

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: [WHCA Print] [WH Pool] In-town pool report #1
Date: Friday, June 23, 2017 12:10:23 PM

From: "Haberma, Maggie" <maggie.haberman@nytimes.com>

Date: June 23, 2017 at 11:34:07 AM EDT

Subject: [WHCA Print] [WH Pool] In-town pool report #1

Good morning from the East Room on this muggy Friday.

The president is expected to join for a signing of the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. The room is still filling with attendees. Print pool was brought in at 11:20 am.

Omarosa is so far the only administration official your pooler can see. POTUS remarks scheduled to start at 11:30 am.

This is some background from the White House, helpfully passed along by Donovan Slack, on the attendees and the event:

In addition to veterans and members of Veterans Service Organizations, the following individuals are expected to attend:

Speakers:

President Donald J. Trump

Dr. David Shulkin, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Sergeant Michael Verardo

Members of Congress :

Sen. John Boozman (AR)

Sen. Tom Cotton (AR)

Sen. Dan Sullivan (AK)

Rep. Jodey Arrington (TX)

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL)

Rep. Bruce Poliquin (ME)

Rep. Martha Roby (AL)

Rep. Phil Roe (TN)

Veterans and Veterans' Family:

Dennis Egbert – Pennsylvania

Cornell Langford – Maryland

Angela McConnell – Virginia

Mark Lucas

John Byrnes – North Carolina

Rick Disney – Florida

Bob Carey – Maryland

Daniel Caldwell – Virginia

Sarah Verardo (wife of Sergeant Verardo) – North Carolina

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Maggie Haberman
New York Times
@maggienyt
212-556-4489

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: [WHCA Print] [WH Pool] Travel 3 Fore arrival
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 10:39:13 AM

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 10:35:00 AM EDT
Subject: Fwd: [WHCA Print] [WH Pool] Travel 3 Fore arrival

Correction. Subject line should of course be "Ford Arrival"

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 10:33:15 AM EDT
Subject: [WHCA Print] [WH Pool] Travel 3 Fore arrival

Marine 1 touched down at 1013 on the ship's 1092 ft long runway full of helicopters and other aircraft next to Atlantic and docked naval ships. Trump was greeted by sec Mattis, acting naval sec sean stackley, and calf Richard McCormack. Priebus, miller, and mnuchin and wife exited back.

Trump saluted and chatted briefly beside the ship's 10--story superstructure that includes all air traffic and control functions. He then walked over a small red carpet surrounded by "rainbow sideboys" -- men dressed in green, red, purple, and blue that designate their functions on the ship. The monochrome suits and h omega look a bit like the tv show "Wiggles."

He then walked to a large gray platform that served as a giant elevator to take him down to the hangar base, a giant auditorium below.

He wan still wearing suit and red tie.

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From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: *DRAFT DOI Daily Comms
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 5:31:52 PM
Attachments: [WH Daily comms update 10-27.docx](#)

INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

10/27/2017

DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Department of the Interior Communications Team

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Press Inquiries:

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- **E&E News:** (Maxine Joselow) --**REQUEST**—As I'm the regulations reporter for E&E News. I'm in charge of helping with our Q&A section, and I was wondering if you'd be able to set up a short phone interview with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife Lola Zinke for a Q&A. I understand Ms. Zinke is very busy, so the conversation could be as short as 15 minutes, and it could occur anytime in the next month or so. I'm just hoping to ask her about leading Sen. John Tester's campaign, traveling with her husband, and other matters related to her daily life and activities.--**RESPONSE**-- The Department does not facilitate Mrs. Zinke's schedule.
- **Reuters:** (Susan Heavey)—**REQUEST**-- Does the Interior Dept or the secretary have any comment on this (FEMA statement on Whitefish Energy contact)? Also, can you tell us what is on the agenda for the secretary's meeting with the president later today? —**RESPONSE**— Today, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke issued the following statement in response to false reports alleging any ties to Whitefish Energy, a company which was contracted by PREPA and the Puerto Rican government. "I had absolutely nothing to do with Whitefish Energy receiving a contract in Puerto Rico. Any attempts by the dishonest media or political operatives to tie me to awarding or influencing any

contract involving Whitefish are completely baseless. Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime. “Neither myself nor anyone in my office has advocated for this company in anyway. After the initial contract was awarded, I was contacted by the company, on which I took no action. All records, which are being made available to appropriate officials, will prove no involvement. “I welcome any and all investigations into these allegations, and encourage the Interior Department’s Inspector General to investigate this matter fully.”

Top Stories

- **Washington Post:** [Trump says he will shrink Bears Ears National Monument, a sacred tribal site in Utah](#)
- **Los Angeles Times:** [Trump plans to shrink two national monuments in Utah, senator says](#)
- **THE HILL:** [White House: Zinke told Trump he had 'no role' in Puerto Rico contract](#)
- **Washington Examiner:** [Ryan Zinke tells Trump he had no involvement in \\$300 million Whitefish contract for Puerto Rico power grid](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Secretary Zinke met with POTUS.
- Next week, Secretary Zinke is out on personal leave.

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: *DRAFT DOI Daily Comms
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 3:56:24 PM
Attachments: [WH Daily comms update 10-24.docx](#)

INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

10/24/2017

DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Department of the Interior Communications Team

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Press Inquiries:

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- ****Multiple Inquires** (NBC-Gabe Gutierrez, NYT- Deborah Acosta, Reuters- Emily Flitter)—REQUEST--** Would someone from Secretary Zinke's office call me to discuss Whitefish Energy. Here are my questions: 1) Did Sec. Zinke play any role in securing the contract for Whitefish Energy to work in Puerto Rico? 2) Does Sec. Zinke know the company's chief executive, Andy Techmanski? 3) The Washington Post reported that one of Sec. Zinke's sons once worked a summer job at one of the company's construction sites. Is that correct? Also, confirming this statement provided to the Post: "The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company."—**RESPONSE--** On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.

- **CNN: (Rene Marsh)—REQUEST 1--** CNN is looking for information/clarity on Secretary Zinke and his familiarity with Andrew Techmanski, the CEO of Whitefish Energy. Have the two worked together before? In what capacity? How Does the Secretary know Techmanski? Has Techmanski or any of his business partners worked with Zinke on any projects either as Secretary or when Zinke was a member of congress? Did Zinke recommend Whitefish Energy for the contract to help restore Puerto Rico? Did Zinke have any influence or involvement either directly or indirectly with Whitefish securing the contract in Puerto Rico? Has this company or any of its leadership, including the CEO, had any political connections to Zinke or his wife during their political careers. Donations directly or indirectly? What was/is the Secretary's involvement in the overall recovery process for Puerto Rico?—**RESPONSE 1--** On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites. **REQUEST 2—** Did the Secretary work with or communicate with Techmanskis in the aftermath of the hurricane? Were they in communication after the hurricane discussing any aspect of the recovery effort or anything else?—**RESPONSE 2--** Background: No. The gentleman sent an email but there was not action taken on it (no reply, forward, discussion, etc). Not for a statement, just for your context - The secretary's phone number and email address have been published multiple times over the years so he gets a lot of emails/cold calls/letters.—**REQUEST 3--** One additional question beyond the content of the email sent from Techmanski to Zinke. I understand in 2016, then-Congressman Rep. Zinke's office reached out to local officials in Montana about a Whitefish Energy project. Can you the Secretary provide you with insight on why he intervened? What sort of assistance did Zinke's office provide to Whitefish? —**RESPONSE 3--** On background: That is not accurate. No intervention was taken by Zinke or his office. I'm understand a local field representative in the Congressional office was contacted by an employee of the business, the field rep listened politely took no action and referred him to the Senators' offices.
- **E&E News: (Pamela King)—REQUEST--** I was wondering if Interior has any initial thoughts to share on the HOARD Act introduced today by Rep. Lowenthal: https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/10/24/document_gw_03.pdf. The bill would require annual reports to Congress on APD data.—**RESPONSE--** The Department has not taken an official position on the bill at this time. FYI - So far this year the BLM has decreased their processing time for APDs by an average of 46 days.
- **E&E News: (Kellie Lunney)—REQUEST--** Politico ran this item today. Is this accurate? Will the secretary be on the Hill today to meet with members of the Natural Resources Cmte? Why the secrecy? **ZINKE'S SUPER SECRET HILL HUDDLE** - Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke will meet this afternoon with House Natural Resources Committee members in a room typically reserved for issues involving a high-security clearance. Zinke will meet separately with committee Democrats and Republicans. Copies of invitations obtained by Huddle say he will be "raising a confidential matter" and only members and staff with top-secret level clearance may attend. Democratic Rep. [Ruben Gallego](#) told Huddle there's "nothing normal" about meeting with Zinke in such secure spot given his department has very little oversight over clandestine issues and said it's likely a way to limit participation since very few staffers on the panel have a security clearance.—**RESPONSE--** I'm not at liberty to discuss conversations that

may or may not be held in a secure location.

Top Stories

- **New York Post:** [No-name firm with Zinke ties lands \\$300M Puerto Rico power contract](#)
- **Politico:** [Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs](#)
- **Missoulian:** [Whitefish firm's \\$300 million repair contract in Puerto Rico raises questions](#)
- **Washington Examiner:** [Trump administration plans 'largest oil and gas lease sale in US history'](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Interior announced oil and gas lease sale #250. This is set to be the largest acreage sale in the history of the Gulf of Mexico. The press release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Today, Secretary Zinke hosted two hour-long meetings with the House Natural Resources Committee Rs and Ds.
- Tonight, Secretary Zinke is joining conservative reporters for an off the record dinner.
- This week, Interior will release the Energy Burdens Report.
- This week, Interior will announce an oil and gas lease sale in Alaska at the National Petroleum Reserve.
- Thursday, Interior will host an event with VSOs to improve coordination with and services for veterans. The event will be open press.
- Friday, the Secretary will meet with POTUS.

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 10:13:32 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Bloomberg: U.S. to Exit Global Anti-Corruption Effort Aimed at Oil Cash](#)

“The Trump administration said it will exit a global anti-corruption effort that compels oil, gas and mining companies to disclose the payments they give governments worldwide. The decision, announced in a letter Thursday to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, may undercut the effort that aims to give citizens and watchdogs in poor but mineral-rich nations details on how much their government leaders get in taxes, royalties and lease payments. With that information, they can ensure the money is spent on roads and schools, not squirreled away in foreign bank accounts.”

[E&E News: Interior official compares \\$70 entry fee to cost of a movie](#)

“Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt today defended a plan to charge \$70 for a peak-season entry fee at 17 of the busiest national parks next year, saying it's roughly the same cost as taking his family to a 3-D movie. "It costs me about \$68 and 90 cents for the two kids and my wife and I to go see a movie," Bernhardt said on NPR's 1A, a daily program and podcast produced by NPR member station WAMU. Bernhardt said park fees have not kept pace with inflation. And he said that higher fees would not keep most low-income Americans from visiting the parks, adding that a bigger problem for them is the cost of transportation and lodging associated with traveling to the parks.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[THE HILL: Senators spar over proposal to drill in Alaska wildlife refuge](#)

“Lawmakers on Thursday fought over the possibility of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the opening act of a legislative push to allow oil production in the Alaskan Arctic. Republicans from Alaska and on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee cast drilling in the refuge as an operation that can be done safely and one that would help the economies in both the state and the nation. But Democrats vowed to fight drilling there, saying the area is too ecologically important to allow industrial production.”

- The Alaska 1002 area is a 1.5 million acre coastal plain in Alaska specifically set aside because of its natural resource potential. This set-aside was done by President Jimmy Carter. To develop energy there, however, Congress must give an authorization.

- The Department of the Interior wants two lease sales in the Alaska 1002 area over the next 10 years. Lease sales are estimated to generate \$3.5 billion in bonus bids; with a 51-49 split between the U.S. Treasury and the State of Alaska, the Treasury would bring in \$1.8 billion projected.
- Development in the Alaska 1002 area would follow all appropriate environmental laws and procedures.
 - Energy production occurs in the Kenai Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, as well as the NPRA (National Petroleum Reserve Alaska). The latter is also located on Alaska's North Slope on the coastal plain.
- Secretary Zinke visited the North Slope last spring with Chairman Murkowski and a bipartisan Senate delegation; there, he signed a Secretarial Order requiring the U.S. Geological Survey to update resource assessments for the Alaska 1002 area.
 - This effort is in line with President Trump's Executive Order 13783 on American energy independence.
- A 2009 report by the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there are 10.35 billion barrels of oil available within the Alaska 1002 area, with 80-90% of that being economically recoverable at \$43/barrel.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Oregon Public Broadcasting: The Teddy Roosevelt Legacy At Ryan Zinke's Interior Department](#)

"The Department of the Interior is outlining steps aimed at increasing energy production on federal lands. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke says boosting production of resources like oil and gas creates jobs and enhances the nation's energy security. It's another pro-industry headline for a secretary touting himself as not only an avid outdoorsman, but a follower of the conservation ideals of the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. If the manager of most of our federal lands is going find inspiration from someone, it would be hard to find a more appropriate muse."

[U.S. News and World Report: Groups Sue for Details on Trump Plan for National Monuments](#)

"Environmentalists sued the administration of President Donald Trump on Thursday seeking to pry loose details of plans to shrink national monuments and marine areas and open protected areas to commercial fishing, energy extraction, logging and other industries. The lawsuit alleges the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Interior Department illegally ignored Freedom of Information Act requests for documents related to the issue. Trump has said intends to shrink two monuments in Utah — Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante."

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Russell Newell](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Eli Nachmany](#); [John Bockmier](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 9:59:07 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[U.S. News and World Report: Congress Debates Oil Drilling in Largest US Wildlife Refuge](#)

“A showdown is looming in the nation's capital over whether to open America's largest wildlife refuge to oil drilling. A budget measure approved by the Republican-controlled Congress allows lawmakers to pursue legislation that would allow drilling on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge takes up an area nearly the size of South Carolina in Alaska's northeast corner. Nearly 200,000 caribou in the Porcupine Caribou Herd migrate from Canada to the coastal plain most years.”

[Independent Journal Review: Int Sec Ryan Zinke Spent the Day in Moccasins and a Fashion Staple That Would Make George H.W. Bush Proud](#)

“On Wednesday, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke marked Native American Heritage Month by participating in #RockYourMocs. Zinke ditched the traditional dress shoe usually seen around the Capitol for a pair of moccasins. While former President George H.W. Bush may be well known for his incredible sock game, what the interior secretary sported underneath his moccasins proved Bush isn't alone in his love for fashionable feet accessories...Zinke also offered a statement of remembrance of Native American Veteran Michael Bell and was given a quilt his family made as a gift. Teen Vogue reported that some people took umbrage at Zinke's decision to wear moccasins, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs thanked the secretary on Twitter for celebrating with them. The tweet added they were “honored” to gather around the quilt with him as he remembered Bell.”

[The Daily Sentinel \(CO\): U.S. Lands Open for Biz](#)

“More than 250 people applauded a high-ranking official who came to Grand Junction on Thursday night with news that the federal government is dedicated to making federal lands welcome to energy development. Kate MacGregor, who oversees the Bureau of Land Management, outlined President Donald Trump's and U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plans to remove roadblocks to mining and drilling. Many attendees walked past roughly 40 sign-waving protesters at Two Rivers Convention Center. Grand Junction's Petroleum and Mining Club hosted MacGregor, who delivered the speech, “The Department of the Interior's Role in Energy Dominance.”...MacGregor said the Department of Interior aims to streamline planning and permitting of leases, reduce the regulatory burdens, support and improve pipeline development and improve trust with local, state and tribal partners.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[New York Times: Trump Administration to Lift Ban on ‘Trophy’ Elephant Imports](#)

“The Trump administration will begin allowing hunters to bring into the United States “trophy” elephants killed in Zimbabwe, reversing a 2014 ban on a practice that has received intense scrutiny in recent years. Though African elephants are protected under the Endangered Species Act, the law allows the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to authorize imports of trophies if the agency finds that the hunts in which the animals were killed contribute to the survival of the species. The United States banned such imports from Zimbabwe in 2014 because of a lack of data on conservation efforts there. Now the United States agency says it is satisfied with Zimbabwe’s actions and believes such hunts can be beneficial for the species by bringing money to local communities and providing incentives to conserve elephants. “Since our 2014 and 2015 findings, there are strong indications that the efforts of private landowners and consortiums to manage elephants within their areas of control have received greater support,” the federal agency said in a notice to be published in the Federal Register on Friday.”

- **USFWS Statement:** “Legal, well-regulated sport hunting as part of a sound management program can benefit certain species by providing incentives to local communities to conserve those species and by putting much-needed revenue back into conservation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the hunting and management programs for African elephants in Zimbabwe and Zambia will enhance the survival of the species in the wild. These enhancement findings are required prior to allowing import of these trophies under Endangered Species Act regulations. The finding applies to elephants hunted in Zimbabwe on or after January 21, 2016, and on or before December 31, 2018, and to elephants hunted in Zambia during calendar years 2016, 2017 and 2018, for applications that meet all other applicable permitting requirements.”

[Washington Post: Watchdog says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document travel](#)

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has failed to keep complete records — and in some cases, kept none at all — of his travel since taking office, the agency’s watchdog told department officials this week, saying that management of Zinke’s travel was “deficient” and lacked oversight. A rare alert Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall sent to the secretary’s office Wednesday, obtained by The Washington Post, said her investigation into allegations of improper travel practices by Zinke has been stymied by “absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips.” Interior lawyers and ethics officials also have not shown evidence to investigators that they have been able to “distinguish between personal, political and official travel” or cost-analysis documents to justify his choice of military or charter flights, Kendall wrote. The memo reveals that the inspector general is also scrutinizing the travel of Zinke’s

wife, Lolita, who often accompanied him on official trips. Kendall wrote that the department's documentation was so lacking that investigators cannot determine "the full extent" of her travel and how it was paid for."

PLEASE REFER TO THE ATTACHED LETTER IN RESPONSE TO THE IG LETTER FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY BERNHARDT

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[U.S. News and World Report: Justice Department Won't Release National Monument Documents](#)

"Federal officials say they don't have to provide an Idaho environmental law firm with documents possibly outlining legal justifications for President Donald Trump to shrink national monuments because they're protected communications. The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit from Advocates for the West. The environmental law firm filed a public records request for documents on the national monuments earlier this year, and the Justice Department released more than 60 pages in May. The agency withheld 12 pages, however, contending that they are protected under attorney-client privilege and intra-agency communication rules."

[NBC News: Drones are fighting wildfires in some very surprising ways](#)

"Wildfires in the U.S. were brutal last summer, scorching more than 8.8 million acres and cloaking the Pacific Northwest in smoke and ash. In California alone, more than 40 people died and 8,400 buildings were destroyed in the deadliest wildfires in the state's history. Things may only get worse in years to come... But aerial drones may help save the day. From tiny quadcopters to big fixed-wing aircraft, drones are showing that they can detect, contain and even extinguish fires faster and with greater safety. They give firefighters a bird's-eye view of the terrain and help them determine where a fire will spread — so they can make swift decisions about where fire crews should go and which residents need to be evacuated."

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Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:24:35 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Bloomberg: Trump, First Lady Welcome Ghosts, Goblins on Halloween Eve](#)

“President Donald Trump dressed up as himself, complete with his trademark red tie, for his first Halloween in the White House. Trump and first lady Melania Trump greeted some of the 6,000 children and adults who were invited for trick-or-treating at the White House on Halloween eve. Children from more than 20 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia attended the festivities on the South Lawn, along with military families and members of unspecified community organizations. Spooky music played over loudspeakers. Machines cranked out fog. Pumpkins carved with the likenesses of past presidents decorated the south entrance of the White House. Black spiders hung from webs spun between the portico's columns. A sign over an awning proclaimed "Halloween at the White House 2017.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[Augusta Free Press \(VA\): Kaine, colleagues urge Trump to rescind proposed national park fee increase](#)

“U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) joined Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and nine other colleagues in a letter to Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke requesting he withdraw his proposal to dramatically increase national park entrance fees at 17 national parks pending further review. According to the proposal, Shenandoah National Park visitor fees would increase dramatically from \$25 to \$70 per vehicle during peak season.”

TALKING POINTS

- Secretary Zinke has spoken at length about addressing the deferred maintenance problem at our National Parks, and this will require a new approach.
- Our parks face an \$11 billion maintenance backlog and need serious improvements to infrastructure if they are to accommodate visitors.
- The higher fees would go directly into funding these infrastructure improvements; in lieu of indiscriminately imposing a tax on the American people, the fee increase represents a free market solution that relies on the citizenry's voluntary use of the parks to fund the sites' future.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

Politico: Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group said in a Federal Election Commission complaint that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash. The June RV sale is one of several transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke’s family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke’s campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump’s Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits.”

Wall Street Journal: FBI Is Probing Puerto Rico Power Contract

“The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating a decision by Puerto Rico’s power authority to award a \$300 million contract to a tiny Montana energy firm to rebuild electrical infrastructure damaged in Hurricane Maria, according to people familiar with the matter. Agents from the FBI’s San Juan field office are looking into circumstances surrounding the deal that the public power monopoly known as Prepa signed with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC, according to the people familiar with the matter. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló canceled the contract Sunday, saying it had become a distraction from the U.S. territory’s efforts to restore the devastated grid. Only 30% of the island’s power customers have had electricity restored.”

Bloomberg: Arctic Refuge Oil Bonanza More Likely to Be Bust for GOP Budget

“Congressional Republicans counting on a \$1 billion windfall from selling oil-drilling rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to help pay for tax cuts may be in for a disappointment. Data from previous Arctic oil lease sales suggest the U.S. is likely to collect less than a fifth of that billion-dollar goal over the next decade-- about \$145.5 million -- from auctioning off territory in the sprawling northeast Alaska refuge where caribou calve and polar bears roam. Oil companies may be scared away by the controversies and costs of drilling in that remote and fragile terrain. Even if they aren’t, crude prices would have to be some \$15 more per barrel than they are today to make the effort pay off at all.”

Palm Beach Post: Gov. Scott proposes additional \$50 million for Lake O dike

“Gov. Rick Scott is proposing an additional \$50 million to expedite repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike that surrounds Lake Okeechobee. The announcement this morning comes as the lake once again tops 17 feet above sea level, a depth that causes concerns about the integrity of the aging structure. Scott said the \$50 million is part of his 2018-2019 recommended budget and is on top of the \$50 million approved in the current year’s budget to kick-start repairs. Florida Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, and House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land O’Lakes, lauded the announcement.”

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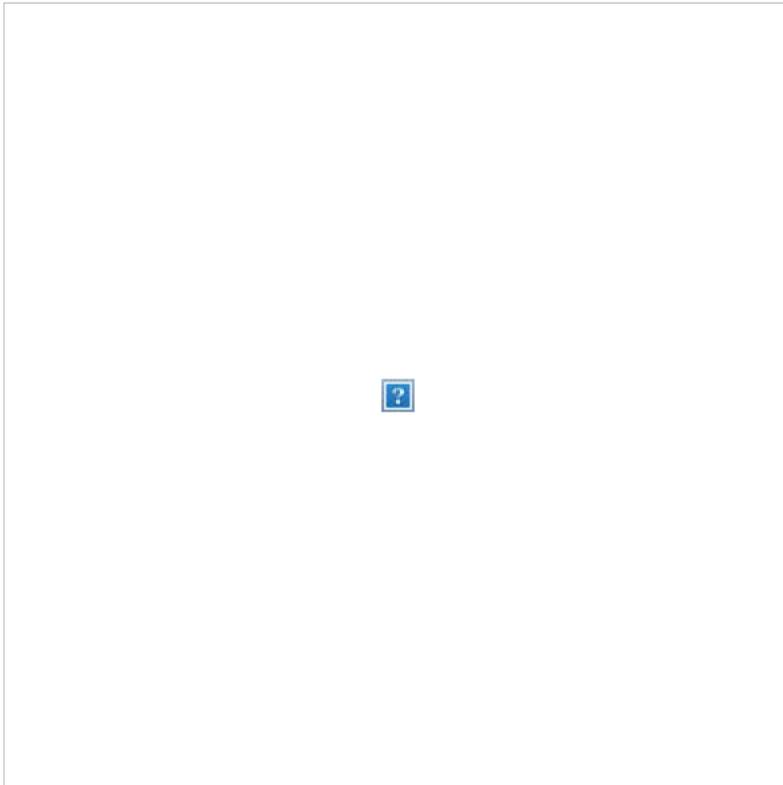
Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: "Farewell, Anthony Scaramucci, thanks for the memes" Moment
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 8:31:29 PM



What's happening



Farewell, Anthony Scaramucci, thanks for the memes

Haha · 2 hours ago

The Mooch's 10-day tenure as White House communications director was brief, but it delivered a lot of jokes.

[Go to Moment](#)



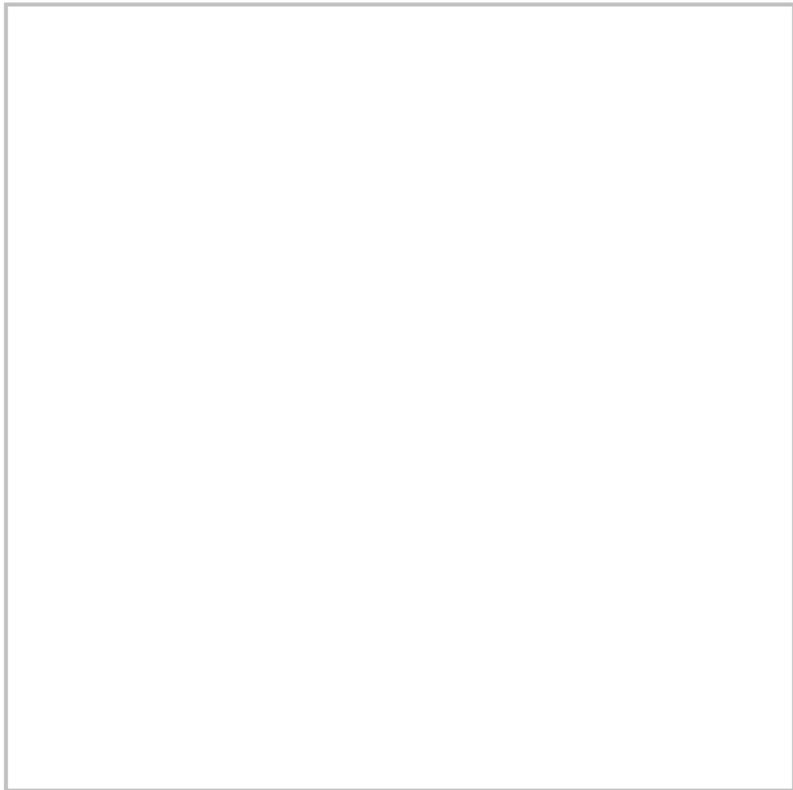


You have to get creative if your name doesn't make an easy wedding hashtag

Haha · 34 minutes ago

When Steven Kleinschmidt (@StevenMK30) apologized to his future wife for not having an easy name to work with in the ...

[Go to Moment](#)



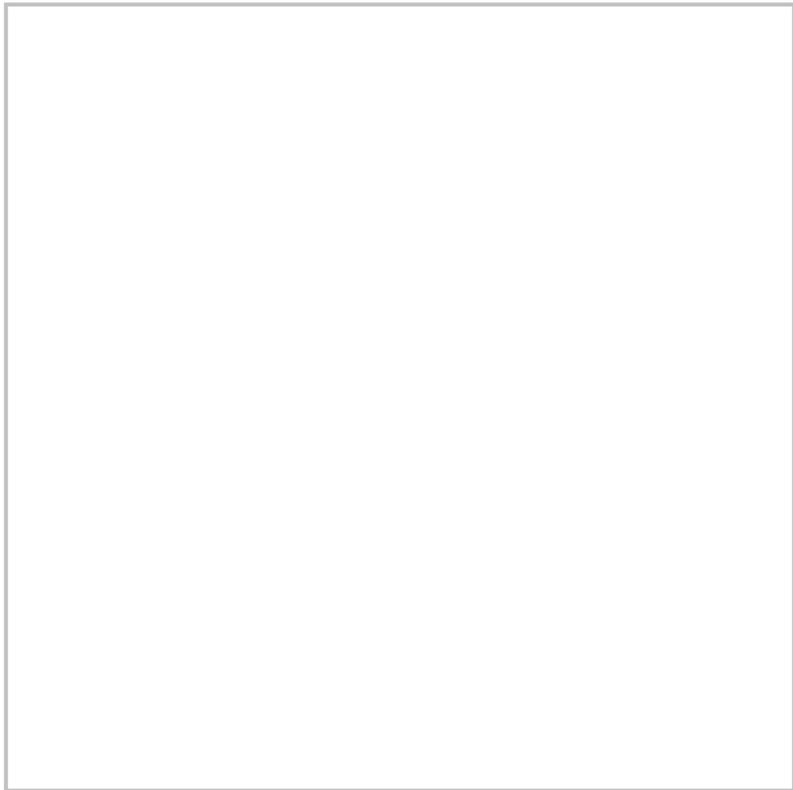
Trump is the 'everything is fine' meme incarnate

Weird · 37 minutes ago

Following the recent dismissal of White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci less than two weeks Trump hi...

[Go to Moment](#)





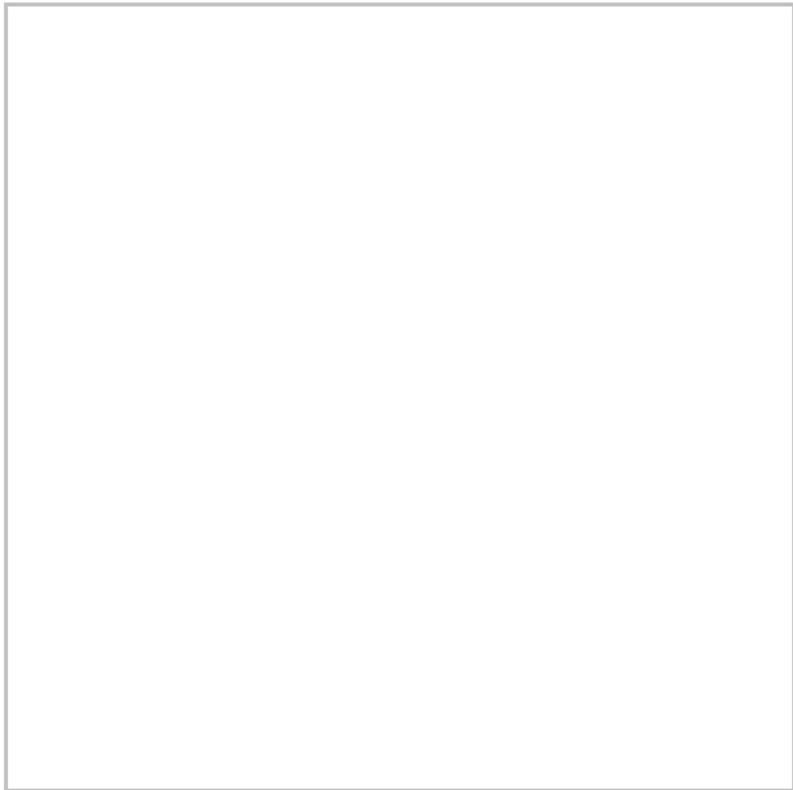
Have you never seen a cow in real life? Apparently you're missing out

Amazing · 5 hours ago

After the Daily Telegraph ran a story based on a survey that suggested one in eight young people in the UK had never ...

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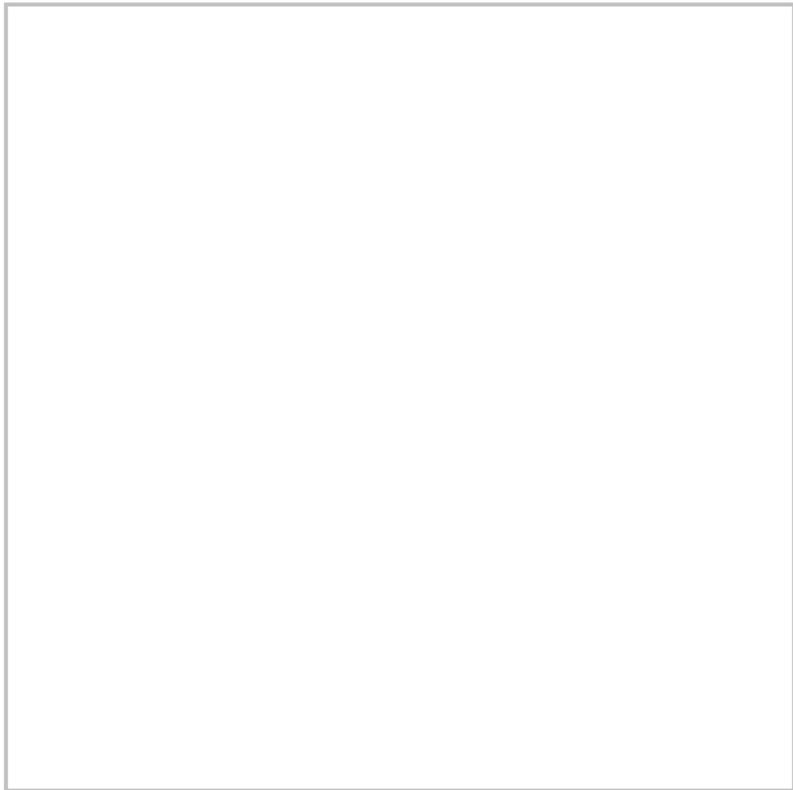
Bennett tells other players there's no glory in dying on the field

NFL · 1 hour ago

After a pair of New York Jets expressed their willingness to die on the football field after being asked about growin...

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These fake back to school facts deserve an A!

Hashtag Roundup · This morning

The school year is right around the corner and these #FakeBackToSchoolFacts will absolutely not prepare you at all (v...

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We sent this email to @DogDayInterior

Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: "John Mayer has an idea to make waiting on hold a little less boring " Moment
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 9:02:43 PM



What's happening

A large rectangular area that is mostly empty, with a small blue square icon containing a white question mark centered in the middle. This likely represents a missing image or video for the tweet.

John Mayer has an idea to make waiting on hold a little less boring

Celebrity · 1 hour ago

People can't decide whether it's genius or not.

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A large, empty rectangular box with a thin border, located at the bottom of the page, possibly representing a missing image or a placeholder for another tweet.

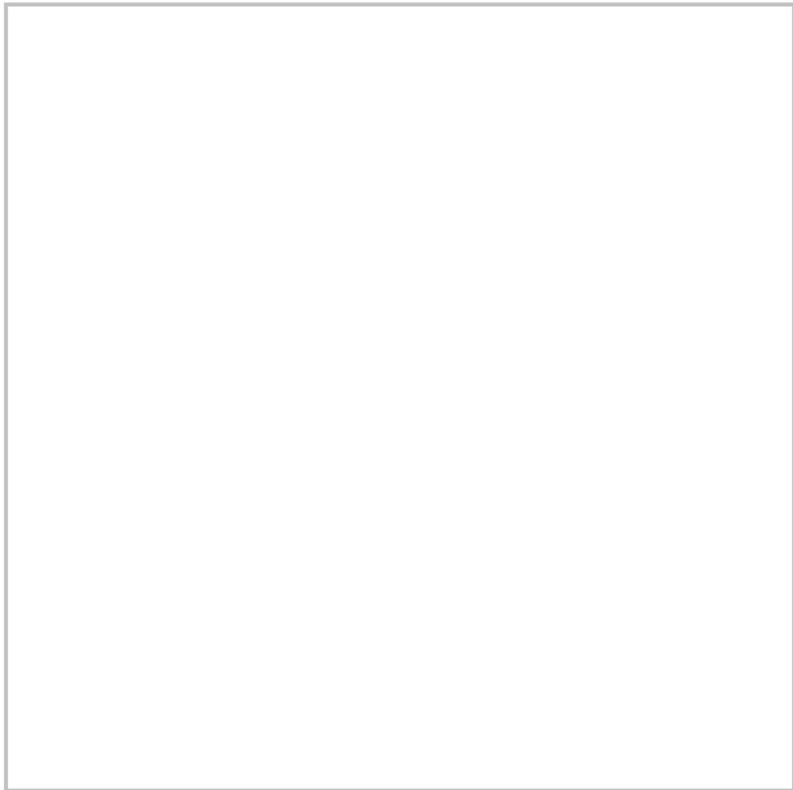


The hedgehog emoji's time has come

Trending · Earlier today

Apple's latest batch of emoji includes a dinosaur, a rock climber, a giraffe, pie, a curling rock and new wardrobe op...

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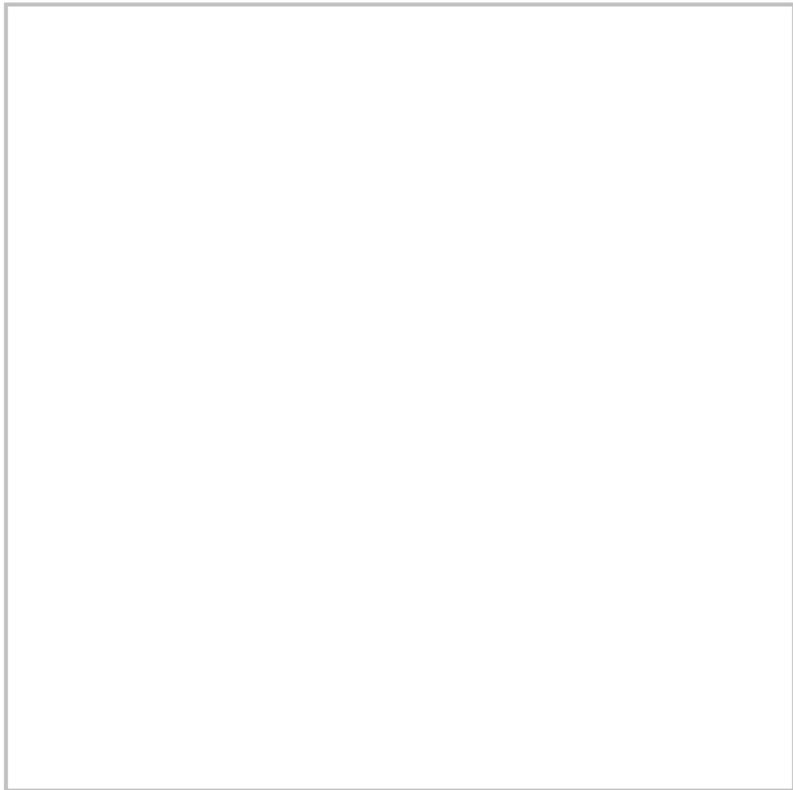
Trump: Melania received 'abuse' for wearing heels in hurricane aftermath

Politics · 3 hours ago

In an interview on Mike Huckabee's upcoming show on TBN, President Trump came to his wife's defense over the criticis...

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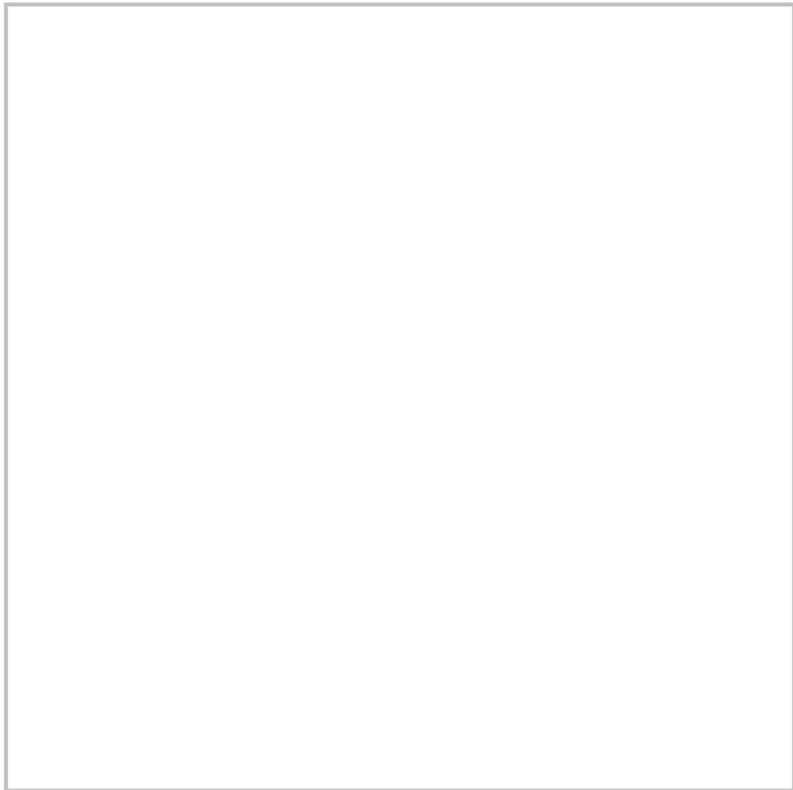
You can go meatless at McDonald's

Food · Earlier today

Finland is testing the McVegan.

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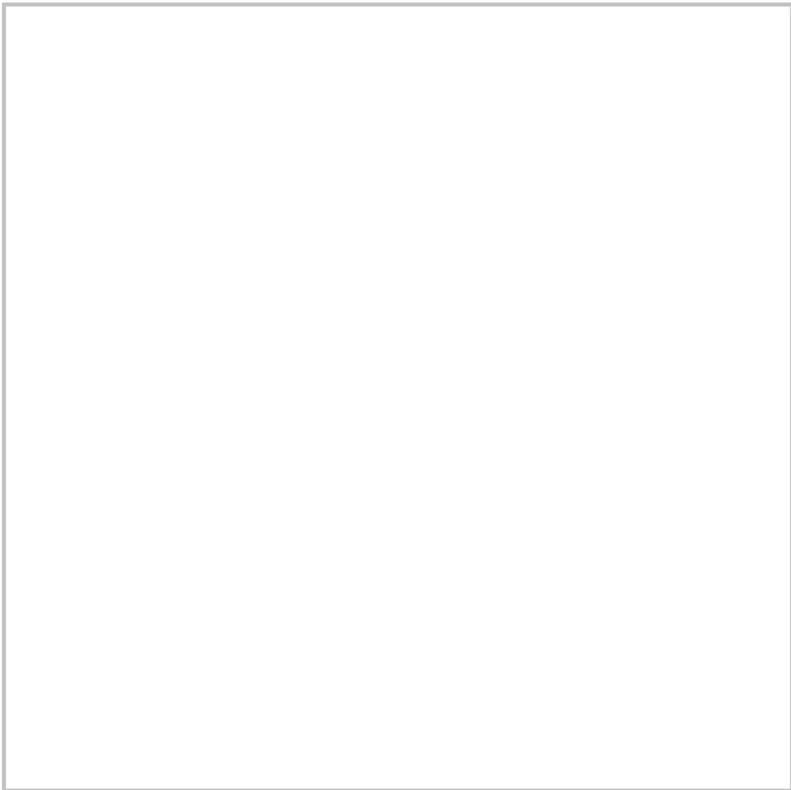
Tropical storm kills at least 22 in Central America, heads to Gulf Coast

Weather · 5 hours ago

The storm is expected to make landfall on Sunday, possibly as a Category 1 hurricane.

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Using a towel to take something out of the oven is risky business

Haha · 38 minutes ago

You've been warned.

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We sent this email to @DogDayInterior
Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* 'You're Fired' may be harder than Trump thinks when it comes to federal workers
Date: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 9:20:35 AM

[Washington Post: 'You're Fired' may be harder than Trump thinks when it comes to federal workers](#)

Lisa Rein
August 21, 2017

Anxious to remake the federal government, the Trump administration is cracking down on employees who break the rules, taking action in some instances in disciplinary cases that had languished under former president Barack Obama.

The White House in April instructed agencies to “remove poor performers” as they construct plans to shrink the workforce as part of a federal downsizing. Trump vowed during the campaign to shake up a government awash in “waste, fraud and abuse” — and the new administration has been vocal about its strategy.

Budget director Mick Mulvaney laid out detailed mandates to ensure that poor conduct be handled swiftly and poor performers monitored closely or given “appropriate discipline.”

After years criticizing the Obama administration for going easy on cases involving problem employees, Republicans are taking a hard line against misconduct at several troubled agencies.

[Trump’s hard-line plan for government workers]Veterans Affairs, still recovering from criticism in 2014 that employee misconduct led to manipulated patient waiting lists at its medical centers, in July began publishing disciplinary actions online, including 525 firings since Trump took office. With 350,000 employees, VA in June became the model for a broader job protections shake-up sought by conservatives when Trump signed a bill creating a quick path for VA Secretary David Shulkin to fire employees who fail to meet conduct or performance standards.

At Homeland Security, the inspector general is conducting an agencywide review of misconduct actions. Employees were asked in a July survey whether the sprawling department created after the 9/11 attacks has “sufficient processes and procedures to address conduct issues.”

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is asking career officials at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to explain how they have handled improper time and attendance reporting, an agency official familiar with the inquiry said. Investigators and congressional Republicans say the problems related to time and attendance tracking have gone unaddressed for years.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has vowed zero tolerance for sexual harassers. This month the Yellowstone National Park superintendent went public with disciplinary actions he is taking against a dozen employees involved in a harassment case.

[Congress clears Trump-backed bill to fast-track firing of VA workers]

But in its efforts to fulfill the president’s campaign promise to “drain the swamp” of entrenched federal workers, the new political leadership in Washington is meeting resistance

from powerful federal employee unions and finding that maneuvering around long-guaranteed civil service protections is not easy.

This month an administrative board ordered a stay of the firing of the former director of the VA Medical Center in Washington, who had been removed from his post to an administrative job in April. An inspector general's probe found that patient health was endangered by managerial dysfunction. Brian Hawkins was fired for a "failure to provide effective leadership," VA officials said. He claimed wrongful termination and is back at work while his case is independently reviewed. In a test of the new law, which offers fewer protections for employees, Shulkin plans to remove Hawkins again based on another inspector general's investigation, VA officials said. That inquiry found that he violated agency rules by sharing sensitive information about employees with his wife on their personal email accounts. Hawkins did not respond to a request for comment.

Even cases that Trump officials inherited from the Obama administration have been challenging. The Census Bureau took over litigation that sprang from an inspector general's findings two years ago that employees in its hiring office gamed the system to improperly collect \$1.1 million in salaries. It is still unresolved, an agency spokesman said.

A case now playing out at the Patent and Trademark Office shows the complexities of carrying out Trump's mandate.

After a three-year investigation, the office has moved recently to fire or suspend 18 of about two dozen employees in a clerical support unit that docket trademark applications, according to current and former agency staff and other government officials familiar with the case. One worker has been fired.

[Patent office filters out worst telework abuses in report to watchdog]

Agency officials conducted an internal inquiry whose findings were shared with The Washington Post, showing that the employees improperly charged the government hundreds of thousands of dollars over several years. In the most egregious cases, officials found that some employees worked two hours a day but billed taxpayers for eight, plus two more overtime hours.

A union official denied any impropriety, saying his members "were available to work" but often finished their tasks quickly and awaited more assignments, a practice that went on for as long as a decade.

"My employees are not in the wrong," said Harold Ross, president of Local 243 of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents the unit. "They produce fast. They're available for the whole time. All of a sudden, management wants to come against them."

Patent office spokesman Paul Rosenthal said in an email the agency does not comment on specific personnel cases.

"More broadly, the USPTO has always taken its time and attendance policies seriously," he wrote. "Employees must accurately record their time worked. And the overwhelming majority of our employees do just that. But employees who falsify their work records or work hours . . . will continue to be held accountable."

In another sign of the Trump administration's efforts to more forcefully address employee misconduct, Rosenthal cited an agreement — signed by the union representing patent examiners — to allow supervisors to monitor staff work habits with tracking software that indicates whether employees are at their computers. Labor had resisted these changes, which the union signed the day before Trump took office.

Timecard abuse has been documented over several years in reports by the inspector general at the Commerce Department, the patent office's parent agency. The office has been praised for its flexible work hours and telework policies.

[Patent office workers costs taxpayers millions by playing hooky, watchdog finds]

The Post reported in 2014 that an internal investigation found patent examiners repeatedly misrepresented their hours and received unsubstantiated overtime pay and bonuses. Top agency officials removed the most damaging revelations from material turned over to the inspector general, documents provided to The Post showed. Commerce officials said the material was in draft form.

At the time, Obama officials pledged to hold employees accountable. But critics said few patent examiners were punished or paid restitution.

Commerce's then-acting inspector general, Dave Smith, opened an investigation into the trademark employees, according to government sources. But top patent officials prevailed after asking that they be allowed to conduct their own inquiry.

Last fall, Smith released a computer analysis showing discrepancies between the time claimed by patent examiners and hours worked. But privacy laws prevented the agency from acting against 415 employees identified as the worst offenders. Under a new law, management is allowed to pursue administrative or criminal enforcement in such cases. It is unclear if the patent office plans to act.

Republicans' frustration with patent officials and the unions boiled over at a House hearing in December after Trump's election. Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's panel on government operations, dressed down the agency's No. 2 Obama appointee, Russell Slifer, and the head of the patent examiners' union for tolerating abuses.

The agency had long suspected timecard abuses in the trademark division, where jobs have been outpaced by automation. But managers could not document it until 2013, when they installed tracking software.

"We had never seen anything like it," recalled Bill House, who retired in 2015 from the employee relations office, which investigates misconduct. The number of cases, the money allegedly bilked and the hours the employees spent not working "was so bad they pulled other [employee relations] specialists to work on it," House recalled.

The treasury employees union is fighting the proposed discipline, said union and management officials who requested anonymity to discuss the subject. An arbitrator is scheduled in October to hear the first case, of the sole employee who has been fired.

Tim Hannapel, the NTEU's national counsel, said the tracking software detects only part of the work employees are asked to do — tasks that include emails, phone calls, and monitoring rules and regulations.

“It’s substantive stuff, but there isn’t a code that tracks this work,” he said.

The union has turned down management’s offers to allow employees to resign with clean records if they reimburse taxpayers for unearned compensation, according to union officials and others familiar with the discussions. The employees, who are paid \$59,693 annually on average, remain on the payroll.

The NTEU also is alleging disparate racial treatment because almost all of the employees are black. The union says relatively few higher-paid white patent examiners have been disciplined for similar misconduct claims. The agency did not comment on the settlement negotiations or the discrimination claim.

“They turned a blind eye to the other employees,” Ross, the local union president, said of patent examiners.

Slifer, now an intellectual-property attorney in Boise, Idaho, said that when he and the unions worked together to respond to Congress’s accountability requests, it was clear that the relationship with the Trump administration would be different.

“The recognition that having a GOP majority in Congress and in the White House certainly put the unions on notice that they don’t necessarily enjoy the same support from Republicans as they have from Democrats,” he said.

He said employee accountability is more complicated than saying “if someone isn’t putting in their 80 hours [every two weeks] they need to be canned. It is important that you provide all employees due process and make sure they understand their responsibilities.”

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* Greens fault Zinke for overseas trip as report deadline looms
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 2:26:37 PM

[Greens fault Zinke for overseas trip as report deadline looms](#)

Jennifer Yachnin
August 17, 2017

Conservationists slammed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke today for traveling overseas ahead of the deadline for his review of dozens of national monuments, noting that the Trump administration official has visited less than a third of the sites under evaluation.

The Center for Western Priorities pointed to a photograph published today by Zinke's wife, Lola Zinke, on her Twitter account, which shows the couple at sunrise along Turkey's Bosphorus.

Several hours later, Lola Zinke published another photo of herself with the tags "Happiness #Mykonos," possibly referring to the Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

The Interior Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Zinke's whereabouts, although a spokeswoman stated last week that the secretary could not be reached at that time as he celebrated his 25th wedding anniversary.

Zinke is scheduled to submit his final recommendations for potential reductions or even elimination of dozens of national monuments to President Trump next week.

The president ordered an assessment in late April of all national monuments created since 1996 that encompass more than 100,000 acres of land or sea.

"Our national monuments are full of beautiful places to take a summer trip. Secretary Zinke promised a rigorous analysis of national monuments, but what the American public got was a sham review and a foreign vacation," Center for Western Priorities Deputy Director Greg Zimmerman said.

He added, "If he bothered to listen, Secretary Zinke would have found that national monuments are cornerstones of Western economies, that they protect exceptional and unique lands, and, most of all, that virtually no Americans support eliminating national monuments. I worry, instead, he's moving to permanently shut down national monuments."

While Zinke has granted reprieves to six monuments to date — announcing yesterday that California's Sand to Snow National Monument would remain unchanged — and called for significant reductions to Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, he has yet to comment on the other 20 monuments under review (E&E News PM, Aug. 16).

Although the secretary has traveled across the country during the 3½ month review, he has visited eight of the 27 monuments included in his assessment. His stops have included Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, Nevada's Gold Butte and Basin and Range, New Mexico's Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Maine's Katahdin Woods and Waters, Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou, and the Atlantic Ocean's Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine national monuments.

Notably, he has not made official visits to any of the sites he has excused from the review to date, although his staff notes that he was familiar with the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument in Montana as a native and a former House lawmaker of the state.

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

From: Nachmany, Eli
Subject: *News Alert* Interior Department Kickstarts Initiative To Get Veterans Back Into America's Wild
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 3:41:18 PM

[Breitbart: Interior Department Kickstarts Initiative To Get Veterans Back Into America's Wild](#)

Kristina Wong
October 27, 2017

Green Beret John Wayne Walding lost his leg while searching for insurgents in Afghanistan's Shok Valley in 2008 and faced something he never thought he could—the word “can’t”—he said during a speech at the Department of Interior on Thursday.

It was a bitter pill for the twenty-something Texan who believed he could do anything he put his mind to.

Walding spoke of “that sadness [that] would creep into your mind” from not having the ability to walk. “If I can’t even do that, how am I going to be a man and raise my wife and kids?” he wondered. “April 6, 2008, was the day I learned ‘can’t.’”

It was not until he was invited on a ten-day grizzly bear-hunting trip in Alaska that he was reintroduced to the word “can” — and it changed his life, he said.

“Thank God that I had the courage to say ‘yes,’” he said. “It was the most, just absolute catalyst into my recovery, right? Once that happened, it got the hamster back on the wheel.”

He would go on to run the Army Ten Miler and other races and become the first prosthetic-limbed soldier to graduate the Special Forces Sniper Court.

Walding was one of the veterans at the Interior Department on Thursday for a gathering of veterans, hunting, and wildlife groups meeting to discuss how to improve access for hunting and fishing for veterans, particularly wounded warriors and those with PTSD.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke — himself a retired Navy SEAL veteran, the father of a Navy diver, and father-in-law to a Navy SEAL — hosted the gathering to kickstart the initiative, one of his big priorities at the department.

Speaking to the group of several dozen, he noted that today's veterans spend their entire careers at war, noting that his son-in-law has deployed more than ten times.

“Our veterans are spending more time overseas than they are at home. And it has an effect on the VA. It has an effect on communities because normal has become over there, rather than over here, so I'm concerned about the experience when they come home that our public lands are once again returned to the people,” he said.

But throughout the years, Zinke said there has been a rollback of access to the nation's wilderness for hunters and fishers, which he aims to reverse.

“Hunting and fishing is part of our legacy. And a lot of veterans are part of our hunting and fishing experience, and I am concerned that we've seen a lack of access, roads being closed,

the wilderness, even,” he said.

“Some wildernesses have become more restrictive. Access is becoming harder and harder to find,” he said. “So we’ve done a pivot within Interior. My priority is to return the public lands to the public and make sure we have access and make sure that hunting and fishing is a part of our legacy.”

The Interior Department manages one-fifth of land in the United States, including national parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and other public lands used for hunting, fishing, and recreation.

“We’re introducing a great concept called Pinchot,” he said, named after conservationist Gifford Pinchot, who believed in using “best science and best practices for the greatest good for the longest term.”

“That is the American conservation ethic that I grew up with, and that is the American conservation ethic Interior is now prescribing to,” he said. “Veterans play an enormous role in that.”

Zinke also noted the Interior Department’s roots in the military, noting that the department came out of the Department of War in 1849, which is why the Interior secretary has a flag.

“That is tradition, and that is honoring tradition of those who came before me,” he said. Zinke said he looked at things within his secretarial power that he could do.

Don Peay, founder of Sportsman for Fish and Wildlife, also addressed the group, talking about helping veterans find peace after coming home in the outdoors.

He spoke about Marine Lance Corporal Chance Russell Phelps, who was killed on April 9, 2004, and about whom the movie Taking Chance is based. Peay said Phelps loved to hunt, and his father told him that restrictive Interior policies have destroyed what they loved.

Peay also thanked veterans for their service: “If you’re not willing to stand for our flag, get the hell out of America. Without all of you, we have no freedom.”

Mark “Oz” Geist, a Marine veteran and member of the security team that fought the Battle of Benghazi, also spoke to the group about his own experience growing up hunting in eastern Colorado.

“Hunting, open spaces...we know how much that means to us and our veterans,” he said. “It’s those open spaces that are so important.”

Rick Cicero, a double amputee and one of the founders of Honored American Veterans Afield’s Learn to Shoot Again program, discussed with Breitbart News the healing impact for wounded warriors when they go out fishing and hunting.

“How can we get more opportunities to take these guys out and show them the blessings that they still have? Get rid of that C-A-N-T word and make it the C-A-N word that it’s meant to be,” said Cicero, a communications and intelligence specialist assigned to Special Forces.

Other veterans and representatives at the meeting included:

Matthew Shuman, American Legion; Ron Regan, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies; Keith Tidball, Cornell University; Tom Kilgannon, Freedom Alliance; David Hagner, Freedom Alliance; Anthony Pace, Freedom Hunters; Tom Deoudes, Freedom Hunters; Jim Hazlett, Freedom Hunters; Brian Gliba, Freedom Hunters; Dan Theole, Freedom Hunters; Cathleen Pearl, Got Your 6; Brandon Eden, NASA; Tom Taylor, Honored American Veterans Afield; Sandy Sandberg, Honoring Our Veterans; Tom Porter, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; Susan LaPierre, National Park Foundation; Chris Cox, National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action; Graham Hill, National Rifle Association; Mark Oliva, National Sports Shooting Foundation; Larry Thueme, Operation Injured Soldiers; Kevin Stone, Operation Injured Soldiers – Veteran; David Folkerts, Project Healing Waters; and Amy Simon, Rivers of Recovery

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Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke vows to end culture of harassment and intimidation in Park Service
Date: Friday, October 13, 2017 3:58:39 PM

[Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke vows to end culture of harassment and intimidation in Park Service](#)

Louis Sahagun

October 13, 2017

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Friday announced a plan to combat sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation of employees within America's national parks system and to hold managers accountable if inappropriate behavior is ignored.

The plan aims to change an embedded culture that Zinke said has allowed senior officials to downplay or stonewall complaints from mostly female workers of being physically threatened, propositioned for sex and inappropriately touched.

"Under my leadership we're going to hold people accountable," Zinke announced during a visit to the National Park Service's Grand Canyon headquarters. "We're also fixing the problem of victims being afraid of retaliation or inaction by codifying the right of victims to report abuse to any manager at any location across the service, and by bringing on an independent investigative partner."

Zinke's announcement comes as the entertainment industry and other businesses are roiled by resignations of high-profile figures in harassment scandals, such as movie titan Harvey Weinstein and Uber Technologies Chief Executive Officer Travis Kalanick, who allegedly fostered a "men's club" work environment that tolerated abuse and exploitation of women.

The announcement follows a series of investigations and congressional hearings into allegations of hostile work environments and sordid incidents that a year ago led to the resignations of several senior Park Service officials, including the superintendents of Yosemite and Grand Canyon.

Zinke's plan will strengthen the agency's ability to investigate and address harassment complaints by adding 14 employees to its labor relations and ethics staffs. It will also expand training to support harassment prevention efforts.

The results of a recent survey of about half of all Park Service employees underlined the problem: The agency has failed to shield its employees from work environments that, in some cases, included routine groping.

The survey found that about 10% of those surveyed reported experiencing sexual harassment in the last 12 months. About 38% of employees reported experiencing some form of harassment over the same time period.

Stories of Park Service employees being preyed upon by men in positions of authority, agency critics say, have circulated for years within the agency that likes to project a lofty image of itself as caretaker of America's natural treasures.

Until recently, critics say, most harassment cases were handled internally, with managers

sweeping the allegations under the rug, or handing down minimal penalties.

“This is the fourth declaration of zero tolerance of sexual harassment we’ve heard from the Interior Department in the past three years alone,” Jeff Ruch, executive director of the advocacy group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. “The problem is that people at the highest levels never wind up facing consequences. Instead, they tend to kick troublemakers upstairs, or offer them the option of resignation.”

For example, Ruch’s group cites a female staffer’s complaints of unwanted hugs, lingering handshakes and inappropriate comments from Jorge Acevedo, superintendent of De Soto National Memorial in Florida. The complaints prompted an Interior Office of Inspector General investigation.

Acevedo, whom the woman also accused of lying prone on her desk while she tried to work, was transferred in April to a new position as manager of a complex of small parks in Alabama at his previous salary. He also received a \$1,000 performance bonus, according to an Interior Office of Inspector General report the advocacy group obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

“If, as the Park Service claims there is zero tolerance, then why aren’t these firing offenses?” Ruch said.

The harassment allegations erupted last year, after the disclosure of an inspector general’s investigation prompted by a 2014 letter to then Interior Secretary Sally Jewell from 13 current and former female employees. The women alleged that their complaints — of being threatened and inappropriately touched and photographed by boatmen in charge of educational floats along the Colorado River — had not been addressed.

Congressional hearings led to the removal of David Uberuaga, superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, and Myrna Palfrey, superintendent of Canaveral National Seashore in Florida, for their failure to appropriately handle such accusations.

The hearings also prompted Don Neubacher to retire in 2016 as superintendent of Yosemite National Park, where employees had complained of a systematic failure to investigate and address allegations of harassment at the California landmark renowned for its majestic waterfalls, granite ridges and serene valleys.

A few weeks later, his wife, Patty Neubacher, deputy regional manager for the Park Service’s Pacific West Region, which covers 56 national parks in six states, stepped down amid allegations that she used her position to protect her husband during the harassment scandal.

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Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* Secretary Zinke gives remarks at Flight 93 National Memorial
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 1:28:32 PM

[Secretary Zinke gives remarks at Flight 93 National Memorial-Part 1](#)

[Secretary Zinke gives remarks at Flight 93 National Memorial-Part 2](#)

[Secretary Zinke gives remarks at Flight 93 National Memorial-Part 3](#)

Transcript Below:

SECRETARY RYAN ZINKE: Thanks, Mike. What a beautiful day, as it was that fateful morning. We all remember 9/11 somewhat differently, for me, I was a seal instructor in Coronado. And on that fateful morning, I knew that our country would be forever changed. Now, as I was with the cabinet members on Saturday looking at hurricane Irma, and planning the recovery of Harvey and looking at the forest fires in west, the Vice President and I had a conversation about his experience as he was standing on the steps of our nation's capital. The heroism and courage of the 40 passengers and crew is special because it was their actions that protected our nation. I have fought in a lot of battles in my life and truly, their fight was worth fighting for. I'm grateful for this Vice President because he has continued the fight against evil. His family has continued the fight against evil. His son is a first marine, or a first lieutenant, in the marine corp. trained to be a pilot. His father who fought in Korea as second lieutenant in the United States army, earned a bronze star and I'm convinced from his father that the Vice President learned that not only must you fight, but you must win. So this morning it is my high honor to introduce a man that I've gotten to know as a great man of conviction and character, of faith, a man who loves his country, loves the people that are in it and also understands that evil cannot win. Evil cannot break the spirit of our great nation, and so with that is my high honor to introduce the Vice President of the United States of America Mike Pence.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: Governor and Secretary, Congressmen, Superintendent Clark and distinguished guests, but most of all family members of the heroes who perished in this very field. Reverend Britain, and all of those who join us and look on today. We are deeply humbled to join you on this most solemn of days, at this flight 93 memorial annual remembrance ceremony at this common field one day. That became a field of honor forever. President trump asked me to be here to pay a debt of honor to the 40 heroes of flight 93. To all the fallen and their families. And to the generation of heroes they inspired. And to tell you, that his heart is here in Pennsylvania, especially with all of you who have lost loved ones 16 years ago. Our President observed this day of remembrance at the Pentagon memorial where

moments ago he paid tribute to the 184 men and women that lost their lives there. All of our hearts are with the families of the 2753 men and women, their families who lost their lives at the world trade center in New York City. As the president said just moments ago, we grieve with every family of the innocent souls who were murdered by terrorists that day, and we will never forget what happened on September 11th, 2001. Today, we pause as a nation not so much to remember tragedy as to celebrate heroism and patriotism, but permit me to say that on this day, as Gordy said before our hearts and prayers are with our fellow Americans in Florida and throughout the region, who suffered loss in the winds and waters of hurricane Irma. At this very hour, first responders and new citizen heroes are being forged among the people of Florida, and as the president has said, and I say again, to those affected by hurricane Irma we're with you and we'll stay with you and be with you every day after this tempest passes to restore, recover and rebuild.

Everyone remembered where they were on this day 16 years ago. A mom rousing her children to get ready for school. A farmer wrapping up the morning chores, a coal miner finishing the third shift and heading home. As a new member of congress, I was going through my normal workday routine at the United States Capital. When I learned of the attacks in New York City and at the pentagon, I will always remember the scenes of that day. Watching the capital complex being evacuated. It was as though the building was literally hemorrhaging with people running in every direction. I found myself just across the street from the U.S. capital eventually on the top floor of the headquarters of the capitol police chief. I was there with leaders of the house and senate. Shortly after I arrived, the chief-of-police set the phone back down and informed the leaders gathered there that there was a plane in bound to the capital and said it was 12 minutes out. In that moment the room became silent, and as people began to make plans, I found myself looking out the window. Where just across the street was the capitol dome with that majestic statue of freedom standing a top it? A dome that's a symbol of the ideals of this nation of freedom and democracy for all the world. So we waited, it was longest 12 minutes of my life. But it turned to 13 minutes, Then 14, and then we were informed that the plane had gone down in a field in Pennsylvania. In the days ahead, like every American, we would learn the story of the 40 heroes of flight 93. Men and women who looked evil squarely in the eye and without regard to their personal safety they rushed forward to save lives. They were mothers and fathers, your brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of every walk of life and background. Marc Bingham was on his way to be an usher at a college friend's wedding. Flight attendant in the wake of a career in law enforcement. Lauren carried the spark of life within her. An unborn child three months along and Bill Cashman, a former army paratrooper had actually helped to build the world trade center with his own two hands, and there were so many others whose names we heard echo into the wind this morning.

They were ordinary people, but on that day they became extraordinary. We all know the story. Flight 39 took off at 8:42 departing to San Francisco, and 46 minutes later terrorists seized control and at 9:42 plane diverted to Washington D.C. and passengers called loved ones only to find out what was happening across the country. They learned what that the rest of America knew. The world trade center had been struck and the pentagon had been hit only a few minutes after they were hijacked. They figured out that the terrorists intended to use their plane for the same purpose. But as Tom Burnet told his wife on the phone, we're going to do something and they did. The men and women of flight 93 began to join together and they devised a plan in those short moment moments, they knew their objective. They not only plan

but history records that they prayed. Together with Lisa Jefferson, a phone operator on the ground below, we are told they prayed the Lord's Prayer. And recited those ancient words though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. At 9:57, after only 29 minutes, Todd Beamer spoke those words that America and the world will never forget. "Let's roll". They charged the cockpit and took hold of their fate and 6 minutes later at 10:03, flight 93 plummeted here to the earth. The brave men and women aboard sacrificed their lives for the country we call home. We gather here today because the men and women of flight 93 are heroes, and this beautiful memorial stands as a testament to the American people's undying reverence for their service and sacrifice. Each of their 40 names are etched into this marble. They're carved into the memory of the American people as well. Even as they are seared into the hearts of you that were left behind, the Bible tells us that the Lord is close to the broken-hearted and to the families of the fallen here, that will be our prayer for you today. You honor us by your presence. As the President said this morning, you honor our heroes, you renew our courage, and you strengthen us all.

Today, as a nation we mourn with you. We remember with you. And we are looking forward to the day when we will hear the chimes in this place, and the tower of voices will turn the whisper of the wind into a heroic call to action and it will remember them and echo across this field for generations to come. 93 feet that tower of voices that will be completed by this time next year will honor the heroes of flight 93 and that soaring structure will hold those 40 times each with a different musical note to symbolize the voices of the 40 men and women we remember today. The notes when played together, I'm told, will form a perfect harmony. Just as in their final moments the men and women of flight 93 worked together to defend freedom. The American people will forever be inspired by their courage and resolve. We honor them by remembering them and we honor them by ensuring that we do all in our power as a nation to prevent such evil from ever reaching our shores again. As President Trump has reminded us that we are in the midst of a war between good and evil. The first battle in that war took place in the skies above us and ended in this grassy meadow. We cannot handle this place beyond what the heroes of flight 93 have already done. When the plane went down the heroes on board were the first of a new generation of heroes to rise up as citizen soldiers in what's come to be known as the global war on terror. It is remarkable to think that in the wake of their service and sacrifice, America itself experienced a rebirth. A rebirth of unity and purpose and a rededication to our idea of freedom, and every day for 16 years their actions have inspired many more of our fellow citizens to stand up and step forward, and to follow in their heroic service. The President said today, America cannot be intimidated and in the aftermath of September 11th, we've seen tens of thousands of Americans step forward to serve their communities and protect our families and defend our freedom. They donned the uniform of first responders, firefighters, police officers and more than 5 million Americans have stepped forward to serve in the armed forces of the United States of America.

Since September 11th, these men and women turned a day of tragedy into a triumph of freedom as our nation rallied together and charged forward to meet the enemy on our terms on their soil. And we will always cherish the memory of the nearly 7,000 Americans who have given their lives on the field of battle since that day 16 years ago. Like the heroes of flight 93, we'll never forget their service, their sacrifice, or the families they left behind. But we must remind ourselves, on this solid day of remembrance, the threat remains and even now the

menace of global terrorism brings violence across the wider world to places like London, and Paris, and Barcelona. ISIS continues to threaten against America and against our lives and all that cherish freedom, but under the leadership of President Donald Trump as our commander in chief, our armed forces have ISIS on the run in Iraq and Syria and we will not rest or relent until we hunt down and destroy them at their source. And we also do want to remember that the perpetrators of 9/11 organized and orchestrated their attacks from a safe haven of Afghanistan, and just a few short days ago, President Trump renewed our commitment to see the fight in Afghanistan through to an honorable and enduring outcome that will be worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made. Some four weeks ago, President Trump expressed the full commitment to the United States to destroy terrorist organizations and the radical ideology that drives them and so we will. America will remain engaged in Afghanistan until we eliminate the terrorist threat to our homeland and our people once in for all. We've made great gains. Our resolve is stronger than ever and I promise you together as one nation and one people we will drive the cancer of terrorism from the face of the earth.

We fight because our families deserve to live in safety and security. We fight because our fallen heroes demand justice so as long as we have strength we'll honor their neighbors and the people they died to defend. I'm here on behalf of our President and all the American people to pay a debt of honor, a debt of honor to the heroes of flight 93, a debt of honor to a generation of heroes that followed their inspiring example in and out of uniform. At home and abroad, I'm also here to pay a debt of gratitude to the heroes of flight 93 on a much more personal basis. For their actions on that day in these skies saved American lives. And as my wife Karen, who joins me here today knows, it's a debt I don't think I'll ever be able to repay. Because among the many lives that were saved by their selfless courage, they might have well saved my own life that day.

16 years ago--You know this isn't our first time standing in this field here in Pennsylvania. Not more than a year after that fateful day, Karen and I brought our three small children here to this hallowed ground on a drive back from Washington to Indiana. That day we did not find this extraordinary memorial. We found only a makeshift memorial. No more than a plywood wall and a wooden cross in the field. It was that day with, the help of a park ranger, that I learned personally the sequence of that event that day. I asked her if the U.S. Capitol was in fact the target. What time have the plane have reached the capital building? And what she told me I'll never forget...I will always believe that I and many others in our nation's capital were able to go home that day to hug our families because of the courage and selflessness of flight 93.

So I speak on behalf of the grateful nation. Thank you for giving me the privilege of speaking on behalf of my little family as well. When heroes fall, the nation mourns. For no greater love is a man than this that he's laid down his life for his friends. To the families of the fallen, as President Trump promised this morning I would say the memory of your loved ones will never die. They will always be with us. Their heroic story in our minds and hearts and enshrined in the memory of this country. As long as America endures, we will tell their story. And generations of Americans will ever be inspired by the faithful and courageous words and deeds of the heroes of flight 93. May God bless our beloved fallen. May God bless and comfort

the families gathered here and all those that suffered loss on this day 16 years ago. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* SWAMP CRITTERS TARGET RYAN ZINKE, BUT I'M BETTING ON THE SEAL
Date: Monday, December 18, 2017 4:20:52 PM

[Daily Interlake-Editorial: SWAMP CRITTERS TARGET RYAN ZINKE, BUT I'M BETTING ON THE SEAL](#)

Frank Miele

December 16, 2017

If anything speaks authoritatively on the partisan mess that is Washington, D.C., it is the vilification of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, seemingly the left's favorite target after President Trump himself.

Just last week, former government ethics chief and serial Trump critic Walter Shaub made headlines when he called Zinke "the poster child for this lawless administration's misuse of governmental authority and resources."

Well, pardon my disbelief, but when Zinke was a member of the Montana Legislature, he was the "poster child" for moderate Republicans. In the preceding 30 years, he was also the "poster child" for over-achievers (He was a 4.0 student at Whitefish High School, as well as class president and football star). Later he was a "poster child" for military heroes, serving as a Navy SEAL in both Iraq wars, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan. Then he was Montana's lone congressman, elected twice by the people who know him best.

Here at the Inter Lake, we got to know him as a state legislator, a local businessman, and even as a member of our editorial board for a brief tenure. In every instance, we saw in Ryan Zinke a willingness to look at both sides of an issue, but not to talk out of both sides of his mouth. He was plainspoken to the point of being brutally honest and he made it his personal mission to "restore trust in government."

It is therefore with considerable bewilderment that I have watched the Democratic establishment and the national media try to paint Zinke as some sort of Neanderthal jet-setter criss-crossing the country with a club in one hand and an arsonist's match in the other.

A lot of the issues raised about Secretary Zinke do seem to revolve around travel — taking charter flights on several occasions, bringing his wife with him on flights while he was traveling on official business, selling a campaign-related RV to a friend and fellow Republican at a favorable price. Really? Do you really think other Cabinet members have not used charter flights in the past? Besides, Zinke says that his office is spending less on noncommercial air travel than the previous two secretaries. What's wrong with that? As for the RV, it's up to buyer and seller what price a vehicle is worth. Zinke is not the first person to offer a friend a good deal on a vehicle.

How about this headline from Mother Jones magazine: "The Interior Department Is Giving Business to Secretary Zinke's Billionaire Pal." Wow! That's scandalous! Until you read the story and find out that the business amounted to three night's lodging at Whitefish Mountain Resort for 99 bucks a night. An Interior Department official needed a place to stay while attending the Western Governors Association meeting in Whitefish last June. Sure, Bill Foley, the majority owner of the resort, is a friend of Zinke, but who cares? Has Mother Jones ever been to Whitefish? It's a small world, and probably every hotel owner in the town of 5,000

people knows Zinke. And do we really think that Foley became Zinke's "pal" so that he could somehow get the corner on that \$297 of hotel lodging income?

And we wonder why most Americans have no interest in running for office or serving in government! As for Lola Zinke traveling with her husband, why exactly should the Cabinet secretary's wife NOT travel with him? Considering all the stories coming out of D.C. about the antics of other men, we think it might be a good idea if more men in high office traveled with their wives.

Finally, the high crime that drove Walter Shaub crazy was that Zinke had retweeted a message from the House Natural Resources Committee about a squabble over President Trump's decision to shrink several national monuments.

As interior secretary, Zinke had recommended that Trump greatly reduce the size of the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, among others. The outdoor retailer Patagonia took offense at this move, and sent out an online message that "The President Stole Your Land." Zinke told reporters the claim was "nefarious, false and a lie." He also retweeted the House committee's claim that "Patagonia Is Lying To You."

Shaub said, Zinke had "misused his official position by re-tweeting this wildly inappropriate tweet," and that his "thuggish interference with a business is outside the scope of his duties," suggesting that Patagonia should sue him for libel.

Well, sorry, but if Patagonia wants to engage in a debate about public policy, they had better be prepared for a fight. We know Ryan Zinke is, and we suspect he is better armed.

Frank Miele is managing editor of the Daily Inter Lake in Kalispell, Montana. He can be reached at fmiele@dailyinterlake.com.

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Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Nachmany, Eli
Subject: *News Alert* Trump's Interior secretary talks about administration's Alaska plans and priorities
Date: Friday, December 22, 2017 12:22:38 PM

[Anchorage \(AK\) Daily News: Trump's Interior secretary talks about administration's Alaska plans and priorities](#)

Nathaniel Herz

December 22, 2017

WASHINGTON — From this office overlooking the National Mall with its crackling fire and snarling stuffed brown bear, U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is helping determine the fate of some Alaskans' most coveted projects — from oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the proposed road between the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula.

In a 40-minute interview last week, Zinke laid out his views on Alaska issues and offered hints at how the Trump administration will press its priorities in the state, simultaneously pledging to reinvigorate fossil fuel production on federal lands and to promote conservation and recreation.

"I don't think it's a tradeoff. I've heard this argument before: 'Well, you can either do this or you can do this,' " Zinke said. "It's called multiple use."

Since the federal government owns more than half the land in Alaska, Zinke can be thought of as something like a landlord. The Interior Department oversees Alaska's national parks, guides onshore and offshore oil drilling on federal lands and in federal waters and, through its Bureau of Indian Affairs, is the federal government's liaison to Alaska Native tribal groups.

Earlier this year, on his first trip to Alaska, Zinke pledged to reverse Obama-era restrictions and reinvigorate the state's oil industry, drawing praise from political and industry leaders.

But that pledge has yet to be fully translated into concrete policy, leaving groups with a stake in Interior Department policy — from oil companies to conservation organizations — waiting to see just how Zinke proceeds on some of the state's most contentious federal issues.

Zinke rode into his first day on the job on horseback, offering a change of course from Obama's last interior secretary, former REI chief executive Sally Jewell.

A former Montana congressman, Navy SEAL and Boy Scout, Zinke reveres Teddy Roosevelt — there's a bust next to his fireplace and a portrait above. But Zinke describes his own battles as different from those faced by the Rough Rider.

That former president, Zinke said, fought to preserve public lands for public use, not "special interests" like timber barons. But today, Zinke's foes are conservation groups and companies like Patagonia, which sued Trump over the administration's move to shrink a pair of national monuments in Utah.

"Special interests now, in many cases, are those that want to keep you off the land — that want to make it wilderness and wilderness only and restrict the American public from using the land," Zinke said. "Not everyone can afford to spend five days hunting. So there's a lot of

Americans that enjoy our public lands on the weekend, right? And that requires access. That requires roads, in many cases. There's a lot of Americans that are disabled — veterans that I know. They're not able to hike seven ranges in."

Family history

Zinke's wife, Lola, once lived in Anchorage, where she worked at the Lucky Wishbone restaurant. Ryan Zinke, meanwhile, said he did military exercises in Alaska in the 1980s, from Kodiak out to the western end of the Aleutian Islands.

He said there's "really about four issues" in Alaska — two of which are well known.

One is the proposed road that would run 30 miles between the villages of King Cove and Cold Bay, on the Alaska Peninsula. It's long been a priority of the state's Republican congressional delegation.

"King Cove, we're working on it," said Zinke, who brought up the project himself before a reporter could ask about it. "Everyone knows about it. King Cove is on the map."

King Cove residents say the road would give them easier access to Cold Bay's jet runway for medical evacuations. But conservation groups have fought the proposal because about half the route would run through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.

Zinke wouldn't specify whether the department's next step to advance the project would be announced soon, instead saying: "The winds are very favorable."

Zinke's other high-profile priority is boosting oil production on the North Slope.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain has long been a battleground for conservation groups and pro-development politicians. And the Interior Department will ultimately be charged with guiding leasing and oil development there, assuming the GOP tax plan is approved.

Zinke downplayed environmental concerns about drilling in the refuge, saying the proposal on the table is limited to the coastal plain, known as the 1002 area, which makes up some 8 percent of the refuge's area.

"It's really Alaska 1002, and not the expanse of all ANWR," Zinke said.

But development there is still years away, since oil infrastructure inside the refuge hasn't been built yet.

Near-term prospects for production are far better in the Indiana-sized National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, where the first project went online in 2015.

Zinke has ordered a review of an Obama-era plan that placed about half the reserve off-limits to drilling. That plan also doubled the size of a protected area around Teshekpuk Lake, in the reserve's northeastern corner.

The lake, and nearby land, is key caribou habitat, and it's also visited by birds that come from

all seven continents. But it's also close to new oil discoveries, sparking industry interest in the area — which in turn has prompted fears from environmentalists that the Trump administration could try to roll back protections there.

Zinke wouldn't directly address his department's plans for revisiting the reserve's management plan. But he acknowledged that "not everywhere" in NPR-A is appropriate for oil and gas production.

"The area is so large, people tend to paint it with this big brush — they paint it as if it's monolithic," Zinke said. He added: "There are lakes, there are sensitive areas where even though it resides in the petroleum reserve, it is not appropriate under the current technology to drill."

One solution to that problem, Zinke said, could be the use of technology that allows oil companies to drill horizontally.

Help for Alaska Natives, land surveys

Two other, lower-profile issues are also at the top of Zinke's Alaska agenda, he said.

One, he said, is the 2,800 Alaska Natives who missed out on applying for Native land allotments while serving in the Vietnam War era — a problem that's long been a focus for the state's congressional delegation.

The other has to do with surveys of land that's being transferred to the state by the federal government, dating back to when Alaska first became a state. About one-third of the 106 million acres that the Bureau of Land Management has been in the process of transferring was still unsurveyed as of last year, and state officials were feuding with the Obama administration over how to more quickly finish the job.

Zinke said the solution could be in drones — and in the two sides' willingness to agree on a method to use them.

"The accuracy is plus or minus a couple of centimeters," he said. "I don't think it will take a fleet, even though Alaska is enormously large."

Meanwhile, Zinke offered few specifics when it comes to the coastal Alaska communities endangered by rising sea levels.

Barack Obama visited Alaska as president in 2015, and his administration highlighted the plight of rural villages like Newtok and Shishmaref. Those places are facing threats of flooding and erosion amplified by rising sea levels and thawing permafrost, and critics have argued that Trump and Zinke are ignoring the problem.

Asked about the federal government's role in helping to relocate some of the villages — which could cost hundreds of millions of dollars — Zinke said the new administration wants to respond to the desires of individual communities, rather than impose policies from the top down.

"There's a role because we represent the tribes and Native Alaskans. We're their advocate," he

said. But, he added: "What the specific solution is, I don't think anyone knows at the moment."

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Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: *News Alert* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: A tiny town hit hard by Irma
Date: Monday, September 18, 2017 11:20:52 AM

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: A tiny town hit hard by Irma](#) **September 17, 2017**

Everglades City, Florida - Billy Snyder stood in mud-caked boots in his mud-caked living room, or what used to be his living room before Hurricane Irma roared in. "If we can save the stuff that's important to us, we can just close the doors and never come back in," he told the workers who had gathered around him. "We're just gonna demolish the whole house and rebuild, this time on stilts."

Half a dozen U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) personnel waited for his instructions: What to save, what to dump. It was actually pretty easy. Anything below three feet off the ground was a smelly, sodden mess, because that was the level at which Irma's storm surge dumped a deluge of stinky gray mud and swamp water that ran through and ruined his family's house.

But there was plenty to salvage that had survived above the storm surge mark: dishes, wine glasses, his wife Shannon's macramé hangings, his son's Little League trophies.

The Service personnel got busy, saving what they could, carrying the family's possessions to a safe, dry garage in the backyard, where it would wait for the Snyders to rebuild. What could not be saved, they loaded into big black trash bags and hauled them to the curb.

"Thanks a ton," Snyder told the crew. "I don't know how we would have done it without you." The sun got hotter. The trips got repetitious. The day had just started.

"It's the right thing to do"

Everglades City is a tiny town of 400-plus, south of Naples on the southern Gulf coast of Florida. Irma blasted through here on Sunday, Sept. 10, with 140 mph winds and a storm surge that has been reported between six and 10 feet high. According to news reports, Everglades City was one of the places that suffered the most from Irma's fury; most of the town was underwater at one point. Then the storm surge receded, and left the residents with the mother of all clean-up projects. Actually, not all that much blew away in Hurricane Irma. Instead, Irma made the residents do the work themselves, hauling their ruined possessions out into their front yards and dumping them next to the street.

Even before Irma hit, the Service had set up an Incident Command team, a structure used to more effectively coordinate efforts in an emergency, and decided to send three task forces to Florida as soon as it was safe. Service coordinator David McCaghren helped assemble the Central Louisiana Task Force; the majority of its 14 members hail from that state. They mustered at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, then set off in a convoy for south Florida, hauling lots of chainsaws and heavy equipment. They got to Everglades City, more than 750 miles away, on Friday, Sept. 15, and got to work.

"Whole neighborhoods were trashed," said McCaghren. "Incident Command said we've got to help these people. We've got all these assets, let's put them to work for the public. "It's the right thing to do," he said.

Kayla Kimmel's day job is as a biologist in the Service's Baton Rouge, Louisiana, conservation office. She volunteered to join the task force, and is the only woman working alongside 13 men.

"We were in this situation a year ago in Baton Rouge," she said. "We had what they called a 1,000-year flood, and my mom's house got four and a half feet of water. College friends came down from different states and we cleaned out my mom's house, and then we just continued working, going house to house for eight days."

Like all the task force members, she was spattered from head to toe with the foul-smelling gray mud that is ubiquitous in Everglades City. "I'd like to be able to pay it forward," she continued. "This is a long process, and this is just the start. It's totally overwhelming for these people. But having people come in who can get big parts of it done takes a lot of the stress off."

"I just walked down the street with a chainsaw"

The task force split up into several smaller groups. Their first priority was clearing roads so that residents could move freely.

One narrow road was blocked by a battered old boat that had seen better days even before Irma. The wall of water had lifted it out of a nearby yard and deposited it in the middle of a road.

"We were gonna just push it off the road to open the road, but the guy had some attachment to that boat and asked if we could put it on its trailer, so myself, Rod Cobb and John Dickson took a little time and loaded it onto his trailer for him," said Chris Nothstine, a supervisory forestry technician at Sandhill Crane NWR. "It meant a lot to him."

Nothstine has had a busy summer. He was deployed in Utah for two weeks fighting the Western wildfires in a separate Incident Command. He returned home for one week, then left for a two-week stint in Florida.

"When we finished up with that street, pushing debris out of the road," he continued, "we met a guy named Chris Richards, whose family had stayed on the island during the storm. We followed him to his house and his whole family was out there working. We started taking a lot of the work off them that they had been doing for three, four, five days. "When they saw they had people to help, his wife went straight over to the neighbors' house and started helping them. When we finished with Chris's house, we went over to the neighbors' house where his wife was working and started helping them. We took a tree off a shed.

"At one point," he added, matter-of-factly, "I just walked down the street with a chainsaw, cutting down trees that were leaning on houses or blocking roads. The big thing is just being out here. Three people on a crew can go a long way, doing outreach."

Another group of task force members headed to Big Cypress National Preserve in Ochopee, Florida, a few miles from Everglades City. The U.S. National Park Service manages Big Cypress, and some buildings there had suffered wind damage to their roofs. A crew of four Fish and Wildlife staffers nailed down tarps on three buildings to protect the roofs. It was hot work, but at least there was no gray mud. "They're just amazing, covered in dirt"

"This community has deep roots; it's more than 100 years old, which is amazing in Florida, where everything is so new," said Jim Ragusa, principal of Everglades City School, which

educates pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in one building. “Many of these people, their great-grandparents and grandparents grew up here.”

The school was already the center of this community in many ways, and Ragusa has made it more so, turning the cafeteria into a staging area to store supplies and a free lunch program for first responders and anyone else who just needs a free lunch. He takes his turn grilling hot dogs and hamburgers along with his many volunteers, but spends a lot of time on his cell phone managing disaster response logistics by the seat of his pants.

“The Fish and Wildlife people have just been tremendous,” he said. “They’ve been working their butts off. They’re just amazing, covered in dirt, busting their ass.”

As he was speaking, the Central Louisiana Task Force, most of them covered in slimy gray mud, lined up for hot dogs and hamburgers, apples and bottles of ice-cold Gatorade. Volunteers greeted them and thanked them. “When I ate lunch with the crew,” task force leader McCaghren said, “they were grinning. I told them, ‘It’s a good feeling, helping like this, isn’t it? There ain’t nothing like it.’”

“We’re gonna get you back in shape”

As the Service personnel continued to salvage what they could from Billy Snyder’s little turquoise bungalow, he paused for a minute.

“Three generations of people have lived in this house. This house has been passed around,” he reflected. “But I think it’s run its course.” When Irma was approaching, Snyder, a biologist with the U.S. National Park Service, and his wife Shannon took their sons Henry, 9, and Jack, 7, and evacuated to Enterprise, Alabama.

“When we went to leave, we explained to them why we were leaving,” he said. “We showed them the television. Let them express their feelings. There was no crying, no fussing. We are not feeling sorry for ourselves. We are counting our blessings and consider ourselves extremely fortunate. Nobody died.

“The real story is the way the townsfolk have come together and really pulled together to help one another,” he continued.

“And how the Fish and Wildlife Service just rolled up out of nowhere and said. ‘Hey, we’re gonna get you back in shape.’ ”

By Sunday morning, the task force had new orders. Incident Command wanted them to take their heavy equipment to the Florida Keys, where it was needed. They were on the road before sunrise. Pretty much all of them took a little gray mud with them.

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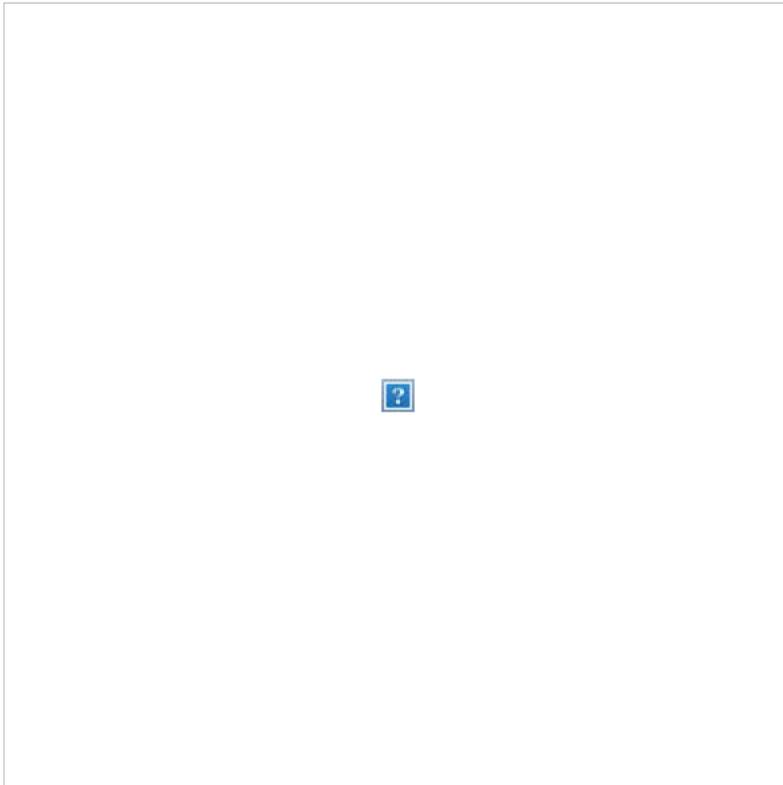
Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: "Scaramucci's wife files for divorce, according to the New York Post" Moment
Date: Friday, July 28, 2017 7:46:04 PM



What's happening

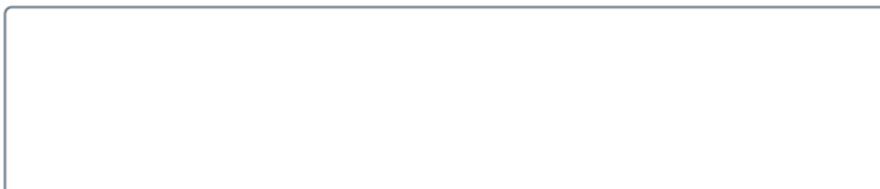


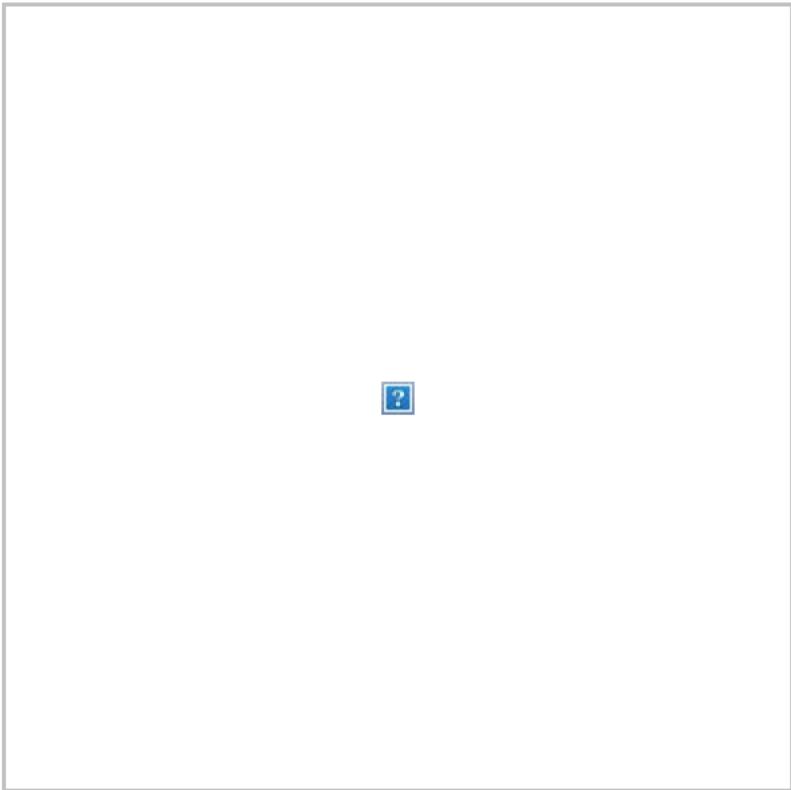
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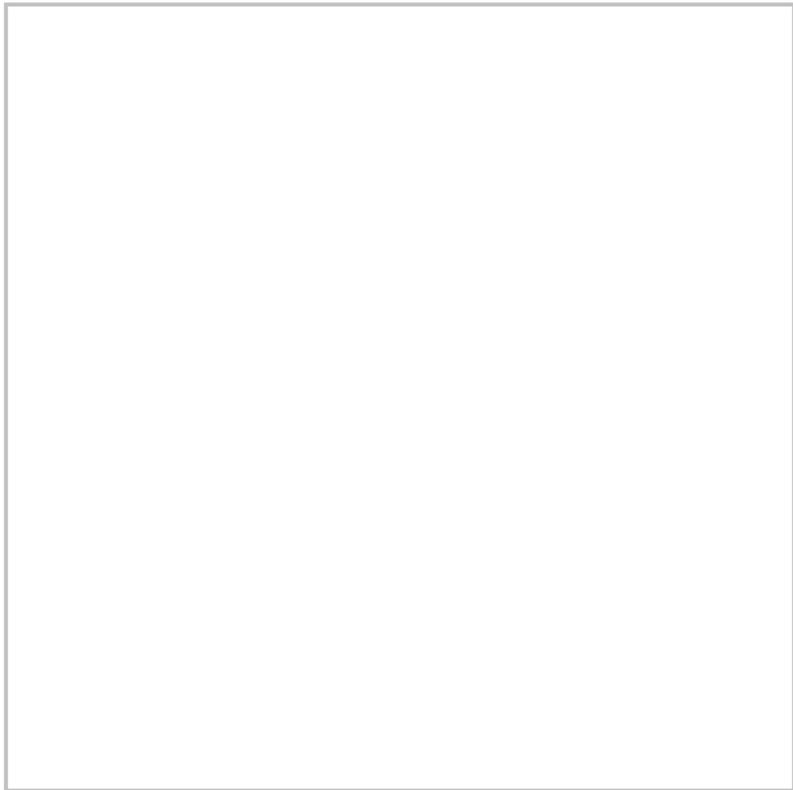
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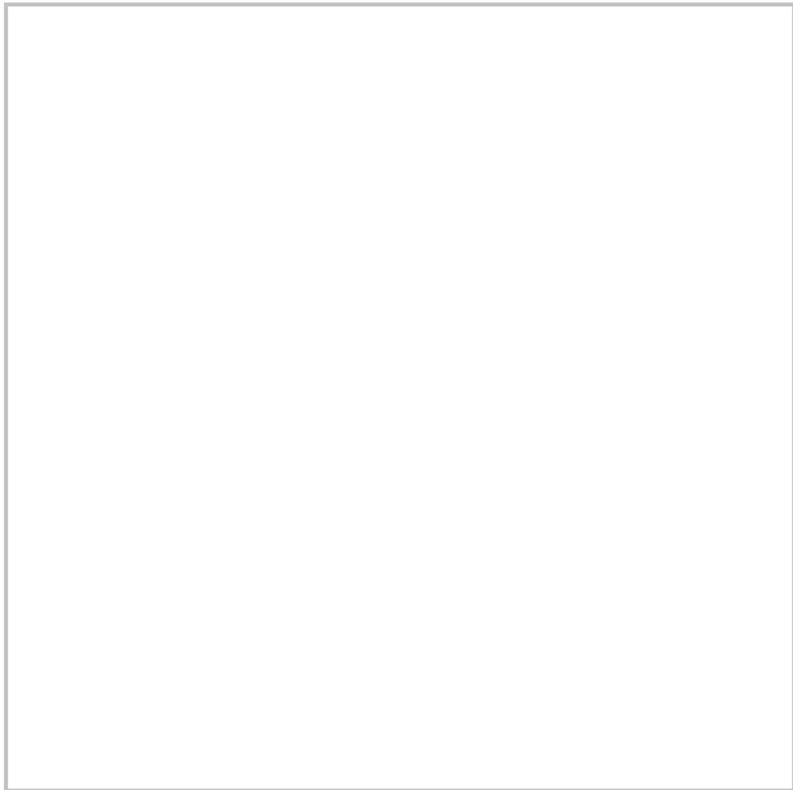
Surprise! Your iPhone knows all the words to Bohemian Rhapsody

Cool · 4 hours ago

Siri is a huge Queen fan. She just needs a little prompting.

[Go to Moment](#)





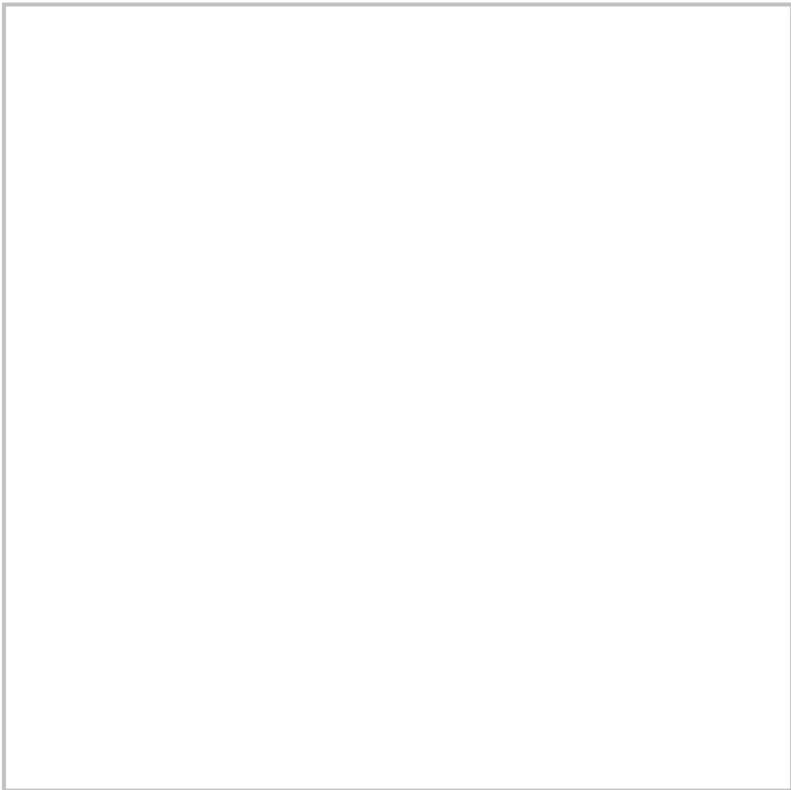
Do ... do the Fox & Friends hosts know how insurance works?

WTF · 3 hours ago

Following the rejection of the GOP's skinny repeal, the Fox & Friends crew was flabbergasted at the celebratory respo...

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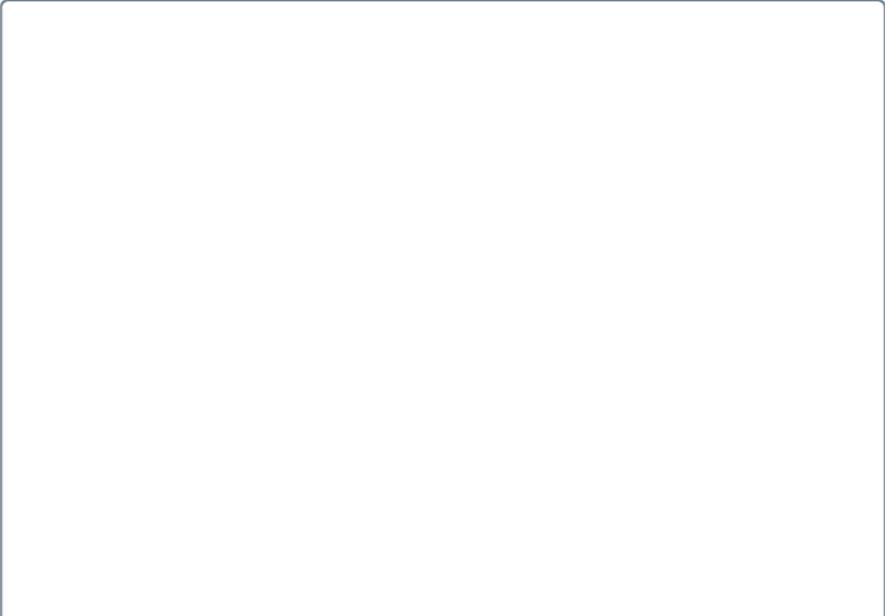


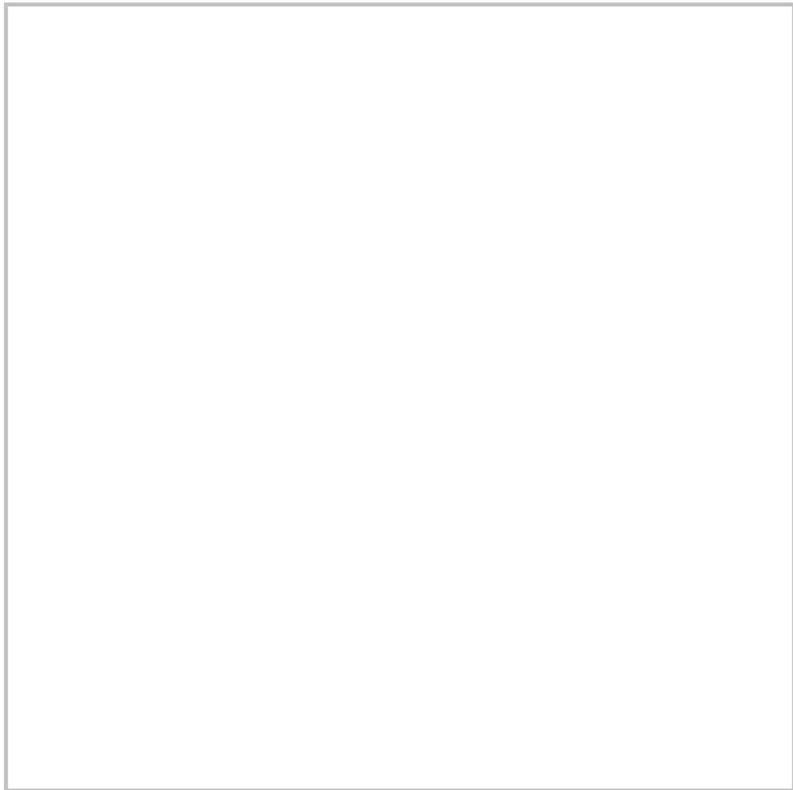
Shaq releases diss record aimed at LaVar Ball

NBA · 1 hour ago

Over JAY-Z's "Blueprint (Momma Loves Me)" instrumental, O'Neal dropped a three-minute assault aimed at the head Big B...

[Go to Moment](#)





What's going on with Colin Kaepernick and the Ravens?

NFL · 1 hour ago

After the Ravens expressed interest in signing Colin Kaepernick, who has been out of the league since protesting soci...

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We sent this email to @DogDayInterior

Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Michael Argo – Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary

Michael Argo is a former U.S. Navy SEAL Captain who served for three decades which included combat during Operation Just Cause in Panama and service in Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq. He served as Commander and Commanding Officer for four separate commands, worked three Joint commands and toured on numerous operational deployments around the world. CAPT Argo played college football at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; he holds a B.A. in Education and an M.S in Geography. More recently, CAPT Argo served as a strategist and planner at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, DC with the KENNEDY Irregular Warfare Center and worked briefly at the Department of Homeland Security in the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office.

Commented [AM*1]: I said it this way so you technically could read it as having both degrees from chapel hill

Commented [AM*2]: Is it CAPT or CAPT.

Commented [AM*3]: Sounds better than "short stint"

INTRODUCTION OF CAPT Michael P. Argo: U.S. NAVY SEAL CAPTAIN RETIRED

CAPTAIN (retired) Michael P. Argo served as a U. S. NAVY SEAL for three decades. He served as the first Commodore of the SEAL's Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven (**NSWG-11**) in San Diego California, as an Action Officer at the NAVY SEAL Headquarters, Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado California, and as the Commanding Officer for three separate Navy Operational Support Centers (NOSCs); CO of NOSC Los Angeles, CO of NOSC Denver and CO of NOSC Hartford.

Commented [AM*4]: Navy or Naval?

OPERATIONALLY, CAPTAIN Argo served as the EXECUTIVE OFFICER and OPERATIONS OFFICER of SEAL TEAM TWO, where he fought in Combat Operations during Operation JUST CAUSE in PANAMA and was awarded the **Combat Action Ribbon**. He also served a period in **Fallujah** Iraq during **Operation Iraqi Freedom**. Throughout his career he has toured on numerous deployments in Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, Korea, South West Asia and Central Asia.

Commented [AM*5]: Not sure what to capitalize

Commented [AM*6]: Not sure if you capitalize Operations here?

Commented [AM*7]: Caps?

Commented [AM*8]: Is this meant to be bold?

Commented [AM*9]: Bold?

Commented [AM*10]: Tell me if tour is an appropriate use

Commented [AM*11]: Capitalized?

Additionally, CAPT Argo served as both a Pilot and Navigator of a NAVY SEAL Mini-submarine, known as a SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV), where he conducted numerous s launch and recovery operations off a Nuclear Submarine.

EARLIER in his Career:

Commented [AM*12]: Caps?

-CAPTAIN (Ret) Argo graduated, as a collegiate athlete, from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Commented [AM*13]: Added that if you want it

-He received his NAVY commissioned from Navy ROTC.

Commented [AM*14]: Received what?

-His first tour was onboard a Navy Destroyer, the USS John King (DDG-3), where he served as First Lieutenant, Legal Officer and Electrical Officer.

-He graduated from Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL School Class training with Class 134

-He deployed to Haiti during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY as the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Operations Officer

-He did a tour at Special Boat Unit Twenty (SBU-20) in Little Creek VA.

CAPT Argo's most profound accomplishments have been graduating from BUDs, establishing Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven, standing up SEAL Teams SEVENTEEN and EIGHTEEN, and convincing his beautiful wife Margot to marry him and share their lives with *four* daughters!

Today, CAPT Argo serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Department of Interior under TEAMMATE Secretary Ryan Zinke, CAPT Argo is an active Board member of the SEAL FAMILY FOUNDATION and Member of the UDT/SEAL Association.

Commented [AM*15]: Caps?

SHORT SUMMARY SHORT

CAPT (Ret) Michael Argo has served as the Commander and Commanding Officer for four separate commands, worked in three Joint Commands (Theater Special Operation Command –TSOC's) and has toured on numerous deployments in Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, Korea, South West Asia and Central Asia. He deployed to Haiti during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY as the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Operations Officer.

CAPT Argo severed at SEAL TEAM TWO, SEAL DELIVERY TEAM TWO (SDV), SPECIAL BOAT TEAM TWENTY as Executive Officer, Operations Office, Training Officer and Platoon Commander, respectively. He served as a Pilot and Navigator for a SEAL min-sub, Delivery Vehicle (SDV) at SDV TEAM TWO and conducted numerous s launch and recovery operations off a Nuclear Submarine.

Commented [AM*16]: Are these all Caps?

Commented [AM*17]: Double check for Caps here

His Command Tours include: Commander of Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven (NSWG-11), Commanding Officer of Navy Operation Support Center Los Angeles (NOSC-LA), Navy and Marine Corps Center, Denver and Navy and Marine Corps Center, Hartford.

CAPT (Ret) Argo had a successful Naval career and has severed in **Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)**. He served in **Desert Shield and Desert Storm** and fought in Operation "**Just Cause**" in Panama with SEAL TEAM TWO where he was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon.

CAPT (Ret) Argo has a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and a Masters of Geography from Central Connecticut State University in Hartford Connecticut.

CAPT Argo is married to the former Margaret Lee Davis of Raleigh North Carolina, Who graduated from Salem College in NC and teaches Special Education for Fairfax Count Public School.

CAPTAIN and Margo Argo have four beautiful daughters who have graduated from University of Californian Berkeley, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara and One still in school at Sonoma State University just north of San Francisco CA.

And the same Navy SEAL Slogan hold true with these four girls. "The only easy day was yesterday."

Today, CAPT Argo serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Department of Interior under TEAMMATE Secretary Ryan Zinke, CAPT Argo is an active Board member of the SEAL FAMILY FOUNDATION and Member of the UDT/SEAL Association.

Commented [AM*18]: Caps?

From: nancy_dipaolo@doioig.gov
To: [Downey Magallanes](#); [Scott Hommel](#); [April Slayton](#); [Casey Hammond](#); [Douglas Domenech](#); [Edward Keable](#); [Heather Swift](#); [James Cason](#); [Micah Chambers](#); [Pamela Barkin](#); [Paul Ross](#); [Rich Myers](#); [Thomas Crosson](#); [Virginia Johnson](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: 2 summaries & SAR to Hill and public
Date: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 5:52:47 PM
Attachments: [Summary USBRRetaliatiUnfounded Public.pdf](#)
[Summary QuestionableTravelNPSSuperintendent Public.pdf](#)
[SAR April2017.pdf](#)

Attached are 2 summaries of investigations that just went to Congress and will be posted publicly on doioig.gov Thursday 6/1. In each case the complaints were unfounded.

Separately, our Semi-Annual Report to Congress was transmitted, and will also be posted tomorrow.

Nancy K. DiPaolo
Director, External Affairs
Office of the Inspector General
Department of the Interior
202.208.4357
(c) 202.805.4701



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: May 30, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

ANCHORAGE--Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska affairs. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

"A lifelong Alaskan, Steve is Wackowski is especially suited to advise me on matters in the state because of his exemplary military service; extensive experience with public policy for U.S. senators from Alaska; and work in the private sector with fish, wildlife, and oil and gas operations," said Secretary Zinke. "His background is invaluable as we focus on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's management including Denali and other crown jewels of the national park and wildlife refuge systems." Zinke just returned from a tour of Denali.

Commented [MJF1]: Current location?

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

Commented [MJF2]: Did he also go to UC Berkeley or just to the ROTC there while at St. Mary's College?

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce's* "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

Commented [MJF3]: Red fox Labrador?

DRAFT



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: May 30, 2017

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###

Commented [MJF2]: Red fox Labrador?

Formatted: Centered

NATIONAL PETROLEUM COUNCIL

1625 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 393-6100 Fax: (202) 331-8539

August 18, 2017

The Honorable Ryan K. Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

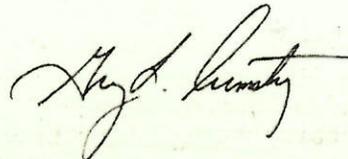
On behalf of the officers and members of the National Petroleum Council, I extend to you a cordial invitation to a reception on Monday, September 25, 2017. The reception will be held in the Thomas Jefferson Room of The Hay Adams, 800 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m.

The reception is being held in conjunction with the 127th meeting of the Council, which will begin at 3:00 p.m. in the George Washington Room of The Hay Adams. The meeting agenda will include remarks by the Honorable Rick Perry, Secretary of Energy.

The National Petroleum Council is a federal advisory committee to the Secretary of Energy and has contributed many valuable studies to successive administrations since being established at President Truman's request in 1946. The approximately 200 members, mostly chief executive officers of oil, natural gas, power, and related companies, as well as representatives from academic, public interest, and other outside organizations, are appointed by the Secretary of Energy.

The National Petroleum Council members welcome the opportunity to visit with you informally during the reception. I hope that your schedule will permit you to join us on September 25. Please notify Marshall Nichols, Executive Director of the Council, of your attendance plans. If you wish to use e-mail, you may respond to: rsvp@npc.org.

Sincerely,



Greg L. Armstrong
Acting Chair

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

OFFICE OF THE

2017 AUG 22 PM 12:04

RECEIVED

Ryan K. Zinke is the 52nd United States Secretary of the Interior. Secretary Zinke served 23 years in the Navy SEALs from 1986 through 2002, retiring with the rank of Commander. Prior to accepting a position in President Donald Trump's cabinet, Secretary Zinke represented Montana as a Congressman from the state's at-large district, holding office from 2015 to 2017 and earning the unique distinction of being the first-ever Navy SEAL to be elected to the U.S. Congress. He also served in the Montana State Senate, representing the 2nd district.

A member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Secretary is a Montana native, having grown up in Whitefish, MT. Some of his earliest childhood memories are the times he spent at Glacier National Park. He is an avid hunter. Secretary Zinke attended college at the University of Oregon, where he played Division I football and graduated with a degree in Geology. He has also obtained an M.B.A. and an M.S. degree from National University and the University of San Diego, respectively.

Given the prevalence of Native American tribes in Montana, the Secretary possesses a deep understanding of tribal issues. In the U.S. House of Representatives, Secretary Zinke served on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee, championing legislation that would honor our military and veterans, reform forest management, and protect the rights of Native Americans. Secretary Zinke is an admirer of President Theodore Roosevelt, and he believes in the importance of a multiple-use philosophy for our public lands. He is a proponent of American energy dominance.

Secretary Zinke is married to Lola Zinke. They have three children: Jennifer, Wolfgang, and Konrad.

Ryan Zinke is the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A Montana native, the Secretary is a former Navy SEAL Commander. He represented Montana's at-large district in the U.S. Congress.

Hi, I'm Secretary Ryan Zinke, here with my wife Lolita and the Ambassador to Happiness: Ragnar.

The holiday season in America is about faith, family, and tradition. As the New Year approaches, we come together to celebrate our blessings with the ones we love.

To our great members of the Department of the Interior, it is my honor to wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a happy holidays.

However you celebrate, I encourage all of you to spend time with those nearest to your heart. The American family is what makes our Nation great – and it is other traditions of giving, love, and community that will keep us strong.

We have the privilege of being able to enjoy the holidays in peace at home, and we give thanks for the brave sacrifice of our troops and military families.

As a retired Navy SEAL Commander whose daughter was a Navy diver, I would ask that you keep these military families in your hearts and prayers this holiday season.

Please be sure to stay safe during the holidays and I hope you enjoy it on some of our beautiful public lands.

From my family to yours: may God bless you this holiday season, and may God bless the United States of America.

LOLA (in Spanish)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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HON. WALTER B. JONES
Honorary Vice Chair
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MIKE MITCHELL
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JOHN KERN
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HARRISON WADSWORTH, IV

Jefferson Islands Club
Citizen of the Year Awardees

2016 Kevin Brady
 2015 Cory Gardner/Martin Heinrich
 2014 Joe Manchin III / Bill Shuster
 2013 Dave Camp
 2012 Ron Wyden/ Paul Ryan
 2011 Saxby Chambliss/Mark Warner
 2010 Lisa Murkowski
 2009 Mary Landrieu/James L. Jones, Jr.
 2008 Howard Coble/Collin Peterson
 2007 Steny H. Hoyer
 2006 Pete Domenici/Jeff Bingaman
 2005 Duncan Hunter
 2004 Joe Barton
 2003 James M. Inhofe
 2002 Ted Stevens
 2001 W.J. (Billy) Tauzin
 2000 J. Dennis Hastert
 1999 John Breaux/Thad Cochran
 1998 John Dingell
 1997 Trent Lott
 1996 Bill Emerson
 1995 Don Young
 1994 Robert C. Byrd
 1993 Jack Brooks
 1991 Jamie Whitten
 1990 Dick Cheney
 1989 Dan Rostenkowski
 1987 Dante Fascell
 1986 Claude Pepper
 1985 Jim Wright
 1984 John Tower

WASHINGTON OFFICE DIRECTOR
 CHERYL LUCZKO
 703-464-7072
 cheryl@jeffersonislandsclub.com

CLUB MANAGER
 COLLEEN T. WISE
 37434 RIVER SPRINGS ROAD
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 301-769-2141

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The Jefferson Islands Club

1064 Rustling Oaks Drive, Millersville, MD 21108
 www.jeffersonislandsclub.org

OBJECTS
 "To support, defend, and advance the fundamental principles of government enunciated by Thomas Jefferson.
 "To provide a Club House with suitable surroundings and comforts where members may assemble, discuss and promote Jeffersonian philosophies, to the end they may become controlling in Federal and State Governments."

June 19, 2017

Secretary Ryan Zinke
 1849 C. Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

Each year, the Jefferson Islands Club presents its Citizen of the Year Award to legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service and contributions in the spirit of America's founding fathers.

The Jefferson Islands Club Board of Directors has nominated you as the 2017 Citizen of the Year in recognition of your leadership and public service as a U.S. Navy Seal Officer, as a member of Congress, and now as the Secretary of the Interior.

The award ceremony can be scheduled, based on your convenience, for July 25 or July 26, 2017 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Siemens Corporation, 300 New Jersey Avenue NW, Rooftop Terrace, Washington, D.C., 20001. If neither date and time are convenient, please let us know, and we will work to adjust the timing to accommodate your busy schedule.

Our Club was founded in 1931, led by Senators Key Pitman (NV), Harry Hawes (MO), and Joseph Robinson (AR) along with charter member Franklin Roosevelt, who was then the Governor of New York. Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senator Jack Kennedy were also members and President Truman visited the club often.

Today, our mission is to support bipartisanship solutions for a better America and to promote conservation of the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. The funds raised at the reception will support conservation projects on the Club's island, located in St. Mary's County, Maryland. It is a critical ecological buffer island and host to treasured wildlife in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Jefferson Islands Club is a Section 501(c)(7) tax exempt and nonprofit organization.

The previous award recipients are listed on this letterhead and include: Speaker Paul D. Ryan, Minority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, Rep. Kevin Brady, Senator Cory Gardner, Rep. Martin Heinrich, Rep. Dave Camp, Senator Ron Wyden, Senators Saxby Chambliss, Mark Warner, etc. Information about the Club can be found at www.jeffersonislandsclub.com.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Bill Baugh
 President

DRAFT EVENT FACT SHEET (6-17-2017)

Sixth Annual Tribute to Veterans and Veterans Serving in Congress

June 27, 2017

WHAT: Sixth Annual Bipartisan Sixth Annual Tribute to Veterans and Veterans in Congress.

WHEN: Tuesday, June 27, 2017, from approximately 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

WHERE: The Capitol Hill Club, Eisenhower Room (1st Floor), 300 First Street SE. Washington, D.C. 20003. Tel: 202.484.4790.

EMCEE: [Jennifer Griffin](#), National Security Correspondent for FOX News Channel (FNC) and is based out of the Washington D.C. bureau. She joined FNC in October 1999 as a Jerusalem-based correspondent – Invited (awaiting confirmation).

INVITED GUESTS: Partial list includes the following:

- U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke (first Navy Seal in the Cabinet and past participant) - Invited.
- Father Patrick J. Conroy, Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives - Tentative
- Members of the House and Senate leadership, Armed Services Committees and Veterans Affairs Committees.
- Approximately 20-30 Members and Senators are expected to attend, including U.S. Congressman Mike Coffman (CO), the only member who served in the U.S. Army and Marines, and a veteran of the Persian Gulf War and Iraq War. Rep. Coffman, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee, is confirmed; others pending.
- Colonel James Hickey (USAF-retired) and senior advisor to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. Colonel Hickey was a part of the elite group that captured Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.
- The Honorable James Gilmore, former Governor of Virginia and chairman of the Congressionally-appointed “Gilmore Commission”
- Christine “CJ” Johnson, who works at the U.S. Department of State as a co-manager of the program serving veterans with higher education who seek to continue service in foreign affairs, are confirmed to attend.
- First Class Petty Officer, Fame J. Academia, served his country for 28 years starting with the Merchant Marines towards the end of World War II. His family heroically helped American pilots evade Japanese capture in the Philippines. He joined the U.S. Navy and served in the Korean War. He was chosen to serve as a personal aide to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, and was involved with the Vietnam War and Cuban Missile Crisis. He will lead the Pledge of Alliance.
- Tom Rogan, columnist, and other editors and reporters from The Washington Examiner, are confirmed.

-

BACKGROUND: This year’s bipartisan Sixth Annual Tribute to Veterans and Veterans in Congress will recognize all members of Congress who have served in the U.S. military and bring unique and vital understanding of the complex challenges facing our country in the 21st century. There will be a strong theme of “service” throughout the program – recognizing all who serve their country, in elected office, in the U.S. military, and through other means.

According to a compilation of lists by CQ Roll Call, the House has 81 veterans (including 3 female Members); the Senate has 20 veterans, including 1 woman.^[1] These Members served in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, as well as during times of peace.^[2] Many have served, and a few are still serving, in the reserves and the National Guard. All of the female veterans are combat veterans.

FORMAT: Reception to begin at 6pm, followed by formal program at approx. 6:45 p.m. which will include members of Congress, a recognition of hosts and special guests, and a performance by world-renowned tenor Anthony Kearns (two brief sets with intermission). A meet-and-greet will follow the performance

DRAFT EVENT TIMELINE (6 p.m.to 8 p.m.)

- Tasting of premium whiskies / wine/ beer reception
- Networking Reception followed by brief program
- Presentation of the Flag (approx. 6:45 pm).
- Pledge of Allegiance
- National Anthem
- Recognition of Military Veterans serving in the U.S. Congress including U.S. Rep. Michael Coffman (CO, Member of the House Armed Services Committee, others TBA.)
- FOX News National Security Correspondent Jennifer Griffin as Master of Ceremonies (invited)
- Recognition of military organizations such as American Humane Association represented by veteran and his war dog who will discuss the life-saving power of military and service dogs.
- Performance by World-renowned Tenor Anthony Kearns
- Meet and Greet following program (Coffee and desserts)

HOSPITALITY: A selection of premium whiskies will be provided courtesy of Beam Suntory. Beer to be provided by Beer Institute and California Chardonnays from Wine Institute. Event co-hosted by The Congressional Institute, James Carey Foundation, Student Veterans of America, and others, with support from The American Humane Association.

ENTERTAINMENT: Brief performance by Anthony Kearns, who recently sang for Pope Francis during his first historic visit to the U.S., and also before President Obama, Speaker Boehner, and

100 bipartisan members of Congress, as during the 2014 National Memorial Day Concert. Anthony Kearns sang last year at the 100th anniversary of Ireland's Easter Rising (which led to Ireland's independence). In honor of the anniversary, Kearns performed at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts on May 17 and May 23, 2016. Recently he sang at the September 11, 2001 National Memorial and Museum in New York as the guest of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and at the 50th anniversary of President John F Kennedy's trip to Ireland in 1963.

TICKETS: This is a ticketed event. Limited tickets available through Eventbrite. (Tickets are \$100+ per person; \$50 for Young Professionals; Voluntary Contribution for active or retire military.) Sponsors will receive complimentary tickets in addition to other benefits. Read more: <https://2017june27veterantribute.eventbrite.com>

SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES: (Custom packages available)

- Presenting Sponsor: \$25,000
- Platinum Sponsor: \$10,000+
- Gold Sponsor: \$7,500+
- Silver Sponsor: \$5,000+
- Bronze Sponsor: \$2,500+
- Host Committee Friend: \$1,500+

PARKING/TRANSPORTATION: Capitol South Metro / Valet (\$24) and street parking available.

ATTIRE: Business attire.

SET-UP: Mixed seating – theater-style seating and scattered cocktail-style seating. Approximately 150-200 guests are expected.

CHARITY PARTNER: American Humane Association, the country's first national humane organization, is now celebrating 100 years of working with the U.S. military. Their work with the armed forces began in 1916 when the U.S. Secretary of War asked them to care for the millions of war horses being wounded on the battlefield of Europe. Following World War II. American Humane Association helped pioneer the use of animal therapy to aid veterans returning to civilian life. Today, the organization operates a wide array of programs and initiatives assisting America's active-duty military, veterans, military families, and military animals – helping and reuniting military K-9 teams, providing returning veterans with service dogs, and bringing comfort and healing to the children of military families. For more information, please visit www.americanhumane.org/military.

NWX Dept Of Interior Conference Call

CONFERENCE DETAILS:

LEADER: Mr Jason Funes
 DATE/TIME: Dec 5 2017 @ 03:24 PM CT
 CONFIRMATION #: 6387929

ATTENDEE PROVIDED			SYSTEM CAPTURED
NAME		Organization	CALLED FROM
SPEAKERS			
1 Jason	Funes		(b) (6)
PARTICIPANTS			
2 Acee	Agoyo	Indianz.com	
3 Tom	Albano	CBS News	
4 Diana	Alba-Soular	Las Cruces Sun News	
5 Damon	Arthur	Record Search Light	
6 Natalie	Baptiste	Mother Jones	
7 Rocky	Barker	Idaho Statesmen	
8 Jeremy	Barnum	National Park Service	
9 Carol	Batchelor	KBGE Radio Station	
10 Madelyn	Beck	Inside Energy	
11 Lola	Bird	Borough of Land Management	
12 Nathan	Blevins	Denver Post	
13 Henry	Brean	Las Vegas Review Journal	
14 Roz	Brown	Public News Service	
15 Hillary	Brown	KOBI TV	
16 Jes	Burns	OR Public Broadcasting	
17 Thomas	Burr	Salt Lake Tribune	
18 Timothy	Cama	The Hill	
19 Jim	Carlton	The Wall Street Journal	
20 Annette	Cary	Tri-City Herald	
21 Rob	Chaney	Missoulian Newspaper	

22 Peter	Christian	KGBO Radio
23 Michael	Coleman	Albuquerque Journal
24 David	Coles	PBS News Hour on Public TV
25 Scott	Condon	Aspen Times Newspaper
26 Rachel	Crowspreadingwings	KSBB
27 Brian	Dabbs	National Journal
28 Matthew	Daly	Assisoated Press
29 Nedra	Darling	DOI
30 Sarah	Dettmer	Great Falls Triubune
31 Jen	DLouhy	Bloomberg
32 Stephanie	Ebbs	ABC News
33 Juliet	Eilperin	Washington Post
34 Darryl	Fears	The Washington Post
35 Jon	Ford	Fox News
36 Eli	Francovich	The Spokesman Review
37 Ben	Geman	Axios
38 Miranda	Green	CNN
39 Mark	Hand	Think Progress
40 Gary	Harmon	The Grand Junction CO Sentinel Newspaper
41 Ryan	Heinsius	KNAU AZ Public Radio
42 Devin	Henery	Call The Hill
43 Alex	Hinson	Department of Interior
44 Steve	Jess	Arizona Public Media
45 Blake	Koemans	ABC Fox Montana
46 Gregory	Korte	USA Today
47 Kris	Kuchar	Active Interest Media
48 Casey	Kuhn	KJZZ
49 Kaloryn	Lochhead	San Francisco Chronicle
50 Katy	Locke	Navajo Hopi Observer
51 Lydia	Lohrer	Detroit Free Press
52 Brian	Maffly	Salt Lake Tribune
53 Diane	Maggipinto	KUER Radio
54 Jason	Mark	Sierra Magazine
55 Brady	McCombs	Associated Press

(b) (6)

56 Roger	McDonough	KCPW 88.3
57 Craig	Miller	KOED
58 Kevin	Miller	Portland Press Herald
59 Elizabeth	Miller	The Santa Fe Reporter
60 Jim	Mimiaga	Cortez Journal
61 Elvina	Nawaguna	Congressional Quarterly
62 Nathan	Oneal	KSNV TV
63 Andrew	Oxford	Santa Fe New Mexican
64 Laura	Paskus	NM Political Report
65 Weston	Phippen	Outside Magazine
66 Leroy	Polk	KTUU Chanel 2 News in Anchorage Alaska
67 Kurt	Repanshek	National Parks Traveler
68 Shannon	Rice	C-Span
69 Lisa	Roche	Deseret News
70 Paul	Rogers	San Jose Mercury News
71 Paul	Ross	Department of The Interior
72 Ian	Russell	KLAS Las Vegas
73 Nick	Sambides	The Bangor Daily News
74 Debra	Saunders	Las Vegas Review Journal
75 Keith	Schneider	Los Angeles Times
76 Tristan	Scott	Flathead Beacon
77 Elizabeth	Shogren	High Country News
78 Kirk	Siegler	NPR News
79 Polly	Stryker	KOED in San Francisco
80 Morgan	Sturdivant	WABI TV5
81 Ray	Taylor	ABC News
82 Andrew	Theen	Oregonian
83 Tom	Towbridge	KSFR Santa Fe Public Radio
84 Julie	Turkewitz	The NY Times
85 Megan	Verlee	CO Public Radio
86 Valerie	Volcovici	Reuters
87 Kathy	Walker	KOA Denver
88 Greg	Wallace	CNN
89 Erica	Walz	The Insider

(b) (6)

90 Dennis
91 Kate
92 Jennifer

Webb
Whittle
Yachmin

Grand Junction Sentinel Newspaper
ABC Fox MT
E&E News

(b) (6)

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#); [Katharine MacGregor](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#); [Downey Magallanes](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Russell Roddy](#)
Subject: A Bundy Wife
Date: Sunday, July 30, 2017 8:43:28 PM

Came up to me at the house (just now) who is hosting the media avail in a few min and unknown to me recorded our conversation. She was crying and talking about how her husband is in jail 10 miles from here and how dare the Secretary not visit the families. She told me about the hardship their family endured and I was empathetic and said I can't imagine what they have been through but did not elaborate. She asked to meet with the Sec and I told her I was in charge of the media avail only but he did not have time. I also said that even if he wanted to, he could not do anything since this is in the courts now. I did more listening than talking but wanted to let you know. Rusty escorted her off the property because the owner of the land asked her to leave. They know each other and did not have a pleasant exchange. Media were not around to hear this but don't know who saw.

Just wanted to let you know.
Thanks,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: daniel.jorjani@ios.doi.gov; dwbernhardt@ios.doi.gov; Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov
Subject: A sudden change in Ryan Zinke's travel plans cost taxpayers nearly \$2,000, documents show - The Washington Post
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 6:00:40 PM

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/12/11/a-sudden-change-in-ryan-zinkes-travel-plans-cost-taxpayers-nearly-2000-documents-show/?utm_term=.f234cf13e1de

A sudden change in Ryan Zinke's travel plans cost taxpayers nearly \$2,000, documents show



Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke attends a November event at the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's decision in April to change his travel plans for a fact-finding trip to Channel Islands National Park in California [added nearly \\$2,000](#) in costs when he left from Santa Barbara, Calif., where his wife owns a second home, according to emails sent among Interior Department officials.

The documents, obtained by the advocacy group Western Values Project under the Freedom of Information Act, show the extent to which National Park Service staff had to rearrange transportation to accommodate Zinke. The two-day trip — which included Zinke's wife, Lolita, as well as her aunt, Beatrice Walder — was originally scheduled to depart out of Ventura Harbor aboard a Park Service vessel, the Ocean Ranger.

It is unclear what prompted the change in plans for the April 17-18 trip. The Zinkes had just spent the weekend in Santa Barbara and decided to attend an evening town hall event there on the 17th that the conservative group Young America's Foundation hosted.

Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall is probing several aspects of Zinke's travel, including his trips to political gatherings and the extent to which his wife reimbursed the government for costs stemming from her attendance on multiple journeys. In a memo last month, Kendall warned the secretary and his aides that they needed to provide documentation to "distinguish between personal, political and official travel" and that management of his trips had been "deficient."

Interior press secretary Heather Swift said in an email Monday that the visit "was part of a multi-day visit" to department sites from Sacramento south to the Channel Islands. Zinke always planned to meet with the team at the national park, "and the office of scheduling reached out to the superintendent's office as soon as it was clear when he could go."

For the boat, Swift added, the Zinkes paid via check for her fare and her aunt's fare. "No costs were incurred due to Mrs. Zinke's presence."

Still, the emails chronicle how costs rose after Zinke's staff stressed he wanted to go in and out of Santa Barbara rather than Ventura.

Russell Galipeau, the Channel Islands superintendent, wrote in [an April 7 email](#) that while he was working with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officials to use a vessel it had in Santa Barbara, "I urge against it." A week later, Galipeau wrote that "to accommodate" Zinke's request, the crew would need to be paid three hours of overtime each, adding \$300, and the government would have to add fuel for an additional eight hours of running time at a price of \$1,440. The group ultimately used the Park Service's boat.

In a phone interview Monday, Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said the fact that government employees had to go to such lengths and that taxpayers incurred a higher bill suggests a broader problem at Interior. "This pattern of behavior is not just a problem for the people who are making the schedule changes," he said. "The influence they're exerting over leadership decisions at Interior is sloppy and ethically deficient."

Swift countered that Saeger's group is "a classic dark money group which is run by current and former Democratic Party members and campaign staff."

Channel Islands National Park is the site of a [major restoration effort](#) undertaken by the Nature Conservancy with the Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to bring back native habitat and endemic species such as the island fox, the island scrub-jay and the Santa Catalina Island ironwood. Thousands of sheep, cattle and feral pigs were killed as part of the effort to eliminate invasive species on the network of eight islands.

Zinke was billed \$142 on April 25 for the travel costs associated with his wife and her aunt, which grew by mid-June to \$152 with late fees. It was paid by the end of June.

The Zinkes were accompanied by Nita Vail, a political supporter of Zinke who had hosted a fundraiser for him in 2014 in Carpinteria, a seaside community about 15 minutes east of Santa Barbara. Vail is a great-granddaughter of the rancher who bought Santa Rosa Island in 1901 and established the Vail & Vickers ranch there. The family, which sold Santa Rosa Island to the federal government for \$30 million in 1986, ran cattle on the island until 1998 and operated a commercial hunting business there until 2011.

The National Parks Conservation Association sued in the mid-1990s to end both ranching and big-game hunting on Santa Rosa, arguing that they were degrading crucial habitat. The Vail family closed its hunting business as part of a settlement in that suit.

After touring Santa Rosa with Vail on April 18, Zinke said he would "like to highlight the significant ranching heritage on the island with a working demonstration ranch," Galipeau said in [an email](#). "At this point it is not clear how this idea will be implemented."

Read more:

[Ryan Zinke's wife played a key role in his official event and travel planning, newly released records show](#)

[Watchdog says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document travel](#)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Anzelmo-Sarles, Jenny
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Shelby Galvin](#)
Subject: access and blankets
Date: Friday, November 24, 2017 1:56:26 PM

Heather,
Adding my colleague Shelby to this note. She can come swing by your office Tuesday or Wednesday to pick up blankets. We will hold them in our on-site office. What room number are you?

We'll also be able to assist with a golf cart escort for the guest we discussed. Please let me know what time he'll arrive. Please have him go to the press check-in tent (its green with an arrowhead on it) across from C st on 17th. After he goes through security we'll be able to escort him and his wife around to their seats.

Thanks,
Jenny

Jenny Anzelmo-Sarles
Spokesperson
National Park Service
National Capital Region

Office: (202) 619-7177
Cell: (307) 690-2355



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA ®

From: American Enterprise Institute
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: AEI This Week: Communism didn't just hurt Communist countries
Date: Saturday, November 25, 2017 7:04:46 AM

 AEI's weekly digest of top commentary and scholarship on the issues that matter most.



Let's restart the adoption movement

Giving and volunteering benefit your health, wealth, and satisfaction — especially when you can see the faces of the people you're helping. Arthur Brooks shares his wife's response: Let's adopt a little girl from China.

[Continue Reading](#)



How much growth can tax reform deliver?

It's a common refrain that cutting taxes will boost economic growth. So we asked Alan Viard, Stan Veuger, and Alex Brill to share their expert opinions on how much tax policy can impact the economy.

[Continue Reading](#)



Communism didn't just hurt Communist countries

This November marks 100 years since the Bolshevik revolution, and too many have already forgotten the crimes of Communism. Sadanand Dhumes points out the damage done to other countries that is also often overlooked.

[Continue Reading](#)



The FCC is reversing the net neutrality order

Here's something to be thankful for: Reversing the net neutrality regulation will result in more innovation, more network investment, more competition, and more



transparency, writes Mark Jamison.

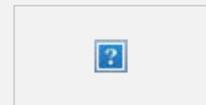


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"Should the fact that some don't want to hear an opinion mean that no one else gets to?"

— AEI President Arthur Brooks
(Read the full piece from 2015 [here](#))



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This message is for: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov | [Manage preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Chevron: Democrats call for investigation of Murkowski call — Tax reformers give up on border adjustment — BLM takes next step on coal lease expansion
Date: Thursday, July 27, 2017 3:29:08 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 07/27/2017 03:27 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

DEMOCRATS DECRY ALLEGED ZINKE THREATS: The top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee is calling for a formal investigation, following news that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke threatened crucial Alaska priorities after Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) voted against health care legislation. Citing the Alaska Dispatch News' [report](#) on the matter, Arizona Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#) said Zinke had crossed the line.

"**Running a department of the federal government** means you serve the American people as a protector of their rights and freedoms," Grijalva said in a statement. "It doesn't mean you serve the president as a bag man for his political vendettas. Threatening to punish your rivals as political blackmail is something we'd see from the Kremlin. Secretary Zinke's willingness to deliver these threats speaks volumes about his ethical standards and demonstrates that Interior's policy positions are up for political grabs, rather than based on science or the public interest."

Ben Lefebvre reports: Democrats on the Natural Resources Committee plan to send a letter today calling for an investigation conducted by possibly the GAO or inspector general's office. But they're not the only ones: Energy and Commerce ranking member [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.) [asked](#) GAO Wednesday to investigate whether Rick Perry or others at DOE violated federal laws relating to lobbying and influencing the public. More [here](#).

MURKOWSKI CARRIES ON: The Alaska senator said in a statement today she will continue to work with President Donald Trump on health care reform, but did not address Zinke, Ben [reports](#). "While I have disagreed with the Senate process so far, the President and I agree that the status quo with health care in our country is not acceptable and that reforms must be made," Murkowski said in a prepared statement. "I continue working to find the best path for what I believe will achieve that — a committee process where we can work issues in the open and ensure Alaskans have the health care choices they want, the affordability they need, and the quality of care they deserve."

Murkowski confirmed to reporters in the Capitol today that Zinke called her Wednesday, but she did not elaborate on the conversation. She also [told E&E News](#) earlier today that Trump had called her Tuesday after she voted against proceeding to legislation to repeal Obamacare. "It was not a very pleasant call," she told the publication.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find safer ways to deliver energy. We're piloting a program that uses drones to monitor tanks and pipelines. Watch the

video: <http://bit.ly/2vFEzbX> **

BYE BYE BORDER TAX: In a joint statement today, the Trump administration and congressional leaders acknowledged that they would abandon plans for a controversial tax on imports, Pro Tax's Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#). House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) had hoped to use the import tax, known as border adjustability, to pay for other tax cuts, but the proposal drew fierce backlash from energy companies, retailers and other import-dependent industries. "While we have debated the pro-growth benefits of border adjustability, we appreciate that there are many unknowns associated with it and have decided to set this policy aside in order to advance tax reform," the statement said. They plan for the legislation to move through the committees this fall.

SENATE CLOSES IN ON SANCTIONS BILL: The Senate is close to delivering Trump his first big rebuke, POLITICO's Elana Schor [reports](#). "The Senate is seeking unanimous consent to pass a bipartisan sanctions bill targeting Russia, Iran and North Korea" as soon as today. "That move would send to Trump's desk a measure that constrains his bid to defrost relations with Moscow by allowing Congress to block any attempt to ease or end penalties against Vladimir Putin's government. ... Senate Foreign Relations Chairman [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) predicted Thursday that passage in his chamber 'would be very soon,' perhaps as soon as later in the day unless any senator on either side of the aisle raises an objection."

DRINKING WATER BILL MOVES FORWARD: The House Energy and Commerce Committee sent a bipartisan drinking water measure to the full House for consideration by voice vote today, but not before it added provisions relating to security and emerging contaminants. Annie Snider reports: "The [amendment](#) to [H.R. 3387 \(115\)](#), the first major update to the Safe Drinking Water Act in two decades, tackles concerns about new or newly understood contaminants appearing in tap water by requiring utilities to monitor for such "emerging contaminants" so long as funding and laboratory capacity is available. The amendment also requires water systems to develop emergency response plans addressing their vulnerability to natural disasters and terrorism, and it creates an EPA grant program to help utilities improve their resiliency." More [here](#).

INTERIOR WELCOMES THREE: Zinke [announced](#) three new hires to his agency today, offering a range of congressional, executive and private sector experience in the Office of the Solicitor, the Office of Communications, and the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs. Richard Goeken has been hired as deputy solicitor for parks and wildlife; Russell Newell makes a return to the department as deputy director of communications; and Blake Deeley, a former aide to West Virginia Rep. [David McKinley](#), will serve as an adviser in the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

BLM TAKES NEXT STEP ON COAL LEASE EXPANSION: The Bureau of Land Management is moving forward with plans to conduct an environmental study that would lead to expansion of a mine in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. A Federal Register [notice](#) to be published tomorrow says BLM will prepare an environmental impact statement on an application to expand the West Antelope mine to cover another 441 million tons of coal. The agency is taking public comment on how to scope the EIS for 60 days, and will host a public meeting Sept. 20 in Wright, Wyo.

SECOND GROUP WANTS INQUIRY INTO PRUITT TRAVEL: A second watchdog group is seeking an investigation into EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's travel habits after the Environmental Integrity Project this week [found](#) Pruitt spent a significant portion of the spring

in his home state of Oklahoma. EIP asked the agency's inspector general to review the matter. Today, another group, American Oversight, [asked](#) the Office of Special Counsel, an independent agency, to look into the matter as well to determine whether any ethics rules were broken or government resources wasted.

LIGHTER CLICK: NBC's Andrea Mitchell appeared on "Late Night with Seth Meyers," where she discussed health care, the secretary of State and the beginning of her career as energy correspondent for NBC. Mitchell discussed what it was like reporting on energy as a woman and the time she tried to report from Three Mile Island. "Well, a very kindly, paternalistic bureau chief, a lovely man, said — when I noticed that, five days in, I was the only correspondent not going in and covering this thing. I went, and said, 'How come I'm the only one not going to Three Mile Island?' And he said, 'Because you are a woman of childbearing age.' And I said, 'Has it occurred to you that men's balls are as vulnerable to radiation as women's ovaries?' I mean, I got there the next day." Watch it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- The future of renewable energy is in Texas, [CBS](#).
- Oil field spills down 17 percent last year, [E&E News](#).
- Growth-starved utilities have found a new way to make money, [Bloomberg](#).
- How Rick Perry could fire Robert Mueller, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- [White House adviser](#) clashes with Mnuchin over tax plan
- Trump, Sessions are joining forces [on immigration push](#)
- Joint Chiefs to troops: "[No modifications](#)" to transgender policy from Trump tweet

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find better and safer ways to deliver energy to America. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping capabilities to monitor Chevron wells, tanks, and miles of pipeline. Watch the video <http://bit.ly/2vFEzbX> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/07/democrats-call-for-investigation-of-murkowski-call-023960>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Democrats demand investigation of 'political blackmail' against Murkowski [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/27/2017 12:44 PM EDT

The top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee said Thursday he will request a formal investigation into whether Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke threatened projects important to Alaska in retribution for Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#)'s vote against health care legislation.

Zinke called Murkowski and fellow Alaska Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#) Wednesday afternoon — a day after Murkowski voted against taking up the bill to repeal Obamacare — to warn them that the administration's support for energy projects in the state are now at risk, Sullivan [told the Alaska Dispatch News](#). The "message was pretty clear," Sullivan said.

Citing that report, Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) said Zinke had crossed the line.

"Running a department of the federal government means you serve the American people as a protector of their rights and freedoms," Grijalva said in a statement. "It doesn't mean you serve the president as a bag man for his political vendettas. Threatening to punish your rivals as political blackmail is something we'd see from the Kremlin. Secretary Zinke's willingness to deliver these threats speaks volumes about his ethical standards and demonstrates that Interior's policy positions are up for political grabs, rather than based on science or the public interest."

Natural Resources Democrats plan to send a letter Thursday calling for an investigation conducted by possibly the GAO or inspector general's office, said committee spokesman Adam Sarvana.

Zinke holds ample sway over the state of Alaska, where the federal government controls 61 percent of the land in the state. Interior is reviewing a multitude of projects tied to Alaska energy development, including a possible opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas drilling and allowing offshore oil drilling in currently off-limits Arctic waters.

Interior also has the final say over whether to allow a road through Alaska's Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to take residents of an isolated village reach a nearby hospital, something Murkowski has pushed for years.

"Even if this road provides health care access to hundreds, which is very much in doubt, Secretary Zinke thinks the price to build it is a vote to deny health care access to millions," Grijalva said.

But Murkowski is not without her own levers of influence over Zinke. She chairs the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over his department, as well as the Appropriations subcommittee in charge of deciding how much money Interior has to spend each year. Wednesday afternoon, the energy committee abruptly postponed a meeting that would have included votes on three Interior nominees.

Zinke's reported phone call came after President Donald Trump tweeted his displeasure with Murkowski's vote. But there are relatively few political consequences Murkowski could face in the near term. She will not be up for reelection again until 2022, and she has previously proved her political mettle in the state — winning a rare write-in victory to be reelected in 2010 after she lost the GOP primary to a Tea Party challenger.

Spokespeople for the Interior Department, Murkowski and Sullivan did not respond to requests for comment. A spokeswoman for House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) declined to comment.

Alaska Oil & Gas Association President Kara Moriarty called the threats "unfortunate."

"As the secretary has said, they want to have American energy dominance, and the only way

to do that is through Alaska," Moriarty told POLITICO. "When the time comes when Alaskan energy projects are in front of Congress, I hope they are considered on their merits and not used as a political chits."

Environmentalists were unsparing in their assessment.

"Ryan Zinke is revealing himself as Trump's hitman. He's now threatening to hold public lands and energy policy hostage over a health care bill. This is the U.S. government, not the Corleone family," Jennifer Rokala, the executive director of the Center for Western Priorities, said in a statement. "Congress and the administration should discuss America's energy and lands policy on the merits, without mob-inspired threats from the Department of the Interior and the White House."

Zinke is not the first member of Trump's Cabinet without a health care portfolio to insert himself into the debate over the Senate's effort to repeal and replace Obamacare. The Energy Department earlier this week posted then deleted a tweet saying it was time to "discard" the law, with a link to an op-ed on the subject from Secretary Rick Perry.

Energy and Commerce ranking member [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.) [asked GAO Wednesday to investigate](#) whether Perry or others at DOE violated federal laws relating to lobbying and influencing the public.

Meanwhile, some Republicans back in Alaska said Murkowski's vote was stirring up trouble for her at home, with state GOP Chairman Tuckerman Babcock saying his party is in "full revolt."

"I think among Republicans it is causing tremendous damage," Babcock said in a phone interview Thursday, citing "a grassroots swell" of comments on Facebook pages for the party, Murkowski and Sullivan. "It's evident to me that the Republicans [in Alaska] are in full revolt over the idea that these promises aren't going to be kept."

He added that Interior's ownership of so much of Alaska makes raises the stakes of any clash with Zinke.

"What the secretary of Interior does will have a major impact on Alaska. He's absolutely vital to moving forward with the development of the coastal plain at ANWR, National Petroleum Reserve on the Western North Slope, building the road from King Cove, the land exchange that Congressman Young has gotten through the House of Representatives," Babcock said. "I'm just hitting the tip of the iceberg on how important a cooperative relationship is with that department."

Jake Lahut contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Murkowski pledges to work with Trump on health care, sidesteps details of Zinke call
[Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/27/2017 02:12 PM EDT

Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) said she will continue to work with President Donald Trump on health care reform but did not address reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke threatened projects in her home state in a public statement today.

"While I have disagreed with the Senate process so far, the President and I agree that the status quo with health care in our country is not acceptable and that reforms must be made," Murkowski said in a prepared statement. "I continue working to find the best path for what I believe will achieve that — a committee process where we can work issues in the open and ensure Alaskans have the health care choices they want, the affordability they need, and the quality of care they deserve."

Murkowski confirmed to reporters in the Capitol today that Zinke called her Wednesday, but she did not elaborate on their conversation. She also [told E&E News](#) earlier today that Trump had called her Tuesday after she voted against proceeding to legislation to repeal Obamacare.

Murkowski and fellow Alaska Republican Senator [Dan Sullivan](#) received calls Wednesday warning them that the administration's support for public lands or energy projects may dwindle after Murkowski's vote Tuesday against taking up a bill to repeal Obamacare. Interior has wide sway over Alaskan energy project because nearly two-thirds of the state consists of federal property. The Alaska Dispatch News [first reported](#) the calls.

House Democrats are [calling for an investigation](#) into the call Zinke made to the Alaskan senators.

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Import tax officially abandoned in Big 6 tax reform talks [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 07/27/2017 02:51 PM EDT

White House and congressional leaders officially acknowledged Thursday that a controversial tax on imports would be dropped from tax reform, but otherwise provided no new details on a broader plan they expect to start moving through Congress in the fall.

The import tax, called border adjustability, was pushed by House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) as a way to fund tax cuts, but it prompted a fierce backlash from retailers and other import-dependent industries.

In a largely symbolic statement, the "Big Six" tax reform negotiators vowed to reduce tax rates, simplify the tax code and improve U.S. economic growth by changing tax laws.

But the biggest news is what they decided to leave out.

"While we have debated the pro-growth benefits of border adjustability, we appreciate that

there are many unknowns associated with it and have decided to set this policy aside in order to advance tax reform," the statement said.

"... [W]e are now confident that, without transitioning to a new domestic consumption-based tax system, there is a viable approach for ensuring a level playing field between American and foreign companies and workers, while protecting American jobs and the U.S. tax base," it said.

Expectations had grown in recent days that the negotiators — Ryan, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#), House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn — would provide more details of their talks that members could use to build support for tax reform during the August recess. But the statement lacked those kinds of details.

"The goal is a plan that reduces tax rates as much as possible, allows unprecedented capital expensing [for businesses], places a priority on permanence, and creates a system that encourages American companies to bring back jobs and profits trapped overseas," the joint statement said.

It added that "the time has arrived" for the tax-writing committees to produce draft legislation. "Our expectation is for this legislation to move through the committees this fall, under regular order, followed by consideration on the House and Senate floors," the statement added.

The series of tenets were high-level by design to demonstrate that all the parties involved are still moving in the same direction, though exact details are still being hammered out.

Representatives from various groups who were briefed on the top-line statement saw it in a positive light, given that it demonstrated compromise toward getting tax reform legislation enacted by the end of this year. Ryan and Brady hadn't stopped backing the border adjustment tax until today.

"With BAT out, Washington has an opportunity for the first time in more than a generation to pass a tax reform plan that boosts American businesses and family budgets," said a statement from the president of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, Sandy Kennedy.

[Back](#)

Senate set to pass Russia sanctions, rebuffing White House [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 07/27/2017 02:12 PM EDT

Congress is on the verge of delivering Donald Trump the first big bipartisan rebuke of his presidency.

The Senate is seeking unanimous consent to pass a bipartisan sanctions bill targeting Russia, Iran and North Korea as soon as Thursday. That move would send to Trump's desk a measure that would constrain his bid to defrost relations with Moscow by allowing Congress to block any attempt to ease or end penalties against President Vladimir Putin's government.

The House passed the sanctions package on Tuesday in an overwhelming 419-3 vote, and an intra-GOP squabble that threatened to delay its passage was quickly [resolved](#) Wednesday night. Senate Foreign Relations Chairman [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) predicted Thursday that

passage in his chamber "would be very soon," perhaps as soon as later in the day unless any senator on either side of the aisle raises an objection.

"We are prepared to move this legislation by unanimous consent at any time," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) said on the floor Thursday. The only no votes during the Senate's initial consideration of Russia and Iran sanctions last month were Kentucky Republican [Rand Paul](#) and Vermont independent [Bernie Sanders](#).

Passage of the sanctions bill has drawn no Democratic objections, according to a senior aide to the minority. A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) did not immediately return a request for comment on whether there are any lingering GOP objections to quick passage of the sanctions bill.

The White House has avoided taking a clear position on the sanctions legislation all week, with communications director Anthony Scaramucci telling CNN on Thursday that Trump "may sign the sanctions exactly the way they are, or he may veto the sanctions and negotiate an even tougher deal against the Russians."

Corker, a longtime ally of the Trump administration, said he has talked to both the president and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson about the sanctions bill in recent days and "gotten no indication from them that they plan to veto it.

"It's just not a good way to start a presidency to veto something and then be soundly overridden," Corker told reporters. "It wouldn't be something I would do, but they may choose to do it."

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Energy and Commerce sends bipartisan drinking water bill to the floor [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 07/27/2017 02:25 PM EDT

The House Energy and Commerce Committee added provisions relating to security and emerging contaminants to a bipartisan drinking water measure before sending it to the full House for consideration by voice vote.

The [amendment](#) to [H.R. 3387 \(115\)](#), the first major update to the Safe Drinking Water Act in two decades, tackles concerns about new or newly understood contaminants appearing in tap water by requiring utilities to monitor for such "emerging contaminants" so long as funding and laboratory capacity is available.

The amendment also requires water systems to develop emergency response plans addressing their vulnerability to natural disasters and terrorism, and it creates an EPA grant program to help utilities improve their resiliency.

And the committee added provisions requiring water systems to make their reports to consumers more understandable, and encouraging states and EPA to look at whether restructuring or consolidation could help water systems with long-running problems.

The overall measure tackles issues raised in the wake of the lead crisis in Flint, Mich., and represents one of the first bipartisan infrastructure measures to gain traction under the Trump administration.

WHAT'S NEXT: The bill has broad support and should be able to easily pass the House, although it remains to be seen when it would get a vote. Companion legislation has yet to be introduced in the Senate.

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Pruitt spent significant time in Oklahoma in spring, records show [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 10:49 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt spent 43 days in March, April and May on trips to his home state of Oklahoma, according to travel records obtained by the watchdog group Environmental Integrity Project.

The [records](#), released under the Freedom of Information Act, include weekend trips home as well as official business in the state, such as a tour of a chemical plant or an awards event hosted by the Oklahoma Well Strippers Association. The records indicate Pruitt [sometimes](#) paid his own airfare but often went at the government's expense.

"These travel records show that Administrator Pruitt is more focused on cultivating his relationships with industry and conservative political organizations in his home state of Oklahoma than he is on protecting the environment and the public health for the rest of America," EIP Executive Director Eric Schaeffer said in a statement.

The group will ask EPA's inspector general to investigate Pruitt's travel Monday, an EIP spokesman said. As precedent, he pointed to a 2015 IG [report](#) on a regional administrator who scheduled more than half of his official trips to areas near his home in California's Orange County, some of which the IG questioned.

EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in a statement that Pruitt was focused on running EPA, "not running for elected office. The administrator's travel, whether to Utah, Michigan or Oklahoma, all serves the purpose of hearing from hard-working Americans about how EPA can better serve the American people."

Pruitt said at an industry conference in May that his wife would join him in living in Washington this summer since both their children are both now in college, which could decrease his weekend trips home to Oklahoma.

Pruitt's predecessor, Gina McCarthy, paid her own way for trips home to Boston approximately every other week, according to an EIP spokesman.

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White House adviser clashes with Mnuchin over tax plan [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 07/27/2017 05:08 AM EDT

The White House is eager to present a unified front on tax reform, but those leading the effort inside the administration haven't been able to bridge deep fissures over how much to cut taxes and the best way to pay for it.

The White House's top tax staffer, Shahira Knight, who works for Gary Cohn at the National Economic Council, has feuded in the last few months with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and other Treasury officials, according to a senior administration official and four other people familiar with their interactions.

This comes as the administration and congressional leaders prepare to unveil a broad-brush tax proposal, weeks ahead of schedule, as a way to pivot from the grinding debate over health care — and to show movement on an issue significant to the business community before Congress adjourns for its August recess.

Yet many key outstanding questions remain, including how low the corporate tax rate can go — a major focus of the president who wants it at 15 percent — and what if any tax benefits or breaks lawmakers will need to eliminate to pay for cuts.

These trade-offs are part of what makes tax reform difficult. No businesses, or individuals, like to see any particular tax break eliminated and tend to mobilize when their goodie is threatened. Figuring out how to balance the many competing interests at play have been the focal point of Knight's disagreements with Treasury — and a foreshadowing of Republicans' challenges with any tax overhaul.

"She will be quick to point out how difficult tax reform will be. She is not some Art Laffer right-wing nut," said one former Republican congressional staffer. "She will ask, 'How are we going to pay for this?' And she will be one of the first ones to say this."

Early on in the administration, Knight and Mnuchin clashed over the type of tax system the U.S. should even have. (He was advocating for a move to a so-called fully worldwide system by getting rid of deferral payments that some companies make). That was part of one of Trump's many tax plans, dating back to the campaign in 2015.

Eventually both Knight, a former senior Hill staffer and ex-lobbyist, joined Capitol Hill lawmakers and staff to persuade Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn to drop that idea, according to a senior administration official.

Knight and Mnuchin have disagreed more recently and with some frequency over the best way to pay for tax cuts. Among the issues: Mnuchin does not like the idea of scrapping businesses' ability to deduct interest - a big boon to the real estate and finance industry that heavily relies on debt to make deals - while Knight views it as a way to offset tax cuts without adding to the deficit.

One of Mnuchin's top Treasury advisers called Knight a "very talented colleague and a critical

part of our team." "We work together daily and she brings a deep knowledge of tax reform that benefits our current efforts," said Justin Muzinich, a counselor to Mnuchin at Treasury.

Knight knows the history of past tax reform efforts, dating back to the last major revision in 1986, and is equally proficient in the technical hiccups of the code, according to interviews with 10 people including three senior administration officials, lobbyists, and current and former congressional staff. She is a special assistant to the president and frequently briefs the president himself on tax issues.

"She is the leading person who combines the trust of the political appointees with technical knowledge, and it is clear that she is speaking to the highest levels," said one former Treasury official. "Frankly, she is one of the few people that the political people can talk to with the knowledge that she is on their side."

Knight got her break in the tax world by starting out on a subcommittee of the House Ways & Means Committee, eventually working her way up to senior adviser. She worked under former Chairman Bill Thomas, who had a reputation as a sharp-elbowed and demanding boss - traits that former colleagues and friends say that Knight shares.

"She learned at the altar of Bill Thomas. He was a stone cold killer and the most effective legislator of his generation," said Mike Sommers, Speaker John Boehner's former chief-of-staff who now heads up the American Investment Council.

On the Hill, Knight worked on the 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts - a huge political victory for Republicans.

But her more under-the-radar Capitol Hill policy claim-to-fame was the 2004 bill called the American Jobs Creation Act, according to several former Republican and Democratic congressional staffers. This was a highly technical and far-reaching bill that re-set some international tax rules and gave businesses what the non-partisan Tax Policy Center called a "potpourri of new tax breaks."

After the Hill, Knight went on to work as a lobbyist for the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association and Fidelity Investments where she spent more than seven years and became an expert in taxes related to savings, retirements, and pensions.

The financial services industry, in particular, has been very comforted by her role in the White House, the former Treasury official said, because they view her as one of their own.

That is true of a huge swathe of the Hill and downtown lobbyists, both Democrats and Republicans, who feel like Knight is a known quantity in an administration stocked with New York bankers and outsiders with little D.C. connections.

"The president at the beginning talked about tax policy in a way we were unaccustomed to," said a former Democratic congressional aide. "She showed up and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. She can translate the administration's more general discussion of taxes."

Recently, Knight has spent her time working with Treasury officials on hammering out a potential tax reform blueprint and sitting in on the 'Big Six' tax reform meetings with Mnuchin, Cohn, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Finance Committee Chair Orrin Hatch, and Ways & Means Chair Kevin Brady.

She frequently speaks to outside groups such as the Tax Council or National Association of Manufacturers on the administration's tax goals. She also takes tons of meetings, expressing enthusiasm on the most in-the-weed topics, according to numerous people who've met with her.

"People need to be well-prepared," said Marc Gerson, chair of the law firm Miller & Chevalier who worked with Knight on the Ways & Means Committee. "She asks insightful questions, and she wants follow-up."

Those meetings also give D.C. insiders a foreshadowing of where the administration may head on tax reform; in one recent session, she told people that they did not need to spend much time talking about the border adjustment tax, leaving the impression that it was no longer on the table from the administration's perspective.

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Trump and Sessions try a long-distance relationship [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 07/27/2017 01:15 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and his "beleaguered" attorney general, Jeff Sessions, may be on the outs, but they're making a unified push on immigration — by taking on the MS-13 gang.

The group has been blamed for a series of brutal murders over the past 18 months on Long Island, where Trump is scheduled to speak on Friday in a bid to pressure Congress to fork over money for his immigration crackdown, pointing to the influx of migrants from Central America as a factor in the renewed violence.

At the same time, Sessions is 3,500 miles south in El Salvador, the epicenter of the MS-13 gang, where he'll echo the same message in meetings with President Salvador Sánchez Cerén and other top officials.

The president will use his Friday speech to urge Congress to back his border wall with Mexico and to greenlight funding for new Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and immigration judges, administration officials told POLITICO.

"I think it'll be very hard for Democratic lawmakers to vote against hiring ICE officers and the other resources we need to remove some of these dangerous and violent people, like MS-13, from our country, who are quite literally terrorizing communities, committing the most heinous kinds of crimes imaginable," said one administration official, who wasn't authorized to speak on the record about the president's speech.

A die-hard immigration warrior, Sessions has given Trump credibility on the issue among conservatives — a factor that is weighing on the president as he debates whether to fire the attorney general, according to another senior administration official.

Sessions has also made eradicating MS-13 a core priority since becoming attorney general.

"Groups of murderers and rapists and traffickers and thugs are carrying out a frontal assault on the rule of law and on law-abiding men and women in communities over the country," Sessions said during a speech on Long Island in April. "They have no right, and they must not be allowed to take control of a single city block or street corner."

Asked whether the tension between Sessions and Trump could make it more difficult to implement the president's immigration agenda, the first administration official said, "The president is focused on enforcing the laws of the United States, and everybody who works with him understands that." A third administration official quipped that Sessions' absence from the Long Island speech is "not any stranger" than anything else that's been happening at the White House this week.

A Justice Department spokeswoman said Sessions' trip to El Salvador had been long planned.

MS-13 is a transnational gang that was formed in Los Angeles in the 1980s by Salvadorans fleeing the country's civil war.

While the gang has existed in the United States for decades, a recent spate of grisly MS-13-connected murders involving machetes has put a spotlight on its activities and drawn the attention of the president.

"They come from Central America. They're tougher than any people you've ever met," Trump [told](#) Time magazine last year. "They're killing and raping everybody out there. They're illegal. And they are finished."

Administration officials said Trump's fascination with the gang stems in part from the fact that the MS-13 murders on Long Island dominated New York's tabloid newspapers for months. Trump, a lifelong New Yorker, is a regular reader of the tabloids.

Trump's top aides, including chief strategist Steve Bannon and senior adviser Stephen Miller, have also highlighted the problem in conversations with the president. Bannon and Miller, a former Sessions staffer, have long pushed Trump to be more aggressive on immigration.

Miller, a native of Southern California where MS-13 took root, is expected to play a central role in writing Trump's Friday speech.

Long Island is still reeling from the MS-13 murders, and White House aides hope the speech will ratchet up political pressure on Democrats to support the president's immigration policies. But Democrats are unlikely to budge.

The House is slated to vote soon on a wide-ranging spending bill that includes funding for Trump's border wall along the Mexico border. The measure is unlikely to win support from Democrats, and it has little chance of passing the Senate.

The administration has separately called for hiring 10,000 new ICE agents, though the president's fiscal year 2018 budget proposal called for 1,000 new agents. The budget also requested funding to hire 75 new immigration judges to deal with the backlog of nearly 600,000 immigration cases pending in the courts.

Administration officials said they have been pressing members of Congress behind the scenes to back Trump's priorities, hoping to score funding for new ICE agents and immigration judges by the end of the year.

"We're pushing Congress hard on this," the first administration official said. "There's no question about that."

Rep. Peter King, a New York Republican, met with Trump in the spring to discuss his concerns with the gang and he's been in regular contact with the president's top aides.

"He is committed to doing all he can to destroy MS-13. He sees this as an evil organization," King said in an interview. "He believes that the federal government and the state and local policy working together can crush it if they move quickly and effectively."

King, like Sessions and others in the administration, blame the federal government's unaccompanied minors programs, which help young people from countries in Central America enter the United States, for boosting MS-13's numbers.

King called for a wholesale review of the programs, something that is gaining traction in the Trump White House. Another administration official said the issue is likely to come up in Trump's Friday speech, along with criticism of sanctuary cities, a frequent target for the president.

The Trump administration is using the threat of MS-13 to justify many of its immigration policies. Since Trump took office, ICE has led a number of [gang-related operations](#) across the country that have resulted in thousands of arrests. And ICE has [urged](#) its agents to take action against any undocumented immigrants they come across, even if they don't have a criminal record.

Since the beginning of January, ICE's investigations unit has arrested 3,311 alleged gang members, including more than 350 people believed to belong to or be associated with MS-13, according to the agency.

But the Trump administration's efforts are worrying immigrant rights advocates, who fear that the president's rhetoric could cause a backlash against Central American immigrants. They are also raising red flags that the administration could round up immigrants who aren't actually members of MS-13 and other gangs.

"One of our top concerns is that people are going to be labeled as gang members in an overly broad manner, which could lead to more arrests and deportations even for people who have not been active in a gang," said Shiu-Ming Cheer, a senior staff attorney at the National Immigration Law Center.

Ted Hesson contributed to this report.

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Joint Chiefs: 'No modifications' to transgender policy from Trump tweet [Back](#)

By Bryan Bender and Jacqueline Klimas | 07/27/2017 11:28 AM EDT

There will be "no modifications" to the military's transgender policy as a result of President Donald Trump's declared ban on transgender men and women on Twitter, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs said in a message to top military officers on Thursday -- the latest sign of the disarray following the commander-in-chief's abrupt announcement.

Marine Gen. Joe Dunford also wrote in the message, which was sent to the chiefs of the military branches and senior enlisted leaders, that the military will continue to "treat all of our personnel with respect."

"I know there are questions about yesterday's announcement on the transgender policy by the President," Dunford wrote in the internal communication, a copy of which was provided to POLITICO. "There will be no modifications to the current policy until the President's direction has been received by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary has issued implementation guidance."

"In the meantime, we will continue to treat all of our personnel with respect. As importantly, given the current fight and the challenges we face, we will all remain focused on accomplishing our assigned missions," he continued.

The president said Wednesday in a series of three tweets that transgender troops would no longer be allowed to serve in any capacity, sparking questions about what that would mean for the thousands currently in uniform and whether it constitutes an official policy change.

The announcement also sparked fierce criticism from lawmakers in both parties, while advocacy groups immediately threatened to take the president to court to overturn any ban.

Dunford's message was seconded later in the day by Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis' chief spokeswoman.

"The Department of Defense is awaiting formal guidance from the White House as a follow-up to the Commander-in-Chief's announcement on military service by transgender personnel," Dana White said. "We will provide detailed guidance to the Department in the near future for how this policy change will be implemented."

"The Department will continue to focus on our mission of defending our nation and on-going operations against our foes, while ensuring all servicemembers are treated with respect," she added.

The Pentagon's position underscored how the military, like legal experts, does not consider the president's social media pronouncements policy.

In an appearance at the National Press Club, Gen. Mark Milley, the Army chief of staff, also said later Thursday that Dunford is "exactly right" and that the military will work through new guidance when it gets a formal directive from the White House through normal channels.

"We grow up and learn to obey the chain of command, and my chain of command is secretary of the Army, secretary of Defense and the president," Milley said. "We will work through the implementation guidance when we get it...To my knowledge, the Department of Defense, Secretary Mattis has not received written directives yet."

Milley also doubled down on Dunford's message that every service member - "bar none" - should and will always be treated with dignity and respect.

Only a formal directive through the chain of command would lead to a real policy change, said Tobias Wolff, a professor at University of Pennsylvania Law School.

He said that Dunford's statement makes it clear that the Pentagon does not make major changes to its policy because of a tweet - "and he was right to do so."

"The chairman of the joint chiefs is respecting the rule of law and the role of the secretary of defense, and he is protecting commanders in the field from having good order and discipline undermined," Wolff said. "General Dunford should never have been put in this position. It is a reflection of the crisis we now face with this increasingly unstable and reckless individual occupying the presidency."

Dru Brenner-Beck, a retired Army judge advocate general and president of the National Institute for Military Justice, [told POLITICO](#) that under normal procedure the president would issue an executive order instructing the Pentagon to go about changing the department's personnel policy — but only after Defense Department officials coordinated with various parts of the military and weighed in on the proposed changes in the draft order.

Brenner-Beck said its even legally questionable whether a declaration from the president's personal social media account is enough to launch the process of rewriting Pentagon regulations, calling it "a whole new frontier."

"A tweet doesn't really give you policy," she said. "How do you implement a tweet? Usually you would have some kind of an actual policy document that comes down."

A Defense Department official, speaking on the condition they not be named, said Thursday that the Pentagon is scrambling to coordinate with the White House for guidance on the way forward, noting that there is an urgent need to explain to the troops what it means.

Transgender troops -- which by some estimates number as high as 15,000 and as few as 1,300 -- have been allowed to serve openly since June of 2016. The Pentagon has been studying ways to implement the decision for new recruits -- including questions about housing and medical care.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis last month ordered that review be extended another six months.

The Pentagon's policy changes have not been without controversy. House Republicans, as part of defense spending legislation now under consideration, have sought to prohibit the Pentagon from paying for troops' gender transition surgery.

But virtually no one has suggested drumming them out of the military altogether.

"Everyone was confused and I think there are still confused," said Radha Iyengar, a senior economist at the government-funded Rand Corporation, who authored a recent study for the pentagon on the medical costs associated with transgender service members. "I think the Joint Chiefs statement helps that but we are waiting to see what the actual policy is."

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Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 4:12:18 PM

By Eric Wolff | 10/04/2017 04:09 PM EDT

With help from Anthony Adragna, Alex Guillén and Ben Lefebvre

NOM NOM NOM: Democrats on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee today grilled a quartet of nominees to second-level EPA posts, and Republicans gave what for to a Democratic nominee to a second term to the NRC.

Chemical nom declines to recuse himself: Michael Dourson, the nominee to head EPA's chemicals and pesticides office, declined today to recuse himself from any issue he worked on previously as an independent toxicologist, saying he would evaluate each one on a case-by-case basis, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). [Tom Carper](#), the top Democrat on the committee, asked Dourson to agree to a blanket recusal during his nomination hearing. Dourson said he would rely on guidance of agency ethics officials for any recusal issues. Carper would harp on the issue at the end of the hearing, saying: "You know what's most troubling about Mr. Dourson? I think most of us try to live our life by a set of rules or standards. One of the principles that guides me is what is right to do — not what is the easy or expedient thing to do, what's the right thing to do? He may be able to get an opinion from this administration from EPA counsel that he doesn't have to recuse himself. That wouldn't be the right thing to do."

Air nom uncertain how much humans contribute to climate change: William Wehrum, the nominee to run EPA's air office, said today that the degree of human contribution to climate change is an "open question," Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). In response to inquiries from [Jeff Merkley](#), Wehrum said human activity contributes in some manner to climate change, but declined to say whether human activity is the primary driver. Merkley said Wehrum's response indicated that Wehrum is "really quite frankly unacceptable to serve in this capacity."

Second term for NRC's Baran 'a big ask': EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) complained this morning that reconfirming NRC member Jeff Baran may be too high a price for Republicans to pay in exchange for Democrats easing their opposition to GOP nominees to the agency, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). "Senate Democrats have refused to advance the nominations of Annie Caputo and David Wright to the NRC until Commissioner Baran is confirmed to a new five-year term," Barrasso said at nomination hearing with Baran and four nominees to the EPA. "To be clear, Mr. Baran's nomination is a big ask."

Vote won't be for a while: Looks like it will be a few weeks at least before EPW can vote on the four EPA nominees, given time for post-hearing questions for the record. Barrasso told reporters afterward that he is working on a "package" of nominations on the Senate floor, including enforcement nominee Susan Bodine, two Republican NRC nominees and a handful of Energy Department hopefuls. But Barrasso gave no sense of timing on when those might move. "There are a lot of nominees who have been through the process that the Democrats continue to hold up as part of an attempt to not allow President Trump to fill his sub-Cabinet," he added.

WELCOME TO AFTERNOON ENERGY. It's Wednesday, we can all agree on that. I'm

your guest host Eric Wolff, filling in for Esther Whieldon, who was filling in for Kelsey Tamborrino, who is unavailable because she is filling in for me. (Just kidding! Joke totally stolen from Parks and Rec. Kelsey is on vacation.) Send along your tips and news to ewhieldon@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@Esthernow](https://twitter.com/Esthernow), [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro) ... and [@ericwolff](https://twitter.com/ericwolff). What the heck.

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find safer ways to deliver energy. We're piloting a program that uses drones to monitor tanks and pipelines. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

RESOURCES EYES REVENUE SHARING, BOEM-BSEE MERGER: The House Natural Resources Committee will bring up a draft bill on Oct. 11 that aims to make significant changes to offshore oil and gas drilling policies. An early [draft](#) was shared with ME, though we were told some unspecified changes have been made. The language would include offshore energy production revenue from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia in an offshore revenue sharing program with states; prevent future presidents from withdrawing sections of the outer continental shelf from drilling or designating marine sanctuaries; and repeal certain Obama-era rules on Arctic drilling, among other things. Democrats have said they'll oppose the measures, with former BOEM Regulation and Enforcement Director Michael Bromwich scheduled to speak as a minority witness against the draft bill's proposal for a study to merge BOEM and BSEE.

ENERGY NOMINEES ADVANCE: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [advanced](#) two DOE nominees by voice vote today. Bruce Walker is nominated to be assistant secretary of Energy for electricity delivery and energy reliability and Steven Winberg, of Pennsylvania is nominated to be an assistant secretary of Energy for fossil energy.

METHANE RULE DELAYED: The Interior Department proposed to suspend enforcement of an Obama-era rule on methane emissions for 18 months as it plans to rewrite it, according to a [document](#) to be filed tomorrow in the Federal Register, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). The agency said it is concerned that the final rule analysis "may have underestimated costs and overestimated benefits, and [BLM] is therefore presently reviewing that analysis for potential inaccuracies." The rule is intended to require oil and gas companies that extract from federal lands to capture more of the methane that leaks.

DC CIRCUIT CANCELS LNG ARGUMENTS: The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals canceled oral arguments today on two more Sierra Club lawsuits challenging the Energy Department's approval of liquefied natural gas export applications for sales to non-Free Trade Agreement countries, Darius [reports](#). A three-judge panel canceled oral arguments over DOE's approvals of the [Sabine Pass](#) and [Corpus Christi](#) LNG projects today. Earlier today, the court [canceled](#) arguments for a case over DOE's approval of the Cove Point LNG project. The cancellations were unsurprising after the Sierra Club [lost a similar lawsuit](#) over another LNG application back in August.

SHARPEN YOUR PENCILS, BIODIESEL NOTICE COMMENTS OPEN: The EPA today [published](#) in the Federal Register its notice that it could cut biodiesel volumes required under the Renewable Fuel Standard. The proposal, released last week, was met with fierce resistance by biofuel producers. The agency will take comment until Oct. 19.

MAIL CALL! SECOND TIME'S THE CHARM? Three senior House Democrats — [Steny](#)

[Hoyer](#), [Gwen Moore](#) and [Denny Heck](#) — sent a [second letter](#) to Trump asking him to withdraw Scott Garrett's nomination to run the Export-Import Bank. They note Garrett has yet to secure a Senate Banking hearing on his selection after more than five months.

TAKE A GLANCE! BIG BOOST FROM LNG EXPORTS: Expanding liquefied natural gas exports could support between 220,000 and 452,000 new U.S. jobs and contribute \$73 billion to the economy by 2040, the American Petroleum Institute argues in [a study](#) out Tuesday.

LIGHTER CLICK: Former EPA chief Gina McCarthy made an appearance on Comedy Central's new show "The Opposition with Jordan Klepper" Tuesday night. She talked about the agency's budget and Pruitt's planned red team-blue team climate science debate. Watch [here](#) around the 9-minute mark.

QUICK HITS

- Trump takes a first step toward Scrapping Obama's global warming policy, [NYT](#).
- Interior Department whistleblower resigns, calling Zinke's leadership a failure, [Washington Post](#).
- Crude inventories plummet as oil exports hit new record, [Fuel Fix](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS

- Tillerson: I have "[never](#)" considered resigning.
- Trump loyalists [lose patience](#) with congressional Russia probes.
- Key GOP senators [open](#) to "bump stock" ban.

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find better and safer ways to deliver energy to America. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping capabilities to monitor Chevron wells, tanks, and miles of pipeline. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/epa-nominations-get-grilled-by-epw-dems-nrc-nom-gets-it-from-gop-024915>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Dourson won't follow Democrat request to recuse himself on many chemicals issues [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/04/2017 11:25 AM EDT

Michael Dourson, the nominee to head EPA's chemicals and pesticides office, declined today to recuse himself from any issue he worked on previously as an independent toxicologist, saying he would evaluate each one on a case-by-case basis.

Sen. [Tom Carper](#), the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, asked Dourson to agree to a blanket recusal during his nomination hearing. Carper brought a chart

that showed Dourson had often recommended significantly higher "safe" levels of substances than recommended by EPA, including chlorpyrifos — which EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt this year declined to ban despite agency scientists' recommendations — as well as perchlorate, PFOA, TCE and other chemicals.

"I can give you as many or more examples of situations where the science that we brought forward as a team actually lowered the safe dose ... for various sponsors," Dourson told Carper. He added that he has previously worked with or for various government entities.

Dourson said he would rely on guidance of agency ethics officials for any recusal issues.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee has to set a date to vote on Dourson's nomination.

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Wehrum says degree of human role in climate change an 'open question' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/04/2017 01:38 PM EDT

William Wehrum, the nominee to run EPA's air office, said today that the degree of human contribution to climate change is an "open question."

In response to questions from Sen. [Jeff Merkley](#), Wehrum said human activity contributes in some manner to climate change, but declined to say whether human activity is the primary driver.

"These are very complex issues and very important issues and I understand they're important to you," Wehrum added at a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing before Merkley cut him off. Wehrum declined several times to answer follow-up questions, drawing the ire of Merkley, who expressed incredulity that Wehrum was not familiar enough with those issues to comment despite his lengthy history working on environmental legal issues in the private sector and at EPA.

"No one can look at what is happening on the planet and see that there is nothing happening unless you're deliberately determined to ignore that information," Merkley said. "And that makes you really quite frankly unacceptable to serve in this capacity."

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee has not yet set a date to vote on Wehrum's nomination.

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Barrasso: Baran renomination to NRC is a 'big ask' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 10:59 AM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) complained this morning that re-confirming Nuclear Regulatory Commission member Jeff Baran may be too high a price for Republicans to pay in exchange for Democrats easing their opposition to GOP nominees to the agency.

"Senate Democrats have refused to advance the nominations of Annie Caputo and David Wright to the NRC until Commissioner Baran is confirmed to a new five-year term," Barrasso said at nomination hearing with Baran and four nominees to the EPA. "To be clear, Mr. Baran's nomination is a big ask."

Caputo and Wright [secured](#) the blessing of EPW in July but Sen. [Tom Carper](#) has [pressed](#) that Baran, whose seat expires in June, get a new five-year term and move alongside Republican picks as a bipartisan package.

But Barrasso bristled at the notion of having Baran on the NRC longer than President Donald Trump's GOP nominees, as well as NRC Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki. Wright and Caputo are up for terms expiring in June 2020 and June 2021, respectively. The Wyoming Republican also said he's hardly seen reason to drop his long-held opposition to Baran since former Sen. Barbara Boxer originally pushed him through the Senate years ago.

"In December 2014, the last time the Senate confirmed Mr. Baran, only one Republican voted in favor of his confirmation," Barrasso said. "Since then, Commissioner Baran has given me little reason to reconsider my vote."

WHAT'S NEXT: EPW has not yet scheduled a vote on the nominees.

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DOE electricity, fossil picks easily clear Senate energy committee [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 03:03 PM EDT

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee gave its support to two Energy Department assistant secretary nominees today, the panel announced.

President Donald Trump has tapped Bruce Walker to lead DOE's electricity delivery and energy reliability office, while Steven Winberg was picked to head the agency's fossil energy programs. Both were approved by the Energy committee on a voice vote.

The panel held a hearing last week to consider both nominees and was supposed to vote on them out at a Tuesday markup that was canceled Monday night.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Winberg and Walker nominations move to the full Senate but it's unclear when they will get approved.

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BLM proposes 18-month delay to methane rule [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/04/2017 09:59 AM EDT

The Interior Department proposed to suspend enforcement of an Obama-era rule on methane emissions for 18 months as it plans to rewrite it, according to a [document](#) to be filed tomorrow in the Federal Register.

"The BLM is currently reviewing the 2016 final rule and wants to avoid imposing temporary or permanent compliance costs on operators for requirements that may be rescinded or significantly revised in the near future," the agency said in the document.

The agency said it is concerned that the final rule analysis "may have underestimated costs and overestimated benefits, and [BLM] is therefore presently reviewing that analysis for potential inaccuracies."

The 2016 rule was intended to require oil and gas developers on federal lands to capture more of the methane that leaked during their operations. The rule went into effect in January 2017 and survived an effort by Congressional Republicans to repeal it.

WHAT'S NEXT: BLM will accept public comments on the proposal for 30 days.

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Court cancels more LNG export challenges [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 01:56 PM EDT

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals canceled oral arguments today on two more Sierra Club lawsuits challenging the Energy Department's approval of liquefied natural gas export applications for sales to non-Free Trade Agreement countries.

A three-judge panel canceled oral arguments over DOE's approvals of the [Sabine Pass](#) and [Corpus Christi](#) LNG projects today. Earlier today, the court [canceled](#) arguments for a case over DOE's approval of the Cove Point LNG project.

All three lawsuits were scheduled to be heard Oct. 18.

The Sierra Club [lost a similar lawsuit](#) against the agency over its approval Freeport's LNG export application in August, *Sierra Club v. DOE*, 15-1489. The group did not appeal the decision, which unanimously opted to defer to DOE's "reasoned explanation as to why it believed the indirect effects pertaining to increased gas production were not reasonably foreseeable."

WHAT'S NEXT: Now that the judges intend to make a decision on all three cases without having oral arguments, a decision may be released in the next few weeks.

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Appeals court cancels arguments on second LNG challenge [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 12:28 PM EDT

A three-judge federal appeals panel today canceled oral arguments on a lawsuit from the Sierra Club challenging the Energy Department's approval of the Cove Point liquefied natural gas export application.

"The court concludes, on its own motion, that oral argument will not assist the court in this case," according to an [order agreed to](#) by D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals judges David Tatel, Harry Edwards and David Sentelle.

The oral arguments had been scheduled for Oct. 18.

Environmentalists said that the agency didn't properly estimate how the gas shipments might increase prices domestically, potentially boost coal use in the power system or increase greenhouse emissions. DOE had defended itself by arguing that producing the numbers Sierra Club is seeking would be so speculative as to be meaningless.

The cancellation isn't a big surprise after the Sierra Club [lost a similar lawsuit](#) against the agency over its approval Freeport's LNG export application in August, *Sierra Club v. DOE*, 15-1489. The group did not appeal the decision, unanimously opted to defer to DOE's "reasoned explanation as to why it believed the indirect effects pertaining to increased gas production were not reasonably foreseeable."

Sentelle, a senior circuit judge, is on both cases.

WHAT'S NEXT: Now that the judges intend to make a decision on the case, *Sierra Club v. DOE*, 16-1186, without having oral arguments, a decision may be released in the next few weeks.

To view online [click here](#).

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Federal appeals court swats away challenge to DOE's LNG review [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/15/2017 11:29 AM EDT

A federal appeals court landed a major legal blow against environmentalists today when a three-judge panel [upheld](#) the Energy Department's process for evaluating liquefied natural gas

export applications.

The Sierra Club had challenged DOE's authorization of the Freeport LNG terminal to export liquefied natural gas, arguing that the agency didn't properly estimate how those shipments might increase domestic prices, potentially boost coal use in the power system or increase greenhouse emissions.

DOE had argued that producing the numbers Sierra Club is seeking would be so speculative as to be meaningless, a position the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals judges unanimously felt justified in deferring to the agency.

Although DOE made some of its arguments "needlessly complicated," the judges agreed that it "offered a reasoned explanation as to why it believed the indirect effects pertaining to increased gas production were not reasonably foreseeable," Judge Robert Wilkins wrote for the panel.

During oral arguments in February, the panel seemed to sympathize with Sierra Club's desire for a more detailed analysis of exporting U.S. natural gas while also hesitating to find fault in the Energy Department's work up to that point.

The judges today ultimately opted to take a "limited and deferential review" and said the Sierra Club didn't knock down the government's concerns about a speculative analysis.

DOE reasonably argued, Wilkins wrote, that "every natural-gas producing region in the country is a potential source for new gas wells in order to meet export-induced natural gas demand."

WHAT'S NEXT: The D.C. Circuit announced Monday that it would take oral arguments Oct. 18 on a similar Sierra Club lawsuit against DOE over the agency's export approval for Dominion's Cove Point LNG project.

To view online [click here](#).

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Tillerson: I have 'never' considered resigning [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 10/04/2017 11:10 AM EDT

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Wednesday that he has never considered resigning his position, disputing an NBC News report that he was on the verge of such a move over the summer.

"The vice president has never had to persuade me to remain as secretary of state because I have never considered leaving this post," Tillerson said during a hastily scheduled news conference at the State Department.

Tillerson did not directly address whether he had called Trump a "moron," as NBC reported. "We don't deal with that kind of petty nonsense," he said when asked about the report.

"Let me tell you what I have learned about this president, whom I did not know before taking this office: He loves his country. He puts Americans and America first," the secretary of state and former ExxonMobil CEO said. "He's smart. He demands results wherever he goes and he holds those around him accountable for whether they've done the job he's asked them to do."

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert later said at a press briefing that she had spoken to Tillerson about the "moron" remark and that "the secretary does not use that type of language. The secretary did not use that type of language to speak about the president of the United States. He does not use that language to speak about anyone."

Nauert also said that the two men had a "good conversation" following Tillerson's remarks and that the secretary had said he and Trump are "all good."

Shortly after Tillerson's statement, Trump tweeted that, "The @NBCNews story has just been totally refuted by Sec. Tillerson and @VP Pence," even though the secretary of state had not denied calling the president a "moron." "It is #FakeNews. They should issue an apology to AMERICA!" Trump wrote.

NBC News reported Wednesday that Tillerson had referred to Trump as a "moron" after a meeting at the Pentagon last July with members of the president's national security team. Citing multiple unnamed sources, the network reported that the secretary of state was close to resigning in the wake of the president's controversial, political speech at a Boy Scouts of America jamboree and only remained in his job after discussions with Vice President Mike Pence and other administration officials.

Trump has butted heads at times with his top diplomat, most recently last weekend on Twitter, where the president appeared to undercut Tillerson, who had said a day earlier that the U.S. was in direct communication with North Korea in an effort to reduce tensions over its nuclear ambitions. "I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man," Trump tweeted. "Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!"

Despite the back-and-forth between Trump and Tillerson, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said earlier this week that the president retained confidence in his secretary of state. She repeated that view on Wednesday.

"As we've said many times before, if the president doesn't have confidence in somebody, they will no longer be in their position," Sanders told reporters aboard Air Force One as Trump headed to Las Vegas.

Tillerson has appeared to break ranks with the president at other critical moments. Last August, he told "Fox News Sunday" that "the president speaks for himself" when asked about Trump's equivocating response to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

R.C. Hammond, Tillerson's spokesman, issued his own clean-up of sorts on Wednesday morning, tweeting that he "spoke out of line" when he told NBC about conversations regarding U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley, who is rumored to be a replacement for Tillerson.

Hammond had told NBC that Pence had asked Tillerson "if he thought Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was helpful to the administration, or if he was worried about the role she was playing."

"Regarding the NBC News report: I spoke out of line about conversations I wasn't privy to," Hammond tweeted on Wednesday. "I should've given more complete info or none at all regarding the positive role Amb. Haley plays in the Admin."

Jarrold Agen, a spokesman for Pence, also issued a statement, denying that the vice president had talked with Tillerson about potentially leaving or that Pence had questioned Haley's role.

"The Vice President can also confirm that, as the Secretary of State made clear, at no time did he and the Secretary ever discuss the prospect of the Secretary's resignation from the administration. Any reporting to the contrary is categorically false," Agen said. "In addition, any statements that the Vice President questioned Ambassador Nikki Haley's value to the Trump Administration is also categorically false. The Vice President has known Ambassador Nikki Haley for many years, holds her in the highest regard, and appreciates her strong service to this administration at The United Nations."

Tillerson, a political newcomer who faced one of the most contentious Senate confirmation hearings in recent history, has said in the past that he was hesitant to accept the position of secretary of state and had been looking forward to retirement before it was offered.

"I didn't want this job. I didn't seek this job," Tillerson told IJR last March. "My wife told me I'm supposed to do this."

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Trump loyalists lose patience with congressional Russia probes [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney and Elana Schor | 10/04/2017 05:05 AM EDT

Loyalists of President Donald Trump are losing patience with Republican leaders over the wide-ranging Russia probes creeping into his inner circle, saying House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have allowed the investigations to hobble the White House for months.

Congressional investigators, say some lawmakers and state GOP leaders who back Trump, have let the probes — and the media coverage they generate — sidetrack the president as his allies, family members and aides are hauled in for questioning about whether Russians had American help in their quest to tip the 2016 election against Democrat Hillary Clinton.

GOP leaders largely have kept their distance as the House and Senate intelligence committees and the Senate Judiciary Committee conduct their separate Russia probes — which are independent of the investigation underway by special counsel Robert Mueller, a former FBI director. The Senate intelligence panel will update the public on its progress Wednesday. But Trump's most ardent supporters say it's time to clamp down.

"Three investigations is just way too many," said Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.). "Some of them need to step back and wait until we see what evidence is educed."

Lori Klein Corbin, a member of the Republican National Committee from Arizona, said the

probes are a distraction to Trump.

"Of course, the Republican leadership is behind these probes," she said. "The Republicans cannot get over the fact that Trump won and is our president."

Some Trump allies believe that the congressional inquiries offer Democrats platforms to raise questions that strike at the legitimacy of the 2016 election. And they allow a steady drumbeat of leaks and mini-revelations to preserve a sense of intrigue and suspicion around key figures in the Trump White House.

Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist, crystallized the fury last week when, during a [Fox News interview](#), he called out McConnell and Ryan by name.

"Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan have allowed three investigative committees on Capitol Hill with full subpoena power, they're going after President Trump every day," he boomed. In a ["60 Minutes" interview](#) last month, Bannon suggested the investigations were an attempt by the Republican establishment to "nullify" the 2016 election.

Members of Trump's base began echoing the complaints, accusing leaders in their own party of harboring secret desires to undermine the Trump agenda.

"From the beginning, Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan have not been friends of the president of the United States," said Robert Graham, a former chairman of the Arizona Republican Party.

GOP leadership aides reject suggestions they're working to undermine Trump and say meddling in the work of their committees would be counterproductive and wrong.

"This is not a Congress that gets in the way of investigations," said one House leadership aide, adding that if a thorough probe exonerates Trump, it would help "clear his name."

That's the tack that most Republicans in Congress have taken amid the swirl of allegations that has engulfed the White House. "I am hopeful it will be fair and impartial and will illuminate the facts of exactly what Russia did to undermine our electoral process," said Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who ran against Trump for the 2016 GOP nomination.

But the even-handedness is partly what's infuriating Trump's most zealous supporters. They want their colleagues instead to probe more deeply into issues that could harm Democrats — from allegations about mishandling of funds by the Clinton Foundation to revelations that former FBI Director James Comey may have drafted a statement exonerating Clinton in a 2016 investigation before agents had finished witness interviews.

Democrats, they complain, surely wouldn't investigate a president of their own party with as much vigor.

"My friends on the other side of the aisle, they view almost everything through a political lens," said Biggs, "and Republicans don't seem to do that as well."

Rep. Lou Barletta (R-Pa.), who is running for the Senate on a pro-Trump platform, also indicated that he's tiring of the Russia probes.

"I think the American people just expect us to move on and get their work done instead of

focusing on what appears to be a witch hunt," he said.

In the Senate Intelligence Committee, where the Russia probe appears to be the most advanced, top investigators Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) have attempted to maintain bipartisan comity. They've been tight-lipped about their findings so far and say they are limited in what they can discuss publicly — both by the traditional secrecy of the committee and because the probe relies on classified information.

The committee has most recently focused on Russia's manipulation of Facebook, Twitter and Google to drive an anti-Clinton propaganda campaign and inflame cultural divisions in the United States. But many Trump supporters think social media is a sideshow as well.

"People think it's crazy. I think your average person in Nebraska has concluded there's nothing there. That's certainly my conclusion," said J.L. Spray, a Republican national committeeman from Nebraska. "There's so many phantoms, and now we learn about Facebook and Google. I think we're just swinging at air. The big 'duh' is the Russians are f---ing with us on Facebook. Any 9-year-old kid would figure that out."

Veteran GOP strategist Saul Anuzis said the griping by Trump supporters reflects pent-up frustration that Trump has been besieged since his inauguration.

"I think there's a frustration that Trump seems to be constantly under attack. It doesn't matter what the process is, there's a feeling that he's not being fairly treated," he said. "The president never got his honeymoon period."

Many Republicans are still waiting to see what comes of the probes. Among the right-leaning grass roots in Burr's home state, "it's maybe 50-50" between those who support letting the investigations take their course and those who perceive the Russia inquiries as a threat to the president, said Erik Wilson, a board member of the free-market Republican Liberty Caucus of North Carolina.

"I think the greater risk would be if they didn't. The backlash and the hue and cry of cover-up and political favoritism would probably be far worse," said former RNC Chairman Michael Steele.

"Let the committees do their job and let the investigations go where they need to go," Steele said. "The general thinking is, well, if there was no behavior to investigate in the first place, well, we wouldn't be here then, would we?"

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Chevron: Former EPA official expected to be air office pick — BLM requests comment on fracking rule — Group questions Pruitt's trips home
Date: Monday, July 24, 2017 3:28:04 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 07/24/2017 03:25 PM EDT

With help from Annie Snider

FORMER EPA OFFICIAL EYED FOR AIR OFFICE: President Donald Trump is expected to select an EPA official from the George W. Bush administration to run the agency's powerful air office, Alex Guillén reports. Wehrum would provide critical knowledge of EPA's workings and environmental law, but as an industry lawyer he represented several high-profile clients in lawsuits challenging numerous Obama-era EPA regulations — meaning he may face recusal and conflict issues similar to Pruitt. Bill Wehrum served as acting assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation from 2005-07 and spent 2001-05 as counsel to Jeff Holmstead, Bush's first air administrator.

Since leaving EPA, Wehrum has represented a Who's Who of industry interests seeking to block Obama-era environmental and safety rules. His clients in various lawsuits have included the American Petroleum Institute, American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, the Utility Air Regulatory Group and several other trade associations. Alex has more [here](#).

BLM WANTS TO NIX OBAMA FRACKING RULE: The Bureau of Land Management is calling for comments on a plan to rescind an Obama-era rule which set regulations for fracking on federal land, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). In a [proposal](#) to be published in Tuesday's Federal Register, the agency writes: "BLM believes that the 2015 final rule unnecessarily burdens industry with compliance costs and information requirements that are duplicative of regulatory programs of many states and some tribes." For months the Interior Department has signaled that it would either rewrite, suspend or rescind the rule BLM put in place in 2015 requiring drillers to publicly disclose what chemicals they put in their fracking fluids and perform well integrity tests before drilling.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vFizh5> **

GROUP QUESTIONS PRUITT'S TRIPS HOME: The Environmental Integrity Project, a watchdog group, wants EPA's inspector general to investigate Administrator Scott Pruitt's travel home to Oklahoma. Pruitt spent 43 days in March, April and May on trips back to his home state, according to [travel records](#) obtained by the group, and include weekend trips home as well as official business in the state. The records indicate Pruitt [sometimes](#) paid his own airfare, but often went at the government's expense, Alex reports.

"These travel records show that Administrator Pruitt is more focused on cultivating his

relationships with industry and conservative political organizations in his home state of Oklahoma than he is on protecting the environment and the public health for the rest of America," EIP Executive Director Eric Schaeffer said in a statement. The [group asked](#) the agency's IG to investigate Pruitt's travel today, according to an EIP spokesman said. As precedent, the spokesman pointed to a 2015 IG report on a regional administrator who scheduled more than half of his official trips to areas near his home in California's Orange County, some of which the IG questioned. More [here](#).

PROMOTING PRUITT'S GREAT LAKES BREAK WITH TRUMP: EPA's press shop is touting its boss' independence on the topic of Great Lakes funding, after Pruitt last week [broke](#) with the White House over its proposed elimination of federal spending on the popular Great Lakes Restoration Initiative during a swing through Minnesota. The press shop this afternoon circulated to reporters an excerpt from a Minnesota Star Tribune [opinion piece](#) lauding Pruitt's support for the program — but EPA's email did not include the article's last paragraph warning Pruitt that industry cannot police itself and that "Minnesotans will be watching carefully."

PERRY TWEETS: Energy Secretary Rick Perry signaled he's working with Oregon Rep. [Greg Walden](#), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "Thanks @repgregwalden for joining me for lunch. Looking forward to working together with our friends @HouseCommerce toward #EnergyDominance," Perry wrote in a [tweet](#), which also featured a photo of the two men.

REPORT: TILLERSON EXIT POSSIBLE: CNN reports today Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was turned off by Trump's public rebuke of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, so much so that a "Rexit" from Foggy Bottom would not at all be surprising to two sources who spoke to the network. The former ExxonMobil CEO "has a growing list of differences with the White House, including a new debate over Iran policy and personnel," CNN reports. "His frustration is hardly a secret and it has spilled out publicly at times. But friends sense a change of late." Two sources told CNN there has been "a noticeable increase in the secretary's frustration and his doubts that the tug-of-war with the White House would subside anytime soon." But the two "also acknowledged it could have been venting after a tough week, a suggestion several DC-based sources made when asked if they saw evidence Tillerson was looking for an exit strategy." Read it [here](#).

STATE AGS FILE CHEMICAL SAFETY SUIT: New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, along with a group of 10 other state AGs, filed a [lawsuit](#) today against EPA for "illegally delaying a vital rule meant to protect communities, workers, and first responders from dangerous chemical accidents," his office [announced](#). The group is taking aim at the 20-month delay of a chemical safety rule by the agency for facilities with toxic chemicals on site, POLITICO New York's Marie J. French [reports](#). The lawsuit, which was filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, argues that the EPA's delay exceeds the agency's authority under the Clean Air Act. AGs from Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington all signed onto the lawsuit.

SIERRA FILES INTENT TO SUE GEORGIA POWER: The Sierra Club today [announced](#) it has served a notice of intent to sue electric utility Georgia Power, in order to block the company from draining its ash ponds at 11 coal-burning power plant sites, "without getting updated permits that would protect waterways and the public's health." In a statement, Stephen Stetson, the group's senior representative for its Beyond Coal campaign in Georgia, said: "Today's filing puts Georgia Power on notice that we'll fight to make sure they adhere to the critical public health protections in the Clean Water Act before they start pumping water

from these toxic coal ash ponds into our lakes and rivers."

A LOOK AT TRUMP APPROVAL IN KEY SENATE STATES: Trump's approval rating averages above 50 percent among adults in 3 out of 10 states he won in November that were held by Senate Democrats, Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard reports. According to a new Gallup poll of the first five months of Trump's presidency, Trump's "average approval rating in Sen. [Joe Manchin](#)'s West Virginia averages 60 percent, with just 35 percent disapproval. In North Dakota, where Republicans are still trying to find a recruit against Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#), Trump's approval rating has averaged 59 percent, with 36 percent disapproval. And in Montana, home to Sen. [Jon Tester](#), 56 percent approve and 41 percent disapprove," Kevin [writes](#). More Missourians approve of Trump's performance than disapprove, 49 percent to 46 percent, but the president's numbers are underwater in the other six states where Democrats are defending Senate seats next year. In Arizona, Nevada and Texas, where Republican Senate incumbents are seeking reelection, at least half of adults disapprove of Trump's performance. Read the poll summary [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Warren Buffet is building up a 'recession resistant' energy powerhouse, [Los Angeles Times](#).
- West Virginia orders Energy Transfer to stop work on Rover pipeline, [Reuters](#).
- Scaramucci once accepted warming. Now he's a 'subordinate,' [E&E News](#).
- The troubling return of Al Gore, [New Republic](#).
- Halliburton revenues jump nearly 30 percent, [Houston Chronicle](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- GOP despairs at [inability to deliver](#)
- Kushner defends his Russia contacts: ['I did not collude'](#)
- [Priebus sidelined](#) as Washington outsiders' power grows

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vFizh5> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/07/former-epa-official-expected-to-be-air-office-pick-023892>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump expected to pick Bush EPA official turned industry lawyer for agency's air office
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By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 10:03 AM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to nominate Bill Wehrum, a former George W. Bush-era EPA official, to run the agency's powerful air office, according to two sources outside the administration familiar with the plans.

While Wehrum would bring critical knowledge of EPA's workings and environmental law, he also represents several high-profile industry groups in lawsuits challenging numerous Obama-era EPA regulations, meaning he may face recusal and conflict issues similar to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Wehrum served as acting assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation from 2005 to 2007. Bush pulled Wehrum's formal nomination to that post after Democrats blocked him as too industry-friendly, though the new simple majority threshold on nominees likely will prevent that from happening again. Wehrum spent 2001-2005 as counsel to Jeff Holmstead, Bush's first air administrator. Holmstead [emerged](#) last month as a possible Trump pick to be EPA deputy administrator, though coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler remains the frontrunner for that job.

In a 2013 [interview](#) with Law360, Wehrum said that despite the Supreme Court's 2007 ruling that said EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases, he believes "Congress never intended the EPA to address an issue such as climate change under the Clean Air Act."

He also called for lengthening the review cycle for National Ambient Air Quality Standards beyond five years — House Republicans recently passed a bill that would stretch that to ten years — and said the Obama administration tried to shift power away from the states and toward EPA, comments since echoed by Pruitt.

And in a 2015 Wall Street Journal [editorial](#), Wehrum said the EPA-caused Gold King mine spill highlighted how the agency "often criminalizes actions that are nothing more than accidents, many far less damaging to the environment than the Animas River disaster." That spill fouled Colorado's Animas River and downstream areas for several weeks before water quality [returned to normal](#) and the river was reopened to recreational activities.

Wehrum pointed to the 2014 chemical spill that fouled drinking water for hundreds of thousands of West Virginia residents, which led to an EPA investigation and the company's bankruptcy, as an example of "unjust" treatment.

For the last decade Wehrum has been a partner at the high-powered D.C. law firm Hunton & Williams, where he currently represents high-profile clients, including two leading oil and gas industry lobbying groups, in a number of ongoing lawsuits against EPA.

Wehrum represents the American Petroleum Institute in a challenge to EPA's methane rule for new oil and gas wells, as well as the separate legal battle over EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's decision to stay that rule while under review, where API has defended Pruitt's stay.

He also represents either API or American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, a refinery sector group, in lawsuits over a 2015 rule limiting pollution from oil refineries; a ["regional consistency" rule](#) that governs how court rulings apply to nationwide EPA regulations; and permitting rules for Indian lands.

He represents the Utility Air Regulatory Group, a coalition that challenges EPA air regulations, in a legal challenge over an Obama-era rule meant to decrease explosions at

chemical plants and other facilities. Pruitt has put that rule on hold while it is under review.

Wehrum helped the Gas Processors Association challenge two greenhouse gas reporting rules. He took an EPA boiler regulation to court on behalf of a coalition of industry groups, including the American Chemistry Council, the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Forest & Paper Association. He is challenging an EPA emissions rule for brick manufacturers on behalf of an industry group. And he represented construction interests in various lawsuits against the Labor Department, including an ongoing challenge to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's 2016 silica exposure rule.

Wehrum did not immediately reply to a request for comment on Monday. EPA and White House spokespeople did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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BLM proposes withdrawing Obama-era fracking rule [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/24/2017 10:04 AM EDT

The Interior Department is calling for comments on a plan to rescind an Obama-era rule setting regulations for hydraulic fracturing on federal land.

"BLM believes that the 2015 final rule unnecessarily burdens industry with compliance costs and information requirements that are duplicative of regulatory programs of many states and some tribes," the agency said in a [proposal](#) to rescind the rule to be filed in the Federal Register Tuesday.

Interior has signaled for months that it would either rewrite, suspend or rescind the rule BLM put in place in 2015 requiring drillers to publicly disclose what chemicals they put in their fracking fluids and perform well integrity tests before drilling. Focus on the rule is heating up as more [rigs](#) are being put to work this year amid a recovery from the market crash of recent ago.

Environmental groups have said the rule is necessary to ensure dangerous chemicals don't leak out of fracked wells and into water supplies. President Donald Trump singled out the rule for review in a March [executive order](#), however, arguing that it burdened domestic energy production.

The rule never went into effect, having been fought over in court as soon as it was issued. Environmental groups and oil and gas companies are waging a legal battle whether BLM has jurisdiction over drilling procedures.

WHAT'S NEXT: BLM's call for comments will last for 60 days.

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Pruitt spent significant time in Oklahoma in spring, records show [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 10:49 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt spent 43 days in March, April and May on trips to his home state of Oklahoma, according to travel records obtained by the watchdog group Environmental Integrity Project.

The [records](#), released under the Freedom of Information Act, include weekend trips home as well as official business in the state, such as a tour of a chemical plant or an awards event hosted by the Oklahoma Well Strippers Association. The records indicate Pruitt [sometimes](#) paid his own airfare but often went at the government's expense.

"These travel records show that Administrator Pruitt is more focused on cultivating his relationships with industry and conservative political organizations in his home state of Oklahoma than he is on protecting the environment and the public health for the rest of America," EIP Executive Director Eric Schaeffer said in a statement.

The group will ask EPA's inspector general to investigate Pruitt's travel Monday, an EIP spokesman said. As precedent, he pointed to a 2015 IG [report](#) on a regional administrator who scheduled more than half of his official trips to areas near his home in California's Orange County, some of which the IG questioned.

EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in a statement that Pruitt was focused on running EPA, "not running for elected office. The administrator's travel, whether to Utah, Michigan or Oklahoma, all serves the purpose of hearing from hard-working Americans about how EPA can better serve the American people."

Pruitt said at an industry conference in May that his wife would join him in living in Washington this summer since both their children are both now in college, which could decrease his weekend trips home to Oklahoma.

Pruitt's predecessor, Gina McCarthy, paid her own way for trips home to Boston approximately every other week, according to an EIP spokesman.

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Gallup: Trump approval ratings in key Senate states [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 07/24/2017 10:32 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's approval rating averages above 50 percent among adults in three of the ten states he won in November held by Senate Democrats, according to [Gallup's polling summary](#) of the first five months of his presidency.

Trump's average approval rating in Sen. [Joe Manchin](#)'s West Virginia averages 60 percent,

with just 35 percent disapproval. In North Dakota, where Republicans are still trying to find a recruit against Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#), Trump's approval rating has averaged 59 percent, with 36 percent disapproval. And in Montana, home to Sen. [Jon Tester](#), 56 percent approve and 41 percent disapprove.

The president's numbers are almost certainly better among registered and likely voters, which lean more Republican than the total adult population. But the numbers provide the most detailed state-by-state look at Trump's popularity since the 2016 election.

Republicans already hold the other 14 states where Trump's approval rating topped 50 percent in the first half of the year.

Missouri is the only other Democratic-held state where Trump's approval among adults outweighs his disapproval, 49 percent to 46 percent. In Ohio and Indiana, 47 percent approve on average with 48 percent disapproval. In Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, 43 percent approve on average with 52 percent disapproval. Michigan sees an average 42 percent approval and 52 percent disapproval, while Florida sees 42 percent approval and 51 percent disapproval.

Trump's ratings are similar among adults in Arizona, Nevada and Texas, where three Republican senators are up for reelection next year. Forty-four percent approved of Trump in Nevada, with 50 percent disapproval. In Arizona, 43 percent approved and 52 percent disapproved. And in Texas, 42 percent approved and 51 percent disapproved on average.

Across all 50 states, Trump's approval rating has averaged 40 percent. The polls are based on interviews with more than 81,000 U.S. adults from Jan. 20 to June 20.

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GOP despairs at inability to deliver [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson and Josh Dawsey | 07/23/2017 11:54 PM EDT

The Republican Party is more powerful than it's been in more than a decade — and yet it has rarely seemed so weak.

Continuing chaos in the White House has been punctuated by the failure to deliver on the GOP's seven-year pledge to overhaul Obamacare and has many asking whether the party can capitalize on the sweeping election victories it has achieved at the federal, state and local levels.

Ahead of this week's crucial Senate vote on health care, White House aides are considering how to distance Donald Trump from Congress and how to go after the Republicans who vote no — an idea the president seems fond of, according to people who have spoken to him. Several people said he plans to keep up the fight, no matter how this week's vote goes.

Trump threatened Republicans on Twitter, writing Sunday that they would face electoral consequences, and complained about his party not defending him — even though congressional Republicans are tired of defending him all the time.

"It's very sad that Republicans, even some that were carried over the line on my back, do very little to protect their President," he wrote.

Meanwhile, people close to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell say they are frustrated that the president has shown little focus on his political agenda, particularly health care. Trump's interview with The New York Times last week, for example, in which he raged about Attorney General Jeff Sessions instead of promoting health care, was "political malpractice," one senior GOP aide said.

With control of both Congress and the White House — and yet no major legislative successes to point to — the Republican Party is finding itself stuck. A GOP Congress is frustrated with the president and unsure what will happen next in his daily West Wing drama. And Trump wants to sign legislation to show he is effective and is frustrated bills are not on his desk.

A sudden White House shakeup on Friday made it even more clear that Trump, who campaigned as an outsider, is determined to govern as one, too — and not listen to McConnell, House Speaker Paul Ryan or other orthodox allies. The president expanded the power of the political neophytes in his administration, elevating Manhattan hedge fund manager Anthony Scaramucci to White House communications director, at the cost of an operative — press secretary Sean Spicer, who announced his resignation on Friday — with years of Washington experience.

Spicer was not the only establishment casualty. Reince Priebus, the White House chief of staff who, at least in title, holds one of the most powerful jobs in Washington, has been largely sidelined. Several West Wing aides suggested he should quit — and wondered Sunday why he doesn't, according to White House aides and advisers.

The hire of Scaramucci was the biggest shot yet at Priebus, White House officials say, because he was opposed by Priebus, will report directly to Trump and will be far more powerful than a normal communications director.

Let "the president be the president" is how Scaramucci described his new job in a Fox News interview on Sunday, an indication that the newly shaken-up White House will be the same as the old — where, last Wednesday, the president scheduled and conducted the blockbuster interview with the Times with the assistance of a single communications aide, Hope Hicks, and without the knowledge of his senior advisers.

Even Trump supporters are beginning to express frustration with the constant chaos in the West Wing. "There are a lot of missed opportunities," said Julius Krein, who founded the pro-Trump journal American Affairs in February in an effort to give the Trump movement some intellectual heft. "It has all degenerated into D.C. tempests and teapots," Krein said, characterizing policies championed by the administration in the first six months as "mediocre conventional Republicanism with a lot more noise."

While Trump has specialized in delivering self-inflicted blows, the Senate Republican Conference is demonstrating that it, too, is capable of administering them.

Sens. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) ground the legislative process to a halt with their surprise announcement last week — made without informing McConnell or the White House — that they would not support the bill.

But several people involved in the process, including three chiefs of staff to lawmakers poised to support the bill, complained that McConnell ran a process that was ultimately too secretive and kept a stranglehold on information. And he has yet to speak with Lee personally since the senator's defection July 17, according to a Lee aide.

The Senate is expected to vote Tuesday on a motion to proceed to a vote on the bill, though it's not clear McConnell has the votes he needs to advance the measure.

News that Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) is suffering from an aggressive brain tumor cast a darker pall on the week's events.

The frustration at the inability to deliver on the long-held promise of repealing Obamacare is also deepening the soul-searching among Republicans.

Trump's rise had already exacerbated a point of internal Republican debate between limited-government conservatives and the blue-collar voters Trump helped draw into the party, voters who were essential to the victories of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, and with whom George H.W. Bush and Mitt Romney failed to connect.

Many of the latter rely on government subsidies and programs. "You have Republicans who run against Obamacare but actually like Obamacare," Florida Rep. Ron DeSantis told the Washington Examiner last week.

Ohio Sen. Rob Portman and West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito both represent states that Trump carried by sizable margins but that expanded Medicaid under Obamacare and have large populations afflicted by the opioid epidemic; both expressed reservations about the Senate bill. Vice President Mike Pence spent time over the weekend with Portman in Ohio, and Trump was to appear in West Virginia on Monday.

The intractability of the Obamacare repeal debate has some conservatives wondering whether the ideological tide is moving against limited government altogether. "If a Republican won this time around, it was going to show that maybe Obama was this historic exception. He got in there because of the financial crisis and then again because of a flawed opponent in Romney," said Rich Lowry, editor of National Review. "Now it looks like Trump might just be a very temporary break. It's a very bad situation."

But several top Republicans, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a close ally of the Trump administration, said that the effort to roll back Obamacare is not dead yet, and conservatives warned GOP lawmakers that failure will have dire repercussions.

"If this fails, it is a disaster for them. They will lose their moral authority to get anything done and lead. There will be a real breakdown of the Republican Senate," said David McIntosh, president of the Club for Growth.

White House officials and lawmakers alike worried that a setback on health care would snowball, making tax reform and an infrastructure bill more difficult. "The fear is that we look impotent, that it makes things harder for the debt ceiling and that it makes tax reform harder," said a senior administration official.

To add to those woes, the Russia-related inquiries that have enraged the president show no signs of abating. The president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, answered questions before the

Senate Intelligence Committee on Monday and is scheduled to do so again Tuesday with the House Intelligence Committee. Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort are also scheduled to testify before Congress in the coming days. Meanwhile, Trump himself was to address more than 40,000 Boy Scouts on Monday at their annual Jamboree in West Virginia, a state he carried by 42 points.

Against the backdrop of White House chaos and congressional paralysis, McCain's diagnosis, the proximate cause of Lee's and Moran's announcement that they had decided to sink the health care bill, seemed a literal manifestation of an illness in the GOP. His status as an American hero who has drawn bipartisan admiration during his 3 1/2 decades in Washington evoked nostalgia for the political establishment that Trump, the putative head of the GOP, was elected to raze.

"The only thing that makes it somewhat complicated is that the conventional establishment, while less chaotic, their record over the past 30 years is pretty bad. That makes it harder to desire a reversion to that sort of mode," Krein said.

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Kushner defends his Russia contacts: 'I did not collude' [Back](#)

By Annie Karni | 07/24/2017 06:03 AM EDT

In his first public defense of his meetings with Russian officials during Donald Trump's campaign and transition, Jared Kushner on Monday presented his encounters with those operatives as innocent interactions, according to testimony submitted to Senate investigators.

In an 11-page opening statement to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is part of the ongoing investigation into possible collusion between Russian officials and the Trump campaign, Kushner — now a senior White House adviser — attempted to exonerate himself, writing: "I did not collude, nor know of anyone else in the campaign who colluded, with any foreign government."

Instead, the powerful son-in-law painted a picture of himself as a loyal, overworked, under-experienced senior adviser to his father-in-law during a novice campaign that was never staffed up to win.

Kushner reiterated the message in a brief statement to reporters gathered outside the White House after testifying for more than two hours to the Senate panel. He took no questions.

But the remarks, designed to look fully transparent and take Kushner out of the Russia investigation spotlight, appeared to raise more questions about Kushner's judgment than it answered.

To wit: the former real estate developer explained the glaring omissions on his security clearance forms — which did not originally include several meetings with Russian officials that have since come to light — as an honest mistake made by his assistant at the time. And like others in the Trump orbit who met with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak before

Inauguration Day, Kushner also said he had trouble remembering the official after their first brief, previously unreported encounter at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. — the same event where Attorney General Jeff Sessions met with, but didn't remember, the Russian ambassador.

Overall, his account of events "still feels incomplete, it was not fulsome," Evelyn Farkas, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, said of the testimony. "I still wonder exactly what he discussed with Kislyak" in his subsequent conversations to the Mayflower meeting, she said. But more importantly, she added, Kushner's testimony provides no explanation for why he was cavalier in his interactions with Russians after intelligence community reports that Russia tried to meddle in the U.S. election.

"After that," Farkas said, "why not alert the FBI? It doesn't exhibit good judgment, or concerns for national security or the integrity of our democracy to be taking those meetings with the Russians."

The testimony also raised questions about how a man who blamed multiple foul-ups on sloppy paperwork, unread emails and misunderstandings, is overseeing such a vast portfolio as he does in the White House. As a top West Wing official, Kushner's situation does not appear to have changed much since the campaign: he still operates with a bare-bones staff, little bureaucracy, and impossible burdens (see: overseeing the Middle East peace process while also innovating the entire federal government).

"I am not a person who has sought the spotlight," Kushner says in his opening statement, according to a copy provided to POLITICO. But he explains that after Trump clinched the Republican nomination, his father-in-law asked Kushner to be the point of contact for foreign governments, and he was in touch with emissaries from 15 different countries, including Russia. To put his hectic life and schedule into context — and explain away his presence at a meeting where a Russian lawyer was hawking opposition research about Hillary Clinton — he also writes that he typically received about 200 emails a day during the campaign, and often didn't read through every exchange.

In his opening testimony, Kushner walks through each of his four meetings with the Russians, downplaying all of them to brief, pro forma interactions that lead to no follow-ups.

"I had no ongoing relationship with the Ambassador before the election, and had limited knowledge about him then," he writes of Kislyak, with whom he reportedly tried to set up a communications backchannel during the transition. "In fact, on November 9, the day after the election, I could not even remember the name of the Russian Ambassador."

Trying to prove his point, he adds: "when the campaign received an email purporting to be an official note of congratulations from President Putin, I was asked how we could verify it was real. To do so I thought the best way would be to ask the only contact I recalled meeting from the Russian government, which was the Ambassador I had met months earlier, so I sent an email asking Mr. [Demetri] Simes [the publisher of a foreign policy magazine], 'What is the name of the Russian ambassador?'"

Kushner also responds to a Reuters report that he had two follow-up calls with Kislyak. "A comprehensive review of my landline and cell phone records from the time does not reveal those calls," he says of the reported calls in April and August of 2016.

His second interaction with a Russian official was the now infamous Donald Trump, Jr. meeting with the Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, that June.

Kushner claims he had no idea what he was walking into. An email from his brother-in-law reminds him of the time change to 4 p.m. for the Trump Tower meeting, and Kushner writes that it was not abnormal to pop into each other's offices for meetings. "That email was on top of a long back and forth that I did not read at the time," he writes. "Documents confirm my memory that this was calendared as 'Meeting: Don Jr. | Jared Kushner. No one else was mentioned.'"

The meeting, where Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, Trump, Jr., and campaign operative Paul Manafort and four other people were discussing Russian adoptions and were gathered to exchange information about Hillary Clinton, was outside of his purview, he writes.

"I actually emailed an assistant from the meeting after I had been there for ten or so minutes and wrote 'Can u pls call me on my cell? Need excuse to get out of meeting,' Kushner writes. "No part of the meeting I attended included anything about the campaign, there was no follow up to the meeting that I am aware of, I do not recall how many people were there (or their names), and I have no knowledge of any documents being offered or accepted."

His third and final contact with a potential Russian agent, he claims, was a hoax email he received from a hacker trying to obtain Trump's tax returns.

During the transition, he said, his only meeting with Kislyak lasted 23 minutes.

"I stated our desire for a fresh start in relations," he says of the meeting where Kushner reportedly tried to set up a backchannel of communication. It was Kislyak, Kushner writes, that brought up U.S. policy in Syria, and said "he wanted to convey information from what he called 'his generals,'" Kushner writes. "He said he wanted to provide information that would help inform the new administration. He said the generals could not easily come to the U.S. to convey this information and he asked if there was a secure line in the transition office to conduct a conversation."

Former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and Kushner explained to him that there was not. "I believed developing a thoughtful approach on Syria was a very high priority given the ongoing humanitarian crisis," he explains. "and I asked if they had an existing communications channel at his embassy we could use where they would be comfortable transmitting the information they wanted to relay to General Flynn. The Ambassador said that would not be possible and so we all agreed that we would receive this information after the Inauguration."

Kushner said he declined two attempts by Kislyak in December for a follow-up, eventually sending his assistant instead. It was there that Kislyak recommended that Kushner sit down with Sergey Gorkov, the head of a Kremlin-linked Russian bank. All that was exchanged, he said, was a humble piece of art and a bag of dirt from the Belarus village where his grandparents were born.

"There were no specific policies discussed," he said. "We had no discussion about the sanctions imposed by the Obama Administration. At no time was there any discussion about my companies, business transactions, real estate projects, loans, banking arrangements or any private business of any kind."

The Putin-linked bank, however, has provided a different explanation. The Washington Post reported that the bank claimed the meeting was part of a new business strategy and that it was held with Kushner in his role as the head of his family's real estate business, Kushner Companies.

As for the confusion about his security clearance forms, he blames the omissions on an assistant.

"[People at my New York office] sent an email to my assistant in Washington, communicating that the changes to one particular section were complete; my assistant interpreted that message as meaning that the entire form was completed," he writes. "At that point, the form was a rough draft and still had many omissions including not listing any foreign government contacts and even omitted the address of my father-in-law (which was obviously well known). Because of this miscommunication, my assistant submitted the draft on January 18, 2017."

But lawyers cast doubt on his hurried explanation of the gaps on his security clearance forms. "The idea he'd have his staff fill out the questionnaire is beyond belief itself," said Nick Akerman, a former assistant Watergate prosecutor, noting the process requires a physical signature. "Someone on this committee has to go through this point by point and take him through this whole process."

Kushner is so rarely heard from in public that when he spoke, briefly, at a tech conference earlier this summer, many people joked they didn't know what his voice sounded like. "It has been my practice not to appear in the media or leak information in my own defense," Kushner notes in his testimony. But it won't be his last time on the stand.

Kushner, who will face a second grilling by the House on Tuesday, has been preparing for both sessions with his lawyers. He claims, at the end of his lengthy statement: "I had no improper contacts. I have not relied on Russian funds to finance my business activities in the private sector. I have tried to be fully transparent with regard to the filing of my SF-86 form, above and beyond what is required."

While Kushner and his aides may be hoping to make him a less juicy target than other former Trump officials under investigation, like Manafort and Trump, Jr., the statement is only the beginning of the story.

"The key," said Peter Zeidenberg, who served on the Justice Department's special prosecution team during the Valerie Plame Wilson CIA leak investigation, "will be how this story holds up to a thorough cross-examination."

Darren Samuelsohn contributed to this report.

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Priebus sidelined as Washington outsiders' power grows [Back](#)

By Tara Palmeri | 07/24/2017 05:10 AM EDT

Reince Priebus took the punishing job of President Donald Trump's chief of staff with the idea that he would stick it out for at least one year.

Six months in, with one of his top allies in the West Wing — press secretary Sean Spicer — on his way out, Priebus is in defensive mode, his role diminished and an internal rival hogging the limelight.

Trump's decision to bring Wall Street financier Anthony Scaramucci into the role of communications director shows the rising power of political outsiders and the diminished influence of establishment figures — which Priebus, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, epitomizes.

One White House official and two outside advisers said that while Scaramucci was brought into the White House for the communications job, he's considered an internal candidate to eventually succeed Priebus as chief of staff. There are also a handful of outside candidates.

The unexpected hire has raised questions of whether more shake-ups are coming, even as the White House [has tried to downplay](#) its internal discord. The instability has made it difficult for the administration to fend off questions about ties between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia and to move forward an embattled legislative agenda.

Despite frequent reports his position is in jeopardy, Priebus hopes to finish out his year, according to people close to him. He is eyeing another big hurdle this week of getting the health care bill to pass through the Senate, defenders said Sunday.

"Reince is focused on driving the president's bold agenda, and that has been and always will be his top priority," White House deputy press secretary Lindsay Walters said.

Still, his stature in the White House appears to be shrinking. Priebus was fiercely opposed to hiring Scaramucci, saying the former financier had no prior experience in government communications. They have been at odds with each other since Scaramucci was passed over for the director of public liaison role in February.

Scaramucci made clear to reporters on Friday that he reports directly to Trump, not Priebus, even though the chief of staff would typically oversee communications and other portfolios.

Special assistant and social media director Dan Scavino also [tweeted on Saturday](#) that he reports directly to the president.

"In a normal White House, every staffer reports to the chief of staff," said Republican strategist Alex Conant. "Any staffer who believes that they don't report to the chief of staff is going to be a potential headache for the chief of staff."

Scaramucci also said he plans to reset the culture of the White House communications shop so that it is focused on protecting the president. Republicans in and out of the White House have grumbled that the press operation, which is staffed with RNC alums including outgoing press secretary Spicer, was disorganized in its defense of Trump's actions but always eager to boost Priebus.

"I would like to reset the culture inside the comms department so that people recognize that I'm actually there to serve them, and they're going to be working with me, not for me," Scaramucci said on FOX News. "That's a very big distinction. And that all of us are there to

serve the president of the United States and his agenda."

Scaramucci has [promised](#) to "audit" the communications shop, and many staffers who are closely aligned with Priebus are bracing for their fate, multiple White House officials said.

In a White House full of internal fiefdoms, Spicer is the third senior staffer brought into the White House by Priebus who has been shown the door. After the House failed on its first attempt to pass a health care bill, Priebus' deputy chief of staff Katie Walsh was pushed out. [She has since returned to the RNC](#). Former communications director Mike Dubke also [resigned](#) in May.

"His strength was in his people," a close White House adviser to Trump said of Reince. "He didn't have personal clout, he had organizational clout, so losing another staffer is eroding his organizational clout."

Priebus also has a reduced policy footprint now that the action on health care has moved to the Senate.

He's seen as a "House guy" because of his close relationship with House Speaker Paul Ryan. Once the Senate took over, Priebus allowed Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to work with the White House legislative affairs shop and Vice President Mike Pence.

When that effort floundered, Trump brought in outside help instead of leaning harder on his chief of staff. He [has called upon his former campaign aides](#) Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie to help strong-arm senators to support the bill.

Still, with face-time key to staffers' influence, Priebus remains at Trump's side often. He had lunch with the president Saturday at his golf course in northern Virginia, a sign to some aides that Priebus' position is safe.

"He's still the White House chief of staff," the Trump adviser said, before adding: "For now."

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Chevron: Oil, coal state senators push for RFS deal — FERC: We're good — Murray urges "no" vote on NASA pick
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 3:27:16 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/26/2017 03:25 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Esther Whieldon

OIL, COAL STATE SENATORS PRESS TRUMP FOR RFS DEAL: Nine oil- and coal-state Republicans — led by Texas Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) — are demanding President Donald Trump meet with them and Midwestern senators to consider changes to the Renewable Fuel Standard. "We request that within the next three weeks you convene a meeting regarding the RFS and pro-jobs policies with us, our Senate colleagues who previously lobbied you on behalf of the ethanol industry, and relevant members of your administration to discuss a pathway forward toward a mutually agreeable solution that will also save refining jobs and help unleash an American energy renaissance," the senators wrote in a [letter](#) to Trump sent Wednesday, but obtained by POLITICO today.

Senate Republicans are largely split on the RFS: "Oil state lawmakers are furious over their corn-state colleagues' ability to quash efforts to alter the biofuel mandate," Eric Wolff [reports](#). Refiners argue that high prices of credits needed to comply with the RFS could push some refiners out of business. The final rule for RFS volumes is due Nov. 30.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

FERC: WE'RE GOOD: FERC refrained from calling for widespread reform within its agency rules in its response to the White House's executive order calling on agencies to identify rules that are burdensome to domestic energy resources. FERC released a [15-page document](#) that says agency staff voluntarily reviewed hydropower licensing, liquefied natural gas facility and gas pipeline siting, electric capacity policy in the three eastern power markets, and electric generator interconnection policy. "Hydropower licensing was the only subject staff said might benefit from reform, highlighting that the commission could consider allowing certain applications to be resubmitted if they're initially rejected," Darius Dixon reports. More [here](#).

NOW IT'S PERSONAL: A federal commission said today it will require coal magnate Robert Murray to personally tell his miners that he violated a key safety law. "Murray made PowerPoint presentations at five West Virginia mines in 2014 to 3,500 miners directing employees to alert their managers to any safety complaints made to the Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration — even though the law allows those complaints to be submitted anonymously," Alex Guillén [reports](#). An administrative law judge at Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission said in 2015 that Murray's policy was "calculated to discourage miners from using the MSHA complaint process." She [fined](#) the company and ordered Murray as CEO to read a message to his miners informing them that they are not required to report MSHA complaints to management. Murray argued that the requirement was punitive, but at a public meeting today, "the four FMSHRC commissioners agreed that Murray

had waived his right to appeal the order because the company did not properly object to it in prior proceedings, and thus they will require Murray to read the message," Alex writes.

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find safer ways to deliver energy. We're piloting a program that uses drones to monitor tanks and pipelines. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2yXRtrd> **

NEW YORK WILL SUE EPA: New York State [says it will sue](#) EPA for missing a key deadline to issue a federal plan tackling smog-forming pollution that floats across state lines, Alex [reports](#). Back in August 2015, the agency said 24 states had not created strong enough plans to curb their ozone emissions to reduce pollution in downwind states, but it missed an August 2017 deadline to issue federal implementation plans for those states. "With this action, New York makes it clear that we will not stand idly by as other states shun their responsibility to keep our nation's air quality safe," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement. Five of the 24 states — Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia — contribute to New York's levels.

HOUSE NARROWLY PASSES BUDGET: The House passed 216-212 the fiscal 2018 budget today, scoring a victory in the Republican crusade to overhaul the tax code. The measure, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), unleashes a special procedural power allowing the Senate to move forward on a tax reform bill, as well as opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling, with a simple majority vote rather than a 60-member threshold normally required. More [here](#).

— **After the budget was passed, the League of Conservation Voters launched** new digital ads thanking senators, "who are working to stop this shameful effort to sell out the iconic landscape to polluters and encouraging others to join them," LCV said in a release. The ads come as part of LCV's \$200,000 push to stop Congress from approving ANWR drilling through the reconciliation. The ads specifically thank Sens. [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.), [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) and [Michael Bennet](#) (D-Colo.) for their amendment last week to remove the drilling language. LCV also thanks Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) and [Angus King](#) (I-Maine) for voting to protect the refuge, but it criticizes Sen. [Cory Gardner](#) (R-Colo.) for "siding with polluters." Watch the sample ads [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

COURT WON'T DELAY BRICK MACT ARGUMENTS: A three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today [said](#) it will not postpone oral arguments over the Obama administration's brick MACT, which ratcheted down emissions limits for brick manufacturers. EPA earlier this month asked for an indefinite delay and for the case to be put on hold amid an agency review of the rule, potentially followed by revision or repeal. Though industry interests supported EPA's request, environmental challengers did not. The court did leave open the possibility that it will ultimately not decide on the rule; the order issued today instructs the parties to be prepared to discuss at arguments whether the case should be delayed further. Arguments will take place before Judges Judith Rogers, Patricia Millett and David Sentelle on Nov. 9.

MURRAY URGES 'NO' VOTE ON NASA PICK: Sen. [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.) is urging her fellow Democrats to oppose the president's pick to head NASA, calling him "a dangerous choice to lead the agency." Murray [sent a letter](#) to leaders of the Senate Commerce Committee today criticizing the NASA nominee, Rep. [Jim Bridenstine](#) (R-Okla.), for his denial of climate change science, as well as his "opposition to equal rights" for women, immigrants and LGBT individuals. "It is clear Rep. Bridenstine would move us backwards not forwards and I urge

you to vote against his nomination," Murray said in the letter. Bridenstine's confirmation hearing is set for Nov. 1. Pro Defense's Jacqueline Klimas reports more [here](#).

WHITE HOUSE TAPS COAL CONSULTANT FOR OSMR: The White House today [announced](#) the president plans to nominate Kentucky mining consultant Steven Gardner to be director of the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Gardner is president and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a Lexington, Ky., consulting firm, which he "focused on mining issues and worked as a subcontractor to help draft environmental documents for the Obama OSMRE's stream protection rule," Esther Whieldon reports. Congress and the Trump administration repealed that rule earlier this year under a Congressional Review Act resolution. More on Gardner's background [here](#).

ZINKE CREATES EXPEDITED PERMITTING TEAM: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Wednesday signed [Secretarial Order No. 3358](#) creating an Executive Committee for Expedited Permitting that will be led by Zinke's Energy Policy Counselor Vincent DeVito and will consist entirely of politicals from the secretary's office, including Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt and the five assistant secretaries that oversee the Interior's bureaus, Indian Affairs and handle policy, management and budget. The team will be in charge of implementing Interior's plans for streamline permitting and the group's directive includes identifying energy right-of-way corridors on federal lands where projects proposed in those areas would receive expedited processing.

THANKSGIVING PARADED: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) is telling his members they should prepare to work into Thanksgiving break, POLITICO's Seung Min Kim reports today. "McConnell told GOP senators in meetings earlier this week that the chamber very well could stay in session the weekend before the week of Thanksgiving, as well as the week of the holiday, according to two senior Republican sources," Seung Min reports. Of course, a similar warning went out last week that didn't pan out — the Senate left Washington late Thursday after clearing its budget resolution — but as Republicans face tax reform and other critical legislative tasks, "an increasingly vocal faction of McConnell's conference has been urging leadership to stay in session longer, even 24-7 if necessary." More [here](#).

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- U.S. marine sanctuary oil drilling report sent to Trump, not public, [Reuters](#).
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- Tillerson's [power play](#)

— [Mnuchin struggles](#) to earn trust on the Hill

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

FERC rule review recommends few changes [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/26/2017 11:05 AM EDT

FERC largely patted itself on the back in its response to the White House's executive order calling on agencies to sniff out rules potentially burdensome to domestic energy resources.

The [15-page document](#) says agency staff voluntarily reviewed four areas of FERC work: hydropower licensing, liquefied natural gas facility and gas pipeline siting, electric capacity policy in the three eastern power markets, and electric generator interconnection policy.

Hydropower licensing was the only subject staff said might benefit from reform, highlighting that the commission could consider allowing certain applications to be resubmitted if they're initially rejected.

When the agency explored its 180-day "pre-filing" process for LNG terminals, the report says that procedure may slow some projects but is worthwhile because it allows potential issues to be addressed early.

"Thus, although this regulation may result in delays or additional costs to the applicant early on in a project's development, its overall result is a more timely application review by considering all issues regarding a project concurrently," staff wrote. "As such, there is no need for the Commission to consider any revision to this regulation."

When it came to generation interconnection policies, FERC listed a half-dozen orders the agency has issued to make the process as efficient as possible and said: "None of these orders materially burden the development or use of domestic energy resources."

WHAT'S NEXT: The report is a staff product and the report warns that it "does not specifically recommend actions nor indicate the timing of any potential action."

To view online [click here](#).

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Commission will require Murray to read safety message after violation [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/26/2017 11:21 AM EDT

An federal commission today said that it will require coal magnate Robert Murray, a major supporter of President Donald Trump, to personally tell his miners that he violated a key safety law.

Murray made PowerPoint presentations at five West Virginia mines in 2014 to 3,500 miners directing employees to alert their managers to any safety complaints made to the Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration — even though the law allows those complaints to be submitted anonymously.

An administrative law judge at Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, which deals with violations of the 1977 Mine Act, said in 2015 that Murray's policy was "calculated to discourage miners from using the MSHA complaint process." She [fined](#) the company \$150,000 and ordered Murray as CEO to read a message, either in person or via videoconference, to his miners informing them that they are not required to report MSHA complaints to management.

Murray argued that the requirement was punitive and meant largely to humiliate him.

But at a public meeting today, the four FMSHRC commissioners agreed that Murray had waived his right to appeal the order because the company did not properly object to it in prior proceedings, and thus they will require Murray to read the message.

WHAT'S NEXT: After the commission issues its formal decision as early as next month, Murray will be able to appeal to either the 4th Circuit in Richmond, Va., or the D.C. Circuit.

To view online [click here](#).

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Judge slaps Murray over intimidation of miners [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/18/2015 04:33 PM EDT

Murray Energy can no longer force its coal miners to alert their supervisors when they report safety violations to federal inspectors, an administrative law judge [ruled](#) today.

The company incurred a \$150,000 fine in the case, which stemmed from a number of safety complaints made in 2013 at mines that CONSOL had recently sold to Murray. Owner Robert Murray last year told workers at each mine that they must inform management about any complaints made to MSHA.

The judge, Margaret Miller of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, concluded that miners could have been "intimidated and discouraged" from making safety complaints, after listening to a recording of a speech Murray gave to miners and reviewing other evidence. In the speech, Murray connected increased safety complaints with the threat of job losses, explicitly telling miners that no other jobs in the area pay as well — in a tone the judge deemed "serious and at times threatening."

Murray's actions "went beyond what was necessary to establish a safe environment at the mine," she wrote. "Rather, they were calculated to discourage miners from using the MSHA complaint process."

Miller ordered the company to pay fines totaling \$150,000, more than MSHA had sought, citing "high" negligence and indications that the company tried to intimidate witnesses. She also ordered Murray to tell workers that they are not required to report complaints to the company.

Murray did not immediately return a request for comment.

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New York to sue EPA over upwind ozone pollution [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/26/2017 01:12 PM EDT

The state of New York [says it will sue](#) EPA for missing a key deadline to issue a federal plan tackling smog-forming pollution that floats across state lines.

EPA said in August 2015 that 24 states had not created strong enough plans to curb their ozone emissions to reduce pollution in downwind states. Five of those states — Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia — contribute to New York's levels. But EPA missed an August 2017 deadline to issue federal implementation plans, or FIPs, for those states.

"With this action, New York makes it clear that we will not stand idly by as other states shun their responsibility to keep our nation's air quality safe," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement. "It's critical that these states take the necessary steps to reduce their environmental impact for future generations and I urge them to follow New York's lead to secure a cleaner and greener tomorrow for all."

EPA also missed an Oct. 1 deadline to issue non-attainment designations under the 2015 ozone standard, leaving its implementation uncertain. New York and various other states previously said they will sue over that missed deadline as well.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Clean Air Act requires anyone suing EPA over a missed deadline to provide a least 60 days notice before suing.

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House narrowly passes budget — setting up mammoth tax fight [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes and Rachael Bade | 10/26/2017 08:38 AM EDT

House Republicans cleared a crucial hurdle in their drive to overhaul the tax code Thursday after narrowly approving the Senate's budget.

By passing the measure, 216-212, Republicans unlocked procedural powers that allow the Senate to pass a tax bill with just 51 votes — and evade Democratic filibusters. But even with the ability to sideline Democrats, the GOP faces a daunting task as it tries to rewrite the tax code.

Heading into the vote, it was unclear whether enough GOP lawmakers would support the measure. A band of Republicans from high-tax states vowed to vote "no" on the budget unless GOP leaders scrapped plans to curb the state and local tax deduction currently in the GOP's tax proposal.

Speaker Paul Ryan and his top lieutenants were banking, however, on enough Republicans being jazzed about tax reform to back a fiscal blueprint many despise.

"A 'no' vote, as we heard from our Democrat colleagues, is to block tax reform and defend the status quo," Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) warned on the floor before the vote.

Leadership had originally sought to come up with an agreement on the nearly \$1.3 trillion state and local tax break before the Thursday vote — particularly after a host of allies like Republican Reps. Lee Zeldin of New York and Tom MacArthur of New Jersey said they would need to resolve the issue before backing the budget.

But leadership suddenly postponed a negotiation session on the matter late Wednesday night, likely in a sign that enough opponents were appeased by a commitment to work toward a deal in the coming days on the state and local tax break.

The vote was filled with drama on the House floor.

As the electronic House vote board began to fill out with "yeas" and "nays," Republican holdouts like New York Rep. John Katko stood near House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.), watching the evolving tally as some waited until the last minutes to cast dissenting votes.

House Budget Chairman Diane Black (R-Tenn.), who kept her eyes on the board throughout the count, told POLITICO afterward that "we would have done what we needed to do to make sure we got that vote done."

Leadership's promise to work with angry lawmakers didn't work for all naysayers.

"I am voting NO," Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.) tweeted Wednesday night, a promise he fulfilled Thursday. He was responding to a constituent asking him to oppose the budget and "a tax plan that favors the wealthy."

The early ultimatums serve as a preview of the challenge that lies before GOP tax writers, even before legislative text of the tax bill is set for release next week.

Brady said that Republicans will introduce the bill on Nov. 1 and his committee will begin considering it on Nov. 6.

"I'm going to stay at the table, so is the leadership, with our New York and New Jersey lawmakers to try to find a solution where their taxpayers are better off after tax reform," Brady said later on Thursday after meeting with GOP members from high-tax districts in those two states and others like California and Illinois.

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.), one of 20 Republicans who voted against the budget, said at least 22 GOP House members stand together on the state and local tax issue. Dozens of others held their nose while voting yes for the budget, he added.

Delivering a pre-condition of his own, President Donald Trump tweeted Monday that there would "be no change" to the way 401(k) plans are taxed, even as key lawmakers said they are still considering alterations to the popular retirement plans.

"We might be debating the details of a tax reform plan that does not exist," Rep. Rob Woodall (R-Ga.) complained on the floor this week, noting that the bill has yet to be unveiled.

Many Republicans have refrained from publicly making demands on the fledgling tax proposal, feeling political pressure to remain flexible in the interest of ultimately achieving a policy priority seen as make-or-break for the GOP.

The budget the House passed Thursday is a far cry from the version the chamber first approved earlier this month and is unlikely to have garnered sufficient support without the tax debate hovering over it.

The House's initial plan, favored by fiscal hawks, would have required lawmakers to offset the costs of new tax cuts and to find \$203 billion in extra savings from some welfare programs. But those requirements would not fly in the more moderate Senate, which passed its budget last week.

Under immense pressure to pass a tax reform bill by year's end, Republican leaders struck a time-saving deal to forgo a formal conference committee to resolve differences between the House and Senate plans.

Although many House GOP lawmakers have derided that decision and complained about the final text, most rank-and-file Republicans still quickly resigned themselves to supporting the budget in order to move on to the GOP's tax reform aspirations.

For their part, Democrats have seized on what they called the "hypocrisy" of fiscal conservatives backing a plan that would drive up the debt. The Senate budget envisions tax cuts that could add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over a decade.

"Republicans are always telling us how much they care about the deficit. But when it comes to giving their beloved tax cuts to their billionaire friends, they suddenly develop a convenient case of amnesia," Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) said on the House floor as lawmakers teed up debate this week. "They say, 'What deficit? Don't worry, these tax breaks will pay for themselves.'"

Aaron Lorenzo contributed to this report.

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Murray urges Democrats to oppose Trump's NASA pick [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 10/26/2017 10:00 AM EDT

Sen. [Patty Murray](#) is urging Democrats to oppose President Donald Trump's pick to head NASA, calling him "a dangerous choice to lead the agency."

The Washington state Democrat [sent a letter](#) to leaders of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee today criticizing the NASA administrator nominee, Rep. [Jim Bridenstine](#) (R-Okla.), for his denial of climate change science and his "opposition to equal rights" for women, immigrants and LGBT individuals.

"It is clear Rep. Bridenstine would move us backwards not forwards and I urge you to vote against his nomination," Murray said in the letter obtained by POLITICO.

Murray pointed to several specific examples that she said made the congressman unfit for the top NASA post, including Bridenstine calling the Supreme Court's decision on gay marriage a disappointment, supporting Trump's travel ban and not recognizing a difference between local weather and broader climate.

"The agency has inspired countless young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math and has stirred curiosity in billions of individuals across the world," Murray writes. "Rep. Bridenstine's denial of fundamental scientific facts and long record of bigoted and hateful statements run counter to this legacy."

Bridenstine's confirmation hearing is set for Nov. 1.

Florida Sen. [Bill Nelson](#), the ranking Democrat on the committee that will consider the nomination, and Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) previously [slammed](#) Bridenstine for being a politician, not a scientist or engineer, who traditionally has led the organization.

Gay rights advocates [previously said](#) they would push back against his nomination because of his anti-LGBT views.

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Trump taps Kentucky coal mining consultant to lead OSMRE [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 10/26/2017 11:53 AM EDT

President Donald Trump plans to nominate Kentucky mining consultant Steven Gardner to lead the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, the White House announced today.

Gardner is president and CEO of ECSI, a Lexington, Ky.-based consulting firm that has

focused on mining issues and worked as a subcontractor to help draft environmental documents for the Obama OSMRE's stream protection rule. Congress and the Trump administration repealed that rule earlier this year under a Congressional Review Act resolution.

In 2011, Gardner [testified](#) at a House Natural Resources Subcommittee that OSMRE had pressured him and others working on the environmental impact statement to tweak the data to minimize the impact the rule would have on jobs and coal production.

Gardner was president of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration in 2015 and he served on the UK Mining Engineering Foundation, the Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors.

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McConnell to GOP senators: Be ready to work through Thanksgiving week [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 10/26/2017 09:08 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is telling his members to be prepared to work straight into the Thanksgiving break.

A similar warning [last week](#) didn't pan out, as the Senate left Washington late Thursday after clearing its budget resolution. The chamber usually adjourns for the week mid-afternoon on Thursdays and returns Monday evening.

But McConnell told GOP senators in meetings earlier this week that the chamber very well could stay in session the weekend before the week of Thanksgiving, as well as the week of the holiday, according to two senior Republican sources. The week of Thanksgiving is currently scheduled as a recess week.

Republicans are taking on an ambitious tax overhaul and also face other critical legislative tasks such as disaster aid, government funding and immigration. An increasingly vocal faction of McConnell's conference has been urging leadership to stay in session longer, even 24-7 if necessary.

In addition to legislation, McConnell and other Senate Republicans are eager to confirm President Donald Trump's nominees — particularly for the federal judiciary. The chamber is set to confirm one district judge and advance another on Thursday afternoon.

"President Trump should be commended for his strong judicial picks," McConnell said on the floor earlier this week. "The Senate is going to keep working hard to confirm them. And we're going to succeed."

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Trump opioid declaration falls short, say state officials [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley and Sarah Karlin-Smith | 10/26/2017 08:56 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Thursday will declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency — a move that is narrower than what his own opioid commission had recommended and that will not pump additional money into an epidemic that has ravaged communities and claimed thousands of lives.

State officials and public health experts expressed disappointment, saying the epidemic is growing faster than efforts to contain it. Trump had promised in August that his administration will spend "a lot of money" on the opioid crisis — a vow that he did not deliver upon.

"People are dying," said Andrew Kolodny, executive director of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing. "We have people dying of overdoses on waiting lists for an effective treatment."

Senior administration officials told reporters that acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan will sign the declaration on Thursday. That will allow public health agencies to swiftly redirect existing health resources to the crisis, but won't add fresh funds. It will also cut "bureaucratic delays" in hiring personnel and expand access to telemedicine, including remote prescribing of medication commonly used for substance abuse or other mental health treatment.

The declaration will not include the extra money that state officials and some in Congress say is critical for a comprehensive response to the drug epidemic that the White House estimates is claiming about 175 lives a day. The HHS public health fund currently has only about \$57,000 left in it, although Congress could replenish it and the department has some other emergency resources to draw on. An administration official said there are "ongoing discussions" with lawmakers about how much money is needed to address the emergency.

Public health and addiction experts say a multi-pronged approach is needed immediately — a national prevention strategy, greater access to substance abuse treatment and enough money for communities to stock up on naloxone, a drug that can reverse life-threatening overdoses. Some experts had urged Trump to trigger another kind of national emergency under the Stafford Act, which can unlock more federal resources and emergency powers but is usually used for more clearly delineated crises like hurricanes or fires.

The spreading opioid crisis reaches from abuse of prescription painkillers to street drugs like heroin and the even more lethal fentanyl. Drug overdoses now kill more people than traffic crashes or gun-related deaths, and there's growing fear that IV drug use will set off waves of new HIV/AIDS infections in the heartland.

Some lawmakers from hard-hit states immediately said they would be open to allocating more resources — but it's not clear how much of an appetite there is on Capitol Hill to significantly increase spending. As of now, the House and Senate appropriations bills for next year keep opioid funding levels flat. States are already getting \$1 billion between 2017 and 2018 under the 21st Century Cures legislation to respond to the drug crisis.

"We're underwater," said Rep. David McKinley (R-W.Va.) during a congressional hearing

earlier this week where he criticized the federal response. "I don't understand why more resources aren't flowing to help out a rural state like West Virginia." His state has the highest overdose death rate in the country.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie in a statement praised Trump for taking "bold action." But the president's order will fall far short of the recommendations his Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis made in its preliminary report in July.

For example, the commission recommended mandatory education for doctors and waiving a longstanding federal prohibition on using Medicaid funds to pay for inpatient substance abuse treatment — which the panel said was the single fastest way to increase treatment.

Michael Fraser, executive director of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, urged Congress to act. "The lack of resources is concerning to us since the opioid epidemic is presenting lots of challenges for states' budgets," he said.

Advocates worry about redirecting other health funds, particularly from programs such as HIV prevention.

"There are some measures in the package that suggest states could shift money away from HIV to the opioid crisis, but the fact is patients who are suffering from the opioid crisis, they have other health concerns too," said Tiffany Kaszuba, deputy director of the Coalition for Health Funding. "It's not even robbing Peter to pay Paul anymore. It's robbing Peter to pay Peter."

The declaration doesn't include other priorities identified by state and local officials. For example, it won't immediately address access to the emergency overdose treatment naloxone. The price of the drug has soared in the past couple of years, making it hard for cash-strapped emergency departments to stock the drug.

Ohio was able to negotiate a lower price of naloxone for emergency medicine agencies and police officers, but at a cost of \$40 a vial it's still too high for many EMS agencies, particularly as some of the stronger opioids now require multiple doses per patient, said Carol Cunningham, Ohio's state medical director for the department of public safety's EMS division and the chairperson of the National Association of State EMS Officials.

Policy experts said the administration's decision to use a public health emergency fund instead of a national emergency declaration under the separate Stafford Act is not enough.

"You show me in the past a national public health emergency declaration with no accompanying funds or even requests for funds, I'd be pretty surprised," said Andrew Kessler, who runs Slingshot Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in behavioral health and drug abuse.

Some states had hoped to see more help to build out programs that show promise. Rhode Island, for instance, wants to establish a pre-arrest diversion program so that law enforcement sends people using opioids to treatment instead of jail. "We know that prevents deaths, and criminalization does not," said Rhode Island's Health Director Nicole Alexander-Scott.

Trump said in August and then again last week that he would declare the crisis a national emergency, which would give the administration more tools to fight the crisis but also raise a

host of legal and economic issues.

At the time, officials were considering using the Stafford Act, which is typically reserved for natural disasters and administered by FEMA. Former HHS Secretary Tom Price, White House budget director Mick Mulvaney and the White House Domestic Policy Council had objected to such a declaration because of its potential multi-billion-dollar price tag, legal issues and questions about how it could be implemented.

The more measured response speaks to the complexity of a drug epidemic that is pervasive yet not isolated in a particular time or place like a hurricane or a fire.

Another official added the administration has already spent \$1 billion on the opioid crisis since the president took office. Roughly \$500 million for drug addiction response efforts was provided under the 21st Century Cures Act signed into law by former President Barack Obama last year.

The declaration of public health emergency lasts 90 days but can be renewed.

Adam Cancryn and Rachana Pradhan contributed to this report.

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Leaked document shows Tillerson power play [Back](#)

By Nahal Toosi | 10/26/2017 05:02 AM EDT

A leaked State Department document is alarming diplomats and others who say it shows the accumulation of power among a small and unaccountable group of senior aides to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

The chart, obtained by POLITICO, illustrates the growing influence of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, which traditionally has served as an in-house think tank but which Tillerson heavily relies upon for day-to-day decision making. Critics already complain that the office — led by Brian Hook, a powerful Tillerson aide not subject to Senate confirmation — accepts too little input from career diplomats, and the chart, which lays out a method to craft foreign policy, shows no explicit role for them.

The chart appears to show a top-down approach in which ideas emanate from the secretary's inner circle rather than bubbling up from diverse sources, including foreign service officers in the field. More than half a dozen current and former U.S. officials who have seen the document said it reveals an unusual level of control and oversight by the Policy Planning Staff, which is known in diplomatic circles as S/P.

Several current and former U.S. officials warned that the new approach, called the Policy Planning Process, or "P3," increases the risk of poor, uninformed policy choices on everything from terrorism in Africa to human rights issues at a perilous time in international relations. It could also further demoralize career State Department staffers who already feel marginalized by Tillerson and President Donald Trump.

"This says to me that they are developing a new foreign policy structure that is designed to largely ignore those who know these regions and who know these issues," said Brett Bruen, a former State Department official who served under Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

The chart suggests "a power grab by a small cabal of Tillerson aides," added a senior Democratic congressional aide. "Making policy with a token effort to engage policy experts is a recipe for disaster and further evidence that the political forces in this administration will do anything they can to dismantle the State Department."

The State Department's press section did not respond to a POLITICO request for more material and context, but a senior department official said in a statement: "Policy development starts with the administration priorities set by the president. The policy planning process develops foreign policy with broad input at all stages from within State and the inter-agency. This process has supported new policies in a range of areas, including Asia, the Middle East, and Europe."

In recent weeks, Hook has been meeting with various divisions at the State Department to explain the eight-step process. A source familiar with the issue said Hook is not seeking feedback but merely informing employees of a process Tillerson has already approved. The chart shows that policymaking begins with a "whiteboard session" between Hook and Tillerson.

Other State Department sources said Hook is simply explaining an approach that, at least in its first few steps, has slowly taken hold since Tillerson, a former ExxonMobil CEO used to corporate management structure, took over as secretary in February.

The State Department officials said Hook's policy planning chart nonetheless formalizes an unwelcome change in their status from the Obama administration.

"We are *implementers* of policy decided by Tillerson and his team," one veteran State Department official concluded.

Several sources were unsettled to see the chart omit any mention of other parts of the State Department, especially its many bureaus focused on specific regions and issues, such as the Middle East and economics.

Some noted that Hook and Tillerson could include career diplomats in policy discussions throughout the process, even if the chart does not describe a specific role for them. Certain longtime department employees, including acting Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Susan Thornton, are known to have Tillerson's ear. It's also possible that what the chart vaguely describes as an "internally" triggered policy demand could come from a junior diplomat with a big idea.

Regardless of those caveats, the sources consulted said the chart strongly implies that Hook and Tillerson are the authoritative drivers of foreign policy to an unusual degree.

Several sources — while cautioning that the chart could offer an incomplete picture — also noted with concern that it also implies that the secretary of state, the Cabinet and Trump himself might endorse a policy prior to any significant evaluation by the National Security Council. They argued it should be the other way around to prevent poorly informed policy

options from being placed before Cabinet secretaries and the president.

One serving U.S. official said the chart seemed "delusional" in its measure of the State Department and Tillerson's influence in policy making. The Defense Department and the White House itself are major players in crafting U.S. foreign policy; and in the case of Tillerson, he's clashed with Trump on so many levels — even reportedly calling the president a "moron" — that his very future at State is in question.

"This would be a challenging process to manage effectively for even the most powerful and skilled secretary of state, and we don't have that right now," said Derek Chollet, who was a deputy director of the Policy Planning Staff under former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. "I don't understand how this comports with any reality that we're aware of."

The State Department's Policy Planning Staff was created in 1947 by legendary diplomat George Kennan at the request of then-Secretary of State George C. Marshall. It's supposed to be an independent source of analysis and often acts as a second opinion on policy for the secretary. According to the department's own explanation, Policy Planning tends to "take a longer term, strategic view of global trends."

Various secretaries of state have employed the office in different ways. It was considered unusually active under James Baker, when George H.W. Bush was president. It was also considered relatively active when Hillary Clinton was secretary of state.

But former and current U.S. officials said that, even in those days, the Policy Planning Staff worked hand in hand with other divisions at State instead of supplanting them. A case in point was the "pivot to Asia" strategy publicly articulated by Clinton — but widely considered the brainchild of then-Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell.

Hook's role at State is drawing increasing scrutiny from lawmakers, many of whom are troubled by Tillerson's slowness in filling the many vacant assistant secretary and other leadership positions at State. The jobs remain unfilled as Tillerson is working on a plan to restructure and streamline the entire department.

Hook and his crew on the Policy Planning Staff — which numbers around two dozen, according to the State Department's website — wield unusual power in part because so many key jobs are empty or held by diplomats on an acting basis. And unlike assistant secretaries or other top officials, Hook's position doesn't require Senate confirmation, which troubles some on Capitol Hill.

Observers say Hook, viewed as a relatively mainstream Republican, is running ragged trying to meet the demands placed on him.

"Hook is like a one-man band frantically, albeit valiantly, trying to play all the instruments, as competent and experienced musicians are made to stand on the sidelines," one U.S. official said.

There have been reports that Tillerson, as part of a broader effort to restructure the State Department, wants to greatly expand the size of the Policy Planning Staff. The department did not immediately respond to questions about those reports. Still, even the possibility is meeting resistance among some lawmakers.

Last month, Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire tacked an amendment onto a State Department appropriations bill that seeks to limit the size of the Policy Planning Staff, subject to certain conditions. The broader bill, which was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee, also largely rejected Trump's effort to slash the State Department's funding by a third.

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Mnuchin crashes into steep learning curve on the Hill [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 10/26/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is the de facto frontman for the administration's proposed overhaul of the U.S. tax system because of his extreme loyalty to President Donald Trump and the scores of tax policy experts and economists at his command.

But Mnuchin, a former investment banker and movie financier with no prior experience in Washington, hasn't been able to overcome Republicans' suspicion about his Wall Street background and limited conservative credentials. That may complicate White House efforts to influence debate as the details of a tax bill are written.

Republicans' simmering discontent with Mnuchin emerged full force in September, when he urged House Republicans to vote for the deal to temporarily raise the debt ceiling as part of a package that Trump had crafted with the two top Democratic leaders.

Behind closed doors, Mnuchin [asked](#) lawmakers to take the tough vote not for the president or for the party, but rather to do it for him, according to three people who attended or were briefed on the meeting. So few members felt any personal bond with Mnuchin that they were surprised he felt comfortable making such a request, and said it betrayed a lack of understanding about the way power works in Washington.

That was also the last time Mnuchin spoke to many of the people in the room, said one senior House aide.

"We will defer to the administration on who they want to put out there on tax reform, but we see the president as the top salesman," said a second House aide. "Trump supporters will watch Trump selling this, and they will be swayed by Trump, not Steven Mnuchin."

Mnuchin has had more success in relationship-building on the Senate side, cultivating Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and other powerful figures one-on-one as potential allies.

But he's encountered a steep learning curve on the nuances of tax and economic policy, according to current and former Treasury staffers and congressional aides.

"I think it has taken him awhile because he was thrown into the situation cold," said Hatch. "He has a tremendous business background."

He frequently also makes verbal gaffes during public appearances, often contradicting the White House's best-laid talking points. In mid-October at an international finance conference, Mnuchin [said](#) that eliminating the estate tax would ultimately help wealthy people — after the White House had already cast scrapping it as a way to aid farmers, ranchers and small business owners.

A senior Treasury official said Mnuchin has been working on tax reform daily since he assumed the job of Treasury secretary and continues to enjoy a very close relationship with the president, dating back to the 2016 campaign. As for Mnuchin's relationships with members of Congress, the official added that "just like any relationship, we are always working on it."

The administration declined to make Mnuchin available for comment.

Selling tax reform, a task that has bedeviled lawmakers since President Ronald Reagan's 1986 overhaul, would be difficult for any administration. Republicans are split over how much to lower tax rates and which breaks or deductions they should eliminate to offset the tax rate reduction.

Party members also cannot agree among themselves on whether a potential tax bill can and should add to the country's growing deficit, a concern to the fiscal and spending hawks in both the House and Senate.

It's even harder for Trump, who has already failed to orchestrate passage of Obamacare repeal — a signature campaign issue not just for him but for the Republican Party — and who has been unbridled in his criticism of leading GOP lawmakers in recent weeks, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee.

Corker, who recently met one-on-one with Mnuchin a few times at his Senate office and Treasury, said he'd been happy with Mnuchin's outreach so far.

"Look, I'm a business guy," Corker said. "I like people who talk business."

Business connections first led Mnuchin to sign on as Trump's chief fundraiser in the spring of 2016. He and Trump had known each other informally for roughly 15 years through New York City finance and real estate circles, Mnuchin recently [said](#) on a POLITICO Money podcast.

It was a job that many establishment Republicans had already passed up, said one adviser close to the administration — and it gave Mnuchin an opening to cement his relationship with Trump by traveling extensively across the country with him.

Ultimately, Mnuchin was rewarded for his efforts with one of the plummiest jobs in any administration and in economic circles — running the Treasury Department.

Mnuchin has managed to maintain an excellent relationship with the president during the administration's sometimes tumultuous nine-month run — a feat that other officials, such as Director of the National Economic Council Gary Cohn, former chief strategist Steve Bannon or former chief of staff Reince Priebus weren't able to do, according to Republican lawmakers, senior administration officials and advisers close to the White House.

"There is no question that he has gained influence and, shall we say, standing," said Larry Kudlow, an informal economic adviser to Trump dating back to the campaign. "As other

people in the administration have lost ground, there is a seesaw effect, and Mnuchin's standing has improved."

That helped the Treasury secretary weather sharp criticism this past summer after his wife engaged in a tit-for-tat on Instagram over a photograph she posted of herself emerging from a government aircraft in designer clothes — a trip, it later emerged, that included a visit to Fort Knox, where the pair watched the eclipse. Mnuchin then made comments dismissing public interest in the solar event, inflaming the controversy.

After Trump's wavering condemnations of neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August, Mnuchin publicly defended the president against charges that he'd equivocated between hate groups and counterprotesters. He did the same with the controversy over NFL players kneeling during the national anthem at games to protest police brutality against African-Americans, saying the players should "do free speech on their own time."

The fact that Mnuchin waded into the latter controversy, so far outside of the purview of the Treasury Department, led former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers to call Mnuchin on Twitter "the greatest sycophant in Cabinet history."

His loyalty has, however, paid dividends in keeping up his relationship with the president, and that has contributed to Mnuchin's status inside the White House, far more than his relations with Capitol Hill. This week, he's in the Middle East to coordinate efforts with allies to crack down on terrorist financing, and he'll be part of Trump's entourage when he travels to Asia next month.

"Most of our deep tax policy discussions with the president are with Secretary Mnuchin and Director Cohn together, all hashing out the issues and thinking the pros and cons," said House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas). "The interactions in that group has really proven to be valuable."

Yet Mnuchin's ability to stay in Trump's good graces has not translated into his ability to build warm relationships across Capitol Hill.

His debt ceiling comment still plagues his relationships in the House. The picture is not much better in the Senate, where he's still an unknown quantity to many members, thanks to the fact that he spent so little time in Washington before becoming Treasury secretary.

People who have dealt with Mnuchin acknowledge that he has a quiet, sometimes socially awkward manner that does not lend itself to chitchat or building instant rapport.

"He's reserved. He is not a slap-you-on-the-back type of guy," said Hatch. "But if you ask him a question, he'll answer it. There is no subterfuge with him."

Yet there remains a feeling among some Republican lawmakers and congressional aides that Mnuchin views tax reform through the lens of what is good for New York and Wall Street — a worldview that sometimes can mar his ability to sell the White House's efforts politically and throughout the heartland as a middle-class tax plan.

As one congressional aide remarked: "High finance does not always translate into tax reform."

Lately, Mnuchin has tried to combat these perceptions by hosting lawmakers or small groups at the agency's majestic downtown building, adjacent to the White House, as a way to help

him forge better relationships in a comfortable setting, and lawmakers have appreciated the gesture.

The administration has also been putting other top officials out to help sell tax reform — particularly those with far deeper ties to the Hill.

Vice President Mike Pence gave a speech at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute on Tuesday morning, while the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, has emerged as a key and vocal player who has tried to allay lawmakers' concerns about the way any tax package could add to the deficit.

Mulvaney has strong relationships with House members, thanks to his roughly six years in the chamber. The White House also recently included Mulvaney in a closed-door session with some members of the Senate Finance Committee.

The test of Mnuchin's leadership on tax reform will come shortly, perhaps as early as next week, once detailed proposals emerge from the House Ways and Means Committee.

Then, Mnuchin will have to defend far more specific decisions on tax breaks and deductions and deploy Treasury's army of resources to help with the economic modeling and analysis, all while remaining a fierce advocate for Trump. "A big part of this will be to make sure the White House and Treasury is coming out with a consistent position," said one congressional aide. "Things will get tough. That will be the real test."

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Chevron: PJM slams DOE grid proposal — GOP senators hold up disaster aid over Jones Act — Report: Pruitt spends \$2 million on security
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 4:02:50 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/23/2017 04:00 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Ben Lefebvre

PJM: PERRY PLAN WON'T SOLVE PROBLEMS: Energy Secretary Rick Perry's proposal to support coal and nuclear power generation isn't going to work, and may be contrary to law if enacted, according to Andy Ott, CEO of PJM Interconnection. "Some of the concerns raised by DOE we certainly understand [and] agree with a need for action. However, the DOE's proposed remedy is simply unworkable," Ott told reporters. He argued that Perry's plan went against FERC's core statute and the agency's practice of treating energy sources fairly, Darius Dixon [reports](#). "It's not a uniform proposal across the nation. It seems to be a proposal that's targeted at specific resources, which we think is discriminatory and inconsistent with the Federal Power Act," Ott said. "We believe that it's contrary to law and ... [won't] really solve any problems."

"**I don't know how you incorporate** such a proposal without having a significant detrimental impact on markets," he added. The PJM CEO joins an array of voices condemning DOE's proposed pricing rule, including the oil and gas industry, renewable energy companies, environmentalists and others. FERC is accepting initial comments on the proposal through today.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

WHAT'S THE HOLDUP? GOP Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) and [Mike Lee](#) are delaying passage of a disaster aid package, demanding that Puerto Rico be made permanently exempt from the Jones Act, among other concerns. The 1920 law, which restricts shipments between U.S. ports to vessels built and operated by Americans, has complicated efforts to send supplies to the hurricane-hit territory as it recovers. POLITICO's Seung Min Kim reports the senators are also holding the bill up over fiscal concerns. The Senate plans a procedural vote tonight "to advance the \$36.5 billion measure, which has already passed the House," Seung Min reports. "Even with the objections, senators are expected to pass the bill later this week and send it to President Donald Trump for his signature. Read [more](#)."

PRUITT'S HOUSE OF CARDS: EPA has spent almost \$16,000 on a card reader security system for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's office, and the agency is hiring as many as a dozen more agents for Pruitt's personal force of 24/7 bodyguards, CNN [reported](#) today. A full team will have salaries topping at least \$2 million annually, and that doesn't include other costs for training or equipment, CNN notes. It also doesn't account for travel; at least one agent travels in first class with Pruitt on flights around the country.

The card reader contract also expanded Pruitt's "duress alarm" to sound in a newly constructed office designated for Pruitt's security detail, according to the [contract information](#)

posted online. CNN, citing "a source with knowledge," said that EPA is also considering biometric security measures like fingerprint scanners, "but it was not clear if a biometric system had been installed or continues to be under consideration." All this comes amid both planned budget cuts and what EPA's inspector general says is a significant increase in threats against the administrator.

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

PROPOSED REPEAL OF EPA GLIDER EMISSIONS RULE HEADS TO OMB: EPA has sent to the White House a proposal to repeal part of the Obama administration's Phase 2 heavy-duty truck rule covering gliders and glider kits, according to a [notice](#) on the OMB's website. The rule classified gliders — refurbished engines installed into a new tractor chassis — as new motor vehicles, subjecting them to stricter emissions limits. Pruitt met in May with representatives from Fitzgerald Truck Sales, the largest provider of glider kits in the U.S. In August, he [announced](#) that EPA would revisit those parts of the rule, as well as a separate section setting novel trailer standards.

SHOW ME THE MONEY: Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) and Rep. [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.) are asking for a meeting with Interior about why payments to Louisiana coming from a Gulf of Mexico oil and gas revenue sharing program may be less than half what was expected, congressional sources told AE. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards sounded the alarm [in a letter](#) dated Oct. 20 that said the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority estimated it would receive only up to \$75 million from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, not the \$176 million maximum it expected to receive earlier this year. GOMESA money helps Louisiana and other coastal states repair coastal areas, but the Trump White House had proposed earlier this year that the federal government keep a larger chunk of the royalty payments now going to the revenue sharing program. An Interior spokesperson did not comment the proposed meeting or GOMESA math.

KEEP IN MINE: The Mine Safety and Health Administration today seeks public comments on its reporting requirements for mine refuse piles and impoundments, Pro Employment & Immigration's Ian Kullgren [reports](#). The comment period will remain open through Nov. 22 and arrives as MSHA is seeking a renewal of its reporting requirements from the OMB, according to a [Federal Register notice](#) published today. The notice says OMB is particularly interested in comments that "[address] whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency," and "evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate ... and minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond."

HOUSE BUDGET VOTE ON THURSDAY: The House is set to vote Thursday to formally back the Senate's budget resolution, "fast-tracking the GOP's effort to advance a tax overhaul with a simple majority in the Senate," Pro Budget's Sarah Ferris reports. "House Republicans are expected to easily clear the fiscal 2018 budget, despite the fact that the upper chamber's version is not as fiscally conservative as the plan the House advanced earlier this month. With passage, Republicans would unlock the powerful legislative tool known as reconciliation, which replaces the Senate's 60-vote threshold with a simple majority in some circumstances." Read more [here](#).

SCOTT REQUESTS MORE FOR ENVIRONMENT: Florida Gov. Rick Scott announced

today that he will seek spending increases for the environment next year, receiving both praise and criticism from environmentalists, POLITICO Florida's Bruce Ritchie reports. "Scott said his fiscal year 2018 request will include a record \$355 million for Everglades restoration along with \$50 million for the Florida Forever land conservation program at the Department of Environmental Protection," Bruce writes. "Florida Forever received no funding in the current state budget, while Everglades restoration received \$167.7 million. ... The announcement was praised by representatives of Audubon Florida and the Everglades Foundation who attended Scott's announcement at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Collier County. ... But Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, a Democratic candidate for governor, and representatives of the Sierra Club and Florida Conservation Voters blasted the governor." Read it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

— Twelve big cities to buy zero emissions buses, extend green areas, [Reuters](#).

— In Harvey's wake, a rush to the courthouse, [The Wall Street Journal](#).

— Professor has a message for Congress: Overfishing is over, [E&E News](#).

— Booker introduces environmental justice bill, [Associated Press](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Trump spars with [widow of slain soldier](#) about condolence call

— The man who helped cool [Trump's Russia rage](#)

— Democrats' [early money haul](#) stuns GOP

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/pjm-slams-doe-grid-proposal-025181>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

PJM CEO: Perry grid plan 'contrary to law' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/23/2017 02:38 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry's proposal to support coal and nuclear power generation is unworkable and may be contrary to law if enacted, according to Andy Ott, CEO of PJM Interconnection.

"Some of the concerns raised by DOE we certainly understand [and] agree with a need for action. However, the DOE's proposed remedy is simply unworkable," Ott told reporters on a conference call this afternoon.

He argued that Perry's plan flew in the face of FERC's core statute and the agency's practice of treating energy sources fairly.

"It's not a uniform proposal across the nation. It seems to be a proposal that's targeted at specific resources, which we think is discriminatory and inconsistent with the Federal Power Act," Ott said. "We believe that it's contrary to law and ... [won't] really solve any problems."

The proposal was discriminatory, he said, because in boosting coal and nuclear power, the rule would create a special group of power sources that are "providing very similar or the same services" to the grid. In addition, Perry's plan was tweaked after its release but before its official publication to stipulate that the rule would apply to power markets that also had capacity markets.

"Certainly, there are generators in non-RTO areas and certainly generators in areas without capacity markets," Ott said. "The point is, why would they be compensated any differently?"

He added: "I don't know how you incorporate such a proposal without having a significant detrimental impact on markets. "

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC is accepting initial comments on the DOE proposal through the end of today.

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GOP senators hold up disaster aid over Puerto Rico concerns [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 10/23/2017 01:44 PM EDT

At least two Senate Republicans are delaying swift passage of a disaster aid package — demanding that Puerto Rico be made permanently exempt from a 1920 law that has complicated efforts to send supplies to the hurricane-ravaged territory.

[Jeff Flake](#) of Arizona and [Mike Lee](#) of Utah are holding up the legislation, according to GOP sources, due to fiscal concerns but also to allow Puerto Rico to bow out from the Jones Act, which restricts shipments between U.S. ports to just those vessels built and operated by Americans.

The Senate on Monday evening will hold a procedural vote to advance the \$36.5 billion measure, [H.R. 2266 \(115\)](#), which has already passed the House. Even with the objections, senators are expected to pass the bill later this week and send it to President Donald Trump for his signature.

Lee wants 30 minutes on the floor to speak about his concerns before the disaster aid package passes, a spokesman said.

The Trump administration issued a 10-day waiver of the Jones Act late last month, but said it would not extend it.

Lee and another Arizona Republican, [John McCain](#), have introduced a bill that would permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act, which the senators say has caused shipping costs from the U.S. mainland to the territory to be double the cost of goods carried from foreign islands near Puerto Rico.

The aid package has been a target of several parochial concerns from senators representing regions recently hit by disaster.

Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) and [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) were among the senators pushing for more aid to help their home states recover from the torrent of hurricanes earlier this year.

Cornyn extracted personal assurances last week from the Trump administration that another emergency funding measure will include more money for Texas, which is dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in late August.

[Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) also has a hold on the disaster aid package, GOP sources said. A spokesman for the Texas senator did not return a request for comment.

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EPA will review parts of Phase 2 truck emissions rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 08/17/2017 04:47 PM EDT

EPA will revisit certain parts of the Obama administration's 2016 Phase 2 emissions rule for heavy-duty trucks, the agency announced today.

The rule set new standards for model years 2021-2027 of tractor-trailers, school buses, delivery vans and other large workhorse vehicles. The Truck Trailer Manufacturers Association sued to block EPA's novel aerodynamic requirements for trailers, arguing the agency cannot set vehicle standards for a product without an actual engine.

The Trump administration is considering revisions to the trailer standards, but it will leave in place separate requirements for tractor engines.

The final 2027 trailer standards by themselves would have secured as much as a 9 percent drop in carbon dioxide emissions and fuel consumption compared to a 2017 trailer, and the separate standards for tractor engines would achieve up to 25 percent emissions reductions by 2027, according to Obama administration estimates.

EPA said it will also reconsider part of the rule that classifies gliders — refurbished engines installed into a new tractor chassis — as a new motor vehicle. House appropriators last month voted to have EPA report to Congress on the glider issue, although that language may not survive the ultimate spending package that clears Congress.

"We intend to initiate a rulemaking process that incorporates the latest technical data and is wholly consistent with our authority under the Clean Air Act," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

said in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will begin a rulemaking process to revise or completely rescind those parts of the rule. The earliest compliance deadlines are in 2018. The trailer association unsuccessfully sought relief in court, but EPA may now offer administrative delays in light of its new rulemaking.

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DOL solicits comments on mine waste records [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 10/23/2017 01:58 PM EDT

The Mine Safety and Health Administration today asked for public comments on its reporting requirements for mine waste.

The comment period, which will remain open through Nov. 22, asks for feedback on the agency's reporting requirements for refuse piles and impoundments — pools of mixed coal waste and water created during the mining process.

MSHA is seeking a renewal of its reporting requirements from the Office of Management and Budget, according to a [Federal Register notice](#) published today, and must provide a comment period as part of that process. The notice says OMB is particularly interested in comments that "[address] whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency," and "evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate ... and minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond."

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House to vote Thursday on Senate budget [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/23/2017 12:42 PM EDT

The House is slated to vote Thursday to formally back the Senate's budget resolution, fast-tracking the GOP's effort to advance a tax overhaul with a simple majority in the Senate.

House Republicans are expected to easily clear the fiscal 2018 budget, despite the fact that the upper chamber's version is not as fiscally conservative as the plan the House [advanced](#) earlier this month.

With passage, Republicans would unlock the powerful legislative tool known as reconciliation, which replaces the Senate's 60-vote threshold with a simple majority in some circumstances.

The Rules Committee is scheduled to meet Tuesday to set parameters for considering the budget. If the House quickly wraps up other work, floor debate could begin as early as Wednesday, with a vote on final passage postponed until Thursday.

The House GOP conference tentatively [agreed](#) Sunday to take up the budget the Senate [passed](#) last week — rather than try to reconcile differences through a conference committee — to save several weeks of legislative work.

The move is a major concession for House Budget Chairman Diane Black, who pitched her own budget as the GOP's most conservative plan in 20 years.

To pay for a tax overhaul, the Senate budget would allow for the addition of up to \$1.5 trillion to the federal deficit. In contrast, the House's plan would require the tax reform bill to be deficit neutral and would force Congress to find more than \$200 billion in savings from changes to mandatory programs like Social Security and Medicare — provisions considered a non-starter for Senate Republicans.

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Trump spars with widow of slain soldier about condolence call [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 10/23/2017 08:30 AM EDT

Myeshia Johnson, the widow of a soldier killed earlier this month in Niger, said Monday that a condolence call from President Donald Trump "made me cry even worse," prompting Trump to immediately push back against part of her emotional account via Twitter.

"The president said that he knew what he signed up for, but it hurts anyways and I was — it made me cry because I was very angry at the tone of his voice and how he said it. He couldn't remember my husband's name. The only way he remembered my husband's name was because he told me he had my husband's report in front of him and that's when he actually said 'La David,'" Johnson told ABC's "Good Morning America." "I heard him stumbling on trying to remember my husband's name and that's what hurt me the most because if my husband is out here fighting for our country, and he risks his life for our country, why can't you remember his name? And that's what made me upset and cry even more because my husband was an awesome soldier."

An hour after Johnson's ABC interview aired, Trump responded on Twitter to rebut a portion of her account. "I had a very respectful conversation with the widow of Sgt. La David Johnson, and spoke his name from beginning, without hesitation!" Trump claimed in his online post.

The interview and Trump's online response to it drags the controversy surrounding the president's condolence call to Johnson into its second week, prolonging a news cycle that has resurfaced questions about the president's treatment of Gold Star families. The issue of Trump's conversation with Johnson has mushroomed just as the White House has sought to focus attention on the president's proposed tax cuts and reforms and has brought back

memories of Trump's feud with the Gold Star Khan family, who railed against the president at last summer's Democratic National Convention.

The phone call between Johnson and the president became a point of contention last week when Frederica Wilson (D-Fla.), a family friend who was traveling with the widow when she took Trump's call on speakerphone, told reporters that the president had struggled to remember Army Sgt. La David Johnson's name and said the slain soldier knew what he signed up for when he enlisted.

As the week wore on, the White House lashed out at Wilson, accusing the hat-wearing congresswoman of being "all hat, no cattle" and suggesting that she had sought to politicize the soldier's death. Trump himself, in a post to Twitter, wrote that Wilson had "totally fabricated what I said to the wife of a soldier who died in action (and I have proof). Sad!"

The Trump administration's most powerful defense came last Thursday from White House chief of staff John Kelly, a retired Marine Corps general, who shared with reporters what happens when a service member dies and recalled details from the death of his own son, a Marine who was killed in Afghanistan in 2010. Kelly shared the words of condolence that his friend, Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, had offered him on his son's death — that "he was doing exactly what he wanted to do when he was killed" — a similar sentiment to what Trump sought to express on his call with Johnson.

Kelly, in his briefing room remarks, also lashed out at Wilson, referring to her as an "empty barrel" as he recalled the 2015 dedication of an FBI office in Miami, where he said the Florida lawmaker inappropriately boasted that she had been instrumental in securing the funding for the facility. But the chief of staff's criticism was quickly discredited: Wilson had not yet been elected to Congress when the money for the FBI building was appropriated, and video of her remarks from the ceremony shows her celebrating the bipartisan legislation she spearheaded to name the new FBI building after two agents killed in a 1986 fire, not to secure funding for the building.

The White House stood behind Kelly's statement and Sanders told reporters Friday that "If you want to go after Gen. Kelly, that's up to you. But I think that if you want to get into a debate with the four-star Marine general, I think that's something highly inappropriate."

Despite the White House's insistence that Wilson had mischaracterized and fabricated the tenor of Trump's call, Myeshia Johnson's account of the conversation aligned with the lawmaker's account.

"Whatever Ms. Wilson said was not fabricated. What she said was 100 percent correct," she said, explaining that six people, including Wilson, had heard the call as the family made its way to meet the slain soldier's remains at Dover Air Force Base. "The phone was on speakerphone. Why would we fabricate something like that?"

The widow said she was left "very, very upset and hurt, very" by the president's call.

She also said that many of her questions surrounding her husband's death have not yet been answered by the military and that she has not been allowed to view her husband's body. She said she has not been told how he was killed or why it took two days from the time La David Johnson's unit was attacked for the military to recover his body.

"Why couldn't I see my husband? Every time I asked to see my husband, they wouldn't let me," she said. "I need to see him so I will know that that is my husband. I don't know nothing. They won't show me a finger, a hand. I know my husband's body from head to toe, and they won't let me see anything. I don't know what's in that box. It could be empty for all I know, but I need — I need to see my husband."

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The man who helped cool Trump's Russia rage [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 10/23/2017 05:09 AM EDT

Since the end of July, President Donald Trump has noticeably tempered his public complaints about the Russia investigation, avoiding any Twitter allusions to a "witch hunt" or threats to fire special counsel Robert Mueller.

That's partly due to the intervention of White House lawyer Ty Cobb, who since joining the administration 2½ months ago has impressed upon Trump the risks of using such loaded language when it comes to Mueller, according to a White House official and several sources familiar with the president's legal strategy.

Cobb's ability to keep Trump's Russia rage under control is going to be tested in the months ahead as Mueller's probe heats up. The special counsel's team is interviewing current and former White House officials and campaign staffers, as well as the president's own family members, in its sprawling investigation.

Solomon Wisenberg, a former deputy on Kenneth Starr's independent counsel investigation into President Bill Clinton, credited Cobb with having "a very salutary effect" on Trump. "It's one thing to have an adviser to tell you, 'Boy, if you say this it's not good politics, it's not good for us,'" he said. "It's another thing to have your white-collar lawyer say, 'This is extremely harmful to you legally to say this.'"

Cobb's job — for which he's putting in upward of 85 hours a week — includes reviewing a vast database of internal documents relevant to the Russia probe and also speaking with reporters, though he has studiously avoided television appearances. Five staffers now work for him full time at the White House, including Steven Groves, who stepped down in August from his job as chief of staff to U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley.

In an interview, Cobb said he can't take credit for the change in the president's tone on Russia, and notes that John Kelly took over as White House chief of staff the same week he arrived. But, Cobb said, it's the president who really changed course, endorsing a move toward greater cooperation in hopes of speeding Mueller's probe to a close.

"He did it," Cobb said of Trump.

Now, Cobb says, "we've got a good relationship in terms of trust" with Mueller. "They know the effort we've put into it," he added.

It's a dramatic turnaround from earlier this year, when Trump's legal team was based in New York under the leadership of his longtime personal attorney, Marc Kasowitz, who often served as the president's attack dog — including at a June appearance at the National Press Club during which he declared Trump's innocence and suggested that ousted FBI Director James Comey had lied under oath to Congress.

Privately, Kasowitz had also tried but failed to get the president to stop tweeting about the Russia investigation in April and May, just before Trump's firing of Comey prompted the appointment of Mueller, according to a person familiar with Trump's legal strategy. "He was very well aware of the stakes of his tweeting and the ramifications of what could take place," this person said.

Kasowitz stepped away in July amid frustration with the president's behavior and has since been replaced by John Dowd and Jay Sekulow as Trump's lead personal attorneys, while Cobb is working alongside White House Counsel Don McGahn. While Cobb represents the White House itself, Dowd and Sekulow deal with Trump's personal legal issues, including Mueller's probe into possible obstruction of justice surrounding the Comey firing. The three attorneys are in regular communication and keep one other apprised of some aspects of their work, like their schedules, Cobb said.

Robert Bennett, a former personal attorney for Clinton and Cobb's longtime law partner, said the president's attorneys had given Trump certain legal heft and appeared to have helped in tamping down some of the most potentially damaging aspects of his earlier behavior. "I know John and Ty are two very forceful advocates with a lot of experience," said Bennett. "My surmise is they had an impact."

Cobb works out of a windowless office in the West Wing, not far from the Situation Room and White House mess hall—though he has to go through the office of a communication staffer just to get to his desk.

He started out reporting directly to Trump, a precondition he insisted upon when taking the job early this summer, though that arrangement changed with the arrival of Kelly, who now serves as a gatekeeper to the Oval Office. Cobb didn't know the president beforehand — someone who has long experience with civil litigation, but wasn't familiar with how a high-stakes Washington investigation works.

Cobb has extensive experience on Washington special counsel investigations going back decades. He represented several individuals pulled into the Starr probe, which started with the Clintons' Whitewater land deal. He also had clients who were dragged into separate cases examining Clinton's secretaries of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development, and he represented Eli Segal, the head of Clinton's AmeriCorps national service program who was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing during an independent counsel probe into alleged conflicts of interest.

He also served as a top investigator who examined the corruption allegations against Ronald Reagan's HUD secretary, Samuel Pierce. That case didn't result in any charges against Pierce but 17 others were indicted and convicted over the course of the five-year probe. And he represented one of the lawyers caught up in the Iran-Contra investigation.

Trump's attorneys haven't been able to stop Trump from making any comments on Mueller's investigation. In a Fox News interview earlier this month, the president called the Russia

probe "an excuse used by the Democrats when they lost the election." And last week, Trump [tweeted](#) the suggestion that the Democratic Party, FBI or Kremlin could have helped pay for a dossier of salacious but unverified information about ties between him, his 2016 campaign and the Russian government.

Those comments, however, were in marked contrast with Trump's off-the-cuff and legally troublesome responses on Russia from the first half of the year. His Twitter posts alone — a May [warning](#) that Comey "better hope that there are no tapes of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!" — have [been described](#) as invitations to sharp lines of questioning from Mueller.

Trump also has drawn scrutiny for several moves right before Cobb, Kelly and others joined the White House, including his decision to skirt his own attorney when he reportedly dictated his son's initial public statement to the press explaining the reason for a 2016 Trump Tower meeting with a Russian lawyer. That statement, written aboard Air Force One, said Donald Trump Jr. "primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children" - even though his son later [released emails](#) showing the meeting was offered as a chance to see damaging material about Hillary Clinton.

Trump in mid-July — with only [one communications staffer](#) present — also gave a controversial Oval Office interview to The [New York Times](#) in which he said he [regretted](#) hiring Attorney General Jeff Sessions because of his recusal from the Russia probe and also called it a "violation" for Mueller to examine his family finances beyond Russia.

Working as one of the president's attorneys is hardly a risk-free endeavor. John Dean, Richard Nixon's White House counsel, became a federal government witness who exposed the details of the Watergate cover-up. Several of Clinton's top White House lawyers, including Bernard Nussbaum, Bruce Lindsey, Beth Nolan and Jack Quinn, ended up on the witness stand or other legal crosshairs themselves amid the Democratic president's scandals. And a federal judge ordered Harriet Miers, President George W. Bush's top counsel, to testify before Congress over the firings of U.S. attorneys.

"It's an office in which you can take some heavy fire," said Robert Bauer, the former White House counsel under Barack Obama, the only president in the post-Watergate years who didn't face an independent investigation during his time in office.

Indeed, some of Trump's attorneys are already facing legal jeopardy. Michael Cohen, one of Trump's longest serving personal attorneys, has his own lawyer and remains on the radar of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which just postponed a public hearing previously scheduled for Wednesday to examine his role in the Russia probe. McGahn, the Trump White House counsel, has also retained a lawyer and is expected to soon follow his former colleagues Reince Priebus and Sean Spicer to be questioned by Mueller's team about his role in several early moves that have become central parts of the Russia investigation, including the hiring and firing of Michael Flynn, who briefly served as White House national security adviser, and the ousting of Comey.

Several other Trump lawyers — both inside and outside the White House — could face more intense questions over their role in the Russia response. Mueller is reportedly interested in speaking with James Burnham, a former senior associate counsel in McGahn's office who now works in the Justice Department's civil division.

Two other McGahn deputies have confirmed roles in the Russia response: Stefan Passantino, who has been a main point of contact for the Office of Government Ethics as it examines the establishment of a legal defense fund for Trump staffers, and Greg Katsas, who last week [acknowledged](#) during his Senate confirmation hearing for a seat on a key federal appeals court that he'd given legal advice "on a few discrete legal questions" involving the White House response to the Russia probe.

Kasowitz could also be a potential witness over the role he played earlier this year by reportedly [suggesting](#) to White House aides they didn't yet need to hire their own attorneys. As Trump's personal lawyer, he can lean on attorney-client privilege, but legal experts say his interactions with the president's government employees could put him in Mueller's sights. "It's potentially obstruction, not to put too fine a point on it," said a lawyer representing another client mired in the Russia probe.

Sekulow, Trump's other outside attorney alongside Dowd, could face questions for the public statements he made to the media earlier this summer minimizing the president's role in crafting the response to the Times story about Donald Trump Jr.'s 2016 campaign meeting with the Russian attorney promising Clinton dirt, according to legal experts.

While Cobb, Dodd and Kelly have helped to tamp down the president's recent statements on the Russia probe, they can't erase the problems that Trump and his previous legal advisers created for themselves, said Ross Garber, a white-collar defense attorney who has defended three Republican governors during impeachment proceedings: Alabama's Robert Bentley, South Carolina's Mark Sanford and Connecticut's John Rowland. Garber added that Sekulow's multiple appearances on television publicly discussing the Trump case could set up a legal fight over whether he retains his complete right to attorney-client privilege involving conversations with the president.

"The way this was organized at the beginning," Garber said, "would have put the actions of the lawyers and the spokesmen and especially the lawyer-spokesman on the radar screen."

In an interview, Sekulow said his attorney-client privilege with Trump remains in place. And he said he isn't expecting to be personally pulled into Mueller's Russia probe. "I've not heard from Bob [Mueller]. I'm not planning on hearing from him. And I don't have a lawyer," he said.

Dowd declined comment for this story.

Cobb and Dowd have gained notoriety in other ways too. They became [front-page fodder](#) in the New York Times after a reporter overheard their public conversation on the patio at BLT Steak in downtown Washington about how much cooperation Trump should give Mueller.

Cobb last month also got duped by an [email prankster](#) who was impersonating a White House aide, a flap he said in an interview became a "complete distraction" and had prompted a threefold spike in new attempts to lure him into similar conversations.

"I always try to be responsive. Even the haters. I try to calm them down," Cobb said. "My view is I like people. I try to see the better nature in people. I hate to see people just viscerally angry. I responded to those with great success for the first couple of weeks. Now it's in a different mode."

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Democrats' early money haul stuns GOP [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 10/23/2017 05:07 AM EDT

Democratic candidates are reporting historic early fundraising totals, alarming GOP strategists and raising the prospect that 2018 could feature the most expansive House battlefield in years.

Animated by opposition to President Donald Trump and the Republican congressional majorities, at least 162 Democratic candidates in 82 GOP-held districts have raised over \$100,000 so far this year, according to a POLITICO analysis of the latest FEC data. That's about four times as many candidates as House Democrats had at this point before the 2016 or 2014 elections, and it's more than twice as many as Republicans had running at this point eight years ago, on the eve of capturing the House in the 2010 wave election.

Nearly three dozen Republican incumbents were outraised by Democratic challengers in the third quarter of this year - a stunning figure. Nine GOP incumbents already trail a Democratic opponent in cash on hand, increasing the likelihood that many veteran incumbents will face tough opposition for the first time in years.

The Democrats' fundraising success, especially from a glut of candidates who have never run for office before, is unsettling to those charged with protecting the GOP majority.

"That's something that should get every Republican's attention in Washington," said Jason Roe, a Republican strategist who works on House races. "These first-timers are printing money."

Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.), who has never gotten less than 58 percent of the vote in 12 terms in Congress, is among those suddenly facing cash-flush opposition. Three Democratic opponents outraised Frelinghuysen in the third quarter, and each has already brought in more money than any challenger Frelinghuysen has faced in a quarter-century.

In Texas, GOP Rep. John Culberson, whose Houston-area district attracted little attention from either party before Hillary Clinton carried it in 2016, finished the summer with less campaign cash than two different Democratic opponents.

The long slate of well-funded Democratic candidates, coupled with a favorable political environment and poor polling numbers for Trump, is raising Democratic hopes of erasing the GOP's 24-seat majority.

"The Democrats in 2017 are starting to very much resemble the Republicans in 2009," said former Rep. Steve Israel, who chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in 2012 and 2014. "People are talking about a wave developing, but in order to even begin to think about a wave, you have to be in a position to take advantage in [case of] a wave. And Democrats are clearly in that position."

Many Republican representatives, especially ones battle-hardened from past campaigns, are

already preparing hard for 2018 by shoring up their positions. Reps. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) and Barbara Comstock (R-Va.), for example, vastly outraised all of their Democratic challengers in the last quarter as they ready for reelection campaigns in districts Trump lost in 2016.

"The fact that the environment is so intense so early is ultimately a good thing, as it makes sure more members will be prepared," said Mike DuHaime, a Republican operative. "They can see it coming."

Republican groups are also raising tens of millions of dollars to help bolster their party. The Republican National Committee in particular has [outstripped](#) the Democratic National Committee, raising over \$100 million and building up cash reserves of over \$44 million this year, ahead of the 2018 elections. House Speaker Paul Ryan has also raised record-setting amounts of money for House Republicans.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee raised \$8.9 million in September, beating its Republican counterpart for the fifth month in a row. But the National Republican Congressional Committee still has more than \$10 million more in its bank account — money that will come in handy across the sprawling battleground, especially if more incumbents retire.

Democrats and Republicans each have a handful of costly, open battleground seats to defend, from Rep. Dave Reichert's (R-Wash.) suburban district outside Seattle to Democratic Rep. Tim Walz's rural seat in southern Minnesota.

"Resources will be spread thin because no incumbent — in the primary or in the general — can afford to not take this seriously," said Roe, the Republican consultant. "We're just spread thin. That's our vulnerability, the strain on resources."

That strain was apparent in recent comments by Rep. Glenn Grothman, who represents a solidly Republican block of eastern Wisconsin, easily won reelection in 2016, and has not typically made lists of GOP incumbents vulnerable to a 2018 challenge. Grothman told a [local radio program](#) earlier this month that he's "very apprehensive about the future," because "the fundraising is not going as well as I'd like."

"We're not raising as much money as we should," Grothman added.

A week later, his Democratic opponent, Dan Kohl, filed a campaign finance disclosure showing him outpacing the Republican incumbent.

"Clearly there is an intensity among the Democratic base that is similar to what Republicans had in 2009, but it's hard to tell what it's going to be like a year from now," said DuHaime. "But you can't deny the enthusiasm."

Stung by over-optimistic projections in past years, Democratic operatives have been careful to avoid declaring a wave on the horizon. With so many candidates piling into crowded Democratic primaries, they worry about their own resources being drained and fear nominees could be pulled too far to the left before difficult general election battles next year.

"It's way too early to start measuring the drapes," said former DCCC executive director Kelly Ward, now a top staffer at the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, adding that

under the current congressional map, "you need a tsunami, not just a wave, to overcome how badly the [district] lines are broken."

The party's first order of business in 2018 will be to navigate an unusual number of expensive primaries looming due to the free-flowing money and the opportunity Democrats smell in dozens of districts. In southern California, two of the biggest Democratic self-funders in the country — Andy Thorburn, who loaned his campaign \$2 million, and Gil Cisneros, who gave his campaign over half a million dollars — are both running against GOP Rep. Ed Royce, along with a handful of other candidates. Three other districts in Orange County alone are similarly crowded, and drenched in campaign money.

In some primaries, local Democrats are pushing back on national party leaders' anointment of candidates, as in the fight to take on Rep. Mike Coffman in Colorado. Democrats also expect issues like Sen. Bernie Sanders' Medicare-for-all plan to divide candidates, and Republicans are ready to pounce on statements that may play well in Democratic primaries but could be damaging in swing-district general elections.

"Nothing beats watching candidates blow their cash trying to explain how progressive they are and how they are 'still on the fence' about Nancy Pelosi's place in their party," said Jesse Hunt, the press secretary for the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Israel acknowledged the debates within his party but said he does not believe they will weaken Democratic candidates next November.

"To the extent that there are differences, they are certainly not sapping Democrats' fundraising abilities, not sapping Democratic recruitment and certainly not sapping Democratic energy," Israel said. "There may be fissures, but they are not swallowing up our party. The Republicans have fissures that are swallowing up their party."

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Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 5:06:46 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/16/2017 05:04 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon

U.S. STILL STICKING WITH ITS PARIS PLAN: Judy Garber, acting assistant secretary at the State Department, reaffirmed President Donald Trump's stance today that the U.S. "intends to withdraw at the earliest opportunity" from the Paris climate agreement, but sidestepped the controversy some in Bonn have brought by pressing for coal, via the White House's wishes. Garber, head of the U.S. delegation to the climate change talks, said during an address to COP23's high-level session that the U.S. intends to remain engaged with partners on climate issues. Garber said Washington remains "open to the possibility of rejoining at a later date under terms more favorable to the American people." Representatives in Bonn have not discussed what those "terms" might be, Emily Holden [reports](#).

Garber noted that U.S. emissions have fallen as the economy has grown and said much of that was because of private sector innovation. But her comments strikingly diverge from the message brought by Trump aides in Bonn, who promoted new coal for developing countries at a side event and have suggested the possibility of linking with other countries in a "clean coal alliance." Full remarks [here](#).

THE COAL SHOULDER: Canada and the U.K. today launched an anti-coal alliance, in a direct challenge to the Trump administration's coal message. Canadian Environment Minister Catherine McKenna and Claire Perry, the U.K. minister for climate change, formally launched the 27-member group, whose declaration said it will seek to close down existing coal plants and "impose a moratorium on any new traditional coal power stations without operational carbon capture and storage." Emily reports more [here](#).

WATCHDOG SLAMS ZINKE: Because Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document his travel, it's impossible to say whether he has violated government rules, Interior's watchdog determined today. "Our investigation is delayed by absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips and a review process that failed to include proper documentation and accountability," Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said in [a letter](#) obtained by POLITICO and first reported by The Washington Post. Zinke's travel has come under fire for mixing taxpayer-funded travel with political activities, as well as taking [military or private planes](#) rather than flying commercial, and the investigation by Interior's Office of Inspector General seeks to clarify whether all procedures were correctly followed, Eric Wolff [reports](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

**** A message from Chevron:** We're piloting a program that uses drones to keep an eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch

the video: <http://politi.co/2zx6RdM> **

HEAR YE, HEAR YE: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [will testify](#) before the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee on Dec. 7 — his first time before the committee, Alex Guillén [reports](#). Chairman [Greg Walden](#) (R-Ore.) and subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#) (R-Ill.) said in a joint statement that they're looking forward to receiving a "much-needed update" from Pruitt on his priorities, "including his stated policy of getting EPA 'back to the basics' and its impact on the agency's activity going forward."

— **The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee** [announced today](#) Pruitt will testify before the committee on Jan. 31 — something committee Democrats have been clamoring for, since the EPA head hasn't returned to the panel since his confirmation in February.

FORGET ABOUT IT: FERC head Neil Chatterjee today said the agency is moving past Rick Perry's grid proposal, instead focusing on its own approach. Chatterjee told reporters after FERC's monthly meeting that the issue of supporting baseload coal-fired and nuclear power plants had caused a "hyperbolic reaction" because many people didn't understand FERC's process. "I think part of the problem is that people are still debating the [notice of proposed rulemaking] as it was submitted to us [by the Energy Department]," he said. "What I'm trying to say is we've moved past that and we're moving toward a constructive solution that still answers the questions that Secretary Perry asked in the NOPR in a way that does not distort markets and is legally defensible." Darius Dixon reports more [here](#).

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH ABOUT THE GREAT ZEFAM COCHRANE! After a brief hiatus at monthly meetings, a handful of pipeline protesters interrupted today's FERC agenda, including 77-year-old actor James Cromwell. "You may be a federal agency but you do not represent the will or the well-being of the American people," Cromwell, known for roles in "Star Trek," "Babe" and "L.A. Confidential," yelled at the commission leaders from the back of the meeting room as he was being escorted out. "The energy that you're pushing is inimical to life on this planet."

Chatterjee throws some serious shade: "I just want to start by saying I'm fairly certain James Cromwell uttered more words there than he did in the entire movie 'Babe.' He only says, like, four words in the that movie," Chatterjee told reporters at the beginning of a press conference. "He was, for the record, awesome in 'L.A. Confidential.' ... Who said FERC's an obscure agency? C-list actors are coming to our meetings."

STAFF CHANGES AT BLM: Zinke has appointed Brian Steed, the former chief of staff for Rep. [Chris Stewart](#) (R-Utah), as acting director of the Bureau of Land Management, a change that was announced in a Wednesday email to BLM staff and obtained by POLITICO. Steed joined Interior in October as deputy director of programs and policy, Esther Whieldon [reports](#). Mike Nedd, a career staffer at BLM, said in the email he and BLM acting Deputy Director John Ruhs "have come to know [Steed's] ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission." Nedd said he will become acting deputy director for operations and that Ruhs will return to his job as BLM Nevada state director.

JUST IN CASE: EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers today [proposed](#) delaying the effective date for the Obama-era Waters of the U.S. regulation as insurance against the upcoming Supreme Court decision on the proper venue for litigation. More [here](#).

REGION 1 HEAD SELECTED: Pruitt picked Alexandra Dunn, executive director of the Environmental Council of States, to run EPA's Region 1, covering Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, Alex also [reports](#) today. Dunn has been at ECOS, a state-focused nonprofit group, since 2014, and was recently elected to the American College of Environmental Lawyers' Board of Regents. Earlier this year, ECOS [called for](#) a "recalibration" of the roles of EPA and the states on environmental regulation, which the group called "cooperative federalism 2.0," echoing similar calls from Pruitt.

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(DON'T) LEAN ON ME: Maine Sen. [Susan Collins](#) said today she's "leaning against" supporting Michael Dourson's nomination to run EPA's chemicals office, Anthony Adragna [reports](#). A lack of support from Collins would leave Dourson without adequate support for confirmation in the closely divided chamber, after GOP Sens. [Richard Burr](#) and [Thom Tillis](#) both came out in opposition on Wednesday. "I have a lot of concerns about Mr. Dourson, but I've not yet made a final decision," Collins said. Dourson is currently working as an adviser at the agency. [John McCain](#) also said today he had not decided whether to support Dourson.

FRANKEN ACCUSED OF GROPING WOMAN: Sen. [Al Franken](#), a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, today apologized after a female broadcaster said the lawmaker groped and kissed her without her consent during a 2006 trip overseas. Leeann Tweeden wrote that Franken's alleged actions took place while they toured the Middle East to entertain military personnel in 2006. Franken apologized in a statement, saying in part that he sends his "sincerest apologies to Leeann." Shortly after, Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) called for an Ethics Committee investigation into Franken. POLITICO's Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim report more [here](#).

TAX BILL PASSES HOUSE: The House passed a sweeping rewrite of the tax code, bringing the president and the GOP closer to a much-needed legislative win. The bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), which would slash corporate and individual rates, passed with a handful of Republicans joining Democrats in opposition.

But the bill could spell out trouble for the administration's trillion-dollar infrastructure plan. "At best, House support for the plan would signal lukewarm backing among Republicans for President Donald Trump's ambitions," Pro's Colin Wilhelm reports. "At worst, the bill would effectively end the funding structure that the administration touts as a way to reach its \$1 trillion target and minimize the burden on taxpayers." More [here](#).

PUTTING ON AIRS: A bipartisan group of senators — Collins, [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Tom Carper](#) — have asked the Government Accountability Office for a review of the EPA's air quality monitoring work. "These air quality monitoring networks are increasingly important in implementing and tracking compliance with the Clean Air Act, protecting public health, sharing monitoring data with other agencies, state and local governments, and the public, and informing policy decisions," they write. Read the letter [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

— As Germany hosts green summit, an energy firm is razing a nearby forest, [CNN](#).

— Toxic algae: Once a nuisance, now a severe nationwide threat, [Associated Press](#).

— Industrial strength: How the U.S. government hid fracking's risks to drinking water, [InsideClimate News](#).

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**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about energy, safety, and some truly high-flyin' doin'. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping to help keep a close eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2zx6RdM> **

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

U.S. climate negotiator sticks to Paris withdrawal, tiptoes around coal [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/16/2017 12:23 PM EDT

BONN, Germany — The head of the U.S. delegation to the climate change talks reiterated President Donald Trump's stance that the U.S. "intends to withdraw at the earliest opportunity" from the Paris climate agreement, but did not press the case for coal, as White House aides have done at the international meeting.

In an address to COP23's high-level session, Judy Garber, an acting Assistant Secretary at the State Department, who took over for Undersecretary of State Tom Shannon, said the U.S. intends to remain engaged with partners on climate issues, and she said Washington remains "open to the possibility of rejoining at a later date under terms more favorable to the American people."

U.S. representatives here have not discussed what those terms might be, and they have until just before the 2019 U.S. elections to submit the official exit.

Garber noted that U.S. emissions have fallen as the economy has grown and said much of that was because of private sector innovation. She touted natural gas, nuclear, solar, wind, energy storage and energy efficiency, and said the U.S. is working with countries such as China and India on smart grids and carbon capture and storage.

Garber's comments diverged sharply from the message from Trump aides here who promoted new coal plants for developing countries at a side event and have suggested the possibility of linking with other countries in a "clean coal alliance," even as the United Kingdom and Canada launched a 27-member initiative today to phase out coal use.

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New anti-coal push in Bonn pits nations against U.S. [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/16/2017 03:08 PM EDT

BONN, Germany — Canada and the U.K. on Thursday launched an anti-coal alliance at the global climate summit here, a direct challenge to the Trump administration's bid to promote new high-efficiency coal-fired power plants.

Canadian Environment Minister Catherine McKenna and Claire Perry, the U.K. minister for climate change, formally launched the 27-member group whose declaration said it will seek to close down existing coal plants and "impose a moratorium on any new traditional coal power stations without operational carbon capture and storage."

"Coal is literally choking our cities, with close to a million people dying every year from coal pollution," McKenna said.

Almost 40 percent of global electricity comes from coal, and while McKenna acknowledged that phasing it out would not be easy, she said it was crucial to achieve climate goals and protect public health.

Other members include France and Italy, which both aim to phase out coal in the next decade, and Finland, Mexico and New Zealand. Two U.S. states — Washington and Oregon — will also join. Both have already announced plans to shutter their coal plants. While the group's members consume only a small fraction of the global coal supply, they aim to form a powerful political partnership.

McKenna said despite the U.S. effort to support coal, the economic case for the fuel was fading.

"There are cheaper, more sustainable sources of power, in particular clean power, renewables," she said. "The economics dictate it, but we need to be supporting countries that want to make the move. We've said that there are developing countries [where] there might be a price deferential. We want to be helping to support them. This is the huge opportunity."

Officials from the White House have used the annual climate change conference to tout "cleaner" fossil fuels, including at a [controversial event](#) on Monday that drew protesters. But the head of the American negotiating team delivered a speech to the assembled nations that carefully steered clear of coal.

Judy Garber, an acting assistant secretary at the State Department, at the COP23 high-level session said the U.S. still intends to withdraw from the 2015 Paris deal and is open to rejoining later under "more favorable" terms. The U.S. team has said it was not planning to discuss those terms at the Bonn meeting.

Garber noted "dramatic decreases in the cost of low-emissions technologies and fuels, including natural gas, solar, wind, energy storage and energy efficiency," but also referenced

work with China and India capturing carbon emissions from coal.

"We know that each country will need to determine the appropriate energy mix based on its particular circumstances, taking into account the need for energy security, promotion of economic growth and environmental protection," she said. "In that context, we want to support the cleanest, most efficient power generation, regardless of source."

Not all developed countries are on board with the new anti-coal pitch, including Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel is still struggling to form a new government.

"We were asked whether we want to participate. I have asked for understanding, that we cannot decide this ahead of the next government," said Barbara Hendricks, the German environment minister. "The initiative, however, will keep us up to speed about what's happening."

Kalina Oroschakoff contributed to this report.

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Zinke traveled on charter, military planes [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/28/2017 07:47 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides have taken several flights on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands, according to documents and a department spokeswoman.

Zinke is at least the fourth senior member of the Trump administration to have used non-commercial planes at taxpayer expense, along with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and HHS Secretary Tom Price. President Donald Trump has [fumed](#) at Price's pricey travel, and Democrats say the revelations demonstrate a cavalier attitude by Cabinet members toward excessive spending.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said Zinke's charter or military plane trips were booked only after officials were unable to find commercial flights that would accommodate Zinke's schedule, and that all were "pre-cleared by career officials in the ethics office." Swift said she had not spoken to Zinke about whether he would reimburse the government for the cost of the flights, as [Price plans to do](#) for some of the \$400,000 tab he racked up on charter flights.

On June 26, a Beechcraft King Air 200 carried Zinke and several staffers from Las Vegas to Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell, Mont., about a 20-minute drive from Zinke's home in Whitefish, according to his [official schedule](#). The flight cost \$12,375, Swift said.

Zinke left after speaking at an event for the city's new professional hockey team, the "Vegas Golden Knights Development Camp Dinner," according to his schedule. Earlier in the day, he had been in Pahrump, Nev., for an announcement related to public lands.

Zinke's flight left Las Vegas at 8:30 p.m. PST and landed around 1:30 a.m. MST in Kalispell. The secretary stayed overnight at his residence, Interior documents show.

Las Vegas is one of the main [connecting](#) airports for commercial flights to Glacier International. Commercial flights between the two cities are available for several hundred dollars a ticket, according to travel planning websites.

In Whitefish, Zinke attended the Western Governors' Association's annual meeting, where he spoke for about 20 minutes without taking questions. He then had a private lunch with association members. In the afternoon Zinke was the subject of a photo shoot with GQ magazine at Lake McDonald and fished while being interviewed by Outside Magazine, the records show.

Zinke and staffers flew commercial back to Washington, D.C., the next day, according to the records.

The trip was not the first in which Interior booked a private jet for Zinke. [On March 31](#), Interior chartered two flights to take Zinke and staff from St. Croix to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend the centennial of the Danish government turning the islands over to the United States. Another two flights were chartered to return to St. Croix later that night.

Swift said she did not know how much the flights cost but that no other arrangements were available.

Commercial flights between the two islands generally run a few hundred dollars, according to travel booking websites.

In May, Zinke and his wife, Lolita, used a military aircraft to travel to Norway. From there, they flew on a military plane to Alaska for events organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The trip included charter planes to travel within Alaska, a common occurrence in the large, remote state. The Zinkes paid for Lolita's share of the trip, the full cost of which was not immediately available, Swift said.

Zinke also took a military helicopter from Fort Bliss to review the Organ Mountains monument in New Mexico in June, and he used a Bureau of Land Management helicopter to review the Basin and Range National Monument on July 30. "It is difficult to survey a half-million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour and a half," Swift said.

Along with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Zinke took a military plane to Ravalli County, Mont., to check on wildfires in the area in August. "The military plane was used because of a very tight travel window, with no viable commercial airline options to transport two secretaries, security details, and associated USDA, Forest Service and Interior staff to Missoula in the time required," said USDA spokesman Tim Murtaugh. The cost of the flight was not immediately available, but the two agencies plan to reimburse the Air Force, Murtaugh said.

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Watchdog slams Zinke for failing to document travel [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/16/2017 04:02 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document his travel, the agency's watchdog said Thursday, preventing it from determining whether he had violated government rules.

Zinke has come under scrutiny for mixing taxpayer-funded travel with political activities, as well as taking [military or private planes](#) rather than flying commercial, and the investigation by Interior's Office of Inspector General seeks to clarify whether all procedures were correctly followed.

"Our investigation is delayed by absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips and a review process that failed to include proper documentation and accountability," Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said in [a letter](#) obtained by POLITICO and first reported by The Washington Post.

Zinke's travels have drawn scrutiny after Interior revealed he had taken non-commercial flights at taxpayer expense, POLITICO and other news outlets have reported. POLITICO has also reported that the former congressman from Montana [has mixed](#) taxpayer-paid trips with political work, such as when he participated in a fundraiser on behalf of the Virgin Islands GOP.

The IG criticized Zinke for failing to complete documentation for his travel in the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, and said that the process established by Interior's Ethics Office and Office of the Solicitor "does not include sufficient documentation of the legal and ethical analysis conducted to distinguish between personal, political, and official travel, or consistent cost analysis to justify use of non-commercial travel."

The IG asked for documentation of all of Zinke's travel, as well as for the documentation of travel by his wife, Lola Zinke, with documentation for how and when the travel was paid.

Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, the agency's second-ranking official, blamed the lack on documentation on the Obama administration for leaving behind "an organizational and operational mess."

In his [response letter](#), Bernhardt emphasized that Interior employees would continue to cooperate with the IG, and said he would provide documentation as requested.

But he also went on to note that former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell hadn't completed her documentation for 12 trips taken last year and in January of this year, and he said some trips may have never been entered in the system.

"When I arrived at the Department in August 2017 it was clear to me that the Secretary and I had inherited an organizational and operational mess," he wrote. "From my perspective, regarding IOS travel procedures, it appears that the exact same procedures and processes utilized by the previous Administration remain in place and continue to be dysfunctional."

Zinke joins a cast of Trump administration officials, including Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and now-departed Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who are accused of misuse of taxpayer funds for travel.

Esther Whieldon contributed to this report.

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Pruitt to testify before House panel Dec. 7 [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/16/2017 12:00 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will [testify](#) before the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee on Dec. 7.

"We're looking forward to receiving a much-needed update from Mr. Pruitt on his priorities for the agency, including his stated policy of getting EPA 'back to the basics' and its impact on the agency's activity going forward," E&C Chairman [Greg Walden](#) and Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#) said in a joint statement. "Following EPA's controversial and expansive interpretation of its authorities during the past administration, it is past time for EPA to refocus on pursuing its important public health and environmental missions as Congress originally intended."

The appearance will be Pruitt's first before the Energy and Commerce Committee. Democrats on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee are also seeking to have Pruitt testify soon, noting he has not appeared before that committee since his confirmation hearing on Jan. 18.

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Pruitt to testify before EPW in late January 2018 [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 03:55 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will appear before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on Jan. 31, 2018, making his first return to the panel nearly a year after his confirmation, the panel announced today.

"It is important that EPA Administrator Pruitt testifies before the committee," Chairman [John Barrasso](#) said in a statement. "It will give senators the chance to hear about the important work being done at the agency."

Committee Democrats have already expressed outrage Pruitt hasn't returned since his confirmation in February so waiting more than two additional months likely won't mollify that the anger.

"Mr. Pruitt's appearance before our committee, which oversees the agency he leads, is long overdue," Ranking member [Tom Carper](#) said in a statement. "While I think it is unacceptable

that members of this committee will have to wait over a year to hear directly from Administrator Pruitt, I am glad that a date has finally been set, and I look forward to his testimony on January 31st."

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt will testify on [Jan. 31](#).

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FERC chief urges critics to 'move past' DOE's proposal [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/16/2017 01:30 PM EDT

FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee said Thursday that the agency was developing its own approach to support grid resilience rather than working from the proposal submitted by Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

Chatterjee told reporters after FERC's monthly meeting that the issue of supporting baseload coal-fired and nuclear power plants had caused a "hyperbolic reaction" because many people did not understand the agency's process.

"I think part of the problem is that people are still debating the [notice of proposed rulemaking] as it was submitted to us [by the Energy Department]," he said. "What I'm trying to say is we've moved past that and we're moving toward a constructive solution that still answers the questions that Secretary Perry asked in the NOPR in a way that does not distort markets and is legally defensible."

Chatterjee said his effort to implement an "interim" proposal to prop up economically struggling generators in power markets is still being ironed out, but it may direct grid operators to identify what plants are needed for "resilience."

"Once it's fully fleshed out and I feel that it's a defensible product, I want to be able to present that to my colleagues so they can review it," he said, noting that he would ensure that his fellow commissioners would have sufficient time to review it.

In an interview with [Utility Dive](#) on Wednesday, Chatterjee said he was considering an order to require regional grid operators to provide "interim compensation" for power plants that contribute to grid resilience and are at risk of closing before FERC can finish a formal rulemaking, or that those grid operators "show cause that [they] not be required to do so."

Chatterjee said Thursday that "on-site, secure, firm fuel that does not depend on just-in-time delivery," as among the characteristics of power plants that contribute to grid resilience.

The interim FERC chief said that he didn't see any threat to the renewable industry or to natural gas from his plan.

"I genuinely believe that this will not have a negative impact on gas. I believe deeply in natural gas and its value. ... I don't want to do anything to hurt the gas industry," he said.

Chatterjee said that he's pushing an interim proposal to preserve certain power plants because "in the short term, I just want to make sure that the patient doesn't die while we do the longer-term analysis."

However, he didn't envision that his plan — which doesn't appear to have broad support among the FERC leadership yet — would have a mechanism to compensate consumers for paying plants that ultimately turn out not to have been necessary in any long term review.

"As we look through this, we will try and make this as minimally disruptive — we'll try to keep the costs down — to consumers as possible," Chatterjee said, adding that "consumers have paid for things that have a lot less value to the grid than long term resilience and security."

He added: "Thinking about the consequences if we got this wrong, it's a pretty reasonable ask."

Kevin McIntyre, President Donald Trump's pick to lead FERC, is expected to be sworn in in the next few days.

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Zinke appoints Utah hill staffer as acting BLM director [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/16/2017 12:10 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has appointed Brian Steed, the former chief of staff for Rep. [Chris Stewart](#) (R-Utah), as acting director of the Bureau of Land Management.

Mike Nedd, a career staffer who had been acting director since March, announced the change in a Wednesday email to all BLM staff, which POLITICO obtained today.

Steed joined Interior in October as deputy director of programs and policy and Nedd said in the email he and BLM Acting Deputy Director John Ruhs "have come to know [Steed's] ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission."

Nedd said he will become acting deputy director for operations and that Ruhs will return to his job as BLM Nevada state director.

"Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email. "We are excited to have him temporarily step into this leadership role. We couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the initial transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands over the past few months."

The agency did not comment on whether Steed may have limitations on carrying out his responsibilities now that the Vacancies Act requirements kicked in this week.

That law states that unless the president has nominated someone for a Senate-confirmed

position, any person filling that role in an acting capacity cannot carry out certain functions assigned by law or regulation beginning 301 days after that vacancy occurred. President Donald Trump has not announced an appointment for BLM director.

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EPA seeks delay on WOTUS in case Supreme Court lifts stay [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/16/2017 02:48 PM EDT

EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers today [proposed](#) delaying the effective date for the Obama-era Waters of the U.S. regulation as insurance against the upcoming Supreme Court decision on the proper venue for litigation.

The rule, also known as the Clean Water Rule, was originally to take effect on Aug. 28, 2015, although it was stayed by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in October 2015. That stay, however, could be dissolved soon by the Supreme Court, which is [expected to rule](#) in the coming months on whether WOTUS-related legal challenges must first go through district courts or should jump straight to the appellate level.

In the event the justices choose a district-first scheme, the 6th Circuit's nationwide stay would end. Thirteen states would still be covered by a stay issued by another federal judge in North Dakota, but WOTUS theoretically would apply to the other 37 states.

"This step will allow us to minimize confusion" as the agency works on the repeal and rewrite, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a statement.

It is unclear when EPA plans to finalize its repeal of the WOTUS rule, though officials have indicated it could be before the end of the year. The rewritten version is not expected to be proposed until next year.

The proposal would move WOTUS' effective date until two years after the proposal is finalized, which would place it sometime in 2020, almost five years after the original August 2015 start.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will take public comment for just 21 days once the proposal is published in the Federal Register.

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ECOS chief picked to lead EPA's New England region [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/16/2017 10:49 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has picked Alexandra Dunn, executive director of the Environmental Council of States, to run EPA's Region 1, which covers Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Earlier this year, ECOS, a state-focused nonprofit group, [called for](#) a "recalibration" of the roles of EPA and the states on environmental regulation, which the group called "cooperative federalism 2.0." That echoed Pruitt's call for states to take on a greater role in both regulation and enforcement.

Dunn has been at ECOS since 2014, and was recently elected to the American College of Environmental Lawyers' Board of Regents. Prior to ECOS, Dunn headed the Association of Clean Water Administrators and was an attorney for the American Chemistry Council.

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Collins 'leaning against' Dourson for EPA chemicals role [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 12:35 PM EDT

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) told reporters today she's "leaning against" backing Michael Dourson's nomination to run EPA's chemicals office, which would leave him without adequate support for confirmation in the closely divided chamber.

"I have a lot of concerns about Mr. Dourson, but I've not yet made a final decision," she said.

North Carolina Republican Sens. [Richard Burr](#) and [Thom Tillis](#) both came out in opposition on Wednesday to Dourson, who is currently working as an adviser at the agency. Both declined to say if he should leave that role today.

Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) also said today he had not decided whether to support the nomination.

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Franken apologizes after woman says he groped her [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim | 11/16/2017 11:12 AM EDT

Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) apologized Thursday after a female broadcaster said the lawmaker groped and kissed her without her consent during a 2006 trip overseas.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) immediately called for an ethics investigation, and Franken vowed to cooperate.

Multiple Democratic senators quickly broke with Franken after Leeann Tweeden, a radio anchor for Los Angeles' KABC, [wrote Thursday](#) about the senator's admitted misconduct. Tweeden described harassment by Franken while she and the comedian, then a host on liberal talk radio, toured the Middle East to entertain military personnel in 2006.

According to Tweeden, Franken crafted a performance skit during the trip to make the anchor kiss him against her will. "I felt disgusted and violated," she said of the incident. "I tried to let it go, but I was angry."

Tweeden wrote that after she returned from the overseas trip she discovered a picture of the senator groping her as she slept.

Tweeden's allegations were published Thursday on the radio station's website accompanied by a picture depicting Franken grabbing the anchor's breast while she slept aboard a C-17 cargo plane as they departed from Afghanistan.

McConnell (R-Ky.) immediately called for the ethics committee to investigate, and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Franken himself echoed the need for such a probe.

Some of Franken's fellow Democrats readily shared their dismay at his actions as Tweeden's story swept through the Capitol. A growing awareness of sexual harassment's prevalence [is propelling](#) a push to overhaul Capitol Hill's system for handling workplace misconduct complaints.

"I have every reason to believe Ms. Tweeden's account," Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) told reporters. "I think that women should be able to feel safe and free in their workplace, and if there are such allegations they should come forward."

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) called Franken's behavior "unacceptable," adding that he believes Tweeden.

"Sexual harassment and groping are never okay," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) told reporters. "Sen. Franken will have to address the allegations in the article."

The Franken allegations come as McConnell and GOP leaders continue to isolate Roy Moore amid multiple alleged cases of sexual harassment or misconduct by the Alabama Senate nominee. While many GOP senators initially qualified their condemnation of Moore's behavior, suggesting they had yet to fully evaluate the assault charges against the Alabama Republican, the Democrats who spoke out against Franken's actions on Thursday pointedly aligned with Tweeden's story.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who is seeking GOP support for legislation that would broadly reform Capitol Hill's sexual harassment policy, said that she believes Tweeden's "deeply concerning" story.

"I feel very strongly that Roy Moore should not be a senator and I feel strongly that, if he is elected, that the Senate should have its own response to it," Gillibrand told reporters. "I expect to hear more from Sen. Franken on this issue."

Other Democrats declined to answer questions about Franken on Thursday or held off making a statement. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), a frequent liberal ally of Franken, avoided questions from reporters, while Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said that he is "waiting to hear

from Al."

Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.), vice chairman of the ethics committee, cited policy against weighing in on a matter before the panel, as did fellow committee members Sens. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii).

In his call for an ethics committee probe of Franken, McConnell said that "all credible allegations of sexual harassment or assault" should be investigated by the panel. "Regardless of party, harassment and assault are completely unacceptable — in the workplace or anywhere else," the Kentucky Republican said.

In his second statement of the day responding to Tweeden, Franken said he is among the powerful men who "have been forced to take a good, hard look at our own actions" after the recent flood of sexual harassment and assault allegations hitting Hollywood, the media, and politics.

"While I don't remember the rehearsal for the skit as Leeann does, I understand why we need to listen to and believe women's experiences," Franken said.

"This should not have happened to Leeann Tweeden," said Franken's fellow Minnesota Democratic senator, Amy Klobuchar.

Klobuchar, who is leading bipartisan talks on an overhaul of Congress' sexual harassment policy through her position as top Democrat on the Rules Committee, added in a statement that Franken's behavior is "another example of why we need to change work environments and reporting practices across the nation, including in Congress."

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.) described herself as "very sad" about Tweeden's story and added that she would join fellow Rules panel members to "do everything we can" to make the Congress' harassment complaint system easier for victims to navigate.

Tweeden's story also prompted Democrats in vulnerable reelection races next year to immediately distance themselves from Franken. The Minnesotan canceled his scheduled appearance at a weekend fundraiser for Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), who issued a statement declaring that "sexual harassment is never acceptable."

Democratic challengers in House races who received donations from Franken have "already [donated] the money to a variety of local charities," said Meredith Kelly, a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spokeswoman.

Abby Finkenauer, a Democratic challenger in Iowa who received a donation from Franken, said that "Democrats need to hold ourselves to the same standards we would demand of Republicans."

"Sexual assault is not a partisan problem," said Finkenauer, who donated the money to a nonprofit that supports sexual assault victims.

Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), who earlier this week shared her own story of sexual harassment while working as an intern in the 1970s, said she would donate money received from Franken's leadership PAC to charity. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), who tweeted that "Senator Franken's conduct was inappropriate and unacceptable," also donated a leadership PAC contribution from Franken to charity, as did Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Bob

Casey (D-Pa.).

"I've decided it's time to tell my story. #MeToo," Tweeden wrote Thursday on social media, referencing the social movement that has led to dozens of accusations of sexual misconduct against powerful men in a range of industries.

In a later press conference in Los Angeles, Tweeden said her experience with Franken reminded her of a recording of disgraced movie producer Harvey Weinstein trying to cajole a woman to keep talking with him after acknowledging that he groped her.

Franken "just kept persisting," Tweeden said. "I was just like, okay, fine — just so he would shut up, you know?"

Cristiano Lima, Marc Caputo, Louis Nelson, Kevin Robillard, and Elena Schneider contributed to this report.

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Tax reform may doom Trump infrastructure plan [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 11/16/2017 05:01 AM EDT

The tax reform bill set to be voted on Thursday by the House of Representatives could kill any chance of the Trump administration's trillion-dollar infrastructure plan ever happening.

At best, House support for the plan would signal lukewarm backing among Republicans for President Donald Trump's ambitions. At worst, the bill would effectively end the funding structure that the administration touts as a way to reach its \$1 trillion target and minimize the burden on taxpayers.

The House bill ends tax breaks for private activity bonds, a key part of public-private partnerships in projects ranging from roads to low-income housing. The administration has said it wants to leverage those partnerships to reduce the direct cost of the president's building plan.

Private activity bonds leverage local or state government debt for a project deemed to be a public good but too expensive for that government to manage, so it arranges for a private entity to run it. Examples range from aquariums to water systems. Those bonds come with a tax exemption, as other municipal bonds do, on what they pay out to entice investors to buy them.

The White House did not comment on the change, but suggested that it would attempt to restore tax breaks for that type of infrastructure financing.

"We will continue working with Congress throughout the process to ensure that the President's priorities are reflected in the tax cut bill that reaches his desk," White House deputy press secretary Lindsay Walters said in an emailed statement to POLITICO.

Rep. [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said he was concerned about repealing the tax exemption for those bonds.

"I don't know that there's a commitment" to restore the bond exemption between the House and Senate when they reconcile their bills. "There's a lot of money on the sidelines that comes into play, so I think it's something that would hopefully be put back in there."

Added Shuster: "The president's talked about doing these kinds of things, so it's not a helpful thing" for Trump's building plan.

Infrastructure experts agreed.

"If that moved forward, it would pretty substantially undermine the Trump infrastructure plan," said Michael Likosky, a principal at the infrastructure advisory firm 32 Advisors. "A large amount of infrastructure is financed through the tax code."

The head of the infrastructure financing desk for one major bank, who asked not to be named for fear of being seen as critical of Congress, said he viewed the tax reform provision as a sign of the House's rejection of Trump's infrastructure plan.

"Infrastructure is a lower priority for the House of Representatives as they've wrestled with tax reform," he said.

Matt Fabian, a partner at Municipal Market Analytics, estimated that 80 percent of the public-private partnerships that Trump would rely on to pay for new building use private activity bonds.

Elimination of such bonds would "effectively neuter" any infrastructure agenda that would use private financing, Fabian said.

The Joint Committee on Taxation, which does nonpartisan economic and budgetary analysis for Congress, estimates that eliminating those bonds would raise almost \$40 billion over 10 years, which would help make up for lost revenue from tax cuts made by the House reform bill.

Republicans need to meet strict budget requirements to pass tax reform along a party-line vote in the Senate.

Unless Trump can create an unlikely alliance of Democrats and Republicans to pass \$1 trillion in new infrastructure spending, repeal of the bonds could effectively end those hopes. That may set up a high-stakes fight to save the exemption if the House and Senate have to agree on unified tax reform legislation.

Shuster and other infrastructure spending supporters hope that the issue will be fixed, in part because the Senate's version of tax reform includes the private activity bond exemption. But the Senate tax bill is already over the budgetary limit for money the government may lose under the tax reform bill it's considering. That makes it more likely that provisions repealed by the House to fit those budgetary requirements will be included in a final product.

Even Republican supporters of private activity bonds sounded pessimistic.

"Finding revenue, finding the scorer space, it's an inside-D.C./Beltway problem; but it's the

reality of the legislative sausage-making process that we're dealing with, and so finding the revenue is one of the difficult questions that has to be answered," said Rep. [Tom Reed](#) (R-N.Y.). "Even after tax reform, we're not going to give up the fight, because I believe in these types of programs."

Likosky and other infrastructure financing experts expected major municipal bond market distortions for the remainder of the year, due to a rush to market for private activity bonds before they would be repealed by the House bill.

"The muni market itself would shrink accordingly," Fabian said, and federal government aid to assist those programs would likely need to increase to offset it. Airports, hospitals and other institutions reliant on private activity bonds may increase costs to individuals to make up for the shortfall if that federal aid didn't come.

Fabian said he expected projects important to the constituencies of many Republicans, like rural hospitals, small religious universities and charter schools, to be hit particularly hard by loss of the bonds.

According to Chris Hamel, head of the infrastructure investment group for Royal Bank of Canada, a portion of low-income housing construction would also likely stall out. According to RBC, private activity bonds financed over \$4 billion worth of low-income housing projects in 2016.

But some view private activity bonds skeptically as government subsidization and see no problem killing them, regardless of the impact on Trump's infrastructure ambitions.

"What it does is dries up another revenue source with regard to that particular form of infrastructure," said Rep. [Mark Sanford](#) (R-S.C.), who sits on the House Transportation Committee. "But I think that there is fairly unanimous consent, within at least the House [Republican] conference, that they need to go."

Multiple members said they have yet to hear much pushback on the repeal from the White House, either, suggesting a potential abandonment of the private financing route for Trump's infrastructure plan.

"I think that's been a valuable tool," said Rep. [Pat Tiberi](#) (R-Ohio), a Ways and Means member. "If there is some abuse, which some say there has been, I would be for trying to limit [the private activity bond tax exemption's] scope. If it ends up being repealed, I think it will have an impact on the housing market."

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Hope Hicks may hold the keys to Mueller's Russia puzzle [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 11/16/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Special counsel Robert Mueller's team is preparing to interview the woman who's seen it all: Hope Hicks.

She's been part of Donald Trump's inner circle for years, first at Trump Tower and then as an omnipresent gatekeeper and fixer who could get emails or other communications directly to the boss during the 2016 campaign.

As a senior White House adviser and now as communications director, she's been in the room for moments critical to Mueller's probe, which has grown to include the president's response to the Russia investigation itself.

Hicks' history with Trump makes her one of the more useful witnesses for Mueller as he looks for insights into the president's habits and moods. She also is one of the few people well positioned to recount the president's reactions at various moments as the Russia scandal has sidetracked his presidency — including the Mueller appointment itself.

Mueller's decision to request an interview with Hicks — who hasn't been named in any criminal wrongdoing — also indicates he's reached a critical point in the overall investigation, according to former prosecutors and veterans of past White House investigations. Typically, conversations with such senior-level aides are saved for near the end of a probe.

"Anytime you can get someone who is the right-hand person or who's been around the primary target of an investigation, under oath, answering detailed questions, means you've progressed very far along in the investigation," said Adam Goldberg, a former Clinton White House lawyer.

White House attorney Ty Cobb wouldn't say specifically when Hicks planned to appear before Mueller's team, though he did say he was "bullish" that all current White House aides, including Hicks, will have completed interviews with the special counsel "shortly after Thanksgiving."

"Nothing about the White House's commitment to fully cooperate with the special counsel, including doing necessary interviews, has changed," Cobb said on Wednesday. "We continue to be in a full cooperation posture."

Hicks, her attorney and Mueller's office all declined comment for this story.

People who know Hicks, 29, say she's been preparing for months for her sit-down with Mueller's prosecutors. She's hired as her attorney Robert Trout, a former assistant U.S. attorney and co-founder of a white-collar law firm that has represented other high-profile people mired in Washington scandals, including President Richard Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell during Watergate, Fawn Hall during Iran-Contra and President Bill Clinton's paramour Monica Lewinsky.

Friends in touch with Hicks say they expect her to cooperate fully with the special counsel. "I think she's smart enough and sensible enough that she knows she'd be doing no one any favors by lying — the best thing she can do for everyone is to tell the truth," said one friend.

But the potential for her to be tripped up by investigators looms large given the complexity of the Russia probe and the sheer amount of time Hicks has spent by Trump's side.

"It's not going to be easy," said a former Clinton White House aide who was questioned under oath during one of the many independent-counsel investigations that shadowed that Democratic administration. "It's more of a root canal than a checkup."

Hicks first came into Trump's world in 2012, two years after graduating college, when the New York PR firm at which she was working tapped her to help one of its clients: Ivanka Trump. Donald Trump poached Hicks in October 2014, according to a [GQ profile](#), and she's listed as the point of contact that month on a news release announcing a new reservation system for the under-construction Trump hotel in Washington that would let people buy the right to book a room "should their chosen candidate become the next President of the United States."

Hicks continued to work on Trump business operations in 2015, though her portfolio expanded into politics as her boss started hiring his first campaign staffers and early-primary state advisers ahead of his June entry into the presidential race. A [McClatchy story](#) that January — profiling the "sideshows of the Republican presidential campaign" — quotes Hicks explaining that Trump's visits to Iowa and South Carolina in recent years had been done "to advance his goal to make America great again."

In March 2015, during the span of nine days, Hicks is on a news release touting a new PGA golf tournament at Trump's Los Angeles course, as the point person for the creation of Trump's presidential exploratory committee and responding to Trump's winter residence newspaper, the Palm Beach Post, to explain that he was looking at a run for the White House as a Republican, with plans to give up his NBC show "The Apprentice."

After Trump officially entered the race in the late spring, with a controversial speech at Trump Tower, Hicks served as one of few core staffers and held a central role as the primary spokesperson for the campaign.

Hicks was dealing with Russia questions as early as December 2015, when she issued a statement on Trump's behalf calling it "a great honor" after President Vladimir Putin praised him as "an outstanding and talented personality" and the "absolute leader of the presidential race."

As the calendar flipped to 2016, Hicks started publicly crossing paths with several campaign associates who would later become central figures in Mueller's Russia investigation.

In March 2016, Hicks joined Trump at a [Washington Post editorial board meeting](#) when he first announced a foreign policy advisory team that included Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, who pleaded guilty last month for lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russian officials.

Papadopoulos, according to Mueller's court filings, emailed senior Trump campaign aides in late April, including then-campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, to tell them about calls he'd been getting "about Putin wanting to host him and the team when the time is right." A month later, in May 2016, Hicks went on the record to the [Daily Mail](#) to dismiss a story in the Israeli newspaper Maariv saying Trump was planning a trip after the GOP convention to Israel, Germany and Russia.

She also dealt with Page, who told the House Intelligence Committee during a closed-door hearing last month that he had emailed her, Lewandowski and senior aide J.D. Gordon in June 2016 to tell them he had been invited — after joining the campaign — to speak in Moscow.

A month later, Hicks made the first in a series of comments to reporters about Page's speech in Moscow — in which he slammed the U.S. for a "hypocritical focus" on democracy and

corruption in Russia — trying to explain it was not reflective of the views of the Trump campaign.

Hicks tangled with Roger Stone, the longtime Trump adviser and GOP dark-arts operative who has drawn scrutiny in the Russia investigation for seemingly predicting WikiLeaks' October 2016 release of emails hacked from Hillary Clinton campaign Chairman John Podesta.

And she also had to answer for Paul Manafort, whose role spearheading GOP delegate-counting efforts at the Republican National Convention and later as campaign chairman prompted a series of media inquiries about his past business relationships. The Washington Post [reported](#) this September that Manafort had emailed Hicks in April 2016 telling her to disregard the newspaper's questions about his ties to Putin ally and Russian aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska. Manafort was indicted last month along with his protégé, Rick Gates, on multiple charges of money laundering and fraud.

Hicks tried to avoid making waves on several other Russia-related stories as the general election campaign heated up.

She referred media questions in June 2016 to the Secret Service amid the first reports in The [Washington Post](#) that Russian government hackers had breached the Democratic National Committee. She pointed reporters back to Trump's [Twitter feed](#) that July after he joked that Russian hackers should help to "find the 30,000 emails that are missing" from Clinton's State Department account.

Two days after Trump's election win, Hicks told the [The New York Times](#), the [Washington Post](#) and other media outlets that the campaign had no contacts with the Russian government. Those comments were quickly debunked, starting with the Russian deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, who told reporters that Moscow had been in touch with Trump's "immediate entourage." Subsequent reports have revealed Russian meetings with, among others, Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, Jeff Sessions, Manafort, Page and Papadopoulos.

Hicks has also been present for key Russia-related moments since arriving at the White House. She was with Trump in Bedminster, New Jersey, during the early May weekend when he decided to fire Comey. The [Washington Post](#) in September also reported Hicks was in the Oval Office for a meeting the day before the FBI director was ousted when the president described a draft letter he and senior aide Stephen Miller had written spelling out at length Trump's complaints about Comey.

According to the [Post](#), Hicks, White House spokesman Josh Raffel and lawyers for Kushner tried unsuccessfully while flying home from Germany in July on Air Force One to urge Trump into a more transparent public response as news broke about the Trump Tower meeting his eldest son had organized during the campaign with a Russian lawyer who was offering dirt on Clinton.

Hicks was also the [only Trump aide in the room](#) when the president sat for a [Times interview](#) in July where he revealed he wished he hadn't nominated Sessions to be attorney general because of his recusal over the Russia probe. He also questioned the political leanings and ethics of Sessions' deputy Rod Rosenstein.

Mueller's team has already interviewed others who worked in the White House—including

former chief of staff Reince Priebus and former press secretary Sean Spicer — but almost no one can offer prosecutors the window into the past 2½ years that Hicks can.

"If she is forthcoming and cooperative, she can be very useful to them," said Renato Mariotti, a former assistant U.S. attorney closely tracking the case, who added that Hicks can explain "what was normal" and "what wasn't normal" during the course of a typical day in the Trump campaign and the White House.

"Her access to Trump is going to be important, what she saw, what she heard," Mariotti added.

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How Doug Jones could pull off a stunner in Alabama [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti and Daniel Strauss | 11/16/2017 05:06 AM EDT

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — The first and most vital task for Doug Jones to pull off a once-unthinkable upset in Alabama: Get Republican voters comfortable with the idea that it's OK to pull the lever for *this* Democrat, if the alternative is scandal-wracked Roy Moore.

"I'm a Republican, but Roy Moore? No way," one man says in Jones' latest ad, released Tuesday. "I'm a lifelong Republican, but I just can't do it," another concurs. The word "Democrat" is not uttered once.

Nearly unthinkable even a week ago, the prospect of Jones becoming the first Democrat elected to the Senate from Alabama in a quarter century has suddenly become very real. Jones remains an underdog in a state that chose Donald Trump by a 28-point margin in the presidential election, and where Democrats make up just over a third of the electorate, according to polling.

But he does have a path. Here's how it looks, according to interviews with nearly a dozen Democrats within and near Jones' team since Moore was hit with accusations of pursuing — and in two cases abusing — teenage girls. First, create a permission structure for alienated Republicans who are skeptical of Moore — primarily those who voted against him in the GOP primary — to cross the aisle. At the same time invigorate the base, especially African-Americans, who make up over a quarter of registered voters, according to the Alabama Secretary of State's office. And finally, keep the national Democratic Party and its despised brand as far out of the picture as possible, while still benefiting from its money.

Even before the parade of Moore accusers came forward — [a sixth did so](#) on Wednesday — local Democrats were quietly upbeat. Controversial in state politics for decades, Moore received just 51 percent of the vote in his last statewide race — during a 2012 election cycle in which Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney carried Alabama with 60 percent of the vote.

Here's a look at Jones' game plan ahead of the Dec. 12 election:

Win over Strange voters

Jones will need to bring over some of the state's suburban moderate Republicans who preferred Sen. Luther Strange to Moore in September's first round of voting, which Strange lost by 10 points.

That will mean making inroads in regions with high shares of college-educated white voters, including Shelby County, Madison County (home of Huntsville), Jefferson County (home of Birmingham), and Montgomery (home of Montgomery city). And it will entail driving down turnout in the more rural parts of Alabama where support for Moore — a former official in Etowah County, home of Gadsden — is strongest.

Jones' allies expect a renewed focus on the counties that backed Strange over Moore.

"These stories about Judge Moore, I think, have the effect of having people give a harder look to him and who he is ... and what kind of senator he'd be," said Birmingham lawyer Giles Perkins, a top Jones adviser. Moore was removed twice from the state Supreme Court and has a history of racist and homophobic comments. "The race was in play before this week."

Keep D.C. Democrats at bay — to a point

In an attempt to keep the national Democratic Party at arm's length — and thereby not scare away Republicans — Jones canceled a fundraising trip to Washington this week, skipping an event that would have put him in a room with high-profile Democratic leaders like California Sen. Kamala Harris. Meanwhile, national-level Democrats are plying their hero-in-the-making with advice, money and tweets — without crossing the line into being a public, backfiring nuisance.

High-profile national surrogates are also steering clear of the state: The most famous person to visit Alabama for Jones so far, former Vice President Joe Biden, now has no plans to return. The only other prominent Democrat to appear for Jones — civil rights icon John Lewis — has been deployed to help with African-American turnout. He appeared in Mobile with Jones over the weekend.

"You don't win those kinds of races by having people from out-of-state go in and tell them what they should do — that nationalizes the race and turns the spotlight on our stereotype," said former Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean, who said he'd recently spoken with Jones. "The people of Alabama will decide they've had enough, and we should get out their way and let that happen."

"There's an expectation that he can carry his own over the next four weeks," added Democrat Randall Woodfin, the mayor-elect of Birmingham, where Jones campaign signs dot the city and its suburbs.

At the same time, Jones is still relying on fundraising help from national Democrats to help fuel his massive spending advantage over Moore on the television airwaves. Senate Democrats' campaign arm is sending a stream of fundraising emails for Jones, and prominent senators, like Tim Kaine, Harris, Elizabeth Warren, and Kirsten Gillibrand have tapped their campaign supporter lists to help Jones, to great financial effect.

Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly, in a fundraising note of his own, compared the race with his 2012 victory over a controversial Republican, and Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy's appeals netted Jones over \$125,000, according to a Democrat familiar with the figures.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and DNC have remained in close touch with Jones' team after monitoring the race for months and offering organizing and messaging guidance. But neither has made plans to step in any further, eager to keep the spotlight on Moore and away from themselves.

Even the fact that Monday's news conference held by a fifth Moore accuser with celebrity lawyer Gloria Allred occurred in New York City, not Alabama, sent grumbles through the ranks of Democrats.

Invigorate the base

Jones allies are now looking through the results of Moore's last race to see how they can improve upon the Democrats' near-win five years ago. That will likely involve running a more sophisticated turnout operation in largely African-American neighborhoods in the cities.

Much of Jones' recent campaign activity has zeroed in on these voters. In addition to the rally with Lewis, he has appeared in both Montgomery and Birmingham — two cities with among the highest proportion of African-American residents in the country. In the last week, he has also visited the far reaches of the state, from Mobile in its southwest corner to Fyffe in the northeast.

Organizing efforts, meanwhile, have largely focused on the so-called Black Belt, a collection of roughly 18 counties including Montgomery and Sumter — where Strange beat Moore.

Still, even if Jones executes this plan to perfection, there's no guarantee he'll win. Democrats haven't won any statewide race in Alabama since 2008, after all, and haven't gotten a senator elected here since 1992.

"There is unvarnished skepticism of The Washington Post, and media in general, among grass-roots conservatives," said Republican state Sen. Phil Williams of Gadsden, outlining Jones' challenge and pointing to the paper that broke the first story about Moore and his past behavior. Williams, who endorsed Moore over Strange, said the accusations meant the race would be "closer" than it otherwise would be, but predicted Moore would still win.

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Many in middle class would eventually pay higher taxes in new Senate plan, study says

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By Brian Faler | 11/16/2017 12:07 PM EDT

Senate Republicans' revised plan to revamp the tax code would eventually raise taxes on many middle-income people, according to a new independent analysis.

While everyone, on average, would initially see their taxes fall under the plan, the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation said Thursday that by 2027, everyone earning less than \$75,000 on average would face a tax increase. Those between \$20,000 and \$30,000 would see a 25

percent hike that year, the report found.

Though JCT did not offer an explanation of the figures, those increases are partly because most of Republicans' tax cuts for individual taxpayers would expire after 2025. At the same time, lawmakers want to change, and make permanent, how the tax code is indexed for inflation in a way that will push people into higher tax brackets faster as wages rise.

Republicans say they were forced by arcane budget rules in the Senate to make individual tax cuts temporary, and that lawmakers in the future won't allow those increases to take effect. They're also challenging Democrats to vote with them to waive those budget restrictions when their plan reaches the Senate floor. That would require 60 votes.

Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) Thursday morning blamed projected tax increases for some low-income people on Republicans' plans to kill the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate to have health insurance, as part of their tax-rewrite plan. Removing that penalty means fewer people signing up for federally subsidized coverage, which, for many, comes in the form of tax credits. Hatch complained that shows up in the JCT tables as a tax increase.

"Obviously we have no intention of raising taxes on these families," he said. "Every Republican on this committee has been committed to providing tax cuts to every income cohort."

The tax poured fuel on Democratic criticism of the plan.

"I do not know how anybody can go home to their constituents and explain why it's a good idea to hike taxes on parents who are barely staying afloat to pay for a massive corporate handout," said Sen. Ron Wyden, the Finance Committee's top Democrat. "What's happening here is shameful."

But Republicans will likely emphasize the early years of the analysis, which found middle-income people reaping some of the largest percentage tax cuts under the plan.

In 2019, people with incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000 would see their tax bills fall by 9.8 percent, the study found. Those between \$75,000 and \$100,000 would see a 7.7 percent decline compared with a 5.4 percent cut for millionaires. Overall, the plan would cut taxes that year by 7.4 percent, the report said.

In many years, those earning more than \$1 million would bear a larger share of the total tax burden under the plan than they do today, JCT said.

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Yes, very



Somewhat



Neutral



Not really



Not at all

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Chevron: Zinke aide's wife worked for controversial fundraiser — FEMA concerned with Whitefish contract — Rosselló to visit New York
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 3:04:33 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/27/2017 03:03 PM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon

INTERIOR'S DESIGNER: A political operative who has benefited from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's political activity used the wife of Zinke's chief of staff to do interior design work on two of her homes, Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano scoop. "The chief of staff, longtime Zinke aide Scott Hommel, did not list any compensation for the work on his government ethics forms — as federal law would require if his wife had been paid for the work."

The relationship raises new questions about Zinke's relationship with direct mail consultant Kimberly Bellissimo, who has been accused of working with "scam PACs" that raise money by allegedly misleading conservative donors. "Zinke has worked with Bellissimo's ForthRight Strategy and related firms since at least 2013 through his super PAC, congressional campaign and leadership political action committee, steering at least \$4.8 million to them, and as Interior secretary he helped raise money for a Virgin Islands-based PAC that was another top client of Bellissimo's firms," Ben and Nick report.

"If Lucretia Hommel made money last year with her company, Snobz Interior Design, Scott Hommel would have to have disclosed it to the Office of Government Ethics before joining the Interior Department as Zinke's top adviser. His [personal financial disclosure](#) lists his wife as a self-employed interior designer but does not indicate that the business generated any profits. ... Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift told POLITICO that Scott Hommel didn't have any discrepancies on his ethics report, but she declined to make him available for an interview. Swift declined to discuss whether Lucretia Hommel earned income from her interior design business." Read more [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Happy Friday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

GONE WHITE-FISHING: FEMA today said it has "significant concerns" about the contract to prepare the grid between Puerto Rico's electric utility and a small Montana-based company from Zinke's hometown, Ben [reports](#). The agency said it was not involved with the contract between the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority and Whitefish Energy and is investigating whether the costs PREPA agreed to are reasonable. FEMA also said it has not reimbursed PREPA for any expenses related to Whitefish Energy. The White House also disavowed the contract today, CBS News [reports](#).

TRAILER RULE ON HOLD: A federal court today sided with a trucking industry group

and agreed to [stay](#) an Obama administration rule requiring truck trailers to be more aerodynamic in order to reduce fuel use. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit agreed to keep the underlying case held in abeyance pending further guidance. The court asked EPA, the Truck Trailer Manufacturers Association and other parties to provide status updates every 90 days. Eric Wolff has more [here](#).

BLM ADVANCES CALIFORNIA SOLAR PROJECT: The Bureau of Land Management is advancing a proposed 500 megawatt solar project in Southern California but recommending reducing its geographic footprint to avoid sensitive habitats. BLM said in a [Federal Register notice](#) today that it has issued a [draft supplemental environmental impact statement](#) and supporting documents for EDF Renewable Energy's Palen Solar Electricity Generating System Project. BLM says it supports an alternative project design that would avoid a large area of the desert that serves as a path for floodwater and is critical to thirsty local vegetation and wildlife habitats. EDF is the third owner of the project, which was first proposed in 2009 as a solar tower but is now planned to be a series of solar arrays.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND: Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló could visit New York "next week, I believe, as early as next week," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said, to see how the state recovered after Hurricane Sandy. Cuomo has traveled to the territory twice since it was struck by Hurricane Maria, POLITICO New York's Jimmy Vielkind [reports](#), and discussed rebuilding from hurricanes with Rosselló while there. "We're already working with them on how to build resiliency measures into the reconstruction of Puerto Rico much the way we have here," Cuomo said today. "He's going to come to tour what we've done and to sit with experts, but my staff and his staff are already working."

ST. LOUIS COMMITS TO 100 PERCENT RENEWABLES: St. Louis — home to various coal companies like Arch Coal and Peabody — has committed to 100 percent renewable energy by 2035. "Lawmakers in St. Louis have approved a [measure](#) aimed at powering the city entirely on renewable energy sources, including wind and solar, by 2035," the Huffington Post reports. "The resolution, [introduced last month](#) by St. Louis Board of Aldermen President [Lewis Reed](#) and unanimously approved by the legislative body on Friday, tasks the city with developing a plan by December 2018 to wean itself off fossil fuels." Read [more](#).

TRUMP SUPPORTS LAKE OKEECHOBEE SPEED UP: Florida Gov. Rick Scott praised the president Thursday, following news that the White House announced support for hastening repairs to the Lake Okeechobee dike. POLITICO Florida's Bruce Ritchie [reports](#): "The federal government is repairing the dike around Lake Okeechobee to prevent it from breaking and flooding surrounding communities. Scott said last April that Trump had agreed that the federal government would partner with the state to speed up repairs but details never were provided. Thursday night, the White House [announced](#) that Trump had instructed Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney to accelerate the completion of dike repairs. No timetable for funding or repairs was included in the announcement."

TRUMP TWEETS VS. STEYER: Trump used his penchant for tweeting this morning to hit billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer as Steyer ramps up his eight-figure ad campaign to impeach the president. "Wacky & totally unhinged Tom Steyer, who has been fighting me and my Make America Great Again agenda from beginning, never wins elections!" Trump tweeted this morning. Steyer's ad calling for the president's impeachment coincidentally played this morning on "Fox & Friends," likely catching the president's eye, POLITICO's Nolan McCaskill [reports](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Trump tells Sen. [Orrin Hatch](#) that he'll shrink Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, [The Salt Lake Tribune](#).
- Chevron hammered for production miss while Exxon gets a pass, [Bloomberg](#).
- Baker Hughes reports a slight rise in U.S. oil-rig count, [MarketWatch](#).
- Energy, not tech or finance, in CEO line-up for Trump's China visit, [Reuters](#).
- Subsidy plan for coal and nuclear plants 'will cost US taxpayers \$10.6bn a year,' [The Guardian](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Twitter urged firms to [delete data](#) during 2016 campaign
- GOP eyes end of Russia probes with Trump [collusion unanswered](#)
- Capitol Hill's [sexual harassment policy](#) 'toothless,' 'a joke'

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/zinke-aides-wife-worked-for-controversial-fundraiser-025269>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Top Zinke aide's wife has worked for controversial fundraiser [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano | 10/27/2017 11:10 AM EDT

A Washington political operative who has benefited from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's political activity used the wife of Zinke's chief of staff to do interior design work on two of her homes, according to interviews and social media interactions reviewed by POLITICO.

The chief of staff, longtime Zinke aide Scott Hommel, did not list any compensation for the work on his government ethics forms — as federal law would require if his wife had been paid for the work.

The previously undisclosed relationship raises new questions about possible conflicts of interest stemming from Zinke's relationship with direct mail consultant Kimberly Bellissimo, who has been accused by some prominent conservatives of working with "scam PACs" that raise money by allegedly misleading conservative donors. Zinke has worked with Bellissimo's ForthRight Strategy and related firms since at least 2013 through his super PAC, congressional campaign and leadership political action committee, [steering at least](#) \$4.8 million to them, and

as Interior secretary he helped raise money for a Virgin Islands-based PAC that was another top client of Bellissimo's firms.

If Lucretia Hommel made money last year with her company, Snobz Interior Design, Scott Hommel would have to have disclosed it to the Office of Government Ethics before joining the Interior Department as Zinke's top adviser. His [personal financial disclosure](#) lists his wife as a self-employed interior designer but does not indicate that the business generated any profits.

"The threshold for reporting a spouse's business income is very low — \$1,000," said Brett Kappel, a campaign finance and ethics lawyer for Akerman LLP. "Failing to disclose required information on the [ethics] form is serious business — it could be a criminal violation of both the Ethics in Government Act and the False Statements Act."

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift told POLITICO that Scott Hommel didn't have any discrepancies on his ethics report, but she declined to make him available for an interview. Swift declined to discuss whether Lucretia Hommel earned income from her interior design business.

Federal ethics guidelines require political appointees to disclose their spouse's income to evaluate whether they can avoid conflicts of interest, said Rob Walker, of counsel at law firm Wiley Rein LLP and a former chief counsel and staff director of the Senate and House Ethics committees.

"It's getting to the impartiality of officials in their official decision-making and if they could be affected by their own or closer relatives financial interest," Walker said.

In addition to its work with political campaigns, ForthRight Strategy, where Bellissimo is CEO, also appears to work with nonprofits that would have interest in decisions by the Interior Department, raising additional red flags over potential conflicts of interests. In a [post](#) on its Facebook page Tuesday, ForthRight says it "is proud to be part of the E&E Legal team."

The Energy & Environment Legal Institute, which the post referenced, is a nonprofit that specializes in filing public records requests and lawsuits against agencies including Interior, the Energy Department and EPA to advance conservative policy goals. E&E Legal President Craig Richardson told POLITICO the group has hired ForthRight as a fundraising vendor.

Bellissimo gushed about Lucretia Hommel's work in a review posted on [Snobz Interior Design's Facebook page](#) in October 2016.

"Currently working with Lucretia on not one but two projects!" Bellissimo wrote. "First she started on our 1905 Beachhouse on the Jersey Shore...I call it 'Jersey Shore meets St. Tropaz chic!' Now we are tackling our 1885 brownstone in downtown Washington D.C."

Bellissimo did not respond to requests for comment on her relationship with Lucretia Hommel.

Scott Hommel was the treasurer for Zinke's super PAC, Special Operations for America, when it first hired Bellissimo's direct-mail fundraising firms in 2013. Zinke's congressional campaign and a leadership PAC he founded when he was elected to the House also spent heavily on Bellissimo's firms. And Bellissimo has remained close to Zinke since he joined

Interior. Bellissimo and her husband posed for a photo with the newly inaugurated secretary and Vice President Mike Pence when Zinke was sworn in last March.

Lucretia Hommel acknowledged working for Bellissimo but ended an interview before providing details on how much she was paid for the work.

"I was her interior designer for many years," Lucretia Hommel told POLITICO. "She hired me to do her house at the beach. I'm working on a project with her at her house in D.C. currently. We're finishing up. She's become a friend. She's a great person. She's just my client."

Bellissimo also uses Snobz Interior Design's website to sell furniture, Hommel added. Bellissimo's phone number and email address were listed on the site as of Friday.

Lucretia Hommel tagged Bellissimo in a [June 17 Facebook post](#) offering a "sneak peek at our favorite makeover so far," with before-and-after photos of a townhouse in Washington. An [Aug. 6 update](#) in which Bellissimo also was tagged included a photo of Bellissimo and a man who appears to be her husband painting an interior wall.

Estimating how much an interior designer may make working on a New Jersey beach home and Washington townhome would be difficult without knowing more details, several interior designers told POLITICO. But they agreed that it would undoubtedly be worth more than \$1,000. "Decorators can charge \$250 an hour, \$400 an hour, I know people that charge \$500 an hour. A thousand dollars — couldn't do even a week at that," said Mathilda Cox, an interior designer in the district and member of the American Society of Interior Designers.

Bellissimo began working with Zinke's super PAC in May of 2013, when it began paying her firms for direct mail and postage services, according to campaign finance disclosures. ForthRight Strategy was then operating as Base Connect — as it had until an executive was convicted on child pornography charges in 2014 — and a handful of other firms Bellissimo operates out of the same office in downtown Washington also were hired by the super PAC.

Zinke stepped away from Special Operations for America that September to launch his congressional campaign, though he continued to benefit from the super PAC's independent expenditures on his behalf. Zinke's campaign also hired Bellissimo's firms for direct mail work, according to FEC filings. SEAL PAC, the leadership PAC Zinke used to raise about \$3 million in his first term, also relied heavily on direct mail fundraising provided by Bellissimo's companies.

In addition to developing a friendship with Lucretia Hommel, Bellissimo also appears to be friends with Zinke and his wife, Lolita, judging by their interactions on social media.

In February 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo to Facebook of her and her husband with Ryan Zinke and Rob O'Neill, a former Navy SEAL who claims to have shot Osama Bin Laden. Lolita Zinke commented "beautiful lady," to which Bellissimo replied, "Back at 'ya Lady Z!"

On May 12, 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo of her with Lolita Zinke and Lucretia Hommel at the annual First Lady's Lunch hosted by the Congressional Club at the Washington Hilton.

"At the First Lady's lunch with the ladies of Team Zinke! Thank you Lolita Zinke for inviting me," Bellissimo wrote in a Facebook post accompanying the photos that tagged Hommel and Zinke.

To view online [click here](#).

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FEMA investigating Whitefish Energy's Puerto Rico contract [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/27/2017 11:20 AM EDT

FEMA today said it has "significant concerns" about the contract Puerto Rico's electric utility signed that appoints a small, Montana-based company to fix the island's grid.

The agency said it was not involved with the contract and has not reimbursed the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority for any payments to Whitefish Energy. FEMA also questioned whether the contract prices PREPA agreed to are reasonable.

"FEMA is presently engaged with PREPA and its legal counsel to obtain information about the contract and contracting process, including how the contract was procured and how PREPA determined the contract prices were reasonable," the agency said in a statement.

The contract between PREPA and Whitefish Energy included a provision barring government review of the company's labor cost and pricing. A copy of the contract had been [posted](#) as of last week on the Caribbean Business news website, but was apparently removed today. It attracted widespread attention Thursday night following a series of [tweets](#) from journalist Ken Klippenstein.

That provision has added to criticism about the awarding of the contract to Whitefish Energy, a two-man operation that is located in Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's hometown.

WHAT'S NEXT: Several congressional committees also are investigating the contract and have asked Whitefish Energy or PREPA to provide additional information.

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U.S. Court stays EPA truck trailer rule [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 10/27/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today stayed an EPA rule that would have required truck trailers to be more aerodynamic.

"The EPA Final Rule on review is hereby stayed insofar as it purports to regulate trailers," the court [wrote](#). "Petitioner has satisfied the stringent requirements for a stay pending court review."

The grant of a stay signals that the petitioners could win on the merits.

The Truck Trailer Manufacturers Association challenged the rule soon after it was finalized last year. The case has been held in abeyance at EPA's request, but the rule was set to go into effect on Jan. 1.

The lawsuit was a narrow challenge to EPA's requirement that the trailers used to haul cargo meet new regulations designed to make them lighter and more aerodynamic to reduce their fuel use and emissions.

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Trump blasts 'wacky & totally unhinged' Tom Steyer after impeachment ad campaign

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By Nolan D. McCaskill | 10/27/2017 07:26 AM EDT

President Donald Trump blasted Tom Steyer on Friday, calling the Democratic megadonor "wacky" and "totally unhinged."

"Wacky & totally unhinged Tom Steyer, who has been fighting me and my Make America Great Again agenda from beginning, never wins elections!" Trump tweeted Friday morning.

Steyer, a California billionaire activist, is launching a \$10 million national ad campaign calling for the president's impeachment. The 60-second TV spot began running last week, according to [Forbes](#).

The ad played Friday morning on "Fox & Friends," likely catching the president's eye.

Steyer [opens the ad](#) narrating over clips of the president and a shot of North Korea. He says that Trump has brought the U.S. "to the brink of nuclear war" with North Korea and is "accused of obstructing justice" with his May firing of then-FBI Director James Comey and "of violating the Constitution by taking money from foreign governments and threatening to shut down news organizations that report the truth."

"If that isn't the case for impeaching and removing a dangerous president, then what has our government become?" says Steyer, speaking directly into the camera and identified onscreen as an "American Citizen." "I'm Tom Steyer, and, like you, I'm a citizen who knows it's up to us to do something. It's why I'm funding this effort to raise our voices together and demand that elected officials take a stand on impeachment."

Steyer adds that a Republican-led Congress "once impeached a president for far less, yet today people in Congress and his own administration know that this president is a clear and present danger who's mentally unstable and armed with nuclear weapons, and they do nothing."

He asks Americans to join him and tell their member of Congress "they have a moral responsibility to stop doing what's political and start doing what's right."

"Our country depends on it," he warns.

The ad encourages viewers to sign a petition at NeedToImpeach.com.

Steyer responded to Trump's barbs on the president's preferred platform, tweeting that Trump is "right about one thing."

"I have been fighting your racism and corporate groveling from the beginning — and always will," said Steyer, who called on House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) "to take a stand" in subsequent tweets. "Americans deserve much better. Americans across the board know you're a danger to the people of this country."

Immediately after tweeting about Steyer earlier Friday morning, Trump thanked Fox News' morning show for its coverage.

"Thank you @foxandfriends," Trump said, one minute after his tweet about Steyer. "Really great job and show!"

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Twitter urged firms to delete data during 2016 campaign [Back](#)

By Josh Meyer | 10/27/2017 05:07 AM EDT

Twitter quietly ramped up a campaign last year to permanently delete some user data from its social media platform and the files of commercial firms using it, raising concerns that the policy would help Russian cyberspies suspected of meddling in the 2016 election cover their tracks.

In June and September of 2016, the company posted updates to its privacy policy and user agreements that reminded firms that when anyone deleted or revised tweets — or closed accounts — that all others with access to them would have to destroy any trace of them as well. If they failed to comply, the company warned, they risked being cut off from the Twitter database.

The second of the directives came amid intensifying questions about who was behind efforts to hijack Twitter to sway voters, and after cyber-researchers had expressed concerns that the deletion policy was undermining their efforts to link that campaign to Moscow.

In some cases, private-sector researchers say they complained about the directives to Twitter officials, while others issued warnings on the platform itself and other online platforms.

Samuel Woolley, an information warfare expert who was director of Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Research Team, questioned the timing of the directives, saying they came after he and associates had repeatedly warned Twitter officials that the existing deletion policy already was undermining their efforts — and those of many other researchers — to determine the extent of Russia's attempts to manipulate the social media platform.

"There was a ton of research showing that Twitter was the place spreading disinformation, just

overwhelmingly manufactured information," said Woolley, now director of the Silicon Valley-based Digital Intelligence Lab. "Many of us in the [cyber-research] community have made it clear to Twitter that to delete this information would be a travesty. We've been having this conversation for over four years" with people at various levels of Twitter, including senior executives.

"All social media companies have deletion policies," Woolley added. "However, when policies are changed during pivotal political moments — and when the company has regularly been warned its platform is the vessel for civic manipulation in similar moments — one is right to wonder, why then?"

People familiar with Twitter's thinking said the directives were merely efforts to reinforce and clarify existing company policies designed to protect the privacy of users, and that the September directive in particular was made to bring Twitter more in line with stringent privacy protections established by the European Union.

"It has long been our stance that developers must keep the Twitter content they consume up to date," a Twitter official said, in response to questions from POLITICO. "We've clarified our policy at several points, based both on updates to our overall Privacy Policy and based on feedback from developers about different use cases. ... But the intent is the same."

"Importantly, nearly every major social media platform requires external developers who use their data to follow these kinds of rules," the Twitter official said, citing what she said were the similar policies of Facebook, Tumblr and Instagram.

But some government and private-sector cybersecurity analysts said the changes were far more significant, and had the effect of prompting data firms to destroy potentially large amounts of information that could be relevant to probes of Russia's efforts to influence the 2016 election. Twitter was aggressive enough in its enforcement that one company lost access to the database for failing to make required deletions.

Emilio Ferrara, principal investigator at the University of Southern California's Machine Intelligence and Data Science, said he had criticized Twitter's privacy policy during last fall's campaign. He said he did so on Twitter itself, even though "they just ignore those."

"Their implementation and the decision to physically destroy these data raises critical issues on accountability that social-media service providers should be asked to address moving forward," Ferrara said. "Even if I appreciate Twitter's initiative regarding deleting abusive or propagandist content on the platform, their implementation of it is problematic: There is no need to physically destroy such content in the company's servers; it can be just hidden from the public interface and records should be kept, for auditing purposes."

For at least four years before the 2016 election, researchers who monitor Twitter had openly criticized Russia for using the platform to meddle in other elections, especially in Ukraine.

They had also pointedly criticized Twitter for its failure to do anything substantive about that meddling, including not changing its deletion policy to allow for saving of material that might be useful to researchers and law enforcement.

"This policy allows adversarial intelligence agencies and other disinformation operators to edit the news and then remove their traces," according to Thomas Rid, a professor of strategic

studies at Johns Hopkins University and a leading cyber-researcher who was the first person to publicly link Russia to the WikiLeaks release of hacked emails from the Democratic National Committee. "It means they can run operations more effectively and more covertly than ever before, and we may never find out exactly how they pulled it off."

Now, more than a year later, Twitter's deletion policy — and how it changed over time, and why — merits further scrutiny by congressional committees investigating Russian meddling in the U.S. election and the apparently significant role social media played in it, the analysts said.

"If certain aspects of content on Twitter reveals that there has been interference in our elections, especially by foreign actors but also by people in our country, the public has a right to know," Woolley said. "But before the public has the right to know, I think that congressional investigators, third-party researchers, a lot of other people need to have this information. And this effort to obfuscate information that has been deleted or made private is super problematic."

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GOP eyes end of Russia probes with Trump collusion unanswered [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney and Elana Schor | 10/27/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Republican lawmakers say they're approaching the end of their investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election even though the most politically explosive issue — whether associates of President Donald Trump colluded with the Kremlin — remains unresolved.

That will present Democrats who have spent a year amplifying suspicions about Trump's own ties to Russia with a wrenching choice: to join Republicans and set aside the most momentous aspect of their probes — or to break from the GOP and end any chance of presenting a united front against a continuing Russian threat.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) has suggested his panel's investigation will end early next year, emphasizing that he wants to wrap up by February, ahead of the first 2018 primary elections.

His panel still has a long list of witnesses to interview, but Burr described the timeline as a "mathematical equation," one pitting the ability of the committee to schedule meetings against the calendar. And he's hinted it's possible the report will find no evidence of collusion between Trump allies and Moscow.

"If there's evidence that there was something there, that will be laid out. If there's no evidence, how could anybody object to it?" Burr said.

Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas), who's leading the House Intelligence Committee's Russia probe, told POLITICO this week that he hopes to finish before the Senate.

Conaway said he intends to seek a meeting with Burr, as well as the House and Senate

committees' top Democrats — Rep. Adam Schiff of California and Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia — to sketch out their panels' conclusions and attempt to generally align their reports. Wildly divergent conclusions, he said, could "embarrass the institution" and could send mixed messages about the urgency of the Russian threat.

Schiff said in an interview that he agrees with Conaway on the need for a meeting of the four committee leaders as well as his drive to come to a unified bipartisan conclusion.

"I think, frankly, it would be a good idea for the four of us to be collaborating as we go along rather than wait until the conclusion of our investigation," Schiff said. "I second Mike's suggestion and actually think it would be worthwhile."

But a kumbaya moment may be wishful thinking when it comes to questions about collusion.

In the House, and possibly the Senate as well, bringing the Russia probes to a close is likely to trigger a partisan showdown.

Some Republicans on the committees have publicly dismissed allegations that Trump allies might have helped Russia's interference campaign. They've seen no conclusive evidence suggesting collusion occurred, and they're weary after interviewing scores of witnesses who they say have shed little new light on the matter.

"We've hit the point of diminishing returns long ago," said Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho.) "We've looked at lots of stuff. At some point in time, the jury needs to reach a verdict."

Warner didn't rule out the possibility of a meeting with Burr, Conaway and Schiff, though he dismissed as "preliminary" an effort to stave off a partisan splintering.

"We're still operating in a very collaborative fashion," Warner said in an interview.

Democrats, though, seem increasingly resigned to the fact that their probes may end without a conclusion on whether any Americans aided the Russian interference effort.

"It's quite possible that six months from now, there will be unanswered questions that we can't answer because the people we would need to answer those questions are in Russia," said Rep. Jim Himes (D-Conn.). "The probability that we're going to produce a report that buttons down every question is pretty low."

Warner has said he'd readily accept it if the Senate investigation finds no evidence of collusion.

"[I]f there's not something there, I'll be the first to acknowledge that," the Virginia Democrat [told](#) The New York Times this week.

The painful choice for Democrats is whether to attempt to forge a fragile compromise with Republicans that depicts what both parties generally agree on: that Russia orchestrated a massive interference campaign to undermine U.S. politics and stoke intense division. That would likely mean abandoning a definitive determination on collusion — or punting to special counsel Robert Mueller, who's leading a criminal probe of possible crimes connected to the Russian plot.

But even Democratic unity on those questions may be challenging.

"I'm not signing on to any report unless it's a bipartisan report," Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), a member of the intelligence panel, said in an interview.

Manchin also disputed the notion that "we're going to be that far apart" in the end.

"It's up to us to come together and say, 'OK, we agree,'" he added.

Schiff and fellow California Rep. Eric Swalwell, two of the most outspoken House Intelligence Committee Democrats, say they too hope for unity but emphasized that despite the absence of a smoking gun, they've seen compelling evidence of Trump allies' "intent to collude."

"We may not find the crime on videotape, but I believe we have already seen evidence of intent," Swalwell said. "But our investigation is ongoing and we haven't reached a conclusion."

Swalwell pointed to a slew of storylines in which figures in Trump's orbit contacted Kremlin-associated Russians. There's the secret meeting with Kremlin-connected Russians that the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., organized in Trump Tower ostensibly to obtain documents unfavorable to Hillary Clinton, as well as attempts by two Trump business associates to seek Kremlin help for a Trump Tower development in Moscow just as the presidential campaign was beginning in earnest.

There also are lingering questions about Trump's first pick for national security adviser, Mike Flynn, and allegations he secretly assured Russia's ambassador that Trump would lift Obama-imposed sanctions on Russia. And there's the mysterious [admission by a GOP operative](#), who claimed connections to the Trump campaign, that he sought help from Russians to expose thousands of emails deleted from Clinton's private server.

"We've certainly seen evidence of an intention by the Trump campaign to collude with the Russians," Schiff said. "I would hope that, at the end of the day, we'll come to a common conclusion on that as well. I think it's too early to say."

Himes noted that new twists seem to emerge constantly, pointing to a [Daily Beast report](#) this week that a Trump campaign data firm, Cambridge Analytica, acknowledged approaching WikiLeaks to try to procure Clinton's deleted emails.

Schiff, who complained in a recent Washington Post [op-ed](#) that the White House was pressuring Congress to conclude its Russia probes, may also find allies among Senate Democrats who say there's still a long way to go before they'll feel satisfied they turned over every rock in the investigation.

"I want to get actionable items in place that can secure our voting infrastructure by" the time that primaries begin next year, Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) said in an interview. "But I think we should follow the investigation where it takes us, irrespective of the timeframe."

Sen. Angus King, a Maine independent who caucuses with Democrats, also suggested he would have trouble signing on to any final report that left the collusion matter unresolved. "The report has to be comprehensive," King said in a brief interview.

How Republicans approach the issue of collusion, too, could determine whether Democrats

join them.

Barring any dramatic new evidence, Republicans like Rep. Peter King of New York would like to plainly state that lawmakers found "no evidence" of collusion. But they worry that might turn off some Democrats.

"They're too committed," King said. "They're so dug in on this."

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Capitol Hill's sexual harassment policy 'toothless,' 'a joke' [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Elana Schor | 10/27/2017 12:07 AM EDT

Two female lawmakers and several congressional staffers are calling for an overhaul of Capitol Hill's policies on sexual harassment, citing a culture of tolerance in a workplace long known as a boys' club.

The sexual harassment scandals involving major Hollywood and media figures are focusing new attention on Congress' procedures, which critics say are woefully inadequate for deterring bad behavior in an institution filled with powerful men and young aides trying to advance their careers. Each congressional office operates as its own small, tightly controlled fiefdom with its own rules and procedures, which makes it that much harder to come forward.

Lawmakers and congressional aides are not required to undergo sexual harassment training — a shortcoming even the office that handles complaints says should be changed. And victims must submit to as long as three months of mandated "counseling" and "mediation," as well as what one lawyer involved in such cases called a "cooling off period," before filing a complaint against an alleged perpetrator.

That's assuming they're even aware of how to lodge a grievance.

One former staffer who said she was sexually harassed by a colleague years ago told POLITICO she didn't know where to turn at the time. She'd never heard of the Office of Compliance, or OOC, the entity that exists to handle harassment complaints and enforce workplace protection laws for the legislative branch. When she called a congressional committee that deals with administrative issues to inquire about filing a complaint, she said, she was turned away without any guidance.

"I didn't even know it existed as a resource," the ex-staffer said of the compliance office. "You don't have an HR Department on the Hill. There's no one place that you go. Nobody on the Hill has any idea how you report and deal with sexual harassment."

Some officials are trying to change that. Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) next week will introduce legislation calling for an overhaul of the compliance office, which she said is "constructed to protect the institution — and to impede the victim from getting justice." On Friday, she will release a video recounting her experience years ago as a congressional staffer, when the office's chief of staff "held my face, kissed me and stuck his tongue in my mouth,"

she said.

"Many of us in Congress know what it's like, because Congress has been a breeding ground for a hostile work environment for far too long," Speier continued. "It's time to throw back the curtain on the repulsive behavior that has thrived in the dark without consequences."

In [an interview Thursday](#), Speier called the OOC "toothless" and "a joke." She said "it encumbers the victim in ways that are indefensible."

"There's no accountability whatsoever," she said. "It's rigged in favor of the institution and the members, and we can't tolerate that."

The call to overhaul the OOC comes as 40 percent of female congressional staffers say there's a sexual harassment problem on Capitol Hill, according to a July [survey](#) conducted by Roll Call. The survey found that one in six female aides said they'd personally been sexually harassed in their offices, and only 10 percent were aware of structures that existed to report misconduct.

OOC Deputy Executive Director Paula Sumberg defended her office. "Any current staffer who has not heard of the Office of Compliance has somehow missed our emailed Annual Notification of Rights, our quarterly eNewsletters, and information about us on" the House intranet, Sumberg said in an email.

But even the OOC appears to acknowledge flaws in the system. In recent years, it has recommended that Congress make sexual harassment training mandatory. And the OOC recently urged Congress to raise its profile, noting that some training seminars for staffers don't mention the office as a resource for workplace disputes.

Multiple staffers, including some who've worked on Capitol Hill for years, said there is a dearth of information about the OOC. So it's not readily apparent where to turn when a colleague's — or even a boss' — actions become inappropriate.

That was the case for former staffers in former Rep. Tim Murphy's office. Aides who called POLITICO to detail a hostile work environment — slammed doors, cursing, timed bathroom breaks and verbal abuse — said they were either unaware of the OOC or told it was pointless to complain. Others feared retaliation.

Even some lawmakers aren't apparently aware of, or at least inclined to rely on, the OOC.

In 2014, a group of female staffers accused Kenny West, the chief of staff to Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), of making inappropriate comments toward them. But Meadows turned to his friend, Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.), for help. Meadows asked Gowdy's chief of staff, a woman, to interview his aides to determine whether West had acted inappropriately, according to an Office of Congressional Ethics report.

Gowdy's staffer recommended Meadows fire the staffer, though Meadows kept him on payroll for months after that, the report said.

A similar situation played out in the office of Rep. Eric Massa (D-N.Y.) in 2010, after he was accused of making unwanted advances toward a junior male staffer. A more senior aide in the office brought the matter to Rep. Steny Hoyer's office, which instructed the aide to report the matter to the Ethics Committee.

A House Administration Committee spokesman said Thursday that harassment on the Hill is "a serious issue" and that the panel is "currently evaluating what additional resources might be made available" to further help lawmakers and aides. She also argued that the Office of House Employment Counsel provides training, including sexual harassment awareness training, as does the Office of the House Chief Administrative Officer.

President Donald Trump's former campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, painted a harsh picture of the reality facing women on Capitol Hill after a video emerged last year of Trump bragging about his sexual advances on women.

"I would talk to some of the members of Congress there when I was younger and prettier, them rubbing against girls, sticking their tongues down women's throats who were uninvited, didn't like it," Conway told MSNBC in October 2016.

The comment was meant to defend Trump from lawmakers aghast by the "Access Hollywood" video. Conway's spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment on which members she was talking about.

Speier and Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-Mich.) are looking to pre-empt such situations with legislation that would mandate sexual harassment training for every congressional office. Executive branch employees must undergo such training, but it is optional for congressional workers.

Speier has introduced her bill every year since 2014, to no avail. One year, she came close to getting it passed when House appropriators agreed to tuck her bill into an appropriations measure — only to see it stripped from a Senate spending package.

Lawrence, who used to investigate harassment issues for the federal government, said she always checked whether training had been provided. "This is a first step, and I know this is one that can make a difference," she said.

When Speier introduces her bill again this year, the legislation will go beyond sexual harassment training and seek to overhaul the lengthy process Hill victims must go through before filing a complaint.

As it stands now, after an incident but before filing a complaint, victims are required to go through 30 days of "counseling" with an OOC employee. Following that process, they have 15 days to decide whether they want to pursue the next step: 30 days of mandated "mediation."

After mediation, victims must wait another 30 days to file a complaint. The OOC allows anyone filing a complaint to ask to shorten the counseling period and doesn't require them to be in the same room as the accused during mediation, but Speier put little stock in those measures.

"Can you imagine a victim who's been sexually harassed who attempts to file a complaint and then is told they've got to go through three months of biting their tongue and continuing to work in that kind of environment?" she asked. "You've just been sexually harassed and you're told you have to be 'counseled' for 30 days. Are you kidding me?"

Les Alderman, an attorney who has represented multiple congressional employees in harassment and discrimination cases, said that OOC officials "do their best to do exactly what

the law says they should." But he warned that the law that created the office "has major downfalls."

For one, Alderman said, the 30-day counseling period a harassment victim must undergo before pursuing a complaint is confidential.

Alexis Ronickher, an employment rights lawyer at Katz, Marshall & Banks who's worked with sexual harassment victims in congressional offices, said that means victims can be sanctioned and their cases jeopardized if they say publicly that they're filing a complaint against a lawmaker or fellow staffer.

"It's the strap of silence in my opinion that helps foster a broken system. The fact that you can't tell anyone that you filed a request for counseling or that you're in mediation, that everything that goes on there has to be confidential," she said. "It creates an environment in which people don't talk about what's happening and women who are being sexually harassed can't come together and say, 'I'm coming forward; you should come forward.'"

Ronickher said it's not the Office of Compliance's fault as much as the 1995 Congressional Accountability Act, which governs how the office operates and the rules governing complaints.

The GOP-controlled Congress created the OOC in 1995 amid the scandal involving then-Sen. Bob Packwood's rampant sexual harassment. Ten women told The Washington Post about the Oregon Republican's lewd behavior. The furor grew as Senate Republicans — including then-Ethics Committee chairman and now-Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — resisted holding hearings.

Former Nevada Sen. Richard Bryan, then the ethics panel's top Democrat, recalled a "drumbeat of complaints" that eventually forced committee Republicans to join his call to act against Packwood.

"This wasn't just one woman ... there was a pattern," Bryan said in an interview.

OOC fielded 49 requests for counseling during fiscal 2016, according to its most recent annual [report](#), including six in the House and two in the Senate. Of those requests, 15 dealt with harassment or a hostile work environment.

Despite the waiting periods, Sumberg said the OOC's process for dispute resolution is faster than that of other federal agencies. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which polices harassment cases for those agencies, can take as long as 180 days to act on a discrimination charge, according to its [website](#).

"We probably have the fastest administrative process for bringing a sexual harassment complaint in the entire federal government," Sumberg said by email.

Alderman, the attorney who works with harassment and discrimination victims, noted another key difference between the OOC's process and the EEOC's work in other federal agencies. After an accuser has successfully navigated the system and won a complaint, the EEOC requires the posting of information about the perpetrators of discriminatory behavior, so that "hopefully public notice and shame occurs."

No such publicizing of a perpetrator's past record is required in Congress. It's a system,

Alderman said, that "helps repeat offenders keep on repeating."

POLITICO is taking a deeper look at Capitol Hill's sexual harassment policy. To share your stories confidentially with a reporter, please contact rbade@politico.com or eschor@politico.com. You can also anonymous share information with our reporting team [using these tools](#).

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Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 4:29:58 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/24/2017 04:27 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE AMERICAN LAWMAKER: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke met for secret briefings today with members of the House Natural Resources Committee, a session Democrats said was confusing and unusual, Anthony Adragna and Nick Juliano report. The Interior chief met separately with Republicans and Democrats from the committee in a secure room in the basement of the Capitol, which is typically reserved to discuss classified information. The topic of discussion was a "national security matter," and lawmakers declined to say any more than that, Anthony and Nick report.

Lawmakers offered few details: "Suffice to say that they related to international resource issues," California's [Jim Costa](#) said after the briefing. "This was a confusing meeting — certainly interesting and important issues — but I can't tell you a damn thing [about it] because it was all wrapped around the veneer of confidentiality," [Jared Huffman](#) said. "It's a check-the-box exercise to say 'I met with the Democrats.'" Ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) said it was the first Natural Resources meeting in a sensitive compartmented information facility during his 14-year tenure in Congress.

Committee Democrats said Zinke's presentation and subsequent questions left little time for a host of other issues they hoped to raise with him, such as his review of national monument designations and the ethical questions surrounding Zinke's associations with alleged "[scam PACs](#)," non-commercial travel and reorganization plans for the agency. "He gave a brief statement about his travel and that was it," Costa said, declining to offer additional details. Read more [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from Chevron:** We're piloting a program that uses drones to keep an eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gzHlxs> **

INTERIOR TOUTS LARGEST EVER LEASE SALE: The Interior Department is proposing the largest oil and gas lease sale ever held in the U.S., Zinke [announced](#) today. The proposed lease sale would encompass 76,967,935 acres in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, offshore Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, and is scheduled for March 2018. Interior said it "includes all available unleased areas on the Gulf's Outer Continental Shelf, surpassing last year's region-wide lease sale by about one million acres."

The proposed lease sale would follow an August sale that Interior said at the time was the largest offshore lease sale, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "That lease sale for [76 million acres](#) fell

short of the \$247 million generated from a Gulf of Mexico lease sale last March."

"In today's low-price energy environment, providing the offshore industry access to the maximum amount of opportunities possible is part of our strategy to spur local and regional economic dynamism and job creation and a pillar of President Trump's plan to make the United States energy dominant," Zinke said in a statement of today's announcement. The proposed notice of sale will go into the Federal Register Oct. 26.

DEMOCRATS WANT DETAILS ON DOURSON: EPA [confirmed](#) last week that Michael Dourson, President Donald Trump's pick to head EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, is serving as a special adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt on chemicals ahead of his official confirmation — which prompted Democrats to demand an explanation. "Your appointment creates the appearance, and perhaps the effect, of circumventing the Senate's constitutional advice and consent responsibility for the position to which you have been nominated," the 10 lawmakers, led by [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) wrote in a letter to Dourson. "Your improper involvement in EPA decisions could provide grounds for subjects of EPA regulations and oversight to challenge the legal validity of those decisions in court." They ask Dourson to describe his duties, his relationship with the career official serving as acting head of the OCSPP and whether any of that official's duties have been delegated to Dourson, Alex Guillén [reports](#).

COURT TOSSES SUIT OVER HOTSPOT GUIDANCE: The D.C. Circuit today [tossed out](#) a lawsuit brought by environmentalists over an Obama-era update to agency guidance on how to measure a transportation project's effect on both fine and coarse particulate matter levels. Green groups argued that the "hot-spot" guidance was wrongly written without notice-and-comment rulemaking. But the three-judge panel concluded that for the fine PM guidance, the groups could not show an adverse impact and thus did not have standing to sue. As for coarse PM, the panel said the guidance is non-binding and thus is not a final agency action that can be challenged in court.

INTELLIGENCE, OVERSIGHT TO LOOK AT URANIUM SALE: Two new congressional committees will probe the Obama administration's decision to approve the sale of American uranium production capability to a Russian state-run energy conglomerate, POLITICO's Kyle Cheney reports. House Intelligence Chairman [Devin Nunes](#) said he'd be linking up with the House Oversight panel to investigate the deal, which the Senate Judiciary Committee has [already said](#) it would look into. Kyle points out the move is likely to infuriate Democrats, who have generally dismissed the issue as an attempt to distract from the ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Nunes' announcement follows [reports](#) suggesting the sale of uranium production facilities to the Russian-run Rosatom came amid a broader bribery plot by Russian officials to gain a foothold in the American energy industry while President Barack Obama was in office. More [here](#).

TRUMP ASKS ABOUT DENALI NAME CHANGE: Trump asked Alaska's two GOP senators about reversing an Obama-era move to change the name of country's tallest mountain from Mt. McKinley to Denali. in a March meeting with [Lisa Murkowski](#) and [Dan Sullivan](#), CNN reports, the president asked about undoing the name change, Sullivan told the Alaska Federation of Natives convention. "The meeting came as Trump and the senators discussed several Obama administration moves limiting development in Alaska,' CNN writes. "He looked at me and said, 'I heard that the big mountain in Alaska also had — also its name was changed by executive action. Do you want us to reverse that?'" Sullivan said. "Lisa — Sen. Murkowski — and I jumped over the desk," Sullivan said. "We said no, no!" Obama

announced in 2015 that he was renaming the Alaskan mountain after the name in the indigenous Athabascan language. According to Sullivan, Trump was "perplexed that the two Republicans wanted to keep an Obama-era decision." More [here](#).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: The House Energy and Commerce Energy subcommittee announced three [markups](#) for 10 a.m. Thursday in 2123 Rayburn. The subcommittee will consider [H.R. 1733 \(115\)](#), to direct the the Energy secretary to review a report on the benefits of the re-refining of used lubricating oil; [H.R. 2872 \(115\)](#), on existing nonpowered Dams Act development; and [H.R. 2880 \(115\)](#), on the Closed-Loop Pumped Storage Hydropower Act.

FLAKE WON'T SEEK REELECTION: Arizona Sen. [Jeff Flake](#) will retire after his current term expires, according to a senior Republican familiar with the decision. Flake a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and chairman of its water and power subcommittee, was one of the most vulnerable Republican senators up for reelection in 2018, POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt [reports](#).

TESLA UNVEILS SOLAR IN PUERTO RICO: Telsa [tweeted](#) today images of solar generation and a storage facility it installed in Puerto Rico, at the Hospital del Niño. The facility will power the hospital, "with a combination of solar cells and Tesla's Powerpack commercial energy storage batteries," TechCrunch reports. Tesla's tweet noted that this is "first of many solar+storage projects going live." It comes "after the company discussed how it might help with Puerto Rico's ongoing recovery efforts with PR Governor Ricardo Rossello following an exchange between the Governor and Musk on Twitter. Rossello and Puerto Rican Chief Innovation Officer Glorimar Ripoli proposed turning the territory into a flagship example of what Tesla's solar technologies can do for the world," TechCrunch [writes](#).

More than one month after Hurricane Maria hit the U.S. territory, electricity service has not been restored to most residents of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority had partially restored service to 18 percent of customers in 35 of 78 municipalities, as of Monday morning, the Energy Information Administration [reports](#).

QUICK HITS:

- How the Farm Belt pressured Trump and beat the oil industry, [Bloomberg](#).
- EPA press office tips toward hostility under Pruitt, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Trump administration is launching a weather and climate satellite, [Scientific American](#).
- South Korea to resume building two new nuclear reactors, but scraps plans for 6 others, [Reuters](#).
- Can solar save a huge coal plant? Zinke's thinking about it, [E&E News](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Kid Rock: "F--- no, I'm [not running](#) for Senate."
- [Trump and Corker](#) exchange insults ahead of GOP unity lunch.
- Reid gone from D.C. — but [still pulling strings](#).

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about energy, safety, and some truly high-flyin' doin'. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping to help keep a close eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gzHlxs> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/zinke-secret-huddle-with-natural-resources-025205>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano | 10/24/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has directed millions of dollars in political contributions since 2014 to a network of Washington operatives that prominent conservatives have accused of profiting by misleading donors.

Beneficiaries of Zinke's largesse include groups linked to Washington-area political operative Scott B. Mackenzie, organizer of a Virgin Islands GOP political action committee that hosted the secretary at a [St. Croix fundraiser](#) in March. Before that, when Zinke was a Republican congressman from Montana, his political operation steered significant portions of its spending to a handful of Washington, D.C.-area consulting firms that also have had ties to Mackenzie and his associates.

Zinke has continued this relationship even as other Republicans have recoiled from dealing with Mackenzie, whose critics say he operates "[scam PACs](#)" that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead. The critics include former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, who filed a [suit](#) accusing Mackenzie and other defendants of running a "national fundraising scam" after they gave his 2013 campaign for governor less than a half percent of the money they had raised in his name.

Similarly, Zinke's own leadership PAC also relied heavily on small donors while spending heavily on consultants, in a departure from how most members of Congress operate those kinds of groups.

The details about Zinke's fundraising and spending practices have not been previously reported, nor has his years-long relationship with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands Republican Party, a group that some Republicans in the Caribbean island chain have accused of misrepresenting itself to donors. POLITICO's analysis of Federal Election Commission filings, plus interviews with campaign finance lawyers and people familiar with the Virgin Islands group's fundraising, offer a deeper picture of the political activism of the retired Navy SEAL who serves in President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

None of the records indicate that Zinke violated the law or received any direct compensation from his association with Mackenzie, the Virgin Islands PAC or its consultants. But one campaign finance expert said the information shows that Zinke was not behaving like a typical politician.

"To say the least, this is highly unusual," said Karl Sandstrom, a former Democratic FEC

commissioner who now works at the law firm Perkins Coie.

An Interior Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the assistance Zinke has offered to the Virgin Islands group or his use of political consultants. Mackenzie declined to be interviewed, and officials from the Virgin Islands organization — also known as VIGOP — did not respond to requests for comment.

Zinke is separately facing investigations by Interior's internal watchdog and the independent Office of Special Counsel over his habit of [mixing politics and official business](#).

Legal limits on Zinke's partisan activities have tightened now that he's Interior secretary, and he has cut ties with his PACs since being sworn in. Still, he has kept up appearances at fundraisers and other political events — averaging more than one per month — a pace that is unusual for a Cabinet member. Those include his appearance at the March fundraiser in the Virgin Islands, which occurred during a taxpayer-funded trip less than a month after he became secretary.

Complaints among Republicans about "scam PACS" have been on the rise for years, focusing on groups that target conservative voters as a source for donations. Those complaints have repeatedly focused on Mackenzie, the founder of a number of GOP-leaning PACs that have used slogans such as "Stop Hillary Clinton" to raise money from conservatives — then appeared to do little actual politicking.

Such groups make use of what past FEC leaders have described as a loophole in campaign finance law. The commission declined to take action against one of Mackenzie's Virginia-based PACs, the Conservative StrikeForce, after former Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) [complained](#) in 2012 that it had been "fraudulent" in raising money from his supporters while falsely implying it would aid his reelection campaign. While the PAC's actions were "[troubling](#)," the commission's attorneys wrote, they didn't violate any laws or rules that the FEC has the power to enforce.

Cuccinelli made similar criticisms in his 2014 lawsuit, which accused Mackenzie, Conservative StrikeForce and other defendants of using the bulk of the money they had raised in his name to "enrich themselves." The case was eventually [settled](#), with Conservative StrikeForce agreeing to pay Cuccinelli's campaign \$85,000 and turn over its donor lists.

Conservative commentator Erick Erickson [warned](#) campaigns as far back as 2010 that he might not endorse any Republican candidate who used one Mackenzie-linked consulting firm, then known as Base Connect and now called ForthRight Strategy. Montana Democrats accused Zinke of facilitating a "[political Ponzi scheme](#)" with his connections to Mackenzie-linked firms during his 2014 congressional campaign, though the charges apparently gained little traction.

More recently, Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas) — who was angered last year when the Virgin Islands GOP used his photo without his permission on fundraising solicitations — said in a statement to POLITICO that the Virgin Islands group and ForthRight "are preying on seniors in a disgusting attempt to enrich themselves."

Adav Noti, a former FEC associate general counsel who now works for the nonprofit watchdog Campaign Legal Center, said in an interview that he had dealt with the Virgin Islands group and Mackenzie as an FEC official, and that in his opinion, "They are a scam

PAC."

"Scott Mackenzie has a number of scam PACs," Noti said. "He was probably the first, or one of the first, with the idea of bilking people out of money through PACs. People are being defrauded, and that needs to stop."

The FEC is scheduled to decide Thursday whether to fine Mackenzie for [less-serious discrepancies](#) in campaign filings by two other PACs of which he's the treasurer, Freedom's Defense Fund and the Conservative Majority Fund.

None of the criticism has seemed to deter Zinke, who used part of a government-paid trip to the Virgin Islands in March to attend a VIGOP fundraiser, where — as POLITICO [reported](#) in early October — an invitation listed tickets costing as much as \$5,000 a couple, and Zinke's schedule indicated that high-dollar donors had a chance to take photos with him. It was at least the third VIGOP event Zinke had attended there since 2015.

VIGOP, which the FEC classifies as a "non-party" PAC, directed more than a third of its spending during the 2016 election cycle to a handful of Washington-area consulting firms, including ForthRight and at least three other companies that share its address on 15th Street Northwest, according to campaign filings and other documents. Those firms also received more than \$3.2 million during the same period from Zinke's congressional campaign, leadership PAC and a super PAC he founded before running for Congress, federal campaign records show.

Between the 2014 and 2016 elections, Base Connect had renamed itself ForthRight Strategy after a former executive [pleaded guilty](#) to child pornography charges. A number of the firm's clients left, but Zinke's campaign and his newly formed leadership PAC not only stayed with the firm but also spent substantially more on it in the next election.

Zinke also publicly endorsed ForthRight's performance in his 2014 congressional race, offering a testimonial that was displayed on the firm's website until this month, when the watchdog group Campaign for Accountability filed an ethics complaint.

"Your results and personal commitment to Team Zinke were bar none!" the company quoted Zinke as saying on its website. "I greatly value the professional as well as the personal relationship we have developed over many years."

This praise came even though Zinke's campaign appears to have received less than it spent from its relationship with the firm.

ForthRight [says](#) it raised \$1.9 million for Zinke's 2014 race by sending out 1.6 million pieces of mail, attracting nearly 44,000 new donors whose average contribution was \$44. About \$550,000 of that haul went to Zinke's campaign for "voter mail, radio ads, TV ads, get-out-the-vote activities and lawn signs," according to the firm's website. But that was less than the \$608,000 that Zinke's campaign spent on postage and direct mail from Century Data Mailing Service, a firm located at the same 15th Street address as ForthRight, according to FEC records.

In the run-up to last year's election, Zinke's campaign and his leadership PAC, known as SEAL PAC, spent about \$3 million combined on ForthRight Strategy, Direct Support Services and Legacy Lists — all of which operate out of the same office and list ForthRight CEO

Kimberly Bellissimo among their executives. (Bellissimo did not respond to POLITICO's requests for comment.)

Special Operations for America, a super PAC that Zinke founded in 2012 before running for office, also paid firms at that address a total of about \$1.8 million during the 2014 and 2016 campaign cycles.

Mackenzie is not listed on ForthRight's website or business filings but was long associated with the firm under its previous names, Base Connect and BMW Direct, both of which [listed him](#) as a staff member [as far back as 2007](#).

Besides sharing an affinity for the same consultants as Mackenzie's VIGOP, Zinke's SEAL PAC has also followed a similar fundraising model: It raised two-thirds of its money from small donors in 2016, then steered only 4 percent of its spending to other campaigns, with almost all the rest going to operating expenses and overhead.

Typically, members of Congress use their leadership PACs to cover expenses that cannot be funded from their campaign accounts and to contribute to fellow politicians, using donations of up to \$5,000 from lobbyists and other PACs. But SEAL PAC relied on donations of less than \$200 for about two-thirds of the \$3 million it collected during the 2016 cycle, according to a review of the donations. The group then spent more than \$2.6 million on overhead and gave just \$118,000 to other congressional campaign committees.

Relying heavily on small-dollar donations is one hallmark of the "scam PAC" play, said Brett Kappel, a partner at the law firm Akerman LLP who specializes in campaign finance, lobbying and government ethics.

"Unfortunately, they generally target the most vulnerable segment of the population with the least disposable income — retired people living on fixed incomes," said Kappel, who declined to discuss specific cases. "Frequently, these are elderly conservative voters who are upset with the direction of the country."

Lorraine Hutchinson, of Butler, Pennsylvania, told POLITICO that these elderly voters included her mother, who she noticed was repeatedly contributing to SEAL PAC and other organizations, though she didn't have the disposable income to spare. Hutchinson said Zinke's PAC was one of the slowest to cease soliciting money when she asked them to stop. At one point, Hutchinson resorted to posting a plea on SEAL PAC's Facebook page.

"It took a great deal of time and effort but I managed to get most of them to stop. The Seal PAC was one of the most persistent," Hutchinson told POLITICO in a Facebook message last week. "I am convinced that these groups knowingly take advantage of the vulnerable elderly and this is a widespread problem without any easy solutions."

Erickson told POLITICO in 2015 that groups that raise political donations without doing much actual politicking are "completely a drain" on the conservative movement, saying they threatened to sap the donors' enthusiasm while achieving no concrete results.

But Bellissimo, the ForthRight CEO, [defended](#) direct-mail fundraising in a 2014 post for The Daily Caller.

Donors who send checks in response to mail solicitations "are some of the most patriotic,

conservative, generous, and sophisticated people on the planet. ... They are also 'movement people," Bellissimo wrote. "They are willing to sacrifice their dollars on a principled conservative even when they know that candidate is an underdog."

Mackenzie has similarly [defended](#) his high operating costs, telling the FEC in response to West's complaint that "fundraising is expensive and getting more so every year."

Bellissimo's firm has played a crucial role in partnering with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands PAC: Several months before Mackenzie filed the VIGOP's initial paperwork with the FEC in December 2013, Virgin Islands Republican Party Chairman John Canegata signed a contract with Base Connect Vice President Timothy Webster making the firm the exclusive fundraiser for the PAC, according to a copy of the confidential document reviewed by POLITICO.

Some Republicans in the Virgin Islands objected to the use of their name in fundraising mailers urging voters to "Stop Hillary Clinton," and Canegata's involvement with Mackenzie has exacerbated divisions within the local party's governing body.

The anti-Clinton pieces, "at best, solicit donations under false pretenses," four members of the Virgin Islands Republican Territorial Committee wrote in a February 2015 internal report, a copy of which was obtained by POLITICO. The members reported that "not a single penny of the funds received through these solicitations have been used for any purpose identifiable to any effort to oppose the election of Hillary Clinton as president."

Bellissimo introduced Zinke to VIGOP in 2015, his first year in Congress, a source familiar with VIGOP's operations told POLITICO. Zinke, his wife, Lola, and Bellissimo flew to St. Thomas to attend a VIGOP event in November of that year. Photos of the VIGOP members posted on Facebook show Zinke and Bellissimo mingling at the Caribbean venue alongside Canegata and Saul Anuzis, a Michigan-based GOP operative who helped raise money for VIGOP. Neither Anuzis nor Canegata responded to requests for comment.

In February 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo of Zinke speaking at the Hay-Adams hotel across from the White House and bragged that she had "the privilege of playing staffer for Congressman Zinke this afternoon." When a friend commented on the Facebook post, saying the then-House freshman should run for president, she replied: "Maybe someday.... Will you help me campaign for him?"

Zinke returned for another VIGOP event at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Thomas less than two weeks after the 2016 election, according to social media posts. Then came his appearance at the VIGOP fundraiser this past March — this time as a member of Trump's Cabinet.

To view online [click here](#).

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Zinke separately briefs Democrats, Republicans on national security matter [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna and Nick Juliano | 10/24/2017 03:25 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke delivered a pair of secret briefings Tuesday to members of the House Natural Resources Committee, a session Democrats said was confusing and unusual.

Zinke met separately with Republicans and Democrats from the committee in a secure room in the basement of the Capitol typically reserved to discuss classified information. The topic of discussion was a "national security matter," and lawmakers declined to say much more than that.

"Suffice to say that they related to international resource issues," Rep. [Jim Costa](#) (D-Calif.) told POLITICO after the briefing.

"This was a confusing meeting — certainly interesting and important issues — but I can't tell you a damn thing [about it] because it was all wrapped around the veneer of confidentiality," Rep. [Jared Huffman](#) (D-Calif.) said. "It's a check-the-box exercise to say, 'I met with the Democrats.'"

Lawmakers offered few details as they emerged from Zinke's separate sessions with Democrats and Republicans on the House Natural Resources Committee. Ranking Member [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) said it was the first Natural Resources meeting in a SCIF, or sensitive compartmented information facility, during his 14-year tenure in Congress.

Democrats who attended the session said Zinke's presentation and subsequent questions left little time for a host of other issues they hoped to raise with him, such as his review of national monument designations and ethical questions surrounding Zinke's associations with alleged "[scam PACs](#)," non-commercial travel and reorganization plans for the agency.

"He gave a brief statement about his travel and that was it," Costa said, declining to offer additional details.

Rep. [Niki Tsongas](#) (D-Mass.) said Zinke "tried to explain where the costs are coming from," but did not go into any detailed explanation about his participation in political fundraisers while on official trips or say whether Interior had been reimbursed for any of those costs. Tsongas would not elaborate further.

Zinke declined to answer questions from POLITICO as he entered the meeting about his political activity or travel. "It must be a slow news day," he quipped.

Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah) said the use of the SCIF was necessary for "parts of" what Zinke had to say, but he did not anticipate that lawmakers would have to receive additional classified briefings from the secretary. Bishop declined to describe the subject of the meeting.

Grijalva said Zinke's presentation concerned "something that could have been done in another setting" and said "it did keep us from talking about some very substantive stuff."

He add that whether Zinke intended to or not, "the substance of what we came here to talk about — and the majority of members that were there came to talk about — never got talked about."

The briefing comes as new ethics questions swirl about Zinke's activities.

POLITICO reported Tuesday the former Montana congressman has directed millions of dollars to questionable groups that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead. And a little-known energy

company, Whitefish Energy, that is based in Zinke's hometown recently [won a \\$300 million contract](#) to help restore Puerto Rico's power grid despite being just two years old.

Those latest controversies come on the heels of the agency's inspector general [looking into](#) Zinke's use of taxpayer-funded charter planes and [concerns about his participation](#) in fundraising or other political events while on official travel. But Democrats said there wasn't enough time to dive into those topics.

"We didn't talk about much that was not directly related" to the national security topic, Rep. [Donald McEachin](#) (D-Va.) said.

Some Democrats said the secure setting was unnecessary.

"We were playing national security games in a [secure room] with the secretary of Interior at a time when we should be asking hard questions about why climate scientists are being reassigned to desk jobs, about why our public lands are being given away," Huffman said afterward. "The swamp is getting worse and worse in this administration. We should have been talking about it, and we were playing war games."

To view online [click here](#).

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BOEM Gulf of Mexico offshore lease sale yields \$121M [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 08/16/2017 05:23 PM EDT

BOEM's latest auction of offshore acreage in the Gulf of Mexico drew more than \$121 million in winning bids today from oil and gas companies.

Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Total and two dozen other companies bid on 76 million acres, which Interior said was the largest amount of Gulf acreage ever offered in a single lease auction. The bidding fell short of the \$247 million generated from a Gulf of Mexico lease sale last March, however.

President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke have touted offshore drilling as a way for the U.S. to achieve "energy dominance." But with oil prices hovering below \$50 a barrel, oil and gas companies have been wary of committing to new offshore projects, which can take several years and billions of dollars to carry out.

Interior slashed the royalty rate that companies have to pay on the oil and gas they produce to 12.5 percent for leases in less than 200 meters of water depth, down from the 18.5 percent originally advertised for the sale.

WHAT'S NEXT: Public comments are due Thursday on Interior's review for a new five-year offshore lease plan.

To view online [click here](#).

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EPA chemical nominee starts at EPA as Pruitt adviser [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff | 10/18/2017 10:56 AM EDT

Michael Dourson, the controversial nominee to run EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, has already started at the agency as a special adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt, according to an agency spokeswoman.

"Yes, he most certainly has," EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in an email when asked if Dourson had begun serving as an adviser to Pruitt on chemicals.

Dourson has yet to be confirmed by the Senate. A committee vote planned for today was scrapped after Sen. [Joni Ernst](#) threatened to withhold her support for Dourson and other EPA nominees over an unrelated biofuel dispute with Pruitt.

Dourson was most recently a professor at the University of Cincinnati Department of Environmental Health's Risk Science Center. Dourson was still listed as a professor as of Oct. 5, a day after his confirmation hearing, according to a [cache](#) of his department bio page, though he is [no longer listed](#) as a faculty member.

Dourson's move to EPA was first reported Wednesday by E&E.

Another pending EPA nominee, Susan Bodine, who was selected to run the enforcement office, has also [started at EPA](#) ahead of her confirmation, which has yet to receive a floor vote. She has been working as an adviser to Pruitt on enforcement matters.

"This is not unique to our administration, but something that is a common practice," Bowman said.

To view online [click here](#).

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Democrats want details on Dourson's advisory post at EPA [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/24/2017 02:58 PM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats want EPA nominee Michael Dourson to explain his role as an adviser to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt while he awaits confirmation to become head of the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

The agency [confirmed](#) last week that Dourson is serving as a special adviser on chemicals ahead of his official confirmation.

"Your appointment creates the appearance, and perhaps the effect, of circumventing the Senate's constitutional advice and consent responsibility for the position to which you have been nominated," the 10 lawmakers, led by [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.), wrote in a [letter to Dourson](#). "Your improper involvement in EPA decisions could provide grounds for subjects of

EPA regulations and oversight to challenge the legal validity of those decisions in court."

They asked Dourson to describe his duties, his relationship with the career official serving as acting head of the OCSPP and whether any of that official's duties have been delegated to Dourson.

The letter also asked several questions on certain chemical and legal issues Dourson declined to answer ahead of his confirmation. "We expect that you have familiarized yourself with these issues and can be more forthright in answering the questions we previously asked," it said.

Whitehouse last month sent a [similar letter](#) to Susan Bodine, who started as a special adviser to Pruitt on enforcement ahead of her confirmation to run the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. A spokesman did not say whether his office had received a response.

WHAT'S NEXT: Dourson's nomination will receive a committee vote alongside other nominees on Wednesday. It is unclear when he will receive a floor vote.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump: Russia uranium deal 'biggest story that Fake Media' ignores [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 10/19/2017 08:11 AM EDT

President Donald Trump complained Thursday that the "fake media doesn't want to follow" news related to an Obama-era sale of uranium deal involving the Russian government, resurfacing an issue he spoke of often on the campaign trail to attack Democrat Hillary Clinton.

"Uranium deal to Russia, with Clinton help and Obama Administration knowledge, is the biggest story that Fake Media doesn't want to follow!" the president wrote online Thursday.

The controversy, which centers around a 2010 sale that put the Russian government in control of more than 20 percent of the U.S. uranium supply, made its way back into the spotlight this week when the Senate Judiciary Committee [opened](#) a fresh investigation on the matter. That probe was triggered by a story published by [The Hill](#) reporting that the FBI had uncovered Russian nuclear officials were engaged in an array of illegal activities in the U.S., including bribery, extortion and kickbacks.

Trump often used the uranium deal during last year's presidential campaign in an effort to paint Clinton as corrupt, pointing to donations made to the Clinton Global Initiative as an indication that she approved the sale to appease donors.

But while the State Department was one of the agencies involved in approving the uranium deal, both the Clinton campaign and officials from the department have said that the former secretary of state was not involved in the approval process because such matters did not rise to her level within the department.

To view online [click here](#).

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Two GOP-led panels launch probe of Obama-era uranium deal [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney | 10/24/2017 04:03 PM EDT

Two more Republican-led congressional committees will probe the Obama administration's decision to approve the sale of American uranium production capability to a Russian state-run energy conglomerate, a key GOP lawmaker announced Tuesday.

Rep. [Devin Nunes](#), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said he'd be linking up with the House Oversight panel led by Rep. [Trey Gowdy](#) (R-S.C.). The Senate Judiciary Committee has already [said](#) it would investigate the uranium deal.

The announcement Tuesday is sure to infuriate Democrats, who have generally dismissed the issue as an attempt to distract from the ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. It comes on the same day President Donald Trump visited the Capitol to meet with Senate Republicans and as leaders of the Russian election-meddling probes have signaled the end of those investigations may be nearing.

Nunes' announcement follows [reports](#) in recent days suggesting the sale of uranium production facilities to the Russian-run Rosatom came amid a broader bribery plot by Russian officials to gain a foothold in the American energy industry while President Barack Obama was in office.

Republicans have seized on the issue to try to deflect scrutiny over Russia's actions after Democrats have spent months scouring for connections between Trump and the Kremlin. The election-meddling probes, including into whether Moscow had help from any Trump associates, have been a nonstop distraction for the White House and sent Trump into bouts of Twitter rage.

The Obama-era uranium deal was a source of Republican criticism during the 2016 campaign. Republicans latched onto reports showing that one of the parties to the uranium sale was a Clinton Foundation donor. The State Department had a role in approving the deal while Hillary Clinton was secretary of State, though [there's no evidence](#) she was personally involved.

Nunes said Rep. [Pete King](#) (R-NY), an Intelligence committee member who raised questions about the deal at the time, would be that committee's point person on the new probe.

Nunes remains head of the intelligence panel even though he stepped aside from the Russia probe in April after he raised eyebrows by unexpectedly visiting the White House to brief the president on early findings of the investigation. Democrats claimed his actions compromised the probe at a sensitive juncture.

Reps. [Mike Conaway](#) (R-Texas), Gowdy and [Tom Rooney](#) (R-Fla.) took over the daily leadership of the Russia investigation. But Nunes has remained involved, tangling recently with Fusion GPS, the firm that commissioned a salacious and disputed dossier about Trump's connections to the Russian government. Nunes recently issued a subpoena to force Fusion to

reveal who funded its research, though the company has fought to avoid handing over information.

To view online [click here](#).

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Flake announces retirement as he denounces Trump [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt and Kevin Robillard | 10/24/2017 02:51 PM EDT

Embattled Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) will retire after his current term expires, he announced on Tuesday in a decision that further roils a 2018 Senate landscape marked by multiple Republican retirements.

Flake was one of the most vulnerable Republican senators up for reelection next year. A vocal critic of President Donald Trump throughout and since the 2016 campaign, Flake said it became clear that that opposition would make it impossible for him to get through a Republican primary.

He took to the Senate floor to deliver a full-throated denunciation of Trump.

"We must never adjust to the coarseness of our dialogue, with the tone set up at the top," Flake said. "We must never accept the deadly sundering of our country. The personal attacks, threats against principles and freedoms and institutions, and flagrant disregard for decency."

"Reckless, outrageous and undignified behavior has become excused as telling it like it is when it is actually just reckless, outrageous and undignified," Flake continued. "And when such behavior emanates from the top of our government, it is something else. It is dangerous to a democracy."

The decision came with Flake trailing in public polling to former state Sen. Kelli Ward, an arch-conservative endorsed by former White House strategist Steve Bannon who mainstream Republicans consider unelectable in a general election. Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, a progressive-turned-moderate serving her fourth term in Congress, is the likely Democratic candidate in the contest.

"Steve Bannon adds another scalp to his collection," said Andy Surabian, a senior advisor to the pro-Trump nonprofit Great America Alliance and a top ally of Bannon's.

Establishment Republicans said they hoped Flake's retirement would increase their chances of defeating Ward, allowing them to unite behind an establishment candidate without a history of attacking the president, who remains sacrosanct with GOP primary voters.

It's not clear who else might enter the GOP primary, though operatives mentioned state Treasurer Jeff DeWit, Rep. Martha McSally and Rep. David Schweikert as possibilities who could unite both wings of the party. One top Republican strategist said Gov. Doug Ducey would likely play a leading role in finding a candidate.

Flake refused to endorse Trump during the 2016 election, and wrote a book criticizing the

president as insufficiently conservative. The continued potshots at the president eroded Flake's own support among GOP primary voters, but he refused to back down and had begun hiring campaign staff, raising additional money and preparing his reelection bid.

"We've taken a banner that is not familiar to us as Republicans. And I don't know how long this will last," Flake told POLITICO in an interview last week, referring to the Trump-led GOP.

Flake informed Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) of his decision earlier Tuesday. "I knew that he was thinking about it but very sorry it's happened," McCain said. "He's one of the most honorable men I've ever known."

Democrats echoed that sentiment, speaking to Flake's popularity in the Senate among members of both parties.

"He is one of the finest human beings I've met in politics. He is moral, upright, and strong and he will be missed by just about everybody in the Senate," Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said in a statement.

Flake's retirement upends what was pegged as one of the most closely-watched Senate races in 2018, but it's unclear exactly what the effect will be.

Steven Law, the president of the McConnell-aligned Senate Leadership Fund, predicted that Flake's departure would guarantee Ward's defeat.

"The one political upshot of Sen. Flake's decision today is that Steve Bannon's hand-picked candidate, conspiracy-theorist Kelli Ward, will not be the Republican nominee for this Senate seat in 2018," Law said.

A top Republican strategist said Flake's team had been polling the race since the beginning of the year, and had repeatedly found no path to victory in either the GOP primary or the general election. About a month ago, Flake's team delivered that news to the senator, the strategist said, and Flake had been considering retirement ever since.

"He basically lost to all comers," the GOP strategist said. "There wasn't a Republican or a Democrat you could put next to him on the ballot who he wouldn't lose to."

Flake's major problem was with the center of the electorate. Independents were either unfamiliar with Flake or disliked him. While McCain shared Flake's problems with the right wing of his own party, Independents adored McCain, helping him easily win reelection last year over then-Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick.

If Flake's floor speech — and retiring Republican Sen. Bob Corker's scathing criticism of the president earlier Tuesday — was any indication, Trump could be in for a long year of vocal opposition from prominent members of his own party before they leave the Senate.

"I'm aware that there's a segment of my party that believes that anything short of complete and unquestioning loyalty to a president who belongs to my party is unacceptable and suspect," he said. "The notion that one should stay silent as the norms and values that keep America strong are undermined, and as alliances and agreements that ensure the stability of the entire world are routinely threatened by the level of thought that goes into 140 characters — the notion that we should say or do nothing in the face of such mercurial behavior — is ahistoric and

profoundly misguided."

Seung Min Kim and Elana Schor contributed to this report.

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Kid Rock: 'F--- no, I'm not running for Senate' [Back](#)

By Rebecca Morin | 10/24/2017 10:21 AM EDT

Kid Rock doesn't want his name on a ballot anytime soon.

The multi-genre singer, whose real name is Robert Ritchie, said Tuesday on Howard Stern's SiriusXM show that he was not running for Senate, despite the hype growing around the idea.

"F--- no, I'm not running for Senate. Are you kidding me?" Kid Rock said, according to the [Detroit Free Press](#). "Who couldn't figure that out? I'm releasing a new album. I'm going on tour too."

His new album, "Sweet Southern Sugar," is set to be released on Nov. 3.

Kid Rock said that people in his circle who were "in on the joke" were beginning to take the Senate talks seriously.

He said he would tell them that "no, we're not doing it, but let's roll with it for a while."

Speculation that Kid Rock would run for Senate began circulating over the summer when, among other things, he launched a website, KidRockforSenate.com, and posted statements that he was mulling over a possible Senate bid.

Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC backed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, in August expressed support for the musician to take on Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) in 2018.

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Trump and Corker hurl insults as GOP strives for unity [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 10/24/2017 08:47 AM EDT

President Donald Trump and Sen. Bob Corker dramatically escalated their feud on Tuesday, with the president accusing Corker of blocking tax reform efforts and the Tennessee Republican warning Trump that his legacy will be the debasement of America.

The nasty exchanges came ahead of a Capitol Hill lunch between Trump and GOP senators to

project unity on an ambitious legislative agenda. While the two men generally avoided each other at the meeting, the rebukes still hung in the air.

Corker set off the latest tiff, appearing on all three major broadcast morning news shows to needle the president and to call on him to "step aside" on tax reform.

Trump punched back on Twitter.

"Bob Corker, who helped President O give us the bad Iran Deal & couldn't get elected dog catcher in Tennessee, is now fighting Tax Cuts," Trump wrote. "Corker dropped out of the race in Tennessee [sic] when I refused to endorse him, and now is only negative on anything Trump. Look at his record!"

Corker quickly responded, lamenting on Twitter the "same untruths from an utterly untruthful president. #AlertTheDaycareStaff." Trump's claim that Corker opted to leave the Senate only after the president refused to endorse him has been disputed repeatedly by the Tennessee Republican's office. In fact, it was Trump, Corker's office has said, who asked the senator to reconsider his retirement.

The spat escalated from there, and captured the civil war that is plaguing the Republican Party despite the GOP's control of both the White House and Congress. Trump has sparred at times with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Dean Heller (R-Nev.), among others.

Flake grabbed his own share of the spotlight on Tuesday, announcing that he would not seek reelection in 2018, and delivering a searing speech on the Senate floor in which he railed against Trump.

"Reckless, outrageous, and undignified behavior has become excused and countenanced as 'telling it like it is,' when it is actually just reckless, outrageous, and undignified," Flake said. "And when such behavior emanates from the top of our government, it is something else: It is dangerous to a democracy."

"Mr. President, I rise today to say: Enough," Flake added.

It's yet to be seen, though, if Flake will join Corker, who is also not seeking reelection in 2018, in taking up the mantle of the senator who consistently punches back against the president.

On NBC's "Today" on Tuesday morning, Corker said, "The best way for us to have a success" on tax reform is for the legislation to be driven by Congress, not the president, a recommendation he said was "based on recent history and just, interactions."

The Tennessee Republican also called Trump's scheduled lunch with Republican senators on Tuesday little more than a "photo op."

Speaking more broadly about the president in an interview on "CBS This Morning," Corker told anchor Charlie Rose that "it appears to be the governing model of this White House to purposefully divide."

Corker then notched up his rhetoric even further during an interview on CNN, saying Trump will most be remembered for "the debasement of our nation."

"At the end of the day, when his term is over, I think the debasing of our nation, the constant non-truth telling, just the name calling, the things — I think the debasement of our nation will be what he'll be remembered most for, and that's regretful," Corker said.

Asked whether he regrets supporting Trump during last year's election, Corker said, "Let's just put it this way: I would not do that again."

Trump continued the back-and-forth, asking his Twitter followers, "isn't it sad that lightweight Senator Bob Corker, who couldn't get re-elected in the Great State of Tennessee, will now fight Tax Cuts plus!"

In another two-post missive, Trump lobbed more criticism, resurrecting a nickname he pinned to the Tennessee Republican weeks earlier: "Sen. Corker is the incompetent head of the Foreign Relations Committee, & look how poorly the U.S. has done. He doesn't have a clue as the entire World WAS laughing and taking advantage of us. People like liddle' Bob Corker have set the U.S. way back. Now we move forward!"

While the war of words built expectations for a face-to-face clash at Tuesday's lunch, Corker called the meeting "uneventful" and that references to the feud did not come up.

He said on MSNBC that his earlier back-and-forth with the president was "to express concerns about, you know, the conduct and just what it means to America and Americans and what it means to the world. But I don't really have any agenda other than responding again to shots across the bow."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, too, downplayed the conflict between Corker and Trump, telling reporters Tuesday afternoon that "I don't have any observation about that." He predicted that Republicans' top priority, tax reform, would be unifying enough to bridge any fractures within the GOP.

The anticlimactic lunch meeting belied a morning of rhetoric from the president's Twitter account that was particularly biting. Corker willingly engaged the president, responding in kind with scathing criticism online and in a flurry of TV news interviews.

While some have feared that Trump's feud with a powerful committee chairman could imperil GOP priorities, including tax reform, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said Tuesday that the spat between the two men would not alter Republican policy efforts.

"At the end of the day, I know Bob well. Bob is going to vote for Tennessee, he's going to vote for America, he's going to vote for tax reform," Ryan continued at a news conference with House Republican leaders. "So put this Twitter dispute aside," he said.

The relationship between the two men, which had already been on rocky footing, soured further this month as Corker and Trump have lobbed increasingly barbed criticisms at one another through the media. Amid a separate reported spat between Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in early October, Corker came to the defense of the secretary, telling reporters that Tillerson and other top advisers "help separate the country from chaos."

Trump replied with a Twitter barrage, launching his claim that the senator had opted to retire only once a presidential endorsement had been taken off the table. Trump also said he had rejected Corker as a possible secretary of state and said the senator was "largely responsible

for the horrendous Iran Deal!" Corker was quick with a sarcastic retort, writing that "it's a shame the White House has become an adult day care center. Someone obviously missed their shift this morning."

The senator also delivered a scathing review of Trump in an interview with The New York Times, telling the newspaper that the president has behaved "like he's doing 'The Apprentice' or something" and that he could put the U.S. "on the path to World War III."

Corker said on Tuesday morning that he tried being a helpful force to Trump — with little to show for it.

"Many of us, me included, have, you know, tried to, you know — I've intervened, I have had private dinner, you know, been with him on multiple occasions to try to create some kind of aspirational approach, if you will, to the way that he conducts himself, but I don't think that that's possible," Corker said. "He's obviously not going to rise to the occasion as president."

Nolan D. McCaskill and Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Reid gone from D.C. — but still pulling strings [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti and Burgess Everett | 10/24/2017 05:03 AM EDT

LAS VEGAS — The Senate is done with Harry Reid, but Harry Reid isn't done with politics — not even a little bit.

The 77-year-old ex-Democratic Senate leader has been encouraging multiple Democrats to run for president, he acknowledged to POLITICO in an interview late last week at his work space two miles from the Las Vegas Strip. He skewered the congressional Republicans whom he blames for the rise of Donald Trump. And while insisting he's leaving the daily tactical maneuvering in the Senate to Chuck Schumer after 34 years in Washington, Reid acknowledged dialing and texting with Democratic senators who seek his advice on how to better fight back against Trump.

"I didn't want anyone thinking I was still trying to run the Senate, so I told them I wasn't going to try and run the Senate. I told Schumer: If you need me, you call me anytime, I'm available. I will only call you under circumstances I think I need to. And that's what I've done," he said. "I hope that makes him feel good, that I'm not saying, 'Chuck, why the hell'd you do that?' Or calling [Senate Minority Whip Dick] Durbin and saying, 'Talk to Chuck and tell him, don't do that, that's so dumb.' Or call Schumer and say, 'Tell Durbin to shut up.' I haven't done that."

Long Mitch McConnell's chief tormentor, Reid even went out of his way to give props to the GOP leader's newest nemesis: Ex-White House strategist and current Breitbart leader Steve Bannon, who is recruiting a slate of Republican primary challengers with the explicit aim of removing the Senate majority leader.

"Until the last year or so, I never heard of the man. Now I've heard of him," Reid said of

Bannon. "He's obviously very persuasive and extremely smart. Everyone acknowledges he's smart and persuasive."

Ten months after his departure from Washington, Reid has carved out a significant behind-the-scenes advisory role for himself in guiding the future of his party, while strengthening his role as the mastermind of Democratic politics in his home state. He's no longer whipping votes or drawing headlines by knifing Trump: His day job is co-chairing an MGM Resorts-funded think tank with John Boehner.

But Reid is also spending his days working to solidify his legacy here by electing a slate of Democrats in 2018, including Rep. Jacky Rosen in her bid to replace Republican Sen. Dean Heller.

"When I left Washington on Jan. 6, I made a decision: I wasn't going to live in the past, I was going to live in the future," Reid said, sitting in his windowless second-floor office at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' law school building. "Now, did I really believe it at the time? Not really, but that's what I said to myself."

Yet he's also been taking calls from potential presidential candidates, rising Democratic stars and party eminences who are asking for his guidance. During a recent trip to Washington, where he's in the midst of selling his apartment at the Ritz-Carlton, Reid met with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, whom he helped bring to the capital in the first place nearly a decade ago.

That's not all, Reid said. In addition to sitting down with Democratic leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Schumer, his schedule also included time with former President Barack Obama, former Vice President Joe Biden, former White House chief of staff Denis McDonough, and John Podesta, the former campaign chairman for Hillary Clinton.

Schumer said he talks to Reid multiple times per month, and the topics range from political advice to casual conversations about their families. "He'll often see something on TV and just call me," said the New Yorker.

Durbin, who speaks to Reid a similar amount, said Reid "never" calls about ongoing Senate business, and is "very careful" to avoid doing anything that could undercut Schumer or confuse the caucus' hierarchy.

The conversations tend to be more quotidian: In one recent chat, Reid called Durbin and said, "Dick, I'm standing in front of a Barnes and Noble. Recommend a book," Durbin said.

When Reid speaks with current senators, he waits to be asked for advice rather than offer it unsolicited, said half a dozen Democratic senators who've spoken with him. When he comes through Washington, he has encouraged the caucus to be bold and outspoken in their resistance to Trump in order to give voters something to support.

Among those on the call list of his rarely holstered iPhone is Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders: The two are still friendly, and a former top Reid aide, Ari Rabin-Havt, is now a senior adviser to the once- and maybe future presidential contender. Reid's first meeting after his POLITICO interview last week was with Sanders' former campaign manager, Jeff Weaver, who was in town for a Democratic National Committee meeting.

Reid also speaks frequently with Warren, with whom he's built a close relationship. (Another former top Reid staffer, former communications director Kristen Orthman, now works for Warren.)

And he often connects with other progressive members of the caucus, including Sens. Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Jeff Merkley of Oregon, who caught Reid's attention with his 15-hour protest of then-Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch in April, as well as his trip to Iowa last month.

Reid acknowledges he's popular among potential presidential hopefuls eager to check in with the longtime political chief of an influential early voting battleground state.

"I am happy to see people wanting to run. That's why, all these people who want to run for president? [It's] good," he said. "They come here and say they're going to run. I say, 'Good, run.' That's what I've told a few of them."

How many? "Enough."

Reid remains polarizing within the party. So his continued activity is frustrating to critics who thought his retirement would mean a full exit from the political scene. Many Sanders allies still accuse him of quietly helping Clinton during 2016's critical Nevada caucuses.

And some Democratic senators who clashed with Reid say they're happy with the switch to Schumer, who has had to focus more on protecting red-state Democrats facing tough reelection battles in 2018.

"Harry didn't talk to me when he was here," said Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who had a frosty relationship with Reid and now serves on Schumer's leadership team. "I have more input than I ever had before and I feel good about that."

Reid has an extensive network in Washington through former top aides who now work in influential Senate offices and at groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (national political director Faiz Shakir) and the Center for American Progress (senior adviser Adam Jentleson). And Reid still works closely with longtime staffer Rebecca Lambe, the top Democratic political operative in Nevada who also works with Senate Democrats' national super PAC, and his former chief of staff Susan McCue, who called him midway through the interview.

But for all his political activity, Reid now deflects when asked about Trump, saying only that the president's tenure has been "by far" worse than he feared during the campaign. How so? "I'm not going to get into that. Other people can talk about that," Reid said.

His ire is reserved for congressional Republicans.

"People are under the false impression that Trump created the Republican Congress. Wrong. They created him, they created him," Reid said. "They did not like Barack Obama, [so] they only came up with two answers: No. 1, we're going to oppose his reelection ... They failed miserably. The other, they get an A-plus. They opposed everything, everything he tried to do for eight years."

Of course, that antipathy goes both ways. "Harry Reid, I think he really poisoned the atmosphere in this place," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas).

The bulk of Reid's work is now focused on bolstering Nevada's shift toward becoming reliably Democratic. Reid, who for years considered himself a red-state Democrat, sees that evolution as a big part of his legacy.

Reid has made the case to national party leaders that his blueprint for Nevada — heavily funding grass-roots organizing and voter registration efforts — should be the model in a targeted set of states, rather than a broader-strokes approach nationwide.

Though Reid headlined a fundraiser for the DNC on Friday, much of this year's activity is focused on ousting Heller, who's taken fire from Democrats as well as Bannon-aligned insurgents on the right.

"I'm a big fan of Jacky Rosen's, I'm doing everything I can to help her," said Reid. "Dean Heller's a nice guy and I'm not going to go out of my way to whack him. There are plenty of others doing that."

He maintains a good relationship with GOP Gov. Brian Sandoval — they kept in touch during this summer's fights over Obamacare repeal, and met just before Sandoval appeared with Heller to oppose one plan in June. But the race to replace Sandoval is just one of several Nevada state races that bear Reid's fingerprints: He's also deeply immersed in elections for secretary of state and Rosen's House seat, among others.

But no matter how often local Republicans portray him as a sinister puppet master, he's not going anywhere. Without the Senate, his friends and former aides say, Reid is now free to roam as a political animal.

"I don't expect him to go away from that," said Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.), Reid's successor in the Senate, who keeps in close touch with him. "And I don't think he should."

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Exelon: Court says EPA coal jobs study not required — Murkowski pushing for a vote — Sanctions bill heads to House
Date: Thursday, June 29, 2017 3:46:27 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/29/2017 03:44 PM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon and Darius Dixon

PROGRAMMING NOTE — Due to the July Fourth holiday, Afternoon Energy will not publish on Monday, July 3 and Tuesday, July 4. Our next Afternoon Energy will publish on Wednesday, July 5. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

COURT: EPA CAN'T BE FORCED TO STUDY COAL JOBS: The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals today said in a [17-page ruling](#) that EPA can't be forced to produce a new, detailed study of how its regulations and enforcement actions affected employment in the coal industry, Alex Guillén [reports](#). The decision effectively reverses a lower court ruling just two days before EPA's deadline to produce the study. "A district court judge in West Virginia last year sided with coal producer Murray Energy in ruling that EPA had failed to comply with Section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act, which says EPA should study how its actions affect employment. That judge ordered EPA to produce a detailed study by July 1."

But today's decision by a panel of three Obama-appointed judges means "the employment studies described in Section 321(a) do not amount to a non-discretionary duty and are not judicially enforceable. The lawsuit should never have been allowed to play out, the 4th Circuit said in vacating the lower court's ruling."

EPA says it'll study jobs anyway: "President Trump's EPA will take the economic and job impacts of its proposed regulations into account consistent with its statutory requirements, regardless of the outcome of this particular case," EPA spokeswoman Amy Graham said in a statement. But Murray still plans to appeal, a company spokesman said. More from Alex [here](#).

PUSHING FOR A VOTE: Alaska Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) says she's pressing forward on a floor time for her new energy bill, which has only minor changes from the version that nearly made it across the finish line last year, Anthony Adragna [reports](#). "This is not brand-new stuff," the Senate Energy chairwoman told reporters today. "These are bills that have passed the committee, passed the Senate, passed the House many of them. What we've done is put them in a package and they're ready to go."

Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) has taken procedural steps to allow the bill to bypass committee, but he has not yet scheduled a floor debate. Murkowski said there had been minor changes to energy efficiency provisions in the bill she introduced Wednesday (S. 1460), particularly to ensure "building codes truly are voluntary." Murkowski said she had some "talking to do with trying to find some time" on the Senate schedule, but the measure won't need to go through the committee process again.

Click [here](#) to read the bill. A summary is [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and

keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

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<http://bit.ly/2szvZN4> **

SANCTIONS BILL HEADED TO HOUSE: The Senate is set to ease "a partisan conflict that had delayed House action on a bipartisan package of sanctions on Russia and Iran" as soon as today, POLITICO's Elana Schor reports. "A technical fix to the sanctions bill that was crafted to clear a constitutional concern in the House is in the process of getting cleared for unanimous passage in the Senate, Foreign Relations Chairman [Bob Corker](#) and his Democratic counterpart, Maryland Sen. [Ben Cardin](#), said" today.

"That passage would end a delay driven by Democratic suspicion that the House GOP may plan to make more significant changes to a sanctions bill that cleared the Senate with 98 votes — and would place new limits on President Donald Trump." More [here](#).

NRC KEEPS CUTTING ITS FEES: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is set to trim its annual fees on power plant operators by 7.4 percent compared to last year, according to a [notice](#) set to publish in the Federal Register Friday. Regulators have been conducting a campaign to shrink their own budget, 90 percent of which is covered by fees, in part because the nuclear "renaissance" failed to materialize. Year-over-year annual fees on operating reactors, spent fuel storage and reactor decommissioning have gone down in 2015 and 2016 as well. The new fees take effect 60 days from the notice's publication date.

DELAYED AGAIN: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee announced this morning that it will again delay votes on nominees to the NRC and EPA until July 12. EPW had originally slated the markup for Wednesday before rescheduling it to noon today, Darius Dixon [reports](#).

TRADE COMMITTEE RELEASES NAFTA RECS: One of the U.S. government's high-level trade advisory committees placed particular focus on streamlining customs procedures and broadening services trade in 12 pages of recommendations for the renegotiation of NAFTA. "It is time to bring the NAFTA into the 21st Century and to turn it into a high-standards agreement in accordance with the negotiating objectives of the 2015 Trade Promotion Authority," the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations wrote in [comments](#) filed Wednesday.

Pro Trade's Adam Behsudi reports: "The committee's recommendations, however, reflected disagreement on a number of points, with labor-group members voicing views that diverged from those held by the majority on data flows, rules of origin, government procurement and investor protections. ... There was broad agreement that a NAFTA do-over should strengthen environment and labor protections." More [here](#).

WIND STILL FACING LOCAL SITING CHALLENGES: A new [report](#) by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory today finds that little has changed when it comes to wind generation in the last three decades. Among other things, while wind generation has generally been viewed favorably in the U.S. over that period, "local wind developments have been

challenged by vocal opposition within host communities," the report said.

'TERMINATOR' GOES IN ON CLIMATE CHANGE: While many within the climate change fight have focused on public health for years as a talking point, former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has taken the effort to another level, [California Playbook](#) writes. Schwarzenegger joined Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti for an on-stage talk in Los Angeles on Wednesday, where he suggested the U.S. government should concern itself more with climate change than with ISIS. For a government charged with protecting its residents, he said, "It doesn't make any sense that we're all worried about ... is ISIS going to come to America and all of those kind of things, when in fact we are killing in America over 200,000 people every year."

Of people who reject mainstream climate science, he said, "Now in movies, when you do this, you take those guys who say [carbon] is not a pollutant, and you hook them at the mouth up to an exhaust pipe ... and they find out in a minute."

STUDY: THE COST OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A new study out from [Science](#) today finds that in the poorest third of the U.S., economic damages from climate change will cost as much as 20 percent of residents' income. States that will experience the worst damages to their economies will be in the South and lower Midwest. The study also found that overall, climate change will lead to economic losses and restructuring and widening inequality.

MAIL CALL: Reps. [John Rutherford](#) and [Don Beyer](#) anchor a bipartisan letter signed by more than 100 lawmakers to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, opposing seismic airgun blasting off the Atlantic Coast. The letter focuses on the threats posed to coastal communities, economies, fisheries and marine mammals. They note nearly 1.4 million jobs and over \$95 billion in gross domestic product rely on a healthy Atlantic Coast, mostly via fishing, tourism and recreation. Read it [here](#).

— **Ranking member Raúl Grijalva** and Virginia Rep. [Donald McEachin](#) also penned a letter to Trump today urging him to appoint an inspector general at the Department of the Interior. The position has gone without a full appointment for more than eight years. Read it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

— Angela Merkel predicts showdown with U.S. over climate at G-20, [The Washington Post](#).

— In Japan, 'soul searching' years after disaster, [E&E News](#).

— Was America's first offshore wind farm unfairly blamed for a whale's death? [Huffington Post](#).

— A new problem for Keystone XL: Oil companies don't want it, [The Wall Street Journal](#).

— Trump's 'energy dominance' week is dominated by misleading claims, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Senate Republicans close to scrapping some tax cuts [in Obamacare repeal](#)

— Tillerson blows up at top [White House aide](#)

— [Republicans condemn Trump](#) for crude tweets about 'Morning Joe' hosts

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

4th Circuit says EPA can't be forced to study coal job losses [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/29/2017 09:12 AM EDT

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals today said EPA cannot be forced to produce a new, detailed study of how its regulations and enforcement actions affected employment in the coal industry, reversing a lower court just two days before EPA's deadline to produce the study.

A district court judge in West Virginia last year sided with coal producer Murray Energy in ruling that EPA had failed to comply with Section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act, which says EPA should study how its actions affect employment. That judge ordered EPA to produce a detailed study by July 1.

But a panel of three Obama-appointed judges on the 4th Circuit today said in a [17-page ruling](#) that the employment studies described in Section 321(a) do not amount to a non-discretionary duty and are not judicially enforceable. The lawsuit should never have been allowed to play out, the 4th Circuit said in vacating the lower court's ruling.

The law "imposes on the EPA a broad, open-ended statutory mandate," the judges concluded, noting a lack of instruction on how EPA was to carry out the studies or deadlines to meet. "A court is ill-equipped to supervise this continuous, complex process."

EPA revealed in a [court filing](#) last month that more than 110 staffers had been assigned to produce the study on time and to create a process for ongoing review.

WHAT'S NEXT: The 4th Circuit's ruling lifts the requirement for EPA to produce the study. It is unclear whether Murray Energy will appeal to the full 4th Circuit or the Supreme Court.

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EPA shrugs off coal jobs ruling as Murray promises appeal [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/29/2017 02:57 PM EDT

EPA says it will consider potential coal job losses driven by its regulations as the agency acts, regardless of an appellate court's ruling today [freeing the agency](#) from producing a report on how its rules have impacts on coal miners.

"President Trump's EPA will take the economic and job impacts of its proposed regulations into account consistent with its statutory requirements, regardless of the outcome of this particular case," EPA spokeswoman Amy Graham said in an email.

Graham did not clarify whether EPA intends to finish the study despite the ruling, or whether EPA plans to put greater emphasis on economic and job impacts during rulemakings. The Clean Air Act does not require that the job impact studies should necessarily affect EPA's thinking on environmental regulations.

Murray Energy spokesman Gary Broadbent said the company is reviewing the ruling and intends to appeal, although he did not specify whether Murray will seek an en banc review before the full 4th Circuit or if it will go to the Supreme Court.

WHAT'S NEXT: Murray plans to appeal the ruling.

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Murkowski: Energy bill ready now for floor action [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 06/29/2017 01:35 PM EDT

Senate Energy Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) says she's pushing for floor time for her new energy bill, which has only minor changes from the version that nearly made it across the finish line last year.

"This is not brand-new stuff," the Alaska Republican told reporters today. "These are bills that have passed the committee, passed the Senate, passed the House many of them. What we've done is put them in a package and they're ready to go."

Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) has taken procedural steps to allow the bill to bypass committee, but he has not yet scheduled a floor debate.

Murkowski said there had been minor changes to energy efficiency provisions in the bill she introduced Wednesday, S. 1460, particularly to ensure "building codes truly are voluntary." Ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) agreed only "minor things" had been changed in the bill.

Senate and House lawmakers [pushed until the last minute](#) last December to iron out differences between the bipartisan Senate bill and a House companion that cleared the lower chamber with mostly Republican votes, before Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) ultimately pulled the plug on those efforts.

Text of the latest energy package has not yet been released.

WHAT'S NEXT: Murkowski said she had some "talking to do with trying to find some time" on the Senate schedule, but the measure won't need to go through the committee process again.

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Senate sends fixed Russia-Iran sanctions bill to House [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 06/29/2017 12:54 PM EDT

The Senate on Thursday approved tweaks to its bipartisan package of sanctions on Russia and Iran, ending a delay of the bill as Democrats prodded the House GOP to quickly pass it in order to put Moscow on notice for its cyber-meddling in last year's election.

The unanimous passage of a technical fix to the sanctions bill eliminates a constitutional concern that had arisen in the House, but does not fully resolve Democratic [suspicion](#) that the House GOP may plan to make more significant changes to the legislation.

The Senate approved its sanctions bill two weeks ago on a 98-2 vote, and included new limits on President Donald Trump's ability to lift or ease sanctions on Russia. Before relenting on the tweaks Thursday, Senate Democrats had sought assurances of no further major changes to the upper chamber's version of the bill and balked after failing to receive them, according to a leadership aide.

"I want to put the House on notice: If they water down the bill, weaken the sanctions, add loopholes to the legislation — they will find stiff resistance here in the Senate," Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said on the floor Thursday ahead of the passage of the fixed sanctions measure.

Schumer said that he and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell "worked hard to pass" the new penalties against Moscow in advance of next week's G-20 summit in Germany, where the White House confirmed Thursday that Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet on the sidelines.

The New York Democrat urged Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) to move the now-tweaked sanctions bill through the House in the hours before lawmakers begin leaving Washington on Thursday for a week-long recess. Ryan's office did not respond immediately to a request for comment on that request, which House Republicans are unlikely to meet given time and procedural constraints.

Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker told reporters Thursday that he spoke with Ryan the previous night and added that "I still think [the sanctions bill is] going to be taken up as-is when we get back."

The foreign relations panel's top Democrat, Maryland Sen. Ben Cardin, sounded a similar note

in a brief interview: "We have an understanding with Republican leadership to move legislation," he said. "There's no guarantees of what's going to happen in the House, but I'm comfortable that they're trying to push a strong bill."

Corker declined to comment on White House [plans](#) to ask the House GOP for more Trump-friendly changes to the bill, noting that those decisions were discussed anonymously.

But the Tennessee Republican offered "hope that the delay doesn't create mischief, if you will," because the House will now wait until after next week's recess to take up the sanctions measure.

In addition to its new sanctions against Russia and Iran, the Senate-passed legislation would allow Congress to block Trump from easing or ending penalties against Vladimir Putin's government. Trump and Putin are expected to meet on the sidelines of next week's G-20 summit in Germany, the Kremlin said Thursday.

"I think it's going to become law," Corker said of the sanctions bill.

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EPW reschedules NRC, EPA nomination votes to July [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/29/2017 10:10 AM EDT

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee announced this morning that it has delayed votes on nominees to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the EPA.

The votes are now scheduled for July 12. EPW had originally slated the markup for Wednesday before rescheduling it to noon today.

NRC nominees Annie Caputo and David Wright, and EPA nominee Susan Parker Bodine, who has been tapped as assistant administrator of the office of enforcement and compliance assurance, are awaiting committee approvals.

Lawmakers will also consider legislation to reauthorize and tweak aspects of EPA's popular brownfields program and a bill reauthorizing the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, which helps retrofit diesel-powered equipment.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPW has rescheduled the markup for the morning of July 12.

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Top-level trade advisory committee lays out NAFTA recommendations [Back](#)

By Adam Behsudi | 06/29/2017 11:06 AM EDT

The U.S. government's senior advisory committee representing agriculture, labor groups, manufacturing and services firms issued 12 pages of recommendations for the renegotiation of NAFTA, placing particular focus on streamlining customs procedures and broadening services trade.

"It is time to bring the NAFTA into the 21st Century and to turn it into a high-standards agreement in accordance with the negotiating objectives of the 2015 Trade Promotion Authority," the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations wrote in its [comments](#), filed Wednesday.

The committee's recommendations, however, reflected disagreement on a number of points, with labor-group members voicing views that diverged from those held by the majority on data flows, rules of origin, government procurement and investor protections. The labor members also said they "sharply disagree" with the assessment that NAFTA led to growth in jobs and wages.

At the same time, a majority of committee members said they "caution against making the mistake of trying to use NAFTA to achieve goals that are beyond its reach, such as reducing the bilateral trade deficit with Mexico."

There was broad agreement that a NAFTA do-over should strengthen environment and labor protections. Mexico's shortcomings on labor rights were recognized as one of the factors fueling movement of production and jobs south of the border. "These provisions should be updated and implemented prior to the entry into force of any commercial provisions that an updated NAFTA agreement might incorporate," the comments state.

The members also reached consensus over the need to use the trade deal to tackle climate change. They recommended new commitments to expand renewable energy and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies by 2025.

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Schwarzenegger goes all in on climate change -- Malliotakis becomes presumptive GOP NYC mayoral nominee [Back](#)

06/29/2017 11:07 AM EDT

CALIFORNIA PLAYBOOK -- per David Siders and Carla Marinucci -- Proponents of climate change policies have tried in recent years to focus public attention on the immediate health effects of an especially hazardous class of pollutants, including black carbon, finding the long-term consequences of rising temperatures insufficiently compelling for the electorate at large.

Leave it to **former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger** to take the effort to another level. Joining **Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti** for an on-stage talk in Los Angeles on Wednesday, the former California governor suggested the U.S. government should concern itself more with

climate change than ISIS.

For a government charged with protecting its residents, he said, "It doesn't make any sense that we're all worried about ... is ISIS going to come to America and all of those kind of things, when in fact we are killing in America over 200,000 people every year."

There are other, more violent ways that the movie star could be persuasive. Of people who reject mainstream climate science, he said, "Now in movies, when you do this, you take those guys who say [carbon] is not a pollutant, and you hook them at the mouth up to an exhaust pipe ... and they find out in a minute." <http://politi.co/1N8zdJU>

FLORIDA PLAYBOOK -- per Marc Caputo -- The Senate's Trumpcare bill is [polling abysmally](#) (with support at just 12%, 16%, 18%, 27% or 35% depending on the survey yesterday). But the effort to bring it to a vote isn't over. To undermine opposition, **Sen. Marco Rubio** is pushing back against the Congressional Budget Office's analysis, which damaged the bill's prospects in estimating 22 million more people would go uninsured. Rubio called some of CBO's math a "joke" and "deeply flawed" during one of his [Facebook Live](#) fireside-like chats. A partial transcript:

FUNKY BASELINE — Rubio: "They [CBO analysts] are comparing the Senate bill to Obamacare. Here's the problem. They are comparing it to Obamacare from March of 2016. That is not an accurate baseline. In just the last year, premiums have increased, less companies are in the marketplace, people have dropped out of coverage or lost coverage. ... So when you say that 15 million people are losing coverage in the next two years, compared to what? Because they're comparing it to something that doesn't exist. They're comparing it to what they thought Obamacare would do a year ago. But it's been worse than what they projected. So that baseline has to be reset."

EXPANSION 'JOKE' — Rubio: "5 of those 15 million [who would lose insurance], are people that they believe are going to lose coverage because states are going to expand [Medicaid]. And then those states are going to have to kick people off in 2026. So here's what they're basically saying ... 'The State of Texas and the State of Florida are going to expand Medicaid. They didn't do it now. But all of a sudden, Florida and Texas are going to expand Medicaid. And we're going to add a bunch of people onto Medicaid. And then in four years we're going to kick all of them off.' And that's how we get to 5 million. That's a joke. How do they know? How does their computer know what decision these state leaders are going to make? Did they talk to the state leaders? Because Florida has already decided they're not expanding. And I promise you, Texas is not expanding. And yet somehow, they throw this number out there [as] if it's accurate."

OTTOMLINE — Rubio: "Any CBO score based on a projection that Florida and Texas are going to expand Medicaid, and then kick people off, is flawed. And any CBO score that's based on what Obamacare looked like in March of 2016 is deeply flawed. Because it's a lot worse off today than it was in March of 2016. ... You can't have an honest debate about the future of healthcare in America and how to reform it, if we're not operating on the facts as our baseline. And a lot of that depends on how this is being reported."

RUBIO'S RHETORICAL LEGERDEMAIN — In pushing back against CBO and chiding the press for "regurgitating" its score, Rubio manages to say little about the bill itself. He also paints a rosier picture of the future than is likely when it comes to Medicaid by saying "As long as Florida keeps the same amount of funding or gets an increase ... there is no reason for

anybody to be losing any of their current benefits under Medicaid." But how does that happen when Trumpcare cuts \$772 billion in federal money from Medicaid over a decade? CBO says federal "spending on the program would decline in 2026 by 26 percent." But Florida's Medicaid program has grown 52 percent in enrollment (to an estimated 4.1 million recipients) and 47 percent in cost (to \$26.3 billion in state and federal money) during the fiscal year that begins July 1 (Saturday). A 26 percent cut in federal money in 2026 would deeply affect eligibility and services. <http://politi.co/1OC2BLg>

MASSACHUSETTS PLAYBOOK -- per Lauren Dezenski -- As the holiday weekend approaches, potential Senate candidate **Geoff Diehl** is rallying his troops. First, he's entreating supporters to open their wallets a little wider ahead of Friday's fundraising deadline for the second quarter, saying it's "vital to our campaign momentum that I file a strong report," in a fundraising email.

That's hardly hyperbole — Diehl has previously said the strength of his fundraising in the spring and beginning of the summer will determine whether or not he officially challenges **Sen. Elizabeth Warren**. "I know it may seem really early, but Elizabeth Warren has a huge war chest," the email continues. "Moreover, she turns every issue into a fundraising plea to build up her funds."

Diehl's folks plan to deploy over the holiday weekend, too — sporting freshly inked "The Real Diehl" t-shirts at parades south of Boston in Braintree, Randolph, Plymouth, Duxbury and Wakefield. <http://politi.co/1KQBHPp>

NEW YORK PLAYBOOK -- per **Jimmy Vielkind** and **Azi Paybarah** -- Assemblywoman **Nicole Malliotakis** was on her way to Albany when she learned she had become the presumptive Republican mayoral nominee, after her challenger in the primary, real estate executive **Paul Massey**, announced he was [dropping out](#) because he "[hadn't caught fire](#)" and [couldn't finance](#) the effort any longer. This sets the stage for a scenario few imagined before **Errol Louis** [wrote](#) about it last month: "A Republican ticket of young black and Latino citywide candidates ..." **Councilman Eric Ulrich** is trying to alter those plans, urging Republican Party leaders to take a second look at **Bo Dietl**, whom they blocked from entering their contest after his remarks about the mayor's wife.

Malliotakis' role as a legislator will highlight Albany's control over New York City policies, like mayoral control and taxes. As our **Jimmy Vielkind** and **Nick Niedzwiadek** reported, Malliotakis and her Albany colleagues voted late last night on an omnibus bill late to extend mayoral control for two years as part of an "extraordinary" special session. ([She told](#) NY1 last night **Bill de Blasio**'s problem is he spent too much money on education bureaucracy.) Malliotakis' record as a legislator in Albany for the past seven years — and how it affected the five boroughs — will now be under scrutiny. She also is a Republican who voted for **Donald Trump** this past November and defends a number of the policies that de Blasio says hurt New York City, like his threats to cut some federal security aid to "sanctuary cities."

ILLINOIS PLAYBOOK -- per **Natasha Korecki** -- Via **Kevin Robillard** -- The 400 major conservative donors who gathered this weekend at the Broadmoor Resort in Colorado Springs for the annual seminar run by the **Koch Brothers'** network were treated to entertainment, wonky policy discussion and quite a few jokes at Illinois' expense, even though the state's GOP governor, **Bruce Rauner**, attended the most recent Koch gathering in January. On Saturday night, at a dinnertime panel with two other governors, **Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens** bragged about passing a right-to-work law and declared: "One of the great things about being

governor of Missouri is Illinois is right next door." The crowd laughed, and Greitens went on to suggest he could lure businesses to the other side of the Mississippi. And during a Monday panel on tax reform, Rauner ally **Ken Griffin** laughed along with the crowd when other panelists made jokes about the state's high taxes and general dysfunction. No one ever mentioned Rauner by name, but the jokes made clear the network's well-heeled donors still see Illinois as a liberal bastion, GOP governor or not — and no one stepped up to defend Rauner. <http://politi.co/1KIZXzz>

NEW JERSEY PLAYBOOK -- per Matt Friedman -- It's budget day and there's still no deal on the Horizon legislation, which — unless either **Speaker Prieto, Senate President Sweeney** or **Gov. Christie** backs down — the passage of the state budget depends on.

There are all kinds of things that could happen. Could a coalition of Democrats and Republicans rise up and try to force a vote on the Horizon bill, which, by the way, hasn't even been introduced in the Assembly yet? It would take a supermajority of 60 votes to even get it on the floor.

A big question is whether Prieto can get the 41 votes he needs for the budget if he doesn't pass the Horizon bill. That came up during a conference call of Democratic leaders. Ousting Prieto, I'm told, did not come up in the call. But there's been chatter, and you can't rule it out when a situation gets this dire. Even if most Democrats oppose ousting Prieto, it wouldn't be impossible for some of them to cut a deal with Republicans. (**Prieto spokesman Phil Swibinski** projected an "all is fine" vibe in a tweet last night about a Prieto fundraiser in Essex County.)

There are so many moving parts, and so many rumors flying around. Everyone tells me no one wants to shut down the government. But in my 10 years covering Trenton (I started the year after the 2006 shutdown), this is the worst deadlock I've seen. <http://politi.co/1WdOXgU>

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Senate GOP likely to miss Friday deadline on Obamacare repeal [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Seung Min Kim and Sarah Karlin-Smith | 06/29/2017 11:45 AM EDT

Senate Republicans are increasingly unlikely to reach agreement on a new version of their Obamacare repeal measure by their self-imposed Friday deadline, as key senators engaged in a furious round of dealmaking.

GOP senators were close to a potential agreement to retain some of the taxes in Obamacare, including the so-called net investment income tax that levels a surcharge on some high-income earners. That would appeal to moderate holdouts, but likely would turn off conservatives who are pushing to dismantle as much of the 2010 law as possible, including its taxes.

"There's a significant amount of interest among, I would say, a good group of members for retaining that for some purpose," South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the third-ranking Senate Republican, said in an interview. But on how many conservatives would be lost if that tax was kept, Thune added: "It's not a big number, but it's enough."

Meanwhile, key Republicans have secured a new infusion of cash for the opioid crisis. But while McConnell's team might be able to satisfy more centrist GOP senators with additional funding, conservatives remain a huge headache, according to senators and aides.

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and his allies are still pushing to gut Obamacare's regulatory structure, but Republican sources doubt that the Senate parliamentarian will allow it. That raises a key question: Can the party's right flank support what's going to amount to only a partial repeal of the law?

One Republican senator was "less optimistic" about meeting the Friday deadline, adding: "I'd be surprised if we get something done by Friday."

As he entered the office of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — where key holdouts have been cycling through in recent days during the fast-paced negotiations — on Thursday morning, Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) confirmed the party is leaning toward maintaining Obamacare's tax on wealthy individuals' investments. The GOP would then reallocate that money to help more people from low-income households pay for insurance, although Thune said some Republicans want to use those funds for deficit-reduction purposes instead.

No final decision has been made, Republicans said, but the party is leaning strongly toward reshaping the bill to be less of a tax cut for the wealthy and more to supplying health insurance options to the working poor.

"We are going to figure out a way, I believe, before Friday comes, to greatly enhance the ability of lower-income Americans to buy health insurance on the exchanges that actually covers them. And my sense is the [investment tax] is going to go away," Corker said. "It's not an acceptable proposition to have a bill that increases the burden on lower-income citizens and lessens the burden on wealthy citizens."

Killing or delaying the tax cuts will give the party significantly more money to play with and potentially change the optics of a bill portrayed by Democrats and some GOP critics as a tax cut for the rich at the expense of curtailing benefits for the poor.

The "net investment tax" imposes a 3.8 percent charge on some investments by people who make more than \$250,000 a year, in addition to the capital gains tax. Centrist and dealmaking senators are ready to scrap it to take away critics' ammunition.

Corker and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) have both raised the issue in party lunches, Republicans said.

Republicans also are considering keeping a Medicare tax increase from Obamacare that their initial bill would cut. Combined, retaining the investment tax and Medicare tax could give the party more than \$200 billion to invest in health care, on top of the \$188 billion in savings the GOP has to spend from its initial Congressional Budget Office score this weekend.

"I am" open to keeping the net investment tax, said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). "But only if it's part of a plan that works, not just simply growing government for revenue purposes."

Sen. Ron Johnson, a conservative holdout who has pushed for rolling back even more of Obamacare, signaled he would nevertheless be willing to consider keeping the investment tax

around.

"If we're retaining the benefit we ought to have the funding mechanisms," he said in an interview.

But conservatives such as Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania and Rand Paul of Kentucky signaled that keeping the tax would be a potential deal breaker.

"I'm for repealing Obamacare, which includes all the taxes in Obamacare," Paul told reporters.

"I expect that we'll be repealing all of the taxes in Obamacare," Toomey said.

McConnell met with a bevy of senators privately over the past two days, including conservatives like Cruz and moderates like Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

"One of the things the working group said at the outset is that we will not set any artificial deadlines. We would keep working until we reached an agreement," Cruz said after leaving McConnell's office.

Movement on the party's tax cuts follows a Wednesday evening offer among White House and congressional negotiators. That plan would deliver \$45 billion to fight opioid addiction and establish health savings accounts that would allow people to pay for insurance premiums with pre-tax money, aimed at moderates and conservatives, respectively.

Still, it was unclear whether the opioid money would be enough to win over wavering senators from the center. When asked about the additional funds, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) responded: "I'm not there yet. I know that."

The frenzied atmosphere is a last-ditch attempt by McConnell and his lieutenants to salvage a bill that will no longer be considered this week, despite initial vows by leadership that a vote would occur regardless of the outcome.

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said he hopes Republicans can reach an agreement by Friday. Part of the difficulty, Cornyn said, is receiving a new score from CBO which he said is using a "Ouija board ... to predict the future." The Senate cannot vote without a CBO score.

"We're continuing to have conversations," Cornyn said. "I know it's aggravating to the press corps because there isn't really anything to report."

Jennifer Haberkorn and Adam Cancryn contributed to this report.

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Tillerson blows up at top White House aide [Back](#)

By Josh Dawsey, Eliana Johnson and Alex Isenstadt | 06/28/2017 08:04 PM EDT

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's frustrations with the White House have been building for months. Last Friday, they exploded.

The normally laconic Texan unloaded on Johnny DeStefano, the head of the presidential personnel office, for torpedoing proposed nominees to senior State Department posts and for questioning his judgment.

Tillerson also complained that the White House was leaking damaging information about him to the news media, according to a person familiar with the meeting. Above all, he made clear that he did not want DeStefano's office to "have any role in staffing" and "expressed frustration that anybody would know better" than he about who should work in his department — particularly after the president had promised him autonomy to make his own decisions and hires, according to a senior White House aide familiar with the conversation.

The episode stunned other White House officials gathered in chief of staff Reince Priebus' office, leaving them silent as Tillerson raised his voice. In the room with Tillerson and DeStefano were Priebus, top Trump aide Jared Kushner and Margaret Peterlin, the secretary of state's chief of staff.

The encounter, described by four people familiar with what happened, was so explosive that Kushner approached Peterlin afterward and told her that Tillerson's outburst was completely unprofessional, according to two of the people familiar with the exchange, and told her that they needed to work out a solution.

"Colleagues are capable of frank exchanges," said R.C. Hammond, a State Department spokesman, when asked about the disagreement. "Evaluating nominees did get off to a slow start, but it is now moving along at a pretty good clip."

It was the loudest manifestation yet of how frustrated Tillerson is in his new role. He has complained about White House attempts to push personnel on him; about the president's tweets; and about the work conditions in a West Wing where he sometimes finds loyalty and competence hard to come by. Above all, the former ExxonMobil CEO, accustomed to having the final word on both personnel and policy in his corporate life, has balked at taking orders from political aides younger and less experienced than he is.

Disputes between the White House and a Cabinet secretary, particularly over personnel, aren't unusual. The Obama White House told Hillary Clinton that her friend Sidney Blumenthal couldn't join her at the State Department. Other secretaries in Trump's Cabinet have also clashed with DeStefano, who has a difficult job balancing White House requests, political considerations and headstrong Cabinet secretaries, many with executive experience.

"It's very common that there would be some tensions and some tussles between the White House and departments or agencies about senior personnel decisions," said Matthew Waxman, a senior official in the State Department and National Security Council under President George W. Bush. "It's just very abnormal that these issues wouldn't be worked out more quickly."

Waxman, now a professor at Columbia University, said the fights are likely harder for a Cabinet secretary like Tillerson, who is accustomed to supreme control as a CEO. "But we have a system of government where political appointments run very, very deep," he said. "It's the way the system works. The White House has the final say."

Tillerson's frustration with White House meddling began early and has been a persistent issue. "He went into this with a very negative attitude towards the White House," said a former senior State Department official familiar with his thinking, who recounted that during the transition, Tillerson opposed a candidate proposed by Trump's team simply on the grounds that Trump's team was proposing him.

He has sometimes conducted talks with potential job candidates without telling the White House, said one person familiar with his actions. Tillerson has told senior officials that Trump promised him autonomy, and that he wanted it, according to people who have spoken to him.

"Rex is a 65-year-old guy who worked his way up from the bottom at Exxon, and he chafes at the idea of taking orders from a 38-year-old political operative," said a former transition aide who worked closely with Tillerson.

DeStefano worked for years as a senior adviser to former House Speaker John Boehner before he joined the Trump administration, where he has struggled to fill thousands of jobs across the government, though the pace has quickened in recent weeks.

White House spokesman Michael Short blamed some of the staffing delays on "obstruction" from Senate Democrats and said that many diplomatic positions need careful vetting.

"The meeting was productive and there was consensus on the topic of staffing, which is moving forward more quickly," Short added.

Where Tillerson is concerned, the frustration goes both ways. Many of his proposed nominees have been rejected by DeStefano's Office of Presidential Personnel either because they are Democrats or because they are Republicans who were critical of Trump during the campaign. Though Brian Hook, the State Department's director of policy planning, told associates several weeks ago that the department had several people in the pipeline, few have been announced since, and the White House continues to resist Tillerson's choices.

He's also faced resistance to leaning on civil servants. Tillerson has expressed his desire to nominate Susan Thornton, a career foreign service officer now serving as the acting assistant secretary in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to take over the job in an official capacity — a move White House staffers have resisted, saying they want a political person in the role.

"If the secretary is putting forward a nominee such as Susan, he is doing it because he believes she's the most qualified and best fit for the position," said Tillerson spokesman Hammond. "In this particular case, he has the experience of working with her, since she has been on the job since February. That includes a trip to Beijing, a visit from the Chinese president to Mar-a-Lago, and the first of a series of four dialogues."

The secretary has additionally clashed with the White House over ambassadors, according to several people familiar with the conversations, and some of the conversations are ongoing.

Tillerson has also drawn criticism for isolating himself — with the help of Peterlin, his chief of staff — in his office on the State Department's seventh floor and for excluding many career diplomats from the policymaking process. That has frustrated the White House because even the president's senior aides have had difficulty reaching him at times.

His leadership of the State Department seems a vast departure from his stewardship of Exxon, where he was considered a kinder, gentler executive than his predecessor, the combative and bombastic Lee Raymond. Asked about how to lead a large organization during a time of crisis, he told students at his alma mater, the University of Texas, early last year: "You do have to communicate in times like this and you have to be visible."

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Republicans condemn Trump for crude tweets about 'Morning Joe' host [Back](#)

By Kelsey Tamborrino and Nolan D. McCaskill | 06/29/2017 09:25 AM EDT

Republican lawmakers on Thursday swiftly rebuked President Donald Trump for crudely claiming that "Morning Joe" co-host Mika Brzezinski was "bleeding badly from a face-lift," saying such tweets are beneath the office of the president.

In a [two-part tweet](#), Trump said he "heard poorly rated @Morning_Joe speaks badly of me (don't watch anymore)." He then went on to hit Brzezinski: "how come low I.Q. Crazy Mika, along with Psycho Joe, came ... to Mar-a-Lago 3 nights in a row around New Year's Eve, and insisted on joining me. She was bleeding badly from a face-lift. I said no!"

The messages, some of the most graphic and personal since Trump became president, were condemned by Republicans who are struggling to push Trump's legislative agenda forward while the White House is consumed by the Russia probes and self-inflicted dramas.

"Obviously, I don't see that as an appropriate comment," House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said Thursday during his weekly press conference, adding, "Look, what we're trying to do around here is improve the tone, the civility of the debate, and this obviously doesn't help do that."

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) went further, tweeting, "Mr. President, your tweet was beneath the office and represents what is wrong with American politics, not the greatness of America."

Graham later told POLITICO that Trump's insult was "highly inappropriate" regardless of any impact it might have on distracting from the GOP agenda. Asked if the president should apologize, Graham said, "I would, if I were" Trump.

The tweets echo some of Trump's attacks from the campaign trail, during which he went after then-Fox News host Megyn Kelly after the first debate by saying, "You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever."

But the messages take on a new tenor now that Trump is in the Oval Office, and is trying to pull off big legislative lifts — including an Obamacare repeal bill and tax reform package — that require message discipline.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders quickly defended the tweets, explaining the president fights back when he feels the criticism toward him is unwarranted.

"Look, I don't think that the president's ever been someone who gets attacked and doesn't push back," Sanders told Fox News on Thursday morning. "There have been an outrageous number of personal attacks, not just to him but to frankly everyone around him. ... This is a president who fights fire with fire and certainly will not be allowed to be bullied by liberal media or liberal elites in Hollywood or anywhere else."

Sanders said she personally has been attacked on "Morning Joe" on matters that have nothing to do with her beliefs, ideology or policy. "I have seen far worse things [than the tweets] come out of that show," she said.

The first lady's office responded to the president's tweet through a spokeswoman who reiterated what Melania Trump said in an April 2016 speech.

"As the First Lady has stated publicly in the past, when her husband gets attacked, he will punch back 10 times harder," Stephanie Grisham, Melania Trump's communications director, said in a statement.

But there's evidence that the public is frustrated with the president's Twitter use. More than 6-in-10 registered voters say Trump should stop tweeting, including 49 percent of Republicans, according to a Quinnipiac University [poll](#) conducted ahead of Trump's latest attack and released Thursday.

And some Republicans in Congress said Trump crossed a line with his vulgar message.

Following a hearing on U.S. Capitol Police, Republican Sen. James Lankford said in a [statement](#) that the president "should model civility, honor, and respect in our political rhetoric. The President's tweets today don't help our political or national discourse and do not provide a positive role model for our national dialogue."

Unlike other Republicans who in the past have vocalized their opposition to Trump's actions, Lankford isn't a notably frequent Trump critic.

Republican Sen. Ben Sasse, who is a frequent critic, [tweeted](#): "Please just stop. This isn't normal and it's beneath the dignity of your office."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi agreed, telling reporters that what Trump tweeted was "so blatantly sexist" and "really saddens me because it is so beneath the dignity of the president of the United States to engage in such behavior."

She also blasted her Republican colleagues who haven't condemned the president's rhetoric. "The Republicans, they can tolerate almost anything — a candidate beating up a reporter and then cheering him on as he arrives in Congress, the tweets of the president of the United States," she said at her weekly news conference. "They set a low standard for public officials in terms of their demeanor."

Trump's tweet dominated the conversation on a day when the House was scheduled to vote on two immigration bills, the Senate was focused on getting its Obamacare repeal legislation back on track, and part of the administration's travel ban was set to be enforced Thursday evening. The White House had also designated this "energy week," with Trump scheduled to deliver remarks at an energy event at the Energy Department.

Republicans expressed frustration that the president's tweets do nothing to further the GOP

agenda.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who is among the Republican holdouts on the health care bill, [tweeted](#): "This has to stop - we all have a job - 3 branches of gov't and media. We don't have to get along, but we must show respect and civility." Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), another skeptic of the GOP health bill, tweeted, "Stop it! The Presidential platform should be used for more than bringing people down."

Conservative commentator Laura Ingraham sent out a [tweet](#) chastising the White House's message discipline: "Today ALL comms coming out of WH shd be focused on #KatesLaw and #NoSanctuaryforCriminalsAct -- not cable TV hosts."

GOP strategist Rick Tyler, a former communications aide to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's White House bid, told POLITICO that Trump's tweets have "zero benefit" and criticized the administration's defense of them as "childish."

"Republicans will arrive at the 2018 elections with absolutely no accomplishments and nothing to run on," Tyler said. "In order to effect large-scale public policy change through legislation, you have to have a communications strategy to convince the country that the direction you're going is somewhere they'd like to go."

While Trump's attack on Thursday morning provoked a big response, the "Morning Joe" hosts have a notorious love-hate relationship with the president. During the 2016 campaign, Trump was a frequent call-in guest to the show and as recently as March retained Joe Scarborough's advice on matters before [addressing](#) Congress. But the MSNBC show has also faced criticism for being too cozy with the administration.

In a Vanity Fair [report](#) from May on the co-hosts' recent engagement, the couple acknowledged meeting with the president more than a week after his inauguration, where Trump reportedly suggested they have their wedding at Mar-a-Lago or the White House. According to Scarborough, Trump even suggested he could be the one to marry them.

Scarborough and Brzezinski have since become increasingly critical of the president, and Trump has repeatedly attacked them on Twitter, but Thursday's messages marked a new low.

Brzezinski [responded](#) to Trump shortly after his tweets on Thursday with her own post of a Cheerios box detailing a child and the slogan "Made For Little Hands" — a seemingly pointed reference to the campaign trail during which Trump's hand size was often targeted.

MSNBC, meanwhile, was direct and unsparing in its criticism.

"It's a sad day for America when the president spends his time bullying, lying and spewing petty personal attacks instead of doing his job," an MSNBC spokesperson said, echoing a similar sentiment from the organization's spokesman Mark Kornblau, who [tweeted](#) that he "never imagined a day when I would think to myself, 'it is beneath my dignity to respond to the President of the United States.'"

It was not immediately clear what specific comments set off the Twitter attacks this morning, but Brzezinski did hit the president this morning on "lying ... and destroying the country."

"Nothing makes a man feel better than making a fake cover of a magazine about himself, lying every day and destroying the country," Brzezinski said in reference to a Washington Post

[report](#) that alleges a fabricated Time magazine cover photo featuring Trump is hanging in at least five of his golf clubs.

Also, on Tuesday's episode of "Morning Joe," Brzezinski and Scarborough went back and forth on Trump's hand size and his onslaught of media-focused tweets of late.

"That's a very small person," Brzezinski said.

"I work in cable news and I can tell you that's sad, pathetic. Think bigger," Scarborough countered, adding that while the "worst health care strategy ever" rages, Trump's talking about the media.

"Keep on being small," Brzezinski said.

"Tiny. That's the word," Scarborough corrected.

On the campaign trail, the president was often criticized for his treatment of women, most notably after the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape in which Trump can be heard bragging about sexually assaulting women.

And in a bizarre moment on Tuesday, while on the phone with Ireland's new prime minister, Trump called forward an Irish journalist to comment on her smile.

Despite the furor around his tweets on Thursday, Trump did get some support outside of the White House. Fox News primetime host and frequent Trump defender Sean Hannity tweeted [various links](#) to "Morning Joe"-related coverage. "Maybe liberal Joe should stop calling the @POTUS a schmuck, a liar, a thug and mentally unhinged. Were they kissing @POTUS ass at xmas? Yes," he [tweeted](#).

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) also appeared to defend the president, noting that he's dealing with an adversarial news media.

"The media is salting him every day," Shelby said. "I guess he's fighting back."

Other lawmakers, however, said they were trying to tune it out.

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) said he didn't want to talk about the president's tweets because he's trying to "stay positive."

"If you don't have something nice to say, say nothing at all," Johnson said.

"The American people need us to be focused on health care and tax reform, not Twitter fights and cable news," Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) [said on Twitter](#).

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, who unsuccessfully ran for president in 2016, [summarized](#) Trump's comments in three words: "Inappropriate. Undignified. Unpresidential."

Thursday morning's tweetstorm also fits into Trump's recently stepped-up crusade against the media in which he has targeted other outlets that he believes are publishing unfair coverage of his administration.

Trump attacked The Washington Post on Wednesday, complaining that the "fake news"

newspaper was protecting Amazon from tax liabilities with its coverage.

Representatives for Brzezinski and Scarborough did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hadas Gold, Elana Schor, Kyle Cheney, Austin Wright, Heather Caygle and Diamond Naga Siu contributed to this report.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by Exelon: House aprops release energy spending bill — Perry: DOE grid study has coal focus — Rosneft hit by cyberattack
Date: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 6:28:59 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/27/2017 04:30 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

HOUSE ENERGY SPENDING BILL OUT: The House Appropriations Committee today [released](#) its fiscal 2018 [energy and water spending bill](#). Overall, the \$37.56 billion bill cuts \$209 million from this year's spending levels, but comes in \$3.65 billion above President Donald Trump's budget request, according to a committee release. DOE's energy programs receive \$9.6 billion, down \$1.7 billion from this year but \$2.3 billion more than Trump asked for. The bill would keep spending on science programs level with this year and includes funding for Yucca Mountain, among other provisions.

On the chopping block: House appropriators are endorsing Trump's call to eliminate the popular Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, and their bill would bar DOE from issuing future loan guarantees, Nick Juliano [reports](#). DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy would see its funding cut nearly in half, while offices for fossil and nuclear energy see much smaller cuts.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

EPA ANNOUNCES WOTUS REPEAL: EPA today released its proposed rule to undo the Obama administration's landmark water regulation cementing federal protections for smaller streams and wetlands. The proposal would repeal the 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule and reinstate an older process EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers used to determine where the Clean Water Act applies, Annie Snider [reports](#). A copy of the Trump administration proposal is [here](#).

PERRY: DOE STUDY WILL HAVE EYE TOWARD COAL: Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the grid reliability study his department is undergoing will highlight ways to reverse policies, he claimed, were motivated by a desire to harm the coal industry. While speaking at the Energy Information Administration annual conference, Perry didn't specifically mention the Obama administration, but made clear that he would pursue a different course.

"Over the last few years, grid experts have expressed concern about the erosion of critical baseload resources, specifically how it is dispatched and compensated," he said. "These are politically driven policies driven by a hostility to coal." Trump, Perry and other Cabinet secretaries have questioned climate science and vowed to reinvigorate the coal industry, Eric Wolff [points out](#).

CALLING ON GRID RENEWABLES: FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable hit back today, saying renewable generation hasn't harmed the reliability of the grid and instead said she'd like to see more growth. "Do I have to recognize and be attendant to supporting different

way renewables work? I say yes, but I have seen no problems with reliability," Honorable said during a Q&A at the EIA conference. "Bring on more renewables."

Coal and nuclear plants' problems are "less about regulation, more about economics," Honorable noted in her remarks, which followed Perry's. More [here](#).

**** A message from Exelon:** Innovation always begins with the spirit of discovery—the search for new ideas and answers to our biggest questions. As America's largest clean energy provider, what happens when 34,000 Exelon engineers, analysts, and innovators put their heads together to tackle the energy industry's biggest challenges? Find out here: <http://bit.ly/2szvZN4> **

PRUITT BUDGET HEARING HAS FEW FIREWORKS: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt avoided the same level of Republican scolding over EPA's proposal to slash its budget during a Senate hearing this morning that he received two weeks ago from House appropriators. It may have helped that only two Republicans showed up to question him — spending subcommittee Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and Montana's [Steve Daines](#). Both praised Pruitt for rolling back regulations they disliked, but both also offered stern words about the budget's cuts to their favored programs.

"I don't believe that we can achieve the level of budget cuts proposed," Murkowski told Pruitt, pointing in particular to cuts targeting Alaska Native Villages, targeted airshed grants and a radon program. Daines questioned the 31 percent cut to Superfund clean-ups, noting his state is home to 19 Superfund sites. Pruitt said better management could make up for a smaller budget.

Sidestepping on science advice: Pruitt dodged questions from [Chris Van Hollen](#) about last night's New York Times [article](#) that said his chief of staff, Ryan Jackson, tried to alter recent testimony given by scientist Deborah Swackhamer about the Board of Scientific Counselors. "I've not read the article," Pruitt said, with Jackson sitting directly behind him. He offered to turn over any related communications to senators, and said BOSC members were free to reapply for spots on the panel.

Regionally speaking: Pruitt promised that he would work to bring permanent administrators to the agency's 10 regions, jobs that do not require Senate confirmation but are critical to overseeing field work and liaising with states. "I believe we're making progress and I'm hopeful we'll have regional administrators in place soon," Pruitt said.

Gone fishin': Pruitt also promised Murkowski that any public comment period on EPA's proposal to withdraw its previous work on Pebble Mine won't fall exclusively during Alaska's intensely busy fishing season. Murkowski noted that Bristol Bay fishers are working "20 to 24" hours a day from now through August, and expressed concern that a 60-day comment period, which has yet to begin, would preclude those fishers from commenting. Pruitt promised to "make sure all voices are heard," and said he would make the comment period "90 days or whatever" to accomplish that.

ROSNEFT HIT BY CYBERATTACK: Russian petroleum company Rosneft confirmed [via Twitter](#) today that "a massive hacker attack has hit the servers of the company." POLITICO Europe's Laurens Cerulus [reports](#) the ransomware attack is spreading across Europe, similar to the outbreak of global malware WannaCry last month, and seems to be making its way through Europe's energy and transport companies. Computers affected by the malware show

messages asking people to pay \$300 worth in bitcoins to a specific account.

Pro Cybersecurity's Eric Geller reports the new virus spreads via a flaw in Microsoft Windows originally exposed in a leak of apparent NSA hacking tools, according to researchers. The software, dubbed Petya, has sent law enforcement officials scrambling and sparked fears that another global ransomware attack is underway. It appears the U.S. has been largely unscathed to this point. DHS said it was "monitoring reports" of the ransomware campaign and coordinating with international authorities. More [here](#).

IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH: E&E News reports today it has learned authorities "are investigating a cyber intrusion affecting multiple nuclear power generation sites this year." While there's no evidence that the nuclear industry's safety systems were compromised, any cybersecurity breach at nuclear reactors "marks an escalation of hackers' probes into U.S. critical infrastructure," E&E writes. "Electricity-sector officials confirmed [on Monday] that they are working to unpack the significance of the secretive cyber event, code named 'Nuclear 17.'" Read [more](#).

BLOOMBERG: TRUMP IS A 'PR PROBLEM': Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement "sends a terrible message," but won't stop U.S. efforts to cut emissions, former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg told POLITICO in Brussels today. "The truth of the matter is, the president pulling us out, that is a PR problem," he said. "But since the federal government has not had a lot to do with what we've done in the last few years — reducing our carbon footprint — so what?"

Bloomberg also noted it's about economics, POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff and David Herszenhorn [report](#). "It's capitalism. It's the lower cost of fracked natural gas and renewables that's really destroying the coal industry," said Bloomberg, who is now the United Nations' special envoy for cities and climate change.

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Kelly Speakes-Backman will become Energy Storage Association's first chief executive officer, effective July 1, the association [announced](#) today. Speakes-Backman joins the association after serving as senior vice president of policy and research at the Alliance to Save Energy.

QUICK HITS:

— Wind power's big bet: Turbines taller than skyscrapers, [Reuters](#).

— The ozone hole is slowly healing — but this chemical could delay its recovery by decades, [The Washington Post](#).

— Hot mic records troubling conversation about solar regulations, [Billings Gazette](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— [Trump blasts CNN](#) as "fake news" after it retracts story

— The "international man of mystery" linked to [Flynn's lobbying deal](#)

— McConnell warns Trump, GOP on [health bill failure](#)

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House energy and water spending bill released [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 06/27/2017 12:01 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Committee has released its fiscal 2018 energy and water spending bill.

The [\\$37.56 billion bill](#) funds the Department of Energy, Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies. Overall, it cuts \$209 million from this year's spending levels but comes in \$3.65 billion above President Donald Trump's budget request, according to a committee release.

DOE's energy programs receive \$9.6 billion, down \$1.7 billion from this year but \$2.3 billion more than Trump asked for, according to the committee. The bill would keep spending on science programs level with this year and includes funding for Yucca Mountain, among other provisions.

The Army Corps would see \$6.16 billion, a \$120 million bump compared to this year and \$1.16 billion more than the budget request.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House Appropriations energy and water subcommittee is scheduled to meet Wednesday to markup the bill.

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House energy and water spending bill released [Back](#)

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House bill would eliminate ARPA-E, bar future DOE loan guarantees [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 06/27/2017 01:26 PM EDT

House appropriators are calling to eliminate a popular late-stage research program and bar the Energy Department from issuing new loan guarantees while proposing to cut spending on energy efficiency and renewables nearly in half.

The cuts reflect House Republicans' preference for DOE's nuclear and fossil energy programs, which would receive much smaller reductions. The House plan would not cut most programs as steeply as President Donald Trump called for in his budget — but lawmakers made exceptions for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy and the loan-guarantee program.

The [energy and water spending bill](#) House appropriators released today does not include any funding for ARPA-E, which the Trump administration also proposed zeroing-out in its budget request.

For the loan-guarantee program, the spending bill would rescind nearly \$161 million in money available to underwrite loan guarantees as well as DOE's authority to issue any new loans after Oct. 1. The bill would provide \$2 million for administrative costs to be drawn from fees DOE has collected, a 95 percent reduction from the equivalent sum this year.

DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy office would receive about \$1.1 billion in the House bill. That's down from nearly \$2.1 billion the office received this year.

But the fossil and nuclear energy offices would not see anything close to that magnitude of cuts. The fossil office would receive about \$635 million, down \$33 million from this year, while nuclear would see \$969 million, a \$48 million reduction.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House Appropriations energy and water subcommittee will mark up its bill on Wednesday. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are likely to resist the call to cut ARPA-E as the appropriations bill moves through Congress in the coming months.

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EPA announces proposed WOTUS repeal [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/27/2017 02:37 PM EDT

EPA is moving forward with its proposed rule to undo the Obama administration's landmark water regulation cementing federal protections for smaller streams and wetlands.

The proposed rule would repeal the 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule, also called the Clean Water Rule, and reinstate the process that EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers used for nearly a decade to determine which waterways receive Clean Water Act protection in the wake of two muddled Supreme Court decisions. EPA announced today it had completed the proposal, but a copy was not immediately available.

Last year, a court blocked implementation of the Obama rule, so today's proposal would not trigger any immediate changes. Instead, the proposal is meant as a backstop by the Trump administration in case the original legal stay of WOTUS put in place by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals is lifted, which could occur when the Supreme Court decides whether the 6th Circuit has jurisdiction over the matter.

The proposed rule is the first in a two-step process planned by Administrator Scott Pruitt's EPA. The agency is already working on writing a new version of the rule that would include a narrower interpretation of which creeks, bogs and marshes are protected under federal law. Suggestions from states and groups representing local environmental officials were due to EPA earlier this week.

The proposed water rule is the first formal step toward repealing one of the many Obama-era environmental regulations that President Donald Trump has targeted, including climate regulations. If finalized, it is likely to be challenged in court by environmental groups and supportive states.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will open a public-comment period that will lay some of the legal battlefield for opponents who are likely to challenge the rule in court if it is finalized.

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Perry: DOE grid study to ferret out policies hostile to coal [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/27/2017 11:47 AM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the grid reliability study his agency is conducting will look for ways to reverse policies he claimed were motivated by a desire to harm the coal industry.

Perry didn't specifically mentioned the Obama administration in his speech today to the Energy Information Administration annual conference, but he made it clear that he would pursue a different course.

"Over the last few years, grid experts have expressed concern about the erosion of critical baseload resources, specifically how it is dispatched and compensated," he said. "These are politically driven policies driven by a hostility to coal."

The Obama administration looked for ways to promote low-carbon energy sources in the name of fighting climate change. President Donald Trump, Perry and other Cabinet secretaries have questioned climate science and vowed to reinvigorate the coal industry.

"No reasonable person can deny the thumb — no the hand — that's been put on the scale in favor of certain political outcomes," Perry said.

Perry did not mention economic factors such as competition from cheap natural gas among the problems facing coal and nuclear generators. DOE's reliability study will focus on the "regulatory burden placed on baseload generation," he said.

At the same time, he stressed that DOE would "ensure that renewable energy finds its way into the grid," but that reliability would not be "tossed aside in the name of some political favorite."

Two climate protesters interrupted Perry's EIA speech, both demanding that Perry acknowledge that he was "a climate denier."

WHAT'S NEXT: Perry's grid study is expected in July.

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Honorable calls for more grid renewables [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/27/2017 11:12 AM EDT

FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable said renewable generation has "absolutely not" harmed grid reliability, and she'd like to see more.

"Do I have to recognize and be attendant to supporting different way renewables work? I say yes, but I have seen no problems with reliability," she said during a Q&A following a speech at the Energy Information Administration's annual conference. "Bring on more renewables."

Honorable spoke immediately after a speech by Energy Secretary Rick Perry in which he praised renewables but also expressed concern that the shrinking number coal and nuclear generators, which serve as baseload power, threatened grid reliability.

The woes facing coal and nuclear plants are "less about regulation, more about economics," Honorable said.

FERC has been without a voting quorum for months, and Honorable's last day will be on

Friday, leaving acting Chairman Cheryl LaFleur as the only remaining commissioner. New commissioners, when they are confirmed, will have to get up speed in a hurry to tackle the backlog.

"I had the luxury of voting present for my first 30 days while I got my feet on the ground, but I don't know if our colleagues will have that time," she said. "You need decisions from us yesterday."

WHAT'S NEXT: Two Republican nominees to FERC await Senate confirmation.

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Cyberattack under way on Europe's energy and transport companies [Back](#)

By Laurens Cerulus | 06/27/2017 10:26 AM EDT

A ransomware attack is spreading across Europe in what looks like an outbreak of malware like the global WannaCry attack last month.

Russian petroleum company Rosneft confirmed its systems were under attack, saying in a [tweet](#) that "a massive hacker attack has hit the servers of the company." The transport company A.P. Moller-Maersk confirmed in a [tweet](#) it also suffered an attack and its systems were down. Meanwhile, Kiev's main airport has been affected by the malware, the BBC [reported](#).

Security researchers have raised similar warnings for energy systems in Ukraine, including Ukrenergo and Kyivenergo. Other incidents are being reported.

"It looks like what happened with WannaCry," said Rickey Gevers, security researcher at RedSocks Security, a Dutch cybersecurity firm.

Computers affected by the malware show messages asking people to pay \$300 worth in bitcoins to a specific account.

Ukrenergo, one of the affected companies, was the target of a [severe cyberattack](#) that downed the energy systems in large parts of Ukraine last Christmas.

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on June 27, 2017.

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NSA-linked tools help power second global ransomware outbreak [Back](#)

By Eric Geller | 06/27/2017 10:27 AM EDT

Security researchers are racing to analyze and contain a new form of ransomware that has begun seizing computer networks around the world, just weeks after a similar cyberattack crippled an unprecedented number of businesses and hospitals.

Like the massive malware outbreak in mid-May, the new virus also spreads via a flaw in Microsoft Windows originally exposed in a leak of apparent NSA hacking tools, according to researchers.

The malicious software has battered organizations in Russia, Ukraine, Spain, France and Poland, according to cybersecurity researchers, sending law enforcement officials scrambling and sparking fears that another global ransomware attack is underway. It appears the U.S. has been largely unscathed to this point.

Major energy, shipping, banking, pharmaceutical and law firms, as well as government agencies, have confirmed they are fighting off cyberattacks, although it's unknown if all these online ambushes are linked to the ransomware outbreak. In Europe, law enforcement agency Europol is "urgently responding" to infections of European businesses, the agency's executive director [said](#) on Twitter. In the U.S., DHS said it was "monitoring reports" of the ransomware campaign and coordinating with international authorities.

Researchers have been warning for weeks that the recent WannaCry ransomware virus — which [locked up](#) hundreds of thousands of computer networks in what experts called a game-changing cyberattack — was only the beginning of these fast-spreading digital sieges.

Digital security specialists say hackers have since been working to tweak the WannaCry malware, potentially allowing it to skirt the digital defenses that helped stall the global assault. WannaCry was powered by a variant of apparent NSA cyber weapons that were dumped online, raising questions about whether the secretive hacking agency should be sitting on such powerful tools.

The virus is spreading using the same Microsoft Windows flaw as WannaCry, according to digital security firms [Symantec](#) and [Bitdefender Labs](#).

Security firm Kaspersky Lab estimated it had seen 2,000 victims — and counting — as of midday. Such an estimate is significantly lower than the massive numbers tied to WannaCry, but some researchers noted technical details of the new malware that might make it harder to kill.

Some researchers identified the infection as a novel variation of the so-called Petya malware. But researchers at Kaspersky believe it is a totally new strain they are dubbing NotPetya.

Like WannaCry, this new virus demands that victims pay a ransom using the digital currency Bitcoin before their files can be unlocked. As of midafternoon, 27 victims had [paid](#) a ransom, with the number steadily climbing.

Unlike WannaCry, however, the rapidly spreading malware does not merely encrypt files as part of its ransom scheme. Rather, it changes critical system files so that the computer becomes unresponsive, according to John Miller, a senior manager for analysis at the security firm FireEye, which reviewed the malware.

Additionally, researchers [said](#) the malware is capable of hopping around using multiple

Microsoft flaws, not just the one exposed in the online dump of the purported NSA cyber weapons.

A sample of the malware initially went [undetected](#) by [nearly all](#) antivirus software.

The digital weapon cloaks itself as a file that Microsoft has already approved as safe, helping it avoid detection, Costin Raiu, director of global research efforts at Kaspersky, [said](#) on Twitter.

The malware was written on June 18, according to a sample that Kaspersky has [analyzed](#). Researchers have not yet linked it to any specific hacking group or nation-state, unlike WannaCry, which digital specialists and reportedly intelligence officials in the U.S. and U.K. traced to North Korean-backed hackers.

Most of the infections on Tuesday were in Ukraine, with Russia the next hardest hit, according to [Kaspersky's analysis](#). Russia was also a major victim during the WannaCry outbreak. Raiu told POLITICO that Belarus, Brazil, Estonia, Netherlands, Turkey and the United States were also affected, but that those countries accounted for less than 1 percent of all victims.

Researchers suspect that Ukraine became the nexus of the outburst after companies using a popular tax program unknowingly downloaded an update that contained the ransomware. From there, the virus could have spread beyond those companies using various flaws in Windows.

The ransomware eruption may be responsible for several major cyber incidents that began Tuesday.

The global shipping and logistics firm Maersk — which is based in Denmark — [confirmed](#) that it was dealing with an intrusion affecting "multiple sites and business units." And the Russian oil company Rosneft [said](#) it was responding to "a massive hacker attack."

Ukraine's central bank and its capital city's main airport also [said](#) they were dealing with cyberattacks. The virus [appeared](#) to be hitting the country's government computers as well.

The cyberattack also forced the Ukraine-based Chernobyl nuclear power plant to revert to manual radiation monitoring, [according to](#) a Ukrainian journalist citing the country's state news service.

Elsewhere, the German pharmaceutical giant Merck [said](#) its network was "compromised" in the outbreak and that it was still investigating the incident.

But the U.S. has been largely spared so far.

The American Gas Association said in a statement that no U.S. natural gas utilities have reported infections.

However, in Pennsylvania, the Heritage Valley Health System — which operates two hospitals and 60 physician offices — said it was grappling with a cyberattack. "The incident is widespread and is affecting the entire health system," said spokeswoman Suzanne Sakson.

Multinational law firm DLA Piper was also experiencing computer and phone outages in multiple offices, including in Washington, D.C. The company did not respond to a request for

comment.

But a photo shared with POLITICO showed a sign outside the firm's Washington office that read, "All network services are down, do not turn on your computers! Please remove all laptops from docking stations and keep turned off. No exceptions."

DLA Piper's secure document storage system for clients also went down, though the firm may have done that as a precaution. "A bit stressed at moment as I am unsure if our docs there are safe," one client told POLITICO.

Tim Starks contributed to this report.

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Trump blasts CNN as 'fake news' after it retracts story [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 06/27/2017 07:14 AM EDT

CNN's decision to retract a story published last week tying a member of President Donald Trump's transition team to ongoing Russia investigations offered the president an opportunity Tuesday morning to attack perhaps his favorite media target, which he labeled "fake news" and questioned for publishing "phony stories."

The story in question, published late last week, reported that the Senate Intelligence Committee was investigating the head of a Russian investment fund who met before the inauguration with Anthony Scaramucci, a financier and high-profile member of Trump's transition team. CNN also reported that the Senate committee was looking into whether or not Scaramucci had suggested that sanctions against Russia might soon be lifted.

In addition to the story's retraction, three CNN employees, including a Pulitzer Prize-winner, resigned from the company.

"Wow, CNN had to retract big story on "Russia," with 3 employees forced to resign. What about all the other phony stories they do? FAKE NEWS!" Trump wrote on Twitter Tuesday morning. "Fake News CNN is looking at big management changes now that they got caught falsely pushing their phony Russian stories. Ratings way down!" he added in a subsequent post.

Beyond bashing CNN, the president quickly pivoted to two other media foes, writing online that "They caught Fake News CNN cold, but what about NBC, CBS & ABC? What about the failing @nytimes & @washingtonpost? They are all Fake News!"

While Trump took the retraction as an opportunity to attack CNN, Scaramucci himself, who does not hold a role inside the White House but still makes occasional television appearances in support of the president, was more conciliatory.

"CNN did the right thing. Classy move. Apology accepted. Everyone makes mistakes. Moving on," Scaramucci wrote on Twitter Saturday.

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The 'international man of mystery' linked to Flynn's lobbying deal [Back](#)

By Isaac Arnsdorf | 06/27/2017 05:09 AM EDT

More than two years ago, two men started visiting Washington to push Turkey's agenda in the capital. They dined with dignitaries and enlisted prominent lobbying firms from both sides of the aisle.

It was an unremarkable Washington story, except for one thing: The last lobbyist one of the men hired was Gen. Michael Flynn, President Donald Trump's campaign adviser at the time, who was later fired as national security adviser for lying about his conversations with Russia's ambassador.

Flynn's client, a Turkish businessman named Ekim Alptekin, has gained attention as federal investigators examine Flynn's apparent failures to disclose foreign contacts. But so far, the other man in the pro-Turkey efforts has largely avoided public notice, making him an intriguing figure in the mystery surrounding foreign influence in Washington.

The man, Dmitri "David" Zaikin, is not registered as a foreign lobbyist and has no apparent connection to Turkey.

What he does have, a ProPublica-POLITICO examination found, is a long track record of partnering with powerful Russian businesspeople and government officials, mostly involving energy and mining deals. More recently, Zaikin has done political work in Eastern Europe, advising parties in Albania and Macedonia that have drifted toward the Kremlin.

Zaikin also has business connections to Trump. Working at a real estate agency in Toronto in the 2000s, Zaikin brokered sales in one of the city's new high-rises: the Trump International Hotel and Tower. Perhaps coincidentally, Zaikin was also close with a Russian woman who was the exclusive agent for one of Trump's Florida developments and who was branded "Trump's Russian hand" by a glossy Russian magazine.

Zaikin has not been accused of any wrongdoing. Alptekin and Zaikin have denied knowing each other and say Zaikin had nothing to do with Flynn's lobbying deal.

As previously [reported in POLITICO](#), three people with direct knowledge said Alptekin and Zaikin collaborated on Turkish lobbying, jointly steering the work.

Zaikin referred questions to his lawyer, who declined to comment. Flynn's lawyer didn't answer requests for comment. The White House referred questions to Trump's outside lawyer, whose spokesman also did not respond to a request for comment.

Zaikin says he was born in 1967 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. In an earlier email to Politico, he wrote that his family long faced anti-Semitic persecution in their homeland and that they fled the collapsing USSR for Canada in 1990.

"Mr. Zaikin reserves nothing but contempt for the Soviet government, and whatever vestiges of it may still exist," his lawyer, Tara Plochocki of the firm Lewis Baach Kaufmann Middlemiss, wrote to POLITICO.

But Zaikin gave a different account to Geoffrey P. Cowley, a British engineer who was his business partner from 2010 until they split in 2016. Cowley said he never heard Zaikin claim his family was persecuted, nor had he heard Zaikin criticize the former Soviet Union.

"That might be the official line," Cowley said.

Instead, according to Cowley, Zaikin had said his father was in the Soviet military or diplomatic corps.

"When he was with me, whoever I wanted to see, David would pick up the telephone and I got to see him," Cowley said, naming officials in Albania, Serbia and Guinea as examples. "That doesn't happen with some Jewish refugee out of Ukraine who doesn't know anybody."

Settling in Toronto, Zaikin was active in the community of Jews from the former Soviet Union. He soon became a real estate agent, eventually with an upscale brokerage. He marketed properties to Russian buyers. He married a woman from St. Petersburg and had three children.

In 2002, Zaikin started a side gig. He became chairman of Siberian Energy Group, which was incorporated in Nevada and was listed over-the-counter on NASDAQ. The company's [archived website](#) notes Zaikin's "extensive ties to Russia's business community, as well as to federal and regional government authorities."

Zaikin worked to help the governor of the western Siberian province of Kurgan attract Western investors for energy exploration and infrastructure, according to Tim Pears, whom Zaikin hired to help raise money in the United Kingdom.

"He did the government of Kurgan a lot of favors in terms of helping to raise money for them," Pears said. The governor reported directly to President Vladimir Putin, according to a company [press release](#).

The region's prospects didn't pan out: Zaikin's company never pumped a single barrel of oil or cubic foot of gas, according to [disclosures](#) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The SEC [repeatedly queried](#) the company about its financial dealings, specifically about its payments to Russian executives and consultants in shares and options whose values were opaque or shifting.

"We note that although you describe various transactions utilizing common stock of the company, it is not clear from your disclosures how the value of such stock for each transaction was determined," SEC officials wrote in one [letter](#).

In 2006, Siberian Energy Group used shares worth \$2.7 million to buy a Russian company, Kondaneftegaz. Less than two years later, Zaikin's company sold significant stakes in Kondaneftegaz to two Russian investors for just \$10 each. Kondaneftegaz had actually been awarded two additional drilling licenses before those sales, according to SEC reports.

Zaikin previously told POLITICO that he was "not involved" in that transaction, though his signature appears on the [purchase](#) and [sale](#) agreements filed with the SEC.

Zaikin obtained Siberian Energy Group's licenses at auctions that weren't publicized and were attended only by people who had government connections, according to a contractor for the company. Zaikin's lawyer refused to comment on this.

"David was on the inside track," said Jordan Silverstein, who worked for a firm doing investor relations for Siberian Energy Group. "He seemed like an international man of mystery."

Zaikin's business career continued to involve both Russian oil work and Toronto real estate dealings. In 2005, Zaikin told the Globe and Mail newspaper about a new development he was promoting: the Trump International Hotel and Tower. The newspaper reported that Zaikin called his "top five international clients" and four agreed to buy.

"When this project was announced I instantly became a strong believer that it would be a significant winner," Zaikin told the newspaper. "I have stayed at Trump Hotels and seen how other similar projects went in New York, Chicago and Las Vegas."

Not long after, Zaikin and several colleagues from Siberian Energy Group became directors or shareholders of a mining company called RAM Resources, later First Iron Group, according to corporate filings. First Iron's board included the deputy chairman of Russian state bank VEB, who had also been Putin's deputy chief of staff. The company was registered in the British isle of Jersey, a haven for offshore companies.

Other investors in the company were themselves offshore firms, based in the Cayman Islands, Cyprus, the British Virgin Islands and elsewhere.

According to Zaikin's partner Cowley, who served on the company's board, the venture was ultimately controlled by Alisher Usmanov, an Uzbek-born Russian iron oligarch. Usmanov's representatives did not respond to a request for comment.

Cowley, an experienced mining executive who had worked for other Russian oligarchs, said he was impressed by Zaikin's global political connections.

A consulting firm that Zaikin and Cowley started advertised Zaikin as having "a network of contacts with senior executives and top government officials and Presidents in Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Ethiopia, Albania, Sierra Leone, Mali, Liberia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, [and] Romania."

By 2011, Zaikin had moved to London. He set up several companies registered at his home address. One of them, EM Infrastructure Ltd., lists two names on a U.K. incorporation document: Neither is Zaikin's. One belongs to his wife, a jewelry designer, and the other name is a Viktor Grabarouk, whose address is listed as Zaikin's home and whose birth date is listed as one day after Zaikin's own.

A search of corporate records and the comprehensive British phone book showed no references to a Viktor Grabarouk.

A few years later, Zaikin's career took yet another turn. After working in residential real estate and the Russian energy sector, Zaikin became an adviser to the ruling parties in Turkey,

Albania and Macedonia. He also began working with those parties to set up lobbying in the United States.

Zaikin told Cowley he wanted to be "working with the staffs of senators and high-profile people in the States," Cowley recalled. The two stopped working together as Zaikin focused more on politics.

Starting around 2015, Zaikin helped run pro-Turkish nonprofit groups to lobby U.S. lawmakers, according to an American consultant who worked with him, John Moreira. Alptekin, the Turkish businessman who later hired Flynn, told Politico he worked with the main group Zaikin helped set up.

In August 2016, Alptekin signed a contract with Flynn for \$600,000 to urge the U.S. to turn over Fethullah Gülen, a cleric now in Pennsylvania whom Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuses of trying to topple him.

The contract refers to Alptekin as "Capt. Ekim Alptekin." Alptekin said he's not a captain and he doesn't know why the contract calls him one.

Flynn was paid by a Dutch consulting firm that Alptekin owned called Inovo, according to Flynn's Justice Department disclosures. But records show Inovo had no significant business activity in the three years before the Flynn deal. In fact, the company was in debt for more than 125,000 euros in the months before paying Flynn. Alptekin acknowledged in an interview that Inovo lacked sufficient funds and said he used his own money to pay Flynn.

Flynn's firm ultimately repaid \$80,000 to Inovo. Alptekin has said it was a refund. Flynn's filing with the Justice Department called the payment a "consultancy fee."

Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating Russian efforts to influence the election, is interested in the source of Flynn's lobbying income, according to a person familiar with the probe. Mueller's spokesman declined to comment.

While working on Turkey, Zaikin also facilitated lobbying and political consulting deals for the Macedonian political party VMRO-DPMNE, according to four people with direct knowledge of the activities. He did the same for Albania's Socialist Movement for Integration, known as LSI, according to four people familiar with the arrangements. Zaikin introduced leaders of both parties to American lobbyists and campaign advisers, the people said.

VMRO, like Turkey, historically aligns with the West but has recently cozied up to the Kremlin. VMRO for months refused to leave power despite failing to win enough seats in a December election to form a parliamentary majority. The standoff put the party at odds with the U.S. State Department, whereas it has [received forceful backing from the Russian Foreign Ministry](#).

Albania's LSI and its leader, Ilir Meta, are avowedly pro-Western but have sometimes clashed with the State Department over the U.S.' push to reform the country's criminal justice system.

Around the same time Zaikin started getting more involved in Eastern European and American politics, he and his wife repeatedly met with a friend named Elena Baronoff, who worked with the Trump Organization to sell condos in Florida.

On social media, Zaikin and Baronoff discussed plans to meet and posted photos of

themselves dining out in London. In October 2013, Zaikin posted back-to-back photos of himself and Baronoff with the chef of a French restaurant in the posh Mayfair neighborhood. Two weeks later, he tweeted a photo of his wife and Baronoff hugging with the comment, "It was warm like in Miami."

On another apparent visit, in July 2014, Baronoff posted to Instagram a [photo](#) of herself and Zaikin's wife, Yana, on a London sidewalk and then a [photo](#) of the lobby of a five-star hotel captioned, "with love to Yana and David Zaikin."

Baronoff was born in Russia, earned degrees in journalism and mass communication, and served as an official "cultural attaché in public diplomacy" for the Russian government at an unspecified time, she said in interviews and bios. In 1989, she moved to Iowa, then Florida.

Starting with little means, Baronoff became a travel agent and later a real estate agent. She [wrote](#) on LinkedIn that her diplomatic training was key to her success in "marketing and building the brand of high-end luxury condominiums under the Trump brand."

By 2004, Baronoff was Trump's on-site director of customer relations for the Trump Grande near Miami. She was photographed with Trump and his daughter Ivanka and celebrated on the cover story of The Women's City magazine as "[Donald Trump's Russian hand](#)."

As the exclusive agent for the Trump Grande development, Baronoff sold 44 units to Russian buyers, according to an analysis by Reuters. An undated [photo surfaced](#) on Twitter showing Baronoff in Moscow with Trump's children Ivanka, Eric and Don Jr.

Last month, Trump released a letter from his lawyers saying any of his firm's transactions with Russians were "immaterial," though Donald Trump Jr. said in 2008 that the company was seeing "a lot of money pouring in from Russia."

Baronoff fell ill while traveling to Turkey in 2014 and was diagnosed with leukemia. She died in 2015. Following her burial, her family received visitors at the Trump International Beach Resort.

Her son, George Baronov, said his mother worked for Trump after first doing business with Trump's partner in Florida. "She was the in-house broker," Baronov said. "She did a lot of marketing and advertising and traveling around the world." The Moscow trip with Trump's children was in 2003 or 2004, he said.

Two years before she died, Baronoff [worked on](#) a \$28 million Manhattan real estate deal with Turkish President Erdogan's son and son-in-law, according to hacked emails published by WikiLeaks. The emails also showed the son and son-in-law receiving updates about [Zaikin's lobbying efforts](#). In September 2016, as Flynn [later disclosed](#), Alptekin arranged a meeting between the same son-in-law and Flynn himself.

Isaac Arnsdorf, formerly of POLITICO, is a writer for ProPublica.

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McConnell warns Trump, GOP on health bill failure [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Josh Dawsey and Jennifer Haberkorn | 06/27/2017 10:11 AM EDT

Mitch McConnell is delivering an urgent warning to staffers, Republican senators and even the president himself: If Obamacare repeal fails this week, the GOP will lose all leverage and be forced to work with Chuck Schumer.

President Donald Trump continued to float the possibility on Monday that Congress and the White House would simply let Obamacare's individual markets collapse if the GOP's repeal effort goes down later this week. But McConnell called up Trump recently, according to people with knowledge of the call, to deliver a reality check.

Voters expect Republicans to deliver on their long-held promise to repeal the law, McConnell said, according to those people. And failing to repeal the law would mean the GOP would lose its opportunity to do a partisan rewrite of the law that could scale back Medicaid spending, cut Obamacare's taxes and repeal a host of industry mandates.

Instead, Republicans would be forced to enter into bipartisan negotiations with Democrats to save failing insurance markets.

McConnell delivered a similar warning Monday to Republican senators at his leadership meeting and to top GOP staffers, warning that Democrats will want to retain as much of Obamacare as possible in a bipartisan negotiation, according to Republican aides.

"If we fail, we're going to be negotiating with [Democratic Leader] Chuck Schumer," said one Republican staffer.

McConnell's motivational words are aimed at reviving support for his bill to repeal the health care law through the party-line reconciliation method this week. GOP leaders are hunting for votes to even start debate on the bill, with at least four Republicans currently opposed to the legislation as written and many more undecided.

Republicans will have a party lunch on Tuesday that will offer a window into the repeal bill's prospects and potential deal-making to be done.

McConnell still has about \$188 billion in funds that he could use to shore up the bill's support by offering Republicans money to fight opioid abuse, as well as several more proposals he could include to attract conservative support, particularly the expansion of health savings accounts to woo the party's right flank.

The Senate is likely to vote on kicking off floor debate on the bill on Wednesday, though it could occur on Tuesday. Vice President Mike Pence will dine with wavering Republican senators on Tuesday night, which could boost the bill's prospects for a Wednesday vote.

McConnell has told senators for weeks that he fears a failed repeal effort would be followed by a large bailout of the insurance industry that would be supported by moderate Republicans and Democrats, per people familiar with his thinking. And McConnell would be content to not touch Obamacare repeal again if this bill failed.

Trump has repeatedly weighed taking away cost-sharing subsidies and has privately told activists and administration officials that Democrats would own the failure of Obamacare and

that it could be a political boon for Republicans.

But some of his senior officials believe the White House would take at least some of the blame if markets imploded.

If the bill fails, Schumer (D-N.Y.) and his members would be empowered to negotiate with centrist Republicans to save the flailing markets. A trio of Democratic senators met with some Republicans this spring to discuss a bipartisan proposal to shore up the nation's health care system, but there are many elements of the GOP's bill that those Democrats will not support.

"The price of admission for me sitting down with you is I'm not willing to [per capita] block grant Medicaid and eliminate Medicaid expansion," said Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), recalling her message to those Republicans.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by ExxonMobil: Perry grid plan hits resistance — Perry says energy subsidies justified — Trump: Puerto Rico can't keep FEMA forever
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 3:25:30 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/12/2017 03:23 PM EDT

With help from Emily Holden and Alex Guillén

PERRY GRID PLAN HITS RESISTANCE: Energy Secretary Rick Perry's call for FERC to support coal and nuclear power plants came under scrutiny at the House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing today, with skeptical lawmakers pressing him on how he could justify the costly move in a free market. But Perry cast his plan as vital for American security, saying the grid is too crucial to submit to a traditional cost-benefit analysis.

"What's the cost of freedom? What does it cost to build a system to keep America free?" Perry said when asked whether DOE considered how much his recent proposal to aid coal and nuclear power might cost consumers. "I'm not sure I want to just put that straight out on the free market and say, 'OK, whoever can build the cheapest delivery system here to keep America free.'" Darius Dixon has more [here](#).

Perry also contended it was fair to help certain power sources because previous administrations have done the same. "That was really kinda my goal with this [proposal], was to get to talking about the whole idea and the understanding that we have subsidized the energy industry for a long time. I frankly don't have a problem with that," he said.

— **Perry sees climate change link:** And, in an exchange with California Rep. [Jerry McNerney](#), Perry [acknowledged](#) a link between climate change and the severe storms that have wrought the U.S. But Perry declined to say whether policymakers could make a difference in addressing the problem. "We're probably going to agree that it's happening, we're going to agree that it's going to have an effect on the globe," Perry said. "I think where we may or may not agree is how much of this is man's fault, and our decisions that we're going to make here. I don't believe that we need to be making decisions that put America at a very disadvantaged [position] — from around the globe — making decisions that we think might have an impact on climate change." Still, Perry added: "Are we having an impact on [climate]? Absolutely. Can we make a difference? You bet."

— **Pallone wants IG to probe Perry's travel:** New Jersey Rep. [Frank Pallone](#), the committee's top Democrat, expressed concern regarding the amount of money the administration has spent on such travel for members of the Cabinet and staff, and he [he's asked](#) the Energy Department's inspector general to dig into Perry's use of non-commercial flights. Pallone added the issue was of concern because the Trump administration had proposed "extreme" budget cuts for federal agencies. Perry defended his travel by saying that many DOE sites are put in remote locations by design. "When Leslie Groves was choosing the places to start national labs and to do the Manhattan Project, he wanted to go places that were pretty difficult to get to," Perry said.

— **Hitchhiker's guide to traveling:** "I suppose you could even hitchhike" to some places, Perry at one point jokingly told the energy subcommittee. Perry said he tries to travel in a "thoughtful and most reasonable way," but sometimes "may have to do it in a way that does

expend some taxpayers' dollars."

Read all about it: Read committee Democrats' letter to the IG's office [here](#) and Pallone's letter to Perry requesting additional information on the FERC proposal [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

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TRUMP: PUERTO RICO CAN'T KEEP FEMA FOREVER: President Donald Trump this morning suggested there's a limit to how much federal aid he is willing to extend to Puerto Rico in its recovery from Hurricane Maria. "Puerto Rico survived the Hurricanes, now a financial crisis looms largely of their own making," says Sharyl Attkisson. A total lack of accountability say the Governor. Electric and all infrastructure was disaster before hurricanes," Trump wrote on Twitter in a series of posts. "Congress to decide how much to spend. We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!" The official death toll from the storm has risen to 45, CNN reported Wednesday, and at least 113 people are unaccounted for. As of [Wednesday](#), 90 percent of the island was still without power. More [here](#).

GULLIFORD RETURNS TO REGION 7: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has selected Jim Gulliford to run the agency's Region 7. This is Gulliford's second stint as the Region 7 administrator, which oversees Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. He previously ran the division from 2001 to 2006. Gulliford was also the Senate-confirmed assistant administrator for what is now the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention from 2006 to 2009. More [here](#) from Alex Guillén.

Fun fact: Gulliford — for the moment at least — is now directly behind Pruitt in the line of succession at EPA. The most recent executive order setting that line, [signed Jan. 13](#), first lists all of the agency's Senate-confirmed positions, none of which have yet been filled. After them comes the Region 7 administrator, a post now filled by Gulliford. Catherine McCabe, the deputy Region 2 administrator who served as acting EPA chief for almost a month before Pruitt's confirmation, is ranked just after Gulliford.

FINLAND TO ADD TO CLIMATE CHANGE FUND: Finland today is [announcing](#) a \$135 million climate change fund with the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group. The fund is meant to finance early-stage mitigation or adaptation projects in low-income countries, including in sub-Saharan Africa, where energy demand is growing rapidly. The deal was on tap before the November election, but Finland's minister for foreign trade and development, Kai Mykkänen, told POLITICO that Trump's decision to exit the Paris climate agreement and cancel payments to the Green Climate Fund has "actually strengthened the commitment of us others, meaning Europeans and Chinese."

"We feel that we are really the torchbearers once important countries are shying away from

the project," he said, adding that he is hopeful the U.S. federal government will be more climate friendly in the future. Climate investments have typically come more as grants or loan guarantees to middle-stage projects, said Kruskaia Sierra-Escalante, manager of blended finance at IFC. "A lot of significant, large projects to reduce greenhouse gases have been in the middle-income countries," Sierra-Escalante added. "Finland has moved to the next stage to really press all of us to try to get to do more climate finance in the poorest countries."

LCV ENDORSES IN ALABAMA: The League of Conservation Voters Action Fund endorsed former U.S. Attorney Doug Jones for Alabama Senate, [it said today](#), in a bid against Republican Roy Moore in this year's special election. "Doug Jones has dedicated his career to helping the people of Alabama," Tiernan Sittenfeld, the senior vice president of government affairs for the group, said in a statement. "LCVAF is proud to support Jones, a candidate who has a history of standing up for hardworking communities and is determined to fight for clean air and water which are important for jobs, public health, recreation and tourism."

EXELON STEPS IN TO FUND WMATA SERVICE: Exelon, the parent company of Pepco, will pay to extend Metrorail service an extra hour tonight to accommodate Nationals fans and visitors to the grand opening of The Wharf in Washington, D.C., WMATA [said](#) today. "Our commitment to the D.C. community extends beyond powering our customers' homes and businesses," said Exelon CEO Chris Crane. "We want to make sure they can enjoy these landmark events in D.C. and have options for getting home safely and efficiently, and we are pleased to partner with Mayor Bowser to make this happen." The cost of the extended service totals \$100,000.

MAIL CALL — DON'T FORGIVE FLOOD DEBT: A coalition of taxpayer advocates, environmentalists, insurance companies and housing groups condemned [in a letter](#) to congressional leadership a plan to forgive \$16 billion in debt held by the National Flood Insurance Program, Pro Financial Services' Lorriane Woellert [reports](#).

CLIMBED A MOUNTAIN AND I TURNED AROUND: The Cultural Landscape Foundation today announced its "annual thematic compendium of threatened and at-risk landscapes," this year called "[Landslide 2017: Open Season on Open Space](#)." The project "focuses on nationally significant sites, large and small, throughout the United States, including sites protected under the Antiquities Act and those threatened by confiscation, development, energy and resource extraction, and other incompatible uses," TCLF said in a [release](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Power industry sees little or no impact from Clean Power Plan repeal, [SNL](#).
- The U.S. solar industry's new growth region: Trump country, [Reuters](#).
- Evaporation: The overlooked alternative energy source? [The Christian Science Monitor](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- President's lawyers may offer Mueller a [meeting with Trump](#)
- America's [shadow war](#) in Africa
- Will [Collins leave the Senate](#)? Announcement coming Friday

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/perry-grid-plan-hits-resistance-025024>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Perry: Where the grid is concerned, 'what's the cost of freedom?' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/12/2017 01:46 PM EDT

The importance of keeping the nation's electric grid operating is too important to submit to a traditional cost-benefit analysis, Energy Secretary Rick Perry told House lawmakers this afternoon.

"What's the cost of freedom? What does it cost to build a system to keep America free?" Perry said when asked whether DOE considered how much his recent proposal to aid coal and nuclear power might cost consumers. "I'm not sure I want to just put that straight out on the free market and say, 'Okay, whoever can build the cheapest delivery system here to keep America free.'"

Rep. [Paul Tonko](#) was pressing Perry about whether DOE could've focused more on grid infrastructure rather than fuel security, after noting that most power outages are triggered by damage to distribution and transmission lines.

"I think the cost-effective argument on this is secondary to whether or not the lights are going to come on," Perry said.

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Perry sees climate change link to storms, defers on what to do [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/12/2017 12:35 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry told a House subcommittee today he believed climate change was linked to the severe storms that battered the U.S., but he declined to say whether policymakers could make a difference in addressing the problem.

"Do you think that climate change is, in any way, a threat to our nation?" Rep. [Jerry McNerney](#) asked Perry.

"Yes, sir, I do," Perry answered.

When McNerney asked, "Do you see a relationship between the weather events we've had and climate change?" Perry replied, "most likely, yes, sir."

But he added he didn't think the U.S. should take action that could hurt the country's competitive position.

"We're probably going to agree that it's happening, we're going to agree that it's going to have an effect on the globe," Perry said. "I think where we may or may not agree is how much of this is man's fault, and our decisions that we're going to make here. I don't believe that we need to be making decisions that put America at a very disadvantaged [position] — from around the globe — making decisions that we think might have an impact on climate change."

Still, Perry added: "Are we having an impact on [climate]? Absolutely. Can we make a difference? You bet."

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Pallone calls on DOE watchdog to probe Perry's travel [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/12/2017 11:27 AM EDT

Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.) is asking the Energy Department's inspector general to dig into Energy Secretary Rick Perry's use of non-commercial flights, which the agency [disclosed](#) late last week.

"I continue to be concerned by the amount of money this administration is spending when it comes to non-commercial travel for members of the Cabinet and their staff," Pallone, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, told Perry this morning.

The New Jersey Democrat had asked the inspectors general at Health and Human Services and EPA to probe the travel habits of the leadership at those agencies.

"Today, in light of the \$50,000 you have spent in taxpayer dollars for non-commercial travel, I'm making a similar request to the Energy Department's inspector general," said Pallone, who added the issue was of concern because the Trump administration had proposed "extreme" budget cuts for federal agencies.

Perry defended his travel by saying that many DOE sites are put in remote locations by design.

"When Leslie Groves was choosing the places to start national labs and to do the Manhattan Project, he wanted to go places that were pretty difficult to get to. Hanford is one those," Perry said. "During my confirmation hearing and in front of senators, and obviously going and speaking to a number of you, almost every member invited me to come to their district. ... I travel a lot to do my job. I do it in a way that I think is thoughtful, with the taxpayers in mind."

WHAT'S NEXT: If the DOE IG opens an investigation, it's unclear when it may begin.

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Trump sparks new backlash after threatening Puerto Rico aid [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and Matthew Nussbaum | 10/12/2017 07:57 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Thursday suggested that U.S. citizens on the hurricane-ravaged island of Puerto Rico shouldn't get used to assistance from the federal government — a statement that sparked new outrage and left the White House on the defensive.

"Electric and all infrastructure was disaster before hurricanes," Trump wrote on Twitter in a series of posts. "Congress to decide how much to spend. We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!"

Trump has come under fire for appearing to blame Puerto Rico for neglecting its infrastructure and financial health in recent years, while sparring with local officials and initially giving the U.S. territory less attention than hurricane victims in Texas and Florida.

The tweets on Thursday — which landed as nearly 90 percent of the island was still without power and nearly 40 percent of residents lack access to clean drinking water — particularly touched a nerve.

"It is not that you do not get it; you are incapable of fulfilling the moral imperative to help the people of PR. Shame on you.![sic]" Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of San Juan, wrote on Twitter. In recent weeks, she has been a target of severe criticism from Trump, who dismissed her and other critics as "politically motivated ingrates."

Puerto Rico's governor, Ricardo Rosselló, sought a less fiery path, writing on Twitter: "The U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico are requesting the support that any of our fellow citizens would receive across our Nation."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said at a news conference that Trump's broadside "is heartbreaking and it lacks knowledge."

And House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) took to the House floor to rail against Trump's statements. "Mr. President, do not send a message to any American that we will turn our backs on them. That is not fair, that is not right, and you ought to correct the statement you made," he said.

The concern was not contained to Democrats. House Speaker Paul Ryan echoed Trump's comment that the island needs fiscal reforms, but suggested now was not the time for that debate.

"At the moment, and it's why I'm going down there tomorrow, there's a humanitarian crisis that needs to be attended to and this is an area where the federal government has a responsibility, and we're acting on it," Ryan said.

The White House sought to clean up the comments later on Thursday, with chief of staff John

Kelly telling reporters later that "the U.S. military and FEMA can't be there forever."

"The minute you go anywhere as a first responder, and this would apply certainly to the military, you are trying very hard to work yourself out of a job," Kelly said during a surprise appearance at the White House briefing, adding that FEMA and the military can be withdrawn "hopefully sooner rather than later."

He said he had spoken with Rosselló earlier Thursday and that the White House enjoys a "great relationship" with the governor. "Our country will stand with those American cities in Puerto Rico until the job is done," Kelly added.

The White House also released a statement from press secretary Sarah Sanders on Thursday afternoon.

"Our job in any disaster affected location is to help the community respond and recover from that disaster. We continue to do so with the full force of the US government and its resources in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands and other affected areas," Sanders said. "Successful recoveries do not last forever; they should be as swift as possible to help people resume their normal lives. We are committed to helping Puerto Rico. Our Administration is working with Governor Rossello and Congress to identify the best fiscally responsible path forward."

And a White House official stressed that Puerto Rico's debt crisis would be addressed independently of the disaster relief process.

Trump's morning warning came after White House officials had stressed for weeks their intention to work with Puerto Rico throughout the recovery process. And Trump himself had said last month that "we will not rest ... until the people of Puerto Rico are safe."

"These are great people. We want them to be safe and sound and secure, and we will be there every day until that happens," Trump said at a manufacturing event on Sept. 29.

Puerto Rico has struggled with the devastation from a particularly heavy hurricane season, one that included a direct hit from Hurricane Maria late last month that devastated large swaths of the island. The official death toll from the storm has risen to 45, CNN reported Wednesday, and at least 113 people are unaccounted for.

Reports of desperation are piling up, including from federal government officials. The Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday warned Puerto Rican residents against breaking into industrial waste sites in search of drinking water. And The New York Times reported that medical care remains a challenge on the island, with just 43 of the island's 72 open hospitals currently operating with power.

Still, Trump has asserted that his administration's handling of the storm has been a great success, and he has rejected any criticism of the effort as "fake news."

Even as the president has continued to rail against the territory, Congress is moving forward on hurricane relief funds, which the White House has also advocated for.

On Thursday afternoon, the House is poised to approve a \$36 billion aid package intended largely for Puerto Rico — the largest disaster package since the one provided for Hurricane Sandy victims in 2013.

The money would replenish the Federal Emergency Management Agency's coffers by roughly \$18 billion, which lawmakers say is enough to last for several more weeks. That includes \$4.9 billion in emergency loans to ensure the cash-strapped island government can pay its workers and other debts.

But GOP leaders have been clear that another installment of aid will be needed before the end of this year. Emergency responders from all federal agencies, from FEMA to the Defense Department, have been going quickly through their cash reserves in Puerto Rico's worst disaster in decades.

And Democrats are saying that Trump's rhetoric is not helping.

"The President of the United States' most solemn duty is to protect the safety and the security of the American people. By suggesting he might abdicate this responsibility for our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, Mr. Trump has called into question his ability to lead," Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.) said in a statement.

Sarah Ferris, Colin Wilhelm, Rachael Bade and Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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Former EPA chemical chief returns to Region 7 [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/12/2017 01:34 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has picked Jim Gulliford, a former head of EPA's chemicals office, to run the agency's Region 7, which oversees Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

This is Gulliford's second stint as the Region 7 administrator; he previously ran the division from 2001 to 2006. Gulliford was also the Senate-confirmed assistant administrator for what is now the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention from 2006 to 2009.

Since leaving EPA, Gulliford has been executive director of the nonprofit Soil and Water Conservation Society. Prior to his EPA career, Gulliford had stints as an Iowa soil official and in environmental programs at Iowa State University and Southern Illinois University.

Pruitt [previously named](#) Cathy Stepp, the head of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, to be principal deputy regional administrator for Region 7.

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LCV Action Fund endorses Jones in Alabama [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 10/12/2017 12:50 PM EDT

The League of Conservation Voters Action Fund endorsed former U.S. Attorney Doug Jones for U.S. Senate in Alabama, the latest sign of national progressive groups rallying behind Jones' long-shot bid against Republican Roy Moore in this year's special election.

"Doug Jones has dedicated his career to helping the people of Alabama," Tiernan Sittenfeld, the senior vice president of government affairs for the group, said in a statement. "LCVAF is proud to support Jones, a candidate who has a history of standing up for hardworking communities and is determined to fight for clean air and water which are important for jobs, public health, recreation and tourism."

The election is scheduled for Dec. 12.

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Coalition condemns flood program's debt forgiveness [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 10/12/2017 05:02 AM EDT

A coalition of taxpayer advocates, environmentalists, insurance companies and housing groups [expressed dismay](#) at a plan to forgive \$16 billion in debt held by the National Flood Insurance Program.

The group stopped short of asking lawmakers to strip the program's debt forgiveness from a disaster aid bill the House is expected to [pass today](#).

"We understand that people have to have their flood claims paid," said Jenn Fogel-Bublick, a spokeswoman for the SmarterSafer coalition. "But at the end of the day, we're really disappointed that what Congress is going to do is simply forgive the debt without making the changes that are needed to ensure we're not in this position every year."

The conservative Heritage Foundation yesterday flagged the disaster aid bill as a key vote, urging lawmakers to vote "no" on the flood insurance bailout.

"There have been numerous efforts over the past decade to make the NFIP financially and structurally sound, but special interest pushback successfully blunted serious reforms," Heritage Action Vice President Dan Holler said. "Put another way, the NFIP's existing debt stems from poor design and congressional inaction, not an unforeseen crisis."

Recent hurricanes are projected to cost the NFIP \$16 billion, putting the program on a path to exhaust its financial resources, including its \$30.4 billion borrowing authority, by the end of this month. Last week, the Trump administration asked Congress to cancel \$16 billion of the program's debt.

"Put plainly, the NFIP is not designed to handle catastrophic losses like those caused by Harvey, Irma, and Maria," White House budget director Mick Mulvaney wrote in his Oct. 4 request for emergency funding. "The NFIP is simply not fiscally sustainable in its present

form."

Mulvaney called for a program to subsidize flood insurance for low-income homeowners, paired with premium hikes for policyholders who can afford them.

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President's lawyers may offer Mueller a meeting with Trump [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 10/12/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Donald Trump's lawyers are open to having the president sit down for an interview with Robert Mueller, according to a senior White House official, as part of a wider posture of cooperation with the special counsel's Russia probe.

If Mueller doesn't request an interview by Thanksgiving, Trump's lawyers might even force the issue by volunteering Trump's time, the official said. The White House believes such an interview could help Mueller wrap up the probe faster and dispel the cloud of suspicion over Trump.

A meeting with Mueller could bring serious risks for Trump — exposing him to questions about everything from potential obstruction of justice over his firing of FBI Director James Comey to what Trump might know about Kremlin support for his presidential campaign.

But the official suggested that the White House has no reason to stonewall Mueller.

"Whatever happens with regard to whether or not, or how, the special counsel might want to interview the president, there's no reason to expect that would be combative," the senior White House official explained.

All the key decisions on Trump's potential interaction with Mueller will come from the president himself and his personal lawyer, John Dowd, who initially declined to comment for this story. In an email after this article published, Dowd said: "Totally false!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Dowd disputed the senior official's characterization of the Trump legal team's position on an interview with Mueller.

Trump told reporters this spring that he was "100 percent" willing to testify under oath about alleged Russian ties to his campaign.

But even if he has nothing to hide, Trump's unpredictable nature and willingness to bend the facts pose headaches for his legal team as it strategizes for a possible sit-down with Mueller. One angry or untrue statement could have devastating political and legal consequences for the president.

Trump would be the first president since Bill Clinton to face questions under oath from a federal prosecutor. In August 1998, Clinton famously sat for four hours of testimony as part of independent counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation into Clinton's affair with White House

intern Monica Lewinsky.

Republicans made Clinton's arguments during the sworn testimony — over the definition of "sexual relations" and the meaning of the word "is" — central to his impeachment by the GOP-led House of Representatives on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. Congressional Republicans later publicly released complete [video](#) of the testimony.

There's little dispute over Mueller's power to interview Trump in connection with his probe into Russian interference into the 2016 election. Every president since Watergate except Barack Obama has been directly involved in a federal criminal investigation while serving in office. All but George H.W. Bush agreed to submit to questioning.

"You can say, 'I'm busy. I'm fighting World War III. I can't talk to you right now.' But you can't just say because I'm president of the United States you have to wait until I'm out of office," said Solomon Wisenberg, a deputy to Starr who participated in the grand jury questioning of Clinton in 1998. "If they want his testimony, he's going to have to testify."

Wisenberg said that, should Trump resist meeting with Mueller, he would trigger a constitutional clash that the prosecutor would be likely to win, based on Supreme Court rulings. Short of that, the only way Trump could avoid answering questions would be to assert executive or attorney-client privilege, or to invoke his Fifth Amendment right against possible self-incrimination.

Trump allies initially took a [combative](#) posture toward Mueller, but his lawyers have recently adopted a more cooperative stance toward the special counsel's investigation, one they hope will expedite its conclusion while publicly signaling that Trump has nothing to hide.

Mueller's office, which declined comment for this story, started interviewing Trump White House aides last month, according to a source familiar with the probe. Two of his most senior lawyers, criminal fraud experts Andrew Weissmann and Greg Andres, were spotted by POLITICO last Friday afternoon leaving the grand jury room at the federal courthouse.

Veterans of past investigations into alleged executive branch misconduct said a Trump interview would probably be among Mueller's final steps before completing his work, either with indictments, a final report to the Justice Department or even the exoneration Trump often predicts.

Wisenberg said he's not yet convinced that Mueller will even press for a presidential interview. But if the special counsel does, he predicted it would be near the end of the investigation. "You certainly don't want to have to ask him twice," Wisenberg said. "You want this investigation as wrapped up as it can be."

Robert Bennett, who helped lead Clinton's high-powered outside legal team during the Lewinsky scandal, said he thinks Mueller has "done a tremendous amount of work already and probably could do the interview sooner rather than later" with Trump.

"Mueller," he added, "would want to get this guy on the record as quick as possible."

By contrast, Bennett said, Trump's lawyers may be smart to stall until they develop a clear understanding of what Mueller might want to talk about. "The wise thing to do is delay it as long as humanly possible to see what other things fall out," he said.

Clinton's attorneys resisted Starr's attempts to get the president to testify about his relationship with Lewinsky — forcing the independent counsel to [obtain](#) the first-ever subpoena for federal grand jury testimony from a sitting president.

The president's attorneys ultimately negotiated with Starr to conduct the interview in the White House Map Room. Unlike a typical grand jury interaction, Clinton was able to have his attorneys present in the room while Starr's team posed questions. The grand jury, watching via video, also asked questions.

In the Iran-Contra investigation, President Ronald Reagan answered questions under oath on three different occasions, including twice when he was out of office. Reagan wasn't [officially notified](#) until August 1992 that he wasn't a target of independent counsel Lawrence Walsh's probe. Reagan's vice president, George H.W. Bush, gave a videotaped deposition for the Iran-Contra grand jury in early 1988, but White House attorneys fought off Walsh's attempts to question him again after he became president.

A meeting with Trump could also bring perils for Mueller himself, legal experts said. Pressing Trump for answers on potential topics ranging from his business finances to his family's role in the election could risk enraging a president who has privately mused about his power to fire the special counsel.

Katy Harriger, a Wake Forest University constitutional law professor who has written a [book](#) about the role of special prosecutors, said Mueller should interview Trump "only if it is absolutely necessary to the case."

"It would be an understatement to say this president is unpredictable, and if you can make a case without his testimony I believe you would do that," she said.

Mueller or defense attorneys may also seek Trump's testimony in connection with potential criminal cases against former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn or other members of the president's inner circle. If so, Trump would not be the first president to field questions involving a federal criminal investigation focused on a case involving his associates.

Special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, for example, [interviewed](#) President George W. Bush during a 70-minute session in the Oval Office in June 2004, though not under oath, as part of his probe into who leaked the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson. Fitzgerald also met with Vice President Dick Cheney.

Clinton gave four hours of videotaped [testimony](#) for the defense in the 1996 trial of then-Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker and James and Susan McDougal, which produced the first convictions in the independent counsel's Whitewater probe. He also [testified](#) under oath in September 1999 during an independent counsel investigation into allegations that Labor Secretary Alexis Herman illegally solicited campaign contributions.

Trump's lawyers could push to limit the time and scope of any interview with Mueller, and also ask for advance details about what kinds of topics and documents would be raised. Trump also could seek exemptions from questions by citing executive and attorney-client privilege.

As a last resort, Trump could invoke the Fifth Amendment — but only at the risk of political fallout. Trump [criticized](#) his Democratic campaign rival Hillary Clinton after some of her

former staffers did just that rather than testify in a congressional probe into her use of a private email server. "If you're innocent, why are you taking the Fifth?" Trump [asked](#) at an Iowa rally in September 2016.

Trump has pleaded the Fifth before, however, during his 1990 divorce proceedings with his first wife, Ivana Trump.

Richard Ben-Veniste, a former Watergate prosecutor, said the risks for Trump are enormous and that Trump's routine distortion of facts would make speaking to Mueller under oath highly dangerous. "Given his proclivity toward confabulation, I have no doubt his lawyers would counsel strongly against him testifying," he said.

Trump, of course, is no stranger to legal proceedings. A USA Today [database](#) counted more than 4,000 federal and state lawsuits involving him over three decades in business. He's been interviewed repeatedly under oath, including a [2007 deposition](#) in a libel case where he acknowledged that he determined his wealth based on his own gut. "My net worth fluctuates, and it goes up and down with the markets and with attitudes and with feelings, even my own feelings, but I try," Trump said in the case.

Bennett, the former Clinton lawyer, said Trump's experience testifying in civil cases is in an entirely different league than what he'd face with Mueller.

"It's one thing to be interviewed in a real estate thing," said Bennett, "and quite another when you're the president of the United States and you're being interviewed in connection with a criminal investigation."

Even if he never meets with Mueller's team, Trump could still wind up discussing the Russia probe in an official setting. Congressional Democrats [have signaled](#) an interest in summoning Trump to address House and Senate investigators — which would not be unprecedented.

President Gerald Ford appeared before a House Judiciary subcommittee in 1974 to explain his pardon of former President Richard Nixon. President Woodrow Wilson hosted the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the White House in 1919 to answer questions about the post-World War I U.S. peace treaty with Germany and the establishment of the League of Nations.

And in February 1862, according to the [Senate historian's office](#), President Abraham Lincoln met privately with the House Judiciary Committee to address accusations his wife had given a reporter an advance copy of his annual message to Congress.

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America's shadow war in Africa [Back](#)

By Wesley Morgan and Bryan Bender | 10/12/2017 05:00 AM EDT

America's little-known war on terrorists in Africa is becoming more perilous as the U.S. deploys growing numbers of troops to the continent's most lawless regions, including the part of Niger where four special operations soldiers died in an ambush last week.

The escalation is occurring with little public debate — and, some military experts say, too little attention from top decision-makers in Washington. The U.S. military presence in the Sahel and sub-Saharan regions has grown to at least 1,500 troops, roughly triple the official number of American troops in Syria, according to Pentagon and White House figures.

As with Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, the dispatch of hundreds of additional U.S. troops to countries like Niger, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Uganda and South Sudan is another instance where President Donald Trump's "America First" rhetoric hasn't kept his administration from being drawn deeper into far-flung war zones. And the U.S. lacks a comprehensive strategy for pursuing its mission in Africa, military and intelligence experts told POLITICO.

"I don't think there is any congressional oversight in this," said Michael Shurkin, a former CIA analyst specializing in Africa who is now a researcher at the Rand Corp., a Pentagon-funded think tank.

He also pointed to vacancies in top policymaking posts in the State and Defense departments, saying they've left military operations such as Africa Command and its special operations component "pretty much doing their own thing."

"It is not that there is a good policy or bad policy," Shurkin said. "There is just no policy. It is inertia."

Last week's deadly attack has thrust into the limelight a series of dangerous military deployments that normally receive scant attention compared with the far larger military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A central focus of the mission is the vast desert nation of Niger, nearly twice the size of Texas, which has been a magnet for jihadists of many stripes, including those recruited locally and so-called foreign fighters drawn from North Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

In June, the official number of U.S. troops supporting Niger's military as it fights the militant groups was 645, up from 575 in December 2016. But now it's at least 800, according to the Pentagon.

Many of the troops are Green Berets, Navy SEALs and Marine Raiders, but officials said the reinforcements have mostly been Air Force personnel who are there to manage a surge in surveillance flights by unmanned drones and manned spy planes.

That's a significant jump from the 100 troops that then-President Barack Obama deployed to Niger in 2013, notes a new [report](#) from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the research arm of Congress. "This trend has coincided with sizable increases in U.S. security assistance for African countries over the past decade, of which Niger has been a major beneficiary."

Plans are also underway to accommodate more forces, including \$50 million that the Air Force requested to construct an air strip in the northern city of Agadez, considered one of the most volatile areas of the country.

The U.S. military presence has also been expanding elsewhere in the region.

As of June, another 300 U.S. troops were operating in neighboring Cameroon, up from 285 in December, according to the White House notifications to Congress required under the War Powers Act.

At least 410 more U.S. military personnel are nearby in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Uganda and South Sudan, targeting the Lord's Resistance Army. Those numbers, also from June, were the first public estimates of the U.S. military presence in that area.

A Pentagon spokeswoman, Maj. Audricia Harris, confirmed the increase in American troops in Niger but did not respond to inquiries about more up-to-date U.S. troop levels elsewhere in the region.

U.S. intelligence has warned in recent months about the growing Islamic militant threat in the region that stretches from Mali in the northwest to South Sudan and Uganda in East Africa — and a number of countries in between.

"In North and West Africa, al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) escalated its attacks on Westerners in 2016 with two high-profile attacks in Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire," Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, reported to Congress in May. "It merged with allies in 2017 to form a new group intended to promote unity among Mali-based jihadists, extend the jihad beyond the Sahara and Sahel region, increase military action, and speed up recruitment of fighters."

Current and former military officials say the distinction between advising and combat is blurring as U.S. troops expand their footprint and increase the patrols they conduct in terrorist sanctuaries alongside local allies.

"You're damn right they're in harm's way," said a former military officer with direct knowledge of the Africa operations who was not authorized to speak publicly, "because we are accompanying the indigenous forces and those forces are fighting an active, thinking enemy there."

The level of danger to U.S. troops had been on display even before the deadly ambush in Niger last week.

Rep. Chris Smith, a New Jersey Republican who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee, said after the attack that "this was the first attack on U.S. forces on the ground in Niger."

But two military officers — one current and one former — with direct knowledge of the operations in Niger told POLITICO that troops had previously been injured by an improvised explosive device or mine, though it remains unclear whether Americans were deliberately targeted in that incident.

In the field, the American advisory mission in Niger relies on a mix of Army Green Berets, Navy SEALs and Marine Raiders. They go along on missions with several local forces, including a commando unit called the Expeditionary Forces of Niger.

The ill-fated patrol last week was an Expeditionary Forces mission, in a part of the country where troops are trying to hunt down and disrupt convoys of smugglers who travel through

Niger's open brush land from Mali and Chad to Libya carrying arms and terrorist funds. It is one of several areas in the broader Lake Chad Basin where advisers accompany the Expeditionary Forces and other local units.

While the Americans "stay back from actual raid," the former military officer related, sometimes advisers have been under fire.

"We would go to the last covered and concealed spot" when going along with partner forces on a combat mission and then stay back from the actual raid, the former military source said. "But of course there's no concealment out there" in an arid landscape with little vegetation to hide behind.

But as the military effort ramps up, so have concerns that the Trump administration lacks a comprehensive strategy for the region. Such a strategy would also emphasize more non-military tools such as economic aid and cooperation with allies to strengthen democratic institutions in some of the world's poorest nations.

"There is a tendency to militarize things by deferring to the military," Shurkin said, adding that the military effort "should be part of a larger strategy that will include other types of assistance."

"You will end up with this piecemeal approach — focused on military stuff but in a very narrow way," he added, noting that the U.S. military is only training a few elite units in these nations.

A senior State Department official on Wednesday told Congress that the administration is seeking to do more to assist countries hardest hit by the scourge of terrorist groups.

Donald Yamamoto, an acting assistant secretary of state, told a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee that the the administration's \$5.2 billion foreign aid budget next year will give priority to Mali, Nigeria and other African nations where Islamic terrorist groups have gained strength.

He called promoting these fragile states "a critical priority for the United States in Africa."

But Congress received a warning last week that the larger U.S. military presence, along with that of other allies like the French, may already be angering local populations prone to the jihadist message.

"The growing foreign military footprint in the country appears to have fed a local backlash against both the government and Western countries," the Congressional Research Service report said.

"One risk is that it is ineffectual and we are wasting money," Shurkin said of the African counterterrorism mission. "We can also make things worse. Mucking around you bound to inflame things, exacerbate problems. We have no idea who these people are, which could be very, very dangerous."

Army Lt. Gen. Kenneth Tovo, who oversees all Army special operations forces, pledged in an address Wednesday to the Association of the United States Army in Washington to get to the bottom of what happened to the troops killed in Niger last week.

"I think we owe that to the American people, we owe that to the mothers, fathers, and wives of the fallen, to look critically from every echelon to see if we can do our job better," Tovo said. "I think it highlights the fact that really every mission around the world that we're undertaking has got elements of risk."

Both military sources with knowledge of the Niger operations questioned just how much the missions are accomplishing.

"I would be hesitant to say we and the Nigeriens are having significant effects in that part of Niger up near Mali," said the former officer.

"We're having an effect," he added. "Is it going to win the war? No, because the war will never end."

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Will Collins leave the Senate? Announcement coming Friday [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Burgess Everett | 10/12/2017 12:35 PM EDT

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) will announce at a local Chamber of Commerce event on Friday whether she will run for governor — a decision that remains shrouded in secrecy and could upend the Senate political landscape.

The influential moderate plans to make the announcement during a speech she's giving on health care in Rockport, Maine, according to a source familiar with the event. The speech is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m.

Collins has wrestled for months with whether to leave the Senate to launch a 2018 gubernatorial run, and has given few clues about where she will ultimately land. Her Senate colleagues, particularly fellow moderates, have been urging Collins to stay, and senior Republicans said this week that they were completely in the dark about what Collins will do.

One of a handful of moderates left in the Senate, Collins was first elected to the Senate in 1996 and is not up for reelection until 2020. Under Maine law, the governor would tap a replacement to serve out the rest of Collins' Senate term should she be elected as the state's chief executive. LePage is term-limited.

Because of her centrist politics, Collins has assumed an outsize role in contentious policy battles in the Senate, where Republicans hold a narrow, 52-seat majority and have been battling Democrats generally unified against major pieces of the GOP agenda. The senator opposed multiple iterations of the Senate GOP's plans to dismantle and replace Obamacare, helping to contribute to the repeal effort's demise.

Her exit could also hand Democrats another Senate seat. It would create a dynamic similar to that in 2012, when moderate Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) retired and Sen. Angus King, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, handily won election.

"In the absence of Susan Collins, Maine becomes a whole different place," said Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), who served as chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2014, the last time Collins was on the ballot.

But while fellow senators are urging Collins to remain in the Senate, they're also sympathetic to her wishes to be closer to home.

"For people like me and Susan, our life isn't here," said Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), a close friend of Collins who wants her to stay. "Our life is back in our home state. And I think that's really a big part of it, too."

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by ExxonMobil: What we're hearing from the hearings — Icahn faces subpoena over Trump work — House energy bill clears committee
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 4:17:09 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/08/2017 04:13 PM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff and Darius Dixon

BACKTRACKING ON ETHANOL: President Donald Trump's pick to lead the Council of Environmental Quality [reversed](#) her previous opposition to the federal ethanol mandate and softened her stance on climate change at a confirmation hearing this morning.

Kathleen Hartnett White faced pressure from corn-state Sens. [Mike Rounds](#) (R-S.D.), [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) and [Deb Fischer](#) (R-Neb.) over her past criticism of the Renewable Fuel Standard. White said her previous criticism of the program as "ethically dubious" was based on flawed data. Now, she told the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, she "solidly" supports Trump's backing of ethanol producers and the RFS.

The CEQ pick also said scientific studies should not "dictate" government policies, even as she softened some of her previous comments casting doubt on human-influenced climate change. White said she believes human activity contributes to climate change, but reiterated she does not believe the extent of that contribution is known with precision — a position that's the norm for many within the Trump administration, Alex Guillén [reports](#).

MURRAY WORK IN FOCUS: Andrew Wheeler, the deputy EPA administrator nominee who also testified this morning, faced numerous questions over his role as a lobbyist for Murray Energy, which would [benefit](#) from administration policies. Wheeler acknowledged representing the company in meetings with Energy Department and congressional officials to support Trump administration efforts to prop up ailing coal-fired power plants, Alex [reports](#). But he denied contributing to a memo that CEO Bob Murray gave to Trump soon after the election.

Asked about ethanol, Wheeler told Ernst he would make sure EPA delivered a determination on whether the agency could grant a waiver to allow year-round sale of 15 percent ethanol using its existing authority. Ernst wants a yay-or-nay from EPA so she and her colleagues know if they need to get back to work on legislation that would accomplish the goal. "As long as I'm not pre-judging the answer, I can commit to that," Wheeler told her.

ICAHN SUBPOENAED: Federal investigators issued subpoenas for information on Carl Icahn's efforts to change biofuel policy, while he was serving as an informal adviser to Trump, Pro's Eric Wolff reports. The U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York "recently contacted Icahn Enterprises L.P. seeking production of information pertaining to our and Mr. Icahn's activities relating to the Renewable Fuels Standard and Mr. Icahn's role as an advisor to the President," according to a [10-Q filing](#) that Icahn Enterprises filed on Friday with the SEC. Read [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and

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WEHRUM VOTE COMING: Trump's nominee to lead EPA's air office, William Wehrum, will get a Senate cloture vote this afternoon, setting him up to be confirmed as soon as Thursday, Anthony Adragna [reports](#).

WHAT'S THE HOLD UP? Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke sent [a letter](#) to Senate leadership demanding "immediate action" on four nominees to his agency, some of whom have waited four times as long as their predecessors for a vote. He called for the chamber to immediately process the nominations of Brenda Burman to lead the Bureau of Reclamation, Susan Combs to be assistant secretary of policy management and budget, Joseph Balash to be assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management and Ryan Nelson to be agency solicitor, Anthony [reports](#). "Several of our nominees for leadership positions have been waiting an exorbitant amount of time to be confirmed in the Senate," Zinke wrote. "These delays are hampering DOI's ability to do the work of the people we are all supposed to be serving."

HOUSE ENERGY BILL ADVANCES: The House Natural Resources Committee reported an energy bill out of markup today, but without the support of Louisiana Republican [Garret Graves](#). The bill, [H.R. 4239 \(115\)](#), would increase the offshore energy revenue-sharing cap and expand the program to include coastal Atlantic states, but Graves said he also wants to see Congress change the formula by which revenues are distributed to address shortfalls in money to restore coastal wetlands in his home state. "We have been speaking for not weeks but months on ways to improve the revenue sharing for the state of Louisiana," Graves told the committee, something he said the current bill does not address. "I can't explain this to people at home. I won't even try to." Graves did not offer any amendments today, and Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) said his concerns could be addressed through separate legislation. The energy bill is expected to hit the House floor in the coming weeks, but its prospects in the Senate are murky.

For the birds: The committee adopted along party lines an amendment from [Liz Cheney](#) (R-Wyo.) that would bar the government from enforcing the Migratory Birds Act against energy companies that harm protected species via actions deemed "accidental or incidental" to their operations.

CLIMATE REPORT NOT A FACTOR IN CPP DECISION: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt told [USA Today](#) the recent National Climate Assessment [report](#) showing human activity is the main cause of climate change will not affect his decision to withdraw the Clean Power Plan. "We're taking the very necessary step to evaluate our authority under the Clean Air Act and we'll take steps that are required to issue a subsequent rule. That's our focus," Pruitt said. "Does this report have any bearing on that? No it doesn't. It doesn't impact the withdrawal and it doesn't impact the replacement." Emily Holden has [more](#).

N.C. DISAVOWS SAB APPOINTEE: Donald van der Vaart will not represent North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality, which he used to head, or the state in his recent appointment to EPA's Science Advisory Board. Alex [reports](#) Van der Vaart "demoted himself at DEQ to a non-political position that cannot be removed at will following last fall's

gubernatorial win by Democrat Roy Cooper. But his position on SAB will not come with Cooper's blessing, according to DEQ." The agency told local TV station WRAL, it "does not support his participation on the EPA's SAB."

EPA DINGED FOR CIVIL RIGHTS DELAYS: The Office of Special Counsel, an independent federal agency, concurs with an EPA investigation showing that the agency is taking far too long to process civil rights cases. In a [letter](#) to the president, OSC says EPA investigated whistleblower complaints and found that the Office of Civil Rights is taking an average of 491 days to issue Final Agency Decisions since 2011, far longer than the 60 days allowed by law.

TO THE LIMIT: The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today [said](#) the temporary construction stay on FERC's approval of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline is limited to active work in Pennsylvania, Darius Dixon [reports](#). The federal panel was responding to Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co.'s concerns about construction in other states along the route.

SPOTTED: Nuclear Energy Institute CEO Maria Korsnick was seen standing just outside the House floor this afternoon and eventually gathered quite the circle of visitors: House Energy and Commerce Chairman [Greg Walden](#), and GOP Reps. [Fred Upton](#), [Joe Barton](#) and [John Shimkus](#) all huddled with her. "She was really here just to have lunch with me," Barton told AE. "It was primarily just a personal conversation."

EPA'S PARKING LOT: EPA paid \$840,000 for subsidized parking and \$690,000 for unoccupied parking spaces over a two-year period, according to [a report](#) from the agency's [inspector general](#) today.

CLAYTON WADES INTO CORPORATE CLIMATE DEBATE: SEC Chairman Jay Clayton waded into the tension between activist investors and companies over shareholder proposals, during a [speech](#) today in New York, Pro Financial Services' Patrick Temple-West [reports](#). Much like the proposal Exxon Mobil faced earlier this year, when the company was asked to report climate change risks and its board ultimately recommended voting against the proposal. "History has shown that shareholder proposals can gain traction and lead to corporate governance changes that better track the long-term interests of Main Street investors," Clayton said, acknowledging these proposals come with added costs for companies.

TRUMP TOUTS NEW PLAN FOR ENERGY PURCHASES: Twenty-four South Korean companies announced plans during the president's trip to Seoul today to purchase \$57.5 billion worth of U.S. goods and services — including \$22.8 billion in energy purchases, according to a [joint release](#) from both nations. Pro Trade's Doug Palmer reports more [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

— Groups push for energy incentives in upcoming Senate bill, [E&E News](#).

— Wyoming proposes stronger rules for coal clean up, [The Seattle Times](#).

— Peak oil? Majors aren't buying into the threat from renewables, [Reuters](#).

— Johnstown never believed Trump would help. They still love him anyway, [POLITICO Magazine](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Senate GOP to unveil tax bill that [diverges from House plan](#).
- [Russia investigators](#) probe 2016 GOP platform fight.
- Democrats euphoric after [Tuesday election romp](#).

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/11/what-were-hearing-from-the-hearings-025455>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

CEQ nominee White flips on biofuel support [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff and Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 11:37 AM EDT

Kathleen Hartnett White reversed her position on biofuels at her confirmation hearing today, telling senators she now backed the federal program she once criticized as "ethically dubious."

Hartnett White, who has been nominated to lead the Council on Environmental Quality, was pressed by Sens. [Mike Rounds](#) (R-S.D.), [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) and [Deb Fischer](#) (R-Neb.) on her past comments calling for the elimination of the Renewable Fuel Standard. President Donald Trump has been a strong backer of ethanol producers and the RFS.

"I solidly support his support," she told Rounds.

Hartnett White said her past views were based on flawed data.

"In the early years of the program, I made some particularly critical questions about whether ethanol would challenge the global food supply," she said.

But, she said, Ernst had shared newer data with her. "What a great victory, and I congratulate the corn industry" on increasing production, she said.

CEQ has no direct regulatory role over the RFS, but it provides advice to the president on environmental matters like the biofuels program.

"As a child of rural American, I have painfully observed over my lifetime the decline of vibrant small towns. ... An industry like ethanol has really contributed to giving new life to rural communities and keeping families together," she said.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will schedule a vote on Hartnett White's nomination.

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Science shouldn't 'dictate' policy, CEQ nominee says [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 11:26 AM EDT

Kathleen Hartnett White, the nominee to run the White House's Council on Environmental Quality said scientific studies are important but should not "dictate" policy.

"I think science should overwhelmingly guide assessments and all of that but I don't think they dictate policy results," she said today at a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing.

White, a longtime critic of climate science, said that she believes human activity contributes to climate change, but that she does not believe the extent of that contribution is known with precision, a position adopted by a number of other Trump administration officials.

"It's likely that CO2 emissions from human activity have some influence on the climate, but ... CO2 in the atmosphere has none of the characteristics of a pollutant that contaminates and fouls and all of that that can have direct impact on human health. As an atmospheric gas, it's a plant nutrient," said White, reiterating her past comments.

As POLITICO [reported](#) in September, some scientists now suspect that heightened CO2 levels in the atmosphere are actually making plants grown for food less nutritious. And climate scientists have long linked anthropomorphic CO2 to the effects of climate change, including warming, sea level rise, more extreme weather and ocean acidification.

WHAT'S NEXT: The EPW Committee will likely vote on White's nomination to CEQ in the coming weeks.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump coal backer wins big under Perry's power plan [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Eric Wolff | 11/06/2017 05:03 AM EDT

A proposal by Energy Secretary Rick Perry to alter the nation's electricity markets would provide a windfall for a small group of companies — most strikingly one owned by coal magnate Bob Murray, a prominent backer of President Donald Trump.

Perry's plan would force consumers to subsidize ailing coal-fired and nuclear power plants with billions of dollars, in what he calls an effort to ensure that the nation's power network can withstand threats like terrorist attacks or severe weather. But his narrowly written proposal would mostly affect plants in a stretch of the Midwest and Northeast where Murray's mining

company, Murray Energy, is the predominant supplier, according to a POLITICO analysis of Energy Department data.

The company and its PAC together sent \$200,000 to pro-Trump election efforts last year, while Bob Murray threw an invitation-only West Virginia fundraiser for Trump in 2016.

Perry's proposal, which needs approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, is the Energy secretary's most aggressive step yet toward helping Trump reverse what he has denounced as former President Barack Obama's "war on coal." But while it would stimulate demand for coal, it would also increase power prices for millions of customers.

The plan has stirred up opposition from an unlikely gathering of allies, including environmental groups, the natural gas, wind and solar industries and the American Petroleum Institute, normally one of the fossil-energy world's most potent advocates in Republican politics. But it has drawn cheers from coal companies, particularly those with operations in Appalachia.

"Customers get less than nothing while a few companies and their investors get a whole lot of something," Nora Mead Brownell, a Republican former electricity regulator, said of Perry's plan, noting the high cost estimates. "Money that gets spent there doesn't get invested in doing what you really need to do, which is upgrading the grid."

Meanwhile, Bob Murray's company has publicly acknowledged that its future depends on whether Perry's plan flies.

"Murray Energy has a vital and critical interest in the outcome of this rulemaking proceeding," the company said last month in its comments to regulators. "Given the current threats to those resources, Murray Energy, along with other coal producers and related industries ... is threatened with bankruptcy and significant economic harm if those resources are forced out of the market by unreasonable and unsupportable market pricing mechanisms."

The company declined to comment on its financial status or its communications with the Trump administration. But Bob Murray has been vocal in urging Trump and Perry to aid the U.S. coal industry, after he attacked Obama as "[the greatest destroyer](#) that America has ever seen."

Since Trump's swearing-in, Murray has made personal pleas for help in face-to-face meetings with Trump and DOE officials, including Perry and Brian McCormack, Perry's chief of staff.

At those meetings in the summer, [Murray urged](#) Trump to declare a power grid emergency and force coal-fired power plants owned by one financially troubled company, FirstEnergy Solutions, to stay open even if the company sank into bankruptcy. Those plants bought about two-thirds of their coal from Murray in 2015, according to POLITICO's analysis of U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

At DOE's urging, the White House ultimately declined to declare the emergency. But Perry's new proposed rule would accomplish the same result by requiring the power markets to cover the costs to run the economically ailing plants, enabling them to keep producing power.

Ohio-based Murray Energy, the No. 5 U.S. coal producer, is the largest supplier to the dwindling number of coal-fired power plants in one stretch of the Rust Belt and Appalachia,

overseen by an electricity market called the PJM Interconnection. The power plants in PJM account for roughly 44 percent of Murray's sales, according to POLITICO's analysis.

Murray's nearest competitor, industry leader Peabody Energy Corp., sold about 9 percent of its coal in that market. In total, Murray sold 24 million tons of coal to PJM merchant coal plants in 2015, far more than Peabody's 15 million tons.

"Murray is by far the largest player in the Northern Appalachian basin and de facto one of the biggest gainers if FERC acts on the DOE [proposal]," said Joe Aldina, director of coal research for the analytics and data company S&P Global.

DOE defended its proposal, and said there was a clear need for some type of action.

"There is broad and substantial support for this action beyond coal suppliers," DOE public affairs director Robert Haus said in an email, noting that even critics have called for some kind of market reform. "Filed public comments show that while supporters and critics differ on how to approach reforming the market, there is widespread consensus that FERC needs to act."

The proposal is not Perry's first effort to promote coal, which has seen its share of the national electricity supply slump from more than 50 percent a decade ago to about one-third now — a fall mostly caused by flat power consumption and gains by natural gas.

In August, Perry's department issued a report that raised questions about whether coal's decline could threaten the country's power system, and contending that coal power plants' ability to run around-the-clock and store large fuel inventories gives them advantages over natural gas or renewable power when it comes to national security. Those advantages don't help them, though, in competitive markets where power sources go head to head on price.

The DOE proposal calls for power market operators to guarantee payments to power plants that keep 90 days of fuel on site. That requirement would be virtually impossible for natural gas-fired power plants to meet — they get their fuel via pipelines — and would totally exclude wind or solar plants.

By requiring 90 days of on-site fuel, the measure would create incentives for most coal-fired power plants to increase their fuel supplies, providing a quick boost for miners.

One [recent analysis](#) by consulting firm ICF said the proposal could cost nearly \$4 billion a year, while [another study](#) by Energy Innovation, a nonprofit firm that analyzes climate and energy policies, said the figure could be as high as \$10.6 billion annually. Perry has dismissed concerns over the costs, asking "What's the cost of freedom?" when [pressed by lawmakers](#).

"It's about the coal producers, frankly," said Kit Konolige, a senior utilities analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. The rule might affect individual power producers differently, he added, but "you can certainly say it would definitely be a plus for coal miners."

Players in the power business say the rule appears to focus on the PJM market, because it would only apply to electricity generators in certain types of regional power markets. It would exclude those in regions where state regulators oversee the economics of power companies.

The rule was "certainly targeted at the PJM region," said Andy Ott, CEO of PJM, which oversees all or parts of Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the

District of Columbia.

Among the nation's roughly 280,000 megawatts of coal-fired power, Perry's rule is tightly written to affect only about 40,000 megawatts, according to POLITICO's analysis. Power capacity from plants owned by the companies FirstEnergy and NRG account for nearly 40 percent of that slice, according to EIA data for 2015, the most recent year for which the information is complete. Murray provided two-thirds of the coal FirstEnergy bought for its competitive plants, and only 2 percent of NRG's.

Among those plants that would benefit from the plan are four coal power generating units at FirstEnergy's Murray-supplied Sammis plant in Ohio that are set to retire within the next three years. FirstEnergy, the parent of the troubled FirstEnergy Solutions subsidiary, could see its plants sell an additional [\\$500 million](#) in electricity a year if Perry's plan is enacted, but its CEO played down the notion that Perry's effort was designed to help it.

"I don't think the DOE initiative has anything to do with FirstEnergy, despite what's been reported in some of the media," CEO Chuck Jones said on an earnings call with analysts. "I think it has to do with preserving critical fuel-secure baseload generating facilities — and I think that's what it'll do, whether FirstEnergy owns them or [FirstEnergy Solutions] creditors own them or whether FES creditors sell them to a third party that we don't even know of today."

The fate of Perry's proposed rule ultimately falls to the leaders of FERC, an independent agency largely made up of technocrats that have developed the power market rules over two decades. (The agency is overseen by a five-member bipartisan panel of presidential nominees.) Perry has directed the agency to take "final action" by Dec. 11, though the agency is not required to follow his timeline.

DOE's proposal has attracted vociferous opposition from power producers and trade groups representing wind, solar and natural gas energy, and has been criticized by five former FERC chairs from both parties. Dynegy and NRG Energy, two of the power companies likely to see the biggest benefits from the plan — and which have big investments in PJM competitive coal plants — also oppose the proposal as too expensive and a distortion of the market.

DOE's plan would also provide a lifeline to [money-losing nuclear plants](#) owned by Exelon Corp., NextEra Energy and FirstEnergy. But the coal industry says its situation is the more dire.

"We don't have time to wait for regular order," said Paul Bailey, CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, noting that DOE's plan wasn't the first to tackle problems in the power markets.

"The DOE-FERC proposal just magnifies the conversation that's going on and made it more urgent. What DOE did was good," he said. "Clearly, people are focusing on this right now to a degree they wouldn't have six months ago. No doubt about that."

Alex Guillén contributed to this report.

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Wheeler attended Murray meetings on DOE coal aid but says he didn't write company's pitch [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 01:08 PM EDT

Andrew Wheeler, the nominee for EPA deputy administrator, says he represented Murray Energy in meetings with Energy Department and congressional officials to support Trump administration efforts to prop up ailing coal-fired power plants.

Wheeler, who counted Murray among his clients as a lobbyist at Faegre Baker Daniels, faced numerous questions at his confirmation hearing today over his work for the company, which would be one of the [main beneficiaries](#) of DOE's proposed grid rule, and its CEO Bob Murray, a top supporter of President Donald Trump. Wheeler said he attended a Murray Energy meeting at DOE where the grid proposal was discussed several months ago, as well as a meeting on Capitol Hill on the subject. He said he de-registered as a lobbyist in August.

Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) pressed Wheeler over Murray's comments in a recent PBS Frontline documentary. The CEO said he gave Trump "an action plan" outlining coal policies to pursue, including eliminating the Clean Power Plan.

"I did not work on that and I do not have a copy of that memo," Wheeler told Whitehouse at the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing.

Wheeler said Murray gave him a copy to read in December or January. "I looked at it and handed it back to him, I don't have it," Wheeler said, adding that he did not recall any specifics.

Whitehouse said he hopes to get a copy of the plan with the help of EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) now that Wheeler confirmed its existence.

WHAT'S NEXT: The committee will likely vote on Wheeler's nomination in the coming weeks.

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Ex-Trump adviser Icahn subpoenaed by U.S. attorney over biofuels [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/08/2017 02:46 PM EDT

The U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York has subpoenaed former White House adviser Carl Icahn for information about his push to change the federal biofuels program, according to a [SEC filing](#) issued by his company.

Icahn Enterprises L.P. says in the Nov. 3 10-Q filing that the U.S. attorney recently contacted it "seeking production of information pertaining to our and Mr. Icahn's activities relating to the Renewable Fuels Standard and Mr. Icahn's role as an advisor to the President."

President Donald Trump named his longtime billionaire friend as an unpaid "Special Advisor to the president for Regulatory Reform" in December, though Icahn resigned that position in August after drawing criticism that his efforts to change the RFS would benefit CVR Energy, an oil refining company he owns.

"We are cooperating with the request and are providing information in response to the subpoena," the filing says. "The U.S. Attorney's office has not made any claims or allegations against us or Mr. Icahn."

Reports of Icahn's lobbying to alter the biofuels blending program — and the EPA's subsequent rejection of those changes — are believed to have driven fluctuations in the prices of biofuel credits that refiners must buy to show they are complying with the federal program.

Ethanol producers and some ethics experts complained that Icahn's push to change the federal program was a clear conflict of interest, and Senate Democrats sent letter to the SEC and CFTC demanding investigations.

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Senate to vote on Wehrum nomination to lead EPA air office [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/08/2017 10:53 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said today the chamber would vote to move forward on William Wehrum's nomination to lead EPA's air office.

He didn't specify a time but said the cloture vote would occur after the confirmation of Peter Robb to be general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. That would likely put a final vote for Wehrum on Thursday.

McConnell lauded Wehrum as "qualified" and someone "who will help undo some of the damage" he said the Obama EPA did through regulations.

"This is an office in desperate need of new leadership from someone who understands how to implement air policies in a balanced way rather than with extreme regulatory overreach," McConnell said. "Mr. Wehrum is the right person for the job."

Democrats and environmental groups have strongly opposed the nomination.

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Zinke demands 'immediate action' on 4 Interior nominees [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/08/2017 10:59 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke sent [a letter](#) to Senate leadership demanding "immediate action" on four agency nominees, some of whom have waited four times as long as their predecessors for a vote.

"Several of our nominees for leadership positions have been waiting an exorbitant amount of time to be confirmed in the Senate," he wrote in the letter obtained today. "These delays are hampering DOI's ability to do the work of the people we are all supposed to be serving."

He called for the chamber to immediately process the nominations of Brenda Burman to lead Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, Susan Combs to be Interior's assistant secretary of policy management and budget, Joseph Balash to be assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management and Ryan Nelson to be agency solicitor.

Zinke bashed senators for working "behind the guise of the cloakroom, putting random and unknown holds on these nominations," a practice he called "senseless and unexplainable."

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New U.S. climate report at odds with Trump policy [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/03/2017 05:10 PM EDT

A sweeping new U.S. government [report](#) concludes that humans have pushed global temperatures to the highest level seen by modern civilization, defying the Trump administration's pronouncements that climate change is a hoax or based on unsettled science.

The report, produced by 13 agencies as part of the congressionally required National Climate Assessment, reinforced years of research that shows human activity was the main reason temperatures have soared in the past century — and they are likely to keep climbing, boosting sea levels and threatening environmental disasters.

The report contradicts President Donald Trump's rejection of climate science, his plan to withdraw the U.S. from a global pact to fight climate change and his moves to unwind a slate of policies put in place under former President Barack Obama to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Foremost, we conclude based on extensive evidence, that it is extremely likely that human activities are the dominant causes of global warming," said David Fahey, one of the lead authors. "For the warming over the last century, there is no convincing alternative explanation for the warming observed."

However, the White House stuck to its stance that climate "has changed and is always changing," and it pointed to portions of the report about the uncertainty around the Earth's sensitivity to greenhouse gas emissions.

White House spokesman Raj Shah said in a statement that the Trump administration "supports rigorous scientific analysis and debate," and the U.S. will continue to promote access to

"affordable and reliable energy needed to grow economically," support technology and infrastructure that reduce emissions and "enable us to address future risks, including climate related risks."

Fahey, a scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told reporters on a conference call that he saw no attempt to influence the report by the Trump administration.

"I'm quite confident to say there's been no political interference in the scientific messages of this report," Fahey said.

Virginia Burkett, an Interior Department climate scientist and chair of the subcommittee on Global Change Research, emphasized that the report steered clear of recommending any policies to deal with climate change, saying it was limited to "strictly the science."

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who said he did not believe that man-made emissions were the main cause of climate change and has moved to eliminate Obama's rules curbing carbon dioxide pollution from power plants, did not comment on the report.

The report was reviewed by scientists at the National Academies, released for public comment and screened by federal agencies under both the Obama and Trump administrations.

Juanita Constible, a special projects director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a blog post the report confirms what many other previous studies had shown.

"It's essential that our federal leaders in Congress and the Executive Branch take seriously the dire conclusions from the painstaking and authoritative work in the [the report] — and more importantly, to urgently act on the findings," Constible wrote.

Bob Kopp, a climate scientist at Rutgers University and a report contributor, said the findings "reaffirmed that climate change is real, that humans are the dominant cause of warming, and that it is having an effect in the U.S. And those effects will grow more severe as long as we continue to emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere."

Sea levels are expected to rise one to four feet by the end of the century and could swell by up to eight feet if emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise, the Climate Science Special Report says.

Episodes of heavy rainfall are becoming more frequent and intense, and heat waves will become more common. Kopp said the report also shows the U.S. can expect more compounded extreme weather events, like the multiple hurricanes and wildfires that occurred this summer.

Annual global average temperatures are expected to rise by 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050. And although the growth in global carbon dioxide emissions is slowing, that trend is moving too slowly to keep temperatures below a dangerous tipping point of 3.6 degrees, or 2.0 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels that would see more devastating impacts, the scientists found.

The report is the most comprehensive study since the last National Climate Assessment was published three years ago and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its physical science report four years ago, Kopp said.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program, which coordinates the assessment, also released a draft of a second [volume](#), which examines impacts on public health and the environment, and a draft of a [report](#) on changes in carbon levels.

The report about how climate change impacts Americans, which will undergo public comment, notes that "Americans are responding to rapid changes affecting their everyday lives and livelihoods," because of climate change.

Reservoir managers in the Colorado River Basin are adjusting to lower water levels, cities along the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts are seeing more flooding and storm surge from rising seas and heavier rains. Farms in the Midwest are adopting new crop management strategies, and communities in the western U.S. face more wildfires, it notes.

Some risks are already unavoidable while others could be reversed if greenhouse gas emissions decline, according to the report.

"Climate change puts many things Americans care about at risk, both now and in the future, and risks will intensify without action," the report says.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Pruitt says climate study doesn't change his rollback plans [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/08/2017 11:21 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said a U.S. government report showing human activity is the main cause of climate change will not affect his decision to withdraw the Clean Power Plan, according to an [interview](#) with USA Today.

Pruitt proposed rolling back President Barack Obama's standards for power plants last month and said his agency is reconsidering the extent of its authority to regulate greenhouse gases.

"We're taking the very necessary step to evaluate our authority under the Clean Air Act and we'll take steps that are required to issue a subsequent rule. That's our focus," Pruitt told USA Today. "Does this report have any bearing on that? No it doesn't. It doesn't impact the withdrawal and it doesn't impact the replacement."

EPA is expected to release an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking weighing agency authority and considering a replacement that would allow states to set coal plant efficiency standards, rather than spurring them to shift toward more natural gas and renewable power.

Pruitt has questioned how much humans contribute to rising temperatures, arguing it can't be measured with precision and might not pose the risks most climate scientists expect. The National Climate Assessment, compiled by 13 agencies and reviewed by the National Academies, [contradicts him](#), finding that human activity is "extremely likely" to be the dominant cause of climate change that is already intensifying extreme weather.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA is taking comment on its proposed Clean Power Plan withdrawal through Jan. 16.

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SAB appointee doesn't represent North Carolina, state says [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 10:16 AM EDT

Donald van der Vaart, the former head of North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality, will not represent the agency or the state in his recent appointment to EPA's Science Advisory Board, the DEQ [told a local television station](#).

Van der Vaart, a Republican who was considered for a top EPA appointment, demoted himself at DEQ to a non-political position that cannot be removed at will following last fall's gubernatorial win by Democrat Roy Cooper.

But his position on SAB will not come with Cooper's blessing, according to DEQ.

"DEQ does not support his participation on the EPA's SAB," the agency told local TV station WRAL. DEQ will not participate as a representative of the DEQ or North Carolina, the agency added.

Neither van der Vaart nor EPA immediately returned requests for comment this morning.

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Court limits stay on Atlantic Sunrise to work in Pennsylvania [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/08/2017 09:43 AM EDT

A federal court panel said today that a temporary construction stay on FERC's approval of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline is limited to active work in Pennsylvania.

On Monday, a three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals issued an "administrative stay" halting work on the pipeline while judges weigh whether to grant a full emergency stay on the project requested by community and environmental groups. But, concerned about construction in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co. requested the court clarify whether the stay request was limited to concerns about construction in Pennsylvania, to which the judges agreed.

The stay "is limited to a stay of construction activities in Pennsylvania, and does not preclude the operation of completed facilities already in service," an [order from the panel](#) this morning stated. "The administrative stay also does not preclude the installation, monitoring, inspection,

and repair of necessary environmental controls, monitoring of the pipeline rights of way, or activities needed to safeguard the horizontal directional drill, as described in the motion."

Environmental and community groups sued FERC in March, saying the agency did not conduct a thorough enough climate study before it approved the \$2.6 billion pipeline project. But the lawsuit is still in its early stages, and those agency critics asked the court to grant an emergency stay until their case, Allegheny Defense Project, et al v. FERC, 17-1098, is resolved.

WHAT'S NEXT: The D.C. Circuit panel must still decide whether to grant the full emergency stay but the timing of that call is unclear.

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SEC's Clayton opens debate on overhaul of corporate governance rules [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 11/08/2017 11:08 AM EDT

The head of the Securities and Exchange Commission on Wednesday proposed changing the rules for the battles between shareholders and corporate boards over issues such as executive compensation and climate change.

In a [speech](#) in New York, SEC Chairman Jay Clayton gave his most detailed remarks since he joined the agency in May, on the issue of corporate governance. Clayton said any changes to corporate governance rules are far off, but said he wanted to start a discussion about shareholder proposals and retail investor participation in voting.

"The Commission should be 'lifting the hood' and taking a hard look at whether the needs of shareholders and companies are being met," Clayton said at the Practising Law Institute.

Clayton noted that retail investors are not voting their shares. With investments predominantly in funds, which vote on behalf of shareholders, Clayton raised the question: "Are voting decisions maximizing the funds' value for those shareholders?"

"I have become increasingly concerned that the voices of long-term retail investors may be underrepresented or selectively represented in corporate governance."

He also waded into the tension between advocacy investors and companies over shareholder proposals. Religious-affiliated funds, pension funds and other advocacy investors occasionally file shareholder resolutions with companies. One of these proposals from earlier this year asked Exxon Mobil to report about what risks it faces from climate change. The company's board recommended voting against the proposal.

"History has shown that shareholder proposals can gain traction and lead to corporate governance changes that better track the long-term interests of Main Street investors," Clayton said. He also acknowledged these proposals add costs for companies.

Clayton did not say whether he would support increasing the SEC's thresholds that shareholder

proposals need to meet to be filed at companies.

"My guiding principle is that we have to consider whether our rules are serving the long-term interests of Main Street investors," he said. "We need to make sure that those investors have a seat at the table as we examine the proxy process."

Separately, Clayton followed up on the agency's warnings about so-called initial coin offerings, adding potential misconduct to a list of enforcement concerns ranging from fund fee disclosure to penny stock fraud.

"There is also a distinct lack of information about many online platforms that list and trade virtual coins or tokens offered and sold in Initial Coin Offerings," he said. "Trading of tokens on these platforms appears to be susceptible to price manipulation and other fraudulent trading practices."

Up to \$2.7 billion has been raised in ICO funding in the past six months, up from \$100 million in the prior period, according to an Oct. 24 report by Goldman Sachs.

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South Korean companies plan \$57.5B in U.S. purchases [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 11/08/2017 08:46 AM EDT

Twenty-four South Korean companies announced plans during President Donald Trump's trip to Seoul to purchase \$57.5 billion worth of U.S. goods and services, including \$22.8 billion in energy purchases, the two countries said in a [joint release](#) today.

In addition, another 42 South Korean firms unveiled plans to implement 64 projects in the United States over the next four years valued at \$17.3 billion, the release said.

The deals suggest Trump's constant hectoring about the size of the United States' trade deficit with its sixth-largest trading partner may have encouraged South Korean firms to collectively announce their buying plans.

[U.S. goods exports](#) to South Korea over the past five years have averaged about \$43 billion annually, including energy sales in the range of \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion. U.S. exports of services to South Korea were estimated at \$20.5 billion in 2015.

South Korean officials have previously pointed to increased purchases of U.S. liquefied natural gas as one way of closing the bilateral goods [trade gap](#), which totaled \$27.5 billion last year.

On Tuesday, Trump touted South Korean plans to buy "billions of dollars" of U.S. military equipment, which he said would also help reduce the trade gap.

The statement notes South Korea has already made \$13 billion in U.S. military purchases over the past three years, and that President Moon Jae-in plans to ramp up military spending by

2022.

That will "help cover the Republic of Korea's financial commitments made by past administrations to major United States origin programs such as F-35A Joint Strike Fighter, KF-16 Fighter Jets upgrade, Patriot PAC-3 ballistic missile defense upgrade, AH-64E Apache heavy attack helicopter, Global Hawk high-altitude UAV, and AEGIS combat systems," the statement said.

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Johnstown Never Believed Trump Would Help. They Still Love Him Anyway. [Back](#)

By Michael Kruse | 11/08/2017 05:06 AM EDT

JOHNSTOWN, Pa.—Pam Schilling is the reason Donald Trump is the president.

Schilling's personal story is in poignant miniature the story of this area of western Pennsylvania as a whole—one of the long-forgotten, woebegone spots in the middle of the country that gave Trump his unexpected victory last fall. She grew up in nearby Nanty Glo, the daughter and granddaughter of coal miners. She once had a union job packing meat at a grocery store, and then had to settle for less money at Walmart. Now she's 60 and retired, and last year, in April, as Trump's shocking political ascent became impossible to ignore, Schilling's 32-year-old son died of a heroin overdose. She found needles in the pockets of the clothes he wore to work in the mines before he got laid off.

Desperate for change, Schilling, like so many other once reliable Democrats in these parts, responded enthusiastically to what Trump was saying—building a wall on the Mexican border, repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, bringing back jobs in steel and coal. That's what Trump told them. At a raucous [rally](#) in late October, right downtown in their minor-league hockey arena, he vowed to restore the mines and the mills that had been the lifeblood of the region until they started closing some 40 years ago, triggering the "American carnage" Trump would talk about in his inaugural address: massive population loss, shrinking tax rolls, communal hopelessness and ultimately a raging opioid epidemic. When Trump won, people here were ecstatic. But they'd heard generations of politicians make big promises before, and they were also impatient for him to deliver.

"Six months to a year," catering company owner Joey Del Signore [told](#) me when we met days after the election. "A couple months," retired nurse Maggie Frear said, before saying it might take a couple of years. "He's just got to follow through with what he said he was going to do," Schilling said last November. Back then, there was an all-but-audible "or else."

A year later, the local unemployment rate has ticked down, and activity in a few coal mines has ticked up. Beyond that, though, not much has changed—at least not for the better. Johnstown and the surrounding region are struggling in the same ways and for the same reasons. The drug problem is just as bad. "There's nothing good in the area," Schilling said the other day in her living room. "I don't have anything good to say about anything in this area. It's sad." Even so, her backing for Trump is utterly undiminished: "I'm a supporter of him, 100

percent."

What I heard from Schilling is overwhelmingly what I heard in my follow-up conversations with people here who I talked to last year as well. Over the course of three rainy, dreary days last week, I revisited and shook hands with the president's base—that [thirtysomething percent](#) of the electorate who resolutely approve of the job he is doing, the segment of voters who share his view that the Russia investigation is a "witch hunt" that "has nothing to do with him," and who applaud his judicial nominees and his determination to gut the federal regulatory apparatus. But what I wasn't prepared for was how readily these same people had abandoned the contract he had made with them. Their satisfaction with Trump now seems untethered to the things they once said mattered to them the most.

"I don't know that he has done a lot to help," Frear told me. [Last year](#), she said she wouldn't vote for him again if he didn't do what he said he was going to do. Last week, she matter-of-factly stated that she would. "Support Trump? Sure," she said. "I like him."

When I asked Del Signore about the past year here, he said he "didn't see any change because we got a new president." He nonetheless remains an ardent proponent. "He's our answer."

I asked Schilling what would happen if the next three years go the way the past one has.

"I'm not going to blame him," Schilling said. "Absolutely not."

Is there anything that could change her mind about Trump?

"Nope," she said.

All this, perhaps, is not so surprising, considering [polling](#) continues to show that—in spite of [unprecedented unpopularity](#)—nearly all people who voted for Trump would do it again. But as I compared this year's answers to last year's responses it seemed clear that the basis of people's support had morphed. Johnstown voters do not intend to hold the president accountable for the nonnegotiable pledges he made to them. It's not that the people who made Trump president have generously moved the goalposts for him. It's that they have eliminated the goalposts altogether.

This reality ought to get the attention of anyone who thinks they will win in 2018 or 2020 by running against Trump's record. His supporters here, it turns out, are energized by his bombast and his animus more than any actual accomplishments. For them, it's evidently not what he's doing so much as it is the people he's fighting. Trump is simply and unceasingly angry on their behalf, battling the people who vex them the worst—"obstructionist" Democrats, uncooperative establishment Republicans, the media, Black Lives Matter protesters and NFL players (boy oh boy do they hate kneeling NFL players) whom they see as ungrateful, disrespectful millionaires.

And they love him for this.

"I think he's doing a great job, and I just wish the hell they'd leave him alone and let him do it," Schilling said. "He shouldn't have to take any shit from anybody."

Del Signore is by his own admission not a person who's focused on policy specifics. A short,

stout genial man who wears gold chains around his neck and rings on both pinkies, he last year did something for Trump he had never done for any other political candidate. The 61-year-old Johnstown native proudly planted a Trump sign in the ground in front of his catering company. And nothing that's happened in the past 12 months, he told me when we met for lunch on Italian buffet day at the Holiday Inn, has lessened his enthusiasm for the man who so energized him.

"Everybody I talk to," he said, "realizes it's not Trump who's dragging his feet. Trump's probably the most diligent, hardest-working president we've ever had in our lifetimes. It's not like he sleeps in till noon and goes golfing every weekend, like the last president did."

I stopped him, informing him that, yes, Barack Obama liked to golf, but Trump in fact does [golf](#) a lot, too—[more](#), in fact.

Del Signore was surprised to hear this.

"Does he?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

He did not linger on this topic, smiling and changing the subject with a quip. "If I was married to his wife," Del Signore said, "I don't think I'd go *anywhere*."

He added: "Some of these things are like that thing he said to Billy, Billy Bob, Billy Bud"—searching, unsuccessfully, for the name Billy Bush—"on the bus, [that comment](#) he made." Del Signore shrugged. "He's a human male. I'm glad he wasn't saying, 'Hey, I like little boys.' You know? So he's not perfect."

Del Signore said he's been following politics far more than before because of Trump. Trump, he said, is just "more interesting." So now he likes watching the news. "Ninety-nine percent of the time I watch Fox," he said. "Sometimes I'll be sitting there listening to all this Fox stuff, and I'll say, 'Maybe they aren't right, maybe I'll flip to CNN'—but every time I've found that Fox has been correct, and CNN is definitely fake news."

A Catholic whose wife goes to church every Sunday, whereas he, "shame on me," does not, Del Signore told me toward the end of our lunch that some people at church told his wife that Obama is the antichrist. "She comes home and tells me these things that they tell you in church," he said. I asked him whether that's what he thinks. "I don't know," he said. "Some people say that."

If Obama, I asked, *is* the antichrist—whose arrival is said to precede the second coming of Christ—what would that make Trump?

"The savior?" Del Signore suggested.

Not even Trump, though, can stop what's coming, he added. "Just looking around, and putting two and two together, a little bit of business savvy, a little bit of street savvy, a little common sense, a little bit of education, you kind of deduct different things," he told me. "I think we're going to see the end of the world in our generation."

It's maybe understandable why somebody here might think this. A little more than a month after last year's election, a 5-month-old baby [starved](#) to death in her bassinet after both her parents [overdosed](#) on [fentanyl](#), a frighteningly potent sort of synthetic heroin. It was shocking even to a community that's become all too familiar with the unremitting ravages of opioids.

One morning last week, Arch Liston, Johnstown's city manager, drove me to the neighborhood where it happened. It's called Kernville. From the cab of his silver Chevy pickup truck, he pointed out one decrepit, vacant house after another.

"Old factory houses that people have just abandoned," he said. "Abandoned. Abandoned. Abandoned."

He sighed heavily.

Many houses I saw from inside Liston's pickup bore a big *X* painted on a board nailed to the front, marking them as dangerously structurally unsound. If nothing else, Liston told me, it's an instruction to the fire department: If it catches fire, let it burn. There are approximately 1,400 houses with an *X*, Liston said, and he would tear them all down if he could. But each demolition costs roughly \$7,000, and it is money the city does not have.

Last year here, the Trump signs were everywhere. This year, my eye settled on different sorts of signs. CONDEMNED. NO TRESPASSING. BEWARE OF DOG. Empty storefronts saying FOR RENT and FOR SALE. The shuttered Hey Day Diner—not far from Coney Island Lunch, a greasy-spoon staple since 1916, once a go-to for round-the-clock shifts of steelworkers, closed this past summer. The sign in the window read: THANK YOU ALL OF OUR CUSTOMERS FOR MANY YEARS OF PATRONAGE.

Liston drove by the Social Security office. "Probably the busiest building in town," he said.

There are some positives around here. Corsa Coal's Acosta mine in neighboring Somerset County opened in June. So did Robindale Energy's new Maple Springs mine. Rosebud Mining reportedly is working to reopen its facility in Cresson, but a company spokesman wouldn't comment on the status of the project. The increased activity is largely the [result](#) of spiking Chinese demand. But even with potentially several hundred new jobs, the long-term outlook for coal is grim. An industry forecast last month from the *BMI Mining Report* projected coal production to grow by 6 percent and 2 percent this year and next year, respectively, but also noted: This "does not reflect an expectation for President Donald Trump to revive the sector and our longer-term view out to 2021 remains decidedly downbeat." The area's unemployment rate stands at 5.2 percent, [down](#) a point from last year at this time—but that's still higher than the [state](#) and [national](#) numbers. At Johnstown's JWF Industries, a 450-employee manufacturing company, business hasn't gone up this year, owner Bill Polacek told me, but he's expecting a 30 percent jump next year. He chalks that up to Trump and his "pro-business" "mood."

But even this optimistic stance highlights some of the deep-seated troubles here. "Right now, if I could find 150 people, I'd put them to work," Polacek said. He needs machinists. He needs welders. "But it's hard to find people," he said—people with the requisite skills, people who can pass a drug test.

"We just don't have the workforce," said Liston, the city manager. "If they are employable, and have a skill set, basically they already moved out of the area."

Some of the later-in-life blue-collar workers who are still here can be loath to learn new trades. "We've heard when working with some of the miners that they are reluctant because they're very accustomed to the mining industry," said Linda Thomson, the president of JARI, a nonprofit economic development agency in Johnstown that provides precisely the kind of retraining, supported by a combination of private, state and federal funding, that could prepare somebody for a job in Polacek's plant. "They really do want to go back into the mines. So we've seen resistance to some retraining."

Polacek, a lifelong Johnstown resident and one of the city's few remaining business titans, was a staunch supporter of Trump. He has been largely pleased with his performance as president so far, he said, but Polacek does wish Trump would try to be more bipartisan and more deliberative—and also that he and his administration would pay as much attention to Johnstown now as he did during the campaign.

"We've been trying to reach out to him to say, 'Hey, remember us? We need help here,'" he told me. "That's my only frustration. I'd just like to tell Trump, 'Hello? We're still here. We're ready for you.'"

For three decades, Johnstown had a powerful friend on Capitol Hill in Rep. Jack Murtha, who steered millions in pork-barrel money to his hometown from his seat on the House Appropriations Committee. But Murtha died in 2010, and earmarks have been banned. Now, the seat is held by a Republican backbencher named Keith Rothfus. "We have not had an influx of any federal money that has assisted us since January," Liston said. Even just a part of the \$1 trillion infrastructure package that Trump once talked about would help considerably, he added.

Johnstown has been resilient in the past. A catastrophic flood in 1889 killed more than 2,000 people. A flood in 1936 killed another 25. But ever since the 1977 flood that killed 85—coupled with mounting mill and mine closures and job losses due to increased global competition—the trend lines here have been almost invariably dispiriting. And so Johnstown and surrounding Cambria County, whiter, poorer and less educated than America overall, was famished for the message Trump [delivered](#) in person at War Memorial Arena last October. "Your government betrayed you, and I'm going to make it right," he told them. "We're putting your miners back to work," he told them. "Your jobs will come back under a Trump administration," he told them. "Your steel will come back," he told them.

"The change you've been waiting for will finally arrive," he pledged.

It was what they so badly wanted to hear. On November 8, 2016, in Cambria County, Trump [trounced](#) Hillary Clinton by nearly 38 points.

By last week, though, John George told me that despite what they might have said, people here didn't really believe Trump would make good on all his promises. "Deep down inside," he said, "I don't think anybody thought the steel mills were going to come back." George is the owner of "George's Song Shop" downtown. He bills it as America's oldest record store. It's been in business for 86 years. His father ran it for 30, and he's had it for the past 56. George is a Democrat, but he voted for Trump, and he would do it again, he said. His whole adult life, essentially, he's watched potential customers leave, as the population of the city has plummeted from more than 70,000 to less than 20,000. Now he sees the names and faces of some of his customers in the newspaper. In the obituaries.

In 2015, Cambria County had 58 overdose deaths. Last year, that number soared to 94. This year, the deadly epidemic is on pace for a similar toll. One of my mornings in Johnstown, I had a meeting scheduled with the coroner. I was on my way when he called to postpone.

"I apologize," said Jeff Lees. "We just got called out on two drug overdoses. We're just getting slammed here."

Something I heard last week that I didn't hear last year: resignation. Drapes drawn, Maggie Frear, the retired nurse, sat in her darkened living room and told me there really wasn't all that much Trump could do to help Johnstown and Cambria County.

"You know, we're sort of a depressed area," she said. "We're just a little area, you know—but it's a good area. Good people here. And I think he would, if he knew of a place that had a lot of problems, I think he would try to help. I don't know what he could do, or would want to do, for Johnstown, you know?"

He said he was going to bring back the steel mills.

"You're never going to get those steel mills back," she said.

"But he *said* he was going to," I said.

"Yeah, but how's he going to bring them back?"

"I don't know," I said, "but it's what he said, last year, and people voted for him because of it."

"They always say they want to bring the steel mills back," Frear said, "but they're going to have to do *a lot* of work to bring the steel mills back."

He hasn't built the wall yet, either. "I don't care about his wall," said Frear, 76. "I mean, if he gets his wall—I don't give a shit, you know? But he has a good idea: *Keep 'em out.*"

He also hasn't repealed Obamacare. "That's Congress," she said.

And the drug scourge here continues unabated. "And it's not going to improve for a long time," she said, "until people learn, which they won't."

"But I *like* him," Frear reiterated. "Because he does what he says."

John Daloni is the financial secretary of the United Steelworkers Local 2632 union. Last November, many members of his union, considered for so long here, and in so many places like it, to be guaranteed voters for Democrats, flipped and went for Trump. Daloni, who had supported Clinton, reeled. "I lost 20 pounds," he told me last week when we met at the union office, adjacent to a gun store. "I had to see a cardiologist, because I honestly think my heart was broken—I spent 24 hours walking around with one of those Holter monitors. I didn't know what was happening. I felt awful."

Last week, he reported hearing for the past year at work, at Gautier Steel, exactly what I had

been hearing in my conversations around town—a remarkable, undeniable, ongoing vehemence of support.

"I don't give the guy that much credit," Daloni said, referring to the president, "but *man*—he knows what buttons to push, and he's pushing 'em."

His insistent [declarations of success](#) no matter the reality—it's working. Trump's inveterate blame-shifting—it's working.

They don't mind his intemperate tweets. They don't mind the specter of scandal, which they dismiss as trifling nonsense. They don't mind his nuclear saber-rattling with North Korea, saying they feel safer under Trump than they did under Obama. And they don't mind his mixed record of delivering on the promises he made in their hockey arena.

So many people in so many other areas of the country watch with dismay and existential alarm Trump's Twitter hijinks, his petty feuds, his penchant for butting into areas where the president has no explicit, policy-relevant role. All of that only animates his supporters here. For them, Trump is their megaphone. He is the scriptwriter. He is a singularly effective, intuitive creator of a limitless loop of grievance and discontent that keeps them in absolute lockstep.

One afternoon last week I stopped to talk to a small group of people who had gathered on the sidewalk across the street from the Johnstown Planned Parenthood office. One woman had set up a bucket of body parts of toy babies. Gale Bala sat on a low rock wall and held a sign that said ABORTION KILLS CHILDREN. She voted for Obama in 2008. She voted for Romney in 2012. Her parents were Democrats, her steelworker husband was a Democrat, and she was a Democrat until two years ago. She voted for Trump last fall, and she'll "definitely" vote for him in 2020, too.

"He's kind of the last best hope, in my opinion," said Bala, 65, a retired high school Spanish and reading teacher. "I haven't run into anybody who's said they'd never vote for him again."

Next to Bala was a gray-haired man who told me he voted for Trump and was happy so far because "he's kept his promises."

I asked which ones.

"Border security." But there's no wall yet. "No fault of his," the man said.

What else? "Getting rid of Obamacare." But he hasn't. "Well, he's tried to."

What else? "Defunding Planned Parenthood." But he [didn't](#). "Not his fault again," the man said.

I asked for his name. "Bill K.," he said. He wouldn't give me his last name. "I don't trust you," he said.

More than anything, what seemed to upset the people I spoke with was the National Football League players who have knelt during the national anthem to protest police brutality and racial inequality.

"As far as I'm concerned," Frear told me, "if I was the boss of these teams, I would tell 'em,

'You get your asses out there and you play, or you're not here anymore.' They're paying their salaries, for God's sake."

"Shame on them," Del Signore said over his alfredo. "These clowns are out there, making millions of dollars a year, and they're using some stupid excuse that they want equality—so I'll kneel against the flag and the national anthem?"

"You're not a fan of equality?" I asked.

"For people who deserve it and earn it," he said. "All my ancestors, Italian, 100 percent Italian, the Irish, Germans, Polish, whatever—they all came over here, settled in places like this, they worked hard and they earned the respect. They earned the success that they got. Some people don't want to do that. They just want it handed to them."

"Like NFL players?" I said.

"Well," Del Signore responded, "I hate to say what the majority of them are ..." He stopped himself short of what I thought he was about to say.

Schilling and her husband, however, did not restrain themselves.

"The thing that irritates me to no end is this NFL shit," Schilling told me in her living room. "I'm about ready to go over the top with this shit. We do not watch no NFL now." They're Dallas Cowboys fans. "We banned 'em. We don't watch it."

Schilling looked at her husband, Dave McCabe, who's 67 and a retired high school basketball coach. She nodded at me. "Tell him," she said to McCabe, "what you said the NFL is ..."

McCabe looked momentarily wary. He laughed a little. "I don't remember saying that," he said unconvincingly.

Schilling was having none of it. "You're the one that told me, liar," she said.

She looked at me.

The NFL?

"Niggers for life," Schilling said.

"For life," McCabe added.

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Senate GOP to unveil tax bill that diverges from House plan [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Josh Dawsey | 11/08/2017 12:39 PM EDT

Senate Republicans plan to unveil a bill to rewrite the tax code that sharply diverges from the

House GOP's plan, including by not fully repealing the estate tax.

GOP leaders will brief the conference on the details of their long-awaited tax overhaul legislation on Thursday morning at 11:30 a.m. in the Strom Thurmond room at the Capitol, according to two sources.

The session is meant to walk senators who are not on the tax-writing Finance Committee through the intricacies of the GOP's tax bill before unveiling it to the public.

The plan is expected to have significant differences from the House legislation.

For instance, the Senate plans to ax the state and local tax deduction — which will deeply disappoint House Republicans from high-tax blue states — in their bill, according to multiple sources familiar with the measure.

Sources said not repealing the estate tax entirely is in part to accommodate Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), a powerful swing vote in the Senate who has said she sees no need to eliminate it, as the House plan does.

"We want to make sure we kind of walk the members through the bill, before we start talking about it publicly," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said in an interview Wednesday. "But I would say we learned a lot from the House's experience. I'm glad the House went first because hopefully some of the things they have learned from the experience, we will avoid those problems in the Senate."

Senators are also discussing how to craft their pass-through provision — which affects businesses whose taxes flow through their individual owners — so it is more palatable to the small business lobby than the House legislation.

Meanwhile, Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) have been pushing for a more generous child tax credit than was outlined in the House bill.

The Senate is expected to publicly unveil their tax bill on Thursday, although they have been waiting for the House Ways and Means Committee to finish marking up their own bill until they can roll out the Senate version.

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Russia investigators probe 2016 GOP platform fight [Back](#)

By Josh Meyer | 11/08/2017 05:03 AM EDT

U.S. investigators are focusing on an enduring mystery of the 2016 election: whether Trump campaign officials made the Republican Party platform more friendly to Russia as part of some broader effort to collude with the Kremlin, according to congressional records and people familiar with the probes.

Congressional investigators have interviewed ex-Donald Trump aides and advisers including

J.D. Gordon, the national security policy representative at last year's GOP convention, about the campaign's push to remove proposed language from the 2016 Republican platform that called for giving weapons to Ukraine. People involved with crafting the platform also were expecting interest from special counsel Robert Mueller's team, such as witness interviews or producing documents, some of those sources said.

The Trump campaign's position in the platform fight was seen at the time as making the official GOP stance friendlier toward Russia because the proposed language they defeated would have endorsed sending weapons to aid the Ukrainian government's fight against pro-Russian separatists in the eastern part of the country. Many leading Republicans backed the idea, so the platform fight came as a surprise.

Now that year-old debate is getting fresh scrutiny from the ongoing investigations into how Moscow meddled in the 2016 election and whether any Trump aides were involved, including then-convention manager Paul Manafort. The president has repeatedly denied any collusion, calling the investigations a "witch hunt."

Gordon, who has been a senior national security adviser or spokesman to four GOP presidential candidates since 2012, has largely escaped the harsh spotlight on some other Trump campaign officials. But while he has not been accused of wrongdoing, he has been questioned, in part, because of his role in the platform fight and his job overseeing two campaign volunteers, Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, who communicated with Russian officials or operatives last year.

Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to lying to investigators about his interactions with Russian-linked intermediaries, and he is now cooperating with Mueller's probe. Two other senior campaign officials who were involved in the convention, Manafort and Rick Gates, were indicted last week by the special counsel on various charges stemming from their overseas lobbying work before they joined Trump's campaign.

Manafort, who remains under active investigation in the broader collusion probes, also sent an email days before the platform debate to a longtime aide with ties to Russian intelligence, offering private briefings about the campaign to a top Vladimir Putin associate and Russian oligarch he owed millions of dollars. The month before, Manafort, Donald Trump Jr. and Trump senior adviser Jared Kushner [met at Trump Tower](#) with a Kremlin-connected Russian lawyer who had promised dirt on Hillary Clinton.

Investigators are focusing, in part, on whether those activities were part of any choreographed effort by the campaign to forge closer ties to Russia or to exchange promises — such as dropping U.S. sanctions, if elected — in return for help defeating Clinton. Lawmakers continue to ask about the 2016 platform fight as part of that probe, and Page, a campaign foreign policy adviser, faced questions on the subject when he appeared before House investigators last week.

Gordon told POLITICO in a series of exchanges that he wasn't involved in any wrongdoing and that he wasn't aware of any suspect activities by Manafort or other campaign officials or advisers. He said investigators were probing other people involved in pushing the platform change that the Trump campaign opposed, though he would not identify them.

"Investigators are rightly looking into whether or not crimes were committed by individuals connected to Ukraine, including possible FARA violations and other illegal activities,"

Gordon wrote, referring to the Foreign Agents Registration Act. "I applaud them for conducting a thorough investigation as there are clearly two sides to the GOP Platform controversy."

Gordon said it would be up to Mueller to reveal whether the special counsel's office had reached out to him or interviewed him, and he declined to provide specifics of his talks with congressional investigators except to say that they covered a range of topics. He agreed to speak on the record to POLITICO only via text message exchanges, given what he said was the sensitivity of the investigations and efforts by some Trump opponents to thrust him into the middle of them.

The "stakes are too high for error. Prison, impeachment proceedings, lawsuits," he wrote in one text message.

"Impeachment of a President at stake," he wrote in another. "Would prefer people stop trying to use my head as a battering ram."

Diana Denman — a Texas delegate to the 2016 convention who pushed for the GOP platform to support providing weapons to Ukraine, the provision Trump aides fought to change — told POLITICO that she had hired a Washington-based defense lawyer within the past 10 days. She said she spent several days in Washington last week on related issues.

"It seems that I needed to do this and I was advised to do it," said Denman, who said she proposed the pro-Ukraine amendment because she thought it was in line with the GOP position and in favor of "people fighting for their freedom."

"I was told why I should not discuss anything further," she added. "I know I'm not being very helpful, but I'm locked down."

Denman is not suspected of any wrongdoing, according to people familiar with her situation, but she likely will be asked to provide documents and testimony in the coming weeks to help investigators lock down the details of what happened behind the scenes during the week before the convention in which the platform was hammered out.

"I represent Diana, and I'm not commenting," said Robert N. "Bob" Driscoll, her lawyer. A former deputy assistant attorney general, Driscoll lists as some of his specialties representing clients involved in congressional and Department of Justice investigations.

Details of the amendment fight remain in dispute. Denman said that after her proposal was offered, Gordon intervened to lobby members of the GOP foreign policy platform committee, with help from other Trump campaign officials. Gordon has denied that, but he acknowledged asking the subcommittee to table the amendment until the end of the deliberations so he could alert campaign officials.

The amendment was tabled, and the language for the official party platform ultimately was changed to offer "appropriate assistance" to Ukraine, which Gordon said reflected the original draft language.

One of the things investigators want to know is who Gordon was consulting with, and why, during the extended period when the campaign was fighting the proposed change.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence panel, queried Page about the

platform change during a seven-hour interview with the committee last week, according to a transcript released on Monday.

Schiff asked Page who he had communicated with about the platform change, referring him to an email he sent to Gordon, other campaign advisers and at least one campaign official that said, "As for the Ukraine amendment, excellent work."

"Does it refresh your recollection at all about what other interactions you may have had with the campaign about the amendment?" Schiff asked, according to the [transcript](#).

"No," Page replied. "This ... is my only interaction that I vaguely recall. And this expresses my personal opinion. And that's all that was."

Schiff also asked Page, "Did you ever communicate with Paul Manafort about the Ukraine amendment?"

"Absolutely not," Page replied.

The Senate Intelligence Committee also has been looking at the platform issue as part of its broader probe, and has "interviewed every person involved in the drafting of the campaign platform," Sen. Richard Burr, the committee chairman, said at a briefing last month.

Based on "feedback ... from the individuals who were in the room making the decision," Burr said, the committee had tentatively concluded that Trump campaign staff were "attempting to implement what they believed to be guidance to be strong, to be a strong ally in Ukraine but also leave the door open for better relations with Russia."

But, he added, the matter was "not closed, open for the continuation."

Kyle Cheney contributed to this report.

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Democrats euphoric after Tuesday election romp [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti | 11/07/2017 11:00 PM EDT

Jubilant Democrats struck a defiant tone after sweeping victories across the country on Tuesday night, led by Democrat Ralph Northam's surprise pummeling of Republican Ed Gillespie in Virginia's gubernatorial race.

Surveying their first electoral sweep in half a decade after a soul-crushing 2016 campaign and a desultory start to the Donald Trump era, Democratic leaders reset their expectations for the 2018 midterms. They're now expecting a fundraising and candidate recruitment surge, powered by grass-roots fury at the Trump administration.

While most Democrats stopped short of predicting the party will take the House next year, they noted in Gillespie the failure of a candidate who tried balancing between Trump-style

populism and establishment Republicanism.

"We were all under a lot of pressure saying we need to win this thing, we need a boost. But we gave a rocket boost tonight," said outgoing Democratic Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, celebrating at Northam's election night party. The result in the race to replace him, he said, "is a rejection of Trump, of the hatred and bigoted fear that they always bring into these campaigns."

"I certainly didn't see this ass-kicking coming; this is pretty stunning," added Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.). "Republicans have two problems: their president and their agenda. And I don't think either of those liabilities are disappearing anytime soon."

The shifted landscape remains forbidding for Democrats. They must flip 24 Republican-held seats to win the House, and are forced to defend 10 incumbent senators running for reelection in states that Trump won in 2016. They must also handle a range of painful internal tactical and policy divisions threatening to rupture their unity at any moment.

Plus, Tuesday's wide victories came in one solidly Democratic state and another that's been leaning that way, making it potentially perilous to read too much into their results.

But paired with Phil Murphy's long-expected victory in New Jersey's gubernatorial election, upsets in Virginia's House of Delegates races, and wins in mayoral elections from New Hampshire to Florida, the evening presented Democrats with a night to celebrate for the first time since Trump's shocking victory in November 2016. They have repeatedly fallen short in special elections in conservative areas so far this year, but Tuesday's results wiped that slate nearly clean in the eyes of stunned party operatives and lawmakers.

After Northam's win, New Mexico Rep. Ben Ray Luján, chairman of House Democrats' campaign wing, immediately started calling potential Democratic House candidates who were on the fence about whether to run.

"Doesn't matter if you're watching CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC: There's good news for Democrats, [and] this is a nightmare scenario for Republican incumbents, especially in Virginia," Luján said, pointing to Virginia Rep. Barbara Comstock as an example of an incumbent Republican whose path to victory suddenly looks much tougher.

"The House is absolutely in play; everything is absolutely moving in our direction," Luján said.

Even before Tuesday, optimism was building among Democrats working on 2018 campaigns. As more and more Republican House members announce their retirements rather than run again in an inhospitable landscape, the victories could tilt the midterm playing field further toward Democrats by giving them a fundraising and recruitment jolt.

And at a time when Democrats have once again become enmeshed in their own civil wars over ideology, tactics and the 2016 loss, the victories provided them with hope that Republican fissures would dominate the political conversation again. Tweeting from South Korea after the Virginia race was called, Trump distanced himself from Gillespie, accusing the former Republican National Committee chairman of not "embrac[ing] me or what I stand for."

Tuesday's losses could initiate a broader debate in the GOP over a vexing question: the extent

to which the party should embrace Trump in 2018.

Gillespie engaged in a tortured balancing act, refusing to campaign with the president but embracing some of the culture-war issues that Trump has championed.

On Tuesday evening, several people close to the White House argued that Gillespie should have gone further to embrace the president — and that by not appearing with him he dampened turnout from conservatives and Trump supporters whose votes he needed.

"It should serve as a wake-up call for any Republicans who are pretending there's not a political problem going into next year. Republicans in Virginia and New Jersey worked hard and knew the challenges, but voters were sending a message," said Republican operative Mike Duhaime, outgoing New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's former top strategist.

Democratic operatives were also quick to note on Tuesday evening that exit polls showed Virginians caring deeply about health care over other issues, handing ammunition to those who argue that the party should focus on bread-and-butter economic and household topics rather than zeroing in on Trump himself.

If such a focus works in a shifting battleground like Virginia — which has now voted for two straight Democratic governors and senators, and three straight Democratic presidential candidates — it is likely to work in other battlegrounds, they said.

"Americans — not just Democrats — are getting fed up with a mean-spirited, divisive, denigrating kind of politics — one that isn't focused on a prosperity agenda but is actually, even more so, doubling down on the politics of the elite, the wealthiest in our country," said Democratic New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker. "This has been a very dark year. But the north star is rising."

Alex Isenstadt contributed to this report.

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Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 4:24:12 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 05/24/2017 04:22 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon and Annie Snider

WHEN IN ROME, FORGET ABOUT PARIS: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [told reporters](#) today that it's unlikely the president will make a decision on the Paris climate change agreement before he returns to the U.S. During his visit with Pope Francis, President Donald Trump was pressed by the Vatican Secretary of State on his stance on climate change, and he asked Trump to keep the U.S. in the Paris agreement.

When asked about the meeting, Tillerson said Trump "hasn't made a final decision" on the Paris deal and likely will not until "after we get home." Tillerson told reporters that there was "a good exchange [on] the difficulty of balancing addressing climate change, responses to climate change, and ensuring that you still have a thriving economy and you can still offer people jobs so they can feed their families and have a prosperous economy." The secretary and former Exxon Mobil CEO said that's "a difficult balancing act to take" and said the administration is looking forward "to having further talks with them on climate policy."

That means Trump will likely spend two days starting Friday getting pressure to stay in the deal from the heads of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom. The Trump administration has left its options open in the preparation for the G-7 meeting, [refusing](#) to offer clear positions on climate change, Eric Wolff reports. Tillerson, asked what could come out of the G-7 meeting, told reporters he didn't expect any trade agreement, but instead "what there will be is a very frank discussion and exchange on why these trade unbalances exist."

THE POPE'S BOOK CLUB: Pope Francis presented Trump with a copy of his encyclical on climate change and the environment — *Laudato Si'* — along with several books during their first meeting this morning, Anthony Adrgana [reports](#). Trump said after receiving the gifts, "Well I'll be reading them" and later added of the pope "He is something. We had a fantastic meeting."

Welcome to Afternoon Energy and welcome to Wednesday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PRUITT: CPP STILL UP IN THE AIR: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said today that he has not yet decided on a path forward for the Clean Power Plan and regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, Alex Guillén [reports](#). "We're going to evaluate our authority under Section 111. We're going to evaluate our authority under the Clean Air Act with respect to stationary sources and make an informed decision about what Congress has empowered us to do in those areas. And that's yet to be determined," Pruitt said at an event hosted by the law firm Faegre Baker Daniels.

DOE ABANDONS MONIZ'S BOREHOLE DRAMA: Energy Secretary Rick Perry has nixed an initiative held over from his predecessor aimed at drilling a miles-deep hole as a way of disposing of nuclear waste and studying geothermal energy, the Associated Press [reports](#). Moniz's Energy Department underestimated the degree of opposition the borehole project would face: it was initially kicked out of South Dakota and blocked in North Dakota before proposing to dig in a different South Dakota locale. Residents, local commissioners and politicians often didn't believe DOE's statements and documents professing that the boreholes would only be for research and not actual nuclear waste. DOE was caught so flatfooted that energy appropriators [scolded](#) DOE last year over the process.

EPA PUTS OUT CALL FOR NEW SCIENCE ADVISERS: EPA is officially opening the nomination process for members of a scientific advisory board targeted by the Trump administration. A [notice](#) set to run in Thursday's Federal Register seeks nominations by July 21 for the Board of Scientific Counselors, which advises the agency on research, and which lost half its members when EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt declined to renominate nine individuals earlier this month. According to the notice, the agency is seeking people from academia, industry or elsewhere with expertise in a range of issues, including atmospheric science, climate change, engineering and public health.

The board's chairwoman, University of Minnesota Professor Deborah Swackhamer, [told](#) lawmakers Tuesday she's concerned about her board's ability to function with only five members, and said she is "troubled" and "fearful" that the administration appears to be marginalizing and politicizing science.

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THREE MILE ISLAND MAY CLOSE: Exelon Corp. warned today that it may have to shut down its Three Mile Island nuclear plant before its license expires. The money-losing plant lost out for the third year in a row on an opportunity to provide standby power for the PJM market, Darius Dixon [reports](#). It was unable to promise low enough prices to participate in the 2020-21 capacity program, which offers payments to power plants for the promise of delivering electricity when regional grid operators call on them. In a [statement](#), Exelon said the Three Mile Island plant "did not clear in auction, placing it at risk of early retirement." The company blamed the plant's woes on "continued low wholesale power prices and the lack of federal or Pennsylvania energy policies that value zero-emissions nuclear energy."

ARMY CORPS BUDGET DOCS UP: Just like many of its projects, the Army Corps of Engineers delivered its budget justification [documents](#) late. The documents detail how specific port, levee, dam and ecosystem restoration projects across the country would share the 16 percent cut proposed by the Trump administration. Workplans, explaining how the agency will use extra money sent by Congress in this year's continuing resolution, still aren't out.

Among those dispirited by the proposal is the barge industry, which had made major advances in its priorities in recent years, including getting a 29-cent-per-gallon fuel tax passed for the industry in order to fund its share of new lock and dam projects. Not only would the Trump budget proposal collect that revenue and leave much of it in the bank rather than spend on projects, but it would levy a new user fee in the industry that would also be left to accumulate in the bank, said Mike Toohey, president of the Waterways Council, Inc.

FEINSTEIN PRESSES ZINKE ON MOJAVE WATER PIPELINE: Sen. [Dianne Feinstein](#) (D-Calif.) is pressing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke about a controversial water pipeline proposal that Democrats raised conflict-of-interest concerns about during hearings for Zinke's deputy. "Given that it is the mission of your department to protect and responsibly manage our natural resources, I would hope that you would not allow a single company with powerful lobbyists to circumvent our laws and degrade a national treasure for corporate profit," Feinstein wrote in a [letter](#) to Zinke today, urging him not reverse an Obama administration decision on the Cadiz pipeline.

David Bernhardt, who Trump named to be Zinke's No. 2, lobbied for the Cadiz water project, which would pump groundwater from a fragile aquifer below the Mojave desert to southern California communities. It sought to use a railroad right-of-way to avoid federal environmental review, but the Obama administration knocked down that approach. In March, the Trump administration reversed the legal opinions behind the Obama administration denial. Bernhardt said at his nomination hearing last week that he was not involved with that decision, but [Maria Cantwell](#), the top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee handling his nomination, has urged him to recuse himself from such issues relating to his former clients during the entirety of his tenure.

ICAHN'S BIG WIN: Billionaire Carl Icahn's oil refining company, CVR Energy Inc. saved about \$60 million in the first quarter of the year as the market shifted because of expectations that the administration will alter a regulation involving renewable fuels. "It's much more than a lucky break," Bloomberg [reports](#). "As a 'special regulatory adviser' to President Donald Trump, Icahn has been advocating the kind of relief that will benefit his company. Icahn's cost savings show how the Trump administration has let officials' outside business interests influence policy decisions." In March, Icahn said he was shorting the credits, called renewable identification numbers — a move that has already paid off for CVR, in which Icahn Enterprises LP owns an 82 percent stake. (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#))

AEE ENDORSES CHATTERJEE FOR FERC: Ahead of the Senate Natural Resources Committee hearing Thursday on FERC nominees Neil Chatterjee and Rob Powelson, Advanced Energy Economy released a statement of support for one of the would-be commissioners. AEE Vice President of Federal Affairs Arvin Ganesan said in [a statement](#) that AEE "strongly supports" Chatterjee's nomination, saying he "shares our fundamental belief that markets thrive when there is true competition on the basis of all the attributes various technologies have to offer." AEE also noted it has a long-standing relationship with Powelson, particularly during his roles as Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission commissioner and as president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, "but he was unable to meet with AEE, which is necessary for a formal endorsement, prior to tomorrow's confirmation hearing," it said.

QUICK HITS:

- Hanford nuclear cleanup budget slashed in energy proposal, [Bloomberg](#).
- Climate policies could boost economic growth by 5 percent, OECD says, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Shell, Exxon may appeal over planned Groningen gas output cut, [Reuters](#).
- Trump's pick for EPA enforcement office was a lobbyist for Superfund polluters, [The](#)

[Intercept](#).

— Scientists just published an entire study refuting Pruitt on climate change, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Trump ditches his feud in gracious [visit with the pope](#)

— How Trump killed [political mudslinging](#)

— GOP turns to [familiar foil](#) amid Trump woes: Pelosi

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump won't make Paris decision until he returns to U.S. [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 05/24/2017 11:03 AM EDT

President Donald Trump likely won't make a decision on the Paris climate treaty until he returns to the U.S., Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told reporters today.

The Vatican Secretary of State pressed Trump on climate change today and asked the president to keep the U.S. in the Paris climate agreement.

"But we had a good exchange [on] the difficulty of balancing addressing climate change, responses to climate change, and ensuring that you still have a thriving economy and you can still offer people jobs so they can feed their families and have a prosperous economy," Tillerson said, according to a pool report. "And that's a difficult balancing act to take, and so I think we had a good exchange there, and we look forward to having further talks with them on climate policy."

Pope Francis had welcomed Trump to the Vatican by [handing](#) Trump a signed copy of his encyclical calling for action on climate change. Tillerson said he did not know if the Pope discussed the issue with Trump.

When asked about the meeting on Air Force One, Tillerson said Trump "hasn't made a final decision" on the Paris deal and likely will not until "after we get home."

That means Trump will likely spend two days starting Friday getting pressure to stay in the deal from the heads of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The

Trump administration has left its options open in the preparation for the G-7 meeting, [refusing](#) to offer clear positions on climate change as part of the advance preparations typical for high level meetings.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump will meet with G-7 leaders, and possibly make a decision after he returns home next week.

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Trump's hazy views confuse allies ahead of summit [Back](#)

By Tara Palmeri | 05/24/2017 05:10 AM EDT

BRUSSELS — President Donald Trump's vague stances on climate and trade have frustrated U.S. allies just days before a major international summit in Italy, senior French and Italian officials said.

Officials from the G-7 countries meeting later this week are crafting the formal statement they'll issue from the gathering, as is typically done ahead of such staid, prepackaged summits of world leaders. The French are leaning on Trump to clarify whether he wants to pull out of the Paris climate agreement, and Italy hopes he will agree to accept more migrants fleeing war in the Middle East or contribute funds to help Europe deal with the flood of people.

U.S. officials, however, have so far submitted broad points that fail to nail down positions on issues the leaders will discuss Friday and Saturday in Taormina, Italy, according to four foreign officials and one U.S. official reached by POLITICO.

"We haven't exactly seen the same situation before," said Pierre Vimont, a former French ambassador to the United States who said he had spoken to people involved in the G-7 negotiations. "It's been difficult to find an agreement with the Americans."

The discord could cause drama during Trump's first foreign trip as president, which has so far gone smoothly. The president hasn't made up his mind on key policies, and he has a habit of switching stances, leaving overseas allies guessing which way Trump will lean on major decisions that could affect domestic politics in their own countries.

As a presidential candidate, Trump said NATO was obsolete and that China manipulated its currency. Since taking office, he has [reversed himself on both](#). Leaders attending the summit hope they can similarly sway him during the upcoming meetings to remain in a major climate pact and support trade negotiations with the European Union.

Trump's indecision could be a negotiating tactic designed to see what foreign leaders will offer him. A White House official who has seen the United States' key points said the U.S. so far has agreed to include only general language in the G-7 communiqué — the formal statement out of the gathering that signals the agreements reached or commitments made by participants — such as "promote economic prosperity and global growth."

"He will address unfair trade practices and other global issues, such as the role of innovation

in the economy, women's equality, and food security," the official said.

But these broad strokes aren't satisfying allies who want Trump, who has not named ambassadors to countries involved, to clear up the confusion.

"Trade and climate are holding up the communiqué," said a senior French official.

Trump has long made clear that he prefers bilateral trade deals over multilateral deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement, but the European Union trades as a bloc and does not allow members like France, Italy and Germany to reach bilateral agreements.

Negotiations on an EU-U.S. trade deal known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership have stalled since Trump's election.

On the Paris climate agreement, a 2015 deal to tackle global warming, Trump has said he wants to give the leaders a chance to make their case to him in person. But a White House official familiar with conversations about the deal said Trump has indicated he's leaning toward backing out.

For domestic political reasons, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni would like a commitment from the U.S. to take more migrants or provide financial support to Italy, which will likely see a surge of migrants with the change of seasons. A senior Italian diplomat said they realize the request is unlikely to be granted.

Italian officials hope that they will get clearer signals from Trump after his meeting on Wednesday with Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Italian foreign minister Angelino Alfano, though that conversation will last only about 40 minutes with translation, a senior Italian diplomat said.

There are also expected to be precise commitments on fighting terrorism as well as on the Syrian crisis, according to a French official with knowledge of the negotiations.

It's still unclear how the disputes will be resolved, but Trump has shown a willingness to go in new directions, said Vimont, the former French ambassador.

"This new U.S. administration has been much more ready to change drastically what the previous administration was doing," said Vimont. "This is why it makes the whole process of drafting a communiqué more difficult than before."

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Pope gives climate encyclical to Trump [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 05/24/2017 09:17 AM EDT

Pope Francis presented President Donald Trump with a copy of his encyclical on climate change and the environment — *Laudato Si'* — as part of several books he gifted during their first meeting this morning.

Trump said after receiving the gifts, "Well I'll be reading them" and later added of the pope "He is something. We had a fantastic meeting."

The meeting came as Trump is mulling whether to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump is expected to make a decision on Paris around the upcoming G7 summit later this week.

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Pruitt: Future for carbon rules 'yet to be determined' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/24/2017 02:04 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said today that he has not yet decided on a path forward regarding the Clean Power Plan and regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.

"We're going to evaluate our authority under Section 111. We're going to evaluate our authority under the Clean Air Act with respect to stationary sources and make an informed decision about what Congress has empowered us to do in those areas. And that's yet to be determined," Pruitt said at an event hosted by the law firm Faegre Baker Daniels.

Pruitt reiterated his uncertainty about what "tools" EPA can use under the Clean Air Act, though as Oklahoma's attorney general he sued EPA over its use of Section 111(d) to write the Clean Power Plan with fuel shifting requirements.

Agencies tend to get into trouble when they "imagine new authority" or try to "do the job of Congress," Pruitt said.

Pruitt also hinted at a much more restrained approach that he thinks would survive court challenges.

"This Supreme Court, in my view, is a Supreme Court that will say very clearly to all executive agencies, 'do the job of the statute, do the job Congress assigned to you. If you seek to do more than that, it's going to be an issue,'" he said.

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Senate appropriators scold DOE for bungled borehole project [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 04/14/2016 03:41 PM EDT

DOE may be pursuing a "consent-based" approach for siting nuclear projects, but lawmakers on the Senate Appropriations Committee aren't impressed with how it handled the local outreach for a research effort in North Dakota.

The \$35 million DOE research project run by Battelle Memorial Institute is studying [deep boreholes](#) as a way of disposing of nuclear waste and geothermal energy. Although DOE repeatedly emphasized that no waste would be stored in this particular borehole, state and county officials in North Dakota, where the miles-deep hole was set to be dug, said they were kept in the dark. Things quickly spiraled as locals feared that radioactive waste would eventually be shipped to the area, and they [moved to block it](#).

In the bill report for the Senate energy and water appropriations legislation [approved](#) by the Committee today, lawmakers told the agency to get its act together if it wants to pursue more controversial projects.

"The Committee supports the Department's efforts to develop a process for consent-based siting by engaging State, local, and tribal government entities," the report says. "However, The Committee directs the Department to take a more active role in future consent-based siting processes for spent nuclear fuel or any other high level waste than it has demonstrated in the deep borehole demonstration project in North Dakota."

"The Secretary is encouraged to ensure lessons learned from the demonstration project in North Dakota are incorporated into its plan to develop a process for future consent-based siting," the bill report states.

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EPA science board chairwoman 'concerned' about lack of members [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 05/23/2017 11:24 AM EDT

The chairwoman of the EPA scientific advisory board that has been targeted by the Trump administration said she is concerned about the board's ability to function with so few members.

Deborah Swackhamer, chair of EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors and a University of Minnesota professor, told the House Science Committee's environment panel that her board is down to just five members since EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt declined to renominate nine of the board's 18 members. Four members have rotated off after their second terms and two subcommittee members also resigned in protest.

"I'm obviously concerned. My committee is no longer populated. I'm anxious that it gets repopulated as quickly as possible," she said.

An EPA spokesman has [said](#) the agency is reopening the nomination process and indicated Pruitt is looking to increase industry voices on the panel.

Rep. [Brian Babin](#) (R-Texas) defended the move, arguing there was no reason to "rubber

stamp" renominations when there is a pool of other interested scientists, and he questioned why "such an open and honest process" would be an issue.

But the panel's Democrats argued the move is part of a pattern of trying to undermine science, including by removing references to climate change from agency websites and deciding not to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos despite the recommendation of EPA's scientists.

"I'm concerned that today the Trump administration is attempting to silence federal scientists and offer alternative facts rather than scientific evidence," said the panel's top Democrat, Rep. [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#) (D-Texas).

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Exelon warns of more nuclear woes after PJM auction [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 05/24/2017 11:55 AM EDT

Exelon Corp. warned today that it may have to shut down its money-losing Three Mile Island nuclear plant before its license expires after the plant lost out for the third year in a row on an opportunity to provide standby power for the PJM market.

The plant was unable to promise low enough prices to participate in the 2020-2021 capacity program, which offers payments to power plants for the promise of delivering electricity when regional grid operators call on them.

Three Mile Island "did not clear in auction, placing it at risk of early retirement," Exelon said in a [statement](#). The company blamed the plant's woes on "continued low wholesale power prices and the lack of federal or Pennsylvania energy policies that value zero-emissions nuclear energy."

While the plant's operating license would let it run into 2034, Exelon said it only has obligations to run Three Mile Island through May 2019, leaving its fate an open question after that. "Exelon has been working with stakeholders on options for the continued operation of TMI," it said.

The 837-megawatt reactor didn't clear the two previous capacity auctions and has been losing money for five years, the company said. Its [2016 annual report](#) labeled Three Mile Island as its plant with "the greatest risk of early retirement."

Exelon has previously warned about shutting down nuclear plants in New York and Illinois only to reverse those decisions after it successfully convinced those states to step in with new nuclear subsidy programs.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Pennsylvania legislature [recently created](#) a bipartisan, bicameral "nuclear energy caucus" although it's unclear whether when or if the group will move legislation. Nuclear-friendly programs in New York and Illinois are in the early stages of being challenged in court and will determine how other states proceed with any new energy initiatives that critics say distort electricity markets.

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Trump ditches his feud in gracious visit with the pope [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and Giada Zampano | 05/24/2017 05:54 AM EDT

VATICAN CITY — President Donald Trump visited Wednesday with Pope Francis, one of his highest profile feuding partners from last year's campaign, exchanging gifts in a meeting that the president labeled "fantastic."

Trump's stop at the Vatican comes amid a nine-day, multi-nation trip, his first as president. Trump also met Wednesday with Italian political leaders, but the visit with Pope Francis was widely considered one of the trip's crucial moments, given the rhetoric the two men had hurled at one another from across the Atlantic during the presidential election.

The president was effusively gracious to the pope throughout the meeting, according to the traveling pool of reporters who were allowed to observe some of Trump's time with him, thanking him repeatedly as they exchanged gifts. Trump again told the pope, "Thank you. Thank you. I won't forget what you said," as their meeting came to a close. Pope Francis responded by telling the president "buena suerte," Spanish for "good luck."

"Honor of a lifetime to meet His Holiness Pope Francis. I leave the Vatican more determined than ever to pursue PEACE in our world," Trump wrote on Twitter following his visit.

Trump was accompanied at the meetings, which a traveling pool of reporters was briefly allowed to see, by senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner and his wife Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter who is also a White House adviser. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, First Lady Melania Trump and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster were also among the U.S. delegation.

Both the first lady and the president's daughter wore black dresses and black veils, in accordance with the Vatican custom for women who meet the pontiff. Pope Francis could be heard by reporters asking the first lady, who is from Slovenia, if she had been giving the president potizza, a Slovenian dessert.

A readout of the visit provided by the Vatican called the meeting between the two men "cordial" and said they spoke of "the promotion of peace in the world through political negotiation and inter-religious dialogue, with particular reference to the situation in the Middle East and the protection of Christian communities."

Both Trump and the pope share a "joint commitment in favor of life and freedom of worship and conscience," the Vatican noted, as well as a hope for a "serene collaboration" between the U.S. government and the Catholic Church in the U.S. on issues including immigration, healthcare and education.

The president presented Pope Francis with a first edition set of books written by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as well as a bronze statue that the White House said "represents hope for a

peaceful tomorrow."

"This is a gift for you. These are books from Martin Luther King. I think you will enjoy them," Trump told the pope.

The pope, in return, gave Trump a set of his own writings, including his 2015 encyclical on climate change and the environment. Also among the pope's gifts to Trump was a copy of this year's World Day of Peace message, which the Pope said he had personally signed for Trump. The president told Pope Francis that "I'll be reading" what he was given.

Also among the gifts for Trump was a medal made by a Roman artist with an olive branch on it, which the pope said symbolized peace. The president responded by telling Pope Francis that "we can use peace."

The meeting, which the pool report noted was stiff at its start, marked a dramatic warming between the two leaders, who have regularly been at odds over issues including immigration and refugees. The pope has been especially critical of Trump's promise to build a wall along U.S.-Mexico border, visiting and saying mass along the Mexican side of the border and telling reporters last year that "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian."

Trump called the pope's statement "disgraceful" in a statement released by his campaign, adding that "if and when the Vatican is attacked by ISIS, which as everyone knows is ISIS's ultimate trophy, I can promise you that the Pope would have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been President because this would not have happened."

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How Trump killed political mudslinging [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti | 05/24/2017 05:15 AM EDT

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — In Montana's upcoming special election, Republican Greg Gianforte and Democrat Rob Quist are getting pounded on the airwaves and in the local papers. Democrats paint Gianforte as an out-of-touch plutocrat with financial ties to Russia and ISIS. Republicans frame Quist, a musician, as a tax-dodging pothead who's skipped out on his debts and performed at a nudist resort.

Yet political pros from Kalispell to Washington, D.C. are amazed that so little of the mud seems to be sticking.

Now some are wondering if it's the new normal after a bitter 2016 presidential election campaign marked by an avalanche of attacks and sensational revelations against Donald Trump that once would have doomed candidates to defeat.

"The threshold for oppo is certainly higher and the shock value is at a different level given Trump," said longtime Democratic strategist Zac Petkanas, a veteran of the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign, pointing to a new, hyper-charged

political landscape constantly filled with Trump news.

Private GOP polling shows Thursday's contest for Montana's lone seat in the House of Representatives has tightened slightly in the home stretch. Gianforte confirmed as much on Tuesday, twice declaring to roughly 40 residents in a park here that, "This race is closer than it should be."

Among other things, Gianforte was still dealing with political blowback from the health care reform bill — the New York Times reported that he had praised his party's unpopular American Health Care Act in a private call with Washington lobbyists after refusing to take a public stance on it earlier in the day.

But that wasn't all. He's been the subject of reports asserting he has financial ties to Russian companies under sanction by the United States, and that he owns a stake in a Swiss cement company accused of making payments to ISIS.

Yet Gianforte remains the favorite, leading strategists to question what exactly it will take to break through in a noisy political ecosystem dominated by Trump, and whether the opposition research hits on him have just faded into background noise.

"There's been so much money thrown at this race — it's the most expensive race in Montana's history and the shortest race in Montana's history — [that] it's reached a saturation point," said Montana GOP Sen. Steve Daines, who held the House seat from 2013 to 2015 and is close to Gianforte.

Local operatives on both sides say their internal polling numbers for Quist have also barely budged, despite reports of the Democrat's rocky financial history — including tax liens — regular marijuana use and news that he was taking a salary from his campaign. (Public polling has been sparse for this race.)

"What moves a voter is not always going to align with what the national media is covering in a given day, so you need to adapt for that reality in the Trump era," said Jessica Mackler, president of American Bridge, the main Democratic opposition research group. That means the onus is now on researchers to find new ways to distribute their material, she said, indicating that the circulation of packaged hits online might be more effective than trying to place them in a traditional press that's so focused on Trump.

Some trace the phenomenon directly to the new president, on whom opponents on both sides of the aisle struggled to land a campaign-altering punch. It wasn't that research had no effect on Trump by November 2016 — he entered office as the least popular president-elect ever, Mackler noted — but his opponents were so overwhelmed with the amount of material suddenly flooding the zone that they were unsuccessful in using it to create a single narrative against him that resonated with enough voters.

"If you think of a campaign as a ship sailing from Point A to Point B, the role of opposition research on either side is missiles that sink the ship by driving the hull underwater," explained Colin Reed, the executive director of America Rising, the largest Republican opposition research firm.

"If you look at a guy like Donald Trump, he is someone who had decades worth of universal name ID. He was a reality star with a show, people knew who he was, he had lived and thrived

in the busiest media market in the country. So he had a hull that could withstand attacks, because people felt like they knew him," said Reed, whose group spent years going after Hillary Clinton and successfully driving her favorability rating down ahead of 2016.

But with Trump now in office after a scarring campaign, the political media environment is desensitized to what would previously be major surprises, said researchers on both sides, pointing to how little national attention has been paid to Quist and Gianforte's headlines, considering their shock value and the national focus on their special election.

With the threshold for breakthrough oppo suddenly higher than ever, the parties are placing an extra premium on finding the kind of penetrating intel that might cut through the muddle. That's why the research department was the only one deemed important enough to be left intact as the Democratic Party's new chairman took over this year. It's why the RNC's research staff has ballooned to 10 researchers, and why Washington is now experiencing a boom in oppo, as outside groups staff up and Democrats search for the silver bullet that they hope will derail the Trump presidency.

"We've found that we need an even larger war room operation, and an even larger rapid response operation," said Mike Reed, the Republican National Committee's research director. "We need to always just be faster in responding. There's a need for speed, to push back, to break through the cycle."

In Georgia's Sixth Congressional District, Republicans believe oppo work on Democrat Jon Ossoff — like revealing that he doesn't live in the district and that he'd done work for Al Jazeera — did have some impact, crediting it with helping to suppress his support enough to force a runoff vote in April. But that race is widely regarded as a toss-up now, in a district HHS Secretary Tom Price routinely won by 20 or more — suggesting that Ossoff is in fact vastly over-performing and relatively undamaged.

"For better or worse, campaigns have become another form of reality television where colorful aspects of a candidate's biography may not be treated as a vice at all, but rather as proof of their authenticity," said Brian Fallon, a senior Clinton aide in 2016. "In the aftermath of Trump's election, it's fair to wonder whether anything is disqualifying anymore."

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GOP turns to familiar foil amid Trump woes: Pelosi [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle and Gabriel Debenedetti | 05/24/2017 05:20 AM EDT

House Republicans are turning to a reliable villain to rev up their listless base: Nancy Pelosi.

Afraid of the ripple effect of President Donald Trump's early scandals, the GOP is looking to motivate conservative voters by painting all Democratic candidates with Pelosi's "San Francisco liberal values." It's an old standby for Republicans, which they're testing out again in special House elections in Montana and Georgia, where Democrats are running unexpectedly strong in GOP-friendly districts.

"I think we'll see if it works. I believe it still works," National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Steve Stivers of Ohio said of the GOP focus on Pelosi.

Pelosi remains a deeply unpopular figure among GOP voters. She has only a 14 percent favorability rating with Republicans, according to a Politico/Morning Consult poll released Wednesday. And she doesn't do much better with independents — just 20 percent of those voters view her favorably.

But in what's shaping up to be a tough environment for Republicans driven by Trump's tumultuous administration, some Democrats are starting to think, or at least hope, that the Pelosi-bashing trick might be growing old.

"A national campaign, using her as the boogeyman, I don't think it's going to work anymore," said Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.). "It's a playbook that worked for them. And people tend to stay with what works until it doesn't. ... But I think it's a hopeful smokescreen on their part that maybe [they think] will deflect from Trump."

Republicans have long demonized Pelosi, even before she won the speaker's gavel in 2006, in a strategy that her supporters say reeks of sexism. But the plan for the most part has been wildly successful, with the GOP controlling the House since 2010 and likely for the foreseeable future. And with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton gone but Pelosi still House minority leader, she's Republicans' primary Democratic punching bag.

This time, Republicans aren't the only ones tuning in to see whether vilifying Pelosi is still a winning strategy. Pelosi's caucus, restless after years in the minority under her leadership, is watching what happens now more than ever. And some are already privately demanding change if Democrats don't pick up one of the special election seats up for grabs.

"There's a real widespread sense if the Republicans' only attack on us is Nancy Pelosi, why are we leading with our chin?" said one House Democrat. "There's a greater and greater sense that it's time for a change in leadership."

Pelosi's advocates say any talk of a change in leadership is minor at most and completely unrealistic. And, they argue, Republicans are only targeting her because they have nothing to show for having all the power in Washington.

"The GOP brand is in tatters, and their top legislative priority, Trumpcare, polls at 17 percent," said Jorge Aguilar, executive director of Pelosi for Congress. "The tired, rehashed strategy of attacking Pelosi doesn't work and demonstrates just how bankrupt of ideas House Republicans are."

"Clearly, House Republicans recognize they have no message to run on in the midterms and they're desperately grasping at straws," said Tyler Law, a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spokesman.

While the special election for Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price's old seat in Georgia's 6th Congressional District pits Republican Karen Handel against Democrat Jon Ossoff, Republicans in Georgia and Washington have tried to shove Pelosi front and center, peppering mentions of her name and her picture into paid ads for months.

Republicans have used the Pelosi strategy so frequently that many Democratic strategists

working on House races now bake in an assumption that they'll have to defend against that attack into their initial game plan. And that pattern has continued in the closing days of the race for Montana's at-large district, which was vacated by now-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

A recent spot run by the Congressional Leadership Fund, the super PAC affiliated with Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), for example, closes by placing pictures of Democratic candidate Rob Quist and Pelosi next to each other.

"Quist doesn't stand with you, and in Washington Quist would stand with Nancy Pelosi and her liberal, out-of-touch agenda, not Montana," the narrator says. "You wouldn't trust Pelosi with your vote. Why trust Rob Quist?"

In a new robo-call running in the state, Vice President Mike Pence also gets in on the action, urging voters, "Don't let Nancy Pelosi and the liberal Democrats take this seat out of Republican hands."

One sign outside of Helena even included the words: Quist + Pelosi = GUN CONTROL.

Pelosi has appeared far more than any other national figure in Republican advertising in the two marquee special election races — even though Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders spent the past weekend in Montana campaigning for Quist, and Pelosi's personal involvement has been minimal. The ads paint her as too liberal and too out-of-touch for the voters in the districts.

And that's been a cause for consternation among Democrats involved in both campaigns, as well as for those thinking about the party's broader strategy as it looks to win over the kind of Republican-leaning and independent voters it will need to seize the House in 2018.

Several rank-and-file Democrats said there have been quiet, small-group discussions recently about whether there should be a leadership shakeup ahead of the 2018 midterms, and, if so, when.

Still, it seems unlikely that House Democrats, long publicly resistant to the party change that many privately say is needed, would choose now to turn their caucus upside down.

Even members who say it's time for a fresh leadership slate — Pelosi and her deputy, House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), have led the caucus since 2003 — say the intracaucus tensions aren't as discernible right now. And they're generally happy with the way Pelosi has challenged Trump, called attention to his potential ties to Russia and united the caucus to fight GOP efforts to repeal Obamacare.

But there is an increasing awareness within the caucus, lawmakers and operatives say, that Pelosi's image could haunt them in ways it never has before. If Democrats have a real chance to take back the House by making the midterms a referendum on the president — a luxury they didn't have in the Obama era — could Pelosi stand in the way?

"Watching these specials, I've thought the name Nancy Pelosi could be the finger in the dike that prevents a wave from taking over," said one long-time Democratic consultant. "And I think Democrats are silly not to think that's an issue."

To hear Republicans tell it, using Pelosi as their main cudgel is an obvious play. After Pelosi was reelected Democratic leader, Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway tweeted, "What a relief. I was worried they had learned from the elections & might be competitive and

cohesive again."

And since Pelosi is not perceived as a "resistance" figure in the same national way that Obama or Sanders are, tying Democratic candidates to her doesn't lend them the kind of anti-Trump feeling that might appeal to some women and independents in these suburban districts, according to national operatives and pollsters.

Many Democratic strategists dismiss the idea that Pelosi's image is a serious drag on the party, noting that Trump is far better known and more controversial, and that Republicans have been running on an anti-Pelosi line long enough that they've figured out how to combat it.

"This is what Republicans do because they're pathetic little frat boys who don't have policies to run on," said one Democratic aide.

But within the House Democratic Caucus, some members have grown concerned that Republicans see a chance to replicate their success from previous midterm cycles — chatter that only grew last month after Ossoff missed a chance to avoid a runoff in his race by 2 percentage points, after months of being hammered as a Pelosi lackey.

"We should all be concerned," said one House Democrat, "that this could be a political liability for us to pick up seats."

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the National Biodiesel Board: EPA won't settle — Enbridge gets cross-border pipeline permit — Cochran not returning today
Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 4:07:58 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/16/2017 04:06 PM EDT

With help from Emily Holden

EPA WON'T SETTLE: EPA chief Scott Pruitt today signed a [directive](#) — and accompanying [memo](#) — aimed at curtailing the "sue and settle" practice from the agency. "EPA has previously sought to resolve lawsuits filed against it through consent decrees and settlement agreements that appeared to be the result of collusion with outside groups," the directive says. It calls for more agency outreach to industry groups and will require the agency to post various documents related to lawsuits online, Alex Guillén [reports](#).

Pruitt, along with other Republicans, has long been critical of EPA for settling suits with green groups over missed statutory deadlines. Environmentalist groups and Democrats, however, say the consent decrees generally only lock in a timeline for action, not the underlying regulatory details.

The move is garnering praise from some: Daren Bakst, a research fellow in agricultural policy at The Heritage Foundation, commended EPA "for going after the egregious sue and settle practice" in a statement today. "The EPA is making it clear that the public and the integrity of the rulemaking process are no longer going to be sacrificed for the political objectives of narrow interests," Bakst said.

— **Sierra Club Environmental Law Program Director Pat Gallagher** called the move a perpetration of "lies about the law as an excuse for refusing enforcing it." In a statement, Gallagher said, "The government generally seeks to negotiate settlements precisely because of significant legal vulnerability — and Pruitt's abuse of the law by delaying, obstructing and blocking numerous public health safeguards means he is extremely vulnerable to being held accountable in court."

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Happy Monday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

**** Presented by the National Biodiesel Board:** President Trump repeatedly pledged to protect biodiesel and the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). But EPA's latest actions threaten the 64,000 jobs supported by biodiesel. A strong RFS will be key to keeping these jobs and upholding his promise. Tell EPA to grow the RFS: <http://bit.ly/2ghDL03> **

ENBRIDGE GETS ITS PERMIT: The State Department today signed off on an Enbridge pipeline expansion that would bring up to 890,000 barrels a day of Canadian oil sands crude to refineries in the U.S. Midwest, Ben Lefebvre reports. Enbridge Energy's Line 67 Pipeline, which won the cross-border [permit](#), would transport as much oil sands crude as Keystone XL. More [here](#).

COCHRAN WON'T RETURN TO WASHINGTON TODAY: [Thad Cochran](#), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, is still out of commission and will not return to Washington today as planned. Cochran's absence denies Senate Republicans a reliable vote as they take up a must-pass budget later this week, POLITICO's Seung Min Kim and Burgess Everett report. Cochran's office said today that Cochran, who has been recovering in Mississippi from urological issues, has developed another urinary tract infection that will keep him in his home state. More [here](#).

— **Postponed:** The Senate Appropriations Committee today postponed a subcommittee [markup](#) of the Interior-Environment spending bill that had been scheduled for Tuesday.

TRUMP HINTS AT PULLING OUT OF IRAN DEAL: President Donald Trump said today that he decertified Iran's compliance with the landmark nuclear agreement because he is "tired of being taken advantage of" and hinted that the U.S. could still fully pull out of the deal, POLITICO's Louis Nelson [writes](#). Congress now has about two months to decide whether to reimpose sanctions on Iran, and Trump said he would wait to decide whether to pull out entirely. "We'll see what phase two is. Phase two might be positive. It might be very negative. Might be a total termination," the president said during a Cabinet meeting today. "That's a very real possibility. Some would say that's a greater possibility. But it also could turn out to be very positive. We'll see what happens."

HAPPY NUCLEAR SCIENCE WEEK! The Department of Energy joins the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in celebration of [Nuclear Science Week](#), Oct. 16-20, DOE said today. As part, the Office of Nuclear Energy holds an "[Ask Me Anything](#)" on Reddit today with experts from the National Labs, and will hold a "Millennial Nuclear Caucus," on Oct. 19, where "young leaders in the field will come together to discuss the future of nuclear energy."

PUERTO RICO FACES ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS: The Associated Press today reports on the "massive environmental emergency" playing out in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria, with no end in sight. "I think this will be the most challenging environmental response after a hurricane that our country has ever seen," said Judith Enck, former administrator of the EPA region that includes Puerto Rico under Obama. AP reports: "EPA officials said that of last week they still had not been unable to inspect five of the island's 18 Superfund sites — highly contaminated toxic sites targeted for cleanup because of risks to human health and the environment — including the former U.S. Navy bombing range on the island of Vieques. 'I just wish we had more resources to deal with it,' said Catherine McCabe, the EPA deputy regional administrator." Read it [here](#).

OHIO RIVER DAM REOPENS: The Ohio River is now open at Lock & Dam 52 as of today, the Waterways Council, Inc. [said](#). After closing for nearly a week after waters rose above the maximum locking stage in the aftermath of Hurricane Nate, the river reopened on Saturday. Lock & Dam 52 closed from Sept. 6-14 due to an unscheduled maintenance outage. Currently, there are 58 vessels with 658 barges waiting to transit at the 89-year-old facility.

STUDY: LAND USE PRACTICES COULD CURB CLIMATE: Land use practices could be more important to curbing climate change than previously thought, according to a study published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences by scientists from the Nature Conservancy and more than a dozen other groups. Better management of forests, farmland, grasslands and wetlands could provide 37 percent of carbon reductions needed to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius by 2030, when accounting for cost constraints,

according to the study. More [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Trump has taken longer to name a science adviser than any modern president, [The Washington Post](#).
- Indy Q&A: Harry Reid on why coal industry is doomed, Yucca Mountain still dead and his pick in Nevada's gubernatorial primary, [The Nevada Independent](#).
- Trump voters in storm-ravaged county confront climate change, [Associated Press](#).
- Oil prices could see prolonged rally on Iraqi and Kurdish tensions, expert says, [CNBC](#).
- Governors push clean energy technology, [U.S. News & World Report](#).
- Porter Ranch residents exposed to Aliso Canyon gas leak have uranium, lithium and other chemicals in their bodies, health study shows, [Los Angeles Daily News](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Trump says he may try to talk Bannon out of [pushing GOP challengers](#)
- Florida's Senate race shaping up as [a clash of titans](#)
- Kelly tries to get [empty administration jobs](#) filled fast

**** Presented by the National Biodiesel Board:** Made from an increasingly diverse mix of resources such as recycled cooking oil, soybean oil and animal fats, biodiesel is a renewable, clean-burning diesel replacement that can be used in existing diesel engines without modification. More than 64,000 workers rely on biodiesel to support their livelihood. What happens to biodiesel matters to American workers, rural communities and real families. But EPA's latest actions threaten the future of those jobs by proposing cuts to the successful Renewable Fuel Standard. Administrator Pruitt should respect the promises made by President Trump. Watch the president promise to protect the RFS here: <http://bit.ly/2xn5Sgm> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/epa-wont-settle-025070>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Pruitt issues EPA directive to curb 'sue and settle' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/16/2017 12:34 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today signed a [directive](#) and accompanying [memo](#) meant to curtail what he has criticized as EPA's "sue and settle" practice.

The new directive calls for more agency outreach to industry groups and will require EPA to post various documents related to such lawsuits online.

Pruitt and other Republicans have long been critical of EPA for settling suits with

environmental groups over missed statutory deadlines. Green groups and Democrats note the consent decrees generally only lock in a timeline for the agency to act, not the underlying regulatory details.

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State Department approves Enbridge oil sands pipeline expansion [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/16/2017 03:20 PM EDT

The State Department today approved a cross-border permit for an Enbridge pipeline expansion that would bring up to 890,000 barrels a day of Canadian oil sands crude to refineries in the U.S. Midwest.

The Line 67 approval green-lights a project that would transport as much oil sands crude as the more controversial Keystone XL pipeline planned by TransCanada. The State Department found the expansion would serve the national interest, but the Enbridge project continues to meet resistance from environmental groups that are protesting any increase in shipments from Canadian oil sands.

Enbridge did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Its Line 67 currently has a capacity of 500,000 barrels per day.

Keystone XL remains in limbo waiting for state regulators in Nebraska to approve its route there, even after President Donald Trump made it one of his first acts to promote the pipeline.

WHAT'S NEXT: Enbridge is expected to update the Line 67 expansion plans during its third-quarter earnings next month.

To view online [click here](#).

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Cochran still out of commission because of health woes [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Burgess Everett | 10/16/2017 10:25 AM EDT

Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) will not return to Washington on Monday as planned due to continued health problems — denying Senate Republicans a reliable vote as they take up a must-pass budget later this week.

The Senate is still planning to vote on its budget this week regardless of Cochran's presence, Republican sources said. But they have little room for error with Cochran out, and GOP leaders are laboring to convince both Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and John McCain of Arizona to support the fiscal blueprint.

Cochran's office said Monday that Cochran, who has been recovering in Mississippi from urological issues, has developed another urinary tract infection that will keep him in his home state. Doctors monitored Cochran and advised him to stay home to recover from his health conditions, his office said.

"He will continue his recuperation at home in Mississippi," Cochran's chief of staff, Brad White, said in a statement. "The senator has expressed his intention to return to the Senate when his health permits, and to fulfill his commitment and duties to the people of his state."

The statement did not indicate when Cochran, the Senate Appropriations chairman, would return to Washington, and a Cochran spokesman said only that the senator's plan is to "get back as soon as possible." The Appropriations Committee is slated to take up spending bills on Thursday, although subcommittee markups on Tuesday were postponed.

Privately, Republicans have been increasingly concerned about the health of Cochran, who is in his seventh term in the Senate.

[Several sources](#) indicated last week that Republicans are worried Cochran's absence could last through the end of the year, which would mean the chief senator overseeing government spending would not be present for the year-end funding fight. Current government funding runs out on Dec. 8.

Cochran is not up for reelection until 2020 and is viewed as a reliable leadership ally. His seat was fiercely contested in a 2014 primary, and GOP leaders poured in resources to save Cochran from the insurgent Chris McDaniel, a state senator. McDaniel is weighing a challenge to Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) next year, and could run for Cochran's seat if he ends up stepping down and a special election is scheduled.

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, is next in line to chair the committee and often plays a significant role in fiscal negotiations, a scenario that could be heightened if Cochran is gone for a prolonged period.

Cochran's absence in the Senate could also help thwart the GOP's broader agenda.

Republicans control 52 votes in the chamber, and just three defections or absences usually means that the GOP would not be able to pass a budget resolution — which is necessary to provide Republicans with procedural powers to advance a tax plan without Democratic support.

The Senate is slated to take up its budget later this week, and Paul and McCain are both viewed as potential "no" votes.

However, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), who is on trial for federal corruption charges, is also expected to be absent from the Senate this week, which would give Republicans slightly more breathing room even with Cochran's absence.

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Trump freshly hints at fully pulling out of Iran deal [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 10/16/2017 12:19 PM EDT

President Donald Trump said Monday that he decertified Iran's compliance with a landmark nuclear agreement because he is "tired of being taken advantage of," while also hinting that the U.S. could still fully pull out of the deal.

"I feel strongly about what I did. I'm tired of being taken advantage of as a nation," the president said Monday during a meeting with his cabinet. "This nation has been taken advantage of for many, many years, for many decades, frankly, and I'm tired of watching it."

Trump announced his move to decertify Iranian compliance with the landmark 2015 nuclear deal on Friday, triggering legislation that gives Congress 60 days to decide whether or not to reimpose certain sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement. Trump has lambasted the nuclear deal, negotiated by former President Barack Obama along with the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany, as "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into."

The president said Monday that he is waiting for "phase two" of the deal, one that will either improve it or prompt him to withdraw the U.S. entirely. Of the latter option, the president said, "some would say that's a greater possibility."

"We'll see what phase two is. Phase two might be positive. It might be very negative. Might be a total termination," the president said. "That's a very real possibility. Some would say that's a greater possibility. But it also could turn out to be very positive. We'll see what happens."

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Trump expresses wariness of Bannon's 'season of war' [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Cristiano Lima | 10/16/2017 12:44 PM EDT

President Donald Trump, who in 2016 ran as the nontraditional, nationalist insurgent riding roughshod over the establishment, on Monday expressed skepticism about Steve Bannon's attempt to produce a wave of such candidates in coming Republican primaries.

"Some of the people he may be looking at, I'm going to see if we talk him out of that," Trump said during a Rose Garden news conference when asked about Bannon's pledge to recruit primary challengers to all but one sitting Republican senator in 2018.

While it's unclear whether Trump will follow through, his comments could mark a line in the sand, with Trump appearing to describe a willingness to stand by Republican incumbents against Bannon-backed challengers.

Trump's stance was muddled, however, because roughly two hours earlier he appeared to voice support for Bannon's vowed war on establishment figures, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Trump told reporters that Bannon "is a friend of mine" and is "very

committed to getting things passed" when asked about the Breitbart News chief's attacks on McConnell and other GOP leaders who have failed to pass his legislative agenda.

But after a private meeting with McConnell, Trump expressed the skepticism about Bannon's efforts, especially his support for GOP Senate candidates who will challenge McConnell's leadership role.

"Just so you understand, the Republican Party is very, very unified," Trump declared during the Rose Garden news conference, with McConnell by his side.

Trump's apparent commitment to stand by incumbent Republican senators against his former campaign CEO and White House strategist shows that even a tradition-bucking president may hue to the party line in the interest of moving his agenda forward and maintaining a governing majority.

McConnell, who Bannon has been publicly critical of since being ousted from his West Wing role in August, said that despite any differences between himself and Bannon, his goal was simple: "to win elections in November."

The Senate Republican leader said that regardless of who won during the party primaries, what mattered was that they carried their victory into the general election.

"You have to nominate people who can actually win because winners make policy and losers go home," he said. In a swipe at Bannon, he cited controversial Republican candidates from recent elections who, after beating more moderate opponents in primaries, lost to Democrats in what were widely seen as winnable races.

Bannon on Saturday ratcheted up his war against the GOP establishment — and McConnell specifically — as he vowed to challenge any Senate Republican who doesn't publicly condemn attacks on Trump.

"Yeah, Mitch, the donors are not happy. They've all left you. We've cut your oxygen off," Bannon said during a speech to religious conservatives at the Values Voter Summit in Washington.

"There's a time and season for everything and right now it's a season of war against a GOP establishment," Bannon added. "It's no longer acceptable to come and pat you on the head and tell you everything is going to be fine just to get those people in office."

Since leaving the West Wing, Bannon has raised his public profile, holding campaign events and delivering speeches to further his campaign against establishment figures. He's also relying on the powerful forces of the Breitbart News platform and the support of the ultra-wealthy Mercer family to further his agenda.

Trump's own frustration with GOP establishment leaders was clear on Monday. He told reporters earlier in the day that he "can understand where Steve Bannon is coming from" given Republican lawmakers' failure so far to pass Obamacare repeal, tax reform and other big ticket items.

While Trump stressed that he had "great relationships with many senators," he gave a grim assessment of the work by GOP lawmakers on Capitol Hill. "They are not getting the job done," Trump told reporters while meeting with his Cabinet. "And I'm not going to blame

myself. They are not getting the job done."

The president added that "there are Republicans frankly that should be ashamed of themselves" for their inability to convert on repealing the Affordable Care Act and passing major tax reform legislation.

But at the Rose Garden press conference, Trump and McConnell, standing side-by-side, sought to strike a united front.

"We've been friends for a long time. We are probably now — despite what we read — we're probably now, I think, at least as far as I'm concerned, closer than ever before," Trump said. "And the relationship is very good. We're fighting for the same thing."

"I wanna underscore what the president said: We have the same agenda," McConnell said.

Trump has also already shown a comfort in breaking with Bannon, joining McConnell to support Alabama Sen. Luther Strange against a primary challenge from the far-right former judge, Roy Moore.

Moore won by about nine points, and Bannon introduced him for his victory speech.

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Florida's Senate race shaping up as a clash of titans [Back](#)

By Marc Caputo and Edward-Isaac Doveve | 10/16/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Sen. Bill Nelson went to Democratic leader Chuck Schumer this summer with an urgent plea.

Florida's Democratic Party was in disarray after the 2016 presidential debacle, the senator said, and he needed help from D.C. to prepare for a likely challenge next year by GOP Gov. Rick Scott, who's spent at least \$86 million of his own fortune on his two gubernatorial campaigns.

Anxious about holding onto seats — and aware that a milquetoast moderate who's been in politics for 30 years might not be ideal in the current political environment — the Senate minority leader convened a meeting of party hands. Present were Democratic National Committee chair Tom Perez, his aides and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee staff. They discussed reworking budgets and underwriting the Florida Democratic Party effort to help the three-term senior senator.

Nelson told the group that Democrats desperately needed to catch up on field staff in Florida, especially in the wake of the presidential and Senate race results last year that saw Republican-leaning voters flood the polls and took even plugged-in Democrats by surprise.

"The Democrats executed the 2012 playbook to perfection in 2016," said one person who attended the meeting. Republicans "wrote a new playbook, and it was a better one. [Nelson's]

point was and is that they didn't stop organizing."

Nelson is one of 10 Democrats up for reelection in states carried by President Donald Trump — and among the most vulnerable. A loss in Florida would all but relegate Democrats to the Senate minority for at least another two years; their hopes of winning the chamber next year are already exceedingly slim.

So Democrats have been targeting Scott as if he's already an announced candidate. They're airing digital ad buys against the Republican, launching early voter registration drives and coordinating sometimes-fractious progressive groups to boost Democratic voter turnout — a strategy that's paid dividends in two local elections.

The all-hands-on-deck response to Nelson's request speaks to the deep concerns among Democratic activists and elites worried about the three-term senator's lagging fundraising and the difficulty of motivating Democratic voters in off-year elections. Nelson — who took a month off from fundraising amid the recent hurricanes — is redoubling his efforts to fill his campaign coffers, notably with a series of fundraisers headlined by one of the party's rising stars, California Sen. Kamala Harris.

Democrats don't see much of a threat to Nelson if Scott doesn't run, and argue that the main reason the governor is a challenge is due to his deep pockets. Scott, who is termed out of office at the end of 2018, is expected to decide on a Senate bid by the end of this year or early next year.

"We'll all need to raise at least \$60 million for Bill," said one Democrat close to Nelson, and even then the incumbent would probably "get outspent by Scott by 2-to-1."

Due to its size and 10 media markets, Florida is so expensive to campaign in that operatives say a week's worth of campaign television ads statewide could cost nearly \$3 million next year. As of the second fundraising quarter this summer, Nelson had just \$5 million in the bank. Scott has about \$3 million in his political committee, but he's allowed to raise bigger chunks of money from corporate interests under state law as long as he's not a federal candidate.

Polls show the two are tied in a hypothetical matchup.

Nelson downplayed the urgency of his conversation with Schumer and said he wasn't special among vulnerable Democrats on the ballot next year. Schumer, he noted, has "got 10 senators, Democratic incumbents, in states that Trump won. So he's doing this for all of them."

Still, Nelson subscribes to the theory that you run unopposed or you run scared. And the 75-year-old senator — who served in the House and won two statewide elections for insurance commissioner before clinching three terms in the Senate — is pretty sure he'll face opposition.

"The way I approach an election, I assume nothing," Nelson said in April when asked about Scott. "I run scared as a jackrabbit."

The last Democrat to face Scott was former Gov. Charlie Crist, a moderate white centrist like Nelson. After their 2014 matchup, Crist described the effect of Scott's money and his formidable consulting team, OnMessage, as "a buzz saw." Nelson can expect the same treatment, according to OnMessage founder Curt Anderson, who said he can understand why

Democrats are worried.

"For Schumer and the Democrats, it really comes down to a numbers game: How do you get more seats if they've got 10 of them in states Trump won?" Anderson said.

"When it comes to the Senate, every state is the same. You get one vote for each," Anderson added. "And so you say, 'Wait a minute? Where's the biggest bang for the buck?' And Florida is really difficult because of how much it costs. You can get three states somewhere else for less money than you need to spend in Florida."

And when it comes to dropping big bucks in Florida, Scott has an extra pot of money — his "Let's Get to Work" political committee — in addition to his personal millions. Since the end of the 2016 election, Scott has raised almost \$3.9 million and spent nearly \$3 million on ads, polls and consultants.

Under Florida law, the governor can raise and spend unlimited dollars from corporations or individuals. If he were an announced federal candidate, his fundraising would be as constrained as Nelson's, which is largely limited to so-called "hard" donations from individuals capped at \$2,700 for each election.

So in delaying an official decision, Scott has an additional edge over Nelson in raising and spending money.

Privately, some Republicans have grouched that Scott has frozen the field and made it impossible for any viable GOP candidate to file and raise money. If Scott decides not to run, they say, the eventual GOP candidate will be at a disadvantage.

Anderson said none of that matters to Scott, who is focused now on his job as governor.

Nelson has never faced an opponent as tough as Scott. He dispatched two easy opponents in 2006 and 2012 to keep his seat.

But the same is true of Scott. He won his first election in 2010 and then reelection in 2014 during the midterm elections of President Barack Obama. Though those were strong Republican years, when Democrats were at pains to distance themselves from a relatively unpopular incumbent. Yet Scott never won a majority of the vote either time, winning by 1.2 and 1 percentage points, respectively.

The 2018 cycle could be a much tougher environment for Scott and other Republicans. Trump is far less popular heading into this midterm than Obama ever was, according to polls. And in two contested local elections this year, a Miami state Senate seat and the St. Petersburg mayoral race, Trump has been a drag on the Republican candidates as Democrats have enjoyed Election Day turnout advantages.

Trump has privately and publicly urged Scott to run for Senate.

Nelson has also sidled up to one of the state's most popular Republican politicians, his Senate colleague Marco Rubio. After Hurricane Irma ripped through the state, the pair went to events together throughout Florida, reinforcing Nelson's campaign theme of bipartisanship.

In contrast, Scott and Nelson weren't seen together after the hurricane. In a break with the typical non-political etiquette in response to hurricanes, the White House arranged for Scott to

have an event with Small Business Administration chief Linda McMahon and didn't inform either senator.

Rubio allies said the slight made little sense because the senator is next in line to chair the Senate's small business subcommittee and oversee McMahon's department and its response to the hurricane.

"The White House wanted an event to help Scott if he runs for Senate," one Republican familiar with the matter said.

Storm politics could cut different ways in a potential Nelson vs. Scott showdown. Nelson hopes the influx of Puerto Rican evacuees to Florida after Hurricane Maria will boost his chances in 2018.

"If they will register to vote, which I'm certainly going to encourage, because I can tell you among the Puerto Rican community in the greater Orlando area, they have been very embracing of my public service," Nelson said Sunday in a San Juan press conference, according to the [Miami Herald](#).

Since Oct. 3, more than 36,000 people from the 3.4 million-person island arrived in Miami International Airport, Orlando International Airport and Port Everglades. Thousands more arrived elsewhere in the state, which already has more than 1 million people of Puerto Rican descent. Tens of thousands more are expected.

As for Scott, while he initially received bipartisan praise immediately before Hurricane Irma hit, Democrats criticized his leadership after a power outage at a nursing home led to the death of 14 residents. They've also accused him of a type of "cronyism" for tapping a 29-year-old former travel aide, whom they say is unqualified, to run the state's emergency management department.

Scott has accused Democrats of exploiting a tragedy and has reacted to the nursing home deaths by issuing an emergency order requiring generators to power air-conditioners at the facilities. He's also called for language to be added to the state constitution to help protect nursing home residents.

But Democrats say the tragedy revealed Scott's weaknesses running the state, which may take on greater proportions as the recovery continues. Polls show that Scott, who was constantly on TV before and after the hurricane, had a boost in his approval ratings.

But Democrats predict it won't last.

"His mismanagement of Hurricane Irma," said Democratic Senate Campaign Committee communications director Lauren Passalacqua, "only magnifies a self-serving record of putting Floridians last."

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Kelly tries to get empty administration jobs filled fast [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 10/15/2017 05:42 PM EDT

White House chief of staff John Kelly is giving Cabinet secretaries more autonomy to pick top political appointees, reversing efforts under his predecessor Reince Priebus to run most appointments through the West Wing.

Kelly's goal, according to 10 interviews with White House officials and advisers close to the administration, is to do a better job of finding candidates for the hundreds of jobs throughout the administration that remain vacant almost nine months into President Donald Trump's first term.

"Being somebody from the Department of Defense, normally you've got key people in place and a clear chain of command," said Leon Panetta, a former White House chief of staff himself and former Secretary of Defense, who spoke to Kelly around the time he accepted the White House job. "It's very difficult to run anything if you don't have people responsible in those positions."

Kelly entered the White House with an unusually clear understanding of the flaws of the personnel process, according to two people close to him.

As a Cabinet pick and then as Department of Homeland Security secretary, Kelly was frequently exasperated during the transition and early days of the administration over his inability to choose his own staff. He got into frequent spats with the White House over filling a handful of top jobs in his department, according to one of the people close to him.

Other Cabinet secretaries, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, have had their [own problems](#) with the White House personnel office, with Mattis trying to circumvent it and hire his own staff.

"Look, everyone in the White House is upset. It's both a problem of getting candidates through the bureaucracy and through the Senate. Of course Kelly is upset," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, an informal adviser to Trump whose wife, Callista, has been nominated as Trump's Vatican ambassador. "The whole system is totally screwed up."

Part of the problem stems from the Trump administration's criteria for hiring staffers and top political appointees. Potential candidates must be loyal to the administration and not have spoken harshly about the president during the campaign.

That has created a particular problem when it comes to filling national security jobs, because scores of Republican experts, many of whom served in the George W. Bush administration, signed a letter criticizing the future president before the election.

Many experienced Republicans who ordinarily would have vied for middle- and top-level posts under a Republican president also decided to sit out the Trump administration in January, starving the president of choices when it came to picking appointees.

The president himself seems willing to tolerate vacancies indefinitely.

"I'm generally not going to make a lot of the appointments that would normally be - because you don't need them," Trump told Forbes in an interview which posted last week. "I mean, you look at some of these agencies, how massive they are, and it's totally unnecessary. They have

hundreds of thousands of people."

The White House press office did not respond to requests for comment.

Filling vacant jobs has taken on particular urgency in recent weeks, as the White House contends with thorny policy questions such as North Korea's growing nuclear might and the fate of the Iran deal. The administration is also trying to re-negotiate the NAFTA trade agreement and roll back parts of Obamacare through regulations and executive orders.

At the State Department, more than 78 jobs do not have a nominee out of 149 key positions, and 32 countries still don't have ambassadors in place, according to data kept by the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service.

The Treasury Department has 15 key slots open out of 28 significant Senate confirmed positions as the White House dives into selling tax reform.

Just last week, Treasury announced it would [not fill](#) its No. 2 deputy secretary slot after a second candidate dropped out of the running for it.

Kelly's own former job remains open two and a half months after he moved to the White House, with Trump nominating Kelly's No. 2 Kirstjen Nielsen this week after other potential nominees were passed over.

The Department of Health and Human Services, the agency responsible for overseeing the Affordable Care Act, lacks a Cabinet secretary after former Rep. Tom Price resigned after spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to charter private jets for government trips.

So far, the Senate has confirmed roughly 142 political appointees out of the 602 key jobs throughout the government, according to the Partnership for Public Service.

The presidential personnel office also got off to a rocky start. Its director Johnny DeStefano, who started right after the inauguration, had to find candidates for hundreds of key Senate-confirmed jobs without an existing pool of applicants after the administration discarded lists compiled by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was fired as transition head days after the election in November.

DeStefano also entered the job with no formal experience in executive recruiting or hiring. Previously, he worked for House Speaker John Boehner and the National Republican Congressional Committee.

At the White House, both Priebus and Steve Bannon, the former White House chief strategist, were seen as his high-level protectors. Their departures this summer have left DeStefano adrift inside Kelly's new power structure, according to two people close to the administration.

Kelly recently asked DeStefano to oversee the Office of Public Liaison, whose head George Sifakis left in August following Priebus' ouster.

DeStefano, who also retains his title as head of the personnel office, did not respond to requests for comment.

Outside conservative activists and groups are no longer blaming Senate Democrats for holding

up confirmations.

Last week, over 100 conservatives released a letter to remind both the administration and Capitol Hill that "personnel is policy."

The letter demands that Senate leadership schedule committee and floor action every Thursday and Friday and to work full weeks until Trump's nominees get confirmed. Among the signatories are Edwin Meese, former Attorney General under Ronald Reagan; Becky Norton Dunlop, a former Reagan adviser who worked on the Trump transition; Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, and Adam Brandon, President of FreedomWorks.

Republicans say that the slow pace of appointments impedes Trump's agenda. It ends up leaving much of the agency-level, or diplomatic work to government careerists who aren't necessarily supportive of the Trump agenda.

"The career people know how to keep the government going and respond to citizens, but if there is any desire to change what the government is doing, that is most effectively done if it is being led by a political appointee," said Clay Johnson, who oversaw presidential personnel under Bush. "So without the hundreds of political appointees at each of the key agencies, the administration of government will continue, but it will be hard for the Trump administration to change or eliminate something, or create something new."

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: Tax rewrite, ANWR headed to Trump — No records found for EPA Superfund task force — Bundy mistrial declared
Date: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 4:17:22 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/20/2017 04:15 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon, Emily Holden and Ben Lefebvre

TAX REWRITE HEADED TO TRUMP'S DESK: The House gave the final OK today on the GOP's tax overhaul, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), sending the bill to President Donald Trump's desk. The House was forced to vote a second time today on the \$1.5 trillion tax-cut measure after several provisions ran afoul of procedural rules in the Senate. Crucially, the bill contains a provision to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration and drilling — a long-sought victory for Alaska Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#).

Ahead of the House vote today, Trump touted ANWR's inclusion in the bill as one of its key accomplishments, pointing particularly to the fact his predecessors could not succeed in opening the refuge. "So, a friend of mine who is in the oil business said, 'I can't believe it, ANWR, they have been trying to get it for 40 years,'" Trump said during a press conference. "Forty years, and I didn't know that. ... We are going to start drilling in ANWR, one of the largest oil reserves in the world that for 40 years this country was unable to touch."

"That by itself would be a massive bill," Trump added. "It will be one of our biggest — one of our biggest oil reserves. ... Puts us at a level that we're not even at now and we are doing very well in terms of, as you know, energy. ... But that's when it hit me. When he said, you know, they have been trying to get that — the Bushes, everybody, all the way back to Reagan. Reagan tried to get it, Bush tried to get it, everybody tried to get it. They couldn't get it passed."

Democrats, greens vow to keep up the fight: Sens. [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.) and [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) joined a troupe of environmental groups and tribal representatives to promise they would fight against drilling in ANWR. The group did not offer specifics of what that would look like, only promising lawsuits in the unspecified future. But the fight could also go to banks' and drilling companies' boardrooms.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Our next [Afternoon Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. **

SUPERFUND TASK FORCE WON'T SHOW ITS WORK: EPA had no documents to turn over related to a 34-page task force [report](#) on new plans for cleaning up toxic waste Superfund sites, according to an [email](#) from a Justice Department lawyer responding to a Freedom of Information Act request by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. PEER asked for any documents reflecting the schedule of task force activities, meeting minutes and materials presented to the group, and the lawyer said there were none, other than a May 22, 2017 [memorandum](#).

PEER is doubtful the self-selected group of 107 EPA staffers could write the recommendations without forming any sort of paper trail. "Pruitt's plan for cleaning up toxic sites was apparently immaculately conceived, without the usual trappings of human parentage," PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch said in a written statement. The DOJ lawyer told PEER EPA would look for additional records but found none, according to Ruch. "It stretches credulity that 107 EPA staff members with no agenda or reference materials somehow wrote an intricate plan in 30 days," Ruch said. Many environmental groups are suing EPA over [delaying or refusing](#) to provide public records under FOIA. EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox could not comment on the specifics of the FOIA request and response.

BUNDY MISTRIAL DECLARED: A judge today declared a mistrial in the criminal case of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who led a 2014 armed stand-off in a dispute with BLM. U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro said federal prosecutors had failed to share documents with the defense, including FBI memos. A new trial date has been set for Feb. 26, 2018, Reuters reports, but it is unclear if the trial will proceed. "Acting U.S. Attorney Steven Myhre said prosecutors have yet to decide whether to pursue the case, and even if they do, the judge will hear defense arguments on Jan. 8 on whether to dismiss the case." Read [more](#).

NRC TO DISCUSS YUCCA DOCS SYSTEM: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled a two-day January meeting to discuss four options the agency might take for rebuilding a documentation system that housed information related to the licensing of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project. NRC's so-called Licensing Support Network was dismantled when regulators put the licensing process for the repository on ice in 2011. Over the summer, NRC leaders, in a 2-1 vote, [authorized](#) agency staff to spend up to \$110,000 on preliminary "information gathering" work on the licensing process in case Congress decided to approve new funds for Yucca Mountain after several years of financial drought.

"The information being collected will assist the Commission in making efficient, informed decisions concerning appropriate means for reconstituting the LSN's functionality if the currently suspended Yucca Mountain adjudication were to re-commence in the future," according to a Federal Register [notice](#) set to be published Thursday. Despite significant support in the House for new Yucca money, the Senate hasn't [supported](#) new funds. The meeting is slated for Jan. 30 and 31 at NRC headquarters.

REPORT: EMP ATTACK UNLIKELY TO IMPACT GRID NATIONWIDE:

Detonating an electromagnetic pulse device at high-altitude could knock out systems on the ground critical to the U.S. electric grid across several states, according to a [new study](#) from the Electric Power Research Institute, but wouldn't necessarily set off a "nationwide grid collapse." The study was limited to so-called late-stage pulses termed E3s and was analyzed under 11 different target locations. EPRI suggests a set of grid modifications to limit, block or disconnect EMP-induced currents that could damage transformers and other equipment. But the organization also said additional studies should be done on how E3 pulses might

compound the impacts of E1 and E2 pulses, which can damage communication and power plant SCADA systems, yet software capable of conducting those models "do not currently exist in a commercially available format."

ROSSELLÓ PLEDGES MIDTERM SHAKE-UP: Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló vowed to mobilize the 5.3 million Puerto Ricans living on the mainland to shake up the midterm elections in states ranging from Florida to California, Pro's Lorraine Woellert reports. Rosselló remains "infuriated about a Republican tax plan that he says could hobble the island's economy even as thousands of residents remain without power and water three months after Hurricane Maria," Lorraine writes. "Everybody has seen the damage of the storm and yet policy decisions go in the opposite direction of where they should go," Rosselló said on Tuesday. "We're not just going to stand by. We are going to take action." Read [more](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Saudi Arabia hunts for oil assets in the U.S., [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- New York City comptroller proposes pension funds to cut fossil fuel portfolio, [Reuters](#).
- Exxon ends restrictions on meeting shareholders, [Financial Times](#).
- Trump nominee acknowledges role in under reporting radiation in drinking water, [News 5 Cleveland](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Ryan calls reports that he'll retire "[rank speculation](#)"
- [Crunch time arrives](#) for Congress to avert shutdown
- Nadler wins top Democratic post [on Judiciary Committee](#)

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard, **helping to boost the U.S. economy**, was signed into law ten years ago this week. According to a recent analysis in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, the RFS boosted the value of the U.S. agricultural sector by \$14.1 billion in 2015, or nearly \$6,800 per American farm. Thanks to the RFS, corn prices averaged \$3.58 per bushel in 2015; without the program, corn prices would have averaged just \$2.75 per bushel, far below the cost of production.. Last year, the production of 15.3 billion gallons of ethanol supported more than 339,000 direct and indirect jobs across all sectors of the economy. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. #thankyouRFS **

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/tax-rewrite-anwr-headed-to-trump-058991>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

NRC staff starts info-gathering tasks on Yucca Mountain [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/08/2017 02:45 PM EDT

Leaders at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have directed staff to do some preliminary "information-gathering" on the licensing process for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project.

According to an [agency memo](#) dated July 31 and publicly released today, NRC staff has been permitted to spend up to \$110,000 to hold meetings on how it might reconstitute its so-called Licensing Support Network — a system that compiles documents related to its hearing process. And the staff can conduct training on the process and survey potential hearing venues in Nevada.

"As staff develops any further proposals for Commission consideration, it should retain focus on those activities needed to re-establish infrastructure to support the conduct of the proceeding," the memo states, referring to Yucca Mountain's long-stalled licensing review.

All of the \$110,000 would come from a pool of money previously allocated by Congress to work on Yucca. President Donald Trump's fiscal 2018 budget proposal includes \$30 million for the NRC to restart the project's licensing process that stalled several years ago.

When agency leaders [voted](#) on a [proposal from NRC staff](#) earlier this year, NRC Chairman Kristine Svinicki wrote that the activities "are not a resumption of the suspended proceeding." Instead, they were "appropriate steps" to improve the agency's "readiness to execute the budget requested."

But Commissioner Jeff Baran, a Democrat, who said it was "premature" to start the information-gathering work, had insisted that "we have no idea whether Congress will ultimately appropriate Nuclear Waste Fund monies for this purpose."

WHAT'S NEXT: The agency memo did not stipulate a time frame for staff to complete the work, but the goal is to be prepared for Congress to infuse more cash into the process in fiscal 2018, which begins Oct. 1.

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Shimkus: Nuclear waste bill mired in dispute with appropriators [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/08/2017 06:10 PM EDT

Rep. [John Shimkus](#) is in the midst of a face-off with members of the powerful Appropriations Committee over language in his [bipartisan](#) nuclear waste bill that would limit their say in how money from the Nuclear Waste Fund is spent.

The Illinois Republican's bill, [H.R. 3053](#), would authorize the Energy Department to open one interim storage facility while regulators review plans to permanently house it at Yucca Mountain, which would be expanded in size. But the measure also sets aside mandatory spending from the fund, an account amassed from fees on nuclear-generated electricity that was [valued](#) at \$46 billion last year.

Mandatory spending in the Shimkus bill includes operating costs related to Yucca Mountain

and additional payments through a "benefits agreement" with the state of Nevada. Under existing law, Congress spends money from the fund through annual appropriations bills, a process that allowed Democrats to block required regulatory reviews of Yucca Mountain for the last several years.

"We want to be able to send a signal to not just DOE to move forward and that there's going to be some consistent funding, but we also want to send a signal to the state of Nevada that if there's going to be an agreement on benefits that that's not at the whim of a year-to-year process," Shimkus told POLITICO on Wednesday. "My frustration is that we are serious but the appropriators, right now, are still wedded to a year-to-year process."

GOP leadership "wants us to resolve this conflict" before bringing the bill to the floor, Shimkus said.

Given the fund's \$46 billion value last year, Shimkus' bill would permit DOE to spend at least \$500 million annually for the construction and operation of a Yucca Mountain facility as well as payments to Nevada for hosting "without further appropriation."

Shimkus said the negotiations with appropriators over his bill are separate from the omnibus spending bill lawmakers need to address next month, making it difficult to estimate when the conflict might be resolved.

The showdown is only the latest hurdle for long-suffering nuclear advocates who want the U.S. to establish a permanent waste repository.

Even if Shimkus and the appropriators resolve their differences on his bill, the Senate has shown little appetite this year for addressing a permanent nuclear waste repository, despite the retirement of former Democratic Leader Harry Reid, Yucca Mountain's No. 1 foe. Nevada Republican [Dean Heller](#), who faces one of the toughest reelection fights next year, has become the biggest roadblock in the upper chamber. The House included \$150 million to restart Yucca in its fiscal 2018 spending bill for the Energy Department and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but the Senate did not follow suit and seems unlikely to go along with including the funds in an omnibus.

"Senate Republicans have made it clear they don't want to move forward on Yucca Mountain because it could hurt Sen. Heller," a senior Senate aide said.

Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.), who chairs the appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over Yucca, acknowledged in a recent interview that Heller is "a well-respected, influential U.S. senator, so his views will be paid attention to by lots of senators," but that it was too soon to tell how a final deal would shake out.

Heller himself wouldn't say whether he'd secured any assurances from Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) to keep new Yucca funds out of the next spending law. "I keep urging it," he said with a smile. "I think we'll get there."

The Senate is "not passionate about this," said Tim Peckinpugh, a partner at K&L Gates, a law firm that was involved with the lawsuits that sued to force the federal government to continue work on the Yucca Mountain application. "I don't see a John Shimkus in the Senate," he said. "He has passion and incredible persistence on this issue. But I do see broad-based support. I'm convinced that if there's an up-or-down vote in the Senate, it would pass by big

numbers — more than 60 — and I think both sides know that, quite frankly."

Simply looking at the map of where the commercial and defense nuclear waste destined for a site like Yucca Mountain currently sits, logical supporters of the new funding would include members of the Senate Democratic leadership like Sens. [Chuck Schumer](#) of New York, [Dick Durbin](#) of Illinois and [Patty Murray](#) of Washington.

But Sen. [Catherine Cortez Masto](#) (D-Nev.), like Heller, opposes Yucca in line with the rest of her state's congressional delegation. And she's convinced that Schumer, the Senate minority leader, won't support new cash for the project next month.

"I don't anticipate that there's going to be any funding," she said. "I've talked to my leadership about it. ... Sen. Schumer is opposed to it."

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Puerto Rico governor vows midterm revenge for tax bill [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 12/20/2017 09:24 AM EDT

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló says he plans to mobilize 5.3 million Puerto Ricans living on the mainland to shake up the midterm elections in states ranging from Florida to California.

Rosselló, a Democrat and member of the island's pro-statehood New Progressive Party, is infuriated about a Republican tax plan that he says could hobble the island's economy even as thousands of residents remain without power and water three months after Hurricane Maria.

"Everybody has seen the damage of the storm and yet policy decisions go in the opposite direction of where they should go," Rosselló said in an interview with POLITICO on Tuesday. "We're not just going to stand by. We are going to take action."

The 3.4 million U.S. citizens living on the island have no vote in Congress, but they do have 5.3 million fellow Puerto Ricans scattered across the mainland who do have a vote. It's that political power Rosselló plans to leverage.

"We are a significant voting bloc in the United States that perhaps hasn't been organized well in the past," he said. "The diaspora, the Puerto Rican exodus, has always wanted to help Puerto Rico, it just hasn't been crystal clear how they can do it. If we can establish that organization we can have plenty of influence."

For Rosselló, the idea gelled with the tax vote, which blew a hole in tax and manufacturing rules granting the island both foreign and domestic status. The system has made Puerto Rico a tax haven for drug and medical device makers, who can incorporate in the commonwealth as foreign subsidiaries but label their products as made in the U.S.

The new tax plan treats companies on the island the same as those operating outside the U.S., subjecting them to a tax of up to 12.5 percent on intellectual property.

Even if he can get the tax changes fixed and pick up other legislative wins, Rosselló said he intends to stick to his plan. His office has begun cataloging Puerto Ricans and Latinos living on the mainland to see where they can have an impact.

So far, he figures they can sway congressional district votes in 14 states, including Florida, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas. He pointed to the influence of Florida's 2.7 million Cuban-Americans, a powerful and well-organized constituency.

Rosselló has been trading barbs this week with Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) over Rubio's support for the tax bill.

"We are twice the size. If we can get organized, we can certainly start swaying decisions our way and having at least some political leverage," he said. "We will evaluate those who gave the good fight for the people of Puerto Rico and those that didn't."

His plan also would draw attention to Puerto Rico's legal status, which he calls "this big elephant in the room".

"What are we going to do with a colonial territory in the 21st century?" Rosselló said. "The United States has unfinished business. It holds the oldest and most populated colonial territory in the world."

"Having no representation is a clear disadvantage and if you need any more evidence of this just look at the tax reform," Rosselló said. "Just because we don't have representation we got railroaded."

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Ryan calls reports that he'll retire 'rank speculation' [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/20/2017 09:36 AM EDT

House Speaker Paul Ryan said Wednesday that he has not discussed the prospect of stepping away from Congress anytime soon with anybody, nor has the thought even crossed his mind, calling reports that he might resign next year "rank speculation."

POLITICO Magazine reported earlier this month that Ryan (R-Wis.) has privately told confidants that he will not seek another term as speaker and expressed a preference for retiring shortly after next year's midterm elections, before the next Congress is sworn in. Ryan disputed that reporting and told "CBS This Morning" that he "actually never did" discuss plans to leave after passing tax reform with anybody.

"That's what surprises me about this. That's why I thought it was a very irresponsible piece. The idea that after passing tax reform, as if it's the only thing I care about, I'm just going to leave, get up and go, it's ridiculous," Ryan said. "It's a thought that never entered my mind, let alone discussed it with anybody. So I really see this as sort rank speculation among the D.C. beltway press, speculating these things. I think it was fairly irresponsible speculation. It's

faulty speculation."

The initial report did not say Ryan would leave after Congress completed tax reform.

With a massive tax reform package, policy Ryan has pursued for nearly his entire political career, on the verge of passing Congress, a late 2018 retirement would afford the speaker another year to pursue entitlement reform, another long-term legislative priority of his. It would also allow him to live full time at home in Wisconsin with his school-age children and, people close to the speaker [emphasized to POLITICO Magazine](#), avoid appearing on a ballot with President Donald Trump in 2020.

But while Ryan was insistent that he has no plans to retire from Congress, he did not commit to serving beyond 2018 and told ABC's "Good Morning America" that he has not yet decided whether or not he will seek reelection in his outeast Wisconsin district in next year's midterms.

"Yeah look, I'm not going anywhere any time soon. I'm so focused on getting our agenda done. On questions on way down the line, I'll address those way down the line," he told ABC anchor George Stephanopoulos. "But in the meantime, we've got a lot of work to do. I'm here to stay. I'm not going anywhere. If something changes down the road in the future, I'll address that down the road in the future."

Asked by Stephanopoulos if he plans to seek reelection to Congress and as speaker, Ryan replied that "it's not even 2018 yet, so that's something my wife and I always discuss later in the campaign year, something we haven't even discussed yet. So that's something we'll discuss down the road when the appropriate time comes."

Despite his noncommittal answer on ABC, Ryan was insistent on CBS that he has much work left to accomplish and specifically disputed the notion that he might resign from Congress before the end of his term.

"I'm not going to get up and leave this Congress, our conference and my responsibilities in the middle of this term. We've got so much more work do," he said, citing criminal justice reform, welfare reform and poverty as issues that remain on his to-do list. "We've got a lot of work do, we're excited about doing it. And we're banking a big win here. I want to get back to work and get more things done, not the least of which is to get the military rebuilt. So there's a lot of work to do. That's why I'm not going anywhere soon."

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Republicans drop Obamacare fix in rush to avert shutdown [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Heather Caygle | 12/20/2017 11:06 AM EDT

Republican leaders Wednesday defused the simmering Obamacare crisis that threatened to keep both chambers in session through Christmas, though year-end policy items remain in flux.

Key Senate Republicans agreed to drop demands for a contentious year-end Obamacare fix, likely allowing the House and Senate to avert an 11th hour showdown before government funding expires Friday

The Senate bill intended to prop up Obamacare will no longer be jammed into this week's government funding scramble, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) conceded Wednesday afternoon. Instead, Collins said she hopes to force a vote on the subsidies bill in January.

The two chambers had been on a collision course for days over the contentious subsidies bill, with House rank-and-file Republicans staring down Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Even with the Obamacare flashpoint out of the picture, House Republican leaders will have a hard sales job to convince their fractured conference to swallow another kick-the-can spending bill.

They could get some help from the calendar: With Christmas near, members are eyeing their travel schedules as they talk about punting the most contentious issues until next month.

The GOP's current funding strategy would appear to shelve nearly every tricky political issue until Jan. 19. That includes the must-pass items, like funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program and national surveillance powers that run out Dec. 31 — though those items could see short-term extensions.

Speaker Paul Ryan's plan to keep the government funded past Friday now involves a simple funding extension through Jan. 19 — a last-minute course reversal that is roiling the conference's most conservative flank as well as defense hawks.

House Democrats are refusing to back the bill, according to multiple sources, giving Ryan and his deputies an extremely tight margin to clear the bill on the floor Thursday. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi personally informed Ryan on the House floor Wednesday afternoon of House Democrats' decision.

GOP leaders will have to sell the strategy to their skeptical conference — and fast — to avoid a fiscal showdown, just after the party's historic vote to overhaul the tax code.

As recently as Tuesday morning, the House GOP planned to pass a spending bill that would deliver a huge boost to the Pentagon while holding all other domestic budgets in flux, in a defiant attempt to jam the Senate.

But House GOP leaders abruptly pulled that plan late Wednesday after warning signs about its level of support.

One major trouble spot was a massive \$81 billion disaster aid package that was slated to be attached to the funding bill.

Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy announced Tuesday that the disaster package would be merged with this week's spending bill, though the 184-page bill had been unveiled only hours before.

The last-minute addition was needed to win over dozens of Republicans from Texas, Florida and Louisiana who had demanded funding before leaving for Christmas. Without the aid, they

threatened to tank any spending bill.

Some House conservatives, however, balked at the price tag and dug in with their demands for at least some spending cuts to help offset the costs. Congress is on track to spend \$132 billion in emergency funding this year alone on disaster recovery.

House GOP leaders are now planning to hold a separate vote on the hurricane and wildfire measure, which would be the largest single disaster outlay in U.S. history.

As a standalone, it's unclear if the disaster package will pass with bipartisan support. After initially signaling support for the plan, House Democrats were working behind the scenes Wednesday to get more relief for storm-stricken Puerto Rico.

House Democrats have not said publicly that they will oppose the disaster bill if they don't get certain concessions but it remains a possibility.

The GOP's strategy has been shifting by the hour.

House Republicans planned to take a separate vote Thursday to reauthorize so-called Section 702 spying powers under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. But on Wednesday afternoon, the GOP abruptly backed off those plans and decided to discuss the next steps at the conference's meeting later that night.

That decision came shortly after members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, who oppose the renewal, huddled with key GOP leaders including House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

The fate of the Section 702 renewal is also in question in the Senate, where Democrats hope to hold their ground on a so-called "clean" bill.

Senate Democrats argue that Congress should not tackle just one or two less-controversial issues while leaving the toughest items for January, which they believe lessens their leverage.

"We cannot do a short-term funding bill that picks and chooses what problems to solve," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Wednesday. "That will not be fair and will not pass. We have to do them all together, instead of in a piecemeal fashion."

"It has to be a truly global deal. We can't leave any of those issues behind," Schumer said.

The trickiest vote on Thursday, by far, will be the House's stopgap spending bill, which must be sent to the Senate and signed by the president by Friday at midnight.

Many members of the House Armed Services Committee may oppose the bill, after warning for weeks that they'd oppose another stopgap spending bill. Pentagon leaders, including Defense Secretary James Mattis, have personally made their case against the short-term bill in multiple meetings on Capitol Hill this fall.

GOP leaders are personally urging defense hawks to support what they call a "clean" funding extension, given that it will include some additional flexibility for the Pentagon's budget.

The House Armed Services Committee huddled with GOP leaders earlier Wednesday on the plan, and the full House GOP conference is expected to meet at 5 p.m.

House Republicans say they haven't been briefed on a specific plan, but the rumor is that nearly every contentious political point will be punted until January.

Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.) joked that GOP leaders are now on "Plan C" of their plan to keep the government open -- a strategy that he said every Republican in the chamber should get around to preserve their tax win.

"It would be an act of political malpractice, after a successful tax reform vote, to shut the government down. Talk about stepping on your own message. I mean really, how dumb would that be? But anything's possible around here. This is Congress," Dent said.

Even as House GOP leaders ditch their defense-only spending bill, some House Republicans who are strongly pro-military seem open to the idea as long as there are some tweaks to give the Pentagon greater budgetary flexibility in the meantime.

"I don't like that for the military, but I'm not going to bring down the government," Rep. John Carter (R-Texas) said. "I'm not going to shut down the government."

Jennifer Scholtes, Elana Schor and Martin Matishak contributed to this report.

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Nadler wins top Democratic post on Judiciary Committee [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle | 12/20/2017 10:37 AM EDT

House Democrats have tapped New York Rep. Jerry Nadler as their next leader on the Judiciary Committee, the panel that would potentially initiate impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump if Democrats win back the House.

Nadler won a decisive victory over Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) in a caucus-wide election Wednesday morning. Lofgren, a former immigration lawyer, is the second-most senior member on the panel behind Nadler.

"This is a pivotal time, with our country possibly on the verge of a constitutional crisis," Nadler said in a speech before the vote, according to a Democratic source in the room. "We cannot afford to make this choice based on anything but who is the best person to sit in that chair."

The caucus voted 118-72 in Nadler's favor Wednesday. Nadler, who has served on the panel since first coming to Congress a quarter-century ago, was thought to have a slight edge over Lofgren going into this week.

His advantage was further underscored when Democrats on the steering committee voted 41-18 to back Nadler on Tuesday afternoon. There were rumors Lofgren might drop out of the race after that vote, but she proceeded with the secret ballot election Wednesday.

Nadler and Lofgren have been quietly campaigning for the position for months but didn't expect the election to occur until after the November 2018 midterms. Everything was pushed forward when Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the top Democrat on the panel, resigned earlier this month amid sexual harassment allegations.

Reps. Ted Deutch of Florida and Hakeem Jeffries of New York were among the members who officially nominated Nadler on Wednesday. A handful of Democrats, eager to challenge the caucus' seniority system, tried to recruit both Deutch and Jeffries to run for the position earlier in the process, but the two lawmakers declined.

Deutch, Jeffries and several other Democrats spoke favorably of Nadler, citing his knowledge of constitutional law and leadership on criminal justice reform.

"They gave me a script. I don't need a script, because I know the man. We are in a fight for the soul of our democracy," Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, said in a speech before the vote. "I can think of no one better to lead the House Democrats on the Judiciary Committee than Jerry Nadler."

Rep. Luis Gutiérrez (D-Ill.), a close ally of Lofgren, was among the Democrats who backed her nomination, calling her a lawmaker of "the highest caliber" and touting her decades of work on immigration issues.

"I haven't had to travel alone ... Zoe Lofgren was standing there," Gutiérrez said. "Just as important as the work you do on your committee is the work you do for your country."

Lofgren, too, touted her immigration bona fides when making her pitch to the caucus. Lofgren also noted that she would be the first woman to occupy a leadership post on the committee in its 200-plus year history.

"My presence would make a major difference in achieving immigration reform," she said. "I think it's very important that Democrats...stand up for people who have been treated unfairly."

Nadler had the advantage going into the election, partly because he has served on the committee for two years longer than Lofgren. While both members are widely liked within the caucus, Democrats, particularly from minority groups, tend to favor seniority.

Neither Nadler nor Lofgren committed to pursuing impeachment in the runup to the election. But the two did talk openly about what it would take for them to support the process if Democrats win back the House next year.

For Democrats to pursue impeachment, there would have to be some support both from Republicans — particularly in the Senate — and Trump voters, [according to Nadler](#).

"There's not much point in impeaching a president and having him acquitted in the Senate as happened with [Bill] Clinton," Nadler said in an interview in his office late last week.

Aside from impeachment, the committee deals with a raft of controversial issues and is home to some of the House's most partisan members. Other issues within the panel's jurisdiction include immigration, abortion, guns and criminal justice.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: Grassley staffer worked on RFS after taking industry job — Vogtle continues on — FERC grid plan response coming soon
Date: Thursday, December 21, 2017 4:36:41 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/21/2017 04:34 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon

GRASSLEY AIDE WORKED ON RFS AFTER TAKING INDUSTRY JOB: A longtime staffer for Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#), Kurt Kovarik, continued to work in the Iowa Republican's office on one of the National Biodiesel Board's top lobbying priorities after accepting a job there, POLITICO Influence reports. Kovarik, who served as Grassley's legislative director, started talking with the NBB about a job in September but initially declined to move forward, according to Grassley's office. The trade group made him an offer in early December, while he accepted and notified Grassley's office. The Renewable Fuel Standard is a top priority of the NBB, as well as of Grassley's. NBB spent more than \$1.2 million this year lobbying on the fuel standard and other issues, PI reports.

"**The National Biodiesel Board [announced last week](#) that Kovarik** would join as vice president for federal affairs, starting on Jan. 8. In the meantime, he continued to work on the renewable fuel standard, participating in a call last week to prepare for [a White House meeting](#) on the issue, Grassley's office said. 'Since Kurt accepted his new position, he's transitioned into a largely technical/informative support role for staff taking over his portfolios in order to maintain continuity of Sen. Grassley's leadership on the issues,' Michael Zona, a Grassley spokesman, wrote in an email. 'Other legislative staff have taken over his portfolios.'" Read more [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Our next [Afternoon Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. **

VOGTLE CONTINUES ON : The Vogtle nuclear reactors got one last lifeline via Georgia regulators, who voted on continuing construction of the project today. "The state Public Service Commission did not give Southern Co.'s Georgia Power everything it wanted," Darius reports, "but a company representative said it was enough to keep going. Commissioner Tim Echols offered a motion to let Georgia Power continue building the project with certain restrictions, and it passed unanimously." The Vogtle reactors are currently billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule. But PSC Chairman Stan Wise said that "history, over

time" will prove that the commission's decision today was the correct one. Read [more](#).

The Sierra Club hit the decision by PSC today, saying it "failed consumers." Ted Terry, the director of the group's Georgia chapter, said in a [statement](#) the commission "failed Georgia's hard-working families and businesses today by choosing to be lapdogs for Georgia Power instead of watchdogs for the people of Georgia."

INTERIOR PAUSES ANOTHER NAS STUDY: The Interior Department has stopped another [study](#) on fossil fuel issues, this time focusing on offshore drilling safety, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. In a Dec. 7 stop-work order, Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement ordered NAS to "suspend all work on a study to review and update the bureau's offshore oil and gas operations inspection program to enhance safety," the [group said today](#). The order gives 90 days to determine whether the order should be lifted and work resume, or should be terminated. It's the second time a National Academies study has been stopped by DOI in the last four months; in August DOI stopped a study on how coal mining affects nearby residents in Appalachia pending a contract review, the NAS said.

FERC SEEKS LOWER CYBER REPORTING STANDARD: FERC today proposed a rule that would require power plants and transmission operators to report cybersecurity threats to the grid at a lower threshold than previously determined, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). Margaret Scott, a staff member in FERC's electric reliability office, told agency leaders there was concern that existing mandatory reporting requirements "may understate the true scope of cyber-related threat." That's partly because there were no reported cyber incidents in 2015 and 2016, while DHS responded to 59 cybersecurity incidents in the energy sector last year, she said.

EYE ON PIPELINES: FERC will review how it evaluates natural gas pipeline applications, Chairman Kevin McIntyre announced at today's meeting, his first since claiming the agency's gavel earlier this month. Darius reports that the regulators plan to "conduct an open-ended review of a policy statement that has guided the agency's natural gas pipeline review process for nearly two decades." The chairman said it's crucial for organizations to occasionally review their policies as a matter of good governance, noting he will keep an open mind. More [here](#).

Mark your calendar: McIntyre also said he doesn't expect his agency to go past Jan. 10 deadline to respond to Energy Secretary Rick Perry's grid proposal. "I arrived here, I think, less than 48 business hours before the then-deadline [of Dec. 11] was to be upon us for action, and I didn't regard that as realistic at all to try to get something done in that kind of a quick fashion," McIntyre said. "I think it would, of necessity, end up being slapdash and that's not my style." Read [more](#).

And speaking of his arrival: McIntyre said today that the delay in his swearing-in was due to the complexity of disconnecting him from Jones Day, where he had worked for more than two decades, Darius [reports](#). "I'm sorry to disappoint you. I don't have a tale of palace intrigue," he told reporters after today's monthly meeting.

Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur got into the Christmas spirit by presenting Neil Chatterjee with a gift for his service as interim FERC chairman. "I really thought a lot about what you get for the man who has everything," she said, before passing a colorful bag to Chatterjee. "Fortunately, I found something right in my office made in Kentucky that I thought was near

and dear to your heart." "It's pulverized," she said as the Bluegrass State native pulled out a bag of ground coal. "A 90-day supply!" Chatterjee said.

PAC PICKS 6: The Democratic Conservation Alliance PAC announced its first round of endorsements in the 2018 cycle, highlighting six lawmakers who have "demonstrated leadership in advancing legislation to protect America's land, water, and wildlife, while also standing up to the Trump Administration's unprecedented attacks on the environment," the PAC said in a release. The PAC endorsed and contributed \$1,000 to the reelection of Reps. [Julia Brownley](#) (D-Calif.), [Salud Carbajal](#) (D-Calif.), [Ann McLane Kuster](#) (D-N.H.), [Stephanie Murphy](#) (D-Fla.), [Matt Cartwright](#) (D-Pa.) and [Tom O'Halleran](#) (D-Ariz.).

HUD SINKS FLOOD STANDARD: In [a notice](#) today, HUD said it would abandon five proposed rules, including a flood-protection [standard](#) created during the Obama-era that requires HUD-backed properties to build at a higher elevation when in flood-prone areas, Pro Financial Services' Lorraine Woellert reports. The move comes amid Trump's [two-for-one order](#), which requires agencies to identify two rules for elimination for each new regulation. "Since Hurricane Sandy, the agency has applied the flood-resiliency standard to disaster recovery funds," Lorraine reports. "It's not clear if that practice will continue." Read [more](#).

KOCH BROS. TO PUSH TAX REFORM: The Koch brothers' network of political groups is set to launch a multimillion-dollar push next year to sway Americans on the just-passed tax reform bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard reports. "We have a public that distrusts anything coming out of Washington, especially anything from the majority party," said Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, the network's grassroots organizing arm. "We have a job that's not that hard. We have to make sure people understand the benefits they're going to receive from this legislation." The Koch network "will aim to make sure voters know they're benefiting from the tax legislation, which President Donald Trump is expected to sign soon," Kevin [writes](#).

MAIL CALL — WORK WITH US ON SAGE GROUSE: Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) sent a letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, calling on his agency to work with Barrasso's home state of Wyoming on sage grouse management. Read the letter [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Shale gas was going to make them rich. Then the checks arrived, [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#).
- The new climate watchdogs: Democratic attorneys general take on Trump, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Chevron Phillips completes \$6B petrochemical expansion, [Chron](#).
- Greens launch ads against Trump environmental pick, [The Hill](#).
- Ex-industry lobbyists win top jobs in agencies they once fought, [Bloomberg](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

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- Cochran's future in [the Senate in doubt](#)

— [Trump taunts Democrats](#) as he touts tax reform win

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard, **helping to clean the air**, was signed into law ten years ago this week. According to a January 2017 analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, corn ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 43% compared to gasoline. Additionally, the same study found that by 2022, corn ethanol could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 76% compared to gasoline. Ethanol is the best tool available to reduce tailpipe emissions of other harmful pollutants, including carbon monoxide, air toxics like benzene and fine particulate matter. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. #thankyouRFS
**

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/grassley-staffer-worked-on-rfs-after-taking-industry-job-060183>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House to host Senate staff for biofuels talks [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/12/2017 04:16 PM EDT

The White House will host a meeting Wednesday with Senate staffers in the hopes of striking a deal between oil refiners and biofuel producers who have clashed over the Renewable Fuel Standard, sources tell POLITICO.

A White House aide confirmed the meeting would take place. Sources said it's a preliminary conversation intended to explore whether a deal can be reached to both help refiners, who say they are struggling with the costs of complying with the RFS, and continue supporting the biofuel industry that has matured under the RFS.

Industry sources and Republican Senate aides say that staff for pro-ethanol Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) and [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) will attend, and aides to Sens. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and [Pat Toomey](#) (R-Pa.) will be there to represent refiners. Staff from EPA, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Economic Council will also join the meeting.

A spokeswoman for Sen. [Deb Fischer](#) (R-Neb.) said her staff would also be attending the meeting, which was first reported by Reuters.

Midwestern senators scored a win when they forced EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to backtrack on efforts to alter parts of the RFS, but Cruz forced the White House to get involved after he put a hold on Bill Northey, who is up for a USDA undersecretary position.

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Vogle construction will continue following vote by Georgia regulators [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/21/2017 10:21 AM EDT

Georgia regulators today delivered a vital lifeline to the Vogtle nuclear reactors.

The state Public Service Commission did not give Southern Co.'s Georgia Power everything it wanted, but a company representative said it was enough to keep going. Commissioner Tim Echols offered a motion to let Georgia Power continue building the project with certain restrictions, and it passed unanimously.

PSC Chairman Stan Wise said that "history, over time" will prove that the commission's decision today was correct.

The Vogtle reactors, which are billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule, are the only units under construction in the U.S.

Vogtle has received \$8.33 billion in Energy Department financing under the Obama administration, as well as other conditional commitments from the Trump administration earlier this year. It hit a major setback earlier this year when Westinghouse filed for bankruptcy, although its parent firm Toshiba fully paid \$3.68 billion due to Georgia Power ahead of schedule.

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FERC seeks to lower cyber incident reporting threshold [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/21/2017 11:35 AM EDT

FERC today proposed a rule that would require power plants and transmission operators to report additional cyber threats to the electric grid.

Margaret Scott, a staff member in FERC's electric reliability office, told agency leaders that there was concern that the existing mandatory reporting requirements "may understate the true scope of cyber-related threat" partly because there were no reported cyber incidents in 2015 and 2016. The Department of Homeland Security responded to 59 cybersecurity incidents in the energy sector last year, she said, which includes the electric industry.

The proposal to lower mandatory reporting requirements would focus on systems that affect the operation of the bulk electric system rather than business-side IT system, said Kevin Ryan, a staffer in FERC's general counsel's office.

The proposal would attempt to set common information reporting requirements for cyber intrusions and attempted intrusions, directs the North American Electric Reliability Corp. with setting a deadline for reporting cyber incidents with DHS and other organizations, and to produce an anonymized report on electric cyber incidents.

WHAT'S NEXT: Comments will be due on the proposed rule within 60 days of it being published in the Federal Register.

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FERC to review gas pipeline permitting policy [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/21/2017 01:46 PM EDT

FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre announced today that regulators plan to conduct an open-ended review of a policy statement that has guided the agency's natural gas pipeline review process for nearly two decades.

McIntyre said it's essential for organizations to occasionally review their policies as a matter of good governance, and he would approach the review with an open mind.

"A new fresh look at our policies should not be read as a complaint about our current policy. It is not. I do not have any specific area of our current policy practice that I am proposing be changed. I'm open to change, of course," he told reporters.

The [1999 statement](#) has served the FERC well, Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur said, but she argued that the agency has taken a narrow view of the policy in practice.

"Over time our practice has coalesced around a reliance on precedent agreements as the determiner of market need ... I think our review of pipeline applications would benefit from a broader consideration of need," LaFleur said.

In October, she [explained](#) her position in a dissent to FERC's approval of the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley projects, which then-Chairman Neil Chatterjee "strongly" [disagreed](#) with.

Similarly, former FERC Chairman Norman Bay attached a [separate statement](#) to a natural gas pipeline approval before he resigned in February where he suggested that the agency's view of pipeline "need" was too narrowly defined by gas shipping agreements.

WHAT'S NEXT: McIntyre indicated that reviewing the pipeline policy statement would be top tier issue for FERC in 2018 but said that it was too early to say what form the review process will take. A range of options are available, he said, including a notice of inquiry or technical conferences.

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McIntyre: FERC response to DOE grid plan expected by Jan. 10 [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/21/2017 12:38 PM EDT

FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre said today that he doesn't expect his agency will slip past the

Jan. 10 deadline regulators are on to address Energy Secretary Rick Perry's grid resilience proposal.

"I don't envision going back and asking for more time. Whether we'll need until the 10th, it's hard to say. I hope not," he told reporters after the agency's monthly meeting. FERC was originally slated to take some "final action" on Perry's controversial effort to aid coal and nuclear power plants by Dec. 11 but McIntyre requested additional time shortly after being sworn in at FERC earlier this month.

"I arrived here, I think, less than 48 business hours before the then-deadline was to be upon us for action and I didn't regard that as realistic at all to try to get something done in that kind of a quick fashion," McIntyre said. "I think it would, of necessity, end up being slapdash and that's not my style."

He also said that he hadn't spoken to Perry about the proposal.

During his decades as an attorney, McIntyre's client list including several large [energy corporations](#) with business before FERC, but he didn't expect to recuse himself from FERC's debate on the Energy Department's grid plan. "I don't think it's going to be deemed necessary or appropriate"

"There are a lot of areas where I don't take a step around here without close consultation with the designated agency ethics official ... and this is among them," he said.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC is expected to take "final action" on DOE proposal by Jan. 10, 2018.

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FERC chairman: No funny business behind my slow swearing-in [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/21/2017 02:04 PM EDT

FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre said today that the delay in his swearing-in was due to the complexity of disconnecting him from Jones Day, where he had worked for more than two decades.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you. I don't have a tale of palace intrigue," he told reporters after today's monthly meeting. "That's a phrase not of my creation, but of one of you here at the table I believe."

The real story, he said, is far more mundane.

"Unlike my now-colleagues on the commission, I was in private practice for 30 years representing companies, mostly before this body, and I was a partner in a law firm," he said. "Each of those things carries certain complexities ... particularly as to the extraction process."

McIntyre was confirmed by the Senate on Nov. 2 and the White House cleared his paperwork shortly before Thanksgiving. But he didn't take his position at FERC until Dec. 7, setting off a

range of speculation about what was slowing the process down.

Once he got the greenlight to be sworn in, McIntyre said, there was a series of steps he had to take to properly exit from Jones Day, withdraw as official counsel to several client companies and transition his work to others at the firm.

As soon as those steps had been "done with care," he said, he had himself sworn in at FERC.

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HUD abandons flood and public housing rules [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 12/21/2017 01:45 PM EDT

HUD will abandon five proposed rules, including a flood-resiliency standard designed to protect houses backed by taxpayer funds.

In a [notice](#), the agency said it won't advance a flood-protection [standard](#) generated under President Barack Obama that requires properties backed by HUD funds, including those with Federal Housing Administration mortgages, to be built at a higher elevation when they're in flood-prone areas.

The action is part of the agency's effort to conform to an [executive order](#) issued by President Donald Trump just days after his inauguration. The order requires agencies to identify two rules for elimination for each new regulation.

It comes as the country begins the difficult and costly effort of rebuilding after three destructive hurricanes. Since Hurricane Sandy, the agency has applied the flood-resiliency standard to disaster recovery funds. It's not clear if that practice will continue.

HUD will also abandon rules making it more difficult to demolish public housing and a regulation that sought to streamline the administration of public housing funds.

WHAT'S NEXT: The notice will be published Dec. 22.

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Koch network to launch multimillion-dollar tax reform push [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 12/21/2017 05:03 AM EDT

The big-spending Koch brothers' network of political groups is set to unleash a multimillion-dollar push next year to sell Republicans' just-passed tax reform legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), which remains deeply unpopular with the American electorate.

"We have a public that distrusts anything coming out of Washington, especially anything from the majority party," said Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, the network's grass-roots organizing arm. "We have a job that's not that hard. We have to make sure people understand the benefits they're going to receive from this legislation."

Independent analysts estimate more than eight in 10 Americans would receive a tax break from the bill next year, with the largest benefits going to the wealthiest Americans and corporations. The legislation would also add about \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over the next decade.

Public polling indicates the bill is unpopular and that most Americans don't believe the legislation will benefit them. A [CNN poll](#) released Tuesday found just 33 percent of Americans favor the plan, with 55 percent in opposition. Two-thirds say it will do more to benefit the wealthy than the middle class, with 27 percent saying the opposite. Just 21 percent believe they'll be better off if the bill becomes law, while 37 percent believe they'll be worse off.

The Koch network, which includes Freedom Partners, the Hispanic-focused LIBRE Initiative and Concerned Veterans for America, will aim to make sure voters know they're benefiting from the tax legislation, which President Donald Trump is expected to sign soon.

The network has yet to put a figure on how much it will spend to sell the plan, but it spent \$15 million on similar efforts this year in the run-up to the bill's passage by the House and Senate this week.

The new push will include town halls with economists, members of Congress and accountants to explain the plan, as well as radio, television and digital advertising to remind Americans to look at their paycheck to see the benefits or calculators to show how much they'll save.

Phillips also said there will be more targeted efforts. For instance, he said, the groups might run digital ads on websites popular with young men who make less than \$50,000 a year to remind them of the repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate, which they disproportionately paid the penalty for. They could also carry out tax prep work in Latino communities to highlight how families are saving money, he added.

The group will also seek to highlight examples of an economy Phillips said "was heating up," including announcements of wage and job growth.

"Given that the tax reform bill was just finalized, there's a lot of work to be done educating Americans about its benefits," Freedom Partners Executive Vice President James Davis said. "We will make a massive push to show how pro-growth policies can revitalize the economy and open the floodgates to new opportunity, innovation, and prosperity."

The effort will be separate from the network's straightforward political work, which often involves airing attack ads targeting Democratic members of Congress. The network spent millions on ads targeting Indiana Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#), Missouri Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) and Wisconsin Sen. [Tammy Baldwin](#) in hopes of pushing them to support the legislation, which they ultimately voted against. Phillips said to expect similar "accountability efforts" in 2018.

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Cochran's future in the Senate in doubt [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan | 12/21/2017 04:55 AM EDT

Sen. Thad Cochran, chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee, hasn't presided over a hearing since early September. The Mississippi Republican has not given a speech on the Senate floor all year, and he's introduced only two bills during that time, both of them minor.

To the extent that Cochran weighs in on any issue, it's in the form of an official statement from his office or the appropriations panel. He has stopped meeting with anyone about substantive committee business, including other senators or House members, according to several sources familiar with his activities. Cochran's aides deny this is the case.

The 80-year-old's feeble performance has fueled expectations — among senators and aides who've witnessed his physical and mental decline firsthand — that Cochran will step down from the Appropriations chairmanship early next year, or resign from the Senate altogether.

"The understanding is that he will leave after Jan. 1," said a Republican senator who serves on the Appropriations Committee. "That's what most of us believe will happen."

A spokesman for the Mississippi Republican said Cochran hasn't divulged his plans.

"Sen. Cochran has not made any statements regarding leaving office. He continues to do his work for Mississippi and the nation," Chris Gallegos, said.

Some sources in contact with Cochran's office believe that he might stay until a major government spending bill is completed, which might happen in January or February.

The concerns about Cochran come at a sensitive time for Senate Republicans. Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Armed Services Committee and former GOP presidential nominee, is undergoing treatment for brain cancer and has returned to Arizona to spend the holidays with his family. Democrat Doug Jones, who scored a stunning upset in the Alabama Senate special election this month, will soon cut the GOP majority to 51-49.

And with President Donald Trump sliding in the polls, what had looked like a chance for Republicans to pick up Senate seats in 2018 has now turned into a battle to simply retain control of the chamber. If Cochran resigns or retires, Mississippi would have two Senate elections in November; incumbent GOP Sen. Roger Wicker is also up for reelection. Republicans would be heavily favored to hold both seats in the conservative state.

Gallegos also said there is no new information on whether Cochran will continue as chairman of the appropriations panel. He used the same formulation in his response that the senator's staffers employed for months in fending off questions about their boss' health.

"He has not made any statements about relinquishing his chairmanship," Gallegos said.

When asked about why Cochran has stopped meeting with senators or members about committee business, Gallegos said, "Sen. Cochran continues to meet with constituents, advocates and administration officials, including those related to his work on the committee.

Many of these meetings have been related to defense appropriations."

Gallegos pointed to Cochran's Twitter account as proof of this statement. The account includes pictures of Cochran shaking hands with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and King Abdullah II of Jordan in recent weeks, among others.

Cochran was absent from the Senate for several weeks during September and October due to a urinary tract infection. His wife, Kay Bowen Webber, makes \$165,000 as an executive assistant in his office, according to Senate disbursement records.

If Cochran steps down in 2018, Gov. Phil Bryant (R) would appoint a replacement for him, with a special election to fill the rest Cochran's term taking place in November, the same day as the regularly scheduled election for the seat held by Wicker. If Cochran leaves office before the end of this year, the special election would take place within 100 days, according to Mississippi law.

GOP sources said they've been hoping Cochran doesn't resign or retire before next year to avoid a quick special election.

Potential appointees to replace Cochran, according to Mississippi political insiders and news reports, include Rep. Gregg Harper, Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves and Mississippi Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann, among others.

Chris McDaniel, a state senator who lost to Cochran in a bitter 2014 primary, is considered a leading candidate for the seat as well. McDaniel, however, might challenge Wicker or run for lieutenant governor, he said in an interview.

"My hope is that he's healthy and happy, I just want to see him back to his normal self," McDaniel said of Cochran, adding that he didn't want to speculate on whether a Senate seat would come open soon. "There's just no way to know for sure what will happen."

"Whatever he does, I still have to prepare for a race," McDaniel added. "If I run against Wicker, the race is in June. If there is an open seat, the race is in November. If I run for lieutenant governor, that race is in 2019."

The Senate Appropriations Committee has limped ahead in Cochran's absence. The panel approved two continuing resolutions to keep the government funded, as well as two disaster aid packages.

A Cochran aide noted that any subcommittee chairman can call for hearings, adding that the panel's work typically slows in the fall. There have been two subcommittee hearings on opioids in recent months.

However, Sen. Richard Shelby (Ala.), the No. 2 Republican on the panel, is effectively serving as chairman, according to numerous senators and GOP staffers. Shelby is expected to take over if Cochran steps aside.

Shelby declined to discuss Cochran or his own role on the panel.

Both the House and Senate have been forced to replace aging or sick committee chairmen in the past, an extraordinarily delicate undertaking. Few of these senior lawmakers easily give up their powerful posts: The decision affects not only them but their home states and districts, as

well the network of lobbyists and consultants who rely on their patronage.

The late Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) voluntarily gave up his gavel at the Senate Appropriations Committee in November 2008. Byrd was 91 and faced questions about his health and ability to manage the panel.

The late Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) stepped down as chairman of the Armed Services Committee in 1997, when he was 95 years old. And former Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), at age 82, was ousted as chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee by the now-retired Democratic Rep. Henry Waxman.

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Trump taunts Democrats as he touts tax reform win [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/21/2017 08:28 AM EDT

President Donald Trump predicted Thursday that the package of tax cuts passed Wednesday by Congress "will soon be kicking in and will speak for themselves," proving wrong Democrats who he said "hate these big cuts" and the media, who he said "is desperate to write badly" about the White House-backed legislation.

"The Massive Tax Cuts, which the Fake News Media is desperate to write badly about so as to please their Democrat bosses, will soon be kicking in and will speak for themselves," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Companies are already making big payments to workers. Dems want to raise taxes, hate these big Cuts!"

Trump hosted a pep rally of sorts Wednesday on the White House's South Lawn, gathering Republicans from both houses of Congress behind him as they celebrated the passage of a package of tax reforms and cuts that the president and GOP leaders have argued will stimulate the economy and make U.S. businesses more competitive globally.

The bill, which the president is expected to sign, is the first major legislative victory for Trump and the culmination of a career-long goal for House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), long a tax policy wonk who once served as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. Wrapped up in the legislation were other GOP priorities, including a repeal of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate and opening Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Reserve for oil drilling.

The legislation passed through Congress without the support of any Democrats, who have characterized the bill as a give-away to corporations and to the wealthy while offering relatively little for the middle class. Polling conducted before the bill's passage has shown Americans mostly siding with Democrats in their view of the GOP legislation, although Republicans have argued that opinions of it will quickly change once the tax cuts go into effect.

Already on Wednesday, a handful of major companies announced plans to hand out bonuses, raise wages or otherwise reward employees in the wake of the tax cut legislation's success on

Capitol Hill. AT&T, Boeing, Comcast, Wells Fargo were among the companies to make such announcements, which were celebrated Thursday morning by counselor to the president Kellyanne Conway, who said Democrats' argument that the tax cuts would hurt working class Americans was "upended hours after it passed."

"It was the very first commitment of the tax break from these companies. they reinvested it right back into their employees immediately," she said on Fox News's "Fox & Friends" Thursday morning. "So many of those businesses are headquartered and/or have a presence in the states of Democratic senators who could not muster a yes vote for this historic tax plan."

"And think about that. You go back home, as a senator of that state where Boeing is, where Wells Fargo is, where Comcast is," she continued. "And these folks are going to say 'I thought you said you had to be against this because it was going to help the wealthy? I don't consider myself wealthy' those employees are going to say, 'and I'm grateful that this president and that Republican Congress passed it.'"

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: Zinke PAC blames software for discrepancy — Tax bill, ANWR is law — Court rules on silica
Date: Friday, December 22, 2017 3:37:17 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/22/2017 03:35 PM EDT

With help from Anthony Adragna

BLAME IT ON THE SOFTWARE: A leadership PAC launched by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said a technical glitch was to blame for a nearly \$200,000 discrepancy in its campaign finance reports. SEAL PAC [told the FEC](#) today it was working to fix problems the government office identified and that faulty software led the PAC to report having more cash on hand at the beginning of 2017 than at the beginning of last year, Ben Lefebvre reports.

"Zinke launched the leadership PAC when he was elected to the House as a Republican from Montana and stepped away from the group after joining President Donald Trump's Cabinet in March," Ben writes. "Last month, the [FEC asked](#) SEAL PAC to explain why its report for the first six months of 2017 showed it had \$408,882 in the bank as of Jan. 1, when its final 2016 report showed a balance of \$215,633 on Dec. 31. The PAC said the data file accounting for the surge in cash it reported having did not transfer correctly to the FEC." Read [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Happy holidays, everyone! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Our next [Afternoon Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. **

TAX BILL IS LAW: President Donald Trump signed the GOP's signature tax legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), into law this morning without much fanfare. "I didn't want you folks to say I wasn't keeping my promise," he said at the impromptu signing. "... We did a rush job today and it wasn't fancy. ... We expected a formal ceremony in two weeks." Trump promised to sign the bill, which includes a provision to open up drilling exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in a tweet this morning before his Christmas trip to Florida. "Will be signing the biggest ever Tax Cut and Reform Bill in 30 minutes in Oval Office. Will also be signing a much needed 4 billion dollar missile defense bill," Trump wrote. Read [more](#).

FLOOD PROGRAM GETS SHORT-TERM EXTENSION: Congress has extended the National Flood Insurance Program until Jan. 19, as part of legislation, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), passed last night and also [signed](#) by Trump this morning to keep the government open, Pro Financial

Service's Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). The program was set to expire today.

NPS RESPONDS: The National Park Service responded today to a [report](#) from the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative that more than [90 documents](#) detailing how national parks plan to address climate change have been removed from the agency's website. Citing Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NPS said it has a Jan. 18 deadline "to make electronic information and technology accessible to people with disabilities. As part of that process we are updating PDF documents on [NPS.gov](#) that are not yet accessible to all, including climate action plans for nearly 100 parks that were listed on a nps.gov webpage," a NPS spokesman said. "Those noncompliant PDF documents are temporarily unavailable for download while we work to make them compliant with the revised accessibility standards. In the meantime the PDF documents will be provided by email upon request."

IN SILICA CASE, COURT RULES AGAINST INDUSTRY: The D.C. Circuit Court today [rejected](#) all industry challenges to the Obama-era silica rule, Pro Employment & Immigration's Andrew Hanna reports. In its decision posted today, the court ruled against the industry, represented by the Chamber of Commerce. The Obama administration rule aimed to drastically lower the amount of permissible workplace exposure to crystalline silica, which is used in hydraulic fracturing. Now-EPA air chief Bill Wehrum had argued on behalf of the petitioners. Wehrum, a former attorney at Hunton & Williams, argued that OSHA had not proven that lowering the silica standard would provide any significant health benefits. More [here](#).

REPORT: SUPERFUND SITES PRONE TO CLIMATE RISKS: An Associated Press analysis finds there are 327 Superfund sites "in areas prone to flooding or vulnerable to sea-level rise caused by climate change," according to flood zone maps, census data and EPA records. "This year's historic hurricane season exposed a little-known public health threat: Highly polluted sites that can be inundated by floodwaters, potentially spreading toxic contamination," AP writes. " ... The vulnerable sites highlighted by AP's review are scattered across the nation, but Florida, New Jersey and California have the most, and the most people living near them. They are in largely low-income, heavily minority neighborhoods, the data show." Read [more](#).

EMPLOYEES EXITING EPA IN DROVES: More than 700 people have left the EPA since Trump has taken office, The New York Times along with ProPublica report. That "wave of departures ... puts the administration nearly a quarter of the way toward its goal of shrinking the agency to levels last seen during the Reagan administration," NYT writes, and reflects poor morale at the agency.

By the numbers: "Of the employees who have quit, retired or taken a buyout package since the beginning of the year, more than 200 are scientists. An additional 96 are environmental protection specialists, a broad category that includes scientists as well as others experienced in investigating and analyzing pollution levels," NYT write. "Nine department directors have departed the agency as well as dozens of attorneys and program managers. Most of the employees who have left are not being replaced." Read [more](#).

PREPARING FOR 2018: The year may not yet be over — but Republicans are gearing up for abrasive 2018 midterm elections. Republicans have privately warned Trump to brace "for a possible bloodbath," POLITICO Alex Isenstadt reports. "In recent weeks, some of the president's advisers have taken it upon themselves to warn him directly about the fast-deteriorating political environment," Alex [writes](#). "White House officials have convened to

discuss ways to improve his standing with suburban voters." And on Wednesday, the president met with a score of advisers to discuss the political landscape.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) echoed the concern in a Thursday interview with the Washington Examiner. "The environment today is not great, the generic ballot's not good, and I'd love to see the president's approval rating higher. So I think we should anticipate a real knock down, drag out — even on the Senate side," McConnell said in the [interview](#). More [here](#).

The Kentucky Republican also told reporters today to expect a shift in the Senate. "I think one thing you can say about this year, it was pretty partisan," McConnell said during his traditional year-end news conference on Capitol Hill. "We're gonna be looking for areas of bipartisan agreement because that's the way the Senate is. There's only a few narrow exceptions, as all of you know, to those principles in the Senate." POLITICO's Seung Min Kim reports more [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- U.S. rig count rises by 1, [Chron](#).
- How Big Oil lost control of its climate misinformation machine, [InsideClimate News](#).
- It's almost over. Here's what happened in '17, [E&E News](#).
- Scott Pruitt's reformation, [National Review](#).
- Big Oil looks on as Italian giant completes "mission impossible," [Bloomberg](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- [Democrats block dozens](#) of Trump nominees
- [At least \\$600,000 in public money](#) spent settling Senate misconduct claims since 1997
- Trump eyes former aides as [West Wing staffers depart](#)

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard, **helping to enhance U.S. energy security**, was signed into law ten years ago this week. Net petroleum dependence was 25% in 2016, but would have been 33% without the addition of 15.3 billion gallons of ethanol to the fuel supply. Looked at another way, 2016 ethanol production displaced an amount of gasoline refined from 540 million barrels of crude oil. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. #thankyouRFS **

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/zinke-pac-blames-software-for-discrepancy-061575>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

FEC probes discrepancies at former Zinke PAC [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/21/2017 04:50 PM EDT

The Federal Election Commission is asking a leadership PAC previously affiliated with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to provide more details about its direct mail spending and to account for a \$200,000 discrepancy in its account, among other issues in its most recent campaign finance report.

SEAL PAC, which Zinke launched after winning his first congressional race in 2014, has until Dec. 26 to address the issues identified by the FEC, according to a request sent Monday. The FEC also asks about incomplete information related to some donors, excess contributions and potentially misclassified spending, some of which occurred after Zinke's affiliation with the leadership PAC ended when he joined President Donald Trump's Cabinet in March.

When Zinke was in Congress, SEAL PAC raised most of its money from small-dollar donors and funneled it back to a handful of [political operatives](#) who have drawn criticism from other GOP candidates. That approach made it unusual among leadership PACs, which typically rely on large contributions and lawmakers use to spread donations among allied politicians.

In Monday's letter, the FEC asked SEAL PAC to further explain the money it spent on direct mail and related activities, which are responsible for the vast majority of the PAC's \$1 million in operating expenses so far this year. Most of the money was spent after Zinke left, but the committee relied on the same consultants it used in previous years.

The FEC also wants SEAL PAC to explain how its bank account nearly doubled in size on New Year's Day.

According to SEAL PAC's report covering the first six months of this year, it had [\\$408,882](#) in the bank on Jan. 1. But it reported having just [\\$215,633](#) cash on hand a day earlier, on Dec. 31, 2016, in its previous year-end report.

Vincent DeVito, who now works at Interior advising Zinke on energy policy, was SEAL PAC's treasurer until Zinke appointed him to his new position in May. DeVito signed the 2016 campaign finance report, which was updated several times, most recently on April 27.

SEAL PAC's current treasurer Barbara Lazaris did not respond to a call for comment. Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the department could not answer campaign-related questions.

The FEC also asked SEAL PAC to provide more information on contributions from two individuals who gave more than the \$5,000 contribution limit per election cycle. Most of those donations came in after Zinke had left.

The PAC also reported giving \$10,000 each to congressional campaigns run by GOP Reps. Jim Banks of Indiana and Scott Taylor of Virginia, double the legal limit. Both contributions were reported June 29. "Although the Commission may take further legal action regarding the excessive contribution(s), your prompt action in obtaining a refund and/or redesignating the contribution(s) will be taken into consideration," the FEC wrote.

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Former Zinke PAC blames software for \$200,000 accounting discrepancy [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/22/2017 01:54 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's former PAC blamed a technical glitch for a nearly \$200,000 discrepancy in its campaign finance reports and said it is working to fix problems identified by the FEC.

SEAL PAC [told the FEC](#) on Friday that faulty software led it to report having more cash on hand at the beginning of 2017 than at the beginning of last year. Zinke launched the leadership PAC when he was elected to the House as a Republican from Montana and stepped away from the group after joining President Donald Trump's Cabinet in March.

Last month, the [FEC asked](#) SEAL PAC to explain why its report for the first six months of 2017 showed it had \$408,882 in the bank as of Jan. 1, when its final 2016 report showed a balance of \$215,633 on Dec. 31. The PAC said the data file accounting for the surge in cash it reported having did not transfer correctly to the FEC.

"The committee is now rebuilding the missing ... data file to compile lost data from the prior uploaded report," a representative for SEAL PAC wrote in the response. "If needed, FEC technical support will be contacted for further data recovery and amendment assistance."

SEAL PAC's former treasurer, Vincent DeVito, left the organization earlier this year to join Zinke at Interior, where he is a senior adviser on energy policy. The group's new treasurer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The PAC reported raising \$415,253 in the first six months of this year, much of which came from small donors, and spending more than \$1 million over that same period, mostly on direct mail consultants and related expenses. The PAC continues to work with the same handful of political operatives it did when Zinke was in charge, many of whom have [drawn criticism](#) from other GOP candidates.

In its response to the FEC on Friday, SEAL PAC explained that the direct mail and other activities on which it spent the vast majority of its money "did not contain expressed advocacy," or specific suggestions on which candidates or measures to vote for.

SEAL PAC also said it took steps to obtain missing information about some donors and refund donations it received or contributions it made that were above legal limits.

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Trump signs major tax overhaul into law [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/22/2017 10:20 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Friday signed the landmark \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul legislation in

the Oval Office, forgoing a public signing ceremony for the greatest legislative accomplishment of his first year in office.

Trump, seemingly in a festive mood ahead of his Christmas trip to Florida, told the pool of White House reporters who gathered to watch him sign Friday that he had initially planned to sign the bill early next year but changed his mind after watching TV news earlier in the day.

"I was going to wait for a formal signing some time in early January, but then I watched the news this morning and they were all saying, 'will he keep his promise, will he sign it by Christmas?'" Trump said. "And I called downstairs, I said, 'Get it ready, we have to sign it now.' We were going to wait until Jan. 7 or 8 and do a formal ceremony, but every one of the networks was saying 'will he keep his promise and will he sign it for Christmas, before Christmas, and so I immediately called and said, 'Let's get it ready.'"

The president also signed a temporary government funding bill, which averts a government shutdown.

The president offered the ceremonial pens that he would have handed out to lawmakers and special guests at an official signing ceremony to the journalists in the press pool — "I in particular like the boom holders, they were so nice to me the other day, and the cameramen" — warm words for a group he has often blamed for what he believes is unfair coverage of his administration and at whom he has regularly lobbed insults.

"Many of you have worked very hard. Many of you have worked very, very fairly. And we really appreciate that. So here you go, folks," he said, pushing the box of pens to the edge of the Resolute Desk.

Trump's signature on the tax cut legislation put the finishing touches on his first major legislative accomplishment since taking office last January. He celebrated the bill with congressional Republicans at a pep rally of sorts on the White House South Lawn earlier this week and touted its merits in his roughly 20-minute exchange with reporters, highlighting that the newly signed law would repeal the estate tax, open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling and lower corporate tax rates.

Trump also celebrated the wave of corporations, including AT&T, Wells Fargo, Comcast, Boeing and others who have committed to bonuses, pay increases or other spending on employees in the wake of the tax bill's passage. He said he had received a call from New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who Trump said told him he planned to purchase and build a "tremendous paper mill or paper products plant" in North Carolina because of the tax cut legislation. The president added that he had "had many calls such as that."

"A lot of things are going to be happening in the USA. We're going to bring back our companies. They've already started coming back. I think they had certain confidence in me. They figured we were going to get this done. They have already started," he said. "Corporations are literally going wild over this, I think even beyond my expectations, so far beyond my expectations."

Trump also highlighted the provision of the tax bill that undoes the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, which he called "the most unpopular thing in Obamacare" and "very, very unfair." He hinted that he might be gearing up for another run at repealing and replacing his predecessor's signature health care legislation, telling reporters that "we're going to come up

with something that's really going to be very good."

The success of the tax cut legislation has been widely regarded as a much-needed legislative victory for both the president and Republicans on Capitol Hill, especially after Congress failed last summer to pass legislation to undo Obamacare. Trump disputed that notion Friday, stressing the administration's success rolling back government regulations, and passing the VA Accountability Act and military legislation.

The president's White House rally with GOP lawmakers followed the legislation's passage through both houses of Congress, including a narrow 51-48 party-line vote in the Senate. The bill, which will allow Trump to make good on a campaign promise and tick a major item off his policy wish list, has thus far proved unpopular with voters, who most polls show largely oppose the legislation.

Republicans have insisted that the bill's popularity will improve once Americans begin to see its effects in the form of fatter paychecks starting next year and an economy goosed by lower corporate taxes. Asked whether he would hit the road to bolster the tax bill's popularity, the president said "I don't think I'm going to have to travel too much to sell it. It's selling itself. It's becoming very popular."

Democratic messaging, which polls show has so far been more successful, has argued that the bill is little more than a giveaway to corporations and wealthy Americans while doing relatively little for the middle-class Americans at whom Trump and Republican leaders have said the bill is aimed.

As the legislation as being hashed out in Congress, Trump regularly suggested that at least a handful of Democrats would ultimately come on board and vote for his tax cut package, a prediction that did not come true. On Friday, he said "Democrats already regret" not signing on to the plan.

"I think the Democrats will really regret — the Democrats already regret it. You know, they have their typical thing, 'It's for the rich.' They know that's not true," he said. "And they've been called out on it by the media, actually. But the Democrats very much regret it. They wanted to be a part of it. Just doesn't work out."

Trump ended his exchange with reporters on a positive note, answering a question about the process of shepherding the tax legislation across Capitol Hill with warm words for Congress, whose members — Republicans as well Democrats — he has often sparred with throughout his first year in the White House.

"One thing I've really learned is, I learned and got to know and became very friendly with the people in the House, the people in the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats. When I came, you know, I didn't know too many. I was very politically active but I didn't know too many," the president said. "I can call anybody now. I know every one of them very well. ... Many of these people, I have to say, not saying all, but I'm saying many of these people are great people that truly love this country. So I think that helps."

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Trump signs spending bill, averting shutdown [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 12/22/2017 12:02 PM EDT

President Donald Trump signed a four-week stopgap spending bill this morning, ahead of a midnight shutdown deadline.

The measure ([H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#)) extends federal funding at current levels through Jan. 19, at which point lawmakers will either have to clear another temporary patch or settle on a package that provides updated spending levels through the end of fiscal 2018.

Trump and congressional leaders have yet to reach a compromise, though, on the overall defense and nondefense budget caps that would guide that broader deal.

The continuing resolution signed into law today is the third such tide-me-over bill Congress has cleared since the current fiscal year began on Oct. 1.

This latest measure keeps the Children's Health Insurance Program running through March 31, extends authority under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act until Jan. 19, provides extra emergency money for some defense programs and waives so-called PAYGO cuts that would have slashed billions from programs like Medicare as a result of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), also signed into law this morning by Trump.

Both chambers [passed](#) the spending bill with ease Thursday evening, after GOP leaders struggled this week to settle on a plan that could garner enough Republican support in the House and sufficient Democratic votes in the Senate.

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Congress extends flood insurance program [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 12/22/2017 11:35 AM EDT

Congress has agreed to renew the National Flood Insurance Program to Jan. 19 as part of [legislation](#) passed last night to keep the government open.

The program, which protects homeowners from the financial perils of flooding, was set to expire today without action.

WHAT'S NEXT: Short flood insurance extensions have been riding on government funding bills as lawmakers negotiate a long-term agreement to reauthorize and overhaul the NFIP. The focus of activity is in the Senate, after the House passed a reauthorization bill last month.

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Report: Administration removes over 90 National Park climate pages [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/22/2017 05:01 AM EDT

The National Park Service has removed more than 90 documents on how national parks plan to address climate change, according to [a report](#) from a watchdog group tracking changes to agency websites, the latest move by the administration to scrub references to the issue that President Donald Trump has derided as a hoax.

Those climate action plans, which described what "parks are doing to respond to climate change and move park operations in a more sustainable direction" according to an archived website, include those from prominent sites such as Glacier National Park, Everglades National Park, Joshua Tree National Park and Grand Canyon National Park.

The group tracking the changes, Environmental Data and Governance Initiative, said the removals started in July but that the bulk occurred in early December. Visitors must now request a copy of the action plans by email.

EDGI notes it does not "intend to assess any agency or entity's intentions or rationale for the demonstrated changes to any web pages or other online content that appear in this report."

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke [reportedly](#) criticized the head of Joshua Tree National Park over a series of tweets related to climate change the park sent out in November.

WHAT'S NEXT: No public archive for the national park climate action plans is yet available, according to the group.

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D.C. court rules against industry in silica case [Back](#)

By Andrew Hanna | 12/22/2017 12:55 PM EDT

The D.C. Circuit Court rejected all industry challenges to the Obama administration's silica rule.

The rule was aimed at drastically lowering the amount of permissible workplace exposure to crystalline silica. The court ruled against industry, represented by the Chamber of Commerce, in a [decision](#) posted today.

The Chamber asked the court to review five issues, including whether "substantial evidence" existed supporting the claim that silica exposure was dangerous and whether the rule was economically or technologically feasible for certain industries. The court rejected all the Chamber's arguments.

Building trade unions fared better with the court, which rejected their petition against a 30-day

trigger for medical surveillance but approved "further consideration" of OSHA's decision to omit medical removal protections from the rule.

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Republicans warn Trump of 2018 bloodbath [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 12/21/2017 09:55 PM EDT

A few weeks before Alabama's special Senate election, President Donald Trump's handpicked Republican National Committee leader, Ronna Romney McDaniel, delivered a two-page memo to White House chief of staff John Kelly outlining the party's collapse with female voters.

The warning, several people close to the chairwoman said, reflected deepening anxiety that a full-throated Trump endorsement of accused child molester Roy Moore in the special election — which the president was edging closer to at the time — would further damage the party's standing with women. McDaniel's memo, which detailed the president's poor approval numbers among women nationally and in several states, would go unheeded, as Trump eventually went all-in for the ultimately unsuccessful Republican candidate.

The backstage talks provide a window into how those closest to Trump are bracing for a possible bloodbath in the 2018 midterms, which could obliterate the Republican congressional majorities and paralyze the president's legislative agenda. The potential for a Democratic wave has grown after Republican losses this fall in Virginia, New Jersey and Alabama, and as the president's approval ratings have plummeted to the 30s.

In recent weeks, some of the president's advisers have taken it upon themselves to warn him directly about the fast-deteriorating political environment. White House officials have convened to discuss ways to improve his standing with suburban voters. And on Wednesday, the president met with Kelly, political director Bill Stepien, communications director Hope Hicks, former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski and Brad Parscale, Trump's digital director in the 2016 campaign, to discuss the political landscape. Lewandowski forcefully raised concerns about the party's efforts, according to one attendee and another person briefed on the meeting.

In an interview this week, Stepien acknowledged the pattern of presidents losing seats in Congress in their first midterm election. But he argued that it's far too early to write off the GOP in 2018.

Stepien pointed to positive economic numbers that could buoy the party, along with a favorable Senate map and an RNC field deployment program that has been ramping up for months. Trump is also set to sign major tax cut legislation that Republicans are betting voters will reward them for, despite its unpopularity in polls before passage.

The White House political chief also noted that polling during the presidential election failed to pick up on Trump's support. It was a pattern, he argued, that could be repeating itself.

"History tells us it will be challenging. How challenging, time will tell," Stepien said. "But we have a strong sense of optimism."

Among GOP leaders, however, there is widespread concern heading into 2018. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has said privately that both chambers could be lost in November. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has told donors that he fears a wave of swing district Republican lawmakers could retire rather than seek reelection.

During a conference meeting last week, House Republicans listened as the past five chairmen of the party's campaign arm addressed the political environment. One endangered lawmaker said his main takeaway was that incumbents should spend little time worrying about Trump or the White House and focus only on controlling what they can. Another person who was present came away with the impression that if lawmakers didn't shore up their political standing now, they shouldn't expect the national party to be able to save them down the road.

"In a year like this, you better not take anything for granted," said Pennsylvania Rep. Charlie Dent, a moderate Republican who is retiring. "I think most members know this is going to be a really tough challenge this cycle."

Trump is well aware of the dangers his party faces in 2018, those who've discussed it with him say. During political briefing sessions, top aides highlight positive developments — but also more concerning ones, such as his declining numbers among well-educated voters and higher earners. He has peppered advisers with questions about his approval ratings, and about whether he is getting enough credit for his accomplishments.

Trump has also questioned friends and advisers about how particular races are developing, sometimes in granular detail. He has recently asked, for example, about who will be running for the seat former Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) recently resigned from.

The president, however, has shrugged off some early setbacks. After the Alabama loss, he gathered with Vice President Mike Pence, Kelly, Stepien and deputy chief of staff Rick Dearborn. The group dived into the results, talking through why the race played out as it did.

As they craft a 2018 campaign plan, White House officials are cognizant that the president isn't popular in some parts of the country. Trump is most likely to hit the trail in conservative states like Missouri or Montana with an eye toward mobilizing his core supporters. Discussions are underway, for example, about sending Trump and Pence to campaign in a southwestern Pennsylvania congressional district that the president won by nearly 20 percentage points that's holding a special election in March.

Trump aides expect his campaign schedule to more fully take shape in late spring or early summer, as legislative business takes a back seat to an intensifying midterm season.

"If the president is going to be campaigning, he needs to be very discreet and selective about where he goes," said Dent.

While the president's numbers are cratering in some swing states, he's expected to take on an expanded role on the fundraising circuit in 2018, which Republicans hope will allow them to swamp Democrats in campaign spending. The president has proven to be a major draw for donors, raising around \$30 million for the RNC this year. There are talks about possibly holding an event next month in South Florida, where Trump is expected to spend part of

winter.

The president often seems most at ease hobnobbing with friends at fundraisers. During a recent event in New York City, Trump cracked that the tax bill was so good he might go back into business, recalled one person who attended. He also joked that while many of his contributors had expected ambassadorships in return for their largess, another one, North Carolina businessman Louis DeJoy, just wanted to be his friend.

Behind the scenes, though, the White House has been racing to find solutions to the electoral challenge. Following the Virginia gubernatorial race, the administration commissioned an after-action report to examine why the party under-performed among suburban voters.

And at a staff meeting following the Virginia loss, aides discussed a range of issues important to those voters. Among the ideas suggested: underscoring the administration's efforts to curb the opioid crisis and to assist veterans, perhaps by increasing the visibility of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin.

For much of the year, Capitol Hill Republicans worried about whether Trump's team fully recognized the political realities they faced in 2018 and vented that the administration wasn't always responsive to their concerns.

In some corners of the Republican world, there is anxiety about the White House political operation and its readiness for next year's races. During Wednesday's meeting, Lewandowski laced into the RNC, saying that it had raised a fraction of the money it should have, according to an attendee and another person briefed. Several RNC officials noted that the committee had raised over \$120 million this year, the most ever in a non-election year.

Afterwards, Lewandowski and Stepien had a heated exchange outside the Oval Office that stretched for around 10 minutes. The incident was first reported by the [Washington Post](#) and the [New York Times](#).

With the election year approaching, the White House is considering beefing up its political team. Among the possibilities under discussion, one Trump aide said, is elevating staffers with political backgrounds into the administration's political shop.

Yet as a challenging 2018 grows ever closer, many senior Republicans say they've seen greater coordination with the White House political department. The administration and Senate Republicans have embarked on a joint effort to recruit North Dakota Rep. Kevin Cramer into the state's Senate race. Trump has personally spoken to Cramer, and last week the congressman met with McConnell and National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman Cory Gardner (R-Colo.).

Earlier this month, Cramer and his wife, Kris, met with the NRSC's executive director, Chris Hansen, who made the case to the couple that Cramer had performed well in polling the committee had conducted.

The White House and McConnell's team have also been in talks about wooing former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty into next year's special election for the seat being vacated by Democratic Sen. Al Franken.

On Wednesday, Stepien met with top aides from the RNC and House and Senate GOP

campaign arms.

Some senior Republicans believe the departure of former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, an avowed McConnell critic who is closely aligned with the conservative insurgency, has eased tensions with the administration.

"I think there have been incredible signs of progress in recent weeks," said Josh Holmes, a former McConnell chief of staff and top political lieutenant, adding that "almost everything seems to be headed in a much more productive direction."

But some Republicans are still sounding the alarm. Scott Jennings, a former top political adviser in the George W. Bush White House who is close to McConnell, said the president has major political challenges in the coming year: improving his approval numbers, ensuring the party nominates strong general election candidates, and selling his economic accomplishments.

"There are 10 months to improve the fundamentals here, and the Senate map is, on paper, good. But maps don't make majorities and I think there's a realization that there's at least a 50 percent chance one or both chambers could fall," Jennings said. "In less than one year, this first term could be, for all intents and purposes, over if the Democrats take control of either chamber."

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McConnell bracing for 'knock down, drag out' 2018 midterms [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/22/2017 08:27 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told the Washington Examiner Thursday that he anticipates a "knock down, drag out" 2018 midterm election for Republicans, who will look to maintain their majorities in both houses of Congress with a historically unpopular president in the White House.

"The environment today is not great, the generic ballot's not good, and I'd love to see the president's approval rating higher. So I think we should anticipate a real knock down, drag out — even on the Senate side," McConnell (R-Ky.) said in an [interview](#) Thursday.

While the party in control of the White House often struggles in the first midterms after a presidential election, the Senate races scheduled for 2018 would ordinarily bode well for the GOP, with Democrats defending several seats in states won by President Donald Trump last year while Republicans are protecting only a small handful of vulnerable seats.

But with most polls showing Trump with historically low approval ratings for a president one year into his first term, Republicans have struggled at the ballot box in 2017, most notably in deep-red Alabama, where Democrat Doug Jones won a special Senate election to fill the seat vacated by Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Even in the five House special elections won by Republicans, Democrats outperformed expectations, mounting competitive races in traditional GOP strongholds like suburban Atlanta, Kansas and Montana.

Republicans running in 2018 will also have to defend the massive tax reform bill passed this week by Congress, a top priority of the president's and of GOP leadership that has thus far proved unpopular with voters. McConnell said Thursday that Democrats "want to have a debate over the tax bill, we're ready for it," imagining campaign ads against Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), both of whom voted against the tax bill and are up for reelection next year.

"But that won't be the only issue. There are a lot of different things that affect the attitude of people, some of which we won't be able to control," the majority leader continued.

McConnell also said he is prepared to wade into GOP primaries to "make every effort to make sure we have a nominee on the November ballot who can appeal to a general election audience."

He attacked former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, who has said he plans to back insurgent GOP candidates and upset the Washington establishment, over his support for controversial Republican firebrand Roy Moore, who lost to Jones in the Alabama Senate race and was accused during the campaign of molesting girls as young as 14 when he was in his 30s.

"Those political geniuses managed to elect a Democrat in the reddest state in America. I rest my case," McConnell said.

Moore won the GOP primary in Alabama's Senate race in part by campaigning hard against McConnell's leadership, a successful message among Alabamian Republican voters who rejected Luther Strange, the incumbent who was backed by the majority leader. But McConnell said his support, as well as support from his Senate Leadership Fund super PAC, won't be an issue in 2018.

"I'm not going to be an issue in a single race in America," he said. "I can assure you the support of the Senate Leadership Fund is not a negative. You can ask a lot of incumbents around here whether they believe it was important to their success, and it was. And, it will be there again in 2018."

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McConnell forecasts bipartisanship in new year [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 12/22/2017 01:35 PM EDT

After a rough-and-tumble year of partisan battles, Mitch McConnell says he's ready to try something new: bipartisanship.

The Senate majority leader's two marquee accomplishments in 2017 — a massive tax overhaul and confirmation of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court — were done with little or no Democratic support. His bid to repeal Obamacare collapsed, but that was never meant to pick up Democratic votes anyway.

But now McConnell is adopting a bipartisan tone as Republicans head into a difficult election year in which control of the Capitol is at stake.

"I think one thing you can say about this year, it was pretty partisan," McConnell said Friday during his traditional year-end news conference on Capitol Hill. "We're gonna be looking for areas of bipartisan agreement because that's the way the Senate is. There's only a few narrow exceptions, as all of you know, to those principles in the Senate."

Laying out his preliminary agenda for 2018, McConnell said he is "almost certain" that he will tee up legislation that curbs part of the Dodd-Frank law that overhauled the financial industry after the 2008 crisis. That bill can likely overcome any filibuster threat, as it has nearly a dozen Democratic co-sponsors, including some who are the GOP's biggest political targets in the November midterms.

McConnell also stressed that he has committed to bringing up legislation to address the future of hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants in the United States as long as a bipartisan group of senators can strike an agreement. The Kentucky Republican has also mentioned overhauling the nation's infrastructure as a potential policy target for next year.

McConnell also signaled he has little interest in pursuing some sharply partisan measures next year. Of Senate Republicans who are itching to take up Obamacare repeal again, he said simply, "I wish them well." And McConnell again threw cold water on the prospect of Speaker Paul Ryan's desire to overhaul entitlement and welfare programs.

"I've been here a while and the only time we've been able to do that is on a bipartisan basis," McConnell said of changing entitlement programs. "It was Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill, raised the age of Social Security and that was before I got here, so it's been a while."

McConnell added: "The sensitivity of entitlements is such that you almost have to have a bipartisan agreement in order to achieve a result."

President Donald Trump will meet with Ryan and McConnell in early January to begin hashing out the party's 2018 agenda, the majority leader told reporters.

On Trump, McConnell said the two men have "established a really good working relationship" — despite deep disputes between them earlier this year over the failure of Obamacare repeal and political campaign strategy.

"You can sense this tax exercise kind of brought everybody together, because we knew we weren't going to have any support from the other side," McConnell said. "We worked together seamlessly. I think we go into the new year with a high level of confidence in our ability to work together with the administration."

McConnell is even coming around to one of Trump's practices he once criticized: "With regard to the president's tweeting habits, I haven't been a fan until this week. I'm warming up to the tweets, actually."

He also urged Sens. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), the leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee, to complete a bipartisan report on Russian meddling into the 2016 campaign because "if it's purely partisan, I don't think anybody will give it any credibility."

Still, McConnell acknowledged some looming political clashes are on the horizon.

While he said he hoped he could reach an agreement with Democrats on lifting strict spending caps for defense and domestic programs, the majority leader said the Pentagon has been hit harder, budgetwise, and that "there's an urgency there" with relieving the across-the-board cuts enacted under a 2011 deficit reduction law.

Democrats have demanded equal increases in spending for both domestic and defense programs.

And on immigration, McConnell declined to answer whether he personally supports a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers. While the bipartisan Senate group is discussing ways to provide a permanent status for the young undocumented immigrants, a GOP plan McConnell has endorsed only provides temporary protections to current beneficiaries of the Deferred Actions for Childhood Arrivals program for three years.

McConnell also said Congress must address "chain migration," which refers to naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent residents sponsoring immediate relatives for green cards, a frequent target of Trump and the right.

"I think you all are familiar with the fact that I'm pretty supportive of legal immigration," McConnell said, invoking his wife Elaine Chao, the current Transportation secretary who immigrated to the United States from Taiwan when she was 8 years old. On Dreamers, "we want to have a signature, we don't just want to spin our wheels here and have nothing to show for it."

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Democrats block dozens of Trump nominees [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Seung Min Kim | 12/22/2017 11:37 AM EDT

About 100 of President Donald Trump's nominees have been kicked back to the White House, prolonging an unusually high number of vacancies across his administration and escalating the Senate's long-running nomination wars.

While the Senate agreed to keep roughly 150 of Trump's picks for consideration next year, it refused to do so on roughly 100 others, according to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office. That means the White House will have to renominate them if Trump wants them installed.

Among the high-profile picks tossed back to the White House: Alex Azar, chosen as the new head of the Department of Health and Human Services; Thomas Farr, a district court nominee whose record on voting rights has infuriated Democrats; and K.T. McFarland, the former deputy national security adviser chosen as U.S. ambassador to Singapore who is now facing questions about her communications with ex-national security adviser Michael Flynn.

That will trigger a requirement that nominees' paperwork be up to date — a gargantuan task for some nominees who've been languishing in the Senate for months, especially if their net worth changed dramatically because of the surging stock market.

That has some lawyers worried that nominees could throw in the towel, frustrated by the [already laborious](#) process of winning Senate approval.

"For some nominees, their paperwork will be obsolete," said one lawyer who represents several nominees and was not authorized to speak on the record. "The stock market has gone up, so the numbers are going to be materially different."

Many nominees hire lawyers to walk them through the confirmation process, spending tens of thousands of dollars — or much more for wealthy people with complicated financial situations — for assistance in filling out ethics and financial disclosure forms. The process requires nominees to review and document nearly every major financial decision in their adult lives, and the finished paperwork has been known to run more than 60 or 70 pages, lawyers said.

Generally, nominees will have to update their paperwork only if there's been a material change, but each Senate committee has slightly different rules governing the issue.

In a less divisive political atmosphere, lawmakers would have approved a unanimous consent agreement allowing the nominees to carry over into next year. Such agreements have rarely been controversial.

Any one senator can object to allowing a nominee to be carried over. Though it's likely Democrats are responsible for most of the rejections, Republicans also could have triggered some, too.

During the first year of the Obama administration, only eight nominees were not carried over into the next session, according to Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), who has been researching the issue. President George W. Bush had just two picks returned to the White House.

"It definitely violates precedent," Lankford said of sending back so many nominees. "That's just a sign of the times that people are looking for a rule to be able to slow the Senate down even more. ... That's making a bad situation worse."

But Democrats said the caliber of Trump's nominees warranted a break from tradition.

In an interview earlier this week, Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) said he would look for obstacles to oppose nominees with "egregious conflicts of interest," an "appalling lack of knowledge about the job," or "who are inclined to destroy the very agencies that they're assigned to support the mission of."

Merkley and Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) targeted Kathleen Hartnett-White, Trump's pick to run the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

"Unqualified or controversial nominees will not simply be rubber-stamped by the Senate," Carper said in a statement. "Let's start the new year off with a clean slate and allow President Trump the opportunity to nominate a leader for the Council on Environmental Quality who takes environmental laws and public health protections seriously."

White has [come under fire](#) from Democrats for rejecting the scientific consensus on the human

causes of climate change.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump eyes former aides as West Wing staffers depart [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Annie Karni | 12/21/2017 07:48 PM EDT

President Donald Trump is basking in the first big legislative victory of his presidency — but the strong end to a shaky first year in office hasn't stopped him from privately ruminating on potential changes he could make to his inner circle in 2018.

Speculation about additions to the cast of characters in Season 2 of Trump's West Wing has ramped up as the administration braces itself for a wave of staff departures expected in the coming weeks, according to a dozen White House aides and outside advisers who have spoken with the president.

In recent weeks, these people say, Trump has been particularly high on Larry Kudlow, an outside economic adviser to the president and a former adviser to President Ronald Reagan. He helped lobby senators on the tax bill and was on hand at the White House on Wednesday for the South Lawn celebration after it passed.

Kudlow has been discussed internally as a potential successor to National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, who has announced no immediate plans to leave but has told friends he will be weighing his options over the holidays.

A changing of the guard is normal for any administration hitting the one-year mark. But Trump, who began shedding senior officials just a month into his presidency, continues to take comfort in the outside political hands who ushered him into the White House — and has lately been talking them up behind closed doors.

At a private Christmas party at the White House last week, according to several attendees, the president gave multiple shout-outs from the podium to former campaign spokesman Jason Miller, now a CNN contributor, as well as to lobbyist and former campaign adviser David Urban. Insiders said Urban remains Trump's top choice for U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, but could also come into the administration in some other role.

Trump has been spending more time with former campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, who has long craved a West Wing role. The president even offered support on Twitter for Lewandowski's new book, "Let Trump Be Trump."

The president met with Lewandowski and several White House aides on Wednesday in the Oval Office for more than an hour, amid what outside advisers describe as a "big push" to get Lewandowski and former deputy campaign manager David Bossie into the White House.

A person familiar with the meeting — which also included Brad Parscale, who ran the digital operation for Trump's campaign, and other West Wing aides — said Lewandowski got into an argument with White House political director Bill Stepien over what he views as the

administration's lack of direction.

Trump's admiration for his old standbys is seen by some as a potential challenge for his chief of staff John Kelly, who since arriving in July has succeeded in ridding the West Wing of big personalities who stayed on after the campaign and short-circuiting direct lines to Trump himself.

In recent weeks, Kelly, according to frequent visitors to the West Wing, has started to do "bed checks"—that is, walking through the lobby waiting room to get a sense of who is coming and going from the White House.

And lately, Trump has been turning for political advice to Kelly's predecessor, Reince Priebus, who speaks with the president regularly and joined him for lunch in the White House on Tuesday.

Another recent regular on Trump's call list, according to White House insiders: Matt Schlapp, a former Bush administration official and current chairman of the American Conservative Union, whom Trump enjoys grilling for political advice. Schlapp, whose wife, Mercedes, works in the White House communications department, is another original Trump loyalist, one of the lone voices who stood by Trump in the days following the release of the damaging "Access Hollywood" tape in October 2016.

"Just because the president called somebody he has a relationship with for a long time to thank them for their support does not mean he's making them a job offer," said press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders of the president's recent conversations with former campaign hands. A White House official added that Trump's recent conversations with his friends and former aides are nothing new, but rather a constant of his presidency.

In the aftermath of Roy Moore's defeat in the Alabama Senate race, the president is increasingly focused on Republicans' electoral prospects and has complained to friends that the White House's political operation is lacking, according to multiple sources close to the president.

The president's frustration has also put White House political director Bill Stepien's future in the administration in doubt, though White House officials stressed that there are no immediate plans for a shakeup of his department. Trump has also begun weighing a revamped and expanded political operation that can begin preparing for his reelection bid.

A number of staff changes are already in the works and are expected to be formalized soon by the White House.

Jim Carroll, a former White House lawyer, will be named deputy chief of staff, according to White House officials.

Carroll would succeed Kirstjen Nielsen, who departed the White House earlier this month to become Homeland Security secretary. Nielsen, who knew Carroll when they both served in the George W. Bush administration, played a central role in picking her successor, according to a person familiar with the process. Carroll is already working out of Nielsen's old office — which originally belonged to chief strategist Steve Bannon and housed his famous whiteboard — according to several White House officials.

Deputy national security adviser Dina Powell, Office of Public Liaison Communications Director Omarosa Manigault Newman and Domestic Policy Council Deputy Director Paul Winfree all announced their departures this month. Powell is expected to stay at least until February.

Deputy chief of staff Rick Dearborn is also expected to exit the White House early next year, leaving open another senior position in the West Wing.

But the White House isn't facing a wholesale rebirth. Several senior administration officials are planning to stay for now, including Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump, son-in-law Jared Kushner, communications director Hope Hicks and senior adviser Kellyanne Conway, lending some stability to a constantly lurching ship.

Conway — who purposefully lowered her public profile earlier this year, running the White House opioid crisis efforts and working closely with the first lady on the issue — is seen internally as a person on the rise, with some suggesting her as a potential successor to Kelly as chief of staff.

Hicks, meanwhile, was initially seen as an inexperienced pick for the role of communications director, but remains, as one White House official put it, "Trump's favorite person," and is often requested in meetings by Cabinet officials who know that her presence there means the discussion in the meeting will be relayed back to Trump.

And legislative affairs director Marc Short, who was on the short list for president of The Heritage Foundation, is expected to remain in his senior position in the West Wing.

As the end of the year approaches and Trump dangles hints about whom he wants to bring in, White House officials have begun betting on who else will leave.

"For almost all of us, if not all of us, it's a question of when next year," one White House staffer told POLITICO of the exit strategy.

Current and former administration officials fear that the raft of departures could empty the administration of policy experts who understand the mechanics of government.

One former administration official warned of a "brain drain from the policy staff and an effort to turn the White House into more of a political or messaging operation."

Alex Isenstadt contributed to this report.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: "Media monitoring" contract axed — House passes tax reform bill — Regulators reject TransCanada request
Date: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 3:37:54 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/19/2017 03:35 PM EDT

With help from Anthony Adragna

'MEDIA MONITORING' CONTRACT AXED: Republican media monitoring firm Definers Public Affairs canceled its controversial \$120,000 no-bid contract for services with EPA amid backlash over the company's links to GOP opposition research firm America Rising, Emily Holden [reports](#). "Earlier this year, America Rising filed several Freedom Of Information Act requests for communications from EPA career staffers who had been critical of Administrator Scott Pruitt or President Donald Trump," Emily writes. That [included an email](#) sent by John O'Grady, a top union official at the EPA, that "mentions or refers to President Trump." Definers described the decision to end the contract as mutual, although EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox wouldn't say whether the agency or company initiated the cancellation.

The New York Times [reported](#) last week that Allan Blutstein, a Definers vice president had filed at least 40 FOIA requests in an effort to root out "'resistance' figures in the federal government" after Mother Jones first [uncovered the contract](#). (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#))

— **"Definers offered EPA a better and more efficient news clipping service** that would give EPA's employees real-time news at a lower cost than what previous Administrations paid for more antiquated clipping services," Joe Pounder, the firm's president, [tweeted today](#). "But it's become clear this will become a distraction. As a result, Definers and the EPA have decided to forgo the contract."

Democrats sought its termination: Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Kamala Harris](#) sent [a letter](#) today to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt asking him to "immediately" cancel the contract. "At a minimum, it presents an appearance of impropriety to which you as Administrator should never be a party," they wrote. "Hiring a public relations firm with abundant ties to industries you regulate, which is itself part of a broader network of groups active on behalf of you and fossil fuel interests, suggests that you have handed industry the keys to EPA." The senators asked for various records associated with how the contract was awarded and agency contacts with staff from Definers.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at www.ethanolrfa.org.
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HOUSES PASSES TAX REFORM: The House today passed the most sweeping tax code rewrite in three decades, sending the bill [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) to the Senate, where it is expected to be cleared for President Donald Trump's signature later today. The \$1.5 trillion tax cut measure offers a long-sought legislative victory for Republicans, even as Democrats have vowed to run against it in 2018.

CORNYN GOES TO BAT FOR MLP BREAK: Sen. [John Cornyn](#) "inserted language into the final tax bill that would enrich three different constituencies: fossil fuel firms, Republicans' major campaign donors and a handful of Cornyn's GOP congressional colleagues including Texas Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) and two other Texas lawmakers in the House," a report from the International Business Times says. "Cornyn originally added the language in an amendment to the Senate bill at the same time his former chief of staff was lobbying both the House and Senate on the tax treatment for those same oil and gas partnerships." The amendment ensures master limited partnerships — the corporate structure for many pipeline companies — will get the "pass through" break in the bill. Read [more](#).

Extenders prepped and ready: House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) said today health care-related tax provisions could get tacked onto a federal funding bill due for consideration this week, Pro Tax's Aaron Lorenzo reports. "We're prepared with packages on Medicare reforms, on the extenders and on the health care tax items as well, you know, if the call is made to include them at any point," he told reporters. Should such talks accelerate, Brady added he is ready. "Whether it's going forward, coming back from the Senate, any of those," he said. "So we're prepared. We've got packages already in whatever the design is." At the center of the extenders package lies a handful of energy-related provisions, Aaron [reports](#). Momentum to renew those tax benefits and others has begun in the Senate.

RGGI SETS EMISSION CUTS: The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a nine-state northeast cap-and-trade program, has [completed](#) its lengthy program review, finalizing previously announced plans to reduce power-sector emissions an additional 30 percent between 2020 and 2030. States will now begin to incorporate the changes. Virginia has also announced it will [join](#) the group.

REGULATORS REJECT TRANSCANADA REQUEST: TransCanada's request to the Nebraska Public Service Commission to reconsider an amended application for an alternative Keystone XL route was denied by the commission, according to a commission [filing](#). "TransCanada requested the reconsideration after the commission ruled the company could only build the pipeline using a route different from the one TransCanada first proposed," Ben Lefebvre reports. TransCanada has yet to make a final decision on whether it will build the pipeline. Read [more](#).

STATES SUE OVER METHANE RULE: Attorneys general from California and New Mexico have filed a lawsuit against the Interior Department for suspending the methane waste prevention rule, Ben reports. The states allege the move posed threats to human health and the environment. Filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, the suit is the latest complaint against Interior's attempted rollbacks of Obama-era environmental regulations. In the suit, the AGs request that DOI immediately reinstate the rule, and they say suspending the rule violated the Administrative Procedures Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. More [here](#).

— Separately, the Natural Resources Defense Council and others have [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Trump administration for stopping protections against methane waste and air

pollution from oil and gas operations on public lands. Read the suit [here](#).

A STEPP UP: Cathy Stepp will become regional administrator for EPA's Chicago-based Midwest office, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [reports](#), spanning the Region 5 office, which includes Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Stepp, the former head of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, has been deputy regional administrator in EPA's Kansas City office since September, according to her LinkedIn [page](#). Emily Holden reports more [here](#).

PRUITT'S BUG SWEEP TOTALS \$9K: Pruitt "used public money to have his office swept for hidden listening devices and bought sophisticated biometric locks for additional security," the Associated Press reports. The spending totaled nearly \$9,000, AP found. EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox defended the move on Monday, telling the AP, "Administrator Pruitt has received an unprecedented amount of threats against him and while The Associated Press attempts to trivialize his safety, there is nothing nefarious about security decisions made by EPA's Protective Service Detail." More [here](#).

DOE PUTS \$12M IN SOLAR RESEARCH: The Energy Department today [announced](#) selections for a \$12 million funding opportunity to advance predictive modeling capabilities for solar generation. "These projects will address a critical gap in our research, which is knowing precisely how much solar electricity to expect at any given hour on any given day," Energy Secretary Rick Perry said in a statement. The project selections come as Perry has [prioritized](#) research and development in grid reliability. See the Solar Forecasting 2 selections [here](#).

MAIL CALL — BRING BACK AFTC: More than 300 groups — including NGVAmerica and the National Propane Gas Association — called on Congress to reinstate the \$0.50/gallon alternative fuels tax credit in the year-end legislative package for a minimum of two years. "Renewal of the AFTC also will bring significant environmental benefits and enhance our energy independence by lowering our dependence on foreign oil," the letter says. Read it [here](#).

WHAT'S ESA'S IMPACT? Texans for Natural Gas is out with a new report today focusing on the Endangered Species Act's impact on oil and natural gas production, comparing lawsuits brought by activists with conservation measures implemented by producers. According to the report, activist groups have overwhelmed the Fish & Wildlife Service with listing petitions and lawsuits. It found 141 ESA lawsuits related to missed deadlines were filed between 2005 and 2015 — 79 percent of which were filed by environmental groups. The report also finds that Texas oil and natural gas operators "proactively implement conservation efforts" to protect species. Read it [here](#).

MOVERS, SHAKERS: North Dakota Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#)'s office announced today that his communications director, Adam Jorde, is leaving his Washington office and will join NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association as director of government relations on Thursday. Jason Stverak is returning to the office as deputy chief of staff.

QUICK HITS:

— Zinke wants to expand critical minerals production, saying: "We are vulnerable as a nation," [The Washington Post](#).

— Residents report nosebleeds and headaches after new leak at Aliso Canyon natural gas

facility, [Los Angeles Times](#).

— BHP Billiton, acknowledging climate change, to quit coal group, [The New York Times](#).

— GOP works to undo disclosure rule for oil companies abroad, [Chron](#).

— Scientists stunned by massive snowfall increases among Alaska's highest peaks, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Leaked memo schooled [Tillerson on human rights](#)

— The real reason Trump allies [are attacking Mueller](#)

— "[I was an easy pickup](#)": How Trump lost Manchin on taxes

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard, **helping to save consumers money at the pump**, was signed into law ten years ago this week. The RFS saved consumers \$17.8 billion in gasoline expenses in 2015, the equivalent to \$142 per American household, according to a recent analysis in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. Gasoline prices were 18 cents per gallon, or 9.5% lower, because of the RFS. In addition, the RFS has been responsible for increased federal tax revenues. Learn more at www.ethanolrfa.org. #thankyouRFS **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/media-monitoring-contract-axed-057693>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

GOP firm ends controversial media monitoring contract with EPA [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/19/2017 02:22 PM EDT

The Republican media monitoring firm Definers Public Affairs canceled its \$120,000 contract with EPA following a media backlash because of the company's links to GOP opposition research firm America Rising.

Earlier this year, America Rising filed several Freedom Of Information Act requests for communications from EPA career staffers who had been critical of Administrator Scott Pruitt or President Donald Trump. That [included email](#) sent by John O'Grady, a top union official at the EPA, that "mentions or refers to President Trump."

News reports about the two efforts to monitor news coverage about the agency and dig up information about dissenting staffers stirred new accusations that Pruitt is fostering an atmosphere of paranoia and distrust at EPA.

Definers described the decision to end the contract as mutual, although EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox would not say whether the agency or company initiated the cancellation.

Definers President Joe Pounder [said](#) in a written statement that previous administrations paid

for more for slower services, but "it's become clear this will become a distraction. As a result, Definers and the EPA have decided to forgo the contract." He added that the firm will not offer its services to any other federal agencies.

Mother Jones first [reported](#) on the contract, and The New York Times [documented](#) the ties between Definers and America Rising, which was also started by Pounder.

To view online [click here](#).

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Conservatives demanding details on federal workers' encryption use [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 02/14/2017 03:09 PM EDT

Republicans in Congress and their conservative allies are demanding details about federal workers' use of encrypted messaging apps, part of a broader counterattack on employees suspected of opposing President Donald Trump's agenda.

Congressional Republicans are also pondering changes to longstanding laws that protect government workers, further stoking fears among some federal employees that the new administration's supporters are out to squash dissent.

Republicans on the House Science Committee took up the cause on Tuesday by [asking](#) EPA's inspector general to review reports that agency employees are using an app called Signal, which allows people to exchange encrypted text messages and phone calls. POLITICO [reported](#) this month that a group of fewer than a dozen EPA employees were using the app to discuss what they would do if Trump's political appointees flout the law or delete valuable scientific data.

The anti-Trump resistance has infuriated Republicans, who fear that dissenters in the government could undercut the president's policy proposals by unleashing even more embarrassing leaks. They also contend that the use of encrypted messaging circumvents federal record-keeping laws — an argument Science Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) echoed in Tuesday's letter.

"[T]he Committee is concerned that these encrypted and off-the-record communication practices, if true, run afoul of federal record-keeping requirements, leaving information that could be responsive to future Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and congressional requests unattainable," wrote Smith, who organized the letter to the IG. The panel has jurisdiction over many cybersecurity issues.

Outside conservative groups have launched similar efforts.

Citing POLITICO's story, the Cause of Action Institute, a right-leaning watchdog group, filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act this month seeking EPA employees' communications using Signal. "The bottom line is: An encrypted app is basically a way to avoid transparency," Institute Assistant Vice President Henry Kerner said in an interview.

It's not just encryption that is raising eyebrows. Republican research firm America Rising filed

a FOIA request this month seeking all emails sent by John O'Grady, a top union official at the EPA, that "mentions or refers to President Trump."

The FOIA request came in response to O'Grady's [comments](#) to The Washington Post that Trump's decision to firing then-acting Attorney General Sally Yates "sends kind of a chilling effect" through agencies. O'Grady did not respond to a request for comment.

"The public is entitled to know whether career federal government employees are engaged in partisan politics on the taxpayers' dime," said Allan Blutstein, vice president of FOIA operations at America Rising.

EPA employees said they are not using Signal for official government business, and they raised concerns that they're being targeted because they are critical of Trump.

"I don't think anybody can dictate which apps we use on our personal time, for personal conversations," one EPA employee told POLITICO.

The debate comes as employees across the government — political appointees and career officials alike — are increasingly relying on encrypted messaging apps, fearing repercussions if their private conversations are made public.

National security officials have long used encrypted mobile phone software like Signal and WhatsApp to communicate with reporters and other staffers. Signal frequently [comes up in articles advising people](#) how they can [communicate free](#) of snooping from government officials or hackers, especially following the massive leaks of stolen Democratic Party emails that roiled last year's presidential election.

Trump's appointees have gotten into the act, too: The Washington Post [reported](#) this week that administration staff members are using an app called Confide, which deletes messages once they are read, because they're afraid of being accused of leaking to the press. That's also a threat to transparency and accountability, argued Tom Fitton, president of the conservative activist group Judicial Watch, in an interview with POLITICO on Tuesday.

"If they're conducting government business via an application that destroys records, that's a problem that needs to stop," said Fitton, adding that the administration needs to either train its staff on the issue or send them a reminder. He added that the Trump administration is "asking for a lawsuit from either Judicial Watch or someone else if they don't get their act together on these records policies."

Asked if the House Science Committee will pursue a similar probe of White House staffers' use of encrypted messaging apps, spokeswoman Kristina Baum declined to make any commitments. But she said the panel "intends to continue to monitor" cyber issues.

The growing tension across the government has some career employees worried that Republicans will try to make radical changes to laws protecting federal workers — a move that could make people more fearful to speak out against Trump. Trump has already imposed a freeze on most federal hires and has promised to reduce the size of the workforce.

"Frankly, the climate has shifted rather dramatically and we've gone from a chief executive who respects civil servants to a rather bombastic, disdainful chief executive who unfortunately empowers their disparagement," Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.) said in an interview.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the House Oversight Committee, is eyeing a major overhaul of the civil service system. He has discussed phasing out pensions for new government employees, instead relying on a defined-contribution plan like a 401(k), and has advocated making it easier to fire problem workers. Chaffetz reportedly talked about some of these issues during a recent meeting with Trump.

Connolly said he's concerned that the Republican Congress could win enough support to move a bill gutting civil service protections. "It is very alarming and I think frankly very destructive in terms of the fabric of a free government and a free society," he said.

In the Senate, lawmakers are also considering changes to civil service laws, but Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) said he is eyeing targeted tweaks that can win bipartisan support, such as efforts to improve the hiring process.

"If we can keep it small and we can keep it targeted, I think we can move it through unanimous consent," said Lankford, who chairs the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's panel on regulatory affairs and federal management. "We need to be better at hiring. If we're better at hiring we don't have to worry about firing."

Alex Guillén contributed to this story.

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Brady says health extenders package is prepared [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/19/2017 12:38 PM EDT

Legislation to extend health care-related tax provisions could get tacked onto a federal funding bill due for consideration this week, House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) said today.

"We're prepared with packages on Medicare reforms, on the extenders and on the health care tax items as well, you know, if the call is made to include them at any point," he told reporters.

Should such talks accelerate, Brady said he is ready.

"Whether it's going forward, coming back from the Senate, any of those," he said. "So we're prepared. We've got packages already in whatever the design is."

Separately, Brady said House Republicans, who are on the verge of passing an agreement on more sweeping tax legislation today, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), would later turn their focus to tax extenders. Formal talks with the Senate haven't yet begun, he said.

"We haven't had that discussion yet just because we're focused on finishing out the tax reform bill, but we'll pivot to that discussion right after this is over," he said, adding that he assumes tax extenders would slide into next year.

A handful of energy-related tax provisions is at the center of the tax extenders package.

Momentum to renew those tax benefits and others, some of which are related to transportation and agriculture, has started in the Senate.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House and Senate plan votes today on final passage of the tax overhaul bill.

To view online [click here](#).

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Virginia advances proposal to join RGGI [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/16/2017 04:57 PM EDT

Virginia's Air Pollution Control Board today decided to officially move ahead with a proposal for the state to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

The [plan](#), which will now go out for public comment before it's finalized, proposes to cap carbon dioxide emissions from power generation in Virginia at 33 million tons or 34 million tons in 2020, with 3 percent annual reduction through 2030.

Outgoing Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe [announced](#) the decision to join the multi-state program earlier this week at the climate summit in Bonn, Germany. In a statement today backing the board's decision, McAuliffe made a dig at President Donald Trump.

"Virginia is uniquely vulnerable to the threat of climate change and many of our residents are already experiencing its impacts. ... I am proud that Virginia is joining states around the nation that are filling the void of leadership that President Trump has left on transforming the energy sector and protecting our environment," he said.

New Jersey, which exited the pact under Republican Gov. Chris Christie, is also set to rejoin RGGI.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Air Pollution Control Board is expected to take public comments for at least 60 days once it's announced in the Virginia Register.

To view online [click here](#).

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Nebraska regulators reject TransCanada motion to amend Keystone XL application [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/19/2017 12:29 PM EDT

The Nebraska Public Service Commission denied TransCanada's request that it consider an amended application related to the alternative route the commission set for the Keystone XL pipeline, according to a commission [filing](#).

TransCanada requested the reconsideration after the commission ruled the company could only build the pipeline using a route different from the one TransCanada first proposed. TransCanada has not yet made a final decision whether it will build the pipeline.

The PSC also turned down a [motion](#) by the Nebraska landowners that the commission did not have legal standing to approve the alternative route.

WHAT'S NEXT: TransCanada and the other parties have 30 days to appeal the PSC's decision.

To view online [click here](#).

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States sue Interior over delay to methane waste rule [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/19/2017 12:55 PM EDT

The California and New Mexico attorneys general filed a [lawsuit](#) against the Interior Department for suspending the methane waste prevention rule, alleging the move posed threats to human health and the environment.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, is the latest complaint against Interior's attempted rollbacks of Obama-era environmental regulations. Interior finalized a rule earlier this month delaying the methane waste rule until January 2019, a move designed to give the department time to repeal the rule.

In the suit, the attorneys general request that Interior immediately reinstate the rule, and they charge that Trump administration's [suspending the rule earlier this month](#) violated the Administrative Procedures Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

"Defendants have prioritized a negligible increase in oil and gas operators' profits over the public interest in preventing the waste of a public resource that belongs to the American people," the suit claims. "In doing so, Defendants dismiss out of hand the harmful impacts of the thousands of tons of toxic air pollutants and hundreds of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases emitted as a result of operators' inefficient, outdated, and wasteful practices."

The methane waste prevention rule as written would force oil and gas producers to tighten methane leak detection and repair requirements on federal lands. Some in the industry have complained the upgrades are too expensive.

WHAT'S NEXT: Interior will respond to the lawsuit.

To view online [click here](#).

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Stepp to head EPA Midwest region [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/19/2017 12:53 PM EDT

Cathy Stepp, the former head of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, will become regional administrator for EPA's Chicago-based Midwest office, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [reports](#).

Region 5 includes Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Stepp has been deputy regional administrator in EPA's Kansas City office since September, according to her LinkedIn [page](#).

She was previously treasurer for the Republican Party of Wisconsin, statewide communications director for Sen. [John McCain](#)'s 2008 presidential bid and a state senator.

To view online [click here](#).

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Leaked memo schooled Tillerson on human rights [Back](#)

By Nahal Toosi | 12/19/2017 05:12 AM EDT

Three months into his tenure as secretary of state, Rex Tillerson alarmed veteran diplomats with remarks that sounded like a potential shift in American foreign policy: The U.S., he said, should be careful not to let values like human rights create "obstacles" to the pursuit of its interests.

The comment, at a gathering of State Department employees, provoked an outcry among former U.S. officials and human rights activists who feared America was abandoning a vital mission. Two weeks later, a top Tillerson adviser wrote up a short tutorial, in the form of a confidential memo to his boss, recapping "the debate over how far to emphasize human rights, democracy promotion, and liberal values in American foreign policy."

The May 17 [memo](#) reads like a crash course for a businessman-turned-diplomat, and its conclusion offers a starkly realist vision: that the U.S. should use human rights as a club against its adversaries, like Iran, China and North Korea, while giving a pass to repressive allies like the Philippines, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

"Allies should be treated differently—and better—than adversaries. Otherwise, we end up with more adversaries, and fewer allies," argued the memo, written by Tillerson's influential policy aide, Brian Hook.

It is unclear what prompted Hook to author the memo, and whether he did so at Tillerson's request amid a furor in foreign policy circles about Tillerson's May 3 remarks, in which he said that "it's really important that all of us understand the difference between policy and values" like "freedom, human dignity and the way people are treated."

But the memo, a photo of which was shown to POLITICO, suggests that Tillerson, a former CEO of ExxonMobil, was still on a steep learning curve when it comes to foreign affairs. It

also seems to foreshadow President Donald Trump's approach to the complex politics of human rights overseas.

During his May visit to Saudi Arabia, and while hosting the leaders of Egypt and Turkey at the White House, Trump did not publicly press the leaders of those countries on their authoritarian policies. But during an address to South Korea's Parliament in November, Trump spoke at striking length about the brutality of North Korea's regime. Trump and Tillerson have also repeatedly assailed Iran's human rights record.

Hook's memo "tells Tillerson that we should do exactly what Russian and Chinese propaganda says we do—use human rights as a weapon to beat up our adversaries while letting ourselves and our allies off the hook," said Tom Malinowski, who served as an assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor in the administration of former President Barack Obama.

"He utterly misses the elemental fact that America's moral authority is one of our main advantages in the world, and that it would disappear if we apply it as selectively as he advises," Malinowski added.

On Monday, Trump unveiled a new National Security Strategy document that uses the phrase "human rights" just once. (Obama's last plan, in 2015, mentioned the phrase 16 times.) Trump's strategy at one point states, "We are not going to impose our values on others," but later includes a section on how the administration will "Champion American Values."

The memo also offers a glimpse into how Tillerson's secretive inner circle shapes foreign policy, leaving many veteran State Department officials feeling sidelined.

Hook heads what's known as the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. Policy Planning traditionally has served as an internal think tank doing mid- to long-term strategizing, but under Tillerson it is more involved in day-to-day work that would otherwise be the purview of the department's many bureaus.

"The classic dilemma of balancing ideals and interests is with regard to America's *allies*. In relation to our competitors, there is far less of a dilemma. We do not look to bolster America's adversaries overseas; we look to pressure, compete with, and outmaneuver them," Hook wrote.

"For this reason," Hook continues, "we should consider human rights as an important issue in regard to U.S. relations with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. And this is not only because of moral concern for practices inside those countries. It is also because pressing those regimes on human rights is one way to impose costs, apply counter-pressure, and regain the initiative from them strategically."

It is not clear whether Tillerson ever read the memo, which was categorized as "sensitive but unclassified." Hook did not answer multiple requests for comment. The memo was shown to POLITICO on the condition that only its text be reprinted.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert would not confirm or deny the veracity of the memo. "We can't comment on alleged internal documents but, as a general matter, human rights remains an integral part of our values that we consistently address with other nations," she wrote in an email.

Other State Department sources, although not in a position to confirm the authenticity of the memo, said it appeared to follow standard formatting used for such papers.

Long a familiar face in conservative foreign policy circles, Hook held several positions under President George W. Bush, including assistant secretary of state for international organizations.

Hook's decision to join the Trump administration surprised some in Washington because so many other mainstream conservative foreign policy experts publicly distanced themselves from Trump during the 2016 presidential race. His disproportionate influence at the State Department has unnerved some lawmakers who note that he never had to endure the confirmation process.

Hook's three-page memo lays out the historical underpinnings of the two main U.S. foreign policy schools on human rights, which Hook divides into "realism" and "liberal/idealist/Wilsonian."

George W. Bush, like fellow presidents Bill Clinton and Obama, "worked on relatively optimistic assumptions regarding the possibilities for positive social change overseas, as nudged forward by American power and diplomacy," Hook states. "No doubt this optimism was well-intentioned.

"But in the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan, slow economic recovery, the rise of China, and the failed Arab Spring, there is understandably less optimism today that the world can be easily democratized or reshaped simply by expressing American liberal values, or by badgering American allies."

Hook approvingly writes that Ronald Reagan's "first instinct was always to back allies against adversaries, even in controversial cases, including through his second term." But Jimmy Carter, Hook states, damaged American interests because he "badgered" and undermined U.S. allies like the shah of Iran.

Today, "in the case of US allies such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Philippines, the [Trump] Administration is fully justified in emphasizing good relations for a variety of important reasons, including counter-terrorism, and in honestly facing up to the difficult tradeoffs with regard to human rights," Hook writes. "It is not as though human rights practices will be improved if anti-American radicals take power in those countries."

Malinowski took issue with some of Hook's historical lessons. Anti-Americanism in Iran, he argued, was festering before Carter arrived on the scene—thanks in part to the CIA's role in overthrowing an elected Iranian government in 1953 and America's longstanding support for the country's repressive monarch.

Malinowski also dismissed Hook's claim that Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa's apartheid regime worked "in the long run," noting that it is generally accepted that U.S. sanctions were more effective in changing that government's behavior. Reagan largely resisted lawmakers' demands to impose sanctions on South Africa over its segregation policies, even vetoing legislation later overridden by Congress.

A former senior official in the Bush administration, speaking on condition of anonymity, also expressed disappointment in the memo.

"The memo forgets about people entirely. It doesn't even recognize the existence of cases where criticizing a 'friendly' regime will win the United States a lot of support at the street level," the former official said. "To give an example, the United States didn't raise human rights issues with the Greek military junta in the 1970s because it was 'pro-American.' The result of this abandonment of the people of Greece was long-term anti-Americanism there."

Tillerson made his comments about balancing values and interests during his first town hall with State Department employees. He tried to be nuanced and cautious with his remarks, emphasizing that American values remain constant, even as policies change over time.

"For me, it's one of the most difficult areas as I've thought about how to formulate policy to advance all of these things simultaneously. It's a real challenge," he told the audience.

In more recent months, Tillerson earned applause from some in the human rights community for visiting Myanmar and later declaring that the Asian country was carrying out "ethnic cleansing" against its Rohingya Muslim minority.

Still, Tillerson's decoupling of American values and American interests has been cited frequently by critics in the months since his May town hall appearance.

The criticism comes as morale in the State Department has plummeted over proposed staff and budget cuts and amid mounting frustration that many career civil and foreign service employees are being shut out of the policy-making process.

One U.S. diplomat's fiery resignation letter, first [reported](#) by Foreign Policy, cited Tillerson's May 3 comments as one of the reasons she felt compelled to quit.

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The real reason Trump allies are attacking Mueller [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 12/19/2017 05:09 AM EDT

President Donald Trump insists he's not going to fire Robert Mueller, but that's not stopping Republicans and others close to the president from orchestrating a relentless stream of attacks on the credibility and integrity of the special counsel and his team of Russia investigators.

In the past week, investigators on Mueller's team have been publicly accused of bias against Trump and of violating criminal procedure to get documents related to his transition. The purpose of the onslaught, according to people close to the White House, isn't to encourage the president to oust the special counsel, a move that could precipitate a crisis in the Justice Department and potentially a move to impeach Trump.

Rather, these people said, the goal is to sow public doubt about Mueller and his prosecutors in advance of upcoming criminal trials — and to give the president political cover if he wants to start issuing pardons to any current or former aides swept up in the Russia scandal.

"It is definitely a smarter strategy than outright firing of Mueller, because that is likely to

create a firestorm," said Elizabeth de la Vega, a former assistant U.S. attorney from the Northern District of California. "It is also entirely consistent with Trump's modus operandi because he is surprisingly nonconfrontational, preferring to be manipulative and, frankly, sneaky."

The latest complaints against Mueller are a sharp escalation from earlier this year, when Trump and his allies took their [first shots](#) at the former FBI director, questioning his hiring of prosecutors who had predominantly donated to Democratic politicians, including President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

Their grievances have taken on an added sense of political urgency as the Russia inquiry creeps closer to the president's inner circle. Earlier this month, former national security adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to investigators about his contact with foreign officials. The plea followed a similar deal cut by former campaign adviser George Papadopoulos in October, when former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and his deputy, Rick Gates, pleaded not guilty on charges including tax evasion.

Mueller's critics have especially latched on to two major revelations from the past week. First, the Justice Department released to Congress and reporters several hundred anti-Trump text messages [exchanged](#) between two FBI officials who had previously served on Mueller's team. Then on Saturday, an attorney for Trump's transition team [lodged](#) a complaint that the special counsel had improperly obtained tens of thousands of the team's emails directly from the General Services Administration — claiming violations of both attorney-client privilege and the Fourth Amendment, which protects against unlawful search and seizure.

While Trump told reporters Sunday as he returned from Camp David that he wasn't considering firing Mueller, he did respond when asked about the special counsel's methods for obtaining his transition team's emails.

"Not looking good," Trump said. "It's not looking good. It's quite sad to see that. My people are very upset about it. I can't imagine there's anything on them, frankly, because as we said, there's no collusion."

Several legal experts described Mueller's moves as entirely appropriate, and the special counsel's office even defended itself through a rare public comment.

"When we have obtained emails in the course of our ongoing criminal investigation, we have secured either the account owner's consent or appropriate criminal process," Mueller spokesman Peter Carr said in a statement released after midnight on Sunday.

For Trump, launching direct attacks against Mueller has up to now been a no-no. While the businessman-turned-politician used his branding skills to great effect during his historic 2016 presidential campaign — labeling opponents with catchy monikers like "Little Marco," "Lynin' Ted" and "Crooked Hillary" — he has so far [heeded](#) the [advice](#) of White House attorney Ty Cobb and other aides who have urged him to leave Mueller alone.

But how long that lasts is an open question.

Some of the very public voices Trump listens to the most are beating the drum that Mueller's investigation has gone off the rails. The Wall Street Journal earlier this month published an [op-ed](#) asserting that the special counsel was "too conflicted to investigate the FBI" and urging

him to "step down in favor of someone more credible."

Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, who is scheduled to appear with the president's son Eric in mid-January at a [Mar-a-Lago event](#) in South Florida celebrating the one-year anniversary of Trump's inauguration, also [unloaded](#) on the Russia investigators during a recent program.

"There is a cleaning needed in our FBI and Department of Justice," she said "It needs to be cleansed of individuals who should not just be fired, but who need to be taken out in cuffs!"

Jay Sekulow, the president's personal attorney, used an appearance last week on Sean Hannity's Fox show to call for a second special counsel to look into potential conflicts of interest between the Justice Department and the FBI. And then Hannity, a few days later and again with Sekulow on the program as a guest, took a direct swing at the Mueller probe. "They have been exposed as corrupted, abusively biased, incapable of conducting a fair investigation," he said.

Mark Corallo, a former Justice spokesman when John Ashcroft was attorney general who earlier this year worked as press secretary for Trump's legal team, said in an interview with POLITICO that he's tried to avoid direct attacks on Mueller — until the FBI officials' emails surfaced.

Now, he's accusing Mueller of "not just hyperpartisanship, but what seems to be actual efforts to go after Trump and his associates without the objectivity that is required of prosecutors and investigators."

Corallo said Trump would be making a "colossal mistake" in firing the special counsel.

"It'd certainly lead to serious talk of impeachment," he said, adding that talk about pardons for now was premature "until the Mueller investigation has wrapped up."

But Corallo predicted that because of recent events, Mueller investigators were going to suffer in the court of public opinion.

"Whether or not the facts that underpin the Flynn, Manafort and Gates charges are legitimate or not is now irrelevant to a large portion of the American people," he said.

Indeed, public opinion on the Mueller investigation remains a mixed bag. A POLITICO/Morning Consult [poll](#) of 1,955 registered voters conducted Dec. 8-11 — just before the [release](#) of the FBI officials' anti-Trump text messages — found 39 percent of respondents saying the special counsel had been conducting a fair investigation, with 27 percent saying it hadn't been fair and another 34 percent who said they didn't know or held no opinion.

The same poll did suggest Trump could be entering dangerous terrain if he fired Mueller: Forty-six percent said that would not be a good idea, while 19 percent approved of the president's ousting the special counsel. Thirty-five percent had no opinion or said they didn't know.

Several sources closely tracking the Russia investigation said the mixed messages coming out of Trump's camp are happening for a reason.

"The collective criticism of Mueller and his staff, the truly bizarre complaint to Congress from

the transition team — are we cooperating or not? — and the calls for a second special counsel are clearly part of an orchestrated strategy to try to discredit Mueller and, in turn, to potentially lay the groundwork to justify a pardon for Flynn," a white-collar attorney representing a senior Trump aide wrote in an email to POLITICO.

"Whether Trump actually pulls the trigger will depend, in part, on what sort of feedback they get from this barrage of trial balloons," the lawyer added. "But — not to mix metaphors too awfully — this is plainly a shot across the bow."

Trump so far has brushed aside questions about pardons, even though some of his most loyal aides have landed directly in Mueller's cross hairs.

"I don't want to talk about pardons for Michael Flynn yet," the president told reporters on Friday. "We'll see what happens. Let's see."

That open-ended response prompted panic among some Trump critics. The ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, Democratic Rep. Jerrold Nadler of New York, and the panel's full slate of Democrats wrote a [letter](#) to their Republican counterparts on Monday urging them to hold hearings on the president's pardon powers.

Mueller's defenders see the attacks in a more nefarious light.

"It's all such a bunch of poppycock. It's just feeding his base. I don't understand how people buy it," said Katya Jestin, a former Justice Department prosecutor who tried a Mafia case with Mueller attorney Andrew Weissmann and later worked with him in private practice at Jenner & Block.

"I think it's a distraction," she added. "I feel this gets ginned up every time they think something is coming down the pike."

Barbara McQuade, a former Obama administration U.S. attorney from eastern Michigan, said the anti-Mueller attacks looked to be part of a long-term strategy to discredit the special counsel.

"This could be to lay the groundwork for firing him, but it seems more likely to me to be a strategy to cast doubt on any charges that Mueller files down the road," she said. "Putting the police on trial in this way is a common tactic of criminal defense attorneys. If the public is conditioned to doubt the credibility of Mueller, then the public may also doubt the validity of the charges themselves."

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'I Was An Easy Pickup': How Trump Lost Manchin on Taxes [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove | 12/19/2017 05:01 AM EDT

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During the transition last year and several times since, Donald Trump repeatedly pushed Joe Manchin to switch parties and become a Republican, the West Virginia senator revealed in an interview for POLITICO's Off Message podcast.

He said no—"I said, 'You need more Democrats like me, you don't need Republicans,'" Manchin explained.

So Trump asked Manchin to support repealing Obamacare, and then the Republican tax bill.

He said no to those, too.

Manchin should be the most endangered politician in America, followed closely by the nine other Senate Democrats running in states Trump carried last year, many by wide margins. And they all should have been poachable votes for the White House, if the president's outreach to red-state Democrats had worked, and if the agenda Republicans have chased in search of something to call a win hasn't consistently proved so unpopular with voters—the tax bill has a 26 percent approval rating, according to a Monmouth University poll out Monday, with 50 percent of people saying they believed it would *raise* their taxes.

"I was an easy pickup. Very easy pickup," Manchin said. "And a couple, two, three other Democrats would have been easy pickups, if they had just made an effort."

Not one of those Trump-state Democrats has budged on Obamacare repeal or taxes, to the surprise of Democrats themselves, who entered the year with their brains and confidence scrambled by Trump's win.

For all the lunches at the White House and trips Trump's made on Air Force One to needle them back home, Democrats are heading into 2018 complaining loudly about Trump-led Republicans abandoning what he stood for in secret, stealthy ways. Even the very not-viral Montana Sen. Jon Tester made a [viral video](#) yelling into the camera and mocking the handwritten changes in the margin of the tax bill.

And as Manchin heads into his own reelection campaign as the Senate Democrat from the most Trump-friendly state—the president carried West Virginia by 42 points, and even persuaded Gov. Jim Justice to switch parties in August—he said he's feeling just fine about his choices, and his chances.

"I'm not worried at all," Manchin said. "Not one iota am I worried."

Manchin did, as he likes to point out, win by 24 points in 2012 the same day Mitt Romney carried his state by 27 points, winning every county along the way, which he credits to a personal brand he's spent 35 years in politics building.

He's comfortable telling Elizabeth Warren directly—and saying publicly—that Washington Democrats "don't hold anybody accountable and responsible for anything." He says his colleagues who have called for Trump to resign are "foolish" and nakedly political. He's frustrated by his fellow Democratic senators calling for Al Franken to resign before the Ethics Committee completes its investigation into sexual misconduct allegations against him, and [calls](#) their treatment of Franken "the most hypocritical thing I've ever seen done to a human being."

And he proudly ripped in to National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman Cory

Gardner of Colorado, whom Manchin confronted on the Senate floor two months ago, complaining about super PAC attacks on Manchin's daughter being the CEO of the drug company Mylan, which manufactures some products with opioids, aiming to undercut the hard line he's taken against opioids as the epidemic has ravaged his state.

"I said, 'Be a man enough to go after me. Don't be chicken shit.' And that's what they are. I said, 'Cory, that's not you,' I said—Cory's a good guy; I like him," Manchin said. "No different than the DSCC [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee], too, they all do it. I despise that. Their name's not on the ballot; my name's on the ballot. OK. If you want to go after somebody, go after me, not after my family."

The NRSC, the Republicans' Senate campaign arm, points out that Manchin never complained so publicly about the DSCC roping Missouri Republican Roy Blunt's wife into its attacks last year, though in the interview, Manchin said he didn't like that either, insisting, "Democrats are as wrong as the Republicans. Someone's got to stop this. Cory's a good enough person to stop it. OK?" (Gardner declined to comment.)

Manchin believes West Virginians will see the tax bill like he does: a closed process that explodes the deficit in ways Ronald Reagan would never have allowed, helps the rich and makes little impact in the paychecks of the people in his state.

"Whenever you are upside down and you're robbing Peter to pay Paul, and you can't find Peter anymore ..." he says, then offers an even more homespun West Virginia version about his grandfather, the owner of a small grocery store: "Joe," he says, "indebtedness—which is basically uncontrolled debt, unmanaged debt—will make a coward out of the decisions. You'll be cowardly in your decisions." He was exactly right, and we're doing it now."

The GOP take on Manchin is, as NRSC spokesman Bob Salera put it, that he's "rejected all opportunities to work across the aisle." Salera dinged him for voting against Obamacare repeal and the Republican tax bill despite Trump's appeals for his help: "Manchin turned his back and voted with Washington Democrats."

In Manchin's populist blasts against the tax bill, DSCC Chair Chris Van Hollen of Maryland said he sees a message that will resonate across the map—in states where Democrats are defending, in states where they're trying for pickups, and in states like Mississippi or Utah where Democrats are nursing aspirations that seem slightly less like fantasies since Doug Jones won in Alabama. ("It was clear to me this year there's a very, very dramatic shift," Jenny Wilson, the Democratic candidate in Utah, said on the afternoon after the Alabama surprise.)

Take Missouri, Van Hollen said, where Democratic incumbent Claire McCaskill is presumed to be in major danger against state Attorney General Josh Hawley, a top recruit of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). Pointing to assessments of the GOP tax plan tilted in favor of the wealthy at the expenses of the middle class, Van Hollen said, "Trump promised an economic populism during his campaign, but his proposals have been all about big Republican donors. They've been all about giveaways to big corporations and the very wealthiest in this country. And that is not what Trump voters bargained for."

With Jones arriving in the Senate, Manchin has new dreams of a middle-of-the-road nucleus, along with fellow centrist Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), and from the Republican side, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), retiring Sens. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). Add in "that independent free spirit" Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Manchin said, and he thinks they

might be able to reshape what happens.

As for Trump, Manchin said, he doesn't how to break through to the president.

"When he says he's not a politician, I agree. I understand that," Manchin said. "But he's allowing politicians to set an agenda that he ought to let his gut set. He is more comfortable wanting to do a bipartisan deal than he is wanting to do a partisan deal, I can tell you. I can feel it, OK? But he gets pushed right into this partisan rhetoric: 'Democrats are all bad.'"

It's debatable just how hard Trump has to be pushed to be partisan, but ever since he rushed to Trump Tower during the transition to toy with bolting the Senate to become energy secretary, Manchin's been a Trump favorite, chatting on the phone regularly with the president and sidling in for photo-ops.

"Hey, Joe, I want you to know this is not going to be a tax cut for the wealthy and rich like me. This is going to be for the working people that got left behind," Manchin remembers Trump saying to him at one of their meetings a few months ago. "I said, 'Mr. President, that's perfect. That's a wonderful starting point. That's where we should be.'"

Manchin's office worked with the Wharton School of Finance, the president's alma mater, and the Third Way centrist Democratic think tank to develop alternative proposals that they submitted to the White House in draft form. They never heard back.

"It shows you where their values are. Their choices were that the corporations get the greatest cuts, the wealthiest get the greatest benefits, and on top of that, theirs is all permanent. The people that get the least amount and the unknown is, the people that get the temporary are the people that needed it the most," Manchin said. "So I said, "Guys, wait a minute. Aren't we off-base a little bit here?"

I asked him whether he said that to the president.

"I didn't see it then," he said, adding, "I haven't been back."

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Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute: Keeping up with the Jones Act — Court throws cold water on green challenge — Koch pays \$650K over sulfur gas violation
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:07:59 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 09/28/2017 04:04 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Esther Whieldon

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONES ACT: President Donald Trump today authorized a 10-day waiver of the Jones Act for Puerto Rico less than 24 hours after officials at DHS said it was "unlikely" to be lifted. Trump suspended the shipping restriction in order to help facilitate the delivery of fuel and other goods to the hurricane-ravaged territory, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said today, much like the White House did in previous weeks for Texas and Florida.

Trump waived the act at the request of Puerto Rico, Sanders said via Twitter. The waiver will allow foreign vessels to bring material from one U.S. domestic port to another, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "It will go into effect immediately," Sanders said. The president is scheduled to visit Puerto Rico next week.

But, the decision runs counter to the behest of the Transportation Department, Pro Transportation's Kathy Wolfe reports. DOT argued that the Jones Act shouldn't be waived for Puerto Rico in a [letter](#) from MARAD sent to offices on Capitol Hill Wednesday afternoon. The letter argues that containers from Jones Act-compliant ships were "stacking up in the terminals faster than they can be moved inland" and that waiving the Jones Act "will likely only exacerbate the problem." More on that [here](#).

Homeland Security officials had said just a day ago that they had not yet decided how to act on a Jones Act waiver request sent by eight members of Congress. Senior DHS officials even went as far as to say the waiver was unlikely and that an official determination could take days or weeks.

Sens. John McCain and Mike Lee introduced legislation today to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act. "While I welcome the Trump administration's Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico, this short-term, 10-day exemption is insufficient to help the people of Puerto Rico recover and rebuild from Hurricane Maria," McCain said in a statement. "Our legislation would permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act, an antiquated, protectionist law that has driven up costs and crippled Puerto Rico's economy."

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

COURT THROWS COLD WATER ON GREEN CHALLENGE TO LANDFILL RULE STAY: The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today denied environmentalists' request to immediately rule that a now-expired stay of Obama-era landfill methane rules by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt was unlawful. The green groups called the stay, which was in effect from May 31 through Aug. 29, a "carbon copy" of the one Pruitt issued over the unrelated

methane rule for new oil and gas wells that was struck down by the D.C. Circuit. But a three-judge panel today declined to rule before hearing more. In a [one-page order](#), the court asked for more detailed briefs on the issue and ordered both sides to argue whether the case is moot since the stay expired a month ago. Pruitt has not issued a subsequent, longer-term stay despite moving forward with reconsidering parts of the rule. The order was issued by Judges David Tatel, a Clinton appointee; Thomas Griffith, a George W. Bush appointee; and Cornelia Pillard, an Obama appointee.

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** Energy security is a top priority. For decades, we lacked a tool to measure our progress and assess the impact of policy decisions. Our *Index of Energy Security Risk* changed all that and gives us an objective, quantitative way to track it. See our Index here: <http://bit.ly/2xGeOvL> **

KOCH PAYS \$650K OVER SULFUR GASOLINE VIOLATION: A Koch subsidiary will pay EPA \$650,000 to settle an alleged Clean Air Act violation, according to a newly released [settlement agreement](#). Kansas-based Koch Supply & Trading, which blends fuel at a Pasadena terminal, in 2012 allegedly produced nearly 16 million gallons of a fuel known as "conventional blendstock for oxygenate blending," or CBOB, that violated EPA standards for sulfur in gasoline. The deal was approved on Wednesday by three administrative law judges on EPA's Environmental Appeals Board.

NAS REPORT SAYS DOE SHOULD OFFER ITS OWN LAND FOR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT: The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in a [report](#) today contends DOE should take a page from the Interior Department's book and look for ways it can offer its land for energy development. The report recommends DOE take an inventory of its 164 sites in 32 states and create an office that would work with energy developers on leasing viable locations. "The intersection of public benefit and private interest is strong on these lands, and their development can further the national objective of energy independence and greater national security," said Paul DeCotis, who chaired the committee that wrote the report.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE: The National Flood Insurance Program has exhausted its borrowing authority after damage caused by the series of hurricanes that drenched the U.S. over the last few weeks, Pro Financial Service's Zachary Warmbrodt reports. That news ups the pressure on Congress to allow it to tap Treasury further to pay claims. "FEMA, which runs the program, said it notified Congress on Sept. 20 that it borrowed \$5.8 billion from Treasury to fund losses this year, including those incurred by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and 'anticipated programmatic activities,'" Zachary writes. "The balance of FEMA's remaining borrowing authority is now zero, according to the agency. Congress last raised its borrowing cap to about \$30 billion after Hurricane Sandy." More [here](#).

— **The Senate today passed the FAA bill by unanimous consent** without the House's controversial flood insurance provision. The bill now heads back to the House, which is also expected to pass it by unanimous consent, Pro Transportation's Tanya Snyder [reports](#).

COAL EXEC, LAWYERS INDICTED ON BRIBERY: An executive at coal mining Drummond Co. and two attorneys with the prominent Alabama law firm Balch & Bingham have been indicted on charges of bribing a state legislator to oppose an environmental cleanup plan, according to the [Justice Department](#). Joel Gilbert and Steven McKinney are named on charges including conspiracy and bribery. The two handle environmental litigation at Balch & Bingham, a law firm where Jeff Wood — who was [recently tapped](#) as a Trump adviser and

acting Assistant Attorney General of DOJ's Environment and Natural Resources Division — served [as a partner](#) earlier in his career. Drummond Vice President David Roberson was charged with the same crimes. "The three are accused of bribing former state Rep. Oliver Robinson, who pleaded guilty earlier this month to accepting \$360,000 in payments. Prosecutors say the law firm represented Drummond, and Robinson got a contract to oppose an expansion of an environmental cleanup site linked to Drummond." Read more [here](#).

INDUSTRY PASSES ON TRUMP'S MARINE REVIEW: The Trump administration is reviewing 11 marine sanctuaries that cover some 425 million acres of marine life and land, but instead of applauding the move, the energy industry seems to be largely disinterested, Reuters reports. The marine review is part of a larger White House strategy to open new areas for oil and gas drilling and "put the energy needs of American families and businesses first," according to an April presidential order. "But interviews with energy industry representatives signal the effort will likely miss its target," Reuters writes. "Opening up these areas would likely help wind power companies — which Trump has lambasted — more than oil producers, they say. And neither industry is interested because of the high costs of offshore development, comparatively rich opportunities on land and the public relations headaches of developing protected oceanscapes." Read it [here](#).

SCALISE RETURNS TO CONGRESS: House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) returned to Congress today in a surprise appearance during a House vote. It was the first time Scalise, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, had been in the Capitol since he took a bullet to the hip while practicing with the Republican congressional baseball team in Alexandria, Va., POLITICO's Kyle Cheney and Rachael Bade [report](#). "You have no idea how great this feels to be back here in the people's House," Scalise told the chamber. "The last three-and-a-half months have been a pretty challenging time for me and my family. But if you look at the outpouring of love, of warmth, of prayer — my gosh! — we've been overwhelmed. And it's given us the strength to get through all this."

PRUITT SCHEDULE MISSING MEDIA APPEARANCES: Although EPA [began releasing](#) a simplified version of Pruitt's schedule online this week, the Media Matters blog points out there is a lack of transparency in the released schedules, which go as far back as April, as they omit many of the administrator's media interviews — including at least 12 interviews with right-wing media. "Media Matters identified 13 media interviews Pruitt gave that were not accounted for on these publicly released schedules," the site writes, "and 12 of these interviews were with conservative or right-wing outlets. The more recent, bare-bones schedule lists 52 occasions on which Pruitt gave interviews to media outlets over the five months covered. For 51 of them, the outlets are not specified; the events are simply listed as 'media interview' or 'media interviews.'" Read the specifics [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Interior to overhaul Obama's sage grouse protection plan, [The New York Times](#).
- Majority of Americans now say climate change makes hurricanes more intense, [The Washington Post](#).
- Climate and energy are becoming focal points in state political races, [The Guardian](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Trump fuming over [Price's charter flights](#).
- White House "[back to square one](#)" in search for DHS secretary.
- [Democrats see 2018 gains](#) in repeated Obamacare repeal tries.

****A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** Pipelines Power America. America has over 2.6 million miles of pipelines that safely deliver natural gas and petroleum products throughout our nation. It would take over 750 tanker trucks a day to transport the same amount of energy as a single pipeline. While our analysis shows that certain regions like the Northeast face a critical lack of pipeline infrastructure that is contributing to higher prices and negative economic impacts, pipeline projects are under attack across the nation. It's time to end delays and allow for energy that is essential for our daily lives to move around our nation. Find out more about how Pipelines Power America here: <http://bit.ly/2wG6lj9> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/09/keeping-up-with-the-jones-act-024824>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump waives Jones Act for Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/28/2017 08:40 AM EDT

President Donald Trump today authorized a lifting of the Jones Act to help deliver fuel and other goods to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said.

The president waived the act at the request of Puerto Rico, Sanders said via Twitter. Lifting the Jones Act allows foreign vessels to bring material from one U.S. domestic port to another.

"It will go into effect immediately," Sanders said of the waiver.

Trump had come under fire for not lifting the shipping restrictions earlier. Puerto Rico is running out of fuel, potable water and other necessities after being hit by Hurricane Maria last week.

DHS waived the Jones Act for fuel delivery to Texas and Florida after hurricanes hit those states earlier this year.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump has scheduled a trip to Puerto Rico next week.

To view online [click here](#).

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DOT urged no Jones Act waiver as late as Wednesday afternoon [Back](#)

By Kathryn A. Wolfe | 09/28/2017 11:51 AM EDT

DOT argued that the Jones Act shouldn't be waived for Puerto Rico less than 24 hours before President Donald Trump did just that.

A [letter](#) from MARAD sent to offices on Capitol Hill Wednesday afternoon, obtained by POLITICO, argues that containers from Jones Act-compliant ships were "stacking up in the terminals faster than they can be moved inland" and that waiving the Jones Act "will likely only exacerbate the problem."

"Waiving the Jones Act now will not provide any additional relief to the hurricane victims on the island," wrote Alexis Rudd from MARAD's Office of Congressional and Public Affairs. "The most pressing logistics challenge is how to get cargo to people in need after it has arrived in port. There is currently a shortage of trucks and drivers to move containers from the ports to inland distribution centers."

Rudd cautioned that the administration should only consider allowing case-by-case Jones Act waivers once infrastructure on the island is restored. "There should not be any blanket waivers of the Jones Act."

Trump this morning [waived](#) the Jones Act for Puerto Rico, following pressure to act. The waiver lasts for 10 days.

To view online [click here](#).

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DHS says it hasn't denied Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico — yet [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 09/27/2017 11:35 AM EDT

DHS officials said today that they have not yet decided how to act on the Jones Act waiver [request](#) sent Monday from eight members of Congress.

However, senior DHS officials made it clear that a waiver is unlikely and that an official determination could take days or weeks, as it requires coordination with other federal agencies.

Under statute, the Jones Act, which requires that goods moved between U.S. ports must be carried on U.S.-owned and -operated vessels, can only be waived for reasons of "national defense" or if there aren't enough U.S.-flag vessels to meet demand. In the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the Department of Defense requested a Jones Act waiver for Texas and Florida, which was issued quickly. In the absence of a Pentagon request, DHS needs to make those determinations itself, consulting with MARAD on vessel availability.

DHS officials also told reporters that the department had "not received a formal waiver request," since Congress is not a traditional pathway for these kinds of requests. Still, the officials said they are evaluating the request and working as quickly as possible to make a determination.

The officials also reiterated that a Jones Act waiver would not help move goods within the island, which is the real problem Puerto Rico is facing right now.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are statutorily exempt from the Jones Act.

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McCain, Lee pen bill to exempt Puerto Rico from Jones Act permanently [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 09/28/2017 01:59 PM EDT

Sens. [John McCain](#) and [Mike Lee](#) introduced legislation today to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act.

The move comes after President Donald Trump granted a 10-day waiver of the Jones Act to the island, which is still reeling from the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria.

"While I welcome the Trump administration's Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico, this short-term, 10-day exemption is insufficient to help the people of Puerto Rico recover and rebuild from Hurricane Maria," McCain said in a statement. "Our legislation would permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act, an antiquated, protectionist law that has driven up costs and crippled Puerto Rico's economy."

To view online [click here](#).

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Flood insurance program exhausts Treasury borrowing [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 09/28/2017 10:16 AM EDT

The National Flood Insurance Program has depleted its borrowing authority after a series of devastating hurricanes over the last several weeks, a turning point that will put pressure on Congress to allow it to tap Treasury further to pay claims.

FEMA, which runs the program, said it notified Congress on Sept. 20 that it borrowed \$5.8 billion from Treasury to fund losses this year, including those incurred by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and "anticipated programmatic activities."

The balance of FEMA's remaining borrowing authority is now zero, according to the agency. Congress last raised its borrowing cap to about \$30 billion after Hurricane Sandy.

"Ultimately, the claims payments on Harvey and Irma will exceed the current spending authorities of the National Flood Insurance Program," a FEMA spokesperson said. "We will be collaborating with Congress so that every claim is paid in full."

For Hurricane Harvey, more than \$925 million in claims have been paid, FEMA said. As of Wednesday, more than 88,000 claims have been submitted in Texas and more than 480 in Louisiana.

For Hurricane Irma, FEMA has paid \$26 million on claims. More than 25,000 claims have been submitted across Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. FEMA expects the claims numbers to increase.

WHAT'S NEXT: Congress this week is debating whether to pass legislation intended to boost the private sector flood insurance market outside the NFIP. Lawmakers are also working on reauthorizing the program before it expires Dec. 8.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate passes FAA extension bill by unanimous consent [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 09/28/2017 01:39 PM EDT

The Senate has passed the FAA bill by unanimous consent without the House's controversial flood insurance provision. The bill will go back to the House, which is also expected to pass it by unanimous consent, avoiding a shutdown of FAA programs.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump campaign taps GOP energy lobbyist as adviser [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Elana Schor | 09/12/2016 07:18 PM EDT

The Trump campaign has recruited a Republican lobbyist and former aide to Sen. [Jeff Sessions](#) to advise the nominee on energy policy, according to sources familiar with the campaign.

Jeff Wood's role in the Trump campaign is yet another sign of Sessions's influence on the nominee's policymaking apparatus, which has suffered from [internal tension](#) in recent weeks. Wood served as a legal counsel for Sessions from 2011 to 2014, focusing on energy and environmental issues, before becoming a [partner](#) at Balch & Bingham, a firm where he served earlier in his career.

Before joining Sessions' office, Wood was an in-house lawyer at Nashville-based Ingram Barge Company, a leading inland waterway shipping business.

Sessions endorsed Trump in February, long before the New York developer locked down the Republican nomination, in a perceived blow to Sen. [Ted Cruz](#)'s (R-Texas) primary hopes.

According to public records, Wood has lobbied for Southern Company and the Alabama Power Company.

Wood is working closely with Andrew Wheeler, another Trump campaign energy adviser. Wheeler is the [co-leader](#) of the energy and natural resources practice at the firm Faegre Baker Daniels and a former Republican staff director on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Trump's campaign has also received high-level energy policy advice from Continental Resources CEO Harold Hamm (a [contender](#) for energy secretary in a Trump administration), Murray Energy CEO Robert Murray and North Dakota Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#).

Wood, Wheeler and the Trump campaign did not respond to requests for comment. It's unclear exactly when Wood began working for the campaign.

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Scalise returns to Congress for first time since shooting [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney and Rachael Bade | 09/28/2017 10:04 AM EDT

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, seriously wounded by a gunman's bullet in June, returned to Congress in a surprise appearance during a House vote Thursday.

It was Scalise's first time in the Capitol since he took a bullet to the hip while practicing with the Republican congressional baseball team in Alexandria, Va. The shot shattered bone and tore through muscles and organs, leaving Scalise on the brink of death.

But after months of treatment and steady recovery, Scalise made his first journey from the hospital to the Hill. Tearful lawmakers from both sides of the aisle greeted him with a standing ovation as he addressed the House floor.

"You have no idea how great this feels to be back here in the people's House," Scalise told the chamber. "The last three-and-a-half months have been a pretty challenging time for me and my family. But if you look at the outpouring of love, of warmth, of prayer — my gosh! — we've been overwhelmed. And it's given us the strength to get through all this."

It was welcome sight for members, who once feared they may never see their colleague again. Rep. Rodney Davis, who watched Scalise go down at the practice that day, caught wind of Scalise's return early and sought to find the room where he was waiting before the big reveal.

"I'm going to stake him out just like you guys," the Illinois Republican said to POLITICO. He'd texted and talked to Scalise on the phone since the shooting, but had not yet seen him in person. "This is a great day! ... I didn't know that we'd have the chance to see Steve walk again, let alone be here with us."

A few minutes later, Scalise, flanked by staff and U.S. Capitol Police, emerged from a room off the House floor and slowly made his way through the speaker's lobby. He leaned heavily on two canes at each arm but seemed cheerful. When someone greeted him, he responded over his shoulder: "It feels good to be back!"

The chamber erupted with applause when Scalise walked through the door. Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Pa.) wiped away tears, as did multiple other members. Rep. Cedric Richmond, a Democrat and longtime Scalise friend from Louisiana, walked over to the Republican side of the chamber to clasp hands with his buddy.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) came over from the Senate to see Scalise. He sat in the front row on the edge of his chair for much of the address.

Though he's been absent from Congress, Scalise has worked the phones to try to help the House prepare for a hectic fall agenda.

Scalise's office said he will be resuming his work at the Capitol, while also completing an extended period of out-patient rehabilitation over the coming months.

President Donald Trump on Thursday praised Scalise as "brave" during a brief interview with NBC News.

"He's a special man. Brave. Just a great guy, a great friend of mine. We're so excited. What happened to him, just horrible," the president said. "We are so happy."

Scalise was shot while playing second base in preparation for an annual charity game against congressional Democrats. The shooting, by a lone gunman who appeared to attempt a political assassination, was a harrowing moment that rippled across Washington and the country. Lawmakers offered vivid descriptions of dodging bullets and fleeing the gunman until Scalise's Capitol Police detail was able to take him down.

The episode has since led lawmakers to seek increased funding for personal security.

In his address to members, Scalise thanked lawmakers for their support and the "true angels" in his security detail, who saved him. One of those, Officer David Bailey, was also wounded in the shooting. He stood in the chamber balcony by Scalise's wife and the surgeons who "gave me a second chance at life," as Scalise said.

"David you are my hero. You saved my life," Scalise said. The room cheered.

In one of the most moving moments of the morning, Scalise thanked Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), a military vet who applied a tourniquet to Scalise's leg after the shooting. Scalise's doctors said he was mere minutes away from dying due to blood loss, and without Wenstrup, he might not have made it.

"He was one of the first to come to my side," Scalise said. The tourniquet "saved my life so that I could actually made it to the hospital in time to wall the blood off."

Wenstrup, sitting several rows away from Scalise, walked over and embraced him with a bear hug.

To view online [click here](#).

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EPA begins posting Pruitt's schedule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/25/2017 11:09 AM EDT

EPA has begun posting a basic version of [Administrator Scott Pruitt's schedule](#) online in response to increased requests for his itinerary.

The posted records cover April 3 through Sept. 8. EPA previously released a more detailed version of Pruitt's [February and March schedule](#) in response to records requests from POLITICO and other outlets.

An EPA official said last week the schedule will be updated every two weeks. EPA posted a similarly basic schedule for Pruitt's predecessor, Gina McCarthy, typically on a daily basis.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump fuming over Price's charter flights [Back](#)

By Josh Dawsey, Andrew Restuccia and Louis Nelson | 09/27/2017 01:12 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and his top aides are fuming over Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price's use of expensive private jets, with some advisers privately calling for Price's ouster.

Trump rebuked Price in sharp terms Wednesday but declined to bat down speculation that the HHS chief could be fired for his lavish spending of taxpayer dollars.

"We'll see," the president told reporters when asked whether Price would stay in his job.

"I was looking into it, and I will look into it. And I will tell you personally, I'm not happy about it," Trump said. "I am not happy about it. I'm going to look at it. I am not happy about it, and I let him know it."

Administration officials said that Price is safe for now.

POLITICO has [revealed](#) that Price has flown 26 times on private aircraft since last May at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, a break with the practice of his predecessors, who generally took commercial flights.

Some Trump advisers are urging Trump to get rid of Price, according to three people familiar with the conversations.

"His conduct is pretty much indefensible," one senior administration official said. "I don't know how you defend it."

White House officials said Trump was shocked by Price's behavior, especially because he nurtured a reputation as a fiscal conservative during his time as a House lawmaker.

Two administration officials said the steady drumbeat of reports on Price's travel has made the issue impossible to ignore.

The president is annoyed with cable news coverage of Price's travel, one of these people said. "He goes, 'Why did he do this? It makes no sense,'" the official said.

Administration officials said Trump's anger at Price may not translate to his ouster. Price is the latest Trump administration official to get on the president's bad side. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson are among those who have run afoul of the president.

Although several high-profile officials have been pushed out of the administration, others have made their way back into the president's good graces. Officials also noted that, despite the public image he earned as the star of "The Apprentice," Trump is often reluctant to fire people. And he sometimes takes weeks to make a final decision.

But Price was already on thin ice before the jet stories broke. Trump and other senior administration officials have complained that he wasn't effective in wooing House members on the Hill for Obamacare repeal initiatives, one of the reasons the former House Republican was tapped for the job.

Price has also been absent for several Oval Office meetings where repealing the law was discussed. Many of the meetings on Capitol Hill were led by Vice President Mike Pence, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Director Seema Verma or Marc Short, the legislative affairs head.

Additionally, Trump, who cares deeply about personal chemistry, does not have a close connection with Price, one of the administration officials said. Few senior White House officials have been willing to defend him this week.

"Price isn't happy," one senior administration official said. "Wouldn't shock me if this ends in him stepping down, especially after failing on health care over and over."

White House officials also believe HHS mishandled its response to the jet stories.

HHS seemed unconcerned by the stories at first and felt there was little need to respond, according to two administration officials. One of these officials said there was no urgency — and the agency didn't quickly share facts with the White House.

HHS has said Price did not violate federal travel regulations, which allow for chartered aircraft when "no scheduled commercial airline service is reasonably available." A POLITICO review, however, showed that many of Price's private flights were matched closely by commercial options available at a fraction of the cost.

In an interview last weekend, Price said he would stop taking taxpayer-funded private flights, telling Fox News that "We've heard the criticism. We've heard the concerns. We take that very seriously and have taken it to heart."

[Among the private flights](#) booked by Price was a June day trip to Nashville, Tennessee, where he toured a medical dispensary, spoke at a health summit organized by a friend and had lunch with his son. Price also took a chartered flight last month to a resort in Georgia where he and his wife own property, arriving a day and a half before he was to address a medical

conference.

The White House has sought to distance itself from Price's behavior, with press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders declining to offer a defense of the secretary's flight choices and telling reporters this week that they were not "White House-approved travel."

HHS spokespeople did not immediately return an email seeking a response from Price.

The secretary's travels have also drawn the attention of the House Oversight Committee, [which launched an investigation](#) Wednesday into the use of private aircraft by Price and other senior government officials. The HHS inspector general has also launched an investigation into Price's use of chartered planes.

"We welcome this review," Price said of the inspector general's review in his Fox News interview last weekend. "We want to make certain that we have the full confidence of not just this administration, but the American people."

That Price has made a habit of chartering aircraft for his travels as a Cabinet member is especially notable given his past criticism of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), whom Price, then a member of Congress, lambasted in 2010 for "flying over our country in a luxury jet."

Tara Palmeri, Eliana Johnson and Annie Karni contributed to this report.

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White House 'back to square one' in search for DHS secretary [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Eliana Johnson | 09/28/2017 11:32 AM EDT

The Trump administration is hitting reset on its search for a permanent Department of Homeland Security secretary due to White House aides' dissatisfaction with the slate of candidates, according to two people familiar with the process.

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mike McCaul had been considered the [front-runner](#) for the job, but he no longer is in contention, these people said. White House chief of staff John Kelly, who led DHS before being tapped for his new West Wing role, privately raised red flags about McCaul's stance on immigration, which has at times diverged from that of President Donald Trump.

One person close to the process said the Trump administration is now "back to square one" on the search, and it could be weeks before a final decision is made.

The department is being helmed by Acting Secretary Elaine Duke, a DHS veteran who was Kelly's deputy, as it copes with the fallout from Trump's new travel restrictions, his decision to end DACA and a series of powerful hurricanes that have ravaged Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

McCaul is in lockstep with Trump on many issues. He is [pushing legislation](#) that would provide \$10 billion for Trump's border wall with Mexico.

But he also has publicly broken with the president over his travel ban, distancing himself from the restrictions and [criticizing](#) its haphazard rollout as "problematic." McCaul also bashed Trump's response to the Russia investigations, saying in a July interview, "It sort of looks paranoid to me."

The White House has taken a [deliberate approach](#) to finding a new DHS secretary. Kelly and his deputy, Kirstjen Nielsen, are playing key roles in identifying candidates. White House aides are committed to choosing somebody with experience in homeland security and politics.

A White House spokeswoman declined to comment, saying, "We will let you know once we have any personnel announcements."

A McCaul spokeswoman declined to comment, referring a reporter to a Fox News [interview](#) from earlier this month in which McCaul said, "This is really the president's decision — wherever I can serve my country the best ... ultimately the president will decide that."

Ted Hesson contributed to this story.

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Dems see 2018 gains in repeated Obamacare repeal tries [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Heather Caygle | 09/28/2017 05:03 AM EDT

To the Republicans vowing to keep their Obamacare repeal drive alive for as long as it takes, Democrats say: Please, and thank you.

While Senate Republicans [abandoned their last-gasp attempt](#) to topple Obamacare before a Saturday deadline, they're already suggesting they might try again next year. That timing — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that Congress would take up repeal again in the first quarter of next year — could keep the threat of upending the health care system front of mind in the thick of the 2018 campaign season.

And as much as they want to keep Obamacare intact, Democrats believe that political dynamic only boosts their chances of taking back the House and putting Republicans on defense in Senate races.

"I think they are falling into an enormous trap of their own making. And have at it," said Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.). "I think they're going to pay a very heavy price for this."

Obamacare also has proven a uniquely unifying issue for Democrats, from the red-state Joe Manchin wing to the liberal Bernie Sanders end of the party. Activist groups that are otherwise prone to occasional clashes with party leaders have also linked arms to help Democrats defeat repeated Republican repeal efforts, and any fresh repeal attempt close to the midterms would likely spark another kumbaya moment.

"Everybody, from the most progressive to the most moderate, would be glad to vote to retain the progress we've made on health care and to prevent people's lives from being thrown into chaos," Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) said.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee homed in on the anti-repeal message after the Senate's latest push sputtered earlier this week, blasting out a reminder that all but 20 House Republicans backed the GOP's repeal plan in May.

DCCC spokesman Tyler Law declared that no matter what happens to the GOP's drive to uproot Obamacare, Democrats would work hard to hang the unpopular House-passed repeal bill around their rivals' necks.

"This issue is going to remain front and center because it's so personal," Law said. "And I would also add it's going to be front and center because Republicans are stubbornly saying, 'We are going to continue over and over again to try and take your health care away.'"

That commitment from Republicans who are still openly [entertaining](#) a return to the repeal debate before 2019 has deep roots, however. GOP donors and conservative activists who have propelled the party's seven-year push to dismantle Obamacare are not content to declare it dead for good, particularly when Trump's party is only in the early stages of its tax reform efforts.

Republicans dismissed the idea that Democrats can capitalize on Obamacare repeal.

"House Democrats have made bold claims about their electoral prospects before only to fail miserably — this is no different," Jesse Hunt, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, said in a statement. "Their embrace of single-payer health care has ensured that their unabashed loyalty to the progressive base, at the expense of working class families, will be the defining issue of this cycle."

Waiting until next year, Republicans wager, will give them more time to shape a more successful "replace" element for their Obamacare repeal-and-replace plan.

"Democrats have been able to use the issue, mostly because the messaging on our side hasn't been great, but the fact is that health care in the U.S. — everyone, Democrats, Republicans, recognize something needs to change. Obamacare isn't working," one GOP strategist said. "With more time, Republicans are going to be able to craft a plan that more folks can agree on within the caucus, and it will give them more time to sell it to the general public."

There's also the problem that continued failure by Republicans on their years-long campaign pledge could keep base voters home next Election Day. Proponents of the latest repeal bill were open about anger among GOP donors and the grass roots.

But after watching Republicans reap the political gains of campaigning against Obamacare, Democrats are convinced the tables have turned. Connolly singled out Rep. Darrell Issa and other politically imperiled California Republicans as particularly at risk if the GOP attempts to bring back Obamacare repeal next year. The 14 California House Republicans who voted for their party's repeal bill "went off the cliff for solidarity, irrespective of the impact on their constituents," he said.

Democrats need to pick up 24 seats to take back the House. They're eyeing 23 Republican

seats in districts Hillary Clinton won and argue at least 50 more GOP seats could be competitive in the right environment.

Voters rated health care and the economy as the two most important issues when picking their member of Congress in the [latest POLITICO/Morning Consult poll](#), released this week.

The overarching theme — vote for Democrats or Republicans will keep trying to take away your health care — could also help mask some of the party's own divisions over health care, Democratic strategists say.

Progressives, including multiple 2020 presidential contenders and 60 percent of House Democrats, have in recent weeks [rallied around](#) the Medicare-for-All push from Sanders (I-Vt.). But Democratic leaders and several vulnerable House Democrats have [shied away](#) from the proposal, wary of alienating centrist voters in districts that will be critical in the push to win back the lower chamber next year.

Republicans raced to play up the internal Democratic divide after Sanders' splashy rollout earlier this month, aiming to turn it into a campaign-trail albatross for the minority. But a broader message focused on GOP repeal efforts could help deflect the spotlight away from some of those differences and force Republicans to go on defense.

Indeed, progressive organizers who have not hesitated to criticize Democratic leaders say their grass roots won't be caught off guard again by another repeal push.

"We don't want to see this come back, but our groups have said time and time again that every time Republicans have put forward an attempt to repeal, they would step up," said Angel Padilla, policy director at the liberal group Indivisible. "We don't think that's going to change. And we think it's going to affect who controls Congress."

Democrats also argue that bipartisan Senate talks to stabilize Obamacare will only help their case heading into the midterms. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) [resumed talks Wednesday](#) to try to salvage their bipartisan health care plan, an effort that was quashed by GOP leadership when the repeal plan seemed to have legs.

But Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has already [rejected the talks](#), saying any bill they come up with would never pass in the House. Democrats say that stonewalling only strengthens their case to voters in the coming months.

"The politics for us is really clear and really simple," Schatz said. "In the end, they've got to do what they think is right, but Round Seven [of repeal] doesn't seem like the right slogan for 2018."

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Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 3:53:22 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 09/29/2017 03:49 PM EDT

With help from Emily Holden

BREAKING DOWN THE BUDGET: Senate Republicans released their long-awaited budget blueprint today for the upcoming fiscal year, paving the way for a tax overhaul without relying on Democratic support. POLITICO's Sarah Ferris [reports](#) the [89-page](#) blueprint instructs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to save at least \$1 billion over a decade, which lawmakers widely expect will come from opening up oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge — a longtime priority of Alaskans including ENR Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#). A vote is expected next week on the resolution that is likely to be approved.

"**Under the budget proposal**, Republican tax writers can add up to \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years, giving lawmakers more flexibility as they attempt a once-in-a-generation revamp of the U.S. tax code," Sarah writes. "With more wiggle room to slash revenue, GOP legislators hope they will be able to go even lower on tax rates for individuals and corporations."

POLITICO reported earlier this week on the plan to include the pro-drilling language in the budget. Authorizing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge through budget reconciliation would allow Republicans to circumvent a filibuster, but could be a risky strategy as two GOP senators have opposed such provisions in the past, Nick Juliano [points out](#).

PERRY PRESSES FERC TO HELP COAL: The Trump administration is calling on FERC to create new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants that are being squeezed by cheaper natural gas and renewable sources, saying they are "indispensable for economic and national security."

The call by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who [told miners](#) in Pennsylvania on Thursday that "it's time for coal in this country to be revived," was done under the rarely used Section 403 authority of the Department of Energy Organization Act. And though Perry stops short of specifically asking for coal incentives, he wants full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and "ancillary" services — and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. That would exclude most natural gas power plants, which do not typically keep large fuel inventories on hand and instead receive supplies via pipeline.

Of course, FERC, whose members are appointed by the president and operate as an independent body, isn't obligated to implement the specific policy pushed by Perry. The commission will be back to operating with a full five members in the coming weeks. More from Darius Dixon [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Happy Friday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1),

[@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** Coming soon, our team of policy experts will be providing timely reactions and analysis of energy news as it happens at *Fuel for Thought*, the Global Energy Institute's new blogging hub. Sign up now to receive these updates in your inbox: <http://bit.ly/2yJpM29> **

ZINKE CALLS CONTROVERSY 'B.S.': Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke waved off the response to his use of a private aircraft, calling it "a little B.S." in a speech at The Heritage Foundation today. The Montana Republican spoke on the matter less than 24 hours after [revelations](#) about his use of private planes surfaced — including a \$12,000 flight from a big-donor event to his hometown and a trip in the Caribbean. The Interior chief is at least the fourth member of the Trump administration to face questions over use of planes at taxpayer expense, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#).

"All this travel was done only after department officials determined no other flights were available," Zinke told the audience at Heritage. "Every time I travel, I submit travel plans to the department, who determines line by line that I follow the law. And I follow the law." Zinke confirmed that he had taken three charter flights since being confirmed in March, but he did not go into detail about the events.

PUERTO RICO TROUBLE BREWS: The Trump administration is facing continued backlash for its recovery response in Puerto Rico, Louis Nelson reports. Tension mounted this morning, with the mayor San Juan lashing out at acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke, who called the Maria relief efforts a "good news story" on Thursday. "Damn it, this is not a good news story. This is a people are dying story. This is a life-or-death story," San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz said on CNN. "When you have to pull people down from their buildings — I'm sorry, but that really upsets me and frustrates me. You know, I would ask her to come down here and visit the towns, and then make a statement like that which frankly it is an irresponsible statement." Roughly half of Puerto Ricans are still without running water, officials said today at a press conference in the island's capital, and just 36 of its 69 hospitals are open and have power. More [here](#).

VOGTLE GETS BOOST IN LOAN GUARANTEE: The Energy Department has approved some conditions of a \$3.7 billion increase in federal loan guarantees for the over-budget Vogtle nuclear project in Georgia, Darius reports. The agency has already approved \$8.33 billion for the two-reactor project under the Obama administration, but now Perry is primed to offer an additional \$1.67 billion to the struggling Southern Co.'s Georgia Power, \$1.6 billion to Oglethorpe Power Corp. and \$415 million to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia. More [here](#).

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson applauded the news. "This DOE loan guarantee will help promote a diverse fuel mix, which is vital as electric co-ops work to meet 21st century energy needs and ensure continued access to affordable, reliable power," Matheson said in a statement. "I applaud DOE and Secretary Perry for recognizing the value of this project and making it more affordable for our members."

EPA TO HOST SMARTSECTORS EVENT: EPA plans to host top trade groups at an event at headquarters on Tuesday to roll out its Smart Sectors program, which will designate staff liaisons for specific industries. The event follows President Donald Trump's speech on Monday that will highlight administration efforts to roll back regulations. The program

focuses on several industries, including oil and gas and utilities and power generation, according to details in the [Federal Register](#). Among groups invited are the Edison Electric Institute and the American Petroleum Institute. The agency staff contacts are meant to spend time "building relationships and improving customer service to sectors; developing additional expertise in each industry's operations and environmental performance; and informing the planning of future policies, regulations, and Agency processes," according to EPA's description.

COME TOGETHER: In a Fox News op-ed published today, Jay Timmons, president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, and Sean McGarvey, president of the North America's Building Trades Unions, announced the creation of the [Coalition for Regulatory Innovation](#). The two organizations have joined to form the coalition "because we believe reform is best achieved with a united bipartisan front," they write. "Thankfully, Republicans and Democrats in Washington have responded to this issue by offering practical solutions to improve the entire rulemaking process. Our commitment is to bring together people from the business and labor communities to get Congress to move forward on reform that is long overdue." Read it [here](#).

MOVERS, SHAKERS: The Colonial Pipeline Company today [announced](#) that Joseph Blount Jr., who has been in the energy industry for 35 years, has been named president and CEO of the company. Blount is a former board member of the company.

QUICK HITS:

- Macron trumps Trump with 'Make Climate Great Again' campaign, [AFP](#).
- Baker Hughes: U.S. drillers add oil rigs for first week since mid-August, [Reuters](#).
- Trump told Iowa he'd save ethanol. His EPA chief has other ideas, [Bloomberg](#).
- How a Texas insurance lobbyist ended up in the anti-swamp Trump administration, [Houston Chronicle](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Bernie backers give [Democrat incumbents](#) a pass in 2018
- White House launches probe of [private email accounts](#)
- Price took [military jets](#) to Europe, Asia for over \$500K

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** For the last decade, we've been at the forefront of energy discussions in Washington and around the nation. Now, as the Global Energy Institute, we're ready for an even larger role, reflecting America's growing influence as an energy superpower. Without our vast grassroots network, we're positioned to help the lead the charge for common sense energy solutions that will grow our economy and improve our security. Visit our website to learn more. www.globalenergyinstitute.org **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/09/budget-blueprint-breakdown-024845>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Senate Republicans unveil budget blueprint to tee up tax reform [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 09/29/2017 01:01 PM EDT

Senate Republicans released their long-awaited budget blueprint Friday for the upcoming fiscal year, paving the way for a tax overhaul without the need for Democratic buy-in.

The [89-page plan](#), which the Senate Budget Committee spent months drafting, sets up the special power of budget reconciliation GOP leaders can use to advance tax reform with just a 50-vote threshold in the Senate.

Nov. 13 is the tentative deadline for tax writers to submit their plans for an overhaul to the budget panel.

Under the budget proposal, Republican tax writers can add up to \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years, giving lawmakers more flexibility as they attempt a once-in-a-generation revamp of the U.S. tax code. With more wiggle room to slash revenue, GOP legislators hope they will be able to go even lower on tax rates for individuals and corporations.

The \$1.5 trillion figure comes out of a compromise struck this month between deficit hawk Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) and tax-writer Sen. [Pat Toomey](#) (R-Pa.), who both sit on the budget panel. Corker had sought a revenue-neutral tax plan, while Toomey had called for as much as \$3 trillion in lost revenue over 10 years.

"This budget is especially important because it will allow us to get to work on our pro-growth, pro-family, pro-jobs tax reform plan," Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) wrote in a statement Friday.

As expected, the Senate's pared-down version veers drastically from the House version. The House budget would require a tax plan that does not add to the deficit, though some tax writers feared that approach would force Republicans to seek less-ambitious tax cuts.

In an unsurprising but contentious move, Senate budget writers ditched long-time conservative calls for mandatory cuts. While the House budget would deliver \$203 billion in mandatory cuts, the Senate asks only one committee to find \$1 billion in savings over 10 years — a disparity sure to be a sticking point when both chambers seek a compromise during conference negotiations in the weeks to come.

The only savings in the Senate version would come from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has been tasked with finding at least \$1 billion over a decade.

Lawmakers widely expect that projected savings to come from opening up oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Senate budget blueprint does not appear to give Republicans another shot at repealing Obamacare next year, as some lawmakers have advocated.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over most Obamacare programs, is expected to focus entirely on tax reform with its \$1.5 trillion instruction.

Obamacare's fate is not assured, though, since some budget experts say the Finance Committee could choose to use its existing instructions to rollback Obamacare, or simply seek authority to do so in another — separate — budget resolution next year.

In recent months, Senate budget writers had also mulled reforms for Dodd-Frank financial rules and student aid programs, according to multiple sources. But the budget document does not include instructions for either the Senate Banking Committee or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee.

Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#) (R-Wyo.) wrote in a statement that the blueprint "puts our nation on a path to balance," in part by reducing spending by \$5 trillion over 10 years. But the budget resolution itself includes no details on how lawmakers could achieve that spending surplus.

In sharp contrast to the House budget, the Senate's would comply with the budget caps mandated by sequestration. (If the Senate chose to ignore the sequester, it would violate a budget rule and prompt a point-of-order on the floor).

Under the upper chamber's plan, the military's budget would be capped at \$549 billion over the next year, to comply with current law. The House budget, which is not subject to points of order, boosts defense spending to \$621.5 billion.

The Senate Budget Committee plans to hold a vote on the fiscal outline next week and is expected to have enough GOP support for approval.

To view online [click here](#).

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Reconciliation may provide opening for ANWR [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Sarah Ferris | 09/25/2017 06:07 PM EDT

Senate Republicans plan to open the door to oil drilling in an Alaskan wildlife refuge using special rules that would allow them to avoid a Democratic filibuster, according to sources tracking the budget process.

The Senate Budget Committee is still drawing up its fiscal 2018 blueprint, which is expected to lay the groundwork for tax reform using special budget reconciliation rules. Two sources familiar with the ongoing negotiations say the document also is expected to lay the groundwork for new energy production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge — a longtime goal of Republicans and oil companies.

It's a potentially risky strategy, with two Republican senators on record opposing similar bills in the past: Sens. [John McCain](#) of Arizona and [Susan Collins](#) of Maine. If those two remain in opposition, Senate leadership couldn't lose a single other GOP vote without jeopardizing their entire reconciliation package, centered on tax reform.

Congress last tried to open ANWR more than a decade ago, and any legislation to do so would run into fierce opposition from environmental groups and virtually all Democrats. But

proponents of the idea say their chances have improved since the election of President Donald Trump, who has sought to increase U.S. oil, gas and coal production.

"Energy dominance requires ANWR," said Matt Shuckerow, a spokesman for Alaska Rep. [Don Young](#), invoking a favorite Trump administration catch-phrase. "We are working with leadership and looking at reconciliation."

The Senate budget resolution is expected to give special deficit-reducing instructions to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in the upcoming fiscal year, totaling about \$1 billion over a decade.

While budget writers can't mandate specific policies, sources say it would enable ENR Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) to write legislation that would remove restrictions on drilling in ANWR or other currently off-limits areas.

Opening up drilling in the arctic could raise as much as \$5 billion over a decade, the CBO [estimated](#) in 2012, when oil was selling for about twice as much as it is now.

That measure could then be bundled into a massive tax reconciliation package, which will need just 50 votes in the Senate.

The House's budget, which has been stalled for months amid GOP infighting, goes even further. That version calls for \$5 billion in extra energy revenues, and a House GOP aide says ANWR is "definitely on the table in terms of reconciliation."

The White House also "will continue to push for more domestic production," an administration official said. Trump's budget request sought \$1.8 billion from opening new areas to energy production.

ANWR is a wide swath of tundra on the northern Alaska coast, home to polar bears, porcupine caribou and a landscape that hasn't been touched in thousands of years. Congress designated the 19-million-acre area a wildlife refuge in 1980, but set aside a 1.5-million-acre parcel known as "10-02" for possible future drilling if future lawmakers approved such a plan.

The U.S. Geological Survey [estimates that part of ANWR](#) could hold up to 12 billion barrels of oil.

In the past, drilling in the refuge only became a hot issue when gasoline prices were high, said Athan Manuel, director of lands protection program for the Sierra Club, which has been lobbying heavily against its development.

"Now it's completely become an ideological and political fight," Manuel added. "There are fewer moderate Republicans than we need. The vote numbers for us are difficult on the Senate side if they go to budget reconciliation."

Young, the Alaska Republican who has spent much of his career advocating for expanded Arctic drilling, has raised ANWR with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Shuckerow said.

Zinke is quietly working to allow oil companies to conduct seismic exploration in the region, The Washington Post [reported](#) this month. But actually letting them extract oil and gas from ANWR would require action by Congress.

The GOP has tried twice in the past to open ANWR for energy development through budget reconciliations. An attempt in 1995 failed after President Bill Clinton vetoed the overall budget package, while a second attempt in 2005 could not overcome a Democratic filibuster in the Senate.

Even using reconciliation, Republicans have little margin for error with only 52 seats in the Senate. And two of their caucus have voted against ANWR provisions in the past.

A spokeswoman for McCain, Julie Tarallo, said despite his past opposition the senator "is open to having a full debate in Congress about the United States' energy policy." Collins' office did not respond to requests for comment.

At least one Democrat, West Virginia Sen. [Joe Manchin](#), may join Republicans if they try to use reconciliation to open ANWR.

"The energy we receive from Alaska is much needed for American energy independence," Manchin told POLITICO. "If it can be done in a safe way, and I think we've proven it can, we should look at every option we have."

Murkowski, who joined McCain and Collins to kill the Senate's Obamacare repeal bill in August, has introduced legislation that would direct the Interior Department to offer oil-and-gas production leases for at least 300,000 acres in ANWR, [S. 49 \(115\)](#). But she told POLITICO last week that Interior had not yet reached out to her about its push to open ANWR for seismic exploration or to form strategy on how to possibly open the area to drilling.

Some question whether her earlier breaks with GOP leadership and the White House will hamper her pursuit of other priorities.

"Murkowski is on the outside looking in" when it comes to GOP energy policy, said one energy lobbyist who requested anonymity to discuss political matters.

Another problem is current low oil prices. More than a decade of into the shale oil boom, the country looks cushioned from a possible oil supply shock, something that could make opening ANWR less urgent than in the past.

"Now that we're in this age of oil supply adequacy, the negotiating power of energy has diminished," said Kevin Book, managing director of energy consultancy ClearView Energy Partners. "What adequacy has done has increased the political cost of opening up ANWR for production."

Another question is whether oil and gas companies would flock to ANWR at today's crude price of \$50 a barrel.

Chevron and BP drilled one exploratory well in the area in the early 1980s at the behest of a local native tribe, according to Alaska Oil and Gas Association President Kara Moriarty. The drilling was done with the permission of the Interior Department, with which Chevron shared the data, but a strict confidentiality agreement keeps the results a closely held secret.

The answer would depend on the company. Prices are expected to rise eventually, and the refuge's onshore topology would make ANWR a more tempting target than the choppy waters and extreme winds off of Alaska's coastline, Moriarty said.

The steady spread of oil and gas pipeline networks immediately outside ANWR also means that bringing any oil from the refuge to market would be easier than it was in decades past, Moriarty added.

The biggest infrastructure requirement would be a short pipeline to connect drilling wells in ANWR to the main Trans-Alaska Pipeline System pipeline taking the crude south.

"A pipeline is not a big lift,' said one oil and gas company representative who asked to speak on background to discuss the matter. "If the oil is there like they think it is, it's not prohibitive."

Chevron put itself in the group of companies that would welcome the chance to set rigs there permanently.

"Chevron supports increased access to federal and private land for the responsible exploration and development of oil and natural gas resources, including the ANWR coastal plain," Chevron spokeswoman Veronica Flores-Paniagua said.

Environmental groups and other Democrats are already alarmed about how far the talk of opening ANWR has come this year. Interior's move to allow seismic exploration, if approved, could harm the polar bears, caribou, wolves and other wildlife already feeling the effects of climate change in the region, and the oil brought from under the tundra would add to greenhouse gas emissions, environmental and Alaskan native groups said.

"Protecting the Arctic Refuge has broad public and bipartisan support and deserves a full debate in regular order, not rushed through as part of the budget process," said Alaska Wilderness spokesman Corey Himrod.

Sens. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) and [Michael Bennet](#) (D-Colo.) in April offered legislation to enshrine the entire region as a wilderness area protected from drilling. The bill, [S. 820 \(115\)](#), was introduced with 37 Democrats and Independent [Bernie Sanders](#) (Vt.) as original co-sponsors.

"We're going to battle this," Markey told POLITICO, arguing that expanded shale oil production has made ANWR moot. "With efficiency gains and growth of fracking in the lower 48 states, there's no need to open ANWR."

Nick Juliano contributed to this report.

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Senate budget opens door to ANWR debate [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 09/29/2017 12:02 PM EDT

The Senate Budget released this morning opens the door for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve or other off-limits areas without having to overcome a Democratic filibuster.

The budget asks the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to find \$1 billion for deficit reduction, according to a [summary](#). That money could come from authorizing new drilling in ANWR, a longtime priority of Alaskans including ENR Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#).

POLITICO [reported](#) earlier this week on the plan to include the pro-drilling language in the budget. Authorizing ANWR through budget reconciliation would allow Republicans to circumvent a filibuster, but could be a risky strategy as two GOP senators have opposed such provisions in the past.

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DOE's Perry pushes FERC to support coal power plants [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The Trump administration on Friday called on FERC to create new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants that are being squeezed by cheaper natural gas and renewable sources, saying they were "indispensable for economic and national security."

Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who [told miners](#) in Pennsylvania on Thursday that "it's time for coal in this country to be revived," pressed electricity regulators to alter power markets and protect the resilience of the power grid with payments to generators that keep fuel supplies on site, a clear reference to the coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

The proposal, which DOE said gave FERC 60 days to create a final or interim rule, comes just a month after Perry's agency issued a report saying FERC should "expedite" its work with grid operators to ensure the stability of the nation's power network.

"In terms of process, this is a pretty bold move," said Tony Clark, a Republican former FERC commissioner. DOE often conducts studies on issues it believes need attention, he said, but "actually forwarding to the commission something specific for action is a pretty bold way of moving the issue right up the batting order at FERC."

The new proposal, directed at FERC under a rarely used Section 403 authority of the Department of Energy Organization Act, stops short of specifically seeking market incentives for coal. But it calls for full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and "ancillary" services — and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. That would exclude most natural gas power plants, which do not typically keep large fuel inventories on hand and instead receive supplies via pipeline.

Perry's request represents a departure from the two decades of U.S. policy that has trended toward more market-based tools, which has helped natural gas to nearly double its power market share. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar, though still modest when compared to fossil fuels or nuclear power, have also grown quickly as federal incentives helped drive down their costs.

But the growth of renewables and natural gas — combined with tighter pollution controls and

weak new demand for electricity — has forced hundreds of old coal-fired power plants into retirement. Nuclear power plants in some parts of the country are also under financial pressure, hurt by negative wholesale power market prices that sometimes require the plant owners to pay to deliver their power supplies.

"If this gets the debate started, then my hat's off," said former FERC Chairman Pat Wood, a friend of Perry and a strong advocate for market-based power systems. "But it's a pretty arresting [thing] to wake up and read. That would never have played in Texas. ... If there is a service to be valued, then a market can value that."

In the [grid study](#) ordered by Perry and released in August, DOE experts pointed to low power prices and cheap natural gas as the single [biggest reason](#) for coal ceding its position as the nation's biggest source of electricity. And that report also called for "reforms" to power markets that would help bolster the electricity network's resilience by easing the financial pressures on many power providers.

In its Friday proposal, DOE cited a spike in demand during the 2014 "polar vortex" that hit much of the U.S., which prompted utilities to run many coal plants that were slated for retirement. Without those plants, as many as 65 million people in the PJM market would have seen their power resources threatened, DOE said.

But the new regulatory pitch from the agency also fueled the growing feud between the gas and coal industries.

Paul Bailey, president and CEO American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, commended Perry for "initiating a rulemaking by FERC that will finally value the on-site fuel security provided by the coal fleet."

But the American Petroleum Institute, which also represents natural gas producers, said DOE drew the wrong conclusions from the 2014 event, and that forcing new mandates on the power market wasn't the solution.

"[A]s we review the proposal we are concerned the agency has mischaracterized the lessons learned from past weather-related events and appears to suggest that additional regulation is the answer where markets have already proven the ability to greatly benefit consumers and give our electric system the flexibility needed to meet constantly, and often rapidly, changing electricity demands," said API Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Marty Durbin in a statement.

FERC, which has struggled to integrate states' energy policies that aim to boost renewables or support aging nuclear power plants, has long maintained a fuel-neutral stance in the regional markets that it oversees. If it were to follow Perry's directive to create incentives for grid resilience to plants that maintain their own fuel inventories on site, it would be an implicit move at the national level to alter the electricity markets to support the fuels that both Perry and Trump have touted.

Montana regulator Travis Kavulla [suggested](#) on Twitter that rather than deal with the pressing issues facing the grid, "Instead, this reform is sort of the [@ENERGY](#) equivalent of the Oprah "you get a car, and you get a car. And you? A car!" approach."

However, FERC, whose members are appointed by the president and operate as an

independent body, isn't obligated to implement the specific policy pushed by Perry. The commission will so be back to operating with a full five members in the coming weeks, with a Republican majority.

"FERC's going to follow its own procedures," said Marc Spitzer, a Republican former FERC commissioner. "It would be a mistake for people to assume that this is going to be some partisan Republican rubber stamp given the way FERC works."

FERC can spend months or years digging into complex issues that underpin the power markets, and its commissioners tend to seek common ground with each other to ensure that its rules are clear and ensure long-lasting regulations that give utilities stability to plan their operations.

"Is someone really going to invest [billions of dollars] when it's a 3-2 vote that partisans and the parties can flip next year? Is that a good forum for investment as opposed to a 5-0 order?" Spitzer said.

FERC declined to say when the agency last received a rulemaking from DOE using Section 403.

To view online [click here](#).

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Zinke calls travel controversy 'a little B.S.' [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/29/2017 12:38 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke dismissed the furor around his use of private aircraft as "a little B.S." in a speech Friday at the Heritage Foundation.

Zinke spoke less than 24 hours after [revelations](#) about his use of private planes, including a \$12,000 flight from an event with a big donor to his hometown and a trip in the Caribbean. He is at least the fourth member of the Trump administration to face questions over his use of private or military planes at taxpayer expense.

"All this travel was done only after department officials determined no other flights were available," Zinke told the audience at Heritage. "Every time I travel, I submit travel plans to the department, who determines line by line that I follow the law. And I follow the law."

Zinke confirmed that he had taken three charter flights since being confirmed in March, but he did not go into detail about the events.

In one case, he chartered a \$12,375 flight from Las Vegas to an airport near his hometown of Whitefish, Mont. Commercial flights are available between the two locations, but Interior officials said none could accommodate his schedule because he was speaking at a dinner for the Las Vegas Golden Knights, a new professional hockey team owned by Bill Foley, the chairman of Fidelity National Financial and a major Zinke backer.

Employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and associated companies [gave](#) nearly \$200,000

to Zinke's campaigns, according to the campaign watchdog group Center for Responsive Politics.

Democrats and environmentalists say the trip was inappropriate, especially in the wake of Zinke's comments earlier this week questioning the loyalty of nearly a third of his employees.

"Secretary Zinke has the nerve to blow your tax dollars on easy living and then tell oil executives that a third of his own workforce isn't loyal to the Trump administration," Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#), the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, said in a statement. "Loyalty to this White House means treating taxpayer money like a piggy bank. He's the one with the ethics problems, not the employees he threw under the bus. Firing other Interior Department employees for ethical lapses is a fine step, but he needs to follow the same standards he applies to his team."

Zinke and several other Trump cabinet members have come under fire in recent weeks for using private jets and military aircraft for official business. HHS Secretary Tom Price [accrued more than \\$1 million](#) in such transportation since May, saying yesterday he would personally repay a fraction of the total cost.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump faces growing backlash over Puerto Rico response [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/29/2017 11:18 AM EDT

President Donald Trump and his aides are facing a growing backlash over their response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, with federal teams on the island struggling to deliver aid to those in need even as the White House trumpets its efforts as a success story.

The tension over the Trump administration's self praise spilled out on Friday morning, with the San Juan mayor lashing out at acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke, who said on Thursday that the Maria relief efforts are a "good news story."

"Damn it, this is not a good news story. This is a people are dying story. This is a life-or-death story," San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz said on CNN. "When you have to pull people down from their buildings — I'm sorry, but that really upsets me and frustrates me. You know, I would ask her to come down here and visit the towns, and then make a statement like that which frankly it is an irresponsible statement."

Trump, who is preparing to visit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands on Tuesday, has also lavished praise on his administration's response, writing on Twitter Friday morning that "Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello just stated: 'The Administration and the President, every time we've spoken, they've delivered.'"

A day earlier, Trump wrote that "FEMA & First Responders are doing a GREAT job in Puerto Rico. Massive food & water delivered... Wish press would treat fairly!" adding in a post later Thursday that Puerto Rico's "governor said 'great job!'"

On Friday morning, Trump opened a speech on tax reform by pledging, "We will not rest ... until the people of Puerto Rico are safe," while also explaining that his administration has been handed an immensely difficult situation.

"This is an island surrounded by water. Big water. Ocean water," Trump said about the U.S. territory, adding later, "We've never seen a situation like this."

But while Puerto Rican officials have expressed appreciation for the White House's outreach, they have also made clear that what has been done so far has been insufficient to meet the needs of the island's 3.5 million U.S. citizens. In the same Fox News [interview](#) where Rossello praised Trump for his efforts thus far, he made clear that "we do need more aid" and that obtaining and distributing that aid remains a problem.

Roughly half of Puerto Ricans are still without running water, officials said Friday at a press conference in the island's capital, San Juan, and just 36 of its 69 hospitals are open and have power. Retirement homes "are becoming just human cages for people that are sick and unable to fend for themselves," Cruz said Friday morning.

The San Juan mayor said on CNN that it has been logistics, not the presence of supplies themselves, that has thus far presented the toughest hurdle to clear. She said Friday morning that a day earlier there had been thousands of shipping containers filled with supplies stuck at a port and unable to move. Only recently had those containers started to make their way out of the port, she said.

In San Juan, Cruz said her residents had received four pallets of water on Thursday — slightly more than 4,000 bottles for a population of roughly 350,000 people — in addition to four pallets of food and 12 pallets of baby food and supplies.

The situation is more dire in other parts of the island, she said, relaying her conversation with another mayor who said his people had no food, no medicine and were drinking from a creek that they also used to bathe and wash their clothes.

"This is a message for President Trump: Thank you for calling San Juan yesterday and listening for our mayday call. But sir, there's 77 other towns that are waiting. They're waiting anxiously and will be very grateful to you and to the American people if you continue to step up," Cruz said. "Again, Mr. Trump, we appreciate everything you are doing and we know it can be done faster. Help us save lives. We will be forever grateful."

Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert, in his own CNN interview on Friday morning that preceded Cruz's, disputed the suggestion that the White House's commitment to the island has been anything but absolute and that the logistical strategy employed by the federal government has been insufficient.

Because it is an island, Bossert said that recovery efforts in Puerto Rico present specific challenges, but he said criticism from "New Day" anchor Chris Cuomo and others on CNN "wasn't well placed."

"I don't accept that we're doing anything short of everything we can do. Yes, I accept that the people are going to see, at the very end, the last person in the most hardest-to-reach area is going to receive assistance in a way that's less acceptable than we'd like to," Bossert said.

"We'd like to give them a bottle of water and food immediately. But I do accept that there's going to be a difference between a full-throated, adequate response and the complete satisfaction of bringing that entire territory back to its full, functional state."

Duke, at a press conference Friday in San Juan, said the integration between Puerto Rican, U.S. military and other federal resources has been "really admirable" and will "set the standard for the future." And while she did not directly address her "good news" remark from the previous day, she stood behind her statement that she was pleased with the federal government's recovery efforts thus far.

"Yesterday, I was asked if I was happy and satisfied with the recovery. I am proud of the work that's being done. I am proud of Americans helping Americans, friends and strangers alike. I am proud of the work that DoD, FEMA, and the territory along with first responders are doing," Duke said. "Clearly the situation here in Puerto Rico after the devastating hurricane is not satisfactory. But together we are getting there, and the progress today is very, very strong. The president and I will not be fully satisfied, however, until every Puerto Rican is back home, the power is back on, clean water is freely available, schools and hospitals are fully open and the Puerto Rican economy is working."

In addition to routing supplies and manpower to Puerto Rico, the Trump administration has also sought this week to combat the notion that the island has not been top of mind for the president. Such criticism began last weekend when Trump launched a rhetorical tirade against the NFL and its players who kneel in protest during the national anthem, posting to Twitter several times on the issue while remaining silent on Puerto Rico, which was reeling from Maria's landfall last week.

Trump and his White House have insisted that Puerto Rico has remained a continuous point of focus in the days since the hurricane hit the island, and the president has mentioned the storm in his social media posts multiple times this week.

But the president also appeared to place some blame this week on Puerto Rico for its dire situation, noting the U.S. territory's "broken infrastructure & massive debt" in a tweet.

On Friday, he wrote that "big decisions will have to be made as to the cost of its rebuilding," a statement Bossert sought to clarify by explaining that Puerto Rico's lack of liquid financial assets — the island declared a form of bankruptcy last May — meant the federal government was paying for the entirety of recovery efforts.

"Once we stabilize, then let's talk about the debt," Cruz said on CNN in a second interview with the network. "You know what? There ain't going to be anybody to pay the debt. If we let them die, nobody's going to pay the debt."

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DOE approves big boost for Vogtle loan guarantees [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 11:08 AM EDT

The Energy Department has conditionally approved a \$3.7 billion increase in the federal loan guarantees for the over-budget Vogtle nuclear project in Georgia, the agency announced this morning.

DOE had already approved \$8.33 billion for the two-reactor project under the Obama administration. Now, Energy Secretary Rick Perry is primed to offer an additional \$1.67 billion to Southern Co.'s Georgia Power, \$1.6 billion to Oglethorpe Power Corp. and \$415 million to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia.

The Energy Department had originally extended loan guarantees for \$3.4 billion to Georgia Power, \$3.1 billion to Oglethorpe and \$1.8 billion to MEAG.

WHAT'S NEXT: The new DOE loan guarantees are conditional and the firms will not be able to access the financing until they are finalized. It's unclear how long it will take to finalize.

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Bernie backers give Dem incumbents a pass in 2018 [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti | 09/29/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Democrats have long been terrified that the Sanders-Clinton slugfest of 2016 would set off a prolonged civil war in the party, forcing incumbents to fight off primary challengers from the left in Senate and gubernatorial races.

It hasn't happened.

In a surprising reversal of the post-2008 dynamic — when Republicans were shut out of power, then saw a raft of tea party primary challengers take on their incumbents — Democrats have largely been spared of that predicament. Instead, it's Republican incumbents yet again facing heat from the right, as arch-conservative Roy Moore's defeat of incumbent Sen. Luther Strange (R-Ala.) this week emphatically showed.

"What Democrats right now care about more than anything is winning," veteran Democratic pollster Jeffrey Pollock said of divisive Democratic primaries. "I don't think the ultra-progressives have abandoned their principles — not at all — but I think they looked at the challenge and said, 'This is not the right place.'"

Most filing deadlines are still months away, so insurgents who aren't currently on the radar could still launch late challenges. Primary fights could also still turn uncomfortable in a range of low-profile House races.

But the relative peace on the left wasn't preordained — the divisiveness of last year's presidential primary was widely expected to manifest again in 2018 statewide elections. Yet with next year's Senate and gubernatorial races shaping up, it's Democrats whose sighs of relief are echoing around the country.

Democrats have escaped the brunt of their own party's populist fury largely because they're heading into the midterms in a defensive crouch, with 10 of their incumbent senators on the ballot in states that voted for Donald Trump. So instead of going after their own senators, progressive activists are focused on gaining Republican-held seats in the House.

"There's some reluctance to put a lot of time into [unseating Democrats], versus [building] a more progressive Congress overall," said former Communications Workers of America union President Larry Cohen, a top Bernie Sanders adviser who now chairs the board of the Our Revolution political group that was spawned from the senator's 2016 presidential campaign. "There's going to be a lot more activity where it's possible to change the makeup of the Congress."

Not all statewide Democratic incumbents are home free: Actress Cynthia Nixon has been encouraged to mount a long-shot challenge against New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo from the left next year — much like the one he fended off in 2014. Former Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chafee has suggested he may take on first-term Gov. Gina Raimondo, criticizing her for not being sufficiently progressive on an array of issues.

And in California, fourth-term Sen. Dianne Feinstein has faced fury from the left for not challenging Trump more aggressively. State Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de León, who made the rounds in Washington this month, and liberal activist Joe Sanberg have gained notice as potential challengers.

Yet those potential fights remain long shots, and the one primary challenge that is already underway — from Hawaii Rep. Colleen Hanabusa against Gov. David Ige — is based more around his perceived unpopularity than a progressive insurgency. Meanwhile, liberal challenges to Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Claire McCaskill of Missouri have so far failed to gain traction.

The most successful GOP primary challenges in 2010 were against relatively moderate, entrenched incumbents in conservative states. In contrast, none of the many Democratic senators running in liberal states in 2018 — such as Delaware's Tom Carper, Maryland's Ben Cardin, Minnesota's Amy Klobuchar, Rhode Island's Sheldon Whitehouse, or Washington's Maria Cantwell — have seen any reason to sweat their own positions.

This wasn't always the likeliest development: in the early days after Trump's victory, a handful of activists who supported Sanders in 2016 created new efforts specifically designed to oust incumbents. But 10 months later, little has come of those pushes, leading many Democratic operatives working on statewide races to now assume those challenges won't come at all.

That Democratic relief stands in sharp contrast to the Republican fears of another round of primaries much like the ones they fought through in 2010, after they were shut out of power in Washington. That year, Sen. Bob Bennett of Utah was ousted by Mike Lee, a tea party challenger, and Rep. Mike Castle was defeated in a Senate primary. Incumbent Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana was then pushed out in 2012. (Conservative Democratic Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas also faced a primary from the left in 2010, but she won, while the only Democratic senator ousted in a primary was party-switching Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania.)

After Strange's defeat, vulnerable Republican Sens. Jeff Flake of Arizona and Dean Heller of Nevada are facing down Trump-friendly primary opponents coming at them from the right. And people aligned with former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon have talked about

taking on Mississippi Sen. Roger Wicker, too. Another potential target, Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker, announced his retirement last week.

But on the other side, with so much of the party's grass-roots money flowing to anti-Trump efforts and candidates, there's so far no organized effort to funnel campaign cash or political support to potential Democratic challengers.

And since so much of the party's energy is organized around opposing Trump and the Republican Congress, even more centrist Democrats have occasionally escaped liberal fury by loudly opposing the GOP. Not one of the five Democratic senators running for reelection in a state Trump carried by double digits even flirted with voting for any of the attempted Republican health care repeal measures this year, for example.

"Because of Donald Trump, the last two years have allowed these people to take positions that are very much on the side of progressives," said Pollock. They "take positions that the progressives embrace, that [are politically] beneficial even in states Trump won by 40 points."

Still, messy Democratic primaries are still expected in several House districts where vulnerable Republicans are running for reelection. One conservative Democratic House member — Illinois' Dan Lipinski — already faces a primary fight.

That's reason enough for establishment-oriented and moderate Democrats to avoid complacency, insisted a handful of party operatives.

"The Sanders campaign proved — from the huge crowds he got, the enthusiasm, the bumper stickers, that he represents an anti-establishment progressive reality in the Democratic Party," said his short-lived 2016 primary foe Chafee. "I am thinking along those lines."

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White House launches probe of private email accounts [Back](#)

By Josh Dawsey and Andrea Peterson | 09/28/2017 08:03 PM EDT

The White House has launched an internal probe of private email use, pulling batches of emails on the White House server to and from private accounts of senior aides, according to four officials familiar with the matter.

The effort began this week after POLITICO reported that Jared Kushner and a number of other senior White House officials used private email accounts throughout the year to conduct government business.

Of particular interest is Kushner and Ivanka Trump's private email domain, because they still work in the White House, two officials said. Accounts of other White House officials also are being reviewed.

The probe could take several weeks or even months to complete, according to one of these people, as officials are searching for all emails sent or received about government business.

The White House counsel's office is reviewing the accounts to determine whether the messages are germane to any investigations such as the ongoing Russia probes by Congress and special counsel Robert Mueller, one of these people said.

News about the private email accounts caught many White House lawyers by surprise, one of these people said, and infuriated a number of White House officials.

A White House spokesperson declined to comment on the review, but said, "The White House instructs staff to fully comply with the Presidential Records Act and briefs staff on the need to preserve records."

At least five current and former White House officials have used private email, [POLITICO previously reported](#). Those include Kushner, Ivanka Trump, Gary Cohn, Steve Bannon and Reince Priebus.

Kushner's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, has said there are fewer than 100 emails about government business in Kushner's private email domain, and that all have been forwarded to his White House account.

The email practice has come under particular scrutiny because President Donald Trump was so critical of Hillary Clinton's private email server, leading to chants of "Lock her up!" on the campaign trail.

There is no evidence White House officials have sent or received classified or sensitive emails on their personal accounts, but the probe is set to determine whether that occurred. The probe is being led by the White House counsel's office, two of these people said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee on Thursday asked Kushner's lawyer to review all his private email and correspondence on other messaging services, citing "concern" that he didn't disclose the email account in a private interview.

Kushner's lawyer has said there is nothing on the private server relating to the investigations into potential Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Kushner previously used a business account during the transition and campaign.

This article was reported in coordination with the Project On Government Oversight, a nonprofit investigative watchdog organization.

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Price took military jets to Europe, Asia for over \$500K [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan and Dan Diamond | 09/28/2017 06:56 PM EDT

The White House approved the use of military aircraft for multi-national trips by Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price to Africa and Europe this spring, and to Asia in the summer, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers.

The overseas trips bring the total cost to taxpayers of Price's travels to more than \$1 million since May, according to a POLITICO review.

Price pledged on Thursday to reimburse the government for the cost of his own seat on his domestic trips using private aircraft — reportedly around \$52,000 — but that would not include the cost of the military flights.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price has reimbursed the agency for the cost of his wife's travel abroad, but declined to say when he did so. Price has been under intense criticism since POLITICO [revealed](#) his extensive use of charter aircraft for domestic flights last week. His travel expenditures are subject to reviews by the HHS inspector general and the House Oversight Committee. Democratic and Republican senators have also demanded information about Price's travel expenditures.

The White House assesses the use of military aircraft for overseas travel by Cabinet members on a case-by-case basis. Secretaries whose jobs involve national security functions are more likely to require military jets, but the White House occasionally approves the use of military planes for other members of the Cabinet.

"Use of military aircraft for Cabinet and other essential travelers is sometimes an appropriate and necessary use of resources," said Raj Shah, White House principal deputy press secretary.

But one of Price's recent predecessors, Kathleen Sebelius, who served for five years under President Barack Obama, said she never took a military plane on her many trips overseas; she always flew commercially. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, who served as HHS secretary for the final 2½ years of the Obama administration, used a military jet for travel to Havana, Cuba, according to former HHS aides.

It is not clear whether Burwell, who did not respond to requests for comment, used military planes on other trips overseas. Two former aides said her husband accompanied her on the trip to Cuba and reimbursed the government for the costs of the trip.

But Yoest said, "It's our understanding that previous secretaries have never reimbursed for spousal travel," referencing Burwell's trip to Cuba.

Price's overseas trips on government planes included stops in Berlin, Geneva, Beijing, Ho Chi Minh City and Tokyo, where he attended world health meetings and met with other high-level officials. In May, Price also visited Liberia, where he discussed the nation's response to the Ebola virus that ravaged the West African country three years ago.

"The trips he's gone on make total sense," one former HHS official said of Price. "It's just how he got there."

Yoest, the HHS spokeswoman, said the use of military aircraft — known as Milair — was necessary both for Price's security and his ability to communicate with the department.

"In both instances, those were Milair flights that were pre-approved," said Yoest. "We don't have a deputy secretary that's been confirmed ... Milair is important for maintaining security and having secure communications, as well."

A White House official confirmed that President Donald Trump's staff approved the flights. Trump has been sharply critical of Price's use of chartered aircraft on domestic flights, saying "we'll see" when asked whether he would fire Price over the issue.

The Trump administration pointed to statistics showing that it approved fewer trips abroad on military aircraft compared with the first eight months of the Obama administration: There were 77 military trips during the first eight months of the Trump administration, compared with 94 at the same point during the Obama years, according to a White House official.

"This [@WhiteHouse](#) has cut down on use of military aircraft for travel," Shah tweeted on Wednesday, linking to a McClatchy [article](#).

"Fact: Trump [administration] authorized fewer flights on military aircraft by senior govt officials than previous [administration]," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders [echoed](#).

During six terms as a Republican House member from Georgia, Price had cultivated a reputation as a fiscal hawk keen on reining in federal spending.

In June, Price defended a proposed budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Nonetheless, his travel tab has exceeded \$1 million when accounting for both the overseas trips and the more than two dozen trips he has taken on private planes domestically since May.

For instance, Price took a Gulfstream C-37B owned by the Department of Defense for a weeklong trip in late May through Africa and Europe. The six legs of travel, which represented about 30 hours of flight time, were projected to cost \$311,418.25, according to an invoice reviewed by POLITICO.

On May 17, Price flew to Liberia, where he met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and other top officials to discuss global health security and public health emergency preparedness, according to an HHS readout of his meetings. He then went to the G-20 health ministers meeting in Berlin, which was held May 19 and 20. His ultimate destination was the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where he stayed until May 24.

HHS secretaries routinely attend the World Health Assembly, often accompanied by a large delegation, as well as other ministerial meetings with world health officials. This year's delegation included nearly 50 people, all of whom were HHS staff or federal employees — except for Price's wife, a physician who was listed as an adviser.

Price, his wife and eight HHS personnel took the Gulfstream from Berlin to Geneva on Sunday, May 21, an HHS official confirmed. The 95-minute trip was projected to cost taxpayers almost \$16,000, according to an invoice.

There are multiple commercial flight options on that route, such as several daily flights by EasyJet, for about \$260 per ticket or less. The German airline Lufthansa is currently running a [promotion](#) for one-way flights between Berlin and Geneva for just \$60.

Other members of the U.S. delegation to the World Health Assembly contacted by POLITICO said they did not take military aircraft to get to Geneva for the conference.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy, presented by the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute: Taking stock of Hill aides' trades — EPA releases Pruitt's schedule — SolarWorld ramps up hiring
Date: Monday, September 25, 2017 3:30:19 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 09/25/2017 03:27 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Esther Whieldon

AIDES RISK CONFLICT IN STOCK TRADES: According to a POLITICO review of federal disclosures for 2015 and 2016, some senior congressional aides regularly buy and sell individual stocks that present a potential conflicts of interest with their work. "A smaller number of staffers trade in companies that lobby Congress and the committees that employ them," Pro's Maggie Severns reports. "In all, approximately 450 aides have bought or sold a stock of more than \$1,001 in value since May 2015."

Of note: David Hoppe, who was Speaker [Paul Ryan](#)'s chief of staff in late 2015 and 2016, regularly traded stocks, Maggie reports. Hoppe and his wife bought shares of the oil companies Occidental Petroleum and Devon Energy shortly before Congress announced plans to lift a years-old ban on oil exports that benefited both corporations.

— **And on the House and Senate Appropriations committees**, at least 18 House aides and 14 Senate aides have bought or sold at least one stock, through their own accounts or family members'. For example, one senior House Appropriations aide working for a member focused on energy and water funding has, through various family accounts, bought and sold shares in companies including Royal Dutch Shell, Energy Transfer Partners, Dow Chemical and Emerson Electric. Read the story [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** American energy is changing our economy. And now, it is changing the world. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute is at the forefront of the policy discussions in Washington and around the nation that will help fuel the global energy revolution. Learn more at www.globalenergyinstitute.org **

KEEPING UP WITH PRUITT: EPA has started posting a simplified version of Administrator Scott Pruitt's schedule online in response to increased requests for his itinerary, Alex Guillen [reports](#). The posted records currently spans April 3 through Sept. 8, but an agency official said it will update the schedule every two weeks. The agency previously released a more detailed version of Pruitt's [February and March schedule](#) in response to records requests from POLITICO and other outlets. See Pruitt's schedule [here](#).

CUOMO TO TRUMP: FOCUS ON RELIEF: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has a message for the president: Tweet about Puerto Rico, not the NFL. "They're just not focused on it," Cuomo told reporters. "What I'm saying: Focus on Puerto Rico. Focus on the Virgin Islands. Focus on rebuilding the Keys and Florida and Texas. Tweet, 'Let's all go volunteer

and help Florida. Let's all go volunteer and help Texas.' Tweet, 'Let's all go and make a donation to the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands because they are American citizens.' That would be a great tweet as president of the United States." POLITICO New York's Jimmy Vielkind reports more [here](#).

JUDGE TOSSES ALASKA CHALLENGE TO ROADLESS RULE: A federal judge last week shot down yet another legal challenge to the 2001 roadless rule, a Forest Service regulation that limits road construction through national forests for timber harvesting or mining purposes. Judge Richard Leon of the U.S. District Court for D.C. [dismissed the case](#) brought by the state of Alaska and a litany of industry groups and companies who argued that the regulation violated eight different laws, including NEPA, the Administrative Procedure Act and the Alaskan National Interest Lands Conservation Act. They also argued that Alaska's Tongass, the nation's biggest national forest, should have been exempted from the rule. However, none of those spaghetti strands stuck to the wall, and Leon tossed the suit.

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) said in a statement today that she is "deeply disappointed" in the ruling. "The rule has decimated our timber industry and serves mainly to prevent the access needed to construct everything from roads and power lines to energy and mining projects," she said. "I recognize the damage this rule is causing, particularly in Southeast, and will pursue every possible legislative and administrative option to exempt us from it."

SOLARWORLD RAMPS UP HIRING: SolarWorld Americas said today it will begin hiring new employees production ramps up in the wake of Friday's decision by a federal trade panel in its favor. Eric Wolff reports the company aims to hire up to 200 workers by May. "Friday's determination made clear that the U.S. industry's problems have not been self-inflicted, but rather are the result of surging imports," Juergen Stein, CEO and president of SolarWorld Americas said in a statement. "As such, we at SolarWorld are prepared to scale up our world-class manufacturing operations to produce leading solar products made by more American workers." While Oregon-based company is still in bankruptcy, Stein promised the commission it would increase production if it got a favorable ruling, Eric [reports](#).

EXXON PLANS TO CUT METHANE LEAKS: Exxon Mobil has moved to cut methane leaks from its shale oil and gas operations, the Financial Times reports today. The company is "taking unilateral action on an issue that has been the subject of sustained political and legal battles in the U.S. in recent years. XTO Energy, Exxon's shale subsidiary, will replace equipment, train staff and research new technologies to curb leaks of methane, a potent greenhouse gas estimated to trap heat 28 to 36 times as effectively as carbon dioxide over 100 years," FT writes. The news comes as the Trump administration "is working to roll back or suspend regulations imposed under President Barack Obama to control methane leakage." Read [more](#).

WESTERN GRID OPERATORS LAUNCH TALKS TO JOIN SPP: Nine western transmission owners, including utilities, cooperatives and two portions of the federal Western Area Power Administration, will next month launch negotiations to join the FERC-regulated Southwest Power Pool regional grid and market operator, the Mountain West Transmission Group [announced](#) Friday. Studies commissioned by the group estimated that joining SPP could collectively save them about \$88 million a year by 2024, by which time about 700 megawatts of coal-fired generation will have retired and more than 2,000 megawatts of wind and solar generation, almost all in Colorado, will be coming online and need a market to sell into. Others participants in the group are Tri???State Generation and Transmission

Association, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Public Service Company of Colorado, Colorado Springs Utilities, and Black Hills Corporation's three electric subsidiaries. A portion of WAPA's footprint is already participating in the SPP market.

CLIMATE CAUCUS ADDS SIX: The bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus announced six new members: Reps. [John Larson](#) (D-Conn.), [Pat Tiberi](#) (R-Ohio), [Nydia Velázquez](#) (D-N.Y.), [Chris Collins](#) (R-N.Y.), [Stephanie Murphy](#) (D-Fla.) and [Jack Bergman](#) (R-Mich.), bringing the Caucus' total to 58 members, with equal parts Democrats and Republicans. "The real-world implications of sea level rise have been on display for all to see in Texas, Florida and the Caribbean following Hurricanes, Harvey, Irma and Maria," Co-chair of the group, Rep. [Carlos Curbelo](#) said. "I'm grateful these members are willing to step up and turn their concern into action by joining the Climate Solutions Caucus. This growing bipartisan coalition will be critical to ensuring Congress makes finding solutions to this issue a priority."

QUICK HITS:

- India's Modi starts \$2.5 billion plan to grow electricity access, [Bloomberg](#).
- Coming soon, Trump's new rule might have "fuzzy math," [E&E News](#).
- One month later, Houston continues to recover from Hurricane Harvey, [Chron](#).
- A vulnerable Antarctica glacier just lost a piece of ice four times the size of Manhattan, [The Washington Post](#).
- Energy entrepreneur hopes to bring commuter rail to Vermont, [Associated Press](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Republicans [brace for failure](#) on Obamacare repeal.
- Trump [continues NFL clash](#): NASCAR fans won't disrespect our country.
- GOP senators to [unveil new "DREAMers" bill](#).

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** Ten years ago, gasoline prices were at an all-time high, American dependence on foreign oil and natural gas was growing, and our energy future and security was at risk. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and leaders in American business came together to form an institute to tackle these challenges head on. Now, 10 years later, we're excited to begin our second decade by transitioning to the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute, reflecting America's new role as a global energy superpower. We'll still provide insight and analysis on the big energy issues of our day, along with our unique ability to bring together the entire energy industry and reach thousands in our local and state Chamber network. Learn more about our Institute and the last decade of progress in this video: <http://bit.ly/2yeil2S> **

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Congressional aides risk conflicts with stock trades [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 09/25/2017 05:06 AM EDT

On Sept. 28, 2016, three members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent a letter to the Justice Department suggesting that the drug company Mylan was violating Medicaid laws.

Nine days later, the Justice Department reached a massive \$465 million settlement with the firm.

In between, another action happened almost invisibly: A Judiciary Committee aide to Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) dropped somewhere between \$4,004 and \$60,000 in Mylan stock from his and his child's portfolios.

If an aide had done the same thing in the executive branch, he or she could be investigated for violating federal conflict-of-interest law. But the Durbin aide's ownership of shares of Mylan, and their timely sale, are reflective of Congress' persistent refusal to crack down on stock trading by staffers, even in firms overseen by their committees.

Durbin's aide, Daniel Swanson, isn't alone. A POLITICO review of federal disclosures for 2015 and 2016 found that some senior aides regularly buy and sell individual stocks that present potential conflicts of interest with their work. A smaller number of staffers trade in companies that lobby Congress and the committees that employ them. In all, approximately 450 aides have bought or sold a stock of more than \$1,001 in value since May 2015.

That's likely just the tip of the iceberg, since most congressional aides aren't required to report their trades. Only those in positions earning more than \$124,406 per year must reveal their investments. Of the 12,500 staffers working for lawmakers, committees and leadership offices, only about 1,700 make that much, according to data compiled by Legistorm and the Brookings Institution.

Government watchdogs say that, at a minimum, staffers should be prevented from buying shares of companies with business before their committees. But they are not. And despite the disparity between the rigorous standards for the executive branch and the laxness of Congress, the House and Senate have taken a permissive approach even to enforcing existing rules.

That's a serious problem, watchdogs say, because aides often have more of a hands-on role than the members themselves in crafting details of legislation that could have enormous consequences for individual companies. And because aides are rarely in the spotlight, there's more potential for ethical lapses to go unnoticed.

"The staff level is actually more dangerous, because they don't get scrutiny and they're not accountable," said Meredith McGehee, chief of policy at Issue One, a watchdog group for money and politics. "If a member does it, he can get defeated. A staff person can wield enormous amounts of power that isn't seen, and there's really no way to hold that staff accountable."

Indeed, one of the key findings of the POLITICO review is that senior aides to both Republican and Democratic House leaders, who often have quiet, largely unseen input into the crafting of legislation, are active traders.

At least 11 aides to House leaders have bought and sold multiple stocks in the past two years.

David Hoppe, who was Speaker Paul Ryan's chief of staff in late 2015 and 2016, regularly traded stocks. Hoppe and his wife bought shares of the oil companies Occidental Petroleum and Devon Energy shortly before Congress announced plans to lift a years-old ban on oil exports that benefited both corporations.

Diane Dewhirst, deputy chief of staff to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, disclosed her spouse's purchase of stock in two pharmaceutical companies, Astrazeneca and GlaxoSmithKline, in December 2016, shortly before Congress passed a medical research bill that benefited both companies.

Meanwhile, on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which sets energy policy and is the main committee overseeing Obamacare, at least six aides have bought and sold stock in companies with interests in the work of the committee. One longtime committee aide in an oversight role bought and sold more than two dozen health care and energy stocks during 2015 and 2016 and sold his stock in Express Scripts, the prescription drug sales company, as the company came under scrutiny over its role in setting drug prices last October.

On the House and Senate appropriations committees, which make broadly influential spending and policy decisions through annual government funding bills, at least 18 House aides and 14 Senate aides have bought or sold at least one stock, through their own accounts or family members'. For example, one senior House Appropriations aide working for a member focused on energy and water funding has, through various family accounts, bought and sold shares in companies including Royal Dutch Shell, Energy Transfer Partners, Dow Chemical and Emerson Electric. Another longtime aide on the committee's staff who is focused on investigations and research, which are at the heart of the committee's decision-making, holds and trades stock in companies with major interests in the committee's work, including pharmaceutical companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and energy companies such as Occidental Petroleum.

Swanson, Hoppe and some other senior staffers said their brokers are authorized to buy and sell stocks without their involvement, and thus they were not consulted on the trades listed in their disclosure forms. But ethics watchdogs have long frowned on such personal deals, noting that they can be abridged at any time and that outsiders have no way to verify that they're being followed. Aides, like members themselves, can create blind trusts that fully bar them from involvement in any trades. If they don't want to go to the trouble of setting up a blind trust, they could protect themselves from many potential conflicts by investing in publicly traded mutual funds.

Meanwhile, some staffers also defended their trading on the grounds that the congressional actions that affected the companies they bought and sold, including the three senators' letter to the Justice Department about Mylan, were known to the public. Ethics watchdogs, however, say that it's often difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether an aide has information that wouldn't be available to the public, and that any trading of stocks that are directly influenced by their committee work constitutes a conflict of interest.

"It causes the public to question whether personal stock holdings are influencing legislative activity," said Donna Nagy, an Indiana University law professor who has written extensively on the issue. "That doesn't necessarily mean a 'yes' or 'no' vote, as it would a senator or member of Congress. Did personal stock holdings influence the speed or slowness with which a report is written? That's something that would be in staffers' control."

Simply having a financial stake in an industry may make a person more likely to advocate for it, at least in the eyes of taxpayers. That's the premise behind the far tougher requirements for staffers in the executive branch, where employees are required by law to recuse themselves from any investments that could potentially conflict with their work.

Senate committee aides are held to no such legal standard. But a little-recognized Senate rule states that aides should divest themselves "of any substantial holdings which may be directly affected by the actions of [their] committee" unless they have permission from the Senate Ethics Committee.

But the rule is interpreted quite narrowly, watchdogs say: The Senate Ethics Committee often measures a "substantial holding" by the percentage of a company that's owned by the aide, or whether an individual investment constitutes the bulk of an aide's savings — not the amount of money that's invested. So most stock trades aren't covered. The Ethics Committee declined to comment.

And the Ethics Committee rarely probes stock trading by aides. Ethics watchdogs told POLITICO they couldn't think of a single case of an aide being investigated for a conflict of interest. The committee hasn't issued a disciplinary sanction against an aide for any reason in 10 years.

"There does not appear to be an effective system of enforcement in place," concluded Craig Holman, lobbyist at the watchdog group Public Citizen. "This is the type of conflict-of-interest rule that should apply to all members as well as senior staff, enforced by real-time public disclosure or stock trading activity."

Through their brokerage accounts, Swanson, who is Durbin's senior counsel on the Judiciary Committee, and his immediate family bought and sold stocks of at least \$1,000 in value 120 times over 2015 and 2016, according to his financial disclosures. His family's holdings amount to somewhere between a minimum of \$99,043 and a maximum of \$785,000, based on the price ranges in the disclosure form. Some of those purchases and sales were in mutual funds, while others were in companies with significant business interests before Durbin and the Judiciary Committee.

Among a variety of trades made through his and his family's accounts, Swanson bought and sold stock in 2U, a for-profit online education company that bills itself as an alternative to the traditional for-profit colleges that have been heavily criticized by his boss, Durbin. He traded stock in Comcast and Verizon, both of which have come under Judiciary Committee scrutiny in the past because of proposed deals and mergers. And he held and sold stock in Express Scripts, a company that, like Mylan, has increasingly caught the eye of regulators and lawmakers for its possible role in drug overpricing.

When asked about the trades, Durbin spokesman Ben Marter provided a letter from Swanson's brokerage firm that says trading in Swanson's account is directed by the firm based on "a mutually agreed upon written statement of your objectives" and that the investment firm has "full authority" to make trades without giving Swanson notice.

Swanson declined to comment further.

Durbin himself is among the many House members and senators who avoid buying and selling stocks, in many cases because of the ethical ramifications of being invested in companies

while voting on and passing laws. And he introduced a bill earlier this year to force President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence to completely divest themselves of any holdings that could present conflicts of interest.

If Trump dropped such investments, Durbin said, it would let "the American people know with certainty that he is putting America first."

But when it comes to his aides, Durbin stops far short of requiring the sale of investments.

"Anybody who's ever met Dan knows that he has conducted himself with the utmost integrity every day of his public service on the Hill," Durbin spokesman Marter said. "That may not matter to POLITICO, but it matters in the real world and to Sen. Durbin, and that's what counts."

As Paul Ryan prepared to become speaker of the House in October 2015, he tapped David Hoppe, a fellow Wisconsin native and former Hill aide, to serve as his chief of staff. Hoppe left lobbying jobs with both his own firm, Hoppe Strategies, and the K Street powerhouse Squire Patton Boggs to work for the new speaker. After he moved back through the revolving door, Hoppe continued to trade stock in companies with interests before Congress.

Hoppe, who has a variety of investments in his and his wife's portfolios, traded dozens of stocks between mid-December 2015 and January 2017, when he left Ryan's office. Some of those trades were made days ahead of Congress passing legislation that benefited the companies Hoppe traded in, and at moments when companies were furiously attempting to sway lawmakers.

As Congress finalized a massive tax-and-spending package at the end of 2015, Hoppe and his wife invested in two petroleum companies that were aggressively lobbying Congress to lift the 30-year ban on oil exports, Occidental Petroleum and Devon Energy. Hoppe made the purchases 16 days before Congress announced plans to lift the ban on oil. During the fall of 2016, as Congress finalized and passed a \$6 billion medical research bill, Hoppe's spouse invested in the pharmaceutical companies Merck and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Such investments can present conflicts of interest, or the appearance of, even if they're not based on inside information.

"It looks terrible. They shouldn't be doing this," said Richard Painter, former ethics lawyer for President George W. Bush, referring to stock trading by aides to House and Senate leaders. "There are two separate problems. One is that if they buy or sell stock based on insider information, they're criminals. But if they make decisions on a bill that could have an effect on their own financial decisions, that might not be a crime — though it is a crime in the executive branch — [but] it stinks to high hell."

In the executive branch, employees are barred from holding investments that pose potential conflicts with their work, and must recuse themselves from decisions that could conflict with their remaining investments. In Congress, however, employees are often left to set their own standards.

Hoppe said in an interview that he doesn't direct trades in the two accounts controlled by him

and his wife. Prior to joining Ryan's office, he said, he and his wife asked their brokers to keep him out of any trading decisions.

"There were no directions in which [a broker] called me and said, 'Do you want to trade this? Do you want to trade that?'" said Hoppe. "Has there been a time when they've asked me about something or another? Probably, but I can't remember it, and I can tell you it wasn't when I was working for Paul."

Dewhirst, the top Pelosi aide whose spouse bought stock in pharmaceutical companies shortly before Congress moved to pass the medical research bill, has worked for Pelosi since 2003. She also recorded purchases and sales in energy and technology stocks in the past two years. Nearly all of those transactions were listed to an account controlled by her spouse. A Pelosi spokesperson said in a statement that Dewhirst is not involved with the investments.

"All transactions are made by [Dewhirst's] spouse upon the recommendation of his investment advisor," the Pelosi spokesperson said.

Pelosi is one of few members of House and Senate leadership who actively buys and sells stocks — and she was heavily criticized for it in a 2011 report by "60 Minutes" about the stock trading habits of members of Congress. She has since scaled back the number of stocks that she and her husband buy and sell. An account owned by Pelosi's husband traded 14 stocks in the past two years.

Most senior members of House and Senate leadership avoid the practice because of the potential for conflicts of interest. Ryan, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer all refrain from buying and selling shares of individual companies. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell sold three stocks this year but has otherwise abstained from trading, and Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn made one purchase and one sale in recent years, each in Apple stock.

While they avoid any appearance of conflicts in their own trades, they seem to exercise little restraint on their aides, who are often the real experts on the intricacies of policies. Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards described Dewhirst, for example, as "the first person I call if I'm trying to really get the lay of the land on an important issue, particularly on the Hill," in a 2015 [interview](#).

Some aides who engage in trades, like those on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, are charged with overseeing powerful industries. In the House, committee aides are allowed to do so while holding and trading stocks in those very industries. Meanwhile, they're sometimes being lobbied by very same companies. The company whose stock Swanson held, Mylan, spent \$315,000 lobbying Capitol Hill last fall, including \$170,000 paid to the Podesta Group solely to lobby on "drug pricing and oversight," after it was accused of mischaracterizing its drug EpiPen in order to avoid having to pay a federally mandated rebate, according to public filings.

"The very senior staffers ought to be considered very much the same as members. These are policy-making individuals. They're the people lobbyists want to meet with and influence," said Holman, of Public Citizen. "It's their ability to affect public policy that matters, whether or not they receive votes or subject themselves to elections."

For his part, Hoppe recalled that during an earlier stint on Capitol Hill working for former

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, he once recused himself from working on an issue involving the Walt Disney Co. because he was a shareholder. But he said he didn't see any similar conflicts while working for Ryan, and added that he was on only a temporary stint in the speaker's office, waiting to return to his lobbying job.

"I'm obviously older, and they don't pay the same on Capitol Hill as I was making in the private sector," Hoppe said. "My wife likes living in a house as opposed to living in a car."

Many Capitol Hill aides are young and don't earn enough money to have large investment portfolios, Hoppe said, and nearly all are drawn to public service for reasons that have nothing to do with making money. But he didn't rule out the possibility that aides could have access to information that would boost their holdings.

"Is it in the realm of possibility that somebody could do that? Yes. Is it very likely? No," Hoppe said. "But people who are dishonest will find a way to be dishonest."

Though congressional aides are largely invisible to the public's eye, they have played roles in well-publicized scandals in the past. In the early 1960s, a Senate aide close to Lyndon Johnson named Bobby Baker was investigated for using his office for personal gain, including accepting cash in exchange for promoting legislation, and running a vending-machine company, Serv-U. Baker's net worth as a Senate aide ballooned from \$11,000 to \$2.5 million over the course of two decades. He was later convicted of crimes including fraud and tax evasion, and both the House and Senate soon started requiring aides to disclose their finances for the first time.

More recently, since Congress passed the Stock Act, a 2012 law that for the first time formally barred members of Congress from insider trading, the sole Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of a potential Stock Act violation that's known to the public involves the actions of a congressional aide.

The aide, a former Ways and Means Committee staff director, allegedly leaked information about Medicare reimbursement rates that were about to rise. A firm called Height Securities, which specializes in gathering intelligence in Washington and relaying it to Wall Street, sent the information to hedge funds, causing stock to shoot up in a company that benefited from the Medicare rate hike.

The SEC has been investigating the case since 2013, but it was delayed for several years when House counsel refused to comply with SEC subpoenas for testimony and documents related to the investigation.

Though the SEC and the House reached an undisclosed agreement that settled the court case, the SEC hasn't yet announced the results of its investigation. But watchdogs say it shows why the laws governing stock trades by aides need to be tightened: Congress seems intent on protecting its unique status and perks, and the SEC remains mostly silent on stock trading.

"We'd be a lot better off if the SEC would look into it, find out what's going on, and reach the conclusion that there are no serious insider-trading concerns — or, if there are concerns, take enforcement action," Painter said.

And while concerns over separation of powers could make it difficult for the SEC to take some investigative steps, such as seizing congressional documents, Painter said, "there's absolutely no reason not to start an investigation, and I think 99 percent of what they need, they could get without problems."

The potential problems arising from aides trading stocks extend beyond insider trading. There's also the potential that investing in a company could corrupt the views or interests of staff.

New York Republican Rep. Chris Collins, a business titan who is among the House's wealthiest members, garnered headlines earlier this year for appearing to persuade at least five of his fellow House colleagues to invest in a tiny Australian drug company called Innate Immunotherapeutics, on whose board he sits.

Little noticed was the fact that Collins' chief of staff, Michael Hook, has made significant investments of his own that track closely with Collins'.

Hook, who knew Collins before joining the lawmaker's office, owned stock in Innate Immunotherapeutics when he joined Collins as chief of staff in late 2015. During his time working for Collins, Hook aggressively sold off investments in other companies and poured the proceeds into Innate Immunotherapeutics stock in three dozen transactions. Collins was and continues to be a member of Energy and Commerce, the central committee overseeing health care policy in the House. He was reelected to the board of directors of Innate Immunotherapeutics in August 2016, after a failed clinical trial drove down the company's stock.

Hook reported owning at least \$1 million in Innate Immunotherapeutics stock at the end of 2016. This January, Hook unloaded at least a half-million dollars in Innate Immunotherapeutics stock amid the weeks of scrutiny of Rep. Tom Price, President Donald Trump's choice for secretary of Health and Human Services, who had bought stock in the company at Collins' urging. Hook began repurchasing stock in the company at the end of January.

Innate Immunotherapeutics isn't the only company with ties to Collins that Hook has invested in. In November and December 2016, Hook invested at least \$150,002 combined — and as much as \$350,000 — in two real estate LLCs that were raising private capital, Sinatra-Stadt Illinois III LLC and Linda Lane Apt. Group. Both LLCs are owned by Buffalo-area developer Nick Sinatra, who has donated to Collins' campaign every election cycle since Collins first ran for his congressional seat.

The news that Collins had suggested Price invest in Innate Immunotherapeutics set off a firestorm of bad press for the two House Republicans, both of whom served on the main panel in charge of setting health care policy. Further reports of Collins' promotion of the company to his peers — and comments made near the House floor about "how many millionaires I've made in Buffalo" — sparked an investigation from the House Ethics Committee. The committee plans to announce its course of action by Oct. 12.

Hook's investments don't appear to be part of the probe.

A Hook spokesperson declined a request for comment. The spokesperson also declined to say whether Hook had consulted with the House Ethics Committee on his investment decisions.

The committee advises lawmakers and staff on how to comply with the chamber's general guideline that employees' personal actions should not discredit Congress.

"They genuinely don't want to see the body brought into scandal, controversy or disrepute," said Joseph Birkenstock, a former chief counsel for the Democratic National Committee. "That includes things like, is your boss twisting your arm? Are you doing things because you're under some job pressure? Or is there any credible forum where someone could claim that your actions or your boss' actions are connected in any way to the commercial success of this business?"

One reason that Hook's investments have not been closely scrutinized amid all the focus on Collins' and Price's stock trading is that Hook's information — while public — isn't easy to access: It's not online and can be viewed only in person in an office tucked into a House Office Building.

In 2012, when Congress passed the Stock Act, leaders crowed that information about the investments of both lawmakers and senior staff would be available online in an easily searchable format. But a year later, Congress silently passed revisions to the bill that wiped out many of those data requirements.

Information on lawmakers is still available online, but it cannot easily be searched or sorted by date or company traded. The requirement that aides' disclosures be posted online was scrapped from the law, and today such information is available only in person at computer kiosks maintained by the House and Senate.

Individuals seeking the information must log in using their name and other personal details. The documents they seek cannot be downloaded or otherwise taken out of the office in a digital format. They can be printed for 10 cents to 20 cents a page.

"There's little excuse for these barriers, especially in the digital age," said Larry Noble, senior director at the Campaign Legal Center.

"When you have to go to an agency or to Congress to have a document printed out, and you put your name down — all that is to deter people from doing it," said Noble. "All that was outrageous 25 years ago. That's not the way the world works anymore."

Other ethics requirements don't make the same exceptions for staff members. Conflict-of-interest laws governing future employment after leaving Capitol Hill treat staff similarly to members of the House. Both House lawmakers and senior staff must take a "cooling-off" period after leaving their jobs on Capitol Hill before lobbying their former colleagues. (Senators are subject to a two-year cooling-off period, while staff follow the same one-year cooling-off period as House aides.)

"The rules in the House and the Senate on trading stock are very permissive, and essentially don't regulate members and staff who are trading in industries when they work on the committee overseeing those industries," said Kenneth Gross, who leads the political law practice at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee provides extra guidance on stock trading to staff in its committee handbook. The handbook tells employees to avoid potential conflicts of interest and err on the side of caution by consulting the House Ethics Committee with

questions, according to an excerpt provided by a committee spokesperson.

Spokespeople for the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Judiciary and Appropriations Committees all declined to say what steps, if any, their staffers who trade stocks are making to comply with their Ethics Committee guidelines.

The Senate Appropriations Committee suggested that staffers are largely on their own: "Committee staff are responsible for adhering to Senate Ethics Committee rules and guidelines," committee spokesman Chris Gallegos wrote in an email.

Despite the public outrage earlier this year over Collins' and Price's trading, Congress has done little to address the rules that allowed the two members of the committee overseeing health care to buy and sell hundreds of shares of health care companies.

Congress rarely changes its ethics laws and rules. Historically, most changes were preceded by well-publicized scandals: The last major ethics reforms took place in 2006, for example, in the wake of the Jack Abramoff scandal, when lawmakers overhauled rules on what lobbyists have to disclose. And 2012's Stock Act, which explicitly barred lawmakers from insider trading, was passed in the wake of the jarring "60 Minutes" report that spotlighted Pelosi's trading.

Earlier this year — and five years after the Stock Act was passed — a POLITICO investigation found that while most lawmakers refrain from trading stocks, a small number frequently trade shares in companies they oversee in Congress. An analysis by Public Citizen this year similarly found that fewer lawmakers appear to be trading stocks, but a dedicated number of senators are regularly trading investments in industries that they partly oversee. POLITICO's findings on congressional aides who are regularly trading stocks raise further questions about whether the Stock Act put a sufficient check on conflicts of interest among lawmakers or their staff, watchdogs said.

Behind the scenes, reform groups have been shopping several proposals that would prevent lawmakers — and their aides — from engaging in such behavior. One idea floated by Issue One would ban lawmakers from trading stocks aside from mutual funds. This would ensure lawmakers have broadly diversified portfolios that they do not control. Public Citizen, meanwhile, would simply apply the much tougher conflict-of-interest rules that apply to the executive branch to members of Congress and their aides.

The groups say they have heard some interest from lawmakers — but no one has stepped forward to introduce either bill. Democrats have been focused on criticizing the Trump White House's apparent ethical lapses. And lawmakers haven't proposed other plans for overhauling the stock trading system — in part, ethics watchdogs say, because they haven't been sufficiently shamed into doing so by the public.

"The more embarrassing the story that comes out, the more pressure there is to do something," Noble said. "A lot of members do honestly believe they should not be trading in stock while they're working in legislation, [but] they may not feel as strongly about it" as the members who disagree.

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EPA begins posting Pruitt's schedule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/25/2017 11:09 AM EDT

EPA has begun posting a basic version of [Administrator Scott Pruitt's schedule](#) online in response to increased requests for his itinerary.

The posted records cover April 3 through Sept. 8. EPA previously released a more detailed version of Pruitt's [February and March schedule](#) in response to records requests from POLITICO and other outlets.

An EPA official said last week the schedule will be updated every two weeks. EPA posted a similarly basic schedule for Pruitt's predecessor, Gina McCarthy, typically on a daily basis.

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SolarWorld to rehire 200 after trade decision [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/25/2017 12:43 PM EDT

SolarWorld Americas said it will begin hiring new employees as it ramps up production in the wake of Friday's decision by a federal trade panel in its favor.

The company aims to hire up to 200 workers by May, it announced today.

The Oregon-based company, which is owned by the German firm SolarWorld AG, said its decision was a response to the U.S. International Trade Commission's finding that firms had been injured by cheap imports of solar panels.

"Friday's determination made clear that the U.S. industry's problems have not been self-inflicted, but rather are the result of surging imports," Juergen Stein, CEO and president of SolarWorld Americas said in a statement. "As such, we at SolarWorld are prepared to scale up our world-class manufacturing operations to produce leading solar products made by more American workers."

SolarWorld is still in bankruptcy, but Stein had promised the commission it would increase production if it got a favorable ruling.

The case, originally brought by the Chinese-owned Suniva, is opposed by most of the U.S. solar industry, largely dominated by installers and developers. The commission will send recommendations for tariffs or quotes to the president next month, but President Donald Trump will have the final say.

WHAT'S NEXT: Participants in the case will file tariff proposals with the ITC by Wednesday, and the commission will hold a hearing on Oct. 3.

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Republicans brace for failure on Obamacare repeal [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Josh Dawsey | 09/25/2017 11:32 AM EDT

Republicans in the Senate and White House are increasingly resigned to defeat in their final bid to repeal Obamacare this week, despite a flurry of last-second revisions meant to win over skeptical senators.

President Donald Trump seemed far more pessimistic on Monday morning than he had been last week, telling the "Rick & Bubba" radio show that he expected crippling opposition, calling it "disgusting" that party leaders can't pass a bill to repeal and replace the 2010 health law. Trump wants to continue the health care fight even though he is said to be resigned it will fail this time, a White House official said.

Meanwhile, the latest version of the bill by Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana has not yet moved any of the "no" or undecided votes into the "yes" column.

"Well, I wish 'em luck. But I'm not convinced they have much of a chance," said Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch with a chuckle.

GOP leaders have yet to pull the plug on the effort, but a massive change in dynamics must occur in the sharply divided Senate for the Graham-Cassidy measure to pass.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul is still opposed to the bill, an aide said on Monday morning. Arizona Sen. John McCain also has not changed his position, which hardened on Friday into a "no" vote against his close friend Graham's legislation.

And though the [latest changes](#) to the bill are intended to woo Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine, Collins has not budged from her "lean no" stance, and Murkowski has yet to get on board.

The White House has actively negotiated with Murkowski, Paul and Collins but feels particularly dire about Collins. The White House official said they could get Paul, but it would cost other votes. "Collins doesn't want to vote 'yes' on this," this person said. "I'm not sure what we could do for her."

The president has told advisers that he is convinced that there will be political damage for the White House if they don't pass health care legislation.

Trump predicted Collins will oppose the bill, which along with McCain and Paul's opposition is enough to tank the legislation. With just 52 GOP senators, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) can only afford to lose two votes.

"We're going to lose two or three votes, and that's the end of that," Trump said on the

Alabama-based radio show, in which he dinged McCain as "the only reason" the law is still around. He also referred to McConnell as unpopular.

Utah Sen. Mike Lee is still reviewing the bill, his office said. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz said Sunday he is not yet supportive of the legislation, and an aide said Monday his position has not changed even after the recent revisions. Some of the latest tweaks to Graham-Cassidy would further loosen Obamacare regulations in a bid to win over the two conservative Republicans.

Cruz aides said there had been an agreement last week that the bill's sponsors had backed away from to roll back more regulations to offer cheaper plans. "We thought we were there," said one aide. "It is our intent to to get to yes."

Graham and Cassidy's bill would block grant federal Obamacare funding to states and make deep cuts to Medicaid. Changes circulated on Capitol Hill on Sunday night would allow states more flexibility to eliminate federal insurance regulations and pump more resources toward Alaska, though critics argue the state would still receive less money than under Obamacare.

Murkowski opposed even debating previous iterations of repeal in the summer, but she is still engaging with Graham, Cassidy and other bill supporters this time around. Her sparsely populated and remote state faces high health care costs and unique challenges compared to other states.

Paul said Sunday he could support the bill with fewer regulations and far skimpier block grants to the states, though that position would likely turn off more centrist GOP senators.

Graham insisted on Sunday that Republicans will find the votes to repeal Obamacare.

But Capitol Hill Republicans are privately pessimistic about their chances of reversing the momentum against the bill ahead of a key Sept. 30 deadline to repeal the law by a party-line vote. The White House official said it was a "very uphill battle right now."

McConnell has not said whether he will force a failed vote on the floor, though in the past he has been reluctant to do so. Republicans also lack the votes to reopen debate on the bill, with many senators' offices noncommittal.

In a move perhaps intended to appeal to McCain, who has repeatedly called for consideration of the bill under "regular order, Republicans held a Finance Committee hearing on the bill Monday.

Critics of the bill were not mollified by the hearing, which was quickly disrupted by protests. Capitol Police dragged out nearly 20 protesters, most of whom were disabled and in wheelchairs.

The protest forced Hatch to temporarily suspend the hearing for roughly 15 minutes as the disability rights activists chanted, "No cuts to Medicaid, save our liberty."

Adam Cancryn and Nolan McCaskill contributed to this report.

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Trump moves to get base 'stirred up' with NFL attacks [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and Tara Palmeri | 09/25/2017 08:33 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Monday dug in on his feud with professional athletes, declaring on Twitter that "many people" booed the NFL players who kneeled during the national anthem, and denying that he's stoking racial tensions with his attacks.

Trump's clash with the NFL is extending into its fourth day, and while it's pulling attention from heated debates on health care and tax reform, those around the president say he sees the issue as a way to reconnect with his base.

"He knows it'll get people stirred up and talking about it," a senior administration official said.

The official added the Trump fears his supporters may be feeling neglected after he decided to not immediately cut off protections for undocumented young immigrants known as Dreamers and after he cut a deal with Democrats on the debt ceiling and government funding.

Chris Ruddy, the CEO of Newsmax and a longtime Trump friend, said on Monday that the president is focused on the patriotism angle of the debate and is brushing off the charges of racism.

"He's in a bubble here because he knows he's not a racist. His friends know he isn't," Ruddy said in an interview. "He sees himself standing on the high ground of the truth. But the media are telling the rest of the country a different story about him."

Trump first stoked the issue on Friday at a rally in Alabama, where he told the crowd "wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'get that son of a bitch off the field right now — he's fired.'" Trump's Twitter account was peppered with similar sentiments throughout the weekend, including one post in which he suggested that NFL ratings and attendance had dipped in part because "many stay away because they love our country."

On Monday, Trump showed no signs of backing down.

"Many people booed the players who kneeled yesterday (which was a small percentage of total). These are fans who demand respect for our Flag!" Trump tweeted. "The issue of kneeling has nothing to do with race. It is about respect for our Country, Flag and National Anthem. NFL must respect this!"

Trump's attention to the kneeling of NFL players during the national anthem — a silent protest against racial inequality in the U.S. — comes at the start of a week already brimming with other issues likely to require the president's attention, including last-ditch efforts on Capitol Hill to repeal and replace Obamacare, Tuesday's Senate primary runoff in Alabama, nuclear saber-rattling by North Korea and the ongoing recovery in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria.

Nonetheless, Trump is doubling down on his claims, and his aides have been defending him as a patriot, who is standing up against those who are disrespecting the millions of Americans who have fought to keep the country free.

"This isn't about the president being against anyone, but this is about the president and millions of Americans being for something, being for honoring our flag, honoring our national anthem and honoring the men and women who fought to defend it," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said during the White House briefing on Monday.

Asked if the president regretted referring to a player who takes a knee during the national anthem as a "son of a bitch," the press secretary said, "I think that it's always appropriate for the president of the United States to defend our flag, to defend the national anthem and to defend the men and women who fought and died to defend it."

Sanders also denied that Trump is trying to start a culture war, and indicated that protests against racial inequality may be better directed at the law enforcement officials on the field.

"I think if the debate is really for them about police brutality, they should probably protest the officers on the field that are protecting them instead of the American flag," Sanders said.

She later clarified that she was not being literal with the remark. "I was kind of pointing out the hypocrisy of the fact that if the goal is and the message is that of police brutality, which they've stated, then that doesn't seem very appropriate to protest the American flag. I'm not sure how those two things would be combined."

The president's attacks only fueled protests across the league, with at least some players from nearly every team taking a knee during the anthem. Some stood with locked arms on the sidelines during the anthem, while the Seattle Seahawks, Tennessee Titans and Pittsburgh Steelers stayed in their locker rooms during the song. From the Steelers, only offensive lineman Alejandro Villanueva, a former Army Ranger who served in Afghanistan, stood in the tunnel with his hand on his heart during the anthem.

And while the NFL has borne the brunt of Trump's criticism, the president's national anthem-related focus wandered Monday morning to NASCAR, with the president praising the stock car racing league "and its supporters and fans. They won't put up with disrespecting our Country or our Flag - they said it loud and clear!"

Multiple team owners from NASCAR, which is especially popular in the South and in more rural parts of the U.S., took a tougher stance than those from the NFL, warning that they would fire crew members or drivers who protest during the anthem. The Associated Press reported that Sunday's race in New Hampshire appeared to be protest-free during the anthem.

Dale Earnhardt Jr., the recently retired NASCAR driver who nonetheless remains perhaps the sport's biggest star, weighed in Monday morning, writing on Twitter that "all Americans R granted rights 2 peaceful protests" and quoting former President John F. Kennedy, "those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

In a statement, NASCAR affirmed the "right to peacefully express one's opinion."

"Our respect for the national anthem has always been a hallmark of our pre-race events. Thanks to the sacrifices of many, we live in a country of unparalleled freedoms and countless liberties, including the right to peacefully express one's opinion."

Trump's controversial remarks were met with an almost unanimously chilly reception from the NFL, including from league commissioner Roger Goodell, who called the president's message

"divisive," and New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who said he was "deeply disappointed" by the president's comments. Kraft is a longtime friend of Trump's who donated money to his inaugural committee and had dinner with him and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last February at Mar-a-Lago.

Patriots star quarterback Tom Brady, who has said his friendship with Trump dates back to 2002 but who skipped a White House visit in April, called the president's remarks "just divisive." But Brady was unwilling to blame New England fans who booed his kneeling teammates before the Patriots' Sunday afternoon game against Houston, telling Boston sports talk radio station WEEI that "everyone has the right to do whatever they want to do. If you don't agree, that is fine. You can voice your disagreement, I think that is great."

"It's part of our democracy. As long as it is done in a peaceful, respectful way, that is what our country has been all about," Brady continued.

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GOP senators unveil new 'Dreamers' bill [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 09/25/2017 12:00 PM EDT

A new Senate GOP proposal is being released Monday that creates a pathway to legalization for so-called Dreamers, but it won't allow them to sponsor family members to the United States — one of several provisions that make the bill far more conservative than other relief measures for young undocumented immigrants.

The chief Republican writers of the bill — Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina and James Lankford of Oklahoma — have touted their plan as a more GOP-friendly vision for the fate of young undocumented immigrants in the United States, especially compared to the DREAM Act led by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.).

Tillis and Lankford hope their legislation, called the Succeed Act, can win support from conservatives as Congress scrambles for a fix following the White House's decision to begin revoking work permits and deportation protections early next year for hundreds of thousands of Dreamers.

Details of the bill, which is also sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), were obtained by POLITICO in advance of its release.

Under current law, green card holders can petition for close relatives such as a spouse or children to obtain permanent residency. But President Donald Trump has repeatedly slammed the concept of "chain migration," a term critics use to describe U.S. citizens or permanent residents sponsoring their foreign relatives to come to the United States.

"CHAIN MIGRATION cannot be allowed to be part of any legislation on Immigration!" Trump tweeted earlier this month.

Tillis and Lankford have tried to address that demand by barring Dreamers who would obtain

green cards through their legislation from petitioning family members, although they would be able to sponsor them if they become citizens, according to a person familiar with the legislation.

Some of the nuts-and-bolts of the new GOP bill, which essentially creates a 15-year path to citizenship, are similar to other past proposals addressing the issue of young undocumented immigrants who came here as minors.

To be eligible under the Succeed Act, an immigrant must have been in the United States since June 15, 2012 — the start of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, the Obama-era executive action that Trump said he would end — and before the age of 16. They would be required to obtain a high school diploma, pass a "thorough" criminal background check, submit biometric data to the Department of Homeland Security and pay off any back taxes or establish a repayment plan.

This will give the Dreamers a "conditional permanent residence" status, which they have to maintain for 10 years until they can apply for a formal green card. In that status, the Dreamers must either earn a college degree, serve in the military for at least three years or be consistently employed.

The status must be renewed after five years. Once they obtain green cards, the immigrants are required to wait for five years until they can apply for U.S. citizenship, according to the legislation. Undocumented parents of Dreamers who would qualify under the new Republican bill are also barred from petitioning to stay in the United States based on their children's legal status.

Tillis, a first-term GOP senator who has expressed interest in immigration for some time, and Lankford have communicated with senior White House officials for several weeks on their bill and have gotten a positive reception, according to one Republican source familiar with their efforts.

Trump has agreed in principle with Democratic leaders in Congress on a DACA deal that would pair border security measures with legislation addressing Dreamers, although the details are far from fleshed out.

Democrats have said Trump has agreed to the DREAM Act, which is also backed by GOP Sens. Jeff Flake of Arizona, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Cory Gardner of Colorado. But many congressional Republicans are privately concerned that the DREAM Act is too closely associated with Democrats and would subsequently struggle to attract support from a substantial number of GOP lawmakers.

The legislation is written to help give cover to GOP lawmakers who want to sign onto a bill protecting Dreamers yet still seek some tougher immigration restrictions.

For example, their bill also includes provisions meant to curb future illegal immigration into the United States. It would require future temporary visa holders — such as people who come to the United States on worker or student visas — to sign a waiver that would otherwise grant them an immigration hearing or other immigration-related benefits if they violate the terms of their visa.

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Date: Monday, January 08, 2018 3:50:41 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 01/08/2018 03:48 PM EDT

HOT (AND EXPENSIVE) IN HERE: Last year was the third hottest on record in 123 years of record-keeping, and the U.S. faced record-breaking losses from weather and climate disasters, [NOAA said today](#). A NOAA [study](#) found that hurricanes, wildfires and other events did \$306 billion worth of damage to the U.S. economy, factoring in destroyed property and lost business activity in affected areas, Emily Holden reports.

The most expensive storm of 2017 was Hurricane Harvey, with an estimated \$125 billion in costs, followed by Hurricane Maria at \$90 billion and Hurricane Irma at \$50 billion. As for wildfires, they burned through more than 9.8 million acres in the West and caused close to \$18 billion in damage, tripling the previous record. The U.S. in total saw [16 separate events](#) with losses exceeding \$1 billion each in 2017, tying a record set in 2011 for most billion-dollar disasters in a single year.

NOAA scientists also found the five warmest years on record for the U.S. all have occurred since 2006. Last year's average temperature clocked in at 54.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Read [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Caitlin officially takes over AE on Tuesday, so send your thoughts, news and tips her way to coprysko@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@caitlinoprysko](https://twitter.com/caitlinoprysko), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

FEDERAL ROLE CENTER IN WATER CASES: Supreme Court justices seemed open to expanding the role of the federal government in interstate water disputes today during oral arguments of two separate cases. The outcome of the cases could determine the role of agencies, like the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation, when states cannot agree on how to share water from rivers that they share. In one case, *Texas v. New Mexico and Colorado*, the states are fighting over how much Rio Grande water New Mexico must deliver to its downstream neighbor, Annie Snider reports. The second case, *Florida v. Georgia*, is the latest iteration over a major river system that feeds the Atlanta region, as well as Florida's vital oyster fishery and agricultural interests in both states.

The federal government moved to join the Rio Grande case, Annie reports, but it is not a party in the Southeast water litigation — a fact that seemed to deeply frustrate the justices. "What should I do?" Justice Stephen Breyer repeatedly asked Edwin Kneedler, deputy solicitor general representing the U.S. in *Florida v. Georgia*. The Corps filed an amicus brief in the case, but without its full participation, Breyer said he could not be sure that Florida would receive extra supplies if Georgia conserved more water. Read [more](#).

MURRAY TURNED AWAY: The Supreme Court also opted out of hearing a case from coal producer Murray Energy seeking to force EPA to study coal job losses due to agency regulations, Alex Guillén [reports](#). The court also declined to take up two other energy-related cases, one questioning the power of the Endangered Species Act to regulate animals within

one state only and another challenging part of an Arizona air clean-up plan. It did not act on two other energy cases scheduled to be discussed at its regular conference last Friday: One on whether the threat of climate change is justification for ESA protections in the present, and one on the constitutionality of administrative law judges used at dozens of agencies.

COAL AS ICE: This past blast of Arctic weather caused some hiccups in coal deliveries, S&P Global Market Intelligence [reports](#). The snap into sub-zero temperatures in the Eastern U.S. caused "frozen coal stuck in rail cars, mechanical problems with trains and equipment and ice on the rivers," the trade publication reported, citing two coal production sources. Anecdotes like those, plus scant evidence that natural gas availability caused utilities any headaches, could weigh on FERC's collective mind as it prepares a decision on Energy Secretary Rick Perry's "grid resiliency pricing" proposal to subsidize power companies that keep a 90-day supply of fuel on site to guard against a spike in demand, a requirement that could be met only by coal-fired and nuclear generators.

STEYER STAYS PUT: Billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer will not run for office in 2018; instead, he'll invest \$30 million to help flip the House, POLITICO's Gabriel Debenedetti [reports](#). "My fight is not just in California, my fight is in removing [President] Donald Trump from office, and from power," Steyer said today. The hedge fund manager-turned-activist plans to use his NextGen America political group to ramp up millennial turnout in 10 states, he said, singling out House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and Reps. [Darrell Issa](#) (R-Calif.), and [Barbara Comstock](#) (R-Va.) as targets.

PUERTO RICO GETS 4 NEW ENERGY PROJECTS: Puerto Rico's federal oversight board has approved four energy projects meant to boost its ailing electrical supply, Pro Financial Services' Colin Wilhelm [reports](#). Two of the projects would focus on renewable energy, another would focus on energy reserves and backup power generation for the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, and the fourth would work to reduce energy, water and other utility consumption. "Total investment in the projects will come close to \$1.5 billion," Colin reports.

GERMANY NIXES 2020 CO2 TARGETS: German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats agreed today, during preliminary talks to form a government, that the country's 2020 climate goal was unrealistic. Reuters [reports](#) the two blocs decided that the goal to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent from 1990 levels by 2020 was not feasible. The parties instead said they would put together a plan to reach that goal in the early 2020s, and would stick to the country's 2030 goal of a 55 percent emissions reduction, POLITICO Europe's Emily Schultheis [reports](#).

EPA STAFFS UP: EPA's new general counsel and top water official have arrived at the agency. Matthew Leopold was sworn in today as general counsel, according to a [tweet](#) from the office's official account. And the water office today [tweeted](#) its welcome to new Assistant Administrator for Water David Ross. Both men were confirmed by the Senate last month.

NEVER MIND: The Energy Department's general counsel nominee has withdrawn his nomination, according to his [LinkedIn page](#). "I was one of many awaiting a final confirmation vote when the Senate adjourned before the holidays," wrote David Jonas, a partner at Fluet, Huber & Hoang, who was nominated in May and cleared the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in September. "In considering the additional months that would be required for final confirmation, as well as my professional responsibilities at FH+H Law Firm, I respectfully and regretfully requested that my nomination be withdrawn from consideration."

Darius Dixon reports more [here](#).

BUNDY CASE DISMISSED: A federal judge in Las Vegas today dismissed a case against Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who led a 2014 armed standoff in a dispute with BLM. "Bundy, his two sons and a militia member will not face a retrial on charges that they led an armed rebellion against federal agents in 2014," AZCentral [reports](#). The judge today said the federal prosecutors' conduct was "outrageous" and "violated due process rights" of the defendants and dismissed the charges against the four men "with prejudice," meaning they cannot face trial again, the website reports.

The executive director of the Center for Western Priorities said the decision to let "the Bundys walk free on a technicality should send a chill down the spines of anyone who values our parks, wildlife refuges, and all public lands." Jennifer Rokala said in a statement: "That an extremist like Bundy could blatantly break the law on national television and walk away scot-free will only embolden his followers who've threatened the lives and livelihoods of public land managers across the West."

MOVERS, SHAKERS: The National Association of Manufacturers is adding [five new staffers](#), including Patrick Hillman, who previously worked for General Electric, to be vice president of advocacy. (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#))

QUICK HITS:

- Big Oil finds hurdles buried in Trump's 'America-First' tax plan, [Bloomberg](#).
- A mega-drought and intense temps seen as tinder for uprising, [E&E News](#).
- Trump picks another official with potential conflicts of interest for powerful regulatory role, [ThinkProgress](#).
- Macron appeals to China for partnership in climate, [Associated Press](#).
- Climate denial pervades the Trump White House, but it's hitting some limits, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Attorneys sanctioned in legal fight over oil and gas wastewater disposal well, [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Fusion GPS: Trump-appointed [judge has conflicts, should recuse](#)
- How [Trump's HHS nominee's](#) drug company 'gamed' a patent
- Bannon [finds his regrets](#) aren't good enough for Trump

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2018/01/2017-sets-new-record-for-costliest-weather-067732>

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NOAA: 2017 sets new record for costliest weather, climate disasters [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 01/08/2018 12:52 PM EDT

The U.S. faced record-breaking losses from weather and climate disasters in 2017, the third-warmest year on record, the NOAA said today.

Hurricanes, wildfires and other events did \$306 billion worth of damage to the U.S. economy, factoring in destroyed property and lost business activity in affected areas, according to the NOAA [study](#). The most expensive storm was Hurricane Harvey, at an estimated \$125 billion in costs, followed by Hurricane Maria at \$90 billion and Hurricane Irma at \$50 billion.

Wildfires burning more than 9.8 million acres in the West caused close to \$18 billion in damage, tripling the previous record.

The nation saw [16 separate events](#) with losses exceeding \$1 billion each in 2017, tying a record set in 2011 for most billion-dollar disasters in a single year. In addition to the wildfires and hurricanes, NOAA's tally includes eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze and drought.

Congress has approved \$52 billion for hurricane and wildfire recovery and is considering a package for [\\$81 billion more](#).

The second-costliest year for the U.S. was 2005, which brought \$215 billion in losses, mainly from hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita.

Temperatures for the contiguous U.S. in 2017 were 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit above the average for the 20th century, NOAA said.

Federal agencies reviewing climate science have [concluded](#) it is extremely likely that human activity is the dominant cause of that warming. President Donald Trump has expressed doubts about climate change, and his Cabinet is rolling back efforts to curb emissions.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Justices seem ready to boost federal role in interstate water disputes [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 01/08/2018 02:49 PM EDT

Supreme Court justices appeared inclined to give the federal government a seat at the table to help resolve interstate water disputes during oral arguments over a pair of long-running water wars Monday.

Justices heard arguments in two separate cases that could determine the role of federal agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation when states cannot agree how to share water from rivers that they share. In one case, *Texas v. New Mexico and*

Colorado, the states are fighting over how much Rio Grande River water New Mexico must deliver to its downstream neighbor. The second, *Florida v. Georgia*, is the latest iteration in a long-running dispute over a major river system that feeds the booming metro Atlanta region, Florida's vital oyster fishery and agricultural interests in both states.

The federal government moved to join the Rio Grande case, but it is not a party in the Southeast water wars litigation — a fact that deeply frustrated the justices.

"What should I do?" Justice Stephen Breyer repeatedly asked Edwin Kneedler, deputy solicitor general representing the U.S. in *Florida v. Georgia*. The Army Corps of Engineers filed an amicus brief in the case, but without its full participation, Breyer said he could not be sure that Florida would receive extra supplies if Georgia conserved more water.

"Waive sovereign immunity, get into this, and try to help the special master reach an equitable solution," he told Kneedler.

State officials are closely watching both cases as climate change and booming populations stress water supplies not just in the arid West, but around the country. The job of divvying up water rights among farmers, cities, Native American tribes and other users has traditionally been the purview of the states, with the federal government taking a more limited role. Monday's cases test to what degree that balance can be maintained. Kansas filed an amicus brief in the Rio Grande case, and Colorado did so in the Florida-Georgia case, arguing that the decisions would set legal precedent important to them.

Both cases involve decades-long water disputes between states along river systems where the federal government plays a key management role. But court-appointed special masters, who are tasked with adjudicating the interstate disputes, came to opposing decisions in the two cases about how involved the federal government can and should be in resolving such cases.

In *Texas v. New Mexico and Colorado*, the U.S. intervened on the side of Texas, which argues that New Mexico is violating the 1939 Rio Grande Compact by allowing its residents to divert water from the river below a dam at Elephant Butte before it crosses the border. It was an unusual move by the Justice Department, which normally appears as an amicus rather than an intervening party, and special master A. Gregory Grimsal, a Louisiana attorney, wrote in an interim report last year that the U.S. had overstepped its bounds.

The question before the justices Monday was whether to accept Grimsal's opinion about the federal government's role, not the merits of Texas' claim against its upstream neighbor.

The U.S. has a number of interests in the fight: The federal government oversees the network of dams and reservoirs along the Rio Grande and has contracts to deliver water to users, and it is also obligated to deliver water across the border to Mexico under the terms of a separate treaty.

Attorneys for Colorado and New Mexico argued Monday that their beef is not with the federal government's involvement in the case, but with how it is attempting to participate. Instead of attempting to claim violations of the states' compact, to which it is not a party, the U.S. should pursue its interests under reclamation and treaty law, the states argued.

"If you read an implicit right here for the U.S. to raise a claim under the compact ... then I think you'd be opening up a dangerous door in which the U.S. can try to raise implicit rights

not only in this compact, but in every compact across the country," said attorney Marcus Rael Jr., arguing for New Mexico.

Colorado's solicitor general, Frederick Yarger, contended that allowing the U.S. to bring compact claims would impede states' ability to use such agreements to settle claims "once and for all."

Indeed, Chief Justice John Roberts said he was "concerned" about the impact the decision in this case could have on other compacts.

But justices also repeatedly expressed concern about the federal government's ability to protect its own interests, and pointed to the fact that Congress had to ratify the compact.

"You have to think in a case like this that the approval of the compact was premised on an understanding that it would protect the United States' own interest, which is exactly what's at stake here," said Justice Elena Kagan.

In *Florida v. Georgia*, the U.S. took the opposite approach, declining to join the litigation when the Sunshine State sued its upstream neighbor in 2014. Florida argues that Georgia has done too little to rein in consumption along the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River system, which originates north of Atlanta and ultimately feeds Apalachicola Bay, which then flows into the Gulf of Mexico. The Bay is home to Florida's prized oyster fishery, which has suffered due to low freshwater flows in recent years.

After the oyster fishery collapsed in 2012, Florida sued in an effort to cap Georgia's water consumption. But the suit did not name the Army Corps of Engineers, which manages a system of dams and reservoirs along the river system, and the Corps declined to voluntarily join the litigation between the two states.

After a six-week trial in 2016, special master Ralph Lancaster Jr., a Maine-based attorney, concluded that Florida had shown "real harm" and at least the "likely misuse of resources by Georgia," but said that without the involvement of the Army Corps of Engineers, there was no way to guarantee that a cap on the Peach State's consumption would result in more water for Florida.

Justices on Monday prodded Gregory Garre, the attorney representing Florida, for evidence that extra water made available by Georgia would make its way to the downstream state.

"You have common sense on your side," Kagan told Garre, "but there seems to be a real dearth of record evidence."

Garre argued that an order from the high court in favor of Florida would be part of the "constellation" of laws and regulations that the Corps uses to guide its operations along the river system, and Breyer agreed that it would be only logical for the Corps to send at least some of the water saved by Georgia under a conservation cap down to Florida. But Craig Primis, arguing for the Peach State, repeatedly said that wasn't necessarily true, and pointed out that Florida's water problem wasn't just one of quantity, but also one of timing.

"There's nothing common-sense about the operations of this basin. It's incredibly complex," he said.

At one point, Breyer burst out in frustration, "Why isn't the United States in this case?"

In neither case is the high court's ruling likely to be the end. If Texas, New Mexico and Colorado fail to reach a settlement, the case could go to trial once the question of the federal government's role is resolved. Meanwhile, additional litigation relating to the southeast water wars is already working its way through the courts. In March, the Army Corps of Engineers adopted its new Master Manual for the ACF river basin, and environmental groups sued in district court arguing the Corps failed to adequately account for environmental damage.

"This is a controversy that has been going on for decades over this river," said Gil Rogers, director of the Southern Environmental Law Center's Georgia and Alabama offices. "This is certainly the most high-profile chapter in the controversy, but it's not going to be the final, final word."

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Supreme Court won't hear Murray appeal in coal jobs case [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 01/08/2018 10:04 AM EDT

The Supreme Court today declined to hear a case from coal producer Murray Energy seeking to force EPA to produce studies tracking coal job losses due to the agency's regulations.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals last year reversed a lower court and concluded that the study was included in a discretionary part of the Clean Air Act that courts cannot force EPA to follow. Administrator Scott Pruitt has promised to carry out the study and similar reviews regarding other sectors eventually, although the Trump administration opposed the tight timeline that had been ordered by the trial court given the difficulty of producing such a granular report.

The Supreme Court today also declined to take up two other energy-related cases, one questioning the Endangered Species Act's power to regulate animals that exist only within one state and another challenging part of an Arizona air clean-up plan.

The Supreme Court did not act on two other energy cases scheduled to be discussed at their regular conference last Friday. One challenges whether the future threat of climate change is justification for ESA protections in the present. The other deals with the constitutionality of administrative law judges used at dozens of agencies.

It is not clear why the court did not act, although it could indicate the justices are taking a closer look at those cases.

WHAT'S NEXT: The court will decide on the remaining cases at a later date.

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Steyer to target Ryan, GOP incumbents in \$30M midterms push [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti | 01/08/2018 11:30 AM EDT

Tom Steyer, the Democratic hedge fund manager-turned-activist, won't run for either senator or governor of California in 2018, instead investing \$30 million in an effort to flip the House, he told reporters on Monday.

"My fight is not just in California, my fight is in removing Donald Trump from office, and from power," said Steyer, whose announcement won't dispel speculation that he might run for president in 2020.

Steyer plans to use his NextGen America political group to juice millennial voting numbers in 10 states, he said. He singled out House Speaker Paul Ryan (Wis.), Reps. Darrell Issa (Calif.), and Barbara Comstock (Va.) as targets.

The billionaire has been the biggest donor to Democrats in recent election cycles, to the tune of nearly \$200 million. His national stature has grown recently with a series of straight-to-camera ads, calling for the impeachment of President Donald Trump. That campaign will continue, Steyer said, adding that he will be delivering copies of "Fire and Fury," the Michael Wolff book infuriating Trump's White House, to all congressional offices.

"We now know that the Oval Office cannot reshape a man who does not believe in constitutional democracy. We now know that the Republican Party will not cross a president who controls their base no matter what he says or does," he said at a news conference blocks from the Capitol. "By my count, Donald Trump has committed at least eight impeachable offenses."

Steyer has collected more than 4 million signatures during his impeachment petition drive — a push that some Democratic leaders have urged him to stop, calling it premature. That's given him a massive email list that could be converted into significant political influence. He also has urged individual Democratic leaders and candidates to stand for Trump's impeachment.

But his 2018 investment partially answers critics' questions about whether his money would be better spent on individual races.

Steyer has been playing heavily in races across the country in recent years, largely through his NextGen political group that initially was focused on climate issues. The group relaunched in 2016 with a broader mandate, not zeroing in on any one issue.

"We have taken a disastrous turn, and now we need to get back to a path to a just and prosperous future," he said.

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Puerto Rico oversight board approves 4 energy projects [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 01/08/2018 12:42 PM EDT

Puerto Rico's federal oversight board has approved four energy projects meant to shore up the island's ailing electrical supply.

The projects all relate to the island's power grid, and would mostly use private financing. Total investment in the projects will come close to \$1.5 billion. The board approved them under authority granted by Congress for infrastructure revitalization projects.

Two of the projects would focus on renewable energy, one wind, the other by using solid waste for energy generation. Another aims to provide energy reserves and backup power generation for the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, the commonwealth's electrical utility, which has received scrutiny and criticism for extended power outages following the two hurricanes that hit the island last fall.

A fourth aims to reduce energy, water and other utility consumption at government buildings and correctional facilities.

The comment period for the projects will run until Feb. 6. Comments can be registered [here](#) and will be publicly available on the board's website.

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Nominee for DOE general counsel spot withdraws [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 01/08/2018 01:01 PM EDT

David Jonas, a partner at Fluett, Huber & Hoang, has withdrawn his nomination to be the DOE's general counsel, according to a [post](#) on his LinkedIn page today.

"I was one of many awaiting a final confirmation vote when the Senate adjourned before the holidays," wrote Jonas, who was nominated in May and cleared the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in September. "In considering the additional months that would be required for final confirmation, as well as my professional responsibilities at FH+H Law Firm, I respectfully and regretfully requested that my nomination be withdrawn from consideration."

During his nomination hearing, Jonas faced pointed questions from lawmakers about his opposition to women and gay people serving in the military. He had previously held general counsel jobs at DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

Jonas will also leave his post as a senior adviser to Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

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How Trump's HHS nominee's drug company 'gamed' a patent [Back](#)

By Sarah Karlin-Smith | 01/08/2018 05:00 AM EDT

When Donald Trump's nominee for HHS secretary was a top executive at Eli Lilly, the patent on its blockbuster Cialis was soon to expire.

So Lilly tested it on kids.

The drugmaker believed the erectile dysfunction drug might help a rare and deadly muscle-wasting disease that afflicts boys. The drug didn't work — but under a law that promotes pediatric research, Lilly was able to extend the Cialis patent anyway for six months — and that's worth a lot when a medication brings in over \$2 billion a year.

Critics say the brand-name drugmakers are "gaming" the patent system, finding all sorts of ways to protect monopolies and delay competition from generics. And Alex Azar — the former president of Eli Lilly's U.S. operations, now poised to become the top U.S. health official — professes to oppose such tactics.

But the tension between his past actions as a drug executive and his likely future as the nation's top health official are evident in both the Cialis story and in Lilly's tripling of [the price of insulin](#).

Questions about his commitment to rein in skyrocketing drug costs, [an unfulfilled Trump campaign pledge](#), are likely to dominate [his confirmation hearing](#) before the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday. The full Senate is likely to vote on his nomination to lead the Department of Health and Human Services late this month. He'd succeed Tom Price, who resigned after a taxpayer-funded travel scandal.

Azar himself told the Senate HELP panel in November that "we have to fight gaming in the system of patents and exclusivity by drug companies. I have always been an opponent of abuse and gaming of the patent systems by drug companies."

As a drug company executive, Azar's job was to find treatments and make money. The Cialis experiment was legal, and Lilly's competitors engage in similar practices. As the nation's top health official — the first drug executive to become HHS secretary, if confirmed — he might have different imperatives.

Critics, however, say that his record at Lilly crossed lines and should be disqualifying. Azar "gamed the patent system to protect Eli Lilly's taxpayer-funded profits under the guise of helping sick kids," said Tyson Brody, research and investigations director of the left-leaning Democracy Forward.

HHS officials handling communication for the nominee, who is likely to be confirmed, declined to comment, deferring to Eli Lilly. But Azar's mostly Republican supporters, noting he was well-regarded in high-level HHS jobs in the George W. Bush administration before joining Lilly, say Azar understands the system from inside and out. They say that makes him particularly well-suited to address skyrocketing drug prices.

The pediatric exclusivity law — the one that eventually encouraged Lilly to give kids a sex drug — was enacted about 20 years ago with the best of intentions. Drugs don't work the same

in children as they do in adults, and companies needed incentives to do costly studies. In addition, the law encouraged drugmakers to do more research on rare disorders.

Lilly tested Cialis on Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Its competitor Pfizer tested Viagra in children with a lung disorder. Neither found a cure — Viagra was more likely to harm children than to help them — but both boosted their bottom line.

Lilly didn't hide its financial interest. The company's public discussion of testing Cialis in children centered around the likely financial perks of having a longer monopoly on the drug for use in adults — not the promise of a new treatment for seriously ill children. In fact, sometimes the company openly highlighted that it could get the financial benefits, even if the pediatric trial failed.

"The key purpose of these studies is to do relevant clinical trials done in in the pediatric population. And the studies do not necessarily have to be positive," Lilly's then Research and Development Chief Jan Lundberg said at a health care conference in March 2016.

And while Lilly did this work, it was also pushing the government on other fronts to keep the price of Cialis high — and delaying the availability of cheaper generics.

In November 2016, attorneys for Lilly and United Therapeutics wrote a [letter](#) to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration — which would fall under Azar's purview as HHS secretary — pushing back against a proposed rule that imposed strict penalties against companies that raise the price of a drug faster than the rate of inflation. The policy would have forced companies to sell some drugs to nonprofit and safety-net hospitals that treat lots of low-income people for as little as a penny.

Cialis sales would likely have taken a big hit if that rule had ever been finalized. According to United Therapeutics, which helps Lilly sell a version of Cialis for a lung condition, Lilly [regularly raised the wholesale price](#) of the drug multiple times a year, usually by 9 percent or 10 percent, far outpacing inflation. The Obama-era rule was still in the pipeline — not yet in effect — when Trump took office, and the new administration nixed it.

While Azar may have acted aggressively to protect profits at Lilly, his supporters argue that his record at HHS under Bush reflects a commitment to promoting cheaper medicines. For instance, as HHS general counsel in 2002, he helped push forward an [FDA rule](#) on generics that was designed to close loopholes. It made it harder for brand-name drug companies to keep cheaper versions off the market through tactics like filing new patents on old drugs.

And some health policy experts argue that the 1997 pediatric patent extension law is still important. Even when a drug trial fails, it can advance science. The Cialis pediatric tests were designed to help youths with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which has no cure and kills many by young adulthood. "The pediatric exclusivity scheme is specifically designed to hold out an extremely attractive carrot for research that would not otherwise be done. This works only if the exclusivity is awarded regardless of outcome; the prize is for research, not specific results," said Erika Lietzan, an FDA-focused lawyer at the University of Missouri who spent many years representing drug companies in Washington.

Lietzan also notes that FDA has to sign off on these studies from the start if the company is seeking the pediatric patent extension. That helps ensure that studies are conducted only if there is scientific merit and that companies follow through on the research. They can't just

fake it and claim the extra six months on patent.

Lilly had a reason to believe Cialis might help children with Duchenne. Earlier research had found that the drug increased blood flow to the muscles of men with another type of muscular dystrophy. Lilly told POLITICO it initiated the Duchenne study based on requests from patient advocacy groups and leading scientists who thought Cialis might slow the decline, preserving the youths' ability to walk for at least some time.

The additional patent protection granted for pediatric studies "is critical to encouraging society's understanding of how medicines can be used safely and effectively in children," Lilly's communications director J. Scott MacGregor told POLITICO. Before Congress created those patent extensions, more than 80 percent of drugs approved in adults were being used in children, without any knowledge of whether the medicines would help or harm them, Lilly said. By 2013, that had been reduced to about 50 percent.

But others have raised concerns that drugmakers are gaming the pediatric program to maximize profits, not cures. A [recent study](#) of 200 drug trials led by Tulane University's health policy director found that companies prioritized pediatric studies for drugs with high U.S. sales, and that they are more likely to launch these studies for older drugs with time running out on their patent.

Harvard drug price expert Aaron Kesselheim has similar concerns. "Pediatric trials have been conducted on a number of products with marginal public health importance for children, and the drugs most frequently used by children have been underrepresented; instead pediatric exclusivity studies have tended to involve drugs that were both popular and profitable in the market for adults," he [wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine](#).

That doesn't mean Lilly did anything wrong when studying Cialis in kids, Kesselheim told POLITICO. But it would just make more sense, he said, to directly fund the best pediatric research, rather than to use this roundabout system that keeps prices high and makes consumers pay more.

The intricacies of pediatric patent extensions aren't likely to dominate the Finance Committee hearing. But questions about where Azar's loyalties lie — with drugmakers or patients — are likely to be aired.

"I told you in my office you've got some convincing to make me believe that you're going to represent the American people and not big pharma," Sen. [Rand Paul](#) (R-Ky.) told Azar at his November HELP committee hearing. "And I know that's insulting, and I don't mean it to be, because I'm sure you're an honest and upright person.

"But we all have our doubts, because big pharma manipulates the system to keep prices high," Paul added. "We have to really fix it, and I — you need to convince those of us who are skeptical that you'll be part of fixing it and won't beholden to big pharma."

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Bannon finds his regrets aren't good enough for Trump [Back](#)

By Annie Karni | 01/07/2018 08:01 PM EDT

Steve Bannon, like his onetime brother-in-arms President Donald Trump, is known as someone whose instinct is to double down, not kiss up.

That made his belated attempt on Sunday to de-escalate mounting tension with the commander in chief — who had been publicly and privately raging about his former chief strategist all week — notable to many of his allies, one of whom called it a "huge step for Steve, one of the most stubborn people on earth."

But inside the White House, Bannon's 297-word statement of contrition about comments he made in Michael Wolff's book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" was seen as too little, too late for an operative unaware of the self-inflicted damage his hubris could cause.

It did nothing to quell Trump's rage at his former chief strategist or the anger of Bannon's former West Wing colleagues, according to multiple administration officials, who said the vibe in the president's circle was that people were unmoved by the statement. Asked whether there is anything Bannon can do at this point to get back in the president's good graces, one White House official said curtly, "Unlikely."

That posture has left Bannon supporters wondering whether the three-shirt-wearing bomb-thrower can switch the layers out for a hair shirt long enough to stop Trump from siding permanently with House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell — or whether Bannon's populist wing of the Republican Party has already run out of time to maintain influence in this year's midterm elections.

"The problem for Steve is that we were already into January 2018, and he doesn't really have a system, he doesn't have a fund, he doesn't have a political team," said Matthew Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, whose wife works in the White House communications department. "Now it's going to take extra time to make things up, if he's able to, and repair the trust he had with the president. The clock is no longer on his side."

A Republican pollster and operative with close ties to the White House marveled at the terrible timing of Bannon's feud with Trump. "It happens after taxes, before the Camp David meeting this weekend," the operative said, noting that McConnell and Ryan were both spending quality time with Trump during the peak of his Bannon frustration, shortly after celebrating their first big legislative victory. "He couldn't have picked a worse day on the calendar for this to happen. The swamp won."

Bannon's influence, the operative predicted, will be zilch in the coming 2018 midterms, with no recruitment plan or financial backing to offer establishment-challenging outsider candidates. The operative, who has polled Bannon's name ID in states like Alabama, said his image was 40 percent positive, 20 percent negative among Republican primary voters before the feud. "Now he's going to be 20 to 40 — or worse," the operative predicted.

Meanwhile, the "establishment" wing of the party was cheering the downfall of the anti-McConnell avatar. "This is a bigger win for the president, for whom Bannon is now less able to create problems and now unlikely to give the president continued bad advice in late-night phone calls," Karl Rove, the former chief strategist for President George W. Bush, said in an email on Sunday night. "Bannon shredded his biggest claim, that he was the president's leader

on the outside, the keeper of the flame who had discarded the 'influence' of being a mere staffer for the 'power' of being the leader of the nationalist populist movement."

In issuing the statement that Bannon crafted himself — in which he [expressed](#) "regret" about his five-day delay in reacting to what he called "inaccurate reporting" regarding Donald Trump Jr. and professed undying fealty to the president and his agenda — Bannon was hoping to ratchet down what has become an untenable position for him.

He stalled in speaking out, friends said, in part because he didn't remember making the comments attributed to him in the Wolff tome — Bannon reportedly called a June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower with a Russian lawyer "treasonous" and speculated that special counsel Robert Mueller would "crack Don Jr. like an egg" — but also because the president beat him to the punch by criticizing him on Twitter.

But over the past week, mulling his options, Bannon has been most concerned with clarifying his comments about Trump Jr. and uncharacteristically "de-escalating the tension," an ally said.

He was less concerned with making peace with his White House nemeses Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump — and doesn't mention either of them in his statement.

His Sunday statement said his comments to Wolff were meant to be critical of onetime campaign chief Paul Manafort — who also attended the Trump Tower meeting — not the president's son.

Meanwhile, Trump has done the opposite of de-escalating, finally letting loose on an over-empowered aide whom many have been urging him to dump on publicly for months. Over the past week, he derided his ex-strategist as "Sloppy Steve" on Twitter and in a [news conference](#) conducted from Camp David. There, a jeans-clad McConnell stood with Trump like the victor in a fight for the soul of the Republican Party.

Bannon was also dropped by his benefactor, Rebekah Mercer, and his future at the helm of his website, Breitbart News, remains a question mark, even as he grinds on to the next immigration policy fight.

"It would have been great if that apology had been at the beginning of the week," added Schlapp. "Waiting to the end was a big setback."

One Bannon ally said he was surprised to see the statement at all, figuring you either speak publicly immediately or don't speak out at all.

While Bannon may be at a low point and the morale at Breitbart might be sinking, there was a silver lining, according to the close ally. "You'll see a more serious Bannon come out of this," the ally said.

And there were still some voices willing to speak up for him, despite his fall from grace.

"If there is anyone, like Bannon, who is a strong supporter of Israel and a strong fighter against anti-Semitism and that person ends up having less influence on the administration," said Mort Klein, president of the Sheldon Adelson-funded Zionist Organization of America, "that is something that would sadden me."

Andrew Restuccia contributed to this report.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy: Chatterjee not giving up on interim rule — Hamm joins pro-Trump group's board — Offshore drilling plan on tap Tuesday
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 4:20:14 PM

By Eric Wolff | 12/11/2017 04:18 PM EDT

With help from Anthony Adragna, Matt Daily, and Ben Lefebvre

CHATTIN' WITH CHATTERJEE: FERC Commissioner Neil Chatterjee, who gave up his interim chairman title last week, is still hoping to make his dream of an interim rule to save coal and nuclear plants come to reality. But he acknowledged that the short-term rule would have to thread a difficult policy needle he has not yet figured out, and he told the audience at an Axios event this morning that his top priority now is assessing the long-term reliance of the electric grid. "I still would like to get consensus on an interim step but it's complicated," he told reporters after his speech. He added, "I myself said things had to be legally defensible and not distort markets."

New FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre last week secured a 30-day extension to respond to Energy Secretary Rick Perry's proposed grid rule, giving the commission until Jan. 10 to decide how to proceed.

Battery storage behind? Chatterjee told the audience at the Axios event that the battery storage rule FERC has been working on is farther behind than he expected it would be. Chatterjee had promised Sens. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) and [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.) that he'd advance the rule, which would pay battery operators for services they provide the grid. "I intend to fulfill those commitment, it's just these major undertakings are complex and take time. I'm confident we'll get a result, it's just hard to say what time," he said.

Hi Kevin! Hi Neil! Chatterjee was away last week, so he said he would meet McIntyre as fellow commissioner for the first time today. He expects the grid rule to come up in their conversation.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Eric Wolff, filling in for Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@daily1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

HAMM JOINS PRO-TRUMP GROUP: Oil tycoon Harold Hamm, CEO of Continental Resources, joined the board of director for America First Policies, a nonprofit group that supports President Donald Trump's policies. The group has made an effort to pull together high level Trump supporters with access to Trump's Cabinet, including Perry, as [POLITICO reported](#) last month.

OFF SHORE PLAN DEETS TUESDAY: Trump will unveil the administration's new five-year drilling plan Tuesday, multiple sources told AE. Details are still scarce, but a few sources said they expect the plan to aggressively push for more drilling in federal waters. Tuesday's plan will conclude the process Trump kicked off with his April 28 executive order. We'll still have to see how much appetite oil and gas companies will have for offshore drilling in federal waters in the current era of cheap oil prices — a lease sale for all available acres in the Gulf of

Mexico earlier this year pulled in just over half the bids generated in a 2016 sale offering acres in just the central Gulf region.

HOW DEEP CAN WE MINE? Much has been written about the exploding value of bitcoin over the past several weeks and the dramatic increase in the amount of energy the cryptocurrency miners are gobbling up. But [Newsweek](#) reports that [Digiconomist](#) puts it in even starker terms: At the current rate of energy consumption growth, bitcoin mining will use all the world's energy by late 2020. That's based on sustaining the 25-percent jump in energy consumption over the last month — which is improbable, to say the least. Still, since the machines creating bitcoins right now are consuming an estimated 32.6 terawatt-hours of power a year and are heavily reliant on coal-fired power generation in China, the virtual currency is certainly having a real world impact.

THE SUPREMES WON'T PLAY THAT ONE: The Supreme Court today [declined](#) to hear a case involving EPA's enforcement of a key air permitting program, Alex Guillén [reports](#). The lawsuit was brought by utility DTE Energy after EPA prosecuted the company for violating preconstruction permitting requirements, under which the company should have informed authorities before beginning a major project at one of its power plants. The ruling leaves in place a 6th Circuit opinion which grants EPA prosecutorial discretion. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt last week [issued a memo on this topic](#), noting that EPA will not pursue similar prosecution in the future unless actual emissions increase, and will not "second guess" industry's preconstruction projections of emissions impacts, Pruitt wrote.

IDSAL FOR EPA REGION 6: Pruitt has named Anne Idsal, a deputy land commissioner for the Texas General Land Office, to be regional administrator for EPA's Region 6, the agency said today, Emily Holden [reports](#). The South Central region covers New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

The more you know: Idsal's [mom](#), Katharine Armstrong, a well-known Republican donor, owned the ranch where then-Vice President Dick Cheney [shot](#) his companion in a hunting accident.

TOP OF THE NINTH: The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear both lawsuits over EPA's two major implementation rules for the 2016 update to the Toxic Substances Control Act, a small victory for environmentalists and public health advocates who had pushed for the San Francisco-based court to handle the litigation, Alex also [reports](#) this morning. Cases had been filed in both the 9th Circuit and the Richmond, Va.,-based 4th Circuit. The 9th circuit declined to release its cases, and last week EPA said it preferred to consolidate the cases into a single circuit.

MACRON PUTS HIS #MPGA WHERE HIS MOUTH IS: French President Emmanuel Macron is following through on his Make this Planet Great Again pledge, by facilitating climate research on French soil, POLITICO Europe's Sara Stefanini and Nicholas Vinocur [report](#). He unblocked €30 million (\$35.4 million) for grants and approving applications for 90 candidates to work at France's elite National Center for Scientific Research out of some 250 climatologists who applied online. The government [chose 18 scientists](#) for €20 million (\$23.6 million) in grants last month, around half of them from the U.S., and will announce their names at the One Planet Summit.

THEM METERS DONE GOT SMART: The Institute for Electric Innovation is out with a new report estimating 76 million smart meters will be installed throughout the country by the

end of the year and installations are expected to hit 90 million by 2020. The group further says 40 electric companies have fully deployed the technology and 50 more are actively installing it. Link [here](#).

USING THEIR (DRILLING) PULPIT: More than 50 African-American church leaders sent [a letter](#) today to congressional leaders urging them to remove provisions opening ANWR to oil and gas drilling from their final tax package. "We may live far from Alaska, but our plight as African Americans is one and the same, and thus the call to protect the land of the Gwich'in, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, is a common cause," they wrote.

QUICK HITS

- To Test for Climate Disasters: Build Stuff, Then Blow It Apart, [New York Times](#)
- Sources: Trump supports Pruitt's plan to question science, [E&E](#)
- Las Vegas judge hints at mistrial in Bunkerville standoff case, [Las Vegas Review Journal](#)
- Oil Prices Rise After NYC Explosion, [WSJ](#)

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS

- Alabama Senate race [hurtles](#) to a dramatic finish
- Nebraska RNC official [resigns](#) to protest support of Moore
- [Tax cuts alone](#) won't cover full cost of GOP plan, Treasury says

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Pro-Trump group courts donors with Cabinet access [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 11/10/2017 03:22 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry will headline an intimate gathering of high-powered business executives in Texas next week for the pro-Trump outside group America First Policies, the first in a series of "roundtable discussions" giving donors face time with top Trump officials.

The Houston event featuring Perry, detailed in an invitation sent to a Republican donor and obtained by POLITICO, will include roughly 30 people and cover topics from energy policy to the Trump administration's broader agenda, America First spokeswoman Erin Montgomery said. Perry will not solicit donations from the attendees at the Monday event, which would be a violation of federal law — but America First officials plan to ask for contributions after Perry leaves the room.

The event highlights the cozy and growing ties between officials in President Donald Trump's administration and outside allies spending millions of dollars pushing administration policies this year. America First is brandishing its relationships with government officials to establish

itself as the White House's preferred outside ally, among a mass of pro-Trump groups that have popped up this year.

In addition to holding more roundtable events, America First Policies recently held conference calls featuring White House Legislative Affairs Director Marc Short, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Rep. Erik Paulsen, all key players on tax reform. America First leaders also huddled with White House officials recently.

America First Policies and its affiliated super PAC, America First Action, plan to raise and spend \$100 million supporting Trump's agenda in the next year. Super PACs are not permitted to coordinate with candidates and there are strict rules governing Cabinet officials' political activities. But there is a loophole: Perry and others can participate in events put on by America First's nonprofit policy arm, which is legally separate from the super PAC even though the same officers run both groups.

"As long as the super PAC and the 501(c)(4) each stays in its own lane they can both operate under the same umbrella," said Brett Kappel, a campaign finance lawyer and partner at Akerman LLP.

But campaign finance reform advocates said the arrangement crosses an ethical line.

"This is all part of the very close coordination we're seeing between the campaign itself and what's supposedly an outside group," said Craig Holman, the government affairs lobbyist at the good-government group Public Citizen. The activities constitute "coordination in anyone's definition except for the Federal Election Commission's," he said.

Perry is an ideal ambassador for America First Policies in Texas, where the former governor has deep ties to the energy industry and donors who fueled his state campaigns as well as two presidential bids.

An Energy Department spokesperson did not return a request for comment. Perry was in France this week meeting with energy leaders from other countries. He is slated to attend a similar meeting in Texas on Monday, prior to the America First event, with leaders from Canada and Mexico.

America First was silent for much of this year and went through multiple staff shakeups, but has recently been working to restore its original position as the central group backing Trump's agenda.

But it has competition. Future45, which supported Trump during the 2016 elections with funding from casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson and the Ricketts family, [announced](#) a project that will spend in the tens of millions of dollars promoting tax reform earlier this month. Great America PAC, which is affiliated with former White House strategist Steve Bannon, began endorsing 2018 candidates in recent days.

Great America PAC's support for Roy Moore broke from Trump's support for Sen. Luther Strange in Alabama. America First plans to stay closely aligned with Trump and Trump's agenda, which Texas businessman Roy Bailey said could be a differentiator.

"We're not second-guessing anything; we're totally confident in [Trump's] ability to lead this nation and we're supporting him and the vice president," said Bailey, who is involved with

America First.

That message has intrigued Texas-based energy executive Dan Eberhart, who said he hasn't yet made a donation to America First but is "interested in what they have to say."

"A lot of people who supported Republicans in 2016 are frustrated with the way things have turned out," Eberhart said. "If the Republican establishment won't support the president's agenda, we need alternatives who will."

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Supreme Court won't hear case over air permit prosecution [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/11/2017 10:11 AM EDT

The Supreme Court today [declined](#) to hear a case involving EPA's enforcement of a key air permitting program.

The lawsuit was brought by utility DTE Energy after EPA prosecuted the company for violating preconstruction permitting requirements, under which the company should have informed authorities before beginning a major project at one of its power plants. The company complained that its measured emissions never actually increased once the project was complete.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled earlier this year that emitters can be prosecuted for preconstruction violations even if post-project emissions never actually increased. Today's rejection of the appeal by the Supreme Court leaves that ruling in place.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt last week [issued a memo on this topic](#), noting that while the 6th Circuit said EPA has prosecutorial discretion in this type of enforcement. EPA will not pursue similar prosecution in the future unless actual emissions increase, and will not "second guess" industry's preconstruction projections of emissions impacts, Pruitt wrote.

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt has formed a task force to review and potentially revise the air permitting program.

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EPA won't 'second guess' industry emissions projections in permitting program [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/08/2017 02:38 PM EDT

EPA will now defer to industry analyses on whether major projects will be subject to an important air permitting program, Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a [Dec. 7 memo](#).

The change comes amid the Trump administration's review of the permits under the New Source Review program.

The Clean Air Act requires the owners of power plants and other emitters to study whether major upgrades to facilities will increase pollution. If so, the company must obtain an NSR permit from EPA, a process industry says is timely and costly.

Pruitt wrote that as long as companies follow the rules for how to project emissions, then "EPA does not intend to substitute its judgment for that of the owner or operator by 'second guessing'" a company's analysis. EPA will also allow companies to include in their projections any plans to "actively manage future emissions ... on an ongoing basis," which could make it easier for companies to avoid the permitting program.

In addition, Pruitt said EPA will not prosecute any companies whose analyses show they did not have to obtain permits unless measured emissions actually increase afterward, contrary to their projections.

The Supreme Court is considering whether to hear a lawsuit brought by utility DTE regarding these policies. The Trump administration [urged](#) the justices not to take the appeal, thus leaving in place a lower court ruling that EPA may — but does not have to — prosecute companies for not properly obtaining a permit if their real-world emissions did not increase afterward.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Supreme Court could say as early as Monday whether it will take the DTE appeal. In the meantime, EPA has formed an NSR task force to consider reforms to the program.

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EPA appoints Anne Idsal as Region 6 administrator [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/11/2017 11:09 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has named Anne Idsal, a deputy land commissioner for the Texas General Land Office, to be regional administrator for EPA's Region 6, the agency said today.

The South Central region covers New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

Idsal has been chief clerk and deputy land commissioner for nearly three years, according to her [LinkedIn](#) profile. Before that she was general counsel for the office and for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. She also served as special counsel and executive assistant to TCEQ Chairman Bryan Shaw.

Idsal interned for the Northern District of Texas and Texas Supreme courts. She also served as legal assistant for the Senate Judiciary Committee under Sen. [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas).

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Both TSCA rule challenges to be heard in 9th Circuit [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/11/2017 11:54 AM EDT

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear both lawsuits over EPA's two major implementation rules for the 2016 update to the Toxic Substances Control Act, a small victory for environmentalists and public health advocates who had pushed for the Western court to handle the litigation.

The Richmond, Va.,-based 4th Circuit Court of Appeals had been assigned all three lawsuits over EPA's evaluation rule, which determines how the agency will review chemicals under the law. The San Francisco-based 9th Circuit, meanwhile, was assigned the litigation over EPA's prioritization rule, which determined how EPA will pick which chemicals to review.

Both EPA and the environmentalists suing over the rules sought to have the cases moved to the same court — the 9th Circuit for green groups, the 4th Circuit for EPA. The 9th Circuit last month declined to release the suits over the prioritization rule. Last week EPA said that it would prefer to have both cases in the same jurisdiction, paving the way for today's [order](#) from the 4th Circuit to move the evaluation rule lawsuits to the 9th Circuit.

WHAT'S NEXT: The 9th Circuit will take briefs in both cases and hear arguments over the rules, likely sometime next year. The cases could be assigned to the same panel of judges given the similar legal issues.

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Alabama Senate race hurtles to a dramatic finish [Back](#)

By Gabriel DeBenedetti | 12/11/2017 02:06 PM EDT

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — On the day before voters cast their votes in Alabama's roller-coaster Senate special election, Democrat Doug Jones is enlisting last-minute help from former President Barack Obama, while Republican Roy Moore is expected to emerge from hiding at a final-hour rally with Steve Bannon.

The anticipation surrounding the highest-profile special election in years grew with a surprise poll from Fox News showing Jones ahead by double-digits — defying a slew of other surveys that had Moore clinging to a narrow lead.

While Moore prepped for an evening rally with Bannon, the former White House chief strategist and right-wing provocateur, Jones' campaign is circulated robocalls from Obama and former Vice President Joe Biden.

The flurry of 11th-hour activity was a fitting conclusion to a race that has captivated the

country, with the possibility of Democrats picking off a coveted Senate seat in deep-red territory against a Republican accused of preying on teenagers as a man in his 30s. The contest has exposed some painful rifts in the Republican Party that have yet to heal during Donald Trump's tenure in the White House.

But it has also raised questions about Democrats' ability to win over African-American voters without Obama on the ballot, especially in Southern states where tough voter ID laws already make such turnout operations difficult.

Speaking to reporters at Chris Z's, a diner in Birmingham, on Monday, Jones dismissed the polling discrepancies and tried pivoting back to local matters by saying he cares for polls just as much as Nick Saban and Gus Malzahn, the coaches for the nationally-ranked University of Alabama and Auburn University football teams.

Still, Jones was careful not to confirm that Obama had recorded a supportive message for him, hyper-vigilant about appearing to accept support from such a controversial figure in such an overwhelmingly Republican state.

"The only robo-call I know about for sure is the one from my wife," he said.

Appearing at his first of three planned events Monday, Jones immediately reminded the press of comments made by Sen. Richard Shelby, the longtime Alabama Republican who reiterated on Sunday that he had written in a candidate rather than vote for Moore.

Jones' campaign on Sunday quickly turned two clips of Shelby denouncing Moore into digital ads, and it kept a television spot featuring similar comments in rotation for the closing stretch. In order to win in a state that hasn't elected a Democrat to the Senate since Shelby himself in 1992 — before he switched parties — Jones' team is counting on conservatives turned off by Moore to either vote for him or write in a third option.

Pushing the write-in option, Democratic super PAC American Bridge on Sunday began targeting persuadable Republican voters with a digital ad urging them to back Saban. The editorial board of AL.com, a large newspaper group in the state, chipped in on Sunday as well, urging conservatives to follow Shelby's lead.

Moore, who disappeared from the campaign trail over the weekend to watch the Army-Navy football game in Philadelphia, according to Republicans close to his campaign, has spent the closing hours aiming to shore up his own support among the GOP base.

Declining to appear in public for days before Monday's rally — he even skipped church on Sunday — Moore instead stuck to friendly radio programs, while his allies bombarded local airwaves and screens with anti-Jones ads highlighting the Democrat's support for abortion rights and lashing him to the national party.

After Trump rallied for Moore just over the border in Pensacola, Fla. late last week, he also recorded a robo-call for the candidate. And joining the pro-Trump America First Action super PAC that has disclosed spending over \$1 million for Moore this month, the Republican National Committee recently resumed its support for the candidate after earlier pulling out of a joint fundraising agreement with him.

Still, that move has not sat well with many Republicans aligned with the party establishment.

In Monday, Nebraska RNC committeewoman Joyce Simmons resigned from the group.

"I strongly disagree with the recent RNC financial support directed to the Alabama Republican Party for use in the Roy Moore race. There is much I could say about this situation, but I will defer to this weekend's comments by Senator Shelby," she emailed fellow committee officials.

The move reflected one of Moore's central challenges: winning over pro-Trump Republicans who remain skeptical of him.

Solution Fund, a pro-Moore super PAC, on Monday emailed supporters asking for a final financial push making specifically that pitch.

"Hundreds of thousand[s] of voters that voted last November to stop Hillary Clinton did not vote in the September Alabama Senate Primary," the note read. "Our focus through election closing on Tuesday is to get these voters to polls."

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Tax cuts alone won't cover full cost of GOP plan, Treasury says [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 12/11/2017 11:48 AM EDT

The Treasury Department said Monday that the GOP tax plan currently before Congress would need an assist from other Trump administration priorities to pay for itself.

Tax cuts alone aren't enough, Treasury said in a one-page analysis, citing welfare reform and infrastructure spending as additional boosts to the economy.

The analysis assumes that an economy led by Republicans would boost revenues by \$1.8 trillion over a decade — more than enough to pay for the roughly \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts envisioned by Republicans.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has been saying for months that his department would produce an analysis that proved the tax cuts would be fully paid for, and other top Republicans like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have insisted they have no doubt that would be the case.

The White House drew some criticism earlier this year for assuming that economic growth would hit close to 3 percent a year under President Donald Trump's watch, and Democrats quickly lashed out at what Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer dubbed "fake math" in the new analysis.

"It's clear the White House and Republicans are grasping at straws to prove the unprovable and garner votes for a bill that nearly every single independent analysis has concluded will blow up the deficit and generate almost no additional economic activity to make up for it," Schumer said.

The Treasury analysis released Monday hits that \$1.8 trillion revenue growth figure by

assuming that long-term economic growth would hit 2.9 percent over the next 10 years, which is 0.7 percent higher than a baseline of previous projections.

But the vast majority of outside analyses have found that the GOP tax plans would fall far short of being fully offset. The Joint Committee on Taxation said the Senate tax bill would add about \$1 trillion to the deficit over a decade, and the non-partisan Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center said Monday that the Senate tax plan would increase gross domestic product by 0.7 percent in 2018 before falling off in ensuing years.

Most, but not all, of that extra economic growth projected by Treasury would come from the tax cuts themselves. Treasury assumes that corporate tax changes would spur half the economic expansion, while the other half would be come from a combination of new tax relief for "pass-through" businesses that pay taxes through the individual system and yet-to-be determined proposals for overhauling the welfare system and improving infrastructure.

"The Administration has been focused on tax reform and broader economic policies to stimulate growth, which will generate significant long-term revenue for the government," Mnuchin said in a statement.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren late last month asked Treasury's inspector general to probe the circumstances behind Mnuchin's economic growth claims.

"Either the Treasury Department has used extensive taxpayer funds to conduct economic analyses that it refuses to release because those analyses would contradict the Treasury Secretary's claims, or Secretary Mnuchin has grossly misled the public about the extent of the Treasury Department's analysis," she wrote

House and Senate GOP leaders are crafting a final tax plan behind closed doors. They plan to hold a public meeting Wednesday of the conference committee that would OK the legislation, with a goal of getting it to Trump's desk by Dec. 20 or sooner if possible, a source familiar with the matter said.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Dominion buys SCANA — Lighthouse Resources sues Inslee — Senate GOP majority lowers to 51
Date: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 3:33:45 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 01/03/2018 03:31 PM EDT

COME TOGETHER: Utility Dominion is purchasing SCANA, which recently abandoned its planned nuclear plant expansion in South Carolina. The \$14.6 billion deal the two companies [announced](#) today relies on South Carolina agreeing to continue making payments on the failed V.C. Summer project, which ran over budget and halted construction last year. The merger deal would create a utility with 6.5 million gas and electric customers in eight states, and it would give cash payouts averaging \$1,000 to customers of South Carolina Electric and Gas, a SCANA subsidiary. Dominion would also complete a \$180 million natural gas plant. The companies will next need approval from FERC, the FTC and public utility commissions in three states.

"**We believe this merger will provide** significant benefits to SCE&G's customers, SCANA's shareholders and the communities SCANA serves," said Thomas F. Farrell II, CEO of Dominion Energy, in a statement. "It would lock in significant and immediate savings for SCE&G customers — including what we believe is the largest utility customer cash refund in history — and guarantee a rapidly declining impact from the V.C. Summer project." Eric Wolff has [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

COAL COMPANY SUES INSLEE: Coal miner Lighthouse Resources said today it is suing Washington Gov. Jay Inslee over the state's denial of a permit to build an export terminal to deliver coal to Asia, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). In the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, the coal company argues Inslee and the state's Department of Ecology violated current U.S. energy policy and the Constitution's foreign commerce clause by denying the permit. Lighthouse specifically points to President Donald Trump's calls to increase domestic coal production in its justification. "By taking actions and refusing to act in ways consistent with the federal Government's coal export policies, the Defendants have severely undermined the ability of the United States to speak with one voice in foreign commercial affairs," Lighthouse said in the lawsuit.

JONES, SMITH JOIN SENATE: Alabama Democrat Doug Jones was formally sworn in to the Senate today, narrowing Senate Republicans' already slim majority and complicating their agenda ahead of midterms, POLITICO's Seung Min Kim and John Bresnahan report. Tina Smith, who is replacing former Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota after he resigned following sexual misconduct allegations from multiple women, was also sworn in today, bringing Republicans' tally to a 51-49 majority. The moves make "it easier for Democrats to block President Donald Trump's nominees and filibuster his legislative proposals," Seung Min and John write. Read [more](#).

UNCONVENTIONAL MOVES: The Energy Department announced today six projects that

will receive \$30 million in federal funding for cost-shared research and development in unconventional oil and natural gas recovery. The projects "will address critical gaps in our understanding of reservoir behavior and optimal well-completion strategies, next-generation subsurface diagnostic technologies, and advanced offshore technologies," DOE said. See the projects [here](#).

WHAT IRAN PROTESTS MEAN FOR THE NUCLEAR DEAL: Anti-government protests in Iran could open up Trump to kill the Iran nuclear deal, POLITICO's Michael Crowley and Eliana Johnson report. "Trump will have an opportunity for far more dramatic action in less than two weeks, when he must decide by law whether to continue waiving economic sanctions against Iran that were lifted by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal," the two report.

Michael and Eliana write: "Although Trump has repeatedly threatened to withdraw unilaterally from the nuclear deal, his senior national security team has persuaded him that the diplomatic costs outweigh the benefits of keeping a campaign promise and undoing one of Obama's proudest achievements. But some people familiar with administration deliberations say that the moment of vulnerability for Iran's nearly 40-year-old fundamentalist regime may move him to grander action." Read [more](#).

GAS PRICES SET TO RISE IN 2018: Gas prices in 2018 could hit their highest levels since 2014, according to GasBuddy's 2018 [outlook](#), which finds the yearly national average will rise 19 cents to \$2.57 per gallon. Analysts also found U.S. motorists will spend \$364.6 billion in 2018 — \$25 billion higher than what was spent in 2017. The average household will see its yearly gasoline bill rise to \$1,898, up from \$1,765 in 2017, according to the GasBuddy outlook.

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SCANA, Dominion announce merger in wake of scuttled nuclear plant [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 01/03/2018 10:49 AM EDT

Utilities Dominion and SCANA, which last year decided to stop work on nuclear plant expansion, have agreed to merge, the companies [said](#) today.

The deal is contingent on South Carolina agreeing to continue making payments on the failed V.C. Summer project, which ran over budget and will never produce any power. The South Carolina legislature is now considering whether to pass legislation ending payments on the project, the Post & Courier [reports](#).

The \$14.6 billion deal would create a utility with 6.5 million gas and electric customers in eight states. Customers of South Carolina Electric and Gas, a subsidiary of SCANA, would receive cash pay outs of an average of \$1,000 and a rate reduction of 5 percent, the companies said. Dominion would also commit funds to charities in communities served by SCANA, and the utility would complete a \$180 million natural gas plant.

"We believe this merger will provide significant benefits to SCE&G's customers, SCANA's shareholders and the communities SCANA serves," Thomas F. Farrell II, CEO of Dominion Energy, said in a statement. "It would lock in significant and immediate savings for SCE&G customers — including what we believe is the largest utility customer cash refund in history — and guarantee a rapidly declining impact from the V.C. Summer project."

The Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission have both subpoenaed SCANA for documents related to the Summer project.

WHAT'S NEXT: The companies will need approval from FERC, the FTC, and public utility commissions in three states.

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Coal miner sues Inslee over denied export terminal permit [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 01/03/2018 03:00 PM EDT

Coal miner Lighthouse Resources is suing Washington Gov. Jay Inslee over the state's denial of a permit to build an export terminal to deliver coal to Asia.

Lighthouse Resources, in its lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, argues that Inslee and the state's Department of Ecology violated current U.S. energy policy and the Constitution's foreign commerce clause in denying the permit. Lighthouse specifically references President Donald Trump's calls to increase domestic coal production, which has been in a decades-long decline as power plants switch to cleaner-burning natural gas.

"By taking actions and refusing to act in ways consistent with the federal Government's coal

export policies, the Defendants have severely undermined the ability of the United States to speak with one voice in foreign commercial affairs," Lighthouse said in the suit.

The lawsuit is the last scuffle in the company's nearly six-year battle to build the Millennium Bulk Terminal on the Columbia River to ship coal from Wyoming and Montana to Japan, South Korea and China. Washington's Department of Ecology in September denied the terminal a water quality certification, effectively scuttling the project.

Lighthouse estimates the terminal would ship 44 million tons of coal a year, up to 60 percent more than current levels.

WHAT'S NEXT: Washington state officials will reply to the lawsuit.

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Jones sworn in, and Senate Democrats rejoice [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and John Bresnahan | 01/03/2018 01:50 PM EDT

Democrat Doug Jones was formally sworn in as the newest senator from Alabama on Wednesday, narrowing the Senate GOP's already-slender majority and complicating the outlook for the Republican agenda ahead of the mid-term elections.

Jones, who defeated Republican Roy Moore in a contentious race this fall, became the newest member of the Senate alongside Tina Smith, who is replacing former Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota after he resigned following sexual misconduct allegations from multiple women.

Republicans now control a 51-49 majority, making it easier for Democrats to block President Donald Trump's nominees and filibuster his legislative proposals. The one-seat pick-up also boosts the once-slim prospects of Democrats regaining the Senate majority in a year when they're battling to retain seats in mostly conservative terrain.

"The voices of Jones and Smith will add to the diversity of energy of our caucus," said an ebullient Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). "I predict that both will become influential voices in this historic chamber."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) also offered warm words to the newest senators, telling Jones in particular that he "will have big shoes to fill," including those of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, whose departure from the Senate set off the special election.

Some logistical issues will also have to be worked out with a narrower Republican margin in the Senate. For instance, McConnell and Schumer are still discussing whether the number of seats allotted to each party on committees will be adjusted to reflect the smaller GOP majority, aides said.

Who assumes Franken and ex-Sen. Luther Strange's (R-Ala.) committee assignments won't be settled until those ratios are decided. Franken in particular is vacating a coveted seat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees Supreme Court confirmations and gave Franken

a major platform in interrogating controversial Trump nominees.

Three current or former vice presidents were on hand for Wednesday's ceremonial event: Mike Pence, who swore in the new senators; Joe Biden, who accompanied Jones — a close friend — as he was formally installed as senator; and Walter Mondale, a former Minnesota senator who was alongside Smith.

Mondale joked with reporters about his meeting with Biden and Pence, quipping "They behaved." And Biden in particular was clearly pleased to return to his old Senate stomping grounds, saying "Good to be back" while grinning to reporters during a photo op in the Old Senate Chamber.

More than 20 happy Senate Democrats were on hand to watch Jones and Smith get sworn in, although it was clear Jones was the star of the day. Only a handful of Republicans joined Pence and McConnell to watch the proceedings.

Jones waved to his wife in the gallery and touched his hand to heart after he officially joined what's known as the World's Greatest Deliberative Body. He was soon given a "member pin" that every senator receives.

Biden could be overheard loudly introducing Jones to Iowa Republican Chuck Grassley: "He's a good guy." Then Schumer joked to Biden while pointing to McConnell. "They need your help," Schumer said. "They need you to negotiate."

Schumer — who is scheduled to meet later Wednesday with McConnell, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) in a bid to work out a budget agreement — then lambasted Trump on the floor, especially his Tuesday night Twitter broadside against North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

"President Trump's foreign policy by tweet is doing serious damage to the country," Schumer said on the floor. He accused Republicans who didn't criticize Trump's tweets of "complicity in the degradation of the presidency."

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Iran protests could move Trump to kill nuclear deal [Back](#)

By Michael Crowley and Eliana Johnson | 01/02/2018 07:40 PM EDT

Anti-government protests in Iran offer President Donald Trump a new reason to scrap the Iran nuclear deal later this month — a risky move that Trump's supporters are cheering but that critics warn could play into Tehran's hands.

Trump and his senior officials have offered rhetorical support for the protesters and denounced the government in statements and on Twitter. They are also exploring such further steps as targeted sanctions and warnings to social media companies not to comply with Iranian censorship.

But Trump will have an opportunity for far more dramatic action in less than two weeks, when he must decide by law whether to continue waiving economic sanctions against Iran that were lifted by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The sanctions waivers must be renewed every 120 days.

Trump could be further motivated to move boldly given bipartisan complaints that President Barack Obama failed to act forcefully in response to the last round of major Iranian protests, in 2009, sources familiar with administration deliberations said.

Although Trump has repeatedly threatened to withdraw unilaterally from the nuclear deal, his senior national security team has persuaded him that the diplomatic costs outweigh the benefits of keeping a campaign promise and undoing one of Obama's proudest achievements. But some people familiar with administration deliberations say that the moment of vulnerability for Iran's nearly 40-year-old fundamentalist regime may move him to grander action.

"He's not going to want to waive sanctions and keep money flowing to dictators when there are people protesting in the streets," said Richard Goldberg, a former Senate Republican aide who helped design Iran sanctions and is now a senior adviser at the hawkish Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Another Middle East analyst with ties to the Trump administration agreed.

"I think there's a calculus that you take advantage of this moment and you don't waive the sanctions, and put further pressure on a regime which is already facing a lot of economic problems," said Andrew Bowen, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "You use this as a wedge to try to renegotiate the deal."

Many other Middle East experts and former U.S. officials dispute that rationale, however, warning that pulling the plug on the nuclear deal would throw Iran's embattled Islamist leaders a lifeline. The agreement retains strong support from the five other nations that negotiated it with Tehran — China, Russia, Great Britain, France and Germany.

"I would not walk away" from the nuclear deal, said Dennis Ross, a Middle East adviser to three presidents of both parties. "It basically diverts attention back onto us. We have an interest in keeping the spotlight on what the Iranians are doing, not shifting it to a step that we took."

A senior administration official told POLITICO that waiving the sanctions again, amid the popular upheaval in Iran's streets, "sends a horrible message," but that Trump would also be presented with the option of preserving the deal. Even if Trump decides to continue providing Tehran with sanctions relief, the official said, the protests offer the U.S. "additional pressure over the Europeans" to modify the terms of the nuclear agreement.

Iran insists it will not renegotiate the nuclear deal. The July 2015 agreement slowed Iran's steady march toward a nuclear weapons capability, scaling back and limiting its atomic program in return for an end to punishing U.S. and European economic sanctions.

Obama called Washington's furious argument over the deal "the most consequential foreign policy debate that our country has had since the invasion of Iraq," and warned that the alternatives were a nuclear-armed Iran or war.

As a candidate, Trump repeatedly denounced the nuclear deal and vowed to shred it once in office. He has been dissuaded by top officials, including national security adviser H.R. McMaster, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. None are enthusiastic defenders of the agreement, but all say the costs of withdrawing now — including international isolation and the risk of a second nuclear emergency even as Trump confronts North Korea — are not worth the uncertain benefits.

European leaders have also urged Trump to preserve the deal, arguing that restored U.S. sanctions would empower regime hard-liners who say the U.S. cannot be trusted and would lead Iran to restart its nuclear program.

Confronted with an Oct. 15 legal deadline to certify whether Iran had complied with the deal, Trump declined to do so — despite the findings of international inspectors who say Iran has complied with its obligations, which include dismantling centrifuges and limiting uranium enrichment.

Trump's refusal to certify Iran's compliance was mainly symbolic. But he warned that unless Congress and European countries took unspecified steps to crack down on Tehran, "the agreement will be terminated."

No such action has followed, although Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been talking with his Democratic counterpart, Ben Cardin of Maryland, about legislation that might satisfy Trump that the deal has been strengthened while still winning 60 votes for Senate passage. That would require coming up with language that would not violate the nuclear deal's terms while providing Trump with political cover to preserve the agreement.

Senate aides familiar with the negotiations, however, said it was unlikely that the upper chamber would produce that sort of legislation by the time the president has to decide — on Jan. 11 and over the following week — whether to certify the deal and, more important, to waive the sanctions the agreement lifted.

Seizing on the drama of the protests, Republican hawks are now pushing for a tougher bill. Corker is working to win over one of those hawks, Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a confidant of McMaster and an influential foreign policy adviser to the administration. Two sources familiar with administration thinking say it's unlikely the president would support a bill that Cotton himself has not signed on to.

Cotton is pushing for legislation that targets short-range missiles, which have become a matter of contention in the negotiations. Because they are not nuclear missiles, they fall outside the purview of the nuclear agreement, yet they pose a real threat to Iran's neighbors in the region.

"That is outside the nuclear deal, and that gives the Democrats and the Europeans heartburn," a senior administration official said.

Congress could also pursue legislation in response to the protests, unrelated to the nuclear agreement. Potential bills include enforcing provisions of existing laws against the Tehran, including the Global Magnitsky Act, a 2016 law that expanded an initial statute targeting human rights abusers in Russia to violators worldwide.

Another option would be for the Senate to pass transparency legislation cleared by the House

in December that would make public the financial assets of top Iranian officials.

Sources with ties to the administration said the protests may have raised the bar for what new action against Iran will satisfy Trump when it comes to the nuclear deal.

"The protests come at a time when the politics were really against Trump and the administration internationally. Now you have a situation where Iranians are pouring into the streets. [The protests] are a reminder of the type of regime you've been dealing with," said Goldberg, the former Senate Republican aide. "I think the threshold" for congressional action "goes up much, much more."

Some supporters of the nuclear deal unhappily agree.

"I suspect that this is giving him the pretext to do what he was planning to do anyway," said Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. "It is definitely going to make him more comfortable, but the U.S. will still be isolated and other countries will be upset."

Parsi added that negating the nuclear deal would also do a favor to Iranian hard-liners, who he said would blame President Hassan Rouhani of Iran for brokering a failed bargain with the U.S.

Obama administration officials viewed Rouhani and Mohammad Javad Zarif, his foreign minister and Iran's lead nuclear negotiator, as reformers willing to thaw decades of U.S.-Iranian hostility. Critics say that was never true, and that Rouhani's crackdown on the protesters reveals his lack of genuine support for greater political freedom.

At least 20 people have been killed over nearly a week of protests in several cities around the country, with 450 arrested in Tehran alone, according to The Associated Press.

Ross, who served as a top national security aide in the Obama White House during Iran's so-called Green Revolution in 2009, said Obama did not respond forcefully enough at the time, and he applauded the Trump administration's repeated statements drawing attention to the protests and their violent repression.

Trump administration officials are trying to back the protests without playing into Iranian propaganda that accuses the U.S. of fomenting "regime change" inside the country. In a Tuesday news conference, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, quoted anti-government chants from some of the demonstrations, noting: "Those are not my words. Those are not the words of the United States. Those are the words of the brave people of Iran."

But Ross, who supports non-nuclear sanctions against Tehran, cautioned that top Iranian officials — including the nation's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a militant Shiite cleric — would happily exploit a decision by Trump to walk away from the nuclear deal.

"Reimposing all the nuclear sanctions allows the regime to say they are standing up to pressure from the outside," Ross said. "They want to turn this into a nationalist issue. We want to raise the costs of a crackdown. Don't give them a reason to focus on us."

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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How the federal government hides sexual harassment payouts [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Emily Goldberg and Rebecca Morin | 01/03/2018 05:02 AM EDT

Executive branch agencies have settled dozens of sexual harassment cases involving federal workers in recent years, but the resulting taxpayer-funded payments are shrouded in mystery.

Despite a 2002 law aimed at improving federal accountability in discrimination cases, the system for tracking sexual harassment payments in the executive branch is almost as opaque and bureaucratic as the one governing Congress, where payouts similarly lack transparency — a setup that obscures the extent of workplace problems and allows for little oversight of how taxpayer money is spent, according to a POLITICO analysis.

Requests for information about the broad scope and total cost of sexual harassment settlements from the Treasury Department, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and more than a dozen federal agencies yielded no clear answers. An administration official, who requested anonymity to speak frankly about the process, acknowledged that the figures are difficult to compile because agencies don't track the settlements separately from other harassment claims that touch on everything from an employee's age to religion.

A federal fund run out of the Treasury Department, known as the Judgment Fund, distributes billions annually — more than \$4.3 billion in fiscal 2016, the most recent year available — to pay financial judgments and awards against the United States on a range of issues, including sexual harassment claims.

But the exact amount paid through the fund and by federal agencies for sexual harassment settlements is unclear. Treasury [publishes](#) a yearly report to Congress that lists hundreds of payments made through the fund, yet the report does not include detailed information about the precise reason for the payments.

The Judgment Fund has come under attack by Republicans as an unchecked slush fund, especially after the Obama administration suggested it could be used to make [payments](#) promised to insurers under Obamacare after Republicans moved to stop the money from coming out of the Department of Health and Human Services budget.

House and Senate Republicans have introduced legislation that would require the disclosure of more information about the fund's settlements.

"What we're looking for is just accountability. We just feel like there should be sunlight cast on these things," bill sponsor Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah) told POLITICO in an interview. "I don't think people really saw the overlap with the sexual harassment issue until recent days. I can't imagine that I'm the only one in Congress who feels that it's best to be made public, rather than in secret."

But the problem of tracking harassment claims across the executive branch runs deeper than the Judgment Fund.

The EEOC, which tracks federal discrimination and harassment data, was unable to provide

POLITICO with a detailed breakdown of sexual harassment settlements at federal agencies, instead pointing to individual agency data, which often don't include that information, and a chart of private-sector workplace discrimination settlements.

Some of this data is compiled in EEOC's annual Report on the Federal Work Force, but the most recent report posted on the commission's [website](#) is from fiscal year 2014.

EEOC did not provide a formal response to POLITICO's questions.

Lawyers attributed the outdated data to a lack of resources at EEOC and federal agencies.

"The problem is that [the EEOC's] offices throughout the country have such minuscule staff that it's hard to get anybody trained to do it consistently," said Josh Bowers, a lawyer who represents federal employees in discrimination and harassment cases. "They're operating on a shoestring budget."

Federal employees who experience sexual harassment must navigate a labyrinthine [bureaucratic process](#) to even get to the point where the federal government will find in their favor or make a payment to compensate for the harassment.

The process starts when an employee contacts an agency's Equal Employment Opportunity counselor and is subsequently offered mediation or counseling. If that doesn't resolve the issue, an employee can then file a formal complaint, which could trigger an investigation that must wrap up within 180 days. After the completion of the investigation, the employee can either allow the agency to issue a decision or request a hearing with an EEOC administrative judge. Only after the administrative complaint process is complete can an employee file a lawsuit.

Experts and lawyers said many federal employees drop their complaints after the process drags on for months, often well past statutory deadlines meant to result in expeditious resolutions to their claims.

A 2002 law, the No FEAR Act, requires that federal agencies regularly publish data detailing discrimination claims by employees, but those data are often incomplete, lacking details about the circumstances of the complaints, the alleged perpetrators and the specifics of any resulting settlements.

The No FEAR Act also requires that agencies must pay for settlements and awards against them from their own budgets, which means they must repay any money paid out by the Judgment Fund.

POLITICO asked 18 federal agencies how many sexual harassment claims were lodged by agency employees since fiscal year 2012 and how much taxpayer money was paid out to settle them.

Eight agencies provided POLITICO with their No FEAR report, but they gave no further information on how much, if any, money was allocated to pay settlements, judgments or awards related to sexual harassment claims.

The Office of Management and Budget, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the departments of Education, Transportation, Energy, Commerce and Justice did not respond to POLITICO's inquiries before publication. Two other agencies — the Department of Health

and Human Services and the Small Business Administration — said information on money awarded to complainants can be obtained only by filing a Freedom of Information Act request. POLITICO intends to file such requests.

Data provided by the agencies that did respond varied widely.

Department of Homeland Security data show that there were 42 formal complaints about sexual harassment in fiscal year 2017. But DHS says it doesn't have public data outlining how much money the government paid to settle those claims. The department has broader settlement figures pertaining to discrimination as a whole — more than \$5 million in fiscal year 2017 — but a spokeswoman said the department, like most other agencies, doesn't have more specific figures on sexual harassment settlements.

In addition to its No FEAR report, the Department of the Interior provided POLITICO with survey [results](#) revealing that 8 percent of agency employees, or approximately 4,882 employees, experienced sexual harassment within the 12 months preceding the anonymous survey, conducted from Jan. 9 to March 5, 2017. But the agency's No FEAR [report](#) cited only 12 complaints of sexual harassment in fiscal year 2017.

The State Department also provided POLITICO with the number of complaints it has received from agency personnel, which includes not only local employees but also contractors and employees overseas.

According to a department official, the agency received 483 reports of harassment in fiscal year 2017, which was up from previous years. The department received 365 reports in fiscal year 2016, 320 reports in fiscal year 2014 and 157 reports in fiscal year 2013. The number of reports, however, doesn't represent the number of cases, the official said, adding that the agency may receive multiple reports about a single incident. And the department did not specify how many of those reports included claims of sexual harassment.

But according to information from the State Department's No FEAR [documents](#), six complaints of sexual harassment had been filed for fiscal year 2017 as of Sept. 30. Three sexual harassment complaints were filed in fiscal year 2016, and in fiscal year 2015, eight complaints were filed — the highest number from fiscal years 2012 through 2017.

Just two agencies were able to provide dollar figures detailing the cost of payments related to sexual harassment claims.

The Agriculture Department said it received 75 formal complaints that included an allegation of sexual harassment from 2012 to September 2017. The department said it paid \$627,310 to settle the complaints during that period.

A spokesperson for the Department of Housing and Urban Development said 17 sexual harassment complaints have been lodged within the agency since fiscal year 2012. Four of those complaints were resolved, and the remaining 13 entered the formal complaint process. Of the 13 formal complaints, which are reflected in the agency's No FEAR report, two were settled for a total of \$8,600 and two others resulted in counseling sessions costing \$1,000.

Separately, HUD also reimbursed \$500,000 to the Judgment Fund in fiscal year 2015 for one case filed under federal anti-discrimination statutes, but it's not clear from the [report](#) whether the basis of discrimination was sexual harassment or other bias.

But as a whole, government agencies were unable to provide a clear picture of the cost of sexual harassment cases across the executive branch.

"If a government official is found guilty of sexual harassment or the government pays a settlement, the public has a right to know," said Hans von Spakovsky, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation who has testified before Congress about the Judgment Fund's lack of transparency. "The victim should be able to have confidentiality if they want it, but the government shouldn't be able to have it."

Catherine Boudreau and Ted Hesson contributed to this report.

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Grassley open to public testimony from Fusion GPS leaders, spokesman says [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney | 01/03/2018 12:44 PM EDT

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley is willing to have executives from the firm behind the disputed Trump-Russia dossier testify publicly, his spokesman said Wednesday, adding that the Iowa Republican hasn't sought the release of a transcript of his panel's earlier interview with them for investigative reasons.

The leaders of Fusion GPS, the firm that commissioned a former British spy to compile a dossier that describes an elaborate web of Trump ties to the Kremlin, said in a [New York Times opinion piece](#) Tuesday that Republicans had bottled up their closed-door testimony while leaking selective details to undermine their credibility.

"Senator Grassley has always been and remains for transparency," Grassley spokesman Taylor Foy said Wednesday. "There are, however, investigative factors that he must consider to temporarily protect certain information in the midst of an ongoing inquiry such as this one, like tainting the memory of other witnesses."

Foy said Fusion GPS co-founder Glenn Simpson rebuffed the committee's request six months earlier to testify publicly and invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination "to negotiate for a closed-door interview."

"Despite his public statements, Mr. Simpson and his attorney demanded during the interview that the transcript be kept confidential," Foy said. "Mr. Simpson has refused to answer dozens of questions voluntarily, and has failed to provide the Committee with documents and responses to follow-up questions after the interview."

"The Committee's invitation for Mr. Simpson to testify at a public hearing remains on the table," he added.

Joshua Levy, an attorney for Fusion GPS, urged Grassley to call a vote of the committee on releasing Simpson's testimony, which he said would amount to 300 pages covering a 10-hour interview. Levy also said Grassley's office "misstates the history of Mr. Simpson's cooperation with its investigation."

"We have consistently supported release of the transcript, so long as we would have the opportunity to review it for accuracy, and so long as the identities of Fusion's bank and employees could be protected," Levy said. "Having had the opportunity to review the full transcript, Fusion GPS wants it released."

Levy said Fusion was threatened with a subpoena at the same time the Judiciary Committee also warned it would compel testimony from former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Donald Trump Jr. Though all three declined interviews, "only Mr. Simpson was served with a subpoena," he said. Eventually, the committee withdrew its subpoena and agreed to terms for a voluntary interview.

Levy also accused committee Republicans of focusing too heavily on Fusion at the expense of a broader inquiry into Russian influence in the 2016 election.

"The Committee has long known that Fusion GPS is neither the story nor the reason why the U.S. government is investigating the president's campaign," he said. "We suggest Chairman Grassley acknowledge that fact and be transparent with the American people."

Simpson and fellow Fusion founder Peter Fritsch also accused the GOP of spinning a sinister public narrative about the firm's work.

"Republicans have refused to release full transcripts of our firm's testimony, even as they selectively leak details to media outlets on the far right," the duo wrote in the op-ed Tuesday.

The two men said they described for lawmakers a "yearlong effort to decipher Mr. Trump's complex business past" and troubling evidence of relationships with "dubious Russians." They also wrote that they refuted Trump allies' suggestion that they had advanced knowledge of Russians' plans to meet in Trump Tower with the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., or that the Russians involved in that meeting were sources for the dossier.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence panel, said Wednesday that Republicans have released transcripts from interviews with other witnesses.

"In light of the selective leaks of Mr. Simpson's testimony and the misleading manner in which Fusion GPS' role has been characterized, I would support a release of the transcript," Schiff said in a statement.

Grassley said in August that the committee was likely to release transcripts from the committee's Fusion interview. The Judiciary Committee was just one of three GOP-controlled panels that interviewed Simpson and colleagues.

"The answer is, it will take a vote of the committee to do it, but I presume that they will be released," Grassley said at a town hall meeting in Mount Ayr, Iowa, according to an Aug. 23 Washington Examiner [report](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump breaks with Bannon over explosive comments in forthcoming book [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 01/03/2018 01:30 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and his senior aides were fuming on Wednesday after the publication of a book excerpt containing a series of explosive comments from former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon.

Trump ranted about Bannon in conversations with advisers on Wednesday, at one point telling aides he is "not well," according to a person briefed on the conversations.

In a statement, the president bluntly disavowed his former top adviser, who was pushed out of the White House in August.

"Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my presidency," Trump wrote. "When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind."

Bannon told journalist Michael Wolff that he [viewed](#) a 2016 meeting at Trump Tower with Russian operatives arranged by Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. and son-in-law Jared Kushner as "treasonous" and "unpatriotic," according to a summary published by the Guardian.

The White House dismissed Wolff's forthcoming book, "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House," as "filled with false and misleading accounts from individuals who have no access or influence."

"Participating in a book that can only be described as trashy tabloid fiction exposes their sad desperate attempts at relevancy," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement.

A statement accompanying an [excerpt](#) published Wednesday in New York Magazine said Wolff conducted more than 200 interviews over 18 months, and Wolff said he was given "something like a semi-permanent seat on a couch in the West Wing."

The president has long leaned on Bannon for advice, both during the campaign and throughout his first year in the White House.

But people close to the president said Bannon was beginning to fall out of favor with Trump even before the latest revelations. Trump's anger at his former adviser peaked last month when Vanity Fair published a [lengthy profile](#) of Bannon in which he bashed Kushner and Trump's daughter Ivanka by name.

One person who spoke with the president in recent weeks said Trump told him he rarely speaks to Bannon on the phone these days, adding they've only had a handful of substantial conversations since he left the White House in August.

Bannon and Kushner have long had a tense relationship, and they frequently clashed when Bannon was in the White House.

Bannon did not respond to a request for comment.

In recent months, Bannon hasn't shied away from criticizing the White House, chiding the president for backing incumbent Sen. Luther Strange in the Alabama Senate Republican primary instead of Roy Moore, calling on Trump's lawyers to take a harder line in Robert

Mueller's investigation and lamenting that the administration hasn't taken a harder line on China.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Afternoon Energy: FEC probes Zinke-affiliated PAC — Grassley pledges Northey help — Naftogaz hires in D.C.
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 3:27:41 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/21/2017 03:24 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED: The FEC is asking the SEAL PAC, which Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke launched after winning his first congressional race in 2014, about certain discrepancies it found in the PAC's recent campaign finance report. Particularly, the FEC is asking the leadership PAC to provide further details on its direct mail spending and account for a \$200,000 discrepancy in its account, Ben Lefebvre reports. The FEC is also asking about "incomplete information related to some donors, excess contributions and potentially misclassified spending, some of which occurred after Zinke's affiliation with the leadership PAC ended when he joined President Donald Trump's Cabinet in March." SEAL PAC has until Dec. 26 to address the issues identified by the FEC, according to the request [sent Monday](#).

The FEC also wants SEAL PAC to explain how its bank account nearly doubled on New Year's Day. According to the leadership PAC's report covering the first six months of this year, it had [\\$408,882](#) in the bank on Jan. 1. But it reported having just [\\$215,633](#) cash on hand a day earlier, on Dec. 31, 2016, in its previous year-end report. Vincent DeVito, now an energy policy adviser at Interior, was SEAL PAC's treasurer until Zinke appointed him to his new position in May. More from Ben [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Nov. 23-Nov. 26. Our next [Afternoon Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Nov. 27. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

HELP IS ON THE WAY: Iowa Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) and [Joni Ernst](#) have sought out Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) for help in lifting [Ted Cruz](#)'s hold on USDA undersecretary nominee Bill Northey — and he's pledged to lend a hand, Pro Agriculture's Jenny Hopkinson reports. Grassley said he and Ernst "had a conversation with the leader about the importance of getting him approved ... because his position is so important." Cruz put Northey's nomination for undersecretary for farm services and conservation on hold in October after corn-belt lawmakers worked with the White House to secure commitments on the Renewable Fuel Standard, favoring corn producers over refiners. Cruz in turn has [demanded](#) the White House organize a meeting to discuss a solution to the RFS that would protect refiners from job losses, but such a meeting [has not been scheduled](#), Jenny [reports](#).

NAFTOGAZ HIRES 2 IN D.C.: Ukrainian state-owned oil-and-gas firm Naftogaz has hired Daniel Vajdich and Jonathan Gregory of Yorktown Solutions to represent it in Washington, according to documents filed with the Justice Department and reported by [POLITICO](#)

[Influence](#). Yorktown will work on "fully integrating the Ukrainian gas market with the energy market of the EU, supporting the implementation of the gas market reform in Ukraine and attracting foreign investments to the Ukrainian oil and gas market; [and] efficiently addressing threats posed by the Nord Stream 2 project," according to a contract filed with the Justice Department. The contract is worth \$37,000 and runs through Dec. 31.

SUNRISE PIPELINE BRIEFING SCHEDULE: The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals announced the briefing schedule today on a lawsuit from environmental and community groups that challenged FERC's decision to approve the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline project. Those groups have been ordered to file their arguments jointly by Jan. 16 while FERC has until March 19. Final briefs are due May 10. The project recently gave observers a bit of whiplash earlier this month when it was subject to an on-again, off-again [administrative stay](#).

And because it's FERC-related: The judges also ordered that everyone "limit the use of abbreviations, including acronyms."

READ IT: The Senate Finance Committee released the text of its tax overhaul [legislation](#) late on Monday. The Senate is expected to take up the bill after Congress' Thanksgiving break. Read the text [here](#).

POLAND SIGNS UP FOR U.S. LNG: PGNiG, a major Polish oil and gas company, has signed onto a five-year contract for liquefied natural gas from Centrica LNG, the Embassy of Poland announced in a [tweet](#) today. The move marks the first midterm deal for LNG deliveries from the United States for the company, "as part of a wider plan to cut its reliance on Russian supplies," Reuters reports. Read [more](#).

FOR THE WATCH: The Justice Department today charged Behzad Mesri, a part-time Iranian government hacker, with infiltrating HBO and trying to extort the company, as Congress weighs moving a bill to reimpose sanctions on the nation. Mesri is charged with orchestrating the "hack of the premium cable channel earlier this year, which led to a standoff over a demanded ransom payment and the leak of unaired episodes of HBO's biggest shows, including 'Game of Thrones,'" Pro Cybersecurity's Eric Geller [reports](#).

NUCLEAR COOLING CASE MOVES AHEAD: A federal judge refused Florida Power & Light Co.'s request to dismiss a lawsuit filed by environmental groups over the operation of its nuclear plant in Florida's Miami-Dade County. "Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Friends of Everglades and Tropical Audubon Society earlier this year filed a lawsuit charging that FPL's operation of 5,900 acres of cooling canals violated the federal Clean Water Act. The lawsuit was filed in U. S. District Court in Miami," POLITICO Florida's Bruce Ritchie [reports](#). "The groups are challenging a state-approved plan to withdraw hyper-saline water seeping from the cooling canals into a shallow aquifer and pump it deeper underground to reduce the threat to water supplies."

EPA AWARDS NORTH DAKOTA WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: EPA said today it awarded \$14.7 million to the North Dakota Department of Health for water infrastructure projects. The money, which comes from the agency's Clean Water and Drinking Water state revolving loan, will go toward "new and upgraded wastewater and drinking water plants," the agency said. EPA Regional Administrator Doug Benevento said the funds "will ensure that the state and its communities are providing clean and safe water to all North Dakotans."

WINTER CLEANING: EPA said today it's clearing out its backlog of FOIA requests lingering from previous administrations. As of early October, the agency had 652 open FOIA requests that were submitted in prior years. EPA says it is now "on track to provide responses to over 70 percent of those requests by the end of the calendar year." Steven Fine, EPA's acting chief information officer, said there are open requests from as far back as 2008. "EPA staff are finding ways to overcome a number of obstacles to complete the majority of the old requests by the end of December," Fine said.

QUICK HITS:

- Russian nuclear facility denies it is source of high radioactivity levels, [The Guardian](#).
- Trucking industry split over EPA move to ease emissions rules, [Trucks.com](#).
- Warming to make thunderstorms larger and more frequent, [Associated Press](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- [Conyers scandal](#) rocks House Democrats
- Leading [Trump Census pick](#) causes alarm
- Treasury [imposes new sanctions](#) aimed at North Korea

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

FEC probes discrepancies at former Zinke PAC [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/21/2017 02:14 PM EDT

The FEC is asking a leadership PAC previously affiliated with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to provide more details about its direct mail spending and account for a \$200,000 discrepancy in its account, among other issues in its most recent campaign finance report.

SEAL PAC, which Zinke launched after winning his first congressional race in 2014, has until Dec. 26 to address the issues identified by the FEC, according to a [request sent Monday](#). The FEC also asks about incomplete information related to some donors, excess contributions and potentially misclassified spending, some of which occurred after Zinke's affiliation with the leadership PAC ended when he joined President Donald Trump's Cabinet in March.

When Zinke was in Congress, SEAL PAC raised most of its money from small-dollar donors and funneled it back to a handful of [political operatives](#) who have drawn criticism from other GOP candidates. That approach made it unusual among leadership PACs, which typically rely on large contributions and lawmakers use to spread donations among allied politicians.

In Monday's letter, the FEC asked SEAL PAC to further explain the money it spent on direct mail and related activities, which are responsible for the vast majority of the PAC's \$1 million in operating expenses so far this year. Most of the money was spent after Zinke left, but the

committee relied on the same consultants it used in previous years.

The FEC also wants SEAL PAC to explain how its bank account nearly doubled in size on New Year's Day.

According to SEAL PAC's report covering the first six months of this year, it had [\\$408,882](#) in the bank on Jan. 1. But it reported having just [\\$215,633](#) cash on hand a day earlier, on Dec. 31, 2016, in its previous year-end report.

Vincent DeVito, who now works at Interior advising Zinke on energy policy, was SEAL PAC's treasurer until Zinke appointed him to his new position in May. DeVito signed the 2016 campaign finance report, which was updated several times, most recently on April 27.

SEAL PAC's current treasurer Barbara Lazaris did not respond to a call for comment. Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the department could not answer campaign-related questions.

The FEC also asked SEAL PAC to provide more information on contributions from two individuals who gave more than the \$5,000 contribution limit per election cycle. Most of those donations came in after Zinke had left.

The PAC also reported giving \$10,000 each to Congressional campaigns run by Rep. [Jim Banks](#) (R-Ind.) and Rep. [Scott W. Taylor](#) (R-Va.), double the legal limit. Both contributions were reported June 29. "Although the Commission may take further legal action regarding the excessive contribution(s), your prompt action in obtaining a refund and/or redesignating the contribution(s) will be taken into consideration," the FEC wrote.

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Cruz: Northey is going nowhere until Trump brokers RFS summit [Back](#)

By Megan Cassella and Eric Wolff | 10/31/2017 02:04 PM EDT

Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) said Tuesday he intends to keep holding up Bill Northey's nomination for a USDA undersecretary post until the Trump administration works with him on "a solution" to the Renewable Fuel Standard that protects refiners from "devastating job losses."

The Texas Republican, interviewed at a Chamber of Commerce event on the future of NAFTA, said that as the leader of a group of nine senators "who are deeply concerned about the potential job loss among refiners," he won't let Northey's nomination advance to the floor until he gets an opportunity to meet with the administration.

In effect, Cruz affirmed that Northey's confirmation as undersecretary for farm production and conservation depends on the administration brokering a compromise after a group of corn-belt senators used political muscle to get EPA to make concessions on the RFS that favored corn producers over refiners. That effort was led by [Chuck Grassley](#) and saw [Joni Ernst](#) and [Deb Fischer](#) withhold support for EPA nominees until their concerns were addressed.

"We are working to sit down with the administration and discuss a solution to the RFS that addresses the concerns of the agriculture community, but also avoids devastating job losses among refiners," Cruz said.

Cruz and the eight senators joining him [wrote](#) to President Donald Trump on Oct. 25 asking for a meeting within three weeks, but they made no mention of the effort to use Northey as leverage.

Grassley told reporters on Tuesday morning that he thought a meeting with Trump on the RFS would be "a waste of time" because the president had already intervened several times to bolster the program.

But he suggested he would be open to a meeting. "I'd be happy to discuss Secretary Northey's outstanding qualifications to be a top USDA official with any of my colleagues," Grassley said in a statement to POLITICO, referring to Northey's Iowa title, where he is a three-term agriculture secretary. "Bill Northey's abilities and record earned him a unanimous, bipartisan vote from the Senate Agriculture Committee."

Grassley, Ernst and other corn-belt senators made their power play in response to a notice EPA sent in late September that sought input on whether to reduce the biomass-based biodiesel requirement for 2018 — which had already been set under the RFS — and to lower the volume planned for 2019.

The corn-belt contingent pressured Trump for a meeting with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, and got their wish — and then some.

Following that meeting, held on Oct. 17, Pruitt committed to [reverse the proposed cuts](#) to biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol volumes in the RFS. But EPA also pulled back on plans to allow biofuel credits for exported biofuel, a move that would likely have lowered market prices for biofuel credits.

EPA uses biofuel credits, called Renewable Identification Numbers, or RINs, to ensure that refiners are blending the required amounts of biofuel into the nation's fuel supply. A small group of independent refiners have long complained that when RINs become expensive it hurts their bottom line. The issue has divided the oil industry for the last year, and since Pruitt made his promises to the Midwestern senators, RIN prices jumped higher.

Cruz said the situation won't fly. "The current RFS regime has created RINs, artificial licenses that have been driven up in cost by speculators to a level that is punitive and unsustainable," he said. "And that has to change."

An EPA spokesperson deferred to the White House when questioned about Cruz's latest comments. A White House spokesperson said she had nothing to report at this time.

Ernst, who pointed a finger at the oil industry after Cruz and his cohort wrote to the White House, thinks it's up to the administration to figure out how it wants to address the matter.

"Sen. Ernst believes that meeting is up to the White House to schedule, so we'll see if and when the time comes," spokeswoman Brook Hougeseu told POLITICO. "Her hope is that Sen. Cruz stops unnecessarily blocking Bill Northey over this situation. He is eminently qualified for the position and has nothing to do with the issue Senator Cruz is raising. His effort is

misplaced."

Cruz, when asked Tuesday whether the White House had responded to his request for a meeting, said: "We're working to set up that discussion."

Grassley's spokesman told POLITICO via email on Tuesday afternoon that no one has reached out to Grassley to set up a meeting.

The pressure is on to resolve these issues. The Cruz-led group demanded a meeting within three weeks because a rule setting biofuel blending requirements must be finalized by Nov. 30. That leaves EPA little time to make adjustments if it is to meet the deadline, something Pruitt has promised on numerous occasions he will do.

John Lauinger contributed to this report.

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White House ignores Cruz request for biofuels meeting [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/15/2017 09:55 AM EDT

The White House appears to have spurned a request from Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and eight other senators to set up a meeting with seven Midwestern senators to discuss the Renewable Fuel Standard.

"We won't have such a meeting," Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) told reporters today. "The White House would have to be interested in such a meeting. I've not heard from the White House."

Cruz has been blocking Iowan Bill Northey from becoming an undersecretary at the Department of Agriculture in an effort to force corn-state senators to discuss changes to the program. Last month he led a [letter](#) to President Donald Trump asking for a meeting within three weeks. That period ends today. Cruz has [said](#) he would lift the hold when he gets a meeting.

The White House did not respond to questions about setting up a meeting, nor did Cruz's office. Cruz sent a letter on Tuesday to Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds explaining his desire to come to a compromise on the RFS to protect "liquid fuels."

Trump has consistently backed the RFS and the Midwestern senators in policy disputes, rejecting repeated efforts to change the program by a small group of refiners and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

WHAT'S NEXT: The final rule setting RFS requirements for 2018 and 2019 is due by Nov. 30.

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Grassley: McConnell will help lift hold on Northey [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 11/21/2017 10:45 AM EDT

Iowa's two GOP senators have appealed to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) for help in lifting Sen. [Ted Cruz](#)'s hold on USDA undersecretary nominee Bill Northey — and the Senate's top Republican has pledged to lend a hand.

Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) and [Joni Ernst](#) "had a conversation with the leader about the importance of getting him approved ... because his position is so important," Grassley told reporters this morning. Northey, the Iowa agriculture secretary, is the nominee for undersecretary for farm services and conservation.

"When it comes to the farm bill, we need him in place — and from that standpoint, the leader said he would help to move it along," Grassley added.

Cruz put a hold on Northey's nomination in October after Grassley, Ernst and other corn-belt lawmakers worked with the White House to secure commitments from EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on the Renewable Fuel Standard that favored corn producers over refiners. The Texas Republican has [demanded](#) the White House organize a meeting to discuss a solution to the RFS that would protect refiners from job losses, but [a meeting has not been scheduled](#).

Grassley and Ernst have attempted to negotiate with Cruz, but it "hasn't done much good," Grassley told reporters.

Grassley said it was not clear what McConnell will do to get Cruz to yield, but he added that he and Ernst stressed that it should be done no later than early December. Leaders of the agriculture committees have said they plan to release a draft of the farm bill early next year.

To view online [click here](#).

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Appeals court denies stay on Atlantic Sunrise pipeline construction [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/08/2017 06:22 PM EDT

A federal court panel today denied a request from community and environmental groups to halt construction of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline while those organizations challenge FERC's approval of the project.

"Petitioners have not satisfied the stringent requirements for a stay pending court review," a three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals said in the [order](#).

The panel [instituted](#) an administrative stay on Monday while it weighed whether to grant the full stay, which would've been in place until the lawsuit, *Allegheny Defense Project, et al v. FERC*, 17-1098, was resolved.

WHAT'S NEXT: The court still needs to establish the briefing schedule for the lawsuit and has not decided when or whether to hold oral arguments.

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Iranian charged in HBO hack as Congress weighs nuclear pact [Back](#)

By Eric Geller | 11/21/2017 11:50 AM EDT

The Justice Department on Tuesday charged a part-time Iranian government hacker with infiltrating HBO and trying to extort the company, a move that comes amid allegations the charges were rushed to bolster President Donald Trump's case against Tehran.

The man, Behzad Mesri, is charged with orchestrating the high-profile hack of the premium cable channel earlier this year, which led to a standoff over a demanded ransom payment and the leak of unaired episodes of HBO's biggest shows, including "Game of Thrones."

Speaking at a press conference, Joon Kim, the acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, called Mesri "an experienced and sophisticated hacker who has been wreaking havoc on computer systems around the world for some time."

The charges are the latest in a string of geopolitically loaded indictments of hackers linked to foreign governments including China, Iran and Russia, a once unprecedented move that has become increasingly common in recent years.

But Tuesday's indictment comes just days after The Washington Post [reported](#) that Trump administration officials were pressuring DOJ prosecutors to announce more cases against Iranian hackers, giving it added diplomatic significance.

According to prosecutors, Mesri used stolen login credentials to access HBO's network, stole material including TV episodes and demanded the company pay \$6 million in the digital currency bitcoin.

A grand jury in the Southern District of New York charged Mesri with seven counts, including wire fraud, unauthorized access to a protected computer and threatening to damage a protected computer.

In addition to the HBO infiltration, Mesri also allegedly conducted cyberattacks on behalf of the Iranian military, targeting "military systems, nuclear software systems and Israeli infrastructure."

Mesri, Kim said, "applied those skills that he learned against HBO for personal profit."

Additionally, prosecutors say Mesri defaced websites in the U.S. and other countries as part of an Iranian criminal hacking group, Turk Black Hat Security.

According to the Post's report, DOJ officials were pressured to announce more cases against

these types of Iranian hackers, a move some found suspect after the president in October [refused](#) to certify Tehran's compliance with the deal the country struck in 2015 with the United States and five other world powers to restrain its nuclear program in exchange for reduced economic sanctions.

Trump's move gave Congress 60 days to consider moving a bill to reimpose sanctions on Iran, which would violate the agreement.

Cyber experts are [concerned](#) Iran will refocus its hacker army on the U.S. if the Trump administration and Congress abandon the deal.

Trump officials have "caused internal alarm" with their efforts to make Iranian hacking cases public, according to the Post story. Several sources told the publication that "a series of criminal cases could increase pressure on lawmakers" to reimpose sanctions on Tehran.

Observers quickly [noted](#) the indictment was thin on evidence and included the unredacted name of the grand jury foreperson, [suggesting](#) the document had been rushed. "Not a serious criminal indictment but a badly executed press release," [tweeted](#) independent national security journalist Marcy Wheeler.

But Kim vowed Tuesday's charges "will not be the last time we charge cyber offenses against hackers with ties to the Iranian government."

According to the indictment unsealed on Tuesday, Mesri stole multiple HBO employee user accounts and repeatedly accessed the company's servers to steal unaired episodes of shows like "Ballers," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and "The Deuce." He also stole scripts for the hit series "Game of Thrones," contact information for HBO series' cast and crew, corporate financial documents and login credentials for HBO's social media accounts.

In late July, Mesri began contacting HBO employees to inform them of his theft and demand ransom payment in exchange for not releasing the data. He said he had taken a huge trove of data — approximately 1.5 terabytes — and provided proof of his claim.

"HBO was on[e] of our difficult targets to deal with but we succeeded," he wrote in one July 23 email, according to the indictment.

Mesri initially demanded HBO pay him \$5.5 million in the hard-to-trace digital currency bitcoin, but he later upped his demand to \$6 million. He also added a new threat: If HBO didn't pay up, he would destroy data on the company's networks.

It's unknown if HBO paid its hackers any money, but the stolen HBO files began leaking on July 30.

The United States has previously charged other nations' hackers in similar cases.

In March, DOJ charged four men, including two Russian intelligence officers, for [hacking Yahoo](#) and stealing information on 500 million users. During the Obama administration, the U.S. charged five [Chinese military officers](#) for hacking American corporations to steal trade secrets and seven [Iranian men](#) for crippling bank websites with barrages of traffic, as well as infiltrating an upstate New York dam.

The U.S. also blamed North Korea for a bruising hack on movie studio Sony Pictures — the

first in a string of headline-grabbing hacks targeting entertainment firms — but chose to impose sanctions on the country instead of charging specific hackers.

Indicting foreign government hackers is often viewed more as a tool of deterrence and diplomacy than an attempt to bring the digital assailants to justice, since their governments will never extradite them to face charges.

Instead, the U.S. uses the charges as part of its burgeoning "name-and-shame" strategy of charging foreign nationals, hoping the ensuing travel and financial restrictions will deter others from following in their footsteps.

"Because Mesri is in Iran, we are unfortunately unable to arrest him today," Kim conceded on Tuesday. "But Mesri should know, and all other cyber criminals and would-be cyber criminals should know, that they are not safe behind the anonymity of their computer screens even if they are a world away."

He added: "In the game of thrones, 'Winter is Coming' is the motto of the House of Stark. ... Well today, winter has come for Behzad Mesri."

To view online [click here](#).

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Conyers scandal rocks House Democrats [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan and Heather Caygle | 11/21/2017 11:01 AM EDT

House Democrats found themselves plunged into crisis on Tuesday, after reports surfaced that Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) secretly settled a sexual harassment claim with a staffer in 2015, with senior lawmakers calling for an immediate ethics investigation.

Conyers acknowledged the settlement, first reported by BuzzFeed, but forcefully denied he ever sexually harassed his former aide.

"I expressly and vehemently denied the allegations made against me, and continue to do so," he said in [a statement](#). "My office resolved the allegations — with an express denial of liability — in order to save all involved from the rigors of protracted litigation."

Known as the "dean of the House," Conyers is the longest-serving current House member and one of the most prominent African-American lawmakers in Congress.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi called for an ethics probe into the allegations, saying there must be "zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination, bullying or abuse." Pelosi's office had previously said the California Democrat was unaware of the 2015 settlement.

"As members of Congress, we each have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of the House of Representatives and to ensure a climate of dignity and respect," Pelosi said in a statement. "As I have said before, any credible allegation of sexual harassment must be investigated by the Ethics Committee."

Reps. Jerry Nadler of New York and Zoe Lofgren of California, the two most senior Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee behind Conyers, also endorsed an ethics probe.

"The allegations against Ranking Member Conyers are extremely serious and deeply troubling. Obviously, these allegations must be investigated promptly by the Ethics Committee," Nadler said in a statement.

"The Committee on Ethics should take up this matter immediately with a goal of promptly assessing the validity of the news account," Lofgren said. "This reported behavior cannot be tolerated in the House of Representatives or anywhere else."

Conyers said in his statement that he would fully cooperate with an investigation if the House launches one.

Buzzfeed reported on Monday night that Conyers "repeatedly made sexual advances to female staff that included requests for sexual favors, contacting and transporting other women with whom they believed Conyers was having affairs, caressing their hands sexually, and rubbing their legs and backs in public."

Both Nadler and Lofgren have previously expressed interest in [replacing Conyers atop the panel](#). Lofgren is a former Ethics Committee chairwoman and an ally of Pelosi. She's also a member of the House Administration Committee, which oversees sexual harassment issues in Congress.

The Michigan Democrat, first elected to Congress in 1964, reportedly "used congressional resources to fly in women they believed he was having affairs with," according to documents obtained by BuzzFeed. Another Conyers aide "said she was tasked with driving women to and from Conyers' apartment and hotel rooms."

Conyers allegedly paid \$27,000 in public funds to a female employee who had filed a claim against him with the secretive Office of Compliance in 2014. The documents BuzzFeed obtained have not been independently confirmed.

"The resolution was not for millions of dollars, but rather for an amount that equated to a reasonable severance payment," Conyers noted.

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), who has been leading calls for reforming Capitol Hill's sexual harassment policies, said Capitol Hill investigators should also look into whether Conyers misused congressional funds to pay for the settlement "under the guise of a severance payment."

"If this is true, the amount of taxpayer money used to settle these cases is even higher than the number that's been provided by the Office of Compliance," Speier said.

A prominent Michigan Democrat, Rep. Debbie Dingell, also called for an Ethics Committee investigation. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) called the news "deeply disturbing," but didn't directly address whether Conyers should face an ethics probe.

Other top Democrats, including Congressional Black Caucus members, declined to comment. The CBC is expected to hold a conference call on the Conyers report Tuesday afternoon.

In a statement released on Tuesday morning, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) addressed the

controversy without naming Conyers.

"This report is extremely troubling," Ryan said. "Last month, I directed the Committee on House Administration to conduct a full review of all policies and procedures related to workplace harassment and discrimination. A Committee hearing last week examining this issue led to a new policy of mandatory training for all members and staff. Additional reforms to the system are under consideration as the committee continues its review."

The Conyers case is especially sensitive for Democrats given his age — 88 — seniority, and race. Conyers is the ranking member on the Judiciary Committee. He is also one of the co-founders of the CBC, a key bloc of votes within the House Democratic Caucus. Pelosi and other Democrats have been especially cautious in dealing with ethics and legal problems involving CBC members.

"This is a huge, huge problem for us," said an aide to one longtime Democrat. "I don't know how Pelosi is going to handle this."

So far, no Democrats have called for Conyers to step aside, but that could change given the explosive nature of the allegations against Conyers, the huge controversy surrounding sexual harassment in recent months, and the fact that he has faced ethics problems in the past.

In 2016, Conyers came under investigation by the Office of Congressional Ethics for paying his former chief of staff, Cynthia Martin, for six months after she pleaded guilty to receiving stolen property, a misdemeanor. Conyers refused to cooperate with the OCE probe.

In 2009, Conyers' wife Monica — then president of the Detroit City Council — pleaded guilty to accepting bribes and was sentenced to 37 months in prison.

And in 2006, Conyers came under investigation by the Ethics Committee for allegedly using his staff for personal errands, including babysitting his children. No formal action was ever taken against him by the panel.

Kyle Cheney contributed to this report.

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Leading Trump Census pick causes alarm [Back](#)

By Danny Vinik and Andrew Restuccia | 11/21/2017 05:06 AM EDT

The Trump administration is leaning toward naming Thomas Brunell, a Texas professor with no government experience, to the top operational job at the U.S. Census Bureau, according to two people who have been briefed on the bureau's plans.

Brunell, a political science professor, has testified more than half a dozen times on behalf of Republican efforts to redraw congressional districts, and is the author of a 2008 book titled "Redistricting and Representation: Why Competitive Elections Are Bad for America."

The choice would mark the administration's first major effort to shape the 2020 census, the nationwide count that determines which states lose and gain electoral votes and seats in the House of Representatives.

The fate of the census under President Donald Trump [has been closely watched](#) by voting-rights advocates worried that the administration — which has already made unsupported claims about voter fraud — might nudge it in directions that over- or undercount some Americans. Subtle bureaucratic choices in the wording and administration of the census can have huge consequences for who is counted, and how it shifts American voting districts.

The pick would break with the long-standing precedent of choosing a nonpolitical government official as deputy director of the U.S. Census Bureau. The job has typically been held by a career civil servant with a background in statistics. It does not require Senate confirmation, so Congress would have no power to block the hire.

"If true, it signals an effort by the administration to politicize the census," said Terri Ann Lowenthal, former co-director of the Census Project, an organization that tracks the census. "It's very troubling."

Brunell was under consideration over the summer for the Senate-confirmable job of census director, but the administration declined to nominate him after receiving pushback from Capitol Hill, according to two people who track the census closely.

The White House and Census Bureau both referred comments to the Commerce Department, which oversees the bureau. The Commerce Department declined to comment. Brunell, reached by phone, declined to comment.

The hiring could be announced as soon as this week, though Trump administration personnel decisions often change at the last minute. One administration official said the situation remains "fluid."

As deputy director of the Census Bureau, Brunell would become the highest-ranking permanent official at the agency. Though the deputy director technically reports to the census director, that slot is temporarily being filled by a career civil servant, since former director John Thompson [resigned](#) at the end of June. There is currently no nominee for a permanent director.

"This is worse than making him director," said a former high-ranking Commerce Department official. "There still is going to be hell to pay on the optics. The Democrats and civil rights community will go nuts."

Though it may seem like a dry bureaucratic task, the \$16 billion decennial census has become the focus of hotly contested political arguments in a moment when the question of who counts as an American has risen to the top of the national debate.

The census attempts to count every person who lives within the U.S. borders, and Republicans have long sought to add a question asking respondents about their immigration status, including whether they are U.S. citizens. Democrats and many civil rights groups worry that adding a citizenship question would cause a huge drop in minority response rates, with recipients concerned about what the government would do with the information.

In January, a leaked draft of an executive order directed the Census Bureau to add such a question to the "long form" census, known as the American Community Survey, which is a longer, more detailed look at a subset of people living in the U.S. According to the two people who track the census closely, the administration is currently mulling a similar executive order.

So far, fears that the administration will complicate the census with a citizenship question have not panned out. Trump has not yet issued the order, and two senior administration officials said the issue is not yet being discussed at a high level in the West Wing. Wilbur Ross, the commerce secretary — who once worked as a census enumerator himself — has previously argued that adding questions to the decennial would reduce response rates.

But rumors about the hiring of Brunell have reignited those concerns. The deputy director is effectively the chief operating officer and chief financial officer at the Census Bureau, making Brunell a critical person as the agency gears up for the 2020 census. The position has been filled by a temporary career civil servant since former deputy director Nancy Potok left in early January to accept an Obama administration appointment as the country's chief statistician.

Even a seasoned census hand would be stepping into a difficult job as deputy director now. For the past year, advocates and statistical experts have been warning that the missing top management at the agency and its underfunding by Congress could lead to an inaccurate count in 2020. The bureau is currently conducting its test run for the 2020 census, but it had to cancel components of the test due to limited funding. The agency has also [delayed](#) its regular economic census by six months due to funding shortages.

Census-watchers were also upset at the Trump administration's 2018 budget request for the Census Bureau, which was just 7 percent above its 2017 level. The bureau typically requires — and receives — a huge bump in funding as the decennial approaches, since it must hire tens of thousands of people and open dozens of field offices nationwide. In a rare move, the Trump administration publicly admitted that the bureau's 2018 budget was too low when Ross asked Congress in October for an additional \$187 million, above the administration's \$1.5 billion request.

Brunell's background makes him an unusual choice for the deputy director role. Based on his published [curriculum vitae](#), he appears to have little experience in federal statistics or at managing a big organization, both characteristics that census-watchers believe are vital for the job. In comparison, Potok, his predecessor, spent most of her career at the Census Bureau.

"It's quite a difference going from an academic setting to the Census Bureau," said a person who has worked with Brunell, who asked for anonymity to speak freely about him. "I don't think he's done the administrative work that would be needed to be at a high level in a large organization like the Census Bureau."

Brunell received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California Irvine in 1997 and worked briefly on Capitol Hill as a fellow on a House subcommittee that oversees the census. Since 2005, he has worked at the University of Texas at Dallas, where his research and writing has focused on redistricting and voting rights cases. He has frequently advised states on redrawing their congressional maps. In his 2008 book, "Redistricting and Representation," he argued that partisan districts packed with like-minded voters actually lead to better representation than ones more evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, because fewer voters in partisan districts cast a vote for a losing candidate. He has also argued that

ideologically packed districts should be called "fair districts" and admits that his stance on competitive elections makes him something of an outlier among political scientists, who largely support competitive elections.

Brunell, a registered Republican, has criticized partisan gerrymandering in his work. But the GOP has repeatedly used his research in redistricting efforts, and he appeared as an expert witness to defend GOP-led states in lawsuits over potential gerrymandering. After the 2010 census, he testified or wrote a report in support of GOP redistricting efforts in Alabama, South Dakota, South Carolina and New Mexico.

In North Carolina, where GOP leaders drew congressional districts that were ultimately overturned by the Supreme Court for unfairly discriminating against black North Carolinians, he wrote a report on behalf of the state analyzing the extent of racially polarized voting in 51 North Carolina districts. In Ohio, he wrote a report in opposition to expanded early voting, which many political scientists believe favors Democrats, arguing that it reduces overall turnout because it "takes away from Election Day as a civic event."

Brunell's research has also tackled the census itself. In the early 2000s, he wrote multiple papers on the political controversy surrounding the 2000 census, which included new statistical adjustments intended to more accurately count minorities and other groups that are relatively less likely to respond to the census. Republicans argued that the new techniques were a veiled effort to boost the Democrats' political fortunes; Brunell was sharply critical of them as well, arguing that "a census with an adjustment ultimately leads to a less accurate headcount simply because the post-census adjustment becomes a crutch."

If Brunell is installed in a top Census Bureau job, "there are tons of little things he could be doing to influence what the final count looks like," said the former high-ranking Commerce official. "The ripple effect on reapportionment would be astounding."

Many of those decisions would be less visible, or even invisible, to the public. Brunell, for instance, would oversee the agency's advertising budget, which is essential to persuading groups like undocumented immigrants to respond to the decennial. The agency is set to spend more than \$400 million over the next few years on those advertisements, and decisions about how and where to spend those dollars will be key to getting an accurate count.

Brunell's background also indicates that the White House is heavily focused on the political outcomes of a survey that is primarily supposed to gather objective data about the country. Since 1790, the decennial and the long-form census, along with other products produced by the agency, have been a primary source of rich and objective data for use by researchers. Beyond its impact on elections, the decennial census directs the destination of hundreds of billions of dollars of federal funds each year. Brunell's résumé, however, does not indicate that he has any expertise or experience with those elements of the agency's mission.

The selection of an outsider represents something of an unprecedented break with past leadership of the bureau. Thompson, the previous director, was nominated by President Barack Obama but had previously spent 27 years working as a career civil servant at the agency. Thompson's predecessor, Robert Groves, was also an Obama appointee. He had worked as a civil servant at the bureau in the 1990s.

"It is imperative that the Census Bureau's leadership be viewed by the public and by lawmakers as completely nonpartisan," said Lowenthal. "If either the director or the deputy

director bring partisan baggage to their position, public confidence in the integrity of the census could plummet. So could congressional confidence. And it is Congress that must accept the apportionment results. All this stuff worries me."

To view online [click here](#).

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Treasury imposes new sanctions aimed at North Korea [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 11/21/2017 02:13 PM EDT

The Treasury Department on Tuesday imposed new sanctions targeting North Korea, stepping up pressure on the regime to abandon its nuclear development program.

The sanctions come a day after the Trump administration designated North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism, adding the hermit state to a list that includes Iran, Sudan and Syria. North Korea was previously added to the list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1988 and removed from it in 2008 amid nuclear negotiations spearheaded by former President George W. Bush.

The new sanctions imposed by Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control include one Chinese individual, 13 entities and 20 boats. The sanctions include three Chinese companies that Treasury said have exported about \$650 million worth of goods to North Korea and \$100 million from the country. These goods have included notebook computers, anthracite coal, iron, lead and other products, Treasury said.

"These designations include companies that have engaged in trade with North Korea cumulatively worth hundreds of millions of dollars," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. "We are also sanctioning the shipping and transportation companies, and their vessels, that facilitate North Korea's trade and its deceptive maneuvers."

Treasury also sanctioned Sun Sidong, a Chinese national, and his company Dandong Dongyuan Industrial Co.

Sun and Dongyuan were responsible for exporting more than \$28 million worth of goods to North Korea over several years, including items associated with nuclear reactors, Treasury said. Dongyuan has also been associated with front companies for North Korean organizations involved in developing weapons of mass destruction, Treasury said.

In September, North Korea conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test, detonating a warhead seven times larger than the atomic bomb the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. In July, North Korea appeared to successfully test its first intercontinental ballistic missiles. It remains unclear whether the regime has successfully miniaturized a warhead small enough to fit atop one of its ballistic missiles.

But the developments indicate that North Korea in 2018 may be able to threaten the continental United States with a nuclear weapon, according to a Nov. 6 report by the Congressional Research Service. Further, the U.S. may be running out of time for a preemptive strike on North Korea without the threat of nuclear retaliation, CRS said.

In September, Treasury imposed sanctions on eight North Korean banks and 26 individuals. That followed executive orders Trump signed to target people with ties to North Korea. Also in September, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved sanctions on North Korea.

Even excluding nuclear weapons, war with North Korea would have grave consequences. Within the first hours of military action, North Korean artillery in the demilitarized zone could kill tens of thousands in South Korea, CRS said. There are 28,500 U.S. troops and their families currently stationed in South Korea.

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Date: Monday, August 14, 2017 4:11:29 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 08/14/2017 04:08 PM EDT

SUIT SHOPPING: The Sierra Club sued the Energy Department today, in hopes of pulling back the curtain on agency communications between top officials working on an electric grid study and any outside groups. [The lawsuit](#) filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California would require the agency to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request the Sierra Club filed on May 1. The deadline to comply with that FOIA passed on May 30. Sierra's FOIA request specifically demands communications that Energy Secretary Rick Perry, DOE Chief of Staff Brian McCormack and senior adviser Travis Fisher may have had with groups such as the Edison Electric Institute, the Institute for Energy Research or utility representatives. More from Darius Dixon [here](#).

— **Groups hone in on TSCA:** Green groups have filed a set of lawsuits against EPA, challenging chemical safety rules finalized by the administration last month. The suits, filed Aug. 11 by [Earthjustice](#) in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, and by [Environmental Defense Fund](#) in the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals in New York, contest the two "framework rules" for implementing last year's bipartisan overhaul of the Toxic Substances Control Act, Annie Snider [reports](#). The rules control how the agency will evaluate tens of thousands of chemicals that are already on the market in the U.S.

— **The Natural Resources Defense Council [said today](#)** that it, along with the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments and Cape Fear River Watch, also sued the Trump administration over its toxic chemical regulations.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

EPA EYEING UPDATE FOR POWER PLANT DISCHARGE RULE: EPA will potentially revamp its 2015 power plant discharges rule, according to a letter sent by the agency's head, Scott Pruitt, to the U.S. Small Business Administration on Friday and obtained by POLITICO today. [The letter](#) says the agency will conduct a new rulemaking to "potentially revise" portions of a 2015 regulation limiting toxic discharges from coal-fired power plants. The 2015 rule in question set new technology-based limits on heavy metals that power plants discharge into waterways. The previous limits had not been updated in more than 30 years. The portions of the rule Pruitt said could be revised are the most contentious and expensive ones governing how coal waste is managed by power plants, Annie [reports](#).

IMMELT STAYS PUT: General Electric Chairman Jeff Immelt says he is not leaving President Donald Trump's manufacturing committee, following news today that the CEO of Merck did just that in protest of the White House's response to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., POLITICO's Madeline Conway reports. A GE spokesperson said in a statement that the company "has no tolerance for hate, bigotry or racism, and we strongly condemn the violent extremism in Charlottesville over the weekend," but added that "it is

important for GE to participate in the discussion on how to drive growth and productivity in the U.S." Therefore, the spokesperson said, Immelt "will remain on the Presidential Committee on American Manufacturing while he is the Chairman of GE." More [here](#).

LISTEN IN: FERC is out with a podcast interview today with new Chairman Neil Chatterjee. In it, Chatterjee said his No. 1 priority is going through the agency's backlog and noted that he believes "baseload power should be recognized as an essential part of the fuel mix." He went on to say generation including existing coal and nuclear "need[s] to be properly compensated to recognize the value they provide to the system." Chatterjee, a Kentucky native, said he sees "how important a contribution coal makes to an affordable and reliable electric system." Listen [here](#).

UNDER PRESSURE: Vanguard Group said today it "has urged companies to disclose how climate change could affect their business and asset valuations," Reuters reports. Vanguard, which manages about \$4 trillion, faced pressure from investors on the issue. [Reuters writes](#): "Vanguard, the biggest U.S. mutual fund firm by assets, had not supported climate activists on similar measures. But Glenn Booraem, Vanguard's investment stewardship officer, said in a telephone interview on Monday the issue as well as shareholder proposals have evolved. 'Our support for these proposals is not a matter of ideology, it's a matter of economics,' he said. 'To the extent there are significant risks to a company's long-term value proposition, we want to make sure there is long-term disclosure of those risks to the market.'"

A LONG SEPTEMBER: No one is looking forward to the month of September in the Trump White House. POLITICO's Josh Dawsey reports senior officials have described the month as "brutal," "bad" or "really tough" as a confluence of complicated issues — like the debt ceiling, the 2018 federal budget, tax reform and infrastructure spending — stares back at them. But they also admit the month is crucial for righting the presidency's course. Aides hope to have a better blueprint for how the president wants to proceed on such issues after a series of meetings in New York this week. More [here](#).

SPACE JAM: "A SpaceX capsule rocketed to the International Space Station on Monday, carrying tons of science research, plus ice cream," the Associated Press reports. "... It was the 14th successful booster landing for SpaceX and the sixth on the giant X at the company's touchdown spot at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, just a few miles from its NASA-leased pad at Kennedy Space Center. ... Experiments make up most of the 6,400 pounds of cargo, which should reach the orbiting lab Wednesday. That includes 20 mice that will return alive inside the SpaceX Dragon capsule in about a month. The Dragon is also doubling as an ice cream truck this time. There was extra freezer space, so NASA packed little cups of vanilla, chocolate and birthday cake ice cream, as well as ice cream candy bars." Read it [here](#).

OAK RIDGE MAKES TRANSURANIC WASTE SHIPMENT: Tennessee's Oak Ridge's Transuranic Waste Processing Center made its first transuranic waste shipment since 2012, the Energy Department said today. The waste, which was moved for permanent disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M., "consists of materials and debris that are contaminated with elements that have a higher atomic mass and listed after uranium on the periodic table," [DOE announced](#). "The majority of Oak Ridge's inventory originated from previous research and isotope production missions at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory."

QUICK HITS:

— Shell and Exxon face censure over claim gas was 'cleanest fossil fuel,' [The Guardian](#).

— States are using social cost of carbon in energy decisions, despite Trump's views, [InsideClimate News](#).

— Where pipelines and coal mines intersect: under Hare Krishna shrines, [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#).

— What it's like to ride a 6,000-ton icebreaker through Arctic waters, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Trump declares 'racism is evil' [amid pressure over Charlottesville](#)

— Obama team was [warned in 2014](#) about Russian interference

— The GOP rebel threatening to [snag Sessions' Senate seat](#)

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Sierra Club sues DOE for communications on grid study [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/14/2017 01:26 PM EDT

The Sierra Club sued the Energy Department today to force the agency to divulge communications between top officials working on a contentious electric grid study and any outside groups.

The [lawsuit](#) filed in the Northern District of U.S. District Court of California would require the agency to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request the Sierra Club filed on May 1. The deadline to comply with that FOIA passed on May 30.

Sierra's FOIA request specifically demands communications that Energy Secretary Rick Perry, DOE Chief of Staff Brian McCormack, and senior adviser Travis Fisher may have had with groups such as the Edison Electric Institute, Institute for Energy Research or utility representatives.

The lawsuit says the Sierra Club had at least four email exchanges with the agency about the requested communications after the FOIA deadline passed, and EPA failed to meet subsequent goals to comply with the FOIA request by mid-July and early August.

"Given DOE's demonstrated pattern of failing to produce documents by the dates it has communicated to the FOIA requester, Sierra Club is far from certain that any documents, much less a comprehensive response to our request, will be provided in late August," Sierra Club attorneys write.

WHAT'S NEXT: Sierra Club has asked the court to direct DOE to produce the communications "immediately" but it's unclear how quickly the case will proceed.

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Green groups sue EPA over TSCA rules [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/14/2017 01:21 PM EDT

Environmental groups have filed a suite of lawsuits challenging a pair of chemical safety rules finalized by the Trump administration last month.

The suits, filed Friday by [Earthjustice](#) in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, and [Environmental Defense Fund](#) in the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals in New York, contest the two "framework rules" for implementing last year's bipartisan overhaul of the Toxic Substances Control Act. The rules govern how EPA will prioritize and conduct evaluations of tens of thousands of chemicals that are already on the market in the U.S.

In particular, the suits challenge the rules' approach to excluding certain uses of chemicals from EPA's evaluation of the substance's safety. Green groups argue that, under the law, EPA must analyze all of a substance's likely uses.

"Unfortunately, in straying from the letter and intent of that law, the EPA's framework rules leave the public at risk from chemicals commonly found in our homes, schools and workplaces," Richard Denison, lead senior scientist for Environmental Defense Fund, said in a statement. "Our legal challenges seek to hold EPA to the law and ensure that the public is protected as Congress intended."

EPA did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the lawsuits.

WHAT'S NEXT: The two appellate courts will decide whether to allow the lawsuits to proceed.

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EPA to revamp 2015 power plant discharges rule [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/14/2017 01:43 PM EDT

EPA will conduct a new rulemaking to "potentially revise" portions of a 2015 regulation limiting toxic discharges from coal-fired power plants, according to [a letter](#) sent by Administrator Scott Pruitt to the U.S. Small Business Administration Friday and obtained by POLITICO today.

The 2015 rule set new technology-based limits on heavy metals like mercury and arsenic that power plants discharge into waterways. The previous limits had not been updated in more than 30 years.

The portions of the rule Pruitt said could be revised are the most contentious and expensive ones governing how coal waste is managed by power plants.

"This new rulemaking has the potential to gut the rule. The two most impactful provisions of the rule by far — in terms of the amount of toxics that power plants are dumping into water bodies, and the costs to industry of complying with the rule — are the two main ones that EPA is reconsidering," Thomas Cmar, an Earthjustice attorney, said in an email.

Pruitt's letter indicates EPA will ask the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals to put challenges to the 2015 rule from the coal industry on hold while EPA conducts the new rulemaking. The letter makes no mention of other lawsuits joined with that litigation from environmental groups and drinking water utilities that challenge the overall rule.

EPA did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA would need to file an official notice in order to launch a new rulemaking. The agency is also due to update the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals today on the status of its review of the 2015 rule.

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GE's Immelt not quitting Trump's manufacturing committee [Back](#)

By Madeline Conway | 08/14/2017 01:44 PM EDT

Jeff Immelt, the chairman of General Electric, plans to stay on President Donald Trump's manufacturing committee, which the CEO of pharmaceutical company Merck left today in protest of the White House's response to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va.

In announcing his resignation from the advisory group, Merck's Kenneth Frazier cited Trump's widely panned response to the rally. A car attack on a crowd of counter-protesters left a woman dead and more than a dozen others injured, but Trump initially refused to call out the white supremacists in his response and instead condemned hate "on many sides."

A GE spokesperson said in a statement that the company "has no tolerance for hate, bigotry or racism, and we strongly condemn the violent extremism in Charlottesville over the weekend," but added that "it is important for GE to participate in the discussion on how to drive growth and productivity in the U.S."

"Therefore, Jeff Immelt will remain on the Presidential Committee on American Manufacturing while he is the Chairman of GE," the spokesperson said.

Immelt was chairman of former President Barack Obama's panel of outside economic advisers. He is reportedly a candidate to be Uber's next chief executive.

Following the uproar over his initial response to the violence in Charlottesville, Trump made another statement at the White House today calling racism "evil" and specifically citing hate groups like Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

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Trump aides predicting 'brutal' September [Back](#)

By Josh Dawsey | 08/13/2017 05:43 PM EDT

Inside President Donald Trump's White House, no one seems to be looking forward to September.

Senior officials have described the coming month as "brutal," "bad" or "really tough" because of the confluence of complicated issues — but they also say it's pivotal to getting the presidency back on course.

Aides hope to have a better blueprint for how the president wants to proceed on a series of thorny issues — the nation's debt ceiling, the 2018 federal budget, tax reform, infrastructure spending and perhaps another stab at repealing Obamacare — after a series of meetings in New York this week.

Their goal is to partially temper Trump's expectations, hammer out some compromises and get a competing band of aides on the same page. The month has taken on outsize importance among some top aides and outside advisers, who view it as key to getting the presidency on a better track.

"The stakes are very high in September," said Jenny Beth Martin, who leads the Tea Party Patriots, a conservative grass-roots group. "There is a lot to do in a very short period of time."

Trump, who is impatient, wants it all done immediately, said people close to the president — and he has ratcheted up pressure on aides in recent weeks, even though he doesn't always engage with the substance of issues.

What makes the month harder is that many of the fights are in Congress, where the president and his team have little control.

"The president has made clear his commitment to getting health care, tax reform and infrastructure passed in Congress. There shouldn't have to be a choice," said Kelly Love, a White House spokeswoman.

Trump's aides have prepared lengthy memos and presentations on the legislative calendar for Trump in New York and Washington next week to see how he wants to handle the policy debates.

The fights come as White House aides expect investigations into Russian collusion to heat up and amid a newly rocky relationship with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell following a series of critical tweets and comments from Trump during his Bedminster, New Jersey, retreat last week. Other critical decisions are approaching, such as finalizing a strategy for Afghanistan and choosing whether to suspend the payment of Obamacare subsidies that keep insurance markets functioning smoothly.

And the president is increasingly venting about the apparent inability of the Republican Congress to agree on legislation, especially the Senate's high-profile failure to agree on legislation repealing Obamacare. He has told others he will distance himself from any failures, even as some of his aides push him to cultivate stronger relationships on Capitol Hill.

"The Republicans in Congress only seem to be efficient at one thing: coordinating hearings on Russia with the Democrats," said Sam Nunberg, a longtime Trump aide who left him in 2015 but still talks to administration officials. "At least they can get that done."

September also presents several fights about which Trump's aides aren't in agreement. Fault lines are already coming into view, even as Marc Short, the head of legislative affairs, is trying to get everyone on the same page ahead of the Trump Tower meetings, several administration officials said.

A successful September for many in the administration would include keeping the government open, passing a budget without too much of a showdown, securing some money for the long-promised border wall and beginning talks on tax reform, officials said, while continuing to work on the health care issue.

But other Trump aides have loftier expectations. For some, such as strategist Steve Bannon and his allies, securing money for the wall is a fight worth having. Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney would like spending cuts as part of raising the debt ceiling, but it remains unclear how hard he would be willing to battle for them.

Short is pushing to handle many of the budget issues quickly and to try to move quickly to tax reform, a strategy supported by Gary Cohn, the president's economic adviser, and Steven Mnuchin, his Treasury secretary. But advisers are still wrangling with the fine details of a tax plan. Bannon wants a higher tax on the wealthy, which could go nowhere, and while he previously wasn't involved in health care, Bannon has recently inserted himself into that fight, administration officials said.

The top headaches for Trump's White House are the Sept. 30 deadlines for raising the debt ceiling and funding the upcoming year's budget. The White House also wants to push agenda items, like more border money and defense spending, while also trying to curb deficits. White House officials, including Bannon, Short and chief of staff John Kelly, have told others they expect those fights to be messy.

The outcome that some White House officials fear is a three-month budget extension, only postponing the fight until December. Internally, White House officials are still battling over spending levels in the budget, according to several administration officials. Pressure is likely to rise from the conservative House Freedom Caucus for spending cuts for a budget and the debt ceiling, creating another clash with moderates like the one that tanked health care reform.

Trump, aides said, is determined to get money for the wall and immigration measures — and he is likely to balk at any plan that doesn't give him a win on a signature campaign issue.

Advisers are also deciding whether it makes sense to put considerable effort into reviving the health care fight immediately, as Trump wants to do, and whether to delay tax reform for a month or so while handling other issues — a move that would dismay important outside constituencies. "Tax reform isn't going to come out as soon as we first wanted," said one senior administration official with direct knowledge of the negotiations.

A number of senior officials would quietly prefer to leave health care alone after a bruising fight that climaxed in Trump's public clashes with McConnell. While some White House officials have worked quietly with governors on securing support for a state-based block grant plan, and others have worked with the Freedom Caucus on a repeal-only vote, there is little sign of momentum, senior White House officials said.

Trump wants health care done quickly, even as many in the Senate would like to move on. The president, who is combative, doesn't like to be seen compromising — and often focuses on an issue only after he has lost and received the public sting. "He thinks if we don't get health care done, we're losers," said one adviser who speaks with him often.

On Friday, the House Freedom Caucus vowed to push a repeal-only bill, which quickly secured support from conservative groups like the Club for Growth. Martin, the head of Tea Party Patriots, said she delivered more than a million signatures to the White House calling for the repeal of Obamacare. A bill would likely fail in the Senate, though, and take valuable time from the White House, which needs legislative wins by the end of the year. The Club for Growth said it would score lawmakers on the vote, a move meant to threaten them.

"We hear about repealing Obamacare from the grass roots every day," Martin said.

For many in Trump's White House, tax reform is the greater priority. Short and other senior aides have met with senators and important outside constituencies, like the network of groups backed by the billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch.

Tim Phillips, who leads Americans for Prosperity, one of the largest groups in the Koch network, said his donors are most focused on that, and outside groups say the administration has seemed far better prepared on tax reform than on health care.

"Our view is it's all about tax reform," said Scott Reed, chief strategist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Success would help turn the page on all the drama of the White House so far."

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Trump declares 'racism is evil' amid pressure over Charlottesville [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 08/14/2017 08:21 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Monday denounced the white supremacist groups whose rally in Virginia on Saturday turned deadly, criticizing "racist violence" in remarks that were much more direct in their condemnation than his initial, widely panned response.

"Racism is evil. And those who cause violence in its name are criminals and thugs, including the KKK, neo-Nazis, white supremacists and other hate groups that are repugnant to everything we hold dear as Americans," Trump said in televised remarks Monday afternoon from the White House. "Those who spread violence in the name of bigotry strike at the very core of America."

Trump's remarks in the White House's Diplomatic Reception Room lasted just longer than five minutes, and his comments on Saturday's episode in Charlottesville were preceded by a preamble in which the president touted his administration's economic successes. Nowhere in his remarks did he label Saturday's clash, which left one woman dead, an act of terrorism, a characterization others in his administration and other Republicans have used.

That the president waited until Monday to specifically condemn the hate groups that marched over the weekend had raised eyebrows and recalled multiple episodes from his 2016 campaign in which the president was forced to distance himself, often after a delay and under public pressure, from symbolism and language tied to white supremacist and anti-Semitic groups. On Monday, Trump did not respond to reporters' shouted questions as to why it had taken him two days to explicitly denounce white supremacy.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions and newly installed FBI Director Christopher Wray briefed Trump on Monday before his statement on the clashes in Charlottesville.

Earlier in the day, administration officials rushed to defend Trump's first response to the weekend's deadly violence, insisting that he had already condemned the ideology of hate groups. Those groups, ostensibly gathered for a rally to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, clashed with counterprotesters. The violence peaked when a man drove a car into a crowd of counterprotesters, killing one woman and injuring 19 other people, authorities said.

The president's first comments came Saturday from his club in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he decried "this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides." A White House statement on Sunday sought to clarify the president's position as condemning white supremacists, but the statement was attributed only to an unnamed White House official, stoking questions about why it was issued behind a cloak of anonymity.

Trump's initial statement that "many sides" were to blame struck critics as equating the actions of hate groups with those of counterprotesters. Vice President Mike Pence, however, told NBC that Trump was referring to past, unrelated protests in which there were attacks on law enforcement.

Sessions insisted there was no ambiguity in the president's initial statement.

"He made a very strong statement that directly contradicted the ideology of hatred, violence, bigotry, racism and white supremacy," Sessions told NBC's "Today" show Monday. "Those things must be condemned. They're totally unacceptable. ... He's been firm on this from the beginning. He is appalled by this."

It was unclear Monday why Trump finally decided to make additional remarks or whether it would stem the flow of withering bipartisan criticism.

Prominent Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) wrote online after Trump's first statement that "We should call evil by its name. My brother didn't give his life fighting Hitler for Nazi ideas to go unchallenged here at home."

Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, addressed Trump directly on Twitter, writing "Mr. President — we must call evil by its name. These were white supremacists and this was domestic terrorism."

Michael Signer, Charlottesville's Democratic mayor, told MSNBC's "Morning Joe" on Monday that Trump's remarks had left the president "on the sidelines" of a "country that really needs to progress and heal and tell the truth about a lot of chapters in our history." Signer, who was among those urging Electoral College voters not to certify Trump's 2016 victory, connected the violence in his city over the weekend to the president's campaign.

"Look, I think some of this speaks for itself. We saw the campaign that they ran, we saw the folks they surround themselves, we saw what [former Ku Klux Klan leader] David Duke, you know, people like that say about the president," Signer said. "I think that Charlottesville is going to be synonymous with the nation at long last turning the page on this horrific chapter in American politics where bigots and, you know, the fringe of the fringe were invited into the mainstream, out from the shadows where they belonged."

Trump's handling of the issue could even disrupt his policy agenda. Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier announced via his company's Twitter account Monday morning that he would resign from the president's American Manufacturing Council. Frazier wrote that "our country's strength stems from its diversity."

"America's leaders must honor our fundamental values by clearly rejecting expressions of hatred, bigotry and group supremacy, which run counter to the American ideal that all people are created equal," Frazier's statement said. "As CEO of Merck and as a matter of personal conscience, I feel a responsibility to take a stand against intolerance and extremism."

Trump responded on Twitter by attacking Merck: "Now that Ken Frazier of Merck Pharma has resigned from President's Manufacturing Council, he will have more time to LOWER RIPOFF DRUG PRICES!"

Josh Gerstein contributed to this report.

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Obama team was warned in 2014 about Russian interference [Back](#)

By Ali Watkins | 08/14/2017 05:04 AM EDT

The Obama administration received multiple warnings from national security officials between 2014 and 2016 that the Kremlin was ramping up its intelligence operations and building disinformation networks it could use to disrupt the U.S. political system, according to more than half a dozen current and former officials.

As early as 2014, the administration received a report that quoted a well-connected Russian source as saying that the Kremlin was building a disinformation arm that could be used to interfere in Western democracies. The report, according to an official familiar with it, included a quote from the Russian source telling U.S. officials in Moscow, "You have no idea how extensive these networks are in Europe ... and in the U.S., Russia has penetrated media organizations, lobbying firms, political parties, governments and militaries in all of these places."

That report was circulated among the National Security Council, intelligence agencies and the State Department via secure email and cable in the spring of 2014 as part of a larger assessment of Russian intentions in Ukraine, the official said.

There was no explicit warning of a threat to U.S. elections, but the official said some diplomats and national security officials in Moscow felt the administration was too quick to dismiss the possibility that the Kremlin incursions could reach the United States.

"Even if the Russians and [Russian President Vladimir] Putin had these ambitions, they were doubtful of their capacity to execute them," the official said of the Obama administration.

Former White House officials, requesting anonymity to discuss intelligence reporting, confirmed that the administration began receiving increased traffic in 2014 about Russian disinformation and covert influence in campaigns, but said they did not recall receiving that specific warning about Russian inroads in the United States.

Ned Price, a former spokesperson for the National Security Council, rejected the idea that the administration failed to heed warnings about Russian interference in the U.S. political system or Russian cyberespionage in general.

"The Obama administration was nothing but proactive in responding to Russian aggression in all of its forms, especially as Moscow became more brazen with and following its military moves against Ukraine beginning in 2014," Price said, citing sanctions and increased American support to NATO as evidence of the former administration's seriousness.

But subsequent events — including Russia's interference in the American election through hacks of the emails of the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton campaign Chairman John Podesta, among other intrusions identified by U.S. intelligence — have left many in the former administration wondering whether they could have done more.

"People have criticized us ... for not coming out more forcefully and saying it," former CIA Director John Brennan said at the Aspen National Forum in July. "There was no playbook for this."

On Oct. 7, 2016, about a month before the election, the administration revealed, through a statement from the director of national intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security, that the U.S. government believed Russia was behind the hacks and was seeking to interfere with the election. The revelation, which many in the White House expected to be bombshell news, was largely overshadowed by the revelation that same day of an "Access Hollywood" tape in which Donald Trump made crude and sexist comments to anchor Billy Bush.

But others in the national security community say an overly cautious Obama White House could have done more both during the campaign and in the previous months and years to alert Russia that it was aware of its intentions to subvert the U.S. democracy — along with those of some other Western countries — and would retaliate forcefully at the first sign of Russian interference.

POLITICO spoke with more than a dozen current and former officials from across the national security spectrum, including intelligence agencies, the State Department and the Pentagon. Almost all said they were aware of Russia's aggressive cyberespionage and disinformation campaigns — especially after the dramatic Russian attempt to hack Ukrainian elections in

2014 — but felt that either the White House or key agencies were unwilling to act forcefully to counter the Russian actions.

Intelligence officials "had a list of things they could never get the signoffs on," one intelligence official said. "The truth is, nobody wanted to piss off the Russians."

Among the strategies put forward prior to the 2016 election were closing two Russian dachas in Maryland and New York, which were long suspected of being Russian intelligence sites, expelling diplomats and engaging in counterintelligence operations that would alert Putin to the United States' determination to strike back against any attempts at interference in the U.S. political system.

Officials outside the White House blamed micromanagement by the National Security Council for the lack of a more forceful response, while a former NSC official says any failure to act forcefully against Russia was because of concerns by the State Department and, less frequently, the Defense Department about potential retaliation by Moscow.

"The frustrations [about lack of forceful action] are justified and, frankly, were shared by the White House," said the former official, who requested anonymity due to this person's continuing work in Russia.

"The options were being discussed. They weren't being implemented," the former official added.

The State Department and Pentagon often objected to harsher measures endorsed by the intelligence community, one official said, a difference in perspective that some attributed to the fact that diplomatic staff and defense attaches were obvious targets of retaliation, rather than intelligence officers who usually work undercover.

Concerns about Russian cyberespionage and election meddling largely grew out of the events following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, followed by an aggressive Russian effort to influence the Ukrainian presidential election that May.

A Russia-backed cyberattack against Ukraine's voting infrastructure during the May election was thwarted at the 11th hour. The cyberintrusions — which in some cases could have changed voter tallies — were discovered just hours before what could have been catastrophic outcomes.

"The reports from sources deep inside the Russian government were alarming," one current U.S. official who served under the Obama administration said. "We started getting stuff in April, May [of 2014] that was extraordinary about the extent of the threat and the capacities the Russians were building."

"We were worried [Putin] would try to test us," recalled a former Obama administration official.

The Ukraine crisis — coupled with the Kremlin's embrace of National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, who continues to be granted asylum by Moscow — was a sobering moment for the White House, one recently departed intelligence officer and the current administration official said.

Yet the administration still was reluctant to engage in more forceful counterintelligence

strategies against the Kremlin, including more aggressively tracking and tailing Russian operatives within the United States, according to five of the officials who spoke to POLITICO.

Those outside the White House said they received frustrating mixed messages: The White House would subsequently dismiss Moscow's capabilities while also citing fear of an escalation with Putin.

Price, the former NSC spokesman, denied those claims.

"We responded with the same clarity of purpose following Moscow's aggression against U.S. officials in Russia and, of course, in the face of the Kremlin's attempt to undermine the integrity of our electoral process," he said.

But several senior intelligence and administration officials recall it differently.

"It just seemed like it was difficult, especially after the Crimea and the Ukraine ... there still wasn't a willingness to more heartily engage in the effort," the former intelligence officer said.

In one particularly frustrating instance, officials said, they reiterated a longstanding desire to shut down the two Russian dachas in Maryland and New York. Amid escalating tensions, it was often presented as a way to send a message to Moscow.

"For quite some time, it was an active option. Secretary Kerry refused to consider it," the former NSC official said. "We were getting pushback from the head of the agency being harassed. That was a constant frustration."

Former Secretary of State John Kerry was overseas and unavailable for comment. But a former senior State Department official, speaking as a representative of Kerry, saw it differently. "Kerry agreed to shut down the dachas, but had not settled on the timing," the official said.

Tensions finally reached a fever pitch in the summer of 2016. Just days before Russian operatives began releasing troves of stolen DNC emails, a CIA officer under official diplomatic cover was brutally beaten outside the U.S. embassy in Moscow. The officer managed to slip to safety inside the door of the U.S. compound but was immediately evacuated for medical care.

U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials worked frantically to compile retaliatory options for the Obama White House. Despite being presented with several strategies — including more aggressively tailing Russian diplomats in the U.S. — it opted to do nothing immediately.

"There was some real anger," the former intelligence officer said. "We weren't going to mug anybody, but we could at least be more overt in our coverages. We could expel some people, we could do more overt surveillance on people."

Another former intelligence official put it this way: "The longer we don't push back, the harder they push."

Even after the release of emails designed to damage Clinton's campaign, the White House was reluctant to respond, something that several recently departed Obama-era officials have lamented.

After compiling a list of potential retaliatory options in the summer of 2016 — including kicking out more than 100 Russian diplomats, one official told POLITICO — the pushback from national security agencies was so great and varied, the NSC official said, that for months nothing was done.

"Any of these actions risked a Russian reciprocation," the former NSC official said. "We were kind of caught in a catch-22."

After the election, in December, the White House finally announced the expulsion of 35 diplomats and ordered the Kremlin officials out of the two Russian-owned dachas.

But in a further indication of the tensions within the Obama team, Kerry rejected suggestions that he personally break the news of the expulsions and closing of the dachas to Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, the former NSC official said. Instead, the job was left to Pat Kennedy, one of Kerry's undersecretaries.

The former State Department official, speaking for Kerry, said the option of having Kerry communicate the expulsions and closing of the dachas to Lavrov was never discussed. But the former NSC official was unmoved.

"The idea of having Kerry doing it with Lavrov was raised several times and he didn't want to do it," the NSC official said.

The expulsions and closing of the dachas were symbolic moves that stung the Kremlin, but for many intelligence officers, it was too little, too late.

While some Obama White House officials privately concede that they, too, wish there had been a more forceful response, others stand by the decisions that were made.

"People at the working level don't necessarily understand" the full scope of policy implications, one former White House official said.

Now, to the further frustration of some intelligence officers, there is little indication that, for all Trump's bluster, he'll be tougher on the Kremlin. In his first months in office, the president has signaled a willingness to work with Moscow on several fronts, and has pushed back hard against his own intelligence community's assessment that Russia actively worked to elect him to the presidency.

It's a bitter pill for many who see Trump's election as the avoidable outcome of years' worth of counterintelligence failings against Russia.

"They were warned. They underestimated it until it was too late," the current administration official said of the Obama White House and Russia, with a tinge of bitterness. "They just didn't know how to deal with the bad guys."

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The GOP rebel threatening to snag Sessions' Senate seat [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 08/14/2017 05:09 AM EDT

HOMEWOOD, Ala. — Roy Moore lacks the war chest of two chief rivals in his bid to become the next senator from Alabama. He didn't land the coveted endorsement of President Donald Trump, and doesn't enjoy the advantages of incumbency.

Yet the controversial former state Supreme Court justice is coasting over his Republican challengers in Tuesday's closely watched GOP Senate primary. Moore is set to easily secure a place in a September runoff, as the establishment-backed Sen. Luther Strange and Rep. Mo Brooks scrap for the second spot.

Should Moore become the GOP nominee and the next senator from Alabama, his bombastic personality and antipathy toward Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) are sure to make more trouble for the GOP leader, who's taking constant flak from Trump as it is. McConnell and his allies are spending millions to elect Strange, and in response, Moore has made McConnell the symbol of everything he opposes in Washington.

"I resent people from Washington, raising money in Washington, and sending negative ads to Alabama and trying to control the vote of the people," Moore said in an interview after a GOP executive committee meeting here. "If the Washington crowd wants somebody, the people of Alabama generally don't."

Strange was tapped in February to temporarily assume Jeff Sessions' Senate seat after he was appointed attorney general. Strange and his supporters have spent the campaign trying to tear down Brooks, a four-term congressman and member of the Freedom Caucus, to ensure Strange slides into the runoff against Moore.

Confident they've succeeded against Brooks despite polls showing a close race for second place, the pro-Strange forces recently began running ads against Moore. Leading the way is the deep-pocketed Senate Leadership Fund, which has close ties to McConnell and pledged earlier this year to spend up to \$10 million to prop up Strange. It plans to ramp up the attacks once the six-week sprint to a Sept. 26 runoff election begins.

Moore's national notoriety stems primarily from his stormy tenure on the Alabama Supreme Court. He was removed as chief justice in 2003 for opposing the removal of a Ten Commandments statue from the state Capitol. But Moore was nevertheless reelected to the court, and then suspended for declining to enforce the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriages. After losing an appeal, he resigned in April.

Moore embraces the controversies as a badge of honor.

"What I've done is stand for my country, stand for my Constitution, and I've suffered accordingly," said the 70-year-old Moore. "I think controversy will follow you if you stand up for truth. It's that simple. If you stand up for truth, you're going to have consequences."

He's also prone to teeing off rhetorically. In a recent interview with the Guardian, Moore mused that Vladimir Putin is "maybe ... more akin to me than I know" when told about the Russian president's opposition to gay marriage.

And at a candidate forum here in the Birmingham suburbs, Moore went after transgender

troops in the military, telling the crowd of local party faithful: "If we're going to file for hormone treatments and medical surgeries, that's not making your military stronger. You've got to have a disciplined military."

Aside from social issues and the Constitution, Moore, a Vietnam War veteran, has campaigned on a platform of a stronger military. Talking to voters, he laments that the United States doesn't "carry the image around this world that we used to carry."

Moore — who plans to ride a horse to the polls on Tuesday with his wife, Kayla — insists he doesn't engage in negative campaigning, though his annoyance with McConnell and Strange's allies are clearly growing by the day.

"They're that out of touch in Washington that they don't understand that Alabama people aren't that out of touch," Moore complained in the interview.

That outspokenness is what has made Moore's lead in the race so durable, his fervent backers and even those endorsing his opponents say. One voter, Tom Ford of Montgomery, argued that Moore was "unethically removed for doing something that was ethical by an unethical system."

"The state itself, it does feel the connection with the history of having Judge Moore for so long," said Matt Davidson of Birmingham, a Moore supporter. "He's just so thoroughly Alabama."

Still, national Republicans believe Moore has a high floor but a low ceiling of support. They're confident they can bludgeon the jurist during the runoff so Strange emerges with the Republican nomination, which would effectively elect him to the Senate seat until 2020 in this GOP-heavy state.

Establishment-minded Republicans in the state say Moore's provocative persona is wearing thin.

"You got Roy Moore, who's just had horrible problems with being suspended twice at the Supreme Court," said Jim Wilson, an Alabama businessman who backs Strange. "That doesn't resonate very well with a lot of voters, in my opinion. Last thing we want is that type of personality in the Senate."

Polls have shown Moore steadily leading the sprawling field of nine candidates. A JMC Analytics and Polling survey taken Aug. 5-6 found Moore winning 30 percent of primary voters, Strange with 22 percent and Brooks with 19 percent. A Trafalgar Group poll taken mostly after Trump's Aug. 8 endorsement of Strange had Moore at 35 percent, Strange at 23 percent and Brooks with 20 percent.

Strange has vastly outraised his competitors, hauling in \$2.8 million this cycle, compared with \$456,000 for Moore and \$540,000 for Brooks, according to the latest figures from the Federal Election Commission.

That financial advantage, and especially SLF's support, has allowed Strange and his allies to pummel Brooks on the air, particularly over the congressman's pointed criticism of Trump during the presidential campaign. SLF began piling on Moore earlier this month with an ad chastising the judge for taking \$1 million in salary for him and his wife from a Christian

charity he founded. (Moore's campaign [has called](#) the ad "blatantly false and misleading.")

Perhaps acknowledging the voter discontent over the ads, Strange distanced himself from the notion that he's the majority leader's handpicked candidate: "I just met Mitch McConnell in February."

"We had no previous relationship," Strange told reporters. "I had never met him before. To say that I'm kind of his, quote, guy, is kind of silly, if you ask me." (Both Moore and Brooks, whose campaign bus now features a "Ditch Mitch" banner, say they would not back McConnell for GOP leader.)

It's unclear how much Trump's backing of Strange will boost him in Tuesday's election; it could make a more significant difference in the runoff, particularly if the incumbent senator repeatedly reminds voters of the endorsement.

That's what Strange did in front of GOP activists here, describing the out-of-the-blue phone call he received from the White House last Tuesday. He said he was so surprised that he almost drove into a ditch.

After Trump thanked Strange for supporting him and his agenda in the Senate, the president asked the senator what he could do in advance of Tuesday's election.

"Well, Mr. President, whatever you think is appropriate. A tweet wouldn't be bad," Strange said, describing the conversation. "He said, 'You know, I have 118 million Twitter followers.' (Trump actually has 35.7 million followers.) I said, 'I do sir, I know that very well.'"

Trump called Strange again on Thursday to check up on the senator's campaign. "I'm in this fight with you now, and we need to win," Trump said, according to Strange.

One of Strange's biggest liabilities is how the senator was chosen by disgraced former Gov. Robert Bentley for Sessions' Senate seat. As the state's attorney general, Strange last November had asked a state House committee investigating a potential Bentley impeachment to hold off while his office conducted "related work." Strange has said there was no impropriety in his request.

But those insinuations, as well as McConnell's overt involvement, have apparently stuck, according to Alabama political observers. One poll last week from Cygnal/L2 found Strange with a 42 percent unfavorable rating, while the JMC survey had Strange at 50 percent unfavorable.

That means Brooks backers, should he come in third in Tuesday's primary, may gravitate toward Moore.

One former Alabama GOP official speculated that while Brooks voters around Huntsville — an area saturated with doctorate degrees that is heavily reliant on the federal government — will go with Strange in the runoff, his supporters elsewhere, particularly in the outlining counties, will break hard for Moore.

"Moore," state Rep. Ed Henry, chairman of Trump's Alabama campaign who is backing Brooks, said flatly when asked where the congressman's supporters go if he doesn't make the runoff. "Nobody will vote for Luther Strange. The negative ads don't help him any. Luther Strange is exactly what we've had for the last forever how many decades and he is more of the

same. Nobody wants that."

It's clear the negative ads are leaving an impact on some voters.

"They're lies. That's what I think of them," Celia Waters, a Brooks supporter from Fairhope, said of the ads as Brooks campaigned at a Biscuit King in her hometown. "They've not only come against Congressman Brooks, but they've also come against Judge Moore."

Waters declined to say whom she'd back in the runoff should Brooks not make it.

But she added: "I'll never vote for a liar. I'll just put it that way."

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Date: Wednesday, November 22, 2017 4:22:02 PM

By Esther Whieldon | 11/22/2017 04:20 PM EDT

With help from Matt Daily, Dan Diamond, Seung Min Kim, Heather Caygle, Andrew Restuccia and Kyle Cheney

EPA KEEPS BIOFUEL RULES: EPA has decided not to change compliance requirements for the Renewable Fuels Standard, the agency confirms, a move that rebuffs an effort from some independent refining companies and former White House adviser Carl Icahn to ease refiners' requirements under the biofuels program. "Based on a wide range of stakeholder input and information provided as a part of the public comment period, the Agency has determined that changing the regulatory point of obligation for compliance with the RFS program is not appropriate," EPA spokesperson Liz Bowman said in an email.

The Trump administration decided in August to reject the request to move the "point of obligation" under the RFS, POLITICO [reported](#) at the time. But an official announcement did not come until today.

JUDGE REJECTS CALL TO DISMISS KEYSTONE XL LAWSUIT: A U.S. judge today rejected the Trump administration's call to dismiss a lawsuit filed by environmental groups and landowners challenging its approval of the Keystone XL project, your AE host reports. Judge Brian Morris of the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana Great Falls Division denied motions by the Trump administration and TransCanada Keystone Pipeline LP to dismiss the lawsuit, finding that the State Department's April issuance of a presidential permit for the controversial project constituted an agency action, not presidential, that is therefore subject to environmental laws and the Administrative Procedure Act.

"**The mere fact that the pipeline crossed** the international border did not insulate the State Department's analysis of the environmental impacts of the pipeline project from judicial review under the APA," Morris said in the order. Moreover, "no agency possesses discretion whether to comply with procedural requirements" such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the judge said. He later added that the Endangered Species Act provided "no exclusion for Presidential Permits."

TRUMP, LAWMAKERS TO MEET NEXT WEEK ON AVOIDING SHUTDOWN: President Donald Trump and top congressional leaders will meet next Tuesday to try to hammer out a year-end agreement to avert a government shutdown, according to multiple sources, as Capitol Hill careens toward a legislative pile-up next month. The so-called Big Four — Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#), Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) and Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) — haven't even agreed on total government spending levels that would allow appropriators to write a massive funding bill for the rest of the fiscal year, [report](#) Seung Min Kim, Heather Caygle and Andrew Restuccia.

That means a short-term funding extension to keep the government operating beyond a Dec. 8 deadline is all but inevitable. Congressional leaders would likely need to reach an agreement on the topline figures by early next week for there to be any chance of finishing an omnibus

spending bill in December.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your guest host Esther Whieldon, filling in for Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ewhieldon@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@Esthernow](https://twitter.com/Esthernow), [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Nov. 23-Nov. 26. Our next [Afternoon Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Nov. 27. Please continue to follow PRO Energy issues [here](#).

BARTON APOLOGIZES FOR NUDE SELFIE: Rep. [Joe Barton](#) (R-Texas), vice chairman of the Energy and Commerce committee admitted that a nude picture of him circulating online is authentic and apologized to his constituents, Kyle Cheney [reports](#). "While separated from my second wife, prior to the divorce, I had sexual relationships with other mature adult women," Barton, 68, said in a statement first reported by the Texas Tribune. "Each was consensual. Those relationships have ended. I am sorry I did not use better judgment during those days. I am sorry that I let my constituents, down." The longtime congressman said he is considering his political future, after announcing plans to seek reelection just three weeks ago.

MURKOWSKI BACKING OBAMACARE MANDATE REPEAL: Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) said in an op-ed in an Alaska newspaper Tuesday she supports GOP efforts to repeal the individual mandate in the Affordable Care Act, Dan Diamond [reports](#). "I believe that the federal government should not force anyone to buy something they do not wish to buy, in order to avoid being taxed," Murkowski said in the op-ed. Her support for ending the mandate — after opposing her party's Obamacare repeal bills earlier this year — is a boon for Senate Republican's tax legislation, which includes a mandate repeal and is expected to be voted on next week. But a spokesman for the senator cautioned against construing Murkowski's comments as supporting the tax bill.

Murkowski has been pushing to open part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development and her Energy and Natural Resources Committee earlier this month advanced legislation that directs the Interior Department to offer two ANWR leases of at least 400,000 acres each within 10 years. The legislation will be used in the wider budget reconciliation package that will include tax reforms.

CBO PUBLISHES FULL COST ESTIMATE ON ANWR: The CBO on Tuesday released a full cost estimate [report](#) of its earlier finding the ANWR legislation would raise about \$1.1 billion over the 2018-2027 period for the federal government, with Alaska receiving the other half of the estimated \$2.2 billion in total gross proceeds. CBO noted that it picked the midpoint in the estimated range of potential bid prices given that companies may make different assumptions than CBO "about long-term oil prices, production costs, the amount of oil and gas resources in ANWR, and alternative investment opportunities."

OIL INDUSTRY'S HAPPY THANKSGIVING: A surge in U.S. oil prices will have oil executives raising their wine glasses in thanks tomorrow. The price of light, sweet crude oil futures popped above \$58 a barrel today, and finished at \$57.80, helped by a nearly 2 million-barrel draw [oil inventories](#) last week, as well as the shutdown of the Keystone pipeline that delivers nearly 600,000 barrels of Canadian crude per day to the industry's storage hub at Cushing, Okla.

That pipeline outage — caused by a 210,000 gallon oil spill last week — also pushed the spot January futures contract to a premium above the February contract, a market condition known as backwardation that shows more demand for near-term supplies than those for later delivery, and which is likely to give market bulls some confidence. Not that they need it: January crude futures have rallied a whopping 36 percent since their June low. And of course, next week all eyes will shift to Vienna, where OPEC members, and [perhaps 20 other nations](#), will meet, and likely extend production cuts through the end of next year.

FERC APPROVES TRANSCO'S GULF CONNECTOR EXPANSION PROJECT:

FERC on Tuesday [approved](#) Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Co.'s proposed \$167.4 million Gulf Connector expansion project aimed at shipping 475,000 dekatherms per day of natural gas from Louisiana to LNG export terminals in Texas. Transco plans to build the project's compressor stations, pipeline interconnect and other facilities in two phases ending in 2019 and has signed long-term contracts with Cheniere Energy, the developers of the Corpus Christi LNG Export Terminal, and Japan's Osaka Gas Trading & Export, which is a customer of the Freeport LNG Terminal.

QUICK HITS:

- After ditching Paris, Trump's team has another big international climate decision to make, [The Washington Post](#).
- Giving Thanks, but Not for Turkey-Powered Energy, [The New York Times](#).
- Dominion begins to drain coal ash pond, [Chesterfield Observer](#).
- Exxon, Shell, BP Join Forces to Cut Emissions From Natural Gas, [Wall Street Journal](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- With TSA on the ropes, holiday travel may be a [bear](#)
- Turkey farmers [facing squeeze](#) after Trump kills agriculture rules
- Moore [trumpets](#) president's near-endorsement

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/11/judge-rejects-call-to-dismiss-keystone-xl-lawsuit-031567>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

EPA will reject change that Trump backer Icahn sought [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 08/03/2017 11:53 AM EDT

The Trump administration plans to reject a proposal that would let oil refiners off the hook for complying with the federal ethanol mandate, a senior administration official told POLITICO, dashing the hopes of billionaire Carl Icahn and a slew of independent companies.

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to formally announce the decision within the next two weeks, the official said.

The move is a severe blow for Icahn, a longtime associate and early supporter of Donald Trump who owns the refiner CVR Energy. He was once so confident that the obligation would be changed that he tried to strike a deal with a biofuels trade association.

Ultimately, Icahn and his allies were unable to prevail over a peculiar alliance of major oil companies and biofuels producers, who opposed changing the Renewable Fuel Standard, though for different reasons.

Icahn, refining giant Valero and smaller refiners argued that purchasing compliance credits, called Renewable Identification Numbers, squeezed their bottom lines and, in some cases, threatened to put them out of business. Icahn's CVR lost \$19 million in the second quarter of this year after guessing incorrectly that the administration would make the policy change.

Trump has turned away from one of Icahn's main policy goals in large part due to pressure from corn-state voters and ethanol organizations.

"President Trump supports the EPA's decision," the official said.

The decision follows through on Trump's campaign promise to support ethanol and leave the mandate intact. Corn states and ethanol interests have been lobbying hard, arguing that the change would set back an ethanol industry that is vital to some of the states where voters strongly backed Trump.

"Mr. Trump won that election because voters in Iowa and across the heartland, we rose up in support of him," Annette Sweeney, a member of Trump's Agriculture Advisory Council, said in an interview after the election. "Mr. Trump, the time I visited with him, he understood the need for home-grown fuel, the need for cleaner fuel. Here in Iowa, we were some of Mr. Trump's strongest supporters. And I really think shifting the point of obligation would interrupt America's progress toward making clean renewable biofuels."

Biofuels producers believed that if EPA had shifted the "point of obligation" away from refiners, as Icahn and other companies requested, it would cause years of upheaval. The American Petroleum Institute, which represents much of the oil industry, including the oil majors, has opposed the change, saying it would be a distraction from the kind of overhaul or full-on repeal the program needs.

EPA will finalize an Obama-era proposed decision to reject a petition by refiners that asked to change the program. The agency has been ready to act for months, but the White House Office of Legal Counsel advised waiting for the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals to rule in an omnibus case of RFS challenges, the official said. The case included a challenge by merchant refiners to force EPA to make a decision on the obligation question. In its ruling, the court rejected the request by the refiners to require EPA to decide on the obligation question in every annual RFS rule, but it did say EPA should make a decision at some point. The resolution of the case opens the door for EPA to act.

Oil analysts don't believe the decision to leave the program unchanged will have a significant effect on the cost of RINs, which has fallen substantially since last year.

"The changing of the point of obligation doesn't mean RINs will be more expensive or cheaper," said Tom Kloza, Global Head of Energy Analysis for OPIS.

Critics of the RFS focus on high RIN prices as a chief reason for changing which companies are obligated. CVR lost \$19 million in RIN costs in the second quarter after guessing incorrectly that the administration would expand the number of companies complying with the RFS, a move that might have pushed RIN prices down.

Valero CEO Joe Gorder said Valero spent \$750 million on RINs last year, and Icahn has called RIN sales "the mother of all squeezes." Delaware Valley refiners like the Delta Airlines-owned Monroe Energy and Philadelphia Energy, already smarting from the legalization of crude exports in 2015, say RIN costs could drive layoffs or even bankruptcy.

Valero and other refiners sued the EPA over the obligation issue, arguing that EPA should address it each time it sets new mandates for biofuel blending. Oral arguments in that case were held before the D.C. Circuit last month.

For Icahn, the move could be a blow to the stock price of CVR's refining subsidiary, which shot up 40 percent between Trump's election and the first months of his presidency. But by Wednesday, CVR Refining's stock had fallen back to 6 percent below Election Day.

An early Trump supporter, Icahn was named a "special adviser" to the president, though he is not on the government payroll. Icahn was so confident the change was coming that he and Valero presented the president with draft language for an executive order in February. That same month, he called Bob Dinneen of the Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol trade group, and told him the ink was already drying on an executive order changing the program, and offering to meet Dinneen's demands for providing support. News of the conversation drove down RIN prices and also split RFA from the biofuels community. Within days, RFA had been booted from Fuels America, a political umbrella group for ethanol producers.

The order never came, and in the wake of the news, Icahn became the subject of ethical questions surrounding his role at the White House. Public Citizen filed a lobbying complaint with both houses of Congress, and last week eight Senate Democrats, led by [Elizabeth Warren](#) of Massachusetts, sent letters to the Securities and Exchange Commission, EPA and Commodity Futures Trading Commission calling for an investigation into Icahn's dealings.

Icahn went quiet on the issue over the past few months, possibly as a result of all the investigations and letters from senators.

Icahn did not respond to a request for comment, and EPA did not respond for the record.

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Trump and congressional leaders to hold talks to avoid shutdown [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim, Heather Caygle and Andrew Restuccia | 11/22/2017 02:00 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and top congressional leaders will meet next week to try to hammer out a year-end agreement to avert a government shutdown, according to multiple sources, as Capitol Hill careens toward a legislative pile-up next month.

The so-called Big Four — Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#), Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) and Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) — haven't even agreed on total government spending levels that would allow appropriators to write a massive funding bill for the rest of the fiscal year.

That means a short-term funding extension to keep the government operating beyond a Dec. 8 deadline is all but inevitable. Congressional leaders would likely need to reach an agreement on the topline figures by early next week for there to be any chance of finishing an omnibus spending bill in December.

The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday at 3 p.m., according to congressional sources and a White House official.

In addition to having to move a must-pass bill to fund the government, Republicans hope to pass a sweeping rewrite of the tax code by Christmas.

Further complicating matters is the ongoing dispute over the fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, the Obama-era initiative that has shielded hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants from deportation.

Trump has announced that DACA permits will expire beginning in March, although immigration advocates have said scores of current DACA recipients have already lost protections because they weren't able to get their status renewed before an October deadline.

One source familiar with the negotiations said Democrats, particularly Pelosi, have pushed aggressively to include a DACA fix to a short-term continuing resolution that would keep the government open beyond Dec. 8. A Democratic leadership aide said Pelosi has not asked specifically for a DACA fix to be attached to a short-term extension, although she and Schumer have been publicly adamant that a legislative solution for DACA needs to pass Congress next month.

Democratic leaders have also insisted on ensuring that any agreement to raise defense spending above sequester levels also boosts funding for domestic programs.

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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GOP congressman Barton apologizes for nude selfie [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney | 11/22/2017 02:20 PM EDT

Rep. [Joe Barton](#) (R-Texas) admitted that a nude picture of him circulating online is authentic and apologized to his constituents.

"While separated from my second wife, prior to the divorce, I had sexual relationships with other mature adult women," Barton, 68, said in a statement [first reported](#) by the Texas Tribune. "Each was consensual. Those relationships have ended. I am sorry I did not use better

judgment during those days. I am sorry that I let my constituents down."

The longtime congressman said he is considering his political future, after announcing plans to seek reelection just three weeks ago.

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Murkowski says she backs Obamacare mandate repeal [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond | 11/21/2017 08:33 PM EDT

Sen. Lisa Murkowski says she supports GOP efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, the Alaska Republican wrote in an op-ed for a local newspaper Tuesday.

"I have always supported the freedom to choose," Murkowski wrote in her [op-ed](#) for the Daily News-Miner, an Alaska newspaper. "I believe that the federal government should not force anyone to buy something they do not wish to buy, in order to avoid being taxed."

Murkowski's renewed support for repealing the mandate — after repeatedly opposing her party's Obamacare repeal bills this year — may be a boon for Senate Republicans' tax legislation, which includes mandate repeal and is expected to be taken up on the Senate floor next week.

A spokesperson for Murkowski told POLITICO that the comments should not be construed as support for the tax bill, which does not yet appear to have sufficient support to pass the chamber.

"Senator Murkowski said on Friday that she will be reviewing the work of the Finance Committee over the Thanksgiving holiday and plans to look at the entire package before coming to any conclusion on the legislation," the spokesperson said.

Senate Republicans can only lose two votes and still pass their tax bill through the budget reconciliation process, which requires only a simple majority. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) opposes the bill, saying it disadvantages small businesses, and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) has said that the bill needs to be changed. Several deficit hawks have also raised concerns about the cost of the bill.

Meanwhile, Democrats and pro-ACA advocates have seized on the decision to revive Obamacare repeal efforts, exhorting activists who opposed the GOP's health care bills this spring and summer to similarly oppose the fast-moving tax legislation.

Health care industry groups and the CBO also have predicted that repealing the individual mandate could harm the health care marketplace. The nonpartisan American Academy of Actuaries on Tuesday [warned](#) Senate leaders that eliminating the mandate would lead healthy individuals to drop coverage, raising premiums for the remaining Americans in the individual insurance market and increasing the number of uninsured, barring a replacement mechanism that encouraged consumers to seek out health coverage. However, Standard & Poor's and other observers contend that repealing the mandate [may not be a devastating blow](#) to the insurance

markets.

In her op-ed, Murkowski called again for Congress to pass the package of reforms pushed by Sens. Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray, which the Alaska senator argued would stabilize the ACA's troubled individual insurance market.

"While I support repealing the individual mandate, I strongly support enacting the bipartisan compromise Alexander/Murray legislation into law as fast as possible to stabilize our markets, provide more control to states and more choices to individuals," Murkowski wrote.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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With TSA on the ropes, holiday travel may be a bear [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 11/22/2017 05:01 AM EDT

The Transportation Security Administration has bad news for tens of millions of Thanksgiving holiday travelers: Lines at airports may be even longer than usual as the agency tries once again to plug security holes in its baggage screening.

TSA is scrambling to respond to yet another damning [investigation](#) of its screening effectiveness, for the second time in little more than two years. And the agency is already phasing in revised security procedures — including those for passengers' electronic devices — that could cause "a slight increase in wait times," new TSA Administrator David Pekoske said in an interview.

"The procedure is new," Pekoske said. "It's new to passengers. It's somewhat new to our screeners."

The additional delays may not be as horrendous as the [hourslong queues](#) that left many passengers stranded at airports in the summer of 2016, a year after TSA leaders [launched a crash course](#) in security improvements in response to a previous failing grade from its inspector general.

But Pekoske said travelers could experience some of the longest wait times of the year on Sunday when many return home from the holiday. TSA has projected that more than 2.6 million passengers and airline crew members will be screened on Sunday alone, potentially making it one of the agency's top five busiest days ever.

The squeeze is the latest example of a predicament TSA has faced since its creation in 2001: trying to balance effective security with the need to move travelers efficiently through checkpoints. Obama-era TSA chief Peter Neffenger said the agency has spent almost all of its short lifespan fighting for the resources it needs — but when he reviewed what caused the poor performance in the 2015 audit, he found a "disproportionate emphasis on efficiency over

effectiveness."

"There was a lot of pressure, we thought, on the checkpoint agents to keep people moving," he said. "We also found that we didn't have as consistent and coordinated of a training system as I would have liked to have seen."

Neffenger added that he had hoped that TSA's performance would have improved by now.

Most details of the latest IG audit, released Sept. 27, are classified, but media reports indicate that TSA failed somewhere between 70 percent and 80 percent of covert tests, allowing fake explosives, firearms and other prohibited items to slip through undetected. That's only slightly better than the 95 percent failure rate that TSA suffered in its 2015 audit by the IG.

House Homeland Security Chairman Mike McCaul (R-Texas) said he was "disturbed" by the findings and urged TSA to quickly remedy the situation. "America's enemies only have to be right once, but we have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said at a Nov. 8 hearing.

Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the committee's top Democrat, told POLITICO that not only were the findings from this latest IG report "hair raising," they also showed little improvement since the 2015 audit.

Even before the results of the new investigation were made public, TSA had ordered new procedures that will require travelers to remove any electronics larger than a cellphone from their carry-on bags and place them in a separate bin for scanning. Pecoske said TSA is partially relying on these changes to help shore up gaps revealed by the most recent audit, in addition to improving workforce training so that it's more consistent and deploying new screening technology at airports.

TSA began phasing in the procedures nationwide this fall after testing them at 10 airports. They are now in effect at airports in Arizona, Maryland, New Mexico, New York and Virginia, among other areas. They will eventually be implemented at all U.S. airports.

"We look for windows of time where we can begin to phase [in] the implementation at airports across the country, and a window of time is between the end of the summer travel season and the beginning of the holiday travel season," Pecoske said. "We've found that that process [in total] will have, in the long term, a negligible impact on passenger wait times."

Passengers will be watching to see whether this iteration of TSA's improvement plan results in the same kind of travel headaches as when the Obama administration responded to the last audit failure by ordering an increase in bomb-sniffing dog teams, hand-wanding of passengers and random bag checks, among other things. The demands of that combined with an uptick in air travel overwhelmed the agency's slim staff, resulting in long lines, missed flights and lots of unhappy passengers.

Pecoske has, so far, not suggested a return to that type of manpower-centric approach. In fact, he has been a steadfast supporter of President Donald Trump's fiscal 2018 budget proposal, which would slash funding for TSA's canine teams, called VIPR, and eliminate a grant program that reimburses airports that hire local law enforcement.

Rather, Pecoske's approach seems to be continuing with the technology initiatives that have been underway for the past two years. And that's the element of his plan that seems to interest

Congress the most.

McCaul, for example, wants TSA to pivot to outfitting all U.S. airports with 3-D X-ray machines, known as computed tomography scanners, at every airport security checkpoint in the U.S. as soon as possible.

TSA is piloting CT scanners at several airports and expects to complete the pilot by next summer. Pekoske has warned that rushing the agency to move any faster than that could be risky, given the potential for glitches.

Neffenger said Congress may think TSA has been moving slowly to adopt new technologies, but he noted that his Innovation Task Force began brainstorming with industry on how to develop CT scanners small enough to fit at checkpoints following the IG's 2015 investigation. He said it took about a year and a half just to design a downsized version of the "huge" machines used for checked bags, without losing their effectiveness.

"They moved pretty quickly, I thought," he said.

Neffenger added that while he thinks Congress understands the need for technology, lawmakers should also provide TSA with a steady and predictable funding stream for technology development. It's also important that TSA has a clear research and development plan that drives industry to create the technology that it needs, he said. The fact that the IG continues to identify vulnerabilities points to the continuing need to evolve security checkpoints, he said.

Still, some think TSA could pick up the pace. Compared with other agencies like Customs and Border Protection, TSA's adoption of automated technologies has been slow, said James Benjamin Hutchinson, a senior director at NEC Corp. America. NEC is working with CBP to stand up a national entry and exit system that would track international travelers using facial recognition technology.

"TSA is somewhat slower to the game than a lot of these other agencies," he said. "I think working more closely — not that they haven't been — working a little more closely with the stakeholder community, with the airports and the airlines to accelerate their adoption and implementation of the technology — I think that's going to be helpful."

And with air travel continuing to rise to record highs, airline and travel groups are just as keen to see TSA come up with a plan to improve security procedures without creating checkpoint logjams.

A spokesman for the trade group Airlines for America said the organization is coordinating with TSA to "determine the most effective and efficient way to maintain the highest level of security for the traveling public."

The Global Business Travel Association said improved workforce training is critical to improving TSA's airport security performance. Agents need to constantly evaluate circumstances on the ground and look for behavioral cues that could alert them to threats, said association Executive Director Michael McCormick. "That is the biggest way to combat security threats on site," he said. "Technology doesn't solve everything. It's an enabler."

He said the association would also like to see TSA increase enrollment for PreCheck and other

"trusted traveler" programs to help narrow the pool of potential "bad actors."

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Turkey farmers facing squeeze after Trump kills agriculture rules [Back](#)

By Christine Haughney | 11/22/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Ike Horst raises 22,000 turkeys a year on his farm in the rolling hills of south-central Pennsylvania, selling them to a processing company that was providing him with enough of a nest egg that he hoped he could sell the farm and retire.

But a Trump administration decision to block proposed agriculture regulations may blow up those plans, preserving the multibillion-dollar meat industry's power over the smaller turkey farmers whose birds will grace the tables in millions of American homes this Thanksgiving.

Horst is one of the independent businessmen caught up in the Trump administration's governmentwide deregulation frenzy.

Obama-era rules that had yet to take effect would have given smaller farmers more power to set the terms of their deals with massive meat companies, empowering the growers to sue and better define abusive practices by processors and distributors under federal law. Trump's Agriculture Department killed two of the proposed rules, one of which would have taken effect in October.

Major agribusinesses like Cargill and Butterball fought the rules, saying they would lead to endless litigation between farmers and global food companies.

Trump's deregulatory strike — lauded by big business — has consequences, even for the mom-and-pop turkey farmers who raise free-range, antibiotic-free turkeys that have seen increasing demand as Americans become more socially conscious about the production of their foods.

Horst is afraid a planned sale of his farm will fall through because Plainville Farms, a major organic food producer and the primary customer for his turkeys, is requiring the buyer to install upgrades including fans, tunnel ventilation and a stationary generator if it wants to continue supplying to the company.

Under the rules Trump killed, Horst's buyer could have resisted such new costs.

"That was my retirement," said Horst, who is selling his farm for health reasons and is scheduled to close the sale in January.

In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, some turkey farmers said the processing and distribution companies already have been setting tougher terms. Farmers who produce birds for Plainville received letters in October amending their contracts by cutting performance incentives and demanding that they invest in equipment upgrades. They blame the Trump administration.

If Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue hadn't done away with the proposed rules, "the companies wouldn't be doing things like this," said Mike Weaver, a West Virginia poultry grower and president of the Organization for Competitive Markets, who has been contacted by Plainville's turkey growers about their fears. "We think this has emboldened the companies to abuse the growers."

Distributors and large poultry growers, for their part, have praised the decision to ditch the proposed Obama-era regulations, which were developed under USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration and are commonly referred to as the GIPSA rules. If allowed to go into effect, they "would have opened the floodgates to frivolous and costly litigation," said Mike Brown, president of the National Chicken Council.

Meanwhile, turkey farmers have fewer and fewer choices about where to sell their birds. Contract farmers account for 69 percent of turkey production, according to the USDA. As of 2011, 58 percent of turkey slaughter was controlled by just four companies: Butterball, Jennie-O, Cargill, and Farbest Foods.

As the industry has consolidated, margins for turkey farmers have gotten thinner. Billy Turner, a Virginia-based grower who raises 54,000 turkeys annually for Cargill, noted that when he started working 25 years ago, he earned \$2.25 to \$2.50 for each bird he raised. Now he receives \$1.35 a head. But he can't get out of the business because Cargill asked him recently to make upgrades to his barns that he had to take out a \$150,000 loan to pay for. He said those upgrades have raised his utility bills from \$75 a month to \$700 to \$800 a month. He survives by raising corn and cattle as well. He said if he raised only turkeys, "I couldn't do it. I would probably be bankrupt by now."

Plainville is not a large-scale, mass-market distributor, but one that supplies the high-end organic food segment. It specializes in antibiotic-free and organic turkey meat for which consumers pay a premium. But Plainville's farmers don't get much of that: Farmers interviewed for this article said the new contracts cut what they receive on turkeys to 11 cents a pound from 13 cents. Cook's Illustrated reported that these turkeys sell for more than 10 times more, for \$1.19 a pound.

The farmers point out that Plainville's parent company, Hain Celestial Group Inc., which promotes itself as a healthy food company and owns brands like Celestial Seasonings Tea, reported a 131 percent increase in profit in its most recent earnings statement.

When contacted by POLITICO, Mickey Baugher, vice president of operations for Plainville Farms, replied via a LinkedIn message that "our decision to modify the terms of our grower agreements were not influenced by any changes in GIPSA rules." He noted that even with the updated contracts, growers make 20 percent more than the average industry grower. He added, "We do not believe that any modifications to our grower agreements will have any effect on the quality of our turkeys."

The letter he sent to turkey growers also stated that "the decision to reduce grower pay was not made quickly or lightly" and that "having the best housing in the industry will benefit the welfare of our turkeys."

Mike Lilburn, an Ohio State University professor and unit supervisor of the Poultry Research Center, explained that turkey farms are now raising larger birds much faster and require newer ventilation systems.

"It has to be done for the grower to be competitive, and it has to be done for the company to be competitive with other companies out there," Lilburn said.

Several turkey farmers interviewed for this article, however, said that there are better, more cost-effective solutions. Horst, who has been raising turkeys since 1995, said that instead of installing expensive fans, he has let his turkeys go outside.

"The best thing is natural air," he said.

Years ago, Horst said, the processing and distribution companies, known as integrators, would meet with farmers to discuss contract changes before implementing them. That no longer happens. "Integrators don't want to hear the growers griping and complaining," he said.

Despite his financial worries, he calls turkey farming a "low-stress job," one made enjoyable by the comic antics of the birds. He talks to his turkeys and tells them he won't eat them. Instead, this Thanksgiving, he'll be eating an old German dish that involves stuffing a pig's stomach with sausage and potatoes. He thinks his turkeys appreciate it.

"It's like raising kids," he said. "If you enjoy kids, they'll do good for you. But if you mistreat your children, they're going to be in trouble all the time."

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Moore trumpets president's near-endorsement [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 11/22/2017 02:43 PM EDT

Roy Moore's Senate campaign quickly seized on President Donald Trump's apparent support for the embattled Alabama GOP nominee, parroting Trump's attacks on Moore's Democratic rival while trying to put the sexual misconduct allegations that have dominated the race in recent weeks on the back-burner.

But Democrat Doug Jones on Wednesday swung back, posting a web video featuring the names and photos of Moore's then-teenage accusers and asking, "We will make their abuser a U.S. senator?"

Moore got a boost from the president when Trump cast doubt on the accusations by a number of women who said that Moore, when he was in his 30s, sexually assaulted or molested them. Others said Moore also pursued them romantically as teenagers. But Trump, who had long been silent on the accusations, sounded skeptical Tuesday, saying that "40 years is a long time" since the alleged incidents and suggesting that he believed Moore's denials.

Trump's comments offered cover for Republicans who may have been wavering about voting for Moore. The comments also offered the former Alabama Supreme Court justice a prime opening to bash Jones, a former U.S. attorney. In the same set of comments to reporters, the president also knocked Jones as "bad on crime, bad on borders, bad with the military."

Moore's campaign pounced on those remarks instantly. One email sent Tuesday to supporters included just a YouTube video of Trump's remarks and a transcription. The subject line read, "Donald Trump Blasts Liberal Democrat Doug Jones." A second email — headlined "Moore campaign says 'Mexico First' policies of Doug Jones put Americans at Risk" — criticized Jones on border security and immigration.

Moore has mostly avoided attacking Jones during the campaign. But Alabama Republicans argued that Trump's comments were a boon for Moore and a chance to go on offense against the Democrat.

"President Trump's support signals a big boost for Judge Moore. Outside groups or individuals who were on the fence or sitting out should become re-engaged just a few weeks before the general election," said David Ferguson, a veteran GOP strategist and native Alabamian. "A Republican victory guarantees that a majority in the Senate is maintained, and if Roy Moore has definitely done wrong and resigns in the future, then it ensures the governor will be able to choose a Republican to replace him."

The GOP offensive comes as Jones looks to woo Alabama Republicans uncomfortable with Moore.

On Wednesday, Jones' campaign posted a new 30-second video scrolling through the women who "were girls when Roy Moore immorally pursued them." Jones is promoting the ad online, but it's unclear whether it will run on television.

Jones' recent TV ads have attempted to burnish his bipartisan credentials. One notes that he was confirmed as a U.S. attorney by a Senate that included both Sen. Richard Shelby and now-Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Another ad by the campaign quotes prominent Republicans — Ivanka Trump, Shelby and Sessions — separately saying they have no reason to doubt Moore's accusers. A pro-Jones super PAC, Highway 31, is touting Jones' support for gun rights and his Christian faith in an ad that began airing on Wednesday.

The Jones campaign has been dominating Moore in ad spending, and recent polls have shown either a tight race — an unusual situation for deep-red Alabama — or Jones with a lead.

One Republican pollster who wasn't authorized to speak on the record about the race conceded that Trump's comments do help Moore. But the pollster also cautioned, "We'll have to see what polling next week looks like to confirm."

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Keeping up with Congress — EPA cuts 7 Superfund sites — Coal mining deaths on rise
Date: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 4:06:38 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 01/02/2018 04:04 PM EDT

HATCH ACTS: Utah Sen. [Orrin Hatch](#), the longest serving Republican in the Senate, has announced he will retire at the end of the year. The move from the Senate's president pro tempore will likely open the door for a run by former GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney for his Utah seat and lines up [Thad Cochran](#) to take on the title of pro tempore. If Cochran retires, which some have speculated (but Cochran [has denied](#)), [Chuck Grassley](#) would take the title, according [to seniority](#). "Every good fighter knows when to hang up the gloves. And for me, that time is soon approaching," Hatch said in a video announcement today. "That's why after much prayer and discussion with family and friends, I've decided to retire at the end of this term." More [here](#).

Shuster, too? Pennsylvania GOP Rep. [Bill Shuster](#), chairman of the House Transportation Committee, will not seek reelection. Shuster said he "wants to focus exclusively on working with President [Donald] Trump to pass a massive infrastructure bill before he retires," he told the [Washington Examiner](#). "Rather than focusing on a reelection campaign, I thought it wiser to spend my last year as Chairman focusing 100 percent on working with President Trump and my Republican and Democratic colleagues in both chambers to pass a much needed infrastructure bill to rebuild America," Shuster said in a statement posted by his personal office.

Cramer vs. Heitkamp: North Dakota Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) is expected to meet with the president today, according to the [Grand Forks Herald's](#) Rob Port, and he's expected to discuss a now-likely Senate run. "The indications I'm getting almost universally from Republican political circles is that Cramer will almost certainly be in the Senate race against incumbent Democrat [Heidi Heitkamp](#)," Port writes.

Franken makes it official: Sen. [Al Franken](#) has officially resigned from Congress today, formally submitting his letter of resignation to Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton. Franken's replacement, Lt. Gov. Tina Smith, will be sworn in Wednesday when Congress reconvenes, the Minneapolis Star Tribune [reports](#).

Welcome to 2018 and welcome to the first edition of Afternoon Energy in the new year. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino, letting you all know I'll soon be moving to the morning and taking over Morning Energy for the intrepid Anthony Adragna. In the meantime, keep sending your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

EPA CUTS SEVEN SUPERFUND SITES: EPA has deleted "all or parts" of seven Superfund sites from the National Priorities List, the agency said today. EPA boasted that the number is "more than triple the number of sites removed from the list in 2016," which was two. "We have made it a priority to get these sites cleaned up faster and in the right way," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a statement. "By creating a streamlined task force and making major remedy decisions that hold potentially responsible parties accountable for clean

up, the Superfund program is carrying out the Agency's mission of protecting human health and the environment more every day." The agency says Pruitt has a list of 21 sites that have been targeted for "immediate and intense attention," in response to task force recommendations from this summer. See the names of the three entire deleted sites and the portions of four others [here](#).

STATES HOLD OWN CPP HEARINGS: If EPA won't hold additional public hearings on the Clean Power Plan, states, apparently, will do it for the agency. Delaware, Maryland and New York will hold "people's hearings" in the coming weeks on the proposed repeal of the rule, according to the State Energy & Environmental Impact Center at NYU Law. "These hearings will provide a much-needed forum for more voices to show how implementing the Clean Power Plan will turbocharge a clean energy economy that brings investment, jobs and energy security," David Hayes, executive director of the center and former Interior deputy secretary, said in a release. "State attorneys general are doing everything in their power to defend the landmark Clean Power Plan and stand ready to sue if and when repeal is finalized." The first such event [will occur](#) in Delaware on Jan. 8.

COAL DEATHS ON RISE: "Workplace deaths in the coal mining industry increased last year to their highest point in three years," The Hill reports. "A total of 15 miners died on the job in 2017, Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) data show, compared with eight in 2016. ... The 15th death occurred early Friday morning at a Revelation Energy mine in Fayette County in southern West Virginia, West Virginia Public Broadcasting [reported](#)." Read [more](#).

TRUMP REAFFIRMS NUCLEAR DEAL BLAME: The president took to Twitter today to warn "the U.S. is watching" ongoing anti-government demonstrations in Iran. Trump used his social media platform to again place blame on the nuclear deal struck with the support of former President Barack Obama, claiming it lined the pockets of the Iranian government. "The people of Iran are finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime. All of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave them went into terrorism and into their 'pockets,'" the president wrote on Twitter. "The people have little food, big inflation and no human rights. The U.S. is watching!" Read [more](#).

COLD CALLING: Cold temperatures plaguing the U.S. have chilled natural gas production in U.S. shale patches, Reuters reports. According to analyst estimates, Reuters reports "output of the heating fuel [is] down more than 20 percent since last month in North Dakota's Bakken region. ... Flows of natural gas on interstate pipelines out of North Dakota dropped to about 1 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) on Tuesday, down from about 1.3 bcf on Dec. 25, according to Genscape data. One bcf is enough gas to fuel about five million U.S. homes." Read [more](#).

STUDY: DESERTIFICATION AHEAD, IF NO PARIS: A [study](#) published Monday in Nature Climate Change found that more than one-quarter of the world's land would dry up if the Earth's temperature increases by 2 degrees Celsius by 2050 — a target the Paris climate agreement aims to counter. "The report says the solution is to prevent global warming from rising above 1.5 degrees C, which the researchers say would significantly reduce the number of regions of the world affected by 'aridification,' or the drying of the planet," the Washington Examiner reports. "Our research predicts that aridification would emerge over about 20-30 percent of the world's land surface by the time the global mean temperature change reaches 2 degrees C," Manoj Joshi, lead researcher from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, tells the Examiner. "But two-thirds of the affected regions could avoid significant aridification if warming is limited to 1.5 degrees C." Read [more](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Researchers can now blame warming for individual disasters, [E&E News](#).
- BP takes \$1.5 billion hit over U.S. tax changes, joining Shell, [Reuters](#).
- U.S. oil production surges as companies use smaller workforce, fewer rigs, [Chron](#).
- The U.S. just burned the most natural gas ever, [Bloomberg](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- White House [aides already anxious](#) about 2018
- "It's a giant present to the [tax lobbying community](#)"
- Warren positions for [potential 2020 run](#)

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Frail and disoriented, Cochran says he's not retiring [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan and Anna Palmer | 10/18/2017 04:53 PM EDT

Mississippi GOP Sen. Thad Cochran insists that he is not retiring from Congress, despite widespread speculation about the veteran lawmaker's health and political future.

The 79-year-old Cochran appeared frail and at times disoriented during a brief hallway interview on Wednesday. He was unable to answer whether he would remain chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and at one point, needed a staffer to remind him where the Senate chamber is located.

"Don't believe everything you hear," Cochran said in a low voice when asked whether he plans to retire after 44 years in office.

However, when queried about whether he would stay on as Appropriations chairman, Cochran seemed confused and just repeated the question. "As chairman of the Appropriations Committee?" Cochran asked.

Cochran had to be guided by staffers around a security checkpoint inside the Capitol. He started to walk into a first-floor room — though the Senate chamber is on the second floor. He was then ushered by an aide up to the Senate.

When another reporter asked whether leadership had pressured Cochran to return for a vote on the budget resolution — a key moment in the tax reform debate — Cochran smiled and responded, "It's a beautiful day outside."

Cochran sat quietly in his seat during Wednesday's lengthy vote session. He smiled and responded when a fellow senator stopped by to offer greetings, but generally did not speak to anyone else.

On one amendment, Cochran voted "yes" despite being told by an aide to vote "no." The staffer tried to get the senator to switch his vote, but Cochran kept flashing the "thumbs up" sign, even walking over to the clerk tallying the vote and doing so. GOP floor staffers repeatedly told him the leadership wanted a "no" vote. Several more moments passed before Cochran realized he was voting the wrong way and then changed his vote.

Cochran, who turns 80 in December, has faced questions about his health for the past several years. Cochran has been treated recently for urological problems, though his aides and political allies insisted he was fine. President Donald Trump last month spotlighted Cochran's health when he claimed that Obamacare repeal legislation would have passed had Cochran not been hospitalized. Cochran, though, wasn't in the hospital at that point.

Top Senate Republicans say they are not pressuring Cochran to retire or step down as Appropriations Committee chairman, a powerful perch from which he helps oversee hundreds of billions of dollars in government spending each year. Cochran made a career of steering federal dollars back home, working with former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) for years to ensure their state benefited from hundreds of "earmarks" inserted in annual appropriations bills.

The use of earmarks, which were banned in 2010 after the tea party movement helped Republicans regain control of Congress, helped make Cochran popular back home. He never faced a serious challenge from 1984 until 2014. But that year, conservative outside groups attacked him during the GOP primary and Cochran barely survived a runoff. He went on, however, to easily win the general election.

Cochran's seat is viewed as particularly important, given that the GOP establishment went all out to help him beat state Sen. Chris McDaniel in the 2014 primary.

Cochran is up for reelection in 2020, and Republicans are desperate for him to stay in office and avoid a special election. McDaniel already is planning a campaign against incumbent Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) in 2018.

Cochran was first elected to Congress in 1972, making him one of the longest serving GOP lawmakers in history. His election to the Senate in Mississippi in 1978 was a watershed moment for Republicans. Cochran was the first Republican to win a statewide election in Mississippi since Reconstruction.

Now, the state is overwhelmingly red, with the GOP controlling the governorship, Legislature and congressional delegation. President Donald Trump easily carried the state in the 2016 presidential election.

The Senate has had other once-vibrant members who faced questions about whether they still had the capacity to serve as they aged. The late Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) served until the age of 100, but was forced to give up the chairmanship of Armed Services. Another legendary lawmaker, the late Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) was eventually replaced as chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Burgess Everett contributed to this report.

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Hatch announces retirement, Romney likely to run [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt and Seung Min Kim | 01/02/2018 02:12 PM EDT

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), the longest-serving Republican senator, announced Tuesday he will not seek reelection in November. The move sets the stage for a likely run for his seat by former GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney.

"Every good fighter knows when to hang up the gloves. And for me, that time is soon approaching," the 83-year-old senator, who was first elected in 1976, said in a [video](#) announcement. "That's why after much prayer and discussion with family and friends, I've decided to retire at the end of this term."

The news caps months of speculation about Hatch's political future. President Donald Trump tried aggressively to persuade the Hatch to seek another term, orchestrating a visit to Utah in which the president lavished praise on the senator and rode with him on Air Force One.

Trump's move was aimed in no small part at keeping Romney out of the Senate. During the 2016 campaign, Romney emerged as a de facto leader of the "Never Trump" movement, calling then-candidate Trump a "fraud" and "phony" who was unfit to serve.

The two warmed to each other somewhat after the election, when Trump considered Romney to be his secretary of state. Yet the president and his closest advisers remain suspicious of the former Massachusetts governor. Romney has at times gone out of his way to criticize the new president, including for his response to white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, last year.

With Hatch out of the race, Romney will be the heavy favorite. The former Massachusetts governor, who is now residing in Utah, is widely popular in the state. He has spent the last few months huddling with key players in the state to discuss a prospective bid, including prominent businessman Kem Gardner and state House speaker Greg Hughes.

In a statement posted to Facebook Tuesday afternoon, Romney made no mention of a potential Senate bid.

"I join the people of Utah in thanking my friend, Senator Orrin Hatch for his more than 40 years of service to our great state and nation," Romney said. "As Chairman of the Senate Finance and Judiciary Committees and as the longest-serving Republican senator in U.S. history, Senator Hatch has represented the interests of Utah with distinction and honor. Ann and I wish Senator Orrin Hatch and his loving wife Elaine all the best in their future endeavors."

Hatch, who as the most senior Senate Republican serves as president pro tempore and is third in line for the presidency, had been coy for months about whether he would seek an eighth

term in office — particularly as the Republican tax overhaul effort unfolded on Capitol Hill.

As chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, Hatch recently helped shepherd through the biggest change to the tax code in a generation. The legislation slashed the corporate tax rate and reduced individual rates, while scrapping a key provision of Obamacare that required everyone to hold insurance.

Though the tax effort was contentious and partisan, Hatch also built up a record during his four decades on Capitol Hill of working with influential Democrats to produce landmark bills.

One is the Children's Health Insurance Program, which Hatch created alongside the late Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) in 1997. Funding for the law lapsed Sept. 30, although Congress has passed a short-term infusion of money for the popular program benefiting 9 million lower-income children.

Hatch and Kennedy had struck a close friendship: A songwriter in his free time, Hatch penned a tune for the Massachusetts Democrat when he remarried in 1992.

Hatch, who also chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee, was among the first senators to support the Dream Act with Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) in 2001 — legislation that would create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as minors.

Once Hatch retires, Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi will become the chamber's most senior Senate Republican, though Cochran has also faced speculation that he could soon retire. Next in line after Cochran in seniority among Senate Republicans is Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa.

Grassley is also in line to take over Hatch's influential Finance Committee gavel if Republicans keep control of the Senate in the 2018 midterm elections. But Grassley — who can serve for two more years as Finance chairman under the Senate GOP's term limits — would have to give up his position as head of the Senate Judiciary Committee to do so.

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As protests rage in Iran, Trump backs demonstrators, blames Obama [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 01/02/2018 07:49 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's administration backed anti-government protesters in Iran Tuesday, seizing an opportunity to criticize not just a foreign government that the White House has framed as a chief foe but also the administration of Barack Obama.

Trump tweeted that "the U.S. is watching" the ongoing anti-government demonstrations across Iran, blaming the nuclear deal struck with the support of former President Obama for lining the pockets of the Iranian government.

"The people of Iran are finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime. All of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave them went into terrorism and into their

'pockets,'" the president wrote on Twitter. "The people have little food, big inflation and no human rights. The U.S. is watching!"

Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the U.S. would call for emergency sessions of the United Nations security and human rights councils in New York and Geneva, respectively, to address the Iranian government's crackdown on protesters. She said the Islamic Republic's suggestion that the protests had been fueled by outside influences was "complete nonsense."

"This is the precise picture of a long-oppressed people rising up against their dictators. The international community has a role to play on this," Haley said at a press conference at the UN in New York. "If the Iranian dictatorship's history is any guide, we can expect more outrageous abuses in the days to come...The people of Iran are crying out for freedom. All freedom loving people must stand with their cause."

Tuesday marked the sixth day of protests in Iran, where a flagging economy and an uptick in food prices have prompted demonstrators to chant anti-government slogans. The Associated Press reported Tuesday that at least nine people had been killed overnight, including a member of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, raising the overall death toll from the protests to at least 20.

In Tehran, the Iranian capital, 450 protesters have been arrested since demonstrations began, the AP reported.

The protests are the largest in Iran since 2009, when the disputed reelection of Iran's then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sparked anti-government demonstrations. In what seemed a veiled criticism of the Obama administration's response to those earlier demonstrations, Haley said Tuesday that "the international community made the mistake of failing" to support Iranian protesters in 2009. "We must not make that mistake again."

At Tuesday's press briefing, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders echoed Haley's warning, telling reporters that "the international community cannot sit silent as it did" in 2009. She stopped short of saying that the president would like to see regime change in Iran, instead listing Trump's priorities as "basic human rights" for the Iranian people and an end to Iran's support for groups deemed by the U.S. government to be terrorist organizations.

"The Iranian people are angry at the rising tide of corruption in their daily lives. The people are tired of paying the price for their violent and corrupt rulers," Sanders said. "The citizens of Iran have paid a heavy price for the violence and extremism of their leaders and the Iranian people long to reclaim their country's proud history, its culture, its civilization and its cooperation with its neighbors."

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif took a shot on Twitter at Trump and U.S. foreign policy, writing that "Iran's security and stability depend on its own people, who — unlike the peoples of Trumps regional 'bffs'—have the right to vote and to protest. These hard-earned rights will be protected, and infiltrators will not be allowed to sabotage them through violence and destruction."

U.S. Undersecretary of State Steve Goldstein on Tuesday called on Iran, however, to stop blocking social media sites, including Instagram and the messaging service Telegram, calling them "legitimate avenues for communication," according to an [Associated Press report](#). The U.S. has an obligation "not to stand by," Goldstein said, and will "encourage the protesters to

continue to fight for what's right."

Trump's Tuesday tweet echoed similar sentiments to those he has expressed online over the last three days. He has long been critical of the landmark nuclear deal negotiated in part by the Obama administration, [taking steps last year to imperil it](#) without yet making good on his campaign promise to remove the U.S. from it entirely.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hinted that outside influence may be playing a role in the unrest in his nation, suggesting via a statement on his official website that "in the recent days' incidents, enemies of Iran utilized various means — including money, weapon, politics and intelligence apparatuses — to create problems for the Islamic system."

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White House aides already anxious about 2018 [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson, Annie Karni and Andrew Restuccia | 01/01/2018 06:01 PM EDT

President Donald Trump returned to Washington from his sunny holiday break in Florida in an upbeat mood, relaxed and rested — but many of his top aides are dreading what's to come in 2018.

After ending their first year on a high, signing a sweeping tax reform bill into law, Trump's advisers are divided about how to capitalize on that victory and maintain momentum going forward with Hill Republicans again at odds over their legislative agenda.

They're facing a brain drain on a White House that already had trouble recruiting top talent. Many senior West Wing aides are expected to depart in the coming year, with no replacements lined up. White House chief of staff John Kelly — who has already fired several presidential aides — wants to push out more but has struggled to find suitable alternatives.

And they're still working under the shadow of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, despite repeated assurances from the White House legal team that the inquiry is wrapping up.

The grim reality of 2018 has generated a sense of foreboding among White House aides, according to more than a dozen current and former officials and outside advisers. West Wing aides, who worked furiously to push through legislation and executive actions during Trump's first year in office, expect limited prospects for getting things done in Washington this year heading into a contentious midterm election.

"They absolutely should worry about 2018," said Ari Fleischer, a former press secretary to President George W. Bush. "I do fear a wave election. Democrats are highly motivated to vote against Trump and all Republicans. Trump has got to grow beyond the base, and he has got to make himself less hated among a group in the middle."

While Republicans were unified in their desire to reform the tax code, they are now split over which legislative initiative to tackle next — a dispute the Trump White House, which has

sometimes delegated the nuts and bolts of legislating to congressional leaders, has done little to settle.

And with a diminished margin in the Senate — after Roy Moore's loss in Alabama, Republicans now hold just a 51-seat majority — White House aides and Republicans in Congress say they have little hope that much if any meaningful legislation will reach the president's desk before the midterms.

Behind the scenes, White House aides and Trump's outside advisers are engaged in a fierce debate over the shape of this year's agenda. At issue: whether to appeal to traditional conservative voters by tackling welfare reform or instead push forward on the president's long-promised infrastructure plan, which could attract Democratic support and win over a broader slice of the electorate.

Several Trump advisers have urged the president to strike a more bipartisan tone this year, encouraging him to facilitate a deal with Democrats on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program for young undocumented immigrants and then quickly move to an infrastructure package — a sequence that would significantly delay welfare legislation.

The advisers have told the president that passing infrastructure legislation could help Republicans hold the House, pointing to polling that shows the issue is popular with the public.

Trump met before Christmas in the Oval Office with his former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski; his former director of digital media, Brad Parscale; presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway and others about the merits of each option, according to people familiar with the discussion.

The president has privately told top aides at various points that he is eager to pursue both infrastructure and welfare reform. But Trump's top policy adviser on the subject, Paul Winfree, recently left the White House to return to the Heritage Foundation, and the president has more recently signaled that he believes infrastructure has the best chance of winning bipartisan support and buoying Republicans in the fall.

Some of the president's outside advisers say that's the right approach. "Infrastructure first," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a longtime Trump ally. "I wouldn't touch entitlements. There's zero reason to pick a fight on any of those in an election year."

But House Speaker Paul Ryan has repeatedly said he is determined to reform welfare. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, however, has publicly dismissed the idea, [telling National Public Radio](#) that he is "not interested" in taking on the issue on a party-line basis — and Democrats are in no mood to cooperate ahead of the midterms.

Trump, McConnell and Ryan are expected to settle their differences in a meeting at Camp David the first week in January, though one administration official said he nonetheless expects "lot of infighting."

The president stormed into office with a series of executive orders, but questions also linger about what the president will be able to accomplish at the executive level in the coming year. Aides expect a renewed push on trade, including the possibility that Trump will slap China and other economic competitors with tariffs in the coming weeks.

The issue was largely put on the back burner in recent months so it wouldn't distract from tax reform, according to one White House aide, but the administration is weighing trade measures on everything from steel to solar imports, stoking deep concern among Trump's free-market advisers that the president could spark a trade war.

Administration officials have been working quietly for months to curb the influence of Trump's protectionist advisers. Though the White House's leading China critic, trade adviser Peter Navarro, has been sidelined, the president's free-market aides fear their efforts have had little effect on Trump's thinking.

Compounding this challenging legislative terrain is the departure of senior aides, including deputy national security adviser Dina Powell; Jeremy Katz, deputy director of the National Economic Council; and Winfree, who was deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Few expect Gary Cohn — the director of the National Economic Council, which has emerged as the White House's central policymaking hub — to stay in the administration until the end of 2018. Cohn, the former Goldman Sachs president who was integral in the passage of tax reform, is likely to depart either at the end of January or in August, at the close of the legislative session, according to a senior White House aide. Cohn has assembled a team of policy aides on the NEC — including Katz, who departs in late January — and many of his staffers are expected to follow him if he leaves.

People familiar with plans for staff changes said Johnny DeStefano, already head of the White House personnel office and interim head of the Office of Public Liaison, will also oversee the White House's political affairs and intergovernmental affairs offices — a combined portfolio bigger than any ever held by previous West Wing staff, including Valerie Jarrett under President Barack Obama or Karl Rove under President George W. Bush, one former White House official noted.

The decision to elevate DeStefano — who struggled running the personnel office last year and was slow to fill positions — rather than bringing in outsiders is another sign that the White House is having trouble recruiting new staff. Two people familiar with the hiring process said Trump's White House has had difficulty attracting outside talent as a result of the Russia probe, the complicated government vetting process and the cap on federal employees' salaries.

"My advice to them is find younger people," Gingrich said of a president who favors generals, billionaires and CEOs that he views as peers. "There are lots of ambitious people who can do the jobs. He can lean on Kelly, while Kelly hires young people."

Amid the churn, there is expected to be at least one constant for Trump: the presence, in the West Wing, of family members Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, whom insiders say now plan to stay in Washington at least through the 2018 school year.

After a rocky first year — when even the president questioned whether having family members serving in senior White House posts was a good idea after all — the marginalized power couple plan to start off 2018 with lower profiles and smaller, more defined portfolios than those they pursued in Trump's first year in office, according to a White House official.

Ivanka Trump will continue to serve as a surrogate selling tax reform, promoting STEM and female entrepreneurs. Behind the scenes, she is expected to continue what the official called "quiet talks" around paid family leave. Kushner, meanwhile, will be working on Middle East

peace, while also working on criminal justice reform, North American Free Trade Agreement negotiations and a potential infrastructure bill.

Kushner, for his part, is still widely viewed as the White House official with the most exposure in Mueller's probe, having reportedly instructed former national security adviser Michael Flynn during the presidential transition to reach out to United Nations Security Council member countries, including Russia, to encourage them to oppose a resolution on Israeli settlements.

While the White House's lawyers, led by Beltway powerhouse Ty Cobb, have been assuring Trump that Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the election is likely to conclude in the coming weeks, most of the president's senior aides not only dismiss that as fantasy, but also expect the special counsel's investigation to ramp up in the coming year.

For Trump's closest aides, that means weeks, and potentially months, of the president's dark moods — which his lawyers have sought to alleviate in part by assuring him the investigation was nearing its conclusion, first by Thanksgiving and then by year's end. It's a strategy that one White House aide predicted the president is likely to pick up on.

"I'm among those who can't conceive of it ending in a matter of a few weeks," said a prominent Washington attorney advising one member of the administration. "I can't imagine they actually believed it when they said it, though it's hard to imagine lawyers deliberately misleading their client like that."

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Warren positions herself for potential 2020 run [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti | 01/02/2018 05:02 AM EDT

Elizabeth Warren has spent the past year making a series of below-the-radar moves that would put her in prime position to run for president in 2020 if she decides to.

The liberal icon and Republican bete noire has amassed more money in her campaign war chest than nearly any senator in modern history, groomed political connections with Democrats who've been skeptical of her in the past, and worked to bolster her bipartisan and foreign policy bona fides.

It's part of a conscious break from the heads-down posture that Warren purposefully maintained during the first five years of her Senate career, a wide range of Democrats close to the Massachusetts senator and her tight-knit political operation told POLITICO. And it's representative of Warren's tricky navigation between the wishes of advocates who want her cutting a clear path to 2020, and supporters who think her best bet is to run up the score in her reelection race this year.

The balancing act is evident everywhere, as Warren takes steps she never did when activists were pressuring her to jump into the 2016 presidential race.

Warren is sitting on more campaign cash — \$12.8 million — than nearly any other incumbent senator ever has at this point in an election cycle, despite what's expected to be an easy reelection. But she also held 17 town hall events back home in Massachusetts last year.

She spent the year meeting with prominent figures with whom she's disagreed in the past — from former President Barack Obama to JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon — sit-downs that could come in handy if she runs for president. But Warren shied from repeated invitations to political events across Iowa and New Hampshire.

And Warren has stocked her political staff with a research team directed to scour her past for political vulnerabilities — an undertaking that appears aimed at a national bid. But the group of five aides is also monitoring a gaggle of potential Republican reelection opponents in Massachusetts, where hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, a top backer of President Donald Trump, has funded a super PAC assailing her.

"Big money is already running attack ads against her, and she is and should be taking them very seriously. She won the first time with a formidable grass-roots organization, and she should be doing the same thing again," said former Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1988, who keeps in touch with Warren. "There will be plenty of time after that to think about the national scene."

Yet the result of all her subtly intensifying prep is that one year after Trump's win, she is firmly in the top tier of Democratic presidential contenders, one of just three figures — with Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden — whom all other hopefuls must consider carefully before launching their own bids.

Warren used the publicity tour for her best-selling book that was published in April to crisscross the country and get face time with voters. Warren also reconnected with heavyweight donors who tuned in to her 2012 race — headlining events hosted by Esprit founder Susie Tompkins Buell in San Francisco and former UBS executive Robert Wolf in Martha's Vineyard, for example.

And she activated a potent network of small-dollar contributors who watch her online, especially after "[nevertheless, she persisted](#)" became a national resistance rallying cry around her.

Warren has worked to thaw her relations with local reporters after years of offering them little access, a shift that could help her prepare for the rough-and-tumble media treatment of a presidential campaign. And she has hired a staff heavy on digital talent and researchers — a line of mobilization and defense that could come in handy for both 2018 and 2020.

Increasingly the target of ire from Trump himself as he eyes his own reelection bid, Warren has started punching back on television and online when the president refers to her as "Pocahontas," a derisive nickname referring to her [claiming](#) Cherokee heritage to law school administrators in the mid-1980s.

And while Warren's cooperation with Senate Republicans this year isn't likely to transform her reputation as one of the most liberal members of Congress, it has been a striking change of pace.

She worked with Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley on legislation to improve access to hearing aids,

and with Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski on opioid funding, earning unexpected praise from conservative colleagues. Plus, as a new member of the Armed Services Committee, Warren took a Fourth of July trip to Afghanistan with Arizona Sen. John McCain and South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Still, she also often speaks of GOP proposals in harsher terms than many of her colleagues are willing to, ginning up the Democratic grass roots.

Republican senators only have one principle left, she said on the Senate floor last month as they finalized their tax bill: "Reward billionaire campaign donors."

"The stuff that Trump is focused on, a lot of it is big breaks to big corporations and the banks and others, and that's in her sweet spot, that's why she was elected, it's what she cares about," said Doug Rubin, the longtime Democratic strategist who helped lead Warren's 2012 Senate campaign. "So you may see more of her, just because this stuff is out there."

While Warren carefully avoided the early-state limelight after visiting both Iowa and New Hampshire for others in previous election cycles, her political schedule carved out ample opportunity to cultivate politically useful allies in other influential areas.

On top of visiting battleground states Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin, in part to raise campaign cash for Senate colleagues there, Warren is by far the most prominent early backer of Ohio gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray, the former director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which Warren helped create.

"She has been, really, a nonstop presence here since 2016," said David Pepper, chairman of Ohio's Democratic Party. "For her to lend her nationally credible voice to him is obviously a big boost to him, and if he were to be our nominee, would be a huge boost to the Sherrod [Brown] reelection and our efforts to win the governor's mansion back."

"She's earned a lot of goodwill with people here," he added.

Warren also went out of her way to build connections in communities where she's less well-known, and to reach out to other Democrats who have viewed her warily in the past.

Warren entered 2017 having spent less time on civil rights issues or courting African-American voters than some of her colleagues also considering national runs. But she developed a relationship with Bernice King — Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter — after being silenced for reading Coretta Scott King's letter denouncing Jeff Sessions when the Senate was debating Sessions' nomination to be attorney general early last year. She built ties with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and met with the Rev. Al Sharpton in Washington in October, in addition to addressing the NAACP and other civil rights groups.

One of Warren's most significant challenges in rising to the top of the Democratic Party would be winning over longtime party figures who associate her with a Bernie Sanders-style progressive insurgency. But she has been meeting with major party players behind the scenes. Warren sat down last year with Obama — with whom she occasionally clashed during his administration — according to a Democrat familiar with the meeting, and she spoke with Biden in September.

Such steps are significant because for a potential 2020 bid to be successful, Warren would

likely need to rely on the kind of grass-roots progressive energy that fueled Sanders' 2016 bid without turning off more moderate voters and Hillary Clinton allies.

Already, it's been a difficult tight rope for the anti-big bank crusader to walk. She faced blowback from donors and party establishment figures after she told CNN in November that "Yes," the Democratic National Committee had been rigged in Clinton's favor in 2016, a comment she quickly tried to clean up.

And in July, former Clinton adviser Mark Penn singled out Warren by name in a New York Times op-ed blaming her for the party's turn toward "sharply leftist ideas."

Warren responded the next month in a blistering speech at Atlanta's Netroots Nation conference.

"We're not going back to the days when a Democrat who wanted to run for a seat in Washington first had to grovel on Wall Street. Democrats are heading forward, we are looking ahead, and we will not, we shall not, we must not allow anyone to turn back the clock," she said, calling Penn a "so-called Democratic strategist."

Clinton herself has spoken favorably of Warren during her own book tour, and the references to the senator in the former secretary of state's post-campaign memoir are noticeably more positive than those about Sanders or Biden. And while the Vermont senator may still run for president again, he and Warren have recently teamed up for a series of videos and a New York Times op-ed of their own blasting the GOP agenda on Capitol Hill.

If there was any political tension between the two, it hasn't translated to the screen.

After filming one of the December videos, on the federal budget, Sanders posted a photo on Instagram of the pair smiling.

"Today I had a chat with my favorite senator," he wrote. "Elizabeth Warren."

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Afternoon Energy: Moving swiftly after monument reductions — ITC votes for biodiesel duties — New York Times sues EPA over Pruitt records
Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 4:26:28 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/05/2017 04:24 PM EDT

With help from Anthony Adragna and Ben Lefebvre

MOVING SWIFTLY AFTER MONUMENT REDUCTIONS: Utah's congressional delegation has introduced two pieces of legislation codifying smaller footprints for the Bears Ears ([H.R. 4532 \(115\)](#)) and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments and establishing specific land management plans for the areas. House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#), joined by Utah Reps. [Chris Stewart](#) and [John Curtis](#), pushed back strongly on charges the substantially reduced monuments would pave the way for oil and gas drilling. "The idea we're going to give these over to oil and gas companies is a false narrative. It's a silly narrative," Bishop told reporters. "This is not about development versus protection. This is about how you best manage the lands." He said he was hoping to see the bills hit the House floor in January.

That comes as a third lawsuit, filed by the Conservation Lands Foundation, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners and the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, challenged President Donald Trump's proclamation significantly trimming the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument on Monday. That filing is [here](#).

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke also publicly released his report detailing his proposals for Trump to shrink a handful of national monuments. Read it [here](#).

ABOUT THAT PATAGONIA BANNER: Zinke fired back after outdoor gear company Patagonia changed its website to show its discontent over Trump's Utah announcement. Appearing on "[Fox & Friends](#)" this morning, Zinke criticized companies that "make their products other places, on foreign shores and special interest groups." The secretary went on to say the Utah designation restores "national forests to a national forest," and opens up public land for greater access for hunting, fishing and grazing. Later, Zinke again knocked the retailer, [telling reporters](#), "You mean Patagonia, made in China? This is an example of a special interest. ... The federal estate remains intact."

Patagonia, which changed [its website](#) to read "The President Stole Your Land" after Tuesday's announcement, struggled to handle traffic drawn to its site, Bloomberg [reports](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ITC VOTES FOR BIODIESEL DUTIES: A move today by the U.S. International Trade Commission could open the door for a potential WTO challenge against the U.S. over biodiesel tariffs, Pro Trade's Doug Palmer reports. In a 4-0 vote, the ITC approved hefty double-digit duties on imports of biodiesel from Argentina and Indonesia, citing sufficient evidence of injury to U.S. producers. The move paves a path for the Commerce Department to

issue "[final countervailing duties](#) in the range of 72 percent on imports from Argentina and 35 percent to 65 percent on imports from Indonesia," Doug writes. Argentina President Mauricio Macri told [Reuters](#) last month that Argentina would challenge the duties at the WTO if the Trump administration went through with the measures. The nation exported about \$1.2 billion worth of biodiesel to the United States last year, while Indonesia exported about \$268 million.

The National Biodiesel Board, which brought the case along with 15 domestic producers, cheered today's news. "This unanimous vote is important progress to addressing the harm by this unfair trade on biodiesel," said Donnell Rehagen, chief executive officer of the group, in a statement. "... We are gratified that countervailing duty orders will contribute to leveling the playing field such that the domestic industry has the opportunity to produce at the levels it knows it can." Read [more](#).

API LAUNCHES METHANE REDUCTION INITIATIVE: The American Petroleum Institute today announced a voluntary program to curb methane and volatile organic compound emissions, creating a "Environmental Partnership" with 26 natural gas and oil producers. API said the participating companies — which includes BP, Chesapeake Energy, Chevron, ConocoPhillips and Shell — will begin implementing the program starting Jan. 1. "This groundbreaking partnership further demonstrates the industry's leadership and commitment to responsibly developing America's energy resources while reducing emissions," Jack Gerard, API's president and CEO, said in a statement. Read more of the partnership details [here](#).

Faint applause: But API isn't getting much praise for the [methane reduction program](#). The trade association is the latest to come out with guidelines to cut methane emissions, after Exxon Mobil's XTO unit issued its own methane reduction [guidelines](#) in September, and Exxon, BP, Shell and other industry heavyweights [pledged last month](#) they would reduce methane emissions by improving accuracy of emissions data, working with nonprofits and other measures.

API's version, however, focuses on its members replacing equipment "as expeditiously as practicable" and installing leak detection devices within five years. The Environmental Defense Fund, which [praised](#) the earlier corporate pledges, did not have the same enthusiasm for API's offering. "The last several months have produced a number of good examples of what leadership in reducing methane looks like," EDF Associate Vice President Matt Watson said. "The API program falls well short of these industry led efforts and doesn't reflect best practice in reductions or disclosure."

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO FOIA: EPA is being sued by The New York Times over its refusal to regularly release Administrator Scott Pruitt's full daily schedule and who he meets with. In the [lawsuit](#) filed on Monday, the newspaper, along with Washington-based reporter Eric Lipton, allege EPA is violating public records laws by failing to routinely release those records, Emily Holden reports. "Agency heads' daily schedules have long provided a valuable way for the public to be knowledgeable about important agency decisions, including those that affect the health and safety of their families and themselves," the suit says. EPA previously released Pruitt's meetings with automobile, chemical, fossil fuel and steel executives, and with lobbyists who worked with him when he was Oklahoma Attorney General, in response to a FOIA from the nonprofit group American Oversight — something the Times says EPA must do again, and more regularly. Read [more](#).

EXXON-MASSACHUSETTS BEGINS: Exxon today urged the Massachusetts Supreme

Judicial Court to block the state's attorney general from obtaining records related to whether the company hid its knowledge of the role of fossil fuels in climate change. Reuters reports Exxon lawyer Justin Anderson said his "arguments were focused only on whether Attorney General Maura Healey had jurisdiction to seek records to probe whether the oil company misled consumers and investors." Anderson argued not on the merits of the climate change, but instead "said Healey was improperly trying to establish jurisdiction in part based on more than 300 Exxon-branded gas stations in Massachusetts operated by franchisees to justify probing into the Texas-based company's actions elsewhere," Reuters writes.

Richard Johnston, Healey's chief legal counsel, meanwhile contended Exxon had "control over the franchisees' marketing and conducted advertising on their behalf," Reuters reports. "We should be able to find out if whether they knew about impact of fossil fuels on global warming so they should have said more in those advertisements," Johnston said. The justices gave no indication how they would rule, but "some expressed skepticism that the 300 stations could not create jurisdiction, even if consumers bought gas from a franchisee." Read [more](#).

HOUSE GOP LAYS OUT FUNDING TIMELINE: House GOP leaders will vote on a two-week spending stopgap to fund the government, POLITICO's Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris [report](#), with Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) today pushing for a pre-Christmas vote. Republicans today said the spending bill, [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#), would not be taken up by the Rules Committee until Wednesday, instead of this afternoon as previously planned. A floor vote now is not expected until Thursday, as whipping continues. Remember: Government funding expires on Friday, and it's still unclear if the Democratic support needed in the Senate is there.

MOVER, SHAKER: Terry Boss, senior vice president of environment, safety and operations at the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, will retire after 23 years with the group, INGAA said today. Boss will officially depart on Dec. 31, after leading INGAA's efforts on pipeline safety and operations. INGAA also announced Rebecca Massello will take on the role of director of security, reliability and resilience. Massello, along with Operations, Safety and Integrity Director CJ Osman will acquire Boss' portfolio.

QUICK HITS:

- Interior won't say what it's doing with coal health study, [Bloomberg](#).
- Tribes: Trump's monument order disrespects native people, [Associated Press](#).
- Arctic ice loss could spell more drought for California, Livermore Lab study finds, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).
- How fossil fuel donors shaped the anti-climate agenda of a powerful congressional committee, [InsideClimate News](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Pro-trade GOP senators to urge Trump [to stay in NAFTA](#)
- [Mueller Russia probe](#) cost \$3.2 million in first months
- Conyers announces [he's leaving Congress](#), endorses son as successor

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/moving-swiftly-after-monument-reductions-040895>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

ITC imposes duties on biodiesel imports from Argentina, Indonesia [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 12/05/2017 10:12 AM EDT

The U.S. International Trade Commission today approved hefty double-digit duties on imports of biodiesel from Argentina and Indonesia, opening the door for a possible World Trade Organization challenge against the United States.

The trade panel voted 4-0 there was enough evidence of injury to U.S. producers to justify the restrictions.

The move clears the way for the Commerce Department to issue [final countervailing duties](#) in the range of 72 percent on imports from Argentina and 35 percent to 65 percent on imports from Indonesia.

Importers have already been required to post cash deposits based on those rates.

Biodiesel is made from a diverse mix of resources such as recycled cooking oil, soybean oil and animal fats, and can be used in existing diesel engines without modification, according to the National Biodiesel Board, which brought the case along with 15 domestic producers.

Argentina exported about \$1.2 billion worth of the energy product to the United States last year and Indonesia exported about \$268 million.

That was a combined increase of 464 percent from 2014 levels, taking 18.3 percentage points of market share from U.S. manufacturers, the biodiesel board said.

Argentina President Mauricio Macri told [Reuters](#) last month that Argentina would challenge the duties at the WTO if the Trump administration went through with the measures.

Argentina had hoped to settle the dispute by negotiating a minimum price for its exports, but no agreement was reached before the Commerce Department announced its final countervailing duty determinations last month.

Indonesian Trade Minister Enggartiasto Lukita has also [threatened](#) to challenge the duties either through the U.S. court system or at the WTO.

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New York Times suing EPA for Pruitt schedules [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/05/2017 10:39 AM EDT

The New York Times is suing EPA to try to force the agency to regularly release Administrator Scott Pruitt's full daily schedule and details on who he meets with.

In a [lawsuit](#) filed Monday in the U.S. District Court for D.C., the Times and Washington-based reporter Eric Lipton allege EPA is violating public records laws by failing to routinely release those records.

Since joining EPA, Pruitt has met with automobile, chemical, fossil fuel and steel executives, and with lobbyists who worked with him when he was Oklahoma Attorney General to challenge federal environmental rules, according to records released in response to an earlier Freedom of Information Act request from the nonprofit group American Oversight. The Times says FOIA requires EPA to release that level of information for other Pruitt meetings, and to regularly respond to requests for updated copies of Pruitt's schedule.

EPA chiefs under previous presidents have routinely released detailed calendars in response to regular records requests from reporters and public interest groups. Pruitt's EPA has been intermittently updating a [vague list](#) of appointments, which the lawsuit called insufficient.

"Agency heads' daily schedules have long provided a valuable way for the public to be knowledgeable about important agency decisions, including those that affect the health and safety of their families and themselves," the suit says. "When the public knows who has the ear of an agency head and for how long, and what interests they represent, the public is better equipped to ensure that agencies remain accountable and free from undue and undisclosed influence."

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House GOP leaders vow no deals with Democrats on stopgap spending [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/05/2017 11:06 AM EDT

House Republican leaders have promised conservatives that they won't grant concessions to Democrats to get enough votes for a stopgap spending bill — gaining GOP support but also raising the specter of a government shutdown later this month.

Majority party leaders in the House tentatively decided Tuesday morning to hold tight on their plan to fund the government through Dec. 22, bucking calls from conservatives to move the deadline to Dec. 30.

Still whipping to ensure sufficient GOP support, leaders pushed off a Rules Committee meeting and final floor action by a day, with House passage on the two-week patch, [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#), now expected Thursday. Government funding runs out on Friday.

Those intraparty talks will drag into Wednesday, after a huddle with House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), conservative holdouts and defense hawks ended without a resolution Tuesday afternoon. A final decision isn't expected until Wednesday morning, after another last-minute meeting by the House Freedom Caucus.

The problem with the House strategy is that Senate Republicans still need the votes of at least eight Senate Democrats to advance spending legislation, likely resulting in deal-making later this month that won't fly with fiscal conservatives in the House.

Enough Senate Democratic votes appear possible for a "clean" stopgap spending bill, or continuing resolution, that would extend from Friday until Dec. 22. Both parties hope to have reached a bipartisan, two-year agreement on overall spending levels for defense and non-defense programs by later in the month.

"We don't know what the House is going to do, but if it's a short-term CR, it gives us a little more time to do the things we're talking about now," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) told reporters Tuesday afternoon, noting that top congressional leaders plan to meet with President Donald Trump on Thursday to work on topline budget caps.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) also indicated that Republicans in the upper chamber are gunning for a two-week stopgap rather than a deal until Dec. 30, which he said isn't "the best way to go forward."

But the trouble could come with the vote on a second stopgap just before the Christmas holiday, when Democrats would be expected to make more demands such as an agreement on how to treat DREAMers, young undocumented immigrants. If GOP leaders in the lower chamber stay true to their promises to the likes of the House Freedom Caucus, the game plan could result in shutdown-spurring deadlock right before lawmakers plan to leave town for the holidays.

The scheduling changes in the House came after members of the Freedom Caucus temporarily [withheld support](#) on a tax vote Monday night to get leaders to opt for a Dec. 30 deadline.

But for now, fiscal hardliners seem appeased by other commitments they've clinched after making that demand.

Rep. [Dave Brat](#) (R-Va.), a member of the Freedom Caucus, said leaders "made some great assurances" during a Tuesday morning Republican Conference meeting that "the team stays together" on issues that could emerge.

"And that means you don't go to the Democrats like usual at Christmastime or right after," Brat told reporters.

Longtime spending leader Rep. [Hal Rogers](#) (R-Ky.) suggested House lawmakers could try to force the Senate to accept their version of the second patch.

"If we pass a bill on or about the 22nd and go home, then the Senate will need to make up its mind about what to do about that," Rogers said. "The option is either: Pass or have a shutdown in place."

Ryan expressed confidence that the initial funding measure will pass this week but didn't address prospects for a deal beyond Dec. 22.

"I feel like we're going to have a majority, and we're going to have 218 for passing the CR we had this week," Ryan told reporters Tuesday morning. "We're having a good conversation with our members about timing and date and tactics and all the rest. The point is, we're having the kind of family discussion that we need to have on how to proceed forward with a majority, and

I'm confident we'll have that."

In punting the drama to the week before Christmas, GOP lawmakers may try to jam Democrats with big boosts to defense spending.

An unlikely mix of conservatives and defense hawks is still eyeing a plan to attach a full year of Pentagon funding to the Dec. 22 bill — a move that would cause a showdown in the Senate.

Democrats in that chamber have refused to back a bill that prioritizes the military over spending on domestic programs. And Senate Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#) dug in on [that threat](#) Tuesday.

Some conservatives in the House are betting pressure to fund the Pentagon would be just enough to convince a handful of red-state Democrats to vote in support of a second government funding bill later this month.

If the military funding isn't enough, House Republicans are tossing around another bargaining chip: a disaster aid package. That bill would include tens of billions of dollars for storm-ravaged Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, making it tougher for Democrats to oppose.

Another must-pass item, funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, could also be added to the bill, lawmakers said.

"Is the Senate going to turn around, Christmas or New Year's, and say we're not going to take care of the defense of America, we're not going to take care of these people with these hurricanes?" Rep. [Bradley Byrne](#) (R-Ala.) said. "If they are, then it's on them."

Connor O'Brien contributed to this report.

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Pro-trade GOP senators to urge Trump to stay in NAFTA [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Nancy Cook and Seung Min Kim | 12/05/2017 09:56 AM EDT

A group of pro-trade Republican senators will caution President Donald Trump against withdrawing from the North American Free Trade Agreement during a meeting at the White House on Tuesday, according to multiple people familiar with the meeting.

The meeting comes as the threat of a possible U.S. withdrawal hangs over ongoing negotiations with Canada and Mexico over the pact. U.S. officials have taken a hard line in the latest round of talks that just wrapped up in Mexico, raising concerns that the negotiations could collapse and Trump could pull out.

Six senators are slated to attend the Tuesday afternoon lunch with the president, according to a list provided by a White House official: Deb Fischer of Nebraska, Joni Ernst of Iowa, Jeff Flake of Arizona, Cory Gardner of Colorado, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Lindsey

Graham of South Carolina.

Chief of staff John Kelly, United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, National Economic Council director Gary Cohn and legislative affairs director Marc Short are also scheduled to attend the meeting.

The senators are expected to tout the benefits of NAFTA directly to the president, while warning that withdrawing could have dire economic consequences for the United States, according to one person involved in planning the meeting.

A White House spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment.

Trump vowed as far back as the presidential campaign to withdraw from NAFTA if he couldn't get a better deal. The president almost signed an executive order in April that would have pulled the United States out of the pact, but Republican lawmakers and senior members of his administration persuaded him to back off, warning of consequences for the U.S. agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

But as negotiations over NAFTA have floundered, the president has maintained that he could jump-start the talks by beginning the process of withdrawing.

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Russia probe cost DOJ \$6.7 million in months after Mueller appointment [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 12/05/2017 10:59 AM EDT

The Justice Department spent \$6.7 million on its probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election in the four-and-a-half months after special counsel Robert Mueller's appointment, according to a [report](#) released Tuesday.

Of the total, only \$3.2 million was spent directly by Mueller on salaries, travel, rent and equipment through September.

The other \$3.5 million was spent on DOJ operations and would have been spent on its own pre-existing Russia investigations if Mueller hadn't been tapped to take over in mid-May. DOJ said it wasn't legally required to figure out this total, and past special counsels didn't tabulate it.

The report could provide fodder for President Donald Trump and allies who say the investigation has a blank check and no end in sight.

Republicans were [critical](#) of Mueller's spending even before they'd seen his receipts, with former White House strategist Steve Bannon earlier this fall urging Trump defund the probe, though the White House [said](#) Trump would not do that.

On Capitol Hill, Florida GOP Rep. Ron DeSantis tried without success earlier this summer to attach an amendment to a House budget resolution that would have halted Mueller's funding

just six months into the job.

Spokesmen for DeSantis and Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), two of Mueller's leading critics, didn't immediately respond to requests for comment Tuesday. The GOP chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations committees declined to comment.

Coming to Mueller's defense, Senate Judiciary Committee ranking member Dianne Feinstein said \$3.2 million in spending "is entirely reasonable given the results we've already seen." The California Democrat noted the special counsel in less than five months had already brought charges against two former senior Trump campaign aides, Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, and obtained guilty pleas from former national security adviser Michael Flynn and ex-campaign adviser George Papadopoulos.

"I continue to strongly support Bob Mueller's investigation and believe he should receive all the resources he needs to follow the facts and the law where they lead," Feinstein said.

Mueller's spending totals include \$1.7 million for salaries and benefits, though \$1.2 million of that went to DOJ employees who have been detailed to the Mueller probe.

New hires cost \$500,696 for the period between Mueller's appointment in mid-May and the end of September.

In addition to salaries, Mueller also spent \$733,969 to acquire office equipment for the investigation, which the DOJ report said would remain federal government property after the probe ends. The special counsel spent \$223,643 for travel, almost entirely for staffers who have temporarily relocated to the investigation's headquarters in Washington.

The Mueller probe reported \$157,339 in receipts for a variety of contractual services, including \$111,245 for information technology, \$24,456 for transcription and \$17,217 for building services.

The Mueller budget is drawn from a permanent Treasury Department account that is not tied to the annual appropriations process. DOJ rules state Mueller "shall be provided all appropriate resources" to do his work, though his spending is being audited by DOJ's Justice Management Division every six months.

Mueller's next public report will be released at some point after his receipts through March 31, 2018 are turned over for review, special counsel spokesman Joshua Stueve said Tuesday.

How the special counsel's spending totals are made public represents a break from past precedent. Historically, the Government Accountability Office had conducted the audits of independent counsel and special counsel investigations. Many of those reports, reflecting both the frequency that special counsels worked and the length of time some of them took to complete work, often covered multiple probes. For example, a [March 2001 GAO report](#) listed the latest expenses for seven investigations that all related to President Bill Clinton.

In all, there have been 21 completed independent counsel and special counsel investigations of administration practices dating back to the Carter administration. Their total price tag: \$231 million — \$339 million when adjusted for inflation. Twelve of those cases concluded with no indictments.

Six separate investigations during the Clinton administration ran up costs of more than \$140

million. President Ronald Reagan faced eight different probes, including Iran-Contra, for a total of more than \$84 million, according to a POLITICO review of government audits and reports on their spending.

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Conyers resigns effective immediately, endorses son as successor [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill and John Bresnahan | 12/05/2017 10:33 AM EDT

Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) has announced he is leaving Congress immediately and endorsing his son, John Conyers III, to replace him following allegations of sexual harassment.

"I'm in the process of putting my retirement plans together, and I will have more about that very soon," Conyers, 88, told a Detroit radio station.

"I am retiring today," Conyers added. "And I want everyone to know how much I appreciate the support — the incredible, undiminished support I've received across the years from my supporters, not only in my district but across the country as well."

Conyers is the first member of Congress to relinquish his seat amid the growing national uproar over the mistreatment of women that has toppled powerful figures in Hollywood, the media and now Washington.

Conyers made the announcement that he was ending his congressional career in Detroit, his home and political base for more than five decades. The unofficial "dean of the House," he was first elected in 1964 and is the longest-serving member of the body — one of the longest-serving House members in the history.

Conyers first became a congressional aide in 1958, working for the legendary Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.). His margin-of-victory in most of his 27 congressional races was overwhelming, though Conyers lost two bids for mayor of Detroit.

Conyers' fall from grace was swift, but there were growing signs of trouble for him in recent days. Last week, some of Conyers' closest allies in the Congressional Black Caucus — a group he co-founded — started urging him to step aside.

While Conyers has denied any wrongdoing, he also admitted paying out \$27,000 to a former aide over sexual-harassment allegations. That incident was first reported by BuzzFeed. Conyers used a congressional fund that normally covers office expenses, which concealed the payment.

Another former aide had filed a lawsuit against Conyers earlier this year detailing numerous instances of improper sexual behavior, before later withdrawing the civil action. Then a third former female aide came forward last week to say that Conyers had propositioned her for sex as well.

With news outlets searching frantically for additional victims, Conyers' support among his Democratic colleagues quickly eroded, especially among younger female members who had not served with the Michigan Democrat for long. Reps. Kathleen Rice (D-N.Y.) and Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) called for Conyers' resignation, and more Democrats were expected to follow their lead.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), stung by the backlash over her initial comments that appeared to support Conyers, threw her support behind an effort to have the Ethics Committee investigate the veteran lawmaker. Behind the scenes, Pelosi and other top Democrats, including CBC members, were pressuring Conyers, telling him he didn't want to go through an ethics investigation that could ruin his legacy.

But Pelosi then moved to calling on Conyers to resign last Thursday, dramatically upping the stakes.

"The allegations against Congressman Conyers, as we have learned more since Sunday are serious, disappointing and very credible," Pelosi said at her weekly news conference then. "It's very sad and the brave women who came forward are owed justice. I will pray for Congressman Conyers and his family, and wish them well. However, Congressman Conyers should resign."

Conyers announced his plans from the hospital, calling it a "retirement" even though his departure is effective Tuesday.

"My legacy can't be compromised or diminished in any way by what we're going through now. This, too, shall pass, and I want you to know that my legacy will continue through my children," Conyers said.

"I have a great family here, and especially in my oldest boy, John Conyers III, who incidentally I endorse to replace me in my seat in Congress," he continued. "So we're all working together to make this country a better one, to make equality and justice more available for any."

Conyers was born in Detroit and attended public schools there. After seeing combat in the Korean War, he returned home and enrolled in Wayne State University. Conyers later received a law degree from Wayne State Law School.

Conyers then served as an aide to Dingell and as counsel to several labor unions. He also worked for Michigan's workmen's compensation department.

He formed ties to the ACLU and NAACP, and Conyers went to Selma, Alabama, in 1963 to help register black voters.

By 1964, Conyers was elected to the House, winning easily. He continued to do so for decades to come.

In 1989 and 1993, Conyers ran for mayor of Detroit but didn't perform well either time.

Conyers has a long record of legislative and institutional accomplishments in Congress. He chaired both the Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Government Operations (now the Oversight and Government Reform Committee) during his tenure in the House.

Conyers also helped to co-found the CBC in 1969. That group has now become a major power bloc within the House Democratic Caucus.

The Michigan Democrat focused on civil rights during his tenure in Congress, especially on making it easier for average Americans to vote. He helped pass the 1988 Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act, 1993 National Voter Registration Act (also known as the "Motor Voter Bill"), the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, and the 2002 Help America Vote Act, among other bills.

In addition, Conyers worked to enact a national holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. He pumped hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid into his district, a poor minority-majority area that has suffered from long-term economic distress and high unemployment.

Conyers, though, has faced several ethical scandals over the past decade. These incidents, as well as Conyers' physical and mental deterioration over the last several years, led to internal discussions in January about replacing him as ranking member on Judiciary. However, the CBC strongly objected, and Conyers kept his post.

In 2006, Conyers was investigated by the Ethics Committee for allegedly using his staff for personal errands, including babysitting his children. No formal action was ever taken against him by the panel.

Three years later, Conyers' wife Monica pleaded guilty to federal bribery charges and was sentenced to 37 months in prison. While Conyers was unaffected politically by his wife's criminal case, there were later reports of serious troubles in their marriage, leading to a divorce filing by Monica Conyers that was later withdrawn. The two had met when she worked for his campaign in the late 1980s. They were married in 1990. He was 61; she was 25. They have two children.

In 2016, Conyers came under investigation by the Office of Congressional Ethics for paying his former chief of staff, Cynthia Martin, for six months after she pleaded guilty to receiving stolen property, a misdemeanor. Conyers refused to cooperate with the OCE probe and the Ethics Committee took no action.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Pruitt heads to the Hill — Trump searching for RFS "common ground" — FERC gets to 5
Date: Thursday, December 07, 2017 4:31:20 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/07/2017 04:28 PM EDT

PRUITT HEADS TO THE HILL: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today shifted from earlier statements on the Clean Power Plan and said he would write a replacement rule for the Obama-era rule designed to curb carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Pruitt previously said EPA was also considering not replacing the rule. But when asked by Rep. [Raul Ruiz](#) (D-Calif.) whether his agency had reversed its position on the health effects of particle pollution in proposing to repeal the CPP in October, Pruitt confirmed a replacement plan. "We did not reverse it, congressman. And moreover, we are going to be introducing a replacement rule to replace the Clean Power Plan under Section 111," Pruitt replied during his first appearance before the House Energy and Commerce Committee today.

Coming soon: Pruitt also indicated his "red team" review of climate change science could begin as soon as next month, Alex Guillén [reports](#).

Expanded asbestos review? Maybe: Pruitt also hinted today that the agency may reverse a previous decision expanding asbestos to include millions of tons of the carcinogen already in use, Alex reports. The agency [back in July](#) said it would not consider "legacy" uses and disposal while reviewing asbestos under the Toxic Substances Control Act, instead limiting the review to "manufacturing, processing and distribution." But Pruitt today said that scope may expand, after Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.) raised concerns that the initial plan was insufficient. "I think it's a very important factor that we need to consider and it's something I've already raised with the office that's overseeing this," Pruitt said. More [here](#).

In a tweet: Pruitt said he met with the Moms Clean Air Force before today's hearing. "Thanks for attending and I look forward to working together and hearing your stories," he said.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

LOOKING FOR COMMON GROUND: President Donald Trump met today with 11 GOP senators and a host of senior administration officials to discuss biofuels — a meetup that's been months in the making, via calls from corn-backed states and the likes of senators like [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas).

Ahead of the meeting, the [White House said](#): The president would seek "common ground" on the future of biofuels policy. "President Trump will meet with senators today to discuss his commitment to the Renewable Fuel Standard and how to effectively address the program's impact on independent refiners," a spokesman said. "He will listen to the concerns of senators who represent these workers, with the hope of finding common ground on both sides of this debate."

FERC GETS TO FIVE: Kevin McIntyre, Trump's pick to lead FERC, was [sworn in](#) as

chairman this morning, the agency announced. McIntyre, a longtime Jones Day attorney, has a term running into 2023. He'll take the reins of the regulatory agency in the midst of its review of a controversial grid resiliency proposal from the Energy Department to prop up coal and nuclear plants. FERC is expected to respond to DOE's grid proposal by Dec. 11.

EPA ADDS ANOTHER: The Senate approved Susan Bodine's nomination to be assistant EPA administrator running the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance by a voice vote. Bodine was the top counsel to Republicans on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. She started at EPA in September as a special adviser on enforcement issues to Pruitt. More [here](#).

Balash cannonball: The Senate confirmed Joe Balash by a vote of 61-38 today to be Interior's assistant secretary for land and minerals management. Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) congratulated the fellow Alaskan [in a tweet](#) saying, "W/ significant experience on energy & resource policy, a record of upholding Alaska's interests as a landowner, he will ensure America's interests are well represented."

HAPPY NEW YEAR: The Senate today [released](#) its 2018 legislative calendar. A one-page guide is [here](#).

BLM FINALIZES METHANE RULE DELAY: The Bureau of Land Management will post its long-term delay of its methane rule in a Friday Federal Register [notice](#). The key provisions, "including leak detection and repair requirements, will not be enforced until Jan. 17, 2019, according to the notice. That will give BLM enough time to repeal the rule," Alex reports. A timeline for BLM's review and potential repeal remains unclear, Alex [reports](#).

API CHIEF WARNS COST OF NAFTA WITHDRAWAL: CEO of the American Petroleum Institute Jack Gerard warned Trump that a withdrawal from NAFTA would put U.S. energy jobs and leadership at risk. "The natural gas, oil and refined products industry support efforts to modernize NAFTA, which will enhance North America's role as a global energy leader," Gerard [said today](#) during a discussion on the pact hosted by the Washington International Trade Association. "However, if a modernization agreement cannot be reached, the administration must retain its commitment to the current trade agreement," Gerard added — echoing a host of other industry leaders who are worried about the implications of a withdrawal from the agreement. More [here](#) from Pro Trade's Doug Palmer.

GE CUTS 12K JOBS: General Electric announced today it is cutting 12,000 jobs in its power equipment division, which accounts for about 18 percent of the unit's workforce, The Wall Street Journal reports. The move comes "as the conglomerate slashes costs and battles overcapacity in its core business," WSJ writes. "GE's Power unit has been a major source of pain for the struggling company as global demand has dropped in tandem with GE integrating its acquisition of Alstom SA's power business. The company has said it misjudged the market as volume dropped in traditional coal and gas-fired power, while renewable energy sources grew." Read [more](#).

COAL CAUCUS JOINS ANTI-AMT PUSH: Republicans in the Coal Caucus today [urged](#) the writers of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), to drop the alternative minimum tax from the final legislation, saying that failing to repeal it would be "devastating" to the coal industry, Alex reports. "Coal companies invest heavily in new equipment, oftentimes doing so with large borrowing costs. The industry is very capital-intensive, with many leveraged employers," wrote the lawmakers, led by Rep. [David McKinley](#) (R-W.Va.). "If the corporate AMT remains

in the tax code, paired with new limits on interest deductibility, many companies will have a higher tax burden." Earlier this week, coal executive Robert Murray [told](#) The Wall Street Journal keeping the AMT would kill his business. More [here](#).

FRANKEN RESIGNS: Sen. [Al Franken resigned](#) today after multiple women came forward in recent weeks to say Franken groped or tried to forcibly kiss them. The Minnesota Democrat lost the support of most Democratic senators ahead of his resignation. See the full text of his resignation speech [here](#), and ICYMI on Wednesday, POLITICO's Maggie Severns reports Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton is expected to appoint his lieutenant governor and close ally, Tina Smith, to take Franken's seat. More on that [here](#).

DOE ANNOUNCES \$30M FOR NUCLEAR: Energy Secretary Rick Perry [announced](#) a funding opportunity for advanced nuclear technology development to the tune of \$30 million. "Targeted early-stage investment in advanced nuclear technology will support a strong domestic industry now and into the future," Perry said in a statement. "This funding opportunity is an important step to ensure our nation continues to benefit from this clean, resilient source of electricity."

QUICK HITS:

- Trump officials examining states' authority in pipeline delays, [Houston Chronicle](#).
- Chevron plans sharp rise in U.S. shale investment, [Financial Times](#).
- Bitcoin mining operations now use more energy than Ireland, [Greentech Media](#).
- Largest wildfire eyes communities northwest of Los Angeles, [Associated Press](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Why Democrats [had to dump Franken](#)
- [FBI chief rejects Trump's](#) claim of agency 'in tatters'
- VA kills plan to cut [homeless-vet program](#) after outcry

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<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/afternoon-energy/2017/12/pruitt-heads-to-the-hill-044355>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Pruitt says EPA will write replacement for Clean Power Plan [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/07/2017 12:01 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said today that he will write a replacement rule for the Clean Power Plan, a shift from previous statements that EPA was also considering not replacing the Obama administration's rule designed to curb carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

Appearing for the first time before the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Pruitt faced questions from Rep. [Raul Ruiz](#) (D-Calif.) about whether EPA had reversed its position on the

health effects of particle pollution in proposing to repeal the Clean Power Plan in October.

"We did not reverse it, congressman. And moreover, we are going to be introducing a replacement rule to replace the Clean Power Plan under Section 111," Pruitt replied.

The hearing went into recess at that point so Pruitt could attend a White House meeting.

"We have no further details at this time," an EPA spokesperson said in response to questions about Pruitt's statement.

Pruitt also indicated his "red team" review of climate change science could begin as soon as next month.

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Pruitt hints at expanded asbestos review [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/07/2017 12:26 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today indicated EPA may expand its review of asbestos to include millions of tons of the carcinogen already in use, potentially reversing a decision from earlier this year.

EPA in July [said](#) it would not consider "legacy" uses and disposal while reviewing asbestos under the newly reformed Toxic Substances Control Act, instead limiting the review to "manufacturing, processing and distribution."

Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.), the House Energy and Commerce Committee's ranking member, said at a hearing with Pruitt today that he is concerned that by not considering use and disposal, "you'll produce a risk assessment that fails to capture the risk to workers and ordinary Americans, and in my opinion will not be scientifically valid, and will not be protective of public health."

"I think you've raised a very valid concern," Pruitt replied. "In fact, I had a conversation last week about this very issue with the chemical office. I think you raise a very, very meaningful concern."

Pallone said he hopes to see action on the matter.

"I think it's a very important factor that we need to consider and it's something I've already raised with the office that's overseeing this," Pruitt said.

Asbestos is no longer produced in the U.S., and Pallone said the only remaining source of imports is Russia. President Trump has famously said that asbestos, once a popular flame retardant used in building construction, is "[100 percent safe, once applied](#)," despite OSHA's declaration that there is no safe level.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA is expected to issue a "problem formulation" document soon that

could change the scope of the asbestos review, and will take public comment before proceeding with the risk evaluation.

To view online [click here](#).

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11 GOP senators, senior officials to meet with Trump on biofuels [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/07/2017 09:34 AM EDT

The White House said President Donald Trump will seek "common ground" on the future of biofuels policy with 11 Republican senators and a host of senior administration officials during a meeting today.

"President Trump will meet with senators today to discuss his commitment to the Renewable Fuel Standard and how to effectively address the program's impact on independent refiners," a spokesman said. "He will listen to the concerns of senators who represent these workers, with the hope of finding common ground on both sides of this debate."

Expected to attend the meeting are Republican Sens. [Ted Cruz](#), [John Barrasso](#), [Bill Cassidy](#), [John Cornyn](#), [Mike Enzi](#), [Jeff Flake](#), [Jim Inhofe](#), [John Neely Kennedy](#), [James Lankford](#), [Mike Lee](#) and [Pat Toomey](#).

They'll be joined by White House chief of staff John Kelly, Legislative Affairs Director Marc Short, National Economic Council head Gary Cohn, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Purdue and Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette, among others.

What's next: The meeting is scheduled for 11:30 a.m.

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McIntyre sworn in at FERC [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/07/2017 10:43 AM EDT

Kevin McIntyre, who President Donald Trump intends to lead FERC, was sworn in as chairman this morning, the agency announced.

The former longtime Jones Day attorney has a term running into 2023. He was confirmed by the Senate on Nov. 2, alongside Democratic FERC nominee Rich Glick, who was sworn in last week.

McIntyre takes the reins at FERC in the midst of the agency's review of a controversial grid resiliency proposal from the Energy Department that would prop up economically struggling

coal and nuclear power plants. FERC is expected to take "final action" of some kind on the proposal by Dec. 11, and interim FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee has been pressing his colleagues to support an ["interim" measure](#) that would keep generators "afloat" while seeking comprehensive changes to power market pricing.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC is expected to respond to DOE's grid proposal by Dec. 11. Ten days later McIntyre will chair his first FERC open meeting.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate confirms EPA, Interior nominees [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/07/2017 01:48 PM EDT

The Senate today approved Susan Bodine's nomination to be assistant EPA administrator running the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance by a voice vote.

Bodine was the top counsel to Republicans on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. She started at EPA in September as a special adviser on enforcement issues to Administrator Scott Pruitt.

The committee's top Democrat, [Tom Carper](#) of Delaware, had sought to delay her confirmation amid a fight with EPA over responding to oversight letters from Democrats.

Bodine is just the third person confirmed to EPA in the Trump administration, after Pruitt and air chief William Wehrum.

The Senate today also approved Joseph Balash to be assistant secretary of the Interior for land and minerals management by a vote of 61-38.

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Senate releases its 2018 calendar [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/07/2017 01:57 PM EDT

The Senate today released its 2018 legislative calendar. A one-page guide is [here](#).

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BLM finalizes delay of methane waste rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/07/2017 09:34 AM EDT

The Bureau of Land Management will finalize a long-term delay of its methane waste rule in a [notice](#) to be published in Friday's Federal Register.

The rule's key provisions, including leak detection and repair requirements, will not be enforced until Jan. 17, 2019, according to the notice. That will give BLM enough time to repeal the rule.

"The BLM has concerns regarding the statutory authority, cost, complexity, feasibility, and other implications of the 2016 final rule, and therefore intends to avoid imposing likely considerable and immediate compliance costs on operators for requirements that may be rescinded or significantly revised in the near future," the agency wrote in the notice.

The Interior Department issued a hasty delay last year, but it was [struck down](#) by a federal judge who said the agency failed to follow administrative procedure, in particular collecting public comment on a delay. BLM subsequently went through notice-and-comment rulemaking to produce this new delay.

BLM said on Monday that it will appeal that judge's ruling, despite the newly finalized delay. If that appeal succeeds, it would make it easier for Interior to stop rules in the future.

WHAT'S NEXT: It is unclear how long it will take BLM to complete its review and potential repeal of the methane waste rule, also known as the venting and flaring rule.

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Oil industry chief warns Trump NAFTA withdrawal would cost jobs [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 12/07/2017 11:28 AM EDT

President Donald Trump would put U.S. energy jobs and leadership at risk if he decides to withdraw from NAFTA because Canada and Mexico won't agree to U.S. demands for changes to the pact, the head of the American Petroleum Institute [said](#) today.

"The natural gas, oil and refined products industry support efforts to modernize NAFTA, which will enhance North America's role as a global energy leader," Jack Gerard, CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, said during a discussion on the pact hosted by the Washington International Trade Association.

"However, if a modernization agreement cannot be reached, the administration must retain its commitment to the current trade agreement," Gerard said, joining a growing chorus of industry leaders worried that Trump might follow through on repeated threats to pull out of the pact.

Trump would also jeopardize U.S. energy jobs by weakening NAFTA's investment protections, Gerard continued, referring to U.S. proposals that would reportedly allow countries to opt out of a binding investor-state dispute settlement process.

Those proposals reflect a view in the Trump administration that binding dispute settlement decisions impinge on national sovereignty. However, Gerard dismissed that as a "philosophical" argument that carries little weight with energy companies, who put hundreds of millions of dollars at risk in foreign projects.

With the North American region on the verge of energy independence by 2020, the United States, Canada and Mexico should be moving to strengthen ties, not potentially weaken them, Gerard argued.

NAFTA recently enacted reform to allow foreign and private investment in its energy sector for the first time in more than 75 years. A Trump decision to withdraw from NAFTA could encourage Mexico to favor other sources of foreign investment, such as China, over the United States, he said.

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Coal Caucus pushes to drop AMT from tax bill [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/07/2017 01:36 PM EDT

Twenty-six Republicans in the Coal Caucus today [urged](#) the writers of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), to drop the Alternative Minimum Tax from the final legislation, saying that failing to repeal it would be "devastating" to the coal industry.

"Coal companies invest heavily in new equipment, oftentimes doing so with large borrowing costs. The industry is very capital-intensive, with many leveraged employers," wrote the lawmakers, led by Rep. [David McKinley](#) (R-W.Va.). "If the corporate AMT remains in the tax code, paired with new limits on interest deductibility, many companies will have a higher tax burden."

The House's bill would repeal the AMT, but the Senate's kept it in while at the same time limiting corporate deductions. The AMT sets a floor to prevent corporations from using tax breaks to go below a certain rate — currently, 20 percent.

"This tax hike will have far-reaching unintended consequences to an industry President [Donald] Trump promised to help," the lawmakers wrote. They also criticized the Senate-passed language for barring the use of previously generated AMT credits to offset regular taxes, saying coal companies have "significant" stores of unused AMT credits.

Coal executive Robert Murray [told](#) The Wall Street Journal this week that keeping the AMT would kill his business.

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Franken resigns [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim | 12/07/2017 11:54 AM EDT

Sen. Al Franken said on Thursday that he would resign after seven women came forward in recent weeks and said he groped or tried to forcibly kiss them, capping a stunning fall from grace for one of the Democratic Party's most popular and high-profile politicians.

The second-term Minnesota Democrat, a prolific fundraiser once viewed as a possible White House hopeful, quickly lost support of the most Democratic senators after a fresh set of allegations hit this week. Franken is the second Democratic member of Congress to quit — Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, the longest-serving member of the House, also resigned this week — amid a heightened consciousness and debate across the nation about the heavy toll of workplace sexual harassment.

The 66-year-old senator, a famous comedian and talk show host in his former life who was first elected in 2008, needled President Donald Trump and Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore while announcing his departure "in the coming weeks." An aide said Thursday that an exact resignation date has yet to be determined.

"I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party," Franken said, referring to Trump's comments captured on tape about grabbing women's genitals and to Moore's multiple allegations of sexual assault or harassment of women in their teens.

"But this decision is not about me," Franken added in his floor speech, which began shortly before noon on Thursday. "It's about the people of Minnesota. It's become clear that I can't pursue the Ethics Committee process and at the same time remain an effective senator for them."

About two dozen Democratic senators attended Franken's address, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, fellow Minnesota Democrat Amy Klobuchar, and several of the female senators who triggered the flood of resignation calls. Many members of Franken's staff sat behind him on the chamber, with a handful appearing very emotional — as did Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), who removed her glasses at least twice to wipe her eyes.

Only one Republican was in the chamber for Franken's speech (aside from Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska, who was presiding at the time): Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, an outspoken Trump critic who called Franken a "friend" who "did the right thing." Also watching the speech from the Senate gallery were Franken's wife, Franni; longtime Democratic consultant Mandy Grunwald, a friend of Franken; and John Bessler, Klobuchar's husband.

After he concluded his address, no one applauded, as usually happens during a senator's farewell speech. No other senator stood up to make remarks about Franken's tenure. Instead, Democratic senators walked over to Franken's desk and lined up to embrace him, including women such as Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, who demanded his ouster.

Not all Democratic senators agreed with Franken's decision to step aside, however.

"You know, I just felt the process should've proceeded," Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said after a long pause. "I thought that Al should've been able to go through the process and in the process, he would've been able to make the statement he had to make today [that] he was forced to make, without resigning."

Franken's popularity among his party's liberal base has stoked some anxiety on the left over the party's decision to push him out. His political stardom skyrocketed earlier this year as he emerged as one of the toughest questioners during confirmation hearings for top Trump administration officials, including now-Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

He was close with Schumer, who led the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee during Franken's 2008 Senate bid, which prompted a recount that left the former "Saturday Night Live" star victorious by just 312 votes and handing Democrats the all-critical 60th vote in the Senate.

Though a gregarious personality in the Senate, Franken tried to keep his profile down in some ways, eschewing the national press in favor of home-state media. But he was an outspoken force on several key issues, including on education and net neutrality.

For fellow Democrats however, particularly the women in the caucus, the tide of allegations against him became too great to ignore.

POLITICO [reported](#) Wednesday morning on the seventh woman to come forward about Franken, a former Democratic congressional aide who said he tried to forcibly kiss her in 2006. Within hours, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) called for his resignation, followed by a half-dozen fellow female Democrats and, eventually, a majority of the caucus.

Schumer quietly urged Franken on Wednesday to step aside following the publication of the POLITICO story, and other Democratic senators privately spoke with the embattled senator before he made his announcement on Thursday.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), who spoke with Franken on the phone on Wednesday, said he told him that "it matters to me that you called me personally, and I will also do the right thing."

"I said, 'Look, I think this behavior, you're a wonderful senator and you've done so much good for so many but I just think the behavior is wrong and resignation is really the only alternative now,'" Kaine recalled. "It was a hard conversation."

Still, Franken offered no apology on Thursday to the seven women who have alleged sexually improper behavior. He noted in his speech that in responding to the women, he "wanted to be respectful" of the broader national conversation about sexual harassment "because all women deserve to be heard and their experiences taken seriously."

"I think that was the right thing to do," he added. "I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true, others I remember very differently."

Franken's seat may be in play in an expected special election next year, given that President Donald Trump lost Minnesota by an unexpectedly slim margin in 2016. The state's Democratic governor, Mark Dayton, is [expected](#) to appoint Lt. Gov. Tina Smith as a caretaker

for the seat, paving the way for a potential open primary race in a 2018 special election to serve out the two years remaining in Franken's term.

Pushing Franken out, after Conyers resigned on Tuesday amid misconduct allegations from several former aides, also puts Democrats on firmer political ground on the issue of sexual harassment as the GOP prepares for Moore's potential arrival in the Senate.

Moore, the Republican nominee in Alabama's Dec. 12 Senate special election, faces multiple allegations of sexual assault or harassment from women and girls as young as 14. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has [signaled](#) he plans to pursue expulsion proceedings against Moore, but the Alabamian's endorsement by Trump is driving a wedge within the GOP.

"One of the serious issues we have to face is, what is the appropriate price to pay if you are guilty of such misconduct? To make every case resignation is not fair," Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois said. "To ignore the problem is certainly unacceptable. So we have to work this out as an institution, in terms of our ethics committee, its authority and the standards that we're going to use to grade ourselves and others."

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Full text: Al Franken's resignation speech on the Senate floor [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 12/07/2017 01:19 PM EDT

WASHINGTON, D.C. [12/07/17]—Today, U.S. Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) gave the following speech as prepared for delivery on the Senate floor. You can also download a video of the speech [here](#).

A couple of months ago, I felt that we had entered an important moment in the history of this country. We were finally beginning to listen to women about the ways in which men's actions affect them. That moment was long overdue. I was excited for that conversation, and hopeful that it would result in real change that made life better for women all across the country and in every part of our society.

Then, the conversation turned to me. Over the last few weeks, a number of women have come forward to talk about how they felt my actions had affected them. I was shocked. I was upset. But in responding to their claims, I also wanted to be respectful of that broader conversation, because all women deserve to be heard, and their experiences taken seriously.

I think that was the right thing to do. I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true. Others, I remember very differently.

I said at the outset that the Ethics Committee was the right venue for these allegations to be heard, and investigated, and evaluated on their merits. That I was prepared to cooperate fully. And that I was confident in the outcome.

You know, an important part of the conversation we've been having the last few months has been about how men abuse their power and privilege to hurt women.

I am proud that, during my time in the Senate, I have used my power to be a champion for women - and that I have earned a reputation as someone who respects the women I work alongside every day. I know there's been a very different picture of me painted over the last few weeks. But I know who I really am.

Serving in the United States Senate has been the great honor of my life. I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a Senator - nothing - has brought dishonor on this institution. And I am confident that the Ethics Committee would agree.

Nevertheless, today I am announcing that, in the coming weeks, I will be resigning as a member of the United States Senate.

I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office, and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party.

But this decision is not about me. It's about the people of Minnesota. And it's become clear that I can't both pursue the Ethics Committee process and, at the same time, remain an effective Senator for them.

Let me be clear. I may be resigning my seat, but I am not giving up my voice. I will continue to stand up for the things I believe in as a citizen, and as an activist.

But Minnesotans deserve a Senator who can focus with all her energy on addressing the challenges they face every day.

There is a big part of me that will always regret having to walk away from this job with so much work left to be done. But I have faith that the work will continue, because I have faith in the people who have helped me do it.

I have faith in the dedicated, funny, selfless young men and women on my staff. They have so much more to contribute to our country. And I hope that, as disappointed as they may feel today, everyone who has ever worked for me knows how much I admire and respect them.

I have faith in my colleagues, especially my senior Senator, Amy Klobuchar. I would not have been able to do this job without her guidance and wisdom. And I have faith - or, at least, hope - that members of this Senate will find the political courage necessary to keep asking the tough questions, hold this administration accountable, and stand up for the truth.

I have faith in the activists who organized to help me win my first campaign and who have kept on organizing to help fight for the people who needed us: kids facing bullying, seniors worried about the price of prescription drugs, Native Americans who have been overlooked for far too long, working people who have been taking it on the chin for a generation - everyone in the middle class and everyone aspiring to join it.

I have faith in the proud legacy of progressive advocacy that I have had the privilege to be a part of. I think I've probably repeated these words ten thousand times over the years, Paul Wellstone's famous quote: "The future belongs to those who are passionate and work hard." It

is still true. It will always be true.

And, most of all, I have faith in Minnesota. A big part of this job is going around the state and listening to what people need from Washington. But, more often than not, when I'm home, I'm blown away by how much Minnesota has to offer the entire country and the entire world. The people I have had the honor of representing are brilliant, and creative, and hard-working. And whoever holds this seat next will inherit the challenge I've enjoyed for the last eight and a half years: being as good as the people you serve.

This has been a tough few weeks for me. But I am a very, very lucky man. I have a beautiful, healthy family that I love, and that loves me very much. I am going to be just fine.

I'd just like to end with one last thing.

I did not grow up wanting to be a politician. I came to this relatively late in life. I had to learn a lot on the fly. It wasn't easy. And it wasn't always fun.

I'm not just talking about today. This is a hard thing to do with your life. There are a lot of long hours and late nights and hard lessons, and there is no guarantee that all your work and sacrifice will ever pay off. I won my first election by 312 votes - it could have easily gone the other way. And even when you win, progress is far from inevitable. Paul Wellstone spent his whole life working for mental health parity, and it didn't pass into law until six years after he died.

This year, a lot of people who didn't grow up imagining they'd ever get involved in politics have done just that. They've gone to their first protest march, or made their first call to a member of Congress, or maybe even taken the leap and put their name on a ballot for the first time.

It can be such a rush, to look around at a room full of people ready to fight alongside you, to feel that energy, to imagine that better things are possible. But you, too, will experience setbacks and defeats and disappointments. There will be days when you will wonder whether it's worth it.

What I want you to know is that, even today, even on the worst day of my political life, I feel like it's all been worth it. "Politics," Paul Wellstone told us, "is about the improvement of people's lives." I know that the work I've been able to do has improved people's lives. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

For a decade now, every time I would get tired, or discouraged, or frustrated, I would think about the people I was doing this for, and it would get me back up on my feet. I know the same will be true for everyone who decides to pursue a politics that is about improving people's lives. And I hope you know that I will be right there fighting alongside you, every step of the way.

With that, M. President, I yield the floor.

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Female lieutenant governor expected to replace Franken if he resigns [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 12/06/2017 06:49 PM EDT

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton is expected to appoint his lieutenant governor and close ally, Tina Smith, to Al Franken's seat if the Democratic senator resigns on Thursday, three people familiar with the Democratic governor's thinking said.

But that appointment would be just the start of an upheaval in Minnesota. Part of the reason Smith could be heading to the Senate, the sources said, is that she has indicated no interest in running for Congress in the past and would not run for the remainder of Franken's term, which expires in 2020, in a 2018 special election. That would clear the way for a wide open Democratic primary next year if Franken steps down.

Franken's sudden fall under a deluge of sexual harassment allegations has prompted Democrats to suddenly consider a fast-approaching special election for a once-safe seat — and given Republicans an unexpected opportunity in a state President Donald Trump lost by just 1 point in 2016. But installing Smith or another placeholder in the seat would separate the appointment from potentially fractious Democratic primary politics, giving other Democrats the opportunity to fight on a level playing field in a special primary. Additionally, appointing a woman to fill Franken's role would serve as a symbolic rebuke to Franken in the wake of the allegations against him, Minnesota Democrats pointed out.

"[Smith] really gets Minnesota, she gets the players, she has great built-up relationships," said a Democratic operative with long experience in Minnesota. "She makes practical sense, and she would be a good bridge builder."

Franken's office tweeted late Wednesday that he has not decided whether to resign, but he has an announcement scheduled for Thursday and faced calls to leave the Senate from more than half of his caucus on Wednesday, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. Already, a number of high-profile Minnesota Democrats — including Rep. Keith Ellison, the Democratic National Committee deputy chair, and Rep. Tim Walz, who is currently running for governor — are considered possible contenders to run for Franken's seat.

It is not an opportunity ambitious Democrats were expecting anytime soon. Franken was popular until women came forward accusing him of inappropriate touching and sexual harassment, and well-liked Sen. Amy Klobuchar is considered a lock for reelection in 2018.

Dayton could opt to appoint a senator who would run for the rest of Franken's term next year, giving that person the power of incumbency and more time to build up seniority. But the governor is currently leaning toward giving the seat to a temporary placeholder, giving divided Democrats the chance to choose the next senator through the electoral process instead of by gubernatorial choice. Dayton's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Republicans also said Wednesday that Franken's departure has opened up an opportunity they weren't expecting for years.

"This presents a major opportunity for Republicans in Minnesota," said GOP operative Brian McClung, a former top aide to ex-Gov. Tim Pawlenty. "Republicans here are going to be energized by the chance to replace Al Franken. We continue to believe that Norm Coleman beat him the first time around."

Smith, the lieutenant governor, is a former marketing professional who served as chief of staff to former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak. She worked at the mayor's office in 2007, when the Interstate 35W bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, and played a role in helping rebuild the bridge in the months that followed.

Smith has worked with Dayton since 2010, first on his campaign and as his chief of staff and later as his running mate. Smith earlier this year passed on a run for governor to replace Dayton and signaled she might not be interested in running for office again at all.

"I feel very confident in that decision and actually really energized by being able to put all of my focus on the next, basically, two years left in the term and do this job that I really love," Smith told the Star-Tribune at the time.

That is part of Smith's appeal as a potential placeholder. And it means the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota would have an open contest for Franken's seat, meeting in late spring for the party endorsement process and then holding a primary next August. Because there is relatively little time between Minnesota's primaries and the November general election, Democrats in the state hope they can coalesce around a candidate next spring.

Minnesota Democrats were sharply divided last year over the presidential race, and a sense of division lingers. Sen. Bernie Sanders won the primary caucuses in the state and some rural Democrats ultimately voted for Trump, unnerving urban Democrats in Minneapolis and St. Paul area who tend to dominate state politics.

A number of Democrats currently running to replace Dayton could become candidates for Franken's seat, if he were to resign. That includes Walz and Attorney General Lori Swanson, who has not announced a bid for governor but has often been mentioned as a potential candidate. Ilhan Omar, a Somali-American state representative, was circulated as another potential candidate for the Senate seat on Wednesday.

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Why Democrats had to dump Franken [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove | 12/07/2017 01:27 PM EDT

A year into Donald Trump's presidency, many voters still don't know what Democrats stand for — so at the very least, party leaders reluctantly decided, they better take a stand against sexual harassment.

Especially when they're going to need a huge turnout among women to do what now still seems like a reach, but six months ago seemed impossible: flip the House and maybe even the Senate, and rally in races for governor and state legislature across the country next year.

"For the last decade, Democrats have been pointing the finger at the Republican Party for devaluing women," said Guy Cecil, chairman of Priorities USA and the executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee during the 2012 and 2014 cycles. "This is a

requirement to be able to look at them with a straight face and say we're the party that cares about them."

"As long as Republicans don't do that, there's a very sharp contrast to be drawn. And there's no question that women not only make up a majority of the voting population, but across the country, of both political parties, are sick and tired of the sexual harassment they're facing in all sorts of work places," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.), who has been at the forefront of calling on Democrats accused of harassment to step down.

So it doesn't matter if Nancy Pelosi calls you an "icon," or if most Senate Democrats consider you a friend who just this year got comfortable enough in the job as senator to let his comedian side show in public. For a party heading into 2018 planning to run against Republicans as morally and legally corrupt, they know they need a clean argument.

Rep. John Conyers is the only person in history to be endorsed by both Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama. Al Franken was quickly becoming a legend on the left for his aggressive questioning at hearings.

But both of them were getting in the way of what party leaders see as a bigger mission, and bigger plans. And with the standard now set by Conyers and Franken, they know that will likely mean the end of Ruben Kihuen — the Nevada congressman elected last year as a face of the next generation of Latino political power — along with any other Democrat confronted with credible allegations of harassment or assault.

"Just because Donald Trump is sitting in the White House and Clarence Thomas may be sitting in the Supreme Court," said former Democratic National Committee Chair Donna Brazile, "this is a very important moment and Democrats cannot slip-slide and not have a standard."

Cecil, who days ago was one of the first prominent Democratic operatives to call for Franken's resignation, said he sees this as "a clear-cut case."

"I wish it would be both parties, but it is critical from an ethical and political point of view for the Democratic Party to be clear about what we are willing to accept and not accept," he argued.

Voters haven't left Democrats with much of a choice. Polls show that while Republicans believe sexual harassment is a Democratic problem, Democrats think it's a problem across the board.

Beyond the White House's dismissal of the women who'd gone public with accusations against Trump, Democratic leaders know that within a week, they're likely to have a Senate without Franken but including Roy Moore, despite allegations of preying on children and being banned from a mall over his alleged pursuit of teenage girls.

They also know that while Conyers was walked to the exit by his closest allies, there has yet to be a single Republican leader to call for the resignation of Texas Rep. Blake Farenthold, who also settled sexual harassment claims with taxpayer money. (He denies wrongdoing.) And they're full of self-doubt and disappointment that two of their own have been driven from office, while Republicans have dismissed or ignored claims.

Beyond a strain of anxiety that false information could now start being circulated against Democratic politicians to force them out, Democrats worry about holding to a standard that Republicans are not — a point that Franken touched on in announcing his own resignation Thursday.

"This does establish a new standard," Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said after Franken's resignation, and that to him behavior that predates a politician's time in office can disqualify them for serving.

"Strange principle is emerging," Democratic strategist David Axelrod tweeted Thursday. "If you admit misconduct, you resign. But if you deny it, however compelling or voluminous the testimony against you, you continue in office — or on to office — with impunity?"

But leaders say they have no choice.

"Democrats are not going to hide behind the curtain. We're going to open up the window," Brazile said, arguing that this is the natural and necessary next step for a party that led the charge for the Equal Rights Act, and the first national awakening around sexual harassment after the Anita Hill hearings. "When you go back and review the history of when this became a topic of concern for women in the workplace, it has always been Democrats and Democratic lawmakers who led the way."

Brazile wants to see her party go further, to forcefully lead the charge for all records of sexual harassment claims and payments to be made public. And once their own ranks have been purged, to focus on highlighting the lack of substantive Republican response to Farenthold and the issue overall.

Jayapal on Wednesday introduced a bill to change corporate forced arbitration clauses, which are often used to hush sexual harassment. She is calling for a revamped process in Congress of accountability and transparency about all sexual harassment claims and payments.

"While there is a spectrum of behavior," Jayapal said, "I don't think we should be parsing what behavior is acceptable and what behavior or not."

Democrats have also now reset the standard should Moore win the Alabama race next week.

Through Tuesday afternoon, Franken's Senate Democratic colleagues had been punting on the question of whether he should resign, insisting that they needed to wait on "the process" of the Ethics Committee investigation. That stance collapsed in a matter of minutes on Wednesday morning, with a POLITICO story about another woman who said Franken tried to forcibly kiss her after the taping of a radio show in 2006.

It ended the diminishing patience of most Democrats and a number of Republicans, including Senate Conference Chairman John Thune.

If elected, Republicans have said that Moore would be immediately subjected to an Ethics Committee for an investigation. On Wednesday, Democratic Sens. Chris Coons of Delaware and Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire were among those who declined to answer questions about Moore, citing the possibility he would come before them.

Others already seem much less inclined to wait for the Ethics Committee to proceed if Moore wins, and will likely call for his expulsion immediately.

Meanwhile, on Thursday morning, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich sounded out an argument on Franken that meshed with what many Republican leaders have been saying about Moore: Calling on him to step aside but saying it's up to the voters of Alabama to decide.

Gingrich noted that more than a million Minnesota voters pulled the lever for Franken in 2014, but "30 self appointed 'pure' senators want him out."

"What happened to popular vote," Gingrich tweeted.

Then again, Gingrich led the impeachment of Bill Clinton, which would have had Congress remove a president who had been elected twice by millions of votes.

Democrats will miss Conyers, and they'll miss Franken. The solace, they hope, will come both from feeling like they've done the right thing and from how they're judged next November.

"Women voters, like all other voters, are watching. But it's not just women voters," Brazile said. "Millennials are watching. Everyone is watching."

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VA kills plan to cut homeless-vet program after outcry [Back](#)

By Arthur Allen and Lorraine Woellert | 12/06/2017 05:49 PM EDT

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin has killed a plan to shift money from a major homelessness program in response to a wave of protest from veterans' advocates, who said the move would aggravate conditions for chronically ill and vulnerable vets.

Advocates for veterans, state officials and even officials from HUD, which co-sponsors the \$460 million program, had attacked the decision, saying the service has helped dramatically reduce homelessness among veterans. After POLITICO published a story about their anger, Shulkin reversed course late Wednesday.

"There will be absolutely no change in the funding to support our homeless program," he said in a news release, adding that the money would not be shifted to the Choice program, which enables veterans to get health care outside the VA system.

Shulkin promised to get input from local VA leaders and others "on how best to target our funding to the geographical areas that need it most."

The announcement came after a confusing week of messaging from the VA. On Nov. 27, Shulkin and HUD Secretary Ben Carson appeared at a Washington shelter to tout President Donald Trump's commitment to ending veteran homelessness.

Then on Dec. 1, Shulkin's staff told advocates on a phone call that the agency was ending the program--one of two major VA homelessness projects-- and funneling the money to local VA hospitals that could decide how to use it. The original VA decision was buried in a September

[circular](#) without prior consultation with HUD or veterans' groups.

A person involved with the program said the decision to cut it was made with no input from rank-and-file VA or HUD staff and surprised even employees at the VA.

Shulkin's reversal also came after HUD on Wednesday released its [annual survey](#) showing a 1.5 percent increase in veteran homelessness over 2016 — the first rise since 2010. Most of the jump occurred in Los Angeles, where housing costs are skyrocketing.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), who sits on a veterans' affairs subcommittee, had called the earlier VA decision "a new low" for the Trump administration that was "especially callous and perplexing" in view of the latest data on homelessness.

Murray and the 13 other members of the Senate Appropriations Military Construction-VA Subcommittee had [asked the VA](#) to reconsider its decision.

HUD data show there were nearly 40,000 homeless veterans in 2016, and even those with housing still need assistance. The program has reduced the number of displaced service members, serving 138,000 since 2010, and cut the number without housing on a given day by almost half. More than half the veterans housed are chronically ill, mentally ill or have substance abuse problems.

They can easily lose their housing again and need VA case managers to mediate with landlords, pay bills, and help them access the agency's services and jobs, said Matt Leslie, who runs the housing program for the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

"The people in this program are the most vulnerable individuals," Leslie said. "If someone's going to die on the streets, they are the ones."

Veteran and homeless advocates were infuriated by the VA's original decision.

"I don't understand why you are pulling the rug out," Elisha Harig-Blaine, a National League of Cities housing official who was on last Friday's call, said in an interview afterward. "You're putting at risk the lives of men and women who've served this country."

"The VA is taking its foot off the pedal," said Leon Winston, an executive at Swords to Plowshares, which helps homeless vets in San Francisco, where he said the VA decision is already having an impact. HUD recently put up 100 housing vouchers for veterans in the program, but the local VA hospital said it could only provide support for 50.

Agency spokesman Curtis Cashour said Tuesday that the move gave VA medical centers more flexibility to "ensure resources go where they best align with veterans' needs."

The decision would have affected \$265 million immediately and \$195 million more under the VA's 2018 budget. Under the program, HUD offers housing vouchers for veterans, and the VA provides case management — finding them apartments and making sure they stay there.

At the Nov. 27 event, Shulkin and Carson said Trump was increasing funding for veterans homelessness. They promised to help every veteran find a home.

When asked about the administration's budget, which still includes no additional vouchers for the hard-case veterans, Carson said HUD had "excess vouchers. When we use those, we'll look

for more," he said.

"The old paradigm of dumping money on problems doesn't work," Carson added.

Some communities have excess vouchers, but many more don't have enough, said Harig-Blaine, who is also a member of Shulkin's advisory committee for homelessness. Even in cities where there are excess vouchers, they exist only because the voucher community can't compete with private market rents, he said — not because there aren't homeless veterans there.

Advocates had said cuts to the homelessness program would be doubly foolish because the chronically homeless veterans it serves typically cost cities and the health care system hundreds of thousands of dollars for emergency room visits, ambulance runs and jailings that could be avoided if the veterans were reasonably sheltered.

"These are the kinds of veterans it deals with," said Kathryn Monet, CEO of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

Renuka Rayasam contributed to this report.

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Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 4:19:18 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 08/17/2017 04:17 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Ben Lefebvre

WHO'S VISITING CEQ, OMB? A watchdog group filed a lawsuit today seeking records of visitors to the White House Council on Environmental Quality and other agencies housed in the White House complex, but with independent legal duties, [reports](#) POLITICO's Josh Gerstein. Public Citizen's lawsuit does not seek information on visitors to the core offices of the White House, including senior advisers to President Donald Trump, records that are typically not covered by the Freedom of Information Act. But several courts have concluded that the listed agencies' records are subject to public disclosure under FOIA. The suit also seeks records for the OMB, Office of Science and Technology Policy and Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Public Citizen says the Secret Service is illegally turning over the records to White House officials exempt from FOIA, and it is seeking a restraining order to stop any further transfers to the White House's central record-keeping office, Josh reports. "The D.C. Circuit has already held that the records we requested are agency records subject to FOIA," Public Citizen's Adina Rosenbaum said. "There is no legal justification for the Secret Service to withhold them." Read the suit [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

MONUMENT REVIEW ALL GREEK TO ZINKE: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has apparently taken a break from reviewing U.S. monuments to go visit Greece. Zinke's wife Lola today [tweeted](#) a photo of her and the secretary sharing alone time on a boat and wrote "Love on the Bosphorus #summer." A [second photo](#) a few hours later just showed Mrs. Zinke and the tags #Happiness #Mykonos.

The vacation pics come a week before the Interior secretary is supposed to release a [review](#) of whether to remove national monument status from about two dozen regions. Zinke had [promised](#) an "extensive on-the-ground tours of monuments and meetings with stakeholders," but only published comments on eight of the monuments on the list. An Interior spokesman told AE that Zinke is indeed out of the country, but did not say where he went, when he left, when he will return and whether the monument review is, in practical terms, already finished. The photos were first flagged by environmental group Center for Western Priorities.

BOEM DRAFTS EIS FOR ARCTIC DRILLING PROJECT: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management today [announced](#) a draft environmental [impact statement](#) for proposed offshore oil and gas development submitted to BOEM by Hilcorp Alaska LLC. in September 2015. BOEM said it will take comments on the draft EIS through Nov. 18. "Today's publication of the draft EIS is another important step in the Department's strategy of

responsible resource development and we are committed to working with states, Alaska Native communities, investors and all stakeholders when we analyze development and production plans," said Vincent DeVito, counselor for energy policy at Interior. Houston-based Hilcorp wants to build a gravel island in shallow waters of the Beaufort Sea and has proposed the Liberty Project as a "pipe-in-pipe" subsea pipeline to deliver oil to shore.

ANTI-CPP CRUSADER LEAVES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR: West Virginia Solicitor General Elbert Lin is leaving at the end of the month for an unspecified private sector job, the state's attorney general's office announced today. As solicitor general, Lin represented Attorney General Patrick Morrisey in a number of his lawsuits against the Obama EPA. He argued several key issues before the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals last year over the Clean Power Plan. Lin was solicitor general for more than four years, and prior to that was a partner at the Washington law firm Wiley Rein and a clerk for Justice Clarence Thomas. Morrisey is running to challenge Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) next year.

IPCC ANNOUNCES FAMILIAR NAMES: The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change today announced authors for two of its upcoming reports, and among the ranks were U.S. academics and agency scientists. IPCC said it invited 101 experts from 41 countries to start work on its "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" as coordinating lead authors and review editors. The final report is expected to be finalized in September 2019. Of note, Anne Hollowed, from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Alaska Fisheries Science Center, was selected for a chapter on polar regions, and Robert Hallberg from NOAA's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory for a chapter on sea level rise. The full list is [here](#).

— **IPCC also announced the author team** for its "Special Report on Climate Change and Land," also set to be finalized in September 2019. NOAA's Elena Shevliakova from the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory is aiding on a land-climate interactions chapter, as well as Mark Weltz of USDA-ARS' Great Basin Rangelands Research Unit for a chapter on desertification. See the full list [here](#).

GASOLINE PRODUCTION NEARS RECORD: U.S. gasoline production by refiners and blenders is approaching record levels, the Energy Information Administration said today. Over the first seven months of 2017, production hit near record levels "with four-week rolling average production well above its five-year average and close to the top of its five-year range," EIA writes. "U.S. gasoline inventories also remain relatively high despite growing domestic and foreign demand." Read [more](#).

RECOMMENDED READING: An investigative report from the Tampa Bay Times found that Tampa Electric abandoned special guidelines and "resumed the risky procedure that caused" an accident at the utility's Big Bend Power Station in June, killing five workers. "If Tampa Electric had followed the guidelines, the men would still be alive," the Tampa Bay Times writes. And while the company "can't say when things changed," it "did the job this summer even though its own safety manual appears to prohibit the practice, and after its union complained that type of maintenance violates federal safety rules." Read it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

— Blackstone's new pipeline asset is wreaking environmental havoc, [Bloomberg](#).

— Three Mile Island at center of energy debate: Let struggling nuclear plants close or save

them, [CNBC](#).

— Some Democrats see tax reform as a path to taxing carbon, [The New York Times](#).

— Some conservatives say CO2 helps crops. A big study disagrees, [E&E News](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

— Lawmakers raise cash off [Trump-Russia probe](#)

— Booker takes [debate on Confederate statues](#) to Capitol Hill

— Defiant Trump digs in as racial, [GOP tensions flare](#)

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Lawmakers raise cash off Trump-Russia probe [Back](#)

By Austin Wright and Darren Samuelsohn | 08/17/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Rep. Eric Swalwell's campaign [website](#) features ominous photos of President Donald Trump, Donald Trump Jr. and Jared Kushner. It warns about Russia's attacks on last year's presidential election and asks visitors to sign a petition demanding that a bipartisan commission investigate.

Those who sign are then asked to contribute \$5, \$10, \$25 or more to the California Democrat.

Swalwell is one of the junior members of the House Intelligence Committee, which has long had an unspoken rule against engaging in partisan fundraising related to the panel's secretive work.

But the panel's high-profile Russia investigation is now putting that rule to the test, and experts are warning that some committee members' recent appeals for campaign cash could undermine everyone's credibility.

"If you're trying to fundraise in a way that whips up partisanship, that's going to make the important work of the committee that much harder, if not impossible," said Michael Bahar, who until last May was the panel's Democratic staff director.

Fundraising appeals from Intelligence Committee members have so far avoided detailed references to the panel's investigation, but there is undoubtedly a connection. And these fundraising appeals come as outside groups, including some with ties to the Trump administration, are capitalizing on the highly charged issue to bolster their own war chests.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the House panel's top Democrat, last month sent a fundraising request tangentially related to his involvement in the House investigation that is looking into potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Trump last month took to Twitter to call Schiff "sleazy," blasting him for spending "all of his time on television" talking about the investigation.

The California Democrat responded with a tweet of his own, saying Trump had attacked him for doing his job and asking his supporters to "chip in to stand with me." His post included a link to a fundraising website for Schiff's campaign.

Democrats aren't alone in mixing the Russia probe with raising cash. House Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) and Rep. Trey Gowdy have also done it. Gowdy's request for campaign cash came last month after Schiff [told Bloomberg News](#) the South Carolina Republican was acting like a "second attorney" for Kushner during a closed-door committee interview with the president's son-in-law and senior White House adviser.

In an email to supporters, Gowdy boasted that he had "ticked off" Schiff and Democratic leaders.

"Nancy Pelosi and Adam Schiff are lining up the Democratic machine to take me down next election," he wrote, adding: "Please consider making a financial contribution of whatever amount you are able to afford."

Nunes, meanwhile, has [repeatedly talked](#) about the investigation during private fundraising events, even though he stepped back from the probe this spring after the House Ethics Committee announced it was investigating his handling of classified information.

"The Democrats don't want an investigation on Russia. They want an independent commission," Nunes said at an April dinner where attendees paid \$75 per plate, according to the Los Angeles Times. "Why do they want an independent commission? Because they want to continue the narrative that Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump are best friends, and that's the reason that he won, because Hillary Clinton would have never lost on her own; it had to be someone else's fault."

Spokespeople for Swalwell, Gowdy and Nunes declined to comment on their fundraising efforts tied to the Russia investigation. A spokesman for Schiff, Patrick Boland, said in a statement: "President Trump attacked and personally smeared Congressman Schiff for his efforts to push back publicly on the president's destructive agenda, both domestically and around the world. Congressman Schiff encourages members of both parties to refrain from politicizing the Russia investigation in any way."

The House members' actions contrast with those of Senate Intelligence Committee members investigating Russia's election meddling. Intelligence Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and top Democrat Mark Warner of Virginia have sought to present a united front, avoiding the kind of partisan spats that have characterized the House probe. Burr and Warner do not appear to be fundraising off their investigation.

Lawrence Noble, an expert in campaign finance and ethics with the Campaign Legal Center, said it was inevitable the Russia investigations would become a fundraising tool — a fact he considers unfortunate.

"It undermines public faith in the investigation and makes it look more partisan," Noble said. "It helps further politicize the issue, and that I think is not healthy because I'd like to think everybody would agree there are serious allegations of Russian involvement that need to be

investigated."

Outside the House and Senate intelligence committees, the Russia investigations have been a fundraising boon — on both sides of the issue.

Trump's 2020 reelection campaign declared it had set a one-day fundraising record on May 17 — pulling in more than \$314,000 — for the campaign and joint fundraising committee with the Republican National Committee. What was going on to prompt the flood of cash? A cascading series of bad headlines centering around Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey, and the public disclosure of the president's request that Comey shut down the investigation into his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn. All of that ultimately culminated in the Justice Department's appointment of special counsel Robert Mueller.

Trump's campaign team nudged donors with a series of fundraising emails that didn't mention the Russia scandal specifically but hit on the moment's zeitgeist. They used the word "SABOTAGE" as a subject line and asked for donations as low as \$1 to "DRAIN THE SWAMP."

The Russia probe has been a moneymaker in other ways.

The RNC sent out a June 8 plea from "Trump Headquarters" on the same day Comey testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee seeking donations of \$1. The messages opened with this note: "James Comey stated under oath that President Trump was NOT under investigation by the FBI. ... So why has the Fake News Media spent so much time reporting on the so-called 'Russia investigation?'"

Campaigns aren't the only ones trying to make money off the Russia probe. Roger Stone, one of the many Trump associates who is under federal scrutiny over his activities during the presidential campaign, has been [selling](#) \$9.99 "Comey Nut Job" T-shirts on his website since the spring. In an email, Stone said the Comey shirts are being sold "commercially" and are "not being used for fundraising."

The efforts have struck some as off base. "It's crazy," Nick Akerman, a former Watergate prosecutor and assistant U.S. attorney, said of Stone's fundraising efforts. "This guy is right in the middle of the whole thing and here he is doing all this."

Controversy has followed other lawmakers who try to raise money off congressional investigations and other hot-button issues. The National Republican Congressional Committee in 2014 used the deadly attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, to raise money for House Republicans. Gowdy, who was featured in one message, later criticized the effort and asked that the NRCC stop the ads.

Bahar, who left his Capitol Hill staff job to work at the law firm Eversheds Sutherland, said the House Intelligence Committee has long had an unwritten understanding that members don't issue appeals for campaign cash trading on their work for the committee.

"Because of the often classified nature of what the Intelligence Committee does, there are few opportunities to fundraise," he said. "And that carries over into the Russia investigation too. ... A lot of this stuff is classified or sensitive."

To view online [click here](#).

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Pelosi, Booker push for removal of Capitol's Confederate statues [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 08/17/2017 11:30 AM EDT

The nationwide debate over the removal of monuments to the Confederacy is coming to the U.S. Capitol.

While President Donald Trump on Thursday urged the preservation of "our beautiful statues and monuments" honoring Confederates, Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) plans to craft legislation that would remove the Capitol's statues lionizing supporters of the slave-holding era and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is calling for their elimination.

Pelosi on Thursday urged Republicans to join her in supporting removal of the Confederate figures from the Capitol, lending new momentum to Booker's effort. Only a few Democrats had previously called for the statues' removal after white supremacists staged a violent rally in Charlottesville over that city's likeness of Robert E. Lee.

"The Confederate statues in the halls of Congress have always been reprehensible," Pelosi said in a statement. "If Republicans are serious about rejecting white supremacy, I call upon Speaker [Paul] Ryan to join Democrats to remove the Confederate statues from the Capitol immediately."

Congressional GOP leaders have previously stated that decisions on replacing Capitol statues should rest with individual states, and Ryan's office affirmed that stance earlier this week, **POLITICO reported**. A Ryan spokesman responded to Pelosi's call by reiterating his previous statement.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) was less adamant than Pelosi, welcoming Booker's proposal but turning the focus back to Trump's recent comments on white supremacist groups.

"President Trump and Steve Bannon are trying to divert attention away from the president's refusal to unequivocally and full-throatedly denounce white supremacy, neo-Nazism, and other forms of bigotry," Schumer said in a statement. "While it is critical that we work towards the goal of Senator Cory Booker's legislation, we must continue to denounce and resist President Trump for his reprehensible actions."

The push to remove the Capitol's Confederate iconography promises to reopen an emotional debate that presents pitfalls for both parties. Public polls suggest that the removal of monuments to the Civil War's losing side divides Americans, even as Trump's response to the white supremacist gathering won support from just 27 percent of respondents in a survey released Wednesday by the Marist Poll and PBS NewsHour.

In the wake of the Charlottesville rally, which left one woman dead and more than a dozen injured, Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D-Va.) and Ralph Northam, the Democratic nominee in November's election to replace him, have come out in favor of replacing the state's Confederate monuments.

The issue is more complicated for members of Congress, however, thanks to long-standing guidelines that empower state legislatures to select the statues in the Capitol that honor prominent citizens from their states.

Even so, Congress could eliminate all Confederate statues via legislation and Booker said Wednesday night that he would propose that move. "This is just one step," Booker [tweeted](#). "We have much work to do."

Pelosi, who orchestrated the movement of Lee's likeness from Statuary Hall near the Capitol Rotunda to a less prominent spot on the first floor of the building, took a firm stance on Thursday.

"There is no room for celebrating the violent bigotry of the men of the Confederacy in the hallowed halls of the United States Capitol or in places of honor across the country," she said.

There are 10 statues in the Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection honoring individuals who served in the Confederate army or government. Others depict supporters of slavery or the Confederacy, such as former Secretary of State and Sen. John C. Calhoun and Uriah Milton Rose of Arkansas.

"Individuals who were treasonous to the United States, who took up arms against their own country, and inflicted catastrophic death and suffering among US citizens, should not be afforded such a rare honor in this sacred space," Booker said Thursday. "These statues belong in a museum, where they are put in the proper historical context."

Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill noted Thursday that Ryan has the power to call up a single piece of legislation removing the statues or move them to "a private space in the Capitol out of public view" through the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, a majority of whose members the Speaker selects.

"For Speaker Ryan to hide behind states' rights to defend the symbols of the Confederacy is as shameful as it is postposterous," Hammill said by email.

Leaders of the Congressional Progressive Caucus are also backing removal of the Capitol's Confederate statues. A spokeswoman for the Congressional Black Caucus said Tuesday the group is not presently proposing any legislative solution because GOP leaders back leaving the decisions to individual states.

Booker's legislation promises to put Virginia Democratic Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine in the spotlight given the sensitivity of the issue in their state.

Warner said Thursday that he and Booker are talking "about how we might move forward on" the Confederate statues housed within Congress.

"[T]his is a conversation that is going to, I think, go on now for some time, but I think that everybody needs to have a chance to be heard," Warner told a radio station in Richmond. The former Virginia governor also noted that "there's going to have to be a local process in every community, and we're going to have to have tough, and in many ways overdue conversations, about race."

While serving as Richmond mayor in the 1990s, Kaine spearheaded the installation of a statue

commemorating African-American tennis champion Arthur Ashe and released an official apology for the city's participation in slavery — but he also has supported local conversations about potential monument removal.

"Sen. Kaine thinks Sen. Booker's proposal is a good idea, and he plans to work with him on the bill and support it," a Kaine spokesperson said Thursday. "He also believes the Senate needs to work to address the fundamental inequities in our society that have left African-Americans and families of color in this country with far less wealth, higher unemployment rates, fewer opportunities and less protection under the law."

Democrats are also facing a growing push from civil rights groups and outside-the-Beltway activists to take a stronger stand on the remaining statues in the Capitol as cities from Baltimore to Jacksonville take on removal of their Confederate monuments.

"This is a moment for members of Congress to come together to show that they are not complicit with those who sow hate and division," Vanita Gupta, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said in a statement. "One way to show they do not support white nationalists would be to take a serious look at symbols of hate and monuments to racial discrimination that are enshrined in our nation's Capitol."

In addition, Trump's alignment with supporters of maintaining the Confederate iconography could influence Democratic decision-making. Trump's call on Thursday to maintain Confederate monuments, comparing Lee and Stonewall Jackson to the Founding Fathers, mark [an escalation](#) from remarks earlier this week in which he said the issue should be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

To view online [click here](#).

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Defiant Trump digs in as racial, GOP tensions flare [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 08/17/2017 11:38 AM EDT

A defiant President Donald Trump on Thursday further inflamed racial tensions and the GOP divide, tweeting his support for "beautiful" Confederate statues and attacking Republican senators who have panned his response to the violent Charlottesville white supremacist protests.

Republican lawmakers, CEOs and military leaders have raced to distance themselves from the president after he doubled down on his claim that "both sides" are to blame for the violent clashes that left one dead and injured more than a dozen others.

But the president is showing no signs of backing down.

"Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments," Trump wrote Thursday morning. "You can't change history, but you can learn from it. Robert E Lee, Stonewall Jackson - who's next, Washington, Jefferson? So foolish!"

"Also the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be comparably replaced!" added Trump, who appeared to be sympathizing with some of the white supremacists and neo-Nazis who rallied to protest the removal of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's statue.

Trump also went on the attack against Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who had accused Trump of taking "a step backward by again suggesting there is moral equivalency between the white supremacist neo-Nazis and KKK members who attended the Charlottesville rally."

The president responded with anger, tweeting on Thursday morning that the "publicity seeking" lawmaker's statement was false. "Such a disgusting lie," Trump said. "He just can't forget his election trouncing."

Trump went after Sen. Jeff Flake as well, after the Arizona Republican had warned on Wednesday that the GOP "can't claim to be the party of Lincoln if we equivocate in condemning white supremacy."

"Great to see that Dr. Kelli Ward is running against Flake Jeff Flake, who is WEAK on borders, crime and a non-factor in Senate," Trump said, seemingly endorsing the GOP primary challenger over the vulnerable incumbent senator. "He's toxic!"

Taken together, the chaos of the week represents another low for Trump's presidency, especially as he tries to revive efforts to repeal Obamacare, pass tax reform and push an infrastructure package, while also finding a congressional compromise that can avert a government shutdown and government default this fall. Trump can ill afford to lose the support of fellow Republicans, with the slim majority the party holds in the Senate.

And it's not just lawmakers who are shunning Trump and his rhetoric. A steady flow of business leaders have also severed ties with the White House, prompting Trump to disband two advisory councils to stem the tide of defections. Even military leaders on the Joint Chiefs of Staff have taken stands, unequivocally stating that racism and hatred won't be tolerated within the armed forces.

"I can absolutely and unambiguously tell you there is no place — no place — for racism and bigotry in the U.S. military or in the United States as a whole," Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Thursday from Beijing.

Trump is also facing heightened turmoil in his White House, a dynamic that chief strategist Steve Bannon further aggravated by giving multiple interviews in which he broke from the president on North Korea, attacked his West Wing colleagues — including economic adviser Gary Cohn — and threatened to overhaul the Defense and State departments.

He took a dig at Trump officials who are shying away from an aggressive trade policy, saying "they are wetting themselves."

"That's a fight I fight every day here," Bannon said. "We're still fighting. There's Treasury and Gary Cohn and Goldman Sachs lobbying."

The embattled White House aide also amplified Trump's culture wars message, saying the president's "where does it all end" skepticism "connects with the American people about their history, cultures and traditions."

"The race-identity politics of the left wants to say it's all racist. Just give me more," Bannon [told The New York Times](#). "Tear down more statues. Say the revolution is coming. I can't get enough of it."

But descendants of Confederate Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson have called for the removal of his statue and others who represent the Confederacy.

"They are overt symbols of racism and white supremacy, and the time is long overdue for them to depart from public display," Jackson's great-great-grandsons William Jackson Christian and Warren Edmund Christian [wrote in an open letter](#) to the mayor of Richmond, Virginia.

Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University, said on Thursday that Trump has joined Andrew Johnson and Woodrow Wilson "as the most virulently racist" presidents of the post-Civil War.

"Donald Trump seems to want to incite a cultural war," Brinkley said, adding that the president is "willing to be incendiary on racial issues for political gain."

But he questioned the upside of defending Confederate monuments, noting that the Midwestern states that ultimately carried Trump to victory — Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania — all fought on the side of the Union.

A CBS News poll released Thursday morning shows that 55 percent of Americans disapprove of Trump's response to Charlottesville, though more than two-thirds of Republicans surveyed do approve. The poll was conducted Monday, when Trump declared racism "evil" and condemned hate groups by name, through Wednesday, a day after the president doubled down on his initial response that white supremacists weren't the only people responsible for violence.

Trump, however, eyed a different data point. "Many meetings today in Bedminster including with Secretary Linda M and Small Business," he tweeted, after attacking Republican senators but before tweeting about the Confederate monuments being taken down across the country. "Job numbers are looking great!"

Matthew Nussbaum and Louis Nelson contributed to this report.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy: Putting the "budge" in EPA's budget — Svinicki sails through — Report: DOE internal climate office shuttered
Date: Thursday, June 15, 2017 4:43:43 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/15/2017 04:40 PM EDT

With help from Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon

PUTTING THE 'BUDGE' IN BUDGET: House Interior-EPA spending Chairman [Ken Calvert](#) today told EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt that the proposed agency budget is "untenable." It was a sentiment that lawmakers from both parties made clear at the outset of today's EPA's appropriations hearing — the first of the year, Alex Guillén [reports](#).

The White House's proposed \$2.4 billion cut to EPA managed to hit programs important to every member of the spending subcommittee, California's Calvert said. He specifically noted cuts to a program that upgrades dirty diesel engines as key for his state, along with targeted airshed grants that were cut entirely from the budget, and a 31 percent reduction to Superfund clean-ups. [Betty McCollum](#), the panel's top Democrat, meanwhile had even harsher words. The budget, she said, "would endanger the health of millions of Americans, jeopardize the quality of our air and water and wreak havoc on the economy."

Also during the hearing: Pruitt said the agency is not reviewing a key waiver that allows California to set stricter emissions limits for cars than the federal government. "Currently the waiver is not under review ... by EPA," the administrator said. "It's important we recognize the role of states in achieving good air quality standards," Pruitt added, noting California's early role in environmental regulation. More [here](#).

Pruitt also sought to defend watershed work today, despite proposed cuts to programs. Annie Snider [reports](#) the administrator told Ohio Rep. [Marcy Kaptur](#) he could not recall whether he asked OMB Director Mick Mulvaney or other White House staff to eliminate the watershed programs but sought to reassure skeptical lawmakers that the administration's proposal to zero-out popular watershed cleanup programs would not interfere with their goals. Pruitt acknowledged Congress was unlikely to go along with the proposal to zero-out programs targeting regions like the Great Lakes, which received \$300 million this year, and Chesapeake Bay, which got \$73 million.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Happy Thursday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

NEVADA UNDOES NET METERING CUTS: Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval today effectively reversed cuts to the state's net metering program that dried up the rooftop solar market in the state after they were implemented in 2015. Sandoval [signed A.B. 405](#), a bill that would require utilities to purchase excess power from customers' rooftop solar panels at 95 percent of the rate those customers pay for power from the grid, eventually falling to 75 percent. Rooftop solar companies Sunrun and SolarCity, a subsidiary of Tesla, said they would return to Nevada once Sandoval signed the bill, according to [Reuters](#).

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM: NRC Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki sailed through the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee this morning on her way to a third term, Darius Dixon [reports](#). Lawmakers on the panel approved her renomination on a voice vote. It's unclear when she will get a vote on the floor. [Tom Carper](#), EPW's top Democrat, suggested earlier this week that Democrats are unlikely to demand a procedural vote on Svinicki's confirmation.

BIOFUEL MANDATE COMING VERY SOON: Sources tell Eric Wolff that EPA could release a proposed rule setting the biofuel volume mandates for 2018 as soon as this afternoon. An ethanol and an oil industry source said the agency will keep the conventional ethanol volumes at 15 billion gallons, and increase the requirement for advanced biofuels to 4.38 billion gallons, up 100 million gallons from 2017. More [here](#).

CLIMATE CHANGE: The New York Times [reports](#) the staff of DOE's Office of International Climate and Technology were told to pack their bags this month, citing current and former DOE employees. The department has been in the crosshairs since it was marked for elimination in Trump's budget request. Yet its workers played an essential role in planning Energy Secretary Rick Perry's visit to Beijing last week as part of the Clean Energy Ministerial. The office is the only unit at DOE to have climate in its name, Eric [reports](#).

YUCCA BILL ADVANCES: Draft nuclear waste reform [legislation](#) was approved by a House Energy and Commerce environment panel today on a voice vote — despite a pair of Democratic sticking points. The bill sponsored by panel Chairman [John Shimkus](#) would make the first changes in 30 years to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which names Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole waste repository. Darius has more [here](#).

Ozone, brownfields too: The subcommittee also advanced a pair of bills to reauthorize a brownfields cleanup program and delay ozone standards, Eric [reports](#). Lawmakers split along partisan lines on the [Ozone Standards Implementation Act](#), which would delay implementation of the 2015 ozone standard through 2025 and stretch the regular air quality standard review period from five years to 10. A draft brownfields program reauthorization [bill](#) also advanced on voice vote.

NUCLEAR TAX LIFELINE: The House Ways and Means Committee today approved by voice vote [a bill](#) to extend the nuclear tax credit, Darius and Esther Whieldon [report](#). The fate of the nuclear power credit will help decide the fate of two new projects in South Carolina and Georgia whose backers have warned they may be unable to finish work without an extension of the credit.

Woes across the industry: A majority of nuclear reactors are losing money, thanks to competition in the power sector from cheap natural gas among other factors, according to a report today from Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Losses total around \$2.9 billion a year, according to the report, which found that nuclear plant operators are being paid \$20 to \$30 a megawatt-hour for electricity, while it costs about \$35 per megawatt-hour on average to operate. More [here](#) from Bloomberg.

SUNIVA PROTECTIONS WOULD COST JOBS: If Suniva gets the trade protections proposed in its petition to the International Trade Commission, it would cost an estimated 88,000 jobs — or about one-third of the current American solar workforce, the Solar Energy Industries Association said today. Suniva has asked the ITC to place a tariff on imported solar cells and set a price floor for imported panels, making the argument that it cannot compete

with foreign rivals. But SEIA said today states would stand to lose jobs if such protections were enacted. California, for one, has an expected job loss of 15,800, SEIA said. More [here](#).

OIL SANDS PRODUCTION TO INCREASE: Canadian oil sand developers will increase production by nearly half a million barrels a day through 2018, consulting agency IHS Markit said. The boost would make it the second fastest-growing oil patch after U.S. shale development. Oil sands production reached nearly 2.4 million barrels a day last year, IHS Markit said. Future growth will come from companies that are currently they're expanding their scope, not necessarily new players entering the field. That would be welcome news for Canadian oil drillers. Low prices have most recently helped convince companies like ConocoPhillips and Exxon Mobil to either exit their Western Canada projects or cut back their estimates of how much they could profitably produce in the area.

CARBON EMISSIONS STAY FLAT: Global greenhouse gas emissions likely did not increase in 2016, which would make it the third year in a row of no growth, a BP energy economist said earlier today. Three years of flat emissions would be a big deal, given that emissions grew 2.5 percent a year during the previous decade. "Slowing carbon emissions is significant and profound," BP Group Chief Economist Spencer Dale said while presenting BP's annual energy review at The Atlantic Council. The question is now whether the non-growth in emissions is temporary or a structural change. Leaps in renewable energy production and a global move away from coal point toward the latter, but a big reason for the recent halt in emissions growth was a stark slowdown in Chinese steel, cement and iron production, Dale said. Whether those businesses stay slow remains to be seen.

QUICK HITS:

- Oil's pipeline to America's schools, [The Center for Public Integrity](#).
- Official says more Hanford nuke mishaps likely, [Associated Press](#).
- Scientists say the rapid sinking of Louisiana's coast already counts as a "worst-case scenario," [The Washington Post](#).
- Climate-change deniers aren't tired of winning yet, [New Republic](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Senate votes to impose new sanctions [on Russia and Iran](#)
- Scalise faces [third surgery](#) after being wounded in mass shooting
- Manafort still doing [international work](#)

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

House EPA spending chair: Budget cuts are 'untenable' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/15/2017 11:26 AM EDT

Lawmakers from both parties made it clear at the outset of EPA's first appropriations hearing of the year that the White House's proposed \$2.4 billion cut to the agency won't fly.

House Interior-EPA Chairman [Ken Calvert](#) (R-Calif.) told EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt that the proposed budget is "untenable."

Calvert said the budget managed to cut programs important to every member of the spending subcommittee. He specifically noted cuts to a program that upgrades dirty diesel engines as key for his state of California, along with targeted air shed grants that were cut entirely from the budget, and a 31 percent reduction to Superfund clean-ups.

"These are all proposals we are unlikely to entertain," Calvert said. "This is perhaps not how you would personally craft EPA's budget, but it's the budget you have to defend here today."

The panel's top Democrat, [Betty McCollum](#) of Minnesota also had even harsher words for the budget proposal, which she said "would endanger the health of millions of Americans, jeopardize the quality of our air and water and wreak havoc on the economy." McCollum also slammed the proposed reduction of thousands of workers.

Calvert did praise the budget proposal for maintaining funding for key state water grants and the nascent Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program.

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt is facing questions today from the House spending subcommittee that will write EPA's fiscal 2018 spending bill later this summer.

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Pruitt: EPA not reviewing California car emissions waiver [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/15/2017 12:30 PM EDT

EPA is not reviewing a key waiver that allows California to set stricter emissions limits for cars than the federal government, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said today.

"Currently the waiver is not under review ... by EPA," Pruitt said at an appropriations hearing.

"It's important we recognize the role of states in achieving good air quality standards," Pruitt added, noting California's early role in environmental regulation.

EPA's decision to re-open a review of auto standards for model year 2022-2025 cars also raised concerns that EPA would consider revoking the California waiver. The Clean Air Act allows EPA to give waivers to California on air quality issues because of the state's historic and chronic pollution problems.

The state and environmentalists argued that the law does not allow EPA to revoke such waivers once granted, and California officials said they would fight the Trump administration if it attempted to revoke it.

The waiver in question was granted by the Obama administration in 2009. EPA and the Transportation Department later set the first greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars, but California said that any cars complying with the federal standard would also be deemed to have met the state's standards so as to avoid a patchwork of regulations.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA is continuing its review of the nationwide emissions rules for model year 2022-2025 vehicles.

To view online [click here](#).

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Pruitt defends watershed work despite proposed cuts [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/15/2017 02:35 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt sought to reassure skeptical lawmakers that the Trump administration's proposal to defund popular watershed cleanup programs would not interfere with their goals.

He did not offer any specifics on how that would happen.

Facing critical questions from both Democrats and Republicans on a House Appropriations subcommittee, Pruitt acknowledged that Congress was unlikely to go along with the proposal to zero-out programs targeting regions like the Great Lakes, which received \$300 million this year, and Chesapeake Bay, which got \$73 million.

Pruitt told Rep. [Marcy Kaptur](#) (D-Ohio) he could not recall whether he asked OMB Director Mick Mulvaney or other White House staff to eliminate the watershed programs. "In our discussions with OMB [we] talked about the importance of the Great Lakes Initiative," he said.

EPA will continue to facilitate states' efforts around such cleanups, he said.

"Honestly, money's important, but I think this leadership role is important as well, and that's going to continue," Pruitt told Rep. [Dave Joyce](#) (R-Ohio). Joyce was careful to call the funding blueprint the "Mulvaney budget" rather than attributing it to Trump.

As an example, Pruitt pointed to EPA's role bringing the six Chesapeake Bay states together around a landmark cleanup plan. As Oklahoma's attorney general, Pruitt joined a lawsuit challenging that plan, but he has recently said that he now sees the effort as a model for how states and the federal government can work together. However environmental groups say the administration's proposal to eliminate funding for the program would devastate that effort.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Appropriations subcommittee is expected to write EPA's fiscal 2018 spending bill later this summer.

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Svinicki clears EPW, heads to full Senate [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/15/2017 10:23 AM EDT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki sailed through the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee this morning on her way to a third term.

Lawmakers on the panel approved her renomination on a voice vote.

Svinicki has been on the NRC's leadership board since 2008 and was elevated to the chairmanship by President Donald Trump in January, but her current term expires June 30. And unlike many other federal boards and commissions, NRC leadership members have to step down, even temporarily, if the Senate fails to confirm the nominee.

Trump has nominated two new NRC commissioners, Annie Caputo and David Wright, but EPW plans to vote on them later this month. Sen. [Tom Carper](#), Environment and Public Works' top Democrat, has said that he supports Svinicki's renomination and that EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) "seemed to be comfortable" with packaging them with a renomination of NRC Commissioner Jeff Baran, a Democrat whose term runs out next summer.

WHAT'S NEXT: Svinicki's nomination is now in the hands of Senate leadership and it's unclear when she will get a vote on the floor. Carper suggested earlier this week that Democrats are unlikely to demand a procedural vote on Svinicki's confirmation.

To view online [click here](#).

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Sources: Biofuel volume proposal could be released as soon as today [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/15/2017 10:16 AM EDT

EPA could release a proposed rule setting the biofuel volume mandates for 2018 as soon as this afternoon, industry sources tell POLITICO.

An ethanol and an oil industry source said the agency will keep the conventional ethanol volumes at 15 billion gallons, and increase the requirement for advanced biofuels to 4.38 billion gallons, up 100 million gallons from 2017.

The release of the proposal could slip to Friday, the sources said.

EPA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The mid-June release could make it difficult for EPA to issue the final rule by the deadline of Nov. 30, something Administrator Scott Pruitt has said he wants. EPA [sent](#) the proposal to OMB last month.

The oil industry had hoped EPA might lower the volumes from the statutory maximum set for 2017, but government projections for higher gasoline consumption next year made that unlikely.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will take public comment after release of the proposal.

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NYT: Staff of DOE international climate office told to pack their bags [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/15/2017 01:48 PM EDT

The Department of Energy will shutter its Office of International Climate and Technology, its staff was told this month, [according](#) to The New York Times, which cited current and former DOE employees.

The department has been in the crosshairs since it was marked for elimination in President Donald Trump's budget request. Its workers played an essential role in planning Energy Secretary Rick Perry's visit to Beijing last week as part of the Clean Energy Ministerial.

The office is the only unit at DOE to have climate in its name.

The office last made headlines in February when a supervisor told staff not to use the term "climate change," "Paris Agreement" or "emissions reduction" in written communications, as POLITICO [reported](#) at the time.

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House environment panel approves nuclear waste bill [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/15/2017 12:31 PM EDT

The House Energy and Commerce Committee's environment panel approved draft nuclear waste reform [legislation](#) this morning on a voice vote despite a pair of Democratic sticking points.

The bill sponsored by panel chairman [John Shimkus](#) would make the first changes in 30 years to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which names Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole waste repository. The draft version of the bill includes sections regarding interim storage sites, payments to host states and limits to work on a defense waste-only repository. Several of the bill's elements are contingent on getting a final licensing decision on Yucca.

Committee Democrats offered three amendments to the bill that were ultimately withdrawn after Shimkus promised to address the issues. Two amendments were designed to change bill's

linking the advancement of Yucca with action on interim storage facilities, and the third sought to eliminate a section affecting Nevada's water rights.

Although Shimkus has included a few Nevada-friendly provisions in the bill, it has not won the support of that state's congressional delegation.

GOP Rep. [Joe Barton](#) said that he particularly liked language designed to garner state support. "If we made one huge mistake early on, it was not giving the states more input into the initial process," he said. "If we'd let Nevada have a bigger say upfront we might not have the mess we have today."

After the markup, Shimkus said he expects the nuclear waste bill and two other measures to be "off the [House] floor" before the August recess although he wouldn't speculate on when any of them might get voted out of committee.

WHAT'S NEXT: The draft bill now moves to the full committee where it is likely to face more amendments from Democrats. E&C has not yet scheduled full committee hearings or markups on the bill.

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Ozone, brownfields bill clear House subcommittee [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/15/2017 12:18 PM EDT

A House Energy and Commerce subcommittee today advanced a pair of bills to reauthorize a brownfields cleanup program and delay ozone standards.

The environment panel split along partisan lines on the [Ozone Standards Implementation Act](#) (H.R. 806), which would delay implementation of the 2015 ozone standard through 2025 and stretch the regular air quality standard review period from five years to 10. Democrats attacked the bill as weakening Clean Air Act standards while Republicans said the delay would allow regions to catch up to older standards. Democrats offered several amendments all of which were defeated.

A [draft](#) brownfields bill advanced on voice vote. The bill reauthorizes and adjusts the brownfields program to raise the cap on federal grant amounts for individual sites. The bill received bipartisan support in the committee, though ranking member Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.) said he wished the program would get more funding.

Democrats also took the time to wonder why no EPA officials had appeared before the committee to address any of the bills at issue.

"We've had no administration witnesses before this committee since the beginning of the year, something that has never happened before in my time on the committee," said Rep. [Gene Green](#) (D-Texas).

WHAT'S NEXT: Chairman [Greg Walden](#) will likely schedule a full committee markup on

the bills.

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House Ways and Means approves bill to redo nuclear tax credit [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Esther Whieldon | 06/15/2017 12:53 PM EDT

The House Ways and Means Committee today voted to rewrite a tax credit for nuclear power that's likely to decide the fate of two new projects in South Carolina and Georgia.

The credits — [worth billions of dollars](#) to the companies building Summer and Vogtle expansions — currently require that new reactors be in service by the end of 2020 to qualify. But that timeline became just about impossible for the SCANA and Georgia Power projects following the bankruptcy of their contractor, Westinghouse, earlier this year.

The [bipartisan bill](#), H.R. 1551, from Reps. [Tom Rice](#) and [Earl Blumenauer](#) approved today by voice vote would open the credits to projects that power up after 2020. The committee adopted an amendment from Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) that, among other things, would allow qualified public entities such as public power authorities to forego the credits and pass them along to other companies in the supply chain.

Committee members on both sides of the aisle reiterated their wish that the committee take up legislation to extend tax credits for several of energy technologies left out of a 2015 tax deal. Brady responded that he hopes "we can address this in a positive way this year in comprehensive tax reform."

Sen. [Tim Scott](#) has introduced the Senate version of the [legislation](#), S.666.

WHAT'S NEXT: The legislation now moves to the full House but it's unclear whether it will be able to hitch a ride on another bill to get a floor vote.

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SEIA: Suniva trade case threatens 88K U.S. solar jobs [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 06/15/2017 01:49 PM EDT

The Solar Energy Industries Association [says](#) the U.S. solar sector would lose 88,000 jobs, or about one-third of the workforce, if President Donald Trump grants Suniva's request to impose trade tariffs on solar equipment imports.

The U.S. International Trade Commission is investigating a complaint by Suniva and SolarWorld Americas that an influx of cheap solar cells and modules largely from Asian

countries is harming the U.S. manufacturing market and putting the companies out of business.

SEIA, which has opposed the petition, said the utility-scale market would be hit the hardest and see employment shrink by 60 percent, while residential solar jobs would decline by about 44 percent and commercial sector positions would drop about 46 percent.

California would be hurt the most, SEIA said, with about 15,800 jobs lost. South Carolina would lose about 7,000 jobs and Texas would see about 6,300 jobs vanish, SEIA said.

"Rather than help the industry, the action would kill many thousands of American jobs and put a stop to billions of dollars in private investment," Abigail Ross Hopper, SEIA president and CEO, said in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission expects to determine the extent to which the cheaper solar panels are causing injury by Sept. 22. If it finds there is injury, would send its recommendations to Trump by Nov. 13.

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Senate votes to impose new sanctions on Russia and Iran [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 06/15/2017 01:09 PM EDT

The Senate on Thursday voted 98-2 for new sanctions on Iran and Russia, including new powers for Congress to block President Donald Trump from rolling back any penalties against Vladimir Putin's government.

The bipartisan support for the year's most significant GOP-backed limitation on Trump comes as the White House remains silent on the plan to sanction Moscow, even as President Putin [pushes back](#) at U.S. intelligence officials' conclusion that Russian actors conducted cyberattacks to disrupt the 2016 presidential election. Trump has repeatedly dismissed Russian electoral meddling, raising questions about whether the White House might reject the Senate's sanctions deal.

Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) hailed the lopsided vote in favor of the Iran sanctions bill that he helped shepherd to passage with the Russia measure attached, but he stopped short of echoing previous predictions that Trump would sign the combined sanctions legislation once it clears the House.

Corker told reporters that "I only have talked a little bit with" Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who testified twice this week that the White House would prefer "flexibility" to adjust Russia sanctions as needed. "I have no idea" if the White House is adequately concerned about Russian intervention in last year's election, Corker added, but "hopefully the White House will acknowledge" the massive level of Senate support for new sanctions against Russia.

The Senate-passed sanctions bill also converts existing penalties against Moscow into law, potentially making them more difficult to remove, and prevents the Trump administration

from returning two Russian diplomatic compounds seized in December by the Obama administration as punishment for alleged electoral disruption. The State Department has said that talks are ongoing with Russia over the possible return of the compounds, underscoring the Trump administration's interest in securing more cooperation from Moscow in ending the Syrian civil war.

The Senate's Iranian sanctions legislation imposes new restrictions on Tehran's ballistic missile program, also aiming to punish Iran for supporting terrorism and human rights violations. Before passing the combined Russia-Iran measure, the chamber also attached a bipartisan amendment signaling support for NATO's Article 5 — which Trump earlier this month notably [declined](#) to endorse in Brussels — by a unanimous vote.

The only two votes against the Russia-Iran sanctions deal came from GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Jennifer Haberkorn contributed to this report.

Correction: This story originally misidentified one of the no votes on the legislation as Sen. Mike Lee.

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Scalise faces third surgery after being wounded in mass shooting [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 06/15/2017 11:11 AM EDT

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, shot Wednesday during a congressional baseball practice, was undergoing his third surgery Thursday morning as his colleagues gathered to discuss the horrific shooting and share cautious optimism about the congressman's recovery.

The Louisiana Republican remained in critical condition early Thursday as doctors at MedStar Washington Hospital Center began a third operation. The bullet had fractured bones and torn through internal organs, according to a hospital statement late Wednesday night. And Scalise, who suffered severe blood loss, had multiple units of blood transfusions.

According to sources familiar with Scalise's condition, the third surgery was routine for gunshot victims with doctors checking the work they had performed the night before.

President Donald Trump, who visited Scalise on Wednesday night, said midday Thursday that the lawmaker was "in some trouble" but a "great fighter."

"It's been much more difficult than people even thought at the time. It's been — he's in some trouble, but he is a great fighter and he is going to be OK, we hope," he announced at a White House event. He added that, "I have a feeling that Steve has made a great sacrifice, but there could be some unity being brought to our country. Let's hope so."

On the Hill, lawmakers grappled with the severity of Scalise's condition, with some Republicans even speculating that Scalise could be out of commission for some time. Speaker

Paul Ryan and his leadership team called an emergency conference Thursday morning to give lawmakers an update. Scalise's Chief Deputy Whip Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.), who also has visited him in the hospital, gave a moving speech about faith in dark times — and about Scalise's strength as an individual.

Sources in the room said people tried to stay optimistic, even as some members who witnessed the horrific shooting stood and told their stories. Lawmakers signed jumbo cards for Scalise and the other victims.

Meanwhile, thoughts and prayers poured into the Hill in droves as member geared up to play the congressional baseball game Thursday evening — an annual, friendly bipartisan affair that will become a tribute to their colleague.

"All over the country, we have people praying for Steve, for Steve's wife and kids, for the others injured and for the doctors and nurses caring for our friends," said Rep. Roger Marshall (R-Kans.), the Republican team's relief pitcher. "Steve is a great friend and father and a mentor to many of us."

Several lawmakers in the conference said leadership told them Scalise was likely in surgery at that very moment. But beyond that and a brief discussion of the hospital statement released Wednesday night, leadership did not give additional details on his condition or prognosis.

They also asked members not to comment on Scalise's condition, hoping to tamp down any rumors that might start spreading as Scalise remains in the hospital. Vice President Mike Pence and his wife [visited](#) Scalise Thursday morning, but did not provide additional information about his recovery.

Multiple people were wounded in Wednesday morning's shooting, including a congressional staffer, a lobbyist and two Capitol Hill Police officers. The gunman, identified as 66-year-old James T. Hodgkinson of Illinois, died after being shot at the scene.

On the Senate floor earlier Thursday, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) urged prayer for Scalise and others injured in the shooting — adding that it has been an "immensely difficult 24 hours for all the victims."

"The events of yesterday were devastating, and we know it will take time to heal. But for now, the members of the congressional baseball team have made the decision to go forward with tonight's game, which will be played for charity," McConnell said. "I know we'll be thinking about each of them as they take the field tonight."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) added shortly after McConnell's remarks that the four top congressional leaders — McConnell, Schumer, Ryan (R-Wis.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) — will attend the baseball game together as a show of unity.

"We would all be wise to reflect on the importance of civility in our nation's politics this morning," Schumer said. "We disagree vehemently at times here in Congress, and folks out in the country do, too. But the level of nastiness, vitriol and hate that has seeped into our politics must be excised."

Seung Min Kim and Diamond Naga Siu contributed to this report.

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Manafort still doing international work [Back](#)

By Kenneth P. Vogel | 06/15/2017 05:08 AM EDT

Paul Manafort is at the center of an FBI investigation into ties between President Donald Trump's team and the Russians, but that hasn't stopped him from doing business with international figures and companies, partly by claiming continued access to Trump, according to people familiar with his dealings.

Manafort in recent weeks has either consulted or worked with a Chinese construction billionaire looking to expand his business overseas and a telecommunications firm interested in regulatory approval from governments in Asia and the Middle East, as well as an investment fund claiming links to the Chinese government, according to documents and interviews.

Manafort quietly consulted on a proposal under which the Chinese fund — the China Development Fund — would invest \$30 billion or more in the Puerto Rican government's [bond debt](#) and possibly the island's critical infrastructure, according to documents and interviews with four people familiar with the negotiations, including a Manafort business partner.

One of the people, a lawyer involved in the discussions, said Manafort indicated that he could convince the Trump administration to support any resulting deal, because he's remained in contact with Trump's team, and that he played a role in helping to [soften Trump's tough campaign rhetoric](#) on China.

"He's going around telling people that he's still talking to the president and — even more than that — that he is helping to shape Trump's foreign policy," said the lawyer involved in the discussions.

The White House press office did not respond to requests for comment.

Manafort's spokesman Jason Maloni would not comment on most of Manafort's recent business dealings. But he did assert in an email: "Paul is not engaged in government affairs/lobbying or public relations work for corporations, governments, or individuals."

Maloni declined to elaborate on how he was defining government affairs, lobbying or public relations.

Manafort has, for years, largely avoided registering with the U.S. government as a lobbyist or a foreign agent, and he has narrowly interpreted legal provisions dictating the circumstances under which individuals are required to disclose lobbying or public relations work. However, he recently announced he would [retroactively file](#) reports with the Justice Department detailing work he did for a Russia-aligned Ukrainian political party — perceived by some as a tacit acknowledgment that he failed to abide by the Foreign Agent Registration Act's disclosure provisions in real time.

In August, scrutiny of his work in Ukraine — which is currently [under investigation](#) by the FBI and congressional intelligence committees as part of their Russia probes — led to [Manafort's ouster](#) as Trump's campaign chairman after he helped guide the rookie politician to the GOP nomination.

The idea that Manafort would market his access to Trump to clients and prospective clients interested in influencing government decision-making — without registering as a lobbyist — deeply bothers Trump's allies.

Several Trump allies inside and outside the administration said it would make things easier for Trump if Manafort laid low during the Russia investigations.

"Paul certainly has a knack for making big deals, but it would be problematic for the administration to allow China to buy Puerto Rico's debt and to have Paul involved in the deal," said one outside Trump adviser, suggesting Chinese involvement in the affairs of a U.S. territory off Florida's coast could raise security concerns. The adviser added that "it would be problematic to have Paul representing himself as a liaison to the Trump administration on any deal, given the FBI investigation."

The situation also represents a tricky catch-22 for Manafort.

He is one of the few veteran lobbyists in Washington — or anywhere for that matter — who can legitimately claim a personal relationship with an outsider president who doesn't have deep connections to the Washington establishment and its lobbying industry.

Half a dozen people who have done business with Manafort said he indicated that he periodically [spoke to the president](#) and his team, including to offer political advice, well after he left the campaign, all the way up until the Russia investigation started heating up about two months ago.

Two people close to Trump disputed that, asserting there haven't been any conversations at all since the inauguration.

Trump's relationship with Manafort has become a liability for the president, thanks to the investigations into Manafort's lucrative consulting work for Russia-aligned oligarchs and politicians in Ukraine and Russia.

A federal grand jury impaneled as part of the FBI's investigation has issued a subpoena for records related to Manafort, [according to NBC News](#). Last month, he voluntarily provided documents to the Senate Intelligence Committee, and [offered to be interviewed](#) by the House and Senate intelligence committees.

Manafort's efforts to defend himself have complicated some of his domestic business dealings, said half a handful of people who have worked with — or competed against — him.

But they said it hasn't made him toxic in international business and political circles, particularly in the developing world or in countries that lack robust democratic traditions.

Manafort, 68, made his name as a young GOP operative working on Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign. Since then, though, he's carved out a [lucrative niche](#) representing businessmen and politicians in parts of the world where real or perceived ties to a U.S.

president tend to outweigh negative press in the U.S.

Manafort's defenders reject any suggestion that he encourages the idea that he is an envoy to Trump. In fact, they assert that he actively attempts to disabuse people of that perception, though they concede that people still see him that way.

"Look, Paul has a relationship with Trump. He's always going to be a friend of Trump's. A lot of people know that," said Hector Hoyos, a tech entrepreneur who is a close friend and periodic business partner of Manafort's. "I've been with him in many places. Whenever anybody anywhere in the world starts playing that [Trump connection], the first one to state clearly and openly and publicly that he's not there representing Trump — or the administration — is Paul. But he can't be responsible for what other people may infer."

Hoyos has brought on Manafort to consult on a number of projects involving foreign companies and governments, including the proposed \$30 billion deal between Puerto Rico and the China Development Fund, which presented itself to people involved in the talks as a subsidiary of the state-owned China Development Bank, according to people familiar with the talks.

Hoyos said he and Manafort also are working with [Shanghai billionaire Yan Jiehe](#) to help his company, Pacific Construction Group, win contracts to build infrastructure around the world.

Manafort met with Yan in April in Pacific Construction Group's Shanghai offices.

And before the meeting, Yan told The Financial Times, which first [revealed the meeting](#), that Manafort was going to help him get in on Trump's promised — but [yet to be detailed](#) — \$1 billion infrastructure spending plan. The paper quoted Yan calling Manafort "Trump's special envoy," and boasting "I will not seek out Trump. He will seek me out. In the entire world, I am definitely the most ideal privately owned unit to invest in construction. In the whole world, there's not another company equal to Pacific Construction."

Manafort's spokesman Maloni suggested Yan may have gotten ahead of himself, explaining, "Paul has not agreed to help any entity pursue future government infrastructure contracts in the United States." He said in an email that the discussion with Yan "took place at an impromptu meeting added to Paul's schedule at the Group's request because the Group is potentially interested in the U.S. infrastructure development market."

Hoyos, however, challenged the assertion that Pacific Construction Group is looking to break into the U.S. market. "The bulk of infrastructure development right now is going on in Africa, not in the U.S. God knows what the U.S. is going to do, because Trump hasn't moved on anything related to infrastructure," Hoyos said.

Yan already has conquered the Chinese market, Hoyos said, "but when it comes to competing against other global construction companies in the Middle East or in Latin America or Africa, it's a different ballgame. And that's what he is looking to Paul to do — to help him understand the ropes about how he can take his business and make it become a global business outside China. We believe that Pacific Construction could become one of the world's largest construction companies."

Pacific Construction did not respond to a request for comment.

But POLITICO obtained a previously unpublished company statement to The Financial Times "and related media outlets" characterizing Yan's meeting with Manafort as "a private business engagement" and decreeing that it "shall not be reported in the press without permission from the Pacific Construction Group."

Hoyos said he introduced Manafort to Yan, and that Manafort "doesn't do business with strangers. Paul will not do business unless he knows who he is getting in bed with. He is very careful about that."

Additionally, Hoyos' Florida-based telecommunications company, Hoyos VSN, in March retained Manafort as an adviser to assist in winning regulatory approval for mobile phone and satellite technology in countries including the United Arab Emirates, Japan and South Korea.

"He was brought in to help us access some of the phone companies overseas with which he had relationships, especially in places like Asia," said Hoyos. "If anything came of any introduction that he made, then he would have gotten compensation, just like any of my other consultants."

Manafort was added to Hoyos VSN's Florida corporate [filings in late March](#) as a director, but he was removed in an [amended report](#) filed just three weeks later.

"He's got too much going on, as you know," said Hoyos, who is in his late 50s and who for decades has turned to Manafort, the godfather of Hoyos' daughter, to assist his companies.

In the 1990s, one of Hoyos' companies retained Manafort's pioneering lobbying firm — Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly — to obtain licenses to export supercomputers. "We got the export licenses, and he helped us enlist the Bush administration and then later on the Clinton administration to support us in combating the dumping that the Japanese were doing of supercomputers into the markets," Hoyos said.

And in the early 2000s, Manafort helped broker a deal in which a Portuguese company called Sociedade Lusa de Negócios (SLN) paid \$31 million for a 25 percent stake in a Hoyos-owned company called Biometrics Imagineering, according to Hoyos and Portuguese media reports.

That transaction, on which Hoyos said Manafort was paid a commission, came under investigation in Portugal for alleged fraud and money laundering by SLN and the bank that backed it. Portuguese federal prosecutors [in April announced](#) that they were dropping the case without bringing charges, though they cited concerns over the "extremely complex financial engineering" at play in the deal "coupled with management decisions and practices that raised serious suspicion" over its framework.

Neither Hoyos nor Manafort was a subject of the investigation.

And while Manafort was [accused by some Ukrainian officials](#) of accepting millions of dollars in [off-books cash payments](#) from a Russia-aligned political party, Hoyos said his friend does everything by the book.

"In every single business dealing that I have had with him and that I have seen him engage with anybody, he has always demanded that the overseas Foreign Corrupt Practices Act wording be instated in every single contract as a clause, with the whole wording of the act," Hoyos said.

Nonetheless, Manafort's involvement in the prospective investment by China Development Fund in Puerto Rico raised red flags for some Puerto Rican officials, according to two lawyers familiar with the discussions.

The discussions got as far as a May 12 meeting in Manhattan that lasted four hours and was attended by Manafort, Hoyos, lawyers and other representatives from the Puerto Rican government, as well as an official with the China Development Fund named Benjamin Ng, according to four people familiar with the meeting.

Some of the people said that Ng indicated that the China Development Fund was interested in investing between \$30 billion and \$45 billion in Puerto Rico's debt and infrastructure, including possibly its publicly owned electric utility.

Ng said that the China Development Fund had made extensive investments in Iraq and other foreign countries, but he stressed that the fund was acutely sensitive to possible political opposition to the Puerto Rico deal. The U.S. government has to [approve foreign investment](#) in U.S. companies and infrastructure that carry national security implications, and Trump administration officials have expressed particular [concern about Chinese investment](#) in the U.S.

Manafort had previously suggested he'd be able to win approval for any resulting deal between the China Development Fund and Puerto Rico, said one of the lawyers familiar with the discussions, who did not participate in the May 12 meeting.

Hoyos dismissed that characterization, and cast Manafort as a peripheral player in the talks.

"Those relationships were all my relationships on both sides — China and Puerto Rico. I'm the one that ran the deal," said Hoyos, who is Puerto Rican. "I asked Paul to consult with me because he knows a lot about the whole government business," Hoyos explained, though he said that Manafort drifted in and out of the May 12 meeting.

The talks about a prospective deal appear to have died amid suspicion on both sides, according to several people familiar with them.

They say that Manafort and Hoyos concluded that the Puerto Rican government was not serious because it did not send top officials to the May 12 meeting.

Meanwhile, the Puerto Ricans were leery of the China Development Fund and of Manafort's involvement, which surprised them, according to the two lawyers familiar with the talks. "Manafort was a deal breaker," said one of the lawyers. "He's under FBI investigation, and the Puerto Ricans don't want to get tainted by Manafort's problems."

Representatives from Puerto Rico's governor's office and the Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority — the independent government agency established this year by the Puerto Rican government to help the island dig itself out from [debt and bankruptcy](#) — did not respond to requests for comment.

Neither did Ng, the China Development Bank or the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

Hoyos argued that scrutiny of Manafort's ongoing work was part of a bigger effort — including the ongoing Russia investigations — to bring down Manafort.

Dismissing any suggestion that Manafort may have acted on behalf of Russia during the 2016 campaign, Hoyos asserted that Manafort "has been completely antagonistic to the Russians." He added "Is he friends with Russian oligarchs? Yeah, the same way he's friends with Argentinian and Mexican oligarchs. There are oligarchs around the world, but the fact that he's friends with Russian oligarchs doesn't mean that he supports or even likes [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

Hoyos said Manafort is "under siege," adding "people saying this and that, everybody opining whatever they want to opine without any facts. It's Washington. He understands it, because that's been his arena his whole life. He knows that. That's the game and that's the career he chose."

Cristiano Lima contributed to this report.

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Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 4:25:21 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/14/2017 04:23 PM EDT

With help from Annie Snider and Darius Dixon

SHOOTING SUSPECT WASN'T A FAN OF NATGAS: James T. Hodgkinson, [the alleged shooter](#) who wounded House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#), members of his security detail, a lobbyist and a congressional staffer at this morning's baseball practice in Alexandria, Va., had several political posts on his Facebook page, but the most recent one was a [petition](#) calling on FERC to stop the NEXUS natural gas pipeline project. The Ohio-Michigan pipeline hasn't been approved yet by FERC, which can't give its blessing until it regains the quorum it lost in February. But there's little evidence so far that Hodgkinson, who died after exchanging gunfire with police, was active in protesting energy infrastructure, and FERC hasn't yet said whether he was one of the activists who have been removed from the agency's headquarters over the years for disrupting its meetings. Melinda Tuhus, one of the anti-FERC organizers, told AE they weren't familiar with Hodgkinson.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host, Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

DOE OFFLOADS SOME CASH FOR NUCLEAR R&D: The Energy Department [announced](#) this afternoon that it had signed off on funding for 85 nuclear energy projects totaling nearly \$67 million. The money is coming through a few different DOE programs, including its Nuclear Energy University Program, which is spending about \$31 million on 32 R&D projects. The larger pot of funds also backs public-private partnerships aimed at getting industry greater access to research user facilities that focus on radiation applications.

DOE also [announced](#) its latest batch of ARPA-E funding this year. Sixteen projects that focus on improving the energy efficiency of data centers and boosting the production of semiconductors that can be used in industrial and high-temperature electronics could get up to \$32 million.

MICHIGAN HEALTH CHIEF CHANGED IN FLINT CRISIS: The head of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services has been charged with involuntary manslaughter related to the Flint drinking water crisis, the Associated Press [reports](#). "Charges were read in court this morning against Nick Lyon, who is the highest-ranking member of GOP Gov. Rick Snyder's administration to be caught in the criminal probe of the impoverished city's lead contamination crisis. Lyon is accused of failing to alert the public about an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease that some experts have linked to the switch in the city's water supply and resulting poor water quality," Annie Snider [reports](#).

Attorney General Bill Schuette also announced charges of involuntary manslaughter for former Flint emergency manager Darnell Earley and former City of Flint Water Department Manager Howard Croft today, as well as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's

drinking water chief Liane Shekter-Smith and water supervisor Stephen Busch. Schuette announced chief medical executive Eden Wells has also been charged with lying to a peace officer and obstruction of justice related to an alleged attempt to stop an investigation into the health crisis in Flint, and later misleading investigators about her actions.

CHESAPEAKE BAY HEADING FOR BIG DEAD ZONE: The Chesapeake Bay's annual "dead zone," where low oxygen levels kill or drive away fish and other aquatic species, is likely to be larger than average this year, spanning 1.89 cubic miles — roughly the volume of 3.2 million Olympic-size swimming pools, according to federal researchers. Scientists at NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey attributed the larger size to heavy spring rainfall in New York and Pennsylvania that washed fertilizer and other contaminants into the Susquehanna River. Pennsylvania is far behind its goals for reducing pollution runoff under a landmark Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan, prompting EPA to recently [threaten](#) consequences if the state's efforts don't improve.

KEY PARTS OF METHANE RULE POSTPONED: While litigation and interagency review plays out, BLM will suspend key parts of the methane waste rule, Alex Guillén reports. In a Federal Register [notice](#) to be published on Thursday, BLM says oil and gas producers "should not be required to expend substantial time and resources to comply with regulatory requirements that may prove short-lived as a result of pending litigation or the administrative review that is already under way." Several provisions were scheduled to take effect on Jan. 17, 2018, but have been pushed back indefinitely, BLM said. More [here](#).

Senate Energy and Natural Resources ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) released a statement on the Interior Department's "intent to ignore" the BLM's Methane and Waste Prevention Rule. "The BLM Methane Rule now has the force of law — and President [Donald] Trump is breaking it," Cantwell said. "Congress voted for people over polluters and the administration must respect that outcome."

JUNCKER: NO RENEGOTIATION HERE: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told the European Parliament today the EU is not going to consider Trump's suggestion that the Paris climate deal be renegotiated. "The European Union will not renegotiate the Paris agreement," he told the assembly's plenary session. "The 29 articles of the agreement must be implemented and not renegotiated." POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff [reports](#). Juncker pointed out that it took 20 years to reach the Paris agreement. "Climate action doesn't need more distractions," he said. The next international get-together of global leaders will be the G-20 summit in July, where Juncker made clear the EU wouldn't wait on the U.S. "We will work hard to have a clear message coming out of the G-20 summit in July — or at least from 19 [of the countries]."

POLITICS AT PLAY FOR E15 BILL: A bill to expand sales of gasoline with 15 percent ethanol appears to be stuck on long-running disputes over biofuel policy that could limit its support outside of corn states. Top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee [Tom Carper](#) said after a hearing on the topic today that he will oppose the E15 bill without an amendment addressing "transparency in the RIN market," a reference to the credits refiners must purchase to comply with the Renewable Fuels Standard. Merchant refiners in the Philadelphia area, along with Trump associate Carl Icahn and refining giant Valero, blame high RIN prices for threatening their profits, Eric Wolff [reports](#). Republicans in the hearing seemed to have staked out their positions, with corn-state senators like [Mike Rounds](#), [Jerry Moran](#) and [Joni Ernst](#) promoting the bill and long-time RFS opponents like Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) and Chairman [John Barrasso](#) criticizing it.

WIND AND SOLAR HIT 10 PERCENT: Wind and solar power installations in March provided about 10 percent of total U.S. electricity supply and likely exceeded that level in April, the U.S. Energy Information Administration [said](#) today. Of the total March output from the two renewable sources, wind power provided about 80 percent of the electricity, EIA said. Read [more](#).

FLOOD INSURANCE MARKUP DELAYED: The House Financial Services Committee [will not mark up](#) several flood insurance bills today as was scheduled, following the shooting at a congressional baseball practice. "Further updates on timing will be provided later this afternoon," Financial Services staff director Kirsten Mork said in an email to others on the committee. A bill that the committee was scheduled to mark up today would have limited compensation to 25 percent of premiums that policyholders pay. Sources said a new compromise would set the cap at 27.9 percent, phased in over three years, with a mandate that FEMA reduce costs from current levels by at least 1.5 percent within three years, Pro Financial Services' Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Climate change pushing tropical diseases toward Arctic, [National Geographic](#).
- Surging shale spawns new financing structure for energy infrastructure, [Reuters](#).
- Former EPA official McCabe talks Trump moves on budget, power plan, ozone and Paris, [E&E News](#).
- Trump calls mayor of shrinking Chesapeake island and tells him not to worry about it, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Shooting shatters normal [rhythms of Congress](#)
- Trump faces first [big domestic moment](#)
- House Republicans fear [politically motivated shooting](#)

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Scalise in 'critical' condition after mass shooting [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and John Bresnahan | 06/14/2017 08:19 AM EDT

A gunman opened fire at a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Virginia, on Wednesday morning, wounding House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, members of his security detail, a congressional staffer, and a lobbyist in a scene that one lawmaker said could have been a "massacre."

There were no immediate fatalities as a result of the shooting, although President Donald Trump announced during a televised address Wednesday morning that the shooter had died as a result of injuries sustained in an exchange of gunfire with U.S. Capitol Police.

A law enforcement source briefed on the investigation identified the gunman as 66-year-old James T. Hodgkinson of Illinois.

Scalise's office said Wednesday morning that he was undergoing surgery after being shot in the hip and transported to MedStar Washington Hospital Center. The hospital later tweeted that Scalise remains in critical condition. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) told reporters that Scalise's surgery had been completed.

"Prior to entering surgery, the Whip was in good spirits and spoke to his wife by phone. He is grateful for the brave actions of U.S. Capitol Police, first responders, and colleagues," his office said. "We ask that you keep the Whip and others harmed in this incident in your thoughts and prayers."

In his remarks, the president called Scalise "a very good friend," "a patriot" and "a fighter," and said the prayers of his family, the nation and the world were with him.

"We may have our differences but we do well in times like these to remember everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country. We can all agree we are blessed to be Americans," Trump said in his statement, delivered from the White House's Diplomatic Room.

Tim Slater, the FBI special agent in charge of the Washington Field Office, told reporters at a press conference from the scene that it was too early in the investigation to label the incident an act of terrorism or determine whether or not it constituted an assassination attempt. Likewise, he could not say whether or not members of Congress had been specifically targeted.

Shortly after the shooting, McCarthy announced via Twitter that the House would not hold any of its scheduled votes on Wednesday, although Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said votes in that chamber would go on as scheduled. House Speaker Paul Ryan did summon House members to the floor at noon on Wednesday, where he and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi delivered remarks.

"We are all horrified by this dreadful attack on our friends and on our colleagues and those who serve and protect this Capitol," Ryan said after some brief parliamentary procedures to open the House. "We are united in our shock. We are united in our anguish. An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us."

"To my colleagues, you're gonna hear me say something you've never heard me say before: I identify myself with the remarks of the Speaker," Pelosi said. "We are not one caucus or the other in this House today, but we speak for each other in saying we send our thoughts and prayers to our colleague Steve Scalise."

Former congresswoman Gabby Giffords (D-Ariz.), who also was the victim of a shooting incident, described the shooting as "an attack on all who serve and on all who participate in our democracy."

"I am heartbroken for the pain of Congressman Scalise, the other victims, and their family, friends, and colleagues who survived. I am thankful for the great courage of Capitol Police, who were my protectors after I was shot and became my friends," said Giffords, who was among the 19 people wounded during a 2011 shooting in which six people died. "I also know the courage it takes to recover from a shooting like this, and I know Steve and everyone there this morning have such courage in great supply."

Hodgkinson, the shooter, featured a prominent photo of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) on his Facebook page and Sanders said Wednesday in remarks on the Senate floor that Hodgkinson had volunteered for his 2016 presidential campaign. He offered his prayers for Scalise and the shooting's other victims, denouncing the attacker who had once supported his White House bid.

"I have just been informed that the alleged shooter at the Republican baseball practice is someone who apparently volunteered on my presidential campaign. I am sickened by this despicable act," Sanders said. "Let me be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms. Real change can only come about through nonviolent action, and anything else runs against our most deeply held American values."

Also among the victims was Zack Barth, a legislative correspondent in the office of Rep. Roger Williams (R-Texas), one of the GOP baseball team's captains. Williams wrote on Twitter that Barth was "receiving medical attention but doing well and is expected to make a full recovery."

Another victim, confirmed by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), was Matt Mika, a lobbyist for Tyson Foods and a former House GOP aide for Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.), who was receiving treatment at George Washington University Hospital in Washington. His family issued a statement saying he remains in critical condition.

The hospital, which had previously said two shooting victims were there in critical condition, later amended that statement to announce that one of the patients had died. The hospital did not announce the identities of the patients and would not say if the deceased shooter was one of them.

Two other victims were members of the Capitol Police Department's Dignitary Protection Division, officers charged with protecting Scalise because of his role in House leadership. Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa said that the officers, later identified as Crystal Griner and David Bailey, were in "good condition" and "have not suffered any life-threatening injuries at this point."

Verderosa said the Capitol Police officers on the scene exchanged fire with the gunman. Multiple lawmakers who were at the practice credited Scalise's protective detail with fighting back against the shooter and stopping him from having free reign to attack the otherwise unarmed attendees at the practice.

There was increased security at the Capitol Wednesday in the wake of the shooting, with police blocking off the area surrounding the main entrances to the House and Senate. Only members of Congress were allowed in while others were sent through the visitors' gallery.

The lawmakers were practicing for the annual congressional baseball game at a field in

Alexandria, Virginia, when the shooting began just after 7 a.m. The game itself, a popular, bipartisan event held each summer, is scheduled for Thursday evening at Nationals Park and will go on as planned.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) described on CNN how Scalise was wounded in the shooting, explaining in a phone interview that the GOP whip was among the first to be shot and was hit while standing in the area of second base.

"He'd crawled into the outfield but leaving a trail of blood. We started giving him some liquids," said Brooks, who was not hit.

Sen. Rand Paul vividly recounted the scene in his own CNN interview, and gave credit to Scalise's protective detail for saving lives. "Nobody would have survived without the Capitol Hill police," Paul said on CNN. "He was just killing everyone — he would've. It would have been a massacre."

"And having no self-defense, the ... field was basically a killing field. If you were to run out while the killer was still shooting, he could have shot anybody," he continued.

GOP Rep. John Duncan (R-S.C.), who left the practice before the shooting began, told reporters that he had spoken to a man, believed to be the shooter, as he was departing who asked if the people on the field were Republicans or Democrats. He said he had shared his account with the Alexandria Police Department and that he believed the man he spoke to was the shooter "based on the profile that I saw on TV."

Brooks identified a handful of other lawmakers in attendance at Wednesday morning's practice, including Paul and Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), as well as Reps. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.), Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), Joe Barton (R-Texas), Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), Gary Palmer (R-Ala.) and Williams. Brooks said Wenstrup, a medical doctor, immediately attended to victims, including Scalise.

"I felt like I was back in Iraq as a surgeon," Wenstrup, a former combat surgeon in the U.S. Army Reserve, told CBS News.

Brooks told CNN that the gunman fired from behind the field's third base dugout.

"And I look around and behind third base in the third base dugout, I see a rifle," Brooks said. "And I see a little bit of a body and then I hear another bam and I realize there is an active shooter. At the same time I hear Steve Scalise over near second base scream. He was shot."

The Alabama congressman went on to describe that he never saw Scalise lose consciousness, though there was a 10 or 15 foot trail of blood behind him as he crawled from the infield into the outfield.

Brooks then realized that the rifle was a semiautomatic weapon as chaos ensued.

"The gun was a semiautomatic," he said. "It continues to fire at different people. You can imagine all the people in the field scatter. I run around to the first base side of home plate. We have a batting cage with plastic wrapped around it to stop foul balls. I was lying on the ground as gunfire continued."

Worried that the plastic batting cage would do little to protect him and staffers from gunshots,

Brooks said he took a gamble to get to cover.

"Heard a break in the gunfire and decided to take a chance. Ran from home plate to the first base dugout for better cover. There were a number of congressmen and congressional staffers who helped us lying on the ground," he said.

Flake, who had just batted when the incident occurred, said the gunman was shot. "There was a lot of yelling going on," he said.

There were approximately 25 members at the field, Flake said. One staffer was shot while on the field, and ran with a wound to the dugout, Flake said.

"He had a lot of ammo," Flake said, explaining why it took several minutes to get the situation under control.

Flake, in an interview with reporters at the scene, estimated that the entire incident lasted around 10 minutes. He said one victim, a female Capitol Police officer, was airlifted away from the scene.

"Just a harrowing scene," said Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), who ran into a dugout when the shooting started. "If this gunman had come into [the] dugout, we would have been sitting ducks."

Fleischmann said the incident "seemed to go on forever... It seemed like it took forever to subdue the gunmen."

Fleischmann added: "It was just horrible... The fear factor was horrific."

The shooting took place in a neighborhood baseball field near a dog park that was full of early-morning dog walkers. As the shooting started, neighbors on the adjoining streets heard what they described as "dozens" of shots as people in exercise clothing began to flee past their homes.

Virginia House of Delegates member Mark Levine decried the politics that have killed gun control efforts in the state. Asked if it's the right time to talk politics, he cried out, "Then when is the right time?!"

Trump canceled a planned event at the Department of Labor scheduled for Wednesday, while Pence canceled a morning speech to the National Association of Home Builders. At the group's annual D.C. gathering, Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) called for a moment of silence.

"I thought I was going to come up here and charm you on tax reform, but we're here on a very different day," Roskam told those assembled. "Will you just pray for these people and their families."

In the wake of the shooting, Democrats canceled a press conference announcing a lawsuit against President Trump. The Senate also postponed a hearing examining a budget request for the Capitol Police.

Kyle Cheney, Jake Lahut, Heather Caygle, Clea Benson, Negassi Tesfamichael, Toby Eckert, Caitlin Emma, Anna Palmer, Burgess Everett and Nolan D. McCaskill contributed to this report.

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Michigan health official indicted in Flint water crisis [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/14/2017 10:12 AM EDT

The head of Michigan's Department of Health has been charged with involuntary manslaughter related to the city of Flint's drinking water crisis, according to [the Associated Press](#).

Charges were read in court this morning against health chief Nick Lyon, the highest-ranking member of GOP Gov. Rick Snyder's administration to be caught in the criminal probe of the impoverished city's lead contamination crisis.

Lyon is accused of failing to alert the public about an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease that some experts have linked to the switch in the city's water supply and resulting poor water quality.

Emergency managers appointed by Snyder switched Flint's water supply in 2014 from treated water supplied by Detroit to water from the Flint River that the city treated itself. However, officials failed to include corrosion controls in that treatment, causing dangerous lead to leach from service lines into tap water.

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette, who is widely expected to run for the GOP nomination in the 2018 governor's race, is leading the criminal probe, which has previously filed charges against 11 lower level state and local officials and two former emergency managers.

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BLM delays key parts of methane waste rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/14/2017 10:08 AM EDT

The Bureau of Land Management will suspend key parts of the methane waste rule while litigation and an internal agency review plays out, the agency says in a Federal Register [notice](#) to be published on Thursday.

Oil and gas producers "should not be required to expend substantial time and resources to comply with regulatory requirements that may prove short-lived as a result of pending litigation or the administrative review that is already under way," BLM says in its notice.

Several provisions were scheduled to take effect on Jan. 17, 2018, but have been pushed back indefinitely, BLM said.

The postponed requirements include a mandate to capture a certain amount of waste gas produced during production, along with storage tank vapors; measure flared gas; upgrade or replace some equipment; and have in place leak detection and repair programs. Those requirements would have required operators to buy and install significant new equipment at "substantial cost," BLM said.

Some other provisions have already taken effect and are not postponed, including a requirement that new permits to drill include waste minimization plans, certain maintenance mandates and limits on venting and flaring while in production.

The rule [survived](#) a nullification attempt via a Congressional Review Act resolution last month after several Republicans sided with Democrats to keep the rule alive.

WHAT'S NEXT: Opening briefs in the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for Wyoming are due July 3, with briefing continuing through August. The requirements stayed by BLM will remain paused until litigation and an internal review are complete, a process that could take years.

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Ethanol politics bog down E15 bill [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 06/14/2017 02:18 PM EDT

A bill to expand sales of gasoline with 15 percent ethanol appears to be stuck on long-running disputes over biofuel policy that may limit its support outside of corn states.

Sen. [Tom Carper](#) (Del.), the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, said after a hearing today that he will oppose the E15 bill without an amendment addressing "transparency in the RIN market," a reference to the credits refiners must purchase to comply with the Renewable Fuels Standard. Merchant refiners in the Philadelphia area, along with Trump associate Carl Icahn and refining giant Valero, blame high RIN prices for threatening their profits.

Carper also raised concerns about increasing ozone emissions that already plague his state if more E15 were sold, a concern shared by several influential environmental groups. Sen. [Tammy Duckworth](#) (Ill.) is the bill's only Democratic co-sponsor on the committee.

Sen. [Cory Booker](#) (D-N.J.) did not ask any questions at today's hearing, but afterward he told POLITICO he is in "negotiations" over the bill, declining to offer details. Sen. [Deb Fischer](#) (R-Neb.), the lead sponsor of the bill, said she plans to speak to Booker but has not done so yet.

Republicans in the hearing seemed to have staked out their positions, with corn-state senators like [Mike Rounds](#) (S.D.), [Jerry Moran](#) (Kan.), and [Joni Ernst](#) (Iowa) promoting the bill and long-time RFS opponents like Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) (Okla.) and Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (Wyo.) criticizing it.

WHAT'S NEXT: Barrasso has said the committee will vote on the E15 bill, but no date has been set.

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EIA: Wind, solar provided 10 percent of total U.S. power in March [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 06/14/2017 10:40 AM EDT

The wind and solar power installations provided about 10 percent of total U.S. electricity generation in March and likely exceeded that level in April, the U.S. Energy Information Administration [said](#) today.

However, that share will likely fall below those levels in the summer, largely because output fluctuates based on seasonal changes, EIA said.

Of the total March output from the two renewable sources, wind power provided about 80 percent of the electricity, EIA said.

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House Financial Services won't mark up flood insurance bills today [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 06/14/2017 11:12 AM EDT

The House Financial Services Committee will not mark up several flood insurance bills today following the shooting at a congressional baseball practice.

"Further updates on timing will be provided later this afternoon," Financial Services staff director Kirsten Mork said in an email to others on the committee. "Thanks to everyone for your flexibility. Please keep those wounded in your thoughts and prayers."

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Flood insurance compromise wins over insurers [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 06/14/2017 12:28 PM EDT

Insurance trade groups that threatened to oppose House legislation that would overhaul the National Flood Insurance Program appear to have won concessions and are now offering their support.

One of the changes in the compromise would ease a proposed cap on compensation for private firms that work with the NFIP, people familiar with the matter said.

Spokesmen for Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) and Rep. [Sean Duffy](#) (R-Wis.), who chairs an insurance subcommittee, did not immediately confirm the revisions.

The committee postponed a markup of the legislation following this morning's shooting at a congressional baseball practice.

One of the changes expected to appear when the committee takes up the legislation would address insurance industry pushback against a cap on compensation for insurers participating in the NFIP's "Write Your Own" program. Under the arrangement, private companies sell and service government-backed flood insurance policies.

A bill that the committee was scheduled to mark up today would have limited compensation to 25 percent of premiums that policyholders pay. Sources said a new compromise would set the cap at 27.9 percent, phased in over three years, with a mandate that FEMA reduce costs from current levels by at least 1.5 percent within three years.

Two of the groups that threatened to oppose the legislation, in part because of the cap, now appear to be on board.

The Property Casualty Insurers Association of America sent a letter to the committee saying it backed the amended NFIP package. The National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies sent a separate letter saying the revised legislation had its "full support."

WHAT'S NEXT: The committee is expected to provide updates on the timing of the markup this afternoon.

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Shooting shatters normal rhythms of Congress [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim | 06/14/2017 10:54 AM EDT

The normal rhythms of Congress were shattered Wednesday morning by a shooting that injured House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and at least four others, stunning lawmakers and staffers. But the denizens of the Capitol sought to quickly reassert a sense of normalcy in the Senate, projecting to the world that Congress won't be intimidated by the frightening attack.

Rather than imposing new security restrictions or pausing its work, the best thing for Congress to do is just "move on," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). One of the best-known members of Congress, he said he's received no guidance to alter his movements in and around the Capitol after the shooting. And he said he and his colleagues should not spend time or energy worrying about their own safety.

"This is terrible. Just be grateful it wasn't worse. You've got to just move on. The best thing

we can all do is just get back to work," Graham told a handful of reporters. "I have long since stopped worrying about stuff like this. I have stopped worrying about things I can't control."

Still, in an era of heightened political tensions, the thought of their own safety is frequently on the minds of lawmakers, whether during daily activities in Washington or meeting with voters back home.

On Wednesday morning, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) said he recalled having that thought when the entire Senate was shuttled to the White House in April for a closed-door briefing on North Korea.

"I said, you know what? All it takes is some guy with a rocket launcher or a couple guys throwing a hand grenade and you can knock out most of the Senate," Menendez said. "That's the world in which we live in."

"There's not many hours in a day when I don't think about the potential of some goofball wanting to make a name for himself," added Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.). "So you just got to be aware and you gotta hope you're lucky."

Though some committee hearings were canceled and House votes postponed, the Capitol was mostly operating as usual, albeit with a slightly heightened security presence. Senate votes remained on schedule and Republicans were expected to continue discussing Obamacare repeal.

Party leaders offered brief comments on Wednesday morning, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said he was "deeply saddened" by the event and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) relaying a conversation with Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who was at the baseball field where Scalise was shot. Paul told Schumer: "Had these two Capitol Police officers, who were part of Congressman Scalise's detail, not been there it might have been a massacre."

"The shooting at the congressional baseball practice reminds us of the importance of numbering our days. May we refuse to boast about tomorrow, for we know not what a day may bring," said Senate Chaplain Barry Black in opening the chamber.

Later in the day, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) delivered their own remarks praising Capitol Police while projecting unity and prayer in the aftermath of the shooting.

"We are giving all our thoughts to those currently being treated for their injuries at this moment, and we are united," Ryan said. "We are united in our shock. We are united in our anguish. An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us."

After acknowledging the frightening aspects of the shooting, members of Congress dug into their daily work. Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) said he met with constituents as usual on the Capitol grounds in the hours after the shooting.

"This is one of those freak deals. You can't let it impact the way you do your daily activities," Rounds said in an interview. "You're not going to be able to perform your job and your responsibilities as well as you should if you're looking over your shoulder all the time."

Scalise has a security detail, which prevented the attack from worsening. Top congressional

leaders and those in the presidential line of succession receive constant security due to their prominent positions.

Others take additional measures. "I feel pretty safe back in Texas, particularly," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas). "My license to carry helps a little bit there, too."

"I have never felt like I needed it, except in rare situations," Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said of his security detail that shadows him in Washington. "Today is a reminder of the vulnerability."

But rank-and-file members of Congress do not generally have such security presences unless there is an active threat against them. They walk in and out of the Capitol in public areas where they can be approached by reporters, tourists and even lobbyists. And at town halls back home, where "you never know who's going to show up," in Graham's words, lawmakers generally have local police protecting them.

"It is a brutal and terrifying reminder about the prevalence of violence in our society," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said. Still, he added, "I've done public meetings, parades, forums for more than three decades, and people have more dangerous jobs."

And occasionally members face explicit threats, like threats against Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and his family in 2014.

"We've been very, very blessed to have so much good security around us and then we go home, we're in public places, we have our local state police and all of them have been very good helping us and everything," Manchin said. After this shooting, he added that "everybody will be on high alert. Because then what happens is, you have copycats."

Yet visitors poured into the Capitol for tours and meetings with staffers and members, all part of an apparent effort by lawmakers to put on a brave face and continue Congress's work.

"You've got to live. You just go about your business. It's just, I see the world for what it is," Graham said. "The threats against people in politics are real, but the threats against our soldiers? I've been in places where everyday you get up and everyday somebody is trying to kill you. So you put it all in perspective."

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Trump faces first big domestic moment [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 06/14/2017 11:28 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's first domestic mega-moment has arrived, and his measured reaction to the unexpected tragedy is being praised by all sides as they gauge his temperament in a time of crisis.

Trump touched on all the key notes in the immediate hours after Wednesday's shooting at a congressional GOP baseball practice that sent five people to the hospital, including House

Majority Whip Steve Scalise.

His first remarks: A statement saying he and Vice President Mike Pence were "deeply saddened" by the shooting and a tweet calling Scalise a "true friend and patriot."

Then, just before noon, the president embraced the role of sympathizer-in-chief, delivering a four-plus minute speech in the White House Diplomatic Room revealing Scalise and two Capitol Police officers were in stable condition and confirming the alleged gunman had died following the incident.

In other large-scale moments since arriving on the international stage, Trump sparked controversy by referring to hot-button policy points, attacking his critics and getting ahead of confirmed law enforcement reports. All that was gone in his nationally-televised remarks.

"We may have our differences, but we do well, in times like these, to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country," Trump said near the end of his remarks.

"We can all agree that we are blessed to be Americans, that our children deserve to grow up in a nation of safety and peace, and that we are strongest when we are unified and when we work together for the common good," the president added.

Earlier this month, Trump sparked an international uproar when he touted his controversial travel ban following a terrorist attack in London and also mischaracterized the city mayor's position reassuring the public in its aftermath. During the heat of the 2016 campaign, Hillary Clinton criticized Trump after the Republican declared a bomb had detonated in New York before the local authorities had made that announcement.

Trump also drew criticism last June when he issued a seven-paragraph statement in response to the mass shooting at a night club in Orlando, criticizing President Barack Obama for not saying the words "radical Islam" during the shooting and urging him to "step down" from office because of the omission.

A White House official said while prepping for the speech, Trump was cognizant of the importance of his demeanor. "He wanted to hit the right tone. Moments like this give the president an opportunity to rise above politics and strike a certain chord that captures the sentiment of the nation, that's unifying and that's what he wanted to do."

Trump's softer and more tactful approach earned him praise from an unlikely source: Democrats.

"It looks like Trump and his team took this shooting seriously and acted accordingly. His statement was measured and respectful and hit all the right notes when he issued a call for unity," said Jim Manley, a longtime Democratic spokesman who worked for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

Added a former senior Obama White House aide: "I think he sufficiently played the part."

Republicans also applauded Trump for his immediate response.

"I think he set the right tone and message," said former George W. Bush White House spokesman Scott McClellan. "This is a time to set aside politics and for all of us to come together in support of those who were injured in this tragic shooting. The president has an important role at times like this to be the comforter-in-chief for the nation."

"Temperate, compassionate, and thoughtful — the president's remarks met the test of the moment," said Michael Steel, who served as a spokesman for former House Speaker John Boehner.

Beyond the initial White House statement and tweet on Wednesday morning, Trump has stayed out of the spotlight as local and federal law enforcement piece together the shooting in Alexandria, Virginia. Law enforcement sources named the suspected shooter about four hours after the incident as James T. Hodgkinson of Belleville, Illinois. Those reports identified him as a supporter of Bernie Sanders, and his apparent social media accounts included anti-Trump posts. Sanders, in a statement, said he was "sickened by this despicable act" and condemned the shooting by "someone who apparently volunteered on my presidential campaign."

The White House canceled Trump's speech at the Labor Department that was scheduled for later this afternoon.

According to the White House, Trump has spoken to House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Scalise's wife and chief of staff and the Capitol Police chief. Pence has also spoken to Ryan, as well as House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Texas GOP Rep. Joe Barton, Arizona GOP Sen. Jeff Flake and a staff member who coaches the Republican's baseball team.

While the president's televised response Wednesday drew praise, amid the initial presidential silence several Trump surrogates started making charged public statements and even ascribing a motive to the shooting.

The president's oldest son, Donald Trump Jr., issued a one-word post on Twitter — "This" — in sharing a tweet by conservative commentator Harlan Hill, who wrote: "Events like today are EXACTLY why we took issue with NY elites glorifying the assassination of our President." The tweet was an apparent reference to a current Central Park production of "Julius Caesar" - who in the play is made to look like the president.

Trump White House adviser Kellyanne Conway shared a post by a local South Carolina television reporter quoting South Carolina GOP Rep. Jeff Duncan, who said the shooter asked, "Is this a team of Republicans or Democrats practicing?"

"#breakingnews." Conway wrote.

New York GOP Rep. Chris Collins also placed blame on Democrats, saying in an interview with WBEN radio they need to "tone down" their rhetoric.

"I can only hope that Democrats tone down the rhetoric," Collins said. "The finger-pointing, the angst, the anger directed at Donald Trump and his supporters ... some people react to those things."

Collins referenced a "die-in" protest that happened at his office several weeks ago regarding Obamacare.

"Let's hope we can disagree on a more polite, conversational basis and not do things like they did at my office a couple weeks ago. It's gone too far," Collins said.

Several former Democratic White House aides in the hours after the shooting said they hoped Trump would avoid politics in his first major domestic shooting incident.

"The tone and the words coming out of the White House matter the most," said the same former senior Obama White House official who later praised the president's in-person remarks. "There may be a lot of breathless speculation in the press and an instinct to react strongly, but the sweet spot is typically one of respect, vigilance, and considered thoughtfulness."

"In these moments the public looks to the president to bring some rationality to what we all have difficulty rationalizing," added a former Clinton White House aide. "It's a time to be the healer-in-chief, not the tweeter-in-chief."

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House Republicans fear politically motivated shooting [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, Heather Caygle and John Bresnahan | 06/14/2017 01:21 PM EDT

House Republicans earlier this year discussed ramping up security in light of new anti-Donald Trump and anti-Republican anger on the far-left.

Now, they fear their worst nightmare has come true: a politically motivated shooting.

Republicans on Capitol Hill are fretting that their colleagues were targeted by a gunman during a Wednesday congressional baseball practice because of their party affiliation — or because of an anti-Trump sentiment pulsing through the nation. Many are asking about additional security, fearing they could be next, while also calling for civility to be restored to an increasingly divisive political discourse.

Speaking to reporters just hours after the shooting, Rep. Jeff Duncan recounted an exchange he had with the gunman before he opened fire — and before the South Carolina Republican realized the man was a threat. Duncan said the shooter stopped him in the parking lot by the field as he was leaving team practice early and asked him if Republicans or Democrats were playing.

Duncan told him it was the Republican team, and minutes later, the man opened fire.

Asked if he believed his colleagues were singled out because of party affiliation, Duncan said he did.

"Based on the question he asked me, I would make that assumption because he asked me if this team was the Republican or Democrat team privately," he said. "I responded that it was the Republican team practicing, and he proceeded to shoot Republicans."

He added: "Take that for what it's worth."

Republicans echoed Duncan's sentiment throughout the day, as news dripped out that the Facebook page of the gunman — identified as James T. Hodgkinson, a former home inspector from Belleville, Ill. — was awash in anti-Trump posts. Rep Rodney Davis (R-Ill.), for instance, brought up the current partisan political discourse as a cause behind the shooting.

"This political rhetoric and political discourse that has led to hate, has led to gunfire," Davis said. "I never thought I'd go to baseball practice for charity, and have to dodge bullets. This has got to stop, and it's gotta stop today."

Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), speaking from the floor of the Capitol with a Tennessee Volunteers baseball hat on, called for civility on Fox News when asked whether the shooting was politically motivated: "We come up here and represent the people of the United States, and that's very sad that someone would take it upon themselves to open a weapon and fire upon anybody of any political party or any persuasion. It's very sad."

Since Trump was elected president, Hill Republicans have often taken the brunt of the anger from progressives unhappy at the direction the country is headed. They've seen their town halls and offices overrun with protesters, and while the discourse is often civil, several Republican lawmakers have complained to POLITICO about security concerns. Some have even said they won't hold town halls anymore for fear of their own safety. Others have received death threats.

POLITICO reported on a special conference more than two months ago in which GOP leadership asked former cop-turned-Rep. David Reichert (R-Wash.) to brief members on how to ensure their staff are safe. His tips included asking police to monitor town halls, a practice that most have taken up. He also advised them to install heavy solid doors instead of glass at district offices and ensure each office has a security system in place as well as a backroom exit in case of emergencies.

Wednesday's shooting is likely to only exacerbate those fears. During a members-only security briefing with House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving Wednesday just hours after the shooting, lawmakers pressed leadership with questions about what funds they could use to increase protection for themselves and their staff. Arizona Democrat Ruben Gallego said that while no changes to security on the Hill were announced, a bunch of lawmakers asked if they could use campaign dollars to hire security back home.

Two members, Reps. Ann Wagner (R-Mo.) and Al Green (D-Texas), stood up to talk about death threats they had received recently.

Several Democrats leaving the briefing said they have received an influx of threats against them and their staffs in recent months as well and would be supportive of additional security measures.

"The concern is not about our personal safety as much as it is about our staff and our families," said Rep. Joe Crowley (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. "The lack of uniformity, especially in the districts...to even have metal detectors or a security team in place, those nuances make it more difficult to ensure the safety of our staff."

Green said congressional leaders should consider increasing members' annual expenditure

allowance to provide extra money for security.

"An attack on one of us should be an attack on all of us," Green said he told members during the briefing. The Texas Democrat has recently received lynching threats after calling for Trump to be impeached.

"There should be an allocation for us to have someone in our offices, in these district offices," Green told reporters. "If it can already be used [but] budgets are tight, then we need to increase the budget so that the district offices can be protected. The staff is much more vulnerable than I am."

House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) said the next step is a review of "exactly what funds can and should be used in the event that there are security concerns by any member."

The review will be led by Speaker Paul Ryan's office "in communication with both the FEC and the Ethics Committee," Hoyer added as he was leaving the briefing.

Republicans' fear is grounded in a belief that politics had something to do with the incident. Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz), who was at the practice that erupted in chaos, said on TV that "you've got to assume [the gunman] knew what he was doing here" — though he added, "whether he was targeting certain members, we don't know." Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.), who was also at the practice field, argued that "people know this is the Republican baseball team practicing" because of the security detail and the timing.

"It is pretty well known in the neighborhood who those folks are on the baseball field and where we practice, and there is probably also publicity about it on Capitol Hill," he said. "It's no question that he knew who we were and what he was intending to do, in my judgment, and I'm a former prosecutor in Tuscaloosa and Huntsville and yeah, he was going after elected officials, congressmen."

Coming out of the security briefing with House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving on Wednesday, several Republicans speculated that the motivation may have been more anti-Trump than anti-Republican.

"It seems like this is was more an anti-Trump sentiment, but that's speculation," Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) said. "There was some discussion about that but clearly speculation."

Louis Nelson and Jake Lahut contributed to this report.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Tax bill will resolve renewables BEAT issue — Ryan weighing retirement — Western Values Project targets public lands in ads
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2017 4:11:36 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/14/2017 04:10 PM EDT

WE GOT THE BEAT: Congressional tax reform conferees have resolved a financing issue for renewable projects, two Republicans on the conference committee tell Eric Wolff and Anthony Adragna. "Under [measures in the tax proposal](#) ... the Senate tax bill had created disincentives for financial institutions to fund renewable projects through the tax equity markets developers use to raise capital," the two write. "Clean energy proponents said the base erosion and anti-abuse tax provision would have eroded the value of incentives like the production and investment tax credits in those markets."

But tax writers today seem to have found a solution — though details remained scarce. "Well, that's where we kind of try to find a middle ground to land on, and I think we've sort of — it'll be a combination of things. It's not entirely one provision," Sen. [John Thune](#) said. And Alaska Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) said her fellow conference committee member Thune was taking the lead on fixing the BEAT issue. She agreed it had been addressed. "The fix may entail allowing financiers to take the full value of the research and development tax credit until 2025, and 80 percent of other credits, like the ITC and PTC, according to Keith Martin, an attorney who is co-head of U.S. projects for Norton Rose Fulbright. Martin said he hadn't seen actual text of the legislation, so he wasn't sure if that's what would end up in the final bill," Eric and Anthony report. Read [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

1 IN 3 DOI EMPLOYEES REPORT MISTREATMENT: More than one-third of Interior Department employees said they had been harassed or discriminated against in the past 12 months, according to [an anonymous survey](#) conducted earlier this year, the results of which were released today. Interior's survey was sent from Jan. 9 to March 5 to all Interior personnel employed as of Dec. 10, 2016, the [department said](#) and was conducted by CFI Group, a third-party contractor. The response rate was 44 percent, or 28,203 employees. Its release comes after National Park Service-specific results were released two months ago via the same survey, Interior said.

The breakdown: The survey results showed that 20.5 percent of employees experienced age-related harassment, 16.5 percent experienced gender-based harassment, 9.3 percent because of race or ethnicity, and 8 percent experienced sexual harassment. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and NPS reported [the most incidents](#), with about 40 percent of BIA workers and 39 percent of NPS workers reporting some form of harassment.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in a statement said he had, from Day One, "zero tolerance for any type of workplace harassment." Zinke said: "All employees have the right to work in a safe and harassment-free environment. I've already fired a number of predators who other administrations were too afraid to remove or just turned a blind eye to. Under my leadership

we don't protect predators. When I say 'zero tolerance' I mean that these people will be held accountable for their abhorrent actions." A memo, Interior said, was also sent today to bureau and office heads, where Deputy Secretary Bernhardt directed each to develop and a formal action plan within 45 days to address their specific survey results. The department also outlined specific steps it's taken since it had received initial survey results [here](#).

NEW JERSEY NUCLEAR SUBSIDY BILL COMING SOON: The chairman of New Jersey's Senate Environment and Energy Committee said a nuclear subsidy bill in the works could be filed as early as today. "I'm working hard on it. I can't guarantee it will be done today, but I will try my best," Smith told POLITICO New Jersey's Danielle Muoio. "It's very close to being finished." The state's Senate energy committee and the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee "held a [joint hearing](#) earlier this month to discuss whether subsidies are necessary to prevent the premature retirement of the state's nuclear power plants," Danielle reports. Ralph Izzo, the CEO of PSEG, which owns much of the nuclear generation in New Jersey, has said the struggling plants will be unprofitable within three years and will shut down without some form of subsidy. Sources have said the subsidy could be as much as \$300 million to \$400 million a year, Danielle reports. Read [more](#).

RYAN CONSIDERING RETIREMENT: House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has made it known to some of his closest confidants that he plans to retire after the 2018 midterm elections, POLITICO's Tim Alberta and Rachael Bade report. The news comes amid speculation on Capitol Hill that he could step down even sooner. His two most likely successors have been meeting with members to map out their strategies should a leadership shake-up occur, the two write. Read [more](#).

FARENTHOLD WON'T RUN AGAIN: Texas Rep. [Blake Farenthold](#), facing allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate behavior from former staff members, will not seek reelection, Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider [reports](#).

STATE LAWMAKERS ASK FOR FARMER AID: Florida and Texas lawmakers urged appropriators to help out farmers and ranchers in the next disaster-relief package, which Congress is expected to pass in a year-end spending deal. In a [letter](#) from Wednesday to House and Senate appropriations leaders, the delegations write that a "supplemental crafted to help our states recover from historic hurricane damage would be insufficient if it fails to address the needs of our farm and ranch families." Specifically, the lawmakers are asking that the disaster-relief package address backlogs in USDA recovery programs, including in the Emergency Conservation Program, Pro Agriculture's Catherine Boudreau reports. "Many farm and ranch families are trying to secure financing right now and should be planting within a month's time. For these families, waiting longer for help is not an option," they write. Read [more](#).

WESTERN VALUES PROJECT ADS TARGET PUBLIC LANDS: The Western Values Project is increasing pressure on three Republicans in targeted public lands ads, Elena [reports](#). WVP released internal polling and announced a TV, digital and radio ad campaign in the House races for Arizona Rep. [Martha McSally](#), Oregon Rep. [Greg Walden](#) and Washington Rep. [Jaime Herrera Beutler](#). "In the heart of the West, 2 million acres of protected public lands just got wiped off the map, selling off American heritage," one of the ads says. "Now elites in Washington have their sights set on Arizona." (Watch the AZ-02 ad [here](#), OR-02 [here](#), and WA-03 [here](#).)

HALEY: EVIDENCE IRAN IS VIOLATING DEAL: U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley said

today that she has been presented "indisputable" evidence of Iran violating its U.N. resolution the Middle East. "The nuclear deal has done nothing to moderate the regime's conduct in other areas. Aid from Iran's revolutionary guard to dangerous militias and terror groups is increasing," Haley said at a press conference at Joint Base Andrews, where reporters were invited to inspect military debris that she claimed to be of Iranian origin. "Its ballistic missile and advanced weapons are turning up in war zones across the region. It's hard to find a conflict or a terrorist group in the Middle East that does not have Iran's fingerprints all over it." POLITICO's Louis Nelson reports more [here](#).

IMPORTANT TWEET: D.C.'s first Wawa is open today and FERC Commissioner Robert Powelson gave it a ringing endorsement. "The gold standard in convenience stores has finally arrived here in DC. Congrats Team Wawa on this mornings grand opening ceremony," Powelson said in [one](#) of [two](#) tweets, both accompanying a photo from the opening. "Honored to be invited to sip some java!" (Full disclosure: Your AE host hails from eastern Pennsylvania and is, too, fully Team Wawa.)

QUICK HITS:

- How Republicans think about climate change — in maps, [The New York Times](#).
- Linn Energy to split into three companies and focus on Oklahoma oil, [Chron](#).
- More than 700 employees have left the EPA since Scott Pruitt took over, [ThinkProgress](#).
- Russia wins in Arctic after U.S. fails to kill giant gas project, [Bloomberg](#).

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Tax change would create havoc for renewable energy financing [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/29/2017 05:56 PM EDT

Renewable energy advocates are warning that money for wind and solar power projects could dry up if Congress doesn't alter language in the tax bill that's designed to prevent banks from moving their profits abroad.

Companies that develop wind and solar projects typically sell the federal tax incentives attached to their green energy projects to banks, who can use them to reduce their own tax burdens. Those "tax equity" deals provide the renewable energy developers with the cash they need to build their projects.

But provisions in the Senate tax bill would make it difficult for banks with overseas subsidiaries to buy the credits, which are also accrued by low-income housing and infrastructure projects.

"To me it feels like a drive-by shooting," said Mike Garland, CEO of wind developer Pattern Energy. "Clearly the provision is aimed at corporations who are sending work overseas, but the result is that the investment in U.S. activities is penalized."

Under measures in the tax proposal aimed at reducing "base erosion," Congress would create a kind of minimum tax on profits earned in the U.S. to prevent companies from shifting that income onto the books of their subsidiaries in countries with lower taxes. But the current language would require energy project developers and their bank partners to recalculate their tax credits every year — creating uncertainty that would push many of the financial institutions out of the tax equity business.

"It takes us out of the market," said a source at one bank that does this kind of financing. "The best case scenario is it significantly reduces our involvement in the market, but it would be so difficult to plan in the near term at least, it would take us out. And we're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars of investment every year."

Renewable energy developers don't have the large profits that banks tend to generate, so they don't pay enough taxes to benefit directly from the Investment Tax Credit for solar or the Production Tax Credit for wind that Congress created.

So they have relied on the tax equity financing to drive their rapid growth. In a [blog post](#), Keith Martin, an attorney who is co-head of U.S. projects for Norton Rose Fulbright, said nearly half the financing for a typical solar project and more than half the money for a typical wind project comes from tax equity deals — and four financial institutions have already told him they would leave the market if the law is changed.

There are nearly three dozen financial institutions doing these kinds of deals presently, but about 40 percent of the total funding comes from just three of them: JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and US Bank.

"Without tax equity financing, most of these projects don't go forward, solar or wind," said one renewables industry source who's lobbying on the issue.

The Senate bill has renewable energy industry groups up in arms. The Solar Energy Industries Association, the American Wind Energy Association, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions and the American Council on Renewable Energy sent a joint [letter](#) today to every senator asking for a fix. The lobbying source said the groups are pushing hard for changes, and they have several legislative proposals they hope to get attached to the bill during the vote-a-rama amendment process expected later this week. The person declined to describe the proposals because "things are at a delicate stage."

Financial institutions might be amenable to a provision that allowed banks to carry over unused tax credits to future years, according to the banking source. That would lower the returns on their investments, but it would keep them in the market.

Peter Kelley, vice president for public affairs for AWEA, said Sens. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio), [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa), [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.) and [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.) are "working

to fix the problem before the bill is considered by the full Senate."

"We continue to advocate for a tax reform package that does not threaten the \$85 billion in economic activity and the projected 50,000 new American jobs from wind farm development through 2020," he said in a statement.

Grassley, who is already playing defense to keep cuts to the wind tax credit included in the House bill out of the final bill, and a spokeswoman said, "Sen. Grassley is aware of the concerns raised and is looking into the issue."

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Tax bill will resolve 'base erosion' problem for renewables [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff and Anthony Adragna | 12/14/2017 01:57 PM EDT

Congressional conferees have resolved a tax issue that put financing for renewable projects in jeopardy, two Republicans on the conference committee said today.

Under [measures in the tax proposal](#) aimed at keeping companies from sending their profits to lower tax countries, the Senate tax bill had created disincentives for financial institutions to fund renewable projects through the tax equity markets developers use to raise capital. Clean energy proponents said the base erosion and anti-abuse tax provision would have eroded the value of incentives like the production and investment tax credits in those markets.

But now tax writers seem to have found a way around the problem, though details remained scarce and the situation is fluid. Republicans are aiming to release the conference report on the tax bill by Friday and hope to have it to President Donald Trump's desk before the end of next week.

"Well, that's where we kind of try to find a middle ground to land on, and I think we've sort of — it'll be a combination of things. It's not entirely one provision," Sen. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) said.

Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) said Thune was taking the lead on fixing the BEAT issue, and she agreed it had been addressed. Both senators are on the conference committee.

The fix may entail allowing financiers to take the full value of the research and development tax credit until 2025, and 80 percent of other credits, like the ITC and PTC, according to Keith Martin, an attorney who is co-head of U.S. projects for Norton Rose Fulbright. Martin said he hadn't seen actual text of the legislation, so he wasn't sure if that's what would end up in the final bill.

WHAT'S NEXT: Bill text is expected Friday.

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Paul Ryan Sees His Wild Washington Journey Coming to An End [Back](#)

By Tim Alberta and Rachael Bade | 12/14/2017 12:26 PM EDT

Spirits were high inside the House chamber on Thursday, November 16, when, in the early afternoon, the gavel fell and a measure to rewrite the American tax code passed on a partisan tally of 227 to 205. As the deciding votes were cast—recorded in green on the black digital scoreboard suspended above the floor—the speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, threw his head back and slammed his hands together. Soon he was engulfed in a sea of dark suits, every Republican lawmaker wanting to slap him on the shoulder and be a part of his moment.

Ryan was the man of the hour. Having spent a quarter-century in Washington—as an intern, waiter, junior think-tanker, Hill staffer and, since 1999, as a member of Congress—he had never wavered in his obsession with fixing what he viewed as the nation's two fundamental weaknesses: its Byzantine tax system and ballooning entitlement state. Now, with House Republicans celebrating the once-in-a-generation achievement of a tax overhaul, Ryan was feeling both jubilant and relieved—and a little bit greedy. Reveling in the afterglow, Ryan remarked to several colleagues how this day had proven they could accomplish difficult things—and that next year, they should set their sights on an even tougher challenge: entitlement reform. The speaker has since gone public with this aspiration, suggesting that 2018 should be the year Washington finally tackles what he sees as the systemic problems with Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Tinkering with the social safety net is a bold undertaking, particularly in an election year. But Ryan has good reason for throwing caution to the wind: His time in Congress is running short.

Despite several landmark legislative wins this year, and a better-than-expected relationship with President Donald Trump, Ryan has made it known to some of his closest confidants that this will be his final term as speaker. He consults a small crew of family, friends and staff for career advice, and is always cautious not to telegraph his political maneuvers. But the expectation of his impending departure has escaped the hushed confines of Ryan's inner circle and permeated the upper-most echelons of the GOP. In recent interviews with three dozen people who know the speaker—fellow lawmakers, congressional and administration aides, conservative intellectuals and Republican lobbyists—not a single person believed Ryan will stay in Congress past 2018.

Ryan was tiring of D.C. even before reluctantly accepting the speakership. He told his predecessor, John Boehner, that it would be his last job in politics—and that it wasn't a long-term proposition. In the months following Trump's victory, he began contemplating the scenarios of his departure. More recently, over closely held conversations with his kitchen cabinet, Ryan's preference has become clear: He would like to serve through Election Day 2018 and retire ahead of the next Congress. This would give Ryan a final legislative year to chase his second white whale, entitlement reform, while using his unrivaled fundraising prowess to help protect the House majority—all with the benefit of averting an ugly internecine power struggle during election season. Ryan has never loved the job; he oozes aggravation when discussing intraparty debates over "micro-tactics," and friends say he feels like he's running a daycare center. On a personal level, going home at the end of next year would allow Ryan, who turns 48 next month, to keep promises to family; his three children are in or entering their teenage years, and Ryan, whose father died at 55, wants desperately to live

at home with them full time before they begin flying the nest. The best part of this scenario, people close to the speaker emphasize: He wouldn't have to share the ballot with Trump again in 2020.

And yet speculation is building that, Ryan, even fresh off his tax-reform triumph, might not be able to leave on his own terms. He now faces a massive pileup of cannot-fail bills in January and February. It's an outrageous legislative lift: Congress must, in the coming weeks, fund the government, raise the debt ceiling, modify spending caps, address the continuation of health care subsidies, shell out additional funds for disaster relief and deal with the millions of undocumented young immigrants whose protected status has been thrown into limbo. It represents the most menacing stretch of Ryan's speakership—one that will almost certainly require him to break promises made to his conference and give significant concessions to Democrats in exchange for their votes. To meet key deadlines, he'll have to approve sizable spending increases and legal status for minors who came to the U.S. illegally—two things that could raise the ire of the GOP base and embolden his conservative rivals on Capitol Hill. There is no great outcome available, Ryan has conceded to some trusted associates—only survival. "Win the day. Win the next day. And then win the week," Ryan has been preaching to his leadership team.

The speaker can't afford to admit he's a lame duck—his fundraising capacity and deal-making leverage would be vastly diminished, making the House all the more difficult to govern. When asked at the end of a Thursday morning press conference if he was leaving soon, Ryan shot a quick "no" over his shoulder as he walked out of the room.

Ryan is backed by the vast majority of the GOP Conference, but even a small group of dissenters can make the speaker's life miserable—and he knows it. When Ryan succeeded Boehner in the fall of 2015, the new speaker sought to eliminate—or at least weaken—the parliamentary tactic that had been used against his predecessor. By filing a "motion to vacate the chair," Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina had found a way to force a vote on the speakership at any time—a potential humiliation that Boehner avoided by retiring. Ryan, working with Boehner's team during the transition, was unsuccessful in banning this practice. But he made it clear to Boehner at the time, and to his own allies upon assuming the speakership, that he would not serve at the whims of Meadows and the House Freedom Caucus, a group of some 35 conservative hard-liners. In an interview this fall with POLITICO Magazine, Ryan said the motion to vacate doesn't loom large as a constant threat to his job security. "No, because it's not a job I ever wanted in the first place," Ryan said. "If I was dying to be speaker, I guess it probably would be a dagger over my head. But I don't think like that."

Members of the Freedom Caucus don't necessarily believe this rhetoric from Ryan, but they respect the strategic advantage it gives him. After all, when Boehner left town, Ryan was the only consensus replacement—and even then, members had to beg him to assume the most powerful office on Capitol Hill. Given that history, any conservative who attempts to overthrow Ryan would make the Freedom Caucus—and its two leaders, Meadows and Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan—look like nihilists who collect speakers' scalps for sport. This is especially true without any obvious, universally acceptable successor waiting in the wings. "There are no more golden boys left," Meadows said in an interview, discussing the possibility of Ryan's departure.

Ryan's problems are not limited to the Freedom Caucus; there is, without question, wider discontent in the conference than the speaker appreciates, with legislators across the ideological and experiential spectrums grumbling about a hypercentralized process that gives

them a vote on the floor but little else. That said, it requires a special brand of gumption to go after the speaker's gavel—and the usual suspects can be found in and on the periphery of the Freedom Caucus. These members, who have been eerily quiet for much of 2017, have begun making noise about a mutiny. The expectation of a major betrayal on Ryan's part—either on spending levels, immigration or a combination of the two—has prompted incessant chatter in recent weeks of someone filing a motion to vacate the chair, perhaps as soon as next month. This could be gamesmanship, a bluff to make Ryan feel pressured to step aside. But with a sudden, pervasive sense that Ryan might be ready to leave anyway, a motion to vacate would make sense as a test of his desire to stay on the job.

Either way, the convergence of these realizations—Ryan wanting to retire after 2018, and a possible threat to his speakership even sooner—has sparked a flurry of activity in the offices of Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Majority Whip Steve Scalise, the two most likely successors to Ryan. Both believed Ryan would leave late next year and were therefore planning their next steps at an appropriately deliberate pace. This has abruptly changed: According to multiple GOP sources, both McCarthy and Scalise have taken recent meetings with members loyal to them who have been eager to strategize about life after Ryan. There is little chance Scalise runs against McCarthy, but the whip—knowing McCarthy lacked the votes to become speaker in 2015, prompting Ryan to accept the job—is taking careful stock of the conference, preparing to launch his own candidacy should McCarthy stumble a second time.

The one person who can keep these dominoes from falling, at least in the near term, is Trump. The president and the speaker have been a better pairing than anyone could have imagined a year ago, considering Ryan abandoned the GOP nominee during the homestretch of the 2016 campaign. The speaker has kept shoulder to shoulder with the White House at moments of vulnerability, knowing Trump can shield him—and his members—from the fury of the right. If the president endorses whatever grotesque legislative meatball comes out of the House in the coming weeks—publicly and unambiguously—it's impossible to see Ryan facing any real threat. If the president distances himself from the speaker, however, the floodgates could open—and quickly. Conservatives, having whispered in the president's ear about Ryan not sharing his interests, will be watching carefully for cues. So too will Steve Bannon, who has been conspicuous this year in holding his fire on Ryan, an old nemesis, while laying waste to Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell. Bannon and Meadows, a pair of disruptive forces, have spent the past year keeping Ryan's blood out of the water—but in the unlikely scenario that Trump suddenly sours on the House speaker, they will be inviting the sharks to dinner.

Underscoring all of this palace intrigue are some strange realities—such as the fact that Ryan's survival as speaker might require cover from the very president who once believed that Ryan was trying to sabotage his presidential campaign. Or the notion that Ryan, should he secure his final year in office, will use it to pursue the type of dramatic, politically risky entitlement reforms that Trump explicitly ruled out while running for president. Perhaps no piece of irony is more striking, or effective in capturing this volatile period of Republican history, than the juxtaposition between Ryan celebrating his dream of rewriting the tax code—while hearing of renewed threats to his speakership.

Ryan nearly walked away from Congress once before. It was November 2012, after Mitt Romney's loss to Barack Obama, and the would-be vice president found himself despondent and homesick. Ryan told his wife, Janna, that he was considering retirement. That's when

Boehner called. The speaker, concerned about the stability of his conference, could not afford to lose Ryan; he promised the influential Budget Committee chairman a waiver so he could lead the panel for another two years. Ryan agreed, and as the sting of 2012 receded, he began to map out his political future—and his exit strategy from Congress. Having run and lost a national campaign, Ryan rejected pleas to consider his own presidential prospects; instead, he set his sights on the Ways and Means Committee. The chairmanship, which he had long viewed as a dream job, would open after 2014, and Ryan saw it as the perfect perch from which to both pursue his long-standing policy goals and influence the direction of the national party in 2016. Ryan had it all figured out, according to interviews at the time with his friends, family and staff: He would chair the committee, help a newly elected Republican president write a sweeping overhaul of the tax code, and then ride off into the sunset.

But it wasn't meant to be. Less than a year into Ryan's Ways and Means tenure, Boehner decided to call it quits. He had asked his protege several times over the previous year—since the primary defeat of Majority Leader Eric Cantor—to succeed him as the speaker. "I gave him the Heisman every time," Ryan told POLITICO. The Ways and Means chairman was content to support his friend McCarthy. But the Freedom Caucus wasn't. Jordan and Meadows, concerned that McCarthy, a pragmatic Californian, would lead no differently than Boehner, made him a series of offers—their support in exchange for something from him. One of the proposals called for process reforms, including a drastic restructuring of the Steering Committee, which decides committee assignments and chairmanships. Another, more politically explicit offer, promised McCarthy the group's votes if he could make either Jordan or Meadows the majority leader. When McCarthy bristled, suggesting he couldn't possibly deliver what they wanted, the group told him he wouldn't have enough votes on the House floor to become speaker—even if he had already scored an overwhelming majority in the closed-door conference election.

Hours before that private vote was set to occur, McCarthy called Ryan to say he didn't want the job—and that really, Ryan should take it. He still wasn't interested. Only after several days of around-the-clock phone calls from prominent Republicans did Ryan open himself to the possibility. He began thinking about his conditions for accepting the job. One was family time on the weekends, which was non-negotiable; another was support from the Freedom Caucus. Ryan had watched Boehner struggle to contain the rebellion after the tea party wave of 2010; he would not assume the speakership over the objections of the same rambunctious members who had helped drive Boehner from office. By securing their support up front, Ryan hoped to inoculate himself against the inevitable future grumblings from House conservatives.

Some Freedom Caucus members had reservations about Ryan, but others were ecstatic at his willingness to take the job. Unlike with Boehner, they saw the Wisconsinite—an Ayn Rand devotee and fierce critic of the welfare state—as one of their own. He was equally appealing to other factions of the conference—a sober-minded, well-spoken, telegenic leader with policy experience and people skills. After five years of civil war, there was no other figure who could unite the fractured House Republican Conference. Ryan's colleagues teasingly called him "The Chosen One," and in late October 2015, he assumed the speakership.

The cease-fire was short lived. Conservatives say Ryan failed a critical first test just weeks after taking the gavel, when he refused to leverage government funding to impose new restrictions on the nation's refugee settlement program in the wake of the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California. Jordan pleaded with the new speaker to hold out for increased vetting, telling him that it would show Obama and Democratic Senate leader Harry Reid that "there's a new sheriff in town." Ryan refused—an original sin that chafes Jordan to this day. As he

struggled to adjust to his complex new role—"like Einstein learning to write poetry," is how one of Ryan's admirers described it—he committed another strategic error that would prove costly with some of his members: dismissing the reality TV star running for his party's nomination. In private conversations, Ryan called Trump "a joke" whose penchant for identity politics was dividing the country and dooming the Republican Party's future. He wasn't much gentler in public: For most of the campaign, Ryan made it seem he felt honor-bound to denounce the candidate's latest incendiary remark or antic, as though the two were personally engaged in a tug-of-war for the GOP's soul.

This annoyed some of Ryan's members—both pro-Trumpers and others who disliked him but respected the anger he was tapping into. When the speaker initially withheld his support after Trump became the presumptive nominee—then continued to poke at him even after issuing a grudging endorsement—some of Ryan's colleagues wondered if he was attempting to sabotage the GOP ticket. Ryan made a point, for instance, never to be photographed with Trump—fearful of how it would be used to tarnish his brand, according to multiple sources. But the speaker came to agree that the icy relationship between them was unhelpful to the national party. Under mounting pressure from his members, as well as his longtime friend, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, Ryan offered an olive branch, inviting the GOP nominee to his hometown of Janesville, Wisconsin, for a Saturday afternoon campaign rally.

All hell broke loose on the evening before the event, when the *Washington Post* published a decade-old recording of Trump boasting about his sexual exploits—and his ability to grope women because of his celebrity status. It seemed to be the nail in his campaign's coffin. Ryan immediately disinvited Trump from Janesville, railing to Priebus and other GOP officials about the man he had never trusted or respected in the first place. Feeling validated, and certain that his members were equally outraged, Ryan wanted to take decisive action—even entertaining the idea of withdrawing his endorsement of Trump. On an emergency leadership conference call the weekend of the "Access Hollywood" tape, Ryan floated this idea as House GOP leaders debated how far to distance themselves from Trump. He would cripple their majority, the speaker said; cutting him off might be their best hope of saving the House. It was ultimately McCarthy—who has become Trump's favored member of the GOP leadership—who talked Ryan down. Withdrawing their support, he said, according to multiple sources familiar with the call, might backfire by hurting their own members. He suggested they cool off and not act on impulse.

Ryan agreed, yet somehow still crossed the line with many House Republicans when he declared—on another conference call the following Monday morning, this time with all Republican members—that he would no longer defend or campaign for Trump. That call, leaked to reporters in real time, lit a fire in the grass roots. Congressional phone lines exploded thereafter, with irate GOP constituents calling for Ryan's head. Some members began questioning the sustainability of his speakership; in late October 2016, after leaders scheduled Ryan's speakership nomination, a number of pro-Trump House members urged Ryan to postpone it so they had more time to consider if he should lead the conference. One of those was Rep. Jim Renacci, an establishment-friendly Republican who had long served with Ryan on the Ways and Means Committee. The Ohio Republican started garnering signatures on a secret letter arguing that "the conference is divided" and "there is no reason to hastily hold elections."

Freedom Caucus members sensed an opportunity. At a secret meeting at Meadows' downtown D.C. apartment, days before the election, Freedom Caucus board members devised a plan to

deny Ryan the 218 votes needed to retain his speakership. The strategy called for Jordan to serve as the "sacrificial lamb," running against Ryan—not to win, but to keep the speaker from having the votes needed for reelection. The idea was that Ryan, who talked frequently (and annoyingly, to some members) about how he had never wanted the job in the first place, would step aside to avoid the spectacle. Conservatives had already begun searching for a new speaker from outside their narrow ranks—someone who would command the respect of the conference. Rep. Mike Pompeo—then a little-known, dry-witted defense hawk who'd later make friends in high places and become Trump's CIA director—became their top choice.

As Republicans schemed against their speaker, the underlying assumption was that Trump would lose and the conservative base would be out for blood—that, or Trump would win and kick Ryan to the curb. Either way, he would be finished.

Less than an hour before the polls closed on November 8, 2016, Ryan made the phone call he'd been dreading. With a handful of staffers and family members lingering nearby, Ryan was patched through to senior officials at the RNC in Washington. They had been analyzing voting patterns and running turnout models throughout the day, and were prepared to share their projections with the speaker: Trump was going to go down in flames, earning just 220 electoral votes. Republicans would lose nearly 20 House seats. Democrats would retake control of the United States Senate. Exactly the debacle Ryan had feared.

Stewing inside his team's war room at the Holiday Inn in Janesville—the site of his own election night party—Ryan could not stomach the thought of working with President Hillary Clinton. That said, he wasn't exactly thrilled about working with Trump, whose campaign—fueled by anger, resentment and nativism—was, in his view, a rejection of conservatism's highest ideals. As disappointed as he was about Clinton's apparent victory, the speaker saw a silver lining: He would seize the occasion of Trump's defeat—beginning that night—to speak about a return to an inclusive, aspirational, Jack Kemp-inspired "happy warrior" conservatism, and a rejection of Trumpism.

But Ryan never got the chance. His own race had been called early, and attendees waited patiently in the ballroom for his victory speech. But the speaker was paralyzed in the war room, watching in disbelief as Trump surged past Clinton in the pivotal battlegrounds of Florida and North Carolina. The RNC's numbers, his advisers told him, were garbage: The GOP's Senate majority appeared safe, only a handful of House Republicans were losing, and if the current trends held, Trump was going to win the biggest upset in presidential history. Just before 10 p.m. Eastern, Ryan finally took the stage and spoke for three minutes. "I've just been sitting there watching the polls," Ryan said, the shock written all over his face. "By some accounts, this could be a really good night for America. This could be a good night for us. Fingers crossed."

Ryan would seize the occasion of Trump's defeat to speak about a return to an inclusive, aspirational, Jack Kemp-inspired "happy warrior" conservatism,

and a rejection of Trumpism. He never got the chance.

Ryan faced a legacy-shaping decision that night: Stay true to himself and step down as speaker, or muzzle himself and serve alongside Trump in a unified GOP government. It was a no-brainer: This was Ryan's chance to actually achieve the things he had only fantasized about. Even if that meant getting in bed with the likes of Trump and Bannon. And even if that meant accommodating behavior from a Republican president that he would never tolerate from a Democrat. It was a trade-off Ryan could not refuse. It was, in the refrain of the speaker's allies, "Paul's deal with the devil," one that he would make all over again. Chasing his legislative dreams would require keeping his criticisms of Trump to himself. "You can't create a sideshow, even if there's cause for a sideshow, because it's going to get in the way of getting the big things done," Boehner told POLITICO Magazine of Ryan's approach to Trump. "Paul has got his head on straight. He's very comfortable with who he is and what he's got to do."

As some conservatives watched eagerly for a smoke signal from the president-elect—hoping he would remember the speaker's disloyalty and recommend a replacement—Ryan moved quickly to secure his standing. He spoke with both Trump and his longtime friend, Vice President-elect Mike Pence, in the hours before Trump's victory speech, and made swift plans Wednesday morning to meet with them in Washington the next day. Before their meeting, Ryan shared with several friends that he planned to start his talk with Trump by mentioning their bad blood during the campaign, and explaining why he had said and done certain things. They cut him off: That was a terrible idea. Don't remind Trump of how much he despised you in the past, they said. Focus on the future. Ryan listened. And the advice was sound: To this day, despite Trump's famously long memory, sources in both camps say the president and speaker have never once revisited their old feud.

Indeed, a surprising subplot of the unified GOP government's first year has been the unlikely alliance between Trump and Ryan. The healing process that began in D.C. two days after the election culminated in Pence delivering the message to House Republicans, just minutes before the speakership election, that Trump supported Ryan. (Only one Republican, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, voted against him.) The relationship since has been strangely drama free: Trump and Ryan talk often throughout the week, chewing on questions of policy and process and politics. Never once has there been a blowup, either in person or over the phone. Sources close to both men say they occasionally vent about the other—Trump telling aides that the speaker can't count votes; Ryan complaining to leadership comrades about the president saying things unbecoming of his office—and yet these feuds are, somewhat miraculously, kept in the family.

Ryan's allies paint this as part of a broader picture—his stronger-than-expected partnership with the president; his landmark victories in passing tax reform, as well as a repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act, on the House floor; his prolific, historic fundraising on behalf of the embattled GOP majority—to argue that his Faustian bargain has proven worthwhile. And they cite these same examples to dismiss the sanity of threats against his speakership: What more could House Republicans possibly want from him?

"Paul Ryan is by far and away the best possible person we have to lead this group of people in the right direction," said one such ally, Rep. Tom Rooney of Florida. "I just think that any talk of him leaving, I hope that's not true. It would be a major setback for our cause."

Every speaker deals with varying degrees of discontent in their conference. In Ryan's case, it owes less to ideology than process. Specifically, members who felt marginalized under Boehner—who ran a top-down operation that cut out committee chairs and left little room for lawmakers to shape legislation—feel the House is even more centralized under Ryan. This was evident in the speaker's first, botched attempt at repealing Obamacare: He wrote the bill on his own, then framed it as a "binary choice" for members to either back his proposal or be viewed as supporters of Obamacare. The stunt rubbed Ryan's colleagues the wrong way, particularly Freedom Caucus members who had extracted promises from him in 2015 about opening up the House and restoring regular order.

Conservatives aren't the only ones annoyed with Ryan's approach, and it isn't just back-bench members voicing displeasure. Sources close to House Budget Chairwoman Diane Black, a longtime Ryan ally, said she was deeply upset over the summer about Ryan's treatment of her budget process—though she, like many other senior members friendly with the speaker, would never voice these criticisms publicly. Ryan trampled on Black's budget in order to expedite the push for tax reform. But when the time came to draft the legislation, members of the Ways and Means Committee—who had worked alongside Ryan for years—grew upset at what they saw as the speaker's dictatorial approach. Tax writers vented to the White House that he wielded an iron grip on the process and that they had little imprint on the final product; members grumbled about Ryan big-footing Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady. Members of his committee said they didn't see the final bill until just days before they voted on it. It's no coincidence that more than half a dozen members on Ways and Means—one of the most powerful and desired positions in Congress—are walking away from the House in 2018. Renacci, in an interview, specifically cited Ryan's top-down style as a reason he was leaving the House to run for governor of Ohio.

"You've got to be willing to let everyone bring one pebble of sand to the beach, so they at least feel they helped build the beach," Renacci said. "And that's regular order. If you don't get that, you're never going to be a leader here in the conference."

Similar complaints dogged the previous speaker. But unlike Boehner, who bunkered down and lost touch with many of his newer members, Ryan has made a sustained effort to engage the full spectrum of his colleagues on a regular basis, with both group and individual meetings. This has given rank-and-file lawmakers greater access to the speaker—though not a greater role in the legislative process.

**He's more controlling than Boehner ...
and I voted against John Boehner and
worked with Mark Meadows to vacate
the chair," said Rep. Walter Jones. "I've
been here 22 years and this is the most**

closed shop I've ever seen."

At the end of the day, the real threat to Ryan exists in the same place it did during Boehner's speakership: on the right flank of the conference. Early this fall, as the tax-reform battle was heating up, Rep. Walter Jones of North Carolina—a constant thorn in Boehner's side—joked to fellow conservatives that he wanted to issue a formal apology to the former speaker. Having experienced Ryan's tight grip on the House, Jones said, he now viewed Boehner as a legend—a remark that elicited laughs but also murmurs of agreement in the room. Since then, the idea of conservatives writing an apology letter to Boehner has become a running joke on the right. "He's more controlling than Boehner ... and I voted against John Boehner and worked with Mark Meadows to vacate the chair," Jones said. "I'm very dissatisfied. I've been here 22 years and this is the most closed shop I've ever seen."

Even so, there is no comparing the two speakers at this point. Whereas Boehner had lost all goodwill with conservatives by the time of his exit, Ryan today has strong allies on the right—even if there are an equal number of detractors. "I think Ryan has done a good job," said Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker. "He to this day has my full, 100 percent support. ... He has to herd all these different factions and people on a daily basis, and I respect that."

Ryan and his team have operated under the assumption that if Republicans enact the first tax overhaul in 30 years, much of the frustration will wane — and partywide euphoria at the realization of their first major legislative victory will make the year-end, bipartisan deals easier to swallow. But rank-and-file members aren't so sure. And they worry that Ryan's tunnel vision on tax reform has weakened the GOP's negotiating hand against the Democrats. During a recent meeting with elders of the RSC, Rep. Tom Graves, a senior member on the Appropriations Committee, argued that a "mystic, hypnotic fog of tax reform" had crippled the conference over the past two months, "paralyzing" Republicans from creating an effective spending strategy to advance other Trump priorities.

That concern has echoed throughout the conference in recent weeks. Many House Republicans fear they will be forced to back a massive spending package that drives up the deficit—and an immigration compromise antithetical to the beliefs of the party base. During a meeting in Ryan's office in early November, Rep. Warren Davidson, the Ohio Republican who replaced Boehner and promptly joined the Freedom Caucus, held up the speaker's "Better Way" pamphlet from 2016 and told him: "There is no 'DACA amnesty play' in the playbook."

Hoping to assuage these concerns, Ryan last week summoned representatives from the conference's various factions to meet and come up with a unifying plan ahead of the December 22 deadline to fund the government. The resulting strategy, one that Ryan pledged to execute, has House Republicans sending a funding bill to the Senate next week that includes GOP priorities, such as increased Pentagon funding, but nothing for Democrats—and then leaving town and daring Senate Democrats to vote no. (It's a difficult promise to keep, since McConnell needs at least eight Democratic votes to approve any deal—not to mention that the Senate is accustomed to jamming the House, not the other way around.)

Ryan can see the storm clouds gathering. But people close to him insist he would never quit

mid-Congress, even if passing tax reform into law provides the perfect opportunity to walk away—and even if recent accounts of sexual misconduct among House members have made the job even more stressful. (Two friends say Ryan was visibly shaken after demanding that Arizona Rep. Trent Franks resign his seat, telling them, "I didn't realize slitting throats was part of my job.")

Two friends say Ryan was visibly shaken after demanding that Arizona Rep. Trent Franks resign his seat, telling them, "I didn't realize slitting throats was part of my job."

Even though few members believe Ryan's job is truly in jeopardy, the whispers of his not-far-off retirement have sent various constituencies scrambling to prepare for a shake up. Members loyal to Scalise have urged him to have a candid discussion with McCarthy about his inability to unify the conference, while McCarthy's allies have urged him to line up the president's support so it's ready at a moment's notice. Some neutral parties think Scalise has the inside track—that Trump's backing won't be enough to put him over the top, and that Scalise's already-high stock has skyrocketed since he survived an assassination attempt in June. But the Freedom Caucus will be focused less on personalities than process: As in 2015, conservative members are drafting various demands in exchange for the next speaker to win their votes.

This will cause eyes to roll in some quarters of the conference. But the reality is that while Ryan would surely win a hypothetical near-term battle over his speakership, the Freedom Caucus is already winning the war. This is simple math: Because of its size and willingness to vote as a bloc, the Freedom Caucus will almost certainly provide the margin to crown the next speaker. And assuming Republicans lose seats next year—with swing-district moderates the first to fall—the conservatives will have even more leverage over GOP leadership in the coming Congress.

In a period of particular tension a few months back, one conservative member presented Meadows with a fake draft of a motion to vacate the chair. It was meant to make light of what conservatives viewed as their sorry situation in that moment: nine months into a unified Republican government, and still without a single legislative victory. Meadows told the member the prank was "not funny." But to some members, the prospect of taking out Ryan clearly isn't a joke. It only takes one of them, eager to antagonize the leadership and win lots of headlines, to file the motion and plunge the House into temporary chaos.

The question at that point becomes how hard Ryan is willing to fight to retain his speakership—and how forcefully other Republicans come to his defense. When Meadows made his attempt on Boehner, dozens of allies rushed to the former speaker's office to strategize, demanding an immediate vote to show their strength. Ryan, who keeps a small circle of close friends, does not have any comparable apparatus of longtime loyalists determined to protect him—nor does he view his legacy in Congress as inextricably tied to the position of speaker of the House.

"You've got to remember, I'm the only guy in the modern era who didn't want this job," Ryan told POLITICO Magazine this fall. "I did this because I had to do it. And I'm happy and I'm grateful for the job and it's a great honor. And I feel like I was made for this moment. So I'm good with it. But I'm not a person who covets it. And I never was. So I always feel liberated by that."

Whenever Ryan exits, familiar questions will resurface about whether the Republican Party is governable—and whether, in Congress, there will ever be a leader capable of uniting its tribes. Congress runs on relationships: Boehner was personally popular among members, even those who voted against his initiatives, and the same can largely be said for Ryan. But this is no longer seems sufficient. Dissension in the House Republican ranks is explained not by incompatible personalities, but rather by a fundamental disconnect between the leadership and the rank and file over questions of legislative involvement and procedural transparency. Whoever wishes to succeed Ryan would do well to realize it. During a conference meeting last week, Raúl Labrador of Idaho, a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, ripped into the leadership. "It's not that we don't like you," he said to McCarthy, who stood at the podium. "It's that we don't trust you."

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Farenthold won't seek reelection [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 12/14/2017 10:19 AM EDT

Rep. Blake Farenthold said Thursday he will not seek reelection after facing mounting allegations of sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior from former staff members.

In a video posted on his Facebook page, the Texas Republican acknowledged that his office "accommodated destructive gossip, off-hand comments, off-color jokes and behavior, in general, that was less than professional."

"I had never served in public office before. I had no idea how to run a congressional office," Farenthold said. "And as a result, I allowed a workplace culture to take root in my office that was too permissive and decidedly unprofessional."

His comments comes after the House Ethics Committee opened an investigation into the harassment allegations and as former staff members have begun speaking out about his conduct.

Farenthold spoke with House Speaker Paul Ryan twice on Wednesday and met with National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Steve Stivers, according to GOP sources familiar with the conversations.

Farenthold has come under harsh scrutiny for using taxpayer money to settle a 2014 lawsuit brought by a former staffer over allegations of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment.

Lauren Greene, the former aide, said the Texas Republican told another staffer in the office that he had "sexual fantasies" and "wet dreams" about her — and that she could wear shirts that showed her nipples anytime she wanted.

The 55-year-old married congressman, who was first elected in 2010, again denied the accusations Thursday.

"I want to be perfectly clearly: The charges that were made are false," he said.

Farenthold added that he and his family initially decided over Thanksgiving to run for reelection, but that the renewed focus on Greene's allegations had "become a political distraction" and that his "constituents deserve better."

Greene, who received \$84,000 from a congressional fund used for resolving workplace disputes, told [POLITICO](#) that she found herself blackballed on Capitol Hill and unable to land full-time work after she raised concerns about the hostile work environment.

Other former aides have also spoken out about an abusive atmosphere in Farenthold's office in recent days.

Michael Rekola, who served as Farenthold's communications director in 2015, told [CNN](#) that Farenthold berated aides and often told sexually explicit jokes. Ahead of his wedding, Rekola said Farenthold warned him in front of other staffers: "Better have your fiancée blow you before she walks down the aisle - it will be the last time."

Elizabeth Peace, another former communications staffer, told CNN the four-term congressman regularly referred to aides as "fucktards."

Asked at a news conference Thursday whether Farenthold should resign immediately, Ryan demurred.

"I think he's making the right decision to retire," Ryan told reporters. "There are new stories that are very disconcerting. Unacceptable behavior has been alleged in those stories, and I think he's made the right decision that he's going to be leaving Congress."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi told reporters that the staffers' accusations are "shocking" and "unacceptable," and that he should resign rather than retire.

"I respect Congressman Farenthold's decision and thank him for his service," Stivers said in a statement, adding, "The NRCC is confident we will hold this seat."

Farenthold represents a red-tinted south Texas seat, and had already attracted primary challengers before his decision to not seek reelection. Michael Cloud, member of the Texas Republican Executive Committee, launched a bid in October. Bech Bruun, former Texas Water Development Board chairman, is also expected to get into the race.

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Texas, Florida lawmakers say next disaster-aid package must help farmers [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 12/14/2017 11:48 AM EDT

Florida and Texas lawmakers are urging appropriators to help farmers and ranchers in the next multibillion-dollar disaster-relief package, which Congress was expected to pass as part of a year-end government spending deal.

"A supplemental crafted to help our states recover from historic hurricane damage would be insufficient if it fails to address the needs of our farm and ranch families," the Florida and Texas delegations wrote in a [letter](#) Wednesday to House and Senate appropriations leaders. "Many farm and ranch families are trying to secure financing right now and should be planting within a month's time. For these families, waiting longer for help is not an option."

Specifically, the lawmakers are requesting that the disaster-relief package address backlogs in USDA recovery programs, including in the Emergency Conservation Program, as well as ease certain requirements under the Livestock Indemnity Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish program.

The lawmakers also requested "targeted" financial assistance for farmers, particularly those who grow commodities like vegetables that aren't widely covered by crop insurance.

A top USDA official [recently told](#) Congress that the department needs nearly \$1 billion in disaster-relief funding following this year's devastating hurricanes and wildfires.

But with little more than a week to go until the Dec. 22 deadline when government funding expires, lawmakers [are still negotiating](#) details of the next round of disaster aid, stirring anxiety that the package could be punted another month.

The letter was signed by 54 members of Congress, all of whom represent Florida or Texas except for House Agriculture Committee members [David Scott](#) (D-Ga.), [Austin Scott](#) (R-Ga.) and Del. [Stacey Plaskett](#) (D-V.I.).

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Western Values Project pressures three Republicans on public lands [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 12/14/2017 05:00 AM EDT

The Western Values Project released internal polling and announced a TV, digital and radio ad campaign in three House seats, urging members to "stop the attacks on public lands," one of the TV ads states.

The ads target Republicans: battleground Arizona Rep. [Martha McSally](#), Oregon Rep. [Greg Walden](#) and Washington Rep. [Jaime Herrera Beutler](#).

"In the heart of the West, 2 million acres of protected public lands just got wiped off the map, selling off American heritage," the TV ad's narrator says. "Now elites in Washington have

their sights set on Arizona."

Polling conducted by Global Strategy Group show that a majority of voters in [all three districts](#) oppose legislation to shrink national monuments in Utah.

In Arizona, McSally holds a 3-point lead against a generic Democrat. But when "asked to consider a scenario where she votes to reduce the size of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments," McSally drops to 38 percent support to a generic Democrat with 50 percent, according to the polling memo. In Oregon, Walden favorability also dropped by 5 points "if he votes for legislation to rescind federal land protections," the memo said.

"This was catalyzed by the Trump administration's effort to shrink monuments in Utah," said Chris Saeger, executive director of the Western Values Project. "There are a lot of reasons to believe Congress will aid and abet that, and we want them to know that their constituents will put them on notice for it."

Watch the AZ-02 ad [here](#), OR-02 [here](#), and WA-03 [here](#).

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Haley says U.S. has evidence Iran is violating UN resolution [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/14/2017 01:57 PM EDT

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, standing before military debris that she claimed to be of Iranian origin, offered Thursday what she presented as "indisputable" evidence of Iran's UN resolution-violating actions in the Middle East.

"The nuclear deal has done nothing to moderate the regime's conduct in other areas. Aid from Iran's revolutionary guard to dangerous militias and terror groups is increasing," Haley said at a press conference at Joint Base Andrews, where reporters were invited to inspect the evidence on display behind her. "Its ballistic missile and advanced weapons are turning up in war zones across the region. It's hard to find a conflict or a terrorist group in the Middle East that does not have Iran's fingerprints all over it."

Haley's accusations were the latest in a series of actions the Trump administration has taken to try to raise international pressure on Iran, including ramping up sanctions on the Islamist regime in Tehran.

Trump's critics warn such moves could lead to an eventual military confrontation between Washington and Tehran, and some say the U.S. rhetoric and actions on Iran have echoes of the Bush administration's build-up to the invasion of Iraq.

Still, although most of the international community supports keeping the Iran nuclear deal intact, there is growing concern among U.S. allies in Europe and beyond about Iran's non-nuclear activities in the Middle East.

The U.S. ambassador said Thursday that the debris she offered as proof of Iran's inflammatory

behavior was not directly related to the nuclear deal but was a violation of UN Security Council resolution 2231, which, among other provisions, prohibits Iran from progressing its ballistic missile program in certain ways and bans Iran from weapons transfers.

"We have said everything doesn't have to be tied to the nuclear deal, but it does have to be tied to the security council resolutions. This is blatant violation of what they are not supposed to be doing," Haley said. "Everybody has tip-toed around Iran in fear of them getting out of the nuclear deal, and they are allowing missiles like this to be fired over to innocent civilians."

Last October, President Donald Trump announced that he would decertify Iran's compliance with the Iran nuclear deal but not pull the U.S. out of it, declaring that the Islamic Republic had not lived up to "the spirit of the deal," in part because of its non-nuclear activities.

Behind Haley on Thursday was debris that she said included a rocket with distinctive features that only Iranian models have that she said had been fired by Houthi rebels in Yemen at a commercial airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Also included in the display, Haley said, was material from an anti-tank guided missile, an explosive boat and a so-called "kamikaze drone," all of which she claimed had parts from Iran.

Some of the material had been declassified by the U.S. government, which Haley noted was an unusual step, and presented to the UN secretary general, whose report on Iran's actions Haley cited in her remarks.

Houthi rebels, increasingly backed by Iran, have been engaged in a brutal conflict with the Yemeni government and the Saudi military that is backing it. The Yemeni civil war is widely considered a humanitarian disaster and a proxy war against the Iranian government, with significant civilian casualties inflicted by Saudi forces, who have been backed by their U.S. counterparts.

Haley said the U.S. would invite every member of Congress to view the debris as well as every member of the UN Security Council. Beyond building a "coalition" to put increased pressure on Iran, she offered little in terms of concrete steps.

"What I've seen from our foreign partners is that...now they actually see that the president was right," Haley said. "Now they see that yes, there are problems. Yes, there are other activities because they're feeling it in their own countries."

Nahal Toosi contributed to this report.

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Republican civil war erupts anew [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson and Alex Isenstadt | 12/13/2017 06:39 PM EDT

Democrat Doug Jones' victory in Alabama — far from settling the score between the McConnell and Bannon wings of the Republican Party — instead touched off another round of internecine GOP infighting over who's to blame for the party's loss in one of the most

conservative states in the country.

From the outset, the race served as a proxy war between the tight-lipped Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a paragon of the party establishment, and Steve Bannon, the former White House chief strategist who has dedicated himself to disrupting everything McConnell represents.

Now, both sides are blaming the other for Tuesday's loss, with each painting the results as a case study in the other's political ineptitude. Bannon has argued from the outset that Republican leaders have positioned themselves against the president, determined to thwart his agenda. But McConnell and his allies are using Tuesday's results to tell the president — whom Bannon helped to cajole into the race on Moore's behalf — that his former chief strategist is a political liability.

Jones' victory "unmasked Steve Bannon's incompetence," said Josh Holmes, a former McConnell chief of staff and top political adviser. "What has been exposed here is that Steve Bannon has been the most harmful person to the Trump presidency in all of politics — Republican or Democrat."

Karl Rove told Fox News that Bannon, despite the hype about his political genius, did little more in Alabama than rant and rave "about the so-called establishment in Washington. Not a winning message."

Bannon, naturally, is unbowed, refusing to take any responsibility for ceding what looked like an impossible-to-lose seat in the Deep South. He has told associates that the Alabama results are a case study in McConnell's malpractice.

"Team Mitch did everything in their power to endanger our majority in the Senate and threaten the passage of the Trump agenda by ensuring the outcome that we saw last night," said Andy Surabian, a spokesman for Bannon, who went on to accuse the Senate majority leader of gloating "about the fact that the Republican nominee in Alabama was defeated."

Prior to the election, McConnell told associates that he wanted to destroy Bannon politically, according to one person familiar with the Republican leader's thinking. Their goal: to curtail his influence ahead of the 2018 midterms, in which Bannon has vowed to recruit candidates to knock off McConnell-backed incumbents.

Bannon is supporting Danny Tarkanian, who has vowed to unseat Nevada's Republican senator, Dean Heller, as well as former New York congressman and ex-convict Michael Grimm, who is trying to recapture his old House seat.

McConnell hopes Tuesday's outcome will put a dent in those efforts. His allies argue that Bannon is a charlatan — a man who has sold himself to the president as the guru of the Trump movement who possesses a preternatural understanding of the president's political base only to drive the president into a ditch in Alabama.

"Bannon hurt Trump by giving him poor advice," said Scott Reed, a political strategist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The results in Alabama, Reed said, "hurt the Trump movement."

The faceoff over the Alabama race is the latest iteration of the bitter infighting that has dominated the Republican Party since the rise of the tea party in 2010, and that reached an

apex last year with the election of Donald Trump, a Bannon-backed outsider loathed by politicians in both parties.

Trump's victory did little to settle the debate over who controls in the GOP. In fact, the president now appears to be caught in a tug-of-war between McConnell and his establishment allies, some of whom urged him to endorse Sen. Luther Strange in Alabama's Republican primary, and Bannon, who eventually persuaded him to intervene on Moore's behalf.

It was an appeal from Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker that ultimately persuaded the president to campaign in Alabama on Strange's behalf. Trump even placed a cold call to Ward Baker, the former executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, before doing so. When Baker told Trump that Strange was, in fact, in real trouble, the president decided to intervene.

But he didn't heed the same establishment voices, including his own political advisers, who urged him to stay out of the general election after Strange's defeat. He also rejected private appeals both from his daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who urged him to keep his distance from Moore.

That said, Bannon's prods haven't been siren calls for the president, either. Though he has continued to flout Republican leaders, feuding with McConnell publicly on his Twitter feed, he has also signaled that he will not join Bannon's efforts to unseat several Senate incumbents, privately offering his support to Mississippi's Roger Wicker, Wyoming's John Barrasso, and Nebraska's Deb Fischer.

Privately, Republicans on Wednesday conceded that both sides were to blame for the fiasco in Alabama. Though some Senate Republicans privately breathed a sigh of relief at Moore's loss — few were eager to embrace him as a colleague — they also suggested that McConnell's insistence on backing Strange, rather than popular Republican Rep. Mo Brooks, who also ran in the GOP primary, was shortsighted.

But in hidden corners of Washington, including at the NRSC, Republicans were quietly celebrating Moore's defeat — itself a sign of a party in crisis and a president unlikely to come to the rescue.

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DOJ fuels doubts about integrity of Mueller probe [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 12/14/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Amid a rising drumbeat of Republican criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe, members of Congress and former prosecutors say the Justice Department has amped up the pressure by quietly putting out information bolstering claims that the investigation is unfairly biased against President Donald Trump.

Through a series of small and sometimes subtle moves, DOJ's actions appear to run counter to the goal of keeping Mueller's probe free of political meddling.

Now that Mueller's investigation has reached into Trump's White House — former national security adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty earlier this month and is cooperating with the Russia investigators — some say the department is playing both sides of the high-stakes investigation.

"I think that it appears to me that DOJ leadership is doing what it can to please their boss, which is ultimately the president of the United States," said Renato Mariotti, a former federal prosecutor. "They're doing whatever they can to please him without violating the law."

The latest example came earlier this week when Justice officials convened a small media briefing for a select group of reporters who were shown private text messages sent between two investigators who formerly served on Mueller's team.

That briefing — held in the midst of an ongoing inspector general investigation, and [reportedly](#) offered to the press before members of the House panel had seen the messages — was described as "very odd and unprofessional" by Samuel Buell, a former assistant U.S. attorney and Duke University law school professor.

"It shouldn't surprise anyone that there are people in the political appointee realm at DOJ who are rooting for Mueller to fail," said Buell. "That doesn't mean they are going to be prepared to actually try to derail him. It all merits vigilance."

A DOJ spokeswoman said Wednesday that the FBI agents' lawyers were notified of the disclosure and career Justice officials evaluated the messages as well to be sure they could be released "under both ethical and legal standards." She also explained that DOJ delivered the text messages to lawmakers before they were released to the press.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said at a House Judiciary Committee hearing on Wednesday that the DOJ inspector general had also cleared the way for the messages' public release.

The early release of the FBI agents' text messages isn't the only DOJ move that has offered Mueller's critics new ammunition.

Earlier this month, DOJ [acknowledged](#) it was taking the unusual step of making Mueller tack on an additional \$3.5 million in costs in his first [budget report](#) - almost doubling the probe's total spending to \$6.7 million - so it could reflect wider department operations that are going toward the Russia investigation.

The Justice Department said the additional funding wasn't required to be disclosed by law, and it also explained that it hadn't made previous special counsels include those kinds of figures.

That larger price tag nonetheless fit nicely into the [attacks](#) leveled by critics who say Mueller has a blank check to investigate Trump. Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon has [urged](#) the president to go after the special counsel through his budget, and Trump jumped in Tuesday with a [Twitter](#) post chastising the "thousands of hours wasted and many millions of dollars spent" digging into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Other unusual Justice Department moves include Rosenstein's vague [media statement](#) in June casting doubt on anonymous sources in news stories just as the Washington Post and New York Times were reporting Mueller had determined Trump was the subject of an obstruction

of justice investigation.

And DOJ has opened Mueller up to questions by refusing to disclose [details](#) on the process that led up to the special counsel being granted an ethics waiver to serve as special counsel after working as a partner at WilmerHale, a private law firm that originally represented two critical figures in the case: former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and White House senior adviser and Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner.

"The conspiratorial side of me thinks somebody at Justice is not giving you the explanation for the waiver because they want to create the impression that Robert Mueller has a problem when Robert Mueller doesn't have a problem," said Richard Painter, a former White House ethics lawyer under President George W. Bush. "This is going to lead to Fox News conspiracy talk."

He called DOJ "sloppy" for not releasing under the Freedom of Information Act to POLITICO more details about why Mueller got a green light to lead the Russia probe.

The Justice Department also didn't come to Mueller's defense in late October when Republicans accused the special counsel's office as being the potential source of a [CNN story](#) teasing the first indictments in the whole Russia case. The cable network's story, citing "sources briefed on the matter," dominated a 48-hour period of weekend news before a federal court in Washington ultimately unsealed the charges.

"It is kind of ironic that the people in charge of investigating the law and executing the law would violate the law," South Carolina GOP Rep. Trey Gowdy, the chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, [said](#) on Fox News that weekend. A DOJ spokeswoman later told [Newsweek](#) that the matter had been referred to the department's inspector general for investigation.

Mueller won bipartisan praise with his appointment in May, but that didn't last long. By June, Trump surrogates were [castigating](#) the special counsel over his purported friendship with the ousted FBI Director James Comey - their associates denied there was any significant personal relationship - and the campaign contributions his staff had largely given to Democrats.

The complaints about Mueller have only grown as his investigation has accelerated.

On Air Force One last Friday, freshman Florida GOP Rep. Matt Gaetz said he [warned](#) Trump that Mueller's team was "infected with bias" against the president and the country was at risk of a "coup d'etat" because of the investigation. A Wall Street Journal [editorial](#) published last week suggested it was time for Mueller to "step down in favor of someone more credible."

Paul Rosenzweig, a former George W. Bush-era Homeland Security official and senior counsel from the Kenneth Starr investigation into President Bill Clinton, said he sees the recent onslaught of criticism as Trump "laying the groundwork for firing Mueller." DOJ officials, he added, are in a tough spot as they try to uphold their mandate of impartial justice while serving under a president who has blurred the lines between his administration and the nation's law enforcement apparatus.

"I do tend to think they're under pressure. They're making some judgment calls that are challenging," said Rosenzweig, a senior fellow at the R Street Institute, a free market think tank. "This is one of those cases where they can't win from losing no matter what they do."

In his public testimony Wednesday in the House, Rosenstein sought to defend Mueller -- who consistently [declines comment](#) on even the most basic of questions about his investigation's scope and status -- against a barrage of fastball questions.

The deputy attorney general said he backed Mueller up on his decision to immediately dismiss FBI agent Peter Strzok from the Russia investigation this summer after his anti-Trump texts were uncovered as part of a separate inspector general investigation. He also pushed back at the criticism that multiple members of Mueller's team could not be impartial prosecutors because they'd donated to Democrats.

Still, Rosenstein left open plenty of room for Mueller's critics. He repeatedly skirted answering specific questions about his interactions with the special counsel, or how frequently he's spoken to President Trump about the Russia investigation.

He also gave Republicans a glimmer of hope by pledging to evaluate their calls for the appointment of another investigator.

Rosenstein also faced several questions from Democrats seeking an explanation about why reporters had gotten access to Strzok's text messages before the hearing.

"I was amazed" by the disclosure, said Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democrat who noted DOJ's policy is typically to reject public release of any material related to an ongoing investigation.

Across the Capitol, California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, also said the Justice Department had played directly into Republican hands by sharing the FBI agents' text messages with reporters before the hearing.

"Well, they were used for propaganda purposes," she said. "And I think there is an ongoing effort to malign both Mr. Bob Mueller and the work that the special counsel's office is doing. And I think it's very precise. I think they're going to grab at every single thing to diminish it, to demean it, and it shows me that there's fear out there about what they might come up with."

But Feinstein said she didn't think the Justice Department itself was behind the efforts. "No, these are efforts in the Republican party, Fox News, others -- to demean Bob Mueller," she said.

Rosenstein said DOJ got the inquiry for the text messages from Congress and then made the decision to put them out with the press. "Generally speaking our goal is to be as forthcoming with the media as we can when it's lawful and appropriate to do so," he said.

Elana Schor contributed to this report.

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Republican set to propose harassment response overhaul [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 12/14/2017 01:50 PM EDT

The House Administration Committee's GOP chairman is set to propose a draft bill next week that would overhaul the chamber's system for handling workplace harassment complaints amid a drumbeat of bipartisan calls for change.

A spokeswoman for Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.) said his forthcoming proposal would "focus on all aspects of" the 1995 law that created Capitol Hill's current rules for policing misconduct at the office, "including the reporting and settlement process."

Sexual misconduct allegations forced three lawmakers to resign and two more to retire in recent weeks, with Rep. Ruben Kihuen (D-Nev.) facing pressure from some colleagues to follow,

Harper's committee has held two hearings examining Capitol Hill's harassment policy. Members of both parties have criticized the current system, which shields the identities of offices that use taxpayer money to settle complaints, as too secretive and prone to deterring victims from coming forward.

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) have offered legislation that would end the requirement for congressional employees alleging harassment to undergo counseling and mediation, as well as require lawmakers to personally pay if they are found liable for harassment, in addition to other changes.

It's unclear how much Harper's forthcoming draft legislation would incorporate from those proposals — Speier has 19 Republican cosponsors, while Gillibrand has yet to draw Democratic backers for her version.

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Subject: Afternoon Energy: TransCanada asks Nebraska commission to reconsider — EPA to publish rejection of biofuel change — Supreme Court opts out of tribal groundwater case
Date: Monday, November 27, 2017 4:59:08 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/27/2017 04:57 PM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff

TRANSCANADA: PLEASE RECONSIDER: TransCanada asked Nebraska regulators to reconsider their decision approving an alternate route through the state for its Keystone XL pipeline. The company filed a [motion to reconsider](#) Friday in an effort to get the Nebraska Public Service Commission to "to address some questions that were raised by" its Nov. 20 [approval](#) of a new path for the pipeline that differed from TransCanada's preferred route, according to company spokesman Terry Cunha. "It is not an attempt by TransCanada to have the PSC alter its approval of the Alternative Mainline route," he said.

TransCanada asked the PSC to "consider Keystone's filing of an amended application in accordance with the findings of the Commission that the Mainline Alternative Route is in the public interest," according to the filing. Nebraska landowners filed [their own motion](#) on Saturday demanding the PSC hold oral arguments on TransCanada's request, saying the company sought to file a new application "because it realizes there was no mechanism to approve the Mainline Alternative Route as occurred." Both motions were posted online today. TransCanada has not made a final decision on whether to build the pipeline and is continuing to study the implications of the PSC's decision. Ben Lefebvre reports more [here](#).

RISKY BUSINESS: The risk assessments TransCanada provided to regulators before it began operating the existing Keystone pipeline substantially underestimated how much and how often the pipeline would leak in the U.S., documents reviewed by Reuters found. The 2,147-mile system from Alberta to the Texas coast "has had three significant leaks in the United States since it began operating in 2010, including a 5,000-barrel spill this month in rural South Dakota, and two others, each about 400 barrels, in South Dakota in 2016 and North Dakota in 2011," Reuters reports. But TransCanada's spill risk assessment estimated the chance of a leak of more than 50 barrels to be "not more than once every seven to 11 years over the entire length of the pipeline in the United States," according to its South Dakota operating permit. In South Dakota alone, the estimate was for a "spill no more than once every 41 years," Reuters reports. Read [more](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

WOMEN RULE WEEK! POLITICO is partnering with women-led businesses in the D.C. metro area to offer a full week of exclusive perks in conjunction with the fifth annual Women Rule Summit! Join the fun at participating businesses during Women Rule Week (**Nov. 27-Dec. 1**) for [exclusive deals](#), and tweet five times using #WomenRule for a chance to win two free tickets to the summit on Dec. 5!

MAKE IT OFFICIAL: EPA will publish on Tuesday its official rejection of a biofuel change

request led by refining giant Valero Energy, according to the [pre-publication Federal Register](#). The petitioners sought to expand the number of companies that must show compliance with the Renewable Fuel Standard, but the EPA said they had not shown how a change to the point of obligation would make the program more effective, Eric Wolff [reports](#). "EPA believes that a change in the point of obligation would unnecessarily increase the complexity of the program and undermine the success of the RFS program, especially in the short term, as a result of increasing instability and uncertainty in programmatic obligations," the agency said in its filing. "We believe that the current structure of the RFS program is working to incentivize the production, distribution, and use of renewable transportation fuels in the United States."

COURT DECLINES TRIBAL GROUNDWATER CASE: The Supreme Court [passed](#) on making any decisions today in the legal battle over tribal groundwater rights, leaving in place a previous ruling from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. That court ruled — based on the 1908 *Winters* doctrine — that Native Americans are entitled to rights to the groundwater beneath their reservations. The immediate dispute involves the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in California and two water districts in the state. Alex Guillén reports more [here](#).

WELLS FARGO: INDEPENDENT REFINERS DOING FINE UNDER RFS:

Independent refiners are making money on biofuels credits, called Renewable Identification Numbers, under the Renewable Fuel Standard. "In what may be a surprise to some, most Independent Refiners now enjoy a net benefit from Renewable Identification Numbers (RINs), based on our analysis," Wells Fargo analysts Roger Read and Lauren Hendrix wrote in a research note. "Consumers now bear the majority of RINs costs — like a tax." The analysis undercuts arguments from refiners who claimed high credit prices have been hurting their bottom lines. But it also supports the argument from big oil companies that consumers are paying the costs of the program. Ethanol backers say it depends on who you define as a consumer. "The consumer in this case is the wholesale purchaser of gasoline blendstock — not the retail consumer," said Geoff Cooper, a vice president for the Renewable Fuels Association. "The RIN cost is effectively erased when the gasoline blendstock is combined with ethanol (which comes with a RIN credit) to make the finished fuel (E10) that is sold at retail."

ACC BACKS HEITKAMP, BARRASSO: The American Chemistry Council, which last week began airing ads in support of Sens. [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) and [Dean Heller](#) (R-Nev.), is planning to air ads supporting North Dakota Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) and Wyoming Sen. [John Barrasso](#), according to FEC disclosures. The group is spending \$571,000 on ads supporting Stabenow, \$590,000 for Heller, \$153,000 for Heitkamp and \$133,000 for Barrasso. Watch the Heitkamp ad [here](#). (h/t [Morning Score](#))

FRANKEN APOLOGIZES: Sen. [Al Franken](#) (D-Minn.) today once again apologized over groping allegations he faces from multiple women. "It's been clear that there are some women — and one is too many — who feel that I have done something disrespectful and it's hurt them and for that, I am tremendously sorry," Franken, a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, told reporters outside his Senate office. "I know that I am going to have to be much more conscious when in these circumstances, much more careful, much more sensitive, and that this will not happen again going forward." POLITICO's Seung Min Kim reports more [here](#).

MICHIGAN, ENBRIDGE STEP UP SAFETY: Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and oil company Enbridge today announced an agreement to boost safety procedures related to twin pipelines beneath Lakes Michigan and Huron, the Associated Press reports. The deal includes

a "procedure for temporarily halting the flow of oil through the 5-mile-long underwater segment when storms cause sustained periods of high waves," as well as steps to allow faster detection and quicker response to a potential spill. "It also calls for a study to examine the possibility of digging a tunnel beneath the Straits of Mackinac through which the existing pipelines — or a new one — could be routed," AP [writes](#).

DOE GIVES \$99M TO EFRCs: Energy Secretary Rick Perry proposed \$99 million for funding Energy Frontier Research Centers in fiscal 2018, the Energy Department [announced](#) today. The funds will help "accelerate transformative scientific advances for the most challenging topics in materials sciences, chemical sciences, geosciences, and biosciences," DOE said. Perry said in a statement the money will go toward helping "mobilize our top scientists in the effort to secure America's energy future." DOE also announced a competition for another round of funding, as the centers' support is set to expire in July 2018. "The competition will be open to proposals both from existing EFRCs seeking renewal of support and from institutions seeking to establish new EFRCs under the program," DOE said. Read the request [here](#).

WATCHDOG FILES SUIT RELATED TO AG PRUITT: Watchdog group Campaign for Accountability today filed a lawsuit against Oklahoma state officials over the release of documents related to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's tenure as state attorney general. Filed in the District Court of Oklahoma County, the suit is against state Attorney General Mike Hunter and state Auditor and Inspector Gary Jones "for failing to release copies of audits and documents related to corruption allegations associated with the management of the Tar Creek Reclamation site in the state," CfA said in [a release](#). During his previous job as AG of Oklahoma, Pruitt "declined to bring criminal charges in response to an audit that found evidence of criminal wrongdoing at the Tar Creek Reclamation site," CfA Executive Director Daniel Stevens said. "Why did he refuse to bring charges? We don't know because the Oklahoma Attorney General's office has repeatedly refused to release documents related to this audit." Read the complaint [here](#).

ABOUT THAT TIME TAKEOVER: The Koch brothers' \$650 million investment supporting Meredith Corporation's takeover of Time Inc. — which a Koch spokesman on Sunday night described as "passive" — is being met with skepticism, POLITICO's Michael Calderone and Jason Schwartz report. For one, John Huey, a former Time Inc. editor in chief, told POLITICO that "it's difficult to believe the Kochs would pay a premium to buy into the print media model without the hope that they can harness Time and Fortune to further their agenda." More on that [here](#).

HALLIBURTON TERMINATES LOBBYING REGISTRATION: Oil services company Halliburton has terminated its lobbying registration, POLITICO Influence [reports](#). The company has spent \$330,000 on lobbying this year and employed two in-house lobbyists, Bob Moran and Jessica Franks. Halliburton continues to retain the S-3 Group and Jackson Lewis, according to lobbying disclosure reports, although the latter firm hasn't actively lobbied for Halliburton since last year.

QUICK HITS:

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— Trump races to pick judges who oversee environment cases, [E&E News](#).

— OPEC-U.S. clash for oil supremacy nears day of reckoning, [Chron](#).

— Red wolves have roamed North Carolina for decades. A key Senate panel could hold their future, [Charlotte Observer](#).

— Our personalities are shaped by the climate we grew up in, new study says, [The Washington Post](#).

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Keystone XL pipeline wins green light in Nebraska — but may face new hurdles [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/20/2017 11:25 AM EDT

Nebraska regulators approved the Keystone XL pipeline Monday, but only if it is built along a new path that may force the project developer to jump through a new set of regulatory hoops.

The 3-2 vote by the Nebraska Public Service Commission gave the green light to a different route than the one preferred by Keystone developer TransCanada, moving it east to run partially alongside the original Keystone pipeline and through a portion of the state's ecologically sensitive Sandhills area as well across the Ogallala Aquifer.

The Trump administration is evaluating whether it would have to re-approve the controversial pipeline to account for the new route. But activists who have spent the better part of a decade fighting to block Keystone said the decision throws the whole project into jeopardy, while TransCanada, the company seeking to build the project, said only that it is evaluating its next steps.

"This decision today throws the entire project into a huge legal question mark," said Jane Kleeb, the activist who led the opposition to the pipeline and who is now Nebraska Democratic Party chair. "TransCanada will have to go back to the State Department because that route has never been reviewed by the feds."

The State Department said it is reviewing the PSC decision for just such a possibility.

"We won't know about any impacts until we learn precisely the extent of any changes, something we are currently engaged in," State Department spokesman Vincent Campos said.

TransCanada President and CEO Russ Girling said the company "will conduct a careful review of the Public Service Commission's ruling while assessing how the decision would

impact the cost and schedule of the project."

Former President Barack Obama had blocked the permits for the pipeline in 2015, citing the oil sands' impact on climate change, but President Donald Trump quickly reversed that decision after taking office. Keystone XL is designed to transport up to 830,000 barrels per day of crude from Canada's oil sands and North Dakota's shale fields to oil refineries on the Gulf Coast.

The Nebraska PSC vote comes as TransCanada adds new crews to its cleanup operations in South Dakota, where the original Keystone Pipeline ruptured last week and released 210,000 gallons of oil. But Nebraska law bars the regulators from considering spills or pipeline safety in its decision-making process.

Environmentalists and landowners who opposed Keystone XL's construction have promised to try to overturn the commission's decision.

"We will appeal," Kleeb said. "We will challenge a foreign corporation being given eminent domain in the county courts, with every intent to bring it to the Supreme Court if needed."

Even with the approval, the project, whose costs to build the nearly 1,200 mile artery have ballooned to \$8 billion, is still not ready to be built since TransCanada is gauging the economics of the huge investment. Though prices for oil have rebounded moderately in recent months, and while TransCanada has said demand for space on the pipeline is strong, it's not yet clear that enough companies will commit to the 20-year contracts required to reserve space on it.

The opposition to Keystone XL had been a rallying cry for green activists who have long said mining Canada's oil sands would be a disaster for global climate change, releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

But supporters have said tapping the oil fields in Alberta is no worse than the oil production in Venezuela, where much of the heavy sour crude that is shipped to U.S. refineries comes from now.

Many in the oil industry, however, no longer see the Keystone XL pipeline as crucial to the U.S. refineries as they once did, especially since the railroad sector stepped in to offer a more flexible — though more expensive — way to ship the oil.

"There's not going to be a parade thrown, although everyone in the industry is going to be grateful," said Tyler Nelson, an energy lobbyist for Cornerstone Government Affairs. "It should have been done years ago. But now a lot of people want it to be over with and done and move on."

The pipeline may struggle to succeed in the oil business. [Energy markets](#) have made the Alberta oil sands less attractive, with ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips and others pulling out of the region to concentrate on U.S. oil shale development in Texas. Meanwhile, rival pipeline company Enbridge has expanded its pipeline system delivering Canadian crude to the U.S.

Critics have pointed to the recent shale oil boom as a reason that supply from the Canadian and North Dakota fields is in less demand, and they argue that much of the oil from Keystone XL could end up on tankers bound for export. U.S. oil production is on target to average more

than 9 million barrels a day this year, nearly double what it was when TransCanada first proposed the massive pipeline.

If TransCanada gives its final approval to go ahead, construction would not start until 2019 at the earliest, Paul Miller, TransCanada's president of liquids pipelines, said during a conference call earlier this month.

The pipeline already is the focus of a court challenge stemming from Trump's State Department approving the project. A coalition of groups is arguing the State Department did not do due diligence before approving the cross-border pipeline in March. The case is still in the beginning stages, with a decision pending from the U.S. District Court of Montana on a Trump administration motion to dismiss.

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TransCanada asks Nebraska regulators to reconsider Keystone XL route decision [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/27/2017 04:24 PM EDT

TransCanada asked Nebraska regulators to reconsider their decision approving an alternate route through the state for the Keystone XL pipeline, according to a new filing.

The company's [motion to reconsider](#), filed Friday, is an effort to get the Nebraska Public Service Commission to "to address some questions that were raised by" its Nov. 20 [approval](#) of a new path for the pipeline that differed from TransCanada's preferred route, according to company spokesman Terry Cunha. "It is not an attempt by TransCanada to have the PSC alter its approval of the Alternative Mainline route," he said.

TransCanada asked the PSC to "consider Keystone's filing of an amended application in accordance with the findings of the Commission that the Mainline Alternative Route is in the public interest," according to the filing. Nebraska landowners filed [their own motion](#) on Saturday demanding the PSC hold oral arguments on TransCanada's request, saying the company sought to file a new application "because it realizes there was no mechanism to approve the Mainline Alternative Route as occurred." Both motions were posted online today.

TransCanada has not made a final decision on whether to build the pipeline and is continuing to study the implications of the PSC's decision. Project opponents say the company will need to secure new permits from the federal government if it decides to build along the new route.

WHAT'S NEXT: The landowners said Nebraska state law requires the PSC to schedule oral arguments on TransCanada's motion.

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EPA set to publish official rejection of biofuel change [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/27/2017 12:53 PM EDT

EPA will publish on Tuesday its official rejection of a request to expand the number of companies that must show compliance with the Renewable Fuel Standard, according to the [pre-publication Federal Register](#) released today.

The agency said petitioners, led by refining giant Valero Energy, had not shown how the change to the "point of obligation" would make the program more effective.

"EPA believes that a change in the point of obligation would unnecessarily increase the complexity of the program and undermine the success of the RFS program, especially in the short term, as a result of increasing instability and uncertainty in programmatic obligations," the agency said in its filing. "We believe that the current structure of the RFS program is working to incentivize the production, distribution, and use of renewable transportation fuels in the United States."

The publication brings to a close the battle to make the RFS change that was aggressively pushed by billionaire Carl Icahn, an adviser to President Donald Trump and the owner of a refining company that would benefit from the change.

POLITICO first reported that the petition [would be denied](#) in August.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA is expected to publish the blending requirements for biofuel in 2018 and 2019 no later than Thursday, which is the legal deadline.

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Supreme Court won't hear tribal groundwater appeal [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/27/2017 10:03 AM EDT

The Supreme Court today [declined](#) to get involved in a legal battle over tribal groundwater rights.

The justices' decision leaves in place a ruling from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals that concluded Native Americans are entitled to rights to the groundwater beneath their reservations. That ruling was based on the *Winters* doctrine, a 1908 Supreme Court ruling that concluded the federal government reserved water rights in creating tribal lands.

This was the first time that doctrine was expanded to include groundwater as well.

The immediate dispute was between the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in California and two water districts in the state.

WHAT'S NEXT: Lower courts still have a variety of issues to hash out, including a storage space dispute, water quality measures and just how much groundwater the tribe can claim.

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'Ashamed' Franken apologizes in Senate over groping allegations [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 11/27/2017 01:50 PM EDT

Sen. Al Franken apologized again on Monday after multiple women accused the embattled Minnesota Democrat of groping them in recent years, adding that he is open to making the results of an ethics probe public.

Top Senate leaders and Franken himself have called for an investigation by the Senate Ethics Committee into his alleged behavior that prompted four women to come forward. Franken noted that he has not dealt with the ethics panel before, but he would be open to disclosing the results of any investigation.

"It's been clear that there are some women — and one is too many — who feel that I have done something disrespectful and it's hurt them and for that, I am tremendously sorry," Franken told reporters outside his Senate office. "I know that I am going to have to be much more conscious when in these circumstances, much more careful, much more sensitive, and that this will not happen again going forward."

Franken stressed again during his news conference that he recalls some of the encounters differently, such as a 2006 incident in which Leeann Tweeden said he kissed her without her consent. But he added: "I feel that you have to respect women's experience. And so I apologized to her, and I meant it."

The senator, now in his second term, said he is "embarrassed" and "ashamed."

"I know that I let a lot of people down: the people of Minnesota, my colleagues, my staff, my supporters and everyone who has counted on me to be a champion for women," he said. "So all of you, I just want to again say I'm sorry."

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Koch brothers' 'passive' role in Time Inc. takeover met with skepticism [Back](#)

By Michael Calderone and Jason Schwartz | 11/27/2017 02:34 PM EDT

Charles and David Koch have actively promoted conservative and libertarian policies for years by pumping tens of millions of dollars into political campaigns, advocacy organizations, think tanks and university groups.

Yet the billionaire industrialists' \$650 million investment supporting Meredith Corporation's takeover of Time Inc., the magazine giant behind titles like Time, Fortune, People and Sports

Illustrated, was characterized by a Koch spokesman on Sunday night as a "passive" one. And Meredith said in a release that Koch Equity Development — the Koch brothers' private equity arm involved in the deal — "will not have a seat" on its board and "will have no influence" on editorial or managerial operations.

Reports of the Koch brothers' role, or lack thereof, have been met with skepticism from journalists, media watchers and Koch chroniclers.

"I think, for them, they're always looking to exert influence in one way or another," Daniel Schulman, Mother Jones' deputy Washington bureau chief and [Koch biographer](#), told POLITICO on Monday, "but I don't think they would have done this deal unless they thought it made good business sense. I'm just curious how the return side is going to work out for them and what their long-term strategy is, and these guys are nothing if not strategic."

Schulman suggested the Kochs could also be interested in the consumer data owned by Time Inc. and Meredith. Magazines are known for collecting information about their customers, which could be used to the benefit of the data analytics company controlled by the Koch network, i360.

Some Time veterans are also wary of the billionaires' motivations being purely business-related.

"The deal raises concerns if the Koch brothers intend to use Time as a vehicle for their ideological views from behind the scenes," said Richard Stengel, a former top Time editor and undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs during the Obama administration. "It would be naive to think that just because the Koch brothers don't have a seat on the board that they wouldn't wield some kind of editorial influence."

John Huey, a former Time Inc. editor-in-chief, similarly told POLITICO that "it's difficult to believe the Kochs would pay a premium to buy into the print media model without the hope that they can harness Time and Fortune to further their agenda." Huey also said he agreed with former Wall Street Journal editor and Columbia professor Bill Grueskin, who [compared](#) the Kochs' "no influence" assurance to his former paper creating an "editorial independence committee" to keep Rupert Murdoch in check after he bought the paper in 2007. The media mogul quickly got his way.

Meredith, a Des Moines, Iowa-based publisher behind popular titles like Better Homes and Gardens and Shape, wasn't interested in newsier Time Inc. titles like Time and Fortune when it made a run at the publishing company a few years back. Some Time Inc. titles, like People, InStyle, Cooking Light and Southern Living, would seem the better fit for Meredith, given its portfolio is heavily focused around women's and lifestyle publishing. Recode's Peter Kafka [suggested](#) Sunday that whether Meredith ends up selling Time or Fortune could serve as a gauge for the Kochs' level of interest.

The Koch brothers nearly became major media owners in 2013 when they considered buying the Tribune Company (now Tronc), which includes major newspapers like the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune and Baltimore Sun. The Kochs' desire to buy a media company came as the company faced criticism for its aggressive dealings with the press, which included running a site, KochFacts, to rebut unflattering articles. InsideClimate News publisher David Sassoon [said at the time](#) he felt "completely disrespected and attacked" when covering Koch Industries and accused the company of "media intimidation."

"As the Koch Bros prepare to buy a hunk of Time Inc, I'm remembering that time they took out an attack ad on me for reporting on their company," Rolling Stone's Tim Dickinson [tweeted](#) Sunday night in reference to a [2014 article](#) on the brothers' "toxic empire." The New Yorker's Jane Mayer [found herself](#) the target of private investigators and the subject of a smear campaign after reporting on the Koch brothers.

Meanwhile, the Kochs [have helped fund](#) journalism coming from a conservative-leaning perspective, like the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity's Watchdog.org.

Schulman said he doubted the Koch brothers would take any active role in trying to shape coverage at Time Inc. publications, but suggested their influence may be baked in with such a large-scale investment.

"Influence works in a lot of different ways. They could influence coverage without lifting a finger, basically. If the staff of these publications are aware that the Kochs are significant financial backers of Time Inc., they may not go out of their way to be critical of the brothers or the company," Shulman said. "That would be the way I think it would work."

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Bernie makes moves pointing to 2020 run [Back](#)

By Gabriel DeBenedetti | 11/27/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Bernie Sanders is taking steps to address longstanding political shortcomings that were exposed in 2016, ahead of another possible presidential bid in 2020.

From forging closer ties to the labor movement to shoring up his once-flimsy foreign policy credentials, the moves have provided the senator inroads into party power structures that largely shunned him in favor of Hillary Clinton last year. They've also empowered the progressive icon to harness his newfound political power and help Democrats fight President Donald Trump's administration.

Sanders has been working closely with figures who are close to the party establishment he's long railed against, like American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten. And he's been meeting with international affairs experts such as Bill Perry, a defense secretary in the administration of President Bill Clinton, around a series of speeches designed to define his international vision, one year after running a campaign heavy on domestic policy and light on the rest of the world.

The Vermont independent hasn't decided whether to run for president again in 2020. To his closest allies, his efforts represent a natural next step in his role as "outreach chairman" for Senate Democrats, a new position created for him late last year by Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Yet the maneuvers could form an important part of a Sanders 2020 effort, a dozen of those allies acknowledged to POLITICO — one that looks markedly different from his surprise

2016 bid, which often suffered from a lack of mainstream political support.

"He is now in a very different position than he's ever been in before. He's just stepping into the role," said senior adviser Ari Rabin-Havt, insisting Sanders doesn't see the changes as prep for 2020. "Let's be clear: He's in charge of outreach for the caucus. So when people say he's doing a better job of reaching out? Well, yeah, he's doing his job. This is a new phase of his career."

Much of Sanders' time is now spent fighting Republican plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act and helping organize a constellation of outside liberal groups against GOP tax proposals. But while Sanders himself bristles at questions about 2020, multiple operatives in his political orbit have been gaming out what such a campaign might look.

Constantly reminding themselves and others that the senator is now the country's most popular active elected official, they believe other candidates will have to build their campaigns around him — the unparalleled center of gravity on the left. Their prep now includes game-planning for a handful of other progressives trying to chip into his political lane.

As Sanders monitors his post-2016 political group Our Revolution and the Democratic National Committee's reform efforts, he has also slightly expanded his tight circle of 2016 aides. Campaign manager Jeff Weaver has returned to the senator's political payroll after helping build Our Revolution — which still hosts Sanders' campaign email list and provides him a nationwide foothold.

In contrast to the run-up to 2016, the group of counselors also now includes pollster Ben Tulchin, who joined that year's campaign only after Sanders was convinced that hiring a pollster was worth it. A pair of senior advisers in Sanders' Senate office have also joined. Rabin-Havt, a former Harry Reid aide, has been directing political outreach, and Matt Duss, former president of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, is working on foreign policy.

Recognizing the senator's post-campaign national platform and 99 percent name ID across the country — and aware that his status as a potential 2020 front-runner draws further eyeballs — his team has stopped sticking to just a few pet issues. Now it tries to inject him into as many productive national conversations as possible, sometimes with the support of his wife's new Sanders Institute think tank.

Sanders has often stated his wish to win over other lawmakers to his theory of grass-roots change, and his new Facebook Live show and podcast are largely designed to amplify his voice and grow his audience, in pursuit of that goal.

At times, his team has also tried smoothing over potentially controversial situations that could turn into the kind of political headaches a 2020 hopeful would prefer to avoid, but which would not likely have bothered Sanders four years ago. For example, he ditched a speaking gig at the Detroit Women's Convention in October after his expected presence ignited a firestorm, instead opting to visit storm damaged areas of Puerto Rico.

To allies on the outer rings of Sanders' political circles, the flurry of moves looks like the beginnings of a full-fledged political operation, in contrast to last year's relatively bare-bones organization. But it's a complex balance for someone who hates any perception that he could be an insider.

"Does he do as much politics as we'd like him to? No, but now he's actually playing the

game," said one of Sanders' close political advisers. "Before, he'd say he was going to play by his own rules."

Nonetheless, one year after running an anti-establishment campaign that had the support of just one other senator, Sanders is clearly aiming to improve his standing inside the party. He has worked closely with Schumer and others on defending Obamacare. He has traveled in conjunction with giant liberal advocacy group MoveOn.org to hold health care-focused rallies.

And he has headlined events and conference calls back in Washington with progressive organizations like the Working Families Party.

"I see him taking more responsibility," said Weingarten, one of Hillary Clinton's most prominent labor supporters in 2016, who backed Sanders' pick to lead the DNC after that election. The pair have worked together on Puerto Rico recovery efforts and on a community college unionization drive in Vermont, and Weingarten backed Sanders' signature health care proposal this fall.

"That's why you saw so many 'mainstream Democrats' sign on to his Medicare-for-all bill," she said.

After resisting advisers' pleas to give more foreign policy-oriented speeches during his campaign, Sanders has also now been working with Duss to build a public record on international affairs. That work has entailed more than just his trio of major public speeches on the topic this year — a February address to J Street on Trump, Israel and anti-Semitism; a speech on authoritarianism, in June, at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and a September talk at Missouri's Westminster College to stress the importance of partnerships "not just between governments, but between peoples."

He has also been meeting with veteran policymakers — including Perry; former Obama administration National Security Council Middle East official Robert Malley; and Sarah Chayes, a former special adviser to retired Adm. Mike Mullen, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — to discuss foreign developments.

Sanders' moves to bolster his political presence have largely been confined to Washington. He inherited a political infrastructure in the early voting primary states in 2015 after Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren decided not to run. Now, however, he has refrained from dispatching aides to such states, and he has yet to order up polling there.

He has visited Iowa and New Hampshire twice each this year, in addition to other politically important states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia, to talk health care and other policy issues. But his traditional political outreach in early voting states is largely limited to occasional check-ins with local leaders like former Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, according to Democrats familiar with the discussions.

Instead, his in-state supporters have maintained their own networks. In New Hampshire, his roughly 75-person steering committee still meets monthly behind closed doors, but the tightly organized group refuses to let local allies know even the location or timing of their meetings, Democrats in the state told POLITICO.

Even to some of Sanders' biggest cheerleaders, that dynamic reveals an operation that's revving up but still far from a fully fledged campaign. Yet to the allies dedicated to converting

his newfound popularity into results in Washington, it's significant progress.

After all, the party needs the 13 million voters who enthusiastically backed Sanders last year to show up again in 2018 and 2020, said Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison, the DNC deputy chairman and Sanders' most prominent ally on Capitol Hill.

"Anything that makes Bernie more effective at reaching that movement and continuing to build a powerful progressive base of engaged Americans," Ellison said, "is good for the Democratic Party."

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Trump doesn't know what's next after taxes [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson, Andrew Restuccia and Ben White | 11/27/2017 05:04 AM EDT

The White House and Capitol Hill are singularly focused on passing a tax reform bill — but almost no one in Washington seems to know what the Trump administration will bear down on next.

White House policy initiatives are typically planned months in advance, with congruent strategies for communications and a view toward working them through Congress. But there is little agreement between White House officials and Republican leaders on the Hill about what should follow tax reform.

Over the course of conversations with nearly a dozen senior aides in the White House and on Capitol Hill, a range of possibilities surfaced, from welfare reform to the infrastructure program President Donald Trump touted on the campaign trail to revisiting Obamacare repeal — an effort that has twice frustrated the Trump administration.

The looming vacuum in the Republican agenda underscores how the relative chaos and disorganization of the Trump White House can affect policymaking across Washington. Former administration officials say the situation is virtually unprecedented, and that it is threatening the president's ability to score legislative victories for the GOP heading into next year's midterm elections. It may also cost Trump personally once the 2020 reelection campaign begins in earnest about a year from now.

"There is very little in the pipeline, and no obvious next item on the agenda after tax reform except maybe a return to health care," said Yuval Levin, the editor of National Affairs, a leading conservative policy journal, who works closely with Republicans on Capitol Hill. "Combine that with a president who doesn't think in terms of policy, and you've got no clear next step."

There are some things the administration needs to do no matter what. White House officials will have to work with Congress to get a budget passed in December. And, thanks to the president's executive order rolling back President Barack Obama's work-permit program for young undocumented immigrants, there will have to be a politically explosive debate between now and March about passing a Republican version — which will likely include a showdown

over Trump's long-promised wall between Mexico and the United States.

The administration's disorganization is in part a reflection of the president's own indifference toward many policy issues — but the structure of Trump's White House staff has in many ways inhibited the sort of long-term policy planning characteristic of previous administrations.

Trump has never appointed a deputy chief of staff for policy solely responsible for developing a legislative strategy and coordinating the messaging around it, for example. Many White House aides have moonlighted in the position while attending to their formal duties. The president's former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, laid out early policy targets and was frequently photographed in front of a whiteboard in his office where he kept a handwritten "to do" list of priorities.

Former White House chief of staff Reince Priebus leaned on staff secretary Rob Porter, asking him at various points to take on a policy coordination role in addition to his full-time job — but Priebus himself never laid out a vision for what the policy process should look like.

Several other White House aides have also played a key role in policy development, including domestic policy chief Stephen Miller and deputy chiefs of staff Kirstjen Nielsen and Rick Dearborn, but none is fully responsible for charting administration policy over the long term.

Chief of staff John Kelly, who replaced Priebus in July, has brought some order to the White House, but the retired Marine general doesn't have a deep background in policymaking — and where domestic policy initiatives are concerned, domestic policy aides say they have felt fettered and complained of order without purpose, according to three people close to the president.

The White House's relatively weak domestic policy team has been overshadowed by Gary Cohn and his National Economic Council. Cohn, a government neophyte, has built out a staff capable of rivaling the Domestic Policy Council, which typically charts domestic policy, introducing a source of internal rivalry and instability — a key reason Cohn has taken the lead on tax reform, for example, while domestic policy aides have taken a back seat.

"The NEC team is much larger than in previous White Houses, and the DPC team leaves something to be desired," said a senior White House aide. "In that void, I think Gary's team has proven much stronger than the DPC team."

The general disorganization may exact costs on the administration beyond depriving it of legislative victories. It may also make it harder for the White House to retain staff or to attract replacements as administration officials begin to leave next year.

Domestic policy aides who eagerly joined the administration in January to roll back Obamacare and reform the tax code in the first year of the Trump presidency are less clear what staying on for another year might entail. And while health care and tax reform were legislative causes with which conservative policy wonks have long engaged — and even those lukewarm on Trump's candidacy felt they could contribute to the administration in a policy role — they feel differently about the coming year.

The absence of clear goals for the year ahead has several White House staffers eyeing the exits, according to three people familiar with their plans. The director of the Domestic Policy Council, Andrew Bremberg, who worked on health care before joining the administration, has

told associates that he plans to leave the administration in January. Jeremy Katz, a deputy assistant to the president who has served as Cohn's right hand on economic initiatives, as well as others on the free-trade side of the administration's debates on economic policy, have told colleagues they are uncertain whether they will stick around beyond tax reform.

Cohn is expected to remain in his job next year if the tax reform push is successful, but he could wind up leaving if Trump embraces anti-free-trade positions, such as a unilateral pullout from NAFTA.

There are signs that both the White House and Congress are preparing to turn to welfare reform in the new year. House Speaker Paul Ryan told donors assembled at a Koch brothers conference in Wichita, Kansas, late last month that Republican lawmakers would tackle welfare after tax reform passes the Congress, according to two people familiar with the remarks — an idea the president mentioned last week, telling reporters that "people are taking advantage of the system."

Ryan's 2016 "Better Way" agenda laid out a blueprint for welfare reform, but there is no indication that the White House is prepared to sign on to his approach, and, on the staff level, little work has been done at the White House to indicate to lawmakers what the president wants a bill to look like.

Meanwhile, when the tax package moved from the House to the Senate, Cohn [said publicly](#) that "we'll put infrastructure into the House" — a sequence at odds with Ryan's message to GOP donors.

Senior White House officials did not dispute characterizations of the general confusion surrounding the sequencing of these legislative initiatives, and they said the administration is likely to push welfare reform as well as infrastructure and a health care bill — something that resembles the Graham-Cassidy legislation that stalled in the Senate in September — over the next year.

"It will be all three of them in an order that depends on what the congressional calendar looks like," said a senior White House aide.

"The president ran on and has pushed a bold, aggressive agenda that is ending business as usual in Washington and putting Americans first," said deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley. "President Trump has delivered on many of his agenda items in record time — and no arbitrary amount of unnecessary bureaucratic layers will prevent continued successes on behalf of the American people in the new year."

The dynamic inside Trump's White House differs from that of previous administrations, where the sequencing of domestic initiatives was carefully planned by White House officials working closely with party leaders on Capitol Hill.

In the George W. Bush administration, the role of deputy chief of staff for policy was held both by Josh Bolten, who went on to become the president's chief of staff, and by Karl Rove, who served as the mastermind behind the timing and rollout of policy initiatives throughout his time in the White House.

During Bolten's tenure, Bush administration officials recall, weekly meetings in his West Wing office focused on a calendar he had pinned on his wall that folded out from the current

month to reveal the next four months.

"We thought about this stuff very carefully; we had detailed discussions about it," said a former Bush administration official who participated in the conversations. "The timing of this stuff was carefully thought through, as was the messaging."

Bush officials say they made mistakes — but not for lack of planning. Rove has said publicly on many occasions that one of the biggest mistakes of the Bush presidency, a plan he fought for at the time, was pushing for changes to Social Security after Bush's 2004 reelection before tackling immigration reform. Both efforts ultimately failed, a reality that underscores the importance of the sequencing of domestic policy initiatives given the political mood in the country and in the Congress.

"I believe that running the Social Security idea right after the '04 elections was a mistake," Bush said in his final news conference. "I should have — should have argued for immigration reform."

Obama administration officials tell a similar story of balancing the president's priorities with attention to the hard deadlines in Congress and the political mood of the country. "We had clear priority areas that we went into every year and that we refreshed at the six-month point," said Cecilia Muñoz, who served as director of the Domestic Policy Council for five years during the Obama administration.

With the exception of immigration, Trump didn't campaign on a detailed policy platform. In office, he has relied on Congress to hammer out the details of legislation and, at times, the order of policy pushes. It was Ryan's idea, for example, to tackle health care before tax reform, and as the health bill crumbled, the president told associates he regretted agreeing to put Obamacare repeal first.

A more traditional White House, however, would be guiding Congress rather than vice versa. "It's not unusual for people in Congress to have different perspectives about what's important and what comes next," said Muñoz.

But over the Thanksgiving weekend, Trump gave hints that he's still preoccupied with the victory that eluded him in his first months: a health care overhaul. "Even though Dems want to Obstruct," he tweeted on Thanksgiving Day, "we will Repeal & Replace right after Tax Cuts!"

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Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 4:03:31 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 07/31/2017 04:01 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Esther Whieldon

U.S. COAL HEADED TO UKRAINE: A Pennsylvania-based mining company is expected to begin exporting U.S. coal to a Ukrainian electric utility this year. The Energy Department said today Xcoal Energy and Resources agreed to sell Ukraine's Centrenergo PJSC roughly 700,000 tons of coal by the end of 2017 — an announcement the Trump administration cheered, Darius Dixon reports. Xcoal's first shipment is expected to arrive in Ukraine in late August.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross applauded the deal, which their respected agencies helped negotiate, according to an administration fact sheet. "Today's announcement will allow Ukraine to diversify its energy sources ahead of the coming winter, helping bolster a key strategic partner against regional pressures that seek to undermine U.S. interests," Ross said in a statement.

Perry added: "This announcement will also boost our own economy by supporting jobs in the coal and transportation industries. This Administration looks forward to making available even more of our abundant natural resources to allies and partners like Ukraine in the future to promote their own energy security through diversity of supply and source." More [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy and welcome to Monday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

SCANA ENDS SUMMER NUCLEAR PROJECT: Construction on South Carolina's V.C. Summer nuclear project is ending, according to the utilities involved in building the two reactors. SCANA, the majority owner of the unfinished reactors through its South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. unit, [announced](#) today that it ceased construction on the effort and plans to "promptly" file a petition with state regulators to abandon the project, Darius reports.

The company listed various reasons for not finishing the two Westinghouse-designed AP1000 reactors, including cost concerns about the already over-budget project, "uncertainty" about a congressional extension of nuclear production tax credits and the decision by co-owner Santee Cooper, a state-owned electric utility, to walk away from the project today. More [here](#).

Industry responds: Maria Korsnick, president and chief executive officer of the Nuclear Energy Institute, responded to the news with a [statement](#) maintaining that nuclear energy is still vital. "It is unfortunate that circumstances beyond their control have led to this outcome today," she said. "All the more now, we must impress upon our energy policy decision makers the vital role of nuclear energy in America's energy portfolio."

GREENS ASK COURT TO REVIVE METHANE RULE ON WELLS: Green groups today [asked](#) a federal court to order EPA to resume enforcing its methane rule for new oil and gas wells, given the agency did not ask for an appeal in the window provided by the court. Earlier this month, Alex Guillén reports, a panel of three judges on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Administrator Scott Pruitt's 90-day stay of the methane rule was unlawful. It agreed, however, to keep Pruitt's stay in place for two weeks to give the agency a chance to appeal. "That time ran out last week, and while [industry groups](#) and [states opposed to the rule](#) asked for en banc review by the full court, EPA has remained silent," Alex writes. More [here](#).

PRUITT OPENS UP: Pruitt talked to The Oklahoman about his agency's upcoming "red team-blue team" review of climate change and his political future in an interview out today. "The American people deserve an honest, open, objective and transparent discussion on what do we know and what don't we know" about climate change, Pruitt said, but added that no formal decision has been made on whether to organize the teams.

As for his post-EPA ambitions, Pruitt denied interest in running for governor next year but appeared more circumspect about the chances for a Senate run in 2020. "To think somehow that ... I would go through a confirmation process which, by any measure, is pretty intense, serve five months and move to Washington, D.C., in order to run for governor ... I mean, who would do that? For folks to think that, it's just legendary. People, they don't think through these things," Pruitt said. But he declined to speculate when asked if he would stay with the Trump administration through 2020, the Oklahoman reports. "I'll do it as long as the Lord calls me to and as long as the president wants me to do it," he told the newspaper. Read the story [here](#).

FOUR NEW INTERIOR POLITICALS REVEALED: The Interior Department today released an updated [list](#) of all political appointees at the agency as of July 10 that included four previously unreported staffers. First on the list is Preston Beard, who is an advisor in the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and previously [worked](#) on BSEE Director Scott Angelle's 2016 congressional campaign. The list also included Leila Getto, a former DOE senior adviser and [staffer](#) on the Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute who [joined](#) the agency in June as deputy director of scheduling and advance. The third new staffer is David Mihalic, a former superintendent of Yosemite National Park and Glacier National Park near Zinke's home in Montana, who is now senior advisor to the secretary. Rounding out the list is former Zinke congressional staffer Lacey Smethers who joined Interior in June as special assistant to the secretary.

EPA ADDS HOOSICK FALLS, OTHERS TO SUPERFUND LIST: EPA today [added](#) seven sites to its Superfund National Priorities List, including the high-profile contamination of PFOA from a plastics factory into the water supply in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. Other sites added to the NPL include a battery recycling facility in Puerto Rico, an old lumber treatment site in Florida, and a former dry cleaner in Memphis. EPA also [proposed](#) adding four more sites to the NPL, including a groundwater contamination in Delaware and a former aircraft fire extinguisher repair facility near Oklahoma City.

IG: ADEQUATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT RESPONSE AT REGION 5: EPA's inspector general released a report today that found its Region 5 had adequate policies and practices in place for addressing sexual harassment allegations. The IG report comes in response to a congressional request to determine whether Region 5 managers appropriately handled sexual harassment allegations. No recommendations were made by the IG "because pertinent policies and procedures were in place and being followed." Read [the report](#).

PENCE ABROAD: WE WILL 'HOLD RUSSIA ACCOUNTABLE:' Vice President Mike Pence pledged the U.S. will "hold Russia accountable for its actions" in a speech to NATO allies in Estonia today. Pence reassured the bloc's Baltic members that the Trump administration would maintain its Article 5 commitment to defend them in the face of Russian aggression, POLITICO's Louis Nelson [reports](#). "Under President Donald Trump, the United States will continue to hold Russia accountable for its actions — and we call on our European allies and friends to do the same," Pence said. "President Trump has made it clear: America is open to a better relationship. But the president and our Congress are unified in our message to Russia — a better relationship, and the lifting of sanctions, will require Russia to reverse the actions that caused sanctions to be imposed in the first place."

CLARK: DOE GRID STUDY IS IMPORTANT: Former FERC Commissioner Tony Clark penned an op-ed in the Washington Examiner on Sunday that addressed the importance of the Energy Department's electrical grid study. "It's a timely topic, and like many people, I'm looking forward to the final report," he wrote. "Our nation's electric grid is undergoing some of the most profound changes since its inception, so it's natural that the secretary would ask for an assessment of the electric system and recommendations to head-off any potential problems." Read it [here](#).

WHITE HOUSE SHAKEUP: MOOCH OUT: President Donald Trump has removed Anthony Scaramucci as communications director, a little more than a week after the former financier was named to the post, [three White House officials said](#). The change came at the request of new chief of staff John Kelly, the officials said.

QUICK HITS:

- How Congress is cementing Trump's anti-climate orders into law, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Pro-Dem group launches new climate attacks on White House, [Axios](#).
- Planet has just 5% chance of reaching Paris climate goal, study says, [The Guardian](#).
- From pitched tents to melting ice: August recess, a history, [E&E News](#).
- Shell plans 400 job cuts at Dutch projects and technology department, [Reuters](#).
- U.S. shale boom less potent than expected, new data show, [Houston Chronicle](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- [Ivanka and Jared](#) find their limits in Trump's White House
- Without Priebus, Trump is a man [without a party](#)
- McConnell wages [war down South](#)

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U.S. firm reaches agreement to export coal to Ukraine [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 07/31/2017 01:01 PM EDT

Trump administration officials today cheered the announcement that a Pennsylvania-based mining company is expected to begin exporting U.S. coal to a Ukrainian electric utility this year.

Xcoal Energy and Resources agreed to sell Ukraine's Centrenergo PJSC roughly 700,000 tons of coal by the end of 2017, according to the U.S. Energy Department.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross lauded the deal, which their agencies helped negotiate, according to an administration fact sheet.

"Today's announcement will allow Ukraine to diversify its energy sources ahead of the coming winter, helping bolster a key strategic partner against regional pressures that seek to undermine U.S. interests," Ross said in a statement.

Perry added: "This announcement will also boost our own economy by supporting jobs in the coal and transportation industries. This Administration looks forward to making available even more of our abundant natural resources to allies and partners like Ukraine in the future to promote their own energy security through diversity of supply and source."

Xcoal CEO Ernie Thrasher's statement announcing the deal praised "President Trump's efforts to create a regulatory and business environment that allows the U.S coal industry to freely, and fairly, compete in a global market."

The move would significantly increase the amount of coal being shipped from the U.S. to Ukraine for power generation, compared to 32,211 short tons of thermal coal last year, according to the Energy Information Administration. About 2 million short tons of metallurgical coal, used in industries like steelmaking, was exported from the U.S. to Ukraine in 2016, according to EIA.

WHAT'S NEXT: Xcoal's first shipment is expected to arrive in Ukraine in late August, according to DOE.

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South Carolina utilities spike Summer nuclear project [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 07/31/2017 02:04 PM EDT

Construction on the V.C. Summer nuclear project in South Carolina will come to an end, according to the lead utilities involved in building the two reactors.

SCANA, the majority owner of the unfinished reactors through its South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. unit, announced today that it ceased construction on the effort and plans to "promptly" file petition with state regulators to abandon the project.

The company cited a long list of reasons for not finishing the two Westinghouse-designed AP1000 reactors: cost concerns about the already over-budget project, "uncertainty" about a congressional extension of nuclear production tax credits and the decision by co-owner Santee Cooper, a state-owned electric utility, to walk away from the project today.

"Based on these factors, SCE&G concluded that it would not be in the best interest of its customers and other stakeholders to continue construction of the project," SCANA said in a [statement](#) today.

The project's primary contractor, Westinghouse, filed for bankruptcy protection earlier this year.

Santee Cooper's board of directors today [decided to suspend](#) construction on the new reactors, arguing that the decision would save its customers \$7 billion in additional costs and that a new analysis found they wouldn't be finished until 2024.

"Generation diversity remains an important strategy for Santee Cooper, but the costs of these units are simply too much for our customers to bear," said Leighton Lord, chairman of the Santee Cooper board of directors, in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: SCANA has scheduled a 4 p.m. call for analysts to discuss the impact of suspending its work on Summer.

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Greens urge court to revive EPA's methane rule for new oil and gas wells [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/31/2017 11:06 AM EDT

Environmentalists today [asked](#) a federal court to order EPA to resume enforcing its methane rule for new oil and gas wells after the agency did not ask for an appeal in the window provided by the court.

A panel of three judges on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals earlier this month ruled Administrator Scott Pruitt's 90-day stay of the methane rule was unlawful but agreed to keep Pruitt's stay in place for two weeks to give the agency a chance to appeal. That time ran out last week, and while [industry groups](#) and [states opposed to the rule](#) asked for *en banc* review by the full court, EPA has remained silent.

The environmental groups today called the industry and state rehearing petitions "transparent attempts to seek further delay" that should not stop the court from ordering EPA to lift Pruitt's administrative stay, which otherwise is slated to expire on Aug. 31.

"The filing of such flimsy petitions cannot be permitted to accomplish the very delay this Court found unlawful, to the detriment of Petitioners' members and other Americans who are suffering continued exposure to dangerous—and easily preventable—air pollution," they wrote.

WHAT'S NEXT: The court must decide whether to grant the environmentalists' request and order the rule reinstated, or explore the industry and states' appeal requests. The order keeping Pruitt's stay of the rule in place temporarily was specifically said to give EPA time to appeal, which the agency has not done.

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Pence: We will 'hold Russia accountable for its actions' [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 07/31/2017 08:08 AM EDT

Amid a fresh wave of sanctions and renewed tension between the United States and Russia, Vice President Mike Pence reassured NATO's Baltic member states that the U.S. stands firmly behind its mutual-defense commitment in the face of stepped-up aggression from Moscow.

"The United States stands with the nations and people of the Baltic States — and we always will. We stand with our NATO allies in our commitment to your security," Pence said Monday in remarks at the headquarters of Estonia's defense forces. "Today we stand where East meets West — on a great frontier of freedom. No threat looms larger in the Baltic States than the specter of aggression from your unpredictable neighbor to the east."

Pence's remarks came before members of the U.S., French, British and Estonian militaries and followed a meeting between the vice president and the presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Pence offered optimism that the U.S.-Russia relationship might improve but said that any warming would come with a shift in Moscow's behavior. The vice president reaffirmed President Donald Trump's commitment to signing sanction legislation targeting Russia that passed overwhelmingly last week in Congress.

In response to the forthcoming sanctions measure, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the U.S. to reduce the number of diplomats stationed in Russia by more than 700. The dueling diplomatic maneuvers marked a new low in already frosty relations for the former Cold War rivals.

Trump's presidency brought with it the possibility of improved relations with Russia after the president spent much of the 2016 campaign speaking warmly of Putin and expressing optimism that he would be able to build a strong relationship with the Kremlin. Instead, relations have worsened amid investigations into Russia's efforts to interfere in last year's election, continued Russian military activity in Ukraine as well as Moscow's support for Syrian dictator Bashar Assad.

Trump, too, has shifted his rhetoric in regard to Russia, drawing a relatively tougher line even if some critics would prefer him to take an even more aggressive approach. And after characterizing NATO as "obsolete" and questioning the U.S.' willingness to comply with the treaty's all-for-one, one-for-all defense agreement, Trump has more recently reaffirmed his nation's commitment while also urging member states to increase their defense spending.

"Under President Donald Trump, the United States will continue to hold Russia accountable

for its actions — and we call on our European allies and friends to do the same," Pence said Monday in Estonia. "President Trump has made it clear: America is open to a better relationship. But the president and our Congress are unified in our message to Russia — a better relationship, and the lifting of sanctions, will require Russia to reverse the actions that caused sanctions to be imposed in the first place."

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Trump ousts Scaramucci as communications director [Back](#)

By Tara Palmeri | 07/31/2017 02:39 PM EDT

President Donald Trump has removed Anthony Scaramucci as communications director, a little more than a week after the former financier was named to the post, the White House said on Monday.

The change came at the request of new chief of staff John Kelly, who started Monday, two White House officials said. It was not clear whether Scaramucci would take on a new role after leaving the communications job, nor was it immediately apparent who would take over the position.

"Anthony Scaramucci will be leaving his role as White House Communications Director," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement. "Mr. Scaramucci felt it was best to give Chief of Staff John Kelly a clean slate and the ability to build his own team. We wish him all the best."

Scaramucci was expected to announce his new communications team Monday afternoon, but he was instead informed of the decision to remove him that morning in Kelly's office. Scaramucci was not present when senior staff were told of the change, a White House official said. Another senior aide said the move came after discussions over the weekend. There was "no way" Scaramucci could work with Kelly, the senior aide said.

"Kelly is already changing the culture here," said another White House aide. As the news broke, Kelly was spotted in the White House's East Room for a ceremony, chatting with other senior officials.

Scaramucci's brief tenure brought turmoil to the West Wing, including the exits of press secretary Sean Spicer and former chief of staff Reince Priebus. Scaramucci had tried unsuccessfully to get a White House job earlier in the year, but he settled temporarily for a position at the U.S. Export-Import Bank.

His time as communications director seemed to start smoothly, with a friendly on-camera appearance in the White House briefing room on July 21, the day his new position was announced. Spicer's tenure had been marked by combative exchanges with reporters, and the briefings were largely moved off camera until Scaramucci took over.

But Scaramucci quickly ramped up the drama by threatening to fire "everybody" in the White House press office if leaks to reporters did not stop. On Tuesday, [he told POLITICO he](#)

[planned](#) to fire a press aide — but after he made the move public, it was delayed until the aide, Michael Short, resigned later that day.

Scaramucci also was widely criticized for a profanity-laced tirade last week in a conversation with a [New Yorker reporter](#).

Trump, however, had denied the reports of disorder in the West Wing. "No WH chaos!" he tweeted on Monday morning.

Josh Dawsey and Theodoric Meyer contributed to this report.

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Ivanka and Jared find their limits in Trump's White House [Back](#)

By Annie Karni and Eliana Johnson | 07/30/2017 06:38 PM EDT

By one measurement, last week was a good one for Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.

President Donald Trump's daughter and son-in-law had been double-teaming for weeks to persuade him to oust chief of staff Reince Priebus, pushing for a new chief who could "professionalize the West Wing," according to multiple White House officials. On Friday, Trump finally announced he'd replace Priebus with John Kelly, his secretary of Homeland Security, starting Monday.

That victory followed Trump's appointment a week earlier of financier Anthony Scaramucci, a campaign surrogate and donor, as communications director, a move the couple also strongly supported.

But if Ivanka Trump and Kushner, socially liberal former Democratic donors, remain influential voices with Trump on personnel decisions, they have so far had little effect on his policies.

Last week they were blindsided by the president's tweet saying he planned to ban transgender people from serving in the military, according to several White House aides, a major coup for conservatives who had been quietly lobbying the administration on the issue for months.

White House officials said the first daughter was surprised by her father's posts; in the past, Trump has been a supporter of gay rights. Ivanka Trump, according to these officials, learned of the decision when she saw her father's tweet on her phone.

The decree came less than a month after the first daughter tweeted, in honor of Pride Month: "I am proud to support my LGBTQ friends and the LGBTQ Americans who have made immense contributions to our society and economy." And it spurred another wave of liberal rage directed at Ivanka Trump.

For all the talk of a White House war between New York City liberals and traditionalist conservatives, it was the latest example of the limited influence the moderates have been able

to wield on policy.

Six months ago, few would have thought the president would have been circumventing his daughter to deliver victories to fiscal and social conservatives—but that's precisely what happened with the transgender military ban, which the Pentagon has put on hold pending review.

Now, as Ivanka Trump runs up against some of limits of her power in the White House, she appears to be narrowing her objectives—and disappointing those progressives who had pinned their hopes on the president's family members exerting more of a moderating influence on his presidency.

"Actions speak louder than words," said Sarah McBride, national press secretary for the nonprofit Human Rights Campaign. "Either Ivanka is ineffective in her advocacy within the building, or her voice doesn't matter to the president as much as she hopes it does."

Ivanka Trump has had some victories. While she lost out on persuading her father not to withdraw from the Paris climate accord, she had much more success in limiting a religious liberties executive order to abortion and procreation issues, cutting out many other possibilities that would have angered the LGBT community.

"She's in there doing what she can," said R. Couri Hay, a publicist and a longtime friend of the Trump family. "It's unrealistic, unfair and cruel to expect her to change climate policy and pre-K and women's issues in six months."

But Ivanka Trump — who once met with Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards to discuss a needle-threading way to potentially fund the organization — is staking out her reputation on getting a child care tax credit passed in a Republican Congress as part of tax reform, and fighting for paid family leave to be included in the budget.

She has told allies that she wants to be held accountable solely on those issues she is actively working on — uphill battles that will count as major victories if she is successful — and the success of a World Bank fund she helped start, geared at helping female entrepreneurs gain access to capital. She has also said she wants to make ending human trafficking a White House priority.

Kushner, for his part, remains focused on projects that are peripheral to the White House's main domestic agenda, like introducing technological innovations to the federal government. In the first six months of the administration, he has steered clear of the legislative battles that have been the meat of the work of Trump's policy shop, focusing instead on relations with Mexico, China, Canada and the Middle East.

Ivanka Trump has explained to critics that she doesn't want to ruin her credibility with Republicans, whose support she will need, by being perceived as what she sometimes refers to as a "super-lib" and expressing her personal disagreement with the administration's most conservative policies.

Meanwhile, she desperately wants to lower expectations of what she can achieve in an administration where she views herself as one person on a large team — even though other White House officials said she still has access to the president whenever she desires it. Allies have bucked up her spirits by telling her that her legacy will look better in hindsight if she is

successful in moving the needle on her stated issues. And as she navigates the unique role of working-daughter-in-the-White House, she is reading Eleanor Roosevelt's biography for guidance and inspiration.

Both Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner declined to comment for this story.

People close to her say Ivanka Trump is aware of the criticism hurled at her — and sometimes frustrated by the misunderstanding of the limits of her power.

From her newly renovated, all-white office in the West Wing, Ivanka Trump often fields messages from progressive friends pushing her to speak out on their pet issues. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio messaged her ahead of the climate decision, begging her to do more to intervene.

She's no newcomer to the difficult balancing act. In the early aughts, as she sought to make a name for herself in New York society, she had to simultaneously embrace the family brand while trying to distance herself from the gaudy reputation of the Trump name, already unwelcome in the upper echelons of Manhattan society.

One well-known socialite who was friendly with Ivanka Trump put it bluntly: "Everyone knew that Jared's father was a felon and her father was a buffoon, but you looked past that because they stood on their own two feet and were sophisticated and presentable. They were accepted despite their parents. Now, there's no separating the two."

But friends and acquaintances who knew Ivanka Trump before her move into politics said they are not surprised that she has remained publicly in lockstep with her father. "I know her well enough to know her relationship with her father, which is that she will never, ever, go against the grain," said one former fashion-world friend who has socialized with Ivanka for years but has not spoken to her since she moved to Washington.

Another close friend of the family, who has known Ivanka Trump her entire life, said: "She wanted to be the apple of her father's eye. There's no question, she worked hard to be the perfect image her father wanted."

In the wake of one of the most tumultuous weeks in Trump's presidency, his daughter had a private lunch with the United Nations secretary-general Friday to discuss economic empowerment for women. She's made similar diplomatic excursions, traveling to Berlin in April to join German Chancellor Angela Merkel for a women-themed summit and meeting with female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

It's a world apart from her father's domestic policies — and one more in line with the first lady-like role that she bristles at. The prime movers behind Trump's decision to ban transgender people from serving in the military were two of the House's most conservative members: North Carolina Republican Mark Meadows and the chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, Jim Jordan.

After the failure of an amendment that would have stripped Pentagon funding for gender reassignment surgeries, the duo approached Defense Secretary James Mattis. They discussed a number of options, including a two-year delay on the implementation of Obama administration policy guidelines that permitted Pentagon funding for the surgeries. When that path lead nowhere, they took their case directly to the White House, where they spoke with

several officials including Marc Short, the director of legislative affairs.

Inside the White House, the issue was so closely held — and resolved so quickly — that just a handful of West Wing aides were aware of what was transpiring. In addition to Kushner and Ivanka Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, a Catholic evangelical with a history of pushing religious liberty policies, had no inkling of what was underway.

Meadows and Jordan had also corralled a group of conservatives capable of sinking the appropriations bill, making it clear to the White House they were willing to do so if the funding issue wasn't resolved. "They were frustrated with Mattis and DOD, and the White House was sympathetic to them on the policy," said a senior White House aide. Neither Meadows nor Jordan responded to a request for comment.

Meanwhile, Christian conservatives such as Tony Perkins and Gary Bauer were also lobbying the Trump White House, a factor that boosted the congressmen's cause, according to a second senior White House official.

Their requests ran the gamut: While the congressmen asked the White House to resolve the funding issue, which had riled both fiscal and social conservatives, some Christian leaders came asking for the blanket ban the president delivered on Wednesday. But even they were surprised when Trump came down on their side. "I wish the Republican Congress was as bold as the president is on a wide range of issues," said Steve Scheffler, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition. "But unfortunately, like on health care, they don't seem to be."

Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, in an interview with Fox News radio, cheered the president for "showing that the bottom line is the bottom line is the bottom line."

The other bottom line: Ivanka Trump is aware she needs a real win — not just starting a conversation about paid family leave that may or may not materialize in a final budget — to win back credibility.

Her old circles are skeptical. When asked what her view was on Ivanka Trump, the fashion designer Charlotte Ronson wrote in an email: "Fortunately, I don't know her well enough to give any good accounts."

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Without Priebus, Trump Is a Man Without a Party [Back](#)

By Tim Alberta | 07/30/2017 03:55 PM EDT

Reince Priebus looked battered. It was Monday, October 10—the morning after the final presidential debate—and our eyes met as I boarded a Southwest Airlines flight from St. Louis to Washington, D.C. It had been an extraordinary weekend: On Friday night, the biggest bombshell of the 2016 campaign dropped when the *Washington Post* published a decade-old audio recording on which Donald Trump made lewd comments about groping women. Speaker Paul Ryan disinvited Trump from a unity event in Wisconsin scheduled for the following day, and Priebus, then the chairman of the Republican National Committee, quietly

made the case to Trump and his associates that he should quit the race. Trump refused. The Sunday debate, 48 hours after the tape's release, was dominated by discussion of Trump's history with women. He dismissed his recorded remarks—"grab them by the pussy," Trump had said, boasting that his celebrity status allowed him to get away with aggressive advances on the opposite sex—as "locker room talk."

Priebus occupied a window seat, a pair of staffers to his left. The chair behind him sat empty; my instinct was to grab it and start firing questions through the slit at his left shoulder. But after studying Priebus—the slouched posture, the uncharacteristically rumpled suit, the groaning bags under his eyes—I decided it might backfire. Whether it was pity or strategy, or a bit of both, I settled in two rows back, deciding it would be better to talk upon landing in Washington.

It was an eventful flight: Ryan, while we were at 30,000 feet, had told House Republicans on a conference call that he wouldn't be defending the president anymore—and urged them to do whatever was necessary to survive in their districts. Meanwhile, there were reports Priebus would hold his own call with RNC members to discuss ousting Trump. Priebus was understandably not keen to discuss any of these developments. But he seemed to appreciate my earlier gesture. When I greeted him, just beyond the entrance to the jet bridge, his staffers tried to shut down any interview. Priebus told them to back off. "It's OK," he said, offering the sort of forced half-smile you see at hospital visitations. "Go ahead. Shoot." We walked out of the terminal and past the baggage claim, covering all of it: the tape, the debate, Ryan, the RNC and what (if anything) it could do at this point. Priebus asked twice to speak off the record, which I allowed. But his most telling comment—in retrospect—came at the end of our conversation, after he explained that the RNC had no mechanism to remove Trump as its nominee.

"Look," he said, stepping into the sunlight outside Reagan National Airport, his staffers loading up an idling black Chevrolet Suburban. "We don't get to pick the nominee. And we don't get to just walk away from him, either."

By "we," the chairman was referring to the RNC and the broader party leadership. But it seems obvious now—in studying his approach to Trump throughout the primary season, the general election and during his tumultuous 27-week run as chief of staff, the shortest in history—that Priebus was also talking about himself. As head of the party, Priebus never foresaw the real estate mogul running, much less becoming its standard-bearer. He cracked jokes about Trump early on and flashed outrage at some of his incendiary rhetoric. But as Trump gained momentum and won the nomination and, later, the presidency—and as the RNC chairman emerged as the bridge between him and the Republican Party—Priebus could never bring himself to abandon Trump.

It's not without irony that some will hold him responsible for Trumpism—Priebus should have kicked Trump out of the GOP debates, some critics suggest—seeing how the RNC chairman would have personally loved to see Scott Walker or Marco Rubio as the party's nominee. Trump was the last choice of the party establishment, which Priebus embodied. It became clear, however, that Republican voters had other ideas—and Priebus made it his mission to ensure a level playing field. He ignored calls to remove Trump from debates after he threatened to run as an independent, and bent over backward to make the reality TV star feel welcome in the GOP. Priebus knew he would be accused of sabotaging the party, but he was unwavering in the belief that it was his job to be a facilitator and an ambassador, not a kingmaker.

His friends had mixed feelings about the chief of staff position, and some cautioned Priebus against taking it. After all, he had inherited a penniless, disorganized, technologically bankrupt Republican Party in 2011 and transformed it by 2016 into a financial behemoth with adequate field and data operations. On his watch, the GOP had kept the House, taken back the Senate and now won the presidency; why not ride into the sunset, spend time with his family and cash in on those triumphs?

The fateful answer: Because Priebus couldn't just walk away. He felt a sense of loyalty to Trump, and more acutely, an enduring responsibility to the party and the country. Plus, the second-most prestigious office in the West Wing was beckoning. Priebus jumped at the job.

It was a mismatch from the start. As RNC chairman, Priebus had two primary responsibilities: dialing for dollars (typically three to five hours each day) and sorting out disputes among his 168 members to keep everyone happy. Key administrative functions were mostly handled by other RNC staff, including Priebus' own chief of staff; some associates feared that Priebus' skill set simply would not translate to the new job. Making success all the less likely was the Wisconsinite's disposition: laid back, naturally soft-spoken and nonconfrontational, a classic people pleaser. Priebus kept a mini-fridge stocked with Miller Lite in his RNC office and would later hold occasional Friday happy hours in his West Wing suite, inviting officials from across the building to grab a can of beer or a Solo cup of wine and commiserate about the week that had been. This calm, consensus-minded approach made Priebus a beloved party chairman, and Republicans held out hope that it would make him a good chief of staff. But it didn't. Trump trampled Priebus from Day One, sending out press secretary Sean Spicer, a longtime Priebus ally, to deliver a demonstrably false rant about the inaugural crowd size. Trump resented the idea that his chief of staff was there to tame him, and resented even more the notion that Priebus was the conduit to a Republican Party he had conquered.

But Priebus *was* the conduit. By firing him, Trump has severed a critical connection to his own party—not simply to major donors and GOP congressional leaders, but to the unruly, broader constellation of conservative-affiliated organizations and individuals that Priebus had spent five years corralling. He was effortlessly tagged as an "establishment" figure—inevitably, given his title atop the party—but Priebus was a specialist at coalition-building. He convened regular meetings as RNC chairman with influential players in the conservative movement, picking their brains and taking their temperatures on various issues. That continued as chief of staff: Priebus spoke by phone with prominent activists, such as the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins, at least once a week. There is a meeting scheduled at the White House this Wednesday of the Conservative Action Project—an umbrella group that brings together leaders from across the right—and Priebus was planning to attend. It was this kind of systematic outreach that made Priebus, whatever his flaws as a West Wing manager, an essential lieutenant for Trump.

There is no question, however, that Priebus' absence will echo loudest on Capitol Hill—particularly in the speaker's office. Ryan's team had heard whispers for months of Priebus' possible departure, but the news was nonetheless a dagger, especially on the heels of a health care defeat and at the dawn of tax-reform season. Ryan and Priebus, both Green Bay Packers fans and local beer loyalists, have been friends for decades; Ryan's former chief of staff, Andy Speth, was Priebus' college roommate at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Priebus was the first call Ryan made when things got hairy this year, and vice versa. Working with a West Wing that contains few other true allies—and with a volatile president who has viewed him suspiciously ever since the speaker accused him of making "the textbook definition of a racist

comment" about a Hispanic-American judge—Ryan saw Priebus as his staunchest ally and bunker mate. And now he's gone.

In his place is John Kelly, a retired four-star Marine general and respected disciplinarian whose mandate is to succeed where Priebus failed: imposing order and organization on a chaotic White House. Kelly, however, is not a political figure; he did not support (or oppose) Trump's campaign, and is not known to hold strong political or ideological inclinations. Looking around Trump's inner circle, there is communications director Anthony Scaramucci, a political novice who in the past donated to Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton; chief strategist Steve Bannon, who used Breitbart to try and burn the Republican Party to the ground; National Economic Council director Gary Cohn, a lifelong Democrat; director of strategic communication Hope Hicks, who has zero history with GOP politics; and Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, a pair of self-professed Manhattan progressives. Of Trump's closest advisers, only Mike Pence has any association with the Republican Party.

This no longer seems accidental. Trump has, since taking office, consistently referred to Republicans as though he is not one himself—it's invariably "they" or "them." Unlike past presidents of his party, Trump entered the White House with few personal relationships with prominent Republicans: donors, lobbyists, party activists, politicians. This liberated him to say whatever he pleased as a candidate, and, by firing Priebus, Trump might feel similarly liberated. The fear now, among Republicans in his administration and on Capitol Hill, is that Trump will turn against the party, waging rhetorical warfare against a straw-man GOP whom he blames for the legislative failures and swamp-stained inertia that has bedeviled his young presidency. It would represent a new, harsher type of triangulation, turning his base against the politicians of his own party that they elected.

Things have not yet escalated to that point. But some, including officials in his own administration, took the dismissal of Priebus as a signal that Trump is willing to go rogue against the GOP. Only a day after announcing Kelly as his new chief of staff, the president let loose on Twitter, calling out Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for not changing the Senate's filibuster rules and saying Republicans "look like fools" for not doing so. He also tweeted that Democrats are "laughing at" the GOP. In a final taunt, Trump tweeted that Republican senators would be "total quitters" if they move on from health care following last week's failed repeal vote.

More and more, Trump talks as though there are Democrats and Republicans—and him, a party of one. If unchecked, this poses an existential threat to the GOP. But it's not Priebus' problem anymore. He is officially unemployed. And with a few weeks of summer vacation remaining, chances are that he—along with his wife and two young children—will soon be on an airplane, heading someplace where no reporter will be waiting to ask him about Donald Trump.

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McConnell wages war down South [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 07/31/2017 05:07 AM EDT

Mitch McConnell is unleashing the full force of his political machine in an all-out push to stop two far-right conservatives who threaten to make his life miserable in the Senate.

The Republican leader is aiming to thwart Rep. Mo Brooks and former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore in a special election in Alabama next month. Both men are campaigning against McConnell as a despised symbol of the establishment — and both would exacerbate his already stiff challenge wrangling his GOP Conference.

McConnell is responding in kind. His super PAC is set to spend as much as \$8 million to boost his favored candidate, recently appointed Republican Sen. Luther Strange. McConnell has activated his sprawling donor network and pressed the White House for more resources. And the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the Senate GOP campaign arm McConnell controls, has warned consultants they'll be cut off from future work if they assist Strange's opponents.

And in a highly unusual step, one of McConnell's top political lieutenants has begun quietly advising a long-shot Republican primary candidate running for Brooks' House seat. The move is designed to get in the congressman's head and dissuade him from emptying his campaign war chest in the race for Attorney General Jeff Sessions' old Senate seat.

It's a massive undertaking by McConnell and his allies on behalf of Strange, who was appointed a mere six months ago to fill the seat until a special election. In part, McConnell's urgency reflects his long-standing promise to protect besieged Republican incumbents in primaries. But it also underscores his struggles managing his narrow Senate majority, which were punctuated by the collapse of Obamacare repeal legislation last week after three Republicans broke ranks.

This past week, Brooks, a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, [said](#) he would not vote for McConnell as majority leader and [called](#) for him to step down after the failure of the health care bill.

Moore, who rose to national fame after he refused to obey a federal order to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from an Alabama judicial building, made his feelings clear about the leader in a lengthy fundraising appeal with the subject line, "You & Me vs Mitch McConnell."

"If Mitch McConnell is accusing me of being a 'conservative rebel' who won't march in lockstep behind his Big Government, big-spending agenda," Moore wrote, "then I plead guilty as charged!"

"I don't have — nor want — the backing of Mitch McConnell and his cronies in Washington," Moore added.

As he corralled Obamacare repeal votes last week, McConnell said he was all in for Strange. "As I would be with any Republican senator. I think he's done an outstanding job."

McConnell will put his formidable fundraising operation to work this week. On Tuesday evening, he's slated to co-host a Capitol Hill reception and dinner benefiting Strange. Attendees are being asked to give up to \$10,000, according to an invitation.

Much of the Republican leader's effort in the race is being overseen by the pro-McConnell Senate Leadership Fund. In April, the super PAC held an event in Birmingham, Alabama, to outline its plans to defend Strange, who made an appearance for part of the gathering. Also present was former George W. Bush adviser Karl Rove, who knows Strange, a former state attorney general, from his past work on Alabama judicial races.

"We're in for Luther — money, marbles or chalk," Rove told the crowd, according to one attendee.

Since that time, the group has orchestrated a blistering assault against Brooks. Ads portray the four-term congressman as unsupportive of President Donald Trump, a damaging line of attack in a state where the president is widely popular. One recent Senate Leadership Fund [TV ad](#) used footage from 2016 in which the Alabama congressman called then-candidate Trump untrustworthy.

The offensive was borne out of private polling the group conducted in May testing how voters in the state felt about Brooks' comments about Trump last year. There is evidence that the attacks are taking a toll on the congressman. An independent survey released last week showed Strange leading with 33 percent, Moore at 26 percent, and Brooks at 16 percent.

Senate Leadership Fund has spent \$3.5 million on the race, by far the largest expenditure of any outside group. Yet that figure is expected to grow significantly, especially if no candidate receives a majority of the vote in the Aug. 15 primary and the contest is forced into a September runoff, as is widely expected. The group has pledged to drop \$6 million to \$8 million.

"While he doesn't direct what we do, McConnell has made it very clear that Luther's race is his No. 1 political priority right now," said Steven Law, Senate Leadership Fund's president and a former chief of staff to the Republican leader.

The McConnell team is also trying to rattle Brooks. Republican strategist Ward Baker, a McConnell ally whom the leader hand-picked to serve as NRSC executive director during the 2016 campaign, has been offering guidance, free of charge, to Clayton Hinchman, a 34-year-old, West Point-educated Iraq War veteran who has launched a primary campaign against Brooks for his north Alabama congressional seat. Hinchman is echoing many of the same themes national Republicans are using against Brooks in the Senate race, casting him as deeply disloyal to the president.

In an interview, Brooks said he believed McConnell's fingerprints were all over Hinchman's campaign. Brooks said the leader had engaged in a systematic effort to "strong-arm" and "bully" candidates opposing Strange.

"Alabama voters are starting to develop a strong dislike for Mitch McConnell and the establishment machine that thinks they have a right to dictate to the people of Alabama whether a person can qualify as a candidate and who voters would vote for," Brooks said.

Before entering the race in May, Brooks said he reached out to McConnell's office to arrange a meeting with the leader to discuss a list of concerns he had about Strange, whom he has described as ethically compromised. (When then-Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley appointed Strange in February, Bentley was under investigation by Strange's office, which his critics have seized on.)

But Brooks said his request was rejected. "I don't know if he cares or not," the congressman said. "I know that he denied me the opportunity to meet with him to share this information." (McConnell's office declined to comment.)

While McConnell's team is increasingly optimistic about Strange's prospects, it concedes the race hasn't been easy. Senate GOP officials have made it clear to the administration they would like to see Trump express some measure of support for Strange. Yet three White House aides said they don't expect a Trump endorsement, reasoning that the president has little to gain by injecting himself into a fierce intraparty fight.

McConnell recently grew frustrated when the Republican National Committee refused to release coordinated funding that the Senate GOP campaign arm would be able to use to boost Strange — a holdup that the leader and his political aides blamed on the White House. The expenditure was eventually made, but only after weeks of appeals. While McConnell personally lobbied then-chief of staff Reince Priebus, Strange spoke with Trump about it.

In a brief interview, Strange said he and Trump had discussed the race — "We just had a conversation about 'How's the race going, how you doing?' That sort of thing" — but that he wasn't expecting any kind of declaration of presidential support.

As for the help he was getting from McConnell, Strange said he was "very happy to have the support of my colleagues. Who wouldn't be?"

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Trump to roll back flood-risk standard — And set permitting process goal — Panel delivers blow to greens' LNG challenge
Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 3:43:09 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 08/15/2017 03:41 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER: President Donald Trump will continue his quest to dissolve Obama-era standards and regulations by today rolling back a 2015 standard that requires new federally funded projects be built to withstand strong storms and flooding. The flood standard was designed to protect federal investments from the impacts of climate change, but a White House source said the measure will be killed as part of the executive order Trump is slated to sign this afternoon.

What is it? The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, as it is known, was established under an [executive order](#) issued by former President Barack Obama in 2015, Annie Snider reports. It requires projects ranging from government buildings, like VA hospitals, to bridges and schools funded by federal grants be built to withstand the stronger storms and additional flooding projected to occur as the climate changes. The standard offers options for achieving this, but generally requires construction to withstand a 500-year storm. It hasn't actually taken effect yet, as "each federal agency is tasked with developing its own regulation for implementing the standard, and none have yet been finalized," Annie [writes](#).

ABOUT THAT INFRASTRUCTURE ORDER: The executive order Trump is slated to sign this afternoon will set a two-year goal for the federal government to complete the permitting process for infrastructure projects, Anthony Adragna [reports](#). The order will establish the protocol of "one federal decision" and strive to create accountability for federal agencies involved in the review process, according to the White House.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PANEL DELIVERS BLOW TO GREENS' LNG CHALLENGE: A federal appeals court today [swatted away](#) environmentalists' challenge to the Energy Department's liquefied natural gas review. A three-judge panel opted instead to uphold the department's process for evaluating LNG export applications, after the Sierra Club challenged DOE's authorization of the Freeport LNG terminal to export LNG. The group argued the agency "didn't properly estimate how those shipments might increase domestic prices, potentially boost coal use in the power system or increase greenhouse emissions," Darius Dixon writes. "DOE had argued that producing the numbers Sierra Club is seeking would be so speculative as to be meaningless, a position the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals judges unanimously felt justified in deferring to the agency." The judges agreed that DOE "offered a reasoned explanation as to why it believed the indirect effects pertaining to increased gas production were not reasonably foreseeable," Judge Robert Wilkins wrote for the panel. More [here](#).

The Sierra Club criticized the decision as opening the door for more pollution from

fracking. "We are disappointed with the Court's refusal to require DOE to use available tools to inform communities of the impact of this additional fracking prior to approving exports," staff attorney Nathan Matthews said in a statement. "This LNG export approval creates unnecessary risks for the people of Freeport, Texas, and for every community that is saddled with fracking rigs next to their homes, schools, and public spaces."

REGULATORS APPROVE MOTION ON VOGTLE: Regulators in Georgia cleared a 14-point [motion](#) this morning that outlines the information they want from the owners of the Vogtle nuclear project. Southern Co., the lead owner of the over-budget two-reactor project through its Georgia Power company, is expected to submit a recommendation by the end of the month that will argue for either building one or both units, or abandoning it altogether. The motion was approved alongside a "friendly amendment" from commission Vice Chairman Tim Echols that says the Public Service Commission can rescind or revise its orders if Georgia Power decides to pull the plug on the project for any reason.

MONIZ GROUP PRESSES FOR NUCLEAR SUPPORT: Maintaining the U.S. nuclear industry is critical to maintaining American nonproliferation goals and Navy resources, according to new report from the Energy Futures Initiative. The group, recently formed by former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, consolidates several long-standing concerns about the industry's future in light of troubled over-budget projects in the South, including the deterioration of the nuclear supply chain and equipment industries that also support the nuclear Navy. Among its recommendations, the report argues that FERC, an independent agency, be "direct[ed]" to place "greater emphasis on the national security importance of nuclear power and its associated supply chain." It also suggests that the Energy Department loan program continue, an office the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress have pressed to shut down. Read the [report](#).

TRUMP TWEETS ON CEO 'GRANDSTANDERS': The president today hit back at CEOs who recently jumped ship from his manufacturing council. In a tweet this morning, Trump issued a sharp warning: "For every CEO that drops out of the Manufacturing Council, I have many to take their place," he said. "Grandstanders should not have gone on. JOBS!" POLITICO's Nolan McCaskill has more [here](#).

JULY 2017 MATCHES 2016 IN WARMEST TEMPS: Last month was "statistically tied" with July 2016 as the warmest July in the 137 years that records have been kept, according to scientists at NASA. "Last month was about 0.83 degrees Celsius warmer than the mean July temperature of the 1951-1980 period," the agency said in a [release](#). "Only July 2016 showed a similarly high temperature (0.82 [degrees] C), all previous months of July were more than a tenth of a degree cooler."

SETTLEMENT IN CWA CASE WITH CALIFORNIA FARMER: The DOJ set a \$1.1 million [settlement](#) with a California farmer over wetlands destruction, ending a case that agricultural groups and property rights activists had criticized as federal overreach under the Clean Water Act. John Duarte and Duarte Nursery Inc. agreed to pay \$330,000 in civil penalties and fund \$770,000 in restoration work to compensate for damage to 22 acres of protected streams and wetlands on his property. The agreement allows Duarte to return most of the site back to agricultural use and seek future determinations about whether streams and wetlands on the property are subject to federal protections.

MEET RICK PERRY: The White House posted a video interview with Energy Secretary Rick Perry today, as part of its "Meet the Cabinet" series. In it, Perry says that the most

rewarding part about his job is his staff, which he called a "substantial bunch of professionals," and touted their work as "the most interesting work in the world." The former Texas governor also said he is most excited about the nuclear side of the department, and said in his free time he heads home to Texas to spend time with his wife and "four great dogs." Watch [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Oil traders expect Asia to import more Venezuelan crude if U.S. sanctions kick in, [Reuters](#).
- Big Oil follows Silicon Valley into backing green energy firms, [Bloomberg](#).
- Gore's critics attack box office sales as climate change becomes harder to deny, [Huffington Post](#).
- Breakneck U.S. drilling creates 'industrial inventory' of untapped wells waiting to flow, [Chron](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Trump may not get the 'win' he seeks [in NAFTA talks](#)
- The GOP's [nastiest primary](#)
- Trump plays both sides with [Charlottesville response](#)

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Trump to roll back climate-focused flood standard [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/15/2017 12:41 PM EDT

President Donald Trump will roll back a flood standard designed to protect federal investments from stronger storms as part of an executive order set to be signed this afternoon, according to a White House source.

The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard was established under an [executive order](#) issued by President Barack Obama in 2015. It requires that new federally funded projects — from government buildings like Veterans Administrations hospitals to bridges and schools funded by federal grants — be built to withstand the stronger storms and additional flooding projected to occur as the climate changes. It does not apply to the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Obama administration's standard offers multiple options for achieving greater flood protection, but generally requires construction to withstand a 500-year storm. The previous standard, on the books for more than four decades, required construction to take place outside of the 100-year floodplain. The new standard has not actually taken effect yet; each federal agency is tasked with developing its own regulation for implementing the standard, and none

have yet been finalized.

Industry groups objected to the standard, arguing it was developed behind closed doors and could greatly increase costs.

Environmental groups have objected to efforts to repeal the standard.

"Ninety percent of all natural disasters in the United States involve flooding. These events claim lives and strain the capacity of government agencies and local communities to adequately respond and provide relief," Laura Lightbody with the Pew Charitable Trusts said in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump is slated to sign an executive order on infrastructure containing the roll back of the Federal Flood Risk Management standard at 3 p.m. today.

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Trump order to change 'protocol' for infrastructure permitting [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 08/15/2017 09:05 AM EDT

President Donald Trump will today sign an executive order setting a two-year goal for the federal government to complete the permitting process for infrastructure projects, a spokesperson told POLITICO.

The order, which Trump plans to sign after meeting with his infrastructure team, will establish the protocol of "one federal decision" and strive to create accountability for federal agencies involved in the review process, according to the White House.

Among those slated to attend are Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and White House Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney.

In January, Trump signed an [executive order](#) instructing the chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to create expedited procedures and deadlines for environmental reviews and approvals for high-priority infrastructure projects.

Then, in June [remarks](#) at the Department of Transportation, Trump announced a new office within CEQ that he said would "root out inefficiency, clarify lines of authority and streamline federal and state and local procedures so that communities can modernize their aging infrastructure without fear of outdated federal rules getting in their way."

There's been no further word since then on the new CEQ office and Trump has not nominated anyone to run the White House's in-house environmental policy shop, although names of some [contenders](#) have emerged. Mary Neumayr, formerly senior counsel to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, serves as acting CEQ chairwoman.

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Federal appeals court swats away challenge to DOE's LNG review [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/15/2017 11:29 AM EDT

A federal appeals court landed a major legal blow against environmentalists today when a three-judge panel [upheld](#) the Energy Department's process for evaluating liquefied natural gas export applications.

The Sierra Club had challenged DOE's authorization of the Freeport LNG terminal to export liquefied natural gas, arguing that the agency didn't properly estimate how those shipments might increase domestic prices, potentially boost coal use in the power system or increase greenhouse emissions.

DOE had argued that producing the numbers Sierra Club is seeking would be so speculative as to be meaningless, a position the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals judges unanimously felt justified in deferring to the agency.

Although DOE made some of its arguments "needlessly complicated," the judges agreed that it "offered a reasoned explanation as to why it believed the indirect effects pertaining to increased gas production were not reasonably foreseeable," Judge Robert Wilkins wrote for the panel.

During oral arguments in February, the panel seemed to sympathize with Sierra Club's desire for a more detailed analysis of exporting U.S. natural gas while also hesitating to find fault in the Energy Department's work up to that point.

The judges today ultimately opted to take a "limited and deferential review" and said the Sierra Club didn't knock down the government's concerns about a speculative analysis.

DOE reasonably argued, Wilkins wrote, that "every natural-gas producing region in the country is a potential source for new gas wells in order to meet export-induced natural gas demand."

WHAT'S NEXT: The D.C. Circuit announced Monday that it would take oral arguments Oct. 18 on a similar Sierra Club lawsuit against DOE over the agency's export approval for Dominion's Cove Point LNG project.

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Trump attacks CEO 'grandstanders' who quit his manufacturing council [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 08/15/2017 11:47 AM EDT

President Donald Trump issued a sharp warning Tuesday to American CEOs who sit on his

manufacturing council: You're not irreplaceable.

"For every CEO that drops out of the Manufacturing Council, I have many to take their place," Trump boasted in a tweet Tuesday morning. "Grandstanders should not have gone on. JOBS!"

But just minutes after Trump fired off the tweet, another executive joined the ranks of the three CEOs who withdrew from the president's manufacturing council on Monday in the wake of Trump's response to racial violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, over the weekend.

"I'm resigning from the Manufacturing Jobs Initiative because it's the right thing for me to do," Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, tweeted Tuesday morning. Paul represents the steel industry, which has been a major supporter of Trump.

Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier first drew Trump's ire on Monday after becoming the first executive to quit the president's council.

"I am resigning from the President's American Manufacturing Council," Frazier said in a statement posted by Merck's Twitter account Monday morning. "America's leaders must honor our fundamental values by clearly rejecting expressions of hatred, bigotry and group supremacy, which run counter to the American ideal that all people are created equal."

Trump responded within the hour, although he ignored the root of Frazier's exit. "Now that Ken Frazier of Merck Pharma has resigned from President's Manufacturing Council, he will have more time to LOWER RIPOFF DRUG PRICES!" Trump wrote Monday afternoon.

Hours later, he added: ".@Merck Pharma is a leader in higher & higher drug prices while at the same time taking jobs out of the U.S. Bring jobs back & LOWER PRICES!"

The CEOs of Under Armour and Intel also resigned from their perches on Monday.

"I love our country & company. I am stepping down from the council to focus on inspiring & uniting through power of sport," Under Armour tweeted in a statement attributed to CEO Kevin Plank.

"I have already made clear my abhorrence at the recent hate-spawned violence in Charlottesville, and earlier today I called on all leaders to condemn the white supremacists and their ilk who marched and committed violence," Intel CEO Brian Krzanich said in a company blog post. "I resigned because I want to make progress, while many in Washington seem more concerned with attacking anyone who disagrees with them."

Trump, who premised much of his presidential campaign on his business acumen, has embraced executives since entering the Oval Office. He has often invited business leaders to the White House for roundtables and frequently pledges to reduce burdensome regulations to allow their businesses to thrive.

But his rhetoric has made it increasingly difficult for companies to embrace the Trump White House, and the relationship between the two has been rocky at times.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Disney CEO Bob Iger, for example, both quit the president's advisory councils earlier this summer after the president announced he would pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord.

Former Uber CEO Travis Kalanick similarly resigned his council post in February after facing pressure over the company's response to the president's travel ban barring immigration from Muslim-majority countries. Kalanick resigned as CEO of Uber in June.

Even as recently as Monday, another CEO distanced himself over Trump's Charlottesville comments, which initially failed to called out hate groups like white supremacists, neo-Nazis and the KKK. For his part, though, he didn't go so far as to quit the president's council.

"GE has no tolerance for hate, bigotry or racism, and we strongly condemn the violent extremism in Charlottesville over the weekend," a company spokesperson said Monday, adding that "it is important for GE to participate in the discussion on how to drive growth and productivity in the U.S., therefore, Jeff Immelt will remain on the Presidential Committee on American Manufacturing."

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DOJ settles high-profile Clean Water Act case with farmer [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/15/2017 02:41 PM EDT

The Department of Justice today announced a \$1.1 million settlement with a California farmer over wetlands destruction, ending a case that agricultural groups and property rights activists had criticized as federal overreach under the Clean Water Act.

John Duarte and Duarte Nursery Inc. agreed to pay \$330,000 in civil penalties and fund \$770,000 in restoration work to compensate for damage to 22 acres of protected streams and wetlands on his property. The agreement allows Duarte to return most of the site back to agricultural use and seek future determinations about whether streams and wetlands on the property are subject to federal protections.

Duarte was found guilty by a federal district court judge last year of violating the Clean Water Act by hiring a consultant to conduct "deep ripping" through waterways protected under the 1972 water law. Most farming practices, including plowing, are exempted from the law's permitting requirements, but deep ripping is not.

"Today's agreement affirms the Department of Justice's commitment to the rule of law, results in meaningful environmental restoration, and brings to an end protracted litigation," said Jeffrey Wood, acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resource Division. The DOJ emphasized that "this case is not (and will not be used as) a pretext for federal prosecution of farmers who engage in normal plowing on their farms."

In a statement, Duarte said settling was a "difficult decision" that he came to "reluctantly" given the risks that an even greater penalty would have posed to his business.

WHAT'S NEXT: The settlement agreement is subject to 30 days of public comment and must ultimately be approved by the court.

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Trump may not get the 'win' he seeks in NAFTA talks [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 08/15/2017 05:20 AM EDT

This article is part of a continuing series examining the finer points and nettlesome issues as the United States, Canada and Mexico revisit NAFTA.

As a candidate, Donald Trump constantly called NAFTA the worst trade deal in history and promised "to get a better deal for our workers."

Now that he is president, Trump is about to find out how hard it is to get an agreement that satisfies not only those workers who feel "shafted by NAFTA" but also the powerful business interests currently benefiting from billions of dollars in cross-border sales.

Top trade officials from the United States, Canada and Mexico will sit down on Wednesday to begin thrashing over hundreds of issues as distinct as Canadian dairy barriers and digital trade issues affecting both countries.

Even if negotiators from all three nations are able to come to consensus quickly on a new deal in the coming months, Trump still has to get the agreement through Congress, which past votes on trade issues have shown is no easy task.

"This whole business of renegotiating NAFTA was a campaign pledge in search of a constituency," said Scott Miller, a former lobbyist for Procter & Gamble now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "No business community member, no enterprise, no farm group ever asked for this."

Trump blames the North American Free Trade Agreement for shuttering factories across the industrial Midwest. The current reality, however, business groups warn, is that pulling out of the pact would endanger an estimated 14 million jobs that depend on trade with Canada and Mexico — the two largest export markets for the United States.

Miller said he saw at least a 5 percent chance that Trump would get so frustrated that he would make good on a campaign threat to withdraw from the pact, which would damage the economies of many predominantly rural states that voted for him last year. That could divide the party headed into the 2018 midterm election, potentially increasing the chances of Democratic Party gains.

Another possibility is that Trump strikes a deal, but there's so little support in Congress that he never submits it for a vote and the pact is left as is, Miller said, an outcome that would also make him appear weak.

Although many Democrats share Trump's negative view of NAFTA, they are setting a high bar for what needs to be changed to get their support. They have also criticized, for example, borrowing provisions from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which he discarded on his third day in office.

"NAFTA has cost millions of jobs and suppressed incomes across America," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a Connecticut Democrat who led the fight to defeat TPP. "Americans want a better deal: one that addresses our job losses and stagnant incomes by changing provisions in NAFTA that make it easier to outsource good-paying American jobs, as well as eliminating special rules that allow corporations to sue the U.S. government before a private panel of three corporate lawyers for unlimited taxpayer compensation. A free trade deal that actually helps our economy should include strong, fully enforceable labor and environmental protections, and rules to prevent currency manipulation."

On the Republican side, if the White House brings Congress what the party considers to be a bad NAFTA agreement, it could face stiff opposition led by Sen. John Cornyn, the No. 2 Senate Republican, who has urged Trump to modernize the pact, not end it.

The White House seems to have gotten the message that it needs to tread carefully in talks with Canada and Mexico.

"NAFTA needs to be reformed to help protect American workers and create more jobs at home. We should keep the parts that work, especially for much of American agriculture, but fix the parts that don't," White House chief economic adviser Gary Cohn said in a statement over the weekend, setting a civil tone for the talks. "Working together, we will modernize this agreement to meet the needs of today's economy, just as the president promised."

Trump also stands to face a revolt from business and farm groups that typically round up support for trade agreements. They are the ones who have the most to lose if he makes drastic changes to the pact.

"Any efforts to modernize the deal must be done the right way and guided by a few key objectives," U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue said in a speech earlier this year. "First and foremost, do no harm. We must not disrupt the \$1.3 trillion in annual trade that crosses our borders."

That point was underscored by 32 freshman House Republicans in a recent letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. Twenty-seven of those new members come from parts of the country that Trump won last year, including Rust Belt states like Pennsylvania and Michigan, where his anti-NAFTA message seemed to resonate the most.

"We recognize that a 23-year-old agreement needs updating, and commend your desire to make improvements and ensure strict enforcement," the lawmakers wrote. "We are also keenly aware of the potential for damage to U.S. farmers, businesses, manufacturers, service providers and workers if long-standing agreements are suddenly vacated."

Meanwhile, labor and environmental groups that have long clamored for changes to NAFTA and other trade agreements are already complaining that Trump's proposed reforms don't go far enough.

"These objectives largely replicate those of the failed Trans-Pacific Partnership and won't satisfy the expectations the president created for a revival of America's manufacturing heartland," Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, said shortly after the Trump administration rolled out its goals for renegotiating the pact.

A glimpse of Trump's tough road ahead can be seen by looking back at a 2015 vote to give

former President Barack Obama "trade promotion authority" to finish the 12-nation TPP deal.

Obama tried to sell that agreement as an update of the NAFTA agreement, since it included both Canada and Mexico, along with nine other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Even so, he got support from only 28 Democrats in the House and 13 in the Senate.

Congressional aides say it is unlikely that many of the 158 House Democrats and 33 Senate Democrats and independents who opposed Obama on TPP will rally to Trump's side on a revised NAFTA agreement, especially because the Trump administration's negotiating points borrow heavily from the TPP deal.

Trump's best hope for passage, one lobbyist said, is to craft a revised NAFTA agreement that hews closely to traditional Republican priorities; ignores demands from those Democrats who are unlikely to vote for the pact; and takes the best pieces from the TPP while strengthening other areas, like intellectual property protections, that could muster enough votes for bipartisan approval in both chambers. The lobbyist spoke on condition of anonymity to protect his clients.

But for every concession made to pick up Democratic votes, Trump's chief negotiators will have to calculate how many he loses on the Republican side, one congressional aide said.

The U.S. International Trade Commission is required to do an economic analysis of the new NAFTA before it is submitted to Congress. The panel's assessment of the much larger TPP pact estimated it would create only 128,000 net new full-time jobs by 2032, and increase gross domestic product by just 0.15 percent over the same period.

Further complicating matters, Mexican voters go to the polls next July to elect a new president. That means Mexican negotiators have a window between now and possibly February to make significant concessions, Miller said. After that, talks could shut down and not resume until the new Mexican president takes office in December 2018, he said.

Striking a deal in the next six months would be extremely fast. To put it in perspective, a recent agreement between the United States and Mexico on just one issue — sugar — took months to negotiate. Talks between the United States and Canada on another single issue — lumber — began in the Obama administration and still are not finished. The revised NAFTA agreement could have as many as 30 different chapters, covering all aspects of trade.

However long it takes, Trump will be graded on his work when NAFTA 2.0 is complete. And he risks the possibility that he may not find much to tweet about in the results.

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The GOP's nastiest primary [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns and Kevin Robillard | 08/15/2017 05:09 AM EDT

The slugfest underway between Republican Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita in Indiana isn't just for the right to compete for possibly the GOP's best opportunity to seize a Senate seat

from Democrats in next year's midterms.

It's a chance to finally settle the score between two ambitious pols who've been vying to outdo one another politically since they graduated from the same small college more than 25 years ago.

Yes, this one is personal.

Their campaign didn't officially get underway until last week, but Messer, 48, has already accused Rokita of attacking his wife and "spreading lies" about his record. Rokita, 47, has questioned his rival's mental health, calling Messer "unhinged" and a "ticking time bomb."

With 10 Democratic senators from states that President Donald Trump carried up for reelection in 2018, the scale of opportunity for Republican gains has already spawned several no-holds-barred primaries. But few states are as ripe for a Republican challenge as Indiana — where Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly is unusually vulnerable, running in a state Trump carried by 19 points — and no primary has gotten so nasty, so quickly.

More than a dozen professional colleagues and personal acquaintances painted the hostility between Rokita and Messer as the product of three decades of pent-up rivalry. The two men, who both declined interview requests, have climbed Indiana's political ladder alongside each other for years and even attended the same small, all-male Wabash College together in the early 1990s — a school whose unofficial motto, a former dean noted with a touch of irony, is "competition without malice."

"I've been watching the race between Todd and Luke," said David Hadley, the former dean of students at Wabash College, "and wondering if that's going to carry through or not."

Over the years, Messer has enjoyed the full embrace of Indiana's political elite, which appointed him to a seat in the state Legislature and embraced him as part of its leadership. That same elite has always kept Rokita at bay.

Rokita became one of the nation's youngest statewide elected officials when he was elected Indiana's secretary of state at age 31. But he made enemies among Republicans in the state Legislature, which years later redrew Rokita's congressional district in a way that put his home on the wrong side of the new boundary. Many of Indiana's most prominent political leaders, including Vice President Mike Pence's brother Greg, have lined up behind Messer. And when Rokita put his name forward for governor last year when Pence became Trump's vice presidential nominee, the state Republican central committee instead went with now-Gov. Eric Holcomb, a former party chairman.

"Todd has a sense that 'Messer gets all the breaks and I don't,'" said one GOP operative. "Now they're placed in a zero-sum game, and their underlying feelings come out."

Those feelings reached a boiling point in May and have not calmed since. Messer had been considering a challenge to Donnelly since at least last summer, according to allies, and at first, Rokita waited quietly in the wings. But early this year, Rokita started raising money and meeting with Republican leaders in Washington. Then, a May Associated Press story revealed that Messer's wife, a lawyer, was being paid a \$240,000-a-year consulting fee from an Indianapolis suburb.

The attack struck a particular nerve with Messer, who thought it was prompted by Rokita, according to two people familiar with his thinking. And he didn't hold back.

"Frankly, I've known Todd a long time and very little surprises me," Messer told a local TV station. "But I would say it's not typical that someone starts a campaign by coming after someone's spouse."

Rokita kept needling Messer in public, about that story and for relocating his family to Virginia. Messer distributed a lengthy email accusing Rokita of "spreading lies and half-truths," which Rokita's campaign responded to by calling Messer "unhinged" and a "ticking time bomb." Soon, as both candidates lashed out at each other in the press, a dozen edits appeared on Messer's Wikipedia page echoing one of Rokita's main lines of attack on Messer: his work as a lobbyist.

They have not always clashed, though their careers have been entwined from their earliest days. The affable Messer was the starting middle linebacker and captain of the football team at clubby Wabash, which has produced an unusual number of Indiana politicians for its size, while the hard-charging Rokita worked at the student newspaper.

When the secretary of state race came up in 2002 and Rokita decided to run, Messer, who had made a failed bid for Congress and then became the executive director of the Indiana GOP, passed on running himself and instead worked to raise money, make ads and bring in staff to elevate the relatively unknown Rokita. Bob Grand, a longtime Indiana lobbyist who is now supporting Messer, described Messer as a "tireless advocate" for getting Rokita elected.

But many of the men who helped Rokita defeat a slew of other prominent Republicans in the primary have since abandoned him and are backing Messer for Senate, including his campaign manager Tom John and Grand. Rokita has gone on to earn a reputation as an exacting boss, prone to calling staff late at night.

"Todd has been more of a squeaky wheel than Luke," said Dan Dumezich, chairman of Rokita's finance committee. "Sometimes the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and sometimes the squeaky wheel just irritates people."

Rokita and Messer declined to comment for this story.

Rokita ran particularly afoul of the state Legislature — where Messer had quickly risen up the ranks during a stint several years earlier — in 2009, as lawmakers began preparing for the once-in-a-decade redistricting process. Then in his second term as secretary of state, Rokita proposed making it a felony for lawmakers to consider politics when drawing political boundaries. He toured the state promoting his idea and drew up sample maps with new boundaries.

The Legislature bristled at Rokita's suggestion, which would have given his office new power and disrupted lawmakers' safe seats. The state Senate president — a fellow Republican — said Rokita had "crossed the line."

Two years later, lawmakers gave Rokita his due: The Legislature drew Rokita, who by then was serving his first term in Congress, out of his district. His home sat just 500 yards from the line — a slight that lawmakers called coincidental and Rokita publicly labeled as "comeuppance." (Rokita would later move into his new district.)

Messer had a very different experience in the Legislature: He was appointed to a state House seat in May 2003, and by 2005 was serving in the chamber's leadership. After a Time magazine story spotlighted Indiana as a center of the high school dropout crisis, Messer embraced school reform and found support from Gov. Mitch Daniels, as well as Indiana's elite donors.

Rokita eyed running for Senate in 2010, but opted instead to run for the House. He arrived on Capitol Hill in 2011 and within months found himself at the center of a national clash after he joined other newly elected conservatives in refusing to vote to raise the debt ceiling, enraging House leaders. Messer ran for Congress in 2010 unsuccessfully, but succeeded two years later on his third try. The Wabash grads then found themselves rubbing elbows — and at times, throwing them — on Capitol Hill.

Messer again rose up the ranks fast: Within two years he was elected as chair of the House Republican Policy Committee. And he again embraced education by leading a school choice caucus, hosting rallies attended by John Boehner and Eric Cantor that featured Messer as the smiling emcee.

While Rokita appears endlessly willing to take on unpopular — but important — fights, Messer has been quick to build coalitions and quickly rose to leadership positions in both the state House and in Congress.

But Messer's skill at listening to people and building coalitions can have downsides as well, a GOP strategist warned. "Luke's personality is to try to placate both sides. You may not ultimately satisfy anybody," he said.

And Rokita, who led an education subcommittee, jockeyed with Messer for prominence on their key issue. In 2015, he was working diligently on a major education bill when Messer nearly unraveled a year's work. Messer made a stand in favor of adopting school vouchers, a controversial issue that jeopardized the bill; Rokita fumed to colleagues until Messer backed down.

Today, both men are fuming in public as they launch their campaigns. Both say they're focused on running campaigns that can eventually defeat Donnelly — but they frequently fall back into a now-familiar habit, nipping at each other instead of their Democratic foe.

But there's also an upshot for people like Grand, the Indiana lobbyist, who happens to share an alma mater with the two Indiana congressmen.

"Either way," Grand said, "Wabash College wins."

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Trump plays both sides with Charlottesville response [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson | 08/14/2017 08:47 PM EDT

President Donald Trump caved to pressure from his senior advisers on Monday when he

rebuked neo-Nazis and white supremacists for their involvement in the rally that ended in the death of a 32-year-old Charlottesville woman — but it may have been a Pyrrhic victory.

His remarks on Monday, authored in part by chief speechwriter Stephen Miller, put some of his most ardent supporters in the cross hairs, and quelled the outrage sparked by his initial statement, which was widely considered weak and equivocal.

But the White House's slow-footed response, which played out over three days, fit a broader pattern that has hobbled the president before. Pushed to condemn some of the ugly factions of the alt-right made prominent by his candidacy, Trump has fallen back on the same tactic: delay, delay, delay.

In fact, Trump had a written statement on Saturday that was similar in tone and substance to the one he delivered on Monday, according to a senior White House adviser. But the president veered from those prepared remarks.

Political analysts said Trump's drawn-out response was part of a double game — an effort to avoid alienating part of his base followed quickly by a pivot to tamp down the outrage.

"He feels he can keep his base happy by being mute for 48 hours, and then he can come in and mute the so-called mainstream media world," said presidential historian Douglas Brinkley.

The White House's response appears to have done just that. The president's short speech on Monday earned bipartisan praise while leaving some of Saturday's marchers still feeling a part of the Trump movement.

"He actually sounded presidential," Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, a Democrat, told NBC News. "But I'm disappointed it took him a couple of days."

Meanwhile, Richard Spencer, an organizer of the Charlottesville rally, told reporters that Trump had not condemned his movement. "His statement today was more kumbaya nonsense," Spencer said. "Only a dumb person would take those lines seriously."

The white supremacist website the Daily Stormer celebrated the president's response over the weekend. David Duke credited the president with inspiring Saturday's rally and lashed out at Trump for his initial remarks. He did not respond to a request for comment.

Trump's Johnny-come-lately response to the tragedy followed the template he established during the campaign when he was pressed to disavow the endorsement of Duke — a former imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan and a leader of the Saturday event. In August 2015, Duke declared Trump "the best of the lot" of the GOP candidates.

Over the course of several months, Trump dodged questions, feigned ignorance and stonewalled reporters to avoid directly repudiating Duke's endorsement. "Sure, if that would make you feel better, I would certainly repudiate. I don't know anything about him," he told MSNBC's John Heilemann in August 2015.

Duke ratcheted up his support for Trump in February 2016, urging listeners of his radio show to cast their ballots for the real estate mogul turned politician, culminating in a testy exchange with CNN's Jake Tapper. "I don't know anything about what you're even talking about with white supremacy or white supremacists," Trump told him. "I don't know — did he endorse me, or what's going on? Because I know nothing about David Duke. I know nothing about white

supremacists."

Pressed about the Klan in particular, Trump said, "You may have groups in there that are totally fine and it would be very unfair, so give me a list of the groups and I'll let you know."

Trump later blamed his fumbled response on a faulty television earpiece — of course he disavowed Duke, he told NBC the following day. But that came after his remarks had become front-page news and sparked backlash on both sides of the aisle.

As the violence escalated on Saturday, the president was briefed by several aides. Homeland Security adviser Thomas Bossert told Trump that protesters on both sides white supremacists armed with torches, baseball bats and batons, as well as counterprotesters, club-wielding "anti-fas" — were inciting violence, according to a White House aide familiar with the situation. That gave the president the runway to point the finger at both sides, setting off a three-day political firestorm that didn't subside until Monday.

"It was David Duke redux," Brinkley said. The president's name was not attached to a statement circulated by the White House to reporters on Sunday indicating that he condemned the hate groups behind the rally, which exacerbated the situation.

Politicians and editorial pages across the political spectrum condemned Trump's mealy-mouthed response over the weekend. National Review's editors called it "vague and equivocal." The Wall Street Journal editorial page labeled it a "missed opportunity." And the New York Post, the president's favorite hometown newspaper, declared, "It shouldn't be that hard to summon up a few Trumpian terms like 'losers' and 'really, really bad people' to describe the hundreds of neo-Nazis, Klansmen, white supremacists and the like who descended on the college town — not after one of them has killed an innocent."

There are also signs that Trump's response to the crisis is causing him to bleed political support — if not from the alt-right, from rank-and-file Republicans who are moving to distance themselves from the president as his daily approval rating dipped to just 34 percent, according to Gallup, the lowest level of his presidency.

Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado, who leads the National Republican Senatorial Committee, was one of the first GOP lawmakers to criticize Trump's response on Saturday. Gardner is responsible for protecting and growing the Senate majority in 2018.

"Mr. President, we must call evil by its name," Gardner wrote on Twitter. "These were white supremacists and this was domestic terrorism."

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Date: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 3:52:50 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 05/31/2017 03:50 PM EDT

TRUMP TO SAY AU REVOIR: In a move that is already infuriating American allies globally, a White House official said today President Donald Trump has decided to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate change agreement. The decision to withdraw would mark a victory for the nationalist wing of the Trump White House, including chief strategist Steve Bannon and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who argued that the Paris agreement could hobble domestic energy goals. But it'd be a huge blow to Trump's daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner, who raised concerns that a withdrawal would damage U.S. relations with European nations and other countries that support the pact.

Andrew Restuccia and Josh Dawsey report that administration officials have cautioned that they are still sorting out the details of how exactly Trump will withdraw. One noted that nothing is final until an announcement is made and the Associated Press [reports](#) there could be "caveats in the language" announcing a withdrawal.

For his part, the president continued to stoke the suspense [on Twitter](#), writing: "I will be announcing my decision on the Paris Accord over the next few days. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" If the president does withdraw from the 195-nation pact, the U.S. would join only two other countries who have declined to join the agreement: Syria and Nicaragua.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host, Kelsey Tamborrino. Lots going on today, so send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

EXXON SHAREHOLDERS BACK CLIMATE RESOLUTION: Exxon Mobil shareholders today called on the company to share more information on how it plans to address climate change and associated regulations, Ben Lefebvre reports. "Nearly two-thirds of Exxon's shareholders backed a proposal on Wednesday calling for the company to assess how climate change and global efforts to limit temperature increases will affect its business. The vote is non-binding, but the results show that the once-fringe idea of linking climate change to big oil's operations has gained momentum." More [here](#).

MORE PARIS FALLOUT: The reaction to the news around the globe has been swift. "Climate change is undeniable," the United Nations [tweeted](#) from its official account this morning, quoting from a speech by Secretary General António Guterres. "Climate action is unstoppable. Climate solutions provide opportunities that are unmatched."

Tesla CEO Elon Musk, the Trump administration's go-to tech industry executive, was not pleased with the reports. If the president follows through on the decision to pull out of Paris, Musk said on Twitter that he would "have no choice" but to cut off his participation in White House business councils, Nancy Scola [reports](#).

And green groups reacted with fury: Both the Sierra Club and LCV promised to push

ongoing action at the state and local level to accelerate decarbonization, Eric Wolff [reports](#). "Trump has made a historic mistake which our grandchildren will look back on with stunned dismay," Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said in a statement. And Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, said in his own statement that the president "has abandoned the standard of American leadership."

Conservative groups are encouraged by the news that Trump will withdraw, although they are eager to hear it directly from him, Eric [reports](#). "I am super happy, but of course I don't believe in counting chickens before they're hatched," said Marlo Lewis, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

ANY QUESTIONS? What exactly would it mean for Trump to withdraw from the pact? Nick Juliano has some answers [here](#).

EU AND CHINA HONE IN: Internationally, the EU and China have responded to the news by deepening their commitment to address climate change, POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff [reports](#). Both are set to pledge deeper cooperation on the Paris climate agreement and to promote clean energy technologies. "The EU and China consider climate action and the clean energy transition an imperative," a draft leaders' [statement](#) for their summit on Thursday and Friday says. "Stepping up action will provide both sides with significant opportunities."

IT'S [NOT] THE END OF THE WORLD, AS WE KNOW IT: Maroš Šefcovic, the EU's vice president for the energy union, [said today](#) the U.S. decision to pull out of Paris wouldn't bring about the end of the world. "For Europe there is no plan B, because we do not have a planet B. ... If they decide to pull out, this would be disappointing, but I really don't think that this would change the course of mankind," he told reporters.

HOT TAKES: Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy today [penned an op-ed](#) in Foreign Policy, where she observes it's time for the U.S. to "lean in" on the issue of climate change. "All nations and peoples have an interest in lowering pollution, which harms our health, stifles economic growth, creates instability, and knows no boundaries," the former EPA head writes. In short, McCarthy says, "the current administration doesn't seem to get it." It argues that EPA needs to return to its "core mission," McCarthy writes, "as if carbon pollution doesn't threaten public health and safety — never mind its impact on clean air and water."

— **Todd Stern, who served as special envoy for climate change** during the Obama administration, wrote in The Atlantic today that "the president seems prepared to follow his own misguided calculus" on Paris "and, in the coming days, could render a decision that is indefensible." Pulling out of Paris could cause serious diplomatic consequences, Stern writes. Read more [here](#).

NEW YORK TAKES ACTION: New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said today in a [tweet](#) his state will take matters into its own hands. "I plan to sign an executive order maintaining New York City's commitment to the Paris Agreement," he wrote in reply to a previous tweet that said the Paris agreement "was the biggest step forward we've taken in many years. It's unconscionable for the president to step away from it."

CLIMATE CAUCUS DOUBLES DOWN: Republican Rep. [Carlos Curbelo](#), one of the founders of the Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, said the group's members must "redouble our efforts" after news surfaced of Trump withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement. Curbelo was one of the few Republicans commenting on news the White House

planned to pull out of the deal. The Democratic co-chair of the caucus, [Ted Deutch](#), also slammed the White House news, saying Trump's decision "has the potential to irreparably harm our earth, dramatically hinder our economic growth and fundamentally change our way of life." Eric has more [here](#).

EPA HALTS METHANE RULES: EPA today placed a 90-day stay on multiple additional portions of its 2016 rule setting methane emissions limits for new oil and gas industry sources, Alex Guillén [reports](#). The delay is needed as the agency considers several petitions to reconsider parts of the regulation, other pieces of which the agency put on hold [in April](#). Two more parts of the rule EPA will now reconsider are standards for well site pneumatic pumps and requirements for closed vent systems to be certified by a professional engineer, according to a [Federal Register notice](#) signed by Pruitt on Friday and running soon.

NRDC readies lawsuit: Following the announcement, the Natural Resources Defense Council [said](#) it will sue to block the Trump administration from "rolling back protections against dangerous air pollution from the oil and gas industry."

TEXAS LAWMAKERS SEND GOVERNOR BILL ON WIND NEAR MILITARY BASES: The Texas Legislature has sent Gov. Greg Abbott a bill, [S.B. 277](#), that would disqualify wind projects that were built or started construction on or after Sept. 1 from certain property tax exemptions if they are built within 25 miles of a military airbase or facility. The legislation says the bill is needed for security purposes.

QUICK HITS:

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Trump expected to withdraw from Paris climate deal [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Josh Dawsey | 05/31/2017 08:27 AM EDT

President Donald Trump is planning to pull the United States out of the Paris climate change agreement, a White House official said Wednesday morning — only to have Trump himself revive the suspense less than an hour later.

The withdrawal would fulfill a Trump campaign promise but would be certain to infuriate America's allies across the globe. It would threaten to destabilize the most comprehensive pact ever negotiated to blunt the most devastating effects of climate change. And it would fly in the face of support the deal has drawn from a host of major business interests, including giant oil companies such as Shell and Exxon Mobil.

[Intrigue](#) surrounding Paris has accelerated in the past week, after Pope Francis and other world leaders pressed Trump during his European visit not to abandon the nearly 200-nation 2015 agreement. Administration officials said they are still sorting out the details of how exactly Trump would withdraw, and one noted that nothing is final until an announcement is made.

Trump declined to make it official, at least not yet. "I will be announcing my decision on the Paris Accord over the next few days. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" he [tweeted](#) Wednesday morning.

Trump was slated to continue discussing the issue with senior advisers on Wednesday. But reaction began pouring in Wednesday, including a threat by Tesla CEO Elon Musk to stop participating in White House business councils if the president pulls out.

Axios first [reported](#) the news that Trump would withdraw.

Administration officials sent mixed messages on Wednesday, with some saying they are confident the president would pull out and others urging caution. But officials on both sides of the issue have become increasingly convinced he plans to exit the deal, despite arguments from moderate advisers like Trump's daughter Ivanka that withdrawing would damage U.S. relations abroad. Others who have supported staying included Trump's secretary of state, Rex Tillerson.

Prime supporters of leaving the deal, including senior White House adviser Stephen Bannon, argued that its terms would hobble the U.S. economy and Trump's energy agenda.

Reaction from the international community Wednesday was swift, mostly without mentioning Trump by name. "Climate change is undeniable," the United Nations [tweeted](#) from its official account Wednesday morning, quoting from a speech by Secretary General António Guterres. "Climate action is unstoppable. Climate solutions provide opportunities that are unmatched."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's chief of staff expressed hope that the president could still be swayed. "As far as I can see, it is an ongoing debate within the administration," Peter Altmaier said at a POLITICO [Connected Citizens Summit](#) Wednesday afternoon in Berlin.

In the U.S., conservative groups were preparing to celebrate.

"Au revoir to the Paris agreement indeed," said Nick Loris, an economist at the Heritage Foundation, praising Trump for showing "resolute leadership."

"Without any impact on global temperatures, Paris was the open door for egregious regulation, cronyism and government spending that would have been as disastrous for the American economy as it is proving to be for those in Europe," Loris added.

But the watchdog group Public Citizen said Trump was committing an "epic blunder."

"In an administration that seems incapable of doing much right, Trump's stances on climate change and clean energy still stand out as exceptionally wrongheaded," said David Arkush, managing director of the group's climate program. "The U.S. already is suffering from the effects of global warming, and right now we are on course for catastrophic harm as soon as the second half of this century. At the same time, solutions are readily available."

Meanwhile, the deal's support from business leaders showed how the politics of climate change have evolved, as some multinational companies seek regulatory certainty while some start-ups see opportunities in a shift toward greener forms of energy. Nearly two-thirds of Exxon's shareholders [voted](#) Wednesday to urge the company to incorporate the Paris deal in its business models, regardless of what the U.S. does.

One of the most outspoken responses to Trump's expected decision came from Musk, whose electric-car, solar and battery initiatives aim to promote the move away from fossil fuels.

"Don't know which way Paris will go, but I've done all I can to advise directly to POTUS, through others in WH & via councils, that we remain," Musk [tweeted](#). Musk followed up with a [tweet](#) saying, "Will have no choice but to depart councils" if Trump pulls out of the Paris deal backed by nearly 200 other countries.

Musk's threat comes as the White House is trying to bring tech CEOs and other top executives to Washington on June 19 for a daylong summit on modernizing government technology.

Trump's move would mark the second time in two decades that the United States has negotiated, signed but then spurned a major international climate pact following a change of party control in the White House. The previous occasion — the decision by George W. Bush to abandon the 1997 Kyoto accord negotiated by the Clinton administration — caused years of distrust of the U.S. in international climate circles.

Since then, climate scientists say, the problem has grown only more dire, with few years left for nations to act if they want to avoid the droughts, floods, famines, mass migrations and worsening storms that a changing climate would bring.

Only two countries declined to join the Paris agreement: Syria and Nicaragua.

Republican leaders in Congress had warned other countries before the Paris talks not to [trust Obama's promises](#), noting that a future GOP president could undo any commitments he made. The Obama administration had insisted that the deal's carbon-cutting targets be nonbinding, avoiding the politically disastrous Senate ratification fight that a binding treaty would require.

It would take years for the U.S. to formally withdraw from the Paris deal. But the U.S. is the world's second-largest carbon polluter, and its decision to walk away would threaten to weaken the resolve of major emitters such as China and India to keep their own pledges, even though both nations have pledged to remain in the agreement.

The move is certain to draw the ire of dozens of American allies who received assurances from the Obama administration that the United States was committed to the deal.

Wednesday's news comes on top of separate steps by Trump to weaken the major domestic

planks of Obama's climate agenda, including Environmental Protection Agency regulations requiring cuts in greenhouse gas pollution from power plants.

Trump's advisers have been — and remain — at odds over how the administration should approach Paris. Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, had pushed to stay in the deal, and Ivanka even [brought Al Gore to Trump Tower](#) to meet with her father in December. Gore spoke with Trump again this month in an effort to encourage the president to remain in the agreement.

Trump was also personally lobbied by world leaders at last week's G-7 summit in Italy, and foreign diplomats repeatedly made their case for remaining in the agreement during frequent calls with administration officials.

Others in the "remain" camp included Tillerson, who had praised the Paris deal when he was Exxon Mobil's CEO. During his confirmation hearing this year, he said the United States must keep "its seat at the table" for international climate talks.

But ultimately, Bannon and his allies in the White House appeared to win Trump over, arguing that the agreement wasn't in the U.S. interest.

Even if the U.S. stuck with the deal, scientists and climate activists have warned that the targets Obama and other leaders promised in Paris wouldn't cut enough carbon pollution to prevent the worst effects of climate change. Instead, they said, the signing nations would have to steadily escalate their commitments in coming years.

The agreement calls on countries to aim to limit global warming to "well below" 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit from pre-industrial levels, and it said countries should "pursue efforts" to keep temperature increases to 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit. Under a business as usual scenario, global temperatures could rise by between 4.7 degrees Fahrenheit and 8.6 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century, according to the United Nations, an increase that would have catastrophic consequences.

U.S. greenhouse gas output has slid sharply in the past decade — a trend driven partly by increases in energy efficiency and a shift from coal to natural gas as a power source — and Obama had pledged to continue those reductions in the coming decade to meet the American commitments in Paris. Hillary Clinton had promised even steeper reductions.

Trump, meanwhile, vowed during the campaign that he would reverse Obama's policies, lift restrictions on the energy industry and "save our wonderful coal miners." Those pledges helped him win fossil fuel-producing swing states like Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Trump's upcoming decision raises the prospect that other countries will move on without the U.S., lessening America's influence. Indeed, the European Union and China are set to pledge deeper cooperation on the Paris agreement and the promotion of clean energy technologies, according to a draft leaders' statement for an upcoming [summit](#) that was seen by POLITICO.

Maroš Šefcovic, the vice president of the EU's energy union, said Thursday that Europeans will stick with their climate efforts regardless of what the Americans do.

"For Europe there is no plan B, because we do not have a planet B," Šefcovic told reporters. "If they decide to pull out, this would be disappointing, but I really don't think that this would

change the course of mankind."

Eric Wolff, Janosch Delcker, Kalina Oroschakoff and Anca Gurzu contributed to this report.

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Trump tweets Paris climate decision coming in a 'few days' [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 05/31/2017 09:35 AM EDT

President Donald Trump did not confirm the reports emerging from the White House that he intended to pull the United States out of the Paris climate change agreement, saying only that his decision was coming shortly.

"I will be announcing my decision on the Paris Accord over the next few days. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN," he [tweeted](#) this morning.

The Tweet landed after White House official told POLITICO that the U.S. plans to withdraw from the 195-nation agreement on climate change.

Trump is just back from a 9-day overseas trip in which world leaders, including Pope Francis, pressed him to stay in the agreement. The administration's top advisers have been divided over whether to stay in the deal.

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Exxon shareholders win vote to build Paris climate pact into plans [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 05/31/2017 02:37 PM EDT

The Trump administration may be preparing to [withdraw the U.S.](#) from the Paris climate change accords, but shareholders at Exxon Mobil and at least one other U.S. oil company are demanding the companies incorporate the international deal in their business models.

Nearly two-thirds of Exxon's shareholders backed a proposal on Wednesday calling for the company to assess how climate change and global efforts to limit temperature increases will affect its business. The vote is non-binding, but the results show that the once-fringe idea of linking climate change to big oil's operations has gained momentum.

The vote at the Exxon annual shareholder meeting in Dallas came after investors in its smaller rival Occidental Petroleum earlier this month cast more than two-thirds of their votes for a measure calling for the company to assess how its business would be affected by the Paris climate change accord's target of holding global warming to 2-degrees. Company credit rating agency Moody's [said](#) last year it would start to use the Paris pledge to assess financial risk for

corporations.

"Shareholders have spoken clearly on climate," said Danielle Fugere, president and chief counsel for As You Sow, a group that helps shareholders introduce environmental proposals. "If there's less demand for oil and the world is awash in oil, there's going to be more competition among these companies. Shareholders are trying to figure out who is the best bet."

Not all of these climate-related investor proposals succeeded, however. Chevron shareholders Wednesday morning rejected a motion that the company issue a report on how limiting global temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) would affect its business. Only 27 percent of voting shareholders approved the proposal, down from more than 40 percent who voted for a similar proposal last year.

Exxon, Chevron and other energy companies facing such proposals argue that they are already taking the Paris agreement seriously and incorporating it into their business plans. Exxon in particular pointed out that it was developing technology that would capture the carbon emitted at natural gas power plants and then either store it or use it to produce more electricity.

"We believe the goal of carbon policy is to reduce emissions at the lowest cost to society," Exxon Chief Executive Darren Woods said at the shareholder meeting. "These goals led us to support the Paris Agreement." Woods sent President Donald Trump a letter earlier this month urging the U.S. to stay in the Paris deal.

For Exxon, the votes also illustrate how entangled the company has become in New York state climate change politics. The climate change proposal shareholders approved was partly sponsored by the New York State Common Retirement Fund, which is run by the State's comptroller. Meanwhile, the company is embroiled in a lawsuit with the New York and Massachusetts attorneys general over whether it withheld its own research on climate change from shareholders.

"The burden is now on Exxon Mobil to respond swiftly and demonstrate that it takes shareholder concerns about climate risk seriously," New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said in a prepared statement after the vote.

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Elon Musk: Paris deal departure would force break with Trump [Back](#)

By Nancy Scola | 05/31/2017 02:23 PM EDT

Tesla CEO Elon Musk said today that if President Donald Trump follows through on pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate change agreement, he'd "have no choice" but to cut off his participation in White House business councils.

"Don't know which way Paris will go, but I've done all I can to advise directly to POTUS, through others in WH & via councils, that we remain," Musk [tweeted](#). Musk followed up with a [tweet](#) saying, "Will have no choice but to depart councils" if Trump pulls out of the Paris deal backed by nearly 200 other countries.

POLITICO and others [have reported](#) that Trump is expected to withdraw the U.S. from the climate agreement.

Musk has emerged as the Trump White House's go-to tech industry executive. The Tesla and SpaceX CEO has taken part, for example, in the so-called "President's Strategic and Policy Forum."

Uber CEO Travis Kalanick stepped down from that group in February after a public backlash, including from inside the technology industry. At the time, Musk decided to stay involved, [saying](#), "I believe at this time that engaging on critical issues will on balance serve the greater good."

Musk's threatened break with Trump comes as the White House is trying to bring tech CEOs and other executives to Washington on June 19 for a day-long summit on modernizing government technology, cybersecurity, immigration and other topics.

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Greens decry Trump decision to exit Paris climate deal [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 05/31/2017 10:06 AM EDT

Green groups reacted with fury over news that President Donald Trump will withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement.

"Donald Trump has made a historic mistake which our grandchildren will look back on with stunned dismay at how a world leader could be so divorced from reality and morality," Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said in a statement. "Trump has abandoned the standard of American leadership."

White House [sources said](#) this morning that the U.S. will withdraw from the 195-nation agreement, but President Donald Trump followed up with [a tweet](#) saying he would announce his decision "in the next few days."

The delay in an announcement did little to mollify environmentalists.

"This would be a new low, even for President Trump and [EPA] Administrator [Scott] Pruitt who have prioritized polluter profits over kids' health at every step of the way," Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, said in a statement.

"President Trump's foolish decision means America is joining Syria and Nicaragua as the only three nations in the world not part of the race to head off one of the most dangerous threats the planet has faced," Environmental Working Group President Ken Cook said in a statement. "Even such forward-thinking leaders as Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un signed the agreement."

The Sierra Club and LCV both promised to push ongoing action at the state and local level to

accelerate decarbonization.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump is expected to formally announce his decision in the next few days.

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Conservatives offer tentative applause for Paris withdrawal [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 05/31/2017 01:02 PM EDT

Conservative groups are hopeful that President Donald Trump will withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, although they are eager to hear it directly from him.

"I am super happy, but of course I don't believe in counting chickens before they're hatched," said Marlo Lewis, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

A White House official said this morning the U.S. would withdraw from the agreement, though Trump himself followed the news with a Tweet saying he would decide "in the next few days." Conservative groups have lobbied for withdrawal from the agreement, arguing it puts the U.S. at an economic disadvantage relative to other countries.

"As Yogi Berra said, 'it ain't over till it's over' but we are definitely encouraged about reports that President Trump is heading in the direction of withdrawing," said Thomas Pyle, president of American Energy Alliance.

"President Trump has demonstrated resolute leadership in his decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement," said Nick Loris, an economist at the Heritage Foundation. "Without any impact on global temperatures, Paris was the open door for egregious regulation, cronyism, and government spending that would have been as disastrous for the American economy as it is proving to be for those in Europe. ... Au revoir to the Paris agreement indeed."

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What does Trump's Paris climate decision mean? [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 05/31/2017 02:43 PM EDT

While President Donald Trump is keeping everyone in suspense, a White House official said Wednesday morning that he will formally withdraw from the Paris climate change agreement.

Exiting the deal would make the United States one of the only countries on Earth to altogether dismiss the threat of climate change, and risks complicating already fraught relationships with European allies and rising powers like China and India. POLITICO walks through some of the

questions and answers that led to Trump's decision.

What is the Paris climate deal?

In 2015, representatives of 195 nations met in Paris and agreed to take steps designed to keep global temperature increases below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid potentially devastating consequences related to sea level rise or extreme weather. Each government submitted its own voluntary pledge outlining steps to reduce its carbon footprint. Then-President Barack Obama said the U.S. would reduce its emissions by 2025 to about 27 percent below the level in 2005, identifying his domestic policies such as the Clean Power Plan and stricter automobile fuel-efficiency requirements as key contributors to that pledge. Countries with less mature economies, such as China and India, pledged that their emissions would eventually level off after rising for several more years — an arrangement Trump and other critics of the agreement said made it a "bad deal" for the U.S. But supporters of the Paris agreement point out that it is not legally binding and cannot force the Trump administration to continue implementing Obama's policies.

Why is Trump pulling out?

Trump has repeatedly dismissed human-caused climate change as a "[bulls---](#)" "[hoax](#)" invented by the Chinese to undercut U.S. manufacturing, and those who urged him to exit virtually all believe that scientists' warnings of more extreme weather and rising seas are overblown. Trump has also said that U.S. coal, oil and manufacturing companies are disadvantaged by efforts to reduce carbon emissions. While the question of what to do about Paris deeply divided the Trump administration, the president appears to have sided with nationalists who portrayed the agreement as antithetical to his "America First" agenda. "It was an America second, third, or fourth kind of approach. China and India had no obligations under the agreement until 2030. We front-loaded all of our costs," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt once said of the deal.

Trump's exit from the Paris deal puts the United States alongside Syria, which is embroiled in a civil war, as the only nation on Earth that does not view climate change as a policy problem. (Nicaragua, the only other country not on board with the Paris deal, is staying out because it does not believe the deal does enough to address climate change.)

What happens now?

It's unclear. Trump has several [options](#) he can use to withdraw the U.S. from the deal, and the White House has not yet detailed his plans ahead of a formal announcement the president says is still several days away. Trump may decide to treat the Paris deal as a treaty and submit it for a Senate ratification vote, which would surely fail, or he could go through a formal withdrawal process envisioned in the agreement itself, though that would take several years. Trump also could exit the previously ratified 1992 treaty that established the underlying climate negotiations that produced the treaty, but even Republican senators who said Trump should pull out of Paris did not say he should exit the broader U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Does this mean EPA won't regulate greenhouse gas emissions anymore?

Not exactly. The Trump administration is already in the process of rescinding or revising Obama's climate change rules such as the Clean Power Plan, but that has nothing to do with

whether the U.S. remains a part of the Paris accord. The bigger question for Pruitt is whether he is able to undermine EPA's scientific conclusion that heat-trapping gasses like carbon dioxide are a danger to the public and must be regulated by the Clean Air Act. So far, Pruitt has been hesitant to reverse that so-called endangerment finding, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court since EPA published it in 2009. Legal experts say that means Pruitt will eventually have to write new rules limiting carbon emissions from power plants and other major sources, although Pruitt has not yet announced his next steps.

Will this save the coal industry?

Doubtful. The biggest problem coal faced was electric utilities switching power plants to run on cheap natural gas unleashed by the U.S. fracking revolution. In the last decade, coal has fallen from more than 50 percent of the U.S. electricity market in 2000 to around 30 percent today, and market analysts say that share is likely to keep falling. In fact, the largest U.S. coal companies urged Trump to stick with the Paris deal, in an effort to secure more backing for technologies like carbon capture and sequestration that they believe are vital to the industry's long-term future.

Still, leaders of some smaller mining firms, such as Murray Energy CEO Bob Murray, urged Trump to pull out of Paris, saying it was an "illegal" waste of taxpayer money.

Who supports this decision?

Pruitt was perhaps the most vocal member of Trump's administration in favor of withdrawing from Paris, arguing behind the scenes that sticking with the deal would complicate his efforts to unwind Obama's climate change regulations at EPA. A group of Republican senators, including Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) and Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.), echoed that argument in an influential letter to Trump last week, saying that the deal could provide ammunition for environmentalists to use in lawsuits challenging Trump's energy agenda.

Other supporters of exiting the deal included White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, a handful of smaller energy companies, and conservative groups such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute and American Energy Alliance. And 56 percent of Republicans wanted Trump to exit the deal, according to a [poll](#) last month from POLITICO and the Harvard T.H. School of Public Health.

Who opposed it?

Trump's daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner were among those urging him to stick with the deal, along with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and several Republican members of Congress including Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska). They said staying with the non-binding deal would not inhibit Trump's broader energy goals while allowing the U.S. to maintain influence in international climate change negotiations and related diplomatic efforts. Major U.S. and global energy companies, including Exxon Mobil, the [top three U.S. coal producers](#) and major tech companies like Apple and Google also sought to convince Trump to stay a part of the Paris deal. About 62 percent of Americans overall supported staying in the Paris deal, including more than six in 10 independents and 87 percent of Democrats, according to the POLITICO-Harvard poll.

What does this mean for the planet?

It's not good, but prospects weren't exactly rosy before Trump made up his mind. The emissions-reduction policies Obama put in place were insufficient to hit his U.S. target in the Paris deal even if they had been fully implemented — and Trump has already put virtually all of them on [the chopping block](#), making any reductions more difficult to achieve.

And many scientists say the goals under the Paris agreement are themselves too modest to limit global climate the change to 3.6 degrees, and that global carbon emissions will have to reach net zero by the end of the century, a herculean task.

Any major new emissions-cutting policies will come from states like California and New York or foreign leaders in Europe and China, and activists will keep pressure on oil and coal companies to reduce their carbon footprint. Just a few hours after news of Trump's decision broke this morning, Exxon shareholders voted in favor of a resolution asking the company to report annually on how it is dealing with climate change.

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EU and China commit to deeper climate cooperation as U.S. turns away [Back](#)

By Kalina Oroschakoff | 05/31/2017 10:02 AM EDT

The EU and China are set to pledge deeper cooperation on the Paris climate agreement and to promote clean energy technologies, according to a draft leaders' statement for their [summit](#) on Thursday and Friday seen by POLITICO.

"The EU and China consider climate action and the clean energy transition an imperative," according to the statement. "Stepping up action will provide both sides with significant opportunities."

Their commitments to step up efforts to cut emissions and implement the deal come as President Donald Trump is [planning](#) to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate deal, according to a White House official.

In the wake of a broader U.S. retreat from its traditional international role, the two will also stress the importance of "developing global free trade and investment" and multilateralism, according to the draft.

The leaders' separate and explicit statement on climate change and clean energy is meant to show that the EU and China are stepping up as the U.S. makes a U-turn on its own climate policy.

"The fact that they're taking the time and effort to come up with a declaration of cooperation is the most important part," said Wendel Trio of the Climate Action Network Europe.

China has been a vocal advocate for climate action in recent months, a change from its previous "climate bad boy" reputation, Li Shuo of Greenpeace China told reporters on Wednesday.

The text was prepared ahead of a meeting of EU country ambassadors on Wednesday.

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on May 31, 2017.

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Energy union chief: U.S. climate withdrawal wouldn't 'change the course of mankind'

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By Kalina Oroschakoff and Anca Gurzu | 05/31/2017 11:01 AM EDT

A U.S. decision to pull out of the Paris climate deal would be "disappointing," but it wouldn't bring about the end of the world, Maroš Šefcovic, the EU's vice president for the energy union, said today.

"For Europe there is no plan B, because we do not have a planet B," Šefcovic told reporters in response to [reports](#) that President Donald Trump plans to pull out of the international agreement. "If they decide to pull out this would be disappointing, but I really don't think that this would change the course of mankind."

Šefcovic added that he's confident the business case for investing in renewables will continue to drive the American shift to clean energy, even if it withdraws.

A White House source confirmed today that Trump has decided to pull out. However, Trump later [tweeted](#) that he will announce his decision "over the next few days," adding in his trademark capital letters: "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

Meanwhile, the EU and China are [forging](#) closer diplomatic ties to fill the leadership gap left by the U.S. climate U-turn, with plans to announce enhanced cooperation on implementing the Paris deal, cutting emissions and promoting clean energy during the EU-China summit in Brussels on Thursday and Friday.

"What we are already feeling is that there are much stronger expectations from our partners across the world, in Africa, Asia and China, that Europe should assume leadership in this effort," Šefcovic said. "We are ready to do that."

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on May 31, 2017.

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Curbelo calls to 'redouble' climate efforts, Democrats rip Trump [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 05/31/2017 11:47 AM EDT

Republican Rep. [Carlos Curbelo](#) (Fla.), one of the founders of the Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus, said the group's members must "redouble our efforts" after news that President Donald Trump plans to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

Curbelo, who has raised the prospect of Trump's impeachment, was one of the few Republicans commenting on [news](#) the White House planned to pull out of the deal. Trump later [tweeted](#) he would announce a decision on the 195-nation agreement "in the next few days."

"Bipartisan #Climate Solutions Caucus must now redouble our efforts to build consensus for pro-growth clean energy policies," Curbelo tweeted.

The Democratic co-chair of the caucus, [Ted Deutch](#) (Fla.), slammed the White House news, saying Trump's decision "has the potential to irreparably harm our earth, dramatically hinder our economic growth and fundamentally change our way of life."

Other Democrats also joined in the criticism.

"President Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris Climate Accord is a stunning abdication of American leadership and a grave threat to our planet's future," House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) said in a statement.

"If Trump abandons the #ParisAgreement, he's putting us on a dangerous course toward catastrophic #ClimateChange," Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.), ranking member on the Energy and Commerce Committee, [said](#) on Twitter.

Andrew Cuomo, the Democratic governor of New York, promised his state would take climate action on its own.

"If Washington won't act, New Yorkers will," he [said](#) on Twitter. "We've set bold renewable energy goals and will invest in a sustainable future."

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EPA to reconsider more provisions of oil and gas well emissions rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/31/2017 11:55 AM EDT

EPA today placed a 90-day stay on several additional portions of its 2016 rule setting methane emissions limits for new oil and gas industry sources.

The delay is needed as the agency considers several petitions to reconsider parts of the regulation, EPA said. The agency [in April stayed](#) some other portions of the rule, including fugitive emissions requirements, but today's announcement covers other key parts of the regulation.

Two more parts of the rule EPA will now reconsider are standards for well site pneumatic pumps and requirements for closed vent systems to be certified by a professional engineer,

according to a [Federal Register notice](#) signed by Administrator Scott Pruitt on Friday and running soon.

Those requirements will be placed on hold for 90 days while EPA reviews them, and the agency "intends to look broadly at the entire 2016 Rule," not just the specific portions already identified, according to the notice.

EPA will have to take public comment on any proposed changes to the rule before finalizing them, and could subsequently face litigation.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will issue proposed changes to the rule's requirements and take public comment.

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EPA to reconsider parts of oil and gas well emissions rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 04/19/2017 11:11 AM EDT

EPA says it will review key parts of a 2016 Obama administration rule governing methane emissions from new oil and gas wells.

The rule, also known as the oil and gas NSPS, included requirements for companies to monitor "fugitive emissions" — essentially leaks — from oil and gas production sites. But in a [letter](#) to the American Petroleum Institute and other industry groups who petitioned for reconsideration, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt says they have made a valid objection to those requirements because of an unspecified issue that arose after the comment period.

The agency has issued a 90-day stay on the fugitive emissions compliance provisions.

EPA has also agreed to review part of the rule regarding how companies could get approval for alternative methods to limit emissions, along with a provision that applied the rule to low-production wells. Neither part was included in the proposed rule and thus "the public could not have raised objections to these provisions during the public comment period," EPA said.

Those reconsiderations will be subject to a notice-and-comment rulemaking process, along with possible eventual legal challenges.

The agency did not take a position on other reconsideration requests made by industry groups.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will begin a process to reconsider these portions of the rule, a process likely to take a year or longer.

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Russia probe scares off potential appointees [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Josh Dawsey | 05/31/2017 05:05 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's effort to fill hundreds of vacant jobs across the federal government has hit a new snag: Russia.

Potential hires are paying close attention to the expanding investigations, which have now begun to touch senior Trump aides, with some questioning whether they want to join the administration.

Four people who work closely with prospective nominees told POLITICO that some potential hires are having second thoughts about trying to land executive branch appointments as federal and congressional investigations threaten to pose a serious distraction to Trump's agenda.

"It's an additional factor that makes what was an already complicated process of staffing the government even harder," said Max Stier, head of the Partnership for Public Service, which has advised the Trump transition on hiring.

According to the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, the White House has announced nominees for just 117 of the 559 most important Senate-confirmed positions.

That trails the records of Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, who had each nominated about twice as many people by this point in the first year of their first terms.

Trump has not yet nominated a No. 2 at the Agriculture Department, Education Department, Department of Veterans Affairs or Environmental Protection Agency, and dozens of top positions at every federal agency remain vacant. Trump's nominees for deputy secretary of Commerce and Treasury both withdrew.

One lawyer who represents prospective political appointees told POLITICO that three clients said over the past two weeks that they are no longer interested in working for the Trump administration following the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel overseeing the federal investigation into Trump associates' contacts with Russian officials during the campaign.

"There's no doubt in my mind that people are being very cautious, to put it mildly," this lawyer said, adding that there is growing concern in Republican circles that the caliber of hires could deteriorate if the administration's top picks drop out.

"You're going to have a situation where they're going to have trouble getting A-list or even B-list people to sign up," the lawyer added.

Others agreed. "With all that is going on now, there is certainly a greater amount of hesitation," said a former government official who regularly speaks with one of Trump's Cabinet secretaries. "They have a real talent problem that continues to grow."

A White House spokeswoman said the Russia investigation and the series of news stories that have pummeled the administration in recent weeks have had no impact on hiring. She said the president is recruiting individuals "of the highest quality."

But the steady stream of palace intrigue stories about internal tensions and plans for a staff shakeup — after months of rumors about various senior officials getting pushed out — are making it harder to persuade people to join the administration, another White House official said.

White House communications director Michael Dubke said Tuesday he will leave his role, while Trump is weighing the possibility of bringing former campaign aides Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie into the White House.

"It's not the best place to work right now, but you're still working at the White House, so there are far worse jobs," the official said.

Former Bush and Obama administration officials who worked on personnel issues told POLITICO they never struggled to find qualified candidates for top jobs.

"I can't speak to Republicans not wanting to join this administration but, as a general matter, we didn't have trouble recruiting people — quite the opposite," said Lisa Brown, who served as White House staff secretary under Obama for two years.

Along with distracting from lower-level hires, the Russia probe has slowed and complicated the process of filling the administration's highest-profile vacancy — director of the FBI.

Trump administration officials have been frustrated by the difficulties they've faced in finding a new FBI director. Top White House officials, including chief of staff Reince Priebus and chief strategist Steve Bannon, hoped to have made a decision made by now.

Instead, leading candidates Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) and former Sen. Joe Lieberman have all withdrawn from consideration. The White House is now looking at a new field of candidates, and Trump met with two possibilities — John Pistole and Chris Wray — on Tuesday.

"It's not so easy to find an FBI director in the Trump administration," the White House official said.

The official added that Trump and his senior team are aware that hiring is not moving fast enough at agencies but said that, right now, "It's just not priority No. 1."

A second White House official said he was not aware of any potential nominees dropping out because of the recent news but echoed concerns that the Russia probe would inevitably add to further delays filling empty jobs.

"The problem we are likely to have is it may be difficult to get people to focus on hiring with all of this going on," the official said.

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Kushner tries to pretend everything's normal [Back](#)

By Annie Karni | 05/30/2017 10:08 PM EDT

There has been no rallying the troops in the White House, and no open acknowledgment from President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, that he has transformed from behind-the-scenes West Wing power broker to its lead distracting story.

Kushner led three meetings in the West Wing on Tuesday — and never once acknowledged the stories about him that have dominated cable news since last week, when it was reported that during the campaign he discussed setting up a secret communications back channel to Moscow.

For the first five months of Trump's administration, Kushner has managed to stay out of Trump's line of fire, even as every other top West Wing aide has taken a turn on the outs with the president. As Trump has sought input from outside advisers on whom he should keep and whom he should can, Kushner seems to operate as a faculty member with tenure in an otherwise insecure work environment.

With his wife, Ivanka Trump, according to multiple White House sources, Kushner emerged from the holiday weekend intent on dismissing his increased public scrutiny in connection with the FBI's ongoing Russia probe as nothing more than a public relations problem that will blow over — and act like his special status in the White House has not changed.

On his first full day back after the holiday weekend, Kushner led a meeting on veterans affairs, a meeting with his Office of American Innovation and a planning meeting on a "Tech Day" at the White House next month, when he hopes to gather tech leaders in Washington to discuss modernizing government services. Kushner also conducted a series of follow-up phone calls about Trump's just-concluded overseas trip, a White House official said.

Ivanka Trump, White House sources said, was also working out of her West Wing office on Tuesday, conducting business as usual — which includes a weekly communications meeting in her office. (Kushner and his wife, who both serve as official government employees, have chosen to run their own press shop as a separate entity from the Sean Spicer-led operation down the hall, relying on their own aides to handle queries from reporters.)

The New York Times reported Sunday that Kushner and Ivanka Trump were batted down at the Trump golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey, as aides explained that Kushner has not been contacted by the FBI to discuss his role in allegedly trying to set up a back channel with the Russians. His attorney, Jamie Gorelick, reiterated her client's interest in sharing with Congress any information he has about his meetings with Russian officials. But on Tuesday, they were back to work.

At Thrive Capital, the venture capital firm co-founded by Kushner's younger brother, Josh, employees have sometimes, over the years, been greeted with motivational Post-It notes on their computer monitors, reminding them to keep their "heads down. Stay focused. Ignore the noise," even when confronted with good news.

If Kushner wanted to communicate to concerned White House officials that the game plan was to tune out the noise and keep on working, he was far less explicit about it.

That left some unease in the White House about who, exactly, was in charge. Early Tuesday, after weeks of rumors about a shakeup in the White House press shop, communications

director Michael Dubke made his resignation public. But staff members believe a bigger staff shakeup is looming — The Washington Post reported over the weekend that Trump associates were discussing shipping off chief of staff Reince Priebus to serve as ambassador to Greece.

In his first press briefing in over a week, press secretary Sean Spicer did not deny that Kushner had tried to set up a back channel with the Russians. "Mr. Kushner's attorney has said that Mr. Kushner has volunteered to share with Congress what he knows about these meetings," Spicer said. "And he will do the same if he's contacted in or — and connected with any other inquiry."

When asked point blank whether the White House disputed the back channel reports, Spicer said that the question, posed by The Washington Post's Phil Rucker, "presupposed facts that have not been confirmed."

On Tuesday, Trump retweeted a Fox News story that downplayed Kushner's relationship with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and reported that a permanent back channel was never discussed. That was the extent to which Trump himself has moved to defend his son-in-law, who was responsible for planning Trump's successful visits to Saudi Arabia and Israel last week.

But the juxtaposition between his biggest hurdle arriving on the heels of his first measurable success in the White House isn't new to Kushner. In his former office at 666 Fifth Avenue, the headquarters of his family real estate company, Kushner kept a framed photograph of the first page of Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities," according to a 2008 profile of Kushner published in the now-defunct Portfolio Magazine.

"But when you think of this, you think, 'It's the best of times, it's the worst of times,'" he said in the rare interview, referring to the first line of the Victorian novel. "But I love how we bought this building literally right after my father came out of prison, probably five, six months after. And the thought that I had was, 'It's kind of like the juxtaposition of going from the worst of times to the best of times.'"

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Poll: Support for Trump impeachment rises [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard | 05/31/2017 06:18 AM EDT

An increasing percentage of voters want Congress to impeach President Donald Trump — even if they don't think Trump has committed the "high crimes and misdemeanors" the Constitution requires.

Forty-three percent of voters want Congress to begin impeachment proceedings, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, up from 38 percent last week.

"If President Trump was hoping his foreign trip would shift the conversation away from scandals, he may be out of luck," said Morning Consult Co-Founder and Chief Research Officer Kyle Dropp. "Over the last week, support for beginning impeachment proceedings

among voters rose from 38 percent to 43 percent."

But that's still less than the 45 percent who don't want Congress to impeach Trump, down a tick from 46 percent the week before.

Only three American presidents in history have faced legitimate impeachment threats.

Much of the support for impeaching Trump comes from political considerations, the poll shows — not a belief that Trump is actually guilty of impeachable offenses, like treason, bribery or obstructing justice.

Of those who want Congress to move toward impeachment, a 54-percent majority of those believe Trump "has proven he is unfit to serve and should be removed from office, regardless of whether he committed an impeachable offense or not." Only 43 percent of those seeking impeachment believe Trump has committed an offense that meets the high constitutional standards for removal.

The results underscore the intense partisan divisions following last year's rancorous election. A wide majority of self-identified Democratic voters, 71 percent, want Congress to impeach Trump. But more than three-quarters of GOP voters, 76 percent, don't think Congress should begin impeachment proceedings.

Despite the sharp split on impeachment, Trump's approval ratings as president have stabilized, the poll shows. For the second consecutive week, 45 percent of voters approve of the job Trump is doing, while half disapprove. That has recovered from a low of 41 percent prior to Trump's trip overseas this month.

While poll respondents were not asked explicitly to react to Trump's first foreign trip, the poll shows voters are skeptical of Trump's aspirations to help Israel and the Palestinians strike a long-sought peace deal. Only 9 percent think it's very likely Trump will be able to broker such an agreement. More say it's either somewhat likely (18 percent), not too likely (28 percent) or not likely at all (31 percent).

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll was conducted May 25-30, beginning just after the Congressional Budget Office weighed in on Trump's chief legislative goal in the opening months of his presidency: the health care bill the House passed earlier this month. The CBO's report projected the bill, if enacted, would save the federal government \$119 billion over the next decade, but 23 million fewer Americans would have health insurance.

The poll shows more voters continue to disapprove of the GOP health care bill, 47 percent, than approve, 38 percent. And the 33 percent who disapprove of the bill "strongly" far outpaces the 14 percent who approve strongly.

A 47-percent plurality of voters think the bill would make the U.S. health care system worse — more than the 32 percent who think it would make the system better. Twenty-two percent say it won't make a difference on the health care system.

Forty-seven percent of voters also believe the bill will increase their health care costs, while only 18 percent think it will lower their costs and 17 percent don't think it will have an impact.

Last week's CBO report is unlikely to improve voter perceptions of the bill. Told about both the bill's deficit savings and the reductions in health insurance coverage, only 20 percent say it would make them more likely to support the bill. Nearly twice as many, 39 percent, say it makes them more likely to oppose the measure.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll included interviews with 1,991 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents —

Toplines: <http://politi.co/2rRIjZs> | Crosstabs: <http://politi.co/2rBDJPd>

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Subject: Afternoon Energy: Trump, Cruz to meet on biofuel — Report: "Red team" review on horizon — Barrasso to EPA: Finish RFS review
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 4:27:29 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/01/2017 04:25 PM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon

TRUMP, CRUZ TO MEET ON BIOFUEL: President Donald Trump will meet with Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and several Cabinet members next week to discuss U.S. biofuel policy and fuel efficiency standards, Andrew Restuccia and Ben Lefebvre report. The Thursday meeting is an attempt by the White House to reach a compromise between Cruz, who has held up a Trump nominee to the Agriculture Department over the administration's support for the Renewable Fuel Standard, and the farm-state lawmakers who pressured EPA to back down from potential changes to the regulations for biofuels.

The White House had until now [ignored](#) Cruz's requests for a meeting. Cruz and eight other senators sent a [letter](#) in October requesting changes to the program overseen by EPA, which sets the minimum volumes of ethanol and biodiesel to be used in the fuel market. Refiners must either purchase the biofuels to blend with their gasoline or diesel fuel, or buy credits to show their compliance — credits the refiners say are too expensive and threaten to push some refiners out of business. Read more [here](#).

REPORT: RED TEAM ON THE HORIZON: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt could be close to unveiling his "red team" in a matter of weeks, Bob Murray, founder and CEO of Murray Energy Corp, told E&E News, referring to Pruitt's plan to hold a public debate about global warming. While attending an event at the conservative Heritage Foundation, Murray told the publication "he has been personally pushing Pruitt to challenge the endangerment finding, the scientific underpinning for past and future regulations on greenhouse gas emissions." Murray, who has been a strong backer of administration efforts to [prop up the coal sector](#), says he met last week with Pruitt, who told him the red-team debate is imminent — and that the exercise is the first step toward a possible challenge to the endangerment finding.

Also of note: Several candidates for that "red team" role questioned scientific consensus on climate change at the Heritage event. "One theme they expressed is that carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels should no longer be considered a pollutant but instead an essential ingredient in maintaining a global population boom," E&E writes. Read it [here](#).

Bueller? ... Bueller? The Sierra Club said the "coal executive" debate won't change the fact that temperatures and sea levels are rising, in a [statement](#) from National Resistance Campaign Director Maura Cowley. "Perhaps after Pruitt tries to create a false debate over climate science, he can establish a red and blue team to debate whether or not Ferris Bueller was indeed sick," Cowley said.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

BARRASSO TO EPA: FINISH UP: The chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is calling on EPA to quickly wrap up its studies on the environmental impact of the Renewable Fuel Standard — calling the lull "unacceptable." Republican Sen. [John Barrasso](#) hit the agency for delaying the resource conservation report until 2024, when there's a 2007 law in place that requires the agency to study and report to Congress whether the RFS will hurt air quality. EPA has also failed to update a review of the RFS' effects on resource conservation, Alex Guillén [reports](#), something the agency's inspector general dinged last year. "Over the last several years, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has heard increasing concerns about the environmental impacts of the RFS," Barrasso wrote in his letter. The chairman calls on the agency to complete the study by Sept. 30, 2018. Read the letter [here](#).

FARENTHOLD UNMASKED: Rep. [Blake Farenthold](#) (R-Texas) used \$84,000 in taxpayer money to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by his former communications director, POLITICO's Rachael Bade reports. That makes the Texas Republican the only known sitting member of Congress to have used a little-known congressional account to pay an accuser, sources told POLITICO. Lauren Greene sued Farenthold, a member of the House Oversight Committee, in December 2014 over allegations of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment. "When she complained about comments Farenthold and a male staffer made to her, Greene said the congressman improperly fired her," Rachael writes. "... House Administration Chairman [Gregg Harper](#) (R-Miss.) told GOP lawmakers in a closed-door Friday morning meeting that only one House office in the past five years had used an Office of Compliance account to settle a sexual harassment complaint. Harper said in that one instance, the settlement totaled \$84,000." Read more [here](#).

LOL: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson today called reports that the White House is readying to fire him "laughable," POLITICO's Nolan McCaskill [reports](#). The New York Times reported earlier this week that chief of staff John Kelly has created a plan to oust Tillerson and replace him with CIA Director Mike Pompeo, leaving Arkansas Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) to fill the void at the CIA. "It's laughable," Tillerson said of the plot, smiling. "It's laughable." The former Exxon Mobil CEO made two unscheduled trips to the White House on Thursday and was scheduled to return to the White House again today to meet with Trump and Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and then lunch with the president and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

DEMOCRATIC SENATORS ASK IF TRUMP WILL REMOVE USDA LAND FROM MONUMENTS: Democratic Sens. [Debbie Stabenow](#) and [Michael Bennett](#) in a [letter](#) to Trump today him to clarify whether he intends to cut out any Forest Service-jurisdictional land when he shrinks Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. Trump is expected to announce his decision on the two monuments Monday and Bennet and Stabenow, who is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, said Trump's nominee for USDA general counsel testified that the agency did not recommend removing any of its forests from monument footprints.

— **Arizona Rep. [Ruben Gallego](#) introduced a bill today** to protect the Bears Ears monument. The bill "would protect the original acreage identified by the tribes as housing culturally sensitive artifacts and sacred lands," according to a [release](#) about the bill.

GLOBAL ACCORD MADE ON ARCTIC FISHING: Global powers have struck a deal to prevent fishing in parts of the Arctic, despite increased pressure from fishermen who are eyeing new waters opened by receding ice, POLITICO Europe's Kait Bolongaro [reports](#). At a Washington meeting on Thursday, the U.S., along with the EU, China, Russia, Japan, Canada,

Denmark, Norway, South Korea and Iceland, negotiated a draft agreement preventing high-seas fishing in the central Arctic Ocean following five rounds of talks. Their agreement still needs to be signed and ratified, Kait writes, and "is intended to allow time for scientific research on the possibility of fishing in the Arctic." Read the draft agreement [here](#).

OBAMA ADDRESSES CLIMATE, PARIS: Former President Barack Obama spoke to a leadership forum in India's capital today, where he said he couldn't debate climate change with people who claimed it wasn't real, the Associated Press [reports](#). "If you're saying it's a hoax, then there's no way for us to bridge our differences in a constructive way," Obama said, while acknowledging that he could discuss the topic with people who said fossil fuels were necessary for growth in poorer nations, like India. Though Obama did not mention Trump by name, it's well known the president has called climate change a hoax.

The former president also praised India for helping broker the Paris climate agreement — Obama's landmark climate achievement, which Trump has said he will withdraw from. "It's an agreement, even though we have a little bit of a pause in American leadership, that is giving our children a fighting chance," Obama said.

LIGHTER CLICK: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Director Scott Angelle checked out "3D seismic data on oil and gas in the Gulf." See it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Baker Hughes: U.S. drillers add oil rigs for second week in a row, [Reuters](#).
- Judge questions Exxon's attempt to block climate fraud investigations, [InsideClimate News](#).
- 5 takeaways from The Times's ClimateTECH conference, [The New York Times](#).
- Google now sources 100 percent of its energy from renewables, [Futurism](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Flynn pleads guilty to [lying to the FBI](#)
- Trump plans to declare Jerusalem [the capital of Israel](#)
- Black lawmakers wonder [why Conyers has to go](#) — but not Franken

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House ignores Cruz request for biofuels meeting [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/15/2017 09:55 AM EDT

The White House appears to have spurned a request from Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and eight

other senators to set up a meeting with seven Midwestern senators to discuss the Renewable Fuel Standard.

"We won't have such a meeting," Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) told reporters today. "The White House would have to be interested in such a meeting. I've not heard from the White House."

Cruz has been blocking Iowan Bill Northey from becoming an undersecretary at the Department of Agriculture in an effort to force corn-state senators to discuss changes to the program. Last month he led a [letter](#) to President Donald Trump asking for a meeting within three weeks. That period ends today. Cruz has [said](#) he would lift the hold when he gets a meeting.

The White House did not respond to questions about setting up a meeting, nor did Cruz's office. Cruz sent a letter on Tuesday to Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds explaining his desire to come to a compromise on the RFS to protect "liquid fuels."

Trump has consistently backed the RFS and the Midwestern senators in policy disputes, rejecting repeated efforts to change the program by a small group of refiners and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

WHAT'S NEXT: The final rule setting RFS requirements for 2018 and 2019 is due by Nov. 30.

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Trump to meet with Cruz over biofuel policy [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Andrew Restuccia | 12/01/2017 04:04 PM EDT

President Donald Trump will meet with Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and several Cabinet members next week to discuss U.S. biofuel policy and fuel efficiency standards, an administration official told POLITICO on Friday.

The Thursday meeting is an attempt by the White House to reach a compromise between Cruz, who has held up a Trump nominee to the Agriculture Department nominee over the administration's support for the Renewable Fuel Standard, and the farm-state lawmakers who pressured EPA to back down from potential changes to the regulations for biofuels.

The White House had until now [ignored](#) Cruz's requests for a meeting. Cruz and eight other senators sent a [letter](#) in October requesting changes to the program overseen by EPA, which sets the minimum volumes of ethanol and biodiesel to be used in the fuel market. Refiners must either purchase the biofuels to blend with their gasoline or diesel fuel, or buy credits to show their compliance — credits the refiners say are too expensive and threaten to push some refiners out of business.

Cruz retains a hold on Trump's nomination of Bill Northey to a senior USDA post, a move seen as payback after EPA backed down from considering changes in how the biofuels

program is implemented amid an outcry from farm-state lawmakers.

"The key here is they need to get Cruz something to get rid of that hold," said one industry representative familiar with the meeting.

The meeting will include Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, the administration official said, though the person added that the attendee list could change. No industry representatives are expected to attend.

While biofuels will most likely be the first topic discussed, attendees will also delve into the higher CAFE standards the Obama administration put into place, as well as octane requirements. The Trump administration has delayed implementing an increase in civil fines for automakers who violate the fuel economy standards, a move that [triggered](#) a lawsuit from environmentalists.

Cruz and Trump have had a rocky relationship in the past, including after Trump linked Cruz's father to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during the 2016 campaign, though they have been on better terms in recent months.

Cruz's office did not reply to a request for comment, and the White House declined to comment.

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Trump coal backer wins big under Perry's power plan [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Eric Wolff | 11/03/2017 05:01 AM EDT

A proposal by Energy Secretary Rick Perry to alter the nation's electricity markets would provide a windfall for a small group of companies — most strikingly one owned by coal magnate Bob Murray, a prominent backer of President Donald Trump.

Perry's plan would force consumers to subsidize ailing coal-fired and nuclear power plants with billions of dollars, in what he calls an effort to ensure that the nation's power network can withstand threats like terrorist attacks or severe weather. But his narrowly written proposal would mostly affect plants in a stretch of the Midwest and Northeast where Murray's mining company, Murray Energy, is the predominant supplier, according to a POLITICO analysis of Energy Department data.

The company and its PAC together sent \$200,000 to pro-Trump election efforts last year, while Bob Murray threw an invitation-only West Virginia fundraiser for Trump in 2016.

Perry's proposal, which needs approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, is the Energy secretary's most aggressive step yet toward helping Trump reverse what he has denounced as former President Barack Obama's "war on coal." But while it would stimulate demand for coal, it would also increase power prices for millions of customers.

The plan has stirred up opposition from an unlikely gathering of allies, including environmental groups, the natural gas, wind and solar industries and the American Petroleum Institute, normally one of the fossil-energy world's most potent advocates in Republican politics. But it has drawn cheers from coal companies, particularly those with operations in Appalachia.

"Customers get less than nothing while a few companies and their investors get a whole lot of something," Nora Mead Brownell, a Republican former electricity regulator, said of Perry's plan, noting the high cost estimates. "Money that gets spent there doesn't get invested in doing what you really need to do, which is upgrading the grid."

Meanwhile, Bob Murray's company has publicly acknowledged that its future depends on whether Perry's plan flies.

"Murray Energy has a vital and critical interest in the outcome of this rulemaking proceeding," the company said last month in its comments to regulators. "Given the current threats to those resources, Murray Energy, along with other coal producers and related industries ... is threatened with bankruptcy and significant economic harm if those resources are forced out of the market by unreasonable and unsupportable market pricing mechanisms."

The company declined to comment on its financial status or its communications with the Trump administration. But Bob Murray has been vocal in urging Trump and Perry to aid the U.S. coal industry, after he attacked Obama as "[the greatest destroyer](#) that America has ever seen."

Since Trump's swearing-in, Murray has made personal pleas for help in face-to-face meetings with Trump and DOE officials, including Perry and Brian McCormack, Perry's chief of staff.

At those meetings in the summer, [Murray urged](#) Trump to declare a power grid emergency and force coal-fired power plants owned by one financially troubled company, FirstEnergy Solutions, to stay open even if the company sank into bankruptcy. Those plants bought about two-thirds of their coal from Murray in 2015, according to POLITICO's analysis of U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

At DOE's urging, the White House ultimately declined to declare the emergency. But Perry's new proposed rule would accomplish the same result by requiring the power markets to cover the costs to run the economically ailing plants, enabling them to keep producing power.

Ohio-based Murray Energy, the No. 5 U.S. coal producer, is the largest supplier to the dwindling number of coal-fired power plants in one stretch of the Rust Belt and Appalachia, overseen by an electricity market called the PJM Interconnection. The power plants in PJM account for roughly 44 percent of Murray's sales, according to POLITICO's analysis.

Murray's nearest competitor, industry leader Peabody Energy Corp., sold about 9 percent of its coal in that market. In total, Murray sold 24 million tons of coal to PJM merchant coal plants in 2015, far more than Peabody's 15 million tons.

"Murray is by far the largest player in the Northern Appalachian basin and de facto one of the biggest gainers if FERC acts on the DOE [proposal]," said Joe Aldina, director of coal research for the analytics and data company S&P Global.

DOE defended its proposal, and said there was a clear need for some type of action.

"There is broad and substantial support for this action beyond coal suppliers," DOE public affairs director Robert Haus said in an email, noting that even critics have called for some kind of market reform. "Filed public comments show that while supporters and critics differ on how to approach reforming the market, there is widespread consensus that FERC needs to act."

The proposal is not Perry's first effort to promote coal, which has seen its share of the national electricity supply slump from more than 50 percent a decade ago to about one-third now — a fall mostly caused by flat power consumption and gains by natural gas.

In August, Perry's department issued a report that raised questions about whether coal's decline could threaten the country's power system, and contending that coal power plants' ability to run around-the-clock and store large fuel inventories gives them advantages over natural gas or renewable power when it comes to national security. Those advantages don't help them, though, in competitive markets where power sources go head to head on price.

The DOE proposal calls for power market operators to guarantee payments to power plants that keep 90 days of fuel on site. That requirement would be virtually impossible for natural gas-fired power plants to meet — they get their fuel via pipelines — and would totally exclude wind or solar plants.

By requiring 90 days of on-site fuel, the measure would create incentives for most coal-fired power plants to increase their fuel supplies, providing a quick boost for miners.

One [recent analysis](#) by consulting firm ICF said the proposal could cost nearly \$4 billion a year, while [another study](#) by Energy Innovation, a nonprofit firm that analyzes climate and energy policies, said the figure could be as high as \$10.6 billion annually. Perry has dismissed concerns over the costs, asking "What's the cost of freedom?" when [pressed by lawmakers](#).

"It's about the coal producers, frankly," said Kit Konolige, a senior utilities analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. The rule might affect individual power producers differently, he added, but "you can certainly say it would definitely be a plus for coal miners."

Players in the power business say the rule appears to focus on the PJM market, because it would only apply to electricity generators in certain types of regional power markets. It would exclude those in regions where state regulators oversee the economics of power companies.

The rule was "certainly targeted at the PJM region," said Andy Ott, CEO of PJM, which oversees all or parts of Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Among the nation's roughly 280,000 megawatts of coal-fired power, Perry's rule is tightly written to affect only about 40,000 megawatts, according to POLITICO's analysis. Power capacity from plants owned by the companies FirstEnergy and NRG account for nearly 40 percent of that slice, according to EIA data for 2015, the most recent year for which the information is complete. Murray provided two-thirds of the coal FirstEnergy bought for its competitive plants, and only 2 percent of NRG's.

Among those plants that would benefit from the plan are four coal power generating units at

FirstEnergy's Murray-supplied Sammis plant in Ohio that are set to retire within the next three years. FirstEnergy, the parent of the troubled FirstEnergy Solutions subsidiary, could see its plants sell an additional [\\$500 million](#) in electricity a year if Perry's plan is enacted, but its CEO played down the notion that Perry's effort was designed to help it.

"I don't think the DOE initiative has anything to do with FirstEnergy, despite what's been reported in some of the media," CEO Chuck Jones said on an earnings call with analysts. "I think it has to do with preserving critical fuel-secure baseload generating facilities — and I think that's what it'll do, whether FirstEnergy owns them or [FirstEnergy Solutions] creditors own them or whether FES creditors sell them to a third party that we don't even know of today."

The fate of Perry's proposed rule ultimately falls to the leaders of FERC, an independent agency largely made up of technocrats that have developed the power market rules over two decades. (The agency is overseen by a five-member bipartisan panel of presidential nominees.) Perry has directed the agency to take "final action" by Dec. 11, though the agency is not required to follow his timeline.

DOE's proposal has attracted vociferous opposition from power producers and trade groups representing wind, solar and natural gas energy, and has been criticized by five former FERC chairs from both parties. Dynegy and NRG Energy, two of the power companies likely to see the biggest benefits from the plan — and which have big investments in PJM competitive coal plants — also oppose the proposal as too expensive and a distortion of the market.

DOE's plan would also provide a lifeline to [money-losing nuclear plants](#) owned by Exelon Corp., NextEra Energy and FirstEnergy. But the coal industry says its situation is the more dire.

"We don't have time to wait for regular order," said Paul Bailey, CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, noting that DOE's plan wasn't the first to tackle problems in the power markets.

"The DOE-FERC proposal just magnifies the conversation that's going on and made it more urgent. What DOE did was good," he said. "Clearly, people are focusing on this right now to a degree they wouldn't have six months ago. No doubt about that."

Alex Guillén contributed to this report.

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Barrasso presses EPA to quickly finish RFS studies [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/01/2017 11:22 AM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) pressed EPA today to quickly finish studies of the Renewable Fuel Standard's environmental impacts.

The 2007 law shaping the RFS required EPA to study and report to Congress on whether the

RFS will hurt air quality, which the agency has not done. EPA has also failed to update a review of the RFS' effects on resource conservation. EPA's inspector general [dinged EPA](#) last year for failing to complete those studies.

"Over the last several years, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has heard increasing concerns about the environmental impacts of the RFS," Barrasso wrote in his [letter](#).

The agency plans to finish the resource conservation report by the end of this month, but Barrasso blasted the 2024 target to complete the air quality impact study, calling it "unacceptable."

"EPA cannot ignore the will of Congress and the requirements of the Clean Air Act for 17 years," he wrote. "I ask that you complete this study no later than September 30, 2018."

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Lawmaker behind secret \$84K sexual harassment settlement unmasked [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 12/01/2017 12:24 PM EDT

Rep. Blake Farenthold used taxpayer money to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by his former spokesman — the only known sitting member of Congress to have used a little-known congressional account to pay an accuser, people familiar with the matter told POLITICO.

Lauren Greene, the Texas Republican's former communications director, sued her boss in December 2014 over allegations of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment.

Greene said another Farenthold aide told her the lawmaker said he had "sexual fantasies" and "wet dreams" about Greene. She also claimed that Farenthold "regularly drank to excess" and told her in February 2014 that he was "estranged from his wife and had not had sex with her in years."

When she complained about comments Farenthold and a male staffer made to her, Greene said the congressman improperly fired her. She filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia, but the case was later dropped after both parties reached a private settlement.

No information was ever released on that agreement.

House Administration Committee Chairman Gregg Harper (R-Miss.) told GOP lawmakers in a closed-door Friday morning meeting that only one House office in the past five years had used an Office of Compliance account to settle a sexual harassment complaint. Harper said in that one instance, the settlement totaled \$84,000.

In a statement for this story, Farenthold would neither confirm or deny that his office was responsible for that \$84,000 payout.

"While I 100% support more transparency with respect to claims against members of Congress, I can neither confirm nor deny that settlement involved my office as the Congressional Accountability Act prohibits me from answering that question," Farenthold said in a statement.

Greene's lawyer, Les Alderman of Alderman, Devorsetz & Hora PLLC, also would not say whether Greene was the woman who received the \$84,000 Harper referred to.

But in a joint statement both Greene and Farenthold prepared at the time of the settlement but never released — a copy of which was shared with POLITICO by Alderman on Friday — the two confirmed they reached a deal in part to save taxpayer dollars.

"[A]fter it became clear that further litigating this case would come at great expense to all involved — including the taxpayers — the parties engaged in mediation with a court-appointed mediator," the statement read. "After extensive discussion and consideration, the parties jointly agreed to accept the solution proposed by the mediator."

The statement added: "The parties believe that the mediator's solution saves the parties, and the taxpayers, significant sums that would be expended in further discovery and/or trial."

The statement also states that Farenthold "disagrees strongly" with his client's allegations and "adamantly denies that he engaged in any wrongdoing." It says the settlement included a confidentiality agreement that precludes Greene and Farenthold from discussing the case and "expressly provides that both parties deny all liability."

The Office of Congressional Ethics also investigated Greene's allegations. In a letter to the House Ethics Committee the watchdog said "there is not substantial reason to believe that Representative Farenthold sexually harassed or discriminated against [ex-staffer Lauren Greene], or engaged in an effort to intimidate, take reprisal against, or discriminate against [Greene] for opposing such treatment, in violation of House rules and federal law."

It was unclear Friday afternoon whether the discovery would have political ramifications for Farenthold, who rode the Tea Party wave to Congress in 2010. The 55-year-old hails from the the southeast corner of Texas, a safe area for Republicans.

However, a [federal panel ruled](#) over the summer that the district was drawn primarily based on race and violated the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act. Farenthold has said he would seek reelection, despite the fact that the make-up of his district may soon change and include more Democratic areas.

The filing deadline for someone to challenge Farenthold is Dec. 11.

Even if he isn't challenged, Farenthold is likely to face repercussions from fellow House Republicans for using taxpayer money to settle a harassment claim. Recent reports, including in POLITICO, revealed that \$17 million has been paid out quietly to settle workplace disputes.

Harper said Friday that only \$360,000 of that total involved a House office.

That, however, won't stem demands from conservatives that members who have been part of such settlements use their own personal money to reimburse the treasury.

Farenthold has a minimum net worth of \$2.4 million, according to his most recent financial

disclosure [form](#).

Farenthold, a graduate of St. Mary's University School of Law, practice law for several years after college. He also worked as a radio disc jockey while in school. He later founded a web design and consulting firm before running for Congress.

Greene came to Capitol Hill as an intern in 2009, and was later promoted to full time in the office of ex-Rep. John Sullivan (R-Oak.). In early 2013, she moved to Farenthold's office, where she stayed for 18 months before her July 2014 firing.

According to Greene's complaint in court, Farenthold and his top aide, Bob Haueter, sexually harassed her, allegations that both men vehemently denied.

"Farenthold regularly drank to excess, and because of his tendency to flirt, the staffers who accompanied him to Capitol Hill functions would joke that they had to be on 'red head patrol to keep him out of trouble,'" Greene's complaint alleged. "On one occasion, prior to February 2014, during a staff meeting at which [Greene] was in attendance, Farenthold disclosed that a female lobbyist had propositioned him for a 'threesome.'"

The complaint added: "On June 10, 2014, in response to Haueter's complaint about [Greene's] shirt ... which Haueter claimed was transparent and showed [Greene's] nipples, Farenthold told [another woman staffer] that [Greene] could show her nipples whenever she wanted to," Greene's complaint asserted.

Greene said Farenthold avoided meeting one-on-one with her, and she also felt awkward about meeting with Farenthold.

When Greene complained to Farenthold directly in June 2014 about her problems with Haueter, she was "marginalized and undermined" by the Texas Republican, and then fired several weeks later, Greene asserted.

Greene took the matter to the Office of Compliance, which handles workplace disputes. She went through a month of mandatory counseling and mediation before filing suit.

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Tillerson dismisses reports of plan to oust him: 'It's laughable' [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 12/01/2017 10:47 AM EDT

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Friday called reports of a White House plan to oust him "laughable."

White House chief of staff John Kelly has created a plan to force Tillerson out of the State Department, according to The New York Times, which [reported](#) Thursday that CIA Director Mike Pompeo would succeed him, with Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) (R-Ark.) favored to take over the

CIA.

"It's laughable," he said of the plot, smiling. "It's laughable."

Tillerson made two unscheduled trips to the White House on Thursday. He is scheduled to return to the White House again on Friday to meet with President Donald Trump and Libyan Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj and then lunch with the president and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters on Thursday that Tillerson remains "committed to doing this job." She stressed, however, that Tillerson serves at the pleasure of the president.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said there were no personnel changes to announce Thursday and indicated that Trump maintains confidence in his secretary of State, despite their strained relationship.

"When the president loses confidence in someone, they will no longer serve in the capacity that they're in," she told reporters at Thursday's briefing.

Sanders called Tillerson "tough" and predicted that "he'll be just fine carrying his job out." Nauert similarly said Tillerson is an "unflappable" leader "whose feathers don't get ruffled very easily."

As of Thursday, Tillerson had not discussed the Times report with Trump, Nauert said. She acknowledged that Trump and Tillerson have policy disagreements but insisted the president respects his chief diplomat.

"I know that they've had certainly a cordial relationship," she said. "Where that relationship is today, I can't speak to that."

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Global powers strike deal to prevent a scramble for Arctic fish [Back](#)

By Kait Bolongaro | 12/01/2017 01:48 PM EDT

The world's leading powers have reached a deal not to fish in the Arctic despite pressure from fishermen wanting to exploit new waters opened up by receding ice.

At a meeting in Washington late Thursday, the EU, the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Norway, South Korea and Iceland negotiated a [draft agreement](#) to prevent high-seas fishing in the central Arctic Ocean after five rounds of talks.

They agreed a moratorium on unregulated commercial fishing in 2.8 million square kilometers of the high seas in the heart of the central Arctic Ocean, a pristine fishing ground slightly larger than the Mediterranean. Their accord, which still needs to be signed and ratified, is intended to allow time for scientific research on the possibility of fishing in the Arctic.

Disappearing Arctic ice has sparked fears among environmentalists of a gold rush among fishermen and energy companies. Among the trawlermen, the main species of interest is Arctic cod.

"Commercial fishing has never been known to occur in this area, nor is it likely to occur in the near future," said a statement from the chairman of the Washington meeting. It added Thursday's agreement would create a scientific research program to determine whether "fish stocks exist in this area that could be harvested on a sustainable basis."

The agreement is not only the first of its kind in this region but also marks a shift in Arctic policymaking by including non-Arctic European and east Asian countries in developing the policy.

"I have been heartened to see that the EU and Asian nations have come to negotiations in a serious way," said Scott Highleyman, vice president at the Ocean Conservancy, a U.S.-based organization.

Bringing Asia into the fold

The U.S. was the driving force behind the agreement after it [banned the expansion of commercial fisheries](#) in its Arctic waters in 2009. Negotiations began in 2013 and five countries — the U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway and Denmark — [signed](#) a declaration in 2015 to push the agreement forward.

Since the election of President Donald Trump, Canada has taken the lead on the file. Ottawa is pushing to host the planned joint research and monitoring program.

Despite not being members of the Arctic Council, negotiators opted to include China, Japan and Korea — three of the world's most powerful fishing nations — into the agreement. Several experts said the Asian presence was vital to ensuring any international accord would be enforceable given the region's legal gray zone and because China and South Korea both have active ice-breaker fleets.

Dr. Peiqing Guo, one of the lead Chinese Arctic experts working on the agreement and professor at the Ocean University of China, said Beijing was keen to play a key role in the Arctic as China solidifies its influence worldwide. Guo said that part of that strategy includes developing international laws and structures to regulate the Arctic, including in international waters.

"I think China will respect the leading role played by Arctic coastal states and offer wisdom for Arctic governance instead of raising unreasonable demands. Surely, China expects to be respected and treated fairly. That is to say, mutual respect between China and Arctic coastal states," Guo said.

Tokyo is also eager to be involved because Japan's presence in the Arctic is an important part of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "panoramic view of diplomacy," according to Dr. Fujio Ohnishi, one of the Japanese delegation's leading Arctic researchers based at Hokkaido University.

"The Arctic is considered a very good place to realize this since it is a new issue," Ohnishi said. "But a secondary factor is that environmental change in the Arctic region affects

countries like Japan."

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on Dec. 1, 2017.

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Flynn pleads guilty to lying to the FBI [Back](#)

By Josh Gerstein, Matthew Nussbaum and Theodoric Meyer | 12/01/2017 09:30 AM EDT

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty on Friday to one felony count of lying to the FBI about conversations he had with Russia's ambassador last year, bringing the special counsel's investigation into the 2016 election deeper into President Donald Trump's inner circle.

Prosecutors said Flynn's conversations about sanctions with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in late December 2016 appeared to come after input from at least two other top members of Trump's presidential transition team.

A Republican close to the White House indicated that Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, was one of the transition officials named in the Flynn plea documents.

Flynn's guilty plea came as part of a deal with special counsel Robert Mueller's team, as it investigates Russian interference in the election and whether any members of the Trump campaign were involved. Flynn has pledged to cooperate fully with the ongoing investigation, including by testifying in any other criminal cases prosecutors file.

The guilty plea, made in federal court in Washington, is the latest turn of fortune for Flynn, a retired Army general who served as national security adviser for less than a month. He is accused of lying to FBI agents in January, shortly after the inauguration, about his conversations with Kislyak.

The plea also represents a devastating moment for the Trump White House, which has at various times dismissed Russian interference in the election as "fake news" and predicted that the investigation would wrap up by the end of the year.

Adding to the administration's woes, the explosive news came as Republican senators on Capitol Hill scrambled to cobble together enough votes to push through a major tax cut bill, the administration's top legislative priority. With a vote expected Friday, the day was set to be a potential high watermark for a White House that has struggled to advance substantive legislation nearly a year into Trump's first term as it has dealt with the continually brewing Russia controversy.

Flynn admitted that he told agents that he had not asked Kislyak to avoid escalating tensions over sanctions imposed by former President Barack Obama, and he also told agents he had not asked Kislyak to delay or defeat a pending resolution at the U.N. Security Council. Both of those statements proved to be false, according to court documents.

At the hearing where Flynn entered his guilty plea Friday, prosecutor Brandon Van Grack offered additional details that appeared to connect Flynn's Russian contacts to the highest levels of the Trump transition team. Van Grack said Flynn spoke with Kislyak about sanctions after a phone call on the topic with "a senior official of the transition team at Mar-a-Lago."

"Immediately after that phone call, the defendant called the Russian ambassador," Van Grack said.

Van Grack also said that the conversation with Kislyak that Flynn lied about regarding the U.N. resolution came at the direction of "a very senior member" of the Trump transition team. The prosecutor did not further identify that individual.

The resolution in question was proposed by Egypt to reprimand the Israeli government over settlement activity.

"A very senior member of the Presidential transition team directed Flynn to contact officials from foreign governments, including Russia, to learn where each government stood on the resolution and to influence those governments to delay the vote or defeat the resolution," said a written statement of facts signed by Flynn and prosecutors.

Prosecutors did not allege that anyone told Flynn to lie about his talks with the Russian ambassador, which is the crime the former national security adviser admitted to Friday.

However, the sequence of events suggests the possibility that Flynn made the false statements to the FBI not only to protect himself from a potential criminal charge for conducting unauthorized diplomatic activity, but perhaps to prevent others in Trump's orbit from falling under suspicion under that two-century-old, rarely used statute.

The White House has consistently said the national security adviser misled top aides and officials — including Vice President Mike Pence, who led the transition — about his sanctions conversations. On Friday, the administration sought to play down the severity of the situation, pointing to Flynn's brief tenure.

"Today, Michael Flynn, a former National Security Advisor at the White House for 25 days during the Trump Administration, and a former Obama administration official, entered a guilty plea to a single count of making a false statement to the FBI," White House attorney Ty Cobb said in a statement. "The false statements involved mirror the false statements to White House officials which resulted in his resignation in February of this year. Nothing about the guilty plea or the charge implicates anyone other than Mr. Flynn. The conclusion of this phase of the Special Counsel's work demonstrates again that the Special Counsel is moving with all deliberate speed and clears the way for a prompt and reasonable conclusion."

But charging documents only deepened scrutiny of who knew what, and when. It remains unclear which transition official directed Flynn to contact Russia about the U.N. resolution, and which official discussed the sanctions conversation with him. The documents also note that "other senior members" of the transition were at Mar-a-Lago when the sanctions conversation took place, raising the prospect that numerous officials were aware of the contact.

Pence, who was still governor of Indiana during the transition, has maintained that he was unaware of the content of Flynn's conversations with Kislyak. Pence was in Indiana on Dec.

21 and was slated to stay there through the holidays, according to reports at the time. He hosted his son's wedding at the governor's residence in Indianapolis on Dec. 28, and remained in the state, with the exception of a day trip to Chicago for fundraising on Dec. 30, through the end of the year.

Flynn, 58, wearing a gray suit and striped tie, stood for more than half an hour Friday morning at a lectern in the crowded courtroom of U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras. Flanked by his defense attorneys Robert Kelner and Stephen Anthony, the retired general seemed calm as he gave "yes" or "no" answers to a series of routine questions about whether he understood the rights he was waiving by pleading guilty.

"Mr. Flynn, I assume you've never been through this process?" asked Contreras, an appointee of President Barack Obama.

"Never, your Honor," Flynn replied.

Near the end of the lengthy back-and-forth, Contreras asked: "Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, your Honor," Flynn said.

There were immediate signs that prosecutors are seeking to leverage Flynn's information to press forward with their investigation. No immediate sentencing date was set and Flynn was released on his own recognizance, with instructions to report to the court's probation department once a week.

Van Grack sought to put off further proceedings regarding Flynn for three months, but the judge told both sides to report to the court in writing by Feb. 1 on the status of the case. The plea agreement also includes a provision discussing the possibility that Flynn may provide information that helps prosecutors charge or convict someone else.

Flynn made no comment as he braved a crowd of reporters and camera crews to depart the courthouse after the 40-minute hearing.

In a written statement distributed by his attorneys, Flynn seemed to acknowledge that what he did was serious, but suggested it was not as grave as some of the most serious accusations made against him in recent months.

"It has been extraordinarily painful to endure these many months of false accusations of 'treason' and other outrageous acts," the retired lieutenant general and former Defense Intelligence Agency chief said. "Such false accusations are contrary to everything I have ever done and stood for. But I recognize that the actions I acknowledged in court today were wrong, and, through my faith in God, I am working to set things right. My guilty plea and agreement to cooperate with the Special Counsel's Office reflect a decision I made in the best interests of my family and of our country."

The mention of his family may have been in reference to his son Michael Flynn Jr., who served as a top aide to his father and has reportedly also come under investigators' scrutiny.

The new charge brings the criminal case into the Trump White House and raise questions about who else in the administration Mueller could be eyeing. And the news comes as a blow for the president, who defended Flynn even after he fired him for lying to Pence about the

same conversations with Kislyak. Former FBI Director James Comey has said Trump asked him in February to go easy on Flynn. Trump later fired Comey.

Flynn's alleged misstatements to the bureau predate Mueller's investigation. He was named special counsel in May, taking over a series of pending investigations related to Russia after Comey's firing.

Comey took to Twitter on Friday with a message that seemed to be in response to the news: "'But [let] justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' Amos 5:24."

Flynn was photographed and fingerprinted Friday morning at the FBI's Washington field office, as two other Trump associates, Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, were when they were charged in October. While declining to comment on Flynn specifically, an FBI source explained that this is the normal process for any arrest.

Flynn's charge comes with a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Defendants usually get far less than the maximum, particularly when they cooperate with prosecutors.

Flynn's conversations with Kislyak, especially his attempts to undercut the Obama administration's policy, appear well outside the purview of traditional actions taken during a transition.

"All governments want to meet with transition officials during the transfer of power from one president to another," Michael McFaul, a former top Obama administration official who would serve as the U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014, said in an emailed statement to POLITICO. "In 2008, we tried to minimize these interactions and focus on building our new foreign policy team. I never once spoke with a Russian official during the transition. That said, there is also a deft way to talk to governments about YOUR future policy ideas, abstractly, without interfering in the policies of the incumbent administration."

Democrats, meanwhile, reacted to the charge with apparent glee.

"Lock him up, lock him up, lock him up, lock him up," Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) wrote on Twitter, repurposing the "lock her up" chant that was a hallmark of Trump's campaign, and that Flynn himself at times deployed.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement: "Michael Flynn's guilty plea is about more than just lying to the FBI. What he lied about and when he did it are of even greater significance. This shows a Trump associate negotiating with the Russians against U.S. policy and interests before Donald Trump took office and after it was announced that Russia had interfered in our election. That's a stunning revelation and could be a violation of the Logan Act, which forbids unauthorized U.S. citizens from negotiating with a foreign power."

In 2016, Flynn was the rare establishment-type figure to come out vocally as a Trump supporter, earning him a prime speaking slot at the Republican National Convention, where, invoking Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, he joined the crowd in chants of "Lock her up!" Trump even considered picking Flynn as his running mate, and he appeared to relish in the support from someone who served more than three decades in the military, working as a

top intelligence officer in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Flynn had publicly soured on Trump's predecessor after he was ousted as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency in 2014 by Obama, who later [warned Trump](#) against hiring Flynn. Trump ignored the warning and [tapped Flynn](#) to be his national security adviser the week after the election.

But even as he was advising Trump during the campaign, Flynn was also lobbying for a firm run by a Turkish-American businessman with ties to the Turkish government. The firm paid Flynn's company, the Flynn Intel Group, more than \$500,000 last year as part of a campaign to discredit Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish cleric living in Pennsylvania whom the Turkish government has blamed for instigating a failed coup, according to lobbying disclosures.

Flynn retroactively registered with the Justice Department in March as a foreign agent because his lobbying work "could be construed to have principally benefited the Republic of Turkey," as Kelner, the defense attorney, wrote in a letter at the time. But Flynn admitted in a document released by the special counsel on Friday that he'd lied about the work he did in the registration, which Flynn's lawyers portrayed at the time as his coming clean about his lobbying work.

Flynn admitted to making "materially false statements and omissions" in his retroactive registration, including lying about the fact that the Turkish government officials were supervising and directing the work. He also misrepresented his lobbying work by stating that it was "focused on improving U.S. business organizations' confidence regarding doing business in Turkey," and lied about an op-ed he [published in The Hill](#) on Election Day in which he compared Gulen to Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Flynn stated in the registration in March that he'd written the op-ed voluntarily and not on behalf of Turkey or anyone else.

The document, which Flynn signed on Thursday under penalty of perjury, also contradicts the account of Ekim Alptekin, the Turkish-American businessman who hired Flynn through his company, Inovo BV. Alptekin told POLITICO in an interview in March that the Turkish government had no involvement in directing Flynn's work and that Flynn had written the op-ed in The Hill of his own accord.

"I really think that he's not very politically savvy," Alptekin [said at the time](#). "He acts on his motivational impulse."

Unlike Manafort and Gates, Flynn hasn't been charged with breaking foreign lobbying law, perhaps because he is cooperating with Mueller's team.

Flynn's potential legal troubles [extend beyond his lobbying](#).

Before joining Trump's campaign, he received more than \$65,000 from RT, Russia's state-owned TV network, and two other Russian companies in connection with a trip to Moscow in 2015 to give a speech. Retired military personnel are barred from receiving payments from foreign governments without permission, which Flynn apparently did not obtain. Flynn also failed to mention the trip or the payments when filling out a security clearance form in January, according to Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight Committee. Knowingly lying on such forms is a felony.

In May, CNN [reported](#) that federal prosecutors were issuing grand jury subpoenas in

Alexandria, Va., to associates of Flynn's. Later reports [indicated](#) that he asked for immunity in exchange for congressional testimony, but the request was denied. In September, his family [set up a fund](#) to accept contributions to pay for his legal defense.

Darren Samuelsohn, Andrew Restuccia and Louis Nelson contributed to this report.

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Trump plans to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 12/01/2017 01:07 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and his senior aides are preparing for a Wednesday announcement that the United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, according to a senior administration official.

The official said the specifics of the announcement are still in flux, adding that the White House is considering having Trump unveil the plan during a speech at the National Defense University in Washington.

The move, coupled with plans [under consideration](#) to eventually move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, could complicate efforts by Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner to restart peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Aides have said plans are still in flux and may change. The president had faced a Friday deadline under a 1995 law to issue a waiver allowing the embassy to remain in Tel Aviv, something presidents have routinely done since 1999.

Trump promised as a candidate to move the embassy, a longstanding concern of some American Jews and evangelical voters. He deferred taking such a step in June, signing a waiver in order to give Kushner time to work on his peace plan.

A White House spokesman said Thursday: "The president has always said it is a matter of when, not if. The president is still considering options and we have nothing to announce."

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By Kelsey Tamborrino | 05/15/2017 04:04 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén, Esther Whieldon and Annie Snider

HOW A FAKE CLIMATE MEME GOT ON TRUMP'S DESK: President Donald Trump rarely surfs the web on his own, POLITICO's Shane Goldmacher reports — but his staff have made a habit of slipping news stories onto his desk, including the occasional internet hoax, in an attempt to press their advantage on policy.

Deputy national security adviser K.T. McFarland gave the president a printout of two Time magazine covers. One, supposedly from the 1970s, warned of a coming ice age; the other, from 2008, about surviving global warming. After reading the material, Trump quickly got riled about the media's hypocrisy. But there was a problem: The 1970s cover was fake, part of an internet hoax that's circulated for years. Staff chased down the truth and intervened before Trump tweeted or talked publicly about it. Read more [here](#).

TAKING STOCK: POLITICO's Maggie Severns investigates Congress' most eager stock traders and found 28 House members and six senators each traded more than 100 stocks in the past two years. That places them in the potential cross hairs of a conflict of interest on a regular basis, and a handful of lawmakers, some of them frequent traders and some not, disproportionately trade in companies that also have an interest in their work on Capitol Hill.

Included in that group is Tennessee Sen. [Bob Corker](#), who was an original cosponsor of a bill to eliminate the oil export ban in 2015, Maggie reports. Corker bought shares in Chesapeake Energy, which was part of a coalition pushing for an end to the ban, in the months leading up to Congress passing the legislation. Also of note: Oregon Democratic Rep. [Kurt Schrader](#), who sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has made a substantial number of trades so far this year in companies that have an interest in the committee's health and energy work, including Exxon Mobil, Marathon Oil and Gas, Conoco Phillips, Pfizer and Eli Lilly. Schrader has made close to 700 stock trades over the past two years. Read more [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy and happy Monday! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino, flagging [this news](#) that the Capitol Reflecting Pool is now more easily duck accessible. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@daily1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

SEIA CEO SAYS TRADE FIX NOT NEEDED: Solar Energy Industries Association CEO Abigail Ross Hopper in a press call today said she doesn't really see a need for any kind of trade fix in response to Suniva's request to impose trade restrictions on imported solar cells and modules. "The best way to deal with oversupply is let the market act," Hopper said. The association has come out in opposition to Suniva's petition to the U.S. International Trade Commission, arguing it would do more damage than good to US jobs and local manufacturing. Hopper added that a supply glut in the market is a common occurrence and doesn't necessarily

equal dumping.

EARTHJUSTICE QUESTIONS BERNHARDT RECUSAL PLEDGE: Earthjustice in a [letter](#) to the White House Friday argued Trump's nominee for Interior Deputy Secretary, David Bernhardt, is flouting the president's ethics guidelines that require lobbyists appointed to government positions to recuse themselves from issues involving past clients for two years. Bernhardt has [pledged](#) to avoid past clients for one year. "If confirmed, Mr. Bernhardt would be charged with overseeing a vast array of public lands, wildlife and waterways related policy areas," the letter says. "A one-year recusal would not sufficiently address these conflicts and would call into serious question the administration's commitment to transparency, accountable and ethical government."

SCOTUS WANTS TRUMP THOUGHTS ON MINING DISPUTE: The Supreme Court today asked the Trump administration to weigh in on a case about state bans on mining practices on federal lands. Justices are considering the case of a gold miner prosecuted by California for using suction dredge mining, a practice prohibited by the state, to search for gold in riverbeds on a claim in a federal forest. Such a request does not indicate the justices necessarily will take the appeal, but it does mean they are giving it a closer look. The case is 16-790, *Brandon Rinehart v. California*.

LET THE MEETINGS BEGIN: Supporters of the Obama administration's Waters of the U.S. rule are lining up to lobby the White House as its regulatory shop considers the Trump administration's first step towards undoing it. The Natural Resources Defense Council, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, have [meetings](#) set up over the next week and a half with the Office of information and Regulatory Affairs, which is reviewing a rule proposal from EPA to withdraw the Obama administration rule and formally revert to the previous guidelines — which remained in effect after a federal court stayed the WOTUS rule. That proposed rule is the first step as the Trump administration's EPA sets about writing its own rule defining which streams and wetlands are protected under the Clean Water Act.

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Republican lobbying firm CGCN Group is bringing on Mike Freeman as a partner. Freeman was previously counsel on the House Natural Resources Committee and before that, worked as an energy and natural resources adviser to Sen. Mike Lee. He also previously was an attorney-adviser at FERC. Freeman is not subject to the House's cooling-off period for senior staffers, meaning he's allowed to lobby his former colleagues immediately. (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#))

CRES FORMS (c)(3): Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions today announced the launch of its CRES Forum, a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that "will educate the public and influence the national conversation about commonsense clean energy solutions," CRES said. Charles Hernick will serve as CRES Forum's director of policy and advocacy, as well as lead the organization's policy work. In a statement, Hernick said, "It is time for commonsense, market-friendly clean energy solutions to address America's energy challenges."

FIGHT OVER FLOOD INSURANCE: A House Republican [plan](#) that would reduce the availability of government flood insurance is drawing opposition from industry groups, Pro Financial Services' Zachary Warmbrodt reports. "Insurers and builders are preparing to push back against the House Financial Services Committee's proposed overhaul of the National Flood Insurance Program, which helps protect millions of homeowners from the economic

risks of flooding, but is saddled with \$24.6 billion in debt following catastrophic hurricanes." More [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- OPEC, Russia hint at extending output cuts into 2018; oil jumps, [FuelFix](#).
- Energy Secretary Rick Perry: I would Have Let James Comey Go If I Were President, [Fox News Radio](#).
- Solar, wind industries pitch job growth to new administration, [Bloomberg BNA](#).
- An endangered Republican's quest to whip votes, win allies, [E&E News](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

How Trump gets his fake news [Back](#)

By Shane Goldmacher | 05/15/2017 05:20 AM EDT

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus issued a stern warning at a recent senior staff meeting: Quit trying to secretly slip stuff to President Trump.

Just days earlier, K.T. McFarland, the deputy national security adviser, had given Trump a printout of two Time magazine covers. One, supposedly from the 1970s, warned of a coming ice age; the other, from 2008, about surviving global warming, according to four White House officials familiar with the matter.

Trump quickly got lathered up about the media's hypocrisy. But there was a problem. The 1970s cover was fake, part of [an Internet hoax](#) that's circulated for years. Staff chased down the truth and intervened before Trump tweeted or talked publicly about it.

The episode illustrates the impossible mission of managing a White House led by an impetuous president who has resisted structure and strictures his entire adult life.

While the information stream to past commanders-in-chief has been tightly monitored, Trump prefers an open Oval Office with a free flow of ideas and inputs from both official and unofficial channels. And he often does not differentiate between the two. Aides sometimes slip him stories to press their advantage on policy; other times they do so to gain an edge in the seemingly endless "Game of Thrones" inside the West Wing.

The consequences can be tremendous, according to a half-dozen White House officials and others with direct interactions with the president. A news story tucked into Trump's hands at the right moment can torpedo an appointment or redirect the president's entire agenda. Current and former Trump officials say Trump can react volcanically to negative press clips, especially those with damaging leaks, becoming engrossed in finding out where they originated.

That is what happened in late February when someone mischievously gave the president a printed copy of an article from GotNews.com, the website of Internet provocateur Charles C. Johnson, which accused deputy chief of staff Katie Walsh of being "the source behind a bunch of leaks" in the White House.

No matter that Johnson had been permanently [banned from Twitter](#) for harassment or that he offered no concrete evidence or that he's lobbed false accusations in the past and recanted them. Trump read the article and began asking staff about Walsh. Johnson told POLITICO that he tracks the IP addresses of visitors to his website and added: "I can tell you unequivocally that the story was shared all around the White House."

White House chief strategist Steve Bannon defended Walsh, who has since left the administration to advise a pro-Trump group, in a statement to POLITICO: "Katie was a key member of the team and is a trusted friend and ally of the White House. No one in the White House took that article seriously." Walsh declined to comment.

But the smear of one of Priebus' closest allies - Walsh was his chief of staff at the Republican National Committee — vaulted from an obscure web posting to the topic of heated conversation in the West Wing, setting off mini internal investigations into who had backstabbed Walsh.

When Trump bellows about this or that story, his aides often scramble in a game of cat-and-mouse to figure out who alerted the president to the piece in the first place given that he rarely browses the Internet on his own. Some in the White House describe getting angry calls from the president and then hustling over to Trump's personal secretary, Madeleine Westerhout, to ferret who exactly had just paid a visit to the Oval Office and possibly set Trump off.

Priebus and White House staff secretary Rob Porter have tried to implement a system to manage and document the paperwork Trump receives. While some see the new structure as a power play by weakened chief of staff — "He'd like to get a phone log too," cracked one senior White House adviser—others are more concerned about the unfettered ability of Trump's family-member advisers, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, to ply the president with whatever paperwork they want in the residence sight unseen.

"They have this system in place to get things on his desk now," the same White House official said. "I'm not sure anyone follows it."

Priebus has implored staff to do so in order to abide by presidential record-keeping laws, which require cataloguing what the president sees for the archives.

Lisa Brown, who served as White House staff secretary under President Barack Obama for two years, said it can be "dangerous" when people make end-runs around paperwork procedures, leaving the president with incomplete or one-sided information at key junctures.

"It's even more important with someone like this," she said of Trump, a president notoriously influenced by the last person he has spoken to, "but the challenge is he has to buy into it."

"You know that people are going to go around the system. But then it's up to the principal to decide how to handle it," Brown added. "You need the president to say 'thanks, I appreciate it' [when he receives stories] and to hand it off to get it into a process."

McFarland, who is expected to leave the NSC [for the ambassadorship to Singapore](#), did not respond to requests for comment about bringing the president a fake news magazine cover. But another White House official familiar with the matter tried to defend it as an honest error that was "fake but accurate."

"While the specific cover is fake, it is true there was a period in the 70s when people were predicting an ice age," the official insisted. "The broader point I think was accurate."

Trump may not be a fan of briefing books but he does devour the news. Most mornings, current and former aides say, Trump reads through a handful of newspapers in print, including the New York Times, New York Post, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal — all while watching cable news shows in the background.

He uses the Internet minimally, other than tweeting and tracking his mentions, so what other news stories he sees can be more haphazard. Trump does receive a daily binder of news clippings put together his communications team, but White House officials disagreed about how much he reads those. White House and former campaign aides have tried to make sure Trump's media diet includes regular doses of praise and positive stories to keep his mood up — [a tactic honed by staff during the campaign to keep him from tweeting angrily](#)).

There is universal agreement among Trump advisers on this: The best way to focus the president's attention on any story is to tell him about it personally, even if it is in one of the papers he's already thumbed through. But officials say it's a high-risk, high-reward proposition because Trump's frustrations at bad stories can easily boomerang against those delivering him the news.

Still, Trump advisers are unwilling to give up the chance to directly bend the president's ear and hand him supporting documents because they have seen how he can be swayed.

When Secretary of State Rex Tillerson wanted to appoint Elliott Abrams, a veteran of the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush White Houses, as his No. 2, someone in the president's orbit made sure Trump was freshly aware of Abram's anti-Trump comments from 2016, such as a [Weekly Standard op-ed](#) in which Abrams wrote, "The party has nominated someone who cannot win and should not be president."

Trump personally intervened to [block Abrams' appointment](#).

More recently, when four economists who advised Trump during the campaign — Steve Forbes, Larry Kudlow, Arthur Laffer and Stephen Moore — wrote in a [New York Times op-ed](#) that "now is the time to move it forward with urgency," someone in the White House flagged the piece for the president.

Trump summoned staff to talk about it. His message: Make this the tax plan, according to one White House official present.

The op-ed came out on a Wednesday. By Friday, Trump was telling the Associated Press, "I shouldn't tell you this, but we're going to be announcing, probably on Wednesday, tax reform," startling his own aides [who had not yet prepared such a plan](#). Sure enough, the next Wednesday Trump's economic team was rolling out a tax plan that echoed the op-ed.

Moore was at the White House that day. "Several of the White House folks came up to us and said, 'It's your op-ed that got Trump moving on this,'" Moore said. "I've probably written 1,000 op-eds on my life but that might have been the most impactful."

So who was his guardian angel in the White House?

"We still don't know," he said.

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Reckless stock trading leaves Congress rife with conflicts [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 05/15/2017 05:17 AM EDT

Even a looming scandal wouldn't deter some of Congress' most eager stock traders.

Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.), President Donald Trump's nominee to be Health and Human Services secretary, was under siege, the harsh lights of a Senate hearing upon him. News reports showed he had bought shares in a tiny biotechnology company while sitting on committees that could influence the firm's prospects. A colleague, Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.), had tipped him off to the investment.

A Washington Post editorial called Price "a walking, talking example of the ways in which congressional ethics requirements are too lax." Sen. Chris Murphy demanded: "Tell me how it can possibly be OK that you were championing positions on health care issues that have the effect of increasing your personal wealth?" Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked him, "Doesn't this show bad judgment?"

But what many saw as a scandal, others saw as an opportunity. On the very day that Wyden was decrying Price's bad judgment, Rep. Doug Lamborn, Republican of Colorado, bought shares of the same tiny Australian company, Innate Immunotherapeutics. Within two days three more members also bought in — Republicans Billy Long of Missouri, Mike Conaway of Texas and John Culberson of Texas. Conaway added more shares the following week.

These brazen decisions to gobble up shares of a little-known firm at the very moment when such trading was being decried as an abuse of power reflects Congress' anything-goes culture around stock investments. In the pursuit of wealth, even obvious conflicts of interest are routinely ignored by members who feast on daily trades. Long, for instance, serves on a committee overseeing Obamacare, and Conaway is a deputy House whip.

The health care lawmakers who invested in Innate Immunotherapeutics are hardly alone in trading in companies that have a major interest in federal legislation, according to a three-month investigation and examination of all stock trades by members of Congress.

POLITICO found that 28 House members and six senators each traded more than 100 stocks in the past two years, placing them in the potential cross hairs of a conflict of interest on a regular basis. And a handful of lawmakers, some of them frequent traders and some not, disproportionately trade in companies that also have an interest in their work on Capitol Hill.

The investigation found that:

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, the Rhode Island Democrat who sits on the Senate HELP Committee, which oversees health care, is a heavy investor in pharmaceutical stocks. Last November, as lawmakers closed in on a bipartisan deal over a significant medical research bill called the 21st Century Cures Act, Whitehouse bought shares in the pharmaceutical firms McKesson, Gilead, and Abbott Labs 10 days before the bill was made public. Whitehouse and his wife bought additional stock in Gilead and Amgen on Nov. 28, two days before the House voted on the bill. The day President Barack Obama signed the bill into law, Whitehouse started a series of three sales of shares in those companies.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, Republican of Illinois, was a guest speaker at Prescient Edge, a small research and technology firm with Defense Department contracts, in January of 2016. When the company raised private capital later that year, Kinzinger bought in to the tune of \$20,002. Kinzinger is now a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which oversees issues affecting Prescient Edge.

Rep. Chuck Fleischmann, Republican of Tennessee, sits on the health care appropriations panel. As Vice President Joe Biden was pressing lawmakers to approve funding for his "Cancer Moonshot" proposal in the summer of 2016, a Fleischmann family account invested in two companies, Juno Therapeutics and Celgene, which were developing new cancer drugs. One of the investments was made a week before the Obama administration announced new measures that would speed up approval for cancer therapies.

Conaway, the Texas Republican, who is a House deputy majority whip, introduced a bill in late 2015 that would pave the way for an area nuclear waste storage facility in his district. The following spring, the storage facility's owner applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for approval to open. Within days, an account owned by Conaway's wife bought stock in a nuclear power company that operated in states surrounding Texas and stood to benefit from a nearby storage facility.

Sen. Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee, was an original cosponsor of a bill to eliminate the oil export ban in 2015. He bought shares in Chesapeake Energy, which was part of a coalition of companies pushing for an end to the ban, in the months leading up to Congress passing the energy-friendly legislation. The day after it was announced that the ban would be included in a piece of must-pass legislation, Corker sold at least \$500,001 of the stock in Chesapeake.

House and Senate members who are active traders insist their buying and selling is a normal part of managing their finances, as with any American who wants to save for retirement or put their kids through school. But their colleagues don't seem to agree. The clear majority of lawmakers avoid potential conflicts of interest by buying mutual funds, putting their portfolios in blind trusts or simply staying out of the stock market.

POLITICO found that 384 House members and senators who served in the 114th Congress

made no stock trades over the past two years. Meanwhile, the lawmakers who are active in stock trading conducted a total of more than 21,300 trades during the past two years, but a small group of very wealthy lawmakers accounted for a significant share of those trades.

Texas Republican Rep. Mike McCaul — whose wife, Linda, is the daughter of Clear Channel communications founder Lowry Mays — reported approximately 7,300 stock transactions in an array of industries over the two-year period. Oregon Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader, who sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has made a substantial number of trades so far this year in companies that have an interest in the committee's health and energy work, including Exxon Mobil, Marathon Oil and Gas, Conoco Phillips, Pfizer and Eli Lilly. Schrader has made close to 700 stock trades over the past two years.

In some cases, these very wealthy lawmakers own significant stakes in private companies that are affected by their legislative work. Conaway maintains partial ownership in oil and gas companies that stand to benefit from energy-related bills he's sponsored in Congress. GOP Kentucky Rep. Hal Rogers traded dozens of stocks while serving as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, which affects a broad array of policy areas. Rogers also maintained partial ownership of a small bank and collected at least \$100,000 in dividends from the bank while chairing the committee, which is on the front lines of deciding whether to roll back Dodd-Frank regulations on banks. Under congressional rules, owning companies and sitting on corporate boards is permitted so long as members don't draw a salary. Rogers didn't respond to requests for comment.

Ethics-concerned lawmakers and experts who have labored for years to persuade Congress to regulate itself over apparent conflicts of interest were surprised by POLITICO's findings because Congress passed a law designed to curb lawmaker insider trading and stock trades just five years ago. They had assumed 2012's Stock Act, which created new disclosures about the stock trades and for the first time explicitly barred lawmakers from insider trading, had deterred most lawmakers from engaging in conflicts of interest. At the time the bill was passed, many thought the simple fear of exposure and political embarrassment would stop the conflicts of interest.

Now they aren't so sure.

"I'm deeply concerned," said Minnesota Democratic Rep. Tim Walz, an early supporter of the Stock Act who does not himself trade stocks. "If you buy stock and then do something that changes that stock, you've got to know what's going on."

In December, Congress approved the 21st Century Cures Act, a bill stocked with \$6.3 billion in new funding for medical research and faster drug approval. In the months leading up to the vote, more than 1,000 lobbyists flocked to Capitol Hill to make their case for what should be included in the legislative package. It was a rare opportunity to dramatically increase the amount of federal money going into pharmaceuticals. It was also, as it turned out, a time when some of the members who contributed to the writing of the bill boosted their own portfolios of drug stocks, POLITICO found.

Whitehouse, Collins, Price and Fleischmann all invested in pharmaceutical companies over the months that the bill was being pulled together. Price traded and held multiple medical stocks, including McKesson, while contributing to the 21st Century Cures Act. Collins sat on

the boards of multiple medical companies and bought and sold health care stocks while authoring parts of the bill.

Whitehouse, the veteran Democrat on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, began a series of purchases in health care stocks related to the bill in mid-November, through his own accounts and family accounts. At the time, negotiators were wrestling over the final version of 21st Century Cures and hoping to vote on it in a matter of weeks. Eager to battle prescription-drug addiction in his home state of Rhode Island, Whitehouse pushed leaders to include funding to fight opioid abuse, as well as health IT legislation. Both of Whitehouse's measures were eventually included in 21st Century Cures.

Ten days before lawmakers announced their breakthrough agreement on the bill, Whitehouse, through his and his family's accounts, bought shares in Gilead Sciences, Abbott Laboratories and McKesson, a pharmaceutical and health IT company. It was the third time that fall that he had bought McKesson shares. The three companies, which combined to spend more than \$7.2 million on lobbying in 2016, had all been lobbying Capitol Hill on the 21st Century Cures Act. In the case of McKesson, the company also reported having lobbied on Whitehouse's IT bill.

Health care negotiators released the final version of 21st Century Cures on a Friday. The following Monday, Whitehouse purchased more stock in Gilead, as well as shares of the pharmaceutical company Amgen. In just over a week — with lawmakers racing against the December recess — the bill was approved by Congress. Ten days after President Barack Obama signed it, Whitehouse sold some of his stock in Gilead, Amgen and Biogen.

Asked about the trades, Whitehouse said his stockbroker acted without his knowledge.

"I don't decide on, neither am I even informed of, trades that are made in my account," Whitehouse said. "I would find out when the filing goes out. I wouldn't know anything about it at the time, and, frankly, I don't know anything about it now." Whitehouse's office provided a letter from his financial adviser that said his account was managed without his input, and he was not alerted of trades in advance.

It's a common refrain from lawmakers engaged in trades while considering legislation that would benefit their investments — their stockbrokers manage their accounts without their input. That's what Price claimed about some of his trades at his confirmation hearing as Health and Human Services secretary. It's also what Conaway, the House majority deputy whip, said about his purchases, which included the little-known Australian firm that caused Price so much trouble, Innate Immunotherapeutics.

Asked whether his investments presented conflicts of interest, Conaway said he didn't see any potential conflicts and doesn't have control over his trades.

"We have professional traders who make trades either on their own, because they have the authority, or with my wife," Conaway said. As for his purchase of shares in the nuclear company Entergy, which stood to benefit from the storage facility he advocated, he said, "That's not something I authorized personally."

Schrader, of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, also said he did not personally direct his investments. "These trades are not self-directed decisions. I check in with my team of advisers periodically for updates on my portfolio, but I am not making the day-to-day decisions," Schrader said in a statement.

Fleischmann, who purchased stock in two cancer treatment companies, said in a statement that he's proud to advocate for cancer research after having lost both his parents to the disease.

"There are no longer earmarks in Congress and I do not determine or advocate where NIH's funds specifically go once they have been allocated," Fleischmann said. "In regard to my stocks, I treat my investments like a blind trust and was unaware of the transaction since my financial adviser makes the transactions."

But Whitehouse, Conaway, Schrader, Fleischmann and other lawmakers who bought stocks in firms that stand to benefit from federal legislation haven't taken the one step that would assure that their investments were truly blind — setting up a blind trust, in which funds are managed independently without the lawmakers' knowledge.

There is a clear procedure to do so, and eight members — including such veteran lawmakers as Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California, and Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah — have taken the step. It's relatively simple: It requires hiring a manager for the trust, drawing up paperwork and submitting it to the House or Senate ethics committee. Once the blind trust is approved, the trustee takes over the fund and, over time, makes decisions on buying and selling assets. The lawmaker doesn't participate at all.

If members choose not to set up a blind trust, ethics specialists say, their claims of not being involved in their investments inevitably ring hollow.

"If you're really not going to be involved, then put it in a blind trust and let a truly independent adviser — not a family relative — make those decisions for you," said Larry Noble, general counsel at the Campaign Legal Center. "When they say, 'Well I didn't know my broker was going to buy it,' you have to start parsing words. You didn't know he was going to buy it that day? Or, you've never had a conversation with your broker about buying that kind of stock?"

And then there's the even easier path of buying mutual funds that aren't tied to a particular industry. In such investments, fund managers make the decisions to buy and sell.

"The best way to proceed for members or staff of Congress is to invest in mutual funds or other similar investment vehicles to avoid any questions or appearances that might arise around whether nonpublic information was used for stock trades," said attorney Robert Walker, former counsel for the House and Senate Ethics committees. "It might lead to a boring investment life, but that's the more prudent ethical and political course."

Now, after seeing how members are continuing to trade stocks despite the potential conflicts of interest, ethics specialists are convinced there need to be tougher laws.

There's "an urgent need" for Congress to take another look at its rules surrounding potential conflicts of interest, said Indiana University professor Donna Nagy, who has written extensively on lawmaker stock trades.

"The public shouldn't even have to ask the question of whether members of Congress have had their activities influenced by their own personal investments," Nagy said. "In the executive branch, it is a federal crime."

* * *

Indeed, if Whitehouse, Collins or Fleischmann worked at the White House or a federal agency, they could face an investigation simply for working on the health care bill while holding stocks that had an interest in the bill — regardless of whether those holdings had any effect on their decisions.

But Congress isn't nearly as tough on itself as the rest of the government.

When the need for tougher conflict-of-interest laws has been broached in the past, lawmakers have often offered two rationales for opposing them: It would be difficult to avoid conflicts of interest given the range of interests that are affected by legislation, and disclosures would have the necessary deterrent effect.

When former Washington state Democratic Rep. Brian Baird first proposed new restrictions on lawmakers' stock trades in 2006, some members went so far as to object on the grounds of the Constitution's speech and debate clause, which protects lawmakers from being sued over what they say or do in Congress, in order to protect members from being persecuted for unpopular beliefs. Others said it would be too burdensome to have to file all their trades with the ethics offices.

Baird saw another reason why lawmakers opposed the plan: "There's a subset that believes themselves to be entitled. They think of themselves as ethical innately," Baird, who left Congress in 2011, said recently. "If that were not the case, why was there so much resistance to the Stock Act?"

Baird wanted to make insider trading illegal for lawmakers, and make it easier for the press and others to find and spotlight members' stock trading. He proposed requiring lawmakers to quickly disclose their stock trades, and mandating that political intelligence operatives — who specialize in relaying Capitol Hill information to Wall Street investors — register like lobbyists do.

The bill languished for more than five years after Baird first introduced it, but the Stock Act's fortune started changing in late 2011 when a "60 Minutes" episode spotlighted dubious trades made by lawmakers. Its subjects included House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who had participated in a profitable IPO for Visa while Congress was considering legislation that would have hurt credit card companies. Within days, lawmakers leapt into action and added their names as cosponsors by the dozen. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, keen to put new checks on Pelosi, joined reform-minded Democrats to lead the charge. The Stock Act was swept into law by the following April.

The final bill barred lawmakers from insider trading, as Baird had proposed, and required members to report all trades within 30 days. The political intelligence component was stripped from the bill by Cantor.

Since its passage, the Stock Act appears to have deterred some lawmakers from making trades. Pelosi, one of the House's wealthiest members, sold Visa shares and bought Apple and Disney, among 16 trades she made over the past two years.

But the bill's enforcement mechanisms have been hard to implement. So far, no one has been convicted of insider trading under the Stock Act. And when the Securities and Exchange Commission sought to enforce the act in recent years, it ran up against sweeping opposition in Congress.

That case involves a former Ways and Means Committee staff director, who allegedly leaked information that Medicare reimbursement rates were about to rise in 2013. The tip found its way to a political intelligence firm, Height Securities, which sent information to hedge funds that rushed to buy stock in Humana, a company that benefited from the rate hike.

When the SEC subpoenaed documents and interviews related to its investigation, House counsel refused to comply. "At least some, and perhaps all" of the information requested by the SEC is protected under the speech and debate clause, counsel argued in a letter. The committee's rebuff set the SEC on a two-and-a-half-year court struggle over the documents that was settled this spring when the two sides reached an out-of-court compromise.

The case demonstrated that "the speech and debate clause is going to be a virtually impenetrable barrier to ever proving one of these cases, even assuming there was insider trading as they defined it," said Stanley Brand, former House general counsel and lawyer at Akin Gump.

That could effectively knock out the biggest deterrence to conflicts of interest. But even if it didn't, some ethicists and lawmakers pointed out, most conflicts of interest don't rise to the level of insider trading, anyway.

For example, during a trip to his home state of Illinois last January, Kinzinger, who has represented the exurbs of Chicago since 2011, went downtown to address a group of business executives. His after-lunch topic was national security, a subject near and dear to his heart as a former Air Force pilot. The hosts of the luncheon — a small security and research firm called Prescient Edge — were soon to be of personal interest to Kinzinger, too: When the private company sought to raise money later that year, Kinzinger invested between \$15,001 and \$50,000, filings show.

Kinzinger's investment opportunity wouldn't be available to most of his voters. And Kinzinger, from his perch on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, remains invested in a company that receives contracts from the Defense Department, including \$148,468 in 2017.

Kinzinger spokesperson Maura Gillespie said in an email that "the congressman was made aware by his financial adviser of a capital raise by the Prescient Edge and so he cleared his investment through [the ethics committee] before buying stock." Gillespie added that "should Prescient have business before the [Foreign Affairs Committee], then he would of course recuse himself, in accordance with ethics."

Meanwhile, the notion that members would police themselves closely because of fear of voter backlash has rarely materialized. Lawmakers' stocks can become campaign issues, but they are rarely the deciding factor in a race. Especially in the House, a significant group of lawmakers represent safe districts where their reelection campaigns rarely grab headlines. Kinzinger, for one, ran unopposed in 2016.

"The public can't be expected to learn about every one of these things. The press can't be expected to cover all of them," Noble said. "And if we think [trading stocks] undermines that they really have their constituents at heart, then it should be prohibited."

Corker, whose seat in red-state Tennessee is considered secure, has made a number of large stock trades over the years. As for his trade in between \$500,001 and \$1,000,000 in Chesapeake Energy, which he bought shortly before Congress announced its agreement to lift

the oil export ban and sold shortly after, Corker spokesperson Micah Johnson said that the senator made the sale to avoid a potential conflict of interest.

"Prior to the vote . . . out of an abundance of caution and to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, Sen. Corker sold his shares at a significant loss," Johnson said. (Three days after Obama signed the bill, Corker again bought Chesapeake Energy stock, which he soon sold at a profit.)

A former aide to a senator who regularly bought and sold stocks linked to his committee work described "a false sense of victimization" among lawmakers who have watched the perks of their job, like gifts and free dinners from lobbyists, get whittled away.

"This feels harmless," the aide said, but "it's one more reason why no one trusts Congress."

In the midst of the controversy over Price's purchase of Innate Immunotherapeutics, Nagy, of Indiana University, was one of several experts who penned op-eds calling for new rules to prevent lawmakers from holding stocks that conflict with their legislative work. It ran the day Price's House colleagues began picking up stock in the same firm. At the time, the possibility that other lawmakers might hear those calls and still buy stock in the same firm seemed beyond possibility.

"I had hoped it would have precisely the opposite effect," Nagy said recently.

It's highly unlikely that the lawmakers would have come across the firm Innate Immunotherapeutics had Price's purchase of discounted stock in the company not caused a public uproar. The company has no approved drugs on the market and little name recognition in the U.S.

But Collins is the company's largest shareholder and sits on its board, and Collins' family members and chief of staff are also among the biggest investors in the company. Price learned about the company from Collins, though he's maintained Collins didn't share any information about Innate Immunotherapeutics that wasn't public.

Lamborn, Long and Culberson, three of the lawmakers who bought shares in the company, each said they heard of Innate Immunotherapeutics through public channels. Lamborn spokesperson Jarred Rego said his purchase of shares in the company was done "on the open market, at fair market value, after all the media discussion about the company." Long spokesperson Hannah Smith said "Congressman Long did not learn of Innate Immunotherapeutics through a colleague, but rather through the news in January when the company became a daily topic." Culberson spokesperson Emily Taylor, said: "Representative Culberson has a lifelong friend with multiple sclerosis and is always looking into news stories and breakthroughs on MS treatments."

In addition, the POLITICO investigation revealed that yet another House member, Markwayne Mullin, Republican of Oklahoma, had bought Innate Immunotherapeutics before the flare-up during Price's confirmation hearing. Mullin's office did not respond to requests for comment.

All the members' investments in Innate Immunotherapeutics were unearthed through the

disclosure forms they were required to submit under the Stock Act. But the disclosures aren't anywhere near as available as they were originally intended to be: Lawmakers envisioned Google-like search data enabling voters to quickly pull up who had traded stocks ahead of market-moving events. But Congress quietly stripped the data requirements out of the law a year after it was passed. Currently, the data is available online but not easily searchable.

Experts like Holman think the idea should be resurrected — and that lawmakers should be required to disclose much more specific information about the value of their assets and trades. Currently, they report trades within a wide dollar range. But the solution that would settle concern about conflicts of interest in the big picture, Holman and others argue, would be either to bar lawmakers from buying and selling stocks entirely, or require them to put their money into broad mutual or index funds.

But lawmakers and aides acknowledge there is no serious discussion on Capitol Hill about taking new steps to curb lawmakers' conflicts of interest. And arguments about conflicts of interest are now at least loosely tied in the public mind to Trump's refusal to release his tax returns, inflaming partisan sentiments.

"It's taken on a different overtone because of President Trump. Now it becomes, 'You guys are just trying to embarrass him with this disclosure,'" said Walz. "It's hard to get members of Congress to police themselves and to write these things. We did it because we were naive enough, we hit the right moment in time, and it went through."

And the members who raged against Price's trades have yet to follow through with legislative proposals to stop the problem.

Patty Murray, Democrat of Washington, was one of the HELP Committee members who was most forceful in her denunciation of Price, demanding, "Congressman, do you believe it is appropriate for a senior member of Congress actively involved in policymaking in the health sector to repeatedly personally invest in a drug company that could benefit from those actions, yes or no?"

In mid-March, Murray and her husband bought a series of stocks that included the pharmaceutical giants Sanofi, Gilead, Amgen and Pfizer, just as the GOP's push to replace Obamacare moved into full swing.

The purchases, a Murray aide said, were "for an account managed by a broker without guidance."

Taylor Gee contributed to this report.

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Bernhardt vows to avoid past clients if confirmed as Interior No. 2 [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 05/10/2017 05:17 PM EDT

David Bernhardt, President Donald Trump's nominee for the number two spot at the Interior

Department, is promising to recuse himself for one year from matters involving a number of oil, gas and generation companies he has represented and lobbied for if he is confirmed to the position.

In a [letter](#) and [financial disclosure form](#) posted by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, Bernhardt said that if he is confirmed as deputy Interior secretary he would resign from his job at the law firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP. He also pledged to step aside from matters involving any of the firm's clients for one year unless ethics officials clear him to participate.

That means Bernhardt will not be personally or substantially involved in matters involving a number of fossil fuel, electric and mining companies including Targa Resources Company LLC, Noble Energy Company LLC, Statoil Gulf Services LLC, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, NRG Energy Inc., Sempra Energy, Taylor Energy Company LLC, Cobalt International Energy and Rosemont Copper Company.

Bernhardt would also have to stay out of matters involving a number of water and wildlife conservation organizations including the Safari Club International Foundation, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Westlands Water District and Cadiz Inc.

As deputy secretary, Bernhardt would not only be responsible for managing day-to-day operations across the agency's nine complex and unique bureaus, but also could play a key role in implementing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's energy development, public lands, endangered species and water infrastructure initiatives.

WHAT'S NEXT: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) has said she hopes to hold a confirmation hearing on Bernhardt this month.

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Here's what House Republicans want in their flood insurance bill [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 05/09/2017 06:04 PM EDT

House Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) is preparing to move forward with a five-year reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program that would phase out coverage for certain structures and eliminate it for properties with excessive claims, according to a draft [summary](#) of the GOP bill obtained by POLITICO.

Hensarling is expected to host a meeting with committee members next Tuesday to discuss the legislation, a Republican familiar with the matter said.

The bill, which has been in development since the last session of Congress, would make several changes to the program, including:

— Four years after enactment, it would phase out NFIP coverage for residential structures where the replacement cost of the building exceeded \$1 million, subject to the local availability of private sector flood insurance.

— Over the same period, NFIP would be prohibited from selling new coverage to structures being built in today's highest-risk areas.

— FEMA, which administers the program, would not be allowed to make available new or renewed coverage for any property where the aggregate amount in claims payments exceeded twice the amount of the replacement value of the property for flood damage that occurred 18 months after enactment.

— The bill would lower from 18 percent to 15 percent the cap on individual policyholders' annual rate increases.

— It would include the text of Rep. [Dennis Ross](#)'s bill that would make it easier for homeowners to use private flood insurance to satisfy requirements of government-backed mortgages.

— Compensation for "Write-Your-Own" companies working with the program would be capped at 25 percent in an attempt to improve the NFIP's ability to pay claims from existing revenue.

WHAT'S NEXT: The NFIP expires at the end of September. The Senate Banking Committee has yet to release its own reauthorization bill.

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Republicans spark fights with industry over flood insurance [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 05/15/2017 05:02 AM EDT

A House Republican [plan](#) that would curtail the availability of government flood insurance is drawing swift opposition from industry groups.

Insurers and builders are preparing to push back against the House Financial Services Committee's proposed overhaul of the National Flood Insurance Program, which helps protect millions of homeowners from the economic risks of flooding, but is saddled with \$24.6 billion in debt following catastrophic hurricanes.

The public got its first comprehensive glimpse of the committee's plans last week when Republicans circulated a draft outline of several changes included as part of a five-year reauthorization of the program. Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) is planning to discuss the legislation with committee members Tuesday. Congress has until the end of September to extend the NFIP.

Already, insurers are unnerved by a proposed cap on how much compensation they would be able to receive under the NFIP's so-called Write-Your-Own program, in which private companies sell and service government-backed flood insurance policies and receive compensation.

Builders see a potential threat from a proposal that would phase out government insurance coverage for new construction in areas at high risk of flooding.

"We understand the need for reforms but we don't want reforms that are going to gut it," National Association of Home Builders Chief Executive Officer Jerry Howard said.

The early opposition underscores the political challenges that Hensarling will face as he seeks to scale back the program while balancing the desire of many stakeholders who want to maintain something closer to the status quo.

Hensarling, a fiscal conservative on a mission to lessen the government's role in financial markets, is by no means seeking to abolish the NFIP over the next few years. But even the middle ground he's staking out as he tries to hasten the growth of private competition may be too much for some interest groups.

The six-page outline Republicans released last week is wide-ranging.

Proposed changes to the NFIP would seek to open up more opportunities for a private flood insurance market, align the program's practices further with those of commercial insurers, put in place protections for customers facing rate increases, update mitigation efforts and address claims-processing concerns that arose in the wake of 2012's Hurricane Sandy.

The document appears to offer reforms that could help satisfy various sides of the debate. On Capitol Hill, the issue falls more along geographic fault lines rather than partisan divides, and it involves major business sectors including insurers, lenders and real estate interests.

Jimi Grande, senior vice president of government affairs at the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies, said the proposed steps on privatization and mitigation seem to fit "that magical lane of politically doable and directionally correct on the policy."

Yet even without bill text being introduced, there are early signs that Hensarling is testing the political limits of flood insurance reform. More flash points may flare up as groups digest the plan.

For months, insurers have been on high-alert after Financial Services Committee Republicans [signaled](#) they were looking at changes to the NFIP's Write-Your-Own program.

Their fears have become a reality. A provision in the draft proposal would cap their compensation at 25 percent of premiums that policyholders pay.

The going rate today is closer to 30 percent.

Committee spokesman Jeff Emerson said that translates to money that is going to insurers for salaries and expenses and not being used to pay claims — a factor, he added, that drives up the likelihood of the NFIP going into debt.

"Capping those costs at 25 percent would make more dollars available for covering the actual insurance part of an individual's premiums," Emerson said.

Insurance industry lobbyists, who were playing defense on the Hill well ahead of the release of the reauthorization draft, are expected to escalate their resistance.

"We oppose the attack on WYO carriers as they are not the problem," said Grande, of the mutual insurers trade group.

The Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America, known as The Big "I," represents businesses on the front lines of the WYO universe that help sell insurance in exchange for

commissions. It has been trying to illustrate how an agent's slice of the compensation compares to the total costs for consumers.

"Based on what we know now, the Write-Your-Own program cuts appear extreme," said the group's senior vice president of external and government affairs, Charles Symington. "The Big T' will oppose them as currently written."

A separate reform threatens to alienate the construction industry.

At issue for builders is a provision that, four years after enactment, would prohibit the NFIP from selling new coverage to "future structures built in today's highest-risk areas," subject to the local availability of private flood insurance.

"For a program that already doesn't charge enough for the risks it insures ... we can't get to a sound financial footing by creating new subsidies in the future," Emerson, the committee spokesman, said. "Four years from now is a reasonable time frame to get away from that old model and have the NFIP do accurate underwriting and pricing of the new risks the program takes on."

The provision would appear to be in line with a suggestion from FEMA, which administers the program. In March [testimony](#) to the committee, FEMA deputy associate administrator Roy Wright floated the idea of identifying a time when flood policies for all new construction would be provided by the private market.

The prospect of the proposal becoming a reality, which would have ramifications for real estate development, has spurred lobbyists to fight back.

Howard, who has been advocating for a reauthorization of the program as the head of the National Association of Home Builders, said the idea is "disturbing" and "doesn't make financial sense."

"It will impact so many states and so many areas within states that you're going to find this will not be politically acceptable once we publicize it and educate members to its impact," he said.

Howard argued that new construction is "built more resiliently," and that having it in the program "would help strengthen the pool and actually cost them less because there will be fewer claims against it."

"The question that we will have to put to our members is what our position on the overall bill would be if that stayed in it," he said.

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GOP plans could kill one of Trump's favorite tax breaks [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 05/15/2017 05:13 AM EDT

A proposal to kill a century-old business tax provision — one that's been key to President Donald Trump's real-estate fortune — is poised to become the next great tax-reform fight in Washington.

House Republicans want the \$1 trillion that ending a deduction for businesses' interest expenses would raise so they can offset the cost of slashing the corporate tax rate, one of the centerpieces of their tax-reform plans.

But that is riling a host of industries that say they have little choice but to rely on borrowed money and fear they will face big tax increases. Farmers, private equity, utilities, real estate, manufacturers and others are raising alarms in the Capitol, where Republicans are divided over the proposal.

Though it's been obscured by the long-running battle over border adjustments, as that debate fades, many predict the interest-deduction fight will soon take center stage.

"This is going to be a big deal — it just hasn't had its time yet," said John Buckley, a former head of the Joint Committee on Taxation and longtime congressional tax aide.

It's crucial to House Republicans' plans because it's their second-largest pay-for, raising even more money than border adjustments, according to an analysis by the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation.

But Trump has long backed the deduction, important to his real-estate development business — which is certain to raise anew conflict-of-interest issues for his administration.

In an interview with the Economist published Thursday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said: "We're contemplating keeping it — that's our preference. But we'll look at everything."

There's also skepticism in the Senate.

"It's controversial," said Texas Sen. John Cornyn, the chamber's deputy Republican leader. "I think we need to be careful because there are a lot of businesses that borrow money as part of their business model."

What, if anything, to do with the break is now a "significant" part of lawmakers' tax talks, said one top Republican aide, though how vulnerable it is depends on how they decide to proceed.

If they opt to pursue a deficit-neutral tax reform, as House Republicans are pushing, there could be big changes because lawmakers will need a lot of budget savings, and the deduction represents a huge pot of cash.

If they decide to simply cut taxes, without pay-fors, there will be less pressure to cut the provision.

"Its usage will be determined by how low of a [corporate] rate members want to get to, and if it's going to be deficit-neutral or if it's going to be a tax cut," the aide said.

As part of their tax-reform plan, House Republicans want to cut the corporate rate to 20 percent, from the current 35 percent - a reduction that would be so deep that they had to look beyond the usual cast of loopholes for ways to finance it. Trump wants a 15 percent rate and he told the Economist it would be "OK" if tax cuts weren't offset.

Interest expenses have long been considered a normal business expense that companies can deduct just as they would their employees' wages or their rent. Lawmakers have rarely tinkered with the provision, let alone proposed ending it.

Back in 1987, amid a wave of debt-financed corporate takeovers, Congress considered limiting the deduction in those sorts of mergers, which sparked a big selloff on Wall Street.

"All hell broke loose," said Buckley. "The bill was quickly pulled and scrapped."

House Republicans also want to kill the deduction so they can adopt so-called expensing, which refers to allowing businesses to immediately write off the cost of their investments, instead of having to spread those deductions out over a number of years.

That's considered important for long-term growth, but experts say expensing can't be combined with the interest deduction because that would provide such rich tax benefits that the government would effectively be paying companies to buy equipment, so lawmakers have to pick one or the other.

A spokeswoman for House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) said: "Republicans have proposed full and immediate expensing for all businesses because it will deliver robust economic growth and create jobs."

Their interest-deduction proposal is backed by many economists who say the code so heavily subsidizes debt that it pushes companies wanting to raise money to turn to loans rather than equity. And that can make economic downturns more severe, some say.

"Firms go bankrupt when they cannot meet the demands of their creditors," the Tax Foundation said in a recent report. "The more a firm borrows, the more it owes in interest, and if it cannot pay interest, bondholders can make claims on the firm's physical assets to get their money back."

"In contrast, equity is much more flexible; during downturns, equity simply accepts a loss of shareholder value. It may not accept that loss happily, but it accepts it nonetheless, and there is no immediate threat to the health of the firm."

But the debate is underscoring how much some industries rely on loans. Among them: farmers, whose opposition to the plan is likely to weigh heavily on red-state Republicans.

"Farming and ranching is almost completely financed with borrowed money," said Patricia Wolff, senior director of congressional relations at the American Farm Bureau Federation. "There aren't stock options or venture capital or other ways for us to raise money so we rely almost entirely on loans from banks, life-insurance companies and from USDA programs, so anything that makes capital more expensive adds to the cost of business."

"Even with the lower proposed [tax] rates, we could see a tax increase," she said.

Critics of the plan are taking solace in the fact that Trump has long opposed the idea. It was not included in his revised tax plan rolled out last month, and he rejected the proposal during his presidential campaign, said former tax adviser Stephen Moore.

"Trump didn't like it because he's a real estate guy, and a lot of real-estate deals are financed

with debt so he squashed the idea," said Moore, who helped developed the campaign's tax plan. "He felt like debt was an integral part of financing business deals so we didn't get very far with that idea."

During his campaign, Trump did eventually propose allowing manufacturers to choose between expensing and the interest break, though many experts say that is probably unworkable because Congress's nonpartisan budget analysts tend to look askance at optional proposals. That's because they assume businesses that rely on expensing will choose that, and those with big loans will opt for the interest deduction, leaving relatively few businesses paying little to the Treasury.

Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) is also wary of the House proposal, telling Bloomberg Television: "Almost everybody is borrowing at this particular point, and some borrowing in big ways, so I think that's going to be on the table, but I think it's going to be difficult to get rid of that."

Added Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), another tax writer: "There's plenty of other places in the code to achieve the necessary savings."

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Sweepstakes heat up for FBI chief [Back](#)

By Josh Meyer | 05/14/2017 07:45 AM EDT

The moment New York Judge Michael J. Garcia appeared on a short list of potential FBI directors, his phone started buzzing with well-wishes from across the bureau's extended family.

Matthew Besheer, who once worked on the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York, sent Garcia a congratulatory note and then called his ex-wife to give her the news. "She was so happy she started crying," Besheer said.

Garcia is among at least 14 candidates who have emerged in the politically charged sweepstakes to replace James Comey, who President Donald Trump fired suddenly last Tuesday. Trump's selection is being scrutinized by a broad range of constituencies, many of them concerned about the future — and independence — of the FBI's investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and possible collusion by Trump associates.

The choice of a new FBI director will also signal the direction of the nation's premiere law enforcement agency under an administration with radically different views about national security, especially domestic and international terrorism, than its predecessor.

Some candidates have strong name recognition, including Mike Rogers, the former FBI agent and Republican chairman of the House intelligence committee, as well as Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn and current acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe. Others who have garnered headlines in the fast-moving selection process include former George W. Bush administration Homeland Security adviser Fran Townsend, former New York City police

commissioner Ray Kelly and Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.).

The FBI Agents Association on Saturday urged Trump to nominate Rogers, saying his "unique and diverse experience" in the Army, as an FBI agent from 1989 to 1994 and his position as former chairman of the House intelligence committee "sets him apart as someone capable of confronting the wide array of challenges."

"It is essential that the next FBI Director understand the details of how Agents do their important work," said President Thomas F. O'Connor, whose association represents more than 13,000 active and retired agents.

Garcia is among the candidates winning support from normally taciturn FBI insiders even though he never worked for the famously insular bureau.

His close FBI ties came as a federal counterterrorism prosecutor in New York, when he spent much of the late 1990s traveling the world with agents pursuing Al Qaeda suspects, including the man who later masterminded the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

"He could've had a badge in those days, because he was right in it," said FBI Special Agent Frank Pellegrino, who also worked on the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York. "He was right there with us. We talked to witnesses together, walked the streets together and then brought the evidence to court and put them away."

Garcia, who also served as a senior Bush administration homeland security and immigration official, declined to comment Saturday ahead of his interview with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. But he has told associates over the years that he'd be interested in the job, and his name briefly came up the last time the job was open, when President Barack Obama selected Comey in 2013.

Garcia would be the first Latino director in the FBI's 82-year history.

No president has picked his FBI director from directly within the bureau's own ranks or from the halls of Congress, perhaps due to the intended firewall between politics and federal law enforcement. Virtually all FBI directors have been either top Justice Department officials with a strong background as prosecutors, or federal judges steeped in the nuance of constitutional law.

A few of the current candidates fit that bill, including Bush administration officials such as former Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, former assistant attorneys general Alice Fisher and Ken Wainstein, current U.S. District Judge Henry Hudson and former federal appellate court judge Michael Luttig. Current FBI officials Paul Abbate and Adam Lee are also on the list.

Garcia's inclusion on the short list shows the considerations in play with the search. Some insiders see it as a sign of the Trump administration wanting to take a more hard-line approach to international terrorism and the threat it poses to the United States, given Garcia's experience working on the front lines of the war on terrorism and the effort to protect U.S. borders.

"Mike is one of us, and he understands what the ultimate goal of radical fundamentalism is," Besheer said. "He'd be the perfect guy to play to catch-up, and to go after these guys more aggressively than we have been in recent years."

As an assistant U.S. attorney in Manhattan from 1992 to 2001, Garcia was a lead prosecutor on two of the most high-profile terrorism cases in U.S. history, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa. His work not only led to convictions in those cases and two top Justice Department awards but also put him on the trail of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed at a time when the FBI and CIA were battling for turf over international counterterrorism operations.

Although Garcia moved on to other areas long before the 9/11 attacks, friends and colleagues say he would relish the opportunity to help try and convict the Al Qaeda mastermind and four alleged co-conspirators who are currently awaiting military commission trial in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Those prosecutions are led by the U.S. military, but the FBI and Justice Department play strong supporting roles, and a director with a personal connection like Garcia could help break the logjam that has prevented the case from proceeding, they say.

"Mike was on the ground, in the thick of it, working very closely with us trying to nail this guy," Besheer said of Garcia's role in the decade-long hunt for KSM, which began after he was linked to the first World Trade Center bombing. "I know it's personal to him, that it's gone on this long and justice has not been served."

Garcia moved to Washington in 2001 and served as assistant secretary of commerce for export enforcement and acting commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service before Bush appointed him assistant Homeland Security secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement from 2003 to 2005.

Bush then sent Garcia back to Manhattan as the United States attorney for the Southern District of New York, where for three years he oversaw 220 prosecutors handling criminal and civil cases and many of the nation's most sensitive terrorism and counterintelligence investigations.

In 2008, Garcia joined the law firm Kirkland & Ellis, where he specialized in international legal issues, and in January 2016 he was appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo as an associate judge of the New York Court of Appeals, the state's highest court.

"He's always been considered incredibly solid, trustworthy, a straight shooter," said Juan Zarate, who worked with Garcia when the two were young federal prosecutors and later, when Zarate was deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism in the Bush administration from 2005 to 2009.

"I think he fits a very strong mold of someone you'd want to take the FBI job at this time in history, with a strong prosecutorial background, reputation for integrity and independence and an affinity for navigating Washington's political waters at a time when the FBI is caught in a serious investigatory but also political environment," Zarate said. "He understands politics and he understands Washington and that you serve at the pleasure of the president. But he also understands that the mission of the FBI and the Department of Justice is to execute the law and to ensure that justice is done."

Several friends and former colleagues noted that Garcia shares two qualities with Comey, his friend and former colleague, that may not help him in the FBI director sweepstakes, or on the job: a fierce independent streak and an insistence on following an investigation wherever it leads.

In 2012, Garcia was tapped to lead a special investigation into FIFA, the governing body of international soccer, and soon declared his intention to investigate suspected widespread corruption in its decision to award hosting rights for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup to Russia and Qatar.

Garcia delivered a 350-page report that FIFA never made public. After a short summary was released clearing both Russia and Qatar of wrongdoing, Garcia publicly denounced it as a whitewash, tried to appeal it and later resigned from his position as FIFA ethics investigator in protest.

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Is it time for Trump staff to lawyer up? [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 05/14/2017 07:02 AM EDT

Veterans of White House scandals from Watergate to Plamegate have an important message for Team Trump: It's time to think about lawyering up.

In the past week, a Senate committee began issuing subpoenas in its investigation into Russian contacts with President Donald Trump's staff and other associates during the 2016 election campaign and transition, while the FBI continues its own criminal investigation. Trump himself fired FBI Director James Comey and then, in the aftermath, said the Russia probe was "made up" and appeared to [threaten](#) Comey on Twitter.

"There's obviously a risk here," said Washington white-collar defense attorney Robert Luskin. "And that's not any kind of judgment on [Trump's] personal integrity or absence of it, but the apparent fact he doesn't seem to be very sensitive about norms and about risks."

It's an axiom of Washington scandals that the cover-up tends to be worse than the crime — and it's lower- or mid-level people who wind up getting caught in the worst legal trouble, usually for tangential offenses like perjury or obstruction of justice.

The ancillary stuff, like a forgotten meeting or a discarded document, can cause the most serious problems for staffers navigating the unfamiliar, expensive and high-stakes world of grand juries, subpoenas and congressional hearings, where the prospects of perjury or obstruction of justice charges can be filed for both unintended slip-ups or intentional attempts to cover up for a superior.

"The thing you worry about in a process like that is you just make a mistake and it appears more than it is," said Rep. Sean Maloney, a New York Democratic lawmaker who served as staff secretary for President Bill Clinton during his final two years at the White House amid congressional impeachment proceedings. "We're all human beings. If someone asks you questions for two or three hours, it's easy to make a mistake."

At least some of the people who joined the Trump administration were aware of the legal risks. "I had folks who joined the administration ask that question, which should tell you something," said Luskin, who previously represented President George W. Bush's senior

political adviser Karl Rove during the investigation into the leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity, as well as a pair of senior officials during the probe of Clinton's Whitewater land deals.

A few of the central players in the Trump investigations already have counsel. Former campaign manager Paul Manafort, whose work in Ukraine is under review, has a lawyer, as does former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn, who last week was served with a subpoena by the Senate Intelligence Committee. Their attorneys did not respond to requests for comment.

Longtime personal Trump tax attorneys from the firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius sent Senate investigators a letter last week [detailing](#) some of the president's business interests tied to Russia. A spokeswoman from the firm declined comment.

John Dean, the former Nixon White House counsel who served a four-month sentence for his role in Watergate, said he doesn't expect Trump's staffers at this early stage of the investigative process to have already started hiring attorneys. But he said that can change quickly.

"It's something that happens in every White House when the contagion has started spreading," he said. He predicted the lower-level employees, including otherwise innocent secretaries and other aides who have gotten up-close interactions with the president and his senior aides, may not see the need to call for an attorney until they've been identified as potential witnesses. "They're primarily driven by fear, fear of the unknown and not wanting to make a mistake," he said.

But Dean added that some people delay retaining counsel because they think it makes them look bad. "If my history watching Watergate and what happened is any indication, the guiltier they are, the later they get lawyers," Dean said. "They don't want to either admit it in their own mind or they think they can tough it out. They think hiring a lawyer is an admission of guilt. And that's foolish."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment about whether individual staffers have retained counsel. "The entire White House staff is hard at work implementing the president's agenda for the American people," said press secretary Sean Spicer.

Outside observers say the signs are growing that Trump's staff may want to start lining up legal advice, even if it's only for preliminary discussions.

"If they have information that indicates contact with Russians or attempts to interfere, they better damn well," said former FBI agent Lewis Schiliro, who spent 25 years at the FBI before retiring in 2000 as head of the New York field office. "That's a pretty serious thing."

Along with the criminal subpoenas, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) last week [requested](#) the Justice Department inspector general examine Trump's firing of Comey; the Treasury Department is reportedly going to be [sharing records](#) with Senate investigators on Trump's financial dealings with Russia and beyond; and [calls](#) keep coming from Capitol Hill Democrats to the White House to retain all documents related to ongoing criminal probes.

Looming legal proceedings can shadow interactions among staffers, exacerbating existing

tensions and infighting.

"I don't know how they're getting anything done, including the people who are much lower down and have jobs with nothing to do with this," said Amanda Kane, a former associate counsel in the Obama White House. "It's a very small, insular environment there."

But others said that an investigation can sometimes serve as a rallying point for staffers. "It's a weird thing. I think you just keep doing your job. You try to stay focused and you believe in the mission," said Maloney, the former Clinton staffer, who later worked for New York Democratic Gov. Eliot Spitzer during the governor's prostitution scandal.

"What really gets you through is the relationships with your colleagues," said Maloney. "You make friends for life, and it's because you're going through the crucible together."

Trump in recent days has publicly tried to stick to his agenda. Last week, his press aides opened their daily briefings talking about an executive order on cybersecurity and his government's response to an accident at the nuclear-waste cleanup site in Hanford, Washington. The president is also preparing for his first international trip this week. On Twitter, he pointed to a recent trade move involving U.S. beef exports to China that he [declared](#) was "REAL news!"

With a friendly Republican Congress, the Trump White House so far isn't facing an independent prosecutor like Kenneth Starr, who investigated the Clintons' Whitewater deal and Bill Clinton's relationship with intern Monica Lewinsky. As Luskin put it: "I have to say compared to the Clinton years that this is a walk in a f----- park."

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By Kelsey Tamborrino | 10/30/2017 03:25 PM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon and Eric Wolff

WATCHDOG URGES ZINKE PROBE: The watchdog group Campaign Legal Center alleges in a new FEC [complaint](#) that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee participated in an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash. Namely, the group says the Zinke campaign bought an RV from Zinke's wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount — suggesting the campaign either overpaid for the vehicle when it first purchased it, or it allowed Zinke's friend Ed Buttrey to pay below market value when he bought it.

The RV sale is just one of several transactions the CLC says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke's family or friends, Esther Whieldon reports. "The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke's campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits."

"**When you combine the disregard for campaign finance laws** when Zinke was a candidate with the disregard that Zinke as Interior secretary has shown for the ethics laws, you certainly get a picture of an individual who may not be taking his responsibilities as an officeholder seriously," Brendan Fischer, who submitted the complaint for CLC, told POLITICO. Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift declined to comment. Read more [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailyml](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

CARDOZA CATCHES WHITEFISH: Whitefish Energy has hired its first lobbyist as scrutiny builds over how the small Montana firm won a lucrative contract to help rebuild Puerto Rico's electric grid. Ben Lefebvre reports the company has retained former Rep. Dennis Cardoza, a "Blue Dog" Democrat from California. Cardoza said he would "meet people on the Hill" to make the case that Whitefish won the contract fairly, but he declined to provide details beyond that. Ben reports Whitefish Energy retained Cardoza last Wednesday. His firm, Foley & Lardner LLP, is in the process of filling lobbyist registration work with Congress, Cardoza told POLITICO today. His other lobbying clients include California health care, real estate and water interests, according to disclosure records. More [here](#).

Meanwhile, the FBI is investigating how Whitefish Energy first won its no-bid contract from the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, The [Wall Street Journal reports](#) today, citing people familiar with the matter.

DOE NO. 2: NUCLEAR NEEDS TO BE 'REVIVED': Trump's Energy Department is looking for ways to cut the price of nuclear power, Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette said today, arguing that the Obama administration put up too many barriers. DOE wants "to drive down the steep cost of building nuclear reactors, costs that least partly reflect the war against nuclear energy," he said at a meeting of the American Nuclear Society. "Nuclear power needs to be revived, and not reviled in America." The phrase seems to be catching on. Last month, Energy Secretary Rick Perry said something similar about coal when visiting a mine in Pennsylvania: "For too long, coal in this country has been reviled and it's time for coal in this country to be revived."

Brouillette also cheered on Yucca Mountain — or some other nuclear waste resting place. "It needs to be done, is the simple answer. There is no 'if,' 'and,' and 'but' about it. Yucca Mountain needs to be developed or a final repository needs to be developed. If we can't get there, then I think it is important for us to look at interim solution," he said. "We will work with Congress to put this back on the table in very short order."

And after his keynote, Brouillette also said he was curious about putting a price on carbon, a notion widely supported in the nuclear community. "I'm unaware of any proposal by the administration at this point in time," he said, while noting his own recent confirmation to DOE. "It is an interesting idea, however. It is something that we should consider at some point."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: The House Natural Resources Committee will hold two oversight hearings on Puerto Rico's hurricane recovery efforts, and the ongoing fiscal and economic crisis that preceded them, Pro Financial Services Colin Wilhelm reports. The committee will hold a previously postponed hearing at 10 a.m. on Nov. 7 titled, "Examining Challenges in Puerto Rico's Recovery and the Role of the Financial Oversight and Management Board." At 2 p.m. on Nov. 14 it will hold another full committee oversight hearing, "The Need for Transparent Financial Accountability in Territories' Disaster Recovery Efforts," and at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, Puerto Rico's federal oversight board will hold its 10th public meeting. More [here](#).

U.N. AGENCY: CO2 LEVELS HIT RECORD HIGH: The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached a record high in 2016, surging to 145 percent above pre-industrial levels in 2016, the World Meteorological Organization said today. WMO, a U.N. agency, warns the CO2 concentration threatens "severe ecological and economic disruptions." POLITICO Europe's Sara Stefanini [reports](#): "The global average of CO2 concentrations reached 403.3 parts per million last year, up from 400 parts per million in 2015 and the highest level in about 800,000 years, the United Nations agency said in an annual report.

"The increase was caused by human activity such as increased land use and deforestation and use of fossil fuels for energy combined with and a strong El Niño, when the Pacific Ocean becomes abnormally warm." Petteri Taalas, the organization's secretary general called for "rapid" cuts in CO2 and other greenhouse gases. "The laws of physics mean that we face a much hotter, more extreme climate in the future," Taalas said. "We are still emitting far too much and this needs to be reversed."

REFINERS TALK TO TRUMP THROUGH 'FOX & FRIENDS': An umbrella group for a small group of U.S. oil refiners, will air an [ad](#) on "Fox & Friends" all week accusing Trump of "caving to ethanol lobbyists" with his refusal to consider changes to the Renewable Fuel Standard. The Fueling American Jobs Coalition ad stands a good chance of being seen by

Trump, a regular viewer of the Fox News morning show. Refiners say the RFS has been ruining their bottom line, while ethanol producers and their supporters in Congress say the program is critical to U.S. energy independence and helping American farmers. The program has divided the Republican caucus in the Senate, and last week a group of nine senators asked the Trump administration to mediate the dispute.

ROSNEFT UTILIZED AS FOREIGN POLICY TOOL: Russia is increasingly "spreading its influence around the world and challenging the interests of the United States" via its oil giant Rosneft, The New York Times [reports](#). "But Moscow risks running into trouble, as it lends money and makes deals in turbulent economies and shaky political climates. ... Russia has been making a flurry of loans and deals all centered on the Venezuelan oil business, money that could make the difference between the government's collapse and its survival. In return, Moscow is getting a strategic advantage in Washington's backyard. President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela was all smiles this month on a visit to Moscow seeking fresh financial backing, thanking Vladimir V. Putin 'for your support, both political and diplomatic.'" (h/t [Playbook](#))

QUICK HITS:

- U.S. oil exports boom, putting infrastructure to the test, [Reuters](#).
- Long-time ally of offshore drillers Overseas safety agency, [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Californians are keeping dirty energy off the grid via text message, [InsideClimate News](#).
- Cliven Bundy and sons face a jury as federal trial opens In Las Vegas, [NPR](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Manafort and Rick Gates [indicted by federal grand jury](#) on 12 counts
- Garcetti, possible 2020 hopeful, [launches](#) innovation group
- [Podesta stepping down](#) from lobbying giant amid Mueller probe

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/10/watchdog-urges-zinke-campaign-probe-025293>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 10/30/2017 11:01 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group says in a Federal Election Commission [complaint](#) that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash.

The June RV sale is one of several transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke's family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the

Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke's campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits.

The call for an FEC investigation adds to the scrutiny Zinke is facing over his political activity. He is already under investigation by Interior's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel over travel costs he incurred as secretary to attend political events while on official business, including a fundraiser in the Virgin Islands in his first month in office.

"When you combine the disregard for campaign finance laws when Zinke was a candidate with the disregard that Zinke as Interior secretary has shown for the ethics laws, you certainly get a picture of an individual who may not be taking his responsibilities as an officeholder seriously," Brendan Fischer, who submitted the complaint for CLC, told POLITICO.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift declined to comment.

In the complaint, CLC says the Zinke campaign's RV sale could have violated federal law prohibiting using political donations for personal benefit in one of two ways: Either the campaign overpaid for the vehicle when it purchased it from Lolita Zinke for \$59,100 in April 2016, or it allowed Zinke's friend Ed Buttrey to pay below market value when he bought it for \$25,000 in June of this year. Records also show Zinke for Congress fund spent more than \$6,000 on tires and maintenance work on the RV in 2016.

The RV would have been worth between \$40,000 and \$49,000 when it was sold to Buttrey, according to The Associated Press, which [first reported](#) the transaction in August. Federal law requires transactions to be for fair market value when a campaign purchases goods from a candidate's family or sells assets to someone else. CLC's complaint notes it "is extremely unlikely that the value of the RV declined by 42 percent over the course of a single year."

Buttrey, a Montana state senator who is rumored to be in the running to be nominated as an Interior assistant secretary, did not respond to a request for comment.

CLC's complaint also raises concerns that Zinke has not disclosed the dates of key expenses from the end of last year. Zinke for Congress reported a \$22,744 payment to a credit card on Dec. 31, but the committee itemizes those costs, including for lodging, travel and meals, as happening on the same day, according to CLC.

Masking the dates of the actual expenses makes it impossible to know whether Zinke was actually using the funds for legitimate purposes or to subsidize his personal lifestyle. For example, knowing those details would show whether Zinke used campaign funds to pay for lodging in New York City on the same day he interviewed for the Interior secretary job in Trump Tower, Fischer said. Trump Tower is a mere 10 minute walk from the WestHouse Hotel where Zinke stayed.

The campaign also listed a \$522.74 charge for lodging the Lime Inn in the U.S. Virgin Islands among the Dec. 31 payments, according to CLC's complaint. [POLITICO reported](#) last week that Zinke was in the territory in November for an event with the Virgin Islands GOP, a political action committee that critics say uses questionable fundraising practices.

Also in question are a number of payments for events reported as occurring after Zinke was sworn in on March 1. His campaign paid \$2,315.52 to the Capitol Hill Club on March 12 for "event catering" and \$1,750 for "Senate catering" was sent to the same address over the next two months, according to campaign finance records cited in CLC's complaint.

Swift said in an email earlier this month that the "Senate catering" payments were to help the Montana delegation continue its weekly coffees for visiting constituents until Zinke's open seat was filled by Rep. [Greg Gianforte](#). But she could not explain the Capitol Hill Club charge and did not respond to follow-up inquiries.

CLC also says Zinke's campaign failed to disclose the underlying donors for tens of thousands of dollars it received from the Zinke Victory Fund — a joint fundraising committee that disbursed funds among his campaign; his leadership political action committee, SEAL PAC; House Republicans' campaign arm; and the Montana Republican State Central Committee. The group says this lack of transparency prevents the public from knowing whether people may have exceeded the legal \$2,700 contribution cap.

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House Natural Resources Committee schedules Puerto Rico hearings [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/30/2017 01:53 PM EDT

The House Natural Resources Committee will hold two oversight hearings on Puerto Rico's recovery efforts from both the recent hurricanes that struck the island and the ongoing fiscal and economic crisis that preceded them.

At 10 a.m. on Nov. 7 the committee will hold a previously postponed hearing, "Examining Challenges in Puerto Rico's Recovery and the Role of the Financial Oversight and Management Board."

At 2 p.m. on Nov. 14 it will hold another full committee oversight hearing, "The Need for Transparent Financial Accountability in Territories' Disaster Recovery Efforts."

At 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, Puerto Rico's federal oversight board will hold its tenth public meeting. Topics on the agenda include the board's review of contracts for the commonwealth government, the recovery of the island's electric utility, and possible revisions to the approved fiscal recovery plan for the territory. The board also plans to examine the commonwealth government's post-hurricane cash crunch and discuss its investigation into Puerto Rico's debt.

WHAT'S NEXT: Tuesday's meeting will take place in San Juan and can be livestreamed on the oversight board's [site](#).

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U.N. agency: CO2 concentration reached record high in 2016 [Back](#)

By Sara Stefanini | 10/30/2017 09:36 AM EDT

The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere surged to 145 percent above pre-industrial levels in 2016, threatening "severe ecological and economic disruptions," the World Meteorological Organization [warned today](#).

The global average of CO2 concentrations reached 403.3 parts per million last year, up from 400 parts per million in 2015 and the highest level in about 800,000 years, the United Nations agency said in an annual report. The increase was caused by human activity such as increased land use and deforestation and use of fossil fuels for energy combined with and a strong El Niño, when the Pacific Ocean becomes abnormally warm.

Carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for hundreds of years and in the oceans for longer, said Petteri Taalas, the organization's secretary general. He called for "rapid" cuts in CO2 and other greenhouse gases.

"The laws of physics mean that we face a much hotter, more extreme climate in the future," Taalas said. "We are still emitting far too much and this needs to be reversed."

The report comes a week before the U.N.'s annual international climate summit begins in Bonn, where negotiators from nearly 200 countries will discuss how to meet the Paris climate agreement's goals of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and eventually 1.5 degrees.

U.N. Environment will release a separate annual report Tuesday on the gap between climate policy commitments from governments and what's needed to reduce emissions.

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on Oct. 29, 2017.

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Trump campaign aides charged in Mueller's Russia probe [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum, Darren Samuelsohn and Josh Gerstein | 10/30/2017 08:50 AM EDT

Special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into President Donald Trump's campaign and Russian election interference has dramatically escalated, with authorities indicting former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and unsealing a plea deal with a foreign policy adviser who lied about meeting with Russia-linked contacts.

The moves are the first official public actions from Mueller, and while they do not directly implicate the president, they show how the special counsel is accelerating his sprawling probe into possible collusion between Trump campaign aides and the Kremlin.

Authorities on Monday morning unsealed an indictment against Manafort and fellow

campaign official Rick Gates that charged the men with money laundering, making false statements and other counts. The two men pleaded not guilty in federal court on Monday afternoon. Prosecutors asked that bond be set at \$10 million for Manafort and \$5 million for Gates but said both may be detained at home until they can post bail.

While both Manafort and Gates had top roles in the Trump campaign, the criminal charges do not discuss any actions clearly related to the presidential race, although the indictment notes that a Ukrainian political party the men worked for had a pro-Russia outlook.

The charges, however, could be used to apply pressure on the two former officials to more fully cooperate in Mueller's larger investigation.

The more revealing details came in a 14-page document showing that George Papadopoulos, a former foreign policy adviser to Trump's campaign, cut a secret plea deal earlier this month for lying to the FBI about the campaign's outreach to Russia-related officials.

The document describes a series of conversations and meetings with contacts who he understood to have connections to the Kremlin about obtaining "dirt" on Hillary Clinton and setting up a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Papadopoulos became a foreign policy adviser to Trump's campaign in March 2016 and went on to cultivate relationships with two individuals apparently connected to Russia, labeled in the document only as "the Professor" and the "Female Russian National." He also Papadopoulos kept campaign officials apprised of his contacts and efforts including, on at least one occasion, at a meeting which Trump himself attended.

"The Professor told defendant PAPADOPOULOS, as defendant PAPADOPOULOS later described to the FBI, that 'They [the Russians] have dirt on her'; 'the Russians had emails of Clinton'; 'they have thousands of emails.'"

Papadopoulos was arrested in July.

The revelations in the plea deal appear to undercut Trump's repeated claims that the sprawling probe is nothing more than a "witch hunt" and that his campaign had no contacts with Russian officials.

Trump on Monday morning downplayed the charges against Manafort and Gates in two tweets that came before the Papadopoulos news emerged. "Sorry, but this is years ago, before Paul Manafort was part of the Trump campaign. But why aren't Crooked Hillary & the Dems the focus?????"

He added, "....Also, there is NO COLLUSION!"

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders also sought to downplay the news during the press briefing, dismissing Papadopoulos as a minor "campaign volunteer" and echoing the president's line that Manafort and Gates were indicted for activity that occurred before the campaign.

"Today's announcement has nothing to do with the president, nothing to do with the president's campaign or campaign activity," Sanders said.

She dismissed Papadopoulos' role as "extremely limited" and a "volunteer position" and said

the advisory council that he sat on only met once. She said Trump did not remember specifics about the March 2016 meeting he attended with Papadopoulos.

She added that Trump had "no intention" of firing Mueller and that she expected the investigation to "conclude soon."

Manafort and Gates were indicted on 12 counts, according to a 31-page indictment unsealed on Monday morning, including money laundering, operating as unregistered foreign agents of the government of Ukraine, failing to disclose overseas bank accounts and making false statements to federal authorities.

The indictment alleges that the men set up a series of offshore companies in order to avoid taxes on their overseas lobbying work and defrauded banks in order to win loans.

The indictment of two figures central to Trump's 2016 election and the plea deal mark the most significant step yet in an investigation that has dogged Trump's presidency, even as he and other officials have tried to redirect attention on to Clinton. The implications for Trump's fledgling policy agenda are potentially catastrophic, as the cloud of Russia allegations only darkens, despite the White House's insistence that nothing will ultimately come of the federal and congressional probes.

Mueller was selected to dig into Russia's role in the 2016 election, including the hacks and release of Democrats' emails, which intelligence agencies have concluded were designed to boost Trump's campaign. Mueller, who was named after Trump fired FBI Director James Comey in May, is also tasked with determining whether any Trump associates colluded with Moscow in that effort. But the special counsel also has wide latitude to pursue any other wrongdoing he finds during his investigation.

Even before the charges were unsealed on Monday morning, White House officials moved to put distance between Trump and his former campaign chairman.

"Whatever happens today with the Mueller investigation, we don't even know that it has anything to do with the campaign, what happens today," counselor to the president Kellyanne Conway told Fox News earlier on Monday morning.

This follows previous attempts by the White House to create distance between itself and Manafort. Trump said in August that Manafort had served on his campaign for a "very short period of time." And at a briefing in March, then-press secretary Sean Spicer described Manafort as having "played a very limited role for a very limited amount of time" during the campaign.

Manafort served on the campaign from March through August 2016, and was campaign chairman from May until he resigned on Aug. 19.

He was present for events that appear critical to the investigation into possible collusion, including a meeting at Trump Tower with a Kremlin-connected lawyer who promised damaging information on Clinton. That meeting was brokered with the help of Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr.

Manafort, a longtime GOP operative, had been under Justice Department investigation since early 2014 -- long before Trump announced his presidential campaign - over his ties to former

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who abandoned office in February 2014 and fled to Russia amid protests and allegations of government corruption.

The charges focused on Manafort's and Gates' lobbying work on behalf of the Ukrainian government and Yanukovich between 2006 and 2015.

The work generated tens of millions of dollars, which was then laundered through "scores of United States and foreign corporations, partnerships, and bank accounts," according to the indictment. The charges allege both tax avoidance and concealment of their work as foreign agents. Manafort laundered more than \$18 million, according to the indictment.

The scrutiny into Manafort's record took on new relevance after investigators began looking at Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Gates joined the Trump campaign in the spring of 2016 along with Manafort, his longtime lobbying partner, to spearhead GOP delegate-counting efforts and avoid an internal party revolt at the Republican convention that could have cost Trump the nomination.

Gates, however, remained in Trump's chaotic orbit during the general election, working on joint fundraising and massaging internal party dynamics from the Republican National Committee even after Manafort was ousted as head of the campaign in August, after he came under fire following reports about his lobbying work for a pro-Russia party in Ukraine.

Gates later connected with Trump confidante Thomas Barrack at an election night party, according to a New York Times report, and got hired to help run the presidential inaugural committee.

After the election, Gates joined a half-dozen Trump campaign alumni — including digital director Brad Parscale and Nick Ayers, who has since become Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff — at America First Policies, an outside group dedicated to promoting the president's agenda.

Gates left the group in March. CNN reported the departure was due to Gates's ties to Manafort, who faced increasing scrutiny over his Russian ties as the extent of Moscow's election-meddling became clear.

Gates had not been contacted by the special counsel's office, according to one associate with close ties to him, and learned of the looming charges against him in the 24 hours before the news became public.

In the past week, he had begun looking for new clients and seemed "perfectly normal," according to this person, who spoke to him. He had continued to work for Barrack.

Gates sent a note early Monday morning to friends and family apologizing for delivering bad news but proclaiming his innocence. In the note, he said he was surprised by the charges, according to a person who reviewed the note.

Some Republicans took the opportunity on Monday to reaffirm their support for the work of Mueller, with some lawmakers fearing that Trump may move to oust the special counsel.

"Months ago I & many other Republicans vowed to support Mueller investigation & allow it

to work its way through process to get the facts," tweeted Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.). "In light of today's indictments we must continue to support and allow the integrity of the process to work."

Democrats used the indictments as an opportunity to call for expanded probes into the Russian meddling.

"Even with an accelerating Special Counsel investigation inside the Justice Department, and investigations inside the Republican Congress, we still need an outside, fully independent investigation to expose Russia's meddling in our election and the involvement of Trump officials," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. "Defending the integrity of our democracy demands that Congress look forward to counter Russian aggression and prevent future meddling with our elections."

Other Democrats sought to link the indictment to the broader question of White House coziness with Russia.

"Paul Manafort and Rick Gates ran Trump's campaign and continued to be a part of his inner circle after Election Day," Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez said in a statement. "This underscores the seriousness of the investigation into Donald Trump's ties to Russia. It's time for Republicans to commit to protecting this investigation and preserving the rule of law."

The Papadopoulos plea could prove far more damning for the White House in the near term than the indictments. Papadopoulos' overtures to Russians were first reported by the Washington Post in August, but that report downplayed the extent of his efforts, and the extent to which he kept senior campaign officials informed.

"It is in the best interest of our client, George Papadopoulos, that we refrain from commenting on George's case," Papadopoulos's defense attorney, Thomas Breen, said in a short statement. "We will have the opportunity to comment on George's involvement when called upon by the Court at a later date. We look forward to presenting all the facts that led to the events that resulted in this charge."

Papadopoulos was informed as early as April that the Russians had "dirt" on Clinton and "thousands of emails." In July, Trump would call on Russia to find the emails missing from Clinton's server, but he said that the comment was meant in jest.

Josh Dawsey, Michael Crowley, Louis Nelson, and Kyle Cheney contributed to this report.

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Garcetti, possible 2020 hopeful, launches innovation group [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove | 10/30/2017 05:17 AM EDT

Prospective presidential candidates tend to launch PACs to pump money into campaigns of people who might prove helpful. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti is starting a nonprofit with

other mayors, union leaders and business executives to fund what they call innovation investments around the country.

Called Accelerator for America, the group will hold its first meeting Nov. 7 and 8 in South Bend, Indiana, timed to coincide with the anniversary of last year's election. The second meeting is already booked for February, in Columbia, South Carolina.

Garcetti announced on Sunday that, as expected, he wouldn't run for governor of California in 2018, writing on Twitter, "I am passionate about my city and my family; both are here in Los Angeles." But skipping a statewide run now clears him to continue his exploration of national politics — reelected earlier this year, his second term will now last five and a half years due to a change in the election schedule, through 2022.

The mission of Accelerator for America is to provide strategic and educational support in cities, counties and states where there are ballot initiatives for infrastructure funding. Leaders of the group will also look to invest directly in existing organizations that promote jobs and skills training that they believe can be scaled out around the country.

They begin with \$1 million in funding, half of which comes from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. More money is expected.

Garcetti, who'll be chairing the council, said the inspiration for it came from the success of last year's Proposition M in Los Angeles, which authorized \$120 billion for infrastructure investment over the next decade. Its passage contrasted with the failure of the Trump administration to provide any details — let alone launch a legislative push — for its promised \$1 trillion infrastructure plan.

"America's cities are here, with all due respect, to help save D.C.," Garcetti said. "We've all seen so many panels and plans and promises, but what we're missing is quick action."

On the stump, Garcetti has used a line about wanting "a Democratic voice in local politics, a local voice in Democratic politics," and he says, "I realized the same thing could be said in a nonpartisan way—a local voice in national politics, a national voice in local politics."

Garcetti said he plans to open November's meeting by listing three objectives: "helping Americans build their future," "helping Americans find their dreams," and "helping Americans live well."

When it's pointed out to him that this sounds like presidential rhetoric —especially in the context of a politician who this year has given a speech in the swing state of Wisconsin, spent a day campaigning in New Hampshire and made frequent appearances at national Democratic events —he said, "I hope it's not my platform—I hope it's a platform for local leaders."

Garcetti, whose jobs group will happen to take him to Indiana and South Carolina, added, "I'm certainly not waiting for the next presidential election to get started."

Longtime Garcetti aide Rick Jacobs will serve as CEO of the group, which is in the process of being incorporated as a 501(c)3.

Each member of the advisory council is being asked to make three suggestions for initiatives to back, and they'll look to take applications as the group develops.

"The more we can do to link up the capital and expertise that's on the coasts with the needs in the middle of the country, the better," said South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who helped develop the concept for Accelerator for America with Garcetti following conversations at meetings of the U.S. Conference of Mayors over the summer.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters general president Doug McCarron pointed out that Proposition M is expected to create 465,000 jobs over 40 years.

"We take that show on the road and we show different cities and counties what can be achieved locally," McCarron said. "There's got to be an uprising of spirit at the local level. It's really easy to point fingers at Washington."

The other advisory council members are: Nashville, Tennessee Mayor Megan Barry; Columbia, South Carolina Mayor Steve Benjamin; Dayton, Ohio Mayor Nan Whaley; Washington State Lt. Gov. Cyrus Habib; International Union of Operating Engineers general president James Callahan; Echoing Green president Cheryl Dorsey; Dollar Shave Club founder & CEO Michael Dubin; PolicyLink CEO Angela Glover Blackwell; Incite.org CEO Swati Mylavarapu; Social Capital Founder and CEO Chamath Palihapitiya; and HNTB president and CEO Rob Slimp.

All the elected officials involved so far are Democrats, though the group does expect to add Republicans to its advisory council.

To view online [click here](#).

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Tony Podesta stepping down from lobbying giant amid Mueller probe [Back](#)

By Anna Palmer | 10/30/2017 01:02 PM EDT

Democratic power lobbyist Tony Podesta, founder of the Podesta Group, is stepping down from the firm that bears his name after coming under investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller.

Podesta announced his decision during a firm-wide meeting Monday morning and is alerting clients of his impending departure.

Podesta is handing over full operational and financial control to longtime firm CEO Kimberley Fritts, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the meeting. Fritts and a senior group of the Podesta team will be launching a new firm in the next one or two days. Sources said the transition has been in the works for the past several months.

"[Tony] was very magnanimous and said, "This is an amazing group of people," a source said of Podesta's remarks. Podesta also told staff he "doesn't intend to go quietly, or learn how to play golf." He said he "needs to fight this as an individual, but doesn't want the firm to fight it."

Fritts also addressed the gathering, telling staff that she is "thrilled at this opportunity" and that, "This is not about me, this is about y'all." Several other senior staff spoke about their

excitement about the future of the firm. The meeting ended with a resounding ovation for Podesta.

Podesta Group did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

Podesta's decision to leave the firm came on the same day that former Donald Trump campaign aides Paul Manafort and Rick Gates were indicted on multiple charges, including money laundering, operating as federal agents of the Ukrainian government, failing to disclose overseas bank accounts and making false statements to federal authorities. Trump campaign foreign policy advisor George Papadopoulos pleaded guilty earlier this month for lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russian officials, according to court records.

The investigation into Podesta and his firm grew out of investigators' examination of Manafort's finances. Manafort organized a PR campaign on behalf of a nonprofit called the European Centre for a Modern Ukraine. Podesta Group was one of several firms that were paid to do work on the PR campaign to promote Ukraine in the U.S.

Podesta Group filed paperwork with the Justice Department in April stating that it had done work for the European Centre for a Modern Ukraine that also benefited the same Ukrainian political party that Manafort once advised. Podesta Group said at the time it believed its client was a European think tank untethered to a political party.

Podesta has long been a larger than life figure on K Street, growing his business from a boutique firm into a massive lobbying and public relations operation. He is well known for his flashy dressing, vast art collection, generous campaign donations across all levels of Democratic politics and, of course, for his brother John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman.

Podesta Group has struggled in the wake of the Mueller investigation. More than a dozen of its lobbying clients have cut ties with the firm this year, according to lobbying filings. Revenues have also declined: The firm brought in an estimated \$4.8 million in the third quarter of 2017, down from \$5.2 million in the second quarter of 2017 and from \$6.1 million in the third quarter of 2016.

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Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 4:06:15 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 09/12/2017 04:03 PM EDT

WHITE HOUSE EXPANDS IN ENERGY: The White House has brought on new members to its energy staff, adding names to work on nuclear power and international environmental and energy issues, according to an administration official. The moves are part of the effort to build out the International Energy and Environment Directorate, which reports to both the National Security Council and the National Economic Council.

Who are they? Andrew Restuccia and Eric Wolff report the group includes John Thompson, "a State Department official who was integral to the Kigali, Rwanda negotiations last year to limit global use of a climate change-inducing coolant." The list also includes Mark Eshbaugh, also from the State Department, who was a the former energy director for the National Security Council under President Barack Obama, and Tristan Abbey, who has been detailed from the Department of Energy to focus on international energy. Aaron Weston's detail to the White House is still being worked out, Andrew and Eric write, but he currently works as an adviser to the Idaho National Laboratory. More [here](#).

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Welcome to Tuesday. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PRUITT: NO ICAHN COMMUNICATION HERE: EPA had no email communication with former Trump adviser Carl Icahn, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt told Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) in a [letter](#) this week. In a letter, sent Monday, Pruitt said the agency searched the inboxes of 39 high-ranking officials for messages to or from Icahn between Feb. 17 and Aug. 18, but found none. Pruitt's letter comes in response to four different letters from Whitehouse and other Senate Democrats seeking information on Icahn's efforts to modify the Renewable Fuel Standard to benefit his refining company. Eric Wolff reports more [here](#).

NOMS GET COMMITTEE VOTE: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will vote Thursday on nominees to FERC and the departments of Energy and Interior, committee leadership announced today. The nominees include: Richard Glick and Kevin McIntyre to be members of FERC; Joseph Balash to be assistant Interior secretary for land and minerals management; David Jonas to be general counsel of DOE; and Ryan Nelson to be solicitor at Interior. While they are likely to be approved by the committee, it remains to be seen how quickly they will get a vote in the full Senate. Details [here](#).

MORE IN #EXXONKNEW: The New York Court of Appeals today [denied](#) Exxon Mobil's request that the court continue reviewing its claim that documents related to the company's research on climate change were protected by Texas accountant-client privilege rules — effectively telling the company it must turn said documents over to the New York attorney general's office. The court also refused Exxon's motion to suspend the case pending appeal, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Ben writes: "The ruling is a blow to the oil major in its fight against New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's accusation that it defrauded investors by not

making public in-house research showing how climate change could harm its oil and gas business. Schneiderman [asked](#) PricewaterhouseCoopers nearly a year ago to produce communications involving Exxon."

Schneiderman cheered the news: In a release, the AG said, "Today's Court of Appeals order affirms that Exxon and its outside auditor have an obligation to produce all the documents that our office rightfully subpoenaed. Our fraud investigation continues to move full speed ahead, despite Exxon's continued strategy of delay."

FLORIDA POWER STRUGGLES CONTINUE: More than half of Florida's utility customers were still without power statewide this morning following Hurricane Irma. The state's governor, Rick Scott, said today that 30,000 utility workers, including hundreds from other states, were focused on restoring power in Florida, POLITICO Florida's Bruce Ritchie [reports](#). "Of the more than 5.5 million households and businesses without power, more than half were Florida Power & Light Co. customers, according to an unattributed report posted at the state Division of Emergency Management website. FPL Vice President Rob Gould said he expects all customers along Florida's east coast to have power restored by the end of the weekend," Bruce writes. "Those along the west coast, where Irma came ashore and where damage was more severe, could have their power restored by Sept. 22, Gould said."

— **Scott also said today delivery of fuel to gas stations is resuming**, and said he is working with state and federal agencies to get ports open to tankers. "We are very focused on getting more fuel to our state," Scott told reporters in Tallahassee. "We've got to get the fuel back. We've got tankers waiting to come in." More [here](#) from Bruce.

— **President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump will travel to Florida on Thursday to [survey](#) damage left in the wake of Hurricane Irma.**

DOE AWARDS GRID SECURITY GRANTS: The Energy Department today announced \$50 million in grants to improve the security and resiliency of the grid. Of the announced grants, seven will go toward resiliency, while 20 will go to cybersecurity. The cyber grants will fund projects covering vulnerability mitigation, incident response efforts and secure grid management communications, Pro Cybersecurity's Eric Geller [reports](#). Nine national laboratories will administer the grants, in partnership with a range of military, academic and corporate partners.

NO DEBT CEILING VOTE IN DECEMBER: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said this afternoon that Congress won't vote again this year to raise the debt ceiling, Pro Budget's Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes report. "It does not eliminate the extraordinary measures that the Treasury secretary had always had," McConnell told reporters. "It doesn't mean that we won't address the debt ceiling in the future." But the vote "will not be in December," he explained. Read [more](#).

DOE: SUNSHOT TARGET REACHED: DOE also released research today that says the solar industry achieved its SunShot Initiative-set target for utility-scale solar cost by 2020. "Largely due to rapid cost declines in solar photovoltaic (PV) hardware, the average price of utility-scale solar is now 6 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh)," DOE said in a release. The department said it is now "looking beyond SunShot's 2020 goals with an expanded 2030 vision for the Solar Energy Technologies Office." More [here](#).

EIA RELEASE SEPTEMBER OUTLOOK: The Energy Information Administration

released today its [Short-Term Energy Outlook](#) for September, which notes, "industry watchers across the sector will have to grapple with uncertainty regarding the timeline for the return to normal operations for critical energy infrastructure, including refineries, in the coming weeks and months," in Hurricane Harvey's aftermath. The report also forecast the average U.S. regular gasoline retail price will be \$2.61/gal in September and then decrease to \$2.40/gal in October. EIA forecast the share of U.S. total utility-scale electricity generation from natural gas will fall from an average of 34 percent in 2016 to about 31 percent in 2017. Coal's forecast generation share, meanwhile, increases from 30 percent last year to 31 percent in 2017.

SEIA RELEASES VIDEO ON TRADE CASE IMPACT: The Solar Energy Industries Association released a video today showcasing stories from American manufacturing workers "whose jobs are at risk due to a national trade case initiated by two foreign-owned firms," it said, ahead of the International Trade Commission's Sept. 22 solar tariff decision. "SEIA estimates that trade penalties would put one-third of those people, or 88,000 Americans, out of work in the first year," it said [in a release](#) announcing the video. Watch it [here](#).

MAIL CALL: Sen. [Ed Markey](#), a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, wrote a letter to Trump today, calling for Harvey and Irma Hurricane rebuilding efforts to include climate change best practices. "Rebuilding efforts must give Americans in the impacted regions confidence that they will be better protected against devastating flooding and other climate impacts in the future, as well as reassure Americans across the country that their tax dollars are being spent sensibly," Markey writes. Read it [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Billionaire Tom Steyer's PAC donates \$1 million to help Virginia immigrant groups mobilize for November election, [The Washington Post](#).
- Solar developers hoard panels as U.S. tariff threat looms, [Bloomberg](#).
- EPA: Bulk of gasoline spill in Galena Park never escaped into waterways, [Chron](#).
- 16 million power outages and 142 mph winds: Hurricane Irma, by the numbers, [The Washington Post](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Russia probes [pose loyalty test](#) for Team Trump
- Kaine hits the trail again, [battling 2016 ghosts](#) on his way
- [GOP lawmakers jittery](#) over lack of tax reform details

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/afternoon-energy/2017/09/white-house-growing-its-energy-team-024558>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House brings on new energy staff [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Eric Wolff | 09/12/2017 01:25 PM EDT

The White House is building up its energy staff, adding new people to work on nuclear power and international environmental and energy issues, according to an administration official.

The group includes John Thompson, a State department official who was integral to the Kigali, Rwanda negotiations last year to limit global use of a climate change-inducing coolant. Bringing in Thompson, who has already started at the White House, has been seen by supporters of the Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol as a signal that the president would get behind the treaty.

Mark Eshbaugh was also being seconded from the State Department, but the former energy director for the National Security Council under President Barack Obama is likely to see his detail end soon.

Tristan Abbey has been detailed from the Department of Energy to focus on international energy. He has been a Republican staffer for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Aaron Weston's detail to the White House is still being worked out, but he currently works as an adviser to the Idaho National Laboratory, which specializes in advancing nuclear research. Previously he served as an aide to the House Science Committee.

The moves are part of the effort to build out the International Energy and Environment Directorate, led by Special Assistant to the President for International Energy and Environment George David Banks. The directorate reports to both the National Security Council and the National Economic Council.

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Pruitt: EPA had no emails communications with Icahn [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/12/2017 02:28 PM EDT

EPA had no email communication with billionaire and former Trump adviser Carl Icahn, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt told Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.) in a [letter](#) this week.

In the letter sent Monday and provided to POLITICO by an EPA official, Pruitt said EPA searched the inboxes of 39 high-ranking officials for messages to or from Icahn between Feb. 17 and Aug. 18, and they found no emails on any subject.

Pruitt's letter was a response to four different letters from Whitehouse and other Senate Democrats seeking information on Icahn's efforts to modify the Renewable Fuel Standard to benefit his refining company. Icahn was an unpaid adviser to Trump until last month, when he resigned his title after questions arose about his advocating for policies that would help his businesses.

Pruitt did acknowledge meeting with Icahn as part of his vetting process to join the Trump administration.

"Mr. Icahn was one of many of the president's advisors that I met with during my confirmation process," he wrote. "During that meeting, I made no assurances with regard to the point of obligation or any other substantive issue."

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FERC, Interior, DOE noms set to clear committee [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 09/12/2017 10:40 AM EDT

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will vote Thursday on several nominees to FERC and the departments of Energy and Interior, committee leaders announced today.

The committee will vote on the following nominees: Richard Glick and Kevin McIntyre to be members of FERC; Joseph Balash to be assistant Interior secretary for land and minerals management; David Jonas to be general counsel of DOE; and Ryan Nelson to be solicitor at Interior.

The nominees are likely to be approved by the committee. It remains to be seen how quickly they will get a vote in the full Senate.

WHAT'S NEXT: The markup is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. Thursday in 366 Dirksen and will be [webcast](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Court denies Exxon bid to shield documents in climate change case [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/12/2017 01:14 PM EDT

An appeals court judge today ruled today Exxon Mobil must turn over documents related to the company's research on climate change to the New York attorney general's office.

The New York Court of Appeals [denied](#) Exxon's request that the court continue reviewing its claim that the documents were protected by Texas accountant-client privilege rules. The court also refused Exxon's motion to suspend the case pending appeal.

The ruling is a blow to the oil major in its fight against New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's accusation that it defrauded investors by not making public in-house research showing how climate change could harm its oil and gas business. Schneiderman [asked](#) PricewaterhouseCoopers nearly a year ago to produce communications involving Exxon.

"Today's Court of Appeals order affirms that Exxon and its outside auditor have an obligation to produce all the documents that our office rightfully subpoenaed," Schneiderman said in a

press release. "Our fraud investigation continues to move full speed ahead, despite Exxon's continued strategy of delay."

An Exxon spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

The case has become a proxy fight for climate change policy, with red-state attorneys general joining Exxon in accusing Schneiderman of harassing the country's largest oil company and those in blue states defending his actions.

The House Science Committee has also opened up its own investigation into Schneiderman's review of Exxon's climate change research.

WHAT'S NEXT: Exxon is expected to reply to the appeals court ruling.

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POLITICO Florida: More than 5M remain without power as FPL asks for patience [Back](#)

By Bruce Ritchie | 09/12/2017 12:40 PM EDT

TALLAHASSEE — More than half of Florida's utility customers remained without power statewide Tuesday morning following Hurricane Irma's devastating march across the state.

Gov. Rick Scott said Tuesday that 30,000 utility workers, including hundreds from other states, were focused on restoring power in Florida.

Of the more than 5.5 million households and businesses without power, more than half were Florida Power & Light Co. customers, according to an unattributed report posted at the state Division of Emergency Management website.

FPL vice president Rob Gould said he expects all customers along Florida's east coast to have power restored by the end of the weekend.

Those along the west coast, where Irma came ashore and where damage was more severe, could have their power restored by Sept. 22, Gould said.

"This is going to be a very uncomfortable time" Gould said. "All of us realize how tough this is, but we are going to get the power on soon."

As of 9 a.m., 58 percent of FPL customers were without power, according to the report. For Duke Energy, nearly 1.3 million of almost 1.8 million customers, or 72 percent, were without power.

For electrical cooperatives, there were 605,046 customers without power. Of the state's 1.5 million municipal power customers, 536,389 were without power.

"We have a lot of power out around the state," Scott said.

FPL shut down both nuclear units at its Turkey Point power plant near Homestead in advance of the storm and one of two units at its St. Lucie nuclear plant near Fort Pierce. Gould did not provide an update but said the utility would not announce when it will repower its nuclear units.

View the 8:59 a.m. DEM power outage [report here](#).

This report first appeared on [POLITICO Florida](#) on Sept. 12, 2017.

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POLITICO Florida: Scott: Ports should open today to bring gasoline to state [Back](#)

By Bruce Ritchie | 09/12/2017 02:58 PM EDT

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Rick Scott said Tuesday that delivery of fuel to gas stations is resuming and he's working with state and federal agencies to get ports open to tankers.

Motorists preparing for Hurricane Irma last week encountered closed gas stations or lines at the pump where there was no gas. Representatives of the [Gasbuddy.com](#) web site, which tracks fuel costs, have helped motorists and state agencies identify areas with fuel outages.

"We are very focused on getting more fuel to our state," Scott told reporters in Tallahassee. "We've got to get the fuel back. We've got tankers waiting to come in."

Port Everglades near Fort Lauderdale and the port of Tampa are expected to reopen Tuesday, the governor's office said. Both are major supply hubs for fuel in the state.

Both ports have terminals with fuel that have reopened to provide delivery to gas stations, the governor's office said. The Florida Highway Patrol is continuing to escort fuel delivery trucks to needed areas.

David Mica, executive director of the Florida Petroleum Association, said reopening Port Everglades and the Tampa port are critical as was getting various fuel waivers and tax relief last week to bring in fuel from out of state.

"The governor's office with regards to assistance in seeking waivers to a bundle of different regulatory type things has been great," Mica said. "The cooperation between our industry and agencies is unprecedented."

Gasbuddy.com has had representatives at the state Emergency Operations Center to help the state track fuel outages.

Patrick Dehaan, a senior petroleum analyst with GasBuddy, said the service was invited by state Division of Emergency Management Director Bryan Koon to participate at the center.

Dehaan said that, while other services were providing data, they didn't have as many users to provide updated information on the availability of fuel.

"I think we have benefited from having a large number of people who already use the app to find cheap gas," he said. "This was a natural progression to help entities help motorists."

Koon told the GasBuddy representatives on Tuesday that he would like them to make a presentation on their role in the hurricane response to other states' emergency management directors.

This story first appeared on [POLITICO Florida](#) on Sept. 12, 2017.

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Trump to visit Florida on Thursday to survey Irma damage [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/12/2017 03:03 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump will travel to Florida Thursday to survey damage left in the wake of Hurricane Irma, which made landfall in southwest Florida last weekend and left wide swaths of wreckage as it made its way up the peninsula.

"The president's action during these times demonstrate why he's a true leader who can bring the country together and get things done for the American people," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at Tuesday's press briefing after announcing Trump's planned travel.

Sanders did not offer any further details on what regions of Florida Trump would visit or what he would do while there.

Shortly after Sanders' announcement, Stephanie Grisham, a spokeswoman for Melania Trump, tweeted, ".@flotus will travel to [#Florida](#) w POTUS on Thurs to survey aftermath of [#HurricaneIrma](#)."

The White House had previously teased plans for Trump to visit Florida but said any trip would not be finalized until the situation there had stabilized to the point that a presidential visit would not add undue stress to local authorities.

Trump has been outwardly engaged in hurricane response and recovery efforts in recent weeks, twice visiting the Gulf Coast, which was ravaged by Hurricane Harvey last month. He has also offered updates and encouragement on Twitter, lauding the work of first responders and promising support for storm victims.

To view online [click here](#).

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DOE awards grid security grants to improve bug patching and incident response [Back](#)

By Eric Geller | 09/12/2017 10:57 AM EDT

The Department of Energy today announced \$50 million in grants to improve the security and resiliency of the electric grid.

Seven of the DOE grants will go to resiliency, while 20 will go to cybersecurity.

[The cyber grants](#) will fund projects covering vulnerability mitigation, incident response efforts and secure grid management communications.

Nine national laboratories will administer the grants, in partnership with a wide range of military, academic and corporate partners.

Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and its partners will develop "a tool to verify the integrity of firmware used in energy delivery system devices, without taking the equipment offline."

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Wash., will oversee an effort to "develop a secure and flexible data exchange approach for communication between control centers."

"A resilient, reliable, and secure power grid is essential to the Nation's security, economy, and the vital services that Americans depend on every day," Energy Secretary Rick Perry said in a statement.

"By leveraging the world-class innovation of the National Laboratories and their partners," he added, "this investment will keep us moving forward to create yet more real-world capabilities that the energy sector can put into practice to continue improving the resilience and security of the country's critical energy infrastructure."

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McConnell: No December debt ceiling vote [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 09/12/2017 02:47 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said this afternoon that Congress won't vote again this year to raise the debt ceiling.

"It does not eliminate the extraordinary measures that the Treasury secretary had always had," McConnell told reporters. "It doesn't mean that we won't address the debt ceiling in the future."

But the vote "will not be in December," he explained.

While Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has not officially predicted how much time Congress has until the nation will reach its borrowing limit, some economists have predicted lawmakers might be able to hold out until March before risking default.

After President Donald Trump struck a deal with Democrats last week to temporarily raise the debt ceiling along with stopgap spending and disaster aid, GOP lawmakers began [insisting](#) the White House come up with a plan for cutting spending in the next effort to lift the limit.

To view online [click here](#).

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DOE shifts SunShot's solar goals [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/12/2017 02:56 PM EDT

The Department of Energy is shifting the focus of its SunShot Initiative to including broader administration priorities, such as grid reliability.

The program, which had dedicated itself to lowering solar costs including both panel costs and permitting, will now also devote research dollars to resilience, reliability, and storage, DOE said today.

"With the impressive decline in solar prices, it is time to address additional emerging challenges," Daniel Simmons, acting assistant secretary for energy efficiency and renewable energy, said in a statement. "As we look to the future, DOE will focus new solar R&D on the Secretary's priorities, which include strengthening the reliability and resilience of the electric grid while integrating solar energy."

DOE was also touting the early achievement of one of its 2020 goals, reducing solar costs for utility-scale solar to 6 cents a kilowatt-hour.

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Russia probes pose loyalty test for Team Trump [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 09/12/2017 05:10 AM EDT

Lawyers representing Donald Trump's current and former aides are giving their clients one simple piece of advice: Don't lie to protect the president.

As special counsel Robert Mueller and congressional investigators prepare to question high-ranking aides — including Hope Hicks, Reince Priebus and Sean Spicer — in the coming weeks, Trump's long history of demanding his employees' complete loyalty is being put to the test.

But Trump stalwarts know the president is closely following the media coverage of the Russia case — and the last thing they want is to be deemed a turncoat whose answers end up becoming further fuel for investigators.

Several of the lawyers representing current and former aides told POLITICO they're actively warning their clients that any bonds connecting them to Trump won't protect them from criminal charges if federal prosecutors can nail them for perjury, making false statements or obstruction of justice.

"What I always tell clients is you can't protect anybody. You can only hurt yourself," said a lawyer representing a client involved in the Russia probe. The attorney added that any overt attempts to protect Trump will raise wider suspicions of a cover-up, making matters "worse for everybody."

"Efforts to concoct a story to protect somebody are almost inevitably doomed to failure," the attorney explained. "All you do is create liability to yourself that didn't exist before."

Mueller's investigation and multiple probes on Capitol Hill have expanded to include the Trump family's interactions with Russians as well as business deals involving the Trump Organization. The federal prosecutors and congressional investigators are doing their homework as they build substantive factual records through document requests, subpoenas and interviews.

That's something the lawyers representing Trump officials say they can't impress enough on their clients, especially when one of the most potent weapons Mueller and his team have to gain leverage centers around anyone who makes misleading statements or other trip-ups.

"The lesson to be always learned is loyalty is one thing, but are you prepared to go to jail for it?" said former Whitewater special counsel Robert Ray. "The answer to that question should be no."

Recent history is littered with examples of loyal staffers who chose to shield their superiors. Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, was convicted in 2007 for lying to federal officials probing who leaked the name of a covert CIA officer, and even President George W. Bush [believed](#) Libby was guilty of trying to protect his boss.

Webster Hubbell, a former Clinton Justice Department official, served an 18-month federal sentence on fraud and tax evasion charges tied to his Whitewater work as a former law partner with President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton. But Hubbell [maintained](#) his loyalty to the first couple while in jail, and even as he faced additional charges tied to independent counsel Kenneth Starr's probe.

Bush commuted Libby's prison sentence, but the Republican president did not heed Cheney's request for a complete pardon. Clinton also declined to grant Hubbell a pardon.

Ray, who succeeded Starr as the special counsel investigating the Clinton White House, called political loyalty a "good thing" that "makes the system work" for elected officials and their staff. But he noted it also "presents some problems when it comes to criminal investigations. These have real-life consequences to people beyond what they even imagined."

"Loyalty is not a two-way street," Ray said. "A lot of young people go to the White House and they're going to be loyal to the president and the president is going to be loyal to me. Bullshit. If it's expedient, you're going to be thrown under the bus. The loyalty isn't necessarily going to be returned. Even if it were, I'm not sure the promise or prospect of a pardon is all that comforting."

As the Trump associates face questioning, they know that loyalty is a treasured commodity in the president's orbit.

Comey testified to this before the Senate in June, explaining how Trump told him during one of their initial White House meetings, "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty." While the ousted FBI chief rejected Trump's overtures, Trump's inner circle is packed with loyalists. Cohen, in a recent [interview](#) with Vanity Fair, described how he sees himself as an extension of the president's family and will stick by Trump no matter the legal bills or criticism that his own relatives face. "I'm the guy who would take a bullet for the president," Cohen told the magazine.

Trump's most dedicated supporters even have a nickname for their club: the "Oct. 8th coalition," which White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway [told](#) the Washington Examiner represents the people who stuck by Trump after the vulgar "Access Hollywood" videotape emerged during the heat of the 2016 campaign.

Calls for testimony have [reportedly](#) gone out to Priebus and Spicer, the former top White House aides who played roles in many of the critical early Trump decisions that have become pertinent to the Russia case, including the firings of national security adviser Michael Flynn and FBI Director James Comey.

Also of interest for Mueller and lawmakers are a pair of longtime Trump Organization hands who have had front-row seats to the president's political rise: Hicks, one of Trump's most trusted aides, now serving as White House interim communications director, and Rhona Graff, the personal secretary who is [named](#) in an email chain arranging a controversial Trump Tower meeting last summer between senior Trump campaign aides and a Russian attorney promising dirt on Hillary Clinton.

Investigators have also been pressing for answers from the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who spent five hours last week meeting with Senate staff to discuss that June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower; Michael Cohen, a personal Trump attorney under a subpoena for documents from the House Intelligence Committee; and Paul Manafort, the embattled former Trump campaign chairman.

John Dean, the former Nixon White House counsel whose public testimony before Congress played a major role in exposing the Watergate cover-up, said a president's loyalty will matter only so much when the staff starts talking to federal investigators.

"It's very interesting the way that works," he said. "I felt that loyalty to Nixon until he started trying to destroy me. That somehow drains loyalty."

Many of the Trump aides being pulled into the investigations are readying for the legal scrutiny. Hicks [hired](#) Robert Trout, a former U.S. attorney in Baltimore, as her personal counsel, while Priebus and White House counsel Don McGahn both have tapped William Burck, a former deputy counsel in the George W. Bush White House.

Others insist questions about maintaining loyalty to Trump in the Russia case is really a moot point. "There's nothing to cover up or have his back on," said a former Trump White House aide. "By all accounts, he's not involved in this."

White House attorney Ty Cobb said Trump has instructed his staff to cooperate with Mueller

and congressional investigators. "The message goes out to all his people. They have to listen to their own lawyers, but the White House wants them to fully cooperate and tell the truth, and we expect they will and to the best of our knowledge that'll be the case."

Cobb also pushed back on the notion that loyalty to Trump would supersede a person telling the truth. "You can be loyal and be honorable at the same time, and that's what the president wants," he added. "Candor and honesty and anything that paints a complete picture here is in the interest of justice, the White House and the country."

A spokesman for Mueller declined comment.

As the current and former Trump associates head into congressional hearing rooms and before Mueller's grand jury, former federal prosecutors say the witnesses are likely to be mindful of how their former colleagues — Trump included — interpret their moves.

"They don't want to be seen as the John Dean among Republicans, to be the traitor who brought down the party," said a former federal law enforcement official who has worked on special counsel cases. "They also have to be concerned if they appear to be cooperating then they're the target of the White House attack machine."

Alex Whiting, a former federal prosecutor and Harvard Law professor, said Mueller may have more luck getting cooperation from recently ousted Trump officials — like Priebus and Spicer, though he noted the two men also may end up being overly cautious too.

"These guys they have their careers and reputations to be concerned about," he said.

Barbara Res, a former construction executive at the Trump Organization who worked directly under Trump, countered that loyalty is likely to matter little for anyone who has gotten such a public boot from Trump's inner circle. "Why should they be loyal to him?" she asked of aides such as Spicer and Priebus. "He treated them like crap."

To view online [click here](#).

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Kaine hits the trail again, battling 2016 ghosts on his way [Back](#)

By Austin Wright | 09/12/2017 05:03 AM EDT

An aide to Tim Kaine enters a diner in Charlottesville and informs the host that the Virginia senator is about to walk in. The host smiles and cracks a joke: "You mean the guy who lost to Trump?"

Ten months after the presidential election, Kaine is still trying to shed the stigma of being the vice presidential candidate on the ticket that came up short against Donald Trump, a man so reviled by Kaine's fellow Democrats that many of them can't bear the thought of him serving out his full four-year presidential term. The senator is back on the campaign trail — stumping in Virginia for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ralph Northam and preparing for his own 2018 reelection campaign.

But even as Kaine tries to keep his focus on the next election, there are constant reminders of the last one — the only election he's ever lost. Trump, it seems, looms over everything.

Kaine isn't interested in relitigating one of the biggest electoral upsets in U.S. history. He looks visibly uncomfortable talking about the election and cautions against "overinterpreting" what went wrong.

Still, as Kaine sips coffee and takes selfies with supporters who recognize their senator, one can't help but detect some lingering resentment over the fact that voters rejected him and Hillary Clinton for a reality TV star. Trump "has frequently done things that I think are shocking for a president to do, but nothing he's done has been surprising," Kaine says. "There is nothing this guy has done that should surprise a person in this country based on the person he was before he took the oath of office."

But Kaine isn't questioning Trump's legitimacy or pining for his impeachment, saying he still hopes Trump will be a good president and wants to work with his administration on issues of mutual interest, like infrastructure.

"Look, he was elected by 63 million people in the electoral college," Kaine says. "He will be president for four years. I think you have to assume that he will."

Instead, the 59-year-old senator is fighting Trump's agenda in the Senate and focusing on what's next: a statewide race in Virginia that will be one of the first chances for Democrats to deliver a major electoral rebuke to Trump. He's working to bolster Northam and others running in Virginia's off-year election this November.

After that, he says he'll turn his attention to 2018. Kaine is urging Democrats to prioritize next year's midterm elections over the 2020 presidential contest.

"There's a lot of skirmishing to grab the microphone for 2020," he says. "If we have a good 2018, I think we'll do fine in 2020. If we have a bad 2018, it will be incredibly demoralizing and really hurt us in 2020."

Kaine and his wife, Anne Holton, discussed the senator's future in a wide-ranging interview on a recent Saturday at a diner called the Nook on Charlottesville's Downtown Mall. It was just a block from where 32-year-old Heather Heyer was killed last month when a man drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters during a white supremacist rally.

Kaine and Holton both appear disgusted as they reflect on Trump's reaction to the rally that brought Nazis and members of the Ku Klux Klan to their state. "Why did they come to Virginia?" Kaine asks, noting that most of the participants were from out of state. "If you have a fantasy about the Civil War, Virginia plays a role in your psychosis. These people hate to see Virginia moving forward."

The interview comes amid a campaign blitz for Kaine — 13 events in three days with Northam and the state's Democratic candidates for lieutenant governor and attorney general, Justin Fairfax and Mark Herring. It's a bit of a warm-up act for the senator, who's using these campaign stops to test the messages he'll be delivering when he begins stumping for himself next year in his first-ever real reelection contest.

"I like being out on the trail a lot, and it is a little bit easier when your name isn't on the

ballot," he says.

Still, when you're Kaine, there's no escaping 2016.

In Charlottesville, he is greeted by University of Virginia students wearing "Stronger Together" jackets. At a campaign event in Newport News, he's introduced to the crowd by Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott as the man who "should have been our vice president."

Even Kaine's own stump speech seeks to make sense of an election that many on the left are still struggling coming to terms with. He reminds his audiences that he and Clinton won the popular vote, and knocks Trump for promising voters "greatness" without offering any evidence of "goodness."

For Kaine, a harmonica-playing former missionary whose aw-shucks demeanor during the presidential race earned him a reputation as "America's dad," this is about the most stinging invective he's willing to hurl at a president who once retweeted a supporter who wrote that "Kaine looks like an evil crook out of the Batman movies."

Even Kaine's reelection campaign next year might not offer him the chance to move past 2016.

His only declared Republican challenger so far is Corey Stewart, a staunch Trump backer who sought to channel the real estate mogul during a bid for the GOP nomination for governor that he narrowly lost. A race against Stewart would almost certainly represent a rematch between the centrist vision put forward by Clinton and Kaine, and the take-no-prisoners approach of the populist conservative forces that powered Trump's victory.

And then there's Clinton. After retreating from the public eye for months, the former secretary of state is launching a book tour this month for her new campaign memoir, "What Happened." Many Democrats are [dreading](#) having to relive the 2016 nightmare.

Kaine says he's been in touch with Clinton "a number of times" over the phone, text and email since the election. But the senator, who tries to get through a book a week, has not read an advance copy and doesn't plan to have any role in her book tour. His first few conversations with Clinton, he says, "were more about looking in the rearview mirror." But their more recent chats "have been about looking in the windshield."

"For Hillary, it's harder because she has to grapple with, 'OK, what's next?'" he says. "I didn't have to sort of decide what's next. I'm in the Senate, and the Senate has even gotten more important because I think the Senate is playing more of the role of the adult in the room right now for the American government."

He rejects the notion that their defeat represented a rebuke of his and Clinton's moderate approach, calling the schism in the Democratic Party "superficial." He adds, though, that the party needs a "more compelling economic message," pointing to an [op-ed](#) he wrote in USA Today in which he said Democrats should focus on "growth" and touted what has become the party's new slogan, "Better skills, better jobs and better wages."

But Kaine says he's not putting himself forward as the one to lead the party out of the wilderness in 2020. He insists he has no presidential ambitions and wants to emulate the 30-year Senate career of former Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), a family friend of Kaine's who retired

in 2009.

"I'm going to consider this the last job I'll ever hold," says Kaine, whose past positions include Richmond mayor, Virginia lieutenant governor and then governor. He offers the obligatory addendum that he could be "voted out" and that "you can't get presumptuous."

It's at this point that Holton chimes in to underscore her husband's decision to rule out a White House bid. "I ruled it out before he did," says Holton, a former Virginia secretary of education. "I've always thought that the office he's in is most important."

Kaine adds that he knows "my home state and being part of the political and economic and social progress of my state is what I'm really interested in." He says his committee assignments — Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Budget and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions — have positioned him well to have a major long-term impact in the Senate, both on the national stage and on issues of importance to his military-heavy home state.

In Virginia, after all, he and Clinton were the winners of last year's presidential contest.

"Virginia has seen too many people like Donald Trump in our history — demagogues who didn't understand the virtue of the Jeffersonian equality principle," he says. "We've seen Donald Trump before. In this state, we've put it behind us. We've shut the door."

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GOP lawmakers jittery over lack of tax reform details [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm and Aaron Lorenzo | 09/12/2017 05:06 AM EDT

Congressional Republicans came back to Washington ready and eager to work on tax reform, but they're still missing one thing: a plan.

That's triggered frustration among rank-and-file lawmakers who feel pressure from President Donald Trump to pass a tax reform bill but have seen no plans and worry they'll be backed into a corner on legislation they haven't even seen, much like they were with the failed Obamacare repeal earlier this summer.

"This time around there is no room for error. This has got to be a home run," Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.) said, recalling the GOP's Obamacare fiasco. "I would hope everyone wants to know what's in it before you vote on it. That's the old [Nancy] Pelosi joke on health care, it turned into a colossal joke. 'You'll find out what's in it after we pass it.'"

A member of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, speaking on condition of anonymity to speak freely said, "It is frustrating and concerning that we don't have the details and yet we're going to be asked in 60 days to vote on something,"

The member suggested that congressional and administration leaders negotiating a plan are holding back information either to avoid leaks or because they haven't found enough common ground yet to share anything.

There are still disagreements among negotiators in closed-door meetings over crucial issues, including:

- The corporate tax rate, with President Donald Trump pushing for a 15 percent rate that others see as unrealistic because of its cost.
- The lack of a clear path forward on the 2018 budget, which will be used as a vehicle for tax reform.
- Allowing businesses to immediately write off the costs of equipment and other big investments.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and top Trump economic adviser Gary Cohn are set to meet with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Budget Committee members Tuesday to strategize on the budget. Mnuchin, Cohn and McConnell belong to the "Big Six" group of tax reform negotiators, along with House Speaker Paul Ryan, Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch.

Republican leaders have set a goal of releasing more details this month, but not before GOP members of Ways and Means get a look and give them the OK. But with each day that passes without a plan, the rank and file seem to get more on edge.

"We want a lot more clarity on tax reform," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the staunchly conservative House Freedom Caucus.

Trump's proposal for a 15 percent tax rate for corporations and other businesses remains a major sticking point, sources familiar with the talks said. The rate is now 35 percent.

But Mnuchin signaled Tuesday the administration's position may be softening.

"I don't know if we'll be able to achieve that, given the budget issues, but we're going to get this down to a very competitive level," he said at an event hosted by CNBC.

The exact number is less important than getting tax reform done, he said.

Republican congressional leaders have mildly, but publicly, broken with Trump on the rate, which they'd initially hoped was a White House negotiating position rather than a concrete goal due to its cost.

"The president's been out there talking about a 15 percent rate, the House has talked about 20, but to get it down from 35 to 20 it's about \$100 billion per point," said Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), the third ranking Senate Republican.

Ryan, in a public interview hosted by The New York Times last week, said it was more realistic to meet or beat the average corporate rate of industrialized countries, 22.5 percent.

"Those numbers are really hard to make work," Ryan said when asked about a 15 percent rate, though he added that he'd let tax writers do the "exact math" on what works for budgetary purposes.

As one conservative tax activist put it, "There's still a little more separation than we originally

thought," indicating that Trump's 15 percent push set an unrealistic bar. The more he pledges it, as he did at a campaign-style rally last week in North Dakota, the harder it would be for him to shift, the activist said.

The House, Senate and White House also remain divided over the budget, which Republicans plan to use as the vehicle for tax reform to get around Democratic opposition in the Senate. The budget would include "reconciliation" instructions designed to avert a filibuster.

"A budget resolution only has to do with one thing and that's tax reform," Brat said. "So if you're going to vote on tax reform, OK what's it look like? And we don't know yet. So it's very hard to vote on a budget resolution, which has as its sole objective doing tax reform, when you don't know what tax reform looks like. And so that's our objection."

In addition, the negotiators continue to wrestle over full, immediate expensing of capital investments for businesses. They are at odds over whether the provision is necessary to juice the economy or too expensive when combined with tax cuts.

Two meetings last week of the Big Six — one on Tuesday with Trump and a follow-up on Thursday — yielded little in the way of movement, at least publicly.

Mnuchin, who is one of the negotiators, told POLITICO as he left the second meeting "we are very close" to finalizing a tax reform agreement, but offered no specifics. Mnuchin also said the administration and congressional leaders were "absolutely" close to releasing a plan, a week after claiming on television that "a very detailed plan" was being shared with members of Congress.

That was news to lawmakers.

"I would think I would be in a position to see that but I haven't," said Meadows, who is one of the members of Congress closest to the administration.

Ways and Means members say they know little more at this point.

"There's nothing concrete yet," said Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.), though he added that he thought a framework would be set soon.

Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.), another Ways and Means member, said, "The president has some final decisions to make and I think when that happens then we roll."

Though congressional Republicans remain cautiously optimistic they will be able to deliver on their promise to overhaul the tax code, they know they have a limited opportunity and fear further delay will only allow interest groups to fully mobilize to fight any changes that might curb or eliminate tax provisions important to them.

Thune said basic questions have to be answered about how to measure the costs and benefits of tax cuts, as well as to what extent they are paid for by ending existing tax breaks.

"And that, obviously, is where you start getting into the controversy," Thune said. "Because every time you kill a deduction or preference or some exemption in the code there's some constituency for that."

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: White House reassures on ethanol — Job growth stays strong — Report: Murray downplays need for DOE rescue
Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 3:24:28 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 12/08/2017 03:22 PM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff

WHITE HOUSE REASSURES GRASSLEY ON ETHANOL: White House chief of staff John Kelly called Iowa Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) Thursday to reassure him that the president backs ethanol, a Grassley spokesman said. The call came after the president met with [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and other oil state senators to discuss how to help refiners. "Following the White House meeting, chief of staff Gen. Kelly spoke with Sen. Grassley over the phone and reiterated the president's unwavering commitment to ethanol, the RFS and Midwestern farmers," Grassley spokesman Michael Zona said.

JOBS GROWTH REMAINS STRONG: The economy added 228,000 jobs in November, the Labor Department said today. That's down from 244,000 in October, but helps to eliminate "any lingering worries about September's net job losses due to hurricanes in Texas and Florida," Pro Employment & Immigration's Ian Kullgren [reports](#).

Oil and gas extraction employment rose slightly, adding 200 jobs last month to grow to 179,400, according to seasonally adjusted numbers. Coal mining shed about 400 jobs between October and November, falling to a seasonally adjusted 51,200. Both figures are above where they were a year ago, according to BLS.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](#), [@dailym1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

NAH, WE'RE GOOD: Murray Energy executive Bob Murray told E&E News the fate of his company doesn't hinge on the outcome of Perry's subsidies proposal — instead, Murray Energy Corp. could survive on growing coal exports, he said. Murray told E&E that he no longer believes the company would fall if utility FirstEnergy Solutions Corp. files for bankruptcy or if the FERC doesn't enact the Energy request.

"**We looked at it initially** and said, 'If they go into bankruptcy at FirstEnergy Solutions, we may also,'" Murray said. "But we've since looked at it and believe that we can survive it through offsetting that loss of business with exports, which are growing. And actually, the pricing of exports now is better than domestic energy coal pricing." More [here](#).

FERC HEADS ATTEND FIRSTENERGY-BACKED CONFERENCE: FERC's then-Chairman Neil Chatterjee and Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur were among the guests at a secret conference in Florida attended by numerous industry executives and organized by a FirstEnergy board member, according to a report from the Energy and Policy Institute, a pro-renewable energy nonprofit watchdog group. The conference in question is an annual gathering, [since 2000](#) and organized by a the Emerging Issues Policy Forum, whose [vice president](#) and [board member](#) is Julia Johnson, current [director on the board of the FirstEnergy](#)

[Corporation.](#)

FirstEnergy is reportedly one of the driving forces of Energy Secretary Rick Perry plan to subsidize failing coal and nuclear plants. EPI points out the Florida meeting came just after Perry's proposal, which Chatterjee has signaled he supports. Chatterjee handed over the gavel this week to new FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre, who has asked DOE for another 30 days to consider the proposal.

EPI also reports that the commissioners' airfare, hotel rooms and meals were likely paid by one of Johnson's entities, potentially in violation of a [FERC ethics rule](#). "FERC did not respond to questions from the Energy and Policy Institute about who paid the bill for FERC personnel to travel and stay at the Eau Palm Resort, instead saying that EPI needs to file a Freedom of Information Act request, which EPI has done," they write. "But EIPF paid for then-Commissioner Collette Honorable to attend the 2016 conference, which was held at the Ritz-Carlton in Key Biscayne, Florida." Read the whole report [here](#).

TRUMP APPROVES CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY: President Donald Trump today approved an emergency declaration in California, as wildfires raging in the area went into their fifth day. The declaration orders federal assistance — via the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA — to aid state and local response efforts, POLITICO's Nolan McCaskill reports. "Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide, at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. Emergency protective measures, limited to direct Federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent federal funding," the White House said in a statement. Read [more](#).

EPA WON'T FIGHT TSCA TRANSFER: EPA said today it won't fight green groups' effort to let the San Francisco-based 9th Circuit Court of Appeals hear lawsuits over one of the major implementation rules for the Toxic Substances Control Act, Alex Guillén reports. "Several lawsuits over the evaluation rule were consolidated into the Richmond, Va.,-based 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, while suits over the prioritization rule were moved to the 9th Circuit, which is based in San Francisco," Alex writes. Environmentalists have asked the 4th Circuit to transfer its suit to the 9th Circuit, while EPA has asked for the reverse. "In a short [filing](#) today, EPA said that it still believes both challenges should be heard in the same court, and said it will drop its opposition to green groups' request that the 4th Circuit move the case," Alex [writes](#).

PRUITT TO RELEASE SUPERFUND LIST: "EPA will release its list of top-priority Superfund sites" today, a senior adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt tells Bloomberg. The list, proposed by the agency in June, "will show which Superfund sites need 'immediate and intense attention,' potentially accelerating cleanup progress and agency decisions at those sites," Bloomberg writes. " ... The list that was initially proposed would have 10 sites, and would be known as the 'Top Ten Administrator's Emphasis List.'" But Albert Kelly, Pruitt's senior adviser on Superfund issues, told Bloomberg the list to be released today has a different name, "and may not have exactly 10 sites, as proposed. He declined to provide further details ahead of the EPA's official announcement." Read [more](#).

SEE YOU IN TWO WEEKS: The president today signed the short-term continuing resolution [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#) appropriating funding through Dec. 22. and avoiding a government shutdown.

CRES TARGETS TAX REFORM: Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions today

announced a digital ad buy targeting key figures on tax reform. The D.C. campaign directs to [this letter](#) from CRES to House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) and Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#). The letter applauds the chambers' tax reform bill [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) for reducing the corporate tax rate and allowing for 100 percent expensing, but voices concerns over the Base Erosion Anti-Abuse Tax provision and the Alternative Minimum Tax.

QUICK HITS:

- Transition plan would decimate agency, except a "tiny bit," [E&E](#).
- A Maryland paper mill burns a polluting sludge called black liquor. The state calls it clean energy, [Baltimore Sun](#).
- BP says 2017 a success as it shifts focus to natural gas, [Houston Chronicle](#).
- Kids' lawsuit over climate change faces big test in federal court, [Bloomberg BNA](#).
- Baker Hughes: U.S. drillers add oil rigs for third week in a row, [Reuters](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- [Final tax bill vote in House](#) won't come next week, GOP leader says
- [Collins' Obamacare deal](#) faces moment of truth
- Trump's "[fake news](#)" mantra a hit with despots

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

Jobs growth stays strong with 228,000 rise [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 12/08/2017 08:48 AM EDT

Job creation stayed strong in November, the government reported Friday, eliminating any lingering worries about September's net job losses due to hurricanes in Texas and Florida.

The Labor Department reported 228,000 new jobs in November, down from October's 244,000 but notably higher than job growth during the months preceding September. October's gains, the largest of Trump's presidency, were, economists cautioned, inflated by the previous month's weather disruptions.

Friday's report demonstrated that the economy is still expanding at a steady clip in in the ninth year of recovery. White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said it showed that "President Trump's bold economic vision continues to pay off," and Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta said it reflected "optimism about the pro-growth, pro-jobs policies being advanced by President Trump's Administration."

"The job market and the economy are strong," said Mark Zandi, the chief economist for Moody's Analytics. "It would be pretty hard to derail."

The November unemployment was 4.1 percent, the jobs report showed, unchanged from October. Average hourly private-sector earnings rose 2.5 percent in October over the previous year. In October, they were up 2.3 percent.

The release comes as Trump and congressional Republicans put final touches on a tax bill that will slash the corporate tax rate and redraw tax brackets for individuals.

"The labor market is in great shape. Tax cuts should be used when the economy needs tax cuts and it doesn't need tax cuts right now," Joel Naroff, the chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors, told [Reuters](#).

Experts expect the tax break to give the economy a short-term boost that will likely level off by 2020.

"This may help the Rs for the 2018 election, but it will really complicate the election in 2020," Zandi said.

Labor force participation was unchanged from October's 62.7 percent and still close to its lowest level since the 1970s.

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Trump approves emergency declaration for California to help combat wildfires [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 12/08/2017 11:55 AM EDT

President Donald Trump today approved an emergency declaration in California, where wildfires have blazed for much of the week.

Trump's declaration orders federal assistance — from DHS and FEMA — to aid state and local response efforts.

"This action will help alleviate the hardship and suffering that the emergency may inflict on the local population, and provide appropriate assistance for required emergency measures ... to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, and to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura," the White House said in a statement. "Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide, at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. Emergency protective measures, limited to direct Federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent Federal funding."

The California wildfires are in in their [fifth day](#). Fires have burned across the southern region, displacing people from their homes and tearing through buildings. Authorities issued evacuation orders for more than 100,000 people.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Thursday that White House and FEMA officials were "speaking regularly to state and local authorities and making sure that we're ready and able to help when needed and when requested by those authorities."

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EPA won't fight moving TSCA lawsuit to 9th Circuit [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/08/2017 11:50 AM EDT

EPA today said that it will not oppose environmental groups' effort to switch courts for a lawsuit over one of the two major implementation rules for the reformed Toxic Substances Control Act.

Several lawsuits over the evaluation rule were consolidated into the Richmond, Va.,-based 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, while suits over the prioritization rule were moved to the 9th Circuit, which is based in San Francisco.

Seeking to avoid connected rules being litigated in different courts, EPA asked the 9th Circuit to send its suit to the 4th Circuit. Environmentalists made a similar request of the 4th Circuit to transfer its suit to the 9th Circuit.

But the 9th Circuit last month said it would not release the suit over the prioritization rule, leaving open the possibility that the 4th Circuit could transfer the evaluation rule challenge to the 9th Circuit.

In a short [filing](#) today, EPA said that it still believes both challenges should be heard in the same court, and said it will drop its opposition to green groups' request that the 4th Circuit move the case.

WHAT'S NEXT: It is unclear when the 4th Circuit will act, and it could still decide to keep the suit rather than transfer it.

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Final tax bill vote in House won't come next week, GOP leader says [Back](#)

By Brian Faler and Colin Wilhelm | 12/08/2017 11:49 AM EDT

The House will not vote next week on a final agreement to rewrite the tax code, though House and Senate negotiators are expected to work through the weekend.

"It will not come up next week, but if it could, I would bring it up as soon as we come out of conference, because I do believe the American people are waiting for a Tax Cuts and Jobs

Act," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy told colleagues late Thursday in remarks on the House floor.

His comments come as lawmakers work behind closed doors on a compromise tax plan that they can send to President Donald Trump to sign into law. Lawmakers have provided little guidance as to when they might wrap up their work, beyond saying they want to finish this year.

Dec. 22 has been widely seen as the unofficial deadline in recent days, as that's the date federal funding will run out under a stopgap spending measure and lawmakers are expected to turn their attention to spending again.

Gary Cohn, the chairman of the National Economic Council, told CNBC Friday that "a lot of progress is being made."

"This is going to be a big weekend for the conference committee; they're spending the weekend working on taxes, and I think we'll see an enormous amount of progress over the weekend," he said.

McCarthy also announced the House would be in session the week of Dec. 18, when the congressional calendar had both chambers on recess.

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Collins' Obamacare deal faces moment of truth [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 12/08/2017 05:06 AM EDT

Sen. Susan Collins is barreling toward yet another health care showdown with her own party. But this time, she might not have the leverage to get what she wants.

Republicans who watched Collins lead the rebellion over the GOP's Obamacare repeal effort just three months ago are playing tough on yet another high-stakes bill, wagering they can do without the Maine moderate's swing vote and still claim a narrow year-end legislative win on tax reform.

Collins went along with the tax bill that repeals Obamacare's individual mandate after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pledged to pass a pair of bills propping up Obamacare's shaky insurance markets, including a bipartisan deal resuming payments on key subsidies that President Donald Trump halted in October.

But Speaker Paul Ryan has made clear he's not bound by the deal, and there's little urgency among House Republicans to do much of anything on health care before the end of the year. On Thursday, Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker said conservatives received assurances that talks on a spending package to keep the government open won't address Obamacare.

"The three things we were told are not gonna happen as part of our agreement: no CSRs, no

DACA, no debt limit," he said, referring to efforts to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing subsidies.

That could cost Collins' support after she signaled that her vote on the final bill may hinge on the fate of the health care measures.

She told a Maine CBS affiliate Thursday night that she'd wait to see the final language from the conference committee working on the tax bill before committing her vote.

"I won't make a final decision until I see what that package is," Collins told CBS WABI 5.

One bill, known as Alexander-Murray, would temporarily restore subsidies to insurers. The second would fund a two-year reinsurance program helping health plans cover particularly expensive patients.

Senate Republicans can only afford two defections and still pass the tax bill using a fast-track procedure that requires a simple majority, with Vice President Mike Pence ready to cast the tie-breaking vote. The margin would become razor thin if Collins holds out, and Sen. Bob Corker maintains his opposition over concerns about the bill's impact on the deficit.

Yet House Republicans still chafing over the Senate's failure to repeal Obamacare insist they won't bend to Collins' demands. And while Senate Republicans are trying to keep Collins in the fold, there's little apparent worry so far that her opposition would sink the tax effort.

"I think you guys have to find something else to be concerned about," said Sen. Tim Scott, one of the 17 GOP lawmakers assigned to merge the House and Senate versions of the tax plan.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, who coauthored Alexander-Murray and has championed its inclusion in a year-end agreement, also waved off the need to pressure House Republicans on the issue.

"The House knows our position," he said. "When they see that they can lower premiums 18 percent ... reduce the debt, reduce the amount of money going to Obamacare subsidies, I think it'll be a Christmas present they'll want to give to their constituents."

One of the few moderates in a Republican conference that narrowly controls the Senate, Collins has regularly used her voice and vote to extract concessions from GOP leaders and ensure she's a central figure in negotiations.

During the health care debate, she urged the GOP to protect Medicaid and preserve more subsidies for people to buy insurance. When they stuck with their blueprint, Collins joined fellow Republicans Lisa Murkowski and John McCain in a dramatic vote that killed the months-long repeal bid.

And in the run-up to the Senate's late-night tax vote, she secured three late changes to the bill, including the expansion of a provision allowing people to deduct hefty medical bills that House Republicans had voted to eliminate entirely.

That was on top of McConnell's "ironclad commitment" to tackle the two health care bills at year's end — measures that Collins claims will help offset premium increases stemming from the bill's repeal of Obamacare's mandate that most Americans be insured.

Collins said Thursday she considers House passage of those Obamacare bills part of that commitment, even though McConnell has only publicly agreed to "supporting passage" of

them and can't singlehandedly force the House to take up legislation.

Ryan hasn't officially ruled out the possibility, but declined to commit to rolling either of the bills into upcoming spending agreements. Conservatives have loudly opposed any aid for Obamacare, and even moderates who support stabilizing the health law have shrugged at the exact timing.

"What the vehicle is to get it through the system, in the House and the Senate to the president's desk, I'll leave that to our leadership," said Rep. Tom Reed, who co-chairs the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

Collins insists she's taking the long view, claiming progress Thursday on trying to win over House Republicans during rounds of private negotiations.

"I remain confident, despite your skepticism, that we will eventually get that," she said.

And as the GOP learned during the repeal debate, the whip count could shift suddenly. Sens. Jeff Flake and Ron Johnson remain wild cards, and either could conceivably join Corker and Collins in torpedoing the tax bill if they dislike the final version.

For now though, Republican leaders are signaling once again that Collins may not get everything she wants on health care — and gambling it won't cost them a second time.

"I think that these are separate issues," said Sen. David Perdue. "I'm hopeful that that won't derail this [tax bill]. We've got to get it this done and get it on the president's desk."

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Trump's 'fake news' mantra a hit with despots [Back](#)

By Jason Schwartz | 12/08/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Authoritarian rulers across the globe are adopting President Donald Trump's favorite phrase to limit free speech, with prominent leaders or state media in at least 15 countries using his "fake news" line to denounce their critics, according to a POLITICO review.

By aligning themselves with Trump's words, despots have been able to use the U.S. president as a shield for their attacks on press freedom and human rights, said Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

"I'm seeing it more and more," he said. Trump, he added, "is providing a context and framework for all sorts of authoritarian leaders — or democratic leaders and others who are dissatisfied or upset by critical media coverage — to undermine and discredit reporting."

In February, for example, Syrian President Bashar Assad [brushed off](#) an Amnesty International report that some 13,000 people had been killed at one of his military prisons by saying, "You can forge anything these days, we are living in a fake news era."

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has [complained](#) of being "demonized" by "fake news." Last month, with Trump laughing by his side, [he called](#) reporters "spies."

And in a meta-moment in July, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro [complained to RT](#), the Russian propaganda outlet, that the world media had "spread lots of false versions, lots of lies" about his country, adding, "This is what we call 'fake news' today, isn't it?"

Over the weekend, a state official in Myanmar attracted notice when [he said](#), "There is no such thing as Rohingya. It is fake news," referring to the persecuted ethnic group.

Those are hardly the only examples of Trump's phrase being deployed internationally: In March, Chinese state media [dismissed](#) a prominent rights activist's account of torture as "fake news." And in May, the People's Daily ran an [op-ed](#) with the headline, "Trump is right, fake news is the enemy, something China has known for years."

During a July news conference in Warsaw with Polish President Andrzej Duda, Trump complained about "fake news" CNN, before turning to Duda and asking if he dealt with the same problems. Duda, who has cracked down aggressively on the press, smiled and nodded. That same day, after a mini-controversy over whether Duda's wife snubbed Trump for a handshake, the Polish president [declared on Twitter](#), "Contrary to some surprising reports my wife did shake hands with Mrs. and Mr. Trump @POTUS after a great visit. Let's FIGHT FAKE NEWS."

Last week, Libyan media [jumped on](#) a Trump tweet accusing CNN of reporting "fake news" to attempt to undermine a report by the network on modern day slavery within the country.

The Russian foreign ministry's website drops big red "Fake news" stamps [on stories](#) it deems untrue.

Even Spain's foreign minister [said that](#) police violence against Catalonians during their independence referendum was "fake news," despite photos and videos to the contrary.

The list goes on to [Uganda](#), [Somaliland](#), [Angola](#), [Cambodia](#) and [Turkey](#). Leaders [in Singapore](#), a country known for restricting free speech, have promised "Fake news" legislation in the new year.

"These governments, they're pushing the boundaries of what it's possible to get away with in terms of controlling their national media," said Steve Coll, dean of the Columbia Journalism School, "and there's no question that this kind of speech makes it easier for them to stretch those boundaries."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders pushed back against the idea that Trump bears responsibility. "This story is really ridiculous," she said in an email. "The president isn't against free speech but we do think reporting should be accurate."

The spread of the phrase has come against a backdrop of rising violence and persecution against journalists — at the end of 2016, the Committee to Protect Journalists counted 259 reporters jailed around the world, more than any year since it began counting in 1990. (The organization expects updated numbers for 2017 soon.)

Trump's go-to insult has become such a touchstone that members of far-right groups or political parties in countries like the Netherlands or Germany often write "fake news" [in](#)

[English](#) in their [tweets](#), said Cas Mudde, an international affairs professor at the University of Georgia.

"I have seen it particularly in social media used by radical right leaders who have been clearly influenced by Trump's use," he said. "Even if they have a tweet in Dutch, there will be a hashtag #fakenews in it."

"Ironically, you could call this the soft power of the U.S.," he said. "The U.S. always had massive soft power — you just think about hip-hop or McDonald's."

Trump has claimed that he invented the term, but in reality, it predates him. In the initial 2016 election conception, "fake news" described fabricated news stories meant to deceive readers, primarily on social media. But shortly after his election, Trump began using it to refute mainstream news stories—or entire outlets—he disagreed with.

"He took this term that had been used against him and turned it into a weapon against the media itself," Simon said. "The meaning has been so diluted and distorted that it's just become an insult without a lot of meaning."

As a result, Coll said, it's obscured the concerns around actual fake news. "We've lost the engagement through that phrase with something that is truly new and important," he said. "It meant originally to refer to something distinct, but it no longer does, and that's kind of an achievement of the president's appropriation of the term."

In Singapore, for example, leaders are billing the anticipated "Fake news" law as a way to fight against the same scourge of disinformation that plagued the U.S. election. But given the regime's history of restricting free speech, it's easy to imagine it being used to squash dissent.

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a history professor at New York University who studies authoritarianism, said that, to her, the phrase does now have a clear meaning: "It's anything that contradicts with a leader's version of reality," she said, pointing to the situation in Myanmar. "You can will away genocide, you can will away events that you didn't want people to know happened."

Ben-Ghiat recently wrote a [New Yorker story](#) asking why so many fascist memorials remain in Italy, and was stunned by the number of responses she received in Italian on Twitter that attacked her using the phrase "fake news," once again, in English.

"People still see the president of the United States as a very important figure. That's his slogan," she said. "It's one prong of a program that also is dismissing human rights, the whole turn against liberal democracy, the new illiberalism."

Leaders, of course, have been seeking to stifle dissenting voices since long before Trump, but Simon said that the cudgel of "fake news" gives them an additional tool. Traditionally, he said, repressive leaders most often justify silencing reporters by citing the fight against terrorism. "I don't think it's going to supplant anti-terror," he said, "but I think it will supplement it quite nicely."

Trump's attacks on the "fake news media" have signaled that protecting freedom of speech is not a priority for the country, essentially handing the world a permission slip, Mudde said.

"A lot of countries look to the U.S. partly for inspiration, but mostly as the policeman of the world," said Mudde. "If you see that the policeman actually doesn't care about freedom of

speech and the free press anymore, you feel that you don't have to care too much either."

Coll, the Columbia dean, said that promoting freedom of speech has always been a pillar of American policy, no matter which party has been in power.

"This has been such a constant of American voicing in the world. And it's not just about press freedom, it's about religious freedom, it's about democratic participation, more recently about women's rights, about LGBT rights," he said. "To just kind of turn around and coin a phrase that gives cover in this way—it's one of those aspects of this time that we're in that you really have to step back and think about to recognize what a departure it is."

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Afternoon Energy: Zinke recommends shrinking "handful" of monuments — Infrastructure council members resign — FERC head recuses self
Date: Thursday, August 24, 2017 5:14:38 PM

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 08/24/2017 05:11 PM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

ZINKE WANTS TO SHRINK 'HANDFUL' OF MONUMENTS: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke won't recommend the total elimination of any of the national monuments under his review, the Associated Press [reports](#) — but he will recommend President Donald Trump shrink "a handful" of them, he said, while not specifying which ones will be targeted.

Today was the deadline for the secretary to send his recommendations to Trump on the future of 22 national monuments, following the president's April executive order to review monuments created by presidential mandate. Zinke told the AP that unspecified boundary adjustments for some monuments carved in the wilderness and ocean will be included in the recommendations he gave Trump. None of the sites would be sold off by the federal government, he said, and public access for uses such as hunting, fishing or grazing would be maintained or restored. The former Montana congressman would not say whether portions of the monuments would be opened up to oil and gas drilling, mining, logging or other industries.

The Interior Department released a [public summary](#) about process used for the report to the White House, though it did not release the report itself. But in that summary, Interior [largely dismissed](#) public comments supporting keeping the sites intact as part of an organized campaign. "Comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining existing monuments and demonstrated a well orchestrated national campaign organized by multiple organizations," the agency said in the summary describing the review process. Esther Whieldon [reports](#) if Trump ultimately decides to alter or eliminate any monuments designated by former presidents Barack Obama or Bill Clinton, he is certain to face legal challenges from conservation and environmental groups.

Already environmental groups have condemned the announcement. The Center for Western Priorities blasted out a statement decrying that "if Secretary Zinke expects Americans to be thankful because he wants to merely erase large chunks of national monuments instead of eliminating them entirely, he is badly mistaken." While the Sierra Club said "any recommendation from Secretary Zinke to shrink national monuments is hypocritical at best and ruinous at worst."

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseyam](#), [@daily1](#), [@nickjuliano](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Afternoon Energy](#) will not publish from Aug. 28-Sept. 4. Our next Afternoon Energy newsletter will publish on Sept. 5. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL MEMBERS CALL IT QUILTS: Several members of

Trump's infrastructure advisory group have resigned, Pro Cybersecurity's Eric Geller reports, citing concerns that the president was not taking urgent matters like cybersecurity seriously. "You have given insufficient attention to the growing threats to the cybersecurity of the critical systems upon which all Americans depend, including those impacting the systems supporting our democratic election process," the resigning members of the [National Infrastructure Advisory Council](#) wrote in a Monday letter to Trump obtained by POLITICO. The council [earlier this week](#) approved recommendations for protecting the country's critical infrastructure from cyber threats, warning administration officials that time was running out before a major attack.

On the list of resignees: Cristin Dorgelo, who was the chief of staff at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy during the Obama administration; former U.S. chief data scientist DJ Patil; former White House Council on Environmental Quality managing director Christy Goldfuss; and former General Services Administration chief Daniel Tangherlini. Tangherlini told POLITICO that Dan Utech, who advised Obama as deputy assistant to the president for energy and climate change, had also resigned. More [here](#).

FERC CHAIR RECUSES SELF FROM FORMER FIRM CONFLICTS: Trump's pick to head FERC, Kevin McIntyre, says he'll recuse himself from matters relating to Jones Day, where he worked for more than two decades. In his ethics agreement filed with the Office of Government Ethics, McIntyre said he would not participate in matters involving the firm and its clients, as well as his own former clients for a year after being confirmed to FERC. McIntyre has represented South Carolina Electric & Gas Co., a SCANA subsidiary, at FERC within the past year. Darius Dixon has [more](#).

EPA GRANTS COME UNDER SCRUTINY: Trump's EPA is undertaking a wide-ranging review of all grants to nonprofits, universities and other institutions, Annie Snider reports — and already the agency has decided to end multiple awards made during the Obama era. "The Bay Journal, a 27-year-old nonprofit news organization that covers Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts, [learned](#) Wednesday that EPA will end a six-year grant it awarded the organization two years ago," Annie writes. "The Journal, which began as an EPA-funded newsletter, was due to receive its next annual distribution of \$325,000 in February." EPA is also requiring that all new grant solicitations be approved by a political appointee in its Office of Public Affairs, according to a [memo](#) first reported by E&E News. More [here](#).

McKINLEY: DOE COULD CHANGE MIND ON COAL PLANT EMERGENCY ORDER: Rep. [David McKinley](#) (R-W.Va.) speculated last night on a [local TV news show](#) that the Trump administration could reverse course and use its emergency power to keep coal-fired power plants operating if FirstEnergy Solutions sought bankruptcy protection. "It's not insurmountable," he said. If "other conditions change," such as utility bankruptcies or other problems, "my hope would be that DOE would reconsider and issue a different opinion," McKinley continued. "Given more facts, [Trump] may very well come out with a different decision, or have the Department of Energy come out with a different decision." DOE [rejected the plea](#) by Murray Energy CEO Robert Murray and First Energy earlier this month.

OGLETHORPE SEEKING \$1.6B LOAN BOOST: Oglethorpe Power Corp., the second-largest owner of the Vogtle nuclear project, is hoping the Energy Department will pad its existing loan guarantees with an additional \$1.6 billion, Darius Dixon [reports](#). The company "received a \$3.06 billion DOE loan guarantee under the Obama administration but [recently asked for an increase](#) in light of Vogtle's financial woes caused by the bankruptcy of its lead contractor Westinghouse earlier this year. "We are seeking additional funding in the range of

\$1.5 [billion] to \$1.6 billion,' Oglethorpe CFO Betsy Higgins said on a call with investors."

BUSINESSES PUSH FOR ISDS NAFTA INCLUSION: Three leading business organizations are pushing the Trump administration to preserve the controversial investor-state dispute settlement provision in NAFTA 2.0, "warning that their support for the renegotiation will wane if the mechanism is weakened or eliminated," Pro Trade's Megan Cassella reports. In the letter sent on Wednesday, the heads of the Business Roundtable, National Association of Manufacturers and U.S. Chamber of Commerce pushed back against common criticisms of the dispute settlement provision, which allows private companies to seek damages from government actions that violate their investment rights under a trade deal. The energy sector's support of a modernized NAFTA deal hinges directly on the inclusion of ISDS, Megan [reports](#).

QUESTLOVE OFFERS ... CHOICE WORDS FOR EPA: Funny Or Die teamed up with the Natural Resources Defense Council in a new video, where The Roots' Questlove calls proposed cuts to EPA "f---ed up."

"**The EPA was created to ensure** that our air and water is safe. ... That's cool," Questlove says in the video. "However, proposed budget cuts would shrink the EPA by nearly a third, crippling the science, data collection and enforcement that protects our health — even gutting a program that tests cancer-causing radon in schools. That's f---ed up." Watch it [here](#).

PARTY IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UKRAINE: Energy Secretary Rick Perry is leading a presidential delegation to Kazakhstan for Expo 2017 and then heading on to Ukraine next week, and he is bringing his wife, daughter, son-in-law and friends. The Energy Department told POLITICO's Playbook that Perry's family and friends will be reimbursing the government for all costs associated with the trip. (h/t [Playbook](#))

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Zinke dismisses support for monuments as 'national campaign' by interest groups [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 08/24/2017 02:01 PM EDT

The Interior Department today said Secretary Ryan Zinke has sent his recommendations on whether to maintain or shrink 22 national monuments to the White House, and it largely dismissed the millions of public comments supporting keeping the sites intact as part of an organized campaign.

"Comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining existing monuments and demonstrated a well orchestrated national campaign organized by multiple organizations," the agency said in a [summary](#) describing the review process.

The agency declined to provide any details about what Zinke recommended for the monuments, but he told the Associated Press earlier today that he was seeking to shrink a handful of them. Another report this week said Zinke called for sharply reducing the Bears Ears monument in Utah established by former President Barack Obama.

Zinke's summary of the process appeared sympathetic to the commenters who opposed the monuments, describing their concerns as more accurately representing the public and local business interests. Those comments sought to "protect traditional multiple use, and those most concerned were often local residents associated with industries such as grazing, timber production, mining, hunting and fishing, and motorized recreation," it said.

interior has said it conducted a thorough review of the comments.

WHAT'S NEXT: President Donald Trump will review the recommendations but it is unclear when, or even if, he will take any concrete actions which would be sure to face legal challenges.

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Report: Zinke to call on Trump to trim a 'handful' of monuments [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 08/24/2017 12:00 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told [the Associated Press](#) today he is recommending that President Donald Trump shrink "a handful" of national monuments, though he did not specify which ones he was targeting.

The report said Zinke would not recommend that Trump revoke the designations of any of the 22 monuments that were under review, avoiding a move that would have tested the legal limits of the president's authority.

The agency has not said whether it will release a public copy of Zinke's report to the White House, which was due today, but Interior is expected to make some announcement later today, according to sources.

If Trump ultimately decides to alter or eliminate any monuments designated by former presidents Barack Obama or Bill Clinton, he is certain to face legal challenges from conservation and environmental groups. Past presidents have changed the size of monuments, but none have revoked a designation under the Antiquities Act entirely, and legal questions remain as to whether the law allows a president to fully undo their predecessors' actions.

At a June House Natural Resources Committee hearing, Zinke [said](#) the Interior and Commerce departments were focusing on "just a few" monuments.

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White House infrastructure council members resign, citing Trump's 'insufficient' attention to cyber threats [Back](#)

By Eric Geller | 08/24/2017 11:24 AM EDT

Several members of President Donald Trump's infrastructure advisory group have resigned, citing concerns that Trump was not taking urgent matters like cybersecurity seriously.

"You have given insufficient attention to the growing threats to the cybersecurity of the critical systems upon which all Americans depend, including those impacting the systems supporting our democratic election process," the resigning members of the [National Infrastructure Advisory Council](#) wrote in a Monday letter to Trump obtained by POLITICO.

The letter also criticized the comments Trump made after this month's deadly white nationalist demonstration in Charlottesville, Va., writing that "you failed to denounce the intolerance and violence of hate groups, instead offering false equivalences and attacking the motives of the CEOs who had resigned from their advisory roles in protest."

Those resigning from the infrastructure council included Cristin Dorgelo, who was the chief of staff at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy during the Obama administration; former U.S. chief data scientist DJ Patil; former White House Council on Environmental Quality managing director Christy Goldfuss; and former General Services Administration chief Daniel Tangherlini.

Dorgelo and Tangherlini confirmed their departures to POLITICO. [Goldfuss](#) and [Patil](#) tweeted that they had resigned. Roll Call first [reported](#) the letter and their departures.

Tangherlini told POLITICO that Dan Utech, who advised Obama as deputy assistant to the president for energy and climate change, had also resigned.

Two other people were recently [removed](#) from the NIAC's member list: Amy Pope, who was a deputy homeland security adviser during the Obama administration, and Charles Ramsey, the former Philadelphia police commissioner. They did not respond to inquiries about whether they had resigned.

A White House official confirmed on Wednesday that "several" NIAC members had resigned but said the remaining participants were "committed to the important work of protecting our

nation's critical infrastructure."

The council, composed of current and former industry executives, met on Tuesday to discuss and [approve a report](#) to Trump with recommendations for protecting the nation's critical infrastructure systems, such as banks and hospitals, from cyberthreats. They urged the Trump administration to expand biennial cyberattack drills, create dedicated emergency communications networks and improve the sharing of cyberthreat data between government and industry.

The resigning members told Trump that they did not believe his administration was "adequately attentive to the pressing national security matters within the NIAC's purview, or responsive to sound advice received from experts and advisors on these matters."

"Your actions have threatened the security of the homeland I took an oath to protect," they said.

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FERC chairman nominee pledges distance from firm, clients [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/24/2017 11:07 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's pick to lead FERC says he'll recuse himself from matters involving Jones Day, the law firm where he has worked for more than two decades.

In an [ethics agreement](#) filed with the Office of Government Ethics, Kevin McIntyre vows to not participate in matters involving the firm and its clients, as well as his own former clients for a year after being confirmed to FERC. McIntyre has represented South Carolina Electric & Gas Co., a SCANA subsidiary, at FERC within the past year.

He will also resign from the board of the Charitable Foundation of the Energy Bar Association and will not participate in FERC business involving the group for a year, and will divest from the Nuveen Virginia Quality Municipal Income Fund. McIntyre's wife works for Boeing, so he will also not engage in dockets that might have a "direct and predictable effect" on the company's financial interests.

Fellow FERC nominee Rich Glick, a Democrat, has also [pledged](#) to make sure his mutual funds don't concentrate in any one sector that exceeds \$50,000.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has scheduled a hearing for the McIntyre and Glick nominations on Sept. 7.

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EPA puts grants under scrutiny, cuts some funding [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/24/2017 02:11 PM EDT

The Trump EPA is undertaking a wide-ranging review of all grants to nonprofits, universities and other institutions, and has already decided to end multiple awards made by the Obama administration.

The Bay Journal, a 27-year-old non-profit news organization that covers Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts, [learned](#) Wednesday that EPA will end a six-year grant it awarded the organization two years ago. The Journal, which began as an EPA-funded newsletter, was due to receive its next annual distribution of \$325,000 in February.

"It's not unprecedented for a new administration to conduct a thorough review of the previous administration's funding decisions, which is currently ongoing for all grants, including those that are mid-cycle," EPA spokeswoman Amy Graham said in a statement, confirming that multiple mid-cycle grants are already on the chopping block. "We are focused on ensuring taxpayer funds are spent responsibly on programs that yield tangible results to protect clean air, land and water."

The agency is also requiring that all new grant solicitations be approved by a political appointee in its Office of Public Affairs, according to a [memo](#) first reported by E&E News.

The Trump administration called for sharp cuts for EPA in its budget blueprint, including to the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort and other watershed programs across the country. But those programs are broadly popular with lawmakers of both parties, and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt voiced strong support for the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort during his confirmation hearing, despite having sued over it in his previous job as Oklahoma's attorney general.

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DOE rejects Murray Energy's request to order coal plants to remain open [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 08/22/2017 09:30 AM EDT

The Trump administration will not use special authority to order coal-fired power plants to remain operational, a move sought by coal producer Murray Energy and other companies, [the Associated Press](#) reported this morning.

In [letters](#) to the White House, Murray wrote that during private conversations in recent months with CEO Robert Murray, President Donald Trump had promised to grant his request for a two-year moratorium on Ohio-based FirstEnergy Solutions closing any of its coal plants, even if the company goes bankrupt. According to the letters, administration attorneys were concerned about the legality of such action. One letter said Murray was present when Trump had directly ordered Energy Secretary Rick Perry three times to grant the request to order the plants to stay open.

DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes confirmed in an email to POLITICO that DOE has rejected Murray's request.

"We look at the facts of each issue and consider the authorities we have to address them but with respect to this particular case at this particular time, the White House and the Department of Energy are in agreement that the evidence does not warrant the use of this emergency authority," she said.

Section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act authorizes DOE to order power plants to remain online during wartime or in certain emergencies. It has been used sparingly — just [eight times](#) since 2000, and never in such a sweeping manner as the two-year moratorium on closing coal plants sought by Murray.

A Murray spokesman did not immediately return a request for comment.

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Vogle co-owner is seeking 50 percent boost in DOE financing [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/24/2017 12:27 PM EDT

The second-largest owner of the Vogtle nuclear project is hoping the Energy Department will pad its existing loan guarantees with an additional \$1.6 billion, a company executive said today.

Oglethorpe Power Corp., which has a 30-percent stake in the Georgia project, received a \$3.06 billion DOE loan guarantee under the Obama administration but [recently asked for an increase](#) in light of Vogtle's financial woes caused by the bankruptcy of its lead contractor Westinghouse earlier this year.

"We are seeking additional funding in the range of \$1.5 [billion] to \$1.6 billion," Oglethorpe CFO Betsy Higgins said on a call with investors.

In a [filing with the SEC](#) earlier this month, Oglethorpe said its initial \$5 billion portion of Vogtle had increased to somewhere between \$6.5 billion and \$7.3 billion.

Oglethorpe's partners, Georgia Power and Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia have also requested increases to their loan guarantees.

Higgins also said that DOE is aiming to make a decision by the end of next month.

"DOE is under a tight timeframe to try to get these new loans agreed so that we can have a conditional commitment by the end of September, which is the end of the government's fiscal year," Higgins said. "They're trying to keep everything the same as it was in the first loan, if possible."

She said that it was unclear whether Oglethorpe would be expected to pay a credit subsidy on any new DOE guarantees.

WHAT'S NEXT: Vogtle's owners are expected submit a recommendation to Georgia regulators on whether to complete the project on Aug. 31.

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Vogtle owners seek new cash infusion from loan program Trump wants gone [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/18/2017 04:50 PM EDT

Backers of the Vogtle nuclear project in Georgia are hoping Energy Secretary Rick Perry can quickly wedge more federal financial support under the massive project — just as one state regulator was skeptical that it would be a "make-or-break" decision.

Three of Vogtle's backers revealed this week that they want a bigger lifeline from the Energy Department after their long-delayed and over-budget project suffered the bankruptcy of its lead contractor and reactor designer Westinghouse this spring.

Under the Obama administration, DOE approved loan guarantees of \$3.4 billion to Southern Co.'s Georgia Power, \$3.1 billion to Oglethorpe Power Co., and \$1.8 billion to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia to back the Vogtle project — the nation's first set of new reactor designs in more than a generation.

Now, all three say they've filed paperwork with DOE to increase those loan guarantee levels for the Vogtle project, while declining to say how much they're now seeking.

When Congress established the loan program as part of the 2005 energy law, DOE was authorized to guarantee up to \$12.5 billion in financing for nuclear energy projects in the U.S., which would potentially allow Vogtle's owners to tap another \$4.2 billion. Bloomberg first reported on the new applications from Southern and Oglethorpe.

Still, Tim Echols, the vice chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission, warned against linking Vogtle's fate to the additional DOE financing.

In June, Vogtle's co-owners secured an agreement from Westinghouse parent company Toshiba that would direct \$3.68 billion to the project. But, in an SEC filing last week, Oglethorpe [aired](#) concerns that they may not be able to "fully collect" the sum if Toshiba's financial status erodes further.

"I'm not sure that the loan guarantee piece of the project equation is a make or break issue for us," Echols said by email. "The Toshiba payments are far more important."

Vogtle's sister project in South Carolina, V.C. Summer, which is set to receive a smaller payout from Toshiba, didn't initially seek assistance from DOE. But earlier this month, a DOE official said SCANA [sought](#) as much as \$3 billion in grants from the agency to support the flailing project — a cash sum that is essentially 10 percent of the agency budget and would almost certainly need congressional approval. DOE rejected the request but suggested SCANA apply for a loan guarantee, which the company declined to do.

Southern is expected to tell Georgia regulators by the end of August whether it plans to proceed with all or part of the two-reactor Vogtle project.

Echols, who has supported the project for years, wrote an [op-ed](#) for The Wall Street Journal late Thursday saying that "[w]ith vision, perseverance and God's help we will make the Vogtle reactors America's next nuclear-energy flagship."

The decision on whether to approve increases for the Vogtle loan guarantees could force Perry into an uncomfortable position: He has expressed his interest in protecting around-the-clock "baseload" sources of electricity like nuclear power, but conservatives have long lambasted the loan program for distorting the energy market.

The Trump administration has called for killing the loan office in its fiscal 2018 budget proposal — a document Perry has publicly distanced himself from on Capitol Hill.

Republican spending chiefs in the House and Senate have also advanced bills that would rescind the loan guarantee authorities established under the George W. Bush administration, a move that may have closed the door on the latest request from Vogtle's owners if the legislation is ultimately signed into law before DOE acts.

"This is reversal of fortune at a pivotal time for the loan guarantee program," said David Blee, the executive director of the U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure Council, a coalition of nuclear businesses. "This demonstrates, especially in comparison to V.C. Summer, the importance of loan guarantees in propelling first-of-a-kind nuclear energy projects."

He added: "We are confident that key appropriators and authorizers will take note."

But some conservatives aren't persuaded by Summer's demise or Vogtle's woes to abandon their opposition to the loan program.

"It's a pivotal moment on the direction of whether this administration will stay true to conservative principles in energy policy that protect the taxpayers and that shift U.S. energy policy in a more market-oriented direction," said Nick Loris, an energy and environment fellow for the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Trying to shore up Vogtle with additional financing, he said, would be a "slippery slope" toward preserving DOE's loan program. "The tide is turning in the right direction for closing down the loan guarantee program. It wasn't all that long ago that this program was hailed an economic stimulus from both Democrats and Republicans."

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3 business groups' support for NAFTA 2.0 could hinge on ISDS [Back](#)

By Megan Cassella | 08/24/2017 12:27 PM EDT

Three top business organizations are urging the Trump administration to preserve the controversial investor-state dispute settlement provision in NAFTA 2.0, warning that their

support for the renegotiation will wane if the mechanism is weakened or eliminated.

"Attempts to eliminate or weaken ISDS will harm American businesses and workers and, as a consequence, will serve to undermine business community support for the NAFTA modernization negotiations," the heads of the Business Roundtable, National Association of Manufacturers and U.S. Chamber of Commerce wrote in a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and four other top Cabinet officials.

In the letter, sent on Wednesday and obtained by POLITICO Thursday, Joshua Bolten, Jay Timmons and Tom Donohue pushed back against common criticisms of the dispute settlement provision, which allows private companies to seek damages from government actions that violate their investment rights under a trade deal.

More than 100 business groups have already [written](#) to the administration to back the provision, and a lobbyist source told POLITICO earlier this week that the energy sector's support of a modernized NAFTA deal hinges directly on the inclusion of ISDS. Liberal lawmakers and progressive groups, meanwhile, are [threatening to oppose](#) any deal that includes the provision.

The three large business groups refuted the idea that ISDS infringes on U.S. sovereignty, writing "rather, it upholds the same fundamental due process and private property guarantees protected by our Constitution, and it obligates other countries to uphold these precepts as well."

They also praised the provision for providing "neutral arbitration" for decades — it has been a feature of nearly all U.S. trade agreements, including the original NAFTA. They also noted that the U.S. government has never lost an ISDS dispute.

The letter — which was also addressed to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn — comes as the administration [is grappling](#) with its position over ISDS.

The USTR did not take a formal stance on the provision in its formal [negotiating objectives](#), released last month.

Adam Behsudi contributed to this report.

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Kelly moves to control the information Trump sees [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson and Nancy Cook | 08/24/2017 05:11 AM EDT

Confronted with a West Wing that treated policymaking as a free-for-all, President Donald Trump's chief of staff, John Kelly, is instituting a system used by previous administrations to limit internal competition — and to make himself the last word on the material that crosses the president's desk.

It's a quiet effort to make Trump conform to White House decision-making norms he's flouted without making him feel shackled or out of the loop. In a conference call last week, Kelly initiated a new policymaking process in which just he and one other aide — White House staff secretary Rob Porter, a little-known but highly regarded Rhodes scholar who overlapped with Jared Kushner as an undergraduate at Harvard — will review all documents that cross the Resolute desk.

The new system, laid out in two memos co-authored by Kelly and Porter and distributed to Cabinet members and White House staffers in recent days, is designed to ensure that the president won't see any external policy documents, internal policy memos, agency reports and even news articles that haven't been vetted. Kelly's deputy, Kristjen Nielson, is also expected to assume an integral role.

The keystone of the new system is a "decision memo" that will — for each Trump policy — integrate the input of Cabinet agencies and policy councils and present the president with various options, as well as with the advantages and drawbacks of each one.

The Kelly-Porter reforms are in many ways a reversion to the habits of previous administrations, particularly in their attempt to ensure competing views are completely and straightforwardly presented to the president.

"There is a White House policy process, tried and true, that is not endemic to Republicans or Democrats, and it includes having the various policy councils bringing in the information and perspectives from agencies and elsewhere and then having the staff secretary's office share the policy council's memo around the office to get it vetted," said Tevi Troy, who served as deputy assistant to the president for domestic policy under George W. Bush.

Porter, a Harvard Law graduate, has assumed a pivotal behind-the-scenes role in the administration, working even before Kelly's arrival to create form from chaos and to serve as an honest broker between the competing factions that populate the Trump White House. He's no stranger to the GOP's vast ideological spectrum, having served as chief of staff to Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and before that as counsel to Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), an Ivy League blueblood and George H.W. Bush partisan, as well as to tea partier Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah).

Former President Barack Obama's staff secretary prepared briefing books for the president that he took home each evening, making sure to incorporate competing viewpoints. "We really worked hard to limit the extent to which he would see anything outside of that channel," said Doug Kramer, Obama's staff secretary. "People are constantly trying to circumvent the process because they want to get to the president, particularly during emergencies."

Some Oval Office veterans say the staff secretary has in recent years taken on an outside role typically reserved for the White House chief of staff, from mediating policy disputes between senior advisers to resolving turf wars between the White House policy councils. In policy meetings on trade, for example, Porter has been left to mediate disputes between National Economic Council director Gary Cohn, who favors free trade, and protectionist Peter Navarro, the head of the White House's National Trade Council.

White House aides note that the new system is likely to slow the policymaking process. Executive orders, dashed out in a matter of days at the outset of the administration, are now likely to go through weeks of review as they are circulated to policy advisers, lawyers and the

president's legislative affairs team.

But some hope that this new policymaking process will deliver legislative victories that have so far been elusive — particularly now that senior strategist Steve Bannon, who was known for skipping formal meetings to take his proposals directly to Trump, is out of the White House. One official called Bannon a "disruptive force" who did not want to follow any set path for making White House decisions.

"Gen. Kelly is instilling processes to ensure that the president has the information and analysis he needs to make decisions," said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "The White House staff will continue to support the president by ensuring that the policy options presented to him reflect all relevant viewpoints, including any dissenting views."

While former White House chief of staff Reince Priebus worked to systematize the policymaking process, White House aides say Priebus spent much of his time doing damage control and never instituted a holistic approach or managed to corral the flow of people and paper through the Oval Office, which until recently served as the social hub of the White House.

The president made policy pronouncements without consulting with all the stakeholders in his own administration; absent a formal policy process, their input often didn't make it to the president's desk. "In the past, a few senior administration officials unilaterally made policy calls that everyone had to live with," said one senior administration official. "It seems like those days are over."

The drawn-out saga to repeal and replace Obamacare revealed the weaknesses of the old system. In the early days of the administration and even the Trump transition, a number of domestic policy aides developed proposals for the potential repeal and replacement of Obamacare that included giving grants to states and the use of health savings accounts. Those ideas got tossed out once Tom Price was confirmed as secretary of Health and Human Services and indicated during a meeting in the Roosevelt Room that the White House would instead back the House plan, supported by Speaker Paul Ryan and Priebus.

Priebus was insistent on this option, according to two White House officials, and called a meeting at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in February where the House's plan was presented as the lone option to senior advisers.

Since taking over for Priebus last month, Kelly has sought to crack down not just on sneakiness and backbiting but also to impose order more broadly. He has tasked deputy chiefs of staff Rick Dearborn and Joe Hagin with bringing some order to the president's schedule, pushing them to plan events further in advance and to include one public-facing event each day and one travel event each week, according to a senior White House aide.

He is also reworking what were once free-flowing White House meetings. Each one now includes a list of attendees to prevent aides from inserting themselves gratuitously where Kelly does not want them. Said a top White House aide: "If you're not on the list, you can't get into the meeting."

Whether a president known for freelancing can live with military discipline is another matter. "If there was not this structure beforehand and if the structure has now been created and if they adhere to it, you will get better results, but there are some 'ifs' in my statement," Troy said.

"The process works if people stick to it."

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Agitated Trump lashes out at McConnell, Ryan, Obama, Clapper, media [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 08/24/2017 10:23 AM EDT

President Donald Trump ditched his recent — if brief — talk of unity on Thursday, instead accusing Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan of provoking a "mess" over the debt ceiling, while also lashing out at the news media and former intelligence official James Clapper.

The declarations came in a series of tweets that Trump fired off early Thursday, which also included a retweet of a picture of himself covering an image of former President Barack Obama with the caption, "The Best Eclipse Ever!"

For days, Trump has bounced wildly between scripted messages calling for unity in the wake of Charlottesville and enthusiastic attacks on his opponents and fellow Republicans alike, underscoring how difficult a packed legislative calendar could prove in September for a president yet to achieve any substantial legislative wins while rapidly alienating his own party leadership.

Press secretary Sarah Sanders appeared to soften some of the rhetoric later Thursday, saying Trump shares leadership's desire for a "clean" debt ceiling increase and denying that a significant rift exists.

"I think the relationships are fine," Sanders said, but added: "Certainly there are going to be some policy differences, but there are also a lot of shared goals."

Trump took special aim at McConnell, who has reportedly grown weary of the president's scattershot approach to the presidency. Both McConnell's and Trump's teams had issued statements on Wednesday downplaying the tension, saying the two were working together on shared legislative goals.

"The only problem I have with Mitch McConnell is that, after hearing Repeal & Replace for 7 years, he failed! That should NEVER have happened!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

The morning missives come just two days after Trump told the crowd at a Phoenix campaign rally, "I don't do Twitter-storms."

He also brought Ryan into his congressional attacks, claiming that McConnell and Ryan rebuffed his request for an "easy" solution to avoiding a debt ceiling crisis this fall.

"I requested that Mitch M & Paul R tie the Debt Ceiling legislation into the popular V.A. Bill (which just passed) for easy approval. They.....didn't do it so now we have a big deal with Dems holding them up (as usual) on Debt Ceiling approval. Could have been so easy-now a mess!" Trump wrote Thursday on Twitter.

Congress has to raise the statutory debt limit by Sept. 29 to avoid a default on the national debt, which economists say would be a disaster for the United States. Both McConnell and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have expressed confidence that the limit will be raised, but some Republicans are balking at the idea of an increase with no strings attached.

Mnuchin has previously asked for a clean debt ceiling increase, implying it would not be tied to other legislation.

The White House "never made a serious push" to tie the debt ceiling to the veterans bill that Trump signed on Wednesday, according to a senior GOP congressional aide, who expressed puzzlement over the public declaration. And it is unclear whether members of the hard-line House Freedom Caucus, who tend to oppose raising the debt ceiling, would have been any more amenable if it was linked to the veterans bill. House Democrats also balked at the plan, a separate GOP source said.

Trump's Thursday riff included an offensive against Clapper and the media coverage of his speeches in the wake of the violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, which have veered from calls for unification to divisive off-the-script remarks.

"James Clapper, who famously got caught lying to Congress, is now an authority on Donald Trump. Will he show you his beautiful letter to me?" Trump tweeted, referencing Clapper's testimony before Congress in 2013 in which he said intelligence officials did not "wittingly" collect data on Americans.

It was not immediately clear what letter Trump was referring to. It was reported later Thursday that Clapper wrote short notes to both Trump and Hillary Clinton ahead of the election that would be delivered to the winning candidate, along with the first presidential daily briefing.

Clapper had laced into Trump following his combative speech at a Phoenix rally on Tuesday night, telling CNN, "I really question his ability to be — his fitness to be — in this office."

"I also am beginning to wonder about his motivation for it — maybe he is looking for a way out," Clapper added.

And Trump blasted the "fake news" media on Thursday morning for pointing out the whiplash nature of his speeches in recent days.

"The Fake News is now complaining about my different types of back to back speeches. Well, there was Afghanistan (somber), the big Rally (enthusiastic, dynamic and fun) and the American Legion - V.A. (respectful and strong). Too bad the Dems have no one who can change tones!" Trump tweeted.

But it appears his feud with congressional leaders has the highest stakes.

Trump's relationship with Congress, which was never strong to begin with, seems to be deteriorating rapidly. He's slated to meet with his office of legislative affairs at the White House on Thursday.

The deterioration comes at a particularly bad time, with both the debt ceiling and funding to keep the government open looming as must-pass items in September. Trump stated this week he would be willing to shut down the government if Congress does not approve money to

build a wall along the southern border, which he promised during the campaign would be paid for by Mexico. Sanders did not reiterate that threat Thursday, and she dodged questions about whether Trump had backed off his demand that Mexico pay for the wall.

Some Republicans have tried to strike a more conciliatory tone ahead of the month's legislative deadlines.

McConnell, speaking at a breakfast in Kentucky, lightly dinged Trump, saying he is "a little concerned by some of the trade rhetoric" emanating from both Democrats and the White House. But the comment on the president's trade agenda was a lone point of contention in remarks that largely cast Trump and Capitol Hill Republicans as allies.

Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), who regularly criticizes Trump and has become a target of the president's wrath, declined on Thursday to engage after Trump attacked him during his speech in Phoenix.

"You know, I just have to concern myself with my own campaign and my day job of being a senator," Flake said on Fox News when pressed about his relationship with Trump. "So what the president does, that's his prerogative."

Seung Min Kim, Louis Nelson and Diamond Naga Siu contributed to this report.

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Castro twins' political ambitions collide [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove | 08/24/2017 05:15 AM EDT

Texas Democrats desperately want Rep. Joaquín Castro to run for governor next year — and they're frustrated by what they see as his twin brother's presidential ambitions getting in the way.

The congressman's decision as to whether to run against Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is caught up in the Castro brothers' unique mix of their deep personal connection and parallel political ambitions. Joaquín Castro is being hounded by Democrats to get in but is torn, according to people who've spoken with him, over whether to take on a popular incumbent with \$40 million in the bank.

That's where his identical twin brother, Julián Castro, comes in. The former Housing and Urban Development secretary and 2012 Democratic convention speaker recently launched a PAC and is spending the fall writing an autobiographical, campaign-style book, and has made his interest in 2020 clear.

The brothers serve as each other's top strategists, and they've agreed that Julián's next political move takes primacy for now. One worry is that a Joaquín loss for governor — it would be an uphill battle, at best, against Abbott — would make the Castros look like losers. The other is that if Joaquin happened to pull off an upset, it would distract attention from Julián, potentially complicating his path to the White House.

Julián has talked to many people about the lack of national Democratic figures to channel the rising power of Latinos, and how well-positioned he believes he is to occupy that space. But he, too, would also be a long shot if he were to run for president in 2020.

Though Joaquín Castro is seen as unlikely to go through with it, last month Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez spoke with the congressman and encouraged him to run for governor, according to a person familiar with the conversation. Several members of the Texas House delegation have also urged him to take the leap.

Both Castros are famously cautious.

"No matter what, I think Joaquín wants to do everything possible that Julián is in the best possible position to move forward with his plans," said Gilberto Hinojosa, the Texas Democratic chairman, who's eager to see the congressman jump in against Abbott.

Hinojosa and other Texas Democrats have talked to the congressman about running. State party officials reached out to operatives in Washington last week to help in the recruitment effort, according to people involved in the conversations.

Joaquín Castro isn't just seen as the strongest potential candidate — 15 months out from the election, Democrats have literally no one else. The race is seen as such a long shot that national Democrats haven't put much thought into trying to find a candidate, who they believe would likely only drain resources from other more winnable races.

Local Democrats are more optimistic. They see a tough environment for Republicans, thanks in part to Donald Trump's early woes. They're heartened by Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke's challenge to Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. They also believe the state's steady demographic changes are nudging the state blue, though there's no electoral evidence of it to date (Hillary Clinton did beat Donald Trump in three Republican-held congressional districts).

As for Joaquin, Democrats say he's the only one who would bring a record on issues, generate excitement on the trail, boast support from establishment Democrats and big national donors, and turn out the state's enormous Latino population. That could be enough, they argue, to get within range of making Abbott vulnerable.

"He has been a rock-solid leader on economic issues," said Jeff Rotkoff, the campaigns director at the Texas AFL-CIO. "If he so chose, he'd be a very powerful messenger."

In private conversations, Castro talks about how "the normal calculus" of politics has been scrambled by Trump. Does that mean he passes on a race because the work in Congress feels too compelling to give up, especially with the speculation that Democrats have an outside shot at winning the House next year? Or does it mean deciding what's happening in Washington and Austin is too disconcerting to not at least try to beat Abbott next year, if only to begin laying the groundwork for a multi-cycle campaign for the governor's job?

"He'd have a lot to consider on that," said Chris Turner, the leader of the Texas state House Democrats. "He's going to do what's best for Texas and the country."

Through a spokesman, Joaquín Castro declined to comment, and Julián Castro did not respond to an effort to reach him directly.

But at a news conference in Austin last week, the congressman joined state legislators blasting Abbott and the GOP for their just-concluded monthlong special session. When asked whether he'd run, Joaquin Castro left open the option in a way that people familiar with his response say was deliberate.

"It's my intention right now to run for reelection. If that changes, I'll let you know," he said, according to people present.

The governor's race isn't the only one where the Castro brothers' internal dynamics have played out. Joaquín Castro told people earlier this year that part of why he was passing on the Senate race against Cruz was to keep from butting into his brother's plans. (However, when Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) was briefly floated for the FBI director opening, Castro said he'd be interested in running for his seat. The shorter timetable of a special election would have been more favorable for Castro and he wouldn't have had to give up his House seat.)

O'Rourke is eager to run with his friend and fellow congressman as a Democratic slate: O'Rourke for Senate, Castro for governor. O'Rourke regularly encourages people to call Castro and make the case to him directly.

"I've told him as much, let him know I would do anything in my power to be successful," O'Rourke said on a drive between the kind of campaign stops in red and blue Texas that he said have convinced him Democrats have a real opportunity to win statewide. "It will take a total commitment, and obviously it's going to be tough. But there's never been a better year than this one."

Running alongside each other would help them both, O'Rourke argued.

"The state is already energized," he said. "It would be supercharged if he would get out there."

Castro was 16 years old the last time a Democrat was elected governor in Texas — Ann Richards in 1990. But beyond how tough Abbott would be to beat, there are factors that could keep Castro in Congress. His seat is safe, and in addition to his committee posts, including a spot on the Intelligence Committee, he's viewed an obvious candidate for a spot in the next generation of House Democratic leaders.

But an ability to do something substantial in the House requires being in the majority. And the path to the majority likely requires redistricting in states like Texas, where Democrats are sure they'd be able to win more races if they had a Democratic governor instead of a Republican governor helping to draw district lines.

"None of that happens unless we have a strong statewide ticket," Hinojosa said. "No one could make it stronger than Joaquín."

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AFTERNOON COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING

July 19, 2017

NEWS OF THE DAY

Healthcare

- The President hosted Republican senators for lunch today, and his message was simple: It's time to get repeal and replace done. INACTION IS NOT AN OPTION
 - The President said today: "I don't think we should leave town unless we have a health insurance plan, unless we give our people great health care."
 - "Any Senator who votes against is telling American you're fine with Obamacare...A yes vote will let Senators debate the future of health care and suggest different ways to improve the bill."
 - "I'm ready to act... I have pen in hand."
- The White House is open to all potential solutions:
 - A clean repeal with time built in to craft a replacement; or,
 - As the President would prefer a repeal and simultaneous replace.
- HHS Secretary Tom Price, CMS Administrator Seema Verma, and several members on the fence about the bill will attend a policy meeting tonight to hammer out the details of an agreement.
- Sen. Mitch McConnell said the Senate will vote next week on whether to proceed with the current Senate bill.

What the President likes in the current GOP bill:

- Expands tax-free health savings accounts/HSAs to increase health coverage; and use of them to pay your premiums
- Gives more control and funding back to the states; redirecting authority from Washington DC back to the states
- Stabilizes the exchanges so that those preexisting conditions are protected
- Saves Medicaid, which is on an unsustainable path, and provides better coverage for low-income Americans
- Commits \$45 billion to help combat the opioid epidemic
- Repeals the individual mandate. 6.5 million Americans are choosing to PAY A TAX rather than buy insurance. We're reintroducing CHOICE
- Repeals the job-killing employer mandate
- Lowers premiums

- Expands coverage options
- Protects those with preexisting conditions
- Reforms a major entitlement program, which is a principle driver of our \$20 million in debt

Background:

- Obamacare has failed
 - Since 2013 premiums have more than doubled nationwide, in Alaska up over 200 percent
 - Despite promise premiums would decrease by \$2,500 on average, they have actually increased by almost \$3,000
 - Biggest lie: You can keep your doctor. You can keep your plan
 - If Obamacare isn't repealed in 2018, over 1,300 counties in the US will have only one insurer
 - 40 counties have absolutely no coverage in the exchange

Commission on Election Integrity

- Election integrity matters to every American:
- By establishing this commission by executive order, President Trump is taking action to ensure the ballot box remains fair
 - The commission has been charged to:
 - Study how the registration and voting process is used in federal elections;
 - To identify the laws, rules, policies, strategies, and practices that enhance the American people's confidence in the integrity of our election system;
 - And to explore the vulnerabilities in our system that could lead to improper voter registration and even improper voting, including cybersecurity concerns
 - The commission has no preconceived notions and no preordained result:
 - It will simply gather facts and data, and at the conclusion of its work report findings
 - It's a bipartisan commission chaired by Vice President Mike Pence, with six Republicans and five Democrats members including New Hampshire's Secretary of State Bill Gardner, America's longest serving secretary of state.
 - More than 30 states have indicated their intention to provide the voter information pursuant to the law of their states:
 - The information the commission seeks is publicly available information
 - For the states refusing to participate – what do they have to hide?
 - If Democrats contend there is no voter fraud, the commission will make their case for them because it will come up with nothing
- The mainstream media's general assertion that the commission is looking for a problem in the name of voter suppression is insulting:
 - Most states haven't done an in-depth investigation on voter fraud in their state
 - A Pew Research Center study found 1.8 million dead people were listed as voters, 12 million records with incorrect data, and 2.75 million persons registered in more than one state
 - A Heritage Foundation database has compiled 1,071 cases of proven instances of voter fraud across the U.S., the bulk of them prosecuted since 2000

Budget Markup Happening Today

Background:

- The House budget resolution reshapes the federal government, including more than \$200 billion in cuts to mandatory programs, while setting up a major overhaul of the tax code.

Top Line

- The House's budget resolution is a bold statement on behalf of America's future, putting taxpayers first.
- It balances the budget within 10 years, secures our national defense, and reforms welfare programs, while funding key priorities.
- Critically, the budget creates a pathway for Congress to pass and President Trump to sign pro-growth tax reform into law.
- While this budget is not exactly what the President laid out in his budget request, it is an important step forward for the American people.

Details

- Total discretionary spending for FY 2018: \$1.132 Trillion
- Defense discretionary spending: \$621.6 Billion
- Non-defense discretionary spending: \$511 billion
- Achieves \$203 billion in mandatory savings and reforms.
- Reduces government-wide improper payments by \$700 billion
- Achieves \$6.5 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years.
- Produces a \$9 billion surplus in FY 2027.

Ambassador to Russia

- The President has nominated Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. of Utah to be to the Ambassador to the Russian Federation.
- Gov. Huntsman has had a distinguished career as a politician, diplomat, and businessman.
- He currently serves as Chairman of both the Atlantic Council, a premier foreign policy think tank, and the Huntsman Cancer Foundation.
- His robust record of public service includes service as U.S. Ambassador to China and to Singapore, Deputy United States Trade Representative, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Trade Development.
- He was also twice elected Governor of Utah.
- In the private sector he is a director on numerous corporate boards including Hilton, Chevron, Ford Motor Company, and Caterpillar.
- He and his wife Mary Kaye are the parents of seven children.

Made in America Certification Event

- The process of certifying Made in America products is now in its infancy, and the Trump Administration is committed to assisting the private sector in quickly improving the verification and certification process.
 - We are reaching out to various organizations involved in the certification and verification process and developing a strategy, with their input, into how to defend and build the Made in America brand.
- The Made in America brand is the world's standard for quality and craftsmanship -- and its integrity must be protected.
 - Unfortunately, the brand is under attack from a flood of illegally subsidized imports and counterfeit goods.
 - When a product made in a foreign country falsely displays a Made in America label, that cuts like a knife into the heartland of America.

When that product arrives on U.S. shores at a price that is cheap only because of unfair trade practices like currency manipulation or illegal government subsidies, that is the deepest cut of all.

- Certification will help protect American companies from the counterfeiters and pirates hoping to put the famed “Made in the USA” stamp on substandard products that are not truly made by our unparalleled workers.
- We want the Made in America brand to reach every shore and to stock every shelf, and we want our workers to reap the benefits.
 - Over 70% of Americans prefer the Made in America label and even those in foreign countries equate Made in America with the highest quality and reliability.
 - The more products we make in America, the more factories we will build, the more jobs we will create, and the stronger will be our economy, communities, and tax base.
 - The Trump Administration will do everything in its power to make this happen, and helping truly American made products get the verification and protection they deserve is another important step.
- President Trump is taking aggressive action to defend companies and products that are Made in America.
 - His Department of Homeland Security is dramatically increasing its monitoring and enforcement efforts to stop the smuggling of counterfeit and pirated products into U.S. markets and to crack down on the illicit trade over the Internet of mislabeled goods.
 - His Secretary of Labor is helping to ensure we have the finest and highest skilled workforce for the future through its strong support of apprenticeships and job training programs.
 - His Department of Commerce is dramatically increasing its enforcement efforts through aggressive antidumping and countervailing duty cases, and other trade actions.
 - His U.S. Trade Representative is leading the effort to renegotiate bad trade deals and to crack down on unfair trade practices.

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AFTERNOON COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING

July 27, 2017

NEWS OF THE DAY

Tax Reform

Top Line:

- American families are counting on us to deliver historic tax reform. And we will.
- The American people have elected a President and Congress that are fully committed to delivering tax relief that ensures:
 - Ordinary Americans keep more of their hard-earned money
 - Our tax policies encourage investment, hiring, and growth – jobs, jobs, jobs!
- Fixing our broken tax code for families, small businesses, workers and job creators is the single most important action we can take to grow our economy and help the middle class get ahead.
- This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect American jobs and make taxes simpler, fairer, and lower for hard-working American families.
- Our goals include:
 - Permanently reducing tax rates as much as possible,
 - Encouraging entrepreneurs to reinvest in their businesses,
 - Incentivizing American companies to bring back jobs and profits currently trapped overseas.

Process:

- Over many years, the members of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have examined various options for tax reform.
- Building on this work and receiving input from a variety of stakeholders, we now have a clear and shared vision.
 - For three months, Congressional leaders and Administration officials have been meeting regularly to develop a template for tax reform.
 - To date, the Administration-led effort has included meetings and discussions with:
 - Over 200 members of Congress
 - More than 80 trade associations
 - Hundreds of corporate executives, business owners, and grassroots organizations
- The two committees are prepared to begin producing legislation - with the Administration's leadership and support - for the President to sign.
- Our expectation is for this legislation to move through the committees this fall, followed by

consideration on the House and Senate floors.

Crackdown on Leaks

From the Department of Justice Spokesperson:

- We have seen an astonishing increase in the number of leaks of classified national security information in recent months.
- This staggering number of leaks is undermining the ability of our government to function and to protect this country.
- Like the Attorney General has said, “whenever a case can be made, we will seek to put some people in jail,” and we will aggressively pursue leak cases wherever they may lead.

First Responders Event

- President Trump will be awarding the Public Safety Medal of Valor to two Capitol Police Special Agents and three Alexandria Police Officers who exhibited extraordinary valor above and beyond the call of duty as the first responders to the Alexandria, VA baseball field shooting on June 14, 2017.
- All of these individuals exhibited exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness and unusual swiftness of action, regardless of his or her own personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life.
- This event reaffirms President Trump’s dedication to the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect Americans.
- Capitol Police Officers, Alexandria Police Officers, pilots from the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit, EMTs and doctors will be attending, as well as the Jennifer Scalise, wife of Congressman Scalise, victims of the shooting, and members of Congress.

Dems More Interested In TV Than Investigating

- The House and Senate Intelligence Committee Russia investigations haven’t even interviewed relevant witnesses and the House investigation has stalled, yet the Democrat heads of these committees seem to have plenty of time to go on TV.
- Since this President was sworn in, Adam Schiff and Mark Warner have done over 183 national TV interviews (about one per day), for 20 hours of total TV time.
 - Since the President was sworn in, Adam Schiff has done 123 TV interviews for over 14 hours on TV.
 - Since the President was sworn in, Mark Warner has done 60 TV interviews for nearly 6 hours on TV.

Foxconn Jobs Announcement

Top Line:

- The President announced that Foxconn will build a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Wisconsin, investing billions of dollars and creating thousands of good American jobs.
 - Foxconn’s initial investment of \$10 billion will create 3,000 jobs, with the potential for up to 13,000 jobs in the future.
 - Foxconn is a world leader in manufacturing for computers, communications, and consumer electronics. The new facility will be for the production of LCD panel products.
 - The company will invest in Southern Wisconsin while a larger facility is constructed.
- The construction of this facility represents the return of LCD electronics manufacturing to the U.S.
- To make such an incredible investment, Foxconn’s leadership put their faith and confidence in the future of the American Economy under President Trump’s leadership.

- Foxconn has seen the Trump administration's work to remove job-killing regulations, to institute Buy American and Hire American policies, and to pursue the steps necessary to revitalize American Industry.
 - This includes work to repeal and replace Obamacare, cut taxes, fix our trade deals, and rebuild our infrastructure.
- "Made in America" makes sense for Foxconn, whose customers and business partners include many of the most iconic American technology companies.
 - Foxconn joins a growing list of industry leaders who understand that America's capabilities are limitless, that America's Workers are unmatched, and that America's most prosperous days are just ahead.

Additional background:

- Foxconn will construct a state-of-the-art Gen 10.5 manufacturing facility for the production of LCD panel products in Wisconsin, with potential for growth to other states.
- Foxconn and Wisconsin are signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Thursday (July 27) in Milwaukee.
- Foxconn will start immediately to set up initial capabilities in Southern Wisconsin while the larger campus is constructed over a 2.5 year period. There will be an initial \$10B investment creating 3,000 jobs, which has the potential to grow to 13,000 jobs.
- Foxconn is the global leader in manufacturing services for the computer, communication and consumer electronics (3C) industry – championing innovation that touches the daily lives of people around the world.
- Headquartered in Taiwan, Foxconn helps build products for many of the leading U.S. and international brands and household names in electronics.

Sessions to El Salvador

- Pursuant to the President's executive order on enforcing federal law with respect to transnational criminal organizations and preventing international trafficking, Attorney General Jeff Sessions today is traveling to the City of San Salvador, El Salvador.
- The Attorney General will participate in a number of briefings and meetings related to MS-13, immigration, drugs, and human trafficking.
- As part of the visit, the Attorney General will be visiting the FBI's Transnational Anti-Gang ("TAG") Task Force, meeting with President Salvador Sánchez Cerén and the attorneys general from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, and giving remarks at a graduation ceremony for international law enforcement.
- President Trump and Attorney General Sessions have made eradicating transnational criminal organizations like MS-13 a top priority of this administration.
- As the Attorney General said in Central Islip in April, "I have a message for any gang that targets our young people: we are targeting you, and we are coming after you." This visit demonstrates the lengths to which the Trump Administration will go in the mission to eradicate this gang and anyone who threatens the safety of our communities.
- In addition, the Attorney General's visit with our Central American partners will reaffirm and strengthen cooperation between the United States and these countries with respect to several shared law enforcement objectives:
 - Combatting organized crime, including transnational criminal gangs like MS-13; information sharing in support of investigations and prosecutions in Central America and the U.S.; and eliminating the human smuggling and narcotics networks that threaten U.S. national security.

POTUS Donates Q2 Salary to the Department of Education

- Today, the White House announced that the President's Q2 salary would go to the Department of

Education.

- The funds will be used to host a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)-focused camp for students.
 - Yesterday, Ivanka Trump and Secretary Betsy DeVos hosted a summer reading event at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History where the focus was on getting young girls, ages 6-10, excited about STEM.

Transgender Individuals in U.S. Military

Top Line:

- After consultation with his Generals and military experts, the President decided that the United States Government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.
- The old policy is expensive and disruptive. It erodes military readiness and unit cohesion.
- Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender individuals in the military would entail.

Additional background:

- The President has expressed his concern since Obama announced his policy.
- After extensive discussions with his national security team, the President decided that is in the best interest of our military to end the Obama policy.

Healthcare

Top Line

- The Senate must pass a bill and get it to the President's desk so we can finally end the Obamacare disaster once and for all.

A Clear Choice

- Chuck Schumer revealed last week that the Democrats plan is the unaffordable Bernie Sanders' single payer proposal – a total big government takeover of our health system.
 - A majority of House Democrats support it, and now the Senate Democrat leader has rolled out the red carpet to the largest government expansion in generations.
- Obamacare is dead, so the American people now face a clear choice:
 - The Republicans' patient-centered, free-market approach that will cut the deficit, lower premiums, and increase options; or,
 - The Sanders-Schumer plan that will bankrupt America and impose a government takeover of our health care system.

Background:

- Obamacare has failed
 - Since 2013 premiums have more than doubled nationwide, in Alaska up over 200 percent
 - Despite promise premiums would decrease by \$2,500 on average, they have actually increased by almost \$3,000
 - Biggest lie: You can keep your doctor. You can keep your plan
 - If Obamacare isn't repealed in 2018, over 1,300 counties in the US will have only one insurer
 - 40 counties have absolutely no coverage in the exchange

Russia Sanctions Bill

Top Line

- While the President supports tough sanctions on North Korea, Iran and Russia, the White House is reviewing the House legislation and awaits a final legislative package for the President's desk.

Background

- The original legislation was hastily and poorly written and contained provisions that were concerning to U.S. companies and would inadvertently weaken the current multilateral Russian sanctions.
- The Administration is pleased that the House and Senate took the time to address many of the concerns the Administration had with the original legislation.
- The Administration has always been supportive of Congress enacting tough sanctions legislation on Russia in response to nefarious cyber-behavior.
- Additionally, the Administration remains committed to keeping existing sanctions against Russia in place until Moscow reverses the actions that triggered sanctions in the first place (Ukraine/Crimea).
- While the Administration still has some concerns with specific language, the newest language provides for much more strategic sanctions against Russia and reflects our joint interest in protecting economic priorities on both sides of the Atlantic.
- As the Administration's policy review on the JCPOA continues, the President will continue to support strong sanctions outside the JCPOA that counter Iran's dangerous and destabilizing behavior.

AMERICAN HEROES WEEK

Top Line:

- This week, the President is celebrating and honoring American Heroes – our brave military service members and veterans, law enforcement officers, first responders and workers.
- Military and Vets
 - The President is committed to rebuilding our military, making sure our warriors have the tools they need to get the job done and return home safely, and ensuring they get the care they deserve.
 - Our service members sacrifice not for fame, or for money, or even for glory -- but for country.
 - Today, a new generation of American patriots are fighting to win the battle against terrorism -- risking their lives to protect our citizens from an enemy that uses the murder of innocents to wage war on humanity itself. The President is behind them 100%.
- Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders
 - The President has ushered in a new era of respect and appreciation for law enforcement – the Thin Blue Line between civilization and chaos.
 - He has made it a personal priority to ensure that our police are treated fairly and with the honor and respect they deserve – we will protect those who protect us.
 - Our first responders' skill and courage saves many lives and represents the true strength of America.
 - They will always have the support of President Trump.
 - It is time for all Americans, from all parties and beliefs, to join in a simple goal to ensure that every child in America has the right to grow up in safety, security and peace.
- Workers
 - We are a nation of builders, and the American Worker has built the greatest civilization the world has ever known.

Our workers are the keepers of the great trades and traditions that built our country, from the New York skyline to the Golden Gate Bridge.

- Every day they are on the job before dawn and after dusk, and they never quit until the job is done.
- They take pride in every part of their work, and the President takes great pride in them.

Schedule:

- Monday: The President began American Heroes Week by speaking to Boy Scouts -- the heroes of tomorrow -- at the 2017 National Scout Jamboree in Reserve, West Virginia.
- Tuesday: The President delivered a very special Salute to American Heroes in Struthers, Ohio.
- Wednesday: The President will deliver remarks to the American Legion Boys Nation and American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation -- more heroes of tomorrow -- at the White House.
- Thursday: First Responders Event at the White House
- Friday: TBA Law Enforcement Event
- NOTE: Additional special events will be announced in the coming days.

Some Notable Accomplishments

- **PROVIDING FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS: President Trump is making sure our veterans get the care they deserve after they have sacrificed for our country.**
 - Under President Trump, Department of Veterans Affairs fired over 500 employees, suspended 200, and demoted 33, as part of President Trump's efforts to restore integrity and accountability to a department charged with supporting our Nation's heroes.
 - 22 senior leaders were disciplined.
 - President Trump signed the Veterans Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, enabling senior Veterans Affairs officials to fire failing employees while establishing important safeguards to protect whistleblowers.
 - The Veterans Affairs administration is shifting veterans' electronic medical records to the same system used by the Defense Department, ending a decades-old rift in sharing information between the two agencies.
 - President Trump signed legislation allowing our veterans to receive care outside of the Veterans Affairs medical system.
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs has acted to increase transparency and accountability by launching an online "Access and Quality Tool" to provide veterans a way to access wait time and quality of care data.
- **AMERICA FIRST FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY: In the first six months of his Administration, President Trump has put America First in world affairs and national security.**
 - President Trump has empowered the military to push back against threats to our interests and allies
 - In his first six months, President Trump worked with our partners and allies in the Middle East to defeat ISIS, leading to Iraqi forces recapturing Mosul
 - After the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against civilians, President Trump authorized strikes against the airbase that launched the chemical attacks, demonstrating our national commitment to preventing further atrocities
 - President Trump has lifted restrictions that had prevented the Secretary of Defense and our commanders in the field from fully using their judgement and expertise.
- **RESTORING PUBLIC SAFETY TO AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: President Trump has been steadfast in his approach to addressing our nation's most pressing public safety issues.**
 - President Trump directed a comprehensive approach to tackle transnational criminal organizations and international drug traffickers, such as the cartels that plague the southern border.
 - President Trump ordered the formation of a task force aimed at reducing violent crime that

has spiked in recent years.

- President Trump is restoring law enforcement's faith that they are protected by increasing the prosecution of people who threaten law enforcement officers.
- **SPURRING JOBS CREATION: President Trump's impact on the economy has been immediate, putting the American Worker back to work all across the country**
 - President Trump signed the "Buy American and Hire American" Executive Order, prioritizing the interests of American businesses and workers.
 - "Buy American" promotes American industry, protecting it from unfair competition by targeting the abusive use of waivers and exceptions to laws on the books.
 - "Hire American" calls for the reform of our visa programs, ensuring that they no longer displace American workers, while fully enforcing laws governing the entry of foreign workers.
 - President Trump signed an Executive Order, making it easier for businesses to start and expand apprenticeship programs.
 - The Dow Jones Industrial Average has increased 17 percent since election day, hitting new highs 25 times this year already.
 - Since January, the economy added 863,000 jobs, including 821,000 in the private sector.
 - 79,000 construction jobs added since January.
 - 42,000 mining and logging jobs added since January.
 - 41,000 manufacturing jobs added since January.

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From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Alex Burns Tweeted: Dem poll has Flake down *27 points* in GOP primary +losing to Sinema in general election
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 7:56:40 PM



Your Highlights

**Alex Burns**
@alexburnsNYT

Dem poll has Flake down *27 points* in GOP primary +losing to Sinema in general election

AZ Poll Memo 091217.pdf
Shared with Dropbox
dropbox.com

 15  130  180

**Michael Steel**
@michael_steel

"Heat 2" is somewhat slower-paced. twitter.com/nypost/status/
...

 75  580  3.7K

**Jake Sherman**
@JakeSherman

Wow. Mnuchin asked for a government jet for his honeymoon.

Treasury Secretary requested government jet for European honeymoon
Secretary Steven Mnuchin requested use of a government jet to take him and his wife on their ... [more](#)
abcnews.go.com



Seung Min Kim

@seungminkim

Senate Majority Whip Dave Brat [twitter.com/JakeSherman/st...](https://twitter.com/JakeSherman/status/1234567890)



James Poniewozik

@poniewozik

Man, good thing Trump didn't have a show on a big TV network at the time; I hear this is a firing offense.

[twitter.com/realDonaldTrump...](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1234567890)



Manu Raju

@mkraju

NEWS: DOJ blocking JUDICIARY from interviewing FBI officials on COMEY firing, a sign of Mueller's interest. My story

DOJ denying Senate request to interview FBI officials

The Justice Department is preventing Senate investigators from interviewing two top FBI offic... [more](#)

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THE BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT
Office of Public Affairs

Date: May 22, 2017

Contact: Gregory Julian (202) 208-3985

Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle
Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former Louisiana state official Scott A. Angelle will head-up the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. As part of the Department of the Interior, BSEE fosters safe and responsible energy production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf through regulatory oversight of oil and gas operations. Angelle, who most recently served as Vice Chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, will assume his new position May 23.

“Scott Angelle brings a wealth of experience to BSEE, having spent many years working for the safe and efficient energy production of both Louisiana’s and our country’s offshore resources,” Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said. “As we set our path towards energy dominance, I am confident that Scott has the expertise, vision, and the leadership necessary to effectively enhance our program, and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible exploration, development, and production of our country’s offshore oil and gas resources.”

Angelle, who will serve as the fourth director in BSEE’s history, has held numerous positions in Louisiana State and Parish governments, including Interim Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Martin Parish President. In the aftermath of the BP oil spill, Angelle served at the request of then Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal as liaison to the federal government, and negotiated an early end of the previous administration’s drilling moratorium.

“I welcome the opportunity to serve President Trump and Secretary Zinke, and work with BSEE staff to meet the critical goal of energy dominance for our country,” said Angelle. “It is an exciting and challenging time for BSEE; I look forward to leading our efforts to empower the offshore oil and gas industry while ensuring safe and environmentally responsible operations.”

Angelle served for eight years as Louisiana’s Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Under his leadership, the state’s coastal permitting system was reformed, providing for efficient permitting while increasing drilling rig counts in Louisiana by more than 150 percent during his tenure. Angelle has also served as Chairman of the Louisiana State Mineral Board, and as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, Southern States Energy Board, and the Louisiana Coastal Port Advisory Authority.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

Established in 2011, BSEE fosters secure and reliable energy production through a program of efficient permitting, appropriate regulations, compliance monitoring and enforcement, inspections, technical assessments, and incident investigations. The position of BSEE Director is not Senate-confirmed.

More information on BSEE can be found at: <http://www.bsee.gov>

###

-- BSEE --

BIOGRAPHY



Scott A. Angelle

Director



Scott A. Angelle is Director, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), Department of the Interior. He is responsible for promoting safety, protecting the environment and conserving resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy industry operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. He joined the bureau on May 23, 2017, following more than 30 years of reforming agencies and organizations in both the public and private sectors. His career is characterized by a strong desire to achieve results that lead to greater success for the organizations he leads.

Most recently, he served as Commissioner, District II, Louisiana Public Service Commission, an elected position he held from 2013 – 2017. As a member of the PSC, he was responsible for serving the public interest by assuring safe, reliable and reasonably-priced services for public utilities and motor carriers. He also served as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and a member of the board at Sunoco Logistics Partners LP.

Angelle began his work in public service in 1988 when he was elected to the St. Martin Parish Police Jury; the youngest person ever selected for the position at age 25. He was elected President of the parish body five years later; also the youngest to hold the position. During this same time he worked as a Petroleum Landman for Angelle and Donohue and Vice President for the Huval Companies with responsibilities for insurance risk management solutions in the energy, government and transportation sectors.

In 2004 he was appointed Secretary, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, a position he held until 2012 under both the Kathleen Blanco and Bobby Jindal gubernatorial administrations. In May of 2010, he was appointed as Interim Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana during the height of the worst oil spill in U.S. history. On behalf of the state, he successfully achieved an early end to the offshore drilling moratorium imposed by the federal government. In November 2010, he returned to the position of Secretary for Natural Resources until resigning to run for Public Service Commissioner.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a graduate of Breaux Bridge Senior High School. He is a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and enjoy spending time with their four grandchildren.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Kelly Love](#); [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: article
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 9:25:20 AM

Here's a really tremendous article from last night. Great for social.

[The Toronto Star: Trump wished country 'Merry Christmas' instead of 'Happy Holidays' at tree lighting, making good on campaign promise](#)

Jill Colvin
December 1, 2017

WASHINGTON—Ring in the holidays for the first time from Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump lit the National Christmas Tree Thursday evening, wishing the country “a Merry Christmas” — as he vowed to do during his campaign.

Taking part in the annual ritual, Trump counted down from 10 before his wife, Melania, pushed a button to set the tree aglow with golden lights and silver stars.

“Today’s a day that I’ve been looking very much forward to all year long,” said Trump. “And now, as the president of the United States, it’s my tremendous honour to finally wish America and the world a very merry Christmas.”

During his campaign, Trump had promised that, when he was elected, people would be saying “Merry Christmas again,” a reference to what he characterized as the country’s obsession with political correctness. In Trump’s view, the move toward the use of the more inclusive “happy holidays” phrase minimized the Christian celebration.

Trump was introduced by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who called Trump “a man who loves our parks, loves our military, and loves our country. The man who brought ‘Merry Christmas’ back to our nation’s capital — and you did, sir.”

Speaking from behind a bullet-proof glass enclosure, Trump also bragged about the mild weather, which hovered in the mid-50s, and compared himself to President Ulysses S. Grant, who signed legislation making Christmas a federal holiday.

“I sort of feel we’re doing that again,” he said to an audience that included many of his family members.

The program, which will air Monday on the Hallmark Channel, was hosted by Kathie Lee Gifford and actor Dean Cain and featured performances by the Beach Boys, Jack Wagner, Wynonna Judd, Craig Campbell and others. It was a less high-profile lineup than last year, when the performers included Kelly Clarkson, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood, Marc Anthony, Yolanda Adams, The Lumineers, James Taylor and Chance the Rapper.

This year marks the 95th annual National Christmas Tree Lighting. The tradition began in 1923 with President Calvin Coolidge and takes place in President’s Park, just south of the White House.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Ashley Parker shared: Trump, Saudi king expected to present unified front in the global war against terrorism
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 11:31:58 PM



Your Highlights



Ashley Parker
[@AshleyRParker](#)

What Trump and Saudi King Salman plan to say tomorrow — tonight.

Trump, Saudi king expected to present unified front in the global war against terrorism

Trump, according to an advance portion of the remarks he will deliver in Riyadh Sunday, will ... [more](#)

[washingtonpost.com](#)



66

75



Annie Karni
[@anniekarni](#)

President Trump had to travel to someone else's kingdom to get the respect he has always craved.

Saudis give Trump a reception fit for a king

At night, a large image of the president was beamed onto the outside of his hotel.

[politico.com](#)



960

2.4K



Josh Barro
[@jbarro](#)

LOCAL NEWS ANGLES FTW

Former FBI head well liked at bagel shop

[...] Comey was such a fan of Village Bagels, he referred a team of Secret Service agents to ... [more](#)

m.westport-news.com



180



850



andrew kaczynski



@KFILE

BREAKING: Sheriff David Clarke plagiarized portions of his master's thesis on homeland security

Sheriff David Clarke plagiarized portions of his master's thesis on homeland security

In all instances reviewed by CNN's KFile, Clarke lifts language from sources and credits them... [more](#)

cnn.com



7.3K



9.7K



Tamara Keith



@tamarakeithNPR

Ultimately President Trump's wife and daughter also chose not to cover their heads. twitter.com/realdonaldtrum...



4.1K



7.2K



Sam Stein



@samsteinhp

honestly though. Fox would have three months worth of cable programming set here if Obama were the one in this pic.

twitter.com/yashar/status/...



6.2K



13K

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Bedminster pool report No. 5b // More from second pool spray
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2017 5:17:02 PM

From: "Korte, Gregory" <gkorte@usatoday.com>

Date: August 10, 2017 at 4:44:10 PM EDT

Subject: Bedminster pool report No. 5b // More from second pool spray

More extended quotes from President Trump's second pool spray at Bedminster National.

On U.S. military presence in Asia: "We're going to look at what's happening in Asia. We're looking at it right now. We're constantly looking at it. I don't like to signal what I'm going to be doing, but we are certainly looking at it and obviously we're spending a lot of time looking at in particular North Korea and we are preparing for many different alternative events."

"He has disrespected our country greatly. He has said things that are horrific. And with me he's not getting away with it. He got away with it for a long time, between him and his family. He's not getting away with it. This is a whole new ballgame. He's not going to be saying those things and he's certainly not going to be doing those things. I read about we're in Guam by Aug. 15. Let's see what he does with Guam. He does something in Guam, it will be an event the likes of which nobody's seen before, what will happen in North Korea.

Q: What does that mean? "You'll see. You'll see. He'll see."

Q: Is that a dare? "It's not a dare. It's a statement. It has nothing to do with dare. That's a statement. He's not going to go around threatening Guam and he's not going to threaten the United States and he's not going to threaten Japan and he's not going to threaten South Korea. That's not a dare, as you say. That is a statement of fact."

On U.S. nuclear posture: "Nuclear to me, number one, I would like to 'de-nuke' the world. I know that President Obama said global warming is the biggest threat. I totally disagree..."

"I'd like to de-nuke the world. I would like Russia, the United States and China and Pakistan and many other countries that have nuclear weapons get rid of them. But until such time that they do, we will be the most powerful nuclear nation on earth, by far.

On anti-missile defenses: "We're going to be increasing our budget by many billions of dollars because of North Korea and other reasons having to do with the anti-missile. We'll probably be able to report that over the next week., because as you know, we reduced it by 5 percent but I've decided I don't want that. We're going to be increasing the anti-missile by a substantial number of billions."

On with nuclear agreement with Iran: "I don't think they're living up to the spirit of the agreement. President Obama in his wisdom gave them \$150 billion. He gave them \$1.8 billion in cash. That's a hard one to figure. But that was his decision. I think it's a horrible agreement. But they are not in compliance with the agreement and they certainly are not in the spirit of the agreement in compliance, and I think you'll see some very strong things taking place if they don't get themselves in compliance.

On leak investigations: "We're looking. We're always looking. We have two leaks. You have the leaks coming out of intelligence and various departments having to do with Syria, having to do with all sorts of different places, having to do frankly with North Korea. And those are very serious. And then you have the leaks where people want to love me and they're all fighting for love. Those are not very important but certainly we don't like them. Those are little inner-White House leaks. They're not very important. But actually I'm somewhat honored by them. But the important leaks and the leaks that the Attorney General is looking at very strongly are the leaks coming out of intelligence and we have to stop them for the security and the national security of our country."

Thought about dismissing Mueller? "I haven't given it any thought. Well, I've been reading about it

from you people. You say, 'Oh, I'm going to dismiss him.' No, I'm not dismissing anybody. I mean, I want them to get on with the task. But I also want the Senate and the House to come out with their findings. Now, judging from the people leaving the meetings, they leave the meetings all the time and they say we haven't found anything...."

On Mueller investigation: "We're working with him. We have a situation that's very unusual.... There was no collusion between us and Russia. In fact, the opposite. Russia spent a lot of money on fighting me. ...

"We have an investigation of something that never took place. And all I say is work with them, because this is an event that never took place. Now, as far as somebody else, where did they file the right papers, or did they forget to file a paper. You know like I guarantee that if we went around and looked at everybody who made a speech or whatever these people did, that's up to them. Did they do something wrong because they didn't file the right document or whatever? Perhaps, you'd have to look at them, but there are probably a lot of people in Washington who have done the same thing."

Given harsh criticism of Democrats, how will you bring them in on other bills like infrastructure? "Well, we'll have to see. I'm not sure that we will bring them in. Maybe we'll bring them in, maybe not. I think the infrastructure bill will be bipartisan and quite frankly, I might have more support from the Democrats. I want a very strong infrastructure bill. We've as of this moment spent over \$6 trillion in the Middle East. When I say spent, we've wasted \$6 trillion in the Middle East, and yet we can't fix our roads and our bridges and our schools and our airports, and I think that's a very sad situation."

On McConnell and his wife, the Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao: "Elaine is doing a very good job. We're very proud of Elaine as secretary of Transportation, as you know. She's doing a very good job. I'm very disappointed in Mitch. If he gets these bills passed, I'll be very happy with him and I'll be the first to admit it.:

Gregory Korte

White House correspondent

USA TODAY

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Washington, D.C. 20005

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Cell: (202) 679-2770

Twitter: @gregorykorte

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Brad - reupping this
Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 9:18:00 AM

Brad - reupping this inquiry from WP last week. As it's a bit more reaching than the standard travel inquiry I wanted to double check what you all wanted us to do with it. There's A LOT of wrong information in here, such as the claim that there were political events in California, Nevada, others. I have the answers for all of these questions, just for your reference.

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?
- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.
 - What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?
- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?
- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barabra, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?
 - On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?

- During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
 - Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?
 - May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay? At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?
 - June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?
 - July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.
 - What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov



Scott A. Angelle
Director
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement



Scott A. Angelle is Director, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), Department of the Interior. He is responsible for promoting safety, protecting the environment and conserving resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy industry operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. He joined the bureau on May 23, 2017, following more than 30 years of reforming agencies and organizations in both the public and private sectors. His career is characterized by a strong desire to achieve results that lead to greater success for the organizations he leads.

Most recently, he served as Commissioner, District II, Louisiana Public Service Commission, an elected position he held from 2013 – 2017. As Acting Chairman of a five-member commission, he was responsible for serving the public interest by assuring safe, reliable and reasonably-priced services for public utilities and motor carriers. He also served as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and a member of the board at Sunoco Logistics Partners L.P.

Angelle began his work in public service in 1988 when he was elected to the St. Martin Parish Police Jury; the youngest person ever selected for the position at age 25. He was elected President of the parish body five years later; also the youngest to hold the position. During this same time he worked as a Petroleum Landman for Angelle and Donohue and Vice President for the Huval Companies with responsibilities for insurance risk management solutions in the energy, government and transportation sectors.

In 2004 he was appointed Secretary, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, a position he held until 2012 under both the Kathleen Blanco and Bobby Jindal gubernatorial administrations. In May of 2010, he was appointed as Interim Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana during the height of the worst oil spill in U.S. history. On behalf of the state, he successfully achieved an early end to the offshore drilling moratorium imposed by the federal government. In November 2010, he returned to the position of Secretary for Natural Resources until resigning to run for Public Service Commissioner.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a graduate of Breaux Bridge Senior High School. He is a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

BSEE Director Announcement Outreach Strategy

Date/Time	Action	Audience	Notes
5-22-2017 10:00 am	DOI Announcement Press Release	DOI and BSEE media distro lists, BSEE social media	
5-22-2017	DOI Announcement Press Release distributed to BSEE Congressional list	Congressional members and staff	
5-23-2017 1:00 pm	BSEE introductory email	all BSEE employees	
5-24-2017 1:00 pm (tentative)	Interview by phone with The Advocate reporter, Baton Rouge, LA (tentative)	Louisiana communities – Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
5-25-2017	Letter to external stakeholders	Industry, NGO's, coastal States	
6-1-2017 (tentative) time TBD	Media Roundtable Discussion (in-person and phone)	Washington bureau and trade reporters	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
6-1-2017	Director's Corner (blog) posted on bsee.gov	Web site viewers	Will be supported by follow-on with social media platforms
June & July Dates TBD	Field visits and all-hands meetings	BSEE field staff	New Orleans, La gulf coast, Houston, Camarillo, CA and Anchorage, AK

From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief, presented by Businesses Against the Ad Tax: Budget victory sounds starting gun for tax reform — House conservatives try to enlist Mulvaney for Senate strong-arming — White House could request December cash for opioid resp..
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 4:11:28 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 10/26/2017 04:08 PM EDT

AND THEY'RE OFF: With 11 months of hairy fiscal fights finally behind them, Republican budget writers made their official handoff today in the GOP's sprint toward tax reform.

The big gamble: House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and his top lieutenants went into this morning's momentous vote without knowing exactly how many "nays" they had to spare. GOP sources played it cool, but House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.) — and plenty of others — kept eyes glued to the board through that 15-minute nail-biter, Jen and Rachael Bade [explain](#). (Black told us later that she was willing to twist arms but was grateful it was not needed.) Ultimately, the gavel went down with a [216-212 tally](#), delivering a decisive — yet incredibly narrow — victory to Capitol Hill Republicans. "I am very, very excited," a grinning Ryan told reporters minutes after the vote.

Salt over the shoulder: It could have been an easier vote. Eleven of the 20 GOP "no" votes on the budget, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), came from high-tax districts desperate to keep the state and local deduction, or SALT. Most expected House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) to resolve the whole standoff late Wednesday night. But the chairman postponed the meeting at the last minute — a little bit of hardball that also signaled the budget vote was likely in the bag. And it paid off. Still, unofficial SALT spokesman [Tom MacArthur](#) (R-N.J.) said he's got at least 22 members willing to tank a tax bill later on. "There were many members who voted yes, but they were holding their nose when they did it," MacArthur told reporters after the vote. "It's not over."

A very bumpy road: Today's budget victory shows that GOP lawmakers are incredibly anxious for tax reform, willing to back a fiscal blueprint many despise, as Brian Faler [explains](#). And they won't have to wait long to get to work. The tax plan will be released Nov. 1, with the first markup five days later.

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED: President Donald Trump scrawled his name today on the disaster aid bill, [H.R. 2266 \(115\)](#), that the Senate cleared Tuesday, delivering \$36.5 billion to help FEMA with recovery efforts, to relieve about half of the National Flood Insurance Program's debt and to keep Puerto Rico's government operational.

More: [SALT fight still unresolved post budget vote](#) | [Lobbyists leap into budget fight](#) | [New Yorkers nearly united on SALT](#) | [California GOP votes for budget](#) | [Ryan demurs on 401\(k\) and SALT stipulations](#)

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc of the day — Puerto Rico's governor sent a [letter](#) urging congressional leaders to pass a permanent fix for its looming Medicaid cash crunch.

#DailyBudgetFact — In New York and New Jersey's highest-taxed districts, more than 50 percent of tax filers claim the state and local deduction on their federal tax return. The Government Finance Officers Association [maps it out](#).

**** A message from Businesses Against the Ad Tax:** Whether it's visiting neighborhood restaurants, shopping local, or listening to the radio, important parts of your daily life could disappear if Congress passes an advertising tax. Stand with local businesses and tell Congress NO to an ad tax that will hurt the economy and kill jobs. <http://politi.co/2yBvu6w> **

DISASTER AID

AN ALLY ON OFFSETS: The Republican Study Committee is looking to pull recruits from the White House — namely, Mick Mulvaney — ahead of a major dispute on disaster funding this fall. As Sarah [reported](#) for Pros, RSC leaders met with the budget director for an hour-long strategy session Wednesday on how to get Congress to agree to offsets for disaster money.

Two tales: Study Committee Chairman [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.) said he asked OMB for help "putting pressure on the Senate" and that "they've agreed to do that." But Mulvaney's spokeswoman had a different recollection of the meeting. "The goal of this meeting was not to pressure the Senate, but rather to discuss shared priorities between Congress and the administration, such as tax reform and disaster relief," OMB press secretary Meghan Burris, who attended the meeting, said in an email.

BRINGING IN BROCK: The Senate Homeland Security panel has scheduled Congress' first hearing on the government's hurricane response. Next Tuesday's [hearing](#) will spotlight FEMA Administrator Brock Long, who took the agency's helm just weeks before Hurricane Harvey. Lawmakers will also hear from the head of the U.S. Northern Command, a deputy commanding general for the Army Corps of Engineers and an assistant secretary for HHS.

More: [Puerto Rico picks power utility czar](#) | [Murkowski pushes for 'modern' rebuild](#)

HEALTH

FINALLY, AN OPIOID DECLARATION: The order Trump handed down today to combat the opioid epidemic will not deliver any new funds. But administration officials say the president may ask Congress for more cash in the end-of-year spending bill to handle the crisis, Brianna Ehley [reports](#). The HHS public health fund currently has only about \$57,000, and health officials say Trump's order falls short of what's needed to get a handle on the crisis.

More: [Advocates fear policy could weaken HIV/AIDS programs](#) | [Officials were kept in the dark](#)

CHIP'S UP NEXT: House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) announced today that the lower chamber will take up a bill, [H.R. 3921 \(115\)](#), next week to extend federal funds for the Children's Health Insurance Program, Rachana Pradhan [reports](#). Nearly four weeks after the program's authority expired, states that rely on the federal infusion are in dire straits. And McCarthy explained that the House is proceeding now because "Minnesota's about to run out of money."

TAX

CHECKIN' OFF THE EASY STUFF: The famously amicable chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee is about to step into a sword fight. Brady is already wrestling with a restive group of GOP Northeasterners on the state and local tax deduction. But that's just the beginning, as Rachael Bade [explains](#) today. The next few weeks (and likely months) will bring countless obstacles and traps. That includes finding \$4 trillion in pay-fors, actively engaging members of both chambers and avoiding Trump's wrath, as Brian Faler [reports](#). It's such an ambitious lift that Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) has privately hinted to senators that he could cancel part of Thanksgiving recess, [per](#) Seung Min Kim.

All the rest: [Mnuchin's steep learning curve](#) | [Child tax credit push inches ahead](#) | [Ivanka huddles with Pelosi ally](#) | [Corker is 'all in' on tax plans](#) | [Koskinen gone at IRS](#)

OBAMACARE

NO FORCED SUBSIDIES: The Trump administration can go on withholding Obamacare subsidies now that a federal judge has denied a request to force the payments, Adriel Bettelheim and Victoria Colliver [report](#). A U.S. district court judge ruled Wednesday against issuing an emergency order requiring the payments be restored while a lawsuit filed by 18 states and the District of Columbia works its way through the courts.

IMMIGRATION

DRAWING LINES ON DACA: Trump reiterated Wednesday that any "DREAMers" dream must come with a "substantial" tradeoff, including funding for the so-called border wall. "I'd love to do a DACA deal, but we have to get something very substantial for it, including the wall, including security, including a strong border," Trump said, [per](#) Ted Hesson. That deal may not come together in the year-end spending deal. House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) today disputed the Huffington Post's report this week that the speaker had privately predicted a DACA fix in the omnibus. "No decision has been made in the timing and decision on DACA," he said.

INFRASTRUCTURE

FIRST THINGS FIRST: House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) said today that Congress needs the White House to deliver an infrastructure plan before lawmakers can get to work on a bill, which he says should come "right behind" tax reform, Lauren Gardner [reports](#). "There's no sense in me going out there and putting something out, and then all of a sudden the president beats it down," Shuster told reporters. "We need the White House — the bully pulpit — to be saying, 'Here's our principles,' and let us go to work."

EARMARKS

— McConnell, Cornyn firmly in charge despite flak from right. [POLITICO](#).

— New endangered species: The GOP deficit hawk. [Christian Science Monitor](#).

— GOP chairman: No appetite for gas tax now. [The Hill](#).

— This is why the congressional budget process is broken. [Washington Post](#).

— Mulvaney: Tax plan is 45 percent Cohn, 45 percent Mnuchin, 10 percent me. [The Hill](#).

— Five years after Sandy, here's how New York is spending billions in federal aid. [DNA Info New York](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 44 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

**** A message from Businesses Against the Ad Tax:** Across the country, small businesses are taking a stand. Congress wants to tax advertising as a way to raise revenue. Where Congress only sees dollars, small business owners see years of hard work, important jobs for their community and a way to support their families. An ad tax would hurt the ability of businesses to grow and thrive, and would impact the entire American economy.

Businesses Against the Ad Tax is a coalition of small- and medium-sizes businesses, along with business-minded organizations, committed to keeping advertising 100% tax deductible. Don't let Congress get away with a short-sighted tax proposal.

Visit [BAAdTax.org](#) to learn how you can support small businesses and stand against an ad tax.
**

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/budget-victory-sounds-starting-gun-for-tax-reform-025251>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House narrowly passes budget — setting up mammoth tax fight [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes and Rachael Bade | 10/26/2017 08:38 AM EDT

House Republicans cleared a crucial hurdle in their drive to overhaul the tax code Thursday after narrowly approving the Senate's budget.

By passing the measure, 216-212, Republicans unlocked procedural powers that allow the Senate to pass a tax bill with just 51 votes — and evade Democratic filibusters. But even with the ability to sideline Democrats, the GOP faces a daunting task as it tries to rewrite the tax code.

Heading into the vote, it was unclear whether enough GOP lawmakers would support the measure. A band of Republicans from high-tax states vowed to vote "no" on the budget unless GOP leaders scrapped plans to curb the state and local tax deduction currently in the GOP's tax proposal.

Speaker Paul Ryan and his top lieutenants were banking, however, on enough Republicans being jazzed about tax reform to back a fiscal blueprint many despise.

"A 'no' vote, as we heard from our Democrat colleagues, is to block tax reform and defend the status quo," Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) warned on the floor before the vote.

Leadership had originally sought to come up with an agreement on the nearly \$1.3 trillion state and local tax break before the Thursday vote — particularly after a host of allies like Republican Reps. Lee Zeldin of New York and Tom MacArthur of New Jersey said they

would need to resolve the issue before backing the budget.

But leadership suddenly postponed a negotiation session on the matter late Wednesday night, likely in a sign that enough opponents were appeased by a commitment to work toward a deal in the coming days on the state and local tax break.

The vote was filled with drama on the House floor.

As the electronic House vote board began to fill out with "yeas" and "nays," Republican holdouts like New York Rep. John Katko stood near House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.), watching the evolving tally as some waited until the last minutes to cast dissenting votes.

House Budget Chairman Diane Black (R-Tenn.), who kept her eyes on the board throughout the count, told POLITICO afterward that "we would have done what we needed to do to make sure we got that vote done."

Leadership's promise to work with angry lawmakers didn't work for all naysayers.

"I am voting NO," Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.) tweeted Wednesday night, a promise he fulfilled Thursday. He was responding to a constituent asking him to oppose the budget and "a tax plan that favors the wealthy."

The early ultimatums serve as a preview of the challenge that lies before GOP tax writers, even before legislative text of the tax bill is set for release next week.

Brady said that Republicans will introduce the bill on Nov. 1 and his committee will begin considering it on Nov. 6.

"I'm going to stay at the table, so is the leadership, with our New York and New Jersey lawmakers to try to find a solution where their taxpayers are better off after tax reform," Brady said later on Thursday after meeting with GOP members from high-tax districts in those two states and others like California and Illinois.

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.), one of 20 Republicans who voted against the budget, said at least 22 GOP House members stand together on the state and local tax issue. Dozens of others held their nose while voting yes for the budget, he added.

Delivering a pre-condition of his own, President Donald Trump tweeted Monday that there would "be no change" to the way 401(k) plans are taxed, even as key lawmakers said they are still considering alterations to the popular retirement plans.

"We might be debating the details of a tax reform plan that does not exist," Rep. Rob Woodall (R-Ga.) complained on the floor this week, noting that the bill has yet to be unveiled.

Many Republicans have refrained from publicly making demands on the fledgling tax proposal, feeling political pressure to remain flexible in the interest of ultimately achieving a policy priority seen as make-or-break for the GOP.

The budget the House passed Thursday is a far cry from the version the chamber first approved earlier this month and is unlikely to have garnered sufficient support without the tax debate hovering over it.

The House's initial plan, favored by fiscal hawks, would have required lawmakers to offset the costs of new tax cuts and to find \$203 billion in extra savings from some welfare programs. But those requirements would not fly in the more moderate Senate, which passed its budget last week.

Under immense pressure to pass a tax reform bill by year's end, Republican leaders struck a time-saving deal to forgo a formal conference committee to resolve differences between the House and Senate plans.

Although many House GOP lawmakers have derided that decision and complained about the final text, most rank-and-file Republicans still quickly resigned themselves to supporting the budget in order to move on to the GOP's tax reform aspirations.

For their part, Democrats have seized on what they called the "hypocrisy" of fiscal conservatives backing a plan that would drive up the debt. The Senate budget envisions tax cuts that could add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over a decade.

"Republicans are always telling us how much they care about the deficit. But when it comes to giving their beloved tax cuts to their billionaire friends, they suddenly develop a convenient case of amnesia," Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) said on the House floor as lawmakers teed up debate this week. "They say, 'What deficit? Don't worry, these tax breaks will pay for themselves.'"

Aaron Lorenzo contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

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House Republicans throw tax orthodoxy out the window [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 10/26/2017 02:02 PM EDT

Swallow a deficit-swelling budget? Sure. Skimp on cutting the top income tax rate? Fine. Take millions of moderate-income Americans off the tax rolls? OK. Pass a potentially 1,000-page tax bill in just a couple of weeks? Alright.

House Republicans are ready to deal when it comes to taxes. They are so desperate for a policy win, after their Obamacare repeal flameout, that they're agreeing to things that a few years ago would have had them at each other's throats.

It's not all sweetness and light, of course — there's been a major fight over Republican plans to cut a deduction for state and local taxes. And the big test will be when Republicans actually release the details of their tax legislation, now slated for Nov. 1, and everyone can see who exactly will be the losers under their plans.

But for now, once-controversial proposals are barely causing a stir.

"The American people want us to get to 'yes' on tax reform," said [Jim Renacci](#) (R-Ohio), who sits on the tax and budget committees.

It's an indication of the pressure lawmakers feel to produce a win ahead of next year's midterm elections after spending seven fruitless months trying to rescind the Affordable Care Act. Many are terrified at the prospect of facing voters next year with nothing to show for their time in power.

Even notoriously balky House conservatives are making nice.

"We've got to get the economy going — it's all about wages going up — and if I can endure some short-term pain for long-term benefits, I'm willing to do that," said [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.), head of the chamber's staunchly conservative Freedom Caucus.

The latest flexibility came with Thursday's House adoption of a Senate budget plan. The annual fiscal blueprint used to be a big deal for House Republicans — Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) made his name as chairman of the Budget Committee, writing plans calling for drastic cuts in federal spending. And for years, House conservatives had demanded budgets balance the government's books.

But the fiscal blueprint they adopted Thursday does no such thing, and some lawmakers question the importance of the budget, saying they agreed to it only in order to tap the all-important reconciliation process they intend to use to move tax legislation through the Senate.

"We don't follow budgets anyway — it's really just a mechanism to get tax reform done," said Renacci.

They are also willing to compromise on their long-standing calls to cut the top income tax rate.

Just a few years ago, House Republicans walked away from a tax reform plan written by then-Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp in part because he cut the top rate only to 35 percent, from 39.6 percent. At the time, Republicans had been promising to cut the top rate to 25 percent — something they had pledged since they took over the House in 2011 — but Camp was unable to make the numbers work.

Now, Republicans are planning an even higher top rate. Their plans are still to be determined, but they may leave the top rate where it is, which President Barack Obama raised as part of the 2013 fiscal cliff agreement.

"I don't think there's anybody out there that is talking about NFL players needing a tax cut — I don't think high-powered doctors and lawyers need a tax cut," said [Rob Woodall](#) (R-Ga.), who emphasized Republicans' plans to instead cut taxes on small and large businesses.

At the same time, they're willing to take millions of Americans off the tax rolls entirely with their plans to double the standard deduction and expand a child tax credit. Just a few years ago, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney lamented that, at the time, 47 percent of Americans did not pay federal income taxes.

Meadows defended the plan, saying: "I don't think we've said, 'Tax more people.' In fact, if anything, we've said 'Tax fewer people.'

"It's a function of putting more of their money back in their pocket," he said.

There have also been relatively few complaints about the prospect of passing a giant tax rewrite bill, the biggest in a generation, in a matter of weeks. Republicans plan to release it Nov. 1, with committee action penciled in for the following week and House approval coming later next month.

Said [Pat Meehan](#) (R-Pa.), "It's not as if these issues are things that have never been considered before — there's a lot of work that's been done.

"There's been long discussion on the outlines of this," he said.

Of course, not everyone is happy.

Republican leaders have faced a rebellion from colleagues from high-tax states over their plan to dump a deduction for state and local taxes, and lawmakers are tangling with the Trump administration over plans to push people out of 401(k) retirement plans and into Roth ones.

And some lawmakers have chafed at the secrecy surrounding the GOP tax plan.

"We don't have the details — that's why I'm frustrated," said [Chris Collins](#) (R-N.Y.).

It also remains to be seen if the mood will hold once Republican leaders unveil their bill. Though their budget allows for a \$1.5 trillion tax cut, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center figures Republicans' tax cut promises would cost some \$5.5 trillion, meaning lawmakers need to come up with a whopping \$4 trillion in savings.

But for now, Republicans are ready to deal.

"This is a great opportunity — I think people are seizing the moment," said Meehan.

To view online [click here](#).

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Some House Republicans ratchet up threats over state and local tax clash [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 10/26/2017 01:30 PM EDT

House Republican leaders have yet to broker a deal with rank-and-file members over the federal deduction for state and local taxes, and some of them are threatening to vote against tax reform as a result.

A number cast their votes against the budget plan the House passed this morning to unlock a filibuster-proof path to sweeping tax legislation, under which the deduction has been marked for elimination.

But Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas), who's in the eye of the storm, expects to find agreement.

"I'm going to stay at the table, so is the leadership, with our New York and New Jersey lawmakers to try to find a solution where their taxpayers are better off after tax reform," Brady

said after meeting with GOP members from high-tax districts in those two states and others like California and Illinois.

[Tom MacArthur](#) of New Jersey, one of 20 Republicans who voted against the budget, said at least 22 GOP House members stand together on the state and local tax issue. Dozens of others held their nose while voting yes for the budget, he added.

The House adopted the Senate's budget resolution 216-212.

"Obviously the New York delegation is working close together to provide tax relief for families in our districts," said [Elise Stefanik](#) (R-N.Y.), who also voted no on the budget because of state and local tax worries. "It's still a work in progress. I'm confident that leadership is going to address the concerns of the New York delegation."

WHAT'S NEXT: Brady plans to release the tax legislation Nov. 1.

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Interest groups weigh in ahead of House budget vote [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/25/2017 07:52 PM EDT

Key outside groups have begun to publicly weigh in on the proposed budget that Republicans plan to use as the vehicle for tax reform.

Americans Against Double Taxation, a group in favor of preserving the state and local tax deduction, urged House members to vote "no" on the budget in a release sent late today. The House plans to vote on the budget Thursday.

Repealing the state and local deduction will increase the tax burden on Americans who live in states with high local tax rates, AADT Co-Director Andrew Koneschusky argued in a statement. Koneschusky said that it would also be unfair to allow, "corporations to continue fully deducting their state and local taxes, but not individuals and families."

Meanwhile, Americans for Tax Reform, which famously promises to campaign against any candidate that raises taxes, said it would view a vote against the budget resolution as a vote against tax reform.

"Support for this budget resolution should be viewed as support for the Trump tax reform plan," ATR said in its statement. "Opposition to the budget resolution equals opposition to tax reform."

The resolution under consideration specifically identifies the elimination of the deduction individuals can take on taxes paid to state and local governments as a way to pay for lower taxes. Republicans hope to pass the resolution Thursday to speed tax reform.

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POLITICO Pro New York: 7 of New York's 9 GOP Congress members vote against budget, citing tax deduction [Back](#)

By Jimmy Vielkind | 10/26/2017 12:54 PM EDT

ALBANY — Seven of New York's nine Republican members in the House of Representatives voted against a budget resolution that will [pave the way](#) for a larger discussion on tax reform.

The New Yorkers joined 13 Republican representatives from other high-tax states like New Jersey in opposing the budget measure, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), which cleared the House on Thursday morning by a 216-212 vote. They are upset about the potential loss of the deductibility of state and local property taxes — which is [worth an estimated \\$17 billion](#) to New York taxpayers.

Two New Yorkers — Reps. [Tom Reed](#) and [Chris Collins](#) — supported the budget measure. Reps. [Lee Zeldin](#), [Pete King](#), [Dan Donovan](#), [John J. Faso](#), [Elise Stefanik](#), [Claudia Tenney](#) and [John Katko](#) voted no.

The same seven lawmakers signed a letter in June [saying they had "deep concerns"](#) about eliminating the SALT deduction. Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), had [challenged the Republicans](#) — many of whom are also [political targets](#) — to vote against the budget resolution.

In a statement, Reed said his vote would pave the way for tax reform that he hopes will boost the economy and benefit his constituents overall.

"This budget is a critical step towards making reforms to our broken and outdated tax code," Reed stated. "We have a once in a generation opportunity to make positive changes that will mean more money for hardworking folks and spark our economy. The American people want and deserve a simpler, fairer tax structure. The time for tax reform is now, so let's get to it."

Faso has been consistently opposed to losing the SALT deduction, and said it cost his vote.

"I remain committed to the belief that we need comprehensive tax reform to benefit Upstate New York families and increase economic growth," he stated. "I could not, however, vote in support of a budget resolution that singled out for elimination the ability of New York families to deduct state and local taxes. I am committed to finding a solution by working with the administration, congressional leadership, and members of both parties to reform our tax code in a manner that works for middle class families in Upstate New York and will allow our economy to grow."

This story first appeared on [POLITICO Pro New York](#) on Oct. 26, 2017.

To view online [click here](#).

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Northeastern Republicans vote against House budget, Californians vote yes [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 10/26/2017 01:29 PM EDT

Twenty Republican House members, including battleground incumbents from high-tax states, voted against the Senate GOP's budget, a key hurdle before Congress can tackle tax reform.

Eleven GOP members from the New Jersey and New York delegations voted against the budget, many of whom had voiced concern over the plan to curb state and local tax deduction.

Notably, several GOP members in contested races from high-tax states voted for the budget, including Rep. [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) of New Jersey, the Appropriations Committee chairman, and every Republican from California, including a collection from targeted Southern California districts.

[POLITICO](#) reported that House leadership postponed a negotiation session on the matter on Wednesday night, "likely in a sign that enough opponents were appeased by a commitment to work toward a deal in the coming days on the state and local tax break."

Pennsylvania Rep. [Brian Fitzpatrick](#), who represents a swing district, also voted against the measure.

A handful of hardline conservatives also defected, including Reps. [Justin Amash](#) (MI-03), [Ken Buck](#) (CO-04), [John Duncan](#) (TN-02), [Matt Gaetz](#) (FL-01), [Lynn Jenkins](#) (KS-02), [Walter Jones](#) (NC-03), [Thomas Massie](#) (KY-04) and [Mark Sanford](#) (SC-01).

The full list of New Jersey and New York incumbents who voted against the budget: Reps. [Dan Donovan](#) (NY-11), [John Faso](#) (NY-19), [John Katko](#) (NY-24), [Pete King](#) (NY-02), [Leonard Lance](#) (NJ-07), [Frank LoBiondo](#) (NJ-02), [Tom MacArthur](#) (NJ-03), [Chris Smith](#) (NJ-04), [Elise Stefanik](#) (NY-21), [Claudia Tenney](#) (NY-22), [Lee Zeldin](#) (NY-01).

No Democrats voted in favor of the budget.

To view online [click here](#).

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Ryan demurs on 401(k), state and local tax deduction clashes [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 10/26/2017 12:46 PM EDT

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) today wouldn't wade into a couple of the biggest clashes to arise over tax reform — changing 401(k) savings plans and eliminating a tax deduction for state and local taxes.

Asked if he agreed with President Trump that 401(k)s should be left alone, Ryan told reporters: "I agree with comprehensive tax reform and I agree with giving the Ways and Means Committee the latitude they need to write their legislation."

After reports last week that Republicans were considering a sharply lower cap on 401(k)

contributions and steering more savings to plans similar to Roth IRAs, Trump tweeted that "There will be NO change to your 401(k)." But Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) indicated Wednesday the issue was still in play.

Ryan has been a chief architect of the GOP tax plan, along with Brady, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#), Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn.

Ryan also deflected a question about a revolt by some Republicans from high-tax states over the tax negotiators' plan to eliminate the federal deduction people can take for state and local taxes they pay. Several of those lawmakers voted against a budget today, which the House [narrowly passed](#), that will be the vehicle for the tax overhaul.

He again said it was up to the Ways and Means Committee to iron out the problem.

"I believe that the Ways and Means Committee will be working with these members in particular to find a solution," Ryan said.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Ways and Means Committee plans to release its legislation Nov. 1.

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House conservatives seek to draft Mulvaney in disaster funding fight [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/25/2017 05:21 PM EDT

A core group of House Republicans is trying to enlist White House budget director Mick Mulvaney in prodding senators amid a series of fall spending battles.

Leaders of the Republican Study Committee met Wednesday morning with Mulvaney to talk strategy on shared fiscal priorities, like requiring Congress to offset disaster relief funding.

"The goal out of this meeting is to partner with the OMB director and the White House to put pressure on the Senate to take some of these reforms seriously," [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.), chairman of the 170-member caucus, told POLITICO after the roughly one-hour meeting. "As we told 'em, 'We need you guys to be putting pressure on the Senate from a different angle.' And they've agreed to do that."

A spokeswoman for Mulvaney disputed Walker's takeaway.

"The goal of this meeting was not to pressure the Senate, but rather to discuss shared priorities between Congress and the administration, such as tax reform and disaster relief," OMB press secretary Meghan Burris, who attended the meeting, said in an email.

Capitol Hill leaders and White House officials are treading carefully in demanding offsets for disaster funding, with storm-ravaged communities like Puerto Rico still lacking basic public services.

Mulvaney helped set off that familiar — but politically painful — debate this week, after Walker [staked](#) a similar position on offsets earlier in the month.

The former South Carolina congressman [wrote](#) to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) on Tuesday calling for at least \$5 billion in spending cuts to defray the cost of the next disaster package. That figure would only partially offset the third aid request, which Mulvaney said would likely total "tens of billions of dollars" and is expected to arrive "mid-November."

Demanding offsets poses a risk in the Senate, where at least eight Democrats would need to back the strategy to overcome procedural hurdles.

Asked about disaster offsets on Wednesday, Sen. [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) struck a note of caution.

"Ordinarily, emergency spending is not offset. But I wouldn't mind, as long as we get the relief that we need. But I'm not for erecting additional obstacles to any state getting the disaster relief they need in emergencies," Cornyn said. "If we can do with offsets, fine. If we can't, then I'm fine going without."

Lawmakers have already approved more than \$52 billion in emergency spending to help states and U.S. territories affected by hurricanes and wildfires this year.

With a larger package in the works, more Republicans say they expect Congress to pay for that aid — a position many conservatives, including Mulvaney, took in the wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2013.

"I think we're beyond just the direct humanitarian relief, so offsets would be appropriate," House Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) said Tuesday.

But other House Republicans, like Rep. [Mario Diaz-Balart](#) of Florida, argue that their districts are still in dire financial straits.

"Reconstruction is emergency," Diaz-Balart said. "It's not reconstruction because you want to build houses on beachfront properties. It's because you've got folks who don't have houses."

The conservative Republican Study Committee is also seeking to secure Mulvaney, a former Freedom Caucus member, as an ally on other deficit-reduction bills.

House conservatives say they have received a promise from Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) to bring up symbolic legislation like the Balanced Budget Amendment in exchange for their votes Thursday on the bicameral budget resolution, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), that would pave the way for tax reform.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Puerto Rico board names officer to oversee power utility recovery [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/25/2017 05:23 PM EDT

Puerto Rico's federal oversight board will appoint a "chief transformation officer" for its beleaguered power authority.

The board announced plans to name Noel Zamot, a retired Air Force officer, to the position to oversee the recovery of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority from two major hurricanes. Most of the U.S. commonwealth has been without power since Hurricane Maria hit the territory over a month ago.

The lack of electricity affects medical services, water distribution and other key portions of Puerto Rico's infrastructure.

Recently PREPA awarded a no-bid contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars to a Montana company with two employees and no record of wide-scale electrical repair that has connections to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. The utility, which is run by the commonwealth government, announced the contract a day after Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló met with President Donald Trump and other officials in Washington.

The company, Whitefish Energy, feuded with San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz on Twitter Wednesday afternoon, asking her if they should send their workers home after she questioned their receiving the contract.

Zamot previously served as revitalization coordinator, a position appointed by Puerto Rico's governor to work with the federal oversight board on the commonwealth's economic recovery.

The board named Zamot under its authority as the utility's trustee under the debt restructuring law passed by Congress last year. The executive director of the board argued that the role is similar to an appointment made in municipal bankruptcy.

"As the representative of PREPA under Title III of PROMESA, the Board believes the successful exit of PREPA from Title III requires adapting the pre-hurricane transformation plans with ongoing federal reconstruction efforts," said Executive Director Natalie Jaresko.

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Trump opioid declaration falls short, say state officials [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley and Sarah Karlin-Smith | 10/26/2017 08:56 AM EDT

President Donald Trump declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency and touted a big public advertising campaign against drug use. But he did not pump additional money into an epidemic that has ravaged communities and claimed thousands of lives.

Trump said he would act swiftly to "review and evaluate" recommendations due next week from his opioid commission, and promised to address illegal drug shipments from countries like China. But the declaration disappointed state officials and public health experts who say a

lot more money is needed for a deadly epidemic that is outpacing efforts to contain it.

"People are dying," said Andrew Kolodny, executive director of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing. "We have people dying of overdoses on waiting lists for an effective treatment."

Senior administration officials told reporters that acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan will sign the declaration on Thursday. That will allow public health agencies to swiftly redirect existing health resources to the crisis, but won't add fresh funds. It will also cut "bureaucratic delays" in hiring personnel and expand access to telemedicine, including remote prescribing of medication commonly used for substance abuse or other mental health treatment.

"We can be the generation that ends the opioid epidemic," Trump said at a White House ceremony attended by many Cabinet officials, lawmakers from affected states and families who have lost relatives to overdoses. He put a great deal of emphasis on his planned anti-drug advertising campaign, recounting how he himself had never had a drink because he heeded the advice of his older brother, who had a drinking problem and died young.

But his declaration relies largely on shifting around existing funds, rather than putting up the extra money that state officials and some in Congress say is critical for a comprehensive response to the drug epidemic that the White House itself estimates is claiming about 175 lives a day.

The HHS public health fund currently has only about \$57,000 left in it, although Congress could replenish it and the department has some other emergency resources to draw on. An administration official said there are "ongoing discussions" with lawmakers about how much money is needed.

Public health and addiction experts say a multi-pronged approach is needed immediately — a national prevention strategy, greater access to substance abuse treatment and enough money for communities to stock up on naloxone, a drug that can reverse life-threatening overdoses. Some experts had urged Trump to trigger another kind of national emergency under the Stafford Act, which can unlock more federal resources and emergency powers but is usually used for more clearly delineated crises like hurricanes or fires.

The spreading opioid crisis reaches from abuse of prescription painkillers to street drugs like heroin and the even more lethal fentanyl — which Trump said he'd bring up in his coming talks with China. Drug overdoses now kill more people than traffic crashes or gun-related deaths, and there's growing fear that IV drug use will set off waves of new HIV/AIDS infections in the heartland.

Some lawmakers from hard-hit states immediately said they would be open to allocating more resources — but it's not clear how much of an appetite there is on Capitol Hill to significantly increase spending. As of now, the House and Senate appropriations bills for next year keep opioid funding levels flat. States are already getting \$1 billion between 2017 and 2018 under the 21st Century Cures legislation to respond to the drug crisis.

"We're underwater," said Rep. David McKinley (R-W.Va.) during a congressional hearing earlier this week where he criticized the federal response. "I don't understand why more resources aren't flowing to help out a rural state like West Virginia." His state has the highest overdose death rate in the country.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who attended the White House event, in a statement praised Trump for taking "bold action." But the president's order will fall far short of the recommendations his Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis made in its preliminary report in July. The final report is due next week.

It's also not clear who will spearhead Trump's effort, given that there are vacancies or acting directors in several key agencies, including the DEA and HHS. Without clear leadership, "this is going nowhere," said Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

The Christie commission in its preliminary report recommended mandatory education for doctors and waiving a longstanding federal prohibition on using Medicaid funds to pay for inpatient substance abuse treatment — which the panel said was the single fastest way to increase treatment. Trump did call for some mandatory training for federal prescribers, but the White House did not immediately release details about its breadth, and physician groups say some training has already been policy for a few years. He also outlined a policy of waiving some of the inpatient treatment Medicaid restrictions in some states, again without many specifics or a commitment for more money.

Trump also highlighted public-private sector efforts through the NIH to develop safer pain treatments. That effort too is already underway.

Michael Fraser, executive director of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, urged Congress to act. "The lack of resources is concerning to us since the opioid epidemic is presenting lots of challenges for states' budgets," he said.

Advocates worry about redirecting other health funds, particularly from programs such as HIV prevention.

"There are some measures in the package that suggest states could shift money away from HIV to the opioid crisis, but the fact is patients who are suffering from the opioid crisis, they have other health concerns too," said Tiffany Kaszuba, deputy director of the Coalition for Health Funding. "It's not even robbing Peter to pay Paul anymore. It's robbing Peter to pay Peter."

Even without more cash, some experts did note that HHS and other agencies could use their emergency powers to act on some other recommendations of the Christie commission. "This could set the stage for something more to come," said Cynthia Reilly, director of the Pew Charitable Trusts substance use prevention and treatment initiative.

But the declaration as unveiled Thursday did not include other priorities identified by state and local officials. For example, it won't immediately address access to the emergency overdose treatment naloxone. The price of the drug has soared in the past couple of years, making it hard for cash-strapped emergency departments to stock it. And addiction experts say that's crucial, particularly in rural areas.

Ohio was able to negotiate a lower price of naloxone for emergency medicine agencies and police officers, but at a cost of \$40 a vial it's still too high for many EMS agencies, particularly as some of the stronger opioids now require multiple doses per patient, said Carol Cunningham, Ohio's state medical director for the department of public safety's EMS division and the chairperson of the National Association of State EMS Officials.

Policy experts said the administration's decision to use a public health emergency fund instead of a national emergency declaration under the separate Stafford Act is not enough.

"You show me in the past a national public health emergency declaration with no accompanying funds or even requests for funds, I'd be pretty surprised," said Andrew Kessler, who runs Slingshot Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in behavioral health and drug abuse.

Some states had hoped to see more help to build out programs that show promise. Rhode Island, for instance, wants to establish a pre-arrest diversion program so that law enforcement sends people using opioids to treatment instead of jail. "We know that prevents deaths, and criminalization does not," said Rhode Island's Health Director Nicole Alexander-Scott.

According to a summary released by the White House, but not mentioned by the president, the Department of Labor will be able to give emergency grants to states for workers displaced by the opioid crisis if funds are available. However, the administration has proposed a 40 percent cut to dislocated worker grants and training.

Trump said in August and then again last week that he would declare the crisis a national emergency, which would give the administration more tools to fight the crisis but also raise a host of legal and economic issues.

At the time, officials were considering using the Stafford Act, which is typically reserved for natural disasters and administered by FEMA. Former HHS Secretary Tom Price, White House budget director Mick Mulvaney and the White House Domestic Policy Council had objected to such a declaration because of its potential multi-billion-dollar price tag, legal issues and questions about how it could be implemented.

The more measured response speaks to the complexity of a drug epidemic that is pervasive yet not isolated in a particular time or place like a hurricane or a fire.

Another official added the administration has already spent \$1 billion on the opioid crisis since the president took office. Roughly \$500 million for drug addiction response efforts was provided under the 21st Century Cures Act signed into law by former President Barack Obama last year.

The declaration of public health emergency lasts 90 days but can be renewed.

Adam Cancryn, Ian Kullgren and Rachana Pradhan contributed to this report.

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Advocates fear Trump opioid policy could weaken HIV/AIDS programs [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 10/26/2017 01:58 PM EDT

Advocacy groups are raising alarms over the way President Donald Trump's declaration of a

public health emergency to address the opioid crisis gives his administration authority to redirect resources from HIV/AIDS programs.

A White House fact sheet distributed today shows the administration is shuffling money from existing programs to fund a response and not spending or requesting additional funds.

HIV/AIDS patient advocates and policy experts are seizing on a line in the fact sheet stating the declaration will allow for "shifting of resources within HIV/AIDS programs to help people eligible for those programs receive substance abuse treatment, which is important given the connection between HIV transmission and substance abuse."

Public health officials have been concerned about a rise in HIV infections linked to injectable opioids since a small town in Indiana was shaken by an HIV outbreak in 2015. But advocacy groups argue a response shouldn't come at the expense of existing programs, some of which already include support for substance abuse treatment.

"This will penalize successful HIV programs that have already reduced HIV infections in the U.S.," said Greg Millett, vice president of public policy for the Foundation for AIDS Research.

Trump's declaration states that the funding would still go to people infected with HIV, but it would put a special emphasis on funding substance abuse treatment programs for those that also have addictions. According to the CDC, 6 percent of the 39,513 diagnosed HIV infections in 2015 were linked to injection drug use.

There are currently 1.1 million people in the U.S. living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The number of new infections has declined by 10 percent between 2010 and 2014, according to the latest figures available from the CDC.

"Right now, we're looking at funding a response for opioids on the back of one of public health's greatest success stories," Millett said.

Public health groups said progress could be hindered if federal funding for HIV/AIDS programs is slashed. It was unclear from the fact sheet which programs the White House was referring to. An HHS spokesman said under a public health emergency declaration, up to 5 percent of the funds available in two supplemental pools of money may be shifted.

"Shifting money is not the answer, additional resources are necessary to address this growing epidemic," said Carl Schmid, deputy executive director of the AIDS Institute.

Advocacy groups have already been concerned about funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention this year. Trump's budget proposed to slice CDC's HIV prevention programs by \$149 million. That was rejected by Congressional appropriators and lawmakers kept the funds level, though advocates say more is needed.

"We're not seeing a serious response from this administration," Millett said.

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Senior health officials in the dark about Trump's opioid declaration [Back](#)

By Sarah Karlin-Smith and Brianna Ehley | 10/25/2017 04:50 PM EDT

Top federal health officials responding to the opioid epidemic still don't know what President Donald Trump will say when he makes a highly anticipated announcement about the crisis Thursday afternoon.

"We don't have information about what the announcement will be, and so I can't comment on it. I honestly don't know," Assistant HHS Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Elinore McCance-Katz told POLITICO on Wednesday following her appearance at a House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on the federal response to the epidemic.

She said the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which is responsible for federal treatment programs, has not been collaborating with the White House in the run-up to the announcement, which is expected to include a formal declaration that the epidemic is a federal emergency.

CDC Principal Deputy Director Anne Schuchat was similarly out of the loop. A spokesperson for the DEA said she had no information but added that the agency will be involved "to an extent."

An administration official said the White House has asked at least one federal agency to provide estimates of how much additional funding it will need to respond to the crisis.

An HHS spokesperson pushed back on that notion and said federal agencies, including HHS and SAMHSA, have been involved in the Trump administration's response to the opioid crisis. "HHS has been working very closely with the White House on the event for tomorrow." She wouldn't confirm that the agencies have been looped in on the details of Trump's forthcoming announcement, however.

[POLITICO reported](#) last week that Trump surprised his own advisers by promising a sweeping emergency declaration over recommendations against such a move. At the time, the White House was not prepared to announce a plan, and administration officials in agencies central to the response weren't readying strategies and tactics to carry out an emergency declaration.

Trump has invited a number of lawmakers from states that have been hit especially hard by the drug crisis, including Sens. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.), [Shelley Moore Capito](#) (R-W.Va.) and [Dan Sullivan](#) (R-Alaska).

A number of advocacy groups have also been invited. None of the executives at those groups or lawmakers contacted by POLITICO say they know what will be said.

Trump could declare the emergency declaration under the Stafford Act, which could free up federal funding and allow regulatory changes throughout the government to respond to the crisis. Such declarations are traditionally used to respond to natural disasters that affect an isolated area and have a defined endpoint. Experts say adapting the approach to opioid use could be very expensive and get mired in legal questions.

Trump could also declare a public health emergency, but that would have a much narrower scope and include little money. He could also ask Congress to appropriate new money to fight

the epidemic. Senate Republican appropriators and Democratic leaders on the House Appropriations Committee told POLITICO on Tuesday they had not been given a heads-up from the White House about any coming requests for new emergency spending on the epidemic.

Public health advocates are anxiously awaiting the fine print of Trump's announcement — particularly how much money he might direct to fight the crisis.

"If there is no money, I don't believe that Trump is serious. We need real action. We need real money. I'm going to be very disappointed if they don't propose something north of \$1 billion," said Andrew Kolodny, executive director of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing.

Democrats appeared to be preemptively putting Trump and Republicans on notice about tackling the crisis Wednesday. A group of more than a dozen Democratic Senators introduced legislation that would invest \$45 billion toward opioid abuse prevention, detection, surveillance and treatment efforts — the amount of money Senate Republicans had put toward opioid efforts in their failed Obamacare repeal bills.

"The Trump administration's plan to address the opioid epidemic has been little more than empty words and broken promises," said Sen. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.), who co-sponsored the bill with Sen. [Bob Casey](#) (D-Pa.).

"I just really want to make sure that there's some real teeth to it," Sen. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.) told POLITICO. "Some of the budgets that we'd seen submitted really was taking money out of drug control issues generally. So I hope we see something innovative, and may some innovative things happening at the FDA."

Sullivan, whose state has been hard hit by opioid abuse, said he hopes the administration will repeal a rule known as the IMD exclusion that prohibits Medicaid reimbursement for substance abuse treatment in inpatient facilities with more than 16 beds.

"We have very, very few treatment centers and if you are able to have more flexibility on that rule you could have more facilities that do treatment and that's important," Sullivan said.

Health care advocates also said they were looking for a well-rounded commitment that would include prevention efforts, funding to develop less addictive pain treatments and assurances that any involvement of the justice system in an emergency declaration would be focused on getting people to treatment, not on criminal penalties.

"We need to focus on moving upstream, we're not just interested in making sure people have access to treatment. We need to think about what we can do to prevent people from becoming addicted in the first place," said Trust for America's Health's John Auerbach.

Even if Trump delivers a substantive plan, addiction experts said they'll be closely evaluating other administration actions in the coming months, noting that if the White House continues to push for a repeal of Obamacare, cuts to Medicaid or other federal health programs in next year's budget, any opioid emergency effort could be undercut, because patients won't be able to access the comprehensive health care programs needed to stay healthy.

"If the Trump administration wants to show they're serious about this, the proof will go well beyond whatever they announce Thursday," said Andrew Kessler, who runs Slingshot

Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in behavioral health policy.

Adam Cancryn contributed to this report.

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House to vote on CHIP funding next week [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 10/26/2017 12:09 PM EDT

The House will take up legislation next week to extend federal funds for the Children's Health Insurance Program, Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) announced today.

Federal money for the program, which insures roughly 9 million low-income children, expired at the end of September and states have resorted to temporary measures to keep their programs afloat.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier this month advanced legislation [H.R. 3921 \(115\)](#) on a 28-23 party-line vote to fund CHIP for five years as well as continue money for community health centers for two years. Democrats objected to the way the measure would increase costs for wealthier seniors on Medicare and cut Obamacare's Prevention and Public Health Fund, among other steps, to pay for the bill.

McCarthy cited funding shortages with Minnesota's program as the reason for bringing the measure to the floor. "The reason why we're doing it next week, because Minnesota's about to run out of money."

McCarthy also said the chamber will vote next week on legislation [H.R. 849 \(115\)](#) to repeal Obamacare's Independent Payment Advisory Board.

Hugh Ferguson contributed to this report.

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GOP's beloved taxman about to be 'the most hated guy in Washington' [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 10/25/2017 07:18 PM EDT

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady has spent the better part of a year crafting a Republican tax reform bill. But on the cusp of the plan's long-awaited unveiling, the House GOP's point man on taxes has had to retool the proposal at least twice in 48 hours.

First, President Donald Trump rejected one key element of his proposal. Then a handful of Republicans threatened to hold up the budget — and delay tax reform altogether — unless he

promised to leave their favorite tax break alone.

And the bill hasn't even been made public yet.

Brady, an 11-term lawmaker from suburban Houston, is on the verge of one of the hardest assignments handed to any House member in years: shepherding a tax bill through his chamber that will, by necessity, have to gore more than a few oxen.

The job will force Brady, known for his agreeable and friendly disposition, to play bad cop with some colleagues seeking to protect plush tax loopholes — but also win over critics to ensure passage of a sorely needed legislative achievement.

"Kevin's about to go from the most popular, well-liked guy, the gentleman with a kind smile from Texas, to the most hated guy in Washington, D.C., by some group or another," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), who had nothing but praise for Brady but said he did not envy his job. "We've got to find a way to make the difficult decisions; Kevin's willing to do that."

Brady was tapped to lead the powerful tax-writing panel last year, when the notion that a conservative overhaul of the tax code could be signed into law seemed absurd. But GOP leaders and the Republican Party are now banking on Brady to get the bill through the House by Thanksgiving.

Brady is already running around trying to smooth potential snags. On Wednesday, after Trump summarily dismissed Brady's proposal to scale back tax-deferred retirement savings accounts, the tax chief huddled with his fellow Republicans to discuss tweaking the proposal — or risk Trump's wrath.

House GOP leaders, meanwhile, implored Brady to win over a handful of Republicans from high-tax states who were threatening to vote against the budget because he planned to curb the state and local tax deduction. Brady worked on a potential deal Wednesday while also juggling an hourlong briefing with reporters, a four-hour tax session with Ways and Means Republicans and a negotiating session with the president's daughter Ivanka Trump, who came to Capitol Hill with her own demands for the tax bill.

"It's a very challenging responsibility," said Ways and Means member Pat Meehan (R-Pa.). "I appreciate the really difficult position Kevin is in — and I think he's done a fairly admirable job at trying to resolve the tensions that are a natural part of this process."

Brady projected optimism in a brief interview this week.

"I do feel confident we are moving together as a conference," Brady said. "Now, will there be support on 100 percent of the provisions? Tax reform just doesn't work that way. And so we will work through the process, [and I will] do my very best to try to resolve all the members' concerns."

A South Dakota native, Brady was one of five kids raised by a single mom after his father, a lawyer, was shot and killed in a courtroom by a client's deranged spouse. He took an interest in leadership early in life, running for student body president of his high school. Brady paid for college with jobs as a meat packer, construction worker and waiter before taking a job as an executive at the local chamber of commerce, where he stayed for 18 years.

In 1990, almost a decade after moving to Texas, Brady ran for the state House of

Representatives and won. Seven years later, he was elected to Congress and quickly joined Ways and Means, one of the most powerful committees on Capitol Hill.

Brady long had his eye on the chairmanship. In 2014, he bowed out of the chairmanship race after it became clear a more junior member of the committee, then-House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan, would win. When Ryan (R-Wis.) became speaker a year later, it looked as though Brady might once again be leapfrogged by a more junior member, Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Ohio.) But Ryan tipped the scale in Brady's favor by endorsing him for chairman.

The job is more challenging than Brady probably imagined.

In recent months, he's had to play mediator between Republicans on his committee and GOP leaders in the House, the Senate and the White House — and they are rarely in sync.

Several Ways and Means Republicans abhorred the so-called border-adjustment proposal championed early on by Ryan as a way to help pay for tax cuts, and they grumbled privately that Brady was doing the speaker's bidding by pursuing it.

At times, Brady also upset some of his committee members by not briefing them on details being hashed out by the "Big Six" top tax negotiators — and by barring their staff from joining the tax meetings out of fear of leaks.

Still, Ways and Means Republicans have admired Brady's ability to balance the constant stress and demands of the job. Even Republicans who aren't on the committee, such as Meadows, praise Brady's legislative skills.

"Brady is one of the good guys here on the Hill who has the patience and the respect of committee members that will allow him to weather, as the speaker said, these 'Class V rapids' that are coming," said Ways and Means Rep. Tom Reed (R-N.Y.). "We're going to stand with him and help him get through this."

Republicans say next week's tax rollout is Brady's first big test. A smooth unveiling, they hope, will create momentum and help avoid the fate of Obamacare repeal.

That's why Brady has had to rejigger his plan. Removing the state and local tax deduction to appease Republicans from New York and New Jersey, for instance, would leave a \$1.3 trillion hole in Brady's bill.

It's an exercise he'll have to get used to. Tax reform, Republicans like to say, is an exercise in turning dials to find the right balance. Any tweak Brady makes for one member is bound to affect the prized provision of another lawmaker.

Brady, who is short and stout with a shaved head, might reach for humor to get him through the next few months. He is known by reporters for his fondness for corny humor and his adherence to talking points.

Asked a few weeks ago about his strategy for an upcoming Republican Conference meeting on taxes — particularly given all the diverging interests in the room — Brady joked, "Hugs for everybody!" He told POLITICO recently that the Astros winning the World Series is first in his prayers; tax reform, second.

Navigating the president's whims will take more than prayers. On Monday, Trump squashed

one unpopular House GOP proposal to help pay for tax cuts: limiting tax-preferred retirement accounts.

"There will be NO change to your 401(k)," Trump tweeted.

Brady suggested Tuesday morning that the idea was still on the table. But Trump reiterated his opposition later in the day.

"I didn't want that [idea] to go too far. That's why I ended it very quickly," Trump told reporters. "I think Kevin Brady is fantastic, but he knows how important 401(k)s are."

At some point, Brady will move from trying to accommodate everyone to having to say "no." That might be hard for the Texan, who aims to please.

"He is not one of these guys who says, 'My way or the highway,'" Reed said. "He truly wants to get to a position that he understands where you're coming from, and if you're acting in good faith, he'll work with you."

Bernie Becker and Aaron Lorenzo contributed to this report.

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6 things that could derail the GOP's tax plans [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 10/26/2017 05:12 AM EDT

Republicans are on the verge of adopting a budget that provides them a historic opportunity to rewrite the tax code for the first time in a generation.

But the path to victory on the biggest issue remaining on President Donald Trump's agenda this year is littered with obstacles and traps — all laid by members of the Republican Party. With the House scheduled to approve a budget Thursday, followed by plans to release their tax bill Nov. 1, Republicans are caught between the urge to cut taxes while avoiding ideas that could cause a revolt in their own party or hurt middle class taxpayers.

Here are the six ways Republicans could derail their own tax plan:

\$4 trillion budget hole: The Republican budget allows them to cut taxes by \$1.5 trillion, which sounds like a lot — except compared to all the promises they've made. Their plans to cut taxes on businesses and individuals would cost some \$5.5 trillion, according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center.

That means they have to find \$4 trillion in offsetting savings to fit their tax plan into the budget. That's more in tax increases and other savings than Congress has approved in the past quarter-century combined.

Many lawmakers have no idea about the scope of changes that will be required to meet their budget numbers, and it is an open question whether Republicans can agree to take trillions

with one hand while handing out trillions with the other. They've offered some indications where they'd find the money, but they haven't gone over well.

401(k) changes: One of the possible revenue raisers has ignited a feud between Hill Republican leaders and President Donald Trump. Congressional tax writers have considered sharply lowering the cap for pre-tax contributions to 401(k) savings plans and steering contributions beyond that to plans that would tax the money up front, rather than when it is withdrawn.

House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady signaled Wednesday that the issue was still on the table, despite a tweet from Trump earlier this week promising, "There will be NO change to your 401(k)."

"We think we can do better," Brady told reporters.

Asked later about Brady's comments, Trump said "maybe we'll use it as negotiating. But trust me. That's one of the great things. You know, there are certain elements of deals you don't wanna negotiate with. 401(k)s — and Kevin knows it, and I think Kevin Brady is fantastic, but he knows how important 401(k)s are."

State and local tax problems: Another idea that has spawned intra-party squabbling is Republican leaders' desire to end the federal tax deduction for state and local taxes people pay, which would bring in an estimated \$1.3 trillion in new tax revenue over a decade. GOP members from high-tax districts are rebelling over the idea, with some from New York and New Jersey threatening to withhold their votes from the budget unless their concerns are addressed.

The lawmakers have floated several compromises, including capping the deduction for high-income earners.

Brady said Wednesday he expected a deal to be struck before tax legislation is introduced.

"I do expect to reach an agreement with our high-tax lawmakers," he said.

Trump interference: Republicans have longed for presidential leadership on taxes, but, if anything, Trump is making things harder. He confirmed many Republicans' fears when he abruptly shot down any 401(k) changes. Earlier this year, he stunned many Republicans when he called a House-passed Obamacare repeal plan "mean," raising fears among lawmakers they might embrace controversial ideas as part of their tax-write plans only to see them trashed by Trump.

What Republicans ideally want from a president is help fighting special interests, by explaining to the public how difficult trade-offs are the price of tax reform. But Sen. Bob Corker surely spoke for many Republicans when he said Tuesday that he'd be happy if Trump just butted out of the tax debate.

"What I hope is going to happen is the president will leave this effort, if you will, to the tax-writing committees, let them do their work and not begin taking things off the debate that ought to be debated in these committees," he told ABC's "Good Morning America."

Senate filibuster: The so-called Big Six tax framework released last month was designed to get Republicans on the same page when it comes to rewriting the tax code, though it hasn't

quite worked out like that. The House and Senate appear to be going in their own separate directions on issues ranging from specific tax policies like whether to kill the estate tax to how much a plan ought to cost.

Senators expect to be consulted — not handed down a pre-cooked proposal — and they don't fear Trump's wrath like many House Republicans. It doesn't help that Trump is feuding with two of the chamber's most independent-minded members, Corker and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Many fear a repeat of the Obamacare repeal debacle when the House strained to pass a plan only to watch it die as senators tried, and failed, to come up with an alternative. Asked earlier this month about the biggest impediment to tax reform, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) said: "You ever heard of the United States Senate before?"

Unrealistic deadlines: Republicans say they intend to finish up with taxes by the end of this year, even as they simultaneously punt a growing number of other contentious issues into December.

They'll have to agree on federal spending in order to keep the government open beyond Dec. 8. Many lawmakers also want to address the so-called DREAMers, some 700,000 undocumented immigrants threatened with deportation under a White House order issued last month. Then, earlier this month, Trump cut off Affordable Care Act subsidies to insurance companies, which lawmakers are scrambling to address amid worries it could lead to soaring premiums.

All of those are combustible issues, and would come as lawmakers try to digest a tax plan likely to run more than 1,000 pages. Some fear it could lead to another showdown over shuttering the government — blowing taxes off the radar.

Republicans have begun acknowledging the calendar may slip when it comes to taxes, with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin saying last week that it would be "extraordinary" if lawmakers can wrap up that work by the end of the year.

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McConnell to GOP senators: Be ready to work through Thanksgiving week [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 10/26/2017 09:15 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) is telling his members to be prepared to work straight into the Thanksgiving break.

A similar warning [last week](#) didn't pan out, as the Senate left Washington late Thursday after clearing its budget resolution. The chamber usually adjourns for the week mid-afternoon on Thursdays and returns Monday evening.

But McConnell told GOP senators in meetings earlier this week that the chamber very well could stay in session the weekend before the week of Thanksgiving, as well as the week of the

holiday, according to two senior Republican sources. The week of Thanksgiving is currently scheduled as a recess week.

Republicans are taking on an ambitious tax overhaul and also face other critical legislative tasks such as disaster aid, government funding and immigration. An increasingly vocal faction of McConnell's conference has been urging leadership to stay in session longer, even 24-7 if necessary.

In addition to legislation, McConnell and other Senate Republicans are eager to confirm President Donald Trump's nominees — particularly for the federal judiciary. The chamber is set to confirm one district judge and advance another this afternoon.

"President Trump should be commended for his strong judicial picks," McConnell said on the floor earlier this week. "The Senate is going to keep working hard to confirm them. And we're going to succeed."

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Mnuchin crashes into steep learning curve on the Hill [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 10/26/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is the de facto frontman for the administration's proposed overhaul of the U.S. tax system because of his extreme loyalty to President Donald Trump and the scores of tax policy experts and economists at his command.

But Mnuchin, a former investment banker and movie financier with no prior experience in Washington, hasn't been able to overcome Republicans' suspicion about his Wall Street background and limited conservative credentials. That may complicate White House efforts to influence debate as the details of a tax bill are written.

Republicans' simmering discontent with Mnuchin emerged full force in September, when he urged House Republicans to vote for the deal to temporarily raise the debt ceiling as part of a package that Trump had crafted with the two top Democratic leaders.

Behind closed doors, Mnuchin [asked](#) lawmakers to take the tough vote not for the president or for the party, but rather to do it for him, according to three people who attended or were briefed on the meeting. So few members felt any personal bond with Mnuchin that they were surprised he felt comfortable making such a request, and said it betrayed a lack of understanding about the way power works in Washington.

That was also the last time Mnuchin spoke to many of the people in the room, said one senior House aide.

"We will defer to the administration on who they want to put out there on tax reform, but we see the president as the top salesman," said a second House aide. "Trump supporters will watch Trump selling this, and they will be swayed by Trump, not Steven Mnuchin."

Mnuchin has had more success in relationship-building on the Senate side, cultivating Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and other powerful figures one-on-one as potential allies.

But he's encountered a steep learning curve on the nuances of tax and economic policy, according to current and former Treasury staffers and congressional aides.

"I think it has taken him awhile because he was thrown into the situation cold," said Hatch. "He has a tremendous business background."

He frequently also makes verbal gaffes during public appearances, often contradicting the White House's best-laid talking points. In mid-October at an international finance conference, Mnuchin [said](#) that eliminating the estate tax would ultimately help wealthy people — after the White House had already cast scrapping it as a way to aid farmers, ranchers and small business owners.

A senior Treasury official said Mnuchin has been working on tax reform daily since he assumed the job of Treasury secretary and continues to enjoy a very close relationship with the president, dating back to the 2016 campaign. As for Mnuchin's relationships with members of Congress, the official added that "just like any relationship, we are always working on it."

The administration declined to make Mnuchin available for comment.

Selling tax reform, a task that has bedeviled lawmakers since President Ronald Reagan's 1986 overhaul, would be difficult for any administration. Republicans are split over how much to lower tax rates and which breaks or deductions they should eliminate to offset the tax rate reduction.

Party members also cannot agree among themselves on whether a potential tax bill can and should add to the country's growing deficit, a concern to the fiscal and spending hawks in both the House and Senate.

It's even harder for Trump, who has already failed to orchestrate passage of Obamacare repeal — a signature campaign issue not just for him but for the Republican Party — and who has been unbridled in his criticism of leading GOP lawmakers in recent weeks, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee.

Corker, who recently met one-on-one with Mnuchin a few times at his Senate office and Treasury, said he'd been happy with Mnuchin's outreach so far.

"Look, I'm a business guy," Corker said. "I like people who talk business."

Business connections first led Mnuchin to sign on as Trump's chief fundraiser in the spring of 2016. He and Trump had known each other informally for roughly 15 years through New York City finance and real estate circles, Mnuchin recently [said](#) on a POLITICO Money podcast.

It was a job that many establishment Republicans had already passed up, said one adviser close to the administration — and it gave Mnuchin an opening to cement his relationship with Trump by traveling extensively across the country with him.

Ultimately, Mnuchin was rewarded for his efforts with one of the plummiest jobs in any

administration and in economic circles — running the Treasury Department.

Mnuchin has managed to maintain an excellent relationship with the president during the administration's sometimes tumultuous nine-month run — a feat that other officials, such as Director of the National Economic Council Gary Cohn, former chief strategist Steve Bannon or former chief of staff Reince Priebus weren't able to do, according to Republican lawmakers, senior administration officials and advisers close to the White House.

"There is no question that he has gained influence and, shall we say, standing," said Larry Kudlow, an informal economic adviser to Trump dating back to the campaign. "As other people in the administration have lost ground, there is a seesaw effect, and Mnuchin's standing has improved."

That helped the Treasury secretary weather sharp criticism this past summer after his wife engaged in a tit-for-tat on Instagram over a photograph she posted of herself emerging from a government aircraft in designer clothes — a trip, it later emerged, that included a visit to Fort Knox, where the pair watched the eclipse. Mnuchin then made comments dismissing public interest in the solar event, inflaming the controversy.

After Trump's wavering condemnations of neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August, Mnuchin publicly defended the president against charges that he'd equivocated between hate groups and counterprotesters. He did the same with the controversy over NFL players kneeling during the national anthem at games to protest police brutality against African-Americans, saying the players should "do free speech on their own time."

The fact that Mnuchin waded into the latter controversy, so far outside of the purview of the Treasury Department, led former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers to call Mnuchin on Twitter "the greatest sycophant in Cabinet history."

His loyalty has, however, paid dividends in keeping up his relationship with the president, and that has contributed to Mnuchin's status inside the White House, far more than his relations with Capitol Hill. This week, he's in the Middle East to coordinate efforts with allies to crack down on terrorist financing, and he'll be part of Trump's entourage when he travels to Asia next month.

"Most of our deep tax policy discussions with the president are with Secretary Mnuchin and Director Cohn together, all hashing out the issues and thinking the pros and cons," said House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas). "The interactions in that group has really proven to be valuable."

Yet Mnuchin's ability to stay in Trump's good graces has not translated into his ability to build warm relationships across Capitol Hill.

His debt ceiling comment still plagues his relationships in the House. The picture is not much better in the Senate, where he's still an unknown quantity to many members, thanks to the fact that he spent so little time in Washington before becoming Treasury secretary.

People who have dealt with Mnuchin acknowledge that he has a quiet, sometimes socially awkward manner that does not lend itself to chitchat or building instant rapport.

"He's reserved. He is not a slap-you-on-the-back type of guy," said Hatch. "But if you ask him

a question, he'll answer it. There is no subterfuge with him."

Yet there remains a feeling among some Republican lawmakers and congressional aides that Mnuchin views tax reform through the lens of what is good for New York and Wall Street — a worldview that sometimes can mar his ability to sell the White House's efforts politically and throughout the heartland as a middle-class tax plan.

As one congressional aide remarked: "High finance does not always translate into tax reform."

Lately, Mnuchin has tried to combat these perceptions by hosting lawmakers or small groups at the agency's majestic downtown building, adjacent to the White House, as a way to help him forge better relationships in a comfortable setting, and lawmakers have appreciated the gesture.

The administration has also been putting other top officials out to help sell tax reform — particularly those with far deeper ties to the Hill.

Vice President Mike Pence gave a speech at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute on Tuesday morning, while the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, has emerged as a key and vocal player who has tried to allay lawmakers' concerns about the way any tax package could add to the deficit.

Mulvaney has strong relationships with House members, thanks to his roughly six years in the chamber. The White House also recently included Mulvaney in a closed-door session with some members of the Senate Finance Committee.

The test of Mnuchin's leadership on tax reform will come shortly, perhaps as early as next week, once detailed proposals emerge from the House Ways and Means Committee.

Then, Mnuchin will have to defend far more specific decisions on tax breaks and deductions and deploy Treasury's army of resources to help with the economic modeling and analysis, all while remaining a fierce advocate for Trump. "A big part of this will be to make sure the White House and Treasury is coming out with a consistent position," said one congressional aide. "Things will get tough. That will be the real test."

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Ivanka Trump, Rubio say joint effort to boost child tax credit in flux [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 10/25/2017 07:44 PM EDT

Ivanka Trump and congressional Republicans are ratcheting up calls to raise the child tax credit as part of their middle-class pitch for reshaping U.S. tax laws, but they're far from settled on some key details.

They haven't yet reached agreement on how much to increase the credit from its current \$1,000, for example. Boosting the credit has been Trump's top priority since her father became president, and Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) and other lawmakers have worked on the issue for

several years.

The credit needs to be at least \$2,000 because \$1,800 is a break-even mark, according to Rubio. They're trying to get closer and closer to \$2,000, but the proposal still needs buy-in from lawmakers on both sides of the Capitol before a figure is finalized, said Sen. [Tim Scott](#) (R-S.C.).

Nothing's a foregone conclusion, added Scott, who sits on the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee. But for Rubio, who appeared alongside Trump, Scott and other Senate and House GOP members at a press conference in the Capitol, there's not much wiggle room.

"It's actually not a very negotiable number because anything less than that doesn't really achieve the goal," Rubio told reporters. "I know they're still working through the details, but if we want to make it meaningful and make it count, it's going to have to be at or near that number, or even higher."

Failing to sufficiently expand the child tax credit would doom tax reform, he said, adding that President Donald Trump reemphasized the need to focus on the middle class in tax reform while lunching Tuesday with Senate Republicans.

Rubio, with Ivanka Trump's help, is pushing to boost the benefit to at least \$2,000 and make it refundable against payroll taxes, which means taxpayers who owe no income taxes would still receive the full credit benefit. The issue matters because of decades of wage stagnation alongside escalating costs for raising a family, Trump said.

"It is a priority of this administration and it is a legislative priority to ensure that American families can thrive and that we deliver real and meaningful tax relief to middle-income Americans," she said.

Scott said the process still has to play out in Congress, with the House Ways and Means Committee expected to release legislation next week followed by a markup before the Senate takes the mantle. Despite support for boosting the credit to \$2,000, the proposal still needs broader input, he said.

"We are looking forward to a vigorous debate," Scott said.

A lot of work remains to be done, Trump said.

Also still to be determined: at what income level to phase out the tax benefit for higher-income taxpayers. Trump's plan has been derided by some as little more than a benefit for upper-class Americans who don't need the help.

"We'll be dialing this in and out quite a bit," said Sen. [Dean Heller](#) (R-Nev.), another Senate Finance member. "The question is: What is the middle class?"

The numbers matter to determining how much the middle class would actually benefit, Scott said.

"I can't pretend that we have figured out those dials yet because we have not," he said.

Increasing the credit amount and ensuring refundability against payroll taxes are essential to broader tax legislation developing in Congress, because without those elements there would be

tax increases on those who can least afford it, Rubio said. Refundability matters because most of the would-be beneficiaries don't have income tax liabilities, Rubio said.

"Both politically and from a policy perspective, and from a fairness perspective, you can't just produce a tax reform in which all of the benefit accrues to the people who can hire lobbyists and at the expense of the people who actually we should be helping," he told reporters in an earlier briefing.

The so-called Big Six plan from the White House and congressional GOP leaders differs on refundability. It would keep the first \$1,000 of the credit refundable but make the added amount nonrefundable, something that critics have said would leave millions of low-income children without any benefit if they come from working families with incomes too low for federal income tax liability.

Rubio's plan, which he's scaled back a bit from a bill he introduced a couple of years ago with Sen. [Mike Lee](#) (R-Utah), would cost about \$435 billion over a decade, according to an estimate from the Joint Committee on Taxation. The Rubio-Lee bill would have increased the child tax credit to \$2,500.

"We're open-minded people," Rubio said of lowering the credit proposal from the 2015 bill.

The updated Rubio proposal wouldn't index the \$2,000 amount to inflation. It also doesn't directly address the fate of a tax credit for dependent care, but Rubio said it could simply get left in place alongside settling on the \$2,000 figure for the child credit, rather than the initial idea to combine them into a larger, more universal credit.

The Big Six plan calls for a nonrefundable credit of \$500 for non-child dependents.

Across the aisle, Sens. [Sherrod Brown](#) (D-Ohio) and [Michael Bennet](#) (D-Colo.) are also weighing in. They're rolling out legislation that would create a new \$300-per-month, per-child credit for children under 6, plus a \$250-per-month, per-child credit for those 6 to 18. Their proposal would also make the credit fully refundable.

Rubio expects both Senate and House legislation to include expanded child tax credit language when they debut.

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Pelosi ally meets with Ivanka Trump on child tax credit [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle | 10/26/2017 09:41 AM EDT

Ivanka Trump met with Democratic Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a close ally of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, this week in an effort to gain up support for her proposal to expand the child tax credit.

Trump met with several GOP lawmakers in the Capitol Wednesday, and held a press conference with nearly a dozen Republican senators, to spotlight her pet issue. But her

meeting with DeLauro is notable because Democrats have promised united opposition to the GOP's current tax reform proposal.

DeLauro has long been an advocate for expanding the child tax credit but brushed off any notion that she would work with Republicans on their current GOP framework during an interview earlier in the week.

"The current bill and the current proposal, I am opposed to," DeLauro said, before her meeting with Ivanka Trump.

But "if we have the opportunity to have a back and forth and a dialogue about what should go into a tax proposal, I will come at it from the child tax credit perspective," she added. "I want to make sure that in that bipartisan dialogue that the child tax credit is front and center."

A spokesman for DeLauro confirmed the meeting but declined to provide details of their discussion.

The House will vote Thursday on the Senate's budget resolution. If it passes, it would allow Republicans to push through a tax rewrite in the Senate without needing any Democratic votes.

Democrats are hoping GOP internal divisions trip up a partisan tax reform plan and prompt Republicans to seek bipartisan support. Democrats have vowed to oppose the current GOP plan but have said they're open to working with Republicans if this proposal fails.

Privately, though, several sources say House Democratic leaders [have no intention](#) of working with Republicans on a tax plan next year, particularly with the House majority on the line.

DeLauro brought up working together on the child tax credit during a Democratic leadership meeting Monday, but Pelosi shot down the idea down, saying Democrats are focused on defeating Republicans right now.

"You will be in the majority" if Republicans continue to stumble, Pelosi said during a closed-door caucus meeting on Tuesday, according to sources in the room.

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Corker won't let Trump feud affect tax reform: 'I'm all in' [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 10/26/2017 08:54 AM EDT

Bob Corker on Thursday said his personal feud with the president will not affect his vote on Senate Republicans' plan to reform the nation's tax code. In fact, he said, he's "all in."

"Look, tax reform is our agenda. It's the Republican Senate agenda," Corker (R-Tenn.) told CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Thursday morning.

He added that he will "absolutely not" let his public spat with President Donald Trump shape

his position on tax reform.

"It'd be like somebody in your listening audience representing their company, sitting across the table from someone they may have a low regard for, but are they gonna do something that's gonna damage their company because of that?" Corker asked. "Absolutely not. I'm all in."

The House is expected to vote later Thursday on the Senate's budget resolution. Passage would allow the Senate to approve a tax reform measure on a party-line vote using the same budget maneuver Senate Republicans deployed in their unsuccessful attempts to repeal and replace Obamacare.

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Kautter named acting IRS commissioner [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 10/26/2017 10:36 AM EDT

David Kautter, the assistant Treasury secretary for tax policy, is about to add another role: acting commissioner of the IRS.

The White House announced today that Kautter, who was confirmed for the Treasury post by the Senate in August, would take over as acting chief on Nov. 13. IRS Commissioner John Koskinen's five-year term expires the day before.

The Treasury Department said in a statement that Kautter would continue his work on tax reform at the department while also working as acting commissioner. Kirsten Wielobob and Jeff Tribiano, both deputy commissioners at the tax agency, will run the day-to-day operations at the IRS, according to Treasury.

It's not uncommon for the IRS to have an acting commissioner while waiting for a new Senate-confirmed leader. Steven Miller, then the deputy commissioner for services and enforcement, took over as acting chief in November 2012 before being forced out months later over the IRS's tea party controversy.

Kautter has decades of experience in tax and accounting, with time spent at Ernst & Young, the Kogod Tax Center at American University and RSM.

Koskinen will finish out his full term despite efforts by House Republicans to remove him over the commissioner's handling of the investigation into the IRS's improper scrutiny of conservative organizations seeking tax-exempt status.

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Trump open to DACA deal with border wall funding [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 10/25/2017 02:52 PM EDT

President Donald Trump said today that he's willing to strike a deal to protect so-called DREAMers covered under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program — provided the agreement includes funding for a border wall.

The president [fielded reporters' questions](#) on the White House lawn before he boarded a helicopter en route to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

"I'd love to do a DACA deal, but we have to get something very substantial for it, including the wall, including security, including a strong border," he said. "We have to be able to stop drugs from pouring into our nation."

Trump announced in September that he would phase out DACA, which offers work permits to undocumented immigrants brought to the United States at a young age.

DACA enrollments will begin to expire in large numbers after March 5, a cutoff date set by the administration.

The White House [released](#) a list of immigration reform principles earlier this month, but senior officials expressed willingness to negotiate.

The list includes a border wall, but also other policy changes, including a reduction in family immigration and measures targeting so-called sanctuary cities.

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Shuster wants more infrastructure details from White House [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 10/26/2017 12:25 PM EDT

Rep. [Bill Shuster](#) said today he wants the White House to show its hand on its infrastructure plan sooner rather than later, so lawmakers can be ready to move on a bill once they've tackled a tax code overhaul.

"Waiting until tax reform is done, I think it should be tucked in right behind it," he said. "Tax reform should definitely go first. We should be coming up right behind it."

Shuster said he's been in contact with some senators interested in crafting an infrastructure package, but noted that lawmakers want to wait for the administration to put out more details of what it wants the bill to look like before they begin work in earnest.

"There's no sense in me going out there and putting something out, and then all of a sudden the president beats it down," the Transportation Committee chairman told reporters.

"We need the White House — the bully pulpit — to be saying, 'Here's our principles,' and let

us go to work," he added.

On the gas tax, Shuster said he doesn't "think there's a will there" for the House to consider raising it during the tax debate. "But I think as we go through the process — [with] Gary Cohn, the White House and the Senate — there'll be opportunities to talk to folks and see where we go," he said.

Figuring out a fix to the Highway Trust Fund could be a way to get Democrats on board with the tax effort, Shuster observed.

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McConnell, Cornyn firmly in charge despite flak from right [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan | 10/25/2017 07:38 PM EDT

Despite a near constant barrage of attacks from Sean Hannity, Steve Bannon and the Breitbart wing of the GOP, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other top Senate Republicans remain firmly in charge.

There is no threat of a leadership challenge to McConnell or any of the other highest-ranking Republicans, and their support inside the GOP Conference remains rock solid.

Yet there is also no question that Senate Republicans are feeling the heat from the unhappy GOP base, especially the strongest pro-Trump elements of the party. In response, many Republicans are tying themselves ever closer to President Donald Trump. So while the media, Democrats and even some of their own colleagues — especially those who are not seeking reelection — hammer Trump's alleged ethical lapses, poor poll numbers and legislative failures, wrapping themselves in Trump's mantle is the smartest way to survive for party leaders on Capitol Hill.

Still, Senate Republicans also cautiously wonder whether the bitterly anti-establishment mood among GOP voters — the same mood that helped propel Trump into office — will ultimately cost them their majority. By choosing staunchly conservative primary candidates who may not be able to win a general election, Republican voters would be cleansing their party of "Never Trumpers" while at the same time steering it toward minority status. It's an issue the GOP leadership has wrestled with since the beginning of the tea party movement, and it will play out again in 2018.

"In Republican primaries, we've kind of let nature take its course and nominated people who, as the majority leader said, can't win general elections. When we do that, we lose," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), who surprisingly found himself targeted by Hannity on Tuesday night. "What that means is, we have to push back on that sort of mentality and thinking because none of us want to be in the minority status where we can't get things done."

Noting Hannity's criticism of him, Cornyn pointed to a recent analysis by The Washington Post that showed he has one of the most "pro-Trump" voting records of any Senate Republican. "I try not to pay too much attention to those comments and get distracted,"

Cornyn added.

"People support our leadership team," said Republican Conference Chairman John Thune of South Dakota, No. 3 in the GOP hierarchy. "I know there's a lot of outside interest and discussion in this. But within the conference, Mitch is supported, Cornyn is supported."

Thune believes some of the assessments of GOP congressional leaders coming from conservative commentators are "ridiculous."

"I think we've got a 'saliva purity' test now that defies any rational approach to things. We've got to understand the people they're targeting this year vote with the president 99 percent of the time, they're some of the most conservative members of the Senate," Thune said.

Following the stunning retirement announcements by GOP Sens. Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona — who have both clashed repeatedly with Trump — Hannity on Tuesday called for McConnell and Cornyn's ouster. A close Trump ally, Hannity lashed out at several other of the president's Republican critics as well, including Sens. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine.

"I have a suggestion for all you never-Trumper senators that are headed for the exits," Hannity said. "Take your other colleagues with you. Mitch McConnell, goodbye. Ben Sasse, goodbye. John Cornyn, goodbye."

Hannity's demands for new Senate GOP leadership, which are echoed strongly by Bannon and some of the Senate GOP hopefuls he's endorsed, fell flat with McConnell's colleagues.

"Sean Hannity is a friend of mine, but he's in a competitive business. He's maybe capturing some of those extreme viewers," said Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma. "We have good people in there doing a very hard job. Cornyn, he has to go out of his way not to be a purist. I think he's done a very good job."

Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who clashed with McConnell over how the Obamacare repeal process played, said McConnell is firmly in charge despite Flake and Corker's announcements.

"I'm not sure it has any effect whatsoever," said Johnson.

Collins, who has long been targeted by Hannity and other conservative pundits, said the harsh rhetoric aimed at anyone who strays from the party line hurts Republicans in the long run.

"I think it is destructive and unproductive to be pushing out leaders or members who have been very effective," Collins said. "There's also a certain irony here. If you look at Jeff Flake's voting record, he has a very conservative voting record, one of the most conservative records. If he's not a conservative, who is?"

For his part, Trump thinks everything is wonderful with Senate Republicans, despite his Twitter and verbal barrages aimed at Corker, Flake, McConnell and others.

"I think we had a tremendous — I called it a love fest. It was almost a love fest. Maybe it was a love fest. We got standing ovations," Trump said of his meeting Tuesday with Senate Republicans. "There is great unity. If you look at the Democrats with Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton, that's a mess. There's great unity in the Republican Party."

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Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 3:31:40 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Kaitlyn Burton | 10/16/2017 03:29 PM EDT

THE SHOW MUST GO ON: It's one of the Senate's biggest weeks of the year, but as we learned this morning, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) will be short a clutch vote.

Red Bull ready: The absence of Sen. [Thad Cochran](#) — who is still home in Mississippi recuperating from some health issues — likely won't dash the Senate GOP's hopes of passing a budget this week. We're told debate will still begin Tuesday, and an all-nighter on amendments is slated for Thursday. One Senate GOP aide told us today after a morning strategy meeting: "It's full speed ahead."

Plenty to read: Senate budget writers today released the full 318-page [document](#) to accompany their budget resolution, [S. Con. Res. 25 \(115\)](#). Besides a brief warning about the nation's ballooning deficit, the Senate Budget Committee uses the "print" to make a full-throated endorsement for tax reform.

Last-minute lobbying: Without Cochran, McConnell can only afford to lose two other Republicans on the budget. The good news? Sen. [Susan Collins](#) told ABC this weekend that she's likely a yes. Now, leadership is looking squarely at [Rand Paul](#) and [John McCain](#). Still, Senate GOP leaders may have some breathing room. Sen. [Bob Menendez](#) isn't expected to make it for vote-a-rama on Thursday because he's standing trial in New Jersey, as Seung Min Kim and Burgess Everett [report](#).

How Democrats could bring the pain: The GOP's all-nighter on amendments could be a lot more painful without Cochran, a reliable leadership ally. Even if every Republican backs the budget, Democrats could do some damage if they can convince a few recalcitrant members to side with their proposals. The one that could matter? Democrats will almost certainly propose striking out the line in the GOP's budget that waives the Senate's pay-as-you-go rule.

A 2004 repeat? The Senate GOP will be desperate to avoid the kind of "PAYGO" revolt that nearly tanked their tax plans under President George W. Bush. Back then, four centrist Republicans sided with Democrats to demand that new tax cuts didn't simply add to the deficit. Two of those who supported the mutiny back then? Collins and McCain.

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Rep. [Mike Turner](#) (R-Ohio) is [seeking](#) an explanation from the mayor of Dayton, after the city lost out on a half-million-dollar housing grant because of past mismanagement issues.

#DailyBudgetFact — U.S. crop subsidies are expected to cost about \$8 billion per year over the next decade, according to the [American Enterprise Institute](#). About \$5.5 billion of that will go directly to farmers, while \$2.5 billion will go toward private crop insurance companies and agents.

**** A message from Businesses Against the Ad Tax:** Small businesses across the country are uniting against an ad tax. Advertising is tax deductible, just like rent and utilities, because it's critical to a business's ability to raise awareness, reach new customers and hire talented employees. Don't let Congress kill small businesses by taxing advertising. Speak out at BAdTax.org. **

APPROPRIATIONS

DELAYED: With Cochran sidelined again this week, Senate appropriators are holding off on their Tuesday markups — but appear likely to resume work later in the week. The committee today postponed subcommittee meetings on fiscal 2018 Homeland Security and Interior and Environment bills, but not the full committee markup on Thursday. More scheduling changes are likely later in the week, per a GOP aide.

Countdown: Including this week, the Senate has just seven weeks in session before the Dec. 8 spending deadline.

BUDGET

RECONCILIATION, RE-IMAGINED: Just two generations ago, budget reconciliation was a simple concept. Dreamed up in 1974, it was a way to tweak spending and tax bills that had already passed to secure short-term budget fixes. For the rest of their priorities, congressional leaders still resorted to good ol' fashioned arm-twisting.

Enter ... gridlock: The renaissance of the once-obscure budget tool began in the 1990s, when President Bill Clinton realized reconciliation was his only chance to muscle through a spate of tax hikes (that ultimately helped produce a surplus). This kind of eat-your-spinach budget approach was short-lived, however. A half-decade later, the Bush administration twice used the procedural tool to enact and expand massive tax cuts that blew a hole in the federal deficit. And from there, there was no turning back, as Jeff Davis [writes](#) in POLITICO Magazine.

ENZI UNDER FIRE: The Senate is poised to pass a bare-bones budget resolution this week to pave the way for tax reform — and it's causing heartburn among Washington's budget purists. Piling onto Sen. [Bob Corker's criticism](#) last week, long-time budgeteers like Bill Hoagland and Stan Collender are pointing arrows at Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#).

Airing grievances: "By allowing the budget process to be used solely to expedite the Trump tax cut bill Enzi has ignored, evaded and sidestepped his responsibilities as budget chairman," Collender [wrote](#) in his Forbes column Sunday. And Hoagland added in his own [post](#): "The current Senate resolution's one and only purpose is to allow for the expedited consideration of a tax reconciliation bill that could add at least \$1.5 trillion to the burgeoning country's debt."

DISASTER AID

BY WEEK'S END: Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) hinted today that the Senate would take up the House-passed disaster relief bill in the second half of this week. "Obviously passing the budget which enables tax reform and tax reduction comes next, then the supplemental to take adequate care of those who've been harmed by the natural disasters we've been afflicted with lately," McConnell told reporters in a joint presser with President Donald Trump today. We've heard that bill could be the Senate's last vote of the week, heading to Trump's desk just before the National Flood Insurance Program runs dry.

TAX REFORM

NOT SO FAST: The Republican Party's repulsion to red ink is fading fast, Rachael Bade and Burgess Everett [report today](#). But some deficit hard-liners are hanging on, demanding offsets for the GOP's precious tax cuts. The increasingly divisive debate is causing some hard feelings within the GOP, and could have dire consequences in the narrowly divided Senate.

Shots fired: Corker is questioning the deficit cred of Trump's budget chief, Mick Mulvaney, who was once one of the House's fiercest fiscal hawks. "Our OMB guy, I say this with humor, what happened to him?" Corker said. "He used to be the fiscal hawk."

Fighting back: In his new gig, Mulvaney argues it's A-OK to increase the deficit with tax cuts, as long as the ever-expanding economy eventually pays the bill. "Macroeconomic changes will always lead to change in the larger economy, okay?" Mulvaney told POLITICO in an interview. "You raise a tax, it has impact. You lower tax, it has impact. It just does."

WHAT THE PEOPLE THINK: A CBS News Nation Tracker poll found that the majority of Americans say Republicans' tax reform plans will favor the wealthy, Brent Griffiths [reports](#). Here's the breakdown — 58 percent think the current proposals would favor the wealthy, 19 percent think reform would treat everyone equally, and 18 percent think the plan would favor the middle class.

OBAMACARE

A CALENDAR PROBLEM: The bipartisan duo of Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) and [Patty Murray](#) seemed to be making steady — yet slow — progress on staving off an Obamacare market collapse this fall. The tentative plan? Two years' worth of subsidies, which they hoped would prevent premium spikes for millions. Then came the White House's decision to pull out the rug on those subsidies much earlier than expected, as Jen Haberkorn and Adam Cancryn [report](#).

Rewriting the game plan: Democrats are now looking to stuff those Obamacare subsidies into another must-pass bill this year, like the December omnibus. But it may not be enough time. Health insurers face key deadlines over the next few weeks, and open enrollment for Obamacare kicks off in November, ready or not.

Short-term fix? In an impromptu soliloquy at the White House today, Trump repeatedly said he expects a "short-term fix" for Obamacare (in the same breath that he declared, "There is no such thing as Obamacare anymore"). Then he issued yet another timeframe for the next repeal-and-replace vote. Trump vows to have another vote in March or April, and predicted "100 percent" support from Republicans.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

HELP NEEDED: With Reince Priebus out, newly installed White House chief of staff John Kelly is taking a different tack to hiring. The former Homeland Security chief is giving the rest of Trump's Cabinet much more autonomy to pick top political appointees, Nancy Cook [reports](#). Kelly's goal is to do a better job of finding candidates for the hundreds of jobs throughout the administration that remain vacant almost nine months into Trump's first term.

Slogging through: The Senate has confirmed roughly 142 political appointees out of the 602

key jobs throughout the government, according to the Partnership for Public Service.

IMMIGRATION

SEEING FOR THEMSELVES: As the Trump administration ratchets up its demands for a border wall, a bipartisan coalition from Congress is headed for a first-hand look at border security. House Judiciary Chairman [Bob Goodlatte](#) will lead a group of lawmakers this week on a tour of parts of the U.S.-Mexico border from Texas to Southern California. The group will include liberal Democrats like [Sheila Jackson Lee](#) and immigration hardliners like [Steve King](#). (h/t [Morning Shift](#))

EARMARKS

- Trump, red state Democrats warily approach each other on tax cuts. [Washington Post](#).
- Republicans eye alternatives for getting to 20 percent corporate tax rate. [Fox Business](#).
- Natural disasters lighten Republican attitude on deficit spending. [Washington Examiner](#).
- Efforts to pry loose Trump tax returns hit a wall. [POLITICO](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 54 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017)

**** A message from Businesses Against the Ad Tax:** Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and rely on advertising to grow and thrive. That's why we're uniting to fight a proposed ad tax that would hurt our businesses, customers and local communities.

Right now, 100% of a company's advertising expenses, both digital and traditional, are tax deductible. Congress may change this, which would make advertising costs more expensive and cripple a business's ability to reach new customers.

In 2014 alone, companies in the United States spent an estimated \$297 billion on advertising. Roughly 20 million Americans go to work every day to support the advertising industry. Help stop this short-sighted tax proposal and tell Congress NO ad tax!

Visit [BAAdTax.org](#) to learn more. **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/short-a-vote-senate-trudges-ahead-on-budget-025073>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Cochran still out of commission because of health woes [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Burgess Everett | 10/16/2017 10:25 AM EDT

Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) will not return to Washington on Monday as planned due to continued health problems — denying Senate Republicans a reliable vote as they take up a must-pass budget later this week.

The Senate is still planning to vote on its budget this week regardless of Cochran's presence, Republican sources said. But they have little room for error with Cochran out, and GOP leaders are laboring to convince both Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and John McCain of Arizona to support the fiscal blueprint.

Cochran's office said Monday that Cochran, who has been recovering in Mississippi from urological issues, has developed another urinary tract infection that will keep him in his home state. Doctors monitored Cochran and advised him to stay home to recover from his health conditions, his office said.

"He will continue his recuperation at home in Mississippi," Cochran's chief of staff, Brad White, said in a statement. "The senator has expressed his intention to return to the Senate when his health permits, and to fulfill his commitment and duties to the people of his state."

The statement did not indicate when Cochran, the Senate Appropriations chairman, would return to Washington, and a Cochran spokesman said only that the senator's plan is to "get back as soon as possible." The Appropriations Committee is slated to take up spending bills on Thursday, although subcommittee markups on Tuesday were postponed.

Privately, Republicans have been increasingly concerned about the health of Cochran, who is in his seventh term in the Senate.

[Several sources](#) indicated last week that Republicans are worried Cochran's absence could last through the end of the year, which would mean the chief senator overseeing government spending would not be present for the year-end funding fight. Current government funding runs out on Dec. 8.

Cochran is not up for reelection until 2020 and is viewed as a reliable leadership ally. His seat was fiercely contested in a 2014 primary, and GOP leaders poured in resources to save Cochran from the insurgent Chris McDaniel, a state senator. McDaniel is weighing a challenge to Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) next year, and could run for Cochran's seat if he ends up stepping down and a special election is scheduled.

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, is next in line to chair the committee and often plays a significant role in fiscal negotiations, a scenario that could be heightened if Cochran is gone for a prolonged period.

Cochran's absence in the Senate could also help thwart the GOP's broader agenda.

Republicans control 52 votes in the chamber, and just three defections or absences usually means that the GOP would not be able to pass a budget resolution — which is necessary to provide Republicans with procedural powers to advance a tax plan without Democratic support.

The Senate is slated to take up its budget later this week, and Paul and McCain are both viewed as potential "no" votes.

However, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), who is on trial for federal corruption charges, is also expected to be absent from the Senate this week, which would give Republicans slightly more breathing room even with Cochran's absence.

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The Rule That Broke the Senate [Back](#)

By Jeff Davis | 10/15/2017 07:17 AM EDT

This month, as congressional leaders ready their various budget and tax proposals for fiscal year 2018, Republican hopes hinge on the use of budget reconciliation—a way to expedite the lawmaking process for certain bills by immunizing them from the threat of filibuster and limiting the scope of amendments. In short, if the House and Senate can each pass the same budget resolution, it starts a process in which they can reconcile any differences between the two bills in a final proposal both chambers then vote on.

At the moment, the House and Senate proposals for fiscal year 2018 are quite sweeping in scope. The House resolution calls for \$200 billion in mandatory spending cuts, while the Senate bill would cut taxes by \$1.5 trillion. If Congress can agree on a final budget resolution, House and Senate committees will have no choice but to write legislation meeting whatever "reconciliation directives" they are given by the budget resolution.

There's just one big problem: Budget reconciliation was never meant to be used like this. Once a tool to ease partisan gridlock, reconciliation has become part of the problem, used to reinforce the very problems it was designed to help fix.

As envisioned in the [original 1974 Budget Act](#), budget reconciliation was limited in scope: a two-week exercise in late September of each year to tweak the spending and tax bills that had already passed earlier in that session. It was not built for legislation sweeping in scope and scale. Allen Schick, the Congressional Research Service specialist tasked with helping Congress draft the 1974 Act, later [wrote](#) that "reconciliation was intended to deal with legislative decisions made during the interval between adoption of the first budget resolution and consideration of [a] second resolution [in September, just before the start of the fiscal year]." But it was never used this way.

As re-imagined in 1980, budget reconciliation was a way to temper partisan gridlock: Its first major use happened under President Jimmy Carter and was largely supported by congressional Republicans as a way to circumvent the powerful Democratic "old bulls" who sat as committee chairmen. Reconciliation's subsequent uses in the 1980s required the Republican president's signature on a bill passed by a Congress in which Democrats controlled at least one chamber. Reconciliation shifted to the beginning of the annual budget cycle—instead of tweaking bills passed earlier in the year, reconciliation now had to look back at laws passed by prior Congresses. It was a useful legislative tool, but as its use became routine, it started being brandished as a weapon for increasingly partisan governance.

The turning point happened in the 1990s. President Bill Clinton's first budget got zero support from congressional Republicans, and the ensuing reconciliation bill wound up passing the Democratic Congress by just one vote in each chamber—the first time budget reconciliation had been used successfully in what turned out to be a partisan manner. A number of measures that would otherwise have had trouble getting to 60 votes in the Senate—raising the income tax rate on top earners by 8.6 percentage points, increasing gasoline taxes by 4.3 cents per

gallon, delaying federal retiree cost-of-living adjustments, and increasing taxes on Social Security benefits—were now law. It was a demonstration of how reconciliation could be used to push controversial policies through the Senate without requiring the 60 votes needed to break a filibuster.

The long-term implications of this shift were not visible at the time, but it has had wide-ranging and transformative effects on the way Congress works—or doesn't. Reconciliation has helped to entrench congressional gridlock, discouraged bipartisan lawmaking, made it more difficult for complicated bills to become law and made budget deficits more inevitable.

Both [statistical](#) and [anecdotal](#) evidence indicate that partisan gridlock is a much worse problem in today's Senate than at any point in the past century. The result is that Congress enacts fewer but longer laws. GPO has used the same typeface for the *Statutes at Large* for more than a century. In 1974, Congress enacted 404 public laws totaling 2,359 pages of statute. In 2016, the number of laws enacted was cut almost in half, to 214, but the number of pages had increased to 3,036. The average number of pages per law has almost tripled, from 5.8 in 1974 to 14.2 pages last year.

Legislators have responded to the diminished hopes of enacting legislation the traditional way by succumbing to the temptation to take the reconciliation shortcut through the Senate rather than going through "regular order," which is the normal way of legislating—including allowing amendments, relevant committee hearings, a standard amount of floor debate and the use of the filibuster. One need only think back to the last few months of debate over repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act—which Republicans tried to do through reconciliation rather than through regular order. In doing so, they not only lost the support of Senator John McCain, who wanted regular order used on any replacement bill, but also halted an inchoate bipartisan Obamacare fix in the Senate.

We're stuck on something of a hamster wheel: Gridlock makes reconciliation a more attractive option; reconciliation has thwarted goodwill attempts at bipartisan lawmaking; the inability to pass bipartisan bills makes gridlock more likely; and the cycle continues.

This is less important when Congress and the White House are in different hands. For instance, two years after Clinton's first reconciliation deal, Republicans took back the House and Senate, and House Speaker Newt Gingrich sent Clinton a reconciliation bill with \$387 billion in entitlement cuts, which Clinton vetoed. There is little point in using a procedure that requires only 51 votes in the Senate to pass a bill if you still need 67 votes in the Senate to override a president's veto.

The urge to use reconciliation as a filibuster workaround is stronger when the same party controls Congress and the presidency. This started to come to fruition in George W. Bush's first term, when the reconciliation process was used to enact \$1.25 trillion in tax cuts over 10 years (which passed with only 58 votes in the Senate), and again two years later, when those tax cuts were expanded and accelerated through reconciliation by a vote of 51-50 (with Vice President Dick Cheney breaking the tie).

The Bush tax cuts highlight another problem with reconciliation: The budget process that ushered in the age of reconciliation does not treat deficits as a problem. When the Budget Act was being written in spring 1974, the U.S. was only five years removed from a balanced

budget, and there was no reason to believe that steadily increasing deficits and debt would be systemic. Accordingly, the 1974 process makes it just as easy to use the tool of reconciliation to increase deficits as it does to decrease them.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Mike Enzi's [2018 budget resolution](#) orders the Finance Committee to produce a bill to "increase the deficit by not more than \$1.5 trillion" over 10 years. It is doubtful that the legislators who created the reconciliation process in 1974 dreamed that it would be used for anything with such profound fiscal implications.

Today, Congress too frequently uses reconciliation to force specific policies through the Senate and makes the numbers fit the preferred policy, instead of the other way around. This started in FY 2001, when reconciliation was used to send one politically popular tax cut (repeal of the so-called "marriage penalty") to Clinton's desk for a veto. It reached peak granularity in the mid-2000s, when Republican senators tried to use reconciliation for the sole purpose of getting around a Democratic filibuster of legislation to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. (Chairman Enzi's 2018 resolution is attempting the ANWR gambit again, ostensibly to reduce deficits by just \$1 billion over 10 years, a rounding error in a major Cabinet agency's budget.)

Reconciliation was supposed to be all about numbers, not policy. In its original usage, reconciliation forced congressional committees to change whatever policies they wished in order to meet the spending and revenue totals agreed to by a majority of Congress in the budget resolution. The "Byrd Rule" reform first enacted in 1985 and made permanent in 1990—and named after its author, Senator Robert Byrd—reinforced the numbers-only nature of reconciliation, automatically jettisoning any provision from a reconciliation bill that does not directly affect revenues or outlays—unless at least 60 senators vote to save the provision.

The Byrd Rule makes reconciliation singularly unsuitable as a vehicle for enacting complicated policies into law, which is a big reason why the Affordable Care Act has always had problems. After Democrats lost Ted Kennedy's Senate seat in January 2010, they no longer had their filibuster-proof 60-seat majority to pass health care reform and were forced to implement the final version of the ACA through budget reconciliation. The reconciliation bill couldn't address anything relating to the private insurance market or other important aspects of health care that don't show up in the federal budget, which created several inconsistencies in the law that have never been fixed.

Further, reconciliation is supposed to be about short-term budget fixes, not semi-permanent trends. When reconciliation was first used, in FY 1981, the budget resolution's "window"—that is, the length of time during which a budget resolution's spending and revenue policies apply—covered only three fiscal years. The implementation of the [1990 budget agreement](#) increased the window to five years. In FY 2002, that time span doubled to 10 years, in order to make the Bush tax cuts last as long as possible.

The problem is that budget scores and forecasts are like weather forecasts—the farther into the future they try to look, the less accurate they turn out to be. The economists at the Office of Management and Budget and Congressional Budget Office are required to estimate what interest rates, inflation, GDP growth, unemployment and demographic trends will be 10 years from now in order to model tax receipts and entitlement spending based on those assumptions. But no sane person would bet their own money on those forecasts being precisely accurate, or even generally accurate, a decade out.

In addition to keeping nonbudgetary provisions out of reconciliation bills, the Byrd Rule also prohibits reconciliation bills from carrying any fiscal provision that has costs past the expiration of the budget window—which is why the Bush tax cuts expired after 10 years, forcing the "fiscal cliff" crises. Ten years is a long time by political standards, so fiscal policies with a 10-year sunset may *feel* permanent, but they aren't, and Congress has a bad track record with the extension of such temporary, yet long-term, policies.

The reconciliation process showed its limits earlier this year. Nine months ago, the new Congress convened and, within its first 10 days, passed the first budget blueprint for the ongoing fiscal year 2017—done solely so that reconciliation could be used to repeal the Affordable Care Act later that year. Again, policy came before numbers: The reconciliation directives only said that the repeal bill should decrease the deficit by "at least" \$1 billion over 10 years. Various incarnations of the reconciliation bill were scored as reducing deficits between \$119 billion and \$473 billion over 10 years, but none of them was able to get even 50 votes in the Senate. Meanwhile, the 2018 budget blueprint was kept on hold until after September 30, so as not to pre-empt the 2017 reconciliation bill.

Reconciliation initially represented a pragmatic approach to governance. Over time, its original use has been shoehorned as legislators seek to use its expedited processes to enact almost any kind legislation that affects spending or taxes—regardless of whether reconciliation is a suitable or responsible fit.

It was meant to allow a majority of Congress to work its will—if both chambers could come together, the thinking went, and declare appropriate levels of taxes and spending, the tool of reconciliation could be used to overcome legislative inertia and special interests and write a law to get to those numbers. But now, reconciliation is too often used to push controversial policies through the Senate without regard to its effect on spending and tax receipts.

Instead of the majority using reconciliation to rewrite policies that will fit within certain financial boundaries, it's now used to implement policy changes in search of a majority—with the numbers falling where they may.

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Deficit hawks trampled in GOP tax cut stampede [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Burgess Everett | 10/16/2017 05:07 AM EDT

Republicans' unified control of Washington is triggering an identity crisis within the party over what it means to be a fiscal conservative in the age of Donald Trump: Do deficits even matter, or do tax cuts trump all?

If the White House and GOP lawmakers can't come to terms on the matter soon, it could very well doom Trump's cherished tax reform initiative.

Conservatives have long railed against the nation's now-\$20 trillion debt. But now that they're desperate to pass a tax bill, many Republicans' repulsion to red ink is fading fast. Yet some deficit hard-liners are holding the line, insisting that tax cuts be paid for, either by axing

deductions or with stiff spending cuts.

The debate is causing some hard feelings within the GOP.

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) recently questioned the deficit cred of one of the House's proudest fiscal hawks before he left to become Trump's budget chief, Mick Mulvaney. In his new gig, Mulvaney is now insisting it's okay to increase the deficit with tax cuts, because an expanding economy will eventually pay the bill.

"Our OMB guy, I say this with humor, what happened to him?" Corker said in an interview. "Do you understand what I'm saying? He used to be the fiscal hawk."

Mulvaney responded in kind during an interview last week, accusing Corker of "ignoring reality."

"Macroeconomic changes will always lead to change in the larger economy, okay?" he said. "You raise a tax, it has impact. You lower tax, it has impact. It just does."

The debate highlights conflicting schools of thought over tax cuts in the party of Reagan, which could have dire consequences, particularly in the narrowly divided Senate.

Republicans say they want less debt but at the same time love a good tax cut — and are desperate to finally notch a major legislative achievement. Most Republicans are coming down on the side of tax cuts, preaching supply-side theories that tax cuts need not be paid for because they will grow the economy and eventually pay for themselves.

"In order to make good on our campaign tax promise, there probably are going to be some sacrifices made from an ideological perspective," said senior House Budget Committee member Steve Womack (R-Ark.), a longtime deficit hawk.

"I believe that the biggest remedy for our fiscal situation is growth in the economy," he added. "I am not averse to some deficit spending in order to create long-term sustained growth."

Most economists say it's unlikely that a multi-trillion-dollar tax package will pay for itself with sustained, long-term growth. That however hasn't stopped Republicans from predicting that cutting taxes will increase the GDP by a full percentage point for several years and wash away deficit concerns with new revenue.

The crux of the debate centers on "static" scores from budget-crunchers that do not account for new growth, and "dynamic" scores that predict new revenues will be produced by tax cuts.

In today's GOP, "dynamic" is in and "static" is out.

"The scoring mechanism, again, is crazy," said Sen Ron Johnson (R-Wis.). "Just agree we're going to lose money on a static scoring basis. I'm happy to live with a \$2-3 trillion static loss."

Corker has been the loudest critic of this thinking, warning about a "party-like" atmosphere in the GOP, especially now that Barack Obama is out of the White House. But he's being joined by others: Sen. Todd Young (R-Ind.) told the Indiana Business Journal that "we can't assume unreasonable rates of economic growth or we're being fiscally irresponsible."

Corker's group, however, appears to be small party. While Republicans earlier this year set out

to rewrite the tax code without blowing a hole in the national budget, most Hill Republicans, from GOP leaders to conservatives have started to side with Mulvaney, acknowledging that they'll grow the deficit for a time with the tax package.

"I believe Corker is going to get to the place where I am: If you do the models and look at this right, it pays for itself," said Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.).

"I think Sen. Corker will do great in the private sector as he learns a little bit more about economics," quipped House conservative Scott Perry (R-Pa.) when asked about Corker's resistance to dynamic scoring — though Corker became wealthy as a real estate developer before he became a politician.

Freedom Caucus leader Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) argued that revenue-neutral tax reform — which ensures tax cuts are paid for by reducing tax loopholes elsewhere — is "just moving money around" and "doesn't do anything for the economy."

Meadows also predicted Republicans will never have the nerve to cut spending, so they have to pass steep tax cuts to spur growth: "What you have to do is you have to mitigate the damage by being as aggressive as you can be on tax rates, which would lessen the damage of our lack of fiscal responsibility over time."

People like Corker, however, say the idea that tax cuts will automatically pay for themselves is irresponsible — particularly because many economists have thrown cold water on that very notion. He's willing to accept some assumptions of economic growth because of tax reform, but says if in his "heart" he feels those assumptions are unrealistic, he'll vote "no."

"I'm now nervous about where this goes. I hope that in the end if it's a big deficit creator, then our caucus will not support it," Corker said.

In theory, dozens of Republicans in Congress agree with Corker. In separate interviews, pragmatists Reps. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), Adrian Smith (R-Neb.) and Charlie Dent (R-Pa.) all said they'd prefer to do revenue-neutral tax reform.

Cole said counting on supply-side growth without any pay-fors is "a little rosy" and Smith said paying for tax cuts would be best "because I think that's how we get the longest policy possible." (If provisions in the bill grow the deficit after a decade, they would likely expire under Senate budget rules.)

All three, however, signaled their willingness to vote for a tax package that adds to the deficit if the choice was that or nothing.

"I prefer it to be revenue-neutral, but I also understand the complexity of it," Dent said. Still, he seemed a little uncomfortable relying on dynamic scoring: "I don't want to be overly optimistic about how much growth will be generated."

There's also a third, smaller group of Republicans who are pushing for tax cuts to be paid for by spending cuts. The Senate's budget calls for trillions in spending reductions, but there is no enforcement mechanism for it.

The loudest member of that group is Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who Republicans are worried will vote against whatever tax bill they produce.

"I'm a huge deficit hawk. My opinion has always been that you pay for a tax cut with spending cuts," Paul fumed. "And everybody else up here thinks you should pay for a tax cut by increasing somebody else's taxes."

Many conservatives, including Mulvaney, applaud the Paul idea but don't think it's realistic given the reluctance of Republicans to go to the mat on fiscal issues these days. They've raised the debt ceiling without cuts and spent billions on disaster aid without paying for it.

That's why it's important to cut taxes, Mulvaney argued, because growing the economy is the best shot they have.

"They simply do not have the political will on the Hill to solve this through the spending side of the equation," he said. "So we have to move to the revenue side."

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Poll: Majority think GOP tax plan will benefit the wealthy [Back](#)

By Brent D. Griffiths | 10/15/2017 10:10 AM EDT

A majority of Americans say that Republican plans for changing the tax code will favor the wealthy.

According to a new [CBS News Nation Tracker poll](#), 58 percent of Americans think the current proposals would favor the wealthy, 19 percent think reform would treat everyone equally, and 18 percent think the GOP plan would favor the middle class. Those feelings run counter to attempts by President Donald Trump and congressional leadership to frame the debate as being all about financial relief for the middle class.

The president has tried to court Democrats during the administration's rollout of the tax plan, reportedly hoping that even a couple of Democratic votes could make up for opposition from members of his own party to elements of the plan.

Among the president's supporters in the CBS poll, nine in 10 either like or are willing to accept the idea of the president making deals with Democrats, in principle. On the other side, a majority of the president's opponents like or would accept Democrats cutting deals with him, with many saying "deal-making is how Washington should work."

Trump has billed his effort as a Christmas gift for the middle class, but as [POLITICO previously reported](#), the current situation with the tax code makes it hard for him to keep his promise that the wealthy would not benefit from reform.

Respondents were also asked about Trump's relationship with congressional Republicans, a topic that has received considerable attention since Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said Trump was risking World War III and that his staff was essentially forced to become an adult day care service.

Among Republicans, 39 percent feel their party's congressional members "don't like" Trump

and are actively trying to undermine him, while 37 percent say Republicans on Capitol Hill don't like the commander in chief but pretend to have an affinity for him so they can get their agenda passed.

Overall, 56 percent of respondents said that congressional Republicans do not like the president, but pretend to get along with him, 29 percent say Republicans do not like him and undermine his agenda and 15 percent say Republicans in Congress like the president and want to help him.

The CBS News poll was conducted by YouGov using a nationally representative sample of 2,371 U.S. adults reached from Oct. 11 through Oct. 13. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.5 percent.

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Congress' uncertain path on Obamacare subsidy fix [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and Adam Cancryn | 10/13/2017 04:21 PM EDT

Congressional Republicans were caught off guard by the Trump administration's decision Thursday to pull \$7 billion in Obamacare funding next week, leaving them scrambling over whether or how to replace the critical subsidy funds.

President Donald Trump had been threatening for months to cut off the funds, which insurers use to help low-income people pay their deductibles and co-pays, but Congress had scant warning when he finally stopped them, effective immediately, less than three weeks before the Nov. 1 start of the next open enrollment season.

A bipartisan attempt by Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to stabilize Obamacare, which would fund the subsidies for up to two years, has already encountered skepticism from GOP conservatives and growing opposition from the White House. The two lawmakers plan to keep talking — but it's a tough road.

"Under no circumstance should Congress attempt to expand Obamacare by cutting a check for President Obama's bailout of insurance companies," Rep. Mark Walker (R-N.C.), chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, tweeted late Thursday.

In the short term, a bill to restore the funding faces huge political hurdles on Capitol Hill, where the White House's decision has reignited the partisan warfare over the GOP's failed Obamacare repeal efforts. Democrats are already eyeing a year-end spending bill or a supplemental disaster bill as possible places to tuck in the Obamacare funding.

But without the money for the cost-sharing subsidies, which reduce the out-of-pocket health care costs for low-income people, the Obamacare markets are likely to grow more unstable over the next year, with big questions about viability in 2019.

The sudden decision to end the payments — which is likely to be thrown into the courts — presents a risky political calculation for both parties before the 2018 mid-term elections.

If Republicans negotiate with Democrats, it means taking partial ownership of a health law that is toxic to their base. If they walk away, it may not be so easy for Republicans to keep blaming Democrats for higher premiums with the GOP in control of Washington. Similarly, Democrats have to decide whether it's better to make changes to Obamacare, or to blame rising premiums on a Republican party hell-bent on taking insurance away from people as they head into the fall campaign.

Several polls have shown that while the Trump base still clamors for Obamacare repeal, much of the country wants both parties to stabilize the health law. A [poll](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation released Friday found that 7 in 10 Americans want the Trump administration to make the health law work, not make it fail.

While they don't have a final agreement yet, Alexander and Murray have a general framework they hope will result in a deal: Republicans would support up to two years of cost-sharing payments in exchange for giving the states flexibility to get around Obamacare's requirements. But the negotiations had stalled over how to define that flexibility in a way that both parties could accept. Alexander and Murray plan to keep working when the Senate returns from a recess next week.

They have support from many governors, including some Republicans who would prefer to see a stable insurance market rather than an imploding one.

"I continue to be optimistic about our negotiations and believe we can reach a deal quickly — and I urge Republican leaders in Congress to do the right thing for families this time by supporting our work," Murray said Friday.

Before the funding was pulled, Senate Republicans were increasingly pessimistic that Murray and Alexander could reach a deal that a broad number of Republican senators could support. And they were even more skeptical that any plan they pass could get through the more conservative House, where the GOP lawmakers are still smarting from seeing their Obamacare repeal bill die in the upper chamber.

Privately, many Republicans hoped the White House would continue making the payments so that the GOP didn't have to deal with the problem. In fact, within a day of the announcement, notably few Republicans had made public statements to weigh in one way or another on the White House's decision.

Trump has often mused about throwing the Obamacare markets into chaos to force Democrats to the negotiating table. He spent months toying with pulling the subsidy funding before making the call Thursday night — just hours after signing an separate executive order paving the way for health plans that are exempt from Obamacare rules. Policy experts warn those "skinny plans" appealing to younger and healthier people could do widespread damage to the individual market on its own.

"Massive subsidy payments to their pet insurance companies has stopped," Trump tweeted afterward. "Dems should call me to fix!"

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer quickly ruled out any thought that Democrats might be pressured to give ground on health care, repeatedly telling reporters that it's up to Republicans to find a way to fund the subsidies or risk owning whatever chaos hits the markets.

"Republicans in the House and Senate now own the health care system in this country from top to bottom," he said. "Threats and bullying is not going to work. In this, politically, [Trump]'s in worse shape than we are."

With polls showing that Americans largely hold Republicans responsible for the fate of the health care system, there's little incentive to give in to any demands that would make major structural changes to Obamacare.

"Our Republican colleagues understand that they have an obligation to solve this problem," Schumer said.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi urged a quick repair. Funding could be restored in a "stand-alone [bill], a vehicle that's attached to a supplemental, or down the road in the omnibus, but that's pretty far down the road; hopefully we could resolve it sooner," she said.

Republicans also have to decide whether they want to step between the increasingly hostile relationship between the White House and insurance companies. The combination of the White House decision to cut the cost-sharing payments as well as the new executive order to allow insurance companies to sell less regulated plans has the potential to further destabilize shaky markets.

"They're sending a signal as strong as they can to the insurance industry: I double dog dare you to participate" in the Obamacare markets, said Rodney Whitlock, a vice president at ML Strategies and a former GOP aide on Capitol Hill.

It was House Republicans who first objected in 2014 to the Obama administration using its executive authority to fund the subsidies — a legal challenge that they ultimately won in a district court. But when Trump won the presidency, it put the GOP in a difficult spot between pushing to end the subsidies at the risk of owning any resulting damage, or quietly reversing their stance in court.

House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) said Trump's decision reaffirmed that only Congress can appropriate money.

"As Obamacare's failures continue to hurt families across the country, Congress is continuing to look for ways to provide certainty and lower premium costs for the millions of Americans still trapped in Obamacare's collapsing marketplaces," he said.

Conservative Republicans on Friday said the decision to stop the payments is an opportunity to renew the repeal debate — calling on the GOP not to accept anything less than a total replacement of Obamacare.

"We need the focus to be on repealing and replacing Obamacare," a spokesman for Walker said. "What we don't want is for the Senate to pass a bill that simply props up the failing system."

Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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Kelly tries to get empty administration jobs filled fast [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 10/15/2017 05:42 PM EDT

White House chief of staff John Kelly is giving Cabinet secretaries more autonomy to pick top political appointees, reversing efforts under his predecessor Reince Priebus to run most appointments through the West Wing.

Kelly's goal, according to 10 interviews with White House officials and advisers close to the administration, is to do a better job of finding candidates for the hundreds of jobs throughout the administration that remain vacant almost nine months into President Donald Trump's first term.

"Being somebody from the Department of Defense, normally you've got key people in place and a clear chain of command," said Leon Panetta, a former White House chief of staff himself and former Secretary of Defense, who spoke to Kelly around the time he accepted the White House job. "It's very difficult to run anything if you don't have people responsible in those positions."

Kelly entered the White House with an unusually clear understanding of the flaws of the personnel process, according to two people close to him.

As a Cabinet pick and then as Department of Homeland Security secretary, Kelly was frequently exasperated during the transition and early days of the administration over his inability to choose his own staff. He got into frequent spats with the White House over filling a handful of top jobs in his department, according to one of the people close to him.

Other Cabinet secretaries, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, have had their [own problems](#) with the White House personnel office, with Mattis trying to circumvent it and hire his own staff.

"Look, everyone in the White House is upset. It's both a problem of getting candidates through the bureaucracy and through the Senate. Of course Kelly is upset," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, an informal adviser to Trump whose wife, Callista, has been nominated as Trump's Vatican ambassador. "The whole system is totally screwed up."

Part of the problem stems from the Trump administration's criteria for hiring staffers and top political appointees. Potential candidates must be loyal to the administration and not have spoken harshly about the president during the campaign.

That has created a particular problem when it comes to filling national security jobs, because scores of Republican experts, many of whom served in the George W. Bush administration, signed a letter criticizing the future president before the election.

Many experienced Republicans who ordinarily would have vied for middle- and top-level posts under a Republican president also decided to sit out the Trump administration in January, starving the president of choices when it came to picking appointees.

The president himself seems willing to tolerate vacancies indefinitely.

"I'm generally not going to make a lot of the appointments that would normally be - because you don't need them," Trump told Forbes in an interview which posted last week. "I mean, you look at some of these agencies, how massive they are, and it's totally unnecessary. They have hundreds of thousands of people."

The White House press office did not respond to requests for comment.

Filling vacant jobs has taken on particular urgency in recent weeks, as the White House contends with thorny policy questions such as North Korea's growing nuclear might and the fate of the Iran deal. The administration is also trying to re-negotiate the NAFTA trade agreement and roll back parts of Obamacare through regulations and executive orders.

At the State Department, more than 78 jobs do not have a nominee out of 149 key positions, and 32 countries still don't have ambassadors in place, according to data kept by the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service.

The Treasury Department has 15 key slots open out of 28 significant Senate confirmed positions as the White House dives into selling tax reform.

Just last week, Treasury announced it would [not fill](#) its No. 2 deputy secretary slot after a second candidate dropped out of the running for it.

Kelly's own former job remains open two and a half months after he moved to the White House, with Trump nominating Kelly's No. 2 Kirstjen Nielsen this week after other potential nominees were passed over.

The Department of Health and Human Services, the agency responsible for overseeing the Affordable Care Act, lacks a Cabinet secretary after former Rep. Tom Price resigned after spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to charter private jets for government trips.

So far, the Senate has confirmed roughly 142 political appointees out of the 602 key jobs throughout the government, according to the Partnership for Public Service.

The presidential personnel office also got off to a rocky start. Its director Johnny DeStefano, who started right after the inauguration, had to find candidates for hundreds of key Senate-confirmed jobs without an existing pool of applicants after the administration discarded lists compiled by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was fired as transition head days after the election in November.

DeStefano also entered the job with no formal experience in executive recruiting or hiring. Previously, he worked for House Speaker John Boehner and the National Republican Congressional Committee.

At the White House, both Priebus and Steve Bannon, the former White House chief strategist, were seen as his high-level protectors. Their departures this summer have left DeStefano adrift inside Kelly's new power structure, according to two people close to the administration.

Kelly recently asked DeStefano to oversee the Office of Public Liaison, whose head George Sifakis left in August following Priebus' ouster.

DeStefano, who also retains his title as head of the personnel office, did not respond to requests for comment.

Outside conservative activists and groups are no longer blaming Senate Democrats for holding up confirmations.

Last week, over 100 conservatives released a letter to remind both the administration and Capitol Hill that "personnel is policy."

The letter demands that Senate leadership schedule committee and floor action every Thursday and Friday and to work full weeks until Trump's nominees get confirmed. Among the signatories are Edwin Meese, former Attorney General under Ronald Reagan; Becky Norton Dunlop, a former Reagan adviser who worked on the Trump transition; Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, and Adam Brandon, President of FreedomWorks.

Republicans say that the slow pace of appointments impedes Trump's agenda. It ends up leaving much of the agency-level, or diplomatic work to government careerists who aren't necessarily supportive of the Trump agenda.

"The career people know how to keep the government going and respond to citizens, but if there is any desire to change what the government is doing, that is most effectively done if it is being led by a political appointee," said Clay Johnson, who oversaw presidential personnel under Bush. "So without the hundreds of political appointees at each of the key agencies, the administration of government will continue, but it will be hard for the Trump administration to change or eliminate something, or create something new."

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Efforts to pry loose Trump tax returns hit a wall [Back](#)

By David Siders | 10/16/2017 01:08 PM EDT

LOS ANGELES — Efforts to pry loose President Donald Trump's tax returns at the state level have hit a wall, stalling in statehouses across the country including in California, a hotbed of anti-Trump resistance.

Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed legislation late Sunday that would have forced presidential candidates to make their tax returns public before appearing on the California ballot, marking the death there of a measure once ballyhooed by Democrats and open government advocates as an end-run to Trump's refusal to disclose his tax filings.

Democrats have seen similar proposals stall in more than 20 states since Trump's election. But Brown's veto here — in a deeply liberal state where Democrats control every statewide office and both houses of the Legislature — marked a new low for the offensive.

Breaking with lawmakers of his own party, Brown said in a veto message that despite "the political attractiveness — even the merits — of getting President Trump's tax returns, I worry about the political perils of individual states seeking to regulate presidential elections in this

manner.

"First, it may not be constitutional," he wrote. "Second, it sets a 'slippery slope' precedent. Today we require tax returns, but what would be next? Five years of health records? A certified birth certificate? High school report cards? And will these requirements vary depending on which political party is in power?"

The veto was not unexpected, and lawmakers from Hawaii to New Hampshire and Massachusetts were preparing to redouble their efforts later this year or in 2018. But despite a barrage of proposals at the federal and state level, Trump's tax returns remain out of view.

"I would think that Californians, like New Yorkers ... want to honor the 40-year tradition of presidential candidates releasing their tax returns," said New York state Sen. Brad Hoylman, whose own measure stalled in Trump's home state.

"We have a Republican-controlled state Senate, which has been the stumbling block in my chamber for passage," he said.

In other states, some Democrats have raised concerns similar to Brown's, both about the constitutionality of the measure and about the potential to create a "slippery slope" of requirements for presidential contenders.

Hoylman said he had encouraged former Harvard Law School classmate Scott Wiener, a California state senator, to move forward with legislation in California, hoping for a "watershed moment" in the nation's most populous state. But with Brown's veto appearing increasingly likely last week, Hoylman called the anticipated outcome "really disappointing."

Democrats have been gunning for Trump's tax returns since the 2016 election, when Trump became the first president in decades not to disclose his tax returns. And with Republicans blocking efforts to force their disclosure at the federal level, many Democrats turned to the states.

By March, lawmakers in 23 states had introduced measures to force presidential candidates to release their recent tax filings, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. But some Democrats questioned the legality of compelling disclosure, and in Republican-controlled statehouses, the measure was doomed.

Vetoing a tax disclosure bill in New Jersey in May, Republican Gov. Chris Christie, a supporter of Trump, called the measure unconstitutional and a "transparent political stunt."

In California, tax-disclosure advocates found a governor highly critical of Trump. But Brown, a fourth-term Democrat, has also rejected similar disclosures of his own: In a break with long-standing tradition of gubernatorial candidates in California, Brown did not release his own tax returns in 2010 or in his reelection campaign in 2014.

In a veto message released just before midnight on California's bill-signing deadline, Brown said he hesitated "to start down a road that well might lead to an ever escalating set of differing state requirements for presidential candidates."

The bill Brown vetoed would have required, as a condition for appearing on the primary ballot, that presidential candidates file copies of their five most recent tax returns with state officials. The state, in turn, would make them public.

The legality of states requiring presidential candidates to release their tax returns has long been in doubt. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that states cannot add to the qualifications for U.S. Senate or House members, and California's own legislative counsel had released an opinion casting doubt on the constitutionality of the presidential disclosure bill.

But some legal experts had been more encouraging of the legislation, including former ethics lawyers for President Barack Obama and George W. Bush. Richard Hasen, an election law expert at University of California, Irvine, said in an email that Brown's veto would amount to a "setback" for the state-level effort.

But he said, "I doubt it would stop other states with heavy Democratic majorities from trying. If any succeed, no doubt the matter will end up in the courts."

But state-level Democrats first have to get a bill enacted. Hawaii state Rep. Chris Lee, who introduced a tax-disclosure bill in Hawaii, said that with three years until the next presidential election, "I don't think anybody's trying to rush anything." And Massachusetts state Sen. Mike Barrett, who is carrying a tax-disclosure bill in his state, said a veto from Brown "doesn't mean that Jerry Brown is the U.S. Supreme Court. It doesn't mean that he substitutes for seven justices who do this full time."

"It is true that in the short term, nothing seems to be happening on presidential tax return disclosure," Barrett said. "But it wouldn't take much for the mid-term trend to look extremely promising."

In addition to efforts by Democrats in the nation's statehouses, plaintiffs in a handful of lawsuits across the country have said they will seek to obtain Trump's filings, including in several cases targeting Trump's foreign business ties and a case in which protesters claim Trump incited violence against them at a campaign rally.

But the prospects of obtaining Trump's tax records in court are as murky as they are in state legislatures. Greg Belzley, an attorney for protesters seeking Trump's tax records in a Kentucky case, said, "Hell, man. If I had the slightest idea of where things were going in this country, or what's going on, I'd be a millionaire."

Democratic lawmakers have argued that reviewing Trump's taxes has become more significant amid ongoing questions about Trump's ties to Russia and as Trump and Republicans strive to make changes to the tax code — a position that appears to carry weight with the American public. According to recent Morning Consult/POLITICO poll, a plurality of American voters — 49 percent — say Trump should release his tax returns before any tax return proposal moves forward.

Trump has said he would not release his returns because they were being audited by the IRS, though the IRS has said there is no regulation prohibiting someone from making their returns public while under audit.

Yet absent legislation to force Trump's hand, it could be years — if ever — before his filings are disclosed.

"The only ones who care about my tax returns are the reporters," Trump said at a January press conference.

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Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 4:50:36 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 06/28/2017 04:47 PM EDT

WHY MEADOWS IS TALKING BUDGET CAPS: In an unlikely twist, an obscure budget rule has compelled one of the most conservative of congressmen to beg for a budget deal with Senate Democrats.

House Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) says he got word this month of a Senate rule that would effectively kill the current House budget resolution on the floor of the upper chamber. Wotks can dig that up in section 312(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. Because the House's proposed defense spending would violate the current budget caps, Senate Republicans would be forced to either write a budget adhering to the caps or strike a deal with Democrats to allow for more spending across the board. And so, trying to keep the long game in mind, Meadows says he has asked House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) to start negotiating with minority party leaders in the upper chamber.

The strategy: Seeing the writing on the wall, the Freedom Caucus has come to terms with the fact that Senate Republicans will probably need to deal with Democrats — likely leading to more domestic spending — to pass a joint budget agreement and therefore unlock filibuster-proof tax reform. Meadows' suggestion to Ryan: Try for a swifter deal with the Senate, as well as more mandatory cuts. "We're looking at higher offsets because we believe the non-defense discretionary is going to be higher than \$511 [billion]," Meadows told reporters today. "That's what makes the negotiations on our side even harder — we're trying to anticipate what we believe may happen on the Senate side."

Sidestepping: House GOP leaders, however, argue there's a way around that Senate rule, and it all comes down to three letters — OCO. The strategy was most recently tested in 2015, when Senate Republicans passed a budget that proposed to raise defense spending above the caps by shifting all extra money into war spending (aka overseas contingency operations), rather than counting it in the base budget. "This OCO approach is fully compliant with the BCA," a Senate Budget Committee official explained at the time. Procedurally, GOP aides say it could work again this year. But whether it can work politically is another story.

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — In a [letter](#) to appropriators, Grantmakers in the Arts makes the case for steady or increased funding for agencies like the National Endowment for the Arts. More from [Morning Education](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — A new survey shows general fund revenues for fiscal 2017 are coming in below forecasts in 33 states, Governing [reports](#).

BUDGET

OUR FIRST CLUE! Now here's a committee that's plenty excited for reconciliation

instructions. House Financial Services is planning to reverse two big parts of Dodd-Frank to fulfill its cost-cutting requirement under this year's budget reconciliation package. Rep. [Patrick McHenry](#), the panel's vice chairman, said Tuesday night that he wants to target the federal government's authority to wind down failing financial institutions and seek to bring the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's funding under congressional control, Colin Wilhelm [reports](#). Those two provisions were the biggest cost-savers in the Financial CHOICE Act that passed the House earlier this month. The entire bill was expected to save \$33.6 billion over 10 years, according to CBO.

SASSING BACK AT HERITAGE: The House Agriculture Committee hit back this afternoon against criticism from Heritage Action, saying it is "absurd" for the group to suggest Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) is impeding the House's budget agreement by refusing agriculture spending cuts, Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine Boudreau [report](#). In a written statement, the panel said Conaway's farm bill advocacy "may not fit with Heritage Action's long-running campaign against America's farmers and ranchers, but it certainly isn't the reason we still don't have a budget." The committee said the chairman has — "from the beginning" — assured House Budget Chairwoman [Diane Black](#) and leadership "that we will be part of the solution."

Exhibit A: The Heritage Action statement that prompted the committee's ire said, "Conaway's apparent unwillingness to cut a paltry amount of federal spending from his committee is a slap in the face to American taxpayers and jeopardizes historic tax reform," Helena [reports](#).

BATTLING BAT: While Freedom Caucus members aren't making specific tax reform demands in budget talks, Meadows says his group wants an understanding in principle on border adjustment's fate, Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#). Members of the conservative caucus don't think the potential BAT revenue can be counted on and are in agreement that House GOP leaders should scuttle it because of insufficient support among Republicans.

DEFENSE

DON'T MISS THE MARKUP: House appropriators have moved up their defense [markup](#) to Thursday morning after leaders announced today that the chamber won't be voting on Friday. That means the committee's [report](#) on fiscal 2018 defense spending is now out for public consumption.

SAVING THE SPACE LAUNCH SYSTEM: Jacqueline Klimas got ahold of an Air Force [memo](#) this week that says the service "strongly objects" to an NDAA provision that would prevent the department from investing in the development of a new space launch system. And Jacqueline [reports](#) that Rep. [Mike Coffman](#) has drafted an amendment to nix that prohibition.

ENERGY

SUBCOMMITTEE SIGNOFF: House appropriators approved the energy and water spending bill out of subcommittee this morning, agreeing to nearly \$38 billion for fiscal 2018. As Esther Whieldon [reports](#), the measure comes in \$209 million under current spending levels and nearly \$4 billion above the president's request. There's no full committee markup on the calendar yet.

BORDER WALL

PROTOTYPE PROSPECTS: The federal government could begin construction of border wall prototypes by the end of the summer, but an exact timeline remains unclear, Ted Hesson [reports](#). The agency is currently in the second phase of a process to solicit designs for the wall prototypes, but no contracts have been awarded, Ron Vitiello, acting deputy commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, told reporters on Tuesday.

AGRICULTURE

RIDE-A-LONGS: House appropriators [approved](#) the first agriculture spending bill of the Trump era out of subcommittee today, and it has plenty of goodies for GOP lawmakers. So many, in fact, that Catherine Boudreau made a [handy list](#) of everything from bringing back low-fat chocolate milk in schools to requiring that U.S. iron and steel be used in rural construction projects.

READY TO SNAP UP SNAP CUSTOMERS: Amazon.com has been in the news for all sorts of reasons this week, but not for its quiet play into the (currently nonexistent) online food stamps market. As Morning Ag [reports](#), the e-commerce company is one of several online retailers enrolled in a pilot program that lets some Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program customers use their benefits online. Even more under the radar? Amazon recently [rolled out](#) rolled out a 45 percent discount on its Prime memberships for anyone with an EBT card. Those customers can't use their benefits online — yet.

TAX

IRS FEELS THE PAIN: IRS funding cuts hampered taxpayer assistance this year, according to a watchdog [report](#) released today. Aaron Lorenzo [explains](#) that taxpayers who called the IRS for help filing their returns generally fared better than those who needed other types of assistance. For example, it was more difficult for delinquent taxpayers who couldn't cover their bills right away to connect with the IRS to establish payment plans, according to Taxpayer Advocate's report to Congress.

APPOINTING LIEUTENANTS: Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) has drafted his tax reform team, Brian Faler [reports](#). The roster: Sens. [Rob Portman](#) and [Mike Enzi](#) will focus on rewriting the international tax code. Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) will look at the individual code. Sens. [Bill Cassidy](#) and [Dean Heller](#) will examine energy tax provisions. And Sen. [Pat Roberts](#) will work on agriculture tax issues.

OBAMACARE

WHAT NEXT? After calling off the first Obamacare repeal vote, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) says he's now hoping to strike a new deal by Friday or Saturday, with plans to have CBO analyze that proposal and to hold a vote soon after the July Fourth recess, Burgess Everett, Jennifer Haberkorn and Josh Dawsey [report](#).

Bullying Keith Hall: Folks who were in attendance at the GOP meeting Tuesday say Republican senators quickly laid into CBO Director Keith Hall, in a seemingly genuine effort to discredit the nonpartisan referee so it doesn't derail the GOP's final health care bill. Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) asked Hall, who was hand-picked by Republicans in 2015, how the director could project millions more would be covered by Medicaid expansion in future years, wondering aloud whether the CBO could predict what was essentially a political decision left to individual states and their governors.

To feed your insatiable Obamacare appetite: ['At least very close'](#) | [5 changes that could help Schumer's strategy](#) | [No love for Medicaid](#) | [It 'will be great, if we get it done'](#) | [Backing off Heller](#) | [Defending Medicaid](#) | [Voter opposition](#) | ['We will not relent'](#) | [Why it just might happen](#)

POLITICAL STRATEGY

CRAMPING THEIR STYLE: Senate Republicans are increasingly frustrated with White House actions that undermine their legislative efforts and jeopardize their chances at reelection, Alex Isenstadt and Josh Dawsey [report](#).

EARMARKS

- How America's aircraft carriers could become obsolete. [Bloomberg](#).
- Trump's border wall faces contracting delays, a limited budget and a September deadline. [Washington Post](#).
- Brazil suspends passport issuance due to budget crunch. [Reuters](#).
- House Republicans want to cut funding for administration's telecom arm. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Texas Medicaid cuts leave special needs kids without therapy. [The Associated Press](#).
- NATO allies increase military spending. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Opinion: Trumpcare could bring back an epidemic of abuse. [The New York Times](#).
- Business associations to Congress: Hurry up on tax reform. [POLITICO Pro](#).

ON TAP THURSDAY

10 a.m. — The House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, as well as the panel's Oversight Subcommittee, hold a [joint hearing](#) on challenges of Social Security coverage and payroll tax compliance for state and local governments. 1100 Longworth House Office Building.

10 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science holds a [hearing](#) on NASA's budget. 192 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

10:15 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Legislative Branch Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the fiscal 2018 budget request for the Senate Sergeant at Arms and U.S. Capitol Police. 124 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

10:30 a.m. — The House Appropriations Committee [marks up](#) its fiscal 2018 Legislative Branch and Defense spending bills. 2359 Rayburn House Office Building.

2 p.m. — The House Appropriations Committee [marks up](#) the fiscal 2018 Commerce, Justice and Science spending bill. H-140, The Capitol.

3 p.m. — The House Appropriations Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee [marks up](#) its fiscal 2018 spending bill. 2358-A Rayburn House Office Building.

WE'RE COUNTING: 94 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires. 459 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/06/anticipating-senate-trouble-fiscal-hawks-demand-more-savings-023536>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House Republicans will seek to kill key Dodd-Frank provisions through reconciliation

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By Colin Wilhelm | 06/27/2017 06:41 PM EDT

The House Financial Services Committee will seek to strike down key provisions of the Dodd-Frank financial regulation law through the budgetary maneuver of reconciliation, the panel's vice chairman said.

Rep. [Patrick McHenry](#) (R-N.C.) told POLITICO that the committee would target the government's authority to wind down failing financial institutions and seek to bring the CFPB's funding under the control of Congress.

Both moves are contained in the Financial CHOICE Act, the Dodd-Frank repeal bill sponsored by Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) that passed the House earlier this month.

A spokesperson for Hensarling did not immediately comment.

The House Budget Committee is weighing mandatory spending cuts to be included in the budget's instructions. If Republicans pass a budget with those instructions, and it's adopted by the Senate, it would mandate that each House committee find a certain amount of savings within its own jurisdiction.

Because reconciliation is a cost-saving measure, only items that would ensure that the budget is revenue-neutral or decrease the deficit can be added. Reconciliation allows legislation to bypass a potential filibuster in the Senate, where Democrats would otherwise be able to block the changes to the law.

Shortly before the CHOICE Act passed the House, the CBO estimated the legislation would save \$33.6 billion over 10 years, mostly due to the elimination of the two targeted Dodd-Frank provisions.

The Republicans are zeroing in on Orderly Liquidation Authority, which grants the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and other agencies the power to wind down a financial institution and liquidate its assets if it fails, avoiding the bankruptcy process.

They're also seeking to place the CFPB in the normal appropriations process. The consumer watchdog is currently funded through the Fed, a point of contention with conservatives, who say that makes the bureau unaccountable to Congress.

Also being considered is repeal of part or all of the Volcker rule, which prohibits banks from trading on their own account or investing in certain funds, according to a House Republican aide.

"Whatever [Senate Banking Chair [Mike\] Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) doesn't get done in the Senate, we'll take a look at whatever else we can do in reconciliation," said Rep. [Blaine Luetkemeyer](#) (R-Mo.), chairman of the House subcommittee with jurisdiction over financial institutions.

Even though a filibuster is not possible under reconciliation, senators opposed to any portion of the budget language can raise points of order with the parliamentarian, who has final say over what can be included under the law.

That limits any changes to whatever will provide savings over time, which would prevent Republicans from pursuing another goal: turning the CFPB into a bipartisan commission rather than its current director-led structure.

Conservatives, including members of the House Freedom Caucus and Republican Study Committee, want budget cuts included in reconciliation instructions to set the table for tax reform.

But they, House Budget Chairwoman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.), and the Republican leadership are wrestling with how to find enough cuts to satisfy those demands without losing the votes of moderate lawmakers, which could slow down, or kill, the budget process and tax reform with it.

Budget resolution language was expected to be introduced this week, though that has been postponed for now as Republicans work to find common ground.

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House Ag swats back at Heritage Action on spending cuts [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine Boudreau | 06/28/2017 03:24 PM EDT

The House Agriculture Committee on Wednesday dismissed allegations from Heritage Action that Chairman [Mike Conaway](#)'s objection to agriculture spending cuts is the obstacle holding up the hotly anticipated House budget deal, calling them "absurd."

"With the farm economy in one of the biggest slides since the Great Depression, the chairman has been advocating for a budget that won't exacerbate the conditions of our farmers and ranchers in rural America and that won't impede development of the next farm bill," said Rachel Millard, a spokeswoman for the committee. "That may not fit with Heritage Action's long-running campaign against America's farmers and ranchers, but it certainly isn't the reason we still don't have a budget."

Conaway (R-Texas) has [refused](#) to make significant mandatory cuts to farm and nutrition programs as part of a budget agreement that aims to rein in federal spending and pave the way for tax reform.

"Chairman Conaway is committed to passing a budget and moving tax reform forward, and to suggest otherwise is absurd," Millard said. "From the beginning, he has assured [House Budget] Chairwoman [[Diane](#)] [Black](#) and leadership that we will be part of the solution."

Heritage Action earlier on Wednesday [criticized](#) Conaway for pushing back against the cuts, blaming him for being "at the heart of the problem" that's delayed the release of the House budget deal.

Reports last week indicated that there was likely to be \$150 billion in mandatory cuts over 10 years, though it's not clear what portion of those would fall to farm bill programs. More recently, House budget leaders have reportedly sought an additional \$50 billion in mandatory cuts to appease both defense hawks and the right flank of the party, a move that has incensed some committee chairmen, including Conaway.

Conaway and other farm-state lawmakers have long argued that the Agriculture Committee shouldn't have to come up with big cuts after the 2014 farm bill cost far less than anticipated. At the time, lawmakers said the bill would save taxpayers \$23 billion over 10 years, but it has saved closer to \$100 billion, largely due to reductions in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program payments.

House agriculture appropriators said Wednesday they weren't even aware of the outside criticism of Conaway's pushback on mandatory agriculture spending cuts, nor have they heard objections from any of their colleagues on the right about their discretionary spending bill that largely rebukes President Donald Trump's proposed budget cuts.

Asked whether they've been hearing pushback from conservatives, Rep. [Robert Aderholt](#) (R-Ala.), chairman of the House agriculture appropriations subcommittee, and Rep. [Sanford Bishop](#) (D-Ga.), ranking member of the subcommittee, looked at each other a little puzzled.

"We've not heard anything, have we?" Aderholt asked Bishop as they took questions from reporters after holding a markup of their spending bill Wednesday.

"I've not," Bishop said. "In fact, I've heard sighs of relief from many of the stakeholders in agriculture, who are the American people, because having the highest-quality, safest and most abundant food and fiber anywhere in the world is something that most Americans want. I think that rural America is breathing a sigh of relief."

"They recognize that we do have our eyes on trying to enhance the quality of life for people who live in rural America," Bishop added.

The fiscal 2018 spending bill advanced out of subcommittee in a unanimous voice vote Wednesday.

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Heritage Action criticizes Conaway for blocking ag budget cuts [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 06/28/2017 09:20 AM EDT

Heritage Action is criticizing House Agriculture Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) for refusing to make significant cuts to agriculture as part of the forthcoming House budget deal.

In a [statement](#) today, the conservative group noted that the House Budget Committee has postponed unveiling its budget resolution and blamed Conaway for being "at the heart of the problem."

"Chairman Conaway's apparent unwillingness to cut a paltry amount of federal spending from his committee is a slap in the face to American taxpayers and jeopardizes historic tax reform," said Dan Holler, vice president of Heritage Action. "The farm bill alone is projected to cost nearly \$1 trillion over the next ten years, and work requirements for food stamps for able-bodied adults without dependents alone would yield significant savings."

Conaway, for his part, has argued that the ag committee shouldn't bear the brunt of steep cuts after the 2014 farm bill cost far less than anticipated. At the time lawmakers claimed that the bill would save taxpayers \$23 billion over 10 years, but it has saved closer to \$100 billion, largely due to reductions in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program payments.

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Top Freedom Caucus members push border adjustment debate into budget talks [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 06/27/2017 04:49 PM EDT

House Freedom Caucus leaders are demanding some clarity on the fate of the proposed border adjustment tax as part of budget talks.

They don't think the potential revenue it would raise can be counted on, said the conservative faction's chairman, Rep. [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.).

Freedom Caucus members have differing opinions on the proposed import tax, which is estimated to raise \$1.2 trillion over 10 years for tax reform. But they've reached consensus that House GOP leaders should scuttle it because it lacks sufficient support among Republicans on both sides of the Capitol.

That missing link — broad GOP buy-in — is slowing the overall tax reform effort, Meadows and others have said for weeks, including at a Colorado event over the weekend hosted by the conservative billionaire Koch brothers, who vehemently oppose border adjustability.

Members of the Freedom Caucus aren't making specific tax reform demands within the budget talks, but they want an understanding in principle on border adjustment's fate, Meadows said today.

In short, he wants some directions or guardrails.

"We believe that we need to make some decisions on tax reform as part of the budget process

because it has such a far-reaching implication on the budget reconciliation instructions," Meadows said.

Rep. [Jim Jordan](#) (R-Ohio), who formerly chaired the Freedom Caucus, said he would like to see tax reform language first. That should be coupled with discretionary program savings in a budget plan, Jordan said.

In addition, Meadows wants to include all committees of jurisdiction in reconciliation instructions, in case the Senate doesn't repeal all the Affordable Care Act taxes, for example.

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Coffman drafts amendment to scuttle space launch vehicle ban [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 06/28/2017 02:28 PM EDT

Rep. [Mike Coffman](#) has drafted an [amendment](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act that would allow the Air Force to invest in development of a new evolved expendable launch vehicle for space.

The amendment, obtained by POLITICO, would remove a portion of the chairman's NDAA mark that prohibits the Air Force from spending any money on development of a new space launch vehicle. An Air Force memo [strongly condemned](#) the provision in the bill, which the service said would decrease competition and drive up the cost of launches.

The amendment from the Colorado Republican would allow money to be used for research, development, testing and evaluation of a new launch vehicle.

The Air Force now relies on two companies for its space launch needs: SpaceX and United Launch Alliance, a team of Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

The government is currently investing in development of ULA's new Vulcan launch system, something that would continue under Coffman's amendment. The bill, however, would force ULA to maintain its existing Atlas V and Delta IV launch systems.

The House Armed Services Committee is marking up its version of the fiscal 2018 defense policy bill today.

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House subcommittee advances energy, water spending bill [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 06/28/2017 11:41 AM EDT

A House appropriations subcommittee today advanced a \$37.56 billion fiscal 2018 energy and water spending bill that would end an Energy Department research program and bar the agency from issuing new loan guarantees.

The Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water advanced the [bill](#) with a voice vote without making any amendments. The spending bill for the Department of Energy, Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies cuts \$209 million from this year's spending levels, which is still \$3.65 billion more than President Donald Trump proposed.

Top democrats on the full Appropriations Committee and subcommittee bemoaned that the bill would [cut](#) key programs that promote clean energy and other technologies and end DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy program.

"The bill shortchanges renewable energy, science, by terminating ARPA-E and then doing real violence to the energy efficiency and renewable energy account," said [Marcy Kaptur](#) (D-Ohio).

WHAT'S NEXT: The bill advances to the full committee, which has not announced when it will take up the measure.

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Border wall prototype construction slated for late summer [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 06/27/2017 04:40 PM EDT

The federal government could begin construction of border wall prototypes by the end of the summer, but an exact timeline remains unclear, according to Ron Vitiello, acting deputy commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

CBP previously [planned](#) to start construction of the prototypes last week in San Diego, but that timeline has been delayed.

President Donald Trump's proposed 2018 budget [requests](#) \$1.6 billion for new and replacement wall along the southern border, but those funds will need to be approved by Congress. In the meantime, CBP has \$20 million in reprogrammed funds to begin evaluating wall designs. The spending bill signed in May also [allocated](#) \$341 million to replace existing fencing.

The agency is currently in the second phase of a process to solicit designs for the wall prototypes, but no contracts have been awarded, Vitiello told reporters today.

Vitiello expressed confidence that CBP could build the 74 miles of border wall [requested](#) in the White House 2018 budget. "It's all dependent on this funding," he said. "We'll have to see what we can get accomplished with what's provided."

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House appropriations subcommittee approves \$1B less in fiscal 2018 bill for USDA, FDA and CFTC [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 06/28/2017 11:30 AM EDT

The House Appropriations agriculture subcommittee advanced a \$20 billion discretionary spending bill for fiscal 2018 by unanimous voice vote Wednesday.

Overall, the panel allocated \$1.1 billion less than it did in fiscal 2017 for three agencies — the Agriculture Department, FDA and CFTC. The spending bill makes cuts across the majority of programs such as farm loans, rural development, agricultural research, international food aid and efforts to control and eliminate pests and diseases.

"The reality remains that, as a country, we need to get our financial house in order and find the means to address our ever growing deficit," [Robert Aderholt](#) (R-Ala.), chairman of the Appropriations agriculture panel, said in his opening remarks. "However, this bill is not in full agreement with some of the budget proposals to defund parts of the Rural Development mission area or food aid programs."

The bill would give rural development programs \$2.6 billion, down slightly from \$2.88 billion in fiscal 2017. The panel listed \$1.4 billion for Food for Peace and \$185 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which would be millions less than last year. President Donald Trump has proposed eliminating both programs.

[Sanford Bishop](#) (D-Ga.) said Republicans and Democrats on the subcommittee were able to come together and agree not to "abandon rural communities, as proposed, in the White House budget request." However, he criticized the fact that GOP House budget leaders have yet to advance a budget resolution. Thus legislators are operating in a vacuum: There is no overall spending number, subcommittees have no allocations, and the debt limit is approaching with no plan to raise it.

"Marking up just one bill at a time without a full list of allocations leaves us effectively working in the dark," he said. "Further, without a bipartisan budget deal, we will also be forced to cope with the real potential for the return of sequestration."

The bill would cut the CFTC's budget by \$2 million, a blow to Republican acting CFTC Chairman Chris Giancarlo who is advocating for a \$281.5 million budget for the agency. The CFTC's budget has been flat at \$250 million since 2015.

The Republicans' budget cut for the CFTC "will hamper the agency [and] leave it without the tools it needs to properly massive commodities markets," said [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.).

Patrick Temple-West contributed to this report.

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Rider check: What's in the USDA, FDA spending bill [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 06/27/2017 03:48 PM EDT

The fiscal 2018 agricultural spending bill that House appropriators released today would change some of the school nutrition standards championed by former First Lady Michelle Obama and block processed poultry imported from China from being served in those school meals.

Schools would have to demonstrate financial hardship to receive an exemption from the Obama-era whole grain standards, which aim to replace white breads, rice and other foods with whole grain-rich varieties. Also, stricter sodium reduction targets — another initiative dating to the Obama administration — would be delayed, and schools would be able to serve low-fat flavored milk as opposed to only the non-fat version. The provisions, which have been included in previous government spending bills, are similar to the [policy directive](#) that Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue signed during his first week in office.

Two provisions in the \$20 billion discretionary spending [bill](#) for USDA and FDA programs also signal that House appropriators are concerned about USDA's [decision](#) to import processed chicken raised and slaughtered in China. Those products would be banned from the National School Lunch Program under the spending bill, and lawmakers outlined a list of verification and re-inspection requirements for USDA food safety officials to follow.

GOP lawmakers are already [talking](#) about how Congress will likely pass a continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown on Oct. 1, when the fiscal 2017 spending package expires. Work in the House and Senate on all 12 appropriations bills for fiscal 2018 is months behind schedule, in part because President Donald Trump's budget arrived late. But there also is internal fighting among House Republicans over spending priorities, particularly how to pay for a large bump in defense spending, plus a crowded floor calendar in the Senate — making it likely that Congress will go the omnibus route once again.

Here are a list of other riders in the appropriations bill:

— **U.S. iron, steel in rural infrastructure projects:** Rural water, wastewater, waste disposal and solid waste management projects, including maintenance and repair as well as construction, would have to use iron and steel produced in the U.S. under the House spending bill. Appropriators outlined some exceptions, including if the Agriculture secretary determines that the restriction is "inconsistent with the public interest" or if U.S. iron and steel products are not available "in sufficient and reasonably available quantities" or are not of "satisfactory quality." The requirement also wouldn't apply if the cost of sourcing U.S. metals increased project costs by more than 25 percent.

— **Shielding against trans-fat lawsuits:** The FDA in 2015 decided to [all but ban artificial trans fats](#), which are still used in candies, microwave popcorn and baked goods. Since then, food manufacturers have been nervous about exposure to liability, because the agency's formal phase-out doesn't start until June 2018. House appropriators inserted language into the fiscal 2018 spending legislation, as they have in previous years, that gives industry some cover from litigation by declaring that partially hydrogenated oils can't be considered unsafe until that FDA compliance period kicks in.

— **Delay FDA sodium targets:** House appropriators would block the FDA from issuing voluntary sodium reduction targets until the Institute of Medicine and the CDC update the Dietary Reference Intake for sodium, a move designed to shelve another Obama administration priority. The provision also was included in the omnibus spending package for fiscal 2017.

— **Block SNAP retailer stocking rule:** The agricultural spending bill would continue to delay USDA's [final regulation](#) requiring convenience stores that accept food stamps to stock a wider variety of healthful foods. House appropriators crafted a similar provision that made it into the fiscal 2017 omnibus after lawmakers argued the regulation created compliance costs that placed too great a burden on small businesses, which could in turn lead them to opt out of accepting food stamps, limiting where recipients could use their benefits.

The rule, which was required by the 2014 farm bill and finalized during the Obama administration, increases to seven the variety of products retailers must stock in four staple categories: meat, poultry or fish; bread or cereals; fruits or vegetables; and dairy products. The previous requirement was three varieties. The rule also redefines "staple food" to exclude products with multiple ingredients, such as TV dinners.

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IRS filing season generally good but challenges remain, Taxpayer Advocate says [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 06/28/2017 01:44 PM EDT

Taxpayers who called the IRS for help filing their returns this year generally fared better than those who needed other types of assistance, according to a [watchdog report](#) released today.

For example, it was more difficult for delinquent taxpayers who couldn't cover their bills right away to connect with the IRS to establish payment plans, Taxpayer Advocate's report to Congress said. And though phone call service improved when assistance went through the IRS's accounts management telephone lines, the improvement was due to reduced volume, the report said.

Cuts in IRS funding hampered taxpayer assistance.

"There is no doubt many of the service constraints are attributable in significant part to funding limitations," National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson said in the report.

Olson recommended the IRS send Congress a list of core services that have been cut back or killed off, and indicate that a better spending level would bring those services back.

"If the IRS describes how it would use additional funding to improve taxpayer service with greater specificity, congressional appropriators might be convinced that additional funding would be put to good use and provide that funding," the report said.

Lawmakers on the House Appropriations Committee are set to mark up a spending bill

Thursday that includes funding for the IRS.

The revenue agency, which has had its funding cut nearly 20 percent since 2010, when accounting for inflation, would lose about 2 percent in funding for the coming fiscal year under President Donald Trump's budget proposal.

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Hatch names tax reform deputies [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 06/27/2017 03:33 PM EDT

Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) is asking some of his Republican colleagues on the panel to take the lead developing tax reform ideas in certain policy areas.

Sens. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio) and [Mike Enzi](#) (R-Wyo.) will focus on rewriting the international tax code, Hatch said today. Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) will look at the individual code. Sens. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) and [Dean Heller](#) (R-Nev.) will examine energy tax provisions, while Sen. [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.) will work on agriculture tax issues.

The effort is reminiscent of the tax reform working groups Hatch set up in 2015, though that effort was bipartisan. Hatch, speaking on the Senate floor, said he invited Democrats to participate, though he complained they had "process demands" and were accusing Republicans of being "hellbent on giving massive tax breaks to the super wealthy."

The effort shows any tax overhaul will not be dictated by a handful of party leaders working in secret, Hatch said.

"I've been working to involve all of the Republican members of the Senate Finance Committee in this effort," he said. "We have a number of great senators on the committee, many of whom have put in years of work on different areas of the tax system. I think it would be foolish to let that experience and expertise go to waste."

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Inside the GOP's surprise health care flop [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Jennifer Haberkorn and Josh Dawsey | 06/27/2017 11:15 PM EDT

Senate Republicans had no inkling of what they were walking into on Tuesday afternoon as they filed into the Mike Mansfield room on the Capitol's second floor.

Mitch McConnell's 51 colleagues, from his most junior members to his closest lieutenants, fully expected the Senate to vote this week on the Senate GOP's wounded Obamacare repeal

bill. They knew the whip count was far worse than advertised but were ready for McConnell to either admit defeat or start a furious round of deal-making to try to win their support. They took McConnell at his word that a vote would occur, regardless of the result.

Then the Kentucky Republican shocked them all as he dispassionately informed them at the top of the meeting that the vote would be delayed, and that he would continue the painful exercise of trying to get 50 of the caucus' 52 votes for Obamacare repeal.

Never mind that McConnell and his team had previously made clear that they did not believe letting the bill hang out over the July 4 recess would improve the result of the perilous negotiations.

"It's different from what he said ... yesterday afternoon as late as 5:30 p.m.," said a Republican senator.

Senators left the meeting perplexed at what will come next, and people close to McConnell don't fully comprehend how his strategy will play out, according to interviews with senators, aides and Republican operatives.

Even Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), McConnell's deputy and perhaps his closest ally, admitted that he was a "little bit" surprised at the decision. Cornyn had said the vote was on just minutes before.

"I understand it and support it. It's important that we succeed," Cornyn said of McConnell's move. "This is more than just about health care, as important as that is. This is about keeping our promises and demonstrating our ability to govern."

If the bill failed, the GOP's base could abandon them for not following through on the party's years-long campaign against Obamacare. It would also be harder for Republicans to pay for a sweeping tax reform plan. President Donald Trump's agenda could be mortally wounded.

In recent days, McConnell spoke to White House aides, senators, political consultants and his sprawling Washington network built over decades in the Senate.

But he never tipped his hand on what might be coming.

Everyone in the Senate took him at his word that a vote would occur this week, which is why the decision to punt the bill was so surprising. But it's also true that McConnell has never been the type of leader to put a bill on the floor that he knows will fail.

McConnell made his choice because he still sees a narrow path to success. "He's not interested in coming back and having a failed vote," said a person close to McConnell.

It will be fraught with danger while trying to balance out the demands of senators from Medicaid expansion states and hard-line conservatives looking to gut Obamacare as much as possible. And his decision to delay the bill also carries great political risk because it draws out the Obamacare fight at least a couple more weeks. But he's decided it's a risk worth taking.

The episode was a stunning twist in the GOP's long-running saga to roll back Obamacare.

Before the House first pulled its bill from the floor back in March, McConnell vowed that the Senate could pass a repeal bill in a week. Then he had the Senate GOP meet nearly every day

of the last two months once the House finally sent him a bill in April. Now he's trying a new tactic.

Behind closed doors Tuesday, McConnell informed the senators of his goal to strike a new deal by Friday or Saturday, with plans to have the Congressional Budget Office analyze that proposal and to hold a vote soon after the recess.

CBO Director Keith Hall was also present for the meeting, and GOP senators quickly laid into the man who's been haunting them with projections of 22 million fewer insured and short-term premium increases, according to people in attendance. It seemed to be a genuine effort by Republicans to discredit the nonpartisan referee so that the GOP's final health care bill isn't derailed by the CBO.

"CBO could stand for 'Confusing But Obtuse,'" said Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) afterward.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) asked Hall, who was hand-picked by Republicans in 2015, how he could project millions more would be covered by Medicaid expansion in future years, wondering aloud whether the CBO could predict what was essentially a political decision left to individual states and their governors.

"I'm from the biggest potential Medicaid expansion state. And if you think Texas is expanding, you're wrong," chimed in Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), according to attendees of the closed-door meeting.

Cruz is one of those senators McConnell now must win over, but he may be easier than most. He's been working well with McConnell, once his high-profile adversary, and his attack on Hall was aimed at making his colleagues feel better about the GOP leader's bill.

McConnell and Trump must persuade all but two of the following currently opposed senators to reverse course: conservatives Mike Lee of Utah, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin as well as the more centrist Susan Collins of Maine, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Rob Portman of Ohio and Dean Heller of Nevada, and surprise opponents like Jerry Moran of Kansas.

"There's several things we've put on the table. And at this point there's not much give," Capito said. "I don't know how, or if, we can get there."

"Tinkering isn't going to work, from my perspective. There would have to be a major overhaul of the bill ... to win my support," Collins said.

A few hours before the change in schedule was announced Tuesday, negotiations were really just beginning, as Cruz visited with McConnell privately. Portman met later with Vice President Mike Pence at his hideaway.

White House officials said Tuesday morning they were still angling to make deals with individual senators, hoping to deploy the \$188 billion they have left over from the CBO score to pour into the bill and cut deals.

But one Republican aide involved in the process said that GOP leaders had not yet engaged in the horse-trading needed to push the bill across the finish line — a key reason McConnell called off the vote early in the week.

"The truth is, we're not even close. This is not, like, a couple of tweaks," the aide said.

McConnell has given the White House assurances he will bring the bill to a successful vote, and an anxious Trump has been told by top aides in the Oval Office that he could trust McConnell, according to one person familiar with the conversations.

Trump told aides and McConnell that he wanted to be involved in whipping votes, and two administration officials said he enjoyed doing so in the House.

But McConnell aides and advisers don't think Trump can help like he could in the House.

"Trump doesn't bring us any votes. He just doesn't," said one person familiar with the majority leader's thinking.

As the whip count became more dire in recent days, the White House became increasingly concerned about the flailing Republican bill and began to ramp up its efforts and urgency toward what could be Trump's key domestic achievement. Some, like top congressional lobbyist Marc Short and chief of staff Reince Priebus, were not as determined to have a vote this week as McConnell initially was, according to people who spoke with them.

Trump began working the phones over the weekend. On Tuesday afternoon, he hosted Paul and the two developed what Paul called a "good rapport," a significant development considering Paul is perhaps the firmest "no" vote against the GOP's repeal bill right now.

On Tuesday, Trump also invited the entire GOP caucus to the White House to make a personal pitch to a party that by the time of the meeting included at least eight senators who opposed the bill in its current form.

"Obviously, the White House must have played some role, or otherwise we wouldn't all be trundling down there," said Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Still, the particulars of the Senate's procedures will always, ultimately, be up to McConnell.

Some saw his delay as a positive sign, considering that the GOP leader could have simply cut bait on the bill. Instead, he is willing to expend huge amounts of political capital on a bill that could easily cost the GOP seats in Congress as soon as next year.

"More time gives opportunity," said Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.).

Others weren't so sure. After all, if the GOP follows McConnell's new timeline and strikes a deal heading into the recess, GOP senators will have nine days at home dealing with liberal activists, a new CBO score and more critical media coverage.

"Personally," said Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), "I'd just as soon work through the recess."

Eliana Johnson and Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Trump teases 'big surprise' on Senate Obamacare repeal effort [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 06/28/2017 12:47 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Wednesday suggested that "a big surprise" could be coming in the Republican effort to repeal and replace Obamacare, a tease that came hours after the president predicted that Senate Republicans are "going to get at least very close" to passing their stalled healthcare bill.

"And just to do a little official business, health care is working along very well. We could have a big surprise with a great health care package. So, now they're happy," Trump said, gesturing to a group of reporters during a meet-and-greet with the visiting World Series Champion Chicago Cubs.

"What do you mean by big surprise, sir?" one reporter shouted

"I said you're going to have a great, great surprise. It's going to be great," Trump said without elaborating further.

Earlier Wednesday, Trump had predicted that Senate Republicans are "going to get at least very close" to passing legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare, adding that "I think we're going to get it over the line."

Trump's earlier comments, which came during a roundtable discussion on energy with state, local and tribal leaders at the White House, followed a meeting Tuesday afternoon with Republican senators just hours after GOP leadership postponed a vote on its health care measure until after the July 4 recess.

The vote's postponement came after the legislation failed to gain traction among the Senate GOP rank and file. At least eight Republican senators have expressed opposition to the measure, and, with a 52-seat majority, the party can afford to lose just two GOP votes and still pass the bill.

"The meeting went really well. We're talking about a great, great form of health care," Trump said in introductory remarks captured by the White House press pool. "We have a plan, that if we get it approved — it's very tough, every state is different, every senator is different. But I have to tell you, the Republican senators had a really impressive meeting yesterday at the White House. We had close to 50 of them. We have 52, we need almost all of them. That's never easy."

"I think we're going to get at least very close, and I think we're going to get it over the line. There was a great, great feeling in that room yesterday," he continued.

The bill, Trump said, would make health care cheaper not only for individuals but also for the country. He said Obamacare is "dying" and has been a "headache for everybody" and a "nightmare for many." With the Senate's legislation, the president said, "we get rid of so much ... all of the bad parts of Obamacare are gone."

By postponing the vote, Trump said, Republicans "have given ourselves a little bit more time to make it perfect."

Asked by a reporter whether he was concerned about the Medicaid cuts in the legislation, Trump said only that "this will be great for everybody."

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5 changes McConnell can make to get repeal bill on track [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 06/27/2017 08:49 PM EDT

Mitch McConnell has little margin for error as he tries to salvage the Senate's Obamacare repeal effort over the July 4 break.

The majority leader has to craft a compromise that tears down enough of Obamacare to satisfy the party's conservative wing, while also ensuring the health benefits are generous enough to keep skeptical moderates in line. He can lose just two of the 52 Republican votes, and use Vice President Mike Pence as a tie-breaker.

Here are the five items on McConnell's menu:

The Medicaid mess

The Senate health care bill would gut the safety net program, rolling back Obamacare's expanded coverage and slashing its funding by \$772 billion over a decade. And that's perhaps the main obstacle facing McConnell as he tries to win over a crucial bloc of moderate GOP senators.

Republican leaders may try to soften the blow to Medicaid to win over several holdouts by considering lengthening the phase-out of generous funding for Medicaid expansion and easing the cap on the whole program's funding. Senate Republicans hailing from expansion states — like vulnerable Nevada Sen. Dean Heller and key swing vote Rob Portman of Ohio — have pushed for a phase-out as long as seven years, far longer than the bill's current three-year track.

McConnell may also float the potential for excluding certain groups from the program's funding limits, in a bid to maintain coverage for some of the neediest Americans and relieve the financial burden on cash-strapped states.

But changes along those lines would put GOP leaders at risk of losing key conservatives who see Medicaid spending as out of control. Sen. Pat Toomey has led the charge to end the program's entitlement status, with support from several other senators eager to limit Medicaid's reach.

"Medicaid was initially set up to help the poor, women, children and the disabled," Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming said. "It has been taken in a direction way different than that."

The battle over Obamacare's subsidies

McConnell is also likely to weigh making the Senate bill's tax credits more generous to alleviate concerns that poorer and older people wouldn't get enough aid to purchase insurance on the individual market.

The current bill scales back those subsidies and cuts off eligibility at 350 percent of the federal poverty line, compared with Obamacare's 400-percent threshold. The restructuring disproportionately benefits younger and healthier enrollees, the Congressional Budget Office projected Monday, raising concerns that older and poorer patients would be forced to pay significantly more for health care, or go without.

But Republican leaders can easily dial those subsidies back up if they are key to winning over swing votes like Sens. Susan Collins or Lisa Murkowski.

"I'm very concerned about the impact on premiums generally, particularly for that very vulnerable group between age 50 and 64," Collins said.

What may not be so easy: Getting the conservative wing to go along with the bigger tax credits. Sen. Rand Paul — perhaps the most consistent opponent of the bill — has railed against the subsidies as just a perpetuation of Obamacare. Another holdout, Sen. Ron Johnson wants to eliminate that financial aid altogether.

Rolling back Obamacare regulations

Bringing conservatives back into the fold starts with repealing as much of Obamacare as possible — and that means doing more to gut the health law's regulatory structure.

Paul and Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Mike Lee of Utah have pushed to roll back all the standards governing health insurance plans, including protections barring insurers from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions. And Republican leaders are already halfway there: The Senate bill lets states waive additional Obamacare rules in a bid to further lower premiums.

"I have been very clear from the beginning how to get my vote," Cruz said.

But conservatives' remaining demands are extensive, and include adding provisions — such as medical malpractice reform and allowing insurers to sell across state lines — that could disqualify the bill under the Senate's strict reconciliation rules that are essential if McConnell is to pass the bill with a simple majority.

If he eliminates Obamacare's protections for sick Americans, McConnell also risks inviting the backlash that nearly doomed the House GOP's repeal bill. That controversy prompted Sen. Bill Cassidy to declare he wouldn't support any bill that leaves the sick without access to care. And if moderate GOP senators are already worried about whether the bill maintains coverage for the most vulnerable, further gutting Obamacare's protections likely won't get them any closer to "yes."

The Planned Parenthood problem

The easiest tweak Senate Republicans can make to the bill could also be among its most controversial: stripping out a provision that defunds Planned Parenthood for one year.

Collins and Murkowski — who have long been critical of zeroing out the organization's

funding — are drafting an amendment that would preserve the funds. Incorporating that into the Senate's revised bill could go a long way toward winning those two crucial moderates. It would also come at little tangible economic cost since it has no effect on the rest of the bill.

But it risks upsetting the vast majority of Republican senators who saw this as their chance to finally cut Planned Parenthood's funding after multiple failed attempts to do so. McConnell would have to take his colleagues' temperature before he makes any final decision and weigh whether he can endure the additional backlash from influential anti-abortion groups.

Adding enticements, including more money to combat opioid abuse

McConnell has roughly \$188 billion to spend on sweeteners to the health care bill, thanks to CBO's estimate that it would reduce the deficit by far more than the House-passed version of repeal. That gives him room to dole out aid for senators' pet issues in hopes of winning their votes, and it could go a long way toward addressing some moderates' concerns.

Boosting funding to fight the opioid epidemic ravaging many states would likely be a strong inducement for holdouts like Ohio's Portman and West Virginia's Shelley Moore Capito.

"This bill will not ensure access to affordable health care in West Virginia, does not do enough to combat the opioid epidemic that is devastating my state, cuts traditional Medicaid too deeply, and harms rural health care providers," Capito said in a statement laying out her complaints about the legislation.

Republican leaders could also funnel more money into tax credits to reduce the burden of premiums in Alaska's particularly expensive individual market to lock in Murkowski's vote, and respond to a range of asks from senators across the spectrum.

Sen. Marco Rubio, for example, said he's mulling his own set of proposals aimed at shoring up Florida's Medicaid and individual markets. Of course, sweeteners targeted to specific senators could sow discontent among the rest of the conference, especially those keen on preserving the bill's deficit savings. That puts further pressure on McConnell to spend his billions wisely.

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How Schumer kept Dems united on Obamacare [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Elana Schor | 06/28/2017 05:08 AM EDT

Chuck Schumer fired off a warning at a caucus-wide retreat in January: Senate Republicans will try to pick off Democrats, one by one, to join the GOP effort to dismantle Obamacare.

If that happens, Schumer said in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Democrats are finished. And so the 48-member caucus must stick together to try to save it.

With that message, relayed by a source familiar with the episode, the New York Democrat and newly minted minority leader swiftly united an often-squabbling caucus against efforts to repeal Obamacare.

Months later, it helped deliver a major, though perhaps temporary, victory Tuesday when Mitch McConnell's bid to repeal Obamacare stalled — a cause that had similarly united Republicans for the seven years since the landmark health care bill became law.

Now, as Senate GOP leaders punt a key vote on their health care bill until after the July 4 recess, Schumer faces his next challenge in his first major legislative battle as the top Senate Democrat: keeping his party and grass-roots allies mobilized for at least two more weeks, as Republicans rewrite their plan and hunt for votes.

Schumer also has to protect his moderate members up for reelection in 2018, who already have faced repeated attacks from the National Republican Senatorial Committee over their pledge to shield Obamacare from efforts to unravel it. President Donald Trump has also previewed that playbook, tweeting Tuesday that a "failed, expensive and dangerous ObamaCare" was the Democrats' legacy. Trump is already trying to blame Democrats for obstructionism for any problems with the health system.

"Complacency is not something that we can countenance. We have to continue letting people know how bad this is," Schumer told reporters on Tuesday. "Despite the fact that they have an amazing message machine... on this issue, it has sunk through. Only 17 or 16 percent of Americans support Trumpcare. They are really getting the message. We're gonna keep doing that."

Liberal activists were not always certain they could count on him to aggressively take on the GOP.

But earlier this year, Schumer quickly worked to ensure all 48 members of the Democratic Caucus — from Joe Manchin of West Virginia to Bernie Sanders of Vermont — would take a firm stance against repealing Obamacare, a position that solidified in January as efforts to dismantle the law ramped up.

"When they saw that I — in no way, shape or form — could vote to hurt every part of my state, every demographic in my state, I think that gave him the [sign] that we're going to be united on this," Manchin said.

That included any attempts from Republicans, limited as they were, to quietly reach out to Democrats on potential bipartisan health care talks.

When GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana — who had been shopping around their own Obamacare replacement proposal — asked centrist Democrats including Manchin, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Donnelly of Indiana to chat about health care, Schumer gave the moderates the green light to go ahead, as long as they stressed that complete repeal was off the table.

"Whenever we started to do what each of us do, which is try to go solve a problem, he would remind us that there would be a time for that, but first we had to be together and send a message: It's not OK to unravel the health care system," Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, one of Schumer's closest allies, said. "And he's been very effective."

A consummate dealmaker at heart, Schumer has nonetheless embraced a role leading a restive Democratic Party eager to oppose President Donald Trump at essentially every turn.

The minority leader has added Sanders and other liberal upstarts such as Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Brian Schatz of Hawaii to his broader leadership team. Merkley holds a standing meeting with liberal groups such as MoveOn.org, Our Revolution, UltraViolet and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee every other Thursday, often relaying feedback from the coalition back to Schumer.

One Senate Democratic aide said of Schumer: "I think he's realized the value of the activist communities out there."

"We have a diverse caucus and he's got just as much enthusiasm among the moderates as he does among the progressives," Schatz said. "And I think he's adapted very quickly to the age of Trump and the era of social media. These are difficult times but he's the right leader for these difficult times."

Schumer's relationship with the left wasn't always as warm as it became in the last weeks of the heated health care fight.

Liberal activists pressed Senate Democrats for a procedural blockade in protest of the GOP's secretive Obamacare repeal process, but the caucus didn't ramp up obstruction tactics until after passage of a bipartisan Russia sanctions bill. Another provocative maneuver, to shut down committee hearings, could have disrupted high profile testimonies, particularly in the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Angel Padilla, policy director at the anti-Trump group Indivisible, said activists "were really nervous" as they first urged Democratic senators to ramp up the opposition: "We thought, 'They're not going to do it because they're Democrats and they don't do this stuff.'"

After Democrats held their first Monday night talk-a-thon savaging the Republican repeal bill last week, however, activists rallied to their side — while constantly nudging for more resistance.

Democratic leaders "are learning to be receptive to where people are," said Center for American Progress Action Fund campaign director Emily Tisch Sussman. "Understandably, they still have some deference to process, particularly in the Senate versus the House. ... So they're getting there."

Still, the unity Schumer cultivated helped Democrats more easily exploit the divisions in the Republican Conference, whose members ranged from those who were fretful that dismantling Obamacare would harm their constituents to those who were frustrated that the repeal didn't go far enough.

Schumer and the Democrats were handed some gifts along the way, including a private comment made by Trump himself that the House version of Obamacare repeal was "mean." They also set out a goal of defeating the health care bill on a procedural vote to begin debate, rather than filibustering the bill with endless amendments once it got to the floor, as activists initially sought.

The New York Democrat is well aware that heeding the ornery spirit of the liberal grass roots can bring huge energy to Democrats' push to hamper Trump's agenda. Now that the GOP has postponed the repeal vote, activists are expecting him to not forget that lesson.

"The moment Democrats announced they were going to start shutting down business as usual in the Senate, health care leapt back onto the front page of newspapers, Republicans started falling off the bill," MoveOn Washington director Ben Wikler said in an interview. "We are optimistic that Democrats have seen the effects of standing and fighting and are going to keep doing it."

Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, warned that the postponed vote could prove a temporary victory if Republicans regroup after the Fourth of July recess. And he urged the Democratic base to maintain this week's level of energy and public pressure.

"I just hope that we use this time to wake more Americans up" to the consequences of Obamacare repeal, he said in an interview. "One of the biggest dangers we have right now is complacency, is silence, is people sitting on the sidelines."

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How the GOP Turned Against Medicaid [Back](#)

By Joshua Zeitz | 06/27/2017 05:41 PM EDT

In May 1965, just weeks before Lyndon Johnson signed Medicaid into law, his administration launched Head Start, an enrichment program for preschool-aged children from poor families.

The program's administrators were appalled by the poor health of their students. In Jacksonville, Florida, more than half of participating children were anemic, and between one-quarter and one-third suffered hearing and sight problems. In Beaufort County, South Carolina, 90 percent of kids suffered from hookworms and roundworms. In Boston, almost one-third of Head Start youngsters showed signs of physical or mental health illnesses.

Rotting teeth, vitamin deficiency, chronic infections—50 years ago in the United States, this was how many 3- and 4-year-olds from poor families lived.

Then came Medicaid—an afterthought tacked onto the administration's Medicare bill, and one that LBJ scarcely mentioned when he signed both measures into law. Medicaid's roots were humble, its ambitions modest. As originally conceived, the program provided health insurance to poor children, poor pregnant women and some qualifying parents. In its first year, its budget was less than \$1 billion—about \$7.7 billion in today's dollars.

Over 50 years, successive Congresses and presidential administrations vastly expanded the program's scope to cover 80 million people, or almost one-quarter of the population. [Its budget](#) last year was \$378 billion. To be sure, it has never enjoyed the popularity of Medicare, which covers a much more politically powerful constituency: seniors. But it has proven highly durable. Despite the GOP's preference for smaller government and lower taxes, for many decades, Medicaid enjoyed broad backing from Republican leaders.

That was then. Now, congressional Republicans have proposed taking a hacksaw to Medicaid—a move that will, according to the Congressional Budget Office, leave [many millions](#) of poor people uninsured. For Democrats, the Senate GOP's Better Care Reconciliation Act,

which ends Medicaid's entitlement status, is a "[monstrosity](#)." For many Republicans, it is nirvana. "You and I have been dreaming of this since I have been around, since you and I were drinking at a keg," House Speaker Paul Ryan told Rich Lowry, editor of *National Review*, earlier this year. That position isn't widely popular: Amid much public outcry, the Senate postponed its anticipated vote on BCRA this week. But it testifies to the GOP's full metamorphosis from the Party of Ronald Reagan to the Party of Ayn Rand.

Still, there's more to the story. Republicans are right to observe that Medicaid was never supposed to grow as big as it did. Its framers intended the program to help a small few who were unable to capture the full benefits of America's postwar prosperity. In their hubris, 1960s liberals assumed that a booming economy would continue to grow in perpetuity. They didn't anticipate industrial decline, growing inequality, an explosion of single-parent households or the contraction of America's unionized workforce and, with it, employer-based health insurance.

For 50 years, Medicaid proved a highly elastic Band-Aid for many of America's economic wounds. Its desecration will leave us in an unfamiliar and dangerous place.

Though many conservatives regard the Great Society as a radical exercise in wealth and income redistribution, in fact, LBJ did not generally support quantitative measures like cash transfers or a guaranteed minimum income. Instead, his administration assumed that in a robust and growing economy, qualitative measures like education, job training and access to health care and food security would ensure that every American had an opportunity to share in the nation's prosperity. For those temporarily or permanently unable to capture a share of this affluence, the government would provide compensatory assistance.

This thinking reflected conventional postwar exuberance. In recent memory, the United States had clawed itself out of the Great Depression, mobilized its economy to defeat fascism on two continents, and generated unprecedented, sustained growth. "A generation ago," observed the veteran journalist Walter Lippmann in 1964, "it would have been taken for granted that a war on poverty meant taking money away from the haves and turning it over to the have-nots ... But in this generation a revolutionary idea has taken hold. The size of the pie can be increased by intention, by organized fiscal policy and then a whole society, not just one part of it, will grow richer."

The debate over health care followed this same trajectory. Twenty years earlier, in the waning days of the New Deal era, liberals fought unsuccessfully to extend universal health coverage to all Americans. At every turn, powerful opposition from the American Medical Association and congressional Republicans stymied their efforts. But by the 1960s, it was no longer clear that they even *needed* to pass national health care. After World War II, major employers began extending unionized employees such benefits as paid vacations, annual cost-of-living raises and private health insurance. What liberals once assumed government would need to do for its working-class citizens, private industry now offered on a contingent basis. By 1960, 100 million Americans—56 percent of the country—enjoyed access to private health plans.

In light of this reality, liberals scaled back their efforts and focused on two discrete categories of people: senior citizens, who by definition did not have access to employer-based insurance, and the very poor—especially children and single mothers—who were likewise left behind. Medicare and Medicaid were quintessential Great Society programs: limited in ambition in

scope and designed to help groups of citizens who could not, by virtue of their age or condition, capture the advantages of prosperity.

The Social Security Amendments of 1965—the official name of the bill that established both programs—passed Congress with bipartisan support. In the [House](#), 65 Republicans supported the legislation; 73 GOP members joined Southern Democrats in opposing it. In the [Senate](#), Republicans voted 13 to 14 in favor of the bill. Though many conservative Republicans agreed with Reagan that Medicare represented "a short step to all the rest of socialism," a large number of moderate and liberal GOP members openly supported government health care for the oldest and poorest Americans.

In the quarter-century that followed, Medicaid expanded both in scope and size. With strong bipartisan support, Congress extended the program to include disabled adults who qualified for Supplementary Security Income and allowed states to care for those in need of psychiatric care or suffering mental disabilities. Richard Nixon signed both measures into law. Reagan tried unsuccessfully to convert Medicaid into a block-grant program in 1981—meaning it would no longer be funded according to the number of people who qualified for it (much like other entitlement programs, including Medicare or the federal home mortgage deduction). Instead, it would receive a fixed level of funding. If need surpassed available funding, states would be forced to cut enrollment or services. But Reagan later changed course. With overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress, he signed a series of bills that sharply raised the income eligibility level for women and children, created new categories of mandatory or optional coverage, and made it easier for people who lost eligibility because of rising incomes to remain in the program during a transition period.

All told, the number of Medicaid recipients rose from 4 million in 1966—the year of its inception—to 35.8 million in 1992. Most of that expansion occurred under Republican presidents and with the strong support—or at least consent—of GOP members of Congress.

Indeed, Republicans didn't set their sights on Medicaid until the mid-1990s, when Newt Gingrich's conservative revolution turned the party's caucus to the hard right. That trend accelerated during the presidency of George W. Bush, as the GOP attempted—to no avail—to privatize Social Security and convert Medicaid into a block-grant program. Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, which vastly expanded Medicaid, and the advent of the Tea Party, Republicans have existed in a perpetual state of war with Medicaid.

But it wasn't always so.

Medicaid grew by congressional and presidential fiat, but also by virtue of sweeping economic change.

It was originally intended to serve a small population of individuals unable to avail themselves of America's seemingly boundless prosperity. But after 1973 the economy began to sputter. Military spending on the Vietnam War, as well as a series of supply shocks in the food and energy sectors, generated a decade of runaway inflation. Inflation was accompanied, in turn, by rising unemployment, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which had for many years had formed the backbone of America's prosperous, postwar middle class. Increasingly, it seemed that compensatory measures would not help poor people in urban ghettos, declining coal towns in Appalachia, or post-industrial cities capture prosperity that simply no longer

existed.

During the decade in which John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson governed, the American economy expanded at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent each year. The country has not seen growth like this since. When Donald Trump promised to deliver 4 percent annual growth, one expert surmised that it would be a "[monumental task](#)" to achieve anything near those results.

To be sure, in the years since LBJ left office, America has experienced periods of sustained economic expansion. But the blessings of limited economic growth have accrued principally to the wealthiest Americans. Between World War II and 1973, real wages grew steadily at an annual rate of between 2 and 3 percent, enabling millions of American workers to enjoy unprecedented upward mobility. After 1973, average wage growth slowed dramatically. Over the next three decades, household wages remained essentially flat, but only because more women entered the workforce even as men's wages fell. Families with two wage earners were just able to maintain parity and then some; families headed by single parents fell behind.

The problem is that the structure of the American family has [changed markedly](#) since 1965, when [roughly 5 percent](#) of all children were born out of wedlock. Today, [roughly 40 percent](#) of all children—including 67 percent of black children, 25 percent of white children and 42 percent of Latino children—are born into single-parent households.

At the same time, record-setting numbers of working-age adults have slipped out of the workforce; they are neither employed nor seeking employment, a trend that has alarmed conservatives and liberals alike. And those who are employed are much less likely to belong to unions or to enjoy access to defined benefits pensions and health insurance. From 1999 to 2014, [the percentage](#) of non-elderly Americans enrolled in employer-based insurance fell from 67 percent to 56 percent. Only 37 percent of persons living below the poverty line even have access to such coverage.

Medicaid was designed, and by increments expanded, to help certain disadvantaged groups: struggling single parents and their children, disabled workers, impoverished older people not yet eligible for Medicare, the underemployed, the working poor. But 50 years ago, no one expected the number of people in these categories to total one-quarter of the nation. It is a testament to the program's elasticity that it has been able to paper over the inequities of the modern American economy for so long.

Medicaid is an entitlement program and has been since its inception. Its funding varies depending on how many people qualify for it at any given time. In this sense, it is countercyclical. During economic downturns, more people need it, and more people receive it. [Over two-thirds](#) of its spending benefits children, the elderly, or the blind and disabled. It [covers](#) costs for 64 percent of seniors in nursing homes and almost half of all births. It keeps afloat hundreds of [rural hospitals](#), whose clients are disproportionately poor and elderly.

We don't need to guess what will happen when many millions of qualifying poor and elderly people are denied access to Medicaid. We already know. We need look no further than the first class of Head Start students—3- and 4-year-olds with worms and anemia. Or elderly citizens who testified before the Senate in 1959—seven years before the launch of Medicare and Medicaid. One retiree from Tampa, Florida, wondered what would happen if he or his

wife should require long-term care. "I will have to seek some charity institution and submit to the humiliation of what they call a necessity, and pronounce to the whole world that I am only a pauper, a beggar," he bitterly informed the committee. That was what happened when elderly people who worked hard all their lives exhausted their resources and couldn't afford a nursing home.

To be sure, Medicaid has grown far beyond its original mandate. Perhaps that's OK, given the structural changes to the U.S. economy since 1965. Or maybe we should devise a better way to ensure that people who are struggling economically can see a doctor or receive necessary care. But that's not the discussion we're having. The Senate bill is the *Fahrenheit 451* of health care. It isn't an attempt to insure more people—or the same number of people—with greater efficiency or better outcomes. It throws people off insurance to pay for tax cuts benefiting the wealthiest Americans, as Republican skeptics like Maine Sen. Susan Collins have noted.

The problem isn't simply that the Republican Party opposes higher taxes or state-sponsored health programs. Some of its leaders can't even get their heads around the idea of *insurance*—the means by which people mitigate risk, together. In the year 2017, GOP members of Congress honestly [wonder aloud](#) why men should be compelled to buy into plans that cover prenatal services. Shared risk and shared reward: It's a concept so simple—so fundamental to living in a society—that they teach it in preschool. It's why women who have children pay into insurance plans that also benefit men who develop testicular cancer. But today's Republican Party has grown radically anti-social in outlook. It no longer resembles in the slightest degree the party of Everett Dirksen, Hugh Scott or Norris Cotton—Jacob Javits, Clifford Case or Margaret Chase Smith. All voted for Medicaid in 1965.

Working from a blank slate a half century ago, Republicans and Democrats created Medicaid, together. Over the next 25 years, they expanded it, together.

If Republicans dismantle the program this week, they will do so alone. It will then fall to Democrats to pick up the pieces. When they do, they may no longer feel bound by economic assumptions that guided postwar liberals—assumptions about a forever growing economic pie that no longer reflect our diminished national economic reality. In devising their solution to the problem, Democrats may propose—and the electorate might endorse—measures far more radical than conservatives can possibly imagine.

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Trump: Obamacare repeal bill 'will be great, if we get it done' [Back](#)

By Madeline Conway | 06/27/2017 04:54 PM EDT

The Senate Republican bill to repeal Obamacare "will be great, if we get it done," President Donald Trump told GOP lawmakers shortly after party leaders delayed a vote on the legislation today.

"This will be great, if we get it done," Trump told senators gathered in the White House for a meeting about the stalled health care effort. "And if we don't get it done, it's just going to be

something that we're not going to like, and that's OK and I understand that very well."

"But I think we have a chance to do something very, very important for the public, very, very important for the people of our country that we love," he added, before asking reporters to leave the meeting.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) had intended to bring the proposal to repeal the Affordable Care Act, former President Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement, to the Senate floor as early as today for a procedural vote. But several conservative and moderate Republicans came out in opposition to the bill Monday and today, and enough said they opposed the key procedural vote to start debate on the measure to stop the overall momentum.

Republican leaders now say they intend to return to health care following the Senate's July Fourth recess.

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Pro-Trump group pulls ads criticizing Heller over Obamacare [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 06/27/2017 06:22 PM EDT

A pro-Trump outside group will pull its ads assailing GOP Sen. Dean Heller over his opposition to the now stalled Obamacare repeal bill — a move that follows massive backlash from senior Republicans who called on the organization to stop attacking the Nevadan.

America First Policies had begun airing TV and radio ads on Tuesday savaging Heller for his planned 'No' vote, with spots charging that Heller had broken his "promise" to voters that he would dismantle Obamacare — a stunning attack on a member of the president's own party and the most vulnerable Republican up for re-election in 2018.

But on Tuesday evening — just a few hours after the TV and radio ads went up and after Senate Republicans tossed plans to vote on the legislation this week — the group, which is staffed with several of the president's top campaign aides, decided to stop running the ads, two senior Republicans familiar with the decision told POLITICO.

An America First Policies official said the decision followed Heller's decision to appear at the White House with other Republicans on Tuesday, arguing that it was evidence that he was open to negotiating on the bill.

The purpose of launching the campaign, this official argued, was to pressure Heller into coming to the negotiating table — which he'd now done.

Anger over the TV ads became a topic of discussion at the White House meeting, with Heller himself raising them as a point of concern, according to a spokeswoman for the Nevada senator.

"Let's just say that I would say it was maybe a background issue" during the meeting, said South Dakota Sen. John Thune.

Since the group announced the offensive on Friday, it has come under fire from Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who privately fumed that the attack would make it harder to get Heller's support. McConnell's political team also reached out to the group, pleading with them to stop the commercials.

A number of senior Republicans, including former top officials at the National Republican Senatorial Committee, also spoke out against the barrage, saying it would make Heller's already difficult re-election even tougher.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Emboldened industry lobbyists try to scale back Medicaid cuts [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn and Paul Demko | 06/27/2017 07:08 PM EDT

Hospitals, doctors and nursing homes have one last chance to shape a Republican bill to repeal and replace Obamacare they say will hurt millions of old, poor and sick Americans — and their own bottom lines.

After being on the sidelines for much of the repeal debate, the groups see an opening in the meltdown of the Senate health care bill. They're particularly worried about the legislation's proposed deep cuts to Medicaid, the country's largest insurance program, which covers 74 million people.

Medicaid "was established to prevent our country's most vulnerable citizens from being left behind, and it's truly become a lifeline for millions of Americans," said Rick Pollack, CEO of the American Hospital Association, during a call with reporters on Tuesday. "Even Republican senators are sounding alarm bells over the harm these deep cuts would cause for vulnerable patients in their states."

A coalition of the nation's largest provider groups is airing ads across 12 states this week linking the Senate bill to worse care for millions, including children, the disabled and the elderly. Health care lobbyists are targeting shaky senators both in D.C. and in their home states, hammering home the idea that Medicaid cuts could skyrocket charity care and force hundreds of small and rural hospitals out of business. And on Monday, the trade group representing nearly 14,000 nursing homes broke its silence to deliver a scorching indictment of Senate Republicans' bid to remake Medicaid.

"We genuinely believe that if the senators had any idea of the extent of the impact on [nursing homes] in the country that they'd never be proposing this," American Health Care Association President Mark Parkinson said. "If they adopt this bill, the future of long-term care as we know it will be very different."

Insurers are taking a less combative stance, but they're also warning that the cuts would have grave consequences. The Association for Community Affiliated Plans has released an ad

criticizing the Senate plan that it says will run during MSNBC's "Morning Joe" program. Last week, a group of 10 major Medicaid plans sent a letter to Senate leaders blasting the GOP repeal bill, arguing that it would cripple state budgets and hurt efforts to combat the opioid crisis.

"If the goal is to reform the Medicaid program and reduce costs, there are different ways of going about it than just taking a hatchet to the budget," said John Baackes, CEO of L.A. Care Health Plan, one of the signatories to the letter.

The lobbying effort still pales in comparison to the scorched-earth tactics of the health insurance industry that derailed former President Bill Clinton's proposed health care overhaul more than two decades ago. But the effort has been bolstered by the Congressional Budget Office's projection that the bill would leave 15 million more Medicaid-eligible Americans uninsured over a decade, and cut federal payments to states by a quarter.

Soon after the CBO report was released, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) vowed to oppose the bill unless it was made more generous. Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), whose state expanded Medicaid under Obamacare, previously came out against the legislation over its cuts to the program.

That leaves Senate Republican leaders in a bind: If they soften the Medicaid cuts to placate moderates, they're likely to antagonize conservative hardliners. That dynamic is making it difficult to arrive at a compromise that can attract 50 votes.

Senate Republicans kept such disagreements out of the headlines for weeks by drafting their repeal plan behind closed doors, vowing that it would be superior to the House version. But as soon as the draft legislation became public, those fissures came into view — and health care lobbyists were waiting to exploit the divisions.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell bowed to that reality Tuesday in announcing that Republicans would continue to work on the bill and not hold a vote before the July 4 recess — a deadline that he'd previously indicated was non-negotiable.

"Legislation of this complexity almost always take longer than anybody would hope," McConnell told reporters. "But we're going to press on."

The uncertainty is likely to further embolden industry lobbyists. Even before Tuesday's announcement, they were expressing confidence that they could prevail on key expansion-state senators in Alaska, Arizona, West Virginia and Ohio.

"This is not fine wine," said one lobbyist, describing the unhappiness with the bill among Republican senators. "It does not get better with age."

Hospital groups are working closely with expansion-state governors, including Ohio's John Kasich, Arizona's Doug Ducey and Nevada's Brian Sandoval, to exert pressure on senators.

The CBO score projecting coverage losses and deficit savings gave the industry groups some sense of how much they can ask for.

"Having the Senate bill provides a level of clarity we didn't have before," said Tom Nickels, AHA's executive vice president for government relations and public policy. Nickels described the industry as being in "purgatory" between hammering the House bill and trying to

anticipate the Senate bill.

The Senate plan notably went further than the House bill in curbing future Medicaid spending. The upper chamber would have eventually limited Medicaid spending growth per beneficiary to the consumer price index, which is far below the current growth rate.

"No element of our health care system has come close to CPI cost growth, certainly in my lifetime," said Ceci Connolly, CEO of the Alliance of Community Health Plans. "That's an unrealistic aspiration."

That's one area where Republicans might scale back the cuts. But it's tough to see how they're going to significantly reduce the CBO projection of 15 million fewer insured while continuing to scrap Obamacare's Medicaid expansion.

Already, Senate Republicans have given up on making radical changes to the individual market. Their plan calls for subsidies to be available to individuals with incomes up to 350 percent of the federal poverty level, down from 400 percent under Obamacare.

That's a far cry from seven years of campaign promises to completely dismantle the federal health care law. Despite the challenge forging consensus, Senate Republicans insist that they'll eventually coalesce around a repeal package that fulfills that goal.

"You're dealing with people's lives with health care," Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) told reporters Tuesday, after it was announced that the repeal vote would be delayed. "I'd rather do it right than do it fast. But obviously you can't wait forever."

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Poll: Fewer than 4-in-10 voters back GOP health bill [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard | 06/28/2017 06:18 AM EDT

Just 38 percent of voters approve of the Republican plan to repeal and replace Obamacare, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll conducted before Senate leaders pulled the latest version of their bill in an effort to win over more GOP votes.

That's fewer than the 45 percent who disapprove of the Republican health care bill. Another 17 percent say they don't know or have no opinion of the bill.

Six in 10 Republican voters approve of the bill, but a quarter of members of President Donald Trump's party disapprove. The numbers among Democrats are a mirror image: Twenty-five percent approve, and 64 percent disapprove. But independents tilt against the measure: Only 30 percent approve, and 43 percent disapprove.

The intensity gap is on the side of the bill's opponents: Thirty-one percent of voters overall "strongly" disapprove of the bill, roughly double the 16 percent who "strongly" approve.

The results are similar to voters' views of the health care bill that recently passed the House —

though the wording of the poll question was changed in this new survey to reflect the Senate's consideration of its own measure.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday that the chamber would not take up the bill this week as previously planned. The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll was conducted June 22-24 — prior to both the Kentucky senator's Tuesday announcement and the release on Monday of the Congressional Budget Office's report on the bill's effects.

Other measures in the poll also point to the bill's challenges. More voters think the bill will make the nation's health care system worse (41 percent) than believe will make it better (29 percent). More think it will increase costs for their families (42 percent) than think it will decrease those costs (21 percent). Thirty-eight percent think the bill will hurt the quality of health care, and only 26 percent think quality would be improved.

Though the poll was conducted before the CBO released its projection that 22 million fewer Americans would have health insurance if the Senate bill became law, the report confirms voters' beliefs: Forty-six percent say they expect the bill would decrease the number of Americans with health insurance, while only 21 percent believe more people would be insured.

As Senate Republicans attempt to recalibrate the bill to rein in moderate and conservative defectors, voters are divided on the scope of the effort. Thirty-eight percent say the legislation goes too far in making changes to the health care system, and another 23 percent say it doesn't go far enough.

It's a split that exists within the GOP, as well.

"The tension between moderate Republicans and hard-liners that is playing out in the Senate is mirrored in the polling," said Kyle Dropp, Morning Consult co-founder and chief research officer. "While 31 percent of Republican voters think the Senate bill doesn't go far enough in making changes to the health care system, 18 percent thinks it goes too far."

Republicans in both chambers have focused on advancing health care legislation solely with votes in their own conferences, but the POLITICO/Morning Consult poll shows more voters trust Democrats to handle the issue. Forty-six percent of voters trust Democrats in Congress more to handle health care, while only a third trust Republicans more.

President Donald Trump remains far more popular with GOP voters than the Republican health care bill: 80 percent of Republicans approve of the job Trump is doing. But Trump's overall approval rating is still underwater: 45 percent of voters approve of his job performance, and 51 percent disapprove.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll surveyed 1,994 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

*More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents —
Toplines: <http://politi.co/2sO62tj> | Crosstabs: <http://politi.co/2rYF3II>*

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Trumka: 'We will not relent' in fight against GOP health care bill [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 06/28/2017 11:13 AM EDT

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said today he will keep mobilizing forces to kill the GOP health care bill.

In a conference call with reporters, Trumka said the AFL-CIO is pouring resources into five key states — Ohio, Alaska, West Virginia, Nevada and Maine — to sway on-the-fence Republicans. The efforts include TV and social media ads, public rallies, town halls and phone drives to get voters to call senate offices.

"We will not relent until it's dead and gone," Trumka said.

Trumka took credit, in part, for eroding support in the Senate and delaying a vote on the bill.

"Working people brought this bill to a screeching halt," Trumka said. "We mobilized in record time, and we're not about to step down."

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Why I'm Not Betting Against Mitch McConnell [Back](#)

By Jeff Greenfield | 06/28/2017 01:34 PM EDT

If you're planning to watch Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell cajole a clutch of disaffected Republican colleagues into casting a "yes" vote for the moribund health care bill, arm yourself with a scorecard and calculator. With nearly \$200 billion to allocate—assuming that effort doesn't infuriate his more conservative colleagues—you can expect a blossoming of catchy catchphrases to describe the efforts of a wily negotiator whose capacity for pulling legislative rabbits out of hats should never be underestimated.

Remember the "Cornhusker Kickback," the derisive term Republicans used in 2010 to describe the goodies that Democrats bestowed on Nebraska to win over their foot-dragging senator, Ben Nelson? Well, we've already seen the "Aleutian Advantage," aimed at the high cost of medical care in Lisa Murkowski's Alaska. Soon we may see the "Badger Bestowal" (for Wisconsin's Ron Johnson), the "Buckeye Benefaction" (for Ohio's Rob Portman), the "Pine Tree Premium" (for Maine's Susan Collins) and the "Sunflower Subsidy" (for Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran of Kansas).

The run-up to the actual vote (assuming McConnell does not fold his cards and give up) is going to feature running tabs on every cable news channel and political website, along with daily prediction models and betting odds. With that kind of frenzied coverage, it's hard to

remember that there are some fundamental underpinnings to this fight that are worth keeping in the front of your mind:

1. The Vote Will Be Close, Because That's the New Normal.

Once upon a time, major social legislation was the product of bipartisan consensus. In 1935, Social Security was passed by votes of 372-33 in the House and 77-6 in the Senate. Thirty years later, Medicare passed 313-115 in the House and 68-21 in the Senate; a plurality of House Republicans and 13 GOP senators voted "aye." But over the past quarter-century, a very different pattern has emerged. President Bill Clinton's tax and budget proposals passed by a single vote in the Senate—Vice President Al Gore broke a 50-50 tie—and with a 219-213 vote in the House. George W. Bush's prescription drug plan passed 220-215 in the House, but only after GOP leaders held the vote open for hours. Barack Obama's stimulus proposal won exactly 60 votes in the Senate—the bare minimum to avoid a filibuster—and his Affordable Health Care Act won the same 60-vote minimum. And the House's bid to "repeal and replace Obamacare" passed earlier this year with 217 votes—one more than the bare minimum, due to vacancies. That bill was nearly defeated because of the polarization of the parties, and in particular the threat of primaries within the Republican Party by foes of anything that smacks of government regulation or taxes. Now, competing cross-pressures on Republican conservatives and moderates all but assure that McConnell will have almost no margin for error.

However ...

2. There's Enormous Incentive Not to Let the President Lose a Key Vote

In every one of those key votes, the president prevailed. Why? Because, when the vote is that close, no member of Congress wants to be seen as the person who inflicted a poetical defeat on a president of his or her own party. Back in 1993, then-Senator Bob Kerrey—no fan of Clinton's character or policies—decided at the last minute to support Clinton's budget proposal, telling him: "I could not and should not cast a vote that brings down your presidency." Further, these reluctant party members have often been rewarded with significant concessions. Clinton abandoned any effort at an energy tax to win over suburban Democrats; Obama's health care plan bent heavily toward insurance companies to help win the support of Senator Joe Lieberman, whose state of Connecticut was home to many insurance companies. At Lieberman's insistence, the bill also dropped the whole idea of a "public option," a step toward a single-payer system dear to the hearts of more progressive Democrats.)

And in this case, concessions are even more likely because ...

3. "Winning" Matters Way More Than What's Actually in the Bill

There's a story about a spectator at a bullfight who sees a vendor selling "Hot Meat Pies." When he bites into one, it's cold, doughy and meatless. When he complains, the vendor says: "No, no— 'Hot Meat Pie' is just the *name* of the pie."

That is where the Republicans are today. They have spent seven years promising their base that they will "repeal and replace Obamacare." At this point, that is all that matters. To quote political analyst Vince Lombardi, "Winning isn't everything, it's the *only* thing." So, if it takes a substantial increase in Medicaid funding—if it takes firm protection for people with preexisting conditions—or, alternatively, if it takes letting states permit grossly inadequate

insurance policies—that is what will be in the bill. The one likely invulnerable provision is the massive cut in taxes for the affluent; abandoning that would be akin to the Roman Catholic Church declaring that the Trinity is just a suggestion. You can see this mentality in a recent [column](#) by conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt, who chastised wayward Republican senators that "to vote 'no' on whatever compromise arrives is to express contempt for the Republican Party as a whole."

Complicating the negotiating is something we have never seen before, namely ...

4. The President Has No Idea What's in the Bill and No Idea Whether He'd Back It If He Did Know

In every recent case, presidents were fully engaged in the struggles to shape these bills. Clinton and Obama were policy wonks; George W. Bush, while often painted as detached when it came to details, was a full partner in the struggle to get his prescription drug plan through the House. Trump, on the other hand, is on record as declaring that 2 plus 2 equals 5, or 7, or 86. By that I mean he has promised to fully protect Medicaid, lower premiums, decrease deductibles and increase benefits, all at a lower cost. His familiarity with the process can be gauged by the fact that he a) threw a victory party after the House passed the bill, and b) later declared the bill as "mean" and "a piece of s—." During the first round of House negotiations, my colleague Tim Alberta [reported](#), the president had trouble cutting a deal "because he lacked familiarity with the legislation itself"; this week, the *New York Times* reports that the president seems not to have understood that the Senate bill's centerpiece is a massive tax cut.

It is not too much to say that if someone suggested he "repeal and replace Obamacare" by taking the Medicare law and striking "over 65" from it, Trump would embrace the idea with enthusiasm. The problem for McConnell and his colleagues, then, is that the only assurance they have that the president will not undercut whatever deal they strike is that he has the same focus on detail as Governor William J. LePetomane in "Blazing Saddles."

Taken together, these underlying realities suggest that, if you're betting on history to repeat itself, McConnell will get 50 votes for his bill. But betting on history these past two years has proven to be a fool's wager; if McConnell does manage to pass the bill, it will be the legislative equivalent of squaring a circle.

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Senate GOP seethes at Trump impulsiveness [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt and Josh Dawsey | 06/27/2017 09:06 PM EDT

Top GOP officials and senators say White House chaos and impulsiveness are crippling efforts to expand the Republican Senate majority in 2018, unraveling long-laid plans and needlessly jeopardizing incumbents.

There's a widespread sense of exasperation with the president, interviews with nearly two dozen senior Republicans reveal, and deep frustration with an administration they believe

doesn't fully grasp what it will take to preserve the narrow majority or add to it.

The most recent flash point involves Nevada Sen. Dean Heller, who was attacked by a White House-sanctioned outside group after announcing his opposition to the now stalled Obamacare repeal bill. Heller, the most endangered GOP incumbent up for reelection in 2018, was initially targeted with a surprise \$1 million digital, TV and radio assault — an act of political retaliation that stunned senators and other top GOP officials.

The TV and radio commercials, produced by America First Policies — which is staffed by a number of Trump's top campaign aides — accused Heller of refusing to keep his "promise" to dismantle Obamacare.

The offensive reflected Trump's mounting frustration with Capitol Hill Republicans who refuse to advance his stymied legislative agenda and was designed to send a loud message that it's time to get on board. Yet it infuriated Majority Leader Mitch McConnell himself, who privately fumed that it would make it harder to get Heller's support for the legislation. Some McConnell allies reached out to the organization directly to express their displeasure and to plead with it to cease the attacks, reasoning that it could badly hurt Heller's already challenging reelection bid.

"I share the administration's frustration on members wavering on repeal, but the answer is not to attack the most vulnerable member of the conference," said Rob Jesmer, a former National Republican Senatorial Committee executive director.

By Tuesday evening, after several senators complained directly to the president about the anti-Heller ads during a meeting earlier in the day at the White House, [the group decided to stop airing the spots](#). Heller himself brought up the commercials during the meeting, a spokesman for the senator confirmed. (An America First Policies official insisted that the group pulled the commercials because Heller showed up to the White House discussion, arguing that his presence demonstrated he was willing to negotiate on the bill.)

"[Halting the ads] was a responsible decision that I'm hopeful leads to a good working relationship going forward," said Josh Holmes, a former McConnell chief of staff.

McConnell has also been stewing about another race: the Alabama Senate primary, which has turned into a personal priority for the majority leader. For weeks, McConnell and top political aides had been asking the Republican National Committee to release coordinated funding to help newly appointed Sen. Luther Strange, who is trying to fend off a large field of GOP primary opponents in a late summer special election. The NRSC and another McConnell-allied group, Senate Leadership Fund, are already aggressively boosting the Alabama senator.

Yet after weeks of requests, no RNC expenditures have been granted, and Senate Republican strategists began to wonder whether the requests had simply been lost in a bureaucratic logjam — or worse, whether the anti-establishment president was reluctant to have the national party wade into a contested primary.

The lack of commitment caused so much consternation that McConnell and Strange brought the matter directly to the White House, asking for the administration to approve of the funding. Strange has talked directly to Trump about it, according to two sources briefed on the matter. McConnell personally lobbied chief of staff Reince Priebus, a former RNC chief of staff who remains plugged into the committee's operations.

As of Tuesday morning, however, according to a RNC official, the national party still hadn't given final approval.

White House spokespersons did not respond to a request for comment.

In Arizona, where Republican Sen. Jeff Flake, a Trump critic, is facing a difficult reelection, Trump-fueled primary worries are intensifying. Prior to the 2016 election, Trump vented openly about Flake's criticism of him — at one point, backstage before a campaign rally in Arizona, telling top aides animatedly that he wanted to find a Republican opponent to challenge the senator in 2018, according to two people familiar with the exchange. The administration's anger at Flake has flared anew amid his criticism of the president's decision to fire former FBI Director James Comey.

Flake has already drawn a Trump-friendly primary opponent in former state Sen. Kelli Ward, and two other allies of the president — Trump 2016 campaign COO Jeff DeWit and former state GOP chair Robert Graham — could also try to unseat him.

Republican officials say they expected some turbulence as they learned to coexist with a president who is, at heart, a political newcomer who is relatively unfamiliar with congressional politics. But even so, the wild unpredictability of the Trump White House has led to considerable consternation and rattled a GOP firmament that views next year's Senate election landscape as a golden opportunity to expand the majority.

"No committee likes instability, and it appears they're creating instability," said Rob Collins, who as NRSC executive director during the 2014 cycle helped to lead the successful GOP push to seize control of the upper chamber.

Appearing before a small group of donors and activists recently, NRSC Chairman Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) expressed concern about how the political environment is making it harder to get candidates into races and said the wooing of potential Senate candidates was going slower than expected, said one person who was present for the private gathering.

Potential contenders, he said, were deeply uncertain about whether to enter races given the challenging political conditions and worried that things could get worse.

An NRSC spokeswoman said "our recruitment efforts are going as planned" and disputed the notion that Gardner had concerns about Trump or the political environment.

"Chairman Gardner, who didn't get into his Senate race until March of 2014, knows firsthand that candidates do not need to announce early in a cycle to win," said Katie Martin, the spokeswoman.

Trump has already complicated the GOP's 2018 candidate recruitment plans, dating back to just before the inauguration, when the president nominated Montana Republican Ryan Zinke to the Interior secretary post. McConnell had been pursuing Zinke for months, viewing the congressman as a prized recruit who could defeat Democratic Sen. Jon Tester in 2018, and had met with him to discuss a possible race. Top party strategists had reviewed polling data suggesting that Zinke would start out the contest in a virtual dead heat with the incumbent.

When he found out that Trump was about to tap Zinke for the Cabinet post, McConnell launched a late effort to get him to reconsider. He phoned several White House officials and

explained to them that Zinke was a top prospect in the Montana race, one whom Senate Republicans had been after for months, said one person familiar with the calls. It didn't work.

McConnell had been pushing the White House to appoint a pair of red-state Democratic incumbents up for reelection in 2018, West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin and North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, to Cabinet positions — a gambit that would have improved the GOP's odds of seizing their seats.

Yet Trump ignored the advice. While Manchin and Heitkamp were invited to Trump Tower — something they were happy to publicize to their conservative constituents — neither was tapped. In the months since, Manchin, who faces the hurdle of running for reelection in a state that Trump won by over 40 percentage points, has eagerly presented himself as something of a White House ally — a rare Democrat who is willing to work with the president.

The image of Manchin being close to the president — fed by a photo of Manchin seated next to Trump in the White House, and by the tales the senator tells of his phone conversations with the commander in chief — have created headaches for the NRSC, which has planned to target the West Virginia seat aggressively. At the committee's Capitol Hill offices, said one senior Republican, discussion about how to contend with the perception that Manchin is working with the president has come up in meetings.

For Senate Republicans, not everything about the Trump White House has been negative. Among party operatives, there is extensive praise reserved for Vice President Mike Pence, who has emerged as the administration's de facto ambassador to Republicans planning for next year's races.

Pence has begun promoting the party's Senate contenders. During a stop in West Virginia, Pence asked to take a photo with GOP Rep. Evan Jenkins, who is challenging Manchin, and then posted the picture on his Twitter feed, accompanied by the caption: "Enjoyed seeing Rep. @EvanJenkinsWV while visiting Charleston, WV today. Thanks to his leadership we will Make America Great Again."

"There is nothing more powerful than a fully engaged and fully functional White House," said Jesmer. "One that is using its political arm to sell its agenda on TV and online. One that is using the prestige of Air Force One and Air Force Two to garner significant grass roots and earned media. And one that has a coordinated messaging strategy with allies on the Hill, the Cabinet and stakeholders."

For now, the GOP will have to be content with the president's efforts in Florida, one of the swing states he won in 2016. During a recent visit, Trump began a speech by noting that he wanted the state's Republican governor, Rick Scott, to run for Senate in 2018. It was an unexpected move, given that other Republicans might be interested in seeking the seat and because presidents typically don't weigh in on primaries at such an early stage in the election cycle.

"I hope he runs for Senate," he said, before interrupting himself. "I know I'm not supposed to say that."

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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House Republicans want to cut funding for administration's telecom arm [Back](#)

By John Hendel | 06/28/2017 03:59 PM EDT

House Republicans want to slash the fiscal 2018 budget for the Commerce Department's telecom and tech arm even more than the Trump administration budget would. [Legislative text](#) unveiled this afternoon would allocate \$30 million for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, about a quarter less than what it's received in recent years and \$6 million less than what the White House suggested in its proposal.

NTIA is the administration branch responsible for helping manage wireless spectrum owned by federal government agencies such as the Department of Defense. It's also run several initiatives to spur broadband deployment and helped get the FirstNet public safety broadband network off the ground. The agency recently described in its [budget justification](#) many tasks it would not be able to perform even if only funded at \$36 million.

The GOP measure would also forbid "NASA and the Office of Science and Technology Policy [from] engaging in bilateral activities with China unless authorized or certified via procedures established in the bill," the House Appropriations Commerce, Science and Justice subcommittee noted. It would allocate \$865 million for the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a cut of \$87 million from the current fiscal year but \$140 million more than the White House recommendation.

The subcommittee plans to take up the measure for markup Thursday.

Republicans also unveiled the Financial Services funding bill, which would cut the FCC budget from about \$340 to \$322 million, on par with what the White House requested. The Financial Services subcommittee will mark up that bill on Thursday as well.

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Business associations to Congress: Hurry up on tax reform [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 06/28/2017 03:25 PM EDT

Some of Washington's most influential business lobbies just gave Congress a clear message on tax reform: Hurry up.

"In the short-term, we urge you to press forward with the adoption of a Fiscal Year 2018 concurrent budget resolution including reconciliation instructions that would aid the swift passage of comprehensive, pro-growth tax reform," the groups wrote in a [rare joint letter](#) addressed to leaders of both parties in both chambers of Congress.

Signing on to the letter were the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the

National Association of Manufacturers and the National Federation of Independent Business.

Tax reform advocates have become increasingly restive about the pace of the effort, particularly with Congress and the White House bogged down on repealing and replacing Obamacare.

"We understand that the Senate is actively considering health care legislation, but it is important that the House start the budget process now, so that reconciliation instructions will be available to move tax reform legislation expeditiously," the groups wrote.

"The federal tax code has weighed America down for far too long. You now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to substantially improve America's economy, but accomplishing this task may well require the special legislative procedures attendant to a budget resolution's reconciliation instructions," they added.

House lawmakers have reached an impasse over the level of spending cuts to include in instructions for reconciliation, a budget maneuver that Republicans plan to use to avert a Democratic filibuster in the Senate. Conservatives, including House Budget Committee Chair [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.), are pushing for spending cuts to be tied to the reconciliation instructions House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) wants to use for tax reform.

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Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 3:53:10 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 10/03/2017 03:50 PM EDT

ON DEFENSE: Both chambers will take key votes this week to push their budget resolutions closer to reconciliation. And that laser-sharp focus on tax reform is putting self-described fiscal conservatives in a tight spot.

Even OMB Director Mick Mulvaney is now talking about the "[need to have new deficits](#)." And Sen. [Bob Corker](#), who's taken so much heat for the Senate's \$1.5 trillion tax outline, has begun his own damage-control operation — telling anyone who will listen that he won't back a plan that would add "one penny" to the deficit.

Who's the judge? But Corker has also made clear that he won't be making his final decision based on the tallies of the two official scorekeepers: CBO and JCT. Instead, he's sticking by the well-worn GOP argument that only a dynamic score (one that factors in potential economic growth) will matter. That viewpoint doesn't translate to reconciliation, however, because the Byrd rule makes dynamic scoring difficult (if not impossible) to use. With that in mind, folks like Corker contend that the \$1.5 trillion in deficit-growing wiggle room is just a necessary legislative fallacy. "This is a vehicle to get through parliamentary issues, period," he said.

Pay no mind: The Senate Budget Committee will spend two full days marking up its fiscal 2018 plan this week (not that Corker thinks you should care). "Look, the budget itself is always a joke. It's a total joke, it's not worth the paper that it's written on," he said. "To spend more than five minutes looking at the budget is like spending five minutes too much time on it."

Timing: The Senate's budget is expected to make it to the floor after next week's recess, Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said today. The Senate will be out for the week following Columbus Day.

GOOD TUESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc(s) of the day — CBO [estimates](#) that the House GOP's bill to ban most abortions after 20 weeks could cost as much as \$335 million over 10 years. The bill, [H.R. 36 \(115\)](#), the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, would result in additional births and lead to increased spending on Medicaid.

Two House Democrats [wrote](#) this week to the Interior Department's inspector general, calling for an investigation into how often Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife has joined him on taxpayer-funded charter or military flights. More from [Esther Whieldon](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — The average single parent paid [\\$12,536 in taxes](#) in 2015. A single person with no children paid an average of \$17,387 that year.

EDUCATION

RENEWING DeVOS' SECURITY CONTRACT: An agreement governing Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' protective detail — which is provided around the clock by the U.S. Marshals Service — was just renewed for fiscal 2018, Caitlin Emma [reports](#). And an Education Department official says \$6.54 million is the "high water mark" the department doesn't plan to exceed for those expenses over the next year. (DeVos' setup is unique since Education secretaries are usually protected by the department's own small security force.)

DISASTER AID

A FEW MORE WEEKS: The White House is expected to formally request its next funding package for hurricane recovery in "mid-October," McConnell told reporters today, just after hosting a meeting with representatives from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

OFF SCRIPT DOWN SOUTH: "I hate to tell you Puerto Rico, but you've thrown our budget a little out of whack," Trump told local officials after touching down this afternoon on the hurricane-ravaged island, where he's now face to face with the "politically motivated ingrates" he has slammed on Twitter over the last few days, Matthew Nussbaum [notes](#). While Trump continues to say the federal government's response has been stellar, local officials — like U.S. Virgin Islands Del. [Stacey Plaskett](#) — contend that there's a "disconnect" between what the Puerto Rican people need and what the feds are providing, Jacqueline Klimas and Colin Wilhelm [report](#).

WIRELESS WORKAROUND: At the FCC, Chairman Ajit Pai is asking commissioners to quickly approve up to \$76.9 billion in funding flexibility to repair wireline and wireless communication networks in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, John Hendel [reports](#). The order would let companies use money from the commission's universal service program fund, typically reserved for funding broadband deployment in hard-to-reach areas.

BUDGET

CALLING HER SHOT: Two days before her budget resolution lands on the floor, Rep. [Diane Black](#) is pulling a Babe Ruth and pointing to the bleachers. "We're gonna pass it," the Budget chairman said confidently as she exited this morning's GOP conference meeting, skirting the question of how solid that tally will emerge. "We're going to have enough votes up on that board to pass that bill."

About those next steps ... We also asked Black if she's made a decision on whether to stay on as chairman through the joint conference committee, but no dice. "I'm just going to take this one step at a time," she said.

'A STARTING POINT': Democrats on the Budget Committee have fired the starting guns in this fall's budget negotiations, calling for \$603 billion in defense discretionary and \$570 billion in domestic spending in fiscal 2018. [John Yarmuth](#), the top Democrat on that panel, today called it a "starting point," adding that he's aiming for the same kind of compromise that Congress achieved in April. "I think that's actually a very good model for what we might see in December," Yarmuth told reporters.

Pushing for parity: The Democratic budget touts "the idea of parity" for defense and nondefense funding — though that doesn't mean equal spending for both. It just means raising

spending by the same amount, which — in this case — is \$54 billion above the caps. In contrast, the Progressive Caucus' budget would put defense and domestic spending at the same \$570 billion level — amounting to a much bigger boost on the domestic side. When asked why he didn't seek equal funding levels in the Democratic wish list, Yarmuth said "we're trying to have some degree of fiscal responsibility in the budget as well, so that's really the compromise we made."

Countdown to caps: Yarmuth says he doesn't expect negotiations over budget caps to begin in earnest until November. But the issue is clearly on his radar. "There is some support on the Republican side to do that. How extensive it is, we don't know yet," Yarmuth told a group of advocates today. "But I think the potential is there to do that." The Kentucky Democrat noted that some House appropriators, like [Hal Rogers](#), are on his side.

LEADERSHIP

RYAN WENT TO BAT FOR PRICE: In the minutes before the White House announced Tom Price's ouster Friday, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) apparently made a last-ditch plea to prevent the HHS secretary's dismissal, Josh Dawsey and Rachael Bade [report](#). According to two people with knowledge of the call, White House chief of staff John Kelly dialed up the speaker before the Trump administration announced Price's resignation. Despite the secretary's pricey travel habits, Ryan reportedly urged Kelly to reconsider, touting Price's experience in Congress and work in the administration.

APPROPRIATIONS

COLLINS WEIGHS HER OPTIONS: Senate appropriator [Susan Collins](#) says she's given herself until mid-October to decide whether to leave her influential perch for a gubernatorial run back home. And as Burgess Everett [writes](#) today, the Maine Republican is truly torn. "Given the contentious environment in Washington right now, my voice and vote matter a great deal," the Transportation-HUD cardinal said. "On the other hand, if I were fortunate enough to be elected governor, I could work more directly on job creation."

HEALTH CARE

PARTISAN PAY-FORS: It's usually pretty easy to get Democrats on board with funding the Children's Health Insurance Program. But the five-year proposal the House Energy and Commerce Committee [released](#) Monday night is no sure bet for bipartisan backing. As Rachana Pradhan [explains](#), Republicans are proposing to fund the package by increasing means-testing in Medicare for wealthier seniors, allowing states to remove lottery winners from state Medicaid programs, changing Medicaid's third-party liability policy, cutting more than \$6 billion from Obamacare's Prevention and Public Health Fund and changing the Affordable Care Act's grace period for missing premium payments.

Clock's ticking: Since the committee is just now moving this week to [mark up](#) the bill — four days after federal funding for the program expired — states are working to keep their programs afloat until Congress ultimately clears a new extension, Brianna Ehley [explains](#). The Kaiser Family Foundation says at least 10 states will deplete funds by year's end. And some states say they expect to terminate enrollment at the start of 2018 or shift eligible kids to other government insurance programs if Congress doesn't act in time.

ENTITLEMENTS

WELFARE REVAMP IN THE WORKS: The White House is working on an executive order aimed at tightening requirements under welfare programs, Andrew Restuccia [reports](#). Federal agencies received a draft order for comment last week, according to two administration officials. One of the officials said the draft calls on agencies to propose new rules, including tighter work requirements, as well as streamlining or eliminating redundant services and establishing metrics for holding agencies accountable for program performance. The order is also expected to encourage greater cooperation with state and local governments.

FLOOD INSURANCE

JUICING THE DEBATE: Besides funding the government by Dec. 8, Congress must also take on the (potentially trickier) task of extending the National Flood Insurance Program beyond that date — as cries for a revamp are amplified by the fact that the program has now hit its \$30 billion borrowing cap. But Zachary Warmbrodt [explains](#) that the controversy last week over whether to attach a flood insurance rider to the FAA bill, [H.R. 3823 \(115\)](#), actually seems to have breathed new life into the overhaul effort.

COAST GUARD

IF YOU DON'T ASK ... House lawmakers are urging the Coast Guard to submit a detailed request for emergency funding to cover agency damage from recent hurricanes, Tanya Snyder [reports](#). During a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing today, subcommittee leaders [Duncan Hunter](#) and [John Garamendi](#) encouraged Coast Guard officials to give the White House facility-by-facility accounts and photos of the more than \$320 million in property damage the agency sustained.

TRANSPORTATION

SHUSTER'S PREDICTION: House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) says he hopes the Trump administration releases its next batch of infrastructure principles "in the next week or so," Lauren Gardner [reports](#).

EARMARKS

- Reliant on Medicaid dollars, small hospitals shut down maternity wards just to stay afloat. [POLITICO Magazine](#).
- Tax cuts, sold as fuel for growth, widen gap between rich and poor. [The New York Times](#).
- How devastated Puerto Rico really is, by the numbers. [VICE](#).
- Connecticut towns grapple with big funding cuts amid budget deadlock. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Some congressional Republicans question tax plan over deficit costs. [Washington Post](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 66 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/budget-hawks-explain-away-deficit-growing-tax-plan-024894>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Grijalva asks Interior IG to include Zinke's wife in travel probe [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 10/02/2017 04:10 PM EDT

Two House Democrats are calling on the Interior Department's inspector general to investigate how often Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife joined him on taxpayer-funded charter or military flights in light of her involvement in a Republican Senate campaign.

Lolita Zinke is chairing the campaign of Troy Downing, a businessman who is vying to unseat Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year.

"Because the secretary's spouse is leading a senate campaign in Montana, tax-payer funded travel for Mrs. Zinke, especially to or from Montana, deserves heightened scrutiny," wrote [Raúl M. Grijalva](#) and [Donald McEachin](#) in a [letter](#) today to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall, the top watchdog within Interior. Grijalva is the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, and McEachin is ranking member of its oversight subcommittee.

POLITICO reported earlier today that the IG's office has opened an investigation into Zinke's travels.

The inspector general's office has not decided on the scope of its investigation but it is "focused on the secretary's travel at this point," said Nancy DiPaolo, IG spokeswoman. The investigation, which was launched Friday, "is at its earliest phases," she said. "We'll likely be looking into travel, modes of travel, costs and schedules, etc."

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DeVos' security detail could cost up to \$6.54M over the next year [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 10/02/2017 06:20 PM EDT

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' security detail could cost up to \$6.54 million from now through the end of September 2018, an Education Department official told POLITICO on Monday.

That projected cost is seen as a "high water mark" that the agency doesn't plan to exceed, said spokeswoman Liz Hill.

An agreement governing DeVos' protective detail — which is provided around the clock by the U.S. Marshals Service — was just renewed for fiscal 2018, which began on Saturday.

The Education Department paid the marshals \$5.28 million for her protective detail from February through September of this year — about \$2.5 million less than what was projected.

That's because both agencies were able to find cost savings, Hill said. For example, [DeVos](#)

[pays](#) for the marshals to fly with her on her own private plane, which reduces travel costs, she said. DeVos foots the bill for the plane.

It's extremely unusual for the Education secretary to be protected by marshals — the past four Education secretaries have been protected by the Education Department's own small security force.

Drew Wade, a spokesman for the U.S. Marshals Service, said he couldn't disclose the number of employees protecting DeVos or the "nature of threats against the secretary" due to "reasons of operational security."

The agreement signed by the Education Department and the U.S. Marshals Service includes salaries and benefits for the marshals, their travel and per diem expenses, one "leased and equipped limousine" for DeVos and other vehicles, according to a copy of the first agreement signed by both agencies, obtained by POLITICO through a Freedom of Information Act request. That first agreement is dated March 28.

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Trump brings harsh edge to Puerto Rico trip [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Nolan D. McCaskill | 10/03/2017 05:03 AM EDT

President Donald Trump brought a jarring tone to Puerto Rico as he was briefed on the hurricane devastation, appearing to blame the U.S. territory for having "thrown our budget a little out of whack" and complimenting officials for sustaining only 16 deaths, compared with the much higher human toll of Hurricane Katrina.

"I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you've thrown our budget a little out of whack because we've spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico," Trump said Tuesday in his first public remarks from the island, which declared a form of bankruptcy in May. "And that's fine."

The president also appeared to boast that the death toll in Puerto Rico pales in comparison to the more than 1,800 fatalities that followed Katrina in 2005.

"We saved a lot of lives," said Trump, who added that "every death is a horror" and broached what he called "a real catastrophe" in Katrina.

"Sixteen people versus in the thousands," the president said, overstating Katrina's death toll.

"You can be very proud of all of your people, all of our people working together," he told Gov. Ricardo Rosselló. "Sixteen versus literally thousands of people. You can be very proud. Everybody around this table and everybody watching can really be very proud of what's taken place in Puerto Rico."

Trump came face to face Tuesday with the "politically motivated ingrates" he slammed on Twitter just days before, landing in Puerto Rico after spending much of the past week boasting about a wildly successful response effort that hasn't matched the reality of the hurricane-

ravaged island — and after picking a fight over the weekend with the San Juan mayor.

The visit comes as he's also attempting to be soother-in-chief for the nation after a shooting in Las Vegas left at least 59 dead on Sunday night — the first time he's had to navigate two disasters of national scope that are politically perilous for any president, but especially one prone to off-the-cuff riffs.

The Puerto Rico stop marks only the start of emotionally charged travels for Trump this week. On Wednesday, he is scheduled to travel to Las Vegas to meet with the families of victims of Sunday's massacre.

Trump struck a somber tone in his first public comments on the deaths in Las Vegas, decrying the "act of pure evil" and calling for unity. On Tuesday, though, he traded the scripted and controlled setting of the East Room for a storm-ravaged island where more than half of the residents remain without access to drinking water and only 5 percent of the island has electricity.

Trump extended praise to his administration and Rosselló, Puerto Rico's Democratic governor. And he asked Puerto Rico's Republican non-voting congresswoman, Jenniffer González, to repeat past praise of the administration's response for the television cameras.

"He's not even from my party, and he started right at the beginning appreciating what we did," Trump said of Rosselló. "Right from the beginning this governor did not play politics. He didn't play it at all. He was saying it like it was, and he was giving us the highest grades. And on behalf of our country, I wanna thank you."

Trump, however, sought to have the plaudits reciprocated, noting that he watched González say "such nice things about all of the people that have worked so hard" the other day and asking her to repeat her compliments.

"Jenniffer, do you think you can say a little bit [of] what you said about us today?" Trump asked. "And it's not about me. It's about these incredible people, from the military to FEMA to first responders. I mean, I've never seen people working so hard in my life. Perhaps you could say, Congresswoman?"

Cameras captured the president engaging in a conversation with a hurricane victim, asking multiple questions and commending public officials in closing. And the pool of reporters following the president described a pair of bizarre basketball-related exchanges.

Trump asked a teenager if he played basketball and was going to the NBA. After handing out bags of rice at a church, Trump began shooting paper towels into the crowd — mimicking the motions of a jump shot.

Trump has courted controversy by blasting on Twitter the "poor leadership ability" of Puerto Rican officials, who he said "want everything to be done for them." Trump also said the island's leaders "are not able to get their workers to help," and he accused Carmen Yulín Cruz, the Democratic mayor of San Juan — who repeatedly slammed the Trump administration's response to Hurricane Maria — of trying to score partisan political points by criticizing him.

"We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico. Outside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates," Trump tweeted on Sunday.

All the while, he's kept up an upbeat tone about the response. He told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday that it's "amazing what's been done in a very short period of time." He added: "There's never been a piece of land that we've known that was so devastated."

Other officials have echoed his attitude. "The federal government is doing everything within our powers and capabilities to first focus on the life-sustaining and life-saving measures as well as on the rebuilding process," press secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters on Monday.

Even with sourness from the weekend's controversial tweets lingering, some see a reason for guarded optimism. Luis Fortuno, who served as the territory's governor from 2009 to 2013 and is now a lobbyist in Washington, was working to deliver supplies in San Juan on Saturday morning when he received a call from Trump.

"The White House is already thinking of the next phase, the reconstruction phase," Fortuno said in an interview. "I think that this time around they are thinking outside the box," about more than just bringing Puerto Rico back to the infrastructure status it had prior to Maria.

But Trump will have to do more than just sing the praises of his own response to the storm.

"People don't want to hear 'Hey, we're doing great,' and they don't want to hear, 'Hey, we're doing awful,'" said Tevi Troy, a senior George W. Bush aide who wrote a book, "Shall We Wake the President?", about White House disaster response. What they want, Troy said, is concrete information about what's being done to help them and how long it will take to get back to normal.

It's an added bonus if federal and local elected officials show a united front, Troy added. He pointed to President Barack Obama's famous visit to New Jersey with Republican Gov. Chris Christie after Superstorm Sandy days before the 2012 presidential election as evidence that such bipartisan accord is possible.

But while Trump had political allies at his side in Texas and Florida — where Govs. Greg Abbott and Rick Scott have been energetic supporters — he's working alongside Democratic politicians who are for the most part strangers in Puerto Rico.

It is unclear whether Trump will meet with Cruz, the San Juan mayor. She has been invited to participate in Tuesday's events, Sanders said Monday.

Trump appears to have learned lessons following his first visit to a disaster scene, when he was widely criticized for making a trip to Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey that didn't involve actually meeting with — or even mentioning — any victims. In a subsequent trip to Texas and a trip to Florida after Hurricane Irma, Trump met with people directly affected by the storm, giving out hugs and supplies at shelters.

Trump's White House received generally high marks for its handling of Harvey and Irma in Texas and Florida. But that narrative has changed as the full scope of devastation from Maria has come into view — and as Trump devoted his attention to picking a fight with the NFL over player protests during the national anthem.

"He seemed to be in full operational mode in Texas and Florida, and then his energy tapered off when it got to Puerto Rico," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University.

The initial poor handling was compounded by Trump's weekend Twitter feud, he added.

"It made him look small, not big," Brinkley said, and it potentially complicates the optics for Tuesday's trip, when optics are of significant political importance. "It's going to be extremely awkward. ... The possibilities of being booed or hissed at are very large."

Colin Wilhelm contributed to this report.

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Puerto Rico still in crisis as Trump arrives [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas and Colin Wilhelm | 10/03/2017 05:05 AM EDT

When President Donald Trump arrives in Puerto Rico on Tuesday, he'll find an island on the verge of spiraling into a deepening crisis, with 95 percent of the power grid still knocked out and more than half of the 3.4 million residents lacking access to clean drinking water.

Answering calls for a more robust federal response, including from the [three-star general](#) leading efforts on the ground, the military is deploying additional forces and sending 18 more aircraft to help provide medical care and reach isolated communities. That's on top of the more than 12,600 federal employees — including 7,000 troops and 700 FEMA workers — who are already clearing roads, providing security, distributing generators and handing out fuel, water and millions of meals in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

But all of that still may not be enough. Much of the help isn't matching what people actually need, in what Del. Stacey Plaskett (D-U.S. Virgin Islands) on Monday called a "disconnect" with federal officials.

And Democrats who visited FEMA headquarters on Monday said they were discouraged by what they heard and blasted the Trump administration's leadership.

"The government is not responding with the urgency that is needed," Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) said on a conference call with reporters Monday. "There is no dollar estimate for what is needed because there is no plan in place."

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) agreed, praising federal responders and military personnel on the ground but highlighting the disparity between the size of recovery force and the scale of devastation.

"Instead of 5,000 of our men and women in uniform, there should be 50,000," he said.

Plaskett, in an interview, cited the Army Corps of Engineers' repairs to the Virgin Islands' potable water system as an example of how aid attempts have gone awry. Most residents on the islands live in rural areas and don't use the water system, instead relying on cisterns to collect rainwater under their homes, Plaskett said. That means that, even with the water system repaired, many are still without access to drinking water — something she said the Army did not realize.

There are some signs of improvement. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said Monday that wait times for gas are down to under an hour, compared to six or seven hours just a few days ago, and 37 percent of the island's residents now have cell service. FEMA Administrator Brock Long, who arrived in San Juan on Monday, said he saw rush-hour traffic and people cutting lawns.

"The bottom line is what I saw was progress being made today," Long said. "I didn't see anybody in a life-threatening situation at all."

Alejandro De La Campa, the leader of the FEMA region that includes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, said 65 percent of grocery stores and almost 70 percent of gas stations are open.

Despite FEMA's assessment, power is still out on much of the island. Officials said residents in populated areas should get power back "within weeks or a couple months," but those in more remote areas could be without power for up to 10 months.

The Army Corps of Engineers has distributed 79 generators to critical facilities, like hospitals and sewer stations, with 400 more on the way, said Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, the commanding general. But most hospitals are still without power, and the fact that most of Puerto Rico's telecommunications grid continues to be down makes it hard for federal and local authorities to know where an emergency response that could save lives is needed.

Over the weekend, Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, who is leading the federal response in Puerto Rico, [told PBS](#) that the damage is "the worst I've ever seen" and said the military would be sending more resources.

Luis Fortuño, the former governor of Puerto Rico, said he's seen a difference in San Juan since Buchanan's appointment last week.

"As soon as the general came down, things started moving in the port," said Fortuño, now a Partner at Steptoe and Johnson, which lobbies on federal health care funds for Puerto Rico.

Fortuño said he told Trump that the island needs more military aid and a longer waiver to the Jones Act allowing foreign ships to make deliveries to the territory during a phone call on Sept. 30.

"The president expressed his personal commitment" to see the recovery through, said Fortuño.

"The White House is already thinking of the next phase, the reconstruction phase," Fortuño said. "I think that this time around they are thinking outside the box," to not only restore Puerto Rico to its pre-Maria state, but devote resources to improve the territory's infrastructure.

The Trump administration has yet to submit to Congress a supplemental funding request for FEMA to cover the costs of disaster relief, but a proposal is expected later this week and early estimates put the requested figure at \$10 billion to \$15 billion. The White House maintains that emergency funding for FEMA passed last month after Hurricane Harvey will suffice until mid-October.

Trump's visit could improve his understanding of the problem, said James Norton, a former

deputy assistant secretary at the Department of Homeland Security who worked on the Hurricane Katrina relief package under former President George W. Bush.

Seeing a hurricane-ravaged area firsthand can "really have an impact on your thinking," Norton said.

"People are in a situation where they have no lights, no power, no water. They're looking for answers from government," he said. "I just think they'll be wanting to know what else is coming, what other help is coming."

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Pai unveils FCC proposal to help rebuild Hurricane Maria-ravaged telecom networks

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By John Hendel | 10/03/2017 12:40 PM EDT

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai unveiled a proposal today designed to help with the rebuilding of damaged communications networks in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, still racked by problems following Hurricane Maria. He circulated the order internally within the agency Monday.

"I shared with my colleagues an order that would quickly make available up to \$76.9 million of funding to repair wireline and wireless communication networks and restore communications services in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands," Pai said in a statement.

The order would let companies use money from the commission's universal service program fund, typically reserved for funding broadband deployment in hard-to-reach areas. It would also let companies receive such funding early, Pai said: "Instead of receiving a standard monthly payment, carriers could elect this month to receive seven months' worth of funding immediately in order to expedite repair and restoration efforts."

Pai urged commissioners to approve the order as soon as possible and said he would place it on the Oct. 24 meeting agenda if not approved by then.

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Ryan asked White House to reconsider ousting Price [Back](#)

By Josh Dawsey and Rachael Bade | 10/03/2017 01:22 PM EDT

Speaker Paul Ryan last week urged the White House to reconsider ousting Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, his longtime friend who had come under fire for often using a taxpayer-funded private jet for travel, according to two people with knowledge of the call.

John Kelly, the White House chief of staff, called the Wisconsin Republican minutes before the departure was announced Friday afternoon. It was a heads-up call, one White House official said.

Ryan urged Kelly to reconsider and touted the Georgia Republican's experience in Congress and work in the administration, one of the people familiar with the call said.

Price has long had the speaker's ear on policy matters and was part of Ryan's old "Jedi Council," a group of fiscal conservative rabble-rousers who used to powwow when Republicans were in the minority.

But Kelly made clear that Price was out, and the call quickly ended, one of the people said.

A spokeswoman for Ryan and a White House spokesman declined to comment on the call.

The conversation reflected a private disagreement between the White House and Ryan's office — not an unprecedented occurrence — even as the two sides have tried to show a public alliance to advance a repeal of Obamacare, tax reform and other legislative priorities.

It also shows how the decision to oust Price caused some angst on Capitol Hill.

Price officially resigned on Friday after he came under fire for his frequent use of private and government planes for travel, at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$1 million since May. POLITICO revealed in a series of articles that Price flew at least 26 times on private aircraft, a sharp break with his predecessors' practice. He also used military aircraft for multi-national trips to Africa, Europe and Asia.

Even though the jet scandal was the direct cause of Price's ouster, the secretary had slowly lost the president's trust over a number of months. Price rarely attended Oval Office strategy meetings, was seen as having insufficient influence on Capitol Hill, and was associated in Trump's mind with the repeated failure to repeal Obamacare.

Ryan, however, has long considered Price a top ally with a similar mindset. The two met with other conservatives for weekly policy breakfasts during the "Jedi Council" days. And Price also stuck by Ryan's side when he first proposed his controversial GOP budget privatizing Medicare.

After Price resigned last Friday, Ryan released a statement calling him a "good man" and "superb secretary" — as well as a friend.

"Tom Price is a good man," Ryan said. "He has spent his entire adult life fighting for others, first as a physician and then as a legislator and public servant. He was a leader in the House and a superb health secretary. His vision and hard work were vital to the House's success passing our health care legislation. I will always be grateful for Tom's service to this country and, above all, his continued friendship."

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Collins agonizes over decision to ditch the Senate [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett | 10/03/2017 05:00 AM EDT

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp was watching TV recently when she saw a report that Susan Collins was considering a run for Maine governor and soliciting advice on the decision.

The North Dakota Democrat quickly shot a text message to her Republican colleague: "Don't do it."

A move by Collins to seek the governorship would rock the Senate and the broader political landscape. In a chamber controlled by just 52 Republicans, Collins and a handful of other centrist senators can decide the fate of President Donald Trump's agenda. And a run by Collins for governor could eventually cost the GOP one of its last congressional footholds in New England.

Collins is torn over whether to leave her prominent perch as one of the Senate's few true moderate legislators, according to her colleagues. If Collins had made up her mind by now, said Sen. Angus King (I-Maine), "she already would have announced it."

In an interview, Collins said the buzz about her prolonged indecision is "accurate." She initially planned to make up her mind by the end of September, but pushed back her deadline to mid-October as she wrestled with the GOP's recent Obamacare repeal effort.

"Given the contentious environment in Washington right now, my voice and vote matter a great deal," Collins said. "On the other hand, if I were fortunate enough to be elected governor, I could work more directly on job creation."

She added: "That's why it's such a difficult decision to make. And I'm trying to figure out where I matter most."

A Governor Collins would leave centrists like Heitkamp even more lonely in the Senate. But Heitkamp acknowledges that Collins is feeling a tug to return to Maine full time: "Fundamentally, she wants to go home."

"She is [up in the air]. And I think she had hoped to make a decision before this," said Heitkamp, who herself weighed retirement before announcing this year she'd run for a second term. "I desperately hope she doesn't run."

There's also risk for the fourth-term senator. She could face a primary challenge in the gubernatorial race, fueled by term-limited Republican Gov. Paul LePage's open disdain for Collins' opposition to Obamacare repeal proposals. And if Collins runs, it would likely fuel Democrats' push to take back the Senate in 2020, since most Republicans believe she's the only person from her party who can hold the seat.

In 2012, when Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) retired, King walloped the GOP candidate. So the first thing Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) did when he took over as the Senate GOP's campaign chairman was set out to persuade Collins to run again in 2014. She won reelection with 68 percent of the vote and Republicans took the chamber for the first time in eight years.

King is begging her not to leave. And in an unusual display of bipartisanship in the Senate, so are moderate Democrats.

"She's so important to the country here," said Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.). "We don't have enough folks like her."

Republicans are fretting Collins will join retiring Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and create a wave of pragmatic GOP senators fleeing the chamber. Though Collins holds sway as one of the chamber's few swing votes, she also faces the frustration of watching her party constantly doing the opposite of what she'd like — from trying to repeal Obamacare on party lines, to refusing to hold a hearing on Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland, to nominating Donald Trump.

In the latest Obamacare repeal effort, even after party leaders had written her off as an automatic "no," she came under unyielding pressure from the White House. Vice President Mike Pence called her last Saturday as she drove across the state, a conversation that got so in-depth that Collins pulled her car over.

They talked for 40 minutes. Not even two days later, Collins came out in opposition, delivering the knockout blow. And she says another party-line shot is unwise.

"I don't think having a partisan approach to an issue that affects one-sixth of our economy and affects millions of Americans is the right way to go," Collins said.

Collins is reevaluating her career amid some ominous developments for a politician with her profile. Prominent deal-makers in Congress are retiring just as a new wave of strident conservatives are trying to break in. Meanwhile, Republicans say they want to take another stab next year at a party-line repeal of Obamacare, and they're weighing doing the same thing on tax reform.

Collins would enjoy more autonomy and control over the agenda as governor of Maine, a job she sought unsuccessfully in 1994.

Asked whether she would run, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) cited his surprise with Corker's decision and said: "You never know with these people."

"I always expect her to act in a way that she thinks is best for Maine," said McCain, who is close with Collins and understands any aversion she might have to her current situation. "Am I happy with the environment here? Of course not. Nobody could be."

Collins said her committee work and seniority "really matter" — but she is tantalized by the opportunity to help the less prosperous parts of the state, where shuttered paper mills and an aging population have devastated the economy.

"I'm from the northern part of the state, which needs a lot of help ... two-thirds of the state is losing population and opportunity," she said. "I have some ideas for economic development that only a governor can pursue."

Maine Republicans say Collins would likely have to navigate the divide between the Trump and establishment wings of the Republican Party if she runs. LePage spent September slamming her opposition to the Graham-Cassidy health repeal bill as "shameful" as the two sparred over whether the bill would have been good for the state.

Phil Harriman, a political analyst and former Republican state senator, said LePage's attacks

on Collins could be damaging given his sway over the state party, though she'd be a clear front-runner in a general election.

"It would be more complicated, at least in the Republican primary," Harriman said. "If it was today, I would say she'd probably face a primary challenge."

Collins is cognizant of the state's complicated political environment. In the past two decades, Maine has had Republican, Democratic and independent governors. Collins, Snowe and King have been among the most independent-minded senators in recent years. And Trump won an electoral vote in the northern part of the state, pushing Maine into swing-state territory.

Asked about LePage's performance, Collins was diplomatic. But she acknowledged the yawning difference between her measured moderation and his bombastic sound bites.

"I support many of Gov. LePage's policies," she said. "Obviously, he and I have very different styles and we disagree on what the impact of what Graham-Cassidy would have been."

While Republicans are fretting that the GOP's flailing governance of Washington will push Collins to join the retiring Corker and Pennsylvania Rep. Charlie Dent, it's not uncommon for senators to mull leaving the dysfunctional chamber for executive office. Most, like Heitkamp and Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), eventually decide to stay in D.C.

Manchin was the outlier among senators interviewed for this story, who hope that Collins will stay put. The West Virginia senator said she should run if "she thinks she has a shot for it."

"Best job in the world. Oh my god. There's no comparison," said Manchin, a former governor. "You never deny somebody who has that opportunity to do something good for their state."

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Energy and Commerce unveils five-year CHIP funding bill [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 10/03/2017 12:11 AM EDT

The House has drafted legislation to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years, according to [text](#) posted late Monday night by the Energy and Commerce Committee.

The bill was released after Congress failed to act ahead of a Sept. 30 deadline to continue funding for the program, which covers roughly 9 million low-income children. Several states are poised to run out of funds before the end of the year and are scrambling for contingencies, in the event that Congress does not move quickly and children risk losing their benefits.

The CHIP provisions in the House bill mirror an agreement reached by Senate Finance Committee leaders last month to continue funding through fiscal 2022, according to a GOP aide. The legislation would in two years begin to wind down Obamacare's 23 percent funding boost in the federal match rate to states, and make tweaks to the law's "maintenance of effort" requirements that prevented states from reducing eligibility for the program.

The bill also includes \$1 billion in Medicaid funds for Puerto Rico and would modify reductions in Medicaid disproportionate share payments to hospitals.

Energy and Commerce will [mark up](#) the CHIP bill and several others on Wednesday at 1 p.m., including legislation to repeal Obamacare's Independent Payment Advisory Board and a bill to extend community health center funding that also expired at the end of September. The Senate Finance Committee will also mark up its CHIP funding extension bill, [S. 1827 \(115\)](#), that day.

To view online [click here](#).

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House GOP proposal to pay for CHIP program likely to rankle Democrats [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 10/03/2017 09:34 AM EDT

House Republicans' package to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program and other public health programs would use Obamacare's prevention fund and entitlement programs to pay for it — moves that could threaten bipartisan backing for the bill.

Republicans as part of their five-year CHIP funding extension want to increase means-testing in Medicare for wealthier seniors, allow states to remove lottery winners from state Medicaid programs and change Medicaid's third-party liability policy that dictates who pays claims for enrollees before Medicaid must be responsible for costs. Their legislation to continue community health center funding for two years would cut more than \$6 billion over a decade from Obamacare's Prevention and Public Health Fund, which the GOP has frequently criticized as a "slush fund," and revise the Affordable Care Act's 90-day grace period for missing premium payments down to 30 days.

The pay-fors are likely to rankle Democrats ahead of an Energy and Commerce Committee markup Wednesday. Democrats have pushed for a five-year funding extension for CHIP, a program with bipartisan support that covers roughly 9 million children and whose federal money expired on Saturday.

"The legislation offered last night by [committee chairman [Greg Walden](#) (R-Ore.)] is not a bipartisan agreement," a spokesperson for committee Democrats said Tuesday morning.

In the past, both parties have agreed to changes in Medicare that boost the premiums of wealthier seniors, but Democrats oppose GOP efforts to scrap the ACA's prevention fund and have criticized the Medicaid lottery winner proposal.

The CHIP provisions in the House bill mirror an agreement reached by Senate Finance Committee leaders last month to continue funding through fiscal 2022, according to a GOP aide. The legislation would begin to wind down Obamacare's 23 percent funding boost in the federal match rate to states in two years, and make tweaks to the law's "maintenance of effort" requirements that prevented states from reducing eligibility for the program. Fiscal conservatives have taken issue with Obamacare's funding bump because it led to roughly a dozen states' CHIP programs being fully paid for by the federal government.

The House bill also includes \$1 billion in Medicaid funds for Puerto Rico and would eliminate \$2 billion in reductions in Medicaid disproportionate share payments to hospitals for 2018.

Energy and Commerce will [mark up](#) its CHIP bill and several others on Wednesday at 1 p.m. The Senate Finance Committee also marks up its CHIP bill Wednesday morning.

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States rush to preserve children's health coverage [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 10/02/2017 07:21 PM EDT

States are scrambling to shore up the government health insurance program that covers 9 million low-income kids after Congress failed to meet the deadline to renew its funding over the weekend.

A number of state officials are looking for ways to keep their programs afloat, hoping Congress will approve money for the federal Children's Health Insurance Program before they have to cut off coverage.

Despite bipartisan agreement to continue the program, lawmakers missed a Sept. 30 deadline to renew funding. Many say they still have time to get money to states, despite progressive groups decrying over the weekend that Republicans allowed the program to "expire."

While states won't run out of money immediately, at least 10 [will deplete funds](#) by the end of the year, according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. If Congress doesn't approve funding by then, some state officials say they expect to terminate enrollment in the beginning of next year or shift eligible kids to other government insurance programs with potentially less federal support.

"This is a terrible situation for everyone who relies on CHIP to be a functioning program," said Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Emily Piper.

Without getting new funding from Congress soon, Minnesota is considering tapping into its unspent federal allotment for 2017, which would fund the program for about nine months. Doing so, however, would come with a federal penalty of \$10 million to the state.

"It would carry us forward, but it would be a financial strain to the state's budget," Piper said.

CHIP, now in its 20th year, is jointly funded by the federal government and the states. Historically, the federal government has provided an average of 71 percent of the funding, but a provision in the Affordable Care Act boosted federal funding to the states by 23 percentage points over the past two years.

Lawmakers say they are still planning to fund CHIP this year, though they haven't acted with urgency so far. The Senate last month unveiled a bipartisan measure, S. 1827 (115), that funded the program for five years and preserves Obamacare's funding raise for two years before it's gradually phased out. The bill was overshadowed by the GOP's last-ditch failed

effort to dismantle Obamacare, but lawmakers are expected to mark it up in committee this week.

The House, meanwhile, is also expected to hold a markup on a CHIP measure this week but has not yet released a bill, which is expected to be drastically different than the Senate's. Sources say the House is unlikely to keep the enhanced Obamacare funding for more than one year. Its bill is also expected to include funding for community health centers and other health programs, which could make it hard to pay for.

State officials say the funding uncertainty is already causing logistical headaches.

"Even if Congress comes back and gives them all the money in the world, it's very distracting and destabilizing," said Matt Salo, executive director of the National Association of Medicaid Directors.

Like Minnesota, Utah is considering moving eligible children to Medicaid if the money runs out, said Utah Medicaid Director Nate Checketts. The state is also considering moving some kids to the Obamacare insurance marketplaces, where they can get subsidized coverage. However, officials are still working through the logistics.

Colorado is also looking at Obamacare's marketplaces as a fallback option. The state's CHIP program, which is expected to run out of money by the end of January without action from Congress, plans to notify families in mid-December that coverage may be terminated, triggering a qualifying event that allows them to purchase Obamacare coverage through the state's exchange. More than 75,000 children and nearly 800 pregnant women are currently enrolled in Colorado's program.

"Families want to know as soon as their coverage is potentially threatened," said Colorado Medicaid Director Gretchen Hammer. "Families know that they have coverage through January, and they want to know what their options are."

California's Department of Health Care Services said it's still business as usual for the state's CHIP program, which receives more than \$2 billion a year and covers about 1.3 million children and pregnant women. The program is expected to run out of funding in December.

"Right now, it is a tough balance between the reality of a true urgency facing state CHIP programs and not wanting to create panic for families whose children depend on CHIP coverage," said Kristen Golden Testa, director of the California health program at The Children's Partnership.

In Texas, funding is expecting to dry up in January or February for a program covering nearly 400,000 children and 36,000 pregnant women in the state. Texas budget writers estimated Texas would receive \$3.2 billion in federal funding for CHIP over 2018 and 2019.

"With so many families across the coast impacted by Hurricane Harvey, CHIP and Medicaid help families maintain coverage," said Lou Fragoso, president of Texas Children's Health Plan, which covers 430,000 people in Texas, about 15 percent of whom receive CHIP. "This is critical, especially for those in communities devastated by the recent storm and flooding."

The Texas health department has warned that it would begin winding down the CHIP program after funding runs out early next year. But close observers say the state hasn't made serious

preparations because Congress is widely expected to continue funding the program.

Victoria Colliver, Rachana Pradhan, Renuka Rayasam and Joanne Kenen contributed to this report.

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Trump administration weighing executive order on welfare [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 10/02/2017 04:34 PM EDT

Trump administration officials are mulling an executive order that would instruct federal agencies to review low-income assistance programs, part of a coming effort to make sweeping changes to the country's welfare system.

The White House began circulating a draft order to federal agencies for comment last week, according to two administration officials, who were granted anonymity to discuss the internal deliberations.

One of the officials said the draft order calls on agencies to review existing regulations and propose new rules that conform to a set of broad welfare principles, including tighter work requirements that encourage recipients to shift back into the labor force.

The order also calls for streamlining or eliminating duplicative services and establishing metrics for holding agencies accountable for program performance. It also encourages greater cooperation with state and local governments.

The initiative comes as President Donald Trump shifts attention to his ambitious tax reform initiative in the wake of his failed effort to repeal Obamacare. Administration backers of the welfare executive order hope he signs it before Thanksgiving, one of the officials said.

But another official cautioned that the conversations about the order are "very preliminary at this stage," adding that the final outcome is uncertain. The order has not yet gone through the strict policy-vetting process put in place by White House chief of staff John Kelly.

"We aren't going to comment on rumors about future potential Executive Orders," White House spokeswoman Natalie Strom said in an email. "When we have something to release, we'll let you know."

The draft order, which has been under discussion by an internal White House-led working group since this past spring, doesn't target any specific program, according to one of the officials who had reviewed it, but instead calls for a high-level overview of programs across federal agencies.

The agencies in the process of reviewing the order include the Department of Health and Human Services, the Labor Department, the Agriculture Department, the Treasury Department, the Education Department and the Commerce Department.

Administration officials have been talking to members of Congress for months to discuss a broader effort to rethink the government's welfare programs. The last major welfare reform came in 1996, under President Bill Clinton.

Liberals have long criticized the 1996 bill, asserting that it hurt millions of low-income Americans. Since then, Democrats have fiercely opposed efforts to weaken welfare programs, arguing that Republicans are using the banner of welfare reform to target poor people.

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) have introduced wide-ranging legislation that would make changes to welfare programs, including by imposing tighter work requirements on recipients of food stamps, also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Jordan and Lee have said they modeled their legislation on the 1996 welfare legislation, which imposed new work requirements and limits on welfare recipients.

Trump mentioned the issue in both his January inaugural address and his February speech to a joint session of Congress. "Millions lifted from welfare to work is not too much to expect," Trump said in his February remarks.

The president's fiscal year 2018 budget proposal called for massive cuts to the social safety net, including food stamps, Social Security disability insurance benefits and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

"If you're on food stamps and able-bodied, we need you to go to work," White House Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney told reporters earlier this year.

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Flood insurance talks reinvigorated after FAA debate [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 10/02/2017 06:22 PM EDT

A short-lived controversy over whether to attach a flood insurance rider to last week's FAA extension bill has breathed new life into monthslong negotiations aimed at overhauling the National Flood Insurance Program.

Senators on both sides of the aisle said commitments were made to keep talking after a provision intended to help the private flood insurance market was stripped out of the FAA bill.

"It sharpens people's minds," said Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.), who led efforts to remove the flood provision from the FAA bill and has drafted broader legislation to reauthorize the government flood insurance program. "They understand it has to be dealt with now."

Congress has about two months to come up with a plan before the National Flood Insurance Program expires on Dec. 8. Neither chamber has passed a bill to get it done and only the House has moved legislation out of committee.

In the Senate, one of the biggest sticking points has been a proposal, [S. 563 \(115\)](#), from Sens. [Dean Heller](#) (R-Nev.) and [Jon Tester](#) (D-Mont.) intended to make it easier for private companies to offer flood insurance outside the government program.

After months of unresolved negotiations, the issue was front and center last week after the House attached its version of the private flood insurance bill to the must-pass FAA legislation, [H.R. 3823 \(115\)](#). House Republicans passed the package despite pushback from Republicans and Democrats who didn't want the proposal included.

The opposition was based partly on the merits of the policy change. Though the House passed a previous version of the private flood insurance bill with wide support, there remains concern on both sides of the aisle about how greater private sector competition would weigh on the National Flood Insurance Program, which is heavily in debt to the Treasury after a series of devastating hurricanes. One of the concerns is that private insurers will "cherry pick" low-risk policies and leave the government with those most susceptible to losses.

"There's a pretty significant lack of understanding over what this provision will do in a vacuum," Rep. [Garret Graves](#) (R-La.) said, adding that he supports the private flood insurance bill as part of "overall reform."

Part of it was about getting a bigger flood insurance bill done. In a letter last week, House Minority Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) and a group of senior Democrats, including House Financial Services ranking member [Maxine Waters](#) of California, warned that the House FAA bill attempted to "prejudge negotiations on a bipartisan reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program."

The private flood insurance provision is a high priority for House Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas), who has been leading the House GOP's efforts to draft a broader bill reauthorizing the program. The House version of the FAA bill with the flood insurance item would have taken a major issue off the negotiating table. Hensarling has said the private flood insurance proposal could help provide homeowners with more affordable options.

"I don't oppose this policy," Waters said on the House floor last week. "I voted for it last Congress, and I voted for it when we marked it up in committee this year. But moving this bill, at this time, while ignoring all the other policy responses needed for the flood insurance program and the ongoing natural disasters in our country, is simply irresponsible."

It was clear even before the House passed the FAA bill that it would be a problem in the Senate, where the private flood insurance provision has gotten much less traction. Senators including Cassidy and [John Kennedy](#) (R-La.), who has his own flood insurance reauthorization bill, quickly pushed back and had support from Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#).

[Mike Rounds](#) (R-S.D.) co-sponsored an amendment with Cassidy and Kennedy that struck the flood insurance proposal from the FAA bill. The amendment and the scaled-back FAA bill sailed through the Senate, and the House passed it in little time.

Rounds and Kennedy sit on the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over the flood insurance program and has been the home of bipartisan negotiations for months. [Sherrod Brown](#) (D-Ohio), the committee's ranking member, said "we didn't ask for this language from the House." Senate Banking Chairman [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) has said he supports the

underlying private flood insurance proposal.

"We can find some middle ground but this is not middle ground," Rounds said.

Kennedy said the action last week would help with getting a bigger flood insurance bill done.

"I've received assurances from many of my friends on the Democratic side that they're anxious to get with us and try to work something out," he said, adding that Schumer was among them.

Tester said he too had gotten a commitment from Schumer to "negotiate in good faith" on a bill.

"We were having a hard time getting people to negotiate this issue," he said. "That should not be the problem going forward. Commitments have been made to do that."

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Lawmakers press Coast Guard to demand more funding [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 10/03/2017 11:40 AM EDT

House lawmakers want the Coast Guard to recoup some of their hurricane-sustained losses as part of an emergency supplemental — but underscored that the service will need to ask for it.

The Coast Guard sustained more than \$320 million worth of property damage from Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, with numbers not yet available for Hurricane Maria. That's on top of \$77 million worth of unfunded damage from Hurricane Matthew last year.

In his opening statement at a hearing today, House Transportation Coast Guard Subcommittee Chairman [Duncan Hunter](#) noted that the Coast Guard, situated as it is outside Department of Defense, "has not been included in defense budget protections or increases" and in fact "has seen budget reductions requiring the elimination of over 1,500 positions between fiscal years 2013 and 2015."

"It's important that the Coast Guard go to the president at this point and say, 'look, this is what we've incurred and we need to be included in supplemental,'" Hunter told Coast Guard officials, saying it makes it easier for Congress to do their jobs if the budget request comes from the president.

Ranking member [John Garamendi](#) noted the need for the Coast Guard to supply facility-by-facility accounts of the damage, with pictures.

Beyond infrastructure, Rear Admiral William Kelly said the resiliency and retention of an over-stressed workforce keeps him up at night — something he acknowledged in response to Rep. Brian Mast's question, "How close are you coming to not being mission ready?"

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Shuster hopes for new infrastructure principles soon [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 10/03/2017 11:37 AM EDT

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Penn.) told reporters today he hopes the Trump administration releases its next batch of infrastructure principles "in the next week or so" as Republicans continue to work on a tax code overhaul.

"We've been talking to the administration for the last several months — developing, talking, giving them our advice on what we think is doable, what's not doable. We've seen their outline, but that's continuing to be adjusted, and we hope they're going to make it public in the next week or so," the Pennsylvania Republican said. "It'll be more of an outline or principles, so that we can move forward with sort of putting meat on the bone."

Shuster said a package can't move forward without input from the Ways and Means Committee on how to pay for it.

"I think they'll move pretty closely together, because I also believe that if tax reform gets slowed up a little bit somewhere or gets stuck, infrastructure is something that I think brings a lot of people on board with tax reform, especially when you go to the Senate when it's such a tight margin," he said.

Shuster said he doesn't think an infrastructure bill can get done without including without some mix of non-federal funding. A House Democrat told reporters last week that President Donald Trump had criticized public-private partnerships as a way to finance an infrastructure package during a meeting with lawmakers.

"I think it's an all-of-the-above solution" with P3s and states, Shuster said.

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Rural Hospitals Are Dying and Pregnant Women Are Paying the Price [Back](#)

By Lisa Rab | 10/03/2017 05:39 AM EDT

BOONE, N.C.—Three years ago, Lucia Parker gave birth to her first child surrounded by people she loved. Her mother, sister, and husband were by her side at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, and the nurses attending her were family friends. Each of them took turns massaging her back. They lifted her out of a birthing tub and gave her an epidural when the labor pains grew too intense. By the time her son was born, there was not a dry eye in the room. "It felt like family," Parker says.

The hospital, in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, was 25 minutes from Parker's home. But this February, when her second baby is due, she won't be able to deliver there. Instead, she plans to drive an hour-and-a-half southwest to Mission Hospital in Asheville, on mountain roads that

could be slick with ice and snow, to give birth in a room with nurses and staffers who are strangers. "I have no idea how that's actually going to work," she says. "I am not gonna know anybody when I have this baby." She doesn't have much of a choice. Blue Ridge's labor and delivery unit, which delivered 173 children last year, shut down on September 30. The next closest hospital with a maternity ward, McDowell Hospital in Marion, is roughly an hour southeast of Parker's home, but she's afraid to drive there in labor. To reach it, she would have descend 1,400 feet in elevation, navigating a road with curves so tight motorcycle riders call it "[The Devil's Whip](#)."

Parker is not alone. As Congress debates repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, rural hospitals are in a kind of purgatory, unsure about their Medicaid budgets and the private health insurance that sustains them. At least 81 rural hospitals have shut down across the country since 2010, according the North Carolina Rural Health Research and Policy Analysis Center at UNC. The pace of closures has been increasing since the Great Recession, but the current health care policy limbo—which leaves hospitals and insurers unable to predict their income—exacerbates the problem. "The uncertainty is really impinging providers, particularly hospitals, from making the kinds of decisions that might put them on a better footing," says center director Mark Holmes.

Parker lives in an impoverished swath of rural Appalachia where the hospitals are particularly vulnerable. In her Congressional district, 20 percent of families with children live below the poverty line and more than 40 percent of residents—roughly 318,000 people—rely on some form of publicly-funded health care. Another hospital in the district, Angel Medical Center in Franklin, North Carolina, shut down its maternity ward in July, after officials said the unit was losing \$2 million a year. And Parker's congressman, Republican Mark Meadows, has not intervened to keep them open. The Freedom Caucus chairman has been one of the nation's most vocal critics of Obamacare, favoring legislation that ends insurance subsidies and makes deep cuts to Medicaid.

Any cuts to Medicaid would hurt rural hospitals, says Diane Calmus, government affairs and policy manager for the nonprofit National Rural Health Association. Seventy-five percent of patients in the Mission Health system—the nonprofit that runs Blue Ridge, Angel, and four other western North Carolina hospitals—are either uninsured or on Medicare or Medicaid. These hospitals were especially hard hit when the Republican-led North Carolina General Assembly refused to expand Medicaid in 2013. Eighteen other states made the same decision, and the impact was clear: more than 70 percent of the rural hospitals that shut down in the past seven years were in 16 of those states. Four hospitals in rural North Carolina have closed since 2013, and Blue Ridge has been losing money every fiscal year since 2013. Last year it lost \$3.1 million. Charity care—services that no one pays for—at rural hospitals has increased more than 50 percent since Obamacare passed. "We have a rural hospital closure crisis," Calmus says.

Holmes and other experts say the lack of Medicaid expansion is not the only cause of the crisis. They point to low Medicaid reimbursement rates, patients who can't afford their deductibles, consolidation of hospital ownership, declining rural populations, medical staffing shortages, and a longstanding trend of Southern hospitals struggling to make ends meet. "You really have a death by a thousand paper cuts situation here," Holmes says. But if a hospital wants to stay open, Calmus says, it may close a unit that is well-known for losing money: the maternity ward.

A recent study by researchers at the University of Minnesota found that more than half of the

nation's rural counties no longer have hospital obstetric services, and 9 percent of them lost those services between 2004 and 2014. Katy Kozhimannil, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health who co-authored the study, says hospital officials make these decisions only after weighing the community's needs against their ability to keep their doors open. More than half of all births at rural hospitals are funded by Medicaid, but the program reimburses hospitals at half the rate private insurance would. Low birth rates in rural areas compound the problem, because there are fixed costs for maintaining around-the-clock nurses, technicians, doctors and equipment. Mothers in Yancey County, where Parker lives, had 182 babies in 2015, compared to mothers in Buncombe County, which contains Asheville, who had 2,625 babies that year. "Obstetrics... is not a money maker for hospitals anywhere," Kozhimannil says. "At some point, it just becomes untenable to have the staff available."

Mission Health officials say the decision to close the labor and delivery unit at Blue Ridge was not a financial one. They blame low birth rates at the hospital and concerns about "clinical quality and safety standards," says Cara Truitt, regional advocacy director for Mission Health. Truitt pointed out that Blue Ridge had just one full-time obstetrician on call to deliver babies, and officials worried about providing the "general surgery support" needed to perform C-sections. By contrast, McDowell Hospital in Marion has three obstetricians, and Mission is currently investing \$45 million to rebuild that hospital, with five new delivery rooms and a C-section suite slated to open next year.

But many of Blue Ridge's doctors and nurses don't buy that argument. In addition to the obstetrician, four other people currently deliver babies at Blue Ridge, and two of them are family practice physicians trained to perform C-sections. The real challenge, some argue, is not quality but quantity: Blue Ridge was projected to deliver 200 babies this year, which was not enough to offset its expenses. "It appears to us that the motive to close labor and delivery was largely financial," the hospital's medical providers wrote in a joint public statement released this summer. "Hospitals across the country face financial challenges. Labor and delivery units usually lose money."

Mission concedes that the closure of Angel Medical Center's labor and delivery unit was due, in part, to uncertainty over the future of Obamacare and the lack of Medicaid expansion in North Carolina. If the state had expanded Medicaid, Mission would be \$8 million "better off," instead of \$34 million behind its budget goals, Mission CEO Ron Paulus told the local newspaper in May. (Paulus, through a spokesperson, declined to be interviewed for this story).

In April, senior Mission officials discussed the hospitals' predicament with Meadows, who told local reporters he was shocked by the announcement that Angel's labor and delivery unit would close. "Obviously it came as a bit of a surprise to me, but the decision was not predicated on anything we're working on in regards to the repeal and replace of Obamacare—it was an independent business decision that was made," Meadows told the *Smoky Mountain News*.

Meadows also denied that Medicaid expansion would have helped Angel keep its maternity ward open. "When looking at expanding Medicaid, it was mostly going to be for able-bodied single adults—that's a totally different argument," he said. In fact, pregnant mothers were covered by Medicaid before Obamacare passed. But Kozhimannil says an expansion would have sent more Medicaid payments to other parts of the hospital, and helped sustain money-losing operations, such as maternity wards.

Hospitals like Blue Ridge also receive special Medicaid funding, known as disproportionate share hospital payments (DSH), which help cover the cost of serving impoverished patients. Under Obamacare, those payments were supposed to disappear. In theory, they would be replaced by more patients receiving Medicaid coverage. But after many states refused to expand Medicaid, Congress repeatedly delayed the DSH funding cuts. They were slated to take effect on October 1, slashing \$2 billion in federal funding from hospitals like Blue Ridge in the next fiscal year.

In May, Meadows said he was trying to find a way to avoid that funding cut. "I'm working with colleagues in the Senate on how we can work with what they call the disproportionate payment for Mission and other hospitals," he told the *Smoky Mountain News*. "We now have to look at how we can make sure there's incentive for taking care of those with critical needs and also keep providers financially viable." It's unclear if Meadows' negotiations were successful. His press secretary did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

In the last week of September, the doctors at Blue Ridge delivered a baby every day, sometimes more than one. "The system is not ready for our department to close," Dr. Dorothy DeGuzman said. DeGuzman, a family practice physician trained in high-risk obstetrics and C-sections, has been delivering babies at Blue Ridge for six years. Now she's afraid the hospital will not be able to help women who need an emergency C-section. "And then a baby will die, and possibly a mother."

A 2011 study of more than 49,000 pregnant women in Canada found that traveling more than an hour to give birth led to higher rates of babies being admitted to neonatal intensive care units. Mothers also have more unplanned deliveries when hospitals close their maternity wards. "They end up delivering in their car on the way to the hospital, on the side of the road, [or] in the emergency room," Calmus says.

Truitt, the Mission spokesperson, downplayed such health risks. In the "very, very rare cases" when a woman needs to give birth on her way to another hospital, she says, Blue Ridge can deliver the baby in its emergency room, and have an ambulance transport the mother and newborn to Asheville or Marion.

But DeGuzman also worries her more impoverished patients will stop going to their prenatal appointments, which could affect the health of their babies. Blue Ridge will continue to offer prenatal care, but many women prefer to see the same doctors for their pregnancies and delivery. Calmus says lower-income women might intend to drive to Asheville for such appointments, and then stop showing up because they have to take a day off work, or can't afford the gas to drive three hours round trip. And they won't have DeGuzman there to remind them. After she learned Blue Ridge's maternity ward would shut down, DeGuzman accepted a job in California. She and the obstetrician who works at Blue Ridge are both leaving because they don't want to stop delivering babies. This means the women of Yancey and Mitchell counties are losing two of the three doctors in the area who perform C-sections. "In rural America, many physicians are connected to the hospital, and when the hospital cuts service lines closes, they do lose that workforce," Calmus says. "And the workforce doesn't come back."

The people who live near Spruce Pine understand what a loss this will be. This summer, families and doctors protested the closure of Blue Ridge's maternity ward, and many were

frustrated by Mission's response. "They elected to close labor and delivery at Blue Ridge, sending us back to a level of care we have not experienced in this community since the 1960's or 70's," Dr. Elizabeth Peverall, who cares for newborns at Blue Ridge, wrote in a letter to the editor of the local paper.

Some residents wonder how they will attract more young people and jobs to the area if mothers have no place to deliver their babies. Katie Willett, another patient of DeGuzman's, said she would like to see a birth center open in the area. However, Kozhimannil, the University of Minnesota professor, says birth centers, which are primarily staffed by midwives, face many of the same financial challenges as hospitals. And it would be tough for one to open without a nearby obstetrics unit available to handle C-sections.

Meanwhile, Willett's second child is due in February. She's considering delivering at a birth center in Asheville, about an hour away from her home near Blue Ridge. But she's not happy about it. "I've told Dorothy [DeGuzman], I can't imagine this process—pregnancy and labor and delivery—not here and not with her by my side," Willett says. If she goes into labor when it's snowing in the middle of the night, Willett and her husband will pack extra blankets and water in their car and start driving toward Asheville or Marion—whichever path is safest. "Worst case scenario, I think we'd have to consider the road."

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Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 4:49:48 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 10/02/2017 04:45 PM EDT

HOLA, OCTOBER: We're certainly not legislating at light speed here, but the 10th month of the Gregorian calendar doesn't look nearly as grim as once predicted. For starters, fiscal 2018 has begun without any furlough plans for federal workers. And both chambers are slated for real budget action this week.

Put this in your Palm Pilot: The Senate Budget Committee will begin marking up its resolution at [2:30 p.m. Wednesday](#), with a second crack at it beginning at [10:30 a.m. Thursday](#). On to floor action in the House, the lower chamber [plans to vote](#) Thursday (sometime before the fly-away time of 3 p.m.) on its own budget resolution, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#).

And then: Yes, this is surely progress. But Congress' budget writers have a lot of work to do in the weeks to come, as they try to reconcile major differences between their two fiscal plans, as [Sarah reports today](#). The most glaring divergence, of course, is that the House's proposal assumes no new deficit spending, while the Senate's resolution would allow tax writers to add \$1.5 trillion without offsets.

What gives? Because of the Senate's political dynamic, the onus will probably fall on House lawmakers to give up the most during conference negotiations. And at least some of the lower chamber's fiscal hawks seem prepared to back a final product that's far less conservative than their dream deal. With a lot of coaching from leadership, many GOP legislators are already writing off the ideological loss as a necessary concession to clinch an even bigger win: tax reform. "What's become clear this year is that the budget is not a budget," Rep. [Mark Sanford](#) (R-S.C.), a member of the usually uncompromising Freedom Caucus, tells us. "At best, it's a vehicle for tax reform and a variety of other conservative hopes and dreams."

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — In its first [report](#), the Trump administration's Council of Economic Advisers called regulation "a tax on the economy" that has slowed U.S. economic growth by an average of 0.8 percent a year since 1980. More from [Lorraine Woellert](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — The federal government has awarded \$154,728 to six grant recipients in the first two days of fiscal 2018. Last fiscal year, the government doled out more than [\\$662.7 billion](#) in grants.

BUDGET

DEMOCRATS' DREAM DOC: Democratic budget writers unveiled a multitrillion-dollar fiscal wish list today to counter their Republican peers' budget resolution. Like the GOP plan, Democrats would scrap federal spending caps under the Budget Control Act. But Democrats would spend \$603 billion on defense discretionary and \$570 billion on domestic programs, compared with the GOP's plan to spend \$621.5 billion on defense and \$511 billion on

domestic. [Summary](#) | [Text](#) | [Tables](#).

Bright blue blueprint: The document, drafted by Rep. [John Yarmuth](#) (D-Ky.), is jam-packed with liberal policy goals, like a minimum wage hike, paid parental leave, Pell Grant boosts, drug rebates for Medicare and an immigration overhaul. The only department that would see cuts over a decade would be Agriculture. The rest would see gradual — or in some cases, sharp — increases. In turn, the plan would balloon the deficit to about \$6.7 trillion after 10 years, up from \$562 billion at the end of fiscal 2017.

It's all relative: Yarmuth argues the minority party's plan would keep U.S. debt at a "sustainable" level by maintaining roughly the same level of debt held by the public — 77.5 percent this year, compared with a projected 76.9 percent over 10 years. "Unlike the Republican proposal, which betrays hardworking families to give massive tax breaks to the wealthy, our budget invests in education, infrastructure, health care, and our national security," Yarmuth wrote in a statement.

OCO crackdown: Democrats say they would fund overseas contingency operations, or OCO, at requested levels for fiscal 2018. But that war fund would disappear starting in fiscal 2019, substantially curtailing the Pentagon's budget.

EVEN BLUER: Meanwhile, Reps. [Mark Pocan](#) (D-Wis.) and [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) unveiled the Progressive Caucus' fiscal 2018 budget proposal. The [51-page document](#) was filed as an amendment to the House GOP budget scheduled for floor action this week. The Progressive Caucus plan pitches a \$2 trillion infrastructure and job investment, as well as \$200 billion for hurricane relief and climate change research.

DISASTER RELIEF

THE NEXT INFUSION: The White House is preparing to issue another disaster aid request even quicker than initially expected. The \$10 billion to \$15 billion proposal could make it to lawmakers by week's end, Playbook [scoops](#).

Tallying it up: Costs are piling up as the federal government runs triage in a half-dozen hurricane-ravaged states and territories, as shown in an internal [FEMA memo](#) obtained by POLITICO.

— Housing recovery has cost \$1.2 billion as of Sept. 29, with 54 percent of housing inspections completed in Texas, about 17 percent in Florida and about 39 percent in Puerto Rico.

— More than 114,000 flood insurance claims add up to more than \$3.3 billion so far.

— Small Business Administration loans tally about \$627 million, with 71 percent processed from Harvey and 35 percent processed from Irma.

— New SNAP payments will cost nearly \$119 million and benefit about 360,000 people.

— The USDA has estimated more than \$4 billion in crop insurance liabilities.

The next step: Budget chief Mick Mulvaney hinted this weekend that damage assessment has already begun in Puerto Rico. "The search-and-rescue effort is over," he [told](#) CNN on Sunday. "We have made it to every single place on the island to make sure that folks are safe."

THE MILITARY'S MISTAKES: President Donald Trump has blamed the "big water" (you know, the Atlantic Ocean) for slowing the government's response in the Caribbean. But in 2010, the U.S. military responded robustly to destruction in Haiti, an island just about 400 miles away from Puerto Rico. Back then, the USS Carl Vinson arrived within three days of the earthquake, and the Air Force airlifted 15,000 Americans within days. Ahead of Maria, however, the military actually pulled out hundreds of troops. Afterward, service members were slowly redeployed and left largely without a plan, Richard Parker [writes](#) for POLITICO Magazine.

Too early for pom-poms? Trump has been his administration's biggest cheerleader on the response to Puerto Rico (as evidenced by David Cohen's [tick-tock](#) of recent tweets). And POTUS' cheery tone hasn't gone unnoticed from on-the-ground responders, as Matthew Nussbaum and Marc Caputo [note](#). "It's kind of like a football coach at halftime saying, 'Hey, we're winning,'" Thomas Atkin, a former Coast Guard admiral, told POLITICO. "You still have half a game to play."

More: [Trump's risky fight](#) | ['Grudge presidency'](#) | [Mulvaney jabs San Juan mayor, too](#) | [Islanders make their escape](#) | [Florida braces for evacuees](#)

TAX

LINE DRAWN ON DEFICIT: Sen. [Bob Corker](#), newly freed from a reelection battle next year, is threatening to oppose the GOP's tax bill if it adds "one penny" to the deficit, Patrick Temple-West [reports](#). There will be some flexibility, of course. The Tennessee Republican says he's willing to use a "reasonable score on dynamic growth" — meaning a cost estimate that factors in potential GDP gains, and not the "static" version from CBO. (Speaking of the nonpartisan budget office, House Democrats want that official score before any markups, Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#) today.)

THE MUST-HAVES: Mulvaney says there are just two non-negotiable pieces of the White House tax plan: lowering rates for average workers and businesses. "This really is about the middle class and the corporate tax rate," Mulvaney said on CNN's "State of the Union," Patrick [reports](#).

More for the middle: House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) also spent Sunday morning talking up the GOP tax plan to middle-income earners. On his list: doubling the standard deduction, increasing the child tax credits, scrapping the so-called marriage penalty and keeping the homeowner tax break, as Patrick [notes](#) for Pros.

More: [Remember the Kansas experiment?](#) | [Tech firms go big](#)

WHITE HOUSE

KELLY HOLDS THE PERMISSION SLIPS: Amid Tom Price's [resignation](#) Friday, Cabinet officials were informed that they'll now need top-level permission to take private flights on the government's dime. The ultimate decider of who gets to avoid commercial air travel, and when: White House chief of staff John Kelly, Matthew Nussbaum [reports](#).

Fat lady hasn't sung: The Trump administration's private-plane pains definitely didn't end with Price's ouster. As Ben Lefebvre [reports](#) today, the Interior Department's inspector general has just opened an investigation into Secretary Ryan Zinke's use of taxpayer-funded charter

planes, after the watchdog "received numerous complaints." And EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is also still not in the clear.

More: [Price regrets 'distraction'](#) | [Who will replace him?](#) | [Just the nail in the coffin](#) | [Obamacare game-changer? Not so much.](#)

FBI

GUESS WE'LL NEVER KNOW: A federal judge has ruled that the FBI doesn't need to disclose how much it paid last year to get a private firm to unlock the iPhone associated with the 2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino, Calif., Josh Gerstein [reports](#). Helpful hint: Then-FBI Director James Comey said last year that the cost was more than he was expected to make in salary during the remainder of his term as head of the FBI — approximately \$1.4 million.

HEALTH CARE

PLUNGING PREMIUMS: The average monthly premium for a Medicare Advantage plan will be \$30 in 2018, a 6 percent decline from this year, Paul Demko [reports](#). The number of Medicare Advantage plans available nationwide will increase from about 2,700 to more than 3,100. And the average premium for prescription drug coverage in 2018 will be \$33.50 — down from \$34.70 this year.

EARMARKS

- Replacing faulty heart devices costs Medicare \$1.5 billion in 10 years. [New York Times](#).
- Trump says he's trying to 'reduce size of government' — but he's really not. [USA Today](#).
- Mnuchin: Can't guarantee tax cut for entire middle class. [Reuters](#).
- Mortgage investors question taxpayer cost of Wells Fargo seizures. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Op-ed: The U.S. can no longer afford deficit-increasing tax cuts. [The Wall Street Journal](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 67 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/budget-writers-prepare-to-compromise-024871>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Dueling GOP budgets head for collision in quest for tax reform [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/02/2017 05:23 AM EDT

House and Senate Republicans stand poised to wage war over their dueling versions of a budget resolution that would unlock the GOP's long-desired tax reform.

Senate Republicans rolled out their fiscal 2018 budget on Friday, and the two chambers' choices couldn't look more different. The House budget would require a tax plan that does not

add to the deficit, while the Senate edition would allow tax writers to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years.

One key element the two budget resolutions do share is the special power to write a tax reform bill that requires just a simple majority vote to advance in the Senate. If they fail, Republicans give up their shot at a tax overhaul without the need for Democratic support — which may mean no tax reform at all.

The high-stakes battle over that budget divergence will come to a head during the next few weeks, as both the House and Senate aim to pass their budgets and then steam toward a compromise.

Rep. Steve Womack, who is rumored to be in line as the next Budget Committee chairman, says tax reform will be the "ultimate test for leadership," riddled with policy differences that will challenge lawmakers to consider the legislative long game. That starts with fundamental disagreements over the content of the differing budgets that would jump start the tax debate by giving a green light to the separate reconciliation process.

"There will be a myriad of reasons why people will have certain issues that they want to bring forward. To some, it will be the cuts on the mandatory side that were advanced by our '18 budget resolution. To others, it will be the potential adding to the deficit and the potential consequences for long-term debt," Womack (R-Ark.) told POLITICO.

Already, it appears some of the House's fiscal hawks will be more willing this time to cede on their fundamental demands for deficit neutrality and sizable spending cuts. The House's ambitious fiscal agenda is jam-packed with spending cuts and program overhauls.

Rep. Mark Sanford (R-S.C.), a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, said it's his "sense of the conference at this point" that many fiscal conservatives will be more conciliatory than usual during budget negotiations. Republicans are under intense political pressure to begin work writing their tax reform.

What makes it easier, Sanford said, is that the budget resolution is a largely symbolic document that already falls short of the ideal many Freedom Caucus members desire. Even in the House's conservative outline, most of the difficult cuts wouldn't take place for several years.

"The budget is just a tattered document," Sanford said. "At this point, it is what it is — which is maybe a vehicle for tax reform."

Budget negotiations are even trickier in the Senate, where Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) can only lose a handful of votes. Already, McConnell has had to personally intervene in tax-related disputes among members threatening to hold up the Senate's budget.

"I'll tell you what the budget resolution will be — whatever the Senate can pass," Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.) said last week. "A lot of people have a hard time understanding that."

Laying out ultimatums, warns Sen. John Neely Kennedy (R-La.), will greatly impede conference negotiations on a final, bicameral product.

"I hope the House realizes what the Senate realizes — and that is the American people are very impatient with us right now," Kennedy said. "Everybody's not gonna be happy. But I

don't wanna see somebody say, 'Well, because you didn't do this, I'm taking my toys and going home.'"

In the House, GOP leaders have from the start tried to push the lower chamber's budget resolution toward a final product the Senate would be more willing to accept.

Last spring, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) convinced House Budget Chairman Diane Black (R-Tenn.) to trim the initial goal of \$500 billion in mandatory cuts to about \$203 billion. And Ryan urged lawmakers during a closed-door conference meeting to remain flexible on final budget instructions and specific tax cuts.

"Don't draw any red lines. Don't say, 'I've got to have this, I've got to have that,'" Rep. Tom Cole said Ryan instructed lawmakers.

Under the House budget, any tax reconciliation bill would have to include the \$203 billion in mandatory cuts achieved largely by cutting safety net programs. That prompted some GOP moderates to warn of the political optics of cutting food stamps or Medicaid to pay for corporate tax breaks.

The House budget also lays out strict parameters to prevent a tax plan from adding to the deficit, even short-term. And that language has given heartburn to Budget panel members like Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Ohio), who almost voted against the resolution because he was afraid it doesn't provide tax writers with enough funding flexibility to achieve desired cuts.

The final budget agreement, Renacci notes, will likely emerge "a little more flexible" due to Senate input.

The House's fiscal conservatives have already conceded that they expect to lose some battles over the final budget resolution.

Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), head of the House Freedom Caucus, said he supports the Senate's calls for adding \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years because it "allows for us to be very aggressive on tax cuts." But the North Carolinian is firm on his insistence that the final product can't simply be a "shell" for reconciliation.

For fiscal hawks like Meadows, concessions to achieve tax reform could be ugly marks on otherwise pristine records of opposing bills that don't meet all of their deficit-reducing demands.

House Republicans will likely be forced to abandon calls for roughly \$200 billion in mandatory cuts — the most ever proposed by a budget committee through reconciliation. They'll also be expected to sign on to a budget that breaks the party's cardinal rule: Achieving balance within 10 years.

Due to the tight time frame for tax reform, the House Budget Committee is hoping the Senate will be more likely to adopt some of the lower chamber's ideas, "rather than finding a middle ground on every single provision," one House GOP aide said.

"If they want to do \$1.5 trillion, then maybe the compromise is they look at mandatory spending," the aide said.

Senate budget writers have assumed offsets of their own, giving the Energy and Natural

Resources Committee the task of finding at least \$1 billion over a decade — projected savings expected to result from opening up oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Jennifer Scholtes contributed to this report.

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Trump economists say deregulation would boost economic growth [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 09/30/2017 02:02 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's Council of Economic Advisers called regulation "a tax on the economy" that has slowed U.S. economic growth by an average of 0.8 percent a year since 1980.

In its first [report](#), the three-member panel counted some 400 "economically significant regulations" created over the last eight years.

"Though each well-intended rule aims to enhance social welfare, it is crucial to separate the intention of a given regulation from its actual impact on the economy," they wrote. "The restrictions imposed by excessive regulations create unnecessary costs that are borne by families and business owners alike and lower U.S. GDP growth."

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SCOOP: Trump administration to ask for more relief funds [Back](#)

10/02/2017 06:37 AM EDT

SCOOP: MORE DISASTER MONEY -- The Trump administration will ask Congress to approve another between \$10 billion and \$15 billion for the FEMA disaster relief fund this week, according to sources with knowledge of the request. We hear the magic number will be \$13 billion. This is meant to begin to cover the cost of the spate of recent natural disasters, including the storm in Puerto Rico.

THE LATEST ON PUERTO RICO ...

-- "**San Juan mayor in hurricane spotlight after Trump tweets**," by AP's Danica Coto in San Juan: "In Puerto Rico's hurricane-ravaged capital, it seems Carmen Yulin Cruz is everywhere these days: handing out bags of ice, wading through chest-deep floodwaters, hugging people in need of comfort. Cruz has long won attention across the island for her hands-on style of leadership in San Juan. But this week she rose to international prominence as a target of Twitter attacks by U.S. President Donald Trump — including one tweet Sunday calling her and others 'politically motivated ingrates.' ... A graduate of Boston University and

Carnegie Mellon, she is also a former member of the island's House of Representatives."
<http://bit.ly/2x77rih>

-- **POOL REPORT DU JOUR - AFP's Michael Mathes**, quoting Trump at the Presidents Cup golf tournament in Jersey City, New Jersey: "'On behalf of all of the people of Texas, and... if you look today and you see what's happening, how horrible it is but we have it under really great control, Puerto Rico. And the people of Florida who have really suffered over this last period of time with the hurricanes,' Trump said before presenting the trophy to US captain Steve Stricker. 'I want to just remember them, and we're going to dedicate this trophy to all those people who went through so much, that we love, that are part of our great state, really a part of our great nation,' Trump said. Back to golf: 'Our team USA -- wow did you play well.'"

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Highlights from the Sunday shows [Back](#)

10/01/2017 12:42 PM EDT

SUNDAY BEST -- SAN JUAN MAYOR CARMEN YULIN CRUZ to GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS on ABC'S "THIS WEEK": "People are being told to register via Internet for FEMA relief, when we don't have any Internet or very little Internet, even in the San Juan metropolitan area. I recognize the good heart that the FEMA people have. They want to help. But they just don't have the resources, and it's not me who's saying it.

"General Buchanan, a three star general appointed now to take care of the situation, said two days ago, we just don't have the resources in order to handle the logistical support that is needed in San Juan and Puerto Rico. But we have done all that we can. People are out there. They're cleaning the streets. Community kitchens are coming up and we are getting tons of donations. On Thursday, I got three pallets of water, four pallets of food and four pallets of baby supplies from FEMA. All of this, I gave to the mayor of Comerío, a town whose mayor had come to the FEMA distribution center and had been told just wait until next Monday, because we have nothing."

-- **CHRIS WALLACE** talks to **FEMA DIRECTOR BROCK LONG** on **"FOX NEWS SUNDAY"**: "We can chose to look at what the mayor spouts off or what other people spout off, but we can also choose to see what's actually being done."

-- **CNN'S JAKE TAPPER** speaks with **OMB DIRECTOR MICK MULVANEY** on **CNN'S "STATE OF THE UNION"**: **TAPPER**: "Let me show you one last tweet from President Trump, and then we will get to tax reform. He wrote -- quote -- 'To the people of Puerto Rico, do not believe the #fakenews.' Director Mulvaney, as I'm sure you know, 95 percent of the people of Puerto Rico are without power, 89 percent have no cell service. So they're not seeing this news that the president is attacking. But beyond that obvious disconnect, these stories that CNN is reporting on the ground in Puerto Rico, firsthand accounts from American citizens in dire need, without food, without water, without power, do you think these stories are fake?"

MULVANEY: "No, I -- what you all have done -- I have watched a lot of the coverage of showing what's happening on the ground -- is entirely accurate. I think what you have not shown, however, is the federal effort that we have got in place down there, and the fact that the governor has been very complimentary of the administration. Again, I think there's more than 70 mayors on the island of Puerto Rico, and yet you seem to spend a lot of attention on the one from San Juan. So, I think that's where the president's pushback is. I don't know if there's been coverage, for example, that we have now made it to every single town. The search-and-rescue effort is over. We have made it to every single place on the island to make sure that folks are safe."

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The Military Was Ready in Texas and Florida. What Went Wrong in Puerto Rico? [Back](#)

By Richard Parker | 10/02/2017 09:59 AM EDT

Nearly two weeks after Hurricane Maria's landfall, the Trump administration's military aid to Puerto Rico may not be too late if it can save lives and ease the suffering of millions. But it is undisputedly arriving in amounts too little and too slowly, in sharp contrast to recent responses around the world and, most recently, elsewhere in the United States during this hurricane season.

Over the past few years, the military has conducted textbook operations in Pakistan, Japan, Thailand and Haiti—pumping in massive amounts of aid after devastating earthquakes and hurricanes in those countries, no matter how rough or isolated the conditions. Just weeks ago, the military response to Hurricane Harvey in Texas was rapid and powerful. In preparation for Hurricane Irma, the Trump administration again ordered up an extensive military relief operation.

But when Hurricane Maria struck at full strength several days later—precisely as advertised, and similar in scale to Harvey—the U.S. military simply called off the huge resources it had mustered for Hurricane Irma. An inadequately small military contingent was left on its own for nearly two weeks to help with the damage. If there was a plan for disaster relief it was not publicly apparent. And on-scene commander—crucial in crises this large—was not appointed until nearly 10 days after landfall.

No less an authority than the three-star general who reversed the disastrous initial federal response to Hurricane Katrina back in 2005, retired Army Lt. Gen. Russell Honoré, said as much. "We're replaying a scene from Katrina," he said on [National Public Radio](#) about Maria on Thursday. "We started moving about four days too late." That seems overly generous.

The voyage of the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) led by the assault vessel *USS Kearsarge* helps tell the tale quite starkly. I know the *Kearsarge* personally; she was my salty, floating home away from home during the spring of 1999, when I covered the Kosovo War.

The *Kearsarge* might be impressive, but it's important not to overestimate it and the other ships in the group, *Wasp* and *Oak Hill*. An amphibious ready group such as this is designed to project a comparatively small amount of power—there are only about 2,400 marines and a relative handful of aircraft aboard—with stunning precision and speed. It is neither meant to fight a whole war alone nor save millions of people on its own.

On August 31, the *Kearsarge* and company headed for the Texas Gulf Coast—six full days after Hurricane Harvey made its own devastating landfall. That might seem late, but the saving grace, of course, was that other military assets reached Texas first.

Indeed, Hurricane Harvey in Houston provided a preview of how the military normally responds to humanitarian disasters. Within six days, military search and rescue filled the skies, as HH-60s flew overhead while C-130s and 17 giant C-17 and two C-5 cargo planes from as far away as Utah and New York, ferried in supplies—despite closed civilian airports. The Coast Guard alone flew in 42 helicopters and seven cargo planes. Medical patients were evacuated to San Antonio. The U.S. Northern Command sent nearly 70 more helicopters. Over 6,000 active duty troops arrived along with 5,000 and then 6,000 more members of the Texas National Guard, maneuvering in nearly 300 high-water trucks, Chinook helicopters and boats.

With Hurricane Irma ominously approaching Florida, the *Kearsarge* and company turned east. The military's preparations for Irma were as awesome in their scale as they had been for Harvey. Some 8,000 troops of the Florida National Guard were not only activated but, like a wartime army, maneuvered across the state as Irma craftily perplexed forecasters as to where, precisely, it would strike. Other states pitched in thousands of additional guard troops. (All of this information is drawn from Northern Command's and other public military statements.)

At sea and in the air the response built up like a clenched fist. The *Kearsarge* amphibious group was not only on its way but the carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* made for the Keys with the support vessels *USS Iowa Jima*, *New York* and *San Jacinto*. And much of the entire helicopter aviation brigade of the fabled 101st Airborne Division—the world's largest helicopter army—prepared to deploy, packing its choppers into C-5 cargo planes.

The Air Force readied what's known as an air bridge: a continual flow of big C-17, C-5 and C-130 cargo planes. A U.S. military air bridge can move entire divisions—tanks, 10,000 troops, equipment and all—into combat halfway around the world overnight. This time, though, it would carry 14 million meals, water, fuel and equipment. Indeed, because of the overwhelming response, the *Kearsarge* was freed up to ferry British marines into the hard-hit British Virgin Islands.

But then Irma struck the Keys, spared Miami and spent itself bouncing up Florida's west coast. And suddenly, the *Kearsarge's* group was sailing alone into the Caribbean. It and its sister vessels headed to Dominica to evacuate that devastated island. *Wasp* stayed, [peeled off to the U.S. Southern Command](#), as the rest of the group headed for Puerto Rico, arriving the day after Maria roared across it and the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands. *Kearsarge* and *Oak Hill* were left to put a small advance party ashore in Puerto Rico to assess the situation the day after the storm and set up air traffic control. Helicopter search and rescue operations were launched and supplies were ferried ashore.

And everything else? Vanished. The *Lincoln* and other vessels left their posts in Florida turned back north. After dropping off fresh water in Florida, the *Lincoln* turned north and made port in Virginia by September 15. National Guard units returned home. The air armada of what

would have been hundreds of aircraft and helicopters bound for Irma never appeared after Maria. [An Army photographer captured](#) the 101st offloading its helicopters from the C-5s in the dark, even as Maria approached.

In Washington, the president has given himself and his administration "A-pluses" for their response to Maria, claiming his administration is "doing a very good job." At the same, time, the military leadership has come off as brutally slow and suspiciously defensive. For example, testifying on Capitol Hill last Tuesday, Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, [reportedly squawked](#) that the ports and airports weren't readily accessible.

Maybe not. A relatively small number of military flights—three to six daily until recently—landed at the international airport in the capital, San Juan, which also serves as the main air base for the Puerto Rican National Guard. Now those numbers of flights are to ramp to 10 daily. And yes, the vast majority of old military facilities in the American commonwealth are shuttered.

Yet there are 15 airports or airfields in Puerto Rico, including on the smaller and remote islands of Culebra and Vieques. The Culebra airport is short but big enough for large helicopters. The Vieques airport has a runway 4,300 feet long. That's plenty big enough for a C-130, which needs a runway just 3,000 feet in length and 60 feet in width, according to the Defense Technical Information Center. The U.S. Coast Guard, a far smaller service, has reportedly been ferrying water and food via air into the airport there; if the limited air assets of the Coast Guard can make it, it stands to reason that the Air Force and Navy can, too.

On Wednesday, by the Pentagon's own count, nine airports in Puerto Rico were open. Only Thursday did the Northern Command announce that it was "adjusting" from a small seaborne operation to a larger airlift, emphasizing big cargo planes. Three harbors in Puerto Rico and eight in the Virgin Islands were serviceable to one degree or another, according to the military.

And yet in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, American citizens are waiting for the *USNS Comfort* hospital ship, which won't arrive until next week. Ten days after landfall there was no real air bridge. Likely dozens upon dozens of heavy helicopters are needed to move supplies until trucks are offloaded. And reservist units specifically trained for long-term humanitarian relief, water purification, medical care and military police? As of this writing, there is absolutely no sign of them. Ten days in, a few Marines, small Army elements and the Puerto Rican National Guard were ashore on their own.

In contrast, the United States eventually put 60,000 federal and reserve troops into New Orleans after Katrina after 2005, Honoré noted. Puerto Rico will need far more, he said. As in all things in the military there is a manual for responding to humanitarian disasters. The most recent version [is JP 3-29](#), geared primarily for foreign operations, but generally applicable. This 203-page volume from the Joint Staff at the Pentagon spells out—in excruciating detail—what to and what not to do in these circumstances.

It's this kind of detail that created successes under brutal circumstances from Pakistan to Japan to Thailand—and Haiti in 2010, when the USS Carl Vinson arrived just three days after an earthquake and the Air Force airlifted 15,000 Americans within days.

In the case of Maria, at first blush, three things appear to have not been done. The first is

adequately preposition forces and assets. The second is the timely appointment of an on-scene commander; the U.S. Northern Command did not appoint combat veteran Brig. Gen. Richard Kim until 10 days after landfall. The third is a detailed plan. Planning is paramount, according to the manual. And if there was one, it certainly was not publicly announced as were military relief efforts for Irma and Harvey—even though Maria's strength and trajectory were known a full four days before landfall.

The Trump administration has sought, desperately, to shift the blame and claim that this was somehow a surprise—even though a direct hit was forecast days beforehand. Later, Lt. Jeffrey Buchanan, the three-star land forces commander at Northern Command, even claimed that the hurricane's effect was not foreseeable. Again, suspiciously defensive. If the military didn't think Maria was serious, then why did it evacuate its own aircraft on the island to Guantanamo Bay?

For the military, Maria may be a singular stain upon a noble and sterling record built not on taking—but saving—lives. The Trump administration is due a serious reckoning. That's because for millions of fellow Americans in the Caribbean this is serious, if not deadly, business.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Trump tweets of progress in Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By David Cohen | 10/01/2017 10:02 AM EDT

President Donald Trump began Sunday with a trio of tweets extolling his administration's response to the disastrous situation in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

His positive remarks were in contrast to some of those he made Saturday, and some were met with criticism who thought they were inaccurate.

Trump's tweets began: "We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico. Outside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates ...

"... people are now starting to recognize the amazing work that has been done by FEMA and our great Military. All buildings now inspected ...

"... for safety. Thank you to the Governor of P.R. and to all of those who are working so closely with our First Responders. Fantastic job!"

His tweets were in contrast to some he wrote Saturday in which he assailed the mayor of San Juan and the news media — and seemingly mocked the population of Puerto Rico as lazy.

"Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help. They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort," he tweeted Saturday.

It wasn't clear whether Trump's claims Sunday were true. CNN, for instance, quoted the

governor of Puerto Rico as saying that some areas of the island remain basically isolated, casting doubt on Trump's claim that "all buildings now inspected."

A White House official later clarified that "in the case of the President's tweet, inspections should equate to searches" — and added: "2,649 is the number of structures searched as of September 30th related to Hurricane Maria, which covers both Puerto Rico and St. Croix."

The official noted that various humanitarian missions continued.

San Juan's mayor, speaking on ABC's "This Week," pushed back against the president.

Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz rejected the president's notion she was not coordinating with FEMA. "I was in FEMA the — a couple of days afterwards, when they were at the San Juan Marriott. I was invited to visit and we have been communicating ever since," she told host George Stephanopoulos.

Cruz added: "I know the good heart of the American people, and I know that when a mayday sound goes off, they come to the rescue. They did it in Haiti. They did it in Africa. They've done it all over the world. We just want it to be done here, in a Caribbean nation that has 3.5 million U.S. citizens."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) tried to walk a fine line in the dispute between Trump and Cruz.

"I don't spend a lot of time thinking about it, to be honest with you, because right now, having lived through four hurricanes, nothing like what Puerto Rico's facing, you know, our desire is to be a voice and a force for positive results, helping people," he told John Dickerson on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Rubio added: "I do think every minute we spend in the political realm bickering with one another over who's doing what, or who's wrong, or who didn't do right, is a minute of energy and time that we're not spending trying to get the response right."

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Trump's upbeat Puerto Rico rhetoric clashes with reality on the ground [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Marc Caputo | 09/29/2017 09:08 PM EDT

President Donald Trump says his administration is deftly responding to the devastating hurricane that leveled Puerto Rico, but the jarring gap between his rhetoric and the dramatic reports about dire conditions there is raising fresh questions about the effectiveness of recovery efforts on the island.

As his administration grapples with the third hurricane to hit the United States in a matter of weeks, and as the relief operation in Puerto Rico kicks into gear, Trump has repeatedly said he's getting positive reviews. "Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello just stated: 'The Administration and the President, every time we've spoken, they've delivered,'" Trump [tweeted](#) Friday.

But nine days after Hurricane Maria knocked out the island's power, communications system and some roadways, Americans there are still struggling to get supplies and phone service.

"There's always a danger whenever you start responding in a way that says, 'Hey we've done a great job,' and there are still people in need," said Thomas Atkin, a former Coast Guard admiral and principal deputy assistant secretary of defense under President Barack Obama. "It's kind of like a football coach at halftime saying, 'Hey, we're winning.' You still have half a game to play."

Publicly, Trump and Gov. Ricardo Rosselló have praised each other, with the president claiming Friday morning on Twitter, "FEMA and First Responders are amazing. Governor said 'great job!'" But while Rosselló has repeatedly expressed gratitude for the federal help, he told MSNBC on Friday that the federal "response still is not where it needs to be."

Part of the problem is, as Trump has said, that it's more difficult to move resources to Puerto Rico than to Texas or Florida, which were also hit by major storms recently.

"This is a lot harder than people think," said Craig Fugate, Obama's FEMA director who was largely praised for his work at the agency.

But Puerto Rico's government also was less prepared for Hurricane Maria than Texas or Florida were. Puerto Rico's electrical grid was already decayed from years of neglect and was damaged further by Hurricane Irma days before Maria hit. Once the power and cell service were knocked out, along with the roads, the government's ability to operate was crippled.

At the same time, federal officials are hampered in how decisively they can respond in Puerto Rico. Local leaders bristle at the idea the military should take over operations, for example, valuing their independence from Washington. Instead, they have requested more helicopters, military help to fix roads, and faster approval from the Federal Aviation Administration for companies seeking to fix communications systems.

"Puerto Rico isn't Texas. It isn't Florida. It's a world of its own. And it's a complete mess," said one official, in a telephone interview from San Juan, who is assisting the administration and didn't want to speak publicly for fear of upsetting the alliance between the governments in San Juan and Washington.

The sense that the Trump administration's response has been off-key has not helped.

When Trump has tried to point out Puerto Rico's infrastructure problems, he has come across as blaming it, bringing up that the island was in debt "to Wall Street and the banks which, sadly, must be dealt with," as he tweeted Monday. Pointing out the difference in preparedness compared to Texas and Florida reads as "talking down to the victim," said Tevi Troy, who served as a deputy assistant to President George W. Bush for domestic policy when Hurricane Katrina hit.

Local officials dispute that characterization as well. "We've been here for 10 days and we still don't have reliable communications ... And that's our fault? That's bad management on our part?" asked one Puerto Rico official who also did not want to be named so as not to disrupt relations with Washington.

Trump raised congressional ire on Wednesday when he explained a reluctance to waive the

Jones Act, a shipping law, because he was hearing from "a lot of shippers and ... a lot of people who work in the shipping industry that don't want the Jones Act lifted." The administration waived the act on Thursday and said it had done so as soon as Puerto Rico's governor made the request.

The rest of the administration has talked up its own actions, too. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke called the Puerto Rico response a "good news story," though she later clarified that she was not satisfied. "This is textbook, and it's been done well," homeland security adviser Tom Bossert echoed, calling the response "unprecedented."

And, in a repetition of one of Trump's own favorite lines, he added: "They're going to come out bigger, better and stronger than ever."

Critics have fired back against the early celebratory talk.

"Damn it, this is not a good news story," San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz told CNN on Friday. "This is a people are dying story. This is a life or death story. This is a there's a truck-load of stuff that cannot be taken to people story. This is a story of a devastation that continues to worsen because people are not getting food and water."

The relief official who spoke to POLITICO from San Juan said mainland officials need to reorient their thinking about the depth of the problems in Puerto Rico.

"We have to think of this as societal collapse: no power, no water, no food, no nothing," the official said. "We came in thinking this would be a traditional model of disaster response ... It is up to us to keep everything moving. Civil society is pretty much gone, and we didn't realize that until like 36 or 48 hours ago. And who knows when it's going to end."

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Trump picks risky Puerto Rico fight [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Marc Caputo | 09/30/2017 07:50 AM EDT

The natural disaster in Puerto Rico has escalated into a firestorm for President Donald Trump, whose Saturday Twitter attack on the mayor of San Juan drew harsh condemnations, new charges of insensitivity, and warnings about political fallout.

In a series of Saturday morning tweets, Trump blasted the "poor leadership ability" of Puerto Rican officials, who he said "want everything to be done for them." Trump also said the island's leaders "are not able to get their workers to help," and accused the Democratic mayor of San Juan — who has publicly criticized his administration's response to Hurricane Maria — of scoring partisan political points.

Even Republicans were uncomfortable seeing television images of suffering Puerto Ricans juxtaposed with Trump's fighting words, tweeted from his luxury golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey.

"He is definitely not helping," said Republican state Rep. Bob Cortes, a Puerto Rico native who lives in Central Florida, which has seen a huge influx of Puerto Rican families in recent years. Cortes added that the controversy "gives [Democrats] a platform to register new voters."

Other Republicans also worry that Trump's comments could be a godsend to Democrats in Florida—a swing state whose Puerto Rican population of more than 1 million is expected to swell as people flee the storm's aftermath.

Ten days after Maria ravaged the island, most of Puerto Rico is still without power and many of its 3.4 million residents, most of them U.S. citizens, lack basic supplies like food and water. Critics say the Trump administration has been slow to help, with some invoking the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans a decade ago.

The perception that George W. Bush oversaw an incompetent and insensitive response to Katrina dealt a crippling blow to his presidency from which he never recovered, helping to drive his approval ratings to the low 20s. Trump officials scoff at the comparison with Katrina, saying their response to Maria has been appropriate.

In Washington, Democrats were swift to condemn Trump's tweets Saturday.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, released a statement calling Trump's tweets "abhorrent, baseless, and ... beneath the dignity of the office of the Presidency."

"Lives are on the line and people are dying," he added.

Trump's early morning broadsides, which began at 7:19 a.m., came after San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz slammed the administration's response repeatedly on Friday amid growing media coverage of the devastation on her island.

"We are dying here," Cruz said in an emotional plea. "If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy." Puerto Rican officials say Maria killed at least 16 people there — a number experts believe will grow significantly.

From Bedminster, Trump defended his response while dismissing Cruz as a partisan.

"The Mayor of San Juan, who was very complimentary only a few days ago, has now been told by the Democrats that you must be nasty to Trump," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help."

Trump added that the Puerto Ricans "want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort. 10,000 Federal workers now on Island doing a fantastic job."

But Republicans are anxious about the [political effect](#) the Puerto Rico crisis might have on Trump's national standing as well as their fortunes in Florida, where Gov. Rick Scott is mulling a bid against Democratic incumbent Sen. Bill Nelson next year. The past four top-of-the-ticket races in Florida were decided by 1.2 percentage points or less. Puerto Rican voters already tend to favor Democrats.

"It is a political nightmare for both Trump and Scott," a consultant associated with the

Republican National Committee said in a text message. He said the disaster and Trump's "asinine response to criticism" have given Democrats "a way to 1) energize Puerto Rican voters in Florida and 2) motivate Puerto Rican residents who will be Florida residents after this disaster."

While echoing those concerns, Cortes also said Puerto Rico deserves its share of the blame, thanks to the commonwealth's endemic corruption and mismanagement. "It took a storm of this magnitude to show how underprepared they were," Cortes said.

Meanwhile, the White House is fighting against the narrative that it has been slow to act. Trump's Saturday schedule lists five phone calls to discuss the storm response, including one with Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long.

Trump also reiterated his plan to visit the island on Tuesday, saying he would "hopefully" stop off in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Trump's White House social media director, Dan Scavino, joined the fray on Twitter, calling Cruz a "hater" and "an opportunistic politician." Cruz denied that her criticism of Trump was fueled by personal animus.

"Actually, I was asking for help," she told MSNBC on Saturday morning. "I wasn't saying anything nasty about the president." Cruz noted that even Trump's point man for the disaster recovery effort, Army Lt. Gen. Jeff Buchanan, said on Friday that the number of U.S. troops assisting is "not enough." (Buchanan said more manpower and equipment like helicopters were headed to the island.)

Trump's tweets also targeted media outlets that have dedicated increasing amounts of air time to the suffering and chaos on the pummeled island.

"Fake News CNN and NBC are going out of their way to disparage our great First Responders as a way to 'get Trump.' Not fair to FR or effort!" he wrote.

Under mounting pressure, in recent days Trump officials have defended their relief effort as a success. On Thursday, acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke called the response "a good news story."

The comment only inflamed frustrations on an island where a sense of helplessness prevails, however.

"Damn it, this is not a good news story," Cruz told CNN on Friday. "This is a people are dying story. This is a life or death story. This is a there's a truckload of stuff that cannot be taken to people story. This is a story of a devastation that continues to worsen because people are not getting food and water."

Cruz, a liberal Trump critic, initially avoided tussling with the president for fear that it would become a distraction to relief efforts and "not productive."

But as the week unfolded, Puerto Rico officials felt their pleas for faster action and less red tape went unheeded. Then, on Thursday, Trump touted the recovery effort on Twitter, writing, "Governor said 'great job!'" That was an apparent reference to Cruz, who finally let loose with harsh criticism.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) also pointed to problems on the island in a Friday tweet, writing that criticism of the Trump administration response is "missing [the] main problem." FEMA "has sent lots of aid problem is distribution once it gets to #PuertoRico," Rubio wrote.

Rubio, though, [warned](#) the Trump administration privately and publicly that Puerto Rico could become a "Katrina-like" situation.

Behind the sharp debate over disaster response are internal political tensions on the island. Cruz is eyeing the job of Puerto Rico's Republican governor, Ricardo Rossello, who has taken pains to avoid publicly criticizing Trump. She is developing strong ties to Florida Democrats and met Wednesday with Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine, a likely candidate for Florida governor, when he delivered 7,000 pounds of relief supplies to the island.

About 24 hours later, Florida's Republican governor met with Rossello in Puerto Rico, then debriefed Trump on the disaster response over lunch the following day.

"This is not a time for politics," Scott said on the White House lawn Friday, saying that Rossello is "going through an unbelievable crisis."

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Trump's Puerto Rico response tests the limits of his fondness for grudges [Back](#)

By Annie Karni | 10/01/2017 03:53 PM EDT

President Donald Trump may not have a cohesive foreign policy doctrine or any clear ideological underpinning for his domestic agenda.

But he has a firm personal outlook on life that has driven him as a businessman, a candidate and now as president — one he outlined succinctly at an early campaign stop in Dubuque, Iowa, last year. "When people treat me unfairly," he warned, "I don't let them forget it."

Until this weekend, when Trump spent two days engaging in a personal feud with the mayor of San Juan, Trump's "grudge presidency" had not been tested by a humanitarian crisis in which lives were being lost in real time — and where there was no natural constituency for his explosion of grievances.

"We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico," the president tweeted Sunday morning from his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey. "Outside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates, people are now starting to recognize the amazing work that has been done by FEMA and our great Military."

The message followed a series of tweets on Saturday lashing out at Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of San Juan, accusing her of "such poor leadership ability" in not getting people on the ground to help.

It was a direct response to her emotional news conference Friday night, in which she begged the president for more help. "We are dying here," Cruz said, slamming down two thick binders

of documentation that San Juan had provided to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to obtain help.

In another world, Cruz's frustration with the layers of bureaucracy standing between her wiped-out city and food and water delivery might have been in line with Trump's own interest in cutting regulations and red tape.

The props she used were similar to charts Trump has wielded at news conferences to demonstrate how obtuse the country's permitting and regulatory process can be. But Cruz's plea was interpreted by Trump as a personal insult.

"I am asking the president of the United States to make sure somebody is in charge, that is up to the task of saving lives," she said. "If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency."

On Twitter, Trump noted that Cruz had been "very complimentary" to him in the past. "They want everything to be done for them," he complained, "when it should be a community effort."

To longtime Trump watchers, Trump's personal reaction to Cruz was par for the course. Last weekend, he revoked an invitation for NBA star Stephen Curry to visit the White House with his team after Curry slighted him by saying he did not want the team to make the trip.

From the perch of the presidency, he has gone after morning show hosts such as Mika Brzezinski; lawmakers from his own party, such as Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain; and members of his own Cabinet — most notably, Attorney General Jeff Sessions. He has even taken on the NFL.

Trump's criticism of Cruz was in line with how he has reacted for years to individuals who have criticized him personally.

"This stretches back to Trump's earliest days in the New York media ecosystem," said Republican strategist Rick Wilson, a frequent Trump critic. "He's a creature of the New York Post Page Six culture, and so beefs, grudges, feuds — either real or contrived — came to be associated in his mind with exposure and success. Sadly, now, of course, he's the commander in chief of the greatest nation on earth."

This time, White House officials joined in, defending Trump's feud with the mayor.

"My understanding is that as of yesterday, she had not even been to the FEMA operation center in her own city," budget director Mick Mulvaney said Sunday morning on CNN, referring to Cruz. "It is unfortunate that the San Juan mayor wants to sort of go against the grain. We'd love to have her on the team as we all pull in the same direction."

White House communications adviser Mercedes Schlapp posted on Twitter a Daily Caller interview with another Puerto Rican mayor, who accused Cruz of not participating in meetings with FEMA. "Puerto Rican mayors support federal response & POTUS leadership & humanitarian efforts," she posted on Twitter. "Liberal Media won't cover other side."

Cabinet secretaries were dispatched to the Sunday shows to explain, once again, why there was nothing surprising about Trump's unusual behavior. "When the president gets attacked, he attacks back," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin explained on "Meet the Press." "I think the mayor's comments were unfair given what the federal government has done."

Behind the scenes, the White House press office churned out "readouts" of Trump's calls with other Puerto Rican officials — including a former governor, now working as a lobbyist in Washington, who "thanked the president for his leadership and commitment to the people of Puerto Rico."

Trump allies shrugged off the weekend back-and-forth. "Donald Trump is never going to attend a sensitivity class," said Chris Ruddy, the chief executive of Newsmax and a longtime Trump friend. "I think everyone has figured that one out. I think he's done a pretty good job handling this storm so far."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Trump saw his response as a political opportunity to demonstrate empathy and get credit for delivering results. On Saturday, he tweeted that he and first lady Melania Trump would be visiting Puerto Rico this week, but otherwise, he was old-school Trump.

"This lack of empathy, of being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes during the worst catastrophe the island has seen — the fact that this is what he's focusing on while people are still not being communicated with, makes me ill," said Democrat Melissa Mark-Viverito, the speaker of the New York City Council and a native of Puerto Rico.

Mark-Viverito visited San Juan last weekend as part of a group of 25 representatives from New York City, she said. She defended Cruz's criticisms of the government response, based on what she saw.

"I was there last weekend, and I didn't see any FEMA representation on the ground," she said. "I went knocking on doors with the mayor — people were not waiting for the government, they were getting in their bulldozers and clearing paths. I didn't witness any sort of federal representation."

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Mulvaney criticizes San Juan's mayor [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 10/01/2017 10:06 AM EDT

A White House official added criticism on the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, a day after President Donald Trump's condemnations on Twitter.

In an interview on CNN's "State of the Union," Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney questioned San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz's response to Hurricane Maria.

"My understanding is that as of yesterday, she had not even been to the FEMA operation center in her own city," Mulvaney said, referring to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"It is unfortunate that the San Juan mayor wants to sort of go against the grain. We'd love to

have her on the team as we all pull in the same direction."

As of Saturday, 10 days after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island, most of Puerto Rico was still without power and many of its 3.4 million residents, most of them U.S. citizens, lacked basic supplies like food and water. Critics say the Trump administration has been slow to help, with some invoking the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005.

Trump has said he will be going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday. He also tweeted after his initial criticism of Cruz: "Results of recovery efforts will speak much louder than complaints by San Juan Mayor."

San Juan has a population of about 347,000, according to a 2016 estimate by the Census Bureau.

Mulvaney also criticized media coverage of the administration's response to the crisis in Puerto Rico.

"I've known from Day One that there are folks who want to see this administration fail," Mulvaney said.

The media have not shown "the federal effort that we have in place down there," he said. "There are more than 70 mayors on the island of Puerto Rico, and yet you seem to spend a lot of attention on the one from San Juan. I think that's where the president's pushback is."

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Puerto Rico's Exodus Begins with a Trickle Into Orlando [Back](#)

By Francisco Alvarado | 09/29/2017 07:42 PM EDT

ORLANDO—A few times a day, on no particular schedule, a plane pulls up to a gate at the airport here and disgorges a hundred and fifty or more exhausted, anxious, and very often hungry people. Only three hours before, they were among thousands of panicked storm victims, packed into a sweltering airport in San Juan, clamoring for an \$800 seat on anything with wings that might ferry them away from the devastation left nine days ago by Hurricane Maria. Now, in the air-conditioned comfort of Concourse D, they are safe in a country that is technically their own, but they are not home.

The halting parade of evacuees that has passed through the Orlando airport over the past week—and through Miami's airport, too—lacks the visual drama of earlier crises in the Caribbean, when oppression, natural disaster or plain desperation pushed Cubans and Haitians onto crude homemade rafts or into the holds of leaky fishing trawlers. But this is every bit an exodus of that order. The means of escape is not a harrowing ordeal, but what's being left behind most certainly is. And those lucky enough to get out are not so exhausted that they can't summon anger at the government officials who they feel paid them less heed than hurricane victims on the mainland.

When Roberto Marquez and his wife Lourdes arrived at Luis Muñoz Marín International

Airport in San Juan around 5:30 a.m. on September 25, they found utter chaos. "There were a few thousand people already there," the 53-year-old attorney said. "There was no power, no ventilation, no cell service and no security guards. Just airline employees sort of winging it."

The couple had tried to leave Puerto Rico before Hurricane Maria slammed into the island five days earlier, but were unable to find available seats. After the storm with its 155-mile-per-hour winds passed, Marquez was able to reach his sister in Florida, who booked two tickets on a Southwest Airlines flight scheduled to depart on September 22. It was cancelled because the airport had not reopened. Two days later, when a few flights resumed, Marquez and his spouse drove to the airport. "We had to physically be there in order to get on a list for a flight on Monday," he said. "On Monday, we were told to get in a long line of people who were being picked to get on a plane on a first-come, first-served basis."

After waiting for nearly four hours, the Marquezes boarded a Southwest jet that was supposed to depart for Orlando at 9:30 a.m. The flight didn't take off for another two hours. Marquez estimates the plane carried 166 passengers, including dozens of elderly people and unaccompanied children. "There was an old lady who had an oxygen mask and needed dialysis," Marquez said. "The man sitting in front of me was a renal patient. And I counted seven children who were 2-years-old or younger."

Marquez's sister picked them up and drove them 90 miles to Tampa, where the couple intend to stay indefinitely. "My plan is to work from Tampa for as long as I can," Marquez said. "To be honest, things were pretty bad in Puerto Rico before Maria hit us. I don't know if I am going back."

Marquez is not alone. Between September 24—the first day departing flights resumed—and September 28, more than 3,000 passengers from San Juan have arrived at Miami International Airport (Orlando airport officials could not provide similar arrival numbers). Most will likely resettle in Central Florida, which in recent years has become home to more than 1 million Puerto Ricans seeking job opportunities and financial stability as the U.S. territory continues to slog through a crippling debt crisis that has driven unemployment to 10 percent. Hurricane Maria, which left most of the island's 3.4 million people without electricity, knocked out a third of the hospitals, leveled thousands of homes and tore up hundreds of miles of road, only hastened the collapse.

"I've heard an estimated 15,000 Puerto Ricans from the island will be in Central Florida by mid-October," said Ney Rivera Garcia, a founding member of Orlando-based Puerto Rican Action Initiative. "We are preparing to do whatever we can to help our brothers and sisters."

Garcia was among dozens of volunteers packing up supplies and essentials inside El Centro Borinqueño, a large Puerto Rican community center and event venue in Orlando. The 64-year-old Puerto Rican activist said he was able to purchase airline tickets at \$800 each for his daughter, his son-in-law and his granddaughter. They live in Bayamon, a city in Puerto Rico's northern coast that experienced heavy floods. "She called my wife to let us know she was fine right after the storm," Garcia said. "But it's been two days that I haven't heard from her."

Elected officials in Orange County are just beginning to figure out how to deal with the coming onslaught of Puerto Rican storm evacuees, who cannot be turned away since they are U.S. citizens. Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs could not be reached for comment, but in a September 28 memo to county commissioners, she said she spoke with Governor Rick Scott to determine what resources will be available to assist individuals and families who have left or

plan to leave Puerto Rico.

"The governor has assured me that he is working directly with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to meet the needs of those evacuees," Jacobs wrote. "Not only must our federal government partners have a plan, a number of local entities, from schools to hospitals to social service agencies, must also be ready to welcome our friends from the storm-battered island."

However, some evacuees blame FEMA and the Trump administration for providing a slow, disinterested response to the calamity enveloping Puerto Rico. Javier Colom arrived in Orlando on a JetBlue flight Wednesday morning. The 31-year-old from Mayagüez, Puerto Rico's eighth-largest municipality, said he and three friends sustained themselves for almost a week on a diet of fruit, crackers, peanut butter and water.

He said the federal government has been dragging its feet compared to the response after Hurricane Harvey inundated the Houston area and only days later Florida was raked from south to north by an equally monstrous Hurricane Irma. "Whether we are here or in Puerto Rico, we are still U.S. citizens," Colom said. "We have sent our people to wars and to defend this country. We deserve respect from the people in charge who can help us."

Garcia echoed Colom's criticisms. "We are treated like second-class citizens," Garcia said. "We are seen as immigrants just like any Mexican or anyone from a Latin American country."

Meanwhile, Hurricane Maria refugees continue trickling through Orlando International Airport. On a Wednesday afternoon, family members anxiously waited outside the terminal's concourse D for relatives arriving on a Southwest plane.

Francisco Marrero, a husky Puerto Rican with gelled black hair, woke up at 7 a.m. and drove four hours from Miami to pick up his wife, Karla, and his daughters, Amber and Inara. After the hurricane hit, he didn't hear from his wife for almost three days. "Those were the most stressful days of my life," he said. "I wasn't able to calm down until I heard her voice."

Marrero relocated from Gurabo, a city in central Puerto Rico, to Miami two months ago. His wife and kids were supposed to join him the week Hurricane Maria hit the island. "God moved heaven and earth to bring them here," he said. "I had a stable job in Puerto Rico, but I got a better job offer in Miami. So there was no thinking twice about it."

Karla said she had been staying with her parents, whose home got flooded, but did not sustain any wind damage. "It was an extremely frustrating experience not being able to let my husband know we were okay," she said. "Our plan now is to stay here and live in Florida."

Nearby, Marlene Santiago held up a white poster stamped with the Puerto Rican flag that read, "Welcome home! Mom and dad, we missed you!"

Spotting her parents William and Marjorie Santiago, she ran into their arms and held them in a long embrace. "I was hysterical," Marlene Santiago said. "For three days, I didn't know anything about my parents."

She said a family friend had to drive an hour-and-a-half from Ponce, where her father and mother were staying, to San Juan in order to get phone service and call her to let her know they were fine. Marjorie Santiago said she and William had been trying to catch a flight to

Orlando since Sunday. "We waited for six hours and had no luck," the 74-year-old retiree said. "We went back on Tuesday early in the morning and waited until around 5 p.m."

The Santiagos finally got seats the following day when William, a diabetic, started to show signs of low blood sugar. "The conditions in the San Juan airport are horrible," Marjorie Santiago said. "It is incredibly hot because there is no air conditioning. Everybody there is desperate to get out."

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Corker: Lobbying battle ahead for tax breaks [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 10/01/2017 12:09 PM EDT

As Congress takes the driver's seat in advancing President Donald Trump's tax plan, a fierce lobbying battle is about to begin as people try to keep special tax breaks from being eliminated, a top Senate Republican said on Sunday.

Four days after Trump released a landmark tax reform proposal, members of his administration deflected questions about who specifically will pay lower taxes. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said Congress' tax-writing committees now have to get into the knotty details.

As that process begins, lobbyists will be fighting to protect trillions of dollars in special tax breaks for various business sectors and individuals, said Sen. Bob Corker, speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"Every lobbyist in the world is going to be up here fighting those," the Tennessee Republican said. If those lobbyists successfully twist arms in Congress, the deficit might explode as a result of the tax legislation, he said.

Corker — who announced last month he will not run for reelection in 2018 — has said he will not vote for a tax reform bill that adds to the deficit.

In the budding tax plan, "I am willing to accept a reasonable score on dynamic growth," said Corker referring to a budget measuring technique that includes an estimate of the potential economic boost to the economy from tax cuts.

Still, if the tax legislation looks as if it would add "one penny to the deficit," Corker said he would oppose it.

"Everyone was a fiscal hawk, kind of, not really, but kind of up until the election," Corker said of congressional Republicans. "Now it's like there is a party going on up here."

The deficit "is the greatest threat to the nation," Corker said.

Mnuchin, speaking on ABC's "This Week," said that when economic growth is taken into account, the president's tax plan would reduce the deficit.

"Under our plan, we believe this will cut the deficit by \$1 trillion," Mnuchin said. "And that's with a conservative, 2.9 percent GDP over the 10-year period of time."

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Ways and Means Democrats demand tax reform score before markup [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 10/02/2017 11:18 AM EDT

House Ways and Means Democrats want an official score before any tax reform legislation gets marked up, they said in [a letter](#) to the panel's GOP chairman, Rep. [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas).

President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans have laid out a framework for a tax bill, but they've left a number of blanks for policy decisions that are still being made.

The 16 Democrats who signed the letter Sept. 28 want better transparency.

"It would be an insult to our constituent families and companies to push forward a back-of-the-envelope tax reform bill based on partisan guesswork instead of economic analysis," they wrote.

Republicans shouldn't follow the same process they have in developing legislation to overturn the Affordable Care Act, the letter said.

The Joint Committee on Taxation should provide a conventional revenue estimate that would indicate what tax reform would cost relative to federal receipts, a distribution analysis to show who would shoulder any costs or gain any benefits from changes to existing tax laws and an explanation of how overhauling the tax code would affect the U.S. economy.

"It is critical that any consideration of tax reform be delayed until JCT has issued this analysis," the letter said.

Unofficial estimates of the framework tax plan, which make assumptions about changes under consideration, have shown the proposal would widen the federal deficit and benefit the top 1 percent of earners more than anyone else. Republicans in the White House and Congress have disputed those assumptions.

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OMB's Mulvaney: Trump has 2 'red lines' in tax bill [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 10/01/2017 09:34 AM EDT

Cutting tax rates for corporations and the middle class are two "red lines" that President Donald Trump has established as tax legislation develops in Congress, the White House budget director said Sunday.

Responding to a question about whether rich people would benefit from Trump's tax proposal, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said debates about details of the tax plan will start in the House of Representatives this week. As that effort progresses, Trump has two overarching objectives, Mulvaney said, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union."

"There are two real red lines," he told host Jake Tapper. "When it comes to the middle class, they will pay less, and it will be easier for them to pay."

Secondly, "the corporate rate has got to come down," he said. "We were pushing for 15 [percent]. We got some pushback from the House and Senate leadership, so the 20 percent proposal is on the table right now."

"When you hear the president say he doesn't really care what happens to the top 1 percent, that's real for him. This really is about the middle class and the corporate tax rate," Mulvaney said.

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Speaker Ryan sets out tax bill objectives [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 10/01/2017 01:43 PM EDT

House Speaker Paul Ryan laid out some of the tax provisions he wants included in the tax legislation that is expected to begin in Congress this week.

Speaking Sunday on "Face the Nation" on CBS, Ryan said middle-class people will benefit from the legislation, along with corporations.

"We're going to double your standard deductions so you can file your taxes on a postcard," the Wisconsin Republican said.

"We're going to take people who are in the 10 percent bracket and put a lot of that money in a zero percent tax bracket. We're taking the 15 percent bracket down to 12 percent. We're going to get rid of the marriage penalty. We're going to increase the child tax credit."

Additionally, tax incentives for home buying, charitable giving and education spending will all be maintained, Ryan said.

Asked whether the tax plan will increase the national debt, Ryan said it would not.

"This will have to be a deficit-neutral tax bill," he said, adding that "this tax code and this tax reform will give us faster economic growth. Faster economic growth helps raise the economy, which raises revenues. And that helps us tackle the deficit."

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Schumer points to Kansas to criticize Trump's tax plan [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 10/01/2017 01:12 PM EDT

In a warning shot to Republicans crafting landmark tax legislation, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Sunday that Kansas' experiment with tax cuts foreshadows what can happen if the GOP relies on "fake numbers" to support its effort.

Speaking on CBS' "Face the Nation," Schumer rebutted assertions by the Trump administration that the president's tax plan is not designed to cut taxes for rich Americans.

"It's completely focused on the wealthy and the powerful. Not on the middle class," Schumer said.

The New York Democrat also attacked Republicans' assertion that the tax plan won't add to the deficit. Kansas' 2012 tax cuts led to a budget deficit that forced the state to cut funding for schools and infrastructure, Schumer said. Facing a major budget deficit, Kansas lawmakers in June approved legislation that rolled back many of Gov. Sam Brownback's tax cuts.

"This idea that cutting taxes on the wealthy, this trickle-down economics which the Republican Party loves, does not create growth," Schumer said. "It never has."

He insisted that if Republicans want to get anywhere with Trump's tax plan, they need to work with Democrats.

"They have to consult us," he said. "They can't just put down a plan and say, 'Bipartisanship is you guys come over and do what we want,' when it's against our principles."

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) was dubious of the idea that the plan wouldn't overwhelmingly benefit the rich.

"For Trump to go on television that, oh, this doesn't benefit the wealthy is absolutely outrageous," he said on CNN's "State of the Union." "Of course, it benefits the wealthy. And of course it benefits large multinational corporations."

The 2016 presidential candidate added: "We are living in a moment of massive income and wealth inequality. The very, very rich are getting richer. Middle class is shrinking."

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Silicon Valley all in on tax reform [Back](#)

By Steven Overly | 09/30/2017 07:03 AM EDT

Silicon Valley is racing to support and shape President Donald Trump's multitrillion-dollar tax proposal, despite months of distancing itself from his policies on everything from immigration to climate change.

The Republican proposal to slash corporate tax rates and ease taxation of companies' overseas earnings has vast implications for the tech industry, which counts the wealthiest companies on earth among its ranks. The companies have responded by marshaling an army of lobbyists, some with connections to a Trump administration that many of their customers and liberal employees loathe.

Tech companies tapped 546 tax lobbyists in the first half of 2017, more than during any of the previous six years, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics.

No other policy issue facing tech companies in Washington — and there are many of late — stands to have as great an impact on their businesses as an overhaul of the tax code. Tech giants want Congress not only to chop the corporate tax rate but to allow them to pay less tax if they bring back home the cash they hold abroad. Apple, Microsoft, Cisco, Google's parent Alphabet and Oracle top the list of U.S. companies with the biggest overseas cash piles, according to [Bloomberg data](#) compiled in June. Apple alone has a staggering \$246 billion in cash outside the U.S.

Those numbers help explain why the tech sector — despite its frequent fractures with Trump — has resisted calls to fully disengage from the administration: It needs to keep a foot in the door as Republicans draft and usher through their plans for a major tax overhaul.

"There are also times where we disagree with their point of view and where they want to take policy, and we speak up at that point," said Linda Moore, the CEO of TechNet, an industry advocacy group. But she added: "We do want to support them on tax reform. That is a great example where: 'We're behind you 100 percent. What can we do to help you get that done?'"

That stance doesn't sit well with liberal activists who have been urging Silicon Valley to abandon Trump since the earliest days of his administration.

"Tech companies like to paint themselves as innovative, ethical and inclusive institutions. However, when it comes to tax reform, many are tempted to follow their bottom line in a corporate free-for-all," said Reem Suleiman, a senior campaigner with the progressive group SumOfUs.org. "So Silicon Valley has a dilemma: Stand up for the values it touts, or take advantage of Trump's corporate coup over our democracy."

On the lobbying front, tech firms have sought out Trump-connected lobbyists for tax and other issues. Amazon tapped Trump transition staffer Dan McFaul and Trump campaign fundraiser Brian Ballard, both of Ballard Partners, at the start of the year. Microsoft worked for a time with Navigators Global's Andy Keiser, who also worked on the transition, and brought on Sextons Creek's Bill Smith, a longtime aide to Vice President Mike Pence.

Tech CEOs have also been their own advocates. Tax reform was one of the topics discussed in June at closed-door meetings between senior White House officials and tech executives, including Apple CEO Tim Cook and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. Industry leaders made a separate appeal directly to National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn and Treasury

Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a private meeting earlier this year.

That behind-the-scenes influence building has ramped up even as tech companies publicly condemn the president's actions on a range of other issues. With each controversial decision emanating from the White House — banning travelers from certain Muslim-majority countries, abandoning the Paris climate deal and responding to racist violence in Charlottesville, Va., by blaming "many sides" — tech CEOs have blasted the policies as bad for the economy and American competitiveness.

The decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program this month drew a particularly strong reaction from industry players, including the chief executives of Google, Apple, Facebook and many other firms. Microsoft President Brad Smith even said Congress should make legal protections for DREAMers a greater priority than tax reform — a bold stance that turned out to be an outlier in the tech industry.

The tech sector has resisted pressure to cut all its ties with the president, with some executives like Cook explaining their decision as a patriotic or moral duty to provide counsel to whoever is in the White House. "I feel a great responsibility as an American, as a CEO, to try to influence things in areas where we have a level of expertise," Cook [told Bloomberg Businessweek](#) in June.

Those efforts may be bearing fruit if the Republican tax framework released Wednesday is any indication. Though devoid of many details, the proposed plan would drop the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent, preserve research and development tax credits, effectively eliminate U.S. taxes on future overseas revenue and allow corporations to bring home trillions of dollars they have stashed abroad at a one-time low tax rate — all provisions the tech industry has fought for.

Tech companies, like other big corporations, assert that money brought back to the U.S. could be used to hire workers or build factories, an argument that dovetails with Trump's America-first economic agenda. In May, when Cook announced plans for a \$1 billion fund to invest in U.S. advanced manufacturing projects, he said Apple would [borrow the money](#) because the "bizarre" U.S. tax code makes it financially painful to repatriate its overseas cash.

The issue has also taken on greater urgency as foreign regulators start raising questions about companies' offshore tax strategies, lobbyists said. The European Commission in 2016 slapped Apple with a 13 billion euro penalty for allegedly accepting a sweetheart tax deal from Ireland.

While tech's vocal opposition to Trump during the election and on recent social policies leaves a "bitter taste" for some Republicans, ultimately GOP leaders want Silicon Valley involved in the tax reform effort, said Keiser, the principal at lobby shop Navigators Global who served on Trump's transition team.

"Getting tax reform right and encouraging broad economic growth is far more important to the policy and the politics than trying to extract a pound of flesh against tech, one of America's most important industries," Keiser said.

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Price resigns from HHS after facing fire for travel [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond, Rachana Pradhan and Adriel Bettelheim | 09/29/2017 04:57 PM EDT

HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned Friday in the face of multiple federal inquiries and growing criticism of his use of private and government planes for travel, at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$1 million since May.

The White House said the former seven-term Georgia congressman, 63, offered his resignation earlier in the day and that President Donald Trump had accepted it.

Price becomes the first Trump administration Cabinet secretary to step down. The White House said Trump asked Deputy Assistant Health Secretary Don Wright to serve as acting secretary of the agency, which has an annual budget \$1.15 trillion and includes the Medicare and Medicaid programs, as well as the FDA, NIH and CDC.

As late as Thursday, Price said he believed he had the president's support. But the tumult surrounding his travel became another distraction for an administration already reeling from the defeat of repeated Senate efforts to repeal Obamacare and criticism for its hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

Price ran afoul of Trump in part because his actions seemed to symbolize everything the president had inveighed against with his vow to "drain the swamp." The fallout extended to a Cabinet-wide crackdown with [the announcement](#) Friday night that chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Price, in his resignation letter, expressed regret that "recent events" distracted from efforts to overhaul the health care system. "In order for you to move forward without further disruption, I am officially tendering my resignation as the Secretary of Health and Human Services effective 11:59 PM on Friday," he wrote.

Senate Democrats quickly served notice they were preparing for a potential confirmation fight over Price's successor, saying the next HHS secretary must not undermine Obamacare. Under Price, the department cut the law's enrollment period in half and slashed advertising and outreach for the enrollment period starting in November.

"The next HHS secretary must follow the law when it comes to the Affordable Care Act instead of trying to sabotage it," said Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#).

"Tom Price's replacement needs to be focused on implementing the law as written by Congress and keeping the president's promise to bring down the high cost of prescription drugs," Senate Finance ranking Democrat [Ron Wyden](#) of Oregon said in a statement.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), a close ally, praised Price as a dedicated public servant. "His vision and hard work were vital to the House's success passing our health care legislation," Ryan said in a statement.

POLITICO revealed that Price flew at least 26 times on private aircraft at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, a sharp break with his predecessors' practice. Many of Price's flights were between major cities that offered inexpensive alternatives on commercial airlines,

including Nashville, Philadelphia and San Diego.

On some of those trips, Price, an orthopedic surgeon, mixed official business with leisure. He took a government-funded private jet in August to get to St. Simons Island, an exclusive Georgia resort where he and his wife own land, a day and a half before he addressed a medical conference he and his wife have long attended. In June, HHS chartered a private jet to fly Price to Nashville, where he owns a condominium and where his son resides. Price toured a medicine dispensary, spoke to a local health summit organized by a friend and had lunch with his son, an HHS official confirmed.

Price also used military aircraft for multi-national trips to Africa, Europe and Asia, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers. The White House said it had approved those trips but not the private jets within the United States.

Price tried to defuse the controversy by promising on Thursday to reimburse the government for the approximately \$52,000 cost of his own seat on his domestic trips. But that wasn't enough to tamp down the scandal, which had [infuriated](#) the president and prompted a bipartisan inquiry from the House Oversight Committee and separate calls for accountability from lawmakers including Republican Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#). The inspector general of Price's own agency is [reviewing](#) if Price complied with federal travel regulations.

The White House put Cabinet officials on notice Friday that it would crack down on use of private planes, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public, reminding department and agency heads that, by regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

The issue of Cabinet members' travel has already extended beyond Price: POLITICO reported Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides [took several flights](#) on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights in the Caribbean. Zinke dismissed the furor as a "little B.S." during a Friday appearance at the Heritage Foundation.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price reimbursed the agency for his wife's travel, but declined to elaborate.

White House officials have groused about Price's frequent travels, with one senior White House official saying the HHS secretary was "nowhere to be found" as they mounted a last-ditch unsuccessful push to repeal Obamacare.

Congressional Democrats attacked Price for advocating spending cuts to the health agencies he oversaw and health care programs while spending taxpayer dollars on private jets. "There could not be a clearer statement of the Trump administration's priorities," Sen. [Maggie Hassan](#) (D-N.H.) said. Key Democrats overseeing health issues in Congress had formally requested that HHS's inspector general review Price's travel practices.

In June, Price defended a proposed fiscal 2018 budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price told the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Ethical questions dogged Price even before questions about his travel arose. During his Senate confirmation hearing to helm HHS, Price faced pointed questions about his personal investments in health care companies during his time in Congress. Democrats called on government ethics officials to investigate Price's health care stock trades, following reports that he got a sweetheart deal from a biotech company and invested in Zimmer Biomet, a medical device-maker, just days before writing legislation that would have eased regulations on the sector.

The Senate confirmed Price by a 52-47 margin in February after he maintained full Republican support.

Price carved out a reputation as a staunch fiscal conservative during his decade-plus tenure in the House of Representatives. He generally supported reducing government spending on health care while shifting more of the financial burden onto individuals. Like most conservatives, he's supported privatizing Medicare so that seniors would receive fixed dollar amounts to buy coverage and limiting federal Medicaid spending to give states a lump sum, or block grant, and more control over how they could use it.

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White House to Cabinet: No private air travel without Kelly's approval [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 09/29/2017 06:57 PM EDT

The White House cracked down on Cabinet officials' use of private planes Friday, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft," after Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price [resigned](#) over his own taxpayer-funded flights.

Mick Mulvaney, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public. His exit came after [a series of POLITICO reports](#) about his frequent use of private planes to conduct government — [and sometimes personal](#) — business.

"In light of recent events, the President has asked me to remind the heads of all executive departments and agencies of Administration policies on travel," Mulvaney wrote.

He reminded the department and agency heads that, by regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

"However, beyond the law and formal policy, departments and agencies should recognize that

we are public servants," Mulvaney wrote. "Every penny we spend comes from the taxpayer. We thus owe it to the taxpayer to work as hard managing that money wisely as the taxpayer must do to earn it in the first place."

Mulvaney added: "Put another way, just because something is legal doesn't make it right."

Officials should stick to commercial travel "with few exceptions," he wrote.

In the wake of the controversy, other administration officials' travels have come under scrutiny. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has used military planes for some trips, [POLITICO reported](#), while EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have also raised eyebrows with their travel itineraries.

President Donald Trump was livid over the Price scandal and accepted his resignation on Friday.

"We have great secretaries, and we have some that actually own their own planes, so that solves that," Trump told reporters earlier on Friday.

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Interior watchdog opens investigation into Zinke's travel [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/02/2017 02:13 PM EDT

The Interior Department's inspector general's office has opened an investigation into Secretary Ryan Zinke's use of taxpayer-funded charter planes, a spokeswoman said Monday.

The watchdog has "received numerous complaints" and launched its investigation late last week, said Nancy K. DiPaolo, spokeswoman for Interior's Office of the Inspector General.

Zinke is one of several members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet to face questions over his expensive travel, along with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and former HHS Secretary Tom Price, who resigned Friday.

The secretary has flown on government-owned or -chartered aircraft several times this year, including one \$12,000 trip from Las Vegas to an airport near his hometown in Montana and another trip in the Caribbean, as [POLITICO reported](#) last week.

The Las Vegas trip has attracted particular scrutiny, because Zinke was appearing at an event affiliated with a major campaign donor that kept him from catching a commercial flight to Montana. He gave a motivational speech to a dinner for the Las Vegas Golden Knights, a new hockey team owned by Bill Foley, the chairman of Fidelity National Financial. Employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and associated companies have donated nearly \$200,000 to Zinke's past congressional campaigns.

A watchdog group, the Campaign for Accountability, was among those who [asked](#) Interior's IG to investigate. The group said Zinke's Vegas speech "seems to be a special favor provided

to a major political supporter of both Sec. Zinke and the president at taxpayer expense."

Zinke last week called the attention paid to the events "[a little B.S.](#)" and said he followed the law. On Friday evening, after Price's resignation, the White House cracked down on non-commercial travel by Cabinet members. "[J]ust because something is legal doesn't make it right," Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney wrote in a memo to agency heads.

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Price said he regrets 'distraction' in resignation letter [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 09/29/2017 05:51 PM EDT

Former HHS Secretary Tom Price said in his official resignation [letter](#) to President Donald Trump he regrets that "recent events" created a distraction from his administration's objectives, according to a copy shared by the White House Friday evening.

Price resigned following POLITICO reports of his use of private jets totaling more than \$400,000 at the taxpayers' expense.

"I regret that the recent events have created a distraction from these important objectives," Price wrote. "Success on these issues is more important than any one person. In order for you to move forward without further disruption, I am officially tendering my resignation as the Secretary of Health and Human Services effective 11:59 PM on Friday, September 29, 2017."

Price sent an internal email to HHS employees about 30 minutes before the White House announced his resignation. Price told his former colleagues he will "always treasure" his nearly eight months leading HHS.

"What a great joy it has been to serve with you," Price wrote, according to the email obtained by POLITICO. "Please know I shall be thinking of you and encourage you to remember the people, patients, and partnerships we're all privileged to serve."

He closed: "Duty is Ours - Results are the Lord's!"

Dan Diamond contributed to this report.

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Who will replace Price? [Back](#)

By Joanne Kenen and Jennifer Haberkorn | 09/29/2017 05:42 PM EDT

Tom Price hadn't even stepped down when the Washington policy world was buzzing about who was likely to replace him.

A dozen names are being talked about as the next HHS secretary, including several belonging to those already serving in the administration. But of course President Donald Trump often defies Washington's conventional wisdom.

The rumored short list includes former Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), who would sail through Senate confirmation but would probably be considered too moderate on Obamacare, and Dr. Mehmet Oz, a cardiothoracic surgeon made famous by his talk show, which Trump has appeared on. Other current or former members of Congress who could be considered include Rep. [Fred Upton](#) (R-Mich.) and former Rep. Dave Camp.

Here are the names getting particular attention:

Seema Verma: The administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is responsible for those two big health care entitlement programs and much of Obamacare. She is close to Vice President Mike Pence, having helped create conservative Medicaid makeover plans for Indiana and several other red states.

Verma has limited management experience, having run a small consulting firm, and HHS is a sprawling health and social services agency that includes everything from the National Cancer Institute to Head Start. During the failed Obamacare repeal efforts in Congress, however, she [earned plaudits](#) for her ability to quietly explain to Republican lawmakers the various repeal bills, and how they would impact specific states. She's already been confirmed by Congress once — by a 55-43 vote.

Rick Scott: The Florida governor won praise from Trump after Hurricane Irma tore through his state and has publicly said he is weighing a Senate run next year against [Bill Nelson](#). But Democrats have turned up the heat on the two-term governor over the tragedy at a Hollywood, Fla., nursing home following the storm that claimed 12 victims.

Scott is a former hospital executive who became CEO of Columbia/HSA. He and Trump have known each other for two decades, and Trump likes Scott's record as governor and as a business tycoon. Scott chaired a super PAC that promoted Trump's candidacy during the presidential campaign. But Scott's former company also faced huge fines for [health care fraud](#).

Scott Gottlieb: Trump's FDA commissioner has been in and out of government, holding prior jobs in the FDA as well as in CMS, where during the George W. Bush administration he worked on the implementation of the Medicare drug benefit. He's a physician and medical school professor who has also been affiliated with the American Enterprise Institute.

The conservative Gottlieb favors looser rules for what drug and device makers are able to tell doctors about unapproved uses of their products. But he has surprised some Democrats with his outreach to FDA career staff who may not share all his views and his transparency. His blog posts, speeches and access to the media offer a big contrast to Price, who has been noticeably inaccessible.

David Shulkin: The Veterans Affairs secretary is a Trump favorite, and the only Cabinet nominee to be unanimously confirmed. However, Shulkin has come under criticism for combining leisure with business on his official travel — he attended a Wimbledon

championship tennis match, toured Westminster Abbey and took a cruise on the Thames while meeting this summer with European officials about veterans' issues, [The Washington Post reported Friday](#). Shulkin did fly commercial, but his wife's expenses were covered by taxpayers, according to the Post.

A physician and former health administrator, Shulkin is also the only member of Trump's Cabinet who is a holdover from the Obama years; he served as the VA's undersecretary of health in that administration. Now he's trying to get the massive, scandal-plagued VA health care back on track to serve around 9 million Americans a year. He has made the agency's performance and improvement programs public and transparent. He still sees patients — in person and via telemedicine.

[Marsha Blackburn](#): The longtime House Republican has conservative credibility on Obamacare, having been a chief critic of the program in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and on social issues such as abortion, having led the House's investigation into Planned Parenthood funding last year. But the Tennessee representative has no experience in the health care industry or running a major organization, and she is said to be eyeing retiring Sen. [Bob Corker](#)'s Tennessee seat.

Don Wright: The longtime HHS bureaucrat, doctor and public health expert was named acting HHS secretary Friday following Price's resignation.

Wright, whose focus is emergency preparedness and infectious disease, had been the acting assistant secretary for health at HHS — a role he's held since February. He is also the deputy assistant secretary for health and director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Wright was appointed by George W. Bush to serve as the alternate U.S. delegate to the WHO Executive Board and served as HHS principal deputy assistant secretary for health during the Bush administration, according to his HHS biography.

Bobby Jindal: The former Louisiana governor was a rival of candidate Trump in the 2016 campaign, and the rivalry was deep and visceral, although he eventually said he'd support Trump. But Jindal is steeped in health care. He was doing health policy academically and professionally before he entered politics. He studied health systems at Oxford, headed his state's Department of Health and Hospitals at age 24, was executive director of a national bipartisan Medicare commission, worked in HHS under George W. Bush, served in Congress, and then became governor. He is deeply conservative, economically and socially, and favors a deregulated free-market health care system.

Rick Santorum: The former Pennsylvania senator, another one-time Trump rival in the 2016 GOP race, is a favorite of religious conservatives because of his staunch anti-abortion views. He popped up on the national health care stage last month as he worked with Sens. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.) and [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) on their last-ditch but failed effort to pass an Obamacare repeal bill before the legislative window for a 50-vote win closed Sept. 30.

Ben Carson: The retired neurosurgeon and former rival for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination is another long shot. Carson, now HUD secretary, was supposedly in the mix for HHS when Trump initially named his Cabinet. Some reports at the time citing his associates said he had turned it down.

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Trump's breaking point with Price [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Josh Dawsey and Dan Diamond | 09/29/2017 09:06 PM EDT

Tom Price's downfall was his penchant for pricey jets.

But his demise was months in the making, as the president continued to lose trust in the HHS secretary who rarely attended Oval Office strategy meetings, had little sway or influence on Capitol Hill, and was associated in the president's mind with one of the administration's biggest defeats — the failure to repeal Obamacare.

Of particular notoriety: A picture of Price in March drinking at Bullfeathers, a famed Capitol Hill bar, as his colleagues tried to wrangle votes for the president's signature initiative.

Price's lack of goodwill with Trump and other senior administration officials ultimately doomed his chances of survival, even though many administration officials believed the furor would blow over when news first broke that Price spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on private jets.

By early this week, however, it became clear that the growing firestorm over Price's travel was only getting worse. The White House believed HHS had badly handled the response to the controversy — and was caught off guard by the facts. And it was hard to find a power player in the White House who would defend Price to the president.

POLITICO published five stories over the last 10 days that revealed Price had spent [more than \\$1 million](#) in taxpayer money on travel since May, including overseas flights on military aircrafts and more than two dozen domestic trips on private planes.

Other media outlets amplified the revelations, with cable news frequently running damaging chyrons and reporters peppering Trump and press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders about the growing scandal throughout the week.

The president grew more angry, fuming to West Wing aides about the optics of a member of the administration spending so lavishly. The almost daily drip of revelations — including that Price [took](#) a government-funded private jet in August to get to a Georgia resort where he and his wife own land — further incensed the president.

Meanwhile, Trump was intensely frustrated by his unsuccessful health care push and associated Price with the failure, several aides said. He joked at a rally in July he would fire Price if he didn't get the votes for the Obamacare repeal.

While the White House has weathered a steady stream of mini-scandals since Trump took office, this one was different, according to administration officials, because it made Price look like the kind of creature of Washington that the president had railed against on the campaign trail.

Trump himself blasted Price on Friday for what he suggested was frivolous spending in light of the administration's efforts to impose fiscal conservatism on the federal government.

"I've saved hundreds of millions of dollars," the president told reporters on Friday when he was asked if he had lost confidence in Price. "So I don't like the optics of what you just saw."

Administration officials grew increasingly certain on Friday that Price would be ousted, but the final decision happened quickly, according to aides, who had cautioned as late as Friday afternoon that Trump might change his mind.

Though he nurtured a reputation as a ruthless boss on *The Apprentice*, Trump often hesitates to fire people — and sometimes takes weeks to make a final decision. In this case though, the president was counseled that the travel stories had become a distraction from his policy agenda, especially his tax reform push, according to an administration official.

There was also little personal chemistry between the two men.

The president was initially attracted to Price because he was a doctor, a supporter and "looked the part," one adviser with direct knowledge said, plus he was given positive reviews from House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and others on Capitol Hill.

He soon became a bit player in the administration.

Price was often left out of senior level meetings in the Oval Office on Obamacare repeal, even as other top deputies attended, according to several people with knowledge of the matter.

The president and a number of top aides had little faith in his political instincts.

Leading the effort to negotiate with senators on the Hill was CMS Administrator Seema Verma and Marc Short, head of legislative affairs. Two senior White House officials said Price's relationships at the Capitol were not as good as he promised — and that some members preferred not to deal with him. Many members saw him as prickly and not particularly likable, one senior GOP aide said, damaging his ability to negotiate.

Andrew Bremberg, the head of the White House's Domestic Policy Council, was more involved in policy decisions than Price, these people said.

Price was often out of town during key stretches of the presidency, and while several senior officials said they weren't aware of his private jet use, there was a general consensus that he was often nowhere to be found.

"I didn't know he was on private jets," one senior administration official said. "I knew he was never there."

Price's press office initially reassured the White House that the story would quickly pass and argued that Price needed charter jets to respond to public health emergencies like the recent hurricanes.

After POLITICO [identified](#) at least 17 charter flights that took place before the first storm — Hurricane Harvey — hit in late August, and included flights that did not appear to be for urgent public health priorities, HHS then changed its argument: Price needed charter aircraft "to accommodate his demanding schedule," a spokesperson allowed last week.

As he often does when making a big decision, the president began making calls on Thursday night and Friday morning to ask whether he should fire Price.

Trump also told aides that if Price had a defense, he would give it. "I don't think he has any defense for it," one person said, summarizing Trump's comments. "He is just taking it."

Price did make a last-ditch effort to save his job, announcing on Thursday that he would reimburse the federal government for the cost of his seat on the domestic flights, a figure that reportedly totals nearly \$52,000 — just a fraction of the total cost of the trips. The president didn't like that Price was only offering to pay back some of the flights, and was struck by TV coverage that showed the total cost as more than \$1 million, officials said.

The secretary also tried to go on Fox News and assuage the president. It didn't work.

Rumors began swirling in HHS early Friday that Price might be fired. But, in an apparent sign of how quickly the final decision was made, Price was conducting business as usual late Friday.

Just minutes before Price's resignation became official, the secretary sent an email to HHS officials outlining next steps on the "Reimagine HHS initiative," a broad reorganizational effort of the department that was expected to result in staff reductions. The email outlined senior HHS officials who will be spearheading the process.

"Thank you for all your dedication and support, and we look forward to being in touch soon," Price wrote, according to the email, which was obtained by POLITICO.

Across town at the White House, Trump's chief of staff John Kelly was calling Hill leadership to tell them Price was out.

One senior official said the tipping point was when the White House couldn't contain the scandal and it became an administration-wide story.

Other members of Trump's Cabinet were coming under increased criticism for their use of military and private aircraft, including Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, Interior Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

"Got to the point he was causing problems for everybody," this person said. "He could have lasted maybe if it didn't just get worse every day."

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Price was never a player on Obamacare repeal [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 09/29/2017 08:43 PM EDT

Former HHS Secretary Tom Price was chosen by President Donald Trump because he was a doctor and a rising star on Capitol Hill who could drive the Obamacare repeal effort.

But in his short tenure, Price not only misread the politics of repeal, he failed to assert himself as a power player on the No. 1 priority of his party, according to administration officials, lobbyists and state and federal officials involved in the repeal effort. He was sidelined from the administration's efforts to sell lawmakers on GOP repeal proposals. More important, he never developed a close relationship with President Trump, which made it impossible to him to survive revelations that his use of private jets and military aircraft cost taxpayers more than \$1 million.

"As a physician and former House member who understands health care policy, his inability to convince his former colleagues to pass health care reform is a black mark," one health care lobbyist said. "... To call it a disappointment would be an understatement."

While Price could not convince enough lawmakers to vote for repeal, he did use his power as the nation's top health regulator to weaken the law that his party was unable to overturn through legislative action.

Under his watch, HHS shortened the Obamacare enrollment period, reduced marketing and outreach, slashed enrollment assistance, cut HealthCare.gov's online hours — and used Twitter, news releases and [YouTube videos](#) to discredit the law.

"His private jet use may have been what did him in, but his real offense was overseeing and directing President Trump's sabotage of health care for millions of people," said Sen. Chris Murphy, (D-Conn.). "Insurers are raising premiums because this administration is intentionally undermining our health care system."

In many other ways, his brief tenure fell short, say lobbyists and Hill sources.

A powerful House committee chairman with ties to House leadership and allies on both the economic and social conservative wings of his party, Price charged into the Health and Human Services Department armed with an expansive agenda and a mandate to reshape the nation's health care system in his conservative vision.

But he leaves office largely without tangible accomplishments after just seven months marked by ongoing scandal and an inability to turn his ambitious rhetoric into reality.

"It's a short list," said Tom Miller, a resident fellow at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute. "But he was able to make a lot of progress in establishing clearer rules" for how government officials should travel.

Along the way, Price frustrated his congressional colleagues as well as the White House, deflated morale across the agency and disappeared at perhaps the GOP's biggest health care moment in decades — the failed push to repeal and replace Obamacare.

A POLITICO investigation [revealed](#) that Price had taken more than \$400,000 worth of taxpayer-funded charter jets — and at least another half-million worth of military flights overseas. That travel — some of which occurred as the White House and Senate Republicans were trying and failing to pass Obamacare repeal — reportedly infuriated the president and prompted his statement Friday that he'd decide Price's future later in the day. Price later submitted his resignation, writing that he regretted the "distraction" his travel habits had created.

Still, some Capitol Hill Republicans feel Trump was too quick to run away from Price once the first story broke. In July, the president publicly joked that Price would get fired if he wasn't able to repeal Obamacare.

"He apologized, paid his portion, we should have moved on," said one Republican aide.

A staunch conservative, Price's ascension to HHS appeared to signal a sharp turn for the nation's health care priorities. The former congressman and orthopedic surgeon had long railed against heavy-handed government regulation, and led the push for changes that went beyond Obamacare — including efforts to scale back both Medicare and Medicaid.

But the Georgia Republican was dogged from the start by ethical questions over hundreds of thousands of dollars of health care stock trades he made while in Congress, delaying his nomination and putting his conduct under a microscope. Senate Democrats boycotted a vote on his nomination over the revelations, and a House lawmaker later asked the SEC to investigate him for violating stock trading laws.

Inside HHS, Price quickly alienated career staffers, throwing a wrench in his efforts ramp up work within the agency. In one of his first big speeches to HHS staffers, Price spent much of his talk trashing the agency's work on Obamacare and warning he planned to reorganize the department and potentially trim staff.

"I heard from so many people on that day how tone-deaf and disappointing that was," said Aisling McDonough, a former CMS staffer. "You're not convincing anyone there."

And as the House struggled to sell its plan for repealing and replacing Obamacare, Price drew fire for promising the GOP bill would lower premiums and ensure that nobody lost coverage — claims that ran directly counter to projections from the CBO. After that, OMB Director Mick Mulvaney emerged as the administration's chief pitchman for the House repeal bill.

When the repeal push moved to the Senate, he was even less helpful to the GOP, according to Republican sources on Capitol Hill. CMS Administrator Seema Verma, Vice President Mike Pence and head of legislative affairs Marc Short met more often or made calls to influential senators such as Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins.

Largely left out of the legislative push, Price sought to unravel Obamacare from within the agency — a task that has so far amounted to policy changes likely to curtail access to and awareness of the upcoming open enrollment period.

HHS in recent weeks said it would slash its Obamacare outreach budget by 90 percent, as well as sharply cut grants sent to organizations on the front lines of the enrollment effort. It's also taking the federally run sign-up site — HealthCare.gov — offline for 12 hours every Sunday except for one during an already-shortened enrollment period.

"Every day is another challenge," an executive at one state insurance exchange vented. "You can't say one positive thing about connecting people to health insurance? Why? I don't understand."

Elsewhere in the agency, initiatives aimed at remaking the health care system are just getting under way. HHS has signaled it will slow the transition toward paying doctors based on their quality of care, rather than the quantity — a decision reflecting Price's desire to reduce the

burden on small physicians. It was also planning to ramp up experimental work to alter Medicare.

And medical equipment companies are set to benefit from an expected halt to a competitive bidding program that would've cut government payments to the industry, a shift that Price supported while in Congress.

But most of those changes had yet to get off the ground before Price's travel scandal brought his tenure to an abrupt end.

As the stories grew increasingly worse on Price, Trump fumed and told aides that if Price had a defense, he would give them. "I don't think he has any defense for it," one person said, summarizing Trump's comments. "He is just taking it."

Josh Dawsey and Jennifer Haberkorn contributed to this story.

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Medicare premiums will decrease slightly for 2018 [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 09/29/2017 05:43 PM EDT

Premiums for Medicare Advantage and Part D prescription drug plans will decrease slightly next year, CMS [announced](#) today.

The average monthly premium for a Medicare Advantage plan will be \$30 in 2018, a 6-percent decline from this year.

CMS expects 20.4 million Medicare beneficiaries — just over a third of all enrollees — to choose private plans for next year.

The number of Medicare Advantage plans available nationwide will increase from about 2,700 to more than 3,100.

The average premium for prescription drug coverage in 2018 will be \$33.50 — down from \$34.70 this year. It's the first time that premiums have declined since 2012.

Medicare open enrollment runs from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7.

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Mortgage investors question taxpayer cost of Wells Fargo seizures [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 10/02/2017 02:39 PM EDT

Mortgage investors asked regulators for an accounting of taxpayer costs after Wells Fargo seized \$91 million in a trust account meant to benefit bondholders.

In a letter to Mel Watt, director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and Mark McWatters, chairman of the National Credit Union Administration, the Association of Mortgage Investors said it had concerns about the impact on bonds owned by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and credit unions.

"We respectfully ask that you confirm whether any government sponsored enterprises or related credit union entities are holders of any certificates in the affected trusts described below; the extent to which these egregious remittances have implications on the U.S. taxpayers; and, any consequences to the safety and soundness of the enterprises and the credit union system," AMI wrote in the Sept. 28 [letter](#).

In December 2016, BlackRock, Pimco, TIAA-CREF, Prudential and other investors sued Wells Fargo in New York State Supreme Court, alleging wrongful conduct and breach of duty over the trustee's management of hundreds of residential mortgage bonds. As a trustee, Wells is a gatekeeper between homebuyers and bondholders, ensuring that investors who own pools of mortgages receive their principal and interest payments every month.

In June, Wells Fargo withheld \$91 million in mortgage principal and interest proceeds from bondholders, prompting Pimco to accuse the company of "looting" trust money to pay its legal fees. In August, Fitch Ratings declared \$2.4 billion in residential mortgage-backed securities at a high risk of default because of the Wells action, making those bonds less valuable.

"The infusion of private mortgage capital into the market is essential," AMI wrote in its letter to regulators. "The issues arising from Wells Fargo's actions have many obvious implications on the availability and affordability of mortgage credit."

Wells Fargo has asked the court to dismiss both complaints.

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: Diane Black sees her ticket out of town — House watchdogs demand federal travel logs — House border wall bill could complicate year-end spending deal
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 4:48:33 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 09/27/2017 04:44 PM EDT

ON A GLIDE PATH: The House Freedom Caucus announced this afternoon that its almost three dozen members will be putting away their knives that have been aimed at the GOP budget, ending Rep. [Diane Black](#)'s epic, nine-month quest to get herself a floor vote.

With conservative opposition melting away, GOP sources tell us that long-awaited budget vote on [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#) could happen as soon as next week — a timeline that House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) also gave members today, per [Rachael Bade](#).

Keeping her cool: Standing beside House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) this afternoon at a press conference formally presenting the Republican tax plan, Black was surely thinking, "Can I get a hallelujah?" But the Budget Committee leader, eager to switch to full-time gubernatorial campaigning back home in Tennessee, isn't declaring legislative victory just yet. "I'm very encouraged by what came out about the Freedom Caucus," Black said, adding that she's still counting prospective votes and will make an announcement on timing Thursday.

That magic moment: The Freedom Caucus breakthrough landed just hours after top White House and congressional Republicans first briefed lawmakers on details of their tax plan this morning, as Rachael [reports](#). It wasn't everything the Freedom Caucus was demanding to know before backing the budget — but it's close. We've got individual rates (12, 25 and 35 percent), a corporate rate (20 percent) and a small business rate (15 percent). Republicans even offered some details on repatriation, calling for a special reduced-tax "holiday" for global businesses to bring home offshore profits.

Hell-raising to come: But it won't all be a piece of cake, despite what Sen. [Bob Corker](#) might [lead you to believe](#). Deficit hawks are almost certain to demand more details about how the GOP will afford trillions of dollars in tax cuts. We know Republicans plan to defray the costs by peeling away some popular business benefits — like a break for interest investments — but they're going light on specifics, as Brian Faler [explains](#).

All the rest: [What's in the Big 6 plan](#) | [Reversing course on tax cuts for wealthy](#) | [A rogue messenger?](#) | [The 'losers' will keep guessing](#) | [First hearing on the books](#) | [Joe Donnelly joins Trump for speech](#) | [Homebuilders on board](#)

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Sen. [John McCain](#) sent a [letter](#) this week urging DHS to waive the Jones Act — which mandates that only U.S.-owned and -operated ships can enter U.S. ports — to speed up hurricane relief in Puerto Rico. But senior DHS officials have made clear that a waiver is unlikely, Tanya Snyder [reports](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Between 2010 and 2016, the federal government spent an average of \$1.668 billion annually to fight fires. That's a jump from the \$703 million spent, on average,

each year between 1990 and 1999. POLITICO Pro's [DataPoint](#) illustrates that progression.

OVERSIGHT

ANOTHER PRIVATE JET PROBE: The House Oversight Committee began demanding travel logs today from federal agencies, hoping to root out inappropriate uses of private jets and government aircraft, Dan Diamond [reports](#). The [letters](#) to the White House and 24 federal agencies follow POLITICO reports that HHS Secretary Tom Price has frequently opted to travel by private jet — on the taxpayer's dime — as well as watchdog investigations into Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's travel habits.

It gets juicier: In all his jet-setting, Price took a government-funded private plane to an exclusive Georgia resort where he owns land and another flight to Nashville, where he stayed less than six hours and had lunch with his son, Dan Diamond and Rachana Pradhan [report](#).

POTUS' ire: President Donald Trump said this afternoon that he's looking into Price's travel patterns, Louis Nelson [reports](#). "I am not happy about it, and I let him know it," the president said in a brief exchange with reporters. And McCain called Price's behavior "disturbing," saying today that he thinks "it's something that needs to be investigated," Adam Cancryn [reports](#).

Voters disapprove: In a new [POLITICO/Morning Consult poll](#), 64 percent of respondents said it was inappropriate for Price to take private aircraft, while 16 percent said it was A-OK.

APPROPRIATIONS

HOLY HIPAA VIOLATION: Apparently Senate Appropriations Chairman [Thad Cochran](#) is home recovering from a medical issue. How do we know? The president of the United States [tweeted](#) about it this morning: "With one Yes vote in hospital & very positive signs from Alaska and two others (McCain is out), we have the HCare Vote, but not for Friday!" It only took Cochran spokesman Stephen Worley a little over an hour to [tweet](#) an explanation: "Sen. Cochran is in Mississippi recuperating from a urological issue, but is not in the hospital."

IT'S THERE IF THEY WANT IT: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) has formally fast-tracked the House fiscal 2018 omnibus spending bill for future floor debate. McConnell's move to begin the "Rule 14" process doesn't mean the partisan bill will get a vote anytime soon, but one aide points out that it could serve as a future vehicle for spending bills. Congress has until Dec. 8 to pass its next appropriations package.

AGRICULTURE

SPEAKING OF NATURAL DISASTERS: A bipartisan group of senators is pushing for some major changes to the national forest firefighting fund in Congress' next hurricane relief package, Sabrina Rodriguez [reports](#). It's already the most expensive year on record for the U.S. Forest Service's firefighters, forcing the agency to dip into other accounts for extra change — a practice called "fire borrowing."

A silver lining: Even Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is behind the idea. "I think there's a silver lining in a crisis," he said, adding, "We've seen people coming together, whether in fires or hurricanes. There may be more empathy there." Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) jumped in and argued that Congress has "never had a better shot of finally getting fire borrowing ended."

MORE HELP FOR COTTON? Agriculture leaders, including Perdue and House Agriculture Chairman [Mike Conaway](#), are pushing the White House to renew a cotton subsidy program in the wake of damage from Hurricane Harvey, Catherine Boudreau [reports](#). The cost-sharing program, which totaled about \$300 million in payments last year, has not yet been reauthorized for 2017. But Conaway says the help is much needed "in between farm bills" — something that's especially true in hurricane-ravaged regions like his home state of Texas.

DISASTER AID

RUBIO RALLIES FOR PUERTO RICO: Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) has become the first GOP voice to say the Trump administration needs to step up assistance to Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria, Marc Caputo [reports](#) from Miami. "There's going to have to be a lot more hands-on federal engagement for us to be able to successfully carry out the mission," Rubio told POLITICO on Tuesday, before delivering a similar message in a face-to-face meeting with Vice President Mike Pence. "There's going to have to be additional federal presence beyond simply assisting the Puerto Rican government. We're going to have to consider more federal assets deployed."

DEBT, BE GONE: While the Caribbean islands struggle, investors holding billions in debt owed by Puerto Rico's electric authority are offering a loan including \$1 billion in new funding and the cancellation of \$150 million in existing debt, Colin Wilhelm [reports](#).

GROUNDS FOR AN EXCEPTION? Puerto Rico's delegate to Congress is urging Perdue to make five key disaster-relief programs available to help the island's farmers recover, Jenny Hopkinson [reports](#). In a letter to USDA this week, Resident Commissioner [Jenniffer González-Colón](#) said that — while producers on the island aren't eligible for assistance under the programs she cited — the back-to-back storms created an extreme emergency that warrants special action by USDA.

IMMIGRATION

SHUTDOWN-SPURRING SALVO? House Republicans laid out a plan this afternoon to authorize \$10 billion for Trump's dream of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. And although the legislation wouldn't actually appropriate any cash, it pegs an ambitious negotiating stance ahead of the real funding fight in December. As Rachael [explains](#), that kind of border wall allocation is highly unlikely to fly in the Senate, potentially spelling shutdown before year's end.

PROTOTYPE TIME: Meanwhile, construction is now underway on eight border wall prototypes in the San Diego area, Ted Hesson [reports](#). Four of the sample walls will be made of concrete and four of "other materials."

EMPLOYMENT

OLDER WORKERS, HIGHER COSTS: Thanks to slow-moving hiring practices and a bunch of baby boomers who haven't retired at predicted rates, the U.S. government's workforce has grown significantly older than the American workforce overall, Danny Vinik [writes for The Agenda](#). Today, just 17 percent of federal workers are under 35 years old. (In the private sector, almost 40 percent are.) More than a quarter of federal employees are now older than 55. And that means higher costs.

Why's that? A [study](#) from last year found that an older labor force is less productive and even makes young workers less productive. There's also evidence that older people are less able to learn new skills. And [studies have found](#) that older workers are more expensive, due to their greater use of health care services — costs that fall directly on the federal government, which self-insures its workforce.

OBAMACARE

CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP: And just when we thought GOP repeal efforts were officially dead, Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) switches on the life support with the most noncommittal of closed-door comments. Jennifer Haberkorn, Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim give the [blow by blow](#) on the death (and potential revival?) of the Graham-Cassidy plan.

More: [Trump plans executive order](#) | [McConnell's dreadful day](#) | [Bipartisan health care talks resume](#) | [Heritage opposes efforts to prop up Obamacare](#) | [But governors are for it](#) | [Trump: 'We will have the votes'](#)

EARMARKS

- House passes bill to reauthorize child home visiting program. [POLITICO Pro.](#)
- Report: Afghan forces lost \$700 million in US ammo. [Military Times.](#)
- Trump backs off vow that private sector should help pay for infrastructure package. [The Washington Post.](#)
- VA running out of money for private health care program. [The Associated Press.](#)
- Farm, green groups push for increased conservation funding. [POLITICO Pro.](#)

WE'RE COUNTING: 72 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017). Three days until the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/09/diane-black-sees-her-ticket-out-of-town-024803>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Everything you need to know about the Big 6 tax plan [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 09/27/2017 11:01 AM EDT

After months of closed-door negotiations, the "Big Six" on Wednesday unveiled its long-awaited plan to rewrite the tax code. The task now is selling the sweeping proposal to rank-and-file lawmakers. Republicans hope to get a bill to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the year. Here's what you need to know about the plan negotiated by the top Republican lawmakers and administration officials:

For individuals: The big surprise here is that Republicans are backing away from plans to slash taxes on the rich. They are floating the idea of some sort of surtax on the well-to-do,

though details are scant. That's a major shift from what Republicans campaigned on in last year's elections, when they proposed steep tax cuts for the wealthy. But they are trying to head off the inevitable attacks from Democrats, and maybe even win some of their support.

"We are committed to making sure the tax code is at least as progressive as the exiting tax code, that it does not shift the tax burden from high-income to low- and middle-income taxpayers," a senior administration official told reporters.

Their plan would make a number of other changes to the individual side of the code, including collapsing the number of tax brackets to three from seven, with the top rate set at 35 percent but leaving open the possibility that it could be set higher for some. They would nearly double the standard deduction to \$24,000 for couples while getting rid of the personal exemption.

Though many supply-side Republicans are skeptical of the child tax credit, the Big Six is calling for a major expansion of the popular break, while offering no details on how it might be increased. They're also proposing a new \$500 credit for non-child dependents like seniors.

They want to repeal the estate tax along with the alternative minimum tax, which was originally meant to ensure that the wealthy don't avoid taxes altogether.

The plan calls for keeping education-, retirement- and work-related breaks, without getting into specifics.

The Big Six — which includes the top House and Senate leaders, the chairmen of the two chambers' tax-writing committees, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn — didn't provide specifics about how the individual provisions would work, such as when the different tax brackets would kick in. So it's hard to know if the aggregate effect of the various changes would really leave the relative tax burden among different groups untouched.

But an administration official says: "When all the pieces add up, that's what you'll see."

For businesses: As expected, the plan calls for cutting the corporate rate to 20 percent, from the current 35 percent. Small businesses would pay 25 percent. Companies would be allowed to immediately write off investment expenses, though only for five years.

On the international front, the U.S. would adopt a "territorial system" where the government would no longer attempt to tax companies' overseas earnings. At the same time, though, the plan proposes a foreign minimum tax to prevent businesses from moving abroad to avoid U.S. taxes altogether.

"For companies that are operating in tax haven countries, we do want to make sure there is at least a certain level of tax," the official said.

It would offer a so-called repatriation holiday, allowing multinationals to bring home offshore profits at a reduced tax rate, though the plan offers few details. The corporate alternative minimum tax would be eliminated. The Republican plan would keep a popular research and development tax credit, and also an incentive to invest in low-income housing.

So who are the losers? Not a lot of detail here, though in some ways this is the most important question with Republicans' tax plans.

It calls for killing a long-standing deduction for state and local taxes. It would also partially reduce a break for business interest expenses, though details are few. Republicans say they will get rid of "most" itemized expenses, though they're hanging onto some of the largest, including deductions for mortgage interest and charitable contributions.

Republicans will need a lot more than that though to live within the budgets they're developing. While their plans call for trillions in tax cuts, Senate Republicans are writing a budget calling for a \$1.5 trillion tax cut while House Republicans want the plan to be deficit neutral.

How much is this going to cost? No word here, with Republicans saying that will be determined by whatever lawmakers agree to as part of their budget — though the assumption appears to be their plan will ultimately increase the budget deficit. "We are going to have a budget resolution from the House and Senate, which is going to tell us how much we can add to the deficit."

Other surprises: Republicans aren't proposing to cut the capital gains rate, though that's been part of the party's tax orthodoxy for decades. They also aren't calling for any changes in the Earned Income Tax Credit, though there has been a lot of bipartisan agreement on expanding this wage supplement for the working poor for childless adults. Currently, the program — the government's biggest assistance program to the poor — heavily favors those with children.

Sorry Paul Ryan: Though House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) have spent an enormous amount of time working on tax reform, the agreement released Wednesday rejected or scales back many of their ideas. Border adjustments — which generally would have taxed imports but not exports — are nowhere to be found, of course. Their other top priority, those business investment provisions — known in the tax world as "expensing" — are only temporary.

The Big Six only agreed to partially reduce the business interest deduction, which House Republicans wanted to eliminate. The plan is committed to maintaining the current progressivity of the tax code, something Ryan has previously rejected.

Unanswered questions: Aside from missing details on how exactly the various provisions would work, there are other TBDs such as how Republicans will prevent rich people from disguising themselves as small businesses in order to tap the lower 25 percent rate. The plan also calls for allowing both expensing and interest deductions, which tax experts across the political spectrum call a bad idea because the combination of the two can allow people to create tax shelters.

What's next: The next major step for Republicans is passing a budget. They need it to tap the so-called reconciliation maneuver they're relying upon to muscle their tax plans through the Senate over Democrats' objections. Without it, their tax plans — at least as currently written — are dead.

Said Brady: "Without a budget, there's no tax reform."

The Republican leaders will start selling the plan to rank-and-file members immediately, with a meeting Wednesday at the National Defense University to discuss it.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump defies GOP over tax cuts for the rich [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Aaron Lorenzo | 09/26/2017 02:10 PM EDT

President Donald Trump — eager to work with Democrats on tax reform — upended Republican leaders' plans to cut taxes for the rich just as the party is set to unveil its much-awaited tax proposal.

During a meeting at the White House on Tuesday, Trump made a point of telling GOP and Democratic lawmakers that his top tax advisers — Gary Cohn and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, both very affluent individuals — won't see their tax bills reduced. Both men nodded in agreement, sources in the room told POLITICO.

Though Trump has insisted before that the wealthiest taxpayers wouldn't benefit from his plan, the timing of the assertion roiled what Republicans were hoping would be a unified tax reform rollout on Wednesday. Instead of lowering the top income bracket to 35 percent, as congressional leaders wanted, multiple GOP sources say they will now say that the top rate is open to negotiation — and that a tax surcharge could be imposed on the most affluent.

"What we heard is that things were negotiable," said Rep. John Larson (D-Conn.), a Ways and Means Committee member who attended the meeting. "But [Trump] couldn't have been more clear about it being a middle-class, working-class, lower-class tax cut."

The last-minute scramble on perhaps the most politically sensitive piece of tax reform came a day before Speaker Paul Ryan and Vice President Mike Pence were set to rally the House GOP Conference around a newly minted GOP tax proposal. It highlights the fickle nature of the tax talks: Republican leaders had been working on a partisan tax bill, but Trump wants to work with Democrats, too. And seared by the failed effort to push a partisan health care bill through Congress, top White House officials are wary a GOP-only tax bill will fail, too.

While Trump told House Ways and Means Committee members that the top rate is "negotiable," his message contradicts the very blueprint being sketched out by the so-called Big Six. The group writing the GOP tax bill — which includes Cohn, Mnuchin, Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the tax committee chairmen in both chambers — had intended to reduce the top rate of 39.6 percent rate to 35 percent, according to multiple Hill and administration sources.

Not every Republican on the Hill is balking at Trump's message, though conservatives have long called for rate reductions for everyone, including the upper class. In fact, there's now quiet talk among GOP Ways and Means members that they could leave the 39.6 percent rate for top earners in a fourth bracket, even as top tax writers were hoping to condense the seven tax brackets to three. Lawmakers could set a lower rate on business investments because that's money they're plowing into the economy, not just sitting on it, they say.

"I, too, share concerns about a tax reform that is going to target the wealthy individuals," said New York Republican Rep. Tom Reed, another tax panel member who attended the meeting. "My priority are the Americans working paycheck to paycheck, middle-class folks who need

relief from the broken tax code."

Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.), an early Trump supporter and top congressional ally, said Trump clearly wants to work with both sides of the aisle: "I think the real call is from the White House about how things become integrated and how much it becomes bipartisan, and I think the president, the way he spoke today, he's looking to make sure bipartisan elements are there."

Democrats are skeptical. Larson noted that "there wasn't a person in the room he didn't agree with," calling Trump a "good salesman." Others say they've heard Trump talk out of both sides of his mouth plenty of times before. Trump seemed undecided on the top rate Tuesday, while also pledging to eliminate the estate tax, which would disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

"Trust everyone, but cut the cards. ... I say that as it relates to taxes," Larson said. "The devil is in the details ... so, we'll see."

Democrats also note that congressional leaders haven't taken the same tack as the leader of their party — excluding Democrats from tax talks nearly altogether. In a letter to Ryan on Tuesday night, just hours after meeting with the White House, House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley (D-N.Y.) asked the speaker to allow Democrats to attend Wednesday's tax retreat.

"I am deeply concerned by Republicans' go-it-alone approach to tax reform, which is occurring despite eagerness from House Democrats to engage in the process," he wrote. "I respectfully ask you expand this [retreat] to include House Democrats."

That doesn't mean Trump won't try to win them over. It's why he hosted Republicans and Democrats from the tax panel at the White House just two weeks after huddling with the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

Ways and Means ranking Democrat Richard Neal kicked off the meeting by making the case that tax reform should benefit not the rich, but the middle class. Trump agreed, saying he's "prepared to negotiate with Democrats" on rates and vowing the GOP bill "would not be helpful to the wealthy," Neal said.

The president didn't discuss specifics of the tax reform outline he's scheduled to discuss Wednesday in Indiana, the Massachusetts Democrat continued. He did say in public remarks before the meeting that the plan would include "nearly doubling the standard deduction that most families take on their taxes, and increasing the child tax credit."

GOP insiders say the administration — and Trump in particular — are sensitive to accusations that their plan would benefit top earners. That's not only because Trump's populist base is mostly middle-class earners but also because he and his Cabinet members are incredibly wealthy — and they don't want to be seen as throwing kickbacks to one another.

In fact, at one point during the tax meeting, Trump pointed to Mnuchin and Cohn and said they won't get a cut. The two nodded their heads, according to Larson, and said on cue: "We're not getting any tax breaks."

Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-Calif.) soon after gave an impassioned speech about working mothers and the need for child care assistance in the tax code. Trump became excited, exclaiming

something along the lines of: "I've got to get you to talk to Ivanka because that's all she talks to me about," according to one member in the room.

Kelly said Trump told Sánchez: "Linda, you are going to be really, really happy tomorrow when we bring this up. You're going to be so surprised that nobody's going to be able to say anything bad about it."

Asked about the exchange post-meeting, Sánchez gave an eye roll. After Trump "assured me that I would love their proposal on child care and that tomorrow I would be thanking him," she said she retorted: "Can I get that in writing? Because I'm a lawyer."

"He said, 'Oh, my daughter talks about that all the time.' And I said, 'Well, I'd love to talk to her about it because I've been working on that for several years,'" Sánchez mimicked. "We'll see if they're sincere in wanting to work on that but he guaranteed me that I would love it. I would love it."

Sánchez also said Trump told the room the tax rate for multinationals to bring earnings back to the U.S would be 10 percent: "Apparently, he picked the rate himself. Other people wanted lower, and he thought 10 was a nice, round number, apparently."

Republicans aren't sure what to make of Trump's comments about bipartisan tax reform. Many are privately skeptical that he can cut a deal with Democrats on taxes.

Overtures aside on the top individual tax rate and child tax credit, Ways and Means Democrats are also approaching the potential opportunity with a dose of skepticism.

"There are a ton of unanswered questions because they didn't release any of the details of what tax reform would look like," said Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wis.), who added that Trump's invite the day before he was scheduled to release the updated tax reform plan was a bit late for his taste. "It's nice to be there on the takeoff and not just the landing."

Kind also questioned the partisan path Republicans have taken on taxes to date, and still plan to, by using the budget reconciliation process to secure passage with a simple Senate majority. That would block Democrats from filibustering the bill.

"This may have been a carefully choreographed show," said Rep. Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.), who added that he's nonetheless hopeful for a bipartisan opportunity on taxes.

Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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Trump hits the road to sell tax plan - but some worry what he'll say [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook and Ben White | 09/26/2017 07:23 PM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to tout the Republicans' new tax blueprint as one of the biggest tax cuts in recent American history at a Wednesday rally in Indiana - but Republican

lawmakers, lobbyists and others are worried about exactly what he'll say.

Administration officials and top congressional leaders are calling for a 20 percent top rate for corporations. But the president has demanded in multiple meetings that tax negotiators stick with a 15 percent corporate rate even as senior congressional Republicans and members of his own administration including National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn told him such a number wasn't possible without blowing up the deficit.

"He's the one guy left in Washington who still wants a 15 percent corporate rate," said one person close to the president and the tax reform discussions. "They could put 20 percent down on paper and he could go out and say 15 percent anyway. He goes to these tax meetings and people just hammer him but he still wants 15 percent."

The president said Wednesday on his way to Indiana that "20's my number."

"I wanted to start at 15 so that we got 20," he told reporters. "I'm not negotiating that number. I am not going to negotiate. That's the number I wanted to get to. I wanted to start at 15 to get there. We really had to start there because of the complexity of the numbers, but 20 is a perfect number."

Trump has a habit of going off-script at public events, editorializing and extemporizing. That's exacerbating fears that the president could upend months of behind-the-scenes negotiations by the so-called Big Six—a group of White House officials, Hill Republican leaders, and committee heads—over the blueprint document Trump will introduce to the greater public in Indiana.

"Politically, he should be focused on what he does best - by calling the blueprint the greatest, biggest, super, all of the superlatives - and then allow everyone to focus on filling in the blanks of a tax bill," said one Republican lobbyist with ties to the administration.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a long-time Trump loyalist dating back to the campaign, has tried to convince the president that the proposal is a good starting point that can be improved through the legislative process, said an adviser with close ties to the administration.

"It's not as fundamental reform as many of us would like it to be," said Republican Rep. Devin Nunes of California following a meeting of the House tax writing committee on Monday, "but we can get real reform."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The Republican blueprint, developed by administration officials, congressional leaders, and heads of the House and Senate tax-writing committees, will suggest deep cuts to both the corporate and individual tax rates; a new type of international tax system called a territorial system; the temporary phasing in of full expensing for five years to allow businesses to immediately deduct capital investments; and the doubling of the standard deduction for individuals and an expansion of the child tax credit, a pet project of the president's daughter and adviser Ivanka Trump, according to several people familiar with the plan.

It will also call for the elimination of the deduction for state and local taxes, a benefit that primarily helps voters in blue states such as California, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. But the proposal will not go into detail as to which other deductions congressional

lawmakers might target to pay for deep rate cuts, except for noting the mortgage interest and charitable deductions are no longer on the table.

The negotiators opted to leave out the deductions they wanted to eliminate because they could not agree on the final list and did not want to provoke D.C.'s well-paid army of tax lobbyists, according to two people familiar with the negotiations.

"K Street lives and gets paid to kill tax reform," said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president of the conservative think tank, American Action Forum, and a former director of the Congressional Budget Office. "That is the generic issue with tax reform. It is routinely blown up by the business community."

But at the moment, the bigger concern is the divide between the Big Six tax proposal and the president's personal preferences, because it leads to a lack of confidence in the negotiations, said one former House Republican aide.

"Lawmakers are worried about having the rug pulled out from them," the aide said.

Other congressional aides trusted the process of constructing a tax bill and seeking Republican lawmaker support more than they trusted the White House.

"The president is always full of surprises. That is something built into our psyches as we move forward," said one senior congressional aide. "That is why it is important to have a document, so the White House, House, and Senate are on the record, saying 'This is what we want to achieve.' There is a clear recognition on the part of the members that failure of tax reform will have deep consequences for 2018. That kind of motivation helps."

The Big Six blueprint is expected to suggest bringing the corporate rate down to 20 percent, while condensing individual tax rates to three income brackets of 12 percent, 15 percent and 35 percent. That would represent an increase in the bottom rate of 2 percent, something Democrats are likely to attack on Wednesday.

But administration officials say that the doubling of the standard deduction and other credits in the bill will actually make most low-income tax filers better off under the new proposal. The blueprint will also suggest that lawmakers writing the tax bill could add another, higher top rate for the highest incomes. That would be aimed at deflecting Democrats' nascent arguments that the tax plan would be a boon for the wealthy.

On Tuesday morning, Trump told a group of bipartisan tax writers at a White House meeting that the top rates for individuals was "negotiable," contradicting the Big Six document that suggests lowering it to 35 percent.

It will be hard for analysts to assess the actual impact on Americans' bottom lines because the blueprint will not include details on the ranges of incomes that the rates will apply to and exactly which deductions will change - leaving voters with a half-portrait of how their financial lives could change under this potential tax overhaul.

The president has also repeatedly said he does not want to cut taxes on the wealthy, something that will be very difficult for Capitol Hill Republicans to pull off if they kill the alternative minimum tax and the estate tax while lowering the rate that individuals pay on "pass-through" business income.

Sources close to the process said the plan would include a proposed 25 percent rate for business entities and individuals who report business income on their personal returns along with "guardrails" to prevent abuse of that rate by wealthy doctors, lawyers and other professionals trying to reclassify their ordinary income as business income. But the people close to the process say this is mostly a placeholder and that there is no real mechanism available yet to create these guardrails.

The question of how to tax, or even define, businesses that fall under the proposed 25 percent rate has vexed the tax negotiators. The Big Six officials also could not agree on the issue of full expensing - which allows businesses to immediately deduct capital investments such as equipment but is also a costly provision.

In the end, they opted to include a phase-in of full expensing temporarily for five years as a win for House Speaker Paul Ryan and Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady. Those House leaders had to stand by earlier this summer as Big Six negotiators abandoned one of their key ideas to raise revenue through a border adjustment tax.

At a dinner on Monday night with conservative leaders, the president spoke about tax reform in an upbeat and engaged manner, said one attendee.

"He didn't get everything he wanted out," said the source who attended the dinner with social conservative leaders. "If he could wave a magic wand, it's not going to be that proposal but it will still be very good."

Rachel Bade and Colin Wilhelm contributed reporting

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GOP tax plan likely to keep losers guessing [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 09/27/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Don't expect many answers Wednesday to one of the most closely guarded secrets in the Capitol: who gets screwed under Republicans' tax plans.

The long-awaited proposal set to be released by the so-called Big Six will be heavy on the GOP's tax cut desires and light when it comes to explaining whose taxes will have to go up to help control costs.

Republicans' game plan is to essentially launch a sneak attack on cherished tax breaks, in order to give opponents as little opportunity as possible to mount a counteroffensive.

It's not that Republicans don't necessarily know who they want to foot the bill for their plans. But they aren't ready to identify them all — and are willing to weather accusations they are ducking hard choices and blowing up the budget — in order to deprive the losers of a head start on lobbying.

"They're going to withhold them as long as they can," said one former Republican tax aide. "If

you don't give the details on how to pay for it, people can't really lobby against it."

The question of who will pay is the biggest unknown in their tax plans. The proposal will call for a litany of tax cuts, including reducing the corporate rate to 20 percent from the current 35 percent, while reducing taxes on unincorporated businesses to 25 percent. It will propose nearly doubling the standard deduction, expanding a tax credit for having children and creating a special low rate on multinational companies' overseas earnings.

The cost of all that would run in the trillions, and Republican leaders don't plan to simply cut taxes and leave it at that. They want to at least partially defray the cost with offsetting tax increases.

In the Senate, Republicans are working on a budget that will allow them to cut taxes by a total of \$1.5 trillion. In the House, their budget would require them to not add to the deficit.

Republicans have offered some indication where they intend to find savings, such as by eliminating a long-standing deduction for state and local taxes, and also by paring a break for business interest payments. But they've been vague on many of the specifics, and they'll need much more than that to fit within their budget.

Interest groups are anxiously awaiting details on who will have to pay under Republicans' plans.

"I'm just sitting here on pins and needles, like the rest of town," said Jerry Howard, head of the National Association of Home Builders.

His group has already prepared advertisements both supporting and opposing the Republican proposal, depending on the ultimate plan.

"We're prepared for any eventuality," he said. "We're going to be ready to fight for or against whatever is in the tax bill."

A small coterie of party leaders and their tax aides surely have an idea of how they intend to make their numbers work, tax veterans say.

But the timing of showing your hand on pay-fors and exactly what to reveal is a delicate thing. Republican leaders are under pressure from rank-and-file colleagues, especially House conservatives, to begin filling in the blanks of their plan. Some conservatives say they won't vote for a budget, needed to move any tax plan, without more information.

So the trick is to provide enough detail to satisfy lawmakers whose votes they'll need — and enough specifics to make their plan appear credible — but not so much that they get eaten alive by lobbyists.

The Big Six includes House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), Finance Committee Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#), Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#), National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Their plan won't include many details on pay-fors, said Rep. [Jim Renacci](#), a Republican tax writer.

"The statement will be a generalization of a platform that we want to get to," he said.

Some say the recent debate over House Republicans' plans to create a "border adjustable" business tax was an example of how not to approach this.

They were transparent about how they wanted to finance a big chunk of their tax plans, with a proposal that would have essentially taxed imports while allowing exports to be sold tax free. But Republicans announced the plan last year, long before they ever had a chance to push it into law, and opponents mounted such a furious lobbying campaign that the idea overshadowed the rest of their tax-reform plan. It was later dropped.

It's not just that Republicans don't want to give lobbyists a jump on their plans.

They also don't know how many offsets they'll need exactly, because they haven't agreed on how much their plan will ultimately cost. They'll need a lot more pay-fors if the House, whose plan is deficit neutral, gets its way than if they can borrow \$1.5 trillion as the Senate is proposing.

What's more, the Big Six has been divided over how deeply to go after the business interest deduction and other breaks, with senators pushing for smaller cuts. The House and Senate are likely to go separate ways on many of the pay-fors.

Howard, of the home builders group, says he's worried about a phalanx of provisions: the cap on deductible mortgage interest, the tax rate on small businesses, the interest deduction, a credit for investing in low-income housing and plans to expand the standard deduction, among others.

His group has hired economists who previously worked for Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation and also the House Ways and Means Committee to crunch the numbers on what Republicans' tax plan in its entirety would mean for them, in order to help them to decide whether to support or oppose it.

Howard says he's uncertain if Wednesday's release will provide enough details to make that judgment.

"I don't know the answer to that," he said. "I have to assume that we'll have enough information, and be prepared as if that's the case. If it's not, we'll remain on hold."

If Republicans don't include those details in Wednesday's plan, it could be a while before more details are released.

Brady says he won't release the legislative text of his plan, spelling out how exactly it will work, until after Republicans have a budget in place. Some don't expect Republicans to release those details until shortly before the tax committee formally takes up a plan — next month at the earliest. Republicans are pushing to get a bill to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the year.

Not everyone thinks hiding the pay-fors is a worthwhile strategy.

"You don't have to do it this way — in fact, it's really stupid," said John Buckley, a former longtime Democratic tax aide.

"If it can't sit out there and survive, it's not worth pursuing, in my opinion," he said.

What's more, he said, even if Republicans are able to muscle controversial changes through Congress now, before opponents can stop them, lobbyists will inevitably be back, trying to undo the changes.

"If you succeed in ramming it through, well, Congress meets again," he said. "What the hell do you think is going to happen next year?"

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Hatch sets international tax reform hearing for next week [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 09/26/2017 05:25 PM EDT

The Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing on international tax reform Oct. 3.

The hearing will follow Wednesday's unveiling of a Republican tax reform framework that committee Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) helped negotiate. Republicans have been pushing for the adoption of a "territorial" tax system, which would generally exempt the foreign income of U.S. companies from domestic taxation.

"There are a variety of changes we can make to the U.S. tax code to help American companies better compete in the global market and put an end to the perverse incentives that have caused jobs and investment to move overseas," Hatch said in a statement.

The witnesses at the hearing will be Brett J. Wells, a law professor at the University of Houston; Kimberly Clausing, an economist at Reed College in Portland, Ore.; Stephen E. Shay, a lecturer at Harvard Law School; and Itai Grinberg, a law professor at Georgetown.

WHAT'S NEXT: The hearing will be at 10 a.m. in room 215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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Democratic senator to appear with Trump at tax reform event [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss and Matthew Nussbaum | 09/26/2017 07:05 PM EDT

Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#) (D-Ind.) will ride with President Donald Trump on Air Force One to a tax reform event in Indiana on Wednesday, two people familiar with the plans confirmed.

It's the latest example of an endangered Democratic senator from a red state looking to show some bipartisan credibility by appearing with Trump as he makes his push for tax cuts.

Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) (D-N.D.), earlier in September, flew with Trump to a tax reform speech

in her home state and appeared onstage with him.

Republicans are looking to increase the pressure on Donnelly, who is up for reelection in 2018 in the deeply conservative state. Along with Trump's visit this week, Vice President Mike Pence is making at least three trips to Indiana over September and October to push for tax reform. His first visit came last week.

Six Republicans are running in the primary to face Donnelly, including Reps. [Luke Messer](#) and [Todd Rokita](#). Messer will be at the Wednesday speech.

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Homebuilders endorse Trump tax plan in split with industry [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 09/27/2017 11:23 AM EDT

The National Association of Home Builders endorsed the White House tax plan and called for "creative thinking" on tax incentives for homeownership.

"It's a winning combination," NAHB Chief Executive Officer Jerry Howard told POLITICO. "We think the Gang of Six hit a home run here." He cited the tax cuts for businesses and the middle class, as well as the plan's "clearly stated commitment to homeownership."

The endorsement is a major shift for the group, which had [vowed](#) to challenge an increase in the standard deduction. Raising the deduction, they argued, would devalue the mortgage interest deduction.

It also opens a crack in the housing industry's united front against any tax changes that would diminish incentives for homeownership.

Howard said he was encouraged by language in the framework endorsing homeownership. Replacing the mortgage interest deduction with a tax credit is one option, he said.

"I think that's something that might be on the table," he said. "We think it's time for creative thinking."

The White House will release its plan later today.

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House Oversight Committee launches investigation into agency travel following Price reports [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond | 09/27/2017 10:27 AM EDT

House investigators want answers from HHS Secretary Tom Price and other Cabinet officials about their use of government-owned aircraft or private jets for travel.

The request from the House Oversight Committee is the latest government scrutiny of Price's use of private jets, which was first reported by POLITICO last week.

Under Federal Travel Regulations, officials are advised to take the "most expeditious" means of transportation and "by no means should include personal use," Chairman [Trey Gowdy](#) and ranking member [Elijah Cummings](#) write in a sample [letter](#) addressed to Price, who served more than a decade in the House before joining Trump's administration. Similar letters were sent to 23 other agencies and the White House.

POLITICO has reported that Price has spent more than \$400,000 on taxpayer-funded private jet travel since May. A [story](#) on Tuesday detailed how Price's trips blended personal and professional travel, including a \$17,760 round trip on a charter jet to Nashville, where Price stayed less than six hours and had lunch with his son. Price has said he will halt all private jet travel pending the outcome of an HHS inspector general's [review](#).

Other Trump administration officials have come under scrutiny for their travel. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has faced questions after his flight on a government plane to Kentucky, where he reportedly watched the solar eclipse, as well as his request — later withdrawn — to use a government plane on his honeymoon. EPA Secretary Scott Pruitt also has used non-commercial planes for some of his official travel, CBS News reported on Tuesday.

Gowdy and Cummings are seeking details on senior officials' use of non-commercial planes, including the airplane manifest, the trip's destination and purpose, the cost of the trip and the dates of use. Agencies were asked to respond by Oct. 10.

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Price's private-jet travels included visits with colleagues, lunch with son [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond and Rachana Pradhan | 09/26/2017 06:51 PM EDT

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price took a government-funded private jet in August to get to St. Simons Island, an exclusive Georgia resort where he and his wife own land, a day and a half before he addressed a group of local doctors at a medical conference that he and his wife have long attended.

The St. Simons Island trip was one of two taxpayer-funded flights on private jets in which Price traveled to places where he owns property, and paired official visits with meetings with longtime colleagues and family members. On June 6, HHS chartered a jet to fly Price to Nashville, Tennessee, where he owns a condominium and where his son resides. Price toured a medicine dispensary and spoke to a local health summit organized by a longtime friend. He also had lunch with his son, an HHS official confirmed.

An HHS official said both the Georgia and Tennessee trips were for official government

business and were paid for by the department.

Richard Painter, who served as the top ethics official for President George W. Bush, said Price's trips may have been legal but were ethically dubious.

"To use a charter flight on something that combines personal and government business, I think it's highly unprofessional and really inappropriate," Painter said — especially if personal business represented a disproportionate part of the trip.

HHS has long maintained that Price, whose use of chartered aircraft is under investigation by the HHS inspector general, has not violated Federal Travel Regulations, which state that officials can charter a plane only if "no scheduled commercial airline service is reasonably available (i.e., able to meet your departure and/or arrival requirements within a 24-hour period, unless you demonstrate that extraordinary circumstances require a shorter period) to fulfill your agency's travel requirement."

Like some of the other 26 flights that Price took on corporate jets since May identified by a POLITICO review, the trip to Tennessee appears to have occurred despite the existence of multiple commercial flight options. The trip to Georgia, while less direct, also could have been accomplished with a routine connecting flight through Atlanta's busy international airport.

On Aug. 4, Price flew a Dassault Falcon 2000 twin jet from Raleigh, North Carolina, where he had given a speech to a flu vaccine manufacturer, to Brunswick Golden Isles Airport, which is about a half-hour drive from St. Simons Island. It was the same plane that had shuttled him between five states in four days, one that HHS had chartered through Classic Air Charter for more than \$86,000, according to federal contracts.

The plane arrived in Brunswick at 4:02 p.m. the afternoon before the start of the two-day Medical Association of Georgia retreat and roughly 40 hours before Price addressed the group, according to airport records and people familiar with the event. At about the same time, there were connecting commercial flights from Raleigh to Brunswick via Atlanta that would have gotten Price to St. Simons Island that evening.

Painter questioned why Price needed to travel on Friday afternoon to St. Simons Island when his speech wasn't until Sunday.

"One night is appropriate for a speech in Georgia, not two nights," Painter said, given that Price was traveling around the East Coast.

The Nashville trip offered even more commercial options. On June 6, Price took a Learjet 55 — a \$17,760 round-trip flight, according to a federal contract — that departed from Washington Dulles International Airport at 9:12 a.m. ET and touched down in Nashville at 9:44 a.m. CT.

Two commercial flights that morning followed similar itineraries. An American Airlines plane departed Reagan National Airport at 9:05 a.m. ET and landed in Nashville at 9:39 a.m. CT. A Southwest Airlines flight left Baltimore-Washington International at 9:18 a.m. ET and arrived in Nashville at 9:54 a.m. CT.

Commercial airline tickets with government discounts would have cost between \$102 and \$333 per person round-trip between the two cities, according to the U.S. General Services

Administration.

The afternoon event was the first-ever Healthy Tennessee Summit organized by Dr. Manny Sethi, an orthopedic surgeon and prominent local Republican who's met with President Donald Trump and was featured as an "Obamacare victim" in a White House [video](#) posted in June.

Sethi, who says he hasn't given money to Price, has nonetheless donated \$15,000 to the Tennessee Republican Party since May 2016; the party's Twitter feed [hailed Sethi](#) last year as "one of our closest friends." Sethi also said that Price has been a mentor for years.

In his remarks, Price reminisced about his longtime fondness for Sethi, and both men referenced Price's personal ties to the city — chiefly, that his only son went to Vanderbilt University and still lives in the city. Price also owns a condominium in Nashville valued at more than \$150,000, according to county records.

Price's agenda in Nashville, which was planned just days in advance and came as Senate Republicans were trying to pass a bill repealing major parts of Obamacare, was also lightly scheduled, say individuals with knowledge of Price's travels. Price spent less than 90 minutes combined between his two scheduled events — about an hour touring the Dispensary of Hope medication dispensary in the morning, and about 20 minutes giving his speech at the Healthy Tennessee Summit in the afternoon.

The trip was so last-minute that Price wasn't part of the summit's formal meeting agenda; attendees were given a handout with the secretary's biography. Reporters weren't informed when Price would be speaking until less than an hour before he arrived at the summit. The meeting website [still lists](#) an outdated agenda.

Local health care leaders said the trip was a surprise to them too. "We heard that he was here on the day of" his visit, said one health care business executive who often works with lawmakers. "I only know what I read in the [paper] about his trip."

Meanwhile, Price didn't take any questions at the summit and promptly left for the airport when his speech was done by 2:40 p.m. His charter plane departed less than 40 minutes later.

Sethi, the summit's organizer, said he felt lucky to get even a few minutes with the secretary because Price's time was so valuable.

"In Nashville, there were like 20 other things on his docket," Sethi said.

One of them was lunch with his son, Robert Price, who is a musician in Nashville. It occurred during a nearly three-hour block of Price's schedule between when Price departed the Dispensary of Hope around 11:30 a.m. CT — "He had to leave for the rest of his Nashville meetings," said a staff member at the dispensary — and his arrival at the health care summit around 2:15 p.m. CT.

Painter said Price's trip to Nashville raised multiple ethical concerns. Despite spending nearly \$18,000 on a Learjet, Price spent just five-and-a-half hours in the city and with only two official visits on his calendar — an hourlong tour of the dispensary and a 20-minute speech — that bookended his lunch with his son.

"If [Price] flew out there commercial and he had a lunch with his son, no one would bat an eyelid," Painter said. "But he's combining all these different ways of stretching it," Painter

added, listing off the expensive charter flight, Price's personal lunch and choosing to make a speech to a little-known group run by a prominent Republican.

"They're playing games with the rules," Painter said.

The trip to St. Simons Island, the largest of the "golden isles" on the coast of Georgia and a popular destination for well-heeled professionals from Atlanta and other Georgia cities, was also lightly scheduled.

Both Price and his wife were on familiar turf. An orthopedic surgeon from the Atlanta area whose involvement with the Medical Association of Georgia helped launch his political career, Price spoke for about an hour on Sunday, Aug. 6, to a group of roughly 20 doctors involved in the Georgia Physicians Leadership Academy, as did other Georgia state lawmakers who are physicians, including Price's wife, Betty Price.

Price has taught communications skills at the physician leadership development event for nine years, according to a spokesperson for the Medical Association of Georgia. The group said it did not pay for his travel or any other expenses related to the St. Simons meeting.

Both Price and his wife, a physician and a member of the Georgia state House of Representatives, have longstanding ties to the island. For years, Price held congressional fundraisers at the King and Prince Resort — the same venue that hosted the physicians' retreat — often on the first weekend of August, the same days that he visited this year.

Local property records show that the Prices, who reside in the Atlanta suburbs, also own undeveloped land on St. Simons that Price valued at more than \$1 million in financial disclosure forms this year.

Price was originally scheduled to take a charter flight to Georgia on Thursday, Aug. 3, one of three planned stops that day beginning with an opioids roundtable in Illinois and with a short layover in Raleigh, North Carolina, to visit Seqirus, the flu vaccine manufacturer. But while the roundtable, featuring GOP congressman Darin LaHood, took place as planned, the North Carolina and Georgia trips were rescheduled as Price went back to Washington for one night.

Price then flew down to Raleigh on Friday, Aug. 4, for a brief stopover before continuing on to the Georgia resort later that day.

"It was a 45-minute visit," said a spokesperson for the Raleigh-based drug vaccine manufacturer. "I think he had something else to get to."

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Trump on whether he'll fire Price over charter flights: 'We'll see' [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/27/2017 01:12 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Wednesday expressed sharp displeasure with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price over his use of pricey private jets at taxpayers' expense,

saying "we'll see" when asked by reporters if he would fire Price.

"I was looking into it and I will look into it. And I will tell you personally, I'm not happy about it," Trump said in a brief exchange with reporters. "I am not happy about it. I'm going to look at it. I am not happy about it, and I let him know it."

POLITICO [revealed](#) that Price has flown 26 times on private aircraft since last May at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, a break with the practice of his predecessors, who generally took commercial flights.

The Department of Health and Human Services has said Price did not violate federal travel regulations, which allow for chartered aircraft when "no scheduled commercial airline service is reasonably available." A POLITICO review, however, showed that many of Price's private flights were matched closely by commercial options available at a fraction of the cost.

In an interview last weekend, Price said he would stop taking taxpayer-funded private flights, telling Fox News that "We've heard the criticism. We've heard the concerns. We take that very seriously and have taken it to heart."

[Among the private flights](#) booked by Price was a June day trip to Nashville, Tenn., where he toured a medical dispensary, spoke at a health summit organized by a friend and had lunch with his son. Price also took a chartered flight last month to a resort in Georgia where he and his wife own property, arriving a day and a half before he was to address a medical conference.

The White House has sought to distance itself from Price's behavior, with press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders declining to offer a defense of the secretary's flight choices and telling reporters this week that they were not "White House-approved travel."

Spokespeople for the Department of Health and Human Services did not immediately return an email seeking a response from Price.

The secretary's travels have also drawn the attention of the House Oversight Committee, [which launched an investigation](#) Wednesday into the use of private aircraft by Price and other senior government officials. The Health and Human Services Department's inspector general has also launched an investigation into Price's use of chartered planes.

"We welcome this review," Price said of the inspector general's review in his Fox News interview last weekend. "We want to make certain that we have the full confidence of not just this administration, but the American people."

That Price has made a habit of chartering aircraft for his travels as a cabinet member is especially notable given his past criticism of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), whom Price, then a member of Congress, lambasted in 2010 for "flying over our country in a luxury jet."

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McCain wants full investigation into Price's 'disturbing' private-jet travel [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 09/27/2017 02:03 PM EDT

Sen. [John McCain](#) today called for a full investigation into HHS Secretary Tom Price's use of private jets, calling reports of his taxpayer-funded travel "disturbing."

"I think it's something that needs to be investigated, and frankly it's disturbing from the information I've read," the Arizona Republican said. "It's the taxpayer's dime."

McCain's comments came after President Donald Trump told reporters he's "not happy" about Price's pattern of chartering private planes and declined to say whether Price's job was safe.

POLITICO found that Price has flown 26 times on private aircraft since last May, costing taxpayers at least \$400,000. Price has said he will stop using charters pending a formal review by his department's inspector general.

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Poll: Voters say Price's charter flights are inappropriate [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 09/27/2017 07:14 AM EDT

Nearly two-thirds of registered voters disapprove of HHS Secretary Tom Price's decision to charter private jets to conduct official business, a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll shows.

Sixty-four percent of voters said it was inappropriate for Price to take private aircraft, which costs tens of thousands of dollars more than commercial flights. Sixteen percent said the trips were appropriate.

The poll asked voters about five flights Price took on the East Coast two weeks ago, which POLITICO [first reported](#) last week. Price flew to Maine to participate in a discussion with a health care industry CEO, and then he made trips to health clinics in New Hampshire and Philadelphia to discuss efforts to fight the opioid epidemic.

POLITICO has identified [at least 26 charter flights](#) Price has taken since May at a cost of at least \$400,000 to taxpayers.

The poll was conducted from Sept. 22-24. During that time, Price said he would stop taking private jets for official business pending a review by the HHS inspector general. Democratic lawmakers have also sought a detailed accounting from HHS on Price's use of private jets.

Most voters said they hadn't read or heard much about Price's travel.

"The news that Secretary Price was flying private made waves in Washington, but the polling suggests it has not captured national attention," said Morning Consult co-founder and Chief Research Officer Kyle Dropp. "Just 18 percent of Americans say they heard a lot about the

news, and an additional 25 percent said they heard some."

HHS has defended Price's use of private planes as necessary to accommodate his demanding schedule, especially amid pressing priorities like responding to hurricanes and addressing the opioid crisis. However, many of the flights were unrelated to those issues and were to cities with frequent, inexpensive commercial options. POLITICO has identified at least 10 charter flights Price took since May that were not related to either the opioid crisis or hurricane response, including flights to conferences in Maine, San Diego, Calif., and Aspen, Colo.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll also found that 26 percent of voters have a favorable view of Price, while 25 percent view him unfavorably.

Price, a former House Budget Committee chairman, represented Georgia in Congress for more than a decade and had a reputation as a fiscal hawk and fierce opponent of Obamacare.

The White House has sought to distance itself from Price's travel practices. President Donald Trump over the weekend said the issue was being looked into, and press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the White House didn't approve the trips. White House counselor Kellyanne Conway accompanied Price on trips to at least six states.

The poll surveyed 1,987 registered voters and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy. More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents — topline [here](#) and crosstabs [here](#).

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Senators, Perdue look to Maria aid for fire-funding fix [Back](#)

By Sabrina Rodriguez | 09/26/2017 07:36 PM EDT

A bipartisan group of six senators, including Senate Finance ranking member [Ron Wyden](#), believe a potential aid package for hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico could also provide a means of revamping the way the federal government funds wildfire prevention and suppression.

"We have never had a better shot at finally getting fire borrowing ended than we do this upcoming period, when we're going to have another disaster package," Wyden (D-Ore.) said today as Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue hosted a briefing on U.S. Forest Service funding and the 2017 wildfire season.

Wyden and five other senators — [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho), [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.), [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.), [Jim Risch](#) (R-Idaho) and [Michael Bennet](#) (D-Colo.) — echoed Perdue's call for Congress to quickly find a permanent solution to the Forest Service's ballooning wildfire-suppression costs, which have [exceeded \\$2 billion](#) for the current fiscal year — making 2017 the most expensive year on record for the Forest Service.

Fire-suppression spending in fiscal 2017 has reached 55 percent of the Forest Service's budget, a marked increase from just 15 percent in the 1990s. As wildland fires have increased in frequency and in the amount of time it takes to extinguish them, the Forest Service routinely borrows from fire-prevention programs to fight ongoing blazes.

Perdue argues that [lasting changes](#) to the Forest Service's budget are needed to prevent officials from having to hoard money intended for fire-prevention efforts — such as prescribed burns, harvesting and insect control — which could exacerbate the problem in the long run.

Lawmakers from both parties on Tuesday spoke in general terms that leadership on Capitol Hill understands the severity of the problem. Wyden and other senators left open the possibility of a legislative solution apart from a possible aid package for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, however. Crapo, for one, emphasized that Congress needs to act as soon as possible to shore up the Forest Service's funding, whether in the form of a relief measure for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands or targeted legislation.

"I agree with you," Perdue said in response to Crapo, noting that the spate of hurricanes in recent weeks could serve to increase public awareness of the government's approach to disaster relief — wildland fires included.

"I think there's a silver lining in a crisis," Perdue said, adding: "We've seen people coming together, whether in fires or hurricanes; there may be more empathy there."

The secretary also believes that OMB could make changes to give him added flexibility to manage the Forest Service's budget. He said that when he last spoke to officials at OMB he got a "favorable signal" that "they were moving in that direction," though he cautioned he has not received a "definitive" answer.

The widespread nature of the damage Puerto Rico sustained during back-to-back hits by Hurricanes Irma and Maria likely means the White House could be weeks away from submitting a formal request to Congress for an aid package, POLITICO reported earlier Tuesday. Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) is demanding that lawmakers approve a relief measure by week's end to boost recovery efforts in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Wyden said Schumer has indicated that funding for wildland fires is "priority business."

It's also a problem that is forecast to get worse. The Forest Service estimates fire-suppression efforts will represent two-thirds of its budget by 2021, with spending increasing by about \$100 million each year during that period.

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Conaway: Cotton growers waiting on OMB to approve assistance [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 09/26/2017 04:01 PM EDT

The White House Office of Management and Budget is reviewing a proposal from USDA to

renew a program that subsidizes cotton growers' ginning costs, House Agriculture Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) said today.

Conaway told reporters he hopes the damage Hurricane Harvey inflicted on the cotton crop in southeast Texas will help OMB see the value of approving the cost-share program again this year — and that Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is advocating for it.

"We have to help the president understand how helpful that would be in between farm bills," Conaway said, noting the committee is aiming to release its version of the legislation by the end of this year or early next year. "Cotton farmers need help now."

In June 2016 USDA sent about \$300 million in payments to cotton growers under the ginning assistance program, and the industry has been lobbying for something similar this year.

The 2014 farm bill included a crop insurance program designed specifically to assist cotton growers during an economic downturn, but growers have been critical of the program, which has had lackluster sign-up rates. They argue the ginning assistance program is needed until Congress can devise a more permanent solution, either via an appropriations bill or the next farm bill.

USDA and OMB did not immediately return requests for comment.

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Puerto Rico electric utility bondholders offer emergency loan [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/27/2017 09:00 AM EDT

Investors holding billions in total debt owed by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority will offer a loan including \$1 billion in new funding to the beleaguered government-backed utility.

The loan would also cancel \$150 million of existing debt, as the bondholders propose to exchange \$1 billion of existing bonds for \$850 million in new debt. The investors plan to pitch the proposed cash infusion as a way to finance repairs to Puerto Rico's electrical grid, which Hurricane Maria knocked out, and matching funds for the utility to qualify for matching grants from FEMA.

Bondholders making the offer say they would ask for no principal or interest to be paid for two years.

On top of the obvious humanitarian aspects of Puerto Rico's post-Maria recovery, the devastation of the natural disaster has thrown into even greater doubt the possibility that bondholders will see money owed to them by the commonwealth's government.

"The PREPA Bondholders have consistently attempted to work constructively with PREPA, the Government of Puerto Rico, and the Oversight Board [put in place by Congress] to forge a path towards rehabilitating PREPA's operations and finances — and today's commitment reflects this," said Stephen Spencer of Houlihan Lokey, the financial advisory firm advising

PREPA bondholders, in a release. "Our thoughts are with the people of Puerto Rico ... during this difficult time and we hope that this capital commitment will provide bridge financing and matching funds as required by FEMA legislation while supporting the Commonwealth's recovery."

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Puerto Rico's rep in Congress urges USDA to provide disaster-relief funding [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 09/26/2017 04:47 PM EDT

Puerto Rico's non-voting representative in Congress urged Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to make five key disaster-relief programs available to help the island's farmers recover from Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

In a letter to USDA today, Resident Commissioner [Jenniffer González-Colón](#) said that while producers on the island aren't eligible for assistance under the programs she cited, the back-to-back storms created an extreme emergency that warrants special action by USDA. She requested that the Livestock Indemnity Program, the Livestock Forage Disaster Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program be applied to Puerto Rico along with initiatives that aid the forestry industry.

"Puerto Rico has a substantial agriculture sector, but it is now destroyed," González-Colón wrote in the letter, which she posted to her [Twitter account](#). Entire crops of key staples like bananas, plantains and coffee were wiped out, she said, and the storms severely damaged about 80 percent of the island's poultry infrastructure, killing an estimated 1.9 million birds. Fruit groves, pastureland and dairy production infrastructure also were significantly affected, she added.

"To ensure the fastest possible recovery of Puerto Rico's agriculture, everything that can be done must be done, including making the island eligible for all USDA disaster assistance programs," González-Colón wrote.

González-Colón also [tweeted](#) that she had spoken to Perdue about her request. In response, a USDA spokesman told POLITICO that during that conversation, Perdue "pledged all resources and flexibilities at USDA's disposal as Puerto Rico begins to recover."

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House Republicans propose \$10 billion for Trump's border wall [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 09/27/2017 03:28 PM EDT

House Republicans on Wednesday unveiled a plan to provide \$10 billion for President Donald

Trump's border wall with Mexico, a bill unlikely to clear the Senate but which could fuel a shutdown fight in December.

Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mike McCaul (R-Texas) said his panel will vote on the legislation next week. The bill also would add 10,000 more border patrol agents and Customs and Border Protection officers, tap the National Guard to patrol the southern border and target people who have overstayed visas.

"Now that we have a partner in the White House who has made this a top priority, it's time to send a bill to President Trump's desk so we can deliver the American people the security they have long demanded and deserve," McCaul said in a statement.

The bill represents Republicans' opening salvo in both the looming year-end government funding fight and high-stakes negotiations over undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children.

It almost certainly won't pass the Senate, where at least eight Democrats would be needed to clear a 60-vote threshold.

Still, the measure foreshadows Republican negotiating positions in the fight over the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which Trump announced earlier this month he would end absent action from Congress. Trump has said the wall need not be part of any bipartisan deal to codify the program, but House Republicans want the wall on the table.

While the bill authorizes funds for the wall, it does not actually appropriate the money. But it shows that Republicans are intent on fighting for the wall ahead of debate to keep the government from running out of money in the second week of December.

Trump has said he wants a shutdown rumble over his wall money, which Democrats have rejected. He and some conservatives feel they could win a public relations battle if that were to occur. GOP leaders disagree and believe Republicans would face an intense backlash if the government shuts down.

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Border wall prototype construction begins [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 09/26/2017 06:18 PM EDT

Construction will begin today on eight border wall prototypes, according to an [announcement](#) by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The prototypes will be built in the San Diego area. Four of the sample walls will be made of concrete, and four of "other materials."

Each of the prototypes will be 18-30 feet high and "will inform future design standards," according to CBP.

Ronald Vitiello, acting CBP deputy commissioner, said the prototypes will help the agency "incorporate all the tools necessary to secure our border."

Caddell Construction Company, one of the companies awarded a contract to build the prototypes, paid \$3 million to settle a Justice Department fraud investigation in 2012, POLITICO [reported](#) earlier this month.

The company did not admit wrongdoing in the case.

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America's government is getting old [Back](#)

By Danny Vinik | 09/27/2017 05:02 AM EDT

It's no secret that American workers are getting older. Even as millennials become the biggest cohort in the labor force, the median age of all U.S. employees has crept up from 30 to 42 over the past 30 years. But when it comes to getting older, a POLITICO analysis finds, the private sector has nothing on the U.S. government.

The U.S. just elected the oldest new president in history, and Congress, too, has been getting consistently older, with its average age now up around 60.

But the vast majority of the government consists of the 2 million-strong federal civilian workforce. And thanks to slow-moving hiring practices and a huge cohort of baby boomers who haven't retired at the predicted rates, it has grown significantly older than the American workforce overall. Today, just 17 percent of federal workers are under 35 years old. (In the private sector, almost 40 percent are.) And more than a quarter of federal employees are now older than 55.

In some agencies, the upward age shift is even starker. Sixty nine percent of NASA's workforce is over 45 years old. At the Department of Housing and Urban Development, it's 70 percent. At the tiny Government Printing Office, it's even more extreme—80 percent.

In principle, there's nothing wrong with older workers: They have more experience than younger ones and employers often report that they are more attentive at work. Age discrimination is not just illegal, but strips companies of experience and judgment; it's fair to say that plenty of Silicon Valley companies might benefit from the perspective of a more experienced cohort of employees. But workplaces that shift too far in any direction can suffer. There is evidence that offices with more older workers are [less productive](#) and, due to their workers' age, [more expensive](#); health care costs are especially high, and a wave of retirements would leave the government on the hook for a major increase in pension spending. And broadly speaking, if the government is supposed to reflect America accurately—making small and large policy decisions that affect every aspect of the country—it's only reasonable to expect that the federal workforce should reflect the generational makeup of the country.

Given the stereotypes about government employees, it's easy to assume that federal worker protections have led to a vast army of aging-in-place bureaucrats who simply can't be

removed. But organizational experts and former federal human resource managers say the problem is more complicated than that, and more troubling for good governance. They see an ineffective hiring system that is decades out of date. They have spent years warning policymakers that rules and laws were inhibiting their ability to hire and train new employees. The aging of the federal workforce, they say, is a symptom of Washington's inability to keep up with modern-day management practices and to plan for the future—as well as a system hamstrung by rigid federal employment directives, some of which, ironically, were aimed at freshening up the workforce.

"It's not so much a matter that old people are stupid and young people are smart," said Don Kettl, a professor at the University of Maryland who has written extensively on government management. "It's that smart agencies develop a plan for a pipeline. The federal government's biggest problem is it's not very good at pipeline planning."

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED to happen this way—or at least, for years, government analysts were worried they'd be facing the opposite problem. In 1988, the Hudson institute published an influential report called "[Civil Service 2000](#)" on the future of the federal workforce, warning that a glut of workers in their mid-careers would start leaving in 2002. That warning was supported by a raft of research suggesting a large block of middle-aged workers would all be entering their retirement years at the same time, wiping out huge amounts of institutional knowledge and swamping the government in a "retirement tsunami."

But nearly 30 years later, that tsunami hasn't arrived—and many experts think it never will. Instead, baby boomers have simply hung onto their jobs. "What we've really seen is the impact of better health and longer lives and people wanting to work together," said Myra Howze Shiplett, who served in various personnel positions across the federal government and also authored a report in 1999 warning of a retirement crisis. Said another expert: "It's been the coming crisis for 25 years."

What happened instead is that the government workforce has simply shifted older and older. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of full-time federal workers younger than 45 has gone down, while the percentage over 55 has grown dramatically, up 83 percent, according to a POLITICO analysis of data from the Office of Personnel Management. Workers at the very youngest end, under the age of 24, represent just 1.2 percent of federal employees, compared with 13 percent in the private sector. In part, that's because federal workers are [much more likely](#) than private sector workers to have a graduate level degree (29 percent vs. 11 percent), but it still is a remarkably small fraction of the overall federal workforce.

Most government agencies don't have a mandatory retirement age, so with an economy that provides less and less job security for workers, it's not exactly a surprise that many government employees have decided to continue working late into their careers.

Specialists on human resources interviewed for this story say this does have consequences. When I asked them about the effects of an aging workforce, many mentioned technology: A federal government operating in a time of smartphones and social media is staffed largely by people who grew up before the Web was invented, and many before computers arrived in homes. "A lot of the cyber crooks out there are themselves younger, and having people who are part of the video game culture improves your ability to be able to figure out how the other side is going to come at you," said Kettl, adding, "Of course it's ageist, but it's also a fact."

This belief isn't universal, and there isn't actually much evidence either way on whether

younger people are more technologically savvy than older people. But younger people *use* technology more, and have grown up with high expectations in areas where government often falls short, such as customer service, user experience and response time.

There isn't much academic research on how an aging workforce affects an organization more broadly, either. Surveys of employers have found that older workers are more experienced and focused on their work. But a [study](#) from last year found that an older labor force is less productive—and even makes young workers less productive as well, though it's unclear why. There's also evidence that older people are less able to learn new skills. And from a budgetary perspective, [studies have found](#) that older workers are more expensive, due to their greater use of health care services. These costs fall directly on the federal government, which self-insures its workforce.

Organizational experts say that the experience and talents of older workers make them a critical piece of any organization, but having a workforce with balanced ages is important for other reasons, including ensuring that the government—the entity that creates, implements and enforces policies—has a steady influx of new perspectives and fairly represents the interests of all Americans. Private sector companies put huge resources into recruiting and training younger workers under the belief that those workers will have a different viewpoint and new ideas. Said Sean Morris, who leads Deloitte's federal human capital office: "The iconic companies, the ones most able to innovate and change to the ever increasing number of missions, are those that have a much more balanced number of generations."

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is well aware that its workforce is getting older, and it's trying to address the issue. Human capital officers—the people who manage agency personnel—have carefully tracked the numbers, attempting to recruit younger workers and replenish their ranks. But according to many former chief human capital officers, these efforts have been stymied, running into a thicket of bureaucratic rules and well-intentioned but poorly designed policies.

To experts, the problem is simple: The government simply isn't designed to recruit and hire a modern workforce. The classification system for federal workers, for instance, dates back to 1949, and despite real progress in updating it, the rules still create huge challenges for agencies by forcing them to fit workers into certain prescribed categories rather than giving them the flexibility to hire and pay workers as they see fit. There's no exact government-wide hiring policy. It is filled with exemptions and carve-outs, and thick with paperwork; the closest thing to an official manual is a [351-page handbook](#) published by the Office of Personnel Management.

One rule that has especially bedeviled hiring managers is the veterans preference. The rule, which dates back to a law passed in 1944, was intended to force agencies, if faced with two similarly qualified candidates, to hire a military veteran over a non-vet. But numerous human resource experts said that in practice it creates almost a lock for veterans in many jobs: Because the hiring process effectively re-defines "similarly qualified" to encompass candidates with very different skill levels, veterans often get chosen by rule over considerably more qualified competitors.

"The veterans preference, it started in a good way. Right thing to do," said Rebecca Contreras, former chief human capital officer at the Treasury Department, who is now president of AvantGarde, a consulting firm on human capital management. "But it's taken over and inhibited a lot of agencies, and has locked down the opportunity to take anyone who is not a

veteran."

Congress also makes the job harder: Federal hiring is highly dependent on the federal budget, and Washington's dragged-out budget battles can be huge obstacles to hiring. Lawmakers rarely complete the budget process on time, often passing a stopgap measure when they can't agree on spending levels. These so-called "continuing resolutions" appear innocuous—after all, the government stays open—but within agencies, they [cause confusion](#) and impose a de facto hiring freeze on most offices. Hiring officers have no idea how many workers they can hire. Often, they have to delay even planning their staffing levels, never mind actually recruiting and hiring candidates, until Congress reaches a more permanent deal.

According to former human resource officers, former President Barack Obama inadvertently made the problem worse with his own initiative to recruit younger workers—a new program that created more problems than it solved. This was part of Obama's attempt to make government "cool" again and bring in a younger, more diverse workforce. Jeri Buchholz, formerly NASA's chief human capital officer, remembered getting strict orders from Obama's OPM on whom to recruit: "Early career people, veterans and Hispanics."

In 2010, Obama issued an executive order creating something called the Pathways Program, which both streamlined existing internships and fellowships, and made it harder for agencies to use such programs to circumvent the veterans preference. Obama officials didn't see these goals as contradictory, believing that agencies shouldn't have trouble complying with the preference. "It should be seen as an opportunity," said Shelley Metzenbaum, who had a top position overseeing personnel in Obama's budget office.

On the latter goal, Pathways succeeded—OPM [found](#) that the percentage of veteran hires rose from 24 percent in fiscal 2009 to 33 percent in fiscal 2014. Overall, nearly a quarter of federal workers are veterans, compared to just 5 percent of the private sector workforce. But former human capital officers said it created huge hiring challenges, and the data show that many agencies nearly [stopped](#) hiring through Pathways altogether. In another critical way, Pathways hasn't worked: Though the reforms were supposed to help bring younger people into government, the average age of people in the Pathways program was 27.1, up from 25.4 under previous programs.

These trends are worrisome for the age of the federal workforce—and that is evident in the data. The percentage of new hires younger than 30 fell from 37 percent in fiscal 2011 to 35 percent in fiscal 2016, according to OPM data. It's unfair to blame that entirely on Obama or Pathways. After all, the government went through sequestration, and agencies faced intermittent hiring freezes during those years. That made workforce planning exceptionally hard and especially limited the government's ability to recruit younger workers. But despite Obama's efforts to recruit younger workers, nothing much has changed, and in fact new government workers now skew slightly older.

"They need to do targeted outreach, targeted sourcing, targeted marketing," said Contreras. "It all goes back to having the right people on the right seat on the right bus. How is the government going to do that if they don't make a comprehensive effort across the board?"

NONE OF THIS means that there haven't been some smaller successes. Obama, for instance, implemented new programs to bring young tech workers into the government, including 18F, an agency created in 2013 to help government agencies improve their digital products, and the U.S. Digital Service, both of which brought workers from companies like Google and Amazon

into the government for short stints. The goal was to infuse private-sector tech expertise into the workforce without tying down workers for years. It's widely seen as a big success, reducing the time between interview and offer letter to 30 days, compared with around six months for most agencies.

If there is one agency that has succeeded in trying new hiring practices and recruiting a younger workforce in recent years, it is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created in 2011 under the Dodd-Frank financial reform law. Fifty seven percent of CFPB workers are younger than 45—a number roughly in line with private-sector norms and higher than any other federal agency.

But the CFPB's success is also an indictment of the current hiring system: The CFPB has the distinct advantage of being a new agency, without a legacy workforce. In addition, the agency was accused of ageism in the hiring process. Three people [sued](#) the CFPB after its applications were rejected saying they were denied employment "because of their age." The agency denied the accusation and the case was settled out of court.

Can President Donald Trump turn around the federal behemoth? He's promised to run the government like a private-sector company and tasked his son-in-law, senior adviser Jared Kushner, with [modernizing government](#) through the newly created Office of American Innovation. But there are a lot of reasons for skepticism that an influx of younger workers will enter the government anytime soon. One of Trump's first moves was a hiring freeze, and though it has since been lifted, it sent an immediate bad signal to potential candidates considering government careers, experts said. More importantly, Trump is very unpopular with young people: One [recent poll](#) found that 62 percent of millennials disapprove of his job performance, compared to just 22 percent who approved. (He's more popular among older Americans—but not with federal employees, who [overwhelmingly disapprove](#) of his performance.) And if the economy continues to improve, workers will have other job options instead of working for Uncle Sam.

In addition, Trump doesn't have the personnel in place to undertake a major overhaul of federal hiring practices. His nominee to head OPM, the most important personnel office, hasn't yet been confirmed—his initial nominee [withdrew](#) in August, and he named a new candidate in September. That means he'll go nearly a year in office without his top adviser on personnel issues.

Analysts say there's a small but real chance the imbalance could solve itself in a way that becomes a crisis of its own. Thirteen percent of the federal workforce—more than 100,000 workers—are now over the age of 60. At the departments of Education, Labor and Treasury, around 6 percent of the workforce is already over 65; at HUD, that figure is almost 9 percent. There's only one possible conclusion to these trends: At some point, these workers really are going to retire. When they do, the agencies will lose decades of institutional knowledge across programs and jurisdictions, forcing them to compete for replacements in a tight labor market with a government more unpopular than at almost any point in its history.

After decades of predictions that haven't come true, most experts are reluctant to continue forecasting a retirement tsunami, but they are worried. One former Obama official described it to me as "more like termites in the basement as opposed to a wolf at the door"; Dan Blair, who was director of OPM during the George W. Bush administration, had a different metaphor. "I liken it to osteoporosis," he said. "It may not affect day-to-day operations until something really breaks down."

Washington has had decades to prepare for this moment, but despite real efforts by multiple administrations, nothing much has changed. When that tsunami hits, or the termites finally reach the foundation, Congress may finally start paying attention—but by then it might already be too late.

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Inside the life and death of Graham-Cassidy [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn, Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim | 09/27/2017 05:06 AM EDT

Sen. Lindsey Graham offered a eulogy for the GOP's Obamacare repeal effort on Tuesday, but seized on one bright spot as a reason not to give up after a parade of health care disappointments.

During a closed-door party meeting to discuss their terms of surrender, he told fellow Republicans that Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who opposed repeal over the summer, said she'd be open to his plan under other conditions, according to GOP senators in the room.

The decision on Tuesday not to vote on the Graham-Cassidy bill marked the fourth Obamacare repeal bill failure since the summer began. But Republicans say they're not going to stop, and Murkowski's decision not to oppose the bill provided a small victory in an otherwise painful defeat.

"Today to me, it's not a matter of if, it's now when," Graham said of repealing the Affordable Care Act. "Because this idea makes sense. Let's say we fail. Let's say we continue to fail. You've seen the damage done to the party, donors, people upset. The good news is I see enthusiasm for the first time among Republicans about an alternative to Obamacare."

Graham's positive spin comes just two weeks after he and Sen. Bill Cassidy had to publicly plead with President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to get on board with a last-gasp Obamacare bill. They then went on a legislative binge, running around Washington to lobby the White House senators and conservative groups to at least not kill their effort.

The Graham-Cassidy push was aided by "the fact this wasn't a leadership exercise," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 3 GOP senator.

At one point, the bill seemed to have a real chance of success. And then it ran into the same hurdles that killed every other GOP health plan. Ultimately, a number of Senate Republicans remain wary of transforming the U.S. health system in such a haphazard process — especially with plans to make deep cuts to Medicaid and roll back protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

And yet the sudden spurt of momentum behind Graham-Cassidy, once considered a long shot, underscores how nervous Republicans are about facing voters in 2018 without fulfilling their top campaign promise or having much of a legislative record.

What hasn't changed is that there are three hard "nos" against Obamacare repeal: Sens. John McCain of Arizona, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Susan Collins of Maine, not to mention other quietly skeptical senators.

In fact, Graham's best friend, McCain, turned out to be more out of reach than the moderate Murkowski.

The Arizona senator left a closed-door meeting of Senate Republicans on Tuesday holding an article listing the problems his state would see if the bill became law, as he grumbled to reporters about the rushed process to write the bill.

"There was no point. Everyone knows where I am," McCain said Tuesday in an interview. "I've said incessantly I want hearings, I want votes, I want input."

Both Graham and Cassidy say they merely ran out of time. Other Republicans say the effort was thwarted by bad information — early drafts had errors or misleading information — and last-minute changes that made members uncomfortable about what they'd be voting on.

"I can't be on CNN defending something if it's in its 27th iteration when I think it's the third iteration. That's not the way I do business," said Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.). "I don't even know what the last version looked like."

Graham told his Republican colleagues in the closed-door meeting Tuesday that Murkowski "likes the idea of sending the money to Alaska and getting the hell out of the way. But the process and the constant changes just made getting her vote impossible at this point," according to a Republican senator in the room.

And so, Senate Republicans succumbed to the reality Tuesday that despite getting close to fulfilling their seven-year-old campaign pledge, they wouldn't have time to rally the final votes before the procedural power to pass legislation with only a majority expires on Saturday.

And Murkowski's position gives Republicans enough latitude to say that Obamacare repeal is not dead, simply on the back burner, as they focus on scoring a legislative win with tax reform.

Murkowski said Tuesday she could "get behind" the idea of block granting health care funds to the states, but she trashed a "hard deadline and lousy process."

"The U.S. Senate cannot get the text of a bill on a Sunday night, then proceed to a vote just days later, with only one hearing - and especially not on an issue that is intensely personal to all of us," she said in a statement.

Vice President Mike Pence told Republicans on Tuesday that they need to repeal Obamacare by the end of this Congress, GOP senators said, ensuring that the Obamacare debate will be part of the 2018 mid-term elections, just like it was in every election since 2010.

But unless the Senate math shifts, Republicans are no closer to 50 votes than they were on the July evening when McCain dramatically ended the previous GOP repeal effort. And after Collins confirmed on Monday that she's the third Republican to oppose the bill, its fate was sealed.

"It took 18 months for them to pass Obamacare," Graham said of Democrats. "It's gonna take us a while for us to replace it."

The discussion at the closed-door GOP meeting Tuesday was short on health care and long on tax reform. It seemed that after talking about health care for four months, there wasn't much left to go over and most Republicans had all come to the same conclusion: Another failed vote would only heighten the bad vibes in the party. A vote McConnell's office said could happen this week was pulled.

Cassidy and Graham first began gently pushing their proposal to turn Obamacare funding into block grants for the states in July, when Senate Republicans were previously in the throes of the Obamacare repeal effort.

"And it was appealing to people," said Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.). "Block grants are something we've all supported."

That effort faded quickly as the GOP attempted a slapdash "skinny" repeal, which then failed with McCain's dramatic opposition.

The push to repeal Obamacare took on new life after a party lunch meeting two weeks ago at the Senate GOP's campaign headquarters. There, they were presented with a dour assessment of the party's finances as donors rebelled against a party that had abandoned its promise.

"Failure of health care has made the problem we had worse. It's not just [contested] primaries but donors. Let me tell you, online giving went down 40 percent after we failed on health care. Pledges to the Republican Party went down 60 percent. And I understand that," said Graham, who cheekily called such feedback "employer assessments."

Some Republicans were hopeful that the Senate effort would mirror the House's multiple attempts at Obamacare repeal: After the leadership-driven effort failed, members would pick up the pieces and deliver.

"The leader felt like they ought to be able to enjoy at least a little bit of the fruits of that effort and see where it went. They kept gaining momentum, and I think there was a hope that our members that weren't there last time were there this time," Thune said.

But again, the effort came down to the same handful of skeptics: Murkowski, Paul, McCain, Collins. Graham and Cassidy wrote off Paul and Collins relatively quickly, assuming they would be impossible to budge. They spent much of their time trying to woo the Alaska Republican, and hoped that Graham's friendship with McCain would be enough to move him to a "yes" vote.

Still, some Republicans held out hope.

"I always knew it was going to be hard," said Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). Asked if he ever thought they would triumph, he said, "Yeah, I actually did."

Graham and Cassidy are an unlikely pair. Cassidy has been promoting Medicaid block grants for years and Graham wanted to deliver on a crucial GOP campaign pledge. Graham, never a health policy wonk, told fellow Senate Republicans during Tuesday's lunch that he's learned more than he wanted to about health care, according to one senator.

Graham called the recent push the "most amazing journey of my life" and insisted that the idea of block granting health care dollars to states — an idea that former Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) passed on to Graham at the Senate barbershop earlier this year — would be the basis of any conservative Obamacare repeal plan in the future.

"I think we have an idea that people can rally around," Graham said. "We now have an idea that I think Republicans understand, that the average person can understand."

And a growing faction of Senate Republicans are becoming more emboldened despite their failures, echoing Pence's message inside the GOP lunch on Tuesday that the push to repeal Obamacare needs to continue into next year.

"Obviously there's a lot of discouragement about not being able to do it but there's also a very strong attitude that we're not going to stop trying," Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho). "We can't. We just have to keep working at it."

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Trump says he'll sign executive order allowing purchase of health care across state lines

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By Nolan D. McCaskill and Paul Demko | 09/27/2017 01:51 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Wednesday said he will likely sign an executive order allowing Americans to purchase health care across state lines.

But the idea is broadly opposed by state insurance commissioners, consumer advocates and insurers, and has been a failure in states where it's been tried.

"I'll probably be signing a very major executive order where people can go out across state lines, do lots of things and buy their own health care, and that will be probably signed next week," Trump told reporters on Wednesday afternoon. "It's being finished now. It's gonna cover a lot of territory and a lot of people — millions of people."

Trump's remarks revived a theme from his presidential campaign and came a day after the collapse of Senate Republicans' efforts to repeal Obamacare with a simple majority.

Trump didn't elaborate on how he would allow insurance to be sold across state lines. But most insurance experts find it hard to imagine how an executive order could supplant existing state regulations, and believe such a move would likely spark a legal challenge.

"Health insurers already have the ability to sell insurance in multiple states as long as they comply with state consumer protection and licensing laws, which many already do," said Mike Considine, CEO of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, in a statement to POLITICO. "The NAIC has long been opposed to any attempt to reduce or preempt state authority or weaken consumer protections."

Washington Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler, a Democrat, said he didn't know how an

executive order could ever be binding on a state. "I just can't imagine it having that kind of impact. State law is going to supersede an executive order."

Trump and other Republicans have long touted sales across state lines as a sure-fire way to bolster competition and drive down prices. The Affordable Care Act allows states to form compacts to test the concept.

But state insurance commissioners — even Republicans — health plans and consumer advocates warn that without strong federal standards, as currently exist with Obamacare, it would likely lead to a "race to the bottom" with insurers flocking to the states with the least stringent rules. Skeptics also worry that there wouldn't be any accountability for insurers that engage in shoddy business practices if state regulations are stripped away.

"I do not believe that state insurance commissioners, nor state legislatures or governors, will look kindly to anything that would pre-empt our ability to protect our consumers," said Maryland Insurance Commissioner Al Redmer Jr., a Republican appointee.

Several states — including Wyoming, Maine and Georgia — have already tried allowing across-state sales, and it's been a colossal bust. The chief reason: There's been zero interest from insurers. That's in part because creating competitive provider networks in states where they don't have any current customers is incredibly difficult.

In addition, insurers in states with tough regulations are fearful of having to compete against out-of-state plans that don't have to adhere to the same rules.

"My insurers here absolutely cringe when you talk about across-state sales," Washington state's Kreidler said.

But Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.) argues that taking away states' rights to regulate their insurance markets is just what's needed to spur competition.

"If I see a plan in Arizona that I want to buy, I ought to be able to buy," Kennedy said. "What's going on right now is you have these little fiefdoms in each state where the insurance commissioners want to keep control."

Adam Cancryn contributed to this report.

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Mitch McConnell's dreadful day [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan, Burgess Everett and Josh Dawsey | 09/27/2017 05:07 AM EDT

For Mitch McConnell, Tuesday was about as bad as it could get.

A vulnerable incumbent senator, Luther Strange of Alabama, lost handily to Roy Moore, who used the Senate leader as his campaign punching bag. McConnell pulled the plug — again — on repealing Obamacare. One of his close allies, Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), announced his

retirement.

And President Donald Trump is back on McConnell's case, dubbing him "weak" at a private dinner with conservative activists on Monday evening.

McConnell's job is in no immediate danger, and he hopes to pivot quickly to tax reform. Yet months of woes are now taking their toll on the GOP leader's agenda, and his caucus.

"It's been a hard summer for all of us," admitted Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 3 GOP senator.

Asked Tuesday whether he was having a "tough day," McConnell ignored the question. And that was before Corker announced his retirement and Moore won.

"We haven't given up on changing the American health care system," McConnell said. "We're not going to be able to do that this week, but it still lies ahead of us, and we haven't given up on that."

McConnell's long-shot bid to save Strange, who had Trump's backing as well, failed spectacularly as the former Alabama attorney general was trounced by Moore in the deep red state. And that soon could be a daily problem for McConnell. Moore, twice ousted as a judge on the Alabama Supreme Court for defying federal edicts, has openly said he wants to dump McConnell as the top Senate Republican.

"Judge Roy Moore in the U.S. Senate means the END of Mitch McConnell's reign as Majority Leader," Moore vowed in one fundraising pitch. Moore now faces Democrat Doug Jones in the Dec. 12 general election.

Moore's win came just hours after McConnell, faced with unwavering opposition from a trio of his GOP colleagues, was forced to ditch the latest GOP proposal to repeal and replace Obamacare. McConnell's choices were grim: Hold another failed vote, or concede another defeat.

McConnell chose to call it quits and perhaps try again next year. Yet it was another embarrassing setback in McConnell's failed months-long effort to overturn the 2010 Affordable Care Act, and it came at an even heavier price this time — more problems for McConnell from the occupant of the Oval Office.

Trump spent much of August publicly bashing McConnell but stopped after the two held a private meeting several weeks ago. But now the president is bad-mouthing the Senate leader again.

During a dinner with conservative activists on Monday night at the White House, Trump laid into McConnell, according to two attendees. Trump told the activists that McConnell was "weak" because he couldn't pass the GOP health care plan, and the president complained at length about how Republicans had failed him on the issue, while asking the activists what they should do next.

Trump added that he was disappointed in McConnell for not changing the Senate filibuster rule so that only 51 votes are needed to pass legislation, also dubbing McConnell's resistance to the idea as "weak." That criticism does not ring true to Senate Republicans, given that Democrats have barely been able to use the filibuster due to McConnell mostly holding party-

line votes.

A McConnell spokesman declined to comment.

A person briefed on the meeting noted Trump took aim at far more than McConnell during the meeting, distancing himself from Strange and whacking Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) as well. Trump called McCain "disgraceful" on health care and mocked his thumbs-down gesture on the Senate floor against a GOP proposal in July, complete with a facial expression, attendees said.

After the race was called Tuesday, McConnell vowed to support Moore in the general election despite the candidate's opposition to him personally.

"He ran a spirited campaign centered around a dissatisfaction with the progress made in Washington. I share that frustration," McConnell said of Moore in a statement. "Senate Republicans will be as committed to keeping Alabama's Senate seat in Republican hands with Roy Moore as we were with Luther Strange."

McConnell's support in the Republican Conference remains solid despite what Trump, Moore and former Trump aide Steve Bannon say about him. Bannon has launched a crusade against the Senate leader and Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Ohio) since leaving the White House.

"It's not even a close question there," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn said of McConnell's position. "It's not easy being majority leader, which is why many people choose not to run for it."

The way to put an end to anti-McConnell challengers, Cornyn said, is "you win. Really, it's about that simple."

After ushering through the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, McConnell has found himself in a box. Trump will receive the lion's share of credit for legislative victories that McConnell or Ryan engineered, but the president has made clear he'll blame the GOP leaders when bills falter.

Trump might turn to Democrats again in search of victories — as he did earlier this month to put off a fight over the budget and debt ceiling — which would again test McConnell and Ryan's loyalty to the president.

Some Republicans said that at least in the case of Obamacare, McConnell was not to blame for the failure of the proposal pushed by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.).

"The whole health care thing right now was sort of inspired by Graham and Cassidy, and the president, who kept it alive. I don't think Mitch has much ownership other than to try to see if there's a path forward," Thune said.

Thune added that Strange's situation in Alabama was a "unique set of circumstances. I think everybody in a lot of these places, particularly primary voters, want to send a message to Washington."

Strange was appointed to the seat by former Republican Gov. Robert Bentley, who later resigned in a sex scandal. Strange's appointment didn't sit well with Alabama voters. The Senate Leadership Fund, a pro-McConnell super PAC, dumped \$9 million into the race in a

bid to derail Moore, but he proved far too strong. And Trump's endorsement of Strange proved to be too little, too late.

"What happens today in Alabama with Luther Strange has nothing to do with Mitch McConnell. It has everything to do with Alabama," Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said before the results were tallied.

Personal loyalty to McConnell remains high among his colleagues. They remember him as a two-term chairman of the NRSC. He led the fight against former President Barack Obama for eight years. And he got Gorsuch onto the Supreme Court, which is Trump's only real win in Congress so far.

When it comes to who to blame for a difficult year with just a 52-seat majority, McConnell's colleagues refuse to point to the majority leader as the source of the problem. They criticize each other, not McConnell.

"You can only fight with the troops that you've got," Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) said of McConnell's predicament.

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Alexander, Murray to meet for bipartisan health talks [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett | 09/27/2017 12:18 PM EDT

GOP Sen. Lamar Alexander will meet with Democratic Sen. Patty Murray on Wednesday to try to salvage their bipartisan health care efforts, Alexander said in an interview.

House and Senate Republican leaders rejected the effort last week, preferring instead to try another partisan attempt at Obamacare repeal. Alexander said now that that's collapsed, he's going to try again with Murray to stabilize insurance markets.

Still, Alexander said he needs broader buy-in than just a deal between him and Murray, the two leaders of the Senate's health committee.

"We're going to see if it's possible to find some bipartisan consensus that can get a result," Alexander said. "I'm talking to her, I'm talking to Republicans and I'm talking to some Democrats."

Senate Republicans say they are still wary of any "bailout" of insurance companies and are skeptical Democrats will make concessions. But Murray did make an offer to Alexander that would allow the sale of some cheaper plans and more state flexibility before their effort ended.

Democrats have said they were very close to striking a deal until GOP leaders stomped on it.

"Chairman Alexander and I had been making great progress toward our goals of stabilizing the market and reducing premiums — with many members on and off our committee — until Republican leaders pulled the rug out from under us," Murray said Tuesday. "Now — the two

weeks since our last hearing have been wasted."

Some Republicans also still want to make another go at Obamacare repeal next year, in an all-GOP effort. But Alexander insisted the two approaches are compatible, as the repeal bill sponsored by Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana to block-grant health care to the states would kick in mostly in 2020 and Alexander and Murray are focused on stabilizing premiums in 2018 and 2019.

"Whether or not the Cassidy bill will pass, we need to do the kind of things I'm thinking about," Alexander said.

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Heritage Action vows to fight bipartisan bids to shore up Obamacare [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 09/26/2017 05:09 PM EDT

Heritage Action served notice it will oppose efforts to prop up Obamacare marketplaces in the aftermath of Republicans' latest failed attempt to repeal the health care law.

"Some lawmakers will reflexively demand a 'bipartisan market stabilization' in response to Obamacare's deteriorating markets. That is unacceptable," the conservative group's CEO, Michael A. Needham, said in a statement today. "Repealing and, ultimately, replacing Obamacare will eventually require moderate Republicans to come to the table and follow through on their repeated campaign promises."

Heritage said as congressional Republicans shift their attention to tax reform, they shouldn't accept Obamacare as settled law but push for repeal in the near future.

Senate HELP Chairman [Lamar Alexander](#) and ranking Democrat [Patty Murray](#) presided over a series of hearings on shoring up the marketplaces before GOP leaders mounted a last-ditch effort to pass a repeal plan by [Lindsey Graham](#) and [Bill Cassidy](#). Alexander this week said the climate wasn't conducive for follow-up collaborations.

"My goal wasn't just to get a bipartisan agreement; it was to get a bipartisan result and I didn't see any way to get one in the current political environment," Alexander said on Monday. "That environment hasn't changed, maybe it does change — but it hasn't."

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Governors push Congress to resume bipartisan health care talks [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 09/27/2017 02:14 PM EDT

One day after Senate Republicans admitted defeat on their latest Obamacare repeal plan, the nation's governors are pushing Congress to resume bipartisan efforts to stabilize the health insurance marketplaces.

Senate HELP Committee leaders said today they would explore the possibility of reviving bipartisan talks, which were sidelined by repeal efforts.

"We applaud the renewed commitment of Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#) and Sen. [Patty Murray](#) to find a bipartisan solution to insurance market stabilization and we encourage Congress to support and engage in their effort," the National Governors Association wrote.

The governors also pushed Congress to reauthorize funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, which is set to expire on Saturday.

Governors are calling on Congress to fully fund the Affordable Care Act cost-sharing subsidies, which President Donald Trump has threatened to pull. They're also asking to speed up the process for applying to Obamacare state innovation waivers, as well as providing new flexibility to test health reforms.

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Trump: 'We will have the votes' for Obamacare repeal [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 09/27/2017 08:27 AM EDT

President Donald Trump today said the attempt to repeal and replace Obamacare isn't dead, tweeting that "we will have the votes on Healthcare" but not for Saturday's reconciliation deadline.

"We will have the votes for Healthcare but not for the reconciliation deadline of Friday, after which we need 60. Get rid of Filibuster Rule!" he tweeted.

On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) chose not to hold a vote on Sens. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.) and [Bill Cassidy](#)'s (R-La) Obamacare repeal bill after it became clear there wasn't enough support for it.

The Graham-Cassidy bill was the GOP's last-ditch effort to overturn former President Barack Obama's signature health care legislation through the process known as reconciliation, which allows them to approve a bill with 50 votes instead of the typical 60 required by Senate filibuster rules.

Trump also tweeted "With one Yes vote in hospital & very positive signs from Alaska and two others (McCain is out), we have the HCare Vote, but not for Friday!" His mention of a hospitalized senator appears to be a reference to Sen. [Thad Cochran](#), who is recuperating at home in Mississippi from a urological issue.

Cochran spokesman Stephen Worley said the senator is not in the hospital, however.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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House passes bill to reauthorize child home visiting program [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 09/26/2017 05:15 PM EDT

The House today voted 214-209 to reauthorize the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which expires at the end of the month.

The federal home visiting program is aimed at assisting low-income families with young children. The bill, [H.R. 2824 \(115\)](#), would reauthorize the program for five years and comes with a controversial state matching requirement, opposed by Democrats. The House approved an amendment introduced by Democratic Rep. [Suzan DelBene](#) of Washington, however, that would strike the matching requirement for Indian tribes or tribal organizations.

The House [later this week](#) will consider [H.R. 2792 \(115\)](#), the Control Unlawful Fugitive Felons Act or CUFF Act, which House Republicans want to use to fund the home visiting program reauthorization by [prohibiting](#) Supplemental Security Income payments to people with an outstanding arrest warrant for a felony or for violating a condition of probation or parole. Democrats have blasted the CUFF Act as a pay-for, saying it destroys the opportunity for a bipartisan reauthorization of the home visiting program.

Republican Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) of Iowa last week introduced [S. 1829 \(115\)](#), the Senate version of the bill to reauthorize the home visiting program. Democrats have hailed the Senate version as bipartisan because it doesn't include the state matching requirement or the CUFF Act as a pay-for.

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Farm, green groups push for increased conservation funding [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 09/27/2017 11:52 AM EDT

Conservation groups are pushing for more funding and reporting requirements in the next farm bill, but with money tight on Capitol Hill, it's unclear if such programs will see any boost.

The list of [recommendations](#) released today from 26 groups — including the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, National Farmers Union, Trust for Public Land and the Environmental Working Group — calls for a reversal of the roughly \$6 billion in cuts that were made in the 2014 farm bill reauthorization, which were reduced more in the appropriations process. They also want more enforcement to ensure that taxpayer money is going to good use.

"We stand united in saying that cuts to farm bill conservation programs must come to an end, and that we now must reverse these cuts and bring conservation investments in line with resource need and producer demand," the groups said in the recommendations.

Also included were calls to expand nationwide Sodsaver requirements — an initiative to discourage converting grassland into cropland by reducing subsidies on crop insurance premiums for farmers to do so. The rules currently apply to farmers in just six states.

Many of the recommendations are unlikely to sit well with farm groups and GOP lawmakers, who say conservation programs should be voluntary. They will likely want few changes in the next farm bill in an effort to get the measure passed quickly.

And with even less money from Congress for the reauthorization — the committees are expected to have to make [\\$10 billion in spending cuts](#) — they argue that money should be used to help cotton and dairy farmers who have been struggling with what are said to be inadequate insurance and support programs.

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Date: Friday, September 08, 2017 4:48:14 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 09/08/2017 04:45 PM EDT

FOOL ME ONCE: Begrudgingly, they went along. But Republican lawmakers are determined not to get sidelined a second time, after holding their noses through the hard-to-swallow vote this morning on a debt ceiling increase, stopgap spending and disaster aid.

The vote that ended one of the most productive workweeks in recent memory has stirred the kind of intraparty strife that's sure to make for a tense December, as rank-and-file Republicans prepare to protest another "clean" debt ceiling increase while learning just how much leverage President Donald Trump has ceded to their Democratic counterparts.

Throwing tomatoes: As Rachael Bade and Kyle Cheney [report](#), House Republicans booed when OMB Director Mick Mulvaney refused to commit this morning to reducing spending as part of the next debt ceiling hike. During that meeting, Mulvaney and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin got an earful from the roomful of congressional Republicans — many of whom say they emerged more disgruntled than when they entered the gathering, which was supposed to be a kumbaya-inspiring experience.

Mostly counterproductive: Republican Study Chairman [Mark Walker](#) told Sarah this morning that he personally asked Mnuchin what the December vote on raising the debt ceiling will look like. "The Treasury secretary could not answer that, and many of us found that very frustrating," Walker said. The meeting went so badly, he explained, that the Cabinet members seem to have done more harm than good to the whip count for the morning vote. "I would probably say they lost a few votes, rather than gaining a few," Walker said.

Shameless plug: Tune in at 10 a.m. Sunday to [C-SPAN Newsmakers](#) for Sarah and Bloomberg reporter Anna Edgerton's full interview with Walker.

Tired eyes? Check out [our latest Nerdcast](#), on how Republicans are still reeling from Trump's debt ceiling deal.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — A cadre of defense industry groups [is calling](#) on Congress to enact a full-year spending measure and renew the debt ceiling before the December deadline. More from [Connor O'Brien](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — While Mnuchin maxed out his campaign contributions to Donald Trump with more than \$5,000 in donations, the Treasury secretary and his wife gave more than \$13,000 to Hillary Clinton's campaigns for Senate and the presidency since 2000, as well as lesser sums to several other Democrats, according to [OpenSecrets.org](#). Rep. [Ryan Costello](#) noted the irony this morning of "a Democratic donor Treasury secretary" trying to convince Republicans to vote for a "clean" debt ceiling alongside a fiscal hardliner like Mulvaney.

BUDGET

FINALLY ON THE FLOOR? House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) told us today that she expects her fiscal 2018 budget to debut on the House floor the week of Sept. 25. She says the whipping operation isn't quite done, though: "We still some cleanup to do — we do."

DEBT DEAL

COMING AROUND AGAIN: Even Mnuchin couldn't tell GOP lawmakers today exactly how much time they have until the next bruising debt ceiling fight. But the folks at Bipartisan Policy Center have a guess: "Sometime in March 2018." There's a big caveat, of course. "The uncertainty this far out — including yet-to-be-determined spending for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and the possibility of income tax changes — cannot be overstated," the nonpartisan group says.

IT'S OFFICIAL: It's hard to overstate how remarkable it is that the House and Senate have already passed a continuing resolution and a debt ceiling bill a full 22 days ahead of schedule. The House easily cleared the package — which also includes \$15.25 billion in disaster aid — this morning, as Jen [reports](#). Our takeaways:

— **Hastert Rule achieved:** House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) walked away with a win after 113 Republicans voted for the legislation, outpacing the 90 "no" votes from his party (yep, we've got [the list](#)).

— **Military above most:** Still peeved by Congress' decision to opt for another stopgap bill, half of the 34 Republicans on House Armed Services voted against the package, Connor O'Brien [points out](#).

— **Didn't even get all the Texans:** Twenty-one out of 25 Texas lawmakers voted for the package. Those opposed? Reps. [Jeb Hensarling](#), [Mac Thornberry](#), [Joe Barton](#) and [Sam Johnson](#). (More on Thornberry's decision [from Connor](#).)

— **The press release game:** A dig through our inboxes shows how Republicans will explain their votes back home. As Kyle Cheney [aptly noted](#), House Republicans who voted against today's package called it a "debt ceiling bill." For those in favor, it was a "disaster relief bill."

APPROPRIATIONS

MINIBUS DECELERATES: So much for that Saturday vote! House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) announced late Thursday night that there won't be any more work on the GOP minibus until next week. We had been expecting late votes tonight, but McCarthy reversed course to make sure coastal lawmakers can get home safe before Hurricane Irma strikes, as Sarah [reports](#).

What's next: Lawmakers will churn through debate on the three remaining bills: Labor-HHS-Education, Financial Services and Commerce-Justice-Science as soon as they get back. Expect multiple days of debate because there are still nearly 200 amendments to go.

Calvert's big moment: The House churned through nearly 80 amendments related to EPA and Interior Department funding in the last 24 hours. Tuning into that lengthy debate, [Morning Energy](#) lays out the top issues to watch for the omnibus in December: Park maintenance, Environmental justice program funding, State grants for clean water, Offshore drilling, Water

monitoring for mine spills, and Clean Air Act regulations.

DENT BOWS OUT: After more than dozen years in Congress, Rep. [Charlie Dent](#) will call it quits after 2018, Kyle Cheney and Alex Isenstadt [report](#). The Tuesday Group leader and appropriations cardinal confirmed this week that he won't be seeking reelection, noting that he "never planned on serving" more than five or six terms (he's now in his seventh). And as Theodoric Meyer [scoops](#) this afternoon, Dent has already hired Ivan Adler and John Hesse of the McCormick Group, who specialize in landing clients new jobs on K Street.

AWKWARD APOLOGY: Thursday night's debate on the Interior-EPA appropriations package delivered one of the most heated moments of the whole week. Rep. [Don Young](#), Alaska's sole House member, lost his temper during a debate over wildlife management and lashed out at Rep. [Pramila Jayapal](#), saying the freshman lawmaker "doesn't know a damn thing what she's talking about." The 84-year-old Republican also [repeatedly referred](#) to Jayapal, 51, as "young lady."

Girl power: The Washington Democrat demanded that Young withdraw his remarks, which — after several tense minutes — he did. Young then returned to the floor to apologize. "I recognize it was out of order, so I hope you accept my apology," he said.

The next 'she persisted' moment: Female-focused groups like NARAL quickly turned the moment viral. Jayapal seized on the attack on Twitter. "A message to women of color out there: stand strong. Refuse to be patronized or minimized. Let the small guys out there be intimidated by you," she [wrote](#). (Even Chelsea Clinton [joined](#) in.)

AGRICULTURE

FARM SAFETY NET'S ENOUGH? Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said today that lawmakers seem reluctant to passing a supplemental disaster assistance package for U.S. farmers and ranchers affected by this year's hurricanes and wildfires, Catherine Boudreau [reports](#). "I think Congress is somewhat hesitant to open up a supplemental disaster program on top of the crop insurance program," Perdue told reporters.

Go to the source: The secretary also said today that his department needs to "appeal to appropriators and Congress ... to fix the fire funding problem once and for all," Jenny Hopkinson [reports](#).

Tack it on: A dozen senators [wrote](#) to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) this week, asking that funding to fight wildfires be included in any future disaster aid packages so the Fire Service doesn't have to pilfer hundreds of millions of dollars from other accounts to cover its deficit from wildfire season.

OBAMACARE

FILLING THE VOID: Health care advocates say they have no clue how they'll fill the major funding gap left by the Trump administration as they look to promote Obamacare signups this fall. Federal health officials will be working with a budget of about \$10 million for the entire sign-up season, which starts Nov. 1 — down from \$100 million last time around.

Wishful thinking: Ever since the White House pulled out the rug last week, several prominent Obama allies have been in talks to raise the money themselves, Rachana Pradhan

[reports](#). But some involved with that effort are less than optimistic. "To just think that somebody will come in and have \$50 million is just ... that's going to be a very, very difficult ask," one person told Rachana.

TRANSPORTATION

GOOD NEWS FOR GATEWAY? Emerging from their meeting with Trump this week, New Yorkers said they're optimistic the president will, in fact, commit federal funding for Gateway rail project, Dana Rubinstein [reports](#). POTUS made no firm commitment, though, to the nearly \$30 billion project.

HEALTH CARE

UNEXPECTED REBUKE: We don't say this often, but Senate Democrats struck political gold on abortion policy during an appropriations markup this week. As Jen Haberkorn [writes](#), Senate spending leaders delivered a double challenge to the Trump administration on Thursday, prompting some key Republicans to vote against the package.

A two-fer: The newly approved State and Foreign Operations bill, [S. 1780 \(115\)](#), would undo the White House's funding ban for NGOs that perform or promote abortion, the so-called global gag rule. Senators also voted to preserve the always-controversial Title X family planning program and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program — a direct shot at Trump.

Across party lines: On the global gag rule, GOP Sens. [Susan Collins](#) and [Lisa Murkowski](#) sided with Democrats, while Democrat [Joe Manchin](#) voted to retain it.

IMMIGRATION

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EARMARKS

— How Washington traps disaster victims. [POLITICO Magazine](#).

— Searching for \$1 Billion: Inside the Pentagon's struggle to match Trump's Air Force One boast. [Defense News](#).

— North Carolina, still reeling from Hurricane Matthew, stares at Irma. [The New York Times](#).

— Illinois Governor to Borrow Up to \$6B to Pay Off Late Bills. [The Associated Press](#).

— [Cochran](#), [Leahy](#) bring back bill to boost Farm to School grant program. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 22 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Sept. 30, 2017). 387 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/09/gop-lawmakers-deride-white-houses-noncommittal-debt-limit-strategy-024515>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House Republicans lash Mnuchin, Mulvaney behind closed doors [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Kyle Cheney | 09/08/2017 11:54 AM EDT

It was supposed to be a call to unity.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney joined a closed-door GOP Conference meeting Friday to try to rally wary Republicans around a debt ceiling bill they hated.

But the huddle quickly went off the rails when Rep. Tim Walberg stood up to say President Donald Trump needed to play more with the team. The Michigan Republican said he was all for bipartisanship, but he argued that Trump shouldn't have blindsided the conference when he struck a deal with Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, undercutting GOP leadership.

Walberg was the first of more than a dozen lawmakers who echoed that same sentiment, according to sources in the room. Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker of North Carolina asked Mnuchin why he even bothered meeting with conservatives over the summer if he was just going to ignore their input entirely. Another lawmaker said Trump "pissed off a whole lot of people in here" when he went against a joint leadership-White House plan to advocate for a longer debt limit increase that took the issue off the table until after the midterm elections.

And the room booed when Mulvaney and Mnuchin refused to commit to spending cuts during the next debt ceiling debate — and then asked for their vote on the current legislation.

"[Mnuchin's] last words, and I quote, were 'Vote for the debt ceiling for me,'" Walker said as he left the meeting. "You could hear the murmurs in the room there. There was some hissing and I don't know if there was booing but there were some groans."

Republicans are putting Trump on notice: Don't do this to us again.

Ultimately, 133 House Republicans, more than half of the GOP Conference, voted for Trump's agreement with Democrats when the House passed the legislation Friday morning, 316-90. But most did so out of obligation to help the victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma — not for anyone in the Trump administration.

"There's a lot of disappointment in the decision that the president made, and the way our leadership was treated. That's a sore spot," said former House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.). "However, this bill — we have no choice but to raise the debt ceiling, and we have no choice but to help those people in desperate need in Texas and other places. ... But it's not a happy camp."

Most Republicans seethed as they exited the conference meeting and headed to the floor. They said they were shell-shocked that they were being scolded into raising the nation's borrowing limit without spending cuts by a GOP administration — especially by Mnuchin, a longtime

Democrat, and Mulvaney, once among the House's most ardent critics of raising the debt ceiling without conservative reforms.

"If it wasn't so serious it kind of would have been funny," said Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Penn.)

"When you have a Democratic donor Treasury secretary saying we as a Republican Congress need to vote for this and an OMB director I don't believe ever supported a clean debt ceiling ... say we need to do this, it's kind of 'Where am I right now?' he said.

Lawmakers gave a particular earful to Mulvaney, who they remember adamantly rejecting previous debt ceiling increases and pushing to tie disaster aid to spending cuts, most notably after Hurricane Sandy hit New York and New Jersey in 2012.

"He would've been in the audience doing most of the shouting," said Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) "I remember him during Sandy. I don't forget."

Rep. Darrell Issa cracked that Mulvaney, a former Freedom Caucus conservative, should find 43 vacancies in the administration for Freedom Caucus members, suggesting they might abandon their principles and back what Rep. Bill Flores (R-Texas) has been calling a "crap-sandwich" if he gave them a job.

Lawmakers — and Mulvaney himself — laughed, knowing full well it was a pointed jab at the budget director conservatives say sold out his ideology when he joined the Trump administration.

Most of it was not lighthearted, however.

The room booed when Mulvaney refused Texas GOP Rep. Joe Barton's request that he commit to reducing spending as part of the next debt ceiling hike. Lawmakers also repeatedly voiced frustration that the administration refused to commit to tackling conservative priorities in December, when a confluence of fiscal fights — including a long-term government spending agreement — are expected.

Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the hard-line House Freedom Caucus, downplayed the tension in the room, suggesting differences were philosophical, not personal: Many lawmakers were eager to vote for relief for Hurricane Harvey victims, but they were also torn over lifting the nation's borrowing limit.

But one thing was clear, he said. Democrats won the week.

"I think that they would be accurate in suggesting that Democrats had a win on this because there are no structural reforms to the debt ceiling that was included with the debt ceiling vote," Meadows said. "Indeed, it's the first time I can recall we're increasing the debt ceiling without something conservative being attached to it."

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Nerdcast: Republicans reel from debt ceiling deal [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 09/08/2017 05:41 AM EDT

It's time for Episode 71 of the Nerdcast, POLITICO's podcast on the White House and politics. Tune in each week to geek out with us as we dive deep into the political landscape and the latest numbers that matter.

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Datapoint: 3. On Wednesday, President Trump agreed to Democratic leaders' plan to raise the debt ceiling, fund the government for 3 months and provide Hurricane Harvey aid, much to Republicans' dismay.

Datapoint: 3. That's the number of paragraphs in former President Obama's statement in response to the Trump White House's decision to end DACA. But within those nine paragraphs, Obama never addressed Trump directly.

Datapoint: 15 percent - That's Trump's target for the top corporate tax rate. The current rate is 35 percent. The group of GOP congressional leaders and administration officials known as the "Big Six" are scrambling to make the math work.

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Defense industry groups call for full-year government funding [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/08/2017 10:46 AM EDT

A cadre of defense industry groups is calling on Congress to enact a full-year spending measure and renew the debt ceiling before the next likely deadline in December to avoid a shutdown or default.

In [a letter](#) to House and Senate leaders in both parties today, industry groups call for "consistent and uninterrupted funding."

"Our government needs to be functioning to protect our security and grow our economy," the letter argues. "We must continue to pay our troops, government civilians and the contractors who support them. Vital weapons programs and maintenance and logistics efforts need to continue without interruption."

The Senate on Thursday passed a temporary continuing spending resolution as part of a package that also includes a debt limit increase and Hurricane Harvey aid. The House is expected to pass the stopgap measure today. The measure funds the government and extends the federal borrowing limit through Dec. 8.

The House is also expected to pass its remaining full-year appropriations bills next week as well. The Senate has yet to pass any fiscal 2018 appropriations bills.

The letter was signed by heads of 10 defense industry groups, including the Aerospace Industries Association, the National Defense Industrial Association and the Professional Services Council of the United States.

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House sends Harvey aid package to Trump with debt ceiling boost [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 09/08/2017 10:36 AM EDT

The House easily cleared a package Friday to provide more than \$15 billion in disaster aid for victims of Hurricane Harvey, raise the debt ceiling and fund the government for three months.

President Donald Trump is expected to swiftly sign the bill, which delivered on the fiscal deal he [struck](#) with Democrats earlier this week. The House passed the legislation 316-90, a day after the Senate passed it, 80-17.

The measure takes care of most of Congress' must-pass items this month, with extensions still needed by Sept. 30 for the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Trump administration officials have said the president wanted to clear the legislative decks to ensure tax reform remains the policy focus this fall.

But House Republicans, who have derided the strategy since the president first settled on it, continued to condemn Trump's move as they headed to vote Friday morning on the package many felt forced to support.

Punting on the debt limit until Dec. 8, Republican lawmakers argue, will give Democrats the upper hand, since the GOP likely will have to bargain with the minority party for votes to continue government funding — now set to expire on the very same day.

"There's a lot of sentiment that the president's decision empowers Democrats in December to withhold support for a further debt extension and a funding bill, that it emboldens them and it empowers them to make our job much more difficult in December," Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.) said. "It empowers the Democrats to bargain, when they really had no bargaining position the way we were headed."

Many Republicans expressed disappointment that House leaders and Trump administration officials didn't entertain debate on cutting spending along with raising the debt ceiling.

In a House GOP meeting Friday morning with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House budget director Mick Mulvaney, several Republicans pressed the Cabinet officials to commit to a strategy for handling deficit spending the next time Congress must vote to raise the debt limit, according to lawmakers who attended the meeting.

"Show us a plan," Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) said he told Mnuchin. "We can't just keep borrowing money. We're going to be \$22 trillion in debt."

Several House Republicans said they were told Friday morning that the Federal Emergency Management Agency could run out of disaster relief funding by day's end.

While the bill would infuse that account with \$7.4 billion, that money could run dry in as little as a few weeks, especially if Hurricane Irma lives up to the destructive potential predicted of the storm set to hit Florida by Saturday.

Lawmakers whose districts lie in the new hurricane's potential path, and who also opposed the final aid vote Friday, are already beginning to defend their opposition.

"I voted for Harvey funding earlier in the week. It's this mess, where they combine all this, that bothers me," said Duncan, who represents the northwestern portion of South Carolina, bordering Georgia. "And if next week South Carolina or Georgia or Florida comes back because of the hurricane, I'll vote for pure disaster relief funding then, just like I did this week."

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Thornberry, citing CR, votes against Harvey relief-debt limit bill [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/08/2017 11:25 AM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) today voted against legislation that provides aid for Hurricane Harvey in his home state of Texas and raises the debt ceiling, citing the inclusion of a three-month continuing spending resolution.

The measure, which will keep the government funded through Dec. 8, easily passed the House 360-90. But Thornberry, a longtime critic of stop-gap spending for defense programs, said the bill would exacerbate military readiness problems.

"Continuing resolutions do enormous, lasting damage to the American military," the Texas Republican said in a statement. "We are witnessing an alarming increase in accidents, growing evidence of a force under stress, and an eroding technological position when compared with our adversaries."

"Not only does this bill fail to remedy those problems, it makes them worse," he said.

The package, [H.R. 601 \(115\)](#), passed the Senate yesterday by a similarly wide 80-17 vote. Thornberry's Senate counterpart, Arizona Republican [John McCain](#), also voted against the bill.

Thornberry added that he supports emergency assistance in the wake of Hurricane Harvey but argued the bill's three-month debt limit increase "does not provide the certainty that financial markets and our economy need."

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House delays minibus votes until next week [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 09/07/2017 09:53 PM EDT

House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) announced the postponement tonight of the GOP's eight-bill spending bundle, citing the impending landfall of Hurricane Irma.

Prolonging the spending debate into a second week, the House's only task Friday will be a 12:30 p.m. vote on the Senate-passed fiscal deal, [H.R. 601 \(115\)](#), which includes more than \$15 billion in disaster aid. It would also raise the nation's borrowing limit and keep the government open through Dec. 8.

McCarthy said the House would halt work on its so-called "minibus," [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#), until next week to accommodate lawmakers whose districts are in the path of Hurricane Irma. Lawmakers have roughly 200 amendments remaining to debate on four separate spending titles.

"As we continue to track Hurricane Irma, I know many of our members in the southeastern United States are anxious to get home to get their families and constituents," the majority leader said, adding that he wants to ensure members "can get home safely."

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GOP moderate Charlie Dent won't seek reelection to House in 2018 [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney and Alex Isenstadt | 09/07/2017 07:58 PM EDT

Pennsylvania Rep. Charlie Dent, a Republican who occupies a swing district, will not seek reelection in 2018, he confirmed in a statement on Thursday night.

Dent issued a statement emphasizing his lengthy career in public office and noting that he "never planned on serving" more than five or six terms — but he's now in his seventh.

Dent said his decision was the product of periodic discussions that began during the government shutdown in 2013 and continued into the mid-summer, when a small group of friends, family and staff decided he wouldn't run again.

Dent described himself as a member of the "governing wing of the Republican Party" and said he's always sought to "fulfill the basic functions of government, like keeping the lights on and preventing default."

"Regrettably, that has not been easy given the disruptive outside influences that profit from increased polarization and ideological rigidity that leads to dysfunction, disorder and chaos," he said.

Dent's retirement comes the day after another swing district Republican, Washington Rep.

Dave Reichert, announced he was calling it quits. Florida Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, another moderate, is also retiring. Democrats are certain to target all three seats in next year's midterms. Dent's announced departure comes one day after state Rep. Justin Simmons said he would challenge him in a primary.

Dent spent much of 2017 opposing President Donald Trump's agenda, to the chagrin of hard-line conservatives, who vowed to oppose him. Last Friday, 125 conservative allies of the president converged in Dent's district in Northeast Pennsylvania to voice their opposition to his actions in office.

Dent is leader of the centrist Tuesday Group. He has openly questioned the the GOP's proposed budget and the president's efforts on tax reform.

Dent's decision seemed to catch his primary rival, Simmons, off guard on Thursday evening.

"I guess the polling must have been really bad. Can't say we were expecting this," he said.

Simmons has feuded with Dent in recent weeks as he inched closer to mounting a primary challenge. He contended that Dent failed to adequately support Trump's agenda and that Dent had lost touch with the Republican Party in his district, as well as nationally. Dent fired back at Simmons last week, releasing a series of text messages, including one in which Simmons asked for his endorsement.

Simmons formally entered the race on Wednesday, and said he "absolutely" thinks Dent decided to retire because of the challenge.

"I think right now we could say, 'Mission Accomplished,'" Simmons said. "We wanted to make sure we got a more conservative candidate in the seat, and now we can do that."

Simmons spoke Friday [at a rally](#) organized by groups aligned with Trump, who descended on Dent's district and called for his ouster. At the time, Dent rejected complaints that he doesn't support Trump, arguing that he was willing to work with the president.

"At the same time," he added, "I am not a sycophant."

President Donald Trump carried Pennsylvania's 15th District with nearly 52 percent of the vote in 2016. But former President Barack Obama also won it once, and Democrats have long coveted the seat, which Dent protected even during wave elections last decade.

Cristiano Lima contributed to this report.

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Perdue: Congress 'hesitant' to pass supplemental disaster relief for agriculture [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 09/08/2017 01:31 PM EDT

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said Friday Congress is "somewhat hesitant" to pass a

supplemental disaster assistance package for U.S. farmers and ranchers affected by this year's hurricanes and wildfires.

"It remains to be seen how the crop insurance program will work," Perdue told reporters following a swearing in ceremony for U.S. Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke. "I think Congress is somewhat hesitant to open up a supplemental disaster program on top of the crop insurance program. If there are unmet needs, I believe Congress will have the compassion to do that."

Perdue said the farm safety net should be structured so it is sufficient to meet producers' needs on an ongoing basis, including after natural disasters, instead of leaving farmers and ranchers in a position where they must rely on Congress to enact a supplemental disaster assistance measure to respond to recovery needs.

The secretary said he hopes Hurricane Irma, which is projected to strike Florida as soon as Saturday night, will lose some of its steam before it makes landfall in the continental U.S. and that it doesn't bring the catastrophic levels of rain that Hurricane Harvey dropped on southeast Texas. Florida is the heart of the U.S. citrus industry, and the state also has a robust produce sector, he said, noting that if Irma tracks north toward Georgia and the Carolinas it could devastate peanut, poultry and cotton production.

Irma was a Category 5 storm — the strongest possible measure — when it struck islands in the Caribbean, but it was downgraded to a Category 4 on Friday morning, Reuters [reported](#). Even so, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency warned Friday that the storm could lay waste to parts of the southeast.

"Hurricane Irma continues to be a threat that is going to devastate the United States in either Florida or some of the southeastern states," FEMA Administrator Brock Long said during a press briefing, according to the wire service report.

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Perdue pushes lawmakers for funding to fight fires [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 09/08/2017 11:51 AM EDT

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue called on appropriators to provide appropriate funding to the U.S. Forest Service to fight fires, arguing that the service doesn't have the resources it needs for prevention.

In remarks this morning during a ceremony for new Chief Tony Tooke, Perdue tasked the longtime Forest Service staffer to work with him on getting Congress to recognize the true cost of fighting forest fires.

"You can have the right leadership and the right people ... but if you don't have the resources and the means of dependable funding, that's an issue," Perdue said.

"We need to appeal to appropriators and Congress and the law-writers to fix the fire funding

problem once and for all," the secretary added.

The Forest Service spends about 55 percent of its budget on fire suppression, up from 15 percent a decade ago. With fires raging across the Pacific Northwest, Perdue warned that the price tag could be even higher this year. As fires have become more common and larger, the Forest Service has had to pull from other parts of its budget, including fire prevention, in order to cover the costs.

Perdue said he met with OMB Director Mick Mulvaney on Thursday to explain the issue, but Congress still needs to act to fix the problem.

"When we leave a fuel load out there because we have not been able to get to it because of a lack of dependable funding, we are asking for trouble," Perdue said.

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Obamacare advocates face daunting outreach effort after HHS cuts [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 09/08/2017 10:54 AM EDT

Obamacare supporters are scrambling to assemble an Obamacare enrollment plan after they were blindsided by the Trump administration's decision to slash spending on outreach for the law's next sign-up season.

But with less than two months until open enrollment begins, advocates are quickly finding that building a robust counter-messaging program to an administration opposing the Affordable Care Act will be a daunting task. Funding is limited, the sign-up window has been cut in half, and Obamacare advocates say their efforts couldn't possibly match the reach of the federal government.

"There's really nothing we can do to completely fill this void without the federal government stepping in," said Dara Taylor with Community Catalyst, a national consumer health advocacy group. "We were definitely surprised by this decision and extremely disheartened."

HHS last week said [it would cut Obamacare advertising](#) from \$100 million in the previous enrollment period to \$10 million for the sign-up season beginning Nov. 1. The administration is also slashing funding for in-person enrollment aides known as navigators from \$63 million to \$37 million.

In light of the steep cuts, prominent former Obama officials have been exploring a new fundraising effort to promote enrollment. Yet some involved in the talks privately admit they don't expect significant financial support from foundations or the health care industry.

"To just think that somebody will come in and have \$50 million is just ... that's going to be a very, very difficult ask," said one person familiar with the efforts.

Even though Obamacare supporters had been expecting the Trump administration to reduce support for 2018 enrollment, they were still surprised by the size of the cuts. Before HHS

announced its decision, Community Catalyst and other national groups had already been planning to provide more support to local organizations that help enroll people, Taylor said.

The Trump administration's decision to cut outreach comes not long after one of the largest enrollment organizations shut down operations earlier than expected after declining financial support. Enroll America, which had close ties to the Obama White House, at one point ran a field campaign in 11 key states to supplement the previous administration's outreach. Young Invincibles, an advocacy group for young adults, will carry on some of Enroll America's efforts for the 2018 sign-up season in [certain states](#), including Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas.

Barring an unforeseen financial windfall, advocates say many groups will have to find new ways to promote enrollment and recruit new groups to help.

"Even if we all got together and were able to get a bunch of money to be able to help with outreach and enrollment efforts, there's going to be a gap," said Liz Hagan, associate director of coverage initiatives at consumer advocacy organization Families USA.

Protect Our Care, a group started by former Obama officials earlier this year to oppose Republican efforts to repeal the health law, is also involved in crafting an outreach plan. The group recently hired veteran Democratic operative Brad Woodhouse as campaign director.

Outside groups, including the Center for American Progress and Indivisible, are already using social media to publicize the enrollment period. However, former Obama health officials say social media, while helpful in advertising the law to younger demographics, has a limited reach.

Television advertising "is the best vehicle to get new people in the door," said Josh Peck, the former chief marketing officer at CMS.

HHS is not expected to purchase any TV ads for the 2018 enrollment season, which the Trump administration shortened from three months to six weeks in states using HealthCare.gov for enrollment. Department officials suggested the administration, in addition to purchasing digital ads, will use emails and text messages to communicate with Obamacare enrollees.

About 12.2 million people signed up in Obamacare plans in the previous enrollment season. As of mid-March, roughly 10 million people were still enrolled.

Former Obama health officials worry that even an aggressive outside enrollment campaign won't be enough to boost sign-ups. Ultimately, they say, advocates can't come close to matching the federal government's data for targeting prospective customers.

"The administration knows who's coming to visit the website and might need a nudge," said Leslie Dach, a former top HHS official and campaign chairman of Protect Our Care. "They know who has enrolled the last time around. They hold the keys to communication, and they've made it clear that they will not do anything to make the law work."

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Senate appropriators rebuke Trump on abortion policy [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 09/07/2017 06:56 PM EDT

Senate appropriators on Thursday dealt a twofold rebuke to the Trump administration on abortion policy, though it is almost certain the changes won't become law.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a fiscal 2018 foreign relations funding bill containing language that would undo a Trump administration prohibition on funding for nongovernment organizations that perform or promote abortion.

The committee also adopted an amendment by Democrat Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire that would undo the Republican policy known as the "Mexico City policy" or the "global gag rule" in a 16-15 vote. Republicans Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska voted with panel Democrats to scrap the policy while West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin voted to retain it.

The policy bars federal aid to foreign organizations that provide or promote abortion. In the past, it applied only to organizations that got family planning funding. Under President Donald Trump, it was extended to apply to all organizations that get global health money, potentially including maternal health programs, anti-Zika efforts and the expansive PEPFAR program to stop HIV/AIDS.

Overriding the ban — which Republican presidents customarily put in place days after being inaugurated — would mark an embarrassment for the Trump administration. But the appropriations bill is quite unlikely to be finalized as written. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) noted at the markup the GOP-led House would insist on keeping the Trump policy in place.

"This is the same debate we have every year, probably with the same outcome," he said.

The Appropriations Committee also voted Thursday to instruct the administration to run the Title X family planning program and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program as they were under the Obama administration. Trump administration officials have floated changes to both programs.

The Susan B. Anthony List, an anti-abortion group, chastised Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, for introducing the bill with the prohibition on changing the programs.

"In the face of the horrors of Planned Parenthood's activities, Sen. Blunt allowed his own bill to move forward in a way that continues Obama administration policy to protect the abortion industry," SBA List president Marjorie Dannenfelser said.

Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) voted against the appropriations bill in part because of the Title X language.

"As written, the bill does not just provide funding for family planning programs, it also prohibits the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Department from changing the current rules for the issuance of Title X grants," a spokesperson for Lankford said in a statement. "Placing this kind of limitation on the current administration is completely unacceptable."

Blunt said during the hearing that he would have backed an amendment from Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) to allow the administration to change Title X. But Daines pulled the amendment because he knew it would likely fail in the committee, Blunt said.

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CBP announces contracts for wall designs of 'other materials' [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 09/07/2017 04:47 PM EDT

U.S. Customs and Border Protection [announced](#) today the names of four companies awarded contracts to construct border wall prototypes of "other materials."

The prototypes will be between 18 and 30 feet high and are expected to be built this fall in the San Diego area.

The designs will offer an alternative to concrete wall prototypes slated for construction in the coming weeks.

The companies are Caddell Construction of Montgomery, Ala., KWR Construction of Sierra Vista, Ariz., ELTA North America of Annapolis Junction, Md., and W. G. Yates & Sons Construction of Philadelphia, Miss.

Last week, CBP [announced](#) the companies awarded contracts to build the concrete wall prototypes. Two of the companies — Caddell Construction and W. G. Yates & Sons — were also given contracts for the designs of "other materials."

POLITICO reported that Caddell [paid](#) more than \$3 million in 2012 to settle a Justice Department criminal investigation into whether it defrauded the U.S. government when it participated in a program to help small business contractors.

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How Washington traps disaster victims [Back](#)

By Danny Vinik | 09/08/2017 05:17 AM EDT

When a devastating flood struck Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in August last year, Scott Rotolo returned home to nearly \$100,000 in flood damage. Wanting to rebuild as quickly as possible, he contacted the Federal Emergency Management Agency for help. The agency directed him to the Small Business Administration—[Washington's frontline emergency lender](#)—and he applied for, and accepted, a low-interest loan to rebuild his house and replace his possessions.

To Rotolo, a 39-year-old IT worker, it seemed like the smart financial decision: The

government offers a low interest rate, and the money got him back into his house quickly. He and his family moved back in March. But a few months later, he realized that that he'd made a big mistake: Because he took out a disaster loan—just over \$100,000 that he needed to pay back with interest—he was not eligible for the federal disaster grants that came available a few months ago. The news came as a big surprise, Rotolo said in an interview: he didn't see any notice from FEMA or the SBA that taking out a loan would block him from getting a disaster grant. "Because I was responsible," he said, "I'm being punished."

As Louisiana has begun dispersing nearly \$2 billion in disaster grant money over the past few months, people in the disaster-relief world are sounding the alarm that many disaster victims can be unwittingly caught in the trap that snared Rotolo. Thanks to a rule originally passed to prevent double-dipping by unscrupulous disaster victims, some of the neediest people in devastated areas can actually lose their access to relief grants.

It's not clear how many people have actually been rebuffed for grants, though Rotolo is one of 18,000 people approved for a disaster loan after the 2016 Louisiana floods, all of whom would be affected by the rule. State officials say it's the top complaint they are hearing from disaster victims as they try to rebuild. "This is the number one issue that folks are running into," said Richard Carbo, deputy chief of staff for Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards.

"This was a massive issue 11 years ago," said Adam Knapp, who was the policy director for the Louisiana Economic Development agency after Katrina and now is the CEO of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce. "It was a massive issue after Sandy. It was a massive issue after our flood and still is. It's just a forgotten issue."

This week, as a Hurricane Harvey relief bill moves quickly through Capitol Hill, officials in Louisiana are trying to convince Congress to fix the issue—so far, with no luck. On Wednesday, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards sent a [letter](#) to congressional leaders requesting they include language in the Hurricane Harvey relief bill that ensures disaster victims are not penalized for receiving an SBA loan. Neither the \$7.9 billion bill passed by the House Wednesday nor the \$15 billion bill passed by the Senate on Thursday included any such language, but state officials are continuing to press lawmakers. "Congress needs to act," said Carbo.

The problem has its roots in America's two-tiered system for delivering money to disaster victims. The first and most immediate form of relief is loans: The Small Business Administration issues low-interest loans to struggling homeowners and businesses, giving them access to cash as quickly as a few weeks after the disaster, which they have to pay back with interest. The second form of relief is grants, which are more valuable—homeowners don't need to pay them back—but can take much longer to receive.

The catch: every dollar for which disaster victims are *approved* for an SBA loan is a dollar less they can receive from a federal grant. In other words, if a victim who is eligible for \$120,000 in assistance is offered a \$90,000 SBA loan, she can only receive grants worth \$30,000—no matter if she accepts or declines the loan.

The rule means that many people are now finding themselves boxed out of grant money they'd otherwise be qualified to receive. In some cases, disaster-relief experts and state officials said, they simply aren't aware that when applying for loans, they're closing off the chance to get a far more valuable grant later. "It always catches people off guard," said Robin Keegan, the former executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, which was created following

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to oversee the recovery.

Already, lawyers working with Harvey victims say they are unsure how to advise their clients, worried that applying for an SBA loan could prevent them from receiving grant money in the future. "It is very frustrating," said Tracy Figueroa, a lawyer at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid who leads its office of disaster assistance.

These rules arose to prevent a problem known as "duplication of benefits"—or, colloquially, double-dipping. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and major floods in the Midwest in 2008, a [federal audit](#) found that due to a bureaucratic failure, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which issues one of the two main kinds of disaster grants, sent money to people who'd already received an SBA loan to cover their losses. Such double dipping, which is prohibited by federal law, cost the government almost \$1 billion, money that could have gone to other victims. The [new rules](#), issued by HUD in 2011, were designed to prevent such bureaucratic mistakes from happening again, ensuring that federal assistance reaches those who need it most.

But state officials and disaster experts say, the rules have gone too far. Along with preventing double dipping, they say, the rules penalize people who would have been better off waiting for federal grant money—leaving them saddled with thousands of dollars in debt instead of a simple payout by the government. "Now is when homeowners are really fully finding out how much their SBA loan is a barrier for them," said Knapp. "It's a policy choice that the federal government has made."

HUD and the SBA did not respond to a request for comment.

A former HUD official who asked not to be named because she no longer speaks for the agency defended the current rules, arguing that if a disaster victim without insurance has the resources to rebuild—in other words, they can repay an SBA loan—then they should receive a loan rather than a grant. "If folks don't have flood insurance and they get an SBA low-interest loan, isn't that a fair benefit?" The former official further argued that allowing people who are eligible for an SBA loan to receive a grant from HUD would be expensive and unfair. "They are just expecting that they should just get a grant to rebuild. You are penalizing homeowners that pay for flood insurance."

State officials and many disaster experts see this problem differently, believing that even people with the means to rebuild deserve some grant money, instead of being saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in loans. "Sometimes the fact that you are bankable and can take out an SBA loan doesn't mean you are as well-resourced that you can take on that burden of debt," said Keegan, who is now the director of Resilient Baton Rouge, a group formed last year to provide behavioral health services to last year's flood victims. "What I've heard a lot in implementation woes of these programs is people are dipping into savings, retirement benefits or a college fund just to make ends meet."

More importantly, they say, agencies must do a much better job explaining to disaster victims that applying for an SBA loan can hurt them in the future when they seek grant money. Asked whether agencies make that information clear, Figueroa said, "Not at all."

"It's hard for somebody who is on the phone with FEMA and being told that you better apply for that SBA loan because otherwise we can't even think about giving you FEMA money," she said. "They are applying for stuff, doing whatever they need to scrape together a way to begin

to recover and then grant programs come out later and [they say,] 'Oops sorry you got a loan so we can't give you this grant.'"

A FEMA spokesperson said that the agency warns people about the ban on duplication multiple times: when they first register for FEMA assistance, on the eligibility letter they receive, and also in a release form when registering. "This form places the applicant on notice that they are required to return any FEMA assistance that is covered by another source such as insurance," the spokesman wrote in an email.

Controversy around the "duplication of benefits" rules also arose after Superstorm Sandy when New York lawmakers and Governor Andrew Cuomo worried that HUD would attempt to claw back money that victims had received through disaster grants and from a flood insurance settlement. The lawmakers [successfully negotiated](#) a waiver that protected certain, low-income victims from clawbacks by FEMA for certain overpayments.

Edwards would like to see a much bigger change: It's only fair, he says, to allow people who receive an SBA loan to take advantage of HUD disaster grants as well. In February, he sent a letter to the congressional delegation asking for a legislative change to either forgive SBA disaster loans taken out by victims of last year's flooding—in other words, turn the loans into outright grants—or to allow those victims to also receive HUD grants. In August, he sent a letter to Ben Carson, the secretary of HUD, asking for a regulatory change that would effectively accomplish the same thing. In that letter, Edwards appealed not just for his state but for disaster victims elsewhere in the U.S. "This is, perhaps, the single biggest change we can make to support homeowners," he wrote, "not just in Louisiana, but across the country."

Scott Rotolo says he's hoping that Edwards' efforts will succeed. If he had known that the SBA loan would have made him ineligible for a grant, he said he would have taken out a private loan at the market interest rate, and then applied for a grant when that money became available. Now it's too late. The SBA loan is effectively a second mortgage on a house he just moved into last year. "I can't maintain the lifestyle I had before," he said. "I'm just right there in the middle class and I don't have an extra \$430 a month."

"It's going to be tough," he added. "But I'll find a way."

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Cochran, Leahy bring back bill to boost Farm to School grant program [Back](#)

By Sabrina Rodriguez | 09/07/2017 06:57 PM EDT

Two members of the Senate Agriculture Committee from opposite sides of the aisle — [Thad Cochran](#) (R-Miss.) and [Patrick Leahy](#) (D-Vt.) — reintroduced a measure on Wednesday to expand the Farm to School grant program and increase its annual authorized funding level by \$10 million.

The program, administered by USDA, connects schools to locally produced farm foods and works to educate students on healthy eating habits. It is authorized at \$5 million per year and has more than 40,000 participating schools.

Cochran, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Leahy, the panel's ranking member, first introduced the measure in 2015. Their second-go, [S. 1767 \(115\)](#), would increase the number of eligible schools and expand it to preschools, summer programs and after-school programs.

Barriers that prevent farmers from taking part would be reduced under the so-called Farm to School Act of 2017, and the maximum grant award would be lifted, to \$200,000.

"Nearly half of all school districts participate in farm-to-school activities because this program both encourages healthier eating habits among children and supports local farmers," Leahy said in a statement. "It's a natural partnership with benefits all around — children, communities, farmers and schools all win under this formula."

The measure also would give the Agriculture Secretary one year from date of passage to submit a report to the Senate and House agriculture committees as well as the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on progress in identifying and removing regulations that block development of farm-to-school arrangements.

A companion bill, [H.R. 3686 \(115\)](#), was introduced in the House on Wednesday by Reps. [Jeff Fortenberry](#) (R-Neb.) and [Marcia Fudge](#) (D-Ohio).

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: House (finally) passes a budget — Senate budget panel trudges through amendments — Walker demands disaster aid offsets
Date: Thursday, October 05, 2017 4:07:08 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 10/05/2017 04:03 PM EDT

IT'S OUTTA HERE: Just a few weeks ago, it wasn't clear first-term Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) would ever get the votes. Today, the rookie became a congressional celebrity on the floor of the House, as she won the prize rarely achieved by Budget Committee leaders: Passage of a comprehensive budget plan.

The resolution, of course, is mostly symbolic. But this year's version showcases key conservative goals that might otherwise never get a vote on the House floor. Sarah ticks through the [five things](#) the document reveals about GOP priorities.

Hugs and high-fives: After this summer's unanimous committee vote, only 18 House Republicans voted against the document, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), today. (We hear several were specifically taking a stand against the GOP's plans to eliminate the state and local tax deduction.) When the gavel struck, with a [219-206 tally](#), a visibly jovial Black was surrounded by GOP supporters handing out high-five and hugs.

Up next: The Senate is expected to approve its own budget out of committee today, with plans to pass it on the floor the week of Oct. 16. The first steps to creating a conference committee, however, likely won't begin until November, Black said today. As one of the few Republicans who would have a seat at that table, Black said her top priorities in those joint talks would be tax reform, of course, as well as reducing deficits.

But first, party! The double-tasking Tennessee gubernatorial candidate says she's still undecided about whether to stay on as chairman through the conference. If not, she'll allow her successor (potentially [Steve Womack](#)) to pick up where she left off. "I'm going to celebrate today, and we'll make that decision later," Black said.

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Dozens of House Republicans, led by Senate Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#), [urge](#) President Donald Trump to make national security "the top priority" of budget negotiations this fall. More from [Gregory Hellman](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — New York residents pay about \$41 billion more in federal taxes than they received in federal spending, according to the [state comptroller](#). That means for every federal tax dollar paid by New York residents, the federal government sent 84 cents back to the state. The average return for every tax dollar nationwide is \$1.18.

BUDGET

MARATHON MARKUP: The Senate Budget Committee is still in the midst of its all-day markup. And while the budget resolution won't be public until the end, you get a sneak peek. According to an internal [report](#) we nabbed, the resolution would set up a record \$695 billion

budget for the Pentagon after 10 years and slash spending for domestic departments, including Agriculture, Transportation and Energy. Sarah [sums it up](#).

The gist of debate: In case you haven't been glued to the [webcast](#), lawmakers have spent much of the markup bickering about the definition of the word "cut." Democrats have for days been [slamming](#) their GOP colleagues for targeting Medicare under the budget resolution, claiming that the Republican document would cut the program by \$473 billion over a decade. But Republicans say that's a misleading assessment. "We're not cutting anything," Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) said, batting back at Democratic complaints. "We're just trying to reduce the rate of growth and spending to stop mortgaging our kids' future."

End in sight? The committee will go through votes this afternoon and into the evening on dozens of (mostly Democrat-backed) amendments, with a final vote expected around the dinner hour. Check out the panel's [Tumblr](#) for the blow by blow.

DISASTER AID

WALKER DEMANDS OFFSETS: It's always been a politically risky position — insisting recovery aid be offset as images of destitute disaster victims still populate the evening news. But Republican Study Chairman [Mark Walker](#) is climbing out on that limb. Sarah serves up [the scoop for Pros](#), reporting late Wednesday that Walker is calling for spending cuts to cover the White House's new \$29 billion [disaster aid request](#). "We're going to come out strong for those to be offset," Walker says. "Just because Republicans are in charge doesn't mean deficits and debts no longer matter."

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE: Congress is expected to clear the latest aid request later this month. But Colin Wilhelm [explains](#) that Puerto Rico might run out of money before that funding comes through.

NFIP DEBT, BE GONE: Rolled into the new aid request, the Trump administration is calling on Congress to cancel \$16 billion in debt the National Flood Insurance Program has accrued by paying out more in claims than it takes in from premiums, Zachary Warmbrodt [notes](#).

WHITE HOUSE

BUSINESS OR PLEASURE (OR BOTH?): Ethics watchdogs say Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is combining politics with his official duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon [report](#).

CATCHING PRICE: Details of former HHS Secretary Tom Price's jet-setting habits have only come out over the last few weeks. But our Dan Diamond and Rachana Pradhan have been chasing this story for five months. Check out [their account](#) of the painstaking reporting that ultimately led to the Cabinet secretary's ouster.

PROBING PRUITT: Reps. [Peter DeFazio](#) and [Grace Napolitano](#) sent [a letter](#) this week asking the EPA's inspector general to investigate Administrator Scott Pruitt's use of round-the-clock security and a \$25,000 soundproof phone booth.

DEFENSE

EXTRA INFUSION? House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) says the Pentagon

could get extra money under the impending disaster aid package — but only if DoD officials ask. "Get your act together," Thornberry says he told Pentagon leaders, "and if you have a pressing need that we can get a head start on between now and December, get it up to us." Thornberry highlights maintenance and missile defense funding as urgent needs he hopes the Pentagon would request, Connor O'Brien [reports](#).

HEALTH CARE

A BARGAINING CHIP: Once-bipartisan efforts to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program are running into problems in the House. The Energy and Commerce Committee approved a bill late Wednesday that would keep the money flowing for five years, but with some severe cuts to Obamacare programs. Not a single Democrat voted to advance the measure, as Rachana Pradhan [reports](#). One of the House bill's key pay-fors would increase means-testing for Medicare for wealthier seniors — a proposal Democrats have attacked.

ENROLLMENT SEASON'S UPON US: Obamacare's sign-up window begins in less than a month, and the whole operation is expected to be drastically different than before the Trump administration took control. As Paul Demko and Adam Cancryn [explain](#), the federal government has gutted outreach and marketing, slashed funding to outside enrollment groups and left state officials in the dark on key details — making for what is expected to be a shorter, quieter and more chaotic enrollment period.

AGRICULTURE

STANDING UP FOR SNAP: The top Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee, [Debbie Stabenow](#), took her chamber's budget writers to task this week for their planned cuts to the USDA. Senate Republicans are counting on \$21 billion in cuts to agricultural programs over a decade to help achieve the symbolic "balanced budget."

TAX

CORKER CRANKS UP DEMANDS: Sen. [Bob Corker](#) is going further with his tax reform ultimatums, now insisting that he will only support a proposal that reduces deficits based on a solid growth model, Sarah [reports](#). "Unless it reduces deficits, and does not add to deficits — with reasonable and responsible growth models — and unless we can make it permanent, I don't have any interest in it," Corker told fellow Budget Committee members during round one of this week's markup.

More: [Pressuring Trump-state Democrats](#) | [Fighting to preserve state and local deduction](#)

EARMARKS

— States worry federal funding for Children's Health Insurance Program won't come in time. [Wall Street Journal](#).

— Budget Chair Black sticks around for now. [The Hill](#).

— The deficit: A tax problem, not a spending problem? [Bloomberg BNA](#).

— Deficit hawks voice worry over direction of tax plan. [The Hill](#).

— Why some scars from the recession may never vanish. [The New York Times](#).

— Thornberry: 'I'd get rid of all' the budget caps. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Why tax cuts will only get harder from here. [Bloomberg](#).

— Fertilizer companies call for more money for farm bill conservation, research. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 64 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/house-finally-passes-a-budget-024937>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

What the House budget reveals about GOP priorities [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/05/2017 02:29 PM EDT

House Republicans on Thursday gave the stamp of approval to a sweeping budget resolution that has been dubbed the conference's most conservative fiscal statement in 20 years.

The budget — nearly a year in the works and arriving months late — has been at the center of the GOP's ambitions this fall because of its procedural power to unlock a filibuster-proof tax bill. The Senate Budget Committee is working on its own version of the fiscal 2018 budget and it's expected to come to the floor yet this month.

The budget communicates the majority party's key principles, though they may never make it into law, and the House GOP version shows that:

— **They want to overhaul the tax code:** Above all else, House GOP lawmakers say their budget demonstrates a commitment to draft a tax reform plan. House Freedom Caucus members — and moderates — stifled their many objections in the interest of unsealing the reconciliation process that allows tax reform to pass in the Senate with a simple majority vote.

— **A cut in entitlements is a must:** The GOP's dramatic plan to overhaul Medicare, developed by Speaker Paul Ryan when he was Budget Committee chairman, has become a must-have in conservative budgets. This year's budget, however, would go further by requiring GOP chairmen to find \$203 billion over 10 years in savings from entitlement programs like food stamps, agricultural subsidies and housing assistance.

— **The Pentagon's budget would grow:** Republicans struck a rare compromise between fiscal hawks and defense hawks this year to propose a massive Pentagon budget of \$620 billion for the current fiscal year. That figure, the results of months of wrangling, is a compromise between the \$640 billion desired by defense hawks and the \$603 billion request from the White House.

— **The desire to repeal Obamacare is alive:** The GOP keeps its seven-year-old promise to root out ex-President Barack Obama's health care law, which includes repealing billions of dollars worth of subsidies, tax increases and the Medicaid expansion. In place of Obamacare,

the GOP budget would enact the House-passed replacement package, that failed in a dramatic Senate vote earlier this year.

— **Fighting deficits remains central:** The hallmark of most conservative budget plans is the ability to achieve balance over 10 years. The House GOP budget projects it would lead to a surplus within a decade, with the help of rosy economic growth projections and severe across-the-board domestic cuts that would likely never make it into law.

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House passes budget in first step toward tax reform [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 10/05/2017 11:56 AM EDT

The House passed a budget today that paves the way for tax reform, slashes spending over 10 years and calls for lawmakers to find at least \$203 billion in extra savings from mandatory programs.

After months of intra-party wrangling, GOP leaders succeeded in advancing the fiscal 2018 resolution, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), on a 219-206 vote.

The deal is far from done, however, since the Senate has yet to bring its [own plan](#) to a floor vote, and budget writers must ultimately reconcile the differing packages during conference negotiations.

Because Senate Republicans have a smaller majority than their House counterparts, House Republicans are [already bracing](#) for a final product that's far different than the plan they have now sent to the Senate.

Before passage this week, House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.) touted her proposal's most fiscally conservative tenets, noting that the budget resolution would instruct congressional committees to cut billions of dollars from mandatory programs that pay for food stamps, housing aid and student loans.

"Can we not acknowledge that there are some programs that perhaps have fraud, waste and abuse we can take care of? ..." Black said on the floor. "That's what this budget does. It says, 'Open up your minds, think differently, let's not do things the same old way and keep putting the same old programs out there that maybe aren't working.'"

But Democrats contend that those budget instructions would take from the poor while the plan's reconciliation language enables Republicans to pursue tax cuts for the nation's wealthiest individuals.

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Thornberry pushes Trump to keep defense spending hike high on agenda [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 10/05/2017 01:39 PM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) is leading 153 of his colleagues today in [commending](#) President Donald Trump for backing a level of \$700 billion in annual funding for national defense, in an effort to signal the significant Republican support in the House for increasing defense funding, a committee aide told POLITICO.

It comes as Trump is attempting to rally support in Congress for an overhaul of the nation's tax code.

"Restoring our military strength and defending the country is as important to America's success as reforming the tax code, ensuring healthcare for Americans and growing the economy," the letter states.

During his address last month to the U.N. General Assembly, Trump declared: "It has just been announced that we will be spending almost \$700 billion on our military and defense. Our military will soon be the strongest it has ever been."

The Budget Control Act limits annual defense spending to \$549 billion, not including war funding contained in a separate Overseas Contingency Operations account.

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Senate GOP budget plan boosts Pentagon, cuts domestic spending [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/05/2017 11:41 AM EDT

The Senate GOP's fiscal 2018 budget resolution would reduce or rein in spending for many domestic programs across the government, while setting up a record \$695 billion budget for the Pentagon after 10 years.

The Senate Budget Committee's 10-year fiscal plan would slash spending for domestic departments including agriculture, transportation and energy, according to an internal [report](#) obtained by POLITICO. The so-called chairman's mark, which contains a decade's worth of spending breakdowns, is not yet public.

One of the biggest cuts would hit the nation's transportation programs. That budget would be slashed by \$11.29 billion over 10 years, down to \$77.8 billion. And that department's mandatory funding would be sliced further, from \$55.4 billion to \$37.6 billion during that period.

Agriculture funding would be reduced by roughly \$2 billion, down to \$20.2 billion after 10 years, with the biggest chunk of savings coming from mandatory programs like crop subsidies.

Democrats argue the impact of the GOP's proposed cuts would actually be higher when compared to ever-rising spending projections from the Congressional Budget Office. Sen.

Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) has said agriculture cuts would amount to [about \\$21 billion](#) over a decade.

Other agencies would see their budget levels essentially flatline over 10 years, including international affairs, community development and science and technology.

The military, meanwhile, would see its budget rise from \$557.2 billion to \$695 billion over 10 years, assuming that Congress can reach a deal to lift its current spending caps.

The biggest spending boosts, besides the military, would go toward health programs with ballooning costs like Medicare. But as Democrats have pointed out, the Republican plan to increase Medicare spending would actually amount to a cut of nearly \$500 billion over 10 years when compared to the current baselines.

CBO has projected that Medicare would cost \$8.532 trillion over 10 years. The GOP budget tables would spend \$8.059 trillion on Medicare — a difference of \$472.9 billion.

The Senate Budget Committee is expected to advance its budget resolution later this afternoon.

Tucker Doherty contributed to this report.

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RSC chief stakes opposition to hurricane relief without offsets [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/04/2017 10:50 PM EDT

The Republican Study Committee's chairman is threatening to oppose the next round of hurricane relief funding if Congress doesn't cut spending to cover the costs.

"We're going to come out strong for those to be offset," Rep. [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.) told POLITICO late Wednesday. "Just because Republicans are in charge doesn't mean deficits and debts no longer matter."

Walker said he has for weeks told fellow lawmakers, including those in leadership, to demand offsets. Now he is going public with his position as Congress considers the White House's new \$29 billion [disaster aid request](#).

Lawmakers are expected to vote mid-month on the fresh aid plan, which includes \$13 billion in Federal Emergency Management Agency funding that would not count toward Congress' annual spending limits.

GOP leaders have signaled there are likely to be more requests to come, and the price tag for hurricane recovery could total hundreds of billions of dollars.

So far, Congress has [allocated](#) \$15 billion in emergency funding since the three devastating storms began ravaging the U.S. and its territories with Hurricane Harvey's initial blow in late

August.

Walker's demands are likely to incite a years-old fiscal fight within the GOP over whether emergency spending should add to the nation's deficit.

Prominent conservatives, including Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.), have for years argued that disaster relief should be offset.

"Congress must ensure that a catastrophe of nature does not become a catastrophe of debt," then-congressman Pence said in a 2005 floor speech that has resurfaced in recent weeks.

In 2011, a [similar demand](#) by House conservatives brought the government to the brink of shutdown.

Walker proposes Congress consider reshuffling money from accounts like the Energy Department's loan program for manufacturing fuel-efficient cars.

This year, a majority of House Republicans already agreed to bend the pay-as-you-go requirement for the \$15 billion hurricane relief package ([H.R. 601 \(115\)](#)) enacted last month. Ninety Republicans, including Walker, opposed the legislation, which also funded the government through Dec. 8 and temporarily suspended the debt ceiling.

On future packages, Walker said he believes "the bulk" of the House's Republicans will join in opposition if there are no offsets.

The first emergency package was different, he argues, because it was an immediate response when "there were people's lives in the balance" and it "wasn't an overwhelming amount."

Walker stressed that he isn't planning to hold a disaster package "hostage" but wants to remind fellow Republicans that they, too, have campaigned against runaway spending.

"We just want to say, 'Hey, we're waving a flag out here,'" Walker said. "If we don't have the money, then is it not due diligence to go find out where money is being spent frivolously?"

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White House seeks nearly \$30B in disaster aid package [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/04/2017 06:13 PM EDT

The White House this afternoon formally requested nearly \$30 billion in emergency funding for its ongoing recovery efforts in hurricane-battered regions like Puerto Rico, Florida and Texas.

In a letter to congressional leaders, the Trump administration asked for \$12.8 billion for FEMA's disaster relief fund, \$16 billion for the National Flood Insurance Program and \$576.5 million for the forest service's firefighting fund.

"We need the help of Congress to stabilize the affected communities and replenish dwindling and depleted funds," Office of Management and Budget chief Mick Mulvaney wrote. He said the money should be classified as "emergency spending," meaning it would not require spending offsets.

House and Senate appropriators immediately released statements in support of the White House's request and pledged to act quickly. House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) said he would "put legislation forward as soon as possible."

Rep. [Nita Lowey](#), his Democratic counterpart on the panel, said she supported Trump's request for FEMA, but added it needed to go further.

"Congress should add to this request by appropriating funding for flexible Community Development Block Grants; rebuilding coastlines, roads, transit systems, airports, ports, and other infrastructure; small business loans; and repairs to military installations and other federal facilities damaged in the storms," said Lowey, of New York.

The White House's request had previously been [reported](#) by POLITICO.

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Oversight board, Democrats sound alarm over federal aid to Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/04/2017 04:59 PM EDT

President Donald Trump may have promised Puerto Rico more aid, but the island could run out of money before it gets there.

The commonwealth is already insolvent, owing far more money than it could ever pay back. But the actual cash that the government uses to function, which was already drained, may run out by mid-October due to spending on the emergency response to Hurricane Maria.

Congressional Democrats criticized the Trump administration for taking longer to submit a funding request for the emergency response than it did following Hurricane Harvey, which mainly pounded Texas.

"We got a relief package on Texas in what, four or five days?" said Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) on Tuesday. "[Republicans] said sometime next week," for passage of a relief package that would include disaster aid funding for Puerto Rico, Grijalva said. "That'll take it into 15, 16 days."

The administration was expected to present a \$13 billion emergency funding request for FEMA to Congress today.

The bipartisan federal board established by Congress to oversee Puerto Rico's finances also sounded alarms over the commonwealth's ability to pay for immediate essential services, like police and emergency responders.

"Your immediate and bold assistance is urgently needed to minimize loss of life, support critical emergency response efforts, and provide tools to support the island's recovery," the board wrote in a [letter](#) sent to Congress on Tuesday night.

In addition to an expedited relief package, the board made an unusual request for a low-interest loan from the federal government to provide Puerto Rico with more financial flexibility as a short-term emergency measure.

In a press call on Wednesday Rep. [Rob Bishop](#), chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over Puerto Rico, said the panel would evaluate their request.

The board also prepared Congress for a massive price tag to rebuild the commonwealth. In its letter, the board cited an early report from Moody's Analytics, an investment and economic research firm, that estimates Puerto Rico's recovery will cost \$95 billion.

"I can't predict what Congress as a whole will do," Bishop said, when asked about the federal loan request and a relief package. But he said his committee will consider modifying the PROMESA law that created the oversight board and allowed the island to restructure its \$70 billion in bond debt in a process similar to bankruptcy.

Changes could include giving the board more authority and placing the U.S. Virgin Islands, which has higher debt per capita than Puerto Rico, under the same restructuring and oversight board process.

What Bishop did not predict is what Trump proposed in an interview with Fox News Tuesday night: eliminating Puerto Rico's debt.

"Let's see how this thing plays out in the future," said Bishop, referring to the process Puerto Rico is in now.

Bishop also said his committee will play "a lead role in the overall strategy and the rebuilding process," and work closely with the U.S. Treasury Department and other agencies in the Trump administration as that process unfolds.

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White House proposes flood insurance reforms, debt cancellation [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 10/04/2017 06:05 PM EDT

The White House has outlined for congressional leaders several proposed changes to the National Flood Insurance Program as part of a disaster assistance request that includes canceling \$16 billion of the program's debt.

In a [letter](#) to House and Senate leaders, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said the NFIP required "immediate financial relief to fulfill its obligations to its policyholders" but "must also be reformed to place it on a sound financial footing and to

enable the private market for flood insurance to expand."

Lawmakers have been debating for several months what to do with the program as part of a long-term reauthorization bill. There was some overlap with what the administration proposed today, but a number of the White House's ideas will probably face pushback by lawmakers and industry groups.

The proposed changes from the White House include establishing a means-tested affordability program for low-income policyholders, giving FEMA authority to discontinue coverage for "extreme repetitive loss properties," phasing out new policies for certain new construction and prohibiting the NFIP from selling new flood insurance policies for commercial structures. The list includes proposals intended to help grow the private flood insurance market.

Mulvaney said the recent hurricanes resulted in projected losses of \$16 billion. By the latter part of this month, he said the NFIP will have fully exhausted its financial resources, including its \$30 billion borrowing authority, and will be unable to pay claims.

"Put plainly, the NFIP is not designed to handle catastrophic losses like those caused by Harvey, Irma and Maria," he said.

WHAT'S NEXT: Mulvaney said it was urgent that Congress act on the disaster request for the NFIP and other programs "as expeditiously as possible."

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Interior secretary draws flak for mixing politics, official travel [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/04/2017 07:31 PM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a

little B.S."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips he takes outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then-Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity. Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her

own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [canceled](#) his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he [would have been](#) cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter, an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. [Raúl Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and [Donald McEachin](#) (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations, that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in

Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. [Amata Radewagen](#), the Republican delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana where he joined Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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How We Found Tom Price's Private Jets [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond and Rachana Pradhan | 10/04/2017 05:25 PM EDT

The first tip came from a casual conversation with a source back in May: Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price was using private jets for routine travel, possibly in violation of federal travel rules that allowed such flights only when commercial options weren't available.

But it was a tip and little else—no times, no names of charter services and not even a schedule from a notoriously secretive Cabinet secretary.

So we embarked on a months-long effort to win the trust of sources, both in and outside of HHS, who were in a position to know about the secretary's travel. This required numerous meetings and phone calls, sometimes after hours, seeking to confirm what the original source acknowledged was just secondhand information. Neither of us had ever reported a story of this difficulty before.

Price's lack of transparency made our job harder. In the initial months following his confirmation on February 10, he hadn't made his schedule public, unlike past secretaries. Bare-bones reports of events outside Washington usually were posted on the agency's website after they happened. But there were few places and times—not enough information to take either to charter services, sources inside HHS or anyone else in a position to know about the flights. And we faced another problem: Because the planes Price was taking were private, their arrivals and departures weren't recorded on public databases.

That meant we had to re-create Price's schedule from scratch if we were to have any hope of matching his trips to chartered flights. We reviewed the HHS summaries of Price's meetings. We scoured news sites for reports of Price speeches outside Washington. We obsessively tracked his appearances on social media. Putting all this information together, we built a database of Price's trips.

That task became somewhat easier in July, when Price's public relations staff began sending out notices to reporters of upcoming trips—a common practice in previous administrations—but it wasn't until late August that the reports of the secretary's travel plans became more regular.

This created an opportunity to stake out the airport and watch Price get on and off the plane, the surest way to determine that he was using charter aircraft on dates and times when commercial flights were also available. But which airport was Price traveling from?

There were several missed opportunities, when we either went to the wrong airport or the right

airport at the wrong time. Then, in September, we received an official notice from HHS that Price would be traveling to the Philadelphia area to meet with people affected by addiction to opioid painkillers. By the morning of September 15 — when Price took a private jet to travel from Washington to Philadelphia, a distance of roughly 125 miles — we had figured out that Price was using the private jet terminal at Dulles International Airport, 28 miles outside of Washington.

That Friday morning, we camped out at the Dulles charter terminal. A little after 8 a.m., we saw two SUVs and a police escort roll onto the tarmac, as the cars discharged passengers who then boarded a [distinctive 30-seat charter plane](#) with a golden belly. By 8:30 a.m., we watched the charter jet take off, heading north, and tracked it to Philadelphia using FlightAware, an airline tracking website.

It was strong evidence, but it wasn't enough. We hadn't seen the faces of Price or the other passengers — including White House counselor Kellyanne Conway, who went on that opioid trip. Using social media and help from sources, we kept tabs on the movements of Price and Conway in Philadelphia, tracing when they wrapped up the event and headed to the airport.

By the time Price boarded the private jet at Philadelphia International Airport for the return trip to Dulles in early afternoon, we had figured out how to get the best view of the Dulles tarmac: Rachana drove by the charter jet terminal, timing her approach so she could best see the jet field, while Dan stood in the airport's main terminal, tracking the plane through his phone and counting down its arrival to Rachana, before hustling out to a patch of concrete that offered a view of the tarmac, too.

It was enough. We saw the distinctive golden plane taxi around to the private-jet terminal. We saw a man with Price's build and shock of white hair walking across the tarmac. We saw the SUVs and police escort come out to greet him and the other passengers before speeding them away.

After that, we pieced together his itinerary for the entire week by calling sources, looking for photos of events on social media and compiling HHS notices for his travel plans. We even called charter plane companies—including the one that Price had used—to figure out how much the trips cost. And we purchased flight data that offered the precise times for departures and arrivals of flights to validate what sources had said was Price's schedule. That also enabled us to compare Price's actual departures and arrivals with commercial flight options, train travel and even the cost of traveling by SUV. This was especially important: We wanted to compare the cost of Price's jets with that of commercial transportation, revealing a potential waste of taxpayer dollars.

While there was evidence that Price had been using charters for months, our first story stuck to what we had established beyond any doubt: The round-trip to Philadelphia, as well as three other flights in the previous two days.

On Monday, September 18, we sent our questions to HHS and repeatedly asked for a meeting or phone call with Price, but were rebuffed. After more than 24 hours, HHS issued a terse statement that, yes, the secretary used charter flights, but mostly for public health emergencies. The statement asserted that there was no violation of federal regulations, but offered no further explanation.

The publication of our first story—headlined "[Price's private-jet travel breaks precedent](#)"—

shook loose new sources of information and gave fresh impetus for us to go back to our earlier efforts to reconstruct Price's schedule of trips. We matched the dates of Price's trips to contracts for charter air service on [USAspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov), the government database of all federal outlays. And we established the precise times of Price's departures and arrivals through an exhaustive search of data we gathered from airports across the country. By Thursday, the matches were solid enough to go with a follow-up story: "[Price traveled by private plane at least 24 times.](#)"

As we looked at our growing database, we noticed some peculiarities about his trips. For instance, there was a Friday afternoon charter flight that took him to an island off the Georgia coast, even though he didn't have any formal events scheduled for nearly two days. We checked property records, HHS financial disclosures and fundraising records from Price's political career and realized the former Georgia congressman had long-standing ties to St. Simons Island: He and his wife regularly visited during the summers, both for fundraisers and to participate in the local medical association, and they owned undeveloped land worth more than \$1 million there.

A day trip by Price to Nashville didn't seem to make much sense as a priority for the HHS secretary, either. We could find only about 90 minutes' worth of events on Price's calendar, and many Nashville-area health care leaders told us they hadn't even known he was coming. But once again, Price had a personal tie: His son lived in the city and the secretary himself owned property there. And the reporters were able to track down, and get HHS to confirm, that Price had lunch with his son that day.

That led to our next story: "[Price's private-jet travels included visits with colleagues, lunch with son.](#)"

Though all our stories to this point were about taxpayer-funded charter flights, our sources insisted that his use of military aircraft bore scrutiny, too. Arguably, his use of military planes on trips to Europe and Asia—at a cost of more than \$500,000, based on our review of invoices obtained through sources—was excessive for an HHS secretary, even if it was vetted by normal channels. Plus, the presence of Price's wife, Betty, on the trips raised more questions. We followed up with HHS, the White House and scrutinized the travel practices of previous HHS secretaries before publishing our report on Thursday, September 28, "[Price took military jets to Europe, Asia for over \\$500K.](#)"

By then, the stories had become a national issue, with President Donald Trump among many other officials questioning Price's decisions on travel. Our colleagues on POLITICO's White House and Congress teams helped us keep track of the growing outrage. By Friday, September 29, Trump sent a strong signal that Price wouldn't be around too much longer, telling reporters before he departed for his New Jersey golf club that they'd hear more about the fate of his HHS secretary that evening.

When word came of Price's resignation later that afternoon, at 4:36 p.m., we weren't sure what to do at first—we were in the middle of reporting a follow-up article. By that point, we had put in almost a thousand hours of work on the Price investigation. But we thought back to when we spotted that plane with the distinctive golden belly on the Dulles tarmac, just two weeks earlier, the moment that our slow-burn investigation became a real and consequential story.

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Thornberry pushed Pentagon for supplemental request for disaster bills [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 10/05/2017 10:13 AM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) today said he urged Pentagon leaders to request supplemental funding as Congress prepares to consider emergency disaster relief funding.

"I told them, there's going to be more disaster money," the Texas Republican said. "Get your act together, and if you have a pressing need that we can get a head start on between now and December, get it up to us."

President Donald Trump on Wednesday [formally requested](#) \$30 billion in emergency funding for hurricane recovery in Puerto Rico, Florida and Texas as well as wildfire assistance. House and Senate appropriators quickly signaled their support for the request and pledged to act quickly on legislation.

Thornberry highlighted maintenance and missile defense funding as urgent needs he had hoped the Pentagon would request. He added that he had spoken to White House Office of Management and Budget director Mick Mulvaney about the issue, and while he said extra funding could be added to upcoming disaster relief legislation, "practically speaking DoD needs to ask for it."

The chairman criticized the Pentagon for not requesting more money and both the department and Congress for accepting stopgap continuing spending resolutions.

"Unfortunately, we have conditioned the department in a bad way," he said.

Thornberry made the comments at the conservative Heritage Foundation, where the think tank rolled out its annual "Index of Military Strength." The report, which rates threats and the readiness of each of the military services, concludes the military services remain in "marginal" state of readiness and are trending towards "weak."

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Energy and Commerce clears CHIP bill in party-line vote [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 10/04/2017 08:36 PM EDT

The House Energy and Commerce Committee this evening advanced legislation along party lines to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years.

The CHIP legislation, which was approved in a 28-23 vote after gaining no support from Democrats, mirrors an agreement reached by Senate Finance Committee leaders last month to continue funding through fiscal year 2022. The bill would begin to wind down Obamacare's

23 percent increase in federal matching funds to states in two years, and make tweaks to the law's "maintenance of effort" requirements that prevented states from reducing eligibility for the program. It was also amended to help the U.S. Virgin Islands with Medicaid funds, building on the \$1 billion in the underlying bill for Puerto Rico.

House Republicans proposed to pay for the CHIP legislation by increasing means-testing in Medicare for wealthier seniors, allowing states to remove lottery winners from state Medicaid programs and change Medicaid's third-party liability policy, which dictates who pays claims for enrollees before Medicaid is responsible for costs. Those pay-fors drew objections from Democrats.

"Wealthy seniors already pay much more than others for their premiums," ranking Democrat [Frank Pallone](#) said.

Republicans argued the offsets were reasonable.

"We're not cutting back any major program, and I think it's a good thing that we do offset the spending," [Joe Barton](#) (R-Texas) said.

Lawmakers are still set this evening to consider a separate bill funding community health centers for two years, as well as legislation repealing Obamacare's Independent Payment Advisory Board.

The committee earlier today cleared seven bills addressing various Medicare issues, including extending the Independence at Home Demonstration for two years, and requiring Medicare coverage for a type of DNA test to diagnose prostate cancer.

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Democrats accuse Trump of 'sabotage' on Obamacare signups [Back](#)

By Paul Demko and Adam Cancryn | 10/05/2017 12:40 PM EDT

Obamacare's first open enrollment season under the Trump administration will be shorter, quieter and likely, more chaotic — and even the law's most ardent supporters are worried there's little they can do to change that.

With less than a month before sign-up begins, the federal government has gutted outreach and marketing, slashed funding to outside enrollment groups and left state officials in the dark on key details.

The enrollment window is only half as long as in previous years. HealthCare.gov — the main sign-up site for more than half the country — will be shut down for 12 hours nearly every Sunday. And in the White House and Congress, Republican leaders continue to insist the entire market is on the brink of collapse.

While the Trump administration failed to repeal Obamacare, it's doing everything it can to whack it administratively — pulling resources from implementation and taking steps that seem

aimed at reducing sign-ups for the law's fifth open enrollment. As a result, even the law's supporters acknowledge that Obamacare enrollment will likely drop for a second straight year as more young and healthy people jump ship — putting even more stress on fragile markets and driving a fresh round of partisan bickering over who's to blame.

"They're trying to sabotage the markets," said Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) (D-Mo.), warning that Republicans are fully responsible for the law's fate. "It's now all them. It is all them. One hundred percent."

Republicans insist that if enrollment tanks, it will be because of rising premiums and dwindling choices.

"A much bigger driver than a government agency trying to get you to enroll is what's going on in the market itself," said Alaska Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#). "Our market has been the poster child of the disaster."

CMS has defended the reductions as a bid to reduce wasteful spending, contending most people are already aware of open enrollment and don't need as much help. Officials have said they cut funds to navigator groups that failed to meet their enrollment targets last year. Navigators dispute that, however, saying that agency didn't account for people they helped enroll in Medicaid, advised to automatically re-enroll in Obamacare, or helped to start applications but who finished at home.

A CMS spokesperson also emphasized that individuals will still enjoy a range of options to help them sign up this year, including local insurance agents and brokers and certified application counselors.

The impact of the cuts will be felt most acutely in the 28 mostly red states that rely solely on the federal government to run open enrollment. The Trump administration's 90 percent cut to its advertising budget means individuals won't see television ads urging them to visit [HealthCare.gov](#). Its decision to eliminate 40 percent of federal grant money to enrollment assistance groups means far fewer on-the-ground resources, especially compared with states like California and Massachusetts that continue to pour resources into state outreach.

Concern about the cuts has already spurred a counter-offensive led by former Obama administration officials Lori Lodes and Josh Peck, who oversaw outreach and education for [HealthCare.gov](#). Their new nonprofit — called Get America Covered — is planning to do some of the outreach that federal health officials won't, enlisting celebrities and pushing out information aimed at getting people covered.

Several Senate Democrats have talked with Get America Covered about turning their own political networks into a makeshift campaign to drive people to [HealthCare.gov](#).

"If the administration is going to try to undermine open enrollment, we're going to have to build a massive operation outside of Washington," said Sen. [Chris Murphy](#) (D-Conn.), who met Tuesday with the group. "I'm going to be helpful in any way that I legally can be, including pushing the message out and helping raise money for it."

Still, Obamacare's supporters admit there's little chance of matching the federal government's vast reach or resources. The Obama administration used every imaginable option to spur sign-ups over the last few years. Even then, enrollment had begun to plateau at about 10 million —

less than half the level originally projected by the CBO.

With half the enrollment time and millions less to spend, those closely involved with the enrollment effort say they'll struggle to build on that number — especially coming off a bruising repeal fight marked by President Donald Trump's claims the law is already dead.

"The recent repeal efforts have created a great deal of political noise," said Jessie Menkens, who oversees outreach efforts for the Alaska Primary Care Association, which lost about 25 percent of its federal funding this year. "It has caused a lot of confusion and it has caused a sense of unease."

Congressional Republicans, though, say that Obamacare was already in a free fall before the Trump administration took office. They note that nearly half the counties in the country have just a single insurer selling plans, and premiums have skyrocketed in many places.

"I think Obamacare is sabotaging enrollment because the costs are so high, the choices are so limited," said Sen. [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.).

Those problems, while real, are unlikely to cause the markets to implode. That's because there's a core group of millions of enrollees who receive generous subsidies tied to their incomes. So even if premiums jump, many of those customers won't see their monthly bills increase, making them unlikely to drop coverage.

Beyond those people, though, the lack of advertising and outreach is likely to put a big dent in Obamacare's sign-ups.

"My fear, of course, is that people will lose coverage because they didn't do what they needed to do to re-up," said Margarita Labarta, CEO of Florida's Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, which saw its federal grant cut from \$550,000 in 2017 to just over \$40,000 now. That wasn't even enough to fund one full-time worker, she said, so the group turned down the money.

Just one group is now doing outreach work in the 17-county, predominantly rural area where Meridian works, she said.

In Louisiana, funding for the main statewide navigator group was cut 72 percent. The hit forced Navigators for a Healthy Louisiana to lay off 14 people and make very tough choices. It reassigned its remaining five navigators to the communities where they've seen the highest enrollment, leaving broad swaths of the state without anywhere to turn for in-person help.

"North Louisiana — the entire upper part of the boot — is without navigator services," said Brian Burton, the group's state director. "It leaves more people needing assistance and fewer people to assist them."

It also remains unclear what will happen once HealthCare.gov opens for business. Randy Pate, who heads the CMS office that oversees Obamacare implementation, told staffers last week that the agency is making it easier to find the sign-up site, and for people to enroll through insurers and brokers.

But at the same time, it's planning to shut down HealthCare.gov for 12 hours on five of the six Sundays during open enrollment — a popular time for people with weekday jobs to sign up. The open enrollment period itself has been compressed from 12 weeks to six, from Nov. 1 to Dec. 15.

"What we're doing is focusing on those things we can control," said Cheryl Gardner, the CEO of New Mexico's health exchange, which manages its own marketplace but relies on the HealthCare.gov website. "These [outages] are pretty long and right in the middle of open enrollment, which is really inconvenient."

State officials have also complained that CMS is keeping them in the dark on how it plans to manage the expected crush of people trying to access the website. A CMS spokesperson said that call center staffing will be consistent with prior years and that they'll use waiting rooms and a callback service to ensure everyone who wants to enroll by the deadline can do so. But the agency has not said how many call center employees will be dedicated to open enrollment, or if it has a contingency plan should HealthCare.gov suffer technical problems, said Heather Korbolic, the head of Nevada's state health exchange.

That all adds up to big questions about how enrollment under the Trump administration will actually work.

"The good thing is that the bar is so low and they're doing so little, that anything people do on the outside is going to have an impact," Lodes said. "But nothing can replace the government."

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Corker cranks up demands for deficit-reducing tax plan [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/04/2017 04:42 PM EDT

Sen. [Bob Corker](#) said this afternoon that he will only support a tax plan that reduces federal deficits based on a "reasonable and responsible" growth model, throwing another wrench into the GOP's tax overhaul effort.

Corker had previously said he would not support a bill that "adds one penny" to the deficit. Now he is going further in his demands, complicating work for Republican tax writers who are trying to balance the desire for aggressive tax cuts with ultimatums from fiscal hawks.

The Tennessee Republican told fellow budget panel members today that he won't back a bill "unless it reduces deficits."

"Let me say that one more time: Unless it reduces deficits, and does not add to deficits — with reasonable and responsible growth models — and unless we can make it permanent, I don't have any interest in it," Corker said.

Although Corker has not said which models he will use to measure the plan's impact on the deficit, he has already dismissed reliance on CBO estimates, which do not allow "dynamic" scoring of tax plans and are likely to show the proposal costing money over a decade.

The two-term senator, who recently announced he is retiring from Congress, also went on a tear against the budget process.

"I have difficulty putting that much energy into discussing this budget document, because this is some of the most meaningless work that we do here," Corker said. "There's nothing about this that is that particularly serious."

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AFP pressures Trump-state Democrats on tax reform [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 10/05/2017 06:00 AM EDT

Americans for Prosperity is spending \$4.5 million on television ads to push three Democratic senators up for reelection next year to back the GOP's plan for tax reform.

The group is spending \$2 million to pressure Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#) in Indiana, \$1.5 million to persuade Sen. [Tammy Baldwin](#) in Wisconsin and \$1 million to goad Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) in Missouri. All three senators are up for reelection in 2018 in states President Donald Trump won during the 2016 election cycle.

"We've heard the grassroots in Wisconsin, Missouri and Indiana calling for tax reform loud and clear," Americans for Prosperity President Tim Phillips said. "If these senators are in touch with their constituents, they already know the overwhelming demand for Congress to deliver on this bold, pro-growth plan that makes the tax code simpler, fairer and flatter."

The ads feature a young woman speaking direct to camera about the impact of tax cuts.

"People are sick of politics," she says. "I am too. But fixing our broken tax system isn't about politics — it's about helping people. It means the powerful, the well-connected, politicians — they'll stop benefiting from a rigged system. It means everyday Americans will have more to spend on what's important to them."

The ads then show a black-and-white image of the state's senator. "Sen. Baldwin is standing in the way of a simple, fair tax system," the woman says, as instructions to call the senator appear on screen.

The ending for the ad targeting Donnelly is subtly different. "Don't let Sen. Donnelly stand in the way of a simple, fair tax system," the woman says.

Donnelly, along with North Dakota Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) and West Virginia Sen. [Joe Manchin](#), declined to sign a letter spearheaded by Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) laying out Democratic principles on tax reform. Those three senators are considered more likely to back the GOP tax reform proposal than other Democrats. The Schumer letter said Democrats could not back legislation cutting taxes for the wealthy or adding to the deficit.

Americans for Prosperity wants the Democratic senators to back the tax reform framework released by congressional leaders last week, and noted all three senators had previously talked about the need to simplify the tax code and lower corporate rates.

Watch the ads [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Talks to preserve state and local tax deduction underway in House [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm and Aaron Lorenzo | 10/04/2017 03:36 PM EDT

Early signs of compromise are emerging over the federal deduction for state and local taxes.

Members of leadership are listening to rank-and-file concerns over the issue, which, according to some, top-ranking Republicans did less of when they got pushback on the border adjustment tax pushed by House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), according to multiple congressional aides privy to the talks.

The state and local topic bubbled to the top of the agenda during the House Republican Conference tax reform retreat late last month. The issue has arguably become the top tax reform concern for numerous Republicans.

That's given confidence to GOP defenders of the deduction from high-tax states like New York, New Jersey and Illinois. They believe their message resonates among Republican leaders in Congress who have proposed eliminating the benefit as part of a more comprehensive bill to overhaul U.S. tax laws.

GOP leaders need votes for that broader tax reform, and with backers of the deduction threatening to hold back their support, there's opportunity for a compromise.

Rep. [Tom MacArthur](#) (R-N.J.) met with Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) to discuss the issue Tuesday night. MacArthur said the unified Republican blueprint wouldn't have enough votes to pass the House without a compromise.

"It can't pass in this form," he said Wednesday, adding that Brady and other Republican House leaders were receptive to feedback from him and other advocates of keeping a federal deduction for local property taxes. "Leadership and Ways and Means crafted a policy that I know they believe in and they'd love to have it pass today. There aren't the votes for it."

Rep. [Kenny Marchant](#) (R-Texas), a member of Ways and Means, agreed.

"It's a concern for a lot of the members," he said.

A Brady spokesperson agreed that he's willing to listen, while a Ryan spokesperson declined to comment.

MacArthur has Ways and Means allies on the issue, particularly Rep. [Tom Reed](#) (R-N.Y.), as well as Republicans off the committee from high-tax states like his own.

"I think we're winning the argument," a congressional staffer said on condition of anonymity to avoid jeopardizing the still-ongoing talks. "Many more members are educated and engaged on this issue, and the brass is realizing they need the votes, so there is early talks of a

compromise."

House Republican leaders and Ways and Means members held their first in a series of listening sessions Tuesday afternoon on the portion of the tax code that affects individual taxpayers.

They plan to hold a total of five sessions on other aspects of tax reform, part of an ongoing effort to make all Republicans comfortable with what their leadership wants them to vote on and avoid a repeat of the failed health care reform effort earlier this year.

Republicans from states that have low or no income taxes but pockets of higher property taxes, like Texas, may also align with high-income-tax-state Republicans on the issue. Sweetening the pot by keeping property taxes deductible from federal taxes could give Republicans from both types of states a win to bring home to their constituents and prevent an overall tax increase on some of their higher-income voters.

Texas' taxes are "all local but they're high," Marchant said.

MacArthur said he wants to combine the deduction for local property taxes with the mortgage interest deduction to form one unified housing credit, and he's open to phasing it out at higher income levels.

Another option would let individuals deduct either mortgage interest or property taxes, but not both, and Reed has argued for making the deduction a credit that could get scaled down at high incomes.

Still, support for ending the deduction is strong among other Republicans. Conservatives argue that doing away with the deduction would force states and municipalities to lower their own taxes or drive away residents.

Ending it would also raise more than \$1 trillion to offset individual rate cuts and other benefits Republicans would like to add to the tax code.

MacArthur and other Republicans who come from high-tax states reject the notion that the deduction gives high-tax states and localities a free ride.

"These same people are running around Congress saying, 'Well, why should low-tax states subsidize high-tax states?'" he said. "Why? Because these high-cost states are already subsidizing everyone else," by paying more in federal taxes than they receive back in funding from the federal government.

To view online [click here](#).

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Thornberry: 'I'd get rid of all' the budget caps [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 10/05/2017 12:35 PM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) today endorsed repealing both caps on

defense and domestic spending set by the 2011 Budget Control Act.

"If it were up to me, I'd get rid of all the caps on defense and domestic," Thornberry, a Texas Republican, said at a Heritage Foundation event where the conservative think tank unveiled its annual "Index of Military Strength" report.

House- and Senate-passed defense policy legislation, [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#), calls for more than \$70 billion above the limits set by the law. Thornberry has previously said he's open to increasing domestic spending to boost the defense budget.

In recent years, Republicans have pushed to circumvent the caps for defense spending while Democrats have argued for equal increases for defense and domestic funding. But some defense hawks have recently called for repealing all the caps, arguing limits on discretionary spending have hobbled the Pentagon without forcing reductions in mandatory spending.

"Obviously they failed because none of that has happened," Thornberry said of the budget law. "Instead, the 15 ... percent of the budget that is defense has born 50 percent of the cuts."

Thornberry said massive votes for the National Defense Authorization Act in both chambers show "overwhelming consensus that we have cut too much" from the military "and that we need to turn it around."

He also predicted lawmakers would strike a budget deal and said "the sooner it happens, the better."

"I believe there will be a deal," Thornberry said. "I suspect there will be a domestic and a defense component to any final agreement."

To view online [click here](#).

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Fertilizer companies call for more money for farm bill conservation, research [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 10/05/2017 01:17 PM EDT

The fertilizer industry is urging Congress to include incentives for farmers to adopt precision nutrient management approaches and to increase research funding in the next farm bill.

In a [letter](#) sent Wednesday to the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Agriculture committees, the Fertilizer Institute urges lawmakers to make a priority Conservation Innovation Grant projects related to new fertilizer technologies. The letter also recommends funding to give growers incentives to adopt better fertilizer management and to require reporting on fertilizer use.

The group also asks that research into nutrient management be a high priority in USDA research programs and grants. It wants lawmakers to provide "strong funding" to the competitive grant programs of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and to reauthorize the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research.

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: House budget writers aim for deal by next week — Appropriators pitch hybrid effort to raise both budget caps and debt limit — Freedom Caucus wavers on welfare reform
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 4:54:29 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 06/14/2017 04:51 PM EDT

ONE WEEK TO DO IT ALL? Rep. [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.) still doesn't know if she has enough votes to pass the House GOP's budget on the floor. But the always-optimistic budget ringmaster has officially set her sights on June 21 for the long-awaited markup.

As we [reported for Pros](#) this afternoon, the House Budget Committee informed Democratic staff today that it's "possible" the big markup would be held in exactly one week. The GOP budget staff isn't confirming (or denying) that date, and one aide close to the process made clear that budget unity is still very much a work in progress. "We're fighting for next week and trying to get an agreement," the aide said.

Wishful thinking: A Wednesday markup is certainly tentative and will likely depend on how the House GOP's members-only budget meeting goes on Friday morning — if that huddle even happens now that the House isn't voting that day. House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) is expected to take the mic to convince members to work toward a deal — and fast. Next week is likely the panel's last chance to get its resolution on the calendar before the July 4 recess. Budget writers can also only hold off those anxious appropriators for so long until they start using their own numbers to craft spending bills (exhibit A: the House Appropriations Committee will hold that MilCon-VA markup Thursday afternoon).

Getting to yes: Black has a few more key moments before Friday to shape a budget resolution that can pass the floor, including a meeting on Thursday morning with the House Freedom Caucus. The conservative caucus met last night to talk budget but didn't take an official position, according to a spokeswoman, possibly signaling that members are keeping an open mind until their chat with Black. The full budget committee also has two meetings this week.

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) and [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.) are introducing a [bill](#) today that would provide a \$5,000 tax credit to employers who hire individuals participating in a federal- or state-registered apprentice program. More from [Morning Shift](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — The CBO is asking for its own budget bump this year, requesting \$49.9 million for fiscal 2018. Check out Director Keith Hall's [testimony](#) before House appropriators this week.

BUDGET

LET'S MAKE A DEAL: It lasted only about 60 seconds, but there was some serious bipartisan budget talk at one of those lesser-known appropriations hearings today. Breaking up some in-the-weeds global finance chatter, Rep. [Charlie Dent](#) (R-Pa.) told Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin that Congress should immediately strike a deal to raise both the budget caps

and the debt ceiling this month.

'Budgetary stability': "I would like to suggest to you — if you could take this back to the White House — that we ought to enter into a bipartisan budget agreement and tie the debt ceiling to that, before the end of July," the moderate Republican appropriator said. "I think that would be extremely important, to provide not only stability for the markets, but budgetary stability for all of us." Dent predicts "a lot of bipartisan support" for that strategy.

Seriously, did they plan this? Just minutes later, Rep. [David Price](#) (D-N.C.) gave the idea a glowing review. "That's an important request, and I endorse it wholeheartedly," Price said. The 20-year House veteran lamented that the lack of a budget deal was already threatening to cause a government shutdown in September. "For once, let's anticipate that. For once, let's get ahead of the game," Price said. "Do the budget agreement now that will let us do our work and avoid that kind of destabilizing scramble at the end of the fiscal year."

TAX

WAVERING ON WELFARE REFORM: In a departure from their usual instinct to put their principles above political practicality, some Freedom Caucus members are saying it might not be worthwhile to insist welfare reform be included in a tax overhaul. As Colin Wilhelm [reports](#), Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) and former Chairman [Jim Jordan](#) (R-Ohio) are trying to sell the welfare ultimatum. But in doing so, the Senate could reject the budget, leaving tax reform without a vehicle to pass into law unless they can gather support from Democrats. Some Freedom Caucus devotees, however, say it could be the key to getting enough GOP votes in the House.

BAT still a non-starter: The Freedom Caucus' leaders don't want anything to do with the "border adjustment" tax House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) has proposed. And Brady's pitch this week to make it a five-year transition period didn't bring any naysayers on board, Colin [notes](#).

DEBT CEILING

TRILLION-DOLLAR DIFFERENCE: If some in the Freedom Caucus have their way, Congress may only have another 18 months until the next debt ceiling debacle. Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) is now eyeing a strategy to lift the debt ceiling by roughly \$1.5 trillion, compared to the \$2.5 trillion the Trump administration has considered, Rachael Bade [reports](#). That stricter spending cap would push off the next debt ceiling fight until just after the 2018 elections (naturally).

DEFENSE

TOP HAWK WOOS FISCAL HAWKS: Meadows says Rep. [Mac Thornberry](#)'s ideas were well-received when the House Armed Services chairman made his pitch this week for funding DoD at \$640 billion and not President Donald Trump's proposed \$603 billion. "The key that unlocks it all is coming up with a budget agreement," Meadows told reporters. "Whether it's \$603 [billion] or \$640 [billion] or somewhere in between, I think a number of us are willing to look at that, in anticipation that we may have to look at other areas, whether it's welfare reform, tax reform, or some of the other issues." More from [Morning Defense](#).

GO YOUR OWN WAY: Defense Secretary James Mattis defended the Trump

administration's decision not to set a specific time frame for a troop drawdown, arguing today that reductions will be based on conditions on the ground, not arbitrary deadlines, per [Gregory Hellman](#). "I believe what we have to do is get to a point that the Afghan security forces, working for a government that can win the affection and respect of its people, can carry out the security," Mattis told senators.

BOEING'S BOTTOM LINE: Boeing's executive vice president said today that she likes Trump's focus on getting the best deal for taxpayers, though she declined to say whether the president's leadership has been good or bad for the company's business, Jacqueline Klimas [reports](#). Leanne Caret says conversations with the president on the Air Force One program have been a "great opportunity" for Boeing to show the president that the company understands a good business deal. But it's gotta hurt to see comments like Trump's [tweet](#) in December about his intention to "cancel" the program over its "out of control" costs.

OBAMACARE

ROSIER REPEAL ESTIMATE? MAYBE NOT: Folks at the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget have been number-crunching the new Obamacare repeal estimate. And [they say](#) the fresh opinion from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services actually concludes that the House-passed health care bill could increase the debt by \$409 billion over the next decade. The nonprofit also ticks off the reasons the opinions from CBO and CMS are not apples to apples, including the fact that CBO does its scores on a fiscal-year basis while CMS uses calendar years and each agency uses a different baseline for its analysis for starting assumptions.

WHY YOU GOTTA BE SO MEAN? It's been a bruising week for the House health care bill, and the hits keep on coming. Speaking to a group of GOP senators on Tuesday, Trump borrowed words from a Taylor Swift [hate song](#) to describe the other chamber's bill. (This is only a few weeks after Trump himself made calls to sway on-the-fence Republicans.) Looking ahead to the 2018 midterms, the president instructed the Republican senators to write a bill that's more easily defensible, Burgess Everett, Jennifer Haberkorn and Josh Dawsey [report](#). On the House side, the backdoor criticism [isn't sitting well](#) with the members who are already uneasy about backing a bill projected to cut off coverage for 23 million people.

PAPERS, PLEASE: As long as Obamacare is still around, House Republicans want to do a triple-check that undocumented immigrants aren't receiving federal dollars to pay for their health insurance. The House passed a bill along party lines on Tuesday that would step up immigration status checks for people who seek health care tax credits, Ted Hesson [reports](#).

FINANCIAL SERVICES

WINNING OVER INSURERS: Insurance trade groups that threatened to oppose the House GOP's proposal to overhaul the National Flood Insurance Program appear to have won concessions and are now offering their support, Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). What's changed? House Financial Services leaders are rumored to have eased up on their proposed cap on compensation for private firms that work with the program.

CALENDAR

MULVANEY COMES HOME TO CONGRESS: OMB Director Mick Mulvaney has another [appearance](#) on Capitol Hill in exactly one week. The former congressman will be

testifying about his own agency's budget at the House Appropriations' financial services subcommittee hearing at 2 p.m. on June 21.

SHOOTING SHAKES UP SCHEDULE: Today's agenda was supposed to be packed again with budget-related hearings and markups. But the [shooting](#) this morning has largely cleared the congressional schedule. Among the events canceled or delayed: the House's [vote](#) on a health care bill that's part of the repeal agenda, a [hearing](#) on reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, a flood insurance [markup](#), and a [markup](#) on a bill to reauthorize DHS. But a handful of Trump's Cabinet officials did make it up to Capitol Hill this morning, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. Read on for highlights.

STATE DEPARTMENT

NO VACANCY SIGN: Tillerson spent a good part of this week brushing off reports that his understaffed department is causing troubles for diplomacy. At his third appearance on Capitol Hill, he said there "really is not" a backlog of work because of the number of people in temporary posts. "Every job is filled today," Tillerson said, adding that lower-ranking officials have agreed to hold the "acting" positions until their replacements arrive.

The MYOB plan: Tillerson also took a stab today at laying out Trump's vision for foreign policy when pressed about the potential harms of the president's "America First" budget and agenda. Calling out the "mistakes" of former administrations that focused on nation-building, Tillerson said Trump is "not into government-building or changing government." Speaking for Trump, the secretary said, "I think what he was saying is, there's a lot of conflict that can be created when we try to go too far in imposing our way of life on others."

TREASURY

GOING GLOBAL: Mnuchin looked a little out of his comfort zone in the hot seat before House appropriators this afternoon, answering questions about everything from Russia to international aid programs. The former Goldman Sachs banker made clear that he's still learning on the job: "I feel like I've gotten a PhD in the last 100 days."

Under fire — from the GOP: Mnuchin, who oversees more than a dozen international aid programs, acknowledged that the White House has "made difficult cuts" in areas like the World Bank. Those cuts, he said, were intended to "fund the military to its proper level." But even GOP lawmakers weren't buying it. "We don't want to end up with a contradiction whereby, in our effort to increase our military's capacity, that we end up hollowing out the very things that build up the conditions for international stability," Rep. [Jeff Fortenberry](#) (R-Neb.), a noted defense hawk, told Mnuchin.

JOBS

APPRENTICESHIP OVERSIGHT IS OVER: A top adviser to the president says Trump will now roll out his executive order on apprenticeship on Thursday, Ian Kullgren [reports](#). Trump had planned to sign the directive this afternoon in conjunction with a policy speech at the Labor Department. But the address was [canceled](#) after this morning's shooting. The pending directive would virtually eliminate oversight of government-subsidized apprenticeship programs, according to a source familiar with a draft of the plan. Ian [explains](#) that the executive order would shift certification of federally funded apprenticeship programs

from the Labor Department to grant recipients, a move that effectively would eliminate government oversight.

Ivanka's input: During a White House meeting today with Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta and more than [a dozen CEOs](#), Ivanka Trump highlighted the skills gap among women and minorities and said the government needs to do more.

Think small: The apprenticeship push marks an evolution for the White House, which now seems to be catching on to the benefits of focusing on small policy wins rather than potentially insurmountable efforts like tax overhaul, Obamacare repeal and major infrastructure investment, Nancy Cook and Andrew Restuccia [explain](#).

STICKING UP FOR NAFTA: As the Trump administration prepares to begin renegotiating NAFTA this summer, U.S. manufacturers urged the White House this week not to destroy business ties among the three countries that support 2 million American manufacturing jobs, Doug Palmer [reports](#).

CYBER

McAULIFFE PLEADS FOR CASH: Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe says he told Trump that the federal government needs to fork over more money to help states with cybersecurity, Tim Starks [reports](#).

EARMARKS

- [Marco Rubio](#) enlists Ivanka Trump to promote bigger child tax credit. [Bloomberg](#).
- A year after declaring victory on sanctuary cities, Culberson still at war. [Houston Chronicle](#).
- Frelinghuysen opponent gets financial boost. [NJ Advance Media](#).
- VA warns of surprise budget gap, insists no delays in care. [The Associated Press](#).
- Fact Check: These statements by Trump's Cabinet don't match policy. [The New York Times](#).

ON TAP THURSDAY

9 a.m. — The House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the DoD budget request. 2359 Rayburn House Office Building.

11 a.m. — The House Appropriations Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the DOT budget request. 2358-A Rayburn House Office Building.

11 a.m. — The House Appropriations Interior and Energy Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the EPA budget request. 2007 Rayburn House Office Building.

2 p.m. — The House Appropriations Committee [marks up](#) its fiscal 2018 funding bill for military construction and Veterans Affairs programs. 2359 Rayburn House Office Building.

10 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the budget request for the Department of Health and Human Services. 138 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

WE'RE COUNTING: 108 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires. 473 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/06/house-budget-writers-aim-for-deal-by-next-week-023311>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Budget committee markup 'possible' next week [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 06/14/2017 03:38 PM EDT

The House Budget Committee notified Democratic staff today that it aims to mark up its long-awaited budget resolution next Wednesday, an aide confirmed.

Republican leaders on the panel gave official word to their Democratic counterparts that a hearing is "possible" next week.

The committee's GOP staff said they could not confirm the tentative plans for a markup, which would follow Republicans' high-profile budget gathering scheduled for Friday.

"We're fighting for next week and trying to get an agreement," one GOP aide close to the budget process said.

At that meeting, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) is expected to lay out various scenarios for budget and appropriations this year. The gathering is considered a last-ditch attempt to resolve [GOP infighting](#) over the fiscal 2018 budget before GOP leaders decide to abandon the document and set spending levels informally instead.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Freedom Caucus still divided on tax reform [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 06/13/2017 07:00 PM EDT

The House Freedom Caucus remains divided over its approach to tax reform.

The group has debated its official stance on tax reform for the last two weeks, with caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) and former Chairman [Jim Jordan](#) (R-Ohio) attempting to steer the group towards unified opposition to the plan favored by House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) and in favor of tying welfare reform to tax reform.

"I do believe that we'll have some official position if we can get to the 80 percent threshold," Meadows said.

He and Jordan oppose the border adjustment provision in the plan put forward by House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas), and Meadows has echoed the Trump administration's position that tax cuts do not have to be deficit neutral.

"Our position, should we take one on tax reform, is not an indictment on [Brady's] ability to try to encourage, inform and educate our members as much as drawing a conclusion that outside of the Freedom Caucus, as well as inside of the Freedom Caucus, there doesn't seem to be much support for the border adjustment tax," Meadows added.

Jordan and Meadows want to use caucus votes to force House Republican leadership to tie welfare reform to tax reform in budget instructions necessary for a maneuver to bypass a potential filibuster of tax reform in the Senate. But in doing so the Senate could reject the budget, leaving tax reform without a vehicle to pass into law unless they can gather support from Democrats.

"I don't think it's necessary" to tie to welfare reform to tax reform, said Freedom Caucus member Rep. [Joe Barton](#) (R-Texas). "But I think it might be helpful. If you're not going to get any Democrat votes, welfare reform is popular enough amongst our base that that helps you get the votes for tax reform, which is more controversial."

The hardline conservative group has discussed taking an official position on tax reform, with several members opposed to border adjustment, but has yet to take a formal position. Some members argue that combining a sweeping welfare reform with a tax package, in part as a replacement to offset the cost of lowering tax rates, would poison the well for reforming the tax code.

"The pitch I'm going to make is that tax reform is such a big deal to the country and to the world, with the U.S. being much of the world's economic engine. We need to focus on just getting this right." said [David Schweikert](#) (R-Ariz.), the one Freedom Caucus member who sits on the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee. "I'm going to encourage my friends out there [not to tie the two together]. Big time tax reform is going to be the biggest thing any of us ever vote on. Tying externalities, no matter how important they are, just make the votes more difficult."

To view online [click here](#).

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Opponents unswayed by Brady's plan to phase in import tax provision [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 06/13/2017 09:53 PM EDT

Opponents of a controversial tax on imports weren't swayed by a five-year transition period proposed Tuesday by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman [Kevin Brady](#).

Brady (R-Texas) had signaled earlier that phasing in the "border adjustment" provision, which

would tax imports but not exports in a bid to juice domestic production, was most likely part of a plan to tamp down opposition to the plan.

Opponents gave it a thumbs down anyway.

"Phasing in flawed, unnecessary policy is not a solution; in fact, it is likely to create more problems than it solves," Heritage Action CEO Michael Needham said in a release. "Rather than creating additional economic uncertainty, congressional leaders need to declare the border adjustment tax dead. Only then can a serious conversation on advancing real, pro-growth tax reform move forward."

Americans for Prosperity — a group aligned with the Koch brothers — and import-dependent retailers issued similar statements.

A spokesperson for Brady pointed to previous remarks Brady gave about Heritage Action's recently announced opposition to his plan.

Brady had noted that the Heritage Foundation previously advocated border adjustment as part of a tax system that would end taxation of the profits U.S. businesses earn abroad and that are already taxed by foreign governments. That is in line with Brady's proposal in his blueprint.

"That bold tax reform proposal is included in the House GOP Blueprint," Brady said in a statement.

Committee Republicans were caught off-guard by the timing of Brady's announcement.

"I haven't talked to him today about it, he might've said something at a meeting I wasn't at," Rep. [Vern Buchanan](#) (R-Fla.) told reporters. "It's something we're going to dig into, the fact that he did bring it up today and find out the impact of that."

The border adjustment has drawn the most opposition to the House GOP's tax reform plan so far. Brady has been promising to address opponents' concerns.

"A very gradual five-year phase-in really resolves a lot of the challenges," he said at an event Tuesday morning.

The conservative-leaning Tax Foundation, which has been supportive of Brady's tax reform blueprint, estimates that a five-year transition would decrease the amount of money that the provision raises by \$220 billion over ten years. As originally drawn, the provision was meant to raise more than \$1 trillion to fund other tax cuts.

It's unclear how much the potential exemptions Brady mentioned for financial services and telecommunications may also decrease the expected revenue.

Likewise, Brady suggested his final draft could allow small businesses to continue to take advantage of the interest deduction for business debt. His blueprint proposes eliminating the deduction in favor of the immediate write off of large purchases made by businesses.

"They often don't have access to capital markets," he said during the same public remarks in which he floated his proposal for border adjustment transition.

But advocates of preserving the interest deduction didn't jump on board.

"When lawmakers set out to reform the tax code, their stated goals were economic growth and simplification. Proposals that eliminate interest deductibility for some businesses and retain it for others, however, fail to accomplish either of these objectives," said BUILD Coalition spokesman Mac O'Brien.

Republicans on Brady's committee wanted to reserve full judgment until they knew more about what the chairman was proposing. But Buchanan and others sounded encouraged by Brady's proposal.

"A lot of businesses have told me in reference to that, 'Don't just put everything in Day One, give us time to adjust, and we can adjust,'" Buchanan said.

Rep. [Mike Kelly](#) (R-Pa.), another committee member, had not heard details but sounded encouraged by the idea of giving importers and the economy time to adjust.

"Huge increases in the cost of products don't really work well," said Kelly, who hasn't taken a stance on border adjustment.

Proponents of border adjustment say that it will drive a rise in the value of the dollar that will offset any increased cost of products caused by the import tax, but critics argue that's unrealistic.

Rep. [David Schweikert](#) (R-Ariz.), a supporter of the border adjustment provision, was curious about Brady's proposed carve outs

"You would have to design some very unique, hopefully elegant rules" for the exemptions, he said.

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Meadows: Freedom Caucus eyeing \$1.5 trillion debt ceiling increase [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 06/13/2017 11:17 PM EDT

Some House Freedom Caucus conservatives want to raise the debt ceiling by a smaller amount than the Trump administration would like — just long enough to clear the 2018 mid-term elections, the group's leader said Tuesday.

The Freedom Caucus has not taken an official position on a specific number. But Chairman Mark Meadows emerged from a group meeting Tuesday night saying some of his conservative colleagues are looking at a \$1.5 trillion lift in the nation's borrowing cap.

The North Carolina Republican said that's smaller than the \$2.5 trillion he believes the White House wants.

"The White House wants \$2.5 trillion, is what I heard. We're more in the \$1.5 trillion range," Meadows said. "It's not an official position, but some members of the Freedom Caucus have

been discussing \$1.5 trillion as a specific amount in a debt ceiling increase."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has asked Congress to raise the debt ceiling before the August recess, leaving Republicans just a few weeks to cobble together a plan. Freedom Caucus members want to address the matter before the recess, but they're asking for spending reforms and debt-payment prioritization to accompany any lift in the nation's borrowing limit.

GOP leaders, however, have all but thrown out that idea and are signaling that they're more likely to work with Democrats since the debt ceiling has to pass the Senate, meaning it will need eight Democratic votes.

While few have discussed numbers, let alone settled on a plan, Meadows suggested the \$1.5 trillion would push the deadline for addressing the contentious issue again past the mid-term elections.

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Mattis opposes arbitrary timeline for keeping U.S. troops in Afghanistan [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 06/14/2017 01:30 PM EDT

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis today criticized setting deadlines for the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, telling a Senate panel that withdrawing troops "on a timeline rather than consistent with the development of the government and the security forces" has encouraged the Taliban.

"Other nations pulled their forces out as well, and furthermore the Taliban was emboldened," Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In an exchange with Sen. [Jon Tester](#) (D-Mont.), Mattis insisted that victory in Afghanistan remains achievable as long as troop reductions are made based on conditions on the ground.

"I believe what we have to do is get to a point that the Afghan security forces, working for a government that can win the affection and respect of its people, can carry out the security," Mattis said.

Mattis' comments follow President Donald Trump's decision on Monday to delegate the decision for setting troop levels to the defense secretary. There are currently 8,400 U.S. troops in the country.

Mattis sought to reassure Sen. [Jack Reed](#) (D-R.I.) that the president remains an "active participant" the development of a new strategy.

"I don't keep any secrets from the president," Mattis said. "The president is keenly interested, not in all the tactical details, but in getting the strategy right."

The administration's Afghanistan strategy, he added, aims to pursue reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban. "We have a strategy that will involve reconciliation as

fundamental, knowing that all wars have to end sometime. But it takes two to tango."

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Boeing exec likes Trump's focus on cost cutting [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 06/14/2017 12:12 PM EDT

Boeing's executive vice president said today she liked President Donald Trump's focus on getting the best deal for taxpayers, though she declined to say whether the president had been good or bad for the company's business.

As a taxpayer, Leanne Caret said she appreciated the president's emphasis on reducing costs.

"What I like, and I think what we've all seen, is that he's focused on business results and he's focused on getting a great deal for our taxpayer, and I think all of us as taxpayers should want that same thing," she said at a Defense One Global Business Briefing

Asked directly if Trump had been good or bad for business, she responded: "I don't think there is a good or bad."

Trump has tweeted about multiple Boeing programs, including the contract to build a new Air Force One. Prior to the inauguration, the president-elect tweeted that he would "cancel" the program over its "out of control" costs

Caret said that conversations with Trump on the Air Force One program have been a "great opportunity" for Boeing's CEO to show the president that the company understands a good business deal.

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Trump knocks House health care bill as too harsh [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Jennifer Haberkorn and Josh Dawsey | 06/13/2017 02:57 PM EDT

President Donald Trump directed Senate Republicans to pass a generous health care bill at a meeting with more than a dozen GOP senators on Tuesday, arguing that the austere House health care bill is difficult to defend, according to people familiar with the meeting.

The president also said Republicans risk getting savaged in the 2018 midterms if they fail to repeal Obamacare after a seven-year campaign against the law.

But he made clear that the Senate needs to pass a bill that Republicans are able to more easily defend and is not viewed as an attack on Americans from low-income households, as the

House bill has been portrayed by critics, the sources said. He also advocated more robust tax credits for people who buy insurance on the individual market, a move that would increase the bill's cost.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who is pushing the Senate to slow the repeal of Medicaid expansion, indicated Trump is concerned about the people who are enrolled in the program for low-income Americans.

"He talked about the need to take care of people," Portman said of the president.

The gathering included 13 GOP senators of varying ideological stripes, from the moderate Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska to the conservative Mike Lee of Utah and Ted Cruz of Texas. The meeting left some Republicans on Capitol Hill with the impression that Trump is siding with more moderate Republicans, particularly when it comes to winding down Obamacare's Medicaid expansion, which brought insurance coverage to millions of people.

Trump has told associates that news coverage of the House health care bill was "terrible," in the words of one associate who has spoken with him.

Trump threw a party in the Rose Garden celebrating the passage of the House bill and has publicly called it "terrific."

But aides and associates said he has not liked the news coverage and has shown little interest in what is in the bill — but wants it to be received well.

Conservatives want to wind down the expansion quickly and curtail future Medicaid spending, while more centrist senators are trying to preserve as much coverage as possible. Republicans said Trump spent a significant portion of the meeting observing senators disagreeing over the matter.

Murkowski, who, like Portman, is from a state that expanded Medicaid, said she made it clear to the president that she is concerned about repealing the expansion.

"I reinforced that I think Medicaid expansion has been very important to the state of Alaska," she said.

Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.), who is arguing to constrain future Medicaid spending to a rate lower than the House bill provides, said finding the sweet spot "remains a challenge."

"It feels like we're making a little bit of progress. It's slow, but it was always going to be a tough slog," said Toomey, who attended the meeting.

A White House official said Trump did not take a firm position on Medicaid, which is the subject of much deliberation within the Senate Republican Conference. Seema Verma, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, attended both the White House meeting and a subsequent GOP lunch on health care, playing point for the administration on the matter.

And rather than instructing senators to meet hard deadlines, Trump urged Republicans to have a more orderly process than the chaotic one in the House. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is trying to call for a vote this month, though it may slip until July due to

ideological disagreements and the difficulty of drafting such a complex bill.

The president asked Republicans to set aside their vast policy differences and find consensus.

"The message really was, 'I know you have your differences, but work through them and let's figure out a way to get it done,'" said Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.). "We have to get a product."

"He wants us to pass this bill and improve this House bill," Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch of Utah told reporters.

Republican senators believe it will be at least a week before a coherent blueprint emerges for the GOP to chew over. Leaders are still going back and forth with the Congressional Budget Office to lay out options for Medicaid and tax credits and how much each option would cost.

Hatch told reporters that he doesn't think there will be a bill this week. If that prediction holds, it would be difficult for the Senate to vote on legislation before the Fourth of July recess.

McConnell refused to tell reporters when a bill might be released or how long it would be available to the public before a vote.

"We'll let you see the bill when we finally release it," McConnell said. "Nobody's hiding the ball here."

Trump has taken a much more hands-off approach to the Senate bill than he took with the House version. Many senators expect the president to weigh in with more one-on-one or group lobbying as the GOP gets closer to moving a bill to the Senate floor.

"He'll be a big help, but I think the timing is important. And he'll be an important part of this," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas). "We need to consult among ourselves and come up with a consensus."

Adam Cancryn contributed to this report.

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Trump rattles House GOP over health care comments [Back](#)

06/14/2017 06:41 AM EDT

IMAGINE IF you're a House Republican, and voted for the leadership's health-care bill in May after being told that you were doing the newly elected president a solid. You listened to the White House's pleading -- perhaps you got a phone call from Vice President Mike Pence, Chief of Staff Reince Priebus or even the president himself. The administration was on the Hill nonstop to push their legislation. You explained to your constituents that the late-in-the-game changes made to the bill helped cover more people. You celebrated with him in the Rose Garden after passage.

NOW YOU HEAR THE PRESIDENT has gone behind closed doors and told senators the

House bill is "mean" and says it doesn't do enough to cover people. Wouldn't that anger you? Well, it's angering a lot of House Republicans, who believe their president put them at political risk with that comment. A Senate health care bill was always going to be more moderate than the House version. If you're a House Republican, are you going to help the White House next time after the president privately just dumped all over you after you cast a vote for him? A lot of GOP lawmakers are buzzing about it, and many are none too pleased with the president right now . *Story: "AP sources: Trump tells senators House health bill 'mean,'" by Alan Fram. <http://apne.ws/2t0vZnB>*

ONE MORE QUICK THOUGHT -- Republicans on the Hill spent years decrying behind-the-scenes machinations of government. Now they have an attorney general that is refusing to discuss his conversations with the president. And a Senate majority that seeking to pass a major health-care bill without hearings.

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House passes bill to check immigration status for tax credits [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 06/13/2017 05:33 PM EDT

The House approved a bill today that would require the federal government to check the citizenship and immigration status of people who seek a premium tax credit for health insurance.

The Verify First Act, sponsored by Rep. [Lou Barletta](#) (R-Pa.), [calls for](#) the Social Security Administration, DHS and the Department of Health and Human Services to work together to root out fraud.

The tax credit is meant to help lower- and middle-income families obtain health insurance through the marketplace. Republican critics, however, [claim](#) the credit has led to hundreds of millions of dollars in unwarranted tax breaks doled out to undocumented immigrants.

The measure, which passed largely along party lines with a vote of 238-184, would be tied to the enactment of the Republican health care plan.

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Flood insurance compromise wins over insurers [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 06/14/2017 12:28 PM EDT

Insurance trade groups that threatened to oppose House legislation that would overhaul the National Flood Insurance Program appear to have won concessions and are now offering their support.

One of the changes in the compromise would ease a proposed cap on compensation for private firms that work with the NFIP, people familiar with the matter said.

Spokesmen for Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) and Rep. [Sean Duffy](#) (R-Wis.), who chairs an insurance subcommittee, did not immediately confirm the revisions.

The committee postponed a markup of the legislation following this morning's shooting at a congressional baseball practice.

One of the changes expected to appear when the committee takes up the legislation would address insurance industry pushback against a cap on compensation for insurers participating in the NFIP's "Write Your Own" program. Under the arrangement, private companies sell and service government-backed flood insurance policies.

A bill that the committee was scheduled to mark up today would have limited compensation to 25 percent of premiums that policyholders pay. Sources said a new compromise would set the cap at 27.9 percent, phased in over three years, with a mandate that FEMA reduce costs from current levels by at least 1.5 percent within three years.

Two of the groups that threatened to oppose the legislation, in part because of the cap, now appear to be on board.

The Property Casualty Insurers Association of America sent a letter to the committee saying it backed the amended NFIP package. The National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies sent a separate letter saying the revised legislation had its "full support."

WHAT'S NEXT: The committee is expected to provide updates on the timing of the markup this afternoon.

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Scalise in 'critical' condition after mass shooting [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and John Bresnahan | 06/14/2017 08:19 AM EDT

A gunman opened fire at a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Virginia, on Wednesday morning, wounding House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, members of his security detail, a congressional staffer, and a lobbyist in a scene that one lawmaker said could have been a "massacre."

There were no immediate fatalities as a result of the shooting, although President Donald Trump announced during a televised address Wednesday morning that the shooter had died as a result of injuries sustained in an exchange of gunfire with U.S. Capitol Police.

A law enforcement source briefed on the investigation identified the gunman as 66-year-old James T. Hodgkinson of Illinois.

Scalise's office said Wednesday morning that he was undergoing surgery after being shot in

the hip and transported to MedStar Washington Hospital Center. The hospital later tweeted that Scalise remains in critical condition. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) told reporters that Scalise's surgery had been completed.

"Prior to entering surgery, the Whip was in good spirits and spoke to his wife by phone. He is grateful for the brave actions of U.S. Capitol Police, first responders, and colleagues," his office said. "We ask that you keep the Whip and others harmed in this incident in your thoughts and prayers."

In his remarks, the president called Scalise "a very good friend," "a patriot" and "a fighter," and said the prayers of his family, the nation and the world were with him.

"We may have our differences but we do well in times like these to remember everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country. We can all agree we are blessed to be Americans," Trump said in his statement, delivered from the White House's Diplomatic Room.

Tim Slater, the FBI special agent in charge of the Washington Field Office, told reporters at a press conference from the scene that it was too early in the investigation to label the incident an act of terrorism or determine whether it constituted an assassination attempt. Likewise, he could not say whether members of Congress had been specifically targeted.

Shortly after the shooting, McCarthy announced via Twitter that the House would not hold any of its scheduled votes on Wednesday, although Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said votes in that chamber would go on as scheduled. House Speaker Paul Ryan did summon House members to the floor at noon on Wednesday, where he and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi delivered remarks.

"We are all horrified by this dreadful attack on our friends and on our colleagues and those who serve and protect this Capitol," Ryan said after some brief parliamentary procedures to open the House. "We are united in our shock. We are united in our anguish. An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us."

"To my colleagues, you're gonna hear me say something you've never heard me say before: I identify myself with the remarks of the Speaker," Pelosi said. "We are not one caucus or the other in this House today, but we speak for each other in saying we send our thoughts and prayers to our colleague Steve Scalise."

Former congresswoman Gabby Giffords (D-Ariz.), who also was the victim of a shooting incident, described the shooting as "an attack on all who serve and on all who participate in our democracy."

"I am heartbroken for the pain of Congressman Scalise, the other victims, and their family, friends, and colleagues who survived. I am thankful for the great courage of Capitol Police, who were my protectors after I was shot and became my friends," said Giffords, who was among the 19 people wounded during a 2011 shooting in which six people died. "I also know the courage it takes to recover from a shooting like this, and I know Steve and everyone there this morning have such courage in great supply."

Hodgkinson, the shooter, featured a prominent photo of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) on his Facebook page, and Sanders said Wednesday in remarks on the Senate floor that Hodgkinson

had volunteered for his 2016 presidential campaign. He offered his prayers for Scalise and the shooting's other victims, denouncing the attacker who had once supported his White House bid.

"I have just been informed that the alleged shooter at the Republican baseball practice is someone who apparently volunteered on my presidential campaign. I am sickened by this despicable act," Sanders said. "Let me be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms. Real change can only come about through nonviolent action, and anything else runs against our most deeply held American values."

Also among the victims was Zack Barth, a legislative correspondent in the office of Rep. Roger Williams (R-Texas), one of the GOP baseball team's captains. Williams wrote on Twitter that Barth was "receiving medical attention but doing well and is expected to make a full recovery."

Another victim, confirmed by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), was Matt Mika, a lobbyist for Tyson Foods and a former House GOP aide for Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) who was receiving treatment at George Washington University Hospital in Washington. His family issued a statement saying he remains in critical condition.

The hospital, which had previously said two shooting victims were there in critical condition, later amended that statement to announce that one of the patients had died. The hospital did not announce the identities of the patients and would not say if the deceased shooter was one of them.

Two other victims were members of the Capitol Police Department's Dignitary Protection Division, officers charged with protecting Scalise because of his role in House leadership. Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa said that the officers, later identified as Crystal Griner and David Bailey, were in "good condition" and "have not suffered any life-threatening injuries at this point."

Verderosa said the Capitol Police officers on the scene exchanged fire with the gunman. Multiple lawmakers who were at the practice credited Scalise's protective detail with fighting back against the shooter and stopping him from having free reign to attack the otherwise unarmed attendees at the practice.

The FBI later said in a statement that a second lawmaker "sustained minor injuries and was also transported by a medic unit." Williams is believed to be the congressman the FBI referenced.

Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas) told reporters that Williams may have sprained his ankle trying to protect people but wasn't shot. "He has had medical attention," Barton confirmed.

He also lamented that "members are not looked at as people anymore."

"We're kind of looked at as I won't say targets, but people think they can come to our town hall meetings and say just the most obnoxious things and we not feel it personally," he said. "I can assure you, every member of Congress is a person. He has family, and while we try not to show it, sometimes we do take it personally."

There was increased security at the Capitol on Wednesday in the wake of the shooting, with

police blocking off the area surrounding the main entrances to the House and Senate. Only members of Congress were allowed in while others were sent through the visitors' gallery.

The lawmakers were practicing for the annual congressional baseball game at a field in Alexandria when the shooting began just after 7 a.m. The game itself, a popular bipartisan event held each summer, is scheduled for Thursday evening at Nationals Park and will go on as planned.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) described on CNN how Scalise was wounded in the shooting, explaining in a phone interview that the GOP whip was among the first to be shot and was hit while standing in the area of second base.

"He'd crawled into the outfield but leaving a trail of blood. We started giving him some liquids," said Brooks, who was not hit.

Sen. Rand Paul vividly recounted the scene in his own CNN interview, and gave credit to Scalise's protective detail for saving lives. "Nobody would have survived without the Capitol Hill police," Paul said on CNN. "He was just killing everyone — he would've. It would have been a massacre."

"And having no self-defense, the ... field was basically a killing field. If you were to run out while the killer was still shooting, he could have shot anybody," he continued.

GOP Rep. John Duncan (R-S.C.), who left the practice before the shooting began, told reporters that he had spoken to a man, believed to be the shooter, as he was departing who asked if the people on the field were Republicans or Democrats. He said he had shared his account with the Alexandria Police Department and that he believed the man he spoke to was the shooter "based on the profile that I saw on TV."

Brooks identified a handful of other lawmakers in attendance at Wednesday morning's practice, including Paul, Barton, Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Reps. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.), Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), Gary Palmer (R-Ala.) and Williams. Brooks said Wenstrup, a medical doctor, immediately attended to victims, including Scalise.

"I felt like I was back in Iraq as a surgeon," Wenstrup, a former combat surgeon in the U.S. Army Reserve, told CBS News.

Brooks told CNN that the gunman fired from behind the field's third base dugout.

"And I look around and behind third base in the third base dugout, I see a rifle," Brooks said. "And I see a little bit of a body and then I hear another bam and I realize there is an active shooter. At the same time I hear Steve Scalise over near second base scream. He was shot."

The Alabama congressman went on to describe that he never saw Scalise lose consciousness, though there was a 10- or 15-foot trail of blood behind him as he crawled from the infield into the outfield.

Brooks then realized that the rifle was a semiautomatic weapon as chaos ensued.

"The gun was a semiautomatic," he said. "It continues to fire at different people. You can imagine all the people in the field scatter. I run around to the first base side of home plate. We have a batting cage with plastic wrapped around it to stop foul balls. I was lying on the ground

as gunfire continued."

Worried that the plastic batting cage would do little to protect him and staffers from gunshots, Brooks said he took a gamble to get to cover.

"Heard a break in the gunfire and decided to take a chance. Ran from home plate to the first base dugout for better cover. There were a number of congressmen and congressional staffers who helped us lying on the ground," he said.

Flake, who had just batted when the incident occurred, said the gunman was shot. "There was a lot of yelling going on," he said.

There were approximately 25 members at the field, Flake said. One staffer was shot while on the field, and ran with a wound to the dugout, Flake said.

"He had a lot of ammo," Flake said, explaining why it took several minutes to get the situation under control.

Flake, in an interview with reporters at the scene, estimated that the entire incident lasted around 10 minutes. He said one victim, a female Capitol Police officer, was airlifted away from the scene.

"Just a harrowing scene," said Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), who ran into a dugout when the shooting started. "If this gunman had come into [the] dugout, we would have been sitting ducks."

Fleischmann said the incident "seemed to go on forever... It seemed like it took forever to subdue the gunmen."

Fleischmann added: "It was just horrible... The fear factor was horrific."

The shooting took place in a neighborhood baseball field near a dog park that was full of early-morning dog walkers. As the shooting started, neighbors on the adjoining streets heard what they described as "dozens" of shots as people in exercise clothing began to flee past their homes.

Virginia House of Delegates member Mark Levine decried the politics that have killed gun control efforts in the state. Asked if it's the right time to talk politics, he cried out, "Then when is the right time?!"

Trump canceled a planned event at the Department of Labor scheduled for Wednesday, while Pence canceled a morning speech to the National Association of Home Builders. At the group's annual D.C. gathering, Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) called for a moment of silence.

"I thought I was going to come up here and charm you on tax reform, but we're here on a very different day," Roskam told those assembled. "Will you just pray for these people and their families."

In the wake of the shooting, Democrats canceled a press conference announcing a lawsuit against Trump. The Senate also postponed a hearing examining a budget request for the Capitol Police.

Kyle Cheney, Jake Lahut, Heather Caygle, Clea Benson, Negassi Tesfamichael, Toby Eckert, Caitlin Emma, Anna Palmer, Burgess Everett, Nolan D. McCaskill and Diamond Naga Siu contributed to this report.

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House cancels vote on GOP health bill [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 06/14/2017 09:59 AM EDT

The House has delayed today's scheduled vote on a health care bill that's part of the GOP's Obamacare replacement agenda following a gunman's attack on a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Va., this morning.

The House was supposed to vote on H.R. 2372, which would allow veterans to receive American Health Care Act tax credits.

The House Energy and Commerce health subcommittee also canceled this morning's hearing on reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

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House Financial Services won't mark up flood insurance bills today [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 06/14/2017 11:12 AM EDT

The House Financial Services Committee will not mark up several flood insurance bills today following the shooting at a congressional baseball practice.

"Further updates on timing will be provided later this afternoon," Financial Services staff director Kirsten Mork said in an email to others on the committee. "Thanks to everyone for your flexibility. Please keep those wounded in your thoughts and prayers."

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House Homeland and Judiciary markups delayed after shooting [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 06/14/2017 11:32 AM EDT

A pair of legislative markups in House committees were delayed today following a shooting that injured House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.), members of his security detail, and a

congressional staffer.

The House Judiciary Committee moved to noon a markup previously scheduled today for 10 a.m. The committee will consider [a bill](#) that would clamp down on the refugee resettlement program.

The House Homeland Security Committee also delayed until noon a markup of bill to reauthorize DHS. The department has not been reauthorized since its creation in 2002.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee proceeded with a 10 a.m. hearing on "Ideology and Terror: Understanding the Tools, Tactics and Techniques of Violent Extremism."

In opening remarks, Chairman [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.) referenced the shooting, which took place as members of Congress practiced in Northern Virginia for an annual baseball game.

"There's no way anybody can deny we have a problem worldwide in terms of extremism and violence," he said. "We witnessed it just a few hours ago on a practice field for a charity baseball event."

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Adviser suggests Trump will sign apprenticeship executive order tomorrow [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 06/14/2017 02:04 PM EDT

A top adviser to President Donald Trump indicated that Trump would give his address on apprenticeships tomorrow and sign a related executive order.

"Tomorrow, the president will remind all Americans once again," of the importance of skills trades, said Reed Cornish, a technology adviser to the president. "[He] will direct our resources toward apprenticeships and skills based-learning."

Trump had been scheduled to sign the executive order and give a policy speech today at the Labor Department. The White House called off the event after news of the shooting that wounded House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.) and Republican staffers during a baseball practice in Alexandria, Va., this morning. A White House spokesman couldn't confirm Cornish's statement.

Cornish joined the president's eldest daughter Ivanka Trump, Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta and more than a dozen CEOs for a roundtable discussion on apprenticeships in the Indian Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Ivanka Trump opened the discussion by expressing sorrow for the shooting and then turned the discussion to jobs. She highlighted the skills gap among women and minorities and said the government needs to do more.

"We must do better than this, and technical education plays a critical role," Ivanka Trump said.

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Trump speech at DOL canceled [Back](#)

By Marianne LeVine | 06/14/2017 10:44 AM EDT

The White House canceled President Donald Trump's speech to the Labor Department after a shooting this morning at a congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Va.

Trump was expected to discuss executive actions to encourage private-sector apprenticeship programs. The speech was scheduled for 3 p.m.

A White House spokesperson told reporters: "We will provide you updates on the schedule for today as we have them."

A separate White House event, a CEO roundtable discussion about apprenticeships with Ivanka Trump, is still scheduled to take place today.

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Trump expected to change certification for apprenticeships [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 06/13/2017 06:35 PM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order Wednesday that would virtually eliminate oversight of government-subsidized apprenticeship programs, according to a source familiar with a draft of the plan.

The draft executive order would shift certification of federally funded apprenticeship programs from the Labor Department to grant recipients, a move that effectively would eliminate government oversight. Right now, companies that receive government funds must report certain information to the Labor Department; under Trump's plan, the companies would essentially monitor themselves, the source said.

Trump is expected to sign the order in conjunction with a policy speech at the Labor Department Wednesday afternoon.

The president's plan would also propose more than doubling the amount allotted for for apprenticeship grants, adding \$100 million to Trump's existing 2018 budget request of \$90 million. The budget request represented only a one percent increase. The source — who was briefed by a colleague that reviewed a draft of the order last Friday — said the order didn't say how that funding increase would occur; it would almost certainly require approval from Congress.

Trump has sought to make workforce development the focus for his administration this week. He traveled to Wisconsin today with his eldest daughter, Ivanka Trump, to host a roundtable on apprenticeships at Waukesha Technical College. On Wednesday he will meet with more than a dozen CEOs on the subject.

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White House names CEOs expected to attend workforce roundtable [Back](#)

By Steven Overly | 06/14/2017 08:46 AM EDT

Executives from Siemens USA, CA Technologies, Northrop Grumman and DXC Technology are among those expected to attend a roundtable discussion on apprenticeships and other workforce issues at the White House today, according to administration officials.

Ivanka Trump and Reed Cordish will lead that conversation as part of the White House's weeklong emphasis on creating apprenticeships to better match workers' skills to vacant jobs. President Donald Trump is then expected to speak and sign an executive order at the Department of Labor.

Amazon previously confirmed that Dave Clark, the company's senior vice president of worldwide operations, will attend the events.

The full list of attendees includes:

Trump Administration:

Secretary Wilbur Ross, Department of Commerce;
Secretary Elaine Chao, Department of Transportation;
Secretary Alexander Acosta, Department of Labor;
Administrator Linda McMahon, Small Business Administration;
Ivanka Trump, Adviser to the President;
Gary Cohn, Director of the National Economic Council;
Reed Cordish, Assistant to the President;
Christopher Liddell, Director of Strategic Initiatives;
Dina Powell, Assistant to the President

Executives:

Julie Sweet, North American CEO, Accenture;
Lee Styslinger, Chairman and CEO, Altec;
David Clark, SVP of Worldwide Operations, Amazon;
Mike Gregoire, CEO, CA Technologies;
David Cordani, President and CEO, Cigna;
Ashok Vemuri, CEO, Conduent;
Larry Merlo, President and CEO, CVS Health;
Andrew Liveris, Chairman and CEO, Dow;
Mike Lawrie, Chairman, President and CEO, DXC Technology;
William Brown, Chairman, President and CEO, Harris;

Mike Petters, President and CEO, Huntington Ingalls Industries;
Marillyn Hewson, Chairman, President and CEO, Lockheed Martin;
Wes Bush, Chairman, President and CEO, Northrop Grumman Corp;
Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, Partnership NYC;
Dan Houston, Chairman, President and CEO, Principal Financial Group;
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Trump tries to master the art of the tiny [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook and Andrew Restuccia | 06/14/2017 05:18 AM EDT

Bill Clinton salvaged his presidency by focusing on small-ball policy wins. Now Team Trump is trying to master the art of thinking tiny.

Faced with a rising drumbeat of scandal stemming from ongoing Russia probes, President Donald Trump is continuing to pursue a big, complicated legislative agenda — repealing Obamacare, reforming the tax system and passing an infrastructure package.

Any of those would be hard to achieve in perfect circumstances, but with the GOP ideologically fragmented and the White House distracted by legal trouble, it's increasingly difficult to imagine Trump landing a big win. Veterans of past White Houses say if the president wants to keep Republican voters on his side, it's time to turn his attention to putting forward discrete, achievable policy proposals that he can actually get done.

"It is the only strategy," said Ari Fleischer, former White House press secretary under President George W. Bush. "Trump will never be able to land a knockdown punch with policy until he has a Rose Garden signing ceremony, but he can at least keep delivering jobs."

The White House seems to be getting the message. For months, executive branch actions to unwind or rewrite regulations got little notice. But in recent weeks, wonkier policies are getting more fanfare, with briefings for reporters and appearances by Cabinet officials in the press room.

On Wednesday, Trump is expected to announce the reorganization of government job training programs at the Labor Department as part of the White House's "workforce development week" — the latest in the administration's recent efforts to highlight tangible, limited goals like privatizing air traffic control or slashing regulations.

An administration official said the White House is planning more policy-themed weeks in the coming months, including one on energy tentatively scheduled for late June. The official said the weeks are aimed at unifying the White House's message.

White House spokeswoman Natalie Strom cited Trump's appointment of Justice Neil Gorsuch and his moves to roll back Obama-era regulations as successes: "The media has been ignoring

the significant policy victories the president has been achieving for our country since the day he got into office, from pulling back onerous Obama-era regulations to putting Justice Gorsuch on the Supreme Court to stepping up for American jobs in trade negotiations, but the American people haven't."

Yet, despite the White House's best efforts, Trump has often undercut his team's efforts at message discipline, distracting from infrastructure initiatives last week and his jobs proposals this week with angry tweets about fake news, leaks and the investigations against him.

In a briefing with reporters last week, Marc Short, White House director of legislative affairs, said the president is an effective messenger for the administration's policy proposals.

"He may not have a conventional style in doing that, but many of his efforts are extremely helpful to us in getting our legislative agenda accomplished," Short said — though he acknowledged that there's "no doubt" that the Russia investigations distract lawmakers from Trump's policy agenda.

Both Clinton and President Barack Obama salvaged the latter halves of their presidencies with these kinds of policy rollouts. As a former governor, Clinton often felt most comfortable in campaign mode, so the Clinton White House filled his schedule with events and deployed his entire Cabinet to amplify policy announcements on everything from increasing home ownership to expanding the number of police officers on the beat.

"Presidential terms are like a nine-inning baseball game — you go from pitch to pitch, batter to batter, inning to inning," said former Clinton White House staffer Chris Lehane, who helped manage the fallout from the administration's scandals, which included impeachment proceedings. "It is a grind and requires discipline and teamwork from everyone on the squad."

After the Democrats were dealt a brutal defeat in the 2010 midterm election, Obama changed his focus from big legislative achievements like the stimulus bill, Obamacare and banking regulations. In the years that followed, he reoriented his White House toward a greater use of executive power and issued a series of orders, actions and regulations on everything from climate change to nutrition, immigration, policing and education.

"In any administration, you want to show activity, but showing activity and results is not the same thing," said Cecilia Muñoz, director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under Obama. "We worked hard to find things where we could have impact and measure the impact."

Other White House alumni agreed.

"It's very important to maintain a very steady drumbeat of very positive news," said former Clinton adviser Dick Morris, now a Republican who has praised Trump. Morris said that making consistent progress on smaller issues is "maybe more important" than big-ticket items like the repeal of Obamacare. "If you do those right, they'll overcome the negatives that are coming out in the attack," he said.

But, while conservatives are ready for any wins, some worry that any sustained focus on small-ball policy issues will distract the administration from its bigger promises.

Trump "needs someone on his team with discipline to say you may be bored about talking

about health care, but our allies and voters aren't," said Club for Growth President David McIntosh.

"They're skipping around from one subject to the next," he added, calling for a "focused executive-type approach that says these are our top three goals and we're going to keep focusing on them until we hit this out of the park."

McIntosh and other conservatives said one possible model for Trump is Ronald Reagan's aggressive push for tax cuts in the 1980s. The then-president gave a televised speech in 1985 that officially launched the most recent overhaul of the tax code. President George W. Bush similarly led the way in the push to slash tax rates in 2001.

Conservatives hope that Trump can do the same for policy initiatives — big or small — given his remarkable ability to drive the news cycle.

"While health care and tax reform are mired in figuring out a path forward, they should pursue things unilaterally," said Rohit Kumar, former domestic policy director and deputy chief of staff to Sen. Mitch McConnell. "But if I were running a Republican political campaign in 2018, I don't think I would be comfortable trying to build a case just on the small-ball stuff. You need to also have health care and tax."

Another question: Whether the president can stick to his administration's strategy of touting small ball policy ideas amid so many other distractions. The White House organized a series of events last week to draw attention to the administration's \$1 trillion infrastructure plan, but Trump started the week with an angry tirade against his own Justice Department for rewriting his travel ban and criticisms of London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who was dealing with a terrorist attack.

"Much of the conversation is not focused on the policymaking but on Russia and the president's tweets and that rarely enhances the policy direction of any administration," Muñoz said. "Any administration faces headwinds. What is interesting is how many headwinds they have created for themselves."

Darren Samuelsohn contributed to this report.

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Manufacturers to Trump: Don't hurt NAFTA ties that support 2 million U.S. jobs [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 06/13/2017 05:27 PM EDT

U.S. manufacturers that President Donald Trump says will benefit from his NAFTA renegotiation are urging his administration not to destroy business ties among the three countries that support 2 million American manufacturing jobs.

"Manufacturers have been working on this really since the election, given the prominence this issue took," Linda Dempsey, vice president of international economic affairs at the National Association of Manufacturers, told POLITICO. "We rolled up our sleeves with our members.

We took a serious look at the agreement."

That deep dive resulted in a 35-page set of [comments](#) filed late Monday with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, which is preparing for the start of negotiations with Canada and Mexico as early as August.

In contrast to Trump's characterization of NAFTA as a disaster for American manufacturing, NAM argued that the 23-year pact has helped make the sector bigger and stronger than ever.

"More than two decades since the NAFTA was implemented, U.S. value-added manufacturing hit a record-high of \$2.18 trillion in 2016, nearly double its level of \$1.13 trillion in 1993," NAM said in its comments. "That growth has been fueled in significant part by the more than tripling of U.S. manufactured goods exports to \$1.27 trillion in 2016 compared to \$411 billion in 1993."

Trade with Canada and Mexico, which currently represents about one-third of U.S. manufacturing exports, played a major role in that expansion. "These two nations purchase more U.S. manufactured goods than the next 10 foreign countries combined," NAM said.

Besides praising the current agreement, the manufacturing group also offered ideas for strengthening NAFTA: further reducing trade barriers, making it easier for goods to cross borders and crafting rules to cover new areas like the digital economy.

In tune with the Trump administration's heavy emphasis on enforcement of U.S. laws against unfair trade practices, the group also recommended the three countries work together against foreign companies that flout the rules.

"We have this very integrated North American economy that has grown in significant part because of the underlying agreement, but yet we have trade cheating coming in from third countries," Dempsey said. "What do we need to do to address that?"

One option would be for Canada and Mexico to pass legislation similar to what Congress approved last year to strengthen the U.S. government's ability to go after companies that evade anti-dumping and countervailing duties it imposes, she said.

In recent weeks, both Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer have adopted the business community's mantra that the NAFTA renegotiations must "first do no harm" to the existing trade pact.

But Trump's intense focus on reducing bilateral trade deficits has created a great deal of nervousness in both Mexico City and Ottawa about the direction the talks could take.

Hoping to reduce the role the trade deficit could play in driving the NAFTA negotiations, NAM argued in its brief that the U.S. manufacturing trade with Canada and Mexico "has been generally balanced in recent years."

In the worst-case scenario, from a free-trade perspective, the United States could pressure Mexico and Canada in the NAFTA talks into a series of "managed trade" arrangements to address the deficits, said Fred Bergsten, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Examples include voluntary restraint agreements, where NAFTA partners would agree to limit

certain exports to the United States, and voluntary import enhancement pacts, where they would agree to buy more of certain U.S. products, he said.

Such proposals would likely get a stony reception from Mexico, said Antonio Ortiz-Mena, a former Mexican trade negotiator now at the Albright Stonebridge Group, a policy analysis firm.

"It's a terrible idea, so I don't think that should be contemplated," Ortiz-Mena said, calling instead for a "deep renegotiation" of NAFTA that would cover much more trade in services than the original pact, as well as reducing non-tariff barriers.

Such barriers on the U.S. side would include restrictions on Mexico and Canada's ability to participate in federal and state government procurement projects, Ortiz-Mena said, identifying an area where U.S. union groups strongly oppose any openings.

At the same time, Mexico should insist that the rules of origin for automotive trade among the three NAFTA countries not become "overly restrictive," despite the desire of U.S. union groups to tighten them up in a misguided attempt to return jobs to the United States, he said.

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McAuliffe urged Trump to hike cybersecurity funding for states [Back](#)

By Tim Starks | 06/14/2017 01:04 PM EDT

Gov. Terry McAuliffe told President Donald Trump at a National Governors Association reception that the federal government needs to ship more money for cybersecurity to states, Virginia's chief executive said today.

McAuliffe relayed the Trump conversation at an NGA event during an interview with POLITICO. He also said Congress needs to help with funding.

"I met recently with the president, spent time talking to him about infrastructure," said McAuliffe, who chairs NGA. "I specifically talked about cyber with the president."

"The federal government needs to invest in the infrastructure of cybersecurity at the state level," he added. "The funding is the key to all of this."

The spending could go toward "some actual hard costs that go into what you need to do with your framework, but it's also a lot of education, a lot of training," he said.

McAuliffe said there should be a single cybersecurity-focused committee in the House and Senate, and that Congress should pass a regular budget as opposed to a continuing resolution.

"They can't even pass a budget and they print money," he said.

McAuliffe has focused his tenure as NGA chair on hardening state-level networks, which have historically lagged on cybersecurity due to lack of funding and expertise.

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: House puts disaster aid on next week's docket — Senate budget coasts through committee — Treasury watchdog demands more details on Mnuchin's future trips
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 2:31:53 PM

By Sarah Ferris | 10/06/2017 02:29 PM EDT

The Budget and Appropriations Brief will not publish on Monday, Oct. 9. We'll be back Tuesday, Oct. 10. In the meantime, get your fiscal fix [here](#).

RALLYING FOR PUERTO RICO: For the half-dozen states and territories pounded by hurricanes last month, more relief is on the way this month.

Next week, the House is poised to take up its second disaster aid package in roughly five weeks. We're told the package will closely track the White House's aid request this week, which sought \$12.8 billion to replenish FEMA's disaster fund and another \$16 billion to wipe out debt in the National Flood Insurance Program. The Senate would take up the aid bill immediately after returning from its recess on Oct. 16.

What Texas wants: If congressional leaders do choose to match the White House's request, they'll be putting aside a plea from one of the largest congressional delegations. Texas' 38-member delegation — as well as its governor, Greg Abbott — sent a [letter](#) Thursday begging appropriators to broaden the scope of its aid package. On their wish list for Hurricane Harvey victims: \$10 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, \$7 billion for Community Development Block Grants and \$450 million for the Small Business Administration.

Not this round: But we're told that any non-FEMA, non-flood insurance funding will probably have to wait. [Mario Diaz-Balart](#), a GOP appropriator from Florida, tells us more cash will certainly be needed for the community block grants program — just not yet. "That takes a little bit longer, but that's coming as well." Another appropriator, [Hal Rogers](#), said they're focused squarely on FEMA right now. As for the other programs? "We'll see. We're just now getting into disaster recovery."

Fears of a 'short attention span': Democrats on the House appropriations panel are making a similar push to plus up these programs ASAP. "The danger, obviously, is the longer you go without having done it, the less urgency there is. The less the suffering is on people's mind. We tend to have a short attention span around here," one Democratic aide told us today.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — The CBO [released](#) its annual self-assessment on the accuracy of its economic forecasting, defending its record as "comparable in quality" to the administration and private sector estimates.

#DailyBudgetFact — President Donald Trump's fiscal 2018 budget predicts that annual revenue will grow [34 percent](#), or a total of \$1.1 trillion, over six years by assuming aggressive economic growth. The White House budget projects that yearly employee compensation will be 35 percent higher in 2022 compared to 2016.

BUDGET

BIG LEAP FORWARD, BUT LITTLE FANFARE: After months of anticipation, it was a mostly anticlimactic moment for Senate budget-writers. Just before 5 p.m. on a flyaway day, the Budget Committee advanced its [fiscal 2018 resolution](#) along party lines, as Jen [reports](#). Few lawmakers actually stuck around to hear Chairman [Mike Enzi](#)'s closing remarks, after the Wyoming Republican sensed the anxious recess-mode lawmakers and told them, "Everybody can leave."

Bad timing: In an unfortunate twist for Enzi, the big budget vote took place at almost the exact time that Rep. [Tim Murphy](#) resigned. (More on that juicy story [here](#).)

Ch-ch-changes: Over the day-long markup, the panel agreed to eight out of several dozen amendments, but none that would fundamentally reshape its reconciliation plan. The biggest tweak came from [Cory Gardner](#), with an [amendment](#) to repeal Obamacare's contentious Independent Payment Advisory Board, as Jen [reports](#). Two notable Democratic amendments: One from [Tim Kaine](#) to block cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, and another from [Patty Murray](#) to boost hurricane disaster aid.

Next steps: The Senate is expected to take up the budget sometime the week of Oct. 16. Passage would kick off a conference committee with the House, likely sometime in November. And by the time that process is done, GOP tax-writers hope to have the text of their bill ready to go.

TAX

POLITICAL DOWNSIDE OF A TAX CUT: Extra-conscious of optics recently, Republicans have been seeking out a magic formula that would cut taxes for the middle class without delivering a boon to the wealthy. As Brian Faler [reports](#) today, it turns out that's a lot harder than it seems. Because the top 1 percent now pays about 45 percent of all federal income taxes, it's virtually impossible to lower rates without helping out those high earners. Democrats, meanwhile, are ready to pounce.

NOT GIVING IN: Desperate for pay-fors, the White House is refusing to concede in the inter-party fight over long-standing state-and-local tax deduction. Republicans from high-taxed states like New Jersey and Connecticut have been throwing tantrums to keep it. (Several even voted against the budget resolution in protest, House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) told us Thursday.) But administration officials are maintaining it's needed, as Toby Eckert [reports](#) today. Recall that eliminating the state-and-local deduction could save \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, according to the Brookings Institution.

ECONOMY

AFTER THE STORM: The U.S. economy lost jobs last month for the first time since 2010, and the trio of late-summer hurricanes are likely to blame, Marianne LeVine [reports](#). A total of 33,000 jobs were lost in September, and that doesn't include Puerto Rico. Still, White House chief economic adviser Gary Cohn points to wage growth and the still-dropping unemployment number as the "real bright news."

ADMINISTRATION

LEGAL, BUT LACKING DETAIL: Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is off the hook for his use of government-funded planes, a federal watchdog determined on Thursday. But he's going to have to step it up when it comes to providing a "standard of proof" for \$811,797.81 worth of taxpayer funded travel, as Victoria Guida [reports](#).

Not another 'boilerplate statement': The inspector general's office calls out Mnuchin for supplying "a single boilerplate statement" to justify his trips, "despite the fact that the memo clearly calls for a more rigorous and complete provision of facts and arguments."

CASE CLOSED?: Ex-HHS Secretary Tom Price has officially paid up for some of the private travel that prompted his resignation. "As he said he would, Dr. Price, prior to stepping down, wrote a personal check to the U.S. Treasury for the expenses of his travel on private charter planes," an HHS official told [Rachana Pradhan](#). Health officials said Price would reimburse the government roughly \$52,000 after he opted for private jets instead of flying commercial.

EARMARKS

— FEMA removes statistics about drinking water access and electricity in Puerto Rico from website. [Washington Post](#).

— The next three major hurdles for the GOP's tax plan. [Washington Post](#).

— Warning signs emerge in GOP's tax reform push. [The Hill](#).

— Help wanted: Staff shortages under Trump slow policy changes. [Reuters](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 63 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/house-puts-disaster-aid-on-next-weeks-docket-024959>

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Senate committee pushes through budget for floor action [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 10/05/2017 04:18 PM EDT

The Senate Budget Committee swiftly approved a fiscal 2018 budget plan this afternoon that would give legislators the leeway to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over a decade so as to overhaul the tax code.

The budget resolution, advanced 12-11, is expected to be considered on the Senate floor the week of Oct. 16.

If the chamber passes the measure, a conference committee will work to hammer out differences between the Senate's plan and the version ([H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#)) the House [passed](#) earlier in the day and craft a joint budget resolution.

The Senate's budget resolution calls for a \$695 billion defense budget after 10 years, as well as

drastic [spending reductions](#) to many domestic departments.

During the markup, the panel rejected an amendment in a party-line vote that would strike instructions in the budget that allow Congress to find \$473 billion in savings from Medicare over a decade.

Democrats have made those provisions their No. 1 complaint with the budget document, producing their own [analysis](#) on the potential changes to Medicare and [calling](#) on President Donald Trump to threaten a veto over that language.

Republicans argue that their budget would not cut Medicare but would simply allow Congress to slow the program's rate of growth.

"We've now seen this amendment filed in many different forms. But every single version was formed with politics in mind," Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#) (R-Wyo.) said. "My Democrat colleagues want to find a clever way of making the false accusation that somehow through this budget Senate Republicans are cutting Medicare."

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Inside Tim Murphy's reign of terror [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, Jake Sherman and John Bresnahan | 10/05/2017 11:02 PM EDT

Rep. Tim Murphy, a staunch anti-abortion advocate, thought he could withstand the media furor that engulfed him after reports that he'd encouraged his extramarital lover to end her apparent pregnancy.

He was wrong.

Just one day after announcing he would retire after the 2018 election, Murphy reversed course and told Speaker Paul Ryan he was resigning effective Oct. 21. Murphy's abrupt decision ended a 15-year career on Capitol Hill in a shocking manner. The 65-year-old Pennsylvania Republican was so safe in his conservative district that Democrats hadn't even fielded an opponent against him during the past two election cycles.

Ironically, Murphy's swift collapse came not because of text messages he sent to a woman with whom he was having an extramarital affair, encouraging her to have an abortion as first reported by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Tuesday. In fact, fears among senior Republicans about a potential wave of negative stories on how Murphy ran his congressional office were what ultimately pushed him out the door.

Multiple top House Republicans during the past 24 hours pressured Murphy to resign once it became clear that the House Ethics Committee might have to investigate allegations tied to his reported mistreatment of staffers. Numerous GOP sources were aware of systemic problems in Murphy's office, including high staff turnover, which had been the topic of gossip and speculation for years.

The Post-Gazette had reported on a June 2017 memo in which Murphy's longtime chief of staff, Susan Mosychuk, warned the Pennsylvania Republican that he was mistreating and "harassing" staff, causing 100 percent turnover.

But Mosychuk is a source of controversy herself.

A number of former Murphy staffers told POLITICO that it was Mosychuk's behavior that drove them to leave Murphy's office. And these ex-aides said the combination of Murphy and Mosychuk — who had a close personal relationship, according to GOP lawmakers and staffers — made the situation intolerable. Mosychuk was promoted to Murphy's chief of staff in 2004, just a year after becoming his legislative director.

According to these aides, Mosychuk regularly engaged in brutal verbal abuse of lower-ranking aides, from calling aides "worthless" and their work "garbage" to asking derisively, "Do you or do you not have a fucking college degree?"

Ex-staffers said Mosychuk kept white noise machines throughout Murphy's congressional office so constituents waiting in the front room couldn't hear her screaming. If Mosychuk was angry at staffers, she would make them take the stairs instead of the elevator, so they couldn't ride with her, according to one former employee who witnessed it.

Mosychuk would even call staffers out of their bathroom breaks to demand they return to the office, or yell at them for taking too long to use the restroom. Many younger aides did not take lunch breaks, eating at their desks because they were scolded for leaving. One new employee quit after just a couple days because he was dressed down for using a paper clip instead of a staple on a briefing packet, multiple sources said.

"It was one of the worst places I have ever worked in my life. There was screaming. Intimidation. Nothing you ever did was right," Nick Rodondo, Murphy's former district director, told Pittsburgh radio station KDKA's "Marty Griffin Show."

Rodondo said the two of them were fond of each other — he said he saw them feed each other at events — but terrible to many others.

"Susan Mosychuk was no better than [Murphy]. She wrote that memo to cover her butt," he continued. "I know, Marty. I know what these people are like. To call them creeps is an affront to creeps."

Prior to his resignation, POLITICO had begun seeking information from Murphy office's about whether Mosychuk earned more in outside income than was allowed under House rules. For several years, she received payments from Murphy's congressional office as well as his campaign.

During 2008, Mosychuk was paid \$231,500 — \$156,500 for her official duties and \$75,000 from the campaign, according to House disbursement records and her annual financial disclosure form. But permissible outside income for top aides that year was capped at \$25,830, according to the House Ethics Committee.

In 2010, Mosychuk earned nearly \$158,600 for her congressional duties and reported more than \$47,000 in income from the campaign, according to her disclosure report. House rules capped such outside income at \$26,550 that year.

Mosychuk, through a Murphy spokeswoman, said she took "leave without pay" from her official duties to do campaign work and was therefore allowed to earn more than the ethics threshold permits.

"Ms. Mosychuk's salary and compensation is documented, reported and in full compliance with all the rules prescribed by the House Committee on Ethics," Carly Atchison, Murphy's communications director, said in a statement. "As a matter of public record, this includes both her congressional salary and compensation earned from the campaign while on [leave without pay] status in 2008 and 2010, fully documented and compliant with House rules."

However, House disbursements records show Mosychuk was paid every quarter of that year and does not appear to have taken more than a few weeks off. The only time her pay dipped in 2008 was in the third quarter, when she earned about \$7,000 less than her usual salary, a loss of roughly two weeks' pay. Mosychuk was paid \$75,000 from Murphy's reelection campaign that year, far more than she could have normally earned during such a short period for political work.

In the third quarter of 2010, Mosychuk similarly made about \$8,000 less than her usual quarterly earnings, though she earned \$47,000 from the Murphy re-election committee. Again, this suggests Mosychuk was being paid an inordinate amount for political work covering a relatively brief time-frame.

Mosychuk did not respond to questions about her political work.

Ethics experts said that such a high campaign salary for what would have been a relatively short time on leave might violate the spirit, if not the letter, of House rules.

"There is a rule about outside income, and it is a serious matter to violate that rule," said Larry Noble, senior director and general counsel at Campaign Legal Center, a campaign watchdog group.

Murphy's office did not respond to the allegations of Mosychuk's alleged verbal abuse of former workers. Some said they've gone to therapy or that it took years to rebuild their self-confidence.

"I tried to forget all of it because it was so horrible," said one former Murphy employee. "Screaming was an everyday thing. The manipulation and the mind games. ... Everybody in that office was depressed."

Another former staffer called it a "culture of intimidation" while a third said, "It took me a long time to have any confidence in myself."

Murphy's career started to unravel in early September, when he was forced to admit to an affair with Shannon Edwards, a Pittsburgh-area psychologist half his age. Edwards' husband had sought to depose the congressman as part of their divorce proceedings. Murphy fought the deposition, which would expose the affair to his constituents, but lost in court.

On Tuesday, the scandal erupted when the Post-Gazette reported that Murphy had suggested Edwards get an abortion during a pregnancy scare, citing leaked text messages between the two.

"And you have zero issue posting your pro-life stance all over the place when you had no issue

asking me to abort our unborn child just last week when we thought that was one of the options," Edwards texted to Murphy in late January, according to the Post-Gazette.

Edwards was responding to a Facebook post by Murphy, touting his anti-abortion position in Congress. Murphy is a member of the House Pro-Life Caucus and voted this week for legislation to ban abortions after 20 weeks.

The story also highlighted a toxic work environment in Murphy's office, pointing to Mosychuk's memo, which she titled: "Office Conduct and Behavior: Harassment/Legal Compliance." Mosychuk accused Murphy of causing 100 percent turnover in the office because of a "pattern of sustained inappropriate behavior."

Mosychuk warned Murphy that his actions could be seen as "harassment" of staffers. She highlighted two June incidents in which Murphy was "storming around as we walked in, and as we sat down for prep — having just arrived literally moments ago — you started in on the [legislative director] and verbally abused him, harassed him, chastised him and criticized all his work products."

"You called many of the work products that he literally gave up his weekend to produce as 'useless,'" Mosychuk wrote in the memo. "You pushed other documents off the table onto the floor because they weren't what you wanted. Then you got angry and demanded we find the documents that you had just thrown on the ground."

Several ex-employees who spoke with POLITICO, however, said that while Murphy was a tough boss, Mosychuk was the real reason they quit their jobs. They were flabbergasted that Mosychuk dressed down Murphy for conduct she regularly engaged in herself.

"The description in the memo is not what he does; it's what she would do," said one ex-staffer. "She was the one who would verbally abuse staff. He was bad, but you can deal with a tough member. She was literally terrorizing people."

Murphy's and Mosychuk's treatment of staff has long been known on Capitol Hill. Senior Republican lawmakers and aides said they often sympathized with people who worked there after hearing horror stories.

One former staffer said another aide in the different Capitol office once insisted on doing something nice for her because "I know you work in Murphy's office and could use something good." That same staffer would later go on to encourage people coming into the Murphy office for interviews, or applying to work for the congressman, to turn around and run.

"I would say, 'You don't want to be here unless you're going to be homeless tomorrow,'" she said.

Asked why they never reported these actions to the Office of Compliance, which oversees employment matters in Congress, two former staffers said they looked into the matter but were afraid it'd get back to Mosychuk and that she and Murphy would ruin their careers.

"It's not like a private company where you have an HR department," said one former Murphy employee. "It was a culture of abuse and a culture of corruption. There really is no oversight."

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Senators vote to allow repeal of Medicare oversight board [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 10/05/2017 05:15 PM EDT

Senators added language to their budget document this afternoon allowing the repeal of the controversial board created in the health care law to control rising costs of Medicare.

The Senate Budget Committee approved [an amendment](#) by voice vote that would allow the panel's chairman to nix the still-dormant Independent Payment Advisory Board.

[Cory Gardner](#) (R-Colo.) offered the IPAB-killing proposal as an alternative to a failed amendment Democrats put forward. That amendment would have done away with GOP language allowing Congress to reduce Medicare spending by nearly \$500 billion over 10 years.

"The IPAB board would give superpowers to a committee to cut Medicare outside of Congress, to make budgetary decisions in Medicare without the approval of Congress and then have great power over Congress," Gardner said. "So if we want to protect Medicare, let's adopt this amendment, protect Medicare, repeal the IPAB board and actually do something for our seniors — instead of trying to fool the American people into believing that an increase is actually a cut."

The future of the IPAB language or how it would play out is unclear. The budget was approved by the committee but still must be passed by the Senate, and then differences with the House-passed budget would be ironed out by a House-Senate conference committee.

In the House, the Ways and Means Committee approved a bill, [H.R. 849 \(115\)](#), with bipartisan backing earlier in the week that would repeal IPAB.

Kaitlyn Burton contributed to this report.

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No tax cut for the wealthy? Easier said than done [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 10/06/2017 05:00 AM EDT

Republicans want to make the middle class the big winners in their tax plans, but here's the thing: Average Americans already pay a small share of income taxes.

Those levies are primarily borne by people much further up the income ladder, with the top 0.1 percent of earners projected to pay more to the IRS than the bottom 80 percent combined. This year, official government data [show](#), the top 20 percent will pay 95 percent of all income taxes.

That's why some say it's becoming increasingly difficult to cut taxes, especially tax rates, without favoring the rich.

"It's basically impossible to have a large tax cut that doesn't involve most of the benefits going to high-income groups just because that's who pays taxes now," said Adam Looney, who was deputy assistant Treasury secretary for tax analysis in the Obama administration.

That's a big political problem for Republicans who want their plans to rewrite the tax code focused on helping the politically all-important middle class. They know voters take a dim view of cutting taxes on the rich, and want to fend off inevitable attacks from Democrats that the GOP's tax plans amount to a giveaway to millionaires and billionaires.

Republicans have already rewritten their plans to avoid giving so much to the wealthy. They've dropped plans to cut taxes on capital gains, and they're considering a to-be-determined higher tax bracket on the rich.

Earlier this year, in a sign of Republicans' nervousness over the issue, lawmakers dropped plans to kill an investment surtax on the wealthy as part of their Obamacare repeal plans, amid complaints it would disproportionately help the top 1 percent.

They've also repeatedly slammed a [report](#) last week by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center showing their proposal would mostly help high earners.

"Do you know who we think about when we think about tax reform and tax relief?" House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) asked Thursday during an event in Maryland to promote tax reform.

"We think about the moms and dads who go to bed worrying about the next day, whether or not they can make ends meet — we're thinking about the people in this country who are living paycheck to paycheck," he said. "The purpose of tax relief is: Give middle-income taxpayers a tax cut."

But the challenge for Republicans goes beyond the particulars of the "Big Six" tax framework released last week or the TPC analysis.

They are confronting a tax system where the tax burden is increasingly bunched up at the top of the income spectrum, thanks to huge earnings gains by the rich and the fact that the U.S. has one of the most progressive income tax systems in the world.

The top 1 percent — about 1 million families earning at least \$379,000 — will pay 45 percent of all individual income taxes collected this year, and almost one-third of taxes overall, including corporate, payroll, estate and excise taxes.

More modest income gains among average Americans, as well as repeated efforts by Congress to cut taxes on low- and middle-income people, mean those groups are shouldering a declining share of the tax burden.

The average federal tax rate on people in the middle three income quintiles — those whose earnings put them in the 21st to 80th percentile of incomes — has fallen by 30 percent since 1979 to 13.8 percent, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Rates on low-income people have declined even further, by 57 percent, to 3.3 percent.

"The fact that they don't pay very much in taxes means that it's very hard to provide them with a large tax cut," said Looney, now a fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Not just that: It's hard to cut tax rates on moderate-income people without simultaneously benefiting the rich. That's because everyone pays the same marginal tax rates on, say, their first \$50,000 in income, regardless of how much they make in total. So cutting, for example, the 15 percent tax bracket helps the poor and rich alike.

The challenge for Republicans is compounded by the fact that they aren't simply trying to cut taxes on middle-income people. They also want to promote economic growth by reducing rates on businesses.

They plan to slash the corporate rate to 20 percent, from the current 35 percent — which President Donald Trump has called non-negotiable — while cutting taxes on unincorporated businesses to 25 percent.

But that exacerbates their income distribution problems, because those taxes are disproportionately paid by high earners who would be the primary winners if they're cut.

Almost half of the corporate tax will be paid this year by the top 1 percent, according to Treasury. Economists believe the corporate tax is mostly passed onto companies' shareholders. And nearly 60 percent of so-called Schedule E income — which includes earnings by S corporations, partnerships and limited liability companies — will accrue this year to people making more than \$1 million, according to projections by Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation.

If lawmakers really wanted to cut moderate-income people's taxes, some say they should reduce payroll taxes, the biggest levies people earning less than \$200,000 now pay.

But that comes with its own political baggage.

For one thing, the main payroll tax funds Social Security, and cutting that 12.4 percent charge would hurt the old-age program's finances — and no politician wants to be accused of undermining it.

That payroll tax was also designed to create the sense among payers that they paid directly into the program and are therefore owed checks when they retire, and many lawmakers are wary of eroding that link.

Thirdly, it would face procedural problems in Congress. Republicans want to use so-called budget reconciliation to move their tax plan through the Senate, over Democratic objections, and changes to payroll taxes are not allowed in such measures.

That's why some Republicans are turning to what's been a Democratic strategy for helping people who owe little in taxes: expanding "refundable" tax credits. Those allow people to receive a check from the government when the credits exceed their tax bills.

Republicans are particularly focused on expanding the \$1,000 child tax credit, promising to increase the maximum size and loosen the program's eligibility rules. They haven't decided specifics, though Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) and [Mike Lee](#) are demanding lawmakers at least double the credit.

"The tax reform framework released by the Trump administration and Senate and House leadership last week sets up tax reform so that the amount of tax relief working families receive will be largely dependent upon how much the child tax credit is increased," Rubio said in an analysis released Thursday.

He wants to allow people to begin claiming it against their payroll taxes.

"Making the child tax credit refundable against payroll tax liability is essential to meaningfully cutting taxes for America's working class families, as the majority of American workers pay more in payroll taxes than they do income taxes," it said.

Expanding refundable credits is controversial among Republicans, though, because it can take people off the income tax rolls altogether and, in the federal budget, many of the credits count as increasing spending, not cutting taxes. And it's expensive.

Some supply-siders complain it does little for economic growth.

Republicans are also borrowing an idea from former House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp: imposing a surtax on the rich.

They haven't said how it would work, or even if it will definitely be included, but Camp — who was also trying to avoid disproportionately helping the wealthy as part of his own tax reform plan — created a particularly onerous tax on the rich that dunned everything from their retirement contributions to their health care benefits.

Even if lawmakers can find a way to give people at different income levels the same percentage tax cut, it may not sound equal to voters when those percentages are converted into dollars — giving a millionaire a 5 percent tax cut can seem a lot bigger break than a similar-sized cut for some making \$50,000.

But Ryan Ellis, a conservative tax consultant, says most people don't care how much the rich receive in tax cuts so long as they get what they consider to be meaningful reductions as well.

"Ask a family making \$87,000 with two kids if they could use an extra \$1,200," he said.

"The Jones family doesn't give a s--- if distribution tables that JCT or Treasury or TPC put out are skewed at some end because of the pass-through rate — they don't know or care about any of that," said Ellis. "To them, it's a new refrigerator, it's a vacation they couldn't take.

"That's the way they look at it, that's the way Republicans look at it, and that's how we sell tax relief to the middle class."

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White House digs in on eliminating state and local tax deduction [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 10/05/2017 03:40 PM EDT

The White House is maintaining a hard line on wiping out a deduction for state and local taxes as part of tax reform, despite [efforts](#) in Congress to negotiate a compromise on the issue.

"The president's been clear about his position, and we're moving forward with the framework that we've laid out," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said today when asked whether the administration was open to negotiation.

Republican lawmakers who represent high-tax areas are rebelling against plans to do away with the federal deduction people can take for property taxes and other state and local levies. They are urging GOP leaders, who have endorsed ending the deduction, to strike a deal that would preserve the benefit in some form.

A spokeswoman for House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady said Wednesday that he is willing to listen to the members' concerns.

Opponents of the deduction argue that it primarily benefits upper-income taxpayers and encourages some states and localities to maintain high tax rates. Ending it would also raise more than \$1 trillion to offset individual rate cuts and other benefits Republicans would like to add to the tax code.

Sanders said that "80 percent of the [deduction's] benefit goes to six-figure filers."

"The fact is, it isn't fair and it doesn't make sense for working Americans across the country to subsidize the very wealthy in a few states," she said at her regular media briefing.

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Economy lost 33,000 jobs in September [Back](#)

By Marianne LeVine | 10/06/2017 08:36 AM EDT

The economy lost jobs in September for the first time in seven years, a consequence of late-summer hurricanes.

The Labor Department reported Friday morning that the economy [lost](#) 33,000 jobs, down from 169,000 jobs added in August.

Prior to the jobs report, the Bureau of Labor Statistics [said](#) Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Hurricane Irma in Florida could have "direct and indirect effects on employment, hours, and earnings." The monthly jobs figure does not include jobs numbers for Puerto Rico, which is still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria.

"In the midst of a hurricane, nobody is hiring," said Megan Greene, chief economist at Manulife Asset Management.

In a statement, William Wiatrowski, the acting commissioner for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, explained that during the survey week, which includes the 12th of the month, "many employees in areas affected by the hurricanes were likely off payrolls."

The jobs report also included some positive news. September unemployment, the report showed, was 4.2 percent, down from August's 4.4 percent, and the lowest level since February 2001. "We do not believe the hurricanes had a discernible effect on the national unemployment rate," Wiatrowski said in his statement.

In addition, average hourly private-sector earnings rose 2.9 percent in September over the previous year, the largest increase since December 2016. In August, they were up 2.7 percent. The hurricane may have skewed wage growth. Pantheon Macroeconomics' Ian Shepherdson wrote in a note to clients that wages were up "probably because the people who temporarily dropped off payrolls are lower paid than average."

Another bit of good news was that labor force participation ticked up to 63.1 percent, up from August's 62.9 percent and the highest level since March 2014.

Appearing on Bloomberg TV, White House chief economic adviser Gary Cohn said "there is some noise in the number because of the hurricane" but that "you discount that noise out and you're looking ... at the wage growth and you're looking at the unemployment number, which is the real bright news here."

President Donald Trump appeared Thursday to be trying to get out in front of Friday's jobs report, which analysts had predicted would show a slowdown, when he [tweeted](#): "Stock market hits an ALL-TIME high! Unemployment lowest in 16 years! Business and manufacturing enthusiasm at highest level in decades!" Trump's "lowest in 16 years" claim reached back to the unemployment number for July, when it was 4.3 percent. In August, unemployment ticked up to 4.4 percent.

Republicans and Democrats both acknowledged this was more a hurricane report than a jobs report. In a written statement, House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) said that "it's clear from this jobs report that Hurricanes Harvey and Irma not only devastated communities in Texas and Florida, they devastated their local economies as well."

Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), ranking member of the Joint Economic Committee, said that the "job numbers underscore the gravity of the task at hand — to rebuild families' lost homes, businesses, and communities in the wake of the devastating hurricanes."

Analysts did not seem alarmed by the job loss. Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group Inc., [told Bloomberg](#): "I don't think this is indicative of problems in the labor market -- it's because of the hurricanes." He added that "the economy is in decent shape, the labor market continues to improve, and we'll bounce back to job growth in the final three months of 2017."

Still, Elise Gould, senior economist at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, said in a statement that even factoring in the hurricanes, "such a loss—on top of net downward revisions in July and August—is concerning for an economy that is still recovering. In order just to keep up with the working-age population growth, we need to add at least 90,000 jobs a month."

The unfavorable jobs report comes as Trump prepares to nominate a Federal Reserve chair. Last week, Trump said he would make a decision in the next "two or three weeks."

Ben White contributed to this report.

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Treasury inspector general finds no wrongdoing in Mnuchin plane travel [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 10/05/2017 05:07 PM EDT

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has not violated any laws with his use of government-funded planes but should provide more detail on why he needs them in the future, the department's inspector general found in a [report](#) released Thursday.

Mnuchin has flown on military aircraft seven times since becoming secretary, at a cost of approximately \$811,797.81, and will do so again later this month, according to the report. He has never expensed a private charter flight.

"I see no violation of law in these requests and uses," OIG Counsel Rich Delmar wrote in the report.

"What is of concern is a disconnect between the standard of proof called for in [a 2011 memo from then-White House chief of staff William Daley], and the actual amount of proof provided by Treasury and accepted by the White House in justifying these trip requests," he added.

The report was prompted by requests after Mnuchin's trip to Kentucky with his wife, Louise Linton, who famously posted a picture of herself leaving the plane on Instagram and drew attention to the designer brands she was wearing.

According to the report, a fare was estimated for Linton's travel, for which Mnuchin reimbursed the government.

A flight to Miami, which cost over \$40,000, would have cost only about \$700 per person on a commercial flight, according to the report.

In the eight approved flights — which do not include Mnuchin's withdrawn request to use a government-funded plane for his honeymoon — the trips were classified as White House support missions. To qualify as such a mission, the president "must have specifically directed that the travel occur" by personally requesting the assignment.

"In almost all cases a single boilerplate statement constituted the whole analysis and justification for designation and use of military aircraft, despite the fact that the memo clearly calls for a more rigorous and complete provision of facts and arguments," the OIG report read.

But Delmar then noted that budget director Mick Mulvaney on Sept. 29 issued a memo related to government-funded travel, which "strongly suggests more rigor will be required in future requests."

Treasury spokeswoman Molly Meiners noted that the inspector general's review "identified no violation of law, regulation, or ethics requirements in connection with the Department's requests."

"The Inspector General suggested certain enhancements to the longstanding approval process, which we intend to incorporate fully going forward," she said in a statement.

Mnuchin personally owns a small plane, according to his financial disclosure form, but it might not be able to support secure communications required by the secretary in his role on the National Security Council.

"The Inspector General confirmed that the Secretary is 'required by applicable authority and policy to have access to secure communications at a high level of classification at all times — including both official and personal travel,'" Meiners said.

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: House Republicans take 'minibus' victory lap — Black won't rule out October budget vote — Tillerson teases at restructuring vision
Date: Thursday, September 14, 2017 5:55:49 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 09/14/2017 04:44 PM EDT

CHEST-THUMPING TIME: It was the kind of morning House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) needed amid a month of GOP horrors. After four late-night Rules Committee meetings and eight days of floor debate — spanning nearly two months — the House finally (albeit narrowly) passed that \$1.2 trillion spending package, as we [reported](#) for Pros.

This marks the first time since 2009 that all 12 spending bills have cleared the chamber on time, as Ryan was quick to point out. "We achieved conservative victories for the president's agenda, for our agenda," the speaker declared at a press conference, surrounded by the Republican cardinals who helped make it happen. "It's been a long time coming."

They did it! Remember the "GOP omnibus" idea that even some conservatives didn't think was possible? Four months later, Rep. [Tom Graves](#)' long-shot idea is on its way to the Senate. "We've clearly sent a strong message," Graves (R-Ga.) told us today, talking excitedly about punting pressure to the upper chamber. "The ball is now in their court."

Well that was close: The package, [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#), passed by just 13 votes, with 25 lawmakers playing hooky, 14 Republicans voting no and a single Democrat (Minnesota Rep. [Collin Peterson](#)) voting yes. [Breaking it down](#).

Quiet again — for now: This is a clear win for appropriators, who slogged through one of the most intense markup seasons in years. By [our count](#), the House hasn't passed more than eight appropriations bills in one season since 2012. And none have been traditionally thorny measures like Labor-HHS-Education, Agriculture or State-Foreign Operations. Of course, appropriators are far from the finish line. Lawmakers and staffers must now produce either a second stopgap or a full-blown, bicameral omnibus by Dec. 8.

Red meat: Republicans are going to be talking about this one for a while, even when they're ultimately forced to sign a bipartisan deal in December. The just-passed GOP goodies they can tout: A \$1.6 billion down payment for President Donald Trump's border wall, zero dollars for Planned Parenthood or key climate change programs, some Dodd-Frank dismantling, repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate and the paring down of environmental regulations.

Can't forget the caps: Nobody likes to talk about the BCA, but ... the bill approved today includes \$621.5 billion in defense spending, far above the \$549 billion allowed by law. As Democrats pointed out today, that package would trigger \$72 billion in automatic cuts from the military if it was actually signed into law. "Without an agreement to raise Budget Control Act spending caps, we will just face another crisis in December," Rep. [Nita Lowey](#) (D-N.Y.) warned.

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — GAO has released a [report](#) on funding gaps in the Rural Housing Service,

finding that the agency's fiscal issues have resulted in delayed payments to landlords and the loss of rental units. More from [Christine Haughney](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — The federal government will pay a total of \$705 billion in federal health care subsidies — excluding Medicare — for people under 65 this year, according to a new [report](#) from the CBO. That figure already accounts for the taxes and penalties that are intended to help fund those subsidies.

PRO POLICY SUMMIT

STAR-STUDED HIGHLIGHTS: Today's [policy summit](#) included 17 different panel discussions with officials from nearly every corner of the government.

— **What about the deficit?** Budget hawk Kent Conrad dismissed Congress' chances of trying to tackle the national debt this year. "We're in what I would call concern-about-the-debt-free zone," the former Budget Committee chairman said, Eli Okun [reports](#).

— **Two-party tax overhaul is possible:** Rep. [Richard Neal](#), the top Democrat on the House's tax-writing panel, said today there's "room for conversation" with Trump on tax reform efforts this year. "The administration seems to be in sync with the middle class positions that we would adopt," Neal, of Massachusetts, said, per [Colin Wilhelm](#).

— **Shoot for the moon:** Rep. [John Culberson](#), a top House appropriator, called for a huge boost in the nation's space budget. The Texas Republican said the U.S. should spend as much as 2 percent or 3 percent of its GDP on space exploration — an increase from the 0.5 percent currently being spent, as Jacqueline Klimas [reports](#).

— **Addressing drug costs:** The health insurance industry's top lobbyist lamented today that lawmakers aren't paying enough attention to actually lowering the price of drugs. "We all sit here and say we want to cover more people, [but we] can't do that if we don't deal with the underlying cost problem," said Marilyn Tavenner, the head of America's Health Insurance Plans.

BUDGET

WON'T SAY 'OCTOBER': As House lawmakers jet off for a weeklong recess, House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) tells us she's still aiming for a vote when they return. Asked today about voting the final week of September, Black said, "That would be great." But the Tennessee Republican wouldn't say whether she'd be willing to wait until October. "I don't want to box ourselves in with 'yes,' 'no' or 'in between' because we're still doing some work."

NOT BITING: Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) said Wednesday that his tax huddle with Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) hasn't changed his stance on the budget. "We will guarantee that we have enough information before we vote for the budget," Meadows, R-N.C., said, as Colin and Aaron Lorenzo [report](#).

STATE

TILLERSON'S VISION: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sent an email to department employees this week, offering a glimpse into his restructuring plans. Our Nahal Toosi got her hands on the internal email. And she [reports](#) that Tillerson said he aims to save as much as \$10 billion over five years by restructuring the department and better aligning, if not outright

merging it, with USAID.

DISASTERS

REBUILDING BETTER: In an about-face for the Trump administration, HUD Secretary Ben Carson says post-hurricane rebuilding will be done to withstand future storms and flooding if federal funds are used, Lorraine Woellert [reports](#). Just last month, Trump signed an executive order nixing a rule that projects have to be built to withstand extreme flooding if the feds are ponying up. Taxpayer advocates were not pleased about Trump's dismissal of the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, arguing that requiring "smarter" construction ultimately saves federal dollars.

FANNING OF FLAMES ... OF REFORM? After years of talks, Republicans from Western states say they're serious about overhauling the federal government's fire management system in the next few months. A group of lawmakers, including Sen. [Steve Daines](#) of Montana and Rep. [Greg Walden](#) of Oregon this week that they're hoping to use one of the many must-pass bills this year to advance their own reforms, Catherine Boudreau [reports](#). The chief goal is a permanent fix to what's called "fire borrowing" — when the Forest Service maxes out on its firefighting budget and is forced to take money from other accounts, like insect and disease programs or hazardous fuel programs.

TREASURY

ON THE TAXPAYER'S DIME: Following on [Insta-gate](#), Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is now fielding flak for trying to use a military jet for his European honeymoon earlier this year. ABC News, citing undisclosed sources, first reported that Mnuchin put the request in writing and that it led to an "inquiry" by the Treasury Department's Office of Inspector General. Henry C. Jackson and Josh Dawsey have got [the details](#).

FLOOD INSURANCE

CAN THEY FIX IT? Acknowledging that Congress will need to pass legislation — and soon — to lift the National Flood Insurance Program's borrowing limit, some Republicans say now's the time for broader reform to get the system "on a sustainable path," Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#).

AGRICULTURE

HOW LOW CAN WE GO? The "error rate" in the nation's \$71 billion food stamp program has reached [record lows](#) in recent years. But Senate Agriculture Chairman [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.) wants to bring that key metric back under scrutiny in the upcoming debate on the farm bill, Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine [report](#). SNAP has one of the lowest fraud rates in the government, though critics have pointed to the multiple ongoing investigations into how exactly that rate is calculated. After a 2002 federal crackdown on misspent SNAP dollars, the number of states with a 6 percent payment error rate went from 13 to 45 today. A top USDA official says the department plans to publish an updated error rate by June 2018 after not issuing one for the past two years amid the investigations, Catherine [explains](#).

DEFENSE

NDAAs ROADBLOCK: The Senate is [expected](#) to scoot through the rest of debate on the

National Defense Authorization Act today or Monday. But several funding-related proposals stopped amendment consideration this week, Connor O'Brien [explains](#). Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) declared "an impasse" Wednesday night, saying "we simply can't get an agreement." The stalled amendments include a [proposal](#) to repeal the sequester as a budget-cutting mechanism, a tweak to beef up Buy American requirements for the Pentagon for items used overseas and a plan to strip limitations on medical research funded by the Pentagon. Budget-watchers are [keenly tracking](#) the sequestration amendment.

TAX

DEADLOCK, MEET DEADLINE: With just 11 days until they are expected to release an initial tax plan, the "Big Six" remain deeply divided over how to rewrite the code. Brian Faler [reports](#) this afternoon that top congressional and administration negotiators remain at loggerheads over a number of items, including plans to reduce a deduction for state and local taxes, as well as one for corporate interest expenses.

JEALOUS OR JUST NERVOUS? As POTUS continues to meet with Democrats on tax reform, many GOP lawmakers worry the strategy will derail the party-line effort they've been pursuing, Rachael Bade and Burgess Everett [explain](#). Proof that Trump is willing to pander hardcore to the desires of Democrats on this one: He says he's even entertaining requests to raise taxes on wealthier people and says "the rich will not be gaining at all with this plan," Nolan D. McCaskill [reports](#).

Harder, still: Contrary to the president's [tweet](#) this week, hurricane recovery seems to be complicating tax reform efforts. As Brian [explains](#), lawmakers are certain to spend tens of billions more to assist those stricken by the storms, which may give some Republicans second thoughts about simultaneously adding billions to the deficit with their tax plans. And the idea of special tax legislation to help storm victims adds to the complexity.

IMMIGRATION

BORDER WALL TO THE BACK BURNER: Democratic leaders [Nancy Pelosi](#) and [Chuck Schumer](#) say Trump told them over Chinese food Wednesday night that he's not going to be demanding border wall money in any kind of 'DREAMers' bill, our team [reports](#) today. But POTUS insists he's not giving up on the border structure, telling pool reporters today that the wall "will come later."

INFRASTRUCTURE

WHITE HOUSE GUIDANCE TO COME: The Trump administration is preparing more details on what it wants to see Congress accomplish with infrastructure legislation. But that guidance won't come until tax overhaul's rolling, Andrew Restuccia and Lauren Gardner [report](#). The Trump administration has still yet to divulge details about where it expects to get the \$200 billion federal investment the president has touted, except to say it would come from cuts to other programs.

CYBER

HACKER-FIGHTING FUNDS: Reps. [Mark Meadows](#) and [Jim Langevin](#) are introducing a bill that would allow states to apply for federal grants to update election technology after proving they have adopted federal cybersecurity standards, Cory Bennett [reports](#). The measure

matches a bipartisan amendment that Sens. [Amy Klobuchar](#) and [Lindsey Graham](#) are trying to get attached to the NDAA bill the Senate's currently debating.

LABOR

MINIMUM WAGE HIKE: The hourly minimum wage for federal contractors will increase to \$10.35 in January 2018, up from the current \$10.20, Marianne Levine [reports](#). The tipped minimum wage will also increase to \$7.25 an hour, up from the current \$6.80.

EARMARKS

- Harvey heats up inflation data, raising odds Fed will raise interest rates. [CNBC](#).
- House adopts after-school amendment in spending bill, rejects three other provisions. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- NATO official details alliance's budgetary, capability challenges. [Defense News](#).
- This is the crazy tax math Trump must master, fast. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#).
- How the Bernie Sanders plan would both beef up and slim down Medicare. [The New York Times](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 85 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017), 16 days until the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/09/house-republicans-take-minibus-victory-lap-024605>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House sends \$1.2T spending package to certain rejection in Senate [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 09/14/2017 12:14 PM EDT

The House on a 211-198 vote Thursday passed a mammoth fiscal 2018 spending bill that reflects Republican priorities but stands no chance of making it through the Senate in its current form.

The 12-measure bundle, [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#), would provide \$1.2 trillion in government funding. But House leaders have yet to negotiate a politically feasible compromise with the Senate and — in particular — with Senate Democrats who can block spending bills on procedural votes. That means the legislation will not be signed into law by the start of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1.

Instead, Congress [cleared](#) a spending patch, [H.R. 601 \(115\)](#), last week that will continue federal funding at current levels through Dec. 8, when leaders hope to have reached a bicameral deal.

"The appropriations package before us this morning puts the House on the right path to

completing its annual appropriations work for the entire federal government," House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) said on the floor just before passage. "The results are bills that represent our shared values and priorities."

But Frelinghuysen's Democratic counterpart, Rep. [Nita Lowey](#) of New York, complained that passage of the package "gets us no closer to enacting full-year funding ..."

"Majority leadership must immediately convene bipartisan discussions to develop a new budget agreement with realistic caps on defense and nondefense spending," Lowey said.

House Republicans called a vote in July on passage of the first four measures in the package, picking off the most noncontroversial bills to advance with Democratic support.

Because the remaining eight contain thornier policy issues and harder-to-swallow topline numbers for those in the minority party, GOP leaders launched an extensive whipping operation more than a month ago to ensure enough Republicans would be on board to pass the second chunk — no easy task considering the House's most ardent fiscal hard-liners are not accustomed to voting for federal spending bills of any kind.

Rep. [Tom Cole](#) (R-Okla.), an appropriations cardinal, told POLITICO in late August that GOP leaders were still whipping the final package and had yet to secure the requisite commitments for passage, more than a month after they first began tallying support.

Even over the week and a half leading up to the vote, some GOP leaders remained uncertain about the final outcome.

"There's nothing in the bag," House Rules Chairman [Pete Sessions](#) (R-Texas) said before his panel began the first of two late-night meetings to tee up the package. "Do I believe we are going to present the conference and the House a package that they will be able to see as worthy of us moving on? Yes, I do."

For most of the 12 bills in the package, funding levels come in below current spending but above President Donald Trump's budget request.

The most drastic spending cut would be made in the division covering the State Department and foreign operations, which would receive \$47.4 billion — \$10 billion, or about 17 percent, less than current levels.

The departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs, as well as the legislative branch, would see funding boosted.

The legislation includes \$1.6 billion to build several structural barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border, but would not fund a so-called border wall in the way the president has promised.

Before the legislation was debated on the House floor, GOP leaders took special procedural steps to delete two controversial amendments that had been adopted during committee consideration.

Without allowing lawmakers to go on record on the floor, in July leaders [plucked](#) language that would have phased out the 2001 war authorization. Then this month, they [removed](#) provisions that would have allowed federal employment for immigrants who have been granted waivers under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

In total, House leaders allowed floor debate on more than 460 amendments and dedicated eight work days to the package over a more than two-month span.

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GAO flags problems with rural housing subsidies [Back](#)

By Christine Haughney | 09/14/2017 11:16 AM EDT

Budget cuts, poor estimates of rental costs and government bureaucracy all contributed to the funding gaps that USDA's rural housing service suffered in the 2013-15 fiscal years, according to a GAO report.

GAO released the results of its [findings](#) about how an agency, which provides \$1.4 billion in annual rental subsidies to landlords housing more than 270,000 low income rural households, could run out of money. Funding problems were so dire that some payments to landlords were delayed and even lost some rental units.

Some of GAO's suggestions to the agency included trying to improve its rental assistance estimation methods and make sure that there are more accurate assumptions used in budget requests. The agency did not comment on the suggestions.

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Congress failing to seize moment on cutting debt, panelists say [Back](#)

By Eli Okun | 09/14/2017 11:53 AM EDT

Congress has many options for tackling long-term debt, but it probably won't take up any of them soon, panelists said at the POLITICO Pro Policy Summit today.

"We're in what I would call concern-about-the-debt-free zone," said former Sen. Kent Conrad, a North Dakota Democrat.

The panelists weren't optimistic about the prospects for debt reduction in the current tax reform push. House Republican leaders [plan to release](#) more details this month.

"The dream died when the border-adjustment tax died," said James Pethokoukis, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. "I'd almost rather have this whole tax reform debate stop and think hard" about long-term solutions.

Pethokoukis admonished conservatives for not seizing the moment: "It is a profound mistake by Republicans to not at all focus on how in the future we are going to get those revenues.

The national debt [surpassed \\$20 trillion](#) for the first time last week, and Conrad said Social Security could be insolvent by as early as 2029. "There is a fiscal reality out there that has to be dealt with," he said.

But nobody wants to tackle long-term reform of the so-called entitlement programs or new approaches to revenue, said Bill Gale, a senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution. "We need to be figuring out ways to deal with it," Gale said, adding that a carbon tax and value-added tax would be two revenue generators.

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Neal: 'Room for conversation' with administration on tax reform [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/14/2017 01:43 PM EDT

The top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee expressed optimism about possible bipartisan coordination on tax reform.

Rep. [Richard Neal](#) (D-Mass.) said at today's POLITICO Pro Policy Summit that he thinks there's "room there for conversation" on "building out" tax reform around provisions aimed at aiding the middle class.

"I think there's some room given that for the moment, just for the moment, that the administration seems to be in sync with the middle class positions that we would adopt," he said.

Still, Neal said, "the key is to pay attention to the distribution tables," as to who would benefit from tax reform the most. He also raised concerns over the president's rhetoric on the topic.

"I think the president from time to time has used words interchangeably like 'tax cut' and 'tax reform,'" Neal said.

His comments follow recent deals and talks between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats on the debt ceiling, federal spending, tax reform and immigration.

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Top House space appropriator calls for boost in space budget [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 09/14/2017 10:38 AM EDT

The top House appropriator who oversees NASA funding said today he'd like to see the space budget increase to 2 or 3 percent of gross domestic product — a huge increase from the .5 percent currently being spent.

Rep. [John Culberson](#) (R-Texas) said at the POLITICO Pro Policy Summit the country was spending 4 percent of GDP on space exploration when it was working on the Apollo mission, but that it has dropped significantly. It'll take a large discovery to "electrify" the public to support increased spending on space and NASA, he said.

Culberson predicted that big discovery will be the discovery of life on Europa, one of Jupiter's moons. This discovery is so important that he actually legally required NASA to complete the mission to Europa in the space appropriations bill being considered on the House floor today.

"It is illegal for NASA not to fly this mission," he said.

Culberson emphasized the need for NASA to explore, calling it the "interplanetary highway system." And said he envisions private companies playing a large role in the future of space flight, comparing it to "catching a cab outside the hotel" for low-Earth orbit.

"I'm a big believer in the yellow pages test. If you can find a government service in the yellow pages, you ought to privatize it as much as you can," he said.

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Freedom Caucus leader uncommitted on budget after tax briefing [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker and Aaron Lorenzo | 09/13/2017 06:23 PM EDT

Rep. [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) suggested Wednesday that he didn't have enough information yet on the emerging GOP tax plan to commit to vote for the House budget resolution.

"We will guarantee that we have enough information before we vote for the budget," Meadows, the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, said after GOP lawmakers met with Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) on tax reform.

House conservatives have said that they want more details on what the White House and GOP leaders are proposing in a tax overhaul before they vote for a budget. Republicans will need to pass a budget if they want to revamp the tax code with a simple majority vote in the Senate.

Meadows said that he got the "distinct impression" from the meeting with Brady that a GOP tax package would not allow companies to immediately and fully write off new investments, an idea that was in last year's House Republican blueprint.

The tax bill would have "accelerated expensing" provisions, according to Meadows, who added that GOP leaders were still shooting to lower the corporate rate to the 20 percent range.

Brady has long pushed for both lower corporate rates and more robust expensing provisions. The joint statement on tax reform that senior administration officials and top Republican lawmakers released in July called for "unprecedented capital expensing," and Brady repeated "unprecedented" twice when quizzed after Wednesday's meeting on whether he'd back down from full expensing.

WHAT'S NEXT: Tax reform negotiators are expected to release more details of a proposal on Sept. 25.

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Tillerson offers peek into State Dept. redesign plan [Back](#)

By Nahal Toosi | 09/13/2017 06:46 PM EDT

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson hopes to save as much as \$10 billion over five years under his plan to restructure the State Department by better aligning, if not outright merging, it with USAID.

In an email sent to State Department employees Wednesday, Tillerson offered just a glimpse into his plan to reshape the department, a blueprint that he said he would submit to the White House Office of Management and Budget this week.

The redesign effort also includes changes to the U.S. Agency for International Development. It is being watched closely by lawmakers and diplomats on edge over President Donald Trump's proposed drastic cuts to the foreign affairs budget.

In the email, a copy of which was shared with POLITICO, Tillerson writes that he wants to update the information technology system, offer more flexible programs for employees with families, and further empower the State Department's top leaders.

His main point, however, focused on ways to better coordinate what the State Department does with what USAID does. Tillerson never explicitly says he wants to merge the two entities, which would probably require congressional approval, but leaves the impression that he wants to eliminate redundancies.

"Our redesign plan seeks to align State and USAID foreign assistance and policy strategies, capabilities, and resources to execute foreign policy priorities more effectively," Tillerson writes. "It includes several ambitious proposals with investments that will generate a minimum deliverable of 10 percent [\$5B] in efficiencies relative to current [FY2017] spending over the next five years, with an aspirational general interest target of up to 20 percent [\$10B]."

Tillerson acknowledges that some of his restructuring plans will require congressional approval, but notes that some efforts are already underway. For instance, he is taking steps to reduce the number of special envoys at the department.

The changes will be unveiled "on a rolling basis," Tillerson said. "Once a solution is ready to go, we're going to put it to work as soon as we can."

Some State Department employees were left scratching their heads by the email and eager for more details. "It's lots of business school buzzwords with no tangible details," one employee said of Tillerson's message.

The future of the State Department is of concern to not only its employees but also to

lawmakers. Both Republicans and Democrats have put up fierce resistance to Trump's proposal to cut the department's and USAID's annual budget by roughly a third. Tillerson has left numerous top leadership positions at State empty as he has pulled together his restructuring plan, further alarming lawmakers.

A key Senate panel last week passed legislation that kept the level of foreign affairs funding roughly on par with that of recent years, a rebuke to both Trump and Tillerson.

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Carson vows new construction will be built to withstand future storms [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 09/14/2017 10:47 AM EDT

New construction backed by federal disaster recovery funds after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma will be built to withstand future storms and flooding, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson said.

"As you rehabilitate or construct units, it's very, very important to learn the lessons of what made them so vulnerable in the first place and build that into the new construction," Carson told POLITICO. "That's a high priority for us."

"These things will happen again," he said. "Now is the time to be thinking of that."

Last month, President Donald Trump signed an [executive order](#) rolling back environmental reviews and flood-protection standards.

HUD, which will manage the bulk of recovery spending in Houston and Florida, will make sure all affordable housing units lost to the storms will be replaced or repaired, Carson said.

"We will get all the people who were dependent on us taken care of," he said.

WHAT'S NEXT: HUD is still assessing storm damage and Congress is likely to approve more federal aid.

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Republicans aim to overhaul fire management, budget by year's end [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 09/13/2017 04:05 PM EDT

A group of Republican lawmakers is working on a legislative package that would revamp federal forest management and the way wildfire suppression is funded amid severe blazes in the Northwest.

Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) said lawmakers are looking at "three to four" measures Congress must pass before the end of the year that could be used as the vehicle for the reforms.

"There will be a package that I hope to see on the president's desk before the end of the year to address the fire borrowing issue, as well as forest management," Daines said today during a press conference with Senate EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) and Reps. [Greg Walden](#) (R-Ore.) and [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) (R-Wash.).

Efforts to fight wildfires routinely drain funds from the U.S. Forest Service's budget and forces the agency to borrow from other programs, including fire prevention efforts like forest thinning, fire breaks and prescribed burns.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke said the agency at the end of last week had to begin moving money from other accounts — potentially upwards of \$300 million — in order to cover the costs of fighting Northwest wildfires.

"Normally we deal with 20 large fires this time of year. Now there are 80 and we have a shortage of resources," Tooke said.

Barrasso is planning to hold a hearing on Sept. 27 on two bills designed to expedite the U.S. Forest Service's process for carrying out fire prevention activities, according to a committee aide: [S. 605 \(115\)](#) and [S. 1731 \(115\)](#).

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Treasury Secretary Mnuchin asked for government jet for honeymoon [Back](#)

By Henry C. Jackson and Josh Dawsey | 09/13/2017 10:03 PM EDT

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin asked for a military jet to take him and his wife, actress Louise Linton, on their European honeymoon earlier this summer, the Treasury Department confirmed on Wednesday.

ABC News, citing undisclosed sources, first reported that Mnuchin put the request in writing and that it led to an "inquiry" by the Treasury Department's Office of Inspector General.

Mnuchin and Linton traveled to Scotland, France and Italy after their wedding in late June. The request for a military plane eventually was deemed unnecessary after further consideration.

A Treasury Department spokesman released a statement Wednesday evening acknowledging that Mnuchin had requested the jet, but said the secretary had done so because he wanted to maintain secure communications during extended travel.

As a member of President Donald Trump's National Security Council, Mnuchin "has responsibility for the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence," the spokesman said. "We have multiple issues around the world where the secretary is directly involved in national security, notably North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela, among others."

The spokesman added: "It is imperative that he have access to secure communications, and it is our practice to consider a wide range of options to ensure he has these capabilities during his travel, including the possible use of military aircraft."

Requests for military jets are fairly unusual, though not unprecedented, for personal travel. Such trips can cost tens of thousands of dollars to operate per hour. Treasury secretaries tend to fly on commercial airlines but have used government planes for overseas work trips.

Mnuchin, one of the wealthiest members of Trump's Cabinet, is a former Goldman Sachs banker and movie producer who also made millions in real estate. He is a key figure for Trump, serving as lead administration official on tax reform, Trump's top domestic priority.

His use of government aircraft was already under scrutiny after he took Linton on a trip to Louisville and Fort Knox in Kentucky in July.

A government investigator is looking into whether Mnuchin used the trip to get a better view of the solar eclipse with Linton. Mnuchin has denied that, saying he was in Kentucky for work meetings on tax reform. He also has said he will reimburse the government for Linton's travel costs.

Linton herself stirred controversy this summer when she lashed out at a commentator on Instagram who had criticized her on social media for flying on a government jet with Mnuchin. Linton eventually apologized.

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Will hurricanes open door to flood insurance overhaul? [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 09/13/2017 06:41 PM EDT

The National Flood Insurance Program is facing a shortfall of billions of dollars to cover claims from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, forcing Congress to once again expand the deeply indebted program's ability to borrow from the Treasury.

For some lawmakers, it will be an opening to push for lasting policy changes intended to expand private flood insurance options outside the government backstop and rein in the subsidies offered by the program.

It might also open the door to a broader debate about whether it makes sense for one government department to be in debt to another — in this case the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Treasury.

"It's an opportunity," Rep. [Tom MacArthur](#) (R-N.J.) said of talks to raise the borrowing authority. "We're either just going to bump that authority or use that as an occasion to really pass a reform bill that puts the NFIP on a sustainable path."

It's a fight that Congress will have to engage in over the weeks to come, and one that could

complicate efforts for the government to quickly pay claims to thousands of Texas and Florida residents affected by Harvey and Irma.

FEMA [revealed](#) Wednesday that it expects Harvey alone to cost the flood insurance program \$11 billion, a figure that would overwhelm its \$1.5 billion cash on hand as well as a \$1 billion layer of reinsurance coverage and \$5.8 billion that it has left to borrow.

"As you do that math, it will exceed the current spending authorities," said Roy Wright, the FEMA official overseeing the program.

Less than three weeks since Harvey made landfall, FEMA has received 84,000 claims from the hurricane and has issued initial payments totaling \$177 million — numbers that Wright said "will continue to climb very, very rapidly." He did not provide estimates on the impact of Hurricane Irma. Wright said he had enough resources to pay for "the early stages of this" into next month.

"Congress will have to lift the NFIP borrowing authority \$15-25 billion in the next 60 days or the program will implode and fail the homeowners who did the right thing and bought insurance," said Barry Scanlon, a former FEMA official and congressional staffer who later founded the consulting firm DCMC Partners.

Lawmakers have known for weeks that they would likely be called upon to shore up the flood insurance program. Some immediately saw it as an opportunity to advance reform proposals that have failed to move in the last several months as Congress struggled to reauthorize the program before its Sept. 30 expiration. Last week, lawmakers extended the program through Dec. 8 as part of a Harvey aid package.

Senate Banking Chairman [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) said in an interview last week that legislative vehicles drafted in response to Harvey "might present opportunities for us to move a flood insurance bill."

"I would be open to adding some part of the ultimate, broader flood insurance bill as we move along," he said. "I've always been that way. I've felt when we extend the debt ceiling we need to get some fiscal reforms to go with it."

Last week, House Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) tried unsuccessfully to attach one of his flood insurance policy priorities to the bill that extended the program until Dec. 8.

The rider that he wanted was intended to encourage more private insurers to enter the flood insurance market, which is dominated by the government.

"There is no reason for a permanent taxpayer subsidy when competition can often provide protection at a lower cost," he said at a conference in Washington yesterday.

Hensarling, an outspoken fiscal conservative, has doubled down on his criticisms of the program in the wake of the hurricanes.

"I believe after Harvey and after Irma it would be insane for the federal government to simply pay to rebuild the same homes in the same fashion in the same place," he said. "Shame on us if we do, because the fatalities and economic carnage will simply continue."

A debate over whether to allow the program to borrow more will put a spotlight on a bigger question that has divided Republicans: Why does it make sense for the flood insurance program to pay hundreds of millions of dollars per year in interest to the Treasury?

Hensarling's approach to balancing the program's books has been to shrink its footprint, escalate rates and introduce more private capital. But others in the GOP are on board with proposals that would attack the debt more directly.

Sens. [John Kennedy](#) (R-La.) and [Bob Menendez](#) (D-N.J.) have a bill that would freeze interest on the NFIP's debt, freeing up potentially \$400 million per year that could go toward mitigation or affordability assistance. Co-sponsors of their bill, [S. 1368 \(115\)](#), include Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.), [Thad Cochran](#) (R-Miss.) and [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.).

In the House, Rep. [Maxine Waters](#) (D-Calif.), the top Democrat on the Financial Services Committee, has called for the program's debt to be forgiven.

MacArthur, a Financial Services Committee Republican who had an earlier career as an insurance executive, said he too was contemplating whether to raise the issue of how the interest payments burden the program. He acknowledged he was "probably a little bit on an island with this one."

MacArthur said he didn't think it would be responsible to wipe out the debt but said he was open to freezing the interest.

"Sure, you borrow money, you gotta pay it back," he said. "But do we have to charge interest to ourselves?"

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Roberts eyes SNAP error rates ahead of farm bill [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine Boudreau | 09/13/2017 08:34 PM EDT

Senate Agriculture Chairman [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.) is planning to zero in on how USDA calculates the error rate for the food stamp program during a hearing on Thursday — adding a new layer to the already thorny politics heading into the 2018 farm bill debate.

It's the only hearing the committee is planning to have on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which represents the lion's share of farm-bill spending, ahead of reauthorizing the five-year law. The first panel is scheduled to examine whether the USDA's quality control process ensures states are reporting accurate error rates for SNAP, according to committee aides.

SNAP is one of the most scrutinized federal programs, in part due to its price tag of about \$71 billion a year, and is a target for cuts by GOP leaders in Congress. Defenders of the nutrition assistance program often highlight its low error rate as an example for other agencies to follow, but ongoing investigations into its accuracy have the potential to open the program up to new criticism.

Senate Ag staff are careful to note that Roberts' interest is not in taking an axe to the program, but rather in taking a much closer look at how it is being administered, especially if there are potential taxpayer savings.

"This is not about pushing people off the program; this is about how the program is run," a committee aide said.

The percentage of SNAP dollars issued to either ineligible households or to eligible households in excessive amounts was 2.96 percent in 2014, according to department data. There was also an underpayment rate of .69 percent that year, bringing the total error rate to 3.66 percent.

The lineup for the hearing on Thursday signals the committee intends to examine the issues that USDA's Office of the Inspector General raised about the error rate in the past. Expected to testify is Brandon Lipps, acting deputy undersecretary and administrator of Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services at the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, as well as two witnesses from the USDA's Office of the Inspector General: Gil Harden, assistant inspector general for audit, and Ann Coffey, assistant inspector general for investigations.

How USDA calculates SNAP's national error rate — a measurement of whether applications were accurately approved and whether benefits sent to participants were too high or too low — is a technical, two-tiered process based on reports by state administrators. It is the states' role that's likely to be under the most scrutiny during the hearing on Thursday.

The states have long had financial incentives — and penalties — based on their error rates. The USDA rewards states with low error rates with bonuses totaling \$48 million each year.

The USDA Office of the Inspector General began investigating the error rate in March 2013, however, and in September 2015 [issued a lengthy report](#) on its findings: States had purposefully weakened the integrity of the quality control process in order to lower error rates.

During this dust-up, USDA Food and Nutrition Service began its own review and has since directed 42 states to develop and submit corrective action plans. As a result, the agency didn't issue error rates for 2015 or 2016.

Anti-hunger advocates agree that ensuring the error rate is correct is absolutely crucial for the integrity of the program — they want an accurate rate, too. But there are also concerns that this renewed focus could come at a bad time for SNAP, which is already being eyed for cuts under the House Republican budget plan and by factions in the party that will no doubt have their knives out in the lead-up to the farm bill.

The second panel at the hearing, which could run several hours, will cover a broader suite of nutrition topics, likely ranging from the SNAP Employment & Training programs to SNAP-Ed and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. Its diverse list of panelists includes: Sam Schaeffer, CEO and executive director of the Center for Employment Opportunities; Bryan Parker of the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma; Jimmy Wright of Wright's Markets Inc.; Diane Schanzenbach of Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research; and Brian Riendeau, executive director of Dare to Care Food Bank.

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USDA to resume publishing annual SNAP error rates in 2018 [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 09/14/2017 11:59 AM EDT

The USDA plans to publish an error rate for SNAP by June 2018 after not issuing one for the past two years amid investigations into what was determined to be unreliable data, a top department official said today.

States were purposefully hiding errors from the USDA — potentially dating back to 2004, Brandon Lipps, acting deputy undersecretary of Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, told the Senate Agriculture Committee.

The agency has plans with 42 states to address the problem. Lipps said that following through with those plans "gives confidence to our statisticians" that the SNAP error rate for 2017 will be accurate.

Chairman [Pat Roberts](#) said it was unacceptable that the integrity of the SNAP program can't be verified because in all but a few states, the process used to measure errors has failed. "Thus, the level of erroneous payments states have made when administering this program is completely unknown," he said.

Roberts cited past SNAP error rates — most recently reported in 2014 at 3.6 percent — to emphasize that billions in taxpayers dollars were at stake.

The error rate, which is a measurement of whether applications were accurately approved and whether benefits sent to participants were too high or too low, was called into question by the USDA Office of Inspector General. In September 2015, it [issued a lengthy report](#) on its findings.

FNS also conducted its own review, and the Department of Justice has begun investigations into an unknown number of states.

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Senate could finish NDAA today or Monday, McCain and Schumer agree [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/14/2017 11:29 AM EDT

Senate Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) and Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) today agreed the National Defense Authorization Act could see a final vote as early as today or Monday.

On the Senate floor, the pair reiterated their goal to pass the bill, [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#), as soon as possible.

"Is it reasonable to assume that we could finish this up today, or set a time Monday?" the Arizona Republican asked.

"Absolutely," the New York Democrat responded.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) filed a motion to cut off debate on the bill Wednesday. But McCain said he was still working to secure votes on four key amendments, including a repeal of budget sequestration.

"We are still negotiating ... to see if we can come to an agreement on those, and I'm guardedly optimistic," McCain said. "We'll know later on this morning or early this afternoon."

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Senate deadlocked on four NDAA amendments as McConnell moves to end debate [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/13/2017 07:14 PM EDT

The Senate is deadlocked on four key amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act, Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) said this evening.

The stalemate resulted in Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) moving to end debate on the bill ([H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#)) just before the Senate adjourned for the day.

Speaking on the Senate floor, the Arizona Republican declared "an impasse" on the four amendments. "We simply can't get an agreement," he said.

The stalled amendments, according to a committee spokeswoman, are: a [Tom Cotton](#) (R-Ark.) proposal to repeal the sequester as a budget-cutting mechanism; a [Mike Lee](#) (R-Utah) amendment barring indefinite detention; a [Tammy Baldwin](#) (D-Wis.) amendment beefing up Buy American requirements for the Pentagon for items used overseas; and a [Dick Durbin](#) (D-Ill.) amendment stripping limitations on medical research funded by the Pentagon.

The chairman urged senators to work out their differences to allow votes on the proposals.

"Unfortunately, the majority leader will have to file cloture and ... then move forward with the bill, which in my view could be finished tomorrow," McCain said.

"I hope overnight my colleagues on both sides would sit down and figure out, as we have a number of these amendments, a way that we can reach a point where we can have up-or-down votes on these amendments, which are important to the nation," he added.

The Senate also adopted a package of 104 non-controversial amendments, including proposals from both Democrats and Republicans.

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AIA backs Cotton NDAA amendment to repeal sequestration [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/14/2017 11:53 AM EDT

The Aerospace Industries Association is throwing its weight behind an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to repeal sequestration.

In [a statement](#), AIA President and CEO David Melcher said the industry group "strongly supports" an amendment from Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) (R-Ark.) to the defense policy bill [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#) that would eliminate sequestration — the procedural mechanism used to enforce spending caps set under the Budget Control Act.

"The caps are so inadequate that Congress has raised them every year since the BCA was signed into law," Melcher said. "The sequester mechanism, as we saw in 2013, is a disruptive and harmful process, making across-the-board cuts to thousands of line items government-wide after appropriations have been signed into law."

Cotton's amendment doesn't repeal the caps, but would take away their primary enforcement mechanism for both defense and domestic programs, a move Melcher called a "good first step."

Cotton's amendment is one of four proposals Senate Armed Services [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) is pushing the Senate to vote on before it completes consideration of the NDAA. But the Senate is deadlocked on whether to allow the votes.

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Big Six still divided over basic elements of tax reform [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 09/14/2017 01:19 PM EDT

The "Big Six" are deeply divided over how to rewrite the tax code, including how to finance long-promised cuts in individual and corporate rates.

Though House Republicans are promising to release a plan the week of Sept. 25, the top congressional and administration negotiators remain at loggerheads over a number of items, including plans to reduce a deduction for state and local taxes, as well as one for corporate interest expenses.

"Right now, the Senate and the House are pretty far apart," said one Republican aide. "There's serious frustration."

Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), himself a member of the Big Six, fired a warning shot Thursday, saying his panel will not be a "rubber stamp" for whatever is proposed.

One major issue is whether to adopt a plan that would allow companies to immediately deduct the cost of their investments, sources say.

Known as "expensing," it's a top priority for House Republican leaders because many economists say it's one of the best things lawmakers can do for economic growth. What's more, House Speaker Paul Ryan has already compromised on one of his other top priorities, a now-discarded proposal to create a "border adjustable" business tax that would have hit import-reliant companies.

But the deduction is hugely expensive, and Senate Republicans believe it won't fly in their chamber. The White House, not to mention many in the business community, is much more interested in cutting the corporate tax rate as deeply as possible, though that is also pricey at roughly \$100 billion for each percentage point reduction.

The Big Six are also divided over how sharply to cut a long-standing deduction for corporate interest expenses. House Republicans have proposed ending it entirely, which would raise some \$1 trillion, covering a big chunk of the cost of any plan. But the break is important to many companies, and other negotiators want to only reduce it.

The group is also at odds over eliminating a long-standing deduction that individuals can take for the state and local taxes they pay. Ryan has repeatedly called for eliminating it entirely, calling it a subsidy for state governments, but some are concerned over what that would mean for upper-middle-class people.

Hatch, meanwhile, is pushing a so-called corporate integration plan that would shift some of corporations' tax burden onto their shareholders. He believes that would be a more cost-effective way of reducing the tax burden companies actually pay, though the idea has not gotten much traction with House Republicans.

In a sign of the tensions, Hatch signaled Thursday that he would treat the long-promised tax framework only as a guidepost — not necessarily a binding commitment.

His tax-writing committee won't be "anyone's rubber stamp," Hatch said.

"The group — some have deemed us the Big Six — will not dictate the direction we take in this committee," he said.

"Any forthcoming documents may be viewed as guidance or potential signposts for drafting legislation," he said. "But, at the end of the day, my goal is to produce a bill that can get through this committee."

The Big Six negotiators have been working for months behind closed doors trying to get the House, Senate and White House on the same page regarding the overall contours of any tax rewrite. The process was set up to avoid a repeat of the Obamacare repeal debacle, when House Republicans muscled a plan through their chamber only to watch it collapse in the Senate.

The group is comprised of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Ryan, House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas), Hatch, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn.

Republicans are racing to push tax legislation through Congress by the end of the year, before

next year's midterm elections begin to loom. It is Republicans' top priority on Capitol Hill, and many lawmakers fear voters will punish them if they fail on taxes after their Obamacare plans fell apart.

With the Big Six divided, Trump has begun sounding out Democrats on a possible bipartisan tax deal. Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), the top Democrat on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, said his side may be able to work with the administration.

"I think there's room here for some agreements," he said, pointing to Trump's recent suggestions that he may not cut taxes on the wealthy.

That contradicts a string of independent assessments of Trump's previous tax plans that found they would primarily benefit the top 1 percent of earners.

"He seems to be more interested in Democratic positions on taxes," Neal said. "It seems to me pretty clear that he's not headed towards 2001 and 2003"-style tax cuts.

Brady, speaking today at POLITICO's Pro Policy Summit, agreed Trump may end up turning to Democrats for a deal.

"If Republicans aren't willing to unite and deliver on tax reform, he'll find someone else" to work with, Brady said.

Aaron Lorenzo and Colin Wilhelm contributed to this report.

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GOP shudders as Trump courts Democrats on taxes [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Burgess Everett | 09/13/2017 06:30 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's courtship of Democrats on tax reform is dividing congressional Republicans on the merits of a bipartisan bill — and could upend the party-line strategy that White House and GOP leaders have been pursuing for months.

Trump has talked tax reform with two bipartisan groups of senators and House members since Tuesday, dining with swing state Democrats and hobnobbing with centrists in the lower chamber. He told them he wants their votes on a tax bill, even entertaining a Democratic request to raise taxes on wealthier individuals.

"If they have to go higher, they'll go higher, frankly," Trump told reporters Wednesday just before his meeting with the House Problem Solvers Caucus, a cluster of moderate Republicans and Democrats pushing him for a bipartisan tax bill.

Raising taxes on the rich is the polar opposite of supply-side economics espoused by Republicans. Indeed, while GOP leaders welcome Democratic votes on tax reform, they're loath to compromise on key provisions of their plan.

Tax decision-makers in the "Big Six" — House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, White House economic adviser Gary Cohn and the GOP chairmen of the House and Senate tax-writing committees — opted months ago to pursue a partisan tax bill, all but writing off Democrats. They aim to pursue tax reform via budget "reconciliation," a procedural tool that allows them to evade a 60-vote threshold in the Senate, where the GOP controls just 52 seats.

Now, GOP leaders and conservative lawmakers are warning that a Trump alliance with Democrats could upend all those plans.

"It'd be a mistake to assume that if we're going to lose some Republicans that we can make up for it with a few Democrats," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the third-ranking Republican.

But that opinion is at odds with the emerging White House sentiment that Democrats could provide the votes to get a tax bill over the finish line — and perhaps even reach 60 votes in the Senate.

Skepticism in the House is just as pronounced. It's one thing for Trump to cut a three-month spending deal with Democrats; overhauling the tax system with the help of the opposition party is another matter entirely.

"Trump is talking about doing bipartisan stuff with Chuck and Nancy on taxes, and I don't want to open the door to that until we see what this [GOP] tax plan looks like," said Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.). "If we can reach across the aisle and get them on board, heck yes. But my guess is: They're not going to be too thrilled about jacking up the supply side."

Trump suggested Wednesday that the wealthy "will not be gaining at all with this plan," predicting that their tax rates will remain "pretty much where they are" or even increase. But Republicans of all stripes — especially in the Big Six — believe taxes should be reduced across the board.

"We need rates to come down for every American," said Rep. Andy Barr (R-Ky.). "When you have a taxpayer that's a [small business] that might have a \$1 million income, that's not \$1 million to an individual person. That's a job-creating small business!"

Not every Republican denounced Trump's comments. After meeting with the president Wednesday afternoon, Problem Solvers Caucus leader Tom Reed (R-N.Y.) praised Trump for "not worrying about the extremes on either side of the party."

"What you saw today was a president who's leading for the American people, and that's what it's about: getting the deal done," he said on Fox News.

Some Senate Republicans are also excited by the possibility of a bipartisan deal — even if it would likely move the bill far to the left of where Republicans would go on their own.

"Why don't you start with a bipartisan discussion, see if you can find areas of agreement? Which is the point I made to President Trump ... that was my advice," said Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who attended a bipartisan dinner at the White House on Tuesday.

After Republicans failed to repeal Obamacare on their own, top White House officials began worrying that the chamber wouldn't be able to pass a tax bill on a party-line basis, either.

While they're fine with the Big Six continuing to pursue a GOP tax bill, administration officials believe they'll need a handful of Senate Democrats to pass legislation and will need to strike a deal at some point.

Hence the invitation to swing-state Democratic Sens. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Joe Manchin of West Virginia to dine with Trump on Tuesday — then the Problem Solvers the day after.

Speaking to reporters at a Christian Science Monitor breakfast Tuesday, White House Director of Legislative Affairs Marc Short acknowledged as much, saying Trump wanted a bipartisan tax plan after finding that Republicans were "not reliable" on Obamacare repeal.

"We don't feel like we can assume that we can get tax reform done strictly on a partisan basis," he said. "So it is wise for us, not just from a policy perspective but from a vote-counting perspective, to try to reach out and earn the support of Democrats as well."

Senate GOP leaders, however, warn that relying on Democrats is short-sighted. Don't expect Heitkamp, Manchin or Donnelly to come through, they say, if Republicans are three votes short.

Democrats are "never there if you need 'em," said Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.).

While GOP leaders haven't publicly discouraged Trump from wooing moderate Democrats, they believe those Democrats are just flirting politically with the president. Many of them are up for reelection in states that Trump won, so it's in their interest to at least appear open to a deal.

In the end, though, "their fear of political retribution from leadership and their base I think will make it hard for them" to side with Republicans, said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas). "I hope I'm wrong, but I'm not optimistic."

Still, after the Obamacare debacle, some Senate Republicans agree with the White House that Senate Republicans could come up short if they go the GOP-only route. A number of rank-and-file members told Politico on Tuesday that it's very possible they'll need a handful of Democrats even to get 50 votes.

"We're going to need some Democratic votes to get this passed, most likely," said Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.). Added Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.): "I don't know of any tax reform bill that could eventually pass — given the circumstances we faced in our party — without Democratic votes."

It's the cost of that support that has Republicans worried.

Trump budget director Mick Mulvaney, a former member of the House Freedom Caucus, told Fox Business Network on Wednesday that it's "fair" to assume Democratic buy-in would result in a watered-down tax plan.

"I think the president recognizes that," he added.

Nancy Cook and Josh Dawsey contributed to this report.

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Trump: Rich people won't benefit 'at all' from tax plan [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 09/13/2017 04:02 PM EDT

President Donald Trump declared Wednesday that the rich won't be getting richer under his administration's tax plan and even signaled a willingness to raise taxes on the wealthy.

"The rich will not be gaining at all with this plan," he told reporters ahead of a meeting with a bipartisan group of House members at the White House.

No formal plan currently exists, but Republicans in Congress expect to unveil details of its effort to reform the nation's tax code by the week of Sept. 25.

For his part, Trump outlined four principles for tax reform on Wednesday: Simplify the tax code and make it fair; slash taxes "substantially"; encourage companies to hire Americans and grow in America; and return trillions of dollars that businesses have parked overseas.

"It'll be the largest tax decrease in the history of our country for the middle class," he said.

The president also stressed that his administration is focused on reducing taxes for the middle class and jobs — "jobs meaning companies," he noted.

Trump added that he would like to see a 15 percent corporate tax rate, a figure Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin conceded may be unachievable, "and much lower than that for individuals."

Asked if wealthy individuals would have to pay higher taxes, Trump said, "I think the wealthy will be pretty much where they are."

"If we can do that, we'd like it. If they have to go higher, they'll go higher, frankly," he said. "We're looking at the middle class, and we're looking at jobs."

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Hurricane relief could bring headwinds for tax reform [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 09/14/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Hurricane recovery efforts are beginning to complicate Republican plans to remake the tax code.

Lawmakers are certain to spend tens of billions more to assist those stricken by the storms, which may give some Republicans second thoughts about simultaneously adding billions to the deficit with their tax plans. Democrats have already begun pounding them on the issue,

and lobbyists are looking for opportunities to insert provisions that may be unrelated.

What's more, Republicans want to move special tax legislation to help storm victims, even as time runs short for a tax-code revamp they hope to push through Congress by the end of the year.

The risk is that lawmakers from affected area will want to be generous to their constituents, much as Congress was in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Back then, lawmakers created more than 40 tax breaks for storm victims. Among the beneficiaries were businesses that hired the displaced, volunteers who assisted with the cleanup, and recipients of the Earned Income Tax Credit — a wage supplement — who couldn't work during the recovery.

Going back to that playbook could blow up their still-developing hurricane response into a major production just as time is at a premium, sapping energy and momentum from the GOP's larger plans for the tax code.

"They have to walk the line carefully between, 'What are we trying to do on tax reform?' and 'What kind of relief can we give on hurricane relief,' without distracting too much from the tax-reform efforts," said John Gimigliano, a former Republican tax aide who helped put together the Katrina tax-aid packages.

Caught in the middle is House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#). As a member of the so-called Big Six, he's helping spearhead efforts to rewrite the code, Republicans' top priority in Congress ahead of next year's elections.

But he also represents a Houston-area district that was hit by Harvey and is seeking help from Congress.

Asked about the potential for the hurricane tax bill to distract from Republicans' broader tax ambitions, Brady said: "While it does take some time, because we want to make sure we get the tax provisions right, right now we're continuing to stay on the timetable on tax" reform.

He ticked off several ideas he believes could win bipartisan support, including allowing storm victims to tap their retirement accounts early without having to pay customary penalties; easing rules surrounding a deduction for casualty losses; and softening restrictions on tax-deductible charitable contributions.

But lawmakers still don't know exactly what the affected states will need, he said.

"How do we get our small businesses back up and running? How do we get customers to them? How do we help these families rebuild?" Brady asked. "For some, the waters have not yet receded so they don't yet have a good assessment of either property or economically of what they're looking for."

"We're consulting with our members and our communities now," he said.

Lobbyists are already eyeing the coming legislation as a potential vehicle for their favorite projects, regardless of how closely they're related to the hurricanes.

"People are thinking through, 'Is there something that I've been working on that I can tie to this that makes sense,'" said Ryan Ellis, a conservative tax consultant.

A Republican tax aide is already fielding pitches from K Street.

"I've got tons of emails that say, 'Hey there's going to be a tax title and this would be a good thing,'" the aide said. "I don't know what the appetite is for that stuff right now. The optics would look bad if you start Christmas tree-ing it up, with a bunch of crap that doesn't make any sense."

Democrats, meanwhile, are already casting Republicans' broader tax plans as unaffordable in the face of hurricane cleanup costs.

"A tax cut, particularly one for the very wealthy, is not going to help Florida or Texas rebuild from these storms," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) said Wednesday.

"We're about to add billions to the deficit to rebuild parts of our country, something we absolutely should do because it's an emergency," he said. "But that makes it even more important that tax reform be fiscally responsible."

Last week, Congress approved more than \$15 billion in aid, in what will be the first tranche of assistance. Though disaster-aid packages are usually associated with things like FEMA or flood insurance, historically they've had a tax component as well.

It was particularly large in 2005, when Republicans — then, as now, in charge of the entire government — spent months on legislation providing Hurricane Katrina victims with a host of tax breaks. There were special provisions for those who provided free housing to the displaced and who were rehabbing historic structures. There were expanded education credits.

Businesses received incentives to keep their workers on even when they couldn't operate and to provide employees with housing. They were granted preferences allowing them to write off expenses associated with environmental cleanups where petroleum products had been released.

State governments were granted authority to issue tax-preferred bonds to help with the rebuilding.

All of that put a major burden on Congress' tax-writing committees, which had to write rules on how it would all work (they included a restriction stipulating the bonds couldn't be used to finance things like massage parlors, liquor stores or country clubs).

Lawmakers may face uncomfortable questions from constituents if they don't approve aid on the scale seen with Katrina, said Gimigliano, now a tax adviser at KPMG.

"Every circumstance is unique and what was needed in New Orleans may not be needed in Houston or that's needed in Florida," he said. "But if they do something narrower they're going to have to explain why does this 2017 bill look like that, when the 2005 bill looks like that."

All of the work on a relief package would not only eat up precious time and energy, it may also affect how Republicans write their broader tax plans. It will surely be harder to get rid of tax provisions storm victims are now relying upon. For example, that break for casualty losses, which allow people to write off property lost in things like storms and fires, appeared to be on the chopping block with Republicans' tax overhaul, though Brady says he wants to expand it.

Likewise, Republicans may feel pressure to be consistent across their storm assistance and

their tax rewrite plans. If they want to expand, say, the New Markets Tax Credit to help storm-stricken areas recovery, they'll have a harder time proposing to eliminate it as part of their larger tax plans.

It may even complicates Republican plans to use a so-called current policy baseline for tax reform. They want to use that because it would save them hundreds of billions of dollars, making it easier to make the math behind their tax plans work. But applying that standard to what will likely be temporary tax provisions to help storm victims would make their assistance plans appear far more expensive.

To be sure, Republicans now have a template of sorts with past disaster relief bills, giving them a menu of possible options from which they can choose as they write their Harvey and Irma assistance plans.

Moreover, the politics are different this time around.

Back in 2005, congressional Republicans were trying to show the public they were on top of the Katrina disaster, after the Bush administration was heavily criticized for its response to the storm. This time, Republicans know their broader tax plans are key to their electoral fortunes.

"Tax reform is obviously what we're all ginned up for, and that's the priority, but at the same time, we know we have to do these [hurricane] things too," said Rep. [Tom Reed](#) (R-N.Y). "And we can do both."

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Trump, Democrats confirm outline of DACA deal, despite denials [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Josh Dawsey, Rachael Bade and Louis Nelson | 09/13/2017 11:19 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and Democratic congressional leaders reached a tentative agreement Wednesday night to provide a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants known as Dreamers — but after a conservative backlash, the president and his aides sent conflicting signals about how firm the agreement was.

After a meeting with Trump at the White House on Wednesday night, Democratic leaders Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi said they had come to terms with Trump on a plan that would provide protection for Dreamers in exchange for beefed-up border security — but, notably, no additional funding for a border wall.

"We all agreed on a framework: Pass DACA protections and additional security measures, excluding the wall. We agreed that the president would support enshrining the DACA protections into law," Schumer (D-N.Y.) said on the Senate floor Thursday.

The news triggered an outcry from the right, which accused Trump of abandoning his tough-on-immigration campaign stance. So Trump and his aides rebutted Democrats' claims that an agreement had been struck — while at the same time acknowledging the outlines of a deal.

"No deal was made last night on DACA. Massive border security would have to be agreed to in exchange for consent. Would be subject to vote," Trump tweeted.

Added White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters: "By no means was any deal ever agreed upon."

Yet it seemed to be a matter of semantics. Speaking briefly to reporters shortly after his tweet, Trump said he and the Democratic leaders were close to a deal on the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, but that any agreement would hinge on "massive border security," adding that funding for a border wall will come "a little bit later."

He also said he had spoken to House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and that both are "on board" with a DACA-for-border-security deal with Democrats. The meeting Wednesday night did not include Ryan and McConnell, whom Trump spurned for Pelosi and Schumer on a fiscal deal last week.

"Well, we want to get massive border security, and I think that both Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, I think they agree with it ... we're fairly close, but we have to get massive border security," the president said. "Ryan and McConnell agree with us on DACA. We're very much on board. I spoke to them, yes."

Responding to accusations he was backing "amnesty," Trump also said Thursday: "We're not looking at citizenship. We're not looking at amnesty. We're looking at allowing people to stay here."

Contrary to Trump's suggestion before boarding Air Force One that he had already conferred with Republican leadership about a DACA deal, Ryan said he spoke to Trump about the deal while the president was in the air Thursday. The speaker was insistent that no deal has been struck and that true negotiations have not even begun.

"There is no agreement. The president and the chief of staff called me from Air Force One today to discuss what was discussed. And it was a discussion, not an agreement or a negotiation," the speaker told reporters Thursday. "We have not begun negotiations. What we're doing is talking with ourselves here in our majority to make sure we're all on the same page ourselves before we proceed on all of these things, and it's right and proper that the president talks with the other party, the Wisconsin Republican said. "These were discussions, not negotiations. There isn't an agreement."

Following Trump's tweets on Thursday morning, Schumer and Pelosi said that while the details still need to be hammered out, Trump was not directly contradicting the pact reached at dinner. They said they agreed to forgo the wall as part of this deal with the president — though he would still pursue it — and that a border security package still had to be hammered out but could include new technology and roads.

"If you listened to the president's comments this morning, [Budget] Director [Mick] Mulvaney's comments this morning, it is clear that what Leader Pelosi and I put out last night was exactly accurate," Schumer said.

Trump also didn't deny Thursday morning that building the border wall could be separate from any DACA deal. But he emphasized that the wall, which he says is currently under construction "in the form of new renovation of old and existing fences and walls, will continue

to be built." Schumer and Pelosi vowed to continue opposing it.

The agreement came as a surprise to most Republican leaders on Capitol Hill, according to two GOP aides, the second time Trump has blindsided them this month after his deal with Pelosi and Schumer on the debt ceiling.

Trump seems to enjoy spending time with the Democrats. A senior White House official said the dinner was "jovial" and there was frequent laughter — and Trump seemed very pleased afterward. The official expects more meetings among the president and the two top Democrats.

But some Republicans accused Trump of backing away from his core campaign promises. Rep. Steve King of Iowa said if the deal is true, the "Trump base is blown up, destroyed, irreparable and disillusioned beyond repair. No promise is credible."

After much waffling, Trump last week said he would follow through on his campaign promise to end DACA. But the president, who has often expressed sympathy for Dreamers, first gave Congress six months to come up with a legislative solution.

The news of a deal with Democrats drew swift condemnation from conservatives, including from media outlets and pundits that have traditionally bolstered the president. Breitbart News, helmed by former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, featured headlines including "Amnesty Don" and "Dems declare victory as Trump caves on DACA."

Conservative commentator Laura Ingraham was similarly critical of the reported deal, slamming the president in a series of posts to her Twitter account. "BUILD THE WALL! BUILD THE WALL!...or...maybe...not really," Ingraham wrote online Wednesday night.

"When does American working class w/out real wage increase in 15yrs & who send their kids to overcrowded public schools get amnesty?" Ingraham asked on Twitter on Thursday morning.

Trump spent all day Wednesday talking about cutting such a deal, floating a similar framework while huddling with bipartisan members of the House Problem Solvers Caucus. Three sources in the room from both sides of the aisle said Trump suggested he would accept new border security measures for a fix of the Dreamer program he sought to rescind — and that he'd let his demands on the wall pass, for now.

One lawmaker present said Trump specifically suggested he could accept the DREAM Act, which includes a path to citizenship for those who migrated to the U.S. as minors.

"He said, 'We got to get the wall done, but maybe we could do them separately,'" one person in the room told POLITICO on Wednesday afternoon, several hours before Trump's meeting with Democratic leaders. "He said maybe we do border security, but maybe not the wall."

The sources briefed on the meeting declined to estimate how much border security would be provided under the plan or what the specifics would entail, a key part of any agreement, given the wide range of possibilities that border security could contain. This spring, Congress approved more than \$1 billion in new border security.

The leaders and the president also did not agree on when such a package would be passed; both chambers of Congress are controlled by Republicans. But one person briefed on the

meeting said Trump and the Democrats want it done "sooner rather than later."

Another person at the Problem Solvers Caucus meeting earlier Wednesday said: "He's not giving up on the wall, and we're not giving up on the wall. But it doesn't have to be on DACA."

Trump may still push for the border wall in a spending bill in December, according to congressional Republican aides, but White House staff publicly backed off that path this week as well. Instead, Trump focused on cutting a deal with the political opposition on DACA.

In an earlier meeting between House leaders, Pelosi told Ryan that Democrats want to see action on DACA in the next few weeks — a deadline most congressional Republicans consider unrealistic.

House Republican leaders insist they have six months, until March, to codify protections for Dreamers. But Democrats want to see a legislative solution by Oct. 5, the deadline for current DACA recipients whose permits expire during the six-month period to renew their applications.

The meeting with Schumer and Pelosi kicked off with a long discussion about trade and China, a second aide briefed on the meeting said.

Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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White House official: Infrastructure principles waiting on tax overhaul [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Lauren Gardner | 09/13/2017 03:35 PM EDT

The White House is working on a set of more-detailed principles for Congress to use to craft wide-ranging infrastructure legislation, but it won't appear until after policymakers make progress on a tax overhaul, an administration official told POLITICO today.

"Our position is to be ready to go when the president decides to transition" to infrastructure, the official said.

The White House will rely on Congress "quite a bit" to take the lead on an infrastructure bill, the official said, adding that members have asked for more specifics on how the administration plans to attract more state and private sector money for those projects. "We'll do the principles, they'll do the drafting," the official said.

The official noted the administration's "one federal decision" concept, which they hope will prevent bickering and slow-walking between agencies tasked with approving project permits. The Council on Environmental Quality will have an initial list of actions it plans to take to expedite the permitting process to be [published](#) in tomorrow's Federal Register.

The official didn't divulge details about where the \$200 billion of federal money the

administration has touted will come from, except to say it would be derived from savings generated from cuts to other programs.

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House bill aims to get states grant money to fight hackers [Back](#)

By Cory Bennett | 09/13/2017 03:58 PM EDT

A House Freedom Caucus member has joined with a cyber-focused Democrat to introduce a bill that aims to help states strengthen the digital defenses protecting their electoral systems.

The measure would allow states to apply for federal grants to update election technology after proving they have adopted federal cybersecurity standards. Republican Rep. [Mark Meadows](#) and Democratic Rep. [Jim Langevin](#) are behind the bill, which they dubbed the Protecting the American Process for Election Results, or PAPER, Act.

The measure is a House companion to a bipartisan upper chamber amendment that Sens. [Amy Klobuchar](#) and [Lindsey Graham](#) are trying to get attached to the annual defense authorization bill, which is currently being debated. The lawmakers believe Congress must help states prepare to fight off election hackers after a 2016 presidential race destabilized by alleged Russian cyberattacks.

"The PAPER Act would be a major step forward in securing our election process, updating the security of our voter logs, and allowing for efficient and effective audits of election results," Meadows said in a statement.

Langevin, who co-chairs the Congressional Cybersecurity Caucus, said the measure would help "the people on the front lines to ensure that the most fundamental right in our democracy, the right to vote, is not impinged by foreign powers."

The PAPER Act would direct the federal Election Assistance Commission to develop election cybersecurity recommendations for states. The states that adopt these guidelines would then become eligible for federal grant money to help upgrade their election systems.

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Minimum wage for federal contractors to rise in January 2018 [Back](#)

By Marianne LeVine | 09/14/2017 11:10 AM EDT

The hourly minimum wage for federal contractors will increase to \$10.35 in January 2018, up from the current \$10.20, according to a [notice](#) in the Federal Register.

In addition, the tipped minimum wage will increase to \$7.25 an hour, up from the current \$6.80.

The wage hikes are in response to a 2014 [executive order](#) from President Barack Obama that raised the hourly minimum to \$10.10 and the tipped minimum to \$4.90 for workers "performing work on or in connection with covered Federal contracts," beginning in January 2015.

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House adopts after-school amendment in spending bill, rejects three other provisions

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By Mel Leonor | 09/13/2017 07:45 PM EDT

The House rejected today three amendments to the Education portion of its spending bill, [H.R. 3358 \(115\)](#), but adopted one that would boost funding for after-school programs by \$100 million.

Proposed by Rep. [Nita Lowey](#) (D-N.Y.), the amendment that was adopted, 228-188, would reduce funding for the administration of the Education Department while boosting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which funds academic programs during non-school hours.

The House rejected an amendment by Rep. [Jason Lewis](#) (R-Minn.) 263-153 that would have increased funding for Career and Technical Education state grants by \$70.2 million.

The House also rejected an amendment by Rep. [Glenn Grothman](#) (R-Wis.) to reduce funding for three Education Department offices, 285-131. Grothman's amendment would have reduced funding for the department's Program Administrator, Office of Inspector General and Office of Student Aid Administration by 2 percent.

Lawmakers rejected a [Joe Courtney](#) (D-Conn.) amendment to increase funding for magnet schools by \$1.18 million by reducing funding for charter school grants, 212-204.

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Date: Monday, June 26, 2017 3:33:49 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 06/26/2017 03:28 PM EDT

IT'S ALL HAPPENING: House appropriators are forging ahead with their closed-door defense markup tonight. And yes, since they didn't call the whole thing off, you can be sure House Budget Committee leaders have agreed to be a bit more generous to the Pentagon in this year's budget resolution.

As Sarah [reported for Pros](#) this weekend, those budget writers are getting mighty close.

Weekend work: Appropriators released the fiscal 2018 defense bill Sunday afternoon after plenty of back and forth between Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) and Budget Chairwoman [Diane Black](#). The bill gives \$584 billion for base Pentagon spending and an extra \$74 billion in war funding. If you're thinking that figure falls short of the many defense numbers we've been tossing around this month (\$603 billion versus \$621 billion versus \$640 billion), don't fret. This is just the money for DoD. More will go to military construction and nuclear programs under the Energy Department, Connor O'Brien [explains](#).

HITCHING A RIDE: One interesting nugget from the just-released defense bill: House appropriators want to make it harder for the Pentagon to shutter unneeded bases. Those closures, colloquially called "BRAC," could save as much as \$2 billion per year, according to defense leaders, Connor O'Brien [tells us](#).

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — A [poll](#) commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers found that nearly three quarters of respondents oppose the Trump administration's proposal to cut education funding by more than 13 percent. More from [Morning Education](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Seventy-nine years ago a federal minimum wage went into effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Congress initially set the wage at 25 cents an hour, which amounted to about \$3.50 in current dollars. More from our [This Day in Politics](#) series.

Tweet du jour: Our [@seungminkim](#) tweeted over the weekend that [@JohnCornyn](#) is leaving the door open to delaying the health care vote. Responding today, the senator [tweets](#): "I am closing the door. We need to do it this week before double digit premium increases are announced for next year."

APPROPRIATIONS

IS IT SEPTEMBER ALREADY? Democrats are already drawing their lines in the sand for this fall's spending fight, with almost 100 days to go until the deadline. Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), joined by four Democratic appropriators, sent a [letter](#) today urging GOP leaders to strike a deal to avert the looming sequester.

Playing the long game: Without congressional action this fall, those automatic spending cuts — which have never before gone into effect for a full fiscal year — would cut billions from both defense and domestic programs. Most appropriators, even Republicans, say there's no way to avoid lifting the caps at some point. But it's certainly not top of mind.

The Democrats are demanding:

- Parity be protected (AKA raising caps equally for both defense and non-defense)
- All 12 spending bills get passed — "not just a select few"
- No "poison pill" riders
- No "border wall" or "deportation force" funding

MORE MARKUPS: Still no budget yet, but House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) is cruising right along. Heads of the Commerce, Justice and Science panel, as well as the Financial Services subcommittee, will hold markups on Thursday for fiscal 2018 bills. The former will begin at 2 p.m and the latter at 3 p.m.

By our count, we've got:

- One bill to be considered by full committee this week (Legislative Branch)
- Five bills to be considered by subcommittees this week (Defense; Agriculture; Energy and Water; Commerce, Justice and Science; and Financial Services)
- One bill already passed by full committee (Military Construction and Veterans Affairs)
- Four bills remaining (Homeland Security; Interior; Labor, Health and Education; State and Foreign Operations)

OBAMACARE

THE SCORE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR (ROUND THREE): CBO is expected to release another analysis today of the GOP's effort to repeal Obamacare, weighing in on Senate Republicans' latest iteration. And budget analysts predict the score is likely to say the legislation would leave millions more uninsured than Obamacare, Adam Cancryn and Dan Diamond [report](#). Meanwhile, Senate Republicans are busy moving the goalposts, planning to release a revised version of their bill as early as today, in an effort to quell growing dissent, Burgess Everett and Jennifer Haberkorn [explain](#). Seldom have GOP leaders faced a more arduous whipping operation than now, with lawmakers from all wings of the party withholding support, Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim [note](#).

We've got you covered on Obamacare coverage:

Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) ... [slams the repeal plan](#), wants to '[slow the process down](#),' and [isn't bluffing](#).

GOP opposition: [Skepticism remains](#) | [Invitation to naysayers](#) | [Freedom Caucus holds fire](#)

President Donald Trump weighs in: [Dems 'own Obamacare'](#) | ['Remember keep your doctor](#),

[keep your plan'](#)

States impact: [Single-payer dreaming put on hold](#) | [Freedom to sell across state lines](#) | [GOP governors could be secret weapon](#)

Political angling: [Why Dems can't break through](#) | [Trump political arm tells GOP to get in line](#) | [Koch-backed group calls health fight 'humbling'](#) | [Pro-Trump group targets Heller](#)

EDUCATION

SCOTUS SPEAKS: States can no longer close their coffers when religious schools come knocking. The Supreme Court ruled this morning that states can't deny funding for religious schools simply because they are religious, Benjamin Wermund [reports](#). The court ruled 7-2 that Missouri wrongly denied a church a state grant for a playground "simply because of what it is — a church."

Vague on vouchers: The ruling, hailed as a victory by religious groups, is vague about hotly debated school choice policy, however. The court doesn't say whether states can legally prevent public money (in the form of tuition support) from going to religious organizations.

FALLING BEHIND: Supporters of a closely watched voucher program in Indiana got some bad news this morning. A [new study](#) found that Indiana students who received a voucher to swap their public educations for private schooling saw "substantial annual achievement losses" in math in their first few years, Caitlin Emma [reports](#). A glimmer of hope? Students who stuck with private schools appeared to "make up" the difference in math scores within three to four years.

IMMIGRATION

'THE WALL' HAS ALREADY STALLED: Construction of the Trump administration's border wall prototype was supposed to begin last week in San Diego, but the Union-Tribune [reports](#) that bids for the \$20 million project are still being reviewed. U.S. Customs and Border Protection declined to say what caused the delay, or whether the agency has reviewed options for putting solar panels on the structure, Ian Kullgren reports for [Morning Shift](#).

DEFENSE

SUCK IT UP: In a [Q&A with Greg Hellman](#), Sen. [Deb Fischer](#) complained that the upper chamber should be more lickety-split in moving forward on defense spending. "I have found that very frustrating that we pass a NDAA, and two weeks later we can't get on a defense appropriations bill," she said. "We all vote for authorization of these programs and then won't even take up an appropriations bill to fund them. I don't know how you go home and justify that to people in your state. So, I think, suck it up, we need to start doing our job and taking on appropriations bills."

JOBS

MINIMUM WAGE WOES: University of Washington researchers are out today with a [study](#) showing that Seattle's \$13 minimum wage has reduced the hours of low-wage workers by 9.4 percent. The study examined the first two hikes in Seattle's \$15 minimum wage law, from \$9.47 to \$11 in 2015 and to \$13 in 2016. The first round had little effect, the research found. But in the second, hours for low-wage workers fell by 3.5 million per quarter, Ian

Kullgren [explains](#).

ENTITLEMENTS

CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS: In her latest episode of [The Global Politico podcast](#), Susan Glasser chats with Rep. [Adam Kinzinger](#), who points to Trump's infrastructure investment plan and refusal to tamper with Social Security as flashpoints for the presidency. If you want to increase military spending and drive down the debt, "it's going to take entitlements," Kinzinger says. "Both sides know that," he adds. "We just pretend like it's not the case."

The infrastructure mismatch: Kinzinger says he's personally "very supportive" of Trump's infrastructure dreams. "We have to build this country," he said. "And frankly, as a conservative Republican, if you read the Constitution, it outlines the role of the federal government in infrastructure." But the vision could be a tougher sell, "with other members who are more budget hawk-focused," Kinzinger warns.

POLITICAL STRATEGY

HOPEFUL, BUT WORRIED: Reporting from Colorado, Kevin Robillard [sets the scene](#) for us at the summer seminar meeting of the Koch brothers' network of conservative groups: Donors see a major opportunity this year to achieve years-old Republican goals of reforming the tax code and passing a new health care law. But they are also consumed with worry that the GOP will somehow blow the chance it has been waiting for — whether because of an unfocused president or fretful congressional Republicans.

EARMARKS

- \$6.5 billion debt for 100,000 residents of U.S. Virgin Islands. [The New York Times](#).
- Johnson: 'Where the Senate health bill fails.' [The New York Times](#).
- How the right gets Reagan wrong. [POLITICO Magazine](#).
- Senate Democrats: Boost domestic spending, not just defense. [The Associated Press](#).
- Corporate tax rate at 28% seen as more likely than historic cut. [Bloomberg News](#).

ON TAP TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and the Environment holds a [hearing](#) on EPA's budget. 124 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

10 a.m. — The House Appropriations Committee holds a [hearing](#) on the budget for the United Nations and international organizations. 2359 Rayburn House Office Building.

10 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government holds a [hearing](#) on budgets for the SEC and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. 138 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

10:30 a.m. — The Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on the Labor Department's budget. 192 Dirksen Senate Office Building.

WE'RE COUNTING: 96 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires. 461 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/06/house-republicans-zero-in-on-defense-spending-deal-023491>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Budget committee nearing deal with defense hawks [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 06/24/2017 04:40 PM EDT

The House Budget Committee is nearing an agreement with defense hawks to advance its long-awaited budget resolution next week, a GOP aide familiar with the talks confirmed Saturday.

The House GOP's tentative deal would cap base defense spending at \$621 billion for fiscal year 2018 — the same level proposed by budget-writers last week, but with a \$10 billion boost to war spending.

The budget committee would also agree to raise defense levels by 5 percent annually over the next three years.

As part of the compromise, the House Budget Committee bumped up its request for mandatory cuts through reconciliation. The committee will now seek \$200 billion in cuts over 10 years, up from \$150 billion.

The dispute over defense spending remains the key sticking point as the House Budget Committee aimed to release its markup next week.

The updated numbers came out of Friday meetings between Budget Chairwoman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.) and House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#).

Budget-writers are seeking to nail down the figures this weekend, ahead of the Monday night markup of the House's defense appropriations bill.

To view online [click here](#).

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House defense spending bill released [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 06/25/2017 07:55 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Committee today released fiscal 2018 defense spending legislation.

Text of the measure is [here](#), and a summary is [here](#).

The legislation allocates \$584 billion for the base Pentagon budget and an extra \$74 billion in war funding.

The bill appears to conform to an emerging House Republican spending framework, which calls for \$621 billion in national defense spending, including funding for the Pentagon's base budget, military infrastructure programs and nuclear programs under the Energy Department.

Like the House Armed Services Committee version of the National Defense Authorization Act, the legislation funds more active-duty Army troops than requested by the Pentagon, as well as a higher 2.4 percent military pay raise. It also funds procurement of 11 Navy ships as well as 84 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, 24 F/A-18 Super Hornets and 56 Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

The Defense Appropriations Subcommittee is set to mark up the measure in a closed session Monday evening.

To view online [click here](#).

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Defense spending bill bars a new BRAC [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 06/26/2017 08:45 AM EDT

The newly released House defense appropriations bill would prohibit a new round of base realignment and closure.

The fiscal 2018 [defense spending measure](#) is set to be marked up by the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee today.

If adopted by the full House, the provision, which would bar funding "to propose, plan for, or execute" a BRAC, would be a blow to Pentagon efforts to close excess infrastructure, which defense leaders have said could save as much as \$2 billion a year once implemented.

The Pentagon's budget proposes waiting until 2021 to implement BRAC.

In recent years, the Pentagon has faced staunch skepticism from many lawmakers wary of closing bases in their home states as well as the upfront costs of a BRAC and whether the proposal would generate savings. So, it appears unlikely Congress would greenlight a new round of base closures this year.

The House version of the National Defense Authorization Act includes no provision barring BRAC, but doesn't specifically authorize a new round either.

To view online [click here](#).

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CBO score sure to add to McConnell's headaches [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn and Dan Diamond | 06/26/2017 05:26 AM EDT

The CBO is poised to tell Senate Republicans this week that their health plan will leave millions more uninsured than Obamacare — with the losses estimated from 15 million to 22 million over a decade, according to a half-dozen budget analysts polled by POLITICO.

"What I can say with confidence is that the Senate bill will lead to very large coverage losses," predicted Matt Fiedler of the Brookings Institution, which had previewed the CBO score of the House bill in March but declined to do so for the Senate. "The only question is how large."

And that could complicate GOP leaders' attempts to corral wavering moderates as they race to lock down votes ahead of a possible vote by week's end to give President Donald Trump his first legislative victory.

Uncommitted moderates, like Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, will face increasing pressure to oppose the bill. All hail from states that have expanded Medicaid, where hundreds of thousands of newly covered Americans might lose coverage.

Some senators have already staked out opposition to significant declines in coverage. "I cannot support a bill that's going to result in tens of millions of people losing their health insurance," Sen. Susan Collins of Maine said on Thursday.

Senate Republicans can afford to lose only two votes to pass their bill through the budget reconciliation process on a party-line vote.

The CBO score of the House bill — which was released 10 days before an initially planned floor vote and projected a coverage decline of 24 million people — was a factor in House Speaker Paul Ryan's decision to cancel the vote in late March, as many moderates said they couldn't vote for the legislation as written and needed more time to review it. Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Pa.), who voted for the bill in committee, was among the handful of House Republicans who ended up deciding to vote against the bill after the CBO score.

But nearly all House members ended up backing the final bill without waiting for an updated score. Several weeks later, the budget analysts found a coverage decline of 23 million over a decade for that plan.

The CBO score of the Senate bill, expected as early as Monday, is nearly certain to project major declines in coverage because of the bill's significant funding cuts to Medicaid, budget experts said.

Given the bill's myriad waiver possibilities and the time crunch, some organizations said they aren't bothering to run formal analyses this time.

"We gave up," said one budget expert who has analyzed the Republican bill. "Too much uncertainty."

By all accounts, there is no threshold uninsured number that would kill the bill. GOP senators are already attempting to inoculate themselves from political blowback by assailing the budget office's reliability, a running attack by the party since the health care process began.

"I have a lot of questions about the accuracy of the CBO," said Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso.

Republican budget experts have bemoaned those attacks. "Should Republicans take CBO seriously? Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, they have no choice," said Bill Hoagland, who was an early employee of the budget office and later worked for former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.). "The rules and procedures under the Budget Act require that cost estimates be prepared by CBO."

Doug Holtz-Eakin, a former head of the CBO and the leader of the conservative American Action Forum, says he's upset by some of the criticism but understands where it comes from, too.

"I believe it's reasonable for people to disagree where CBO comes down sometimes," Holtz-Eakin said. "I don't like it when people attack the integrity of CBO or somehow accuse them of tilting the playing field. But they're just going to struggle with this. They are."

Some Republicans like Ryan have attacked the CBO's projections but also touted numbers published by the office — when it suits them.

"The CBO does a great job, by and large, on how much something costs," Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price [said](#) on Sunday. "They do a relatively poor job on what the coverage consequences of a health plan are."

Hoagland observed that Republicans "like the spending savings associated with the reduction in Medicaid, but they don't like the number estimated to reduce coverage."

"You can't have it both ways," he said.

While the Senate bill includes many similar provisions as the House bill, it also includes changes to Obamacare subsidies and other insurance market reforms that could make the decline slightly smaller.

Some Senate Republicans have spent years praising the CBO's reliability and accuracy; Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley has [repeatedly said](#) that CBO is "like God" in Washington.

"There are those who will want to discount a CBO score," said Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas. But "it's what we have here, it's what we utilize, and I think it's an important discussion."

Several senators said they're explicitly waiting for the CBO report to understand the broader implications of the bill. "There is a possibility when we see the CBO score that the Republican plan spends more than the Democrats have been spending," said Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who has been a critic of the GOP health care effort.

"My analysis is that [consumers'] out-of-pocket costs would increase under the Senate bill," Collins said. "That's one of my major concerns, we'll have to see what CBO says."

That kind of scope is one reason the CBO projections are so important, budget analysts say.

"I would be very, very worried for Republicans to dismiss the CBO estimates," Hoagland said. "It was established specifically for the purpose of what we're going through — an objective analysis of [major] Congressional legislation."

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate GOP revises health bill in hunt for votes [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Jennifer Haberkorn | 06/26/2017 08:29 AM EDT

Senate Republicans released a revised version of their bill to repeal Obamacare Monday and are preparing further changes to overcome deep opposition in the party toward last week's initial effort, according to people familiar with the matter.

The [updated text](#) is intended to promote continuous health coverage, which was left out of the discussion draft released Thursday and is designed to encourage people to buy insurance ahead of an emergency.

The Republican leadership and its allies as well, as President Donald Trump, are working furiously to tamp down criticism of the legislation and a voting timetable that will provide perhaps just a couple days for senators to review the final product.

Trump called undecided GOP senators including Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, Rand Paul of Kentucky, Ted Cruz of Texas and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia to feel them out on healthcare, said White House press secretary Sean Spicer on Monday afternoon.

In a pointed [exchange](#) with conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt on Monday, Johnson said the bill does "nothing adequate to bring down the premiums" and said that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) should allow more time before a vote. Hewitt responded: "That's why you got reelected, to pass this bill this week. It's a disaster not to do so."

"You don't have to do it this week. I just completely disagree ... I see what leadership's trying to do. They're trying to jam this thing through," Johnson said.

Pressed on how he will vote if forced to do so this week, Johnson said he prefers not to kill the bill: "I've not said I'm a no. But I'm not a yes yet."

Despite the complaints, Republicans are still expecting a vote this week as McConnell aims to reach a conclusion before the July 4 recess.

After previously leaving the door open to a vote next month, party whip John Cornyn of Texas said on Twitter that "we need to do it this week before double digit premium increases are announced for next year."

Most people in the party's leadership believe that letting the bill hang out over a recess will result in more "no" votes and hurt the GOP's momentum. Earlier on Monday, the president also suggested that the party could let insurance markets collapse if the bill fails this week.

"Republican Senators are working very hard to get there, with no help from the Democrats. Not easy! Perhaps just let OCare crash & burn!" Trump said in a tweet.

Adding to the GOP's problems, the American Medical Association — the nation's largest trade

group of physicians — [announced its opposition](#) to the Republican bill Monday because it would violate medicine's standard to "first, do no harm." The medical group supported the passage of Obamacare, an endorsement Republicans have long held against the organization

Republicans did get one nod of approval. Insurance company Anthem said the Senate bill "will markedly improve the stability of the individual market and moderate premium increases" but acknowledged the company is still reviewing the "challenges the current bill proposes" to Medicaid.

A number of Republican senators have balked at the initial draft of the bill, with several more moderate members blasting it from the center for its strict future Medicaid spending constraints and more conservative senators like Johnson railing against the bill as only a partial repeal of Obamacare.

The revised Senate bill would include a six-month "lock out" period in which people who don't have insurance have to wait before their policy takes effect. The lock out would apply to people who have been uninsured for at least 63 days; people would not have to pay their premiums during that time. The House bill would have allowed insurance companies to charge uninsured people up to 30 percent more for up to one year.

This proposal represents the GOP alternative to Obamacare's individual mandate, which is deeply unpopular but helps keep insurance markets afloat.

A White House official said there will be big changes to the bill after the Congressional Budget Office score, which will determine "how much can be given to the moderates."

Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) shocked Republicans on Friday by strongly opposing the current draft of the bill for its Medicaid cuts, even after McConnell had implored senators not to take hard lines and remain open to continuing negotiations. A Trump-affiliated outside group has threatened him with attacks ads.

Changing minds in the Senate may prove far more difficult than in the House.

Heller is the most vulnerable Republican senator up for reelection next year, and it may be politically helpful for him to oppose a bill that cuts benefits to low-income voters in his state. On the flip-side, Johnson and conservative Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Mike Lee of Utah may feel less pressure from the president and McConnell to support a bill they view as imperfect because they were just reelected to six-year terms last fall.

CBO announced it will release its analysis on Monday, which could affect the positions of many Republicans. The CBO score is likely to reflect the revisions dealing with continuous coverage, which may help improve the bill's coverage numbers.

Shortly after the bill text was released Thursday, senior Republican aides acknowledged the policy was missing from the bill and they were still trying to find legislative language that would get by the parliamentarian. If they can't get anything through, they would rely on HHS Secretary Tom Price to tighten enrollment rules, according to a Republican source.

Because Republicans are keeping the requirement that insurance companies accept everyone regardless of their pre-existing conditions, which is expensive for insurance companies, the GOP needs some policy to encourage people to buy insurance. Without it, insurance

companies would experience a death spiral of too many costs coming in and not enough healthy people to balance it out.

Josh Dawsey contributed to this story.

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Senate Republicans skeptical Obamacare repeal can pass this week [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim | 06/25/2017 02:23 PM EDT

Senate Republicans are casting doubt on their leaders' plans to vote this week on repealing Obamacare, with lawmakers from all wings of the party so far withholding support from the massive reshaping of the health care law that they campaigned on for seven years.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky faces problems from seemingly every corner of his conference, and — from wary moderates to conservatives and even leadership allies — few Republicans were willing Sunday to predict the Senate repeal bill could pass this week, before lawmakers leave Washington for a weeklong July 4 recess.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) outlined "very serious concerns" about GOP leaders' bill on ABC's "This Week," saying that "it's certainly going to be very difficult" for McConnell to win the 50 votes he needs to pass it on such a tight time frame.

Collins said her biggest problems with the Republican Obamacare repeal bill are its steep Medicaid cuts and effects on older Americans' premiums. The draft would let insurers charge older people more for plans than Obamacare does.

On the other ideological end of the GOP Conference, conservatives were also flashing yellow lights.

"There's no way we should be voting on this" before the recess, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) told NBC's "Meet the Press," urging his party's leaders to "not rush this process."

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, speaking to reporters at the Koch Brothers' donor conference in Colorado Springs, said he was unsure if Republicans would be able to round up the votes. He said the party needed to move quickly, and things were on schedule for a vote this week.

"We don't have the luxury of waiting around. It's not going to get easier," Cornyn said, identifying Aug. 1 as a "drop-dead line."

Asked if President Donald Trump was doing enough to help the bill over the finish line, the Texas Republican responded: "We're trying to hold him back a little bit."

It is not yet clear what changes McConnell would accept to win over critics. An attempt in the House of Representatives in March to quickly push through Obamacare repeal legislation was unsuccessful, but Republicans [narrowly passed](#) a tweaked version a little more than a month

later. GOP leaders, including [President Donald Trump](#), have said the Senate draft is open to negotiation.

Still, the surprising level of criticism from Republicans so far — no Democrats are expected to support repealing Obamacare — has made Senate leaders' goal to vote this week seem optimistic.

Johnson, for example, emerged as an unexpected skeptic after the push to repeal Obamacare helped propel him into office in 2010. He joined three other conservatives Thursday — just hours after McConnell released the details — to announce they would not vote for the legislation in its current form.

The GOP leadership's problems grew deeper on Friday, when Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, widely viewed as the most vulnerable Republican senator on the ballot next year, also came out in opposition to the bill.

In addition to the five senators who have announced that they don't support the Republican health care measure as currently written, several others remain publicly up in the air.

"Right now, I am undecided," said Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), who had crafted an Obamacare alternative with Collins that had gained little traction with the rest of the conference. "There are things in this bill that adversely affect my state that are peculiar to my state."

Cassidy urged Senate GOP leaders to slow the bill down: "I don't know quite why the rush."

"I, frankly, would like more days to consider this," Cassidy said. "That'll probably be a discussion coming back. I think a few more days to consider will be helpful."

Republicans are also facing resistance from key governors worried about the bill's cuts to Medicaid. A forthcoming estimate from the Congressional Budget Office about the bill's impact on premiums and the number of the uninsured could turn off lawmakers who are on the fence.

The CBO report is expected early this week. On "Fox News Sunday," Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price attempted to pre-empt the analysis by arguing that the agency has been "woefully inadequate" in predicting the coverage impact of health care measures.

Rural health groups, medical organizations and other hospital associations have already come out in opposition. During a debate on "Fox News Sunday," Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) pointedly noted to Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) that the head of the Wyoming Hospital Association and the CEO of a major Wyoming hospital had both announced opposition to the GOP health care measure. (Barrasso responded that the hospital CEO hadn't read the bill.)

Republican Ohio Gov. John Kasich on Sunday declined to urge Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) to oppose the bill but underscored his own opposition.

"I'm not saying just kill the bill," Kasich told CNN. "Let's get something that is going to work ... stabilizing all these issues around insurance and coverage, and then get to the heart of the matter, which is the rising costs of health care — frankly, which this bill doesn't begin to even do."

Planned Parenthood remains a sticking point for some; the bill cuts off its federal funding for a

year. Collins, who along with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) opposes defunding the women's health group, said Sunday that she is "optimistic we'll prevail" on that issue, though removing that language could alienate social conservatives who have long advocated cutting funds for Planned Parenthood.

Another conservative opposing GOP leaders' current bill, Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said on Sunday that his party's leadership has "promised too much." He focused his frustration on how much the GOP repeal bill leaves intact Obamacare's subsidies for health coverage.

"I will get to yes if they change their approach," Paul said in an interview with ABC. "And will they change their approach if they don't get 50? I think they ought to. Why don't we whittle it down to what the whole caucus agrees on?"

Administration officials and Senate leaders tried to downplay the internal discord, saying they would work with Paul, Heller, Johnson and Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Mike Lee of Utah to modify the bill to win them over.

"Every one of them is committed to a fundamental change away from Obamacare and central government control and into local control and patients making decisions," Barrasso, a member of leadership, said of the five GOP holdouts.

Barrasso added: "I believe we'll get it passed, and that's the only way we can fundamentally change away from Obamacare."

Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, speaking to donors, said he was about 40 percent done reading the legislation. But he wasn't prepared to say he would vote for it. Koch network leaders have been critical of the proposal, but haven't announced outright opposition.

"This is largely a Medicaid reform package," Sasse said, lamenting Republicans didn't have the 60 votes necessary for a "full repeal or full replace piece of legislation."

Pressed by the moderator for a position, Sasse dodged. "This session is actually on the record, right? There's press here?," he said. "I have nothing to announce today."

Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.), speaking on CBS' "Face the Nation," also stressed to his conservative colleagues that the GOP measure was a "first step" and "not the last step." Meanwhile, Price argued that the legislation would stabilize insurance markets so insurers would return to communities they've recently abandoned, while offering flexibility to both consumers and to states.

"It's significant reform," Price said on Fox. "It's a move in a much better direction, because it is a patient-centered move."

If McConnell cannot muster 50 votes to take up his Obamacare repeal bill this week, it remains unclear whether he would return to the effort after July 4 or move on to other top GOP priorities, including tax cuts and raising the federal debt limit.

"I think they have, at best, a 50-50 chance of passing this bill," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said on "This Week."

Should Republicans fail to push repeal through the Senate, Schumer said, he would reach out to the White House to renew his offer of a bipartisan discussion on ways to fix Obamacare

without repealing the law.

Some Republicans said they thought McConnell could still pull it off.

"This is still a work in progress, although the leader of the United States Senate is very good at establishing coalitions to see that legislation passes," Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) said on Fox's "Sunday Futures." "I just don't know whether the votes will be there by the end of the week."

Kevin Robillard contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

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GOP Sen. Johnson slams new health care bill in NYT op-ed [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 06/26/2017 08:04 AM EDT

The Senate legislation introduced last week to repeal and replace Obamacare falls short of addressing systemic problems in the U.S. health care industry, a Republican lawmaker who opposes the bill wrote in a New York Times [op-ed](#) published Monday.

Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, one of five GOP senators who has announced opposition to the repeal-and-replace measure, said the bill does not go far enough in undoing certain Obamacare provisions and follows too closely in the mold of past government solutions instead of taking problem-solving strategies from the private sector.

"Like many other senators, I had hoped that this was where things were headed during the last several weeks as the Republican bill was discussed," Johnson wrote. "We're disappointed that the discussion draft turns its back on this simple solution and goes with something far too familiar: throwing money at the problem."

With a 52-seat majority in the Senate, Republican leaders can afford to lose the support of just two members of their caucus and still pass the repeal-and-replace legislation that has been a top GOP priority for years. Republican leadership in the Senate has said the chamber will vote on the bill later this week.

Johnson said it was unacceptable that the GOP proposal leaves in place a provision banning insurers from denying coverage to those with pre-existing conditions or charging them more, rules he said "drive up the cost of insurance for everyone." Also unacceptable are increases for health care subsidies, he wrote.

In attacking Obamacare itself, the Wisconsin senator recalled the words of former President Bill Clinton, who described the health care legislation as "the craziest thing in the world" during a campaign stop on behalf of his wife, 2016 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, a remark that quickly became a GOP talking point despite the former president's subsequent backtracking.

Obamacare, Johnson said, has "virtually eliminated the power of consumer-driven, free-market discipline from one-sixth of our economy." He pointed to laser eye surgery, which

grew cheaper and more prevalent when it was not covered by most insurance plans, as evidence that health care is not immune to market forces.

A better solution than the one currently on the table would further loosen regulations, Johnson said, "so that Americans can choose to purchase insurance that suits their needs and that they can afford." The Wisconsin senator said protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions should be modeled on pre-Obamacare programs in states like his own, which relied on high-risk pools.

With regulations sufficiently loosened, Johnson wrote, "the market [can] begin to rein in the underlying cost of health care itself and reduce the cost of taxpayer subsidies." He left open the option of working with Senate leadership to alter the bill enough for him to support it.

"Republican leaders have told us the plan unveiled last week is a draft, open to discussion and improvement," Johnson wrote. "I look forward to working with Senate leadership and the president to improve the bill so it addresses the plight of the forgotten men and women by returning freedom and choice to health care."

To view online [click here](#).

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Johnson: No quick Senate vote on Obamacare overhaul [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 06/25/2017 11:21 AM EDT

One of the Republican senators initially opposing legislation to overhaul Obamacare said he does not want a quick vote on the bill.

Sen. [Ron Johnson](#), speaking today on NBC's "Meet the Press," said "I'm not a 'yes', yet" on the bill unveiled last week by Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#). Johnson is joined by Sens. [Rand Paul](#), [Ted Cruz](#) and [Mike Lee](#) and [Dean Heller](#) in initial opposition to the bill.

"What I'd like to do is slow the process down, get the information, go through the problem-solving process actually reduce these premiums that artificially driven up because of Obamacare mandates," Johnson said.

"I would like to delay the thing," he said. There is no way we should be voting on this next week ... I have been encouraging leadership, the White House anybody I can talk to for quite some time let's not rush this process. Let's have the integrity to show the American people what it is."

Other Republicans said they are skeptical about a vote this week.

"I hate to say this but I just don't know whether the votes will be there by the end of the week," Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) said on Fox News.

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The surprising GOP holdout on the Senate's health bill [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 06/24/2017 07:36 AM EDT

Ron Johnson stormed Washington in 2010 by railing against Obamacare, becoming one of the law's harshest and most persistent critics. Now, with the Senate on the brink of repealing the law, he's one of the surprise holdouts threatening to block the bill.

The Wisconsin Republican says Senate leaders are rushing the vote before he and the public can analyze it and are not doing enough to actually bring down premiums. He joined with a trio of Senate conservatives on Thursday who say they're open to negotiation but can't support Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's bill as it is.

"It's not a bluff," Johnson told POLITICO. "Until I have the information where I am certain this is ... in the best interest for the folks in Wisconsin — that this puts us in a better position tomorrow than we are today — I'm not going to be voting yes."

By joining with Sens. Rand Paul, Ted Cruz and Mike Lee, Johnson has significant leverage. McConnell can only lose two of his 52 Republicans for the bill to still pass — so he'll have to pick off at least two conservatives, depending on whether he can keep every other Senate Republican on board. McConnell's job got tougher Friday when Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) said he would oppose the bill for being too conservative — because it doesn't protect states that expanded Medicaid under Obamacare.

The opposition from Paul, Cruz and Lee was somewhat expected. And even the opposition from Heller was not surprising, given that he is facing the Senate GOP's toughest reelection race next year.

But Johnson is rarely such a thorn in the side of GOP leaders.

Johnson's chief concerns are ensuring there is enough time to analyze the bill, driving down premiums and protecting states that refused Medicaid expansion as Wisconsin did. His opposition did not come as a surprise to Republicans working on the bill, who said he has been extremely vocal in closed-door GOP conference meetings. Johnson, a former business owner and accountant, has argued that Republicans need to rely less on politics and more on policy experts such as actuaries and insurance executives to craft their bill — a request that leadership tried to meet by bringing them to meetings.

Johnson, as well as the other Senate conservatives opposing the original draft, have been careful to leave wiggle room for negotiation, honoring McConnell's request to not publicly slam the door shut. Republicans working on the bill believe they can win over the Wisconsinite by connecting him with experts and officials who can address his concerns, such as CEOs of insurance companies or Wisconsin institutions.

"I've been voicing this repeatedly throughout the process," Johnson said of his need for information. After Thursday's meeting where Senate leaders unveiled the legislation, "I had a number of staff members come over offering to provide whatever information I need, which is good."

GOP leaders say the strongest argument they have for winning over Johnson — or any other Republican on the fence — is that they all promised to repeal Obamacare.

"Everybody needs to be thinking about voting no and particularly if you're the vote that takes it down," a Republican senator said of the leadership strategy. "We can afford to lose a couple but after that," the senator said, trailing off.

That argument may carry more resonance with Johnson — or embolden him to ensure the GOP bill goes as far as possible to repeal Obamacare. Johnson had made a mark in Washington by opposing Obamacare. Much of his 2010 Senate race against the Democratic incumbent, Russ Feingold, was focused on disparaging the recently passed health care law. Since then, Johnson has sponsored many anti-Obamacare bills and even tried to take an Obamacare legal challenge to the Supreme Court.

But Johnson is beholden to few in Washington. He largely self-financed his 2010 race as a political neophyte. In his reelection race last year, establishment Republicans largely gave up on Johnson's reelection chances and sent precious campaign dollars elsewhere in the country.

Johnson says he wants to see a CBO score on the health bill, which is expected early next week — just days before McConnell plans to hold a vote. He said he needs time to analyze the bill's impact on the health system, doctors and hospitals.

"I have a hard time believing I'll have that information prior to when leadership may want to vote on this," he said Thursday.

Johnson raised his concerns about Medicaid funding levels with President Donald Trump at a White House meeting with other lawmakers last week. His other major beef is that the bill won't do enough to reduce premiums — a chief complaint among Cruz, Lee and Paul. They would like the bill to repeal Obamacare's requirement that insurance companies accept everyone regardless of a pre-existing condition — a political non-starter with many other Republicans. The Senate conservatives say there are other ways to protect people with medical problems, such as high-risk pools.

"The primary driver of premium increases is guaranteed issue," Johnson said, referring to the Obamacare protection for pre-existing conditions. "We really should be talking about providing individuals the freedom to purchase the kind of health care products they want to buy not being dictated by the federal government."

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Senate Republicans skeptical Obamacare repeal can pass this week [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Seung Min Kim | 06/25/2017 02:23 PM EDT

Senate Republicans are casting doubt on their leaders' plans to vote this week on repealing Obamacare, with lawmakers from all wings of the party so far withholding support from the massive reshaping of the health care law that they campaigned on for seven years.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky faces problems from seemingly every corner of his conference, and — from wary moderates to conservatives and even leadership allies — few Republicans were willing Sunday to predict the Senate repeal bill could pass this week, before lawmakers leave Washington for a weeklong July 4 recess.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) outlined "very serious concerns" about GOP leaders' bill on ABC's "This Week," saying that "it's certainly going to be very difficult" for McConnell to win the 50 votes he needs to pass it on such a tight time frame.

Collins said her biggest problems with the Republican Obamacare repeal bill are its steep Medicaid cuts and effects on older Americans' premiums. The draft would let insurers charge older people more for plans than Obamacare does.

On the other ideological end of the GOP Conference, conservatives were also flashing yellow lights.

"There's no way we should be voting on this" before the recess, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) told NBC's "Meet the Press," urging his party's leaders to "not rush this process."

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, speaking to reporters at the Koch Brothers' donor conference in Colorado Springs, said he was unsure if Republicans would be able to round up the votes. He said the party needed to move quickly, and things were on schedule for a vote this week.

"We don't have the luxury of waiting around. It's not going to get easier," Cornyn said, identifying Aug. 1 as a "drop-dead line."

Asked if President Donald Trump was doing enough to help the bill over the finish line, the Texas Republican responded: "We're trying to hold him back a little bit."

It is not yet clear what changes McConnell would accept to win over critics. An attempt in the House of Representatives in March to quickly push through Obamacare repeal legislation was unsuccessful, but Republicans [narrowly passed](#) a tweaked version a little more than a month later. GOP leaders, including [President Donald Trump](#), have said the Senate draft is open to negotiation.

Still, the surprising level of criticism from Republicans so far — no Democrats are expected to support repealing Obamacare — has made Senate leaders' goal to vote this week seem optimistic.

Johnson, for example, emerged as an unexpected skeptic after the push to repeal Obamacare helped propel him into office in 2010. He joined three other conservatives Thursday — just hours after McConnell released the details — to announce they would not vote for the legislation in its current form.

The GOP leadership's problems grew deeper on Friday, when Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, widely viewed as the most vulnerable Republican senator on the ballot next year, also came out in opposition to the bill.

In addition to the five senators who have announced that they don't support the Republican health care measure as currently written, several others remain publicly up in the air.

"Right now, I am undecided," said Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), who had crafted an Obamacare alternative with Collins that had gained little traction with the rest of the conference. "There are things in this bill that adversely affect my state that are peculiar to my state."

Cassidy urged Senate GOP leaders to slow the bill down: "I don't know quite why the rush."

"I, frankly, would like more days to consider this," Cassidy said. "That'll probably be a discussion coming back. I think a few more days to consider will be helpful."

Republicans are also facing resistance from key governors worried about the bill's cuts to Medicaid. An forthcoming estimate from the Congressional Budget Office about the bill's impact on premiums and the number of the uninsured could turn off lawmakers who are on the fence.

The CBO report is expected early this week. On "Fox News Sunday," Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price attempted to pre-empt the analysis by arguing that the agency has been "woefully inadequate" in predicting the coverage impact of health care measures.

Rural health groups, medical organizations and other hospital associations have already come out in opposition. During a debate on "Fox News Sunday," Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) pointedly noted to Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) that the head of the Wyoming Hospital Association and the CEO of a major Wyoming hospital had both announced opposition to the GOP health care measure. (Barrasso responded that the hospital CEO hadn't read the bill.)

Republican Ohio Gov. John Kasich on Sunday declined to urge Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) to oppose the bill but underscored his own opposition.

"I'm not saying just kill the bill," Kasich told CNN. "Let's get something that is going to work ... stabilizing all these issues around insurance and coverage, and then get to the heart of the matter, which is the rising costs of health care — frankly, which this bill doesn't begin to even do."

Planned Parenthood remains a sticking point for some; the bill cuts off its federal funding for a year. Collins, who along with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) opposes defunding the women's health group, said Sunday that she is "optimistic we'll prevail" on that issue, though removing that language could alienate social conservatives who have long advocated cutting funds for Planned Parenthood.

Another conservative opposing GOP leaders' current bill, Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said on Sunday that his party's leadership has "promised too much." He focused his frustration on how much the GOP repeal bill leaves intact Obamacare's subsidies for health coverage.

"I will get to yes if they change their approach," Paul said in an interview with ABC. "And will they change their approach if they don't get 50? I think they ought to. Why don't we whittle it down to what the whole caucus agrees on?"

Administration officials and Senate leaders tried to downplay the internal discord, saying they would work with Paul, Heller, Johnson and Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Mike Lee of Utah to modify the bill to win them over.

"Every one of them is committed to a fundamental change away from Obamacare and central government control and into local control and patients making decisions," Barrasso, a member

of leadership, said of the five GOP holdouts.

Barrasso added: "I believe we'll get it passed, and that's the only way we can fundamentally change away from Obamacare."

Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse, speaking to donors, said he was about 40 percent done reading the legislation. But he wasn't prepared to say he would vote for it. Koch network leaders have been critical of the proposal, but haven't announced outright opposition.

"This is largely a Medicaid reform package," Sasse said, lamenting Republicans didn't have the 60 votes necessary for a "full repeal or full replace piece of legislation."

Pressed by the moderator for a position, Sasse dodged. "This session is actually on the record, right? There's press here?," he said. "I have nothing to announce today."

Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.), speaking on CBS' "Face the Nation," also stressed to his conservative colleagues that the GOP measure was a "first step" and "not the last step." Meanwhile, Price argued that the legislation would stabilize insurance markets so insurers would return to communities they've recently abandoned, while offering flexibility to both consumers and to states.

"It's significant reform," Price said on Fox. "It's a move in a much better direction, because it is a patient-centered move."

If McConnell cannot muster 50 votes to take up his Obamacare repeal bill this week, it remains unclear whether he would return to the effort after July 4 or move on to other top GOP priorities, including tax cuts and raising the federal debt limit.

"I think they have, at best, a 50-50 chance of passing this bill," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said on "This Week."

Should Republicans fail to push repeal through the Senate, Schumer said, he would reach out to the White House to renew his offer of a bipartisan discussion on ways to fix Obamacare without repealing the law.

Some Republicans said they thought McConnell could still pull it off.

"This is still a work in progress, although the leader of the United States Senate is very good at establishing coalitions to see that legislation passes," Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) said on Fox's "Sunday Futures." "I just don't know whether the votes will be there by the end of the week."

Kevin Robillard contributed to this report.

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Price invites GOP foes of Obamacare overhaul to keep talking [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 06/25/2017 09:57 AM EDT

A top Trump administration official leading Obamacare overhaul efforts sought Sunday to placate members of his own party in the Senate who are opposing legislation unveiled last week.

Tom Price, secretary of Health and Human Services, said on "Fox News Sunday" that President Donald Trump and others are talking with the five Senate Republicans who have said they do not support the Senate version of an Obamacare overhaul. They are Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, Ted Cruz of Texas, Mike Lee of Utah, Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Dean Heller of Nevada.

Those senators have said "we want to be able to support this bill," Price said about conversations with the five holdouts.

Responding to a question about Heller's opposition over concerns about Medicaid, Price said, "Medicaid isn't the only vehicle to be able to purchase coverage or to be able to have coverage." And to Paul, Price said that Obamacare's "penalties go away" in the Senate legislation. "There are 6.5 million folks who are paying \$3 billion for the privilege of not purchasing that coverage," said Price.

"What we're trying to do here, admittedly, is to thread a needle to make it so that, as the president says, every single American needs to be able to have access to the kind of coverage that they want," Price said, adding that conversations with Republican holdouts are ongoing.

"That's the nature of the legislative process, and that's what we'll be working through this week."

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Freedom Caucus holds fire on Senate Obamacare repeal bill [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney and Rachael Bade | 06/25/2017 07:12 AM EDT

The most hard-line conservatives in the House are taking an unusually cautious approach to the Senate's Obamacare replacement, promising to keep an open mind about whatever their colleagues across the Capitol send back.

It's a change in strategy for the House Freedom Caucus.

When House leaders first released a health care bill in February, for instance, group members took to television talk shows to pan the plan as "Obamacare lite," furious that it didn't, in their eyes, do enough to unravel the 2010 health care law.

They also threatened to withhold their support until changes were made, and later won concessions.

For now, those hardball tactics have disappeared. As the Senate looks to pass its own health care legislation this week, those same House conservatives are taking a more measured approach — even as several conservatives in the Senate are currently balking at the bill.

"I would like it to be better, but if this is the best we can do across the whole conference and the whole Congress, I have to respect that," said Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pa.), a Freedom Caucus member.

Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) said last week that he — and the majority of the group — would likely back the Senate measure if it includes a few changes offered by conservative ally Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). And he's signaled in recent weeks a willingness to bend on other Freedom Caucus priorities, including state waivers for Obamacare regulations that were essential to winning over the hard-liners' support in the House just a few weeks ago.

As senators began negotiating, the Freedom Caucus refrained from taking formal positions on ideas floating around the upper chamber that many in their ranks would have once rushed to oppose. And Freedom Caucus vice chair Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) on Thursday said it's unlikely that they'll weigh in on the plan soon.

It's a notable change in tone from the typically rigid negotiating tactics of the Freedom Caucus. And it's all aimed squarely at allowing their Senate colleagues breathing room to conduct difficult negotiations.

"I'm optimistic that in the effort to find 51 votes in the Senate and 218 votes [in the House], that some of those compromises are being made," Meadows told reporters Thursday, hours after the Senate released its initial health care plan.

Since the House passed its bill in May, the Freedom Caucus has kept a low profile, freeing Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to find consensus without conservative House members blasting his every move.

In an interview late last month, Meadows even joked that his involvement would probably just tank the Senate process: "Leader McConnell doesn't need Mark Meadows to tell how to get consensus in the Senate. And quite frankly, the more that Mark Meadows tries to help him get consensus, the more difficult it is for him to get consensus, and I'm very self-aware of that."

It's more than just simple courtesy. McConnell is working in a highly polarized Senate to cobble together 50 votes for a health care package. With no Democrats expected to support the measure, he can afford to lose only two of the chamber's 52 Republicans.

Already, four conservative senators — Cruz, Mike Lee (R-Utah), Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) — have said they can't support the bill without amendments to dismantle more of Obamacare. A fifth senator, Dean Heller (R-Nev.), is pulling in the opposite direction, warning that the initial bill cuts too deeply into Medicaid and Obamacare's protections for him to support it.

Meadows and the Freedom Caucus are still hoping to assert themselves before the final version of the bill is passed, but they're doing it in uncharacteristically subtle ways.

The group's leaders, including Meadows, Jordan and Raúl Labrador (R-Idaho), have kept in touch with conservative senators, especially Lee, as well as Johnson.

Meadows has also quietly been working with mainstream Senate Republicans to ward off changes that might erode conservative support — and to signal just how far his allies might be

willing to go in accepting more moderate tweaks to the bill.

For example, he's spoken to Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) about Thune's plan to increase tax credits for poorer individuals while cutting them on the wealthy. The Freedom Caucus has advocated against proposals for a refundable tax credit, but Meadows signaled in May that he's open to Thune's proposal.

Meadows also indicated several weeks ago that the Senate preference for a multiyear phase-out of Obamacare's Medicaid expansion won't necessarily be a deal-breaker, even though conservatives have grumbled that the House's shorter window was already too generous. And Meadows even indicated that he could possibly back the Senate bill if it weakens a conservative-favored provision that the House included: allowing states to waive core Obamacare coverage standards.

"If the waivers come out, there will be a number of other options that are put in their place that could potentially be just as meaningful in driving down premiums," he said.

There are also indications the Freedom Caucus' muted approach could change. One conservative source said the group's current stance isn't necessarily indicative of its posture this week, as negotiations in the Senate continue.

Perhaps the most crucial bellwether for conservative support the fate of Cruz's proposed amendments. The Texas firebrand has suggested allowing consumers to use their Obamacare tax credits to purchase insurance products that fall short of the health care law's coverage standards. That "consumer choice" amendment, along with a few other conservative additions, would virtually guarantee a majority of the Freedom Caucus' support, Meadows said Thursday.

Another flash point will come this week, when the Congressional Budget Office indicates the economic and coverage impact that the Senate bill is likely to have. CBO's analysis suggested that the House bill would result in 23 million fewer people with health coverage in the next decade, a metric that spooked some moderate senators, who deemed the House measure a nonstarter.

Conservatives will be looking a different CBO number: how the Senate bill affects premium increases, the most important thing to them.

"If CBO says this will continue to bring down premiums, and it protects pro-life and Planned Parenthood defunding and all, I'm open to it," Jordan said of the Senate proposal Thursday.

In the meantime, the drumbeat of news that insurers are pulling out of Obamacare's individual market exchanges has provided fuel for Republicans to push ahead with their plans. And it appears to be making it easier for some conservatives to swallow compromises.

"Is the bill that the Senate kicked out or the House bill my dream bill? No, it is not," Perry said. "However, the context is, what's happening now is failing, and we have an obligation to do what we can to fix it as best we can."

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Trump: All Dems do is 'delay and complain. They own Obamacare!' [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 06/26/2017 09:08 AM EDT

Democrats who have loudly opposed Republican efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act "have no policies or ideas," President Donald Trump wrote online Monday morning, and are themselves responsible for the controversial healthcare legislation that GOP lawmakers have campaigned against for years.

"The Democrats have become nothing but OBSTRUCTIONISTS, they have no policies or ideas. All they do is delay and complain. They own ObamaCare!" Trump wrote on Twitter Monday morning. He followed up shortly with a second health care-related post: "Republican Senators are working very hard to get there, with no help from the Democrats. Not easy! Perhaps just let OCare crash & burn!"

The president's promise to repeal and replace his predecessor's signature healthcare legislation is nearing a key hurdle this week, when the Senate is scheduled to vote on a bill that would undo Obamacare. If passed, it would need to be reconciled with the House version, passed weeks ago, before making its way to Trump's desk.

Trump's labeling of Democrats as obstructionists has been a regular refrain, but with majorities in both the House and Senate, it is Republicans, not Democrats, who have thus far been the biggest obstacle to the president's repeal-and-replace promise.

It took GOP legislators in the House of Representatives two tries to pass a repeal-and-replace measure after weeks of working to strike a compromise between arch-conservative and moderate Republican members. The final version wound up passing by just a handful of votes.

And in the Senate, where the GOP majority is tighter, Republicans can afford to lose just two members of their caucus and still pass their bill to repeal and replace Obamacare. Already five GOP senators have expressed opposition to the bill, although all have left open the possibility that they could support it if changes are made.

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Trump defends GOP health care bill, blasts Obamacare [Back](#)

By Rebecca Morin | 06/24/2017 11:10 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Saturday criticized the Affordable Care Act and Democratic opposition to the Senate's Obamacare repeal bill as he continues to push for its passage.

"Democrats slam GOP healthcare proposal as Obamacare premiums & deductibles increase by over 100%. Remember keep your doctor, keep your plan," the president wrote in an early morning tweet.

Senate Republicans unveiled their plan to repeal Obamacare — the Better Care Reconciliation Act — on Thursday. The bill needs 50 votes to pass but lacks the support of Senate Democrats and several Republican lawmakers.

According to [new analysis](#) released last week by Oliver Wyman Health, an actuarial firm, premiums could increase by 40 percent by 2018 under Obamacare.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders initially would not commit the White House to endorsing the plan during a Thursday press briefing. But Trump tweeted his support for the bill Thursday evening.

"I am very supportive of the Senate #HealthcareBill. Look forward to making it really special! Remember, ObamaCare is dead," Trump wrote Thursday night.

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California's single payer dreaming put on hold [Back](#)

By Victoria Colliver | 06/23/2017 08:43 PM EDT

California's Assembly speaker on Friday decided not to advance the state's high-profile single-payer legislation, calling the effort "woefully incomplete," and sending it back to the Senate for more work.

The decision, which comes a day after the U.S. Senate released its version of the GOP plan to repeal Obamacare, deals a blow to [Senate Bill 562](#), authored by state Sen. Ricardo Lara.

"We are disappointed that the robust debate about healthcare for all that started in the California Senate will not continue in the Assembly this year," Lara said in a statement. "This issue is not going away, and millions of Californians are counting on their elected leaders to protect the health of their families and communities."

This speaker's move does not kill SB 562 because it's been introduced in the first year of a two-year session.

"The Senate can use that time to fill the holes in SB 562 and pass and send to the Assembly workable legislation that addresses financing, delivery of care, and cost control," said Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon [in a statement](#), in which he described himself as a supporter of single payer, but noted the bill has "potentially fatal flaws."

The bill's primary sponsor, the California Nurses Association, immediately condemned the Speaker's decision, calling his late Friday afternoon announcement "a cowardly act, developed in secret without engaging the thousands of Californians who have rallied to enact real health care reform."

"Speaker Rendon's decision is especially ironic given the pending action by the U.S. Senate to withdraw health coverage for millions of Americans, including Californians, and drastically increase costs for tens of millions more of the most ill among us," Deborah Burger, co-

president of the union, said in a statement.

The legislation will remain in the Assembly Rules Committee, Rendon said, "until further notice."

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Senate repeal bill could free health insurers to sell plans across state lines [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond | 06/23/2017 05:41 PM EDT

An under-the-radar provision in the Senate's Obamacare repeal bill would take a step toward the longtime GOP goal of allowing health insurance sales across state lines.

Section 139 of the [bill](#) released Thursday would take away state regulators' ability to approve the participation of plans in their small-group health insurance market, paving the way to speed new plan offerings across the country.

Senate Budget Chairman, [Mike Enzi](#) (R-Wyo.), who authored the provision, says it will help small businesses band together through trade associations and set up or join health plans that cross state lines. But it's spooking state insurance regulators, who warn the measure could destabilize the small group market.

The bill would modify the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the federal statute overseeing workplace benefits. A small group health plan certified to sell in one state would be automatically approved in any other state where it seeks to do business, barring objection from the Labor secretary.

The provision was a "pleasant surprise," said Neil Trautwein, vice president of health care policy at the National Retail Federation, which supports expanding trade association health plans. The NRF consulted with Enzi's office on the provision, but even Trautwein was unsure it would be included in the Senate health bill.

The bill allows multi-state plans to sell health insurance to small businesses across state lines — without being subject to regulation in each state. That would mark an unprecedented change in how those plans get sold and could dilute oversight in the broader insurance market, officials warn.

"This is exactly the thing that many of us who are insurance commissioners have been worried about," California Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones said. "Federal regulation that would preempt state regulation."

"This allows one state to impose its view of health care on all 50 states," added Beth Sammis, an industry expert and former regulator in Maryland.

As written, the provision only affects the small business market, which covers about 18 million people nationwide. But Jones and others say it would quickly destabilize that market, where premiums have been growing slowly in recent years even as the individual market has

experienced significant turbulence. It could also spark broader efforts to roll back state insurance regulations.

In one hypothetical example, a plan could incorporate in a state that has relatively lax regulations — such as Georgia or Mississippi — and then sell in a market like Massachusetts, which has much stricter rules. States currently have broad powers to regulate how insurers settle claims, provider networks and what insurers must cover, among other requirements.

Some conservatives have long called for deregulating the insurance market, and President Donald Trump has pushed for the sale of insurance across state lines. However, his administration had said it would pursue this policy through additional legislation, arguing that Republican lawmakers couldn't advance the idea under the strict budget process being used to pass the Obamacare repeal bill.

An Enzi spokesperson said that the office worked with the Senate parliamentarian to ensure that the provision would pass under strict budget reconciliation rules. Enzi's office said permitting small businesses to band together to form or join regional health plans will allow them to negotiate better prices and benefits than they could have gained on their own.

"Senator Enzi is aware that insurance commissioners have expressed concerns with the ability for individuals, or groups, to buy insurance over state lines," the spokesperson said. "He believes such changes are ultimately better for [consumers] but is willing to listen and work with insurance commissioners who have concerns."

Industry experts agree that the Senate bill's provisions could potentially lead to cheaper health insurance premiums upfront, if small businesses buy less comprehensive coverage for their employees. But they also warn that those employees could then be hurt by higher out-of-pocket costs later.

They further fear the provision could spark a race to the bottom as plans flock to incorporate in states with lax regulations and then sell nationwide. That would undercut plans that choose to remain incorporated in states with stricter regulations and end up paying higher prices as a result.

"There is a serious concern what this could do to the small group market — which is stable right now," an official at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners told POLITICO. "Throwing this bomb in there could cause some disruption."

Even in states like Tennessee, where the individual insurance market is facing real problems, the small group market is performing well. "We have a lot more insurers participating in the small group market," Insurance Commissioner Julie McPeak said.

Concern about selling across state lines unites regulators in red states and blue states. Maryland Commissioner Al Redmer Jr., appointed by that state's GOP governor, said that any effort to weaken state regulations would hurt his ability to safeguard consumers.

"Insurance departments around the country are concerned about individual [states] not having the ability to protect their citizens," Redmer said. And "state legislatures around the country will have heartburn," too.

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Republican governors could be secret weapon against health care bill [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 06/24/2017 09:05 AM EDT

A handful of GOP governors opposed to their party's proposals to overhaul Medicaid could potentially kill Mitch McConnell's effort to repeal Obamacare.

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, a Republican moderate who has hammered the repeal efforts for months, helped to deliver Sen. Dean Heller to the "no" column Friday. He stood next to Heller in the governor's conference room in Las Vegas as the Nevada Republican announced he could not vote for the Senate repeal plan as written.

"I cannot support a piece of legislation that takes insurance away from tens of millions of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Nevadans," said Heller, becoming the fifth senator to go public with a threat to vote against the bill since it was unveiled. "It's going to be very difficult to get me to a yes."

Other GOP governors, including Ohio's John Kasich and Arizona's Doug Ducey, are pressing their own lawmakers — including Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) — to oppose or alter provisions the state executives fear would cut billions in Medicaid funding to their budgets over the next decade.

Governors have no authority over their lawmakers, of course, and their sway is as much about personal relationships as it is about state politics. But even a handful of strongly opposed Republican governors could provide political cover for their senators to oppose the legislation.

And that could be a problem for McConnell, who can afford to lose only two of his 52 members to pass the bill, which could see a floor vote as soon as next week.

Kasich, for instance, whose state expanded Medicaid, has spearheaded much of the opposition to GOP plans to restructure Medicaid, but it is unclear yet whether he has persuaded Sen. Rob Portman, the state's one GOP senator.

"Gov. Kasich is going to speak out every day until the vote is taken," said John Weaver, a Republican political strategist who advises Kasich. "What influence that has on Rob Portman? I have no idea."

Portman is among the moderates also being wooed by McConnell. A co-leader of a group of GOP senators from states that expanded Medicaid, the Ohio senator has sought a longer phase-out of that program and wants more money to address the opioid crisis since many substance abusers have gotten treatment through Medicaid. He has not said how he plans to vote.

Ducey, meanwhile, wrote a letter to McCain obtained by POLITICO expressing support for repealing Obamacare, which he called "a policy disaster," but outlining his objections to the Senate draft: He complained about a three-year phase-out of Medicaid expansion funding, saying he would not have enough time to plug holes in the state's budget. He asked for more explicit Medicaid flexibility — and he said that federal funding for the program needs to grow

at a rate exceeding that of medical inflation.

"Medicaid must be able to pay for the real-world costs of providing care," Ducey wrote. Arizona's Medicaid agency on Friday released an analysis that the draft Senate bill could cost the state roughly \$7 billion between 2018 and 2026.

McCain, who has said he would consult Ducey and other state leaders, has not said how he will vote.

With only two days since the text of a bill written in secret was released publicly, most senators have declined to say how they will vote. But several say they are consulting with their governors and other state leaders before they make a decision.

After the release of the bill, Heller said he would share it with Sandoval to help determine whether it is good for his state. "As I have consistently stated, if the bill is good for Nevada, I'll vote for it and if it's not - I won't," he said in a statement.

Roughly 24 hours later, Heller stood alongside Sandoval announcing his opposition. "I think we can do better," said Sandoval, a moderate who is term limited in 2018. "If you don't have access to meaningful healthcare and you can't get the care that you need, nothing else really matters."

The issues for most Republican governors relate to how the GOP plan treats Medicaid, a federal-state program that provides health coverage to the poor, the elderly and the disabled — approximately 74 million in all. Sixteen red states expanded Medicaid under Obamacare.

The Senate bill would phase out that expansion over three years — a longer window than allowed for in the House legislation but one that moderates say isn't long enough. It also proposes to eliminate Medicaid's status as open-ended entitlement, a sweeping change that some argue could threaten care for tens of millions of children, pregnant women, the elderly and disabled individuals.

In addition, the plan would cap federal Medicaid funds to states based on the number and type of enrollees, with the funds growing in sync with medical inflation until 2025, after which they would drop to the lower rate of general inflation. That has caused alarm among many state officials in both parties, who say those types of spending reductions are not tenable.

Aware of the huge role that Medicaid plays in their states, most senators say they're consulting with their colleagues back home.

"I have to tell you that I try to respect and respond to the elected leaders in my home state," McCain said Thursday during his weekly Facebook Live town hall. "In this particular case, because Arizona is a Medicaid-expansion state, it is even more important."

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis, whose state has a Democratic governor but a GOP-controlled state Legislature said he planned to be talking with state legislative leaders this weekend.

"As complex as it is, there are really only a handful of levels you need to look at and see how it affects your state," he said.

Jennifer Haberkorn contributed reporting.

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Why Dems can't break through on Obamacare repeal [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 06/26/2017 05:05 AM EDT

Even before Senate Republicans released their Obamacare repeal plan last week, a call went out from liberal activists: Head to the airport and greet departing senators with a furious protest.

About five dozen demonstrators showed up at Reagan National Airport, chanting loudly and hoisting signs that read "Don't Take Away Our Health Care" and "Resist." Organizers hailed the turnout given the short notice, but the contrast with the thousands of people who flocked to the last airport protests — against President Donald Trump's travel ban — was inescapable.

And compared with the tea party fervor aimed at Democrats when they worked to pass Obamacare seven years ago, this year's liberal defense of the law hasn't mustered the same energy to seize, and stay in command of, the nation's attention.

For weeks now, liberal activists and Democratic senators have struggled to capture the public's focus in their campaign to halt Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's momentum to repeal Obamacare. Now that the GOP bill is public, its expected coverage losses are likely to make it as deeply unpopular as the House's plan — yet the left is facing a perilously narrow window to pick off wavering Republican senators and sink the bill before this week's vote.

That messaging crisis is not for lack of trying. But progressives have been stymied by Republicans' strategy of keeping the bill behind closed doors as well as a crowded media landscape fixated more on Trump's tweets and Russia scandal than on the intricacies of Medicaid spending. And then there's money: Democrats have been vastly outspent by Republicans in ad wars over Obamacare repeal.

Even if they break through the clutter this week by flooding the GOP with public anger, they may be too late to save Obamacare.

"What we want is for this to be in the headlines, on the front page of newspapers every morning, and it hasn't been because it's been such a secretive process," Angel Padilla, policy director of the liberal group Indivisible, said in an interview.

Even after 43 disability-rights activists, including many in wheelchairs, got dragged out and arrested outside McConnell's office Thursday, Padilla said he saw "most of the evening news programs still talking about tapes" of former FBI Director James Comey that Trump initially suggested existed before saying they don't.

"It's been really frustrating."

Now, Democrats haven't been entirely unsuccessful.

Raucous town hall meetings organized by Indivisible and other groups earlier this year spooked GOP lawmakers and garnered significant media coverage. And only 16 percent of the public now thinks the House-passed measure, which largely mirrors the Senate bill, is a good idea, according to last week's NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll — strong evidence that Democratic attacks are resonating. Obamacare itself is more popular than ever.

"The numbers for the Republican health care bill are lower than I remember for the [Affordable Care Act]," said David Axelrod, a former top adviser to President Barack Obama. "The one element that is missing is the significant ad spending we saw on the anti-ACA campaign."

The Democratic group Save My Care and AARP have escalated their advertising push in defense of Obamacare in recent days, but it is not likely to match opponents' campaign. American Action Network, a nonprofit with ties to House Speaker Paul Ryan, spent more than \$8 million on TV and radio advertising during House debate on repeal; a pair of progressive groups spent less than \$2 million by that point.

Another former top Obama adviser, Anita Dunn, disputed the notion that liberals are having more trouble this year than the tea party did in 2009 and 2010, arguing the GOP's plan is now polling poorly and that Republicans are "hiding from their constituents" by holding fewer town halls and rushing to pass the bill.

"But there are some significant differences — President Obama made ACA his focal point and there were no scandal stories (like Russia) competing in the space," emailed Dunn, who served as White House communications director at the start of the Affordable Care Act debate. "The Democrats ran an open and public process, with hearings, witnesses, and many opportunities for the other side to organize around."

And while Trump-era marches have drawn tens of thousands into the streets to call for action against climate change, support immigrants and demand the president's tax returns, none have focused on opposing Obamacare repeal. In contrast, thousands of tea party activists descended on the Capitol to protest final passage of the health care law in March 2010. Liberals may try something similar, with activists spreading the word on Twitter about forming "a massive human chain" at the Capitol on Wednesday, the day before a possible Senate vote.

Senate Democrats are powerless to stop the bill on their own, because Republicans are using procedural maneuvers to circumvent a filibuster. But they have tried a variety of tactics lately to try to bring public pressure to bear on the GOP.

Last week, they [launched](#) a procedural blockade to spotlight Republicans' avoidance of hearings on their repeal bill. They held a talk-a-thon that stretched until midnight, with a series of senators speaking on the floor. A trio of Democratic senators, Cory Booker of New Jersey, Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Brian Schatz of Hawaii, jumped in a cab and recorded their trip to the Congressional Budget Office to try to unearth the proposal.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) took the save-Obamacare show on the road over the weekend, drawing more than 1,000 people to the first of three rallies against repeal that he and MoveOn.org held in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

Democrats have also sought to elevate the personal stories of those threatened by the bill, which would cost millions of low-income Americans their health insurance and gut key

consumer protections, all while slashing taxes for the wealthy and insurers. They held numerous news conferences with constituents who would be harmed by the bill and promoted a push on social media with the hashtag #AmericaSpeaksOut.

But the left has been unable to fuel a viral phrase, like conservatives' false "death panel" charges, or to find a single pro-Obamacare face to rise from the pack and take aim at Trump — much as Gold Star father Khizr Khan or former Miss Universe Alicia Machado did during last year's presidential campaign.

"The thing that really elevates someone's story from merely provoking empathy to becoming iconic is when Republicans or the right-wing media attack a grass-roots hero," said MoveOn Washington director Ben Wikler.

During the House's Obamacare repeal debate, it appeared briefly that late-night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel might take the mantle after an emotional speech about his infant son, who had a health crisis, went viral. But the House, after serious struggles, passed its bill. And then the debate went quiet in public, particularly as Republicans [sidestepped](#) recess-week town halls following earlier tense confrontations with constituents.

Sen. Tom Carper admitted in an interview that he isn't sure whether Democratic messaging has broken through yet. But the Delaware Democrat argued that his party has successfully branded the GOP repeal bill with at least one label: [secret](#).

"The press doesn't know what's going on. We don't know what's going on. Some of the Republicans don't know what's going on," Carper said. "That's got to be disconcerting to average, normal people who have misgivings about this place anyway."

Hammering the Senate GOP's Obamacare repeal as too radioactive to draft in public may prove liberals' most compelling tactic against a bill that could see a vote less than one week after its release and as changes remain under consideration.

"If I'm a vulnerable Republican senator, I'm breathing a sigh of relief that McConnell took active measures to minimize the news coverage, but I'm panicked what signal that secrecy sent to voters," said Democratic strategist Jesse Ferguson, a veteran of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee during the original Obamacare battle.

"It doesn't take a Ph.D. in health policy for voters to figure out he kept it secret because it would be bad for them, and his plotting has made an unpopular bill even more reviled," said Ferguson, who is now working with several groups opposed to repeal.

Ultimately, progressives might find one thing in common with the Obama-era tea party: Both might fall short on Capitol Hill, only to take revenge at the polls.

For all its energy on the ground at the time, the right failed to stop the health care law from being passed.

With complete control of Washington and a commitment to their policy goals, Democrats were willing to plow ahead regardless of the political ramifications. Republicans now find themselves in a similar position.

A GOP wave toppled House Democrats from power in 2010, and Democrats are predicting that Republicans will suffer in 2018 if their bill becomes law.

"Unlike the ACA, which grew more popular as its effects and benefits kicked in, [repeal] will become even more unpopular as the law's effects of people losing health care and paying more for less coverage become a reality," Dunn said.

House Republicans may be nervous, but Senate Republicans face a highly favorable electoral map next year, potentially easing most GOP senators' fears of backing the controversial proposal.

Democrats, meanwhile, are expressing optimism that they can marshal the massive public pushback needed to derail the legislation this week.

"I think people are starting to get it," Murphy told POLITICO soon after the GOP bill emerged. "They realize that this is not theoretical anymore. This is something terrible about to happen to them."

From the sidelines of the airport protest, Working Families Party organizer Zach Weinstein agreed. "Now it seems like we're all on the same page — on the grass-roots side, on the inside," he said. "Hopefully we can stop this thing once and for all."

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Trump political arm to GOP: Get in line [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 06/25/2017 08:38 PM EDT

A new campaign by top White House allies targeting the GOP's most vulnerable senator over health care sends a loud message to those resistant to the Trump agenda: We're coming after you.

America First Policies, a White House-backed outside group led by the president's top campaign advisers, has launched a \$1 million attack against Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, who on Friday [announced](#) that he opposed the Senate's recently unveiled Obamacare repeal plan.

That included a Twitter and digital ad campaign targeting the senator, including a video that accuses him of "standing with" House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a reviled figure in conservative circles.

"Unacceptable," the video says. "If you're opposed to this bill, we're opposed to you."

America First Policies is set to expand its campaign early this week with TV ads that will go after the Nevada senator.

The offensive aims both to punish Heller and to sway his vote, and it is a stunning act of political retaliation against a member of the president's own party — one who faces a perilous path to reelection in 2018. Senior Republicans, many of whom are deeply worried about Heller's political standing and increasingly nervous about the midterms, were shocked and spent the weekend measuring the possible fallout.

Those close to the White House say the attack is an outgrowth of President Donald Trump's mounting frustration over his stymied legislative agenda and anger at Capitol Hill Republicans whom he sees as unhelpful.

In a Saturday [tweet](#), Trump hinted at his displeasure after multiple senators expressed concerns with the bill: "I cannot imagine that these very fine Republican Senators would allow the American people to suffer a broken ObamaCare any longer!"

By targeting Heller, America First Policies is telegraphing to recalcitrant Republican lawmakers — even those trying to navigate treacherous political waters at home — that they will be punished if they don't go along with the Trump agenda. Other Republicans could soon face similar attacks.

Brian Walsh, president of America First Policies, said after Heller's Friday news conference that the group's senior leadership — including former Republican National Committee chief of staff Katie Walsh, Trump fundraiser Tommy Hicks, and Nick Ayers, a longtime top strategist for Vice President Mike Pence — determined that "it was time to make a strong statement."

"For the greater part of a decade, the GOP has promised to repeal and replace Obamacare, taken dozens of votes to do so; now, with the ability to keep that promise on the horizon, legislators are wavering," Walsh said. "Sen. Heller's decision to walk away is unacceptable and sends the wrong message to the rest of the senators who are still working to get to 'yes.'"

Within 90 minutes of Heller's announcement, the group had mobilized. Determined not to let the news fade on a summer Friday afternoon, Brad Parscale, the digital director on Trump's presidential campaign who now works with America First Policies, directed an anti-Heller Twitter offensive aimed at ginning up anger among Trump supporters. Spending just over \$100,000, the organization encouraged people to tweet at Heller and his staffers, created algorithms that tied Heller with Pelosi, and promoted a "HellerVotesYes" hashtag.

On Saturday morning, America First Policies itself tweeted: "Why did @SenDeanHeller lie to voters about #RepealAndReplace? He's now with @NancyPelosi. NOT GOOD! #HellerVotesYes."

For America First Policies, the move represented something of an about-face. During the House health care debate this spring, White House officials said the group was too passive and should have pressured Republicans who opposed the repeal effort. As Congress entered the summer months, the group promised a more muscular effort to promote the president's agenda.

The anti-Heller move, however, rankled allies of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who keeps a close eye on his party's 2018 plans and is deeply sensitive to attacks on his members. Several McConnell political advisers said they received no warning and vented that it was a serious misstep, especially with the party holding just a two-seat majority.

Heller's team was also blindsided and infuriated by the barrage, said one adviser to the Nevada senator. But, fearful of further antagonizing the White House, they refrained from hitting back.

"I have a lot of respect for the team running this organization but think attacking fellow Republicans is a big mistake and a bad strategy," said Brian Walsh, a former top National Republican Senatorial Committee official (who is not related to America First Policies' Brian Walsh or Katie Walsh). "There are 10 Senate Democrats running for reelection in states won

by President Trump, including several by double digits. Money and energy on the Republican side should be focused on turning those seats red and not on a circular firing squad."

The offensive isn't entirely without precedent. In 2009, as then-President Barack Obama's health care push got underway, a White House political arm began airing commercials in the states of vulnerable Democratic senators — some facing reelection — who had voiced concerns about the legislation. The ads annoyed then-Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, who at one point called them a "waste of money."

Yet the pro-Obama ads, which did not mention the Democratic senators' names, were not nearly as hostile as the pro-Trump ones, which accused Heller of lying and described his behavior as "unacceptable."

The animosity between Trump's allies and Heller is not new. During his 2016 campaign, Trump struggled to win over Capitol Hill Republicans, including the Nevada Republican, who made it known — repeatedly — that he was no fan of the GOP candidate. In June 2016, Heller was quoted as saying he had no intention of voting for Trump. Trump has since made clear to top advisers he doesn't view the Nevadan as an ally, said two people close to the president.

When the Senate health care debate heated up last week, Heller was once again in the White House cross hairs. In conversations with the administration, the senator made clear he was leaning against supporting the bill. But Trump advisers thought he was using the bill to play political games — a view that only intensified on Friday afternoon when Heller made his announcement alongside GOP Gov. Brian Sandoval, a past Trump critic who also opposes the health care legislation.

"He needs to come back to the table and work to get to 'yes.' Period," said America First Policies' Walsh. "I think we are making that crystal clear."

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Koch-backed group calls health fight in Congress 'humbling' [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 06/25/2017 09:15 PM EDT

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The head of the Koch brothers-backed Americans for Prosperity admitted to donors on Sunday that the group was caught "flat-footed" by the fight in Congress to replace Obamacare, as the group seeks to influence Republican proposals it says do not go far enough to repeal the 2010 law.

"We fully expected a repeal vote," Americans for Prosperity President Tim Phillips told hundreds of donors at the Koch network's annual seminar at the Broadmoor Resort. "We were caught flat-footed when it didn't happen."

He added: "This has been humbling for us."

Americans for Prosperity and other Koch network groups have been critical of the GOP replacement efforts, arguing they don't do enough to rein in costs or undo President Barack

Obama's signature achievement. The group opposed the first House repeal attempt but backed a later version negotiated by House Freedom Caucus Chair Mark Meadows and New Jersey Rep. Tom MacArthur.

The group has been critical of the Senate's draft, with Phillips telling reporters on Saturday the proposal was "disappointing," but has stopped short of out-and-out opposing the law.

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), speaking to a donor lunch, declined to take a position on the legislation. But he pointed out Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn in the crowd and said he had a bruise on his collarbone from Cornyn putting his thumb on him. Two other senators in attendance, Mike Lee of Utah and Ted Cruz of Texas, have said they oppose the current version of the legislation.

Cornyn, speaking to reporters, said the bill was on track for a vote this week but acknowledged that it would be tough to get the votes needed for passage.

"It's going to be close," he said.

Phillips warned the donors they had a limited amount of time to change policy at the federal level because of the looming 2018 elections. The network's top priority in that time? Tax reform, not health care.

"We have a window of about 12 months until the 2018 election grinds policy to a halt," he said. "We've learned from health care that we can't take anything for granted."

The group sent three members of the House Freedom Caucus — Florida Rep. Ron DeSantis, North Carolina Rep. Mark Meadows and Virginia Rep. Dave Brat — to pitch their vision for tax reform to reporters. The group strongly opposes proposals for a border adjustment tax, which both House Speaker Paul Ryan and Ways and Means Committee Chair Kevin Brady have backed.

"The B.A.T. is D.O.A. in the Congress," DeSantis said. "The Phillies have a better chance of winning the World Series this year than BAT has [of] passing." (The Phillies have the worst record in baseball and are 25 games under .500.)

Meadows said President Donald Trump told him he doesn't support the tax either.

"The speaker now understands that he does not have the votes on the BAT," he said of Ryan.

Network leaders said they also were pleased with the Trump administration's efforts on the federal judiciary, regulatory reform, education reform and in other areas. But the group warned donors significant losses in the midterm elections could block progress.

"This midterm election cycle is far more difficult than in recent years," said Emily Seidel, a top official at Freedom Partners, another Koch-backed organization. She said liberal political groups were seeing donations booming and had growing budgets to match the donors' largesse. "We are facing a reinvigorated left."

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States must support some church programs, high court rules [Back](#)

By Benjamin Wermund and Caitlin Emma | 06/26/2017 11:02 AM EDT

The Supreme Court chipped away Monday at the traditional wall separating church and state, ruling 7-2 that states cannot exclude religious institutions from state programs that have a purely secular intent — in this case, making playgrounds safer.

However, the court framed its decision narrowly in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia vs. Comer*, declining to say how far states could go to fund the school choice programs being pushed by President Donald Trump as part of his sweeping school choice agenda.

The decision written by Chief Justice John Roberts held that Missouri wrongly denied a church a state grant "simply because of what it is — a church." But it stopped short of addressing the constitutionality of provisions in 39 states, including Missouri's, that bar public money from supporting religious organizations. Those provisions, known as Blaine Amendments, have been an obstacle to many school voucher programs, which channel taxpayer money to help low-income families pay tuition for private schools, many of which are run by religious groups.

Still, religious rights and voucher proponents, including Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, celebrated the ruling as an incremental win, while most groups opposed to taxpayer funding of religious groups denounced it.

Roberts took pains to underscore the narrowness of the decision in a footnote, saying "this case involves express discrimination based on religious identity with respect to playground resurfacing. We do not address religious uses of funding or other forms of discrimination."

Significantly, Justices Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas objected to the footnote, arguing it made the ruling unnecessarily vague.

"I worry that some might mistakenly read it to suggest that only 'playground resurfacing' cases, or only those with some association with children's safety or health, or perhaps some other social good we find sufficiently worthy, are governed by the legal rules recounted in and faithfully applied by the Court's opinion," Gorsuch wrote.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said the decision "reaffirms that the government cannot discriminate against individuals or organizations, simply because they or their members hold religious beliefs."

The Center for Education Reform, an advocacy group seeking expansion of vouchers, praised the court for its support of religious rights and pledged to work to bring other cases to enable the justices "to review the constitutionality of Blaine Amendments and pave the way for parents to decide the best educational opportunities for their children, be they private, religious or public in nature."

On the other side, the National Education Association, a teachers union that took Missouri's side, applauded the high court for steering clear of a broad decision that would affirm voucher plans.

"Today's ruling means that those state constitutional provisions remain as safeguards against such voucher proposals and returns to the legislative branches the question of whether vouchers make any sense," NEA President Lily Eskelsen García said.

Harvard professor Martin West said the opinion won't stop states from denying vouchers to religious schools based on their Blaine Amendments.

"One of those challenges, if successful at the state level, could then provide an another opportunity for the Supreme Court to clarify the issue," he said.

"Gorsuch and Thomas write separately to say that they see no distinction between denying funds based on the identity of a religious institution and their use of the funds," he added. "They would clearly be on board with a broader ruling."

The Institute for Justice, a libertarian advocacy group that defends school choice programs in court — including a Colorado program under challenge — called Monday's ruling a victory, but said the high court needs to take up the Colorado case to settle the larger issues.

"Sooner or later, the U.S. Supreme Court will need to address the lingering bigotry of Blaine Amendments that stand out like scars in state constitutions across the nation," Institute for Justice President Scott Bullock said in a statement. "The Court should now take up the Douglas County case and explicitly reject government discrimination against the free and independent choices of parents who choose religious schools for their children in school choice programs."

Some advocates for a strict separation of church and state described the decision as a blow.

"This ruling threatens to open the door to more taxpayer support for religion, which is at odds with our history, traditions and common sense," Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said in a statement.

A lengthy dissent by Justice Sonia Sotomayor and joined by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg took strong exception to Roberts' decision, saying it "slights both our precedents and our history, and its reasoning weakens this country's longstanding commitment to a separation of church and state beneficial to both."

Daniel Mach, director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief which took the state's side in the case, called the decision disappointing — but expressed relief it did not go further.

"Religious freedom should protect unwilling taxpayers from funding church property, not force them to foot the bill," Mach said. "The court's ruling, however, focuses specifically on grants for playground resurfacing, and does not give the government unlimited authority to fund religious activity."

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Study finds 'substantial' losses in math for Indiana voucher students [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 06/26/2017 09:00 AM EDT

Indiana students who left public schools for private schools using a voucher saw "substantial

annual achievement losses" in math in their first few years and no difference in reading, compared to students who stayed in public schools, according to a [new study](#).

But the students who remained in private schools for three or four years "make up what they initially lost relative to their public school peers" in math scores, found R. Joseph Waddington of the University of Kentucky and Mark Berends of the University of Notre Dame — two researchers who've studied Indiana's school voucher program for years.

The poorest-performing students, meanwhile, tended to return to public schools.

The researchers note that they observed a relatively small number of students across three and, especially, four years and cautioned against premature conclusions.

"These year three and four estimates may also point to student persistence, as the lowest achieving students who receive a voucher and attend a private school tend to return to a public school," the study suggests. "Additional years of testing data and information from teachers and principals will shed more light on these trends — and possible explanations for them — across years of the program."

The analysis looked at Indiana students in grades three through eight who transferred from public to private school using a voucher during the first four years of the program, or the 2011-12 through 2014-15 school years.

Voucher students typically entered private school "substantially behind their private school peers." During the first two years of the voucher program, "many private schools lacked the capacity or experience in educating new students who are academically behind," the study says.

Some teachers and principals also reported that voucher students struggled with changes in norms and expectations, like homework requirements.

"As expectations or norms may be different in private schools than public schools, voucher students attending private schools for the first time could be put at a disadvantage beyond negative math scores," the report says.

The statewide results are similar to a previous study by the two researchers, which found Indianapolis students who left public school for a private school saw achievement losses in math and no benefits in reading.

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: Sen. Deb Fischer [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 06/25/2017 04:01 PM EDT

Sen. [Deb Fischer](#) worries about the Pentagon's timetable for modernizing the nation's nuclear arsenal — and that a slip in one program could undermine the effort.

"If we don't stay on schedule, or if something unforeseen would happen that would throw [a program] off the rails, then that's going to be an issue," the chairwoman of the Senate Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee told POLITICO.

Senior military officers have warned Congress this year that little slack exists for delay in the development of key nuclear programs.

The Republican senator from Nebraska, though, is hopeful that military commanders will now have a freer hand under President Donald Trump to talk about their needs for increased funding, including more money for nuclear modernization, than during the Obama administration.

"We've seen it at hearings," Fischer said. "There's been a difference in the last five months in what they're presenting to the committee."

Fischer, whose home state of Nebraska hosts the headquarters of U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, also said she hopes the Pentagon's nuclear posture and ballistic missile defense reviews will detail the Trump administration's priorities for funding its proposed nuclear overhaul.

The senator also pushed back against the creation of a "Space Corps," a proposal championed by House Armed Services Strategic Forces Chairman [Mike Rogers](#) (R-Ala.), as an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

"Now, we're going to have a space force, and what's next?" Fischer asked. "I don't want to create more layers that respond slowly to really important areas like space and cyber, where many times you need a quick response."

POLITICO sat down with the senator in her Capitol Hill office to discuss pressing defense issues and her goals for her subcommittee ahead of its scheduled closed markup of the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act Monday afternoon.

These excerpts have been edited for length and clarity.

What are your thoughts on the president's topline defense budget proposal? Is it sufficient?

I'm pleased that he had an emphasis on national defense and security. I think, obviously, those are my priorities for the federal government. And I liked that he did that. In looking at the department's budget of course the area that we focus on the most is with nuclear modernization. That's obviously a priority. And this secretary of Defense and previous ones have made it clear that it's a priority as well for the department.

What were your takeaways from the nuclear modernization proposal? Specifically, some of your colleagues were pleased with the \$1 billion increase at the National Nuclear Security Administration. Is that sufficient?

I think it is. Through the whole modernization portfolio that we have...the thing that I'm concerned about the most is the timetable. Because we have a lot of projects that are coming due at the same time. So if we don't stay on schedule, or if something unforeseen would happen that would throw [a program] off the rails, then that's going to be an issue...

But, I've received assurances that yes, everything's on schedule, it's going to work out fine. I've even asked, 'well, do you need more money in this area or this area,' and been told that no, they really don't at this point.

Turning toward the subcommittee markup...tell me a little bit about some of the priorities are going to be there.

I think it's going to be fine...You know, it's really a pretty bipartisan subcommittee.

What I find amazing this year and one thing I really wanted to accomplish as chairman — and I spoke with Sen. [Joe] Donnelly (D-Ind.) about it — we just felt it would be really important to educate members and that was going to be a focus.

So, the first subcommittee hearing we had...Gen. [Robert] Kehler there, to be able to speak, obviously, with authority, but also with kind of reassuring members too, just about what our nuclear program is, the importance of the triad, the importance of deterrence, and not do so in a threatening manner.

Are there any specific programs your subcommittee is prioritizing or that should be looked at as part of the authorization process?

Obviously, the areas that I focus on are the ones under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. So, it's [nuclear] modernization, it's space, it's missile defense. Looking at STRATCOM, making sure we can move forward...on the command center.

Cyber is something we talk about a lot, but we don't have a plan for. It's a criticism I would say I levied at the last administration on different defense issues. That we just didn't hear a plan. And I have commented to this administration as well that we need a plan and we need a plan on cyber....It needs to be laid out. But not just for Congress but for our allies, ...our friends and our adversaries as well.

What do you mean by a plan for cyber?

I mean how we act and react to cyber aggression... A lot of people compare cyber to nuclear, and they think that because you have nuclear deterrence, cyber deterrence is going to work as well. I don't necessarily buy into that...

There's no definition on what an act of war is in cyberspace. There are no international norms when it comes to cyberattacks. You know, those are questions that I think need to be answered and need to be answered soon, if we're going to keep up...in this new war-space.

You said you were also looking at STRATCOM as well. Any specific oversight concerns with STRATCOM that you're looking at?

Nothing specific right now, just to look that the command-and-control center stays on schedule.

What are your expectations of the nuclear posture review and ballistic missile defense review the administration is conducting?

Obviously, I want to see the triad...be reaffirmed there. On the posture review, I hope to see the emphasis on what are the priorities and where should funding really go. And [for the

Defense Department] to be honest about if we do need increased funding, to just say, 'we need it.' I don't know if that's always been the case in the past. ... The military is always very careful not to be political and I don't think it would be political, I just think they need to be truthful in what their conclusions really are.

Are there any programs that you can point to where you feel like, perhaps in the past they've underestimated the amount of funding they need?

I don't know...if necessarily they've underestimated programs. I think they follow directives they are given. They work for a commander-in-chief.

Don't you feel there's been a difference even in testimony this year? ... It's like, why didn't you say this before? I understand the position they're in, but it's frustrating as a member who's trying to provide resources that this country needs...not get the full picture...I understand they serve the commander-in-chief, but they serve this country as well.

To be clear, you feel like military commanders have a bit of a freer hand now than in the Obama administration to talk about the damage the sequester has had?

We've seen it, we've seen it at the hearings. I don't want to leave the impression that they haven't spoken up in the past. They have. At every hearing, there's a question about sequestration and it's a bad thing, and yes, they've always agreed with that. But...there's been a difference in the last five months in what they're presenting to the committee. And, obviously, that comes from Secretary [Jim] Mattis, but there's definitely a difference.

Is there a compromise you can see with Democrats that would lift the defense budget caps?

I would hope that my colleagues on the other side will at least be able to get on defense appropriations bills. I have found that very frustrating that we pass a NDAA and two weeks later we can't get on a defense appropriations bill.

We all vote for authorization of these programs and then won't even take up an appropriations bill to fund them. I don't know how you go home and justify that to people in your state...

So, I think, suck it up, we need to start doing our job and taking on appropriations bills. And then you need to make a tough decision:

Are you going to fund this program or are you going to fund that program? Are you really going to back up the words you say at a committee about defense needing more money and then be willing to make a choice, between a program in the Department of Defense and not increase funding for other discretionary programs?... It's a dollar for dollar, I don't support that.

Related to the nuclear posture review, what in your view is the best way to deal with Russian violations of the INF Treaty?

It's obviously going to be up to the military...and the secretary of Defense to provide options to the president on what to do. I think there has to be firmer stand taken, then just saying, yes, you violated this treaty. Because now, we're into...the third year since the cruise missile test occurred...

We're looking now at deploying missiles. Do we just keep saying no you should do that? Or should there be consequences? And obviously there needs to be consequences...

We just passed a sanctions bill ... Sanctions are always an option. ... Or again, depending on what options the department's going to provide to the president, there are actions that can be taken...Either with interceptors, or taking them out on the ground, or developing our own.

If Russia does not come back into compliance with the treaty, would you support sanctions or developing our own missiles?

I would support a plan that can lay out options in a manner that provides...a decisive end-state. And we haven't seen that in the past. But it would just be nice to hear plans.

Sanctions is an option...but, as I mentioned, there are other actions that can be taken as well.

Are there any specific military space programs that you are eyeing or have oversight concerns about? Additionally, are there military space reform initiatives that you would support?

With space, I think many members of the committee have had their eyes open to challenges that we face...And I just think there's a lot of concern about where we are and where other countries are with regard to space, and what's happening in space.

Congressman Rogers has suggested that we need to look at how we encourage personnel in the Air Force to pursue space careers. He's also talked about the idea of a Space Corps. Is that something you would support?

The congressman's been in my office to talk about that. I'm not sold on a space force right now.

Why is that?

I worry about having a force for everything. You know we just started a new U.S. Cyber Command. There's talk about a cyber force now. Now, we're going to have a space force and what's next?

I don't want to create more layers that respond slowly to really important areas like space and cyber, where many times you need a quick response.

So it's a bureaucracy concern?

Yea, I would say that would be part of it. And it's difficult to find trained individuals. But I would say that the services are training people, in cyber areas especially, to be able to respond to these...areas. I have to be convinced...on what we would gain from the creation of [a Space Corps]. The congressman makes a good case. I just haven't agreed with him on it. He said he'll be back.

There has been some concern out there with the pace of nominations to the Pentagon. Is that a concern that you share as well and if so, how would you like to see it addressed?

I encourage the president and the administration to get us names, not just with the Defense Department, but for all the agencies. There's a lot of spots to fill.

Do you have any management concerns about the Pentagon in the meantime?

I haven't seen any. It's nice to have phone calls returned. And it's nice to have staff...call different departments and have their phone calls...answered.

But yes, there needs to a quicker pace in staffing of all the departments. But we've been fortunate in our office in working with the administration.

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Study: Seattle minimum wage increase cut worker pay [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 06/26/2017 09:00 AM EDT

Seattle's \$13 minimum wage has reduced the hours of low-wage workers by 9.4 percent, according to a [study](#) released by University of Washington researchers this morning.

The study examined the first two hikes in Seattle's \$15 minimum wage law, from \$9.47 to \$11 in 2015 and to \$13 in 2016. The first round had little effect, the research found. But in the second, hours for low-wage workers fell by 3.5 million per quarter.

The reduction in hours, paired with a modest 3 percent increase in wages, had a sizable effect on the amount of money workers take home. According to the study, low-wage workers — defined as earning less than \$19 per hour — took an average pay cut of \$125 per month in 2016.

The findings are likely to inflame the partisan debate over minimum wage. The left-leaning Economic Policy Institute already released a lengthy [rebuttal](#), arguing the analysis "suffers from a number of data and methodological problems" that skew the data toward job loss.

The authors warn that their findings shouldn't be used to frame the national debate over minimum wage. They caution that differences in regional economies could produce different results for minimum wage hikes elsewhere.

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Rep. Adam Kinzinger: The Full Transcript [Back](#)

By Susan B. Glasser | 06/26/2017 05:19 AM EDT

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Glasser: Hi, I'm Susan Glasser, and welcome back to The *Global POLITICO*. I am delighted to have Congressman Adam Kinzinger, once again, as our guest this week. And really, it's a

great opportunity. I've wanted to have him as a Global POLITICO almost since I launched this podcast, now five months, more or less, which is exactly how long—

Kinzinger: Congrats, by the way.

Glasser: Which is exactly the length of the Trump presidency. The reason I always wanted to have you, Congressman, as a guest is I've often thought back to a conversation that we had last summer, so just about a year ago now, at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

At the time, perhaps it was a little bit of an academic discussion over what kind of a foreign policy President Donald Trump might be. But I'll set the stage for you a little bit. Just that morning, *The New York Times* had had an interview with Donald Trump. And I believe you were already a little bit not sure that you really could support your party's nominee. He would then take the stage the next day and make his acceptance speech. A very kind of dark vision of America that echoed his future inaugural, "American carnage" speech. But at that point, that hadn't happened.

But *New York Times* had had this fascinating interview with Donald Trump in which he raised all sorts of questions about American foreign policy. And I was amazed to have you come in there, and sit down, and just sort of say exactly what you thought. And your analysis holds up pretty strongly a year later. And so, I thought we'd start with a quote from that event of a year ago.

You said, "Donald Trump believes in strongmen. Vladimir Putin is a strongman. He's a tough guy, and I think that attracts Donald Trump. I call it a 'narcissistic foreign policy.' Coming from Donald Trump is the idea that [the] world needs us; that if we're going to be in Korea, or have troops in Germany, they need to pay us. I am offended by the idea I'm some kind of protection racket, or some kind of mercenary force."

What you called it at the time was "a very dark but seductive foreign policy. It's very dangerous." OK. A year later, a "narcissistic foreign policy." In a way, that might be the best description I've seen yet. People are always trying to impose doctrines on Donald Trump. Do you still think "narcissistic foreign policy" fits?

Kinzinger: You know, I think it's very interesting to me to look at where we are, versus rhetoric of a year ago. I've actually been very pleased with what I've seen out of this presidency — the bombing of the airfield in Syria, holding to the redline, pushing back against redline crossings in Syria. I think, you know, by actions, pushing back against Russia, not necessarily words. So, I've been impressed with that.

At the same time, you have the actions compared to the words, and the words have still been, you know... You go to NATO — and think there has to be an understanding. Yes, NATO needs to pay more money. It needs to meet its commitment to national defense. But the reality is, we're not doing NATO a favor. NATO, as much as anything, is doing us a favor. We're helping each other. That's what mutual defense is about.

And so, I think I would like to see more words about the fact that, you know, our involvement in the world is not just out of the charity of heart, it's out of necessity. We're not in South Korea just because we love the South Koreans. There is a strategic interest to us there. The South Koreans already pay for half of our troops that are stationed there. It's actually cheaper to have a troop in South Korea than it is like in Alabama because of that.

And so I think, to an extent, the words have been still somewhat of a narcissistic view of why America exists in the world. But the actions of the administration, I've actually been pretty happy with.

Glasser: Well, you're capturing sort of, I think, what we've all observed. There's Donald Trump and his Twitter feed, and his personal instincts and views about foreign policy. And now, of course, he has an entire administration — or maybe not a fully staffed one. We can talk about that later. But he has an administration. He's hired a secretary of defense who's widely respected. He's hired a national security adviser. A secretary of state.

And so trying and struggling, I think we all are, to figure out what's the balance between the people he's put into power, the existing policies that their departments represent, and then the role that the president himself plays. We had a pretty stark demonstration of that over the last couple weeks when we had Trump, once again, seeming to make foreign policy by tweet on North Korea and China, for example. We are very confused. What is our policy in the Middle East?

So how do you look at that? You're up here on Capitol Hill, obviously, so you're not sitting in the room, but you're debating this with your colleagues in the Foreign Affairs Committee. How do you look at the difference between the president himself and this whole foreign policy and national security infrastructure that we have?

Kinzinger: Well, I've never been in the White House in terms of in power, or been in the administration, so it's hard for me to say. You know, the president definitely has final say in terms of anything on foreign policy, but there's also a structure that acts beyond him. There are decisions that are made. For instance, shooting down an Su-22 in Syria was probably not something that the president directly gave the order to [do], but he did give the leverage to his commanders to make that decision. So it's kind of hard to tell where that falls.

There's also the issue of, look, President Trump is a good entertainer, and, frankly, he knows how to communicate with people he needs to communicate to. And he understands that kind of idea of "American first" is really attractive to people, so he says it. You know, "NATO needs us. We're doing them a favor." That idea.

But what I've seen in action is he seems to be giving a pretty significant amount of leverage to his team, which is what we want to see. For instance, as we learn about what the future of Afghanistan's going to be, and the amount of troops, and everything else, he seems to be empowering Secretary Mattis and others to make that decision, and that's a good thing.

So it's a dichotomy I don't think I can figure out in terms of the difference between the words of the president and the actions. But I'll tell you, I've been happy with the actions. The words, not so much.

Glasser: So, you know, last year in our conversation at the RNC, you said, "The president is a dictator on foreign policy." And that was part of the reason you had so many concerns, recognizing there were few constraints on his action. And of course, the question of what role Congress can play is one that a lot of people have been asking. How does it look now that you're trying to think about what are the constraints you would want to put around a president in the Oval Office on foreign policy? You guys are considering a Russia sanctions bill right now. Tell me a little bit about the balance between executive and legislative power in the Trump era.

Kinzinger: I believe, when it comes to foreign policy, in a very strong executive branch— and I'm probably the minority view in Congress in this— everybody wants to have their say. The problem is between House and the Senate, there's 535 of us. And all of us out here think that we could be a good commander in chief. So you have 535 members of Congress that all have their idea of how to fight ISIS, how to push back against Syria, et cetera.

And the problem is, in this complicated world where it's not about, you know, in the 1700s, when you declare war against England, it takes three months to even get the message there. This is all real-time things. We find out there's a chemical attack, or there's a fighter bombing our allies. You know, that kind of stuff. This has to be leverage given to the president.

So I would vote for and like to see us pass a use-of-force authorization against ISIS. I don't think the president needs it, but I think we should. The problem is, you have members of Congress out here that want to put constraints in it. You know, a time limit, a troop limit. You cannot, as members of Congress, tie the hands of the president. You give him a goal, which is destroy ISIS, and you let him decide how to get here.

And then, on things like Russia, I do think Congress can play a strong role in sending a message to the administration and to Russia that Congress believes that sanctions, at this point, are the best thing to deal with what's been going on. I do think there is a role for Congress to play, but I give a lot of military leverage to the president because I just don't — I know my colleagues out here. I love them all, but a lot of them don't know anything about the military or warfare, and they think they do.

Glasser: Well, and we should note, of course, that you served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. I think that's part of what gives you a different perspective in general on foreign policy. You've rated it as a much more important reason why you're in Congress ...

Kinzinger: Right.

Glasser: ... in the first place than most of your colleagues. But let's drill in a little bit on that Russia sanctions bill, because it's an interesting case study. It's one of the first examples that's come up where you have clearly a policy disagreement by, I would say, the majority of Republicans on Capitol Hill, who are eager to show that they still favor a tougher approach to Vladimir Putin and to Russia than President Trump has personally indicated.

You have this bill coming over from the Senate and there's a sense though that here, on the House side, is where Trump's allies may try to water it down or change it.

Kinzinger: Right.

Glasser: What are the dynamics inside the Republican Conference here?

Kinzinger: I haven't sensed the dynamics within the conference yet. I think this is so new. And we just assumed this was going to happen. It's so new. What we're hearing today, as of the day we're talking, is that there is a blue-slip issue. Fine, maybe that's the case. You know, revenue originating from the House versus the Senate. That needs to be fixed.

But I think if there is an attempt to water this down, there will be some holy hell from some of us that would be very upset about this. Look, you have interests. I don't want to name names, but it's the same kind of special interest that opposed Russian sanctions in the past, that I specifically talked to and said, 'Don't you dare come in here because of that.' And they're trying to do it again, and they're scaring members. You have European nations that are trying to meet with all of us that are saying — you know, specifically Germany. Germany is saying they're worried about this pipeline issue.

Well, look, Germany shut down all of their nuclear plants, so they became reliant on natural gas. So don't come in to me with a sad story. I love Germany. My family originated from Germany, but don't come in here because you guys screwed up your power grid, and say that you're basically inept to respond to the Russians.

Let's see how this blue-slip issue goes about, but I think you will see a House that is very, very eager to make sure this thing passes.

Glasser: That's so interesting about Germany. So basically, they're worried that in an almost overreaction to Trump and the fear of him being too accommodating to the Russians, they're worried that Congress would go in the other direction, in effect, and potentially make things worse with the Russians, and compromise their ability, as they see it, to negotiate with their big neighbor.

Kinzinger: Yes, basically. But you know, you have to be tough. I understand that they have an interest and a concern. You have to protect your own people. Germany is a very successful country. But again, they shut down all of their nuclear plants in an overreaction to some things, and so, there's some price to pay for it. Now, we should continue to work with Germany to make sure we're exporting natural gas, to make sure that they have the ability to exploit their natural gas, and the allies in the region.

But we've got to do everything. The one-trick pony of Russia is their ability to export natural gas. That's their best foreign policy tool because their jets can barely fly. It's that ability to do natural gas. And keep in mind, the economy of Russia is about the size of — just a little larger than the economy of Illinois. And we have 50 states. They have one big one.

Glasser: Well, it's funny. When I was Moscow correspondent at the very beginning of Putin's tenure, he used to talk, without irony, in saying his goal to make sure that Russia's economy would grow to be as big as Portugal's, the smallest member of the European Union at the time.

Kinzinger: That's right.

Glasser: You know, and I think that's revealing about what they inherited from the Soviet Union as well.

Kinzinger: That's right.

Glasser: So, I think your example about this House, the sanctions bill, is really interesting because it suggests all of the competing politics around Russia right now, which has emerged as this major foreign policy issue of the Trump administration. One of the things that I think I and others are struggling to understand is what has gone on with the politics of Russia in the Republican Party as a result of candidate Trump, now President Trump's different rhetoric about Vladimir Putin.

You've seen an amazing turnaround in the polls, certainly, which suggests that Republicans who used to be the sort of get-tough-on-Russia party have flip-flopped dramatically in terms of public opinion surveys. And it's now Democrats, by and large, who express much more hawkish views about Russia.

Kinzinger: Well, I welcome them finally, by the way, to be Russia hawks because they weren't a few years ago.

Glasser: But that's right. Both parties have shown that they are very flexible, shall we say, in their ideology. What does that mean though here on Capitol Hill? Have your Republican colleagues really changed their mind about Vladimir Putin?

Kinzinger: You know, I hope not. Some have, you know. I have a few friends that basically express a lot of—they believe this kind of idea, which is so flawed it's unbelievable, that it's either a strongman or terrorism, right? Bashar Assad in Syria, and Russia's backing him, or it's just chaos and ISIS everywhere. I don't believe that.

I mean, I don't think strongmen work anymore anyway because with internet, with the ability to communicate, people don't like to be oppressed. I know we may think they do, but they don't. And so, they'll throw off the shackles of dictatorship. People sometimes see the Russians and they buy into this idea that bombing hospitals, bombing schools, basically beating the crap [out] of the Muslims, basically, somehow will help us when this war on terror. And all it does, frankly, is create more enemies.

But in terms of the broader politics of Russia, I was disappointed once when I saw a poll that said, "Vladimir Putin is more popular among Republicans than Barack Obama." And I say, look, I was no fan of President Obama. I think he's a good man, but I would much rather him as my president than Vladimir Putin, who kills his political enemies. And I'll just say briefly, it shows how much people need leadership on foreign policy.

Glasser: Well, that's been your consistent theme all along, is that you need to lead and not follow ...

Kinzinger: Amen.

Glasser: ... when it comes to foreign policy, which is not necessarily how our political class is generally defined.

Kinzinger: That's true.

Glasser: . . . Somebody said to me — I said I was going to interview you today, and they said, "Well, you know, I feel like he's become sort of the John McCain of the House when it comes

to foreign policy in the Republican Party." That's not always an easy role to play. What is it like to be out there disagreeing where you do on issues of principle with the White House, with the administration? Do you get a lot of pushback here?

Kinzinger: You do, but I have a lot of respect for Senator John McCain. He was the first guy to call for a surge in Iraq. Everybody thought he was crazy for that, and it worked. I have a lot of respect for him.

The thing I've learned, so in 2013, I was one of the few House Republicans with Mike Pompeo, frankly, to actually call for giving the president the authority to bomb Syria. The calls in my office at that time were ballistic, of people asking me to resign, I'm a warmonger, everything else. History has proven correct that that would have been the right thing to do.

Look, the job's not particularly fun, and I get elected because I want to make a difference, and I want to make an impact. That's what's fun for me; serving the people in my district, making a big impact on the international front. And so, you know, you ask what's it like. It's actually kind of invigorating to sometimes stand up and just say what needs to be said.

Glasser: Early on, I was envisioning like the internal monologue of John McCain every day, waking up, you know, after January 20. And sort of like, "OK, do I tweet about this one?" Like, you know, "Do I let this one go? What do I pick a fight on and what do I not?" What are your principles for sort of like, "OK. When do I go on TV to say like, 'Enough is enough?'" Which fights do you pick?

Kinzinger: It's almost a day-to-day decision. I like President Trump and I like a lot of the things he's doing as a Republican. You know, again, I mention foreign policy. The actions in foreign policy are good. The agenda on domestic policy. The area where I will pick a fight, or have a disagreement — I think that's a better word to say — is something that's egregious on foreign policy. A tone, a political tone.

I've tried to make as well as foreign policy and representing my district, political tone a big issue. I yearn for the day that we can get back to disagreeing without threatening people's lives and breaking up Thanksgiving dinner. And so, that's another area I'll pick a disagreement on. But it's really a moment-by-moment choice. I'm not out looking to argue with the president. Like I said, I like him. But on areas where I feel like my responsibility is to America and to my district, it's not to the Republican Party.

Glasser: What do you see, by the way, as flashpoints other than Russia? That obviously is an area where the center of gravity, politically, on Russia had been very different than what Trump came in talking about. Are there other areas that you're constantly sort of making that balance? I mean, trade was something that seemed like it would become a much bigger issue. It still might, in terms of Republicans being free traders up here on the Hill, and having a president who is talking in much more protectionist terms.

Kinzinger: I think trade is a big issue. I mean, I'm a free trader, fair trade, right? But what we've seen is the president basically has said, "OK, we're going to kill the Pacific Trade Agreement," which I think was a mistake. But at the same time, you know, we haven't pulled out of NAFTA. I think we're going to be negotiating some one-on-one trade agreements. So I do think he followed through on his promise, but at the same time, it's not quite what people thought he was going to be.

I think we have a tendency — you know, I'm actually very supportive of the president on the issue of infrastructure. We have to build this country. And frankly, as a conservative Republican, if you read the Constitution, it outlines the role of the federal government in infrastructure. I get dismayed when I hear some of my colleagues say the federal government shouldn't have a role. But I think that could be a flash point with other members who are more budget hawk-focused.

And the other, I'd say lastly, is just the budget, in general, can be a flash point. We want to increase military spending, but at the same time, to really deal with the debt in this country, it's going to take entitlements. We all know that. Both sides know that. We just pretend like it's not the case.

We have to reform Social Security. For a guy my age, 39 years old, you can make changes to it to save it for my parents. But you know, the president made a promise not to touch it, and so we're going to continue to try to cut the military, or cut discretionary spending, when we know what the real problem is.

Glasser: OK, I thought we had left Russia behind, but the truth is we have to go back to it. We've avoided it for how many whole minutes? Nineteen whole minutes.

Kinzinger: All right.

Glasser: The Russia investigation, which is not the same thing as the Russia policy conversation, this is the shadow that's sort of hanging over ...

Kinzinger: Yeah.

Glasser: ... all of these conversations. After James Comey's testimony, you said, "President Trump, without a doubt, acted improperly," although we would wait and see what the actual investigative conclusion is. I don't know if you saw it, but I was struck today by an op-ed that former Senator Lowell Weicker, a Republican from Connecticut, wrote in *the New York Times* ... he's the last surviving members of the Watergate Select Committee.

And he wrote about basically the duties of members of Congress in this kind of a situation. And I thought it was very interesting because, of course, he is making the argument that it was much more bipartisan. That Republicans as well as Democrats, if you go back and listen to the Watergate tapes, which he said he'd been doing recently, that you can't tell really, just by listening to the voices which party a member of Congress is in.

Kinzinger: Yes.

Glasser: I suspect that would not be the case if you listened to the Comey questioning, and you didn't know whether the senator was a Republican or a Democrat. You would probably guess pretty quickly.

Kinzinger: Yes.

Glasser: What is your responsibility as a member of Congress in an investigation of the president?

Kinzinger: Well, it's to be a check on the executive branch. It's to uphold the Constitution, and it's to do the right thing. You know, it's interesting, I think President Trump has brought some

of this on himself by just the constant tweeting, right? You know, talking about tapes, talking about this kind of stuff. And I wish he would do what President Clinton did, which was say, "Hey, look, the investigation will go on. I have work to do for the American people." That's good for America, the Republican Party, and the president if he did that.

But at the same time, I've said we deserve answers. Look, I do care about 2018, and I care about 2020 as a Republican. But my deepest burden in this whole situation is not about that. It's about the institution of government because when people have their faith in this government undermined -- right, or left, or in between -- if you believe that we're not getting to the answers, or there's doubt that there was collusion with Russia — and I personally don't think the president colluded with Russia.

But I think we'll figure that out through this process of this investigation. That's what American people need is to know that justice has been served. To know we can hold our leaders, especially the president, accountable to concerns. That's what makes us unique. In Iran, you're not going to be able to have a commission to investigate the ayatollah. It's just not going to work. It's not going to happen in Russia.

It's unique about us because that's how this institution, which represents people from all different countries, backgrounds, colors, creeds, ethnicities, that's how we've worked, is we believe we hold our government accountable. And that's frustrating to some of us out here sometimes because, you know, Congress has a 9 percent approval rating. But it's our favorite pastime to hold our politicians accountable and dislike them. We just need answers.

If there's nothing here and Mueller comes out and says it, this is going backfire against the left pretty big.

Glasser: You watched the Comey testimony?

Kinzinger: Most of it, yes.

Glasser: Just tell me about your reaction. I mean, neither you nor I, in our lifetime, has ever seen the director of the FBI go under oath and call the president of the United States a liar.

Kinzinger: Right. Well, I mean, it's disappointing that he said it or had to say it. You know, the world is watching this. And I believe America's job is to be an example of self-governance to a world drowning in chaos. And then, when we're drowning in our own chaos, it doesn't really help us with that mission.

But at the same time, in watching that there was no smoking gun to say, you know, the president obstructed justice. As I mentioned, I think he acted improperly. I think probably most people would admit that. But that's very different than saying obstructed justice. I do think truth matters in general.

Glasser: Just to be clear, you could imagine a situation where the investigation fills out that picture and ...

Kinzinger: Yes, whichever way.

Glasser: ... makes the point that it's obstruction. You're not saying you don't ...

Kinzinger: That it is or is isn't. Yes.

Glasser: Right. You're just saying that the testimony itself did not ...

Kinzinger: Right.

Glasser: ... conclusively prove that to you.

Kinzinger: Yes. And I'm not a lawyer, and I don't frankly quite know what that rises to. But on the broader point, which is the issue of truth, I learned in Sunday school growing up that there is an absolute truth, and truth matters. Sometimes people can see truth through a different lens, but there is truth. And where I really worry is that people don't believe in truth anymore. They believe in simply what comports with their world view.

So they go on the website that has all the news stories that shows what they believe back at them. Some people go on this news site over here, and it's created this problem where people only believe what they already pre-believe. That's confirmation bias. That's a scary thing when there's no truth anymore. And that's another thing that bothers me. It worries me.

Glasser: I'm sure you get some of that from you constituents or people out there. What about up here on Capitol Hill? Do you think that people live in information bubbles here as members of Congress?

Kinzinger: It's a good question. I think some do, but I also think the men and women I work with on both sides of the aisle are actually really, really impressive people. And I think they can see both sides of arguments. One of the things that I lament, that I wish we could do differently is, people see us fight, but they never see when the cameras are off, we're actually buddies out here. And that's what I wish we could show more of.

But, yes. So there's probably some confirmation bias with people, but I think for the most part, I have a lot of respect for the people I work with, and I think they get good news from great sources.

Glasser: It was a pretty talking-point-laden response that you saw, the public response to the Comey testimony, right? You had Republicans saying, "There's no smoking gun." You had Democrats saying, "This is the gravest accusation made in a hearing since Watergate." That doesn't really — you know, it's not inspiring to people, right?

Kinzinger: Well, and what it does is, again, if you're a Republican, you just say — I think, frankly, the Democrats have been way overly dramatic. I think any new piece of information that hits the news, they are just screaming impeachment. Not all of them — some of them. And that's worn way old. That's gotten way old. But there are some on our side that, you know, deny everything is real, and that gets way old too.

Glasser: Just as a thoughtful person, regardless of where it would lead, what are questions that you have? You and I are both basically spectators here. We're reading these stories as they appear in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. What are some specific questions that you would ask if you were on that committee?

Kinzinger: Well, I think bottom line, up front, what I'd want to know is, who was talking to the Russians if in fact that was happening. Why? What were the discussions? Because I think it's possible that there were some in his circle that were talking to them, that, you know, he didn't know about. Again, I don't this rises up to him, frankly, from what I've seen.

I'd want to know that. I'd want to know what happened after. A lot of different questions about that. But I think when it's all said and done, I'm putting a lot of faith in Robert Mueller, who I think is a great American, to really just do the right thing, and get people the answers they need.

Glasser: As you've thought about it in your head, are there any lines that if they were crossed, would really change your thinking about this for you? For example, the president has already publicly said in the NBC News interview with Lester Holt that he fired Director Comey with the Russia probe and its escalation in mind. Does that trouble you? What are your own redlines?

Kinzinger: It's concerning. I don't want to put what my redlines are because, again, as a not-legal expert, I don't know what rises to illegal, or improper, or not. And so, I think in those hypotheticals, it's kind of dangerous to put my redlines out there. I want to see, frankly, just what the answers are here, and then we can make a decision. I hope there's nothing to any of this, and I hope that the president has a very successful four or eight years.

Glasser: You mentioned the Democrats sort of shouting impeachment at every new newspaper article. What does that feel like up here on Capitol Hill? Is it something that people are actually talking about sort of in a process way, like nuts and bolts?

Kinzinger: Not really. Actually, to be honest with you, no. I don't know within Democratic circles if they are. But on our side, no. I mean, we don't think that that's going to happen. But the Democrats are the ones who are talking about it, and so I'm sure they're having their conversations about that.

But, no. It's not something we're talking about. We're trying to focus on our agenda out here, and you know, we've had some difficulty getting some of that over the finish line. And so, that's where we're really doubling down.

Glasser: That's a very diplomatic way of putting it. You mentioned incivility and how this was one of the issues that you've tried to pick up on. You're wearing right now a sticker in honor of your colleague, Congressman Scalise. After the recent shooting, you just put out on Twitter the other day, you know, an example of some of the incredibly—I don't even know how to characterize it.

Kinzinger: Evil. I say evil.

Glasser: Evil public discourse aimed at you and other Republicans after this shooting, and the idea that people would respond to this by basically saying, "He deserved it," things like that. Have you see a marked deterioration in discourse over the last year as a result of this 2016 election?

Kinzinger: Yes. I mean, look, both sides are responsible. And I think if somebody says only the other side is responsible, they're responsible for this. They're part of the problem. Both sides had it. President Obama had a lot of threats against him. We know about that. I've never seen it this bad though, personally. When somebody puts a tweet saying, "I wish you were on second base during the shooting," or, "I wish the plane had hit the Capitol instead of being taken out by the hero passengers because it would be better off for our country," or, "Lincoln deserved to be assassinated." Those kinds of things are what they're saying.

I thought it was important to put that out there because as a Christian, frankly, I believe that the best way to expose darkness is to bring it to light, and so people can see the kind of thoughts. And I don't do it to say, "Woe is me." Like, I've got thick skin. I can handle it. But I think people need to see the kind of discourse out there. And frankly, it's got to change.

We can have arguments and debates, and we should, and we should have passionate debates. Sometimes they should get too heated, but when it breaks up Thanksgiving dinner, and when Mom and Dad are in the basement watching news and getting angry, and having heart attacks, that's when it's gone too far.

Glasser: And what about the use of the presidential bully pulpit to name call and things like that? Does that have an effect?

Kinzinger: Yes, it does. It's all the way from a guy that's on the city council to the president of the United States. We all have a responsibility to bring the tone back to civility. That includes the president, and I hope we're seeing more of that.

Glasser: Well, I can see that you have a very busy schedule up here today, but I want to just circle back at the very end to the questions that originally prompted this conversation, which are really about your own, very unusual experience as a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, in a Congress where mostly that's not the case.

Kinzinger: Right.

Glasser: You have some thoughts about how to reengage the United States really in Afghanistan, in the Middle East. You've been very critical of President Obama's policy in those places. What is your view about what is possible right now? Is there a more winning scenario for how the U.S. could engage?

Kinzinger: I think we have to understand that we are in a generational fight. I think the mistake that was made at the beginning of the war on terror was this belief that if we just liberated Afghanistan, or did whatever, it would be over. We're not fighting a state in ISIS. We're fighting an ideology, and ideologies are only defeated from within.

I look at this as like the Cold War, just with more shooting. It took us 50 years, and basically a second and third generation, to over throw the cloak of communism from within. That's what it's going to take in this. And where I think we're shortsighted, which is my concern — we'll defeat the Islamic State, but there'll be ISIS 2, and Al Qaeda 3, and ISIS 5 that comes along. We've got to fight the next generational war on terror against and with the 7- and 8-year-olds.

Now, I say that to sound controversial. What I mean is those 7- and 8-year-olds right now who are internally displaced from the evil of Assad, they're the ones that, if they're given no hope and no opportunity, are going to be easy recruits for the next generation of ISIS. If they're given hope, and opportunity, and the ability to read, an optimistic view of the world, they're way less recruitable. That's why you don't see huge recruitings in the United States, because people have opportunity.

And so I think we have to focus on that next generational fight to be successful.

Glasser: So congressman, we started with our conversation a year ago, on your views about Donald Trump and foreign policy at a time when neither you nor I probably thought he was

going to become president.

Kinzinger: Or him. He didn't think so.

Glasser: Or him. Exactly. So, you know, as you look ahead over the next year, what do you think we're going to be talking about a year from now?

Kinzinger: You know, it's really hard to tell. I think we'll have answers to this investigation, and so we'll talk about that, whatever that looks like. I think on a foreign policy front, I think stuff in Syria will come to a head, and I don't know if that means escalation, or if that means de-escalation. But I think we're going to have some kind of a very different situation there. I think ISIS will probably be destroyed, but that's actually going to be the beginning of our difficulties.

And so, you know, it will be interesting a year from now. Stuff has changed so fast in the last year that I've learned it's really hard to predict. But I do believe that we are in a world that while capitalism has brought people way more opportunity, and way more hope, there are a lot of low-grade battles everywhere. As Americans, we have to remember that our job is to be an example of self-governance to billions that are desperate for a taste of what we have.

Glasser: You talked about picking your battles. You know, you have picked a few with the president; a notoriously thin-skinned president. Has there been any retaliation for you?

Kinzinger: No, not at all. In fact, the couple times I've met with him, he's been very complimentary. And so, I'll continue to do what I think is the right thing for my country and my district. You know, if that means call out the president or support him, I want to support him whenever I can, and I'll oppose him when I have to.

Glasser: Thank you so much.

Kinzinger: You bet.

Glasser: That's Congressman Adam Kinzinger. I'm delighted to have him as the guest on this week's *Global POLITICO*. And of course, you can always tune to in on iTunes or whatever is your podcast platform. Subscribe to us, and email me anytime at SGlasser@politico.com. Thanks again.

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Koch network donors eye Trump and Congress warily on health care, taxes [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 06/26/2017 01:13 PM EDT

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Conservative donors see a major opportunity this year to achieve years-old Republican goals of reforming the tax code and passing a new health care law. But they are also consumed with worry that the GOP will somehow blow the chance it has been waiting for — whether because of an unfocused President Donald Trump or fretful congressional Republicans.

That combination of hope and concern infused the summer seminar meeting of the Koch brothers' network of conservative groups. Before a gathering of over 400 donors at the luxury Broadmoor Resort, Koch officials spoke of an enticing but narrow window to pass major tax and health care legislation, even though Republicans control the presidency and both chambers of Congress.

"We have a window of about 12 months until the 2018 election grinds policy to a halt," said Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, the network's grassroots organizing group.

After waiting eight years for another Republican president, some Koch network donors now worry that the current one could end up being an obstacle.

Trump "doesn't have a core philosophy that we have," said Colorado energy executive Chris Wright. Wright, who said he voted for Libertarian presidential nominee Gary Johnson in 2016, added: "We don't have a clear, consistent direction from the top."

"I think we have 10 months and a rare opportunity to shrink the influence of the government on the economy," Wright said. "The one we have now who can sell the public is Paul Ryan, but he doesn't have the bully pulpit. The person with bully pulpit is not a great seller of ideas and progress."

The Koch network, organized by brothers Charles and David Koch, is a collection of conservative donors who have donated billions over the decades to everything from Republican politicians to school choice efforts to university think tanks in an effort to move the country in their ideological direction. The group's allies and former staffers hold key positions throughout the Trump administration, and the network announced plans earlier this weekend to [spend nearly \\$400 million on politics and policy](#) over the next two years.

The Koch network declined to directly back Trump's candidacy in the election last year. Top network officials have been pleased with his administration's court appointments and work on tax reform, and were ecstatic about legislation he signed last week reforming the Department of Veterans Affairs. But they were sharply critical of Attorney General Jeff Sessions' stance on criminal justice reform and the GOP efforts to repeal Obamacare, arguing the Senate bill doesn't do enough to lower premiums and totally repeal the law. (The network isn't officially opposing the Senate proposal, but is working to make it more conservative.)

But individual donors in the network have donated significant sums to Trump and super PACs backing him, including Doug Deason, a Texas-based donor who is the son of IT billionaire Darwin Deason.

Deason was more bullish on Trump, particularly praising his pick of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. "Anything other than Gorsuch is gravy," Deason said. "Even if he just tweeted and pissed people off now, I'd be happy."

But he also said he and a group of about ten other Dallas-area donors planned to withhold checks from out-of-state Senate and House GOP incumbents until Trump's agenda, including Obamacare repeal and tax reform, made it through.

Deason said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell needed to "grow a pair." "We want to send a message about how important this is," he said.

At the same time, Deason said he had recently met with leaders from America First Policies, a nonprofit backing Trump's agenda that launched attacks on Nevada Sen. Dean Heller for opposing the Senate health care bill, arguing it cut Medicaid too harshly and did too little to lower premiums.

Deason wasn't the only donor who worried about whether congressional Republicans will ultimately pass major legislation.

Bob Fettig, a Wisconsin metal fabrication company owner, was optimistic about the chances for tax reform. "It looks like they're serious, and they're actually going to do something to simplify it," he said.

But Fettig added: "The big question is, when it gets down to vote time, are they going to introduce all kinds of amendments to undo the simplicity of it?"

"A lot of people are frustrated with our government in general because politicians don't do what they say they're going to do," Fettig continued. "I'm confident that Trump will continue to push forward. ... Politicians are continuing to be politicians."

Despite the apprehension, none indicated they were ready to shut off the money faucet into GOP campaign wallets. Even Deason, who said he had organized Texas donors to deny Republicans campaign cash until Trump's agenda is passed, admitted he might not be able to follow through.

When a reporter asked if he would donate to Republican senators next summer when McConnell called even if the president's agenda flopped, he responded with a shrug: "Yeah."

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How the Right Gets Reagan Wrong [Back](#)

By Henry Olsen | 06/26/2017 07:51 AM EDT

For nearly 30 years, the Republican Party has increasingly resembled a religion, with Ronald Reagan as its deity. Party leaders endlessly quote him, and every GOP presidential nominee until Donald Trump ran on a platform they thought was barely changed from Reagan's 1980 campaign. No wonder conservative talk radio icon Rush Limbaugh calls our 40th president "Ronaldus Magnus": Ronald the Great.

This religion's creed—let's call it Reaganism—is simple. Government and taxes are bad, private entrepreneurship and supply-side economics is good. Social conservatism and unofficial endorsement of Christianity is essential to national well-being. Around the world, America should speak loudly, carry the biggest stick and never be afraid of using it. Proclaim and practice these truths and political success will be yours.

This canon has been repeated for so long that it seems self-evidently true to Republicans and movement conservatives. But it's simply not the sum of what Reagan believed.

I discovered this while researching my new book on Reagan's life. I learned that election returns show Americans don't want what Reaganism's high priests are preaching. More crucially, I learned that everything I thought I knew about Reagan was wrong—that Reaganism misrepresents Reagan's own views.

Reagan's conservatism actually fit squarely within Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal consensus, not the anti-New Deal conservatism that forms Reaganism's heart.

Heresy! some readers will cry. How can a man who backed Barry Goldwater, who said that "libertarianism is the heart of conservatism," and who told America that "government is not the solution to the problem, it is the problem" be a New Deal conservative? The answer is that while all those statements are true, they exist in the context of a much more pro-government world view than Reaganism admits.

The young Reagan was an ardent devotee of FDR and the Democratic Party. His friends from that era say he memorized FDR's "fireside chats" and incessantly prattled on about New Deal liberalism. Many assume that his political outlook changed so much as he moved to the right that he rejected FDR and the New Deal. But Reagan always said "I didn't leave the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party left me." Taking that line seriously is the first step to getting Reagan right.

Reagan's early conservative talks before he rose to national fame during Goldwater's bid for the presidency in October 1964 argued that certain government social programs weren't needed to meet "humanitarian aims." He would criticize bureaucrats who bossed people around or programs that gave aid to people who didn't need it. He did not, however, join other conservatives and say New Deal programs were unconstitutional or an improper thing for government to do. Nor, if the programs genuinely met a legitimate need, did he criticize them for costing too much.

Quite the contrary. I just about fell off my chair in the Reagan Library when I heard him say this in a 1958 speech: "In the last few decades we have indulged in a great program of social progress with many welfare programs. I'm sure that most of us in spite of the cost wouldn't buy many of these projects back at any price. They represented forward thinking on our part."

He repeated similar sentiments in every speech I listened to, even saying in 1961, "Any person in the United State who requires medical attention and cannot provide for himself should have it provided for him." That year, he supported an alternative to Medicare called the Kerr-Mills Act that gave federal funds to states so they could help poor senior citizens pay for medical care, even writing to a longtime friend that "if the money isn't enough I think we should put up more."

Reagan did not change his stripes as he became conservatism's hero, and continued to preach his own unique conservative vision. He told viewers of the October 1964 "Time for Choosing" speech endorsing Goldwater, the speech that made him a national political star, that conservatives were for "telling our senior citizens that that no one in this country should be denied medical care for lack of funds." He campaigned for governor of California saying talk "in America of left and right" was "disruptive talk, dividing us down the center." He said his "Creative Society," intended to be a non-bureaucratic alternative to Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society," wasn't "some glorified program for passing the buck and telling people to play Samaritan and solve their problems on their own while government stands by to hand out Good Conduct ribbons." And when he became governor, he pushed through a then-record tax

increase after his efforts to "cut, squeeze, and trim" government could not balance the budget.

He didn't alter his views when he ran for and became president, either. He often said, "Those who, through no fault of their own, must depend on the rest of us" would be exempt from budget cuts. He pushed through three tax increases as president, one of which made Social Security solvent for the past 35 years.

Reagan got these ideas from FDR, and often paraphrased lines uttered by his one-time idol. The line that government should support "those who, through no fault of their own," could not support themselves came from FDR, who used that exact phrase frequently to describe who deserved government help. In the Time for Choosing speech, Reagan chastised liberals by saying "the trouble with our liberal friends is not that they're ignorant; it's that so much they know isn't so." Reagan had adapted that line from a nearly identical variant uttered by FDR in his seventh fireside chat. Even Reagan's famous closing statement in the 1980 presidential debate against Jimmy Carter, when he asked Americans if they were better off than they were four years ago, was a direct paraphrase of a section of FDR's fifth fireside chat.

Conservative Republicans who didn't cotton to FDR didn't notice this, but the blue-collar voters who became known as "Reagan Democrats" sure did. During his governor's race, Reagan's margins were an astounding 36 percent to 44 percent larger than those of the 1962 Republican gubernatorial nominee, Richard Nixon, in towns dominated by blue-collar whites. He did dramatically better than other Republican presidential nominees in similar counties and towns when he ran for president, too. As one person told Reagan biographer Lou Cannon in 1984, "He isn't really like a Republican. He's more like an American, which is what we really need."

Republicans and conservatives have forgotten those elements to Reagan's thought and appeal, and have suffered at the polls ever since. The Republican nominee for president has received a majority of the popular vote only once since 1988. Most tellingly, Republican nominees before Trump consistently lost the Reagan Democrat-dominated states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, and Pennsylvania, winning only one of those states (Iowa) in one race (2004).

When Republicans have come out victorious, it's been mainly because the Democratic alternative has been worse, or because those Republicans have tacitly rejected Reaganism's creed. The current congressional majority, for example, is due to the 2010 and 2014 waves, which were clearly a reflection of anger at President Barack Obama rather than an endorsement of Reaganism. And Republican domination of statehouses and state legislatures has resulted mainly because these representatives have rejected Reaganism. Republican governors and state legislatures have continued to increase the size of government, cutting taxes on the margin but largely following the real Reagan by keeping services strong first. Governors like Kansas' Sam Brownback, who tried to buck this consensus by cutting services to make up for deficits caused by large tax cuts, have failed. Even deep-red-state voters like most of the Big Government set in motion by FDR's New Deal.

Meanwhile, Republicans on the national level are ignoring Reagan's legacy by focusing too much on cutting popular programs and providing large tax cuts to people who are already doing quite well. House Speaker Paul Ryan's insistence on making Medicare and Medicaid fiscally sustainable has led to plans that could end up denying medical care to the people who need these programs most. Texas Senator Ted Cruz's presidential campaign put forth a tax plan that would have lowered the top rate paid by the richest taxpayers to a mere 10 percent, cutting federal revenues by over \$8 trillion at a time when the aging of baby boomers would

have started to significantly increase federal spending. It's not that the Democrats' solutions are any better, by the way, but the lesson of the 2012 election was that tired and stale Democratic proposals, even when pronounced by an unpopular standard bearer, beat Reaganism.

Trump is the most surprising and most recent example of Reaganism's political failure. In 2016, he made active government in the service of the "forgotten American," a phrase FDR and Reagan also used to describe working- and middle-class Americans, the centerpiece of his campaign. He trounced 16 GOP adversaries, most of whom (especially Cruz) campaigned on Reaganism's principles. He then received an overwhelming swing vote from blue-collar whites—the same vote Reagan got, in exactly the regions of the country where Reagan did well—to capture the White House. He was the first Republican since Reagan to capture Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa and Pennsylvania.

Trump is far from Reagan's second coming: His tenure in office is decidedly unlike the Gipper's in his tone and his approach to Russia. And he has veered in the direction of Reaganism at times: For one, the president supported Ryan's Obamacare replacement bill (even though he later called it "mean" and the bill will cost many of those Trump Democrats their health care). Trump's tax reform principles also veer far toward the supply-side "cut taxes for the rich" approach Reaganism advocates, providing little-to-no direct tax relief for the Trump Democrats who put him in the Oval Office. But even so, Trump remains the Republican leader least wedded to Reaganism in many years. In fact, his combination of support of an active government in service of the average worker with other traditional GOP concerns such as deregulation and support for the pro-life agenda more closely mimics what Reagan actually said and believed than any other GOP national leader since. No wonder the types of voters who went for Reagan voted for Trump, too.

Reagan's campaign slogan in 1980 was simple, yet profound: "The Time is Now: Reagan." That is as true today as it was then. Replace Reaganism with the real Reagan, and the Republican Party can become "the New Republican Party" he spoke of before the Conservative Political Action Conference's 1977 annual meeting.

That party, he said, was the party of "the man and the woman in the factories, the farmer, the cop on the beat." It was a party that shunned ideology and recognized that conservatives come in different stripes with different concerns and priorities. It was a party that would make certain that "working men and women" would "have a say in what goes on in the party." Without saying it directly, he implied it would be a party that interprets rather than tacitly opposes FDR's New Deal.

Reagan made that point clear toward the end of his career. On Columbus Day, 1988, he told a group of Italian-Americans in New Jersey that the "party of FDR and Harry Truman" wasn't dead. Instead, "the party that represents people like you and me, the party that represents a majority of Americans," was alive—in the GOP. "You see," he told his audience, "the secret is when the left took over the Democratic Party, we took over the Republican Party."

Conservatives face a rendezvous with destiny, a time for choosing. They can choose to follow the false prophets of Reaganism, and thereby hand power over to the left for decades to come. Or they can embrace the real Reagan and finally create the new Republican Party he dreamed of, a party that can make America the shining city on a hill he always knew we could be.

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: House tax writers seek offsets despite \$1.5 trillion budget leeway — Obamacare signups expected to fall as subsidy rises — Puerto Rico dissolves controversial contract
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 4:09:31 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 10/30/2017 04:06 PM EDT

HARD WAY ANYWAY: In an ideal world, Congress could cut taxes without jacking up the debt or hiking other taxes. But reality — and reconciliation — make it an exercise in seesawing with a double-pan scale.

As all you budget experts know, the fiscal 2018 resolution, [H. Con. Res. 71 \(115\)](#), adopted last week could alleviate some of that hassle, allowing the tax cuts to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit. But a number of House tax writers say they plan to offset the bill expected to be unveiled Wednesday, Aaron Lorenzo [explains](#). (Sorry, senators.)

The catch: We're not talking about tit-for-tat spending cuts here. Get ready for the GOP to rely on the often-nebulous, and always controversial, task of dynamic scoring — assuming tax breaks will spur economic growth and then estimating a specific dollar amount produced by that revving. Never mind that a [new analysis](#) by the Tax Policy Center concludes that the Republican tax plan would reduce revenue by about \$2.4 trillion over a decade, Colin Wilhelm and Toby Eckert [explain](#).

Still not enough: Even if that scoring turns out to be mighty dynamic, there's just no way Republicans can guesstimate their way around paying for at least some of the \$5.5 trillion price tag their tax plan is expected to bear. And so the hunt for revenue offsets continues. Potentially kicking in some cash, the mortgage tax credit appears to be back on the chopping block, Lorraine Woellert [reports](#). Then tipping that scale in the other direction, the itemized property tax deduction now seems to be safe, Toby and Colin [note](#).

The trade-offs are tricky, since a lot of folks lose when you ax existing tax breaks. Morning Tax author Bernie Becker articulates that conundrum today in his three-part [video explainer](#) on loopholes and the U.S. tax code.

All the rest: [Property-tax deduction could help](#) | [GOP tosses conservative playbook](#) | [Bill remains shrouded in secrecy](#) | [White House says Trump remains committed to immediate corporate cut](#)

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc of the day — A CRS [report](#) publicly released today states that the House bill [H.R. 2997 \(115\)](#) to separate air traffic control operations from the FAA would trigger an automatic budget sequester if costs are not offset. More from [Tanya Snyder](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — In 2015, 40 states reported 2,436 new cases of acute hepatitis C, although the CDC estimates the actual number is 13.9 times higher, due at least in part to the opioid epidemic. [More](#) from POLITICO's DataPoint team.

Quote du jour: "I'm sorry, but it's just really hard to take your question seriously when there's

two Tyrannosaurus rexes right out there," White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said during a tax reform panel in South Carolina last week, after he was distracted by a parade of employees dressed up for Halloween, [per](#) The Herald.

***FREEDOM CAUCUS FLUB:** Last Wednesday's brief erroneously identified Rep. [Matt Gaetz](#) (R-Fla.) as a member of the House Freedom Caucus. Sorry for the error.

OBAMACARE

OPEN SEASON: With bare-bones operations and hardly any advertising, Obamacare is expected to bring in a lot fewer sign-ups this fall, Paul Demko, Rachana Pradhan and Adam Cancryn [explain](#). But the total cost of Obamacare payments is still almost certain to rise as the government is forced to subsidize those exploding premium costs. The average monthly federal subsidy will be \$555 in 2018, compared to \$382 this year, Paul [reports](#) for Pros today. Sign-ups begin Nov. 1.

Picking up the tab: Much of Obamacare's spiking premiums can be explained by President Donald Trump's actions — including his decision to cancel a key subsidy program earlier this month. CBO [predicted](#) that cutting off those payments would jack up Obamacare's cost by \$194 billion over a decade because customers' subsidies are tied to the cost of their premiums. Then last month, the budget office [estimated](#) that the federal government would spend \$47 billion on subsidies in 2018.

More: [CMS sets rules for 2019 marketplaces](#) | [Dramatic state-to-state differences on enrollment](#)

DISASTER RELIEF

CATCH AND RELEASE: After days of backlash, the Puerto Rican government and Montana-based Whitefish Energy are dissolving their contentious, \$300 million contract. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló publicly called for the cancellation of the contract Sunday morning, after previously resisting any change to the deal, Colin Wilhelm [reports](#). Whitefish was hired to rebuild the island's electrical grid, which remains devastated weeks after Hurricane Maria.

Not off the hook: The no-bid contract, made using emergency funds, will likely come under scrutiny as officials from FEMA and other government agencies head to Capitol Hill for two separate oversight hearings this week.

More: [Whitefish staffs ups in Washington](#) | [Zinke on defense](#)

FINALLY, A FIRE-BORROWING FIX? The House will vote this week on a bill intended to help the federal government with the ever-growing costs of wildfires in the West. Rep. [Bruce Westerman](#), the Arkansas Republican who authored the bill, says the Forest Service would no longer have to dip into other accounts after draining its firefighting budget — a perennial problem known as "fire-borrowing."

How it works: The bill, [H.R. 2936 \(115\)](#), would let the secretaries of Agriculture and Interior declare a major disaster if their departments would otherwise run out of firefighting money that year. Although the measure wouldn't allocate new money, it would allow reshuffling of existing funds. Separate from the funding issue, the bill also contains more controversial forest

management reforms that have angered environmentalists.

WHITE HOUSE

HITTING THE LINKS: For decades, presidents have used the golf course to earn the loyalty of fellow politicians. And in many ways, Trump has followed that trend, successfully tapping into the power of an 18-hole outing with the likes of Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. But POTUS hasn't become fast friends with all of his golf partners, Darren Samuelsohn [explains](#). For one, there's only a small field of lawmakers who are good enough to compete with the president on the course, says Rep. [John Yarmuth](#) of Kentucky, the Budget Committee's ranking Democrat (and both a member and property owner at Trump's semi-private golf club in Ireland).

'Tough call': And then there's the fact that members of the minority party are reluctant to be seen swinging a club next to a political foe like Trump. "I'm not sure there's a lot of Democrats who'd want to go out and spend four hours with him," Yarmuth said. Personally receiving an invite from Trump would be "a very tough call," he added, arguing that he wouldn't necessarily want to "tarnish" his only presidential golf experience thus far (with President Barack Obama in 2015).

AGRICULTURE

HARVEY RUINS 'ONE OF BEST CROPS EVER': Hurricane Harvey caused more than \$200 million in crop damage for Texas farmers — many of whom were banking on a record year, according to a new [analysis](#) from Texas A&M University. Cotton farmers saw half of the losses, or about \$100 million, amounting to just a slice of the state's \$2.5 billion cotton crop last year, Jenny Hopkinson [explains](#). "Many South Texas or coastal area cotton farmers were on the verge of harvesting one of the best crops ever in Texas," says Doug Steele, a researcher at Texas A&M.

DEFENSE

MOUNTING COSTS: The Pentagon has spent more than \$1.4 trillion on war operations since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Connor O'Brien [reports](#). A new government [report](#) shows the U.S. military has spent more in Afghanistan than Iraq on a year-to-year basis since 2010. But more has been spent in Iraq overall — \$748 billion, compared to \$687 billion spent in Afghanistan.

AUMF price tag: The ever-growing costs of war are sure to come under scrutiny [tonight](#) when Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Both are likely to face a barrage of questions about the prospects of open-ended warfare against global extremists.

EDUCATION

DEVOS IS DOWNSIZING: The Office of Federal Student Aid has begun offering buyouts — including early retirement — to longtime employees to help shrink the education department, The Washington Post [reports](#). A department employee could receive as much as \$25,000 under that offer, Kimberly Hefling [adds](#).

EARMARKS

- John Boehner unchained. [POLITICO Magazine](#).
- How a Republican idea for reducing Medicare costs could affect you. [The New York Times](#).
- Connecticut's budget solution: State capital gets more, small towns get less. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Is \$45 billion the White House's opioid funding ask? [Prescription Pulse](#).
- Opinion: GOP has murdered the federal budget. [Forbes](#).
- Study: GOP tax plan will explode deficit. [The Hill](#).
- Debate over sanctuary cities gets a test run in Virginia governor's race. [The Wall Street Journal](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 41 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/10/house-tax-writers-look-for-offsets-despite-15-trillion-budget-leeway-025296>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

A \$1.5 trillion gift to the House [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 10/30/2017 05:01 AM EDT

House Ways and Means Republicans gained a good deal of breathing room on tax reform with House passage of the Senate budget last week.

It simply makes some tough choices easier.

"Of course it does," said Rep. [Mike Kelly](#) (R-Pa.), who's fighting to keep a number of longstanding tax benefits related to the cost of doing business, like deductions for borrowing and advertising expenses and a credit for construction in economically depressed communities.

Not only does the budget plan deliver a filibuster-proof pathway — known as reconciliation — for a broad bill to redraw U.S. tax laws, it also comes with \$1.5 trillion in headroom for tax cuts to add to the deficit.

The original budget resolution the House passed earlier this month included some spending cuts and instructions for revenue-neutral tax legislation, leaving less latitude for tax reform. But Senate Republicans crafted their budget more flexibly and left the spending cuts out, and that's the roadmap going forward on both sides of the Capitol.

The \$1.5 trillion frees House Republicans of the yoke of revenue neutrality.

A number of GOP Ways and Means members say they still plan to offset the tax legislation

they're scheduled to roll out on Wednesday, when counting on economic growth they believe the bill will produce under so-called dynamic scoring. The Senate's deficit figure is based on traditional scoring.

"In order to make this move in the most timely manner, we accepted their instructions but we're going to continue to move on our plan, and our plan is for offsets on a dynamic basis," said Rep. [Tom Rice](#) (R-S.C.).

A dynamic score will come from the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation after Ways and Means finishes its business on the bill, expected after several days of a markup set to begin Nov. 6, said Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas).

But committee members admit that not even dynamic scoring can make up for \$1.5 trillion in a tax package expected to cost some \$5.5 trillion in total in order to reduce the corporate tax rate to 20 percent, cut other business tax rates to 25 percent and lower individual tax rates almost across the board, among many other changes.

But they're not prepared to forecast a final House figure, either.

"Those are the numbers we're still working on based on all the changes," said Rep. [Jim Renacci](#) (R-Ohio). "This is their way of passing a budget, which is a gimmick, we pass our budget. In the end, we haven't followed a budget since 1974 in this Congress so this is a way to get tax reform done. It's that simple."

When former Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp introduced tax reform legislation in 2014, it was based on years of development under revenue-neutral strictures imposed by the Republican from Michigan.

GOP members of the committee then and now griped that those limits were unnecessary because of their belief that tax cuts will yield economic growth, and they didn't want to pare back some benefits long baked into the tax code that are designed to motivate business expansion. And those sentiments aren't unique to Republicans on the tax-writing panel.

The hunt for revenue offsets in the current overhaul effort has been hard enough, Kelly said.

Most recently, fights have broken out over proposals to eliminate the federal deduction for state and local taxes and to alter when taxes get collected on retirement contributions. Fully repealing the deduction could raise about \$1.3 trillion over a decade and the retirement move \$750 billion, though bartering for compromise on both ideas would generate less revenue.

Republican lawmakers from high-tax districts in New York and New Jersey are pressuring their party leaders to back off outright repeal of the state and local tax deduction. The budget passed by a narrow 216-212 margin largely because of state and local tax worries among many of the 20 Republicans who voted against it.

Some are now threatening to withhold their support for tax reform.

In the dispute over retirement plans, President Donald Trump has warned tax writers to keep their hands off 401(k)s. But Brady and his Senate counterpart, Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), have refused to rule out changes.

Before the current squabbling over those issues, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and Brady kept up

a protracted fight over their import tax idea that would have raised more than \$1 trillion over the 10-year budget window, but they lost.

Hence the ongoing quest for revenue, which has occupied a lot of time in private meetings between Brady and Republican Ways and Means members over the past two days.

Republican senators who first approved the budget's \$1.5 trillion allowance believe about a third of it is accounted for by considering current policy rather than current law, though the latter is used by the Congressional Budget Office.

Growth of about 0.4 percent a year over the current CBO projection of economic expansion would make up the remaining balance of roughly \$1 trillion.

Brady plans to introduce it Nov. 1 and then open official committee debate the week after. The markup is expected over multiple days, Brady said. A traditional score will be released when the markup begins, he said.

And despite all the wrangling over offsets and how much economic punch their tax plan will ultimately deliver, Ways and Means Republicans are projecting confidence.

"For us to get rates down, we've got to get rid of a lot of things," said Rep. [Devin Nunes](#) (R-Calif.). "I'm not worried about any of this."

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TPC analysis: GOP tax plan would slow economy long-term [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm and Toby Eckert | 10/27/2017 04:23 PM EDT

A [new analysis](#) of the GOP tax reform plan concludes that it would boost the economy in the short term but slow it over the long term, reducing federal revenue by around \$2.4 trillion over a decade.

The study by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center runs counter to White House estimates. A [study published today](#) by the White House Council of Economic Advisers, for instance, estimates an economic boost of up to 5 percent in the long term just as the result of business tax cuts.

The TPC study was based on a dynamic score of the tax overhaul framework released by Hill Republican leaders and the Trump administration in September, along with assumptions derived from the administration's April outline and the "Better Way" plan House Republicans released in 2016.

"TPC found that the Framework would boost the economy in the short-run as people spend some of their increased after-tax income and businesses increase investment, temporarily raising output relative to its potential level," Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the Center, [wrote in a blog post](#). "However, over time the tax cuts — and the increased deficits they produce — squeeze the overall supply of capital, raise the cost of borrowing, and lower firms'

level of investment. The smaller capital stock also diminishes wage growth, which in turn reduces labor supply."

The report is likely to draw strong pushback from the White House and congressional Republicans. They fiercely disputed an [earlier TPC report](#) that concluded the wealthy would be the biggest winners under the GOP tax plan.

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Ryan loses key ally on tax reform after switch on breaks for homeowners [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 10/28/2017 04:59 PM EDT

The National Association of Home Builders on Saturday accused House Speaker Paul Ryan of abruptly reversing course on a mortgage tax credit proposal and announced it would oppose the tax-reform proposal that GOP lawmakers expect to unveil on Wednesday.

The about-face by the housing-industry lobbying group strips Republicans of a powerful ally. Tax breaks for homeowners have long been one of the flash points of any attempt to rewrite the nation's tax laws.

"All the resources we were going to put into supporting are now going to go into opposing the plan," NAHB Chief Executive Officer Jerry Howard told POLITICO.

Homebuilders and other groups had been working with Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) on a plan to preserve tax breaks for homeowners. House Republicans have been planning to weaken the deduction that home mortgage borrowers currently get for the interest they pay on their mortgages by raising the standard deduction, leading much of the housing lobby to line up against the plan.

As an alternative, Brady had agreed to a tax credit that would combine mortgage interest and local property taxes, Howard said.

Friday night, Brady told Howard that that idea had been rejected by House leadership. In a phone call Saturday, Ryan said rank-and-file members weren't comfortable with the concept of a homeownership tax credit, Howard said.

"I don't think it's fair of the speaker to take a concept that his own committee chair is in favor of and deep-six it without vetting it with the conference," Howard said.

"He told me there wasn't enough time and the concept would not be put into the document," Howard said. "I told the speaker candidly we had shopped the proposal to the White House and we had support there."

A Ryan spokeswoman confirmed the call had taken place but had no other comment.

Brady said in a statement that tax writers will restore an itemized property tax deduction to the plan and suggested that the fight over the mortgage tax break wasn't over.

"Homebuilders have been great partners in developing a new home credit that helps more Americans with both their mortgage and property taxes by expanding this tax relief to homeowners who don't itemize," Brady said. "I hope members of Congress will examine it closely to determine if they want it included before tax reform heads to the president's desk."

A person familiar with the tax discussions said rank-and-file House members aren't well-versed on the concept of a mortgage and property tax credit. The idea also wasn't consistent with the original GOP framework, this person said.

The [framework](#) called for preservation of "tax incentives for home mortgage interest" but didn't explicitly endorse the mortgage-interest deduction.

The mortgage-interest deduction has been widely criticized by economists and housing advocates because most of its benefits flow to wealthier Americans. A tax credit, by contrast, reach more low- and moderate-income buyers, especially under the GOP framework, which increases the standard deduction.

"Under the framework, the mortgage-interest deduction becomes simply a subsidy for the very wealthy," Howard said. "It doesn't do anything to promote homeownership."

Colin Wilhelm contributed to this report.

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Property-tax deduction could help GOP reform bill [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo, Jimmy Vielkind and Colin Wilhelm | 10/29/2017 02:48 PM EDT

House tax writers' decision to allow an itemized deduction for state and local property taxes in their reform plan could be a step toward quelling a revolt against the plan by Republican lawmakers from high-tax states.

Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady announced the change on Saturday, an apparent concession in a hard-fought battle that led 20 House GOP lawmakers to vote against the budget bill — the vehicle for a tax overhaul — last week. Some of those lawmakers also threatened to withhold their votes from the tax-reform bill, which House leaders plan to release on Wednesday, unless their concerns were addressed.

Brady and other House GOP leaders have been seeking to end the federal deduction for state and local taxes that people pay, as part of their tax overhaul. But Republican lawmakers from high-tax districts in New York, New Jersey and other states have been pushing back, saying it would amount to a tax increase on their constituents.

"At the urging of lawmakers, we are restoring an itemized property tax deduction to help taxpayers with local tax burdens," Brady said in an emailed statement Saturday.

In an early sign that the move could be softening the opposition of some lawmakers, Rep. Dan

Donovan (R-N.Y.), the only GOP House member who represents a district within New York City's five boroughs, described it as a positive development on Sunday.

"I'm grateful to the Chairman and House leaders for listening to the argument that I and others made about the basic unfairness of double taxation, and I look forward to analyzing the tax relief proposal in its entirety next week," said an email from Donovan, whose constituents pay city and state income taxes.

Donovan was one of the seven New York House Republicans who voted against budget passage in the House last week, the same seven who penned a letter in June outlining "deep concerns" over losing the state and local tax deduction. Only two Republicans from New York's House delegation voted for the budget and declined to sign the letter: Reps. Tom Reed, a Ways and Means member, and Chris Collins.

Rep. Leonard Lance (R-N.J.) had a similar, if more cautious, reaction to Brady's comments.

"This is a step in the right direction but I will need to see legislative text to determine if this proposal is in the best interest of New Jersey," Lance, one of four Garden State Republicans to oppose the budget, said in an email. "We already send more than enough money to Washington. I am pleased this debate has reminded lawmakers from other states of that fact. There is more work to be done on the SALT issue."

Despite the positive reaction from Donovan and Lance, it's unclear whether Brady's move will be enough to end the fight. A coalition of state and local governments and service providers criticized it as a half-measure, noting it did not address state and local income and sales taxes.

"Chairman Brady's partial elimination plan for the state and local tax (SALT) deduction would insert the heavy hand of Washington into state and local finance decisions, dictate winners and losers among states, and unfairly penalize taxpayers in states that rely significantly on income taxes," Americans Against Double Taxation said in a statement. "We will vigorously oppose this plan and continue to work for the preservation of the full state and local tax deduction, which has stood for more than 100 years."

The fate of the state and local tax deduction has been one of the thorniest problems to arise so far in Republicans' tax-reform effort.

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House GOP tosses conservative playbook in bid for tax reform [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 10/29/2017 07:09 AM EDT

House Republicans are so desperate for a win on taxes that they're agreeing to proposals that would have caused internal party warfare just a year or two ago.

They're considering forgoing a big cut in the top income tax rate on the rich, offering moderate-income Americans so many tax breaks that many would be excused from paying taxes entirely and passing a potentially 1,000-page tax bill few have seen within a matter of

weeks. Last week, they agreed to a budget that ignored their demands for deep cuts in federal spending just so they could pass a tax bill using a special procedure that enables them to move forward without any Democratic votes.

It's an open question whether Republicans will be as flexible when party leaders release their entire tax bill, due Nov. 1, and everyone can see exactly who will be the losers under their plan. They already have some internal battles, with Republicans from high-tax states fighting a proposal to dump a long-standing deduction for state and local taxes.

But for now, once-controversial proposals are barely causing a stir, a sign lawmakers are willing to move beyond their party's orthodoxy on taxes and into a more freewheeling debate on how to rewrite the code.

"The American people want us to get to 'yes' on tax reform," said Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Ohio), who sits on the tax and budget committees.

It's an indication of the pressure lawmakers feel to produce a win ahead of next year's midterm elections after spending seven fruitless months trying to rescind the Affordable Care Act. Many are terrified at the prospect of facing voters next year with nothing to show for their time in power.

Even notoriously balky House conservatives are making nice.

"We've got to get the economy going — it's all about wages going up — and if I can endure some short-term pain for long-term benefits, I'm willing to do that," said Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), head of the chamber's staunchly conservative Freedom Caucus.

The latest flexibility came with Thursday's House adoption of a Senate budget plan. The annual fiscal blueprint used to be a big deal for House Republicans — Speaker Paul Ryan made his name as chairman of the Budget Committee, writing plans calling for drastic cuts in federal spending. And for years, House conservatives had demanded budgets balance the government's books.

But the fiscal blueprint they adopted Thursday does no such thing, and some lawmakers question the importance of the budget, saying they agreed to it only in order to tap the all-important reconciliation process they intend to use to move tax legislation through the Senate.

"We don't follow budgets anyway — it's really just a mechanism to get tax reform done," said Renacci.

They are also willing to compromise on their long-standing calls to cut the top income tax rate.

Just a few years ago, House Republicans walked away from a tax reform plan written by then-Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp in part because he cut the top rate only to 35 percent, from 39.6 percent. At the time, Republicans had been promising to cut the top rate to 25 percent — something they had pledged since they took over the House in 2011 — but Camp was unable to make the numbers work.

Now, Republicans are planning an even higher top rate. Their plans are still to be determined, but they may leave the top rate where it is, which President Barack Obama raised as part of the 2013 fiscal cliff agreement.

"I don't think there's anybody out there that is talking about NFL players needing a tax cut — I don't think high-powered doctors and lawyers need a tax cut," said Rep. Rob Woodall (R-Ga.), who emphasized Republicans' plans to instead cut taxes on small and large businesses.

At the same time, they're willing to take millions of Americans off the tax rolls entirely with their plans to double the standard deduction and expand a child tax credit. Just a few years ago, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney lamented that, at the time, 47 percent of Americans did not pay federal income taxes.

Meadows defended the plan, saying: "I don't think we've said, 'Tax more people.' In fact, if anything, we've said 'Tax fewer people.'"

"It's a function of putting more of their money back in their pocket," he said.

There have also been relatively few complaints about the prospect of passing a giant tax rewrite bill, the biggest in a generation, in a matter of weeks. Republicans plan to release it Nov. 1, with committee action penciled in for the following week and House approval coming later next month.

Said Rep. Pat Meehan (R-Pa.), "It's not as if these issues are things that have never been considered before — there's a lot of work that's been done.

"There's been long discussion on the outlines of this," he said.

Of course, not everyone is happy.

Republican leaders have faced a rebellion from colleagues from high-tax states over their plan to dump a deduction for state and local taxes, and lawmakers are tangling with the Trump administration over plans to push people out of 401(k) retirement plans and into Roth IRAs.

And some lawmakers have chafed at the secrecy surrounding the GOP tax plan.

"We don't have the details — that's why I'm frustrated," said Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.).

It also remains to be seen whether the mood will hold once Republican leaders unveil their bill. Though their budget allows for a \$1.5 trillion tax cut, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center figures Republicans' tax cut promises would cost some \$5.5 trillion, meaning lawmakers need to come up with a whopping \$4 trillion in savings.

But for now, Republicans are ready to deal.

"This is a great opportunity — I think people are seizing the moment," said Meehan.

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GOP tax bill shrouded in secrecy [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo and Seung Min Kim | 10/28/2017 06:55 AM EDT

Rank-and-file House Republicans are increasingly alarmed by the secrecy shrouding the massive tax bill their party leaders plan to ram through Congress next month.

Just days ahead of the legislation's release, GOP members of the House Ways and Means Committee are still in the dark on numerous details being ironed out by the powerful tax-writing committee's chairman, Kevin Brady (R-Texas), and his staff. And they're blaming the panel's top-down approach for the uncertainty.

"There are a lot of open issues," said Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Ohio), echoing comments made by several of his colleagues on the committee.

Heading into the weekend, question marks remained on at least two high-profile proposals to offset the cost of slashing individual and business tax rates: curbing federal deductions for state and local taxes and business interest as well as potential changes to taxing retirement savings.

The uneasy feeling among members extends to their tax aides, who've been excluded from a recent series of hours-long member meetings with Brady and his tax counsels.

Several personal office tax staffers to committee Republicans indicated that they're grappling with how to brace their bosses for the coming lobbyist wave. Well-funded special interests are ready to pounce on the tax bill when Brady brings it out Nov. 1; aides are worried about the onslaught, particularly over any surprises in the legislation.

"You could potentially see some bombs in there," one aide said.

Part of the logic behind restricting access to the text stems from an eagerness to keep lobbyists at bay for as long as possible. There's also precedent; former Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp introduced tax reform legislation in 2014 after keeping final language under tight wraps until soon before the now-retired Michigan Republican released it. (And when he did, the bill bombed.)

But lawmakers, even those on the tax-writing committee, simply don't always have the same level of understanding of the issues in play as their professional staff, the same aide said on condition of anonymity because of sensitivities around the talks.

Aides aren't expected to join the next series of Ways and Means Republican meetings, which are scheduled for Monday afternoon and all day Tuesday. Brady has said he plans to introduce the tax bill on Wednesday, and begin considering it in committee the following week.

"Chairman Brady and Ways and Means members will meet next week to discuss final details before they introduce the tax reform text," said a spokeswoman.

Aides have been told they'd receive a briefing before the bill emerges, but that huddle could come as late as Tuesday night, another Ways and Means staffer said.

Even President Donald Trump's chief tax negotiators haven't been fully briefed, though Treasury Department officials were supposed to get looped in a bit more over the weekend, a Ways and Means aide said.

The approach by House Republicans stands in stark contrast to the other end of the Capitol, where top Senate Republicans want to ensure all GOP senators feel they have buy-in from the start — a desire to avoid retracing the steps that led to their failed Obamacare repeal attempt.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has convened meetings with Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and a handful of key Republicans on the Senate's tax-writing panel, as well as GOP senators not on the committee, to gauge their needs, aides said.

"It's so complex and there are so many moving parts," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas). "We've tried to learn our experience on health care and do better on taxes."

Republicans on the Finance Committee have paired up with other GOP senators in a buddy system of sorts to ensure all GOP senators are included in the process. For instance, South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 3 Senate Republican who sits on the Finance Committee, has been in touch with Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), who in turn has been lobbying to include her paid leave tax credit proposal in the overall GOP blueprint.

Sen. Bob Corker, the retiring Tennessee Republican who has repeatedly raised concerns about the potential deficit-busting impact of a GOP tax bill, has also met privately with McConnell and Finance Committee Republicans to lay out his priorities, a spokeswoman said. Corker has also spoken with Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.).

Senate GOP leaders will also ensure their tax proposal, expected to be released sometime after House Republicans unveil their legislation next week, gets considered by the Senate Finance Committee — another marked difference from the botched health care process.

Cornyn, the second-ranking Senate Republican, sketched out an ambitious goal of passing its tax legislation by Thanksgiving — giving GOP senators just under four weeks to move legislation overhauling the tax code even though the actual bill has not been released.

"We can be up and running in a day. We know where we want to go," insisted Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), the chairman of the Finance Committee. Still, Hatch added of the GOP conference-wide lobbying effort: "Everybody wants something. They're all over us on what they want."

House and Senate Democrats, meanwhile, have been almost completely shut out of the discussions.

Republicans plan to use powerful budget reconciliation procedures that circumvent Democratic filibusters, so broad bipartisan support won't be required.

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Trump remains committed to immediate corporate tax cut, Sanders says [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/30/2017 02:50 PM EDT

President Donald Trump remains committed to an immediate cut to the corporate tax rate, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said today when asked about the possibility of phasing in the cut as part of a tax overhaul.

"We haven't changed our principles since this process started," she told reporters.

Sanders said she "doesn't anticipate" Trump will change his stance on an immediate cut that would drop the corporate income tax rate to 20 percent from the current marginal rate of 35 percent.

Phasing in the rate cut could accommodate congressional budget rules that Republicans will use to bypass a potential filibuster in the Senate.

WHAT'S NEXT: Detailed plans for the corporate rate are expected to be included in the tax legislation that Republicans plan to unveil Wednesday.

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CRS: Air traffic control spinoff bill would trigger sequester [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 10/30/2017 02:55 PM EDT

The House GOP bill that would separate air traffic control operations from the FAA would trigger an automatic budget sequester if costs are not offset, [according](#) to the Congressional Research Service.

A CRS memo dated Oct. 13 but released today by Transportation Committee Democrats asserts that the projected \$98.5 million deficit increase that would result from the plan would force Congress to implement the sequester plan lawmakers agreed to in 2011.

The CBO determined the amount of the projected deficit last month.

CRS noted that if no additional legislation was recorded on the PAYGO scorecard, which tracks five- and 10-year deficit impacts from proposed legislation, and if no legislation was enacted to prevent a sequester from occurring, "then under the law a sequester would be triggered which would require across-the-board cuts to non-exempt mandatory spending programs to make up for the amount of the debit."

Democratic Reps. [Peter DeFazio](#) and [Rick Larsen](#) wrote in a Dear Colleague letter following the release of the CRS memo that the bill, [H.R. 2997 \(115\)](#), would "cause billions of dollars of cuts to Medicare over the next decade" as well as cuts of "billions of dollars from other critical programs, including accrual payments to the Military Retirement Fund, Federal Emergency Management Agency National Flood Insurance Fund expenses, and agriculture funding."

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Confusion clouds open enrollment with Republicans still eager to dismantle Obamacare

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By Paul Demko, Rachana Pradhan and Adam Cancryn | 10/29/2017 06:56 AM EDT

Obamacare is about to have its worst open-enrollment season ever — and that's no accident.

President Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress still aim to dismantle the 2010 law. Making it look bad helps their cause, even as they've failed repeatedly to repeal or replace Obamacare. The new theory for Republicans: If fewer people enroll in Obamacare, there will be less of a constituency to save it.

"I think it's going to implode on its own," said Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.), a strong ally of the president on the Hill. But with Trump undoing his predecessor's rules and policies, "to some extent, perhaps he's expediting the implosion."

When the fifth open-enrollment season opens on Wednesday, it will look a lot different than when Barack Obama was in office. Trump won't be going on TV comedy shows to urge people to sign up. His chief of staff won't be talking up the value of health insurance on [sports radio](#). His Cabinet won't be crisscrossing the country to energize sign-up drives.

And if enrollment dips — as health care policy experts predict — the poor numbers will be used as evidence by Trump and Republicans that Obamacare is failing.

"Maybe this enrollment period will produce the kind of problems necessary to get everybody's attention that we need to get our house in order, and do the work we need to do to get the program fixed," said Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.).

From the day he took office, Trump and his administration have taken steps to undermine the markets, including gutting outreach and marketing. Competition in the Obamacare exchanges has diminished, with nearly half the counties nationwide having just one insurer selling plans. Premiums have skyrocketed — partly because Trump himself cut off federal subsidies, leaving the insurers facing billions in extra costs.

On Sunday morning, Trump tweeted about the situation anew. "As usual, the ObamaCare premiums will be up (the Dems own it), but we will Repeal & Replace and have great Healthcare soon after Tax Cuts."

And the noise created by Republicans' repeated failed attempts to dismantle the federal health care law has sowed vast confusion about the status of the marketplaces, as [several polls have shown](#).

That chaos has been compounded by Trump's repeated assertions that Obamacare has somehow ceased to exist — despite the fact that more than 10 million Americans obtain insurance through the law's insurance exchanges.

"Obamacare is finished," Trump said earlier this month. "It's dead. It's gone."

Shrinking enrollment will erode the markets politically — and weaken them, practically.

Enrollment dropped nationwide this year. Trump officials turned off the outreach spigots immediately after they took office, and they dampened the last-minute surge of sign-ups right before the cut-off date on Jan. 31. Joshua Peck, who served as chief marketing office for HealthCare.gov in the Obama administration, [estimates](#) that at least 1.1 million fewer Americans will enroll in coverage next year due to the Department of Health and Human Services' cuts in Obamacare advertising.

Yet Republicans might be putting themselves in political peril if they're seen as intentionally making wobbly markets more wobbly. Most polls have shown that the public will blame Republicans — [by a roughly 2-to-1 margin](#) — for future problems with Obamacare.

"I don't think President Trump and the Republicans in Congress realize it's on them now," said Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.). "So if they have trouble with the Affordable Care Act because of their efforts to undermine it, the public's going to blame them even if they try to say it's someone else's fault."

Trump's decision to cut off cost-sharing subsidy payments, which insurers rely on to reduce costs for low-income Obamacare customers, further rattled the marketplaces. But fears that it could spark a mass exodus of insurers, and potentially lead to market collapses in some states, haven't materialized.

That's in large part because insurers were able to boost premiums for next year in order to make up for the lost federal payments. Insurers will still take a short-term financial hit, but they should be on steady financial ground for 2018.

"The CSR hand grenade, if it was thrown in January or February of this year, would have forced a lot of carriers to do midyear exits and it would have destroyed the exchanges in some states," said Dave Anderson, an insurance expert at Duke University, using shorthand for "cost-sharing reduction" subsidies. "Pulling CSRs in mid-October was a nothing-burger."

On top of all the confusion about those subsidies — because they affect the insurers, but don't have a direct impact on the costs for people who get subsidized — the enrollment window that wraps up on Dec. 15 is roughly half the amount of time of earlier years.

Consumers who are currently enrolled and don't renew by that date will be automatically re-enrolled in a plan soon after the sign-up window closes, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Officials also plan to deploy similar tools that queue customers during high-traffic times on HealthCare.gov.

But anyone without insurance who thinks they have until January to sign up, like they did last year, will be out of luck.

"You've got a lot of confusion out there about what is truly available in the market," said Alexis Miller, a senior vice president at Highmark, which sells Obamacare plans in Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia. "All of that is hitting our members right now."

Another wild card is what effect cuts to marketing and outreach will have on enrollment. The Trump administration reduced federal spending on advertising by 90 percent and chopped grants to organizations that help individuals sign up for coverage by 40 percent.

For the first time, the federal government won't promote HealthCare.gov through television

ads — a tactic that Obama-era health officials argue was most effective in reaching the broadest range of potential enrollees.

The Trump administration has also pulled back on community partnerships that played a key role in reaching important but harder-to-attract demographics like minorities, younger enrollees and rural residents. And in some states, the budget cuts forced in-person assistance groups to close up shop.

"It's been very clear how much the void of the administration not doing what they've done in the past is being felt across the country," said Lori Lodes, a former Obama health official and the co-founder of Get America Covered, a nonprofit formed to help promote Obamacare's open enrollment period.

Get America Covered will run its own digital outreach campaign during enrollment, and is trying to piece together a network of businesses and health care groups to boost awareness. But Lodes openly admits it'll be difficult to fully counter the confusion created by Trump's repeated insistence that Obamacare is already "dead."

"We don't know what sort of impact that will have," she said. "There are just so many asterisks."

Insurers are stepping up their own efforts to fill the void; it's their customers, after all. Michigan's Priority Health, for example, is running television ads aimed at enticing potential customers to call and get a copy of a booklet: "Separating Fact From Fiction in the Age of Health Care Reform." The insurer has also boosted the number of webinars it's holding to help educate brokers about its coverage options.

"Plans are stepping it up, but they can't mirror exactly what the marketplace had been doing in the past," said Kelley Turek, executive director of exchange operations and policy at America's Health Insurance Plans.

Some Obamacare-friendly states are also marshaling additional resources to make up for the cuts to federal outreach and marketing. Pennsylvania is spending \$100,000 on a campaign that includes television, radio and digital ads. The spots will direct potential customers to HealthCare.gov, as well as Consumers' Checkbook, a plan comparison tool.

"I believe that this campaign can make a difference," said Jessica Altman, the state's acting insurance commissioner, on a call with reporters last week. But she criticized the federal government's decision to chop Obamacare ads down to \$10 million this year because of the void it creates.

"Our resources are certainly not as great as those of the federal government," she said.

It remains to be seen whether the Trump administration will be a reliable partner for insurers going forward. So far, they don't see any signs of outright sabotage, and they've gotten used to rolling with the punches when it comes to Obamacare.

"This is our fifth rodeo," said Marty Anderson, chief marketing officer for Wisconsin's Security Health Plan. "None of those rodeos have been the same. Each one has been challenging in and of itself."

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Soaring premiums will cause ACA subsidies to increase by nearly 50 percent [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 10/30/2017 09:34 AM EDT

Premium subsidies for Obamacare customers will rise by nearly 50 percent next year because of huge rate hikes, according to [an analysis](#) by HHS of rate filings in the 39 states that rely on HealthCare.gov for enrollments.

The average monthly federal subsidy will be \$555 in 2018, compared to \$382 this year. Premium subsidies are expected to be more than twice as high as they were in 2016.

Premiums are skyrocketing in part because of President Donald Trump's decision to scrap cost-sharing-reduction payments, which insurers utilize to lower the out-of-pocket costs for low-income Obamacare customers. Most insurers are jacking up rates next year - often by 15 percent or more — to compensate for the removal of federal funding.

The rate hikes in most states are being loaded onto silver plans, which are the only ones that qualify for cost-sharing-reduction payments, in order to blunt the financial pain on Obamacare customers who don't qualify for subsidies.

The monthly premium for the second-most-expensive silver plan — which is used to determine subsidy levels — will increase by an average of 37 percent — from \$300 to \$411 — for a 27 year old enrollee.

Obamacare customers will also have fewer choices when the 2018 open-enrollment season starts on Wednesday. Nearly one in three current enrollees will find just a single insurer selling plans, up from 20 percent of Obamacare customers this year who faced monopoly markets.

Eight states will have just a single carrier in every county.

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ACA marketplace rules emphasize state flexibility, reducing regulatory burdens [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 10/27/2017 05:09 PM EDT

The Trump administration's proposed [Obamacare marketplace rules for 2019](#) emphasize increasing state flexibility and reducing federal regulatory burdens.

The approach reflects an executive order signed by President Donald Trump on his first day in office that directed agencies to scrap regulatory requirements to the greatest extent possible under the Affordable Care Act.

"Over time, issuer exits and increasing insurance rates have threatened the stability of the individual and small group Exchanges in many geographic areas," the 300-plus page rule states at the beginning, a stark change in tone from regulations put forth by the Obama administration.

In addition, it states that the focus will be on "enhancing the role of States in these programs and providing States with additional flexibilities, reducing unnecessary regulatory burden on stakeholders, empowering consumers, and improving affordability."

In particular, the Trump administration is proposing to make it easier for states to seek waivers of federal rules around medical loss ratios and to loosen the requirements for organizations that work on Obamacare outreach efforts.

CMS is also proposing raising the threshold at which federal rate review is triggered. Currently, federal regulators review any premium increase above 10 percent, but the proposal would push that to 15 percent.

The administration is also stepping back from encouraging insurers to sell "standardized plans." CMS intends to no longer emphasize those offerings on HealthCare.gov.

"We seek to encourage free market principles in the individual market, and to maximize innovation by issuers in designing and offering a wide range of plans to consumers," the rule states.

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State Week: ACA open enrollment to vary dramatically state-by-state [Back](#)

By Renuka Rayasam | 10/27/2017 01:01 PM EDT

With help from Dan Goldberg, Victoria Colliver, Alexandra Glorioso and Rachana Pradhan.

The experience of shopping for Obamacare health plans will vary more than ever from state to state when open enrollment kicks off next week.

Overall premiums for the average silver plan will rise about 34 percent this year, but there will be huge variations among the states, according to [a study](#) from Avalere Health.

The average silver plan premium will rise 69 percent in Iowa, which withdrew a waiver it hoped would stabilize its market, after the Trump administration signaled it would reject the application. Wyoming, Virginia and Utah will also see silver plan premium hikes in excess of 60 percent.

Meanwhile some states have been able to buck the trend.

Alaska, which was able to get federal approval for a reinsurance program that helps health plans deal with costlier patients, will see the average silver plan premium decline by 22 percent. Arizona and North Dakota will also see silver plan premiums decrease, according to

the Avalere study.

And while shoppers on the federal exchange have just six weeks to select a plan for 2018, some states with their own marketplaces have extended deadlines. [New York](#) and [California](#), for example, have extended open enrollment through Jan. 31, 2018.

On to the rest of state news. Tips and story ideas always welcome at rreyasam@politico.com and [@renurayasam](#).

CALIFORNIA — Single payer came back into the limelight this week as a special assembly committee held [two days of hearings](#) in Sacramento, the first in a series of hearings on how California could achieve universal health coverage for all residents. The first day of the hearings focused on California's current system, while speakers examined universal health care in other countries on the second day. The California Nurses Association derided the committee hearings for failing to do anything — they're for information-gathering only — and called for more immediate action. Single payer also received attention this week as the issue proved to be the biggest dividing point among the top four Democratic candidates hoping to succeed Gov. Jerry Brown. More [here](#).

NEW YORK — Gov. Andrew Cuomo [signed a bill](#) expanding the Clean Indoor Air Act. New Yorkers will no longer be allowed to vape in indoor areas where they are not permitted to smoke tobacco. The Clean Indoor Air Act was enacted in 2003 and bans smoking in most workplaces, hospitals, restaurants and bars and many other indoor public spaces. People wishing to use vaporizers or electronic cigarettes will have to follow the same rules.

WASHINGTON — Average premiums for individual market plans will rise roughly 36 percent for 2018, with 10 percent of the increase attributable to President Donald Trump's decision to stop paying cost-sharing subsidies, according to state regulators. Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler [approved](#) 11 health insurers to sell 74 plans on the state's individual market. Washington is one of 18 states and the District of Columbia that sued the Trump administration over the decision to scrap CSRs.

ARIZONA — The state Supreme Court on Thursday heard arguments on the legality of a key part of Arizona's Medicaid expansion, the Arizona Republic [reports](#). Arizona GOP legislators sued the state over a hospital assessment that is being used to cover the state's share of expansion costs, arguing the financing mechanism was illegally enacted because it did not pass with a two-thirds majority required for tax increases. Lower courts have sided with Arizona's Medicaid agency. If state lawmakers prevail, coverage could be jeopardized for roughly 400,000 people covered by expansion.

FLORIDA — The state's health care agency turned down a request from Florida state Sen. Rene Garcia, from Southeast Miami, to extend the deadline for companies to bid on Florida's Medicaid Managed Care Program. In the request, laid out in an October letter acquired by POLITICO Florida, Garcia questioned whether the agency had enough time to review and answer questions on bid invitations because of Hurricane Irma. Companies could respond in early August to receive responses by the agency on Sept. 15. Irma made landfall in Miami on Sept. 10. The agency responded that it did have time to review the bids, but wouldn't discuss them further because it is in a "statutory blackout" period for negotiations.

TEXAS — The [case](#) of an undocumented girl in South Texas, who was detained after an emergency gall bladder surgery, has thrust the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Health and

Human Services division responsible for the care of unaccompanied minors, back in the spotlight this week. The 10-year-old girl, who has cerebral palsy, was brought to the country from Mexico by her mother, when she was a baby. On her way to the emergency procedure at a hospital in Corpus Christi from her home in Laredo, Rosa Maria Hernandez was apprehended at a border check point. Agents followed her to the hospital and after the procedure placed her in a shelter for unaccompanied minors in San Antonio. Immigration officials have now stepped up enforcement actions in hospitals and other former safe zones, according to multiple [news reports](#). Rep. [Joaquín Castro](#) (D-Texas) has [called](#) on the administration to release the girl from federal custody.

ON THE MOVE: Theodore Mazer, a San Diego otolaryngologist, was installed as the California Medical Association's 150th president during the physician organization's annual meeting last weekend in Anaheim. Mazer, a CMA member for 29 years, has served on the CMA Board of Trustees since 2002, and is a past president of the San Diego County Medical Society and a delegate to the American Medical Association.

HIGHLIGHTS

A federal court judge in San Francisco [refused to grant an emergency order](#) to resume CSR payments requested by attorneys general from 18 states and the District of Columbia.

States may [roll back](#) children's health coverage without money from Congress.

The House is set to vote on extending [CHIP](#) funds next week.

Massachusetts' Obamacare waiver was [rejected](#) for 2018.

Trump's decision to end CSRs [will cost](#) the federal government more money in Florida.

A federal appeals court [cleared the way](#) for an undocumented teen to get an abortion.

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Puerto Rico utility cancels controversial energy contract [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 10/29/2017 02:56 PM EDT

Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority canceled its \$300 million contract with Whitefish Energy, a Montana-based company, after additional scrutiny surrounding the repair contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The move comes after Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló called for the cancellation of the contract Sunday morning. Rosselló's public call to the federal oversight board of Puerto Rico happened after days of resisting any change to the contract, according to a source with knowledge of the situation.

A spokesperson for the governor did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Rosselló publicly objected last week to the oversight board's installation of an emergency chief transformation officer to oversee the recovery of PREPA, Puerto Rico's beleaguered government-backed power utility, after the board filed in court to do so last week. That board-installed officer is placed above PREPA's Executive Director Ricardo Ramos, who signed off on the Whitefish contract. That contract uses federal funds overseen by the utility to repair Puerto Rico's electrical grid, most of which remains offline weeks after Hurricane Maria hit the island.

The law passed by Congress last year allows the board to act as trustee for any Puerto Rico government entities that seek to reorganize their debt in court, a process similar to bankruptcy. A judge overseeing the restructuring of Puerto Rico's debt granted the request, according to a court document.

Several congressional committees sent investigative inquiries about the contract last week, and members of the House Natural Resources Committee also sought information as to why Rosselló did not seek to activate "mutual aid" agreements with nearby states to increase the number of work crews available, an action Rosselló ultimately took Sunday.

"Transparent accountability at PREPA is necessary for an effective and sustained recovery in Puerto Rico," said Parish Braden, a spokesperson for that committee, in an email to POLITICO. "Immediate actions must also be responsibly aligned with long-term rebuilding and revitalization efforts. Success depends on the cooperation and coordination of the Governor, the Oversight Board, PREPA's Chief Transformation Officer and federal partners."

In a news conference Sunday, Rosselló urged the immediate end of an agreement between PREPA, and Whitefish Energy, a two-year-old company whose selection for a no-bid contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars has drawn intense political scrutiny. Rosselló also criticized the federal government for a delay in sending brigades from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In a news release sent Sunday, Rosselló said his comments were "intended to reaffirm our commitment to transparency in the contracting process in the government of Puerto Rico and to achieve the highest degree of efficiency possible in the restoration of the power grid of our island, in the shortest amount of time possible."

"The goals I established are aimed at achieving 30 percent of the power generation capacity. I am grateful for the effort that the PREPA staff is doing together with the contracted companies," Rosselló said in the release. "At the moment, PREPA and its contractors have 404 brigades working on the island, while the [Army Corps of Engineers] has seven."

Earlier this month, The Washington Post reported that Whitefish had previously employed the son of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and that the company was selected despite having no experience in large-scale electrical repairs and with only two full-time employees. The company has subcontracted out its work on the island.

Since then the contract, initiated by PREPA using federal emergency funds, has come under congressional scrutiny and put Zinke on the defensive.

Zinke on Friday said he had "absolutely nothing to do" with the awarding of the contract to Whitefish, which is from his hometown. "Any attempts by the dishonest media or political operatives to tie me to awarding or influencing any contract involving Whitefish are

completely baseless. Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime," Zinke wrote in a [statement](#).

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Whitefish Energy hires first lobbyist as scrutiny of Puerto Rico contract mounts [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/30/2017 12:44 PM EDT

Whitefish Energy has retained a former House Democrat to lobby on its behalf, following numerous calls for investigations into how the small Montana firm won a lucrative contract to help rebuild Puerto Rico's electric grid.

Former Rep. Dennis Cardoza, a "Blue Dog" Democrat from California, said he would "meet people on the Hill" to make the case that Whitefish won the contract fairly, but he declined to provide details beyond that. Lawmakers from both parties have called for investigations into how the small, 2-year old company from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's hometown won a \$300 million contract to help Puerto Rico recover from Hurricane Maria. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority said it would [cancel](#) the contract Sunday after an outcry over how the recently formed, two-man company was hired in the first place.

Congress is not the only one looking into Whitefish's operations in Puerto Rico. The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that the FBI has [opened an investigation](#) into the contract, citing people familiar with the matter.

Whitefish Energy retained Cardoza last Wednesday, and his firm Foley & Lardner LLP is in the process of filling lobbyist registration work with Congress, Cardoza told POLITICO Monday. Cardoza's other lobbying clients include California health care, real estate and water interests, according to disclosure records.

The law firm has advised Whitefish Energy on contract issues in the past, Cardoza said, but declined to say exactly when that business relationship began.

"They've been a client for a while," Cardoza said.

Whitefish has not previously had any registered federal lobbyists working on its behalf, according to disclosure records.

Puerto Rico's federal oversight board, which Congress put in place to oversee the territory's economic and fiscal recovery, plans to focus much of its scheduled meeting Tuesday on the beleaguered electric utility, according to a source familiar with the agenda.

Zinke said Friday he had "[absolutely nothing to do](#)" with the company or how it won the contract.

In a [statement](#) Sunday, Whitefish said it was "very disappointed" with Puerto Rico's decision to cancel the contract, a move the company said would further delay restoring power to the island's residents.

Colin Wilhelm contributed to this report.

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Zinke says he had 'absolutely nothing to do with' Puerto Rico contract [Back](#)

By Cristiano Lima and Ben Lefebvre | 10/27/2017 03:53 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Friday said he had "absolutely nothing to do" with Puerto Rico awarding a small, for-profit company from his hometown a \$300 million contract to repair the island's electrical grid in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

"Any attempts by the dishonest media or political operatives to tie me to awarding of influencing any contract involving Whitefish [Energy Holdings] are completely baseless. Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime," Zinke wrote in a [statement](#).

"Neither myself nor anyone in my office has advocated for this company in anyway (sic)," he continued. "After the initial contract was awarded, I was contacted by the company, on which I took no action. All records, which are being made available to appropriate officials, will prove no involvement."

Zinke's statement came after the White House denied any role by the federal government in the deal between Whitefish Energy and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority.

"This is a contract that was determined by the local authorities in Puerto Rico, not something that the federal government played a role in," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at Friday's briefing.

Sanders added: "But as we understand, there is an ongoing audit and we'll look forward to seeing the results of that later."

Sanders said President Donald Trump and Zinke discussed the controversy during their meeting on Friday and that the interior secretary said he had no involvement in the contract being awarded to company.

Zinke "reiterated once again that we have no role, the federal government, specifically he had no role in that contract," Sanders said.

Multiple congressional committees are probing the controversial contract, which awarded the task of restoring transmission and distribution lines damaged or destroyed by the powerful Hurricane to a small, 2-year-old company that had only two full-time employees on its payroll as the storm hit in September.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee late Friday became the latest panel to probe the business deal. Committee Chairman Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) and ranking member Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) [asked](#) the Department of Homeland Security to

review the contract to determine whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency will be responsible for reimbursing PREPA the cost of Whitefish Energy's work.

Sanders' and Zinke's comments distancing the Trump administration from the decision to solicit Whitefish's services echo a statement released earlier Friday by FEMA.

"The decision to award a contract to Whitefish Energy was made exclusively by Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA)," the agency said in a statement. "FEMA was not involved in the selection."

FEMA added it had "significant concerns" with how officials in Puerto Rico acquired the company's services and that it had not yet confirmed "whether the contract prices are reasonable."

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello said Friday, according to ABC, that there will be "hell to pay" if any wrongdoing is discovered in the contract being awarded to Whitefish.

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Trump finds golf isn't the way to Congress' heart [Back](#)

By Darren Samuelsohn | 10/28/2017 06:58 AM EDT

One weekend in early June, President Donald Trump tested out his golf course diplomacy with Sen. Bob Corker, making the Tennessee Republican one of his first congressional partners at his Northern Virginia country club.

The pair shared a cart and partnered up in a match that included former NFL quarterback Peyton Manning. They discussed both politics and policy — "a little of it all," Corker recalled in an interview earlier this week — and there wasn't much in the way of the trash talking that Trump is known for on the green.

"Honestly, it was enjoyable," Corker told POLITICO. "You learn a lot about him personally."

But that springtime round hasn't stopped Corker from undercutting Trump since then, firing off a series of blistering attacks in media interviews and Twitter against a president who he characterized as in need of "adult daycare."

Trump also didn't have much luck with another recent golfing partner: Kentucky Republican Sen. Rand Paul. Just days after the former 2016 GOP presidential primary rivals played at the president's members-only Virginia golf course, Paul [sided](#) against Trump on a critical budget resolution vote that the president hopes can pave the way for a wider measure cutting taxes.

The president found some early success using golf to his advantage in office, [inviting](#) Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to play with him at two of his South Florida courses in February to cement their personal relationship — a favor Abe is planning to repay by hosting a golf game when Trump visits Tokyo next weekend. But it has worked less well in Washington, where the

president hasn't been able to leverage his nearby golf club into close relationships on Capitol Hill.

Trump's other recent golfing partner has been South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, who said in an interview that his two rounds with the president over back-to-back October weekends have helped pave the way for him to be critical of the White House in a way that can ultimately advance his agenda.

"I said I want to beat you on the golf course," Graham said in an interview. "But the best thing I can do for you is tell you what I think and be respectful about it. Here's the one thing about playing golf, and you're getting to know someone, you're far less likely to take gratuitous shots because you've spent time with them."

Graham hasn't missed a beat in playing this role. He recently praised Trump for assembling a strong national security team that's "good for the Republican Party." And after a recent visit to South Carolina together aboard Air Force One, Graham [jumped](#) at the president's offer of a helicopter ride back to the White House.

But Graham remains a critic on one of the biggest White House sore spots: the Russia investigations. The senator a few weeks before his first golf outing with Trump issued a scathing [warning](#) to the president over the notion of firing special counsel Robert Mueller, saying it "could be the beginning of the end" of his administration. Last weekend on NBC's "Meet the Press," Graham [said](#) Trump continues to have "a blind spot on Russia I still can't figure out."

Missouri GOP Sen. Roy Blunt — a member of GOP leadership who cautioned that he's "not in the club championship ranks" of golfing ability — said it wasn't clear whether the president's recent overtures on the golf course have been productive in building support for Republican policies.

"I don't think it hurts," Blunt said. "Anything that builds relationships is generally helpful, though I'd like to see ... more specific votes that respond to the investment of time."

Trump is likely at the tail end of his weekend golf trips this year to his Washington-area course. He leaves on Friday for a 12-day, five-nation Asia trip, and he won't have many warm weekends left in 2017 by the time he returns to the capital.

Meantime, the president's private Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach beckons. It will open again for the season around Halloween, and Trump has his pick of three South Florida golf courses with his name on them, including one that's a short motorcade ride from his beach home.

Trump's bid to connect with lawmakers through golf is limited in no small part by a lack of people who play at his level. Former House Speaker John Boehner was the last congressional leader known to seriously golf. But he retired two years ago, and the current ranks of House and Senate leadership are bare when it comes to the type of quality player Trump prefers. The field of good golfers among rank-and-file members is small, too.

"I would not call it widespread at all," said Rep. John Yarmuth, a Kentucky Democrat who is both a member and property owner at the president's semi-private golf club in Ireland.

By all accounts, Trump is a top-notch player. Golf Digest in January [ranked](#) him No. 1, ahead

of John F. Kennedy, Dwight Eisenhower and Gerald Ford, among the 16 most recent presidents who played the game. But his skills — and desire to keep a round moving — also can work against him when it comes to finding playing companions from the political ranks.

"It's almost that he's too good," said Mike Sommers, a former Boehner chief of staff. "You can't see him driving through the rough helping someone find their ball."

Chris Ruddy, a Trump friend and Mar-a-Lago member, said Trump likes golfing only with people around his skill level. "He doesn't enjoy playing with real amateurs. He likes to move around quick. Someone who isn't great is slower," said Ruddy, CEO of the conservative website Newsmax.

Ohio Republican Rep. Jim Jordan, a conservative Freedom Caucus founder, said he plays golf on some weekends back home with his brother-in-law. But he said he'd fall into the category of amateur golfer who would suggest that Trump — should he ever offer an invitation — try looking elsewhere.

"He wouldn't enjoy playing with me because I'm nowhere near that handicap level," Jordan said. "If the president asks you to do something, you'd consider that. But I'd also tell him, 'Mr. President, I'm not very good. You might want to play with someone else.'"

Another obstacle for Trump to forge golfing connections in Washington: his schedule. Playing as often as he does on Saturdays and Sundays doesn't match up well with members of Congress who make it a point to go back to their states and districts on the weekends.

Sen. David Perdue, a Georgia Republican [ranked](#) by Golf Digest last year as the best golfer among members of Congress, said he had just discussed playing 18 holes with Trump when the president visited the Capitol for a GOP luncheon earlier this week.

"I've been invited for sure," Perdue said. But Perdue said that finding a date in recent weeks has been challenging because of his commitments back in Georgia.

While Perdue said he expects to talk political shop when he does finally play golf with Trump, he also expects the round to be heavy on the social side.

"I'm not sure he's using it as a tool," Perdue said. "It's a personal thing to do. This man has friends and uses it that way. He uses it to get relaxation. He uses it to think."

Ruddy said he also doesn't see Trump as trying to use golf to win allies or policy converts. "The idea that somehow you get an inside track just because you play golf is just a nonstarter," he said. "Trump uses it as a good way to understand people and hear them out."

Trump repeatedly disparaged President Barack Obama for golfing as much as he did during eight years in office. But Trump has ended up playing even more golf than his Democratic predecessor.

In his first 40 weeks in office in 2009, Obama played 23 rounds of golf. Trump, during that same period of time this year, has played at least 32 rounds that have been confirmed by either the White House, social media reports or journalists traveling with the president. There have also been another 28 times where Trump was known to be at one of his country clubs and seen as likely playing golf, according to data compiled by the website [Trump Golf Count](#).

Trump and Obama have also followed similar paths in eschewing fellow politicians as their playing partners. Obama often filled out his golfing foursome with longtime staffers and close friends. In fact, just five of the 333 rounds that the Democratic president played over his two terms were with members of Congress, according to a tally kept by CBS News reporter Mark Knoller. Obama played golf only three times with foreign leaders.

For Trump, the playing partners he's had who have been publicly named have included longtime friends like New York real estate executive Richard Levine and professional athletes, including Washington Redskins quarterback Kirk Cousins and PGA professional Rory McIlroy.

Golf during Trump's life prior to politics — and Washington — was all about making money. He frequented the links with his fellow golf-obsessed Manhattan billionaires and CEOs. His name is also attached to 12 courses in the U.S., including the iconic "Blue Monster" Doral in Miami, and five more abroad in Dubai, Ireland and Scotland.

Partisanship also wasn't a factor in who Trump teed off with. In 2012, for example, former President Bill Clinton in a [CNN interview](#) — conducted by guest host Harvey Weinstein, standing in for Piers Morgan — volunteered this about Trump: "I love playing golf with him."

But 2012 is not 2016. And the idea of hitting the links with the president is hardly seen as a smart career move for a Trump critic — especially in the smartphone era, in which club members and guests frequently post video and pictures of Trump whenever he's at one of his courses.

"I'm not sure there's a lot of Democrats who'd want to go out and spend four hours with him," said Yarmuth, the ranking member of the House Budget Committee and a serious golfer who plays at about the same level as the president.

Asked whether he'd entertain playing golf with Trump, Yarmuth hedged. He waited nearly six years before finally getting out on a course with Obama — at Joint Base Andrews in suburban Washington in 2015.

"That'd be a very tough call for me," Yarmuth said. "I say it because I so cherish my one presidential golf experience. I don't want to necessarily tarnish it. I'd like to keep it as my only presidential golf memory because it was so good."

Burgess Everett contributed to this report.

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Texas farmers took \$200 million hit from Harvey [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 10/27/2017 03:54 PM EDT

Hurricane Harvey caused more than \$200 million in damage to Texas farmers when it hit the coast of the state in late August, according to a new [analysis](#) from Texas A&M University.

Cotton farmers saw half of the losses, or about \$100 million. Roughly 200,000 bales of cotton on the stalk and another 200,000 harvest bales destroyed or severely damaged — a huge hit to farmers in the region who were expecting one of the best crops of all time. In total terms, however, it is a small percentage. Last year, the state's cotton crop was worth \$2.5 billion, [according to the USDA](#).

The livestock industry saw \$93 million in damage, which accounts for not only the loss of cattle, but also destruction of hay and fences from the storm.

And rice and soybean growers took an \$8 million hit. The USDA is estimating that the rice production from the region will be down 618,000 hundredweight as compared to forecasts before the storm, and 1,700 acres of soybeans along the Texas coast are reported to be lost, Texas A&M reports.

"The effects of Hurricane Harvey will linger for quite some time with our Texas farmers and ranchers," Doug Steele, director of Texas A&M's extension service, said. "Many South Texas or coastal area cotton farmers were on the verge of harvesting one of the best crops ever in Texas, while some ranchers were unable to save some cattle from insurmountable flood waters."

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Total war costs since 9/11 top \$1.4T, Pentagon report finds [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 10/30/2017 11:08 AM EDT

The military has spent over \$1.4 trillion in war costs since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to a new Pentagon [report](#) — the vast majority split between operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The effort in Afghanistan has cost \$687.6 billion through June, while operations in Iraq have cost \$748.1 billion — including the U.S.-led war between 2003 and 2011 and the ensuing U.S.-led military campaign against the Islamic State that began in 2014, which has totaled \$17.1 billion through June.

The report was released publicly by the Federation of American Scientists. Previous versions of the report can be found [here](#).

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Education Department to offer voluntary buyout payments [Back](#)

By Kimberly Hefling | 10/28/2017 09:45 AM EDT

The Education Department has notified Office of Federal Student Aid staff members that it that will begin offering voluntary buyouts to some employees to shrink the division, the Washington Post [reported](#).

Staff members were informed of the early retirement and voluntary incentive separation payments in a memo on Friday, according to the Post.

It's not clear how many employees could be potentially affected. Typically, the most a department employee would receive as part of such an offer is \$25,000.

An Education Department spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Trump administration has said that streamlining government agencies is a priority.

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John Boehner Unchained [Back](#)

By Tim Alberta | 10/29/2017 06:00 PM EDT

WEST CHESTER, Ohio—He swings the golf club like a right-hander, which he is, but putts as a southpaw. Maybe it's a metaphor for a conservative politician who often turned to liberals in crunch time, but I'm too busy losing \$20 on this hole to appreciate it. We're on the green now, surveying his 10-foot par attempt, a modest breeze transporting his tobacco cologne. With a posture as unique as his personality—back hunched over nearly parallel to the turf, left shoulder dipped well below the right, fingers interlocked around a grip of blue rubber—he gazes downward and shuffles his feet. The veins are still dancing in his muscular, leathery legs as the blade retreats from the ball, and it's apparent within moments of their reunion that something isn't right. As the Titleist Pro V1 finds its resting place, several feet shy and slightly west of its final destination, he can't mask his frustration. "Nice one, *Boner*," he mutters.

To play golf with John Boehner is to learn there are unwritten rules governing the use of the word *Boner*. When spoken by his close friends—"Thatta boy, *Boner*!"—it's almost always to congratulate him on a good shot. When the former U.S. House speaker uses it—"Aww, Jesus, *Boner*!"—it's almost always to rebuke himself for a bad one. Today he is saying it with ruinous frequency.

We're on Boehner's home course, the Wetherington Golf and Country Club, on a Monday afternoon in early June. Tucked away in West Chester, Ohio—an affluent enclave of suburban Cincinnati, part of his old district—the club is hosting a charity fundraiser, dubbed the "Boehner Classic," benefiting a nearby Boys & Girls Club. The former speaker is one of two star attractions; the other is his friend, the professional golfer Fuzzy Zoeller, a character known more for his off-color jokes than his two major championships. With wealthy donors ponying up to play alongside them—but some of his old buddies also in town—Boehner decides to form a group of nine players, myself and Zoeller included, and creates a team scramble that pits five golfers against the other four.

But something isn't right with the former speaker's game. Long considered one of Washington's finest golfers, he is spraying shots left and right with choppy, self-doubting swings. Sensing my surprise, Boehner says his handicap has skyrocketed since leaving Congress two years ago. After he misses that 10-foot putt, and we climb into our cart, I ask why. "You have to concentrate while you hit the ball," he tells me. "That's my biggest problem in golf these days. I just can't concentrate. I could always concentrate on what I had to do. But these days ... " Boehner pauses for several seconds, then pulls hard on the Camel 99 wedged between his knuckles. "I just can't concentrate."

To outsiders, Boehner might just be the happiest man alive, a liberated retiree who spends his days swirling merlot and cackling at Speaker Paul Ryan's misfortune. The truth is more complicated. At 67, Boehner *is* liberated—to say what he spent many years trying not to say; to smoke his two packs a day without undue stress; to chuckle at the latest crisis in Washington and whisper to himself those three magic words: "Not my problem." And yet he is struggling—with the lingering perception that he was run out of Congress; with his alarm about the country's future; and with the question of what he's supposed to do next. After leaving office, Boehner says a longtime family friend approached him. "You've always had a purpose—your business, your family, politics," the friend said. "What's your purpose now?" Boehner says the question gnaws at him every day.

We met three times over the summer, his most candid and revealing series of interviews since a third attempted coup on his speakership led him to say *to hell with it* and retire early. The first interview was in June at Wetherington; the second in July at Burning Tree Club, a private, all-male establishment in Bethesda, Maryland; the third in September following a joint fundraiser with Ryan at the Bengals vs. Packers game in Green Bay, Wisconsin. In the whole of our conversations, he asked only five or six times for something to remain off the record. In those instances, I agreed. Everything else was fair game—and he did not disappoint. From his text messages with George W. Bush, to his scathing critiques of conservative media and his former antagonists on Capitol Hill, to his disgust at America's being stuck with a choice between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, the former speaker held little back.

What I discovered from 18 hours on the record with him, and dozens more with his friends, is that for all the talk of Boehner living the dream in retirement—mowing and manicuring his lawn, fiddling around at his workbench, spending time with his grandson—he is lacking a certain peace. It's the type of tranquility that accompanies the knowledge that your life's work won't be remembered as a failure; that the party and the institution you gave everything to aren't collapsing because of mistakes you might have made.

Boehner is a fascinating and paradoxical figure in his own right. He was the brilliant salesman who couldn't get his own members to buy. The back-slapping creature of K Street who never took a single earmark. The gruff chain-smoker who weeps at the mere mention of schoolchildren. The Midwestern everyman who won't be seen in public without a clean shave and an ironed shirt. The bartender's son who became speaker of the House.

But the story of Boehner's 25 years in Washington is also the story of the Republican Party, the Congress and American politics in the post-Ronald Reagan era: an account of corruption and crusading, enormous promises and underwhelming results, growing ideological polarization and declining faith in government. The same centrifugal forces that made Boehner's job impossible have bedeviled his successor, Ryan, and kept the GOP majorities in

Congress from passing any landmark legislation in 2017. Now, as the revolutionary fervor that swept Boehner into the speakership degenerates into a fratricidal conflict centered around Trump, the former speaker's frontline view of the Republican civil war is essential to understanding what went wrong.

On the eve of his golf outing, I find myself on Boehner's back patio. He's hosting a barbecue for friends who came to Ohio for the fundraiser, and we get acquainted as Boehner works several outdoor grills, Camel in his left hand and tongs in his right. Among others seated around the table, sipping Maker's Mark 46 from blue plastic cups and smoking cigars, are Dick, who owns a winter home near Boehner's on Florida's Marco Island; Ed, who also spends winters on Marco Island but still runs a business out of western Ohio; and Mick, the longtime chief of staff in Boehner's personal office who lives nearby. All three promise that I'm in for a treat. They aren't lying: Boehner has prepared a feast of teriyaki-marinated flank steaks, his specialty; chunks of seared beef tenderloin; grilled chicken breasts; a salad of avocado, tomatoes and fresh mozzarella; au gratin potatoes; a sweet corn skillet; and baked crescent rolls. As we eat, someone jokes that the only thing missing are hot dogs. Boehner looks up from his plate. "I've never had a hot dog for dinner in my life," he says, stone-faced.

After we eat, Boehner sits across from me, reaches for a lighter and indicates he's ready to talk. Boehner smokes two packs a day and has a habit of pinching off the smoldering end of his cigarette, rolling the butt into a ball and shoving it into his pocket. (On the back nine a day later, Boehner stops at a receptacle and scoops from his pocket some two dozen smoke-stained balls.) Of his 11 siblings, one has passed away. It was lung cancer. Boehner says this doesn't concern him—"If I was going to die from smoking cigarettes, I'd already be dead"—but I notice that his laughs, which come often and easy, are almost always accompanied by coughs. *Ah-heh. Ah-heh.*

Breaking the ice, I mention some news of the day—that Trey Gowdy appears likely to become chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. The previous chairman, Jason Chaffetz, had abruptly announced his resignation from Congress; House conservatives had hoped that Jim Jordan, a senior member on the committee, might pursue the chairmanship. Boehner grins. "Gowdy—that's my guy, even though he doesn't know how to dress," he says. Then Boehner leans back in his chair. "Fuck Jordan. Fuck Chaffetz. They're both assholes."

And away we go.

Boehner's beef with Chaffetz, who would later join Fox News as a paid contributor, is not personal—just that he's a "total phony" who possessed legislative talent but focused mostly on self-promotion. "With Chaffetz," Boehner says, "it's always about Chaffetz."

His problems with Jordan, the founding chairman of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus, run much deeper. To Boehner and his allies, Jordan was the antagonist in the story of his speakership—an embodiment of the brinkmanship and betrayal that roiled the House Republican majority and made Boehner's life miserable. Although he would tell me in later conversations that he holds no grudges against anyone, today Boehner unloads on his fellow Ohioan. "Jordan was a terrorist as a legislator going back to his days in the Ohio House and Senate," Boehner says. "A terrorist. A legislative terrorist."

If he sounds exasperated, it's because this is the central irony of his career: A quarter-century before the conservative insurgency stormed Washington and derailed his speakership, John Boehner *was* the conservative insurgency.

ACT I

Boehner's pursuit of national office was his first rebellion against the establishment.

When the news broke in 1989 that Ohio Congressman Donald "Buz" Lukens, a Republican, had paid a 16-year-old for sex—and was trying to get her mother a government job—the party bosses tried pushing him out. Lukens wouldn't budge. So they coalesced around a challenger: former GOP Congressman Tom Kindness, who had held the seat prior to Lukens. Months went by before Boehner, a state representative who had made himself wealthy selling corrugated boxes and injection-molded plastics, jumped into the race—much to the displeasure of party leaders. Boehner didn't have insider connections or family favors to cash in; one of a dozen kids who grew up in a two-bedroom home and cleaned floors in his father's shot-and-a-beer saloon, he worked as a janitor to pay for college and first took elected office as a township trustee before later winning a statehouse seat.

Armed with little name recognition and even less support, Boehner poured his own money into the race—nearly emptying his family's bank account by spending \$150,000 on the campaign. "It was too much money," Debbie Boehner, his wife, tells me. Her husband nods. "I put it all on the line." Money wasn't Boehner's problem; it was his name. Almost everyone in the district pronounced it *Boner*. "Think about this," Mick tells me on the patio, laughing so hard he can barely finish. "You had a guy named *Kindness* running against a guy named *Boner*." Defying expectations, Boehner won the primary and gained the party's support. That included help from Paul Ryan, a local college Republican who volunteered that fall. "I didn't know him," Ryan says. "I thought his name was *Boner*."

By then, the Democrats' post-Watergate zeal for reform had long since faded, and the House was widely seen as the oozing center of the Washington swamp—an out-of-control legislative slum that invited malfeasance and vice. It was against this backdrop that Boehner, a newcomer, made it his mission to clean up Congress. "He indicated he wanted to be very aggressive and very much involved in reform efforts, and he brought a lot of energy to it," Newt Gingrich, who was then the second-ranking House Republican, remembers of the freshman lawmaker.

Almost from the day he arrived on Capitol Hill in January 1991, Boehner found himself arguing with employees of the House Bank—a financial institution for members of Congress only—who explained that his paycheck could be deposited only with them. These rules vexed the rookie legislator. Months later, he spotted a statistic from the Government Accountability Office audit of the House Bank: more than 8,000 of its checks had bounced. "They needed all of us to keep our money in those accounts so they could have a big enough float to keep the bank alive," Boehner recalls. After discussing this realization with six of his fellow freshman Republicans, they agreed to expose the rot. As they did so, in the form of a privileged resolution, Boehner tells me, Speaker Tom Foley and Majority Leader Dick Gephardt—both Democrats—approached him on the House floor, as did Bob Michel, the Republican minority

leader. "All three of them said essentially the same thing," Boehner remembers. "'We didn't do anything wrong, and we won't do it again.'" As Boehner and Co. dug deeper, probing the bank's finances and pushing for the disclosure of members whose accounts were overdrawn, they earned a nickname: the Gang of Seven. Less than a year into his first term, as Americans seethed over the improprieties exposed by these freshman renegades—with Democrats, the majority party, shouldering the blame—the House Bank was closed. And Boehner's star was born.

The Gang's work wasn't finished. Over the next several years they turned their attention to other targets, including the scandal-plagued House Post Office, leading to the indictment and imprisonment of House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski, a powerful Illinois Democrat. Sensing an opportunity to seize Washington's moral high ground and win back the House after 40 years in the minority—President Bill Clinton's own troubles would be icing on the cake—Gingrich enlisted Boehner to help draft the "Contract with America," a [list](#) of promises to voters.

As he helped guide the party's midterm strategy, Boehner's high-profile role made him a hero to reform-minded conservatives seeking office across the country in part of what would later be dubbed the "Republican Revolution" of 1994. Richard Burr, who today is the senior senator from North Carolina, was campaigning for a House seat that year and remembers hearing about Boehner. "I think John was probably the first one that actually intended to drain the swamp. He was a radical," Burr says. "The closest example would be a Freedom Caucus guy today." Jordan, running his first race for the statehouse that year, recalls fawning over his future nemesis. "Here's a guy who's fighting to clean things up in Washington."

Republicans won the majority, and Boehner, leveraging his newfound celebrity, ran for the No. 4 spot in House leadership: conference chairman. Gingrich had become speaker with Michel's retirement, and he had a different person in mind for conference chair. But Boehner won anyway, cashing in on favors he had accumulated by virtue of his status as a prodigious young fundraiser.

At freshman orientation following the 1994 midterms, Boehner, now a four-year veteran of the House, sat with three incoming members—Burr, Saxby Chambliss of Georgia and Tom Latham of Iowa—and discovered they had much in common. The four would become inseparable. "There's a very small cadre of things that makes John Boehner like you," Burr says. "We all liked red wine. At the time most of us used tobacco products. ... John had his, let's say, peculiarities about him. He was not shy to be critical of one's hair or one's dress if in fact he found it to be outside of what he perceived to be appropriate or the norm. And I think we were the only three people that were willing to put up with his crap. So, we became his best friends."

Boehner's fastidiousness would become legendary among colleagues. Friends say he would iron virtually every piece of clothing—shirts, undershirts, boxer shorts, pants, suit jackets, ties. Patrick McHenry, currently the chief deputy whip, recalls how, on his first day in Congress in 2005, Boehner walked into the cloakroom and spotted him eating an ice cream sandwich. They had never met. Boehner lit a cigarette and scowled at him. "Don't do that," he said, pointing to the frozen snack. "Why?" McHenry replied. "You're gonna be a fatass," Boehner told him.

This is Boehner's way of showing affection; after he calls me "shithead" for the umpteenth time on the golf course, his buddy Dick leans over. "You know that means he likes you,

right?" (His buddies have the same towel-snapping style. At one point, I hit a low, screaming drive. "You know what your problem is?" Fuzzy Zoeller asks me. "L.O.F.T." I nod, saying I should tee my ball higher. "No," he shakes his head. "Lack of fucking talent." Boehner howls with approval.)

Having watched Gingrich stalk the halls of Congress, rarely making eye contact with colleagues—much less greeting them—Boehner knew he needed to engage members while still being himself. "You grow up in a bar and you learn to mix it up with people," Boehner says. "It was a way of building relationships, as goofy as it sounds. And if you've got a relationship with people, you've got a chance to move them."

Those relationships failed to save him from what looked like a political death sentence.

The year 1994 didn't just usher in new leadership to the House and the GOP; it marked a profound shift in Washington's partisan relations. Gingrich, a master messenger with a zero-sum approach to ideological warfare, perfected the art of launching poll-tested attacks on Democrats as "radicals" who threatened liberty. With a penchant for turning personal disagreement into political Armageddon, Gingrich weaponized the speakership as never before.

"The beginning of the scorched-earth policy really began with Gingrich winning in the mid-'90s, the Gingrich revolution, and the enormous pressure put on moderate Republicans to walk away from anything remotely approaching a compromise," says former Vice President Joe Biden, who was then a senator from Delaware.

Another change, one that would later inform some of the opposition to Boehner's speakership, was the consolidation of power at the expense of committee chairmen and rank-and-file members. "Gingrich basically created a process where the speaker was the epicenter of the House," says Joshua Huder, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Government Affairs Institute.

As the fourth-ranking House Republican—behind Gingrich, Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom DeLay—Boehner could see the toll these institutional transformations took on GOP members, who felt disempowered by Gingrich's imperial style. After Clinton won reelection in 1996, Republicans grew restless. The GOP had suffered terribly from Gingrich's handling of a lengthy government shutdown from December 1995 to January 1996—a lesson that informed Boehner's aversion to such tactics years later—as well as his constant public feuding and a barrage of ethics charges against him. In January 1997, Gingrich became the first speaker ever reprimanded for an ethics violation.

That summer, several members of the extended Republican leadership huddled to discuss a coup against Gingrich; when the speaker learned of their plotting, they scrambled to protect themselves and Gingrich remained in power. It has long been considered fact that Boehner and Armey joined this mutiny. But Boehner insists he was never involved. He claims that DeLay and Republican leadership chairman Bill Paxon were the masterminds, both eyeing promotions, and that "when it all blew up, they dragged me and Armey into it with them." He sighs. "DeLay and I were never close. Matter of fact, half the stab wounds in my back are from him." The one person who believed Boehner's story was Gingrich. "John is a very honest guy. He'll be honest with you negatively and he'll be honest with you positively," Gingrich

says. "I never doubted him."

Whatever role Boehner played, the damage was done. Gingrich stepped down after Republicans lost five seats in the 1998 midterms, and when heir apparent Bob Livingston shockingly announced that he would decline the speakership—amid swirling reports of extramarital shenanigans—Dennis Hastert, the chief deputy whip, became speaker. Armev and DeLay kept their posts. But there was blood in the water, and Boehner became "the sacrificial lamb," Chambliss says, losing his job as conference chair to J.C. Watts of Oklahoma.

"Most people thought I was going to leave," Boehner says of his humiliating defeat. Instead, he recalls telling his then-chief of staff, Barry Jackson, as they left the vote: "I'm never going to let 'em see me sweat. They're never going to see an ounce of disappointment on my face. We're just going to earn our way back."

Two years later—on the heels of George W. Bush's 2000 election—the chairmanship of the House Education and the Workforce Committee opened up, and Boehner saw his chance. Roy Blunt, a Missourian and the chief deputy whip, remembers Boehner's presentation to the Steering Committee: He brought metal lunchboxes personalized with members' names, and folded up inside were his education policy papers. Boehner lacked seniority, but "it was the right thing to do to bring him back into a more active role in the House," Blunt recalls.

The timing was serendipitous: Bush wanted to show the American people that Washington was still functioning after the September 11 terrorist attacks, and signing a major, bipartisan overhaul of education would be just the thing. Boehner, a golfing buddy of the president's, found himself paired with Ted Kennedy, the liberal lion of the Senate, crafting the most ambitious K-12 bill in American history. "Ted Kennedy was a great compromiser. Everybody thought he was rigid, just wanted his way. That is not Ted Kennedy," says Harry Reid, who then served as Senate majority whip. "And for Boehner, Ted was perfect, because he was always willing to do a deal."

The result, *No Child Left Behind*, was the linchpin to Boehner's political reclamation project—even though the federal government's intrusion into state and local education policymaking spawned a conservative backlash still felt today. Boehner blames "the implementation" of the bill, but makes no apology for breaking with party orthodoxy in writing it. Passage of NCLB might have been the genesis of the right's caricature of Boehner as a spineless centrist, but it also cemented his reputation as an effective dealmaker. "To some members that probably defined him as more moderate than they would like," Blunt says. "To others it defined him as a guy with capacity to get hard things done."

By 2006, the party was reeling—two prolonged wars, ballooning deficit, skyrocketing debt—and Democrats were threatening to take back the House. DeLay had been promoted to majority leader, and Blunt to majority whip; both men loomed as obstacles for Boehner's designs on climbing back into the leadership. But DeLay's indictment in late 2005 opened the door. His resignation sparked an intense five-month period of jockeying for the role of majority leader: Boehner, Blunt and John Shadegg, chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, all wanted the job. Blunt tallied 110 votes on the first ballot, shy of the majority he needed; ahead of the second ballot, Paul Ryan, a member of Shadegg's operation, informed Boehner's team that they would throw their votes to him. The comeback was complete: Boehner was elected House majority leader in what he describes as the best day he

ever had in Congress.

Boehner had made the leadership election a referendum on the GOP's ethical lapses—fittingly but ironically, considering he was bludgeoned in 1995 for distributing Big Tobacco's campaign checks on the House floor. Having apologized and pushed to ban that very practice, Boehner preserved his reputation as a reformer and was now working to fulfill a campaign promise nobody thought he could keep: banning earmarks.

The funding of pet projects in lawmakers' districts helped leadership to keep members in line, but fueled a culture of venality and waste; boondoggles like the "Bridge to Nowhere," a 2005 project calling for a \$223 million earmark to construct a bridge to a remote, sparsely populated Alaska island, became symbols of congressional excess. Boehner never accepted an earmark in Congress—and he enjoyed railing against those who did. His heckling once provoked Don Young, an Alaskan himself, to pin Boehner against a wall inside the House chamber and hold a 10-inch knife to his throat. Boehner says he stared Young in the eyes and said, "Fuck you." (Young says this account is "mostly true," but notes that the two became good friends, with Boehner later serving as his best man.)

Boehner made good on his promise. He rolled the powerful Appropriations Committee and rid the House of earmarks, claiming a watershed victory for good government. History will judge it as perhaps Boehner's most significant achievement—and one that made running the House all the more difficult.

ACT II

He wasn't majority leader for long.

With public opinion turning sharply against Bush—his handling of the Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina and the economy, specifically the early stages of the housing bubble—Democrats took advantage of a demoralized Republican base and won back the House in 2006, picking up 31 seats and handing Nancy Pelosi the speaker's gavel. It wasn't all bad for Boehner: Hastert's retirement cleared the way for him to become the top House Republican.

Although nobody knew at the time, Hastert would become another in a long string of prominent congressional Republicans to be disgraced by scandal. In 2015, Hastert reached a plea agreement with federal prosecutors, acknowledging that he had delivered hush money to one of several male former high school students he had sexually abused. The Boehners, like others who knew him, were dumbfounded. "Denny Hastert was the nicest guy," Debbie says. "But you know what? His wife never came to D.C." Did they ever notice anything unusual, I ask? "Only his staff," Boehner tells me. "He had more gay staff than anybody I knew—at a time when it was a bit unusual." He pauses. "OK, fine. I didn't care. But when all this stuff broke a couple years ago, it took my breath away."

Now minority leader, Boehner spent much of 2008 corralling difficult votes to prop up a sinking economy and an unpopular, lame-duck president. Jordan, who arrived in the class of 2006, remembers watching during his freshman term as the leader straddled a line between his inner conservatism and his loyalty to the president and the party. This reached a memorable

climax in late September 2008, when two-thirds of the House GOP voted against a bailout package requested by Bush and Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson—sending global markets tumbling and Boehner scrambling to find votes. A revised bill passed four days later, averting catastrophe, but the uprising had officially begun.

Republicans, having spent and borrowed extravagantly during the Bush years—and expanded the reach of the federal government with No Child Left Behind, the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit, and the bailouts—now faced a conservative backlash. Pivoting sharply, GOP lawmakers greeted the election of Barack Obama in 2008 with unified opposition to his stimulus package. This brought accusations of hypocrisy. "People thought we had spent too much. Thought the tax cuts were too much," Boehner says. "OK, fine—we need to look ahead. We've got a spending problem."

With Democrats controlling the White House and both chambers of Congress in 2009 and 2010, Boehner felt obligated to hold the line and galvanize the party faithful who had failed to mobilize behind Senator John McCain, the centrist-leaning 2008 nominee. He led the charge against the stimulus, the Affordable Care Act, Dodd-Frank financial regulation, and cap and trade, and his leadership was unquestioned in the GOP conference; Boehner's fiery floor speech denouncing the ACA shortly before its passage was his high-water mark among colleagues. "Look at how this bill was written," the minority leader [said on the House floor](#) in March 2010. "Can you say it was done openly?" Republicans and Democrats shouted in response. "With transparency and accountability?" The shouts continued. "Without backroom deals struck behind closed doors, hidden from the people? Hell no, you can't!"

Out in the provinces, however, the party was transforming, with implications that would prove fateful for Boehner: Rallies nationwide featured Paul Revere imitators waving "Don't Tread on Me" flags, and candidates for Congress were aligning with the so-called Tea Party in denouncing both Obama's overreach and the excesses of the previous GOP administration in equally strident terms. They promised to come to Washington as a new breed of Republican—revolutionaries promising ideological purity rather than partisan achievement. "It was very appealing in running for Congress to say that you would never settle for less than 100 percent," recalls Blunt, who left the House and won a Senate seat in 2010.

The uprising put Boehner in a predicament as Republicans stampeded back into the House majority that November, flipping 63 Democrat-held seats. The new speaker had campaigned on a generic but effective message—"Where are the jobs?"—that revealed a traditional sensibility about how to oppose the president. Boehner wanted Obama gone, but he wasn't much for stunts and gamesmanship; his goal was to prove in 2011 and 2012 that Republicans could be trusted once again as a responsible governing party, thus aiding Obama's defeat in 2012.

"When I saw that Boehner was becoming speaker, I thought that was a positive thing," Biden tells me. "I thought there could be actually some work together, some collaboration together, and we could actually get some things done. But I thought, most of all, he was going to treat the president with more respect than some of his colleagues had."

The class of 2010 wasn't interested in collaboration. These rowdy freshmen lawmakers saw Boehner's "Hell no" speech as a blueprint for their slash-and-burn strategy. When they realized after arriving in D.C. that he would not lead accordingly, dozens of them gravitated toward someone who would: Jordan, the newly installed chairman of the Republican Study Committee. When I ask about those factions forming in 2011, Jordan cites the "Hell no"

speech and shrugs. "That's the John Boehner we were hoping for."

The Republican Party's incipient civil war moved quickly from the campaign trail to Capitol Hill. The fundamentally irreconcilable approaches of Boehner and Jordan, and the members who followed them, produced an increasingly volatile series of intraparty collisions during the new GOP majority's first term in 2011 and 2012.

Some of this owed to Boehner's not taking the campaign rhetoric of his new colleagues at face value. "These were people who ran against Washington and planned on voting that way," explains Tim Huelskamp, who was elected in the 2010 wave and then lost his Kansas district's Republican primary in 2016. Boehner rejects the notion that he was ill-prepared to deal with these rookie legislators, but his allies concede there was a blind spot. "He thought of himself as someone who was of the Tea Party mentality before the Tea Party was a thing ... so I think there were some assumptions made that he got these people, and that they would see he was one of them," says Anne Bradbury, Boehner's former floor director. "But that really never came together."

Some of the freshmen took one look at Boehner—the golf-tanned back-slapper who wore handsome, tailored suits and rented his D.C. apartment from a registered lobbyist—and saw the embodiment of everything they were sent to destroy. "They never gave him a fair shake," says Kevin McCarthy, the California congressman who was then Boehner's majority whip.

One thing everybody agrees on: The debt-ceiling negotiations that summer of 2011 marked the beginning of the end of Boehner's speakership.

Facing an August deadline to raise the nation's borrowing limit, which gave conservatives occasion to take a symbolic stand against fiscal irresponsibility, the speaker appeased his members by declaring that every new dollar of debt must be offset by commensurate spending cuts. The speaker hoped this "Boehner Rule" would project strength from his young, untested conference, but it backfired: Conservatives repeatedly balked at potential compromises being discussed by Boehner and Obama, believing they had leverage to hold out for a better deal.

They rallied around a plan called Cut, Cap and Balance, which required a hike in the debt ceiling to be accompanied by a cut in federal spending, a cap on future levels of spending and an amendment to the Constitution requiring Congress to balance its budget. The proposal, which Boehner privately derided as "Snap, Crackle and Pop," passed the House in mid-July but was rejected out of hand by Obama and the Reid-run Senate. Boehner, staring down the August deadline, moved on; conservatives were irate that leadership had caved. "It was the most popular Republican vote we had taken," Huelskamp says. "And 18 hours later he caved to Obama on some stupid deal and we all went home dejected for the August recess."

Jordan and Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina, who helped craft the Cut, Cap and Balance legislation, urged the GOP leadership in both chambers to force the issue—to "fight," as conservatives loved to say, and let the public decide which party was right. To Boehner, this was a futile strategy—Democrats controlled the White House and the Senate, leaving him with few cards to play. But the debt-ceiling mess was only a taste of things to come—DeMint would later haunt Boehner as president of The Heritage Foundation, whose lobbying arm, Heritage Action, pressured GOP lawmakers into defying the speaker at every turn. "He ran Heritage into the ground," Boehner told me after DeMint was fired this summer. "Heritage

was a respected conservative think tank, and he turned it into some half-assed political operation."

The rising influence of Heritage and other "outside groups" on the right—Club for Growth, FreedomWorks, Tea Party Patriots—made the speaker's job infinitely harder. Egged on by an angry GOP base, they repeatedly cornered Republicans into fights they couldn't possibly win. The defining implosion of their first year in the majority came in late July when it was revealed that Jordan's staff had been conspiring with outside groups to pressure RSC members—*Jordan's own members*—to vote against Boehner's debt deal. It was a stunning breach of decorum and a confirmation of what Obama had already figured out: that Boehner wasn't dealing from a place of strength. Jordan apologized profusely to the conference, but it was too late. Whatever trust once existed between the warring GOP factions had vanished, never to return—and it destroyed Boehner's credibility with Democrats.

"He could practically never deliver his votes," Pelosi tells me. When I ask Boehner about this, during a rain delay at Wetherington, he smirks. "It's hard to negotiate when you're standing there naked," he says. "It's hard to negotiate with no dick."

It didn't help that Boehner spent part of that summer negotiating the biggest deal in modern political history—and keeping his members entirely in the dark about it.

Boehner's conservative foes criticized him as cautious at best and gutless at worst, but he is better understood as a calculated gambler. For instance, he greenlit Ryan's controversial, safety-net-slashing budget proposals at a time when many party leaders were running away from them, because he felt voters would reward the GOP for taking a stand on entitlement spending. The speaker wasn't afraid of going big. But the circumstances had to be right. And in June 2011, they were.

What began as a bipartisan photo-op—18 holes at the Andrews Air Force Base course with Obama and Boehner teaming against Biden and Ohio Governor John Kasich—ended with a suggestion from Boehner that the debt-ceiling predicament actually gave them the chance for a once-in-a-lifetime deal to address America's longer-term crisis: the retirement of the baby boomer generation and the strain it placed on the country's finances. Republicans might agree to increased revenue via eliminating tax deductions and loopholes (violating conservative orthodoxy) if Democrats could agree to spending cuts and entitlement reforms (violating liberal orthodoxy). Obama signaled his openness to the idea, and for the next five weeks their teams worked in secret to hammer out a compromise, knowing that fury awaited in their respective bases.

On Sunday, July 17, it appeared they had a deal. Boehner and Virginia Representative Eric Cantor—whom the speaker had reluctantly brought into the negotiations, knowing the majority leader's distrust of Obama could poison the talks—worked out some final details that morning at the White House. When the president returned from church, Boehner says, he invited them both into the Oval Office and shook their hands. Some fine-tuning remained, but in Boehner's mind the so-called grand bargain was done. The framework included reforms to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security; \$1.2 trillion in cuts to discretionary spending; and \$800 billion in new revenue. "I was one happy son of a bitch," Boehner tells me.

The next 48 hours changed everything. On Tuesday morning, the so-called Gang of Six—

three senators from each party who had been discussing their own sweeping fiscal agreement—announced a briefing for their colleagues at the Capitol. They unveiled a separate framework, totally unaware of what Obama and Boehner had agreed to. This deal included significantly more revenue. Chambliss, by then a senator, was one of the GOP Gang members and had no idea—because Boehner had been negotiating with the president in private—that their announcement would kill the speaker's deal with the White House. Obama saw that Republican senators were endorsing a deal that included far more revenue, and knew there was no way he could sell the grand bargain to his liberal base. When he came back with a counteroffer, seeking a higher revenue number, it validated Cantor's warnings about not trusting the president. And by that point Boehner's members had heard enough about the grand bargain to know they didn't like it—with the \$800 billion revenue figure, much less something higher.

So the deal fell apart, and the two sides peddled their competing versions of events: Boehner's team said the White House moved the goal posts, while Obama's allies said the speaker couldn't sell his own members on the deal. "The White House tried to spin this a million different ways," Boehner tells me. "But we had a deal. They walked away from it." When I ask Biden about this, he takes a long pause. "I think they had a genuine misunderstanding," he says. "I think John is completely sincere, but ... we had this Rubik's cube we were constantly struggling with as to whether or not what was being sold by John in the House was going to be able to be delivered, and what was being sold in the Senate was able to be delivered."

Harry Reid insists his caucus would have provided enough votes for passage, despite deep reservations among Democrats. And he says to this day he blames the Gang of Six for scuttling the grand bargain by releasing a framework that had no chance of becoming law. "They may get mad at me now, I don't care. I knew it would never work," Reid says of the Senate proposal. "It was a doomed failure. I told them that. So, I was hoping Boehner and Obama would move forward."

There is truth in both arguments: that Obama walked away and Boehner couldn't convince his people. That said, knowing how his career ended, Boehner counts the grand bargain as his "biggest disappointment"—not only because the national debt just blew past \$20 trillion, with no hope of entitlement fixes on the horizon, but also because at least there would be something big to show for the heartburn he endured as speaker. "If I could have pulled this deal off, they could have thrown me out the next day," Boehner says. "I would have been the happiest guy in the world."

Having lost the faith of the White House as an effective partner, and the confidence of his right flank to do its bidding, Boehner approached the remainder of the term warily in hopes of avoiding self-inflicted wounds that would hurt GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney's chances of defeating Obama. Instead, after the president won reelection, Boehner was soon back at the negotiating table dealing with yet another crisis. This time, it was the so-called fiscal cliff, in which the expiration of the Bush-era tax cuts and harsh, automatic spending cuts agreed to in 2011 (following the grand bargain's collapse) would take effect simultaneously in 2013—risking to send the country back into recession.

Obama had campaigned in 2012 on the proposal that tax rates should jump for individuals making more than \$200,000 annually. After weeks of haggling following his victory, the president offered a concession: \$400,000 for individuals. Boehner made a counteroffer of \$1

million. Had the entire House GOP rallied behind that idea, they might have forced Obama's number higher. But a larger number of Republicans, having pledged to an outside group never to raise taxes, period, refused to go along. A dejected Boehner conceded defeat in a private conference meeting, and, in a remarkable moment of vulnerability, recited the Serenity Prayer used in 12-step addiction programs.

Boehner was running out of patience. The day before, Reid had blasted him from the Senate floor, saying he ran the House like a dictator. "I don't do angry. Nobody on my staff has ever seen me angry," Boehner tells me. "But that little son of a bitch got under my skin." When he arrived at the White House for a meeting with the president and congressional leaders, Boehner spotted Reid talking with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. "I walked right up to him and said, 'Harry, you can go fuck yourself. You ever listen to that shit that comes out of your mouth?'" Boehner imitates a flustered Reid, then adds: "I thought McConnell was going to have a heart attack."

(Reid adds an interesting detail. "Then he said, 'We've got to get along better,'" Reid recalls, grinning. "That's one reason I like him. He's not a phony. ... He wanted me to know that he wanted us to get along. So that was his way of telling me." Boehner agrees; he says they became "really good friends" after the incident, and today construction is underway on a new think tank at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, which they will co-chair. Boehner visited in August and Reid tells me they went sightseeing together like an old married couple; he even put down the car window so Boehner could smoke as they drove.)

The fiscal cliff further diminished Boehner's standing on the right. When the new Congress convened in January 2013, some two dozen House conservatives plotted to overthrow him. Any speaker needs a majority of votes cast on the House floor on the first day of a new Congress; Huelskamp and others concluded that if 17 Republicans voted against Boehner, that would force a second ballot—and he would step aside out of shame. Huelskamp says the coup participants "signed their names in blood" the night before the vote—not literally—and he was stunned the next day to see just 12 of them follow through. Boehner survived, but was embarrassed by the revolt. It was the first attempt on his speakership, though not the last.

The resentment toward Boehner was rooted in many grievances, some more legitimate than others. Without question, he ran the House in a top-down fashion inherited from Gingrich, centralizing the policymaking process in leadership offices and spurning input from back-bench members. He would also anger conservatives by allowing deadlines to creep up, refusing to state the conference's strategy because he knew they would disapprove—and then he would jam them at the last minute. There also was outrage at his punitive tactics. In late 2012, he had kicked Huelskamp and several other conservatives off key committees as punishment for their votes against leadership initiatives. It was predictable: The earmark ban had robbed Boehner of his best tool to incentivize on-the-fence members, leaving him to lead with all sticks and few carrots. With outside groups actively recruiting primary challengers, members in red districts often saw no political upside in voting with the leadership—a dynamic Boehner could not counter.

Things improved somewhat after the 2013 speaker vote, when Boehner privately assembled a group of five House conservatives—Ryan, Jordan, Tom Price, Jeb Hensarling and Steve Scalise—to discuss a cease-fire. This temporarily ended the hostilities. But by summer, Republicans were engaged in another brutal internecine conflict—this time over immigration.

A bipartisan group of eight senators had crafted a comprehensive immigration bill that

appeared to have support in the House GOP. But in June, when the Senate passed it—68 to 32, with 14 Republicans voting yes—House members found themselves under siege from constituents and conservative groups. The fatal flaw: It provided a path to citizenship, albeit a winding one, for people in the country illegally. Many conservatives could support a path to legal status but not citizenship; Democrats, on the other hand, essentially took a citizenship-or-nothing approach. Boehner was boxed in: He wanted immigration reform, and personally didn't mind citizenship—especially for minors brought to the U.S. unwittingly. But putting the bill on the floor meant it might pass into law with perhaps as few as 40 or 50 of his members voting yes. Conservatives would never forgive him for overruling the vast majority of his membership. Looking back, Boehner says not solving immigration is his second-biggest regret, and he blames Obama for "setting the field on fire." But the former speaker doesn't mention the nativist voices in his own party that came to dominate the debate, foreshadowing the presidential campaign three years later. Ultimately, the speaker's immigration quandary boiled down to a choice between protecting his right flank and doing what he thought was right for the country—and Boehner chose the former.

It wasn't the only time. That summer, conservatives were also getting an earful about the Obamacare exchanges opening on October 1. House Republicans had voted repeatedly to repeal the law but the Senate refused to act, and their constituents, justifiably, wanted to know why Obamacare still existed when they had been promised otherwise. "Somehow, out on the campaign trail, the representation was made that you could beat President Obama into submission to sign a repeal of the law with his name on it," Cantor says. "And that's where things got, I think, disconnected from reality." (In Ohio, listening to his pals groan about Obamacare, Boehner explains why his former colleagues haven't repealed it: "Their gonads shriveled up when they learned this vote was for real.")

Republicans' penchant for overpromising and underdelivering would ultimately enable the ascent of Donald Trump, who positioned himself as a results-oriented outsider who would deliver where politicians had failed. In the shorter term, it invited something less dramatic: a government shutdown. Eager to demonstrate that all options were being exhausted to defeat Obamacare, Ted Cruz in the Senate and conservatives in the House concocted a plan: Because the government needed new funding on October 1, the same day the exchanges would open, they would propose funding the rest of the federal government—while defunding Obamacare.

Boehner objected. Not only would Democrats never go for it; Republicans would be blamed for the resulting government shutdown. "I told them, 'Don't do this. It's crazy. The president, the vice president, Reid, Pelosi, they're all sitting there with the biggest shit-eating grins on their faces that you've ever seen, because they can't believe we're this fucking stupid.'" (Boehner, at one point, surprises me by saying he's proud of Cruz—whom he [once called](#) "Lucifer in the flesh"—for acting responsibly in 2017. Do you feel badly about calling him Lucifer, I ask? "No!" Boehner snorts. "He's the most miserable son of a bitch I've ever had to work with.")

After railing against the defund strategy, however, Boehner surveyed his conference and realized it was a fight many members wanted—and some *needed*. Yielding, he joined them in the trenches, abandoning his obligations of governance in hopes of strengthening his standing in the party. But the 17-day shutdown proved costly. Watching as Republicans got butchered in nationwide polling, the speaker finally called a meeting to inform members that they would vote to reopen the government and raise the debt ceiling. "I get a standing ovation," Boehner says. "I'm thinking, 'This place is irrational.'"

By spring 2014 it appeared Boehner's days were numbered. A bigger bloc of members—not all of them troublemakers—told me at the time they would vote him out at the end of the year, replacing him with a new speaker for the next Congress. What they didn't know is that Boehner had already decided to step down, having instructed his three most trusted staffers to lay out his options for retiring at the end of 2014.

In a digital-time-stamped memo written in November 2013, titled "The End," those staffers—chief of staff Mike Sommers, deputy chief of staff Dave Schnittger and personal office chief of staff Mick Krieger—presented Boehner with three choices. "Option 1" meant announcing in January 2014 his plan to leave at the end of the year. "Option 2" meant announcing that plan in August. "Option 3" meant announcing it in November, after the midterm elections.

Boehner ruled out Option 1, deciding that yearlong leadership races would invite further discord and make legislating hopeless. But he never had the chance to decide between Options 2 and 3. That's because on June 10, 2014, as Boehner dined at Alberto's, his favorite Capitol Hill *ristorante*, Sommers called him with stunning news. Cantor—his majority leader and heir apparent—had lost his primary in Virginia's 7th District to a little-known challenger whose campaign was boosted by Tea Party groups and right-wing radio hosts. "I was pissed," Boehner tells me. "Because in my mind, I was done." ("That was the worst campaign ever run," Boehner adds of Cantor's defeat. "I never saw anything like it.")

Boehner's next call was to Ryan, asking him to become majority leader and slide into the speakership the following year. "He called me that night and said, 'You've got to do this job,'" Ryan tells me. "And I was like, 'There's no way I'm doing this job. You've got to stay.'" Boehner consulted with friends and determined there was only one course of action. "I remember telling him, 'You don't have a choice. This conference falls apart if you leave now,'" Chambliss says.

Cantor's loss triggered a leadership shuffle: McCarthy was promoted to majority leader, and Scalise was elected whip. The new chief deputy whip, McHenry—who admits to being "a bomb-thrower" his first three years in Congress and viewing Boehner as a nincompoop—tells me his view changed upon joining the speaker at his daily management meetings. "I'm in there and it's this realization—*Oh, wait a second*. Boehner does actually care about policy. He understands the dynamics of the conference. He understands where all these different groups are." He laughs. "Like, who is this guy?" McHenry wishes other conservatives had his vantage point. "He could see through opportunities without having to make the 50 or 75 phone calls that I made."

On the golf course in Ohio, Boehner singles out McHenry as an example of how some lawmakers mature after initially acting like "anarchists." He also makes a prediction: "McHenry's going to be the speaker one day."

Republicans took back the Senate in 2014 but little changed. If anything, conservative voters grew angrier at the lack of results. "There were a lot of no-win situations," Scalise says. "You go and pick fights with the Senate, but in the end, they've got a totally different set of rules that made it hard for any of our reforms even to get to the president's desk." McCarthy adds, "I remember telling Mitch McConnell one time, 'Your rules are gonna get the speaker

thrown out."

Boehner was unenthused about returning in 2015. Convinced that he was taking one for the team by staying, he was more anxious than anyone had ever seen him in January, when conservatives organized a second mutiny on the floor. "He was puffing cigarettes faster than usual, and that's hard to do," says Chambliss, who sat with Boehner during the speakership vote. "It obviously worked out. But from then on, I think it was only a matter of time for John to make the decision that this wasn't worth it."

Wounded by that January uprising, and seeing no light at the end of the tunnel—Jordan that same month had co-founded a new group, the House Freedom Caucus, designed to push leadership even harder than the Republican Study Committee had—Boehner plotted a new exit strategy. He would announce his retirement on his birthday, November 17.

But Boehner's plans were thwarted once again. Mark Meadows, another co-founder of the Freedom Caucus, sent shock waves through Congress on *his* birthday—July 28—by filing a "motion to vacate." The idea was to force another floor vote on the speakership, gambling that this time Boehner would either lose or step down to avoid the spectacle.

When news broke of Meadows' move, Boehner's allies were furious. They implored him to call up the motion and hold the vote immediately, in a show of strength. Boehner wanted to think. And after meeting the next day with Jordan and four other Freedom Caucus members, the speaker decided against it. They had urged him not to hold the vote before August recess, since the Republicans who supported him would then spend the month getting pummeled back home. Boehner found himself agreeing. "He's like, 'I don't want to make members take that vote,'" Ryan, who urged a same-day vote, recalls Boehner telling him. "Totally selfless. Always thinking about protecting the membership."

To be clear: Boehner was never going to lose the speakership. In another internal memo—this one digital-time-stamped September 16, 2015, and titled "Save the Institution"—Sommers explained to Boehner that his survival would be ensured if Pelosi had Democratic members vote "present" when the motion came up. If they did, Boehner could win with a simple majority of Republican votes cast—which was never in doubt, as the number of GOP defectors was between 20 and 40. In a subsequent meeting, Boehner broached the idea with Pelosi and she agreed. "You can't have 30 people in your caucus decide they're going to vacate the chair," she tells me. "He knew I had—not his back, but the institution's back."

And yet the maneuver didn't sit well with Boehner—especially since he was dead set on leaving in November anyway. "It would be awful for the institution. We hadn't gone through this in 100 years," he says. "All these Republicans were going to get crap at home for supporting me, only to have me leave soon after that." Boehner is still angry with Meadows, who canceled an interview for this article, for putting him in that position: "He's an idiot. I can't tell you what makes him tick."

On September 24, Pope Francis addressed Congress—a visit Boehner had worked for years to secure—and he says everything clicked. "I never saw members happier than they were the day the pope was there. Democrats, Republicans, House, Senate. Everybody was *happy*."

In his D.C. apartment that night, Boehner told his wife what he was thinking of announcing. "And then I went to bed and slept eight hours. Like a baby. It was unbelievable." The next morning, after his customary breakfast at Pete's Diner, "I looked at that statue of the Virgin

Mary next to St. Peter's Church, and I decided, all right, today's the day," Boehner recalls. "And as soon as I decided that, I thought, you know, the press is going to think I got forced out of here. I just want them to understand there's not one moment of trepidation in this. So, I'm going to walk out there singing 'Zip-a-dee-do-dah.' I made those decisions at the same moment."

Boehner was not forced out—at least, not in any technical or parliamentary sense. And there is no question he felt unburdened by the decision to finally throw in the towel. But the singing routine betrayed the fact that he was hardly his normal, cheerful self in those final months. "He was just kind of emotionally done," says Bradbury, his former aide. "The fact that he felt like he'd given and given to the conference and the country, and this is how he was rewarded, when he didn't want to be there anyway—" she stops herself. "It was very disheartening for him."

ACT III

"Nothing good happens after 10 p.m."

These are words Boehner lived by throughout his career. In a capital city where booze flows freely and parties run late and lawmakers live away from spouses, he decided long ago it would behoove him to be in bed by 10 o'clock. This also allowed him to rise early, take his long walk for coffee, wolf down some eggs at his favorite greasy spoon and read the newspapers before work. Retirement has meant adjustments—Boehner makes his own breakfast and spends his days dialing into conference calls, giving paid speeches or doing housework—but one constant remains: asleep by 10. On my first night in Ohio, just as the conversations were getting loose and the cocktails were getting stiff, Boehner informed the patio crowd he was turning in. It was 9:45.

But the next night was different. After the golf outing, and a reception in the clubhouse, Boehner hopped in his customized golf cart—a retirement gift from his congressional colleagues—and zipped across three moonlit fairways and into his driveway. I figured it was time to say goodnight. But Boehner invited me in for a nightcap. What followed, over bottomless glasses of wine, can only be described as Boehner unshackled. On several occasions, Debbie warned him to stop telling me things; when he ignored her, she would put a couch cushion over my recording device. The highlight was Boehner telling me a story about George W. Bush—and prefacing it by saying, "I shouldn't tell you this." Debbie, opening a bottle of red in the kitchen, barked: "Then don't!"

Boehner leans back in his favorite recliner, retrieving a glowing cigarette from its ashtray. "So I get a text from 43 about a month ago, maybe six weeks ago." Boehner's close friend Ed, who joined our nightcap, interjects: "Off the record?" Boehner waves him off: "It doesn't matter." He lets out a thick cough, smoke escaping his mouth, and continues. "So 43 says, 'Hey, are you talking to Ryan? Are you giving him advice?' I said, 'Yeah, if he calls I give him advice.'" Boehner takes a long, satisfied drag. "And he texts me back: 'He needs to call you more.'"

Boehner erupts into a long, uncontrollable cough-laugh. It is 10:40 p.m.

The anecdote underscores how Boehner and Bush are "two peas in the same pod," as the former speaker says, a pair of even-keeled gents who tried to ignore the stresses of their respective jobs and who enjoy commiserating now that they are both retired. (Boehner tells me that when Bush, while in office, refused to join Burning Tree—due to the optics of a president golfing someplace women aren't allowed—he told the commander in chief, "You're a pussy." Years later, when Bush became a member after leaving the White House, Boehner says he told Bush: "You're still a pussy.")

But the story also speaks to a concern for Boehner these days: the well-being of his successor. Ryan never wanted the job; it took Boehner more than a year to convince him, and there were drastic measures involved. When McCarthy abruptly decided he would not run for speaker, everyone knew Ryan was the only unifying choice. And Boehner knew which buttons to push: The speaker called Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, asking him to pressure Ryan. Dolan obliged, phoning the congressman and piling on more of the "Catholic guilt" Boehner had employed.

It worked, of course. But it's clear Boehner feels a little guilt himself. Ryan now holds the thankless job he was desperate to escape, and finds himself buffeted by the same internal forces. "And then there's the White House," Boehner tells me, rolling his eyes. "Dysfunction is a relative term. Right now it looks like I was a genius."

Even before Trump was elected, Boehner was back in the Capitol one day and visited the speaker's office. Ryan, he says, looked at him wearily: "This job is a lot harder than I thought." When I ask Ryan about this, he confirms the story and laughs. "And I wanted to say, 'You ass, you stuck me with this sh—'" He stops himself. But it's been a tough day, and the speaker needs to vent. "Just getting people to agree on how to do things that are in their own interest is hard to do. Getting people to agree, getting to consensus, on things that are basic and axiomatic, is really hard to do," Ryan tells me. "You need more of a degree in psychology than you need in economics." (Ryan has, however, found comfort in torturing Boehner: The speaker inherited his predecessor's security detail, and whereas Boehner demanded they be freshly shaven every day, Ryan let them grow unruly beards—pictures of which are often texted to their former boss, code name "Tan Man.")

The Freedom Caucus has begun to squeeze Ryan, much as it did to Boehner—warning him that without changes his tenure could be similarly endangered. And Ryan, as Boehner did, is telling friends that he's losing patience with the job. When I tell Jordan about Boehner's description of him—"a legislative terrorist"—and ask about whether he's holding the speakership hostage, he flashes surprise and eventually irritation. "Oh, my goodness. I feel sorry for the guy if he's that bitter about a guy coming here and doing what he told the voters he was gonna do. Wow. I feel bad for him," Jordan says. "But in the end, we were not doing what the voters elected us to do and what we told them we were going to do. We just weren't. And I would argue the same thing is happening now."

Jordan's veiled threat only partially explains the frustration written all over Ryan's face when we meet: Earlier that day, after Ryan scoffed at a Democratic proposal to pass a short-term extension of the debt ceiling, Trump met with Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer and gave them exactly what they wanted. "Um, yeah, that one—yeah, that's kind of par for the course these days," Ryan tells me, his tie loosened and a sense of resignation in his voice. "This is a presidency that offers some surprises." Weeks later, when I ask Boehner about Trump's deal with the Democrats, he erupts into a cough-laugh. "My guess is that he thought he was doing everybody a favor. He had no idea he was cutting off McConnell and

Ryan's legs."

Trump himself is less a source of apprehension for top Republicans than what he represents: a fracturing of the party and a corollary decline in its ability to govern. "We basically run a coalition government without the efficiency of a parliamentary system," Ryan complains.

When I ask Boehner whether the Republican Party can survive this, he cuts me off. "There is no Rep—" He stops himself. "You were about to say, 'There is no Republican Party,'" I tell him. He shrugs. "There is. But what does it even mean? Donald Trump's not a Republican. He's not a Democrat. He's a populist. He doesn't have an ideological bone in his body." So who, I ask, is the leader of the party? "There is nobody," he says.

I ask Boehner what he thinks historians will make of his speakership. "They'll be talking about the end of the two-party system," he replies.

In our months of conversations, Trump was the lone subject about which Boehner seemed reluctant to speak freely. Timing was partly to blame: Weeks before I came to Ohio, Boehner in a paid speech [had described](#) Trump's presidency as "a complete disaster." It brought angry voicemails from then-chief of staff Reince Priebus, who carried stern words from Trump himself. "The White House isn't real happy with me right now," Boehner said at the time. His caution faded somewhat as summer wore on. When I saw him six weeks later at Burning Tree—fresh off a [blockbuster report](#) that Donald Trump Jr. had met with a Russian government official during the campaign in hopes of gaining compromising information on Hillary Clinton—Boehner greeted me in the parking lot with a knowing grin. Before I said anything, he shook his head and muttered, "What a shit show." But our most interesting exchange came in Green Bay, after a hearty meat-and-potato breakfast, when I raised the matter of this summer's march in Charlottesville, and Trump's equivocations. "I do not believe that he is a racist. I do not believe that he is a white supremacist," Boehner tells me. "He has clearly done some things to lead people who never liked him to say those things about him." So, I ask, how can Trump fix that? Boehner arches an eyebrow. "Is it fixable?"

Boehner worries about the deepening fissures in American society. But he sees Trump as more of a symptom than the cause of what is a longer arc of social and ideological alienation, fueled by talk radio and Fox News on the right and MSNBC and social media on the left. "People thought in '09, '10, '11, that the country couldn't be divided more. And you go back to Obama's campaign in 2008, you know, he was talking about the divide and healing the country and all of that. And some would argue on the right that he did more to divide the country than to unite it. I kind of reject that notion." Why is that? "Because it wasn't him!" Boehner replies. "It was modern-day media, and social media, that kept pushing people further right and further left. People started to figure out ... they could choose where to get their news. And so what do people do? They choose places they agree with, reinforcing the divide."

He continues: "I always liked Rush [Limbaugh]. When I went to Palm Beach I would always meet with Rush and we'd go play golf. But you know, who was that right-wing guy, [Mark] Levin? He went really crazy right and got a big audience, and he dragged [Sean] Hannity to the dark side. He dragged Rush to the dark side. And these guys—I used to talk to them all the time. And suddenly they're beating the living shit out of me." Boehner, seated in his favorite recliner, lights another cigarette. "I had a conversation with Hannity, probably about the beginning of 2015. I called him and said, 'Listen, you're nuts.' We had this really blunt

conversation. Things were better for a few months, and then it got back to being the same-old, same-old. Because I wasn't going to be a right-wing idiot."

Boehner believes Americans are ill-informed because of their retreat into media echo chambers, one of two incurable causes of the country's polarization. Another is inextricably related: the unwillingness of lawmakers to collaborate across the aisle, for fear of recriminations from the base. Boehner says the fact he and Obama golfed together only once—and agreed that it was usually better for him to sneak into the White House—speaks to how the two parties punish compromise. He doesn't foresee this toxic political climate improving, ticking off potential fixes—term limits, redistricting reform—that he says won't make a bit of difference. "It's going to take an intervening event for Americans to realize that first, we are *Americans*," he says. An intervening event? "Something cataclysmic," he responds, gazing upward.

Boehner often felt more welcome among Democrats than he did within his own party. When he made his retirement announcement, he told me, Obama called him and said, "Boehner, you can't do this, man. I'm gonna miss you." Biden feels the same way. "The only way we're going to get this back together again," he says, "is with some more John Boehners."

The starkest divide in recent Washington has been between longtime pols like Boehner and Biden who yearn for a more amicable time, and newcomers who view the bitter acrimony of the Bush and Obama years as normal. The fever might have broken in 2016, Boehner says. But the parties chose the two most polarizing nominees in modern history. "The only Republican who Hillary Clinton possibly could have beaten was Donald Trump, and the only Democrat that Trump possibly could have beaten was Clinton," Boehner smirks. "Three hundred and thirty million Americans, and we got those two."

Boehner spent six hours getting photographed around the Capitol in September. He wore a salmon-colored tie for certain shots and a blue tie for others; the photographs will inspire his official portrait, which will probably be hung in the speaker's lobby in late 2018—around the three-year anniversary of his departure. The ceremony will give Boehner occasion to see his old friends, as well as the "assholes." It will also serve as an opportunity to consider his legacy.

As a young House member, Boehner was instrumental in cleaning up Congress. As a committee chairman, he wrote and ushered through one of the premier policies of the Bush administration—even if the results were not what he envisioned. And as speaker, Boehner accomplished more than conservatives will ever give him credit for: winning significant spending cuts under a Democratic president; protecting the overwhelming majority of Americans from a tax hike; keeping earmarks banned despite having every reason to bring them back; and his proudest accomplishment, finding a permanent "Doc Fix," which solved a nagging problem with the Medicare payment formula and could produce nearly \$3 trillion in savings over the next three decades.

"He came to Congress wanting to burn it to the ground," says Sommers, his former chief of staff. "And by the time he left, he was the ultimate institutionalist."

Yet that assessment will be overshadowed by posterity's more existential observations: that Boehner's 25 years in Washington saw the dissolution of a party, the vandalizing of a

government and the splintering of a nation. That Boehner watched as the GOP transformed from the party of George H.W. Bush into the party of Donald Trump. That Boehner funded and helped recruit a class of majority-makers who ended up driving him from office and destabilizing the Congress he cares deeply about. The triumph of John Boehner is that he achieved reform and ascended to the speakership and often rose above the uncompromising dogma of both parties; the tragedy is that he came to Congress an insurgent only to be swallowed by the insurgency, and that he wasted key opportunities, as with the shutdown and immigration battles of 2013, to lead in a way that might have quelled it. "At times," Sommers admits, "we fed the beast that ate us."

Boehner's own district is the ultimate case in point: His successor is Warren Davidson, who was endorsed by Jordan in the GOP primary and has since joined the Freedom Caucus. "He's one of these guys that's caught in two worlds," Boehner says. "They helped him get elected, he felt allegiance to them, he signed up with them. But I'm not sure he's really one of them."

I didn't see the famously weepy Boehner get emotional during our time together, with one exception. The night of the golf outing, Ed tells me that toward the very end of Boehner's speakership he called his friend to share [a poem](#) called "Builder or Wrecker." Debbie asks Ed to recite it. He obliges, and I glance over at Boehner. His face is contorted. By the end of the poem he is sobbing and unable to speak. "He's a builder," Ed whispers to me. "Not a wrecker."

"Have you found your purpose?" I ask him outside the breakfast joint in Green Bay. Boehner shakes his head. "It will become clear. But you can't force the big guy to give you an answer," he says. "Just do the right things for the right reasons, and good things will happen."

With that, we prepare to part ways. The two House speakers enjoyed an overtime thriller at Lambeau Field the day before. Now Ryan has flown back to Washington, where a circular firing squad awaits. As for Boehner, he's jumping in a rental car and pushing farther north in Wisconsin, where Mick, his former staffer, owns a massive wooded property. There, the two will do what retirees do best—sit around and tell stories about the old days. It would make for a more restful experience if Boehner weren't thinking, in the back of his mind, about his story being written—here and in the history books. It's no wonder he can't concentrate.

Boehner shakes my hand and smiles softly. "Be nice to me," he says.

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Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 4:40:49 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes, Sarah Ferris and Luis Sanchez | 07/13/2017 04:35 PM EDT

HERE TO HELP: House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) is teaming up with the White House in an absolute last-ditch attempt to drag that budget resolution across the finish line. As Rachael Bade and Sarah [report](#) today, OMB Director Mick Mulvaney has already started calling up his former House GOP colleagues, urging them to get in line behind the long-delayed proposal.

Scratching backs: Budget leaders are leaning on Mulvaney to convince the Freedom Caucus holdouts to back the GOP budget plan. And the OMB chief is totally game, of course, because he needs that very same budget resolution to achieve tax reform. (And we're sure the fiscal hawk is plenty keen on those mandatory cuts, too). As OMB spokesman John Czwartacki told us by phone today: "The White House sees tremendous value on a 2018 budget resolution passing both chambers of Congress."

How'd we end up here? Mulvaney's enlistment comes after a morning meeting with Black, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), Vice President Mike Pence and White House legislative liaison Marc Short. This is by far the most high-profile budget huddle this year — just nine legislative workdays before the House adjourns for recess. (Yes, Senate leaders were MIA. But on a frenzied day like today, we'll cut them some slack).

Conservatives dig in: Multiple Freedom Caucus members, including Reps. [Dave Brat](#) and [Jim Jordan](#), made clear today that they remain hard "no"s on the budget. They're still seeking more clarity on the GOP's plans for tax reform and, possibly, more mandatory savings. "I don't think that is a radical position," Jordan said. Meanwhile, Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) is preparing to be wooed. "We're not there from a budget agreement standpoint. Are we willing to get there? Yes," Meadows told reporters today. "Are we willing to try to find a compromise? Yes."

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes), sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris) and lsanchez@politico.com.

Doc of the day — Written [testimony](#) of GAO's Cindy Brown Barnes on federally funded early learning and child care programs.

#DailyBudgetFact — Women now make up about 46.8 percent of all U.S. workers, spiking dramatically from 29.6 percent in 1950, according to [Pew Research](#). But the share of women in the labor force may never exceed the 50 percent mark despite that decades-long growth. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that share will peak at 47.1 percent in 2025 before gradually decreasing again.

APPROPRIATIONS

ACTION-PACKED: By day's end, appropriators in both chambers will have held five markups, working from 10 a.m. until what's shaping up to be a late night. Can't keep it all

straight? We've got you covered:

MILCON IS DONE! The Senate Appropriations Committee gave voice vote signoff this afternoon to the \$88.9 billion MilCon-VA bill, as Greg Hellman [reports](#). And since the House panel has already completed work on its version, that's a wrap. No word yet on a date for a floor vote in either chamber, though.

DRAGGING ON: After four hours of amendment debate, the 10 a.m. House markup for the Commerce, Justice and Science bill is still not over. Appropriators plan to return no earlier than 5 p.m. to polish off that one and the Financial Services measure. Sarah [reports](#) that things got pretty political during the first round of debate, with roll call votes on amendments aimed at revoking Jared Kushner's security clearance.

NEXT UP: Separate House subcommittees take up the State and Foreign Operations bill and the Labor-HHS and Education measure this afternoon.

WEDNESDAY RECAP: Two more House bills and the first (!) in the Senate coasted through subcommittee Wednesday afternoon. Catch up: [EPA would see smallest budget in decade](#) | [DHS bill puts focus on immigration](#) | [Heftier MilCon-VA bill would fund 214 projects](#)

The same afternoon, House appropriators released their final two bills — State and Foreign Operations and Labor-HHS and Education. All you need to read: [Cuts to foreign aid, climate change efforts](#) | [DOL faces 11 percent cut](#) | [Modest cuts to CDC](#) | [Health IT cut by one-third](#) | [Education cuts less drastic than Trump](#) | [Trump's school choice proposals left bare](#)

POLITICAL STRATEGY

FRELINGHUYSEN LAWYERS UP: House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) spent almost \$32,000 this spring on legal counsel after a House ethics complaint accused him of targeting a bank employee who was active in a local progressive group, Maggie Severns [reports](#). "It was a prudent move given the politically-motivated ethics complaints that came from the professional left," spokesperson Mike DuHaime says.

POTUS BUDGET

CBO — FOE NO MO: Forget the fact that CBO says the president's budget wouldn't actually balance over a decade. As we [report for Pros](#), OMB says the new budget office [analysis](#) only underscores the fact that President Donald Trump's plan is the best ever. "We are thrilled that CBO confirms that the president's proposed budget resulted in the largest deficit reduction they have ever scored," OMB spokeswoman Meghan Burris said in a written statement following the release this morning of CBO's annual analysis. "CBO agrees that this is the largest deficit reduction package in American history."

Not publicly, at least: Perhaps remembering the way the administration dwelt on historical comparisons during [#InaugurationGate](#), CBO staff has opted not to get involved in ranking Trump's budget against those of past presidents. On a call with reporters today, experts said they don't compare estimates on how each budget would affect deficit reduction. But they conceded that the budget office relied on the White House's own economic estimates because so many of Trump's policy proposals lack specifics.

Brianna Ehley [sums up](#) the health-focused estimates in the new analysis.

EPA

DISMISSING TRUMP'S REQUEST: Alex Guillén has nabbed an internal EPA memo showing that the House's fiscal 2018 Interior-EPA spending bill boosts funding for several programs the White House sought to cut, including the Superfund program and Brownfields projects. Alex has got [those totals](#) and more for Pros.

OBAMACARE

IT'S OUT: Senate Republicans dropped their latest replacement bill this afternoon and — surprise! — it does include that controversial amendment Sens. [Ted Cruz](#) and [Mike Lee](#) have proposed to allow skimpier health plans in the marketplace. The news, which was [scooped](#) by our Burgess Everett and Jen Haberkorn, came as a shock even to Lee, who [tweeted](#) just after their story broke that he hadn't even seen the language in the bill. (He can read the full text [here](#).)

What else? The other big changes include keeping some Obamacare taxes on the wealthy, as Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#), as well as boosting subsidies for the poor and devoting more money to fighting the opioid epidemic. [Much more](#) from Paul Demko.

Where it stands: The goal is still a vote next week, but opposition is hardening within the Senate's conservative and moderate flanks. On the same day Sen. [Rand Paul](#) ruled out supporting the bill, Sen. [Susan Collins](#) vowed to oppose a motion to proceed.

Pressure building: [Trump warns he'll be 'very angry' if it flops](#) | [Conservative groups push Cruz-Lee plan](#) | [No easy path toward 'repair'](#) | [Centrists feel sidelined](#) | [Graham offers his own Plan B](#)

HEALTH

AIDS CRUSADE: At least so far, appropriators are tossing aside Trump's proposals to slash funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in fiscal 2018. The Labor, HHS and Education bill House appropriators are marking up in subcommittee this afternoon keeps funding steady for each program charged with that work and would boost NIH overall. Still, AIDS activists — worried that the final dole will be reflective of the president's request — are in full fight mode now, trying to keep their concerns on lawmakers' radars, Renuka Rayasam [reports](#).

Doesn't jibe: While the president pledged support for HIV and AIDS testing and treatment on National HIV Testing Day last month, his budget sends a very different message, proposing a \$180 million cut to the [CDC's HIV/AIDS](#) and sexually transmitted infection prevention account, a \$550 million reduction in [NIH AIDS research](#) and a \$58.8 million cut from Ryan White, a federal program that provides medical care and support services for the uninsured living with HIV and AIDS.

DEFENSE

AUMF ALTERNATIVE: After a [chat](#) Wednesday with Ryan, Rep. [Barbara Lee](#) says she thinks House Republicans plan to strip her AUMF amendment from the fiscal 2018 defense spending bill and replace it with language that would ask the Defense Department to detail what it wants in a new war authorization, Austin Wright [reports](#).

CASH, NOT CORPS: Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson [tells POLITICO](#) that her service needs more resources for space operations, not a new org chart. But the Air Force's top acquisition official for space [said today](#) he's "excited" by the congressional focus on space, regardless of the organizational shakeup. NDAA update: The Rules Committee didn't allow a floor vote on the amendment to nix Space Corps creation in the bill that's on the House floor today.

BETTER BACK BRAC: Heritage issued a "key vote" for NDAA, [calling on](#) House members to support an [amendment](#) on the floor today that would strip language barring a new round of base closures. But that amendment was defeated despite the conservative group's efforts, Connor O'Brien [reports](#). The chamber also [voted down](#) Democratic amendments to cut defense spending and promote domestic budget increases.

CONGRESS

CAMPAIGN CASH FOR SECURITY: The Federal Election Commission gave blanket permission today for lawmakers to use campaign money to install or upgrade home security systems, Maggie Severns [reports](#). Appropriators are still gung-ho about allowing lawmakers to use their office allowances to pay for extra security in light of the shooting last month at a Congressional Baseball Game practice.

TRANSPORTATION

REPATRIATION, REBORN: Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) says he thinks the idea of using repatriation revenues to pay for infrastructure is en vogue again, Tanya Snyder [reports](#). "I think the idea has a pulse again," he told a crowd at the American Road and Transportation Builders Association conference today. "I think it's something that [the Trump administration is] willing to ruminate over."

ENERGY

CUTS TO AVOID CUTS: Rep. [Mike Simpson](#) says the Energy Department doesn't plan to issue any new commitments from its controversial loan program during the course of Trump's first term and that cutting funds and authorities for the program helped avoid cuts elsewhere in the fiscal 2018 Energy and Water spending bill, Anthony Adragna and Darius Dixon [report](#).

CAMPAIGNS

MANCHIN RAISES \$1.4M: As two of his GOP challengers face a brutal primary battle, Senate appropriator [Joe Manchin](#) is squirreling away cash for his 2018 reelection bid. Elana Schor [reports](#) that the West Virginia Democrat raised more than \$1.4 million in the second quarter, up from the \$553,000 he took in during the first quarter.

EARMARKS

— Yellen: 'Quite challenging' for U.S. to reach 3 percent growth in five years. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— GOP House members seek to cut education budget — but not nearly as deeply as Trump proposed. [The Washington Post](#).

— How wild horses of the West would die under Trump budget. [USA Today](#).

— US budget deficit rose in June to \$90.2 billion. [Associated Press](#).

— Chao: Administration wants to explore long-term Highway Trust Fund fixes. [POLITICO Pro](#).

ON TAP FRIDAY

10 a.m. — The House Ways and Means Committee holds a [hearing](#) on Social Security solvency. Rayburn House Office Building Room 2020.

WE'RE COUNTING: 80 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires. 445 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/07/mulvaney-pinch-hits-during-house-budget-crunch-023738>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

GOP leaders enlist Mulvaney to help with budget woes [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Sarah Ferris | 07/13/2017 02:15 PM EDT

House GOP leaders are enlisting a familiar face to help with their budget woes: President Donald Trump's budget director, Mick Mulvaney, a former Freedom Caucus member.

Mulvaney, the Office of Management and Budget director, committed to GOP leaders at a Thursday morning that he would help muster support to get the budget passed. Republican leadership and House Budget Chairwoman Diane Black are hoping he'll be particularly helpful in wooing his former colleagues and good friends on the Freedom Caucus, whose opposition has become one of the last major hurdles to passing the budget.

Freedom Caucus leaders, who have pushed hard to include mandatory cuts to welfare programs in the budget, have said they will not support the fiscal plan until they get the details of the House's tax reform proposal. Only, tax reform details are still far off, insiders say. And GOP leadership, not to mention Black, are eager to move on the budget.

An OMB official confirmed that Mulvaney would be "working the phones" as well as making in-person pitches.

"The White House wants to be helpful in any way it can," OMB spokesman John Czwartacki said by phone Thursday. "The White House sees tremendous value on a 2018 budget resolution passing both chambers of Congress."

The decision to enlist Mulvaney came amid a Thursday morning huddle between Speaker Paul Ryan, Vice President Mike Pence, Black (R-Tenn.) and White House legislative liaison Marc Short.

The meeting followed several calls between Mulvaney and Black this weekend.

Several GOP sources following the budget process closely said they think Mulvaney's pitch will work, allowing Black to move the bill through committee as soon as next week. Two members of the committee, Reps. Mark Sanford of South Carolina and Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida, told POLITICO on Wednesday that they were told to expect a Budget Committee markup next week.

Mulvaney's first task will be helping Black move the bill through the panel, where some conservatives like Rep. Dave Brat and Gary Palmer, both Freedom Caucus members, have not said they will back the budget.

Republicans cannot move a tax reform package without passing the fiscal blueprint, and Black has already taken on GOP leadership as well as other Republican committee chairs to try to include in the budget entitlement cuts to win over far right lawmakers. Many moderates have balked at the proposal, with as many as 20 centrist Republicans in the Tuesday Group threatening to vote against such a plan — almost enough to block it.

Still, some Freedom Caucus members say those cuts are not enough. Vice chairman Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) suggested during a news conference Wednesday that \$200 billion in mandatory cuts was, essentially, a rounding error compared to the nation's larger spending issues.

Meadows also said the group would need to see the details of the tax plan.

"Without decisions on tax reform, there will not be enough votes to pass it in the House because of the conservative concerns," Meadows said.

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Senate Appropriations Committee approves Milcon-VA bill [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 07/13/2017 01:34 PM EDT

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved by voice vote today the fiscal 2018 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, including \$88.9 billion in discretionary funding.

The committee adopted several amendments to the bill, including one offered by Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) and Sen. [Jeff Merkley](#) (D-Ore.) that would allow veterans to participate in state-approved medical marijuana programs.

The committee also approved a provision that would increase funding for medical and prosthetic research at the Veterans Affairs Department by \$17 million and another that would create a two-year pilot program to provide grants to nonprofit veterans service organizations to complete facility upgrades.

A summary of the bill is available [here](#).

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Republicans defeat amendments targeting Kushner security access [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 07/13/2017 03:12 PM EDT

Republican appropriators today unanimously blocked Democratic attempts to revoke the security clearance of embattled White House adviser Jared Kushner.

Rep. [Debbie Wasserman Schultz](#) said she was targeting Kushner's top-secret access in the wake of his meeting with a well-connected Russian lawyer last year.

"If Jared Kushner can't be counted on to come clean about his meetings ... then he can't be trusted to be in possession of our nation's most trusted information," Wasserman Schultz said during a markup of the fiscal 2018 Commerce, Justice and Science spending bill. "This is someone who deserves to have his security clearance revoked."

In a 30 to 22 vote, the House Appropriations Committee defeated the first amendment, which would cut off clearance for White House staffers who are under investigation for "aiding a foreign government."

With the same tally, the panel defeated another amendment that would have removed top-secret access for anyone who "deliberately fails" to disclose meetings with foreign nationals when applying for a security clearance.

"I would think that every single one of us would want to make sure that the individuals who are the closest advisers to the president of the United States do not have access to this information when they are under investigation," Wasserman Schultz said.

Texas Republican Rep. [John Culberson](#), who oversees the appropriations bill, dismissed the attempt as a "political stunt."

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House panel advances Interior, EPA spending bill [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 07/12/2017 03:55 PM EDT

A House Appropriations subcommittee today advanced a bill that would shrink the EPA's fiscal 2018 funding to the lowest level the agency has seen in a decade and cut the Interior Department's spending by 7 percent.

With a voice vote, the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee approved the bill without making any amendments. The bill would [cut](#) EPA's budget by \$528 million to \$7.5 billion and [fund](#) Interior at \$11.9 billion.

The subcommittee's top Democrat, Rep. [Betty McCollum](#) of Minnesota, said the cuts to the EPA are "too deep and unnecessary." And she bemoaned that the measure includes a number of [riders](#), including ones that would block the EPA from finishing a court-mandated rule on hardrock mining, protect the agency's move to withdraw the Waters of the U.S. regulation from legal challenges and delay implementation of the 2015 ozone standard until 2025.

The language also includes some riders involving the Endangered Species Act that would block the Interior Department from listing the sage grouse under the law or spending money on the grey wolf, which is listed as endangered or threatened in a number of other states. Interior in May complied with a court order to [delist the grey wolf](#) in Wyoming.

Chairman [Ken Calvert](#) said the bill "continues to invest in water infrastructure and cleaning up contaminated land. These programs help create jobs and spur economic development in communities all across the nation."

WHAT'S NEXT: The bill now advances to a full committee vote, which has yet to be announced.

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House subcommittee approves DHS spending bill that would cut TSA funding [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 07/12/2017 05:43 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee approved a DHS spending bill today via voice vote, despite Democrats' misgivings about immigration-related provisions in the bill and a decrease in TSA funding.

[David Price](#) was the only member to oppose the bill, although other Democrats, including full committee ranking member [Nita Lowey](#), voiced concerns about including funding for President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. Subcommittee ranking member [Lucille Roybal-Allard](#) said she could not fully back the bill so long as measures supporting Trump's "malignant rhetoric" on immigration remained. She urged appropriators to instead put more funding toward hiring Customs officers, maintaining TSA's reimbursement program for airports that hire local law enforcement and VIPR teams, she said.

The bill approved by the subcommittee would bump DHS funding to \$51.1 billion, a 4 percent increase over this year's budget, to help the agency build a U.S.-Mexico border wall and hire more immigration officers, among other items. However, the \$7.2 billion budget for TSA is about \$160 million below what the agency received for fiscal 2017.

Members are expected to offer amendments at the full committee markup of the bill.

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Senate Appropriations panel approves military construction, VA bill [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 07/12/2017 03:27 PM EDT

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies today approved \$88.9 billion by voice vote for fiscal 2018.

The bill includes \$9.5 billion to fund 214 military construction projects — \$1.8 billion more than the fiscal 2017 level but \$246 million less than the Trump administration's budget request.

Within the military construction portion of the measure is \$307 million to fund projects that are part of the European Reassurance Initiative and an additional \$154 million to support NATO's response to Russia in the Middle East and North Africa.

The bill would also appropriate \$1.4 billion for military family housing, \$575 million to support construction for the National Guard and reserve forces and \$331 million for projects supporting overseas contingency operations in the Middle East.

The bill also includes \$78.4 billion for the Veterans Affairs Department — a record amount, according to the committee, and \$4 billion more than the fiscal 2017 level. Additionally, the bill would provide \$70.7 billion in advance funding for veterans health care in fiscal 2019.

The full Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to mark up the bill Thursday morning.

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Appropriators propose deep cuts to State Department [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 07/12/2017 04:32 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Committee seeks to dramatically slash funding for State Department programs ranging from the U.S. Agency for International Development to climate change in its newly released fiscal 2018 spending bill.

The State and Foreign Operations measure, released this afternoon, would set total spending at \$47.4 billion for the upcoming fiscal year, cutting about \$10 billion from current levels.

That total matches with the proposed spending level POLITICO [reported](#) on Tuesday.

The majority of the cuts would come from "reductions to nonessential or lower-priority international programs," according to the committee.

The bill would slice payments to the United Nations and shrink funding for international anti-poverty programs like USAID. It would also eliminate funding for programs long disputed by GOP lawmakers, including the Green Climate Fund, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.N. Population Fund.

House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) said in a statement that it is "more important than ever" for the U.S. to invest in global security. He also touted the bill for spending money only where it is most needed to "ensure U.S. dollars are being put to good use to expand democracy and peace, and provide critical humanitarian assistance in war-torn, disaster-affected and impoverished areas or the world."

The proposed spending cuts do not go as far as the Trump administration's proposed [budget](#), which called for capping State Department spending at \$37.6 billion. That same fiscal outline also called for drastic reductions to global diplomacy and aid programs, while cutting off funds for climate change research.

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House Appropriations Committee proposes 11 percent cut to DOL [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 07/12/2017 06:36 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday introduced a spending bill that would cut the Labor Department budget by 11 percent, with the biggest reductions to employment training.

Under the bill, the Employment Training Administration would be slashed by 15 percent, or \$1.5 billion. The Mine Safety and Health Administration would get a 4 percent cut, which according to appropriators would track the continuing decline in coal mining jobs. Jobs Corps programs would see a slight cut of less than 1 percent, and veterans training would get an increase of 2 percent.

The proposed cuts are a far cry from the 21 percent reduction in President Donald Trump's budget, but still represent a sharp decline in funding compared to other agencies. The Education Department, by comparison, would get a 3.5 percent, while the Health and Human Services Department would get cut by just 1 percent.

"This bill reflects Republican priorities to cut spending and focus investments in programs our people need the most — public health and medical research, biodefense, fundamental education, and proven programs that increase job growth, for example," House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) said in a statement. "It also includes important provisions to stop government overreach."

The bill includes a rider preventing enforcement of the fiduciary rule, which requires financial brokers to act solely in clients' best interests, irrespective of commissions and fees, when giving retirement investment advice. Part of the rule took effect in June, and part is set to take effect in January, though the Trump DOL is weighing whether to delay that portion.

Two other riders aim to make it easier for seafood companies to employ seasonal H-2B workers and continue an overtime exemption for insurance claim adjusters if they're working in disaster-stricken areas.

The House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee today approved a spending bill

that would boost funding for the Homeland Security Department by 4 percent.

The legislation includes \$1.6 billion to allow the Trump administration to build wall and fencing on the southern border.

The subcommittee's ranking member, Rep. [Lucille Roybal-Allard](#) (D-Calif.), did not support the measure because of its intense focus on interior immigration enforcement.

"The trauma that is being inflicted on entire communities throughout our country cannot be overstated," she said.

Ted Hesson contributed to this report.

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House appropriators propose modest cuts to CDC [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 07/12/2017 05:38 PM EDT

House appropriators are proposing \$7 billion in funding for the CDC next year, a modest decrease from last year, but far more than floated in President Donald Trump's budget blueprint.

The House Appropriations Committee's proposal — \$1 billion above the president's request — is a stark rebuke to the White House's massive 17 percent proposed cut to the agency.

House Appropriations' Labor-HHS subcommittee Chairman [Tom Cole](#) (R-Okla.) has been widely critical of Trump's proposed cuts to public health. At a hearing earlier this year, he said, "I always say the CDC is every bit as important in defending the lives of Americans as the Pentagon is, in some ways more."

Still, the proposal represents \$198 million below last year's funding levels.

Appropriators maintain the ACA's Prevention and Public Health Fund. However, both the Senate and House Obamacare repeal bills zero out the fund, so it is unclear whether that money will be available to the agency next year. The fund makes up roughly 12 percent of the CDC's total budget.

The bill also includes the longstanding ban on the use of federal dollars to advocate for gun research.

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House bill to cut ONC budget by 35 percent [Back](#)

By David Pittman | 07/12/2017 05:08 PM EDT

The HHS [spending bill](#) released by the House this afternoon cuts ONC's budget to \$39 million, a reduction of 35 percent, and slices AHRQ's funding by \$24 million while maintaining it as a standalone agency.

The House Appropriations spending level for ONC is in line with the Trump administration's request in May. The White House also sought to dissolve AHRQ — which gets \$300 million in the House budget — and give its work to the NIH.

Health IT groups had [decried](#) the White House budget proposal, noting that the cuts would come as ONC's plate is piled high with tasks required under the 21st Century Cures Act.

CHIME said at the time it would be "extremely difficult, if not impossible" for ONC to continue efforts on interoperability, standards and certification with \$38 million.

At a time when the bipartisan Cures and the Precision Medicine Initiative require intensive health IT work, said Tom Payne, chair of the board of the American Medical Informatics Association, the budget "stops progress in its tracks."

The [budget justification](#) for ONC said it would streamline the agency's work, focusing on interoperability and other essential topics. It would largely cut workforce devoted to EHR adoption, privacy, care transformation, consumer activity and clinical quality, as well as the office that works on the Federal Health IT Strategic Plan.

HHS's Office for Civil Rights would receive roughly \$39 million under the House spending bill.

The subcommittee that oversees the HHS is scheduled to mark up the bill Thursday afternoon.

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House appropriators release 2018 education funding bill [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 07/12/2017 04:32 PM EDT

Republican House appropriators today released their bill to fund the Education Department for fiscal 2018.

The bill seeks an overall \$2.4 billion cut to education funding. That's a less drastic reduction compared with the \$9.2 billion that President Donald Trump had proposed axing from the department in his budget earlier this year.

The subcommittee will mark up the bill Thursday at 4:30 p.m. in 2358-C of the Rayburn House Office Building.

Read the bill text [here](#).

To view online [click here.](#)

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House GOP appropriators balk at DeVos 'school choice' proposals [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 07/12/2017 08:02 PM EDT

Republican House appropriators largely disregarded Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' proposal to spend about \$1.4 billion on "school choice" policies in the fiscal 2018 education funding bill released Wednesday.

The spending bill, which will be marked up Thursday, does not fund the bulk of the three main school choice priorities [outlined](#) in the Trump administration's budget request.

Trump and DeVos had proposed directing \$1 billion in Title I money for poor students to a new grant program for school districts that would allow students to attend the public school of their choice. House appropriators didn't bite on that plan. The GOP bill calls for keeping funding for Title I at \$15.9 billion, which is roughly the same as its funding for the current year.

In addition, the bill does not include the \$250 million that the Trump administration proposed for expanding and studying school vouchers that would allow low-income students to select the private school of their choice.

The Republican bill would provide a \$28 million boost to funding for charter schools, bringing total funding for the Charter Schools Program grants to \$370 million. But that falls short of the \$500 million that Trump requested for the program, which would have amounted to a nearly 50-percent increase in funding.

The administration pitched the school choice proposals as a first step toward making good on the \$20 billion school choice plan that Trump promised during his campaign. Trump has called on Congress to pass legislation expanding school choice options, calling it a civil rights issue.

Outside of the appropriations process, the Trump administration has been eyeing a federal tax credit scholarship proposal as a way to advance its school choice agenda. It's unclear if such a proposal will be folded into a broader tax overhaul at some point.

The plan [could funnel](#) billions of dollars to working class families to help pay for private school tuition. A number of school choice advocacy groups are pushing for it, but it could face some resistance from lawmakers who aren't looking to over-complicate the tax code.

Caitlin Emma contributed to this report.

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Frelinghuysen spent \$32K on lawyers after letter to bank [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 07/13/2017 12:51 PM EDT

Rep. [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#)'s (R-N.J.) campaign spent close to \$32,000 this spring on legal counsel after a House ethics complaint accused him of targeting a bank employee who was active in a local progressive group.

Frelinghuysen paid the law firm Wiley Rein \$27,120 in May and June, according to the report, and paid the New Jersey law firm Herold Law an additional \$4,867. He had not paid law firms for legal counsel in other recent campaign finance disclosures, and spokesperson Mike DuHaime confirmed in an email that Frelinghuysen had hired the counsel after the ethics complaint was filed.

"It was a prudent move given the politically-motivated ethics complaints that came from the professional left," DuHaime said.

Frelinghuysen, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, was under fire in mid-May after he sent a fundraising letter to a board member at local Lakeland Bank in which he appeared to target a local activist named Saily Avelenda, who helps lead a group called NJ 11th for Change.

At the bottom of the letter, Frelinghuysen warned organizers were trying to further an "agenda of limited government, economic growth, stronger national security" and added, "P.S. One of the ringleaders works in your bank!" The Campaign for Accountability [filed a complaint](#) asking House investigators to look into whether Frelinghuysen had violated ethics rules when he singled out the bank employee.

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White House celebrates CBO's assessment of Trump's budget [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 07/13/2017 12:30 PM EDT

The Trump administration is raving about the CBO's prediction that the president's budget would shrink the federal deficit by about one-third of projected levels over the next decade.

"We are thrilled that CBO confirms that the president's proposed budget resulted in the largest deficit reduction they have ever scored," OMB spokeswoman Meghan Burris said in a written statement following the release this morning of [CBO's annual analysis](#). "CBO agrees that this is the largest deficit reduction package in American history."

CBO staff subsequently told reporters that the budget office does not track how each president's plan ranks compared to others on predicted deficit reduction, and they conceded that the budget office relied on the White House's own economic estimates because so many of President Donald Trump's policy proposals lack specifics.

The budget experts said they relied on the administration's own projections, for example, in calculating the budget effects of plans like Obamacare repeal, tax reform, infrastructure investment and Postal Service overhaul "because the agencies judged those estimates to be achievable targets." But they assumed no costs or savings for proposals that were less detailed.

In their analysis, CBO and the Joint Committee on Taxation predict deficits would shrink relative to the size of the economy through fiscal 2027, ranging from between 2.6 percent and 3.3 percent of GDP over that time. Their analysis does not jibe, however, with the Trump administration's claim that the budget would achieve balance over a decade.

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Interior Dept. ordered to close Twitter accounts after inauguration tweets [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson and Cristiano Lima | 01/20/2017 04:47 PM EDT

Interior Department officials have been ordered to shut down the organization's official Twitter accounts indefinitely after the National Park Service shared tweets comparing attendance at President Donald Trump's inauguration against former President Barack Obama's.

"All bureaus and the department have been directed by incoming administration to shut down Twitter platforms immediately until further notice," said an email obtained by the Washington Post circulated to Park Service employees Friday.

Earlier Friday the verified Twitter account for the National Park Service retweeted a post from New York Times reporter Binyamin Applebaum showing side by side images of the crowds at Trump's inauguration and at President Barack Obama's record-setting 2009 swearing-in. Obama's, on the left, shows a jam-packed National Mall while Trump's, on the right, is more sparsely populated.

The photos were seen as stark evidence that Trump's prediction of an "unbelievable, perhaps record-setting turnout" did not come to fruition.

The organization also retweeted another user commenting that the whitehouse.gov website had been "scrubbed clean" of pages discussing civil rights, climate change and health care.

Interior Department officials were then given an "urgent directive" to close their official accounts "until further directed." An investigation into whether the tweets were intentional, accidental or part of a hack, is underway, according to the report.

The directive encompasses the department's numerous bureaus and offices, effectively shutting down dozens of official government accounts.

The retweet was particularly jarring given that the NPS [stopped](#) providing official crowd estimates for events on the Mall, including inaugurations, after a dispute over counts at the Million Man March in 1995 prompted a lawsuit threat.

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CBO: Trump budget reduces mandatory federal health spending by \$1.9T [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 07/13/2017 11:54 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's budget proposal would reduce mandatory federal spending on health care by \$1.9 trillion, or 13 percent, over the next decade, according to a new [analysis](#) by the nonpartisan CBO.

The report, released today, projects the bulk of the savings — about \$1.25 trillion — would come from repealing the Affordable Care Act. The CBO estimates another \$610 billion would come from proposed changes to Medicaid.

Trump's \$4.1 trillion budget for 2018, released in May, proposed reducing federal Medicaid spending by \$800 billion over the next decade.

CBO said that the administration's proposal "did not specify the policies that would achieve those savings" so the budget scoring agency interpreted the White House's estimate as "indicating a target for the budgetary effects of the detailed policies that might be proposed in the future."

The Senate's Obamacare repeal bill, released last month, would reduce federal Medicaid spending by \$722 billion over the next decade, according to a CBO analysis. An updated version of that bill is expected to be released today and be scored by the CBO.

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EPA memo details more spending changes in House bill [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/13/2017 12:53 PM EDT

The House's 2018 [Interior-EPA spending package](#) boosts funds for several programs with bipartisan support that the White House had sought to cut, according to an internal EPA memo obtained by POLITICO.

The Superfund program would get a \$28.6 million boost, up to \$1.09 billion, and Brownfields projects would get an extra \$10 million, up to \$90 million for 2018, according to the [memo](#), from EPA's acting chief financial officer, David Bloom. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has said he will prioritize those cleanup programs, although the administration's budget request sought to cut the Superfund budget by about a third.

House Republicans also would give an extra \$15 million for the diesel emissions reduction grant program, which would receive \$75 million in 2018, according to the memo.

For other programs, the House bill proposes cuts to programs that Trump sought to keep fully funded, such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The House bill would cut \$250 million from the clean water SRF, dropping it to \$1.14 billion. The other SRF, for drinking water, would see its funding stable at \$863 million.

The bill would leave untouched a slate of categorical grants that help states pay for implementing and enforcing environmental laws and for environmental projects, according to the memo.

At least two programs targeted by Trump are still in line for belt-tightening: a Mexican border initiative that would be zeroed out and a \$10 million cut for a program to pay for water and wastewater infrastructure in Alaska Native villages.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House Appropriations Committee will mark up the bill on July 18.

Annie Snider contributed to this report.

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Senate Republicans one vote away from Obamacare repeal failure [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett, Jennifer Haberkorn and Sarah Karlin-Smith | 07/13/2017 08:59 AM EDT

The Senate Republican effort to repeal Obamacare is on the cusp of defeat, with two Republican senators threatening to kill the measure before the Senate can even start debate.

GOP leaders released a modified draft of their legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare Thursday, hoping to win senators' support with additional funding for combating opioids and a controversial measure that would allow insurance companies to sell plans that don't comply with Obamacare consumer protections.

But the plan immediately ran into near-fatal opposition.

Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) said they would vote against allowing debate to even start. Several other Republicans — including Sens. Jeff Flake, Rob Portman, Mike Lee and John Hoeven — said they were undecided.

"I'm not there yet" on supporting bill or the motion to proceed, said Portman, who opposed a previous version of the bill. "My position remains the same. ... There's been some progress made on opioids, an issue that I have focused on a lot. Another \$45 billion. But we still have concerns about Medicaid expansion."

"I'm still digesting it," Flake told reporters. "I'll be doing that for a while."

If just three Republicans oppose the procedural motion planned for next week, the seven-year effort to repeal Obamacare would end before the Senate can even formally start debate in a stunning embarrassment for the GOP.

"We gotta get on the bill. ... If we don't at least get on the bill, we're never going to know," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota. "I think it's probably going to be whipped over the next few days."

Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell will take up a motion to proceed to the bill next Tuesday, adding, "This isn't a vote on the merits of the bill. This is a vote on whether to even to talk about it."

McConnell also promised action: "We will be voting next week," he told reporters.

Portman, as well as Sens. Dean Heller, Lisa Murkowski and Shelley Moore Capito — all of whom have raised issues with prior drafts of the bill — huddled with McConnell Thursday afternoon to try to bring the bill back from the brink.

McConnell unveiled the plan on Thursday morning at a closed-door, GOP members-only meeting before posting the text online. Unlike their previous bill, which faced stiff resistance across the conference, it would maintain some Obamacare taxes on the wealthy, provide new financial support to help low-income people purchase health insurance and allow people to pay for insurance with pre-tax money.

The amendment to allow insurers to sell noncompliant plans, which is backed by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), could be altered or removed later, sources said. The amendment would allow the sale of cheap, deregulated insurance plans as long as Obamacare-compliant plans are still sold.

It is not yet clear whether the inclusion of Cruz's proposal will be enough for conservatives. Lee has previously advocated for the amendment with Cruz, but Cruz has been handling the lion's share of negotiating with McConnell. Lee is not yet supportive of the latest version because he's unaware of its content, a spokesman for Lee said.

Cruz said if his language stays, he will support the bill. He said if it is removed it will do "substantial damage" to bill's support.

Flake threw his support behind the Cruz amendment on the show, but declined to say whether that is enough to get him to vote yes.

Both Cruz and Lee had threatened to vote against starting on the bill if it didn't have the amendment; more than a half-dozen other Republican senators have stated they don't support the bill. Any three senators' opposition would end the GOP's Obamacare repeal effort on a procedural motion planned for next week, but McConnell is encouraging senators to open debate on the bill and amend it later.

Republicans saw Thursday's meeting as an airing of all the GOP's grievances about the latest draft and to help determine whether the party can move forward. McConnell pulled an earlier version of the bill last month amid stiff resistance from conservative and moderate Republicans.

Senators are already angling for more changes. An amendment from Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) would direct much of Obamacare's federal funding directly to the states that could offer a starting point for Congress if the Senate GOP's partisan effort fails next week, according to a summary of the bill obtained by POLITICO.

Some Republicans worry that the Cruz proposal could result in split risk pools, one with sick people with pre-existing conditions and the other with healthy young people. Centrists are worried the proposal would undermine protections for people with pre-existing conditions. Cruz and Lee dispute that and will argue it will likely lower premiums and allow people to opt out of Obamacare.

Several senators said it was their understanding that Cruz's latest draft would combine those risk pools, though Republicans said the details of how it would work are murky.

The Cruz amendment would deliver insurance companies subsidies for high-risk Americans with pre-existing conditions under Obamacare's regulations. If insurance companies offer those plans, they could sell cheap plans that are not subject to those regulations.

Some Republican senators now believe it will be a victory to even open debate on the legislation passed by the House, one senator familiar with the negotiations said.

"I don't even know that it's going to get to a vote," said GOP Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

If that procedural vote is successful, a freewheeling amendment process will begin. At some point, McConnell will introduce a substitute that will represent the Senate's draft bill. It may be different than what is introduced on Thursday and could be subject to amendment on the Senate floor next week. The bill, in other words, will be a work in progress until the final vote.

The Congressional Budget Office is analyzing two versions of the bill, one with the Cruz amendment and one without. The Cruz amendment is in brackets in the bill, indicating it is subject to change.

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas declined to say when the CBO score of the Cruz amendment would be released. The analysis for the rest of the draft is expected Monday.

In addition to Cruz and Lee, Paul has cited huge problems with the bill. Paul, who argues the bill keeps too much of Obamacare, has said including the Cruz proposal would not be enough to get his support.

At the other end of the GOP conference, [several moderates](#), including Collins and Murkowski, are worried that the bill would hurt people with pre-existing conditions and others who got coverage under Obamacare. A number of Republicans are uncomfortable with spending reductions to Medicaid, which covers more than 70 million Americans, including families from low-income households, people with disabilities and seniors.

Cornyn, who is responsible for gathering the votes for the bill, said there is no other plan that can get 50 votes.

"If you vote 'no' on this bill, it essentially is a vote for Obamacare because that's what we're going to be left with," Cornyn said on Fox News Thursday morning. "If Sen. Paul can show me 49 other votes for his bill, then I would be all for it. But, unfortunately, the practicality is we have to pass a bill."

The proposal will also give states new flexibility on their Medicaid funding if a public health emergency — such as a Zika outbreak — takes place. The block grant option would also allow states to add the newly eligible Medicaid population to coverage under the block grant.

The bill also includes \$70 billion more than the first draft of the bill's \$112 billion for state-based health care initiatives to drive down premiums. It will include \$45 billion for fighting drug addiction and would ease the sale of low-premium "catastrophic" insurance plans.

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Full text: New Senate GOP health care bill [Back](#)

06/22/2017 11:10 AM EDT | Updated 06/22/2017 12:19 PM EDT

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AMENDMENT NO.IIIII Calendar No.III
Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—115th Cong., 1st Sess.
H. R. 1628

To provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of the
concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2017.

Referred to the Committee on IIIIIIIII and
ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE intended
to be proposed by IIIIIII

Viz:

1 Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the fol-
2 lowing:

3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

4 This Act may be cited as the "Better Care Reconcili-
5 ation Act of 2017".

6 TITLE I

7 SEC. 101. ELIMINATION OF LIMITATION ON RECAPTURE OF
8 EXCESS ADVANCE PAYMENTS OF PREMIUM
9 TAX CREDITS.

10 Subparagraph (B) of section 36B(f)(2) of the Inter-
11 nal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the
12 end the following new clause:

2

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1 "(iii) NONAPPLICABILITY OF LIMITA-
2 TION.—This subparagraph shall not apply
3 to taxable years ending after December 31,
4 2017."

5 SEC. 102. RESTRICTIONS FOR THE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.

6 (a) ELIGIBILITY FOR CREDIT.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 36B(c)(1) of the In-
8 ternal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

9 (A) by striking "equals or exceeds 100 per-
10 cent but does not exceed 400 percent" in sub-
11 paragraph (A) and inserting "does not exceed
12 350 percent", and

13 (B) by striking subparagraph (B) and re-
14 designating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as sub-
15 paragraphs (B) and (C), respectively.

16 (2) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN ALIENS.—

17 (A) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of sec-
18 tion 36B(e) of the Internal Revenue Code of
19 1986 is amended by striking "an alien lawfully
20 present in the United States" and inserting "a
21 qualified alien (within the meaning of section
22 431 of the Personal Responsibility and Work
23 Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996)".

24 (B) AMENDMENTS TO PATIENT PROTEC-
25 TION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT.—

3

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1 (i) Section 1411(a)(1) of the Patient
2 Protection and Affordable Care Act is
3 amended by striking "or an alien lawfully
4 present in the United States" and insert-
5 ing "or a qualified alien (within the mean-
6 ing of section 431 of the Personal Respon-
7 sibility and Work Opportunity Reconcili-
8 ation Act of 1996)".

9 (ii) Section 1411(c)(2)(B) of such Act
10 is amended by striking "an alien lawfully
11 present in the United States" each place it
12 appears in clauses (i)(I) and (ii)(II) and
13 inserting "a qualified alien (within the
14 meaning of section 431 of the Personal Re-
15 sponsibility and Work Opportunity Rec-
16 onciliation Act of 1996)".

17 (iii) Section 1412(d) of such Act is
18 amended—

19 (I) by striking "not lawfully
20 present in the United States" and in-
21 serting "not citizens or nationals of
22 the United States or qualified aliens
23 (within the meaning of section 431 of
24 the Personal Responsibility and Work

4

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1 Opportunity Reconciliation Act of
2 1996)", and

3 (II) by striking "INDIVIDUALS

4 NOT LAWFULLY PRESENT" in the
5 heading and inserting "CERTAIN
6 ALIENS".
7 (b) MODIFICATION OF LIMITATION ON PREMIUM AS-
8 SISTANCE AMOUNT.—
9 (1) USE OF BENCHMARK PLAN.—Section
10 36B(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is
11 amended—
12 (A) by striking "applicable second lowest
13 cost silver plan" each place it appears in para-
14 graph (2)(B)(i) and (3)(C) and inserting "ap-
15 plicable median cost benchmark plan",
16 (B) by striking "such silver plan" in para-
17 graph (3)(C) and inserting "such benchmark
18 plan", and
19 (C) in paragraph (3)(B)—
20 (i) by redesignating clauses (i) and
21 (ii) as clauses (iii) and (iv), respectively,
22 and by striking all that precedes clause
23 (iii) (as so redesignated) and inserting the
24 following:

5
ERN17282 Discussion Draft S.L.C.
1 "(B) APPLICABLE MEDIAN COST BENCH-
2 MARK PLAN.—The applicable median cost
3 benchmark plan with respect to any applicable
4 taxpayer is the qualified health plan offered in
5 the individual market in the rating area in
6 which the taxpayer resides which—
7 "(i) provides a level of coverage that
8 is designed to provide benefits that are ac-
9 tuarially equivalent to 58 percent of the
10 full actuarial value of the benefits (as de-
11 termined under rules similar to the rules of
12 paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 1302(d)
13 of the Patient Protection and Affordable
14 Care Act) provided under the plan,
15 "(ii) has a premium which is the me-
16 dian premium of all qualified health plans
17 described in clause (i) which are offered in
18 the individual market in such rating area
19 (or, in any case in which no such plan has
20 such median premium, has a premium
21 nearest (but not in excess of) such median
22 premium)", and
23 (ii) by striking "clause (ii)(I)" in the
24 flush text at the end and inserting "clause
25 (iv)(I)".

6
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1 (2) MODIFICATION OF APPLICABLE PERCENT-
2 AGE.—Section 36B(b)(3)(A) of the Internal Revenue
3 Code of 1986 is amended—

4 (A) in clause (i), by striking "from the ini-
5 tial premium percentage" and all that follows
6 and inserting "from the initial percentage to
7 the final percentage specified in such table for
8 such income tier with respect to a taxpayer of
9 the age involved:

"In the case of
household income
(expressed as a
percent of the
poverty line)
within the following
income
tier:

Up to Age 29 Age 30-39 Age 40-49 Age 50-59 Over Age 59

10 (B) by striking "0.504" in clause (ii)(III)

11 and inserting "0.4", and

12 (C) by adding at the end the following new
13 clause:

14 "(iii) AGE DETERMINATIONS.—For
15 purposes of clause (i), the age of the tax-
16 payer taken into account under clause (i)
17 with respect to any taxable year is the age
18 attained before the close of the taxable
19 year by the oldest individual taken into ac-
7

ERN17282 Discussion Draft S.L.C.

1 count on such taxpayer's return who is
2 covered by a qualified health plan taken
3 into account under paragraph (2)(A)."

4 (c) ELIMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY EXCEPTIONS FOR
5 EMPLOYER-SPONSORED COVERAGE.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 36B(c)(2) of the In-
7 ternal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking
8 subparagraph (C).

9 (2) AMENDMENTS RELATED TO QUALIFIED
10 SMALL EMPLOYER HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT AR-
11 RANGEMENTS.—Section 36B(c)(4) of such Code is
12 amended—

13 (A) by striking "which constitutes afford-
14 able coverage" in subparagraph (A),
15 (B) by striking "the amount described in
16 subparagraph (C)(i)(II) for such month" in
17 subparagraph (B) and inserting "1/12 of the
18 employee's permitted benefit (as defined in sec-
19 tion 9831(d)(3)(C)) under such arrangement",
20 (C) by striking subparagraphs (C) and (F)

21 and redesignating subparagraphs (D) and (E)
22 as subparagraphs (C) and (D), respectively, and
23 (D) in subparagraph (D), as so redesignated,
24 by striking "subparagraph (C)(i)(II)"
25 and inserting "subparagraph (B)".

8

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1 (d) MODIFICATION OF DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED
2 HEALTH PLAN.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 36B(c)(3)(A) of the
4 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by in-
5 serting before the period at the end the following:
6 "or a plan that includes coverage for abortions
7 (other than any abortion necessary to save the life
8 of the mother or any abortion with respect to a
9 pregnancy that is the result of an act of rape or in-
10 cest)".

11 (2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made
12 by this subsection shall apply to taxable years begin-
13 ning after December 31, 2017.

14 (e) INCREASED PENALTY ON ERRONEOUS CLAIMS OF
15 CREDIT.—Section 6676(a) of the Internal Revenue Code
16 of 1986 is amended by inserting "(25 percent in the case
17 of a claim for refund or credit relating to the health insur-
18 ance coverage credit under section 36B)" after "20 per-
19 cent".

20 (f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Except as otherwise provided
21 in this section, the amendments made by this section shall
22 apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2019.

23 SEC. 103. MODIFICATIONS TO SMALL BUSINESS TAX CRED-
24 IT.

25 (a) SUNSET.—

9

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1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 45R of the Internal
2 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the
3 end the following new subsection:

4 "(j) SHALL NOT APPLY.—This section shall not
5 apply with respect to amounts paid or incurred in taxable
6 years beginning after December 31, 2019."

7 (2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made
8 by this subsection shall apply to taxable years begin-
9 ning after December 31, 2019.

10 (b) DISALLOWANCE OF SMALL EMPLOYER HEALTH
11 INSURANCE EXPENSE CREDIT FOR PLAN WHICH IN-
12 CLUDES COVERAGE FOR ABORTION.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (h) of section
14 45R of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is
15 amended—

16 (A) by striking "Any term" and inserting

17 the following:

18 "(1) IN GENERAL.—Any term", and
19 (B) by adding at the end the following new
20 paragraph:

21 "(2) EXCLUSION OF HEALTH PLANS INCLUDING
22 COVERAGE FOR ABORTION.—The term 'qualified
23 health plan' does not include any health plan that
24 includes coverage for abortions (other than any
25 abortion necessary to save the life of the mother or
10

ERN17282 Discussion Draft S.L.C.

1 any abortion with respect to a pregnancy that is the
2 result of an act of rape or incest).".

3 (2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made
4 by this subsection shall apply to taxable years begin-
5 ning after December 31, 2017.

6 SEC. 104. INDIVIDUAL MANDATE.

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5000A(c) of the Internal
8 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

9 (1) in paragraph (2)(B)(iii), by striking "2.5
10 percent" and inserting "Zero percent", and

11 (2) in paragraph (3)—

12 (A) by striking "\$695" in subparagraph

13 (A) and inserting "\$0", and

14 (B) by striking subparagraph (D).

15 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
16 this section shall apply to months beginning after Decem-
17 ber 31, 2015.

18 SEC. 105. EMPLOYER MANDATE.

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—

20 (1) Paragraph (1) of section 4980H(c) of the
21 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by in-
22 serting "\$0 in the case of months beginning after
23 December 31, 2015)" after "\$2,000".

24 (2) Paragraph (1) of section 4980H(b) of the
25 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by in-
11

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1 serting "\$0 in the case of months beginning after
2 December 31, 2015)" after "\$3,000".

3 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
4 this section shall apply to months beginning after Decem-
5 ber 31, 2015.

6 SEC. 106. STATE STABILITY AND INNOVATION PROGRAM.

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2105 of the Social Secu-
8 rity Act (42 U.S.C. 1397ee) is amended by adding at the
9 end the following new subsections:

10 "(h) SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE TO ADDRESS COV-
11 ERAGE AND ACCESS DISRUPTION AND PROVIDE SUPPORT
12 FOR STATES.—

13 "(1) APPROPRIATION.—There are authorized to
14 be appropriated, and are appropriated, out of monies
15 in the Treasury not otherwise obligated,
16 \$15,000,000,000 for each of calendar years 2018
17 and 2019, and \$10,000,000,000 for each of calendar
18 years 2020 and 2021, to the Administrator of the
19 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (in this
20 subsection and subsection (i) referred to as the 'Ad-
21 ministrator') to fund arrangements with health in-
22 surance issuers to address coverage and access dis-
23 ruption and respond to urgent health care needs
24 within States. Funds appropriated under this para-
25 graph shall remain available until expended.

12

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1 "(2) PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS.—

2 "(A) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 30 days
3 after the date of enactment of this subsection,
4 the Administrator shall issue guidance to health
5 insurance issuers regarding how to submit a no-
6 tice of intent to participate in the program es-
7 tablished under this subsection.

8 "(B) NOTICE OF INTENT TO PARTICI-
9 PATE.—To be eligible for funding under this
10 subsection, a health insurance issuer shall sub-
11 mit to the Administrator a notice of intent to
12 participate at such time (but, in the case of
13 funding for calendar year 2018, not later than
14 35 days after the date of enactment of this sub-
15 section and, in the case of funding for calendar
16 year 2019, 2020, or 2021, not later than March
17 31 of the previous year) and in such form and
18 manner as specified by the Administrator and
19 containing—

20 "(i) a certification that the health in-
21 surance issuer will use the funds in accord-
22 ance with the requirements of paragraph
23 (5); and

13

ERN17282 Discussion Draft S.L.C.

1 "(ii) such information as the Adminis-
2 trator may require to carry out this sub-
3 section.

4 "(3) PROCEDURE FOR DISTRIBUTION OF
5 FUNDS.—The Administrator shall determine an ap-
6 propriate procedure for providing and distributing
7 funds under this subsection.

8 "(4) NO MATCH.—Neither the State percentage
9 applicable to payments to States under subsection
10 (i)(5)(B) nor any other matching requirement shall

11 apply to funds provided to health insurance issuers
12 under this subsection.

13 "(5) USE OF FUNDS.—Funds provided to a
14 health insurance issuer under paragraph (1) shall be
15 subject to the requirements of paragraphs (1)(D)
16 and (7) of subsection (i) in the same manner as
17 such requirements apply to States receiving pay-
18 ments under subsection (i) and shall be used for the
19 activities specified in paragraph (1)(A)(ii) of sub-
20 section (i).

21 "(i) LONG-TERM STATE STABILITY AND INNOVATION
22 PROGRAM.—

23 "(1) APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION RE-
24 QUIREMENTS.—To be eligible for an allotment of
25 funds under this subsection, a State shall submit to
14

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1 the Administrator an application, not later than
2 March 31, 2018, in the case of allotments for cal-
3 endar year 2019, and not later than March 31 of
4 the previous year, in the case of allotments for any
5 subsequent calendar year) and in such form and
6 manner as specified by the Administrator, that con-
7 tains the following:

8 "(A) A description of how the funds will be
9 used to do 1 or more of the following:

10 "(i) To establish or maintain a pro-
11 gram or mechanism to provide financial as-
12 sistance to help high-risk individuals, in-
13 cluding by reducing premium costs for
14 such individuals, who have or are projected
15 to have a high rate of utilization of health
16 services, as measured by cost, and who do
17 not have access to health insurance cov-
18 erage offered through an employer, enroll
19 in health insurance coverage under a plan
20 offered in the individual market (within
21 the meaning of section 5000A(f)(1)(C) of
22 the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

23 "(ii) To establish or maintain a pro-
24 gram to enter into arrangements with
25 health insurance issuers to help stabilize
15

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1 premiums and promote State health insur-
2 ance market participation and choice in
3 plans offered in the individual market
4 (within the meaning of section
5 5000A(f)(1)(C) of the Internal Revenue
6 Code of 1986).

7 "(iii) To provide payments for health
8 care providers for the provision of health
9 care services, as specified by the Adminis-
10 trator.

11 "(iv) To provide assistance to reduce
12 out-of-pocket costs, such as copayments,
13 coinsurance, and deductibles, of individuals
14 enrolled in plans offered in the individual
15 market (within the meaning of section
16 5000A(f)(1)(C) of the Internal Revenue
17 Code of 1986).

18 "(B) A certification that the State shall
19 make, from non-Federal funds, expenditures for
20 1 or more of the activities specified in subpara-
21 graph (A) in an amount that is not less than
22 the State percentage required for the year
23 under paragraph (5)(B)(ii).

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1 "(C) A certification that the funds pro-
2 vided under this subsection shall only be used
3 for the activities specified in subparagraph (A).

4 "(D) A certification that none of the funds
5 provided under this subsection shall be used by
6 the State for an expenditure that is attributable
7 to an intergovernmental transfer, certified pub-
8 lic expenditure, or any other expenditure to fi-
9 nance the non-Federal share of expenditures re-
10 quired under any provision of law, including
11 under the State plans established under this
12 title and title XIX or under a waiver of such
13 plans.

14 "(E) Such other information as necessary
15 for the Administrator to carry out this sub-
16 section.

17 "(2) ELIGIBILITY.—Only the 50 States and the
18 District of Columbia shall be eligible for an allot-
19 ment and payments under this subsection and all
20 references in this subsection to a State shall be
21 treated as only referring to the 50 States and the
22 District of Columbia.

23 "(3) ONE-TIME APPLICATION.—If an applica-
24 tion of a State submitted under this subsection is
25 approved by the Administrator for a year, the appli-
17

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1 cation shall be deemed to be approved by the Admin-
2 istrator for that year and each subsequent year
3 through December 31, 2026.

4 "(4) LONG-TERM STATE STABILITY AND INNO-

5 VATION ALLOTMENTS.—

6 "(A) APPROPRIATION; TOTAL ALLOT-
7 MENT.—For the purpose of providing allot-
8 ments to States under this subsection, there is
9 appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury
10 not otherwise appropriated—

11 "(i) for calendar year 2019,

12 \$8,000,000,000;

13 "(ii) for calendar year 2020,

14 \$14,000,000,000;

15 "(iii) for calendar year 2021,

16 \$14,000,000,000;

17 "(iv) for calendar year 2022,

18 \$6,000,000,000;

19 "(v) for calendar year 2023,

20 \$6,000,000,000;

21 "(vi) for calendar year 2024,

22 \$5,000,000,000;

23 "(vii) for calendar year 2025,

24 \$5,000,000,000; and

18

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1 "(viii) for calendar year 2026,

2 \$4,000,000,000.

3 "(B) ALLOTMENTS.—

4 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a
5 State with an application approved under
6 this subsection with respect to a year, the
7 Administrator shall allot to the State, in
8 accordance with an allotment methodology
9 specified by the Administrator that ensures
10 that the spending requirement in para-
11 graph (6) is met for the year, from
12 amounts appropriated for such year under
13 subparagraph (A), such amount as speci-
14 fied by the Administrator with respect to
15 the State and application and year.

16 "(ii) ANNUAL REDISTRIBUTION OF
17 PREVIOUS YEAR'S UNUSED FUNDS.—

18 "(I) IN GENERAL.— In carrying
19 out clause (i), with respect to a year
20 (beginning with 2021), the Adminis-
21 trator shall, not later than March 31
22 of such year—

23 "(aa) determine the amount
24 of funds, if any, remaining un-

19

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1 used under subparagraph (A)

2 from the previous year; and

3 "(bb) if the Administrator
4 determines that any funds so re-
5 main from the previous year, re-
6 distribute such remaining funds
7 in accordance with an allotment
8 methodology specified by the Ad-
9 ministrator to States that have
10 submitted an application ap-
11 proved under this subsection for
12 the year.

13 "(II) APPLICABLE STATE PER-
14 CENTAGE.—The State percentage
15 specified for a year in paragraph
16 (5)(B)(ii) shall apply to funds redis-
17 tributed under subclause (I) in that
18 year.

19 "(C) AVAILABILITY OF ALLOTTED STATE
20 FUNDS.—

21 "(i) IN GENERAL.—Amounts allotted
22 to a State pursuant to subparagraph (B)(i)
23 for a year shall remain available for ex-
24 penditure by the State through the end of
25 the second succeeding year.

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1 "(ii) AVAILABILITY OF AMOUNTS RE-
2 DISTRIBUTED.—Amounts redistributed to
3 a State under subparagraph (B)(ii) in a
4 year shall be available for expenditure by
5 the State through the end of the second
6 succeeding year.

7 "(5) PAYMENTS.—

8 "(A) ANNUAL PAYMENT OF ALLOT-
9 MENTS.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the Ad-
10 ministrator shall pay to each State that has an
11 application approved under this subsection for a
12 year, the allotment determined under paragraph
13 (4)(B) for the State for the year.

14 "(B) MATCH REQUIRED.—

15 "(i) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator
16 shall pay each State that has an applica-
17 tion approved under this subsection for a
18 year, the Federal percentage of the allot-
19 ment determined for the State under para-
20 graph (4)(B) for the year.

21 "(ii) FEDERAL AND STATE PERCENT-
22 AGES DEFINED.—For purposes of clause
23 (i), the Federal percentage is equal to 100
24 percent reduced by the State percentage

21

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1 for that year, and the State percentage is

2 equal to—

3 "(I) in the case of calendar year

4 2019, 0 percent;

5 "(II) in the case of calendar year

6 2020, 0 percent;

7 "(III) in the case of calendar

8 year 2021, 0 percent;

9 "(IV) in the case of calendar

10 year 2022, 7 percent;

11 "(V) in the case of calendar year

12 2023, 14 percent;

13 "(VI) in the case of calendar

14 year 2024, 21 percent;

15 "(VII) in the case of calendar

16 year 2025, 28 percent; and

17 "(VIII) in the case of calendar

18 year 2026, 35 percent.

19 "(C) ADVANCE PAYMENT; RETROSPECTIVE

20 ADJUSTMENT.—

21 "(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Adminis-

22 trator deems it appropriate, the Adminis-

23 trator shall make payments under this sub-

24 section for each year on the basis of ad-

25 vance estimates of expenditures submitted

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1 by the State and such other investigation

2 as the Administrator shall find necessary,

3 and shall reduce or increase the payments

4 as necessary to adjust for any overpayment

5 or underpayment for prior years.

6 "(ii) MISUSE OF FUNDS.—If the Ad-

7 ministrator determines that a State is not

8 using funds paid to the State under this

9 subsection in a manner consistent with the

10 description provided by the State in its ap-

11 plication approved under paragraph (1),

12 the Administrator may withhold payments,

13 reduce payments, or recover previous pay-

14 ments to the State under this subsection

15 as the Administrator deems appropriate.

16 "(D) FLEXIBILITY IN SUBMITTAL OF

17 CLAIMS.—Nothing in this subsection shall be

18 construed as preventing a State from claiming

19 as expenditures in the year expenditures that

20 were incurred in a previous year.

21 "(6) REQUIRED USE FOR PREMIUM STABILIZA-

22 TION AND INCENTIVES FOR INDIVIDUAL MARKET

23 PARTICIPATION.—In determining allotments for
24 States under this subsection for each of calendar
25 years 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Administrator shall
23

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1 ensure that at least \$5,000,000,000 of the amounts
2 appropriated for each such year under paragraph
3 (4)(A) are used by States for the purposes described
4 in paragraph (1)(A)(ii) and in accordance with guid-
5 ance issued by the Administrator not later than 30
6 days after the date of enactment of this subsection
7 that specifies the parameters for the use of funds for
8 such purposes.

9 "(7) EXEMPTIONS.—Paragraphs (2), (3), (5),
10 (6), (8), (10), and (11) of subsection (c) do not
11 apply to payments under this subsection."

12 (b) OTHER TITLE XXI AMENDMENTS.—

13 (1) Section 2101 of such Act (42 U.S.C.

14 1397aa) is amended—

15 (A) in subsection (a), in the matter pre-
16 ceding paragraph (1), by striking "The pur-
17 pose" and inserting "Except with respect to
18 short-term assistance activities under section
19 2105(h) and the Long-Term State Stability and
20 Innovation Program established in section
21 2105(i), the purpose"; and

22 (B) in subsection (b), in the matter pre-
23 ceding paragraph (1), by inserting "subsection
24 (a) or (g) of" before "section 2105".

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1 (2) Section 2105(c)(1) of such Act (42 U.S.C.
2 1397ee(c)(1)) is amended by striking "and may not
3 include" and inserting "or to carry out short-term
4 assistance activities under subsection (h) or the
5 Long-Term State Stability and Innovation Program
6 established in subsection (i) and, except in the case
7 of funds made available under subsection (h) or (i),
8 may not include".

9 (3) Section 2106(a)(1) of such Act (42 U.S.C.
10 1397ff(a)(1)) is amended by inserting "subsection
11 (a) or (g) of" before "section 2105".

12 SEC. 107. BETTER CARE RECONCILIATION IMPLEMENTA-
13 TION FUND.

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is hereby established a Bet-
15 ter Care Reconciliation Implementation Fund (referred to
16 in this section as the "Fund") within the Department of
17 Health and Human Services to provide for Federal admin-
18 istrative expenses in carrying out this Act.

19 (b) FUNDING.—There is appropriated to the Fund,

20 out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appro-
21 priated, \$500,000,000.

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1 SEC. 108. REPEAL OF THE TAX ON EMPLOYEE HEALTH IN-
2 SURANCE PREMIUMS AND HEALTH PLAN
3 BENEFITS.

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 43 of the Internal Rev-
5 enue Code of 1986 is amended by striking section 4980I.

6 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
7 subsection (a) shall apply to taxable years beginning after
8 December 31, 2019.

9 (c) SUBSEQUENT EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amend-
10 ment made by subsection (a) shall not apply to taxable
11 years beginning after December 31, 2025, and chapter 43
12 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read
13 as such chapter would read if such subsection had never
14 been enacted.

15 SEC. 109. REPEAL OF TAX ON OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICA-
16 TIONS.

17 (a) HSAS.—Subparagraph (A) of section 223(d)(2)
18 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by strik-
19 ing "Such term" and all that follows through the period.

20 (b) ARCHER MSAS.—Subparagraph (A) of section
21 220(d)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amend-
22 ed by striking "Such term" and all that follows through
23 the period.

24 (c) HEALTH FLEXIBLE SPENDING ARRANGEMENTS
25 AND HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT ARRANGEMENTS.—Sec-
26

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1 tion 106 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended
2 by striking subsection (f).

3 (d) EFFECTIVE DATES.—

4 (1) DISTRIBUTIONS FROM SAVINGS AC-
5 COUNTS.—The amendments made by subsections (a)
6 and (b) shall apply to amounts paid with respect to
7 taxable years beginning after December 31, 2016.

8 (2) REIMBURSEMENTS.—The amendment made
9 by subsection (c) shall apply to expenses incurred
10 with respect to taxable years beginning after Decem-
11 ber 31, 2016.

12 SEC. 110. REPEAL OF TAX ON HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

13 (a) HSAS.—Section 223(f)(4)(A) of the Internal
14 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking "20 per-
15 cent" and inserting "10 percent".

16 (b) ARCHER MSAS.—Section 220(f)(4)(A) of the In-
17 ternal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking "20
18 percent" and inserting "15 percent".

19 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by

20 this section shall apply to distributions made after Decem-
21 ber 31, 2016.

22 SEC. 111. REPEAL OF LIMITATIONS ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO
23 FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS.

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 125 of the Internal Rev-
25 enue Code of 1986 is amended by striking subsection (i).
27

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1 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
2 this section shall apply to plan years beginning after De-
3 cember 31, 2017.

4 SEC. 112. REPEAL OF TAX ON PRESCRIPTION MEDICA-
5 TIONS.

6 Subsection (j) of section 9008 of the Patient Protec-
7 tion and Affordable Care Act is amended to read as fol-
8 lows:

9 "(j) REPEAL.—This section shall apply to calendar
10 years beginning after December 31, 2010, and ending be-
11 fore January 1, 2018."

12 SEC. 113. REPEAL OF MEDICAL DEVICE EXCISE TAX.

13 Section 4191 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
14 is amended by adding at the end the following new sub-
15 section:

16 "(d) APPLICABILITY.—The tax imposed under sub-
17 section (a) shall not apply to sales after December 31,
18 2017."

19 SEC. 114. REPEAL OF HEALTH INSURANCE TAX.

20 Subsection (j) of section 9010 of the Patient Protec-
21 tion and Affordable Care Act is amended by striking "
22 and" at the end of paragraph (1) and all that follows
23 through "2017".

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1 SEC. 115. REPEAL OF ELIMINATION OF DEDUCTION FOR
2 EXPENSES ALLOCABLE TO MEDICARE PART D
3 SUBSIDY.

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 139A of the Internal Rev-
5 enue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the
6 following new sentence: "This section shall not be taken
7 into account for purposes of determining whether any de-
8 duction is allowable with respect to any cost taken into
9 account in determining such payment."

10 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
11 this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after
12 December 31, 2016.

13 SEC. 116. REPEAL OF CHRONIC CARE TAX.

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 213 of
15 the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking
16 "10 percent" and inserting "7.5 percent".

17 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by

18 this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after
19 December 31, 2016.

20 SEC. 117. REPEAL OF MEDICARE TAX INCREASE.

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b) of section 3101 of
22 the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read
23 as follows:

24 "(b) HOSPITAL INSURANCE.—In addition to the tax
25 imposed by the preceding subsection, there is hereby im-
26 posed on the income of every individual a tax equal to 1.45
29

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1 percent of the wages (as defined in section 3121(a)) re-
2 ceived by such individual with respect to employment (as
3 defined in section 3121(b))."

4 (b) SECA.—Subsection (b) of section 1401 of the In-
5 ternal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as fol-
6 lows:

7 "(b) HOSPITAL INSURANCE.—In addition to the tax
8 imposed by the preceding subsection, there shall be im-
9 posed for each taxable year, on the self-employment in-
10 come of every individual, a tax equal to 2.9 percent of the
11 amount of the self-employment income for such taxable
12 year."

13 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
14 this section shall apply with respect to remuneration re-
15 ceived after, and taxable years beginning after, December
16 31, 2022.

17 SEC. 118. REPEAL OF TANNING TAX.

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Internal Revenue Code of
19 1986 is amended by striking chapter 49.

20 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
21 this section shall apply to services performed after Sep-
22 tember 30, 2017.

23 SEC. 119. REPEAL OF NET INVESTMENT TAX.

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle A of the Internal Rev-
25 enue Code of 1986 is amended by striking chapter 2A.
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1 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
2 this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after
3 December 31, 2016.

4 SEC. 120. REMUNERATION.

5 Paragraph (6) of section 162(m) of the Internal Rev-
6 enue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the
7 following new subparagraph:

8 "(I) TERMINATION.—This paragraph shall
9 not apply to taxable years beginning after De-
10 cember 31, 2016."

11 SEC. 121. MAXIMUM CONTRIBUTION LIMIT TO HEALTH SAV-
12 INGS ACCOUNT INCREASED TO AMOUNT OF

13 DEDUCTIBLE AND OUT-OF-POCKET LIMITA-
14 TION.

15 (a) SELF-ONLY COVERAGE.—Section 223(b)(2)(A)
16 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by strik-
17 ing "\$2,250" and inserting "the amount in effect under
18 subsection (c)(2)(A)(ii)(I)".

19 (b) FAMILY COVERAGE.—Section 223(b)(2)(B) of
20 such Code is amended by striking "\$4,500" and inserting
21 "the amount in effect under subsection (c)(2)(A)(ii)(II)".

22 (c) COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT.—Section
23 223(g)(1) of such Code is amended—

24 (1) by striking "subsections (b)(2) and" both
25 places it appears and inserting "subsection", and

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1 (2) in subparagraph (B), by striking "deter-
2 mined by" and all that follows through " 'calendar
3 year 2003'." and inserting "determined by sub-
4 stituting 'calendar year 2003' for 'calendar year
5 1992' in subparagraph (B) thereof."

6 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
7 this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after
8 December 31, 2017.

9 SEC. 122. ALLOW BOTH SPOUSES TO MAKE CATCH-UP CON-
10 TRIBUTIONS TO THE SAME HEALTH SAVINGS
11 ACCOUNT.

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 223(b)(5) of the Internal
13 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

14 "(5) SPECIAL RULE FOR MARRIED INDIVIDUALS
15 WITH FAMILY COVERAGE.—

16 "(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of individ-
17 uals who are married to each other, if both
18 spouses are eligible individuals and either
19 spouse has family coverage under a high de-
20 ductible health plan as of the first day of any
21 month—

22 "(i) the limitation under paragraph
23 (1) shall be applied by not taking into ac-
24 count any other high deductible health
25 plan coverage of either spouse (and if such

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1 spouses both have family coverage under
2 separate high deductible health plans, only
3 one such coverage shall be taken into ac-
4 count),

5 "(ii) such limitation (after application
6 of clause (i)) shall be reduced by the ag-
7 gregate amount paid to Archer MSAs of
8 such spouses for the taxable year, and

9 "(iii) such limitation (after application
10 of clauses (i) and (ii)) shall be divided
11 equally between such spouses unless they
12 agree on a different division.
13 "(B) TREATMENT OF ADDITIONAL CON-
14 TRIBUTION AMOUNTS.—If both spouses referred
15 to in subparagraph (A) have attained age 55
16 before the close of the taxable year, the limita-
17 tion referred to in subparagraph (A)(iii) which
18 is subject to division between the spouses shall
19 include the additional contribution amounts de-
20 termined under paragraph (3) for both spouses.
21 In any other case, any additional contribution
22 amount determined under paragraph (3) shall
23 not be taken into account under subparagraph
24 (A)(iii) and shall not be subject to division be-
25 tween the spouses."

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1 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
2 this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after
3 December 31, 2017.

4 SEC. 123. SPECIAL RULE FOR CERTAIN MEDICAL EXPENSES
5 INCURRED BEFORE ESTABLISHMENT OF
6 HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT.

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 223(d)(2) of the Internal
8 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end
9 the following new subparagraph:

10 "(D) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN MEDICAL
11 EXPENSES INCURRED BEFORE ESTABLISHMENT
12 OF ACCOUNT.—If a health savings account is
13 established during the 60-day period beginning
14 on the date that coverage of the account bene-
15 ficiary under a high deductible health plan be-
16 gins, then, solely for purposes of determining
17 whether an amount paid is used for a qualified
18 medical expense, such account shall be treated
19 as having been established on the date that
20 such coverage begins."

21 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
22 this subsection shall apply with respect to coverage under
23 a high deductible health plan beginning after December
24 31, 2017.

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1 SEC. 124. FEDERAL PAYMENTS TO STATES.

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 504(a),
3 1902(a)(23), 1903(a), 2002, 2005(a)(4), 2102(a)(7), or
4 2105(a)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 704(a),
5 1396a(a)(23), 1396b(a), 1397a, 1397d(a)(4),

6 1397bb(a)(7), 1397ee(a)(1)), or the terms of any Med-
7 icaid waiver in effect on the date of enactment of this Act
8 that is approved under section 1115 or 1915 of the Social
9 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1315, 1396n), for the 1-year pe-
10 riod beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, no
11 Federal funds provided from a program referred to in this
12 subsection that is considered direct spending for any year
13 may be made available to a State for payments to a pro-
14 hibited entity, whether made directly to the prohibited en-
15 tity or through a managed care organization under con-
16 tract with the State.

17 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 (1) PROHIBITED ENTITY.—The term "prohib-
19 ited entity" means an entity, including its affiliates,
20 subsidiaries, successors, and clinics—

21 (A) that, as of the date of enactment of
22 this Act—

23 (i) is an organization described in sec-
24 tion 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue
25 Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under
26 section 501(a) of such Code;

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1 (ii) is an essential community provider
2 described in section 156.235 of title 45,
3 Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect
4 on the date of enactment of this Act), that
5 is primarily engaged in family planning
6 services, reproductive health, and related
7 medical care; and

8 (iii) provides for abortions, other than
9 an abortion—

10 (I) if the pregnancy is the result
11 of an act of rape or incest; or

12 (II) in the case where a woman
13 suffers from a physical disorder, phys-
14 ical injury, or physical illness that
15 would, as certified by a physician,
16 place the woman in danger of death
17 unless an abortion is performed, in-
18 cluding a life-endangering physical
19 condition caused by or arising from
20 the pregnancy itself; and

21 (B) for which the total amount of Federal
22 and State expenditures under the Medicaid pro-
23 gram under title XIX of the Social Security Act
24 in fiscal year 2014 made directly to the entity
25 and to any affiliates, subsidiaries, successors, or

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1 clinics of the entity, or made to the entity and
2 to any affiliates, subsidiaries, successors, or
3 clinics of the entity as part of a nationwide
4 health care provider network, exceeded
5 \$350,000,000.

6 (2) DIRECT SPENDING.—The term "direct
7 spending" has the meaning given that term under
8 section 250(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emer-
9 gency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900(c)).

10 SEC. 125. MEDICAID PROVISIONS.

11 The Social Security Act is amended—

12 (1) in section 1902 (42 U.S.C. 1396a)—

13 (A) in subsection (a)(47)(B), by inserting

14 "and provided that any such election shall cease

15 to be effective on January 1, 2020, and no such

16 election shall be made after that date" before

17 the semicolon at the end; and

18 (B) in subsection (l)(2)(C), by inserting

19 "and ending December 31, 2019," after "Janu-

20 ary 1, 2014,";

21 (2) in section 1915(k)(2) (42 U.S.C.

22 1396n(k)(2)), by striking "during the period de-

23 scribed in paragraph (1)" and inserting "on or after

24 the date referred to in paragraph (1) and before

25 January 1, 2020"; and

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1 (3) in section 1920(e) (42 U.S.C. 1396r-1(e)),

2 by striking "under clause (i)(VIII), clause (i)(IX), or

3 clause (ii)(XX) of subsection (a)(10)(A)" and insert-

4 ing "under clause (i)(VIII) or clause (ii)(XX) of sec-

5 tion 1902(a)(10)(A) before January 1, 2020, section

6 1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX),".

7 SEC. 126. MEDICAID EXPANSION.

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title XIX of the Social Security

9 Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) is amended—

10 (1) in section 1902 (42 U.S.C. 1396a)—

11 (A) in subsection (a)(10)(A)—

12 (i) in clause (i)(VIII), by inserting

13 "and ending December 31, 2019," after

14 "2014,"; and

15 (ii) in clause (ii), in subclause (XX),

16 by inserting "and ending December 31,

17 2017," after "2014," and by adding at

18 the end the following new subclause:

19 "(XXIII) beginning January 1, 2020,

20 who are expansion enrollees (as defined in

21 subsection (nn)(1));"; and

22 (B) by adding at the end the following new

23 subsection:

24 "(nn) EXPANSION ENROLLEES.—

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1 "(1) IN GENERAL.—In this title, the term 'ex-

2 pansion enrollee' means an individual—

3 "(A) who is under 65 years of age;

4 "(B) who is not pregnant;

5 "(C) who is not entitled to, or enrolled for,

6 benefits under part A of title XVIII, or enrolled

7 for benefits under part B of title XVIII;

8 "(D) who is not described in any of sub-

9 clauses (I) through (VII) of subsection

10 (a)(10)(A)(i); and

11 "(E) whose income (as determined under

12 subsection (e)(14)) does not exceed 133 percent

13 of the poverty line (as defined in section

14 2110(c)(5)) applicable to a family of the size in-

15 volved.

16 "(2) APPLICATION OF RELATED PROVISIONS.—

17 Any reference in subsection (a)(10)(G), (k), or (gg)

18 of this section or in section 1903, 1905(a), 1920(e),

19 or 1937(a)(1)(B) to individuals described in sub-

20 clause (VIII) of subsection (a)(10)(A)(i) shall be

21 deemed to include a reference to expansion enroll-

22 ees."; and

23 (2) in section 1905 (42 U.S.C. 1396d)—

24 (A) in subsection (y)(1)—

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1 (i) in the matter preceding subpara-

2 graph (A), by striking ", with respect to"

3 and all that follows through "shall be equal

4 to" and inserting "and that has elected to

5 cover newly eligible individuals before

6 March 1, 2017, with respect to amounts

7 expended by such State before January 1,

8 2020, for medical assistance for newly eli-

9 gible individuals described in subclause

10 (VIII) of section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i), and,

11 with respect to amounts expended by such

12 State after December 31, 2019, and before

13 January 1, 2024, for medical assistance

14 for expansion enrollees (as defined in sec-

15 tion 1902(nn)(1)), shall be equal to the

16 higher of the percentage otherwise deter-

17 mined for the State and year under sub-

18 section (b) (without regard to this sub-

19 section) and";

20 (ii) in subparagraph (D), by striking

21 "and" after the semicolon;

22 (iii) by striking subparagraph (E) and
23 inserting the following new subparagraphs:
24 "(E) 90 percent for calendar quarters in
25 2020;
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1 "(F) 85 percent for calendar quarters in
2 2021;
3 "(G) 80 percent for calendar quarters in
4 2022; and
5 "(H) 75 percent for calendar quarters in
6 2023."; and

7 (iv) by adding after and below sub-
8 paragraph (H) (as added by clause (iii)),
9 the following flush sentence:

10 "The Federal medical assistance percentage deter-
11 mined for a State and year under subsection (b)
12 shall apply to expenditures for medical assistance to
13 newly eligible individuals (as so described) and ex-
14 pansion enrollees (as so defined), in the case of a
15 State that has elected to cover newly eligible individ-
16 uals before March 1, 2017, for calendar quarters
17 after 2023, and, in the case of any other State, for
18 calendar quarters (or portions of calendar quarters)
19 after February 28, 2017."; and

20 (B) in subsection (z)(2)—

21 (i) in subparagraph (A)—

22 (I) by inserting "through 2023"
23 after "each year thereafter"; and

24 (II) by striking "shall be equal
25 to" and inserting "and, for periods

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1 after December 31, 2019 and before
2 January 1, 2024, who are expansion
3 enrollees (as defined in section
4 1902(nn)(1)) shall be equal to the
5 higher of the percentage otherwise de-
6 termined for the State and year under
7 subsection (b) (without regard to this
8 subsection) and"; and

9 (ii) in subparagraph (B)(ii)—

10 (I) in subclause (III), by adding
11 "and" at the end; and

12 (II) by striking subclauses (IV),
13 (V), and (VI) and inserting the fol-
14 lowing new subclause:

15 "(IV) 2017 and each subsequent year
16 through 2023 is 80 percent.".

17 (b) SUNSET OF ESSENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS RE-

18 REQUIREMENT.—Section 1937(b)(5) of the Social Security
19 Act (42 U.S.C. 1396u-7(b)(5)) is amended by adding at
20 the end the following: "This paragraph shall not apply
21 after December 31, 2019."

22 SEC. 127. RESTORING FAIRNESS IN DSH ALLOTMENTS.

23 Section 1923(f)(7) of the Social Security Act (42
24 U.S.C. 1396r-4(f)(7)) is amended by adding at the end
25 the following new subparagraph:

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1 "(C) NON-EXPANSION STATES.—

2 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a
3 State that is a non-expansion State for a
4 fiscal year—

5 "(I) subparagraph (A) shall not
6 apply to the DSH allotment for such
7 State and fiscal year; and

8 "(II) the DSH allotment for the
9 State for fiscal year 2020 shall be in-
10 creased by the amount calculated ac-
11 cording to clause (iii).

12 "(ii) NO CHANGE IN REDUCTION FOR
13 EXPANSION STATES.—In the case of a
14 State that is an expansion State for a fis-
15 cal year, the DSH allotment for such State
16 and fiscal year shall be determined as if
17 clause (i) did not apply.

18 "(iii) AMOUNT CALCULATED.—For
19 purposes of clause (i)(II), the amount cal-
20 culated according to this clause for a non-
21 expansion State is the following:

22 "(I) For each State, the Sec-
23 retary shall calculate a ratio equal to
24 the State's fiscal year 2016 DSH al-
25 lotment divided by the number of indi-
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1 viduals enrolled in the State plan
2 under this title for such fiscal year.

3 "(II) The Secretary shall identify
4 the States whose ratio as so deter-
5 mined is below the national average of
6 such ratio for all States.

7 "(III) The amount calculated
8 pursuant to this clause is an amount
9 that, if added to the State's fiscal
10 year 2016 DSH allotment, would in-
11 crease the ratio calculated pursuant to
12 subclause (I) up to the national aver-
13 age for all States.

14 "(iv) DISREGARD OF INCREASE.—The
15 DSH allotment for a non-expansion State
16 for the second, third, and fourth quarters
17 of fiscal year 2024 and fiscal years there-
18 after shall be determined as if there had
19 been no increase in the State's DSH allot-
20 ment for fiscal year 2020 under clause
21 (i)(II).

22 "(v) NON-EXPANSION AND EXPANSION
23 STATE DEFINED.—In this subparagraph:

24 "(I) The term 'expansion State'
25 means with respect to a fiscal year, a
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1 State that, as of the date of enact-
2 ment of this subparagraph, provided
3 for eligibility under clause (i)(VIII) or
4 (ii)(XX) of section 1902(a)(10)(A) for
5 medical assistance under this title (or
6 a waiver of the State plan approved
7 under section 1115).

8 "(II) The term 'non-expansion
9 State' means, with respect to a fiscal
10 year, a State that is not an expansion
11 State."

12 SEC. 128. REDUCING STATE MEDICAID COSTS.

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—

14 (1) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—Section
15 1902(a)(34) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
16 1396a(a)(34)) is amended by striking "in or after
17 the third month before the month in which he made
18 application" and inserting "in or after the month in
19 which the individual made application".

20 (2) DEFINITION OF MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.—

21 Section 1905(a) of the Social Security Act (42
22 U.S.C. 1396d(a)) is amended by striking "in or
23 after the third month before the month in which the
24 recipient makes application for assistance" and in-
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1 sserting "in or after the month in which the recipient
2 makes application for assistance".

3 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
4 subsection (a) shall apply to medical assistance with re-
5 spect to individuals whose eligibility for such assistance
6 is based on an application for such assistance made (or
7 deemed to be made) on or after October 1, 2017.

8 SEC. 129. PROVIDING SAFETY NET FUNDING FOR NON-EX-
9 PANSION STATES.

10 Title XIX of the Social Security Act is amended by

11 inserting after section 1923 (42 U.S.C. 1396r-4) the fol-
12 lowing new section:

13 "ADJUSTMENT IN PAYMENT FOR SERVICES OF SAFETY
14 NET PROVIDERS IN NON-EXPANSION STATES

15 "SEC. 1923A. (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the limi-
16 tations of this section, for each year during the period be-
17 ginning with fiscal year 2018 and ending with fiscal year
18 2022, each State that is one of the 50 States or the Dis-
19 trict of Columbia and that, as of July 1 of the preceding
20 fiscal year, did not provide for eligibility under clause
21 (i)(VIII) or (ii)(XX) of section 1902(a)(10)(A) for medical
22 assistance under this title (or a waiver of the State plan
23 approved under section 1115) (each such State or District
24 referred to in this section for the fiscal year as a 'non-
25 expansion State') may adjust the payment amounts other-
26 wise provided under the State plan under this title (or a
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1 waiver of such plan) to health care providers that provide
2 health care services to individuals enrolled under this title
3 (in this section referred to as 'eligible providers') so long
4 as the payment adjustment to such an eligible provider
5 does not exceed the provider's costs in furnishing health
6 care services (as determined by the Secretary and net of
7 payments under this title, other than under this section,
8 and by uninsured patients) to individuals who either are
9 eligible for medical assistance under the State plan (or
10 under a waiver of such plan) or have no health insurance
11 or health plan coverage for such services.

12 "(b) INCREASE IN APPLICABLE FMAP.—Notwith-
13 standing section 1905(b), the Federal medical assistance
14 percentage applicable with respect to expenditures attrib-
15 utable to a payment adjustment under subsection (a) for
16 which payment is permitted under subsection (c) shall be
17 equal to—

18 "(1) 100 percent for calendar quarters in fiscal
19 years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021; and

20 "(2) 95 percent for calendar quarters in fiscal
21 year 2022.

22 "(c) ANNUAL ALLOTMENT LIMITATION.—Payment
23 under section 1903(a) shall not be made to a State with
24 respect to any payment adjustment made under this sec-
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1 tion for all calendar quarters in a fiscal year in excess
2 of the \$2,000,000,000 multiplied by the ratio of—

3 "(1) the population of the State with income
4 below 138 percent of the poverty line in 2015 (as de-
5 termined based the table entitled 'Health Insurance
6 Coverage Status and Type by Ratio of Income to

7 Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months by Age' for the
8 universe of the civilian noninstitutionalized popu-
9 lation for whom poverty status is determined based
10 on the 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year
11 Estimates, as published by the Bureau of the Cen-
12 sus), to

13 "(2) the sum of the populations under para-
14 graph (1) for all non-expansion States.

15 "(d) DISQUALIFICATION IN CASE OF STATE COV-
16 ERAGE EXPANSION.—If a State is a non-expansion for a
17 fiscal year and provides eligibility for medical assistance
18 described in subsection (a) during the fiscal year, the
19 State shall no longer be treated as a non-expansion State
20 under this section for any subsequent fiscal years."

21 SEC. 130. ELIGIBILITY REDETERMINATIONS.

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1902(e)(14) of the Social
23 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(e)(14)) (relating to modi-
24 fied adjusted gross income) is amended by adding at the
25 end the following:

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1 "(J) FREQUENCY OF ELIGIBILITY REDE-
2 TERMINATIONS.—Beginning on October 1,
3 2017, and notwithstanding subparagraph (H),
4 in the case of an individual whose eligibility for
5 medical assistance under the State plan under
6 this title (or a waiver of such plan) is deter-
7 mined based on the application of modified ad-
8 justed gross income under subparagraph (A)
9 and who is so eligible on the basis of clause
10 (i)(VIII), (ii)(XX), or (ii)(XXIII) of subsection
11 (a)(10)(A), at the option of the State, the State
12 plan may provide that the individual's eligibility
13 shall be redetermined every 6 months (or such
14 shorter number of months as the State may
15 elect)."

16 (b) INCREASED ADMINISTRATIVE MATCHING PER-
17 CENTAGE.—For each calendar quarter during the period
18 beginning on October 1, 2017, and ending on December
19 31, 2019, the Federal matching percentage otherwise ap-
20 plicable under section 1903(a) of the Social Security Act
21 (42 U.S.C. 1396b(a)) with respect to State expenditures
22 during such quarter that are attributable to meeting the
23 requirement of section 1902(e)(14) (relating to determina-
24 tions of eligibility using modified adjusted gross income)
25 of such Act shall be increased by 5 percentage points with
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1 respect to State expenditures attributable to activities car-
2 ried out by the State (and approved by the Secretary) to

3 exercise the option described in subparagraph (J) of such
4 section (relating to eligibility redeterminations made on a
5 6-month or shorter basis) (as added by subsection (a)) to
6 increase the frequency of eligibility redeterminations.

7 SEC. 131. OPTIONAL WORK REQUIREMENT FOR NON-
8 DISABLED, NONELDERLY, NONPREGNANT IN-
9 DIVIDUALS.

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1902 of the Social Secu-
11 rity Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a), as previously amended, is fur-
12 ther amended by adding at the end the following new sub-
13 section:

14 "(oo) OPTIONAL WORK REQUIREMENT FOR NON-
15 DISABLED, NONELDERLY, NONPREGNANT INDIVID-
16 UALS.—

17 "(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning October 1,
18 2017, subject to paragraph (3), a State may elect to
19 condition medical assistance to a nondisabled, non-
20 elderly, nonpregnant individual under this title upon
21 such an individual's satisfaction of a work require-
22 ment (as defined in paragraph (2)).

23 "(2) WORK REQUIREMENT DEFINED.—In this
24 section, the term 'work requirement' means, with re-
25 spect to an individual, the individual's participation
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1 in work activities (as defined in section 407(d)) for
2 such period of time as determined by the State, and
3 as directed and administered by the State.

4 "(3) REQUIRED EXCEPTIONS.—States admin-
5 istering a work requirement under this subsection
6 may not apply such requirement to—

7 "(A) a woman during pregnancy through
8 the end of the month in which the 60-day pe-
9 riod (beginning on the last day of her preg-
10 nancy) ends;

11 "(B) an individual who is under 19 years
12 of age;

13 "(C) an individual who is the only parent
14 or caretaker relative in the family of a child
15 who has not attained 6 years of age or who is
16 the only parent or caretaker of a child with dis-
17 abilities; or

18 "(D) an individual who is married or a
19 head of household and has not attained 20
20 years of age and who—

21 "(i) maintains satisfactory attendance
22 at secondary school or the equivalent; or

23 "(ii) participates in education directly
24 related to employment."

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1 (b) INCREASE IN MATCHING RATE FOR IMPLEMEN-
2 TATION.—Section 1903 of the Social Security Act (42
3 U.S.C. 1396b) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
4 lowing:

5 "(aa) The Federal matching percentage otherwise ap-
6 plicable under subsection (a) with respect to State admin-
7 istrative expenditures during a calendar quarter for which
8 the State receives payment under such subsection shall,
9 in addition to any other increase to such Federal matching
10 percentage, be increased for such calendar quarter by 5
11 percentage points with respect to State expenditures at-
12 tributable to activities carried out by the State (and ap-
13 proved by the Secretary) to implement subsection (oo) of
14 section 1902."

15 SEC. 132. PROVIDER TAXES.

16 Section 1903(w)(4)(C) of the Social Security Act (42
17 U.S.C. 1396b(w)(4)(C)) is amended by adding at the end
18 the following new clause:

19 "(iii) For purposes of clause (i), a de-
20 termination of the existence of an indirect
21 guarantee shall be made under paragraph
22 (3)(i) of section 433.68(f) of title 42, Code
23 of Federal Regulations, as in effect on
24 June 1, 2017, except that—

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1 "(I) for fiscal year 2021, '5.8
2 percent' shall be substituted for '6
3 percent' each place it appears;
4 "(II) for fiscal year 2022, '5.6
5 percent' shall be substituted for '6
6 percent' each place it appears;
7 "(III) for fiscal year 2023, '5.4
8 percent' shall be substituted for '6
9 percent' each place it appears;
10 "(IV) for fiscal year 2024, '5.2
11 percent' shall be substituted for '6
12 percent' each place it appears; and
13 "(V) for fiscal year 2025 and
14 each subsequent fiscal year, '5 per-
15 cent' shall be substituted for '6 per-
16 cent' each place it appears."

17 SEC. 133. PER CAPITA ALLOTMENT FOR MEDICAL ASSIST-
18 ANCE.

19 Title XIX of the Social Security Act is amended—
20 (1) in section 1903 (42 U.S.C. 1396b)—
21 (A) in subsection (a), in the matter before
22 paragraph (1), by inserting "and section
23 1903A(a)" after "except as otherwise provided

24 in this section"; and

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1 (B) in subsection (d)(1), by striking "to
2 which" and inserting "to which, subject to sec-
3 tion 1903A(a),"; and

4 (2) by inserting after such section 1903 the fol-
5 lowing new section:

6 "SEC. 1903A. PER CAPITA-BASED CAP ON PAYMENTS FOR
7 MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

8 "(a) APPLICATION OF PER CAPITA CAP ON PAY-
9 MENTS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES.—

10 "(1) IN GENERAL.—If a State which is one of
11 the 50 States or the District of Columbia has excess
12 aggregate medical assistance expenditures (as de-
13 fined in paragraph (2)) for a fiscal year (beginning
14 with fiscal year 2020), the amount of payment to
15 the State under section 1903(a)(1) for each quarter
16 in the following fiscal year shall be reduced by 16 % of
17 the excess aggregate medical assistance payments
18 (as defined in paragraph (3)) for that previous fiscal
19 year. In this section, the term 'State' means only the
20 50 States and the District of Columbia.

21 "(2) EXCESS AGGREGATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
22 EXPENDITURES.—In this subsection, the term 'ex-
23 cess aggregate medical assistance expenditures'
24 means, for a State for a fiscal year, the amount (if
25 any) by which—

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1 "(A) the amount of the adjusted total med-
2 ical assistance expenditures (as defined in sub-
3 section (b)(1)) for the State and fiscal year; ex-
4 ceeds

5 "(B) the amount of the target total med-
6 ical assistance expenditures (as defined in sub-
7 section (c)) for the State and fiscal year.

8 "(3) EXCESS AGGREGATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
9 PAYMENTS.—In this subsection, the term 'excess ag-

10 gregate medical assistance payments' means, for a
11 State for a fiscal year, the product of—

12 "(A) the excess aggregate medical assist-
13 ance expenditures (as defined in paragraph (2))
14 for the State for the fiscal year; and

15 "(B) the Federal average medical assist-
16 ance matching percentage (as defined in para-
17 graph (4)) for the State for the fiscal year.

18 "(4) FEDERAL AVERAGE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
19 MATCHING PERCENTAGE.—In this subsection, the

20 term 'Federal average medical assistance matching

21 percentage' means, for a State for a fiscal year, the
22 ratio (expressed as a percentage) of—
23 "(A) the amount of the Federal payments
24 that would be made to the State under section
25 1903(a)(1) for medical assistance expenditures
55

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1 for calendar quarters in the fiscal year if para-
2 graph (1) did not apply; to

3 "(B) the amount of the medical assistance
4 expenditures for the State and fiscal year.

5 "(5) PER CAPITA BASE PERIOD.—

6 "(A) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the
7 term 'per capita base period' means, with re-
8 spect to a State, a period of 8 consecutive fiscal
9 quarters selected by the State.

10 "(B) TIMELINE.—Each State shall submit
11 its selection of per capita base period to the
12 Secretary not later than January 1, 2018.

13 "(C) PARAMETERS.—In selecting a per
14 capita base period under this paragraph, a
15 State shall—

16 "(i) only select a period of 8 consecu-
17 tive fiscal quarters for which all the data
18 necessary to make determinations required
19 under this section is available, as deter-
20 mined by the Secretary; and

21 "(ii) shall not select any period of 8
22 consecutive fiscal quarters that begins with
23 a fiscal quarter earlier than the first quar-
24 ter of fiscal year 2014 or ends with a fiscal
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1 quarter later than the third fiscal quarter
2 of 2017.

3 "(D) ADJUSTMENT BY THE SECRETARY.—

4 If the Secretary determines that a State took
5 actions after the date of enactment of this sec-
6 tion (including making retroactive adjustments
7 to supplemental payment data in a manner that
8 affects a fiscal quarter in the per capita base
9 period) to diminish the quality of the data from
10 the per capita base period used to make deter-
11 minations under this section, the Secretary may
12 adjust the data as the Secretary deems appro-
13 priate.

14 "(b) ADJUSTED TOTAL MEDICAL ASSISTANCE EX-
15 PENDITURES.—Subject to subsection (g), the following
16 shall apply:

17 "(1) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the term

18 'adjusted total medical assistance expenditures'
19 means, for a State—
20 "(A) for the State's per capita base period
21 (as defined in subsection (a)(5)), the product
22 of—
23 "(i) the amount of the medical assist-
24 ance expenditures (as defined in paragraph
25 (2) and adjusted under paragraph (5)) for
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1 the State and period, reduced by the
2 amount of any excluded expenditures (as
3 defined in paragraph (3) and adjusted
4 under paragraph (5)) for the State and pe-
5 riod otherwise included in such medical as-
6 sistance expenditures; and
7 "(ii) the 1903A base period popu-
8 lation percentage (as defined in paragraph
9 (4)) for the State; or
10 "(B) for fiscal year 2019 or a subsequent
11 fiscal year, the amount of the medical assist-
12 ance expenditures (as defined in paragraph (2))
13 for the State and fiscal year that is attributable
14 to 1903A enrollees, reduced by the amount of
15 any excluded expenditures (as defined in para-
16 graph (3)) for the State and fiscal year other-
17 wise included in such medical assistance ex-
18 penditures and includes non-DSH supplemental
19 payments (as defined in subsection
20 (d)(4)(A)(ii)) and payments described in sub-
21 section (d)(4)(A)(iii) but shall not be construed
22 as including any expenditures attributable to
23 the program under section 1928 (relating to
24 State pediatric vaccine distribution programs).
25 In applying subparagraph (B), non-DSH sup-
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1 plemental payments (as defined in subsection
2 (d)(4)(A)(ii)) and payments described in sub-
3 section (d)(4)(A)(iii) shall be treated as fully at-
4 tributable to 1903A enrollees.
5 "(2) MEDICAL ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES.—
6 In this section, the term 'medical assistance expendi-
7 tures' means, for a State and fiscal year or per cap-
8 ita base period, the medical assistance payments as
9 reported by medical service category on the Form
10 CMS-64 quarterly expense report (or successor to
11 such a report form, and including enrollment data
12 and subsequent adjustments to any such report, in
13 this section referred to collectively as a 'CMS-64 re-

14 port') for quarters in the year or base period for
15 which payment is (or may otherwise be) made pur-
16 suant to section 1903(a)(1), adjusted, in the case of
17 a per capita base period, under paragraph (5).

18 "(3) EXCLUDED EXPENDITURES.—In this sec-
19 tion, the term 'excluded expenditures' means, for a
20 State and fiscal year or per capita base period, ex-
21 penditures under the State plan (or under a waiver
22 of such plan) that are attributable to any of the fol-
23 lowing:

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1 "(A) DSH.—Payment adjustments made
2 for disproportionate share hospitals under sec-
3 tion 1923.

4 "(B) MEDICARE COST-SHARING.—Pay-
5 ments made for medicare cost-sharing (as de-
6 fined in section 1905(p)(3)).

7 "(C) SAFETY NET PROVIDER PAYMENT AD-
8 JUSTMENTS IN NON-EXPANSION STATES.—Pay-
9 ment adjustments under subsection (a) of sec-
10 tion 1923A for which payment is permitted
11 under subsection (c) of such section.

12 "(4) 1903A BASE PERIOD POPULATION PER-
13 CENTAGE.—In this subsection, the term '1903A base
14 period population percentage' means, for a State,
15 the Secretary's calculation of the percentage of the
16 actual medical assistance expenditures, as reported
17 by the State on the CMS-64 reports for calendar
18 quarters in the State's per capita base period, that
19 are attributable to 1903A enrollees (as defined in
20 subsection (e)(1)).

21 "(5) ADJUSTMENTS FOR PER CAPITA BASE PE-
22 RIOD.—In calculating medical assistance expendi-
23 tures under paragraph (2) and excluded expendi-
24 tures under paragraph (3) for a State for the State's
25 per capita base period, the total amount of each type
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1 of expenditure for the State and base period shall be
2 divided by 2.

3 "(c) TARGET TOTAL MEDICAL ASSISTANCE EXPEND-
4 ITURES.—

5 "(1) CALCULATION.—In this section, the term
6 'target total medical assistance expenditures' means,
7 for a State for a fiscal year and subject to para-
8 graph (4), the sum of the products, for each of the
9 1903A enrollee categories (as defined in subsection
10 (e)(2)), of—

11 "(A) the target per capita medical assist-

12 ance expenditures (as defined in paragraph (2))
13 for the enrollee category, State, and fiscal year;
14 and
15 "(B) the number of 1903A enrollees for
16 such enrollee category, State, and fiscal year, as
17 determined under subsection (e)(4).
18 "(2) TARGET PER CAPITA MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
19 EXPENDITURES.—In this subsection, the term 'tar-
20 get per capita medical assistance expenditures'
21 means, for a 1903A enrollee category and State—
22 "(A) for fiscal year 2020, an amount equal
23 to—
24 "(i) the provisional FY19 target per
25 capita amount for such enrollee category
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1 (as calculated under subsection (d)(5)) for
2 the State; increased by
3 "(ii) the applicable annual inflation
4 factor (as defined in paragraph (3)) for
5 fiscal year 2020; and
6 "(B) for each succeeding fiscal year, an
7 amount equal to—
8 "(i) the target per capita medical as-
9 sistance expenditures (under subparagraph
10 (A) or this subparagraph) for the 1903A
11 enrollee category and State for the pre-
12 ceding fiscal year; increased by
13 "(ii) the applicable annual inflation
14 factor for that succeeding fiscal year.
15 "(3) APPLICABLE ANNUAL INFLATION FAC-
16 TOR.—In paragraph (2), the term 'applicable annual
17 inflation factor' means—
18 "(A) for fiscal years before 2025—
19 "(i) for each of the 1903A enrollee
20 categories described in subparagraphs (C),
21 (D), and (E) of subsection (e)(2), the per-
22 centage increase in the medical care com-
23 ponent of the consumer price index for all
24 urban consumers (U.S. city average) from
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1 September of the previous fiscal year to
2 September of the fiscal year involved; and
3 "(ii) for each of the 1903A enrollee
4 categories described in subparagraphs (A)
5 and (B) of subsection (e)(2), the percent-
6 age increase described in clause (i) plus 1
7 percentage point; and
8 "(B) for fiscal years after 2024, for all

9 1903A enrollee categories, the percentage in-
10 crease in the consumer price index for all urban
11 consumers (U.S. city average) from September
12 of the previous fiscal year to September of the
13 fiscal year involved.

14 "(4) DECREASE IN TARGET EXPENDITURES
15 FOR REQUIRED EXPENDITURES BY CERTAIN POLIT-
16 ICAL SUBDIVISIONS.—

17 "(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a State
18 that had a DSH allotment under section
19 1923(f) for fiscal year 2016 that was more than
20 6 times the national average of such allotments
21 for all the States for such fiscal year and that
22 requires political subdivisions within the State
23 to contribute funds towards medical assistance
24 or other expenditures under the State plan
25 under this title (or under a waiver of such plan)
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1 for a fiscal year (beginning with fiscal year
2 2020), the target total medical assistance ex-
3 penditures for such State and fiscal year shall
4 be decreased by the amount that political sub-
5 divisions in the State are required to contribute
6 under the plan (or waiver) without reimburse-
7 ment from the State for such fiscal year, other
8 than contributions described in subparagraph
9 (B).

10 "(B) EXCEPTIONS.—The contributions de-
11 scribed in this subparagraph are the following:

12 "(i) Contributions required by a State
13 from a political subdivision that, as of the
14 first day of the calendar year in which the
15 fiscal year involved begins—

16 "(I) has a population of more
17 than 5,000,000, as estimated by the
18 Bureau of the Census; and

19 "(II) imposes a local income tax
20 upon its residents.

21 "(ii) Contributions required by a
22 State from a political subdivision for ad-
23 ministrative expenses if the State required
24 such contributions from such subdivision
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1 without reimbursement from the State as
2 of January 1, 2017.

3 "(5) ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES
4 TARGETS TO PROMOTE PROGRAM EQUITY ACROSS
5 STATES.—

6 "(A) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with fiscal
7 year 2020, the target per capita medical assist-
8 ance expenditures for a 1903A enrollee cat-
9 egory, State, and fiscal year, as determined
10 under paragraph (2), shall be adjusted (subject
11 to subparagraph (C)(i)) in accordance with this
12 paragraph.

13 "(B) ADJUSTMENT BASED ON LEVEL OF
14 PER CAPITA SPENDING FOR 1903A ENROLLEE

15 CATEGORIES.—Subject to subparagraph (C),
16 with respect to a State, fiscal year, and 1903A
17 enrollee category, if the State's per capita cat-
18 egorical medical assistance expenditures (as de-
19 fined in subparagraph (D)) for the State and
20 category in the preceding fiscal year—

21 "(i) exceed the mean per capita cat-
22 egorical medical assistance expenditures
23 for the category for all States for such pre-
24 ceding year by not less than 25 percent,
25 the State's target per capita medical as-

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1 sistance expenditures for such category for
2 the fiscal year involved shall be reduced by
3 a percentage that shall be determined by
4 the Secretary but which shall not be less
5 than 0.5 percent or greater than 2 percent;
6 or

7 "(ii) are less than the mean per capita
8 categorical medical assistance expenditures
9 for the category for all States for such pre-
10 ceding year by not less than 25 percent,
11 the State's target per capita medical as-
12 sistance expenditures for such category for
13 the fiscal year involved shall be increased
14 by a percentage that shall be determined
15 by the Secretary but which shall not be
16 less than 0.5 percent or greater than 2
17 percent.

18 "(C) RULES OF APPLICATION.—

19 "(i) BUDGET NEUTRALITY REQUIRE-
20 MENT.—In determining the appropriate
21 percentages by which to adjust States' tar-
22 get per capita medical assistance expendi-
23 tures for a category and fiscal year under
24 this paragraph, the Secretary shall make
25 such adjustments in a manner that does
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1 not result in a net increase in Federal pay-

2 ments under this section for such fiscal
3 year, and if the Secretary cannot adjust
4 such expenditures in such a manner there
5 shall be no adjustment under this para-
6 graph for such fiscal year.

7 "(ii) ASSUMPTION REGARDING STATE
8 EXPENDITURES.—For purposes of clause
9 (i), in the case of a State that has its tar-
10 get per capita medical assistance expendi-
11 tures for a 1903A enrollee category and
12 fiscal year increased under this paragraph,
13 the Secretary shall assume that the cat-
14 egorical medical assistance expenditures
15 (as defined in subparagraph (D)(ii)) for
16 such State, category, and fiscal year will
17 equal such increased target medical assist-
18 ance expenditures.

19 "(iii) NONAPPLICATION TO LOW-DEN-
20 SITY STATES.—This paragraph shall not
21 apply to any State that has a population
22 density of less than 15 individuals per
23 square mile, based on the most recent data
24 available from the Bureau of the Census.

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1 "(iv) DISREGARD OF ADJUSTMENT.—
2 Any adjustment under this paragraph to
3 target medical assistance expenditures for
4 a State, 1903A enrollee category, and fis-
5 cal year shall be disregarded when deter-
6 mining the target medical assistance ex-
7 penditures for such State and category for
8 a succeeding year under paragraph (2).

9 "(v) APPLICATION FOR FISCAL YEARS
10 2020 AND 2021.—In fiscal years 2020 and
11 2021, the Secretary shall apply this para-
12 graph by deeming all categories of 1903A
13 enrollees to be a single category.

14 "(D) PER CAPITA CATEGORICAL MEDICAL
15 ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES.—

16 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In this paragraph,
17 the term 'per capita categorical medical as-
18 sistance expenditures' means, with respect
19 to a State, 1903A enrollee category, and
20 fiscal year, an amount equal to—

21 "(I) the categorical medical ex-
22 penditures (as defined in clause (ii))
23 for the State, category, and year; di-
24 vided by

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1 "(II) the number of 1903A en-
2 rollees for the State, category, and
3 year.

4 "(ii) CATEGORICAL MEDICAL ASSIST-
5 ANCE EXPENDITURES.—The term 'categor-
6 ical medical assistance expenditures'
7 means, with respect to a State, 1903A en-
8 rollee category, and fiscal year, an amount
9 equal to the total medical assistance ex-
10 penditures (as defined in paragraph (2))
11 for the State and fiscal year that are at-
12 tributable to 1903A enrollees in the cat-
13 egory, excluding any excluded expenditures
14 (as defined in paragraph (3)) for the State
15 and fiscal year that are attributable to
16 1903A enrollees in the category.

17 "(d) CALCULATION OF FY19 PROVISIONAL TARGET
18 AMOUNT FOR EACH 1903A ENROLLEE CATEGORY.—Sub-
19 ject to subsection (g), the following shall apply:

20 "(1) CALCULATION OF BASE AMOUNTS FOR PER
21 CAPITA BASE PERIOD.—For each State the Sec-
22 retary shall calculate (and provide notice to the
23 State not later than April 1, 2018, of) the following:

24 "(A) The amount of the adjusted total
25 medical assistance expenditures (as defined in
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1 subsection (b)(1)) for the State for the State's
2 per capita base period.

3 "(B) The number of 1903A enrollees for
4 the State in the State's per capita base period
5 (as determined under subsection (e)(4)).

6 "(C) The average per capita medical as-
7 sistance expenditures for the State for the
8 State's per capita base period equal to—

9 "(i) the amount calculated under sub-
10 paragraph (A); divided by

11 "(ii) the number calculated under sub-
12 paragraph (B).

13 "(2) FISCAL YEAR 2019 AVERAGE PER CAPITA
14 AMOUNT BASED ON INFLATING THE PER CAPITA
15 BASE PERIOD AMOUNT TO FISCAL YEAR 2019 BY CPI-
16 MEDICAL.—The Secretary shall calculate a fiscal
17 year 2019 average per capita amount for each State
18 equal to—

19 "(A) the average per capita medical assist-
20 ance expenditures for the State for the State's
21 per capita base period (calculated under para-
22 graph (1)(C)); increased by

23 "(B) the percentage increase in the med-
24 ical care component of the consumer price index
25 for all urban consumers (U.S. city average)
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1 from the last month of the State's per capita
2 base period to September of fiscal year 2019.
3 "(3) AGGREGATE AND AVERAGE EXPENDI-
4 TURES PER CAPITA FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019.—The
5 Secretary shall calculate for each State the fol-
6 lowing:

7 "(A) The amount of the adjusted total
8 medical assistance expenditures (as defined in
9 subsection (b)(1)) for the State for fiscal year
10 2019.

11 "(B) The number of 1903A enrollees for
12 the State in fiscal year 2019 (as determined
13 under subsection (e)(4)).

14 "(4) PER CAPITA EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL
15 YEAR 2019 FOR EACH 1903A ENROLLEE CATEGORY.—

16 The Secretary shall calculate (and provide notice to
17 each State not later than January 1, 2020, of) the
18 following:

19 "(A)(i) For each 1903A enrollee category,
20 the amount of the adjusted total medical assist-
21 ance expenditures (as defined in subsection
22 (b)(1)) for the State for fiscal year 2019 for in-
23 dividuals in the enrollee category, calculated by
24 excluding from medical assistance expenditures
25 those expenditures attributable to expenditures
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1 described in clause (iii) or non-DSH supple-
2 mental expenditures (as defined in clause (ii)).

3 "(ii) In this paragraph, the term 'non-
4 DSH supplemental expenditure' means a pay-
5 ment to a provider under the State plan (or
6 under a waiver of the plan) that—

7 "(I) is not made under section 1923;

8 "(II) is not made with respect to a
9 specific item or service for an individual;

10 "(III) is in addition to any payments
11 made to the provider under the plan (or
12 waiver) for any such item or service; and

13 "(IV) complies with the limits for ad-
14 ditional payments to providers under the
15 plan (or waiver) imposed pursuant to sec-
16 tion 1902(a)(30)(A), including the regula-
17 tions specifying upper payment limits
18 under the State plan in part 447 of title

19 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or any
20 successor regulations).
21 "(iii) An expenditure described in this
22 clause is an expenditure that meets the criteria
23 specified in subclauses (I), (II), and (III) of
24 clause (ii) and is authorized under section 1115
25 for the purposes of funding a delivery system
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1 reform pool, uncompensated care pool, a des-
2 ignated State health program, or any other
3 similar expenditure (as defined by the Sec-
4 retary).

5 "(B) For each 1903A enrollee category,
6 the number of 1903A enrollees for the State in
7 fiscal year 2019 in the enrollee category (as de-
8 termined under subsection (e)(4)).

9 "(C) For the State's per capita base pe-
10 riod, the State's non-DSH supplemental and
11 pool payment percentage is equal to the ratio
12 (expressed as a percentage) of—

13 "(i) the total amount of non-DSH
14 supplemental expenditures (as defined in
15 subparagraph (A)(ii) and adjusted under
16 subparagraph (E)) and payments described
17 in subparagraph (A)(iii) (and adjusted
18 under subparagraph (E)) for the State for
19 the period; to

20 "(ii) the amount described in sub-
21 section (b)(1)(A) for the State for the
22 State's per capita base period.

23 "(D) For each 1903A enrollee category an
24 average medical assistance expenditures per
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1 capita for the State for fiscal year 2019 for the
2 enrollee category equal to—

3 "(i) the amount calculated under sub-
4 paragraph (A) for the State, increased by
5 the non-DSH supplemental and pool pay-
6 ment percentage for the State (as cal-
7 culated under subparagraph (C)); divided
8 by

9 "(ii) the number calculated under sub-
10 paragraph (B) for the State for the en-
11 rollee category.

12 "(E) For purposes of subparagraph (C)(i),
13 in calculating the total amount of non-DSH
14 supplemental expenditures and payments de-
15 scribed in subparagraph (A)(iii) for a State for

16 the per capita base period, the total amount of
17 such expenditures and the total amount of such
18 payments for the State and base period shall
19 each be divided by 2.

20 "(5) PROVISIONAL FY19 PER CAPITA TARGET
21 AMOUNT FOR EACH 1903A ENROLLEE CATEGORY.—

22 Subject to subsection (f)(2), the Secretary shall cal-
23 culate for each State a provisional FY19 per capita
24 target amount for each 1903A enrollee category
25 equal to the average medical assistance expenditures
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1 per capita for the State for fiscal year 2019 (as cal-
2 culated under paragraph (4)(D)) for such enrollee
3 category multiplied by the ratio of—

4 "(A) the product of—

5 "(i) the fiscal year 2019 average per
6 capita amount for the State, as calculated
7 under paragraph (2); and

8 "(ii) the number of 1903A enrollees
9 for the State in fiscal year 2019, as cal-
10 culated under paragraph (3)(B); to

11 "(B) the amount of the adjusted total
12 medical assistance expenditures for the State
13 for fiscal year 2019, as calculated under para-
14 graph (3)(A).

15 "(e) 1903A ENROLLEE; 1903A ENROLLEE CAT-
16 EGORY.—Subject to subsection (g), for purposes of this
17 section, the following shall apply:

18 "(1) 1903A ENROLLEE.—The term '1903A en-
19 rollee' means, with respect to a State and a month
20 and subject to subsection (i)(1)(B), any Medicaid
21 enrollee (as defined in paragraph (3)) for the month,
22 other than such an enrollee who for such month is
23 in any of the following categories of excluded indi-
24 viduals:

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1 "(A) CHIP.—An individual who is pro-
2 vided, under this title in the manner described
3 in section 2101(a)(2), child health assistance
4 under title XXI.

5 "(B) IHS.—An individual who receives
6 any medical assistance under this title for serv-
7 ices for which payment is made under the third
8 sentence of section 1905(b).

9 "(C) BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER
10 SERVICES ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL.—An indi-
11 vidual who is eligible for medical assistance
12 under this title only on the basis of section

13 1902(a)(10)(A)(ii)(XVIII).

14 "(D) PARTIAL-BENEFIT ENROLLEES.—An

15 individual who—

16 "(i) is an alien who is eligible for
17 medical assistance under this title only on

18 the basis of section 1903(v)(2);

19 "(ii) is eligible for medical assistance
20 under this title only on the basis of sub-

21 clause (XII) or (XXI) of section

22 1902(a)(10)(A)(ii) (or on the basis of a

23 waiver that provides only comparable bene-
24 fits);

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1 "(iii) is a dual eligible individual (as

2 defined in section 1915(h)(2)(B)) and is

3 eligible for medical assistance under this

4 title (or under a waiver) only for some or

5 all of medicare cost-sharing (as defined in

6 section 1905(p)(3)); or

7 "(iv) is eligible for medical assistance

8 under this title and for whom the State is

9 providing a payment or subsidy to an em-

10 ployer for coverage of the individual under

11 a group health plan pursuant to section

12 1906 or section 1906A (or pursuant to a

13 waiver that provides only comparable bene-

14 fits).

15 "(E) BLIND AND DISABLED CHILDREN.—

16 An individual who—

17 "(i) is a child under 19 years of age;

18 and

19 "(ii) is eligible for medical assistance

20 under this title on the basis of being blind

21 or disabled.

22 "(2) 1903A ENROLLEE CATEGORY.—The term

23 '1903A enrollee category' means each of the fol-

24 lowing:

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1 "(A) ELDERLY.—A category of 1903A en-

2 rollees who are 65 years of age or older.

3 "(B) BLIND AND DISABLED.—A category

4 of 1903A enrollees (not described in the pre-

5 vious subparagraph) who—

6 "(i) are 19 years of age or older; and

7 "(ii) are eligible for medical assistance

8 under this title on the basis of being blind

9 or disabled.

10 "(C) CHILDREN.—A category of 1903A

11 enrollees (not described in a previous subpara-
12 graph) who are children under 19 years of age.

13 "(D) EXPANSION ENROLLEES.—A cat-
14 egory of 1903A enrollees (not described in a
15 previous subparagraph) who are eligible for
16 medical assistance under this title only on the
17 basis of clause (i)(VIII), (ii)(XX), or
18 (ii)(XXIII) of section 1902(a)(10)(A).

19 "(E) OTHER NONELDERLY, NONDISABLED,
20 NON-EXPANSION ADULTS.—A category of
21 1903A enrollees who are not described in any
22 previous subparagraph.

23 "(3) MEDICAID ENROLLEE.—The term 'Med-
24 icaid enrollee' means, with respect to a State for a
25 month, an individual who is eligible for medical as-
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1 sistance for items or services under this title and en-
2 rolled under the State plan (or a waiver of such
3 plan) under this title for the month.

4 "(4) DETERMINATION OF NUMBER OF 1903A
5 ENROLLEES.—The number of 1903A enrollees for a
6 State and fiscal year or the State's per capita base
7 period, and, if applicable, for a 1903A enrollee cat-
8 egory, is the average monthly number of Medicaid
9 enrollees for such State and fiscal year or base pe-
10 riod (and, if applicable, in such category) that are
11 reported through the CMS-64 report under (and
12 subject to audit under) subsection (h).

13 "(f) SPECIAL PAYMENT RULES.—

14 "(1) APPLICATION IN CASE OF RESEARCH AND
15 DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AND OTHER WAIVERS.—

16 In the case of a State with a waiver of the State
17 plan approved under section 1115, section 1915, or
18 another provision of this title, this section shall
19 apply to medical assistance expenditures and medical
20 assistance payments under the waiver, in the same
21 manner as if such expenditures and payments had
22 been made under a State plan under this title and
23 the limitations on expenditures under this section
24 shall supersede any other payment limitations or
25 provisions (including limitations based on a per cap-
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1 ita limitation) otherwise applicable under such a
2 waiver.

3 "(2) TREATMENT OF STATES EXPANDING COV-
4 ERAGE AFTER FISCAL YEAR 2016.—In the case of a
5 State that did not provide for medical assistance for
6 the 1903A enrollee category described in subsection

7 (e)(2)(D) during fiscal year 2016 but which provides
8 for such assistance for such category in a subse-
9 quent year, the provisional FY19 per capita target
10 amount for such enrollee category under subsection
11 (d)(5) shall be equal to the provisional FY19 per
12 capita target amount for the 1903A enrollee cat-
13 egory described in subsection (e)(2)(E).

14 "(3) IN CASE OF STATE FAILURE TO REPORT
15 NECESSARY DATA.—If a State for any quarter in a
16 fiscal year (beginning with fiscal year 2019) fails to
17 satisfactorily submit data on expenditures and en-
18 rollees in accordance with subsection (h)(1), for such
19 fiscal year and any succeeding fiscal year for which
20 such data are not satisfactorily submitted—

21 "(A) the Secretary shall calculate and
22 apply subsections (a) through (e) with respect
23 to the State as if all 1903A enrollee categories
24 for which such expenditure and enrollee data
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1 were not satisfactorily submitted were a single
2 1903A enrollee category; and

3 "(B) the growth factor otherwise applied
4 under subsection (c)(2)(B) shall be decreased
5 by 1 percentage point.

6 "(g) RECALCULATION OF CERTAIN AMOUNTS FOR
7 DATA ERRORS.—The amounts and percentage calculated
8 under paragraphs (1) and (4)(C) of subsection (d) for a
9 State for the State's per capita base period, and the
10 amounts of the adjusted total medical assistance expendi-
11 tures calculated under subsection (b) and the number of
12 Medicaid enrollees and 1903A enrollees determined under
13 subsection (e)(4) for a State for the State's per capita
14 base period, fiscal year 2019, and any subsequent fiscal
15 year, may be adjusted by the Secretary based upon an ap-
16 peal (filed by the State in such a form, manner, and time,
17 and containing such information relating to data errors
18 that support such appeal, as the Secretary specifies) that
19 the Secretary determines to be valid, except that any ad-
20 justment by the Secretary under this subsection for a
21 State may not result in an increase of the target total
22 medical assistance expenditures exceeding 2 percent.

23 "(h) REQUIRED REPORTING AND AUDITING; TRANSI-
24 TIONAL INCREASE IN FEDERAL MATCHING PERCENTAGE
25 FOR CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

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1 "(1) REPORTING OF CMS-64 DATA.—

2 "(A) IN GENERAL.—In addition to the
3 data required on form Group VIII on the CMS-

4 64 report form as of January 1, 2017, in each
5 CMS-64 report required to be submitted (for
6 each quarter beginning on or after October 1,
7 2018), the State shall include data on medical
8 assistance expenditures within such categories
9 of services and categories of enrollees (including
10 each 1903A enrollee category and each category
11 of excluded individuals under subsection (e)(1))
12 and the numbers of enrollees within each of
13 such enrollee categories, as the Secretary deter-
14 mines are necessary (including timely guidance
15 published as soon as possible after the date of
16 the enactment of this section) in order to imple-
17 ment this section and to enable States to com-
18 ply with the requirement of this paragraph on
19 a timely basis.

20 "(B) REPORTING ON QUALIFIED INPA-
21 TIENT PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL SERVICES.—Not
22 later than 60 days after the date of the enact-
23 ment of this section, the Secretary shall modify
24 the CMS-64 report form to require that States
25 submit data with respect to medical assistance
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1 expenditures for qualified inpatient psychiatric
2 hospital services (as defined in section
3 1905(h)(3)).

4 "(C) REPORTING ON CHILDREN WITH
5 COMPLEX MEDICAL CONDITIONS.—Not later
6 than January 1, 2020, the Secretary shall mod-
7 ify the CMS-64 report form to require that
8 States submit data with respect to individuals
9 who—

10 "(i) are enrolled in a State plan under
11 this title or title XXI or under a waiver of
12 such plan;

13 "(ii) are under 21 years of age; and

14 "(iii) have a chronic medical condition
15 or serious injury that—

16 "(I) affects two or more body
17 systems;

18 "(II) affects cognitive or physical
19 functioning (such as reducing the abil-
20 ity to perform the activities of daily
21 living, including the ability to engage
22 in movement or mobility, eat, drink,
23 communicate, or breathe independ-
24 ently); and

25 "(III) either—

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1 "(aa) requires intensive
2 healthcare interventions (such as
3 multiple medications, therapies,
4 or durable medical equipment)
5 and intensive care coordination to
6 optimize health and avoid hos-
7 pitalizations or emergency de-
8 partment visits; or
9 "(bb) meets the criteria for
10 medical complexity under existing
11 risk adjustment methodologies
12 using a recognized, publicly avail-
13 able pediatric grouping system
14 (such as the pediatric complex
15 conditions classification system
16 or the Pediatric Medical Com-
17 plexity Algorithm) selected by the
18 Secretary in close collaboration
19 with the State agencies respon-
20 sible for administering State
21 plans under this title and a na-
22 tional panel of pediatric, pedi-
23 atric specialty, and pediatric sub-
24 specialty experts.

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1 "(2) AUDITING OF CMS-64 DATA.—The Sec-
2 retary shall conduct for each State an audit of the
3 number of individuals and expenditures reported
4 through the CMS-64 report for the State's per cap-
5 ita base period, fiscal year 2019, and each subse-
6 quent fiscal year, which audit may be conducted on
7 a representative sample (as determined by the Sec-
8 retary).

9 "(3) AUDITING OF STATE SPENDING.—The In-
10 spector General of the Department of Health and
11 Human Services shall conduct an audit (which shall
12 be conducted using random sampling, as determined
13 by the Inspector General) of each State's spending
14 under this section not less than once every 3 years.

15 "(4) TEMPORARY INCREASE IN FEDERAL
16 MATCHING PERCENTAGE TO SUPPORT IMPROVED
17 DATA REPORTING SYSTEMS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2018
18 AND 2019.—In the case of any State that selects as
19 its per capita base period the most recent 8 consecu-
20 tive quarter period for which the data necessary to
21 make the determinations required under this section
22 is available, for amounts expended during calendar
23 quarters beginning on or after October 1, 2017, and

24 before October 1, 2019—

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1 "(A) the Federal matching percentage ap-
2 plied under section 1903(a)(3)(A)(i) shall be in-
3 creased by 10 percentage points to 100 percent;

4 "(B) the Federal matching percentage ap-
5 plied under section 1903(a)(3)(B) shall be in-
6 creased by 25 percentage points to 100 percent;

7 and

8 "(C) the Federal matching percentage ap-
9 plied under section 1903(a)(7) shall be in-
10 creased by 10 percentage points to 60 percent
11 but only with respect to amounts expended that
12 are attributable to a State's additional adminis-
13 trative expenditures to implement the data re-
14 quirements of paragraph (1).

15 "(5) HHS REPORT ON ADOPTION OF T-MSIS
16 DATA.—Not later than January 1, 2025, the Sec-
17 retary shall submit to Congress a report making rec-
18 ommendations as to whether data from the Trans-
19 formed Medicaid Statistical Information System
20 would be preferable to CMS-64 report data for pur-
21 poses of making the determinations necessary under
22 this section."

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1 SEC. 134. FLEXIBLE BLOCK GRANT OPTION FOR STATES.

2 Title XIX of the Social Security Act, as amended by
3 section 133, is further amended by inserting after section
4 1903A the following new section:

5 "SEC. 1903B. MEDICAID FLEXIBILITY PROGRAM.

6 "(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with fiscal year 2020,
7 any State (as defined in subsection (e)) that has an appli-
8 cation approved by the Secretary under subsection (b)
9 may conduct a Medicaid Flexibility Program to provide
10 targeted health assistance to program enrollees.

11 "(b) STATE APPLICATION.—

12 "(1) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to conduct a
13 Medicaid Flexibility Program, a State shall submit
14 an application to the Secretary that meets the re-
15 quirements of this subsection.

16 "(2) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—An applica-
17 tion under this subsection shall include the fol-
18 lowing:

19 "(A) A description of the proposed Med-
20 icaid Flexibility Program and how the State will
21 satisfy the requirements described in subsection
22 (d).

23 "(B) The proposed conditions for eligibility

24 of program enrollees.

25 "(C) A description of the types, amount,
26 duration, and scope of services which will be of-
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1 fered as targeted health assistance under the
2 program, including a description of the pro-
3 posed package of services which will be provided
4 to program enrollees to whom the State would
5 otherwise be required to make medical assist-
6 ance available under section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i).

7 "(D) A description of how the State will
8 notify individuals currently enrolled in the State
9 plan for medical assistance under this title of
10 the transition to such program.

11 "(E) Statements certifying that the State
12 agrees to—

13 "(i) submit regular enrollment data
14 with respect to the program to the Centers
15 for Medicare & Medicaid Services at such
16 time and in such manner as the Secretary
17 may require;

18 "(ii) submit timely and accurate data
19 to the Transformed Medicaid Statistical
20 Information System (T-MSIS);

21 "(iii) report annually to the Secretary
22 on adult health quality measures imple-
23 mented under the program and informa-
24 tion on the quality of health care furnished
25 to program enrollees under the program as
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1 part of the annual report required under
2 section 1139B(d)(1);

3 "(iv) submit such additional informa-
4 tion not described in any of the preceding
5 clauses of this subparagraph but which the
6 Secretary determines is necessary for mon-
7 itoring, evaluation, or program integrity
8 purposes, including—

9 "(I) survey data, such as the
10 data from Consumer Assessment of
11 Healthcare Providers and Systems
12 (CAHPS) surveys;

13 "(II) birth certificate data; and

14 "(III) clinical patient data for
15 quality measurements which may not
16 be present in a claim, such as labora-
17 tory data, body mass index, and blood
18 pressure; and

19 "(v) on an annual basis, conduct a re-
20 port evaluating the program and make
21 such report available to the public.
22 "(F) An information technology systems
23 plan demonstrating that the State has the capa-
24 bility to support the technological administra-
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1 tion of the program and comply with reporting
2 requirements under this section.

3 "(G) A statement of the goals of the pro-
4 posed program, which shall include—

5 "(i) goals related to quality, access,
6 rate of growth targets, consumer satisfac-
7 tion, and outcomes;

8 "(ii) a plan for monitoring and evalu-
9 ating the program to determine whether
10 such goals are being met; and

11 "(iii) a proposed process for the State,
12 in consultation with the Centers for Medi-
13 care & Medicaid Services, to take remedial
14 action to make progress on unmet goals.

15 "(H) Such other information as the Sec-
16 retary may require.

17 "(3) STATE NOTICE AND COMMENT PERIOD.—

18 "(A) IN GENERAL.—Before submitting an
19 application under this subsection, a State shall
20 make the application publicly available for a 30
21 day notice and comment period.

22 "(B) NOTICE AND COMMENT PROCESS.—

23 During the notice and comment period de-
24 scribed in subparagraph (A), the State shall
25 provide opportunities for a meaningful level of
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1 public input, which shall include public hearings
2 on the proposed Medicaid Flexibility Program.

3 "(4) FEDERAL NOTICE AND COMMENT PE-
4 RIOD.—The Secretary shall not approve of any ap-
5 plication to conduct a Medicaid Flexibility Program
6 without making such application publicly available
7 for a 30 day notice and comment period.

8 "(5) TIMELINE FOR SUBMISSION.—

9 "(A) IN GENERAL.—A State may submit
10 an application under this subsection to conduct
11 a Medicaid Flexibility Program that would
12 begin in the next fiscal year at any time, sub-
13 ject to subparagraph (B).

14 "(B) DEADLINES.—Each year beginning
15 with 2019, the Secretary shall specify a dead-

16 line for submitting an application under this
17 subsection to conduct a Medicaid Flexibility
18 Program that would begin in the next fiscal
19 year, but such deadline shall not be earlier than
20 60 days after the date that the Secretary pub-
21 lishes the amounts of State block grants as re-
22 quired under subsection (c)(4).

23 "(c) FINANCING.—

24 "(1) IN GENERAL.—For each fiscal year during
25 which a State is conducting a Medicaid Flexibility
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1 Program, the State shall receive, instead of amounts
2 otherwise payable to the State under this title for
3 medical assistance for program enrollees, the
4 amount specified in paragraph (3)(A).

5 "(2) AMOUNT OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDS.—

6 "(A) FOR INITIAL YEAR.—Subject to sub-
7 paragraph (C), for the first fiscal year in which
8 a State conducts a Medicaid Flexibility Pro-
9 gram, the block grant amount under this para-
10 graph for the State and year shall be equal to
11 the Federal average medical assistance match-
12 ing percentage (as defined in section
13 1903A(a)(4)) for the State and year multiplied
14 by the product of—

15 "(i) the target per capita medical as-
16 sistance expenditures (as defined in section
17 1903A(c)(2)) for the State and year for
18 the enrollee category described in section
19 1903A(e)(2)(E); and

20 "(ii) the number of 1903A enrollees in
21 such category for the State for the second
22 fiscal year preceding such first fiscal year,
23 increased by the percentage increase in
24 State population from such second pre-
25 ceding fiscal year to such first fiscal year,
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1 based on the best available estimates of the
2 Bureau of the Census.

3 "(B) FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT YEAR.—For
4 any fiscal year that is not the first fiscal year
5 in which a State conducts a Medicaid Flexibility
6 Program, the block grant amount under this
7 paragraph for the State and year shall be equal
8 to the block grant amount determined for the
9 State for the most recent previous fiscal year in
10 which the State conducted a Medicaid Flexi-
11 bility Program, except that such amount shall

12 be increased by the percentage increase in the
13 consumer price index for all urban consumers
14 (U.S. city average) from April of the second fis-
15 cal year preceding the fiscal year involved to
16 April of the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year
17 involved.

18 "(C) CAP ON TOTAL POPULATION OF 1903A
19 ENROLLEES FOR PURPOSES OF BLOCK GRANT
20 CALCULATION.—

21 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In calculating the
22 amount of a block grant for the first year
23 in which a State conducts a Medicaid
24 Flexibility Program under subparagraph
25 (A), the total number of 1903A enrollees
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1 in the 1903A enrollee category described in
2 section 1903A(e)(2)(E) for the State and
3 year shall not exceed the adjusted number
4 of base period non-expansion enrollees for
5 the State (as defined in clause (ii)).

6 "(ii) ADJUSTED NUMBER OF 2016
7 NON-EXPANSION ENROLLEES.—The term
8 'adjusted number of base period non-ex-
9 pansion enrollees' means, with respect to a
10 State, the number of 1903A enrollees in
11 the enrollee category described in section
12 1903A(e)(2)(E) for the State for the
13 State's per capita base period (as deter-
14 mined under section 1903A(e)(4)), in-
15 creased by the percentage increase, if any,
16 in the total State population from the last
17 April in the State's per capita base period
18 to April of the fiscal year preceding the fis-
19 cal year involved (determined using the
20 best available data from the Bureau of the
21 Census) plus 3 percentage points.

22 "(D) AVAILABILITY OF ROLLOVER
23 FUNDS.—

24 "(i) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that
25 the block grant amount available to a
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1 State for a fiscal year under this para-
2 graph exceeds the amount of Federal pay-
3 ments made to the State for such fiscal
4 year under paragraph (3)(A), the Sec-
5 retary shall make such funds available to
6 the State for the succeeding fiscal year if
7 the State—

8 "(I) satisfies the State maintenance of effort requirement under
9 paragraph (3)(B); and
10 "(II) is conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program in such succeeding
11 fiscal year.
12 "(ii) USE OF FUNDS.—Section
13 1903(i)(17) shall not apply to funds made
14 available to a State under this subparagraph and a State may use such funds for
15 other State health programs (as defined or
16 approved by the Secretary) or for any
17 other purpose which is consistent with the
18 quality standards established by the Secretary under clause (iii).

19 "(iii) QUALITY STANDARDS.—

20 "(I) IN GENERAL.—Not later
21 than January 1, 2020, the Secretary
22 shall

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24 shall establish quality standards applicable to a State's use of funds made
25 available to the State under this subparagraph.

26 "(II) ALLOWABLE USES.—In establishing quality standards under
27 this clause, the Secretary shall not
28 prohibit a State from using such
29 funds for—

30 "(aa) a program that is not
31 related to health care, provided
32 that using the funds for such
33 program is otherwise consistent
34 with the standards; or

35 "(bb) the State maintenance
36 of effort expenditures required
37 under paragraph (3)(B).

38 "(3) FEDERAL PAYMENT AND STATE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—

39 "(A) FEDERAL PAYMENT.—Subject to subparagraph (D), the Secretary shall pay to each
40 State conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program under this section for a fiscal year, from
41 its block grant amount under paragraph (2) for
42 such year, an amount for each quarter of such
43 year

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45 shall be equal to the Federal average medical assistance percentage (as defined in section
46 1903A(a)(4)) of the total amount expended

4 under the program during such quarter, and
5 the State is responsible for the balance of the
6 funds to carry out such program.

7 "(B) STATE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT
8 EXPENDITURES.—For each year during which a

9 State is conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Pro-
10 gram, the State shall make expenditures for
11 targeted health assistance under the program in
12 an amount equal to the product of—

13 "(i) the block grant amount deter-
14 mined for the State and year under para-
15 graph (2); and

16 "(ii) the enhanced FMAP described in
17 the first sentence of section 2105(b) for
18 the State and year.

19 "(C) REDUCTION IN BLOCK GRANT
20 AMOUNT FOR STATES FAILING TO MEET MOE
21 REQUIREMENT.—

22 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a
23 State conducting a Medicaid Flexibility
24 Program that makes expenditures for tar-
25 geted health assistance under the program
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1 for a fiscal year in an amount that is less
2 than the required amount for the fiscal
3 year under subparagraph (B), the amount
4 of the block grant determined for the State
5 under paragraph (2) for the succeeding fis-
6 cal year shall be reduced by the amount by
7 which such expenditures are less than such
8 required amount.

9 "(ii) DISREGARD OF REDUCTION.—
10 For purposes of determining the amount of
11 a State block grant under paragraph (2),
12 any reduction made under this subpara-
13 graph to a State's block grant amount in
14 a previous fiscal year shall be disregarded.

15 "(iii) APPLICATION TO STATES THAT
16 TERMINATE PROGRAM.—In the case of a
17 State described in clause (i) that termi-
18 nates the State Medicaid Flexibility Pro-
19 gram under subsection (d)(2)(B) and such
20 termination is effective with the end of the
21 fiscal year in which the State fails to make
22 the required amount of expenditures under
23 subparagraph (B), the reduction amount
24 determined for the State and succeeding
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1 fiscal year under clause (i) shall be treated
2 as an overpayment under this title.
3 "(D) REDUCTION FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—
4 If the Secretary determines that a State con-
5 ducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program is not
6 complying with the requirements of this section,
7 the Secretary may withhold payments, reduce
8 payments, or recover previous payments to the
9 State under this section as the Secretary deems
10 appropriate.

11 "(4) DETERMINATION AND PUBLICATION OF
12 BLOCK GRANT AMOUNT.—Beginning in 2019 and
13 each year thereafter, the Secretary shall determine
14 for each State, regardless of whether the State is
15 conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program or has
16 submitted an application to conduct such a program,
17 the amount of the block grant for the State under
18 paragraph (2) which would apply for the upcoming
19 fiscal year if the State were to conduct such a pro-
20 gram in such fiscal year, and shall publish such de-
21 terminations not later than June 1 of each year.

22 "(d) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—
23 "(1) IN GENERAL.—No payment shall be made
24 under this section to a State conducting a Medicaid
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1 Flexibility Program unless such program meets the
2 requirements of this subsection.

3 "(2) TERM OF PROGRAM.—

4 "(A) IN GENERAL.—A State Medicaid
5 Flexibility Program approved under subsection
6 (b)—

7 "(i) shall be conducted for not less
8 than 1 program period;

9 "(ii) at the option of the State, may
10 be continued for succeeding program peri-
11 ods without resubmitting an application
12 under subsection (b), provided that—

13 "(I) the State provides notice to
14 the Secretary of its decision to con-
15 tinue the program; and

16 "(II) no significant changes are
17 made to the program; and

18 "(iii) shall be subject to termination
19 only by the State, which may terminate the
20 program by making an election under sub-
21 paragraph (B).

22 "(B) ELECTION TO TERMINATE PRO-
23 GRAM.—

24 "(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause

25 (ii), a State conducting a Medicaid Flexi-
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1 bility Program may elect to terminate the
2 program effective with the first day after
3 the end of the program period in which the
4 State makes the election.

5 "(ii) TRANSITION PLAN REQUIRE-
6 MENT.—A State may not elect to termi-
7 nate a Medicaid Flexibility Program unless
8 the State has in place an appropriate tran-
9 sition plan approved by the Secretary.

10 "(iii) EFFECT OF TERMINATION.—If a
11 State elects to terminate a Medicaid Flexi-
12 bility Program, the per capita cap limita-
13 tions under section 1903A shall apply ef-
14 fective with the day described in clause (i),
15 and such limitations shall be applied as if
16 the State had never conducted a Medicaid
17 Flexibility Program.

18 "(3) PROVISION OF TARGETED HEALTH ASSIST-
19 ANCE.—

20 "(A) IN GENERAL.—A State Medicaid
21 Flexibility Program shall provide targeted
22 health assistance to program enrollees and such
23 assistance shall be instead of medical assistance
24 which would otherwise be provided to the enroll-
25 ees under this title.

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1 "(B) CONDITIONS FOR ELIGIBILITY.—

2 "(i) IN GENERAL.—A State con-
3 ducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program
4 shall establish conditions for eligibility of
5 program enrollees, which shall be instead
6 of other conditions for eligibility under this
7 title, except that the program must provide
8 for eligibility for program enrollees to
9 whom the State would otherwise be re-
10 quired to make medical assistance available
11 under section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i).

12 "(ii) MAGI.—Any determination of
13 income necessary to establish the eligibility
14 of a program enrollee for purposes of a
15 State Medicaid Flexibility Program shall
16 be made using modified adjusted gross in-
17 come in accordance with section
18 1902(e)(14).

19 "(4) BENEFITS AND SERVICES.—

20 "(A) REQUIRED SERVICES.—In the case of

21 program enrollees to whom the State would oth-
22 erwise be required to make medical assistance
23 available under section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i), a
24 State conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Pro-
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1 gram shall provide as targeted health assistance
2 the following types of services:

3 "(i) Inpatient and outpatient hospital
4 services.

5 "(ii) Laboratory and X-ray services.

6 "(iii) Nursing facility services for indi-
7 viduals aged 21 and older.

8 "(iv) Physician services.

9 "(v) Home health care services (in-
10 cluding home nursing services, medical
11 supplies, equipment, and appliances).

12 "(vi) Rural health clinic services (as
13 defined in section 1905(1)(1)).

14 "(vii) Federally-qualified health center
15 services (as defined in section 1905(1)(2)).

16 "(viii) Family planning services and
17 supplies.

18 "(ix) Nurse midwife services.

19 "(x) Certified pediatric and family
20 nurse practitioner services.

21 "(xi) Freestanding birth center serv-
22 ices (as defined in section 1905(1)(3)).

23 "(xii) Emergency medical transpor-
24 tation.

25 "(xiii) Non-cosmetic dental services.
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1 "(xiv) Pregnancy-related services, in-
2 cluding postpartum services for the 12-
3 week period beginning on the last day of a
4 pregnancy.

5 "(B) OPTIONAL BENEFITS.—A State may,
6 at its option, provide services in addition to the
7 services described in subparagraph (A) as tar-
8 geted health assistance under a Medicaid Flexi-
9 bility Program.

10 "(C) BENEFIT PACKAGES.—

11 "(i) IN GENERAL.—The targeted
12 health assistance provided by a State to
13 any group of program enrollees under a
14 Medicaid Flexibility Program shall have an
15 aggregate actuarial value that is equal to
16 at least 95 percent of the aggregate actu-
17 arial value of the benchmark coverage de-

18 scribed in subsection (b)(1) of section 1937
19 or benchmark-equivalent coverage de-
20 scribed in subsection (b)(2) of such sec-
21 tion, as such subsections were in effect
22 prior to the enactment of the Patient Pro-
23 tection and Affordable Care Act.
24 "(ii) AMOUNT, DURATION, AND SCOPE
25 OF BENEFITS.—Subject to clause (i), the
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1 State shall determine the amount, dura-
2 tion, and scope with respect to services
3 provided as targeted health assistance
4 under a Medicaid Flexibility Program, in-
5 cluding with respect to services that are re-
6 quired to be provided to certain program
7 enrollees under subparagraph (A) except
8 as otherwise provided under such subpara-
9 graph.

10 "(iii) MENTAL HEALTH AND SUB-
11 STANCE USE DISORDER COVERAGE AND
12 PARITY.—The targeted health assistance
13 provided by a State to program enrollees
14 under a Medicaid Flexibility Program shall
15 include mental health services and sub-
16 stance use disorder services and the finan-
17 cial requirements and treatment limitations
18 applicable to such services under the pro-
19 gram shall comply with the requirements
20 of section 2726 of the Public Health Serv-
21 ice Act in the same manner as such re-
22 quirements apply to a group health plan.
23 "(iv) PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.—If the
24 targeted health assistance provided by a
25 State to program enrollees under a Med-
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1 icaid Flexibility Program includes assist-
2 ance for covered outpatient drugs, such
3 drugs shall be subject to a rebate agree-
4 ment that complies with the requirements
5 of section 1927, and any requirements ap-
6 plicable to medical assistance for covered
7 outpatient drugs under a State plan (in-
8 cluding the requirement that the State pro-
9 vide information to a manufacturer) shall
10 apply in the same manner to targeted
11 health assistance for covered outpatient
12 drugs under a Medicaid Flexibility Pro-
13 gram.

14 "(D) COST SHARING.—A State conducting
15 a Medicaid Flexibility Program may impose
16 premiums, deductibles, cost-sharing, or other
17 similar charges, except that the total annual ag-
18 gregate amount of all such charges imposed
19 with respect to all program enrollees in a family
20 shall not exceed 5 percent of the family's in-
21 come for the year involved.

22 "(5) ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM.—Each
23 State conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program
24 shall do the following:

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1 "(A) SINGLE AGENCY.—Designate a single
2 State agency responsible for administering the
3 program.

4 "(B) ENROLLMENT SIMPLIFICATION AND
5 COORDINATION WITH STATE HEALTH INSUR-
6 ANCE EXCHANGES.—Provide for simplified en-
7 rollment processes (such as online enrollment
8 and reenrollment and electronic verification)
9 and coordination with State health insurance
10 exchanges.

11 "(C) BENEFICIARY PROTECTIONS.—Estab-
12 lish a fair process (which the State shall de-
13 scribe in the application required under sub-
14 section (b)) for individuals to appeal adverse
15 eligibility determinations with respect to the
16 program.

17 "(6) APPLICATION OF REST OF TITLE XIX.—

18 "(A) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that a
19 provision of this section is inconsistent with an-
20 other provision of this title, the provision of this
21 section shall apply.

22 "(B) APPLICATION OF SECTION 1903A.—

23 With respect to a State that is conducting a
24 Medicaid Flexibility Program, section 1903A
25 shall be applied as if program enrollees were

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1 not 1903A enrollees for each program period
2 during which the State conducts the program.

3 "(C) WAIVERS AND STATE PLAN AMEND-
4 MENTS.—

5 "(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a
6 State conducting a Medicaid Flexibility
7 Program that has in effect a waiver or
8 State plan amendment, such waiver or
9 amendment shall not apply with respect to
10 the program, targeted health assistance

11 provided under the program, or program
12 enrollees.

13 "(ii) REPLICATION OF WAIVER OR
14 AMENDMENT.—In designing a Medicaid
15 Flexibility Program, a State may mirror
16 provisions of a waiver or State plan
17 amendment described in clause (i) in the
18 program to the extent that such provisions
19 are otherwise consistent with the require-
20 ments of this section.

21 "(iii) EFFECT OF TERMINATION.—In
22 the case of a State described in clause (i)
23 that terminates its program under sub-
24 section (d)(2)(B), any waiver or amend-
25 ment which was limited pursuant to sub-
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1 paragraph (A) shall cease to be so limited
2 effective with the effective date of such ter-
3 mination.

4 "(D) NONAPPLICATION OF PROVISIONS.—
5 With respect to the design and implementation
6 of Medicaid Flexibility Programs conducted
7 under this section, paragraphs (1), (10)(B),
8 (17), and (23) of section 1902(a), as well as
9 any other provision of this title (except for this
10 section and as otherwise provided by this sec-
11 tion) that the Secretary deems appropriate,
12 shall not apply.

13 "(e) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

14 "(1) MEDICAID FLEXIBILITY PROGRAM.—The
15 term 'Medicaid Flexibility Program' means a State
16 program for providing targeted health assistance to
17 program enrollees funded by a block grant under
18 this section.

19 "(2) PROGRAM ENROLLEE.—

20 "(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'program
21 enrollee' means, with respect to a State that is
22 conducting a Medicaid Flexibility Program, an
23 individual who is a 1903A enrollee (as defined
24 in section 1903A(e)(1)) who is in the 1903A
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1 enrollee category described in section
2 1903A(e)(2)(E).

3 "(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—For pur-
4 poses of section 1903A(e)(3), eligibility and en-
5 rollment of an individual under a Medicaid
6 Flexibility Program shall be deemed to be eligi-
7 bility and enrollment under a State plan (or

8 waiver of such plan) under this title.
9 "(3) PROGRAM PERIOD.—The term 'program
10 period' means, with respect to a State Medicaid
11 Flexibility Program, a period of 5 consecutive fiscal
12 years that begins with either—
13 "(A) the first fiscal year in which the State
14 conducts the program; or
15 "(B) the next fiscal year in which the
16 State conducts such a program that begins
17 after the end of a previous program period.
18 "(4) STATE.—The term 'State' means one of
19 the 50 States or the District of Columbia.
20 "(5) TARGETED HEALTH ASSISTANCE.—The
21 term 'targeted health assistance' means assistance
22 for health-care-related items and medical services for
23 program enrollees."

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1 SEC. 135. MEDICAID AND CHIP QUALITY PERFORMANCE
2 BONUS PAYMENTS.

3 Section 1903 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
4 1396b) is amended by adding at the end the following new
5 subsection:

6 "(aa) QUALITY PERFORMANCE BONUS PAYMENTS.—

7 "(1) INCREASED FEDERAL SHARE.—With re-
8 spect to each of fiscal years 2023 through 2026, in
9 the case of one of the 50 States or the District of
10 Columbia (each referred to in this subsection as a
11 'State') that—

12 "(A) equals or exceeds the qualifying
13 amount (as established by the Secretary) of
14 lower than expected aggregate medical assist-
15 ance expenditures (as defined in paragraph (4))
16 for that fiscal year; and

17 "(B) submits to the Secretary, in accord-
18 ance with such manner and format as specified
19 by the Secretary and for the performance pe-
20 riod (as defined by the Secretary) for such fis-
21 cal year—

22 "(i) information on the applicable
23 quality measures identified under para-
24 graph (3) with respect to each category of
25 Medicaid eligible individuals under the
26 State plan or a waiver of such plan; and

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1 "(ii) a plan for spending a portion of
2 additional funds resulting from application
3 of this subsection on quality improvement
4 within the State plan under this title or

5 under a waiver of such plan,
6 the Federal matching percentage otherwise ap-
7 plied under subsection (a)(7) for such fiscal
8 year shall be increased by such percentage (as
9 determined by the Secretary) so that the aggre-
10 gate amount of the resulting increase pursuant
11 to this subsection for the State and fiscal year
12 does not exceed the State allotment established
13 under paragraph (2) for the State and fiscal
14 year.

15 "(2) ALLOTMENT DETERMINATION.—The Sec-
16 retary shall establish a formula for computing State
17 allotments under this paragraph for each fiscal year
18 described in paragraph (1) such that—

19 "(A) such an allotment to a State is deter-
20 mined based on the performance, including im-
21 provement, of such State under this title and
22 title XXI with respect to the quality measures
23 submitted under paragraph (3) by such State
24 for the performance period (as defined by the
25 Secretary) for such fiscal year; and

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1 "(B) the total of the allotments under this
2 paragraph for all States for the period of the
3 fiscal years described in paragraph (1) is equal
4 to \$8,000,000,000.

5 "(3) QUALITY MEASURES REQUIRED FOR
6 BONUS PAYMENTS.—For purposes of this subsection,
7 the Secretary shall, pursuant to rulemaking and
8 after consultation with State agencies administering
9 State plans under this title, identify and publish
10 (and update as necessary) peer-reviewed quality
11 measures (which shall include health care and long-
12 term care outcome measures and may include the
13 quality measures that are overseen or developed by
14 the National Committee for Quality Assurance or
15 the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality or
16 that are identified under section 1139A or 1139B)
17 that are quantifiable, objective measures that take
18 into account the clinically appropriate measures of
19 quality for different types of patient populations re-
20 ceiving benefits or services under this title or title
21 XXI.

22 "(4) LOWER THAN EXPECTED AGGREGATE
23 MEDICAL ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES.—In this sub-
24 section, the term 'lower than expected aggregate

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1 medical assistance expenditures' means, with respect

2 to a State the amount (if any) by which—
3 "(A) the amount of the adjusted total med-
4 ical assistance expenditures for the State and
5 fiscal year determined in section 1903A(b)(1)
6 without regard to the 1903A enrollee category
7 described in section 1903A(e)(2)(E); is less
8 than

9 "(B) the amount of the target total med-
10 ical assistance expenditures for the State and
11 fiscal year determined in section 1903A(c) with-
12 out regard to the 1903A enrollee category de-
13 scribed in section 1903A(e)(2)(E)."

14 SEC. 136. GRANDFATHERING CERTAIN MEDICAID WAIVERS;
15 PRIORITIZATION OF HCBS WAIVERS.

16 (a) MANAGED CARE WAIVERS.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a State with
18 a grandfathered managed care waiver, the State
19 may, at its option through a State plan amendment,
20 continue to implement the managed care delivery
21 system that is the subject of such waiver in per-
22 petuity under the State plan under title XIX of the
23 Social Security Act (or a waiver of such plan) with-
24 out submitting an application to the Secretary for a
25 new waiver to implement such managed care delivery

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1 system, so long as the terms and conditions of the
2 waiver involved (other than such terms and condi-
3 tions that relate to budget neutrality as modified
4 pursuant to section 1903A(f)(1) of the Social Secu-
5 rity Act) are not modified.

6 (2) MODIFICATIONS.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—If a State with a
8 grandfathered managed care waiver seeks to
9 modify the terms or conditions of such a waiv-
10 er, the State shall submit to the Secretary an
11 application for approval of a new waiver under
12 such modified terms and conditions.

13 (B) APPROVAL OF MODIFICATION.—

14 (i) IN GENERAL.—An application de-
15 scribed in subparagraph (A) is deemed ap-
16 proved unless the Secretary, not later than
17 90 days after the date on which the appli-
18 cation is submitted, submits to the State—

19 (I) a denial; or

20 (II) a request for more informa-
21 tion regarding the application.

22 (ii) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—If

23 the Secretary requests additional informa-
24 tion, the Secretary has 30 days after a

25 State submission in response to the Sec-
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1 retary's request to deny the application or
2 request more information.

3 (3) GRANDFATHERED MANAGED CARE WAIVER

4 DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term "grand-
5 fathered managed care waiver" means the provisions
6 of a waiver or an experimental, pilot, or demonstra-
7 tion project that relate to the authority of a State
8 to implement a managed care delivery system under
9 the State plan under title XIX of such Act (or under
10 a waiver of such plan under section 1115 of such
11 Act) that—

12 (A) is approved by the Secretary of Health
13 and Human Services under section 1915(b),
14 1932, or 1115(a)(1) of the Social Security Act
15 (42 U.S.C. 1396n(b), 1396u-2, 1315(a)(1)) as
16 of January 1, 2017; and

17 (B) has been renewed by the Secretary not
18 less than 1 time.

19 (b) HCBS WAIVERS.—The Secretary of Health and
20 Human Services shall implement procedures encouraging
21 States to adopt or extend waivers related to the authority
22 of a State to make medical assistance available for home
23 and community-based services under the State plan under
24 title XIX of the Social Security Act if the State determines
25 that such waivers would improve patient access to services.

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1 SEC. 137. COORDINATION WITH STATES.

2 Title XIX of the Social Security Act is amended by
3 inserting after section 1904 (42 U.S.C. 1396d) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 "COORDINATION WITH STATES

6 "SEC. 1904A. No proposed rule (as defined in section
7 551(4) of title 5, United States Code) implementing or
8 interpreting any provision of this title shall be finalized
9 on or after January 1, 2018, unless the Secretary—

10 "(1) provides for a process under which the
11 Secretary or the Secretary's designee solicits advice
12 from each State's State agency responsible for ad-
13 ministering the State plan under this title (or a
14 waiver of such plan) and State Medicaid Director—

15 "(A) on a regular, ongoing basis on mat-
16 ters relating to the application of this title that
17 are likely to have a direct effect on the oper-
18 ation or financing of State plans under this title
19 (or waivers of such plans); and

20 "(B) prior to submission of any final pro-

21 posed rule, plan amendment, waiver request, or
22 proposal for a project that is likely to have a di-
23 rect effect on the operation or financing of
24 State plans under this title (or waivers of such
25 plans);

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1 "(2) accepts and considers written and oral
2 comments from a bipartisan, nonprofit, professional
3 organization that represents State Medicaid Direc-
4 tors, and from any State agency administering the
5 plan under this title, regarding such proposed rule;
6 and

7 "(3) incorporates in the preamble to the pro-
8 posed rule a summary of comments referred to in
9 paragraph (2) and the Secretary's response to such
10 comments."

11 SEC. 138. OPTIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN INPATIENT
12 PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES.

13 (a) STATE OPTION.—Section 1905 of the Social Se-
14 curity Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d) is amended—

15 (1) in subsection (a)—

16 (A) in paragraph (16)—

17 (i) by striking "and, (B)" and insert-
18 ing "(B)"; and

19 (ii) by inserting before the semicolon
20 at the end the following: ", and (C) subject
21 to subsection (h)(4), qualified inpatient
22 psychiatric hospital services (as defined in
23 subsection (h)(3)) for individuals who are
24 over 21 years of age and under 65 years
25 of age"; and

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1 (B) in the subdivision (B) that follows
2 paragraph (29), by inserting "(other than serv-
3 ices described in subparagraph (C) of para-
4 graph (16) for individuals described in such
5 subparagraph)" after "patient in an institution
6 for mental diseases"; and

7 (2) in subsection (h), by adding at the end the
8 following new paragraphs:

9 "(3) For purposes of subsection (a)(16)(C), the term
10 'qualified inpatient psychiatric hospital services' means,
11 with respect to individuals described in such subsection,
12 services described in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1)
13 that are not otherwise covered under subsection
14 (a)(16)(A) and are furnished—

15 "(A) in an institution (or distinct part thereof)
16 which is a psychiatric hospital (as defined in section

17 1861(f)); and
18 "(B) with respect to such an individual, for a
19 period not to exceed 30 consecutive days in any
20 month and not to exceed 90 days in any calendar
21 year.

22 "(4) As a condition for a State including qualified
23 inpatient psychiatric hospital services as medical assist-
24 ance under subsection (a)(16)(C), the State must (during
25 the period in which it furnishes medical assistance under
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1 this title for services and individuals described in such
2 subsection)—

3 "(A) maintain at least the number of licensed
4 beds at psychiatric hospitals owned, operated, or
5 contracted for by the State that were being main-
6 tained as of the date of the enactment of this para-
7 graph or, if higher, as of the date the State applies
8 to the Secretary to include medical assistance under
9 such subsection; and

10 "(B) maintain on an annual basis a level of
11 funding expended by the State (and political subdivi-
12 sions thereof) other than under this title from non-
13 Federal funds for inpatient services in an institution
14 described in paragraph (3)(A), and for active psy-
15 chiatric care and treatment provided on an out-
16 patient basis, that is not less than the level of such
17 funding for such services and care as of the date of
18 the enactment of this paragraph or, if higher, as of
19 the date the State applies to the Secretary to include
20 medical assistance under such subsection."

21 (b) SPECIAL MATCHING RATE.—Section 1905(b) of
22 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395d(b)) is amended
23 by adding at the end the following: "Notwithstanding the
24 previous provisions of this subsection, the Federal medical
25 assistance percentage shall be 50 percent with respect to
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1 medical assistance for services and individuals described
2 in subsection (a)(16)(C)."

3 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
4 this section shall apply to qualified inpatient psychiatric
5 hospital services furnished on or after October 1, 2018.
6 SEC. 139. SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH PLANS.

7 (a) TAX TREATMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH
8 PLANS.—For purposes of applying subchapter B of chap-
9 ter 100 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, title XXVII
10 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg et
11 seq.), and part 7 of title I of the Employee Retirement
12 Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1181 et seq.),

13 a small business health plan as defined in section 801(a)
14 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974
15 that is offered to employees shall be treated as a group
16 health plan, as defined in section 2791 of the Public
17 Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-91).

18 (b) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle B of title I of the Em-
19 ployee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29
20 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
21 the following new part:

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1 "PART 8—RULES GOVERNING SMALL BUSINESS
2 RISK SHARING POOLS

3 "SEC. 801. SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH PLANS.

4 "(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this part, the
5 term 'small business health plan' means a fully insured
6 group health plan, offered by a health insurance issuer in
7 the large group market, whose sponsor is described in sub-
8 section (b).

9 "(b) SPONSOR.—The sponsor of a group health plan
10 is described in this subsection if—

11 "(1) such sponsor is a qualified sponsor and re-
12 ceives certification by the Secretary;

13 "(2) is organized and maintained in good faith,
14 with a constitution and bylaws specifically stating its
15 purpose and providing for periodic meetings on at
16 least an annual basis;

17 "(3) is established as a permanent entity;

18 "(4) is established for a purpose other than
19 providing health benefits to its members, such as an
20 organization established as a bona fide trade asso-
21 ciation; and

22 "(5) does not condition membership on the
23 basis of a minimum group size.

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1 "SEC. 802. FILING FEE AND CERTIFICATION OF SMALL
2 BUSINESS HEALTH PLANS.

3 "(a) FILING FEE.—A small business health plan
4 shall pay to the Secretary at the time of filing an applica-
5 tion for certification under subsection (b) a filing fee in
6 the amount of \$5,000, which shall be available to the Sec-
7 retary for the sole purpose of administering the certifi-
8 cation procedures applicable with respect to small business
9 health plans.

10 "(b) CERTIFICATION.—

11 "(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months
12 after the date of enactment of this part, the Sec-
13 retary shall prescribe by interim final rule a proce-
14 dure under which the Secretary—

15 "(A) will certify a qualified sponsor of a
16 small business health plan, upon receipt of an
17 application that includes the information de-
18 scribed in paragraph (2);
19 "(B) may provide for continued certifi-
20 cation of small business health plans under this
21 part; and
22 "(C) shall provide for the revocation of a
23 certification if the applicable authority finds
24 that the small business health plan involved
25 fails to comply with the requirements of this
26 part.

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1 "(2) INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN APPLI-
2 CATION FOR CERTIFICATION.—An application for
3 certification under this part meets the requirements
4 of this section only if it includes, in a manner and
5 form which shall be prescribed by the applicable au-
6 thority by regulation, at least the following informa-
7 tion:

8 "(A) Identifying information.

9 "(B) States in which the plan intends to
10 do business.

11 "(C) Bonding requirements.

12 "(D) Plan documents.

13 "(E) Agreements with service providers.

14 "(c) FILING NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION WITH
15 STATES.—A certification granted under this part to a
16 small business health plan shall not be effective unless
17 written notice of such certification is filed with the appli-
18 cable State authority of each State in which the small
19 business health plans operate.

20 "(d) NOTICE OF MATERIAL CHANGES.—In the case
21 of any small business health plan certified under this part,
22 descriptions of material changes in any information which
23 was required to be submitted with the application for the
24 certification under this part shall be filed in such form
25 and manner as shall be prescribed by the applicable au-
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1 thority by regulation. The applicable authority may re-
2 quire by regulation prior notice of material changes with
3 respect to specified matters which might serve as the basis
4 for suspension or revocation of the certification.

5 "(e) NOTICE REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTARY TER-
6 MINATION.—A small business health plan which is or has
7 been certified under this part may terminate (upon or at
8 any time after cessation of accruals in benefit liabilities)
9 only if the board of trustees, not less than 60 days before

10 the proposed termination date—
11 "(1) provides to the participants and bene-
12 ficiaries a written notice of intent to terminate stat-
13 ing that such termination is intended and the pro-
14 posed termination date;

15 "(2) develops a plan for winding up the affairs
16 of the plan in connection with such termination in
17 a manner which will result in timely payment of all
18 benefits for which the plan is obligated; and
19 "(3) submits such plan in writing to the appli-
20 cable authority.

21 "(f) OVERSIGHT OF CERTIFIED PLAN SPONSORS.—

22 The Secretary has the discretion to determine whether any
23 person has violated or is about to violate any provision
24 of this part, and may conduct periodic review of certified
25 small business health plan sponsors, consistent with sec-
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tion 504, and apply the requirements of sections 518, 519,
2 and 520.

3 "(g) EXPEDITED AND DEEMED CERTIFICATION.—

4 "(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary fails to act
5 on a complete application for certification under this
6 section within 90 days of receipt of such complete
7 application, the applying small business health plan
8 sponsor shall be deemed certified until such time as
9 the Secretary may deny for cause the application for
10 certification.

11 "(2) PENALTY.—The Secretary may assess a
12 penalty against the board of trustees and plan spon-
13 sor (jointly and severally) of a small business health
14 plan sponsor that is deemed certified under para-
15 graph (1) of up to \$500,000 in the event the Sec-
16 retary determines that the application for certifi-
17 cation of such small business health plan sponsor
18 was willfully or with gross negligence incomplete or
19 inaccurate.

20 "(h) MODIFICATIONS.—The Secretary shall, through
21 promulgation and implementation of such regulations as
22 the Secretary may reasonably determine necessary or ap-
23 propriate, and in consultation with a balanced spectrum
24 of effected entities and persons, modify the implementa-
25 tion and application of this part to accommodate with min-
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imum disruption such changes to State or Federal law
2 provided in this part and the (and the amendments made
3 by such Act) or in regulations issued thereto.

4 "SEC. 803. REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO SPONSORS AND
5 BOARDS OF TRUSTEES.

6 "(a) BOARD OF TRUSTEES.—The Secretary shall en-
7 sure that Board of Trustees of a small business health
8 plan certified under this part complies with the require-
9 ments such Secretary sets forth with respect to fiscal con-
10 trol and rules of operation and financial controls.

11 "(b) TREATMENT OF FRANCHISES.—In the case of
12 a group health plan that is established and maintained
13 by a franchisor for a franchisor or for its franchisees—

14 "(1) the requirements of subsection (a) and sec-
15 tion 801(a) shall be deemed met if such require-
16 ments would otherwise be met if the franchisor were
17 deemed to be the sponsor referred to in section
18 801(b) and each franchisee were deemed to be a
19 member (of the sponsor) referred to in section
20 801(b); and

21 "(2) the requirements of section 804(a)(1) shall
22 be deemed met.

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1 "SEC. 804. PARTICIPATION AND COVERAGE REQUIRE-
2 MENTS.

3 "(a) COVERED EMPLOYERS AND INDIVIDUALS.—The
4 requirements of this subsection are met with respect to
5 a small business health plan if, under the terms of the
6 plan—

7 "(1) each participating employer must be—

8 "(A) a member of the sponsor;

9 "(B) the sponsor; or

10 "(C) an affiliated member of the sponsor,
11 except that, in the case of a sponsor which is
12 a professional association or other individual-
13 based association, if at least one of the officers,
14 directors, or employees of an employer, or at
15 least one of the individuals who are partners in
16 an employer and who actively participates in
17 the business, is a member or such an affiliated
18 member of the sponsor, participating employers
19 may also include such employer; and

20 "(2) all individuals commencing coverage under
21 the plan after certification under this part must
22 be—

23 "(A) active or retired owners (including
24 self-employed individuals), officers, directors, or
25 employees of, or partners in, participating em-
26 ployers; or

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1 "(B) the dependents of individuals de-
2 scribed in subparagraph (A).

3 "(b) INDIVIDUAL MARKET UNAFFECTED.—The re-

4 quirements of this subsection are met with respect to a
5 small business health plan if, under the terms of the plan,
6 no participating employer may provide health insurance
7 coverage in the individual market for any employee not
8 covered under the plan, if such exclusion of the employee
9 from coverage under the plan is based on a health status-
10 related factor with respect to the employee and such em-
11 ployee would, but for such exclusion on such basis, be eligi-
12 ble for coverage under the plan.

13 "(c) PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST EM-
14 PLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.—

15 The requirements of this subsection are met with respect
16 to a small business health plan if information regarding
17 all coverage options available under the plan is made read-
18 ily available to any employer eligible to participate.

19 "SEC. 805. DEFINITIONS; RENEWAL.

20 "(a) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this part:

21 "(1) AFFILIATED MEMBER.—The term 'affili-
22 ated member' means, in connection with a sponsor—
23 "(A) a person who is otherwise eligible to
24 be a member of the sponsor but who elects an
25 affiliated status with the sponsor, or

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1 "(B) in the case of a sponsor with mem-
2 bers which consist of associations, a person who
3 is a member or employee of any such associa-
4 tion and elects an affiliated status with the
5 sponsor.

6 "(2) APPLICABLE STATE AUTHORITY.—The
7 term 'applicable State authority' means, with respect
8 to a health insurance issuer in a State, the State in-
9 surance commissioner or official or officials des-
10 igned by the State to enforce the requirements of
11 title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act for the
12 State involved with respect to such issuer.

13 "(3) FRANCHISOR; FRANCHISEE.—The terms
14 'franchisor' and 'franchisee' have the meanings given
15 such terms for purposes of sections 436.2(a)
16 through 436.2(c) of title 16, Code of Federal Regu-
17 lations (including any such amendments to such regu-
18 lation after the date of enactment of this part).

19 "(4) HEALTH PLAN TERMS.—The terms 'group
20 health plan', 'health insurance coverage', and 'health
21 insurance issuer' have the meanings provided in sec-
22 tion 733.

23 "(5) INDIVIDUAL MARKET.—

24 "(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'individual
25 market' means the market for health insurance

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1 coverage offered to individuals other than in
2 connection with a group health plan.

3 "(B) TREATMENT OF VERY SMALL
4 GROUPS.—

5 "(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause
6 (ii), such term includes coverage offered in
7 connection with a group health plan that
8 has fewer than 2 participants as current
9 employees or participants described in sec-
10 tion 732(d)(3) on the first day of the plan
11 year.

12 "(ii) STATE EXCEPTION.—Clause (i)
13 shall not apply in the case of health insur-
14 ance coverage offered in a State if such
15 State regulates the coverage described in
16 such clause in the same manner and to the
17 same extent as coverage in the small group
18 market (as defined in section 2791(e)(5) of
19 the Public Health Service Act) is regulated
20 by such State.

21 "(6) PARTICIPATING EMPLOYER.—The term
22 'participating employer' means, in connection with a
23 small business health plan, any employer, if any in-
24 dividual who is an employee of such employer, a
25 partner in such employer, or a self-employed indi-
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1 vidual who is such employer (or any dependent, as
2 defined under the terms of the plan, of such indi-
3 vidual) is or was covered under such plan in connec-
4 tion with the status of such individual as such an
5 employee, partner, or self-employed individual in re-
6 lation to the plan.

7 "(b) RENEWAL.—A participating employer in a small
8 business health plan shall not be deemed to be a plan
9 sponsor in applying requirements relating to coverage re-
10 newal."

11 (c) PREEMPTION RULES.—Section 514 of the Em-
12 ployee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29
13 U.S.C. 1144) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
14 lowing:

15 "(e) Except as provided in subsection (b)(4), the pro-
16 visions of this title shall supersede any and all State laws
17 insofar as they may now or hereafter preclude a health
18 insurance issuer from offering health insurance coverage
19 in connection with a small business health plan which is
20 certified under part 8."

21 (d) PLAN SPONSOR.—Section 3(16)(B) of such Act
22 (29 U.S.C. 102(16)(B)) is amended by adding at the end

23 the following new sentence: "Such term also includes a
24 person serving as the sponsor of a small business health
25 plan under part 8."

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1 (e) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Section 731(c) of such Act is
2 amended by inserting "or part 8" after "this part".

3 (f) COOPERATION BETWEEN FEDERAL AND STATE
4 AUTHORITIES.—Section 506 of the Employee Retirement
5 Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1136) is amended
6 by adding at the end the following new subsection:

7 "(d) CONSULTATION WITH STATES WITH RESPECT
8 TO SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH PLANS.—

9 "(1) AGREEMENTS WITH STATES.—The Sec-
10 retary shall consult with the State recognized under
11 paragraph (2) with respect to a small business
12 health plan regarding the exercise of—

13 "(A) the Secretary's authority under sec-
14 tions 502 and 504 to enforce the requirements
15 for certification under part 8; and

16 "(B) the Secretary's authority to certify
17 small business health plans under part 8 in ac-
18 cordance with regulations of the Secretary ap-
19 plicable to certification under part 8.

20 "(2) RECOGNITION OF DOMICILE STATE.—In
21 carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall en-
22 sure that only one State will be recognized, with re-
23 spect to any particular small business health plan,
24 as the State with which consultation is required."

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1 (g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
2 this section shall take effect 1 year after the date of the
3 enactment of this Act. The Secretary of Labor shall first
4 issue all regulations necessary to carry out the amend-
5 ments made by this section within 6 months after the date
6 of the enactment of this Act.

7 TITLE II

8 SEC. 201. THE PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH FUND.

9 Subsection (b) of section 4002 of the Patient Protec-
10 tion and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 300u-11) is
11 amended by striking paragraphs (3) through (8).

12 SEC. 202. SUPPORT FOR STATE RESPONSE TO OPIOID CRI-
13 SIS.

14 There is authorized to be appropriated, and is appro-
15 priated, out of monies in the Treasury not otherwise obli-
16 gated, \$2,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2018, to the Sec-
17 retary of Health and Human Services to provide grants
18 to States to support substance use disorder treatment and
19 recovery support services for individuals with mental or

20 substance use disorders. Funds appropriated under this
21 section shall remain available until expended.
22 SEC. 203. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER PROGRAM.
23 Effective as if included in the enactment of the Medi-
24 care Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (Pub-
25 lic Law 114-10, 129 Stat. 87), paragraph (1) of section
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1 221(a) of such Act is amended by inserting ", and an ad-
2 ditional \$422,000,000 for fiscal year 2017" after "2017".
3 SEC. 204. CHANGE IN PERMISSIBLE AGE VARIATION IN
4 HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM RATES.

5 Section 2701(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Public Health Serv-
6 ice Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg(a)(1)(A)(iii)) is amended by in-
7 serting after "(consistent with section 2707(c))" the fol-
8 lowing: "or, for plan years beginning on or after January
9 1, 2019, 5 to 1 for adults (consistent with section 2707(c))
10 or such other ratio for adults (consistent with section
11 2707(c)) as the State may determine".

12 SEC. 205. MEDICAL LOSS RATIO DETERMINED BY THE
13 STATE.

14 Section 2718(b) of the Public Health Service Act (42
15 U.S.C. 300gg-18(b)) is amended by adding at the end the
16 following:

17 "(4) SUNSET.—Paragraphs (1) through (3)
18 shall not apply for plan years beginning on or after
19 January 1, 2019, and after such date any reference
20 in law to such paragraphs shall have no force or ef-
21 fect.

22 "(5) MEDICAL LOSS RATIO DETERMINED BY
23 THE STATE.—For plan years beginning on or after
24 January 1, 2019, each State shall—

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1 "(A) set the ratio of the amount of pre-
2 mium revenue a health insurance issuer offering
3 group or individual health insurance coverage
4 may expend on non-claims costs to the total
5 amount of premium revenue; and

6 "(B) determine the amount of any annual
7 rebate required to be paid to enrollees under
8 such coverage if the ratio of the amount of pre-
9 mium revenue expended by the issuer on non-
10 claims costs to the total amount of premium
11 revenue exceeds the ratio set by the State under
12 subparagraph (A)."

13 SEC. 206. WAIVERS FOR STATE INNOVATION.

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1332 of the Patient Pro-
15 tection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052) is
16 amended—

17 (1) in subsection (a)—
18 (A) in paragraph (1)—
19 (i) in subparagraph (B)—
20 (I) by amending clause (i) to
21 read as follows:
22 "(i) a description of how the State
23 plan meeting the requirements of a waiver
24 under this section would, with respect to
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1 health insurance coverage within the
2 State—

3 "(I) take the place of the require-
4 ments described in paragraph (2) that
5 are waived; and

6 "(II) provide for alternative
7 means of, and requirements for, in-
8 creasing access to comprehensive cov-
9 erage, reducing average premiums,
10 and increasing enrollment; and"; and

11 (II) in clause (ii), by striking
12 "that is budget neutral for the Fed-
13 eral Government" and inserting "
14 demonstrating that the State plan
15 does not increase the Federal deficit";
16 and

17 (ii) in subparagraph (C), by striking
18 "the law" and inserting "a law or has in
19 effect a certification";

20 (B) in paragraph (3)—
21 (i) by adding after the second sen-
22 tence the following: "A State may request
23 that all of, or any portion of, such aggre-
24 gate amount of such credits or reductions
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1 be paid to the State as described in the
2 first sentence.";

3 (ii) in the paragraph heading, by
4 striking "PASS THROUGH OF FUNDING"
5 and inserting "FUNDING";

6 (iii) by striking "With respect" and
7 inserting the following:

8 "(A) PASS THROUGH OF FUNDING.—With
9 respect"; and

10 (iv) by adding at the end the fol-
11 lowing:

12 "(B) ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—There is au-
13 thorized to be appropriated, and is appro-
14 priated, to the Secretary of Health and Human

15 Services, out of monies in the Treasury not oth-
16 erwise obligated, \$2,000,000,000 for fiscal year
17 2017, to remain available until the end of fiscal
18 year 2019, to provide grants to States for pur-
19 poses of submitting an application for a waiver
20 granted under this section and implementing
21 the State plan under such waiver.

22 "(C) AUTHORITY TO USE LONG-TERM
23 STATE INNOVATION AND STABILITY ALLOT-
24 MENT.—If the State has an application for an
25 allotment under section 2105(i) of the Social
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1 Security Act for the plan year, the State may
2 use the funds available under the State's allot-
3 ment for the plan year to carry out the State
4 plan under this section, so long as such use is
5 consistent with the requirements of paragraphs
6 (1) and (7) of section 2105(i) of such Act
7 (other than paragraph (1)(B) of such section).
8 Any funds used to carry out a State plan under
9 this subparagraph shall not be considered in de-
10 termining whether the State plan increases the
11 Federal deficit."; and

12 (C) in paragraph (4), by adding at the end
13 the following:

14 "(D) EXPEDITED PROCESS.—The Sec-
15 retary shall establish an expedited application
16 and approval process that may be used if the
17 Secretary determines that such expedited proc-
18 ess is necessary to respond to an urgent or
19 emergency situation with respect to health in-
20 surance coverage within a State.";

21 (2) in subsection (b)—

22 (A) in paragraph (1)—

23 (i) in the matter preceding subpara-
24 graph (A)—

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1 (I) by striking "may" and insert-
2 ing "shall"; and

3 (II) by striking "only if" and in-
4 serting "unless"; and

5 (ii) by striking "plan—" and all that
6 follows through the period at the end of
7 subparagraph (D) and inserting "plan will
8 increase the Federal deficit, not taking
9 into account any amounts received through
10 a grant under subsection (a)(3)(B).";

11 (B) in paragraph (2)—

12 (i) in the paragraph heading, by in-
13 serting "OR CERTIFY" after "LAW";
14 (ii) in subparagraph (A), by inserting
15 before the period ", and a certification de-
16 scribed in this paragraph is a document,
17 signed by the Governor, and the State in-
18 surance commissioner, of the State, that
19 provides authority for State actions under
20 a waiver under this section, including the
21 implementation of the State plan under
22 subsection (a)(1)(B)"; and
23 (iii) in subparagraph (B)—
24 (I) in the subparagraph heading,
25 by striking "OF OPT OUT"; and
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1 (II) by striking " may repeal a
2 law" and all that follows through the
3 period at the end and inserting the
4 following: "may terminate the author-
5 ity provided under the waiver with re-
6 spect to the State by—
7 "(i) repealing a law described in sub-
8 paragraph (A); or
9 "(ii) terminating a certification de-
10 scribed in subparagraph (A), through a
11 certification for such termination signed by
12 the Governor, and the State insurance
13 commissioner, of the State.";
14 (3) in subsection (d)(2)(B), by striking "and
15 the reasons therefore" and inserting "and the rea-
16 sons therefore, and provide the data on which such
17 determination was made"; and
18 (4) in subsection (e), by striking "No waiver"
19 and all that follows through the period at the end
20 and inserting the following: "A waiver under this
21 section—
22 "(1) shall be in effect for a period of 8 years
23 unless the State requests a shorter duration;
24 "(2) may be renewed for unlimited additional 8-
25 year periods upon application by the State; and
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1 "(3) may not be cancelled by the Secretary be-
2 fore the expiration of the 8-year period (including
3 any renewal period under paragraph (2)).".
4 (b) APPLICABILITY.—Section 1332 of the Patient
5 Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052)
6 shall apply as follows:
7 (1) In the case of a State for which a waiver

8 under such section was granted prior to the date of
9 enactment of this Act, such section 1332, as in ef-
10 fect on the day before the date of enactment of this
11 Act shall apply to the waiver and State plan.

12 (2) In the case of a State that submitted an ap-
13 plication for a waiver under such section prior to the
14 date of enactment of this Act, and which application
15 the Secretary of Health and Human Services has
16 not approved prior to such date, the State may elect
17 to have such section 1332, as in effect on the day
18 before the date of enactment of this Act, or such
19 section 1332, as amended by subsection (a), apply to
20 such application and State plan.

21 (3) In the case of a State that submits an ap-
22 plication for a waiver under such section on or after
23 the date of enactment of this Act, such section 1332,
24 as amended by subsection (a), shall apply to such
25 application and State plan.

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1 SEC. 207. FUNDING FOR COST-SHARING PAYMENTS.

2 There is appropriated to the Secretary of Health and
3 Human Services, out of any money in the Treasury not
4 otherwise appropriated, such sums as may be necessary
5 for payments for cost-sharing reductions authorized by the
6 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (including ad-
7 justments to any prior obligations for such payments) for
8 the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act
9 and ending on December 31, 2019. Notwithstanding any
10 other provision of this Act, payments and other actions
11 for adjustments to any obligations incurred for plan years
12 2018 and 2019 may be made through December 31, 2020.

13 SEC. 208. REPEAL OF COST-SHARING SUBSIDY PROGRAM.

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1402 of the Patient Pro-
15 tection and Affordable Care Act is repealed.

16 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The repeal made by sub-
17 section (a) shall apply to cost-sharing reductions (and pay-
18 ments to issuers for such reductions) for plan years begin-
19 ning after December 31, 2019.

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Taxes on high incomes preserved as part of latest ACA replacement, as expected [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 07/13/2017 12:57 PM EDT

Taxes on top earners' investment income would remain under a new Affordable Care Act

replacement [bill](#) released today by Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.).

The draft legislation would also preserve a Medicare payroll tax on high-income taxpayers.

Keeping both taxes in place would provide revenue to offset costs associated with maintaining some health insurance coverage through the legislation; congressional scorekeepers have estimated repealing the two taxes would cost nearly \$231 billion over a decade.

The 3.8 percent net investment income tax and 0.9 percent Medicare tax, adopted as part of the ACA, hit individual taxpayers whose annual income exceeds \$200,000 and joint filers who earn more than \$250,000 per year.

McConnell's latest bill would also keep a tax on some health insurance executives.

Other revenue-related provisions in the legislation include letting taxpayers use pre-income tax money in their health savings accounts to pay for insurance premiums. That would increase coverage, according to the same scorekeepers at the CBO and Joint Committee on Taxation who made the revenue forecasts on the investment and payroll taxes.

It would also let those who sign up for catastrophic insurance use tax credits to help pay their premiums.

The bill would repeal several taxes put in place under the ACA, including ones on prescription drugs, medical devices and tanning salons. It would also repeal limits on flexible spending account contributions.

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Revised Senate repeal bill keeps Obamacare taxes, adds funding for poor and opioid epidemic [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 07/13/2017 12:09 PM EDT

Senate Republicans' latest health bill keeps some Obamacare taxes on the wealthy and directs more than \$100 billion in new spending to help low-income Americans buy coverage and combat the opioid epidemic.

A revised Obamacare repeal plan also includes a proposal, designed to mollify conservatives, that would allow insurers that sell plans meeting Obamacare's coverage requirements to also sell skimpier, less expensive plans that don't comply with the law.

The new proposal seeks to thread the needle between conservatives and moderates after the Senate's original repeal package sparked opposition from all corners of the GOP caucus. Republicans hope to vote on the new bill next week.

It would keep Obamacare's net investment income tax and an additional Medicare Health Insurance Tax, and it would no longer scrap a tax break for high-earning health insurance executives.

The latest draft, however, doesn't make any significant changes to the Medicaid overhaul proposed in the original plan, which would cut nearly \$800 billion from the entitlement by rolling back Obamacare's expansion of the program and capping payments for each enrollee.

The latest plan does make some minor changes to the Medicaid program that could address the concerns of some senators. For example, it would allow the cap on Medicaid payments to be lifted in the event of a medical emergency, a provision sought by Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) of Florida, which has been battling the Zika outbreak.

The Senate would direct an additional \$70 billion to help states lower costs for low-income insurance customers. That's in addition to \$112 billion that was in the original bill.

It also adds \$45 billion to address the opioid crisis, which could help win over moderates like Sen. [Rob Portman](#) of Ohio and [Shelley Moore Capito](#) of West Virginia.

Conservative advocacy groups at first reacted cautiously to the new plan.

"Over the past two weeks, conservatives have rightly fought to interject additional consumer choice and competition into an otherwise deteriorating market," Heritage Action CEO Michael Needham said in a statement. "It is encouraging to see some of those concepts being considered by the Senate Republican Conference."

The legislation is slated to receive a CBO score on Monday. But the analysis is not expected to cover the amendment being pushed by Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) that would allow insurers to sell plans that don't meet Obamacare's coverage requirements.

That provision could still be removed or changed before the legislation comes up for a vote. Insurers have warned that it would be unworkable because sicker, more expensive customers would be segregated in one risk pool and premiums would skyrocket.

"I think they're trying to find a way to make his approach workable in the context of the other, broader insurance marketplace," said Sen. [John Thune](#) of South Dakota, a member of the GOP leadership team, before entering a meeting to discuss the new draft.

Many prominent provisions in the original plan were retained. They include making tax credits available to Americans earning up to 350 percent of the federal poverty level, as opposed to 400 percent under Obamacare. The plan would also allow insurers to charge older enrollees up to five times as much as their younger customers — compared to a 3-to-1 ratio permissible under current law. Those marketplaces changes would be implemented beginning in 2019.

The Senate bill would still appropriate funding for Obamacare's cost-sharing subsidies for 2018 and 2019, which insurers have said are crucial for stabilizing the individual market in the near term.

The revised legislation would continue to defund Planned Parenthood for one year — a position that will antagonize moderates such as Sens. [Susan Collins](#) of Maine and [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska.

The Senate bill would also do away with Obamacare's unpopular individual mandate. Instead it would try to incentivize individuals to maintain continuous coverage by allowing insurers to freeze out an individual for six months if they don't.

In addition, most of Obamacare's taxes, including those that target health insurers and medical device manufacturers, would be repealed. Implementation of the current law's "Cadillac tax" on expensive plans would be delayed until 2026.

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Trump: I'll be 'very angry' if the GOP health care bill fails [Back](#)

By Negassi Tesfamichael | 07/12/2017 03:45 PM EDT

President Donald Trump lamented that he'll be "very angry" if the Republican effort to repeal ObamaCare collapses.

"I will be very angry about it and a lot of people will be very upset," Trump said on the possibility of the bill to repeal ObamaCare failing, adding, "but I'm sitting waiting for that bill to come to my desk. I hope they do it."

Trump's comments were [excepts](#) from an interview with televangelist Pat Robertson of CBN News out Wednesday. The full interview is set to air on the 700 Club Thursday.

His comments to Robertson stand in contrast to his earlier statement in late June on the GOP's bill, when [he noted](#) that "if we don't get it done, it's just going to be something that we're not going to like, and that's okay."

Trump noted how often Republicans have touted repealing the landmark 2010 health care bill.

"They've been promising it for years. They've been promising it ever since ObamaCare which is failed," Trump said. "It's a failed experiment. It is totally gone. It's out of business and we have to get this done."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is trying to win support from several moderate Republicans and key conservatives in the coming days. He announced Tuesday that the Senate would stay in session through the first two weeks of August, shortening the summer recess considerably.

"He's got to pull it off. Mitch has to pull it off," Trump said of the Kentucky Republican. "He's working very hard. He's got to pull it off."

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Conservative groups endorse Cruz-Lee plan [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 07/12/2017 04:10 PM EDT

Conservative groups are backing Sen. [Ted Cruz](#)'s bid to let insurers sidestep Obamacare's regulations, warning that its inclusion in the Senate GOP repeal bill is necessary to win their support for the measure.

The organizations this afternoon called the proposal the only path to rolling back Obamacare short of full repeal and slammed moderate Senate Republicans for wavering on their pledge to dismantle the 2010 health law.

"I've heard from hundreds of people around the country who are wondering, what's wrong with Republicans?" Tea Party Patriots President Jenny Beth Martin said on a call with reporters. "We delivered. And they are not."

The endorsement of the proposal, which Cruz developed with Sen. [Mike Lee](#), comes after multiple insurance [groups](#) and even some Senate Republicans panned the idea. The plan would effectively set up a two-tiered market, allowing insurers to sell some plans that don't meet Obamacare's coverage requirements. That's prompted concerns that it would undermine protections for people with pre-existing conditions and potentially destabilize the broader insurance market.

But conservatives on the call — which also included FreedomWorks and Club for Growth — called the proposal the only element of the GOP's health care bill that approaches true repeal. They've also launched a [website](#) backing the Cruz-Lee plan.

"The last eight years, the whole movement has focused on the repeal of Obamacare," said former Sen. Jim DeMint, who was recently ousted as president of The Heritage Foundation. "Not fulfilling this promise is a huge issue for conservatives, for Republicans and for the country itself."

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Bipartisan fixes won't come easily if GOP's repeal effort collapses [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and Adam Cancryn | 07/12/2017 07:59 PM EDT

Pivoting to a bipartisan fix of Obamacare won't be quick or easy if Senate Republicans' repeal efforts fail.

A handful of Republicans are preparing potential repairs to the existing health care system as a fallback option, talking up the prospect of a compromise that could win some Democratic support to fix Obamacare and stabilize the market.

But many in the GOP privately say they might need a break between seven years of repeal attempts and a sudden repair effort. And some Democrats are already calling for single-payer health care — an automatic non-starter for Republicans. The sharp political divide underscores just how hard it would be for the parties to come together amid the ashes of a failed repeal.

"I don't think Republicans can do that," Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said of giving up repeal. "I think we have to live up to our intention that we're going to change it."

Republican leaders, who fanned fears that the health system will collapse under Obamacare, are still scrambling to get the 50 votes needed to pass a repeal bill as planned next week. But some lawmakers are working on Plan B. The goal would be to shore up insurance markets, which are struggling in some parts of the country under sky-high premiums or a lack of insurers willing to offer coverage. But the parties disagree about how to do so: Democrats would want to add funding, and Republicans would want to change or repeal pieces of Obamacare.

The most prominent challenge is cost-sharing reduction subsidies, an \$8 billion piece of the health care law that President Donald Trump could stop at a moment's notice. Insurance companies say that uncertainty has caused them to increase premiums.

Even Republicans say finding a solution won't be easy.

"It would have to be more than just bailing out insurance companies," said Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas).

The prospect of a failed repeal vote heading into the August recess threatens to further fragment Senate Republicans already at odds over how to tackle health care. The conference would have to decide whether to keep the repeal movement alive or admit defeat, a difficult prospect given their seven-year-long campaign pledge and Trump's frequent calls for repeal.

Conservative Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) wants a renewed push for repealing Obamacare outright — despite the fact that Senate Republicans as a group have already rejected that strategy.

"The president has indicated he's open to a clean repeal. So has the vice president," Paul said.

On the other end of the spectrum, Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.) are holding up their own plan — which would let states keep Obamacare if they want — as a fresh bipartisan rallying point. But even their most likely Democratic collaborators have balked at core parts of the proposal.

Some Republicans say the bill currently on the Senate floor is evidence the GOP has backed off its full repeal effort — proof, they say, that they're already working on repairing the health care law.

"That's what we've just been discussing for the last several weeks," said Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.). The current Senate draft — "it's repair."

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) charitably likened a bipartisan bill being written by his friend Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to a "noose around my neck," hinting at fatigue over another round of Obamacare talks.

The failure of a repeal bill would put Democrats at a philosophical crossroads, too. They could craft a compromise that appeals to moderates, or rally the base with an all-out push for a public option or single-payer system.

High-profile senators like Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) have made single-payer a key plank of their political platforms, energizing liberal groups intent on pushing the party further to the left. And if the GOP's repeal bid fails, it'll only intensify the outside pressure on Democrats to seize the momentum and demand that any reforms include a

public option at the very least.

That's not a battle that Democrats have either the votes or the political will to fight at this point — there's still considerable skepticism even within the party about single-payer, and Republicans are sure to refuse any attempt to give the government more control over health care.

"In this environment, that's all it'll be," said Montana Sen. Jon Tester, a moderate Democrat, of liberals' hopes for single-payer. "It's just talk."

"It's totally unrealistic to think, I think, that in a Republican administration with a Republican House and Republican Senate, that this is the moment in time that single-payer would be viable," said Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), another moderate. "It doesn't make much sense to me."

But there's just as much concern about disillusioning voters by appearing soft on health care and overly willing to compromise, especially if Republicans are emerging from a spectacular legislative meltdown. Democrats in recent days have tried to find a middle ground, proposing a series of small Obamacare fixes and emphasizing the need to shore up the markets ahead of any broader health care overhaul.

"The Affordable Care Act's made a lot of progress. Now is the time to fix it," said Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.), one of 10 House Democrats pushing a five-point plan to stabilize Obamacare.

And in the Senate, several lawmakers have met with moderate Republicans in a bid to find common ground. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) this week introduced a bill to provide more subsidies to middle-income people to help them buy health insurance.

But even those overtures come with the requirement that any bipartisan package needs to improve Obamacare by pouring significantly more money into the system.

"We need to make sure that these subsidies that are currently funded by the federal government in the exchanges, that reduce co-pays, reduce deductibles for poor people — make sure that that funding continues," said Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), referring to the cost-sharing program.

He added that any big health care bill also needs to maintain or strengthen Obamacare's individual mandate, an already unpopular provision that would likely be a non-starter for many Republicans.

A repair bill would mark the first major changes to Obamacare since it was approved in 2010.

Most major legislation is followed up by fixes. But there have been very few changes to the Affordable Care Act — and those that have been enacted were very narrow.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) said the difference now is that the repeal effort has driven tremendous public attention to health care.

"This repeal bill was supposed to sweep through the House and Senate in January, and it's mid-July now," she said. "I don't think the American public is going to fall asleep after this."

If the GOP bill fails next week, Republicans would have three weeks of August to go home,

regroup and potentially tone down the partisan rhetoric — something that normally doesn't happen during recess.

Heated rhetoric, said Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), "doesn't cool during the month of August. It gets hotter."

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Senate moderates sidelined in new Obamacare repeal bill [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Rachana Pradhan | 07/12/2017 06:52 PM EDT

In a closed-door meeting of Senate Republican chairmen Wednesday, Lisa Murkowski ripped GOP leaders' attempt to scale back Medicaid spending in their Obamacare repeal bill.

The two matters were unrelated, she argued, because the Affordable Care Act did not change Medicaid spending levels across the entire program. The independent-minded Alaska senator was backed up by Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota, a Republican generally aligned with leadership, according to senators and people familiar with the conversations.

"The ACA allowed for Medicaid expansion. The ACA didn't address traditional Medicaid. ... Why do we not focus on the urgency of the concerns with the ACA?" she said in an interview afterward. "Let's deal with the urgency of the issue. Let's set Medicaid off to the side."

GOP leaders are set to unveil a new version of their health bill Thursday, but no major changes have been made to satisfy senators concerned about winding down Obamacare's Medicaid expansion and aggressive Medicaid cuts over the next decade. So even as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell struggles to keep restive conservatives like Ted Cruz and Mike Lee on board, lingering concerns from moderates like Murkowski could signal the bill's demise.

McConnell needs 50 votes simply to open debate on the bill next week, and he is well short of that number, GOP senators said.

"Not right now. But we don't need them right now," said Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), the party's chief vote counter. "We're going to need them next week."

Republicans are planning to pump billions more into the health care system to reduce premiums for low-income people, fight opioid addiction and give states money to make health care innovations. But Cornyn said Medicaid is still "one of the biggest challenges" leaders face.

About a dozen Republican senators have been meeting regularly to air their concerns about changes to the Medicaid program. And since Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) is almost certainly a "no" vote, just two of them could stop the whole measure in its tracks next week on a key procedural vote to take up the bill.

"No breakthroughs. There's been a lot of discussions. ... We remain in the same camp," said

Sen. Dean Heller, one of the stiffest GOP opponents, who is up for reelection in increasingly blue Nevada. "Fundamentally, they haven't changed the bill."

McConnell has told senators they will have a chance to amend the bill on the floor and test the popularity of their push to make Medicaid benefits more generous. But Republicans, both conservative and moderate, have instead pressed for all their preferences to be included in the GOP's base bill, which many suspect will be introduced at the end of the amendment process and overwrite all the changes to the bill.

And a number of Republicans simply don't believe the Obamacare repeal effort should include major entitlement reform on a partisan basis, which could lead to Republican political ownership of curtailed benefits in the coming years and potentially sweeping electoral losses.

The Senate bill seeks to trim federal Medicaid spending by \$772 billion over 10 years, and the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates it would result in 15 million fewer people being enrolled in Medicaid in a decade.

"Why not take out the issue of the [Medicaid spending] inflation rate and have a series of amendments? ... Just don't deal with it in the base bill," said Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine). "A number of us are making the point — I'm not the only one — that Obamacare, except for the expansion, did not change base Medicaid."

Murkowski said she has made a similar point directly to President Donald Trump, who ran promising to protect Medicaid and trumpeted his stance as being different from those of other Republican presidential candidates.

McConnell has also previously argued that in a divided government, bipartisan work is the best way to tackle entitlement reform. Some senators privately say they are uncomfortable changing Medicaid spending without any buy-in from Democrats, who have attacked the GOP relentlessly for writing a bill that would cut taxes for the wealthy and benefits for the poor.

The Senate bill would end Medicaid as an open-ended entitlement in 2020 by capping how much federal funding government gives to states, and unwinds Obamacare's Medicaid expansion funding starting in 2021. One of the biggest sticking points is the decision to allow federal Medicaid payments to only grow in line with inflation starting in 2025, a proposal insisted upon by Senate conservatives to rein in spending.

To some extent, the Senate bill is even more conservative than the House's bill when it comes to Medicaid, because the House plan calls for Medicaid growth that at least matches medical inflation, which rises faster.

But removing the overhaul of Medicaid or letting federal payments grow at a more generous rate may not solve the GOP's math problem. Fiscal conservatives have bought into the bill as an opportunity to restructure Medicaid, and yanking those provisions could cost considerable support on the right. Republicans expect that the conservative-tilting Medicaid language has not changed during the flurry of rewrites over the past two weeks.

"I don't know that we'll see any changes in this particular proposal," Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota said Wednesday. "I do think that that's an item which is still a negotiable item in the future. There are some states out there that get impacted differently than others. And so when we look at it, you want to be fair."

Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, has clashed repeatedly with advocates of more generous Medicaid spending, such as Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio. Toomey said people who disagree with him on which inflation rate to use are "just waiting for the crisis to occur" in the government's finances.

"If we're not willing to slightly slow down the rate of growth at a distant point in the future of the program that is actually driving this deficit the most, if we're not willing to do even that you just need to admit you want to have the crisis," Toomey said Wednesday.

Asked Wednesday whether his opposition to the bill over Medicaid cuts has changed, Portman bluntly answered: "No."

Jennifer Haberkorn contributed to this report.

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Graham introduces repeal back-up plan [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett | 07/13/2017 11:20 AM EDT

A new health care proposal from GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham that would direct much of Obamacare's federal funding directly to the states could offer a starting point for Congress if the Senate GOP effort fails next week, according to a summary of the bill obtained by POLITICO.

The bill from Graham is intended to appeal to Republicans as a replacement plan for Obamacare, while he hopes to sell the effort to Democrats as a repair plan. It would keep all of Obamacare's taxes except for the Medical device tax but block grants about \$110 billion in federal health care funding to the states. It is not intended to compete with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's plan, a Republican aide said, but likely will be offered as an amendment to the bill next week to test its support.

"Instead of having a one-size-fits-all solution from Washington, we should return dollars back to the states to address each individual state's health care needs. Just like no two patients are the same, no two states' health care needs are the same. A solution that works in California may not work in Virginia," Graham said of the bill. "These funds are already being spent on Obamacare, but instead of having Washington decide, we'll empower each individual state to choose the path that works best for them."

Graham has been working with Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) on the proposal. Cassidy and Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced a bill earlier this year that would allow states to keep Obamacare if it's working for them or reform the law if they oppose it, and Graham's bill takes a similar approach in some areas.

The bill would end Obamacare's individual and employer mandates for insurance but retain its protections for people with pre-existing conditions. The billions in federal funds that would be redistributed to the states would be restricted to health care use.

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Once laying out ambitious goals, AIDS activists are now trying to prevent slide backwards [Back](#)

By Renuka Rayasam | 07/12/2017 05:55 PM EDT

ATLANTA — AIDS activists who until recently had been crafting plans to end the epidemic in the United States are now fighting to keep the virus on the radar of federal policy makers.

Advocates fear that HIV/AIDS policies under President Donald Trump — combined with decisions about the future of Obamacare coverage — would devastate those living with the virus or at risk of infection, who are disproportionately in poor, minority communities in the South.

Trump in a [statement](#) on National HIV Testing Day last month pledged continued support for HIV and AIDS testing and treatment. But nearly six months after taking office, he has not yet named a director for the Office of National AIDS Policy or laid out his views on programs like needle exchange.

In June, six members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS resigned. In a Newsweek [op-ed](#), they called out Trump's lack of "understanding and concern."

Trump proposed deep budget cuts to HIV/AIDS programs at the CDC and other federal agencies. Among the cuts he wanted: more than \$180 million in the [CDC's HIV/AIDS](#) and sexually transmitted infection prevention budget, \$550 million from [NIH AIDS research](#), and \$58.8 million from Ryan White, a federal program that provides medical care and support services for the uninsured living with HIV and AIDS.

The House Appropriations Committee released its Labor, Health and Human Services budget for fiscal 2018 on Wednesday, rejecting Trump's proposed cuts. The House panel hasn't proposed any new funds but it did maintain 2017 funding levels for the CDC's HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection prevention budget as well as Ryan White. NIH got a budget boost — though the director will have a big say in directing money to specific research areas.

The Senate is still working on its appropriations bill.

Congress' efforts to repeal Obamacare and roll back Medicaid could endanger coverage for some people living with the virus. If people with HIV infection lose their Medicaid coverage, it would further stretch the Ryan White program.

States that expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act cut uninsured rates of people living with HIV by half from 14 percent in 2012 to 7 percent in 2014, [according](#) to the Kaiser Family Foundation. As of 2014, Medicaid covered more than 40 percent of people living with HIV and last year accounted for 30 percent of federal spending on HIV, according to Kaiser.

The Trump administration's actions contrast with his predecessors. The Obama administration appointed an AIDS office director within a month, and announced its national HIV/AIDS

strategy in a year and a half.

"It's been six months and we don't have a lot of leadership," said Carl Schmid, deputy executive director of The AIDS Institute. "We are concerned about the future." Schmid and other activists interviewed though were cautiously optimistic about Trump's appointment last week of Georgia state health commissioner Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald to head the CDC.

The CDC [estimates](#) that 1.1 million people in the country have HIV. The overall number of newly infected people declined by 18 percent between 2008 and 2014. But HIV diagnosis in gay and bisexual African-American men between the ages of 13 to 24 increased a disturbing 87 percent between 2005 and 2014.

Any additional cuts that are enacted for 2018 would come on the heels of [congressional cuts](#) of about \$9 million in HIV/AIDS efforts — roughly \$5 million from the CDC's sexually transmitted infection prevention budget and \$4 million from the Ryan White program.

With Fitzgerald just moving into her position as director, CDC officials last week would not comment on the budget outlook. But activists and HIV/AIDS policy leaders are alarmed, both by the national challenges and those here in the South.

The White House proposed cuts would be devastating to states that draw on federal funding to support prevention and treatment, said Murray Penner, executive director at the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. More than three out of four state and local health departments would have to scale back HIV testing, which is crucial to preventing the disease's spread, and getting people into treatment early, before the disease progresses and they start showing symptoms, he said.

A White House spokesperson countered that the administration is working "diligently" on health-related policies such as HIV and AIDS and as evidence pointed to the appointment of Katy Talento to the White House Domestic Policy Council. From late 1998 through 2000 she worked at Washington's Whitman-Walker Clinic, a pioneering HIV health center. But more recently she's been identified with her anti-contraception stance.

Oliver Clyde Allen III, executive director of The Vision Community Foundation in Atlanta and a member of the presidential advisory council who has chosen not to resign, said he's seen no movement so far on concrete policies that lower infection rates and provide treatment to HIV infected patients. He's still hopeful, but acknowledged, "I have not seen, as of yet, compassion or major attention to HIV or communities that are impacted by it."

"Press releases are just press releases," he added. "They aren't tangible things."

Michelle Ogle, one of six council members who did quit, is skeptical.

"We don't have a seat at the table," said Ogle, director of infectious diseases at the Warren-Vance Community Health Center in North Carolina. "You can't advise people that don't want advice."

She said that the administration didn't seek the council's input on the proposed budget or about how Affordable Care Act replacement legislation would affect people living with HIV/AIDS.

The epicenter of the disease has shifted to gay and black communities in rural areas in the South, which accounted for more than half of all new HIV diagnosis in the country in 2015,

[according](#) to the CDC.

Cathalene Teahan, president of the Georgia AIDS Coalition, said a lot of the administration appointees have had experience with HIV in the South and they understand the challenges. She's worked with both HHS Secretary Tom Price, a former member of Georgia's congressional delegation, and new CDC director Fitzgerald.

"They understand that, they get it," said Teahan, who also worked with Price's wife, Betty, a member of the Georgia House, on promoting a needle exchange measure, which ultimately died, in the state legislature.

But Ogle points out that these same southern states are the ones that haven't kept ahead of the epidemic. Most of the southern states did not expand Medicaid, and the CDC says that people living with HIV are three times more likely to die in some Southern states, which lag in testing and treatment, than in regions like the Midwest.

Last month, for example, Mississippi's state health department announced it would start charging patients a \$25 fee for HIV and STD tests, even as Jackson, the state's capital, struggles with some of the highest HIV diagnosis rates in the country, [according to The Clarion-Ledger](#).

"The South is a bellwether for what will happen in other parts of the country, where there are large rural communities," Ogle said. "It's starting to bubble now, but this volcano will erupt if this budget goes through."

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Ryan, Lee meet to discuss war authorization [Back](#)

By Austin Wright | 07/12/2017 04:19 PM EDT

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) met today with [Barbara Lee](#) (D-Calif.) to discuss a path forward on a new war authorization to update the 16-year-old resolution that sets the parameters for the U.S. war on terrorism, according to Lee spokesman Christopher Huntley.

Ryan and Lee had a "robust discussion" on the House floor, Huntley said, about an amendment put forward by Lee last month that would repeal the 2001 authorization for use of military force. Her amendment was adopted with widespread support from Democrats and Republicans on the Appropriations Committee, a stunning rebuke to House GOP leaders.

Ryan called the amendment a "mistake" in an interview last month with RealClearPolitics, fueling speculation he might move to strip it from this year's defense appropriations bill.

Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong declined to comment on today's meeting but noted Ryan's objections to the Lee amendment.

"There is a way to have this debate, but this, which endangers our national security, is not it," Strong said.

On Tuesday, Lee said in an interview that stripping her amendment from the spending bill would be a "slap in the face" to the "democratic process."

"People are beginning to really recognize, Democrats and Republicans, that the 2001 resolution was a blank check," Lee said. "We've got to reassert Congress's role and do our job. We've been missing in action."

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Ryan tries to control growing movement to re-open war debate [Back](#)

By Austin Wright | 07/12/2017 04:11 PM EDT

House Speaker Paul Ryan met with anti-war Democratic Rep. Barbara Lee on Wednesday as he sought to take control of growing bipartisan demands for a new debate on the 16-year-old military fight against terrorism.

Ryan and Lee had a "robust discussion" on the House floor about an amendment she pushed through the House Appropriations Committee last month that would repeal Congress' 2001 authorization for force against groups like Al Qaeda, Lee spokesman Christopher Huntley said.

That vote was a [surprising victory](#) for Lee and was seen as a rebuke of the House Republican leadership, which has stymied past rank-and-file efforts seeking a new vote on the war authorization.

After her meeting with Ryan, Lee said she believes House GOP leaders plan to strip her amendment from this year's defense appropriations bill and instead move forward with a measure being crafted by Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.). The Cole provision would ask the Defense Department to spell out what it would want in a new war authorization.

"They should not remove this from the bill," Lee said in an interview. "This was put in as part of the democratic process."

Cole acknowledged he was working on an amendment intended to go into the appropriations bill in lieu of Lee's amendment. He said his measure, which is being proposed as an amendment to a defense policy bill now being considered on the House floor, was designed to "nudge" Congress toward passing a new war authorization. "We should be working with the administration to craft an AUMF that they think helps them get the job done," he explained.

Ryan has insisted that the issue must be taken up in stand-alone piece of legislation — including a full debate in the proper committee of jurisdiction — and not as an amendment rammed into a spending bill. The Wisconsin Republican called Lee's amendment a "mistake" in an interview last month with Real Clear Politics, fueling speculation that he might move to strip it from this year's defense appropriations bill.

"There is a way to have this debate, but this, which endangers our national security, is not it," Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong told POLITICO on Wednesday.

But Ryan is facing new pressure to commit to some process for updating the legal basis for the war in Afghanistan and U.S. military operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria — a group that didn't exist in 2001. If he doesn't, he could face a revolt not only from Democrats who want to rein in President Donald Trump but from leading members of his own party.

"People are beginning to really recognize, Democrats and Republicans, that the 2001 resolution was a blank check," Lee said in an interview Tuesday. "We've got to reassert Congress' role and do our job. We've been missing in action."

The California congresswoman also met Wednesday with Cole, a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee who is closely aligned with GOP leadership.

Cole said Tuesday that he and Lee were trying to "find a more acceptable way to move forward." He said he supports passing a new force authorization but thinks there are better ways to do it than attaching one to a larger spending bill.

"They ought to be convening hearings on this in the appropriate committees and having a debate," he said.

The problem, for those demanding that Congress take action, is that no such hearings or discussion have occurred.

Lee, who was the only member of Congress to vote against the 2001 force authorization, said House leaders have failed to take action to pass a new war resolution, despite years of bipartisan calls to do so.

Her amendment is designed to force Congress to debate the issue, repealing the 2001 resolution 240 days after enactment. Lee has been putting forward similar measures for years now — making it all the more surprising when Republicans on the appropriations panel backed her amendment last month.

Congress in 2015 tried and failed to pass a resolution setting parameters for the war against the Islamic State, with the White House and lawmakers putting forward a half-dozen proposals. Some would have covered a three-year time frame, confined operations to Iraq and Syria and limited the use of U.S. ground combat troops.

The effort collapsed in a partisan dispute, with Democrats pushing for tighter restrictions and Republicans saying they didn't want to curb the president's ability to fight terrorists.

The Trump administration believes that current law gives it the authority to carry out U.S. operations against the Islamic State and is not seeking a new war authorization, according to a National Security Council spokesperson who spoke on the condition of not being named.

"The United States has the legal authority to prosecute the campaign against Al Qaeda and associated forces, including against ISIS, and is not currently seeking any new or additional congressional authorization for the use of force," the spokesperson said.

Without a new military authorization, the ongoing U.S. war on terrorism will continue to be

bound by the measure approved more than 15 years ago after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

That existing resolution authorizes force against those who aided or took part in the 2001 attacks — and has generally been interpreted as targeting "Al Qaeda and associated forces." It has no time frame or geographic limitation.

As a result, the Bush, Obama and now Trump administrations have invoked it as justification to go after suspected terrorists all over the world, from the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, and even on the "high seas," according to the Congressional Research Service.

"We're operating off an obsolete AUMF," said Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), another long-time proponent of repealing the 2001 resolution. "I know these guys are trying to protect their members from casting a tough vote, but none of us have our lives on the line in Afghanistan right now. We owe it to the men and women who are serving there to at least debate whether what we're doing there makes sense."

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Air Force secretary says more resources, not Space Corps, can solve challenges [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 07/12/2017 07:11 PM EDT

Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson says that what the Air Force needs to operate better in space is more resources and more acquisition flexibility, not a new organizational chart in the Space Corps.

To reach that end, she's defended an Air Force budget to Congress that includes a 20 percent increase in spending on space, a significantly larger increase than other sectors of the budget.

"Why is changing the org chart the answer to the problem?" Wilson told POLITICO. "The root cause of this problem is the adversary is modernizing faster than we are, and a lack of resources for space — not because they weren't asked for, but because of sequester — and we've had something like 30 [continuing resolutions] in the last 10 years."

But Rep. [Mike Rogers](#) (R-Ala.) said business as usual is clearly no longer cutting it as adversaries like Russia and China expand their space programs.

"The Air Force has had a couple of decades to fix this problem that we have in space, and they haven't," Rogers told POLITICO. "To continue to let the Air Force and DoD do what they've been doing is not an option."

The House's version of the National Defense Authorization Act, [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#), which is on the House floor this week, would require Wilson to create a Space Corps within the Air Force by Jan. 1, 2019. It would be led by a four-star chief of staff with a seat at the Joint Chiefs' table.

Rogers, who chairs the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, said a Space Corps is the right solution to help the Air Force be more agile and focused on space because it would both create a group of people for whom space dominance — not air dominance — is the No. 1 priority, and protect the space budget from funding other Air Force priorities, like fighters or bombers.

"The Air Force has been using the space budget for their money pot," Rogers said. "That's the main reason they're fighting this."

Wilson, however, said she is pushing back against the proposal because it would create division and "fiefdoms" at a time when services are trying to be more joint, and distract the Air Force with bureaucratic reshuffling at a time when warfighting demands airmen's focus.

"I don't know how that would be possible, to implement it without increase in cost and the bureaucracy associated," she said.

Rogers rejects criticism that the proposal would create more bureaucracy or cost more, saying that it would essentially just fence off the current space workforce and the existing hierarchy that supports it.

While Rogers said that creating the Space Corps would create a group of people whose top priority is space, Wilson said that by dividing that group from the rest of the Air Force, it would also diminish the warfighting culture among that space workforce that is being cultivated now that it is facing a contested environment.

"Space was always benign. ... Now it's changing to a warfighting ethos," Wilson said. "It is a different ethos, and it's helped by being engaged with officers who are in combat every day."

"I think you may freeze in place a culture of benign operations. I'm not sure that's helpful," she added.

Rep. [Mike Turner](#) (R-Ohio) has introduced an amendment to the NDAA to strip out the requirement to create a Space Corps and instead increase the study of the proposal, something that was praised on Wednesday in letters from both Wilson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. The House Rules Committee has not yet decided whether the amendment will be in order.

Wilson said Air Force officials are engaging with members, many of whom she said were surprised the plan made it into the final bill and "have some concerns about it."

But Rogers said Turner was the lone dissenting voice when the proposal was debated in the Strategic Forces Subcommittee and that she felt confident he would have broad bipartisan support in the full House if it comes for a vote.

Asked if she might see a place for a Space Corps within the Air Force sometime in the future, Wilson stressed that now is not the time, but left the door open.

"When we're routinely going to Mars, that starts to change the game a little," she said.

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Air Force acquisition official 'excited' by congressional space focus [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 07/13/2017 12:45 PM EDT

The Air Force's top acquisition official for space said today he's "excited" by the congressional focus on space, regardless of the proposed Space Corps organizational shakeup that top Pentagon leaders have slammed.

Brig. Gen. Mark Baird said the debate surrounding the Space Corps proposal on Capitol Hill is "a good sign because people are now focusing on this problem that we have."

"The organizational what boxes are where and all that — that's going to be decided and debated way above my pay grade, but I'm excited to see we have so much focus on it," he said at the Defense One Tech Summit.

"I'll salute and drive on whatever they tell us to do, but the focus is what's exciting to me," he added.

Other members of the panel from industry and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency declined to comment on the proposal.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson have both publicly criticized the proposal to stand up a Space Corps within the Air Force. Rep. [Mike Turner](#) (R-Ohio) introduced an amendment to the House fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act to strip it out, but the House Rules Committee decided it was not in order.

That means the creation of a Space Corps remains in the bill being considered now on the House floor. It's unclear, though, if the Space Corps will survive reconciliation with the developing Senate legislation.

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Heritage Action backs BRAC amendment [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 07/12/2017 05:46 PM EDT

The conservative advocacy group Heritage Action for America is urging House members to allow a new round of military base closures and realignments.

The group issued a [key vote](#) in support of an [amendment](#) to the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#) from Rep. [Tom McClintock](#) (R-Calif.) that would strip out a provision prohibiting a new BRAC round.

Permitting a BRAC "should not be controversial," Heritage Action argued.

"By prohibiting a new round of BRAC, members of Congress are undermining Pentagon

priorities in order to protect unnecessary military infrastructure in their district or state," the group said.

A statement of administration policy released by the White House today also noted the Trump administration's objections to barring BRAC, which the Pentagon has requested for 2021.

McClintock's amendment is likely to see debate tonight on the House floor.

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House scuttles BRAC, Gitmo amendments to NDAA [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 07/13/2017 03:34 PM EDT

The House today disposed of a slew of amendments to the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#), including rejecting proposals to overturn prohibitions on new military base realignments and closures and transferring detainees to the U.S. from the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The House rejected, 175 to 248, a [proposal](#) from Rep. [Tom McClintock](#) (R-Calif.) that would have struck a provision that bars the Pentagon from implementing a new round of BRAC. The Pentagon had requested authority to conduct such a new round in 2021.

Lawmakers also rejected, 167 to 257, an [amendment](#) from Rep. [Jerry Nadler](#) (D-N.Y.) that would have removed an NDAA provision barring the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to the U.S.

The House also rejected, 198 to 225, an [amendment](#) from Rep. [Mike Conaway](#) (R-Texas) to prohibit the Pentagon from entering into new biofuels contracts while the Budget Control Act remains law.

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Democratic NDAA budget proposals quashed in the House [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 07/13/2017 03:14 PM EDT

The House defeated two Democratic budget amendments to the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#) to cut defense spending and promote domestic budget increases.

Lawmakers rejected, 75 to 35, an [amendment](#) from Rep. [Jared Polis](#) (D-Colo.) that would have mandated a 1 percent reduction in defense spending, except for personnel and health accounts.

Polis called the proposed cut, which would have amounted to a \$6 billion to \$7 billion reduction, "extremely reasonable" that could be taken out of "many overfunded accounts." But Republicans fired back that the cuts were arbitrary and ignored efforts in the NDAA to fill unfunded needs.

The House also rejected, 179 to 245, an [amendment](#) from Reps. [Mark Pocan](#) (D-Wis.) and [Pramila Jayapal](#) (D-Wash.) calling for increases in the defense budget to be matched with equal increases in domestic discretionary spending.

Republicans slammed the measure for proposing to "condition" military funding on extra money for domestic agencies.

"That holds the military hostage to a domestic political agenda," argued House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas). "And I think that is fundamentally wrong at every level."

But the committee's ranking Democrat, Rep. [Adam Smith](#) of Washington state, fired back, noting President Donald Trump's budget proposes boosting defense spending with massive cuts to non-defense spending.

"It is beyond insulting to say if you support any sort of domestic spending you don't care about the troops," Smith said.

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FEC allows lawmakers to spend campaign funds on home security [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 07/13/2017 12:34 PM EDT

The FEC unanimously adopted a plan today allowing members of Congress to use their campaign funds to install or upgrade home security systems.

The FEC took up the issue after the House sergeant-at-arms sent a request to the commission last month, explaining that lawmakers are increasingly [facing threats](#) to their safety and asking if campaign funds could be used to help upgrade their homes. While the FEC had occasionally allowed lawmakers to spend campaign funds on home security on a case-by-case basis, there was no guidance allowing lawmakers to do so without bringing the issue to the FEC first.

Commissioners, especially Democratic Commissioner Ellen Weintraub, expressed concern during the meeting that granting the request would inadvertently give lawmakers leeway to install security systems in order to increase their home values. Eventually, commissioners reached a compromise deal designed to allow lawmakers to upgrade their security systems with language designed to prevent abuse of the new system.

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Wyden: Repatriation funding for infrastructure idea 'has a pulse again' [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 07/13/2017 10:43 AM EDT

Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) said this morning that he thinks the pendulum is swinging back in favor of the idea of paying for infrastructure with the revenues from the repatriation of overseas corporate profits.

"I think the idea has a pulse again," he told a gathering of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association in Washington. "I think it's something that [the Trump administration is] willing to ruminare over. And part of it is, I think they know you have obligation to come up with smart policies to get that \$2.3 trillion back — one — and two, it's pretty hard to find other sources of money for the important work that needs to be done."

Wyden said that there seems to be consensus among senior Republicans that a tax overhaul package should include a repatriation component, and when he asks about using a portion of it for infrastructure, "they don't say, 'no way, no how.'"

The fact that there "are not a lot of other places to go" for infrastructure funding and the fact that Sens. [Chuck Schumer](#) and [Rob Portman](#) had made a lot of headway on a bipartisan plan along those lines both contribute to the resurgence of the idea.

"My own judgment: I think there is more Republican interest in repatriation, A. And B, some of that money being used for infrastructure than people may know," Wyden said.

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Simpson: DOE not expecting new loans for 4-5 years [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna and Darius Dixon | 07/12/2017 05:44 PM EDT

The Energy Department doesn't plan to issue any new commitments from its controversial loan program during the course of President Donald Trump's first term, Rep. [Mike Simpson](#) said today.

"There is nothing on the horizon for a loan guarantee for the next several years — at least four or five," the House energy spending chief said in the Capitol, relaying information he said came from DOE.

The Idaho Republican said that cutting funds and authorities for the loan program helped avoid cuts elsewhere in the energy and water appropriations bill.

"It's a choice. The loan guarantee program I support, but there's just no money for it right now," Simpson said. "Does that mean there won't be in the future? We'll see."

Trump's fiscal 2018 budget proposes to eliminate DOE's energy loan guarantee program. The

House spending bill would bar DOE from issuing new loan guarantee commitments after Sept. 30, and cuts the office's net appropriation compared to the current fiscal year. But the House bill would allow the agency to spend up to \$2 million — using fees it collects from loan recipients — to cover its administrative expenses.

WHAT'S NEXT: The energy and water appropriations bill is headed to the House floor but the timing of a vote is unclear.

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Manchin raises more than \$1.4m in second quarter [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 07/13/2017 05:25 AM EDT

Sen. Joe Manchin raised more than \$1.4 million for his reelection in the second quarter of this year, according to data shared in advance with POLITICO, and has almost \$3.5 million on hand as two of his GOP challengers face a brutal primary battle.

Manchin's second-quarter fundraising more than doubles the \$552,000 he [took in](#) during the first three months of the year, giving a major boost to the West Virginia Democrat — who also faces his own primary challenge from a liberal activist backed by a group of former Bernie Sanders aides.

"West Virginians are tired of partisan negativity getting in the way of good government," Manchin said in a statement. "I'm running on a record of consensus-building on behalf of the people of the Mountain State — hard-working West Virginians who deserve elected leaders who always put their interests ahead of politics."

Manchin already faces two GOP opponents, Rep. Evan Jenkins (R-W.Va.) and West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, who jumped into the race this week after taking repeated shots at Jenkins. The likely bitter Republican primary fight could further lift Democratic hopes of holding onto Manchin's seat in a state that President Donald Trump carried by 42 percentage points last year.

Jenkins raised \$367,726 in the first quarter of this year and had \$1.035 million on hand, according to his campaign finance disclosures. He has yet to release fundraising totals for the second quarter. Manchin's Democratic primary challenger, Paula Swearengin, has yet to post any fundraising disclosures with the Federal Election Commission.

Manchin did not raise money online during the second quarter, according to his campaign.

His new fundraising totals follow a series of robust second-quarter reports from other Senate Democrats running for re-election next year in Trump states, including \$3.1 million for Claire McCaskill of Missouri and \$2.6 million for Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

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Yellen: 'Quite challenging' for U.S. to reach 3 percent growth in five years [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 07/13/2017 12:32 PM EDT

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said today it would be "quite challenging" for the U.S. economy to reach 3 percent growth in the next five years, which Trump administration officials have said is their goal.

During testimony before the Senate Banking Committee, Yellen cited "miserable" productivity growth of 0.5 percent for the past five years. She said U.S. productivity would have to increase by at least 2 percent annually to accelerate economic growth. And she said the workforce is not expanding, another factor working against greater productivity.

But she welcomed any efforts by Congress to achieve faster economic growth.

Yellen also said there are "distortions" in the corporate tax code that are hurting productivity.

"Tax reform could have a favorable effect on productivity," she said.

She said it "depends on the details" of what Congress ultimately does but added that "there is scope there to have a favorable impact on long-term economic growth."

WHAT'S NEXT: The Trump administration and congressional Republicans say they intend to reach a unified tax reform plan in the fall.

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Chao: Administration wants to explore long-term HTF fixes [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 07/13/2017 03:24 PM EDT

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said today that the Trump administration wants to explore long-term fixes to the Highway Trust Fund, including possibly through a vehicle miles traveled fee.

"We actually have begun to look at perhaps using different kinds of measurements for funding highways, and one of which is the mileage, using mileage travel as a parameter as well," Chao said at a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing. She was responding to questions from transportation subcommittee Chairwoman [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine). Chao specifically mentioned several state-level VMT pilot projects that are ongoing.

Chao added that the administration is working on plans to pay for its \$1 trillion infrastructure program.

"We are looking at ways with which to fund the infrastructure proposal, which is why it has taken us quite a while to come up with the proposal and the details," she said.

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Date: Thursday, May 11, 2017 5:02:57 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 05/11/2017 04:57 PM EDT

BACK TO THE CAPS: Senate Republicans aren't exactly in a rush to finish up the GOP's health care package anytime soon, signaling a slow-moving schedule that budget watchers worry will logjam this year's spending bills. But GOP appropriators tell us they don't plan to wait for official budget documents from either chamber to begin drafting bills, even if they don't have a precise dollar figure to spend. "We're starting now," Sen. [John Hoeven](#) (R-N.D.), who leads the spending subcommittee on agriculture, said this week.

Gotta start somewhere: There is at least a launch point, appropriators say, though it's not very popular among that crowd. Without a new budget agreement to replace the 2015 Obama-Boehner deal, Congress has to go back to the roughly \$1.156 trillion topline from the much-maligned Budget Control Act of 2011. "Unless we have a different number, that's the topline," Hoeven told us.

Tied hands: Any official numbers will likely be on hold until GOP leaders agree to a fiscal 2018 budget resolution, which can't happen until health care is done, as the legislation is tied to the fiscal 2017 budget. That leaves appropriators largely in the dark as they kick off their hearings in the next few weeks.

The bipartisan anti-sequester bloc: Some defense hawks within the GOP have already called for scrapping the 2011 caps, at least for military spending. But that effort would run into certain objections from Democrats, who say they won't agree to lift spending levels for defense without an equal boost to domestic programs. Some, like Sen. [Chris Murphy](#) (D-Conn.), say there's bipartisan agreement to find a deal to kill the sequester. "The underlying law is sequestration, which is disastrous and I imagine unacceptable to both parties," Murphy, a Senate Appropriations Committee member, told us.

Stay tuned: The battle over budget caps is just beginning. Over the next few weeks, watch for a big coordinated push from Democrats to raise those spending levels for both domestic and defense.

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: [@jscholtes](mailto:jscholtes@politico.com) and [@sarahnferris](mailto:sferris@politico.com).

Doc(s) of the day — A [report](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities warning that 40 million women would be impacted by the deep Medicaid cuts in the House GOP's health care plan.

The executive director of the Environmental Integrity Project [urges](#) EPA's inspector general to investigate Administrator Scott Pruitt's decision to reassign 10 criminal investigators to his personal security detail, calling the assignments "a wasteful use of taxpayer funds."

#DailyBudgetFact — Last year's [House GOP budget](#), which was written by former Rep. Tom Price, would have cut \$14 billion from Social Security and \$449 billion from Medicare over

10 years. President Donald Trump, who has since picked Price for his Cabinet, has promised not to cut from either program.

DOJ

DIGGING INTO COMEY'S FUNDING REQUEST: Democratic appropriators want the details, of course, on ousted FBI Director James Comey's alleged request for more cash to run the election-meddling investigation. And spending committee leaders in both chambers have now put in formal requests with the Trump administration. In a [letter](#) today to Attorney General Jeff Sessions and another [letter](#) to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, Democratic appropriators urged the administration to turn over critical information on potential Russian interference.

Ain't no date: For their part, Senate appropriators asked for answers at least 72 hours before the committee's hearing on the Justice Department's fiscal 2018 request. Looking to put that hearing on your calendar? Tough luck. It hasn't been scheduled.

They want to know:

- The details of any request for more resources to investigate Russian meddling in the U.S. election process.
- Whether the funding is needed for fiscal 2017 or fiscal 2018.
- How the request was communicated from the FBI to DOJ.
- Whether similar requests were made to the White House, including OMB, or lawmakers.
- What response the FBI received.
- Any "other constraints" that might limit the FBI in conducting a thorough investigation into the matter.

Shaking another tree: Meanwhile, in the investigation (of the investigation), Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.) placed a hold this week on a nominee for a key economic sanctions job and said he would maintain it until the Treasury Department produces documents related to Russia's ties with Trump, Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#).

POLITICAL STRATEGY

EYES ON THE PRIZE, GUYS: Trying not to get enveloped now by the cloud of Comey controversy, Republican lawmakers are keeping their heads down, trying to focus on their biggest legislative lifts. Burgess Everett and Rachael Bade [explain](#): "For all the Democratic outrage over Comey, Republicans can successfully enact legislation on certain issues, like health care and taxes, if they maintain party unity and abide by strict Senate rules. And that has the GOP thinking it can proceed apace on its agenda. ... But now there is renewed focus on the Senate's slow-moving Russia investigations, the GOP's resistance to calling for a special prosecutor or select committee and the confirmation of a new FBI director, all of which will consume precious time and political capital."

Meanwhile, Republican tax writers say the Comey firing isn't going to slow them down, Aaron Lorenzo and Colin Wilhelm [report](#).

OBAMACARE

TWO-BY-TWO — HURRAH, HURRAH: GOP leaders in the Senate are calling on members to talk out their ideas for repealing and replacing Obamacare. In the latest meetup, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) and HELP Chairman [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) hosted Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) and [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.). "The working group that counts is all 52 of us," McConnell said, pushing back against criticism that the 13-senator working group on health care doesn't include a single woman. Jennifer Haberkorn [explains](#) today that the main problem with involving all 52 Republican senators is that leaders will wind up with 52 different ideas about what the legislation should entail.

Your daily Obamacare roundup: [Repeal gets 21 percent approval](#) | [Republicans flub their response](#) | [MacArthur gets called a liar](#) and [tries to defend his vote](#) | [Dems see newly vulnerable GOP seats](#) | [Aetna completely withdraws from marketplaces](#) | [Can California push back?](#)

AGRICULTURE

DRAIN THE ... PASTURE? Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue may have been one of the last Cabinet secretaries to get an official sign-off from the Senate, but he's about to become the first to launch a major department overhaul. The USDA is about to get a Trump-ian "Farmer First" revamp intending to make good on the president's promise to shake up the federal bureaucracy, our Pro Ag team [reports](#).

A demotion for rural development: While there are no layoffs expected, there will be high-level staffing shifts and a resource rearrangement. The USDA will eliminate its undersecretary position for rural development, which coordinates billions in loans and grants related to housing, health care and water in hard-to-reach areas. In its place will be an entire position and branch focused on trade. TBT: Trump has already called for a 21 percent cut in the USDA's budget, largely targeting grants. And programs like the Rural Business and Cooperative Service were also put on the chopping block.

'You grow it, we sell it': Perdue outlined the plan in his own words in The Wall Street Journal today, promising to be an "unapologetic advocate" for American products. "My message for farmers is simple: 'You grow it and we'll sell it,'" Pro [reports](#).

FINANCIAL SERVICES

KEEP THAT FANNIE-FREDDIE MONEY COMING: As head of the country's mortgage finance agency, Mel Watt says he has the power to hoard Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac profits for the mortgage giants themselves — rather than letting those funds flow back to the Treasury. But Senate Banking Chairman [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) is warning Watt not to play that card, Lorraine Woellert [reports](#). "Suspending dividend payments will lead some to believe that reform is not urgent," Crapo told Watt during a hearing today. "I would encourage you to work with this committee to make sure this does not occur."

Lorraine has also got more on Crapo's [proposal](#) for a Fannie-Freddie overhaul and Watt's [warning](#) that the cost of getting a home loan could rise if the companies aren't retooled.

Russian roulette: The mortgage companies are reliant on a \$258 billion line of credit from

Treasury to cover losses. And some investors say drawing on that lifeline could trigger market volatility and reduce confidence in the companies. But some in Congress say that's an overhyped forecast. Challenging Watt to draw on the lifeline to see what would happen, Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) called the risk of a violent market reaction "one of the most baseless arguments I've ever heard" and challenged Watt to draw on the funds to prove his point. Watt says he "can't afford" to take that risk, though.

TAX

HERE WE GO: The House Ways and Means Committee will hold its first tax reform [hearing](#) next Thursday, Bernie Becker [reports](#). The committee says the focus will be on "how tax reform will grow our economy and create jobs across America." Witnesses will be announced next week.

Widening the divide: Trump and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said today that the administration's "preference" is to keep the corporate interest deduction in the tax code, further highlighting the gulf between the administration and House Republicans on an overhaul, Colin [reports](#).

Deduction pleas: A bipartisan group of more than 120 House lawmakers is [urging](#) leaders to preserve advertising as a tax-deductible business expense, Kaitlyn Burton [reports](#).

EARMARKS

- Trump wants \$800 billion, 10-year cut in entitlement programs. [Roll Call](#).
- Conservative groups say infrastructure plan must be fiscally sound. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Saudis boost U.S. ties with \$40 billion investment. [Bloomberg](#).
- Six-figure payouts for sick leave spur outrage, calls for overhaul. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Trump taps David Kautter for Treasury's top tax policy post. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 141 days until federal funding runs out, and the Children's Health Insurance Program and National Flood Insurance Program expire. 506 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/05/obamacare-holdup-constrains-congress-to-old-budget-caps-022798>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Wyden puts hold on Treasury nominee in bid to get Trump-Russia documents [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 05/10/2017 06:24 PM EDT

Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) today placed a hold on a nominee for a key economic sanctions job and said he would maintain it until the Treasury Department produces documents related to Russia's ties with President Donald Trump.

The Oregon Democrat is targeting Sigal Mandelker, Trump's nominee for Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. Wyden's office cited an announcement by Sen. [Mark Warner](#) (D-Va.) who said yesterday that the Senate Intelligence Committee had asked Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network for information on Trump and his aides.

Wyden is the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee.

"We have to follow the money if we are going to get to the bottom of how Russia has attacked our democracy," Wyden said in a statement. "That means thoroughly review any information that relates to financial connections between Russia and President Trump and his associates, whether direct or laundered through hidden or illicit transactions. The office which Ms. Mandelker has been nominated to head is responsible for much of this information."

White House spokeswoman Natalie Strom said the administration fully expects Mandelker to be confirmed soon.

"I can't say I'm shocked that Senate Democrats are looking for any excuse to hold up the President's unquestionably qualified nominees," Strom said. "It's unfortunate that they're willing to play political games with a law enforcement post that is typically handled without this kind of partisan maneuvering."

WHAT'S NEXT: Mandelker is scheduled to testify before the Senate Banking Committee Tuesday.

To view online [click here](#).

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GOP scrambles to shield agenda from Comey fallout [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Rachael Bade | 05/10/2017 06:23 PM EDT

Senate Republicans sat down Wednesday for their first lengthy party meeting since FBI Director James Comey's unexpected sacking. But as the Comey controversy raged outside the stately Mansfield Room and all over cable news, inside their caucus room senators barely uttered a word about it.

Republicans are desperately trying to quarantine the Comey storyline to the Senate Intelligence Committee and work toward their overarching goals of revamping the tax code and health care system. But it may not be as easy to get over as past controversies: Instead of responding to Trump's tweets or an inflammatory speech, this time the GOP is dealing with Trump's actions and their rippling repercussions.

The scrums of reporters haranguing senators over Comey reached new highs on Wednesday, creating unwieldy crowds and exasperated senators who kept getting asked the same question. But inside the GOP lunch, the discussion was almost entirely related to repealing Obamacare, a topic that's difficult enough for Republicans to tackle, senators said. The only mention was a short recitation by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of his position that there should be no special prosecutor investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election and possible

collusion between Trump's campaign and Moscow.

"Absolutely [Comey's firing is] important. But in terms of the issues before us, I don't think it affects us," said Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.).

For all the Democratic outrage over Comey, Republicans can successfully enact legislation on certain issues, like health care and taxes, if they maintain party unity and abide by strict Senate rules. And that has the GOP thinking it can proceed apace on its agenda.

"The health care effort right now is 100 percent Republican. So it's not really affecting [it]," said Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.). "Issues that you deal with that are done in a bipartisan way, sometimes it has an effect. In this particular case, it's having zero effect ... there was no discussion."

But now there is renewed focus on the Senate's slow-moving Russia investigations, the GOP's resistance to calling for a special prosecutor or select committee and now, the confirmation of a new FBI director, all of which will consume precious time and political capital.

And Republican leadership was unable to shake the Comey storyline; in fact, as McConnell took the floor on Wednesday, dozens of Democrats were staring back at him, hoping for a response to Trump's decision to fire Comey.

During a factory tour and a business roundtable in Columbus, Ohio Wednesday, House Speaker Paul Ryan's pitch for tax reform kept getting interrupted by reporters asking questions about the Comey firing. Ryan's team specifically designed the tour to launch House Republicans' push to rewrite the tax code. But while he was speaking to local business leaders, Ryan's Twitter account was lighting up about his lack of response to Comey's ousting.

And some Republicans fret that all the public attention on Comey is going to bleed into their legislative efforts. Asked whether Comey's dismissal could affect the Senate's work, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine replied: "I think it already has."

"Anytime you have a controversy like this, at least in the short-term, it will be a hindrance going forward with legislation — that's just the reality," Rep. Pete King (R-N.Y.) said in an interview. "Yesterday, everyone was talking about health care. Today, all anyone is talking about is Comey and the FBI and Russia."

Other Republicans insisted their focus on Obamacare is dictated by what they are hearing from their constituents, not the Trump news of the day that roils the Capitol at a pace that's difficult for lawmakers to keep up with. As Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.) put it: "I doubt that any Republican senator, other than talking to media, are gonna sit around talking about what do we do about the FBI."

"It's a feeding frenzy in the media and they're enjoying it," said Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.). "The media enjoys this a lot more than normal people do."

But inside the Capitol, there was already evidence that Trump's firing of Comey — and Republicans' defense of Trump — was infecting the upper chamber. Senate Democrats wielded their limited procedural leverage on Wednesday and cancelled all hearings after 11:30 a.m., halting much of the Senate's work for the day. Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) came to the Senate floor to declare the episode "another low."

Republicans don't believe Democrats can keep objecting to hearings devoted to national security and foreign policy, but Democrats wouldn't rule out further actions to scuttle the Senate's daily agenda. And they said that until Republicans agree to an independent investigation, working on bipartisan legislation — which is most of the Senate's business other than party-line efforts on health care and taxes — will be extremely difficult.

"Credibility is a key issue here. Not in this building, but in the public eye," said Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, the No. 3 Senate Democrat. "The best way to establish credibility on whatever issues are in front of us is to make sure we have independent people pursuing the questions around Russia."

Rep. Tom Reed, who leads the bipartisan "No Labels" caucus, tried to downplay the impact Comey's firing would have on his push for moderate Democrats and centrist Republicans to work together. The New York Republican argued that Comey's dismissal "is not a partisan issue" and therefore won't affect the group's work.

"As Americans, both Republican and Democrat, we all care about a fair and non-politicized examination of the facts and that our principles are protected," he said.

That, however, may prove to be wishful thinking.

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin recently met with more moderate House Democrats in the bipartisan "No Labels" caucus to let them know Trump wants Democrats' help reforming the tax code. The conversations, people on both sides of the aisle said, were productive, giving hope to the administration that they could work with the left.

But Comey's firing is likely to cripple the administration's attempts to woo Democrats to the table on taxes.

"His agenda was on life support already. He just pulled the plug himself," said a senior Democratic aide of Trump.

Even if bipartisan collaboration is something of a dream right now, Republicans don't need Democratic support to clinch new health care and tax laws, because they are using powerful budget reconciliation procedures that can circumvent Democratic filibusters in the Senate.

But though the House narrowly passed a healthcare bill last week, Senate Republicans are already beginning to bog down in policy disagreements.

Questions about Comey aren't making efforts to find solutions any easier.

"Health care is tough enough," said Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.).

Seung Min Kim and Jennifer Haberkorn contributed to this report.

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GOP dismissive of tax reform complications from Comey's firing [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo and Colin Wilhelm | 05/10/2017 03:52 PM EDT

Republican tax writers don't expect President Donald Trump's controversial firing of James Comey to slow their efforts to reform the tax code.

Instead, they vowed to keep advancing their overhaul efforts as planned, regardless of potential Democratic obstruction related to Comey's dismissal as FBI director.

"The Democrats are stopping everything no matter what, so it isn't just [Comey]," said Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah). "They'll just use any excuse to clog this place up. They hate Trump so badly that's what they're doing."

A forward-focused sentiment also echoed across the Capitol, with Ways and Means Republicans carrying on as planned, according to spokeswoman Emily Schillinger. "Ways and Means Republicans are working with the administration and the Senate and continuing to move forward on pro-growth tax reform," she said.

But Senate Democrats could slow things down if they aren't satisfied with Republican plans to resolve Comey's dismissal. They want a special counsel to investigate Russian involvement in Trump's election victory.

"This obviously is an overriding question and I think the majority leader is going to want to talk through how to proceed," said Senate Finance ranking member [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.). "Clearly this will very significantly affect the floor, and I think it remains to be seen about committees."

Some analysts saw Comey's firing as an impediment for Trump's economic agenda.

"This dismissal will certainly slow legislative progress on tax reform and other pro-growth measures as Congressional Republicans will spend the coming weeks either deflecting or defending the decision," wrote Compass Point LLC's Isaac Boltansky.

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52 ways to repeal Obamacare [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 05/11/2017 05:14 AM EDT

Senate Republicans want to do their own Obamacare repeal plan — but nearly all 52 Republicans have their own ideas about how it should look.

With his razor-thin majority, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can afford to lose only two GOP votes. That turns each senator into a de facto powerbroker with the ability to shape — or kill — legislation simply by aligning with two other members.

More of those alliances appear to be springing up almost daily, underscoring McConnell's challenge to wrangle 50 votes for any legislation.

"All 52 members of the conference and hopefully Democrats will be interested in working through the issues," said Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.). "There's going to be a lot of people involved in all the discussions."

In one corner are five Republicans led by Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, among the most outspoken GOP critics of the House legislation, who want to give states the power to enact their own plans — including Obamacare if they choose to keep it.

Another group of centrists — Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia and Gardner— worry about repealing Obamacare's Medicaid expansion, which has provided coverage to millions of their residents and pumped billions of federal dollars into their states.

So far, individual lawmakers have not publicly drawn a line against repealing the Medicaid expansion, but some have come close. What to do about that program, which covers almost 1 out of 4 Americans, is the single biggest fault line in the Senate's repeal debate.

Then, there is the official working group of 13 lawmakers backed by Senate Republican leadership that is hoping to bridge the conservative-centrist divide — even though the group has an optics problem because it has not a single woman senator.

McConnell on Tuesday — pushing back on criticism about lack of diversity — downplayed the importance of the working group entirely.

"The working group that counts is all 52 of us," McConnell said.

McConnell, Majority Whip John Cornyn and HELP Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) also met Wednesday with Collins and Cassidy, part of an effort to hear from members beyond just the 13-member working group.

"They are meeting with everybody in the conference and we just happened to be the two up today," Cassidy said. "They know our plan, of course. They're trying to meet with everybody in the conference."

At this point, Republican leaders are trying to keep the Senate tent as wide as possible — in part to keep every member of the GOP focused on fulfilling the seven-year-old campaign pledge to repeal Obamacare without throwing rhetorical bombs that might make the process even more difficult.

"We know that we have to get at least 50 votes," said Alexander, who will play a key role in the process. "Everyone has a point of view. We want to make sure everyone is involved so this is a good way to do it."

But if and when Republicans get closer to putting pen to paper, there will inevitably be winners and losers — and some of those losers are likely to get angry enough to publicly criticize the process.

For now, though, they are diving deep on policy: They plan to hold meetings on health policy almost every day the Senate is in town. Both the 13-member working group and the full Republican conference have discussed how to give states greater flexibility on Medicaid "in a way that doesn't pull the rug out from under anyone who is served by Medicaid," Alexander said.

Each lawmaker, meanwhile, has their own parochial concerns.

"I don't know that there's 52 ideas but there's a bunch," said Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.), whose state was considered a GOP model for using Obamacare's Medicaid funding to pay for private health insurance for participants.

Portman and Capito have emerged as two of the key senators on preserving at least some aspects of Medicaid expansion. Along with Murkowski and Gardner, they wrote a letter to McConnell in March expressing big reservations about the House's plan to undo Medicaid expansion without offering stability for those currently enrolled in the entitlement for the poor.

On Tuesday, another group of senators from states that expanded the program under Obamacare met to discuss their options. They included: Portman, Capito, Gardner, Cassidy, Dean Heller of Nevada, Todd Young of Indiana, John Hoeven of North Dakota, as well as two senators from non-expansion states: Thom Tillis of North Carolina and Collins.

Some senators, meanwhile, are operating as a working group of one.

"I'm not part of a working group," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who says he won't be left out of the debate. "My office is a working group."

Burgess Everett contributed to this report.

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Poll: Just 21 percent approve of House's Obamacare repeal bill [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 05/11/2017 01:47 PM EDT

Less than a quarter of American voters surveyed in a [new poll](#) released Thursday by Quinnipiac University approve of the legislation passed last week by the House of Representatives to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Fifty-six percent of those polled said they disapprove of the legislation, dubbed the American Health Care Act, while just 21 percent said they support it. The support for the legislation represents an improvement over the 17 percent who said they supported the iteration of the bill that failed to pass the House in March.

Overall 66 percent said they disapprove of President Donald Trump's handling of healthcare, while 32 percent said they approve of it.

Forty-nine percent of respondents said the AHCA will hurt the nation, while 29 percent said it will help it and 13 percent said it will have no impact. Republican voters - 48 percent of whom supported the AHCA in the poll - were the only group with a positive view of the bill. Every other gender, party, age, educational and racial group opposed the legislation.

The legislation has proven especially controversial because it offers states the option to pull

out of an Obamacare provision mandating that insurers not charge individuals with preexisting conditions more for coverage. Both Trump and GOP leadership had promised that any Obamacare replacement leave intact protections for those with preexisting conditions.

The repeal-and-replace legislation removes the mandate that all Americans purchase health insurance or else pay a penalty and also undoes a requirement that insurers cover certain services and conditions.

Seventy-five percent of respondents - and 59 percent of Republicans - said it is a "bad idea" to allow states to opt out of cost-lowering protections for those with preexisting conditions. Sixty-four percent of those polled said they approved of the current Obamacare provision that stops insurance companies from charging more for those with preexisting conditions.

Asked about the president's proposal to reform the tax code, 74 percent of respondents and 66 percent of Republicans said they would disapprove of it if it "significantly" increases the national debt, something Trump told *The Economist* in an interview released Thursday could be possible in the short term. Forty-six percent said they would approve of the tax plan if it resulted in spending cuts, while 45 percent said they would disapprove in such a scenario.

Among those polled, 49 percent said Trump's tax plan would hurt the nation while 29 percent said it will help it and 13 percent said it will not have an impact. Sixty-three percent said the wealthy will benefit the most under the president's proposal, while 27 percent said the same of the middle class.

The Quinnipiac University poll was conducted from May 4-9, reaching 1,078 voters nationwide via landlines and cell phones. The poll's margin of error was plus-or-minus three percentage points.

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Republicans flub defense of health care vote [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney | 05/11/2017 05:13 AM EDT

House Republicans celebrated passing legislation to repeal Obamacare last week — but apparently forgot to figure out how to talk about the feat back home.

The result has been a messaging mess, as lawmakers returned to their districts for a weeklong recess to face furious Obamacare defenders.

In interviews and at town halls packed with pro-Obamacare protesters, Republicans have struggled to explain the plan they just approved. Lawmakers are telling audiences conflicting things about how the bill would affect consumers. Others slammed a process they actively participated in or admitted they hadn't read the entire bill before voting on it — even though GOP leaders spent months hawking a website called [ReadTheBill.gop](#).

Rep. Raúl Labrador (R-Idaho) told frustrated constituents on Monday that "nobody dies because they don't have access to health care" — a gaffe he quickly [walked back](#) a day later.

Labrador announced his candidacy for Idaho governor on Tuesday morning, and Democrats are already planning to use the comments against him.

Though many of the lawmakers who backed the legislation immediately shuttled to the White House to celebrate in the Rose Garden alongside President Donald Trump, they're still grappling with what to tell their constituents about it. There's even disagreement within the ranks over whether they should've taken a victory lap for a bill that still has to go through the Senate, where it's likely to be substantially rewritten.

"I don't think it's something to celebrate," Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) [said](#) Tuesday on New York radio station WABC. "I think there are still improvements that have to be made in it. But it's too serious a topic to be out there having a celebration on it."

House leaders opted against arming GOP lawmakers with talking points heading into their early-May recess week. Instead, leaders organized a question-and-answer session for members, led by lawmakers who authored the bill. The session, they believed, would address last-minute changes to the measure and frame potential responses to concerns from constituents.

GOP leaders have also been pointing members and staff to [ReadTheBill.gov](#) to brush up on how the measure would protect people with preexisting conditions and other issues.

Nonetheless, lawmakers have given a mishmash of responses about the significance of the most important vote they've taken so far this year.

At one town hall this week, Rep. Rod Blum (R-Iowa) agreed with a constituent who described the bill's approval as "rushed." He said he backed the measure because it was preferable to Obamacare, but he ripped the process that House leaders employed to push the bill through — without hearings and lacking updated fiscal analysis from the Congressional Budget Office.

"It was rushed, and there should have been hearings," Blum told a crowd packed with Obamacare supporters.

Rep. Jeff Denham of California, one of 23 Republicans representing a district won by Hillary Clinton last year, told constituents that the legislation, which was approved without a single Democratic vote, passed after a "bipartisan" process. In North Dakota, Republican Rep. Kevin Cramer said the bill's shortcomings were the result of arcane Senate budget rules that prohibited an up-or-down vote on repealing Obamacare altogether.

And in TV interviews the day the AHCA passed the House, Reps. Tom Garrett (R-Va.) and Chris Collins (R-N.Y.) said they didn't believe any of their colleagues had read the entire text before passing the bill.

Garrett, a member of the hard-line conservative House Freedom Caucus, defended his comments on Tuesday during a town hall in tiny Moneta, Virginia. He was pressed about conservatives' past vows to provide ample time to read legislation.

"Not only did our team read that bill," Garrett said, "I would wager that if you line me up against any member of either party as it relates to the intricacies of the [bill] ... I could acquit myself very well."

Garrett faced a town hall packed with Obamacare supporters who interrupted repeatedly as he

defended the plan. One constituent said her father lived with brain cancer for eight years before dying of pneumonia.

"But if he had lost those benefits at any point in the eight years he had cancer, there's no way he would've gotten coverage," the constituent said. "What did my dad do to make you think that he deserved to pay more — would've deserved to pay more because he got sick?"

Garrett responded by recounting his mother's lengthy battle with cancer, which she survived.

"I won't discount anyone's personal story," he said, adding that while he may differ with some constituents on the legislative remedy, it's "an honest disagreement."

For many Republicans, including those from competitive districts who voted in favor of the GOP plan, the safer choice was to skip town halls altogether. Those who did hold them often earned constituents' grudging respect for at least showing up.

Cramer, at his event in North Dakota, answered detailed questions about the tax credit system that the Republican plan would create, as well as why he disagrees with calls for a universal health care system. When one constituent asked him how the bill would guarantee health care benefits, Cramer replied, "Everybody wants a guarantee that they get what they want. That's not America."

Rachael Bade and David Siders contributed to this report.

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Rachael Bade and David Siders contributed to this report.

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MacArthur endures town hall trial-by-fire [Back](#)

By Ryan Hutchins and Katie Jennings | 05/11/2017 12:49 AM EDT

WILLINGBORO, N.J. — At his Wednesday night town hall, Rep. Tom MacArthur, one of the chief architects of the revamped GOP Obamacare replacement plan, was called a liar. A man who said his wife had battled breast cancer stood to say MacArthur was the "single greatest threat to my family in the entire world." Another demanded to know whether it's "true that rape can be considered a pre-existing condition."

For nearly five hours, MacArthur faced an onslaught as he spoke here at a community center in the bluest town in this South Jersey-based swing district. Dozens of protesters gathered outside, some lying on the parking lot holding signs in the shape of tombstones. Inside, the congressman was shouted down by constituents and others in the audience of 250 people.

It was a prime example of the anger, confusion and raw emotion surrounding the GOP's replacement health care plan, and a glimpse at why the party's House majority suddenly seems in jeopardy in 2018.

A week ago, MacArthur was standing beside President Donald Trump in the White House Rose Garden, celebrating with other Republicans after the bill narrowly cleared the House of Representatives.

It was largely thanks to MacArthur, a sophomore congressman and multimillionaire insurance executive, that the proposal was even revived. After an earlier version of the bill proved so untenable that House Speaker Paul Ryan said he saw no path forward, MacArthur negotiated

an amendment to appease the hard-line conservative Freedom Caucus, garnering enough support for the measure to pass.

Now, the moderate Republican is being targeted by Democrats as a poster boy in their fight against the American Health Care Act. The town hall was the culmination of a tumultuous few weeks for a politician who's been talked about as a future leader of the Republican party in New Jersey and represents one its few remaining swing districts, where voters backed Barack Obama in 2012 and Trump in 2016.

MacArthur's role may have scored points with the president, House leadership and thousands of voters in his district who live on the other, more Republican-friendly side of New Jersey's Pine Barrens, but it turned fellow moderates against him and led to questions about whether he'll continue to be a co-chair of the Tuesday Group.

Democrats are already plotting a challenge. Andrew Kim, a former national security adviser to President Barack Obama, is exploring a potential run against MacArthur and has raised nearly \$50,000, according to his crowd-funding website.

Save My Care, a coalition of pro-Obamacare advocacy groups, is targeting MacArthur as part of a larger \$500,000-plus TV ad campaign against Republicans who back the plan.

And here at home, his work on the health bill has made him an enemy to many of his Democratic constituents.

Afterward, when asked by reporters if he was concerned about his political vulnerability, MacArthur had a ready answer.

"Well I'm not. It's as simple as that," he said. "If you try to do this job with this constant eye on the political ramifications, you'll have no courage to ever do anything that matters."

Despite the rage he faced on Wednesday, he stayed calm as he stood at the center of the room for hours on end. He did not raise his voice and only grew testy at few moments.

He spent much of the evening insisting that his amendment would not alter one of Obamacare's most popular provisions: coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

"Nobody with a pre-existing condition will either be declined coverage or priced out of being able to buy insurance," MacArthur said, eliciting loud boos from the crowd.

"You're a liar. Have you read your own bill?" someone yelled from the audience.

While the bill says insurers cannot deny coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, it would allow states to apply for waivers from certain Obamacare provisions, which could potentially result in higher premiums for sicker people.

The waivers, MacArthur said, would only apply to the seven percent of the U.S. population that is covered by the individual health insurance market.

"Many of you get it through your jobs and if you work for a company with more than 50 people, it's a non-issue. Many of you get it from Medicare," he said. "In all of those plans I just described, this bill does not touch this [pre-existing conditions] issue."

But his assurances rang hollow with constituents who kept asking what the cost would be for people with pre-existing conditions, even if it was the case that coverage would be guaranteed.

"You are the reason I stay up at night," said Geoff Ginter, the man whose wife battled breast cancer, shouting at the congressman for 12 straight minutes as a police officer stood nearby.

As outrage over Obamacare repeal has grown in recent months, many congressional Republicans have resisted calls to hold in-person town halls or opted for call-in forums, like MacArthur's fellow delegation member Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen.

Frelinghuysen, chair of the House Appropriations Committee and the state's highest-ranking member, voted in favor of the Obamacare repeal bill after opposing an earlier version. He, like MacArthur, was hammered by constituents over the issue of pre-existing conditions during a teletown hall earlier this week.

The state's three other Republicans — Reps. Leonard Lance, Frank LoBiondo and Chris Smith — all said they couldn't vote for a bill that would negatively impact their districts, particularly over concerns about the rollback of federal funds for Medicaid expansion.

MacArthur also faced many angry questions about Trump, his policies and the investigations into potential collusion with Russia. He wouldn't back calls for an independent prosecutor, saying he wanted to see what the FBI and Congress turn up. But he dodged other questions on the whole.

"Folks, I didn't come here to defend the president tonight," he said about half an hour into the town hall.

By and large, however, the focus was on health care. It's a deeply personal topic for MacArthur, whose special needs daughter Grace died at age 11. The cost of her health care totaled more than \$1 million.

"I want to go back to my daughter," MacArthur said during his opening remarks to the crowd as he sought to establish the framework that informed his decision on the bill.

"Shame! Shame on you!" someone from the audience yelled.

"I'm will say, shame on you," he responded.

But it was also a deeply personal topic for several people who asked questions, including one man who said his wife died just two months ago from brain cancer. The man, Michael Maguire, said his medical bills, too, totaled more than \$1 million but were mostly covered by insurance. Without that, he said, he'd be losing his house.

"I can't imagine what you're going through," MacArthur said.

"You went through worse," the man replied. "That's why I can't rationalize where you're coming from."

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MacArthur defends GOP Obamacare repeal bill to angry town hall crowd [Back](#)

By Katie Jennings | 05/10/2017 10:25 PM EDT

Rep. [Tom MacArthur](#) defended his support for the GOP Obamacare replacement bill to a crowd of angry constituents Wednesday night in Willingboro, N.J., the bluest town in his swing district.

MacArthur, a multimillionaire insurance executive and moderate Republican, helped broker the deal with the hard-line conservative Freedom Caucus that passed the House last week.

He spent much of the evening insisting that his amendment would not alter one of Obamacare's most popular provisions: coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

"Nobody with a pre-existing condition will either be declined coverage or priced out of being able to buy insurance," MacArthur said, eliciting loud boos from the crowd.

"You're a liar. Have you read your own bill?" someone yelled from the audience.

A few days earlier, the second-term congressman stood beside President Donald Trump on the White House lawn as Republicans claimed victory, but in his home district he was besieged by residents who said the deal would have a devastating impact.

While the bill says insurers cannot deny coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, it would allow states to apply for waivers from certain Obamacare provisions, which could potentially result in higher premiums for sicker people.

The waivers, MacArthur insisted, would apply only to the 7 percent of the U.S. population that is covered by the individual health insurance market.

"Many of you get it through your jobs, and if you work for a company with more than 50 people, it's a non-issue. Many of you get it from Medicare," he said. "In all of those plans I just described, this bill does not touch this [pre-existing conditions] issue."

But his assurances rang hollow with constituents who kept asking what the cost would be for people with pre-existing conditions, even if it were the case that coverage would be guaranteed.

Joseph Zetkolic, an 18-year-old high school student from Jobstown, asked MacArthur whether rape would be considered a pre-existing condition.

"How did it pass your conscience to allow rape to be considered a pre-existing condition, forcing women to choose between justice and silence for their affordable health care?" he asked as the crowd erupted into a standing ovation.

"You cannot be denied coverage or charged more," MacArthur responded.

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Democratic group argues elusive GOP House targets are vulnerable on health care [Back](#)

By Scott Bland | 05/10/2017 06:24 PM EDT

A new polling memo from a Democratic outside group argues that three Republican House members who have been targeted in past elections and represent districts President Donald Trump carried — Reps. Rod Blum (IA-01), Bruce Poliquin (ME-02) and Fred Upton (MI-06) — are newly vulnerable after the passage of the House GOP Obamacare repeal.

Democratic groups and activists have had a broad discussion in the early days of the Trump administration about where to target their resources, and the [surveys](#) conducted for Patriot Majority USA, a Democratic nonprofit, advocate for investment in these and other seats outside Clinton-GOP crossover districts in 2016. The Democratic polling has the incumbents' favorability in low territory and shows the Republicans trailing generic Democrats in ballot tests.

Patriot Majority USA just started running [TV ads](#) on health care in all three districts. The mixed-mode polls were conducted by Clarity Campaign Labs before the advertisements were released.

In Blum's Eastern Iowa district, 25 percent of respondents said his vote for "the Republican plan to replace Obamacare" made them more likely to vote for him, versus 46 percent who said it made them less likely to support Blum. The surveys were weighted based on midterm turnout in each district in past elections.

For Poliquin, 29 percent said the health care bill made them more likely and 43 percent said less likely to support him. And for Upton — who helped broker the passage of the bill with a late amendment — 27 percent of respondents in his district said his support of the bill made them more likely to support him, versus 42 percent who said it made them less likely.

Republicans are not conceding the message war over health care; earlier this week, a [report](#) from the GOP firm WPA Intelligence argued that House Republicans could minimize any damage on health care by comparing the goals of their still-unfinished legislation against Obamacare in House battleground districts. In the meantime, though, Democrats are trying to play offense in the House.

Though Trump carried all three districts in the Patriot Majority USA polling in 2016, with between 49 and 51 percent of the vote, his favorable rating is underwater in two of them. Thirty-nine percent rate Trump favorably in Blum's district versus 45 percent who rate him unfavorably, while the split is a closer 41-44 in Upton's district. In Poliquin's district, 46 percent view Trump favorably and 40 percent view him unfavorably. The incumbents themselves are all seen more unfavorably than favorably, by between 4 and 8 percentage points.

And in two districts, respondents said they would vote for a generic "Democratic challenger" over the Republican House member. Blum got 32 percent to 47 percent for the generic Democrat — who bears none of the negatives that Republicans will saddle on the Democratic nominee in IA-01 — in his district, while Upton trailed with 37 percent to 41 percent for an unnamed Democrat. In Maine, Poliquin was essentially tied, with 43 percent to 44 percent for

a Democrat.

Clarity Campaign Labs contacted landlines with automated calls and cellphones with live callers from May 7-8. The sample sizes were 769 voters in IA-01, 805 voters in ME-02 and 797 voters in MI-06. The margins of error are plus or minus 3.5 percentage points in IA-01, 3.3 points in ME-02 and 3.4 points in MI-06.

See the polling memo [here](#).

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Aetna withdrawing entirely from Obamacare marketplaces [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 05/10/2017 05:46 PM EDT

Aetna announced it will not sell coverage in individual marketplaces in Nebraska or Delaware, marking the company's complete withdrawal from the Obamacare exchanges.

Both states will potentially be left with just one remaining insurer in 2018. Further, Nebraska's lone insurer, Medica, has already warned it would leave Iowa after becoming the sole option in that state's marketplace.

Aetna cited losses totaling \$700 million in the individual market in the last three years as the reason for its withdrawal. The company expects to lose an additional \$200 million despite shedding almost three quarters of its individual market members since last year. The insurer had 255,000 individual members at the end of March.

Aetna is now the second large national insurer to completely withdraw from the exchanges. Humana announced its total exit in February.

Despite the big losses in the Obamacare markets, Aetna continues to see revenue growth in other government programs, primarily Medicare and Medicaid. Roughly half of its premium revenues came from government programs last year, up from 38 percent prior to full implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

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Can California push back against the GOP health plan? [Back](#)

By Victoria Colliver | 05/10/2017 04:21 PM EDT

Even the state leading the resistance to President Donald Trump could turn out to be a major loser under his health care plan.

The Obamacare repeal bill narrowly approved in the House last week could cost California's Medicaid program [\\$24 billion by 2027](#) and cause premiums to skyrocket [as much as 49 percent](#) on the state's insurance market. And a California law requiring insurers to cover abortion could prevent federal insurance tax credits from flowing to the state altogether.

Though the Senate is expected to produce a more moderate repeal bill, states like California that fully implemented Obamacare are bracing for reduced federal support — and likely fewer consumer protections. And though California would try to salvage as much of Obamacare as possible, not even a state that large could backfill a multibillion-dollar budget hole that would be left by the repeal effort.

"The question is not one of state law protections; it's if the federal funds are pulled out from under us, we can't keep the gains we made," said Kim Lewis, managing attorney of the National Health Law Program's California office.

Here's where California could be vulnerable to repeal efforts:

Essential benefits: The House bill allows states to waive key Obamacare protections, including a ban on charging sick people more and minimum benefit requirements — ranging from emergency care and hospitalization to mental health services and prescription drug coverage. If those opt outs remain in the repeal legislation, California could face pressure to shed some of its consumer protections to keep premiums down and prevent insurers from fleeing the state.

In that case, though, the Legislature would need to approve legislation removing some coverage mandates California has put into state law. For instance, California has required all insurers to cover maternity care since 2012. In other areas, such as mental health and substance abuse, the ACA beefed up state insurance mandates.

"We do have a lot of protections, but we are very vulnerable," said Jennifer Templeton Dunn, a lecturer at San Francisco's UC Hastings College of the Law who focuses on women's health and reproductive rights.

A [study by the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) estimates a recent version of the House plan would raise premiums and out-of-pocket costs for those enrolled in the state exchange, Covered California, by an average of nearly \$2,800 by 2020.

Medi-Cal: The House bill cuts federal funding for Medicaid by \$880 billion, or 25 percent, over 10 years. That could mean major coverage losses in Medi-Cal, which covers [one in three](#) Californians.

Under the Republican plan, states could choose block grants or per capita funding. Experts expect California would opt for per-capita funding, which would likely be more generous and cover more people.

"Even with a per-capita cap, ultimately California is a big loser," said Lewis of the National Health Law Program, adding that advocates would "look at all possible [legal] challenges to efforts to dismantle Medicaid."

Abortion coverage: State law requires all plans offering maternity coverage to cover abortion in California. But a measure in the GOP's American Health Care Act that would prohibit

federal tax credits from being used to pay for insurance that covers abortion services. So that would effectively ban tax credits for all California residents as long as the state still mandates maternity care.

The state's abortion coverage protections are rooted in a 1981 state Supreme Court ruling. This could set up a legal showdown between the state and the federal government.

"We should sue to challenge that because that's an incredible overreach by the federal government," said California Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones.

But Jones, who is running for state attorney general in 2018, still thinks it would be a tough case for California to make.

"We should do everything we can ... but, the fact of the matter is, there are few areas where the federal government won't be able to assert preemption," he said.

Marketplace regulations: California may look to fight back against Obamacare changes that the Trump administration already implemented through [regulation](#). These include shortening the exchange enrollment period and increasing verification requirements for people seeking coverage through special enrollment periods.

Anthony Wright, executive director for Health Access California, said he believes California may be able to claim jurisdiction to assert more control over the Obamacare marketplace it runs. For instance, he said California should try to maintain a three-month enrollment season in 2018, instead of the six-week period under new Trump administration rules.

Pre-existing conditions: Under the House bill, states could allow insurers to charge sick patients more if they set up a high-risk pool to help cover people with pre-existing conditions.

California has been down that road before with its Major Risk Medical Insurance Program, a program set up in 1991 that provided a last-ditch option for people who could not get insurance anywhere else.

Like other states' high-risk pools, California's didn't work very well. It charged enrollees the highest rates available on the private market, so it was unaffordable for many, and the program had a waiting list.

Not even Republican governors opposed to Obamacare seem to be eager [to set up high-risk pools](#), so it's hard to imagine California would take that option.

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Inside Trump's 'farmer first' USDA reorganization [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich, Jenny Hopkinson and Catherine Boudreau | 05/11/2017 09:00 AM EDT

The Trump administration is planning a major organizational shakeup at USDA, rearranging

resources and mission areas to elevate the department's work to promote U.S. farm exports and manage nearly 200 million acres of national forest and grasslands.

The blueprint, which Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is slated to unveil today in Cincinnati, is more of a realignment than a deconstruction, but it takes the Trump administration's conservative, anti-Beltway mantra of scaling back the government's sprawling apparatus and applies it to one of the largest federal departments, with a headcount of just under 90,000 and a reach felt in every state. If President Donald Trump is the "America First" president, then his plan for USDA is "Farmers First" — and heavily geared toward trade.

A staff reduction is not in the cards, the department said. The reshuffling moves conservation programs to pair them with other farm services and divides USDA's operations into two spheres — one dedicated to domestic agriculture, the other to export promotion. It may well raise the profile of the Forest Service, traditionally a large but lesser-known wing of the department that manages millions of acres of federal lands, but the plan also risks being viewed as deemphasizing development work in America's rural areas, which are associated with farming but populated by tens of millions of workers whose hands have never met the soil.

First and foremost, USDA is making good on one of the agribusiness sector's top asks by creating a new sub-cabinet post dedicated to promoting U.S. agricultural exports. The undersecretary for trade would arrive at a time of low commodity prices driven by a global surfeit of commodities like corn, soybeans and wheat — a cropland conundrum for which bolstering trade relationships overseas is seen as the surest solution.

"Food is a noble thing to trade. This nation has a great story to tell and we've got producers here that produce more than we can consume," Perdue said, in a statement to be released this afternoon. "And that's good, because I'm a grow-it-and-sell-it kind of guy."

As part of the plan, USDA is moving its expansive rural development portfolio to report directly to the secretary, to "ensure that rural America always has a seat at the table," the department said. In the announcement Perdue will make this afternoon at a grain transportation facility, the department notes that nearly 85 percent of America's "persistently impoverished" counties are rural and that rural childhood poverty rates are at their highest point since 1986.

But the administrative change up will no doubt be seen by some interests as a demotion for rural development programs, since it bumps them from the sub-cabinet level.

"The proposed reorganization is a stunning reversal of decades of dedication by USDA to rural development as a central tenet of their work and mission," Greg Fogel, policy director at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, said in an email to POLITICO. "It flies in the face of the will of Congress — who recently passed a FY 2017 budget that increased support for the critical, job-creating programs provided through the Rural Development Mission Area — and the American public, particularly the rural communities that brought President Trump to the White House."

To make room for the new undersecretary position and branch that will focus solely on trade, Perdue seeks to eliminate its undersecretary for rural development, a post that's dedicated to coordinating billions in loan and grant programs supporting rural housing, health care and water issues, among other things. The department argues the reorganization places agencies in

a more logical order, aligning services in a way that makes more sense for the farmers and ranchers who depend on them.

The reshuffling jives with much of the prescriptions laid out in the Trump administration's skinny budget proposal, in March. That plan called for a 21-percent cut to the department's discretionary spending, which appears like it would be accomplished, at least in part, through a "reduced Rural Development workload" and by encouraging conservation planning by the private sector. International food aid and discretionary programs at the Rural Business and Cooperative Service were also put on the chopping block. Largely spared from cuts were nutrition assistance programs, food safety efforts and wildfire funding.

The department sent a report to Congress this morning detailing its reorganization concept. It was not immediately clear whether any of these moves would require a congressional blessing. The changes include the following highlights:

Creation of an undersecretary for trade and foreign affairs

The 2014 farm bill directed USDA to create a new undersecretary post dedicated to trade promotion and to reorganize the department to bring trade-related work under the same umbrella. Perdue committed during his confirmation hearing to establishing the post. The former Georgia governor said then and has repeated often that expanding agricultural trade is a priority for the Trump administration, an assurance that's done little to assuage fears about Trump's threat to withdraw from NAFTA — a free trade agreement that's been a boon to farmers — if Mexico and Canada won't renegotiate it.

Former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack had explored the mandate, though he often warned Congress that it would be a complicated move to execute because of USDA's varied international trade activities. As the end of the Obama administration approached, Vilsack questioned the appropriateness of undertaking the administrative changes needed to establish the post because making those moves would have deprived the next administration of a say.

Under the plan, USDA would move the Foreign Agricultural Service into the new branch overseen by the new undersecretary.

Elimination of the undersecretary for rural development

The law stipulates the department is not to exceed seven undersecretaries. To make room, USDA will eliminate the undersecretary for rural development. The change is likely to infuriate advocates who support development, creating a potential theme of opposition to Perdue's leadership of the department. Rural development — a mission area that includes some \$200 billion in loan and investment programs — would become an office similar to USDA's Office of Civil Rights and be led by a lower-ranking official.

NRCS moved under the farm services umbrella

The Natural Resources Conservation Service would be shifted to the farm services side of Perdue's revamped department, joining the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency. The thinking there is to make the conservation service more focused on farming practices and perhaps less concerned with wildlife conservation and private lands, sources said.

Create an undersecretary for farm production and conservation

This newly titled position would oversee the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "This domestically oriented undersecretary, will provide a simplified one-stop shop for USDA's primary customers, the men and women farming, ranching, and foresting across America," USDA noted in a press release slated for release this afternoon.

Elevation of the Forest Service

Because NRCS is being moved, the undersecretary for natural resources and environment will focus more attention on the workings of the Forest Service. The USDA release said that "a reduction in USDA workforce is not part of the reorganization plan." In some ways, a greater emphasis on the Forest Service is consistent with USDA's overall headcount: the agency's 30,000 employees account for about a third of USDA's total staff, and it oversees about 10 percent of the continental United States.

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Perdue op-ed details USDA reorganization [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 05/11/2017 08:24 AM EDT

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has detailed his "significant reorganization" plan for USDA in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal, explaining that its centerpiece will be creation of an undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs, "whose focus will be on promoting U.S. food, fiber and fuel around the world."

"This realignment will help me, as agriculture secretary, to be an unapologetic advocate for American products," he wrote. "My message for farmers is simple: 'You grow it and we'll sell it.'"

Read it [here.](#)

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Crapo warns Watt not to retain Fannie and Freddie profits [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 05/11/2017 11:21 AM EDT

Senate Banking Chairman [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) warned Mel Watt against suspending Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac dividend payments to taxpayers.

"Suspending dividend payments will lead some to believe that reform is not urgent," Crapo

told Watt, director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. "I would encourage you to work with this committee to make sure this does not occur."

Watt said he has the authority to withhold Fannie and Freddie profits without approval from Congress and said it's something he has considered as conservator of the companies. The government-backed entities send quarterly [dividends](#) to taxpayers as part of a contract with Treasury. That preferred stock purchase agreement, or PSPA, can be amended.

"Modest changes to the PSPA would be the first and most prudent way to address this issue, but if that fails, the responsibility for that risk falls back on me as the conservator of these enterprises," Watt said. "We cannot afford to run that risk."

Fannie and Freddie shareholders, led by speculators such as Fairholme Fund and Paulson & Co., want the dividend payments eliminated so the companies can rebuild capital, a move seen by some as a first step toward releasing the mortgage giants from government conservatorship.

As of Jan. 1, the companies, which oversee \$5 trillion in home loans, will be totally reliant on a \$258 billion line of credit from Treasury to cover any losses. Drawing on that lifeline could trigger market volatility and reduce confidence in the companies, according to some investors.

Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) called the risk of a violent market reaction "one of the most baseless arguments I've ever heard." He challenged Watt to draw on the Treasury lifeline to prove his point.

"Believe me, I can't afford to take that risk," Watt said. "I can't afford to say it's theoretical."

WHAT'S NEXT: Watt will send Crapo a paper outlining the legality of amending the PSPA.

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Crapo highlights securitization, risk transfer at Fannie and Freddie [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 05/11/2017 10:25 AM EDT

Senate Banking Chairman [Mike Crapo](#) (R-Idaho) called reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac "a key priority" for the current Congress.

In opening remarks at a hearing on the housing finance system, Crapo raised concerns about the companies' common securitization platform and credit-risk transfer. Here are highlights.

— "While Fannie and Freddie are currently earning profits, if the housing market experiences a downturn, taxpayers could again be on the hook for billions of dollars."

— "One significant undertaking is the creation of the common securitization platform (CSP). The platform was originally intended to function like a market utility — independent from the enterprises — that would be used to issue both agency securities and private label securities. The platform has instead been developed specifically for securities issued by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. One important question as we embark on housing finance reform is whether we

should utilize the CSP or consider other alternatives, such as expanding the Ginnie Mae platform.

— "Another important development in housing finance is the increased transfer of credit risk from the enterprises to the private sector. I encourage FHFA and the enterprises to continue to experiment with different forms of risk transfer, including both front end and back end structures."

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Watt warns of rising risk and costs related to Fannie, Freddie [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 05/11/2017 10:01 AM EDT

Mel Watt, the top regulator of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, warned lawmakers that the cost of getting a home loan could rise if the companies aren't retooled.

In [testimony](#) before the Senate Banking Committee, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency reiterated his call for legislative reform of the government-backed mortgage companies, which, by law, will have drained all their capital on Jan. 1. Here are highlights of Watt's written statement.

— "Neither enterprise will have the ability to weather any loss it experiences in any quarter without drawing further on taxpayer support. This is not a theoretical concern."

— "It is especially irresponsible for the enterprises not to have such a limited buffer because a loss in any quarter would result in an additional draw of taxpayer support and reduce the fixed dollar commitment the Treasury Department has made to support the enterprises. We reasonably foresee that this could erode investor confidence. This could stifle liquidity in the mortgage-backed securities market and could increase the cost of mortgage credit for borrowers."

— "I have said repeatedly, and I want to reiterate, that these conservatorships are not sustainable and they need to end as soon as Congress can chart the way forward on housing finance reform."

— "It is important for all of us to recognize that the conservatorships have led to numerous reforms of the enterprises and their operations, practices, and protocols that have been extremely beneficial to the housing finance markets and have reduced exposure and risks to taxpayers."

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House Ways and Means announces first tax reform hearing this year [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 05/11/2017 01:22 PM EDT

The House Ways and Means Committee will hold a hearing on tax reform next Thursday, as GOP lawmakers press ahead in their efforts to overhaul the tax code.

A committee release today said the hearing — the first it will hold this year on overhauling the tax code — would focus on "how tax reform will grow our economy and create jobs across America." The hearing's witnesses won't be announced until next week, according to a committee spokeswoman.

House Republicans are seeking to shift their concentration to tax reform after passing their Obamacare replacement last week. But even some GOP lawmakers have said that President Donald Trump's decision to fire FBI Director James Comey this week could complicate their efforts to pass big policy items.

Republicans are still searching for consensus among themselves as they're trying to pass a tax overhaul this year.

For instance, the House GOP released a tax reform blueprint last year that includes a border adjustment that taxes imports while exempting exports, an idea that Senate Republicans generally believe can't make it through their chamber. The White House also has said it has concerns about that proposal.

The May 18 hearing will start at 10 a.m. in room 1100 of the Longworth House Office Building.

Aaron Lorenzo contributed to this report.

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Interest deduction draws White House support as Trump talks taxes with Economist

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By Colin Wilhelm | 05/11/2017 02:07 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the administration's "preference" is to keep the corporate interest deduction in the tax code, further highlighting the gulf between the administration and House Republicans on tax reform.

Trump and Mnuchin made their comments during a [lengthy interview](#) published Thursday by The Economist.

When asked whether the White House was contemplating getting rid of the deduction, Mnuchin said, "No, we're contemplating keeping it. That's our preference. But we'll look at everything."

Asked his view, Trump said: "No, I would say probably. ... I think we're contemplating is the word. And it hasn't been determined yet, but we're contemplating."

The deduction is used frequently in the real estate industry, where Trump made his fortune, and private equity, an industry that Mnuchin and other members of the Cabinet have strong connections to.

Utilities and the agriculture sector have also expressed reservations about what effect eliminating the deduction would have on them.

In the past, Trump has spoken favorably of the corporate interest deduction — which would be eliminated by the House GOP plan, in part to pay for the plan, but also as a fundamental reform.

As POLITICO has reported, White House opposition to eliminating interest deduction was expected because private equity and commercial real estate — two industries predominantly represented in the administration through the president, his family, and Cabinet members — are particularly interested in keeping the deduction.

During the interview, Trump went through much of his thinking on broad swathes of economic policy, ranging from trade to taxes to healthcare. Here are the most notable tax-related parts of the interview:

Paying for tax reform vs. 'priming the pump': Trump said it was "OK" if his tax plan balloons the deficit "because it won't increase it for long." Trump characterized doing so as "priming the pump."

"You know, if you don't do that, you're never going to bring your taxes down," he said.

Trump told The Economist he "came up" with the term prime the pump "a couple of days ago and I thought it was good." However, the term has been used in economic circles since at least the 1930s.

House Republicans want tax reform to be deficit-neutral. But Mnuchin has said repeatedly that tax reform would "pay for itself" by unleashing robust economic growth.

"[E]conomic growth under the Trump administration could increase revenues as much as \$2 [trillion] over the ten-year period of time," Mnuchin told The Economist. "So priming the pump in the short term leads to growth."

Not feeling BAT-ty: Trump continued to be lukewarm about what is perhaps the signature (and most controversial) aspect of the House GOP tax blueprint, the 20 percent tax on imported goods and services.

"We are dealing with Congress ... because it's not really what I'm considering," he said.

House tax writers say their "border adjustment" tax, which wouldn't apply to exports, would encourage more domestic production.

Trump's solution appears to be a new tax on goods made by companies that outsource manufacturing.

"You can build all you want out of country, I hope you enjoy your plant," Trump said. "But when you build your car, you're going to have a 35 [percent] tax when you bring it back in.

And if your numbers work, we wish you well. But that's what you're going to have. You're going to have a 35 [percent] tax."

Trump also continued to advocate a "reciprocal tax," though it remained unclear exactly what he means by that.

"I'm for open trade, free trade, but I also want smart trade and fair trade," Trump told *The Economist*. "But they'll say, 'He's not a free-trader,' at 10 [percent]. But if I say we're putting a reciprocal tax on, it may be 62 [percent] or it may be 47 [percent], I mean massive numbers, and nobody can complain about it. It's really sort of an amazing thing."

Trump also professed his affection for a value-added tax, which would be a non-starter for congressional Republicans unless Trump attempted to eliminate the income tax to correspond with it.

"Well the concept of VAT I really like. But let me give you the bad news," Trump said. "I don't think it can be sold in this country because we're used to an income tax, we're used to a ... people are used to this tax, whether they like it or don't like, they're used to this tax."

Taking on all deductions (except interest and charitable): Echoing the tax principles his top economic lieutenants, Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, released last month, Trump said eliminating nearly every deduction in the tax code is on the table.

"There are more deductions ... now you're going to get an interest deduction, and a charitable deduction," he told *The Economist*. "But we're not going to have all this nonsense that they have right now that complicates things ..."

Infrastructure back on the table? Trump once again indicated that the administration could pair tax reform with an infrastructure plan to attract Democratic support.

"We may align it with infrastructure, which they like," he said.

That appeared to contradict Mnuchin, who [last week said](#) "we're probably not gonna do that."

No tax returns for tax reform: Trump also ruled out releasing his tax returns as a way to bring Democrats to the bargaining table.

"I would never do it," he said. "That would be ... I think that would be unfair to the deal. It would be disrespectful of the importance of this deal. Because the only people that find that important are the reporters."

However, numerous polls have shown large majorities of Americans think Trump should disclose his taxes.

In the interview, Trump continued to say he would likely release his returns voluntarily [when out of office](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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House members push to keep advertising deduction [Back](#)

By Kaitlyn Burton | 05/11/2017 01:33 PM EDT

A bipartisan group of more than 120 House lawmakers [urged](#) Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) to preserve advertising as a tax deductible business expense in a tax overhaul.

The letter was led by Reps. [Kevin Yoder](#) (R-Kan.) and [Eliot Engel](#) (R-N.Y.).

"Any measure that would tax advertising — and therefore would make it more expensive — cannot be justified as a matter of tax or economic policy," the members wrote.

They added, "we ask that any changes in our tax system be meaningful, economically sound, and do not threaten the impacts of advertising on jobs and the economy."

Numerous corporate and non-profit interests are stepping up their efforts to preserve tax breaks as talks heat up over tax reform between Congress and the White House.

The Association of National Advertisers supported the letter in a [blog post](#) published Wednesday.

"Advertising's immediate deductibility has been an important part of the tax code for more than 100 years, and it is even more relevant today given the fast pace of the marketplace. Advertising is a vital driver of our economy, and we urge Congress to not impose a burden on the selling process when they consider tax reform," said Dan Jaffe, the head of ANA's government affairs office.

An earlier version of the [letter](#) was sent during the last session of Congress.

To view online [click here](#).

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Conservative groups say infrastructure plan must be fiscally sound [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 05/11/2017 03:31 PM EDT

Conservative political groups have called on Congress and the Trump administration to ensure any infrastructure proposal that is put forward makes "fiscal responsibility" a priority.

In [a letter](#) led by Americans for Prosperity and cosigned by dozens of other organizations, including Heritage Action and the Club for Growth and Americans for Tax Reform, activists urged the administration to avoid adding to the deficit in developing a plan.

Administration officials like OMB Director Mick Mulvaney have said the White House's infrastructure plan will involve at least \$200 billion in new spending.

The groups warned the White House against using repatriated corporate tax revenue to fund infrastructure spending. They argued spending money that is brought back from overseas "has little to do with transportation issues and instead is a symptom of our broken federal tax code that should be addressed in the context of comprehensive tax reform."

The groups are also pushing the White House to cut federal spending, rather than use tax increases or "budget gimmicks," to keep the deficit down.

Other suggestions from the groups include eliminating or reforming environmental regulations, repealing a wage law for federally funded projects that they say makes projects more expensive and allowing state and local governments to determine the priorities of projects.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Trump administration's comprehensive budget, which comes out later this month, may provide further insight into how it plans to move forward with its infrastructure plans.

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Trump taps David Kautter for Treasury's top tax policy post [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 05/10/2017 07:28 PM EDT

President Donald Trump officially nominated David Kautter to serve as the Treasury Department's assistant secretary for tax policy, according to a White House announcement late today.

He's been working most recently in the private sector, as partner-in-charge of the Washington National Tax practice for the audit, tax and consulting firm RSM US LLP. Immediately before that, Kautter was in academia at American University, following more than three decades at Ernst and Young.

His nomination would give a shot in the arm to the administration's efforts on tax reform, which haven't gotten too far off the ground since not many Treasury tax policy positions have been filled.

Kautter has been expected to be Trump's pick for the tax policy assistant secretary slot since March, news that was first reported by POLITICO. Multiple deputy assistant secretary positions remain unfilled underneath the post Kautter would assume, if confirmed.

His nomination requires Senate approval.

In addition to his private sector and academic jobs, Kautter also worked on Capitol Hill as tax legislative counsel for former Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.).

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Yes, very



Somewhat



Neutral



Not really



Not at all

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: Senate fires salvo into the fall budget fight — Price's jet-setting costs him his job — Cochran plans mid-October return
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 5:21:20 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 09/29/2017 05:18 PM EDT

LET THE GAMES BEGIN: Finally. We've got our hands today on the Senate Budget Committee's ever-important fiscal 2018 plan — the checkered flag in the race to pave the way (or majorly complicate plans) for the GOP's do-or-die tax overhaul.

In most regards, the Senate budget resolution is exactly what we expected — a \$1.5 trillion allowance for tax reform, and not much else. It calls for some spending cuts, but barely any that could make it into law. (Of course, that's a heck of a lot different than the House version, which runs the gamut of conservative wish lists, complete with \$203 billion in "real" mandatory cuts.) We've got all the [deets for Pros](#), plus [text](#) and [tables](#).

Committees, get busy: Reconciliation instructions were awarded to just two panels: the Finance Committee (presumably for tax reform) and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee (presumably for oil drilling in the Arctic), as Nick Juliano [reports](#). Other once-rumored instructions, like Dodd-Frank rollbacks for the Banking Committee or student aid reforms for the HELP Committee, weren't touched.

The scorekeeper speaks: Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#)'s budget proposes shrinking the deficit from \$693 billion to \$424 billion in 10 years — a difference of nearly \$1 trillion, [per](#) the CBO. Still, that's not the kind of balance-over-a-decade rhetoric on which the GOP prides itself.

In between the lines: The budget makes no mention of the Senate health panel, which likely means Obamacare will escape a full blow next year. But most experts say the GOP could take a sledgehammer to the law under its Senate Finance Committee instructions. (Think repealing Obamacare taxes or penalties.) Also notable, the Senate includes a dose of messaging by including 15 "reserve funds," including for Obamacare repeal. Technically, this language could prove practical by providing spending flexibility in potential bills. But the reality is, the language is mostly symbolic.

Other key takeaways:

— **PAYGO waived:** As expected, the budget resolution would waive the Senate "pay as you go," or PAYGO, rule for any reconciliation bill this year. Still, the Senate would have to take another vote to dodge the Senate's "statutory PAYGO" down the road.

— **More flexible CBO rules:** Under the budget, lawmakers would no longer have to wait 28 hours to vote on a bill after receiving a CBO score.

— **Tighter rules for OCO:** The Senate budget would create a new point of order involving controversial overseas contingency funding, or OCO. This is straight off a budgeteer's wish list, in an attempt to stem congressional number-fudging that's so common with military money.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc(s) of the day — Senate Democrats sent a [letter](#) to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao requesting an in-person update on the Trump administration's plans for major infrastructure investment. More from [Lauren Gardner](#).

Senate Judiciary Chairman [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) sent a [letter](#) this week to President Donald Trump, asking how the administration will curb private air travel by top members of the administration. More from [Eric Wolff](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — The Senate GOP budget plan would lead to GDP growth of about 1.3 percent over the next two years, compared with 1.6 percent under current law, CBO estimated today. But in later years, real GDP growth is expected to be higher, with an average of 2 percent annually.

ADMINISTRATION

PRICE IS OUT: Trump decided today to give Tom Price his signature "[You're fired!](#)" dismissal, after the HHS secretary stuck taxpayers with the bill for his flights on private jets.

Growing tab: Over the last few days, the accounting of Price's taxpayer-funded trips has risen. The secretary took numerous trips abroad on military planes this year, totaling about \$500,000, Rachana Pradhan and Dan Diamond [report](#). And on some of those trips to Europe and Africa this spring, Price's wife tagged along. The secretary apologized this week and pledged to repay the government for his domestic trips using private planes, our dynamic health care duo [reports](#). Price has also tried to explain away his alleged transgressions, though, arguing that his jet travel was part of an all-out effort to carry out Trump's "very ambitious agenda," Cristiano Lima [notes](#).

Please stop: The White House said earlier this week that it had [intervened](#), asking HHS to "halt" the practice of approving charter flights.

LEAKY FAUCET: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is at least the fourth senior member of the Trump administration to have been caught using private planes at taxpayers' expense, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Zinke and his aides have taken several non-commercial flights, including a \$12,000 charter plane to events in the secretary's hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands.

'A little B.S.': The former Montana congressman's response to the allegations? It's "a little B.S." Zinke contends that all his travel plans were made "only after department officials determined no other flights were available," Ben [reports](#). And the secretary doesn't intend to pay out of pocket for the \$58,000 worth of non-commercial flights he and his staff have taken, Emily Holden [reports](#).

MIXED REVIEWS: Congressional lawmakers are far from unified in their opinions of the Cabinet secretaries' travel logs. Senate Republicans are split, for example, over whether to defend or condemn EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's use of charter and military planes, Anthony Adragna [explains](#).

AHEAD OF THE GAME: Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin has

launched a website that will list every one of his official work trips, Dan Diamond [reports](#). That includes — so far — five trips on Air Force One. Under the private aircraft travel section, Schulkin's staff writes: "None to date."

APPROPRIATIONS

STILL RESTING UP: As part of his ongoing medical recovery, Senate Appropriations Chairman [Thad Cochran](#) (R-Miss.) announced late Thursday that he won't be returning to Washington until Oct. 16. "My physician told me today I am improving, but recommended I remain at home in Mississippi another week," Cochran wrote, explaining that he plans to return after the Senate's mid-October recess to "continue work on the appropriations process."

DISASTER AID

STILL DEBATING A DOLLAR AMOUNT: Facing [growing backlash](#) over their response to hurricane-wrought Puerto Rico, Trump [tweeted](#) this morning that "Puerto Rico has been destroyed by two hurricanes" and that "big decisions will have to be made as to the cost of its rebuilding!" (Some lobbyists are already tossing around the "half-trillion dollar" figure.)

Earbuds in: Check out POLITICO's [latest Nerdcast](#) on Puerto Rico's long road back.

More: [San Juan mayor hits back](#) | [Democrats demand hearing](#) | [Three-star general sent to oversee recovery](#)

HEALTH

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION: Community health centers across the country face a funding cliff this weekend as authority expires for the Community Health Centers Fund, which supplies 70 percent of the facilities' funding, Renuka Rayasam [explains](#). Local officials say they are putting off hiring and expansion to conserve funds until Congress acts. And many are worried about other lenders pulling back financing due to the uncertainty of the federal grants.

TAX

FIRST OF MANY: A prized pay-for in the GOP's tax plan has already generated an opposition campaign on Capitol Hill. Republican tax writers want to eliminate the ability to deduct state and local taxes, a potential windfall of government revenue. Just as you might expect, GOP lawmakers from higher-taxing northeastern states are putting up a fight, as Aaron Lorenzo and Rachael Bade [report](#).

'SOME PIECE OF CRAP': Sen. [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) is the only member of the GOP's "Big Six" who was actually here during Congress' last major overhaul of the tax code. So the Senate Finance chairman is acutely aware of the many challenges of getting there — from the budget to a vote on final passage, Bernie Becker [reports](#). But the No. 1 biggest hurdle? His "fellow senators."

"I don't want it to be some piece of crap," Hatch told reporters this week, "which we're so used to around here."

MAKE 'EM CARE: GOP lawmakers have an enthusiasm problem when it comes to rewriting the tax code, Colin Wilhelm [explains](#). Recent polls show that only around 20 percent

of people think tax reform should be a top priority — while Republicans hope to spend nearly 100 percent of their political energy on it this fall.

More: [The tax plan, in charts](#) | [Trump's 'opening and final offer'](#) | [All about Trump](#) | [A 'giant, beautiful, massive' tax cut](#)

FINANCIAL SERVICES:

TRILLION WITH A 'T': A long-awaited federal watchdog report has found that rolling back part of Dodd-Frank enabled several major banks to hold onto trillions of risky assets last year, increasing risks for taxpayers. Four large banks were holding onto \$10.5 trillion in derivatives contracts in federally insured parts of their operations as of last fall, Victoria Guida [reports](#). "It leaves taxpayers potentially holding the bag if things go bad," Sen. [Elizabeth Warren](#) (D-Mass.) said in a statement. Those Dodd-Frank rules went out the window as part of the 2015 spending deal.

EDUCATION

CHARTER SCHOOL CASH DASH: The Education Department awarded more than \$250 million in grants this week for the creation and expansion of public charter schools. Caitlin Emma [explains](#) that nine states will split more than \$144 million. Seventeen nonprofit charter school management organizations will get a cut of more than \$52 million to expand and replicate high-quality charters. And eight organizations will share more than \$56 million to enhance the credit of charter schools.

EARMARKS

— For homeless advocates, a discouraging lesson in Los Angeles: Money is not enough. [New York Times](#).

— Obamacare assisters adjust to cash-strapped reality. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Deficit rules may force GOP tax reform to be temporary. [CNBC](#).

— Mnuchin: Tax plan will cut deficits by \$1 trillion. [The Hill](#).

— What are cities spending on? Increasingly, it's debt. [Governing magazine](#).

— Fannie and Freddie make \$5.1 billion payment to Treasury. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 70 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017). One day until the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/09/senate-fires-salvo-into-the-fall-budget-fight-024847>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Senate Republicans unveil budget blueprint to tee up tax reform [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 09/29/2017 01:01 PM EDT

Senate Republicans released their long-awaited budget blueprint Friday for the upcoming fiscal year, paving the way for a tax overhaul without the need for Democratic buy-in.

The [89-page plan](#), which the Senate Budget Committee spent months drafting, sets up the special power of budget reconciliation GOP leaders can use to advance tax reform with just a 50-vote threshold in the Senate.

Nov. 13 is the tentative deadline for tax writers to submit their plans for an overhaul to the budget panel.

Under the budget [proposal](#), Republican tax writers can add up to \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years, giving lawmakers more flexibility as they attempt a once-in-a-generation revamp of the U.S. tax code. With more wiggle room to slash revenue, GOP legislators hope they will be able to go even lower on tax rates for individuals and corporations.

The \$1.5 trillion figure comes out of a compromise struck this month between deficit hawk Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) and tax-writer Sen. [Pat Toomey](#) (R-Pa.), who both sit on the budget panel. Corker had sought a revenue-neutral tax plan, while Toomey had called for as much as \$3 trillion in lost revenue over 10 years.

"This budget is especially important because it will allow us to get to work on our pro-growth, pro-family, pro-jobs tax reform plan," Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) wrote in a statement Friday.

As expected, the Senate's pared-down version veers drastically from the House version. The House budget would require a tax plan that does not add to the deficit, though some tax writers feared that approach would force Republicans to seek less-ambitious tax cuts.

In an unsurprising but contentious move, Senate budget writers ditched long-time conservative calls for mandatory cuts. While the House budget would deliver \$203 billion in mandatory cuts, the Senate asks only one committee to find \$1 billion in savings over 10 years — a disparity sure to be a sticking point when both chambers seek a compromise during conference negotiations in the weeks to come.

The only savings in the Senate version would come from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has been tasked with finding at least \$1 billion over a decade.

Lawmakers widely expect that projected savings to come from opening up oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Senate budget blueprint does not appear to give Republicans another shot at repealing Obamacare next year, as some lawmakers have advocated.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over most Obamacare programs, is expected to focus entirely on tax reform with its \$1.5 trillion instruction.

Obamacare's fate is not assured, though, since some budget experts say the Finance Committee could choose to use its existing instructions to rollback Obamacare, or simply seek authority to do so in another — separate — budget resolution next year.

In recent months, Senate budget writers had also mulled reforms for Dodd-Frank financial rules and student aid programs, according to multiple sources. But the budget document does not include instructions for either the Senate Banking Committee or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee.

Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#) (R-Wyo.) wrote in a statement that the blueprint "puts our nation on a path to balance," in part by reducing spending by \$5 trillion over 10 years. But the budget resolution itself includes no details on how lawmakers could achieve that spending surplus.

In sharp contrast to the House budget, the Senate's would comply with the budget caps mandated by sequestration. (If the Senate chose to ignore the sequester, it would violate a budget rule and prompt a point-of-order on the floor).

Under the upper chamber's plan, the military's budget would be capped at \$549 billion over the next year, to comply with current law. The House budget, which is not subject to points of order, boosts defense spending to \$621.5 billion.

The Senate Budget Committee plans to hold a vote on the fiscal outline next week and is expected to have enough GOP support for approval.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Senate budget opens door to ANWR debate [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 09/29/2017 12:02 PM EDT

The Senate Budget released this morning opens the door for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve or other off-limits areas without having to overcome a Democratic filibuster.

The budget asks the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to find \$1 billion for deficit reduction, according to a [summary](#). That money could come from authorizing new drilling in ANWR, a longtime priority of Alaskans including ENR Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#).

POLITICO [reported](#) earlier this week on the plan to include the pro-drilling language in the budget. Authorizing ANWR through budget reconciliation would allow Republicans to circumvent a filibuster, but could be a risky strategy as two GOP senators have opposed such provisions in the past.

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EPW Democrats call for meeting with Chao on infrastructure plan [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 09/29/2017 01:31 PM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Democrats want a meeting with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao as her "third-quarter" deadline for the Trump administration to provide its infrastructure plan to Congress will pass by this weekend.

"We request that you and any other appropriate Administration officials meet with us to share the Administration's long-awaited trillion dollar infrastructure plan," they wrote in a [letter](#) made public today. "Following quickly thereafter, we would hope that you will be able to formally transmit the Administration's plan to Congress so that we may understand the Administration's priorities as we get to work on developing a comprehensive infrastructure investment package."

Chao and other administration officials have repeatedly promised to begin engaging with lawmakers on the details of an infrastructure plan this fall, though now that's expected to be pushed back until Congress makes progress on a tax code overhaul.

During a meeting with GOP and Democratic lawmakers this week, President Donald Trump appeared to flip his position on including public-private partnerships as a way to finance what he's said will be a \$1 trillion package. Rep. [Brian Higgins](#) (D-N.Y.) [said](#) the president even criticized Vice President Mike Pence's home state of Indiana for trying to use a P3 to pay for a major road project.

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Grassley asks Trump to curb expensive travel by administration officials [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/28/2017 04:07 PM EDT

Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) wants to know how President Donald Trump will curb private air travel by top members of his administration, including EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

"Please detail what steps the administration has taken to ensure that cabinet secretaries use the most fiscally responsible travel in accordance with the public trust they hold and the spirit and letter of all laws, regulations, and policies that apply," Grassley wrote in a [letter](#) to President Donald Trump today.

Grassley criticized reports of travel by military aircraft or charter jet by Pruitt, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. EPA has spent \$58,000 on Pruitt's travel this year, including a charter flight to visit to the Gold King Mine in Colorado.

Noting that HHS Secretary Price has said he will not use charter jets while his department's inspector general reviews his travel, Grassley writes, "This development should be copied government-wide."

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Price took military jets to Europe, Asia for over \$500K [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan and Dan Diamond | 09/28/2017 06:56 PM EDT

The White House approved the use of military aircraft for multi-national trips by Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price to Africa and Europe this spring, and to Asia in the summer, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers.

The overseas trips bring the total cost to taxpayers of Price's travels to more than \$1 million since May, according to a POLITICO review.

Price pledged on Thursday to reimburse the government for the cost of his own seat on his domestic trips using private aircraft — reportedly around \$52,000 — but that would not include the cost of the military flights.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price has reimbursed the agency for the cost of his wife's travel abroad, but declined to say when he did so. Price has been under intense criticism since POLITICO [revealed](#) his extensive use of charter aircraft for domestic flights last week. His travel expenditures are subject to reviews by the HHS inspector general and the House Oversight Committee. Democratic and Republican senators have also demanded information about Price's travel expenditures.

The White House assesses the use of military aircraft for overseas travel by Cabinet members on a case-by-case basis. Secretaries whose jobs involve national security functions are more likely to require military jets, but the White House occasionally approves the use of military planes for other members of the Cabinet.

"Use of military aircraft for Cabinet and other essential travelers is sometimes an appropriate and necessary use of resources," said Raj Shah, White House principal deputy press secretary.

But one of Price's recent predecessors, Kathleen Sebelius, who served for five years under President Barack Obama, said she never took a military plane on her many trips overseas; she always flew commercially. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, who served as HHS secretary for the final 2½ years of the Obama administration, used a military jet for travel to Havana, Cuba, according to former HHS aides.

It is not clear whether Burwell, who did not respond to requests for comment, used military planes on other trips overseas. Two former aides said her husband accompanied her on the trip to Cuba and reimbursed the government for the costs of the trip.

But Yoest said, "It's our understanding that previous secretaries have never reimbursed for spousal travel," referencing Burwell's trip to Cuba.

Price's overseas trips on government planes included stops in Berlin, Geneva, Beijing, Ho Chi Minh City and Tokyo, where he attended world health meetings and met with other high-level officials. In May, Price also visited Liberia, where he discussed the nation's response to the Ebola virus that ravaged the West African country three years ago.

"The trips he's gone on make total sense," one former HHS official said of Price. "It's just how he got there."

Yoest, the HHS spokeswoman, said the use of military aircraft — known as Milair — was necessary both for Price's security and his ability to communicate with the department.

"In both instances, those were Milair flights that were pre-approved," said Yoest. "We don't have a deputy secretary that's been confirmed ... Milair is important for maintaining security and having secure communications, as well."

A White House official confirmed that President Donald Trump's staff approved the flights. Trump has been sharply critical of Price's use of chartered aircraft on domestic flights, saying "we'll see" when asked whether he would fire Price over the issue.

The Trump administration pointed to statistics showing that it approved fewer trips abroad on military aircraft compared with the first eight months of the Obama administration: There were 77 military trips during the first eight months of the Trump administration, compared with 94 at the same point during the Obama years, according to a White House official.

"This [@WhiteHouse](#) has cut down on use of military aircraft for travel," Shah tweeted on Wednesday, linking to a McClatchy [article](#).

"Fact: Trump [administration] authorized fewer flights on military aircraft by senior govt officials than previous [administration]," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders [echoed](#).

During six terms as a Republican House member from Georgia, Price had cultivated a reputation as a fiscal hawk keen on reining in federal spending.

In June, Price defended a proposed budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Nonetheless, his travel tab has exceeded \$1 million when accounting for both the overseas trips and the more than two dozen trips he has taken on private planes domestically since May.

For instance, Price took a Gulfstream C-37B owned by the Department of Defense for a weeklong trip in late May through Africa and Europe. The six legs of travel, which represented about 30 hours of flight time, were projected to cost \$311,418.25, according to an invoice reviewed by POLITICO.

On May 17, Price flew to Liberia, where he met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and other top officials to discuss global health security and public health emergency preparedness, according to an HHS readout of his meetings. He then went to the G-20 health ministers meeting in Berlin, which was held May 19 and 20. His ultimate destination was the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where he stayed until May 24.

HHS secretaries routinely attend the World Health Assembly, often accompanied by a large delegation, as well as other ministerial meetings with world health officials. This year's delegation included nearly 50 people, all of whom were HHS staff or federal employees —

except for Price's wife, a physician who was listed as an adviser.

Price, his wife and eight HHS personnel took the Gulfstream from Berlin to Geneva on Sunday, May 21, an HHS official confirmed. The 95-minute trip was projected to cost taxpayers almost \$16,000, according to an invoice.

There are multiple commercial flight options on that route, such as several daily flights by EasyJet, for about \$260 per ticket or less. The German airline Lufthansa is currently running a [promotion](#) for one-way flights between Berlin and Geneva for just \$60.

Other members of the U.S. delegation to the World Health Assembly contacted by POLITICO said they did not take military aircraft to get to Geneva for the conference.

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Price took military jets to Europe, Asia for over \$500K [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan and Dan Diamond | 09/28/2017 06:56 PM EDT

The White House approved the use of military aircraft for multi-national trips by Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price to Africa and Europe this spring, and to Asia in the summer, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers.

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Price pledged on Thursday to reimburse the government for the cost of his own seat on his domestic trips using private aircraft — reportedly around \$52,000 — but that would not include the cost of the military flights.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price has reimbursed the agency for the cost of his wife's travel abroad, but declined to say when he did so. Price has been under intense criticism since POLITICO [revealed](#) his extensive use of charter aircraft for domestic flights last week. His travel expenditures are subject to reviews by the HHS inspector general and the House Oversight Committee. Democratic and Republican senators have also demanded information about Price's travel expenditures.

The White House assesses the use of military aircraft for overseas travel by Cabinet members on a case-by-case basis. Secretaries whose jobs involve national security functions are more likely to require military jets, but the White House occasionally approves the use of military planes for other members of the Cabinet.

"Use of military aircraft for Cabinet and other essential travelers is sometimes an appropriate and necessary use of resources," said Raj Shah, White House principal deputy press secretary.

But one of Price's recent predecessors, Kathleen Sebelius, who served for five years under President Barack Obama, said she never took a military plane on her many trips overseas; she always flew commercially. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, who served as HHS secretary for the final 2½ years of the Obama administration, used a military jet for travel to Havana, Cuba, according to former HHS aides.

It is not clear whether Burwell, who did not respond to requests for comment, used military planes on other trips overseas. Two former aides said her husband accompanied her on the trip to Cuba and reimbursed the government for the costs of the trip.

But Yoest said, "It's our understanding that previous secretaries have never reimbursed for spousal travel," referencing Burwell's trip to Cuba.

Price's overseas trips on government planes included stops in Berlin, Geneva, Beijing, Ho Chi Minh City and Tokyo, where he attended world health meetings and met with other high-level officials. In May, Price also visited Liberia, where he discussed the nation's response to the Ebola virus that ravaged the West African country three years ago.

"The trips he's gone on make total sense," one former HHS official said of Price. "It's just how he got there."

Yoest, the HHS spokeswoman, said the use of military aircraft — known as Milair — was necessary both for Price's security and his ability to communicate with the department.

"In both instances, those were Milair flights that were pre-approved," said Yoest. "We don't have a deputy secretary that's been confirmed ... Milair is important for maintaining security and having secure communications, as well."

A White House official confirmed that President Donald Trump's staff approved the flights. Trump has been sharply critical of Price's use of chartered aircraft on domestic flights, saying "we'll see" when asked whether he would fire Price over the issue.

The Trump administration pointed to statistics showing that it approved fewer trips abroad on military aircraft compared with the first eight months of the Obama administration: There were 77 military trips during the first eight months of the Trump administration, compared with 94 at the same point during the Obama years, according to a White House official.

"This [@WhiteHouse](#) has cut down on use of military aircraft for travel," Shah tweeted on Wednesday, linking to a McClatchy [article](#).

"Fact: Trump [administration] authorized fewer flights on military aircraft by senior govt officials than previous [administration]," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders [echoed](#).

During six terms as a Republican House member from Georgia, Price had cultivated a reputation as a fiscal hawk keen on reining in federal spending.

In June, Price defended a proposed budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Nonetheless, his travel tab has exceeded \$1 million when accounting for both the overseas trips and the more than two dozen trips he has taken on private planes domestically since May.

For instance, Price took a Gulfstream C-37B owned by the Department of Defense for a weeklong trip in late May through Africa and Europe. The six legs of travel, which represented about 30 hours of flight time, were projected to cost \$311,418.25, according to an invoice reviewed by POLITICO.

On May 17, Price flew to Liberia, where he met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and other top officials to discuss global health security and public health emergency preparedness, according to an HHS readout of his meetings. He then went to the G-20 health ministers meeting in Berlin, which was held May 19 and 20. His ultimate destination was the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, where he stayed until May 24.

HHS secretaries routinely attend the World Health Assembly, often accompanied by a large delegation, as well as other ministerial meetings with world health officials. This year's delegation included nearly 50 people, all of whom were HHS staff or federal employees — except for Price's wife, a physician who was listed as an adviser.

Price, his wife and eight HHS personnel took the Gulfstream from Berlin to Geneva on Sunday, May 21, an HHS official confirmed. The 95-minute trip was projected to cost taxpayers almost \$16,000, according to an invoice.

There are multiple commercial flight options on that route, such as several daily flights by EasyJet, for about \$260 per ticket or less. The German airline Lufthansa is currently running a [promotion](#) for one-way flights between Berlin and Geneva for just \$60.

Other members of the U.S. delegation to the World Health Assembly contacted by POLITICO said they did not take military aircraft to get to Geneva for the conference.

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Price chalks up jet travel to Trump's 'very ambitious agenda' [Back](#)

By Cristiano Lima | 09/28/2017 07:28 PM EDT

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price said Thursday that his use of federal money to travel on private jets was part of an all-out effort to carry out President Donald Trump's "very ambitious agenda."

Price, who came under investigation after POLITICO revealed that he had taken at least 26 charter flights on official business since May, at a cost of more than \$400,000, said in an interview on Fox News that he regretted the impact his decisions had on taxpayers. But the secretary also continued to defend the trips for having been approved through the "normal process" and thus having been "deemed appropriate official travel."

Pressed on how he could square the costly travel with his fiscally conservative ideals, Price said the flights were booked partially out of a desire to fulfill Trump's plans.

"These were 10 trips with 26 different legs," he said. "We have a very ambitious agenda and we were trying our doggone best to accomplish the issue mission and the president's agenda."

He added: "Clearly, we weren't sensitive to the taxpayer, which is why I've taken the actions I've taken."

Price announced earlier Thursday that he would write a personal check to the federal government to cover his costs of traveling on private jets and that he would permanently halt the use of charter flights for official business. The announcement came as Price faced increased criticism from within the Trump administration, with the president fuming over the reports and some White House aides [calling](#) for Price's removal from office.

Although Price said Thursday he believed he still had "the confidence of the president," when asked later on Fox whether he was concerned about his job security, Price seemingly dodged, saying, "I work at the pleasure of the president."

He added: "I look forward to gaining — regaining the trust the American people ... may have lost in the activities that I took, and to not only regain the trust of the American people but to regain the trust of the administration and the president."

Following Price's comments Thursday on Fox, POLITICO reported that the White House approved the use of military aircraft for multinational trips by Price to Africa and Europe this spring, and to Asia in the summer, to the tune of more than \$500,000. This brings the total taxpayer cost of Price's travels to more than \$1 million since May, according to a POLITICO review.

Henry C. Jackson contributed to this report.

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White House asked HHS to halt charter flights amid Price scrutiny [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 09/28/2017 03:55 PM EDT

The White House has asked the Department of Health and Human Services to "halt" the practice of approving charter flights, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said today.

"That's something that we're certainly looking into from this point forward and have asked a halt be put, particularly at HHS, on any private charter flights moving forward — until those reviews are completed," she said.

POLITICO reported last week that HHS Secretary Tom Price has used more than \$400,000 in taxpayer money to fly on private jets. Price, who said over the weekend that he would stop relying on charter flights pending an inspector general review, told reporters earlier today that he believes he still has the confidence of President Donald Trump.

"As the president said yesterday, he's not thrilled — certainly not happy with the actions,"

Sanders said, largely echoing the president's previous comments on his Cabinet secretary. "We're definitely looking at the issue. They're conducting both an internal and an IG full review."

Asked if Price will keep his job atop HHS, Sanders said, "We're gonna conduct a full review and we'll see what happens."

Price's travel is also facing new scrutiny from Congress. Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) today asked the White House to explain how it's making sure Cabinet officials keep travel costs under control.

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Zinke calls travel controversy 'a little B.S.' [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/29/2017 12:38 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke dismissed the furor around his use of private aircraft as "a little B.S." in a speech Friday at the Heritage Foundation.

Zinke spoke less than 24 hours after [revelations](#) about his use of private planes, including a \$12,000 flight from an event with a big donor to his hometown and a trip in the Caribbean. He is at least the fourth member of the Trump administration to face questions over his use of private or military planes at taxpayer expense.

"All this travel was done only after department officials determined no other flights were available," Zinke told the audience at Heritage. "Every time I travel, I submit travel plans to the department, who determines line by line that I follow the law. And I follow the law."

Zinke confirmed that he had taken three charter flights since being confirmed in March, but he did not go into detail about the events.

In one case, he chartered a \$12,375 flight from Las Vegas to an airport near his hometown of Whitefish, Mont. Commercial flights are available between the two locations, but Interior officials said none could accommodate his schedule because he was speaking at a dinner for the Las Vegas Golden Knights, a new professional hockey team owned by Bill Foley, the chairman of Fidelity National Financial and a major Zinke backer.

Employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and associated companies [gave](#) nearly \$200,000 to Zinke's campaigns, according to the campaign watchdog group Center for Responsive Politics.

Democrats and environmentalists say the trip was inappropriate, especially in the wake of Zinke's comments earlier this week questioning the loyalty of nearly a third of his employees.

"Secretary Zinke has the nerve to blow your tax dollars on easy living and then tell oil executives that a third of his own workforce isn't loyal to the Trump administration," Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#), the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, said in a

statement. "Loyalty to this White House means treating taxpayer money like a piggy bank. He's the one with the ethics problems, not the employees he threw under the bus. Firing other Interior Department employees for ethical lapses is a fine step, but he needs to follow the same standards he applies to his team."

Zinke and several other Trump cabinet members have come under fire in recent weeks for using private jets and military aircraft for official business. HHS Secretary Tom Price [accrued more than \\$1 million](#) in such transportation since May, saying yesterday he would personally repay a fraction of the total cost.

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Pruitt won't cover costs for private flights [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 09/28/2017 06:48 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt doesn't plan to pay out of pocket for the \$58,000 worth of non-commercial flights he and his staff have taken on four occasions, according to an agency spokeswoman.

Pruitt has taken three private government flights and one chartered plane. EPA has said those flights represented the only travel options for reaching scheduled events in time, including taking an Air Force plane to New York at a cost of \$36,068.50 to travel to events ahead of an international energy ministers' meeting in Italy. The agency received [ethics approvals](#) from EPA's acting general counsel for three of the four trips.

"If a reimbursement was necessary, we would have been told during the approval process and acted accordingly," agency spokeswoman Liz Bowman said.

HHS Secretary Tom Price today said he would [write a personal check](#) to the federal government to cover the cost of his seat on private jet flights that cost more than \$400,000 since May.

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Senate Republicans offer mixed reviews on Pruitt's pricey plane trips [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 09/28/2017 05:14 PM EDT

Senate Republicans were split Thursday over whether to condemn, defend or sidestep questions about EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's expensive use of charter and military planes.

[Lisa Murkowski](#), who oversees the Appropriations subpanel responsible for EPA funding, said she was open to adding language to a spending bill that would prevent Pruitt from taking

private flights, after reports this week revealed EPA spent more than \$58,000 for charter flights on private or government-owned planes. But the Alaska Republican said she hopes it doesn't come to that.

"I don't think it's appropriate," Murkowski said regarding Pruitt's and HHS Secretary Tom Price's use of private aircraft. "That is clearly something that the executive reins in. You tell your people, 'Look, there's no charter flights.' You set the standard. You set what is acceptable. And I think that should be done."

Pruitt used non-commercial flights during trips to Oklahoma, North Dakota and Colorado, as well as to ensure he made a connecting flight to an energy ministers meeting in Italy. The agency's general counsel signed off on the trips, though their high cost has drawn criticism as the Trump administration seeks to slash the agency's budget by one-third.

But not everyone was ready to criticize the trips.

[Jim Inhofe](#) (R-Okla.), the former Environment and Public Works chairman and a friend of Pruitt, defended the administrator's flights.

"If there is a problem with it, then there would be a rule against it and there isn't one," Inhofe told POLITICO in an interview. "That's why he checked first to make sure there wouldn't be a problem."

Current EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) said he was "going to wait and see what comes out" before weighing in on the appropriateness of Pruitt's flights. He did not commit to holding a hearing on the issue, saying only that Pruitt would testify before the committee sometime this year.

Asked if it was generally appropriate for Cabinet officials to take private aircraft, or if he would have similarly held off criticism if it were an Obama administration official involved, Barrasso said, "I want to see what the information is." He added, "With Cabinet members, sometimes it's the only way to get from place to place."

Other Republicans declined to answer the broad question of whether Cabinet officials should take private transportation or said they were unaware of the details of Price and Pruitt's travel. "Good to talk with all of you," Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) told reporters when asked if Cabinet officials should fly in private jets.

[Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa), meanwhile, said he has more questions about Pruitt's and Price's plane tabs. Grassley sent [a letter](#) to President Donald Trump requesting information on what steps Cabinet secretaries are taking to ensure the "most fiscally responsible travel."

Democrats demanded a full accounting of the trips and wanted to know if Trump officials are getting different treatment than Obama Cabinet members.

"I wonder why Scott Pruitt is different from [former EPA Administrator] Gina McCarthy in terms of his needs," [Brian Schatz](#) (D-Hawaii) said. "Whatever they need [in terms of security], I think we ought to give it to them, but they shouldn't get anything more than they need."

[Tom Carper](#) (D-Del.), top Democrat on EPW, called for Pruitt to testify in the near future.

"This is one of those situations where the best disinfectant is sunshine," Carper said.

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Shulkin says no charter jets as VA secretary, launches new website tracking his travel

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By Dan Diamond | 09/29/2017 01:36 PM EDT

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin today posted details about his official travel since Jan. 20 and [said](#) that he hadn't taken charter jets since the start of the Trump administration.

Cabinet officials have been under scrutiny for their use of non-commercial aircraft. POLITICO first reported last week that HHS Secretary Tom Price has taken more than 26 trips on charter jets since May, often without announcing his itinerary in advance.

Shulkin — an Obama administration holdover with unusual bipartisan support in Congress — announced [a new website](#) that includes Shulkin's itineraries and details about his use of non-commercial jets. The VA said the site will be updated within five business days after the conclusion of an official trip.

Shulkin described this as the latest move toward transparency at an agency that has been mired in scandal over the past several years. Shulkin has also posted wait times at VA facilities, lists of disciplinary actions against employees and other data.

Information on the flight habits of other Cabinet secretaries has been trickling out since the Price travel revelations. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos travels on her own private jet and foots the bill for U.S. marshals on the flights, her department [told POLITICO](#) last week. [Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke](#) has also taken several private and military flights.

Arthur Allen contributed to this report.

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Trump faces growing backlash over Puerto Rico response [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/29/2017 11:18 AM EDT

President Donald Trump and his aides are facing a growing backlash over their response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, with federal teams on the island struggling to deliver aid to those in need even as the White House trumpets its efforts as a success story.

The tension over the Trump administration's self praise spilled out on Friday morning, with

the San Juan mayor lashing out at acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke, who said on Thursday that the Maria relief efforts are a "good news story."

"Damn it, this is not a good news story. This is a people are dying story. This is a life-or-death story," San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz said on CNN. "When you have to pull people down from their buildings — I'm sorry, but that really upsets me and frustrates me. You know, I would ask her to come down here and visit the towns, and then make a statement like that which frankly it is an irresponsible statement."

Trump, who is preparing to visit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands on Tuesday, has also lavished praise on his administration's response, writing on Twitter Friday morning that "Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello just stated: 'The Administration and the President, every time we've spoken, they've delivered.'"

A day earlier, Trump wrote that "FEMA & First Responders are doing a GREAT job in Puerto Rico. Massive food & water delivered... Wish press would treat fairly!" adding in a post later Thursday that Puerto Rico's "governor said 'great job!'"

On Friday morning, Trump opened a speech on tax reform by pledging, "We will not rest ... until the people of Puerto Rico are safe," while also explaining that his administration has been handed an immensely difficult situation.

"This is an island surrounded by water. Big water. Ocean water," Trump said about the U.S. territory, adding later, "We've never seen a situation like this."

But while Puerto Rican officials have expressed appreciation for the White House's outreach, they have also made clear that what has been done so far has been insufficient to meet the needs of the island's 3.5 million U.S. citizens. In the same Fox News [interview](#) where Rossello praised Trump for his efforts thus far, he made clear that "we do need more aid" and that obtaining and distributing that aid remains a problem.

Roughly half of Puerto Ricans are still without running water, officials said Friday at a press conference in the island's capital, San Juan, and just 36 of its 69 hospitals are open and have power. Retirement homes "are becoming just human cages for people that are sick and unable to fend for themselves," Cruz said Friday morning.

The San Juan mayor said on CNN that it has been logistics, not the presence of supplies themselves, that has thus far presented the toughest hurdle to clear. She said Friday morning that a day earlier there had been thousands of shipping containers filled with supplies stuck at a port and unable to move. Only recently had those containers started to make their way out of the port, she said.

In San Juan, Cruz said her residents had received four pallets of water on Thursday — slightly more than 4,000 bottles for a population of roughly 350,000 people — in addition to four pallets of food and 12 pallets of baby food and supplies.

The situation is more dire in other parts of the island, she said, relaying her conversation with another mayor who said his people had no food, no medicine and were drinking from a creek that they also used to bathe and wash their clothes.

"This is a message for President Trump: Thank you for calling San Juan yesterday and

listening for our mayday call. But sir, there's 77 other towns that are waiting. They're waiting anxiously and will be very grateful to you and to the American people if you continue to step up," Cruz said. "Again, Mr. Trump, we appreciate everything you are doing and we know it can be done faster. Help us save lives. We will be forever grateful."

Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert, in his own CNN interview on Friday morning that preceded Cruz's, disputed the suggestion that the White House's commitment to the island has been anything but absolute and that the logistical strategy employed by the federal government has been insufficient.

Because it is an island, Bossert said that recovery efforts in Puerto Rico present specific challenges, but he said criticism from "New Day" anchor Chris Cuomo and others on CNN "wasn't well placed."

"I don't accept that we're doing anything short of everything we can do. Yes, I accept that the people are going to see, at the very end, the last person in the most hardest-to-reach area is going to receive assistance in a way that's less acceptable than we'd like to," Bossert said.

"We'd like to give them a bottle of water and food immediately. But I do accept that there's going to be a difference between a full-throated, adequate response and the complete satisfaction of bringing that entire territory back to its full, functional state."

Duke, at a press conference Friday in San Juan, said the integration between Puerto Rican, U.S. military and other federal resources has been "really admirable" and will "set the standard for the future." And while she did not directly address her "good news" remark from the previous day, she stood behind her statement that she was pleased with the federal government's recovery efforts thus far.

"Yesterday, I was asked if I was happy and satisfied with the recovery. I am proud of the work that's being done. I am proud of Americans helping Americans, friends and strangers alike. I am proud of the work that DoD, FEMA, and the territory along with first responders are doing," Duke said. "Clearly the situation here in Puerto Rico after the devastating hurricane is not satisfactory. But together we are getting there, and the progress today is very, very strong. The president and I will not be fully satisfied, however, until every Puerto Rican is back home, the power is back on, clean water is freely available, schools and hospitals are fully open and the Puerto Rican economy is working."

In addition to routing supplies and manpower to Puerto Rico, the Trump administration has also sought this week to combat the notion that the island has not been top of mind for the president. Such criticism began last weekend when Trump launched a rhetorical tirade against the NFL and its players who kneel in protest during the national anthem, posting to Twitter several times on the issue while remaining silent on Puerto Rico, which was reeling from Maria's landfall last week.

Trump and his White House have insisted that Puerto Rico has remained a continuous point of focus in the days since the hurricane hit the island, and the president has mentioned the storm in his social media posts multiple times this week.

But the president also appeared to place some blame this week on Puerto Rico for its dire situation, noting the U.S. territory's "broken infrastructure & massive debt" in a tweet.

On Friday, he wrote that "big decisions will have to be made as to the cost of its rebuilding," a statement Bossert sought to clarify by explaining that Puerto Rico's lack of liquid financial assets — the island declared a form of bankruptcy last May — meant the federal government was paying for the entirety of recovery efforts.

"Once we stabilize, then let's talk about the debt," Cruz said on CNN in a second interview with the network. "You know what? There ain't going to be anybody to pay the debt. If we let them die, nobody's going to pay the debt."

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Nerdcast: Puerto Rico's long road back [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 09/29/2017 07:10 AM EDT

It's time for Episode 74 of the Nerdcast, POLITICO's podcast on the White House and politics. Tune in each week to geek out with us as we dive deep into the political landscape and the latest numbers that matter.

[Subscribe and rate](#) the Nerdcast on iTunes. Listen on your smartphone [here](#), listen on your desktop [here](#).

Datapoint: 1.5 million. That's the approximate number of people in Puerto Rico still without drinking water since Hurricane Maria hit the U.S. territory a week ago, according to a Department of Defense estimate out on Wednesday.

Datapoint: 54.6 percent. That's the share of the vote Alabama Republican Roy Moore got in Tuesday's Senate primary in the state — knocking out appointed Sen. Luther Strange, who was endorsed by President Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Datapoint: \$8.3 million. That's how much money was donated to Donald Trump's political committees and inaugural committee over the past couple years by NFL owners, who found themselves in the center of one of Trump's almost patented cultural controversies last weekend.

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Democrats demand hearing on Puerto Rico recovery efforts [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 09/28/2017 10:39 PM EDT

Democratic members of the House Natural Resources Committee are calling for an oversight hearing on the response to the "unprecedented disaster" caused by Hurricane Maria.

A [letter](#) from 19 Democratic lawmakers asks Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) to hold a hearing examining the "sufficiency of [the Trump administration's] efforts to respond to the crises in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands."

"Recent reports have heralded the administration's decision to send additional resources to Puerto Rico to address the growing crisis," reads the letter shared with POLITICO. "We believe it would be instructive for the Natural Resources Committee to get specific details of the federal response to this unprecedented disaster impacting two of the most vulnerable members of our American family."

The Natural Resources Committee has broad jurisdiction for U.S. territories, and the letter was organized by panel member Rep. Norma Torres (D-Calif.),

Hurricane Maria barreled through the Caribbean last week, causing severe damage. Almost half of the 3.5 million Americans in Puerto Rico are still without clean water and the island is expected to be without power for months -- fueling fears of a humanitarian crisis if basic needs are not met and hospitals and other critical infrastructure not repaired.

Many have been critical of the U.S. response, [concerned](#) that American citizens in the territories are being treated differently than those on the mainland who were impacted in Florida and Texas by Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

More than 100 Democratic lawmakers this week sent a letter to the administration urging the Pentagon to boost its response efforts.

There are thousands of federal workers -- including about 600 employees from the Federal Emergency Management Agency -- in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to help with relief efforts, including clearing roads and transporting supplies.

As of Wednesday, search and rescue teams have accessed 90 percent of the island, according to FEMA.

The Pentagon has also been scrambling in recent days to get more personnel to the area and deliver supplies. It earlier Thursday that it has been able to reach most of the island's hospitals to make assessments of the damage.

"In Puerto Rico, DoD continues ongoing relief operations and is leaning forward to rapidly deploy additional response capacity, expanding airfield and seaport throughput and positioning key leaders forward supporting FEMA priorities," the Pentagon said.

The Navy's hospital ship, the USNS Comfort, is also expected to arrive in Puerto Rico next week -- but some two weeks after the storm.

The Pentagon also announced Thursday that a three-star general has been tapped to lead hurricane recovery efforts in Puerto Rico. Lt. Gen. Jeff Buchanan will serve as the liaison between Defense Department and FEMA relief efforts.

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Pentagon sends three-star general to oversee Puerto Rico recovery [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 09/28/2017 04:54 PM EDT

The Pentagon announced today that the top three-star Army officer at the U.S. Northern Command will lead hurricane recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

Lt. Gen. Jeff Buchanan is scheduled to arrive in Puerto Rico today to serve as the liaison between Defense Department and FEMA relief efforts.

Brig. Gen. Richard Kim, a one star general officer, arrived in Puerto Rico on Wednesday to coordinate the federal response to the natural disaster. But 145 House Democrats [sent a letter](#) to the Pentagon following his deployment, urging that at least a three-star officer be in charge, comparable to the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Earlier, Buchanan had commanded the 10th Mountain Division, an infantry unit, and did four tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

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First GOP tax reform feud erupts over state, local tax break [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo and Rachael Bade | 09/28/2017 08:53 PM EDT

Vulnerable Republicans from a handful of purple districts have declared war on a central pillar of the [tax plan](#) released Wednesday by President Donald Trump and GOP leaders in Congress: A provision that would eliminate state and local tax deductibility, which they say would hike taxes on their middle-class constituents.

In the first intraparty showdown to emerge after the plan's unveiling, Republicans from New Jersey, New York, California and Illinois are among those worried that voters in their districts will face higher taxes than they currently do. They've already started making their case to Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) and Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) — both advocates of ending the deduction — and are vowing to organize to restore their tax benefit.

"I'm going to fight this out and hopefully have success in getting this restored," said New Jersey Republican [Tom MacArthur](#), a leader of the effort. "I am going to do what I can to rally states like New Jersey and New York, Pennsylvania, California, Illinois, Connecticut."

Their campaign throws a curveball into tax reform and is already having an effect: Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) went off script Thursday and said he'd like to maintain the tax deduction if possible. That undercuts the united front GOP leaders wanted to show on the matter — and potentially leaves them a \$1 trillion hole in their list of pay-fors, potentially jeopardizing their entire plan.

"If we can keep it, I'd like to keep it," Hatch said, acknowledging that the position puts him at odds with the statement issued by the so-called Big Six negotiators, a group that includes

Hatch.

He called the unified framework "just the beginning" for efforts to overhaul the tax code.

The tax break is important to taxpayers in states and cities with high property taxes and other levies, most of which vote blue though some are represented by GOP lawmakers like MacArthur. Realtors and others in the housing business also see the tax break as a boost for their industry, given its benefit to home buyers.

Republicans from those states worry about taxes increasing on constituents when they can no longer deduct local levies. Asked if he was a "no" on the tax framework, for instance, MacArthur responded: "I'm certainly a loud objector."

"It's not fair to give the entire country a tax break on the backs of the citizens of these six or seven states ... the highest-tax states in the country, who by the way get the least back as a percentage of what we pay" to the federal government, he said.

The tax benefit provided \$338 billion in deductions in 2015, making it the most widely claimed itemized deduction that year, according to the most recently available IRS statistics. Fully repealing it would raise \$1.4 trillion in revenue over a decade, according to an estimate by Alex Brill of the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute.

MacArthur has been pressing Ryan and Brady on the issue for weeks and also met with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House economic adviser Gary Cohn, who are also insistent about ending the break, saying it mainly benefits upper-income taxpayers.

He's also coordinating with other GOP House members whose constituents face the same concerns, so they can make a concerted case. Some raised concerns about the provision during a half-day House GOP tax retreat on Wednesday as the plan was getting rolled out.

Ways and Means Republicans know the battle isn't over yet, regardless of whether they agree with Ryan and Brady's position that low-tax states shouldn't subsidize high-tax states, a feeling that reverberates even among some Republicans from places like New York.

"I say it's incumbent on our governor to reduce his budget from \$160 billion to \$100 billion," Rep. [Chris Collins](#) (R-N.Y.) said of New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. "I think it's incumbent on our governor to stop jamming the county taxpayers with the Medicaid costs that equate to 90 percent of the Erie County tax bill."

But Cuomo told reporters on Long Island that the state's congressional delegation needs to oppose the emerging Republican tax plan.

"I'm saying to our congressional representatives: You do whatever you have to do to stop this," Cuomo said. "I don't care if you have to filibuster. I don't care if you have to lay across the Senate floor and force them to remove you, bodily, from the chamber. This cannot happen. It would be devastating to the people of the state of New York."

Rep. [Pete King](#) (R-N.Y.) heard the message loud and clear. During the open mic session at the House Republican tax retreat Wednesday, he warned his colleagues that he could face a backlash at the ballot box should they eliminate the deduction.

King's centrist Republican district voted for former President Barack Obama twice by 5

points, he told the room. And while Trump won his district last election, it's only about 35 percent Republican, he said in a brief interview.

"The average person in my district — or the average one who voted for Trump ... their only asset is their home, and they're paying \$15,000 in property taxes on average. Probably another \$10,000 in [others]," he said.

GOP leaders responded to King at the retreat by asking him to "keep an open mind." And so far, some are: One Republican leadership source noted that no lawmakers have drawn a line in the sand over the matter — at least not yet.

In the meantime, Republican tax-writers are hoping to convince concerned members that they shouldn't publicly bash the framework just because they want to save the deduction. They're also pointing to their plan to double the standard deduction, which they argue would offset any hit to high-tax state constituents.

"I'm listening, I want to understand better," said Rep. [Charlie Dent](#) (R-Pa.), who acknowledged that although his state wouldn't feel as much impact as neighboring New York and New Jersey, there's uncertainty nonetheless. "I want to understand how the standard deduction being doubled will mitigate any changes potentially to the state and local property tax deduction."

But some GOP leaders are going on the offensive to try to discredit the state and local deduction. On Fox Business Thursday morning, for instance, House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#), who is from high-tax California himself, suggested the deduction actually serves as an incentive for states to ramp up taxes — because they know the federal government will "subsidize" hikes by allowing people to write them off their federal tax bills.

"Is it fair that other states subsidize states that have high state taxes?" he asked. "Look at California. California is one of the most mismanaged, highest-tax states in the nation. And they use an argument inside that [state] Capitol, 'Let's raise taxes, as you can write it off on your federal income tax.'"

It's unclear if such arguments will actually convince any opponents of ending the deduction, however. While Rep. [Leonard Lance](#) (R-N.J.), who also stood up to voice his objections during the House GOP retreat, wouldn't commit to voting "no," he said he's working in tandem with the others to keep pressing.

"This is a matter of grave importance to me," Lance said in an interview, labeling it a fairness issue since Garden Staters already pay more in federal taxes than they receive in federal tax benefits.

MacArthur has floated one alternative to create a single homeowner deduction that would let taxpayers pair their property taxes with interest they pay on their mortgages. New Jersey has higher property taxes than any other state.

Another option, from Rep. [Tom Reed](#) (R-N.Y.), would turn the existing federal deduction for taxes paid at the state and local levels into a credit. Reed, who sits on Ways and Means, said he's making his voice heard but is also keeping an open mind.

Brady said Republican leaders "are going to continue to listen to Congressman MacArthur and

others from the high-tax states. And secondly, it's crucial that we deliver tax relief for every American regardless of where they live, including those states that have high state and local taxes. So that's where we're going to focus."

But outside groups representing real estate interests, as well as state and municipal governments, aren't waiting. They're already taking up the fight under a single coalition called Americans Against Double Taxation.

The consequence of losing the benefit, they say, would not only hit housing, but also cut into spending on infrastructure, education, public safety and emergency services, and other civic amenities if states and cities are pressured to cut their own taxes as a result of the deduction's elimination.

"We better do more than just write letters," said Tom Cochran of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, one of the groups in the coalition. "Calls are being made right now and the pressure will come from the hinterlands across this nation."

Jimmy Vielkind and Bernie Becker contributed to this report.

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After triumphal rollout for tax reform, GOP faces the reality of delivering [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker, Colin Wilhelm and Aaron Lorenzo | 09/28/2017 08:09 PM EDT

The GOP's tax-reform efforts got a jolt of momentum this week, but Republicans also are getting a fresh reminder of how hard it will be to write a bill that makes it to President Donald Trump's desk this year.

They will have a number of hurdles to grapple with in the coming months, including selling their new plan to the public, fleshing out the policy, wrangling the rank and file and dealing with the myriad competing interests that will deluge the Hill.

Then there's the Senate, the graveyard of Republicans' efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare. Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), asked about the biggest challenges in turning the plan GOP leaders released this week into legislation, deadpanned: "Fellow senators.

"It's mostly all complicated," Hatch added, later noting: "I want it to be the right kind of a bill. I don't want it to be some piece of crap, which we're so used to around here."

The first challenge: passing a budget. Republicans in both chambers are trying to line up votes on a budget next week, a crucial and difficult step for tax reform that they'll have to tackle as they start wading into member concerns about what tax breaks might be on the chopping block.

The Senate Budget Committee looks ready to consider a framework that makes room for \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts, while the full House is expected to take up its budget after months of delay

in searching for the votes. If and when both chambers pass a budget, the House and the Senate would then have to reconcile their differences over spending targets and other potential obstacles.

Even if the chambers clear the budget hurdle relatively fast, some GOP lawmakers are already voicing concerns about how to fill in the specifics of the plan, and interest groups are already mobilizing to protect or advocate for certain provisions.

Plus, Hatch and other members of the Big Six who helped draft the plan have had to defend their product, which Trump sells as focused on the middle class, against intense Democratic attacks that it's merely a gift to the rich.

Gary Cohn, the director of the National Economic Council and a Big Six member, deflected questions Thursday about whether a plan that repealed the alternative minimum tax — meant to ensure that upper-income Americans can't escape taxes altogether — and cut taxes on businesses that pay through the individual system would help Trump.

Americans are worried about "their own financial situation," Cohn said at a White House briefing, hours after saying on ABC's "Good Morning America" that "I can't guarantee" that some middle-class people wouldn't get a tax hike under the framework.

For his part, Trump has been promising a massive tax cut for everyone at various rallies around the country. But with Democrats accusing Republicans of not caring about deficits caused by tax cuts, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said several times Thursday that the GOP plan would eventually pay for itself — and maybe then some.

"We think there will be \$2 trillion of growth," Mnuchin, another Big Six member, said on Fox Business. "So we think this tax plan will cut down the deficits by a trillion dollars."

Liberal groups also have been saying for days that it's laughable to think that the GOP plan, which also proposes cutting the corporate rate to 20 percent, cutting the top individual rate to 35 percent and repealing the estate tax, would be better for the middle class than for the wealthy.

Republicans are considering putting another income tax bracket on top of the 35 percent rate. But they've also drawn criticism from Democrats for proposing to raise the bottom tax rate for individuals from 10 percent to 12 percent, a charge that rank-and-file GOP lawmakers complained needed a better response during a half-day tax reform retreat on Wednesday.

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) called the criticism "nonsense" this week, insisting that taxpayers who currently pay 10 percent would pay nothing under the GOP plan. "The tax elevator goes down at every level," he said Wednesday.

He added in several speeches on Thursday that big-name Democrats like former Vice President Joe Biden, former Vice President Al Gore and former Secretary of State John Kerry all voted to take the lowest bracket to zero in the 1986 tax overhaul.

But perhaps the biggest challenge top Republicans will face on taxes is trying to get rid of tax breaks that have defenders on and off the Hill, and navigating all the various policy priorities pushed by groups around Washington.

"There's a constituency for every single one of them," Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) maintained,

predicting that a GOP tax plan would need to kill around \$4 trillion worth of tax incentives to break even.

The National Federation of Independent Business, a group that backs the "pass-through" businesses that pay through the individual tax system and has longstanding ties to the GOP, even had to be talked out of publicly criticizing the Republican framework, according to several people with knowledge of the discussions.

NFIB has long advocated for pass-through businesses to pay as close to the corporate rate as possible. The plan would set their rate at 25 percent, and the corporate rate at 20 percent.

"Our policy goals haven't changed, and we'll be working with Congress and the White House to secure them in the final bill," said Jack Mozloom, a spokesman for NFIB, adding that the group's statement on the GOP outline "made it clear that we wanted more details and that we will remain engaged."

The White House has suggested in closed-door meetings that it's open to taxing contributions to 401(k) savings plans up front and cutting the cap on the mortgage interest deduction in half. Some housing groups are already worried that the more robust standard deduction proposed by Republicans would amount to a backdoor repeal of the mortgage tax break.

The rush of lobbying on tax reform is to be expected, given how many potential losers there are when tax breaks go by the wayside. But outside groups face a risk if they're too aggressive in their efforts, warned Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform.

"If you sit on the side and throw rocks, you are at the back of the line," he said.

Still, Republican tax writers said those issues would all be worked through in time, even as senior administration officials and congressional leaders still say a tax [overhaul](#) can be signed into law this year.

"Look at the totality of the package," said Rep. [Vern Buchanan](#) (R-Fla.). "More of the blanks are going to get filled in the next week or so."

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Republicans hope to bridge enthusiasm gap on tax reform [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/28/2017 07:16 PM EDT

Tax reform is the top priority for success-starved Republicans in Washington, but selling the greater public on the issue is another matter.

Independent polling hasn't come close to matching the intensity of President Donald Trump, Hill GOP leaders, and conservative activists and interest groups on tax reform. A POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health [poll](#) conducted in late August and early September found that only 20 percent of respondents considered tax reform an extremely important priority, and opinions as to whether it would improve the economy were relatively

split.

About 9 in 10 voters have heard little or nothing about Republican efforts to craft a tax plan, according to the poll, which was conducted before Republican leaders rolled out their most detailed tax reform framework to date on Wednesday.

Reform advocates tout their own polls showing strong public support. The American Action Network, a group with ties to House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), released a poll Tuesday showing 73 percent of respondents agreeing that tax reform should be a "top" or "important" priority for Congress.

Democrats will try to capitalize on any enthusiasm gap between Washington-based groups and the general public — polling earlier in the summer commissioned by POLITICO also showed low trust on tax reform for Trump — and bill the tax plan as a giveaway to the rich and corporations.

Last month, House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas), an architect of the GOP plan, dismissed polls showing low public enthusiasm. He has been barnstorming for the plan outside Washington and inside, with appearances today at The Heritage Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Administration officials are fanning out, too. Vice President Mike Pence made stops in Michigan and Wisconsin on Thursday to pitch the Republican framework.

Pence rallied conservative groups on tax reform in a strategy meeting at the White House after the release. Republicans will attempt to overcome public complacency and Democratic messaging with a tandem effort of conservative grass-roots outreach and advertising, the foundation of which has already been laid.

Advocates argue it will be less of an uphill climb than GOP efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare.

"The tax bill is what will turn the economy around and remind people, 'Why did we vote for Trump and the Republicans? This is why!'" exclaimed Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, a conservative tax activist group. "As much fun as it is to talk about kneeling [NFL players] and all that, this is going to be a much more fun conversation."

Tax reform supporters are making the argument that all of its elements will boost the economy, including a major corporate tax cut that voters are skeptical of. A POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, conducted Sept. 7-14, showed 65 percent of respondents believed corporations paid too little already.

But 60 percent said small businesses paid too much, and there is a tax cut that would help them in the GOP plan, too.

When Trump went to Indiana to tout the plan after its unveiling, he characterized business tax cuts as benefiting individuals, too.

"This is a revolutionary change," he said of the proposed corporate tax cut, "and the biggest winners will be the everyday American workers as jobs start pouring into our country, as companies start competing for American labor, and as wages start going up at levels that you haven't seen in many years."

Republicans will rely on the bully pulpit of the president, as well as a coalition of activists and business groups, to hammer home that and other pro-reform messages.

"I do think that [Trump]'s an effective messenger out in the states," said Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity.

"The sense of urgency is something that we and other organizations pushing tax reform have to convey," said Pete Sepp, president of the National Taxpayers Union, another group present at the White House gathering with Pence.

Staff to the congressional and administration leaders on the tax overhaul briefed various conservative and business association representatives in the spacious House Ways and Means Committee room on Wednesday afternoon, and the Senate Finance Committee has invited members of key business groups and tax coalitions to meet with Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) on Oct. 3.

The principals drafting the tax legislation are trying to manage expectations on individual and business tax rates, saying they could be changed from the goals outlined Wednesday due to budgetary constraints and the give-and-take of the legislative process.

Still, Republicans and their allies largely showed a united front when the plan was released and believe they can give tax [reform](#) the momentum it needs, with a goal of Trump signing the changes into law by the end of the year.

If not, the confidence will quickly turn into despair.

"Republicans recognize that if they don't do this, there's going to be a ton of political hurt put on them," said Andrew Roth, vice president of government affairs for the conservative Club for Growth. "And that's a good motivator."

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Cohn: 'Our opening and final offer are on the table' on taxes [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/28/2017 04:45 PM EDT

The business tax rates outlined by Republicans in their proposed tax reform blueprint represent the GOP's "final offer," White House economic adviser Gary Cohn said this afternoon — unless Democrats are interested in cutting rates even further.

"Our opening offer and our final offer are on the table. We were happy to start at 25 and we're happy to go lower, and we're happy to start at 20 on corporate and go lower," Cohn told reporters at today's White House press briefing. "So there's our opening offer. If he wants to counter something lower, we're very negotiable."

The "he" referred to Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), who said in remarks on the Senate floor today that "Democrats understand that small businesses need a break. We will

work with our colleagues to do it." Schumer has otherwise panned the Republican proposal, labeling it "wealth care" because of what he said are too many benefits for wealthy Americans.

Cohn has [said](#) the administration's proposed corporate tax rate of 20 percent, compared to the current 35 percent, allowed for "no room to negotiate." He also appeared to refer to a 25 percent proposed rate for so-called pass-through businesses, many of which are small.

While many of the GOP proposal's provisions are anathema to Democrats' priorities, Schumer has stopped just short in recent days of saying his party would not work with the Republicans if they were open to negotiating on the plan.

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Democrats see Trump, health care as albatrosses for tax reform [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/28/2017 08:26 PM EDT

The Democrats' plan to fight the Republican tax reform plan? Tie it to President Donald Trump and health care.

A memo from the political wing of the liberal Center for American Progress, CAP Action Fund, circulated to congressional offices on Thursday, calls for Democrats to tie Republicans' ambitions to Trump, especially the ways in which he could benefit from the plan his White House helped draft.

The memo, which was provided to POLITICO, also advises that the cuts demanded by House conservatives in the budget resolution that will be used as the vehicle for tax reform could come from health programs. Democrats should tie those two topics together the same way they branded Republican attempts to repeal Obamacare as a tax cut for the wealthy, the memo argues.

"Given the fact that the emerging Republican tax plan would primarily benefit the wealthy, the inclusion of health care in the FY 2018 budget reconciliations would once again mean a debate over stripping people of their health care to fund tax cuts for the wealthy," the memo reads. "This messaging frame — that Republicans are taking away health care to fund tax cuts for the rich — presents the best line of attack against both tax reform and a revived ACA repeal, and should Republicans combine these two efforts, Democrats should be prepared to hammer it relentlessly."

Democrats were also advised to highlight that the most costly tax cut in the Republican plan will be to the corporate income tax rate, which currently stands at 35 percent but would be reduced to 20 percent under the unified White House-Hill GOP framework released Wednesday.

The memo also says that Trump would likely pay less in taxes if the Alternative Minimum Tax were repealed as planned. Trump paid most of his taxes due to that provision in 2005, according to partial copies of his tax returns that MSNBC host Rachel Maddow obtained. And Trump's children would benefit from the repeal of the estate tax, which the Republican plan

also proposes.

A proposed lower rate for closely held companies and small businesses, referred to as "pass-throughs," would also theoretically benefit the Trump Organization.

"The plan is tailor made to personally benefit Donald Trump," CAP Action Fund's memo concludes.

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Trump pledges 'giant, beautiful, massive' tax cut [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 09/29/2017 12:54 PM EDT

President Donald Trump extolled the broad strokes of his administration's tax plan on Friday, calling it "a giant, beautiful, massive — the biggest ever in our country — tax cut."

Trump unveiled the framework of his administration's plan for tax reform and tax cuts in Indiana earlier this week, and he traveled Friday to a Washington, D.C., hotel to continue touting the proposal in an address to the National Association of Manufacturers.

The president reiterated that his tax plan would slash taxes for everyday Americans, simplify the tax code, level the playing field for American workers and return trillions of dollars that are kept offshore to reinvest into the U.S.

Trump said the policy of Washington when it comes to manufacturing has for decades been best summarized by a single term: surrender.

"They surrendered," Trump said of past administrations. "Under my administration, the era of economic surrender is over, and the rebirth of American industry is beginning. America is winning again, and America is being respected again, and you see that happening all over."

He added that his administration is working daily "to lift the burdens on our companies and on our workers so that they can thrive, compete and grow."

"And at the very center of that plan," he said, "is a giant, beautiful, massive — the biggest ever in our country — tax cut."

The Senate Budget Committee released the text of a fiscal 2018 budget resolution that would allow Senate Republicans to overhaul the tax code on a party line vote. Republicans had unsuccessfully attempted to use the maneuver, called reconciliation, to repeal and replace Obamacare, though Trump maintains the chamber has the votes to pass repeal and will do so early next year.

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GAO: Banks held \$10.5T in potentially risky derivatives after rule change [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 09/29/2017 10:28 AM EDT

A rollback of the so-called swaps pushout rule allowed four large banks to retain \$10.5 trillion in derivatives contracts in federally insured parts of their operations as of September 2016, a new [report](#) from the Government Accountability Office found.

The derivatives rule, part of the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act but amended in the 2015 fiscal spending bill, required banks to spin off derivatives trading businesses that are in federally insured divisions.

After the change, Bank of America, Citi, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase pushed out an estimated \$265 billion of swaps in notional value, compared to \$10.5 trillion that they kept in their insured divisions.

"Today's report largely confirms our own investigative findings: the 2014 repeal of this Dodd-Frank provision was a massive giveaway to a few big banks, letting them hold onto more than \$10 trillion — that's trillion with a T — of risky assets," said Sen. [Elizabeth Warren](#) (D-Mass.) and Rep. [Elijah Cummings](#) (D-Md.), who requested the report in 2015. "And it leaves taxpayers potentially holding the bag if things go bad."

But the report also found that other provisions in Dodd-Frank will likely help mitigate the additional risk created by this change.

"If banks continue to hold financial resources and maintain adequate risk-management systems, as required by their regulators and certain Dodd-Frank Act reforms and regulations, losses stemming solely from the swap activity likely can be absorbed by the banks without causing them serious financial distress," it said.

"However ... it is important to note that derivatives can exacerbate a firm's financial distress caused by other losses as illustrated by Lehman's failure," it added.

American Bankers Association spokesman Jeff Sigmund said the report shows that banks "are well prepared to manage their derivative risks, and do so." He also pointed out that the notional value of derivatives overstate their actual risk.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, for example, [found](#) that the real exposure from these banks' derivatives holdings is "small and actually declining," he said. Specifically, it found that for the top five institutions, total value at risk is \$273 million, down from \$329 million at the end of 2014, when the swaps pushout change was made.

"Not trillion, not billion, but million," Sigmund said.

Banks told GAO that the unamended version of the rule would have likely reduced the efficiency of dealers and end users in managing counterparty credit risk.

Warren and Cummings underlined the importance of not further rolling back Dodd-Frank, in their statement.

"GAO's report is a warning to everyone that rolling back other Dodd-Frank provisions will increase financial risks," they said. "And these risks will be compounded if banks are allowed to return to the free-wheeling abuses they engaged in before we passed the Dodd-Frank Act."

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Education Department awards charter school grants [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 09/28/2017 05:16 PM EDT

The Education Department today [awarded](#) more than \$250 million in federal funds to states and charter school management organizations for the creation and expansion of public charter schools.

Nine states will split more than \$144 million in grants to support new and expanded charter schools. Seventeen nonprofit charter school management organizations will get a cut of more than \$52 million to expand and replicate high-quality charters. And eight organizations will share more than \$56 million to enhance the credit of charter schools so they [can access](#) private and non-federal funds to acquire, construct, and renovate charter school facilities.

"These grants will help supplement state-based efforts to give students access to more options for their education," Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said in a statement. "What started as a handful of schools in Minnesota has blossomed into nearly 7,000 charter schools across the country."

"Charter schools are now part of the fabric of American education, and I look forward to seeing how we can continue to work with states to help ensure more students can learn in an environment that works for them," she said.

Both House and Senate appropriators support increased federal funding for charter schools, but not the \$500 million sought by President Donald Trump in his fiscal 2018 budget proposal earlier this year.

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ACA navigators adjust to new reality [Back](#)

By Renuka Rayasam | 09/28/2017 03:35 PM EDT

AUSTIN, Texas — "Navigator" groups that help people sign up for Obamacare coverage are scrambling to adapt to a compressed open enrollment period and cutbacks by the Trump administration for outreach support. To adapt, they're forced to look for new funding, shift resources and reorganize scheduled events to maximize the use of staff.

The Obama administration relied on navigators to connect with communities with high uninsured rates and to draw younger, healthier people into Obamacare markets. They also educate consumers about their health insurance options and help them through the process of signing up for coverage.

By contrast, HHS this year [slashed](#) its advertising budget by 90 percent and funding for navigators by 40 percent. Earlier this week, the agency said it won't send federal or regional staffers to open enrollment events designed to boost the number of enrollees in ACA plans.

The shift is pushing navigators to pivot in their approach.

"We have to outsmart the situation as best we can," said Ken Goodgames CEO of the Community Council of Greater Dallas, which has seen its HHS funding cut from about \$2.2 million to \$1.8 million. "If this is the new steady state, we have to figure out how to go about evolving."

HHS' current stance is in sharp contrast to the role it's played in previous years. An August 2015 HHS presentation shared with POLITICO shows that the agency had detailed plans in place to collaborate with navigators well before the start of open enrollment. In the era of Obama, the agency conducted analyses of the previous year's open enrollment efforts, outlined communications themes for each week of open enrollment and detailed where to dispatch the HHS secretary and staff for maximum impact.

This year, HHS has sent a clear message that navigators are entirely on their own.

"Marketplace enrollment events are organized and implemented by outside groups with their own agendas, not HHS," said Caitlin Oakley, HHS press secretary. "These events may continue regardless of HHS participation."

Oakley added that the ACA was a "bad deal" and riddled with "failures."

With that attitude, the agency's involvement in open enrollment events could actually backfire, said Elizabeth Hagan, associate director of coverage initiatives at Families USA.

"If they were going to participate and make it political, it's almost a good thing they weren't participating," she said.

Still, navigator groups say the lack of support hampers their enrollment efforts. In addition to providing funding, HHS staff in the Obama administration would generate publicity for events and keep navigators informed of changes or specific issues to be aware of during open enrollment.

Jodi Ray, who oversees the Covering Florida Navigator Consortium, said in previous years, the health secretary would attend the group's kick-off enrollment event. This year, staffers from HHS have yet to contact her. Her group saw its funding cut from \$5.8 million to \$4.9 million.

"They were extremely engaged," Ray said about the health secretaries under the previous administration. "It was valuable to get the attention of the press to get the information out."

That loss of technical assistance and support could become even more pronounced when open enrollment hits and navigators run into problems helping people sign up for coverage.

Jill Ramirez at the Austin-based Latino HealthCare Forum said that in previous years, she would have a weekly call with her CMS program officer; two years ago she hosted former Labor Secretary Tom Perez, who helped the group garner media attention for enrollment efforts. But recently she was told that her "wonderful" CMS contact was stepping aside, and that her group's funding would be cut from about \$250,000 to \$13,000.

"It does feel like it was meant to destruct and discourage," said Ramirez, who has partially made up for funding cuts with money from the city and county.

"But we're continuing," Ramirez said, "despite what the administration has tried."

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Fannie and Freddie make \$5.1 billion payment to Treasury [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 09/29/2017 03:35 PM EDT

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac made their quarterly dividend payments to Treasury today, transferring more than \$5.1 billion.

To date, the government-backed mortgage companies have paid nearly [\\$275.9 billion](#) to taxpayers under an agreement with Treasury. That contract, known as the net worth sweep of company profits, requires the companies to eliminate all of their capital by the end of this year, raising the odds that they'll need to tap Treasury for cash, something they haven't done since 2012.

Combined, Fannie and Freddie have drawn about \$187.5 billion in taxpayer aid since the housing collapse.

WHAT'S NEXT: There is growing political pressure to allow the companies to retain a capital buffer or make their dividend payments annually instead of quarterly.

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Date: Friday, August 04, 2017 4:55:03 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes | 08/04/2017 04:52 PM EDT

SEE YA IN SEPTEMBER: For appropriations purposes, it might as well be Sept. 5, because lawmakers won't be lifting a legislative finger on their unfinished spending bills for more than four weeks. The August hiatus, albeit a congressional normality, seems especially painful this year for those anxious to get funding levels firmed up. After all, the Senate's spending panel hasn't even introduced or marked up six of its 12 measures, making no headway in the extra days the chamber was in session this week to muddle through more attempts to repeal Obamacare and confirm long-delayed nominees.

Inaction tracker: If you've lost track of the House's rapid-fire appropriations action over the last month, or couldn't quite follow along with the Senate's pokey pace, check out our [Appropriations Watch](#) tool.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Big recess plans, anyone? Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc of the day — CBO's newly released [score](#) on domestic and mandatory costs of the Senate's version of the National Defense Authorization Act, [S. 1519 \(115\)](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Federal grand jurors are [paid](#) just \$40 to \$50 per day, plus transportation reimbursement and meal allowances, and employers are not legally required to keep paying workers during their jury service.

TAX

HOMEOWNERS WILL HOWL: One of the most popular tax breaks in America might shrink under the GOP's overhaul plans. Colin Wilhelm [reports](#) today that multiple sources tracking tax reform say the cap on writing off mortgage interest could be lowered, despite Trump's promises to protect the homeownership deduction.

Multi-billion-dollar pay-for: If those rumors become reality, the real estate industry will give 'em hell. But there would be gain for that pain: The Tax Foundation estimates that \$308 billion could be saved over the 10-year budget window Republicans are working with, after factoring in negative economic consequences. And tax writers are in search of some solid pay-fors now that they've ditched the idea of a 20 percent business tax on imported goods and services.

INFRASTRUCTURE

CONFIRMATIONS OPEN FLOODGATES: While top offices at FERC have laid vacant for the first six months of the Trump presidency, a multibillion-dollar backlog of infrastructure projects has been building. Now, with Senate confirmation this week of droves of nominees, the agency's preparing to make it rain. As Eric Wolff and Darius Dixon [report](#) today, FERC must work through a backlog that has grown to at least \$13 billion worth of projects expected to generate more than 23,000 construction jobs, according to a POLITICO analysis of late-

stage applications waiting for approval.

Nick of time: FERC oversees interstate pipelines, liquefied natural gas exports and wholesale electricity markets. And confirmation of Pennsylvania regulator Rob Powelson and Republican Senate aide Neil Chatterjee could not come too soon. "I would not begin to minimize even the passage of another month," says former FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable, "because there are high stakes in the matters that come before FERC each and every day — vast amounts of capital at issue, vast amounts of consumer cost or savings at stake."

ENERGY

DON'T SAY THE FEDS DIDN'T TRY: The utility company that made headlines this week for abandoning an over-budget nuclear project in South Carolina had asked for up to \$3 billion in federal help, Darius [reports](#). An Energy Department official said the agency considered offering the company a loan guarantee, "which they ultimately chose not to pursue."

JOBS

MILLION MARK: Two months after saying the economy had added more than a million jobs under his leadership, President Donald Trump's claim has come true. The Labor Department [reports](#) today that 209,000 jobs were added in July. Marianne Levine [explains](#) that these latest numbers are a decrease from June, when the economy added 231,000 jobs. But unemployment ticked down to 4.3 percent, compared to June's 4.4 percent. Average hourly private-sector earnings were up 2.5 percent over the previous year, as they were in June.

Put in perspective: The pattern of growth in 2017 remains essentially the same as in 2016. According to the Labor Department, an average of 184,000 jobs per month have been created this year, compared to 187,000 in 2016. If you eliminate January, when President Barack Obama was still in office, the monthly average is a somewhat lower, at 179,000.

OBAMACARE

POST-ADJOURNMENT REALITY CHECK: Proving they were bluffing with the repeal-or-bust ultimatum, GOP leaders have closed the Senate for legislative business for the remainder of the month. Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko [explain](#) the lay of the land: After seven years of unity on repealing Obamacare, Republicans are rudderless on how to talk about or address the defining domestic policy issue of nearly the past decade for their party, and they have no clear plans despite holding all the levers of power in Washington. Now, they face a month away from the Capitol, answering to their home-state voters about their lack of progress.

EARMARKS

- Treasury gets reinforcements to confront sweeping agenda. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Illinois fights potential hike in disabled care funding. [Reuters](#).
- Jockeying begins in race for House Budget gavel. [The Hill](#).
- The Republicans' budget mess. [AEI](#).

— Op-ed: Why Trump's new immigration bill makes sense. [POLITICO Magazine](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 58 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Sept. 30, 2017). 423 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/08/senators-split-despite-massive-backlog-of-appropriations-action-024097>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump administration weighs halving popular homeowner tax benefit [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 08/04/2017 05:03 AM EDT

A tax break popular with homeowners and the real estate industry could take a hit as Republicans look for ways to pay for their tax reform plan.

Despite promises from the Trump administration in April that it would "protect the homeownership ... deductions," multiple sources tracking tax reform said that the cap on the mortgage interest deduction — currently set at the interest on up to \$1 million of mortgage debt — could be lowered in tax reform.

That would be a slap in the face to an industry that strongly supported President Donald Trump during his presidential bid: He overwhelmingly won a straw poll by the National Association of Realtors during its annual meeting last year.

The topic came up during a White House roundtable with real estate industry representatives on Monday. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, a key decision-maker on tax reform, and his lead deputy on tax reform, Shahira Knight, led the meeting. Cohn had previously told members of Congress that almost everything, including changes to the mortgage interest deduction, would be on the table.

"They're willing to ruffle some feathers," said one attendee of Monday's meeting. "Everything was on the table," including capping the deduction that the Trump administration has said it would preserve.

No final decision has been made yet, as Republicans work during Washington's sleepy days of August to craft a reform plan that will be politically palatable and meet the criteria for the budgetary maneuver they plan to use to bypass Democrats who could hold up a bill in the Senate. But lowering the cap on the mortgage interest deduction would help offset tax cuts for individuals and businesses.

"I've seen proposals that drop it to \$500,000," said Rohit Kumar, lead on PricewaterhouseCoopers' Washington tax policy team and a former senior staffer to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), one of the six Congressional and administration leaders negotiating tax reform.

After tabling a 20 percent business tax on imported goods and services, known as border adjustability, Republicans need ways to pay for tax cuts so they can minimize the amount

those cuts would add to the deficit. The Tax Foundation, a tax policy think tank, estimates that after factoring in negative economic consequences, \$308 billion could be saved over the 10-year budget window Republicans are working with by lowering the mortgage deduction.

Like many issues in tax reform, the mortgage interest deduction divides more along parochial than ideological lines. Conservatives and progressives alike criticize the deduction as inefficient and more useful for wealthy taxpayers than the working class it's supposed to help put in homes. But its popularity with homeowners in more expensive areas and with the real estate industry have helped it weather past attempts to cut or eliminate it.

"There's not a lot of conservative support for the mortgage interest deduction," said Ryan Ellis, a conservative tax lobbyist.

One example: In February, Mark Calabria, then a financial regulatory expert with the libertarian CATO Institute and now Vice President Mike Pence's top economic adviser, and progressive housing activist Diane Yentel penned an op-ed in favor of reducing the mortgage deduction.

Conservative support for cutting the deduction, combined with smoke signals out of the White House that a reduction could be a part of a broader tax reform package, has the real estate and building industries concerned.

"[L]imiting the mortgage interest deduction amounts to a de facto tax increase on current or future homeowners while putting homeownership further out of reach for prospective buyers," said National Association of Realtors President William Brown in a statement. "We would have strong objections over any effort to further cap or limit the deductibility of mortgage interest."

Brown added that he hadn't seen a sure signal that capping mortgage interest would definitely be in a tax reform proposal, though a \$500,000 cap was brought up as an option at the White House, according to those who attended the meeting.

Another part of the calculus for the Trump administration and congressional conservatives: Use of the deduction could dramatically drop if Republicans push through the doubling of the standard deduction that individuals can take instead of itemizing different tax write-offs.

Reducing the mortgage interest deduction "gets a little tricky because it depends on what else you're doing on the individual side," said Kumar, who added that it's only on the table if Republicans follow through on their goal of doubling the standard deduction.

By some estimates, doubling the standard deduction could lower by 90 percent the use of the mortgage interest deduction by middle-class Americans, eroding much of the argument for keeping it.

That's made the Republican proposal to double the standard deduction a proxy battle over the mortgage benefit. Even though the administration signaled it would keep the mortgage interest deduction in the tax code when Cohn and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced Trump's tax goals this past spring, the National Association of Realtors blasted the inclusion of doubling the standard deductions in those goals.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) reiterated doubling of the standard deduction as a goal in tax reform

during a [meeting with conservative groups](#) on July 28.

"By doubling the standard deduction and repealing the state and local tax deduction, [Trump's] plan would effectively nullify the current tax benefits of owning a home for the vast majority of tax filers," NAR said in a statement tied to the release of Trump's tax goals.

Still, the industry hopes for a near-literal Trump card in the form of the president and his family's deep ties to the real estate industry.

"I'm not so sure it's going to translate into legislative language," said one lobbyist tracking the issue, citing Trump's real estate business. The same lobbyist anticipated a "broad-based campaign" in opposition to any reduction in mortgage interest this fall if the proposal stays in the tax reform conversation.

Lorraine Woellert contributed to this report.

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FERC confirmations set to unleash a backlog of stalled infrastructure work [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff and Darius Dixon | 08/04/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Billions of dollars' worth of shovel-ready infrastructure projects have been held up by a bureaucratic morass that President Donald Trump helped to create.

Trump's promise of a trillion-dollar infrastructure bill has so far failed to materialize on Capitol Hill, but even the executive branch he oversees has a growing backlog of natural gas pipelines and a gas export terminal waiting for approval.

On Thursday, the Senate confirmed enough nominees at the FERC to let the agency get back to business — but now FERC must work through a backlog that has grown to at least \$13 billion worth of projects expected to generate more than 23,000 construction jobs, according to a POLITICO analysis of late-stage applications waiting for approval. FERC oversees interstate pipelines, liquefied natural gas exports and wholesale electricity markets. The commission has been crippled by vacancies since February, after Trump demoted its former chairman, who promptly quit — leaving it unable to conduct any major business until the Senate confirms new commissioners.

The [confirmation](#) of Pennsylvania regulator Rob Powelson and Republican Senate aide Neil Chatterjee could not come too soon.

"I would not begin to minimize even the passage of another month," said former FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable, "because there are high stakes in the matters that come before FERC each and every day — vast amounts of capital at issue, vast amounts of consumer cost or savings at stake."

Many of the largest pipeline projects run right through Trump country, carrying gas out of shale plays in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio — all states Trump won last year and

hopes to win again. One project alone, called Atlantic Coast, would bring 10,000 jobs to West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina, and the \$2 billion NEXUS line would put 3,300 people to work in Michigan and Pennsylvania, states Trump flipped to red for the first time in decades.

The holdup comes as FERC, which has a \$350 million annual budget and 1,500 employees, has found its once-quiet regulatory responsibilities increasingly politicized as its work draws closer to the center of some of the most significant energy and climate policy debates facing the country. The small independent agency does not formally take direction from the White House, but it has ample power to shape Trump's agenda of U.S. "energy dominance." FERC is in charge of authorizing facilities to export natural gas; balancing the environmental risks and benefits of the fracking boom; setting rates for increasingly complicated energy markets; and deciding how far states can go in propping up nuclear power plants by paying more for their carbon-free energy.

Environmentalists, who besieged the agency's board meetings with protests last year, say FERC takes too narrow a view of its mandate to ensure affordable, reliable energy supplies and has ignored larger questions of climate change and environmental protection. Their protests have intensified in the wake of the fracking boom that led to higher demand for new pipelines and export terminals.

Industry supporters say any policy changes need to come from Congress and complain that their projects are falling victim to partisan infighting.

But virtually everyone who has a history with FERC agrees that the polarization around the agency did not begin this year. The agency's long state of paralysis is complex enough that Trump is not solely at fault.

"There are a number of things that had to go wrong to put FERC in this current position, and every single one of them went wrong," said Marc Spitzer, a former Republican FERC commissioner. "It's unfair to put all the blame on any one person."

FERC was set at the precipice of dysfunction by former President Barack Obama, when GOP Commissioner Phil Moeller resigned in October 2015 and fellow Republican Tony Clark followed him out the door 11 months later. Obama never nominated anyone to fill the two GOP-designated seats, in part because of Democrats' larger political feud with Senate Republicans after Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) blocked Merrick Garland's nomination to the Supreme Court without any hearings or votes.

But it was Trump who pushed FERC off that cliff, when he stripped the chairmanship from Norman Bay and gave it to Cheryl LaFleur, another Democrat. Bay followed the lead of most chairs who lose the gavel and resigned, taking the agency's quorum with him. As of July 1, when Honorable resigned, LaFleur became the agency's sole member.

Democrats fault the White House for the pace of confirming new commissioners. The Senate has traditionally confirmed nominees to bipartisan commissions such as FERC by packaging picks from both parties together before bringing them to the floor for votes. But the White House only formally nominated Democratic aide Rich Glick on Wednesday, five weeks after announcing plans to do so.

Others blame the lack of trust in a polarized Washington.

"The Senate functions based on trust and unanimous consent. If everything in the Senate has to go the whole nine yards, then virtually nothing gets done," said one longtime industry official close to pending projects who asked not to be named in order to speak freely. The Senate can move swiftly, the source added, "but in order for that to happen, there needs to be some measure of trust."

Two of Trump's FERC picks, Republicans Chatterjee and Powelson, cleared the Senate energy committee in June, but without Glick's nomination, Senate Democrats were unlikely to allow a delay-free confirmation. Once Glick's papers came in, Democrats let them through on the last day before a monthlong recess.

But industry spent the intervening months watching the clock tick while projects stayed frozen.

"FERC's lack of a quorum since early February represents an unnecessary drag on the economy, sidelining billions of dollars in private capital otherwise poised to put thousands of Americans to work expanding and improving our nation's energy delivery system," said Adam Parker, a spokesman for the NEXUS pipeline project being built by Enbridge.

Enbridge will miss a year-end deadline to begin operating the \$2 billion, 256-mile natural gas link between a Marcellus shale natural gas field in eastern Ohio and markets in Michigan and Canada. The project, which would put 3,365 people to work, finished its environmental review in November — the penultimate regulatory step before construction can begin — and has been waiting since for the commission to get staffed up.

NEXUS is one of 18 pipelines and gas projects that have completed environmental reviews since last fall but could not receive FERC's final OK while it lacked a quorum. Others include TransCanada's WB Xpress; the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which has six companies behind it; the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, being built by a partnership of Duke, Dominion, Piedmont Gas and Southern Company; and PennEast, whose backers include Southern Company and Spectra Energy. Each of these projects will carry natural gas out of the Marcellus shale to population centers in the East or Midwest.

An unusual deep-water LNG export terminal that Delfin LNG wants to build at Port Delfin in Louisiana has its Department of Energy approval, but it needs FERC to sign off on-shore parts of the project before construction can begin.

Together, the projects stand to employ more than 23,000 people in mostly temporary construction jobs and would inject more than \$13 billion in investments into the economy, according to the companies behind them.

For many of these pipelines, the lack of a quorum may have cost them a year of work: Summer and fall are ideal times to build in much of the country. Foul weather stops construction in winter, and environmental considerations often make spring work untenable.

The delays provided a temporary win to the growing ranks of anti-pipeline protesters, who have been arrested at FERC meetings and sometimes even camped outside of commissioners' homes to protest approvals of the infrastructure necessary to move all the new natural gas unlocked by the fracking boom.

Some of those same activists were hoping Senate Democrats would do everything possible to keep the open seats from ever being filled. But that pressure was responsible for the delay, and no Senate Democrats have endorsed the blockade. Sen. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.), whom activists cite as an ally, opposed the two nominated commissioners in committee, and he opposes a bipartisan energy bill that would speed up pipeline approvals.

Keeping FERC without a quorum slowed that process.

"As long as there's no quorum established, no pipelines are being approved. That helps us," said Karen Feridun, founder of Berks Gas Truth, an anti-fracking group out of Berks County, Penn., that is part of the umbrella FERC Vacancies Coalition.

Pipeline approvals are not the only backlog awaiting Trump's new FERC commissioners. They will also be thrust into the center of testy regional and state-level battles over programs designed to address climate change by subsidizing nuclear power plants, and potentially price carbon emissions.

"FERC, and what's subject to its jurisdiction, kind of got dragged into the climate debate," the industry official said, noting that the agency has found itself the target of ever-increasing interest on Capitol Hill from "those in Congress who wanted to stop the Clean Power Plan and were unable to do so."

Figuring out a way to bridge — or block — expansive state energy policies is among the biggest issues that FERC has struggled with over the past several years. Those policies are horrendously complex and tend not to break down along traditional partisan lines, but the task will nonetheless end up on Kevin McIntyre's desk if he's confirmed as chairman.

Those looming policy issues have largely focused on New York and Illinois, which both approved nuclear power incentive programs last year that could have a big impact on electricity markets overseen by FERC, as well as any other state-level policy tailored to specific energy sources.

The Electric Power Supply Association, which represents a range of independent generators, filed complaints in January hoping FERC might stop state programs subsidizing struggling nuclear plants in the New York and PJM Interconnection markets, by arguing those plans would artificially low power prices. EPSA had hoped for FERC action before plans in New York and Illinois took effect this spring. But without a quorum, FERC's hands are tied.

And an [Illinois judge](#) wasn't sympathetic when he knocked down the group's lawsuit to quash the program, saying "FERC's current paralysis does not change the structural limitations on judicial power."

Meanwhile, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania have started to mull their options for helping power plants in their states just as state regulators and a broad swath of the energy industry have increasingly looked to FERC for policy guidance. Many of the nonprofit organizations that operate regions of the electric grid are also trying to develop a market-based way to give states what they want, which [may include](#) a price on carbon.

"One of the greatest challenges that this new commission will face," Honorable said, "is how to support moving through the challenges associated with the implementation of state energy policy and the operation of wholesale energy and capacity markets."

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Source: Utility asked DOE for \$3B to prop up South Carolina nuclear project [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/04/2017 12:25 PM EDT

SCANA asked DOE for a grant for as much as \$3 billion amid their efforts to rescue their V.C. Summer nuclear project, according to an agency official.

Earlier this week, top brass at the company [told state regulators](#) that they sought a grant from DOE valued at least \$1 billion in order to help cover ballooning expenses for the project, which is expected to take another \$7.1 billion to finish. The Summer project's owners [announced their plans](#) this week to abandon the effort.

SCANA CEO Kevin Marsh said he made a "very clear" plea for "direct support from the government in the form of a grant."

A DOE official said the agency considered offering SCANA a loan guarantee, "which they ultimately chose not to pursue."

Marsh also suggested that Southern Co., which is assessing the future of its own over-budget two-reactor project in Georgia, asked DOE for money.

"We made it known to everybody we talked to what we were looking for," Marsh said of SCANA's pursuit of a DOE grant, "and Southern Company asked for the same thing because their cost estimates, I suspect, will be in the same range of ours."

Southern Co. and SCANA didn't respond to a request for comment.

Axios reported on SCANA's request earlier today.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Vogtle project owners expect to file their recommendation on the future of the reactors with state regulators later this month. DOE has already extended an \$8.3 billion loan guarantee to the Vogtle project.

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Trump (finally!) reaches million-jobs mark [Back](#)

By Marianne LeVine | 08/04/2017 08:50 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's claim that he's created a million jobs finally came true — months after he first made it.

"We've added ... more than a million private sector jobs," Trump [said](#) on June 1, when the Labor Department's tally was [about 600,000](#). On Monday White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders [said](#), "We've created over a million new jobs since [Trump] took office," when DOL's tally was 863,000.

With the Labor Department [reporting](#) Friday that the economy added 209,000 jobs in July, Trump can finally say, truthfully, that he's created more than a million jobs since entering office. Trump [tweeted](#) shortly after the report's release: "Excellent Jobs Numbers just released - and I have only just begun. Many job stifling regulations continue to fall. Movement back to USA!"

July's jobs number was a decrease from June, when the economy added 231,000 jobs. But unemployment ticked down to 4.3 percent, compared to June's 4.4 percent. Average hourly private-sector earnings were up 2.5 percent over the previous year, as they were in June.

The pattern of job growth in 2017 remains essentially the same as in 2016. According to the Labor Department, an average of 184,000 jobs per month have been created this year, compared to 187,000 in 2016. If you eliminate January, when President Barack Obama was still in office, the monthly average is a somewhat lower 179,000.

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) called the report "solid" and said, "Our economy is making steady progress with more people entering the labor force and continued job creation." But he cautioned that the report "also shows too many Americans are still having a hard time finding good-paying jobs, getting a raise, and providing for their families."

Sen. [Martin Heinrich](#) (D-N.M.), ranking member of the Joint Economic Committee, blamed Trump for weak wage growth.

"After nearly eight months on the job, President Trump has failed to come up with a cogent plan to create good-paying jobs and increase wages," Heinrich said in a written statement. "As a result, wages are barely exceeding inflation, and more than 100,000 workers have been laid off as companies continue to close American operations and ship jobs overseas."

Analysts reacted positively to Friday's jobs report.

"Kind of all-around strong headline number," Tony Bedikian, head of global markets for Citizens Bank, told [CNBC](#). "More people are coming into the labor force and finding jobs. It's difficult to find anything really negative in the report."

Elise Gould, senior economist at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, said that "we are still steadily moving toward full employment," but estimated that "we need to add at least 223,000 jobs per month over the next year to lower the unemployment rate to 4 percent and bring another million workers back in from the sidelines."

Experts [surveyed](#) by Bloomberg had predicted the creation in July of about 178,000 jobs, an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent, and an over-the-year increase in hourly earnings of 2.5 percent. The payroll company ADP [estimated](#) Wednesday based on its own records that private-sector job growth in July was 178,000.

The jobs report followed [news](#) from the Commerce Department last week that Gross Domestic

Product increased 2.6 percent in the second quarter of 2017, up from the first quarter's 1.2 percent. GDP grew 1.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016, 2.8 percent in the third quarter and 2.2 percent in the second quarter. Although the second quarter of 2017's 2.6 percent figure is an improvement over the first quarter, it still falls short of the Trump administration's [goal](#) of "sustained 3% economic growth."

Commerce's second cut at estimating second quarter growth is Aug. 30.

Labor force participation remained low at 62.9 percent, up from June's 62.8 percent, close to its lowest level since the 1970's. "I think there's some slack in the labor market," National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn said this morning on Bloomberg, "I think we can ... make it easier for small and medim-sized businesses to grow. ... We do think there is much more potential to bring people back into the labor force."

Victoria Guida contributed to this report.

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Republicans leave town with no clear path on Obamacare [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko | 08/03/2017 06:27 PM EDT

Republicans are leaving Washington Thursday for a month of recess with no clear direction on what they'll do next on Obamacare.

Senate leaders want to just drop the issue altogether. Conservatives say they're still fighting for repeal. Moderates want to launch a bipartisan effort to fix the shaky Obamacare system.

The reality is that, after seven years of unity on repealing Obamacare, Republicans are rudderless on how to talk about or address the defining domestic policy issue of nearly the past decade for their party, and they have no clear plans despite holding all the levers of power in Washington. Now, they face a month away from the Capitol, answering to their home-state voters about their lack of progress.

"I still think something gets through, just because there's families that are not going to be able to afford their insurance, middle-income families," said Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.). "It's going to be a lot of effort."

Robert Laszewski, an insurance industry consultant, thinks Republicans may find their footing. "Things get done in Washington, D.C., when they have to get done," he said. "I don't think this is over. They're going to get yelled at when they got home for being incompetent, for embarrassing themselves."

The August recess will mark the first time lawmakers have been home for an extended period since the repeal effort collapsed in the Senate. After seven years of campaigning against the law, this break marks the first time in nearly a decade that the GOP hasn't aligned its talking points against the Affordable Care Act. Several Republican lawmakers, most House members, have planned town hall meetings, meaning they're unlikely to be able to avoid the subject.

"Our focus should be on honoring our promise to repeal Obamacare and to lower premiums," said Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). "Under Obamacare the profits of the 10 largest insurance companies have doubled. The insurance companies are making out like bandits, yet Senate Democrats want to give them billions more in taxpayer money. We should be working for the American people, not for the giant health care companies."

President Donald Trump wants to keep the focus on repeal, too. He has continued to hammer Republicans for not following through on their promise to scrap the law, which will make it hard to move on to other priorities, particularly tax reform.

The looming open-enrollment season for Obamacare is also likely to keep health care on the front burner. Insurers must finalize rates in the next month, with many seeking premium increases in excess of 20 percent. Republicans routinely pilloried Democrats for such rate hikes in the past, and used lower premiums as justification for overhauling health care system.

Now, they're in the uncomfortable position of having to explain inaction as millions of Americans again get hit with sticker shock.

When Republicans return from recess they'll face a packed to-do list that will make it difficult to focus on health care exclusively. Congress will have to raise the debt limit and funding the government by the end of September, as well as reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program.

The various Obamacare proposals could gain or lose momentum over recess. The Congressional Budget Office is expected to score key Obamacare proposals, including Cruz's amendment to allow states to waive certain Obamacare consumer protections; Ohio Sen. Rob Portman's proposal to help people who gained coverage under Obamacare's Medicaid expansion buy private insurance; and a plan from Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Cassidy that would keep many of Obamacare's taxes but allow states to decide how to spend the money. Even Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) says he is working on advancing his idea to allow small businesses to band together and offer employee coverage through the small group market.

Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash) are expected to start work on their health plan ahead of hearings planned for early September.

Looming over it all is the unpredictable Trump. He has repeatedly threatened to scrap crucial cost-sharing subsidies — estimated to be \$7 billion this year — that insurers rely on to lower out-of-pocket costs for low-income Obamacare customers.

If that funding goes away, it could tip the insurance markets into chaos. Health plans would likely jack up premiums by around 20 percent or bolt the markets altogether.

There are already 19 counties at risk of having no insurer willing to sell ACA coverage for 2018. If those bare counties proliferate across the country, and tens of thousands of Americans have no access to coverage, it would intensify pressure for congressional action.

But if Trump unilaterally eliminates the subsidies, it would also enrage Democrats, who would view it as an act of sabotage. That would douse prospects for bipartisan work on health care for the foreseeable future.

Despite the tenuous situation, most lawmakers remain optimistic they'll reach agreement on repealing and replacing Obamacare.

"Whatever we get 50 votes for," said Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), "we're going to be ready to vote on immediately."

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Treasury gets reinforcements to confront sweeping agenda [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 08/04/2017 05:03 AM EDT

The Treasury Department is finally getting some fresh blood after operating for eight months with few senior staff members and a massive portfolio.

The Senate on Thursday confirmed five Treasury nominees. They include David Malpass to oversee the international affairs division and Chris Campbell as assistant secretary for financial institutions, an important position in the domestic finance division.

The two men will help provide political direction on multiple key fronts. Campbell is expected to have a broad portfolio beyond financial regulation such as helping with negotiations on tax reform — which he led for Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) for the past several years — and raising the debt ceiling.

The failure to fill crucial Treasury positions has set off alarms in the financial industry, which is eager to roll back some of the sweeping regulations enacted in the wake of the financial crisis. While Treasury is not a regulator, the department is spearheading a comprehensive review of financial rules, including a first report on banks, released by Secretary Steven Mnuchin in June.

"It's one thing to have the secretary in place, but he sets the big policies," said Wayne Abernathy, executive vice president at the American Bankers Association and a former Treasury assistant secretary. "You need people who get down to the details of those policies. The career guys, they can work out the details, but they can't make [intermediary] political decisions."

Still, the Treasury team is not yet fully staffed — and may not be.

Missing from the roster: a nominee for deputy secretary. President Donald Trump is expected to tap Fannie Mae general counsel Brian Brooks, but the announcement has not been officially made. The administration has also not tapped anyone to fill the role of undersecretary of domestic finance.

And one important Treasury nominee was left out of the package of nominees that moved this week: Heath Tarbert, assistant secretary for international markets and development.

Mnuchin has said there are a number of positions he does not intend to fill at the department. "We have virtually the entire team either picked or already in the process," he said in June on

CNBC.

Sources have said Treasury is unlikely to fill the position of deputy assistant secretary for business affairs and public liaison. Also in question: assistant secretary for financial stability, a position that was initially created to monitor the Troubled Asset Relief Program, which is winding down.

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Why Trump's New Immigration Bill Makes Sense [Back](#)

By George J. Borjas | 08/04/2017 11:20 AM EDT

Since President Donald Trump on Wednesday endorsed the immigration bill proposed by Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue, various politicians of all stripes have condemned it. They've accused the bill of being undemocratic, un-American, and economically unsound. Many have confidently asserted that more immigrants are always better than fewer.

This rush to judgment is way over the top, and largely uninformed. The current immigration system is desperately in need of reform, and a careful examination of the proposal shows that not only will it likely create substantial economic gains for the country in the long term, it also eliminates elements of our current policy that are hard to defend.

First, some background: Despite the dramatic economic changes that the United States experienced in recent decades, the regulation of legal immigration still operates under a system devised back in 1965. This system, which lets in about 1 million legal immigrants a year, favors foreign relatives of current residents—without regards to qualifications. Around two-thirds of all legal immigrants enter under these family preferences. Only around 15 percent enter under so-called employment preferences, typically granted to persons who are "priority workers" or embody other types of desirable skills. The exact rules that determine whether a worker qualifies to be one of this 15 percent are unclear to those uninitiated in the intricacies of immigration law.

This is where the Cotton-Perdue proposal, also known as the RAISE Act, comes in. They propose two major shifts in existing policy. One tries to address the question of how many immigrants should come into the country. The other answers the question of which applicants we should let in—through a complete rewrite of the rules for skill-based immigration.

The rule changes for skill-based immigration should not be controversial. If nothing else, the proposal introduces much needed transparency in identifying which types of workers we seek. The Cotton-Perdue bill would divvy up the 140,000 visas now assigned to the employment preferences by using a point system similar to those adopted and used for several decades in other countries, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In rough terms, those point systems essentially grade visa applicants on the basis of personal characteristics, such as education, occupation and age; add up the points; and grant an entry visa to those who "pass the test."

The Cotton-Perdue bill contains an extremely detailed formula for granting points. The bill

gives more points to those who are young. More points to those who are proficient in English as measured by the score in an actual exam. More points to those with professional degrees or degrees in science and technology. And more points to those who have won prizes that signal exceptional ability in specific areas. An Olympic medal, for example, will get you 15 points; a Nobel Prize, 25.

In short, the bill provides a clear and transparent framework for determining which types of workers we believe to be most beneficial. And I suspect that most Americans would view the Cotton-Perdue approach as common sense. Do many of us really believe that America would benefit more by letting in a sociology professor in her 50s than by letting in a young woman with an advanced degree in computer science?

And why exactly is this type of merit-based visa allocation such a good thing from an economic perspective? Despite all the disagreement that economists have over the details of the economic impact of immigration, there is little, if any, disagreement about the fact that high-skill immigration benefits the United States far more than low-skill immigration.

High-skill immigrants are more complementary to America's existing productive infrastructure. High-skill immigrants pay more in taxes and receive fewer services. Exceptional high-skill immigrants will introduce knowledge and abilities that we will learn from, making us more productive, and expanding the frontier of what is economically possible in our country. And high skill immigration, unlike low-skill immigration, will reduce, rather than increase, income inequality. In fact, the people who will lose out the most from the Cotton-Perdue proposal are the high-skill workers in STEM fields, both native and foreign-born, who are here already. They will now have to compete with many more qualified workers for available jobs.

But there is no need to believe any of these arguments to see the pros of high-skill immigration. Whether we like it or not, there is already a global market for high-skill immigrants, with various countries adopting policies designed to convince the potential migrant to move there. Just look at the policies that other immigrant receiving countries pursue. Many already have point systems to filter the applicant pool, or they have put other policies into place that do the same thing, like the "blue card" in the European Union, giving preference to high-skill applicants. All these countries know something that the United States, to its detriment, has ignored for several decades: High-skill immigration is economically more profitable.

In fact, the Cotton-Perdue proposal is so pragmatic that it essentially predicts its own demise. Given the strong emotions that permeate and dominate the immigration debate, it is unlikely that anything as logical, rational and economically sensible could possibly become law.

The other part of the Cotton-Perdue proposal is bound to be much more controversial, as it involves a cut in the number of legal immigrants admitted through the family preference system. As it stands, the system entitles immigrants in the United States to bring in their relatives. This entitlement extends not only to relatives like spouses and minor children, but also to adult family members, such as the immigrant's parents and siblings.

Just think for a minute about what that means. A newly arrived immigrant can eventually bring in his or her sibling. That sibling will then be able to bring in his or her spouse. But the sibling's spouse will eventually be able to bring in the sibling's spouse's parents and siblings, and on and on.

It is this multiplier effect that the Cotton-Perdue proposal wants to eliminate by getting rid of the entitlement granted to immigrants to bring in their parents, adult children, and siblings. (Preference will still be given to minor children and spouses of immigrants.) But before dismissing the proposal outright, it is worth asking ourselves: Does it really make sense to have a policy that eventually guarantees an entry visa to the immigrant's brother's wife's father's sister?

Because of the ever-expanding number of potential immigrants created by the current policy, its repeal would have a large impact on the total number of immigrants admitted to the country. In about a decade, legal immigration would be cut by about half, bringing the level of immigration down to what we had back in the 1980s. (The Cotton-Perdue bill also discontinues the lottery that raffles out around 50,000 visas a year, but it is the repeal of the siblings and adult family preferences that would have the largest numerical impact).

Some critics, like Senator Lindsey Graham, have already objected to the cut by claiming that the country needs continued high levels of low-skill immigration. As the narrative goes, immigrants do jobs that natives don't want to do. But many [news](#) reports this summer provide anecdotal evidence that this claim is hogwash. Some of Trump's immigration initiatives have left employers scrambling to fill jobs with native workers. And how exactly are they addressing the labor shortage? By offering higher wages and working conditions. It's not that immigrants do jobs that natives don't want to do. It's that immigrants do jobs that natives don't want to do at the going wage.

Other critics of the Cotton-Perdue bill feel that selecting people on the basis of their economic potential is not what the United States is all about. And many also feel that immigration is always a good thing—so that more immigration is always better than less.

And, indeed, human beings are more than just economic animals. Detractors will surely cite the "give me your tired, your poor" lines from the Emma Lazarus poem as proof that immigration to the United States is not simply about how rich the country can get. And those critics have a point—a point I sympathize with. The United States has been historically exceptional in its generosity, welcoming many of the huddled masses with little economic potential. And there's something about this generosity that should make all of us proud to be Americans.

I have much less sympathy, however, with the rigid belief that more immigration must always be better than less immigration. Despite the thousands of published studies that examine the economic impact of immigration, not a single one provides a credible estimate of what the "optimal" number of immigrants should be, the magic number that maximizes our wealth.

If anyone—even someone claiming to be an economic expert—tells you that the science is settled and that economics implies that the correct number of immigrants is x , that so-called expert is flat-out lying. And even if we were able to come up with a magic number based purely on economics, it wouldn't take into account how that number might affect our schools, our neighborhoods, our culture, our safety and our politics. Let's try to be humble for a change. We simply do not know if 1 million legal immigrants per year is too few or too many.

I happen to believe that 1 million legal immigrants per year is probably—and I do mean probably, as I'm not really sure—larger than the magic number. But this belief has little to do with economic studies or expert opinion. It is the lesson I've learned from reading the news and following the political debate over immigration for three decades.

Think about it: Would we be arguing so much about immigration if every American had benefited greatly from it? I doubt it. Surely, immigration made some of us richer, but that additional wealth was not equally shared, and more than a few Americans were left behind.

I recall how back in the early 1980s, at the time I first began to work on immigration, few people cared about my work because few people cared about immigration. Unfortunately, immigration has now become an all-consuming political hot potato, doing its best to polarize us and divide us. The contentious and divisive debate suggests to me that more than a few Americans feel that immigration has made them worse off and that we should cut back a bit to improve the lives of those left behind in the maelstrom.

But there's no need to rely on what I've learned to get the point. Just look at how immigration has destabilized the political consensus in the United States and Europe. What does that tell you about the long-term political and social consequences of large-scale immigration?

Many of the people who will argue that the cuts in the Cotton-Perdue proposal make for bad policy subscribe to the notion that immigration is good for everyone, and that more immigration is obviously better. Unfortunately, they forget the old maxim that there's no free lunch, and that even immigration is not an exception to that rule. Low-skill immigration, which would likely suffer the largest cuts in the proposed bill, imposes costs on taxpayers and it imposes costs on low-skill workers already here.

It's not as if low-skill workers will stop coming under the Cotton Perdue bill. The proposal leaves unchanged the family preference system as it applies to spouses and minor children. That specific provision of current policy allowed the entry of millions of low-skill persons in the past 50 years, and would continue to do so in the future. The difference now is that the larger fraction of high-skill workers coming into the country will help defray the costs of continued low-skill immigration.

The forthcoming debate over the bill would be much more productive if instead of name-calling and accusations about motives we focused on a simple question. Is the "deal" implicit in the Cotton-Perdue bill really such a bad compromise with our historical legacy?

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: The GOP's debt ceiling antidote? — Enzi: Obamacare repeal won't delay budget work — Senators await stage-setting CBO score
Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2017 3:23:27 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 05/10/2017 03:18 PM EDT

A FISCAL SWEETENER: The Senate's top budget writer is mulling a new strategy to get Republicans on board with raising the debt limit in September: Promise big cuts, little by little. Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#) told reporters this afternoon that he'd be keen to look at legislation that lifts the federal borrowing limit for a decade while also imposing new annual limits on spending, though the size of those cuts is unclear.

'Quite possible to do': The idea of a 10-year debt limit increase came up in a spit-balling session late this morning with conservative economist and former Sen. Phil Gramm. "You're voting for a balanced budget, which makes the vote a lot easier," Gramm told a handful of committee members as he pitched the plan. Enzi called it a "great suggestion" and said he will certainly consider it. "I think it's innovative, and probably, quite possible to do," he said. (Enzi's other idea: Base the debt ceiling on a ratio of debt as a share of GDP, rather than on a dollar amount).

Nothing's new in budget world: This reminds us of a recurrent idea from Sen. [Rob Portman](#), who wants to couple any debt ceiling vote with a plan to cut 1 percent from federal spending annually over a decade. That [bill](#) was last introduced in March.

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! We're big fans of this new site from the Treasury Department that breaks down *all* federal spending. [Check it out](#) and then reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — A [letter](#) from Sen. [Shelley Moore Capito](#) to OMB Director Mick Mulvaney protesting the proposed funding cuts to the White House's drug policy office. Capito leads the appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over that office's budget.

#DailyBudgetFact — About three-quarters of all federal spending goes to individuals, private contractors and local governments, according to [USAspending.gov](#).

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET

(ALMOST) NO HOLDUPS HERE: Enzi said today that the GOP's health care effort won't delay his committee's budget work, at least until the end. "We can do everything right up to the finalization of the conference without wiping out the reconciliation of the 2017 budget," he said. The one thing that will be pushed off is the official House and Senate conference to agree on a joint bill.

Yes, there will be reconciliation: Enzi says there will be *something* in reconciliation instructions for the fiscal 2018 budget resolution, but he's not tipping his hand. "I'm getting a lot of suggestions what reconciliation ought to be in the next budget," Enzi told reporters. Still, he hinted that the final package would be somewhat narrow, warning that "a whole bunch of different reconciliations" could prompt members to vote down the whole thing.

Two birds, two stones: Enzi pretty much shot down an idea from some conservatives, including Mulvaney, that Congress could raise the debt ceiling as part of reconciliation. While that would allow a GOP-only majority to lift the borrowing limit, Enzi said it would "probably not" happen because he doesn't think it fits with the rules. "Who has to save the money?" he said.

Weighing a 20-year tax window: The Senate Budget Committee has been asked to consider doubling its budget timeframe for tax reform from 10 years to 20 to help make the math work for a deficit-neutral bill, Enzi said. (The idea was [first raised](#) by Sen. [Pat Toomey](#).) But the chairman isn't making any promises. "There's a lot of requests for budget neutrality," he said. "We'll certainly look at it. It's a difficult thing to reach."

OBAMACARE

THE SCORE THAT SETS THE STAGE: When it rains, it pours, in our world. Don't make any plans for the week of May 22, which has now been penciled in for both the [release](#) of the CBO score on the House-passed Obamacare repeal bill and the Trump administration's budget rollout.

Ready, set, wait: It's unusual, indeed, for a CBO release date to be forecast like this. But this score is extra special since senators' hands are tied until the budget office says how much money the House bill would save, setting the floor for savings in any reconciliation-ripe Senate version.

FRELINGHUYSEN'S TENSE TELE-TOWN HALL: In his back-home call-in this week, House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) told constituents he has "actually read" the health care bill and that it specifically stipulates that insurance companies aren't allowed to limit access for people with pre-existing conditions. But then came the yacht metaphors. "It's cost-prohibitive," one caller said. "I'm able to buy a yacht. It's there. But I cannot afford a yacht." Another caller asked "at what cost" coverage would be available. But Frelinghuysen didn't address the question of cost, and the caller appeared to be cut off while trying to ask a follow-up question, POLITICO New Jersey's Katie Jennings [reports](#).

Today's Obamacare bonanza: [Four Senate deal-breakers](#) | [Congressman claims death threats](#) | [Support for repea declines](#) | [Depending on Ted Cruz](#) |

SAFETY NET

SNAP OUT OF IT: The GOP's plans for SNAP don't seem to jibe with popular opinion about the program that helps more than 40 million Americans buy groceries, Helena Bottemiller Evich [explains](#) today. Many Republicans want more work requirements for able-bodied adults, purchase limitations and overall program reductions. But a recent survey of more than 7,400 likely voters suggests Americans actually favor expanding the program. The numbers:

— 88 percent of respondents said they support raising the benefits for individuals after being told that a recipient living alone earning an average of \$542 per month gets about \$140 in SNAP benefits.

— 78 percent said they support raising benefits after being told a single mother with one child earning \$760 per month gets about \$253 in SNAP benefits.

— 76 percent said candy purchases shouldn't be permitted under SNAP.

— 73 percent said sweetened soda shouldn't be allowed.

Price tag: SNAP funding makes up about three-quarters of the farm bill. Taxpayers paid \$74 billion for the program in 2015.

TAX

PORTMAN'S ELABORATE PLAN: Portman expects to "have something to show" on corporate tax reform by next month "or early summer." And David Rogers has [all the details](#) on what the senator has been working toward in months of behind-the-scenes discussions between the Senate Finance and Joint Taxation committees:

Step 1: Portman begins by ditching the "current law" budget baseline customarily used to score tax bills and substituting it with one that reflects "current policy." That's a looser standard since it assumes that expiring tax breaks over the next 10 years will simply be extended. By doing so, Portman gains \$420 billion to \$460 billion beyond what was available to former House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp when he wrote a major tax reform bill in 2014 that never got off the ground.

Step 2: This windfall would then be reinvested in precisely the sort of business tax breaks that will yield higher economic growth scores from the Joint Tax panel. By doing so, Portman hopes to at least double their value, giving him \$1 trillion-plus in money to smooth the edges of the Camp bill.

Step 3: Depending on the scores he gets back from Joint Tax, Portman would like to lower the corporate rate below the 25 percent target set by Camp. But he still anticipates a five-year phase-in to hold down costs.

TREASURY

WINDING DOWN THE BAILOUT: U.S. taxpayers have now earned \$30 billion more than they paid to rescue banks during the financial crisis, as the Treasury Department sells off its largest remaining bailout investment for \$231.9 million. What's left? Victoria Guida [reports](#) that Treasury still owns stakes in eight of the 707 banks that received TARP funding, which represent outstanding investments of \$66.2 million.

INFRASTRUCTURE

CROWDED OUT: Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) says "it's going to be heard" to fit in passage of a major infrastructure investment package this year, Brianna Gurciullo [reports](#). "We've gotta do the budget to do tax reform and finish health care first," he said. "And now the administration is saying they want to do infrastructure outside of tax reform. So it could, yeah, it could be something that gets pushed."

FLOOD INSURANCE

WHAT THE HOUSE GOP WANTS: The House Financial Services Committee is getting ready to release its lengthy wish list for reupping the National Flood Insurance Program, which is now about \$23 billion in debt. Just ahead of next week's big hearing, Pro's Zachary Warmbrodt offers a [sneak peak](#) with this [draft summary](#).

Tighter rules for highest-risk areas: 1. GOP lawmakers want to phase out coverage after four years for new buildings in the riskiest areas, as well as buildings with replacement costs of more than \$1 million. 2. Coverage would also lapse for properties with payouts totaling more than twice their replacement value.

The rest: Lawmakers would also make it easier for a person's private flood insurance policy to satisfy mortgage requirements. The House bill would also put a 15 percent cap on annual rate increases, down from 18 percent.

DEFENSE

IRONY OF AN AFGHAN SURGE: President Donald Trump's top military advisers are readying a proposal to send as many as 5,000 more troops to Afghanistan. And if the commander in chief gives his signoff, the U.S. would be escalating a conflict Trump himself has long criticized, Bryan Bender and Eliana Johnson [explain](#). By some estimates, the conflict has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$1 trillion. The United States currently has 8,400 troops there. And even with an additional 5,000, the U.S. military presence would pale in comparison to the nearly 100,000 American troops deployed in 2010 and 2011. It would also be just a fraction of the 30,000 additional troops former President Barack Obama authorized soon after he took office in 2009 in his own version of an Afghan surge.

EARMARKS

— DeVos questions whether Congress should reauthorize the Higher Education Act. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Why CBO needs a new approach for the GOP's health care bill. [Axios](#).

— U.S. Census director resigns amid turmoil over funding of 2020 count. [Washington Post](#).

— Interest rates on federal student loans will increase this year. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Medicaid expansion transformed communities, now the bill is coming due. [Wall Street Journal](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 142 days until federal funding runs out, and the Children's Health Insurance Program and National Flood Insurance Program expire. 507 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/05/the-gops-debt-ceiling-antidote-022776>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

CBO score of Obamacare repeal bill expected week of May 22 [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 05/10/2017 10:47 AM EDT

A Congressional Budget Office analysis of the House-passed Obamacare repeal bill is expected early in the week of May 22, according to Hill sources.

The Senate parliamentarian can't review the legislation and the GOP cannot really start writing its bill in the upper chamber until the CBO scoring is complete. That's because the Senate version has to save at least as much money as the House bill — otherwise the measure would violate the budget resolution and the GOP repeal effort would come to a swift end.

The CBO analysis would include revised projections of coverage losses over a decade.

The House's decision to vote on its repeal plan without the CBO score has come back to sting some members. Rep. [Rod Blum](#) (R-Iowa) faced questions about the decision during a heated town hall meeting with constituents in Dubuque, Iowa, conceding the process was rushed.

A CBO score of an earlier House repeal plan found it would leave 24 million more Americans uninsured over a decade. The forthcoming score would reflect an amendment by Rep. [Tom MacArthur](#) (R-N.J.) that was added before the House vote and would allow states to opt out of certain fundamental Obamacare provisions if they meet criteria such as lowering insurance premiums.

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4 deal-breakers that could blow up a Senate repeal bill [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 05/09/2017 06:56 PM EDT

The Senate's fresh attempt to dismantle Obamacare is already running into its first roadblock — the growing list of demands from GOP lawmakers eager to leave their own mark on the legislation.

Just days into the chamber's health care debate, centrists and self-styled mavericks are testing the party's razor-thin margin for victory and setting the stage for a series of high-profile negotiations. Those stare downs are likely to shape big parts of the legislation, since GOP leaders can only absorb two defections if Democrats and the chamber's two independents stand unified in opposition.

Here are the four potential deal breakers that could sink the GOP's Obamacare repeal bid by siphoning support from the political center:

Deep cuts to Medicaid

Who opposes it: Rob Portman, Lisa Murkowski, Shelley Moore Capito, John McCain

The House plan to drastically restructure Medicaid was a big winner for budget-obsessed Republicans intent on shrinking the health entitlement, but it's a pipe dream in the Senate.

The House-passed bill would do more than just roll back Obamacare's Medicaid expansion. It would cut more than \$800 billion over 10 years from a program that covers nearly 1 in 5 poor Americans and cap its federal funding for the first time.

Already, as many as a dozen Senate Republicans have expressed reservations about slashing that much money from the nation's safety net. Some are also hesitant to sign off on an abrupt

end to the Medicaid expansion, especially in states that have benefited significantly from the broader coverage.

"I continue to have concerns that this bill does not do enough to protect Ohio's Medicaid expansion population," Sen. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio) said after the House passed its repeal bill.

Sens. [Shelley Moore Capito](#) of West Virginia, [Cory Gardner](#) of Colorado and [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska have also worried publicly about Medicaid's future, and [John McCain](#) told reporters this week the House's approach wouldn't work for him. Altogether, 20 Senate Republicans represent states that expanded Medicaid under Obamacare.

Since the GOP can only afford to lose two votes, Republican leaders are under pressure to embrace a more gradual phase-out of the expansion and far shallower cuts — or maybe even no cuts at all to Medicaid funding.

Fewer protections for people with pre-existing conditions

Who opposes it: Bill Cassidy, Susan Collins

The firestorm that put House Republicans on the defensive is already spreading to the Senate, where lawmakers are facing questions about how they'll take care of America's sickest patients. The response from outspoken Republicans like Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) has been clear: He won't vote for a bill that could leave people with pre-existing conditions unable to afford health insurance.

"The worst possible argument that can be made is that coverage is not important," he said Monday, referencing President Donald Trump's vow to take care of everyone with a pre-existing condition. "We have to fulfill that contract that President Trump made."

But keeping that pledge while still tearing down Obamacare could be tricky. The law's most protective provisions — including requirements that insurers provide minimum benefits and cover everyone who applies — are among the pillars that Republicans have hammered for making coverage too expensive for healthier people. That could put GOP lawmakers in the uncomfortable position of deciding how far to go to protect the nation's most vulnerable — and how much more sick Americans should have to pay for the privilege.

Defunding Planned Parenthood

Who opposes it: Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski

One of the GOP's longest-standing health care goals is also its most straightforward: cut off federal funding to Planned Parenthood over its abortion services.

But accomplishing that has not been easy, thanks in large part to the staunch opposition of Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) and Murkowski. The pair played an important role thwarting Republicans leaders' bid to eliminate the funding as part of last week's government spending bill, and they're sure to block a similar attempt in any Obamacare repeal legislation.

"It's not the only issue in this huge bill, but I certainly think that it's not fair and it is a mistake to defund Planned Parenthood," Collins said on ABC's "This Week."

The GOP could still plow ahead without their support, relying on Vice President Mike Pence to deliver a tie-breaking vote that pushes a repeal bill through the Senate. But that would mean keeping every other Republican senator on board, from moderates like Portman to

conservatives like Sen. [Rand Paul](#) (R-Ky.).

Paul is already on record fretting that the current bill might not be radical enough, and is a prime candidate to balk if the Senate tries to bend the legislation toward the political center. On the other end of the spectrum, vulnerable centrist Republicans like [Dean Heller](#) (R-Nev.) are likely to feel the heat from women's health supporters to join Collins and Murkowski in standing against Planned Parenthood defunding.

The 'Age Tax'

Who opposes it: Susan Collins, John Thune

Even before Republicans opened the door to letting insurers go back to discriminating against those with pre-existing conditions, the repeal effort threatened to make losers out of one of the nation's neediest groups — poor Americans just shy of the Medicare eligibility age. The House legislation sharply reduces the tax credits meant to subsidize coverage for those in the individual market, capping them at \$4,000 and awarding them based on age.

That change — combined with another provision allowing insurers to charge older Americans five times more than younger ones — would make premiums surge for people in that age cohort, potentially pricing out the market's sickest and poorest people.

The Senate isn't going to let that stand. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) is already working on beefing up the tax credits for lower-income Americans, and several senators have hinted at awarding subsidies based on financial need instead of age. Collins, meanwhile, has piled another recommendation on top of that, arguing that the tax credits should be adjusted for geographic-based cost variations as well — an approach that mirrors Obamacare's current subsidy system.

If the credits don't factor in geography, "that really hurts a state like Maine, where we have an older population living in largely more expensive rural areas," she said.

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'This is how we're going to kill your wife' [Back](#)

By Kyle Cheney | 05/10/2017 10:51 AM EDT

MONETA, Va. — "This is how we're going to kill your wife."

That's the message Rep. Tom Garrett (R-Va.) said he received in a series of recent threats that targeted him, his family and even, at one point, his dog. And it's the reason, he said, that his town hall here in this sleepy Virginia community on Tuesday night was ringed by law enforcement.

When Garrett took the stage at Eastlake Community Church, the walls in the 300-seat room were lined with security — some uniformed and some in plainclothes. The presence was noticeable all night, as Garrett aides enforced rules to keep audience members from disrupting the event.

Though the town hall proceeded without significant incident -- one woman was removed by police for repeated disruptions -- security personnel made their presence felt, approaching hecklers throughout the evening and standing watch at all entrances and exits. The high security presence, Garrett said later, was the result of threats that Capitol Police, state police and intelligence officials "have deemed to be credible and real."

"It's nuts," Garrett said.

The freshman congressman, a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, said the threats have become so disturbing that he and his chief of staff engaged in some gallows humor over it.

"He read one of the more recent correspondences and called me the next day and goes, 'Dude, I'm glad you're alive,'" Garrett recalled.

"I served in the military. I reconciled myself with the reality that one day I'm not going to be here," Garrett continued.

"I don't want to die anytime soon. I got stuff left to do, I hope. But when you pull wives and children in, that's not cool."

Garrett's remarks are a window into an increasingly tense environment facing lawmakers as they head home to angry constituents whipped into a frenzy over the latest debate in Washington about repealing and replacing Obamacare. Lawmakers expressed concerns to GOP leadership in February, after a particularly angry round of town halls.

At the time, Rep. David Reichert (R-Wash.), a former sheriff, [suggested](#) lawmakers have a physical exit strategy at town halls should protests get out of hand. He urged that local police be on hand during town halls, and that lawmakers step up security at their local offices, from installing heavy doors and deadbolts to setting up intercoms to screen visitors.

Garrett said he'd rather be overly cautious than complacent.

"Here's the fear that I have and I said this to some of the police officers here -- that we have 40 police officers here and we do this 10 times and nothing ever happens, and we go 'oh no problem,'" he said. "And then there's five and then something does happen."

It's unclear whether the threats Garrett described were connected to his last-minute support for the American Health Care Act, the GOP plan to replace Obamacare that has stoked intense anger at town halls across the country. But he said he takes no issues with protesters who vehemently reject his position on the health care bill.

"I don't have any problem with anybody who reaches a different policy conclusion based on the information they amalgamate and process," he said. "That dissent is American — praise God, we need that. That's what made us who we are."

"But when it's, 'I'm going to kill you this way. Then, 'I'm going to kill your wife. This is what I'm going to do to your daughters' ... Then you get a circumstance where there's an awful lot of security."

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Poll: Support for GOP health bill declines [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard | 05/10/2017 07:07 AM EDT

The popularity of the Republican health care bill declined over the past week even as its chances of becoming law improved after its passage by the House, underscoring the political peril President Donald Trump and the GOP face in their efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Voters have low expectations — few believe the bill, if enacted, will make the U.S. health care system better, increase the number of Americans with health coverage, improve the quality of their own care or decrease the costs for them and their family.

And as the Senate prepares to take up the legislation, the POLITICO/Morning Consult also shows declines in voters' views of Trump's job performance and his party's standing in next year's congressional elections.

Only 38 percent of voters approve of the GOP-drafted health care bill, the new poll shows — down from 42 percent [last week](#), prior to the House's party-line vote to advance the measure. Forty-four percent of voters disapprove of the bill, up significantly from 37 percent last month. Eighteen percent of voters say they don't know or have no opinion of the bill.

In fact, voters have a more positive opinion of the law the new legislation seeks to supplant: Half of voters now approve of the 2010 Affordable Care Act, while 42 percent disapprove.

Opposition to the Republican bill is more forceful than support for the measure — a gap driven by greater relative intensity among Democrats than Republicans.

"These latest polling numbers on the American Health Care Act could spell trouble for Republicans," said Kyle Dropp, Morning Consult's chief research officer and co-founder. "There is a notable enthusiasm gap: 29 percent strongly oppose the bill, but only 13 percent strongly support it. Moreover, we saw the number of Republican voters who strongly support the bill drop from 36 percent last week to 27 percent this week."

The poll was conducted May 4-6 — with interviews beginning following the House's 217-214 vote to advance the bill. All interviews were completed on Sunday, well before the announcement late Tuesday that Trump had fired FBI Director James Comey.

On health care, 45 percent of voters say they trust Democrats in Congress to handle the issue — greater than the 36 percent who trust Republicans more. Last week, Democrats held a 5-point lead on that question, 42 percent to 37 percent.

Voters also have little hope the new bill — if it becomes law — will improve the U.S. health care system or their own health care, the poll shows. Fewer believe the bill will make the health care system better (26 percent) than believe it will make it worse (41 percent). Only a quarter think it will make the quality of care better, while 36 percent think it will make it worse. Just 19 percent think the bill would increase the number of Americans with health insurance — far fewer than the 46 percent who think fewer Americans would have insurance.

A 42-percent plurality think the bill will increase health care costs for their family, compared to only 18 percent who believe it will decrease costs and 15 percent who don't think it will have an impact on their health care costs. A quarter of voters aren't sure how the bill would impact their health care costs.

While Trump and House Republicans celebrated passage of the health care bill in the White House Rose Garden last week, the POLITICO/Morning Consult bill suggests their efforts have weakened their political standing.

Trump's approval rating slid from 48 percent last week to 44 percent in the new survey. The percentage of voters who disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president ticked up from 46 percent last week to 49 percent in this week's poll.

Republicans remain supportive of Trump: 84 percent approve of the job he is doing, the poll shows. While that exceeds Trump's 80-percent disapproval rating among Democrats, Trump's rating among independents — 38 percent approve and 50 percent disapprove — tilts negative.

Trump's approval rating is net-negative for the first time since late March and early April, in the wake of the House's failure to advance an earlier version of the health care bill.

"We've seen Trump's approval dip this much only once before — right after the House failed to pass the first version of the AHCA," said Dropp, referencing a 10-point swing in Trump's net approval rating in late March.

There are other red flags for Republicans: Democrats have a 6-point lead on the 2018 generic congressional ballot, 42 percent to 36 percent. In last week's survey, the two parties were tied at 41 percent.

Only 24 percent of voters say they would be more likely to vote to reelect a member of Congress who voted for the bill — fewer than the 37 percent who say it would make them less likely to vote to reelect their member. Nineteen percent say it wouldn't change their mind either way, and another 19 percent say they don't know.

A 44-percent plurality of Republicans say they would be more likely to vote for a member who supported the bill. Among Democrats, a greater percentage, 61 percent, would be less likely to vote for a member who voted for the bill. And more independents, 34 percent, would be less likely to vote for a member who backed the legislation than would be more likely, 18 percent.

The poll surveyed 1,996 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

*More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents —
Toplines: <http://politi.co/2pjww5F> | Crosstabs: <http://politi.co/2pjww5F>*

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GOP pins health care hopes on an unlikely figure: Ted Cruz [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett | 05/09/2017 07:04 PM EDT

After four years of taunting and torturing fellow Republicans, Ted Cruz is shedding his just-say-no persona in the Senate for a new identity: Team player. And this is no idle tryout.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell — a man Cruz once derided as a liar and an ally of Democrats — is counting on the Texan to help navigate an Obamacare repeal bill through the Senate with virtually no margin for error. As a trusted voice of the conservative wing of the GOP and conduit to the House Freedom Caucus, Cruz is fast emerging as a pivotal player in the Republican bid to do away with the landmark Democratic health care law.

It's a stunning transformation for a senator who was widely blamed for causing the 2013 government shutdown in an attempt to defund Obamacare. But after receiving so much blowback for that and many other episodes, there's nary a Cruz critic in the Senate Republican Conference nowadays.

"He's trying to get a result. And as smart as he is, he can be a real force in making that happen," said Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), who chairs a key Senate health care committee and is close to McConnell. "If we're able to come to a result in the Republican caucus, I'll be glad to give him a lot of the credit."

Cruz's work on health care has been uncharacteristically low profile so far. It began with a private dinner in mid-February at the upscale D.C. steakhouse Capital Grille with the more compromise-minded Alexander, who once chided Cruz for calling McConnell a liar on the Senate floor by noting that one thing "you learn in Kindergarten is to respect one another."

Alexander and Cruz agreed to assemble a group of GOP senators to prepare for the eventuality that the House would send them a health care bill riddled with flaws that could not pass the Senate as written.

McConnell formalized the group by adding chairmen and members of leadership. The group lacks any true moderates and suggests that McConnell believes the path to passage is through the conservative wing of his caucus.

The exclusion of the likes of Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) has privately irked some senators because of their months of work on an alternative plan and Collins' role chairing the Senate Aging Committee. And the 13-senator working group initially contained no women, an oversight that prompted a cascade of criticism from Democrats and liberal pundits.

But when it comes to passing a new health care law, Republicans believe the inclusion of Cruz and his close ally, Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), could pay critical dividends by building support among conservative groups and the House Freedom Caucus. The gap between more centrist Senate Republicans and more conservative House GOP members is seen as one of the biggest obstacles to writing a new law.

"One of the challenges when the Obamacare bill was in the House, was that early on was that

the different parts of the party were not talking to each other," Cruz said in an interview in his office. "We wanted to ensure that the process from the outset was collaborative and inclusive."

Collaborative and inclusive are not typically words associated with Cruz. Is he evolving into a more pragmatic brand of conservative?

In a word, yes. Now that President Barack Obama is out of office, Cruz said his mission in the Senate is no longer to be the "loyal opposition."

"Different circumstances call for different approaches," said Cruz, who is gearing up to run for a second term next year in a closely watched race. "Now our job is to deliver on the promises. And that's a markedly different role than trying to prevent harmful policies from an imperial president."

Cruz's leading role has shocked some of his colleagues. Many Republicans never could have imagined the bomb-throwing senator organizing and implementing a relatively ideologically diverse working group aimed at passing a bill, not stopping one.

"It was an ingenious stroke," said Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.) said of the appointment.

The group that Cruz helped develop is, in some ways, a substitute for the traditional committee process. Republicans don't believe they can push an Obamacare repeal bill through the committees, particularly the health panel chaired by Alexander. Rather than take the chance that repeal gets tied up in a Senate committee, leaders prefer to work out the party's issues within a broad working group and then go directly to the floor.

"We have skin in the game," Cruz said. "The players across the board in the Senate want to get to yes. We recognize that we have an historic opportunity."

Still, there's concern among some more centrist senators that the end-product could appeal too much to Cruz and not enough to the dozen or so Republican senators who have grave concerns about slashing Medicaid and removing protections for preexisting conditions. The group does include more centrist Republicans like Rob Portman of Ohio, but the overall makeup is still an issue.

"That is a reasonable question to ask given the composition overall of the group," Collins said.

GOP leaders say there is no degree of exclusivity to the working group because it will report regularly to the entire caucus. But its makeup raises questions about who McConnell is willing to lose on the health care vote. Clearly he believes Lee and Cruz are crucial; but some GOP sources said there are deep doubts among senators that Collins or Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) will ever vote for anything the Senate GOP comes up with.

Collins and Paul insist they are in play.

"I've told them there is a compromise: I am for 100 percent repeal of Obamacare. But I will compromise on the percentage of repeal," Paul said. "80 percent repeal, I'd vote for that. But I'm not willing to vote to replace Obamacare with a new federal program."

Though GOP leaders believe by getting Cruz involved they are minimizing the possibility that Cruz will later demolish their repeal efforts, the Texas firebrand isn't on the same page about everything.

The Senate's repeal effort is subject to strict budgetary restraints that will disallow, in the view of most senators, attempts to make it a true repeal of Obamacare. Cruz wants to go as big as possible, and if Senate rules prohibit his idea, he believes Vice President Mike Pence should simply overrule the parliamentarian.

"The parliamentarian merely advises, the vice president decides," Cruz said. "Mike Pence is the ultimate decider."

That opinion is not popular among Republicans, according to senators and aides. They believe it would be tantamount to killing the filibuster's 60-vote threshold.

But on almost every other front, Republicans say, Cruz is being highly productive.

"He is playing well with others," Alexander said. "Presidential races ... are transforming events."

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The SNAP divide: Congress and voters far apart on restrictions, benefit levels [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 05/10/2017 05:01 AM EDT

On the eve of the next farm bill cycle, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program faces a rocky, uncertain political landscape as the right eyes potential reforms amid the Republican push to cut government spending.

But SNAP reform's unpredictable nature isn't solely a product of U.S. politics being mired in one of the country's most polarized periods — as a groundbreaking new survey highlighted recently. The survey of more than 7,400 likely voters, released by the University of Maryland late last month, suggests that Americans on both sides of the aisle broadly agree that SNAP regulations should induce recipients to make healthier choices, whether by banning soda or discounting fruits and vegetables. It also found strong bipartisan support for raising SNAP benefits.

"This survey shows that the American public supports two things about SNAP: having an adequate safety net so people don't go hungry, and, at the same time, making the program even healthier," said Parke Wilde, an economist at Tufts University's Friedman School, who writes the popular blog U.S. Food Policy.

There's just one catch: Congress isn't exactly on the same page.

SNAP — which helps more than 40 million Americans buy groceries, and makes up about three-quarters of the cost of the farm bill — has long been a big target on Capitol Hill for cuts and other reforms, but the pressure has ratcheted up in recent years as the Republican party has moved farther to the right at the same time the SNAP rolls have dramatically increased, largely in response to the Great Recession.

In 2007, some 37 million people received SNAP benefits. By 2013, that total had risen to 51 million, and it is only now starting to come down, though one in seven Americans still receives benefits. In 2015, the program cost taxpayers \$74 billion.

Many Republicans would like to see SNAP reined in during the 2018 farm bill reauthorization, whether it be through more work requirements for able-bodied adults, limiting purchases, or by slimming down the program altogether. The House Agriculture Committee held no fewer than 16 hearings on SNAP between 2015 and 2016 and conducted a "top-to-bottom" review, but reached relatively mild conclusions. The committee highlighted SNAP as a crucial safety net program while hinting at the need to strengthen work requirements and bolster healthy-eating incentives.

House Agriculture Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) has [suggested](#) he's more interested in more moderate reforms and that block grants or drug testing mandates, while not off the table, are not his priority.

The politics in the broader House GOP caucus is where the wild cards are lurking. Though the program generally has bipartisan support, House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has long eyed block-granting SNAP as part of his broader plan to consolidate anti-poverty programs, while hardline members want dramatic cuts, one way or another.

On the other side, anti-hunger groups and a handful of Democrats — including Rep. [Jim McGovern](#) (D-Mass.), perhaps the most vocal lawmaker on SNAP policy — have repeatedly called on Congress to increase benefits. But there is not likely to be any Republican appetite for doing so, as the majority party on the Hill focuses on cost-cutting while agricultural groups lobby for the farm bill to provide more support for farm programs, like stronger insurance programs for dairy and cotton.

And while anti-hunger advocates will no doubt use the survey's results to advocate for raising SNAP benefits, the findings on SNAP restrictions are much thornier for Democrats — but also present a challenge for Republicans, since lawmakers on both sides of the House Agriculture Committee have expressed opposition to the idea.

There's much more room for bipartisan agreement on experimenting with SNAP healthy-eating incentives — and the public seems to agree on this point. A full 88 percent of respondents indicated they favor discounting fruits and vegetables in SNAP, including 81 percent of Republicans and 93 percent of Democrats.

"I was just amazed at the level of consensus for the discounts on fruits and vegetables," said Steven Kull, director of Maryland's Program for Public Consultation, which conducted the study. "It's pretty robust."

What the public thinks about SNAP

The survey was notable for its breadth. It was fielded by Nielsen-Scarborough and Communications for Research, Inc., between November and January, and polled a diverse cross-section of likely voters across eight states on an unusually broad range of SNAP policy questions — from whether the savings limit should be raised for eligible recipients to whether ice cream should be allowed.

The survey — part of a larger polling project on anti-poverty programs that will be released in

coming months — found broad, bipartisan support for increasing SNAP benefits, something that is politically infeasible on Capitol Hill. Eighty-one percent of respondents, including 66 percent of Republicans and 93 percent of Democrats, said they support raising the benefits for individuals after being told that a recipient living alone earning an average of \$542 per month gets about \$140 in SNAP benefits.

Slightly less — 78 percent — said they support raising benefits after being told a single mother with one child earning \$760 per month gets about \$253 in SNAP benefits.

Before answering questions about the program, respondents went through a brief "policymaking simulation," which presented them with pro and con arguments for each question — language that advocates and congressional staffers on all sides of the issue helped craft.

The argument for raising benefits did about 20 points better when respondents were asked which arguments they found convincing. The pro-side argued the current benefit of \$140 is "simply not enough" and that people want to work but often can't find jobs. "Food is a basic human need and it is simply wrong to keep people on the edge of hunger with benefits so low," the argument stated.

On the flip side, the argument against raising benefits noted that SNAP costs taxpayers \$74 billion each year. "We should not increase it," the argument said. "The economy is better now and there are more jobs out there. We need to encourage people to get out there and try harder in this improving labor market. We shouldn't make it easier for them not to make the effort."

The findings, similar to the [results of a 2013 poll](#), suggest there's likely to be extensive public support for states that seek to ban sugary drinks or candy from SNAP at the state level, as [Maine is trying](#) to do.

Overall, 76 percent of respondents said candy purchases should not be permitted under SNAP, including 85 percent of Republicans and 68 percent of Democrats. Support was slightly lower for restrictions on "sweetened soda," with 73 percent of respondents indicating it should get bounced from the program. Republicans took a harder line against sugary drinks, with 82 percent saying it should be out of the program, compared with 67 percent of Democrats.

Last year Maine Gov. Paul LePage, a Republican, requested a waiver to bar state SNAP recipients from buying sugary drinks and candy, but was rebuffed by the Obama administration. "It's time for the federal government to wake up and smell the energy drinks," LePage wrote to then-USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack afterward, threatening to withdraw from the program.

"The Obama administration goes to great lengths to police the menus of K-12 cafeterias but looks the other way as billions of taxpayer dollars finance a steady diet of Mars bars and Mountain Dew," LePage added.

One of the biggest questions surrounding SNAP is whether President Donald Trump has a nose for energy drinks, as it were. The LePage administration is pressing the Trump administration to green-light its proposal, citing how Maine is New England's most obese state.

Last week Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue [told the Associated Press](#) he's already met with

LePage, but wouldn't say how he would come down on the waiver request. Perdue did say the governor "has some very creative programs that we're exploring." Similar efforts to limit SNAP purchases have bubbled up in Tennessee, Alabama and several other states.

State restriction efforts are mostly Republican-led, but the issue spans the political spectrum, since public health groups, which generally lean left, have become increasingly vocal about the need to remove sugary drinks from the program. Earlier this year, the [American Heart Association](#) became the first major health group to call for a pilot program to test removing sugary drinks from SNAP, combined with adding incentives for fruit and vegetable purchases.

The slippery slope of restrictions

Support for purchasing restrictions starts to drop off somewhat when people are asked about whether SNAP recipients should be able to buy cookies, cakes and donuts (59 percent said no) as well as ice cream (43 percent) and chips and snack crackers (40 percent).

Craig Gunderson, professor of food and ag economics at the University of Illinois, sees this as a slippery slope. "Why stop with sugar sweetened beverages and candy?" he asked, somewhat incredulously, adding: "Other people could say, 'Look, it's bad to have orange juice, since it's heavy in sugar.'"

Gunderson said he also sees GOP support for restrictions as a thinly-veiled attempt to take pot shots at low-income people. "There's a group of Republicans who want to stigmatize poor people," he said, arguing that party leaders also know such restrictions could lead to fewer people participating in the program.

The survey, however, found that voters saw the argument for SNAP restrictions as much more compelling than the argument against such limits. The argument for including language like: "We should not encourage people to waste money on food that can damage their health. The rise in obesity and diabetes from eating fatty and sugary foods is a serious strain on America's healthcare system."

On the other side, respondents were presented with a statement that read, in part: "Just because people are poor does not mean the federal government should tell them what to eat. Individuals can make their own decisions about nutrition. Furthermore, administering such rules could be expensive." The statement also argues that Congress would have to battle "armies of food-industry lobbyists," who would try to keep their products in the program.

In all, 82 percent of respondents found the argument for SNAP restrictions very or somewhat convincing, while 42 percent believed the opposing argument convincing. Diving in deeper, 52 percent found the pro argument very convincing and just 19 percent found the anti-argument very convincing.

"That's an unusually low number," said Kull, of the University of Maryland. He said the numbers were surprising to him because, in these types of surveys, a majority of respondents usually find pro and con arguments convincing.

Of course, food industry leaders and anti-hunger groups do find the arguments against restricting SNAP purchases quite convincing. They argue that banning certain foods will increase stigma surrounding them, reduce participation and turn cashiers into food police. They also note that drawing lines around what's healthy and what's not — even sugary drinks,

which may seem like a simple category — would be extremely complicated: Would Capri Sun be forbidden alongside Mountain Dew? What about Sunny Delight versus orange juice?

"Transforming SNAP from an efficient government assistance program to one that requires more regulation and more bureaucracy to run with no clear nutrition benefit is not in the best interest of SNAP participants, businesses or taxpayers," said Chris Gindlesperger, spokesman for the National Confectioners Association.

Gunderson also expressed disdain for the idea that SNAP purchases should be further limited (recipients already can't buy alcohol, hot prepared foods and household supplies) and questioned the survey's findings. "Most Americans really have no idea regarding this issue, in terms of the potential consequences," he said. "It'll drive up food prices because this is a major administrative burden."

"If this were to be implemented, it's patronizing toward low-income households in a way that we'd never do to others," he added. "It would lead to increases in hunger."

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The GOP's responsible taxman [Back](#)

By David Rogers | 05/09/2017 03:35 PM EDT

As a former White House budget director, Sen. [Rob Portman](#) still cares about deficits. But as a pro-trade Ohio Republican, he's every bit as anxious to enact long-sought corporate tax reforms to spur industrial investment back home and lift worker wages.

Where to draw the line is the big question. And amid all the crosscurrents among Republicans these days on rewriting the tax code, Portman best captures the search for a path that gives tax writers flexibility without abandoning all deficit discipline.

Toward this end, Portman has worked for months behind the scenes with staff from the Senate Finance and Joint Taxation committees. He hopes to have something to show by June or early summer but cautions that his goal even then is to outline the potential for consensus — not to exclude competing options.

"We're not trying to do our own thing," he said in an interview. "It's not a Portman effort and I don't want it to be, because I want it to get done. I don't want it to be: 'Here's my great idea, everyone needs to come on board.' What I'm trying to do is build consensus on it."

From a deficit standpoint, the end product will surely be less strict than the baseline used by Congress in enacting the landmark 1986 tax reforms under President Ronald Reagan. But if that breaks the logjam in Congress, it's a risk worth taking, Portman argues. Moreover, the revised standards could yet become a bulwark against the potentially budget-busting tax cuts put forward by the Trump administration.

"They are creating this very pro-growth proposal which gets people excited," Portman said of the White House and Treasury. "Then we have to come in and backfill as I see it, and how you

get as close to that as possible."

He added, "There's a way to take what I would consider to be a more traditional pro-growth approach which some would think sounds less exciting but it's about what's doable. That would be lowering the rates and broadening the base. You do have to slim down some of the existing preferences in the code and get the rate down. I believe it can be done in a neutral basis."

Portman begins by ditching the "current law" budget baseline customarily used to score tax bills and substituting it with one that reflects "current policy."

That's a looser standard since it assumes that expiring tax breaks over the next 10 years will simply be extended. By doing so, Portman gains \$420 billion to \$460 billion beyond what was available to former House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.) when he wrote a major tax reform bill in 2014 that never got off the ground.

Portman's next step is to reinvest this windfall in precisely the sort of business tax breaks that will yield higher economic growth scores from the Joint Tax panel. By doing so, he hopes to at least double their value, giving him \$1 trillion-plus in money to smooth the edges of the Camp bill.

Likely targets are Camp's base broadening provisions that affected the amortization of research and development expenses, LIFO accounting methods for business inventory, and taxes affecting the insurance industry.

Portman, like most Republicans, is eager to deploy "dynamic scoring," in which potential economic growth is factored into official analyses of legislation, which can offset the cost of a proposal.

Depending on the scores he gets back from Joint Tax, Portman would like to lower the corporate rate below the 25 percent target set by Camp. But he still anticipates a five year phase-in to hold down costs. And in his comments, Portman shies away from the ambitious capital gains tax cuts and business write-offs championed by Camp's successors on the Ways and Means panel.

It's a two-step process — adopting a current policy baseline and making fuller use of dynamic scoring — which "provides more breathing room for tax reform," Portman said. But having drawn this line, he would go no further.

"I don't think we have to, to do pro- growth reform," he said, adding, "I do think the deficits are a serious issue."

That's very different from the White House which is pitching a proposal with massive tax cuts — including a 15 percent corporate tax rate. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said the administration's plan would "pay for itself" through faster economic growth, a claim scoffed at by many independent analysts.

Yet at the same time, Portman's critics would say his budget piety is so much hokum: that he is rationalizing more than being rational.

Deficit hawks argue that shifting to a current policy baseline only adds to the damage already done by the 2015 tax extenders bill which made permanent many tax breaks without finding

revenue offsets to reduce the deficit impact. And when the Joint Tax panel used dynamic scoring on its estimates of the Camp bill, the range of results from different economic models was so wide that critics questioned the whole exercise.

Republicans counter that much more has been learned since then and that some macro-economic score from Joint Tax will surely figure in whatever tax bills emerge from the House and Senate.

Moreover, all of Portman's spadework, together with younger colleagues on Finance, is being done with the full knowledge of Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah). And as a practical matter, Hatch stands to be helped by Portman's budget-writing credentials if the chairman is to convince the Senate to give his tax writers more leeway.

Indeed, after years of being cast as a policy wonk on the periphery, Portman has the opportunity now to make his presence felt in the Senate. He is secure in a second term, having handily won re-election by defeating a former Democratic governor and running well ahead of Donald Trump in Ohio. And beginning with his tax-writing days in the House, he's shown an appetite for policy and ability to work Democrats.

Next to Trump's brand of populism, Portman suffers from seeming an elite outlier: part of the Ivy League, globalist, corporate brand of Republicans. But the same 61-year-old lawmaker was early to recognize and speak out on the opioid crisis impacting many working class families at home. And Portman insists now that his support of corporate tax reform is more about worker wages than his allies in the board room.

"The conundrum we are in is where you have the economy growing slowly but wages growing even more slowly, and [therefore] a gap," he said. "I'm excited about tax reform because there is an opportunity here to help overcome one of our biggest challenges: not just the growth in the economy being relatively low ... but flat and even declining wages when you take into account inflation."

"This is not about the boardroom," Portman said. "The board room has done fine by the way. Inversions or being taken over by a foreign company doesn't hurt the CEO's. They all have nice golden parachutes or they stay on. It is about workers in my view and our ability to have more investment here rather than somewhere else. Not just by foreign companies but by U.S. companies."

In truth, there is an increased recognition among economists that the burden of corporate taxes falls on labor — not just capital as assumed in the past. The real argument has moved to the next step: how big is labor's share and how much will workers truly gain from the drive now to reduce rates?

Kevin Hassett, Trump's choice to chair the Council of Economic Advisers, is aggressive in arguing that labor will benefit significantly. And Portman takes heart from Hassett's appointment.

Nonetheless, other economists remain more skeptical. Scorekeepers at the Treasury and the Congressional Budget Office confine labor's share to closer to 20 to 25 percent for example, and that throws some cold water on Portman's argument.

But the bigger question mark going forward is how far Portman can go to somehow bridge the

2014 Camp tax reform bill with the newer 2016 House Republican blueprint shaped by Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) and the current committee chairman, Rep. [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) — himself a transplant from the Midwest.

At one level, many would argue that the Camp bill is as gone from Congress and the tax debate as the former chairman himself. On the other, there is a residue of respect for the fact that Camp alone put his ideas in legislative language and not simply a few pages of talking points.

"I was not necessarily crazy about the Camp proposal but Camp was a real tax person," said H. David Rosenbloom, director of the International Tax Program at the New York University of Law. "Camp knew what he was doing, and he comes up with a global approach to this, he comes up with a real serious proposal and what happens? [Former Speaker John] Boehner said it is blah, blah, blah. I think the shadow of Camp hangs over anything that happens now."

Ways and Means tax staff are working to translate the Ryan-Brady approach into legislative language as well. The stated goal is get the corporate rate down to 20 percent, a full five points lower than Camp. And the plan would allow companies to deduct the cost of a new machine, for example, in just one year — much faster than the current depreciation schedules.

It's more of a cash-flow approach, and in tandem with this change, the House blueprint proposes a new destination tax of sorts — one that will fall on products coming into the U.S. while favoring those going out. The revenues generated from this "border adjustment tax" or BAT would help pay for the reduced corporate rate. But Brady argues it is even more important from a policy standpoint: to level "the playing field" by taking taxes out of business location decision-making.

This is no small matter because well-intended reforms can also make the U.S. system more vulnerable to base erosion and profit-shifting. The shared goal is to move the U.S. more toward a "territorial" system in which income earned by American companies outside the U.S. is exempt from U.S. taxes. But that can create incentives to shift operations or profits overseas without some backstop being added.

Portman himself seems leery of a BAT, given the political fallout it has triggered as well as major policy concerns raised by tax pros like Rosenbloom. But in line with his consensus building he is careful not to dismiss it outright.

"The BAT is going to have a tough time getting the votes needed in the House and in the Senate," Portman said. "It's not that I don't have a preference, I do. But I am most interested in finally getting something done so I'm not trying to rule out their ideas."

"I'm just trying to figure out what's the consensus idea that meets the principle of making the code more competitive so we stop losing jobs and investment overseas and we can begin to see wage growth. Those would be my big issues."

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Treasury reaches milestone, selling off last major TARP investment [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 05/10/2017 01:14 PM EDT

The Treasury Department is selling off its largest remaining investment in a bank made as part of the massive bailouts during the financial crisis.

Treasury today agreed to sell all 10.3 million shares it had left in First BanCorp for \$57.7 million, bringing the total recouped from the government's stake in that bank to \$231.9 million.

The Troubled Asset Relief Program, which set aside \$700 billion to stabilize the financial industry, remains a toxic cloud over any discussion of financial regulation, with lawmakers — particularly Republicans — decrying any talk of future bailouts.

But taxpayers have earned \$30 billion more than they paid for the rescues, Treasury said.

Treasury used \$245.1 billion of the available TARP funding and has recouped \$275.8 billion on sales of those investments, the department said.

WHAT'S NEXT: The department still owns stakes in eight of the 707 banks that received TARP funding, which represent outstanding investments of \$66.2 million, it said.

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Thune: 'It's going to be hard' to do an infrastructure package this year [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 05/10/2017 01:49 PM EDT

Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) said today that lawmakers may not be able to squeeze in an infrastructure package this year with health care, a tax overhaul and other issues dominating their schedules.

Thune, the third-highest ranking Republican in the Senate, told reporters that the House's struggle to pass the American Health Care Act held up other GOP priorities.

"Well, I mean, I think the hiccups that the House had, the speed bumps along the way getting health care over here set us back a little bit," Thune said. Now, Thune said, "from a scheduling standpoint, yeah, it's going to be hard" to fit in infrastructure this year.

"We've gotta do the budget to do tax reform and finish health care first," he said. "And now the administration is saying they want to do infrastructure outside of tax reform, so it could, yeah, it could be something that gets pushed."

Thune added that, in theory, the White House could move up "an infrastructure discussion."

"Or I mean they could decide, if the administration wanted to, to try and wedge a, slot an infrastructure discussion before they take on the tax code," Thune said. "I don't know. That's probably a decision that will be made above my pay grade."

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Here's what House Republicans want in their flood insurance bill [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 05/09/2017 06:04 PM EDT

House Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) is preparing to move forward with a five-year reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program that would phase out coverage for certain structures and eliminate it for properties with excessive claims, according to a draft [summary](#) of the GOP bill obtained by POLITICO.

Hensarling is expected to host a meeting with committee members next Tuesday to discuss the legislation, a Republican familiar with the matter said.

The bill, which has been in development since the last session of Congress, would make several changes to the program, including:

- Four years after enactment, it would phase out NFIP coverage for residential structures where the replacement cost of the building exceeded \$1 million, subject to the local availability of private sector flood insurance.
- Over the same period, NFIP would be prohibited from selling new coverage to structures being built in today's highest-risk areas.
- FEMA, which administers the program, would not be allowed to make available new or renewed coverage for any property where the aggregate amount in claims payments exceeded twice the amount of the replacement value of the property for flood damage that occurred 18 months after enactment.
- The bill would lower from 18 percent to 15 percent the cap on individual policyholders' annual rate increases.
- It would include the text of Rep. [Dennis Ross](#)'s bill that would make it easier for homeowners to use private flood insurance to satisfy requirements of government-backed mortgages.
- Compensation for "Write-Your-Own" companies working with the program would be capped at 25 percent in an attempt to improve the NFIP's ability to pay claims from existing revenue.

WHAT'S NEXT: The NFIP expires at the end of September. The Senate Banking Committee has yet to release its own reauthorization bill.

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Trump's campaign pledges face collision in Afghanistan [Back](#)

By Bryan Bender and Eliana Johnson | 05/09/2017 07:10 PM EDT

President Donald Trump faces a stark choice as his security advisers and military commanders push him to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan — a step that would escalate a conflict he spent years deriding and threaten to violate his "America first" campaign pledge.

It would also be a stark turnaround from Trump's [past criticisms](#) of the conflict's casualty toll and enormous expense, including his 2013 [complaint](#) on Twitter that the Afghan regime "has zero appreciation. Let's get out!"

Now the top brass is readying a proposal to send as many as 5,000 additional troops to help beat back the resurgent Taliban in a country where the U.S. is still waging its longest war. Trump will be presented the military options in the coming days, according to several administration officials.

Trump has said little about Afghanistan since taking office, aside from hailing the military's decision to drop one of its largest non-nuclear bombs on an Islamic State cave network there last month.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Tuesday that Trump wants to hear from his generals on what their overall strategy is — not just how many troops they need.

"One of the things he has asked his national security team to do is to actually think — rethink the strategy," Spicer told reporters. "What are we doing to achieve the goals you are asking about? How do we actually, how do we win, how do we eliminate the threat?"

National security adviser H.R. McMaster and most of Trump's top military advisers — including the top commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. John Nicholson — are advocating the military surge to aid Afghan security forces, which have suffered thousands of casualties since taking the lead in the fight over three years ago. The hope is that a more aggressive U.S. posture, and additional military advisers embedded with Afghan forces, would compel the Taliban back to the negotiating table to resolve the country's political divides.

Trump has already shown an increasing willingness to deploy military force, as in the missile strike he ordered against the Syrian government in retaliation for its alleged use of chemical weapons. But sending thousands more troops into harm's way would be an even graver step into the kinds of foreign entanglements he criticized as a private citizen.

In past years, he expressed special derision for the United States' post-Sept. 11 presence in Afghanistan.

"We have wasted an enormous amount of blood and treasure in Afghanistan," Trump wrote in the 2013 tweet, just one of many such broadsides. In an earlier interview with Fox News' Bill O'Reilly, Trump insisted that "money should be spent in our country, we should rebuild our country. ... Let's get with it, get out of Afghanistan."

Since 2001, when the U.S.-led military coalition invaded and toppled the Taliban from power, [2,396](#) American soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan. By some estimates, the conflict has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$1 trillion.

In its most recent [report](#) on the progress there, the Pentagon concluded that the Taliban "had control or influence over approximately 10 percent of the population and was contesting the Afghan Government for control of at least another 20 percent."

Against that backdrop, Trump faces his first major decision involving large numbers of U.S. troops — one that echoes those put to his predecessors.

The broad outlines of the surge plan are drawing praise from Republican lawmakers who long expressed frustration with what they considered former President Barack Obama's directionless approach to the Afghan conflict.

"President Obama's failure to set a policy or a strategy in Afghanistan squandered many of our hard-fought gains there, and it's been clear for a while we haven't had the forces on the ground to accomplish our mission," said Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a leading Republican hawk and Iraq War veteran. "A troop increase will help stop the Islamic State from growing its footprint in Afghanistan and prevent the Taliban from once again establishing safe havens for terrorists."

At the center of the debate is McMaster, a three-star Army general who is one of the intellectual architects of the counterinsurgency strategy employed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He is a leading practitioner of counterinsurgency strategy, a troop-heavy approach that focuses as much on providing security for the population as on killing the enemy.

He applied it in Iraq, where he served from 2004 to 2006. McMaster's service with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Tal Afar, where he and his team cleared the onetime Al Qaeda stronghold of insurgents, has become a case study for students of counterinsurgency warfare. He has approached the situation in Afghanistan through the same framework, say those who have worked with him.

"Our position in Afghanistan has been deteriorating for some time and, in a sense, what McMaster is doing — because nobody knows counterinsurgency better than he does — is to undo the damage that Obama's micromanagement of the Pentagon did to our prospects in Afghanistan," said Eric Edelman, who served as defense undersecretary for policy in the George W. Bush administration.

When McMaster returned from Iraq, he helped Gen. David Petraeus revolutionize the Army's counterinsurgency doctrine, which was put to the test during the Iraq surge in late 2007.

McMaster's views were also deeply informed by his doctoral studies at the University of North Carolina, which focused on how and why the Vietnam War went awry. His answer, set forth in a bestselling book about the war: Military officers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had "failed to confront the president with their objections" to a strategy they had reason to believe would fail.

Following reports that he has clashed with the president in recent weeks on a number of policy issues, it's clear that, to the extent his plan for Afghanistan runs counter to some of Trump's campaign promises or deeply held beliefs, McMaster considers it a part of the job.

"Part of it is his style, but part of it is, the guy keeps telling him things he doesn't want to hear," said a former Bush administration official.

Defense Secretary James Mattis also supports a military surge, several officials said. "We're up against a determined enemy," Mattis said Monday in Copenhagen.

The United States has 8,400 troops in Afghanistan. Even with an additional 5,000, the U.S.

military presence would pale in comparison to the nearly 100,000 American troops deployed there in 2010 and 2011.

It would also be just a fraction of the 30,000 additional troops that Obama authorized soon after he took office in 2009 in his own version of an Afghan surge.

Indeed, retired Army Col. Joseph Collin, a Pentagon strategist, calls the proposed Trump troop increase a "mini-surge," one that would not mark a dramatic change in the current strategy of advising and training the Afghans and supporting operations with special forces and air power.

But were the president to sign off on a plan that would mark a departure from his campaign rhetoric, it would be, in the words of one former Bush national security aide, "a big deal."

The president was initially briefed on the situation in Afghanistan on his first visit to U.S. Central Command in Tampa in early February, just weeks after taking office.

What he heard was inconsistent with his desire to reallocate American resources from the Middle East and focus attention on domestic priorities. "He heard the truth: We cannot let Afghanistan and Iraq totally implode. We can't walk away from them. As a matter of fact, we're going to have to put more resources in," said the former Bush aide, who has direct knowledge of the meeting. "What he wants to do is get out, but McMaster and Mattis are giving him the military view, which is, 'You can't get out, you have to do more.'"

But hard-core Trump supporters wary of international military commitments are not the only ones hoping he will stick to his stay-out-of-it promises.

"It's the definition of insanity," said Stephen Miles, director of Win Without War, which advocates a less muscular foreign policy that relies heavily on diplomacy. "Sixteen years on, there's nothing a few thousand more troops will do to tip the scales of a war that has no battlefield solution. Afghanistan's problems — endemic corruption, a non-representative political system, and nearly four decades of endless war — will not be solved with American bombs or boots on the ground."

Yet Trump, who seems to relish a challenge, is also feeling pressure from more than just his military advisers. The Taliban itself has been baiting him.

In an open letter days after his inauguration, the Taliban [advised](#) Trump to pull all U.S. forces out of the country, saying that "nothing has been achieved in 15 years of war except bloodshed and destruction."

In words that echoed some of Trump's own past rhetoric, it went on to say that the U.S. "had lost credibility after spending a trillion dollars on a fruitless entanglement." The militant group added that the responsibility to end the war "rests on your shoulders."

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DeVos questions whether Congress should reauthorize the Higher Education Act [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 05/09/2017 05:47 PM EDT

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos today questioned whether Congress should reauthorize the main federal law governing higher education, saying lawmakers should instead "start afresh."

Speaking at an education technology conference in Salt Lake City, DeVos suggested that the current discussion in Congress surrounding reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is misguided.

"Why would we reauthorize an act that's, like, fifty or sixty years old and that has continued to be amended?" DeVos asked. "Why wouldn't we start afresh and talk about what we need in this century and beyond for educating and helping our young people learn?"

The Higher Education Act, which governs federal support for colleges and universities, was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Most significantly, the law controls roughly \$150 billion that flows to students each year through the federal student loan and Pell grant programs.

"The world has changed," DeVos added. "We have many adults that are well into their careers who really do need and want to go back and get a different kind of education. We should be considering the needs of individuals and students, not a system so much."

Both Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#) and Rep. [Virginia Foxx](#), Republican chairs of the Congressional education committees, have said that reauthorizing the Higher Education Act is a top priority for them during this Congress.

The Higher Education Act was last comprehensively reauthorized in 2008 during the George W. Bush administration. The authorization for many programs under the law expired at the end of September, 2014, and they have been renewed either through automatic extensions or other congressional actions.

DeVos also urged the audience at the education technology conference, which is sponsored by Arizona State University and GSV Advisers, to lobby members of Congress about the burden of federal regulations and requirements on their work.

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Interest rates on federal student loans will increase this year [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 05/10/2017 01:18 PM EDT

The cost of borrowing money from the federal government to pay for college will increase in the coming academic year.

The interest rates on new federal student loans are set to jump by more than two-thirds of a percentage point following the U.S. Treasury Department's [sale](#) today of 10-year notes, which is the government security to which the rates are tied.

For new undergraduate student loans, the interest rate will increase to 4.45 percent, up from 3.76 percent.

The rate on direct loans for graduate students will rise to 6 percent from this year's 5.31 percent.

And the interest rates on federal PLUS loans — both for graduate students or parents paying for their children's education — will be 7 percent, up from the current 6.31 percent.

The new interest rates take effect on July 1 for the 2017-18 school year and are fixed for the lifetime of the loan. The changes today do not affect borrowers who already have federal student loans.

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To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: Trump administration opens shutdown-averting negotiations — Rule out Rokita — Blasting 'choose your own baseline'
Date: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 4:09:47 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 08/09/2017 04:06 PM EDT

THAT BORDER WALL, THO: Still hellbent on getting money to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, White House officials are already initiating hush-hush negotiations ahead of Sept. 30 (and the next deadline that will almost surely result from the seemingly inevitable stopgap in store).

Seung Min Kim, Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#) this afternoon that Marc Short met with top Senate Appropriations staffers from both parties this month to make a hard sell for the proposal. What's the White House's director of legislative affairs offering in exchange? Bye-bye budget caps.

Sufficient leverage? The big question, of course, is whether Democrats will give in to the Trump administration's demands in exchange for lifting those spending limits. After all, folks from both sides of the aisle have for months predicted a bipartisan agreement would be struck to bust the caps.

Err, a 'double fence': Perhaps making Democrats more amenable to "border wall" funding is the fact that the White House is only begging this time for money for a "double fence" along some swaths of the border. "Look, there are places where the wall makes sense, and there are places where the wall doesn't make sense and there are better options," [Jon Tester](#), the Senate's top Democrat in charge of homeland security funding, told us this month. "So I'll just take a look at it and see."

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! What's going on out there? Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc(s) of the day — A [survey](#) by the Congressional Management Foundation detailing high-level congressional aides' dissatisfaction with staff skills and office technology, in part because of declining budget levels.

— A [letter](#) from four Democratic senators urging Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to fill the monthsold vacancy of chief enforcement officer, a position geared to prevent fraud within student financial aid.

#DailyBudgetFact — On this day in 2007, the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis first escalated into a global financial meltdown after a major French bank [froze billions of dollars](#) worth of investment funds it had declared impossible to value.

BUDGET

RULE OUT ROKITA: The second-most powerful Republican on the House Budget Committee has officially taken his name out of the running to become the panel's next chairman. Instead, [Todd Rokita](#) has formally entered the race to unseat Indiana Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#), Kevin Robillard [reported](#) Tuesday night. Rokita, the committee's most senior

member, had been seen as a possible shoe-in to replace Rep. [Diane Black](#) as she seeks the Tennessee governor's mansion.

Where's that back bench? The next two longest-serving members of the budget panel, Reps. [Tom Cole](#) and [Mario Diaz-Balart](#), have already taken themselves out of consideration, their offices confirmed to us. But another junior member, Rep. [Bill Johnson](#), has quietly started making his case to the House Steering Committee, The Hill [reported](#) last week. Johnson's office has yet to return our request for comment.

TAX

BASELINE BLUES: The Committee for a Responsible Budget has a message for Senate Budget Chairman [Mike Enzi](#): You've been warned. The influential group of budget hawks sent a [letter](#) to Enzi today blasting the rumors that he's considering a "choose your own baseline" approach to tax reform, a move they say could balloon the federal deficit.

Into the weeds: The Senate's not-yet-released budget resolution will choose whether to assume a current policy baseline or current law baseline — and it could make a big difference. The House's budget has already said the tax package would be based on current law, which would not assume that temporary tax breaks (like those 2015 extenders) will live on eternally. Fiscal hawks consider this to be a more realistic approach, though it makes tax writers' jobs harder. Alas, we've been told that some on the Senate Finance Committee are pushing for a current policy baseline, assuming all tax cuts will be renewed. That would help their cause of deficit-neutral tax reform by way of lowered expectations, since assuming tax breaks become permanent would reduce projected revenues by about \$460 billion over 10 years.

NO GUESSES: The White House's legislative liaison has boldly predicted that Congress would send tax reform to the finish line by November, but Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) isn't gonna play that game. "I'm not going to tell you when we are going to finish tax reform, but we'll finish it," McConnell [told](#) the Florence, Ky., Rotary Club this week, [Toby Eckert reports](#).

ALWAYS A TRADE-OFF: Now about those pay-fors. We already know that Republicans in Congress are considering tightening the limit on the mortgage interest deductions to achieve that grand prize of a lower corporate tax rate. This week, we got some numbers to flesh out that vision. [A new estimate](#) by the Tax Foundation predicts that cutting that mortgage deduction cap in half could raise enough revenue to reduce the corporate tax rate by around 3 percentage points, [Toby reports](#). The move would save about \$319 billion over the next decade. (For context: The current cap is \$1 million of mortgage debt, and the current corporate tax rate is 35 percent.)

HEALTH

TREATMENT IN TANDEM: In a [special report](#) out today on the future of health, The Agenda looks at successful models for truly integrated care and the savings to be had by bucking a disjointed approach. Joanne Silberner [explains](#) that bringing mental and physical health care under one roof has the estimated potential to shave \$26 billion to \$48 billion each year from the nation's health care costs. School districts that are beginning to provide comprehensive mental health services on campus aim to keep kids out of jail, [Brianna Ehley reports](#). And a growing body of evidence supports the idea that a coordinated approach could help address obesity and depression — two of the largest drivers of health care cost increases,

with obesity resulting in almost [\\$150 billion](#) per year in direct costs to the country and major depressive disorder totalling more than \$200 billion per year in direct costs.

AN OPIOID PLAN WITHOUT A PRICE TAG: The Trump administration has yet to put a dollar sign on the president's [calls](#) this week to beef up law enforcement and border security to fight the opioid crisis. Competing proposals, on the other hand, are steeped in detailed federal funding demands. As Morning Agriculture [explains](#), the bipartisan plan Rep. [Cheri Bustos](#) and Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#) are pushing would allow rural communities to shift certain USDA resources toward substance-abuse treatment and other initiatives to curb the epidemic. The bills in that package — [S. 1677 \(115\)](#), [S. 1678 \(115\)](#) and [H.R. 3566 \(115\)](#) — would set aside 20 percent of USDA's telemedicine grant funding for substance abuse treatment, and prioritize loan and grant applications focused on substance abuse prevention, treatment and recovery services.

Disregarded guidance: You'll recall that the interim [report](#) from the presidential commission on opioid addiction urged a "national emergency" and the nixing a longstanding prohibition on using Medicaid funds to pay for residential substance abuse treatment (a change that could cost the federal government between \$40 billion and \$60 billion over a decade, according to previous CBO estimates).

AGRICULTURE

ON THE HERBICIDE'S SIDE: Like his predecessor, House Oversight Chairman [Trey Gowdy](#) has begun [questioning](#) the use of NIH funding for a report that determined that the herbicide glyphosate (a key ingredient in Monsanto's "Roundup Ready" products) is a probable carcinogen. More from [Jenny Hopkinson](#).

ECONOMY

IN DEMS WE TRUST? POLITICO teamed up with Morning Consult to take voters' temps again on the issues they say matter most come election day. Still at the tippy top: economic issues. And for the first time this year, (slightly) more respondents said they trust congressional Democrats over GOP lawmakers to handle issues impacting the economy. But the majority of those questioned still said they trust Republicans more on jobs. Those surveyed placed more importance on reforming entitlement programs than overhauling the tax system or passing an infrastructure spending bill. Check out the [toplines](#).

STATE DEPARTMENT

JUST A RESHUFFLE: The State Department's No. 2 official used a town-hall-style setting on this week to calm the nerves of anxious staffers who still fear the Trump administration will try to dismantle their department. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan assured staffers that the goal of the White House-led restructuring is not to scrap State or USAID, and that a redesign is not a synonym for layoffs, Nahal Toosi [writes](#).

Light on details: Sources in the room said Sullivan offered almost no clarity about the department's big reorganization plan, which are formally due to OMB by mid-September.

DEFENSE

FACTCHECK: President Donald Trump today claimed to have made the U.S. nuclear arsenal "far stronger and more powerful than ever before" since he took office. Not exactly, as

Louis Nelson and Jacqueline Klimas [explain](#). Trump did call for a review of the nation's nuclear posture, but that formal review only began in April. (Results aren't expected until late 2017.) And that modernization plan he boasted about? It was actually started under former President Barack Obama — something that takes decades, not months.

Price tag: The nuclear buildup that Trump touted, of course, won't come cheap. Obama's plan is expected to cost \$400 billion over the next decade, according to a CBO [report](#) this February. That's an average cost of \$40 billion a year.

MORE BUILDUP NEWS: The Navy is moving ahead with its nascent effort to acquire a new guided missile frigate, our Defense team [reports](#). Officials have issued a [request for information](#) that says it is "looking to use an existing ship design that could be modified."

EARMARKS

- How the battle over 'sanctuary cities' has heated up. [Bloomberg](#).
- Number of rent-burdened families nears record. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- JPMorgan CEO Dimon: Lack of action on taxes, infrastructure 'embarrassing'. [The Hill](#).
- Oregon offers to pay immigrant children's health care. [Stateline](#).
- Study: Post-9/11 GI Bill boosted college enrollment among veterans. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 53 days until federal funding runs out, the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Sept. 30, 2017). 418 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/08/trump-administration-opens-shutdown-averting-negotiations-024161>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House pitches deal for wall money — and no shutdown [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim, Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan | 08/09/2017 01:38 PM EDT

The White House is pushing a deal on Capitol Hill to head off a government shutdown that would lift strict spending caps long opposed by Democrats in exchange for money for President Donald Trump's border wall with Mexico, multiple sources said.

Marc Short, the White House's director of legislative affairs, met with top staffers from both parties on the Senate Appropriations Committee last week to make a hard sell for the proposal, the sources said.

Short — who said the border funding would be used for a "double fence" — stressed that the White House is insisting on a down payment for construction this fall. Short also lobbied for a big budget increase for the Pentagon, another priority for Trump.

The government runs out of money after Sept. 30. Without a spending deal, federal agencies will be forced to close until an agreement is reached. Democrats have vowed to oppose funding for a border wall, making it probably the biggest threat to an early October closure.

The White House is offering Democrats more funding for their own pet projects in return for allowing construction to move ahead on a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border — though perhaps not the "big, beautiful wall" with solar panels that Trump has long promised.

The border wall has also become a more valuable prize politically for Trump since the collapse of the Obamacare repeal effort. Trump and GOP leaders are aiming to pass tax reform legislation this fall but face big obstacles — making the border wall even more important for the White House.

Yet there still seems little chance of getting sign-off from Congress. Democrats show no sign of yielding on the issue. They have already blocked the project once: During negotiations over a government spending package last spring, the White House dropped similar demands for wall funding after Democrats balked.

Trump and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney have since said they won't cave this time — even if it means shutting down the government. Indeed, lawmakers and aides in both parties are dreading the looming showdown, as a White House desperate for legislative wins makes a major push for a wall that Democrats hate.

"It's just the wrong message; we don't want to build a wall around the United States," said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), who sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee and called the border wall a "non-starter."

"It's difficult for me to see that proposal going anywhere," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) added. "A lot of people don't want the additional border wall."

The timing of Short's meeting with Senate Appropriations staffers — a full two months before the government would shut down — suggests the White House is aware of just how difficult it will be to secure border funding. White House officials appear to be trying to give themselves as much time as possible to strike a deal.

The White House did not return a request for comment. But GOP insiders on Capitol Hill expect negotiations could drag out well beyond Sept. 30. Senior GOP and Democratic aides believe a two- or three-month patch that continues spending at 2017 levels is likely, in order to buy more time.

Before leaving for August recess, House Republicans made the first move on a wall, passing a security funding bill that included Trump's \$1.6 billion request for roughly 70 miles of new barriers on the southern border.

The House bill also increased the Defense Department budget by more than \$70 billion above current spending caps set in law. All but five House Democrats opposed the measure.

Such a bill, however, is doomed in the Senate, where 60 votes — meaning eight Democrats — are needed to pass any spending agreement. Beyond their opposition to the wall funding, Democrats typically require any military spending boosts to be matched by domestic increases.

Republican and Democratic congressional aides have predicted for months that both sides will come together on a spending agreement to raise spending caps for the Pentagon as well as for nondefense domestic programs.

Congress passed such a framework several years ago under the lead of then-House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.).

The question this time is whether Trump can get his wall money as part of any agreement.

Some Republicans are more optimistic than others. White House officials appear to believe it's a battle that's worth fighting. And congressional conservatives, including those in the House Freedom Caucus, strongly agree, even suggesting they would back a government shutdown to secure wall funding.

After being forced to drop his request for wall money last spring, Trump also tweeted that "our country needs a good 'shutdown' in September" to secure the campaign promises he ran on.

Hill GOP leaders, however, are eager to avoid a shutdown, fearful the public would blame Republicans and that the party could suffer heavy losses in the 2018 midterm elections. They already worry that Trump's slumping approval ratings will cost them at the polls next year.

Still, some Republicans are hopeful that if the White House can sell the border barrier as a "fence" instead of a wall, perhaps some Democrats will be more receptive. Technically, the House wall funding package would not finance a massive brick-and-mortar structure, as Trump promised on the campaign trail, but rather, double fencing and levies.

"Look, there are places where the wall makes sense, and there are places where the wall doesn't make sense and there are better options," said Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), who represents a state that Trump carried by 20 points in the election. "So I'll just take a look at it and see."

But it's unlikely that the White House will find eight Democratic senators to go along, even if means more money for domestic programs.

"I do know for a fact that every [Democrat] considers wall funding to be a poison pill," said Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), who is up for reelection next year.

Murray, the Democrat who negotiated the 2013 budget pact, said she would oppose the terms that the White House is floating.

"He promised during the campaign he was going to build a wall paid for by Mexico," Murray said. "Until I see that promise, it's going nowhere."

Jennifer Scholtes and Elana Schor contributed to this report.

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Rokita enters Indiana Senate race [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 08/08/2017 07:48 PM EDT

GOP Rep. [Todd Rokita](#) will announce Wednesday morning that he is running against vulnerable Democratic Sen. [Joe Donnelly](#) in Indiana, joining an already contentious Republican primary and casting his campaign as another step toward fixing Washington, along with the election of President Donald Trump.

"Indiana needs a conservative fighter who shares our values," the narrator says in Rokita's [campaign launch video](#). "That's why Todd Rokita is running for United States Senate."

Republicans consider Donnelly to be one of the most vulnerable senators up for reelection in 2018, alongside Missouri Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#). Trump won Indiana by almost 20 points in 2016, and Rokita's video specifically calls out the election of Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, the state's former governor, as the beginning of a movement to repair Washington.

Meanwhile, the RNC and NRSC have repeatedly attacked Donnelly as "Mexico Joe" after the Associated Press reported his family's company had outsourced jobs to Mexico. Donnelly has since sold his stock in the company.

"Lobbyists, bureaucrats, politicians and the media — they've rigged the system. ... It's Sen. Joe Donnelly's rigged system too," the narrator in Rokita's video says. "On taxes, Obamacare, guns, life, even national security, Joe Donnelly is with them, not us."

But so far, Rokita has aimed most of his fire at fellow Republican Rep. [Luke Messer](#), who announced his Senate run late last month. The pair have clashed over everything from Messer's wife's high-paid job in an Indianapolis suburb, to Rokita's use of a prop plane for campaign purposes, to edits to Messer's Wikipedia page. Each man's campaign has already called the opposing candidate "unhinged."

State Rep. Mike Braun also entered the contest on Tuesday.

Rokita, a former two-term Indiana secretary of state, won election to the House in 2010. He's built a war chest of \$2.3 million, slightly more than the \$2 million Messer has in his campaign account. Donnelly has nearly \$3.7 million in the bank.

Messer and Rokita start as the front-runners in the Republican primary contest, but operatives said Braun — who has the personal wealth to self-fund a campaign — shouldn't be counted out.

"Our country needs more people who can tackle big issues from perspectives gained from running a business and not a career politician's perspective," Braun said in a statement announcing his run. "I've spent my life building a business and creating jobs. I am running for U.S. Senate because we need leaders who understand the real consequences of the failure of our federal government and are capable of delivering solutions for Hoosiers on issues like health care and tax reform."

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McConnell won't put a timeline on tax reform [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 08/09/2017 01:55 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said he would not join the expectations game for when Congress will pass tax reform, departing from the aggressive timeline laid out by the White House.

"I'm not going to tell you when we are going to finish tax reform, but we'll finish it. That's the way we begin to change America," McConnell [told](#) the Florence, Ky., Rotary Club on Tuesday, according to the Northern Kentucky Tribune.

Last month, White House legislative director Marc Short [said](#) markups would begin in September, legislation would move through the House in October, and it would clear the Senate in November. That followed earlier predictions by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that tax reform would be done by August.

In his remarks to the Rotary Club, portions of which were [posted](#) by ABC News, McConnell said unrealistic deadlines were driving an impression that Congress hasn't accomplished much. Without specifically citing tax reform, he said: "Part of the reason, I think, that the storyline is we haven't done much is because, in part, the president and others have set these early timelines about things need to be done by a certain point.

"Now our new president, of course, has not been in this line of work before and I think had excessive expectations about how quickly things happen in the democratic process," McConnell said. "And so part of the reason I think people feel we're underperforming is because too many kind of artificial deadlines, unrelated to the reality of the complexity of legislating, may not have been fully understood."

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Study sees 3 percentage point cut in corporate taxes from slashing mortgage interest deduction cap [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 08/08/2017 01:12 PM EDT

Cutting the cap on the mortgage interest deduction by 50 percent could raise enough revenue to reduce the corporate tax rate by around 3 percentage points, the Tax Foundation [estimates](#).

Republican congressional leaders and Trump administration officials trying to hammer out a tax reform plan are looking for new ways to pay for tax cuts after they abandoned one major pay-for, border adjustability. POLITICO [reported](#) last week that one idea they are considering is lowering the cap on the mortgage interest deduction, which is currently set at \$1 million of mortgage debt.

The estimate by the non-partisan, conservative-leaning Tax Foundation assumes that the cap is lowered to \$500,000, which it estimates would save about \$319 billion over the next decade.

"This is enough revenue to reduce the corporate tax rate by about 3 percentage points," wrote Kyle Pomerleau, the Foundation's director of federal projects. "This estimate assumes that the cap would apply to all existing mortgages. Any phase-ins would reduce the amount this cap would raise over the next decade. For example, lawmakers could apply this limitation to mortgages received after enactment."

House Republicans have proposed cutting the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent. President Donald Trump wants to cut the rate on all businesses to 15 percent.

The top 1 percent of income earners would see the largest tax increase if the interest deduction cap is reduced, with their after-tax income falling by 0.62, Pomerleau estimated.

"A small number of taxpayers in the middle quintiles would see a tax increase, but it would average less than one-tenth of 1 percent," he wrote.

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The doctor will analyze you now [Back](#)

By Joanne Silberner | 08/09/2017 05:05 AM EDT

As a child growing up in rural Alaska, Vera Starbard was diagnosed with major depression. She'd been sexually abused by her uncle and was plagued by thoughts of suicide. By the age of 10, she'd already spent time as an inpatient in a psychiatric hospital. "It was a really dark time," she says. "And I didn't feel like it was ever going to get better."

But when she was 11, things changed. Her family moved to Anchorage, and they joined the [Southcentral Foundation](#), a health care provider for native Alaskans. The foundation was launching a new approach to health care—one that wove mental health into the rest of its primary care.

For Vera, that meant every checkup included a mental health evaluation. Her primary care team included a psychologist or social worker who offered care on-site. There were a variety of group counseling programs to choose from. Every person she saw had her health record, there were no outside charges, and there was never a wait to make an appointment.

Perhaps most important, accessing mental health treatment was as easy as going to her regular doctor, and there was no stigma attached: Her mental health services were provided at the same time and in the same place as other medical care, just like heading down the hall for an X-ray or blood test.

In Anchorage, she still had a lot to work through, and difficult times ahead. But today, at age 35, she says that Southcentral's approach to mental health care saved her life. "There's a higher than not probability that I would have committed suicide without the resources at my disposal," she says.

It's a truism that the mind and the body are connected, but the U.S. health care system has long treated them as separate—with separate doctors, separate hospitals, separate payment systems.

That's a major reason people with acute mental illnesses don't get help. Ditto for chronic conditions like depression and anxiety. People may not seek help because of stigma. They may not find it because there are too few providers and they are too hard to locate. Or people don't have health insurance, or can't afford the co-pays, or lose interest when faced with a long wait.

The result is that many people who need mental health care aren't getting it. According to [a recent article](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, nearly 18 percent of adults surveyed in 2015 reported having a mental, behavioral or emotional disorder. And 20 percent of respondents said either they or a family member had needed mental health care but didn't get it, either because they couldn't afford it, their insurance wouldn't cover it, they were afraid or embarrassed, or they had no idea where to go.

At the patient level, this means people with mental health issues suffer when they don't need to. And at the policy level, there are huge reasons to fix this, primarily the high long-term cost of untreated mental illness. Mental health plays a big role in chronic conditions like hypertension, obesity and diabetes. "You can go ahead and give all the insulin you want," says Donald Berwick, former head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, founder of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and a big proponent of behavioral health integration. "If you're not addressing the attendant behavioral health issues, you're not just missing the chance to reduce suffering, you're reducing the chance to save a lot of money."

In part because of their Alaska Native heritage, which puts a high value on spiritual health, the leaders of Southcentral recognized decades ago that behavioral health is tightly linked with bodily health. So they became one of the early adopters of integrated care. They embedded treatment for mental and emotional ills in their primary care practices, and found that patient satisfaction rates skyrocketed and usage of medical care went down, saving millions of dollars while improving patient outcomes.

In the nearly 30 years since Southcentral hired its first psychologist, pretty much every study has shown that integrating mental health care into medical care results in better patient outcomes and lower costs. A few years ago, analysts at actuarial firm Milliman [estimated](#) that integrating medical and behavior health care could shave \$26 billion to \$48 billion each year from the nation's health care costs.

But adoption has been slow, in part because of the way much health insurance is structured. Mental health is often a separate benefit, if insurance pays anything at all. Doctors are paid more for procedures on sick people. They get less if they keep their patients healthy and out of the hospital.

Of all the structural problems in the U.S. health care system, the segregation of mental health care from the rest of medical care is arguably the most costly, both financially and in terms of patient health. With new pressure to find ways to bend the curve of health care costs, and the growing burden of chronic disease and worker disability, perhaps no policy could have as much bang for the buck as finally integrating mental and physical health care.

IN THE MIDDLE of the 20th century, mental illnesses weren't considered illnesses per se; fully debilitating illnesses were seen as "insanities" and their sufferers often confined against their will in special mental hospitals. Illnesses that were less debilitating—milder depressions, say, or anxiety or substance abuse—were viewed as weaknesses of will, often ignored by medical professionals. Payment followed suit; for mental health providers it was low, for primary care providers it was essentially nonexistent.

People had to either figure out a way to live with their conditions, or suffer as their illnesses got more acute. The arrival of more effective medications for mental illnesses opened things up a bit—doctors could write a prescription, and patients could feel better without months or years of talk therapy. Still, several studies in the 1980s showed that many patients didn't get treatment, with as many as one-half of patients saying no when their doctors suggested they get mental health care.

[The search was on](#) for something better. In the early 1990s, private foundations and the federal government, through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, began funding clinical studies around the country. Could primary care providers be trained to recognize depression, and get their patients treated? Would that make a difference? The studies showed the answers were yes and yes. In 1996, the Institute of Medicine [published a suggestion](#)—integrate primary and behavioral health care so that patients would get diagnosed and treated by their doctors or via direct referral to a behavioral health specialist as part of their routine medical care. Big health care systems like Kaiser Permanente and the Veterans Administration began experimenting with integrating behavioral health care in some locations.

Southcentral Foundation was ahead of the trend, having started thinking about integrating its care in 1985. CEO Katherine Gottlieb, an Alaska Native who won a MacArthur "genius" grant award for her work at Southcentral, says there was a simple reason: "We did a survey of our community."

Southcentral asked community members to rank their health care priorities among choices like cancer care, diabetes, obesity and behavioral health. The top five priorities, says Gottlieb, were all related to behavioral health—child sexual abuse, child neglect, domestic violence, behavioral health counseling and addictions.

So Southcentral forged forward with its goal of making patients with behavioral health issues feel welcome. It built an airy new primary care center that looks as much like a mountain lodge as it does a place to get medical care. Huge windows frame the snowcapped peaks of the nearby Chugach Mountains, and the halls are filled with Alaska Native art—beadwork, blankets, dolls, carvings and paintings of totem animals such as ravens, orcas and eagles. There's an expansive lobby designed to host community gatherings. Foundation planners say the setting sends the message that the health of the community directly relates to the health of each of its members.

Today, a patient with a history of mental illness, like Vera, gets evaluated by her doctor whenever she comes in for a medical appointment. If Vera seems anxious or depressed, the doctor might talk to her about it, or call in the behavioral health consultant. But the same goes for patients without a history of behavioral problems. A diabetes patient who has stopped taking his pills, for instance, might find himself in a 20- or 30-minute discussion with his primary care doctor about ways to deal with anxiety or depression. The primary care doctor or the behaviorist on the team might suggest more formal counseling, or the request might come from the patient. When hospital care is needed, patients are sent by their care team, and they return to that care team when they get out.

The system puts mental illnesses into the realm of routine health care. "We know that for tons and tons of people, stigma is a really big deal in behavioral health," says Douglas Eby, vice president of medical services at Southcentral and one of the many staffers who've been there since the beginning. "But getting behavioral health during your visit with your primary care

provider, or by the guy down the hall, at the same place and maybe during the same visit—then it's nothing different, and not likely to be stigmatized." Your employer won't find out, and your buddies won't see your truck parked outside a mental health office. Integrating behavioral health care into a medical setting normalizes it, he says.

Southcentral takes things a step further, with several innovative group therapy programs, some of them building on Native American culture—"learning circles" where people talk about how they dealt with internal conflict and about how to resolve their feelings. Vera attended an intensive one-week group therapy session where people shared memories of domestic violence, abuse and neglect. "That was the week I figured out I could be happy," she says. Family, faith and friends also helped, but what she learned at Southcentral was instrumental. "That was the start of not being a victim anymore, of seeing that there was light at the end of the tunnel and I wouldn't always be depressed."

Southcentral's administrators credit integration for lowering hospital admissions and visits to the emergency room by more than a third between 2000 and 2015. In a recent survey, 97 percent of patients said they were satisfied with the care. In 2011, the foundation was awarded a [Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award](#) for delivering top-quality care for less cost than the vast majority of U.S. providers.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE all along, says CEO Gottlieb, has been money.

Southcentral gets by on a combination of private insurers and government programs including Medicare, Medicaid and the Indian Health Service. But most of them don't pay much for mental health care, and they don't pay anything at all for some of the counseling and group sessions the foundation offers. So Southcentral subsidizes behavioral health care with savings from the medical side, and it gets grants as well.

Payment is a challenge across the country.

A landmark study of 113,452 patients in 102 group practices within the Intermountain Healthcare system in Utah and Idaho showed how much can be saved by integrating mental health care. Some practices included mental health care in a "medical home." In other practices, patients were referred to outside therapists. Annual medical costs were \$515 higher per year for patients who did not get mental health services through their primary providers.

While the benefit to patients was clear, the study had a second conclusion—that providers lost money by integrating mental health. As physician Thomas Schwenk noted in an [accompanying editorial](#), during the 2010-13 study period the integrated practices received \$115 *less* per patient per year than the traditional practices, because payment was based on procedures and office visits. Since patients in the integrated practices needed less medical care, the doctors made less money.

Such payment practices are common, and Schwenk wrote that it's going to take "a profound change in the fundamental structure of the U.S. health care delivery system" to integrate behavioral health care into the primary care environment. That would take heavier reliance of payments going to groups of doctors caring for groups of patients, not piecemeal payments for individual services.

There's broad support for behavioral health integration within the health care community and in Congress; there are few critics on record, and no one is lobbying against it. The trade

association for companies that provide health care services to people in insurance plans, the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, is a big booster. Patient groups love it for the access it gives, and for the destigmatization. Supporting health care reform that favors behavioral health care is a major legislative priority for the National Alliance for Mental Illness, which represents people with mental illnesses and their family members.

Andrew Sperling, a lobbyist for NAMI, echoes the conclusion that the chief challenge is money. According to [a SAMHSA estimate](#), Medicare spent \$29 billion on mental health care in 2016, and the Medicaid bill was \$67 billion. Sperling would like to see more for various demonstration programs. And if funds for Medicaid are cut, "a lot of the innovation we've seen with primary behavioral health integration would be stifled," he says.

Still, some doctors and other providers are not totally on board. Many psychiatrists today don't accept Medicare or other insurance, making access still a problem. And primary care practitioners and behavioral health workers may need training in how to work in an integrated system. "People who become cardiologists and rheumatologists and all the other '-ologists' get minimal instruction in behavioral health," says Berwick.

Psychologists and social workers may also have to be retrained, says Berwick's IHI colleague Mara Laderman. Mental health consultants in integrated care systems work differently. "They're focused on action-oriented problem solving over one session or a couple of 20-minute sessions, as opposed to having a more longitudinal therapeutic relationship," she says. "You know, that 50-minute, hour appointment." Southcentral's Eby confirms that—he says they have to look long and hard for people willing to give care outside of those 50-minute boxes.

SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS will take more than money; it will require changing the culture of medicine. Many groups are moving in that direction; the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association and other groups have policies promoting integrated care and offer information to their members on how to adopt it.

The federal government supports a multitude of initiatives designed to promote behavioral health care integration. The Affordable Care Act set aside money for model projects. Close to a billion dollars has been granted for programs that will promote behavioral health care, like setting up patient-centered medical homes within Medicaid. And starting last January, Medicare has been paying physicians for behavioral health care management and consultation. There are new billing codes that allow physicians to charge for helping their patients get behavioral health treatment, managing their patients' care, and working with psychiatrists.

Authors of [an article](#) in the New England Journal of Medicine say it's a "major step forward" and predict millions of beneficiaries will benefit and that there will be millions of dollars in savings. There could be a ripple effect: Medicare often serves as an example to other insurers.

Southcentral Foundation leaders are often invited to speak at conferences or to health care organizations in the Washington, D.C., area, and when they do, they usually stop by Capitol Hill or federal agencies to talk about the benefits of providing mental health care in a primary care setting. Douglas Eby's trips have led him to believe that there will be more support in the future for fully integrated systems.

"We are popular with the whole political spectrum," he says. "We cut costs like crazy and

emphasize self, and family, so Republicans love us. Democrats love us because we're all about community and social factors and reforming the pillars of society so that everyone has improved access to care. When we walk into different political offices, we emphasize different parts of the system so that they can hear our story in their words and values, but it is all very true and the truth is the same truth."

Berwick, with plenty of experience on Capitol Hill when he was head of CMS, is concerned about protecting funding for some of the demonstration projects in the current chaos of health care funding. But in the long run, he says, integrating behavioral health into primary health care is inevitable. "Look, we've got to solve the health care cost problem," he says. In Anchorage, Vera Starbard is watching with interest. Until recently, she figured that all health systems offered mental health care right along with primary care. "That's literally what I had grown up knowing as health care."

But recently, she's seen several friends who are not part of Southcentral struggle to get mental health services. One friend, who, like Starbard, had been sexually abused, struggled for months to get approval from her health insurance company. Then her friend's intended counselor stopped taking new patients. "I'm only now seeing how good integrated care is," says Starbard. "We definitely took it for granted."

Joanne Silberner is a freelance health writer based in Seattle.

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'I just started flowing. It was the only thing that helped' [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 08/09/2017 05:10 AM EDT

When he was 16, DeMarrco Nicholson came home to find his mother unresponsive in the bathroom of their Washington, D.C., apartment, dead from sudden heart failure. In a matter of weeks, he was separated from his siblings, thrown into foster care and bounced from group home to group home in Anacostia, one of the poorest, high-crime neighborhoods in the nation's capital.

After struggling for a year, Nicholson's self-control cracked, and he violently lashed out, kicking and punching lockers, and threatening other students. It was the kind of episode that commonly ends in suspension or even arrest and puts teenagers — especially in neighborhoods like Nicholson's — into what's known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Forced out of school for bad behavior, unsupervised kids can get into even more trouble, wind up in the juvenile justice system and enter a spiral that becomes difficult to escape.

His school took a different tack. Instead of being disciplined for his outburst, Nicholson was greeted by a school-based therapist, who spent the rest of the day talking to him and learning about the [traumatic experiences](#) that brought him to that breaking point.

He was assigned a social worker and a therapist he could conveniently visit between classes. They formed a relationship and learned about his passion for rap music. He was encouraged to write rap lyrics to express his emotions instead of acting out. His therapist even set up a

makeshift recording studio in his office.

Today, Nicholson credits those sessions - the therapy and the rapping — with helping him cope with the trauma of his mother's death. "I started writing in my notebook. I'd tell him, I think I'm ready to record," Nicholson, now 19, said in an interview. "He'd set a time. I'd come in and I just started flowing. It was only thing that helped."

A growing number of school districts, like the District of Columbia school system, are beginning to provide comprehensive mental health services on campus, seeing it as not just a service to students, but a key way to keep lives on track, keep kids out of the justice system, and to treat problems before they get out of hand.

Nicholson gradually worked through the pain that he couldn't deal with alone. He graduated from Anacostia High School this year and is preparing to enroll at the University of the District of Columbia this fall. He wants to study music business. "I would be lost without it," he says of the therapy he received at school.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN mental health and bigger societal costs is becoming more important the more we learn about it - and one of the key links is between mental health and the justice system. Kids with unstable family lives or other traumas are often the ones who act up in school. By suspending them for bad behavior, schools make their problems even worse, by taking them out of a place with stable adults and other supports and leaving them out on the streets, unsupervised, where it's all too easy to get into more trouble - and all too hard to get out of it.

Health experts say for a large proportion of students who act out, the bad behavior is rooted in untreated mental health problems, conditions like depression or anxiety or more serious illnesses like bipolar disorder that often show their first symptoms in adolescence. Often, the illnesses are triggered by the kind of [traumatic experiences](#) that Nicholson went through. According to the National [Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice](#), roughly 70 percent of students in the juvenile justice system have a mental health issue and most haven't had proper treatment. A severe shortage of child psychiatrists and psychologists, coupled with the difficulties of finding insurance coverage for mental health, are some of the largest barriers to treatment.

"Parents have limited abilities to deal with behavioral issues and so kids with these issues, some of whom are more prone to acts of aggression, end up being pushed over to the juvenile justice system," said Wayne Bear, executive director of the Pennsylvania-based Juvenile Detention Centers' Association.

And that's one of the worst places for kids experiencing a mental crisis, said Darcy Gruttadaro, director of advocacy at the National Alliance for Mental Illness. "It's loud and scary and there are a lot of structure and rules to follow, which is a major challenge for a person with a mental illness. Conditions often worsen and they're more likely to keep getting into trouble, lengthening their stay."

"And do they get effective interventions and evidenced-based treatment while they're in a juvenile treatment facility?" she added. "The answer is probably no."

That's where schools come in. School-based mental health services are viewed by experts as the best place for early intervention and detection programs because, as Olga Price, who

founded D.C.'s school mental health program nearly two decades ago puts it: "It's where all of the kids are."

After trying out the idea for a few years in a handful of schools, the city went all in after a shooting in Anacostia in 2010 left three students dead and galvanized support for measures designed to reduce truancy and increase behavioral health services for youth. Children in D.C. public schools now have access to mental health care regardless of their family's income, or whether or not they have health insurance or have dependable transportation to get to a clinic. All kids have to do is get to school and the treatment they need is there.

"The goal is to bring mental health services to children in the setting where they spend the most time," said Tanya A. Royster, director of the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health. "You have access to parents, you have access to teachers, you also have a location it makes the services easier to access."

D.C.'s program, which now serves 60 of the city's 200 public and charter schools, includes at least one full-time therapist stationed at every school, who takes walk-in appointments, but also runs group therapy and class and schoolwide prevention programs. Students who need more intensive care are referred to a specialist in the community. The services are far more comprehensive than traditional school counselors, who often don't have the training or the bandwidth to handle serious behavioral health problems. The city plans to expand the program to every school in the district in the coming years.

The program is financed in part by federal and state grants and local city funding. Many of its services are reimbursed by Medicaid or private insurance. Other community mental health centers provide services in a handful of schools to supplement the program's costs. Still, funding remains a challenge and the city is struggling to find the funds for expansion.

As a result, Price said the program prioritizes schools with higher needs; officials look at attendance information, high-risk neighborhoods, the prevalence of students in need of special education. Anacostia High School, for example, is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in D.C., with the highest rates of violence. The graduation rate in 2016 was just 42 percent.

D.C.'s PROGRAM IS part of a national trend toward approaching children's behavioral issues from a clinical standpoint as opposed to a disciplinary approach. Treating kids who act out in school, whether it's frequent outbursts or one act of aggression or violent behavior, as symptoms of underlying behavioral health conditions is seen as a more long-term solution that can help facilitate a more productive life down the road.

The growing consensus is that if children with mental health issues are spotted early and get support and treatment they need, they are more likely to finish school, attend college and hold a steady job. More traditional forms of discipline, particularly suspension, increase the likelihood of getting into more trouble, and potentially getting entangled in the juvenile justice system.

"There is a lot of blurring of the lines, especially for children, in terms of what is a behavioral health issue, what is a manifestation of experience in trauma and what is a disability. It's complicated," said Sharra Greer, policy director for the Children's Law Center that advocates for school-based mental health programs. "You have a child who is in school, who is throwing chairs in the classroom — it's important to focus on why is that happening, as opposed to this kid should be punished. It's important to get people to look at it from that lens."

Keeping troublesome kids in schools also keeps them closer to services that can help.

"They tend to want to come to school because they know that someone will want to come and talk to them," said Marisa Parrella, the manager of Mary's Center's School-Based Mental Health, one of the community providers that supplements D.C.'s school program.

According to an evaluation report of D.C.'s program, the top reasons children were referred to the school mental health provider were anger and aggression, disruptive behavior, family problems, grief and loss, and poor relations with other students.

D.C. health officials say the program has already helped reduce the number of behavioral problems at schools. The number of suspensions reported throughout D.C.'s schools has fallen by nearly 40 percent in the past couple of years from 11,078 in the 2013-14 school year to 6,695 in the 2015-16 school year, according to city figures. Though the mental health program isn't exclusively responsible for the decline, city officials say it has played a role.

New York City has also been building a school mental-health program. In New York, the program is administered by the Montefiore Medical Center, which operates in 80 public schools in the Bronx, making it the largest school-based health program in the country.

"Schools tend to bring us the children who get into fights or have some behavioral issues," said Gail Shafran, a nurse practitioner who works in one of the Montefiore school clinics. "We often get to know the kids really well, we know a lot of their social and medical history and whether they've experienced trauma. We're able to detect the high-risk kids." That close relationship with students and providers at school makes it easier to get kids help early.

But for school districts that don't have a major medical center willing to integrate their services into the schools, like Montefiore, or an existing federal or city funding stream like D.C., it can be difficult to replicate such a robust system.

Recent federal legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act, provided new grants for states and districts across the country to develop more comprehensive mental health programs, including screening and early intervention. But challenges remain.

"We haven't seen enough communities with schools that take it to the next level," said NAMI's Gruttadaro. "Schools are recognizing they need to do more but it really depends on the school budget and the funding they have available."

Allen said another hurdle is finding school mental health providers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are about 39,000 school social workers and 44,000 school psychologists in public schools across the country, but about 51 million public school students. Because there aren't enough providers to go around, some schools try to train teachers and other staff how to recognize and respond to mental health issues.

But experts say that's not enough, and are pushing for more comprehensive school-based services to avoid more kids with mental health issues from being sucked into the school-to-prison pipeline.

"You can ask any kindergarten teacher to pick out which one of their kids are most likely to get into trouble down the road, and they're almost always right," the Juvenile Detention Center's Bear said. "So we need to get better at identifying kids earlier so you can intervene

before it gets to be a diagnosable problem."

Brianna Ehley is a health care reporter for POLITICO Pro.

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Trump says he'll beat opioid epidemic with law-and-order approach [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 08/08/2017 07:01 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Tuesday vowed his administration would beat the opioid epidemic by beefing up law enforcement and strengthening security on the southern border to stop illegal drugs from entering the country.

Trump, joined in Bedminster, New Jersey, by Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and other administration officials, emphasized a tough law-and-order approach, rather than new treatment or social programs, as the White House's primary strategy for halting an epidemic that kills 142 Americans every day, according to federal statistics.

"Strong law enforcement is absolutely vital to having a drug-free society," Trump said. "I'm confident that by working with our health care and law enforcement experts we will fight this deadly epidemic and the United States will win." The remarks echoed similar comments made by Attorney General Jeff Sessions earlier this summer.

Trump as a candidate vowed to confront a public health crisis that has hit states he carried in the presidential campaign — like West Virginia and Kentucky — especially hard.

Trump on Tuesday stopped short of declaring the crisis a national emergency — a recommendation the White House's opioid commission, led by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, made last week.

Price later told reporters the administration is treating the opioid epidemic as an emergency, but that it does not need to make a formal declaration.

"We believe that, at this point, the resources that we need or the focus that we need to bring to bear to the opioid crisis, at this point, can be addressed without the declaration of an emergency. Although all things are on the table for the president," Price said.

He added that the Health and Human Services Department, along with the Justice Department and other agencies, will be working on a strategy to fight the crisis together. "We'll do that in short order," he said.

The Trump administration has consistently taken a law-and-order approach, despite concerns from experts who say treatment should be the priority.

The administration also backed the GOP's Obamacare repeal-and-replace proposal that the CBO estimated would slash Medicaid — the largest payer of behavioral health services — by \$800 billion. Advocates have stressed that such a proposal would almost certainly result in

less access to treatment for people with addiction.

About 1.2 million people with substance abuse disorders got insurance through the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion, according to a study published in Health Affairs. It also has paid for 35 percent to 50 percent of all medication-assisted treatment administered to help fight opioid addiction, according to the National Council for Behavioral Health.

Tuesday's focus on opioids was quickly praised by GOP lawmakers including Sen. Rob Portman, who campaigned heavily on combating the opioid epidemic during his reelection bid last year and has made it one of his top legislative priorities.

"There is no doubt that this heroin and prescription drug epidemic is a national crisis, and I applaud the president for making this issue a priority," Portman said in a statement.

The White House's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis last week had recommended the emergency declaration, saying it would allow the federal government to more quickly free up federal funds to expand access to substance-abuse treatments — specifically medication-assisted treatment. Price expressed skepticism about the treatment earlier this year during an appearance in West Virginia. He later walked back his remarks.

During Tuesday's briefing, which included high-profile members of the administration such as counselor Kellyanne Conway and senior adviser Jared Kushner, Trump focused on border security and enforcing laws.

Price later insisted that the Trump administration is not interested in cutting Medicaid.

"The president's goal make certain we have a health care system that works for patients," Price said.

Tuesday's meeting came as new federal data shows drug overdose deaths are on the rise, despite federal and state efforts to curb the crisis. In the first nine months of 2016, the National Center for Health Statistics estimates overdose fatalities hit a record 19.9 per 100,000 people, up from 16.7 for the corresponding period in 2015.

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House Oversight pushes NIH for details on glyphosate health study decisions [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 08/08/2017 02:26 PM EDT

House Oversight Chairman [Trey Gowdy](#) is pressuring the National Institutes of Health over its decision not to publish a study that examined exposure of thousands of American farmers to glyphosate and found no evidence that the weedkiller causes cancer.

In a [letter](#) to NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins on Tuesday, Gowdy argues the Agricultural Health Study's findings related to the health risks of the herbicide could have prevented the International Agency for Research on Cancer from classifying the chemical as a probable

carcinogen.

The Agricultural Health Study's results were said to have been ready in 2013. IARC's decision on glyphosate came two years later. The reason why the Agricultural Health Study's results related to glyphosate were not published in time to be included in the IARC review is the subject of intense industry debate and related legal action.

"According to new media reports, AHS researchers published 'numerous studies' from the data collected," Gowdy wrote.

The South Carolina Republican wants to know why Dr. Aaron Blair, one of the senior researchers on the Agricultural Health Study — which was conducted by the U.S. National Cancer Institute — did not bring up the findings when he later led IARC's review of glyphosate.

"The committee is concerned about these new revelations, especially given Dr. Blair's apparent admission that the AHS study was 'powerful,' and would alter IARC's analysis of glyphosate," the letter said.

Glyphosate is the most commonly used herbicide in the world and a key ingredient in Monsanto's RoundUp Ready pesticide. The committee's reference to "new revelations" refers to statements reportedly made in court documents that are part of an ongoing U.S. court case against Monsanto over alleged health effects of glyphosate.

In March, Blair gave a sworn deposition in that case and said data from the Agricultural Health Study would have changed IARC's analysis and made it less likely that glyphosate would have satisfied the agency's standards for classification as "probably carcinogenic," Reuters [reported](#) in June.

IARC, which is part of the World Health Organization, only considers public research when assessing substances for carcinogenicity. Monsanto believes the Agricultural Health Study's glyphosate findings could have been published in time to allow it to be used in the IARC review. But Blair told Reuters that was not possible because there was too much data to be incorporated into a single scientific paper. The National Cancer Institute also said "space constraints" led to the decision, according to the Reuters story. The glyphosate results remain unpublished.

Gowdy set a deadline of Aug. 22 for Collins to turn over to the committee "all documents and communications referring or relating to the decision whether to publish the AHS findings on glyphosate," as well as "all documents and communications to or from Dr. Aaron Blair referring or relating to the AHS findings."

The letter was also signed by committee members [Blake Farenthold](#) (R-Texas), who chairs the Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy and Environment, and [Steve Russell](#) (R-Okla.).

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State Department's No. 2 tries to buck up staff morale ahead of reorganization [Back](#)

By Nahal Toosi | 08/08/2017 04:44 PM EDT

The State Department's No. 2 official assured staffers Tuesday that plans to restructure the department would take their concerns into full account, comparing the process to U.S. military reforms following the Vietnam War.

At a town hall-style session, Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan also urged diplomats and other employees to take media reports on the department's woes with a grain of salt.

The gathering was closed to reporters, but two State officials who watched it described it to POLITICO.

The session appeared aimed at bucking up sagging morale at the department, whose budget President Donald Trump wants to cut by a third. Unlike Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who held a similar event in May, Sullivan took audience questions.

His reference to post-Vietnam reforms in the U.S. military suggests big shifts are afoot; the military saw major changes in organization, doctrine, personnel policy, equipment and training. But Sullivan offered few specifics and few guarantees about what changes may be coming to State, and State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said afterward that his reference to the military reforms was about the desire to include people at all levels in the process.

Sullivan described the various working groups involved in rethinking the department, but gave few clues about what bureaus or divisions could be shifted, cut or reorganized, possibly because such decisions are still far from being finalized. He insisted, however, that the goal of the restructuring is not to dismantle State or its partner, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Despite reports that Tillerson wants to trim the workforce by at least 2,300 people, Sullivan stressed that the redesign is not a synonym for layoffs and that he would do his best to ensure that staff reductions are voluntary. But he also said a hold on lateral transfers for civil servants would stay in place until redesign plans were more concrete.

When asked how seriously the Trump administration is taking a proposal that the State Department's consular services be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security, Sullivan indicated that the leadership at State intends to keep the division under its umbrella. He acknowledged, however, that all options remain on the table.

The department is expected to submit its reorganization proposal to the Office of Management and Budget by mid-September.

The morale at State, whose ranks include civil service and foreign service employees, has sunk precipitously since Trump took office. Tillerson, who is traveling in Asia this week, is widely considered an aloof, isolated figure.

Sullivan is much more popular, and on Tuesday he was full of praise for the 75,000 people who work for the State Department in the U.S. and beyond. Some 450 of those employees attended Tuesday's town hall in person, while video options were available to others.

It's not clear how much power Sullivan wields, although Nauert, the department

spokeswoman, described him as an indispensable member of the leadership team. Regardless, staffers were happy the town hall took place.

"The takeaway to me is they've recognized how terrible they've been at communicating with the building," said one of the State Department officials who described the gathering. "It was important that he did this. He was candid about not having all the answers, which always goes a long way."

Some of the staffers' questions Tuesday focused on who has decision-making powers at State, where a backlog of requests for decisions by Tillerson have deeply frustrated diplomats throughout the chain of command.

Sullivan disputed recent news reports that implied that Tillerson's office had taken away decision-making powers from him and all other top officials. The deputy secretary said so-called delegations of authority were being reviewed in hopes of making them more rational and organized.

Sullivan also insisted that the redesign plans were not about concentrating more power in the hands of the secretary of state.

The vast majority of leadership positions at State remain unfilled. Some staffers believe Tillerson is intentionally avoiding filling the positions until after the reorganization is implemented, which could be many months away.

But Sullivan said that candidates have been identified for roughly 60 percent of the positions, which include undersecretaries and assistant secretaries of state, and that they are in the vetting and nominating process.

The deputy secretary took a moment toward the end of the session to urge State staffers not to believe everything they read in the press about what is happening in the agency.

As an example, he pointed to a story that said the State Department was considering dropping democracy promotion from its mission statement. Sullivan insisted the story was unfair because it had looked at only draft statements.

The State Department is committed to the concept of democracy and always will be, Sullivan said.

Shortly afterward, Sullivan met with a group of reporters who cover the State Department, where he reiterated many of the same sentiments he'd shared during the town hall.

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New Defense Program Watch added on Navy's frigate program [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 08/08/2017 03:47 PM EDT

POLITICO Pro has added a [new entry](#) to its Defense Program Watch on the Navy's nascent

effort to acquire a new guided missile frigate.

A request for information on the project was issued in July.

"The government is looking to use an existing ship design that could be modified," states the new program overview. "Some options floated by analysts include Fincantieri's FREMM frigate used by the French and Italian navies and the U.S. Coast Guard's national security cutter built by Huntington Ingalls Industries."

The Defense Watch feature is designed to track some of the most politically dynamic defense programs and policy fights, highlighting legislative action, budget documents and key influencers in government and the private sector. Have questions, comments or tips? What programs should we consider adding? Contact us at DefenseProgramWatch@politico.com

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Number of rent-burdened families nears record [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 08/09/2017 12:54 PM EDT

The number of poor families struggling to pay their rent rose to the second-highest level on record, according to a Housing and Urban Development report released today.

The [report](#), which tracks low-income households that receive no housing aid or subsidies, found that 8.3 million families spent more than half their pay on rent or lived in "severely substandard" homes that might lack running water or heat.

That figure, based on 2015 data, is an increase from the 7.72 million rent-burdened households recorded in 2013. The record was set in 2011, when the report counted 8.48 million worst-case families.

HUD's Worst Case Housing Needs report to Congress is published every two years.

"Today's affordable rental housing crisis requires that we take a more business-like approach on how the public sector can reduce the regulatory barriers so the private markets can produce more housing for more families," HUD Secretary Ben Carson said in a written release.

The Trump administration also is seeking to unwind the federal government's role in the mortgage system "and ease the stress on rental markets," the release stated.

For the first time, the HUD report breaks out worst-case housing needs for the largest 15 metropolitan areas. Miami-Ft. Lauderdale had the highest share of rent-burdened households, at 61 percent. In Riverside, Calif., 215,000 households, or 57 percent, paid more than half of their incomes for housing.

The number of worst-case households has increased by 66 percent since 2001, affecting all racial and ethnic groups, HUD found. The rapidly growing population of renters is pushing rents up, particularly for more affordable apartments and houses, as construction [lags](#).

WHAT'S NEXT: Housing advocates are seeking more federal funding for affordable rentals.

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Study: Post-9/11 GI Bill boosted college enrollment among veterans [Back](#)

By Mel Leonor | 08/09/2017 01:00 PM EDT

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, which covers educational costs for veterans beyond tuition, boosted college enrollment among veterans by 3 percentage points, a new [study](#) found.

The study, conducted by New York University's Steinhardt School, found that after education benefits were expanded in 2009, college enrollment rates among veterans immediately spiked by 4 percent and then steadied at 3 percent over time, when compared to enrollment before the bill took effect.

The legislation paid out more than \$70 billion for veterans and their families to attend college since it was rolled out.

The findings may signal a boost in college enrollment among veterans ahead. Last week, the Senate signed off on a sweeping expansion of GI Bill education benefits, sending the bipartisan legislation dubbed the "Forever GI Bill" to President Donald Trump's desk.

That bill would increase veterans' benefits by more than \$3 billion over the next decade, and would remove, for new enlistees, the 15-year time limit on when recipients must use their GI Bill benefits.

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations Brief: Womack leading pack to helm budget panel — No December debt ceiling vote — House resumes minibus debate
Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 4:25:44 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 09/12/2017 04:21 PM EDT

GAVEL GRAB: A weeks-long sleeper race to run the House Budget Committee has finally produced a front-runner. [Steve Womack](#) is expected to take over for [Diane Black](#) when she steps down as chairman in the next few weeks to pursue the Tennessee governor's mansion, four senior Republicans tell [Rachael Bade](#).

Womack would leapfrog other senior members on the panel, just as Black did last year. Like former budget chiefs, the Arkansas Republican is close to leadership and already assists with the House GOP's whipping operations. He's also a prolific fundraiser and frequently pays more than his share of dues to the NRCC.

Tall order: The relatively low-profile lawmaker would suddenly become one of the GOP's most valuable players in this fall's big tax reform battle. Womack would likely be forced to play referee between the House's right-leaning budget members and their much more moderate counterparts in the Senate. Indeed, for months Black has been putting out fires to win over defense hawks, deficit-conscious conservatives and moderates. Budget members were so frustrated by the standoffs this year, in fact, that they privately demanded Black go over Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) to get their budget out of committee.

You had one job: The top budget spot has been hard to envy in recent years (though at least two other Republicans, [Rob Woodall](#) and [Bill Johnson](#), are also eyeing the position). While the committee's main task is creating an annual fiscal blueprint, the House hasn't passed a budget since 2015.

Two promotions? Womack is one of only three Republicans who sit on both the budget and appropriations panels. And he's currently the only one who's not also a cardinal, though he's hoping that changes in 2018. Upon [Charlie Dent](#)'s retirement next year, Womack is next in line to lead the MilCon-VA appropriations subcommittee, a post well-suited to a guy who spent 30 years in the Army National Guard.

Stay tuned: The House Republican Steering Committee has not yet announced when it'll formally select the next Budget chairman. And Black isn't ruling out an early end to her term in Congress, according to her [hometown paper](#).

GOOD TUESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@[jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com (@[sarahnferris](#)).

Doc(s) of the day — A coalition of defense analysts sent a [letter](#) this week urging senators to support an [amendment](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act ([H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#)) that would authorize a new round of military base realignments and closures. More from [Gregory Hellman](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — More than 32,600 federal workers are involved in the national response to Hurricane Irma, from the Red Cross to the Army Corps of Engineers. That also includes

more than 2,300 FEMA staff.

DEBT CEILING

OFFICIALLY OFF THE TABLE: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said [this afternoon](#) that Congress won't be voting in December to raise the debt ceiling — denying Democrats the political leverage they stood to gain if the threat of shutdown collided again with efforts to raise the nation's borrowing limit. "It does not eliminate the extraordinary measures that the Treasury secretary had always had," McConnell told reporters. "It doesn't mean that we won't address the debt ceiling in the future."

Saw it coming: While congressional Republicans and the Trump administration have not said how long they expect the latest patch to last, some economists have predicted the Treasury Department can make do until March with the tide-me-over Congress cleared Friday.

APPROPRIATIONS

SNAIL PACE: It's totally understandable if you've forgotten the House is still debating its minibus. After pausing Friday to pass a different spending package (that will actually fund the government beyond Sept. 30), the lower chamber is back at it this afternoon, picking up with day four of debate on its eight remaining funding bills for fiscal 2018.

Where we left off: The House will debate amendments to the Commerce-Justice-Science title this afternoon, and maybe some Labor-HHS-Education tweaks this evening. But no minibus-related roll calls are expected until Wednesday.

Last of all: The House could wrap up amendments to the Financial Services section Wednesday and vote on passage Thursday.

HITCHING A RIDE: The fast-moving fiscal package that wound up on President Donald Trump's desk last Friday had a little help from the READ Act, [H.R. 601 \(115\)](#). Because a version of that global education bill had already passed both chambers this year, the measure was able to bypass Senate procedural steps this month. The sponsors of that bill — Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) and [Dick Durbin](#), as well as Reps. [Nita Lowey](#) and [Dave Reichert](#) — celebrated its enactment in a statement today. (Lowey and then-Sen. Hillary Clinton introduced the first version of the bill in 2004.)

DISASTER RELIEF

METEOROLOGICAL MISCALCULATIONS: The warnings were abundant: Hurricane Irma was supposed to be America's costliest storm on record. Financial forecasters like Georgia-based Enki Research had been predicting \$200 billion in damage from Irma alone. Now, with the storm softening as it climbed up the East Coast, that same company's damage estimates have dropped to about [\\$49 billion](#).

Fears fading: Moody's now estimates that both hurricanes — Harvey and Irma — will cost between \$150 billion and \$200 billion together, Matt Dixon [reports](#). That's on par with Katrina in 2005, but much less than initially expected for the more recent storms. "Damage may not be as severe as once feared," Risk Management Solutions hurricane-tracker Tom Sabbatelli wrote in a [blog post](#) Monday. The company had initially predicted damages of around \$85 billion.

NOT GONNA GUESS: A FEMA spokesperson said it's "too early to speculate on the full

impacts of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma."

Key word is 'cost-sharing': Over the last week, the White House has declared disaster zones in [six](#) states and U.S. territories, making those areas eligible for federal aid. But that doesn't mean the feds are picking up the full tab. For debris removal and hazard mitigation, the government covers only a limited share of those costs. For the Virgin Islands and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, that's between 75 and 90 percent. For Puerto Rico and Florida, FEMA hasn't yet said how much it'll reimburse.

Full funding: In places like Florida and the Virgin Islands, the federal government says it will cover 100 percent of funding for "emergency protective measures." Even still, Florida will only have 30 days to get Washington to fully pay those costs. And in Alabama, only 75 percent of that will be covered.

Related headlines: [Road recovery underway in Florida](#) | [Mexico diverts hurricane aid to deadly quake](#) | [Storm could reignite crop subsidies fight](#) | [Easing more SNAP restrictions](#)

TAX

COURTING CONTINUES: President Donald Trump has invited three Democratic senators over for dinner tonight to chat about tax reform as he tries to get more members of the minority party in his corner, Burgess Everett [reports](#). Democrats invited: [Joe Manchin](#), [Heidi Heitkamp](#) and [Joe Donnelly](#). GOP attendees: [Pat Toomey](#), [Orrin Hatch](#) and [John Thune](#).

Corporate rate in question: Although getting to a 15 percent corporate tax rate remains Trump's goal, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said this morning that he doesn't know if that's possible, Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#). FWIW, new Heritage Foundation findings [conclude](#) that worker wages stand to benefit greatly from a corporate rate reduction.

Deets, please: Amid the ongoing strategizing, congressional Republicans are getting antsy for a concrete plan, Colin Wilhelm and Aaron [explain](#).

IMMIGRATION

NO 'DREAMER'-LINKED BORDER WALL DEMAND: Trump is sending both public and private signals that he is ready to tackle "DREAMer" legislation and won't demand it be tied to funding for a border wall, Seung Min Kim and Andrew Restuccia [report](#). House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) said today that Trump told her privately that he would sign the DREAM Act — a bill that would provide a path to permanent legal status for young, undocumented immigrants — and that he wants "some border security." Marc Short, the White House's director of legislative affairs, also said today that he doesn't want "to bind ourselves into a construct that makes reaching a conclusion on DACA impossible."

DEFENSE

FORCED TO HOLD OFF: Congress' latest appropriations punt is forcing the Pentagon to make big spending sacrifices. The Defense Department will need to cut back on almost all hiring and training, while also dealing with steeper acquisition prices, Gregory Hellman [writes](#).

CHUGGING ALONG: The Senate on Monday night advanced its annual defense bill, NDAA, Connor O'Brien [reports](#). Lawmakers are still aiming for final passage this week,

though votes could be complicated by [Rand Paul](#)'s stand against the bill. Next up: as many as 400 amendment votes on issues like transgender troops and forcing Pentagon base closures.

EDUCATION

VOUCHER PLAN LOSES STEAM: The Trump administration's effort to expand school choice seems to be going nowhere right now. Republicans appear unlikely to add a controversial tax credit for private schooling to the overhaul plan they'll already struggle to pass, the White House has been mum on the issue for months, "school choice" is a nonstarter among House and Senate appropriators and experts don't see a school tax credit passing as a standalone bill, Caitlin Emma [explains](#).

ECONOMY

INCOME STILL FLAT: The U.S. Census reported a 3.2 percent increase today in U.S. median household income between 2015 and 2016, Timothy Noah [explains](#). But after factoring in inflation, average income is essentially unchanged. Again, we're reminded that income levels and wages are the most stubborn economic indicators in the post-recovery phase of the recession. As the Economic Policy Institute [notes](#), that's down 1.6 percent since 2007 and is 2.3 percent lower than 2000.

TREASURY

THE INSTAGRAM POST THAT WON'T DIE: Now comes the sequel to the [cyber quarrel](#) that broke out last month about Louise Linton's #Valentino- and #hermesscarf-tagged Instagram pic. A watchdog group is suing the Treasury Department for documents related to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's use of a government plane to fly to Kentucky with his wife in August, Victoria Guida [reports](#).

FLOOD INSURANCE

INVESTOR PAYOUT: The two hurricanes that slammed the U.S. this month are testing the National Flood Insurance Program's new reinsurance strategy. For just the second time in its history, the debt-laden program is relying on a group of 25 outside investors to help bail out waterlogged homeowners. In January, those reinsurers bought coverage for about \$150 million. Now, they could be paying up to \$1 billion to help cover the severe Gulf Coast flooding, as Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). It's the biggest payout yet for the program, and it's got officials optimistic about the next reinsurance placement planned for January.

ENERGY

ELECTRIC GRID GRANTS: The Energy Department announced \$50 million in grants today to improve security and resilience of the electric grid, Eric Geller [reports](#).

ELECTIONS

DREAMING BIG: Democratic senators in charge of 2018 election planning are holding out hope (at least publicly) that they could take back the upper chamber. Kevin Robillard and Gabriel Debenedetti [explain](#) that reelecting red-state incumbents is still the top priority for Senate Democratic strategists. But they have also begun investigating opportunities to play offense on GOP turf.

OPIOIDS

CHRISTE DEFENDS TRUMP'S DELAY: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie says he knows Trump's "heart" on addressing the opioid crisis, trying to explain away the fact that the president has yet to declare the epidemic a national emergency, Katie Jennings [reports](#).

EARMARKS

— Federal audit finds New York made \$1.4B in improper Medicaid payments. [POLITICO New York](#).

— Trump's push for tax cuts is coming up against a familiar challenge: Divided GOP. [Washington Post](#).

— Chicago asks judge to halt Trump plan to deny funds to "sanctuary cities." [Reuters](#).

— Trump will work with either Democrats or Republicans to achieve tax overhaul. [New York Times](#).

— Labor Department to evaluate apprenticeship grants. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 87 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017), 18 days until the Children's Health Insurance Program is up for renewal (Sept. 30, 2017). 383 days until farm bill authorization is up (Sept. 30, 2018). [Who knows how many] days until the nation will default if the debt limit isn't raised.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations-brief/2017/09/womack-leading-pack-to-helm-budget-panel-024560>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Republicans jockey for looming Budget chairman vacancy [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 09/11/2017 06:22 PM EDT

A handful of Republicans are lining up to replace outgoing House Budget Chairman Diane Black, quietly jockeying for a gavel that will play a starring role in the upcoming tax reform fight.

Budget panel Republicans Steve Womack, Rob Woodall and Bill Johnson are all eyeing the position, the lawmakers confirmed in interviews. Womack and Johnson have already alerted Speaker Paul Ryan of their interest and started buttonholing members of the House panel that elects its chair — though Black, who is running for Tennessee governor, will likely retain her position until the House passes its 2018 blueprint, which is expected around the end of the month.

Four senior Republicans said Womack is currently front-runner. While not the most senior member on the panel, the Arkansas Republican has a good reputation with leadership and conservatives alike. He also organized the National Republican Congressional Committee's

March dinner with President Donald Trump, which brought in \$30 million for the campaign arm.

"There's an expectation that Black will step down having announced for governor of Tennessee, creating a vacancy in the chair, and I'm interested in taking the chairmanship," Womack said. "These are very important times for our majority... and I think the Budget Committee will be very critical in establishing the right framework whereby a sustainable fiscal policy can be crafted that can reach many of the outcomes that a majority of our majority would like to see."

The next chairman would take the gavel at a critical time for Republicans. The party has failed to repeal Obamacare, fund Trump's border wall with Mexico or otherwise secure a single major legislative victory. Tax reform therefore looms large, with many in the GOP seeing it as a must-have to avoid a blood bath in 2018.

But to unlock the fast-tracking procedural tool enabling Republicans to circumvent the Senate's 60-vote threshold and pass a partisan tax package, GOP lawmakers have to pass an identical budget through the House and Senate.

That's where the new budget chairman will be critical. Even if the House clears Black's fiscal blueprint in the coming weeks, Senate budget writers are expected to write a much different plan, jump-starting a series of high-level bicameral negotiations between budget chairmen about what a deal might look like.

There will be plenty of drama. Several senior Republican sources said the final deal might be a "shell" budget that simply includes instructions for tax reform but makes no major cuts to mandatory spending programs, as the House's current draft proposes. That would meet with stiff resistance from conservatives, who were promised by GOP leaders that they would not have to vote on text that includes no serious reforms.

The next budget chairman will have to strike a tricky balance between conservatives eager for spending cuts and House GOP leaders dealing with the more moderate-minded Senate.

Many thought Rep. Todd Rokita (R-Ind.) — Budget Committee vice chairman — would replace Black. But the budget wonk decided to run for Senate in Indiana instead and is locking horns with Rep. Luke Messer (R-Ind.) in the hotly contested primary.

The next two most-senior members, Reps. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) and Mario Diaz Balart (R-Fla.), are both senior members of the Appropriations panel and don't want to give up their subcommittee gavels on the powerful spending committee.

Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.) and Woodall come next, and sources say both are interested, though McClintock's office did not respond to request for comment.

Woodall, a Georgia Republican, said his goal would be "getting [the committee] out of the messaging business and translating that into action," along with tackling budget process reform.

"In the minority you think of a messaging document. In the majority, it is a framework for how to get things done," he said. "So what are those things we could get done together? My goal would be to find those items."

Womack is considered the front-runner because of his leadership experience. He sits on the deputy whip team and often exceeds dues to the NRCC — something the House Republican Steering Committee takes into account when choosing chairmen.

The former mayor, who spent 30 years in the Army National Guard, would want to retain his post on the Appropriations Committee, where he is next in line for a subcommittee gavel. A spot is opening up with Rep. Charlie Dent, an Appropriations subcommittee chief, retiring next year.

Like many Budget Republicans, Womack has admired Black's work on the current budget plan, which includes \$200 billion worth of mandatory spending cuts that's garnered applause from conservatives. Womack says he'd like to continue in that vein, arguing that reducing the national debt "cannot be satisfied by cutting discretionary spending alone."

"With the deficits we're talking about, it is absolutely important to have the conversation about what's going on on the mandatory side," he said.

Womack also argued that the budget is critical for tax reform. "It's important for Republicans to keep their eye on the collective prize, and right now if it's not health care, it has to be tax reform," he said. "This isn't an area [where] we can stumble, so we need to be all hands on deck on the vehicle that will give us tax reform."

Johnson of Ohio, an early Trump defender in the House, is also considering a bid for the chairmanship. Elected in 2010, the former Air Force lieutenant colonel has always kept a lower profile on the Hill but also has a good reputation with leadership. He currently serves as an NRCC vice chair.

"I have dealt with budgets my entire life, whether it was on the mule farm or in my Air Force career or as a corporate executive," Johnson said, in making his pitch. "Passing a budget is foundational to our constitutional mandate. There's not much that's more important in fact in the big scheme of things than passing a budget, balancing a budget and managing our nation's financial and fiscal health."

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Coalition of defense analysts urges support for McCain-Reed BRAC amendment [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 09/12/2017 11:18 AM EDT

A coalition of defense analysts from think tanks and interest groups is urging senators to support an [amendment](#) to the National Defense Authorization Act ([H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#)) that would authorize a new round of military base realignments and closures.

In a [letter](#), organized by Defense Priorities, the experts seek to rally support for an amendment expected to be offered this week on the Senate floor by Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and ranking Democrat [Jack Reed](#) of Rhode Island that [would establish](#) a new Base Realignment and Closure commission to review all installations in 2021.

Defense Priorities argues the proposal would improve the link between basing and strategy, improve cost controls and strengthen congressional oversight compared to previous BRAC rounds.

"The McCain-Reed amendment is carefully tailored to maximize the benefits for U.S. taxpayers and our military," the experts say in their letter.

They also cite the support for a new BRAC round offered by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and the new assistant secretary of Defense for energy, installations and the environment, Lucian Niemeyer, [last week](#) at the Heritage Foundation.

Among those signing the letter were analysts from the Project on Government Oversight, Heritage Action for America, Concerned Veterans for America, FreedomWorks, the Atlantic Council, National Taxpayers Union, the London Center for Policy Research, the Hoover Institution and Peace Action.

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McConnell: No December debt ceiling vote [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 09/12/2017 02:47 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said this afternoon that Congress won't vote again this year to raise the debt ceiling.

"It does not eliminate the extraordinary measures that the Treasury secretary had always had," McConnell told reporters. "It doesn't mean that we won't address the debt ceiling in the future."

But the vote "will not be in December," he explained.

While Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has not officially predicted how much time Congress has until the nation will reach its borrowing limit, some economists have predicted lawmakers might be able to hold out until March before risking default.

After President Donald Trump struck a deal with Democrats last week to temporarily raise the debt ceiling along with stopgap spending and disaster aid, GOP lawmakers began [insisting](#) the White House come up with a plan for cutting spending in the next effort to lift the limit.

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POLITICO Pro Florida: Moody's: Irma could cost \$92B in economic damages [Back](#)

By Matt Dixon | 09/12/2017 11:34 AM EDT

The economic cost of Hurricane Irma could be between \$64 billion and \$92 billion, according to estimates released today by Moody's Analytics.

Collectively, the firm said the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, which decimated southeast Texas and Houston, could cost between \$150 billion and \$200 billion in total damages. That includes damage to "homes and furnishing, vehicles, commercial real estate, and public infrastructure.

"This is comparable to the property loss resulting from Hurricane Katrina," read the estimate.

The firm noted that the estimates are likely to change as additional damage is discovered, but did say that mainstays of both state's economies should bounce back by the end of the month.

"We expect the Texas energy industry and Florida tourism to be operating at close to the normal by the end of September," wrote Mark Zandi, Moody's Analytics chief economist.

He predicted that Congress will appropriate money beyond the \$15 billion approved last week for storm damages in Florida and Texas. The federal dollars, coupled with insurance money, should help offset damages.

"As with most natural disasters in recent years, we anticipate that the combination of insurance money and government aid will roughly cover the full cost of the property damage and the lost economic output," Zandi wrote.

He anticipated that the storms' aftermath will boost GDP by the fourth quarter, but there are some caveats.

"The timing and magnitude of the rebuilding bump to growth will depend on labor availability," he wrote. "There were already mounting labor shortages in both Texas and Florida before the storms, and they will surely be much more acute in their wake."

This story first appeared on [POLITICO Pro Florida](#) on Sept. 11, 2017.

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Mexico no longer offering Harvey aid after deadly quake [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 09/12/2017 07:14 AM EDT

The Mexican government will no longer offer aid to Texas and Louisiana to help with recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, Mexico's foreign ministry announced Monday, instead redirecting that aid to portions of its own nation damaged by a powerful earthquake and Hurricane Katia.

The 8.2 magnitude earthquake struck central Mexico last week near the city of Oaxaca, killing 95 people and injuring hundreds more, the Mexican foreign ministry said. Separately, Hurricane Katia's landfall inflicted "significant damage" on the Mexican state of Veracruz, the foreign ministry said.

"Given this situation, the Mexican government will channel all available logistical support to the families and communities that have been affected in Mexico and has informed the Texas and U.S. governments that, unfortunately, on this occasion, it won't be possible to provide the assistance originally offered," Mexico's foreign ministry [said](#). "This decision is due to the fact that conditions in both countries have changed and that Texas's need for assistance has fortunately diminished."

The Mexican government had offered to send food, personnel, boats and other supplies as part of the Harvey recovery effort. Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray said last month during a visit to Washington that "We are neighbors, we are friends. That's what friends do."

But while homeland security adviser Tom Bossert said President Donald Trump was "deeply touched" by a phone call from his Mexican counterpart offering aid and assistance, the federal government did not officially accept Mexico's aid. The Mexican government noted in its statement that its offer had been accepted by the state of Texas, which said it could use the logistical support offered by Mexico.

Trump, who has not publicly offered condolences to Mexico in the wake of its earthquake and hurricane landfall, has made getting tough with America's southern neighbor a key part of his political agenda, pledging to either renegotiate or tear up NAFTA and to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border that Mexico will pay for.

The Mexican government, along with Canada, has agreed to renegotiations of NAFTA but has insisted at every turn that it will not pay for Trump's long-promised wall.

Late Monday night, the State Department released a readout of a phone call between Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Videgaray in which Tillerson "offered his condolences for the loss of life and the devastation caused by the earthquake in Mexico and from Hurricane Katia" and informed him that "the U.S. government stands ready to assist our neighbors in Mexico during this difficult time."

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Hurricane Irma's path through Florida likely to expose crop insurance gaps [Back](#)

By Sabrina Rodriguez and Catherine Boudreau | 09/11/2017 06:18 PM EDT

As Hurricane Irma ravaged Caribbean islands late last week and churned northward, Florida organic fruit grower Jonathan Gambino predicted his farm could be decimated.

If most of his trees are destroyed, he told POLITICO, there would be no insurance check to replace them. "We'll be at square one," said Gambino, owner of Three Sisters Farm, in Homestead. "We do not have insurance, since we can't afford it. We're just trying to come out alive and rebuild."

As Florida farmers assess damage from Irma, the storm's statewide path of destruction is likely to reveal gaps in the federal crop insurance program and put pressure on lawmakers to find a

solution as they debate the next farm bill. The high cost of covering specialty crops — fruits, vegetables and tree nuts — has led many growers to forgo insurance, leaving them at risk of being wiped out by the disaster.

The four-decade-old crop insurance program, overseen by USDA's Risk Management Agency and administered by private companies, subsidizes an average of 60 percent of farmers' premiums to help them buy protection against natural disasters. But historically it has primarily covered commodities like corn, soybeans and wheat.

The program has expanded in recent years to cover more fresh produce and organic crops. Yet because specialty crops are grown on a much smaller scale than commodities, it has been challenging to keep premium prices affordable. The smaller scale also makes it difficult to forecast market prices and develop and administer the policies. And the large number of varieties within the specialty crop classification makes insuring them even more complex.

In recent decades USDA has expanded the crop-insurance program to cover about 73 percent of fruit and tree nut acreage and 32 percent of vegetable crops nationwide, while major commodities are about 85 percent covered, according to RMA data. The specialty crop industry accounts for just 8 percent of premiums, while commodity crops account for much of the rest.

The lack of insurance for specialty crops could hit Florida especially hard. With the exception of sugarcane, the majority of the state's biggest fall and winter crops are considered specialty crops, including oranges, grapefruit, sweet corn, green beans, strawberries, tomatoes and squash.

Florida farmers are insured for an estimated \$2.7 billion in losses. But while most of the state's sugarcane (98 percent), cotton (91 percent) and citrus (87 percent) are insured, only 59 percent of fresh tomatoes, 57 percent of sweet corn and 44 percent of bell peppers are covered, according to a 2015 RMA [report on specialty crops](#). None of the 29,200 acres of fresh beans are covered.

"It's become very cost-prohibitive for folks in specialty crops to engage in it," said John Walt Boatright, national affairs coordinator for the Florida Farm Bureau, the state's largest agricultural organization, of the crop insurance program. "There are really only a few options that our specialty crop producers can turn to."

The state also produces most of the domestic supply of fresh vegetables during the winter and spring, and Irma-related damage may prevent farmers from planting soon.

"Those crops have just been planted or are about to be, so the silver lining is it's coming early in the season," said Lisa Lochridge, director of public affairs at Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association. "If the crops on the field are flooded or damaged, farmers will have to make the decision of whether or not to replant."

Lochridge said Irma is particularly worrisome for citrus growers as their trees are now full of fruit. Navel oranges and grapefruit, for example, are in season beginning in November. Gambino, the Homestead grower, said his concern was largely for the lime industry, which he said was practically erased from South Florida after Hurricane Andrew in 1992 but has been making a comeback in the region.

The damage in Florida is likely to add urgency to the debate in Congress over how to improve crop insurance in the next farm bill. The legislation — which covers everything from agricultural subsidies and nutrition programs to conservation and trade policy — is due for reauthorization at the end of September 2018.

Many lawmakers, including Senate Agriculture ranking member [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.), support expanding crop insurance for specialty crop growers. That would mean increasing the cost of the program — something that's continually criticized by taxpayer watchdog groups and some members of Congress who call for cuts that would make wealthy farmers ineligible for premium subsidies, among other reforms. The 2018 farm bill is on track to be a budget balancing act, as the GOP pushes forward on its agenda to reduce the federal deficit.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said he is waiting to see how the crop insurance program addresses farmers' losses caused by Harvey and Irma, as well as from wildfires blazing in the Northwest. Perdue [told reporters](#) on Friday that the farm safety net should be structured so it meets producers' needs, including after natural disasters, instead of leaving farmers and ranchers relying on Congress to enact supplemental disaster assistance measures. Perdue on several occasions also has said that the crop insurance program [should not promise farmers profitability](#).

Perdue, before departing on a multi-state tour this summer to listen to concerns from members of the U.S. agricultural industry, said he plans to be "intimately" involved in the 2018 farm bill. Senate Agriculture Chairman [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.) has voiced plans to get a draft of the legislation done by the end of the year. His counterpart on the House Agriculture Committee, [Mike Conaway](#) (R-Texas), is aiming for a similar timeline, and both are staunch defenders of the program.

On Monday, Florida agricultural leaders and farmers were beginning to assess the damage as Irma, which was downgraded to a tropical storm, moved into Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam said in a statement that state leaders were working to contact farmers and take stock of the destruction.

"At this time, it is too soon to tell just how much Hurricane Irma has devastated the agriculture industry," Putnam said.

Even with insurance, farmers say, losses could be devastating.

Paul Allen, co-owner of R.C. Hatton Inc. in Pahokee, Fla., said it will take weeks for him to determine his losses. He said that while he has some fresh vegetables — sweet corn, green beans and tomatoes — in the ground, he's most worried about his more than 4,000 acres of sugarcane.

"We have our sugarcane insured, but there's, regardless, too much at stake," said Allen, who also has a farm in south Georgia. "It won't cover all the loss, and when you look at it, the economic impact is high. That's the trial of farming."

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USDA eases SNAP rules for areas affected by Hurricane Irma [Back](#)

By Sabrina Rodriguez | 09/12/2017 01:38 PM EDT

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has approved a waiver that eases Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program regulations in Florida, Georgia and the Virgin Islands in an effort to aid victims of Hurricane Irma.

"Working with our state and private-sector partners, we are actively taking measures to ensure that people in these areas get the food they need," Agriculture Department Secretary Sonny Perdue said today.

SNAP recipients will be able to buy hot and ready-to-eat foods with their benefits through the end of September. Recipients of the Nutrition Assistance Program in Puerto Rico will have access to the same benefits.

The USDA also already has issued all of its September benefits to recipients in the affected areas to ensure they have access to food in the aftermath of the hurricane.

FNS has not made decided whether to offer the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) to the affected states, but is in talks with state and territory officials in case that's necessary. On Monday, USDA and Texas state health officials announced they would offer the food assistance program for Hurricane Harvey victims who qualify, but who are normally ineligible for food stamp benefits.

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Continuing to court Democrats, Trump will host dinner on tax reform [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett | 09/11/2017 11:05 PM EDT

President Donald Trump will host a dinner on Tuesday with moderate Democrats and Republican senators focused on tax reform as he continues to court Democrats after cutting a debt ceiling deal last week.

Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will host the dinner on Tuesday evening, the White House said. Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Donnelly of Indiana have been invited and are expected to attend, aides said. GOP Sens. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, Orrin Hatch of Utah and John Thune of South Dakota are among the Republican attendees.

The dinner is expected to center on tax reform, the aides said, now Trump's top priority.

The three moderate Democrats are all up for reelection next year in states Trump won handily in 2016. They have also been closer to the president than other congressional Democrats. Each declined to join a letter with party leaders outlining conditions on tax reform and all three supported Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch earlier this year.

Trump appeared onstage with Heitkamp last week at a tax reform event in North Dakota, and the president called her a "good woman" and said he hoped to have her support. Trump's friendly movements toward Democrats have annoyed some Republicans, who are hoping to oust them next year to pad their majority.

But Trump is trying a bipartisan approach of late after a partisan Obamacare repeal effort failed earlier this year. He agreed to a fiscal deal with Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi last week and has angled for some Democratic votes on tax reform.

Republicans are planning to pursue reform in the Senate via a majority vote threshold, though any Democratic votes could be key due to the GOP's narrow 52-seat majority and internal divisions.

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Mnuchin acknowledges 15 percent corporate rate not likely [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 09/12/2017 10:05 AM EDT

Cutting the corporate tax rate to 15 percent might not be possible, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Tuesday morning.

That remains President Donald Trump's goal, but the cost of getting that low could stand in the way, Mnuchin said at an event hosted by CNBC.

"I don't know if we'll be able to achieve that, given the budget issues, but we're going to get this down to a very competitive level," he said.

A rate between 20 percent and 25 percent has been described as more feasible, and Mnuchin said the exact number is less important than accomplishing tax reform.

Mnuchin and White House top economic adviser Gary Cohn are scheduled to meet with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Republicans on the Budget Committee Tuesday to talk about passing a budget, which will determine the scope of a tax reform bill that lawmakers can pass without Democratic votes.

Trump is hosting a bipartisan dinner to talk about tax reform Tuesday night that will include three Senate Democrats. But Mnuchin also said Trump's recent agreement with Democratic leaders in Congress on hurricane disaster aid and the debt limit doesn't signal bipartisan tax reform is being pursued. Administration officials and GOP leaders in Congress are prepared to use reconciliation, the Republican-only pathway to passing legislation by preventing Senate Democrats from blocking bills.

Mnuchin reiterated plans to eliminate the federal deduction for state and local taxes, and added that he hoped state taxes wouldn't rise in places like California and New York.

Trump, Mnuchin and congressional Republicans are also negotiating to reduce taxes for businesses that file their taxes through their owners' individual returns, but they will limit

which firms qualify for lower rates.

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Workers would gain most under corporate tax cut, Heritage study says [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 09/11/2017 04:44 PM EDT

Workers stand to benefit greatly from a corporate tax rate reduction, according to new research findings from the conservative Heritage Foundation that dovetail with frequent comments by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

The reason: the existing corporate income tax suppresses worker wages, said Heritage's Adam Michel.

"Most empirical estimates conclude that labor bears between 75 percent and 100 percent of the tax burden, with results in the literature ranging from 45 percent to 420 percent," he wrote in the paper.

"The average American household will share the benefits of a corporate rate cut through higher wages," Michel wrote.

That contrasts with other economists' findings that corporate taxes fall on the owners of capital, notably shareholders.

"While it is hard to say what most economists think about anything, a fair reading of the literature suggests that while workers do bear some of the burden of the corporate tax, they don't bear much. Thus, they would not benefit much from a corporate tax cut," the centrist Tax Policy Center's Howard Gleckman recently posted online.

Michel concluded such assessments are dated. In today's open world economy in which capital can move easily across borders, the tax burden has shifted from owners of capital to labor, he wrote.

Mnuchin has often said that 70 percent of taxes on businesses gets passed on to workers. He and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn are negotiating with GOP leaders in Congress to reduce the 35 percent corporate tax rate as low as possible; President Donald Trump is pushing for 15 percent.

WHAT'S NEXT: Mnuchin and Cohn are heading to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to discuss the budget and tax reform with Senate leaders.

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GOP lawmakers jittery over lack of tax reform details [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm and Aaron Lorenzo | 09/12/2017 05:06 AM EDT

Congressional Republicans came back to Washington ready and eager to work on tax reform, but they're still missing one thing: a plan.

That's triggered frustration among rank-and-file lawmakers who feel pressure from President Donald Trump to pass a tax reform bill but have seen no plans and worry they'll be backed into a corner on legislation they haven't even seen, much like they were with the failed Obamacare repeal earlier this summer.

"This time around there is no room for error. This has got to be a home run," Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.) said, recalling the GOP's Obamacare fiasco. "I would hope everyone wants to know what's in it before you vote on it. That's the old [Nancy] Pelosi joke on health care, it turned into a colossal joke. 'You'll find out what's in it after we pass it.'"

A member of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, speaking on condition of anonymity to speak freely said, "It is frustrating and concerning that we don't have the details and yet we're going to be asked in 60 days to vote on something,"

The member suggested that congressional and administration leaders negotiating a plan are holding back information either to avoid leaks or because they haven't found enough common ground yet to share anything.

There are still disagreements among negotiators in closed-door meetings over crucial issues, including:

- The corporate tax rate, with President Donald Trump pushing for a 15 percent rate that others see as unrealistic because of its cost.
- The lack of a clear path forward on the 2018 budget, which will be used as a vehicle for tax reform.
- Allowing businesses to immediately write off the costs of equipment and other big investments.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and top Trump economic adviser Gary Cohn are set to meet with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Budget Committee members Tuesday to strategize on the budget. Mnuchin, Cohn and McConnell belong to the "Big Six" group of tax reform negotiators, along with House Speaker Paul Ryan, Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch.

Republican leaders have set a goal of releasing more details this month, but not before GOP members of Ways and Means get a look and give them the OK. But with each day that passes without a plan, the rank and file seem to get more on edge.

"We want a lot more clarity on tax reform," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the staunchly conservative House Freedom Caucus.

Trump's proposal for a 15 percent tax rate for corporations and other businesses remains a major sticking point, sources familiar with the talks said. The rate is now 35 percent.

But Mnuchin signaled Tuesday the administration's position may be softening.

"I don't know if we'll be able to achieve that, given the budget issues, but we're going to get this down to a very competitive level," he said at an event hosted by CNBC.

The exact number is less important than getting tax reform done, he said.

Republican congressional leaders have mildly, but publicly, broken with Trump on the rate, which they'd initially hoped was a White House negotiating position rather than a concrete goal due to its cost.

"The president's been out there talking about a 15 percent rate, the House has talked about 20, but to get it down from 35 to 20 it's about \$100 billion per point," said Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), the third ranking Senate Republican.

Ryan, in a public interview hosted by The New York Times last week, said it was more realistic to meet or beat the average corporate rate of industrialized countries, 22.5 percent.

"Those numbers are really hard to make work," Ryan said when asked about a 15 percent rate, though he added that he'd let tax writers do the "exact math" on what works for budgetary purposes.

As one conservative tax activist put it, "There's still a little more separation than we originally thought," indicating that Trump's 15 percent push set an unrealistic bar. The more he pledges it, as he did at a campaign-style rally last week in North Dakota, the harder it would be for him to shift, the activist said.

The House, Senate and White House also remain divided over the budget, which Republicans plan to use as the vehicle for tax reform to get around Democratic opposition in the Senate. The budget would include "reconciliation" instructions designed to avert a filibuster.

"A budget resolution only has to do with one thing and that's tax reform," Brat said. "So if you're going to vote on tax reform, OK what's it look like? And we don't know yet. So it's very hard to vote on a budget resolution, which has as its sole objective doing tax reform, when you don't know what tax reform looks like. And so that's our objection."

In addition, the negotiators continue to wrestle over full, immediate expensing of capital investments for businesses. They are at odds over whether the provision is necessary to juice the economy or too expensive when combined with tax cuts.

Two meetings last week of the Big Six — one on Tuesday with Trump and a follow-up on Thursday — yielded little in the way of movement, at least publicly.

Mnuchin, who is one of the negotiators, told POLITICO as he left the second meeting "we are very close" to finalizing a tax reform agreement, but offered no specifics. Mnuchin also said the administration and congressional leaders were "absolutely" close to releasing a plan, a week after claiming on television that "a very detailed plan" was being shared with members of Congress.

That was news to lawmakers.

"I would think I would be in a position to see that but I haven't," said Meadows, who is one of the members of Congress closest to the administration.

Ways and Means members say they know little more at this point.

"There's nothing concrete yet," said Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.), though he added that he thought a framework would be set soon.

Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.), another Ways and Means member, said, "The president has some final decisions to make and I think when that happens then we roll."

Though congressional Republicans remain cautiously optimistic they will be able to deliver on their promise to overhaul the tax code, they know they have a limited opportunity and fear further delay will only allow interest groups to fully mobilize to fight any changes that might curb or eliminate tax provisions important to them.

Thune said basic questions have to be answered about how to measure the costs and benefits of tax cuts, as well as to what extent they are paid for by ending existing tax breaks.

"And that, obviously, is where you start getting into the controversy," Thune said. "Because every time you kill a deduction or preference or some exemption in the code there's some constituency for that."

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Trump unlikely to demand border wall for Dreamers bill [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Andrew Restuccia | 09/12/2017 10:54 AM EDT

President Donald Trump is sending public and private signals that he is ready to deal on legislation protecting young undocumented immigrants and won't demand funding for a border wall.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Tuesday that Trump told her in private that he would sign the Dream Act — a bill that would provide a path to permanent legal status for so-called Dreamers — and that he wants "some border security." Meanwhile, a top White House aide indicated Tuesday that the Trump administration would not insist that legislation codifying protections for Dreamers be tied to border wall funding.

"We've been very clear: There is no wall in our DACA future. It's just not going to happen," Pelosi said in a small roundtable with reporters, recounting her conversations with Trump. "I think it's immoral, I think it's expensive and ineffective. And so we're not going to that place."

Pelosi said she and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) pressed Trump on protection for Dreamers during the Oval Office meeting last week, with the two Democrats saying "we will not rest until it is passed as soon as possible."

"It was important to us, so we wanted some assurances that the president would sign the bill

and that we would have some cooperation in passing such a bill," the California Democrat added. "That's been a major piece of that meeting."

Marc Short, the White House's director of legislative affairs, also said Tuesday that the administration is "most interested in getting border security" and that Trump believes a barrier such as a wall "is important to that equation of border security."

"Whether or not that is part of a DACA equation or whether or not that's another legislative vehicle — I don't want us to bind ourselves into a construct that makes reaching a conclusion on DACA impossible," Short said during a breakfast hosted by the Christian Science Monitor.

Those comments underscore Trump's desire to see Congress approve legislation that essentially would turn the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program — an Obama-era executive action that Trump said this month he would end — into law. The president has given Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix, and several Republicans interested in immigration policy have urged the administration to make clear publicly what it is seeking in any deal.

Though the administration seems to be conceding on the wall for now, it isn't for lack of trying. After a New York-New Jersey delegation meeting at the White House to discuss a local transportation project last week, Trump privately pressed Schumer on giving the administration resources for a wall in exchange for signing a Dreamer plan into law, according to one person familiar with the exchange.

Schumer stressed to Trump in the one-on-one conversation that Democrats absolutely would not support that proposal, reiterating that point again to the president when he asked Schumer a similar question about 10 minutes later, according to the source.

Democrats have repeatedly drawn a hard line against construction of a 2,000-mile barrier along the southern border with Mexico, either in government spending negotiations or in talks over how to codify DACA into law. Key Democrats have, however, indicated they will have to accept some modest border security measures to pick up support from congressional Republicans on a DACA fix.

"'You pass it, I'll sign it, I want some border stuff.' That's what he said," Pelosi recounted. "We always want border stuff, so that's not a problem. Especially with all the technologies."

Pelosi didn't indicate what type of specific border security provisions would be palatable to most Democrats, saying her party was focused on a "clean" Dream Act and pressuring GOP lawmakers, particularly moderates, to get on board.

House Democrats will launch a discharge petition effort later this month to try to force the issue to the floor, and Pelosi said they will focus on persuading the roughly two dozen House Republicans who have endorsed a more conservative version of the Dream Act sponsored by Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.). That legislation, Pelosi said in the reporters' roundtable, was "not good enough."

Apart from the border wall, a host of other controversial policies are likely to arise as potential tradeoffs for legislation concerning DACA.

GOP Sens. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and David Perdue of Georgia have said they would like

to see their bill that enacts deep cuts to legal immigration levels — legislation endorsed by the White House — attached to any DACA bill. Some Senate Republicans have looked at tougher enforcement measures, such as a broader E-Verify system to prevent businesses from hiring workers without legal status. Conservative Republicans may also continue to insist on a wall.

Meanwhile, Democrats have furiously strategized behind the scenes about how to push the Dreamer issue, especially with must-pass legislation facing Congress throughout the rest of the year.

Some Democrats privately mulled trying to attach legislation that would grant legal status to DACA recipients serving in the military as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, which the Senate is taking up this week, according to multiple sources.

But Democrats determined that they didn't want to risk angering Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain (R-Ariz.) — for whom the defense bill is a top priority — particularly because McCain is a longtime champion of comprehensive immigration reform and would be a critical GOP ally in a legislative battle over Dreamers, the sources said.

The Pentagon [said](#) last week that about 900 people currently in the military, or who have enlisted, have the temporary DACA protections, according to the Associated Press.

Established by President Barack Obama in 2012, the DACA program currently grants temporary work permits and protections from deportation to about 690,000 undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors. Though he moved to end the program, Trump has publicly voiced concern about the fate of the hundreds of thousands of young people who are protected by it. He [wrote on Twitter](#) last week that he would "revisit the issue" if Congress fails to act.

White House aides have long considered trying to get Democrats to support funding a border wall — a key pledge of Trump's during the 2016 campaign — in exchange for moving forward with a Dreamers bill. But, amid a massive public backlash over Trump's decision to end DACA, the president has grown increasingly eager for a legislative solution to that issue.

Short added later at the breakfast that the president remains committed to building the border wall.

Meanwhile, Pelosi hinted that Obama, who last week condemned Trump's decision to unilaterally end DACA, would soon become more vocal in other political battles, particularly the midterm elections.

"He has made clear his priority was to speak out first and foremost on the Dreamers because this was really wrong," Pelosi said Tuesday. "At some point, I'm hopeful that he will be helpful to our House and Senate efforts, and I think he will."

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Pentagon details negative impacts of a CR [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 09/11/2017 07:12 PM EDT

The Defense Department will need to cancel scheduled training, curtail hiring and suffer reduced readiness and increased acquisition costs under a continuing spending resolution, the Pentagon [tells](#) the Senate Armed Services Committee.

On Friday, Congress approved a massive spending package with a continuing resolution through Dec. 8. And Defense Secretary Jim Mattis spells out specific effects of it in a letter obtained by POLITICO.

Specifically, the Pentagon will have to reduce training. For example, a lack of funds for the Air Force to stand up two F-16 squadrons under the CR will prevent the service from training enough pilots to begin its readiness recovery, Mattis says.

Additionally, Mattis says, the Navy will have to delay the induction of 11 ships, disrupting maintenance schedules and reducing flying hours and steaming days.

Acquisition costs will also increase under the CR, Mattis says. In addition to the inability to start new programs, costs grow when the Pentagon is forced to enter short-term contracts.

On the personnel side, the Pentagon will need to curtail most hiring, including pilots, maintainers, cyber experts and nuclear trained personnel, Mattis adds.

Despite the detrimental effects, a CR does, however, avoid a government shutdown and provides Congress an opportunity to strike a deal lifting the defense budget caps, Mattis writes.

"Long term CRs impact the readiness of our forces and their equipment at a time when security threats are extraordinarily high," he says.

Senate Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and ranking Democrat [Jack Reed](#) of Rhode Island [had requested](#) the Pentagon outline the consequences of a CR.

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Senate votes to advance NDAA [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 09/11/2017 06:15 PM EDT

The Senate today easily cleared its first procedural hurdle to considering the National Defense Authorization Act.

Senators voted 89 to 3 to move forward with the annual defense policy measure [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#). Sixty votes were needed to proceed.

The legislation hit the Senate floor after several delays. It's not yet clear if the Senate will finish debate in just one week, but Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) said on the Senate floor that "members from both sides will have opportunities" to propose amendments.

"Ultimately, we'll keep working to find consensus so that we can pass this critical defense legislation without further delay," McConnell said.

Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) said he hoped Senate Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and ranking Democrat [Jack Reed](#) of Rhode Island could "build a strong manager's package that will be acceptable to both sides."

"We Democrats want to work in a constructive and productive manner to process as many of these amendments as possible and work through even the most difficult of issues," Schumer said

So far, more than 400 amendments have been filed for floor consideration.

The text of the Senate bill is [here](#). The Armed Services Committee report is [here](#). And a summary of the legislation is [here](#).

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Trump promise on expanded school choice falls flat [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 09/12/2017 05:05 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's campaign pledge to expand school choice for millions of working class families isn't happening — at least not in the foreseeable future.

For months, the Trump administration has eyed a first-of-its-kind federal tax credit to help families pay for private school. If it were tucked into a larger tax bill, proponents argued, it could pass with just 51 Senate votes. But Republicans have been unable to pull off any significant legislative wins this year and appear unlikely to add a contentious provision to a tax bill that could complicate its already fraught politics.

And the White House has said nothing about the issue for months.

"Republicans are desperate for a victory and they're desperate to get tax reform done," said Michael Petrilli, president of a conservative education think tank, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. "Anything that looks like a voucher will lose them votes."

Critics [say](#) a federal tax credit would be a "back door voucher," diverting funds from struggling public schools. But 18 states have passed their own programs, allowing individuals and corporations to receive a state tax credit in exchange for donations to scholarship-granting entities, which then award funds to help disadvantaged families pay for private school.

A short-term debt ceiling and spending deal [reached](#) by Trump and Democrats last week opens a window for Congress to tackle a tax overhaul. But there are still no details of that plan, and Republicans must agree on a fiscal 2018 budget resolution that includes instructions for tax changes if they want to pass them with a simple majority in the Senate.

Still, fiscal hawks are already worried that a school tax credit will add to the final cost of a tax

bill, a congressional aide recently [told POLITICO](#). And those working on the tax overhaul fear school choice will complicate the overarching goal: streamlining and simplifying the tax code.

"This is something that would run counter to that effort," said Lindsey Burke, director of the Center for Education Policy at the conservative Heritage Foundation. Heritage hasn't supported a federal tax credit scholarship program out of concern that it would increase regulations over private schools, among other things.

Expanding school choice is a nonstarter with House and Senate appropriators. So far, they've rejected more than \$1 billion proposed in Trump's budget to allow greater school choice, aside from extra support for charter schools.

Experts can't see a school tax credit passing as a standalone bill, since efforts to broadly expand school choice have died in Congress with strong opposition from Democrats and moderate Republicans. The politics only get more complicated as Republicans may fight next year to maintain their majority during the congressional midterms.

A White House spokesman said the president is still "committed to pursuing a robust school choice proposal." But in recent remarks, Trump has said, "we must make the tax code as simple as possible."

Julia Lawless, a spokeswoman for Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), said the details of a tax package will be worked out in the coming months. Hatch is "focused on developing a tax reform package that will provide more relief to the middle class, increase wages and job growth here at home, and ensure American businesses can compete in global markets," she said.

Emily Schillinger, spokeswoman for the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, would not say whether a school tax credit was on the table, but said "members are working to simplify our broken, complex tax code and specifically streamline the education benefits to be more effective and efficient."

Failure to pass a federal tax credit scholarship program would most certainly be a big disappointment for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, a longtime advocate for such an investment. DeVos' spokeswoman didn't respond to a request for comment.

In June, POLITICO reported that the Trump administration invited school choice advocates to the White House to discuss action on school choice, particularly a federal tax credit scholarship program. DeVos and top White House adviser Kellyanne Conway were in attendance.

But since then, the White House has been radio silent on the topic, according to sources familiar with the meeting. And to school choice advocates, that's not a good sign.

"The president spent a lot of time talking about this on the campaign trail," said one advocate close to the discussions. "We knew from the beginning that the administration was going to have to insist on it. ... That's the one big unknown at this point."

Advocates who support the notion of a federal program say it's too early to write the obituary. They're looking for another vehicle to pass it or to budget reconciliation down the line. And they insist it remains a passion of Trump, DeVos and Vice President Mike Pence, who

oversaw a dramatic expansion of school choice in Indiana while he was governor.

"I think given the current environment, while it's a possibility, it's a much longer shot than it used to be," said another advocate. "But I remain cautiously hopeful."

States will likely continue to be the most fertile ground for school choice expansion. Advocates clinging to optimism point to the largely blue state of Illinois, which recently enacted its own state tax credit scholarship program after a fierce legislative fight. If it can get done there, it can happen in Congress, advocates say. But school choice measures in the red state of Texas have continually failed amid reservations from Republican state lawmakers concerned about stripping resources from rural public schools.

Some education experts believe narrower ideas backed by Heritage, like expanding school choice for military families or Native American children, could happen in some form down the line. But without strong support from a White House that can successfully convince Republicans to get on board, Trump's campaign pledge is "effectively dead," Petrilli said.

"If we were talking about a president who had some real political muscle and popularity and made it clear this was something he cared about, then maybe," he said. "But we don't have that president."

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Census reports 3.2 percent hike in median household income for 2016 [Back](#)

By Timothy Noah | 09/12/2017 10:56 AM EDT

U.S. median household income rose in 2016 to \$59,039, a 3.2 percent increase over 2015, the Census Bureau [reported](#).

But median earnings for men and women who worked full-time over the entire year were essentially unchanged after inflation, with men earning \$51,640 and women earning \$44,544.

The total number of people working full-time over the entire year rose by 2.2 million in 2016, and the total number reporting earnings of any kind rose 1.2 million. This, the Census Bureau observed, suggested "a shift from part-year, part-time work status to full-time, year-round work."

Among men with earnings of any kind, 74.8 percent worked full-time through 2016, an increase over 73.9 percent in 2015. The corresponding proportion for women was 62.2 percent, an increase over 61.3 percent in 2015.

Income inequality, as measured by the Gini index, was essentially unchanged in 2016, the Census report said, even when adjusted for household size. The poverty rate was 12.7 percent, down from 13.5 percent in 2015 and 14.8 percent in 2014 and just a whisker higher than where it stood in 2007 on the eve of the Great Recession.

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CREW sues Treasury for details on Mnuchin's flight to Kentucky with wife [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 09/11/2017 02:35 PM EDT

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, an ethics watchdog, today [sued](#) the Treasury Department for documents related to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's use of a government plane to fly to Kentucky with his wife.

CREW requested that Treasury expedite its request under the Freedom of Information Act, but the department has not responded, according to the group.

Mnuchin and his wife, Louise Linton, flew to Lexington, Ky., on Aug. 21, on the day of the solar eclipse.

"We filed an expedited FOIA request because Americans deserve more information to determine whether there has been misuse of government resources," CREW Executive Director Noah Bookbinder said in the release. "We're suing because the government has so far failed even to respond."

The trip garnered particular attention after Linton posted an image of her exiting the plane in designer clothing.

A Treasury spokesperson said the department does not comment on litigation.

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Can the markets rescue the federal flood insurance program? [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 09/12/2017 05:05 AM EDT

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are putting to the test a novel approach to how the federal government and taxpayers share the costs of natural disasters with the private sector.

Catastrophic flooding along the Gulf Coast is expected to trigger a payout of up to \$1 billion from a group of reinsurers to the National Flood Insurance Program, which acquired the coverage in January for about \$150 million.

Funds that the program receives from the reinsurers will help pay claims to homeowners that rely on the government for protection against the financial risks of flooding — a critical service that has left the NFIP \$25 billion in debt after an earlier series of devastating storms.

The reinsurance transaction was the biggest yet for the program, and it has left some policymakers and investors eager for more.

As Congress has considered ways to overhaul the insurance program over the last several months, House and Senate lawmakers have drafted proposals that would encourage it to do more to share flood risks through reinsurance and securities.

That has sparked a debate about the extent to which it makes sense for the government to rely on the financial markets to help manage economic perils. Critics say that turning to the markets could end up being a worse deal for taxpayers compared to relatively cheap government funding. Advocates argue that it's an important step in keeping the program from sinking further into the red.

"If they had done it over the last 15-20 years, we wouldn't have the debt we have right now," said Rep. [Blaine Luetkemeyer](#) (R-Mo.), one of the most outspoken advocates for using private capital to help offset the program's growing obligations to the Treasury.

Further integrating the financial markets into the program is just one of many proposals on the table for lawmakers who are struggling to agree on ways to shore up an insurance program.

FEMA has had the authority to tap into the markets to offset its flood risks for years but has only recently started making deals. It tested the waters with a small reinsurance acquisition in 2016, then followed up in January with agreements involving 25 reinsurers covering \$1.04 billion in flood risk. The reinsurance could be triggered when losses hit \$4 billion.

A potential payout from the reinsurance could be key to determining how quickly the flood insurance program will need to seek an increase in its borrowing authority, which was last raised to around \$30 billion after Hurricane Sandy. FEMA has said it had \$1.7 billion available to pay claims from Harvey plus \$5.8 billion in remaining borrowing authority.

A FEMA spokeswoman declined to speculate on the impact of Harvey but said the agency viewed this year's reinsurance acquisition as a success that officials planned to build upon for another reinsurance placement in January 2018.

In a blog [post](#) earlier this year, FEMA's deputy associate administrator for insurance and mitigation, Roy Wright, said securing reinsurance was a "key step toward achieving the NFIP's long-term vision of building a stronger financial framework." He has called the reinsurance transaction a "cornerstone reinsurance placement."

In a 2015 report to Congress assembled with help from Guy Carpenter, which later became the flood program's reinsurance broker, FEMA said reinsurance would be a more expensive alternative to Treasury debt. But it added that a significant reinsurance program would help stabilize the NFIP's finances and reduce the probability of borrowing after large flood events.

"If Harvey ends up hitting this program, they're going to see that reinsurers are going to respond pretty quickly to them and put needed cash in their hand when they need it most," said Guy Carpenter managing director Jake Clark. "We want to see more of it."

Dennis Burke, vice president of the Reinsurance Association of America, said it was a long-term play by reinsurers who would not likely be deterred by one sizable loss out of the gate.

"Our members write flood insurance around the world," he said. "The opportunity to participate in the flood insurance market in the U.S. is something they've been interested in for a while. They wrote this one contract for the first time and it got hit. ... The contract was

underwritten and priced as though this was not a common, everyday experience. We anticipate the underwriters will continue to look at it based upon the probabilities and risks."

The \$600 billion reinsurance market is not necessarily the only game in town.

FEMA hasn't yet started to tap the broader capital markets, but House and Senate bills would try to make clear that the agency could look beyond traditional reinsurance. Bills under consideration include explicit references to tools including catastrophe bonds and insurance-linked securities.

"There's probably \$35 trillion in global pension fund assets out there," said Daniel Stander, global managing director at risk modeling company RMS. "There is appetite amongst investors to take some of that capital and invest it in asset classes that are not correlated to the global economy. Whether the wind blows or not has nothing to do with the price of oil, the price of property or the price of equities."

Luetkemeyer's bill and another, [S. 1313 \(115\)](#), from Sens. [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) and [Kirsten Gillibrand](#) (D-N.Y.) would require FEMA to annually cede part of the flood insurance program's risk to private reinsurance or the capital markets.

Luetkemeyer said in an interview that private-sector coverage would "protect the program financially and protect the taxpayers from having to be the backstop." The Congressional Budget Office has [estimated](#) that the provision in his bill requiring FEMA to shift risk to the markets would have no significant effect on the amount of reinsurance coverage that it buys or on NFIP spending because the agency intended to continue purchasing reinsurance.

But the proposal has run into resistance from other lawmakers who argue that forcing FEMA to go to the market might not result in the best deal for the flood insurance program.

When the House Financial Services Committee considered Luetkemeyer's bill, [H.R. 2246 \(115\)](#), in June, the panel's top Democrat, [Maxine Waters](#) (D-Calif.), said the proposal made "no sense" because the 2012 flood insurance law that she co-authored clarified FEMA's authority to purchase reinsurance.

She said the bill would legislate "complicated and burdensome" metrics that FEMA would have to follow, potentially giving reinsurers leverage to demand higher premiums.

Rep. [Carolyn Maloney](#) (D-N.Y.) said at the same committee meeting that the requirement would be a "worse deal for taxpayers."

"From a financial perspective it only makes sense for FEMA to use a private reinsurer if the annual premiums that FEMA would pay on the reinsurance are less than the annual interest payments that FEMA pays to the Treasury right now," she said. "Why in the world do we want to require them to pay more?"

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DOE awards grid security grants to improve bug patching and incident response [Back](#)

By Eric Geller | 09/12/2017 10:57 AM EDT

The Department of Energy today announced \$50 million in grants to improve the security and resiliency of the electric grid.

Seven of the DOE grants will go to resiliency, while 20 will go to cybersecurity.

[The cyber grants](#) will fund projects covering vulnerability mitigation, incident response efforts and secure grid management communications.

Nine national laboratories will administer the grants, in partnership with a wide range of military, academic and corporate partners.

Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and its partners will develop "a tool to verify the integrity of firmware used in energy delivery system devices, without taking the equipment offline."

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Wash., will oversee an effort to "develop a secure and flexible data exchange approach for communication between control centers."

"A resilient, reliable, and secure power grid is essential to the Nation's security, economy, and the vital services that Americans depend on every day," Energy Secretary Rick Perry said in a statement.

"By leveraging the world-class innovation of the National Laboratories and their partners," he added, "this investment will keep us moving forward to create yet more real-world capabilities that the energy sector can put into practice to continue improving the resilience and security of the country's critical energy infrastructure."

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Senate Democrats hold onto majority hopes [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard and Gabriel Debenedetti | 09/12/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Senate Democrats are already three seats short of a majority and must play defense in 10 Trump states next year. But the top Democratic senators in charge of planning for the 2018 elections are refusing to publicly give up hope of taking back the chamber, in an improbable but audacious nod to the friendly political environment developing ahead of the midterms.

Reelecting red-state Democratic incumbents is still the top priority for Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) and DSCC Chairman [Chris Van Hollen](#). But they have also begun investigating opportunities to play offense on GOP turf, polling and investigating potential candidates in states like Texas, Tennessee and Alabama with the Republican Party facing a tough national environment.

The Democratic effort began well before a recent burst of bad news for Senate Republicans.

But with former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon plotting primary challenges against incumbents, Tennessee Sen. [Bob Corker](#) mulling retirement, and Republicans fighting a bitter and expensive primary in Alabama's special Senate election, Democrats have begun looking even more closely at picking off a surprise Senate seat — and maybe the majority — next year.

"Our priority is to make sure that we win all our incumbent races," Van Hollen said in an August interview. Then, "we have great pickup opportunities in Nevada and Arizona," he continued. "And we have good candidates in other states, and we're going to have more. We're going to work to maximize our opportunities."

Much of the insistence is for donors' benefit, said a handful of top party operatives: Closing the door on flipping a chamber will make it much harder to raise cash in 2018, especially with House Democrats smelling opportunity to win back the majority there.

But the assertion also reflects a new kind of why-not-try confidence among Senate Democrats, who think the pieces have fallen in place for a potential wave and want to be ready.

Winning back the Senate would essentially require Democrats to draw a straight flush, followed by four-of-a-kind. All 10 Democratic senators from Trump states would need to secure reelection, and the party is particularly worried about defending its incumbents in Indiana, Missouri and Florida. Then, Democrats would need to defeat not just Nevada Sen. [Dean Heller](#) and Arizona Sen. [Jeff Flake](#), but also find a third seat from six deep-red, Republican-held states.

This wouldn't be the first time Democrats prepped for a wave that never came. In 2016, they got top-tier recruits in Arkansas and Kentucky in the form of former Arkansas U.S. Attorney Conner Eldridge and Lexington, Ky., Mayor Jim Gray. Both men lost by double-digits, despite outrunning Hillary Clinton.

Republicans, for their part, don't find Schumer's plotting plausible.

"Chuck Schumer has said for years that Democrats will win the Senate, and that claim is no longer funny, but just plain sad," NRSC spokeswoman Katie Martin said. "There are 25 Democrats up for reelect, with 10 of those in states President [Donald] Trump won. Either Schumer has trouble with math or he has trouble living in reality."

The most immediate opportunity for Democrats may come in Alabama. Some Republican operatives privately fear former Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore could lose the general election if he defeats incumbent GOP Sen. [Luther Strange](#) in the primary. Democrats are wary of turning a race in such a tough state into a national referendum, and they worry that it might be impossible to boost former U.S. Attorney Doug Jones over the hump. But the opportunity to boost Jones, a civil rights attorney who won fame prosecuting members of the KKK, against the ultra-conservative Moore may be too tempting to pass up.

National Democrats still have no immediate plans to get involved in Alabama, and the candidate says he's ready to run either way.

"It doesn't really matter whether I've got help or not," Jones said in an interview. "I'm running as a Democrat. The other side is going to try to tag me however they're going to tag me."

The next opportunity comes in Texas, where Rep. [Beto O'Rourke](#) has already announced a challenge to incumbent Sen. [Ted Cruz](#). Democrats are pleasantly surprised by O'Rourke's strong online fundraising, and he has impressed national operatives with constant campaigning throughout the state.

Still, O'Rourke's refusal to accept PAC money frustrates strategists who think he'll need every penny possible to compete in an ultra-expensive state. Democratic outside groups have recently shied away from spending heavily in big states, with the DSCC and Senate Majority PAC pulling out of Florida last fall.

But Van Hollen said the committee would be ready to back up O'Rourke if he can make the race competitive.

"If Texas becomes clearly competitive, we'll be able to find the resources," he said.

But the state Democrats are most openly excited about is Tennessee. In conversations with other senators — in which he refuses to rule out winning back the Senate — Schumer often brings up Corker's seat, which Senate operatives regard as the white whale of 2018.

As DSCC chair in 2006, Schumer saw Corker win his seat by just 3 points. Fellow senators and campaign pros have taken to wondering whether former Gov. Phil Bredesen might be interested in running. (The 73-year-old has shown no intention of jumping in.)

Even if Bredesen stays out, Democrats seem content with an announced candidate against Corker: James Mackler, a 44-year-old lawyer who joined the military after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, flew Black Hawk helicopters and fought in the Iraq War, and then joined the JAG Corps and prosecuted sexual assault cases. Mackler made the rounds at the DSCC donor retreat in Martha's Vineyard, making a favorable impression on donors and lending his candidacy extra legitimacy, some said.

In an interview, Mackler said he thought Tennesseans and national Democrats both were ready to get behind a candidate with his "proven track record of service and sacrifice." Mackler attacked Corker as overly partisan, and said the Tennessean's criticisms of Trump weren't backed up by actions.

"He'll vote for whatever his party puts in front of him," he said, referencing a quote where Corker dismissed the substance of an Obamacare repeal bill. "I'm an outsider. I'm not the Democratic Party."

While Corker's occasional critiques of the president haven't satisfied Mackler, they have prompted some Republicans to muse about a primary challenge. On Monday, Corker said he wasn't committed to running for reelection.

"I think everyone in the Volunteer State knows, as they did in 2012, that running for reelection has never been an automatic for me," Corker said in a statement. "While we are in a strong position, I am still contemplating the future and will make a decision at the appropriate time."

That Democrats are even considering offensive tactics, rather than preparing to hemorrhage losses in red states, is a reflection of how strongly they feel about their 2018 chances despite the Republican tilt of the Senate map.

The DSCC believes Democrats have a clear upper hand on health care and that fewer top-tier

candidates than expected are challenging Democratic incumbents. They have eagerly watched Trump's spat with Heller and war with Flake and wondered if such intra-GOP conflict could spread.

"We have a tough political map," Van Hollen said. "This is a year where anything can happen."

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POLITICO Pro New Jersey: Christie defends Trump's delay in declaring opioid epidemic a national emergency [Back](#)

By Katie Jennings | 09/12/2017 11:33 AM EDT

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on Monday defended President Donald Trump for not yet declaring the nation's opioid epidemic a national emergency, saying he was at the White House last week to discuss the issue with the president's senior staff.

It has been more than a month since Trump said he [intended](#) to declare the opioid crisis a national emergency based on the recommendation of a presidential commission chaired by Christie. The president, however, has yet to make a formal declaration.

"I was just at the White House last week to discuss this with the president's senior staff. I know they are focused on putting a number of the recommendations that the commission has made in their interim report into place," Christie told "PBS NewsHour" host Judy Woodruff. "I know the president and I know his heart on this, and I know he's ready to do what needs to be done to get this done the right way."

Pressed to explain the unusual delay between Trump's statement and the formal declaration, Christie said the president was busy dealing with the two hurricanes that have ravaged the southern United States in recent weeks.

"We've had two major national emergencies intervene since August, with Hurricane Harvey and now Hurricane Irma. The administration is focused on making sure that's dealt with, and they're also on a parallel track working on making sure that we efficiently and effectively implement the recommendations in the interim report of the commission," Christie said. "I am committed to urging the president to move as quickly as possible, and he's told me that's exactly what he's instructed his staff to do."

This story first appeared on [POLITICO Pro New Jersey](#) on Sept. 11, 2017.

To view online [click here](#).

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DOL to evaluate apprenticeship grants [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 09/12/2017 11:35 AM EDT

The Labor Department said today it will conduct a formal evaluation of one of its core apprenticeship initiatives.

In a [notice](#) to be published in the Federal Register Wednesday, DOL will announce plans to evaluate the American Apprenticeship Initiative, a fund created by President Barack Obama. The \$175 million in one-time funds awarded to 46 companies came from participation fees for H-1B visas for high-tech foreign workers.

DOL said it will evaluate how grants were developed, the outcomes for workers, return on investments for companies and recruitment processes.

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations
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Subject: Budget & Appropriations: Appropriators prepare for fourth punt — Hatch retirement opens plum post — Republicans weigh second round of reconciliation
Date: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 4:22:12 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 01/02/2018 04:17 PM EDT

A DAUNTING TO-DO LIST: Welcome to 2018, the year of the dog ... err, deadlines.

In January alone, lawmakers have vowed to tackle spending caps, immigration, Obamacare, a massive disaster aid package, flood insurance and spying powers. And not long after, they'll be under pressure to deliver on a fix for the Children's Health Insurance Program, the debt ceiling, faltering pension plans and tax extenders.

Another punt? Some appropriators are already talking about a fourth stopgap funding bill for fiscal 2018. Rep. [Tom Cole](#) (R-Okla.) told us today that another short-term bill could kick the Jan. 19 deadline until President's Day. "Until we have an agreement, I don't think you have a choice but to think about another CR," he said about the still-unsettled issue of overall budget caps. "Both sides need to get back to running the government."

Getting to it: The work starts Wednesday. Republican and Democratic congressional leaders will meet on Capitol Hill with White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and legislative liaison Marc Short. President Donald Trump, who has already chatted twice about this with the "big four" since September, won't be present. Neither will White House chief of staff John Kelly, who has initially slated to head up the talks, [Kyle Cheney reports](#).

Up first: Budget caps will be the focus of the talks, according to both White House and congressional aides. (Appropriators have made clear that they need those numbers ASAP to start work on an omnibus.) But the sit-down could turn into a faceoff over immigration, especially after Trump tweeted last week that he would reject any DACA deal without money for a border wall and a series of other immigration changes, [Louis Nelson explains](#). POTUS doubled down on Tuesday, accusing Democrats of "doing nothing for DACA," as [Nolan McCaskill notes](#).

GOOD TUESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@[jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com (@[sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — DOT has "several serious concerns" with New York and New Jersey's latest plan for financing their Hudson River underground tunnel project, according to a [letter](#) the Federal Transit Administration sent last week. More from [Brianna Gurciullo](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Every state began 2018 with a shortage of teachers. In recent years, several states have sought to lower the barriers of entry for new educators, including reducing licensure rules. More from [Stateline](#).

Quote du jour — "We're hoping the '18 budget comes out before the '19 budget, but we'll see how that plays out," Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan told reporters just before Christmas. More from [DefenseNews](#).

ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS

HATCH SAYS 'SEE YA': Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) announced today that he will not run for reelection in 2018, opening up a plum assignment as top Republican on the panel that oversees entitlement programs, health care and taxes, Jennifer Haberkorn [reports](#).

BUDGET

AGENDA-SETTING: Congressional Republicans will face a raft of difficult policy choices when they head to West Virginia later this month for their annual GOP retreat, including whether to attempt another round of budget reconciliation despite exceedingly long odds in the Senate.

Don't rock the boat: You'll recall that House Republicans, led by Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), have set their sights on entitlement overhaul. But Senate GOP leaders, including Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), have publicly downplayed the chances of any changes to Medicare, Medicaid and welfare programs in an election year. The clash between Ryan and McConnell hints at exactly why 2018 will be so tough, as Seung Min Kim and Rachael Bade [explain](#). GOP leaders must unite both chambers around a legislative agenda that appeases the party's conservative base without creating major risks at the polls.

A CHAIRMAN RACE! House Budget Chairman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.) quietly announced last week that she'll be giving up her gavel as soon as a replacement is picked, as Sarah [reported](#). Black, who GOP leaders recruited for the budget position, was never expected to stay on through a second year. The Tennessee gubernatorial candidate did clench her gavel longer than expected, however, to help muscle through the GOP's tax overhaul, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

WHITE HOUSE

SCRAMBLING FOR A STRATEGY: Toasting to tax reform as 2017 ended, White House aides now look warily at an uncertain agenda for the year ahead. As Eliana Johnson, Annie Karni and Andrew Restuccia [explain](#), Republicans are now split over which legislative initiative to tackle next. Behind the scenes, White House aides and Trump's outside advisers are engaged in a fierce debate over whether to appeal to traditional conservative voters by tackling welfare reform or instead push forward on the president's long-promised infrastructure plan, which could attract Democratic support and win over a broader slice of the electorate.

DISASTER RELIEF

A \$30 MILLION HOUSING FIX: Puerto Rico has an unconventional proposal to help its 48,000 illegal squatters in the wake of Hurricane Maria: Give them property rights. Gov. Ricardo Rosselló is asking for U.S. aid to bring generations of illegal settlers into the mainstream, as Lorraine Woellert [writes](#) in a deep dive from San Juan.

GREEN GRID REBUILD: Puerto Rico's dilapidated electric grid has created an opening for renewable energy proponents — if they can get around the red tape. The island's energy regulator is charging ahead with an ambitious high-tech plan to upgrade its decades-old grid, but regulatory and legal obstacles are already getting in the way, as Eric Wolff [reports](#).

Power update: Meanwhile, more than 660,000 power customers across Puerto Rico still lack electricity, more than three months after Hurricane Maria made landfall, the Associated Press

[reports.](#)

AGRICULTURE

EARLY TEST OF TENSIONS: It's finally the year of the farm bill. And if the drama over the latest disaster aid package is any indication, the 2018 edition of the ag bible is going to be a tough one to write, as Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine Boudreau [explain](#). Still languishing within that \$81 billion disaster bill ([H.R. 4667 \(115\)](#)) the Senate is now sitting on: Farm bill provisions that have drawn bipartisan fire, including language that would make cotton growers eligible for the Price Loss Coverage program and give dairy farmers more insurance options. While congressional aides say the cotton move is budget neutral, it's unclear how much the dairy fixes would cost taxpayers.

EARMARKS

- What the pension fight that could disrupt budget talks is all about. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Trump, Congress spoil for fight with shutdown again at stake. [Bloomberg](#).
- Interior Department tapped wildfire preparedness funds for Ryan Zinke helicopter tour. [Newsweek](#).
- Does the white working class really vote against its own interests? [POLITICO Magazine](#).
- Trump's demand for a border wall splits GOP lawmakers. [Bloomberg Politics](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 15 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Jan. 17).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2018/01/appropriators-prepare-for-fourth-punt-062666>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump: 'Democrats are doing nothing for DACA' [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 01/02/2018 10:58 AM EDT

Accusing Democrats of playing politics with undocumented immigrants who came into the country as children, President Donald Trump today predicted that so-called DREAMers will fall "in love" with the GOP.

"Democrats are doing nothing for DACA - just interested in politics," Trump complained via Twitter. "DACA activists and Hispanics will go hard against Dems, will start 'falling in love' with Republicans and their President! We are about RESULTS."

Congressional leaders [will meet with top White House officials](#) on Wednesday to discuss a deal to avert a government shutdown and make headway on an immigration impasse.

Trump tweeted last week that "there can be no" immigration deal without his long-promised border wall and an end to chain migration and the U.S. visa lottery system. A spokesman for

House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) said Democrats won't "negotiate through the press" but "look forward to a serious negotiation at Wednesday's meeting when we come back."

Trump in September [announced the rescission of the Obama-era program](#) that offers protections to thousands of young undocumented immigrants but provided a six-month delay, giving Congress until March to find a legislative solution. He also urged Congress to pass "responsible immigration reform."

To view online [click here](#).

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FTA slams plan for financing Hudson River tunnel project [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 12/29/2017 07:19 PM EDT

DOT has "several serious concerns" with New York and New Jersey's latest plan for financing their Hudson River underground tunnel project, according to a letter sent by a Federal Transit Administration official Friday.

Jane Williams, FTA's deputy administrator, [wrote](#) that the project's backers are seeking at least \$11.1 billion from the Trump administration. Money from the FTA's Capital Investment Grant program would provide half the funding; three Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing loans would cover the other half.

That proposal, Williams wrote, "is a move towards even greater federal dependency."

"We understand and appreciate how important this project is to you, and we remain very much open to paths that would enable it," her letter reads. "Also, Congress is poised to begin discussing infrastructure legislation in the coming weeks."

Williams denied that DOT has agreed to shoulder half of the project's costs. The project's supporters have tried to hold DOT to a promise made during the Obama administration, to do so.

"We consider it unhelpful to reference a non-existent 'agreement' rather than directly address the responsibility for funding a local project where 9 out of 10 passengers are local transit riders," Williams wrote.

In addition, Williams wrote that the states' request for at least \$5 billion in Capital Investment Grant funding "could exhaust the CIG program entirely."

Williams also took issue with the cost estimate for the project.

"We understand this new plan does not address the rehabilitation of the [Hudson River's] existing tunnels, and now only addresses the building of two new tunnels," she wrote. "Given the age of the existing tunnels was the impetus for the project, we question the decision to ignore any funding commitment to that critical component, and to omit billions in other costs previously acknowledged to be part of the overall project cost."

Beyond the tunnel project, Williams added that FTA is "deeply concerned that New York is seriously behind in its State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) certification process."

"Also, serious deficiencies in oversight and management of safety have been apparent in three consecutive FTA safety audits for New York," she wrote.

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Hatch's retirement will open coveted Finance Committee post [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 01/02/2018 03:00 PM EDT

[Orrin Hatch](#)'s retirement will open up a plum assignment as the top Republican on the Senate committee that oversees health care, taxes and entitlement programs.

Hatch announced today that he would not run for reelection in 2018, meaning the Senate Finance Committee job would open up in early 2019.

If Republicans retain control of the Senate in the midterm elections, they would have to select a new chairman to help the Trump administration enact legislation ahead of the 2020 presidential race. If Democrats take control, it would be a GOP ranking member post to play defense.

Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#), who previously served as chairman and ranking member of the panel, still has two years of chairmanship eligibility remaining. In order to lead Finance, he would have to forgo his similarly high-profile gavel at the Senate Judiciary Committee.

It is unclear whether the Iowa Republican would want to give up confirming President Donald Trump's judicial nominees in favor of running Finance again, assuming the GOP maintains control of the Senate.

Next in line of seniority after Grassley would be Sen. [Mike Crapo](#) of Idaho. He would have to give up the Senate Banking Committee chairmanship.

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It's Ryan vs. McConnell on entitlement reform [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Rachael Bade | 12/27/2017 05:06 AM EDT

Speaker Paul Ryan's dream of overhauling the nation's entitlement programs in 2018 will soon run into a harsh reality: His own party isn't on board.

The Wisconsin Republican has detailed an ambitious effort to dramatically reshape Medicare,

Medicaid and welfare programs that the GOP has long targeted as ripe for reforms. But bring it up with key Senate Republicans and House GOP moderates and they blanch — seeing a legislative battle that may not be winnable and that may not be worth it in an election year where control of Congress is up for grabs.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has all but ruled out the idea, saying publicly that he doesn't expect to see welfare and entitlement changes on the agenda next year, particularly if it's done in a party-line manner.

"The sensitivity of entitlements is such that you almost have to have a bipartisan agreement in order to achieve a result," McConnell told reporters at a news conference last week.

Other key Republicans are clearly loath to turn to such a sharply partisan pursuit after grueling fights over Obamacare and taxes. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), a swing vote during the Obamacare repeal fight this summer, quickly changed the subject when asked about Ryan's entitlement reform push.

"Well, I'd like to see us pivot to infrastructure. We've talked it all year, the president talked about it," Capito said. "I think it could be a bipartisan exercise. I would certainly hope so."

The clash illustrates the dilemma that congressional GOP leaders face early next year: How to sketch out an election-year agenda that unifies House and Senate Republicans and satisfies the conservative base without further risking their already-imperiled majorities.

With Democratic opposition to welfare and entitlement changes all but certain, Republicans would have to use powerful reconciliation procedures that can evade a Senate filibuster. But that would require nearly complete unity among Republicans on a joint House-Senate budget and on what controversial policy modifications to make.

Republicans in both chambers will discuss their 2018 legislative strategy at their annual GOP retreat at The Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, in late January. But Senate GOP leaders are already casting doubt on using reconciliation to target the programs.

"All you have to do is the math," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said. "Unless it's bipartisan, then you're talking about reconciliation which means you have to pass a budget, you have to get reconciliation instructions and you have to get 51 Republicans all to vote for it."

The No. 2 Senate Republican added: "That's a pretty steep hill to climb."

McConnell's narrow majority has already been burned trying to tackle entitlements. GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska helped tank the Obamacare repeal effort because it included massive cuts to Medicaid.

And on the cusp of the midterm campaign, other key GOP figures are in a much more bipartisan mood.

"We're going to have a narrow majority next year," said Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, about an entitlements fight. "We're going to have our hands full with nominations and an infrastructure bill and a bipartisan agenda."

Still, those sentiments are running headfirst into the hopes of House conservatives, not to mention those of the powerful speaker, whose years-long pitch to privatize Medicare has endeared him to the right.

Ryan's conference bellowed when Congress temporarily raised the debt ceiling in September without any corresponding spending cuts. And conservatives have been pressing Ryan ever since to call up legislation to reduce the biggest drivers of the national debt.

In order to win votes for a budget in late October that paved the way for the tax overhaul, Ryan promised leaders of the conservative Republican Study Committee to vote sometime next year on deficit reduction legislation. Republicans have since then discussed enacting work requirements for food stamps and other programs for the poor, as well as Medicare changes to curb spending.

"We have to address entitlements, otherwise we can't really get a handle on our future debt," Ryan said on CBS "This Morning" last week. He also specifically singled out programs for low-income people: "We, right now, are trapping people in poverty. And it's basically trapping people on welfare programs, which prevents them from hitting their potential and getting them in the workforce."

But even some of Ryan's rank-and-file are wary of tackling entitlements. Hillary Clinton carried about two dozen GOP-held swing districts in 2016. And with evidence of a Democratic wave already building, centrist Republicans fear cuts to programs that support the most vulnerable could cost them their seats.

Those same centrists balked last summer when House Budget Committee Chairwoman Diane Black (R-Tenn.) proposed axing \$200 billion from such programs in her fiscal blueprint. Centrists wrote to Ryan opposing those cuts, and the speaker is bound to run into the same resistance next year.

In an interview off the House floor, New Jersey Rep. Leonard Lance urged GOP leaders to be "cautious" when proceeding to entitlements. He would rather focus on a bipartisan issue like infrastructure that is well received by his constituents.

"There is a safety net that I support," said the moderate Republican, adding, "I think infrastructure would be a good thing to tackle in the New Year."

Longtime centrist leader Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.), who's retiring at the end of 2018, was more blunt. He said a House vote on entitlement reform would put vulnerable swing-state lawmakers in an even shakier position in the midterm elections. And all for nothing, since it will never pass the Senate, he added.

"The longer I'm here, the more I'm convinced that we don't do things to help members in swing-state districts. We do things to help people in the really red districts to keep the base pacified," he said. "That's not how you hold the majority."

When asked about entitlement reform, several other House GOP moderates responded that they'd prefer to tackle infrastructure, as did Collins in the Senate.

And yet Ryan might still press ahead. The votes are likely there in the House to pass cuts or changes to food stamps, disability insurance, and even Medicare and Social Security, two

programs President Donald Trump vowed to leave intact on the campaign trail. And Ryan could try to move entitlement reform through the House to exert pressure on the Senate to take up the issue.

Ryan could also draw on a powerful ally in the White House. While Trump has steered clear of suggesting Congress curb Medicare, he's spoken in recent weeks about reforming welfare programs.

And there are GOP senators who are fine — or even excited — about taking up an overhaul of entitlement or welfare programs. One is Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which oversees much of the federal safety net.

"I'd love it," added Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). "That's a heavy lift, particularly after the tax bill ... but we know we've got to rein in these programs in order to make them sustainable."

Republicans could also choose to use their reconciliation powers for other purposes.

Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) noted that Republicans may want to use reconciliation to make technical corrections to the GOP's sweeping tax overhaul that passed just last week; fixes are expected to be required for the tax plan, and reconciliation would avert the need to get buy-in from Democrats on a bill they uniformly opposed.

Another option would be yet another push to dismantle Obamacare. While McConnell has thrown cold water on the idea, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said he wants to take another crack at Obamacare and will not vote for a budget that doesn't include reconciliation instructions for health care.

Still, even Graham acknowledged that "getting the Senate to make any substantial changes to Medicare in a partisan fashion is gonna be a bridge too far."

Others, simply, aren't saying much about whether they want to take up a fight on entitlements.

"I have no idea," said Nevada Sen. Dean Heller, the most vulnerable GOP senator up for reelection next fall, as he breezed into the Senate chamber for the final vote of the year. "Merry Christmas."

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Black to hand off budget gavel, remain in Congress [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/27/2017 08:28 AM EDT

House Budget Chairman Diane Black announced Wednesday that she plans to hand over her gavel in early 2018 but will not give up her seat as she revs up her campaign for governor of Tennessee.

Black plans to step down "once a successor is chosen in the new year," according to her spokeswoman Sarah Corley. The Tennessee Republican will not vacate her seat, ending

months of speculation that she would resign shortly after the GOP's tax plan became law.

Steve Womack (R-Ark.) is the early front-runner for the seat, according to several GOP lawmakers. Rob Woodall (R-Ga.) is also eyeing the position.

Black — whose hard-fought budget blueprint jump-started the GOP's tax push this summer — also served on the conference committee that shaped the final version of the legislation.

"It has been an honor to serve as Chairman of the House Budget Committee," Black wrote in a statement. "I am very proud of the hard work of our members and all we accomplished, especially offering real reforms for mandatory programs and unlocking pro-growth tax reform."

The first woman to lead the budget panel, Black is also one of few women at the helm of a House committee this year.

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White House aides already anxious about 2018 [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson, Annie Karni and Andrew Restuccia | 01/01/2018 06:01 PM EDT

President Donald Trump returned to Washington from his sunny holiday break in Florida in an upbeat mood, relaxed and rested — but many of his top aides are dreading what's to come in 2018.

After ending their first year on a high, signing a sweeping tax reform bill into law, Trump's advisers are divided about how to capitalize on that victory and maintain momentum going forward with Hill Republicans again at odds over their legislative agenda.

They're facing a brain drain on a White House that already had trouble recruiting top talent. Many senior West Wing aides are expected to depart in the coming year, with no replacements lined up. White House chief of staff John Kelly — who has already fired several presidential aides — wants to push out more but has struggled to find suitable alternatives.

And they're still working under the shadow of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, despite repeated assurances from the White House legal team that the inquiry is wrapping up.

The grim reality of 2018 has generated a sense of foreboding among White House aides, according to more than a dozen current and former officials and outside advisers. West Wing aides, who worked furiously to push through legislation and executive actions during Trump's first year in office, expect limited prospects for getting things done in Washington this year heading into a contentious midterm election.

"They absolutely should worry about 2018," said Ari Fleischer, a former press secretary to President George W. Bush. "I do fear a wave election. Democrats are highly motivated to vote against Trump and all Republicans. Trump has got to grow beyond the base, and he has got to

make himself less hated among a group in the middle."

While Republicans were unified in their desire to reform the tax code, they are now split over which legislative initiative to tackle next — a dispute the Trump White House, which has sometimes delegated the nuts and bolts of legislating to congressional leaders, has done little to settle.

And with a diminished margin in the Senate — after Roy Moore's loss in Alabama, Republicans now hold just a 51-seat majority — White House aides and Republicans in Congress say they have little hope that much if any meaningful legislation will reach the president's desk before the midterms.

Behind the scenes, White House aides and Trump's outside advisers are engaged in a fierce debate over the shape of this year's agenda. At issue: whether to appeal to traditional conservative voters by tackling welfare reform or instead push forward on the president's long-promised infrastructure plan, which could attract Democratic support and win over a broader slice of the electorate.

Several Trump advisers have urged the president to strike a more bipartisan tone this year, encouraging him to facilitate a deal with Democrats on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program for young undocumented immigrants and then quickly move to an infrastructure package — a sequence that would significantly delay welfare legislation.

The advisers have told the president that passing infrastructure legislation could help Republicans hold the House, pointing to polling that shows the issue is popular with the public.

Trump met before Christmas in the Oval Office with his former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski; his former director of digital media, Brad Parscale; presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway and others about the merits of each option, according to people familiar with the discussion.

The president has privately told top aides at various points that he is eager to pursue both infrastructure and welfare reform. But Trump's top policy adviser on the subject, Paul Winfree, recently left the White House to return to the Heritage Foundation, and the president has more recently signaled that he believes infrastructure has the best chance of winning bipartisan support and buoying Republicans in the fall.

Some of the president's outside advisers say that's the right approach. "Infrastructure first," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a longtime Trump ally. "I wouldn't touch entitlements. There's zero reason to pick a fight on any of those in an election year."

But House Speaker Paul Ryan has repeatedly said he is determined to reform welfare. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, however, has publicly dismissed the idea, [telling National Public Radio](#) that he is "not interested" in taking on the issue on a party-line basis — and Democrats are in no mood to cooperate ahead of the midterms.

Trump, McConnell and Ryan are expected to settle their differences in a meeting at Camp David the first week in January, though one administration official said he nonetheless expects "lot of infighting."

The president stormed into office with a series of executive orders, but questions also linger about what the president will be able to accomplish at the executive level in the coming year. Aides expect a renewed push on trade, including the possibility that Trump will slap China and other economic competitors with tariffs in the coming weeks.

The issue was largely put on the back burner in recent months so it wouldn't distract from tax reform, according to one White House aide, but the administration is weighing trade measures on everything from steel to solar imports, stoking deep concern among Trump's free-market advisers that the president could spark a trade war.

Administration officials have been working quietly for months to curb the influence of Trump's protectionist advisers. Though the White House's leading China critic, trade adviser Peter Navarro, has been sidelined, the president's free-market aides fear their efforts have had little effect on Trump's thinking.

Compounding this challenging legislative terrain is the departure of senior aides, including deputy national security adviser Dina Powell; Jeremy Katz, deputy director of the National Economic Council; and Winfree, who was deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Few expect Gary Cohn — the director of the National Economic Council, which has emerged as the White House's central policymaking hub — to stay in the administration until the end of 2018. Cohn, the former Goldman Sachs president who was integral in the passage of tax reform, is likely to depart either at the end of January or in August, at the close of the legislative session, according to a senior White House aide. Cohn has assembled a team of policy aides on the NEC — including Katz, who departs in late January — and many of his staffers are expected to follow him if he leaves.

People familiar with plans for staff changes said Johnny DeStefano, already head of the White House personnel office and interim head of the Office of Public Liaison, will also oversee the White House's political affairs and intergovernmental affairs offices — a combined portfolio bigger than any ever held by previous West Wing staff, including Valerie Jarrett under President Barack Obama or Karl Rove under President George W. Bush, one former White House official noted.

The decision to elevate DeStefano — who struggled running the personnel office last year and was slow to fill positions — rather than bringing in outsiders is another sign that the White House is having trouble recruiting new staff. Two people familiar with the hiring process said Trump's White House has had difficulty attracting outside talent as a result of the Russia probe, the complicated government vetting process and the cap on federal employees' salaries.

"My advice to them is find younger people," Gingrich said of a president who favors generals, billionaires and CEOs that he views as peers. "There are lots of ambitious people who can do the jobs. He can lean on Kelly, while Kelly hires young people."

Amid the churn, there is expected to be at least one constant for Trump: the presence, in the West Wing, of family members Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, whom insiders say now plan to stay in Washington at least through the 2018 school year.

After a rocky first year — when even the president questioned whether having family members serving in senior White House posts was a good idea after all — the marginalized power couple plan to start off 2018 with lower profiles and smaller, more defined portfolios

than those they pursued in Trump's first year in office, according to a White House official.

Ivanka Trump will continue to serve as a surrogate selling tax reform, promoting STEM and female entrepreneurs. Behind the scenes, she is expected to continue what the official called "quiet talks" around paid family leave. Kushner, meanwhile, will be working on Middle East peace, while also working on criminal justice reform, North American Free Trade Agreement negotiations and a potential infrastructure bill.

Kushner, for his part, is still widely viewed as the White House official with the most exposure in Mueller's probe, having reportedly instructed former national security adviser Michael Flynn during the presidential transition to reach out to United Nations Security Council member countries, including Russia, to encourage them to oppose a resolution on Israeli settlements.

While the White House's lawyers, led by Beltway powerhouse Ty Cobb, have been assuring Trump that Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the election is likely to conclude in the coming weeks, most of the president's senior aides not only dismiss that as fantasy, but also expect the special counsel's investigation to ramp up in the coming year.

For Trump's closest aides, that means weeks, and potentially months, of the president's dark moods — which his lawyers have sought to alleviate in part by assuring him the investigation was nearing its conclusion, first by Thanksgiving and then by year's end. It's a strategy that one White House aide predicted the president is likely to pick up on.

"I'm among those who can't conceive of it ending in a matter of a few weeks," said a prominent Washington attorney advising one member of the administration. "I can't imagine they actually believed it when they said it, though it's hard to imagine lawyers deliberately misleading their client like that."

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'We have a big problem': Puerto Rico seeks aid for tens of thousands of squatters [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 12/31/2017 07:50 AM EDT

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — When Hurricane Maria ripped across Puerto Rico, it revealed the damage wrought by years of government neglect. It also exposed an open secret generations in the making: Tens of thousands of island residents are, in fact, squatters, living illegally on abandoned or government land.

For years, squatters were ignored or used as political pawns as the bankrupt central government swung from crisis to crisis. That changed with Maria, which tore through these low-lying barrios with particular ferocity. Now, with no legal claim to their homes or the land they're built on, squatters find themselves unmoored from federal aid — and high on the government's list of priorities.

Gov. Ricardo Rosselló, who took office in January, wants to fix his squatter problem by embracing it. He's proposed giving 48,000 illegal settlers legal title to their land, a plan that

could cost up to \$30 million. He needs federal disaster aid to make the project work.

"Before the emergency, it was something we needed to do; now it's a more ambitious project," said Puerto Rico Housing Secretary Fernando Gil. "It would be helping out 48,000 people who thought that they couldn't get any help."

Rosselló, a Democrat, has had limited success squeezing disaster aid out of the Republican administration and Congress in the aftermath of the storm. But the issue of land ownership could be a test case for Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, who has promised to break through entrenched government policies to put people on the path to self-sufficiency.

In meetings this month with Carson and HUD Deputy Secretary Pam Patenaude, the Rosselló administration asked for flexibility to spend disaster aid on land surveys and other work needed to transfer property ownership to squatters. HUD didn't respond to questions for this story, but on a visit to San Juan this month, Carson acknowledged Puerto Rico's challenges.

"We do recognize that the situation is different here than it is in Texas or Florida or many places," Carson said. "We want to look at the goals, not the rules."

Housing has been a chronic problem since long before Maria. More than half of Puerto Rico's houses are "informal," a euphemism for illegally constructed. As many as one in five are built on private or government land. Many have been passed down for generations, giving rise to vibrant communities spread across the island's coastal plains.

Socially, these neighborhoods are firmly anchored to the island's bedrock, home to extended families and back-door businesses. Legally and economically, they exist on the fringe. Some residents survive on rainwater and stolen electricity. They pay no property taxes and can't buy insurance. Many lack mailboxes and formal addresses.

Squatters began planting roots after Operation Bootstrap, a 1947 campaign to modernize the island's economy. Urban growth exploded but couldn't keep pace with the rural exodus from failing farms and sugar plantations.

The economic upheaval left thousands without housing. Open land, however, was abundant. Seeking affordable shelter, people built homes on abandoned plantations or empty swamps. The settlers call themselves *rescatadores* — rescuers of the land — and claim a moral, not legal, right to their homes. Seen through a different lens, they're *invasores* — invaders.

HUD officials have seen the situation firsthand. In mid-December, Patenaude visited Carmen Chévere Ortiz in the Villa Calma neighborhood of Toa Baja, west of San Juan. Ortiz, 41, organized an evacuation when floodwaters started rising in her village. Now she is running a food pantry from her house, logging her neighbors' whereabouts and tracking who has food, water and shelter.

Ortiz's parents moved to the neighborhood in 1971 but never obtained legal title to the home she now shares with her mother and six children. Patenaude told her there was nothing HUD could do to help her.

Hurricane Georges forced residents to flee Villa Calma in 1998, but even after that there was little incentive to relocate. City leaders ran electricity into the community and built a school, in

effect granting people permission to stay. About a decade ago, one mayor went further, offering property deeds to political allies.

Ortiz calls herself a *rescatador* and makes no apologies. "It's no time to point fingers, not even at ourselves for staying," she said. "This is an unprecedented event."

Toa Baja Mayor Bernardo Márquez García, who took office in January, is left to sort out the mess caused by decades of government ineptitude compounded by a catastrophic natural disaster. Of the city's 26,000 homes, he estimates that nearly 9,000 are illegal.

"We have a big problem," Márquez said. "Before Hurricane Maria hit, we didn't know we had so much informal construction."

He wants \$150 million to channel the canal. Without federal dollars, it's a pipe dream — Toa Baja's debt is 15 times its \$30 million annual budget. Damage from Maria is an estimated \$300 million.

But after two disastrous hurricanes, should the Villa Calma squatters be moved? That's a question for the Toa Baja community as a whole, not him, Márquez said.

"Most of the areas that were flooded were squatters, but they've been there for 40 or 60 years, for generations," Márquez said. "They were given facilities, utilities. They've built a community, they have a social fabric.

"We can't move in one, two or three years what has been there for decades," he said, but Maria has been a wake-up call. "We're seeing what it means for people to live in flood-prone areas."

In fact, Toa Baja made headlines the last time it tried to uproot a squatter barrio. In 1998, the Federal Emergency Management Agency declared the neighborhood of Villas del Sol a flood zone and encouraged the central government to relocate the community. Puerto Rico spent \$18 million, nearly all of it federal funds, to move 223 families.

A handful of people stayed behind. Soon, others joined them, cleaning up trash and fixing up properties. In 2004, the mayor, seeking reelection, allowed settlers to connect to municipal water and electricity. But in 2009, bulldozers and police in riot gear stormed the neighborhood to force people out, according to a 2010 [complaint](#) filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

In 2011, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division cited the Villas del Sol incident in a [report](#) condemning the Puerto Rico Police Department for use of excessive force.

Four years later, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General [found](#) that about half of the \$180 million spent to provide housing outside of flood zones, including Villas del Sol, had been misspent. It blamed the errors on the island's political bureaucracy.

Puerto Rico's political structure is indeed part of the problem. Power to enforce building codes, for example, lies with the central government. The Puerto Rico Permits Management Office has only 40 inspectors to oversee the island's 78 municipalities, according to FEMA.

Doling out titles is a "scattershot" tactic that does nothing to fix the island's deep-rooted problems, said Deepak Lamba-Nieves, a research director at the Center for a New Economy.

"It's not just about giving out titles — the underlying structural problems need to be addressed. If Maria has brought us anything, it's the ability to start rethinking," he said. "This is the moment to rethink things from the ground up and not just patch things up."

Just east of San Juan, near the city of Canóvanas, lies San Isidro. Set in a basin surrounded by hills, the community hugs a canal that once fed a farming operation. Many of the houses are spare wooden shacks, but others are snug and brightly painted, built of concrete and tile, with carports and fenced yards. San Isidro is a squatter community, but in no way is it a temporary one.

When Maria swept through, the canal became a raging river, pushing water 5 feet deep through the streets. Wind sheared wooden additions from the rooftops. Three months after the storm, there is no power or water.

Angel Luis Cruz and his wife live on the western edge of San Isidro in a house they bought legally for \$18,000 in 1989. Back then, cows grazed steps from their front porch.

Squatters started arriving after Georges, filling the field with houses and stringing makeshift power lines to the nearest electrical poles.

"I bought the house because the view was so pretty. Never would I have imagined this would happen," said Cruz, 72. "They started squatting. They don't pay for water or electricity."

Rosita Colon Benier lives across the street from Cruz in a house she and her husband bought for \$20,000, money they received from FEMA when Georges forced them from their old home. When the water rose, Colon's neighbors threw a rope and dragged her family to safety across the street. She watched the flood sweep away her chickens and the makeshift beauty salon she ran from behind the house.

Colon said she owns the property, but, when pressed, acknowledges that she doesn't have legal title. FEMA gave her \$1,000 to cover two months' rent for her husband and their six children but sent her away when she asked for money for repairs.

The whole community — legal and illegal alike — is without power in part because workers are reluctant to mess with the rigged wires that connect Colon and her neighbors to the grid. When asked why she's stealing electricity, Colon blames the government.

"It's not my fault," she said. "It's the mayor who has done nothing."

Puerto Rico's municipal leaders, at best, have taken an ad hoc approach to the *rescatadores*. The question now is what to do with them.

"It's something that is the fault not only of the person doing the construction and the person who needs a place to live, but also the mayors and senators and even ex-governors, that they allowed it to happen," Gil said. "There are years and generations of people in these communities."

Meanwhile, squatters are falling through the cracks of post-disaster housing aid. Because they're neither renters nor owners, they're cut off from [programs](#) that finance rebuilding or major repairs.

That reality is dawning on the residents of El Negro near the city of Yabucoa, where Maria

tore concrete homes down to the rebar and ripped appliances from their plumbing.

Nabal Guzman Solis, 75, was one of the first in line at FEMA after Maria hit. Mildew is growing on the ceiling of the concrete house he inherited from his father. Water comes through when it rains. The propane tank he used for cooking was stolen, and he's heating food on a wood fire in his backyard. What has he heard from FEMA? "Nada."

Still, "I'm happy," Guzman said. "I'm alive."

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Regulatory and legal obstacles cloud visions of Puerto Rico's grid rebuild [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/28/2017 09:11 AM EDT

Puerto Rico's hurricane-devastated power system opens an opportunity to upgrade its dilapidated electric grid with cutting-edge technology, but would-be visionaries face obstacles ranging from a decades-old federal law to the island's massive debt and stubborn utility.

The U.S. territory's government and federal agencies are still working to end the blackout that has kept much of the island in the dark since Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck in September. But Puerto Rico's energy regulator is developing a long-term plan to transform its grid, add renewables, and develop microgrids that would provide their own generation in the event of another disaster.

While the technology exists to create an advanced grid, regulation and legal hurdles must be overcome first. Making matters more complicated, PREPA has a long reputation among solar installers and analysts for hindering the island's shift to renewables in an effort to protect its centralized generation business model.

"As creative as we want to be on the technology side of things, we will need to be equally creative on the regulatory and financial side of things as well," said Katherine Gensler, director of government affairs for the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which hit Sept. 7 and 20, struck the island with such fury as to wipe out much of the distribution grid, knock out generation, and take out the critical transmission lines that link the power plants on the south side of the island with the population centers on the north. Many of the power plants survived the storms, but the storms exposed aging and decrepit power infrastructure that has proven difficult to repair without replacing. And while [65 percent of generation capacity](#) has been restored, the Army Corps of Engineers estimates that outlying customers won't have power back until May.

Congress has approved \$52 billion in disaster relief funding this year, for states and territories affected by the hurricanes as well events such as the wildfires out West; another \$81 billion bill passed the House last week and is [awaiting action](#) in the Senate when lawmakers return from break.

FEMA, which oversees disaster relief efforts, says its immediate focus is to restore power to

the island. Over the long term, the agency will work with the Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Energy and others "on options for permanent work, to include resilience as FEMA programs allow." In statement, FEMA pointed to DOE's work to improve the grid, "including relocating substations to less flood-prone areas, using simulations to identify better locations for wind and solar generation, integrating distributed energy resources, and hardening towers and other energy infrastructure on the island."

However, proponents of renewable energy, batteries and related technologies say some of those efforts may be hampered by bureaucratic red tape. The Stafford Act, which governs disaster spending, directs states and territories to rebuild damaged infrastructure based on how it operated before a disaster struck. That makes it difficult to use FEMA dollars to replace Puerto Rico's badly outdated electric grid with the latest technology.

It's a problem that members of Congress from both parties say they want to fix.

"It makes little sense to require, as under current law, that buildings and infrastructure be rebuilt in the ways that made them so vulnerable to Hurricanes Irma and Maria," House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) (R-Calif.) and Minority Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) (D-Md.) wrote in a November [op-ed](#) in The Washington Post. "Instead, we ought to work across the aisle to give these communities the chance to come back stronger. Making those investments now will save taxpayer dollars in the long run. Both of us are committed to advancing this issue and working to bring our colleagues on board in this effort."

The Puerto Rico Energy Commission saw an opportunity to rebuild a system better able to withstand future storms and avoid the high fuel costs that make the Energy Information Administration [says](#) costs 55 percent more than the US average. The island has some coal, gas and wind power, but most of its generation is supplied by oil-fired generating plants.

"The main issue in Puerto Rico is too little generation and too many lines to get around," said Alejandro Uriarte, CEO of Puerto Rico solar installer New Energy, which has 2,500 solar customers on the island. "You need to have smaller ecosystems, make sure that generation comes closer to the areas that are more densely populated."

The commission heard dozens of proposals. PREPA and the Puerto Rico Energy Commission joined with the New York Power Authority, ConEd, Edison International, Long Island Power Authority, the Department of Energy, the Electric Power Research Institute, two national labs, and collaborated to write a [report](#) proposing a \$17 billion capital expenditure to build far stronger power poles, hardened substations, smart-grid technology and the use of microgrids to support critical infrastructure.

[Another](#), from power company AES, proposes a mesh of seven regional microgrids, each of which could supply its own power and come back quickly in the event of another hurricane. It doesn't provide a cost estimate, but it says the operating costs of solar-plus-battery installations would be a third lower than the current oil plants, and that solar generation alone could be two-thirds cheaper than current generation. In addition, the microgrids would be designed to separate themselves from the main grid when one area goes down, providing resiliency in a major storm.

Chris Shelton, chief technology officer for AES, emphasized that all of this technology is well tested, if not on this scale.

"What we're talking about is not new," he said. "It's not R&D, it's been running for years."

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has offered his company's solar and battery technology as a solution to the island's energy woes, and Puerto Rico's governor announced that [six systems](#) had been installed as of earlier this month.

But the island needs to revamp its utility, or give it stricter oversight before any of these can come to pass. PREPA has a longstanding reputation of dragging its heels in setting up interconnections for solar, solar installers like Uriarte say. Texas-based solar company Sunnova Solar Energy is the largest solar installer on the island, says that it has struggled with PREPA's "unique recalcitrance" for years, and now, as it tries to bring solar to the islands many residents.

"The inaction and lack of cooperation on PREPA's part has made it difficult," Sunnova CEO John Berger said in a statement. "The utility has continued to obstruct our ability to connect customers' solar systems to the grid."

PREPA did not respond to a request for comment.

Puerto Rico's demolished grid has relieved some installers from the need to interconnect as battery systems become more popular. Uriarte says he's been able to work faster because he's mostly been building battery-solar hybrids that are independent from the grid. He's gone from selling 10 battery systems a year to 350 since the hurricane. All the systems are built to last decades and could easily become part of a future microgrid set up.

"The main challenge getting it done is to have the proper regulation implemented in Puerto Rico that would allow the installations to interact with the grid effectively," Uriarte told POLITICO. Microgrids need to connect their generation and storage resources over utility-owned distribution lines in order to function.

Microgrids were illegal in Puerto Rico until last year, and installers like Uriarte are waiting for PREPA and the commission to develop the necessary framework and standards to allow interconnection. Uriarte hopes the commission can finish the regulatory work by next spring.

PREPA is also loathe to give up control of any of its distribution, transmission, or generation control, because all of those assets can be used to put up bonds. But the utility, which is owned by the commonwealth government, may no longer have a choice. Congress created a federal oversight board through the PROMESA Act in 2016, and in October that board [installed a former Air Force officer](#) to oversee PREPA and the power grid's recovery.

The commonwealth's \$70 billion of debt, including the \$9 billion held by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, will make it hard to find creditors willing to lend money to rebuild.

Thanks to the storms and the creation of the oversight board, Commonwealth government has been able to be more aggressive in dealing with its creditors. FEMA has waived key cost-sharing requirements, and in September the government [rejected](#) an offer from PREPA creditors of a bridge loan and a reduction in debt.

Some critics would like to see the utility privatized and possibly bought out.

"You could wash out all of PREPA's debt and let the new private company get a clean start," said Shayle Kann, a senior adviser to GreenTech Media. "And in privatizing have it get bought

by a larger company with a balance sheet that is creditworthy."

Sunnova's Berger would like to see the federal government allow use of the Investment Tax Credit as a grant program for Puerto Rico projects, similar to a program used as part of the 2009 stimulus law. As SEIA's Gensler points out, PREPA's long history of management problems and deep debts make it unattractive to lenders, which could make the grant system the best way to generate upfront capital costs.

However it gets rebuilt, the island's disaster may offer a major learning opportunity for other islands.

"This is a travesty, the worst disaster in a long time," Kann said. "But the silver lining is some innovative thinking. This problem that Puerto Rico is facing is a combination of a hurricane and something that is common to all island grids, so a lot of that stuff could apply to all other islands. I find that really exciting, despite the fact that it's coming out of a real crisis."

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Farm bill in 2018 begins with early test on cotton, dairy spending [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich and Catherine Boudreau | 01/02/2018 05:02 AM EDT

When agriculture lawmakers return to Capitol Hill this month to begin work in a farm bill reauthorization year, they will face an early test of their ability to strike deals for farmers and ranchers before formal negotiations on the legislation kick off.

Shortly before the House skipped town for the holidays, lawmakers passed a sweeping \$81 billion disaster aid package that included provisions to bolster farm bill programs for cotton and dairy farmers, in addition to providing assistance to communities from California to Puerto Rico that are attempting to rebound from hurricane, flood and wildfire damage.

But the emergency spending package's momentum was [halted in the Senate](#), where lawmakers on both sides of the aisle voiced displeasure. The upper chamber is not expected to move on disaster funding until later this month, leaving the fate of the farm bill fixes up in the air.

Like the larger disaster aid measure, the farm bill provisions also drew bipartisan fire, providing a stark reminder of the deep political fault lines that have made the farm bill a heavier lift with each cycle. The episode also underscores the potential for unforeseen political developments to stymie progress as House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders prepare to unveil their respective versions of the legislation this year.

If lawmakers are to pass the first on-time farm bill since 1990, they will have to solve myriad problems of policy and politics — and the cotton and dairy fixes in the disaster aid bill are first in line when Congress returns.

The provisions would make cotton growers eligible for the Price Loss Coverage program, something they've long lobbied for, and also give dairy farmers more insurance options by lifting the \$20 million annual cap on policies for livestock. The cotton move is budget neutral,

a congressional aide told POLITICO, but it was not clear how much the dairy fixes would cost taxpayers.

The attempt to slip farm bill policy into an unrelated disaster aid bill came under fire almost immediately from the right and the left, even though the legislation picked up support from 69 House Democrats — many from Texas, Florida and California — en route to easy passage by a vote of 251 to 169.

Using the must-pass disaster package to change cotton and dairy policy was seen as a shrewd political move aimed at giving struggling producers relief much faster than through a reauthorized farm bill, as well as an attempt to make the often-unruly process go more smoothly once lawmakers get down to brass tacks later this year.

"This is about making the farm bill easier," said Rob Larew, senior vice president of public policy and communications for the National Farmers Union. "It's all about the money. We have limited resources in the next farm bill. Anything that can be done in advance to build the baseline for dairy and cotton farmers, who are struggling, will be helpful in getting the farm bill completed [this] year."

Larew added that it's encouraging that lawmakers like House Agriculture Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) (R-Texas) and Senate Agriculture ranking member [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) are trying to clear farm bill hurdles now, before the drafts are released.

Stabenow said the provisions to help dairy farmers in the House bill didn't go far enough, and advocated for broader changes to the Margin Protection Program that would send greater indemnities to producers and reduce premium costs. MPP makes payments when the difference between the price of milk and the cost of feed drops below certain thresholds.

Taxpayers for Common Sense called the cotton provision "a huge giveaway," accusing lawmakers of "exploiting the hurricane recovery process to harvest cash for cotton-growing businesses" in a way that "will fleece taxpayers for years."

Heritage Action, the lobbying arm of The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, urged lawmakers to vote against the disaster aid package, calling the cotton provision "an unacceptable expansion of already excessive handouts to the cotton industry." The move fails the test of what should be considered emergency funding, because helping cotton growers isn't urgent, Heritage argued.

Last year brought an especially punishing spate of hurricanes and wildfires — Congress will have spent a record total of \$133 billion on 2017 natural disasters if the aid package is ultimately approved — but it also showed that early spending compromises on farm bill policy are possible.

In July, amid negotiations over fiscal 2018 spending, Senate Appropriations Chairman [Thad Cochran](#) (R-Miss.) and ranking member [Patrick Leahy](#) (D-Vt.) [struck a deal](#) on cotton and dairy provisions. Stabenow also gave her blessing. But Congress still has not enacted spending bills for fiscal 2018 — the latest [continuing resolution](#) will run through Jan. 19 — a reality that created the impetus for an attempt to use what would have been the third emergency spending measure of 2017 to assist cotton and dairy farmers.

The controversial SNAP add-on

The House-passed disaster aid bill also contained a little-known provision that sparked outrage on the left and complicates efforts to change farm bill programs.

Near the end of the text, there is language to create a "National Accuracy Clearinghouse," which would help states ensure that beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — a central driver of farm bill spending — are not collecting benefits in multiple states.

Prior to the holiday break, no one on Capitol Hill seemed able to furnish an official estimate of how much the clearinghouse would save, but multiple sources told POLITICO the savings are projected to top \$550 million.

Lawmakers were told that USDA was planning to launch the clearinghouse in 2018, so using the policy as an offset seemed like a freebie to some, but Democrats and anti-hunger advocates didn't see it that way.

"Pitting one part of the farm bill against another is the wrong way to get things done," Stabenow said in a statement released shortly after the disaster aid package was unveiled.

Ellen Vollinger, a farm bill veteran and director of government relations for the Food Research & Action Center, said she views the dustup as an early test of the broader farm bill coalition — the longtime alliance between SNAP supporters and backers of the farm safety net. The fact that the National Farmers Union and farm policy leaders from other quarters called out the proposed SNAP offset was encouraging, she said, and showed "the degree to which the farm bill stakeholders are united."

Whether the coalition can stick together this year amid political pressure to make significant changes to the SNAP program and draw down spending is a key dynamic to watch this farm bill cycle, particularly with the prospect of the Trump administration and congressional Republicans taking up welfare reform. (Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said in December that he doesn't expect welfare reform to be on the agenda in 2018, however.)

The House Agriculture Committee, which has already written the better part of its farm bill and plans to release it early this year, has kept a tight lid on its draft. Conaway has repeatedly hinted there will be a focus in the bill on using work requirements to thin the ranks of SNAP recipients.

"We hope to make some appropriate changes to work requirements," Conaway told POLITICO in a recent [interview](#). "We've worked hard the past three years to not talk about money. We want to look at policy."

"How do we make sure folks don't get trapped in the system and make sure it's more meaningful to work than live off the government dole?" he added.

Anti-hunger advocates give a lot of credit to the committee for being thorough and not ideological in its review of the SNAP program over the past three years — it has held more than a dozen hearings on the subject — but they remain anxious as they wait to see how Conaway will approach work requirements.

"It's one thing to have these concepts and words, but it's sometimes more complicated than lawmakers think," Vollinger said.

Influential Democrats, including Rep. [Jim McGovern](#) (D-Mass.), have been clear that they will oppose any proposed cuts or structural changes to SNAP. More than 82 Democrats are co-sponsoring a bill, [H.R. 1276 \(115\)](#), from Rep. [Alma Adams](#) (D-N.C.), that would not only increase SNAP benefits, but also protect some jobless adult recipients from being cut off from the program by requiring states to first offer employment and training opportunities.

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What the pension fight that could disrupt budget talks is all about [Back](#)

By Andrew Hanna | 12/28/2017 09:01 AM EDT

The next budget fight could be over multiemployer pensions.

Sen. [Sherrod Brown](#) (D-Ohio) and Rep. [Richard Neal](#) (D-Mass.) have introduced a bill, [S. 2147 \(115\)](#), to prop up faltering union-negotiated pensions funded by multiple employers, including the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund and the United Mine Workers' Health and Retirement Funds. Democratic congressional leaders [made](#) a multiemployer pension fix a top priority in budget negotiations that were postponed to January, alongside other items such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

What congressional Democrats are less quick to point out is that in 2014, amid [lamentations of looming insolvency](#) no less urgent than those heard now, they negotiated an [ambitious bipartisan solution](#) for insolvent multiemployer pension funds that required benefits to be suspended or trimmed. The bill was signed into law by President Barack Obama — whose Treasury Department subsequently declined, in 2016, to approve cuts to Central States, prompting accusations that it knuckled under election-year pressure.

This time, the Democrats' rallying cry is — as House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) told Teamsters and miners on Capitol Hill in mid-December — "No cuts. No cuts!"

Multiemployer pensions are union-negotiated plans maintained by multiple companies, often within a single industry, to share risk. At one time these pensions were thought unusually secure because their solvency didn't depend on the fortunes of any one company. But the 2008 recession, Rust Belt decline and poor returns on investment put some multiemployer plans in financial peril. Today, some 3.5 million Americans pay into "red-zone" multiemployer pension plans that are expected to run out of money in the next 20 years.

The largest of the threatened plans is Central States, whose 400,000 members account for nearly 50 percent of all multiemployer unfunded liabilities. Central States is expected to become insolvent within the next nine years, according to the Treasury Department.

"Many of these retirees will be forced onto food stamps," said Teamsters International Vice President John Murphy. "They may not be able to afford their prescription drug plans. The ramifications are just absolutely tremendous."

In theory, Central States and the UMW's pension fund are insured by the Pension Benefit

Guaranty Corporation. But the PBGC is itself underfunded, and it's expected to become insolvent by 2025, according to the insurer's own [estimate](#). If Central States were to fail, the PBGC would not have sufficient funds to rescue it. And the longer Congress takes to find a multiemployer solution, the more expensive any rescue will become.

The [Teamsters-backed](#) Brown-Neal bill would create a new federal agency within the Treasury Department called the Pensions Rehabilitation Administration that could authorize 30-year loans to troubled pension plans, backed by Treasury bonds. Those loans would be repaid on an interest-only basis for 29 years, with a final payment, including interest and full principal, in the 30th year. The bill would restrict use of the money that Treasury lent to annuities or low-risk investments whose returns would, at least in theory, cover the pensions' unfunded liabilities.

The Democrats cite in support of their proposal an analysis by Cheiron, an actuarial consulting firm that advises many of the country's largest public and multiemployer pensions. Cheiron CEO Gene Kalwarski told POLITICO that the bill's restrictions on what the loans may be used for is key. They "cannot just be put back into the plan and put into risky assets," he said.

Kalwarski conceded, however, that the proposal's likelihood of repaying the 30-year debt was "not 100 percent." Meanwhile, Central States' own actuary, Segan Consulting, maintains that the federal loan program "would not be sufficient" to allow Central States repay its debt, according to a [letter](#) that Central States Executive Director Thomas Nyhan wrote Brown and Neal.

"Financial assistance from PBGC would be required to make the program work for the fund," Nyhan concluded.

Congress thought it had the multiemployer problem licked three year ago when then-House Education and the Workforce Chairman Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.) and then-Ranking Member George Miller (D-Calif.) pushed through the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act. The deal was attached to that year's so-called cromnibus spending bill (so named because it combined a continuing resolution with an omnibus spending bill).

The Kline-Miller bill allowed pension trustees to petition the Treasury Department to suspend benefits if they could demonstrate that the cuts would restore the pensions to solvency. Any Treasury-approved cuts would then require approval from members. Obama administration officials persuaded then-Majority Leader Harry Reid to allow Treasury to overrule that vote if the pension's collapse would bankrupt the PBGC.

The law was designed with Central States very much in mind, and there were signs initially that the Teamsters would extend it tacit, if reluctant, approval. But Teamsters President James P. Hoffa, facing a tough reelection challenge from insurgent Fred Zuckerman, condemned the final bill's mechanism for benefit cuts, and in 2016 Treasury found a way to reject Central States' application. At the time, Miller [told POLITICO](#) that it "was a calculated response to sort of stop the discussion in this political year. ... I just don't understand how you can arrive at another conclusion."

"They very much had in their minds it was an election year," said Joshua Gotbaum, director of the PBGC from 2010 to 2014, now at the Brookings Institute. "Treasury chickened out." Both Miller and Kline have since retired from Congress.

Brown and Neal can claim consistency on multiemployer pensions because they opposed passage of the 2014 pension-reform law. Their bill would require [plans approved for cuts](#) by Treasury under the 2014 framework to reapply under the new loan program and to reinstate suspended benefits, effectively sabotaging the Kline-Miller deal. Plans that failed after 2014 would still be eligible for loans if they have not yet terminated.

"These retirees held up their end of the bargain by working hard for their companies for decades," Brown said in a written statement. "They didn't create this problem, and forcing them to shoulder drastic cuts is not only immoral, it's bad for our economy."

Alicia Munnell, director of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, sees the Brown-Neal bill as a good starting point for discussion on how to fix multiemployer pensions. "This will solve about 80 percent of the problem," she said. "It's important that we get an 80 percent proposal on the table, because I think that will bring all the other participants to a conversation."

UPS and the National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Pensions, whose own pension proposals include cut benefits, have thanked Brown and Neal for their "leadership" on the issue. "UPS hopes that other lawmakers will follow your lead and work in earnest to address this important issue before the end of the year," UPS President of Global Public Affairs Laura Lane [wrote](#) to the lawmakers, although she stopped short of endorsing the bill.

Matt House, spokesman for Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), confirmed that Democratic leaders are "still pushing to get it included in the omnibus," but noted that a deal to lift domestic spending caps must come first. Democrats will have to wait until the new year for formal negotiations to begin, and may not be able to extract more than a pledge to deal with the pensions issue separately from the budget talks.

But a bipartisan working group on pensions has been meeting behind the scenes for months. Republicans and Democrats in the group — Reps. [David McKinley](#) (R-W.Va.), [Don Young](#) (R-Alaska), [Debbie Dingell](#) (D-Mich.), [Marcy Kaptur](#) (D-Ohio) and [Rick Nolan](#) (D-Minn.) — signed a [letter](#) to Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) urging him to support their efforts "in the coming months."

McKinley's office says it's "taking a look" at the Brown-Neal proposal but has not yet come out in favor of it. "The pensions caucus is hoping to take action in coming months," said McKinley spokesperson Alec Thomas. "Hopefully, in the first legislative quarter."

Republicans have yet to release a formal counter to Brown's proposal, but they will almost certainly oppose anything they regard as a pension bailout. The price tag needed to make the plans solvent, tens of billions of dollars, is enough to make fiscal conservatives balk.

"The problem," said Rachel Greszler from The Heritage Foundation, "is the Mineworkers and Teamsters alone — that's almost as expensive as just bailing out the PBGC itself."

But some Republicans, particularly in states that have many multiemployer pension dependents, are at least listening to what Brown has to say. The Teamsters' Murphy said he has heard encouraging signs from Republicans in states like Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio. Brown's fellow Ohio senator, Republican [Rob Portman](#), is a prime pickup target for Democrats. "We are touch with Sen. Brown and all of the stakeholders in this debate, and will continue those discussions as work on this issue moves forward," said a spokesperson for

Portman.

Murphy said he's optimistic the bill will pass, pointing to it as the most "realistic" option.

"Three years ago, if you had asked me that question I would have said the opposite," Murphy said. "Most members of Congress ... know there is a severe human problem coming."

And so far, there are no other legislative proposals on the table. The other major proposals — advanced by the NCCMP and UPS — have yet to be introduced in legislative form. Both feature benefit cuts.

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Does the White Working Class Really Vote Against Its Own Interests? [Back](#)

By Joshua Zeitz | 12/31/2017 08:06 AM EDT

As his first year in the White House draws to a close, Donald J. Trump remains in almost every respect a singular character. He exists well outside the boundaries of what most observers previously judged possible, let alone respectable, in American politics. To catalogue the norms he has violated, the traditions he has traduced or trampled, and the rules—written and unwritten—that he has either cunningly sidestepped or audaciously blown to smithereens would require volumes. Love him or loath him, Trump operates apart from history.

Yet if Trump defies history, paradoxically, he has also resurfaced questions that historians have long debated, including some that many considered settled for many years. In this sense, Trump hasn't just defied history; he has changed it—and he has changed the way that we think about it, forcing us to look back on our past with a new lens.

This Politico Magazine series, to be published in three installments over the next few weeks, will look at three historical debates that simmered on low heat for years, until the historic presidential election of November 2016 brought them back to a boil. These debates are foundational. They concern race and identity. National character. The dark side of populism. They drive at the core meaning of American citizenship.

The first in this series, perhaps the most fundamental, centers around the white working class. Are working-class white voters shooting themselves in the foot by making common cause with a political movement that is fundamentally inimical to their economic self-interest? In exchange for [policies](#) like the new tax bill, which [several nonpartisan analyses](#) conclude will lower taxes on the wealthy and raise them for the working class, did they really just settle for a wall that will likely never be built, a rebel yell for Confederate monuments most of them will never visit, and the hollow validation of a disappearing world in which white was up and brown and black were down?

If they did accept that bargain, *why*? Or [are we missing something](#)? Might working-class whites in fact derive some tangible advantage from their bargain with Trump? Is it really so irrational to care more about, say, illegal immigration than marginal income tax rates?

These are good questions. They're also not new ones. The historian W.E.B. Du Bois asked them more than 80 years ago in his seminal work on Reconstruction, when he posited that working-class Southern whites were complicit, or at least passive instruments, in their own political and economic disenfranchisement. They forfeited real power and material well-being, he argued, in return for the "psychological" wages associated with being white.

Since then, the issue has inspired a vibrant debate among historians. Until last year, most agreed with Du Bois that the answer to the question was not so simple as "yes" or "no"—that whiteness sometimes conferred benefits both imaginary *and* real.

In the age of Trump, we're once again pressure-testing Du Bois' framework. As one might expect, it's complicated. White identity pays dividends you can easily bank, and some that you can't.

In 1935 Du Bois published his most influential treatise, *Black Reconstruction*, a reconsideration of the period immediately following the Civil War. One of the historical quandaries that Du Bois addressed was the successful effort of white plantation owners in the 1870s and 1880s in building a political coalition with poor, often landless, white men to overthrow biracial Reconstruction governments throughout the South.

"The theory of laboring class unity rests upon the assumption that laborers, despite internal jealousies, will unite because of their opposition to the exploitation of the capitalists," wrote Du Bois, who trained at both the University of Berlin and Harvard, and whose grounding in Marxist political economy taught him to view politics through the lens of different but fixed stages in capitalist development. "This would throw white and black labor into one class," he continued, "and precipitate a united fight for higher wages and better working conditions."

That, of course, is not what happened. In most Southern states, poor whites and wealthy whites forged a coalition that overthrew biracial Reconstruction governments and passed a raft of laws that greatly benefited plantation and emerging industrial elites at the expense of small landowners, tenant farmers and factory workers. "It failed to work because the theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method," Du Bois wrote, "which drove such a wedge between white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest."

Du Bois famously posited that "the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white."

Decades before so many white working-class citizens of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin—to say nothing of Alabama, West Virginia and Mississippi—cast their lot with a party that endeavors to [raise their taxes](#) and [gut their health care](#), Du Bois identified the problem: Some wages aren't denominated in hard currency. They carry a psychological payoff—even a spiritual one.

The most obvious time and place to pressure-test Du Bois' theory is the Jim Crow South. In the 60-odd years between the collapse of Reconstruction and World War II, the South—still reeling from the Civil War, in which it lost the present-day equivalent of approximately \$5.5 trillion in real property and wealth—slipped into a semi-permanent state of economic crisis.

In 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt declared the region "the Nation's No. 1 economic problem." It was, as historian Gavin Wright famously observed, a "low-wage region in a high-wage country," one where two-thirds of the population lived in small towns of fewer than 2,500 people, derived meager incomes from agriculture, mining or manufacturing, and even in the midst of a national depression, stood out for poor health, want of education and lack of opportunities for upward mobility.

The vast majority of farmers, black and white, were tenants or sharecroppers, and repressive poll taxes disenfranchised not just black men and women, but also poor white people. Designed by wealthy plantation owners and industrialists, the poll tax was expressly a class measure, meant to preserve the region's prevailing low-tax, low-wage, low-service economy. It was more ingenious and insidious than many people today realize. In Mississippi and Virginia, it was cumulative for two years; if a tenant farmer or textile worker couldn't pay in any given year, not only did he miss an election cycle, he had to pay a full two years' tax to restore his voting rights. In Georgia, the poll tax was cumulative from the time a voter turned 21 years old—meaning, if one missed 10 years, he or she would have to pay a decade's worth of back taxes before regaining the right to vote. In Texas, the tax was due on February 1, in the winter off-season, when farmers were habitually strapped for cash. It was, as one Southern liberal observed at the time, "like buying a ticket to a show nine months ahead of time, and before you know who's playing, or really what the thing is all about."

Little wonder that in 1936, three of four voting-age adults outside the South participated in the presidential election, but in the South, just one in four cast ballots. The system kept men like Eugene Cox, a conservative Democrat who held the powerful post of House Rules Committee chairman, in power. In 1938, Cox won re-election with 5,137 votes, though his district in southwest Georgia had a total population of 263,606 residents.

Yet when working-class Southern whites *could* participate in the political process, they often jettisoned their natural class interests in favor of racial solidarity. Historians have focused special attention on the rise and fall of the Readjuster movement, a biracial coalition that controlled the legislature, governor's office and most federal posts in Virginia between 1879 and 1883. Forged in opposition to a conservative Democratic establishment that had shuttered schools, imposed regressive taxes, and favored creditors over debtors, the alliance passed a raft of measures that presaged much of the Populist movement's agenda in coming years. For a time, it held. But in 1883 Democrats campaigned with intense focus on the issue of inter-marriage and miscegenation—a rare phenomenon that nevertheless struck a raw nerve with white workers and farmers. They warned that Readjuster rule would result in "mixed schools now and mixed marriages for the future." It worked. Conservative "Bourbon" Democrats regained control of state government and reintroduced regressive, one-party rule that benefited a small minority of Virginians.

To reduce Jim Crow politics to a single trajectory is to oversimplify a complicated story. But the problem of white working-class Southerners bedeviled generations of liberal activists and the historians who studied them. When the union federation Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) launched Operation Dixie, a massive effort to unionize Southern workers in the mid-1940s, organizers ran into the same wall: Conservative politicians and their wealthy

patrons successfully used race as a cudgel to turn white workers away from collective bargaining agreements that would have raised their wages. Even those Southern populists who ostensibly opposed Bourbon rule—from Georgia's Tom Watson in the early 20th century to Mississippi's Theodore Bilbo in the 1930s—more often flipped the playbook and used race as a blunt instrument against their elite opponents.

Southern liberals in the 1930s and 1940s applied a sharp class focus and concluded that wealthy Democrats wanted, in historian Gavin Wright's words, to keep labor "cheap and divided." The white liberal writer Lillian E. Smith famously captured this thinking in her short story, "Two Men and a Bargain," which began: "Once upon a time, down South, a rich white man made a bargain with a poor white ... 'You boss the nigger, and I'll boss the money.'"

Critically, Du Bois never insisted that the psychological wages of whiteness were wholly devoid of tangible value. What they forfeited in material benefits, working-class whites also recouped in limited power and privilege. "They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools," he wrote. "The police were drawn from their ranks. ... The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule. On the other hand, the Negro was subject to insult; was afraid of mobs; was liable to the jibes of children and the unreasoning fears of white women; and was compelled almost continuously to submit to various badges of inferiority." You couldn't necessarily buy groceries with these benefits, but they were palpably meaningful.

David Roediger, a historian of class and race who writes with a Marxian lens, emphasized exactly this point in his classic volume, *The Wages of Whiteness*, published in 1991 (the title was a direct tribute to Du Bois). He encouraged a generation of scholars to consider that working-class whites may not have been unwitting dupes in their own economic subjugation; instead, they knowingly harvested certain real advantages of whiteness. While this pattern was most visible in the South, it also deeply influenced political culture in the North and West, where whiteness was no less central to popular conceptions of American citizenship. And Roediger's focus was on Northern workers in antebellum cities—workers undergoing the jarring transition from pre-industrial forms of work and leisure to a more regimented existence as wage laborers.

The workers whom Roediger describes, and whom dozens more scholars would similarly study, understood that American citizenship was predicated on race and independence; Congress, after all, had opened citizenship to all "free white persons" in 1790. That law remained on the books into the 20th century. But what did it mean to be "white?" Congress never made that point clear. Indeed, there was no immediate consensus that certain new immigrants met the qualification. And what did it mean to be "free?" Their new status as wage earners—economically dependent on other men to earn a living—seemingly made many working men and women something less than free. Many non-black workers keenly understood that they might be left outside the boundaries of citizenship. They also resented new forms of industrial discipline that their employers foisted onto them. Many addressed these anxieties by drawing a sharp dichotomy between white and black—citizen and slave—and placing themselves on one side of that divide.

They became avid purveyors of blackface minstrelsy—a popular form of entertainment in which working-class whites reveled in watching other working-class whites apply burnt cork

to their faces and act out what the historian George Rawick (writing more generally about early American racism) described as a "pornography of [their] former [lives]." The black characters they portrayed on stage were shiftless, sexually promiscuous and rowdy; they reveled in pre-industrial activities like hunting. They were coarse. In short, they deflected on black people, both slave and free, the very same social demerits that wealthier whites—who were trying to impose new discipline on the urban working class—scribed to *them*.

Playbills commonly "paired pictures of the performers in blackface and without makeup—rough and respectable," Roediger observed. The former were labeled, "Plantation Darkeys." The latter, "Citizens." By culturally differentiating themselves from black people, actors and audience members alike established themselves as "free white persons."

While it's easy to imagine that working-class whites embraced the new racial dichotomy in order to enjoy leverage in the new urban job market, in many cases, black and white workers weren't even in competition with each other. Many of the most popular blackface actors were former artisans and mechanics—coach makers, typesetters and wood craftsmen who were now increasingly likely to fall into "wage slavery." They were unlikely to vie for employment with free black men, who were normally consigned to unskilled jobs as dockworkers, day laborers, and (until Irish women displaced them) domestic servants.

One group that did sometimes compete for unskilled jobs with African Americans were Irish immigrants. Regarded as racially suspect—[depicted](#) in political cartoons as dark and ape-like, and patently unqualified for citizenship—Irish immigrants became some of the most avid and violent practitioners of white identity politics. Even when they weren't in direct competition with black men for jobs—as when a group of Irish handloom weavers was displaced by *white* Protestant weavers in Philadelphia in 1844—they donned blackface and mobbed their black neighbors. The point wasn't to get their jobs back.

Indeed, more was at stake than cash wages. To achieve standing as free white persons—and to enjoy the many benefits of citizenship that accrued from that definition—working-class men in the antebellum era consciously asserted their white identity and set it apart from blackness through language, performance, politics and violence. To imagine that they didn't understand the full impact of their decisions is to deny them any modicum of intelligence or agency.

If working-class whites historically derived both psychological and citizenship wages by privileging race over class, is it possible that they sometimes enjoyed *real* wages as well? Beginning 25 years ago, a rising generation of political historians including [Thomas Sugrue](#), [Kevin Kruse](#), [Matthew Lassiter](#), [Robert Self](#) and [Craig Steven Wilder](#) concluded that they did. Giving special focus to labor and housing markets, they found that many working-class white families benefited directly from government policies that placed African Americans at a disadvantage.

Take housing. Beginning in the 1930s, most mortgages were underwritten by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a federal agency that insured banks against losses from homeowners who defaulted on their loans. The FHA insured these mortgages in return for securing the banks' pledge to provide home loans at low interest rates and to spread interest payments over at least 15 and as many as 30 years to pay back their loans. At minimal expense to the federal government and with only the pledge of default insurance, the FHA freed up unprecedented levels of capital and helped create a postwar social order in which 60 percent of

American households owned and accumulated wealth in their own homes.

In deciding whether or not to insure mortgages, the FHA rated every census tract in the country. Assuming that houses lost value in neighborhoods that were racially mixed or primarily populated by African Americans and Latinos, the FHA assigned such areas lower scores or "redlined" them altogether, refusing to insure mortgages in these neighborhoods or insuring them on unfavorable terms. This meant that most black Americans could not secure mortgages, as their mere presence in a neighborhood would choke off affordable credit.

In a perverse twist, black residents in many Northern cities had little recourse but to rent cramped, sub-divided apartments in buildings whose white landlords often neglected repairs and upkeep, but the physical decay of their homes fed the white Americans' suspicions that black residents *chose* to live in squalor.

It was not just a matter of housing. A powerful combination of private-sector discrimination and nepotism within trade unions had long excluded black workers from well-paid, blue-collar industries. As George Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO crassly admitted, "When I was a plumber, it never [occurred] to me to have niggers in the union!" Even in liberal bastions like New York City, African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s comprised less than 5 percent of all dock workers, skilled machinists, electricians or unionized carpenters—the types of jobs that afforded non-college educated white men access to middle-class comfort and economic security in the post-war period. The black unemployment rate was double that of the city's overall unemployment rate. And New York was better than most places. In Chicago, 17 percent of black adults in the early 1960s were unemployed. In Cleveland, 20 percent. In Detroit, 39 percent.

By the time federal and state officials got serious about enforcing fair employment laws in the 1970s, America's manufacturing and extractive industries had already fallen into steady decline. In effect, two post-war forces most responsible for lifting millions of working-class families into middle-class comfort and privilege—the suburban housing boom and unionized blue-collar jobs—only became available en masse to black Americans just as the post-war boom drew to a close.

This wasn't a simple case of discrimination or inequality. Working-class white families affirmatively enjoyed what the historian George Lipsitz termed a "[possessive investment in whiteness](#)." They availed themselves of the G.I. Bill's housing and education benefits, paid for in part by black people's taxes, at a time when black veterans faced sharp limitations on where (or whether) they could draw the same benefits. They accumulated equity in their suburban homes and used it to send their children to college or to save for their retirement. They enjoyed access to public services—from public schools and public trash collection, to clean water and sewage—that were deficient in majority-minority neighborhoods. These advantages conferred second-order benefits, including better health and a higher average life expectancy.

In other words, whiteness *did* pay real wages. It delivered an inter-generational advantage to those who were in a position to claim it. And white working-class Americans seemed on some level to understand it. When in 1966 Lyndon Johnson attempted to ram through Congress a law banning racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing, white working-class voters revolted both in the streets and at the polls. (Ronald Reagan, a washed up former actor, unseated the otherwise popular incumbent governor of California, Pat Brown, largely by touting his opposition to the state's open housing law.) That summer, when Martin Luther King Jr. led protests throughout the "bungalow belt" in Chicago's working-class white

neighborhoods and the nearby blue-collar suburb of Cicero, Polish, Italian, and Irish residents who had once been staunch Democratic voters now erupted in fury. They pelted protesters with rocks and beat them with clubs amid cries of "White Power!"; "Burn them like Jews"; "We want Martin Luther Coon!"; "Roses are red, violets are black, King would look good with a knife in his back."

Just a few years later, when the federal government began requiring that government contractors and industrial unions that did business with them begin making affirmative efforts to integrate their workforces, white voters gravitated to backlash politicians who promised to preserve their privilege in the job sector. Even as late as 1990, conservative Republican Senator Jesse Helms was able to make [openly racist appeals](#) on such grounds and pay no price. On the contrary, it was a winning formula.

The same dynamic that Du Bois grappled with is on display today. In breaking for Donald Trump and the GOP, working-class white voters are manifestly undercutting their economic self-interest. To be sure, Trump didn't campaign like an archetypal GOP plutocrat. He railed against free trade and immigration, policies that many white working-class citizens believe, with some justification, have hurt their communities. He promised to bring back manufacturing and coal mining jobs, eliminate generous tax loopholes for wealthy families like his own, and—like Andrew Jackson, after whom he has patterned his presidency—privilege the many over the few.

But Democrats and Never Trump Republicans shouted at the top of their lungs that Trump's campaign promises either weren't possible or that they wouldn't help working-class voters as much as he pledged. And they appear to have been right. The president recently signed into law a tax bill whose benefits, according to the nonpartisan [Tax Policy Center](#) and the [Congressional Budget Office](#), accrue principally to corporations and super-rich individuals; many middle-class and working-class families will ultimately face a tax hike. The administration and its congressional supporters have also taken steps to make [health care less affordable](#) or altogether inaccessible, [destabilize](#) retirement security for working-class families, and allow [industrial polluters](#) to despoil the air they breathe and the water they drink. Despite what Trump said on the campaign trail, his agenda does little to help and much to hurt struggling white families.

Of course, whiteness still delivers other dividends—as it always has. It makes one less [likely to be killed](#) by a police officer during a traffic stop. It enables white men to [carry assault weapons](#) (including long guns) in places of public accommodation, while a black man might be [shot and killed](#) by law enforcement officials merely for picking up a BB gun displayed on a sales rack at Walmart. It affords working-class white families the peace of mind that the government won't invade homes or [hospitals](#) in pursuit of undocumented children or [grandparents](#). Whiteness, in other words, continues to pay tangible benefits, and for right or wrong, it makes some sense that its primary beneficiaries are loathe to support candidates who expressly promise to disrupt this privileged status.

Yet Trump has also, arguably more than any other candidate for president in the last hundred years (excepting third-party outliers like Strom Thurmond and George Wallace), played to the purely psychological benefits of being white. From his racially-laden exhortations about black crime in Chicago and Latino gangs seemingly everywhere, to his attacks on an American-born federal judge of Mexican parentage and Muslim gold star parents, he has paid the white

majority with redemption and revanchism. Trump might be increasing economic inequality, but at least the working-class whites feel like they belong in Trump's America. He urged them to privilege race over class when they entered their polling stations.

And it didn't just stop there. As [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#) argues, Trump swept almost every white demographic group, forging a "broad white coalition that ran the gamut from Joe the Dishwasher to Joe the Plumber to Joe the Banker." It's not just blue-collar white people who seem blithely willing to sacrifice economic rationality for racial solidarity. After all, it arguably took a special kind of stupid for upper-middle class suburbanites in high-tax states to support a party that just raised their taxes. (No, this wasn't a bait-and-switch. The GOP leadership has [talked openly](#) about eliminating deductions for state and local taxes since 2014.) Unless, that is, you account for the wages of whiteness.

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Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 4:31:12 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/04/2017 04:27 PM EDT

FILLING THE EMPTY CHAIRS: Barring more incendiary tweets, Democratic leaders say they're now willing to show their faces at the White House for spending talks on Thursday.

That bicameral chat will probably focus mostly on overall budget caps and not so much on policy deals that could sweeten — or threaten — the looming vote to prevent a shutdown come Friday.

No smoke yet: As we [report](#) this afternoon, GOP leaders in the House hope to have enough Republican votes to pass their two-week continuing resolution without having to rely on Democrats. Even in the Senate, no ultimatums from the minority party are spelling certain failure for the bill at this point. And as John Bresnahan [notes](#), a DREAMers deadlock raises the specter of shutdown — although not necessarily on the first patch this month.

What crisis? Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) says there's "no emergency" right now for those young immigrants who benefit from DACA and that it wouldn't be wise for Democrats "to shut down the government over a non-emergency," Kevin Robillard [reports](#).

Like rain on your wedding day: Apparently retired from his days as chief shutdown agitator, OMB Director Mick Mulvaney [spoke out](#) this weekend against the injustice of a "broken" spending system in which "any little group can sort of hold the government hostage."

Buying time: Appropriators unveiled the [stopgap text](#) this weekend, including language that would temporarily help states that are running out of money under the Children's Health Insurance Program, we [reported](#) Saturday. In rolling out the plan, House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) acknowledged that the bill is just a tide-me-over while leaders negotiate those ever-essential topline numbers for defense and non-defense spending. Once they've got those totals, appropriations will "rapidly go to work with the Senate" on an omnibus, Frelinghuysen says.

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

THE PLAYBOOK POWER LIST: 18 TO WATCH IN 2018: The final Playbook Power List of the year highlights 18 politicians, activists and operatives across the country who are poised to make waves in 2018. From the anti-Trump "Resistance" on the left to the far right Bannomite wing trying to remake the GOP, keep an eye on these people over the next 12 months. [Click here](#) to find out who made the list.

Doc(s) of the day — California's 53 House members are [urging](#) appropriators to include \$4.4 billion in wildfire relief funding as part of the next disaster aid package.

Republican Sens. [John McCain](#) of Arizona and [Jerry Moran](#) of Kansas introduced legislation today aimed at reforming the Veterans Affairs health care system. Check out the [bill text](#), key

[highlights](#) and the section-by-section [summary](#). More from [Gregory Hellman](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Some 199 years ago, Illinois entered the Union as the 21st state, Andrew Glass notes in our [This Day in Politics](#) series. Now, the Prairie State has the eleventh largest budget in the U.S., with general fund spending [totaling](#) about \$20 billion per year and total state spending amounting to about \$36 billion annually.

APPROPRIATIONS

GIVE ME THAT GAVEL: No "no" vote goes unpunished — at least when you're chairman of one of Congress' most powerful committees. Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#) this afternoon that House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and his leadership team discussed replacing Frelinghuysen as chairman after he bucked the party and voted against the GOP tax bill. "If there's no perceived blowback against Frelinghuysen, Ryan's hand is weakened," says one House Republican source familiar with the discussion to oust the chairman. "It's almost a political necessity. There has to be real or perceived blowback."

DEFENSE

RETURN OF THE CROMNIBUS? Loathsome of any continuing resolution lasting through New Year's, some House Republicans are pushing to include a full year's worth of Pentagon funding on one of the stopgap bills this month. House Armed Services member [Mike Gallagher](#) (R-Wis.) says that strategy would allow the House GOP to take a "bigger stand," as Connor O'Brien [reports](#). "I don't think there's an appetite among ... defense hawks in Congress for a long-term CR going into the next year," Gallagher said at the Reagan National Defense Forum this Saturday. But don't expect Senate Democrats to swallow this easily.

'Finish the paperwork': Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) [told](#) Connor this weekend he'd be open to the GOP's "double CR" plan, but only if it's backed up by a budget deal. "If there is an agreement and they need ... another week to finish the paperwork, that's one thing," Thornberry said. "But as far as, let's just pass a two-week CR and then a three-week CR and we'll see where we are then — and then another month CR ... I'm not gonna do that."

TRUMP'S MILITARY MIRAGE: President Donald Trump campaigned on a historic invigoration of the U.S. military. But nearly a year into office, his administration has taken few tangible steps to make that happen, Connor and Bryan Bender [report](#). Most evident? The lack of a caps deal. "Congress has to vote to change the Budget Control Act," notes Rep. [Adam Smith](#) of Washington, the Armed Services Committee's top Democrat. "And if we were so hell-bent to do that — if it was such a priority — why are we sitting here in December and we still haven't done it?"

TAX

LET THE RECONCILING BEGIN: Both chambers will formally agree this week to enter a conference committee on the GOP's tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) — the final step before ultimately voting to send the compromised plan off to POTUS. House and Senate Republicans are in sync on key elements of the plan, like its emphasis on cutting corporate taxes. But there are glaring gaps in policy, including Obamacare's individual mandate, the mortgage interest deduction, the alternative minimum tax and so-called pass-throughs, as Brian Faler [explains](#).

To recap: [GOP defends Friday's frantic push](#) | [How McConnell finally won](#) | [Red-state Democrats vote no](#) | ["Booze, women or movies"](#) |

Policy deep dive: [Reconsidering the corporate rate](#) | [Health care ripple effect](#) | [More generous medical expense deduction](#) | [Protecting a conservative college](#) | [How farmers fared](#) | [ANWR drilling hardly a public priority](#) | [A boost for homeschooling](#)

PAYGO

DOESN'T MAKE IT SO: Outside budget experts are scoffing at Republicans' nonchalant dismissal of PAYGO concerns after McConnell and Ryan released a joint statement Friday [assuring](#) that Congress won't actually allow the \$150 billion per year in cuts to take place upon enactment of tax reform.

Double standard: Among the burning questions of fiscal gurus: Why are GOP leaders willing to stave off a PAYGO sequester without replacing it with alternative savings, even while they aren't cool with doing the same with Budget Control Act cuts.

HEALTH

ADDICTION RESHAPES MEDICAID DEBATE: A crackdown on Medicaid work requirements is sweeping red states — and critics say it could put recovering addicts at risk. Kentucky, New Hampshire, Maine and Indiana are among the GOP-led states attempting a reduce the rolls of the swelling entitlement program, with big questions about how they would make sure people with chronic drug problems or mental illness wouldn't stand to lose their benefits, Rachana Pradhan and Brianna Ehley [explain](#).

Another punt: Acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan made clear today that Trump will let Congress decide whether to dole out more cash to fight the opioid crisis. "We're looking forward to hearing from Congress about how they intend to address this," Hargan told reporters, Brianna [reports](#).

Court of public opinion: More than half of adults believe the opioid epidemic is a "major problem" but not a national emergency, according to a new POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health [poll](#). The same survey [showed](#) that Republican voters still believe Obamacare repeal should be Congress' top priority, even above cutting taxes.

CHEATING CHIP: Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.) says GOP leaders' latest CHIP assist is "a patchwork, slapdash scheme that will do nothing to ease the stress of families and state budgets." Through the [stopgap spending bill](#) House appropriators released over the weekend, states running out of money under the Children's Health Insurance Program would be eligible for tide-me-over funding until month's end. But Wyden says Congress should "step up and end the uncertainty ... after two months of needless delay" by enacting a bipartisan, five-year CHIP extension.

EARMARKS

— Handful of hawkish U.S. lawmakers urge military leaders to fight new CR. [Defense News](#).

— Space Corps "will be implemented" in next few years. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Amid budget crisis, Oklahoma governor bans "swag" spending. [Governing](#).

— Heading toward tax victory, Republicans eye next step: Cut spending. [The New York Times](#).

— "This is the moment": DREAMers face make-or-break push on immigration fight with Trump. [The Washington Post](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 5 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/democrats-agree-to-a-redo-on-spending-talks-039793>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump, Democrats restart talks to avert shutdown [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 12/04/2017 01:27 PM EDT

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said Monday they will meet with President Donald Trump to resume high-stakes negotiations to avoid a government shutdown at week's end.

The Thursday sit-down at the White House with Trump and GOP leaders would amount to a do-over of the meeting Democrats ditched last week over a fiery Trump tweet that slammed the Democrats and cast doubt on the prospect of reaching a deal. The boycott caused a political spectacle and temporarily halted talks on a broader spending deal congressional leaders have been negotiating behind the scenes.

"We hope the President will go into this meeting with an open mind, rather than deciding that an agreement can't be reached beforehand," the Democratic leaders wrote in a joint statement.

Government funding runs out Friday at midnight, though Republican leaders believe they have the votes to push back that deadline until just before Christmas. Both parties hope to have reached a bipartisan, two-year agreement on overall spending levels for defense and non-defense programs by the time funding runs out again on Dec. 22.

That year-end deal is also likely to include other long-stalled legislative priorities, including addressing funding lapses for the Children's Health Insurance Program and the National Flood Insurance Program.

Democratic leaders reiterated on Monday that they are seeking a compromise to extend protections for the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who came to the country as children and are protected by an Obama-era program that Trump is ending in March.

House GOP leaders plan to pass a two-week stopgap on Wednesday to buy more time for striking a broader spending deal. The Senate is expected to pass that bill and send it on for Trump's signature by Friday, with the help of Democrats.

"We'll be able to put that pressure, get an agreement, not just for this year but next year as

well, and we'll get out of this mess," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said on Saturday at the Reagan National Defense Forum.

Enacting the temporary patch would likely allow GOP leaders to postpone Democratic demands on prickly political issues like a deal for young immigrants and funding for the children's health care program.

The two-week stopgap does include language, however, that would make more funding available until month's end to states that are running out of money for administering the children's health program.

House GOP leaders believe they can secure enough votes from Republicans alone to clear this week's stopgap bill without making concessions to Democrats. But some conservatives have scoffed at the idea of punting until Dec. 22, which they fear will lead to a rash of spending before Christmas.

For now, key conservative groups like the House Freedom Caucus and the Republican Study Committee are holding their fire.

"It's still up in the air," one House GOP staffer said about whether Republicans will back the two-week continuing resolution. "It's like a Kabuki dance in slow motion."

Defense hawks have also balked at the idea of a stopgap bill through the end of January, warning of budgetary uncertainty for the Pentagon.

With that in mind, some House Republicans are pushing a strategy that would include a full year's worth of funding for the Defense Department on one of the stopgap bills this month.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) said that strategy would allow the House GOP to take a "bigger stand."

"I don't think there's an appetite among... defense hawks in Congress for a long-term CR going into the next year," Gallagher, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said at the Reagan National Defense Forum on Saturday.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Sunday he was confident Congress could pass a short-term funding bill. "There's not going to be a government shutdown," he said on ABC's "This Week." "It's just not going to happen."

McConnell contends that there is no justification for Democratic demands for tying a so-called Dreamers deal to legislation intended to prevent a government shutdown.

"That's a ridiculous position. There is no crisis," McConnell said. "There's no emergency. The president has given us until March to address it. I don't think the Democrats would be very smart to say they want to shut down the government over a non-emergency."

White House budget director Mick Mulvaney noted over the weekend that Democrats who are hell-bent on getting a Dreamers deal aren't the only ones threatening to withhold votes on government funding. Some House "right-wingers" have threatened opposition, he noted, as well as lawmakers from hurricane-hit states who want more disaster aid.

"This just sheds light on the fact that the spending system is broken when any little group can

sort of hold the government hostage," Mulvaney said on CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday. "We need to get beyond that. I think that we will. I don't think you'll see a government shutdown."

John Bresnahan, Rachael Bade and Connor O'Brien contributed to this report.

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Congress faces frantic week with possible shutdown, taxes, Russia [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan | 12/03/2017 04:03 PM EDT

Congress faces another frantic week as GOP leaders and President Donald Trump wrestle with a possible government shutdown; immigration, tax and gun policies; multiple allegations of sexual harassment against lawmakers; and the probe into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election.

Funding for federal agencies is set to run out on Friday, but lawmakers don't really think there will be a shutdown — at least not yet. Still, a pile-up of contentious policy fights coupled with frequent distractions as Trump's frustration grows with the Russia investigation has many Republicans anxious about the next few weeks.

House GOP leaders have proposed a two-week "continuing resolution" to keep the government open until Dec. 22, arguing they need the funding extension to make progress in bipartisan talks to boost both defense and non-defense spending. They expect they'll need a second two-week funding bill in late December to get past the holidays, though the odds of a shutdown would drastically increase during that time if a budget deal isn't close.

Right now, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) is short of the GOP votes he needs to pass a CR, though top Republicans believe they will get there by week's end. But Senate Democrats, who can block any funding bill, could be key to keeping the government open.

Both House and Senate Democrats are demanding that Trump, Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) reach an agreement to protect hundreds of thousands of young undocumented people known as Dreamers who will lose work permits and deportation protections starting early next year unless an Obama-era program that gave them some security is revived in some form. So far, Trump and Republican leaders don't want to tie a legislative fix for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program to a budget deal. This deadlock raises the possibility of a potential shutdown, although the likelihood is low that it happens on Friday, according to multiple House and Senate sources.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) refused to meet with Trump last week after the president said on Twitter they "want illegal immigrants flooding into our Country unchecked, are weak on Crime and want to substantially RAISE Taxes." Trump added: "I don't see a deal!"

Following that high-profile debacle, Schumer and McConnell spoke privately on the Senate floor in a bid to get the budget discussions moving again. The White House has also been

working to try to reschedule a meeting between Trump and the "Big Four," as the top congressional leaders from both parties are nicknamed. Such a meeting could happen in the coming days, according to GOP and Democratic aides.

There have been discussions between Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) on a possible DACA deal. Senate insiders said there "other lines of discussion" on DACA as well.

In the House, Ryan and his leadership team have vowed for weeks to keep DACA and year-end spending negotiations separate — at least publicly. Ryan, however, now is getting squeezed by both ends of his conference, with a group of more than two dozen moderate Republicans from swing districts siding with Democrats and pushing Ryan to fix DACA by 2018.

McConnell lashed out at Democrats on Sunday for tying Dreamers to the funding bill. McConnell noted that Trump has until March to make any decision on deportations for Dreamers, and he clearly wants to decouple the issue from the budget negotiations.

"That's a ridiculous idea. There is no crisis," McConnell said on ABC's "This Week." "The president has given us until March to address the issue of undocumented children who came into the country ... and are in a kind of difficult spot. But there's no emergency."

McConnell added: "I don't think the Democrats would be very smart to say they want to shut down the government over a non-emergency that we can address anytime between now and March. That's a very untenable position."

Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney also downplayed the possibility of a shutdown, but he noted that certain blocs of lawmakers could derail a short-term CR.

"You know, it's funny to see now that the Republicans are in charge, I think there's a group of right-wingers in the House who say they want to shut the government down," Mulvaney said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." "There's a group of Democrats who want to shut the government down over DACA. And there's a group of lawmakers from some of the hurricane states who want to shut the government down until they get what they want."

When he was in the House, Mulvaney supported the 2013 government shutdown, which Republicans forced in hopes of getting Congress to defund Obamacare, and he played a key role in a 2011 crisis in which some conservatives balked at raising the federal debt ceiling.

Matt House, Schumer's communications director, said the burden of keeping the government open is on the Republicans, as they control the White House, House and Senate.

"Everyone knows the Republicans are in charge. If the government shuts down, it will be squarely on their back," House said.

Even as they wrestle with a potential shutdown, Ryan and McConnell will try to quickly reach a deal on a tax package following the Senate's passage of a \$1.5 trillion tax bill on a party line vote late Friday night.

Discussions have already begun between House and Senate tax writers, and GOP aides said a potential agreement could emerge as early as this week. The two chambers have passed bills that diverge on key issues, including amending the popular mortgage-interest deduction,

taxing small businesses and keeping the alternative minimum tax, which Republicans have long promised to kill.

Ryan and McConnell will formally name conferees for the House-Senate tax talks this week.

Russia will also be on the agenda as FBI Director Christopher Wray testifies before the House Judiciary Committee on Thursday.

Trump launched a broad Twitter attack Sunday on the FBI. "After years of Comey, with the phony and dishonest Clinton investigation (and more), running the FBI, its reputation is in Tatters — worst in History!" Trump wrote on Twitter. "But fear not, we will bring it back to greatness."

Trump added: "Tainted (no, very dishonest?) FBI 'agent's role in Clinton probe under review.' Led Clinton Email probe. @foxandfriends Clinton money going to wife of another FBI agent in charge." Trump was referring to media reports that a lead agent on the FBI's probe of Hillary Clinton's private email server sent text messages to another agent critical of the president.

Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser, pleaded guilty last week to lying to the FBI, a huge blow to the president and a major step for special counsel Robert Mueller's criminal probe. Flynn's plea deal is a sign Mueller's investigation is intensifying, with a focus on coordination between Flynn and other Trump aides and their interactions with Russian officials during and after the presidential campaign.

The furor over sexual harassment will continue to roil Capitol Hill as well. Longtime Democratic Rep. John Conyers of Michigan is supposed to announce his plans following allegations from three women that he harassed them when they worked in his office. Pelosi and other top Democrats have called for Conyers to resign, but so far he has not done so.

Reps. Ruben Kihuen (D-Nev.) and Blake Farenthold (R-Texas) also have come under fire for harassment allegations, while Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) faces an ethics probe over claims that he improperly touched six women. The House Administration Committee will hold a hearing on the issue Thursday. The heads of the House Employment Counsel and Office of Compliance — who have been involved in secret settlements with harassment victims — will testify at that session.

As if that's not enough, the House will also take up a controversial bill to expand the use of "concealed carry" permits. The "Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act," authored by Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.), allows concealed carry permit holders to take their weapons into other states that allow such permits. The bill is a top priority for the powerful National Rifle Association, but it is vehemently opposed by gun-control groups and some law-enforcement associations.

The Hudson bill will be paired with a proposal to "fix" the National Instant Criminal Background Check System after it was revealed that a mass shooter in Texas was able to purchase a gun despite a domestic violence charge.

A third piece of the GOP gun package includes language seeking guidance from Attorney General Jeff Sessions on whether there can be criminal penalties imposed for using a "bump stock" during a crime. Those devices dramatically increase the fire for semi-automatic rifles and were used by the shooter in the Oct. 1 tragedy in Las Vegas, the deadliest mass shooting

in U.S. history. There have been calls to ban bump stocks, but so far Republicans in Congress have waited to see whether the Trump administration can handle the issue through new regulations.

Rachael Bade and Brian Faler contributed to this report.

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McConnell: 'There's not going to be a government shutdown' [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 12/03/2017 10:34 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said today he was confident there wouldn't be a government shutdown when funding runs out at the end of the week.

"There's not going to be a government shutdown," he said on ABC's "This Week" when asked if the Republican-controlled Congress could keep the government running. "It's just not going to happen."

Democrats have threatened to withhold their votes for government funding unless Congress acts to provide legal relief to tens of thousands of children of undocumented immigrants who are protected by an Obama-era program that is set to end in March.

McConnell argued there was no "crisis" that would justify tying saving the so-called DREAMers to government funding.

"That's a ridiculous position. There is no crisis," McConnell said. "There's no emergency. The president has given us until March to address it. I don't think the Democrats would be very smart to say they want to shut down the government over a non-emergency."

Government funding is expected to run out on Dec. 8.

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Highlights from this week's Sunday shows [Back](#)

12/03/2017 11:45 PM EDT

-- **GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS** speaks to **SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MITCH MCCONNELL** on **ABC'S "THIS WEEK"**: **STEPHANOPOULOS**: "Republicans have a majority in the House and the Senate. Can ... you keep the government open on your own?" **MCCONNELL**: "Look there's not going to be a government shutdown. It's just not going to happen."

-- **JAKE TAPPER** talks with **SEN. MARK WARNER (D-VA.)** on **CNN'S "STATE OF THE UNION"**: **TAPPER**: "President Trump says he never asked Comey to stop investigating Flynn. As you know better than I, Comey testified under oath before your committee in June that President Trump did ask him to drop the investigation. Whom do you believe?" **WARNER**: "I believe FBI Director Comey. I think he was very credible in his testimony and his private meetings with us. And it's not just Comey. You had -- clearly, you had an attorney general who has had to recuse himself because of untold contacts with Russians. You had the president of the United States trying to intervene, as has been reported, with other national intelligence leaders, who he appointed, saying, could you back off?"

-- **TAPPER** with **SEN. TIM SCOTT (R-S.C.)**: **TAPPER**: "Your fellow senator from South Carolina, Lindsey Graham, told CNN that he would urge President Trump to pledge to not pardon Michael Flynn. Do you agree with that?" **SCOTT**: "I do. At the end of the day, here's what we know. We have to have a way to restore confidence of the American people in their elected officials and the leaders of this country. One way that you do that is by holding those folks who are, A, lying to the FBI, you hold those folks accountable, and, B, you have a process that is clear and transparent. When the Intel ... Committee is finished, we will have the facts."

-- **CHRIS WALLACE** talks to **H.R. MCMASTER** on **"FOX NEWS SUNDAY"**: **WALLACE**: "Let me ask you about another personnel issue which bubbled up this week. White House officials are talking openly about a plan to replace Secretary of State Tillerson by January of the first anniversary of President Trump being sworn into office. The president and Secretary Tillerson pushed back on that hard. But, can you flatly deny that there is any plan in place to replace Secretary Tillerson over the next couple of months?" **MCMASTER**: "Yeah, I'm not aware of any plan at all. What I'm aware of is that the secretary of state is traveling today to advance and protect our interests, as is our secretary of defense."

-- **JOHN DICKERSON** talks with **OMB DIRECTOR MICK MULVANEY** on **CBS'S "FACE THE NATION"**: **DICKERSON**: "[L]et me ask you about the shutdown which might be coming. Government's [going to] run out of money. Democrats wouldn't meet with the president. What's the status of things?" **MULVANEY**: "You know, it's funny to see now that the Republicans are in charge I think there's a group of right-wingers in the House who say they want to shut the government down. There's a group of Democrats who want to shut the government down over DACA. And there's a group of lawmakers from some of the hurricane states who want to shut the government down until they get what they want. This just sheds light on the fact that the spending system is broken when any little group can sort of hold the government hostage. We need to get beyond that. I think that we will. I don't think you'll see a government shutdown."

DICKERSON: "People used to say that about you. You were in one of those little groups when you wanted to shut the government down for reasons. You've changed your stripes."

MULVANEY: "Well, all the more reason the system should be fixed. We don't spend money properly in Washington, D.C. We jump these massive bills to massive bills. The government shut down I think, John, 17 times in 20 years between '80 and '94 or something like that."

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House GOP leaders plot to avert shutdown, but may need Democrats [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/01/2017 01:46 PM EDT

House GOP leaders are forging ahead with a spending strategy that has drawn flak from far-right members, making it increasingly likely they will need help from Democrats to avert a shutdown.

Less than one week before federal funding expires, the chamber's spending panel released a [two-week patch](#) Saturday. A House passage vote is expected midweek, with Senate action to follow.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) confirmed to members Friday in a Republican Conference meeting that the House will vote on two separate short-term spending measures, with this first one extending through Dec. 22 and another through January.

Under the newly released bill, certain spending constraints would be temporarily lifted to help states that are running low on money from the Children's Health Insurance Program after Congress failed to extend funding for the program in September. States could more easily receive leftover cash from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as a tide-me-over until the program-specific funding is renewed.

Ahead of the legislation's unveiling, the Office of Management and Budget held a call Friday warning federal agencies to put contingency plans in place in case Congress fails to extend funding by the deadline, noting that such guidance is routine and doesn't indicate a greater likelihood of shutdown.

"There is no reason why a lapse in funding needs to occur," OMB Press Secretary Meghan Burris said in a written statement. "Prudent management requires that agencies be prepared for the possibility of a lapse."

Enactment of the two-week patch is far from a sure bet, however.

The [two-part plan](#) is intended to drum up pressure on Democrats to strike a much-needed budget deal by the time government funding runs out on Dec. 8, GOP aides say. But the unconventional tactic has been met with skepticism from conservatives, who fear leaders will abandon their priorities in a last-minute deal before the holidays.

Rep. [Dave Brat](#) (R-Va.), a member of the House Freedom Caucus, warned of an "end-of-year Christmas party of spending with Democrats."

"The budgeting never goes good when everybody loads up the Christmas tree," Brat said. "You got to give me one heck of a good argument for a two-week [continuing resolution]. I haven't heard it yet."

If more than two dozen Republicans oppose the strategy, Ryan would need to lean on Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) to deliver Democratic votes. That tradeoff would almost certainly require the GOP to make painful concessions in the spending deal, like bigger boosts for domestic programs.

House GOP leaders explicitly warned during the closed-door meeting Friday that they would

need to seek help from Democrats if their own members voted against keeping the government open.

"They said, basically ... 'Hey, if we've got the votes, then we do it. If we don't got the votes, then you got to go do things to get votes from elsewhere outside the conference,'" Rep. [Mark Amodei](#) (R-Nev.) told reporters.

Democrats are so far refusing to commit to helping Republicans pass a spending bill, ticking off a list of long-simmering political issues like protections for Dreamers, or young undocumented immigrants, and funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program.

"We have no resolve on CHIP, we have no resolve on the Dreamers, so without any of that resolved, why, why would I vote for an extension?" Rep. [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.) told POLITICO. "I'm going to wait and see what we've got."

Pelosi stressed her commitment to higher domestic spending levels, as well as a "Dreamers" deal, in a news conference Thursday. But she also underscored her intention to avoid a public showdown. "We want to keep government open. That's what we are about," the minority leader told reporters.

By Friday, many Republicans said they remained undecided. The biggest question: What will GOP leaders concede to Democrats in spending talks over the next week?

Both parties say they hope to have a basic funding deal in hand before the deadline — laying out fiscal 2018 limits for the Pentagon and domestic programs. Members said that agreement will likely be the biggest deciding factor in who votes for the bill.

"I think it's 50-50 right now," said Rep. [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.), who leads the influential Republican Study Committee, adding that he and many of his members will remain undecided until they learn the spending levels.

In the Senate, support from Democrats is key to reaching the 60-vote threshold for advancing the spending plan. And conservatives say they're worried about the changes that could come in the upper chamber, where GOP leaders have privately floated the idea of attaching an Obamacare stabilization provision to help win votes for its tax package.

"I think there's some double-bank shots involved with the Senate tax piece. I think there's a couple tricky deals here," Brat said.

Passage of the bill to fund the government beyond Dec. 8 would still require Congress to pass a second stopgap measure on Dec. 22, which would buy time to actually craft an omnibus with updated levels through the end of the fiscal year. That spending process has been on hold for months as GOP leadership slow-walked negotiations during a hectic push for a tax bill.

Republican appropriators dubbed the "double CR" as a last-ditch plan to force leadership of both parties into a long-awaited spending accord.

"This gives us a chance to get that number before a shutdown looms Christmas Eve," Rep. [Hal Rogers](#) (R-Ky.), a former Appropriations chairman, told POLITICO.

"We have no choice," he said. "[Leadership] has been preoccupied, rightly so, with the tax bill, but now this shutdown is looming upon us, and that's the urgent thing that we've got to

address."

Rogers acknowledged that Democrats would likely be needed in next week's vote, though House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) disputed the idea.

"Let's give the leadership some opportunity to talk to some of the members," he said.

Once leaders have settled on topline spending caps, appropriators are expected to need at least a month to arrive at more minute funding levels dictating cash for each federal agency for the rest of fiscal 2018.

"This CR will allow for additional time for a deal to be reached on top-line spending levels for this fiscal year," Frelinghuysen said in a written statement upon releasing the two-week patch Saturday. "Once this agreement is made, my committee will rapidly go to work with the Senate to complete the final legislation."

In the Senate, the last of the 12 annual spending bills were only recently reported out of committee and none have received a floor vote — more than two months into the fiscal year in question.

For their part, House Republicans [passed](#) a comprehensive spending package, [H.R. 601 \(115\)](#), in September. That bill — which advanced with only Republican votes — is both politically unrealistic in the more-moderate Senate and was written without the still-unsettled spending caps as guideposts.

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McCain and Moran push VA health care reform bill [Back](#)

By Gregory Hellman | 12/04/2017 11:48 AM EDT

Republican Sens. [John McCain](#) of Arizona and [Jerry Moran](#) of Kansas introduced legislation today aimed at reforming the Veterans Administration health care system.

The bill would require the VA to use objective data on health care demand to set standards for access and quality and to bridge gaps in veterans' care, the chairmen of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Senate Appropriations Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Subcommittee said in a written statement.

Additionally, the bill would require the VA to promptly pay community providers, open access to walk-in clinics, offer telemedicine, increase graduate medical education and residency positions for employees and improve its collaboration with community providers and other federal agencies, the senators said.

The American Legion, AMVETS and Concerned Veterans for America support the measure, the senators added.

Key highlights of the bill are [here](#). A detailed section-by-section summary is [here](#). And the full

legislative text is [here](#).

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Illinois becomes 21st state, Dec. 3, 1818 [Back](#)

By Andrew Glass | 12/03/2017 06:34 AM EDT

On this day in 1818, Illinois entered the Union as the 21st state. At the time, there were about 35,000 persons living there. The seemingly endless and treeless prairie — so different from the adjacent verdant forests of Kentucky and Tennessee — remained largely unsettled.

Most early Illinois settlers lived in the southern part of the state, where they built homes and farms near trees that grew along creek and river bottoms. Eventually, a few farmers took on the task of plowing the prairie; they discovered that the soil proved richer than expected.

The development of heavier prairie plows and improved access to wood and other supplies, accessible through newly opened shipping routes, encouraged more farmers to head upstate. By 1840, the center of population in Illinois had shifted to the north. Chicago, once a remote hamlet, emerged as a bustling city.

The 1820 census counted 55,211 Illinois residents, a gain of 16.2 percent from 1810. Since then, Illinois has gained population in every decennial census, although the rate of growth has slowed. Currently, it is approaching 13 million.

Slavery was nominally banned by the Northwest Ordinance, although the ban was rarely enforced. When Illinois became a state and the ordinance no longer applied, there were about 900 slaves living there.

The southern part of the state, known as "Little Egypt," was mainly settled by migrants from the South, who had traveled there via the Ohio River. The region remained hostile to free blacks. Local leaders permitted the settlers to bring their slaves with them.

Pro-slavery forces sought to call a convention to legalize slavery. But they were blocked by Gov. Edward Coles, who mobilized the anti-slavery forces, warning that rich slave owners would buy up all the good farmland. An 1823 referendum revealed that three-fifths of the voters opposed slavery.

In 1839, the Mormons (whose formal name is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), created a settlement called Nauvoo on a bend along the Mississippi River. It quickly grew to 12,000 inhabitants and was for a time a rival for the title of being largest city in Illinois.

In the 1840s, the Mormons built a stone temple in Nauvoo, one of the largest buildings in Illinois at the time. In 1844, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter-day Saints movement, was killed in nearby Carthage, Illinois, while he was ostensibly under the protection of the Illinois judicial system, with assurances of his safety from then-Gov. Thomas Ford, a Democrat. In 1846, the Latter-day Saints under Brigham Young left Illinois for what would become Utah.

In the second half of the 19th century, the need for workers in mills, railyards and slaughterhouses made Chicago a common destination for European immigrants and newly freed blacks. By 1857, Chicago was the state's dominant metropolis. During Prohibition, Chicago became synonymous with bootleg liquor and such gangsters as Al Capone.

SOURCE: WWW.HISTORY.COM

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Ryan weighed stripping Frelinghuysen of chairmanship [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan | 12/04/2017 03:13 PM EDT

Speaker Paul Ryan and his leadership team recently discussed replacing House Appropriations Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen after he bucked the party and voted against the GOP tax bill, multiple sources told POLITICO.

Ryan, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) over the Thanksgiving recess considered calling up the GOP steering committee charged with selecting chairmen to force a roll call on whether Frelinghuysen should maintain his position. Scalise, three sources said, pushed hard for the move and was furious that the New Jersey Republican opposed the legislation that leaders believe is vital to maintaining their majority.

"Committee chairmen are expected to support the team," said one senior GOP leadership aide said. "How does he expect to win support for his own bills when he's unwilling to support the President and Speaker's number one priority?"

Spokespeople for Ryan's office and the Appropriations Committee declined to comment.

News about the talks comes after Ryan last week pulled out of a fundraiser for Rep. Lee Zeldin of New York, another centrist Republican who voted against the tax bill. Both Zeldin and Frelinghuysen share concerns about what repealing the state and local tax deduction would mean for their high-tax districts, where constituents use that benefit to lower their federal tax bill.

But Republican lawmakers are even more angry about Frelinghuysen, who's one of the most powerful chairmen in the conference. Chairmen are expected to support GOP leaders on tough votes or major pieces of legislation. And Frelinghuysen, who hails from a more moderate-minded swing district, was not given a green light to vote against the tax bill.

The chairman's "no" vote is particularly sensitive because Ryan, McCarthy and Scalise often have to strong-arm other Republicans to vote for government funding bills that come out of Frelinghuysen's committee. There's a fear that if the chairman is not punished, other lawmakers will balk when GOP leaders need them most on spending bills.

"If there's no perceived blowback against Frelinghuysen, Ryan's hand is weakened," said a

second House Republican source familiar with the back-and-forth. "It's almost a political necessity. There has to be real or perceived blowback."

At the same time, many conservative Republicans grew angry when former Speaker John Boehner removed lawmakers from prized committees for voting against leadership on critical bills. Boehner punished former Rep. Tim Huelskamp by kicking him off the Agriculture Committee — which helped lead to his primary defeat just over a year later.

"I disagree with the chairman's vote, but he, like all of us, should vote according to the principles on which he was elected—as long as within bounds of the Constitution," said Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.) on Twitter. "Leaders would be wise to surround themselves with more people, not fewer, who hold alternative viewpoints."

It's not the first time Frelinghuysen has gone against leadership. Ryan and his top lieutenants had to work hard to flip him from "no" to "yes" on the Obamacare repeal bill earlier this year. The New Jersey Republican did not want to vote for the health bill and worried it would undercut his re-election effort, multiple sources told POLITICO at the time.

Frelinghuysen was also one of only two Republicans to vote in early October against a GOP bill to restrict abortions after 20 weeks except in instances of rape or where the mother's life is in danger.

Beyond floor votes, Frelinghuysen clashed with Ryan over a new, controversial Authorization for the Use of Military Force. Frelinghuysen, eager to embrace "regular order," allowed his panel in June to adopt a bipartisan amendment to a spending bill that would phase out the post-9/11 authority for military action overseas and call for new war guidelines.

Ryan called it a "mistake" at the time — and instructed the House Rules Committee to strip the language from the bill before it even hit the floor.

Then, again to the chagrin of GOP leaders, Frelinghuysen took the unusual step in July of allowing controversial immigration language to be adopted by voice vote during a committee markup. Using the same tactic as with the AUMF provision, GOP leaders again overrode the chairman's call by plucking the immigration language before it reached the floor.

The discussion about Frelinghuysen's fate comes as Congress barrels toward a potential shutdown at week's end. House Republicans are expected to pass a two-week spending stopgap without Democratic support on Wednesday, a painful vote for conservatives and appropriators who see "continuing resolutions" as bad policy.

Even if a shutdown is averted, conservatives are likely to be forced in the coming weeks to accept an increase in non-defense spending in order to win a Pentagon budget boost — then back a massive omnibus in January that could include additional spending for other programs that is not offset with cuts elsewhere.

Jennifer Scholtes contributed to this report.

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Defense budget headed for "disaster" with CR, Rep. Smith predicts [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/02/2017 01:50 PM EDT

Simi Valley, Calif. — The top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee today poured cold water on the optimistic appraisals of the prospects for major sustained increases in defense spending, warning instead of an impending fiscal "disaster."

Speaking at the Reagan National Defense Forum, Rep. [Adam Smith](#) (D-Wash.) predicted more stopgap spending measures and immense difficulty increasing defense spending as sought by defense hawks.

"On the budget side, we are going to walk into probably a three, four-week, two, three-month utter disaster starting on Friday," Smith said. "Anyone who thinks we're close to a deal on the appropriations bills is not paying attention."

Republican leaders are proposing a two-week continuing spending resolution to prevent a government shutdown when current funding runs out on Dec. 8, with the aim of striking a deal to increase strict budget caps on defense and domestic programs in that time frame.

On the same panel, Armed Service member [Mike Gallagher](#) (R-Wisc.) said Republicans were mulling separating defense from remaining appropriations bills.

"There's talk of a two-week CR setting up a bigger stand and whether we dis-aggregate the defense [appropriations] from the rest of spending is the discussion right now," Gallagher said. "I don't think there's an appetite among...defense hawks in Congress for a long-term CR going into the next year."

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Trump's military buildup still a mirage [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien and Bryan Bender | 12/03/2017 03:40 PM EDT

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — President Donald Trump came into office pledging the largest defense spending spree since the administration of Ronald Reagan — assuring the troops that they would see "beautiful new planes and beautiful new equipment."

But that vision remains little more than a mirage, top Pentagon officials, lawmakers and defense industry executives lamented during a gathering this weekend at Reagan's presidential library — undermined by congressional gridlock on spending priorities and a tax overhaul expected to add more than a trillion dollars to the national debt.

"Nobody wants to pay more taxes, everyone wants to have the programs they like protected and everybody wants defense ... and they want the deficit to go away," Gen. Robert Neller, the commandant of the Marine Corps, said in an interview, echoing the sentiments of several leading advocates for a more robustly funded military. "The math just isn't there."

During his insurgent presidential campaign, Trump promised to expand the Army from 476,000 active-duty troops to 540,000. He embraced the traditional Republican gospel that the Navy needs to be much larger, pledging to boost the number of warships from 275 to 350. More missile defense systems, an upgraded nuclear arsenal and hundreds of additional fighter aircraft were also on his wish list.

"You've been lacking equipment," Trump told troops at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida in February. "We're going to load it up."

But lawmakers and the administration have taken few concrete steps to lock in any sustained increase in defense spending close to the 3 percent to 5 percent a year that Defense Secretary James Mattis says is needed to make the vision a reality.

Even a down payment on the proposed buildup is being held hostage on Capitol Hill: Republicans are aiming to pass a stopgap spending measure to prevent a government shutdown when funding runs out on Friday — but that would just keep agencies funded at last year's levels.

And despite widespread agreement that the military is under significant strain, Congress has failed to eliminate the strict caps on spending that it instituted in 2011, which limit defense money that is not directly related to overseas military operations.

While lawmakers have increased the caps several times since 2013, Republicans and Democrats have clashed over whether increases to the defense budget should be matched by equal increases to domestic spending. As Friday's funding deadline nears, Republicans are again pushing for a deal that would increase defense spending by tens of billions of dollars, while Democrats are aiming to extract even more money for domestic agencies.

The 2011 budget law allows only \$549 billion for national defense this year, far below the \$626 billion base budget that both the House and Senate endorsed in their annual defense policy legislation in November.

"There is this assumption that there is this broad support for an increase in the defense budget, and everyone sort of feels good about that," Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, admonished attendees at the annual Reagan National Defense Forum, which was sponsored by nearly two dozen leading Pentagon contractors. "I don't see it happening, OK? When you look at what's going on with our appropriations discussion, we are no closer to an appropriations agreement today than we were last February, because as much as people want to spend more money on defense, they also want tax cuts. They also want a balanced budget.

"Congress has to vote to change the Budget Control Act," he added. "And if we were so hellbent to do that, if it was such a priority, why are we sitting here in December and we still haven't done it?"

Trump's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, defended the president's efforts, telling the forum that "what the president has done has dramatically increased defense spending to address the most egregious gaps." (Trump has gotten some extra defense spending approved through a supplemental budget request, and has praised the passage of a defense authorization bill that recommends — but doesn't actually provide — additional dollars for the military.)

"This is the beginning of a recovery in military capabilities and military capacity," McMaster added.

But he also derided the lack of action in the Republican-controlled Congress to back up the push for a bigger military with the funding to make it happen.

"We need an end to the defense sequester," McMaster said of the spending limits that still drive budget levels, adding that "each of our services aren't big enough."

The Pentagon's second-ranking official also bemoaned the hurdles — immediate and long term — that are hobbling Trump's proposed defense buildup.

"Artificial constraints still hold our national security hostage," Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan told the gathering, in his first major public appearance.

Shanahan blamed the prospect of even more stopgap funding measures as a substitute for annual appropriations bills and "disagreements in Congress that affect timely decision-making."

Defense hawks on Capitol Hill, however, point to broad consensus for more defense spending, most recently exhibited by bipartisan support for the National Defense Authorization Act, which sets Pentagon policy and recommends funding levels well above the budget law.

"You're not going to rebuild in one year, so we'll need to continue rebuilding," House Armed Services Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) said in an interview.

"As far as changing the trajectory, now is the critical time," he added. "Again, look at what Congress has done. Look at what the president's said. This is the time to turn it around. Now."

But defense experts also gave Trump his share of the blame for a lack of leadership on the issue.

"What defense buildup?" remarked Katherine Blakeley, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a nonpartisan Washington think tank. "You have a professed goal of having a buildup, but I haven't seen any kind of real engagement by the administration on ... putting in the legislative groundwork to make that happen."

"To go back to a Reagan-era tagline," she added, "where's the beef?"

Others asserted that the president's own domestic agenda is likely to crowd out the spending his promises would require.

"If all Trump wanted was a big defense increase, he could have had it," said Loren Thompson, a longtime consultant to major defense companies. "But he also wanted tax cuts, entitlement reform and infrastructure investment. Something had to give, and usually in peacetime what gives is military spending — especially military spending for new weapons."

That tension was on display at one of the sessions this weekend when Michael Strianese, chairman and CEO of the major Pentagon contractor L3 Technologies, said that "I would rather work on an increased defense budget than a tax cut."

One of the most senior defense-minded Democrats also bemoaned the impact that other priorities of Trump and Republicans in Congress are having on the Pentagon getting the funds it needs to rebuild.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, told POLITICO that the tax cut the Senate passed early Saturday morning is likely to deprive other needs — including those of the military.

"That is \$1.5 trillion that we cannot devote to defense," he said, citing estimates of how tax cuts will enlarge the deficit during the coming decade. "This is just arithmetic."

Even as the Trump administration requested more military spending for this year, Pentagon officials were managing expectations — telling Congress that that the buildup would not kick in until the administration's upcoming budget for the 2019 fiscal year, which starts next October.

Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said he hopes Congress will still reach an agreement that lets the administration put at least some of Trump's pledges into motion.

"We are going to try in [2019] and [2020] to go for growth," he told POLITICO, expressing confidence that Congress can at least come up with a plan for the next two years to fund the government that also accommodates an increase in defense spending.

But he acknowledged doubts that Congress can do that, even if it lifts the budget caps.

"At the end of the day, this is all about math," he said. "You don't want to raise taxes. You don't want to cut benefits, and we want to grow the military. It is literally impossible. The math says you can't do it."

Until the path is clear, military leaders like Neller say they will have to do the best they can.

"Just pass the budget, give us some certainty," the Marine commandant pleaded to Congress in the interview, "and we will give you the best military - the best Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard that we can afford based on the money you appropriate."

Another continuing resolution that keeps spending at current levels "is not an effective way for us to manage the money and to do the things we need to do to regain our readiness and prepare."

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What's next on tax reform [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 12/02/2017 11:45 AM EDT

Republicans are confident they can quickly overcome the differences between the House and Senate tax bills and send President Donald Trump a plan he can sign into law by year's end.

In their efforts to enact the biggest changes to the tax code since the historic 1986 Reagan-era reforms, the two chambers have passed bills that diverge on key issues like amending the popular mortgage-interest deduction, taxing small businesses and keeping the hated alternative minimum tax, which Republicans have long promised to kill. But don't expect a drawn-out fight over the details.

After the Senate approved its sweeping \$1.5 trillion legislation early Saturday, Speaker Paul Ryan said he would appoint official negotiators on Monday to a conference committee that will meld the measure with the one the House passed in November. Though some Senate Republicans would like the House to simply pass their plan without any changes, a spokesman for Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he will name his own conferees next week.

The two sides agree on many key elements of an overhaul, including its overall size and emphasis on cutting corporate taxes. And none of the issues where the two plans diverge have drawn such strong opposition that they can't be finessed, congressional leaders say. Too much is at stake.

"I think everybody in our conference believes this is an imperative for the economy and also the politics, I think, would not be good were we to fail," said Sen. John Cornyn, the chamber's deputy leader.

Congress is under pressure to act quickly, with Republican leaders racing to complete action before the winner of Alabama's special Senate election can be seated later this month. Lawmakers fear that both Republican Roy Moore and Democrat Doug Jones will oppose their plans.

The agreement on many of the big-ticket items is largely due to the work of the so-called Big 6, a group of Republican leaders who worked this fall to get the two sides on the same page. Both chambers want to slash the corporate tax rate to 20 percent, from the current 35 percent, while expanding a popular child tax credit and capping a long-standing deduction for corporate interest expenses. Republicans also agreed not to cut taxes by more than \$1.5 trillion.

Still, the conference committee will have to work hard. They'll have to find agreement amid fierce lobbying from special interest groups determined to squeeze in last-minute changes. And the Senate's close 51-49 vote on Saturday morning underscores Republicans' thin margin for error.

And there are some significant differences to resolve. The House, for example, wants to slash the mortgage interest deduction in half, and eliminate it entirely for second homes. The Senate would only end it for home equity loans.

In a surprise move, Senate Republicans decided at the last-minute to abandon plans to repeal the AMT — a key part of GOP promises to radically simplify the code — and that's sure to be unpopular with House Republicans.

The House wants to cut some \$65 billion out of education-related tax breaks, which the Senate leaves them mostly untouched. The Senate wants to double one break, for teachers' expenses, that the House would kill altogether. Senate Republicans have seven individual income tax brackets in their plan; the House has four. House Republicans want to end the estate tax while the Senate would only temporarily ease it.

While Republicans largely support repealing the Affordable Care Act's mandate to have health insurance — included in the Senate draft — some in the House want to use the \$318 billion that's projected to raise to finance other changes in the health law.

On the business side of the code, the bills have radically different approaches towards taxing so-called pass-throughs, a hot-button issue that roiled the Senate this week. "Pass-throughs" are unincorporated businesses.

While both sides want to pare a break for corporate interest expenses, the Senate would take nearly twice as much — \$300 billion over the next decade — out of that break as the House.

And the two chambers have different visions for taxing multinational corporations — though that's barely been publicly debated by lawmakers.

"It's always tough to work with the Senate, no matter what the topic is," said Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Ohio), who sits on the tax-writing Ways and Means committee. "What's the old saying? Democrats are the other party, but the enemy is the Senate."

Still, Senate Republicans moved closer to their House colleagues in some areas during this week's deliberations.

Most notably, after House Republicans warned a Senate bid to end a long-standing deduction for state and local taxes was a nonstarter with their colleagues, the Senate adopted a House plan to limit the break to \$10,000 in property taxes.

Likewise, the Senate largely adopted Friday the House position on imposing a one-time tax on corporations' overseas earnings.

Veterans of past tax-policy fights are stunned by the speed with which this Congress has been able to act. The final Senate vote came less than a month after the proposal was introduced; the House completed formal consideration of its plan, from start to finish, in exactly two weeks.

And, after their embarrassing Obamacare-repeal debacle, Republicans acknowledge they are ready to compromise.

"Had we had a list of success, I would say it would be a difficult process," said Rep. Mark Walker (R-N.C.), who leads the Republican Study Committee, a group of often balky conservatives. "But because there is a sense of urgency both in the House and the Senate and within the administration, I think people are going to say: 'You know what? We're going to have to fix things, but we've got to get this done.'"

—*With reporting by Aaron Lorenzo*

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Scott defends rushed process to finish tax bill [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 12/03/2017 11:03 AM EDT

South Carolina Sen. [Tim Scott](#) defended the rushed process for Senate Republicans to pass a wave of tax cuts on CNN's "State of the Union" today, but admitted he didn't read the entire bill before voting on it.

Democrats attacked the process, which saw the final bill text released Friday just hours before the vote, and with hand-written changes in the margins, as well as crossed-out text. A Democratic proposal to delay the vote until Monday to give senators time to read the legislation was rejected.

"I went through the entire bill. I'm not going to say I read every single letter on every single page," Scott told CNN's Jake Tapper.

"I did not read 470 pages. But have I read every aspect of that bill before it was fused together? The answer is yes. We have had the chance over the last three years, since I have been on the committee, to work on every aspect of the bill."

Scott argued Republicans, particularly on the Senate Finance Committee, had long debated and understood what was in the legislation. The bill passed 51-49 early Saturday morning.

"The last hearing that we had was a 23-hour hearing. We had 63 Democrat amendments that were offered. The suggestion that this was not done in the light of day and the last-minute changes, as they talk about them, were last-minute changes that had been envisioned for weeks," Scott said, adding later: "The suggestion that we had so little time to take a look at 500 pages is inconsistent with the truth."

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How McConnell got a win on taxes [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 12/02/2017 03:16 AM EDT

On a recent phone call to discuss the GOP's tax push, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell suggested President Donald Trump focus his personal lobbying efforts on one senator in particular: Ron Johnson.

For weeks, the Wisconsin Republican had made it clear he would seek more generous tax treatment of certain small businesses — and that he was willing to use his vote as leverage. But after several phone calls from Trump and one final negotiating session inside Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn's ornate Capitol office, Johnson said early Friday he would finally support the bill. That announcement made passage seem all but inevitable just one night after the bill nearly collapsed in spectacular fashion on the Senate floor.

McConnell and his leadership team ultimately secured passage of the tax code rewrite in the early hours of Saturday morning after weeks of methodically working each wavering vote, and by trying to learn the lessons of their Obamacare repeal failure.

It worked. By moving the tax bill through the committee process and letting more GOP senators give more input as they drafted the bill, the Kentucky Republican delivered a sorely-needed legislative achievement to his party in a year marked by turbulence on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"It's been quite a year for Senate Republicans," McConnell said in an interview with POLITICO as the chamber prepared to pass the bill. "We've changed the Supreme Court for a generation and done the first comprehensive tax reform in 31 years. Big year for us."

McConnell also pointed to one other reason why the GOP succeeded on taxes but not health care: comprehensive tax reform has been a longstanding goal for Republicans, while there was little consensus on how to replace Obamacare despite their years-long pledge to dismantle it.

Senate Republicans still have to reconcile their differences with the House-passed tax bill, but McConnell said Republicans are "well on the path" to completing the tax overhaul by Christmas. That's been a key party goal, and a timetable, he insisted, that was unrelated to the Dec. 12 special election in Alabama, in which Republican Roy Moore is in a close race against Democrat Doug Jones.

The political fight over taxes won't end when the bill gets to Trump's desk, however. While the GOP views the measure as a political imperative in advance of next year's midterm elections, it has consistently polled poorly with voters. Democrats have savaged the bill, which cuts the corporate rate to 20 percent from 35 percent, as a giveaway to big business and the wealthy.

Still, McConnell dismissed the public perception of the tax bill, expressing confidence it will change.

"Can you think of any major legislation passed in the last 10 years that was popular? Remember how unpopular Obamacare was," the Kentucky Republican said. "If [tax reform], in conjunction with regulatory relief, gets the country growing more rapidly and creates more jobs and opportunity, I think that will answer the skeptics."

The tax victory, which came shortly before 2 a.m. Saturday, was never guaranteed. Facing unified Democratic opposition, McConnell could only lose two GOP votes before the entire effort sank, and leaders had to navigate a litany of competing demands.

There was the influential bloc of fiscal hawks led by Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), making noise about the tax bill's red ink and going so far as to seek automatic tax increases to pay down some of the deficit. There was Johnson, who had teamed with Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) to demand a costly change for so-called "pass-through" businesses, which pay taxes through the individual code.

And there was Susan Collins (R-Maine), a perennial swing vote, who had a detailed list of wishes that became more complicated as Republicans threw in a repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate into the bill.

The furor over the deficit boiled over to the point that on Thursday, Corker and a coalition of tax holdouts contemplated voting with Democrats on a procedural vote that could have derailed the entire effort — prompting extended drama in the chamber that momentarily threatened the bill's future.

Just before the vote, the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation had released their long-awaited report on the plan, and found that it would still balloon the deficit by \$1 trillion even with the economic growth the legislation would generate.

GOP leaders were deeply worried about what kind of impact the report would have on Corker's thinking and tried to persuade the undecided senators not to vote for the Democrats' measure, which would force senators to return with a deficit-neutral tax bill. But for more than an hour on the floor, Corker, Johnson and Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) stubbornly held off, trying to use their leverage to force changes to the tax measure.

"Sen. Corker called me and said, 'Why shouldn't we vote for that one?'" Johnson recalled. "There's always parliamentary maneuvers, right?"

Elizabeth MacDonough, the Senate parliamentarian, was summoned to the gaggle. Senators were told that a proposed "trigger" — which would kick in with tax hikes if the projected economic growth never materialized—would run afoul of budget rules and would have to be axed. At one point, a furious-looking Cornyn loudly told Sen. Angus King (I-Maine), who had felt Democrats were close to pulling the trio of Republicans to their side, that the maneuver would "kill the bill."

"I thought we already had worked everything out," sighed Cornyn after the theatrics.

That floor battle ended up being the last moment when the Senate tax bill looked truly in doubt — about a year after the Republican effort to overhaul the tax code began in earnest.

Not long after the 2016 election, McConnell and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) quietly tapped four Senate Republicans — Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, Rob Portman of Ohio, Tim Scott of South Carolina and John Thune of South Dakota — to be the GOP conference's point people on the tax battle. The group immediately began meeting in December to lay the groundwork for the legislative push.

And after the failure of Obamacare repeal, Republicans were determined to do things differently.

"They're listening carefully to all of the concerns," Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) said of leadership. "They've gone out of their way to make sure regular order has been observed, as demanded and expected by many of the members."

Democrats called suggestions of "regular order" outrageous as Republicans rushed the bill to passage. But McConnell was sure to hold a committee markup of the measure, which he did not do with health care, and which was a main reason Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) voted that bill down.

One controversial idea that became surprisingly easy: Repealing Obamacare's individual mandate in the tax measure, which McConnell noted "certainly takes a big chunk" out of the 2010 health care law.

Despite having just failed to repeal and replace the law, various Senate Republicans had pushed for including the mandate repeal in the tax bill. And when senators realized doing so would net nearly \$350 billion to plow into more tax cuts, it gained steam. As far back as May, Daines was seeking data from the Internal Revenue Service that would break down the impact

of the mandate penalty by state and income, giving GOP senators handy statistics for talking points once those numbers materialized.

Collins expressed discomfort with the mandate repeal, but negotiated other wins, including to allow people to deduct \$10,000 on state and local property taxes, mirroring a House provision. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who also helped sink the GOP's Obamacare repeal bill, said she ultimately had no problem with removing the mandate. And she claimed a big victory in getting language to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Though the House bill doesn't include the health care provision, Senate Republicans are cautiously optimistic that it'll be included in the final product; Daines noted, "If you don't, tell me where you're going to find \$350 billion?"

Resolving some of the final issues happened inside Cornyn's office shortly before 7 p.m. Thursday, when the No. 2 Republican met with Johnson, Daines and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to lay out how the leadership would ultimately meet their demands: Boosting a one-time tax on multinational companies' overseas earnings in order to pay for better treatment of "pass-through" businesses.

Cornyn later called Johnson around 10 p.m. to confirm that the Wisconsin senator would get mostly what he wanted.

"I just really appreciated working with us in good faith," said Johnson, who fielded at least three phone calls from Trump since he declared his opposition to the first version of the tax bill. "When it came down to crunch time, I wanted more. But I'm a reasonable human being."

Meanwhile, Corker and Toomey — who had brokered a budget deal earlier this year that helped provide a framework for the tax measure — worked quietly into the night with the parliamentarian to see if some other trigger could suffice and Corker could be a "yes."

In the final day of the tax fight, the typically-harried legislative process became even messier. Republicans tacked on sweeping last-minute changes. Aides scribbled handwritten revisions to the bill just before senators would vote on the final package, which Democrats relentlessly mocked on Twitter.

Inside the last GOP conference meeting in the Capitol, Corker thanked Toomey for working hard with him to try to reach a final deal on the deficit trigger, even though they fell short. He detailed his concerns that the bill was a huge budget-buster, but it was clear to people inside the room that Corker knew he wouldn't win.

Ultimately Corker stood alone, being the sole Republican to reject the tax bill, along with all Democrats. The dwindling bloc of deficit hawks would keep getting lonelier.

"I know I'm kind of a dinosaur on the fiscal issues," said Corker as he held a cup of coffee, just outside the Senate chamber Friday. "And I'm really not that old. By Senate standards, I'm a teenager. But I do feel like a dinosaur."

McConnell could do the math, and he could leave Corker behind.

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Red-state Democrats stay away from GOP tax bill [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 12/04/2017 05:01 AM EDT

When Republicans began their push for tax reform earlier this year, they had hopes of wooing multiple Senate Democrats to back their plan: 10 of them faced reelection in states President Donald Trump won, five in states he won by more than 20 points.

But those dreams were dashed by the bill's unpopularity in public polling and the inclusion of measures no Democrat was willing to vote for. None of the Democrats voted for the plan.

But the GOP still thinks it can make them pay in 2018.

"Red state Democrats who voted against the Senate tax relief bill have made a fateful mistake," NRSC Communications Director Katie Martin said. "When American taxpayers are able to keep more of their hard-earned cash next year, they'll remember who sided with Washington's liberal elitists and voted against middle-class families."

The bill passed early Saturday morning is unpopular in public opinion polling. A mid-November Quinnipiac University poll found 52 percent of Americans opposed the plan, while 25 percent supported it. Fifty-nine percent said the plan favored the rich at the expense of the middle class, while just 33 percent disagreed.

"Republicans could have written a bill that benefited the middle class and put Democrats in a jam," said Jesse Ferguson, a Democratic strategist working with groups opposed to the plan. "That's not what they did. With only 25 percent support in public polling, there's no pressure on Democrats to support this."

A sign of the bill's unpopularity can be seen in television ad targeting. While early ads from both GOP groups like Americans for Prosperity and 45Committee, and Democratic groups like Not One Penny focused on red state Democrats like Missouri's [Claire McCaskill](#) and Indiana's [Joe Donnelly](#), later ads focused on wavering Republicans like Oklahoma's [James Lankford](#) or Arizona's [Jeff Flake](#).

"Oklahoma is counting on James Lankford to vote yes on President Trump's tax cut," the narrator says in an ad from [45Committee ad](#) released on Wednesday. "This is your chance to cut taxes, Senator Lankford. Don't let us down."

According to a Democrat tracking media buys, Republican groups have spent about \$6 million on ads promoting the plan, double the \$3 million Democrats have spent attacking it.

The state with the most action was Wisconsin. There, the Koch Bros.-backed Freedom Partners Action Fund spent \$1.6 million blasting Democratic Sen. [Tammy Baldwin](#) for supporting tax increases in the past and not supporting tax reform. Senate Majority PAC responded with its own six-figure buy to defend the Wisconsinite.

"If Tammy Baldwin opposes tax reform, it's proof that she opposes jobs," the owner of a construction company says in one of Freedom Partners' ads. "She opposes higher wages. I know of nothing that she's done to help working people like us."

Republicans argue the bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), will become more popular once voters' take-home pay increases in 2018. Only 16 percent of Americans believe the tax bill will lower their taxes. And, they say, voters will reject the red-state Democrats for not siding with Trump, who made visits to Missouri, Indiana and North Dakota to woo those state's senators. Bipartisanship, in particular, is a key part of Donnelly's brand.

"Opposing tax cuts for Hoosier families is about the dumbest thing Mexico Joe has done since he outsourced jobs to Guadalajara," said GOP strategist John Ashbrook, a former top aide to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#). "It's like he doesn't want to win."

Donnelly, however, said the bill was just too partisan for him to swallow.

"I've tried to work with everyone I can during our current national conversation about our tax code. During the last few months, I've even spoken with the President multiple times about ideas that both parties agree would move us forward," he wrote in a fundraising email that went out on Saturday. "But Mitch McConnell and his special interest allies crafted this tax bill in a partisan process and rushed it to the floor with little debate. It's a handout to the richest Americans who don't need more help and the biggest corporations, many of which have shipped their money and jobs to other countries."

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Grassley derides those who spend all their money 'on booze or women or movies' [Back](#)

By Brent D. Griffiths | 12/03/2017 09:31 PM EDT

Sen. Chuck Grassley defended his party's tax plan this weekend by saying that plans to reduce or eliminate the estate tax mean that people will use their money more wisely.

"I think not having the estate tax recognizes the people that are investing," Grassley (R-Iowa) [told](#) the Des Moines Register, "as opposed to those that are just spending every darn penny they have, whether it's on booze or women or movies."

Grassley chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee and is a previous chairman of the and current member of the Senate Finance Committee, an influential panel that played a major role in writing the chamber's plan. The seven-term senator was being interviewed for a Des Moines Register report on the impact of the estate tax.

Republicans have long attacked the estate tax, often referring to it as the "death tax," and their various tax plans would greatly scale it back or eliminate it. The tax is based on the transfer of property when someone dies, if an estate exceeds a certain amount. The Des Moines Register report determined that few family farmers or small business owners end up having to pay the estate tax and those who do pay are rarely forced to sell their land or quit farming.

The Senate's plan, which passed early Saturday morning, expands the individual exemption to \$11 million per person, while the House plan would expand the exemption by the same amount but also eliminate the tax entirely in 2024. That is one difference in the bills that

would have to be reconciled as the legislation moves forward.

The Iowa senator's comments were widely shared on social media and were criticized by a number of Democratic strategists for their harsh portrayal of how people spend money.

"Darn straight, Sen. Grassley. if we gave that money in middle class tax cuts, they'd just waste it on hookers and blow, right?," Jesse Ferguson, a former spokesman for Hillary Clinton, wrote on [Twitter](#).

He later released a statement clarifying his position.

"My point regarding the estate tax, which has been taken out of context, is that the government shouldn't seize the fruits of someone's lifetime of labor after they die. The question is one of basic fairness, and working to create a tax code that doesn't penalize frugality, saving and investment," he said in a statement. "That's as true for family farmers who have to break up their operations to pay the IRS following the death of a loved one as it is for parents saving for their children's college education or working families investing and saving for their retirement."

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Trump appears to back off 'red line' on 20 percent corporate tax [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 12/02/2017 10:00 PM EDT

President Donald Trump today indicated that he may be open to a 22 percent corporate tax rate, after he and other administration officials had called a 20 percent rate a "red line" in tax reform.

Speaking to reporters a day after the Senate passed legislation that included a 20 percent rate, Trump said: "Business tax all the way down from 35 to 20. It could be 22 when it comes out but it could also be 20. We'll see what ultimately comes out."

That appeared to be a step back from his earlier position. He called the 20 percent corporate rate "very much a red line" in September, and last Wednesday a White House spokesman repeated that the administration would "not support" raising the rate to fund an expansion of the child care tax credit, as Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) and [Mike Lee](#) (R-Utah) have proposed.

Most conservative Republicans would oppose going above 20 percent.

Before passing its bill, the Senate rejected the Rubio-Lee proposal. Ivanka Trump has been a prominent supporter of a child credit expansion.

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) has also been open to the idea of a 22 percent corporate rate, saying executives she has talked to would accept it.

The tax plan the House passed last month also includes a 20 percent corporate rate. But setting

the rate at 22 percent instead of 20 percent would give Republicans more breathing room to add provisions to their tax reform plans without blowing up the deficit.

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Tax bill would trigger a major ripple effect through health care [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 12/04/2017 02:46 PM EDT

The Republican effort to overhaul the tax code could send shudders through the health care system, potentially reshaping Obamacare while altering critical financial incentives affecting everyone from medical students to corporations and retirees with chronic illnesses.

The effort, if successful, would represent the GOP's most significant legislative changes to health care in years. But House and Senate Republicans must first navigate the tricky task of reconciling their competing tax bills without losing votes. The GOP can absorb only 22 defections in the House, and just two in the Senate, where Vice President Mike Pence could cast a tie-breaking vote.

Here are the major health care provisions in play as the GOP hits the home stretch on its tax efforts:

Elimination of the individual mandate

The Senate tax proposal would do what Republicans tried and failed to accomplish all year through a slew of health care bills: dismantle a key pillar of Obamacare. A provision included in the bill would effectively eliminate the health law's mandate that most Americans purchase insurance, by zeroing out the penalty on those who don't comply.

The CBO projects that doing so will drive up premiums an additional 10 percent and leave 13 million more people uninsured over the next decade. But the skittishness Senate Republicans showed earlier this year over changing health coverage hasn't materialized during the tax debate, with lawmakers instead expressing widespread support for killing what's long been considered one of the most unpopular parts of Obamacare.

While the law's supporters contend that removing the requirement could further destabilize the Obamacare markets, Republicans have largely dismissed the provision's importance and argued that individuals should be able to choose whether to purchase insurance.

"I have always supported the freedom to choose," wrote Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska), who helped kill the GOP's earlier repeal efforts, in an [op-ed](#) backing individual mandate repeal. "I believe that the federal government should not force anyone to buy something they do not wish to buy in order to avoid being taxed."

House Republicans didn't touch the mandate in their version of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), concerned it would inject volatile health care politics into the tax effort. But now that it's cleared the Senate, the GOP is likely to include rollback of the mandate in the final bill.

Medical expense deductions

Among the big questions the Senate GOP created during its late-night rewrite of the tax bill is the fate of the medical expense deduction, a popular provision that lets people deduct the cost of huge medical bills. The House tax plan would eliminate this deduction, which retiree groups and advocates for the elderly have decried as an attack on seriously ill seniors.

"Nearly three-quarters of tax filers who claimed the medical expense deduction are age 50 or older and live with a chronic condition or illness, and seventy percent of filers who claimed this deduction have income below \$75,000," the AARP [wrote](#) in a November letter to senators.

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) has defended eliminating the deduction in order to simplify the tax code and benefit a wider swath of the population, pointing to the way the plan would double the standard tax deduction.

Still, Senate Republicans opted not only to retain the medical expense deduction, but to temporarily expand it. The Senate version would lower the threshold to qualify for the deduction to 7.5 percent of medical expenses for tax years 2017 and 2018, down from its current 10 percent.

The change was driven by Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine), a key swing vote who pushed for a series of late amendments to the bill before declaring her support. With Republicans nursing a slim voting margin in the Senate, that could make the deduction a big bargaining chip during the House-Senate conference.

Drug industry incentives

Yet another health-related provision hanging in the balance is the orphan drug tax credit, which aims to incentivize research into treatments for rare diseases. The House tax plan would eliminate the credit entirely, in what would be a blow to drugmakers.

The Senate aims to scale back the provision that currently subsidizes half of qualifying clinical trial expenses for rare disease drugs, so that it subsidizes roughly 27.5 percent of those costs.

Both bills, meanwhile, would impose a 20 percent tax on payments from U.S.-based companies to their overseas affiliates — a provision that could hurt pharmaceutical companies in Puerto Rico. Officials on the island have [raised](#) concerns that the commonwealth could be treated as a foreign entity under the bill, putting additional financial stress on drugmakers already dealing with disruptions in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

And the drug industry broadly has sounded alarms about the Senate's decision to keep the corporate alternative minimum tax, a move that companies fear could prevent them from claiming a research and development tax credit. House Republicans scrapped the corporate AMT altogether in their bill.

But there is at least one big win for drug companies at the center of both tax plans. House and Senate Republicans want to lower the corporate tax rate, and give U.S.-based multinational companies a one-time reduction on profits they earn and keep abroad. Pharmaceutical manufacturers rank among those corporations storing the most money abroad, where they can take advantage of lower tax rates.

Medical education

The GOP's tax overhaul has major implications for higher education, in the way it could hike the taxes that medical schools — and their students — may have to pay. One provision yet to be reconciled between the House and Senate is a 1.4 percent excise tax on the investment income of private colleges and universities with large endowments.

The House version would affect as many as 70 schools with endowments worth at least \$250,000 per student. The Senate version is less sweeping: Just 25 to 30 colleges and universities with endowments of \$500,000 per student or higher would be subject to the tax. But either way, it means wealthy Ivy League schools like Harvard and Yale are in line to pay more.

House Republicans are also targeting a pair of provisions that could leave graduate students with significantly higher tax bills, proposing the elimination of a deduction for student loan interest and taxing as income the tuition waivers that allow some grad students to go to school tuition-free. However, the Senate didn't include either of those changes in the final bill.

The GOP's personhood play

The House bill would expand eligibility for 529 savings plans to allow them to be opened on behalf of a fetus — language aimed at fulfilling longtime efforts by the anti-abortion movement to grant legal rights to unborn children.

The provision — which drew immediate criticism from abortion-rights groups — didn't make it into the Senate bill because of strict rules tied to the GOP's bid to pass its legislation via expedited budget rules with only a simple majority. That restriction is likely to keep the provision out of the GOP's final tax bill as well.

Hospital bond restrictions

Hospitals are keeping a close eye on a complicated concept that could mean less money for their development plans: the inclusion of new limits on tax-exempt municipal bond financing by not-for-profit organizations.

Both the House and Senate propose banning the advance refunding of prior tax-exempt bond issues, which makes up a substantial part of the municipal bond market. The House bill would go even further, eliminating the tax exemption for interest income on new bonds.

Disability tax credit

The House bill also proposes eliminating a tax credit incentivizing small businesses to make improvements to their facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Looming Medicare cuts

If House and Senate Republicans can resolve their differences and pass a final sweeping tax bill, they'll immediately confront one more big dilemma: what to do about the [deep cuts](#) to Medicare and other programs that could be triggered as a result. Congress' "pay-as-you-go" rule requires offsetting spending cuts to certain federal programs whenever lawmakers pass a bill that adds to the deficit, meaning the government could be on the hook for as much as \$1.5 trillion in reductions over the next decade. They would hit Medicare hard, taking a roughly

\$25 billion bite out of the program's payments to hospitals and doctors next year.

Obamacare's Prevention and Public Health Fund would be wiped out completely, while the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund would lose \$715 million from its budget. Other federal programs touching pillars of the U.S. economy like agriculture and education would also face elimination.

Republicans have vowed to sidestep the cuts by negotiating a waiver of the rule. In a joint statement last week, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) and House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) said that it "will not happen." But it will take 60 votes in the Senate to waive the requirement, meaning the GOP will need Democrats' help just days after jamming a partisan tax bill through Congress. Democrats have remained mum on whether they'll go along with a waiver, or what they might demand in return.

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Senate bill to expand medical expense deduction [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/01/2017 04:38 PM EDT

The Senate tax bill would lower the threshold for medical expense deductions from 10 percent to 7.5 percent for two years, according to Sen. [Susan Collins](#), who authored the change to the bill.

Collins (R-Maine) said the medical expense deduction was one of several reasons she would support the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

The new changes would convert the deduction back to pre-Obamacare levels. The health care law bumped the threshold to 10 percent.

The House tax bill would eliminate the medical expense deduction.

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Democrats defeat GOP bid to shield conservative college from endowment tax [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 12/01/2017 09:35 PM EDT

Four Senate Republicans joined with Democrats to strip from the GOP tax bill a last-minute provision that would have shielded Hillsdale College, a prominent conservative school, from a new tax on university endowments.

An amendment offered by Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) — and incorporated into a package of changes Republicans unveiled Friday evening to their tax plan, H.R. 1 (115) — would have

exempted all colleges that don't accept federal student aid from the endowment tax.

But Democrats immediately cried foul over the plan because it appeared to benefit only a single college, Hillsdale College, whose president, Larry Arnn, is influential in conservative intellectual circles.

Arnn, who was floated last year as a potential pick to be President Donald Trump's Education secretary, has served as a Heritage Foundation trustee since 2002. The school also has close ties to the family of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Deb Fischer of Nebraska, John Kennedy of Louisiana, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska joined with Democrats early Saturday morning to pass an amendment by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) that stripped the provision from the tax bill.

Democrats had blasted the move as a giveaway to a school with ties to powerful conservative donors.

"This is a very limited provision written for a very special person," Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) said on the Senate floor, noting the school's connections to the DeVoses. Betsy DeVos' brother, Erik Prince, is a Hillsdale graduate, according to the college website.

According to the Hillsdale Collegian newspaper, DeVos' father-in-law, Richard DeVos, co-founded Amway with Jay Van Andel. Van Andel's son, Steve, is a Hillsdale graduate and Amway leader, and the Hillsdale graduate school of statesmanship was named in his honor after he made contributions to graduate school operations and scholarships, the newspaper said.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) questioned why the school was receiving a "special exemption" that was "airdropped at the last minute" into the bill. "I can't find anybody else in America who benefits from this particular provision," he said.

Of the colleges that report data to the federal government, only Hillsdale College would be affected by the provision, according to an analysis of Education Department data provided by a Democratic aide.

Toomey defended his provision, saying it was "perfectly reasonable" to exempt colleges that turn down federal money from the endowment tax because those schools impose less burden on federal taxpayers.

He also accused Democrats of mischaracterizing the exemption, saying it would apply to Hillsdale as well as other colleges that choose to forgo federal funding. Toomey declined to answer Democrats' inquiries on the floor about which other schools would benefit.

The proposed tax on private university endowments is part of both the Senate and House tax bills. The House-passed version applies the tax to colleges with assets of at least \$250,000 per student. Senate Republicans on Friday raised that threshold to \$500,000 per student in their bill, further narrowing the number of colleges that would be hit by the tax.

Hillsdale, a private Christian liberal arts school in southern Michigan, enrolls about 1,400 students and has an endowment of about \$528 million. The college proudly rejects federal funding and the regulations and requirements that come along with it.

The amendment that would have exempted colleges that reject federal funding from the endowment tax was co-sponsored by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and supported by conservative Heritage Action.

Spokesmen for Toomey and Cruz did not immediately respond to a request for comment; neither did a representative from Hillsdale College.

College and university presidents have lobbied heavily over the past several weeks to stop the new tax on university endowments. They argue it will take away money that schools use to help students afford college and invest in their campuses.

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What's in and what's out for farms and ag businesses in the Senate tax bill [Back](#)

By Kaitlyn Burton and Catherine Boudreau | 12/03/2017 09:13 AM EDT

The Senate's sweeping rewrite of the tax code, which [passed early Saturday](#) after Republicans hastily rewrote [sections](#) of the legislation, will likely have far reaching implications for farmers and agribusinesses.

The legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), would provide more tax relief for operations structured as pass-throughs and expand bonus depreciation. But it would eliminate a main deduction for agricultural co-ops that benefit their farmer members.

The Congressional Budget Office on Saturday estimated the Senate bill would add \$1.4 trillion to the federal deficit over a decade. Although the upper chamber and the House still have [to reconcile differences](#) in its respective versions, the Senate's 51-49 mostly party-line vote is a major step forward for the GOP that aims to close the deal before Christmas.

Here are several of the Senate provisions that would affect farmers, ranchers and the agricultural industry:

— **Increase deductions for pass-throughs.** Most farmers organize their operations under a class of businesses known as pass-throughs, such as partnerships, sole proprietorships and limited liability companies, or LLCs.

Republican Sens. [Ron Johnson](#) (Wis.) and [Steve Daines](#) (Mont.) were successful in their bid to increase the deduction for these entities after threatening to vote against the tax bill if the change wasn't included. Pass-through entities would see a deduction rise from 20 percent to 23 percent, a boost financed by increasing a proposed one-time tax on multinational corporations' offshore earnings.

The Senate also added a provision to the tax bill that would allow "specified agricultural or horticultural cooperatives" to take the deduction for pass-through businesses, a provision sponsored by Sen. [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.). This means that co-ops would be [treated the same](#) as other farming businesses.

— **Eliminate the broad deduction for co-ops.** Despite pleas by the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and nearly 200 other farm groups to maintain what is known as the Section 199 deduction, the Senate bill would repeal it. [Many](#) agricultural co-ops use the benefit and then pass along the money to their farmer members. The [trade council estimates](#) this provision sends about \$2 billion each year to directly to growers, who can then deduct their share from their taxes. Sen. [John Hoeven](#) (R-N.D.) had authored an amendment to reinstate the deduction, but it wasn't considered.

— **Raise the estate tax exemption.** The bill would increase the estate tax exemption from \$5.49 million to \$11 million for individuals, and double for couples, meaning only people inheriting estates valued above those levels get hit with the levy.

Groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association have pressed for full repeal of the tax, as the House version would eventually do. Such groups say a farm operation's value is typically tied up in assets like land and equipment, so those hit by the tax would have to sell those assets off to pay for it, threatening the ability to pass farms on to the next generation. But the USDA estimates that under the current rates and with special exemptions for farms, less than 1 percent would have to pay the tax.

— **Expand the Section 179 deduction and bonus depreciation.** The legislation would raise the maximum amount an individual can deduct for new asset purchases, like a tractor or combine, to \$1 million (compared with \$500,000 under current law) and boost the phase-out threshold to \$2.5 million. The bill also would allow 100 percent expensing.

After five years, that benefit would phase out by 20 percentage points every year. Under an earlier version of the Senate bill, full expensing would have completely expired after five years.

— **Restrict the business interest deduction.** The [bill](#) as passed would limit the business interest deduction. Small businesses making less than \$15 million would be exempt. Farming operations could opt out of being subject to that limit, however, although would have to use the alternative depreciation system to recover the cost of any property used in the farming business over a period of 10 years or more.

— **Retain the property tax deduction.** The original version eliminated the deduction for state and local taxes, also known as SALT, but Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) demanded a provision to allow for up to a \$10,000 deduction for property taxes.

— **Keep the Alternative Minimum Tax.** Senate Republicans initially proposed eliminating the individual and corporate alternative minimum tax, but switched course by making it apply to fewer people. For individuals, the minimum threshold would increase from \$50,600 to \$70,600. For couples filing jointly, the threshold rises from \$78,750 to \$109,400. The AMT is intended to prevent those with high incomes from using loopholes to avoid paying taxes.

— **Limit operating loss deduction, "carryback" provisions.** The legislation would strike "carryback" provisions for net operating losses, but make an exception for farming. The deduction would be limited to 80 percent of taxable income and applicable to the previous two years. But carryforwards would be permitted indefinitely for all taxpayers, including farmers. However, the provisions wouldn't be effective until 2023.

Under current law, if farmers have a bad year they can carry net operating losses back to the

previous five years to offset any profit, and thus reduce their tax liability.

— **Provide relief for citrus growers.** The Senate plan, which mirrors a bill, [S. 71 \(115\)](#), introduced by Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) (D-Fla.), would let citrus growers [immediately deduct](#) their replanting expenses even if they raise capital from investors to help cover the costs. This would help growers who need to replant diseased trees, such as those hit with citrus greening disease that is ravaging Florida's industry.

— **Reduce excise taxes on beer.** The bill would significantly lower the excise tax to \$3.50 a barrel on the first 60,000 barrels for smaller craft brewers producing less than 2 million barrels each year. It would also decrease the excise tax to \$16 a barrel on the first 6 million barrels that are either brewed domestically or imported, which would benefit large companies like MillerCoors and AB InBev. This provision would expire after 2019.

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Poll: Two-thirds don't see opening ANWR for drilling as priority [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/04/2017 07:34 AM EDT

Two-thirds of people surveyed don't believe Congress should make a priority of drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, according to a new [poll](#) conducted by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and POLITICO.

That poll contrasts with the strong push Republicans are giving the issue in the tax bill. President Donald Trump and Alaska's Republican lawmakers, including Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#), have said opening ANWR up for drilling would contribute to the U.S. to establishing "energy dominance."

Republicans included language in the tax bill that the Senate passed Friday that would open up a 1.5-million-acre parcel of ANWR to drilling. The USGS [estimated](#) more than a decade ago the area could hold up to 12 billion barrels of oil.

Forty-three percent of Republican respondents and 82 percent of Democrats said passing legislation to allow more drilling in ANWR "should not be a priority" in Congress. Thirty-five percent of Republicans and 10 percent of Democrats said such legislation would be very important or extremely important.

Independents hewed closer to Democrats on the issue, with 69 percent saying it should not be a priority and 19 percent saying it should be very important or extremely important.

The poll was conducted between Nov. 15-19 and included 485 U.S. adults, with a margin of error of 5.3 percentage points.

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Senate expands college savings accounts to K-12, home schools [Back](#)

By Jane Norman | 12/02/2017 03:14 PM EDT

The Senate tax bill passed early Saturday would allow families to use tax-advantaged, section 529 college saving accounts to pay for children to attend public, private and religious K-12 schools, as well as to cover the costs of home schooling.

The amendment, a major victory for conservative education advocates, was sponsored by Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and adopted on a 51-50 vote after Vice President Mike Pence broke a tie.

Cruz said on the floor that his amendment on K-12 schools "ensures that each child receives an education that meets their individual needs, instead of being forced into a one-size-fits-all approach to education, or limited to their ZIP code."

The amendment is similar to language in the House version of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). Both bills would expand section 529 college savings accounts to cover K-12 expenses of up to \$10,000 per year. The House bill, however, does not mention home-schooled students.

The Senate provision says tax-free savings could be used for tuition, books, online educational materials, tutoring outside the home, dual enrollment in an institution of higher education and educational therapies for students with disabilities.

The idea of expanding section 529 college savings to cover K-12 school expenses has long been backed by conservative groups like The Heritage Foundation and the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Public school advocates and teachers' unions say that's misguided because it would allow even the wealthiest Americans to use tax-free accounts for K-12 private school tuition, since there are no income restrictions on the use of 529s.

However, the Senate did not vote on adopting language that would allow "unborn children" to qualify as college savers, similar to what is in the House bill. The language was removed before the vote-a-rama.

The Senate's failure to adopt similar language makes it less likely it will be agreed upon by the House-Senate conference committee that will take up the House and Senate tax bills, expected to launch next week. Groups on both sides of the abortion debate already have squared off over the language in the House bill portraying it as a new front in the battle to grant legal rights to fetuses.

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GOP leaders: PAYGO cuts 'will not happen' [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/01/2017 04:32 PM EDT

Republican leaders are seeking to downplay the possibility that the GOP tax bill would trigger massive spending cuts under an obscure Senate rule known as PAYGO.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) and House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) released a joint statement this afternoon assuring that Congress wouldn't actually allow the across-the-board cuts to take place.

"This will not happen," McConnell and Ryan wrote, arguing that lawmakers have "readily available methods to waive this law, which has never been enforced since its enactment."

If the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), is signed into law, both chambers would need to agree to waive the decades-old Pay-As-You-Go rule to prevent the triggering of \$150 billion per year in [cuts](#) to a slew of federal programs, including Medicare and student loans.

GOP leaders have long been confident that they can strike a quick deal with Democrats to waive the federally mandated slashing.

"There is no reason to believe that Congress would not act again to prevent a sequester, and we will work to ensure these spending cuts are prevented," McConnell and Ryan wrote today.

But at least eight Democrats would need to support that vote in the Senate. And minority party lawmakers aren't making any promises they'll agree to bail out Republicans amid the frantic push to clear the tax bill.

A PAYGO waiver is likely to be included in a government funding bill this month, according to Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine), who said she received a personal assurance from McConnell this week that the cuts would be stifled.

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GOP Medicaid work rules imperil care for opioid abusers [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan and Brianna Ehley | 12/03/2017 07:17 AM EDT

Red states ravaged by the opioid crisis are pushing for Medicaid work requirements that could push people out of treatment as they try to get off drugs.

Kentucky, New Hampshire, Maine and Indiana are among at least eight GOP-led states seeking federal approval to require Medicaid enrollees to work as a precondition of their health coverage. All four states have been hard hit by drug addiction, which claims 140 lives a day nationally.

Governors say they would exempt people with chronic drug problems or severe mental illness from the Medicaid work requirements, but who would qualify and under what circumstances hasn't been spelled out. Critics fear that many addicts could lose benefits, particularly if they go in and out of treatment, or have relapsed — a not uncommon occurrence. Employers'

resistance to hiring people who have failed drug tests or have criminal records could also put health benefits at risk.

Backers of Medicaid work requirements say they're needed to reduce government dependency as the program has grown to cover more than 70 million Americans — nearly 12 million of whom obtained coverage under Obamacare.

The Trump administration is sympathetic, signaling it will sign off on the state waiver requests, even as it made combating the opioid epidemic a priority.

But even some Republican state lawmakers say they fear those with addiction issues would fall through the cracks.

"I'm all for designing programs in a way that encourages and rewards work," said Indiana state Rep. Ed Clere, a Republican who has previously bucked party leaders. "But we have to be careful not to let that objective undermine the primary purpose of health care, which is improved outcomes and wellness. I wouldn't want to see a work requirement get in the way of positive behavior modification and the individual's ability to take responsibility for his or her own health."

Indiana, which expanded Medicaid coverage to 400,000 people under then-Gov. Mike Pence in 2015, is one of the states asking for federal waivers to impose Medicaid work requirements that are primarily targeted at working-age, able-bodied adults. Officials generally are seeking to mandate 20 hours per week of work, or participation in a job-related activity, including volunteering or training.

Low-income adults in treatment for substance abuse would be exempt from the requirement, yet [state data](#) show that only slightly more than a quarter of enrollees with diagnosed problems are getting treated. Death rates stemming from drug abuse in 2015 stood at 19.5 per 100,000 residents, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"There's a lot of people who don't seek treatment who have challenges," said Matt Brooks, president of the Indiana Council of Community Mental Health Centers and chairman of the state's Medicaid Advisory Board. "There are folks who might need services that miss out."

Spending on substance abuse and mental health treatment grew substantially after states expanded Medicaid coverage to low-income adults, with Medicaid spending [over \\$7 billion](#) on substance use disorder services in the first year of Obamacare's expansion, in 2014, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The program's spending on mental health care that year was approximately \$46.5 billion.

Kentucky — whose request to impose work rules on able-bodied adults was not acted upon by the Obama administration — is expected to be the first state to receive the Trump administration's blessing. Officials [estimate](#) that roughly 95,000 people over a five-year period would lose Medicaid benefits under Gov. Matt Bevin's proposal, which also includes increased premiums and other restrictions.

Still, Bevin says the idea of mandating someone with addiction problems to work "doesn't make sense." Kentucky had the third highest rate of death due to drug overdoses in 2015, clocking in at 29.9 per 100,000 people.

"This isn't intended to be just a one size fits all, black and white, you do it this way or you don't get it," he told POLITICO during a recent Republican Governors Association conference in Austin, Texas. "That's foolish. A person like that is a true detriment to themselves, to their families and society as a whole in their addicted state. We need to get them to point where they are not in [an] addicted state so they can become an asset to themselves and their family and society."

The state intends to exempt Medicaid enrollees from employment rules and other conservative changes if they are deemed "medically frail," a catch-all term for people with serious conditions. Indiana includes a similar exemption.

Yet many of the details in the plans are hazy. In Kentucky, some of the qualifying conditions to be deemed "medically frail" are automatic, such as being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, being eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance or receiving hospice care. Others — such as having a chronic substance use disorder or disabling mental health issue — would meet the definition only if they satisfy yet-to-be-determined criteria.

People with addiction issues face a number of hurdles to obtain employment, including employers that drug test their prospective employees. More than half of all employers require job candidates to take drug tests, according to a [study](#) by the Society for Human Resource Management. Relapse is also common. Nationally, the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that relapse rates for addiction range from 40 percent to 60 percent.

"People cannot get a job because they can't pass a drug test," Brooks said. "So now, not only can you not get a job because of a substance use disorder, but you're not going to have access to health care ... and then where does that leave you?"

Criminal records for drug offenses can also make it harder to find employment. Though companies are legally prohibited from having blanket policies against hiring ex-offenders, it can be more difficult for those with a criminal history to find work.

Beyond finding work, people struggling with opioid abuse have trouble maintaining the sort of stability that enables them to hold down a job.

"This is a disease that hijacks a person's brain," said Mark O'Brien, vice president of state and local affairs for the Addiction Policy Forum. He added that for those in treatment programs, getting care can be time-consuming. "For some people, getting treatment is a full-time job," he said.

New Hampshire's waiver proposal would exempt anyone with a mental or physical illness or disability if their doctor fills out a form to verify their eligibility. People participating in the state's drug court program are also exempt from work requirements. However, it's unclear whether doctors would need to fill out the form only once for their patients or would routinely be required to certify that a Medicaid-eligible person still qualifies for the exemption.

"We're not trying to leave anybody out," said New Hampshire state Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley.

Renuka Rayasam contributed to this report.

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Acting HHS secretary: It's up to Congress to address opioid funding [Back](#)

By Brianna Ehley | 12/04/2017 12:32 PM EDT

Acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan signaled today that President Donald Trump will let Congress decide whether to appropriate new funding to address the opioid crisis.

"We're looking forward to hearing from Congress about how they intend to address this," Hargan said during a press conference at the CDC's headquarters in Atlanta.

Trump declared the crisis a public health emergency in October but did not request additional resources, though public health experts say states need billions of new dollars to fight the epidemic. There's been no indication that Congress is preparing a funding package after Trump's emergency declaration.

Hargan said he was encouraged by earlier proposals in the House and Senate to include new money for the opioid response, referring to Obamacare repeal legislation defeated earlier this year. Republican lawmakers had included that funding to help offset the impact of major coverage losses from repeal.

Separately, appropriations bills in the House and Senate keep funding for opioids relatively flat.

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POLITICO-Harvard poll: Democrats and Republicans still fixated on health care [Back](#)

By Joanne Kenen | 12/04/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Congress may have moved on from health care. The public has not.

With taxes and spending, debt and defense piled up on Congress' extremely full plate this month, a new [poll](#) by POLITICO and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health shows that Americans remain sharply focused on health care — but Republicans and Democrats aren't looking at the same things.

Republicans say their top priority is making another attempt at getting the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, repealed and replaced.

Democrats say theirs is getting the Children's Health Insurance Program funded. Congress missed a Sept. 30 deadline to renew federal funding, and now coverage for 9 million low-income kids is enmeshed with all the other year-end spending fights.

Given a list of 15 policy issues pending in Congress, Republicans put Obamacare repeal on

top. Forty percent called repeal an "extremely important priority" and 33 percent said "fixing the current problems" in the health care law was a top concern. Obamacare beat out other top priorities for Republicans, which included halting unauthorized immigration (38 percent), cutting taxes (35 percent), and boosting national defense spending (34 percent).

The unrelenting emphasis on Obamacare — when so many other issues float on and off the public's radar — suggests it's truly a defining, gut issue for the GOP.

"Among Republicans, I think it's a Hatfield and McCoy issue," said Harvard's Robert Blendon, an expert on health care and politics, referring to the legendary 19th century family feud.

The fact that Republicans are "checking both boxes" — repeal the health law or fix it — suggests "they want to feel they got something different out of this debate ... although I don't think we can get them to agree on what that is," added Blendon, who co-designed the poll with POLITICO.

Barely on the radar for Republicans is renewing the protections for DREAMers — the undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children (5 percent) — and investigating Russia's role in the 2016 elections (4 percent). Trade, a hot issue over the past year for Trump voters, has also dropped off.

Democrats' emphasis on the children's health program may come as a surprise because CHIP hasn't received a lot of attention from politicians or the media. That's partly because states and the Trump administration have so far been able to cobble together short-term solutions to stave off a crisis, although it's getting harder each week. And most people in Washington still think Congress will fix the popular program somehow.

"If you watch the news it's not about children's health, so the priority there is quite extraordinary," Blendon said.

After CHIP, which 48 percent of Democrats identified as a top priority, they also listed stricter gun laws (47 percent), giving more hurricane recovery help to Puerto Rico (43 percent), lowering prescription drug prices (39 percent), and investigating Russia's role in the election (35 percent). The lowest priorities for Democrats were Obamacare repeal, boosting defense spending and allowing more drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, all of which were ranked a top priority by just 5 percent of respondents.

The poll did not ask whether people who support Obamacare repeal would be satisfied by killing the law's individual mandate in the GOP tax bill, which currently seems likely. But scrapping that highly unpopular provision will give Republican lawmakers an anti-Obamacare achievement to take home to their voters.

On taxes, just under half of Republicans (49 percent) backed Congress' tax overhaul, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). A similar proportion thought they themselves would benefit — 1 in 4 thought it would help them "a lot" and another quarter thought they'd get "a little" help. A paltry 4 percent of Democrats gave it their blessing.

On health, about half of Republicans and Democrats expect their insurance premiums to go up, and just under half expect them to stay the same. Of those expecting a spike, 37 percent of Republicans blamed insurers (versus 23 percent of Democrats) and 13 percent blamed doctors

and hospitals (versus 8 percent of Democrats).

Not surprisingly, 45 percent of Democrats said higher premiums would be the fault of President Donald Trump and the Republicans — and just over a third of the Republicans blamed the Democrats.

The poll also looked at how Americans view the opioid crisis, which Trump declared a national public health emergency in October without requesting more resources for the problem. More than half of those surveyed considered it a major problem but not a "national emergency."

Indeed, many of those polled regarded opioids as a state and local problem — not one for Washington to solve. That means that despite the clamor in Washington and in the public health world about Trump not requesting more funds, the public isn't really looking to Trump for solutions, Blendon said.

The public also split on whether the government should mandate health plans to treat opioid abuse — with 48 percent supporting the requirement and 49 percent opposing it. Democrats were far more likely to favor it.

The survey was conducted by SSRS, an independent research company, for POLITICO and Harvard from Nov. 15-19. It used cellphones and landlines among a nationally representative sample of 1,009 U.S. adults.

Brianna Ehley and Jason Millman contributed to this report.

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Brianna Ehley and Jason Millman contributed to this report.

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Space Corps 'will be implemented' in next few years, Rep. Rogers predicts [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/02/2017 04:11 PM EDT

Simi Valley, Calif. — A controversial proposal to create a Space Corps under the Air Force will be enacted within the next several years, Rep. [Mike Rogers](#) predicted today.

Rogers, a top backer of the proposal who chairs the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, made the comments at the Reagan National Defense Forum during a panel on national security space with, among others, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Strategic Command chief Gen. John Hyten.

Asked separately about rapid acquisition for space, the Alabama Republican said the Space Corps "will be implemented, if not in the next couple years, in three or four years, five years."

While the final National Defense Authorization Act [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#) doesn't create a separate space cadre, it does require an independent research agency to develop a roadmap for a new space service.

During the session, Rogers and Wilson sparred over the Air Force's management of national security space issues. The Alabama Republican has slammed the service for not taking space seriously enough, and specifically criticized the Air Force for promoting only one space

professional from colonel to brigadier general in the past year.

"If anybody really believes that you're gonna see dramatic change in the way national security space meets its challenges without dramatic organizational change, you're fooling yourself," Rogers said.

"I have to take issue with that because I think we have exceptional airmen," Wilson replied.

"We are the Air Force. We're responsible for this and we own it," Wilson said. "And I'm really proud of our airmen who are part of the space world."

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Date: Tuesday, November 07, 2017 4:18:59 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 11/07/2017 04:16 PM EDT

FIGHTING ANOTHER CR: On Oct. 1, the federal government embarked on another continuing resolution — for the ninth year in a row. Now, chatter of another kick-the-can extension (one that could last into February) is growing louder once again. When asked this afternoon about the chance of finishing up by Dec. 8, veteran appropriator [Mario Diaz-Balart](#) (R-Fla.) laughed. "Since we're on the record, I'm not going to answer," he told us. "We have to keep shooting to get it done by December."

Plan B: At this point, appropriators say a stopgap is just a backup. "A CR is damaging, not only to the military but to the private sector as well," House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) told us today. "It promotes instability and unpredictability. So, hopefully, if we consider one, it will be very, very short." Postponing a fiscal crisis could be useful for a time-pressed (and tax-obsessed) GOP, but only with the support of House Republicans, who passed 12 spending bills on time for the first time in a decade this summer. And they're not ready to forget that accomplishment.

No time for quitting: With almost exactly a month left until the Dec. 8 deadline, top appropriators say it's too early to throw in the towel. "I don't think we even need to be thinking about a CR," says [Hal Rogers](#) (R-Ky.), who endured tough spending negotiations many times in his six years of chairing the House Appropriations panel.

"At the end of the day, we've got plenty of time to do this," [Tom Graves](#) (R-Ga.) says.

GOOD TUESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@[jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com (@[sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — The Penn Wharton Budget Model [estimates](#) that the House GOP tax bill would lower tax revenues by \$1.75 trillion over 10 years. That's far more than the \$1.413 trillion the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated.

#DailyBudgetFact — The House Rules Committee today exceeded a record for the most closed rules in a session. The last open rule was in May 2014, according to [CQ](#).

DISASTER RELIEF

BAILING AT THE LAST MINUTE: The House Natural Resources Committee missed out on a chance this morning to grill the person responsible for that controversial Whitefish Energy contract. Ricardo Ramos, the embattled head of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, canceled plans late Monday to appear before the panel.

Like a note from mom: The chairman of the power authority's board asked Congress in a [letter](#) on Monday to excuse Ramos' absence because of his "challenging" work on the island. Rep. [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah), chairman of the panel, said he was "very disappointed" and told reporters after the hearing that he's still hoping other Puerto Rico power authority officials turn

up to testify next week. Carmen Cruz Soto, the mayor of San Juan, also declined to appear.

SITTING TIGHT: Key lawmakers say they're still waiting to hear how much money the White House will seek in its next disaster package — and when. "Goodness knows," Frelinghuysen told us today when asked about the total price tag. "Just stay put." He said he has only heard "rumors" about when the White House request may come. Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) did offer a small clue about that package's contents, saying today that the next supplemental would definitely include money for Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico.

TAX

'THE DECISIVE DAY': As House Republicans prepare to pass their tax bill ([H.R. 1 \(115\)](#)) on the floor next week, outside groups are going gangbusters in an effort to secure tweaks before it's too late, Theodoric Meyer [reports](#). "We're treating every day like it could be the decisive day," says Bob Chlopak, a lobbyist representing Americans Against Double Taxation, a coalition fighting to preserve deductions for state and local taxes.

Already amending: House GOP lawmakers released a series of changes to their tax plan Monday night, including tweaks to the treatment of private university endowments, carried interest, stock options, dependent care assistance programs, musical works, the Earned Income Tax Credit and international tax avoidance, Brian Faler [reports](#).

Ever-confident leadership: House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) affirmed today that the House GOP's tax bill would indeed comply with the \$1.5 trillion budget cap, as mandated by the Senate's reconciliation rules. "We believe we're going to be fine on that," Ryan told reporters. "We believe that when you look at other analyses, whether it's Treasury or the rest, we're going to be right there in the sweet spot with economic growth that gives us more revenue." For his part, McConnell said he expects the upper chamber's still-unreleased plan "in the end to be revenue neutral for the government, if not a revenue gainer."

Pre-release chats: [Marc Short meets with red-state Democrats](#) | [VEEP chats with House GOP bigwigs](#)

More: [Club for Growth says plan 'doesn't cut it'](#) | [Middle class relief?](#) | [Endowment tax explained](#) | [College sports get short shrift](#) | [Mortgage bankers weigh in](#) | [School choice advocates want more](#) | [GOP on defense](#) | [Rethinking the adoption credit](#) | [Obamacare mandate doesn't make it](#)

Want to know more about [H.R. 1](#)? Pro Bill Analysis provides a detailed breakdown of the legislation complete with expert insight. Pro Bill Analysis is an exclusive feature of Legislative Compass, POLITICO Pro's legislative tracking tool. Here is a preview of the Pro Bill Analysis on H.R. 1.

House Republicans released their long-awaited bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), to overhaul the nation's tax system on Nov. 2. Overall, the legislation would cut taxes by nearly \$1.5 trillion over a decade.

Tax cuts for all types and sizes of companies, as well as other business benefits, are central to the economic promises GOP leaders say their plan will deliver. They expect the bill to expand the economy for years to come with provisions including a 20 percent corporate tax rate and a 25 percent top rate on other kinds of businesses, plus other perks such as immediate write-offs for some capital investments and the ability to deduct interest for a wide swath of smaller

companies.

The proposal also contains far-reaching changes that would affect virtually every household. It includes new tax brackets, new and expanded deductions and the loss of some longtime benefits. For additional context, take a look at the Ways and Means Committee's section-by-section summary released with the bill text [here](#).

Learn more about Legislative Compass [here](#).

DEFENSE

FINAL STRIKE: Senate Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) threatened today to launch his own probe into the Pentagon's finances if the military doesn't soon finalize its own audit. The Pentagon — with an annual budget of more than \$600 billion — is currently undertaking its first-ever financial audit. In a confirmation hearing today for a handful of defense nominees, McCain pressed military leaders to speed it up, Connor O'Brien [reports](#). "Frankly, you all have been getting away with it for years," he said. "We're not gonna do that anymore."

HEALTH CARE

STRETCHING THE SAFETY NET: In a rare public speech today to the National Association of Medicaid Directors, Seema Verma said Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid "does not make sense" and has jeopardized care for more vulnerable enrollees, Rachana Pradhan [reports](#). The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator said the nation "should celebrate helping people move up, move on, and move out" of the program.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

CHEAP CASH FOR PUERTO RICO: Investors have offered a zero-interest, \$1.5 billion loan to Puerto Rico's oversight board and commonwealth government. Did POTUS influence that action? Colin Wilhelm [explains](#).

EARMARKS

— Crush of tough issues could bring about government shutdown. [The Associated Press](#).

— Waters, Richmond rally opposition to flood insurance bill. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Puerto Rico needs as much as \$21 billion in aid, Oversight official Says. [Bloomberg Politics](#).

— FEMA rethinking ban on disaster aid to church buildings. [The Associated Press](#).

— Next New Jersey governor will inherit a state facing large and expensive problems. [Wall Street Journal](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 31 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/budget-appropriations/2017/11/frelinghuysen-any->

[december-stopgap-would-be-very-very-short-025435](#)

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Tax lobbyists sprint to win changes to House bill [Back](#)

By Theodoric Meyer | 11/06/2017 07:13 PM EDT

House Republicans kept their tax bill under wraps for as long as possible to hold back a deluge of lobbyists. After trade groups spent the weekend poring over the details, the flood is on.

The release of Republicans' long-awaited tax bill has sent trade groups representing everything from architects to universities scrambling to secure changes to legislation they fear would harm their industries.

With the House Ways and Means Committee marking up the bill this week and Republicans determined to move it through the House by Thanksgiving, lobbyists are rushing to make their cases before it's too late.

"We're treating every day like it could be the decisive day," said Bob Chlopak, a lobbyist representing Americans Against Double Taxation, a coalition fighting to preserve deductions for state and local taxes.

Since the bill's details were unveiled on Thursday, lobbyists have dug into the text, as their corporate clients plugged the numbers into economic models to figure out how it will affect them. Trade associations in Washington have sent emails to their members across the country and held conferences calls to try to figure out the best way to convince the Ways and Means Committee to spare deductions and tax credits they view as essential to their industries.

Now, many of the groups are settling on strategies for spurring their members to act or identifying members of Congress they will pressure to amend the proposal. Lobbyists see this week as crucial to influencing the House — even as they try to anticipate the course of the tax bill in the Senate, which is set to unveil its own legislation this week.

"You basically have this week" to sway the House, said Jerry Howard, the chief executive of the National Association of Home Builders.

"Realistically, the timeframe in the House is narrow, which is why we're beginning in earnest on the Senate side," Howard added.

House Republicans' proposed tax changes range from the well-known to the relatively obscure. The National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, for instance, have spent months pressing lawmakers not to reduce the home mortgage-interest deduction. The home builders endorsed an initial draft of House Republicans' proposal last month, only to pull their support after House Speaker Paul Ryan nixed a tentative deal the home builders had struck Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady.

The House bill unveiled last week would limit the deduction on new home purchases to mortgages of \$500,000, instead of \$1 million under current law, and eliminate it for new purchases of second homes.

The details of the House bill came as the Realtors — one of the top lobbying spenders in

Washington — gathered at a national conference in Chicago this weekend, giving the group a chance to galvanize members.

"They're all prepared to go back to their states and their communities and make sure their members of Congress know where we stand," said Jamie Gregory, a top lobbyist for the National Association of Realtors.

Realtors across the country have sent more than 114,000 emails to their members of Congress, Gregory said, and they'll decide "within the next two days" where to deploy staff. The group is eyeing sending people to congressional districts with high rates of homeownership that also have high property taxes, making the suburbs of cities like New York, Philadelphia and Chicago likely targets.

The American Institute of Architects, meanwhile, is homing in on ways to save tax credits that have gotten much less attention.

The group sent out an email blast to its members on Thursday identifying three threats in the bill: a change to the tax rate paid by so-called "pass-through" entities that would reduce taxes for many businesses but not architecture firms, and cuts to tax credits for historic preservation and energy efficiency. The architects are appealing to two Republican members of the Ways and Means Committee — Rep. Tom Reed (R-N.Y.), who has supported the historic preservation credit in the past, and Dave Reichert (R-Wash.), who has backed the energy efficiency one — for help.

"We'll be leaning on those folks to really bring the concerns up in the committee," said Ian McTiernan, a lobbyist for the American Institute of Architects.

Other trade groups unhappy with the bill include the American Wind Energy Association and the American Association of Universities.

The Ways and Means Committee began marking up the bill on Monday but did not make speedy progress. Republicans unveiled an amendment on Monday evening that would narrow a proposal to begin taxing private universities' endowments, which had infuriated colleges, and made several other changes.

Trade associations and coalitions also are running online ads and waging campaigns on social media, trying to rouse support to preserve favored tax breaks.

"Our advice to clients for the past several months was to make sure you had a contingency campaign plan in place and a message that can be boiled down to 140 characters," said Ken Spain, a founding partner of CGCN's strategic communications practice and a former House GOP staffer.

Brady has been preparing to tackle a tax overhaul for years, and he's ready for the onslaught of lobbyists looking to preserve their clients' favored provisions, said Lori Harju, a former senior adviser to Brady who's now a lobbyist at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck.

"Brady always said every industry must give something" in order to bring down the overall corporate tax rate, Harju said. "But you don't want to crush an industry, either."

Lobbyists looking to make their case this week should show up with an alternative proposal, Harju said. "Is there a way you think it can be fixed to make it less painful for you?" she said

she counsels clients.

"Don't underestimate Kevin Brady," she added. "He is not going to let this die."

Brian Faler contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

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House Republicans release tax bill changes [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/06/2017 06:22 PM EDT

House Republicans this evening released a series of [changes](#) to their plan to rewrite the tax code.

Their [amendment](#) to the Ways and Means Committee chairman's "mark" would narrow a proposal to begin taxing private universities' endowments.

It would make a number of other changes to [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), including ones to so-called carried interest, the Earned Income Tax Credit as well as their plans to fight international tax avoidance. It also would affect provisions regarding stock options, dependent care assistance programs and musical works.

Democrats were infuriated by the proposal, saying Republicans had blindsided them with the plan though the committee had been meeting today since noon, and say they did not have time to study the proposals.

"This is an utter disgrace," said Rep. [Sander Levin](#) (D-Mich.). "You make a mockery out of this committee," he told Chairman [Kevin Brady](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Red-state Democrats to discuss tax plan with top Trump aide [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 11/06/2017 06:55 PM EDT

At least a half-dozen red-state Democratic senators are set to talk taxes on Tuesday with a senior aide to President Donald Trump, a sign that some of the party's politically vulnerable members have not ruled out backing a bill that the GOP sees as a must to keep hold of its congressional majority.

Sens. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) are expected to sit down with Marc Short, the White House's director of legislative affairs, sources said late

Monday. Their attendance at the meeting, organized by Manchin, comes as Democratic leaders [project](#) confidence in their unity heading into a pivotal six-week stretch of legislating on tax cuts, with Republicans aiming to get a bill through the House by Thanksgiving and to Trump's desk by Christmas.

Half of the six Democratic senators attending Tuesday's meeting — all of whom face reelection next year and are among the GOP's top targets — endorsed an August [letter](#) from 45 Democratic senators who vowed to withhold their votes from any tax-cut legislation that increases the deficit or cuts taxes for the top 1 percent of earners. The House GOP's tax bill, released last week to criticism from Senate Democrats on the left and right wings of the caucus, is projected by the Joint Committee on Taxation to add about \$1.5 trillion to the deficit.

Manchin, Heitkamp and Donnelly notably declined to sign the August letter, but Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) has said that the trio shares the caucus' broader goals of a deficit-neutral tax bill that avoids breaks for the ultra-wealthy.

All six Democrats set to meet with Short have already faced intense pressure on taxes from the White House, with [Heitkamp](#) and [Donnelly](#) both joining Trump on visits to their home states that were designed to nudge them into supporting the GOP legislation. Trump went to Missouri in August [to urge](#) voters to defeat McCaskill if she didn't support Republican tax cuts, while Vice President Mike Pence traveled to Manchin's home state.

When Democrats on the tax-writing Finance Committee visited the White House last month, Brown gave Trump copies of two bills he's authored: one that would offer companies a tax credit to keep jobs in the U.S. and another that would expand the value of the child tax credit and earned income tax credit.

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Pence to huddle with senior House Republicans Tuesday amid tax push [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 11/06/2017 05:09 PM EDT

Vice President Mike Pence will meet separately with House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) and House Republican Conference Chair [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) on Tuesday as Republicans' tax reform push kicks into high gear.

Pence will also attend the weekly Senate Republican policy luncheon on Tuesday, something of a weekly tradition for him. The Senate is expected to unveil its own tax reform plan on Thursday, the same day House leaders hope to clear the tax bill through the Ways and Means Committee — the first hurdle to getting the bill to President Donald Trump's desk.

The vice president's visit comes as White House officials huddled separately with both House and Senate tax-writers at the Capitol today, according to a senior administration official.

The push to overhaul the tax code, with massive cuts for corporations and the wealthiest households, has become a do-or-die proposition for Republicans, especially after their failure

to repeal the Affordable Care Act. The week's activity will unfold as Trump is on the other side of the planet, spending nearly two weeks in Asia meeting with regional leaders.

The presidential absence could allow for more focus on the tax push, without daily Twitter broadsides derailing the message.

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Club for Growth says House tax plan 'doesn't cut it' [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 11/07/2017 09:13 AM EDT

The Republican-aligned Club for Growth harshly criticized the House GOP tax [plan](#) on Tuesday for falling short of several conservative goals, saying it "doesn't cut it."

The group's statement, obtained by POLITICO, takes aim at provisions affecting high-income earners and the estate tax, and also amplifies complaints about a provision affecting unincorporated businesses that has become a major sticking point for Republicans. The statement follows the group's tepid response to the plan when it was released last week.

"As the House Ways and Means Committee continues marking up the recently introduced 'Tax Cuts and Jobs' bill, Club for Growth is taking the opportunity to refocus the discussion to a tax reform proposal that will really grow the economy," the group wrote. "Spoiler alert: The House bill introduced last week doesn't cut it."

The changes the group demanded include lowering the tax rate on millionaires; eliminating the so-called bubble tax of 45.6 percent on certain high-earners with incomes above \$1 million; a full, immediate repeal of the estate tax; and changes to the proposed rules on closely held businesses.

"House Republicans are engaging in class warfare the likes of which would make Democrats green with envy," the group said in the statement.

Objecting to rules written in the bill to prevent abuse of a new, lower tax rate for so-called pass-through businesses, which can range in size from single-owner small businesses to the Trump Organization, the Club for Growth also demanded that GOP tax writers ditch those rules and further cut rates for those businesses.

"The blended, real effective marginal rate is at least 35% and can even be higher," for high-income small business owners, the group argued. "That means no tax cut at all for most small business and family-owned companies."

The statement comes as the House Ways and Means Committee begins a second day of work on the legislation. Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) has indicated that more changes to the bill will be coming, after making a few relatively minor adjustments on Monday.

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Ivanka Trump, Mnuchin pitch tax reform as middle class relief [Back](#)

By Henry C. Jackson | 11/06/2017 10:12 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's daughter and his treasury secretary pressed the case Monday that GOP-led tax legislation is about bringing relief to the middle class, not offering cuts to wealthy Americans.

In interviews with Fox News, Ivanka Trump and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin made similar pitches about the legislation, focusing on what they said were benefits to the middle class.

Critics have argued that the legislation would end up benefiting wealthy Americans far more.

"This is not about tax cuts for rich people," Mnuchin said. "It's about tax cuts for the middle class."

Mnuchin addressed one criticism of the legislation — its cuts to corporate tax rates — arguing that trimming what big companies pay ends up benefiting workers most.

Mnuchin said: "70 percent of the burden of corporate taxes are borne by the worker."

In a separate interview, also on Fox News, Ivanka Trump pointed to the legislation maintaining child and dependent care credits and doubling the standard income tax deduction as elements that will benefit the middle class.

"Really it's the central theme, middle-income Americans and supporting them," she said. "We spend less than any country in the developed world on children between the ages of zero and 5. It's just a fact. We don't invest enough resources."

The House unveiled its tax legislation last week. Senate Republicans have not yet rolled out their blueprint, although there are likely to be differences between the two bills.

Trump said she was confident that Republicans could bridge any differences and was not worried the Senate would make significant changes.

"I'm optimistic that the Senate ... takes what's been created and actually enhances it," she said.

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More colleges exempted from new endowment tax under Brady amendment [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 11/06/2017 06:37 PM EDT

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) today introduced [an amendment](#) to the House

GOP tax bill that would exempt more private colleges and universities from a new tax on their endowment earnings.

The amendment to the bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), would more than double the threshold at which private colleges become subject to a 1.4 percent excise tax on their net investment income.

Under [the proposal](#), the tax would apply only to private colleges whose assets are valued at \$250,000 per full-time student. The [original GOP plan](#) released last week, would have set the threshold at \$100,000 per full-time student.

The new endowment tax, which is opposed heavily by higher education groups, would apply only to private, not public, schools with at least 500 students.

Brady (R-Texas) said today that the new tax would put private university endowments on "equal footing" with private foundations.

The American Council on Education had previously estimated that roughly 160 colleges and universities would be subject to the tax. It was not immediately clear how many would now be exempt under Brady's amendment.

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How big-time college sports takes a hit in the House GOP tax bill [Back](#)

By Benjamin Wermund | 11/06/2017 05:59 PM EDT

The House GOP's tax plan — which would [hit higher education hard](#) — could also land a blow to some major college sports programs by targeting season ticket holders, top-dollar coaches and stadiums.

First, the legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), would do away with a deduction tied to season tickets. Many college booster clubs require a donation for the "right" to buy season tickets for football, basketball and other games. Donors now can write off 80 percent of that gift.

As [the News & Observer points out](#), it's a big deal to many booster clubs. Boosters at the University of North Carolina — the reigning national basketball champion — require a donation of at least \$6,000 for the right to buy two season tickets. That jumps to \$25,000 for four tickets.

The House bill could also create a tax on high-paid coaches.

Under a provision in the plan, employers would be taxed on their top five paid employees. The charge would apply to employees making more than \$1 million and would be 20 percent of the amount over \$1 million that employee is paid.

Many universities with powerhouse athletics programs pay coaches millions and they are almost certainly among those schools' top-paid employees.

At Clemson University, which pays football coach Dabo Swinney an average of \$6.75 million a year, for example, that would translate to a more than \$1 million tax. The University of Alabama, which pays Nick Saban more than \$11 million a year, would be taxed \$2 million.

The House GOP plan could also make it more expensive for colleges to build athletics facilities by taxing interest on private activity bonds, which many colleges use to build the facilities. The National Association of College and University Business Officers says the change "will increase borrowing costs and will likely result in diminished investments in infrastructure."

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Mortgage bankers throw weight behind homeownership tax credit [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 11/06/2017 05:20 PM EDT

The Mortgage Bankers Association urged tax writers to reconsider a homeownership tax credit to replace the mortgage-interest deduction, an idea that House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has rejected.

The position is a critical shift for the trade group, which for decades has joined its industry allies to defend the mortgage-interest deduction from cuts. The policy statement also throws new weight behind an idea being pushed by the National Association of Home Builders.

"We believe Congress should take this historic opportunity to think creatively about new homeownership incentives targeted more efficiently to low- to moderate-income borrowers," such as a 12 percent tax credit for mortgage interest and property taxes, MBA President David Stevens wrote in a [letter](#) to House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) and ranking member [Richard Neal](#).

Stevens said the tax reform plan as written has the potential to harm the housing market and the economy as a whole.

Ryan [rejected](#) the concept of a homeownership tax credit just days before the GOP unveiled its [draft plan](#), telling lobbyists that the concept hadn't been sold to lawmakers. But on Friday, Brady said he wanted to continue talking about the idea, which would combine benefits for mortgage payments and property taxes into a single credit.

"I think it has great merit and would love to see that considered in this process," Brady [told POLITICO](#).

The industry's long-standing loyalty to the mortgage interest deduction is crumbling as the prospects for tax reform become real and as economists and housing advocates get more vocal about the system's flaws, including its disproportionate benefits to wealthier homeowners.

The current GOP tax plan cuts in half, from \$1 million to \$500,000, the size of the mortgages on which homeowners are allowed to deduct interest from federal taxes. It also limits the deductibility of state and local taxes to \$10,000. Those provisions would have an effect on fewer than 6 percent of U.S. homeowners, but would be felt hardest in high-cost states such as

California and New York.

Of the big three homeownership lobbying groups, the National Association of Realtors alone remains wedded to preserving the mortgage interest deduction, or MID, as is, with its current cap of \$1 million.

"Maybe the MID doesn't belong in a blank-slate tax code. But through history, through the democratic process, it is embedded," NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun said on Friday. "We are opposed to anything that harms the attractiveness of homebuying and homeownership."

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School choice group says House tax bill doesn't go far enough [Back](#)

By Caitlin Emma | 11/06/2017 05:00 PM EDT

The Center for Education Reform, an advocacy organization that supports the expansion of school choice, said today that the House GOP's tax plan is a "laudable step, but it leaves too many Americans out of the equation."

In [a statement](#), the group's founder and CEO Jeanne Allen said the proposed expansion of 529 college savings programs to include apprenticeship costs and K-12 expenses like private school tuition "does not account for the importance of providing meaningful opportunities to Americans — opportunities our education, training and workforce programs have failed to provide — and underscores this stark reality."

Some organizations that support the expansion of school choice for many working class Americans [have said](#) the proposal put forward by House Republicans would only help wealthy families afford private school.

The bill would end Coverdell Education Savings Accounts — tax-free accounts that have allowed families to set aside up to \$2,000 to cover K-12 costs — and expand 529 college savings accounts to cover up to \$10,000 per year in expenses for public, private and religious schools. Coverdell accounts are income-restricted, applying to families in lower tax brackets, while 529s are open to everyone, no matter how wealthy.

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Republicans thrown on defensive after study shows tax hike [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/07/2017 02:11 PM EDT

Republicans are on the defensive after a new analysis shows some middle-income people

would see tax increases under their plan to rewrite the tax code.

While most taxpayers — 61 percent — would see their taxes fall in the next two years, 20 percent would pay higher taxes by 2027, the Joint Committee on Taxation said Tuesday. Forty-six percent that year would get a tax cut while 34 percent would see only minimal changes in their tax bills, with breaks of less than \$100.

It promises to be an explosive issue, especially given President Donald Trump and other Republicans' promises to make the middle class the focus of their tax plans.

That has some Republicans in the Senate pushing for significant changes, such as an even larger — and pricier — expansion of the child tax credit, a popular middle-income break, than the one House Republicans are contemplating.

That would require major revisions to the House plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). Some conservatives want to finance it at least in part by repealing the Affordable Care Act's mandate to buy health insurance.

"The House and Senate — I think we need to do even more to provide a tax cut, not just tax reform, but a tax cut for every American," said Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas).

Democratic critics of the plan are seizing on the findings while moderate Democrats who Republicans want to work with are expressing caution.

"I have some concerns," said Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.V.), who was scheduled to meet with administration officials on Tuesday. "The bottom line is the president told me specifically that this is not a tax cut for the rich — it's a tax cut for the hard-working middle class, so I'm looking at everything we're seeing."

House tax writers emphasize that people in every income group would see their tax bills fall under the plan, estimating the average family would receive a \$1,182 tax cut. The JCT said that only 8 percent of taxpayers would pay more in 2019 under the plan.

What's more, Republicans said the legislation will be massaged as it makes its way through Congress.

"There's definitely going to be changes," said Rep. [Vern Buchanan](#) (R-Fla.), who sits on the House's tax-writing committee. "We've got somewhat of a final product, but it's quite awhile before we have a final, final product."

"It's a nine-inning game, we're in the third," he said.

Part of the reason some could see their taxes climb is House Republicans want to replace personal exemptions, which adjust tax burdens for family size, with new family credits. But those provisions would not be big enough to make up the difference for many families.

They also want to index provisions of the tax code for a slower measure of inflation, which means people would be pushed into higher tax brackets over time as wages climb.

Republicans also want to dump a number of tax breaks used by middle-income people, such as a deduction for interest on student loans and a write off for those with large medical expenses.

Though their plan is a net \$1.5 trillion tax cut, they are simultaneously both raising and lowering taxes. They are cutting taxes by more than \$5.5 trillion, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, while raising taxes by more than \$3.8 trillion.

The report found widely varying outcomes within individual income groups. By 2027, for example, about 23 percent of those earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 would see a tax increase. At the same time, 42 percent of people in that same group would see a tax cut of at least \$500.

Among those earning more than \$1 million that year, the report said, two-thirds would see a tax cut of more than \$500 while one third would see a tax increase of at least \$500.

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Brady: Adoption tax credit up for discussion [Back](#)

By Toby Eckert | 11/07/2017 12:34 PM EDT

The adoption tax credit, targeted for elimination under the House GOP tax plan, is back on the table for discussion, Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) said today, after social conservatives and adoption advocates complained about the proposal.

"We're having, absolutely we're having these discussions," Brady (R-Texas) [told](#) conservative talk show host Hugh Hewitt. "For me as a pro-life dad and my wife as a pro-life mom, we understand, look, we understand the joys of adoption, because we have a family where none existed before."

Brady and his wife have two adopted sons. Despite that, the House Republican plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), would eliminate the \$13,570-per-child credit as part of a push to clear the tax code of credits and exemptions used by relatively few Americans, while doubling the standard deduction households could take. The plan would also boost the child tax credit.

Getting rid of the adoption credit would raise little revenue, less than \$50 million over 10 years, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation. Adoption advocates say its elimination would make their jobs harder.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Ways and Means Committee is debating the tax legislation this week, and Brady is expected to make further changes to the plan.

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ACA mandate repeal not included in latest House tax bill amendment [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 11/06/2017 06:36 PM EDT

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) released an amendment to the GOP tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), and he has not added a repeal of the Obamacare individual mandate.

Republicans are awaiting an updated CBO score on repealing the mandate as part of tax reform. Some rank-and-file members — and President Donald Trump — want to ax the mandate as part of the tax bill but GOP leaders are skeptical such a bill can get through the Senate.

To view online [click here](#).

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CMS administrator makes case for sweeping Medicaid changes [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 11/07/2017 12:30 PM EDT

CMS Administrator Seema Verma on Tuesday outlined the Trump administration's case for requiring some people to work in order to get Medicaid, a contrast to what she called the Obama administration's "low expectations" for low-income people.

She called that a "tragic example of the soft bigotry of low expectations" that reinforced dependency.

Verma in a speech to the country's Medicaid directors painted a very different philosophy about Medicaid than the one advanced under former President Barack Obama. She said the ACA expansion of Medicaid to millions of low-income adults without children "does not make sense" and it jeopardizes care for more vulnerable enrollees, such as pregnant women and disabled people, by stretching the safety net.

"For this population, for able-bodied adults, we should celebrate helping people move up, move on, and move out," Verma said in a rare public speech to the National Association of Medicaid Directors. "We have a moral responsibility to do more than just give them a [Medicaid] card. We have a responsibility to give them care."

Her views comport with those of other Trump administration officials including Vice President Mike Pence, and reflect some of the positions she took on behalf of red states like Indiana as a health-care consultant specializing in Medicaid.

Democrats and left-leaning consumer advocate groups have fiercely protested tying Medicaid benefits to employment, arguing that it would set back the goal of providing health coverage to low-income Americans. They are expected to file litigation once CMS grants its first state request.

Verma did not specify when CMS would approve the first state waiver with a work requirement. Kentucky and at least six other GOP-led states have sought permission to impose work requirements, a major shift in Medicaid's 52-year history.

She said CMS will approve state waiver proposals with "community engagement," such as requiring some enrollees to work or participate in related activities such as job training or

volunteering. She also promised greater accountability and a streamlined waivers approval process. Both Democratic and Republican state officials have complained the approval system is cumbersome.

As a consultant, Verma negotiated Medicaid waivers, including the Indiana plan under which then-Gov. Pence adopted Obamacare's expansion. The Obama administration granted Indiana some leeway to add conservative features, but rejected a proposal to institute work requirements.

But under the Trump administration, several states are seeking permission to enforce employment-related conditions, including Kentucky, Arkansas, Indiana, Maine and Wisconsin. CMS has yet to approve a plan despite its clearly stated support for such policies.

Medicaid, which now covers roughly one in five Americans, has grown since 2014 to cover millions of additional low-income adults, most without children. About 11 million people who did not previously qualify have gained coverage under the Medicaid expansion in the Affordable Care Act.

"The Medicaid program is a promise to help individuals live up to their highest potential, leading healthier more fulfilling and more independent lives," Verma said Tuesday. She said work requirements are in the spirit of an idea from President Lyndon Johnson — who established Medicaid in 1965 — that the government should not only relieve symptoms of poverty but also prevent it altogether.

CMS on Monday released policy guidance to streamline approvals of Medicaid waivers and state plan amendments. The agency has revised its website on 1115 waivers to encourage state submissions with different objectives than those promoted by the Obama administration, including strategies to ensure Medicaid's long-term fiscal sustainability and promoting beneficiary independence.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Puerto Rico bondholders offer \$1.5B loan to commonwealth [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 11/07/2017 05:00 AM EDT

Investors in the senior class of Puerto Rican bonds known by their Spanish acronym, COFINA, have offered a zero-interest, \$1.5 billion loan to the territory's oversight board and commonwealth government that may have been influenced by President Donald Trump.

Though the creditors have an obvious gain from Puerto Rico's recovery from devastating hurricanes — they're more likely to be repaid the quicker Puerto Rico can get back on its feet — a source familiar with their strategy also indicated that they were concerned over remarks Trump made around his [trip to San Juan](#) in October after Hurricane Maria.

According to the source, creditors read Trump's comments as stating the U.S. government would attempt to be repaid before creditors for post-petition claims, like the low-interest loan authorized in a recent emergency package by Congress. The commonwealth government said

it needed that loan to maintain essential functions through the end of the year after Maria hit.

Though the administration has had to walk back some of Trump's prior remarks — most notably his comment about ['wiping out'](#) Puerto Rico's debt — creditors believed Trump knew what he meant in his remarks due to his personal experience with bankruptcy in business, the source said.

In addition to speeding the island's recovery, creditors hope that if the loan is accepted by Puerto Rico's oversight board, they will be able to maintain their place in the order of repayment of debt — unless a loan were granted at a negative interest rate, in which case the COFINA creditors would maintain debtor-in-possession primacy.

"This would be an extra level of protection," the source familiar with creditor thinking said.

The loan, the largest of its kind offered to Puerto Rico by bondholders following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, would consist of \$800 million in sales tax revenue currently held by Bank of New York-Mellon and an additional \$700 million from creditors to Puerto Rico, to be distributed over the course of 12 months.

The \$800 million is sales tax revenue that backs the COFINA bonds. A judge has frozen the account until court proceedings around Puerto Rico's debt crisis can be completed, a process that could take months, if not years. Meanwhile, creditors and the commonwealth have fought over the funds. In a U.S. district court filing last night, bondholders argued that the commonwealth government "rejected this offer as 'inconsistent with its litigation strategy.'"

Though the commonwealth has rejected the loan, COFINA creditors maintain hope that the the territory's oversight board will use its power as trustee for the commonwealth and accept the offer.

The oversight board's executive director, Natalie Jaresko, testifies before the House Natural Resources Committee this morning about Puerto Rico's recovery efforts.

To view online [click here](#).

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Waters, Richmond rally opposition to flood insurance bill [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 11/07/2017 02:09 PM EDT

House Financial Services ranking member [Maxine Waters](#) (D-Calif.) and Rep. [Cedric Richmond](#) (D-La.) are urging lawmakers to oppose a bill that would reauthorize and overhaul the National Flood Insurance Program.

In a "dear colleague" [letter](#), the two lawmakers said the bill that the House is taking up this week would "make flood insurance more expensive, less available and less fair for millions of Americans."

"Although we have pushed for a long-term reauthorization bill that ensures the continued availability and affordability of flood insurance, this bill does neither," they wrote. "[H.R. 2874](#)

is a step in the wrong direction for families and businesses across the country."

In addition to the opposition from Democrats, it was unclear today how much support House Republicans looking to pass the bill would have from their own party. Since the committee approved the bill this summer, several Republicans from coastal districts have pushed back.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House Rules Committee will hold a hearing on the bill at 3 p.m.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations
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Subject: Budget & Appropriations: GOP braces for even-tougher second stopgap — Conservative groups suggest OCO as solution to caps disputes — Trump declares disaster relief for California wildfires
Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 2:34:58 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/08/2017 02:30 PM EDT

DRAMA'S OVER (FOR NOW): Government employees (and congressional reporters) rejoice today after both chambers [cleared](#) a short-term funding bill with more than 24 hours to spare. And President Donald Trump officially [signed off](#) this afternoon.

So what's next? Two more weeks of waiting — and then another drag-it-out continuing resolution.

Still stuck: Unlike with many stopgap bills of old, appropriators didn't beg to buy time to finish up an omnibus. This time, lawmakers are simply trying to pressure leaders to finally settle on spending caps. Until then, the entire funding process remains at a standstill. Even if topline numbers were announced today, a bill with updated spending levels probably wouldn't be ready until mid-January.

No deal: The much-touted "Big Four" meeting at the White House on Thursday did not produce the kind of grand bargain that some appropriators had been hoping. Asked if negotiators had zeroed in on a compromise, Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) replied, "I wouldn't say that." Spending levels did dominate the talks, but the two parties didn't come to a consensus, we [reported](#) Thursday evening. Democrats are still demanding parity for any defense and non-defense spending boost, while Republicans want to see the Pentagon get the bulk of any increase.

Putting the 'CRomnibus' to bed: House conservatives say Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has given a firm commitment to push for a full year of defense funding on the next stopgap. But Freedom Caucus members say they're not delusional in thinking Senate Democrats would actually swallow that plan. "I don't know that it would be intellectually honest to suggest there's a high degree of confidence that that will happen," Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) said Thursday with a coy smile.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Agriculture financing group Rabobank warns in its [November report](#) that farmers who grow row crops like soybeans and corn will continue to face low growth and low profit margins over the next five years. More subsidies, anyone?

#DailyBudgetFact — During past government shutdowns, lawmakers have consistently provided back pay for affected employees, according to the Congressional Research Service. During the 2013 shutdown, a total of 850,000 executive branch employees were furloughed — about 40 percent of the workforce.

BUDGET

HOW TO DITCH THE DEMOCRATS: Conservative groups have come up with a plan

they believe would allow Trump and GOP leaders to scrap all deal-making on spending caps without doing damage to the Pentagon. Their argument: Republicans don't need a new proposal that balances increases in defense and domestic money. The GOP can simply go around the caps with the Overseas Contingency Operations fund.

'Last resort': In a 180-degree flip, Heritage Action told Republican lawmakers this week that they should consider that dreaded "OCO" tactic to make sure defense spending isn't sequestered this year. "This would allow the Trump administration to deliver on its promise to increase defense spending without requiring additional domestic discretionary spending," the group wrote in a [memo](#) to Republican offices. "To be clear, OCO is a massive budgetary gimmick and should be used only as a last resort."

Double-dog dare: As one tipster speculated, the plan would dare Democrats to vote no instead of negotiating a caps deal with Republicans — "Mick Mulvaney's strategy all along."

DISASTER AID

FEDERAL FIRE SPRINKLER: Trump has given the go-ahead to rain more federal funds and resources upon California as firefighters there struggle to beat back the blaze that has now [consumed](#) more than 500 structures and sent more than 120,000 people fleeing, Nolan McCaskill [reports](#). The declaration allows the Federal Emergency Management Agency to swoop in with help and provides 75 percent federal funding for emergency protective measures.

Hell of a year: This latest emergency order comes as the federal government continues to make payouts for other catastrophic wildfires this year. FEMA has delivered more than \$13 million in individual assistance since Trump handed down a major disaster declaration in October for California wildfires. Following on lesser declarations, federal fire management assistance has also been given this year to Utah, Nevada and Kansas.

TAX

NOT NEXT WEEK: House and Senate tax negotiators plan to work through the weekend on their overhaul plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). But House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) says a vote won't happen in the House next week, Brian Faler and Colin Wilhelm [report](#).

WILL MITCH RENEGE? Sen. [Susan Collins](#)' support for the GOP tax bill may be wavering, Adam Cancryn [reports](#) today. The Maine senator had agreed to back the measure after McConnell promised to fund Obamacare cost-sharing subsidies. "I remain confident, despite your skepticism, that we will eventually get that," Collins told reporters on Thursday, [per](#) Adam. But behind the scenes, Ryan has told conservatives that the next spending bill won't include any Obamacare provisions, as we [reported](#) Thursday.

A reshuffle: Without Collins, the bill could still pass since only one other Republican, deficit hawk [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.), is on the record in opposition. But if the Mainer drops her support, each GOP vote becomes far more valuable, likely spurring additional Republican demands during conference negotiations.

All the rest: [22 percent corporate rate is on the table](#) | [But Brady sticks with 20 percent](#) | [The HIT could take a hit](#) | [Byrd rule kills Newman's Own carve-out](#)

ENERGY

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: The GOP's plan to help pay for tax reform by expanding Arctic drilling may be just a pipedream. With low oil prices and high costs of new development, energy companies aren't so ecstatic about starting from scratch in Alaska right now, Ben Lefevre and Anthony Adragna [report](#).

Undershooting the target: You'll remember that the [latest report](#) from the CBO, shared internally with budget staffers, estimated ANWR revenues would fall short by about \$366 million.

ADMINISTRATION

HOVERING QUESTIONS: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to accommodate his packed schedule, newly FOIA-ed documents reveal. One of those rides was requested so Zinke could fly back from Yorktown, Va., in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, Ben Lefevre [reports](#). That round-trip flight cost \$6,250.

INFRASTRUCTURE

JANUARY ROLLOUT? That long-awaited infrastructure plan is just a month away, the White House tells [Lauren Gardner](#). POTUS intends to send Congress "a detailed infrastructure principles document" outlining his dreams for spurring \$1 trillion in investment.

State-centric: The plan is expected to give incentives to encourage state and local governments to foot a greater share of the bill for infrastructure projects, whether with their own money or through private-sector financing. The \$200 billion federal share of the package would be split into four buckets: Funding for states and localities that promise to take on more of the financial burden, block grants for rural areas, existing federal loan programs, and money for "transformational" projects "that will truly change the face of our country," the White House spokeswoman said.

'Devolution' in motion: House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) says he hopes to meet with Trump next week to go over the specifics, Brianna Gurciullo [reports](#). "Some of it sounds a little bit like devolution," he said. "And I've not talked to a single governor that wants the federal government not to have a role. It's a national transportation system." The chairman also said he chatted with Ryan this week about the legislative path. "I told him I think it has to be a bipartisan bill," Shuster said. "There's realities in the Senate."

Broadband bellyaching: A top staffer for Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) (D-Fla.) said today that Democrats were previously "hopeful" the Trump infrastructure plan would include direct dollars for broadband deployment, John Hendel [reports](#). "Streamlining, permitting and even tax incentives are helpful to some extent, but you've got to have direct funding to reach broadband, particularly in rural areas," Nelson communications counsel John Branscome said at a conference, following news this week that the White House doesn't plan to set aside funding specifically for broadband development.

TELECOM

JUDGMENT DAY FOR FIRSTNET: States now have less than three weeks to decide

whether to opt out of FirstNet — the \$7 billion broadband network the feds are building out to help first responders communicate. And a bunch of biggies — like California and Florida — are still on the fence, John Hendel [explains](#). At the state level, skeptics wonder about alternatives that could be cheaper for emergency communications and better for broadband coverage. And competitors like Verizon are already giving the federal government a run for its money in courting clients for alternative networks, potentially complicating the cash flow equation.

DEFENSE

'60-YEAR-OLD TANKERS': When Rep. [Don Bacon](#) (R-Neb.) first entered the Air Force in the 1980s, he said there was "zero doubt" the U.S. military was best in show. Some 30 years later, Air Force pilots are still flying the same aircraft he did, and he's less sure about that world-class status. "We've got 60-year-old B-52s, 60-year-old tankers," Bacon [told Connor O'Brien](#) during a recent sit-down. "Just so much evidence that we have declined in our training, in our readiness and the modernization upkeep."

Enough's enough: Bacon calls himself both a budget hawk and a military hawk but warns that he's getting restless with Congress' propensity for stopgap funding bills. "I don't think our military can keep being passed over with these CRs," Bacon said. "We can't keep kicking the can down the road."

ECONOMY

86 IN A ROW: The U.S. economy added 228,000 jobs in November, a dip from the 244,000 created in October, Ian Kullgren [reports](#). The U.S. economy has now added jobs for 86 months in a row, though job growth has slowed since 2014.

FEMA

NFIP GETS TWO MORE WEEKS: Lost in all the hubbub about funding the government, the National Flood Insurance Program also got a two-week extension under the stopgap ([H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#)) this week, Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). No fix, though, for keeping the program from falling further into debt after the \$16 billion bailout in September.

CONGRESS

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PROBE: The House Ethics Committee is opening a new investigation into sexual harassment allegations that resulted in an \$84,000 taxpayer-funded settlement for one of Rep. [Blake Farenthold](#)'s former staffers, Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#).

EARMARKS

- Jovial origins for 'vote-a-rama,' a Senate voting ploy. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- Sequestration deal should avoid harmful offsets, divide funds equitably. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#).
- Perdue: Food aid program should stay linked to farm bill. [Bloomberg](#).
- Pentagon pleads for a full appropriations bill on eve of CR expiration. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Connecticut infrastructure funding in question. [Reuters](#).

— Trump backs keeping state income tax break with cap, Cohn says. [Bloomberg](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: Today's the day federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/gop-braces-for-even-tougher-second-stopgap-046058>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Senate clears spending bill for Trump and averts shutdown [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 12/07/2017 06:18 PM EDT

The Senate tonight backed a two-week funding bill, staving off a government shutdown a full day ahead of the deadline.

Senators approved the bill, [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#), on an 81-14 vote, punting a series of nasty political battles until just before Christmas. President Donald Trump has already endorsed the spending patch and is expected to sign it soon.

Government funding was going to expire Friday night but now would be extended to Dec. 22, when lawmakers have acknowledged they'll need yet another short-term bill to buy time for broader negotiations.

The Senate's vote came after the House earlier this evening passed the legislation with almost entirely Republican votes. House Democrats protested the vote because GOP leaders left them out of negotiations.

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Trump approves emergency declaration for California to help combat wildfires [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 12/08/2017 11:55 AM EDT

President Donald Trump today approved an emergency declaration in California, where wildfires have blazed for much of the week.

Trump's declaration orders federal assistance — from DHS and FEMA — to aid state and local response efforts.

"This action will help alleviate the hardship and suffering that the emergency may inflict on the local population, and provide appropriate assistance for required emergency measures ... to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, and to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and

Ventura," the White House said in a statement. "Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide, at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. Emergency protective measures, limited to direct Federal assistance, will be provided at 75 percent Federal funding."

The California wildfires are in in their [fifth day](#). Fires have burned across the southern region, displacing people from their homes and tearing through buildings. Authorities issued evacuation orders for more than 100,000 people.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Thursday that White House and FEMA officials were "speaking regularly to state and local authorities and making sure that we're ready and able to help when needed and when requested by those authorities."

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Final tax bill vote in House won't come next week, GOP leader says [Back](#)

By Brian Faler and Colin Wilhelm | 12/08/2017 11:49 AM EDT

The House will not vote next week on a final agreement to rewrite the tax code, though House and Senate negotiators are expected to work through the weekend.

"It will not come up next week, but if it could, I would bring it up as soon as we come out of conference, because I do believe the American people are waiting for a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy told colleagues late Thursday in remarks on the House floor.

His comments come as lawmakers work behind closed doors on a compromise tax plan that they can send to President Donald Trump to sign into law. Lawmakers have provided little guidance as to when they might wrap up their work, beyond saying they want to finish this year.

Dec. 22 has been widely seen as the unofficial deadline in recent days, as that's the date federal funding will run out under a stopgap spending measure and lawmakers are expected to turn their attention to spending again.

Gary Cohn, the chairman of the National Economic Council, told CNBC Friday that "a lot of progress is being made."

"This is going to be a big weekend for the conference committee; they're spending the weekend working on taxes, and I think we'll see an enormous amount of progress over the weekend," he said.

McCarthy also announced the House would be in session the week of Dec. 18, when the congressional calendar had both chambers on recess.

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Collins' Obamacare deal faces moment of truth [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 12/07/2017 07:33 PM EDT

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) is barreling toward yet another health care showdown with her own party. But this time, she might not have the leverage to get what she wants.

Republicans who watched Collins lead the rebellion over the GOP's Obamacare repeal effort just three months ago are playing tough on yet another high-stakes bill, wagering they can do without the Maine moderate's swing vote and still claim a narrow year-end legislative win on tax reform.

Collins went along with the tax bill [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) that repeals Obamacare's individual mandate after Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) pledged to pass a pair of bills propping up Obamacare's shaky insurance markets, including a bipartisan deal resuming payments on key subsidies that President Donald Trump halted in October.

But Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has made clear he's not bound by the deal, and there's little urgency among House Republicans to do much of anything on health care before the end of the year. On Thursday, Republican Study Committee Chairman [Mark Walker](#) said conservatives received assurances that talks on a spending package to keep the government open won't address Obamacare.

"The three things we were told are not gonna happen as part of our agreement: no CSRs, no DACA, no debt limit," he said, referring to efforts to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing subsidies.

That could cost Collins' support after she signaled that her vote on the final bill may hinge on the fate of the health care measures.

One bill, known as Alexander-Murray, would temporarily restore subsidies to insurers. The second would fund a two-year reinsurance program helping health plans cover particularly expensive patients.

Senate Republicans can only afford two defections and still pass the tax bill using a fast-track procedure that requires a simple majority, with Vice President Mike Pence ready to cast the tie-breaking vote. The margin would become razor thin if Collins holds out, and Sen. [Bob Corker](#) maintains his opposition over concerns about the bill's impact on the deficit.

Yet House Republicans still chafing over the Senate's failure to repeal Obamacare insist they won't bend to Collins' demands. And while Senate Republicans are trying to keep Collins in the fold, there's little apparent worry so far that her opposition would sink the tax effort.

"I think you guys have to find something else to be concerned about," said Sen. [Tim Scott](#), one of the 17 GOP lawmakers assigned to merge the House and Senate versions of the tax plan.

Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#), who coauthored Alexander-Murray and has championed its inclusion in a year-end agreement, also waved off the need to pressure House Republicans on the issue.

"The House knows our position," he said. "When they see that they can lower premiums 18 percent ... reduce the debt, reduce the amount of money going to Obamacare subsidies, I think it'll be a Christmas present they'll want to give to their constituents."

One of the few moderates in a Republican conference that narrowly controls the Senate, Collins has regularly used her voice and vote to extract concessions from GOP leaders and ensure she's a central figure in negotiations.

During the health care debate, she urged the GOP to protect Medicaid and preserve more subsidies for people to buy insurance. When they stuck with their blueprint, Collins joined fellow Republicans [Lisa Murkowski](#) and [John McCain](#) in a dramatic vote that killed the months-long repeal bid.

And in the run-up to the Senate's late-night tax vote, she secured three late changes to the bill, including the expansion of a provision allowing people to deduct hefty medical bills that House Republicans had voted to eliminate entirely.

That was on top of McConnell's "ironclad commitment" to tackle the two health care bills at year's end — measures that Collins claims will help offset premium increases stemming from the bill's repeal of Obamacare's mandate that most Americans be insured.

Collins said Thursday she considers House passage of those Obamacare bills part of that commitment, even though McConnell has only publicly agreed to "supporting passage" of them and can't singlehandedly force the House to take up legislation.

Ryan hasn't officially ruled out the possibility, but declined to commit to rolling either of the bills into upcoming spending agreements. Conservatives have loudly opposed any aid for Obamacare, and even moderates who support stabilizing the health law have shrugged at the exact timing.

"What the vehicle is to get it through the system, in the House and the Senate to the president's desk, I'll leave that to our leadership," said Rep. [Tom Reed](#), who co-chairs the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

Collins insists she's taking the long view, claiming progress Thursday on trying to win over House Republicans during rounds of private negotiations.

"I remain confident, despite your skepticism, that we will eventually get that," she said.

And as the GOP learned during the repeal debate, the whip count could shift suddenly. Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) and [Ron Johnson](#) remain wild cards, and either could conceivably join Corker and Collins in torpedoing the tax bill if they dislike the final version.

For now though, Republican leaders are signaling once again that Collins may not get everything she wants on health care — and gambling it won't cost them a second time.

"I think that these are separate issues," said Sen. [David Perdue](#). "I'm hopeful that that won't derail this [tax bill]. We've got to get it this done and get it on the president's desk."

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Collins: Deal on tax bill includes House passage of Obamacare measures [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 12/07/2017 02:11 PM EDT

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) said today she believes the House must pass stopgap health legislation under the deal she struck with Senate GOP leaders to support the tax bill.

The Maine Republican voted for the Senate's tax plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), after Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) committed to back measures aimed at stabilizing Obamacare's insurance marketplaces. In his [pledge](#) last Friday, McConnell only agreed to "support passage" of two health bills, but Collins told reporters she believes the agreement also requires the House to pass the health legislation.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) has made clear that he was not part of the deal between Collins and McConnell, and House Republicans have broadly panned the idea of doing anything to prop up Obamacare. That potentially could put in doubt Collins' support for any final tax bill negotiated between the two chambers, and Republicans have little margin for error in the Senate.

One health bill negotiated by Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) and [Patty Murray](#) would restore key subsidy funding to insurers on the Obamacare exchanges and offer states more flexibility to customize their marketplaces. The second would fund a two-year reinsurance program helping insurers cover particularly expensive patients.

Collins said she's still negotiating, and she believes the House will eventually get on board.

"I remain confident, despite your skepticism, that we will eventually get that," she said.

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Walker says cost-sharing subsidies won't be part of spending talks [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/07/2017 03:46 PM EDT

GOP leaders have promised conservatives that this month's spending negotiations will not include Obamacare cost-sharing subsidies, DREAMers or the debt ceiling, Republican Study Committee Chairman [Mark Walker](#) told reporters today.

"The three things we were told are not gonna happen as part of our agreement: no CSRs, no DACA, no debt limit," Walker (R-N.C.) said, referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals law.

The cost-sharing subsidies have become a major point of contention in talks dealing with short-term spending beyond the Dec. 22 expiration set in a continuing resolution to be voted on later today, [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#).

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) said last week that she was promised by Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) that the Obamacare funding would be included in a spending bill. Without it, she has threatened to oppose the GOP's tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), which could come up for a final passage vote as soon as next week.

Walker was among several conservatives who huddled with House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) on Tuesday to discuss spending issues. That promise was among several, spending-related commitments made during the Tuesday meeting, Walker said.

Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#), who also attended the meeting, said separately today that some conservatives are skeptical about GOP leaders' spending promises.

"There are a number of us questioning how rock-solid those commitments are," Meadows (R-N.C.) said, referring to a range of leadership comments on spending levels and policy items.

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Corporate tax rate of 22 percent gains traction in tax reform discussions [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo and Colin Wilhelm | 12/07/2017 12:51 PM EDT

The possibility of setting the corporate tax rate at 22 percent instead of 20 percent surfaced more strongly in the tax reform debate Thursday, with officials at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue indicating it's under serious consideration.

"There's a lot of conversation about corporate rates, we're trying to keep it at 20 percent," Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) told POLITICO. "The president would like it lower than that and so would I, but the 22 percent keeps cropping up so it's a viable thing."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders didn't rule out the administration supporting 22 percent, which has come into play in recent days after President Donald Trump unexpectedly threw the number on the table.

"Look, our focus has been on getting the lowest corporate rate possible," Sanders told reporters. "Fifteen is better than 20. Twenty is better than 22. And 22 is better than what we have. Again, we're going to continue to push [for the lowest rate], but we're not going to negotiate that from the podium, and we're committed to getting the lowest corporate rate we can."

Later in the day, White House legislative affairs director Marc Short appeared to do some damage control, telling Reuters, "We believe that 20 percent is the right number ... 20 percent is about as high as we feel comfortable going."

Raising the corporate rate could seriously disrupt the work that has been done to date as lawmakers rush to get a tax bill to Trump before the end of the year.

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) said Thursday, "I'm focused on 20 — I really

think that's our competitive rate, so we're going to go into conference with that."

"My theory is a very simple one: We should leave well enough alone," said Sen. [Tim Scott](#) (R-S.C.), a member of the Finance Committee who was appointed to the conference committee trying to settle differences between the House and Senate bills.

The extra 2 percentage points would open the floodgates to more requests to add tax preferences back into the bill, he said.

"We'll have multiple people spending the same amount of money in multiple ways because everybody's in a different corner," Scott said.

Brady (R-Texas), who is chairing the negotiations, indicated the issue is far from settled.

"All this — we'll deal with in conference," he told reporters.

Trump suggested last weekend that the sweeping tax overhaul [legislation](#) being negotiated in Congress could set a 22 percent corporate rate, after saying earlier that 20 percent was a "red line" for him. Getting the corporate rate down from its current 35 percent is one of Republicans' main objectives.

But they are also looking for ways to cover the cost of provisions that members want to add or subtract from the bill, including making a state and local tax deduction more generous and abolishing the corporate Alternative Minimum Tax, or AMT.

Trump's comments Saturday threw a sudden, and confusing, new dynamic into the discussions.

"[T]his wasn't a big issue two or three weeks ago," Hatch said, then added, "It was a big issue but it wasn't so much argued."

"It's cropped up in every meeting we've had, but it's also been knocked down in every meeting we've had too," he said.

But Short told Reuters he thought Trump "was just reflecting what conversations he had heard from them [senators], but that ... wasn't intended to signal: this is an endorsement of raising the corporate rate."

Earlier in the day, Trump's top economic adviser, Kevin Hassett, said Trump "has spoken for himself on these things, and he's acutely aware of how important marginal tax rates are, and also he's acutely aware that in conference that sometimes things move around."

Hassett, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, made those remarks at an event hosted by the American Council for Capital Formation.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) refused to play ball when asked Thursday about the corporate rate.

"Do you think I'm going to get in to speculating what's in the conference committee?" Ryan told reporters. "What I'm not going to do is start speculating what is or isn't, what I want or don't want."

The House bill would drop the corporate rate to 20 percent next year, whereas the Senate bill

would make that cut starting in 2019. The Senate bill would also preserve the AMT, which would raise about \$40 billion over a decade according to an official estimate. House Republicans want to strip it out in talks that have started to blend the two bills into one to send to Trump.

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Brady sticking to 20 percent for corporate tax [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 12/07/2017 06:01 PM EDT

House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) is pushing back against suggestions that Republicans might settle for a corporate tax rate north of 20 percent.

Asked this evening if he was open to bumping that up, Brady said: "I'm focused on 20 — I really think that's our competitive rate, so we're going to go into conference with that."

Brady (R-Texas), who is chairing negotiations aimed at hashing out a compromise tax plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), between the House and Senate, also indicated the issue is far from settled.

"All this — we'll deal with in conference," he told reporters this evening.

His comments come as some Republican senators debate possibly cutting the rate to 22 percent, instead of their long-promised 20 percent, an idea first broached Saturday by President Donald Trump.

Brady also said their compromise plan will include more so-called transition rules to give people time to adjust to the changes, especially with "some of the more complex areas like international" corporate tax changes.

Most of the Republican plans take effect Jan. 1, leading to complaints that lawmakers are not giving the public adequate notice to prepare for the changes.

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House tax writers weigh plan to suspend Obamacare insurer tax [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/07/2017 03:16 PM EDT

House Republican tax writers are considering delaying Obamacare's health insurance tax for only limited markets next year, leaving out small businesses and possibly private Medicaid plans, according to sources on and off Capitol Hill. They would suspend it for all markets in 2019.

Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee are worried that it will be difficult for the small businesses to send prospective savings from delaying the tax back to consumers. Industry sources, however, say it is possible.

Excluding small business could pose a political problem: Insurance plans covering large companies, individuals in the Obamacare markets and Medicare Advantage plans would see a tax break, but insurers covering small business would not.

The fate of the health insurance tax is being decided in negotiations over a year-end bill. Also in the mix is a two-year delay of Obamacare's medical device tax, loosening the restrictions on health savings accounts, and delay of the Cadillac tax.

Negotiations are in the early stages, according to several sources, citing the threat of a government shutdown and the conference on the GOP's tax bill.

"Members are working to deliver as much relief as possible from the health insurance tax — as soon as possible," a Ways and Means Committee spokesperson said.

On the Senate side, the tax bill has pushed the Obamacare tax delays to the back burner. Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said the panel hasn't considered delay legislation yet.

"But we'll have to get into it, there's no question," he said.

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Newman's Own faces mammoth tax bill after lawmakers fail to spare the foundation

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By Brian Faler | 12/07/2017 06:42 PM EDT

A decision by the Senate's parliamentarian could force the sale of the late actor Paul Newman's food company, and dismantle his charity.

During the Senate's consideration of Republicans' plans to rewrite the tax code, Parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough struck a provision that would have spared Newman's Own from an unusual 200 percent tax it's facing.

It had been seeking the provision for eight years, and appeared to be finally on the cusp of victory. Both House and Senate Republicans had included the exemption in their tax plan drafts, with little controversy or debate.

But MacDonough deemed the provision — along with more than a dozen others — to be violations of the Senate's rules, so they were deleted before the legislation was passed last week.

"It came as a total bolt out of the blue," said Bob Forrester, head of the foundation that owns the food company. He says he was unfamiliar with the rule.

"It was a stunning, devastating, brutal even, notification when I had heard this had happened."

"We're still stunned," he said.

The IRS has given the foundation until November 2018 before the tax ax will fall. But given the time it takes to sell a company, Forrester says he needs a fix by the end of the first quarter of next year or it will have to begin divesting from the business, which sells salad dressing, dog food, salsa, wine and popcorn, among other things.

When Newman, one of the biggest movie stars of the 20th century, died in 2008, he left the company to his foundation, which gives away its profits to charity.

The problem is a 1969 tax law that bars foundations from owning more than a small stake in private businesses. It was written with an eye toward preventing wealthy people from using foundations as tax shelters, and it imposes a deliberately confiscatory 200 percent tax on those that don't unload their businesses after a certain period of time.

Forrester had won support from lawmakers in both parties for the exemption, including Sens. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) and [Bob Menendez](#) (D-N.J.).

But the parliamentarian, responsible for interpreting the Senate's rules, called it a violation of the so-called Byrd rule. Named after the late Sen. Robert Byrd, the rule puts strict limitations on what sort of provisions can be included in "reconciliation" measures like the one Republicans are now using to muscle their tax plans through the Senate.

MacDonough also killed a bid by a handful of Senate Republicans to include a trigger mechanism that would have forced future tax increases if the GOP plan didn't help the economy as much as lawmakers hope — which briefly brought negotiations over the tax legislation to a standstill.

She deleted more than a dozen other provisions as well, including one allowing education savings accounts for unborn children, tax breaks for people hit by flooding in the Mississippi Delta and one for tax-preparation programs for poor people.

That has frustrated those who had been pushing the provisions, and say they have little recourse to challenge the parliamentarian's decisions.

She could be overruled by lawmakers, though that would be highly unusual.

Ironically, Forrester said lawmakers had advised him to wait to make another run at the foundation provision until lawmakers took up a broad tax-code rewrite, saying that would be his best opportunity to get it approved.

Forrester says he's still looking for ways to get the provision passed, though he may have missed his best opportunity. He acknowledges time is running short.

"I continue to hope there is some other option," he said. "I just can't believe there isn't."

"If there is no option legislatively, then there is no option for Newman's Own other than to break itself up."

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Poor Alaska lease sale sows confusion on ANWR drilling plan [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Anthony Adragna | 12/07/2017 05:47 PM EDT

The weak results from the lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska are giving Democrats ammunition in their fight to stop Republicans from opening the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge under the tax bill.

Democrats are making hay out of the fact [only two companies bid](#) in what Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke had hailed as an "unprecedented" offering of acreage in the NPR-A, and they say the lease sale, which generated only \$1.2 million, undercuts Republican claims that [allowing drilling in a portion of ANWR](#) would generate \$1 billion over 10 years. The [latest report](#) from the CBO, shared internally with budget staffers, estimated ANWR revenues would fall short by about \$366 million.

House Natural Resources ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and two other committee members sent a letter to CBO Director Keith Hall asking for a re-do on ANWR drilling revenue estimates in light of the poor NPR-A showing.

But [Sen. Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska), the driving force behind putting the refuge in the budget package, said the lease sale had little bearing on prospects for ANWR, however. The refuge is believed to hold as much as 10 times the billion barrels of oil estimated to lie buried in the petroleum reserve, Murkowski said.

"Different fields, different prospectivity," Murkowski told reporters.

Meanwhile, House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah) said negotiations over ANWR and how much money it might bring to federal coffers is ongoing.

"I'm going to see all sorts of numbers being thrown out at the last few minutes," Bishop told POLITICO. "We'll look at them. We'll still negotiate this process."

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans will meet in conference to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the tax bill.

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GOP tweaks Arctic drilling language to bump up revenue [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 11/30/2017 11:51 AM EDT

Senate Republicans have reworked language on Arctic drilling in their tax bill to further boost

revenue, hoping to resolve a procedural hiccup before the impending passage vote.

Senate Budget Committee leaders have tweaked provisions that would authorize drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, altering the language in a way they believe will comply with so-called Byrd rule requirements, a GOP committee aide confirmed today.

The budget panel had expected to raise \$1 billion over a decade by opening up ANWR for drilling. But a report from the CBO, shared internally with budget staffers, estimated it would fall short by about \$366 million, according to a Senate Democratic aide.

The GOP's revised drilling language would propose selling more oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, potentially producing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue, the aide said.

If approved by the Senate parliamentarian today, the new language will be formally added before the high-stakes Senate floor vote on the tax plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

The fate of the provision — championed by swing vote Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) — was [called into question](#) Wednesday after a warning from the parliamentarian.

Each part of the GOP's tax plan must comply with a complex set of budget reconciliation rules that allow the legislation to avoid a Democratic filibuster.

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Zinke booked government helicopters to attend D.C. events [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/07/2017 06:31 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to take himself and staff to and from official events near Washington, D.C., in order to accommodate his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for his replacement in Congress and a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, according to previously undisclosed official travel documents.

The travel logs, released to POLITICO via a Freedom of Information Act request, show Zinke using taxpayer-funded vehicles from the U.S. Park Police to help accommodate his political events schedule.

In a case detailed in the new documents, Zinke ordered a U.S. Park Police helicopter to take him and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on June 21.

Zinke's staff justified the \$8,000 flight by saying official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m., too late to make the two-hour drive to the exercise, according to the documents.

The event that prevented Zinke from leaving before 2 p.m. was the swearing-in ceremony for

Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.), according to Zinke's [official Interior calendar](#). Gianforte, who won a special election for Zinke's old seat in May after assaulting a reporter, contributed along with his wife \$15,800 to Zinke's two congressional campaigns.

"Secretary Zinke's last engagement in Washington D.C. is at 2 p.m.," an Interior staffer wrote as justification for using the helicopter. "Driving to [the West Virginia event] would not enable him to be on time and fully participate as scheduled."

Interior defended the trips.

"The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Thursday. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

Zinke also ordered a Park Police helicopter to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Va., on July 7 in order to be back in Washington in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Pence. The trip cost about \$6,250, according to the documents.

The horseback ride through Rock Creek Park also included Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, according to a [post](#) on Pence's Facebook page.

While in Yorktown, Zinke completed a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion, according to the documents. The day before the trip, an Interior trip planner added to the schedule a 30-minute flyover of an area where Dominion Energy [is building](#) high-voltage electric transmission lines to run across the James River.

Interior officials originally estimated that driving to Yorktown would take about three hours, although one noted that "there is a major construction project on I-64, which will slow things down."

In an email to Interior travel scheduler Tim Nigborowicz, an Interior employee justified Zinke's using the helicopter instead of less expensive method by saying "the Secretary will be able to familiarize himself with the in-flight capabilities of an aircraft he is in charge of" and that the Park Police staff on board would "provide an added measure of security to the Secretary during his travel."

Interior officials certified ahead of the flight that Zinke's use of the helicopter would not compromise law enforcement obligations.

The Park Police helicopter, [Eagle One](#), is deployed for medevac and emergency response situations around Washington, a part of its mission Zinke praised later that month.

"U.S. Park Service helicopter pilot and crew provided a life-saving medevac flight during the attack on members of Congress during baseball practice," Zinke said in the July 25 [video](#) celebrating American Heroes Week.

The former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL is [already being investigated](#) by the Interior Department's Inspector General and the independent Office of Special Counsel for his [mixing of official travel and political events](#). Interior earlier this year released records documenting Zinke's use of charter and military aircraft, including a \$12,000 flight from Las Vegas to Montana that allowed him to give a speech for a hockey team owned by a major

campaign donor.

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White House to send infrastructure principles to Congress in January [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 12/07/2017 04:34 PM EDT

President Donald Trump intends to send Congress next month "a detailed infrastructure principles document" outlining his much-anticipated \$1 trillion plan, a White House spokeswoman confirmed today.

Bloomberg first reported the plan's expected January release, though administration officials have for some time signaled that the principles document is expected early next year.

The plan is expected to incentivize state and local governments to take on a greater share of the costs of funding infrastructure projects, whether with their own money or through private-sector financing.

The \$200 billion federal share of the package would be split into four buckets: funding for states and localities that promise to take on more of the financial burden of infrastructure building and upkeep; block grants for rural areas; existing federal loan programs; and money for "transformational" projects "that will truly change the face of our country," the spokeswoman said.

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Shuster: Some Trump infrastructure ideas sound like 'devolution' [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 12/07/2017 06:05 PM EDT

Rep. [Bill Shuster](#) said today that he hopes to meet with President Donald Trump next week to go over the specifics of a 2018 infrastructure package.

The White House plans to [send](#) lawmakers "a detailed infrastructure principles document" next month. Trump's plan is likely to include a program to give states and local governments incentives for picking up at least some of the tab for infrastructure projects.

"Well, I gotta see exactly what they mean by it," Shuster said, when asked about the Trump administration's anticipated approach. "Some of it sounds a little bit like devolution. And I've not talked to a single governor that wants the federal government not to have a role. It's a national transportation system."

Shuster met with House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) earlier this week, and he said they had a "broad

conversation about how we have to do" an infrastructure package.

"I told him I think it has to be a bipartisan bill," Shuster said. "There's realities in the Senate."

Some Republicans in the House also may end up opposing the bill over certain provisions, he added.

Shuster said he wants both chambers and the Trump administration to be "on the same page" in terms of principles. But Trump is going to have to lead the charge.

"We're going to write our own bill, but we need the presidential leadership," Shuster said.

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Nelson staffer says infrastructure package should include direct funding for broadband

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By John Hendel | 12/08/2017 11:33 AM EDT

A top staff member for Senate Commerce top Democrat [Bill Nelson](#) of Florida pushed back against the [Trump administration's announcement](#) Thursday that its infrastructure proposal will likely lack funding dedicated to broadband deployment.

"Streamlining, permitting and even tax incentives are helpful to some extent, but you've got to have direct funding to reach broadband, particularly in rural areas," Nelson communications counsel John Branscome said today at a Practising Law Institute conference. "We were hopeful this would be an area where there would be some direct funding."

David Goldman, a lawyer for House Energy and Commerce top Democrat [Frank Pallone](#) of New Jersey, invoked a House proposal slating \$40 billion for broadband within the Commerce Department, [H.R. 2479 \(115\)](#).

The administration told POLITICO communities could decide on what funding goes to broadband. Congress ultimately must advance whatever is proposed.

Crystal Tully, policy director for Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.), said funding may be secondary to infrastructure streamlining efforts, which the administration could factor into a bill. She said if there is funding, "I think it makes sense to house it under the FCC" or coordinate with the commission if housed under the Agriculture Department.

Lawmakers' broadband infrastructure legislation should become "more concrete" next year given the effort, House E&C GOP counsel Robin Colwell said, citing broadband as "top priority" next year and noting the Senate's [5G discussion draft](#). Branscome cited objections from multiple municipality groups to that draft and said pre-empting localities "should not be approached lightly." Thune [hopes to introduce](#) that bill by year's end.

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Governors face decision time on AT&T-run nationwide public safety broadband network [Back](#)

By John Hendel | 12/08/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Pressure is rising for the federal government and AT&T as they try to beat back heightening noise and doubts from competing providers and state officials as they try to fulfill a mandate to create a nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband communications network.

Such a network would let first responders easily communicate across state lines, the final unfulfilled 9/11 Commission recommendation that advanced into law in 2012 along with \$7 billion to plan and implement it.

The endeavor, known as FirstNet, faced early scrutiny for potential conflicts of interest and other problematic operational issues from lawmakers and the GAO. But it eventually got its act together. The federal government put out a bid in January for a 25-year contract, won last spring by AT&T. The country's largest wireless carrier is now positioned to also leverage wireless spectrum allocated for FirstNet's public-safety purposes for commercial gain.

Without this network, first responders such as firefighters and police officers cannot always use their communications equipment to talk across state lines, which observers say could be a catastrophic limitation in a national disaster.

FirstNet, still yet to be built, now nears a critical milestone that will test its viability and the trust of the country's governors. It also tests AT&T's efficacy before the Trump administration, all while the company is suing the Justice Department over a merger with Time Warner. The game-time decisions for a score of governors approach as the wireless carrier and its government partners battle accusations from competing interests, such as Rivada Networks and Verizon, of strong-arming states into signing up through an opaque process. AT&T and government officials insist they remain open.

So far, 33 states and two territories pledged to join — more than half the country. New Hampshire just became the first state to reject the national network, a blow to FirstNet's efforts.

The rest face a Dec. 28 deadline to decide. If governors opt out, they must take control of spectrum allocated for the network and build an alternative that still lets that state's first responders communicate with others using the national network. A governor's failure to choose results in automatic opt-in to FirstNet. AT&T gave governors draft plans in June, months earlier than statutorily required.

Several big states, including California and Florida, remain uncommitted. Skeptics wonder about alternatives that could be cheaper for emergency communications and better for broadband coverage. New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu on Thursday announced his decision to opt out, choosing instead to work with Rivada. He earlier [urged](#) states to "pause" and said this week that opting out would give his state "a level of control" it wouldn't have if it opted in.

"If we have one, two, three states that opt out, I don't view it as making the national system necessarily weaker for everyone else," said Chris Sambar, AT&T's senior vice president overseeing FirstNet, in an interview.

Opting out will "make it weaker for those states," he said. "They're going to be behind by a couple years. They're going to be hoping that the bet they're making on different providers is going to work out."

Rivada Networks, a 13-year-old public safety communications provider, is actively lobbying governors to ditch FirstNet. It was [eliminated from bidding](#) on FirstNet's contract but now wants states to consider alternatives, joining with U.S. Cellular, the country's fifth-largest wireless carrier, in preparing plans. Macquarie Capital [backs](#) Rivada.

"New Hampshire ran the longest and most thorough opt-out review process in the country," Rivada CEO Declan Ganley said in a statement, anticipating other states joining New Hampshire by the Dec. 28 deadline.

AT&T offered caution and warned of "substantial risks" in New Hampshire choosing "an unproven vendor."

Sambar told POLITICO on Thursday that New Hampshire could still change its mind. He criticized Rivada as "scary" and pointed to Rivada's setbacks in court and abroad when trying to make its case.

"Absolutely, some states are going to opt out," Rivada Senior Vice President Brian Carney said before New Hampshire's announcement. "Once you get one, you could actually get to 10 pretty fast. There really is a subterranean revolt brewing here."

Capitol Hill lawmakers have come to generally back FirstNet. Last month, Rep. [Mike Doyle](#) (D-Pa.) questioned New Hampshire's interest in contracting with Rivada given that the company is not operating a live radio access network anywhere.

Others object to the nature of the choice being put to states.

FirstNet gave states opt-out terms in October that were "a surprise" to everyone, said Verizon Vice President Don Brittingham, whose company didn't bid on FirstNet's contract. In August, the carrier announced plans to build a separate network core — a hub for call routing and network access — for first responders.

Brittingham cautions the opt-out terms would force states "to do business with AT&T" and limit "the state to use AT&T's public safety services for 25 years."

FirstNet and AT&T dispute that characterization. Although the law requires opt-out states to connect to FirstNet's network, it doesn't restrict who can provide end-user services to public safety agencies, FirstNet spokeswoman Chrissie Coon said.

State activity is ramping up, with frenzied debate among state officials as they try to sort fact from fiction. Smaller states tended to be the ones opting in early, although Texas, home to AT&T, joined in September.

Decisions continue trickling in, with Ohio and Vermont joining FirstNet last week despite Vermont lawmakers [writing](#) with first responder concerns. A Florida panel recently

[recommended](#) opt-in.

Last month, California issued a request for alternatives, raising prospects of FirstNet rejection. Brittingham suspects "strong interest" in California opt-out, while AT&T's Sambar remains optimistic, saying larger states "like us to go on a roadshow around the state" first.

Not making governors' decisions easier is an information war among industry players over basic facts.

Rivada wants to convince governors to opt out to buy another six months to assess alternatives. Rivada board member Martin O'Malley, a former Maryland governor, recently ripped FirstNet for "third-world thuggery."

"None of that stuff is reality," countered Sambar, urging governors to ignore company chatter. He touted [facts](#) FirstNet issued to battle "noise in the market," denying opt-out grants states an "extra 180 days."

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: Rep. Don Bacon [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/08/2017 09:44 AM EDT

After nearly three decades in the Air Force, Rep. [Don Bacon](#) is eager to boost military funding, modernize the nation's nuclear arsenal and improve electronic warfare capabilities as a new member of the House Armed Services Committee.

A freshman Republican from Nebraska, Bacon is a retired Air Force brigadier general. His home state hosts Offutt Air Force Base, the headquarters of the U.S. Strategic Command. And, not surprisingly, he's an advocate of maintaining and modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad.

"It's good to have the survivability, the dependability and the versatility that the triad gives you, and if we lose any of those three I think we're a weaker country," Bacon says.

Lawmakers are "ducking our responsibility," he says, by refusing to vote on a new military authorization to govern the Pentagon's sprawling worldwide counterterrorism operations. So, along with three other military veterans from both parties, Bacon introduced a new five-year Authorization for the Use of Military Force against Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Islamic State that would repeal the 2001 and 2002 war authorizations.

A former electronic warfare officer, Bacon was also named a co-chair of the Electronic Warfare Working Group, where he says he'll advocate for an improved doctrine and replacing old weapons platforms.

POLITICO sat down with the congressman in his Capitol Hill office to discuss the defense budget, nuclear modernization, electronic warfare and his other priorities.

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

You probably have a unique perspective coming to Congress as a one-star general.

My peers treat me well because of it, and I'm grateful to them. ... Even the chairman will call me General. "OK, General, it's your turn."

So almost a year into your first term, how has your time been in the House and why did you choose House Armed Services?

Well, I wanted to use my 30, nearly 30 years' experience to advocate for readiness, modernization of our military.

In the '80s and '90s when I came in, there was zero — zero — doubt that we had the best military. We had the best training. Our equipment was really new. The F-15s, F-16s were at that point five to eight years old, you know, when I came in. Today, those same aircraft are flying. They're 25 to 30 years old.

We've got 60-year-old B-52s, 60-year-old tankers. And we're flying one-third of the hours, the captains are today, than what I flew as a captain. ... Just so much evidence that we have declined in our training, in our readiness and the modernization upkeep.

I just feel like I bring a level of experience that's helpful for the HASC and the House. ... I've commanded five times. I've led people in combat. I've been to people's houses talking about the loss of a loved one. ... That's not a bad experience, either. I don't think we should use our military too flippantly. And I think because there's a cost whenever we lose someone. So I think I bring that perspective as well.

An increasing number of Armed Services members have said there can't be another continuing resolution to fund defense, and I believe you were one of them.

I voted with the chairman on that. I think he's right.

So, do you think more Republicans who are concerned about defense are going to vote against another short-term funding measure?

I think it's gonna grow. ... We've done 31 CRs the last 10 years. ... So, I voted against that bill. I wanted to support disaster relief. I thought that was a good bill. But when you attach it to a CR, it doesn't make sense. ...

... There's a tug of war in the Republican conference. You have the budget hawks and the military hawks. I like to think I'm both because I think they're both important. But I don't think our military can keep being passed over with these CRs. ... We can't keep kicking the can down the road.

You're a co-sponsor of a new AUMF with veterans from both parties. Why do you think now is the time to debate and pass a new authorization, given everything else that's on Congress' plate?

It may need to happen after tax reform, I got that, but I think Article I responsibilities are clear. ... My gut tells me that Congress doesn't want to deal with a hard vote on it. And I think some people would rather not say yes or no to what we're doing in Syria or in Africa right

now.

I just think Congress has a role in giving our ... general consent to the executive to do these operations. I support them, frankly, but one-fourth of our Congress was there on 9/11. ... And I think we're ducking our responsibility to not do it. So, that's what motivated me.

It's too much of a blank check. ... I hear a lot of folks that don't want to take that vote because I think if things go bad, they say, "I didn't vote for it," or if things go great, "I'm for it." ... People have to show some responsibility to this thing, our elected members, anyway, in Congress.

What do you think about potential limits on a new AUMF for time or geography?

I support that there should be a time limit, and if it comes up then ... we vote again. ... I think, too, we should be able to say where force should be used. I think it's constitutional.

Now, having said that, I support [Defense] Secretary [Jim] Mattis and what he wants to use the force for, and I would be inclined to give him that authorization. ... But I think Congress should lay out the boundaries, and the executive branch should say what they want to do, and we should be able to give them authorization or not. To do otherwise, we're skirting our responsibility.

The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that modernizing the nuclear triad would cost more than \$1 trillion over the next 30 years. Does that cost make you concerned about the effort to completely overhaul our nuclear weapons?

I am concerned about the cost, but this is what happens when you take a holiday from modernization. Since we've been in the Middle East, we've put so much ... in our operations there that we've short-changed modernization. Now we have this huge bill, but I think our deterrence is critically important.

I know there were some debates during the NDAA process last cycle, someone from the other side of the aisle wanted to ... take away one of the legs of the triad. ... And I oppose it. I think our ICBMs are an important part. ... It's the most dependable part of our deterrence.

They're always on alert and once you get them in they're the cheapest to maintain. But, yes, it costs a little money to put new ones in, and that's where we're at with the Minuteman III; [it's] become obsolete. But I think our bombers give us the most versatility and our submarines give us the most survivability.

It's good to have the survivability, the dependability and the versatility that the triad gives you. And if we lose any of those three, I think we're a weaker country.

What do you want to see from of the nuclear posture and missile defense reviews the Pentagon is conducting?

Well, I'd like to see how we can stretch the modernization for ICBMs and still get it done. I think the subs, we're going to have to spend it at a certain rate. You can't stretch it out. And I think you could say the same thing with our B-2 bomber.

The ICBMs, I think we can keep investing in those Minuteman IIIs. But at some point, they've got to be replaced as well. So, how do we stretch that out and be able to maintain a triad? ...

That would be how I would view it.

In the end, we've got to make sure we've got a survivable nuclear deterrent. ... We have to verify through this review that we're able to sustain that.

There's a part that we're missing. It's the nuclear command and control. ... I used to fly in a Looking Glass mission, which is [a] Navy plane now. ... There's the Navy E-6. They're on alert at all times, and we have a one-star or a general officer always on alert. If things got bad with Russia or China, whomever, we'd take off in five minutes and you can launch all the nuclear weapons from the plane if STRATCOM can't communicate.

The nuclear command and control is antiquated. That bothers me. So that's got to be part of our modernization. ... You want to ensure you have that command and control for the president, that four-star down to the forces.

You were also just named a co-chair of the Electronic Warfare Caucus. What will the key issues be for you there, and how will you be an advocate on the issue in Congress?

In the '90s, we had the premiere EW capability. We had a great doctrine, strategy. We had great weapons systems. And we let it atrophy. ... Our doctrine's wrong. ... For example, the electromagnetic spectrum's a physical spectrum. It's an actual domain, just like air is and space, ground and sea.

I think we're starting to get the people right. We've got a one-star now that's in DoD that's in charge of EW, what used to be a colonel. When I was a captain, it was a two-star that used to run EW programs. So, I think we're starting to get the manning emphasis correct.

But the weapons systems are old. EC-130s are a 1973 aircraft. Original engines, old wings. ... We need our Compass Call replacement, and I'm going to support it. The Navy's gone to the EF-18. ... That's gonna give us some time there. But I'm going to support EW investments is what it comes down to, so that's the main thing that I can help out with.

Right now, I'd say we're getting a C in a lot of those things. I don't think we're at the A level. ... Maybe five years ago I would've gave us a D or a D-minus. So, I think we're getting it better.

Are there any other priorities you'd like to discuss?

You know, our military Gold Star spouses, if they remarry, they lose access to base. They don't get access to the [exchange] or commissary, even if they have dependent children from the spouse who got killed in action.

My bill [which passed the House] gives Gold Star spouses lifetime access to the base. And while they have dependent children, they can have access to the BX and commissary.

It's a small step forward, but I think it's right. I've talked to so many Gold Star spouses and they feel disenfranchised after their spouse gets killed. ... So, I want to fix that.

And this bill doesn't fix this next thing, but I think the follow-on bill [will]. A lot of our Gold Star spouses get about \$1,000 a month. ... But if they remarry, they lose it. ... That's gonna be my follow-on push. I think we put our spouses under a lot of pressure. They want to do the right thing. They met somebody they want to marry, but they're afraid of the impact on their

kids. ... They shouldn't have to feel that way.

Afghanistan. ... I think the president's taking us on the right path with that, the right balance. I don't think we can withdraw, but I don't think we can be doing this big nation-building either. So, I think we've got the right amount of forces to prevent Taliban from taking over Kabul. But if we pulled out, I think Taliban take over Afghanistan in two years and we'll be back to a 9/11 situation.

I generally agree with where they're going with the world hot spots right now. I had troubles with the Iran agreement. ... My concern is in 10 years, they're going to be a recognized nuclear state, and I think that's unacceptable.

North Korea. We don't want a war. ... We've got a lot of work we can do with China. ... In fact, I think we've got to compel them to do more. I think there's ways to do it. But also Japan. I think we can use Japan, in a good way, by helping them arm themselves. ...

... I think the president's sort of doing those things. That's what I'm seeing. So, I think that, despite the Twitter and ... all the hubbub you see, I think the actual execution, I feel comfortable with.

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Jobs growth stays strong with 228,000 rise [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 12/08/2017 08:48 AM EDT

Job creation stayed strong in November, the government reported Friday, eliminating any lingering worries about September's net job losses due to hurricanes in Texas and Florida.

The Labor Department reported 228,000 new jobs in November, down from October's 244,000 but notably higher than job growth during the months preceding September. October's gains, the largest of Trump's presidency, were, economists cautioned, inflated by the previous month's weather disruptions.

Friday's report demonstrated that the economy is still expanding at a steady clip in the ninth year of recovery. White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said it showed that "President Trump's bold economic vision continues to pay off," and Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta said it reflected "optimism about the pro-growth, pro-jobs policies being advanced by President Trump's Administration."

"The job market and the economy are strong," said Mark Zandi, the chief economist for Moody's Analytics. "It would be pretty hard to derail."

The November unemployment was 4.1 percent, the jobs report showed, unchanged from October. Average hourly private-sector earnings rose 2.5 percent in October over the previous year. In October, they were up 2.3 percent.

The release comes as Trump and congressional Republicans put final touches on a tax bill that

will slash the corporate tax rate and redraw tax brackets for individuals.

"The labor market is in great shape. Tax cuts should be used when the economy needs tax cuts and it doesn't need tax cuts right now," Joel Naroff, the chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors, told [Reuters](#).

Experts expect the tax break to give the economy a short-term boost that will likely level off by 2020.

"This may help the Rs for the 2018 election, but it will really complicate the election in 2020," Zandi said.

Labor force participation was unchanged from October's 62.7 percent and still close to its lowest level since the 1970s.

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Congress passes flood insurance extension [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 12/07/2017 06:20 PM EDT

The House and Senate today passed a temporary government funding bill that would keep the National Flood Insurance Program fully operational until Dec. 22.

It was the latest stopgap extension for the program as senators struggled to finalize plans for a long-term reauthorization and overhaul.

WHAT'S NEXT: The fate of the NFIP is expected to stay coupled with government funding extensions as negotiations continue.

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Ethics Committee launches investigation into Farenthold sexual harassment allegations

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By Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan | 12/07/2017 04:13 PM EDT

The House Ethics Committee launched an investigation into Rep. Blake Farenthold over allegations that he sexually harassed a former aide and then retaliated against her when she complained about it.

The committee said new evidence in the matter, which was first reviewed in 2015, warranted an investigation. Earlier Thursday, the panel said it was seeking an interview with Lauren Greene, the former aide who says she was sexually harassed by the Texas Republican.

Greene received an \$84,000, taxpayer-funded settlement after she sued Farenthold in December 2014 over allegations of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment.

Even though the Office of Congressional Ethics cleared Farenthold, the Ethics Committee has continued to look into the matter.

"The Committee on Ethics does not appear to be letting it lie with the Office of Congressional Ethics' recommendation not to pursue further," said Greene's attorney, Les Alderman of Alderman, Devorsetz & Hora PLLC.

Alderman said Ethics Committee staff has called him twice in the past two days seeking to schedule Greene to appear before the panel. "They are actively seeking Lauren's cooperation with their ongoing investigation."

Alderman said they are considering the request but did not know whether Greene would testify.

The ethics panel had reached out to interview Greene more than a year ago. But Greene, who has tried to move on with her life since leaving Farenthold's office, declined to participate, hoping to put the matter behind her.

However, after Greene spoke with POLITICO and CNN this week about being blackballed following her allegations, the Ethics Committee reached out again.

Alderman said Greene cooperated with OCE during its review and told them everything she had alleged in her court filing. Alderman did not know why OCE dismissed the case.

Farenthold's spokeswoman said he has voluntarily testified before Ethics and OCE.

"Congressman Farenthold has testified before both the Office of Congressional Ethics and the Ethics Committee of the House," said Stacey Daniels, Farenthold's spokeswoman. "He has done so voluntarily, answering all of their questions."

OCE's decision not to ask for a full investigation into Greene's allegations might be all that's protecting Farenthold from the same fate as Democratic Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota and Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, both of whom resigned this week in the growing sexual-harassment scandal.

Farenthold, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and other GOP leaders have referenced the OCE decision repeatedly whenever Democrats raise the Texas Republican's case.

Farenthold and Greene were interviewed by OCE when during its investigation. OCE declined to comment on the Farenthold case.

In her lawsuit, Greene claimed another Farenthold aide told her the lawmaker said he had "sexual fantasies" and "wet dreams" about Greene. She also said Farenthold "regularly drank to excess" and told her in February 2014 that he was "estranged from his wife and had not had sex with her in years."

When she complained about comments Farenthold and a male staffer made to her, Greene said the congressman improperly fired her. She filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in the District

of Columbia, but the case was later dropped after both parties reached their settlement, which was not revealed until last week.

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Pentagon pleads for a full appropriations bill on eve of CR expiration [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 12/07/2017 02:11 PM EDT

As Congress considers a new two-week continuing spending resolution, [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#), Pentagon officials pleaded today for a fiscal 2018 appropriations bill that can give the department budget certainty.

The federal government is currently operating on a continuing resolution that expires Friday, forcing a government shutdown unless lawmakers approve a new one, now being set for Dec. 22.

But even that would affect the military's ability to perform maintenance and buy more equipment, said Pentagon Comptroller David Norquist.

"A CR by its very nature is disruptive," he explained. "Every time you add to it, it creates more challenges."

The Pentagon has operated under a CR for 1,081 days over the past nine years, Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said.

One of the biggest priorities for the Defense Department is increasing its supply of munitions — something that can't happen under a continuing resolution, Norquist said.

The impact would be even more severe if the government shuts down. Members of the military would still have to report to work, but wouldn't be paid until the shutdown ends.

That includes troops serving overseas or in combat. Civilians with essential jobs would also have to report to work, while those with nonessential jobs would stay home. Non-critical maintenance also would grind to a halt, putting future work behind schedule.

"I cannot emphasize enough how destructive a shutdown is," Norquist said.

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To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations: GOP gleeful over Trump's tribute to earmarks — Appropriators ponder four-week stopgap — Womack for the win
Date: Wednesday, January 10, 2018 5:23:32 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 01/10/2018 05:19 PM EDT

HELP FROM ON HIGH: Congressional Republicans are giving President Donald Trump a big thumbs-up for his unabashed endorsement of earmarks.

Appropriators are hoping Trump's two-minute tangent on Tuesday will lend support as the broader GOP conference considers whether to bring back the practice. Longtime defenders of those special projects are even pushing a new Trump-inspired argument — that reviving the era of earmarks, under strict guidelines, would actually clean up "the swamp" by holding people accountable, as Sarah [explains](#) today.

Why so taboo? The president's unexpected tribute was unusual for many reasons. Not only is he violating years of party orthodoxy, but he's also backing a move that would probably weaken the power of his own agencies. "Usually the administration doesn't promote that," Rep. [Robert Aderholt](#) (R-Ala.) said. And as self-described budget guru Stan Collender told us today: "This is an agenda that would make a Democrat blush."

Push for productivity: When the House Rules Committee holds its hearing on the issue a week from today, members won't be plotting a return to Congress' old habits. Instead, lawmakers of both parties will argue that it could grease the skids for government projects now choked off by bureaucratic red tape. House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) specifically cited efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers, which he said has "not been up to snuff about getting its job done."

Freedom Caucus backer: Even some Republicans who supported the 2011 earmarks ban are on board. Rep. [Louie Gohmert](#) (R-Texas) [told](#) Fox News that the system was "badly abused" back then, but he now sees a chance to restore Congress' power of the purse. "We're the ones that should be putting the specific line-items in that appropriations bill as to where that money goes," Gohmert argues.

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! Yes, it's only hump day. Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Budget & Appropriations Brief](#) will not publish on Monday, Jan. 15. Our next [Budget & Appropriations Brief](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Jan. 16. Please continue to follow Pro Budget issues [here](#).

Doc of the day — In an [open letter](#) today, more than two dozen conservative groups warned lawmakers against bringing back earmarks.

#DailyBudgetFact — The federal government spent \$807.8 billion on Social Security alone in 2013, up from \$55 billion in 1974, according to [CBO](#). Medicare spending ballooned to \$585.3 billion per year, from \$10.7 billion, over the same timeframe.

APPROPRIATIONS

PRE-PRESIDENT'S-DAY PRESENT? Less than 10 days away from the next shutdown deadline, lawmakers have started to kick around end dates for yet another stopgap. Most rumored: Feb. 16. That would give legislators exactly four weeks to pull together an omnibus after the next patch expires on Jan. 19. And although 28 days seems like plenty of time now, that window could appear pretty skimpy if leaders don't soon strike a deal on budget caps.

Not set in stone: We floated the Feb. 16 idea to House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) today, but the spending chief didn't bite. "I don't think any decision's been made," he said. The New Jersey Republican did say, however, that he suspects a deal on funding the Children's Health Insurance Program "will have to be" included in the Jan. 19 bill to garner enough support for kicking the can past next week.

BUDGET

FRONT RUNNER FOR THE WIN: No surprise, Rep. [Steve Womack](#) (R-Ark.) has sealed the deal on the gavel long assumed to be his. After each of the three candidates delivered 30-minute presentations before the Republican Steering Committee, the panel endorsed the Arkansas Republican for Budget Committee chairman, as we [reported](#) Tuesday night. Now, the full House GOP Conference must give its blessing. The victor's statement: "I'm excited for the chance to lead such an important committee in pursuit of a budget resolution that will address our nation's priorities while putting America on a sustainable fiscal path."

WORK-AROUND FOR WORK REQUIREMENTS: The odds of a fiscal 2018 budget reconciliation bill are looking slim, which isn't great news for the GOP's welfare reform push. But the White House appears to be moving ahead on a separate track. The Trump administration is expected to issue guidance to state officials as soon as this week on the first-ever work requirements for Medicaid, Rachana Pradhan [reports](#). At least 10 states are already seeking federal approval to tie benefits to employment or other job-related activities.

NEW YEAR, NEW ROSTER: For prominent display in your cubicle, our DataPoint team has created an updated cheat sheet of the faces of the Senate Budget Committee, with the smiling mug of newly assigned Sen. [Tom Cotton](#) (R-Ark.). [Check it out](#). Want to add [DataPoint](#) to your Pro account? [Learn more](#).

APPROPRIATIONS

STILL AT THE DRAWING BOARD: Our colleague Seung Min Kim pretty much summed up the DACA state of play in this [tweet](#): "We're still working!!! — Senate immigration group."

Try to keep up: After a [freewheeling](#) chat at the White House on Tuesday, lawmakers are back almost exactly where they started. It's up to the four party deputies — Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) and House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#), plus Senate Democratic Whip [Dick Durbin](#) and House Democratic Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) — to finalize an immigration deal in the next nine days. And they now have to factor in a surprise legal decision that temporarily keeps Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program in place, as Seung Min [explains](#).

I hear you: Senate Democrats used a closed-door meeting with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis this week to push their case for budget parity. And while he may not agree, lawmakers said at least he understands. "We get this position, and he gets ours," Sen. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.) [told](#)

Connor O'Brien.

TAX

THE COST OF CHANGE: The IRS will need an extra \$495 million in funding for fiscal 2018 and 2019 to implement the new tax law, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), the agency's in-house watchdog said in her [annual report](#) to Congress today, per [Bernie Becker](#). In the so-called "Purple Book," National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson also [offered](#) 50 new recommendations to lawmakers seeking to reorganize the agency's operations.

Special requests: Adding pressure, the IRS is being encouraged to take as little as possible out of paychecks so people will see big increases in their take-home pay ahead of this year's midterm elections, Brian Faler [reports](#). And lawmakers are asking the agency to let taxpayers deduct all their prepaid 2018 property taxes from their filings this year, no matter whether they've received their 2018 property tax bills or not, Aaron Lorenzo [explains](#).

HEALTH CARE

BACK AGAIN: The Obamacare stabilization bill is rising from last year's legislative graveyard. After renewed talks this week, Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.) are aiming for a bill that can wind up in the next omnibus, Adam Cancryn [reports](#) today. The package would likely combine the existing Alexander-Murray measure with another bipartisan agreement from Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) and [Bill Nelson](#) (D-Fla.) on reinsurance.

HOSTAGE SEASON: In a familiar refrain, top GOP senators now say children's health funding shouldn't be held "hostage" to a caps deal, Rachana [reports](#). "Nothing should prevent enactment of a five-year KIDS Act reauthorization before Jan. 19 — regardless of a budgetary caps agreement," Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) said.

DEFENSE

ADDING UP THE AUDIT: Keeping tabs on spending is expensive. As Connor [reports](#), Comptroller David Norquist estimated today that the Pentagon's first-ever audit will cost about \$367 million to carry out and another \$551 million to fix identified issues. Of that, \$181 million will go to contract costs for independent accounting firms and \$186 million for related infrastructure. The cost is small, Norquist said, compared to the overall budget and is better than the alternative of "operating in ignorance of the problem."

USE IT OR LOSE IT: At this point, it will be well into the second quarter of the fiscal year (at least) before federal agencies get updated funding levels. And House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) is particularly concerned the Pentagon won't be able to effectively spend extra money as we get closer to Sept. 30, Connor [reports](#). So he's proposing that Congress consider allowing the Defense Department to spend some money beyond the end of the fiscal year, to make sure money doesn't "just sit there" or get spent "foolishly."

LITERALLY, A CRASH COURSE: The Navy needs more ships or fewer responsibilities to prevent the kind of crashes that happened over the last year, the head of surface forces says. Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden said this week that the fleet is "stretched" and that sailors say they need more time to maintain gear, brush up on skills and "unwind," Jacqueline Klimas

[reports.](#)

TREASURY

A TAD SMALLER PAYOUT: The steady climb of U.S. interest rates has resulted in a slight decline in profits to the Treasury, Victoria Guida [explains](#). The Federal Reserve has sent roughly \$80.2 billion back, marking a decline of \$11.7 billion last year.

INFRASTRUCTURE

DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH: This was supposed to be the month for debuting the White House's infrastructure plan. But the Trump administration doesn't seem so wedded to a January delivery these days, Brianna Gurciullo and Lauren Gardner [explain](#).

Pre-plan plan: In the meantime, lawmakers aren't holding back on offering their own ideas. The bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus releases its infrastructure plan today, hoping to "shape the conversation" ahead of the White House blueprint, Tanya Snyder [reports](#). The caucus' report recommends increasing the gas tax and indexing it to inflation, as well as subjecting highway projects over \$20 million to the same life cycle assessments as transit projects.

Picking up momentum? Although raising the gas tax has long been seen as a dead idea in Washington, the concept has been getting a lot of love lately. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue reiterated support today for the revenue-raiser, Brianna [reports](#). And the Chamber chief also talked a little about the growth of entitlement programs, per [Victoria](#).

EARMARKS

— A division for Democrats pondering a government shutdown: 2018 versus 2020. [Washington Post](#).

— Obamacare repeal fades from GOP priorities list in new year. [The Hill](#).

— A year later, Trump still able to woo farmers. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Chinese caution on U.S. debt clouds financing for Trump's tax cut. [Bloomberg](#).

— How the GOP's war on the IRS could backfire. [POLITICO](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 9 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Jan. 19).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2018/01/gop-gleeful-over-trumps-tribute-to-earmarks-070811>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump thrills some Republicans with endorsement of earmarks [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 01/10/2018 01:33 PM EDT

When Rep. [Mario Diaz-Balart](#) found out that President Donald Trump had endorsed earmarks on national television, the 15-year House veteran fist-pumped into the air.

"Am I smiling when I'm not supposed to?" the Florida Republican told reporters, chuckling.

In a week consumed by infighting over immigration, it was Trump's unexpected affirmation of pork-barrel spending that had Washington spinning.

Trump's improvised tribute to earmarks Tuesday lasted just two minutes after an unrelated White House meeting, but the political effects could be far-reaching as Congress mulls whether to allow a revival.

Trump reminisced in seeming familiarity with Congress that in the old days, lawmakers of both parties "went out to dinner at night, and they all got along, and they passed bills" — a vastly different portrait from today's gridlock. Earmarks, he suggested, could "get this country really rolling again."

The chances of ending the 2011 ban are dim in a midterm election year with the GOP's congressional majorities at stake. But some lawmakers have hope now that a key GOP committee is planning its first set of hearings on the issue in years. And House GOP leaders recently moved to restart a debate on earmarks that has been put on hold since fall 2016 in the wake of Trump's "drain the swamp" electoral victory.

Trump's latest taboo-busting position pits him against years of GOP orthodoxy, vexing powerful conservatives who helped propel him to the presidency. Heritage Action called it "nearly unthinkable."

"If Republicans bring back earmarks, then it virtually guarantees that they will lose the House," Club for Growth President David McIntosh said in a statement Tuesday.

But the president also gave voice to a nostalgia that's shared by many long-serving members of Congress, even if they don't often say it out loud.

"Maybe they'll breathe life into the whole idea. I'm all for earmarks," said House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.), whose panel would be ground zero for a revival of pet projects. Frelinghuysen has long argued that it's better for lawmakers to submit requests through his committee, rather than air-dropping them into spending bills through eleventh-hour amendments.

Rep. [Robert Aderholt](#), who has served since 1997, was happily surprised to hear Trump's support, especially since it would empower Congress over executive agencies. "Usually the administration doesn't promote that," he said.

A longtime member of the Appropriations Committee, Aderholt said he could back a return to earmarks "as long as it's done on a fair and transparent basis." He said it's better for elected representatives to dole out government cash, rather than "a group of bureaucrats a thousand miles away."

"The misnomer about that is that it is a 'swamp' issue," the Alabama Republican said. "You could make the argument that this is more getting rid of the swamp, holding people accountable."

Republicans insist it wouldn't be a return to Congress' old habits. Instead, they argue, it could grease the skids for government projects now choked off by bureaucratic red tape. Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) specifically cited the Army Corps of Engineers, which he said has "not been up to snuff about getting its job done."

"I want our members to have conversations," he told reporters Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Democrats reeled at Trump's comments.

"He's supposed to be a conservative, he's a GOP president, and he's talking openly about, 'Let's get them back,'" said Stan Collender, a longtime observer of the budget process and former Democratic budget staffer. "No Democrat would get away with this."

Democrats are unlikely to back any push to bring back earmarks in an election year, though plenty of members, particularly appropriators, support it.

"I'm for earmarks, I've made that pretty clear publicly," Rep. [Steny Hoyer](#) of Maryland, the second-highest-ranking House Democrat, told reporters Wednesday. He then rattled off a list of spending rules that have been tightened over the last decade.

"I believe it is the responsibility of the Congress of the United States to appropriate money for objects that it believes are in the best interests of their communities and their country," Hoyer said, adding that he plans to testify at next week's House Rules Committee hearing.

Line-item expenditures — also known as earmarks — were banned after a series of spending scandals that even led to jail time for one member.

Former GOP Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham was sentenced in 2006 to eight years in prison for accepting millions of dollars in bribes from defense contractors.

Two years later, lawmakers came under fire for the so-called Bridge to Nowhere in Alaska. The \$200 million expenditure exploded onto the national stage with the help of the 2008 GOP presidential ticket, Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and then-Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

Democrats launched reforms when they won control of both chambers in 2006, attempting to rein in funding for what were known as lawmakers' "pet projects." Then-Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) instituted a one-year moratorium in 2007.

But the drastic action came in 2011, when Republicans decisively won back their House majority. (The push was led by then-Speaker John Boehner, who proudly refused earmarks throughout his 21-year span in Washington.)

Weeks after the election, GOP leaders vowed to ban earmarks entirely — one-upping their Democratic counterparts who had sought to ban earmarks only for projects that benefited private companies. Public and nonprofit-driven projects would still be allowed.

Both parties helped increase scrutiny of the appropriations process in the late 1990s and early 2000s, at the same time that Congress was financing more special projects through spending bills.

In 1994, there were fewer than 2,000 earmarks. By 2005, there were about 14,000, according to [PolitiFact](#).

Congressional leaders doled out the spending perks to members for any number of reasons: to reward party loyalty, to secure support for unrelated bills or to simply keep the government open.

Members of the powerful House spending panel — who have witnessed the decline of "regular order" in appropriations over the last decade — are particularly keen to restore the practice.

With a perpetual shortage of votes for spending legislation, both Democrats and Republicans acknowledge that lawmakers once had a vested interest in those bills. Some have likened the 2011 ban to the Prohibition era, predicting that leadership will ultimately feel pressured to reverse course.

Now Trump has lent his support.

"Our system lends itself to not getting things done, and I hear so much about earmarks — the old earmark system — how there was a great friendliness when you had earmarks," he said.

Jennifer Scholtes and Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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Womack clinches endorsement for House Budget chairmanship [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 01/09/2018 08:29 PM EDT

Rep. [Steve Womack](#) won initial backing to chair the House Budget Committee, securing an endorsement from the Republican Steering Committee.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) announced the decision in a statement late this evening.

Now the full House GOP Conference will vote on the pick to replace Chairman [Diane Black](#) (R-Tenn.), as she steps down to focus on her gubernatorial bid.

Womack said in a statement that he welcomed the "huge challenge" of taking the helm. "I'm excited for the chance to lead such an important committee in pursuit of a budget resolution that will address our nation's priorities while putting America on a sustainable fiscal path," he said.

The Arkansas Republican, who had been [seen as a shoo-in](#) for the post, beat out [Rob Woodall](#) of Georgia and [Bill Johnson](#) of Ohio for the recommendation.

If officially chosen, Womack is expected to focus on cutting mandatory spending, to the delight of the committee's most fiscally conservative members.

Womack could give up the gavel as soon as next year since he's in line for a subcommittee chairmanship on the House Appropriations Committee. His two competitors argued during the

run-up to the Steering Committee decision that they would be "stable" choices likely to stick around to run the Budget Committee, which has had three chairmen during the past year.

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Dreamer talks still jumbled after Trump's freewheeling summit [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim, Heather Caygle, Ted Hesson and Rachael Bade | 01/09/2018 08:03 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's freewheeling, televised — and, at times, incoherent — immigration meeting with lawmakers Tuesday accomplished one thing at least, according to attendees: They agreed on what they would try to agree on.

Yet even that tentative outline is prompting pushback from other members who want to tug a final deal on Dreamers to the right or left — further complicating prospects for an agreement that can be signed into law before the young undocumented immigrants begin losing legal protections en masse in March.

Numerous attendees of the highly anticipated White House meeting left assured that a deal to address the fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program would include four main parts: legal status for Dreamers, more robust border security, an overhaul of family-based immigration laws and a change to a controversial visa lottery program. That only those elements were included was a clear signal to conservatives, who are demanding more expansive enforcement provisions in any fix to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program Trump is killing.

"Kevin McCarthy was the one who said, 'All right, it's down to four things, right? DACA and the other three things?'" said Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top negotiator for Senate Democrats, referring to the Republican House majority leader. "And we all agreed."

Added Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.): "Those are the outlines of what a potential deal could be. Now, what in fact takes place as it relates to each of those elements is incredibly important."

The White House concurred, with press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders saying the group "reached an agreement to negotiate legislation that accomplishes critically needed reforms in four high-priority areas: border security, chain migration, the visa lottery and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy."

But some House Democrats say they won't accept those parameters. They argue Democrats are agreeing only to legalize the Dreamers now, and that debates over "chain migration" and the diversity visa lottery need to happen later.

"The statement issued by the White House is inaccurate," said House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

Meanwhile, there's also a restive faction of House Republicans pushing their leadership to take a hard line early in the immigration fight, worried that the more moderate Senate will ultimately jam their chamber with a Dreamer deal they can't accept.

The fact that a mere deal to discuss a deal is stoking such consternation on Capitol Hill illustrates the difficult predicament that lawmakers — not to mention the Dreamers themselves — face in coming up with a solution. And yet it's not all that surprising that the talks have narrowed after the White House immigration meeting, as a bipartisan group of senators had already been focusing on those four core areas.

The group primarily includes Durbin and Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.); the senators have yet to reach an agreement, although they have been working feverishly for weeks discussing proposals.

For example, the senators have debated whether to effectively dump the visa lottery — which doles out about 50,000 green cards annually to people from countries with traditionally low rates of immigration — by reallocating those visas to immigrants who have benefited from Temporary Protected Status programs that the Trump administration is terminating. Separately, there appears to be a more notable struggle over chain migration, with senators disagreeing on whether restrictions on sponsoring relatives should apply just to the Dreamers or to a larger immigrant population.

It's still unclear whether the senators will be able to reach an agreement they can successfully sell to Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, not to mention a more conservative House. But defining the mere outlines of a deal was at least a step closer to a final fix, senators said.

"We did make some progress on it today," Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) said. "The main thing was, let's define out the basis of scope. Let's break down who's going to do what, and let's start the process, because the hard negotiation is obviously going to be in smaller groups."

Other Senate Republicans were encouraged that Trump said his long-coveted border wall with Mexico doesn't have to cover the entire, 2,000-mile boundary. "We've been begging him to say this kind of stuff before," Flake said. "It's only about [700] or 800 miles total. Some of that is replacement. And more importantly, the wall is really a fence."

But later Tuesday, discussion of the bipartisan summit only fueled more dissension among the Democratic ranks.

Democrats spilled out of a more than hourlong meeting in the office of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) Tuesday afternoon differing over what had been decided at the White House as well as what they would entertain in upcoming negotiations.

Durbin and Hoyer left the meeting to huddle one-on-one in a separate room, only to emerge with contradictory talking points.

Hoyer maintained that McCarthy suggested those four areas as the basis for a bipartisan deal during the White House meeting, but that Democrats never agreed to those terms and still haven't. Durbin, meanwhile, didn't dispute his earlier comments that those four issues were on the table, telling reporters the "devil is in the details."

"There are ways to do things that are painless and ways that are fatal," Durbin said. "So you

try to find painless alternatives."

Other Democrats also left the meeting with different stances: Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois suggested they were open to discussing changes to family-based immigration and the visa lottery, while Sen. Kamala Harris and Rep. Linda Sanchez of California said those discussions should be part of broader immigration reform and not attached to a DACA deal.

"I don't think a whole lot of folks in that room really even understand, and I mean no disrespect to them, it's not their areas of expertise, really what [chain migration] means. ... The current law allows for family reunification," said Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.), chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, who successfully crashed the White House meeting after not receiving an invite. "And the same thing with diversity visas. When you really think about who's getting those diversity visas, it has absolutely nothing to do with the issue we're trying to address with DACA recipients, and we're making that case."

When told some House Democrats were disputing even the parameters of an agreement, a frustrated Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) responded: "There is no misunderstanding."

"There were four issues that were agreed to be part of the DACA deal. ... That was what the whole thing was about!" said Diaz-Balart, who also attended the White House meeting. "We have a real opportunity to get this done as long as folks don't start backtracking from what was talked about today."

But even if House Democrats ultimately get on board, there's trouble brewing among the House GOP.

Senior House Republicans used a closed-door conference meeting earlier Tuesday to begin pressuring Speaker Paul Ryan and his top lieutenants to take a harder line on immigration. In particular, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte of Virginia urged leaders to put a conservative DACA bill he will introduce Wednesday on the floor for a vote. It addresses some of the provisions being discussed in the immigration talks, but goes further by changing policies governing unaccompanied child migrants and asylum seekers.

House GOP leaders aren't sure the bill can pass and worry about upending the bipartisan discussions going on in the Senate. But that's unlikely to quell demands from rank-and-file Republicans that they pass a conservative solution instead of waiting on a bipartisan Senate deal.

"There's not a commitment [to a vote] yet, but this is the only bill that can unify the people," insisted Rep. Raúl Labrador (R-Idaho), who helped Goodlatte write the bill, which would surely be rejected by the Senate. "We can get to 218."

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DACA reinstatement throws lawmakers for a loop [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 01/10/2018 12:54 PM EDT

Lawmakers from both parties insisted Wednesday that they're still racing to reach a deal on Dreamers — despite a court ruling the night before temporarily reinstating the immigration program that President Donald Trump is trying to shut down.

A federal judge on Tuesday blocked Trump's effort to completely shut down the Obama-era initiative known Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals — a ruling that, in theory, will allow people who have already obtained DACA permits in the past to renew them. The program allows undocumented immigrants who were brought to the country as children to obtain work permits and remain in the country.

Democrats and immigration advocates worry the Trump administration will quickly appeal the decision and prevail. Meanwhile, Republicans dispute the findings of the judge, San Francisco-based U.S. District Court judge William Alsup, and believe the White House will win an appeal.

"It doesn't change the need for us to act," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas). "I don't think it relieves the anxiety of the DACA recipients that something is gonna happen. It really just adds additional uncertainty, I think, into the mix. So we're plowing ahead like we discussed yesterday at the White House."

Cornyn is one of four top lawmakers — the others include Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) — who are trying to meet with administration officials later Wednesday to sketch out next steps on an immigration deal in Congress.

Key Senate Democrats also stressed that Congress still needs to press for a Dreamers deal.

"Let me be very clear: The ruling last night in no way diminishes the urgency of resolving the DACA issue," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said Wednesday morning. "The only way to guarantee the legal status for Dreamers is to pass DACA protections into law and do it now."

Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) sounded less confident that the ruling wouldn't ease pressure on Congress, which often needs a deadline to act.

"I hope it doesn't" lessen the urgency on Congress, Flake said of the ruling. "But I am worried."

The substance of the judge's ruling — which included Alsup's assessment that Trump's move to wind down DACA was meant to improve the White House's bargaining position on immigration — could embolden Democrats to take a harder line against accepting various conservative demands as part of an immigration deal.

Democrats have already started to raise alarms about the mere contours of an agreement, which would include not only a permanent protection for Dreamers but border security provisions and changes to family-based immigration laws and the diversity visa lottery.

In an interview with POLITICO late Tuesday, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, a former House Democratic leader, contended: "Why would anyone want to negotiate a bad deal to get DACA now that it's become clear the court is saying the Trump administration may

have tried to repeal the program in an unlawful way?"

"I hope it can be a moderating influence on the other side, the Republican side, upon some of their demands," Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) said. "But at the end of the day, I think that in order to make a deal, a deal implies there's negotiations by both sides."

Spokespeople for the Justice Department and the White House said they disagreed with the ruling, though neither said directly whether the administration would appeal Alsup's decision.

But White House legislative director Marc Short said Wednesday on NPR that the ruling doesn't relieve the urgency for Congress to reach an immigration deal.

"If we let this drag out, the risk would be that the Supreme Court would say yeah we're overturning the decision and immediately DACA ends," Short said on NPR. "And so it's better to give us some opportunity to find a legislative fix as opposed to risking status for all those individuals."

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Democrats push fiscal parity at Mattis lunch on Capitol Hill [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 01/09/2018 04:19 PM EDT

Democratic senators emphasized their argument to increase domestic spending in tandem with defense during a closed-door meeting today with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, several Democrats said.

Mattis visited both the Democratic and Republican weekly party lunches in the Senate, underscoring the Pentagon's call for full-year funding.

"We greatly respect him. Everyone in our caucus knows defense is important," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) told reporters at the Capitol. "We made the argument so are some non-defense things. Help us get those."

Congressional leaders from both parties have been in talks to raise the strict caps on spending for the military and domestic agencies for two years, which would pave the way for full-year spending legislation. While Republicans are urging a prioritization of defense spending, Democrats have emphasized "parity" between defense and domestic spending.

Government funding again runs dry on Jan. 19. So, lawmakers need to pass another Continuing Resolution or hammer out a full-year funding deal before then.

Sen. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.), a Senate Armed Services member, added that Mattis understood Democrats' calls for budget parity.

"We get this position, and he gets ours," Kaine said.

The federal government has been funded through stopgap, continuing spending resolutions since October. And Mattis and other top Pentagon officials contend CRs place the military in a tough spot by preventing it from executing new programs or ramping up current ones.

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IRS estimates it will need an extra \$495M to stand up tax law [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 01/10/2018 10:21 AM EDT

The IRS has initially estimated that implementing the new tax law will require an extra \$495 million in funding for 2018 and 2019, the agency's in-house watchdog said in her annual report to Congress on Wednesday.

Implementing the new GOP tax cut, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), will be a major challenge for the IRS, but the agency shouldn't be too quick to blame funding problems if it struggles with that task, National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson said.

The [report](#) ranged widely, touching on issues including the collection of tax debts by private companies and taxpayer services.

Years of funding cuts have already eroded the IRS' ability to help taxpayers, Olson said, but the agency too frequently points to its budget when it runs into problems.

"I cede to no one in my advocacy for increased IRS funding," Olson wrote. "At the same time, limited resources cannot be used as an all-purpose excuse for mediocrity."

Still, there's little doubt that implementing the tax law will challenge the agency, and Republicans have not committed to giving the IRS more funding. Lawmakers are in the midst of trying to negotiate a new federal spending measure, with current funding set to expire Jan. 19.

The 1986 tax overhaul, Olson noted, led to changing or creating 210 IRS forms and to 13 new publications, and the agency brought in 1,300 new staff members to handle all the changes. The IRS has said it thinks the new tax law will force it to modify 131 filing season systems.

Future challenges for the agency could include schemes from states like California, New Jersey and New York to effectively bypass the new law's cap on the state and local tax deduction, including proposals to essentially allow taxpayers to make charitable donations to governments instead of directly paying taxes.

Olson added that the agency currently doesn't know when a homeowner closes on a mortgage, even as the tax law made changes to the mortgage interest deduction that went into effect Dec. 15. She also pointed to the frenzy and confusion that occurred late last year when taxpayers tried to prepay their 2018 property taxes to get a 2017 tax benefit.

Experts also say that some of the more complicated provisions in the new law, including a deduction for pass-through businesses and international rules for multinational corporations,

could take months to even years to fully flesh out.

In addition, the IRS' work on new withholding tables to reflect the new tax cuts is being closely watched as taxes are expected to play a role in this year's midterms.

"The IRS will have a lot of issues to work through, and taxpayers will have a lot of questions," Olson said. "But with more funding, strong leadership, and a closer working relationship with Congress, I am convinced the IRS can do the job well."

The taxpayer advocate included its implementation findings in a comprehensive report that also examined a number of other key issues for the agency.

Olson included a new "[Purple Book](#)" of 50 recommendations for IRS restructuring, in the hopes that could be an area of bipartisan agreement. One of her primary suggestions was that Congress should enact the Taxpayer Bill of Rights that the IRS currently has adopted on its own.

The taxpayer advocate also knocked the IRS' private debt collection program, which the agency started in April after being forced to by Congress. The IRS itself has said the program brought in \$6.7 million from taxpayers in fiscal 2017, but at a cost of some \$20 million.

Not only that, but Olson says in her report the program largely goes after low earners — more than a quarter of the people who paid up after being reached by a private debt collector made less than \$20,000 a year.

Olson also found that the IRS is not fully reckoning with taxpayers' preference to contact the agency by phone as it tries to shift to more online accounts. And she raised concerns about how the agency is implementing another provision passed by Congress that allows the federal government to revoke a person's passport if they have a serious tax debt.

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IRS watchdog says agency needs updating to meet new challenges [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 01/10/2018 11:35 AM EDT

The IRS's in-house watchdog today offered lawmakers 50 new recommendations as they consider whether to reorganize the agency's operations.

Nina Olson, the nation's taxpayer advocate, noted in her inaugural "[Purple Book](#)" that it's now been close to two decades since Congress passed an IRS restructuring act. The 1998 IRS restructuring has held up well, Olson said, before noting the agency could use some updates to deal with new challenges that have arisen over the last 20 years.

"Tax administration has changed in many ways, partly due to the increasing use of automation by the IRS and the increasing use of the internet and other digital services by taxpayers," she said.

Congressional Republicans have shown some interest in revamping how the IRS operates, though House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) has only said he wants to deal with the issue this year. Lawmakers have also faced questions about whether it makes sense to restructure the IRS at the same time the agency is implementing the new GOP tax law.

The suggestions in the Purple Book — including to codify a Taxpayer Bill of Rights the IRS has adopted on its own — are typically bipartisan and often already included in existing legislation, she added.

Other suggestions include allowing the agency to require minimum competency standards for tax preparers; giving taxpayers more time to sue for damages if they're unfairly targeted for collection; requiring that each state has a permanent IRS appeals officer; and forcing the IRS to give taxpayers a receipt detailing how their tax dollars are being spent.

Olson modeled the Purple Book after Treasury's Green Book, an annual release of revenue proposals.

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Fatter paychecks promised by Republicans put IRS in tough spot [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 01/10/2018 05:02 AM EDT

The IRS is facing its first big challenge implementing the new tax law: deciding how much in taxes to withhold from millions of Americans' paychecks.

The agency is under pressure to take as little as possible so people will see big increases in their take-home pay ahead of this year's midterm elections.

But that would come at a cost: smaller or even nonexistent refunds next year, though millions rely on them to plug holes in their family budgets. Democrats are already accusing the Trump administration of plotting "phantom windfalls" ahead of the November contest that will come back to haunt taxpayers next tax season.

"We oppose any attempts by the administration to systematically underwithhold income taxes during the 2018 tax year, knowing that in 2019 taxpayers may find they owe taxes when they were expecting a refund," Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) and Rep. [Richard Neal](#), the top Democrats on congressional tax committees, wrote to acting IRS Commissioner David Kautter.

How the IRS — which is supposed to be apolitical — decides to implement withholding could go a long way toward shaping public opinion on the controversial law.

Workers could see changes in their paychecks as soon as next month, the agency said, and for many it will be the first time they see what exactly the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act means to them.

Even before President Donald Trump signed the bill into law last month, Republicans were promising Americans they wouldn't have to wait long to see the benefits.

"You're going to start seeing a lot more money in your paycheck," Trump said Monday during a speech to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Asked about Democrats' warnings of politically motivated withholding changes, House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) said, "There's never been any question about the IRS' timely, accurate withholding tables, nor should there be today."

Democrats will "do and say just about anything to cast doubt" on the Republican tax program, Brady said.

The IRS did not respond to a request for comment.

There is a history of politicians trying to manipulate withholding, through obscure tables issued by the IRS, with an eye toward providing a short-term boost to the economy. President George H.W. Bush tried it ahead of the 1992 election, and the 1986 tax overhaul attempted, unsuccessfully, to quash refunds altogether.

Most of the new tax law took effect Jan. 1 because Republicans want it to boost growth before voters head to the polls this fall.

As Wyden and Neal pointed out, bigger paychecks now could mean a nasty surprise in 2019. Some accustomed to receiving annual refunds could potentially find themselves suddenly in arrears to the IRS.

"This is not something you want to fool the American taxpayer about — you don't want to have them feeling good because they're getting a big bump in take-home pay only to be surprised next year," said Larry Gibbs, a former IRS commissioner.

"People ought to be able to understand what is being withheld from their paycheck and what that means — not just in terms of a bump in take-home pay, but also whether they're still going to get a refund," he said.

How much is withheld is a product of two things: The allowances claimed on the "W-4" form filed with employers, and the tables the IRS produces telling payroll administrators how much to withhold at given income levels, taking into account the allowances employees claimed.

The IRS is now working on new withholding tables to reflect the new tax law. In a statement late last month, the agency suggested it will not be issuing new W-4s.

"This information will be designed to work with existing Forms W-4 that employees have already filed, and no further action by taxpayers is needed at this time," the IRS said.

About 80 percent of taxpayers will get a tax cut averaging \$2,100 thanks to the new law, according to the independent Tax Policy Center. About 5 percent will face tax increases averaging \$2,800 while the remainder will see essentially no change in their tax bills.

Taxpayers have long prized their tax refunds. The share receiving money back from the IRS at tax time has been firmly lodged at 70 percent or more since the 1960s, despite complaints from experts that it amounts to giving the government an interest-free loan.

In 2016, Kautter, then working at a consulting firm, bemoaned the number of people receiving

refunds each year, while acknowledging taxpayers like being essentially forced to save.

"It drives me nuts," Kautter told POLITICO that April. "You don't lend money to other people interest free."

For millions, it is the single largest payment they receive all year.

The IRS generally likes people getting refunds as well, because it means fewer people it must chase down who owe taxes.

So the withholding sweet spot might be for people to get bigger paychecks this year, but not so large that it erases their refunds next year.

That will be technically difficult, experts say, because the Republican plan dumped the concept of personal exemptions, which are key to figuring out how much to withhold from someone's paycheck, and it's not clear how the agency will make up for that.

What's more, about 8.5 million taxpayers will see tax increases, according to TPC, which not only threatens their refunds. It could also potentially put them at risk of incurring underpayment penalties the IRS imposes on those who pay less than 90 percent of their taxes during the calendar year.

The IRS has provided little guidance thus far on how exactly it intends to proceed, leaving payroll administrators scratching their heads.

"There's definitely some unanswered questions," said Mike Trabold, director of compliance risk at Paychex, a payroll administration firm.

He wonders if the IRS will make any withholding changes retroactive to the beginning of this year. Others wonder if and when the agency will have to develop new W-4 forms, and whether it will waive those underpayment penalties.

Lawmakers have tried to increase people's paychecks before, by unilaterally changing withholding, and faced a backlash from the public.

The 1986 overhaul ordered the Treasury Department to devise a more accurate withholding system that would slash the number of people getting refunds each year. "You can kiss your tax refund goodbye, and with it the summer vacations, new refrigerators and fall wardrobes it has paid for," The Washington Post reported in April 1987.

But the revised W-4 form the agency produced was so complicated that it became hugely unpopular and was dropped.

A few years later, Bush, then running for reelection, ordered the government to withhold less from paychecks in hopes of boosting the economy.

But many people didn't want the extra money if it meant losing their refunds, and within a few years, refunds had returns to previous levels.

Bernie Becker contributed to this report.

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IRS urged to allow deductions for all 2018 property tax prepayments [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 01/09/2018 04:34 PM EDT

The IRS should let taxpayers deduct all their prepaid 2018 property taxes from their filings this year, no matter whether they've received their 2018 property tax bills or not, Rep. [Leonard Lance](#) (R-N.J.) told Acting IRS Commissioner David Kautter today.

The revenue agency previously ruled that prepayments could only be deducted by taxpayers who'd received their 2018 assessments and made their prepayments before the end of 2017.

But the IRS didn't issue that guidance until Dec. 27, five days after President Donald Trump signed the new tax law [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) that included a \$10,000 federal limit on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, which took effect Jan. 1. The law said taxpayers couldn't prepay future state and local income taxes, but wasn't specific on precluding property tax prepayments, Lance reminded Kautter in [a letter](#) today.

In the interim, thousands of taxpayers in New Jersey, New York, California and other high-tax states prepaid 2018 property taxes. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie issued an executive order the day before the IRS advisory, triggering many more Garden State residents to prepay their 2018 property taxes than otherwise would have, Lance said.

"The IRS and state governments should work in comity on these matters," Lance wrote. "Therefore, I believe it is appropriate for the IRS to revisit this Advisory and allow full deduction of all 2018 property tax prepayments, regardless of the date of assessment."

Separately, other Congress members have introduced legislation to fully restore the SALT deduction, while state legislators are pushing other ideas like charitable contributions to state funds and shifting the tax burden to payroll taxes.

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Alexander, Murray revive talks on Obamacare stabilization [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn | 01/10/2018 01:34 PM EDT

Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) and [Patty Murray](#) have resumed negotiations on a bipartisan bill aimed at stabilizing the Obamacare markets, they said today.

The chairman and ranking Democrat on the Senate health committee met this week, Alexander told reporters, and are hoping to craft a bill in the next few weeks that could be folded into a longterm omnibus spending agreement.

That stabilization package would likely combine Alexander and Murray's original [bill](#)

restoring cost-sharing payments to insurers and expanding state flexibility with separate legislation from Sens. [Susan Collins](#) and [Bill Nelson](#) funding a reinsurance program for Obamacare plans.

"It's fundamentally what was agreed to," Alexander said. "It's what we recommended, plus the Collins-Nelson risk pool."

But Alexander and Murray have yet to work out all the details that stalled their initial agreement late last year. House conservatives in December pressed GOP leaders not to take any steps that would prop up Obamacare, and protested the bill's lack of restrictions on using the money for abortions.

Murray has said that adding abortion restrictions is a non-starter. And Alexander, who has also spoken recently with the White House and House Republicans about a prospective stabilization deal, said only that it'd be part of the discussion over the next few weeks.

He also waved off concerns about getting a vote on a deal, saying the more immediate goal is to "try to begin to lower rates in the individual market. And then let the leaders work out the way forward."

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CHIP extension faces headwinds despite lowered price tag [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 01/09/2018 04:55 PM EDT

Lawmakers scrambling to fund the popular Children's Health Insurance Program got an easy out after the CBO dramatically lowered its estimate of how much the program would cost. But even that may not produce a deal since the program's fate is tangled up in the thorny politics of immigration and a government spending bill.

That's a problem because the short-term patch that Congress passed just a few weeks ago is expected to dry up as soon as this month and next in several states — running the risk that children could lose coverage before a March 31 expiration date, according to state officials and others who talk to CHIP directors.

Several lawmakers say the new CBO estimate shows there's no reason to delay sending states a more permanent source of funding.

"It changes the dynamic entirely," said Sen. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio), who argued that CHIP's funding should be considered separately due to the lower price tag.

"I view that as an opportunity," he said.

Both Republicans and Democrats have pledged to renew money for the program, which provides health coverage to roughly 9 million low-income children, but have yet to finalize how to do it. Their job got a lot easier on Friday when CBO significantly lowered its projection of the costs for a five-year funding bill, estimating that a Senate bill would increase

the deficit by \$800 million over the next decade — about a tenth of its earlier \$8.2 billion price tag.

Congress' decision to repeal Obamacare's individual mandate lowered the cost of CHIP partly because covering individuals through the law's exchanges is projected to become far more expensive with the mandate's elimination. In a separate estimate, the nonpartisan budget scorekeeper now projects that a 10-year extension would save \$6 billion over a decade, according to a copy of the estimate obtained by POLITICO.

A spending bill that Congress must pass by Jan. 19 to avoid a government shutdown is seen as the next vehicle to pass a long-term CHIP extension. But Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), whose committee cleared a bipartisan CHIP extension in October, [S. 1827 \(115\)](#), following the updated CBO score said it was time to "stop holding CHIP hostage to a caps deal."

"Nothing should prevent enactment of a five-year KIDS Act reauthorization before Jan. 19 — regardless of a budgetary caps agreement," he said in a statement to POLITICO.

Democrats still blame the funding delay on Republicans for prioritizing Obamacare repeal, [H.R. 1628 \(115\)](#), and a massive overhaul of the tax code, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), over CHIP, whose federal funds expired on Sept. 30 before Congress passed a short-term funding patch last month.

"Those multinational corporations got \$1 trillion worth of tax relief," said [Ron Wyden](#) of Oregon, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance panel that shepherded the chamber's CHIP legislation. "And vulnerable kids on CHIP got something that was temporary. I think that says it all."

Lawmakers have precious few days to act before states could again be in dire straits.

"Basically this entire process has been [flying by] the seat of our pants," said Andrew Tuozzolo, chief of staff to the Health secretary in Louisiana, where officials are planning to send coverage termination notices next month if Congress doesn't enact new funds.

As a result of the delays, some states began informing enrollees in November and December that their coverage could end within weeks.

The December patch, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), provided temporary relief, but it won't last long, said Maureen Hensley-Quinn of the National Academy for State Health Policy. At least 10 states are set to run out of funds as early as this month and February; another six are set to run out in March, according to a survey of state officials, she said.

Hensley-Quinn said states are also still trying to figure out how much leftover CHIP funding they can get from CMS, which originally had approximately \$3 billion on hand but has sent out at least \$1.2 billion to states on the verge of shuttering their programs.

"What is less sure is how much, if any, redistribution funds remain available for states," she said.

The House in November passed a five-year CHIP extension, [H.R. 3922 \(115\)](#), mostly on party lines. Democrats protested that the bill was paid for in part by gutting the Obamacare Prevention and Public Health Fund and raising premiums for wealthy seniors enrolled in

Medicare.

Action has stalled in the Senate, where the Senate Finance Committee continues to negotiate how to pay for its five-year CHIP bill, as well as several Medicare extenders, according to aides in both parties. Funding for other programs, such as community health centers and other public health programs, has also languished in the chamber.

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Pentagon audit to cost \$367M, plus \$551M in fixes, comptroller says [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 01/10/2018 11:42 AM EDT

The first-ever Pentagon audit will cost about \$367 million to carry out and another \$551 million to fix identified issues, Comptroller David Norquist estimated today.

Testifying at a House Armed Services hearing on the audit, which kicked off last month, Norquist said the Pentagon plans to spend \$367 million this fiscal year, including \$181 million in contract costs for independent accounting firms and \$186 million for related infrastructure.

The \$181 million in audit fees, Norquist estimated, is about one-thirtieth of 1 percent of the Pentagon budget.

The cost is small, he said, compared to the overall budget and is better than the alternative of "operating in ignorance of the problem."

"Any number that is in millions is a large number, but on the scale of the enterprise, that type of money for accountability is money well spent," Norquist said.

The audit was met with bipartisan approval among committee members, who had repeatedly requested an audit with little success.

"The up-front cost is going to be enormous. But long term, the benefits are exactly as you describe," ranking Democrat [Adam Smith](#) of Washington state said. "And if we've got to sort of suck it up for a couple years and absorb some costs ... it's going to make significant improvements."

Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) said "it is not by accident that the committee will start our year on this topic."

"It is likely that the result of the first audit will not be pretty, but those results will help direct us all," Thornberry said.

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Thornberry urges flexibility in year-end military spending [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 01/10/2018 01:46 PM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) said today Congress should consider allowing the Pentagon to spend some money beyond the current fiscal year if a full-year defense appropriation is finally passed.

Speaking to reporters after a hearing on the Pentagon audit, the Texas Republican said he's concerned the Defense Department won't be able to effectively spend additional funding with limited time left in this fiscal year, particularly on maintenance.

"They will receive a large percentage of their funding without much time left," Thornberry said. "You either got the choice of spending a lot of stuff fast, or not spending it. And I'm concerned that our maintenance and other readiness problems are so severe that we can't afford to let money just sit there, or to spend it foolishly.

"Is there a responsible way to allow them more flexibility to spend FY18 money on Oct. 2?" Thornberry wondered.

Republicans have advocated boosting defense spending to roughly \$700 billion for this fiscal year. But the Pentagon and other federal agencies have been funded since October through several continuing spending resolutions, which adhere to the previous year's spending levels.

The latest CR runs out Jan. 19. So to avoid a government shutdown, Congress must pass a new CR, or strike a full-year spending deal.

Thornberry also expressed his concerns during the hearing to Pentagon Comptroller David Norquist.

"I think my staff has reached out to yours to work together to see about some greater flexibility in spending money after the end of the fiscal year," Thornberry told Norquist.

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Surface fleet leader: Navy needs more ships or fewer responsibilities [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 01/09/2018 03:39 PM EDT

The head of the Navy's surface forces said today that the Navy needs more ships or fewer responsibilities to avoid the collisions that plagued the community over the summer.

Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden said at the Surface Navy Association annual conference that a string of accidents in the Pacific Fleet over the summer showed that the fleet is "stretched" too thin, with more time being devoted to missions than to training and readiness.

He said that sailors in the Pacific told him that "they need help and, by help, they mean time: time to maintain their gear, time to refresh their basic individual and team skills and time to

unwind."

"Time will only come from one of two things, or a combination of them: more ships and fewer obligations," he said. "It's hard to see it any other way."

The Navy has said it needs 355 ships to meet current demands, but it's unclear how the Pentagon might pay to add 75 ships to the fleet.

Absent growing the size of the fleet, Rowden said the Navy is working to implement several recommendations made by recent investigations, including honestly explaining to senior leaders the level of risk that will come from doing what is being asked of them.

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Fed sent \$80B in profits to Treasury for 2017 [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 01/10/2018 11:25 AM EDT

The Federal Reserve today [announced](#) that its reserve banks sent roughly \$80.2 billion in profits to the U.S. Treasury for 2017.

Its total estimated net income for the year, \$80.7 billion, was down \$11.7 billion from 2016, thanks to higher interest paid to banks on excess reserves — the central bank's primary tool for raising short-term interest rates. Its interest expenses increased \$13.8 billion, but it also received \$2.5 billion more in interest income on its securities holdings.

WHAT'S NEXT: The central bank's audited annual financial statements are scheduled to be published in March, it said.

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Release of Trump infrastructure plan may slip past January [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo and Lauren Gardner | 01/09/2018 06:02 PM EDT

The White House may be pushing back the release of its long-awaited infrastructure package yet again, just a month after saying it would come out by the end of January.

A White House official said Tuesday that there have been "no decisions yet on timing" for the release. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) separately told POLITICO — after a meeting with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and other officials — that administration officials are still deciding whether to publish legislative principles for the plan before or after the president's State of the Union address Jan. 30.

A White House spokeswoman did not immediately comment Tuesday.

It's unclear whether this represents a major snag for the infrastructure plan, which Trump's aides have talked up as a big priority for 2018. The plan — aimed at creating as much as \$1 trillion in federal, state and private spending — could also be another big win for Trump on the heels of December's tax overhaul, the president's supporters hope.

Trump's advisers have told him that pursuing an infrastructure bill will give Republicans the best chance of holding onto the House because the prospect of building new roads and bridges has broad appeal with the electorate.

But congressional Democrats have expressed skepticism about Trump's approach, especially given the administration's signals that it will come with relatively little new federal spending and will attempt to unroll a host of regulatory requirements for transportation projects. And Trump himself has expressed misgivings about the package's expected incentives for government partnerships with private investors — most recently during a huddle last weekend with congressional leaders at Camp David, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) Sunday.

Trump has been raising similar concerns for weeks in private conversations with lawmakers and his advisers, according to people familiar with the conversations.

D.J. Gribbin, the president's special assistant for infrastructure policy, refused to give specifics on the timing of the plan's release when reporters pressed him Tuesday, following the meeting with Cardin and other lawmakers. Besides Chao, the meeting also included members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

A White House official had [told](#) POLITICO in early December that Trump intended to send "a detailed infrastructure principles document" to Congress sometime in January. Even that was later than what Chao had predicted last spring, when she [told](#) Fox News that "the legislative proposal will probably be tackled by the Congress in the third quarter" of 2017.

More recently, the White House has decided to focus largely on infrastructure in the coming months, administration officials have said — setting aside for now a bid to make sweeping changes to the country's welfare programs, a top priority for House Speaker Paul Ryan. That decision came after weeks of internal debate about the administration's legislative priorities.

Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, said Tuesday's meeting was less about specifics of the infrastructure plan and more about face time about the plan with the administration, which he called "helpful."

"I don't know that I learned a lot," Carper said. "I just think there's value in sitting down and talking."

The plan is expected to call for as much as \$200 billion in federal spending over the next decade, with the rest coming from private investment, state or local funding and cuts to other federal programs. An administration official has told POLITICO that a wide variety of projects would have to compete for federal assistance, ranging from roads, railroads, bridges and tunnels to rural broadband or veterans' hospitals — and that communities hoping for money from Washington will have to be prepared to put up their own cash.

At the same time, the White House has proposed budget cuts for some existing federal

transportation programs. And the Department of Transportation told New York and New Jersey late last month not to expect the federal government to pay half of the \$13 billion cost of building a new tunnel under the Hudson River — despite earlier promises to that effect from the Obama administration.

Both developments have increased Democrats' consternation about Trump's infrastructure plan.

Cardin said the administration officials went over their proposal Tuesday but left many of the details unfilled.

"I think we have an understanding [of] the framework they're working under," Cardin said. "What we don't have is specifics. What we don't have is how it adds up. And I think the plea that we're making is let's have a real, open process, but recognize you've got to have the money."

Andrew Restuccia contributed to this report.

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Bipartisan House caucus calls for gas tax increase [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 01/09/2018 02:15 PM EDT

The bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus will release its infrastructure plan Wednesday, hoping to "shape the conversation" ahead of a White House blueprint expected sometime this month.

The House caucus, which has an equal number of Republicans and Democrats, will release a report recommending increasing the gas tax and indexing it to inflation, as well as other options for raising revenue. President Donald Trump's proposal is not expected to include a specific funding mechanism. Key congressional aides say that starting off with proposals that have already had demonstrable bipartisan backing might help accelerate the debate over funding mechanisms, which has stymied infrastructure efforts many times before.

The report also suggests that highway projects over \$20 million should have to undergo the same life cycle assessments that transit projects already do, in order to ensure that assets exist to maintain and operate the infrastructure for at least 20 years.

Rather than shoot for a large but temporary injection of funding, the report focuses on sustainable funding ideas, such as devoting the entire Harbor Maintenance Tax to its intended purpose, expanding loan programs like TIFIA and WIFIA and plussing up the Highway Trust Fund, among others.

Staffers suggested Democrats in the caucus are eager to cooperate with the Trump administration on a plan despite some hesitation in the party about handing the president a "win" ahead of the 2018 midterms.

Caucus members and staff met with White House infrastructure adviser DJ Gribbin this

morning and said there were substantial similarities between the White House plan and their own.

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Chamber reiterates gas tax support, plans additional options for infrastructure bill [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 01/10/2018 12:25 PM EDT

The head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce told reporters today that he has long backed a gas tax hike and that his organization will pitch additional ways to pay for a potential infrastructure package this month.

"I don't think the Congress of the United States is prepared, ready or able to put up trillions of dollars, or a trillion dollars over an ensuing period of time, for infrastructure having just done the things on tax relief and ... they are having to face all these entitlement costs, which are growing in leaps and bounds," Thomas Donohue, the Chamber's president and CEO, told reporters after a speech today.

He also linked infrastructure investment to immigration and the U.S. workforce. "If we do a trillion-dollar-plus, 10-year infrastructure plan, we can't do it with the workers we have now," Donohue said.

During his speech, Donohue said 2018 should "be the year of major infrastructure investment," adding that the Chamber of Commerce and the Trump administration have discussed "what a forward-looking infrastructure package should achieve."

"We have the political will, the bipartisan support and we certainly have the need," Donohue said. "So now is the time for action." Donohue called for focusing on "projects of national significance that maximize long-term growth" and generate jobs.

He mentioned port, airport, broadband, water and energy infrastructure, as well as upgrading bridges and roads for self-driving vehicles. "But the big question: How do we pay for it?" he said. "That's the problem that has dogged, troubled this debate for many years."

He said the Chamber of Commerce plans to release "very constructive ideas and proposals" on that issue on Jan. 18.

"We're going to help jump start the conversation between public and private sector leaders," Donohue said. "We're already talking to the White House and others in town, and people around the world as well, and people with money."

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Donohue calls for infrastructure spending, more access to capital to boost growth [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 01/10/2018 11:30 AM EDT

U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue Wednesday called for sustained economic growth that is more widely shared, boosted by initiatives like infrastructure investment and increased access to capital.

"This must be a concern of ours, to return our nation to equality and opportunity for all," Donohue said in his annual "State of Business" [speech](#). "Two quarters of 3 percent growth — great. But we must make it last for a decade. It must be sustained."

He said he expected stronger growth to continue, "barring unforeseen circumstances," pointing to low unemployment and "a bit" of wage growth, as well as a surging stock market. He credited "better policies" at the federal level and in some states for these gains.

"We don't need everything to turn out just right for us to prosper this year," Donohue said. "Our economy's underlying strength is deep and wide, so we can overcome some adversity."

But the risks include the threat of withdrawal from NAFTA or defaulting on federal debt, as well as continued turmoil in the Middle East and the potential for terrorist or cyberattacks.

To help boost growth, 2018 "can and must be the year of major infrastructure investment," he said.

"We have the political will, the bipartisan support — and we certainly have the need," he said. "Now it's time for action."

Donohue acknowledged it was a "problem" to figure out how such investment should be paid for and said the group would put forward ideas at a Jan. 18 event. In a press conference after his speech, he declined to elaborate on those ideas, though he noted he's "a long-term supporter of a gas tax increase."

"I don't think the Congress of the United States is prepared, ready or able to put up trillions of dollars, or a trillion dollars ... having just done the things on tax relief," he said. He also cited the costs of entitlement programs, "which are growing with leaps and bounds."

"You're not going to pay for these all with government money," he said of fixing roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

In his speech, Donohue also expressed alarm about the "growing disincentive" for companies to go public, citing the role of proxy advisory firms and "activist investors" pushing politically motivated investments.

"Short-termism is forcing leaders to make decisions to satisfy quarterly goals instead of to meet long-term growth objectives," he said.

"This is a serious problem," he added. "Public companies are major contributors to job growth in this country."

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A year later, Trump still able to woo farmers [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 01/09/2018 07:20 PM EDT

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Donald Trump won the presidency in large part by appealing to rural voters. If the sentiment at this week's American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention is any indication, he is still their guy.

Trump is the first president in years who seems to be listening to the needs of the agriculture industry, farmers and ranchers say, and so they stick with him despite their anxiety over his trade and immigration policies.

"I've been back on our family farm since 1992, and this is the first time we've had a president pay so much attention to agriculture," said Renea Jones-Rogers, who grows 600 acres of fresh market tomatoes in eastern Tennessee, and was recently appointed to the Agriculture Department's state farm committee. "He really wants to hear what farmers have to say and make things better."

Trump, a born and bred New Yorker more comfortable in business suits than dungarees, may seem like an unlikely champion of farmers. But he has been able to touch on the issues they care about, such as commitment to rolling back federal regulations and the patriotism he invokes during campaign-style speeches like the one he delivered here Monday.

The president took the stage as the country song "God Bless the U.S.A." blasted through the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center, and he received many standing ovations during a rare speech that stuck mostly to script.

He boasted of his administration's efforts to roll back regulations and the Republican tax overhaul, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). (Trump overstated the size of the tax cuts, claiming they totaled \$5.5 trillion, when they are estimated to total \$1.5 trillion over a decade.)

He also played to the crowd when he said he would support an on-time farm bill that includes crop insurance — a popular program among farmers but obscure to the general public — "unless you don't want me to."

Some of the loudest applause was in response to Trump's statement, "We want our national anthem respected," which prompted chants of "U-S-A, U-S-A," along with the mention of rolling back EPA's controversial Waters of the United States rule and raising the estate tax exemption to \$11 million for an individual, and double that for couples.

Missing from his speech, however, [were any reassurances](#) that the U.S. would not withdraw from NAFTA, which would be disastrous for many grain and livestock farmers' bottom lines. Nor did he promise to improve a visa system for migrant agricultural workers to ease long-term labor shortages as he pursues a crackdown on illegal immigration.

For Kevin Paap, the president of the Minnesota Farm Bureau who grows corn and soybeans, the question he is most often asked by farmers is, "Where does the president stand on trade?"

While producers are supportive of deregulatory efforts and tax cuts, the significance of such moves is diminished if farm income shrinks, he said. Commodity prices have steadily dropped over the last four years because of global oversupply. For years, they have remained low, taking U.S. farm income down with them.

The USDA [estimated](#) that after three consecutive years of decline, net farm income will have increased in 2017 to about \$63 billion.

"We're appreciative of the tax bill, but quite frankly, with the financial stress in agriculture, farmers aren't looking for tax write-offs," Paap said. "If I don't have income, I don't have to worry about income tax deductions."

The best way to increase farm income is to increase prices, Paap said, and expanding export markets could go a long way. He was hoping that Trump during his speech would commit not only to completing NAFTA, but also to pursuing trade deals with other countries, like Japan, Vietnam and others involved in the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Trump pulled out of TPP during his first few days in office, and now the 11 other countries involved are moving forward without the United States.

But Trump only briefly talked about NAFTA, stating that he's working to get a "better deal" for the country, including farmers and manufacturers. He did stop short of making his oft-repeated threat to pull out of the trade deal if Canada and Mexico can't meet U.S. demands.

Another critical issue for many farmers is an overhaul of the H-2A temporary guest-worker program so it is easier to hire more immigrants to harvest crops and work on dairy farms that demand year-round labor.

Jon Hegeman, who owns an ornamental plant operation in White Plains, Ala., is a staunch Trump supporter who uses the H-2A program. During last year's Farm Bureau convention, he told POLITICO that if the United States doesn't fix the migrant worker program to address labor shortages on farms, the country would have to start relying on food imports.

One year later, the visa system is still burdensome, he says, but it at least it hasn't gotten worse.

"This process needs to be modernized, but it takes time," he said, noting that the Trump family uses H-2A and other visa programs to hire foreign workers at its vineyard in Charlottesville, Va., and properties across the country. "He understands labor."

Hegeman said he was supportive of Trump's push to build a border wall, or another type of barrier, to secure the southern border as long as it was proposed as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

As the White House and Congress are trying to hammer out a deal on the legal status of about 700,000 undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, funding for the wall has become a bargaining chip. Trump [met with 25 lawmakers](#) Tuesday to discuss how to move forward on the future of the DACA program, border security and the possibility of an immigration overhaul.

Farmers are also dealing with the rising cost of health care, which many cited as one of their top concerns and an issue Republicans and Democrats should work together on.

Paap said he purchases a policy for him and his wife on the individual market that costs \$2,300 a month, and from the only insurance provider available where he lives in southern Minnesota.

"This is not just about the insurance market, but the cost of providing health care," Paap said, echoing remarks by Sen. [Jerry Moran](#) (R-Kan.), who hosted a workshop Sunday during the Farm Bureau convention.

The Kansas Republican — who [opposed an initial attempt](#) by the Senate to repeal the ACA last year, but ultimately voted for the version that [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and others dramatically tanked — said that Congress should spend more time trying to find ways to reduce the cost of providing health care, and less time debating who pays for it.

"There is something more important than who pays," Moran said. "Let's find out why prescription drugs cost so much. Congress is missing out on this."

Despite the uncertainty on health care — as well as immigration reform and trade — the farm belt is still firmly Trump country. It could sway further in his favor if the White House helps deliver an on-time farm bill, which expires Sept. 30, and completes a NAFTA 2.0 that preserves gains in agricultural exports.

"He knows there is a need to support farmers," said Yvonne Dutschmann, who grows wheat and hay and raises cattle in Gatesville, Texas. She appreciated Trump's directive to EPA to review, and either revise or rescind, the WOTUS rule, and said she voted for Trump because at the time, "he was the lesser of two evils."

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How the GOP's war on the IRS could backfire [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 01/10/2018 12:10 PM EDT

Republicans buoyed by their victory on a historic tax bill are turning their focus on the agency they might hate more than any other: the IRS.

But while conservatives have long wanted to deconstruct the tax collection bureaucracy, right now might be the worst possible time to continue to slash funding and roll back IRS powers. In the wake of the biggest rewrite of the tax code in three decades there will be a huge need to implement, explain and enforce hundreds of pages of new tax provisions in the coming years.

"Restructuring the IRS right now would be the worst thing for our country," said Steve Mankowski, president of the National Conference of CPA Practitioners. "It's just a recipe for disaster."

National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson, the agency's in-house watchdog, said Wednesday the IRS has tentatively estimated it needs an extra \$495 million in funding for 2018 and 2019 to implement the tax law.

That's not stopping House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas). Since 2016 he's threatened to "bust up" the IRS, a vague plan he later refined to turning the IRS into a service-oriented agency for individual and business taxpayer needs, with dispute resolution handled through a small claims court-type of process.

"You're going to see action this year on this issue," Brady said Monday, adding that the Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee that has already mined the issue would continue its work. "We'll have some announcements shortly on some of the new process that they'll be taking going forward, soliciting ideas from lawmakers and organizations as well."

The oversight subpanel, which Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-Fla.) chaired before switching to the Tax Policy Subcommittee in a change announced Wednesday, last year held five hearings on IRS customer service, improving taxpayer experiences, tax fraud, appeals and the agency's antiquated computer systems.

Buchanan has said repeatedly that he wants to release an IRS restructuring bill early this year. But Brady said no timetable has been set on introducing legislation.

"I want to visit with the chairman about when the bill will be drafted and completed and ready for movement," Brady said.

On Wednesday, Olson offered lawmakers 50 new recommendations as they consider a possible reorganization. The proposals are more administrative than structural, such as giving taxpayers more time to sue for damages if they're unfairly targeted for collection and requiring that each state has a permanent IRS appeals officer.

Republicans seem in no hurry to give the agency more money, though Buchanan has said it's being discussed. Both the House and Senate bills that fund the IRS include more cuts.

If Brady, Buchanan and other Republicans get their way in changing IRS powers while also cutting agency funding, as they've done every year since 2010, it could undermine the new tax law President Donald Trump and Republicans on Capitol Hill are boasting about.

First, it would further limit IRS call centers and other contact points for taxpayer inquiries, which have struggled to maintain service amid the budget cutbacks. Personnel numbers have declined, fewer questions are fielded year over year and only basic tax law answers have been given since the 2014 filing season, Olson has testified before Congress.

Shifting the IRS focus from implementation would also distract from developing new forms and tables that are needed to determine how much taxpayers owe. It would also hinder examinations and enforcement, which have suffered as appropriations have dwindled, as shown by reduced audit rates.

On top of that, it would make it harder to understand new international tax laws for U.S. companies that make money abroad or foreign firms that operate here; noncorporate businesses like partnerships and others known as pass-throughs also need clarity on new boundaries governing how their income will be taxed.

Even worse, some critics say, it would hamstring the federal government's collection capability. Simultaneously withholding money from the IRS and restructuring its organization would surely distract from the agency's revenue operations and leave money on the table that

should be collected, Mankowski said.

Instead, agency veterans and others say Republicans who control Congress should sufficiently fund the IRS to ensure it has adequate resources to implement the new law and brace for taxpayer uncertainty.

"I do think that the service needs some additional funds in this instance," said former IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson.

It's in Republicans' interest to work with the IRS during the implementation phase while continuing to hold the agency accountable, he added.

Extra money could be earmarked for specific purposes, similar to the nearly \$300 million boost Congress provided the IRS in 2016, specifically for taxpayer services and combating identity theft, Mankowski said.

Ample appropriations would go a long way toward increasing the number of IRS employees who interact with taxpayers and professionals and ensuring staff is trained on the new law. Better funding would also help address challenges on the enforcement side of the agency, its outdated computer systems and its regulatory functions.

Those issues are more paramount than beginning what are certain to be slow changes for a major bureaucracy, said Everson, who headed the IRS from 2003 until 2007 and is now vice chairman at alliantgroup LP.

"I would operate carefully," he said.

Others agreed.

"That could be a problem to institute massive reforms right now," said former Rep. Charles Boustany (R-La.), now a lobbyist at Capitol Counsel LLC and previously in the oversight role now held by Buchanan.

For his part, Buchanan has said talks are under way to raise the IRS funding level, possibly by as much as \$500 million. As it stands now the agency's budget is on track to decline to about \$11.1 billion without anything extra, down from about \$12.5 billion in 2010 when not adjusted for inflation.

"This is to help the transition," Buchanan said last month, just after a ceremony marking the bill's passage. "For payroll companies and everybody else, a lot of this has to get in place quickly, and the IRS is going to need additional funds to do that."

Brady was less certain than Buchanan about increasing IRS funding for implementation.

"I don't know that," Brady said. "The first question is, what do they need to implement this? And what of their current resources should be prioritized to that end?"

Other agency critics in Congress are even more outspoken. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), a member of the tax-writing Finance Committee, isn't keen to supplement IRS funding because his anger hasn't subsided over the agency's political targeting scandal, which came to light in 2013.

"Only if they show us that they're going to impartially enforce the IRS code, and they proved that they couldn't enforce it, the way that they treated nonprofit organizations back in '11 and '12," Grassley said, adding that he's content to continue holding the agency's feet to the fire over the issue.

Congressional Republicans have for a while been trying to direct funding to specific IRS services and functions, Boustany said. But they ought to dial down their combative rhetoric in the meantime, he added.

"I hope that they do conduct a number of hearings that aren't overtly political to really get down to what the needs are because I think this could be pretty disruptive going forward for a lot of American families, small businesses and of course on the corporate international side as well," Boustany said.

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Date: Thursday, December 21, 2017 5:52:00 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 12/21/2017 05:49 PM EDT

ONE DOWN: You can probably ditch that "Congress ruins Christmas" quip. As of now, it looks like a shutdown will be averted after all — with maybe even a day to spare.

The House passed the four-week spending bill this afternoon, garnering GOP votes to send the measure off to the Senate, as Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [explain](#).

Turning it around: After House Republicans briefed GOP lawmakers last night on the new stopgap plan, members of the minority party were all "bah humbug" about an abysmal whip count. But, oh, how the holidays can spur legislative miracles.

Brief bout of panic: In the upper chamber, Sen. [Rand Paul](#) plans to steal the show with a PAYGO amendment. But with the help of their friends in the minority party, Senate Republicans are expected to breeze through that vote, Sarah [reports](#). The Kentucky Republican is mad that the stopgap spending bill ([H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#)) includes a PAYGO waiver to prevent the tax bill ([H.R. 1 \(115\)](#)) from triggering \$150 billion a year in cuts to Medicare and other federal programs. So he's proposing to keep that hammer coming.

Without objection: Even with that PAYGO pit stop, the Senate could clear the funding bill for President Donald Trump's signature tonight, unless somebody insists on the full spate of debate (and that against-the-grain senator can withstand the burning glares of his or her antsy peers).

What's in it? After so many strategy shifts, it's understandable to be confused about what's in this latest version of the bill. The biggies:

- A "clean" extension of funding for both defense and nondefense programs through Jan. 19.
- \$2.85 billion to keep the Children's Health Insurance Program funded through March 31.
- Authority for CMS to help states deal with CHIP-related funding shortfalls.
- A four-week extension of spy powers under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Program.
- Money for community health centers and other health programs (made possible by \$750 million in cuts to an Obamacare fund).
- That PAYGO waiver.
- A bevy of [extra money](#) for some defense programs.

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Docs of the day — In a [dear colleague letter](#), Rep. [Tim Walz](#) (D-Minn.) called on lawmakers to oppose a continuing resolution "that does not include funding to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs' capacity to directly deliver quality and timely health care to veterans." More from [Connor O'Brien](#).

— More than three dozen House lawmakers sent a [letter](#) today asking appropriators to continue funding for TSA staffing at airport exit lanes and for reimbursing airports that hire local law enforcement. More from [Stephanie Beasley](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — USDA has [again](#) lowered its forecast for Florida's hurricane-battered citrus industry, predicting the lowest production level since 1945. Florida is expected to produce 46 million 90-pound boxes of oranges this season, about 33 percent less than last season's crop.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: The [Budget & Appropriations Brief](#) will not publish from Dec. 25 to Jan. 1. After Friday, our next newsletter will hit your inbox on Jan. 2. Please continue to follow our [Pro Budget coverage](#).

APPROPRIATIONS

GIVING UP THE GAVEL? Sen. [Thad Cochran](#)'s health issues have been stifling work on the Appropriations Committee, and there is growing speculation that he'll step aside in January, John [reports](#) today. For months, Cochran has had a minimal presence at hearings, has stopped meeting about substantive committee business and has said little about federal spending, beyond official statements from his office. [Richard Shelby](#) (R-Ala.), the No. 2 Republican on the panel, is now effectively serving as chairman. But Cochran's office maintains that the chairman has "not made any statements about relinquishing his chairmanship."

High stakes: Cochran's next step could help determine whether the GOP keeps control of the Senate next year, as Jeff Greenfield [writes](#) for POLITICO Magazine. An open seat in Mississippi could trigger an intra-party fight that Republicans already fear could be a flashback to Alabama's race this month. The last time Cochran was on the ballot in 2014, he barely survived a primary challenge from state Sen. Chris McDaniel, who's already planning to run again.

BUDGET

PAGING HOUSE REPUBLICANS: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) has killed the House GOP's dreams of welfare reform before 2018 even got started. "I think the Democrats are not going to be interested in entitlement reform, so I would not expect to see that on the agenda," McConnell declared today at an [event](#) hosted by Axios. He did acknowledge that Republicans can pass bills without Democrats in "rare exceptions" (Read: Reconciliation.) but made no mention of trying that budgetary maneuver again next year.

Sidenote: A Republican-led Congress hasn't adopted a budget in an election year since 2000. ([H/t Jonathan Nicholson](#))

So, what does have a shot? McConnell said he sees "a lot of interest" in infrastructure next year: "I think it's pretty popular with Democrats and Republicans both." (Another fan of the idea? McConnell's better half, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao).

DEFENSE

TAX TROUBLES: The nation's biggest military proponents were already anxious about yet another stopgap spending bill to close out 2017. Now, they fear the GOP's soon-to-be tax law could wipe out the Trump administration's big promise of heftier Pentagon budgets, Connor [reports](#). After all, that \$1.5 trillion tax bill could lead to the same high deficits that forced Washington into much-maligned budget caps in 2011.

SKIPPING A YEAR: Brace yourself for the Mona Lisa of defense budgets. Deputy Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan said today that the White House's fiscal 2019 budget request will call for another increase, but the fiscal 2020 plan will be "the masterpiece." As Jacqueline Klimas [reports](#), Shanahan told reporters today that he expects the Pentagon to release its National Defense Strategy in January, followed by the much-anticipated Nuclear Posture Review and Ballistic Missile Defense Review in February.

TAX

EXTENDING THE FUN! Senate GOP tax-writers delivered even more holiday goodies for U.S. businesses (and lobbyists) this week. The Senate Finance Committee released its long-awaited "tax extenders" bill late Wednesday, giving new hope to tax breaks for owning race horses and building auto-racing tracks, Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#). One festive way to look at the plan, [per Morning Energy](#): "Santa gathered up all the wish lists and compiled them into this bill."

Reality check: The measure's fate is murky, at best, in the House. In the words of Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#): "You're talking to the chairman who doesn't want to do extenders."

Missing one thing: Still no word on that other "extenders" package K Street is so keen on: Medicare provisions Congress must reapprove. This year, the deadline was Sept. 30. Lawmakers had hoped the Medicare extenders could hitch a ride with CHIP funding in this week's stopgap bill. But so far, no dice.

TREASURY

A PIGGY BANK FOR FANNIE AND FREDDIE: Sorry, taxpayers — Fannie and Freddie get to keep some of their cash. After sending tens of billions to the Treasury each quarter as a condition of their bailout, the mortgage giants will finally be allowed to build up a \$3 billion capital reserve rather than forking over every penny, Lorraine Woellert [explains](#) today. The rainy-day fund isn't expected to be enough, though, to keep Fannie and Freddie from seeking another taxpayer handout because of new rules under the tax bill cleared this week.

HEALTH CARE

NICK OF TIME: A federal ruling is expected to come down by year's end on halting a Medicare rule that will slash \$1.6 billion in payments to the 340B drug program, David Pittman [reports](#). Hospitals are seeking to block the rule that would cut payments next year for certain drugs by nearly 30 percent. And the Obama-appointed district court judge presiding over the case hinted today that he may bypass the hospitals' request for a preliminary injunction and rule immediately, noting that his decision will likely face an appeal.

CONGRESS

SCRUTINIZING THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT FUND: The congressional office that handles sexual harassment complaints has refused to spill the details of taxpayer dollars spent to settle claims. And pressure is mounting, Elana Schor [explains](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO PAY FOR THAT? Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) says he's got his head around the basic tenets of Trump's infrastructure vision, except for one minor detail. "I think the big question for us was: 'How do you fund it?'" Thune said about his recent sitdown with administration officials. Our Brianna Gurciullo chatted at length with the chairman about what he expects — and what he wants to see — in the White House proposal expected to hit the Hill in January. Check out [the full Q&A](#).

HUD

BURNING THE RULE BOOK: HUD is ditching five proposed rules, including a flood standard designed to protect houses backed by taxpayer funds, Lorraine [reports](#). The action is part of the agency's effort to conform to an [executive order](#) Trump issued just days after his inauguration.

EARMARKS

- The \$500 million question: Does IRS need more money for tax overhaul? [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Factbox: Big-ticket items at center of U.S. Congress funding battle. [Reuters](#).
- Americans' economic expectations cool to match lowest of 2017. [Bloomberg](#).
- Treasury yields are on a roll — higher. [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- It's Trump's economy now. [POLITICO](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: One day until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 22, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/gop-keeps-eyes-on-the-prize-avoid-shutdown-skip-down-060431>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Rand Paul threatens 'PAYGO' vote on spending bill [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/21/2017 01:26 PM EDT

Sen. [Rand Paul](#) has thrown a hurdle into Congress' last-minute sprint to fund the government before Friday night's shutdown deadline.

The Kentucky Republican said he will demand a vote on scrapping the GOP's attempt to waive \$150 billion each year in [federally mandated](#) cuts that are set to go into effect following

passage this week of the Republican tax plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

Paul [vowed on Twitter](#) this afternoon to "force a Senate vote to keep the caps in place," threatening to drag out the federal funding fight in the last days before Christmas.

The Senate will likely take a separate vote on Paul's amendment to keep PAYGO cuts in place, before voting on passage of this week's stopgap funding bill, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#).

At least eight Democrats will need to back the vote. And Democratic sources in the Senate say the support will likely materialize, even after the minority party has for weeks been pounding the GOP's tax bill for triggering those cuts.

The spending cuts are a result of Congress' "Pay-As-You-Go" budget rule. Whenever bills aren't fully paid for — like the \$1.5 trillion tax bill — the federal government must automatically slash mandatory programs the following year.

The House has included a PAYGO waiver for the tax bill in the stopgap spending measure the lower chamber is expected to pass this evening.

To view online [click here](#).

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Revised CR includes emergency funding for missile defense, ship repairs [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/21/2017 10:37 AM EDT

Stopgap spending legislation set for a vote today in the House includes an extra several billion dollars for missile defense programs and repairs to two badly damaged Navy destroyers.

The extra emergency spending — which totals just over \$4.6 billion — is likely aimed at attracting the support of defense hawks for the continuing spending resolution after House Republican leaders abandoned plans to include a full-year Pentagon funding bill in the CR.

Lawmakers must pass funding legislation by Friday to avert a government shutdown. The stopgap, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), would keep all federal agencies funded through Jan. 19.

The measure includes a total of approximately \$2.4 billion for missile defense procurement. It would allocate \$1.3 billion for missile defense research and development across the military services as well as \$43 million for missile defense operations and maintenance for missile defense.

The CR also includes \$200 million for the construction of a missile interceptor field in Alaska.

The legislation also allocates \$674 million to repair the Navy destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain. The ships were badly damaged in separate collisions in the Pacific that killed a combined 17 sailors.

President Donald Trump requested additional funding for missile defense to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threat as well as repairs to the two destroyers last month.

The measure also would delay mandatory across-the-board cuts to defense and domestic spending slated to take place in January.

Text of the updated CR is [here](#) and a summary of the bill provisions is [here](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Citing VA funding mismatch, Walz opposes CR [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/21/2017 02:06 PM EDT

The top Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is opposing a stopgap government funding bill over the inclusion of extra money for the private Veterans Choice Program that isn't accompanied by additional funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs itself.

In a [dear colleague letter](#), Rep. [Tim Walz](#) (D-Minn.) called on lawmakers to oppose a continuing resolution "that does not include funding to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs' capacity to directly deliver quality and timely health care to veterans."

The stopgap legislation, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), would keep the government funded through Jan. 19. It includes \$2.1 billion to replenish the Choice Program, which subsidizes non-VA medical care for individuals who face long waits or distances for VA appointments. The program is expected to run out of money within the next month.

But Walz said funding should also be dedicated toward VA itself to hire more doctors and nurses and address infrastructure needs. Veterans' groups have typically called for increases in the non-VA care funding to be paired with funding for VA programs.

Walz called more Choice funding "critical" but said the added dollars "serve only as a funding stop-gap measure" while House and Senate Veterans' Affairs hammer out legislation to overhaul VA's so-called care in the community programs, including Choice.

House Democrats [killed legislation](#) in July to replenish the Choice Program using offsets from within the VA budget, which prominent veterans service organizations also opposed.

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Bipartisan House duo push appropriators to protect TSA airport funding [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 12/21/2017 03:17 PM EDT

Democratic Rep. [Val Demings](#) and Republican Rep. [Dan Donovan](#) are pressing appropriators to retain language in a final fiscal 2018 spending bill that would continue funding TSA

programs for staffing airport exit lanes and reimbursing airports that hire local law enforcement.

President Donald Trump has proposed eliminating both programs. But they have, so far, been maintained in both House and Senate spending bills. Demings and Donovan say appropriators should ensure that the final bill fully funds the two programs to avoid shifting up to \$122 million in "funding burden" to local airports.

POLITICO obtained a copy of [a letter](#) the duo sent, along with 40 other House lawmakers, to appropriators today. In addition to Demings and Donovan, the letter is signed by several Homeland Security members, including [Bennie Thompson](#) and [John Katko](#).

"Ensuring that trained and specialized law enforcement personnel are securing our transportation infrastructure is basic, necessary, and affordable, and I'm glad that a strong group of bipartisan members of Congress joined me to agree that funding it is a clear priority," Demings said in a statement to POLITICO.

The push comes as the House prepares to vote on a "bare bones" stopgap spending bill today that would fund federal agencies through Jan. 19.

To view online [click here](#).

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Cochran's future in the Senate in doubt [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan | 12/21/2017 04:55 AM EDT

Sen. Thad Cochran, chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee, hasn't presided over a hearing since early September. The Mississippi Republican has not given a speech on the Senate floor all year, and he's introduced only two bills during that time, both of them minor.

To the extent that Cochran weighs in on any issue, it's in the form of an official statement from his office or the appropriations panel. He has stopped meeting with anyone about substantive committee business, including other senators or House members, according to several sources familiar with his activities. Cochran's aides deny this is the case.

The 80-year-old's feeble performance has fueled expectations — among senators and aides who've witnessed his physical and mental decline firsthand — that Cochran will step down from the Appropriations chairmanship early next year, or resign from the Senate altogether.

"The understanding is that he will leave after Jan. 1," said a Republican senator who serves on the Appropriations Committee. "That's what most of us believe will happen."

A spokesman for the Mississippi Republican said Cochran hasn't divulged his plans.

"Sen. Cochran has not made any statements regarding leaving office. He continues to do his work for Mississippi and the nation," Chris Gallegos, said.

Some sources in contact with Cochran's office believe that he might stay until a major

government spending bill is completed, which might happen in January or February.

The concerns about Cochran come at a sensitive time for Senate Republicans. Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Armed Services Committee and former GOP presidential nominee, is undergoing treatment for brain cancer and has returned to Arizona to spend the holidays with his family. Democrat Doug Jones, who scored a stunning upset in the Alabama Senate special election this month, will soon cut the GOP majority to 51-49.

And with President Donald Trump sliding in the polls, what had looked like a chance for Republicans to pick up Senate seats in 2018 has now turned into a battle to simply retain control of the chamber. If Cochran resigns or retires, Mississippi would have two Senate elections in November; incumbent GOP Sen. Roger Wicker is also up for reelection. Republicans would be heavily favored to hold both seats in the conservative state.

Gallegos also said there is no new information on whether Cochran will continue as chairman of the appropriations panel. He used the same formulation in his response that the senator's staffers employed for months in fending off questions about their boss' health.

"He has not made any statements about relinquishing his chairmanship," Gallegos said.

When asked about why Cochran has stopped meeting with senators or members about committee business, Gallegos said, "Sen. Cochran continues to meet with constituents, advocates and administration officials, including those related to his work on the committee. Many of these meetings have been related to defense appropriations."

Gallegos pointed to Cochran's Twitter account as proof of this statement. The account includes pictures of Cochran shaking hands with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and King Abdullah II of Jordan in recent weeks, among others.

Cochran was absent from the Senate for several weeks during September and October due to a urinary tract infection. His wife, Kay Bowen Webber, makes \$165,000 as an executive assistant in his office, according to Senate disbursement records.

If Cochran steps down in 2018, Gov. Phil Bryant (R) would appoint a replacement for him, with a special election to fill the rest Cochran's term taking place in November, the same day as the regularly scheduled election for the seat held by Wicker. If Cochran leaves office before the end of this year, the special election would take place within 100 days, according to Mississippi law.

GOP sources said they've been hoping Cochran doesn't resign or retire before next year to avoid a quick special election.

Potential appointees to replace Cochran, according to Mississippi political insiders and news reports, include Rep. Gregg Harper, Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves and Mississippi Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann, among others.

Chris McDaniel, a state senator who lost to Cochran in a bitter 2014 primary, is considered a leading candidate for the seat as well. McDaniel, however, might challenge Wicker or run for lieutenant governor, he said in an interview.

"My hope is that he's healthy and happy, I just want to see him back to his normal self," McDaniel said of Cochran, adding that he didn't want to speculate on whether a Senate seat

would come open soon. "There's just no way to know for sure what will happen."

"Whatever he does, I still have to prepare for a race," McDaniel added. "If I run against Wicker, the race is in June. If there is an open seat, the race is in November. If I run for lieutenant governor, that race is in 2019."

The Senate Appropriations Committee has limped ahead in Cochran's absence. The panel approved two continuing resolutions to keep the government funded, as well as two disaster aid packages.

A Cochran aide noted that any subcommittee chairman can call for hearings, adding that the panel's work typically slows in the fall. There have been two subcommittee hearings on opioids in recent months.

However, Sen. Richard Shelby (Ala.), the No. 2 Republican on the panel, is effectively serving as chairman, according to numerous senators and GOP staffers. Shelby is expected to take over if Cochran steps aside.

Shelby declined to discuss Cochran or his own role on the panel.

Both the House and Senate have been forced to replace aging or sick committee chairmen in the past, an extraordinarily delicate undertaking. Few of these senior lawmakers easily give up their powerful posts: The decision affects not only them but their home states and districts, as well the network of lobbyists and consultants who rely on their patronage.

The late Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) voluntarily gave up his gavel at the Senate Appropriations Committee in November 2008. Byrd was 91 and faced questions about his health and ability to manage the panel.

The late Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) stepped down as chairman of the Armed Services Committee in 1997, when he was 95 years old. And former Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), at age 82, was ousted as chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee by the now-retired Democratic Rep. Henry Waxman.

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Republican Control of the Senate Hangs by a Thread [Back](#)

By Jeff Greenfield | 12/21/2017 04:56 AM EDT

Only one Republican senator ultimately didn't vote for the tax bill—and it wasn't because of concerns about the debt, or the tilt of the bill toward the wealthiest Americans. It was because John McCain was back home in Arizona, battling life-threatening brain cancer.

Mississippi's Thad Cochran did make the vote, after missing votes throughout the fall, due to a persistent urinary tract infection. The health of the 80-year old Cochran has raised questions about whether he will be able to serve out his term, which has three more years to run.

Should the health of these two senators force them to step down, the political consequences could be hugely consequential. Arizona would have *two* Senate seats in play in 2018. Democrats have already targeted the seat of retiring Republican Jeff Flake, finding encouragement in the narrow results of Arizona's presidential contest (Donald Trump won with a 3.5 percent plurality, contrasted with Mitt Romney's 9-point win in 2012). Capturing both seats could be enough to put Democrats in control of the Senate (assuming they hold all of the seats they're defending next year—10 of them in states Trump won).

While Mississippi is deep red, Cochran barely survived a 2014 primary challenge from state Senator Chris McDaniel. The Tea Party favorite actually ran slightly ahead of Cochran in the first primary, then lost the runoff by only 7,500 votes. An open seat in Mississippi could trigger an intense fight that could wind up with a fringe candidate sufficiently unappealing to put that safe GOP seat in play. Just ask Alabama.

This speculation might seem morbid, but there's a point that has to be kept in mind as the 2018 midterms loom. Beyond the traditional measurements—generic ballots, the president's approval rating, the state of the economy—there are matters of fate that can and have played decisive roles in who takes the reins of power. And in a Senate so narrowly divided, those matters loom especially large; everything from a Supreme Court nomination to the future of health care to the scope of financial and environmental regulation may hang on a single vote.

Back in 2002, Democrats held a one-vote margin in the Senate, thanks to the defection a year earlier by Vermont Republican Jim Jeffords. (His decision to become an independent and caucus with Democrats shifted the balance of power.) But just 11 days before the midterm election, Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone died in a plane crash. His stand-in, former vice president Walter Mondale, lost to Norm Coleman, and Coleman became the 51st GOP senator. Had Wellstone been reelected, the Senate would have been evenly split.

One can go back further in time. When the 83rd Congress convened in 1953, Republicans held a 48-47 margin (Oregon's Wayne Morse had left the GOP to become an independent, but chose not to caucus with either party). Over the next two years, nine senators died. In two of those cases, the deceased senator was replaced by a member of the opposing party. When Ohio's Robert Taft died in July, his Democratic replacement gave that party a one-vote advantage. The following June, when Wyoming Democrat Lester Hunt committed suicide, his Republican replacement restored a Republican one-vote margin.

The most critical lesson from history is what did *not* happen. As Senate historian Betty Koed notes, "When the second session began in January 1954, the Democrats actually had a one-member advantage in the body, but the Senate did not reorganize under the Democrats. Or, perhaps I should say, the Democrats did not insist on reorganizing." This led to an unprecedented situation, best summarized in an exchange between the respective party leaders. When Republican William Knowland said, "I have the responsibility of being majority leader in this body without a majority," Democratic leader Lyndon Johnson replied: "If anybody has more problems than a majority leader with a minority, it is a minority leader with a majority." It's hard to imagine Democrats making a similar decision today. Back then, both parties were highly diverse, with very conservative Democrats and very liberal Republicans. The party designations were far less reliable predictors of how any given senator would vote.

Not anymore. In recent decades, major votes have broken down consistently across party lines. Not one Democrat voted to repeal Obamacare, or for this week's tax cuts. Not one Republican

voted for Obamacare, or for Bill Clinton's 1993 budget. Given such near-total partisanship, the loss of one or two senators would shift not just the numerical balance of power, but the balance on issues ranging from judicial confirmations to the funding of the government.

At the risk of taking yet another step into the morbid, here's another thing to consider: If a senator steps down, how is that senator replaced? While some states require special elections—we just saw that in Alabama—36 states give the governor the power of appointment. And in only four states—Hawaii, North Carolina, Utah and Wyoming—is the governor required to choose a replacement from the same party as the departing senator. Right now, there are 23 Democratic senators from states with Republican governors. (I'm excluding New Jersey from this count because there will be a Democratic governor in a couple of weeks.) Only seven Republican senators come from states with Democratic governors and two of them are from North Carolina, where the governor must choose a Republican successor.

No one but the most fanatical partisan looks at the political horizon in hopes that illness, injury or death removes an opponent from the battle. But neither does it serve a clear-eyed view of politics to ignore how the arrival of the unexpected can radically alter expectations. There have been too many times when a "black swan" has appeared to ignore the possibility—and the consequences— of a sudden twist of fate.

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Will the tax cuts sink Trump's military buildup? [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/20/2017 04:18 PM EDT

The Republican tax cut plan may be on a collision course with another major legislative priority for President Donald Trump and the GOP: rebuilding the military.

With warnings that the tax measure could add at least a trillion dollars to the budget deficit over the next decade, leading congressional Democrats on military policy, Obama-era Defense secretaries and federal budget experts predict that the red ink will probably crowd out the sustained increases in Pentagon spending that Trump has pledged. They note that the military has often borne the brunt of the belt-tightening that ballooning deficits have demanded in the past.

"If history is any judge, when we pass these tax cuts, we will see further decline as defense spending is squeezed by an already acknowledged increased deficit and by the difficulty to cut other programs," [Jack Reed](#) of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, argued in a recent floor speech on the tax plan.

"It doesn't even begin to add up," added Rep. [Adam Smith](#) of Washington state, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, in an interview. "So, it'll be a big problem for the Department of Defense down the line."

GOP hawks reject the notion that the tax cuts will make a military expansion unaffordable in the coming years. They are pushing to enact \$700 billion in defense spending for the current fiscal year — up from Trump's \$668 billion request — as a down payment on their long

sought-after buildup.

They also dispute that the cuts will create a fiscal crunch similar to the high deficits that led to Congress and the Obama administration to agree to strict budget caps for defense and domestic agencies in 2011.

In contrast, separate analyses of the House and Senate versions of the tax bill by the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that both measures would increase the deficit by roughly \$1 trillion, even after accounting for economic growth. A committee analysis for the final bill estimates it would add \$1.4 trillion to the deficit before any economic growth is factored in. The House cleared a final tax bill for Trump's signature Wednesday.

"It will increase the debt dramatically, and that is definitely going to squeeze on many other priorities," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "Defense certainly will be a big one of those."

Defense hawks on Capitol Hill have so far downplayed the threat.

Rep. [Mike Turner](#) (R-Ohio), a leading member of the House Armed Services Committee, expressed his belief that the military's needs are just too great to cut defense again.

"The deficits are a great concern, but everybody realizes that over the past five, seven years, defense has been the payer for other spending or to effect deficit reduction," Turner said. "It can't be anymore. We can't cut anymore."

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) said he is counting on economic growth spurred by the tax cut to raise government revenues enough to also cover the Pentagon budget increases. But the Joint Committee on Taxation's predictions of upward of a trillion dollar price tag cast doubt on how much economic growth will eat into the anticipated deficit.

"It depends on the growth assumption that you build in," Thornberry said. "And so some of these negative projections that have been made build in very pessimistic growth assumptions."

But other prominent voices in the defense world predict that defense spending will again come under assault.

Three former Obama administration Defense secretaries — Leon Panetta, Chuck Hagel and Ash Carter — have also warned that the military will feel the effects of tax legislation that Congress doesn't pay for.

They cautioned in [a letter](#) last month to congressional leaders that increased debt would "force even deeper reductions in our national security capabilities."

"A wise fiscal policy that is necessary to support the U.S. defense community and its mission must address these long-term fiscal challenges," wrote the trio, two Democrats and one Republican. "Unfortunately, the tax bill being considered by Congress appears to be moving in the opposite direction."

The federal budget deficit's impact on defense spending has been hanging over the Pentagon for years.

Defense spending, along with funding for domestic agencies, was capped through fiscal 2021

by the 2011 Budget Control Act. And while Congress has modestly increased the caps for defense every year since 2013, advocates for a more robust Pentagon budget blame the law for degrading readiness and a shrinking force.

Trump campaigned on eliminating the so-called defense sequester and building up the military, including expanding the Army to 540,000 troops and the Navy to more than 350 ships. Congressional leaders are mulling a two-year budget deal to increase caps for both defense and domestic spending.

But even if Congress had scrapped both the tax cuts and the defense increase altogether, the deficit was already projected to reach \$1 trillion beginning in 2022.

"We already have a structural deficit problem that gets worse and worse throughout the '20s, '30s and '40s ... and then you add to that lower revenues from tax cuts, now you've widened it," said budget analyst Todd Harrison of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "You've made the problem worse. And then you throw in more defense spending and that also widens."

While it makes up more than half of voluntary — or so-called discretionary — spending, defense accounts for only about 15 percent of the federal total budget. For many Republicans, the answer is to overhaul the so-called mandatory government entitlements programs like Medicare and Social Security that are considered the true drivers of long-term federal spending — though that would be a difficult task at best in an election year.

"To get out of debt, you've got to do entitlement reform," said Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.). "The long-term debt problems are not associated with the discretionary spending, they're not associated with the tax code. They're associated with entitlements."

On top of tax cuts and additional defense spending this year, lawmakers plan to allocate \$81 billion in disaster aid for nearly a dozen states and territories ravaged by hurricanes and wildfires as part of their year-end to-do list, which also includes keeping the government funded past Friday.

The deluge of new spending and the lack of guarantees that the tax cut will substantially grow the economy will undoubtedly force unpleasant decisions down the line, the budget specialists say.

"When the BCA was enacted in 2011, the projected deficit for 2011 was over \$1 trillion and that was a big part of what was driving it," Harrison said. "So it's perfectly conceivable that we'll get to fiscal year '22 and something similar will happen."

"Our budgeting for the past years has been incredibly shortsighted and had prioritized political ease of borrowing over putting together sensible budgets that reflect national priorities and sustainable economic policies," added MacGuineas. "And that means we're headed for some real challenging times."

Thornberry says he is more worried about the state of the military than about what how the tax cut might affect the Pentagon's priorities years from now.

Asked if he is worried that anticipated deficits will squeeze defense, he replied: "I am more concerned about fixing ships and planes and readiness today, with the problems we face today,

than I am anything else."

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Shanahan predicts FY 2020 budget will be 'masterpiece' in buildup plan [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 12/21/2017 11:56 AM EDT

Deputy Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan today said the Trump administration's fiscal 2019 budget request due in February will seek another increase in defense spending but predicted the fiscal 2020 request is likely to be "the masterpiece ... the next biggest step we can take."

In a briefing to reporters the Pentagon's second ranking official also said he plans to focus his energies in the coming year on implementing a new National Defense Strategy while managing modernization programs like Lockheed Martin's F-35 joint strike fighter and Huntington Ingalls' work on the next generation aircraft carriers — both of which have faced criticism for ballooning costs.

Shanahan said he expects the Pentagon to release its National Defense Strategy in January, followed by much-anticipated Nuclear Posture Review and Ballistic Missile Defense Review in February.

Next year will also see the department begin to implement some of the reforms mandated in the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, including delegating the role of principal space adviser to someone other than the secretary of the Air Force.

He said it's "possible" Mike Griffin, a former NASA administrator who was nominated in October to be the under secretary of defense for research and engineering, could fill that role.

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GOP senators revive tax extender legislation, again [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/20/2017 08:40 PM EDT

Senate Republicans introduced legislation Wednesday to breathe new life into a host of lapsed tax benefits, the same day they also passed a wider-reaching tax overhaul that they previously touted as the end of temporary tax policy.

The so-called extenders [bill](#), introduced by Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), would give another two years of life to nearly three dozen tax provisions that expired at the end of 2016.

They include benefits related to owning race horses, building auto-racing tracks and ongoing

railroad maintenance. The [bill](#) also would let homeowners continue to itemize their mortgage insurance premiums and would extend and alter energy credits, including the Investment Tax Credit, the nuclear production tax credit and the credit for carbon dioxide sequestration.

No cost for Hatch's bill was provided, but supporters of the broader tax legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), already claimed a fiscal benefit.

They declared about \$500 billion in savings from the cost of extending the numerous tax provisions, using what's known as a current policy baseline, which assumes the provisions would stay on the books since they have been routinely extended. By contrast, using a current law baseline would recognize the scheduled expiration of the benefits, meaning proposals to extend them would cost money.

Hatch's House counterpart, Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas), declined to comment on the accounting method.

"You're talking to the chairman who doesn't want to do extenders," Brady said.

The extenders included in the new package were last renewed at the end of 2015 under the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes, or PATH, Act. It made a number of extenders permanent and gave two- and five-year extensions to others.

The strategy to advance this new bloc of extenders hasn't been determined, Brady said.

"We'll turn to that after we get back" from the holiday break, he said. "That's my anticipation."

A spokesperson for Hatch, Katie Niederee, offered no more specifics on timing, though pressure has been mounting from influence groups to attach extenders to any end-of-year legislation still moving through Congress.

"Extending these provisions would help families, individuals and small businesses in Utah and across the country, and the chairman is committed to working with members to address the expiring extenders in short order," Niederee said in an email.

A [letter](#) to Hatch, Brady and other congressional leaders from about 60 trade associations representing energy, housing, transportation, agriculture and other interests called on Congress to preserve all the benefits dear to their member companies.

"Allowing these tax provisions to remain lapsed creates confusion in the marketplace, and effectively increases taxes on entities that create jobs and economic growth," said the letter. "Accordingly, we respectfully ask that Congress add a multi-year extension, beginning January, 2017, of these important tax provisions to any end-of-year legislative vehicle."

But conservative groups have weighed in with opposition.

Extenders represent tax code carve-outs to special interests and continuing them would be wrong, said Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity. The group, funded by the conservative, billionaire Koch brothers, worked closely with Brady, Hatch and other congressional Republicans to get the broader tax overhaul legislation to President Donald Trump.

"We have not made any deals to look the other way on extenders," said Phillips, insisting that

he wouldn't back down from opposing the effort to yet again revive temporary tax policy.

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Fannie and Freddie will keep \$3B as Treasury, Watt make deal [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 12/21/2017 09:20 AM EDT

The Treasury Department and the Federal Housing Finance Agency will reinstate a \$3 billion capital reserve for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, FHFA Director Mel Watt announced.

The capital agreement will buffer the mortgage giants from market fluctuations after an earlier bailout contract between Treasury and the FHFA required the companies to send their profits to taxpayers and eliminate their reserves in exchange for a \$258 billion taxpayer lifeline.

The \$3 billion won't be enough to prevent [Fannie](#) and [Freddie](#) from seeking taxpayer aid as a result of tax reform, Watt said in a statement.

A February [analysis](#) by Fitch Ratings calculated that the mortgage giants would need to write down a combined \$23.1 billion in tax assets under a 20 percent tax rate. As a result, the companies are likely to require another infusion of taxpayer cash early next year.

"While it is apparent that a draw will be necessary for each Enterprise if tax legislation results in a reduction to the corporate tax rate, FHFA considers the \$3 billion capital reserve sufficient to cover other fluctuations in income in the normal course of each Enterprise's business," Watt wrote. "We, therefore, contemplate that going forward Enterprise dividends will be declared and paid beyond the \$3 billion capital reserve in the absence of exigent circumstances."

To compensate taxpayers for the \$6 billion buffer, the debt Fannie and Freddie owe to Treasury will increase from \$187 billion to \$193 billion on Dec. 31.

"Treasury's first duty is to ensure that taxpayers are being protected," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a written statement. "This agreement balances the concerns of the FHFA with compensation for taxpayers."

The mortgage giants are scheduled to send \$7.7 billion in earnings to taxpayers at the end of this month.

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Judge to act quickly in hospital lawsuit opposing 340B cuts [Back](#)

By David Pittman | 12/21/2017 01:08 PM EDT

A federal judge said today he intends to rule on a dispute over hefty drug discounts to hospitals by the end of the year, when a \$1.6 billion cut to the 340B program ordered by the Trump administration is scheduled to hit.

The American Hospital Association and other hospitals are seeking to block a Medicare rule that will slash payment of certain drugs by nearly 30 percent to providers serving predominately low-income patients. That would put the hospitals' reimbursement more in line with their cost of buying the drugs.

U.S. District Court Judge Rudolph Contreras, an Obama appointee, hinted at the opening of today's nearly 90-minute hearing that he may bypass the hospitals' request for a preliminary injunction in the case and rule immediately. He noted that his decision is likely to face an appeal.

"My goal is decide soon and let the circuit court decide it," Contreras told attorneys.

The hospitals' attorney, Carlos Angulo, argued Congress never gave HHS the authority to cut payments for certain drugs in 340B so dramatically,

"What HHS has done here is dismiss the [funding] formula altogether," Angulo said.

DOJ attorney Joel McElvain argued that HHS has broad authority to set payment policy. The legal precedent for arguing agency action flouts congressional intent is "a very narrow" standard, he said. "We're nowhere close to that here."

Hospitals said if the cuts take effect, facilities may lay off staff and limit or cut services.

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: Senate Commerce Chairman John Thune [Back](#)

By Brianna Gurciullo | 12/21/2017 05:24 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's plan for giving U.S. infrastructure a \$1 trillion overhaul is expected to be in the hands of lawmakers in January, with Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) likely to be involved. We sat down with Thune and talked rural issues, drones, driverless cars and more.

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Infrastructure will be a major issue in 2018. What do you think about the Trump administration's approach — especially when it comes to rural areas?

Well, I think structurally they allocate [dedicated funds] to the rural. I assume that means funding that resembles in some ways the way we've done traditional infrastructure funding in the country — through formulas that ensure that parts of the country that are not gonna be able to benefit from a [public-private partnership], for example, where there's a return on investment, also can participate in whatever the big infrastructure plan is. ... We had them up

here, the administration's team, a few weeks ago, and they kind of laid out that same format and I don't think anybody had big problems with it. I think the big question for us was: 'How do you fund it?' ... But I think at least in terms of the structure of it, it probably makes sense.

What are your thoughts on the proposed program for states and localities?

I think there are some states where you could, and there are some states probably who could do more. I mean our state really has stepped up. Our governor just in the last few years raised the fuel tax in South Dakota significantly. And there have been a couple of other states that have done that. But I think if states want to become bigger partners, there should be a benefit to that. I mean, I think states that are willing to assume a bigger share or match, in terms of the funding for these types of projects, that at least in theory makes sense to me. Obviously, the devil's in the details and we'll see what they send up. We're supposed to get something early next year, we're told.

In the House, Transportation Committee Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) has said "everything's on the table" with respect to paying for it. Is there any pay-for that you would rule out?

Well, I think it's important that we keep an open mind about funding sources. I think it's important if we're gonna fund infrastructure through the Highway Trust Fund, that we pay for it. ... We've done several bills now, highway bills, where we have basically borrowed the money, put it on the debt. And I just think that's a bad way to do it. As a conservative, I think you ought to be offended by the fact that we borrow money to pay for infrastructure. If we're going to build things in this country, we need to figure out a way to pay for it. So I think at this point in the conversation, [we want to] try and not take options off the table, and I think we have to be willing to entertain and listen to people's ideas about how we do that.

And I think it's gonna be important, frankly, at some point for the administration to put something out there. ... I talked to Shuster about this [recently]. But I think the administration kind of wants to let Congress take the lead on finding the funding source. But I think the president, if he really wants to do this, is gonna have to help with selling whatever that is and perhaps identify a funding source that they like and get out and advocate for it. But, again, when we see what they put forward we'll have a better idea, I think, on that question as well.

Moving on to the FAA reauthorization, [S. 1405 \(115\)](#). What's your plan for dealing with your provision regarding co-pilot training in 2018?

We've moved the ball on that issue. [Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao] now recognizes that pilot supply, pilot shortage, is an issue — not only now but in the future, both for commercial aviation as well as for military. There are some things I think that they and the FAA can do that will advance that cause. So we'll look forward to working with them on that. Obviously, I'd love to keep the provision in the bill. But I realize there is some controversy there. But it's an issue that's very real, and I think people need to acknowledge that and help look for ways to address what is gonna become I think even more of an issue in the future.

So, are you willing to take that provision out?

We'll see. I understand that to move the bill —and I think we need to move the bill — but I think we have elevated the issue to a point where there is a recognition within the DOT, the FAA ... but also I think in the broader conversation about this, that it's something that needs to

be addressed. So is there a way we can do that short of having it included in the FAA legislation? There may be.

But what other options are there? The FAA has said they aren't going to make changes without a directive from Congress.

That's what they've said so far, yeah.

Well, FAA Administrator Michael Huerta is leaving soon. Is this something you'd want to bring up with the next administrator?

Yeah. These are issues that we're continuing to explore with the administration. And we've made some headway with them, I believe. And I hope that we continue to make even more headway. So having it in the bill has served, I think, an important purpose. And if we end up having to yank it out to pass the bill sometime next year, I'm hoping there will be other ways in which we can see some movement on the issue that I think gets us closer to some solutions. It's been a good conversation so far.

Mr. Huerta's term expires next month. What is your take on his time at the FAA — his accomplishments and what will be left to the next administrator?

We've worked with him well. He's, I think, been very responsive when it comes to the concerns that we have as we've raised them. We got through the last FAA bill. I think there were a number of issues in there that the administration was involved in helping us as we negotiated that. Unfortunately, that was a short-term bill. We're going to have to do this again. ... The drone issue is one that I think is gonna continue to percolate into the future. And we're gonna need some guidance and some clarity, some direction, not only from DOT and FAA, but I think Congress again is gonna have to provide some rules of the road, so to speak, on that issue. And there's some things that we still have to do that we do in this bill — the consumer protection issues, aircraft certification — there's a whole range of things in this FAA bill that are sort of left undone.

But I think he's been a very responsive administrator who I think has tried to move the ball down the field on a range of issues. ... We dealt with him of course with the last highway bill, too, on [Airport Improvement Program] funding and a number of things that have been good for rural airports. He gets that. ... So I don't know what I would say is his singular legacy. But I can just say generally speaking that, with the exception of the 1,500-hour rule — but I don't blame him for that. I mean that's kind of been a long-held position — he's been a good administrator.

You mentioned drones, and another emerging technology is self-driving cars. What are some of the lessons learned from doing a self-driving car bill, [S. 1885 \(115\)](#), this year, since I assume it won't be the last one Congress does?

Probably not. I think that we did resolve a couple of key issues when we moved the bill through here. And some of it had to do with the question of liability and the question of state versus federal control. This is an issue which historically has been kind of jointly regulated. The states have done the behavioral side. They deal with the driver. And the feds regulate the car. And the question is [about what] if you don't have a driver? So that kind of changes the discussion about that. And with driverless vehicles, the question is liability. So if there's an accident, who's liable? You get insurance issues. [There's] a whole range of things, I think,

that are gonna continue to have to be addressed and re-addressed in the future.

But I think the [legislation] provides a good framework and provides some testing and some requirements that have to be met by folks who are developing these new vehicles. ... I think it's just a really transformative technology that we need to make sure there are some clear guidelines around, some sort of safeguards, if you will, but not the kind of heavy-handed government that really prevents that technology from advancing. So it's a fine line. It's a balance we have to try and strike. I think our bill did that. And I'm hoping that we can get the holds cleared on it in the Senate and maybe get it passed out of here this year.

Is there anything from the process of doing the bill that you would have done differently in hindsight?

Not really. There were a couple things that happened late in the process that we had to react to. We had trucks included in the early drafts and then all of a sudden the Teamsters realized that that was in there. And so the Democrats were scrambling, then, to get trucks out. And, frankly, I think long-term you're gonna have to deal with the truck side of this, too. I've said this before, but it seems to me that to have two separate standards for trucks and automobiles [that are] using the same roadways doesn't make sense to me. But in order to keep the bill bipartisan, we had to pull that out. So would I like to have it in there? Yeah. And if we could do it over again and we could write the bill the way we want to write it, we would have trucks in there.

Then at the end, after that came up, then the trial lawyers reacted to what we were doing in terms of state versus federal from a legal standpoint, and we negotiated, which I think was, again, a very delicate compromise. So our bill, while not perfect, I think represents something that could — that ought to have broad bipartisan support. And I think with the exception of a couple of folks who have expressed [concerns] or at least have placed holds on it on the floor, I think it would pass with a huge majority. So I think we did it the right way. We worked closely with the Democrats on the committee throughout the process. We had to negotiate some compromises that probably we wouldn't have, but in the end it's a bill that I think will be pretty durable because I think it'll be a big bipartisan winner when the time comes for a vote.

With self-driving trucks, even though you wanted to have them in the Senate's bill, they were taken out to get a bipartisan result. But with the FAA bill, you continued to push for the language on pilot training, which splits Democrats and Republicans. So how do you decide when you want to fight something or don't?

As much as we can, like you said, we try to achieve consensus. There's some issues where just that's not gonna happen or you're not gonna have a bill that's reported out by voice or by [unanimous consent], even though we do a ton to narrow the differences. On the FAA bill that we passed last year, I think we took on, what, 60-some amendments in the committee and then processed another 30-some on the floor. And they were kind of evenly divided between Republican and Democrat. So we do everything we can to fix people's issues prior to markup. But sometimes you just can't get there.

To me, the 1,500-hour rule is an important issue for the people that I represent — smaller communities, smaller airports, with limited access to commercial air service. And that's not just South Dakota. That's an issue that applies to most rural areas of the country, and we have a lot members on the committee who care about that. So I think sometimes it has to do with sort of the urgency of the issue, how intensely people feel about it and whether or not there's a

solution in sight. And like I said, having the 1,500-hour rule on the FAA bill, although it kept us from getting a completely bipartisan vote coming out of the committee, has had a desired effect. I mean it has elevated the issue in a way that it hasn't before. And if we end up stripping it in order to pass the bill next year, there was a purpose and I think the discussion about it's been impactful.

Do you think you'll need to strip it for the bill to pass?

I think it's going to be hard to get a lot of the Democrats on board. I think there are Democrats who understand what we're trying to do here and who are impacted in ways. I mean we've got rural Democrats for sure in the Senate, and some on the committee, although we had more rural Democrats in the last session of Congress than we do now. But I think people across party lines understand it. But I also think it'd be very difficult, probably, to get 60 votes for the bill with that provision included. So at some point we'll have a discussion about the path forward — and I want to move a bill.

But right now we're kind of in this holding pattern anyway because we've been waiting for the House to determine whether or not they have the votes to pass their version of it, which included the ATC reforms. At this point, we're in a good place, but early next year, we'll have to make a decision if we want to move forward with the Commerce Committee-passed bill. And if we feel like the House isn't getting sufficient traction to move their bill, I'm not going to sit around forever, and then we'll have to make a decision about that provision.

Lauren Gardner contributed to this report.

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HUD abandons flood and public housing rules [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 12/21/2017 01:45 PM EDT

HUD will abandon five proposed rules, including a flood-resiliency standard designed to protect houses backed by taxpayer funds.

In a [notice](#), the agency said it won't advance a flood-protection [standard](#) generated under President Barack Obama that requires properties backed by HUD funds, including those with Federal Housing Administration mortgages, to be built at a higher elevation when they're in flood-prone areas.

The action is part of the agency's effort to conform to an [executive order](#) issued by President Donald Trump just days after his inauguration. The order requires agencies to identify two rules for elimination for each new regulation.

It comes as the country begins the difficult and costly effort of rebuilding after three destructive hurricanes. Since Hurricane Sandy, the agency has applied the flood-resiliency standard to disaster recovery funds. It's not clear if that practice will continue.

HUD will also abandon rules making it more difficult to demolish public housing and a

regulation that sought to streamline the administration of public housing funds.

WHAT'S NEXT: The notice will be published Dec. 22.

To view online [click here](#).

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The \$500 million question: Does IRS need more money for tax overhaul? [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/21/2017 03:10 PM EDT

The chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and one of his lieutenants differed today over the best approach to making sure the cash-strapped IRS is ready to implement the massive tax overhaul bill Congress passed Wednesday.

Rep. [Vern Buchanan](#) (R-Fla.), chairman of the Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee, said lawmakers are discussing an infusion of around \$500 million to the IRS early next year to cover some implementation costs. But full committee Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) took a wait-and-see approach.

The revenue collection agency needs to revise or develop forms, rules and guidance — quite soon in some cases — as the law [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) takes effect Jan. 1.

"This is to help the transition," Buchanan said. "For payroll companies and everybody else, a lot of this has to get in place quickly, and the IRS is going to need additional funds to do that."

As oversight chairman, Buchanan deals regularly with the IRS and is working on legislation to remake the revenue collection agency's operations.

But separately, Brady seemed more uncertain about boosting IRS funding for implementation.

"I don't know that," Brady said. "The first question is, what do they need to implement this? And what of their current resources should be prioritized to that end?"

Congressional Republicans for years have stunted the IRS budget; it would decline to about \$11.1 billion under fiscal year 2018 spending legislation, [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#), that already has passed the House. A Senate appropriations bill would set a similar spending level, and critics have said the steady funding drop since 2010 has eroded the IRS' ability to enforce and administer tax laws.

Buchanan said the extra \$500 million could get delivered next month to the IRS, but added that the timing remains fluid.

Brady, however, said the IRS, which is being run by acting Commissioner David Kautter, would have to demonstrate a need for any additional appropriations.

"Under a new acting commissioner, if they can make that case in conjunction with Treasury, we'll listen to it," Brady said. "I'll listen to it. But the assumption is not we're opening up the pocketbook. The assumption is we need to know what it takes to implement this effectively

and efficiently, and if you don't already have those resources in your agency."

Congress is on the verge of passing another temporary spending patch to extend federal government funding until Jan. 19, since the current stopgap funding runs out Friday. The bill, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), would also waive so-called Pay-As-You-Go rules set to impose billions of dollars in cuts next year to programs like Medicare, since the tax overhaul legislation would add to the deficit.

Bernie Becker contributed to this report.

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Subject: Budget & Appropriations: House leaders look to their own for stopgap passage — PAYGO worries grow with each tax reform vote — Appropriators put finishing touches on disaster aid bill
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 4:32:09 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 12/01/2017 04:28 PM EDT

PUSHING AHEAD WITHOUT PELOSI? House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and his deputies are confident they can avoid a shutdown next Friday. The question is whether they can do it without Democrats.

GOP leaders are forging ahead with that contentious "double CR" strategy — requiring two separate continuing resolutions to keep the lights on through January. And despite the long odds, they're working hard to get enough Republicans onboard, as Sarah [explains](#). "We want to do it with our own votes," Freedom Caucus member [Dave Brat](#) (R-Va.) said today.

Talking a big game? Plenty of GOP lawmakers love the idea of voting for a funding bill without goodies for Democrats — but they're still loathe to punt big spending decisions to the night before Christmas Eve. "I think it's 50-50 right now," Republican Study Committee Chairman [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.) said this morning. Corraling 218 Republican "yeas" would be an enormous victory for a party that so often turns to Democrats to keep the government funded.

Make-or-break moment: Many conservatives say they're waiting to take a stand until they see the results of the "Big Four" budget talks over the next week. Congressional leaders are aiming to have new overall spending levels in hand by next Friday. "The point of doing a CR is it enables and allows decisions to be made on the caps," Rules Chairman [Pete Sessions](#) (R-Texas) said today.

Holding the cards close: Democrats are taking a similar tactic, refusing to commit to the bill until more decisions are made. "We have no resolve on CHIP, we have no resolve on the DREAMers. So without any of that resolved, why, why would I vote for an extension?" [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.) told POLITICO. "I'm going to wait and see what we've got."

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — The Senate Homeland Security Committee's top Democrat, [Claire McCaskill](#) (D-Mo.), sent [a letter](#) to FEMA this week asking why the agency awarded \$30 million in contracts to a newly formed Florida company that was unable to complete work on the hurricane-ravaged island.

#DailyBudgetFact — The federal government spent \$32.9 billion on HIV in fiscal 2017, mostly paying for health care and treatment covered by Medicaid and Medicare. The smallest chunk of federal spending on HIV was for prevention, at about \$700 million.

PAYGO

ONE STEP CLOSER TO AUTOMATIC CUTS: As Republicans near victory on a tax overhaul, anxiety grows over how to handle the \$150 billion per year in spending cuts set to

come down under PAYGO if the reform bill gets enacted. But with all the legislative attention focused on the tax plan itself, leaders haven't spent much time trying to drum up support for avoiding those reductions, Adam Cancryn and Sarah [explain](#).

DISASTER RELIEF

JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS: House Republicans are tentatively planning to package the next installment of disaster aid with the Dec. 22 stopgap funding bill, according to a senior lawmaker. "There's working agreement to that model," Texas' Sessions said today. "I think some of these things all collide together."

Plugging away: After a spate of hearings this week, House appropriators are working quickly to craft a disaster aid package that could survive both chambers. That supplemental bill could be ready next week. But it's more likely to emerge after the Dec. 8 spending deadline, according to a senior GOP aide. Still no word on how much bigger that package will be compared to the White House's \$44 billion request.

TAX

STILL IN THE RED: The Joint Committee on Taxation has weighed in with an updated analysis of the Senate's tax plan ([H.R. 1 \(115\)](#)), predicting now that the bill would still increase the deficit by about \$1 trillion, even when accounting for extra economic growth, Brian Faler [reports](#). Democrats are obviously gloating. "The score ends the fantasy of magical growth, about unicorns and growth fairies," says Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.), the Finance Committee's ranking member.

Too bad, 'trigger' lovers: Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) says it doesn't look like the "trigger" plan is going to work after talks with the parliamentarian. But he [added](#) that other ideas are being vetted for scrounging up revenue if the tax bill doesn't deliver on the economic growth that has been estimated.

WHIP IT GOOD: Emerging from a GOP caucus meeting today on the last round of changes to the Senate tax bill, Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) declared that "we have the votes," Seung Min Kim, Colin Wilhelm and Brian [report](#).

More: [Nixing a "budget gimmick"](#) | [Obamacare takedown prospects](#) | [Endowment tax flak](#) | [Repatriation debate reinvigorated](#) | [U.S. universities prepare for pain](#)

CONGRESS

ANOTHER SEXUAL HARASSMENT SETTLEMENT: House Administration Chairman [Gregg Harper](#) (R-Miss.) gave his GOP colleagues a [rundown](#) this morning of sexual harassment payouts made over the last five years on behalf of member offices. Of the six claims settled through the congressional fund during the last half-decade, one \$84,000 payment piqued lawmakers' interest. The alleged perpetrator? [Blake Farenthold](#) (R-Texas), Rachael Bade [reports](#).

No control: As Elana Schor and Heather Caygle [explain](#), the Ethics Committee and other entities have no rules to prevent taxpayer-funded payoffs out of member office accounts. But congressional leaders are trying to change that.

Related: [Pelosi convenes harassment meeting](#) | [Why the "fix" could backfire](#)

EDUCATION

HIGHER ED REWRITE: House Republicans released their plan today for rewriting the main law governing higher education, proposing to overhaul the federal student aid program by creating "one loan, one work-study and one grant," Michael Stratford [reports](#). The main association representing colleges and universities in Washington [said today](#) that it's "deeply concerned" about the proposal, claiming the plan would "immediately lead to higher interest charges every year for some six million student borrowers and eliminate 1.5 million financial aid grants."

White House weighs in: Following on that unveiling, the Trump administration is expected to outline its goals today for restricting the loan program so it better "protects taxpayers," Michael [notes](#).

IMMIGRATION

DACA FIX MOMENTUM: At least 29 House Republicans have now signed onto a [letter](#) urging the speaker to codify protections for DREAMers before year's end, according to a House GOP staffer. But the missive doesn't mention pairing the deal to one of the stopgap spending plans Congress plans to move this month. "It is imperative that Republicans and Democrats come together to solve this problem now and not wait until next year," says the letter, which has not yet been delivered and was organized by Reps. [Scott Taylor](#) and [Dan Newhouse](#).

AGRICULTURE

TALK ABOUT A CASH COW: New USDA data shows that the nation's most profitable farms are taking home a growing share of agriculture subsidies, Catherine Boudreau [reports](#). Farms that rake in at least \$1 million in net cash income received 34 percent of commodity subsidies in 2015, up from 11 percent in 1991.

What's the deal? These federal payments are shifting to larger operations mostly because they're tied to output. Big farms nearly doubled their share of production between 1991 and 2015.

EARMARKS

— Massachusetts braces for possible loss of federal funding for children's health program. [Boston Globe](#).

— Ahead of vote, promised Treasury analysis of tax bill proves elusive. [New York Times](#).

— Why FEMA is making a big mistake in Puerto Rico. [The Agenda](#).

— Opinion: The best way to spur growth? Help the poor, not the rich. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#).

— States struggle with access to mental health services. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 8 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/house-leaders-look-to-their-own-for-stopgap-passage-038811>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House GOP leaders plot to avert shutdown, but may need Democrats [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/01/2017 01:46 PM EDT

House GOP leaders are forging ahead with a spending strategy that has drawn flak from far-right members, making it increasingly likely that they will need help from Democrats to avert a shutdown.

One week before a key funding deadline, Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) confirmed to members Friday in a conference meeting that the House will vote on two separate short-term spending bills — one through Dec. 22 and another through January.

The [two-part vote](#) is intended to drum up pressure on Democrats to strike a much-needed budget deal by the time government funding runs out on Dec. 8, GOP aides say. But the unconventional tactic has been met with skepticism from conservatives, who fear they'll get rolled in a last-minute deal before the holidays.

Rep. [Dave Brat](#) (R-Va.), a member of the House Freedom Caucus, warned of an "end-of-year Christmas party of spending with Democrats."

"The budgeting never goes good when everybody loads up the Christmas tree," Brat said. "You got to give me one heck of a good argument for a two-week [continuing resolution]. I haven't heard it yet."

If more than two dozen of the House GOP's far-right flank oppose the strategy, Ryan would need to lean on Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) for votes. That trade-off would almost certainly require the GOP to make painful concessions in a spending deal, like bigger boosts for domestic programs.

GOP leaders explicitly warned during the closed-door meeting that they would need to seek help from Democrats if their own members voted against keeping the government open.

"They said, basically ... 'Hey, if we've got the votes, then we do it. If we don't got the votes, then you got to go do things to get votes from elsewhere outside the conference,'" Rep. [Mark Amodei](#) (R-Nev.) told reporters.

Democrats are so far refusing to commit to helping Republicans pass a spending bill, ticking off a list of long-simmering political issues like protections for DREAMers, or young undocumented immigrants, and funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program.

"We have no resolve on CHIP, we have no resolve on the DREAMers, so without any of that resolved, why, why would I vote for an extension?" Rep. [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.) told POLITICO. "I'm going to wait and see what we've got."

Pelosi stressed her commitment to bigger domestic spending levels, as well as a DREAMers

deal, in a press conference Thursday. But she also underscored her intention to avoid a public showdown. "We want to keep government open. That's what we are about," Pelosi told reporters.

House Republicans began whipping the votes Friday morning, with a vote tentatively planned for Wednesday — two days before the Dec. 8 deadline.

Emerging from the meeting, many Republicans said they remained undecided. The biggest question: What will GOP leaders concede to Democrats in spending talks over the next week?

Both parties say they hope to have a spending deal in hand before the deadline — laying out the fiscal 2018 budget for the Pentagon and domestic programs. Members said that agreement will likely be the biggest deciding factor in who votes for the bill.

"I think it's 50-50 right now," said Rep. [Mark Walker](#) (R-N.C.), who leads the influential Republican Study Committee, adding that he and many of his members remain undecided until they learn the spending levels.

A deal next week would still require Congress to pass a second stopgap bill on Dec. 22, which would buy time to actually craft an omnibus. That spending process has been on hold for months as GOP leadership slow-walked negotiations during a hectic push for a tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

Republican appropriators dubbed the "double CR" as a last-ditch plan to force leadership of both parties into a long-awaited spending accord.

"This gives us a chance to get that number before a shutdown looms Christmas Eve," Rep. [Hal Rogers](#) (R-Ky.), a former Appropriations chairman, told POLITICO.

"We have no choice," he said. "[Leadership] has been preoccupied, rightly so, with the tax bill, but now this shutdown is looming upon us, and that's the urgent thing that we've got to address."

Rogers acknowledged that Democrats would likely be needed in next week's vote, though House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) disputed the idea.

"Let's give the leadership some opportunity to talk to some of the members," he said.

Multiple GOP sources say next week's short-term funding bill won't touch immigration or health care, and would simply be a "clean" CR.

But conservatives say they're worried about that Dec. 8 stopgap bill in the Senate, where GOP leaders have privately floated the idea of attaching an Obamacare stabilization provision to help win votes for its tax package.

"I think there's some double-bank shots involved with the Senate tax piece. I think there's a couple tricky deals here," Brat said.

Jennifer Scholtes contributed to this report.

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Tax bill could trigger historic spending cuts [Back](#)

By Adam Cancryn and Sarah Ferris | 11/30/2017 08:28 PM EDT

Republicans are on the verge of a massive tax overhaul that would hand President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory. But the \$1.5 trillion tax package could trigger eye-popping cuts to a slew of federal programs, including Medicare.

Unless Congress acts swiftly to stop it, as much as \$150 billion per year would be cut from initiatives ranging from farm subsidies to student loans to support services for crime victims. Medicare alone could see cuts of \$25 billion a year. And the specter of those cuts has thrust Congress into a high-stakes game of political chicken.

With so much attention focused on the tax bill itself, neither lawmakers nor many of the advocacy groups had paid as much attention to the depth and breadth of the cuts that will ensue unless the House and Senate come up with a bipartisan deal to stop them. Some groups had run Medicare ads, but they were largely overshadowed by the tax debate itself.

The tax bill hit snags in the Senate late Thursday, as Republicans worked on ways to ease the concerns of deficit hawks. Leaders were still scrambling for votes.

But within the GOP, leaders are confident that once the tax bill is passed, they can strike a quick deal to waive the federally mandated cuts. But Democrats deeply opposed to the tax bill aren't making any promises they'll agree to bail out their rivals — raising the risk of a historic gutting of government programs.

"This would be unprecedented," said William Hoagland, a senior vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center and a former GOP Senate staffer with expertise on the budget. "The law never envisioned that we'd eliminate programs."

GOP leaders are asking moderates like Susan Collins (R-Maine) to back the tax package with the mere promise that lawmakers can find a bipartisan solution during an already divisive year-end crunch that could lead to a government shutdown.

One senior House GOP source was confident a deal on spending would go through. "A statutory PAYGO sequester has never happened, and we will prevent one from being triggered," the source said, adding that Congress has until the end of the year to work it out.

The far reach of the Republican tax plan is the consequence of limitations placed on Congress under the "pay-as-you-go" rule. The decades-old law, revamped during the Obama presidency, requires Congress to offset the cost of each piece of legislation or risk spending cuts painful to both parties.

Lawmakers have repeatedly voted to waive this rule, a total of 16 times, for major bills like the Obama-era stimulus and multiple tax cut packages under George W. Bush.

The GOP's \$1.5 trillion tax plan would trigger \$150 billion in cuts to domestic programs every year for a decade if Congress doesn't step in, according to the CBO. That would include \$25

billion from the money Medicare pays health care providers.

"You're likely to have doctors who will see less patients; you're likely to have hospitals and other health care facilities cut back on certain services," said David Certner, legislative counsel for the AARP, which has loudly opposed cutting Medicare. "It really affects the program."

The fallout for numerous smaller federal programs would be even more drastic, effectively zeroing out their budgets. And while conservatives want smaller government, they don't necessarily want programs lopped off across the board.

The largest chunk would come from health and domestic programs like the Social Services Block Grant, which stands to lose \$1.7 billion, and the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, which would lose \$715 million. Obamacare's Public Health and Prevention Fund — long a target for Republicans — would be wiped out.

Agriculture is usually a spending priority for conservatives, but the tax bill could put \$20 billion of farm aid on the chopping block. Nearly all federal programs for farmers would see funding evaporate.

"Basically, Mr. Perdue would only have the food stamp program to work with," Hoagland said, referring to the Trump administration's Agriculture secretary.

Those cuts would also kick in for the Department of Education's student loan repayment services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the unemployment trust fund.

Republican leaders rushing to pass the tax package have so far dismissed that doomsday scenario as far-fetched — although they were still making last-minute changes on Thursday to address fiscal concerns and stay within Senate budget rules.

Collins, a key moderate holdout on the tax bill, said she received a personal assurance from Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Wednesday that the cuts would be waived — one day after she threatened to oppose the bill over the severe reductions. She said House Speaker Paul Ryan had made the same promise.

"I am confident that neither side of the aisle wants that to occur," Collins said Thursday morning at an event hosted by the Christian Science Monitor, adding that GOP leaders will likely strike a year-end deal to waive the pay-as-you-go requirement.

But the price tag could raise some thorny questions for Republican leaders desperate for a legislative win in the waning weeks of the year — a year in which they controlled the House, Senate and White House and have little to show for it.

Some deficit hawks have already objected to ballooning the national debt, pushing instead for required tax hikes if the bill fails to pay for itself — as many economic analysts predict, including Congress' own Joint Committee on Taxation. Raising taxes would effectively have the same overall impact on the deficit as allowing the spending cuts to take place.

"A vote to block that sequester becomes an awkward vote for some Republicans who said we should be cutting spending," said Ed Lorenzen, a senior adviser at the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "It is ironic that congressional leadership is simultaneously telling members that they're going to block the sequester at the same time they're negotiating a

trigger that's supposed to have tax increases."

The looming threat of the cuts, known as sequestration, has been a political gift for Democrats as they've attempted to kill the GOP's tax bill.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has repeatedly railed against the GOP's tax bill for "gutting Medicare." A series of ads targeting vulnerable House Republicans last month warned that the GOP bill "forces a \$25 billion cut in Medicare."

Publicly, at least, some Democrats have suggested that they could play hardball — withholding their votes to waive the cuts and forcing Republicans to take the fall.

But privately, longtime Capitol Hill veterans say Democrats would never allow spending cuts, even if they could avoid the blame.

"Medicare is underfunded as it is. If we have to change the PAYGO rules, we'll just change 'em," said Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.). "At the end of the day, we — Republicans and Democrats — have to go home and face our constituents. I wouldn't want to go home and face my constituents if I'd cut Medicare."

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Senate tax plan won't cover full cost, study says [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/30/2017 04:26 PM EDT

Senate Republicans' tax-rewrite plan would fall well short of covering its \$1.5 trillion cost through additional economic growth as many lawmakers have promised, a new official analysis shows.

In an eagerly awaited report, the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation said the plan [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) would boost the economy, but not by nearly as much as Republicans predict. It sees the plan boosting growth by 0.8 percent over the next decade, which it said would throw off \$407 billion in additional revenue.

That would reduce the cost of the GOP plan to about \$1 trillion, although lawmakers are only using the analysis for informational purposes, not as a way of making their tax math work.

The JCT estimate is particularly important to Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.), a key swing vote in the Senate, because he's said he won't vote for any plan that increases the deficit, once the economic effects and some accounting adjustments are taken into consideration.

Republicans have argued their plan will end up not costing anything, despite its official \$1.5 trillion cost, because of additional growth. Some Republicans, including Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, have argued it would go beyond paying for itself and actually reduce the deficit.

Democrats seized on the report.

"The score ends the fantasy of magical growth, about unicorns and growth fairies," said Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.), the ranking member of the Finance committee. "The facts are now in — the Republican plan loses a trillion dollars."

Republicans said JCT was low-balling the benefits of their plan, but emphasized the report found it helping the economy.

"The score demonstrates that there is economic growth generated by tax cuts and, really, what we're just talking about is how much," said Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas).

Though Republicans have changed Congress' budgeting rules to incorporate so-called dynamic scoring, which takes account of economic growth, they've run into procedural hurdles that have kept them from actually using it in the Senate, so the new analysis is only being used for illustrative purposes. They can't tap that \$407 billion JCT says their plan would generate.

In a workaround, Republicans agreed last month to cut taxes by \$1.5 trillion because they said that's how much they believed dynamic scoring would generate in extra cash were they able to use it.

House Republicans approved their draft of the tax plan before an analysis of its economic effects was ready.

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Senate GOP: We have the votes on taxes [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim, Brian Faler and Colin Wilhelm | 12/01/2017 10:44 AM EDT

Senate Republicans said Friday they have enough votes to pass their massive tax overhaul, even as they frantically rewrote the multi-trillion dollar legislation behind closed doors.

"We have the votes," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell declared as Republicans emerged from a caucus meeting on the latest round of changes to the legislation.

Details began trickling out Friday afternoon, with Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) saying lawmakers are dropping plans to repeal the alternative minimum tax. Killing the AMT, a complicated batch of rules designed to prevent people from dodging taxes, had been a key part of Republican plans to radically simplify the code. But Rounds said they needed the money to finance other last-minute changes to the bill.

"It is not a repeal anymore," he said.

Lawmakers said they've also increased a deduction for so-called pass-through businesses, which they will pay for in part by dunning multinational corporations. They also dropped a "tax trigger" proposal sought by deficit hawks that was entangled by Senate rules, as well as a backup plan to instead pencil in a future increase in the corporate tax rate.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who announced Friday she will vote for the legislation, said she won a provision to preserve a property tax writeoff. And Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Arizona) said he had secured language phasing down write-offs for business investments that had been slated to abruptly expire at the end of 2022.

Flake added that Republican leaders were still searching for revenue to make the numbers behind their plan work.

In a win for leadership, GOP Sens. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, Steve Daines of Montana as well as Flake all declared on Friday they will both support the bill. A sweeping manager's amendment to be unveiled later Friday will likely incorporate significant changes from the version that cleared the Senate Finance Committee just over two weeks ago.

Johnson in particular is a major boost for Senate GOP leaders, who have struggled all week to corral at least 50 votes for the tax measure. Republicans are using powerful budget procedures to evade a Democratic filibuster on the bill, so Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can lose only two GOP votes and pass the bill.

President Donald Trump is calling GOP senators to back the bill, and White House director of legislative affairs Marc Short was cautiously optimistic coming out of a meeting in Cornyn's office.

"I think they've got a plan," Short said, before adding, "I'm sure there's plenty of drama ahead today." Asked if he was comfortable with narrow passage of the tax reform package by 50 votes plus a tie-breaking vote from Vice President Pence, Short replied: "What do they call a person that finishes last in medical school? A doctor."

Johnson said Republicans have agreed to his demands to increase a deduction for pass-through businesses, which pay taxes on the individual side of the tax code, to as much as 23 percent, from 20 percent. It would be financed, he told reporters, by upping a one-time tax on multinational companies' overseas earnings.

Senate Republicans are adopting a House proposal to charge 14 percent on those multinationals' liquid assets and 7 percent on illiquid ones such as facilities, up from the 10 percent and 5 percent they had been considering.

"We're going to have to reconcile that anyway, and might as well reconcile up front here to take care of our issue," Johnson told reporters.

Johnson and Daines had complained pass-throughs would be put at a competitive disadvantage under the legislation compared to corporations.

Though Johnson's vote was likely never truly in doubt, he could have held out for more changes, which would have further handcuffed leaders as they try to satisfy a duo of stubborn fiscal hawks alarmed that the measure will blow up federal budget deficits. A Joint Committee on Taxation report said Thursday that even with economic growth from the plan, the bill would add \$1 trillion to the deficit over the next decade.

Daines and Johnson had demanded more generous treatment of "pass-through" companies — businesses that file their taxes on the individual code — in the measure. Daines' office said the "pass-through" companies will now be able to deduct up to 23 percent of their income, a boost

from the rates in previous versions of the tax bill.

In a statement Friday, Daines said: "After weeks of fighting for Main Street businesses including Montana's farmers and ranchers, I've decided to support the Senate tax cut bill which provides significant tax relief for Main Street businesses" Daines said in a statement Friday.

Lawmakers said they've also dropped plans to include a trigger mechanism sought by Corker and Flake that would have forced automatic tax increases if the bill didn't jog the economy as much as Republicans hope.

The Senate parliamentarian has found that such a mechanism would run afoul of complicated procedural rules. That sent Republicans scrambling and unable to vote on the bill Thursday night, as leaders had hoped.

Republicans have also ditched plans to swap in future tax increases for the abandoned trigger - a proposed hike in the corporate rate - that deficit hawks had proposed as a backup plan but which many of their colleagues opposed.

Flake also said he had a "firm commitment" by party leaders to "work with me" on "fair and permanent protections" for undocumented immigrants threatened with deportation by President Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Collins, another undecided vote, has secured commitments from both the White House and Senate Republican leaders to include a deduction for up to \$10,000 in property taxes. That parallels a House provision written to appease Republicans from high-tax areas who fumed over GOP leadership's decision to ax a prized deduction for state and local taxes.

Lawmakers are keeping the AMT in order to accommodate those changes, said Rounds.

"That's one of the pay-fors for the pass-throughs, and also for the \$10,000 property-tax exemption," he said. "I think most members felt very strongly that we wanted a property tax exemption for individuals" and so "the trade-off is there."

Meanwhile, Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida and Mike Lee of Utah are still seeking to make a \$2,000 child tax credit refundable by raising the corporate rate level from 20 to 22 percent.

Democrats blasted Republicans on both the substance and process of the tax push.

"In the waning hours, this bill is tilting further towards businesses and away from families. Every time the choice is between corporations and families, the Republicans choose corporations," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said.

"And still, no one knows what the final bill will look like," he added on the Senate floor. "Why on earth wouldn't you want to spend more than a few hours looking at a bill of this magnitude?"

Colin Wilhelm and Aaron Lorenzo contributed to this report.

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Flake: Republican leaders pledged to work on DACA fix [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 12/01/2017 01:54 PM EDT

Sen. [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.) will support the Senate Republican tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) — and said today he received assurances in return that leadership will work on a solution for enrollees in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Flake [said](#) in a written statement that he entered tax negotiations with a pair of objectives. One was to obtain a commitment from the Trump administration and Senate leadership to work with him to "enact fair and permanent protections for DACA recipients." The other was to cut an \$85 billion "budget gimmick" that he didn't describe in further detail.

"Having secured both of those objectives, I am pleased to announce I will vote in support of the tax reform bill," Flake said.

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Will GOP finally take down Obamacare with a tax bill? [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 11/30/2017 07:04 PM EDT

After spending nearly a year on a failed effort to repeal Obamacare, Republicans on Capitol Hill are on the verge of repealing the law's individual mandate as a footnote to their rewrite of the American tax system.

At least two of the three Senate Republicans who blocked the repeal effort over the summer have no problem undoing the requirement that nearly all Americans carry insurance — a provision Democrats say is vital to keeping the Affordable Care Act afloat.

John McCain of Arizona and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said they support the tax bill, which includes repeal of the individual mandate. Susan Collins of Maine has partially pegged her support to assurances from President Donald Trump and Senate Finance Committee leaders that lawmakers will fund a separate Obamacare program that Republicans say will offset the negative effects of repealing the mandate on premium costs. She has not yet said how she will vote on the tax bill.

But those assurances would require House Republicans to fund the program, called cost-sharing reduction payments, which they deride as a "bailout" of insurance companies. House conservatives have opposed the program, although some suggest that if tax reform passage depends on that, they might hold their noses and support it.

"If it was on the precipice of succeeding or failing based on that one issue, there may be people taking a big gulp and moving forward," said Rep. Mark Walker (R-S.C.), who leads the

conservative Republican Study Committee. "But I hope we don't get to that point."

Senate leaders on Thursday were reluctant to commit to how the cost-sharing bill, a deal crafted by Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander and Democratic Sen. Patty Murray, might be enacted as lawmakers consider short-term measures to fund the government.

"I would expect to see it before the end of the year," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said.

Alexander said Thursday that the bill, which was written to reduce premiums in 2018 and 2019, may be pushed back one year. Collins also wants to enact legislation she wrote with Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) that would fund a separate program that would help insurance companies that take on the most expensive patients.

The key GOP motivation for unwinding the mandate — the fine would convert to zero dollars, effectively making it moot — is money. Repeal raises \$338 billion to plow into tax reform, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The agency has warned that it is considering revising its estimates downward in the future, making it a depreciating asset the GOP is eager to cash in on now.

The politics of repealing the most unpopular part of the health care law is an added bonus. Initially, Republican leaders were skeptical of combining the tax reform bill with the toxic Obamacare debate. But it quickly became clear that Senate Republicans were on board as long as other parts of the law remained intact.

There is an added sense of schadenfreude for Republicans. In 2012, when a challenge to the mandate went before the Supreme Court in a high-stakes case the GOP hoped would bring down the whole law, Chief Justice John Roberts ruled the mandate was a tax and, therefore, constitutional.

"Justice Roberts told us it was a tax so it belongs in a tax bill," quipped Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas).

The support for repealing the mandate contrasts with the debate over the summer as the Senate took up an Obamacare repeal bill that would have gutted Medicaid. At the time, Murkowski and Collins cited significant worries about reducing access to health care in their states.

But repealing the mandate, Murkowski argued in [an opinion piece](#) in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner earlier this month, wouldn't hurt access.

"It is important to emphasize that eliminating this tax penalty does not take care away from anyone," she wrote. "Instead, it provides important relief to those who have been penalized for choosing not to buy unaffordable insurance."

Insurance companies and many health law supporters strongly disagree. Murray calls the tax bill a "sabotage" of American families' health care.

The mandate is needed, they say, to make sure that people don't buy insurance only when they get sick. It was designed to counter the health care law's requirement that insurance companies accept everyone. Without a mandate, consumers could theoretically buy insurance in the ambulance on their way to the hospital.

For that reason, insurers and health care providers have come out strongly against repealing the mandate.

Still, the impact of the mandate hasn't been as substantial as the law's drafters anticipated. The fine isn't big enough needed to persuade people to buy coverage, some economists say.

"It hasn't been very effective and doesn't amount to much. It sounds like more than it is," said Alexander, chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. "Plus, it is the most unpopular part of the Affordable Care Act. So repealing it may not make as much of a difference as people once thought."

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Some House Republicans urge senators to drop endowment tax [Back](#)

By Mel Leonor | 12/01/2017 10:31 AM EDT

More than 40 House members, including 19 Republicans, have written [a letter](#) to Senate leaders strongly opposing the proposed tax on private university endowment earnings in the Senate GOP tax plan.

The group includes GOP members who voted in favor of the House tax bill, which has the same provision.

The letter, dated Thursday, was led by Rep. [Lamar Smith](#) (R-Texas), and signed by Reps. [Ted Poe](#) (R-Texas), [Rod Blum](#) (R-Iowa), [John J. Faso](#) (R-N.Y.) and [Pete King](#) (R-N.Y.), among others. Smith, Poe and Blum voted in favor of the House tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). Faso and King opposed the bill.

The House members wrote to senators that the endowment tax is "bad policy" and a "serious threat" to institutions.

Among the group's concerns is the toll the tax would take on financial assistance to students.

"Taxing endowments would reduce funds available for financial aid, drive up tuition costs and jeopardize the future of private colleges and universities," they wrote. "How do the American people benefit from that?"

Proposed is a 1.4 percent excise tax on the investment income of private institutions with at least 500 students and assets valued at at least \$250,000 per student. The House passed its tax bill last month; the Senate continues debate on its plan today.

Lawmakers said in the letter they fear that the future expansion of the tax to cover more institutions, including public institutions, is "inevitable."

Senate Republicans today are [rewriting the bill](#) in advance of an anticipated floor vote, though

there is no sign the endowment tax has been dropped.

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Cardin's bid to get repatriation for infrastructure in tax bill fails [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 12/01/2017 01:24 PM EDT

The Senate today rejected, 43-57, Sen. [Ben Cardin](#)'s motion to amend the tax bill currently barreling its way through the Senate that would use deemed repatriation revenue for infrastructure.

The motion would have sent the tax bill, [S. 1 \(115\)](#), back to the Senate Finance Committee and order the committee to report back in three days with a plan that would "designate the revenue raised by the deemed repatriation provisions of the bill for infrastructure improvements." The motion's goal was "to fix and enhance our country's infrastructure, help create jobs, and responsibly use one-time revenue for one-time spending."

Democrats have long eyed repatriated corporate profit as a possible source of revenue for infrastructure, but the tax bill would use them to lower tax rates.

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The GOP Tax Bill Will Hurt U.S. Universities [Back](#)

By Douglas A. Warner | 12/01/2017 01:24 PM EDT

It seems odd that a tax bill purporting to boost economic growth would take resources away from the institutions most vital to promoting it. But that's just what the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, which has passed the House and is heading to a vote in the Senate, does.

The legislation takes the unprecedented step of taxing the income of certain private universities—specifically, it imposes a 1.4 percent tax on net endowment income for universities with endowments larger than \$250,000 per full-time student. Some commenters have applauded the tax, as if it would rectify everything they consider amiss with higher education in America. But few of those supporters have examined the measure's dire consequences—repercussions that would frustrate everything from access to college in America to the top-notch university research that creates U.S. jobs.

As a former investment banker with 33 years of experience doing commercial and investment banking, I know a good investment when I see one. I know that the way out of the jobs dilemma in America is education and research. America's global competitiveness depends on both. That's why I welcomed the chance to become a trustee of Yale University, where I have served since 2008. I am also the chair of the Investment Committee, which oversees the

management of the Yale endowment. I have taken part in investment decisions and have shaped policies to achieve maximum benefits for current faculty, students and staff while leaving enough resources on the table to ensure that the next generation of faculty, students and staff is able to enjoy comparable levels of support. That's the central idea of an endowment—to provide a permanent source of support that sustains its purchasing power indefinitely.

As a trustee, I have participated in numerous decisions that the endowment made possible, such as adopting broader interpretations of students' "financial need" and committing, as Yale has for decades, to meet every penny of that need. Or building two new residential colleges to expand enrollment in Yale College by 15 percent because the university was denying admission to too many highly talented students. Or investing in new academic resources, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning, that encourage fresh approaches to teaching across the university.

And yet Congress would reduce the capacity of colleges and universities to do this essential work—build the human and intellectual capital the country requires to thrive as a global leader.

The 70 or so institutions targeted by the proposed tax are among the most generous providers of financial aid from their own resources, drawn substantially from their endowments. At many of these schools, spending on grant aid is 20 times the total amount that students receive from federal programs, such as Pell Grants. At Yale and several other schools, parents who make the median family income or less are not expected to make any payment toward their children's education. It is hard to see how students would be better off if Congress taxed the funds to be spent on financial aid.

University endowments also contribute significantly to advances in medicine and high-tech innovation. As anyone who has seen a modern lab knows, research is expensive. Federal grants contribute to this research, but they fall far short of covering the full cost. Universities make up the rest out of private gifts and their own funds. Yale, for example, funds 40 percent of the total cost of all research conducted on campus. This academic research drives commercial innovation and America's job growth—two-thirds of the scientific articles cited in U.S. patent applications were published by university faculty and their graduate students. It is difficult to see how the country would gain from taxing funds that would otherwise be spent on research that spurs innovation and job creation.

Furthermore, many of the colleges and universities facing an endowment income tax are the economic anchors of local economies. Yale, for example, makes voluntary payments to New Haven and other towns; it funds scholarships for any New Haven public high school graduate with a B average or higher to attend any public or private university in Connecticut; the Yale Homebuyer program has dispensed millions to employees who buy (and occupy) a home in New Haven. (Yes, the participating employees pay taxes on the benefit.) I doubt that the federal government will step in to sustain these efforts if universities are taxed.

It's simple: Taxing the resources that support student aid, teaching, research and community investments does not make sense—and it represents a fundamental change in tax policy toward charities. For decades, government has refrained from taxing public charities in recognition of their contribution to social welfare. The Tax Cut and Jobs Act reflects a new maxim: "If we can tax it, we will." That policy does not bode well for any charity, whether they are colleges with smaller endowments, museums or hospitals. But, more important, it

does not bode well for the future of our country.

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House office secretly settled \$84K harassment claim [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Jennifer Scholtes | 12/01/2017 10:49 AM EDT

House Administration Committee Chairman Gregg Harper told his colleagues in a private meeting Friday that one House office paid \$84,000 to settle a sexual harassment claim.

The Mississippi Republican announced the settlement in a closed-door conference, when members peppered leaders for more information about the use of taxpayer money for such complaints.

It is unclear which office was involved, or whether the settlement was for a complaint against a member or a staffer.

Harper also said more than \$360,000 in tax dollars had gone toward workplace dispute settlements involving members of Congress or their staff. That's a small piece of the \$17 million that has been used to settle employment disagreements on Capitol Hill. That figure, however, also includes disputes involving the U.S. Capitol Police and Architect of the Capitol.

"Most of the discussion in there has been about getting this perception turned around that there's \$17 million in sexual harassment claims for members of Congress," Rep. Mark Amodei (R-Nev.) said as he left the meeting.

Harper only shared data for the past five years, but Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.) said lawmakers expected more information by day's end. Over the past half-decade, a total of six payouts have been made on behalf of member offices.

Only the \$84,000 settlement was for a sexual harassment complaint, however. Others were for complaints such as sexual discrimination, Comstock said.

Still, lawmakers pushed Harper to identify the individual involved in the \$84,000 settlement, so people would stop suspecting the rest of them, sources in the room said.

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Lawmaker behind secret \$84K sexual harassment settlement unmasked [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade | 12/01/2017 12:24 PM EDT

Rep. Blake Farenthold used taxpayer money to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by his

former spokesman — the only known sitting member of Congress to have used a little-known congressional account to pay an accuser, people familiar with the matter told POLITICO.

Lauren Greene, the Texas Republican's former communications director, sued her boss in December 2014 over allegations of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment.

Greene said another Farenthold aide told her the lawmaker said he had "sexual fantasies" and "wet dreams" about Greene. She also claimed that Farenthold "regularly drank to excess" and told her in February 2014 that he was "estranged from his wife and had not had sex with her in years."

When she complained about comments Farenthold and a male staffer made to her, Greene said the congressman improperly fired her. She filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia, but the case was later dropped after both parties reached a private settlement.

No information was ever released on that agreement.

House Administration Committee Chairman Gregg Harper (R-Miss.) told GOP lawmakers in a closed-door Friday morning meeting that only one House office in the past five years had used an Office of Compliance account to settle a sexual harassment complaint. Harper said in that one instance, the settlement totaled \$84,000.

In a statement for this story, Farenthold would neither confirm or deny that his office was responsible for that \$84,000 payout.

"While I 100% support more transparency with respect to claims against members of Congress, I can neither confirm nor deny that settlement involved my office as the Congressional Accountability Act prohibits me from answering that question," Farenthold said in a statement.

Greene's lawyer, Les Alderman of Alderman, Devorsetz & Hora PLLC, also would not say whether Greene was the woman who received the \$84,000 Harper referred to.

But in a joint statement both Greene and Farenthold prepared at the time of the settlement but never released — a copy of which was shared with POLITICO by Alderman on Friday — the two confirmed they reached a deal in part to save taxpayer dollars.

"[A]fter it became clear that further litigating this case would come at great expense to all involved — including the taxpayers — the parties engaged in mediation with a court-appointed mediator," the statement read. "After extensive discussion and consideration, the parties jointly agreed to accept the solution proposed by the mediator."

The statement added: "The parties believe that the mediator's solution saves the parties, and the taxpayers, significant sums that would be expended in further discovery and/or trial."

The statement also states that Farenthold "disagrees strongly" with his client's allegations and "adamantly denies that he engaged in any wrongdoing." It says the settlement included a confidentiality agreement that precludes Greene and Farenthold from discussing the case and "expressly provides that both parties deny all liability."

The Office of Congressional Ethics also investigated Greene's allegations. In a letter to the

House Ethics Committee the watchdog said "there is not substantial reason to believe that Representative Farenthold sexually harassed or discriminated against [ex-staffer Lauren Greene], or engaged in an effort to intimidate, take reprisal against, or discriminate against [Greene] for opposing such treatment, in violation of House rules and federal law."

It was unclear Friday afternoon whether the discovery would have political ramifications for Farenthold, who rode the Tea Party wave to Congress in 2010. The 55-year-old hails from the the southeast corner of Texas, a safe area for Republicans.

However, a [federal panel ruled](#) over the summer that the district was drawn primarily based on race and violated the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act. Farenthold has said he would seek reelection, despite the fact that the make-up of his district may soon change and include more Democratic areas.

The filing deadline for someone to challenge Farenthold is Dec. 11.

Even if he isn't challenged, Farenthold is likely to face repercussions from fellow House Republicans for using taxpayer money to settle a harassment claim. Recent reports, including in POLITICO, revealed that \$17 million has been paid out quietly to settle workplace disputes.

Harper said Friday that only \$360,000 of that total involved a House office.

That, however, won't stem demands from conservatives that members who have been part of such settlements use their own personal money to reimburse the treasury.

Farenthold has a minimum net worth of \$2.4 million, according to his most recent financial disclosure [form](#).

Farenthold, a graduate of St. Mary's University School of Law, practice law for several years after college. He also worked as a radio disc jockey while in school. He later founded a web design and consulting firm before running for Congress.

Greene came to Capitol Hill as an intern in 2009, and was later promoted to full time in the office of ex-Rep. John Sullivan (R-Oak.). In early 2013, she moved to Farenthold's office, where she stayed for 18 months before her July 2014 firing.

According to Greene's complaint in court, Farenthold and his top aide, Bob Haueter, sexually harassed her, allegations that both men vehemently denied.

"Farenthold regularly drank to excess, and because of his tendency to flirt, the staffers who accompanied him to Capitol Hill functions would joke that they had to be on 'red head patrol to keep him out of trouble,'" Greene's complaint alleged. "On one occasion, prior to February 2014, during a staff meeting at which [Greene] was in attendance, Farenthold disclosed that a female lobbyist had propositioned him for a 'threesome.'"

The complaint added: "On June 10, 2014, in response to Haueter's complaint about [Greene's] shirt ... which Haueter claimed was transparent and showed [Greene's] nipples, Farenthold told [another woman staffer] that [Greene] could show her nipples whenever she wanted to," Greene's complaint asserted.

Greene said Farenthold avoided meeting one-on-one with her, and she also felt awkward about meeting with Farenthold.

When Greene complained to Farenthold directly in June 2014 about her problems with Haueter, she was "marginalized and undermined" by the Texas Republican, and then fired several weeks later, Greene asserted.

Greene took the matter to the Office of Compliance, which handles workplace disputes. She went through a month of mandatory counseling and mediation before filing suit.

John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Lawmakers have carte blanche to cut secret harassment settlements [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Heather Caygle | 12/01/2017 05:04 AM EDT

The revelation that Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) secretly settled a sexual harassment claim using his office funds obscured a disturbing fact: The House appears to have no clear rules on whether Conyers' colleagues can do the same thing.

Conyers in 2015 made a severance payment of roughly \$27,000 to a former aide who accused him of harassment using his taxpayer-funded office account. But even though the House ethics manual says that employees should be paid for having "regularly performed official duties" — in other words, showing up and doing work, a guideline that the severance payment to Conyers' former aide didn't meet — the settlement deal was still allowed to go forward.

Now Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), a vocal advocate for reform of Capitol Hill's secretive system for handling workplace harassment, is calling out the lack of policing of the secret one-off settlements. She wants the House ethics committee to state definitively whether the chamber will allow more Conyers-style settlements.

The ethics panel "currently has no clear position on whether these payments are indeed impermissible," Speier told the committee's leaders in a Thursday letter, a copy of which was obtained by POLITICO.

Allowing lawmakers use of their office's budgets "to avoid public disclosure of wrongdoing only serves to enable the evasion of accountability," Speier wrote, adding that she knows of one member who used a maneuver similar to Conyers' to settle a misconduct case earlier this year.

"The American people deserve to know whether their tax dollars are being used in this manner."

The question of whether House members can settle harassment claims with their budgets — also known as members' representational allowances, or MRAs — is at the heart of an ongoing ethics committee [review](#) of severance payments Rep. Mark Meadows (R-S.C.) made to a former chief of staff who was accused of sexual harassment by several female aides in the office.

One senior Democratic aide familiar with the issue said that before the Meadows probe, the ethics committee "was much clearer about the use of the MRA for this purpose."

But the ethics panel's "advice has been inconsistent and unhelpful" in the 15 months since, the aide added. "I don't think that they expected this level of scrutiny around these particular settlements."

Another Democratic aide sounded a similar note: "The lack of standardized guidance on this is problematic."

Conyers himself is also the subject of another ethics panel [review](#) on the severance question stemming from his payments to a former chief of staff after she left his office following a guilty plea to a misdemeanor.

The House Administration Committee is holding a hearing Thursday on workplace misconduct settlements in Congress. Some of those are paid using a taxpayer-funded account maintained by the congressional Office of Compliance, while others come out of members' budgets. Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) [settled](#) a hostile work environment claim unrelated to sexual harassment in 2015 using operating funds from the House Natural Resources Committee, on which he is the top Democrat.

If the compliance office's fund is used to pay a harassment claim, the administration panel's GOP chairman and top Democrat have to sign off on it.

But the top Democrat on that committee, Pennsylvania Rep. Bob Brady, said Thursday that no such approval requirement exists for harassment settlements paid from lawmakers' office budgets. If that happened, Brady said in an interview, "we'd probably never know about it."

Former Rep. Candice Miller (R-Mich.), who chaired the administration panel from 2012 until 2016, said in an interview that "I don't remember" being involved in any talks about resolving misconduct claims using lawmakers' office budgets.

"I'm astonished to see that a member would use the MRA to pay off a sexual harassment case," Miller said in an interview. "I don't believe that's why the money was appropriated."

Grijalva said he worked with the House employment counsel's office, which represents the interests of members in misconduct disputes, on the settlement agreement with his former aide. That employee reportedly cited Grijalva's alleged alcohol use as creating a hostile work environment, charges that he denies.

"In this instance I felt that I was taking advice from House counsel, and that that advice was the best advice I could get," Grijalva said in an interview. "And I relied on it."

Speier, in an interview, slammed the employment counsel's office as "biased and member-centered and victim-blaming. That whole function needs to change dramatically."

The employment counsel's office referred questions on the issue to the administration committee. The ethics committee declined to comment for this story.

That committee's handbook for members allows lump sum payments to House employees, but specifies that recipients of the payments must "perform official duties commensurate with the

compensation received" in compliance with chamber rules.

The chamber's ethics manual uses similar phrasing, stating: "The underlying standard for the receipt of compensation by an employee of the House is that the employee has regularly performed official duties commensurate with the compensation received."

A spokeswoman for the administration committee, asked whether the panel has ever taken a closer look at the propriety of using office budgets to pay harassment settlements, said that any "misuse of official resources" would fall under the ethics panel's purview. But the broader issue of settlements is part of the committee's ongoing review of congressional workplace culture, the spokeswoman said.

Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.), an administration committee member working with Speier on broader harassment reforms, said that lawmakers are trying to make their own internal misconduct system more transparent. But they want to avoid getting embroiled in specific "ongoing disputes with members and candidates, because then everybody kind of goes to their corners and you lose that watershed moment."

Brady predicted that part of the House's internal housecleaning on harassment would involve coming up with clearer guidance on the method Conyers and Grijalva used to secretly settle their claims. The administration committee is looking at adding language to its handbook and other guidance clarifying the issue, Brady said.

And asked why the ethics committee has not issued formal guidance, he quipped: "I think they're going to now."

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Pelosi convenes sexual harassment reform meeting [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Rachael Bade | 11/30/2017 07:00 PM EDT

House Democrats on Thursday held the first in a planned series of meetings about strategies to use the national reckoning with sexual harassment as a springboard for reform of Capitol Hill's workplace policies.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) convened the meeting as she and other caucus members began calling for the resignation of Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) following multiple allegations of sexual harassment against him. As Democrats grapple with the political quandary of trying to seize the high ground on harassment while some of their own members fall prey to misconduct scandals, Pelosi kept the spotlight on potential policy remedies.

"We are at a watershed moment in the nationwide fight against sexual harassment, discrimination and retaliation," Pelosi said in a statement. "Members of Congress have a moral duty to the brave women and men coming forward to seize this moment and demonstrate real, effective leadership to foster a climate of respect and dignity in the workplace. We will help transform this moment of truth into an opportunity for action."

Among the outside attendees at Thursday's meeting were victims' advocates and specialists in survivor compensation, according to a Democratic aide, who added that future meetings will touch on handling of harassment claims in local government as well as the private sector.

A source familiar with the meeting said that the American Association of Justice Trial Lawyers and the National Women's Law Center were among the groups represented. Lawmakers in attendance were Reps. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), Brenda Lawrence (D-Mich.), Bob Brady (D-Pa.), Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), Jamie Raskin (D-Md.), James Clyburn (D-S.C.), Ann McLane Kuster (D-N.H.), Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.), and Lois Frankel (D-Fla.), the source added.

Pelosi also hailed Speier for serving as a chief author of broader legislation overhauling the Hill's harassment system and for helping secure passage of a resolution this week that requires all House members and aides to take anti-harassment training. Among the topics discussed Thursday, Pelosi said, was "possible additions" to Speier's bill.

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Why the 'fix' to Congress's sexual harassment policies could backfire [Back](#)

By Les Alderman | 11/30/2017 06:33 PM EDT

As allegations of sexual harassment have reached the halls of Capitol Hill, Congress is turning its attention to its own sexual harassment policies, which let lawmakers use government funds to settle harassment complaints in secret. Though the accusations against Rep. John Conyers have made the biggest headlines, Congress' Office of Compliance has paid out \$17 million over the past 20 years in 264 settlements for various infractions, including sexual harassment. House Republicans have introduced a bill to publicize the names of lawmakers who reach any such settlements and to prohibit settlements from using taxpayer money.

The change is pitched as a reform to bring transparency and accountability to a secretive process that lets perpetrators get away with bad behavior. But as a civil rights lawyer whose firm has represented numerous victims of discrimination and harassment, including victims employed by members of Congress, I can assure you that this proposal is dangerous. Whether intentional or not, the bill punishes victims of harassment who would come forward in the future and who have come forward in the past and would make it *less* likely that victims would come forward to make claims in the future.

The legislation makes two major changes. First, the proposal would retroactively eliminate the confidential nature of settlements that have been made in years past, an effort to expose lawmakers who have acted inappropriately. But this change would hurt the victims as much or more than the lawmakers. The victims often desire that confidentiality because it protects them from the media frenzy that follows when members of Congress are the subject of discrimination and harassment lawsuits. Confidentiality also helps those victims get their next jobs after (hopefully) extricating themselves from the discriminatory harassing environment. The Constitution frowns on retroactive laws such as this because they overrule the expectations and settled legal rights of both parties. My clients expected that these settlements

would stay private; in some cases, they wouldn't have agreed to the settlement if they knew it would eventually become public. It is a breach of trust for Congress to change the rules around the settlement now and force these victims into the public sphere.

Second, and more important, the proposal prohibits taxpayer money from being used to pay settlements or verdicts against members of Congress who discriminate or harass their employees. While that may satisfy a knee-jerk need to hold lawmakers personally responsible for discrimination and harassment, it likely deprives victims of the chance to ever recover the damages to which they are entitled.

Members of Congress rarely have the hundreds of thousands of dollars that are typically paid out in meritorious discrimination and harassment claims. If enacted, the law would effectively require victims to chase lawmakers to their home district to attempt to have local federal or state courts recognize the lawmakers' liability and then go through byzantine debt collection proceedings, such as attempting to freeze assets and bank accounts and garnish the lawmakers' wages in order to collect. In many cases the proposed law would leave the victim with an empty and unenforceable judgment or settlement because the Congressperson simply does not—and never will—have the financial means to pay.

Even on a theoretical level, this proposal doesn't make sense. In law, the concept of *respondeat superior* holds that the employer is responsible for the actions of its employee when the employee causes harm to others. The concept has been a part of our legal system since its inception, and it can be traced in early Roman and Germanic Law and the English Common Law. We do not sue the fast food cook for the nail in our hamburger, nor do we sue the delivery driver for running us over in the crosswalk. And we certainly do not sue the pilot of the plane that crashes for our lost loved ones. This makes sense on two levels: First the delivery driver, or the airline pilot, or the fast food cook would not be in the position to hurt us unless the employer hired them, trained them (or failed to train them) and gave them the tools or authority that they used to hurt us. Second, the employee is rarely in a position to make the victims whole by paying them damages and otherwise compensating them for the harm done.

In the context of Congress, the American people are responsible for placing lawmakers in the position to discriminate against and harass their victims. A lawmaker would not be harassing his or her staff if we had not elected that person in the first place. Every lawmaker is our employee. Under *respondeat superior*, we—the public—are responsible for paying any penalties for a lawmaker's inappropriate behavior. If we do not want to have to pay the damages, then—just as we expect employers to hire and train their employees responsibly—we should do a better job choosing and training the lawmakers we elect.

If Congress wants to force lawmakers to personally pay any harassment settlements, lawmakers could be required to repay the Treasury for any damages and settlements that are funded by taxpayer dollars. In fact, such a policy could be an additional deterrent to discrimination and harassment while making the public (not the victim) the debt collector against the offending lawmaker. Most importantly, this reform would still ensure that the victims receive the justice they deserve.

Les Alderman is a founding member of the Washington, D.C., law firm of Alderman, Devorsetz & Hora PLLC.

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House GOP higher education overhaul released [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 12/01/2017 10:47 AM EDT

Rep. [Virginia Foxx](#), the chairwoman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, today made public House Republicans' plan to rewrite the main federal law governing higher education.

The committee released the full text of a sweeping bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, which was last comprehensively updated nearly a decade ago during the George W. Bush administration.

The bill — titled Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity Through Education Reform, or PROSPER, Act — most significantly overhauls the federal government's student aid programs.

It would streamline existing programs to create "one loan, one work-study and one grant" as well as a single income-based repayment plan.

In addition, the bill eases some federal requirements on colleges, particularly for-profit schools, while revamping how the Education Department holds all colleges accountable for their use of federal aid dollars.

Read the full text [here](#).

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Higher ed group 'deeply concerned' about House GOP student aid overhaul [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 12/01/2017 01:58 PM EDT

The American Council on Education, the main association representing colleges and universities in Washington, said today it is "deeply concerned" about House Republicans' plans to overhaul federal financial aid.

Rep. [Virginia Foxx](#) (R-N.C.), chairwoman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, today released [text of a sweeping bill](#) to rewrite the Higher Education Act. The legislation, among other things, would simplify and streamline the federal student loan and grant programs.

Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, praised the bill for easing many federal requirements and regulations on colleges and universities but said he's worried about its proposed changes to student aid.

Mitchell, who previously served as President Barack Obama's undersecretary of Education,

said in a [statement](#) that the group was "deeply concerned that the proposal would undermine decades of federal policy aimed at helping students at the undergraduate and graduate levels afford a high-quality higher education."

He said that the bill would "immediately lead to higher interest charges every year for some six million student borrowers and eliminate 1.5 million financial aid grants."

The legislation calls for the elimination of need-based interest subsidies on student loans as well as the federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program, which serves low-income students.

"This week's action is just one step in what has been and will continue to be a long and winding process toward reauthorization of the Higher Education Act," Mitchell added. "We look forward to working with the House and the Senate to achieve a final measure that expands access to educational opportunity, fosters innovation and cutting-edge research, and grows the next generation workforce this country needs to compete in a global economy."

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Trump administration reveals principles for higher education rewrite [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 12/01/2017 01:10 PM EDT

The White House Friday plans to outline its goals for overhauling the main federal law governing higher education and student financial aid.

The Trump administration will urge lawmakers to restructure the federal student loan program so that it better "protects taxpayers," according to a [document](#) obtained by POLITICO. The administration also wants to ease federal regulations on colleges and promote campus free speech.

The document, titled "Higher Education Act Reauthorization Principles," is a two-page summary of recommendations for rewriting the law, which was last comprehensively updated nearly a decade ago.

Rep. [Virginia Foxx](#), (R-N.C.), chairwoman of the House education committee, earlier Friday released [the House GOP bill](#) that would rewrite the Higher Education Act.

"Chairwoman Foxx is pleased to see the White House turn its attention to higher education reforms, and welcomes the views of the administration as the legislative process moves forward," a committee aide told POLITICO.

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) is similarly working on legislation to rewrite the law, and he said that will be a top priority next year.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has called for Congress to "start from a blank page" when it comes to updating the Higher Education Act, but hasn't yet offered specific policy

recommendations.

The White House document to be made public Friday outlines five broad goals and eight policy recommendations for reauthorizing the law.

"The current student loan system burdens students with debt and taxpayers with uncertainty," the document says. "Congress should therefore consider reforming, limiting, or consolidating certain existing student loan programs to better serve students and protect taxpayer investment."

The White House also wants to see colleges "share a portion of the financial risk associated with student loans" that were used to attend their institution. Colleges should be held financially responsible for federal student loans based on how well their former students repay them, the document says.

The Trump administration also wants to expand Pell Grants for students who enroll in "high-quality short-term, summer and certificate programs."

And the document reiterates several proposals to revamp student loan repayment options, including eliminating Public Service Loan Forgiveness, that were contained in Trump's budget earlier this year.

The White House also wants Higher Education Act provisions on free speech on college campuses. Congress should "require institutions of higher education receiving Federal funds to provide prospective and current students with a free speech policy disclosure," the document says.

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ERS: Big farms get growing share of subsidies as production consolidates [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 11/30/2017 05:39 PM EDT

Large farms with at least \$1 million in annual gross cash income received 34 percent of commodity subsidies in 2015, up from 11 percent in 1991, according to a USDA Economic Research Service [report](#) published today.

The report, which analyzes the shift in distribution of commodity, conservation and crop insurance payments over the years, also found that large farms received one-third of crop insurance indemnities in 2015, up from 12 percent in 1997 — the earliest year for which USDA has reliable data, ERS said.

The data highlights how as agricultural production has shifted to larger operations, so too have commodity and insurance payments, primarily because they are tied to output. Large farms increased their share of agricultural production from 23 percent in 1991 to 41 percent in 2015, the report noted.

However, reforms to the crop insurance program, including increases in premium subsidies

that disproportionately benefited larger operations, also may have affected the shift of indemnities.

Meanwhile, small operations — or those with less than \$350,000 in annual gross cash income — are receiving a declining amount of commodity subsidies and crop insurance indemnities, as they account for a smaller percentage of overall agricultural production. In 2015, they received about 30 percent of commodity subsidies, down from 61 percent in 1991. Small farms accounted for 22 percent of crop insurance indemnities in 2015, down from 48 percent in 1997.

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Why FEMA is making a big mistake in Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Vivian Graubard and Emma Coleman | 12/01/2017 05:21 AM EDT

In the weeks after Hurricane Maria left much of Puerto Rico without electricity in the worst power outage in U.S. history, island officials made a hasty decision to award a \$300 million contract to Montana-based Whitefish Energy Holdings, a company with [only two full-time employees](#). The swift backlash over the contract led to calls for an investigation and Puerto Rico eventually revoked the deal—but not before precious time was wasted as millions of Puerto Ricans languished without power.

Now, just a few weeks after the Whitefish debacle, a different government agency is making a similar mistake. Last week, the Federal Emergency Management Agency [announced](#) that it will be unable to meet the needs of the Puerto Rican rebuild, and asked for public comment on a proposal to hire a single vendor to handle all of the shipping, transportation, logistics, and delivery of disaster relief aid to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for the next 12 months. The contract could be worth more than \$100 million and will have an immense impact on the speed of the island's recovery. FEMA released the notice the afternoon before Thanksgiving—and gave the public just six days to comment on it.

Behind this rushed and opaque process is an idea just as flawed: hiring a single vendor to take on such a monolithic task. The idea could prove disastrous because one company rarely possesses all the skills necessary to complete every aspect of the rebuild, especially the cultural and contextual understanding to get locals what they need. It also represents a missed opportunity to use the rebuilding process to help the Puerto Rican economy. In the post-disaster rebuild, the federal government has a rare opportunity to do things differently, and to turn the recovery into an economic opportunity in itself, by bringing in a diverse group of Puerto Rican companies to do the work.

Evidence from recent natural disasters shows the risks of a highly centralized rebuilding model. After Hurricane Katrina, although FEMA said it wanted to prioritize small, local, and minority-owned businesses for contracts, [most of the money was awarded in giant chunks](#), some more than \$500 million, to massive companies like Halliburton and Bechtel. These megacontracts usually do not provide decent paying jobs to locals and instead [bring in cheap labor from outside the disaster zone](#), as happened after Katrina. They also often fail to provide

functioning public services, because they [lack the relevant experience needed](#). When the Katrina bills had to be paid, the few remaining public services still operating were gutted to fund the contracts. The firms who took home big paychecks were the same ones whose poor planning and lack of oversight led to stalled recovery times in the Gulf.

The dangers of issuing a big contract to a single vendor are already evident in Puerto Rico. Earlier this week, The Associated Press [reported](#) that an unproven, Florida-based company had been awarded \$30 million in contracts from FEMA to deliver tarps and critically needed supplies for repairs to damaged homes. But the contract was terminated after the awardee, Bronze Star LLC, failed to deliver any of the supplies to the island. This, as thousands of Puerto Ricans struggle to [find housing](#), clean water not from [hazardous waste sites](#), and [primary care centers](#) that still function.

The truth is that the challenge of rebuilding after a disaster is too great for the federal government—or a single company—to handle alone. Local knowledge has been shown to be critical for rebuilding efforts. What we've learned from other hurricane rebuild efforts is hard to miss—that local input isn't a "nice to have," but a "need to have." After Hurricane Sandy, the New Jersey recovery was [spearheaded by 30 local businesses](#) with federal contracts. Similarly, in post-Katrina New Orleans, repopulation picked up steam [when federal and local efforts came together](#) to share information about individual neighborhood blocks and collectively address the challenges to rebuilding them.

Some of the most effective efforts in Puerto Rico over the past two months have been led by Puerto Rican innovators and activists, such as Chef José Andrés, who has [served over 3 million free meals](#), and Lin Manuel Miranda, who has created a [\\$2.5 million hurricane relief fund](#) and has been [vocal about empowering the community](#) to help themselves. These local contributions have been leading the recovery fight and picking up the slack where the federal government and contractors have failed.

Of course, local collaborations can work with or without federal leadership—but here's an opportunity for FEMA to lead. Unfortunately, based on the FEMA notice released last week, the agency intends to go the opposite direction. The notice is just the first step toward signing a contract, asking the public for comments on its requirements and goals. But the initial proposal wouldn't require that the chosen vendor possess any expertise on the needs of the island, and it doesn't incorporate local input. With no incentive to solicit local knowledge or labor, a single-vendor contract could mean an army of mainland workers will [descend for the large payouts](#).

There's a better way for FEMA to award this federal money. After FEMA quietly issued its request for comment, a group of former Obama administration officials, including one of the authors of this op-ed, launched a new initiative to persuade FEMA to use its contract to empower 100 local businesses across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to serve their own communities. The [Rebuild Puerto Rico RFI initiative](#) asks the agency in awarding a contract to favor companies that: hire locally; engage with the community and communicate with local business, government, and non-governmental organizations; and work with the public participation to set quality standards and review overall performance. In addition, the initiative requests to make data on money spent and activities completed public, without which it can be difficult to align rebuild efforts from disparate sources, and add additional transparency measures.

Distributing millions of dollars through dozens of contracts with small local businesses would

require a more intense management strategy than FEMA has previously employed for disasters. But by breaking apart the immense task of rebuilding Puerto Rico into smaller, more manageable chunks, it will be significantly easier to tackle each individual piece and track the progress of the rebuild inch by inch. As small businesses report on their progress, FEMA will gain a more honest, on-the-ground view of the recovery from the members of the community themselves.

The fundamental question of this rebuild is surprisingly simple: Why not have a trucking and warehouse company in Rincón serve the people of Rincón? And, since [unemployment rises in the wake of disasters](#), why not give this money back to Puerto Ricans for a much-needed economic boost? Local businesses and NGOs can—and should—play a central role in the delivery of services and the rebuilding of their own community. It's the only way for Puerto Rico to truly recover.

Vivian Graubard is the director of strategy for Public Interest Technology at New America. She was a founding member of the United States Digital Service under President Barack Obama and served as a senior adviser to the United States Chief Technology Officer. Emma Coleman is a Millennial Public Policy Fellow for the Public Interest Technology initiative at New America.

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Date: Thursday, December 14, 2017 3:30:56 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/14/2017 03:28 PM EDT

COLLISION COURSE: It's official. On the brink of another fiscal cliff, House Republicans will vote next week on a spending combo platter that stands zero chance in the Senate.

House appropriators unveiled a stopgap funding bill ([H.J. Res. 124 \(115\)](#)) late Wednesday that would deliver a hefty boost to the Pentagon while keeping budgets for domestic programs in limbo, as Sarah [reported for Pros](#). That approach emerged victorious from the House GOP's closed-door meeting Wednesday afternoon, even as most members acknowledge the measure's ill fate across the Capitol.

Tossing the boomerang: All but four Senate Democrats already put their opposition in writing, more than enough to tank the bill. So the final version that lands on the House's doorstep after Senate tweaks next week will look mighty different than what the lower chamber's working with now. "The Senate will strip out the defense piece, predictably, and send it back to us," Rep. [Charlie Dent](#) (R-Pa.) told reporters.

WHAT'S IN:

- Full-year funding for the Pentagon, busting sequester-era caps
- A short-term extension of domestic spending, through Jan. 19
- Five years of money for CHIP, but with partisan [pay-fors](#)

WHAT'S NOT:

- Emergency aid for disaster-stricken states
- Renewal of controversial online surveillance powers, now [threatening](#) to trip up the whole bill
- A Medicare [telemedicine expansion](#)

Holding off, on purpose: Theoretically, GOP leaders could hold this vote as early as Monday or Tuesday, leaving plenty of time to avert last-minute "Cliffmas" drama. The text is out, and the whip team has been vote tallying today. But when we asked House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) this morning about timing, he replied: "I expect us to do tax before we do anything." With that once-in-a-generation overhaul on the line, GOP leaders aren't willing to take any unnecessary risks — like spurring backlash from striking a \$200 billion deal with Democrats on spending caps. "If you're mad over the ultimate CR or the ultimate numbers, then we don't want you retaliating by voting no on tax," Rep. [Tom Cole](#) (R-Okla.) told us. "People have a funny way of linking issues sometimes."

Reminder: This is Congress' third continuing resolution since fiscal 2018 began.

GOOD THURSDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@jascholtes) and sferris@politico.com (@sarahnferris).

Doc of the day — Lawmakers from Texas and Florida sent a [letter](#) this week urging appropriators to help farmers and ranchers in the next disaster relief package, saying any aid bill would be "insufficient" without that assistance. More from [Catherine Boudreau](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — A Republican-led Congress hasn't adopted a budget in an election year since 2000.

DISASTER AID

IMPATIENTLY WAITING: It's been exactly four weeks since the Trump administration sent lawmakers its third request for disaster aid. And still, no bill. Appropriators and lawmakers from hurricane-hit states continue to haggle now over the final details of a plan expected to exceed \$60 billion, far surpassing the White House's wish for \$44 billion. As Sarah [explains](#), Texans and Floridians on Capitol Hill are starting to worry the effort will get brushed aside amid the year-end push to fund the government and overhaul the tax code.

In his words: "I don't understand why it's not ready," Rep. [Tom Rooney](#) (R-Fla.) said today. "Hurricane Irma hit us Sept. 10 and 11."

At least a week: House GOP leaders warned Republican lawmakers on Wednesday that the aid package might not be done before both chambers gavel out for Christmas. And that timing could complicate passage of the stopgap spending bill Congress needs to clear before Dec. 22 to avert government shutdown. That is, if a bunch of lawmakers from ailing regions lock arms in opposing that broader funding bill without disaster aid attached.

BUDGET

WORKING ON WORK REQUIREMENTS: House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) made his clearest promise yet that the GOP would spend its precious budgetary powers next year on welfare reform. The ex-budget chairman said Congress will turn its attention to "very important entitlement reforms" during the fiscal 2019 reconciliation process, as Jen Haberkorn [reports](#). We still don't know which programs will be targeted, though Ryan criticized the government's current system for "actually trapping people in poverty, disincentivizing work."

Back to it: Ryan explained that the House actually had three reconciliation packages ready to go in 2017. The first two, of course, were health care and tax reform — and now the speaker says the House will "go back" to welfare reform.

INFRASTRUCTURE

SUPER MINORITY: Since President Donald Trump was first elected, Senate Democrats have suggested a bipartisan deal on infrastructure investment could be doable. But now that the details are firming up — and rollout's imminent — the minority party doesn't seem at all interested in what's on the table. As Lauren Gardner [reports](#), the White House is preparing to unveil its \$1 trillion plan soon after Trump signs the GOP tax overhaul. The administration's approach is already drawing resistance from Democrats, though, who have said they won't support a plan stuffed with budget cuts and environmental rule rollbacks. Who cares? Senate Republicans, who will soon need to woo nine of their colleagues from across the aisle to get

most things moving through the upper chamber.

TELECOM

FCC RESHUFFLES CASH: The FCC voted this morning to funnel more money into its broadband health program this year and to review that funding level down the road, David Pittman [reports](#). The Rural Health Care Program provides \$400 million each year for rural doctors, hospitals and nursing homes to adopt and pay for broadband internet. But the program has reached its cap the last two years as the use of telemedicine grew and nursing homes became eligible for the subsidies.

TAX

BAPTISM BY BYRD BATH: While a tax agreement has been reached, the text has yet to be released. And that means we have to wait for the Senate parliamentarian to do a final vetting of whether the plan is compliant with budget rules. It won't be a cold start, though. GOP negotiators say they've been sending proposals to the parliamentarian to head off any potential problems with the Byrd rule, as Bernie Becker [explains](#) in Morning Tax today.

More: [Rubio delivers ultimatum on child tax credit](#) | [SALT coalition speaks out](#) | [Pence delays trip to stay for possible tiebreaker](#) | [Grad students emerge unscathed](#) | [Health deductions survive](#) | [Trump plays salesman-in-chief](#) | [Fed expects bill to boost GDP](#) | [ANWR drilling remains](#) | ['Base erosion' problem resolved for renewables](#)

BORDER SECURITY

OMB'S EARLY GUIDANCE: Congress hasn't even funded the government for fiscal 2018 and we're already talking about fiscal 2019. Democratic staff on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee released two reports this week detailing OMB's initial wish list for DHS. As Ted Hesson [reports](#), those documents say the White House is again calling for \$1.6 billion for building a border wall, while seeking \$175 million less than the department has requested for technology and equipment. Stephanie Beasley [notes](#) that the reports claim OMB is instructing DHS to shave \$88 million from its fiscal 2019 request for Customs and Border Protection.

NO FORTUNE TELLER: Newly seated DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said this week that she wishes she "had a crystal ball" for pinpointing a start date for construction on a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, Ted [reports](#). "We hope soon," Nielsen said, calling the process of seizing land "complicated."

DEFENSE

NOT UP FOR DEBATE: House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) is loyally defending the "defense-only" spending plan House Republicans have crafted, arguing that lawmakers all agree that more money is needed to address the military's "readiness crisis," Connor O'Brien [reports](#). "To continue to use defense funding as a political football in the face of these undisputed consequences is irresponsible," the Texas Republican said today. "We know what needs to be done to begin to repair our military. Congress should approve these resources now."

CONGRESS

RYAN RUNS FOR THE EXITS: In talks with his closest confidants, Ryan has made it known that he plans to retire after the 2018 midterm elections. And amid speculation that the speaker's departure could come even sooner, his two most likely successors — Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) and Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) — have been strategizing ahead of the potential shakeup. Tim Alberta and Rachael Bade tell [the whole story](#).

POTUS' position: The White House says Trump told Ryan he would be "very unhappy" if the Wisconsin Republican retired after the 2018 elections, Nolan McCaskill [reports](#).

EARMARKS

- Navy Secretary Spencer: We have to learn to say no. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Congress again facing a looming VA care funding crisis. [Military Times](#).
- Every year, the government reports how many people died crossing the border. That number is completely wrong. [Arizona Republic](#).
- With no deal on children's health plan, U.S. states scramble for Plan B. [Reuters](#).
- States agree to Gateway funding, with a new fee for NJ Transit commuters. [POLITICO New Jersey](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: Eight days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 22, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/house-republicans-set-spending-ping-pong-in-motion-053031>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

House Republicans unveil 'defense-only' spending bill [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/13/2017 07:29 PM EDT

House GOP leaders are forging ahead with a controversial spending strategy that would jam the Senate with a politically untenable product before the Dec. 22 government funding cliff.

The House Appropriations Committee released [a bill](#) this evening that would fund the Pentagon for a full year while covering five weeks of domestic spending — legislation Senate Democrats have already panned.

Under the House GOP measure, H.J. Res. 124, domestic funding would run out again on Jan. 21.

The stopgap strategy was the focus of a closed-door House Republican conference meeting this afternoon. During the hour-long session, Republicans mostly agreed to go ahead with the bill, even as some members openly predicted it would be rejected in the Senate.

The vast majority of Senate Democrats have said they would oppose any spending bill that doesn't increase budgets for the Pentagon and all other domestic departments by equal

amounts.

GOP leaders, however, have so far rejected the Democratic demands for "parity," which has led to a weeks-long standstill on a deal for overall spending caps.

Congressional leaders must agree to raise spending levels in the next few weeks to avoid the triggering of automatic cuts to both domestic and defense programs. The House GOP's bill would permanently waive that automatic sequester, which was created under the 2011 Budget Control Act, but only for defense programs.

The bill would also extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years.

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House panel includes CHIP funding in spending bill — but with partisan pay-fors [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/13/2017 07:30 PM EDT

House appropriators tonight introduced a bill to fund the government through Jan. 19 that includes funding for the CHIP program and community health centers.

The [bill](#) includes the CHIP language approved by the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the full House to fund the children's health program for five years and the health centers for two.

Many Democrats rejected the CHIP stand-alone bill, [H.R. 3922 \(115\)](#), when it came up for a vote because it paid for CHIP with controversial cuts, such as to the ACA Prevention and Public Health Fund. Without changes, it stands little chance of getting through a filibuster by Senate Democrats.

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Contested surveillance renewal threatens spending bill [Back](#)

By Martin Matishak and Sarah Ferris | 12/13/2017 07:14 PM EDT

Controversial online surveillance programs that expire at the end of the year have suddenly become a political hot potato that is threatening to derail must-pass spending bills.

For weeks, lawmakers and observers expected a renewal bill for the powerful tools, which collect the digital chatter of foreign targets, would be attached to a spending bill Congress must pass before before a Dec. 22 deadline.

But several Republican lawmakers involved in the negotiations said on Wednesday that the

hotly contested surveillance legislation, which would reauthorize Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, is now threatening to blow up the whole process.

"If there's something that could provide a hiccup in the next two weeks, it's going to be 702 reauthorization," said Rep. [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.), the chairman of the libertarian House Freedom Caucus.

It is "extremely problematic," he added, to tie the debate over the 702 statute to a continuing resolution spending bill.

The topic was one of the "unresolved issues" discussed Wednesday during a meeting of the House Republican Conference, conceded Rep. [Tom Rooney](#) (R-Fla.), who chairs the House Intelligence Committee's NSA and Cybersecurity subpanel.

Shortly after the conference meeting, the House Appropriations Committee released text of a stopgap spending bill through January that did not address the 702 issue.

The issue highlights yet another faction within the Republican party.

Libertarian-leaning Republicans do not support renewing the 702 statute without significant civil liberties-focused changes, such as adding certain warrant requirements for officials wishing to read the contents of Americans' communications that are incidentally swept up via 702 spying programs. But the GOP's national security hawks believe such changes would hinder the government's ability to fight crime and terrorism.

The spying renewal bill ([H.R. 4478 \(115\)](#)) slated for attachment to the continuing resolution favors the hawks. But attaching it could cause the Republican's libertarian caucus to withhold their roughly three dozen votes from the broader spending measure, meaning House Republicans might not have enough support to pass the stopgap bill without Democratic assistance.

"If you throw FISA in there, I think it blows it up, at least in the current form," said Rep. [Scott Perry](#) (R-Pa.)

"I think most of our conference is for reauthorization, but there's enough of our conference that can bring it down," Rooney agreed.

But with just over two weeks before an end-of-the-year deadline, lawmakers are running out of time to re-up the 702 statute, which national security officials insist is vital to combating foreign spies, terrorist threats and cyber crooks.

One possible path being discussed is tacking the 702 bill onto a supplemental spending bill lawmakers are preparing to compensate for the unexpected costs of dealing with major hurricanes that hit Houston, Puerto Rico and southern Florida.

Democrats are more likely to join Republicans to move the disaster relief proposal.

But Rooney warned that such a strategy might also fail.

"I just don't want to bring down the whole [continuing resolution], the disaster supplemental, and everything else, just because I can tell you most of the people in there that were talking that objected to what we were trying to do were objecting because of FISA," Rooney said after

the House Republican Conference.

Yet another option is kicking the can down the road on 702 so it can be debated free of the end-of-year rush on spending legislation.

That move, Rooney said, would involve a simple, "clean" renewal, with no changes, putting off the final 702 decision for a few months.

"I think that that probably makes the most sense," Rooney said, calling it a "good escape valve for those of us that just want the rest of it done."

Indeed, the procedural tactics needed get a 702 bill through Congress aren't the only point of disagreement on the warrantless surveillance programs. After months of debate, lawmakers are still tussling over what revisions — if any — should be made to the online surveillance tools.

House Judiciary Committee leaders are still stumping for a reauthorization bill ([H.R. 3989 \(115\)](#)) they approved with bipartisan support last month. Committee Chairman [Bob Goodlatte](#) (R-Va.) even [grilled](#) Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein over the issue at a hearing Wednesday.

That measure would require FBI officials to obtain a warrant before reading the content of Americans' digital communications collected under 702. The warrant mandate would apply only to criminal investigations, however, not national security-related probes.

"It sounds like FISA really needs to be ... hashed out in the open with the full Congress," Rooney said. "I don't know if you can do that with something like FISA, but let people add amendments so that they can get to 'yes.'"

Rooney also pushed back against a [recent](#) report that intelligence community officials believe they have the authority to keep the snooping efforts operating until next April, despite the end-of-year sunset date.

While the programs could continue to operate, "no new intel can come in," he said. "You don't want to say we don't want to look at anybody new."

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Funding measure drops expected telemedicine expansion [Back](#)

By David Pittman | 12/13/2017 08:19 PM EDT

A [bill](#) that would fund the government through Jan. 19 does not include a measure that would make it easier for private Medicare plans to offer telemedicine as a standard benefit. The House Appropriations Committee released the bill's text tonight.

Industry advocates were hopeful to get some legislation expanding Medicare coverage of the technology in a year-end bill. But the only mention of telemedicine is a line that extends HHS

grant programs to community health centers.

The House Ways and Means Committee last month released a bipartisan agreement that included a bill, [H.R. 3727 \(115\)](#), that would allow Medicare Advantage plans to account for telemedicine in their annual bids from Medicare. Health plans must either cover the cost of the service with government rebates or require beneficiaries to pay higher premiums. The measure is projected to save Medicare \$80 million over a decade.

But the policy, along with the rest of the "Medicare extenders" package, was excluded from the release tonight. Health groups objected to the way the rest of the extenders package was paid for.

Tonight's bill would also extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years and community health center funding for two. Democrats have before rejected the way House Republicans want to pay for the CHIP funding, by cutting the Obamacare Prevention and Public Health Fund.

Under the House GOP measure, [H.J. Res. 124 \(113\)](#), domestic funding would run out again on Jan. 21.

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Texas, Florida lawmakers say next disaster-aid package must help farmers [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 12/14/2017 11:48 AM EDT

Florida and Texas lawmakers are urging appropriators to help farmers and ranchers in the next multibillion-dollar disaster-relief package, which Congress was expected to pass as part of a year-end government spending deal.

"A supplemental crafted to help our states recover from historic hurricane damage would be insufficient if it fails to address the needs of our farm and ranch families," the Florida and Texas delegations wrote in a [letter](#) Wednesday to House and Senate appropriations leaders. "Many farm and ranch families are trying to secure financing right now and should be planting within a month's time. For these families, waiting longer for help is not an option."

Specifically, the lawmakers are requesting that the disaster-relief package address backlogs in USDA recovery programs, including in the Emergency Conservation Program, as well as ease certain requirements under the Livestock Indemnity Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish program.

The lawmakers also requested "targeted" financial assistance for farmers, particularly those who grow commodities like vegetables that aren't widely covered by crop insurance.

A top USDA official [recently told](#) Congress that the department needs nearly \$1 billion in disaster-relief funding following this year's devastating hurricanes and wildfires.

But with little more than a week to go until the Dec. 22 deadline when government funding

expires, lawmakers [are still negotiating](#) details of the next round of disaster aid, stirring anxiety that the package could be punted another month.

The letter was signed by 54 members of Congress, all of whom represent Florida or Texas except for House Agriculture Committee members [David Scott](#) (D-Ga.), [Austin Scott](#) (R-Ga.) and Del. [Stacey Plaskett](#) (D-V.I.).

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Aid for disaster-stricken states could be punted into January [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/13/2017 04:41 PM EDT

Lawmakers from Texas and Florida are exceedingly anxious that hurricane recovery aid will be sidelined in next week's government funding scramble amid internal disputes over who should get how much cash.

Congress was widely expected to approve its next multibillion-dollar disaster request as part of the year-end spending bill. But with just days to go until the Dec. 22 deadline when government funding expires, lawmakers are still haggling over the fine points of the next round of disaster aid.

House GOP leaders are now preparing to take up a stopgap spending bill next week that [would not](#) include any money for hurricane relief, potentially causing problems for passage if members from affected states rebel.

In a closed-door meeting Wednesday afternoon, GOP leaders cautioned lawmakers that the disaster package may not be ready by next week, according to members who were in the room.

The biggest holdup is over how much money should be spent on rebuilding in the Lone Star state, according to lawmakers briefed on the talks. Appropriators are still sifting through a massive binder of requests, worth over \$61 billion, from Texans alone.

The delay is rattling lawmakers from both Texas and Florida. Rep. Tom Rooney, (R-Fla.), a vocal advocate for his state's ailing citrus industry, stood up during Wednesday's meeting, warning that a majority of Texas and Florida lawmakers would oppose a spending bill if they don't secure help for stricken states by Christmas.

Even the No. 2 Republican in the Senate now fears disaster assistance could be punted another month.

"We've been told time and time again by the speaker and the House leadership that the supplemental is going to be coming, but it never seems to come," Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) told reporters Tuesday. "The can always seems to be kicked down the road."

"Now I'm worried that it may end up moving us into January. So I'm very concerned," Cornyn added.

House GOP appropriators say they're closing in on a final agreement for the disaster package and hope to release the text by next week. Lawmakers involved in the negotiations are expecting the package to exceed \$60 billion, far more than the White House's \$44 billion request.

Still, those members say they've received no assurance that the package would be included in the Dec. 22 continuing resolution — the last must-pass bill Congress is slated to consider this month.

"It's a possibility, but no guarantees," Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla) told POLITICO after the meeting.

That could be problematic for House GOP leaders as they look to round up votes to avert a government shutdown when funding expires.

Several lawmakers from the storm-battered states, including Rooney and Curbelo, say they refuse to leave for Christmas without approving the money. They fear that a month-long delay would lessen the political urgency needed to pass a multi-billion-dollar package.

At least some of those members have vowed to take a hard line on the issue. A bipartisan coalition of more than 60 lawmakers from Texas and Florida said in early December that they would block any year-end spending bill that doesn't include disaster funding.

That includes Texas Republicans with powerful perches, like House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) and Homeland Security Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas).

Since then, Texas and Florida lawmakers have been meeting regularly and have largely agreed to vote as a bloc to increase their leverage on disaster aid.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) told POLITICO on Tuesday that she won't back a spending bill if it doesn't include "adequate" recovery dollars for Florida or Texas. "This is how our delegations feel about this," said Wasserman Schultz, whose district spans parts of Miami Beach, which was eroded by Hurricane Irma.

If they make good on their threat, those Texas and Florida lawmakers — representing two of Congress' largest state delegations — would have enough votes to tank the final spending bill.

With a government shutdown on the line, however, that's a big "if."

Rep. John Carter, who is both a Texan and chairman of the spending subcommittee that funds federal disaster assistance, said he won't threaten to oppose a funding bill before the final details are worked out, with or without disaster funding.

"I'm born and raised in Houston. I want disaster aid," Carter said. "I'm not going to say how I'll vote until I see what the plan is. We got to get the disaster aid right now, not six months from now. I'm not a one-issue voter. I vote for the big picture."

Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas), who also has not drawn an ultimatum on the disaster aid, said he has repeatedly voiced his demands for funding to House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

"I've indicated to anybody who will listen that we need to get that supplemental done before

we leave for Christmas," Conaway told POLITICO, adding that McCarthy and Speaker Paul Ryan "understand how important I think it is."

If the package isn't included on the next spending bill, Conaway said GOP leaders could simply put the disaster measure on the floor for a standalone vote — as long as it's done before Dec. 22.

Another appropriator, Calvert, also said that scenario is possible. And some Republicans even speculated Wednesday that a supplemental package could be attached to a controversial bill to reauthorize online surveillance powers, which would also require Democratic votes.

Under the House GOP's plan, the next spending deadline would be Jan. 21 — about 20 weeks after Hurricane Harvey wrecked hundreds of thousands of homes in Houston.

Texans, in particular, fear this package will be their last shot at securing aid for Hurricane Harvey victims. The White House has said more money is coming for Puerto Rico but has not promised to revisit funding needs in Texas.

At this point, many of the unmet demands come down to "a guarantee" about where money will be spent, according to Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas), a leadership ally.

Faced with a barrage of funding requests from cash-strapped local officials, Sessions said GOP leaders have asked every state to narrow down its top priorities and "to understand what it's going to get."

Among the lawmakers lobbying for more funding: dozens of California lawmakers who have seen deadly wildfires burn large swaths of their state.

That includes senior members like McCarthy and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. A group of California members, led by McCarthy, met with Vice President Mike Pence on Tuesday to discuss the federal response to the wildfires.

Votes for next week's spending bill may also be scarce among the many New York Democrats with close ties to Puerto Rico. Members like Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) have taken a hard line demanding Puerto Rico funding.

The White House formally [asked](#) Congress for a \$44 billion disaster package on Nov. 17, but members quickly panned that request, which they called paltry, and appropriators began writing their own version. The final bill is expected to far exceed the White House's request, in Congress' latest rebuke of the White House's budget office.

Congress has already approved \$52 billion for this year's unexpectedly catastrophic storm season — a small fraction of what local officials say is needed to rebuild. Puerto Rico alone requested \$96 billion. Texas and Florida asked for \$61 billion and \$27 billion, respectively.

The next funding package will be largely focused on Texas and Florida, where residents began rebuilding before Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in late September.

Still, aides acknowledge there could be additional pressure to make more funding available for Puerto Rico after a blistering [New York Times investigation](#) found that as many as 1,000 people may have died from Hurricane Maria. The official death toll is 64 people.

Jennifer Scholtes, Seung Min Kim and John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Ryan commits to entitlement reform in reconciliation [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/14/2017 12:07 PM EDT

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) said today that the next reconciliation bill Congress takes up will go "back to very important entitlement reforms" and pledged to also return to Obamacare in 2018.

"Obamacare is collapsing and failing," Ryan said at a press conference in the Capitol. "We won't be able to ignore that problem, so we're going to have to revisit the problem of a health care marketplace that is collapsing."

He did not explicitly say the health care law would be addressed through reconciliation and provided no other details.

But Ryan committed to pursuing entitlement reform in an election year through the fast-track legislative process that doesn't allow for a filibuster in the Senate.

Next year will be "the year where we work on people," he said, adding there are not enough members of the workforce to make up for the aging Baby Boomer population.

"One of the important entitlement reforms we see that is necessary is get us out of this poverty trap where we're actually trapping people in poverty, dis-incentivizing work," Ryan said.

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Senate Democrats flip the script on infrastructure plan [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 01/24/2017 03:08 PM EDT

Senate Democrats are already jockeying for the upper hand in the debate over infrastructure investment, getting out ahead of President Donald Trump's anticipated proposal with their own Tuesday rollout.

Just two work days into the new administration, Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) and several of his Democratic counterparts [laid out](#) what they call "[A Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure and Create 15 Million Jobs](#)," with a \$1 trillion top line that mimics the investment Trump has promised.

But instead of waiting for Trump to detail his plan, Senate Democrats have stepped into the vacuum with their own proposal — a calculated political move that will help them command

credit for a bold proposal, which they can also use to hammer their GOP colleagues for any opposition or delays.

"There have been some bills to do this long before Donald Trump was campaigning for the presidency. ... We've been stymied by our Republican colleagues," Schumer told reporters Tuesday afternoon, in a preview of what's sure to be messaging points to come. "We're challenging him to join us, even if his Republican colleagues in the House and Senate aren't for it."

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) has said he supports the idea of additional infrastructure investment. But he, along with other Republicans, have cautioned against [reliving](#) the perceived failures of the 2009 economic stimulus.

House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) [said](#) on Tuesday that "we will have to carve out the fiscal space necessary for the infrastructure package" as part of the budget — and until that happens, a top-line figure simply won't exist.

But Schumer accused both leaders of being disinterested in any kind of infrastructure investment.

"Let's see his plan," Schumer said about Ryan. "Sounds to me like he doesn't [have one]. Sounds to me like he has a million caveats."

Schumer had a similar assessment of McConnell's stance.

"McConnell's position hasn't changed," Schumer said. "He has been in the past — and nothing has changed — very negative."

Schumer said he has talked to Trump about collaborating on an infrastructure package and said he warned him that lawmakers in the president's own party will be resistant to that effort.

"He seems open to a bill that's this large," Schumer said about Trump. "And I told him, repeatedly, 'If you want to do a bill like this, you're going to have to tell a lot of your Republicans, particularly on the right wing, that they're not going to get their way.' And he acknowledged that. So we'll see what happens."

Later Tuesday, McConnell responded to the Democrats' plan by saying "I don't think we ought to borrow almost a trillion dollars and plus up a bunch of federal accounts, accumulate a lot of debt, and don't build any projects to speak of." And he said he looked forward to Trump's team putting together a proposal that's "paid for" and won't include racking up a "trillion-dollar debt."

Missing from the Democrats' plan is how they propose to pay for it — a crucial component that Rep. [John Delaney](#) (D-Md.), who has his own plan, was quick to point out in a [press release](#).

Schumer acknowledged that some Democrats favor using funds generated by closing tax loopholes and repatriating money from corporate overseas earnings. But he argued that repatriation cash is "not going to be close to enough to fund what we need, even if it were included."

"As for how we pay for it, we will discuss that with [President] Trump. But many of us

believe that it should just be used to create jobs, not to take money away," Schumer said. "We don't believe we should cut middle-class or other programs."

Trump has suggested his plan will be deficit neutral. And what little details have been released so far seem to mostly focus on incentivizing private sector capital, including through tax breaks to those willing to bankroll infrastructure projects.

Schumer said that approach won't fly with congressional Democrats.

"We think the tax incentives and private-public partnerships hardly build anything that's really needed. They would go to places that could be built right now with municipal bonds and other things," Schumer said. "You have to pay for tax incentives, too — giving people big tax breaks. So it's not a pay-for, it's a method of financing. We don't like that method of financing."

With the blueprint they debuted on Tuesday, Senate Democrats are calling for "wide-sweeping" infrastructure investment and claim their proposed investments would create more than 15 million new jobs over the next decade.

Under their plan, the largest sum of money — \$210 billion— would go to repairing roads and bridges, an investment the Democratic lawmakers claim would save the average American family more than \$1,700 a year. The plan also states that an infrastructure package also should ensure the "long-term solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund," including transit, and pledges a \$10 billion TIGER grant program.

Their plan proposes \$200 billion for a so-called "Vital Infrastructure Projects" program they say would "direct major federal investments to the most critical national projects;" \$180 billion to replace and expand rail and bus systems, including Amtrak and Positive Train Control; and \$110 billion for a grant-focused water and sewer program.

It also would kick \$100 billion to energy infrastructure; \$75 billion to rebuild schools; and \$70 billion for ports, airports and waterways, including a "major increase in appropriations" for the FAA's facilities and equipment budget, the Airport Improvement Program, and for accelerating NextGen.

Sums of \$20 billion would go to both expanding broadband access and infrastructure projects on public lands and Indian reservations. And the plan calls for an infrastructure bank capitalized with \$10 billion.

The Democratic proposal would include "Buy America" provisions, Davis Bacon prevailing wage requirements, language intended to increase the involvement of minority and women-owned businesses, and environmental mandates.

Other Democrats who joined Schumer in unveiling the proposal include Sens. [Tom Carper](#), [Sherrod Brown](#), [Bernie Sanders](#), [Bill Nelson](#), [Maria Cantwell](#), [Ron Wyden](#) and [Patrick Leahy](#).

Tanya Snyder contributed to this report.

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FCC expands rural health broadband program [Back](#)

By David Pittman | 12/14/2017 12:02 PM EDT

The FCC will shuffle additional funds into its rural health broadband subsidy program this year and review the program's funding levels for future years, the commission voted this morning.

The Rural Health Care Program provides \$400 million annually for rural doctors, hospitals and nursing homes to adopt and pay for broadband internet. But the program has reached its cap the last two years as the use of telemedicine grew and nursing homes became eligible for the subsidies.

Recognizing complaints about the program, the FCC voted to redistribute unused money from 2015 and earlier to ensure all eligible applicants in 2017 receive money. The commissioner will also seek public comment on how to make the program more efficient in future years.

"Every dollar in this program needs to be stretched as far as possible to help those in need in places like southeast Kansas," FCC Chair Ajit Pai said today.

GOP Commissioner Michael O'Rielly opposed the motion, saying FCC should require reduced spending in other areas of its Universal Serving Fund, the \$11 billion pot of money for uses like education and health care.

Brendan Carr, another Republican commissioner, also voiced concern about the longterm trajectory of the program but supported today's order to provide relief for rural health care providers.

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Rubio a 'no' on tax reform unless child tax credit expanded [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm and Brian Faler | 12/14/2017 02:33 PM EDT

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) will withhold his vote from the final Republican tax plan unless it includes an expanded child tax credit, he said Thursday.

"I can't in good conscience support it unless we are able to increase the refundable portion of it, and there's way to do it, and we'll be very reasonable," Rubio told reporters.

Refundability allows people to get a tax refund even if the amount of the credit exceeds what they owe in taxes.

He said he's received no assurances his concerns will be addressed, though he said President Donald Trump alluded to them Wednesday in a speech.

Asked of the likelihood of Republican leaders making changes to address his concerns, Rubio said, "We're about to find out."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "We're going to continue working with the senator."

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SALT coalition blasts deal in tax reform agreement [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/14/2017 01:03 PM EDT

Taxes will rise for homeowners in many states and their property values will go down thanks to congressional Republicans' tax deal, the advocacy group Americans Against Double Taxation predicted today.

The coalition of state and local government and education groups is urging lawmakers to vote against the final agreement on the House and Senate tax legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), because it doesn't preserve the full federal deduction for all state and local taxes.

The package poised for passage in Congress next week will limit taxpayers' deductions to their property taxes plus either their income or sales taxes, up to \$10,000. That will hurt real estate and threaten funding for infrastructure and public services, Americans Against Double Taxation said in a statement.

"The 11th hour deal by conferees to impose this \$10,000 limit on a combination of state and local taxes that could be deducted does virtually nothing to alleviate the severe cost imposed on middle-class families caused by the partial elimination of SALT," the statement said.

Twelve of the 13 GOP lawmakers who voted against initial House passage of the tax bill came from three high-tax states — New York, New Jersey and California — when the legislation only allowed property tax deductions up to \$10,000. The option to let taxpayers deduct up to \$10,000 of state and local income taxes is meant to ensure few if any other California Republicans vote against the final bill next week.

"It should take care of a lot of those concerns," Rep. [Doug LaMalfa](#) (R-Calif.), who voted for the bill, told POLITICO today.

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans plan to release the details of the agreement by the end of this week.

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Pence delays Israel trip to stay for possible Senate tiebreaker [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Seung Min Kim | 12/14/2017 11:05 AM EDT

Vice President Mike Pence is delaying a planned trip to the Middle East in order to stay in town for the Senate vote on major tax cut legislation planned for early next week, his office announced on Thursday.

"Yesterday the White House informed Senate Leadership that due to the historic nature of the vote in the Senate on tax cuts for millions of Americans, the VP would stay to preside over the vote," said Pence spokeswoman Alyssa Farah.

While the vice president's office framed the change of plans as a desire to be present for a vote they described as "historic," there is a more pressing reason for the last-minute rescheduling: Pence could be needed to break a tie in the Senate to get the legislation through at all.

The initial tax bill barely squeaked through the senate, getting approved 51-49, with all Democrats and Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) voting against it.

Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Thad Cochran of Mississippi, both of whom supported the Senate version of the tax measure, have missed votes all this week due to medical reasons.

Cochran, whom a spokesman said is recovering from a procedure to deal with a non-melanoma lesion on his nose, can return to the Senate for votes "as needed," according to his office. McCain is at Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment related to his brain cancer, which he was diagnosed with earlier this year. His office hasn't said when he would return to the Capitol.

If both McCain and Cochran are absent and no senator switches his or her vote, then Pence would have to break a 49-49 tie.

Adding to the uncertainty, some Republicans, including Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, have yet to take a position on the House-Senate compromise, which is slated to be unveiled on Friday.

"We are so close to passing pro-growth pro-jobs tax reform for hard-working families," Pence's office said in a statement Thursday.

The vice president will then travel to Egypt and Israel where he'll reaffirm the United States' commitment to its allies in the Middle East and to working cooperatively to defeat radicalism."

The delay comes as the trip is already shrouded in controversy, coming on the heels of President Donald Trump's decision to formally recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, a move that upends decades of U.S. policy related to the Middle East peace process.

Some major Arab leaders, including Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and leaders of the Egypt Coptic Church, have backed out of meetings with Pence. And Pence's planned speech to Israel's legislature, the Knesset, is being boycotted by a group of Arab-Israeli members.

Pence is also slated to travel to Egypt, where he will meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

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Republicans drop plan to tax graduate student tuition waivers [Back](#)

By Michael Stratford | 12/13/2017 07:31 PM EDT

Republicans have abandoned plans to increase taxes on graduate students as part of their sweeping tax overhaul, under the [deal reached today](#) between House and Senate negotiators.

The conference committee has agreed to drop from the final tax bill a provision that would have taxed as income the tuition waivers that graduate students receive in exchange for working as teaching or research assistants, according to a GOP aide.

The provision, which was part of the House-passed GOP tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), immediately provoked a backlash from colleges and universities, which argued that the tax increase would devastate graduate education.

Students and higher education groups lobbied heavily against the proposal in recent weeks.

The Senate bill never included the graduate student tax, and even some House Republicans began backing away from it in recent weeks. A group of 31 House Republicans, led by Rep. [Pete Sessions](#) (R-Texas), last week asked congressional leaders to drop the provision from the final tax bill.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Health deductions survive in tax bill [Back](#)

By POLITICO Pro Staff | 12/13/2017 08:45 PM EDT

The tax deal in Congress preserves the deductions for medical bills, which the House wanted to scrap but the Senate pushed to keep.

Sources familiar with the agreement said it reflects the approach from Sen. [Susan Collins](#) — it preserves the deduction for expenses above 10 percent of adjusted gross income but lowers it to 7.5 percent for two years.

Most Americans don't take that deduction — but for those who do, such as families caring for someone with a disability or paying for long-term care, it helps with the large, ongoing expenses.

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With tax victory in reach, Trump plays salesman-in-chief [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 12/13/2017 06:11 PM EDT

President Donald Trump got to play his favorite White House role Wednesday: salesman-in-chief.

As the White House tries to fend off criticism that the Republican tax bill overwhelmingly benefits wealthy individuals and businesses, the president invited five American families into the West Wing to highlight the way the legislation would help them.

Many of the families, with children in tow, personally thanked the president for their tax savings.

Trump, fresh from a shock Republican defeat in Alabama, glowed.

In his freewheeling, upbeat, roughly 20-minute speech, he promised to give "the American people a giant tax cut for Christmas. And when I say giant, I mean giant," he said with his trademark hyperbole.

As he spoke, negotiators across town were finalizing a deal, finally putting a major legislative victory within reach for Trump.

In recent days, with the bill nearing completion, the president has been inserting himself directly into the tax negotiations - as equal parts dealmaker, cheerleader, and troublemaker - even as Congress determined the policy specifics largely on its own, according to interviews with congressional aides, senior administration officials, and sources close to the administration.

Trump has personally reached out to congressional leaders by phone several times a week to check in on the status of the negotiations, or simply for an update, according to congressional aides and sources close to the White House.

He speaks to House Speaker Paul Ryan as often as three to four times a day and spoke to House Ways & Means Chairman Kevin Brady every other day this week.

On Monday, as soon as Ryan returned to Washington, Trump interrupted one of the speaker's staff meetings with a cell phone call, according to one congressional aide - so eager was Trump to hear about the latest machinations on the tax bill.

Trump's involvement hasn't always been helpful. He upended part of the tax negotiations last week by suggesting off-the-cuff, less than 24 hours after the Senate narrowly passed its tax bill, that the corporate tax rate could rise to 22 percent after months of insisting it land, first at 15, and then 20 percent. The comment caught some top White House aides off guard, said one person close to the administration.

The tentative tax deal agreed to Wednesday cuts the corporate rate to 21 percent and temporarily slashes individual tax rates across the board, bringing the top individual rate down

to 37 percent, while dramatically re-shaping the international tax landscape for businesses to a degree that tax experts and top lobbyists are still trying to comprehend.

To detractors of the bill who argue it primarily helps the rich and companies, Trump said on Wednesday that those "cynical voices" had no idea because they had not yet seen the final bill.

The president's speech, first planned late last week, was a way for him to seize the role of salesman - even as he put the onus for the passing the bill squarely on his Republican Hill counterparts.

Trump promised in his speech that families of four earning \$75,000 would see their tax bills slashed in half and that the bill would expand the child tax credit to a greater degree than anticipated. He also said it would cut tax rates on businesses, a move he called "expected." And he added that the IRS would be in position to ensure that Americans will see tax cuts show up in their paychecks as of February.

"As a country we're being respected again," the president said. "I'm here today to tell you that we will never let bad things happen, with respect to the economy of our country."

The White House sought to use Trump's speech as a way for the president to make his "closing argument on tax reform," according to senior administration officials. The House and Senate are trying to pass the tax legislation early next week.

Lately, the White House has been signaling that a victory on a tax overhaul will be folded into a broader message heading into 2018 about the way Trump's presidency has boosted the economy - even if independent economists give part of that credit to foundations laid by former President Obama.

"We are nearing a historic moment to decide the economic future of our nation, and we have it in our power to reject the cynicism to say two percent growth is the new normal," said one senior administration official about the tax bill. "It's important for the president to put it in the context of the larger vision."

And in Trump's telling on Wednesday, the tax bill took on a larger-than-life role becoming a panacea for many of America's trouble by breaking down what he called government barriers, helping to unleash innovation, and restoring the hope of the middle class, Trump said, adding: "Millions of middle-class families will win under our plan."

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Yellen: Fed expects tax bill to boost GDP [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 12/13/2017 04:05 PM EDT

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen today said the tax package going through Congress is one of the factors that led Fed officials to increase their projections for GDP growth next year to 2.5 percent from 2.1 percent.

"The type of tax changes that are likely to be enacted ... are one of the reasons for the uptick in estimated growth and decline in unemployment rate," Yellen said in her final press conference as head of the central bank.

But she noted that Fed officials had been incorporating some potential fiscal stimulus into their projections all year, "so changes since September should not be viewed as an estimate of the impact of the tax package."

Yellen did not say whether the bill might lead the central bank to raise rates more quickly, though she noted that Fed officials did not really change their projections for the future path of the Fed's main borrowing rate.

Still, she repeatedly emphasized the uncertainty around what the ultimate effects of the legislation would be.

The outgoing Fed chief said the bill would seem to stimulate spending but also has "some potential" to boost productivity. For example, increased investment as a result of the corporate tax cut and immediate expensing could boost capital formation. "Exactly how large those effects might be remain uncertain," she added.

WHAT'S NEXT: Yellen's term as chair ends at the beginning of February.

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McConnell: ANWR drilling included in final tax bill [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/13/2017 03:23 PM EDT

Language opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will be included Republican compromise tax package, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said in prepared remarks today.

"Our legislation will also provide for our nation's energy future," McConnell said. "By further developing Alaska's oil and gas potential, this bill will help create jobs, support energy independence and promote our national security."

The provision's inclusion is not surprising given the presence of two powerful Alaskans, Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and former House Natural Resources Chairman [Don Young](#), on the conference committee.

Current House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) confirmed opening the ANWR area to oil and gas drilling would included in Title II of the legislation. "I'm very proud of that particular section and I appreciate all those who worked so hard on that," he said at the tax conference open meeting.

Democrats remained staunchly against the move, arguing it posed a threat to the wildlife refuge and would not generate the revenues that have been forecast.

"This should be taken out," Rep. [Raúl Grijalva](#) said. "It's wildly optimistic that because of what's going to happen in the Arctic refuge that somehow that is going to offset part of the huge deficit that's being created by this legislation. We don't need the oil."

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans have apparently reached an agreement on the bill but final text has not yet been released.

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Tax bill will resolve 'base erosion' problem for renewables [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff and Anthony Adragna | 12/14/2017 01:57 PM EDT

Congressional conferees have resolved a tax issue that put financing for renewable projects in jeopardy, two Republicans on the conference committee said today.

Under [measures in the tax proposal](#) aimed at keeping companies from sending their profits to lower tax countries, the Senate tax bill had created disincentives for financial institutions to fund renewable projects through the tax equity markets developers use to raise capital. Clean energy proponents said the base erosion and anti-abuse tax provision would have eroded the value of incentives like the production and investment tax credits in those markets.

But now tax writers seem to have found a way around the problem, though details remained scarce and the situation is fluid. Republicans are aiming to release the conference report on the tax bill by Friday and hope to have it to President Donald Trump's desk before the end of next week.

"Well, that's where we kind of try to find a middle ground to land on, and I think we've sort of — it'll be a combination of things. It's not entirely one provision," Sen. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) said.

Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) said Thune was taking the lead on fixing the BEAT issue, and she agreed it had been addressed. Both senators are on the conference committee.

The fix may entail allowing financiers to take the full value of the research and development tax credit until 2025, and 80 percent of other credits, like the ITC and PTC, according to Keith Martin, an attorney who is co-head of U.S. projects for Norton Rose Fulbright. Martin said he hadn't seen actual text of the legislation, so he wasn't sure if that's what would end up in the final bill.

WHAT'S NEXT: Bill text is expected Friday.

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Report: White House pushed for border wall funding in DHS proposal [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 12/13/2017 05:18 PM EDT

The White House budget office pushed for more border wall funding in a Homeland Security Department spending proposal, according to a pair of reports released today by Democratic staff in the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

The reports, on border security [priorities](#) and [personnel](#), summarize a budget document that outlines President Donald Trump's priorities in a fiscal year 2019 spending bill.

The White House called for a total of \$1.6 billion "to continue construction of the border wall in the Rio Grande Valley Sector," according to the report on border priorities.

The proposal amounts to \$700 million more than requested by DHS — a 78 percent increase, the report reads.

At the same time, OMB sought to shrink the DHS funding request for technology and equipment by roughly \$175 million, according to the report.

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs ranking member [Claire McCaskill](#) (D-Mo.) asked her staff to analyze the OMB document, which her office said was provided by a whistleblower.

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White House advising DHS to cut Customs funding in fiscal 2019 request [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 12/13/2017 06:25 PM EDT

The White House budget office has advised DHS to cut funding for the office overseeing Customs agents, according to a document obtained by Democrats on the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

A minority staff report outlining a document the committee received from a whistleblower shows the White House instructed DHS to shave \$88 million from its fiscal 2019 budget request for the Customs and Border Protection field operations office that oversees both Customs and Border Security agents.

The budget office further advised the department to add more border security officers but was mum on Customs hires for ports of entry, suggesting the White House has no plans to fill Customs vacancies, per the [report](#).

"The lack of funding for additional CBP officers is especially troubling given the fact that staffing is currently too low by over 3,600 positions based on its internal workload staffing model," the report reads.

As POLITICO previously [reported](#), groups like the American Association of Port Authorities

have warned that there could be dire consequences to diverting resources away from Customs to the border, including a possible slow down in commerce and widening maritime security gaps.

Minority committee staff released a separate [report](#) on the White House's recommendation for border security priorities.

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Nielsen on border wall timeline: 'I wish I had a crystal ball' [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 12/13/2017 05:17 PM EDT

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said today that she couldn't pinpoint when construction could begin on a wall across the U.S.-Mexico border.

"I wish I had a crystal ball and could answer that," she said. "We hope soon."

The secretary spoke about the wall during a [press conference](#) in front of a stretch of border fence in Hidalgo, Texas.

She said the department would evaluate security needs and then "take the solicitation further."

U.S. Customs and Border Protection continues to test wall prototypes that it completed in October, but Democrats in Congress oppose funding for a broader structure.

Nielsen also addressed the possibility that the federal government would need to seize private lands to build a wall.

She called the process "complicated," but said the department would seek to partner with landowners, as well as local and state authorities.

"The wall is all user- and requirement-driven," she said. "So where we need a wall, we'll have a wall."

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Thornberry: The need for more defense spending is 'settled' [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/14/2017 01:49 PM EDT

House Armed Services Chairman [Mac Thornberry](#) today staunchly defended the Republican effort to attach a full-year defense spending bill to a new stopgap government funding measure, arguing the need for an immediate boost for the Pentagon has been "settled."

On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee unveiled a new spending measure that would fund the Pentagon for the full fiscal year while only funding domestic programs through Jan. 19.

But the legislation is likely dead in its current form in the Senate, where spending legislation requires the support of Democrats to reach the 60-vote threshold to avert a filibuster.

"No one is arguing that we are appropriating too much money for the military, or that the needs of our men and women in uniform aren't urgent, or that we aren't running out of time to turn the readiness crisis around in the face of serious threats," the Texas Republican said in a statement. "Those issues are settled."

Defense spending is too important to hold up until a government-wide funding deal is struck, he said, citing readiness gaps and growing threats abroad.

"To continue to use defense funding as a political football in the face of these undisputed consequences is irresponsible," Thornberry said. "We know what needs to be done to begin to repair our military. Congress should approve these resources now."

The House GOP bill also would suspend across-the-board spending due in January if spending exceeds budget caps set for defense and domestic agencies. Congressional leaders are also discussing a potential deal to increase those caps.

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Paul Ryan Sees His Wild Washington Journey Coming to An End [Back](#)

By Tim Alberta and Rachael Bade | 12/14/2017 12:26 PM EDT

Spirits were high inside the House chamber on Thursday, November 16, when, in the early afternoon, the gavel fell and a measure to rewrite the American tax code passed on a partisan tally of 227 to 205. As the deciding votes were cast—recorded in green on the black digital scoreboard suspended above the floor—the speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, threw his head back and slammed his hands together. Soon he was engulfed in a sea of dark suits, every Republican lawmaker wanting to slap him on the shoulder and be a part of his moment.

Ryan was the man of the hour. Having spent a quarter-century in Washington—as an intern, waiter, junior think-tanker, Hill staffer and, since 1999, as a member of Congress—he had never wavered in his obsession with fixing what he viewed as the nation's two fundamental weaknesses: its Byzantine tax system and ballooning entitlement state. Now, with House Republicans celebrating the once-in-a-generation achievement of a tax overhaul, Ryan was feeling both jubilant and relieved—and a little bit greedy. Reveling in the afterglow, Ryan remarked to several colleagues how this day had proven they could accomplish difficult things—and that next year, they should set their sights on an even tougher challenge: entitlement reform. The speaker has since gone public with this aspiration, suggesting that 2018 should be the year Washington finally tackles what he sees as the systemic problems with Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Tinkering with the social safety net is a bold undertaking, particularly in an election year. But Ryan has good reason for throwing caution to the wind: His time in Congress is running short.

Despite several landmark legislative wins this year, and a better-than-expected relationship with President Donald Trump, Ryan has made it known to some of his closest confidants that this will be his final term as speaker. He consults a small crew of family, friends and staff for career advice, and is always cautious not to telegraph his political maneuvers. But the expectation of his impending departure has escaped the hushed confines of Ryan's inner circle and permeated the upper-most echelons of the GOP. In recent interviews with three dozen people who know the speaker—fellow lawmakers, congressional and administration aides, conservative intellectuals and Republican lobbyists—not a single person believed Ryan will stay in Congress past 2018.

Ryan was tiring of D.C. even before reluctantly accepting the speakership. He told his predecessor, John Boehner, that it would be his last job in politics—and that it wasn't a long-term proposition. In the months following Trump's victory, he began contemplating the scenarios of his departure. More recently, over closely held conversations with his kitchen cabinet, Ryan's preference has become clear: He would like to serve through Election Day 2018 and retire ahead of the next Congress. This would give Ryan a final legislative year to chase his second white whale, entitlement reform, while using his unrivaled fundraising prowess to help protect the House majority—all with the benefit of averting an ugly internecine power struggle during election season. Ryan has never loved the job; he oozes aggravation when discussing intraparty debates over "micro-tactics," and friends say he feels like he's running a daycare center. On a personal level, going home at the end of next year would allow Ryan, who turns 48 next month, to keep promises to family; his three children are in or entering their teenage years, and Ryan, whose father died at 55, wants desperately to live at home with them full time before they begin flying the nest. The best part of this scenario, people close to the speaker emphasize: He wouldn't have to share the ballot with Trump again in 2020.

And yet speculation is building that, Ryan, even fresh off his tax-reform triumph, might not be able to leave on his own terms. He now faces a massive pileup of cannot-fail bills in January and February. It's an outrageous legislative lift: Congress must, in the coming weeks, fund the government, raise the debt ceiling, modify spending caps, address the continuation of health care subsidies, shell out additional funds for disaster relief and deal with the millions of undocumented young immigrants whose protected status has been thrown into limbo. It represents the most menacing stretch of Ryan's speakership—one that will almost certainly require him to break promises made to his conference and give significant concessions to Democrats in exchange for their votes. To meet key deadlines, he'll have to approve sizable spending increases and legal status for minors who came to the U.S. illegally—two things that could raise the ire of the GOP base and embolden his conservative rivals on Capitol Hill. There is no great outcome available, Ryan has conceded to some trusted associates—only survival. "Win the day. Win the next day. And then win the week," Ryan has been preaching to his leadership team.

The speaker can't afford to admit he's a lame duck—his fundraising capacity and deal-making leverage would be vastly diminished, making the House all the more difficult to govern. When asked at the end of a Thursday morning press conference if he was leaving soon, Ryan shot a quick "no" over his shoulder as he walked out of the room.

Ryan is backed by the vast majority of the GOP Conference, but even a small group of

dissenters can make the speaker's life miserable—and he knows it. When Ryan succeeded Boehner in the fall of 2015, the new speaker sought to eliminate—or at least weaken—the parliamentary tactic that had been used against his predecessor. By filing a "motion to vacate the chair," Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina had found a way to force a vote on the speakership at any time—a potential humiliation that Boehner avoided by retiring. Ryan, working with Boehner's team during the transition, was unsuccessful in banning this practice. But he made it clear to Boehner at the time, and to his own allies upon assuming the speakership, that he would not serve at the whims of Meadows and the House Freedom Caucus, a group of some 35 conservative hard-liners. In an interview this fall with POLITICO Magazine, Ryan said the motion to vacate doesn't loom large as a constant threat to his job security. "No, because it's not a job I ever wanted in the first place," Ryan said. "If I was dying to be speaker, I guess it probably would be a dagger over my head. But I don't think like that."

Members of the Freedom Caucus don't necessarily believe this rhetoric from Ryan, but they respect the strategic advantage it gives him. After all, when Boehner left town, Ryan was the only consensus replacement—and even then, members had to beg him to assume the most powerful office on Capitol Hill. Given that history, any conservative who attempts to overthrow Ryan would make the Freedom Caucus—and its two leaders, Meadows and Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan—look like nihilists who collect speakers' scalps for sport. This is especially true without any obvious, universally acceptable successor waiting in the wings. "There are no more golden boys left," Meadows said in an interview, discussing the possibility of Ryan's departure.

Ryan's problems are not limited to the Freedom Caucus; there is, without question, wider discontent in the conference than the speaker appreciates, with legislators across the ideological and experiential spectrums grumbling about a hypercentralized process that gives them a vote on the floor but little else. That said, it requires a special brand of gumption to go after the speaker's gavel—and the usual suspects can be found in and on the periphery of the Freedom Caucus. These members, who have been eerily quiet for much of 2017, have begun making noise about a mutiny. The expectation of a major betrayal on Ryan's part—either on spending levels, immigration or a combination of the two—has prompted incessant chatter in recent weeks of someone filing a motion to vacate the chair, perhaps as soon as next month. This could be gamesmanship, a bluff to make Ryan feel pressured to step aside. But with a sudden, pervasive sense that Ryan might be ready to leave anyway, a motion to vacate would make sense as a test of his desire to stay on the job.

Either way, the convergence of these realizations—Ryan wanting to retire after 2018, and a possible threat to his speakership even sooner—has sparked a flurry of activity in the offices of Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Majority Whip Steve Scalise, the two most likely successors to Ryan. Both believed Ryan would leave late next year and were therefore planning their next steps at an appropriately deliberate pace. This has abruptly changed: According to multiple GOP sources, both McCarthy and Scalise have taken recent meetings with members loyal to them who have been eager to strategize about life after Ryan. There is little chance Scalise runs against McCarthy, but the whip—knowing McCarthy lacked the votes to become speaker in 2015, prompting Ryan to accept the job—is taking careful stock of the conference, preparing to launch his own candidacy should McCarthy stumble a second time.

The one person who can keep these dominoes from falling, at least in the near term, is Trump. The president and the speaker have been a better pairing than anyone could have imagined a year ago, considering Ryan abandoned the GOP nominee during the homestretch of the 2016

campaign. The speaker has kept shoulder to shoulder with the White House at moments of vulnerability, knowing Trump can shield him—and his members—from the fury of the right. If the president endorses whatever grotesque legislative meatball comes out of the House in the coming weeks—publicly and unambiguously—it's impossible to see Ryan facing any real threat. If the president distances himself from the speaker, however, the floodgates could open—and quickly. Conservatives, having whispered in the president's ear about Ryan not sharing his interests, will be watching carefully for cues. So too will Steve Bannon, who has been conspicuous this year in holding his fire on Ryan, an old nemesis, while laying waste to Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell. Bannon and Meadows, a pair of disruptive forces, have spent the past year keeping Ryan's blood out of the water—but in the unlikely scenario that Trump suddenly sours on the House speaker, they will be inviting the sharks to dinner.

Underscoring all of this palace intrigue are some strange realities—such as the fact that Ryan's survival as speaker might require cover from the very president who once believed that Ryan was trying to sabotage his presidential campaign. Or the notion that Ryan, should he secure his final year in office, will use it to pursue the type of dramatic, politically risky entitlement reforms that Trump explicitly ruled out while running for president. Perhaps no piece of irony is more striking, or effective in capturing this volatile period of Republican history, than the juxtaposition between Ryan celebrating his dream of rewriting the tax code—while hearing of renewed threats to his speakership.

Ryan nearly walked away from Congress once before. It was November 2012, after Mitt Romney's loss to Barack Obama, and the would-be vice president found himself despondent and homesick. Ryan told his wife, Janna, that he was considering retirement. That's when Boehner called. The speaker, concerned about the stability of his conference, could not afford to lose Ryan; he promised the influential Budget Committee chairman a waiver so he could lead the panel for another two years. Ryan agreed, and as the sting of 2012 receded, he began to map out his political future—and his exit strategy from Congress. Having run and lost a national campaign, Ryan rejected pleas to consider his own presidential prospects; instead, he set his sights on the Ways and Means Committee. The chairmanship, which he had long viewed as a dream job, would open after 2014, and Ryan saw it as the perfect perch from which to both pursue his long-standing policy goals and influence the direction of the national party in 2016. Ryan had it all figured out, according to interviews at the time with his friends, family and staff: He would chair the committee, help a newly elected Republican president write a sweeping overhaul of the tax code, and then ride off into the sunset.

But it wasn't meant to be. Less than a year into Ryan's Ways and Means tenure, Boehner decided to call it quits. He had asked his protege several times over the previous year—since the primary defeat of Majority Leader Eric Cantor—to succeed him as the speaker. "I gave him the Heisman every time," Ryan told POLITICO. The Ways and Means chairman was content to support his friend McCarthy. But the Freedom Caucus wasn't. Jordan and Meadows, concerned that McCarthy, a pragmatic Californian, would lead no differently than Boehner, made him a series of offers—their support in exchange for something from him. One of the proposals called for process reforms, including a drastic restructuring of the Steering Committee, which decides committee assignments and chairmanships. Another, more politically explicit offer, promised McCarthy the group's votes if he could make either Jordan or Meadows the majority leader. When McCarthy bristled, suggesting he couldn't possibly deliver what they wanted, the group told him he wouldn't have enough votes on the House floor to become speaker—even if he had already scored an overwhelming majority in the

closed-door conference election.

Hours before that private vote was set to occur, McCarthy called Ryan to say he didn't want the job—and that really, Ryan should take it. He still wasn't interested. Only after several days of around-the-clock phone calls from prominent Republicans did Ryan open himself to the possibility. He began thinking about his conditions for accepting the job. One was family time on the weekends, which was non-negotiable; another was support from the Freedom Caucus. Ryan had watched Boehner struggle to contain the rebellion after the tea party wave of 2010; he would not assume the speakership over the objections of the same rambunctious members who had helped drive Boehner from office. By securing their support up front, Ryan hoped to inoculate himself against the inevitable future grumblings from House conservatives.

Some Freedom Caucus members had reservations about Ryan, but others were ecstatic at his willingness to take the job. Unlike with Boehner, they saw the Wisconsinite—an Ayn Rand devotee and fierce critic of the welfare state—as one of their own. He was equally appealing to other factions of the conference—a sober-minded, well-spoken, telegenic leader with policy experience and people skills. After five years of civil war, there was no other figure who could unite the fractured House Republican Conference. Ryan's colleagues teasingly called him "The Chosen One," and in late October 2015, he assumed the speakership.

The cease-fire was short lived. Conservatives say Ryan failed a critical first test just weeks after taking the gavel, when he refused to leverage government funding to impose new restrictions on the nation's refugee settlement program in the wake of the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California. Jordan pleaded with the new speaker to hold out for increased vetting, telling him that it would show Obama and Democratic Senate leader Harry Reid that "there's a new sheriff in town." Ryan refused—an original sin that chafes Jordan to this day. As he struggled to adjust to his complex new role—"like Einstein learning to write poetry," is how one of Ryan's admirers described it—he committed another strategic error that would prove costly with some of his members: dismissing the reality TV star running for his party's nomination. In private conversations, Ryan called Trump "a joke" whose penchant for identity politics was dividing the country and dooming the Republican Party's future. He wasn't much gentler in public: For most of the campaign, Ryan made it seem he felt honor-bound to denounce the candidate's latest incendiary remark or antic, as though the two were personally engaged in a tug-of-war for the GOP's soul.

This annoyed some of Ryan's members—both pro-Trumpers and others who disliked him but respected the anger he was tapping into. When the speaker initially withheld his support after Trump became the presumptive nominee—then continued to poke at him even after issuing a grudging endorsement—some of Ryan's colleagues wondered if he was attempting to sabotage the GOP ticket. Ryan made a point, for instance, never to be photographed with Trump—fearful of how it would be used to tarnish his brand, according to multiple sources. But the speaker came to agree that the icy relationship between them was unhelpful to the national party. Under mounting pressure from his members, as well as his longtime friend, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, Ryan offered an olive branch, inviting the GOP nominee to his hometown of Janesville, Wisconsin, for a Saturday afternoon campaign rally.

All hell broke loose on the evening before the event, when the *Washington Post* published a decade-old recording of Trump boasting about his sexual exploits—and his ability to grope women because of his celebrity status. It seemed to be the nail in his campaign's coffin. Ryan immediately disinvited Trump from Janesville, railing to Priebus and other GOP officials

about the man he had never trusted or respected in the first place. Feeling validated, and certain that his members were equally outraged, Ryan wanted to take decisive action—even entertaining the idea of withdrawing his endorsement of Trump. On an emergency leadership conference call the weekend of the "Access Hollywood" tape, Ryan floated this idea as House GOP leaders debated how far to distance themselves from Trump. He would cripple their majority, the speaker said; cutting him off might be their best hope of saving the House. It was ultimately McCarthy—who has become Trump's favored member of the GOP leadership—who talked Ryan down. Withdrawing their support, he said, according to multiple sources familiar with the call, might backfire by hurting their own members. He suggested they cool off and not act on impulse.

Ryan agreed, yet somehow still crossed the line with many House Republicans when he declared—on another conference call the following Monday morning, this time with all Republican members—that he would no longer defend or campaign for Trump. That call, leaked to reporters in real time, lit a fire in the grass roots. Congressional phone lines exploded thereafter, with irate GOP constituents calling for Ryan's head. Some members began questioning the sustainability of his speakership; in late October 2016, after leaders scheduled Ryan's speakership nomination, a number of pro-Trump House members urged Ryan to postpone it so they had more time to consider if he should lead the conference. One of those was Rep. Jim Renacci, an establishment-friendly Republican who had long served with Ryan on the Ways and Means Committee. The Ohio Republican started garnering signatures on a secret letter arguing that "the conference is divided" and "there is no reason to hastily hold elections."

Freedom Caucus members sensed an opportunity. At a secret meeting at Meadows' downtown D.C. apartment, days before the election, Freedom Caucus board members devised a plan to deny Ryan the 218 votes needed to retain his speakership. The strategy called for Jordan to serve as the "sacrificial lamb," running against Ryan—not to win, but to keep the speaker from having the votes needed for reelection. The idea was that Ryan, who talked frequently (and annoyingly, to some members) about how he had never wanted the job in the first place, would step aside to avoid the spectacle. Conservatives had already begun searching for a new speaker from outside their narrow ranks—someone who would command the respect of the conference. Rep. Mike Pompeo—then a little-known, dry-witted defense hawk who'd later make friends in high places and become Trump's CIA director—became their top choice.

As Republicans schemed against their speaker, the underlying assumption was that Trump would lose and the conservative base would be out for blood—that, or Trump would win and kick Ryan to the curb. Either way, he would be finished.

Less than an hour before the polls closed on November 8, 2016, Ryan made the phone call he'd been dreading. With a handful of staffers and family members lingering nearby, Ryan was patched through to senior officials at the RNC in Washington. They had been analyzing voting patterns and running turnout models throughout the day, and were prepared to share their projections with the speaker: Trump was going to go down in flames, earning just 220 electoral votes. Republicans would lose nearly 20 House seats. Democrats would retake control of the United States Senate. Exactly the debacle Ryan had feared.

Stewing inside his team's war room at the Holiday Inn in Janesville—the site of his own election night party—Ryan could not stomach the thought of working with President Hillary

Clinton. That said, he wasn't exactly thrilled about working with Trump, whose campaign—fueled by anger, resentment and nativism—was, in his view, a rejection of conservatism's highest ideals. As disappointed as he was about Clinton's apparent victory, the speaker saw a silver lining: He would seize the occasion of Trump's defeat—beginning that night—to speak about a return to an inclusive, aspirational, Jack Kemp-inspired "happy warrior" conservatism, and a rejection of Trumpism.

But Ryan never got the chance. His own race had been called early, and attendees waited patiently in the ballroom for his victory speech. But the speaker was paralyzed in the war room, watching in disbelief as Trump surged past Clinton in the pivotal battlegrounds of Florida and North Carolina. The RNC's numbers, his advisers told him, were garbage: The GOP's Senate majority appeared safe, only a handful of House Republicans were losing, and if the current trends held, Trump was going to win the biggest upset in presidential history. Just before 10 p.m. Eastern, Ryan finally took the stage and spoke for three minutes. "I've just been sitting there watching the polls," Ryan said, the shock written all over his face. "By some accounts, this could be a really good night for America. This could be a good night for us. Fingers crossed."

Ryan would seize the occasion of Trump's defeat to speak about a return to an inclusive, aspirational, Jack Kemp-inspired "happy warrior" conservatism, and a rejection of Trumpism. He never got the chance.

Ryan faced a legacy-shaping decision that night: Stay true to himself and step down as speaker, or muzzle himself and serve alongside Trump in a unified GOP government. It was a no-brainer: This was Ryan's chance to actually achieve the things he had only fantasized about. Even if that meant getting in bed with the likes of Trump and Bannon. And even if that meant accommodating behavior from a Republican president that he would never tolerate from a Democrat. It was a trade-off Ryan could not refuse. It was, in the refrain of the speaker's allies, "Paul's deal with the devil," one that he would make all over again. Chasing his legislative dreams would require keeping his criticisms of Trump to himself. "You can't create a sideshow, even if there's cause for a sideshow, because it's going to get in the way of getting the big things done," Boehner told POLITICO Magazine of Ryan's approach to Trump. "Paul has got his head on straight. He's very comfortable with who he is and what he's got to do."

As some conservatives watched eagerly for a smoke signal from the president-elect—hoping he would remember the speaker's disloyalty and recommend a replacement—Ryan moved quickly to secure his standing. He spoke with both Trump and his longtime friend, Vice President-elect Mike Pence, in the hours before Trump's victory speech, and made swift plans Wednesday morning to meet with them in Washington the next day. Before their meeting,

Ryan shared with several friends that he planned to start his talk with Trump by mentioning their bad blood during the campaign, and explaining why he had said and done certain things. They cut him off: That was a terrible idea. Don't remind Trump of how much he despised you in the past, they said. Focus on the future. Ryan listened. And the advice was sound: To this day, despite Trump's famously long memory, sources in both camps say the president and speaker have never once revisited their old feud.

Indeed, a surprising subplot of the unified GOP government's first year has been the unlikely alliance between Trump and Ryan. The healing process that began in D.C. two days after the election culminated in Pence delivering the message to House Republicans, just minutes before the speakership election, that Trump supported Ryan. (Only one Republican, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, voted against him.) The relationship since has been strangely drama free: Trump and Ryan talk often throughout the week, chewing on questions of policy and process and politics. Never once has there been a blowup, either in person or over the phone. Sources close to both men say they occasionally vent about the other—Trump telling aides that the speaker can't count votes; Ryan complaining to leadership comrades about the president saying things unbecoming of his office—and yet these feuds are, somewhat miraculously, kept in the family.

Ryan's allies paint this as part of a broader picture—his stronger-than-expected partnership with the president; his landmark victories in passing tax reform, as well as a repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act, on the House floor; his prolific, historic fundraising on behalf of the embattled GOP majority—to argue that his Faustian bargain has proven worthwhile. And they cite these same examples to dismiss the sanity of threats against his speakership: What more could House Republicans possibly want from him?

"Paul Ryan is by far and away the best possible person we have to lead this group of people in the right direction," said one such ally, Rep. Tom Rooney of Florida. "I just think that any talk of him leaving, I hope that's not true. It would be a major setback for our cause."

Every speaker deals with varying degrees of discontent in their conference. In Ryan's case, it owes less to ideology than process. Specifically, members who felt marginalized under Boehner—who ran a top-down operation that cut out committee chairs and left little room for lawmakers to shape legislation—feel the House is even more centralized under Ryan. This was evident in the speaker's first, botched attempt at repealing Obamacare: He wrote the bill on his own, then framed it as a "binary choice" for members to either back his proposal or be viewed as supporters of Obamacare. The stunt rubbed Ryan's colleagues the wrong way, particularly Freedom Caucus members who had extracted promises from him in 2015 about opening up the House and restoring regular order.

Conservatives aren't the only ones annoyed with Ryan's approach, and it isn't just back-bench members voicing displeasure. Sources close to House Budget Chairwoman Diane Black, a longtime Ryan ally, said she was deeply upset over the summer about Ryan's treatment of her budget process—though she, like many other senior members friendly with the speaker, would never voice these criticisms publicly. Ryan trampled on Black's budget in order to expedite the push for tax reform. But when the time came to draft the legislation, members of the Ways and Means Committee—who had worked alongside Ryan for years—grew upset at what they saw as the speaker's dictatorial approach. Tax writers vented to the White House that he wielded an iron grip on the process and that they had little imprint on the final product; members grumbled about Ryan big-footing Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady. Members of his committee said they didn't see the final bill until just days before they voted on it. It's no

coincidence that more than half a dozen members on Ways and Means—one of the most powerful and desired positions in Congress—are walking away from the House in 2018. Renacci, in an interview, specifically cited Ryan's top-down style as a reason he was leaving the House to run for governor of Ohio.

"You've got to be willing to let everyone bring one pebble of sand to the beach, so they at least feel they helped build the beach," Renacci said. "And that's regular order. If you don't get that, you're never going to be a leader here in the conference."

Similar complaints dogged the previous speaker. But unlike Boehner, who bunkered down and lost touch with many of his newer members, Ryan has made a sustained effort to engage the full spectrum of his colleagues on a regular basis, with both group and individual meetings. This has given rank-and-file lawmakers greater access to the speaker—though not a greater role in the legislative process.

He's more controlling than Boehner ... and I voted against John Boehner and worked with Mark Meadows to vacate the chair," said Rep. Walter Jones. "I've been here 22 years and this is the most closed shop I've ever seen."

At the end of the day, the real threat to Ryan exists in the same place it did during Boehner's speakership: on the right flank of the conference. Early this fall, as the tax-reform battle was heating up, Rep. Walter Jones of North Carolina—a constant thorn in Boehner's side—joked to fellow conservatives that he wanted to issue a formal apology to the former speaker. Having experienced Ryan's tight grip on the House, Jones said, he now viewed Boehner as a legend—a remark that elicited laughs but also murmurs of agreement in the room. Since then, the idea of conservatives writing an apology letter to Boehner has become a running joke on the right. "He's more controlling than Boehner ... and I voted against John Boehner and worked with Mark Meadows to vacate the chair," Jones said. "I'm very dissatisfied. I've been here 22 years and this is the most closed shop I've ever seen."

Even so, there is no comparing the two speakers at this point. Whereas Boehner had lost all goodwill with conservatives by the time of his exit, Ryan today has strong allies on the right—even if there are an equal number of detractors. "I think Ryan has done a good job," said Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker. "He to this day has my full, 100 percent support. ... He has to herd all these different factions and people on a daily basis, and I respect that."

Ryan and his team have operated under the assumption that if Republicans enact the first tax

overhaul in 30 years, much of the frustration will wane — and partywide euphoria at the realization of their first major legislative victory will make the year-end, bipartisan deals easier to swallow. But rank-and-file members aren't so sure. And they worry that Ryan's tunnel vision on tax reform has weakened the GOP's negotiating hand against the Democrats. During a recent meeting with elders of the RSC, Rep. Tom Graves, a senior member on the Appropriations Committee, argued that a "mystic, hypnotic fog of tax reform" had crippled the conference over the past two months, "paralyzing" Republicans from creating an effective spending strategy to advance other Trump priorities.

That concern has echoed throughout the conference in recent weeks. Many House Republicans fear they will be forced to back a massive spending package that drives up the deficit—and an immigration compromise antithetical to the beliefs of the party base. During a meeting in Ryan's office in early November, Rep. Warren Davidson, the Ohio Republican who replaced Boehner and promptly joined the Freedom Caucus, held up the speaker's "Better Way" pamphlet from 2016 and told him: "There is no 'DACA amnesty play' in the playbook."

Hoping to assuage these concerns, Ryan last week summoned representatives from the conference's various factions to meet and come up with a unifying plan ahead of the December 22 deadline to fund the government. The resulting strategy, one that Ryan pledged to execute, has House Republicans sending a funding bill to the Senate next week that includes GOP priorities, such as increased Pentagon funding, but nothing for Democrats—and then leaving town and daring Senate Democrats to vote no. (It's a difficult promise to keep, since McConnell needs at least eight Democratic votes to approve any deal—not to mention that the Senate is accustomed to jamming the House, not the other way around.)

Ryan can see the storm clouds gathering. But people close to him insist he would never quit mid-Congress, even if passing tax reform into law provides the perfect opportunity to walk away—and even if recent accounts of sexual misconduct among House members have made the job even more stressful. (Two friends say Ryan was visibly shaken after demanding that Arizona Rep. Trent Franks resign his seat, telling them, "I didn't realize slitting throats was part of my job.")

Two friends say Ryan was visibly shaken after demanding that Arizona Rep. Trent Franks resign his seat, telling them, "I didn't realize slitting throats was part of my job."

Even though few members believe Ryan's job is truly in jeopardy, the whispers of his not-far-off retirement have sent various constituencies scrambling to prepare for a shake up. Members loyal to Scalise have urged him to have a candid discussion with McCarthy about his inability to unify the conference, while McCarthy's allies have urged him to line up the president's support so it's ready at a moment's notice. Some neutral parties think Scalise has the inside track—that Trump's backing won't be enough to put him over the top, and that Scalise's already-high stock has skyrocketed since he survived an assassination attempt in June. But the

Freedom Caucus will be focused less on personalities than process: As in 2015, conservative members are drafting various demands in exchange for the next speaker to win their votes.

This will cause eyes to roll in some quarters of the conference. But the reality is that while Ryan would surely win a hypothetical near-term battle over his speakership, the Freedom Caucus is already winning the war. This is simple math: Because of its size and willingness to vote as a bloc, the Freedom Caucus will almost certainly provide the margin to crown the next speaker. And assuming Republicans lose seats next year—with swing-district moderates the first to fall—the conservatives will have even more leverage over GOP leadership in the coming Congress.

In a period of particular tension a few months back, one conservative member presented Meadows with a fake draft of a motion to vacate the chair. It was meant to make light of what conservatives viewed as their sorry situation in that moment: nine months into a unified Republican government, and still without a single legislative victory. Meadows told the member the prank was "not funny." But to some members, the prospect of taking out Ryan clearly isn't a joke. It only takes one of them, eager to antagonize the leadership and win lots of headlines, to file the motion and plunge the House into temporary chaos.

The question at that point becomes how hard Ryan is willing to fight to retain his speakership—and how forcefully other Republicans come to his defense. When Meadows made his attempt on Boehner, dozens of allies rushed to the former speaker's office to strategize, demanding an immediate vote to show their strength. Ryan, who keeps a small circle of close friends, does not have any comparable apparatus of longtime loyalists determined to protect him—nor does he view his legacy in Congress as inextricably tied to the position of speaker of the House.

"You've got to remember, I'm the only guy in the modern era who didn't want this job," Ryan told POLITICO Magazine this fall. "I did this because I had to do it. And I'm happy and I'm grateful for the job and it's a great honor. And I feel like I was made for this moment. So I'm good with it. But I'm not a person who covets it. And I never was. So I always feel liberated by that."

Whenever Ryan exits, familiar questions will resurface about whether the Republican Party is governable—and whether, in Congress, there will ever be a leader capable of uniting its tribes. Congress runs on relationships: Boehner was personally popular among members, even those who voted against his initiatives, and the same can largely be said for Ryan. But this is no longer seems sufficient. Dissension in the House Republican ranks is explained not by incompatible personalities, but rather by a fundamental disconnect between the leadership and the rank and file over questions of legislative involvement and procedural transparency. Whoever wishes to succeed Ryan would do well to realize it. During a conference meeting last week, Raúl Labrador of Idaho, a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, ripped into the leadership. "It's not that we don't like you," he said to McCarthy, who stood at the podium. "It's that we don't trust you."

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White House: Trump would be 'very unhappy' if Speaker Ryan left [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 12/14/2017 02:35 PM EDT

President Donald Trump told House Speaker Paul Ryan he would be "very unhappy" if the Wisconsin Republican retired after the 2018 elections, the White House said Thursday.

POLITICO [reported](#) earlier Thursday that Ryan has told his closest confidants that his current term as House speaker will be his last. POLITICO also noted that in three dozen interviews with lawmakers, aides, conservative intellectuals and lobbyists, not one believed Ryan would stay in Congress past 2018.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters that Trump had spoken to Ryan ahead of Thursday's press briefing, within hours of POLITICO's report being published.

"The president did speak to the speaker not too long ago and made sure that the speaker knew very clearly — and in no uncertain terms — that if that news was true, he was very unhappy with it," Sanders said. "The speaker assured the president that those were not accurate reports and that they look forward to working together for a long time to come."

Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong dismissed POLITICO's reporting as "pure speculation."

"As the speaker himself said today, he's not going anywhere anytime soon," she said.

Asked whether the president was caught off guard by reports of Ryan eyeing the exits, Sanders suggested that Trump and Ryan were both surprised "because I don't think it was very accurate reporting."

"And so it sounds like they're both committed to and looking forward to spending a lot more time together over the next, you know, hopefully seven, eight years," Sanders said.

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Navy secretary Spencer: We have to learn to say no [Back](#)

By Jacqueline Klimas | 12/14/2017 12:00 PM EDT

The Navy needs to be more judicious about using its assets, Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said in outlining the results of a review found that the fleet has been stretched too thin for too long.

"If in fact we don't have the assets, we do not have the assets," Spencer told reporters ahead of the release today of the results of a [Strategic Readiness Review](#) he ordered earlier this year after the 7th Fleet suffered a series of deadly mishaps. "If in fact national security is threatened, get us the assets."

The review found that over time the Navy has relaxed training and failed to fulfill all its readiness requirements in order to meet growing operational demands.

Spencer likened this to the "overdrawing" a bank account. To prevent further damage, the Navy will need to offer only the resources it has to meet mission requirements around the world, which might mean it can't always go everywhere it is needed, Spencer said.

In all, the readiness review makes 23 recommendations ranging from reviewing the Navy's administrative chain of command to ensuring surface warfare officers focus their careers on Navy skills.

To that end, Spencer said he'll work with Congress on reforms such as reducing the number of joint billets that rising officers need to hold in order advance in their career as a way to reduce their time away from their main warfare specialty.

Spencer said he shared the results of the review with the Army and Air Force.

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Date: Monday, November 27, 2017 2:54:30 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 11/27/2017 02:50 PM EDT

BACK TO WORK: The last 24 hours of headlines say it all: Congress ... "[stares down shutdown amid December deluge](#)," "[prepares for year-end legislative sprint](#)," "[confronts jam-packed December with shutdown deadline looming](#)," "[returns to nightmare](#) ..."

Resuming work this week after an 11-day recess reset, lawmakers know that any legislative missteps over the next three weeks could threaten to dig into their holiday break (and reinforce that "do nothing" adage). The dreaded Dec. 8 spending deadline is now a dozen days away. And appropriators charged with drafting a massive omnibus are still waiting to learn how much they can actually spend. Washington is no longer wondering if Congress will need to lean on another stopgap spending bill — the question is: For how long?

A high-stakes gathering: The first sign of progress could come Tuesday afternoon, when President Donald Trump hosts the so-called Big Four at the White House. Congressional leaders are hoping to hammer out a year-end agreement that includes spending levels, plus a strategy for handling the pile-up of other hot-button political issues with looming deadlines, Seung Min Kim [explains](#).

On Santa's sleigh: That year-end to-do list includes disaster funding, CHIP renewal, a flood insurance extension and reauthorizing NSA surveillance powers. Lawmakers could also confront two other contentious items: the nation's debt ceiling and a DACA deal, since both issues are set to hit a boiling point early next year.

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

WOMEN RULE WEEK! POLITICO is partnering with women-led businesses in the D.C.-metro area to offer a full week of exclusive perks in conjunction with the 5th annual Women Rule Summit! Join the fun at participating businesses during Women Rule Week (**Nov. 27 - Dec. 1**) for [exclusive deals](#) and tweet five times using #WomenRule for a chance to win two free tickets to the Summit on Dec. 5th!

Doc of the day — A recent Chamber of Commerce [report](#) predicts the 12 states that would be hit hardest if the U.S. withdraws from NAFTA. All 12 states — including Michigan, Nebraska and Arizona — favored Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

#DailyBudgetFact — If Congress nixes the tax deduction for charitable giving, the federal government could save \$229 billion through 2026, according to [CBO](#). That's more than double the potential savings from increasing the corporate tax rate by 1 percentage point.

WHITE HOUSE

DUELING DIRECTORS: Nothing says "welcome back to Washington" like a Monday morning power struggle at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. White House budget

chief Mick Mulvaney arrived bright and early to step in as Trump's temporary pick to lead the bureau (even bringing Dunkin' for the staff). But he wasn't the only one eyeing a new office chair. Leandra English, the hand-picked replacement of Obama-era director Richard Cordray, also showed up to work today, signing notes to staff as "acting director." Lorraine Woellert [details](#) the confusion and chaos that has engulfed the consumer agency.

War of words: The political polar opposites are now locked in a legal fight for control of the embattled bureau. The White House argues that it has the power to appoint an acting head, even after ex-director Cordray had already chosen his own replacement. English filed suit against the White House late Sunday, arguing that the 2010 Dodd-Frank act stipulates that she should be in charge — drawing a rebuke from the White House.

— "The law is clear: Ms. English is acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau until the Senate confirms a new director," English's lawyer, Deepak Gupta, said Sunday.

— "The law is clear: Director Mulvaney is the Acting Director of the CFPB," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders wrote in a statement shortly after.

Timeline:

1. [CFPB pick sparks confusion](#)
2. [Cordray's choice files suit](#)
3. [White House defends Mulvaney selection](#)
4. [Bureau's top lawyer privately sides with POTUS](#)
5. [Senators squabble](#)
6. [Lawsuit assigned to Trump-appointed judge](#)

OMB

A DOSE OF SUNLIGHT: Since the start of the Trump administration, reporters have begged for visitor logs from an unusually tight-lipped White House. Now, a lengthy lawsuit from a D.C. watchdog has produced [a trove](#) of information about who's been coming around, including those dropping in on Mulvaney.

Meetings with Mick: Those prominent visitors include Newt Gingrich, Koch Industries lobbyists, multiple pharmaceutical and Wall Street CEOs, and leaders of conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and American Enterprise Institute.

APPROPRIATIONS

HEARINGS GALORE: Appropriations aficionados rejoice — the House spending panel has a stacked calendar this week, with seven hearings planned over two days. On Wednesday, the subcommittees will delve into the [USDA's role in disaster recovery](#), as well as oversight of [the Forest Service](#), the [Army Corps of Engineers](#), the [Small Business Administration and the General Services Administration](#). Then Thursday, the subcommittees will geek out on [FEMA's supplemental aid request](#), [disaster relief for the Federal Highway Administration](#) and [oversight](#)

[of the Interior Department.](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE

'MIXED SIGNALS': Nearly a year into his first term, Trump has yet to flesh out details of his \$1 trillion infrastructure promise. And that uncertainty has started to weigh on Transportation Department officials. As Tanya Snyder [reports](#), the former head of the Build America Bureau says the administration's infrastructure package "appears to be stalled, and the future is uncertain" — a factor that apparently influenced his resignation last month from the agency that helps finance transportation projects.

TAX

IT'S SHOW TIME: Senate Republicans are under pressure to push through their tax bill lickety-split, Seung Min and Bernie Becker [explain](#). After this week, the legislative effort could easily get sidelined amid a year-end spending fight, or threatened altogether by the Dec. 12 special election that could change the chamber's party breakdown. In a rush to get to work, the Senate Budget Committee plans to [mark up](#) the fiscal 2018 reconciliation legislation Tuesday afternoon.

UNCOMFORTABLE ASSUMPTIONS: On paper, much of the [Senate GOP's tax plan](#) will only last a decade. White House and GOP leaders are telling a different story, however, arguing that popular breaks will last indefinitely because Congress will never vote to end them. The idea of "sunsetting" expensive tax breaks is a work-around for those pesky budget rules, but it's stoking anxiety in a growing number of GOP deficit hawks, including Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.), [Todd Young](#) (R-Ind.) and [James Lankford](#) (R-Okla.), as Seung Min [reports](#).

TOO SPEEDY FOR A SCORE: JCT and CBO admitted in a [report](#) Sunday that it's "not practicable" to do a full economic analysis on the Senate tax plan "within the very short time available." The budget experts haven't totally skimmed on their estimates, though, predicting that the upper chamber's plan would increase the deficit by \$1.4 billion over the next ten years but wouldn't increase on-budget deficits by more than \$5 billion in any of the four decades following 2028.

All the rest: [Paul piles on](#) | [Passage predictions](#) | [Sloppy sales job?](#) | [Attack ads air](#) | [Alternative inflation gauge](#) | [Failure 'not an option'](#) | [College leaders scramble](#) | [POTUS makes an appearance](#) | [Sorry, expats](#) | [Newman's secret carve out](#)

CONGRESS

TAXPAYER CASH? GOTTA UNMASK: Congressional leaders are feeling the pressure to release the names of lawmakers who have secretly settled sexual harassment claims at taxpayer expense, Rachael Bade and Elana Schor [explain](#).

FEMA

BEYOND ZIP CODES: A legal victory by NPR could shed some light on the biggest beneficiaries of the nation's costly flood mitigation efforts. A federal judge ruled last week that FEMA must disclose the exact location and sales prices of properties sold through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Josh Gerstein [reports](#). The new disclosure requirement would produce much more granular detail than the current ZIP-code-level data the agency provides.

EARMARKS

- Senate defense appropriations bill shows need for budget deal. [Roll Call](#).
- Exodus of U.S. House chairmen is most since 2006. [Bloomberg Government](#).
- How December could make or break the Trump presidency. [New Yorker](#).
- An old saw's new twist: Death (of the deficit hawks) and taxes. [Roll Call](#).
- Trump doesn't know what's next after taxes. [POLITICO](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 12 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/11/lawmakers-return-to-stopgap-certainty-032735>

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Congress stares down shutdown amid December deluge [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 11/26/2017 03:23 PM EDT

December is shaping up to be the cruelest month for Republicans who control Capitol Hill.

Under enormous pressure for a legislative achievement, GOP senators will attempt to follow their House counterparts this week by passing a massive tax overhaul they can send to President Donald Trump by the end of the year.

At the same time, they're dealing with Democrats to avert a Christmastime government shutdown. And that battle is complicated even further by an emotional fight over the fate of hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants.

"I'm not prepared to go home for the holidays until we get our work done," Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

The to-do list, which Trump will discuss with top congressional leaders at a White House meeting on Tuesday, doesn't end there. Lawmakers are butting heads over a third tranche of emergency aid for hurricane-ravaged areas. Key surveillance powers used by the National Security Agency need to be renewed. Funding for a health insurance program benefiting 9 million lower-income children is already long expired, with several states close to running out of cash.

And it all comes against a continuous backdrop of sexual harassment bombshells that are ensnaring a growing number of lawmakers — not to mention a dramatic Senate special election in Alabama that could immediately prompt ethics proceedings, a rarity in the chamber.

First up is the tax overhaul. The House passed its plan just before the Thanksgiving break with surprising ease — putting pressure on the Senate to cobble together 50 Republican votes, the

same task that stymied GOP senators in the Obamacare battle this summer.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is reckoning with multiple dueling factions, all with competing concerns about the tax bill. A bloc of deficit hawks, including Sens. Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona, is worried the measure would balloon the deficit. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) is opposed, at least for now, because of the way the bill treats small businesses.

Other Republicans, including moderate Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and conservative Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas, aren't pleased that a health care fight is being injected into the tax mix. The Senate legislation would repeal Obamacare's requirement that everyone carry insurance, yielding hundreds of billions in savings but potentially destabilizing health care markets.

If Senate Republicans can pull it off, they'll immediately begin trying to reconcile their bill with the very different House plan.

Then there's the matter of keeping the government open. As Republicans try to jam through their partisan tax bill, they'll be in talks with Democrats on a sweeping year-end spending package to fund the government through September. That task always needs bipartisan buy-in, but the immigration dimension makes the challenge vastly more complicated than in past years.

A short-term funding patch delaying the current Dec. 8 deadline at least a couple of weeks is inevitable, since top Hill leaders haven't even agreed on spending numbers for federal agencies. The appropriations committees would need at least three to four weeks to write funding legislation.

Because it involves a must-pass bill, the spending fight gives House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) maximum leverage to demand a top priority for Democrats by year's end: codifying Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals into law.

While not explicitly threatening to withhold votes without a DACA measure, both Pelosi and Schumer have vowed to save the Obama-era immigration program legislatively before lawmakers leave Washington for the year. Moderate Republicans have also urged their leadership to find a fix.

But doing so could prompt a rebellion among conservatives who don't want to be steamrolled by Democrats on such a contentious issue. The White House is also insisting on funding for President Donald Trump's border wall with Mexico.

In addition to a huge omnibus spending package, Congress has another pricey funding measure to deal with — aid for hurricane-wrecked states and territories — that many on Capitol Hill say doesn't go far enough.

The White House has suggested a \$44 billion emergency measure distributed to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for ongoing hurricane relief, as well as money for combating wildfires in the West. Democrats and some powerful Republicans — including Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 GOP leader — have said the package is far too small, though they will have to contend with fiscal conservatives who are getting weary of continued spending on aid, particularly if it's not paid for with other cuts.

Other prime government programs could be temporarily shuttered if Congress fails to act.

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The National Flood Insurance Program, which has become financially strapped after the spate of powerful hurricanes this year, also needs to be reauthorized by Dec. 8. The House and Senate have dueling proposals to renew the program.

On the health care front, the expiration of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program is already causing problems as more states have turned to temporary cash infusions from the federal government to keep the programs running.

House Republicans passed a largely partisan CHIP funding measure earlier this month. Still, CHIP could be a relatively simple fix: One option would be to let funding ride along with a short-term continuing resolution that will need to clear Congress by Dec. 8.

Lawmakers will also face pressure to act on legislation that would stabilize the Obamacare markets after Trump's decision last month to stop paying so-called cost-sharing reduction subsidies to insurers.

All of this activity could be overshadowed by ballooning sexual harassment scandals on Capitol Hill.

Multiple women have come forward with allegations against Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) and Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), who have faced calls for ethics investigations or to step aside from powerful leadership posts. On Sunday, Conyers announced that "in light of the attention drawn by recent allegations made against me," he is stepping down from his post as the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee. At least one House Democrat said Conyers should resign from Congress.

On the GOP side, Senate Republicans have scoured through essentially every option to try and knock Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore out of the race, after at least nine women accused him of varying degrees of sexual misbehavior, including when one woman was 14 years old.

Democrat Doug Jones has a shot at an upset in the Dec. 12 election, which would be a political stunner in the conservative state. But if Moore wins, he will immediately face calls for expulsion from some of his own colleagues, and McConnell has promised that ethics proceedings for Moore would begin promptly. That could lead to his eventual expulsion, though doing so would be unprecedented.

To top it off, Rep. Al Green (D-Texas) has promised to force a vote to impeach Trump by Christmas. Green backed away from his first attempt to push the issue to the House floor earlier this fall after private pressure from Democratic leaders.

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Confusion and chaos engulf consumer agency [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 11/27/2017 10:47 AM EDT

Two acting directors of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau showed up for work Monday, trading memos and warnings as a political showdown threw the embattled agency into confusion.

White House budget director Mick Mulvaney, President Donald Trump's choice to

temporarily lead the bureau, arrived at about 7:30 a.m. and settled into the CFPB director's office, where he read briefing books.

His challenger for the job, CFPB Deputy Director Leandra English, was also in the building. English, former Director Richard Cordray's hand-picked replacement, sent the staff an emailed greeting shortly before 8 a.m. and signed it with the bureau's top title, acting director.

Mulvaney quickly fired back with a memo instructing staff to ignore any instructions from English. "I apologize for this being the very first thing you hear from me," he wrote, and invited employees to the bureau's fourth floor for doughnuts.

The jousting was part of a legal morass engulfing the agency after Cordray, its first director, abruptly resigned on Friday and handed the reins to English. While consumer advocates and Democrats fight to preserve Cordray's legacy and the fledgling bureau's independence, business lobbyists are using the mess to push for a reboot of the agency. Regardless of who prevails in the current fight, Trump is expected to name a permanent director in the coming weeks or months, making arguments over the acting director moot.

Cordray, who was appointed by former President Barack Obama, named English as acting director as of his resignation at midnight Friday. Before the handoff could occur, Trump designated Mulvaney, who heads the Office of Management and Budget, to lead the bureau until a permanent director could be nominated and confirmed.

On Sunday, English sued the administration in U.S. District Court in Washington, asking for a temporary restraining order to prevent Mulvaney from being recognized, even as the CFPB's own lawyer sided with the Trump administration on the legality of Mulvaney's designation. The case, *English v. Trump*, was assigned to Judge Timothy Kelly, a Trump appointee and former counsel to Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa). Congress confirmed Kelly to the bench on a 94-2 vote in September.

In a [memorandum](#) first obtained by POLITICO, CFPB general counsel Mary McLeod aligned with a Justice Department opinion issued over the weekend.

"It is my legal opinion that the president possesses the authority to designate an acting director for the bureau," McLeod wrote in the Saturday memo to the CFPB leadership team. "I advise all bureau personnel to act consistently with the understanding that Director Mulvaney is the acting director of the CFPB."

That prompted the White House to claim victory on Sunday night.

"Now that the CFPB's own general counsel — who was hired under Richard Cordray — has notified the bureau's leadership that she agrees with the Administration's and DOJ's reading of the law, there should be no question that Director Mulvaney is the acting director," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said. "It is unfortunate that Mr. Cordray decided to put his political ambition above the interests of consumers with this stunt."

But things remain far from settled. In her lawsuit, English named Trump and Mulvaney defendants and asked the court to establish her authority as acting director.

"Ms. English has a clear entitlement to the position of acting director of the CFPB," the filing claims. "The president's purported or intended appointment of defendant Mulvaney as acting

director of the CFPB is unlawful."

English, who was made the bureau's deputy director as of Friday, is being represented in court by Deepak Gupta, a former senior counsel at the bureau. She filed the lawsuit in her capacity as deputy director and acting director of the CFPB. Gupta did not respond to requests for comment. CFPB spokeswoman Jennifer Howard did not immediately respond to questions.

The consumer bureau's staff gathered at bureau headquarters on Sunday, but English did not attend, according to a person with knowledge of the meeting. Another staff meeting was scheduled for Monday morning.

Shortly after Mulvaney arrived for work on Monday, English sent a Thanksgiving email to staff, offering her "gratitude" for the the bureau's service. "It is an honor to work with all of you," she said, signing the email as acting director.

The 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, H.R. 4173 (111), which created the CFPB, states that the consumer bureau's deputy director shall "serve as acting director in the absence or unavailability of the director." Until Friday, the bureau had been operating with an acting deputy director for years. English was named to the slot just as Cordray left, replacing acting deputy David Silberman.

The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel on Saturday [acknowledged](#) the Dodd-Frank provision, but found that Cordray's resignation amounted to an "absence," giving Trump authority to fill the slot.

The bureau's unusual structure, which vests power in a single director with a five-year term, has been a lightning rod since its creation. Businesses have accused the agency and Cordray of regulating by fiat and litigation and argued for more transparency. They've also challenged the CFPB's constitutionality in court, in a [lawsuit](#) that could be decided within weeks or months.

Yet numerous polls have shown that consumer advocates remain strong champions of the agency's work. The bureau says it has delivered \$12 billion in relief, including canceled debt and compensation, to customers wronged by banks, credit unions, payday lenders and credit card companies.

The White House has been interviewing candidates to replace Cordray, including George Mason University's Todd Zywicki, a critic of the agency.

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Trump taps Mulvaney to head CFPB, sparking confusion over agency's leadership [Back](#)

By Victoria Guida | 11/24/2017 04:19 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Friday named White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, setting up a legal clash over who is in charge of the controversial agency.

The announcement came just hours after outgoing CFPB Director Richard Cordray appointed the agency's chief of staff, Leandra English, as deputy director, establishing her as his successor as he steps down today.

The two moves plunged the agency into confusion over the leadership of the bureau, which was established in the wake of the financial crisis and has become a lightning rod for attacks by Republicans and business executives for its aggressive enforcement.

"The President looks forward to seeing Director Mulvaney take a common sense approach to leading the CFPB's dedicated staff, an approach that will empower consumers to make their own financial decisions and facilitate investment in our communities," the White House said in a statement Friday night.

"Director Mulvaney will serve as Acting Director until a permanent director is nominated and confirmed," the statement said.

The 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, which created the CFPB, explicitly says the consumer bureau's deputy director shall "serve as acting Director in the absence or unavailability of the Director," giving the edge to English.

Yet the Federal Vacancies Act allows the president to install a temporary acting head of any executive agency who has already been confirmed by the Senate to another position, like Mulvaney has as leader of the Office of Management and Budget.

Still, the Vacancies Act says that an opening may also be filled if another law "expressly ... designates an officer or employee to perform the functions and duties of a specified office temporarily in an acting capacity."

It doesn't say whether one approach supersedes the other, something the courts will likely have to sort out.

Today's actions were the latest drama engulfing an agency that Republicans have targeted since its inception. GOP lawmakers and bankers say the consumer bureau regulates through enforcement rather than rulemaking and that its single director has unconstitutional power.

Mulvaney himself, while in Congress, savagely attacked the bureau, calling it in 2014 "a wonderful example of how a bureaucracy will function if it has no accountability to anybody." He added that the CFPB has been a "sick, sad" joke.

Cordray fired the first shot earlier today when he abruptly announced that he would leave at the end of the day, speeding up his original timetable of departing at the end of the month, which he disclosed on Nov. 15.

"Upon my departure, [English] will become the acting Director pursuant to section 1011(b)(5) of the Dodd-Frank Act," Cordray said in a [note to staff](#).

"In considering how to ensure an orderly succession for this independent agency, I determined that it would be best to avoid leaving this key position filled only in an acting capacity," he added. "In consultation over the past few days, I have also come to recognize that appointing the current chief of staff to the deputy director position would minimize operational disruption and provide for a smooth transition given her operational expertise."

In his [resignation letter](#), he called serving as the CFPB's first director "one of the great joys of my life," saying the agency has returned nearly \$12 billion to more than 30 million consumers.

Cordray has been rumored to be considering a run for governor of Ohio but has given no indication of his future plans.

"[I]n departing I now look forward to finding further ways to continue to advocate for those who are facing economic anxiety and uncertainty in their lives," he said.

English would officially take the role that has been filled on an acting basis since 2015, most recently by David Silberman, who will continue to serve as CFPB's associate director of research, markets and regulations.

She has held several leadership positions at the CFPB, including deputy chief operating officer, acting chief of staff, and deputy chief of staff.

"Leandra is a seasoned professional who has spent her career of public service focused on promoting smooth and efficient operations," Cordray said in his statement. "As deputy director, we will continue to benefit from Leandra's in-depth knowledge of the operational needs of this agency and its staff."

English has also previously held senior positions at the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management.

Financial companies, which have long criticized Cordray as overly aggressive, decried the move.

"Today's actions by former CFPB Director Richard Cordray in appointing his own Acting Director to lead the bureau reinforces the problematic nature of having a single and completely unaccountable leader," said Chris Stinebert, head of the American Financial Services Association, which represents installment lenders, in a statement.

"The decision to choose who should lead the country's consumer protection agency, and confusion that's been caused by Cordray's own 'succession plan,' should not be made by one individual and for this reason AFSA has long advocated the need for a bipartisan commission," he added.

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White House says Trump has right to name CFPB head, setting up clash [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 11/25/2017 01:03 PM EDT

The White House on Saturday said President Donald Trump has the authority to put budget director Mick Mulvaney at the helm of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, setting the stage for what could be a protracted legal battle.

A senior administration official said the decision to appoint Mulvaney was informed by

communication with the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, which will issue a formal opinion soon. Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, will start his second job at the CFPB Monday morning, replacing Richard Cordray, who resigned Friday.

"It seems like a pretty clear-cut legal question," the official told reporters. "We consulted with the OLC, they have signed off on it."

Yet Mulvaney's appointment came just hours after Cordray abruptly resigned and named the agency's chief of staff, Leandra English, as deputy director, establishing her as his successor as he steps down.

The competing moves plunged the agency into confusion over the leadership of the bureau, which was established in the wake of the financial crisis and has become a target for relentless attacks by Republicans and business executives for its aggressive enforcement.

The legal counsel's opinion is still being drafted, the official said. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Mulvaney "will go into the office Monday and start working," another senior administration official said.

Trump later Saturday tweeted: "The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB, has been a total disaster as run by the previous Administrations pick. Financial Institutions have been devastated and unable to properly serve the public. We will bring it back to life!"

He followed up quickly with another tweet: "Check out the recent Editorial in the Wall Street Journal @WSJ about what a complete disaster the @CFPB has been under its leader from previous Administration, who just quit!"

Trump and Cordray, long at odds over the direction and future of the agency, are headed for a showdown in court that could take months or more to unravel.

On Trump's side is the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, which allows the president to designate a Senate-confirmed official to perform the functions of a vacant position until a nominee can be confirmed to the office.

In Cordray's corner is the Dodd-Frank Act, the landmark 2010 law that created the CFPB and sets up its own line of succession, stating that the bureau's deputy shall serve as acting director in the "absence or unavailability of the Director."

Cordray pitched the bureau into that legal chasm just after 2 p.m. Friday, when he elevated English to deputy director. Minutes later, Cordray said he would resign at the end of the day. On Nov. 15, he had said he would step down at the end of the month.

"Appointing the current chief of staff to the deputy director position would minimize operational disruption and provide for a smooth transition given her operational expertise," Cordray wrote in his [resignation letter](#) to staff.

Just after 7:30 p.m. Friday, the White House designated Mulvaney as acting director of the watchdog agency until a permanent leader can be nominated and confirmed.

"Cordray is saying, and the consumer advocates are saying, that a resignation by Cordray constitutes absence or unavailability, whereas the White House is saying no it doesn't," said Ballard Spahr lawyer Alan Kaplinsky, a leader of the firm's consumer financial services group.

"I think Trump will ultimately prevail here, but it's going to end up in litigation regardless of the opinion the White House is seeking from the Office of Legal Counsel," Kaplinsky said. "The issue could ultimately end up in the U.S. Supreme Court, but in the meantime who's running the agency? It will be very unclear who has authority to govern the agency."

At other agencies, including Office of Management and Budget, the Small Business Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration, Congress expressly provided for a deputy to take over a vacant leadership post, Kaplinsky said.

Barney Frank, the former chairman of the House Financial Services Committee and an architect of the Dodd-Frank Act, said the 2010 law was deliberately written to prevent the president from naming an interim director.

"It was part of an overall suite of arrangements to give the CFPB as much insulation as you could give a federal agency," Frank told POLITICO. "The procedure that Rich Cordray followed was very specifically put into the law to preserve the independence of the CFPB."

Democrats under President Barack Obama faced a similar situation when they wanted to replace Edward DeMarco as acting head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, an independent regulator with a structure similar to the CFPB. The only way to replace DeMarco was with a confirmed nominee or, barring that, by elevating an FHFA deputy already in place, Frank said.

"He could only be replaced by one of his named deputies; that was the restriction," Frank said. "Nobody claimed the Vacancy Act preempted the FHFA then."

An [ongoing lawsuit](#) could add to the confusion of the bureau's leadership -- or settle it. The U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington is weighing whether the bureau's structure is constitutional, given the vast power vested in its sole director. An opinion in that case could come at any time.

English joined the agency during its earliest days under Elizabeth Warren, who fought to create the bureau and set it up before being elected to the Senate.

Until English's appointment Friday, the deputy director position had been vacant for nearly two years, with David Silberman, the bureau's associate director of research, markets, and regulations, serving in an acting capacity during that time. The CFPB press office did not respond to requests for comment.

"This is almost laughable what's going on," said Richard Hunt, president of the Consumer Bankers Association and a longtime critic of the agency. "No one should be surprised Richard Cordray did this. I just hope Leandra English is not a pawn."

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Graham, Durbin disagree on new CFPB director [Back](#)

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/26/2017 12:30 PM EDT

Two senators from different parties squabbled on Sunday over just who should take the reins as interim director of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — placing themselves in the middle of a spat now personally involving President Donald Trump.

Bureau Director Richard Cordray announced on Friday he was resigning and appointed the agency's chief of staff, Leandra English, as his interim successor. But the White House on Friday appointed its own leader, budget director Mick Mulvaney — promptly setting the stage [for a legal clash](#).

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said on CNN's "State of the Union" he believed it was English who is rightly in control, citing the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, which created the agency.

"I've read the provision. It says that when the director steps aside, the deputy director shall be in charge of the agency," the Senate minority whip said. "Not may — *shall* — be in charge."

But Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said on the same program that he backed the White House decision to appoint Mulvaney — a move the White House says is supported by the Vacancies Reform Act, which gives the president the authority to temporarily fill positions.

"I think the president's on good ground here to appoint somebody under the vacancy statute," Graham said.

Both senators agreed, though, that the president needs to appoint a new permanent director — a process subject to confirmation in the Senate. Still, they made markedly different references to the accomplishments of the agency.

"Remember, this was the agency that fined Wells Fargo \$100 million for defrauding the people who were creating phony accounts," Durbin said. "It's a watchdog agency. Wall Street hates it like the devil hates holy water."

Graham, however, called the agency the "most out-of-control, unaccountable federal agency" in Washington.

"Really no oversight at all," he said. "They can get into everybody's business. I don't think they added much at all to the consumer protection. They sure add a lot to increasing costs for midsize banks throughout the country that had nothing to do with the financial collapse."

"I hope it's Mick Mulvaney," Graham added.

For his part, the president on Saturday called the agency "a total disaster as run by the previous Administrations [sic] pick."

"Financial Institutions have been devastated and unable to properly serve the public," Trump [tweeted](#). "We will bring it back to life!"

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CFPB lawsuit assigned to Trump-appointed judge [Back](#)

By Lorraine Woellert | 11/27/2017 01:05 PM EDT

A lawsuit over [leadership](#) of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has been assigned to a judge appointed by President Donald Trump.

The case, *English v. Trump*, will be heard by Judge Timothy Kelly of the U.S. District Court in Washington. Kelly was confirmed by Congress to the post in September on a 94-2 vote.

Leandra English, deputy director of the CFPB, sued Trump and OMB Director Mick Mulvaney on Sunday after the White House named Mulvaney acting director of the consumer bureau. Mulvaney was designated to the temporary job just hours after departing CFPB Director Richard Cordray had named English his successor.

WHAT'S NEXT? Mulvaney is at the CFPB today and English is meeting with Senate Democrats this afternoon.

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Build America Bureau chief left over 'mixed signals' on Trump's infrastructure plan [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder | 11/27/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Frustration over the Trump administration's mixed messages on infrastructure and an ever-slipping timetable for its promised \$1 trillion infrastructure initiative led the first director of DOT's Build America Bureau to [resign](#) last month.

"If there were a significant infrastructure initiative that had moved forward, and it had an enhanced role for the Build America Bureau, that would have been a reason to stay and try to implement that," Marty Klepper told POLITICO in an interview two weeks after he left his post.

But the infrastructure package "appears to be stalled and the future is uncertain," he said. "We're getting many mixed signals; the most recent one was the [House tax reform bill](#), which eliminated private activity bonds."

The administration said in a [statement of principles on infrastructure](#) released in May that they want to lift the cap on private activity bonds. Several of the proposals in that document would have raised the profile of the finance programs the Build America Bureau runs. But after the principles were released, momentum seemed to fizzle.

"There was never a commitment as to what was going to happen to those proposals, and I realized in the fall that the timeline would be further extended," Klepper said.

Although Klepper was hired to helm the brand-new bureau by the Obama administration in its waning days, he said he was excited about Trump's talk about a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan. But the timeline has been a moving target, which Klepper cited as a source of frustration. "The administration initially indicated they'd be announcing it in the spring, then in the fall, then not until after tax reform," Klepper said.

He predicted it would take most of 2018 for Congress to reach an agreement on an infrastructure package, and then the better part of another year to set up a selection process for project applicants, meaning it would be "late fall of 2019 before there was any new funding from any federal initiative, before there are actual dollars flowing."

He also cited his unease over [comments](#) Trump made in September about public-private partnerships — the centerpiece of his infrastructure plan and the bread and butter of the Build America Bureau.

"I was shocked," he said. "This seemed totally inconsistent with everything I thought the administration wanted."

Still, Klepper said he's proud of his work at the nascent Build America Bureau.

"We accomplished a lot," he said. "We closed \$3.5 billion in loans, which supported \$10 billion in project costs. We implemented best lending practices in a number of areas. We developed a culture of customer-focused client service, normally a private sector goal. We [sped] up the timing and transparency of some of our processes, which was important to our stakeholders."

But without an infrastructure initiative, Klepper said, "the trajectory of accomplishments was probably going to be slowing down."

He did note that although the administration has been lagging on its funding and financing initiatives, officials have been working more aggressively on project permitting and regulatory reform, which he said is also important.

Klepper is still "very committed to helping solve [the] infrastructure deficit," he said, and he sees himself continuing to work with developers, investment banks, financial institutions and state governments to develop public-private partnerships for infrastructure as he has for the last 35 years, "not as lawyer but as businessman, strategic adviser and consultant."

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Tax reform hangs in balance in critical week for GOP [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim and Bernie Becker | 11/27/2017 05:01 AM EDT

It's do-or-die time for Senate Republicans on tax reform.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) doesn't appear to have locked down 50

votes for his party's tax overhaul, with at least half a dozen GOP senators showing varying levels of concern about the legislation released earlier this month.

Yet the GOP leadership has a narrow window to push through its tax bill in the Senate before lawmakers become consumed with spending fights that could trigger a [shutdown](#), not to mention a special election in Alabama that could flip a reliable Republican vote to a not-so-reliable one — or even a Democrat.

"I think in the end, we'll get the votes. But it's a process," South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the third-ranking Senate Republican, said on "Fox News Sunday."

The leadership is juggling objections from multiple pockets of the Senate Republican Conference and is running short of time to convince the holdouts as Republicans try to close out a frustrating year for their policy agenda with a major legislative accomplishment.

An influential and independent-minded bloc of deficit hawks, including Sens. Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona, have aired deep concerns about the tax bill's red ink, even accounting for any economic growth that a tax overhaul might generate. Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Jerry Moran of Kansas have voiced concerns about including in the tax proposal language that would repeal Obamacare's individual mandate.

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), so far the only declared "no" on the tax legislation, has argued that the overhaul unfairly disadvantages small businesses. To fix the bill to his liking, the changes would likely cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) has expressed similar concerns on so-called pass-throughs, according to Republicans.

GOP aides expect changes this week to the version of the tax plan that passed the Senate Finance Committee. Those adjustments could come before the legislation hits the floor or through amendments as the bill is considered.

Senate Republicans are discussing an increase in a tax deduction for pass-through businesses in an effort to win over Johnson and Daines, according to a person familiar with the talks. Allowing taxpayers to deduct up to \$10,000 in property taxes, as proposed in the House bill, is also under consideration, as is barring corporations from writing off their state and local taxes. The proposed changes were first reported by [The Washington Post](#).

Finding the money to pay for those changes could be an issue, too. Republicans can cut taxes by no more than \$1.5 trillion over a decade — meaning that, as of right now, they have well under \$100 billion to play with in the Senate bill.

Thune stressed that some Senate Republicans have raised "legitimate concerns," and he said senators will have "plenty of opportunities" to change the bill when it comes to the floor later this week.

But Republicans also believe that the need for a big legislative accomplishment ahead of next year's midterm elections will help sway any holdouts.

"For every Republican senator, the fate of the party is in our hands, as well as that of the economy," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said on CNN's "State of the Union."

There is private optimism about the legislation's prospects for now, but the GOP tax bill's fate will become much clearer once senators return to Washington on Monday. President Donald

Trump is scheduled to attend Senate Republicans' weekly policy lunch on Tuesday, though GOP senators have been far less susceptible to personal arm-twisting from the president than members of the House.

Republicans could face their first policy hurdle on Tuesday, when the Senate Budget Committee meets to merge the tax bill with a separate measure that raises revenue by allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The ANWR provisions were a major win for Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), often a swing vote on controversial bills.

The Budget Committee action should, in theory, be mostly a procedural move. But both Johnson and Corker sit on the committee — where Republicans hold just a one-seat majority — and the senators could use that leverage to force changes.

The Senate could vote to advance the tax bill as early as Tuesday, and that would set up a so-called vote-a-rama, in which senators could offer a litany of changes before final passage sometime Thursday, although the timetable could change.

Even if the Senate is successful in passing a tax bill, Republicans would still need to settle the differences between that measure and the legislation that already passed the House.

The two bills call for permanently lowering the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent and almost doubling the standard deduction for individual taxpayers, though the House increases the deduction by slightly more. But there are big differences, including in how the House and Senate measures treat pass-through businesses. The Senate will also be under pressure from the House to keep its compromise on state and local taxes.

Critics have also knocked both bills for phasing out tax relief for individuals, which would force millions of taxpayers to pay more in future years. Republicans say they expect future Congresses to vote to extend that tax relief, which has raised concerns among the deficit hawks because it would cause the bill to pile on even more debt.

Moran, in particular, has emerged as a tax reform wild card. The Kansas senator, who also raised objections to his party's plans to repeal Obamacare, told constituents in town halls over the Thanksgiving recess that he does not want the individual health insurance mandate repeal mixed in with tax policy.

He has also raised concerns about potential red ink of any tax overhaul.

"The easiest way to say this is, I am for some tax bill. Can we find taxes to cut that grow the economy?" Moran said at a town hall in Clay Center, [according to the Topeka Capitol Journal](#). "We don't want to increase the debt and deficit as a result of tax cuts. My goal is to find out which taxes you cut can actually help create more jobs, better jobs, higher-paying jobs."

Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, another GOP lawmaker worried about the tax bill's impact on the federal debt, still wants to see how the bill could be amended to address those concerns, an aide said.

Republicans will likely have to push through their tax overhaul with solely GOP votes, although a handful of moderate Democrats are keeping their options open. A spokesman for Sen. Joe Manchin said Sunday that the West Virginia Democrat was still considering the measure. Sens. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Donnelly of Indiana have also been

targeted by Republicans as possible "yes" votes.

The inclusion of the Obamacare mandate repeal makes it more unlikely, however, that Republicans can attract Democratic votes. Donnelly said in a Sunday statement that he's been willing from the start to team up with Republicans on tax reform.

"This should not include making health care more expensive for or taking it away from millions of Americans," Donnelly added.

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GOP deficit hawks fear tax plan is secret budget-buster [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 11/24/2017 07:42 AM EDT

The GOP has yet to resolve an internal clash over whether expiring tax cuts will really expire, potentially threatening the party's push for a desperately-needed legislative achievement.

On one side are the White House and top congressional Republicans, who argue that ultimately all the tax cuts in their plan will be extended, even the ones slated to lapse. But that's exactly what the party's small, but mighty, bloc of deficit hawks is afraid of.

And as the Senate steams toward a vote next week on its massive tax overhaul, the fight over the bill's true sticker price may be the deciding factor for the bill.

It was bad enough, in the deficit hawks' view, that key provisions in the House bill expire in five years and that lawmakers already assume they'll get extended. But their concerns multiplied after the revised Senate GOP tax plan proposed winding down a host of popular tax cuts for individuals after 2025. The tax cuts were made temporary to trim the official cost of the bill, but deficit hawks fear Congress will simply extend them — further adding to the government's red ink.

"The savings, the score, it just isn't valid because you know that they're not going to follow through," Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), an avowed fiscal conservative, said in a recent interview. "You can't assume that we'll grow a backbone later. If we can't do it now, then it's tough to do it later."

The collision between what most Republicans see as simple political reality — keeping popular tax cuts for voters — and deep deficit worries from influential GOP senators could derail the tax reform efforts, particularly if and when the chambers try to meld their tax proposals in the coming weeks.

The deficit hawks decry what they see as gimmicks in the plan, particularly writing in an expiration date for tax breaks with no intention of letting them die. While the official price tag for the Senate tax plan may be \$1.4 trillion, extending all the expiring provisions would bump up that cost by another half a trillion dollars, according to the fiscal watchdog group Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Republicans leading the tax charge have said that the tax cuts expire merely to fit within the parameters set up by complicated Senate rules. And they brush off attacks from Democrats who note that the cuts are permanent for corporations but temporary for regular people. Republicans say Democrats should help them make those cuts permanent, which would require 60 votes on the floor — something Democrats are unlikely to do.

Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has publicly blamed the Senate rules as the reason some provisions in the House bill, like a family tax credit, expire after five years. He recently told reporters he thinks future Congresses will extend them.

That's the White House line, too.

"Of course, the hope for everybody is that when the time comes for these things to expire, that they get extended," Kevin Hassett, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said last week.

Flake and Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker, another independent-minded Republican not running for reelection next year, have been among the most outspoken with their deficit concerns. So too, has Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a major wildcard for GOP leadership in the tax fight.

But other Republicans have gradually become more vocal about their own deficit worries, with Sens. Todd Young of Indiana and James Lankford of Oklahoma among them. GOP leaders can only lose two votes before the tax bill tanks.

"My concern is, if you slow down to actually implement it, that's one thing," Lankford said. "But when you assume a sunset on something that you may or may not actually sunset, you may set up other tax fights that you have in the future, or set up additional deficit."

Other GOP senators have raised different objections to the tax bill; Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin doesn't like the way the plan treats small businesses and Sen. Susan Collins of Maine takes issue with repealing Obamacare's individual mandate in the plan, among other concerns.

Democrats have seized on the bill's contradictions, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York has been particularly eager to exploit the Republican divide.

"I say to my colleagues, particularly the deficit hawks, you can't have it both ways," Schumer said in a recent floor speech. "You cannot say we're going to protect the middle class after 2025 and we're going to reduce the deficit. This bill is a deficit budget buster. We all know what will happen."

Indeed, Congress has a good track record of keeping expiring tax cuts around.

Lawmakers faced a "fiscal cliff" at the end of 2012 composed mainly of the expiring Bush tax cuts. Congress, backed by the Obama administration, ultimately voted to make the vast majority of tax cuts permanent. Capitol Hill also routinely voted to maintain temporary tax "extenders" year after year, before passing legislation in December 2015 that made most of them permanent.

The Senate tax measure includes dozens of provisions that are set to expire yet would likely be politically untenable to actually kill; chief among them are their plans to boost the child tax credit, cut individual tax rates and increase the standard deduction.

Corker has been one of the loudest critics of ballooning the deficit. But he's been careful not to openly disparage the tax plans moving through Congress, and Senate tax-writers, as well as leadership, are aware of his concerns. The Tennessee Republican said he has been discussing ways to resolve deficit worries with other senators — Flake among them — but declined to elaborate further.

Whether Senate Republicans can ultimately win over the GOP skeptics is unclear.

When asked about the cost of extending expiring provisions, McCain stressed: "I'm always worried about the deficit."

Brian Faler contributed to this report.

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Paul says he will vote for Senate tax bill [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 11/27/2017 11:27 AM EDT

Sen. [Rand Paul](#) (R-Ky.) said today that he plans to vote for the Senate tax reform bill, writing that he "fought for and received major changes for the better ..."

Paul, who announced his decision in an [opinion](#) piece on FoxNews.com, wasn't a firm "yes" until now, giving Republican leaders some breathing room as they try to nail down enough votes for the [bill](#), which could come up for a floor vote this week.

Paul said he's satisfied that it includes a \$1.5 trillion tax cut over a decade and includes language to repeal the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, though he also said he'd prefer the bill keep some deductions for state and local taxes and include more permanence for individual tax cuts.

But Paul said there would be more bites at the apple if voters pressure lawmakers for additional tax changes.

"Some of that is still achievable. Some of it is due to the peculiarities of the budget and Senate rules and will have to wait for another day," he wrote. "The good news is — we can do this every year."

Senate Republicans can only afford to lose two votes and still pass their bill without Democratic support, but other GOP senators remain question marks, including Sens. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) over state and local deductions, [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.) on taxes on unincorporated "pass-through businesses" and [Jerry Moran](#) (R-Kan.) about the individual mandate, among others.

Paul challenged them to support the bill, calling it "a true test for" his colleagues and urging them to vote for this bill as it is even if they don't get everything they want.

"I urge you, their constituents, to make sure they hear from you," Paul wrote.

WHAT'S NEXT: Finance Committee members including Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) are meeting with President Donald Trump today.

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Thune predicts tax-cut bill will change on the Senate floor, but pass [Back](#)

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/26/2017 10:55 AM EDT

The Senate's No. 3 Republican said Sunday there'll be "plenty of opportunities" to change the tax-cut bill once it moves to the Senate floor, likely as early as this week.

"We're going to have an open process on the floor of the United States Senate, where people can offer amendments," Sen. John Thune of South Dakota said on "Fox News Sunday."
"Those amendments can get debated and voted upon. So, there [will] be plenty of opportunities to change the bill in the direction that some of our senators want to see."

To pass the Senate, the legislation requires a just simple majority of 51 — a tricky process considering Republicans hold only 52 seats and Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) has already said he's opposed.

"We have members, [who] are expressing what are legitimate concerns, who have ideas about how to make the bill stronger and better, and we're certainly open to those," Thune said.

Still, the chairman of the Senate Republican Conference predicted the bill will ultimately pass the Senate.

"I think, in the end, we'll get the votes," he said. "But it's a process. ... It takes time to move across the finish line."

The senator also addressed concerns Democrats have about adding to the national debt. Republicans, Thune said, believe that with a reasonable amount of economic growth, the national debt will be eased.

"We should not settle for 2 percent growth in this economy," Thune said. "But even if we get to 2.2 percent or 2.3 percent, we cover the cost of this bill."

President Donald Trump intends to meet with senators this week ahead of the tax-cut vote to ramp up support for one of his top congressional priorities.

"We need to get this accomplishment," Thune said. "This is a goal that we've had for a long time."

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Republicans fret over White House sales job on taxes [Back](#)

By Annie Karni and Eliana Johnson | 11/26/2017 07:11 AM EDT

When photos of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and his wife, Louise Linton, posing with freshly printed sheets of money ricocheted across the internet earlier this month, Democrats fighting the GOP tax bill saw an opportunity to whack it.

Mnuchin, one of the White House's lead pitchmen for a tax reform bill Republicans are trying to present as a cut for the middle class, is a Yale-educated, second-generation Goldman Sachs banker — and here he was grinning as he presented his black-leather-gloved wife with hot-off-the-press cash.

"If you asked us to put together a photo shoot to show this is a taxpayer-funded giveaway to millionaires and billionaires, I don't think we could do a better job of this," said Tim Hogan, a spokesman for the anti-tax reform activist group Not One Penny. The group made a Facebook ad featuring the photograph that it says led to thousands of calls to lawmakers from constituents, telling members to vote "no" on the tax bill.

Mnuchin's money shot underscored the awkwardness for the White House of selecting multimillionaires as the principal salesmen for a tax bill it claims will boost workers' wages and cut taxes for the average middle-class family. Mnuchin and fellow Goldman Sachs alum Gary Cohn have consistently fumbled that pitch, in part due to their own backgrounds, said Democrats and Republicans watching the effort.

While the House passed its version of the bill earlier this month, Republicans who see final passage as a make-or-break moment for the party are worried about potential turbulence in the Senate, which is expected to vote on its version this week.

Six Senate Republicans are still withholding their support for the tax cut package — enough to tank it — and others in the party said they don't want the difference-maker to be a lack of good messengers from the White House. And so far, the pitches don't appear to be helping. A recent Quinnipiac University poll found that 52 percent of voters oppose the GOP tax plans, and only 25 percent support them.

"If this thing does fall all apart on the shoals," said one former top Hill aide, "maybe the difference is the lack of good messengers. On a nail-biter, you don't want any margin of error."

And critics in both parties said Mnuchin and Cohn may have helped create one.

In September, Cohn told reporters that with the \$1,000 that he said the average American family is likely to save from the proposed tax plan, they "can renovate their kitchen, they can buy a new car." The offhand comment delivered to reporters in the White House briefing room seemed to underscore how out of touch the Hamptons-summering millionaire was with the expenses facing everyday Americans.

"The most excited group out there are big CEOs, about our tax plan," Cohn, the former president of Goldman Sachs, said in an interview with CNBC earlier this month. The Senate version of the tax bill would reduce the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent

starting in 2019.

A few weeks later, speaking in front of an audience of chief executives gathered in Washington, Cohn expressed shock that their hands stayed in their laps when they were asked whether they planned to increase investment under the new tax plan. "Why aren't the other hands up?" Cohn wondered out loud.

The bumbled pitches for a must-win bill have left Republicans exasperated at a time when the global and domestic economies are rallying — and Republican lawmakers are eager to have a legislative accomplishment to point to on the campaign trail during next year's midterm elections. "All kinds of stuff is breaking their way, and they can't get out of their own way," said one prominent Republican close to the Trump administration.

Some Republicans on Capitol Hill have started to distance themselves. House Speaker Paul Ryan earlier this month asked the White House not to send Mnuchin to the Hill to talk with Republican lawmakers about the bill, according to two people familiar with the discussions — though Ryan has praised the Treasury secretary's ability to improve the legislation itself.

"There were some testy conversations" between Ryan and Mnuchin, according to a White House official — in particular, over Mnuchin's attempts at bringing lawmakers on board. He approaches them, the official said, "with a certain arrogance."

Ryan's spokesman Doug Andres denied that the speaker's office made that request. "That is definitely not anything the speaker or our office has ever said," Andres said. But the general view of Mnuchin from the Hill, according to another former top operative on the Senate side, is that Mnuchin "doesn't have a deft touch on the working-man arguments."

Several Republicans say the political pressure for congressional Republicans to pass a bill is so great that any self-inflicted wounds from the Goldman duo are unlikely to matter much.

"The strongest force behind this bill, the one that will make the biggest difference in the end, is the political imperative for Republicans to pass it," said Brian McGuire, a former chief of staff to Sen. Mitch McConnell.

The White House said its sales pitch doesn't depend solely on Mnuchin and Cohn — and that the lead cheerleader for the bill is the president himself.

"The president's entire team, led by Secretary Mnuchin and Gary Cohn, have been sweeping the country talking to Americans about how tax reform will give them a pay raise and make our economy great again," said deputy press secretary Lindsay Walters.

Despite his 12-day trip to Asia during a main negotiating phase of the bill, President Donald Trump has delivered at least eight tax reform-related speeches across the country, including his event in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with truckers in October, a second White House official said.

There, Trump promised that the average American household would see its wages rise by \$4,000 under the tax plan, because of a provision encouraging American companies to bring home profits from overseas. But he provided no evidence to back up the claim. That didn't matter from a sales perspective.

"'Saturday Night Live' opened that weekend with our truckers event," the second White House

official said. "That's a win. Mnuchin and Cohn do not drive a news cycle like a presidential event." In the "SNL" skit, however, Alec Baldwin, as Trump, engaged in an extended riff about how the president couldn't steer away from provocative social issues and jokes about retiring Tennessee Republican Sen. Bob Corker long enough to actually pitch the tax bill.

The official also said that the administration's internal polls show that the president's message has been effective. "We took nuggets of the things the president was saying [about tax reform] and polled it, asking, do you agree with this statement," the official said. "I think nine of those nuggets polled at 80 percent or higher among likely voters. We're very confident of the message we've been selling."

The White House also highlighted other surrogates outside the Goldman class, including budget director Mick Mulvaney, a Southerner with a middle-class, entrepreneurial background who has been making the media rounds.

And the president's daughter Ivanka Trump has been pairing local events across the country with interviews on friendly Fox News programs like "Hannity," "Fox & Friends" and "Tucker Carlson Tonight," where she has been given a platform to talk specifically about the child tax credit, long her pet issue.

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, counselor Kellyanne Conway, Small Business Administrator Linda McMahon, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta have also been participating in local events to pitch tax reform.

But it's Cohn and Mnuchin who have emerged as the dominant faces of the White House sales pitch — and who have Democrats disbelieving their good fortune that the Wall Streeters are allowed to continue to be out front, selling the bill.

"These guys are the ultimate Wall Street insiders," said Brian Fallon, who served as press secretary for Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign. "Any savvy public relations person would say that they should be a mile away from the salesmanship for the bill. But they're out front. It's just a clue that there is no one senior in the White House to say to them, you're benched."

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Democratic ads pressure Murkowski, Capito on tax reform [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 11/27/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Not One Penny, a coalition of Democratic groups fighting the GOP plan for tax reform, is out with new television ads pressuring Sens. [Shelley Moore Capito](#) of West Virginia and [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska to vote against the plan.

"The congressional Republican tax plan raises taxes on every day West Virginians to pay for tax breaks on the wealthiest," a narrator says in the ad targeting Capito. "50,000 West Virginians will get a tax hike. And it cuts access to affordable health care, including coverage for opioid addiction treatment." The ad asks viewers to call Capito and tell her to "oppose the Trump Republican tax plan."

Watch the ad [here](#).

The ad targeting Murkowski strikes similar themes. "In Alaska, we work hard and know that nothing's free but the scenery," the narrator says. "But the congressional Republican tax plan delivers tax breaks to billionaires, millionaires and wealthy corporations. ... Call Lisa Murkowski and tell her we're not paying for their tax break."

Watch the ad [here](#).

The ads are part of a seven-figure national ad buy, which also targets Nevada Sen. [Dean Heller](#) and Maine Sen. [Susan Collins](#). A separate group, Businesses for Responsible Tax Reform, is airing ads targeting Oklahoma Sen. [James Lankford](#) and Tennessee Sen. Bob [Bob Corker](#)

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Controversial inflation gauge makes comeback in GOP tax bills [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 11/27/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Chained CPI is back.

Both the House, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), and [Senate](#) tax bills feature the alternative measure of inflation, which would make their plans cheaper. But according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, it would also be partly responsible for raising taxes on millions of middle-income Americans in the plans' out years.

Republicans' decision to rely on chained CPI has so far flown under the radar. But the slower-growing gauge of inflation is nonetheless key to the GOP's plans, giving Republicans revenue they desperately need for their central goal of cutting the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent and for navigating complex congressional budget rules.

Chained CPI's re-emergence in the tax bills is also sparking concerns from the left that it could soon be used to measure inflation for a host of other programs, which could lead to seniors getting smaller Social Security checks and reduced benefits from other key anti-poverty programs.

"If the majority is successful in trying this alternative and controversial measure of inflation in the tax code, then I believe the next step the majority might take is to apply that same rule to Social Security and veterans' pensions," said Rep. [Joe Crowley](#) of New York, a House tax writer and member of Democratic leadership, noting that some top Republicans have said they want to tackle entitlements after the tax code.

Chained CPI is perhaps best known as a bargaining chip in former President Barack Obama's efforts to strike a broad fiscal deal with congressional Republicans several years back. Supporters of the formally titled "Chained Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers" say it improves how the government currently judges inflation for taxes and other purposes.

The Labor Department currently tracks inflation by examining the prices of a broad range of goods and services. But unlike the inflation measure currently used in the tax code, chained CPI tries to account for how people's buying habits might change if the price of one particular good fluctuates — for example, by substituting apples for oranges or chicken for steak.

"It is the most accurate way to judge inflation that we have," said Marc Goldwein of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a group that advocates reducing the federal debt.

Chained CPI grows about 0.25 percent slower per year than the standard version, which would lead to what critics call a hidden tax increase. Tax brackets and items like the standard deduction and the Earned Income Tax Credit would increase by a smaller amount each year than they would under the current inflation measure, handing out less in benefits to taxpayers and pushing millions into paying higher marginal rates.

The new inflation measure has become an increasingly important part of both the House and Senate tax plans. House Republicans now propose to immediately put into place chained CPI, which they had first sought to implement in 2024.

In a more drastic move, Senate Republicans are now seeking to phase out virtually all the individual tax provisions in their tax overhaul, except chained CPI and the repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate. Both the House and the Senate propose permanently cutting the corporate rate to 20 percent.

Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) said that keeping chained CPI and scrapping most everything else on the individual side "creates more permanence in our tax system so that American job creators can invest in the long term, grow their business and create new jobs."

The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that chained CPI would raise in the neighborhood of \$130 billion over a decade for both the House and Senate bills. But Republicans would also get a more long-term benefit from that change, in large part because chained CPI's effects snowball over time.

The Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center estimates that the slower inflation measure would raise close to a half-trillion dollars in the second decade for a GOP tax overhaul — desperately needed revenue, considering that Senate budget rules that Republicans plan to use to short-circuit Democratic opposition mandate that the tax bills cannot add to deficits outside the 10-year budget window.

For liberal groups, the most inexcusable part might be how Republicans are using chained CPI.

Seth Hanlon of the Center for American Progress said it wouldn't be too hard to use chained CPI in a large, more progressive package that revamped taxes and entitlement programs. But by making chained CPI one of the few permanent proposals on the individual side of the tax code, Hanlon said Senate Republicans were proposing "the tax code we have now, but worse."

"This is a pure tax increase on essentially everyone paying positive income taxes or receiving tax benefits," said Hanlon, a former economic aide to Obama.

Republicans have said that they expect Democrats would join with them later to extend

expiring individual tax benefits, if the GOP succeeds in muscling them into law.

But there are other questions about whether, as Democrats fear, linking taxes to chained CPI would lead directly to a slower rate of inflation for Social Security.

Goldwein said that implementing chained CPI for both taxes and spending at the same time was a natural trade, and that Republicans might have complicated matters by moving first to slow the inflation rate for taxes.

Either way, Goldwein added that chained CPI shouldn't get the blame from those opposed to the GOP tax proposals.

"I don't like the bill because it adds \$1.5 trillion to the debt and probably more in the long run," said Goldwein, before touting the benefits of a new inflation measure. "It's reasonable to fight about how we want to spend that money."

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Graham: Tax-cut failure 'not an option' [Back](#)

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 11/26/2017 10:55 AM EDT

Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#) said today that "failure is not an option" when it comes to cutting taxes.

Appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," the South Carolina Republican said the fate of the Republican Party is in senators' hands, as a vote on a massive tax bill looms this week in the Senate, perhaps as early as Thursday.

"The economy needs a tax cut, and the Republican Party needs to deliver," Graham said. "So, I think we'll get there."

The House already has passed its own tax bill, and the issue is now facing tough sledding in the Senate.

Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.), for one, is already against the bill, leaving a small Republican margin for passage, since Democrats are strongly opposed.

President Donald Trump [plans to meet](#) with senators this week ahead of the tax vote to ramp up support, as well as separately with top Republican and Democratic congressional leaders to discuss spending and other measures still pending in the Congress.

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GOP tax plan rattles higher education, renews charges of elitism [Back](#)

By Benjamin Wermund | 11/27/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Congressional Republicans' plans to slap unprecedented new taxes on higher education have left college leaders shocked and scrambling — the latest salvo in what some observers say is a growing culture war on a higher education system seen as elitist and out of touch.

While most college leaders said they don't believe they were targeted directly in tax reform legislation — and are rather collateral damage — they say the hit was startling, as higher education has long enjoyed bipartisan support. Higher education also is a powerful lobbying force on the Hill.

"I don't think anybody expected this," Tulane President Mike Fitts said. "I don't think a month-and-a-half ago anybody expected this many and this level of changes in the support for higher education in the United States."

In interviews with POLITICO, college presidents contended the tax proposals ([H.R. 1 \(115\)](#)) would be a devastating blow that would make college — especially graduate school — more expensive, and further out of reach of low- and middle-income families. That argument, however, may not go far, as polling shows many Americans are increasingly wary of colleges and universities, and are generally supportive of tax cuts.

"Very few Americans care" about the plight of colleges and especially about the problems of graduate students, said Jason Delisle at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "Very few of them are privileged enough to get a graduate degree from an elite institution. I think they're like, 'Complain all you want.' It's just not going to resonate with Main Street America."

Indeed, recent data shows the nation's most elite schools have long catered mostly to the wealthy, serving relatively few low- and middle-income Americans. Dozens of colleges enroll more students from the top 1 percent of earners than the bottom 60 percent, according to data from the Equality of Opportunity Project.

College presidents argue that's a trend they're working to combat — and that the proposed taxes would curtail those efforts. "I think it's unprecedented," Vanderbilt President Nicholas Zeppos said of the tax legislation. "It's troubling."

But there are signs public support for colleges is waning, especially among Republicans. A recent poll from Pew found 58 percent of Republicans view colleges negatively, while 72 percent of Democrats view them positively.

The tax bills, experts say, may well be part of that sentiment. Both the House and Senate levy new taxes on the largest private college endowments. The House would end deductions for student loan interest and tax tuition waivers for graduate students.

"I think it's part of a culture war ... no question," said Philip Altbach, a research professor and founding director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College. "It is part of an anti-higher education general feeling about what the role of higher education is in society and so on. I do think they should see it as a warning."

Congress is moving rapidly as colleges work to be heard. The House passed its sweeping rewrite of the tax code earlier this month. The Senate could vote on its version as soon as this week.

Higher education lobbying groups have been writing letters to leaders of both chambers and college leaders have been making calls and writing to their members of Congress. Graduate students, especially, are writing letters and making calls as well. With the House bill passed, the focus is on the Senate.

College leaders fear the tax plan is the latest sign they are losing the battle over public perception. The proposal comes after years of rising tuition prices have led many Americans to believe college is too expensive. It also follows a year of intense scrutiny over cultural issues on campuses, including conflicts over free speech that have crystallized the view among some Republicans that colleges are pushing a liberal agenda.

"We're being challenged on all of these fronts, and we see that reflected for example in the tax legislation," Rice University President David Leebron said. "We're being out-demagogued by folks who just want to talk about how wealthy we are rather than what we use those dollars for."

Colleges and universities need to do a better job of communicating the good they do for their communities, college leaders say — citing how they advance research in medicine and other fields and, in many cases, act as major job creators. They also need to be clearer about how they use their wealth, including endowments that in some cases top \$1 billion.

College leaders argue the endowments are crucial for the longevity of their institutions — but also that they are key to funding scholarships.

The leaders said they are most worried about parts of the tax proposals they argue directly affect students or make college more expensive.

At the top of the list is the House GOP's plan to tax as income tuition that schools now waive for graduate students working as teaching or research assistants. At some schools — where the tuition breaks run upwards of \$40,000 — that could more than triple students' taxable income, causing some to spend huge portions of their stipends, which are generally just around \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year, on massive tax bills.

College leaders argue the change will make graduate education unaffordable — at a time when the U.S. needs more students earning advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering and math fields to remain competitive globally.

"You're just going to have fewer graduate students. You're going to strangle the educational enterprise," Zeppos said. "Why would you tax people — particularly when you're falling behind in STEM areas — to get advanced training? I'm still waiting for someone to tell me that's really going to save the budget and it's really good public policy. That's one I'm still scratching my head on."

A spokeswoman for the House Ways and Means Committee said "graduate students, like all Americans, will be taxed at lower, simpler rates based on the compensation they receive — not based on the maze of costly deductions and exclusions Americans must navigate today."

College leaders also decry the House's plan to eliminate a student loan interest deduction, which Republicans argue is minimal compared to the larger break graduates would get from the changes in standard deduction.

House Republicans say the typical single person making \$30,000 right out of college would receive more than \$800 in tax relief, which they say is more than they would receive from the ability to deduct their student loan interest today.

Republicans also argue that, broadly, their plan will boost the economy and create more jobs to graduates.

The Ways and Means spokeswoman said the tax plan is aimed at making the tax code "simpler and fairer for all Americans and lowers rates at every income level."

The plan, she said, "provides hope to millions of young Americans who are going to find better job opportunities, get bigger paychecks, and keep more of the money they earn for what matters most to them. This is especially important for young Americans who are just starting out on their own."

But college leaders say they don't buy that type of argument.

"They're going to get a better job? Well, prove it. Right now all they're seeing is their deductibility on the interest on their loans is going to be added to their student indebtedness," Louisiana State University President F. King Alexander said.

"They're willing to throw higher education and our students under the bus to get a win on tax reform," Alexander said.

But perhaps the most in-your-face item aimed at higher education — especially elite colleges and universities — is a plan in both the House and Senate versions that would tax private university endowment earnings. The tax would only apply to private universities with at least 500 students and endowment assets of at least \$250,000 per student — between 60 and 70 schools.

"It's a very discriminatory, ill-thought-out proposal, which actually creates distinctions that don't make any sense at all," said Leebron, the president of Rice, whose endowment would be taxed. "The proposal literally makes no sense, as a coherent addition to the tax code, and represents a federal intrusion into universities that I think will only have adverse consequences."

Other college leaders who would be hit by the tax say they spend millions from their endowments each year to offer financial aid, especially to low-income students.

Vanderbilt, for instance, spends about \$250 million a year on financial aid, \$90 million of which comes from its endowment, Zeppos said. Seventy percent of undergraduates at Vanderbilt receive financial aid from the school, and the university has a policy that no undergraduates have to take on debt to attend. Vanderbilt's endowment totals about \$4 billion.

The endowment tax, Zeppos argued, will diminish those efforts.

"Now in effect, I've sent 200 scholarships to the federal government," he said.

Those concerns, however, have so far not swayed House Republicans, who passed the tax plan with ease. A spokesman for the House education committee said the chairwoman, [Virginia Foxx](#) (R-N.C.), supports the tax plan "because pro-growth tax reform will help workers and families see a raise in their wages and more money coming into their households.

"As a result, the Republican tax reform plan will provide more Americans with more opportunities of their choosing, including continuing education," the spokesman said.

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Trump to meet with Senate Republicans next week ahead of tax vote [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 11/24/2017 11:15 AM EDT

President Donald Trump will head to Capitol Hill next week to huddle with Senate Republicans as they prepare to pass their own tax overhaul when lawmakers return from the Thanksgiving break.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, who chairs the Senate Republican Policy Committee, made the announcement Friday. Trump made a similar visit to the House Republican Conference shortly before that chamber passed its tax legislation last week.

"We look forward to welcoming President Trump to the Senate again next Tuesday," Barrasso, the fourth-ranking Senate GOP official, said in a statement Friday. "This is a historic opportunity for our conference and the president to build on our momentum to give Americans the tax relief they've been waiting for."

Trump is also scheduled to meet separately with the top four congressional leaders - Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York - later that day.

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U.S. expats may be out of luck in tax reform [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 11/24/2017 08:00 AM EDT

U.S. citizens who live abroad are still pushing for their voices to be heard in tax reform, though their window of opportunity looks to be in the future.

Legislation moving quickly through Congress would end U.S. taxes on American companies' foreign profits, under a system known as territorial taxation, but it wouldn't alter the equation for their American employees stationed overseas, nor would it address other expatriates living outside the U.S. for other reasons.

Instead, they would continue to face citizen-based taxation rather than residence-based taxation, or RBT, a change they're fighting for in tax reform.

In citizen-based taxation, expatriates are subject to U.S. taxes on their foreign- and U.S.-source earnings; they get credits and allowance for taxes they pay abroad, though there can still be double taxation. Under RBT, their earnings from foreign sources would not be subject to U.S. taxes.

But the House passed legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), without such a provision. The Senate [bill](#) scheduled for a floor vote next week also excludes RBT language.

"I'm disappointed this wasn't in the House or Senate packages," said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform.

At this point, the best chance to make the change is probably down the road, said one of the issue's chief champions on Capitol Hill, Rep. [George Holding](#) (R-N.C.). He plans to introduce a bill as a separate follow-up to the sweeping legislation that GOP lawmakers hope to get to President Donald Trump by the end of this year.

A provision in the broader tax legislation that would allow companies to benefit from a territorial tax system should also extend to U.S. expatriates "to ensure that American citizens have a level playing field around the globe as well," said Holding, who sits on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee.

It's a matter of fairness, Norquist said, to give equal treatment to U.S. multinational companies and U.S. citizens abroad. If the fix for individuals doesn't ride with switching to territorial taxes for companies, it will be addressed soon, most likely in entitlement overhaul legislation he expects to come up in April.

"The current system disadvantages Americans working overseas just as it disadvantages American multinationals overseas," Norquist said.

An estimated 8 to 9 million Americans live and work abroad, and about two-thirds of them consider themselves long-term or permanent overseas residents. Most are well-educated, white collar workers, Holding said.

All of them benefit to some degree from credits and exclusions that account for taxes they pay where they live, but they nonetheless must deal with compliance that involves extensive paperwork to report to U.S. authorities. An exclusion for foreign earned income totaled \$102,100 per person this year, and expatriates can claim a credit for foreign taxes that are imposed by a foreign country or U.S. possession.

According to Holding, the citizen-based taxation system they continue to face is outdated, complicated and costly. Expatriates pay \$4,000 on average to file their taxes annually, a factor, along with burdensome bank reporting requirements in the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, in prompting some to renounce their U.S. citizenship, he said.

"That's a base erosion of human capital," Holding said.

In addition, switching to an RBT system would harmonize the U.S. with much of the rest of the world, and it wouldn't overly burden the IRS with new rules since it already applies RBT to nonresident aliens in the U.S.

But Holding hasn't decided on exact language for a bill, which according to some estimates

could result in \$20 billion in lost revenue over a decade, Norquist said.

Among options Holding is considering would be legislation to allow full RBT, or instead changes to the foreign earned income exclusion.

One group representing U.S. expatriates, American Citizens Abroad, is pushing a bill that wouldn't reduce federal revenue by changing to RBT. The current citizen-based taxation only raises about \$5 billion to \$8 billion annually.

The group's plan would include a number of requirements meant to guard against abuse, such as compelling U.S. citizens to prove they've established residence in a foreign country with an individual income tax greater than a token amount.

It would also require expatriates to prove that they resided in their adopted country for a five-year period prior to getting into the RBT system and that they filed all required U.S. income tax returns over that period. It also proposes a departure tax if the expatriate's assets exceed \$3 million, part of preventing someone from opting into the RBT system for tax evasion purposes, and they'd have to pay a \$2,350 fee to choose RBT.

But these anti-gaming provisions could be waived to grandfather in expats who can prove they've established overseas residences long ago.

At the very least, proving this bill language can be revenue neutral establishes a useful baseline for advancing the cause, said the executive director of American Citizens Abroad, Marylouise Serrato.

In the more immediate term, the group is pressing for a Senate floor amendment to get RBT included into the Senate bill next week, though Serrato declined to identify members who might introduce such amendments. Whether RBT gets added to the Senate tax bill or tacked onto entitlement legislation, Norquist said American expats deserve to be next in line.

"We're talking to interested parties on the Senate side and we're making our case," Serrato said.

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Newman's Own tax break [Back](#)

By Danny Vinik | 11/24/2017 07:44 AM EDT

It sells pasta sauce, lemonade, and 31 kinds of salad dressing with Paul Newman's face splashed prominently on the label. Its profits go entirely to charity. And, if the GOP tax bill passes, it will more or less have a section of the U.S. tax code all to itself.

The Newman's Own Foundation isn't mentioned in the Senate or House tax bills by name, but appears to be the target of a specific carveout—among the many highly targeted breaks and exemptions in the new GOP tax plans.

The unusual structure of the Newman's Own Foundation, a nonprofit charity that wholly owns a for-profit food company, leaves it vulnerable to a punitive 200 percent tax that would break up the arrangement, and for the past nine years it has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars lobbying Congress to change U.S. law so it can be exempt.

In this fall's tax overhaul, it looks like Congress is complying. Both the House and Senate tax bills contain a small provision with an almost impenetrable title—an "exception to the private foundation excess business holdings rules for philanthropic business holdings"—that would let the foundation keep owning the company without the tax penalty. The carveout, sponsored by Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) and Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Wash.), could spare another 20 to 30 foundations that would face a similar fate in the future.

For Newman's Own, based in Westport, Conn., the problem appears to have originated with Paul Newman himself. The legendary actor founded the food company Newman's Own in 1993 with a mission to give all the company's profits to charity. When he died, in 2008, he left the company to his private foundation so that his philanthropic legacy could survive. The company is still healthy; Newman's Own doesn't provide information on revenue or profits, but the foundation has recently donated \$26 to \$30 million a year to charity, including \$29 million last year to organizations working on issues such as nutrition and support for veterans. (Newman served in the Navy in World War II.)

But that structure has been a problem since the inception. Thanks to laws passed almost 50 years ago to prevent company owners from creating bogus tax shelters—and to ensure for-profit companies remain focused on making money—a private foundation isn't allowed to own more than 35 percent of a for-profit company for more than five years. If the Newman's Own Foundation didn't reduce its ownership of the food company within that period, it would be hit with a stiff penalty—a 200 percent tax on the value of the food company above the foundation's permitted ownership stake, intended to force the foundation to divest most of the company. In 2013, when the five-year deadline hit, the foundation got a five-year extension from the Internal Revenue Service. That expires next November, when the tax would kick in.

"We have absolutely run out of time. There is no way that anybody can give us more time," said Bob Forrester, the CEO of the Newman's Own Foundation. "There was only that one extension allowed. For us, it's really existential."

The exemption for private foundations that wholly-own for-profit companies is minor in the broader GOP tax overhaul; congressional scorekeepers estimate it would raise a few million dollars a year. But it offers a vivid illustration of just why tax reform is so hard—and why the tax code is so long and complicated. By all accounts, no one opposes the exemption, and previous standalone legislation to create such an exemption has attracted bipartisan support. But qualifying for the exemption requires foundations to meet a complicated, three-part test, written into the tax code, to ensure the company-nonprofit relationship isn't a tax dodge—which is only going to add pages to the tax code and provide more business for tax lawyers.

Though Newman's Own has been the chief driver of the changes, supporters say that the exemption matters far beyond just one foundation, and could give momentum to a new wave of innovative companies with philanthropic missions. Michael Pirron, the founder of the technology consulting company Impact Makers, has run into the same problem with his own firm. He founded Impact Makers with the intention of donating all its profits to charity—easy enough with him at the helm, but hard to guarantee when leadership passed to future executives. If he gifted full ownership of the company to a private foundation, that foundation

would face a huge tax bill in just five years.

Pirron found something of a workaround, donating ownership of the company to two public foundations. (Congress allowed public foundations to own for-profit companies because it believed they had stronger accountability protocols in place.) But this strategy forced Pirron to relinquish some control over the foundation, something that he wouldn't have had to do if the exemption passed. "If the law existed, we would have done something very differently," he said.

Many critics see the law as a long-outdated expression of the concerns of five decades ago. Though it might seem strange that Congress would set tough limits on a philanthropic structure, it made sense amid the growth of nonprofits in the postwar years. In the 1950's, Congress worried that the rich would shift not just their assets but entire companies into private foundations as way to avoid certain taxes. Beyond such tax strategies, they also had concerns about economic competitiveness, worried that for-profit companies owned by private foundations would become distracted from their money-making missions and that would hurt the broader economy. "Congress in the '50s thought the non-profit sector was going to gobble up the whole world," said Alex Reid, a tax lawyer who has consulted with congressional staff on past versions of the exemption.

So lawmakers crafted strict rules to limit private foundation's ownership stake to 20 percent of a for-profit company, rising to 35 percent in certain, rare circumstances.

"Frankly, looking back almost 50 years later, they took a very big hammer to close a very small hole that has precluded the growth of a new form of doing business," said Paul Godfrey, a tax lawyer who has conducted research in support of the proposed exemption. He estimates the change would cost the U.S. treasury about \$30 million in lost taxes over a decade, but would generate \$50 billion in economic benefits for the U.S. economy.

In crafting the new exemption, lawmakers and their aides remained concerned that it could be used as a tax haven for the rich, so they included a strict three-part test: the private foundation must own 100 percent of the for-profit company; all of the net profits from the company must go to the foundation; and there must be a certain level of independence between the foundation and the company.

Tax experts consulted for this story were confident that the three-part test would work, though they suggested that some enterprising lawyer would try to game them anyway.

For Forrester, the larger point of this exemption is to spur new kinds of philanthropy in the future. The company declined to provide revenue or volumes for competitive reasons, but noted that many business analysts doubted that Newman's business model of giving all profits to charity could be successful. Thirty-five years later, the company has donated more than \$500 million to charity, and the food company has continued to expand into new products, including five new organic versions of its classic salad dressings, like Caesar and ranch, and new organic pasta sauces that "make spaghetti sing," proving that the Newman model can work, and potentially encouraging a new generation of founders to follow a similar mission. But Forrester worries that unless the law is changed, young entrepreneurs will be discouraged from considering this path.

"This is two of the best aspects of American character: One side is small business entrepreneurship and the other side is philanthropic generosity," he said. "I don't have a

personal stake in this. I've been trying to retire for 10 years. It's such a great American thing we have. How can we not encourage that?"

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Pressure mounts to unmask Hill harassers [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Elana Schor | 11/22/2017 04:46 PM EDT

Pressure is mounting on congressional leaders to release the names of lawmakers who have secretly settled sexual harassment claims at taxpayer expense — a move that some members of Congress are loath to make.

President Donald Trump told reporters this week that he believes Congress should disclose the settlements. A handful of House members from both parties are calling on Republican leadership to do the same.

And Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.) proposed legislation Wednesday that would mandate public disclosure of sexual harassment settlements — and ban Congress from footing the bill for such deals in the future. Within a few hours of introducing his bill, DeSantis had been contacted by several Republican and Democratic lawmakers asking to sign on.

"It's taxpayer dollars at issue; taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being spent," DeSantis said in an interview, adding that he doesn't understand "why the taxpayer should ever be on the hook for private misconduct of a member. ... That should not be something the taxpayers are funding."

The effort by DeSantis and other lawmakers has sparked an uncomfortable debate inside an institution known for protecting its own. As a national controversy over sexual misconduct by powerful men swirls, some lawmakers worry that the push for disclosure could unfairly unmask members of Congress who insist they've been wrongly accused.

Speaker Paul Ryan's (R-Wis.) office and the House Administration Committee have not ruled out potential changes to the settlement reporting process as part of an ongoing review of the chamber's harassment policy. But there's strong, albeit quiet, resistance on Capitol Hill to disclosing the names of members who've reached settlements in the past.

Some lawmakers and aides worry that several sitting members of Congress are among those who've paid their accusers in recent years. Some of them say that settling a claim doesn't necessarily mean the member was guilty. There are times when it is preferable to settle than to engage in a prolonged legal battle, these people surmise.

Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.) made that point on CNN on Tuesday night, arguing that settlements "should be [made] public going forward" — but not retroactively.

"You may very well have people who ... were innocent but who thought [they] better get a settlement than go through protracted litigation," Nadler said.

But others argue that the taxpayer money involved trumps the case for keeping settlements private.

"They've used our tax dollars to settle cases where they're being accused, at least, of violating laws they're enacting and expect others to live under," said Jenny Beth Martin of the Tea Party Patriots. Martin's group is one of several calling for disclosure of lawmaker names.

It's not just fiscal hawks calling for more transparency. Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), a longtime sponsor of anti-sexual harassment legislation, has also urged leaders to release the names of lawmakers who've settled sexual harassment claims. Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) agreed, telling MSNBC on Tuesday that "any settlements should be made public."

Rep. Scott Taylor (R-Va.) told POLITICO on Wednesday that he's drafting a bill that would bar Congress from using taxpayer money for harassment settlements.

"There is no way that the taxpayer should be subsidizing predatory behavior. Period," said the freshman lawmaker, who sits on a House subcommittee that oversees lawmakers' office budgets.

The back-and-forth comes two days after BuzzFeed reported that Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the longest-serving House member, had used his office funds to settle a sexual harassment claim against him. In recent weeks, several publications including POLITICO have reported that current House rules enable the Office of Compliance, which handles employment disputes, to tap Treasury resources to pay settlements for disputes brought to them.

Aides to Ryan and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) have noted that the leaders don't currently have the names of the members who've settled such complaints, even if they wanted to release them.

But congressional leaders could likely get them if they asked. That's because the chairman and ranking member of the House Administration Committee, who have to approve any settlement payments issued by the Office of Compliance, would be expected to comply with any shift in policy agreed to by Ryan and Pelosi.

Since 1997, the compliance office has paid out \$17 million in workplace dispute settlements, a total that covers discrimination, workplace safety, and pay claims, as well as harassment cases.

There's another potential wrinkle to releasing names and details of all harassment settlements: The compliance office does not necessarily keep records of harassment settlements that are paid out of members' office budgets, sources familiar with the process told POLITICO. That approach, which was used by Conyers, ostensibly allows members to avoid getting House Administration Committee approval.

"Based on my experience, that ends up being the approach that is most feasible," said a source familiar with the compliance office's confidential process, and who asked not to be named in order to speak candidly. But, the source added, members who use internal budgets to settle claims risk looking like they are "getting around" a requirement to pay claims from the compliance office's fund.

DeSantis said that using office budgets to pay for settlements may be one loophole that allows

lawmakers to hide harassment claims even now. He wasn't sure if it is possible to force members to "self-disclose" whether they used their member office budgets to settle with accusers — though he encouraged reporters to try to identify any lawmakers who have done so.

DeSantis' bill would require all compliance office settlements to be made public as well as the details of the allegations. Victims' names would be kept secret, but DeSantis believes they should have a right to come forward to tell their stories.

His legislation, like the bill Taylor is working on, would also prohibit taxpayer money from being used to settle sexual harassment claims against lawmakers in the future. It would force any members involved in such payouts in the past to reimburse the Treasury for the payment, a requirement that's also included in broader legislation authored by Speier and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.).

Though Taylor's legislation wouldn't require accused lawmakers involved in settlements to be named, the Republican said he would back DeSantis' measure, which does have that provision.

If Republican leaders don't lean on the House Administration Committee to disclose settlements, they may have to deal with external pressure from outside conservative groups that are ramping up the pressure on Congress to disclose more information.

Judicial Watch, a conservative legal group that has used the Freedom of Information Act to uncover details of Hillary Clinton's emails, wants Congress to allow FOIA to apply to internal information such as the now-secret workplace misconduct settlements.

Currently FOIA does not apply to Congress, which for years has been shielded from document requests because lawmakers argue it would disrupt legislative deliberations.

"The fact is, we don't know what's going on on Capitol Hill because members of Congress want it that way," Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton said of the harassment settlements in a Tuesday [video](#) that the group posted on Twitter. "And the only way that's going to change is if the American people react."

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Trump doesn't know what's next after taxes [Back](#)

By Eliana Johnson, Andrew Restuccia and Ben White | 11/27/2017 05:04 AM EDT

The White House and Capitol Hill are singularly focused on passing a tax reform bill — but almost no one in Washington seems to know what the Trump administration will bear down on next.

White House policy initiatives are typically planned months in advance, with congruent strategies for communications and a view toward working them through Congress. But there is little agreement between White House officials and Republican leaders on the Hill about what should follow tax reform.

Over the course of conversations with nearly a dozen senior aides in the White House and on Capitol Hill, a range of possibilities surfaced, from welfare reform to the infrastructure program President Donald Trump touted on the campaign trail to revisiting Obamacare repeal — an effort that has twice frustrated the Trump administration.

The looming vacuum in the Republican agenda underscores how the relative chaos and disorganization of the Trump White House can affect policymaking across Washington. Former administration officials say the situation is virtually unprecedented, and that it is threatening the president's ability to score legislative victories for the GOP heading into next year's midterm elections. It may also cost Trump personally once the 2020 reelection campaign begins in earnest about a year from now.

"There is very little in the pipeline, and no obvious next item on the agenda after tax reform except maybe a return to health care," said Yuval Levin, the editor of *National Affairs*, a leading conservative policy journal, who works closely with Republicans on Capitol Hill. "Combine that with a president who doesn't think in terms of policy, and you've got no clear next step."

There are some things the administration needs to do no matter what. White House officials will have to work with Congress to get a budget passed in December. And, thanks to the president's executive order rolling back President Barack Obama's work-permit program for young undocumented immigrants, there will have to be a politically explosive debate between now and March about passing a Republican version — which will likely include a showdown over Trump's long-promised wall between Mexico and the United States.

The administration's disorganization is in part a reflection of the president's own indifference toward many policy issues — but the structure of Trump's White House staff has in many ways inhibited the sort of long-term policy planning characteristic of previous administrations.

Trump has never appointed a deputy chief of staff for policy solely responsible for developing a legislative strategy and coordinating the messaging around it, for example. Many White House aides have moonlighted in the position while attending to their formal duties. The president's former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, laid out early policy targets and was frequently photographed in front of a whiteboard in his office where he kept a handwritten "to do" list of priorities.

Former White House chief of staff Reince Priebus leaned on staff secretary Rob Porter, asking him at various points to take on a policy coordination role in addition to his full-time job — but Priebus himself never laid out a vision for what the policy process should look like.

Several other White House aides have also played a key role in policy development, including domestic policy chief Stephen Miller and deputy chiefs of staff Kirstjen Nielsen and Rick Dearborn, but none is fully responsible for charting administration policy over the long term.

Chief of staff John Kelly, who replaced Priebus in July, has brought some order to the White House, but the retired Marine general doesn't have a deep background in policymaking — and where domestic policy initiatives are concerned, domestic policy aides say they have felt fettered and complained of order without purpose, according to three people close to the president.

The White House's relatively weak domestic policy team has been overshadowed by Gary

Cohn and his National Economic Council. Cohn, a government neophyte, has built out a staff capable of rivaling the Domestic Policy Council, which typically charts domestic policy, introducing a source of internal rivalry and instability — a key reason Cohn has taken the lead on tax reform, for example, while domestic policy aides have taken a back seat.

"The NEC team is much larger than in previous White Houses, and the DPC team leaves something to be desired," said a senior White House aide. "In that void, I think Gary's team has proven much stronger than the DPC team."

The general disorganization may exact costs on the administration beyond depriving it of legislative victories. It may also make it harder for the White House to retain staff or to attract replacements as administration officials begin to leave next year.

Domestic policy aides who eagerly joined the administration in January to roll back Obamacare and reform the tax code in the first year of the Trump presidency are less clear what staying on for another year might entail. And while health care and tax reform were legislative causes with which conservative policy wonks have long engaged — and even those lukewarm on Trump's candidacy felt they could contribute to the administration in a policy role — they feel differently about the coming year.

The absence of clear goals for the year ahead has several White House staffers eyeing the exits, according to three people familiar with their plans. The director of the Domestic Policy Council, Andrew Bremberg, who worked on health care before joining the administration, has told associates that he plans to leave the administration in January. Jeremy Katz, a deputy assistant to the president who has served as Cohn's right hand on economic initiatives, as well as others on the free-trade side of the administration's debates on economic policy, have told colleagues they are uncertain whether they will stick around beyond tax reform.

Cohn is expected to remain in his job next year if the tax reform push is successful, but he could wind up leaving if Trump embraces anti-free-trade positions, such as a unilateral pullout from NAFTA.

There are signs that both the White House and Congress are preparing to turn to welfare reform in the new year. House Speaker Paul Ryan told donors assembled at a Koch brothers conference in Wichita, Kansas, late last month that Republican lawmakers would tackle welfare after tax reform passes the Congress, according to two people familiar with the remarks — an idea the president mentioned last week, telling reporters that "people are taking advantage of the system."

Ryan's 2016 "Better Way" agenda laid out a blueprint for welfare reform, but there is no indication that the White House is prepared to sign on to his approach, and, on the staff level, little work has been done at the White House to indicate to lawmakers what the president wants a bill to look like.

Meanwhile, when the tax package moved from the House to the Senate, Cohn [said publicly](#) that "we'll put infrastructure into the House" — a sequence at odds with Ryan's message to GOP donors.

Senior White House officials did not dispute characterizations of the general confusion surrounding the sequencing of these legislative initiatives, and they said the administration is likely to push welfare reform as well as infrastructure and a health care bill — something that

resembles the Graham-Cassidy legislation that stalled in the Senate in September — over the next year.

"It will be all three of them in an order that depends on what the congressional calendar looks like," said a senior White House aide.

"The president ran on and has pushed a bold, aggressive agenda that is ending business as usual in Washington and putting Americans first," said deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley. "President Trump has delivered on many of his agenda items in record time — and no arbitrary amount of unnecessary bureaucratic layers will prevent continued successes on behalf of the American people in the new year."

The dynamic inside Trump's White House differs from that of previous administrations, where the sequencing of domestic initiatives was carefully planned by White House officials working closely with party leaders on Capitol Hill.

In the George W. Bush administration, the role of deputy chief of staff for policy was held both by Josh Bolten, who went on to become the president's chief of staff, and by Karl Rove, who served as the mastermind behind the timing and rollout of policy initiatives throughout his time in the White House.

During Bolten's tenure, Bush administration officials recall, weekly meetings in his West Wing office focused on a calendar he had pinned on his wall that folded out from the current month to reveal the next four months.

"We thought about this stuff very carefully; we had detailed discussions about it," said a former Bush administration official who participated in the conversations. "The timing of this stuff was carefully thought through, as was the messaging."

Bush officials say they made mistakes — but not for lack of planning. Rove has said publicly on many occasions that one of the biggest mistakes of the Bush presidency, a plan he fought for at the time, was pushing for changes to Social Security after Bush's 2004 reelection before tackling immigration reform. Both efforts ultimately failed, a reality that underscores the importance of the sequencing of domestic policy initiatives given the political mood in the country and in the Congress.

"I believe that running the Social Security idea right after the '04 elections was a mistake," Bush said in his final news conference. "I should have — should have argued for immigration reform."

Obama administration officials tell a similar story of balancing the president's priorities with attention to the hard deadlines in Congress and the political mood of the country. "We had clear priority areas that we went into every year and that we refreshed at the six-month point," said Cecilia Muñoz, who served as director of the Domestic Policy Council for five years during the Obama administration.

With the exception of immigration, Trump didn't campaign on a detailed policy platform. In office, he has relied on Congress to hammer out the details of legislation and, at times, the order of policy pushes. It was Ryan's idea, for example, to tackle health care before tax reform, and as the health bill crumbled, the president told associates he regretted agreeing to put Obamacare repeal first.

A more traditional White House, however, would be guiding Congress rather than vice versa. "It's not unusual for people in Congress to have different perspectives about what's important and what comes next," said Muñoz.

But over the Thanksgiving weekend, Trump gave hints that he's still preoccupied with the victory that eluded him in his first months: a health care overhaul. "Even though Dems want to Obstruct," he tweeted on Thanksgiving Day, "we will Repeal & Replace right after Tax Cuts!"

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From: POLITICO Pro Budget and Appropriations
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Budget & Appropriations: Lingering policy issues haunt spending negotiators — Democrats jockey for sweeter disaster deal in January — McConnell pours more cold water on entitlement reform
Date: Friday, December 22, 2017 4:02:21 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/22/2017 03:59 PM EDT

THE DO-IT-LATER LIST: Government funding is now set to expire on Jan. 19, leaving little time for lawmakers to cull consensus around passing another stopgap — let alone an omnibus built from those still-elusive budget caps. What's more, Congress has only handled a few of the prickliest policy issues that now threaten to vex spending negotiators as they deal with demands for more contentious "riders," as Sarah [explains today](#).

Here's what got done in this week's spending deal ([H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#)) and what still lingers:

Out of the picture (for now):

- PAYGO: Waived
- VA Choice: Funded through fall 2018
- Extra [emergency cash](#) for missile defense and ship repairs
- Children's Health Insurance Program: [Funded](#) through March 31
- Community health centers: [Funded](#) through March

Still an issue:

- FISA authority: [Extended](#) through Jan. 19
- [DACA deal](#)
- Miners' pensions
- Disaster aid
- Flood insurance: [Extended](#) through Jan. 19

Tighter timeline: The House and Senate were only expected to be in session for [11 days](#) before the next funding deadline hit. And just today, leaders in the lower chamber announced they would be further abridging that timeline, opting to cancel legislative work during the first week of January. That means that, while the Senate is still planning to work for 11 days before the next doomsday, the House is now down to just eight.

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Hibernation time. Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: *Budget & Appropriations Brief* will not publish from Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Our next *Budget & Appropriations Brief* will publish on Tues. Jan. 2. Please continue to follow Pro Budget & Appropriations issues [here](#).

Doc of the day — A bipartisan group of lawmakers is [urging](#) House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) to address the looming pension crisis that would hit unions like the United Mine Workers. Several lawmakers had pushed for a pension funding fix in this week's spending bill, to no avail.

#DailyBudgetFact — On this day in 1825, the Library of Congress — then located on the west side of the U.S. Capitol — caught fire, Andrew Glass [recalls](#) in the latest in our This Day in Politics [series](#). These days, the library's budget exceeds \$630 million, and its structures are well-fortified against major blaze.

DISASTER AID

BETTER BARGAINING POSITION: Everything seemed to be coming together this week for states waiting on billions of dollars in disaster aid. Despite early whip worries, the House more than easily passed the \$81 billion bill ([H.R. 4667 \(115\)](#)) Thursday after making tweaks to appease those from disaster-struck regions. But then in the Senate, it was: Gavel down, leave town — with that legislation lying cold on the clerk's desk.

The upper chamber's inaction this year could ultimately be a boon, though, for those hoping for a sweeter deal, as Sarah [explains for Pros](#).

Holding out: Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) has already publicly detailed the demands Democrats will be making in January exchange for their essential votes. "I think we can work it out in a bipartisan way. I certainly do," Schumer said Thursday, while both blaming Republicans for neglecting action on the aid bill and suggesting the upper chamber hold off on taking it up until after the holidays.

What Schumer says Senate Democrats will be seeking:

— "Fair" treatment for California, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

— Nixing of a new business tax that "treats Puerto Rico as if it's a foreign country."

— Cost-sharing lenience, more Medicaid funding and extension of the earned income tax credit for Puerto Rico.

Greater expectations: Even Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said Thursday that he's OK with the Senate waiting until next month. "We're expecting a better bill," he told [Fox News](#). And Texas Gov. Greg Abbott released a statement saying he hopes to work with the Senate to "improve the disaster funding to ensure it addresses the acute needs of Texans."

Vote breakdown: No matter what anybody says about the unpopularity of any given disaster aid bill, it's still politically risky to oppose such a measure. And that reality was reflected in the House's passage tally Thursday. Among Republicans, 182 voted in support and 51 in opposition. Among Democrats, 69 voted in support and 118 in opposition. Check out the [full roster](#) of "yeas" and "nays."

ENTITLEMENT REFORM

MORE COLD WATER: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) took another jab today at his House Republican colleagues' aspirations to overhaul entitlement and welfare programs,

Seung Min Kim [reports](#) this afternoon. "I've been here a while, and the only time we've been able to do that is on a bipartisan basis," McConnell said during his year-end news conference. "It was Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill raised the age of Social Security. And that was before I got here. So it's been a while." The majority leader added that "the sensitivity of entitlements is such that you almost have to have a bipartisan agreement in order to achieve a result."

What's doable? The Kentucky Republican said he hopes leaders can reach an agreement on budget caps in the New Year, saying "there's an urgency" around raising defense levels, especially.

APPROPRIATIONS

SPENDING SOLSTICE: It was the shortest day of the year, but both chambers somehow cleared the stopgap spending bill ([H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#)) in no time flat Thursday. As expected, the House passed the continuing resolution with [largely](#) GOP votes (plus a few dozen Democrats who joined in after Republicans crossed the 217 threshold on their own). The Senate's [evening vote](#) sailed to passage with 66 supporters. And President Donald Trump [signed the bill](#) today before heading to his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Sausage making: For several minutes on the Senate floor, we saw Democrats huddling around the clerk's desk, essentially pulling straws to decide who got to cast "no" votes in protest, and who had to take one for the team and vote "aye" to keep the government running. In the end, 29 Democrats ultimately voted in opposition.

Not all cheers and champagne: Thursday's continuing resolution is the third stopgap bill since Sept. 30, prolonging the pattern of fiscal dysfunction on Capitol Hill. "Having to avoid a shutdown is a sign of failure and shouldn't be celebrated. It's like saying you avoided getting an F with a D-," long-time budget guru Stan Collender [notes](#) today.

HOMELAND SECURITY

A CANINE CRISIS: There are few line items appropriators love more than cash for bomb-sniffing dogs. And the Transportation Security Administration has been reaping the benefits of that affinity for several years. But the agency isn't just dependent on money to build up those canine teams — it needs a good source of specially bred super pups, too. And as Stephanie Beasley [explains](#) today, fierce global competition for those animals has raised concern that TSA won't have enough pooches to meet demands at airports and other hubs. So to build its canine cadre, the agency says it's ramping up contracting and increasingly looking to rely on U.S.-bred dogs.

Plusing up the pups: TSA has about 1,000 bomb-sniffing canines and buys them at a rate of about 400 per year. For fiscal 2018, appropriators have proposed funding for maintaining a force of about 1,050 mutts and have called on TSA to lay out plans for expanding the program, as well as further increasing training capacity at its center in San Antonio. For fiscal 2019, appropriators have asked TSA to specifically request funding for a third-party program for certifying dogs that check air cargo.

Also check out [Steph's Q&A](#) with TSA canine handler Doug Timberlake.

WHITE HOUSE

CONFIRMATION SPREE: In a last legislative sweep before adjourning for the year, the Senate confirmed more than two-dozen Trump administration nominees late Thursday night, including chief financial officers for the departments of Energy, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs. We've got the [full list](#).

Not so lucky: At the same time, about 100 of Trump's nominees were kicked back to the White House, prolonging an unusually high number of vacancies across his administration and escalating the Senate's long-running nomination wars, Andrew Restuccia and Seung Min Kim [report](#). About 150 more nominees were held over for Senate consideration next year.

OBAMACARE

READY TO MOVE ON: Congressional Republicans have been whispering it for months: *No more Obamacare repeal bills*. But on Thursday, McConnell made it official. "I think we'll probably move on to other issues," he told NPR.

'We own it now': For GOP election watchers, it's the obvious choice to avoid getting pummeled next November. But for some conservatives, abandoning Obamacare is seen as abandoning their party's base. That includes Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.), an author of one of the big 2017 repeal efforts, as Cristiano Lima and Jennifer Haberkorn [report](#). "We should do everything we can to replace it, as much as [Democrats] did to pass it," Graham told reporters. "We own it now."

Boomerang bill: The Senate's bipartisan Alexander-Murray deal nearly caused a shutdown-sized showdown among House conservatives this week. The authors, Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.), say they're committed to getting the bill done in January, with maybe even some added provisions, Jennifer Haberkorn [reports](#).

CONGRESS

MISCONDUCT MONEY: Congress' compliance office has finally divulged the total cost of workplace misconduct claims in the Senate. As Elana Schor [reports](#), at least \$600,000 in public money has been spent over the past 20 years to settle 13 claims against senators' offices, according to data released late Thursday.

Still deliberating: A bipartisan group of House negotiators was supposed to release a plan to overhaul Capitol Hill's workplace harassment policy but delayed the release of that proposal Thursday, Elana [explains](#).

Farenthold faces more allegations: All the while, the House Ethics Committee continues to plug away in its investigation of harassment allegations against Rep. [Blake Farenthold](#) (R-Texas), now expending that probe to include claims that he improperly used official resources for campaign activities and lied to ethics investigators, John Bresnahan [reports](#).

HEALTH CARE

LONE STAR STATE LUCKS OUT: The Trump administration approved a \$25 billion, five-year extension this week of a Medicaid waiver that has funneled nearly \$37 billion to Texas hospitals since 2011. Renuka Rayasam [explains](#) that the \$3.1 billion pool of money state hospitals use to fund charity care will remain level for the first two years of the waiver, according to [a letter](#) HHS sent to the state health commission. Starting in October 2019, the

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services plans to "resize" that pool to more accurately reflect hospital charity care costs.

340B TENSIONS: As Congress considers a bill that would make major changes to the federal drug discount program, David Pittman [explains](#) how the dynamic among various branches of one Detroit hospital chain perfectly illustrates the pressure points in the debate over the 340B program. At stake? Billions of dollars in savings for hospitals vs. billions in costs to taxpayers and the pharmaceutical industry.

EARMARKS

- Tax cut complete, hawks push for military increase. [The Hill](#).
- OMB's new deputy for management faces a big challenge. [GovExec](#).
- Trump predicts GOP will work with Democrats 'for the good of the country' on infrastructure. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- Mulvaney tells CFPB staff he's bringing six Trump loyalists on board. [The Intercept](#).
- Western states poised to lose more than \$1 billion under tax bill. [Governing](#).
- Nearly 9 million enroll in HealthCare.gov, surpassing expectations. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 26 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Jan. 17).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/lingering-policy-issues-haunt-spending-negotiators-061719>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

The do-it-later list in the stopgap spending bill [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/22/2017 02:11 PM EDT

Congress' lengthy "to-do" list on money matters turned in to a "do-it-later" list with the holidays at hand.

Lawmakers Thursday night approved their third short-term spending bill in three months, ending this month's high-drama funding fight on an anticlimactic note. The legislation fends off a government shutdown, but just for four weeks.

So much for Congress' self-imposed "Cliffmas" deadline: On nearly every decisive issue, any real decisions have been punted until Jan. 19.

Even though lawmakers stripped out every contentious add-on from the spending bill, GOP leaders scrambled for days to clear it. The stopgap, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), is so far from a traditional spending bill that President Donald Trump referred to it as a "much needed 4 billion dollar missile defense bill" on [Twitter](#) on Friday.

Just how bad will January be? Besides keeping the government open, lawmakers completed only one item from their 2017 spending to-do list: averting massive cuts to social programs under the obscure PAYGO budget rule. Everything else will boomerang back in 2018.

Here's what Congress (sort of) got done in this week's spending bill:

— The Children's Health Insurance Program receives a spending patch through March 31, but the fate of the long-bipartisan program remains [in flux](#).

— The controversial snooping programs authorized under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act are extended through Jan. 19. But deep divisions within the GOP and across the two chambers make it hard to see a path forward for a long-term bill.

— The cash-drained National Flood Insurance Program can keep making payouts through at least Jan. 19. Republicans in the House and Senate remain far from an agreement about how to keep the program solvent long-term.

— The Pentagon's budget now has an extra \$4.6 billion for missile defense programs and repairs to two badly damaged Navy destroyers. Congressional leaders still haven't agreed how much to spend on overall defense spending (or nondefense) for fiscal year 2018.

— The Veterans Choice Program, which allows some veterans to see private doctors and use private hospitals, was given another extra \$2.1 billion (the same amount it received in August) to last into fall 2018.

— Both chambers easily agreed to waive federally mandated PAYGO cuts that would have been triggered by the GOP's \$1.5 trillion tax law, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), next year. This is the only item on Congress' checklist that won't need a fix at all in 2018.

And here's what Congress completely ignored in the bill:

— Roughly \$81 billion in disaster aid was pulled out of the spending bill at the last minute after facing resistance among some House conservatives and Democrats who demanded more funding for Puerto Rico. A separate bill, [H.R. 4667 \(115\)](#), which already cleared the House, will now be considered by the Senate in January.

— Democrats ultimately backed down on their threats to hold up the spending bill until they secured a fix for so-called DREAMers, undocumented immigrants who came to the country as minors. A bipartisan coalition of lawmakers has worked toward a compromise bill that could reach a vote in January.

— Funding for looming pension shortfalls was again left out of the spending bill, despite pushes from a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers. Congress has been asked to chip in for pension plans for miners, Teamster truck drivers and food service workers to avert insolvency in the next few years.

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Revised CR includes emergency funding for missile defense, ship repairs [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 12/21/2017 10:37 AM EDT

Stopgap spending legislation set for a vote today in the House includes an extra several billion dollars for missile defense programs and repairs to two badly damaged Navy destroyers.

The extra emergency spending — which totals just over \$4.6 billion — is likely aimed at attracting the support of defense hawks for the continuing spending resolution after House Republican leaders abandoned plans to include a full-year Pentagon funding bill in the CR.

Lawmakers must pass funding legislation by Friday to avert a government shutdown. The stopgap, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), would keep all federal agencies funded through Jan. 19.

The measure includes a total of approximately \$2.4 billion for missile defense procurement. It would allocate \$1.3 billion for missile defense research and development across the military services as well as \$43 million for missile defense operations and maintenance for missile defense.

The CR also includes \$200 million for the construction of a missile interceptor field in Alaska.

The legislation also allocates \$674 million to repair the Navy destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain. The ships were badly damaged in separate collisions in the Pacific that killed a combined 17 sailors.

President Donald Trump requested additional funding for missile defense to counter North Korea's nuclear and missile threat as well as repairs to the two destroyers last month.

The measure also would delay mandatory across-the-board cuts to defense and domestic spending slated to take place in January.

Text of the updated CR is [here](#) and a summary of the bill provisions is [here](#).

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Short-term funding deal leaves community health centers in limbo [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 12/22/2017 12:46 PM EDT

Community health centers, who saw a bulk of their long-term funding expire at the end of September, said the stopgap spending bill Congress passed Thursday before leaving town did little to resolve their financial worries.

Under the continuing resolution, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), the health centers receive about \$550 million, which HHS says is enough to keep them funded through March. But beyond that there is still uncertainty about future funding.

"There are so many different ways in which this crazy month-to-month insanity is really

making it difficult for health centers to operate on a normal basis," said Dan Hawkins, policy director for the National Association of Community Health Centers. "It's the biggest reason why we're so severely disappointed they couldn't get this job done."

The \$3.6 billion annual appropriation to health centers, representing about 70 percent of their federal funding, expired at the end of September — the same time long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program ran out. Though the health centers and CHIP have bipartisan support, efforts to reauthorize their funding were sidelined by the tax debate in Congress.

The timeline for funding contracts varies, but for some groups they're slated to expire at the end of this year.

The biggest difficulty created by the funding uncertainty is trepidation around signing long-term contracts. Many community health centers rely partly on contract medical workers to deliver care and often lease their facilities.

Last month, Westside Family Healthcare [shuttered a facility](#) in Middletown, Del., that served 2,800 patients because its lease was expiring and it was worried about committing to a new contract with the fate of federal funding unknown.

Mary Zelazny, CEO of Finger Lakes Community Health, said the center started notifying contractors two weeks ago about uncertainty over whether they'll have the money to continue paying them. The center is also considering putting off breaking ground on two new facilities, potentially jeopardizing grant commitments that they've received for the projects.

"We're down to the wire here trying to figure out what we're going to do," Zelazny said.

The funding limbo has also made hiring and retaining staff more difficult. Jamie Berrens, CEO of Cincinnati's Crossroad Health Center, said the company halted plans for hiring and delayed pay raises slated to take effect Jan. 1.

"Staff is very jittery about it," Berrens said. "Nobody wants to come to a place where they could be laid off in two months."

Congress will try again to come up with a longer-term funding bill when the current measure runs out in mid-January.

But there's little realistically that some health centers can do to prepare for the possibility that the funding could be disrupted. Project Renewal, which works with homeless residents of New York City, relies on the federal funding for half of its annual budget. The group had just received a three-year contract renewal, which was slated to begin in January.

"Our ability to hedge against something like this is extremely limited," said Aaron Felder, Project Renewal's director of health care operations and planning. "We would have to radically alter the scale and scope our practice."

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House lawmakers approve short-term surveillance extension [Back](#)

By Martin Matishak | 12/21/2017 05:04 PM EDT

The House today passed a stopgap spending measure that extends the life of powerful electronic spying tools for another month.

Members voted, 231-188, to approve a continuing resolution that funds the government until Jan. 19 and retains the surveillance programs allowed under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The measure now goes to the Senate for final approval, where it is expected to pass, before heading to President Donald Trump's desk for a final signing.

Lawmakers were forced to attach a short-term 702 reauthorization to the broader bill after they [failed to get enough votes](#) to pass a more long-range extension that would have also revised the snooping efforts to some degree.

Earlier this week House Intelligence Committee members [predicted](#) their 702 bill, [H.R. 4478 \(115\)](#), would receive a standalone vote on the floor. Others had pressed for the lower chamber to vote separately on a competing 702 measure approved by the Judiciary Committee, [H.R. 3989 \(115\)](#), which included more alterations to the spying programs.

But those plans were scuttled when another iteration — based largely on the Intelligence panel's bill — was [posted](#) to the House Rules Committee on Tuesday night. That strategy, in turn, was [scrapped](#) in the face of bipartisan resistance in both chambers.

Hours before the vote, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, FBI Director Christopher Wray and other leaders of the intelligence community issued a strongly-worded joint statement [urging](#) lawmakers to not let the programs expire.

"Let us be clear: if Congress fails to act, vital intelligence collection on international terrorists and other foreign adversaries will be lost," they said. "The country will be less secure."

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Latino Democrats to Schumer: Don't forget 'DREAMers' [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 12/21/2017 06:21 PM EDT

A group of Latino Democrats marched to Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#)'s office Thursday to urge him to keep immigration at the top of the party's agenda as Congress moves to pass a spending bill.

Eighteen members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus met with Schumer to insist that he prioritize in spending negotiations a fix for so-called DREAMers brought to the United States as children, according to meeting attendees.

House Republicans [passed](#) a short-term spending bill, [H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#), late Thursday afternoon that would fund the government until Jan. 19, but that bill didn't address immigration or other Democratic concerns, such as long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. The Senate is expected to vote on its spending bill Thursday night.

The Latino lawmakers pressed Schumer to take a stand on DREAMers when the bill heads to the Senate floor. "Leader Schumer promised he'd urge the majority of senators to vote 'no' — as many as possible," Rep. [Darren Michael Soto](#) (D-Fla.) said after the meeting. "And if we can't get it done now, we will lay it all on the line on [Jan.] 19 when we come back."

Congress must pass the spending bill before midnight Friday to avoid a government shutdown, and some Democrats view it as their best shot to pass the DREAM Act, [S. 1615 \(115\)](#), which would provide a path to lawful permanent status to an estimated 1.7 million undocumented immigrants.

"We understand the anxiety of the Hispanic caucus and share their anguish on this issue," Schumer said in a statement. "We're going to do everything we can to get the Dream Act done."

Rep. [Raúl M. Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) said a "significant" number of his Senate counterparts would likely oppose the bill, but that he wasn't sure that would be enough to tank it. "I don't know," he said, "and neither did Schumer."

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) prefers to deal with immigration next year, and [said](#) Wednesday that he would allow a floor vote on a DACA bill by the end of January if a bipartisan group of senators and the White House reached an agreement.

Earlier in the day, Democrats tried to add the DREAM Act, [H.R. 3440 \(115\)](#), to the House spending bill as it moved through the Rules Committee, but Republicans [blocked](#) the maneuver.

CHC Chairwoman [Michelle Lujan Grisham](#) (D-N.M.) joined House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) at the committee hearing to petition for inclusion of the bill. Lujan Grisham echoed her support for the measure after meeting with Schumer.

"We need more senators voting with us," Lujan Grisham said.

Several Democratic senators have vowed to oppose a spending bill that doesn't deal with DREAMers, including [Dianne Feinstein](#) (D-Calif.), ranking member on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Rep. [Luis V. Gutiérrez](#) (D-Ill.) said he felt he did his job when he told Schumer to prioritize the issue. "We were very clear," Gutiérrez said. "Don't throw our DREAMers under the bus."

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Congress extends flood insurance program [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 12/22/2017 11:35 AM EDT

Congress has agreed to renew the National Flood Insurance Program to Jan. 19 as part of [legislation](#) passed last night to keep the government open.

The program, which protects homeowners from the financial perils of flooding, was set to expire today without action.

WHAT'S NEXT: Short flood insurance extensions have been riding on government funding bills as lawmakers negotiate a long-term agreement to reauthorize and overhaul the NFIP. The focus of activity is in the Senate, after the House passed a reauthorization bill last month.

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Library of Congress catches fire, Dec. 22, 1825 [Back](#)

By Andrew Glass | 12/22/2017 12:00 AM EDT

On this day in 1825, the Library of Congress, then located on the west side of the U.S. Capitol, caught fire.

As he left a Capitol Hill dinner party that evening, Rep. Edward Everett of Massachusetts noticed a light glowing in a window near the library. Everett told a Capitol police officer what he had seen, but the officer, who lacked a key to the library door, dismissed Everett's concern.

Other officers, however, saw the glow rise in intensity and summoned the librarian of Congress, George Watterston, to the Capitol. Watterston and the police then discovered a fire on the upper level of the library. Reps. Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Sam Houston of Tennessee arrived on the scene, along with Everett, to help fight the fire.

Firefighters managed to extinguish the blaze before it could spread to the ceiling and other parts of the Capitol. After the smoke settled, they determined that an unattended candle had caused the fire.

The damage proved less extensive than the inferno of Aug. 1814, which occurred when an invading British force torched the Capitol and many other sites in the city, as well.

Among the items lost in the 1825 fire were duplicate copies of books and a classy rug. The library fire prompted Congress to ask Charles Bulfinch, the architect of the Capitol, to introduce flame-retardant materials within the Capitol.

On Dec. 24, 1851, the largest fire in the library's history destroyed 35,000 books, about two-thirds of its 55,000-volume collection. That loss included about two-thirds of the 6,487 books that Congress had bought from Thomas Jefferson for \$23,950 in 1815 to replace and augment the 3,000 volumes that had been burned by the British.

With the completion of the Thomas Jefferson Building on First Street SE in 1897, the Library of Congress moved out of the Capitol. The library's facilities now extend to the John Adams Building, which was completed in 1939, and the James Madison Memorial Building, which opened in 1980. It also maintains the Packard Campus in Culpeper, Virginia, which houses the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center.

The collection currently encompasses more than 38 million books and other printed materials, 3.6 million recordings, 14 million photographs, 5.5 million maps, 8.1 million pieces of sheet music and 70 million manuscripts, 5,711 artifacts and 122,810,430 items in nonclassified special collections.

In 1783, James Madison, who went on to serve as the nation's fourth president, came up with the idea of creating a congressional library. It was established April 24, 1800, when President John Adams signed an act of Congress providing for the transfer of the seat of government from Philadelphia to the newly built capital city of Washington.

Jefferson signed a bill in 1802 that called on presidents to nominate librarians of Congress. It also set up a Joint Congressional Committee on the library that oversees the facility.

SOURCE: HISTORIAN, CLERK OF THE U.S. HOUSE

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McConnell forecasts bipartisanship in new year [Back](#)

By Seung Min Kim | 12/22/2017 01:35 PM EDT

After a rough-and-tumble year of partisan battles, Mitch McConnell says he's ready to try something new: bipartisanship.

The Senate majority leader's two marquee accomplishments in 2017 — a massive tax overhaul and confirmation of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court — were done with little or no Democratic support. His bid to repeal Obamacare collapsed, but that was never meant to pick up Democratic votes anyway.

But now McConnell is adopting a bipartisan tone as Republicans head into a difficult election year in which control of the Capitol is at stake.

"I think one thing you can say about this year, it was pretty partisan," McConnell said Friday during his traditional year-end news conference on Capitol Hill. "We're gonna be looking for areas of bipartisan agreement because that's the way the Senate is. There's only a few narrow exceptions, as all of you know, to those principles in the Senate."

Laying out his preliminary agenda for 2018, McConnell said he is "almost certain" that he will tee up legislation that curbs part of the Dodd-Frank law that overhauled the financial industry after the 2008 crisis. That bill can likely overcome any filibuster threat, as it has nearly a dozen Democratic co-sponsors, including some who are the GOP's biggest political targets in the November midterms.

McConnell also stressed that he has committed to bringing up legislation to address the future of hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants in the United States as long as a bipartisan group of senators can strike an agreement. The Kentucky Republican has also mentioned overhauling the nation's infrastructure as a potential policy target for next year.

McConnell also signaled he has little interest in pursuing some sharply partisan measures next year. Of Senate Republicans who are itching to take up Obamacare repeal again, he said simply, "I wish them well." And McConnell again threw cold water on the prospect of Speaker Paul Ryan's desire to overhaul entitlement and welfare programs.

"I've been here a while and the only time we've been able to do that is on a bipartisan basis," McConnell said of changing entitlement programs. "It was Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill, raised the age of Social Security and that was before I got here, so it's been a while."

McConnell added: "The sensitivity of entitlements is such that you almost have to have a bipartisan agreement in order to achieve a result."

President Donald Trump will meet with Ryan and McConnell in early January to begin hashing out the party's 2018 agenda, the majority leader told reporters.

On Trump, McConnell said the two men have "established a really good working relationship" — despite deep disputes between them earlier this year over the failure of Obamacare repeal and political campaign strategy.

"You can sense this tax exercise kind of brought everybody together, because we knew we weren't going to have any support from the other side," McConnell said. "We worked together seamlessly. I think we go into the new year with a high level of confidence in our ability to work together with the administration."

McConnell is even coming around to one of Trump's practices he once criticized: "With regard to the president's tweeting habits, I haven't been a fan until this week. I'm warming up to the tweets, actually."

He also urged Sens. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), the leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee, to complete a bipartisan report on Russian meddling into the 2016 campaign because "if it's purely partisan, I don't think anybody will give it any credibility."

Still, McConnell acknowledged some looming political clashes are on the horizon.

While he said he hoped he could reach an agreement with Democrats on lifting strict spending caps for defense and domestic programs, the majority leader said the Pentagon has been hit harder, budgetwise, and that "there's an urgency there" with relieving the across-the-board cuts enacted under a 2011 deficit reduction law.

Democrats have demanded equal increases in spending for both domestic and defense programs.

And on immigration, McConnell declined to answer whether he personally supports a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers. While the bipartisan Senate group is discussing ways to provide a permanent status for the young undocumented immigrants, a GOP plan McConnell has

endorsed only provides temporary protections to current beneficiaries of the Deferred Actions for Childhood Arrivals program for three years.

McConnell also said Congress must address "chain migration," which refers to naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent residents sponsoring immediate relatives for green cards, a frequent target of Trump and the right.

"I think you all are familiar with the fact that I'm pretty supportive of legal immigration," McConnell said, invoking his wife Elaine Chao, the current Transportation secretary who immigrated to the United States from Taiwan when she was 8 years old. On Dreamers, "we want to have a signature, we don't just want to spin our wheels here and have nothing to show for it."

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Trump signs spending bill, averting shutdown [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 12/22/2017 12:02 PM EDT

President Donald Trump signed a four-week stopgap spending bill this morning, ahead of a midnight shutdown deadline.

The measure ([H.R. 1370 \(115\)](#)) extends federal funding at current levels through Jan. 19, at which point lawmakers will either have to clear another temporary patch or settle on a package that provides updated spending levels through the end of fiscal 2018.

Trump and congressional leaders have yet to reach a compromise, though, on the overall defense and nondefense budget caps that would guide that broader deal.

The continuing resolution signed into law today is the third such tide-me-over bill Congress has cleared since the current fiscal year began on Oct. 1.

This latest measure keeps the Children's Health Insurance Program running through March 31, extends authority under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act until Jan. 19, provides extra emergency money for some defense programs and waives so-called PAYGO cuts that would have slashed billions from programs like Medicare as a result of the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), also signed into law this morning by Trump.

Both chambers [passed](#) the spending bill with ease Thursday evening, after GOP leaders struggled this week to settle on a plan that could garner enough Republican support in the House and sufficient Democratic votes in the Senate.

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TSA looks to boost domestic canine stocks as demand increases [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 12/22/2017 05:02 AM EDT

Amid fierce global competition for bomb-sniffing dogs, TSA says it's ramping up contracting and increasingly looking to rely on U.S.-bred dogs, hoping to allay fears that it won't have enough canines to meet demand at airports and other hubs.

Concerns about a canine shortage have been brewing for the past decade and have reached a fever pitch in recent years as demand for the dogs has increased in the United States and other countries like China, said Cynthia Otto, who directs the University of Pennsylvania's working dog center.

"If you've got one source and everybody goes there and you need more then there's going to be pressure," said Otto, who previously served as an adviser to TSA's now defunct breeding program, which was shuttered in 2012 after deciding to rely on dogs purchased through contractors. She said TSA and other federal agencies have to compete with many interests for working dogs that are primarily bred in Eastern Europe.

An estimated 80 percent to 90 percent of TSA's bomb-sniffing dogs are foreign-bred, according to the American Kennel Club. Otto noted that is often very difficult to trace the origins of foreign dogs and verify their medical histories and ages. She has urged Congress to support the establishment of a domestic dog breeding program that could provide canines to TSA and other federal agencies.

The tight supply and origins of TSA's stock of canines has drawn concern from lawmakers. In October the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing to examine whether TSA is facing a shortage of bomb-sniffing dogs.

"As Americans we should be concerned that an ever-growing percentage of the dogs that serve on the front lines of protecting the public, our public institutions and our national security are obtained from foreign, rather than domestic sources," Sheila Goffe, the American Kennel Club's vice president of government relations, said at the hearing.

But Christopher Shelton, who manages TSA's Canine Training Center in San Antonio, downplayed those concerns. He said TSA has stopped making overseas trips to buy explosives-sniffing dogs and has turned more to domestic vendors over the past year. The agency has signed contracts with more than a dozen U.S. based vendors within the past six months and the next contracting round in 2018 will introduce even more domestic vendors to the program, he said.

Shelton also said TSA is not facing a dog shortage. TSA currently has approximately 1,000 canine units, including airport passenger screening and general bomb-sniffing dogs. That's sufficient, he said.

"We're finding the dogs that we need to fill our mission," Shelton said.

TSA plans to solicit contract applications from dog sellers early next year. They will be available exclusively to domestic dog vendors who have for years complained that TSA isn't transparent enough in what it's looking for from the dogs, making it difficult for vendors to select dogs that can pass the agency's preliminary testing.

But Rep. [John Katko](#) (R-N.Y.) said TSA doesn't have a minute to spare when it comes to bulking up its canine program, which he supports. Katko chairs the Homeland Security Committee's transportation security subpanel.

"My sense is that they don't have enough dogs, if they really want to beef up the mission," he told POLITICO. "They're more cost effective than machines, much more cost effective. And they last longer, quite frankly, if they're properly trained and properly taken care of."

However, Katko said domestic vendors have complained that TSA "moves the goal post" on required behavioral standards and that results in many dogs failing the rigorous tests necessary to be accepted into TSA's training program.

Katko and Rep. [Bonnie Watson Coleman](#) (N.J.), the top Democrat on the transportation subpanel, have said a recent Islamic State-inspired bombing in the New York City subway is an example of how transportation hubs need more canine units. Had there been more dogs at the station, the suspect might have been identified much sooner, Coleman has said. She recently introduced legislation ([H.R. 4474 \(115\)](#)) that would direct TSA to add 200 canine teams for surface transportation.

The full committee has approved legislation ([H.R. 4577 \(115\)](#)) that would set up a working group for homeland security officials, vendors and universities to develop those standards. The group also would be tasked with brainstorming options for establishing a domestic breeding program. The bill's sponsor, Alabama Republican [Mike Rogers](#), said that DHS must work with domestic vendors to expand the supply of bomb-sniffing dogs that "have been stretched to their limit" as soft target attacks increase.

TSA said its officials have traveled across the country to meet with dog vendors and invited vendors to visit TSA's training center to get a better sense of the qualities the agency seeks.

Among TSA's testing requirements is that the dogs be older than 18 months. They also should have a clean medical record and be physically capable of climbing up and down stairs and walking on slick floors like those found at most airports and train stations. Dogs entering the airport passenger screening program also must remain calm in large crowds and around moving luggage.

Shelton said TSA accepts about 35 percent of the dogs it tests and buys approximately 400 per year. Commonly selected breeds are: Labrador Retrievers, German Shepherds, German Short-Haired Pointers and Belgian Malinois.

"We've really tried hard to educate these vendors on the canines that we will accept," Shelton said. "Some of the information that's in the pipeline is that we are being too selective and that our standards are too high, but the easy answer to that is: TSA's mission is too critical to accept dogs that don't meet our standards."

Still, Otto said a domestic breeding program could be federal agencies' best opportunity to set clear standards. And the program is urgently needed because most U.S. breeders have stopped breeding work dogs because the demand for pets is overwhelmingly greater, she said.

Increasing domestic dogs stocks would also reduce the chances of TSA unintentionally continuing to purchase foreign dogs, said Sheila Goffe, vice president of government relations for the American Kennel Club.

"We would expect that even though TSA is not making those overseas trips right now, that the vendors from whom they buy dogs may very well still be purchasing those dogs overseas and importing them to the United States," she said.

Though AKC is not a vendor, it has worked with the government to register working and military dogs since World War II. The organization sees itself as both a pedigree library and a facilitator of the purchasing process, Goffe said.

Groups like AKC just want to ensure that vendors know what government agencies are looking for as this is an issue that goes beyond TSA, she said.

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: TSA canine handler Doug Timberlake [Back](#)

By Stephanie Beasley | 12/22/2017 05:02 AM EDT

With holiday travel season in full swing, POLITICO sat down with Doug Timberlake, one of TSA's canine handlers at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, to chat about his job, his pup Rriverso, and why you should resist the urge to pet him.

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Can you describe your job?

Our main priorities here are both utilization and training to maintain the dog's skill and develop the dog's skill further. So, we have our utilization requirements that are based on passenger loads and when it's going to be busy. And so we schedule around those times. When we aren't needed for utilization, then we do training. A big part of our job, probably 50 percent, is the maintenance training of these dogs — to maintain their skills and further develop their skills. A typical week, I'm going to spend two or three days of utilization and two or three days of training. And some of those days are even half and half, like some days I get a lot of utilization in the morning but I have a little bit of time in the afternoon to do some training.

To make sure I understand, "utilization" is basically going out and doing your job? You go sniff out bags or whatever needs to be done.

Right.

Tell me about your dog.

So my dog, Rriverso, is a product of our puppy program, back when we used to have one. *[Ed. note: It was discontinued in 2012.]* Those dogs, unlike the ones that we purchase from vendors, we got to name. The dogs that we purchase from vendors, they come already named. So we got to name those dogs and we named all of them after victims of 9/11. Each litter of puppies was assigned a letter, so we could track them. So all the pups from his litter are named with "R." And we actually used a double "R" to distinguish them in this puppy program.

He's named after Joseph Rivero, who was from White Plains, New York. He was a financial guy. He worked at the World Trade Center, and he was killed. So Rivero was named after him. A few years ago, with his prior handler, he got to go to New York and meet the Rivero family. And the one thing that they asked is that we tell as many people as possible that he's out here keeping them safe.

What kind of dog is he?

He's a yellow lab. And he is 8-and-a-half. We've been together for three or four years.

And now let's talk about canine expedited screening. What is it?

The bottom line is if you see a dog in the checkpoint and you get sniffed, then you're likely going to get expedited screening similar to PreCheck. You leave your shoes on, leave your laptop in your bag. Because the things that we're looking for when we take shoes off, take laptops out, all that kind of stuff — are things the dog would find easily. And so we're able to speed the whole line up by getting everybody in, in that manner, right, and get everybody through faster. Because my priority is getting people on to the safe side of the airport while still clearing them and making sure they don't have things that they're not supposed to have.

So we can get these people through the checkpoint faster, and what that equals really is getting them on to the safe side of the airport, right? Because we need to get them inside security for them to be safer. If they're on the public side, they're a target out there. And so we want to get 'em in. And we're able to do it faster, more efficiently.

You told me earlier that you have four of these dogs at Reagan National, total. Is that typical for an airport of this size?

It's pretty typical, yeah. Four is kind of the standard. Some of the bigger airports have more. And that's specifically passenger screening programs. So, if you look at dogs at the airport, we have what we call the legacy teams. Because how the program started was TSA provided dogs and training to the local [police department]. Here's it's [Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority]. They have dogs that are provided by TSA. The dog is provided. The training is provided. There's a stipend for their budget to handle these teams.

So the police are using their own dogs, not the four TSA dogs.

They have their dogs that are TSA assets [assigned] to their department. We have four TSA teams and we're getting a fifth assigned to this airport. Some of your bigger airports will have maybe six. They'll have more. But these are just the passenger screening dogs.

What are the police dogs doing in comparison to yours?

Their dogs are trained in the way that explosive detection dogs have been trained forever. They're searching inanimate objects. They're searching trash cans, cars, luggage, the seating areas, parking garages, all these things. They handle the majority of unattended bag calls. If somebody calls with an unattended bag they come and assist them with that.

Our dogs have an additional skill. The passenger screening canines have been exposed to and trained how to follow moving odor, if it were on a person or on a cart. That completely changes the game because when you have stationary odor all you have to worry about is the

air currents in that area and which direction the wind is going to push the smell. When that smell is moving, now you have to worry about all kinds of different air currents, where it's going, people that cross its trail, all of that kind of stuff. So it's a little bit of a cross between explosives detection and trailing.

In regard to the "maintenance" aspect, do the dogs have to go back and get retrained often?

If I don't ever train then his performance will drop, right? Hopefully, in my entire career I never find a bomb. That's my hope. That's my wife's hope. If my dog never has practice though, he would never find it. It's not like a narcotics dog, who's finding stuff every day. These dogs, they hopefully don't find the real thing every day. And so, if they don't have an opportunity to practice, those skills drop off. They will get bored. Even when I'm running [canine expedited screening] and my dog is sniffing all these people, I'm going to have a decoy on standby because I'll see out there that job is so easy for the dogs. It's literally about as hard as if I asked you stand there and point out everybody wearing a red shirt. My biggest enemy out there is complacency.

Has the increase in air travel this year helped to keep the dogs alert and on their toes?

It does. It's excellent. I like a crowd because that gets my dog engaged. And, honestly, if there is not a crowd, I'm not going to work him out there because I don't want him to be bored. And I've got other stuff I've got to do. I've got training that I have to do. I'm constantly challenging him to develop his skills and sharpen that blade. That's a huge priority. If I'm not heavily needed, I'm focused on that.

People see dogs and they want to pet the dog. They want to play with the dog. How do you deal with that?

That is definitely one of my biggest challenges. I have signs up in the checkpoint that ask you to please not pet the dogs. I have signs all over my dog. I have patches all over him, "do not pet." And a lot of people assume that it's because the dog is aggressive. That's not the case. It's just the fact that I have to keep this dog focused on his job. He's not here to socialize. If I'm letting your kids run up and kiss on him and pet him, he would love nothing more. But I need him to be at work.

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Senate confirms droves of Trump nominees [Back](#)

By Jennifer Scholtes | 12/21/2017 10:56 PM EDT

The Senate confirmed more than two-dozen Trump administration nominees Thursday night in the chamber's last bout of action before adjourning for the year. Among those confirmed:

Energy

— Timothy Petty to be assistant secretary of Interior for water and science.

- Linda Capuano to be administrator of the Energy Information Administration.
- John Vonglis to be the Department of Energy's chief financial officer.
- Kenneth Allen, A. D. Frazier, Jeffrey Smith and James Thompson to be members of the Tennessee Valley Authority's board of directors.
- Christopher Caldwell to be federal co-chairman of the Delta Regional Authority.

Labor

- Katherine Brunett McGuire to be assistant secretary of Labor for congressional and intergovernmental affairs.
- Kate O'Scannlain to be solicitor for the Department of Labor.
- Preston Rutledge to be assistant secretary of the Employee Benefits Security Administration.

Education

- Johnny Collett to be assistant secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.
- Douglas Webster to be the Department of Education's chief financial officer.

Health

- Robert Charrow to be HHS general counsel.
- Tadd Johnson and Lisa Johnson-Billy to be members of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation board of trustees.

Financial Services

- Hester Peirce and Robert Jackson to be members of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Housing and Urban Development

- Irving Dennis to be chief financial officer.
- Suzanne Tufts to be assistant secretary of administration.
- Leonard Wolfson to be assistant secretary for congressional and intergovernmental relations.

Veterans

- Jon Rychalski to be chief financial officer for the VA.

State Department

— Christopher Ford to be assistant secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation.

— Brock Bierman to be assistant administrator of the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia at USAID.

— Kenneth Braithwaite to be ambassador to Norway.

— Lee McClenny to be ambassador to Paraguay.

Intelligence

— Robert P. Storch to be NSA inspector general.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Democrats block dozens of Trump nominees [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia and Seung Min Kim | 12/22/2017 11:37 AM EDT

About 100 of President Donald Trump's nominees have been kicked back to the White House, prolonging an unusually high number of vacancies across his administration and escalating the Senate's long-running nomination wars.

While the Senate agreed to keep roughly 150 of Trump's picks for consideration next year, it refused to do so on roughly 100 others, according to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office. That means the White House will have to renominate them if Trump wants them installed.

Among the high-profile picks tossed back to the White House: Alex Azar, chosen as the new head of the Department of Health and Human Services; Thomas Farr, a district court nominee whose record on voting rights has infuriated Democrats; and K.T. McFarland, the former deputy national security adviser chosen as U.S. ambassador to Singapore who is now facing questions about her communications with ex-national security adviser Michael Flynn.

That will trigger a requirement that nominees' paperwork be up to date — a gargantuan task for some nominees who've been languishing in the Senate for months, especially if their net worth changed dramatically because of the surging stock market.

That has some lawyers worried that nominees could throw in the towel, frustrated by the [already laborious](#) process of winning Senate approval.

"For some nominees, their paperwork will be obsolete," said one lawyer who represents several nominees and was not authorized to speak on the record. "The stock market has gone up, so the numbers are going to be materially different."

Many nominees hire lawyers to walk them through the confirmation process, spending tens of thousands of dollars — or much more for wealthy people with complicated financial situations — for assistance in filling out ethics and financial disclosure forms. The process requires nominees to review and document nearly every major financial decision in their adult lives, and the finished paperwork has been known to run more than 60 or 70 pages, lawyers said.

Generally, nominees will have to update their paperwork only if there's been a material change, but each Senate committee has slightly different rules governing the issue.

In a less divisive political atmosphere, lawmakers would have approved a unanimous consent agreement allowing the nominees to carry over into next year. Such agreements have rarely been controversial.

Any one senator can object to allowing a nominee to be carried over. Though it's likely Democrats are responsible for most of the rejections, Republicans also could have triggered some, too.

During the first year of the Obama administration, only eight nominees were not carried over into the next session, according to Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), who has been researching the issue. President George W. Bush had just two picks returned to the White House.

"It definitely violates precedent," Lankford said of sending back so many nominees. "That's just a sign of the times that people are looking for a rule to be able to slow the Senate down even more. ... That's making a bad situation worse."

But Democrats said the caliber of Trump's nominees warranted a break from tradition.

In an interview earlier this week, Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) said he would look for obstacles to oppose nominees with "egregious conflicts of interest," an "appalling lack of knowledge about the job," or "who are inclined to destroy the very agencies that they're assigned to support the mission of."

Merkley and Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) targeted Kathleen Hartnett-White, Trump's pick to run the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

"Unqualified or controversial nominees will not simply be rubber-stamped by the Senate," Carper said in a statement. "Let's start the new year off with a clean slate and allow President Trump the opportunity to nominate a leader for the Council on Environmental Quality who takes environmental laws and public health protections seriously."

White has [come under fire](#) from Democrats for rejecting the scientific consensus on the human causes of climate change.

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McConnell: 'We'll probably move on' from Obamacare repeal in 2018 [Back](#)

By Cristiano Lima and Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/21/2017 03:33 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday said he wants the Senate to move past Obamacare repeal in 2018 in favor of stabilizing insurance markets and to other issues, prompting a backlash from one of the Senate's most prominent advocates of repeal and an ally of President Trump.

The Kentucky Republican [told NPR](#) that the passage of the GOP's tax overhaul, which also repealed the individual mandate, effectively "takes the heart out of Obamacare." He gave a nod to a new attempt at Obamacare repeal - which the Senate tried unsuccessfully several times over the summer.

"Well, we obviously were unable to completely repeal and replace with a 52-48 Senate," McConnell said referring to the partisan split in the chamber. "We'll have to take a look at what that looks like with a 51-49 Senate [once Alabama Democratic Sen.-elect Doug Jones is seated]. But I think we'll probably move on to other issues."

McConnell's comment drew a sharp rebuke from Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who is hoping to revive a bill next year repealing Obamacare in favor of block grants to states. He and Sen. Bill Cassidy - who authored the last GOP attempt to repeal the health care law in 2017 - met this week to strategize about how to bring back the effort in the new year.

"I think that's a huge mistake," Graham told reporters. "We should do everything we can to replace it, as much as [Democrats] did to pass it. We own it now."

McConnell wouldn't be the first GOP leader to try to move his party past Obamacare.

After former President Barack Obama was reelected in 2012, then-House Speaker John Boehner declared Obamacare the "law of the land." Current Speaker Paul Ryan made the exact same declaration after the House GOP repeal effort failed in March.

McConnell on Thursday touted the idea of shoring up the health care markets, where premiums are higher in 2018. Despite the price hikes, 8.8 million people signed up for insurance through HealthCare.gov, according to numbers released by the Trump administration. Millions more signed up through state exchanges that have not yet reported final tallies.

"We want to steady the insurance markets if we can," McConnell said, "and I think we'll probably be addressing that part of health care sometime next year." Graham, like several other Republicans in the House and Senate, argues that repealing the mandate means the GOP "owns" the health care law and the potential fallout, which experts say will result in higher premiums.

He dismissed the idea of negotiating bipartisan fixes to the law, saying it plainly "won't work." The Senate GOP tried to attach small bipartisan repairs to a spending bill this week but the House forced them to drop the effort when it became clear the legislation wouldn't pass.

Graham is not the only Republican eager to turn back to the health care law.

"I think it is very important we turn to Obamacare and finish the job," said Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Repealing the mandate was a "critical first step but we're not done and I intend to continue working to try to bring together 50 Republicans to honor our promise to the voter."

McConnell, in the interview, also stressed the importance of selling his party's tax overhaul to voters ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

A POLITICO/Morning Consult poll showed voters largely split on the GOP's tax bill, with 42 percent of respondents supporting it and 39 percent opposing it. But other polls painted grimmer sentiment. A CNN poll released Tuesday found that 33 percent of participants supported the bill in December, with 55 percent opposed. The poll also showed that a majority of voters believed the bill would be more beneficial to the wealthy than the middle class.

McConnell cast the negative perception as a product of the press coverage.

"I do think the coverage has been overwhelmingly negative, and it certainly has an impact on it," McConnell said. "You take a family of four making \$73,000 a year, will save about \$2,000. Now, to lot of people inside the Beltway that doesn't sound like a lot of money, but to that family that's a 58 percent reduction in their tax bill."

He also expressed optimism that the chamber would be able to reach a bipartisan compromise on entitlement reform.

"I think entitlement changes, to be sustained, almost always have to be bipartisan," McConnell said. "The House may have a different agenda. If our Democratic friends in the Senate want to join us to tackle any kind of entitlement reform, I'd be happy to take a look at it."

Adam Cancryn contributed to this report.

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Alexander and Murray say they'll keep talking; ACA bill could expand [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/21/2017 08:04 PM EDT

Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) and [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.) said in separate interviews Thursday that they want to resume their talks on a bipartisan Obamacare [package](#) and that the legislation may expand.

President Donald Trump called Alexander on Thursday morning to "reaffirm his interest in a bipartisan health care bill and [to] get it done in January," the Tennessee Republican told POLITICO.

Alexander said the support of Trump — as well as a call House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) made to Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) in support of "invisible risk pools" — makes him confident a deal could come together. Trump's backing could prove pivotal to getting the support of deeply skeptical House Republicans. The president previously backed the idea of a bipartisan package but didn't sell it to House Republicans as part of a government spending bill.

Alexander suggested a modified version of Alexander-Murray could be more expansive but warned that he wants to keep expectations under control.

"I think it's an opportunity to take a fresh look at the individual market and do as much as we

can there to give people lower rates for a longer period of time," he said. "So I think we'll start with Alexander-Murray and Collins-Nelson and then see what ideas the House may have or other senators may have or the administration may have. I mean, the more we can do, the better."

Murray, for her part, said she wants to resume talks in January but said that any deal would have to reflect the realities of the new insurance market, with the individual mandate repeal effective January 2019.

"The goal line keeps shifting and the playing field has shifted dramatically," Murray told POLITICO. "I want to do everything we can to stabilize the marketplace. But the bill has to reflect the marketplace now as of what the Republicans have done."

House Republicans are still deeply skeptical of anything that would be viewed as propping up Obamacare. And at the very least, they want to add abortion restrictions that Murray has said would be a non-starter for her and many other Democrats.

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At least \$600,000 in public money spent settling Senate misconduct claims since 1997

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By Elana Schor | 12/21/2017 08:56 PM EDT

At least \$600,000 in public money has been spent over the past 20 years to settle 13 workplace misconduct claims against senators' offices, including \$14,260 for a single settlement alleging sex discrimination, according to data released late Thursday.

The information on workplace harassment payouts from a fund maintained by Capitol Hill's Office of Compliance, divulged by the Senate Rules and Appropriations Committees, does not include any details on which offices the payments correspond to. Its release came as the Rules panel, led by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), [faced](#) pressure from both sides of the aisle to join the House in opening the Senate's taxpayer-funded settlement books amid a national outcry over sexual harassment.

The Senate's single claim of sex discrimination in the data released late Thursday included no data on whether sexual harassment was involved — the two have generally not been distinguished in congressional misconduct record keeping. Senators' offices paid \$21,420 to settle two claims involving racial discrimination, \$89,800 to settle three claims involving disability discrimination, and \$286,786 to settle eight claims that involved age discrimination, according to the data.

One of those age-related claims was a single \$102,904 settlement that also involved discrimination based on national origin and reprisal, the largest single settlement paid out since 1997 from a senator's office. Congressional office misconduct claims filed with the compliance office can touch on multiple categories of harassment.

The two committees' representatives said in a statement accompanying the information that

aides had met with the Senate Legal Counsel's office to verify that the data could be released to the public without compromising the identity of harassment victims who participated in a confidential settlement process.

"While the Rules Committee has been eager to provide this information in a transparent manner, it has been our priority to protect the victims involved in these settlements from further harm," Shelby said.

The House released its own harassment settlement data for the past five years earlier this month, including an \$84,000 sexual harassment settlement that POLITICO later linked to Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-Texas). After Sen. Tim Kaine's (D-Va.) attempt to obtain similar Senate information was rejected earlier this week, however, the House released further data on past harassment settlements and Shelby [escalated](#) consultations with colleagues on releasing the upper chamber's figures.

"This is the first step toward a more transparent reporting system for harassment in Congress to hold people accountable for their actions," Kaine said in a statement on the Rules and Appropriations committees' release of the data.

The data released Thursday also includes workplace settlement figures for other Senate offices not led by a member. Over the past 20 years, those offices have paid out \$853,225 to resolve 10 settlements, including \$56,000 to resolve three claims involving sex discrimination.

The statistics for both the Senate and House include only claims paid from the compliance office's fund set aside for handling workplace misconduct and do not encompass settlements that may have been paid from lawmakers' taxpayer-funded office budgets. Former Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), for example, used his office budget to pay \$27,000 in 2015 to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by a former aide.

A senior Republican member of the Rules panel who's closely involved in negotiations on reforming Hill harassment policy, West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito said earlier Thursday that she supports the release of the Senate harassment settlement data because "transparency is the best way to figure out how to handle situations, and the American people want to know."

"We could mirror the way the House has done it, without full disclosure, but even then I think people are going to keep asking the question" of which members may be tied to settlements, Capito added. "I would."

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Release of plan to change Congress' harassment rules is delayed [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 12/21/2017 06:43 PM EDT

Bipartisan House negotiators on Thursday delayed the release of a plan to overhaul Capitol Hill's workplace harassment policy, but the move appeared to signal momentum for action when Congress returns to Washington in 2018.

As five House Republicans and Democrats who have worked on a consensus deal to modernize congressional office misconduct policy described themselves as "very close to finalizing" their proposal, a key Senate Republican involved in talks on Hill harassment policy sent another positive signal about action as soon as next month.

"I would look for it more into January," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who is playing a central role in the upper chamber's working group tasked with crafting legislation that would shake up Congress' oft-criticized harassment policy.

"I would like to get it done" as early as possible next year, Capito added in an interview. Members of the Rules Committee who sit on the working group, she said, are on the same page about forthcoming harassment legislation.

Congress passed a short-term spending bill that sets up a lengthy to-do list in January, including reauthorizing a health insurance program that helps cover millions of children, raising the nation's debt limit and keeping the government funded for the rest of the fiscal year. Should the bipartisan House and Senate talks remain on track, harassment reform would be a strong candidate to pass Congress as part of that potentially massive legislative deal in 2018.

House Administration Committee Chairman Gregg Harper (R-Miss.) and top the panel's top Democrat, Bob Brady of Pennsylvania, bolstered hopes for an agreement on Thursday even as they announced the delay of harassment legislation they had planned to release this week.

Working alongside Reps. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), Barbara Comstock (R-Va.) and Bradley Byrne (R-Ala.), Harper and Brady said they were "making significant progress" on an agreement that all four lawmakers could support. The committee expects to mark up the forthcoming legislation "as soon as Congress returns," the five House members said in a statement.

Comstock said in an interview this week that House harassment negotiators were "pretty much in agreement across the board on some pretty major reforms," including key elements of legislation spearheaded by Speier in the House and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) in the Senate.

Among the key priorities the House talks are centering on, Comstock said, is streamlining the reporting process for victims of harassment on Capitol Hill, who currently must undergo mandatory counseling and mediation that can stretch on for months. House negotiators are also moving toward designating a position to advocate for the victim throughout the harassment complaint process, in the interest of creating "a level playing field," Comstock said.

One major unanswered question is how lawmakers working on harassment legislation will ultimately treat the transparency of settlements paid using taxpayer money to resolve previous congressional workplace misconduct claims.

Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.) has attracted 92 co-sponsors in both parties for legislation that would retroactively disclose harassment settlement payments, but it's unclear whether his proposal would be incorporated in any final bipartisan House deal. The House has already released broad harassment settlement data for the past 10 years, and the Senate followed suit

late Thursday after [a delay](#).

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Ethics committee expands Rep. Farenthold probe [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan | 12/21/2017 06:39 PM EDT

The House Ethics Committee announced late Thursday that it was expanding its investigation into GOP Rep. Blake Farenthold to include allegations he improperly used official resources for campaign activities, as well as lying to the panel.

Farenthold is already under investigation over claims that he sexually harassed at least one former staffer.

Thursday's announcement, however, means the stakes have gone up dramatically for the Texas Republican, as misuse of official resources is a potential violation of both House rules and federal law.

Farenthold has already announced he will retire due to the scandal surrounding the harassment allegations. A former aide, Lauren Greene, received an \$84,000 in taxpayer funds as part of a secret settlement after she sued Farenthold in December 2014 for gender discrimination, sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment. The Ethics Committee has sought to interview Greene, although it is unclear if that meeting has taken place yet.

Farenthold's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The Ethics panel also announced that it was formally appointing an investigative subcommittee to look into sexual-harassment allegations against Democratic Rep. Ruben Kihuen of Nevada.

A former campaign aide and a Nevada-based lobbyist have claimed Kihuen repeatedly harassed them and made unwanted sexual advances. Kihuen — who has also announced that he will not seek reelection — has denied the charges and hired a Washington, D.C., attorney to represent him.

"As I've said before, I will fully participate and cooperate with the Ethics Committee investigation," Kihuen said in a statement. "This process is an important part of making sure everyone has their voice heard."

Heather Caygle contributed to this report

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CMS approves five-year extension of Texas' Medicaid waiver [Back](#)

By Renuka Rayasam | 12/21/2017 04:38 PM EDT

The Trump administration today approved a \$25 billion, five-year extension of a Medicaid waiver that's [funneled](#) nearly \$37 billion to Texas hospitals since 2011.

The \$3.1 billion pool of money that state hospitals use to [fund](#) charity care will remain level for the first two years of the waiver, according to [a letter](#) from HHS to the state health commission. Starting in October 2019, CMS said it will "resize" that pool to more accurately reflect the hospitals' charity care costs.

CMS is also winding down a program that's helped hospitals fund primary care, mental health and other initiatives intended to help lower costly emergency room usage in the state. It will provide level funding for two years, decreased funding for the following two years and then no funding in 2022.

An extension of the 1115 waiver, negotiated last year, was set to expire Dec. 31.

The waiver, which the state first struck with the Obama administration, was intended to provide an infusion of short-term funding while Texas adjusted to the Affordable Care Act's coverage expansion and other changes.

But after a 2012 Supreme Court ruling made Medicaid expansion optional, the state changed course, opting to use the money to fund tests for new health delivery programs and help hospitals cover the cost of caring for the state's 4.5 million uninsured residents.

The state's rural hospital association has said that about half the hospitals in the state would close without the waiver dollars. In Texas, local hospital districts raise the state-based revenue required to receive the federal government's 60-percent funding match.

"The new 1115 Waiver ensures that funding will remain available for hospitals to treat and serve people across our state who are in need of top-quality health care," said Gov. Greg Abbott in a statement.

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Detroit hospital chain shows tensions around drug discount program [Back](#)

By David Pittman | 12/22/2017 10:18 AM EDT

Most patients at Henry Ford Hospital in downtown Detroit are undeniably poor.

With almost four in 10 people living in poverty, Detroit is the [poorest city](#) in the country. Henry Ford qualifies for a federal program that forces drug companies to offer steep discounts to hospitals that serve disproportionately large numbers of low-income patients.

A [large clinic](#) that Henry Ford operates 18 miles to the north, in the unmistakably middle-class

suburb of Troy, receives the same discount on its drugs. Only there, about 6 percent of residents are impoverished and the average family makes just under \$90,000 a year, according to the [Census bureau](#).

Depending on who you ask, the six-hospital system is either operating within the guidelines of a federal program known as 340B or fattening its wallet by taking advantage of the law created by Congress in 1992 to help safety-net hospitals.

And drug companies are crying foul. They contend hospitals aren't held accountable for how they apply the savings, which totaled \$6 billion last year, have spent less on charity care in recent years and extended their reach to take advantage of the discount at more clinics that don't necessarily see a lot of low-income patients. Supporters of the status quo counter the facilities are following the government's requirements.

The dispute has become the subject of an intense lobbying fight between hospitals and drug companies as Congress vows to take a closer look at the 340B program.

A new bill in Congress would ban new hospitals and off-campus sites, like those in Troy, Mich., from joining 340B for two years while lawmakers evaluate the drug program, which has ballooned from \$2.65 billion in 2004 to \$16 billion last year.

Meanwhile, hospital trade groups and facilities including Henry Ford sued to block the Trump administration from cutting program payments for certain drugs by almost 30 percent. The reductions will put payments for drugs more in line with what hospitals ordinarily pay, HHS says. The looming cuts will slash nearly \$1.6 billion in hospital revenues, and "quite literally, be fatal" to some, state hospital associations [told](#) a federal court this month.

A federal judge who heard arguments in the case on Thursday said he'll issue a ruling before the reductions take effect Jan. 1. Lawmakers have left town without acting on a bill that would forestall the cuts. That legislation, [H.R. 4392 \(115\)](#), has 160 co-sponsors in the House.

Lawmakers promised to update 340B in light of the attention it has received this year.

"The legislation, which is rather old now, has enough vagaries in it that allows [hospitals] to get away with what they're doing," said Stephen Rapundalo, president and CEO of MichBio, a group that represents Michigan drug companies.

Some of Henry Ford's more than 80 clinics and hospitals that receive 340B discounts operate in well-heeled Detroit suburbs like Troy, West Bloomfield — where the average household income tops \$100,000 a year — and Plymouth, where roughly 5 percent of people live in poverty. Henry Ford has opened four new sites for patients to receive discounted drugs this year alone, although they are located in more working-class towns around southeast Michigan such as Brooklyn and Clinton Township.

Henry Ford's West Bloomfield hospital opened in 2006 and is run by a former Ritz-Carlton executive. The hospital was featured in a 2014 New York Times "Is this a hospital or hotel?" [quiz](#) for its lavish [cafeteria and shopping](#) options.

Hospital chains' smaller clinics are covered under 340B as long as their main hospital provides enough care to low-income patients. And a 2010 change in the program allowed hospitals to contract with private, off-site pharmacies to qualify for 340B. Now, nearly 52,000 pharmacies

nationwide dispense discounted drugs.

Henry Ford, which would lose about \$9.3 million next year under the Trump administration's cut, says savings from drugs it collects in upper-middle class suburbs help poor patients all across southeast Michigan, including inner-city Detroit.

"The savings don't go toward people with super insurance and don't have to worry about co-pays," said Bob Chapman, head of Henry Ford's hematology and oncology work. "The savings are going to go where they're needed within the system where we are caring for the underserved."

The purpose of 340B, as Chapman explained it, was to help hospitals stretch limited resources to help the underserved. "While it doesn't cover all of the costs, it at least takes a bite out of that cost and allows us to do much more than we would have otherwise," he said.

With the money Henry Ford saves in lower drug costs, the hospital is able to provide care and drugs for patients who can't pay regular prices. The Detroit hospital also operates 11 school-based clinics and two mobile medical units that serve the city.

Chapman notes that 36 percent of the country's hospitals participate in 340B and combined provide 60 percent of uncompensated care. "It's obvious these savings are being directed towards the institutions that are addressing that need," he added.

All 340B hospitals have reasons not to add outpatient clinics in wealthy communities since it could jeopardize their eligibility for discounted medicines.

To qualify for 340B, Medicaid or poor Medicare patients must account for at least 11.75 percent of hospital stays. Clinics in wealthy communities could push more insured patients toward hospital stays, jeopardizing their 340B status.

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, 43 hospitals did not re-qualify for the program this year. While some were acquired by chains that aren't eligible for 340B or that just closed, the majority did not meet HHS's 11.75 percent standard, according to 340B Health, a group of covered hospitals.

"There is sort of a check and balance here," said [Bill von Oehsen](#), an attorney who helped found 340B Health. Also, outpatient clinics have to be run almost like another hospital department, a high bar to clear, he said.

That isn't enough for drug companies and government watchdogs.

Drug companies note hospitals' total charity care spending has flatlined over the last decade while the volume of discounted drugs has risen and is on pace to surpass total Medicare Part B drug spending early next decade.

Henry Ford's [community benefit spending](#) has dropped from 13.5 percent in 2011 to 9.2 percent in 2014, the most recent year for which IRS data is available. In fact, most public and nonprofit hospitals' charity care spending [has dropped](#) since passage of the 2010 Affordable Care Act because more patients carry health insurance.

Hospitals counter that uncompensated care isn't the key criteria. Henry Ford serves almost a quarter of the region's Medicaid patients. Residents in poorer Pontiac, Mich., seek care at the

hospital in neighboring West Bloomfield.

The 340B program is "extremely convoluted by design," said one health care consultant who follows both health systems and pharmacists closely. "From the hospital standpoint, I'll bet that few, if any, actually know how much profit they're making on outpatient drugs. They just don't do their accounting that way."

The drug discount program has become "the bedrock of profitability for many institutions," said Dan Mendelson, president of Avalere Health. "This has become a very substantial portion of the profitability of many hospitals in this country," straying from its original intent of helping safety-net hospitals make ends meet.

Outside watchdog groups have called on Congress and HHS to make changes. The HHS inspector general [recommended](#) this summer that lawmakers and the agency more clearly define which patients and hospitals are eligible for the discounted drugs. The GAO made a [similar call](#).

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, which makes policy recommendations to Congress, last year [suggested](#) Medicare reduce its payment for 340B drugs by 10 percent and give that money — roughly \$300 million — to cover hospitals' uncompensated care.

The American Hospital Association's top lobbyist told Congress last week he was willing to have discussions about making it more transparent how hospitals use the nearly \$6 billion in savings.

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Trump predicts GOP will work with Dems 'for the good of the country' [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/22/2017 08:55 AM EDT

President Donald Trump suggested Friday that Republicans and Democrats who have been at odds over nearly every major policy issue this year might soon come together on an infrastructure plan "for the good of the country."

"At some point, and for the good of the country, I predict we will start working with the Democrats in a Bipartisan fashion," the president tweeted Friday morning. "Infrastructure would be a perfect place to start. After having foolishly spent \$7 trillion in the Middle East, it is time to start rebuilding our country!"

A massive infrastructure package has been on Trump's to-do list since last year's presidential campaign and is the policy goal on which he is most likely to find cooperation from Democrats, at least in theory. But Trump has spent much of the year bashing members of the opposing party over his efforts to repeal and replace Obamacare and pass a package of tax cuts, as well as over the ongoing Russia investigation, which he has described as a hoax created by Democrats to excuse Hillary Clinton's loss in last year's election.

While the White House has yet to come forward with its plan — Trump administration

officials have said they plan to release a list of principles sometime before the president's state of the union address next month — early indications point to a wide gap between what the White House is expected to propose, \$200 billion in federal spending paired with state and local money as well as private investment, and the \$1 trillion in new infrastructure that Democrats have suggested.

Unlike the tax bill that Republicans passed through Congress this week, any infrastructure package would need 60 votes to clear the Senate, meaning the White House will need Democratic support if Trump is to tick off another item from his list of policy goals.

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Date: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 5:33:13 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 12/20/2017 05:30 PM EDT

SPRINT TO THE FINISH: Obamacare subsidies are officially off the table, but the Pentagon's budget is still holding up spending talks, with less than 72 hours before the shutdown deadline.

In the awkward Obamacare faceoff between the House and Senate, Sen. [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) has blinked first, deciding today to [punt](#) her subsidies fight until January — a move that dissolves one of the [spending bill's](#) huge hang-ups. But not everything on Congress' 2017 to-do list can be so easily postponed. GOP leaders haven't yet revealed how they'll tackle many remaining issues, including children's health insurance funding and expiring surveillance powers, as Sarah and Heather Caygle [report](#) today. "We're now at about plan C," the ever-blunt Rep. [Charlie Dent](#) (R-Pa.) said today.

One by one: The House could vote on its stopgap funding bill as soon as Thursday. But the measure looks vastly different from the so-called cromnibus we've been talking about. The initial "defense-only" plan was [dropped](#) late Tuesday after the GOP whip team came up short. Instead, House Republicans plan to vote on a mostly bare bones funding bill through Jan. 19. The House is also expected to vote separately on the \$81 billion disaster aid package and renewal of surveillance powers.

What to do about defense? House GOP leaders have been twisting arms, privately meeting with members of the House Armed Services Committee to get defense hawks on board with yet another kick-the-can plan. Part of the bargain: Small bumps for certain programs, like missile defense and military personnel. Those so-called anomalies, as well as some possible reprogramming authority, could help Republicans swallow this week's stopgap. But the strategy is already deterring Senate Democrats, who see it as a violation of their "parity" demand for equal increases in defense and nondefense spending. "We will not accept that, one way or the other," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) said Wednesday about caps-busting defense tweaks. "We have said all along there's got to be parity. Defense goes up, spending for average families goes up."

Always whipping: On the continuing resolution, GOP leaders are still scrambling to nail down enough support. On the disaster aid bill, [H.R. 4667 \(115\)](#), Democrats are still withholding support publicly as they try to make tweaks to help Puerto Rico.

GOOD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day — Medicaid misclassified at least 885 drugs in 2016, likely costing the government billions of dollars in unpaid rebates, according to a new [report](#) from the HHS inspector general. More from [Sarah Karlin-Smith](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — When Congress last overhauled the U.S. tax code in 1986, the national debt was at [38 percent](#) of GDP. Today, deficits amount to 77 percent of GDP.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: The [Budget and Appropriations Brief](#) will not publish from Dec. 25 to Jan. 1. After Friday, our next newsletter will hit your inbox on Jan. 2. Please continue to follow our [PRO Budget coverage](#).

HEALTH CARE

CRIS FOR CHIP FUNDING: Just as House Republicans return to the drawing board on the stopgap — likely casting aside CHIP funding — state officials are warning that nearly 2 million kids could get dropped from coverage next month without congressional action in the meantime, Rachana Pradhan [reports](#) this afternoon. In Virginia, the chief deputy director of the state's Department of Medical Assistance Services said officials are "scrambling" and that lawmakers "totally ignore the fact" that large health care programs must be managed. "You don't just wait until the day before the last dollar is spent," Linda Nablo said. In Alabama, CHIP Director Cathy Caldwell said it's getting "very, very stressful."

PAYGO

DELAY, DELAY, DELAY: The White House may be able to punt on the tax bill's PAYGO problem. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn suggested today that President Donald Trump could delay signing the tax overhaul if Congress doesn't tack a waiver onto this week's stopgap to prevent the automatic cuts, Colin Wilhelm [reports](#). "If we can get PAYGO waived in the [funding legislation], we will sign the tax bill this year," Cohn said at an event hosted by Axios. "We'll see what happens. There's a few technical issues in here that have to be dealt with."

TAX

BYRD RULE'S LAST BITE: Channeling Bill Murray, à la "Groundhog's Day," the House voted again today on the GOP's tax plan, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), following the Byrd-rule-induced changes yesterday. But this time it's actually off to POTUS.

Democrats get blamed: Even though the Senate parliamentarian made the call that doomed several education provisions, some are saying it's Democrats' fault that language got scrapped that would have allowed home schooling families to use tax-advantaged funds for their expenses, Kimberly Hefling [reports](#).

BUDGET

ZOMBIE REPEAL: Obamacare repeal could be back on the docket in 2018, throwing a wrench in the GOP's longstanding plans for welfare reform. Architects of the latest repeal-and-replace bill, Sens. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.) and [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.), held a closed-door meeting Tuesday to talk about reviving that bill in 2018, Jen Haberkorn [scoops](#).

Competing plans: Graham and Cassidy will almost certainly need to lean on budget reconciliation next year, competing against the GOP leaders who have eyed that vehicle for their own "welfare-to-work" agenda. House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) reiterated those plans just this morning, telling [ABC News](#) that Republicans will be focused on "getting people from welfare to work" and "getting states more flexibility in Medicaid" — but won't be touching Medicare beneficiaries. "Those are things we think we can bring more savings to the budget," he said.

FOREIGN POLICY

DON'T VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE: Trump said today that the U.S. will cut off aid to countries that dis his administration through U.N. votes, Louis Nelson [reports](#). "For all of these nations that take our money and then they vote against us ... well, we're watching those votes," he said during a Cabinet meeting. "Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care. But this isn't like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars and nobody knows what they're doing."

INTERIOR

SMALL SUM, GRAND GESTURE: Taxpayers have been reimbursed for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's side trip to a political fundraiser during an official jaunt last spring, Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). According to recent federal campaign finance filings, the Virgin Islands Republican Party repaid the Interior Department \$275 in October for expenses related to Zinke's appearance. That gesture may be enough to protect Zinke from accusations that his Virgin Islands appearance violated the Hatch Act.

Coincidence? The payment came the same day POLITICO first [reported](#) that Zinke was the featured guest at a spring fundraiser where donors shelled out up to \$5,000 to get a pic with the secretary.

OBAMACARE

NO BROKEN PROMISES? A senior White House official said this afternoon that the president is all-in on passing Obamacare stabilization bills in January, Matthew Nussbaum [reports](#). "The president is grateful for the opportunity to work with Sen. Collins on this, and he is committed to following through on our agreement," the official said after Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) backed off their demands today for GOP leaders to include those efforts in the stopgap.

TELECOM

MAPPING BROADBAND GAPS: The FCC is gearing up now to hand out as much as \$2 billion for boosting broadband in rural areas over the next decade. As Margaret Harding McGill [explains](#), the agency published a [map](#) this week of areas eligible to receive cash generated from a reverse auction.

AGRICULTURE

CONTRACTOR LEEWAY: The Agriculture Department is easing up on rules barring states from using contractors for SNAP certification, Helena Bottemiller Evich [reports](#) this afternoon.

SUPP FALLS SHORT: Sen. [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) now says the farm bill fix proposed in the House disaster bill doesn't go far enough, Helena [reports](#). "While I'm encouraged that the House has recognized the need to support both dairy and cotton, this bill misses an important opportunity to repair the broken dairy safety net," Stabenow, ranking Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee, said in a statement.

Can't win: At the same time, the Heritage Foundation is [deriding](#) the steps the package does take to make cotton growers eligible for a loss coverage program. "It's just another way to funnel even more taxpayer money to cotton special interests that already get excessive farm

handouts and even had a special program created exclusively for them in the last farm bill," says Daren Bakst, an agriculture policy expert at Heritage. "To use the cover of a disaster bill to help special interests at the expense of taxpayers is precisely the type of action that makes Americans think so poorly of Congress."

EARMARKS

- Will tax cuts for tech companies actually create jobs? [POLITICO Pro](#).
- In the future, Kevin Brady sees more reconciliation. [Roll Call](#).
- Democrats ready yearlong assault against tax cut package. [The Washington Post](#).
- Arctic refuge has lots of wildlife. Oil, maybe not so much. [National Geographic](#).
- Tax victory may be fleeting for Ryan and McConnell. [POLITICO](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: Two days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 22, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/12/republicans-fling-ornaments-off-stopgap-christmas-tree-059047>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Obamacare stabilization bill dropped from year-end package [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/20/2017 01:19 PM EDT

A Senate effort to stabilize Obamacare's insurance markets will not be part of a year-end spending bill — a win for House Republicans who don't want to do anything to prop up the health care law.

Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) said in a joint statement Wednesday they won't ask GOP leaders to include the stabilization plan, known as Alexander-Murray, in a continuing resolution this week amid growing opposition.

"It has become clear that Congress will only be able to pass another short-term extension to prevent a government shutdown and to continue a few essential programs," Collins and Alexander said. "We have asked Senator McConnell not to offer this week our legislation."

Instead, they will ask leaders to consider it in an omnibus spending bill in January, they said, adding that they don't expect new funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program to materialize until then, either.

"There is every reason to believe that these important provisions can and will be delivered as part of a bipartisan agreement," the lawmakers said. "And Majority Leader [Mitch] McConnell has told us that he will uphold his commitment to schedule and support the legislation."

President Donald Trump wants the stabilization effort passed next year and will sign it into law, the White House said Wednesday, which could provide much-needed support to get the

legislation through the House.

"We believe that we will work with the House to get those passed," a senior White House official said. "We think that we will be in a more comfortable place in January to get that passed."

Alexander said it was "hard to add our bills to a year-end package that does not yet exist" referring to a government spending bill that needs to be passed before the government runs out of money on Friday.

Collins, a key vote on the tax bill, said earlier this month that [McConnell](#) had pledged to support Alexander-Murray by the end of the year in exchange for her support on the tax reform bill. Senior Senate Republicans, including [John Thune](#) and [John Cornyn](#), said as recently as Tuesday that McConnell was keen to keep his promise to Collins.

Collins — and many other Senate Republicans — said the plan was needed to help counteract the effects of repealing Obamacare's individual mandate as part of the Republican tax overhaul package. But Democratic critics say even Alexander-Murray wouldn't make up for the harm of repealing the mandate.

The plan, crafted originally between Alexander and Democratic Sen. [Patty Murray](#), would have funded key Obamacare insurance subsidies that President Donald Trump halted in October. But it faced long odds for passage.

House Republicans not only opposed propping up Obamacare but insisted that restrictions be added to ensure the money isn't used to fund abortions. Anti-abortion groups pledged to oppose the bill unless restrictions were added.

But adding restrictions would trigger opposition from Senate Democrats, whose support is essential to getting the government spending bill approved.

The result will be that the Obamacare mandate will be repealed — a move that alone will drive up premiums by 10 percent according to the CBO. Not funding the cost-sharing payments would result in premiums rising by 20 percent next year and 25 percent in 2020, the CBO said in August.

Alexander said he plans to approach Murray about resuming their work on stabilization, adding that the legislation may change.

"It needs to be bipartisan in the Senate," he said. "I want it to be."

The two initially struck a deal temporarily funding the cost-sharing payments in exchange for greater state flexibility. But since then, Murray has accused the GOP of hijacking their agreement and using it to justify gutting Obamacare's individual mandate.

Senate GOP leaders said earlier Wednesday they were deferring to Collins and Alexander to determine if the stabilization bill could be included in the spending package, according to Cornyn, the chamber's second-ranking Republican.

Whether it ends up in the CR is "really a call for Sen. Collins and Sen. Alexander," Cornyn said Wednesday morning. "The CR is a little bit up in the air."

Collins said House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) called her Wednesday to say the House is committed to passing legislation similar to her bill with Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) that would provide reinsurance programs to the states under Obamacare.

Adam Cancryn and Matthew Nussbaum contributed to this report.

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House Republicans ditch partisan spending plan ahead of shutdown [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan and Rachael Bade | 12/19/2017 10:32 PM EDT

Facing opposition within their own ranks — and a potential government shutdown — House Republicans are once again changing their strategy on a funding bill.

Gone is the plan for a bill funding the Pentagon for the rest of the fiscal year and other government agencies until mid-January. Now House Republicans will extend funding only until Jan. 19 for the whole government, hoping the new strategy will produce enough support to stave off a funding lapse come midnight Friday.

A massive \$81 billion disaster aid bill will be broken out and have a separate vote. There is surprisingly strong opposition to that package, which was unveiled by the House Appropriations Committee only on Monday.

It is still unclear whether GOP leaders will include funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program as part of the new funding bill. And while some defense programs are expected to get a boost under the plan, those details are still under wraps.

A proposal to reauthorize so-called Section 702 spying powers under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act will go as a standalone bill as well.

A Senate plan to add bipartisan Obamacare stabilization funds to the funding bill — known as a continuing resolution — looks dead on arrival in the House. That is likely to spur a tense legislative back-and-forth in the final hours before funding is set to expire this week.

The change in direction shows once again how difficult it is for House Speaker Paul Ryan to get anything through the House, especially if he is relying on GOP votes alone.

Republican House leaders had planned to hold a vote Wednesday on the initial funding bill, seen as a way to placate the party's most conservative members. But after deciding to tack on billions of dollars in disaster aid — with all that money set to add directly to the deficit — those same members ultimately reneged on commitments of support.

Now, House GOP leaders hope to vote on all these bills on Thursday, and then adjourn, leaving the Senate to finish up consideration of the measures. Top Republicans believe Senate Democrats will accept the plan and avoid a government shutdown, or having to return to Washington next week.

For their part, Democrats are already jumping at the opportunity to note the GOP's miscalculation.

"Republican leadership is so preoccupied with their tax giveaway to corporations and contributors that they managed to get surprised by this — the most predictable train wreck in history," said Matt Dennis, Democratic communications director for the House Appropriations Committee.

Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes contributed to this report.

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Not just EpiPen: OIG finds drug misclassifications cost Medicaid billions [Back](#)

By Sarah Karlin-Smith | 12/20/2017 12:17 PM EDT

Medicaid misclassified at least 885 drugs in 2016, likely costing the government billions of dollars in unpaid rebates, an HHS inspector general's [report](#) found.

Drug companies may have owed Medicaid an additional \$1.3 billion in rebates from 2012 to 2016 for the 10 potentially-misclassified drugs with the highest total 2016 reimbursements. These companies paid only \$199 million in rebates over this time period.

Congress asked OIG to look into drug misclassifications and Medicaid following the outcry over the rising prices of the EpiPen allergy antidote that Mylan had been [classifying as a generic](#) for Medicaid rebate purposes since 1997.

Most of the potentially misclassified drugs OIG looked at were classified as generic products in the Medicaid file, but as branded drugs by the FDA. Classifying a product as a generic for Medicaid purposes meant the companies were responsible for a lower base rebate and not subject to penalties when they raise prices for the drugs above the rate of inflation.

Fifty-four manufacturers potentially misclassified their drugs, but four companies were responsible for 54 percent of the potential misclassifications, OIG found.

Overall, 95 percent of drugs in the Medicaid program were appropriately classified and 3 percent appeared to be misclassified. OIG was unable to determine the status of the other 2 percent.

OIG raised concerns that CMS does not have the authority to compel drug companies to correct inaccurate classifications. CMS also doesn't maintain a database of potential errors. OIG suggested CMS seek legislative authority to let it compel drug companies to change their rebate classifications or determine whether on its own it could suspend companies from Medicaid until misclassifications are addressed.

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State officials panicked over CHIP: 'We're in a terrible situation right now' [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 12/20/2017 01:45 PM EDT

Families are becoming increasingly panicked about children losing health insurance without new funding from Congress, state officials warned Wednesday as a new report showed nearly 2 million kids could be dropped from coverage next month.

Roughly 1.9 million children across the country could lose insurance in January if Congress fails to renew Children's Health Insurance Program funding, according to a new [report](#) from the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. Another 1 million could lose coverage by the end of February if the congressional stalemate drags on.

"We're in a terrible situation right now," Linda Nablo, the chief deputy director of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, said on a call with reporters. More than 68,000 children and 1,100 pregnant women in Virginia could lose CHIP coverage without a funding extension.

Federal funds for CHIP, which covers roughly 9 million low-income children and pregnant women, expired on Sept. 30. Despite the program's longstanding popularity, a funding measure in Congress has been delayed by partisan bickering. As of Wednesday afternoon, it appeared a resolution on CHIP funding could be pushed into mid-January.

Several states, including Colorado, Utah, Connecticut and Virginia, have already notified enrollees that their coverage could be terminated at the end of January unless Congress acts in the coming days. Nablo, the Virginia health official, warned that her state may have less money than originally thought and may not be able to provide coverage through the end of January.

"We are scrambling here," she said.

Alabama said it is planning to freeze enrollment Jan. 1, a month before the state will completely shut down its program covering roughly 84,000 children.

"We definitely are facing some really difficult decisions in our state right now," Alabama CHIP Director Cathy Caldwell said Wednesday. "It's just very, very stressful here."

Congress had been hoping to address CHIP funding in a year-end government spending bill. But Republican lawmakers are now weighing a [short-term spending deal](#) that would keep the government funded through Jan. 19, giving them more time to hash out contentious items like CHIP funding.

The House and Senate, in principle, have both agreed on extending the CHIP program for five years and temporarily maintaining a funding boost originally provided by Obamacare. But Democrats have rejected GOP plans to pay for the CHIP extension by cutting other health programs.

Even though federal funds for CHIP expired nearly three months ago, states have relied on supplemental funding from the federal government and other measures to maintain enrollment.

CMS has sent states at least \$1.2 billion in unspent CHIP funds from prior years to help keep their programs open.

Nablo blasted Congress for being "naive" by thinking that it could wait until the last minute to provide new funds.

"They totally ignore the fact that these are large health care programs and they must be managed," she said. "You don't just wait until the day before the last dollar is spent."

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Trump may not sign tax bill without waiver averting Medicare cuts [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 12/20/2017 11:57 AM EDT

The director of President Donald Trump's National Economic Council suggested today that Trump could delay signing the Republican tax overhaul bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), until Congress separately waives a budget rule that would trigger cuts to Medicare and other programs due to the deficit increase caused by tax cuts.

Gary Cohn said that waiver could be a part of a legislative package to keep the government funded until mid-January, though that would require Democrats to support the waiver and a short-term funding package. The threshold to waive the mandatory cuts is 60 votes in the Senate. It's still unclear whether the continuing resolution to keep the government open past Friday will include a so-called PAYGO waiver.

"If we can get PAYGO waived in the [funding legislation] we will sign the tax bill this year," said Cohn at an event hosted by Axios. "We'll see what happens. There's a few technical issues in here that have to be dealt with."

Though the Constitution requires that the president sign or veto a law within 10 days, Congress could delay delivery of the bill after the anticipated final passage today.

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Home-schoolers axed as Section 529 savers in tax bill [Back](#)

By Kimberly Hefling | 12/19/2017 06:25 PM EDT

A home schooling lobbyist on Tuesday blamed Senate Democrats for the removal of a provision from the Senate tax bill that would have allowed home schooling families to use tax-advantaged Section 529 funds for their expenses.

William Estrada, the director for federal relations for the Home School Legal Defense

Association, said Democrats targeted home schooling families by complaining about the provision, and he charged that they were prompted by the National Education Association, a teachers union.

He said that led to the decision by the Senate parliamentarian to rule that the home schooling provision violates the Byrd rule, which severely restricts what sort of provisions may be included in reconciliation measures such as the tax bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#).

"We still see that one party is still the party that doesn't trust parents, particularly when it comes to home schooling," Estrada told POLITICO.

He said the move feels like an act of animosity against home schooling families.

Historically, 529 accounts have been used to help families save for college. But the GOP tax bill would allow families to use them to save for private school K-12 tuition, and an amendment by Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) had allowed home schooling expenses to be included, too.

Mary Kusler, the senior director of NEA's Center for Advocacy, said NEA has opposed the 529 expansion but did not single out the home schooling provision. She said such an expansion would only benefit families that can already afford private schools, at the expense of public schools.

"NEA has been advocating on this issue since the introduction of the tax bill, and never once have we focused solely on the home schooling provisions," Kusler said.

"We really are concerned that this going to be the issue that really does hamper equity and opportunity for all," Kusler said. "It wasn't just the home schooling provisions we were objecting to."

Sens. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.), the ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee, and [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.), the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, issued a statement praising the decisions to remove the home schooling provision, among others.

When asked about what led to the move, a spokeswoman for Wyden referred back to the statement. A spokesman for Sanders did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"Instead of providing tax breaks to the wealthiest people and most profitable corporations, we need to rebuild the disappearing middle class," the statement said.

Because of the changes, the House is expected to have to vote again Wednesday and the Senate later Tuesday night after removing the provisions.

Caitlin Emma contributed to this report.

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Graham-Cassidy backers eye reviving repeal plan next year [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/19/2017 05:25 PM EDT

The senators behind the Graham-Cassidy Obamacare repeal bill met today to come up with a strategy for reviving the legislation in 2018, according to attendees.

"I think we're all going to say that we ripped the heart out of Obamacare with the individual mandate," said Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#) (R-S.C.), referring to the tax overhaul bill expected to pass this week, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). "It's pretty hard to rip the heart out of it and not replace it."

The meeting today covered how to redo the bill's spending formulas — at the very least they'll have to be adjusted by one year — as well as how to build additional political support.

Graham-Cassidy was the fourth Obamacare repeal bill to fail since the summer began and would have replaced the health care law's funding for Medicaid expansion and private insurance subsidies with block grants.

Graham and co-sponsor [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.) argue that the GOP will own more of Obamacare once the GOP repeals the mandate with its tax vote.

"You can argue it was a Democratic health care issue before repeal of the individual mandate," Graham said. "Once you've repealed individual mandate, politically, you own this thing."

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Trump hints at cutting foreign aid over U.N. vote on Jerusalem [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 12/20/2017 12:54 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Wednesday suggested that the U.S. could pull foreign aid from nations that vote against it at the United Nations, a warning delivered ahead of a General Assembly vote expected to criticize the Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

"For all of these nations that take our money and then they vote against us at the Security Council or they vote against us, potentially, at the Assembly, they take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars and then they vote against us," Trump said at a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

"Well, we're watching those votes," he continued. "Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care. But this isn't like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars and nobody knows what they're doing."

Included in Trump's warning was praise for the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, who wrote in a letter to other member states that Trump and the U.S. government would take those votes "personally."

"As you know, the General Assembly is considering a resolution about President Trump's recent decision on Jerusalem," Haley wrote in letter to member states that was provided to

POLITICO by a U.N. source. "As you consider your vote, I want you to know that the President and U.S. take this vote personally. The President will be watching this vote carefully and has requested I report back on those countries who voted against us. We will take note of each and every vote on this issue."

Trump said at his cabinet meeting on Wednesday that "I like the message that Nikki sent yesterday at the United Nations." He said he had received "a lot of good comment on it" and promised that "we're not going to be taken advantage of any longer."

The sentiment in Haley's letter echoed one she put out on Twitter Tuesday, where she wrote that "At the UN we're always asked to do more & give more. So, when we make a decision, at the will of the American ppl, abt where to locate OUR embassy, we don't expect those we've helped to target us. On Thurs there'll be a vote criticizing our choice. The US will be taking names."

The resolution before the General Assembly is expected to mirror one that the U.S. vetoed in the Security Council earlier this week. That resolution, which each Security Council member except for the U.S. voted in favor of, declared that decisions made on the status of Jerusalem were "null and void and must be rescinded," and called on member states to "refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the holy city."

Trump's decision earlier this month to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv has proved controversial, sparking violence and protests in the Middle East, as well as condemnation and criticism from U.S. allies and partners. Jerusalem's status remains a contested point in peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, with each side seeking to claim the city as its capital in any two-state solution.

In making his announcement, the president pointedly did not rule out the possibility of a divided Jerusalem serving as the capital for both Israel and Palestine in a two-state solution, nor did he take a position on any other contested boundaries or issues. Trump's announcement also did not shift the U.S. position on control of Muslim and Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem.

The president and others in his administration have said the move amounted to little more than an acknowledgement of the reality that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. Haley repeated that position in her letter to United Nations member states.

"The U.S. announcement is an acknowledgement that peace is best advanced, not set back, when all parties are honest with each other about the basic facts," she wrote. "Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel since the country's founding nearly seventy years ago. The President's honest assessment of this reality does not foreclose any of the options considered by Israelis and Palestinians for decades. I know that many in the General Assembly are also committed to the cause of peace, and I ask that you consider whether a GA resolution contributes to that cause or fuels the heated rhetoric and violence."

Nahal Toosi contributed to this report.

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Interior reimbursed for Zinke Virgin Island fundraiser, but contributions unaccounted for [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/19/2017 06:57 PM EDT

Taxpayers have been reimbursed for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's participation in a political fundraiser last spring in the Virgin Islands — but questions remain about the donations he helped solicit, according to campaign finance records and interviews.

The Virgin Islands Republican Party repaid on Oct. 5 the Interior Department \$275 for expenses related to Zinke's appearance, according to recent federal campaign finance filings. Despite its small sum, the reimbursement carries significant legal implications. And it came on the same day [POLITICO first reported](#) that Zinke was the featured guest at the March 30 fundraiser, where records indicate that donors paid as much as \$5,000 per couple for a chance to pose for a photo with the secretary.

The Virgin Islands Republican Party — a political action committee nominally based in the islands but run by a Washington-area GOP consultant — did not list any donations matching those amounts in its Federal Election Commission reports for March and April. That makes it impossible to know who may have paid thousands of dollars for access to a member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, whose office has refused to provide advanced schedules of his travels and appearances.

Still, the reimbursement may be enough to protect Zinke from accusations that his Virgin Islands appearance violated the Hatch Act, which prohibits government officials from using taxpayer resources to advance partisan causes. Zinke is facing multiple investigations for his pattern of mixing politics and official business during taxpayer-funded travels.

The Caribbean fundraiser, which occurred during a three-day official trip by Zinke to the island chain, is his only political event so far for which the Interior Department has received reimbursement.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the department invoiced the VIGOP PAC for the amount. Swift did not reply to questions as to the timing of Interior's request for reimbursement.

"The invoice was calculated to cover the political activities portion of the secretary's travel to the USVI in accordance with Hatch Act regulations," Swift said. "There is a formula used to determine what percentage of a given trip the political event makes up, and how much to reimburse."

Swift said Interior had not sought reimbursement related to Zinke's stop at a fundraiser for Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) at an Anchorage steakhouse, or his attendance at a ski resort weekend organized by the leadership PAC of Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.), which [POLITICO previously reported](#). The amount of time Zinke spent at the Young fundraiser did not meet the minimum required to merit repayment under Hatch Act regulations, and Interior did not require reimbursement for the fundraiser in Montana because Zinke was on his personal time, Swift said.

Zinke also attended a July fundraiser for Republican Rep. Greg Walden in Oregon, which was reported in a local media [account](#) from the time. Swift said Interior has issued an invoice to Walden's campaign for that trip. The campaign's most recent FEC disclosures, which run through Sept. 30, do not show any payments to Interior.

The independent Office of Special Counsel, which investigates possible Hatch Act violations, has said in previous cases that timely reimbursement of the government's expenses is sufficient to avoid violating federal regulations that prohibit taxpayer dollars from paying for political activity. OSC, which declined to comment, is one of several agencies investigating Zinke's political activities.

Federal employees can face reprimands or even lose their jobs for violating the Hatch Act, but it is up to the president to decide how to punish violations by presidential appointees. OSC found that two members of former President Barack Obama's Cabinet had violated the Hatch Act, but neither faced major penalties.

Interior "should not be paying for any of Zinke's political travel," said Brendan Fischer, director of the bipartisan watchdog group Campaign Legal Center's federal and FEC reform program. "That being said, there is certainly a pattern of Zinke and other administration officials mixing official and political business, which the inspector general is looking into. Public resources are supposed to be used to advance the public interest, not to coddle political donors."

Besides reimbursing Interior for Zinke's appearance, VIGOP also paid \$875 for catering for a "VIGOP event" on March 30, according to FEC documents. That suggested the federal PAC was the one raising contributions at the event, Fischer said. But it does not appear to have disclosed at least some contributions associated with the appearance, something Fischer said could be a violation of campaign finance laws.

VIGOP has a murky relationship with the U.S. territory's official Republican Party organization, which has been riven by its own internal conflicts in recent years. The FEC classifies VIGOP as a nonparty PAC and lists its treasurer as Scott B. Mackenzie, a D.C.-area political operative who declined to comment when reached by POLITICO.

Zinke has for years worked with the VIGOP, attending at least two of its meetings on the island while he was a Montana congressman. Zinke's own fundraising organizations [spent millions of dollars](#) on a group of political operatives tied to the PAC, including direct mailing company Forthright Strategies, whom Republicans have accused of preying on small donors. POLITICO first reported a week before the reimbursement on Zinke's [use of a charter flight](#) to travel to the islands on official business.

The chairman of the territorial Republican Party, John Canegata, said the fundraiser had been the work of the territorial party, not the PAC, and would be listed in reports filed with the Virgin Islands' election committee.

"All our donations, we will put that together in a form they provide and give that to them at the end of the year," Canegata told POLITICO.

Campaign finance reports for groups registered with the islands' government are due in June and December of each year, a spokeswoman for Election Services of the Virgin Islands said. Money raised at a March fundraiser would have had to have been reported on the June disclosure

report, the spokeswoman said.

VIGOP is not officially part of the Virgin Island Republican Party structure and is not registered with the Elections System of the Virgin Islands as a fundraising organization, said Genevieve Whitaker, deputy supervisor of elections for the agency's St. Croix district.

Other Republicans in the Virgin Islands Republican territorial committee have complained about Canegata's relationship with Mackenzie's VIGOP, saying very little, if any, of the money Mackenzie's organization raises gets distributed to the party or candidates.

The committee also complained that Canegata signed a contract in 2013, a copy of which was obtained by POLITICO, identifying VIGOP as a client of Base Connect, a direct mail fundraising company that other Republicans have accused of exploiting small donors. Political committees linked to Zinke have [long done business with](#) many of the same political consultants as VIGOP.

An invitation for the March 30 event in St. Croix solicited donations of up to \$5,000 per couple to be event "patrons" or \$1,500 to be part of its "host committee." According to Zinke's schedule, he participated in a photo line with donors in those categories. But no donations in VIGOP's federal campaign finance reports match the names of 10 other individuals listed as guests of honor on the invitation, which was obtained by POLITICO.

VIGOP reported 88 donations in March and April, mostly between \$100 and \$500 apiece. Three donations of \$1,000 were the largest received in those months.

However, VIGOP's decision to reimburse Interior may insulate Zinke from some potential sanctions associated with his political behavior, judging by previous cases.

The Office of Special Counsel in 2012 [determined](#) that then-Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius had violated the Hatch Act by endorsing Obama's reelection and a local gubernatorial candidate during a speech in North Carolina at a gala for the Human Rights Campaign, where she was appearing on official business.

After HHS began receiving media inquiries about the speech, it reclassified the event as political and sought reimbursement from Obama's campaign and the Democratic National Committee. While the OSC said her remarks themselves violated the Hatch Act, it determined that HHS had satisfied requirements that the government be reimbursed for costs associated with political appearances.

In 2016, OSC [determined](#) that then-Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro had violated the law when he endorsed Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in an interview with Yahoo News anchor Katie Couric.

Since joining Trump's Cabinet in March, Zinke has appeared at more than a dozen events with former campaign donors or conservative activists while traveling on official business, including at least four fundraisers for politicians or PACs, according to a POLITICO review of his schedule, event invitations, Interior Department emails and other documents.

The sort of mixing of official business with political activity that Zinke has engaged in could lead to an ethical breach even if it is legal, said Virginia Canter, executive branch ethics counsel for good-governance watchdog group Citizens for Ethics and Responsibility in

Washington.

"What you become very concerned about is if you see the political activity driving the official activity," Canter said. "They may be in technical compliance with the law, but from appearance's perspective there could be abuse."

Zinke is under investigation by OSC and the Interior Department's inspector general. The FEC has separately raised questions about VIGOP's spending and is looking into Zinke's former leadership PAC, which relied on many of the same political consultants as the VIGOP.

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Trump's Interior chief 'hopping around from campaign event to campaign event' [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/05/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a little BS."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Office of Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting

political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips he has taken outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking

commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then- Interior Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity. Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt canceled his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he would have been cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter,

an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Donald McEachin (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. Jon Tester next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations; that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. Amata Radewagen, the Republican delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana, where he joined Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the-vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to a joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Obamacare stabilization bill dropped from year-end package [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/20/2017 01:19 PM EDT

A Senate effort to stabilize Obamacare's insurance markets will not be part of a year-end spending bill — a win for House Republicans who don't want to do anything to prop up the health care law.

Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) said in a joint statement Wednesday they won't ask GOP leaders to include the stabilization plan, known as Alexander-Murray, in a continuing resolution this week amid growing opposition.

"It has become clear that Congress will only be able to pass another short-term extension to prevent a government shutdown and to continue a few essential programs," Collins and Alexander said. "We have asked Senator McConnell not to offer this week our legislation."

Instead, they will ask leaders to consider it in an omnibus spending bill in January, they said, adding that they don't expect new funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program to materialize until then, either.

"There is every reason to believe that these important provisions can and will be delivered as part of a bipartisan agreement," the lawmakers said. "And Majority Leader [Mitch] McConnell has told us that he will uphold his commitment to schedule and support the legislation."

President Donald Trump wants the stabilization effort passed next year and will sign it into law, the White House said Wednesday, which could provide much-needed support to get the legislation through the House.

"We believe that we will work with the House to get those passed," a senior White House official said. "We think that we will be in a more comfortable place in January to get that passed."

Alexander said it was "hard to add our bills to a year-end package that does not yet exist" referring to a government spending bill that needs to be passed before the government runs out of money on Friday.

Collins, a key vote on the tax bill, said earlier this month that [McConnell](#) had pledged to support Alexander-Murray by the end of the year in exchange for her support on the tax reform bill. Senior Senate Republicans, including [John Thune](#) and [John Cornyn](#), said as recently as Tuesday that McConnell was keen to keep his promise to Collins.

Collins — and many other Senate Republicans — said the plan was needed to help counteract the effects of repealing Obamacare's individual mandate as part of the Republican tax overhaul package. But Democratic critics say even Alexander-Murray wouldn't make up for the harm of repealing the mandate.

The plan, crafted originally between Alexander and Democratic Sen. [Patty Murray](#), would have funded key Obamacare insurance subsidies that President Donald Trump halted in October. But it faced long odds for passage.

House Republicans not only opposed propping up Obamacare but insisted that restrictions be added to ensure the money isn't used to fund abortions. Anti-abortion groups pledged to oppose the bill unless restrictions were added.

But adding restrictions would trigger opposition from Senate Democrats, whose support is essential to getting the government spending bill approved.

The result will be that the Obamacare mandate will be repealed — a move that alone will drive up premiums by 10 percent according to the CBO. Not funding the cost-sharing payments would result in premiums rising by 20 percent next year and 25 percent in 2020, the CBO said in August.

Alexander said he plans to approach Murray about resuming their work on stabilization, adding that the legislation may change.

"It needs to be bipartisan in the Senate," he said. "I want it to be."

The two initially struck a deal temporarily funding the cost-sharing payments in exchange for greater state flexibility. But since then, Murray has accused the GOP of hijacking their agreement and using it to justify gutting Obamacare's individual mandate.

Senate GOP leaders said earlier Wednesday they were deferring to Collins and Alexander to determine if the stabilization bill could be included in the spending package, according to Cornyn, the chamber's second-ranking Republican.

Whether it ends up in the CR is "really a call for Sen. Collins and Sen. Alexander," Cornyn said Wednesday morning. "The CR is a little bit up in the air."

Collins said House Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) called her Wednesday to say the House is committed to passing legislation similar to her bill with Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) that would provide reinsurance programs to the states under Obamacare.

Adam Cancryn and Matthew Nussbaum contributed to this report.

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FCC identifies areas eligible for \$2B broadband funding program [Back](#)

By Margaret Harding McGill | 12/19/2017 03:21 PM EDT

The FCC today outlined areas in 48 states eligible to receive some of as much as \$2 billion in funding meant to boost broadband deployment over the next decade.

The agency under Chairman Ajit Pai is gearing up to divvy up money next year via a reverse auction through the Connect America Fund that aims to subsidize broadband build-out in unserved rural areas.

The commission released a [map](#) of nearly one million homes and small businesses, largely in rural areas, that are unserved by high-speed broadband. Companies will compete to provide service at the lowest cost rather than bidding up the price as in a traditional auction.

"Closing the digital divide is my number one priority, and through this innovative Connect America Fund auction, we are poised to take the next big step in reaching that goal," Pai said [in a statement](#). "In rural America, broadband opens the doors of opportunity by connecting

remote communities to global markets, jobs, education, health care and information."

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USDA to allow private contractors to provide more help to states on SNAP [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 12/20/2017 01:12 PM EDT

The Department of Agriculture issued guidance today aimed at allowing states to use contractors more in the process of SNAP certification.

Federal law requires that state civil servants certify whether SNAP beneficiaries meet the eligibility requirements, and the guidance does not change that, the USDA said. But the agency's Food and Nutrition Service is expanding "the possible use of contracted private-sector staff to provide basic case-specific information." In the past, guidance has restricted contractors to "a much more limited set of activities," the department said.

The guidance comes after the USDA approved related requests from Michigan and Louisiana.

"I encourage all states with an interest in this new flexibility to consider this change in policy, especially states looking for better ways to align their operations across multiple programs," Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said in a statement.

The USDA argues that the policy change will enable states to "eliminate silos and align service delivery across programs, improve the use of technology, and spur innovation."

The Secretaries' Innovation Group — [a group of largely conservative state officials](#) who administer welfare programs — lauded the decision, noting that its members had asked for this type of flexibility during the Obama administration. For instance, some states have wanted to use contractors to help collect information, like birth certificates, while still having state employees certify the SNAP recipients as required by federal rules, said Jason Turner, executive director of SIG.

"Collecting information to make an eligibility determination can be time-consuming and is a major cost of administering the SNAP program," said Turner. "As states have moved to collect eligibility information at various locations this is a needed change."

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Stabenow says farm bill fixes in House disaster bill don't go far enough [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 12/19/2017 03:02 PM EDT

Senate Agriculture ranking member [Debbie Stabenow](#) is unimpressed with the farm bill fix

provisions proposed in the House disaster bill.

The House's \$81 billion [package](#) released late Monday includes language that makes cotton growers eligible for the Price Loss Coverage program, a change they've long lobbied for. It also contains language that would remove the current cap on livestock insurance policies, a move aimed at helping dairy producers get more access to insurance. There's a \$20 million annual cap, but it's not yet clear how much the change would cost.

The Michigan Democrat made it clear today she did not think the changes go far enough.

"While I'm encouraged that the House has recognized the need to support both dairy and cotton, this bill misses an important opportunity to repair the broken dairy safety net," Stabenow said in a statement.

"Expanding insurance options for dairy farmers is a good first step - but there's more we can do to help our producers recover from tough economic times and lay the groundwork for further progress in the 2018 Farm Bill," she said. "As the Senate completes its work on the disaster package, I will continue to support the Margin Protection Program improvements that Senators Cochran and Leahy made in the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bill."

The Margin Protection Program was created in the 2014 farm bill to replace a previous price support system. It protects farmers based on the margin between the cost of milk and the cost of feed. But the program has been widely criticized for being ineffective: With feed costs being low, it has done little to help producers cope with depressed prices for milk.

Stabenow took further issue with a little-noticed provision in the disaster bill, [H.R. 4667 \(115\)](#), that would set up a "National Accuracy Clearinghouse," a system aimed at making sure SNAP recipients are getting benefits in multiple states. It's not yet clear how much such savings such a system would generate, but the idea that the money would help shore up the farm safety net is not likely to go over well with Democrats or anti-hunger advocates.

"It is also unacceptable that the House decided to target our food safety net for families in exchange for much-needed improvements in the farm safety net," Stabenow said. "Pitting one part of the Farm Bill against another is the wrong way to get things done."

The National Farmers Union was also quick to react to the farm bill language in the supplemental.

"While NFU supports the cotton and dairy changes included in the bill, much more must be done," said Roger Johnson, president of NFU. "It is very disappointing that House appropriators provide significantly lower levels of assistance for dairy producers, who are struggling tremendously with low milk prices, market uncertainty, and a deeply flawed safety net program. We urge the Senate and House negotiators to find ways to provide more real, meaningful help."

Johnson also chided the provisions for apparently trying to use savings from tweaks to the way the SNAP program is administered for farm programs.

"We should also avoid cuts to nutrition program infrastructure outside of the farm bill reform debate," Johnson said. "Broad coalitions, over the course of the last year, have repeatedly stated that one farm bill program should not be an offset from the other. We stand by that

sentiment."

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Heritage slams House moves on cotton, dairy [Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 12/19/2017 03:15 PM EDT

The farm bill [fixes written into the House disaster bill](#) are quickly attracting criticism. Daren Bakst, the agriculture policy expert at the Heritage Foundation, issued a blistering rebuke of provisions today, calling the approach "shameful."

Bakst took particular issue with language buried toward the end of the [184-page bill](#) that was released late Monday night that makes cotton growers eligible for the Price Loss Coverage program.

"Apparently, some legislators in the House don't mind protecting the swamp," Bakst said. "In fact, they are so wedded to the Washington swamp that they are attempting to shamelessly help out their cronies by attaching non-disaster language to a disaster aid bill."

Bakst, a longtime critic of federal farm policy, called it "an expansion of farm handouts to cotton growers."

"This subsidy has absolutely nothing to do with disasters and is a sad, thinly veiled attempt to primarily help large farm businesses meet their financial bottom lines," Bakst said. "It's just another way to funnel even more taxpayer money to cotton special interests that already get excessive farm handouts and even had a special program created exclusively for them in the last farm bill."

"To use the cover of a disaster bill to help special interests at the expense of taxpayers is precisely the type of action that makes Americans think so poorly of Congress," he added. "This provision should be removed immediately. It is shocking that it existed in the first place."

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Tech's challenge: How to spend its tax windfall [Back](#)

By Steven Overly | 12/20/2017 05:07 AM EDT

The Republican tax bill will bring a windfall to the tech industry's biggest players — along with a heaping dose of pressure from President Donald Trump to invest the savings in jobs and factories at home.

The bill will allow companies like Apple and Microsoft to bring their huge piles of overseas cash back to the U.S. at a dramatically reduced tax rate. The decline — to 15.5 percent for cash from as much as 35 percent — is a boon for the tech giants that lead all U.S. corporations in stashing profits abroad, including a whopping \$250 billion stockpile for Apple alone.

Trump and key GOP lawmakers are making clear, though, that they expect the industry to return the favor by putting "America First."

"One of the most important outcomes of this tax bill is an investment into our future," House Majority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, said in a statement. "And by lowering rates for businesses of all sizes we can expect employees to see higher wages and more opportunities for career advancement. That helps the American worker, their families, and communities."

Trump boasted last week that Apple and other "great" companies will be able to bring back "trillions" of dollars as a result of the tax bill, promising they "will be spending that money right here, and it will be jobs and lots of other good things."

But skeptics fear that companies could use the money, once it's repatriated, to bolster their stock prices and increase executive compensation, rather than add jobs.

"Companies could just give it out in dividends. They could use it for stock buybacks. I don't think that's the best use of that funding," said Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna, whose district includes Apple's Cupertino, Calif., headquarters. "I would rather it have at least been linked to an investment in public education or infrastructure. There's no such linkage there."

Apple didn't respond to a request for comment on the tax bill or its plans once Trump signs the measure. CEO Tim Cook, who spent time this year at the White House and Capitol Hill talking about taxes, told NBC News last month he expects Apple will add more jobs as a result of tax reform but did not elaborate.

The current repatriation rate is "not good for investment in the U.S., so this needs to be fixed," Cook said at the time. "In my view it should have been fixed years ago, but let's get it done now."

Now that the tax bill is on the brink of passage, however, Apple and other tech giants that store the most cash abroad — Microsoft, Cisco, Google parent Alphabet and Oracle, according to data compiled by Bloomberg — will be closely watched for their U.S. activity. Those companies either declined or did not respond to requests for comment on this story.

"This is a tax stimulus in many ways for the tech sector at a time when it isn't necessarily needed, so it will be interesting to me what the tech sector does with all of this newfound cash," said Channing Flynn, Ernst & Young's global technology tax leader. "I bet they do wind up doing things that don't necessarily stimulate the economy but wind up providing value to shareholders."

A 2004 tax holiday that allowed companies to bring back foreign earnings at a reduced tax rate required them to first outline plans for using the funds on investments in jobs and infrastructure, though Flynn said much of the money was still used to enrich shareholders. No such requirements are in place this time.

Trump told The Wall Street Journal in July that Cook had promised him Apple would build "three big plants, beautiful plants" in the U.S., a claim Trump reiterated to reporters at a White House meeting in October. Apple has declined to comment on those remarks, and Trump did not provide further details.

Since Trump's election, Apple has made some domestic moves. The company in May unveiled a \$1 billion fund to invest in U.S. advanced manufacturing. So far, the fund has shelled out \$200 million to a Corning factory in Kentucky and \$390 million to a Finisar facility in Texas. Both companies manufacture parts for Apple products.

Apple also announced plans in August to build an Iowa data center after receiving a series of state and local tax breaks, though data centers typically employ a small number of workers following the construction phase.

Looming over all this is Trump's track record of expressing his Twitter-fueled discontent with companies that manufacture overseas. Since his campaign, Trump has made a habit of publicly bashing companies that build American products abroad while praising those that declare plans to add jobs or plants in the U.S. — even if the plans actually predated his presidency.

The repatriation rate is just one aspect of the tax package that benefits the tech industry, which deployed hundreds of lobbyists in Washington to secure favorable provisions.

Like most corporations, tech companies will benefit from the corporate tax rate dropping from 35 percent to 21 percent starting next year. The U.S. will also move to a "territorial" tax system in which future corporate income made abroad is only taxed in the country where it is earned — not taxed a second time in the U.S. — a provision sought by tech and other multinational firms.

The bill also preserves an existing research and development tax credit valued by Silicon Valley and lowers the tax rate on profits earned abroad on intellectual property held in the United States.

At the same time, the plan includes a minimum tax on offshore profits that could create a new tax burden on companies meant to discourage them from moving future money or operations overseas. That could pinch tech firms that have spent years optimizing their overseas operations to pay as little tax as possible.

Still, the legislation has garnered wide support from a tech industry that has been calling for years for tax cuts.

"Our industry will continue to work with stakeholders to refine the tax policies as they take shape in real-life practice," said Dean Garfield, president of the Information Technology Industry Council, "and do everything we can to ensure they boost the ability of businesses of all sizes to continue to harness the power of the internet, enter new markets, and create tech jobs in the United States and around the world."

Li Zhou contributed to this report.

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Tax victory may be fleeting for Ryan and McConnell [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Seung Min Kim | 12/20/2017 02:36 PM EDT

A beaming Speaker Paul Ryan high-fived and hugged his lieutenants after the House first passed the GOP tax bill Tuesday. As the Senate prepared to follow suit hours later, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was elated.

"Couldn't be better," he said in an interview with POLITICO.

Capitol Hill Republicans have every reason to feel euphoric. Ryan and McConnell have ushered the biggest tax overhaul in a generation through Congress and delivered President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory since Inauguration Day.

But on the periphery is palpable angst, particularly in the House. Just hours before the Tuesday vote, some House Republicans fretted privately about the prospect of getting railroaded into propping up Obamacare by the end of the week. And conservatives have been stewing quietly over a looming legislative package coming in early January that most believe will increase spending and codify an Obama-era immigration program they believe is illegal.

"It's kinda like leaving a hospital finding out you're cancer free and getting run over by a Mack truck," said Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker. On the one hand, the North Carolina Republican cheered passage of the tax plan. But he was also aghast that a unified Republican government was even discussing the possibility of enacting Obamacare subsidy payments they campaigned against for years.

Ryan and McConnell scored an undeniable win this week when Congress passed a sweeping tax overhaul. For the speaker, it was a chance to check his No. 1 policy goal off his bucket list. For the majority leader, it was an opportunity to regroup with a once-in-a-generation success, particularly after the Senate failed to repeal Obamacare this summer.

But the victory lap for both men may be short-lived.

By Friday Republicans will have to figure out how to fund the government, and there are no good options. House Republicans hoped to increase defense spending without giving Democrats any funding boost for their own priorities — an idea GOP leaders retracted after realizing it would go nowhere in the Senate. McConnell, for his part, recently backed the idea of adding Obamacare stabilization payments to the short-term spending bill — something House Republicans have flat-out rejected.

That's to say nothing of January, when Congress is expected to raise strict spending caps without equivalent cuts and potentially offer deportation relief to Dreamers. Both could repel the conservative base even more.

Republicans throughout Washington have begun calling the January legislative agenda the "shit sandwich."

"It's going to take a lot of the win away and a lot of the momentum away if we go back on our principles, and to me that's why the [Obamacare] payments are toxic," said Rep. Warren

Davidson (R-Ohio), a Freedom Caucus member who enjoys a strong relationship with Ryan and even sat with him on the floor in the moments before the House vote Tuesday. On Wednesday afternoon, Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) said they would not push for an Obamacare stabilization measure to hitch a ride on this week's stopgap spending bill and would instead seek passage early next year.

Ryan may have sensed that other policy matters were about to infringe on the tax triumph: Just three hours before the House first passed the bill Tuesday, the Wisconsin Republican told his colleagues in a closed-door conference meeting to treasure the moment they passed the tax overhaul and remember it as Republicans tackle a series of thorny year-end issues. Be proud, Ryan said — and don't get bogged down in the drama.

Some heeded his advice; others did not. As Republicans streamed out of the room, several balked at Ryan's suggestion that McConnell might tack Obamacare subsidies onto the government-funding bill at week's end. Minutes later, when the gavel fell on tax reform in the House, some conservatives declined to join the party's standing ovation on the floor, frustrated over leadership's handling of the year-end to-do list.

Republicans' mixed emotions will again be on full display Wednesday: Around 3 p.m., GOP lawmakers will head to the White House for a celebration, where most will laugh and pat each other on the backs like one big happy family. But right after, House leaders expect to call a private conference meeting to discuss how to avert a shutdown — a discussion that's likely to displease conservatives, appropriators and defense hawks alike.

The Senate, a more bipartisan body comprised of more centrist Republicans, is having less heartburn for now. McConnell is determined that his hard-fought legislative victory on taxes — in which he kept together his fractious conference — not be swiftly overshadowed by a shutdown battle that could bruise Republicans.

"I think there's a bipartisan desire to wrap up our business here in a fairly non-contentious way, and I think you'll see that develop at the end of the week," McConnell told POLITICO. "This is not a place we haven't been before."

His top deputy, Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), was also adamant that the looming battles wouldn't detract from the tax win: "I don't know anybody that believes we're going to shut down."

A shutdown just two days before Christmas would tar the victory that GOP leaders on both ends of the Capitol have spent months working toward. Democrats have criticized the messy legislative process and accused the GOP of rushing through the tax bill with little public scrutiny, charges Republicans dismiss.

"I think it's a real tribute to our majority leader that he's been able to get this up and hopefully out," Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said.

Winning over Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the lone GOP senator to reject the Senate's version of the tax bill, was also a feat for McConnell.

At a party lunch on Tuesday, Corker spoke to his fellow Republican senators about how he came around on the tax measure despite initially opposing it out of concerns it would blow through the deficit. He didn't mention, according to one senator, the controversy that exploded

around him in the final days of the tax fight after a report suggested he flipped his vote only after securing provisions in the tax bill that would profit him personally.

McConnell came to Corker's defense in the interview with POLITICO, calling such suggestions about the Tennessee senator "absolutely outrageous."

The majority leader was unconcerned with the perception that some lawmakers could benefit financially from the tax overhaul. McConnell noted that his own accountant ran through how the Kentucky Republican would fare under the tax bill, and "I come out almost exactly where I am now."

"Every taxpayer in America has got a different set of facts," McConnell said. "Not a single member [was] casting a vote on this bill based upon their own personal tax situation."

In the House, there was never really a question about whether tax reform could pass. Ryan was able to muscle through an Obamacare repeal bill earlier in the year, and his conference was so sick of losing that they were willing to swallow almost any tax bill if it meant a legislative victory.

"It's a feather in his cap," said Rep. Bill Posey of Florida of Ryan. "He said this was one of his goals since the day he was on staff. And that says a lot, that it's been important to him — but also very important to the president and the country."

Even if GOP leaders iron out their government funding differences in the next three days with little drama, January is sure to be harder. While Republicans could pass tax and health care bills by themselves, negotiations on spending and immigration will require Democratic votes.

And Democrats, most lawmakers and aides on the Hill agree, have the upper-hand in those talks. That means it's only a matter of time before Republicans cut loose their right flank. But perhaps when that happens, and the intra-party bickering reaches a new crescendo, they'll look back to the day tax reform passed with fond memories.

"The nice thing about doing a big package that has been in the making and overdue for 31 years is this is going to have lasting impacts," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who hopes Republicans will keep talking about tax reform well beyond the shutdown drama. "I don't think any of us are going to lose any of our enthusiasm or gonna stop talking about it."

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Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 3:29:47 PM

By Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 11/20/2017 03:26 PM EDT

MAKE 'EM SWEAT: There's a sequester tucked into the GOP's tax bill — and only Democrats can stop it.

As CBO [warned](#) last week, \$150 billion in automatic pilfering could come as part of the arcane "PAYGO" rules created in the '90s. And while GOP leaders will surely try to waive the requirement to prevent that "Pay As You Go" slashing, they'll need votes from their colleagues across the aisle. So far, though, the minority party is playing hardball, as Sarah [reports for Pros](#) today. "I think if that were the ultimate outcome, that we wouldn't get blamed for it," [John Yarmuth](#) of Kentucky, the top Democrat on the House budget panel, told POLITICO. "I think right now they get blamed for anything that happens."

At stake: The Republican tax plan would force massive cuts to mandatory programs, to the tune of \$150 billion per year, if the legislation lives up to its \$1.5 trillion deficit-digging potential. Medicare would be slashed \$25 billion. Programs like crop subsidies, the Census Bureau, the hospital trust fund, wetlands conservation and parts of U.S. Customs and Border Protection would all feel the squeeze over a decade.

December gamble: If Republicans successfully wrap up their tax bill by Christmas, lawmakers would need to act swiftly to waive PAYGO. That could give Democrats extra leverage in the year-end government funding fight — unless Republicans take a similar tact and attach a PAYGO waiver to that must-pass package.

GOOD MONDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com ([@jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com ([@sarahnferris](#)).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Budget & Appropriations Brief](#) will not publish from Nov. 23-Nov. 26. Our next [Budget & Appropriations](#) newsletter will publish on Nov. 27. Please continue to follow Pro Budget & Appropriations issues [here](#).

Doc of the day — The National Coalition on School Diversity is [urging](#) the House and Senate to drop appropriations language that bans federal funding for transportation intended to help desegregate public schools. More from [Kimberly Hefling](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — Taxpayers who take home \$200,000 or more annually paid 58.8 percent of federal income taxes, though they comprised 6.8 percent of all taxable returns, according to the [Pew Research Center](#).

WHITE HOUSE

NEXT UP AFTER TAX: President Donald Trump said this afternoon that his administration will be "submitting plans on health care, plans on infrastructure, and plans on welfare reform — which is desperately needed in our country — soon after taxes," Lauren Gardner [reports](#).

OPIOID CRISIS

ECONOMIC EFFECT: The White House is out with a new [economic analysis](#) concluding that the cost of the opioid crisis was \$504 billion in 2015. Dan Diamond [explains](#) that the estimate translates to nearly 3 percent of GDP and is significantly higher than previous projections, which ranged from \$11.5 billion to \$79.9 billion in 2015 dollars. Those assessments "greatly understate" the public health problem, the Council of Economic Advisers argues.

BUDGET

OFFSETS, PLEASE? The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget is making a last-ditch plea for a spending deal that doesn't add to the deficit. "At minimum, lawmakers should follow the model of past sequester-relief agreements and pay for new spending with real cuts, not higher debt," the group's president said in a statement today, adding that the offsets must be "real" — not just gimmicks. The statement from Maya MacGuineas comes days after rumors that GOP and Democratic leaders were nearing a \$180 billion, two-year deal that would be only partially offset. Democrats rejected that offer.

INTERIOR

'UGH'-INSPIRING: An Interior Department spokeswoman tells POLITICO that the federal government "incurred no expense" by helping the secretary's wife tag along on official government trips. But the department's email archives suggest that Lola Zinke's inclusion has been both a headache and a time suck for the federal employees who have to coordinate that travel. As Ben Lefebvre [explains](#), Secretary Ryan Zinke sent his staff scrambling to make last-minute arrangements after his wife decided to stay longer than planned on an official trip to Norway, Greenland and Alaska. "UGH! We have all kinds of planes, trains and automobiles manifests to now scramble with," Director of Scheduling and Advance Russell Roddy said in an email to other Interior colleagues.

Ongoing investigation: That email is among the spoils of a FOIA lawsuit filed by the Western Values Project, a liberal watchdog group. The trove — which was shared first with POLITICO — coincides with an inspector general investigation into the secretary's travel expenses and appearances at political events while on official trips.

DISASTER AID

INSULT TO INJURY: The ag industry isn't too pleased with the Trump administration's latest disaster aid request, both because of what it doesn't fund — and what it proposes to cut. As Jenny Hopkinson [explains](#), the \$44 billion request the White House sent to Congress on Friday does not include relief for Florida citrus growers, despite repeated requests from state and federal lawmakers to help farmers whose groves were destroyed by Hurricane Irma.

Bipartisan blasting: Florida lawmakers from both parties have been quick to deride the proposal, Sergio Bustos [reports](#). Republican Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) said it is "unacceptable" that the plan "does not include sufficient and targeted resources for Florida's farmers." Democratic Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) said the request "doesn't come close to providing what is needed." And Republican Rep. [Dennis Ross](#) said, "Floridians have been kicked to the curb."

Offset backlash: Making farmers even angrier, the White House's plan calls for Congress to

cut \$3 billion in USDA funding to help pay for the aid package. Jenny [notes](#) that the administration is also going after \$212 million from the Agricultural Research Service's building and facilities account, \$800 million from WIC and \$204 million in emergency conservation funds.

SPINELESS: As Esther Whieldon [reports](#), the latest request does not include \$12 billion Texas Gov. Greg Abbott sought for a barrier project along his state's coastal spine.

TAX

STATES FEEL THE HEAT: Democratic leaders in New York, New Jersey and California are increasingly anxious about their states' bottom lines as the GOP's tax plan inches closer to enactment. The sweeping bill, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), that cleared the House last week would largely cut off taxpayers' ability to deduct state and local taxes, instantly raising the financial burden to live in those places. Deductions of up to \$10,000 on property taxes still would be allowed. "I'm just saying that what's happening in Washington is concerning the hell out of me," New Jersey Senate President Steve Sweeney said last week, as Laura Nahmias, Katherine Landergan and Carla Marinucci [report](#).

Rate reckoning: These high-tax states could be forced into an awkward debate: Should they lower taxes, even if it means cutting vital services? Or should they keep taxes as they are, hoping wealthy residents choose to stay?

STAY OR GO? OMB Director Mick Mulvaney acknowledged Sunday that repealing the Obamacare mandate might ultimately hamper the GOP's tax push, so the White House won't demand its inclusion. "If it becomes an impediment to getting the best tax bill we can, then we're OK with taking it out," Mulvaney [told](#) CNN's "State of the Union." That's the scenario Sen. [Susan Collins](#) said she's hoping for, Nolan McCaskill [explains](#).

More: [No subsidy ultimatum from Murkowski](#) | [Ads focus on health care cuts](#) | [Governors fear 'chaos' without Obamacare mandate](#) | [Independent power companies cry foul at carve-out](#)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TISK TISK, TILLERSON: In a recent sit-down with POLITICO's Susan Glasser, Sen. [Ben Cardin](#) (D-Md.) weighed in on whether Rex Tillerson is doing a good job, criticizing the secretary of State for not fighting back against Trump's budget proposal and for retaining a hiring freeze among his ranks despite OMB's decision to nix the overall moratorium on bringing in new workers. "He hasn't been the advocate for the Department of State the way he should have been," Cardin said. Check out the [full transcript](#).

'A repudiation': Cardin also said he expects the fiscal 2018 spending plan that ultimately passes the Senate to be a "repudiation" of the Republican president's budget for the State Department, Susan [notes](#).

HEALTH

REJIGGERING MEDICARE PREMIUMS: CMS has announced that it's keeping monthly premiums steady for most Medicare Part B recipients next year. But about a quarter of beneficiaries will pay slightly less than the \$134 standard monthly premium because of "hold harmless" provisions tied to Social Security benefits. And higher earners will pay more, with a

top rate of \$429 per month, Paul Demko [explains](#).

OBAMACARE

DEATH BLOW? Axing Obamacare's individual mandate may not undermine the health care law as much as previously thought. Once considered a key pillar of the system, many health care experts now say the requirement actually has a minimal effect, Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko [report](#) today. That's because the penalty was never as big as Democrats wanted it to be, and many would-be customers have chosen to simply pay the fine instead of buying coverage.

IT'S BACK: There's also fresh momentum for a deal on Obamacare subsidies. Senate Republicans recently arranged a meeting to get Trump to support a bipartisan deal to shore up the already shaky insurance markets, Jen and John Bresnahan [report](#).

EARMARKS

— Puerto Rico to pay Christmas bonuses despite hurricane's toll. [Bloomberg Markets](#).

— Perdue touts investments in rural health care services in 41 states. [POLITICO Pro](#).

— Darrell Issa: Californians don't deserve a tax increase. [The Orange County Register](#).

— Celebrities came through on Harvey pledges, still millions pending from large benefit events. [Houston Chronicle](#).

— Will cutting the health mandate pay for tax cuts? Not necessarily. [The New York Times](#).

— Trump calls for border wall after agent's death. [POLITICO Pro](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 18 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/11/republicans-speed-toward-uncertain-paygo-fate-029258>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Democrats weigh post-tax 'PAYGO' wrath [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 11/20/2017 05:00 AM EDT

The "PAYGO" blame game has begun.

If GOP leaders succeed in enacting tax reform, they'll need the help of their disgruntled counterparts to stop the bill from triggering deep cuts to programs like Medicare and student loans. But Democrats are making no promises they'll approve the bailout, prompting both parties to assign fault for the still-hypothetical doomsday scenario.

"I think if that were the ultimate outcome, we wouldn't get blamed for it," Rep. [John Yarmuth](#), the top Democrat on the House budget panel, told POLITICO.

Because Republicans have allowed themselves to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit through tax reform, their overhaul plan is set to cue \$150 billion in mandatory spending cuts under the decades-old "pay-as-you-go" rule, as detailed in an explosive CBO [report](#) last week.

At least for now, Democrats are content watching their GOP colleagues squirm over the prospect of those painful cuts actually occurring. After all, Yarmuth argues, Republicans would clearly be at fault for inadvertently slashing at funding that pays grandma's medical bills.

"I think right now they get blamed for anything that happens," the Kentucky Democrat said, noting that GOP lawmakers are currently assuming the opposite — that Democrats would field flak for opposing any effort to waive the PAYGO rule.

Republicans say they would dare Democrats to vote "no" on staving off the spending cuts.

"They would have to stand up and say, 'Yes, I want these cuts to happen,'" said Don Stewart, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#). "They won't, of course, and never have — whether it's tax cuts they support or tax cuts they don't."

Those automatic cuts would kick in every year for a decade, potentially stinging assistance programs for crop subsidies, the Census Bureau, the hospital insurance trust fund, wetlands conservation, and Customs and Border Protection.

Medicare would be chopped \$25 billion per year, CBO estimates.

Even so, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget predicts the tax plan would still run a \$36 billion deficit if the automatic cuts occur. With Social Security and many low-income programs protected from PAYGO's reach, reductions to other programs aren't expected to be enough to cover lost revenue from the tax tweaks the GOP plans.

Most Republicans are dismissing the looming sequester as purely hypothetical, arguing that lawmakers would simply have to vote, as they have done in the past, to avert the blow. But because that vote would be politically linked to the GOP's tax bill, Democrats could be tempted to play hardball.

"Why would Democrats possibly vote to waive this when they want Republicans to feel the heat?" one lobbyist familiar with the PAYGO process said.

The procedural rule at the heart of the problem can be waived with 60 votes in the Senate. Lawmakers have done this repeatedly for pricey legislation in recent years, including Obama-era economic stimulus packages.

This year could play out differently, however, given the GOP's determination to jam a partisan tax bill through Congress as Democrats look on with little legislative effect on the process.

Both chambers would need to take separate votes on waiving PAYGO. And the Senate would require bipartisan support, unlike the fast-tracked tax bill that requires only 51 votes.

The gamble is a tough one for Democrats, particularly heading into the 2018 midterms.

Many in the minority party see the prospect of Medicare cuts as a political gift — one more way to rally voters against the GOP's tax bill. But House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) has

not yet spoken to rank-and-file members about how she plans to handle the issue, lawmakers said.

Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) won't settle on a strategy until they are sure Republicans can actually enact tax reform, several Democratic aides said.

Rep. [Richard Neal](#) (D-Mass.) said he has long opposed Congress' use of PAYGO or sequestration in any context "because you never know what the outcome's going to be."

While he's personally concerned about the cuts going into effect, Neal said he doesn't know yet what strategy Democrats will choose.

"I think we'll just have to digest all of it and then make a determination," said Neal, the House Ways and Means Committee's top Democrat.

At the same time, Democrats are reminding Republican fiscal hawks that the budget-busting tax plan and subsequent PAYGO cuts are fundamentally contrary to their cause.

In a letter this month, Sen. [Chris Van Hollen](#) (D-Md.) asked House Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) (R-N.C.) whether he intends to support a PAYGO waiver "in the event that Congress passes tax cuts that increase the deficit."

To complicate each party's calculations, the fight could coincide with several other end-of-year legislative battles.

GOP leaders aim to pass their tax bill by Christmas, which would require lawmakers to act swiftly on PAYGO, since the cuts would take place 15 days after Congress adjourns for the year.

If Democrats agree to vote with Republicans on waiving the rule, minority party leaders could win leverage on other key legislative efforts, including ongoing negotiations on government funding levels, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program and helping young immigrants who now stand to lose protected status.

But Republicans could also work the situation to their advantage, potentially attaching a PAYGO waiver to must-pass legislation like a government funding package, forcing Democrats to lift the rule or vote to both slash mandatory programs and shut down the government.

Bernie Becker contributed to this report.

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Civil rights groups target anti-busing rider in appropriations bills [Back](#)

By Kimberly Hefling | 11/20/2017 12:41 PM EDT

Several civil rights groups are calling on Congress to remove riders to fiscal 2018

appropriations bills that would prohibit the use of federal funds for transportation costs for school desegregation.

The "anti-busing" language has been in appropriations legislation since at least 1974, according to letters dated Friday and sent to [House](#) and [Senate](#) leaders. The letters were spearheaded by the National Coalition on School Diversity, which is a network of civil rights groups advocating for greater diversity in education.

"It is alarming that such legislative language would still be present in 2017, in an era when racial re-segregation of our public schools has surged, where a majority of members of the Supreme Court have declared school diversity to be a 'compelling government interest,' and where so many districts are working voluntarily to promote racial and economic integration for the benefit of their children and communities," the letters said.

The language would "effectively abrogate" some programs governed by the Every Student Succeeds Act, the sweeping 2015 law that states are implementing.

That includes the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, which provides grant funding for districts under a court order or a federally approved voluntary desegregation plan to support magnet schools. The groups say the language could affect the ability to use the funds for transportation, as ESSA allows.

The rider also limits the range of school improvement strategies available when it comes to using Title I funds, which go to support low-income schools, as well as grant funding under the Education Innovation and Research program that is designed to help districts address persistent problems in education, they say.

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Trump: Infrastructure, 'welfare reform' coming after tax bill [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 11/20/2017 01:41 PM EDT

President Donald Trump vowed today that infrastructure — plus his new priority of overhauling the nation's welfare system — would be next in line for attention from the administration once Congress finishes work on revamping the tax code.

"We'll be working on health care, infrastructure and welfare reform. We're looking very strongly at welfare reform, and that will all take place right after taxes — very soon, very shortly after taxes," Trump said before a Cabinet meeting. "So we'll be submitting plans on health care, plans on infrastructure, and plans on welfare reform — which is desperately needed in our country — soon after taxes."

The addition of "welfare reform" to Trump's list of post-tax overhaul policy priorities is recent. White House advisers have said they expect to release an expanded document of "principles" for infrastructure intended to guide lawmakers when drafting legislation once Congress completes debate on a tax bill.

To view online [click here](#).

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White House: Cost of opioid crisis topped \$500B in 2015 [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond | 11/19/2017 07:03 PM EDT

A new White House [economic analysis](#) concludes the cost of the opioid crisis was \$504 billion in 2015 — an estimate that translates to nearly 3 percent of GDP and is significantly higher than previous projections.

Previous estimates of the annual cost of the opioid crisis — which ranged from \$11.5 billion to \$79.9 billion in 2015 dollars — "greatly understate" the public health problem, according to the Council of Economic Advisers.

"[T]he crisis has worsened, especially in terms of overdose deaths which have doubled in the past ten years," the CEA report concludes.

CEA says its model incorporates recent research "finding significant underreporting of opioid-involved overdose deaths." It also accounts for the effects of illegal opioids like heroin, which previous studies didn't include, and "fully" accounts for the value of lives lost because of the crisis in ways that previous reports did not. For instance, the White House says it diverged from previous estimates by quantifying the "value of a statistical life" rather than just projecting the lost earnings from a premature death.

The White House also says it will offer follow-up analysis of recent actions intended to help solve the crisis, such as evaluating how interventions to raise the cost of legally supplying opioids may have negative, unintended consequences. "This is the first but not the last publication CEA plans to issue on the opioid crisis," the report reads.

To view online [click here](#).

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'UGH!': Zinke's wife's travel caused some headaches for Interior staff [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/20/2017 05:03 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife caused some frustration for Interior staffers when traveling with him on official business, according to new records that a liberal watchdog group says uncover the potential misuse of government resources.

The records document Lola Zinke's last-minute requests to join high-level dinners and additions to the guest list for a conservative group's event near their home in Southern California earlier this year. The Western Values Project filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit last month to force Interior to release more than 100 pages of [documents](#) related to Lola Zinke's trips with her husband and interactions with Interior staff. Shared first with

POLITICO, the documents shed new light on the outsize profile Lola Zinke has established compared with the typical Cabinet secretary's spouse, including her dictating people to invite to a town hall hosted by the conservative Young America's Foundation for her husband.

New emails also reveal a celebratory dinner the Zinkes attended that was organized in part by a major GOP donor who gave heavily to Ryan Zinke's congressional campaigns. And they show Interior staffers had to accommodate a last-minute request for her to join the secretary at an official dinner with Alaska's governor. The records cover two trips Lola Zinke joined in the first three months of her husband's tenure as well as some other interactions with Interior staff, such as coordinating her attendance at a White House briefing for Cabinet members' spouses.

While the department says Lola Zinke paid her own way, the records show Interior used staff time to coordinate some of her activities while traveling with her husband. And the trips gave her access to high-level politicians and GOP activists and donors who could benefit her as a political operator in her own right.

"These emails show that the leadership at the Department of Interior treats basic ethical standards like an inconvenience," Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said. "If Secretary Zinke is willing to be so sloppy with something as elementary as this, then god only knows how they're handling big decisions about energy and public lands behind closed doors."

Interior says Lola Zinke pays her own way when she accompanies her husband and that travel is cleared by ethics officials in advance.

"DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence" with the secretary, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Friday.

Interior's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel are investigating the former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL's travel expenses and appearance at political events while on official trips, including those where he was accompanied by his wife. Last week, the IG's office said it could not conduct a thorough investigation because Interior had kept [inadequate records](#). Among other problems, the watchdog said it had "not been able to determine the full extent to which Lolita Zinke, the Secretary's wife, accompanied the Secretary on official travel." Interior officials blamed the shortcomings on inadequate procedures left in place by the Obama administration.

The new records show the secretary's wife helped decide the guest list for a Young America's Foundation town hall forum with Ryan Zinke on April 17 at its Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif., part of a weeklong official trip in the state. Lola Zinke joined her husband for national parks tours and meetings with government officials throughout the week, as well as for a private tour of the Reagan Ranch galleries led by Andrew Coffin, YAF's vice president.

Lola Zinke sent a "list of people I have invited to the event" to two Interior staffers, according to a series of April 7 emails. Caroline Boulton, a special assistant to the secretary, forwarded the list on to an official at YAF, with a warning that more could be added. Interior redacted the names of Zinke's guests before releasing the email.

"She's expecting some of them to bring plus ones and also her list is not yet final," Boulton wrote. "She's said that she doesn't have emails for them all since many of them have been personally told about the event, but I wanted you to have the list!"

YAF is a key pillar of the conservative movement with alumni ranging from White House officials to prominent journalists. The group's donors have reportedly [included](#) the Koch brothers, among others.

Lola Zinke is active in conservative politics. The Santa Barbara native was a member of President Donald Trump's [Hispanic outreach](#) team during the 2016 campaign, and in September she became chairwoman for the Senate campaign of Troy Downing, a Montana businessman hoping to unseat Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year.

Lola had previously [faced criticism](#) for accompanying her husband on the California trip. She posted a [photograph on Twitter](#) from Gov. Jerry Brown's office and accompanied her husband to meetings with DOI regional staff in Sacramento and trips to Fresno and the national parks at Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, the trip manifests show.

The trip also included five days in Santa Barbara and then four days in Zinke's hometown in Whitefish, Mont., an upscale part of the state where the couple owns a home and other real estate.

The secretary bringing his wife along on official trips isn't illegal as long as the government doesn't pay for her expenses. But it can be an ethically gray area, depending on the circumstances, said Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist with good-governance watchdog Public Citizen.

"Spousal travel, especially when paid for by the spouse, suggests that the trip may have less to do with official duties and more resembles a family vacation partially paid for by taxpayers," Holman said.

When Lola Zinke joined an official trip to Norway, Greenland and Alaska, she appears to have caused some headaches by deciding to stay longer than expected. Ryan Zinke sent his staff scrambling to make last-minute arrangements so she could accompany him to dinner with the governor of Alaska and other dignitaries in Anchorage, according to new emails.

Interior staffers apparently found out about the change in plans second-hand from an aide to Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska), who also was on the trip, along with other senators and their spouses, according to a May 27 email from Director of Scheduling and Advance Russell Roddy to other colleagues at Interior — one day before Lola Zinke had been scheduled to return to Washington.

"I have heard that Mrs. Zinke was now maybe not going to fly out from Fairbanks Sunday morning ... so, I asked Annie if she happened to talk to Mrs. Zinke about her plans. She said Mrs. Zinke said she was now going to head to Byers Lake and Anchorage with RKZ and fly out of Anchorage on Tuesday," Roddy wrote. "UGH! We have all kinds of planes, trains and automobiles manifests to now scramble with."

It is unclear what led to the change in plans. Before the trip, Lola Zinke had apparently been trying to secure a seat on a military plane back to Washington, but the Senate staffer coordinating the trip told Interior that it would be a "safer bet" for her to fly commercial because Ryan Zinke would not be with her. The military typically does not like when members of Congress try to get their spouses on military planes without the member being present, according to an email from Boulton relaying guidance she had received. "There's a lot of ifs in that, so let me know if you want me to keep pushing on the" military return flight,

Boulton wrote to Lola Zinke on May 18.

Lola Zinke joined her husband at a May 29 dinner in Anchorage with Alaska Gov. Bill Walker and other state officials.

"The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal," Swift said. Lola Zinke flew home on a commercial flight from Anchorage the following day.

Lola Zinke also accompanied her husband to an April 10 dinner in Washington that was organized with the help of one of his past campaign donors, Burt Sugarman, who has donated heavily to Republicans.

"We are very excited that Sec Zinke accepted the event," wrote Phil Anderson, president of lobbying firm Navigators Global who helped organize the April 10 dinner sponsored by the National Geographic Society, in a March 24 email to Boulton. "As you know, Burt Sugarman first discussed the dinner with Sec Zinke."

Sugarman and his wife, the former Entertainment Tonight anchor Mary Hart, are members of the National Geographic Society's board of directors.

The Sugarmans gave a combined \$10,800 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign, out of more than \$180,000 they gave to GOP candidates and committees in the last election cycle, according to FEC documents.

On April 27, Lola Zinke was invited to an ethics briefing at the White House for Cabinet spouses. "They stressed the importance of attending since important ethics rules will [be] discussed and questions can be answered by White House counsel," Boulton wrote in an email to Lola Zinke.

"Thank you!" she replied. "It's a good thing I'll be in town then."

To view online [click here](#).

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Florida citrus left out of disaster package, again [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 11/17/2017 05:14 PM EDT

The \$44 billion disaster relief package unveiled by the White House today does not include relief for Florida citrus growers, despite [repeated calls](#) from state and federal lawmakers to help farmers whose groves were destroyed by Hurricane Irma.

"Floridians have been kicked to the curb in this proposed disaster supplemental, which lacks relief for Florida's citrus growers who suffered immensely from this storm," said Rep. [Dennis Ross](#) in a statement this afternoon criticizing the White House's decision. "The Florida delegation specifically requested this relief because there isn't a citrus grove that wasn't affected, with some experiencing 100 percent losses — worse than anything the industry has experienced in over 20 years."

Florida's signature crop is heavily concentrated in the southwest corner of the state and was pummeled when Irma, a category 5 storm, hit the mainland. The Florida Department of Agriculture has estimated the sector saw \$760 million in losses, and USDA is expecting the 2017-2018 harvest to be 27 percent smaller than the year before.

Ross said he would not support the package, and urged other members of the Florida delegation to do the same.

"I believe we have a duty to fight to ensure our citrus growers get the relief they need," the Florida Republican said.

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POLITICO Florida: Rubio, Nelson pan White House disaster relief plan [Back](#)

By Sergio Bustos | 11/20/2017 10:10 AM EDT

MIAMI — Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) and [Bill Nelson](#) blasted the Trump administration's proposed \$44 billion disaster relief package, saying it fails to include enough money to help Florida's farmers recover from Hurricane Irma.

"It is unacceptable that this proposed disaster supplemental does not include sufficient and targeted resources for Florida's farmers, particularly the citrus growers who were virtually wiped out by the storm," said Rubio, a Republican, in a [statement](#) after the White House [announced its aid recovery plan](#) in the wake of this summer's deadly trio of hurricanes.

"Florida citrus is a key part of the state's heritage and many Americans' daily lives," Rubio said. "I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure our state's growers get the relief they need to survive the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma."

Florida officials estimate that more than [\\$2.5 billion in damage](#) was caused by Hurricane Irma, which slammed into Florida on Sept. 10 and engulfed the entire state. Of that amount, citrus — Florida's signature crop — was the hardest hit, with losses estimated to be upwards of \$760 million. The USDA is expecting the 2017-2018 harvest to be 27 percent smaller than the year before.

The latest administration request for storm relief includes \$1 billion for nationwide emergency agricultural assistance.

Nelson, a Democrat, said that "this request by the administration doesn't come close to providing what is needed. People are hurting and they desperately need our help, yet this request has no money to provide housing for evacuees and barely any money for Florida's citrus growers. That's unacceptable. Congress needs to pass a more robust disaster bill that actually provides the funding needed to help people recover."

Joining Rubio and Nelson in bashing the administration's proposal was Rep. [Dennis Ross](#), R-Fla.

"Floridians have been kicked to the curb in this proposed disaster supplemental, which lacks relief for Florida's citrus growers who suffered immensely from this storm," said Ross in a statement Friday afternoon. "The Florida delegation specifically requested this relief because there isn't a citrus grove that wasn't affected, with some experiencing 100 percent losses — worse than anything the industry has experienced in over 20 years."

Ross said he would not support the package, and urged other members of the Florida delegation to do the same.

"I believe we have a duty to fight to ensure our citrus growers get the relief they need," the Florida Republican said.

Last month, Congress approved a \$36.5 billion hurricane relief package that did not include money for Florida's agriculture businesses. The promise from Trump administration officials, along with House and Senate leaders, was that the money would be made available in the next disaster relief package.

Unlike its previous two aid requests, the White House asked lawmakers on Friday to partially offset any future funding packages, including the new \$44 billion request. The administration wants Congress to cut as much as \$59.23 billion from domestic programs to help pay for its growing tab of disaster assistance.

If the \$44 billion funding package is approved, Congress will have kicked in nearly \$100 billion in extra money this year to help storm-ravaged communities in places like Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida.

The request calls for \$25.2 billion for disaster programs run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration, as well as \$4.6 billion to rehab damaged federal facilities and other agency recovery efforts. About \$1.2 billion would be used for an education recovery fund and \$12 billion would be spent on a new flood mitigation program run by the Community Development Block Grant.

John Bresnahan, Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris contributed to this report.

This article first appeared on [POLITICO Florida](#) on Nov. 17, 2017.

To view online [click here](#).

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White House targets USDA funding in push for disaster-relief offsets [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 11/17/2017 03:49 PM EDT

The White House wants Congress to target \$3 billion in USDA funding as part of its push for more than \$59 billion in cuts to domestic spending to help defray the costs of recent disaster relief efforts.

The administration released a [list](#) of proposed offsets today that included \$1.4 billion in unobligated balances for mandatory conservation programs, which includes money set aside

for future agreements under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

The White House is also going after \$212 million from the Agricultural Research Service's building and facilities account and \$800 million from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, which the administration sees as ripe for the taking because it stems from lower than expected enrollment. The administration also points to \$204 million in emergency conservation funds, which it says are no longer needed.

The White House's [plan](#) also targets prior-year leftover funding in Rural Economic Development Grants and for the Rural Business Program, the Rural Electrification and Telecommunications Program, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.

The administration today [sent](#) Congress its third emergency funding request to aid recovery from hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and wildfires in the West. It is seeking \$44 billion this time around.

In its two prior aid requests, the White House did not ask for spending offsets, though OMB Director Mick Mulvaney and conservatives previously said they would seek such cuts.

"The administration believes it is prudent to offset new spending," Mulvaney wrote in a letter today that proposed the offsets.

Democrats and several GOP appropriators have said the plan is a non-starter, POLITICO [reported](#) earlier today, noting that the request could upend a host of other funding negotiations on Capitol Hill next month.

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Texas coastal spine left out of Trump disaster recovery request [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/17/2017 05:39 PM EDT

The White House's latest request for congressional disaster recovery funding does not include a \$12 billion Houston area coastal barrier project sought by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, handing a win to green groups that want the federal government to finish an environmental review on the project before it moves forward.

The White House on Friday asked lawmakers to approve \$44 billion in additional funding to aid storm-ravaged areas in Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida, including \$12 billion for a flood mitigation program run by the Community Development Block Grant.

But the coastal barrier project that was part of Abbott's \$61 billion storm recovery funding request in late October would not qualify for that program under the rules set by the White House because it would not address the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey in August. Instead the state's so-called coastal spine project aims to protect communities and infrastructure from the kind of storm surges last seen during Hurricane Ike in 2008 that caused about \$30 billion in damages.

One of a few possible designs for the proposed coastal spine would extend a 10-mile seawall at Galveston Bay by another 50 miles and include massive floodgates that could be closed ahead of a storm to block the surges of water from pummeling the coastline.

Environmental advocates say they are not opposed to the project that's designed to protect coastal communities, critical marine and avian habitat, the Port of Houston, the Houston Ship Channel and oil refining and processing plants that are all vital to the state's economy and could create an environmental disaster if damaged.

But they say its not yet clear how a new barrier would affect the flow of water, and whether it could hurt marine and other ecosystems.

"We don't know what that would do to the ecology of the bay or to the shoreline there," said Amanda Fuller, National Wildlife Federation deputy director of Gulf of Mexico Restoration. "It's just a bunch of unknowns at this point."

The Army Corps of Engineers is performing a five-year study it expects to complete in 2021 on design options for the coastal spine that would avoid harming the marine and avian ecosystem of the Galveston Bay area that serves as a nursery for marine creatures before they mature and move into the Gulf of Mexico.

Bob Stokes, president of the Galveston Bay Foundation, which focuses on wetland preservation and restoration, said the project could be funded in the future through federal appropriations and he continues to "firmly believe that [the study] process is necessary before we fund the coastal spine."

Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) of Texas — who has [placed a hold](#) on President Donald Trump's nomination of Russell Vought to be deputy director of OMB until the Texas funding comes though — has called the president's latest recovery request "wholly inadequate."

Abbott's office did not respond to requests for comment.

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In Democrat-led state capitals, GOP tax reform push could scramble fiscal plans [Back](#)

By Laura Nahmias, Katherine Landergan and Carla Marinucci | 11/19/2017 06:47 AM EDT

The Republican tax reform push in Washington is setting off budgetary alarm bells in high-tax states like New York, California and New Jersey, in the latest political skirmish to pit national Republicans against Democratic state and big-city leaders.

With Republicans intent on shrinking or repealing the state and local tax deduction, California officials are worried that the House-passed tax bill, and the emerging Senate measure, would force local governments to reduce taxes and make big cuts to schools and social services. In New York, where New York City and state revenues are heavily reliant on just a handful of wealthy tax filers, budget watchdogs fear federal tax changes could trigger the flight of those

residents. And in New Jersey, plans for a new millionaire's tax, one of incoming Gov. Phil Murphy's biggest campaign promises, are already being reined in as the Democratic-led New Jersey Senate waits on the outcome of any federal tax plan.

"We're going to have to re-evaluate everything" if a federal bill repealing the state and local tax deduction becomes law, New Jersey Senate President Steve Sweeney said Wednesday in Atlantic City. Just days before, Sweeney had said he would make passage of a millionaires tax his chief priority in the new administration. "I'm just saying that what's happening in Washington is concerning the hell out of me," he added.

Some national Republicans are reveling in the discomfort their plans are causing in Democratic-led states — and say that those governors and state assemblies should just lower their states' taxes.

After New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said last week that GOP plans could lead wealthy New Yorkers to leave the state, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney responded: "Whose fault is that? ... Is it the federal government's fault that New York taxes are so high that they're driving people out of the state?" Mulvaney said. "I don't think it's up to the federal government to save New York from its bad decisions."

In Illinois, another high-tax state, Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner has been relatively quiet on the possible repeal of the state and local deduction, despite pressure from the state's Democratic senators.

Concerns were heightened this past week after the House approved a sweeping \$1.5 trillion tax plan that would all but eliminate the deductibility of state and local income taxes. For leaders in high-tax states, that would mean a rising federal tax burden on many of their highest-earning residents. The tax bill emerging from the Senate would go even further. And while plenty of roadblocks remain, congressional Republican leaders want to secure the long-sought legislative win before the end of the year.

In solidly blue California, Democratic legislators were livid about the impact of the emerging Republican tax bills. Southern California Rep. Ted Lieu fumed that "California will be the biggest loser" from the House bill, since "under this plan, Californians will shoulder the largest net tax increase, at \$12.1 billion in 2027."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein charged that "Californians will be hit especially hard by the elimination of the state and local tax deduction, or what we call SALT. The 6 million California households that claim the deduction could either see their tax bill go up or see cuts to vital services like schools and roads."

The outrage is backed by data: California residents, by far, are the nation's biggest beneficiaries of the SALT deductions. In 2014 alone, the SALT deductions slashed Californians' taxable income by a total of \$101 billion — more than twice that of second-place New York, according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation.

The repeal of SALT could force an uncomfortable tax discussion for high-tax states: Should they consider lowering tax rates, to alleviate the additional tax burden that the elimination of the deductions creates? Or keep taxes as they are — and run the risk of losing wealthy residents who might move elsewhere to soften their tax burden? And for politicians who've called for the politically popular idea of raising taxes on the wealthy, would the SALT repeal

force them to backtrack?

Forcing the debate

Officials in California now predict that the GOP tax bill could transfer tax dollars paid by millions of Californians to other states — making it tougher for both the state government and local entities to find the revenue for needed services in the future. That's especially worrisome for California at a time when the Trump administration and the Republican Congress have already proposed to slash spending on other programs, cuts that would further stress the state's finances.

By approving a plan to take those deductions away from California taxpayers, "it's going to make it harder for state and local government over time. In the end, people's appetites for paying taxes aren't endless — and if you raise their taxes by taking away their deductions, their willingness to be taxed again to fund cut services is going to be harder," said Chris Hoene, executive director of the nonpartisan California Budget and Policy Center, which last week issued an analysis of SALT impacts on state finances.

The impact could be particularly large on education, Hoene said. "Certainly, it will have a significant impact on funding education in the future, because the taxes people are paying that are already supporting education will go up," which means "it's going to make it harder to make a case to pay more for education in the future."

In New York, some city and state officials are privately saying that an elimination of SALT deductions might not lead to new state-level tax cuts but would almost certainly make any plan to raise taxes on wealthier New Yorkers more difficult. State leaders voted last year on a two-year extension of an already-existing "millionaire's tax," and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has called for another one to help pay for repairs to the city's crumbling mass-transit system.

"I think it could increase pressure [to lower taxes], but what it certainly will do, I think, is make it a tougher challenge if the city or the state wanted to raise their taxes," said George Sweeting, deputy director of the city's nonpartisan Independent Budget Office.

The House and Senate tax bills would hit high-income New Yorkers in different ways, Sweeting said.

"There are certainly some New Yorkers who will do well, even with state and local deductibility reduced," Sweeting said. "Even within the very high income group, there would be winners and losers. The winners tend to be people involved with private equity, real estate development. The people who earn most of their income from salaries and wages — someone who's paid a million dollars or more for actually being the CEO of a firm that's getting a very high wage income, they may not lose, but they definitely don't do as well as those who rely more on investment income."

Leaders in the New York State Legislature, who have repeatedly reauthorized extensions of the millionaire's tax but have never been too keen on the idea of de Blasio's millionaire's tax for subway repairs, remained unenthusiastic about the idea on Thursday.

"We'll see what the Senate does," said Michael Whyland, a spokesman for Democratic Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, when asked whether the federal tax plan's passage would

magnify concerns he's already expressed about de Blasio's millionaire's tax idea — or halt plans to raise new taxes altogether.

"This is horrible policy for all New Yorkers. As the speaker has noted, there will be devastating ripple effects throughout the state that will negatively impact all taxpayers," Whyland said.

De Blasio's proposed millionaire's tax for the subway, which would impact about 32,000 New York City residents, would increase the city's highest income tax rate by about half a percentage point, to 4.4 percent from about 3.9 percent, for married couples whose incomes are above \$1 million and for individuals who make more than \$500,000.

A spokeswoman for the mayor's office wouldn't say whether the mayor would rethink his call for the tax hike but also argued that the federal government's plan is tantamount to "double taxation."

"The federal government is now threatening double taxation and asking for even more at the risk of reducing the local services that people have come to rely on. Our tax dollars should stay in NYC, where they actually work for those paying them," said de Blasio spokeswoman Freddi Goldstein.

Flight risks

In private, some city budget watchdogs said they worry that the elimination of SALT, especially when combined with potential federal budget cuts to social services programs, could increase pressure on the city government to make up the difference with the city's own funds. It could also shrink the growth of the city's tax base, drawing fewer high-earners over time, several officials, speaking on background, told POLITICO.

Cuomo, a Democrat who is up for reelection in 2018 and is [positioning himself](#) for a possible 2020 presidential bid, said earlier this month that eliminating deductions for state income taxes, as the new federal plan would do, would cause wealthy New Yorkers to flee the state.

In response, the state and local governments would be forced to raise taxes on the New Yorkers who remain, Cuomo said.

"Even if your federal taxes were to go down ... your state tax and property tax will have to go up, because it will hurt the state," Cuomo told reporters on Nov. 6, on a joint conference call with Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#). "It will hurt our overall revenues, which are already in trouble. It will make this state less competitive for businesses."

Fiscal watchdogs say the departure of even a relatively small number of high-income New Yorkers could have a massive impact on the state's tax revenue.

For instance, New Yorkers who make more than \$100,000 a year pay 83 percent of personal income tax revenues for the state, while people who earn more than \$1 million make up more than 40 percent of personal income tax revenue. And while New York City residents who earn more than \$1 million a year make up less than 1 percent of all city taxpayers, those residents together bring in more than \$4.2 billion in income tax revenue, or 43.6 percent of all the income tax revenue the city receives.

E.J. McMahon, research director at the nonpartisan Empire Center for Public Policy, said the

increase in New Yorkers' effective tax rate could be the straw that breaks the camel's back for a slice of wealthy people weighing whether to spend their golden years in New York or elsewhere.

In 2015, roughly 2,500 people in the state had adjusted gross income of more than \$10 million, he said. If just one-tenth of them, or 250 people, decided to leave, it would cost the state \$700 million.

"These people pay such a huge proportion of the state's taxes that you don't need an exodus, you just need a few hundred more people to decide that they're gonna go to Jackson Hole, Charleston, Boca Raton, to make a huge difference," he said. "You've given them all the reason in the world to think harder about that."

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Mulvaney: White House 'OK' pulling individual mandate repeal from tax bill [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 11/19/2017 11:30 AM EDT

White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said Sunday that the administration wants to repeal part of Obamacare in Congress' tax bill but is "OK with taking it out" if "it becomes an impediment."

President Donald Trump has called for Congress to include a repeal of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate in its tax bill. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that doing so would save the government \$338 billion over a decade but result in 13 million more Americans being uninsured by 2027.

"I don't think anybody doubts where the White House is on repealing and replacing Obamacare. We absolutely want to do it," Mulvaney told host Jake Tapper on CNN's "State of the Union."

"If we can repeal part of Obamacare as part of a tax bill, and have a tax bill that is still a good tax bill that can pass, that's great," Mulvaney continued. "If it becomes an impediment to getting the best tax bill we can, then we're OK with taking it out. So, I think it's up to the Senate and the House to sort of hammer out those details."

The House bill cleared the chamber last week, but Republican leaders did not add a provision to repeal the individual mandate. That provision, however, is currently in the Senate version.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday that she wants "to see changes in the" Senate bill. "The biggest mistake," she said, "was putting in a provision from the Affordable Care Act into the Senate bill that is not in the House bill. And I hope that will be dropped."

Asked whether the individual mandate repeal currently in the bill is an impediment to passage, Mulvaney said he didn't think so.

"If they do get rid of this penalty, the folks who benefit from that are predominantly folks who make less than \$50,000 or \$100,000 a year," he said. "There's actually a benefit if the repeal goes away, but it's up to the House and Senate to hammer through those details."

Tapper cited a nonpartisan analysis that said the Senate GOP tax plan would effectively raise taxes, an argument Mulvaney rejected.

"The bottom line is that the White House, the president, is not going to sign a bill that raises taxes on the middle class, period," he said.

Asked how Trump, who broke precedent by refusing to release his tax returns, may benefit from the GOP tax plan, Mulvaney told NBC's "Meet the Press," "I can't speak to the president's taxes."

"I think that was sort of litigated by the American public during the election," he said. "I will say this: Listen, the president's going to pay much higher taxes on a lot of his properties, excuse me, because he has properties in high-tax states."

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Collins: Senate tax bill 'needs work' [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill | 11/19/2017 11:05 AM EDT

The Senate's legislation to cut taxes "needs work," Sen. Susan Collins said Sunday, hinting that she may not support the bill without significant changes.

"I want to see changes in that bill. And I think there will be changes," Collins (R-Maine) told host George Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week." "There are some provisions of the House bill that I like better."

Collins highlighted that the top rate of 39.6 percent for people who make at least \$1 million would stay the same in the House bill that cleared the chamber last week.

"That's a change that I would like to see be made in the Senate bill so that we can skew more of the relief to middle-income taxpayers," she said. "There are provisions of both bills that I like. But I think the bill needs work."

Asked whether she would support the bill in its current form, Collins said she hasn't "reached that conclusion yet because I think there are going to be further changes."

"But the biggest mistake was putting in a provision from the Affordable Care Act into the Senate bill that is not in the House bill. And I hope that will be dropped, or that bills that have been introduced by Sens. [Lamar] Alexander and [Patty] Murray and Bill Nelson and myself will be adopted to mitigate the impact of those provisions."

President Donald Trump called on Congress last week to include a repeal of Obamacare's individual mandate in a tax bill, in addition to slashing the top tax rate to 35 percent. Collins

cited the individual mandate repeal as "a problem" that needs to be mitigated.

"I'm worried about the impact on premiums," she added. "And that's why we're going to need to pass legislation. And I would like to see that done before we go to the tax bill."

Collins also lamented a provision in the Senate bill that makes corporate tax cuts permanent but individual cuts temporary.

"Again, that's not a provision that I like," she said. "The House made both of them permanent. I think that is a far better way to go."

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Murkowski says Obamacare cost-sharing not a precondition for tax bill vote [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 11/17/2017 06:00 PM EDT

Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) said late today that passage of a bipartisan deal to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing program is not a precondition to her support for the GOP's tax reform package.

"I have consistently said that passing Alexander-Murray is important to stabilizing the individual market and it may be particularly so if the individual mandate is repealed as included in the draft reported by the Senate Finance Committee last night," Murkowski, a key vote on tax reform, said in a statement to POLITICO, referring to the deal struck by Sens. [Lamar Alexander](#) and [Patty Murray](#). "However, one should not assume this is a precondition for my support for the tax bill."

The Alaska Republican said she was planning to review the Finance Committee tax reform bill over the Thanksgiving holiday and will review "the entire package before coming to any conclusion on the legislation."

[Roll Call reported this morning](#) that Murkowski had suggested the cost-sharing reduction payment bill was a condition of her support for tax reform.

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Priorities polling urges Democrats to focus on health cuts in tax bill [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 11/17/2017 03:17 PM EDT

One of Democrats' leading super PACs is urging the party to focus attacks about the GOP tax reform plan on its cuts to health care programs.

In a [new memo](#) based on polling from Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group and Global Strategy

Group, Priorities USA argues Democrats can make the case Republicans are more focused on appealing donors than helping regular people. The three most potent lines of attack for Democrats: noting the proposal would force cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, eliminate medical expense deductions and create new incentives for companies to ship jobs overseas. All three lines of attacks make at least 73 percent of likely presidential-year voters feel less favorably about the plan, and at least 60 percent of voters much less favorable.

Those attacks have an impact on the generic ballot: Before hearing about the plan, Democrats have a 45 percent to 34 percent advantage on the generic congressional ballot. After hearing about the plan, that advantage moves to 50 percent to 33 percent. Only 18 percent of voters think the congressional GOP is "looking out for the interests of regular people," while 62 percent "think they are mainly looking out for the interests of wealthy people and big corporations."

"Republicans have already done significant damage to their standing on the economy through their attacks on the Affordable Care Act and this tax plan will build on that damage," the memo reads. "It gives Democratic candidates a highly effective economic message heading into the midterm elections at a time when the President is historically unpopular, the generic ballot shows a huge disadvantage for Republicans, and Democrats enjoy a sizeable enthusiasm advantage."

The damage also spreads to President Donald Trump, who has enthusiastically backed the tax reform plans. The percentage of voters who think Trump's economic policies would help people like them is down to 29 percent. Asked whether Trump "primarily looks out for regular people or the wealthy and corporations, 59 percent of voters feel he looks out for the wealthy, up from 49 percent in March," the pollsters write. Just a quarter of voters think Trump is looking out mainly for regular people.

The cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, in particular, aren't central to the tax reform debate on Capitol Hill, but the memo argues they could be potent in election-season television ads.

The most effective message with swing voters, according to the memo, is to argue congressional GOP plans give "millions of dollars in tax breaks to wealthy Washington politicians like themselves and their special interest donors, while millions of middle class families will see their taxes go up." This raises major doubts about the plan with 70 percent of swing voters.

Global Strategy Group and Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group conducted the survey of 1,003 presidential-year voters from Nov. 9 to 14. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

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Independent power sector worried by tax carve-out for regulated utilities [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/17/2017 05:23 PM EDT

A tax carve-out for regulated power utilities included in both the House and Senate tax bills

doesn't apply to merchant power companies, which fear the provision could put them at a competitive disadvantage.

Both the Senate bill that advanced out of committee and the bill passed by the House Thursday would cap interest deductions for businesses at 30 percent of their adjusted income. That would serve to offset "bonus depreciation" that the two bills include that allow businesses to deduct the full cost of capital investments from their taxes.

But regulated utilities convinced congressional tax writers to insert an exemption in the bills for them — but didn't provide the same exemption for the merchant power companies or subsidiaries of regulated companies that sell power into the competitive wholesale markets.

"Since we compete with [regulated utilities], the tax provisions likely raise competitive issues which we will need to raise on the Hill," John Schelk, CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association, a trade association which represents the owners of merchant plants. "Needless to say, our argument will be we should get equal treatment."

Winning the exception to the interest deduction has been a high priority for all power providers, since building power plants requires huge capital expenditures, and the debt required to finance them extends for decades. Regulated utilities' expenses are covered by payments from ratepayers, and they prefer using straight-line depreciation that stretches over years for their assets rather than the bonus depreciation. That bonus depreciation can threaten their rate base, since state regulators often view the quicker depreciation as a tax benefit that must be returned to ratepayers.

But independent power producers, which include market-only power plant owners as well as divisions of companies like Dynegy, NRG Energy and FirstEnergy that run competitive power plants don't get that benefit — and they want it. Companies that own merchant power plants tend to have a lot of debt from past investments, but they aren't building many new plants.

"For them, expensing the capital is not a big deal right now, so it doesn't help them," said Toby Shea, an analyst with Moody's. "But the interest expense, which they have a lot of, would help them a lot."

And while regulated utilities and unregulated utilities do not generally compete inside markets like PJM or Texas, there are exceptions. For example, Schelk points out that power plants run by regulated utilities in South Carolina and North Carolina that sometimes sell power into PJM's market would be able to offer lower prices thanks to their exemption.

"Good example is right here in Virginia," Schelk said. "Virginia is in the PJM regional market, but Dominion has rate-based generation while there are also merchant generation IPP plants in [the state]. They compete to be dispatched in PJM and also compete for procurement of new projects."

Other analysts were skeptical that the bill as written would create a big problem for independent power providers. Christi Tezak, managing director for ClearView Energy Partners, said that if competitive arms of holding companies are treated the same as independent power producers, then it's hard to see how either has an advantage in markets.

But, utilities could win a change to the bill in conference or on the Senate floor that would expand the carve out to their competitive divisions.

"If [utility holding companies] get it and IPPs don't then there would be a competitive issue vis-à-vis the two different owners.," she said.

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Ben Cardin: The Full Transcript [Back](#)

By Susan B. Glasser | 11/20/2017 05:11 AM EDT

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Glasser: This is Susan Glasser, and welcome back this week to The Global POLITICO. I'm delighted to have as our guest Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland. He's the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, which means he's right in the middle of everything that we want to talk about at The Global POLITICO.

Senator Cardin, so I guess the inescapable subject in many ways, of course, is Russia these days, when it comes to foreign policy, and especially the Trump administration. First of all, what is going on with these sanctions? Congress passed them overwhelmingly, over the opposition of President Trump. Is there a genuine delay, do you believe, on the part of the administration in implementing them?

Cardin: Well, it's a little bit early to tell whether they're on track to impose them in a timely way. The first mandatory sanctions are supposed to be applied in January, but there is a process you have to go through. And the administration's been late in meeting the deadlines on that process. So, we're watching very carefully to make sure they, in fact, impose the mandatory sanctions on the due dates, but we do know there is a reluctance on the behalf of the Trump administration.

Just recently, President Trump said that he believes that Mr. Putin, when he said he didn't know about interfering in our elections—or he thought he was sincere. Quite frankly, Russia intentionally interfered in our election, and Mr. Putin was behind that. And these sanctions need to be imposed.

Glasser: It is a concern of ours that Mr. Trump continues to believe Mr. Putin when he says that he did not interfere in our elections, when, in fact, we know Mr. Putin did. So, we are concerned as to whether President Trump will enforce the sanctions as passed by Congress, and we'll be watching that very carefully.

Glasser: You know, somebody joked to me that Donald Trump has succeeded in doing what many presidents before him has not, which is creating a bipartisan foreign policy, at least on Russia sanctions, as a result of what he said publicly about Putin. Do you think that Republicans will continue to stick together with Democrats on the issue of holding Russia accountable, or do you see the politics changing?

Cardin: Well, the numbers were overwhelmingly in support of taking a tough stand against Russia. If Russia's conduct continues—that is, if it continues to interfere in Ukraine, if it continues to be counter to what is right in Syria, if they continue to interfere in elections in

Europe and the United States—I think Congress will remain united in demanding that action be taken against Russia.

Glasser: How serious do you believe the initial charges are from the Mueller investigation, and to what extent do they, do you think this portends an even worse relationship with Russia?

Cardin: So, what we do know—this is what we do know. We do know from our intelligence community that Russia had a design to discredit the U.S. elections, and took sides in favor of Mr. Trump over Hillary Clinton. We do now that they engaged individuals and entities to do cyber-attacks to get as much information as they possibly could, and of course, also used WikiLeaks to accumulate information, and released it in a strategic way that could affect our election, and certainly the credibility of our election.

That's what we do know. We also know that there were contacts made between representatives of the Trump campaign and Russia. We know of several contacts that were made, and we also know contacts that were made by WikiLeaks to Donald Trump, Jr., and shortly thereafter, the candidate Donald Trump tweeted out information about WikiLeaks, which was known to be an entity against U.S. national security interests.

So, there are a lot of dots, and they're starting to be connected, that show that Russia intentionally engaged Americans, and American's cooperated, and we'll see exactly where that leads.

Glasser: Well, what it does suggest is that there's not going to be any reset with Russia any time soon. I spoke with an administration person recently who said things really might not have even hit bottom yet. Is that your assessment, as well?

Cardin: The relationship with Russia is an important relationship. We know that they interfered in our elections. We know that they've done things that are very much against our interests. They've done things that require us to take punitive action against Russia. That does not mean we can't work with Russia where we have a common agenda. Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council; we certainly need their help in isolating North Korea and their nuclear weapons violations.

So, we still need to work with Russia. But clearly, Russia's done things that are contrary to our national security interest, and the United States must respond to those types of activities.

Glasser: So, tell us a little bit—this is really a chance on The Global POLITICO to reflect on what it's like in the room in making foreign policy. What is it like these days on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee? You have this extraordinary situation, obviously, with the Republican chairman in open conflict with the President. He has said that other Republican senators privately agree with him, but that they're not at liberty really to do so, since many of them are still running for reelection, and Senator Corker's decided not to.

What do you make of all that? Do you think that the other senators do agree with Senator Corker? How has the conflict with Trump changed what you all are doing on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

Cardin: Well, I believe on foreign policy that there is little difference between the Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We believe that the best course for containing North Korea's nuclear program is through diplomacy, and we disagree with the

language the President has used, and the fact that he's made it more difficult for diplomacy to work.

We believe that in regard to the Iran nuclear agreement, that we have to enforce the agreement rigorously, but we don't want the United States unilaterally withdrawing from that agreement. I think that's what most Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee believe, and certainly in regard to Russia.

We believe that the initial actions taken by President Trump in embracing Mr. Putin was the wrong signal, and I think both Democrats and Republicans agreed on that, and the legislation we passed, I think verifies that.

Glasser: So, do you think Senator Corker is still in a position with his colleagues to get stuff done over the course of the next year and a half? I mean, are you feeling the impasse that he has with the President?

Cardin: I think Senator Corker is widely respected among both Democrats and Republicans in regards to all issues, but particularly foreign policy. So, yes, I think he will be a very important force for congressional activities related to foreign policy. I also believe that he is interested in America succeeding, so he would like to see as much unity as possible between the Trump administration and the Congress. At times that's difficult. We understand that.

But I do think that Senator Corker will work with representatives of the Trump administration to try to give a united front with the Senate.

Glasser: Well, right. As we've learned, it's a complicated thing, right? You know, there's different factions in the Trump administration, and then of course there's the president himself. So, tell us what is your view of how to think about who's running foreign policy right now. What is your assessment of Secretary of State Tillerson, who's obviously been publicly undercut by the President? Do you believe as his oversight committee that he's doing a good job, or does he have the clout necessary to do the job?

Cardin: I think Secretary Tillerson has made several major mistakes. He hasn't been the advocate for the Department of State the way he should have been. The president came in with a budget that cut his agency dramatically. Secretary Tillerson didn't stand up against that cut. Diplomacy is a critical part of our national security. We haven't seen that type of passion come from the Secretary of State.

And quite frankly, American values are represented by our diplomats, and I haven't seen Mr. Tillerson put the highest priorities on American values. So, I think he has not been as helpful, and I think as a result, that we've seen a morale problem in the State Department.

Having said that, I think there have been times that Secretary Tillerson has been very much right on in regards to foreign policy issues, such as negotiation with North Korea, where President Trump has undercut his own Secretary of State.

So, there are times that I think Secretary Tillerson has been on the right track, and there are other times where he's been on the right track, where the President has undercut his abilities.

Glasser: Well, it seems like one of your main critiques and that of a lot of people does have to do with how he's actually running the State Department itself. You talked about the morale

problem. In many ways it's a meltdown. You had a very strong statement earlier this week—I think you'd talked about basically this is "a high-level decapitation of leadership" with losses of very senior Foreign Service officials and the like.

Tell us what you think is going on inside the State Department, and will Congress have a say in changing or blocking any of those plans?

Cardin: Well, there's a role that Congress could play. Obviously, we hope that the budget we pass will be a repudiation of the Trump budget as it relates to the State Department. We also will make it clear about protecting particular priorities within the State Department that have not had that type of leadership at the State Department. We could do that.

What we can't do is run the agency; that's an executive function. And clearly, we've seen an exodus of some of the top career talent at the State Department. And there's still a freeze at the State Department, despite the fact that the Office of Management and Budget has released an overall hiring freeze. So, we do need leaders at the State Department that will make it clear that diplomacy is a priority and support the mission. Congress will do everything we can to support that leadership, but at the present time, we haven't seen it.

Glasser: What happens, like when you call up to try to get something done, or to complain about some of these things? Are they responsive to you? Do you feel like there's a channel open? Do you get a sense that this is ideological?

Cardin: Well, I think there is clearly people at the State Department who very much agree. We try to put a spotlight on that. I think Ambassador Green at the USAID has made a real contribution to the mission of our foreign assistance. We are hoping there'll be more leaders that will emerge that will do that.

But, it really does start with the President of the United States, and when you see the President of the United States diminish the importance by the budget he submits, and then you see the Secretary of State not standing up for the career diplomats, it is disheartening.

Glasser: So, they've made no effort with you, as the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee? Do you feel like you have a personal relationship with Tillerson?

Cardin: Yes, I have a personal relationship, and we've expressed ourselves, and I think we've made some progress, and I can point to particular functions that are stronger today, I think, as a result of Secretary Tillerson listening to not only me, but other members of the United States Senate, that have concerns about the direction we see the department going.

So, I think we've had some input; I don't mean to say we haven't. I think Secretary Tillerson has sought our advice. But overall, I think what is missing is a passion for our career Foreign Service personnel, and standing up for giving them the resources they need to carry out their mission.

Glasser: Yeah, well, it's hard to argue with that, right? That's almost uncontested. So, do you think he is on the way out? Would they be able to confirm, do you think, another Secretary of State in this political environment?

Cardin: Well, clearly there's been speculation as to how long Secretary Tillerson will be able to remain in office. There have been moments that have been uncomfortable between the

Secretary and the President of the United States. He's not the only cabinet-level person who's had these types of issues with the President of the United States.

So, I'm not going to speculate as to whether he will remain Secretary of State or not. Clearly, he—if a vacancy occurs, there would be I think a pretty detailed confirmation process as to the next secretary. If there is a vacancy in the Secretary of State, the United States Senate will go through a pretty thorough confirmation process, whomever the President nominates, so it's not going to be an automatic. We're going to have a lot of questions to ask, considering what has happened during the first year of the Trump presidency.

Glasser: Well, that's right. You raised some of the concerns on substance: North Korea; the Iran deal. What is happening behind the scenes right now with the Iran deal? I mean, basically, where last we left it, essentially President Trump kind of kicked the ball to Congress. So, what is your view of what Congress is going to end up doing?

Cardin: Congress has a limited role in regards to the nuclear agreement with Iran. We do have a review statute that was enacted into law where we review Iran's compliance with the agreement, and we have certain requirements on the President to keep us informed. What we have seen so far is that Iran is in compliance with the nuclear part of the agreement, but certainly has violated non-nuclear issues.

So, I think Congress could play a role. We've already done that; we passed a bill this year imposing new sanctions on Iran for their non-nuclear violations. We can work with our European partners to impose sanctions against Iran for non-nuclear violations.

In regards to the nuclear agreement, we are controlled by the JCPOA, the nuclear agreement, and there, working with our European partners, we can certainly demand strict enforcement and that's—I don't know how much Congress can do in that regard, but certainly, we can support the administration.

Glasser: So, you don't expect anything imminently to come before you?

Cardin: I think Congress will try to be cooperative with the President, but, quite frankly, within the nuclear agreement, we have to work with our partners. That's why we said it's very important to work with our European partners.

Glasser: So, a lot of this discussion around foreign policy is that, in a way because of the uncertainty surrounding President Trump, you hear a lot more about Congress, and especially about the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, than you have in a while. You guys had a pretty interesting hearing last week. I think it was the first time in 40 years a discussion—an open discussion—about the role of the president in being able to order a nuclear first strike. Is this Congress getting its voice back on foreign policy?

Cardin: Clearly, Congress has taken on a stronger role. You see that with the sanctions bill we passed with Russia—and, by the way, also with North Korea and Iran—that discretion that is normally given to the president has been taken over by Congress in our role as the policy arm of government.

So, we have been more prescriptive on the responsibilities of the president on foreign policy, and that's Congress's prerogative, and we've done that under President Trump. So, yes, we are taking a more active role.

And the nuclear command structure, which was developed during the Cold War for two nuclear superpowers with the concept of mutual destruction if either party decided to use it—that premise is no longer valid, because the chances of a nuclear conflict are more with a North Korea-type country than it is with a Russia or China-type country.

So, we could now have a more deliberative process under the presidential command for the use of nuclear weapons, and I think Congress is looking for a way to assert itself in that regard.

Glasser: Well, really, it is quite striking in that regard. What do you hear from foreign officials? I assume that many of them are coming to you with certain high levels of concern about what's going on.

Cardin: You're absolutely correct. I've had numerous discussions with foreign leaders who were trying to get as much insight as possible as to how America will respond to certain of our international challenges. They recognize that President Trump is not predictable, and that has been a subject we have talked about.

But, I think they are somewhat reassured when Congress interjects itself. We did that, quite frankly, on the Transatlantic Partnership and NATO where there was some doubt initially about the President's commitment. Congress, in a nonpartisan manner, reinforced that Transatlantic Partnership and the NATO alliance. That, I think, was helpful.

So, there have been times where I've met with foreign leaders where I explained where our country's commitments are solid, I think helps, and will continue to do that. But the President's unpredictable—make no mistake about it—and that has its concerns with our traditional partners, whether they be in Europe, whether they be in the Pacific, in Asia, or whether they be in our own hemisphere.

Glasser: What is your advice, then, when they say, "How do I know what to pay attention to and what not to?" Do you tell them to read the tweets, or not? What's your guide?

Cardin: Well, I usually tell people who are concerned about President Trump, whether they be Americans or foreigners, stay focused on the issues of concern. If you are talking in regards to the Iran nuclear agreement, let's stay focused as to how we can keep Iran in compliance with the agreement and keep all parties in the agreement. This is a strategy we have to focus on.

If it is dealing with America's commitment to maritime security in the China seas, then let's develop a strategy working with Congress that will give you greater assurances. So, we try to find a path forward to make it clear that America will live up to its traditional commitments.

Glasser: Well, it's interesting. You were just on a congressional trip over the last week to Bonn when the subject was the Global Climate Accord—and in a way, that was sort of the message, right, that you and other Americans there were sending, which is basically, "Well, there's Trump's policy, but there's also America's policy." Right?

Cardin: You're exactly right. Our message was very clearly, we are still in. We are in the Paris Climate Accords; we are in the international effort to deal with our climate commitments. America will meet its Paris targets, and we're on target to do that. And that the President does not speak for this country. We have governors who are taking action; we have mayors who are taking action; Congress has taken actions. We had five senators speak in

regards to that. We have private companies that are doing things; we have NGOs, and universities.

So, yes, exactly. We reassured the international community that the United States would, in fact, live up to its commitments, despite the fact what the President did was, I think, extremely dangerous to the international effort.

Glasser: Do you think people were reassured? What did you hear from the non-U.S. delegates when you were there?

Cardin: Our colleagues globally were extremely pleased to hear the message that we brought. They were very encouraged by that message. But make no mistake about it—there is only one U.S. There is only one President. And they know that the President can take action, or delay action, to make our efforts more difficult and to cede space to other countries that may not be as committed to the global priorities as America is.

Glasser: Well, that's right. I mean, what if it was during the Obama administration, and it was a Republican senator going with the opposite message? There's a certain risk, right? Historically, our politics stopped at the water's edge. Would you have been mad at the Republican you for doing that?

Cardin: Well, yeah, it's a very good point. We want to have a united policy. We think it's President Trump who's the outlier, not the business leaders, the governors, the mayors, the senators that were there. I think we are expressing the mainstream American message here. It's not that we have a different view. President Trump says he wants to negotiate a better deal.

Well, under the Paris Accords, we can change our commitments—but quite frankly, we're going to meet our commitments. So, I don't think the President's message is inconsistent with the responsibility we have to express America's commitment to global climate change. He is hurting the international effort, but he won't stop the American effort.

Glasser: Well, it must have been a very interesting trip for you, for sure. But I imagine, you also heard a lot about Russia, and I do want to come back to that, because people might not realize you played a key role, in some ways you could argue, in triggering some of Vladimir Putin's fury at the United States by being the lead author, and helping to get past the original Magnitsky Act of sanctions on Russia.

How did you get into this? People might not know how you met my old friend Bill Browder, who I knew from Moscow way back when he—before he was a Putin opponent.

Cardin: Well, since my election to Congress, I've always been interested in human rights. I really do believe that's America's strength. Yes, we have a strong military; yes, we have a strong economy. But what really makes America the unique nation it is, is that we speak up about human rights, and anti-corruption, and good governance, and democratic institutions. That's what America is known for. That's what inspires people around the world with U.S. leadership.

So, I've been very active in the OSCE—the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—the U.S. Helsinki Commission—have been the chairman at times of that commission, and have brought to the attention of the American public, but also the international community, Russia's violations of basic international human rights standards that they agreed to in the Helsinki Final Act. So, I've done that traditionally.

And during that period of time, it came to my attention that a young lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, representing an American company, had done what any lawyer should do, and that is if you discover corruption, report it to the appropriate authorities. He did that, and that was his responsibility. As a result, he was arrested, tortured, and killed, leaving a young family behind.

You know, we talk about human rights violations, and we talk about the numbers, but when you put a face on it, you can get people to respond. And Sergei Magnitsky became a rallying call about Mr. Putin and the direction he was leading Russia, a direction to take away the rights of its citizens to internationally-recognized protection.

So, as a result of the tragedy with Sergei Magnitsky, I was able—working with Senator McCain and others—to pass the Sergei Magnitsky Accountability Act, which imposed sanctions against those individuals in Russia that were responsible for his death, denying them the right to visit America or to use our banking system.

That message went beyond just the United States. Other countries followed suit, and it became a rallying point. And just in the last Congress, we were able to extend the Russia-specific statute to a Global Magnitsky Act, going against human rights violators in other countries where their own country does not hold them accountable.

I was very pleased to see that Canada has passed a similar law just recently, and other countries have followed suit, so it has become a real effort to say we are going to stand up against human rights abusers.

Glasser: Well, it's interesting. It was just, I believe, the eighth anniversary just this week of Sergei Magnitsky's death. But what people may also not realize is that the passage of those Magnitsky sanctions is what caused Russia to retaliate by banning adoptions by Americans, which was the ostensible subject of the Natalia Veselnitskaya meeting in Trump Tower, so it all kind of comes full circle—

Cardin: Yes. It does go around into a circle, but it's interesting. Because we were holding human rights violators accountable and not giving him the benefit of our country, Russia decided to take it out on its orphans. It's just amazing what the attempt was made. It's so absurd how Russia responds. It's not Russia; it's Mr. Putin. I should make that clear. The Russian people are good people, and they should have basic rights. It's the Putin government that is denying them the rights.

Glasser: One of the things that's happened as a result of this political intervention in the U.S. election has been a pretty dramatic switch in the partisan view toward Russia in a way that it's got to be a little disturbing, right? I mean, you now see that basically Democrats and Republicans have almost flipflopped in their views about Russia, right? And you have Democrats who are much more hawkish these days, and many Republicans now—a majority, if you look at the Pew Research findings—believe that we should have a reset with Russia, or a more conciliatory policy, as President Trump has suggested.

Does that worry you at all, that we have sort of a partisan view now of Russia policies?

Cardin: I'm not so sure. I mean, it's probably right as far as voting public is concerned, but in regards to the activities in Congress, I have not seen that division. You know, my closest ally in my campaign to hold Russia accountable is Senator John McCain; he's been a true, true hero on this issue. And there are many other Republicans who have helped, including Bob Corker, including Roger Wicker, including so many others who have been very much engaged in the campaign to hold human rights violators accountable in Russia and globally. So, I have

not seen that translate—of course we got a 98 to 2 vote on the Russia sanctions bill in the United States Senate earlier this year.

So, I think there is a general understanding about Russia's nefarious activities by Mr. Putin, and that that needs to be acted upon by both Democrats and Republicans. But, obviously, Mr. Trump has his supporters, and Mr. Trump has certainly not been in the camp of holding Mr. Putin publicly to account for what he has done.

Glasser: Well, you mentioned Senator McCain. Of course, he has been a very strong public advocate on his views about Russia over the years; he's also been—along with Senator Corker—probably the most public in his disagreements with President Trump and his foreign policy.

Do you think—have you talked with either of them about the toll that that takes, or whether that's an effective strategy? Democrats have their own worries about how publicly to oppose Trump, or whether to call for his impeachment. Where do you come down from that?

Cardin: Well, I talk to my colleagues all the time about this, but I don't have to encourage them. John McCain is a champion for human rights, and he is going to speak out as loudly as he possibly can. He's obviously fighting his health right now, but he is not going to be deterred in his beliefs. And the same thing is true of my other colleagues. They are going to speak their minds. And, yes, they may get some negative response from some of their colleagues, but I think most admire their honesty and integrity on this issue.

Glasser: Well, Tom Steyer says that Democrats should all advocate for President Trump's impeachment and removal from office. Do you agree?

Cardin: You know, I'd be a little careful here, because under the Constitution it's the House of Representatives who brings impeachment, and then the United States Senate must act as a juror, to judge whether it's appropriate or not. So I may be called upon to act in that as a member of the United States Senate.

So, I'm not sure it's appropriate for members of the Senate to express a view in regards to impeachment.

Glasser: Well, that's a good point, if you think about whether a process would ever be opened up. Obviously, we're a long way from that, no matter what. Senator Cardin, I know you have to go, but this has been a fascinating conversation. And yet, I notice how we tend to cluster around a few specific crises. What, as you look at the work of the Foreign Relations Committee—what are some of the issues that keep you up at night? Are you really worried about a nuclear war with North Korea? Are you worried that Turkey is going to go south and leave NATO? What keeps you up at night?

Cardin: Well, if I had to do the most consistent nightmares I have, it's probably Russia, because they're so global in their efforts to bring down democratic systems. But, I'm also worried about what could end our civilization if we started a nuclear confrontation—North Korea is clearly in our sights as an immediate major concern. But quite frankly, every day there's a new story, and this past week, when you see what's happened with these Saudi Arabia's purge of members of the royal family, and then of holding the prime minister of Lebanon basically in their country, causing instability in Lebanon that could trigger conflicts with Hezbollah—you know, there's a lot of things in this world that could mushroom into a much larger conflict.

So, yes, I think we could contain each of the immediate problems, but if they spin out of control, the world is in a very unstable position that could cause a major problem.

Glasser: Well, I'm afraid I have to say there's not a lot of cheery conversations we tend to have these days when it comes to the state of the world. But I have to say, Senator Cardin, it's been really terrific to talk with you, and I hope to come back and visit with you in a few months and we'll see what happened to any of these running crises.

Cardin: Well, unfortunately, I think many will still remain, but we're going to do everything we can to try to ease the tension in North Korea and establish a way in which Russia does not interfere with our democratic system. But it's going to be a challenge, and of course, America has a lot of allies and we'll be working to do what's in our best national security interests.

Glasser: Senator Cardin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and this week's guest on The Global POLITICO, thank you very much for joining us.

And of course, thank you to all of our listeners on iTunes, or whatever is your favorite podcast platform. And you can email me any time at sglasser@politico.com.
Senator, thank you.

Cardin: Thank you, Susan.

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How Trump Is Driving Democrats and Republicans Together [Back](#)

By Susan B. Glasser | 11/20/2017 05:09 AM EDT

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President Trump has notched at least one big foreign policy success: uniting senators of both parties against him on Capitol Hill.

That at least is the argument of Senator Ben Cardin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who is now working in close partnership with the panel's Republican chairman, Bob Corker, as the retiring Tennessee senator feuds openly with Trump, chides the president's appointees, and holds hearings to criticize his policies. Call it a rare outpost of bipartisanship in an increasingly polarized moment — or at least an example of a surprising and unintended side effect of Trump's disruptive approach to the world.

"I believe on foreign policy that there is little difference between the Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," Cardin said in an interview for The Global Politico, our weekly podcast on world affairs. He ticked off a list of issues on which he said the committee now agrees across party lines—and over which it appears to be more or less in open conflict with the Trump administration. Among them are imposing mandatory new sanctions on Russia, which ultimately passed the Senate 98-2 over the White House's objections, keeping the Iran nuclear deal in place and pursuing a peaceful solution to the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

It's a striking list. In more than two decades of observing Capitol Hill, I can't remember a comparable moment when the generally staid Foreign Relations panel has been so assertive toward the president, especially given that Congress and the White House are controlled by the same party. To do so, you'd probably have to reach all the way back to the Vietnam era, and the skeptical hearings about the war held by the late, legendary Chairman William Fulbright.

"Clearly, Congress has taken on a stronger role. You see that with the sanctions bill we passed with Russia—and, by the way, also with North Korea and Iran—that discretion that is normally given to the president has been taken over by Congress in our role as the policy arm of government," Cardin told me. "We have been more prescriptive on the responsibilities of the president on foreign policy, and that's Congress' prerogative, and we've done that under President Trump. Yes, we are taking a more active role."

Corker offered a highly symbolic—or at least seriously trollish—signal of how far he's willing to take his feud with Trump last week when he held a hearing on the president's authority to order a nuclear strike—the first time in 40 years that such an issue has been discussed on Capitol Hill. The session was widely—and correctly, Cardin said—interpreted as a senatorial rebuke of the president's loose and inflammatory rhetoric about the "fire and fury" he might unleash against North Korea. "Congress is looking for a way to assert itself in that regard," Cardin said.

Some skepticism is certainly in order here. Congress isn't about to wrest control of nukes—or any other major levers of international power—away from the commander-in-chief anytime soon. Despite post-Vietnam efforts to rein in the imperial presidency, the executive branch retains nearly all the control over American foreign policy. And many members of Congress are just as happy to punt when it comes to taking responsibility for decisions of war and peace that might prove unpopular with voters, a fact painfully underscored when President Barack Obama decided to seek authorization for a retaliatory strike on Syria after a chemical weapons attack on its own citizens—and members of Congress all but hid under their desks.

So no one's suggesting Congress has suddenly grown a spine under Trump.

But the bipartisan talk of constraining and at times openly contradicting the president is something genuinely different about Trump's Washington, and it already extends to a wide range of issues on the foreign policy front—a contrast to the fractured politics of such domestic issues as health care and taxes, where consensus is as elusive as the election results would suggest.

While those policy debates play out along more predictable Republican vs. Democrat lines, Cardin made the case for a Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will hang together against Trump on most of the pressing foreign policy issues of the day. He did not spell out exactly which Republicans he believes to be aligned with Democrats on these issues, though the panel does include, in addition to Corker, several other Republicans whose foreign policy views differ from Trump's, such as his primary rival Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), and another outspoken critic in Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, who like Corker is not running for reelection.

"We believe that the best course for containing North Korea's nuclear program is through diplomacy, and we disagree with the language the president has used, and the fact that he's made it more difficult for diplomacy to work. We believe that in regard to the Iran nuclear

agreement, that we have to enforce the agreement rigorously, but we don't want the United States unilaterally withdrawing from that agreement," Cardin said. "I think that's what most Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee believe, and certainly in regard to Russia," where Trump's public "embracing Mr. Putin was the wrong signal," and triggered the overwhelming Senate vote to overrule him on sanctions.

Both Cardin and Corker have also been increasingly critical of Trump's Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, warning of the department's plummeting morale, "decapitation of leadership," and ill-considered reorganization plans - foolish own-goals, for Cardin, at a time when the president has publicly undercut his top diplomat and devalued the role of diplomacy in America's foreign policy.

Tillerson "has made several major mistakes," Cardin told me. "He hasn't been the advocate for the Department of State he should have been." When Trump proposed a more than 30 percent cut to the department's budget, in fact, it was not Tillerson who objected—but Corker, who called it a "nonstarter" and refused even to take it seriously as a basis for negotiations. In our interview, Cardin said he expects the budget that will ultimately pass the Republican-controlled Senate to be a "repudiation" of the Republican president's State budget.

A new confrontation could soon be brewing over Russia on the Hill, as the Trump administration faces a January deadline for imposing a first round of additional sanctions. The State Department missed the initial deadline to produce names of entities to be sanctioned, leading many in Congress to wonder whether this was the Trump team slow-walking a policy to which the president remains opposed.

Administration sources have told me it's not that, but a bureaucratic failure to meet the initial deadline, reflecting the lack of staffing and disorganization that remains persistent inside the State Department under its budget-cutting secretary—another black mark against Tillerson.

Cardin is not so sure but either way, he said, Congress will remain adamant about pushing Trump to get it done. "We're watching very carefully to make sure they, in fact, impose the mandatory sanctions on the due dates," Cardin said, "but we do know there is a reluctance on the behalf of the Trump administration."

Unlike some of his Democratic colleagues, Cardin is no newcomer to the ranks of Russia hawks. In fact, you could even say he helped trigger Vladimir Putin's decision to intervene in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

A longtime human rights activist who co-chaired the Helsinki Commission, Cardin teamed up with Republican Senator John McCain to pass the Magnitsky Act—over the objections of the Obama administration. Cardin and his staff worked closely on the bill to sanction corrupt Russian government officials with Bill Browder, a Western investor in Russia whose lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, was unjustly imprisoned in Moscow after uncovering a massive fraud that implicated government officials, and later died in jail. In retaliation for the Magnitsky sanctions, Putin ordered an end to American adoptions of Russian children.

And that was precisely the issue about which Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya came to meet with Trump's son, son-in-law and campaign chief in Trump Tower during last year's campaign—a meeting now part of the investigation into Putin's election meddling.

Special counsel Robert Mueller has just issued the first indictments to flow from that

investigation, and Cardin said when I asked about the probe that he believes "there's lots of dots, and they're starting to be connected" as far as Russia's interference and ties to the Trump team.

But beyond that, he wouldn't comment about the investigation and whether it could, or should, lead to Trump's impeachment, as some Democrats are already beginning to say. After all, he noted, the Senate would have to sit in judgment in any trial of the president after an impeachment. That makes Cardin a potential juror. "I may," as he put it, "be called upon to act."

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Medicare premiums, deductibles will largely remain flat for 2018 [Back](#)

By Paul Demko | 11/17/2017 05:02 PM EDT

The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B, which covers doctor visits and outpatient hospital services, will be \$134 next year, unchanged from 2017, CMS [announced](#) today.

But about one in four Part B beneficiaries will pay slightly less than the standard premium because of a "hold harmless" provision tied to Social Security benefits. In addition, individuals who earn more than \$85,000 and couples with incomes above \$170,000 — about 5 percent of Medicare beneficiaries — will pay higher Part B premiums, with a top rate of \$429 per month in 2018.

The annual deductible for Part B beneficiaries will be \$183 next year, the same as for 2017.

There is no premium for Part A, which covers hospital stays, for almost all Medicare beneficiaries.

The annual deductible for Part A next year will be \$1,340, an increase of \$24 from 2017. Beneficiaries will also see slight increases in co-insurance payments for extended hospital stays and placements at skilled nursing facilities.

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Obamacare mandate repeal may not deliver predicted blow [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko | 11/20/2017 05:08 AM EDT

Repealing Obamacare's individual mandate might not be the devastating blow to health insurance markets that supporters of the law fear.

Because the tax penalty for not having insurance is far less costly than what many Americans

would have to pay for coverage, many have chosen to take the fine. Eliminating it, therefore, might not radically change behavior — or fulfill the dire predictions of spiking premiums and vast increases in uninsured people that economists, health providers and politicians once predicted.

Even the Congressional Budget Office says it's rethinking its estimates of the consequences.

"We've always said the mandate is ineffective; it's such a weak mandate," said Deep Banerjee, an analyst at Standard & Poor's who has closely tracked the Obamacare markets. "We don't think many people would lose insurance if the mandate goes away." The ratings service projects repeal would increase the number of uninsured by 3 million to 5 million by 2027, and save the federal government \$60 billion to \$80 billion.

Using tax reform to repeal the requirement to purchase health insurance is not without irony. When Chief Justice John Roberts saved Obamacare in 2012 by ruling that the individual mandate was a tax, conservatives were outraged. But now, with full control of Congress, Republicans can turn the tables: if it's a tax, they'll repeal it in a tax bill.

Axing the mandate, as Senate Republicans are proposing in their tax bill, would give the GOP an estimated \$338 billion more to spend on tax cuts. That's because removing a cudgel to persuade otherwise healthy people to enroll in Obamacare would lower how much the federal government pays to subsidize the coverage. Striking a prominent — and much reviled — feature of Obamacare is a secondary political benefit. House Republicans did not repeal the mandate in their tax bill, but GOP sources expect them to approve adding repeal when the legislation goes to a conference.

Insurers warn that scrapping the individual mandate could capsize the already wobbly markets, which have been buffeted by skyrocketing premiums and dwindling competition. On Tuesday, many of the largest health care industry groups, including America's Health Insurance Plans, the American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association, sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell warning against eliminating the penalty for failing to obtain coverage.

Their argument echoes fears voiced by the CBO: Scrapping the mandate would cause premiums to jump even higher and fewer Americans to enroll in coverage. The scorekeeping agency projects that premiums would be 10 percent higher if the mandate goes away and that there would be 13 million more uninsured Americans in a decade.

"Eliminating the mandate is pulling the plug on the individual market," said John Baackes, CEO of L.A. Care Health Plan. "I think this is a cowardly way of doing it."

But it's also widely acknowledged by health care finance experts that the tax penalty has proved a weak enforcement tool. That's because the fine maxes out at \$695, or 2.5 percent of income, whichever is higher. That's still far less than what many Americans would pay in premiums, meaning its effect on consumer behavior may be overstated.

Republicans have long scoffed at the CBO's projections about what would happen if the tax penalty were eliminated. In its most recent analysis, the CBO indicated that it's considering "major methodological changes" in how it scores repeal of the mandate.

Most observers expect the agency will eventually reduce the projected effect of eliminating

the penalty. That could also result in lower estimated savings — the very thing the GOP is relying on to pay for its tax package.

The GOP's move to repeal now amounts to "cashing in a declining asset," said Tom Miller, a health care economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "If we could just wait a couple of years, we would find out it really didn't amount to much. But it takes awhile for CBO to retreat from its past errors."

Republicans are framing mandate repeal as a "middle-class tax cut" because the vast majority of people who paid the fine are low- or middle-income. According to the IRS, nearly 80 percent of Americans who paid the penalty in 2015 made under \$50,000.

Republicans say the mandate's true effect on coverage is not clear.

"No one really knows," the impact of the mandate, said Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate HELP Committee. "The Congressional Budget Office has revised its estimate downward of the effect [the mandate] has, and many professionals who look at it say the penalty is too low to make much difference, so I don't think we know."

The GOP maintains at least some of the possible effects of repealing the mandate would be blunted by passing the bipartisan deal Alexander struck with the HELP panel's ranking Democrat, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing reduction program, which helps low-income people pay their out-of-pocket health costs. The bill would provide two years of funding for the program, which President Donald Trump cut off last month. That would bring down premiums in 2019 and trigger rebates for consumers in 2018, according to Republicans.

"It would be a very bad idea to repeal the individual mandate and not pass Alexander-Murray," Alexander said.

But Democrats, who strongly support Alexander-Murray, warned they can't be counted on for support if Republicans undermine the Obamacare markets by repealing the mandate.

"Republicans who think they'll be able to jam through a partisan bill that spikes health care premiums and then make it all better by pointing to our bipartisan bill to reduce health costs are either fooling themselves or trying to fool their constituents," Murray said. "Democrats will hold Republicans accountable for the damage they're doing every step of the way."

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GOP senators lobby Trump on Obamacare mandate, markets [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and John Bresnahan | 11/17/2017 03:02 PM EDT

Senate Republicans on Thursday personally lobbied President Donald Trump to support a bill to shore up Obamacare markets while repealing the law's individual mandate as part of tax reform, according to GOP sources.

There is growing concern among Senate Republicans that repealing the requirement that most Americans have insurance without funding a separate Obamacare cost-sharing program would cause too much havoc in already shaky insurance markets. But they need to repeal the mandate in order to have enough money to cover new tax cuts.

Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, Susan Collins of Maine and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana attended the White House meeting, which was arranged by Graham, according to GOP sources.

Senate Republicans want Trump to get behind a bipartisan deal Alexander crafted with Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing program. They argue that enacting Alexander-Murray as part of a year-end spending deal would make up for some of the anticipated damage done to the insurance markets by repealing the mandate. But House Republicans are skeptical of Alexander-Murray, dubbing it a "bailout" of insurance companies.

"There is a growing recognition if we repeal the individual mandate, then Republicans have some responsibility to fix health care — not Obamacare," an aide said.

Repealing the mandate would raise \$338 billion but also cause insurance premiums to spike 10 percent, resulting in 13 million more people uninsured in a decade, according to the CBO. Many Republicans and some outside experts doubt the impact would be that big.

A White House spokesman said Trump and the senators "discussed the ongoing efforts to pass historic tax reform and other legislative objectives."

"The president is pleased with the momentum that has gathered behind finding solutions to these important issues and looks forward to continued cooperation with Congress in order to enact them as soon as possible," the spokesman said.

Alexander and Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska — a key vote on tax reform — have separately cited concern about repealing the mandate without funding the cost-sharing program.

"It would be a very bad idea to repeal the individual mandate and not pass Alexander-Murray," Alexander said this week.

"If the Congress is going to move forward with repeal of the individual mandate, we absolutely must have the Alexander-Murray piece that is passed into law," [Murkowski told](#) the Roll Call newspaper.

Collins has gone even further, saying she's concerned about the very idea of repealing the individual mandate as part of tax reform.

"I think it greatly complicates our efforts to combine tax reform and changes in the ACA," she told reporters earlier this week.

Graham said in a statement that he had a "great meeting" with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, but his office refused to share additional details.

"They remain fully committed to passing meaningful tax reform and repealing and replacing Obamacare. President Trump and Vice President Pence were focused like a laser on success in the Senate," Graham said. "I appreciate the President and Vice President for being generous

with their time and looking for ways to close the deal on these important issues for the American people."

After Alexander and Murray announced a deal on their bill last month, many Republicans and Democrats speculated it would be included in a year-end spending deal. But Senate Democrats this week warned that they may no longer support Alexander-Murray if Republicans repeal the mandate.

Democrats and supporters of the Affordable Care Act say Alexander-Murray would not make up for the damage caused by repealing the mandate, with Murray likening it to trying to douse a fire with penicillin.

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Perdue touts investments in rural health care services in 41 states [Back](#)

By John Lauinger | 11/17/2017 04:43 PM EDT

USDA made more than \$1 billion in investments in fiscal 2017 to fund health care projects and initiatives that enhanced services for some 2.5 million people in rural areas across 41 states, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said in a release this afternoon.

"USDA invests in a wide range of health care facilities — such as hospitals, clinics and treatment centers — to help ensure that rural residents have access to the same state-of-the-art care available in urban and metropolitan areas," Perdue said in a [statement](#).

The investments helped fund 97 rural health care projects through the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program. The loans can be used to build or expand hospitals, medical clinics or other places where care is delivered, such as assisted-living facilities. The loans can also be used to purchase medical equipment.

To qualify for the program, a public or nonprofit entity or federally recognized tribe must be located in a town with a population that does not exceed 20,000 people.

USDA's release highlighted a few of the projects, including a loan of \$91.4 million to Avita Health System in Ohio. In the town of Ontario, the loan was used to build a hospital in a vacant portion of a shopping mall. The facility provides a host of vital health services to some 124,000 rural residents in two counties. It also provides substance-abuse disorder treatment and mental health services to help combat the opioid epidemic.

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Trump calls for border wall after agent's death [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 11/20/2017 02:00 PM EDT

President Donald Trump reiterated his demand for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border following an incident Sunday that left one Border Patrol agent dead and another badly injured.

"As you heard, we lost a Border Patrol officer, just yesterday, and another one was brutally beaten and badly, badly hurt. Looks like he'll make it, but very, very badly hurt," Trump told reporters after a Cabinet meeting today.

"And we talk about the wall, we're going to have the wall," he continued. "It's part of what we're doing. We need it. It's rough territory. That's where the drugs are coming in. A lot of things are happening along the border."

Border Patrol agent Rogelio Martinez died Sunday morning "as a result of injuries sustained while on patrol," U.S. Customs and Border Protection [said](#) in a written statement.

Martinez and his partner had been monitoring an area in South Texas known as the Big Bend sector.

Since his presidential campaign, Trump has called for a border wall to halt the flow of people and drugs across the southern border.

Congress faces a Dec. 8 deadline to pass a spending bill, which could present an opportunity to push for border wall funding.

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Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 4:18:42 PM

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 11/17/2017 04:17 PM EDT

MONEY FOR THE MAINLAND: The White House has unveiled its third major disaster funding request in less than three months, acknowledging that little of that cash would go to long-term rebuilding in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

OMB Director Mick Mulvaney is seeking \$44 billion to fund storm-recovery efforts like Army Corps of Engineers projects and loans to mom-and-pop stores, as we [report](#) this afternoon. But with conditions still so rough in the Caribbean, the budget director says it's too early for a complete damage assessment for either territory. "This supplemental request does not represent the final request for their needs," he wrote.

Tough timing: Congressional leaders will likely include that \$44 billion in a broad funding package in December. But Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands won't get all they've asked for under that bill (\$96 billion and nearly \$7 billion, respectively). And that means local officials could be forced to wait until January or later for reconstruction funds — four months after Hurricane Maria made landfall.

'Downright insulting': Even though they've already skipped town, many lawmakers were quick to blast the request today. "This is wholly inadequate and downright insulting, especially for the people of Puerto Rico," Senate Appropriations Committee top Democrat [Patrick Leahy](#) (D-Vt.) said, noting that he has fielded more than \$180 billion in hurricane funding requests.

The exception: The White House's proposal doesn't seem all bad for Puerto Rico, though. For the first time, the Trump administration is proposing to waive a part of the Stafford Act to let the U.S. territory improve its infrastructure rather than restore it to "pre-disaster" condition, potentially enabling Puerto Rico to upgrade its devastated energy grid.

The total request includes:

- \$25.2 billion for FEMA and the Small Business Administration
- \$12 billion for a new flood mitigation program run by the Community Development Block Grant program
- \$1 billion for emergency agricultural assistance
- \$1.2 billion for an education recovery fund
- \$4.6 billion for rehabbing federal buildings

MENU OF OFFSETS: Just as Mulvaney warned congressional leaders last month, the White House wants this latest tranche of disaster aid to be paid for, stating today that "the administration believes it is prudent to offset new spending." OMB has delivered a list of [suggested savings](#), totaling some \$59 billion and including more than \$44 billion from two

more years of mandatory sequestration, Sarah [reports for Pros](#).

The rest: [Lacking "the will" to help Puerto Rico](#) | [Pell Grant surplus at stake](#) | [USDA funding floated as pay-for](#)

GOOD FRIDAY AFTERNOON! Reach out: jscholtes@politico.com (@[jascholtes](#)) and sferris@politico.com (@[sarahnferris](#)).

Doc of the day: In a [letter](#) to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai today, Sen. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) led 10 of his colleagues in requesting the agency protect Wi-Fi funding within the E-Rate program, which helps connect schools and libraries to broadband. More from [John Hendel](#).

#DailyBudgetFact — In 2014, the FCC voted to modernize the E-Rate program, [approving](#) a \$1.5 billion boost in funding and setting new standards in an effort to expand access.

APPROPRIATIONS

NO DICE: Rumbblings of a potential deal on spending caps piqued the interest of budget watchers Thursday evening. But sources from both parties swiftly quieted the chatter. Democrats did confirm that they swatted down a GOP offer to raise spending caps by roughly \$180 billion over two years, as we [reported](#). The rumored offer would have raised the nondefense budget cap by \$37 billion and boosted the Pentagon's spending cap by \$54 billion, matching President Donald Trump's \$603 billion request for fiscal 2018.

Forced belt-tightening: Don't forget that the 2011 budget law would impose a \$549 billion limit for defense spending and \$516 billion for non-defense funding, down from the current level of \$551 billion for defense accounts and \$519 billion for domestic programs.

ARMED SERVICES SIREN: Add Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and Rep. [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) to the list of lawmakers who are increasingly anxious to see a final spending deal. The defense chairmen penned a joint statement today urging congressional leaders to settle on a plan that matches the budget boost called for in the just-passed NDAA bill, [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#). More from [Connor O'Brien](#).

TAX

'MORE FISCALLY PALATABLE': Several Senate Republicans are starting to worry that their chamber's tax reform bill could blow right past that \$1.4 billion threshold. Brian Faler [explains](#) that some GOP legislators are worried Congress will ultimately extend a host of ostensibly temporary tax cuts, driving up the overall cost. "There are several of us that are trying to figure out a way to make sure this doesn't hurt us relative to deficits," says [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.). "We're looking globally at the whole thing and trying to do what we can to make it more fiscally palatable."

Marathon markup: The Senate reported its tax plan out of the Finance Committee late Thursday. Brian [explains](#) that chamber leaders aim to take up the [bill](#) after Thanksgiving.

More: [Roadblocks emerge](#) | [Individual mandate 'make-or-break'](#) | [Trump faults Democrats](#) | [Pence goes to "tax prom"](#) | [Pro-Obamacare groups gets to work](#)

TRANSPORTATION

PVT. PILOT: The Department of Transportation plans to spend an estimated \$2.5 million over three years on a new program to funnel military veterans into commercial pilot jobs, Lauren Gardner [reports](#). The money would come from the department's research account.

OBAMACARE

NOT A GAME-CHANGER: Repealing the individual mandate might not be a death blow to Obamacare after all. As Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko [explain](#), eliminating the tax penalty might not radically change behavior. Standard & Poor has projected that repeal would increase the number of uninsured Americans by 3 million to 5 million by 2027 and save the federal government \$60 billion to \$80 billion. For Republican lawmakers, that could mean an extra \$338 billion to spend on tax cuts.

EDUCATION

DEEPEST DOWNSIZING: In the Education Department's slim-down, the Office for Civil Rights could be the hardest hit. Our Kimberly Heffling [got ahold](#) of a document showing that the office could lose 45 employees because of early separation offers.

AGRICULTURE

BLUMENAUER'S BLUEPRINT: Rep. [Earl Blumenauer](#) (D-Ore.) has officially introduced his alternative farm bill, aiming to overhaul subsidy and conservation programs, as well as create two new titles devoted to tackling food waste and promoting animal welfare. Catherine Boudreau [outlines the details](#) of the Oregon Democrat's plan.

INTERIOR

LACKING TRAVEL LOGS: The Interior Department's inspector general can't determine whether Secretary Ryan Zinke violated government rules for mixing taxpayer-funded travel with political activities because he failed to properly document his jet-setting, Eric Wolff [reports](#).

EARMARKS

- A \$4 billion plan B to deal with North Korean missiles. [The New York Times](#).
- Panetta: Blowing up the debt is a threat to America. [USA Today](#).
- Santa Clara says it never received grants at center of "sanctuary" fight. [POLITICO Pro](#).
- In Puerto Rico, law passed for fiscal crisis hampers storm recovery. [The New York Times](#).
- Minnesota Supreme Court upholds budget veto. [The Pioneer Press](#).

WE'RE COUNTING: 21 days until federal funding runs out and the National Flood Insurance Program expires (Dec. 8, 2017).

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/budget-appropriations/2017/11/us-territories-forced-to-wait-for-long-term-disaster-aid-027700>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House seeks \$44 billion in third disaster request [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan, Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris | 11/16/2017 07:09 PM EDT

The White House sent its third disaster request to Congress on Friday, asking for \$44 billion to aid recovery from this summer's deadly trio of hurricanes.

If the funding package is approved, Congress will have kicked in nearly \$100 billion in extra money this year to help storm-ravaged communities in places like Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida.

Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) welcomed the administration's move, adding in a statement, "The House will review the request and work with the administration and members from affected states to help the victims get the resources they need to recover and rebuild."

Other lawmakers, however, voiced strong complaints that the package fell short of expectations.

The [request](#) calls for \$25.2 billion for disaster programs run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration, as well as \$4.6 billion to rehab damaged federal facilities and other agency recovery efforts.

Another \$1 billion would go toward emergency agricultural assistance, \$1.2 billion would be used for an education recovery fund and \$12 billion would be spent on a new flood mitigation program run by the Community Development Block Grant.

The Trump administration — still sizing up damage and rebuilding costs in some areas — is expected to ask for even more disaster cash in the months to come.

Indeed, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico less than 60 days ago — the usual threshold for determining long-term recovery needs.

While overall estimates are largely settled for damage wrought by hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the latest request falls short of what local officials had sought for their recovery. Texas had asked for \$61 billion, Puerto Rico wanted \$96 billion and the U.S. Virgin Islands requested nearly \$7 billion.

Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn, one of the most vocal advocates for funding in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, said late Thursday that the White House's request was "wholly inadequate."

Rep. Nita Lowey, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said in a statement that the request "does not come close to what local officials say is needed."

Unlike the \$52 billion Congress already approved in two installments this year, the administration has asked that at least some of the additional funding be offset by spending cuts.

OMB Director Mick Mulvaney urged congressional leaders in a letter last month to avoid appropriating more "emergency" dollars that don't count toward Congress' spending limits.

"As we move toward the longer-term issue of rebuilding the impacted areas of our Nation," Mulvaney wrote, "we believe it would be appropriate that the Congress consider reducing spending elsewhere."

The White House [proposed](#) Friday that Congress find \$59 billion in offsets to dozens of federal programs like rural business grants and conservation efforts.

Congressional fiscal hawks have so far been divided on the question of whether to demand offsets for disaster aid. While Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker (R-N.C.) has pushed leaders to find ways to pay for the extra spending, Freedom Caucus chief Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) said last month that "emergency funding and having an offset with that is not a sustainable position."

Both the House and Senate are expected to take up the new aid request next month, possibly as part of a year-end spending deal. One GOP aide said Friday lawmakers could approve the disaster package separately, before a December agreement to fund the government.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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White House pushes \$59B in cuts to offset disaster aid [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 11/17/2017 01:20 PM EDT

The Trump Administration is urging Congress to cut as much as \$59.23 billion from domestic programs to help pay for its growing tab of disaster assistance.

Unlike its previous two aid requests, the White House asked lawmakers today to partially offset any future funding packages, including the new [\\$44 billion request](#).

"The administration believes it is prudent to offset new spending," Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney wrote in a [letter](#) today, proposing nearly two dozen programs for the chopping block

Most of the programs were already floated for cuts in the Trump administration's fiscal 2018 budget proposal, like the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund and the EPA's tribal assistance grants.

OMB is also targeting flood prevention programs, federal highway aid, rural business loans and upgrades to federal research facilities.

Mulvaney, as well as some key House conservatives, previously said they would seek offsets for post-storm rebuilding. But the budget director's latest push — after initially seeking only \$5 billion in offsets — could upend a series of other funding negotiations on Capitol Hill next month.

Democrats, as well as several GOP appropriators, have firmly ruled out the plan.

Rep. [Nita Lowey](#) (D-N.Y.) blasted the administration's call today for offsets as "galling" at the same time Republicans have pushed budget-busting tax plans.

"Holding vital recovery funding hostage to unrelated and often divisive spending debates is wrong, and only delays fulfillment of our obligation to help disaster victims," the House Appropriations Committee's ranking member wrote in a statement.

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Democrats decry Trump funding request for Puerto Rico relief [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 11/17/2017 01:16 PM EDT

Democrats hammered the Trump administration's emergency funding request as insufficient for storm-stricken Puerto Rico.

"Once again the Trump Administration has proven it lacks the will to help Puerto Rico in a comprehensive manner," Reps. [Nydia Velázquez](#) (D-N.Y.) and [Luis Gutiérrez](#) (D-Ill.) said today in a statement. "This supplemental request fails to provide sufficient funding to help Puerto Rico address immediate needs and set itself on the road to recovery. We also understand that it fails to provide a solution to the potentially devastating Medicaid cliff that is currently facing Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands."

The administration's request to Congress, sent today, calls for \$44 billion in emergency government funding, as well as a request that Congress amend the law governing the federal emergency response so that funds can be used to improve, not just repair, the U.S. territory's delicate electrical grid.

Velázquez and Gutiérrez said that's not enough. Puerto Rico's Gov. Ricardo Rosselló formally requested \$94 billion in federal help on Monday.

"Puerto Rico is facing a serious humanitarian and economic crisis, and now more than ever the American citizens on the island need our help," the Democrats said.

WHAT'S NEXT: The two lawmakers said they will push in Congress for more funding for the supplemental.

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White House proposal would use Pell Grant surplus funds to offset disaster relief [Back](#)

By Kimberly Hefling | 11/17/2017 02:03 PM EDT

A White House proposal to help hurricane-ravaged communities would provide \$1.2 billion for an education recovery fund but would use money from the Pell Grant surplus to help pay for it.

The details were spelled out in a [third disaster request](#) the administration sent to Congress today that seeks \$44 billion in aid for Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida.

Maximum Pell Grant awards for 2018 would not be affected by the proposal, and "unobligated balances in the Student Financial Assistance account would support Pell Grant program costs in future award years," according to an administration [document](#).

Congressional budget hawks have been divided thus far on whether they will demand offsets to pay for the disaster aid.

But the administration said it wants Congress to use \$3.9 billion from the Pell surplus as one of several dozen proposed offsets to federal programs worth \$59 billion to fund the effort. The request does not specify how the education recovery fund would work.

The \$3.9 billion request from the Pell Grant surplus matches what the administration wanted to cut in its budget blueprint earlier this year. Instead, the House spending bill proposed cutting \$3.3 billion from the Pell surplus, while the Senate bill proposed cutting \$2.6 billion.

Earlier this year, the CBO estimated the Pell Grant surplus was \$8.5 billion. Despite the amount in the fund, Democrats and advocates for student aid have long decried "raiding" the Pell surplus because they argue it should not be diverted from the student aid programs.

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White House targets USDA funding in push for disaster-relief offsets [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 11/17/2017 03:49 PM EDT

The White House wants Congress to target \$3 billion in USDA funding as part of its push for more than \$59 billion in cuts to domestic spending to help defray the costs of recent disaster relief efforts.

The administration released a [list](#) of proposed offsets today that included \$1.4 billion in unobligated balances for mandatory conservation programs, which includes money set aside for future agreements under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

The White House is also going after \$212 million from the Agricultural Research Service's building and facilities account and \$800 million from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which the administration sees as ripe for the taking because it stems from lower than expected enrollment. The administration also points to \$204 million in emergency conservation funds, which it says are no longer needed.

The White House's [plan](#) also targets prior-year leftover funding in Rural Economic Development Grants and for the Rural Business Program, the Rural Electrification and

Telecommunications Program, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.

The administration today [sent](#) Congress its third emergency funding request to aid recovery from hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and wildfires in the West. It is seeking \$44 billion this time around.

In its two prior aid requests, the White House did not ask for spending offsets, though OMB Director Mick Mulvaney and conservatives previously said they would seek such cuts.

"The administration believes it is prudent to offset new spending," Mulvaney wrote in a letter today that proposed the offsets.

Democrats and several GOP appropriators have said the plan is a non-starter, POLITICO [reported](#) earlier today, noting that the request could upend a host of other funding negotiations on Capitol Hill next month.

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Senate Democrats ask FCC to hold off making changes to funding for E-Rate Wi-Fi [Back](#)

By John Hendel | 11/17/2017 01:43 PM EDT

Sen. [Ed Markey](#) today led 10 of his colleagues in requesting the FCC protect the Wi-Fi funding within the E-Rate program, which provides for school and library connectivity.

"We urge the Commission to not prematurely make modifications to this important source of funding, which helps ensure all Americans — whether urban or rural, rich or poor — remain connected and competitive in this global economy," the Senate Democrats wrote in a [letter](#) to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai.

The commission in 2014 expanded E-Rate to include funding for Wi-Fi networks within schools and libraries and had anticipated an evaluation of this funding by the start of the 2019 program year. The agency's Wireline Bureau this fall issued a [notice](#) on the adequacy of the funding, collecting comments through early November. The American Library Association [rallied support](#) for such funding during this comment cycle. E-Rate had already included wired internet.

It is "impossible to fully evaluate the program's effectiveness at this time," the lawmakers wrote, lauding the FCC's "eagerness" but encouraging against action just yet.

Markey helped write the legislation that led to the E-Rate program's creation.

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Democrats spurn GOP's opening bid on spending caps [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Rachael Bade | 11/16/2017 05:22 PM EDT

Democratic leaders have rejected an offer from their Republican counterparts to substantially boost funding for the Pentagon with a minimal bump for domestic programs, several sources say.

After nearly a month of talks, GOP leaders proposed a deal this week that would raise spending caps by roughly \$180 billion over two years, according to multiple sources.

Democrats rebuffed the GOP's opening bid, arguing that it violates their demand for "parity" between defense and domestic budget increases.

Congressional leaders must strike a deal this year to prevent the effects of a 2011 budget law, which would impose a \$549 billion limit for defense spending and \$516 billion for non-defense funding.

Without a compromise, lawmakers could trigger across-the-board cuts.

Government funding runs out Dec. 8, though members of both parties have signaled the need for a stopgap funding bill for at least two weeks.

More than a month into fiscal 2018, the government is still operating at fiscal 2017 levels: \$519 billion for domestic programs and \$551 billion for defense accounts.

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McCain and Thornberry pressure budget negotiators for more defense spending [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 11/17/2017 12:31 PM EDT

The chairmen of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees today urged lawmakers negotiating a year-end budget deal to make sure that substantial increases in defense authorized by both chambers are accommodated.

"Through the National Defense Authorization Act, we believe that Congress has done its due diligence to authorize the appropriate level of funding based on threats, requirements, and missions," Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and Rep. [Mac Thornberry](#) (R-Texas) said in a statement. "We expect that any budget agreement will reflect the hard work that Congress has just completed and the reality of today's dangerous world."

The statement comes as congressional leaders mull a two-year, [roughly \\$180 billion deal](#) to increase defense spending limits by \$54 billion each year. If enacted, the limit on national defense spending for fiscal year 2018 would increase from \$549 billion to \$603 billion.

Unlike previous years, where the NDAA was delayed and rewritten to match a budget deal, Thornberry and McCain forged ahead with legislation that busts through defense caps set by

the Budget Control Act in a gambit to force lawmakers to agree to more defense spending.

The proposed budget deal is less than the \$634 billion base national defense topline endorsed by the NDAA [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#) for the current 2018 fiscal year. And it also wouldn't achieve the hefty growth in fiscal 2019 defense spending McCain and Thornberry are seeking to pursue a major military buildup.

"We must not only set the conditions to pass an appropriations bill at the FY18 NDAA level, we must also ensure the necessary growth in FY19.," the chairmen said. "Without that, President Trump's promise to rebuild our military will be impossible."

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Senate deficit hawks blanch at true cost of 'temporary' tax cuts [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/16/2017 03:45 PM EDT

Some Senate Republicans think their party's plans to rewrite the tax code may prove far costlier than it appears, posing another challenge to getting the legislation through the chamber.

They're worried Congress will ultimately extend a host of ostensibly temporary [tax cuts](#), driving the proposal's cost far higher than its official sticker price, now pegged at \$1.4 trillion.

Sen. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) said he is working with several colleagues to address the issue, though he declined to provide specifics.

"There are several of us that are trying to figure out a way to make sure this doesn't hurt us relative to deficits," he said Thursday. "We're looking globally at the whole thing and trying to do what we can to make it more fiscally palatable."

Added Sen. [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.): "It's a concern — it's one thing I'm working on."

That's a new threat to Republicans' tax plans, one that comes after Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.) announced Wednesday he would not support the [plan](#) because of how it treats small businesses.

Addressing the temporary provisions could be difficult, requiring major changes to the plan, just as Republican leaders are trying to quickly shuttle it through Congress. Extending all of the provisions would balloon the cost of the plan to \$1.9 trillion, according to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. Republicans can afford to only lose two votes in the Senate.

The debate comes as budget forecasters say the government will begin routinely running trillion-dollar deficits in the next five years.

The GOP tax plan is pocked with more than 35 provisions that would turn off — and some that would turn on — over the next decade, which critics call budget gimmicks designed to

artificially reduce the plan's cost.

The largest are Republicans' headline tax cuts for individuals, including plans to cut tax rates, expand the standard deduction and beef up the child tax credit.

But there are many others, for both individuals and businesses, including lower rates for so-called pass-throughs that pay taxes through their owners' individual returns, special investment writeoffs for companies known as "expensing" and a new break for employers that offer workers family and medical leave. Most would expire after 2025.

At the same time, there are looming tax increases on multinational companies, Silicon Valley technology companies and others slated to kick in beginning in 2026.

Republicans added the provisions this week in order to comply with arcane Senate rules barring "reconciliation" measures -- which would allow the GOP to pass the legislation with a simple majority in the Senate -- from adding to the debt over the long term.

While Republicans may cut taxes by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, they cannot add a dime to the deficit beyond that. If they do, Democrats can strike the provisions on the Senate floor.

That's why tax cuts abruptly end, but history shows Congress rarely allows temporary tax cuts to expire as scheduled. The vast majority of former President George W. Bush's tax cuts were ultimately made permanent. And for many years, lawmakers continually rolled over a badge of supposedly temporary tax breaks known as the "extenders," before voting in December 2015, as part of a \$600 billion tax cut package, to make most of them permanent.

Democrats are blasting the new round of temporary provisions, saying they contravene one of the basic purposes of tax reform: making the code predictable.

"What we now have is the opposite of tax reform — we have a crazy quilt of provisions, some of them are permanent, some of them are temporary," said Sen. [Ron Wyden](#), the Finance Committee's top Democrat.

Republicans say Democrats could make the individual provisions permanent by voting with them to waive those anti-deficit rules when the bill reaches the Senate floor. "There will be an amendment on the floor to make the individual side permanent," predicted Sen. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio).

A major challenge for Republicans concerned about the temporary provisions is the cost of addressing them.

"If you made expensing permanent, instead of a five-year phase out [as under the Republican plan] — if you paid for it by moving the corporate rate up, you'd have to go from 20 to 25" percent," said Flake, referring to a plan to let businesses immediately write off big investments. "It's a big hit."

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Senate Finance Committee approves GOP tax reform plan [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/16/2017 10:37 PM EDT

The Senate's tax-writing committee this evening approved Republicans' sweeping plan to overhaul the tax code.

The Finance Committee voted along party lines, 14-12, to forward the proposal on to the full Senate. Approval came after four days of sometimes testy consideration, during which Republicans substantially revised the measure while voting down dozens of Democratic amendments.

Senate leaders aim to take up the [bill](#) — which would cut both business and individual taxes while killing Obamacare's individual mandate requiring health insurance — after Thanksgiving.

The Finance panel's vote came hours after the House approved its own competing tax plan. Lawmakers aim to get compromise legislation to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the year.

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Tax reform roadblocks emerge in Senate [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/17/2017 02:08 PM EDT

Republicans were able to muscle their tax-rewrite [plan](#), through the House exactly two weeks after it was unveiled, but they are already facing far tougher sledding in the Senate.

GOP leadership is confronting mushrooming demands from individual senators with much more power to bollix up the tax plans, thanks to the party's super-thin majority.

Sen. [Ron Johnson](#) (R-Wis.) has already said he won't vote for his colleagues' proposal because of how it treats small businesses, leaving Republicans with just one vote to spare when the plan hits the Senate floor after Thanksgiving.

Deficit hawks like Sens. [Bob Corker](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.) are worried the plan will cost far more than advertised thanks to its liberal use of "temporary" tax provisions that will likely be eventually extended, and say they are working on changes to bring down the cost.

Moderate [Susan Collins](#) (R-Maine) has her own concerns, including with plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate to have health insurance as part of tax reform.

Others like Sens. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) and [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) have been wildcards, avoiding taking a public position on the proposal.

Murkowski told Roll Call on Thursday that if lawmakers are going to repeal the individual

mandate as part of the tax plan, they "absolutely" must pass separate health legislation aimed at stabilizing health care markets and controlling costs.

"If that tax cut is offset by higher premiums, you haven't delivered [a] benefit," she told the newspaper.

McCain praised the Finance Committee, which approved a draft of [the plan](#) last night, for "taking another step forward in providing much-needed tax relief," while also serving notice that he wants plenty of time to offer amendments when the plan reaches the Senate floor.

House Republicans have their own red lines, warning a Senate proposal to end a long-standing deduction for state and local taxes is a nonstarter with their colleagues.

Democrats, meanwhile, have been teeing off on the plan, especially after the official Joint Committee on Taxation said Thursday that while everyone's taxes would initially go down under the plan, some middle-income people would eventually see tax increases.

Senate leaders acknowledge they have their work cut out for them, with Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) singling out the small business issue as "particularly challenging."

"We still have quite a bit of work to do there," he said Thursday night, as the Finance panel wrapped up its consideration of the plan. "This is still just the beginning of the legislative process."

The result is there could still be substantial changes to the proposal in the Senate in the coming weeks. That risks dragging lawmakers further away from the "Big Six" framework that was designed to keep the House and Senate on the same page, and avoid a repeat of the Obamacare repeal debacle, when the House approved a plan only to watch the whole effort collapse in the Senate.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) said he will bring the plan before the entire Senate when lawmakers return from a week-long Thanksgiving recess. Their plan cleared the Finance committee last night on a party-line vote after four days of often testy debate, during which Republicans made major changes to the plan while killing dozens of Democratic amendments.

The House cleared a competing draft Thursday on a 227-205 vote. Republicans aim to get a compromise plan to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the year.

Corker said Thursday that he and other lawmakers are working on changes aimed at bringing down the cost of the Senate, now pegged at \$1.4 trillion.

They're worried the bill includes more than 35 temporary provisions that Congress has no intention of actually allowing to ever expire, ballooning the cost far beyond its supposed sticker price. He declined to discuss specifics.

"There are several of us that are trying to figure out a way to make sure this doesn't hurt us relative to deficits," he said Thursday. "We're looking globally at the whole thing and trying to do what we can to make it more fiscally palatable."

That will be difficult to address, with the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimating the Senate plan includes a whopping \$515 billion in budget gimmicks

aimed at artificially reducing its cost.

Another vexing issue will be dealing with small businesses and other so-called pass throughs, whose owners pay taxes on their business's earnings through the individual side of the tax code. To the consternation of Johnson and others, those companies would pay higher taxes than corporations under the Senate plan. Republicans have been struggling for months to come up with a plan to allow pass-throughs to tap their lower proposed business tax rate without creating a loophole for the wealthy to avoid paying taxes.

"I know that there are members that have concerns about that," said Sen. [John Thune](#), the chamber's No. 3 Republican.

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Pence pledges individual mandate repeal as tax reform enters "make-or-break moment"

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By Colin Wilhelm | 11/16/2017 09:02 PM EDT

Vice President Mike Pence called the next few weeks "a make-or-break moment" for tax reform following House passage of a tax overhaul bill today.

"The next few weeks are going to be vitally important," said Pence, who was the keynote speaker at the annual Tax Foundation dinner. Pence doubled down on Trump administration commitments on tax reform, including a late addition: full repeal of the Obamacare individual mandate.

"Repealing the individual mandate tax that is a part of Obamacare is a tax cut for millions of hard-working Americans," said Pence. The House bill passed today that Pence praised during his speech does not include a repeal of that mandate, though the Senate tax overhaul bill does.

The vice president also reiterated promises of new business tax rates — 20 percent for large corporations and 25 percent for all other businesses — "and not a penny more" — that may be hard for Republicans to hit. The Senate tax reform bill currently under consideration by the Finance Committee does not cut taxes for non-c-corporation businesses to 25 percent.

"Before this year is out we're going to pass the largest tax cut in American history," Pence said, calling it "the one policy that's more important than anything else" for economic growth. The Trump administration's assertion of the size of the proposed tax cut compared to others in U.S. history has been disputed.

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Trump faults Democrats for not being involved in tax reform bill [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 11/17/2017 06:56 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Friday accused Democrats of refusing to cooperate with Republicans on an overhaul of the tax code, suggesting that the minority party might like the legislation better if it were to work with the GOP to include some of its own ideas in the bill.

"If Democrats were not such obstructionists and understood the power of lower taxes, we would be able to get many of their ideas into Bill!" Trump wrote on Twitter Friday morning.

Republicans passed their package of tax cuts and reforms relatively easily on Thursday through the House of Representatives, but did so without a single Democratic vote. The legislation's path in the Senate, where the GOP has majority by just two seats, is expected to be more difficult. Republicans have said they hope to have the tax legislation passed and on the president's desk by the end of the year.

Trump has regularly predicted that at least a handful of Democrats will end up voting in favor of his tax legislation, and the White House has at times courted red-state Democratic senators who are up for reelection in 2018. But other Democrats have complained about being left out of the bill-writing process, accusing Republicans of crafting the legislation behind closed doors.

"Democrats should join us and make it bipartisan and permanent, not just criticize," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas wrote on Twitter earlier this month in response to a criticism of the GOP's then-unreleased tax plan. Linking back to Cornyn's post, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) replied "I accept!! Tell me where the secret room is where you are writing the bill and I WILL BE THERE!"

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Pence goes to 'tax prom,' says 'help is on the way' after House tax bill passes [Back](#)

By Akela Lacy | 11/16/2017 09:56 PM EDT

After a day of victory on the Hill for the Trump administration's attempt to pass tax reform, Vice President Mike Pence went to "tax prom."

That's what he called the 80th Annual Dinner for the Tax Foundation, where he delivered the keynote address Thursday evening.

"Help is on the way. You have a champion in the White House," Pence told the audience.

Pence said that the tax effort represented Trump's commitment to middle class families and noted the new legislation would double the standard deduction.

"Starting with that vote today in the House of Representatives, before this year is out, we're going to pass the largest tax cut in American history," Pence said to rumbling applause and whoops from the crowd.

The bill will deliver what the president likes to call "a middle class miracle," Pence said.

Pence said Trump has cut "more red tape than any other president in American history," and credited him for having "[undone](#)," several of which were Obama-era executive orders.

"Under President Donald Trump, the era of over-regulation is over," he said.

He added: "One policy after another was suffocating America's free enterprise economy," Pence said. "The opportunity to pass meaningful tax relief for the American people, to get this stubborn city to give up its claim on the income of working families and businesses" is tough, but "we'll get it done."

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Pro-Obamacare group targets swing Republicans on taxes [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 11/17/2017 01:00 PM EDT

A pro-Obamacare coalition that spent big during this year's health care battle is going back on the airwaves, urging the three GOP senators who tanked their party's Obamacare repeal plan to vote against the massive Republican tax bill.

The left-leaning Save My Care group is focusing on Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, John McCain of Arizona and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska now that Senate GOP leaders have added a repeal of Obamacare's individual health insurance mandate to their tax bill. Next week's six-figure ad buy from Save My Care comes as liberal activists nationwide [seize on](#) the tax bill's Obamacare attack to mobilize their grass roots against the legislation.

The McCain-focused ad praises the Arizona Republican for having "been a hero for Arizona and the country" by opposing the GOP's Obamacare repeal bill in July, according to an advance [copy](#) shared with POLITICO, and the Alaska ad [uses](#) similar language to address Murkowski. The ad running in Collins' home state takes more direct aim at the GOP tax bill for using repeal of Obamacare's insurance mandate to help pay for tax cuts for individuals and corporations.

"President Trump and Republicans in Congress are ignoring bipartisan opposition and trying to sneak health care into their tax plan," the ad [states](#). "Why? To pay for more tax breaks for billionaires and big corporations."

Senate Republican leaders have portrayed the mandate repeal as a de facto tax cut for lower-income individuals who would otherwise have to buy health insurance or pay a fine. The Senate is expected to consider the tax bill on the floor when lawmakers return to the Hill the week after Thanksgiving.

Save My Care was a major presence on the airwaves during this year's Obamacare repeal fight, [spending](#) seven figures in a single April TV ad buy against House Republicans. The coalition opened its pocketbooks again Friday after Senate Republicans added the mandate repeal to their tax plan.

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DOT rolls out program to help vets get pilot training [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 11/16/2017 04:53 PM EDT

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao Thursday announced a government effort to funnel interested military veterans into commercial pilot jobs, an initiative she said is geared toward addressing a growing pilot shortage.

The three-year demonstration program will gauge interest among non-pilot veterans in becoming airline pilots, and will help them get the necessary training, Chao said. DOT's Volpe Center will offer interested veterans financial support, which includes beginner courses through certain flight instructor certifications.

"With certification, participants in the Forces to Flyers program will be able to earn a living while they accrue the flight hours necessary for certification as commercial airline pilots," Chao said at DOT headquarters.

DOT aims to have nailed down arrangements with flight schools — with veterans enrolled in programs — by mid-2018, Chao said.

A department official said the program is expected to cost \$2.5 million over three years, with the money coming from DOT's research account. DOT anticipates funneling no more than 40 students through the program, the official said, though he noted that details are still being finalized.

The DOT initiative is a "first step" in addressing both rural community air access and "the growing shortage of pilots," plus aiding veterans in finding civilian jobs, Chao said.

The new program doesn't address existing pilot training regulations, proposed changes to which have stalled the Senate's long-term FAA bill, [S. 1405 \(115\)](#). The bill would change the way pilots can earn credit toward the 1,500-hour requirement for first officers, with proponents arguing that a dwindling pool of qualified pilots combined with reductions to rural air service are an unintended consequence of the 1,500-hour mandate, which was finalized in 2013.

Rep. [Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.), himself a pilot, said lawmakers are "very interested" in seeing the results of the program and applying them "to pilot training standards and any changes that may need to be made moving forward."

"What the secretary is talking about today goes beyond that," Graves said after the event, noting the challenge and expense associated with pilot training.

The Air Line Pilots Association has disputed the notion that there's any shortage of qualified pilots. Rather, ALPA argues that there's a shortage of pilots who want to work for the low wages being paid by regional airlines, which often serve as a stepping stone to bigger carriers.

The Regional Airline Association has lobbied for lawmakers to allow participation in airline-backed training programs count toward the 1,500-hour requirement. Federal regulations make an exception for military pilots, who may get their restricted Air Transport Pilot certificates if they've flown at least 750 hours. Pilots with certain academic backgrounds also get some credit toward the mandate for their coursework.

Faye Malarkey Black, RAA's president, lauded the program and called it a "critical first step" to getting more pilots into the pipeline. "As we pursue a range of complementary policy solutions, initiatives like this can help support future pilots and ensure Americans from communities large and small retain access to the safe and reliable commercial air service that links them to the global economy," she said in a statement.

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Obamacare mandate repeal may not deliver predicted blow [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn and Paul Demko | 11/16/2017 04:50 PM EDT

Repealing Obamacare's individual mandate might not be the devastating blow to health insurance markets that supporters of the law fear.

Because the tax penalty for not having insurance is far less costly than what many Americans would have to pay for coverage, many have chosen to take the fine. Eliminating it, therefore, might not radically change behavior — or fulfill the dire predictions of spiking premiums and vast increases in uninsured people that economists, health providers and politicians once predicted.

Even the CBO says it's rethinking its estimates of the consequences.

"We've always said the mandate is ineffective; it's such a weak mandate," said Deep Banerjee, an analyst at Standard & Poor's who has closely tracked the Obamacare markets. "We don't think many people would lose insurance if the mandate goes away." The ratings service projects repeal will increase the number of uninsured by 3 million to 5 million by 2027, and save the federal government \$60 billion to \$80 billion.

Using tax reform to repeal the requirement to purchase health insurance is not without irony. When Chief Justice John Roberts saved Obamacare in 2012 by ruling that the individual mandate was a tax, conservatives were outraged. But now, with full control of Congress, Republicans can turn the tables: if it's a tax, they'll repeal it in a tax bill.

Axing the mandate, as Senate Republicans are proposing in their tax bill, would give the GOP an estimated \$338 billion more to spend on tax cuts. That's because removing a cudgel to persuade otherwise healthy people to enroll in Obamacare would lower how much the federal government pays to subsidize the coverage. Striking a prominent — and much reviled — feature of Obamacare is a secondary political benefit. House Republicans did not repeal the mandate in their tax bill, but GOP sources expect them to approve adding repeal when the legislation goes to a conference.

Insurers warn that scrapping the individual mandate could capsize the already wobbly markets, which have been buffeted by skyrocketing premiums and dwindling competition. On Tuesday, many of the largest health care industry groups, including America's Health Insurance Plans, the American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association, sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) warning against eliminating the penalty for failing to obtain coverage.

Their argument echoes fears voiced by the CBO: Scrapping the mandate will cause premiums to jump even higher and fewer Americans to enroll in coverage. The scorekeeping agency projects that premiums would be 10 percent higher if the mandate goes away and that there would be 13 million more uninsured Americans in a decade.

"Eliminating the mandate is pulling the plug on the individual market," said John Baackes, CEO of L.A. Care Health Plan. "I think this is a cowardly way of doing it."

But it's also widely acknowledged by health care finance experts that the tax penalty has proven a weak enforcement tool. That's because the fine maxes out at \$695, or 2.5 percent of income, whichever is higher. That's still far less than what many Americans would pay in premiums, meaning its effect on consumer behavior may be overstated.

Republicans have long scoffed at the CBO's projections about what would happen if the tax penalty is eliminated. In its most recent analysis, the CBO indicated that it's considering "major methodological changes" in how it scores repeal of the mandate.

Most observers expect the agency will eventually reduce the projected effect of eliminating the penalty. That could also result in lower estimated savings — the very thing the GOP is relying on to pay for its tax package.

The GOP's move to repeal now amounts to "cashing in a declining asset," said Tom Miller, a health care economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "If we could just wait a couple of years we would find out it really didn't amount to much. But it takes awhile for CBO to retreat from its past errors."

Republicans are framing mandate repeal as a "middle-class tax cut" because the vast majority of people who paid the fine are low- or middle-income. According to the IRS, nearly 80 percent of Americans who paid the penalty in 2015 made under \$50,000.

Republicans say the mandate's true effect on coverage is not clear.

"No one really knows," the impact of the mandate, said Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Senate HELP Committee. "The Congressional Budget Office has revised its estimate downward of the effect [the mandate] has and many professionals who look at it say the penalty is too low to make much difference, so I don't think we know."

The GOP maintains at least some of the possible effects of repealing the mandate would be blunted by passing the bipartisan deal Alexander struck with the HELP panel's ranking Democrat [Patty Murray](#) to fund Obamacare's cost-sharing reduction program, which helps low-income people pay for their out-of-pocket health costs. The bill would provide two years of funding for the program, which Trump cut off last month. That would bring down premiums in 2019 and trigger rebates for consumers in 2018, according to Republicans.

"It would be a very bad idea to repeal the individual mandate and not pass Alexander Murray," Alexander said.

But Democrats, who strongly support Alexander-Murray, warned they can't be counted on for support if Republicans undermine the Obamacare markets by repealing the mandate.

"Republicans who think they'll be able jam through a partisan bill that spikes health care premiums and then make it all better by pointing to our bipartisan bill to reduce health costs are either fooling themselves or trying to fool their constituents," Murray said. "Democrats will hold Republicans accountable for the damage they're doing every step of the way."

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Civil rights office at Education Department hit hard by buyout offers [Back](#)

By Kimberly Hefling | 11/16/2017 03:29 PM EDT

The Education Department's Office for Civil Rights could lose 45 employees because of early separation offers — the most of any division within the agency, according to a document obtained by POLITICO from a congressional office.

Of the 255 voluntary [offers made](#) Nov. 1 to employees to separate or retire early, 45 people work in the civil rights office, the document says. That could mean a hit for the civil rights branch, which in fiscal 2017 was funded to employ 569 staff members, according to the department's budget request from earlier this year. That request proposed decreasing the size of the office by 46 employees.

The Office for Civil Rights is charged with enforcing federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in K-12 and higher education programs that receive funds from the Education Department. Discrimination is banned against individuals on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age.

Many advocates [have long argued](#) that the civil rights office is understaffed. It receives 10,000 complaints annually, but has half of the staff it had in 1980, when it received fewer than 3,500 complaints, according to Education Department figures.

Sen. [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.), the ranking member of the HELP Committee, said in a statement Thursday she was "appalled" that Secretary Betsy DeVos "would use a lack of staffing and resources as an excuse to roll back civil rights investigations and protections, and then turn around and attempt to shrink these critical offices."

"I will continue to work to give the Department the resources it needs to better aid students and families, and I strongly urge Secretary DeVos to stop putting her ideological agenda above students and work with us," Murray said.

The document shows that the other departments most affected by the buyouts include the Financial Student Aid office and the Institute of Education Sciences, which is the department's statistics, research and evaluation arm. Thirty-six FSA employees were made the offers and 29

offers were made in IES. Another 25 employees in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services received offers.

Read the full list [here](#).

Department employees were extended up to \$25,000 each to leave, but officials haven't made public how many are taking advantage of the offers.

An Education Department spokeswoman noted in a statement that the offers are voluntary and approved by the federal Office of Personnel Management.

"Keep in mind, these positions can be backfilled as the workload demands," said the spokeswoman, Liz Hill.

While the Trump administration has taken steps to streamline government agencies, such employee incentives aren't unique. The department said the offers were made to "facilitate reshaping its workforce to align with the reform and restructuring direction," according to the document.

The Office for Civil Rights has gained attention in recent months. In June, a directive from acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Candice Jackson told the department's investigators to narrow their focus to the merits of a particular claim, rather than probing systemic issues, as they had done during the Obama administration.

Jackson gave regional civil rights offices more autonomy to close cases without approval from Washington. Two months later, the department [had closed](#) more than 1,500 civil rights complaints at the nation's schools — including dismissing more than 900 outright. Department officials have said they're working more efficiently.

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Blumenauer seeks to cut farm subsidies and overhaul conservation in alternative farm bill [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 11/16/2017 05:48 PM EDT

Rep. [Earl Blumenauer](#) (D-Ore.) on Thursday formally introduced his alternative farm bill, titled the [Food and Farm Act](#), intended to overhaul existing farm subsidy and conservation programs. The bill also would establish two new titles devoted to tackling food waste and promoting animal welfare.

"I've been working on farm bill issues since I was first elected, and we've had some mixed success, in part because I made a mistake dealing with little bits and pieces while established farm interests have a plan they're supporting," Blumenauer said during a press conference. "This [bill] is an attempt to try and turn that around."

Blumenauer's legislation has drawn support from a broad range of interests including: author and advocate Michael Pollan; Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common; Wayne

Pacelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the U.S.; and a handful of House Democrats like [Rosa DeLauro](#) (Conn.), [Tim Ryan](#) (Ohio) and [Chellie Pingree](#) (Maine) — all of whom spoke during a press conference or panel discussion on Capitol Hill about improving the food system for farmers and consumers.

[The bill would](#) eliminate commodity support programs and make producers earning above \$500,000 a year ineligible for any type of farm subsidies, while expanding a crop insurance policy for diversified operations. Also, conservation resources would be geared toward improving the environment through cover cropping, reducing soil erosion and other sustainable farming practices.

On the nutrition front, the minimum SNAP benefit would be increased from \$16 to \$25, and more money would be invested in local food systems as well as increasing produce consumption and nutrition education in schools and low-income areas. The bill also would increase assistance for new and beginning farmers and provide more funding for agricultural research.

Blumenauer, who [announced](#) in August his intention of proposing the bill, said he spent several years talking with people involved in agriculture in shaping his legislation.

"They're not looking for a pipeline into the federal Treasury," Blumenauer said. "Some of them are extraordinarily fiscally conservative. They know it's wrong, but that's the system, so they take advantage of it."

Many farmers would rather have the help with research, innovation, conservation and new markets, rather than federal subsidies, he added.

Though the bill has a slim chance of becoming law, the Oregon Democrat said changes are taking place on farms and in kitchens and communities because people are much more aware of issues surrounding food.

"The problem is we haven't done a good job of assembling the coalition, and we have not had a comprehensive piece of legislation that talks about what a farm bill would look like if it was written for Americans who care about issues like nutrition and fiscal discipline," Blumenauer said.

As POLITICO reported, a [coalition of unlikely allies](#) during the 2018 farm bill cycle is organizing around eliminating subsidies for wealthy farmers, which is part of a long-term strategy to overhaul the sweeping legislation. Blumenauer is part of the loose-knit group and hopes that some of the changes he proposes will wind up in the next farm bill, which needs to be authorized by Sept. 30, 2018.

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Watchdog slams Zinke for failing to document travel [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/16/2017 04:16 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document his travel, the agency's watchdog said Thursday, preventing it from determining whether he had violated government rules.

Zinke has come under scrutiny for mixing taxpayer-funded travel with political activities, as well as taking military or private planes rather than flying commercial, and the investigation by Interior's Office of Inspector General seeks to clarify whether all procedures were correctly followed.

"Our investigation is delayed by absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips and a review process that failed to include proper documentation and accountability," Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said in a letter obtained by POLITICO and first reported by The Washington Post.

Zinke's travels have drawn scrutiny after Interior revealed he had taken non-commercial flights at taxpayer expense, POLITICO and other news outlets have reported. POLITICO has also reported that the former congressman from Montana [has mixed](#) taxpayer-paid trips with political work, such as when he participated in a fundraiser on behalf of the Virgin Islands GOP.

The IG criticized Zinke for failing to complete documentation for his travel in the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, and said that the process established by Interior's Ethics Office and Office of the Solicitor "does not include sufficient documentation of the legal and ethical analysis conducted to distinguish between personal, political, and official travel, or consistent cost analysis to justify use of non-commercial travel."

The IG asked for documentation of all of Zinke's travel, as well as for the documentation of travel by his wife, Lola Zinke, with documentation for how and when the travel was paid.

Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, the agency's second-ranking official, blamed the lack on documentation on the Obama administration for leaving behind "an organizational and operational mess."

In his response letter, Bernhardt emphasized that Interior employees would continue to cooperate with the IG, and said he would provide documentation as requested.

But he also went on to note that former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell hadn't completed her documentation for 12 trips taken last year and in January of this year, and he said some trips may have never been entered in the system.

"When I arrived at the Department in August 2017 it was clear to me that the Secretary and I had inherited an organizational and operational mess," he wrote. "From my perspective, regarding IOS travel procedures, it appears that the exact same procedures and processes utilized by the previous Administration remain in place and continue to be dysfunctional."

Zinke joins a cast of Trump administration officials, including Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and now-departed Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who are accused of misuse of taxpayer funds for travel.

Esther Whieldon contributed to this report.

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Santa Clara says it never received grants at center of 'sanctuary' fight [Back](#)

By Ted Hesson | 11/16/2017 04:05 PM EDT

Officials in California's Santa Clara County said today they never received federal grant money at the center of a battle over so-called sanctuary policies.

The Justice Department [sent letters](#) to 29 jurisdictions Wednesday warning that federal law enforcement funding could be threatened over sanctuary policies. The letters specifically cited funds from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.

Santa Clara County was among the jurisdictions sent letters, but county officials said today that they never received Byrne JAG funds in fiscal year 2016, the year in question.

County Board of Supervisors President Dave Cortese called the letter another "swing and a miss" from the Trump administration. "Apparently, the federal government can't keep track of who received taxpayer money," he said in a written statement.

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In April, a federal judge in San Francisco [partially blocked](#) the implementation of an executive order that sought to withhold grant money from sanctuary cities.

Santa Clara County brought one of the lawsuits in that case, which the Justice Department [appealed](#) to the 9th Circuit.

Tucker Doherty contributed to this report.

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Subject: Bullet Points (Two Pages) for Remarks Tomorrow
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 2:11:22 PM
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- Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Members of the Committee...I'd like to introduce my friend, an American patriot
- Captain Cully Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Most Qualified for the Job)

- Important for Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership—Capt. Stimson fits the bill.
- We served together in the Navy, he has 20+ years experience as a lawyer, first served in Navy JAG Corps in 1990s.
- I worked with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.
- Captain Stimson's story is a lifetime of commitment to both community and country.
 - His start as a leader: Captain of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team at Kenyon College
- Graduated George Mason University School of Law

1992, joined Navy JAG Corps – 5 years active duty

- Called back to active duty 2001, to support Joint Special Ops Task Force JAG for SEAL Group Two.

- Served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs under Pres. George W. Bush

- Advised Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates about Pentagon detention operations.

- Has been with Heritage Foundation as a Senior Legal Fellow & Manager of their Nat'l Security Law Program since 2007

- Served our nation 2+ decades in Navy, recently as Dep. Chief Judge of Navy-Marine Corps Trial Judiciary & adjunct law prof./instructor at Naval Justice School in reserve capacity.

PERSONAL LIFE (High-Character Human Being, Fit to Serve)

- Teaching high school/coaching & mentoring young Americans—devoted countless hours to cultivating next generation.

- Chairman of the Board, U.S. Soccer Foundation

(charitable arm of U.S. Soccer): offers assistance to 35,000+ underserved and minority children.

- Captain Stimson has been married since 1995. He and his wife adopted four orphans.
- Epitome of a military officer: always first one to help others
 - Dozens of rec. letters for his students
 - Quietly paid tuition for two of his mentees who could not afford to take the Law School Admission Test.
 - Founded the Bryon J. Horn Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of a fallen fraternity brother.

BIPARTISAN LEADER (comfortable working across party lines)

- Worked with Jeh Johnson, then-General Counsel of the Dept of Defense, on a number of issues to keep our nation safe.
 - Eventually led to Capt. Stimson extending, and Johnson accepting, invitation to speak to the Heritage Foundation.
 - In that speech, Sec. Johnson remarked: “The office of General Counsel of the Defense Dept., particularly in the post-9/11 world, is in the middle of many difficult, front page issues.”
 - As General Counsel of the Navy, Capt. Stimson will confront a host of these difficult issues as well. I have full confidence in his

ability to tackle them.

- Friend & brother-in-arms Capt. Stimson: Navy gaining an eminently qualified attorney, an honorable military officer, and an individual with vast experience/fidelity to law & our country.
- Long career of exemplary service in law & defense, excellent fit for the position to which he was nominated. No doubt he will be a wonderful General Counsel of the Navy.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Elperin, Juliet](#)
Subject: Channel Islands
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 5:08:46 PM

The Western Values Project is a classic dark money group which is run by current and former Democratic Party members and campaign staff.

The Secretary's visit to Channel Islands National Park was part of a multi-day visit to multiple Department of the Interior assets across the state from Sacramento all the way south to the Channel Islands. The Secretary had always planned to meet with the team at Channel Islands National Park, and the office of scheduling reached out to the superintendent's office as soon as it was clear when he could go.

Concerning the cost of boat, no costs were incurred due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. The Zinke's personally paid via check for her and her aunt's boat fare.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Ryan Grim
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Charlottesville police made another controversial arrest -- House passes disaster debt relief, but not for Puerto Rico
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 10:26:37 PM

In June, before Charlottesville was in the national spotlight, the city was in the last stretch of a campaign for commonwealth attorney, the top prosecutor in town. One of the candidates was running on a platform of reining in the police and rolling back mass incarceration. He was not the police department's favorite candidate.

Less than two weeks before the election, five officers showed up in the middle of the night and arrested him. For essentially nothing. [We sent Alex Emmons](#) to Charlottesville to report this story out, after a tip from a reader of this email (!) that we should look into it. I also had him on [TYT live today to talk about his reporting](#). His story [is here](#) and excerpted below.

The House today passed a disaster relief bill that includes \$16 billion in loan forgiveness. [But not for Puerto Rico](#) -- it's for the flood insurance program, so people can keep rebuilding big houses in flood zones.

Most people have moved on from the **Joe Arpaio pardon**, but the legal fight over it goes on. [Maryam Saleh writes on the efforts to appeal the judge's ruling that accepted parts of it.](#)

And a [really cool story about how Catalonians pulled off their banned referendum](#), using all manner of trickery to evade the riot police, including pretending that polling places were actually just pizza shops.

[Before Charlottesville Was in the National Spotlight, Police Arrested Their Most Prominent Critic](#)

JEFF FOGEL woke to the sound of someone furiously banging on his door. He quickly threw on a T-shirt and pajama bottoms while the banging continued, and stole a glance at his alarm clock before running downstairs. It was 12:30 a.m. in Charlottesville, Virginia.

When Fogel opened the door, he couldn't believe what he saw. He was face-to-face with five police officers on his front porch and behind them, five police cars lit up the neighboring houses red and blue with their flashing lights.

As one of the city's leading defense attorneys, Fogel was on a first-name basis with a lot of Charlottesville's top cops, but he was confused about why they would seek him out so late. As a joke, Fogel put out his hands, wrists pressed together in a handcuff position. "Haha. You're all here to arrest me, right?"

It wasn't a joke. "You've gotta be kidding me," he half-shouted.

The commotion woke up Fogel's wife and houseguest, who both made their way downstairs. Fogel turned around and shouted, "Hey everybody, come down and see the brave men of the

Charlottesville police department, coming to arrest a 72-year-old man!”

The officers wouldn't allow Fogel to get his keys or get dressed. Minutes later, as he sat in the back seat of a police car, Fogel realized that throughout his 48-year career as a civil rights attorney, he never understood how much it hurt to be handcuffed. He also realized the arrest would have reverberations. It was early June, and in less than two weeks, voters in Charlottesville would go to the polls to decide on the city's next district attorney, with one of the candidates vowing to rein in police abuse and roll back mass incarceration.

That candidate was now bound for the police station.

[FULL STORY](#)

You're getting this email because you either signed up for it or you took a survey and opted in to this newsletter -- or, probably, you declined to opt out. Either way, I hope you're enjoying it. I'm the Washington bureau chief at [The Intercept](#), and I send this several times a week. If you see an ad here, it's there because sending mass emails turns out to be really expensive. I'm not making any money off of it; it goes to the email service provider and just defrays the cost a bit. If you want to [contribute directly to help keep the thing running, you can do so here](#), though be warned a donation comes with no tote bags or extra premium content or anything. Or you can buy a copy of [Out of the Ooze: The Story of Dr. Tom Price](#), the first book put out by Strong Arm Press, a small progressive publishing house I cofounded.

If somebody forwarded you this note, you can [sign up to start getting your own copy here](#).

Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](#). To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from Bad News, please [click here](#).

From: Rein, Lisa
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Checking in
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 9:40:39 AM

Hi Heather, would be great to get some answers on the flag and on Mrs Zinke soon, and many thanks.

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Newell, Russell](#); [John Bockmier](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Christmas script
Date: Thursday, December 14, 2017 1:26:38 PM
Attachments: [1214 Christmas video script.docx](#)

The new version with SOI edits is attached

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#); [David Bernhardt](#); [Willens, Todd](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Scott Hommel](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Boulton, Caroline](#)
Subject: clip - Interior Secretary Zinke traveled on charter, military planes
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 8:06:45 PM

POLITICO

Interior Secretary Zinke traveled on charter, military planes
By BEN LEFEBVRE

09/28/2017 07:54 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides have taken several flights on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands, according to documents and a department spokeswoman.

Zinke is at least the fourth senior member of the Trump administration to have used non-commercial planes at taxpayer expense, along with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and HHS Secretary Tom Price. President Donald Trump has fumed at Price's pricey travel, and Democrats say the revelations demonstrate a cavalier attitude by Cabinet members toward excessive spending.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said Zinke's charter or military plane trips were booked only after officials were unable to find commercial flights that would accommodate Zinke's schedule, and that all were "pre-cleared by career officials in the ethics office." Swift said she had not spoken to Zinke about whether he would reimburse the government for the cost of the flights, as Price plans to do for some of the \$400,000 tab he racked up on charter flights.

On June 26, a Beechcraft King Air 200 carried Zinke and several staffers from Las Vegas to Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell, Mont., about a 20-minute drive from Zinke's home in Whitefish, according to his official schedule. The flight cost \$12,375, Swift said.

Zinke left after speaking at an event for the city's new professional hockey team, the "Vegas Golden Knights Development Camp Dinner," according to his schedule. Earlier in the day, he had been in Pahrump, Nev., for an announcement related to public lands.

Zinke's flight left Las Vegas at 8:30 p.m. PST and landed around 1:30 a.m. MST in Kalispell. The secretary stayed overnight at his residence, Interior documents show.

Las Vegas is one of the main connecting airports for commercial flights to Glacier International. Commercial flights between the two cities are available for several hundred dollars a ticket, according to travel planning websites.

In Whitefish, Zinke attended the Western Governors' Association's annual meeting, where he spoke for about 20 minutes without taking questions. He then had a private lunch with association members. In the afternoon Zinke was the subject of a photo shoot with GQ magazine at Lake McDonald and fished while being interviewed by Outside Magazine, the records show.

Zinke and staffers flew commercial back to Washington, D.C., the next day, according to the records.

The trip was not the first in which Interior booked a private jet for Zinke. On March 31, Interior chartered two flights to take Zinke and staff from St. Croix to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend the centennial of the Danish government turning the islands over to the United States. Another two flights were chartered to return to St. Croix later that night.

Swift said she did not know how much the flights cost but that no other arrangements were available.

Commercial flights between the two islands generally run a few hundred dollars, according to travel booking websites.

In May, Zinke and his wife, Lolita, used a military aircraft to travel to Norway. From there, they flew on a military plane to Alaska for events organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The trip included charter planes to travel within Alaska, a common occurrence in the large, remote state. The Zinkes paid for Lolita's share of the trip, the full cost of which was not immediately available, Swift said.

Zinke also took a military helicopter from Fort Bliss to review the Organ Mountains monument in New Mexico in June, and he used a Bureau of Land Management helicopter to review the Basin and Range National Monument on July 30. "It is difficult to survey a half-million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour and a half," Swift said.

Along with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Zinke took a military plane to Ravalli County, Mont., to check on wildfires in the area in August. "The military plane was used because of a very tight travel window, with no viable commercial airline options to transport two secretaries, security details, and associated USDA, Forest Service and Interior staff to Missoula in the time required," said USDA spokesman Tim Murtaugh. The cost of the flight was not immediately available, but the two agencies plan to reimburse the Air Force, Murtaugh said.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Scott Hommel](#); [Daniel Jorjani](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Magallanes_Downey](#)
Subject: Clip - Records, watchdogs raise questions about Zinke's ethics deal
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 1:36:20 PM

Records, watchdogs raise questions about Zinke's ethics deal

Corbin Hiar, E&E News reporter
Published: Thursday, May 25, 2017

When Montana Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke was nominated to lead the Interior Department, he signed an ethics agreement promising to resign "upon confirmation" from leadership posts in three organizations with financial ties to him and his family.

But as of Friday — more than 2 ½ months after he was sworn in as Interior secretary — Zinke still held top positions in those groups, according to the Montana secretary of state's office, which maintains records on companies and charities registered in the state.

Montana records also show the secretary's wife, Lolita Zinke, continues to be listed as a managing member of [Continental Divide International LLC](#) (CDI), one of the three organizations with which Zinke has vowed to cut ties. That's potentially problematic, watchdogs say, because in the [agreement](#) with the U.S. Office of Government Ethics that he signed Jan. 10, the then-congressman said he understood "that the interests of" his spouse would be legally attributed to him.

"There are a lot of people currently concerned about enforcement — not only within the agencies but also in the White House — and this is a perfect case of it's one thing to have an ethics agreement, but it's another thing to abide by its terms and conditions," said Scott Amey, the general counsel of the nonprofit Project on Government Oversight.

"If Secretary Zinke hasn't resigned his positions in the companies that he used to work for, he's in violation of his ethics agreement," he added. "We need to remedy this blatant breach."

In addition to CDI, Zinke promised the Office of Government Ethics that he "will resign from my position with" [Double Tap LLC](#) and the [Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation Inc.](#), as soon as the Senate approved his nomination to lead Interior.

CDI, which has collected tens of thousands of dollars in consulting fees from a political group Zinke created, and Double Tap were both founded as hospitality industry ventures.

But both are now "family held residential rental property LLCs," Zinke said in a [statement](#) to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which vetted his nomination.

The mission of the foundation, meanwhile, "is to maintain a children's sledding park and community open space" in Zinke's hometown, Whitefish, Mont., he told the committee.

The Interior Department argues that the secretary has, in fact, complied with the ethics deal.

"The claims made by E&E are patently false," press secretary Heather Swift said in a statement. "The Secretary worked with the career veteran ethics officials at the Department every step of the way. He currently has no management role in any of the organizations identified."

Shortly after being confirmed by the Senate on March 1, "Secretary Zinke resigned as a managing member from the family's two small businesses and a nonprofit organization, which he founded to build the Veterans Peace Park," she said.

Swift provided [three brief letters](#) addressed to "To Whom It May Concern" in which Zinke said he had resigned from the respective groups "effective immediately."

"The documents were mailed to the attorney of the boards, who confirmed receipt, fulfilling the Secretary's requirement," she said.

Those resignation letters, however, never made it to the Montana secretary of state's office.

"The problem that exists here is, there seems to be a pattern of activities where his secretary has been less than transparent," said Meredith McGehee, the chief of policy, programs and strategy at Issue One, an ethics advocacy group. "It doesn't seem like he has bent over backwards to ensure that the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed."

McGehee argued that the ethics questions surrounding Zinke and other members of the Trump administration are due to a lack of leadership at the top.

"In past administrations, Republican and Democratic alike, this is where the White House counsel — particularly for these Cabinet-level officials — would step in and say, 'Hey, guys, get your act together,'" she said. "That's what has been sorely missing in this administration."

She pointed to a [compliance form](#) that the ethics office unveiled earlier this month for Senate-confirmed officials.

"There seems to be a growing concern that compliance is not happening within the normal expected time frame within the administration," she said.

Zinke will have to complete the form by June 5, the beginning of his fourth month in office. It includes the following statement: "I completed all of the resignations indicated in my ethics agreement before I assumed the duties of my current government position."

But the letters signed by the secretary and provided to E&E News are dated March 6, five days

Heather Swift
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after he was sworn into office (*E&E Daily*, March 2).

Double Tap, CDI

Montana state records also raise questions about money Zinke earned in 2016 from Double Tap, one of the companies from which he promised to resign.

Zinke told the ethics office in a [financial disclosure report](#) that Double Tap, [established](#) in June 2011, was worth more than \$100,000 and provided him with an income of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 last year.

But in 2013, it had been shut down by Montana's secretary of state after failing to submit the necessary annual report and fees.

"Since the Annual Report was not successfully filed, Montana law requires the Secretary of State to dissolve your business," the [notice](#) said. "Dissolution proceedings against the Corporation or Limited Liability Company have been completed. The Corporation or Limited Liability Company has involuntarily given up its right to transact business in the State of Montana."

State and federal records, on the other hand, show that CDI has been the focus of ethical complaints in the past.

Zinke established CDI, the company in which Lolita Zinke is a managing member, under the initial name Continental Divide Inns LLC in March 2005, a few years before he retired from the Navy. The principal place of business [listed](#) for the company was a property Zinke owned in Whitefish.

The following year, CDI was [involuntarily dissolved](#) by the state of Montana after its members failed to file legally required annual reports and fees. In January 2007, a year before Zinke would be honorably discharged from military service, he and his wife submitted reports for 2006 and 2007, after which the company was [reinstated](#).

In 2008, Zinke won a seat in the Montana Senate. A few months before going to Helena for the legislative session the next year, Zinke officially [changed the name](#) of CDI to Continental Divide International LLC.

Halfway through his first term in the state Senate, Zinke ran unsuccessfully for [lieutenant governor](#) in 2012. That same year, he also launched Special Operations For America (SOFA), a military-focused super political action committee, a type of independent group that is allowed by the Federal Election Commission to raise and spend unlimited sums of money to advocate for or against political candidates.

Less than a month after Zinke announced he was stepping down from his volunteer position as chairman of SOFA, he entered the race for Montana's lone congressional seat on Oct. 21, 2013.

SOFA supported Zinke's bid for Congress, prompting concerns from watchdog groups about the potential illegal coordination between his campaign and the supposedly independent super PAC, which was registered to another property Zinke owns via Double Tap in Whitefish. In March 2014, the Campaign Legal Center and Democracy 21 filed a [complaint](#) with the FEC, asking it to investigate the ties between the super PAC and Zinke's campaign. A spokesman for the center said the agency never responded to the groups' request.

SOFA spent \$175,000 in support of Zinke during the 2014 election cycle, FEC data show. At the same time, the super PAC told the election commission that it paid CDI over \$11,600 for "consulting" and travel reimbursements.

Altogether, the company that Zinke now describes as a "rental property" business made almost \$45,000 from SOFA from July 2012 until 14 months later, when he announced on Facebook that he was leaving the super PAC.

Zinke's adult daughter, Jennifer Detlefsen, was also directly paid \$2,500 by SOFA for "digital consulting" and "social media," FEC records indicate. Along with Zinke's two sons, she is a managing member of CDI, as well.

"It's a bunch of self-dealing transactions," said McGehee of Issue One. "It would probably be impermissible in a reasonable world. But this is an unreasonable world."

She added, "Part of the problem here is, what is legal is pretty much the scandal. If you put it to a smell test, the smell test stinks."

From: U.S. Department of the Interior
To: joan_moody@ios.doi.gov; paul_ross@ios.doi.gov; timothy_williams@ios.doi.gov; rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov; thomas_baptiste@ios.doi.gov; heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; larry_gillick@ios.doi.gov; newmedia@ios.doi.gov; alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov; nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov; timothy_bergling@ios.doi.gov; govdelivery_prod@doi.gov; william_smith@ios.doi.gov; katelyn_kasperian@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Courtesy Copy: Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 3:15:24 PM

This is a courtesy copy of an email bulletin sent by Alex Hinson.

This bulletin was sent to the following groups of people:

Subscribers of Internal Group, Press in California, Press in DC, Press in New Mexico, Updated Print and Media List, or WH/EOP/EOB, (2903 recipients)

news release



Date: July 12, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department’s many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

"In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said**. "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local

communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said**. "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said**. "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said**. "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said**. "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said**. "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said**. "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul**

Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crocket Club’s Policy Committee. “Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###



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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 2017
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 11:40:29 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 2017**

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart Morristown, New Jersey for Hagerstown Regional Airport en route to Camp David. The President will then participate in a working lunch. In the afternoon, the President will participate in a briefing with the National Security Council. The President will then depart Camp David for Hagerstown Regional Airport, en route to Morristown Municipal Airport. The President will depart Morristown Municipal Airport to Bedminster, New Jersey.

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CBS
Print: Politico
Radio: WestWood One

EDT

7:45AM **Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time**

10:35AM **THE PRESIDENT departs Bedminster, NJ en route to Morristown, NJ**

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

10:50AM **THE PRESIDENT arrives to Morristown Municipal Airport**

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

11:00AM **THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, NJ en route to Hagerstown, MD**

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

11:55AM **THE PRESIDENT arrives to Hagerstown Regional Airport**

Hagerstown Regional Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

12:05PM THE PRESIDENT departs Hagerstown Regional Airport en route to Camp David

Hagerstown Regional Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

12:15PM THE PRESIDENT arrives to Camp David

Closed Press

Camp David

12:30PM THE PRESIDENT participates in a working lunch

Laurel Lodge, Camp David

Closed Press

1:30PM THE PRESIDENT participates in a briefing with the National Security Council

Laurel Lodge, Camp David

Closed Press

4:15PM THE PRESIDENT departs Camp David en route to Hagerstown, MD

Camp David

Closed Press

4:25PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Hagerstown Regional Airport

Hagerstown Regional Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs Hagerstown Regional Airport en route to Morristown,

NJ

Hagerstown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:25PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Morristown Municipal Airport

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown en route to Bedminster, NJ

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:50PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Bedminster, NJ

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2017
Date: Thursday, August 03, 2017 9:50:15 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2017**

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart the White House en route to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) headquarters to receive a briefing on hurricane season. The President will then return to the White House. In the afternoon, the President will have lunch with Vice President Mike Pence. The President will then speak with President Emmanuel Macron of France by telephone. Later in the afternoon, the President will depart the White House for Joint Base Andrews, en route to Morristown, New Jersey. In the evening, the President will depart Morristown, New Jersey, en route to Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster.

-

In-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: Tribune
Radio: Talk Media News

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: AFP
Radio: NPR

EDT

9:00AM In-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:45AM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to FEMA headquarters

South Portico

In-Town Travel Pool (Final Gather 9:15AM – Palm Room Doors)

10:00AM THE PRESIDENT receives a FEMA briefing on hurricane season

FEMA Headquarters

In-Town Travel Pool Spray

10:55AM THE PRESIDENT departs FEMA headquarters en route to the White House

FEMA Headquarters

In-Town Travel Pool

12:30PM THE PRESIDENT has lunch with Vice President Mike Pence

Private Dining Room

Closed Press

1:30PM THE PRESIDENT speaks with President Emmanuel Macron of France by telephone

Private Dining Room

Closed Press

2:15PM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

Joint Base Andrews

Virginia Gate

3:45PM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to Joint Base Andrews

South Lawn

Open Press

4:05PM THE PRESIDENT departs Washington, D.C. en route to Morristown, New Jersey

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:55PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Morristown, New Jersey

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:05PM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, New Jersey en route to Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:20PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

Briefing Schedule

The briefing schedule will be updated in the morning.

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2017
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 10:08:18 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2017**

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will receive his daily intelligence briefing. The President will then depart the White House en route to the Mandarin Oriental, Washington, D.C., to give remarks to the National Association of Manufacturers. Later in the morning, the President will return to the White House. In the afternoon, the President will have lunch with Vice President Mike Pence and Governor Rick Scott of Florida. The President will then depart the White House for Joint Base Andrews, en route to Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster.

In-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: FOX
Print: Media News
Radio: FOX

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: FOX
Print: AFP
Radio: N/A

EDT

9:00AM In-Town Travel Pool Call Time

10:00AM THE PRESIDENT receives his daily intelligence briefing

Oval Office

Closed Press

11:05AM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to the Mandarin Oriental, Washington, D.C.

South Portico

In-Town Travel Pool (Final Gather 10:50AM – Palm Room Doors)

11:25AM THE PRESIDENT gives remarks to the National Association of Manufacturers

Mandarin Oriental

Expanded Pool

11:55AM THE PRESIDENT arrives at the White House

South Portico

In-Town Travel Pool

12:30PM THE PRESIDENT has lunch with Vice President Mike Pence and Governor Rick Scott of Florida

Private Dining Room

Closed Press

3:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to Joint Base Andrews

South Lawn

Open Press

3:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Washington, D.C., en route to Morristown, NJ

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Morristown, NJ

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, NJ en route to Bedminster, NJ

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:30PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2017
Date: Monday, August 14, 2017 12:03:42 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 14, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2017**

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart Morristown, NJ for Joint Base Andrews en route to The White House. The President will then meet with Chief of Staff General John Kelly. In the afternoon, The President will sign a memorandum on addressing China's laws, policies, practices, and actions related to intellectual property, innovation, and technology. The President will then meet with the National Economic Council. In the evening, the President will depart the White House for Joint Base Andrews, en route to John F. Kennedy International Airport. The President will depart John F. Kennedy International Airport to Trump Tower – New York. The President will then speak with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan by telephone.

In-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: Boston Globe
Radio: SRN

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: NYTimes
Radio: CBS

EDT

7:00AM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:00AM In-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:00AM THE PRESIDENT departs Bedminster, NJ en route to Morristown, NJ

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

9:15AM THE PRESIDENT arrives Morristown Municipal Airport

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:25AM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, NJ en route Washington, DC

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:15AM THE PRESIDENT arrives Joint Base Andrews

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:25AM THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route The White House

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:35AM THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House

South Lawn

Open Press

11:15AM THE PRESIDENT meets with Chief of Staff General John Kelly

Treaty Room

Closed Press

3:00PM THE PRESIDENT signs a memorandum on addressing China's laws, policies, practices, and actions related to intellectual property, innovation, and technology

Diplomatic Reception Room

In-Town Travel Pool

3:45PM THE PRESIDENT meets with the National Economic Council

Blue Room

Closed Press

7:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs The White House en route Joint Base Andrews

South Lawn

Open Press

7:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Joint Base Andrews

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

7:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route New York, NY

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:15PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at John F. Kennedy International Airport

John. F. Kennedy International Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:25PM THE PRESIDENT departs John F. Kennedy International Airport en route Wall Street Landing Zone

John. F. Kennedy International Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:45PM THE PRESIDENT arrives Wall Street Landing Zone

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:55PM THE PRESIDENT departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route Trump Tower

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives Trump Tower

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:30PM THE PRESIDENT speaks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan by telephone

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

###

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2017, THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2017
Date: Saturday, September 23, 2017 1:34:56 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 23, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2017, THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2017**

Saturday's (September 23, 2017) Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: Washington Examiner

Sunday's (September 24, 2017) Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: FOX
Print: Washington Examiner
Radio: Washington Post

EDT

Saturday, September 23, 2017

12:00PM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

No public events scheduled

Sunday, September 24, 2017

1:00PM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

**3:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs Trump National Golf Club en route to Morristown,
NJ**

Trump National Golf Club LZ

Closed Press

3:30PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Morristown Municipal Airport

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, NJ en route to Washington D.C.

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives Joint Base Andrews

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route The White House

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

5:30PM THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House

South Lawn

Open Press

###

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2017
Date: Saturday, September 16, 2017 8:19:03 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2017**

-
In the afternoon, President Donald J. Trump will depart Bedminster, NJ, en route to New York, NY.

-
Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: CBS
Print: WSJ
Radio: BBC

EDT

1:30PM **Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time**

4:00PM **THE PRESIDENT departs Bedminster, NJ en route Wall Street Landing Zone**

Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Closed Press

4:20PM **THE PRESIDENT arrives Wall Street Landing Zone**

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:30PM **THE PRESIDENT departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route Trump Tower**

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:45PM **THE PRESIDENT arrives Trump Tower**

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

###

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 9:58:12 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017**

-
In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart Trump Tower en route to the Lotte New York Palace Hotel where he will participate in a meeting with the President of Afghanistan followed by an expanded meeting with the President of Afghanistan. Later in the morning, the President will participate in an expanded meeting with the President of Ukraine. The President will then participate in an expanded meeting with the President of the Republic of Korea. The President will then attend a working lunch with the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Republic of Korea. In the afternoon, the President will participate in an expanded meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan. The President will then participate in an expanded meeting with the President of Turkey. The President will then depart the Lotte New York Palace Hotel en route to the Wall Street Landing Zone where he will depart for Bedminster, NJ.

-
Out-of-Town Travel Pool
Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: ABC
Print: LA Times
Radio: NPR

EDT

7:45AM **Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time**

8:45AM **THE PRESIDENT departs Trump Tower en route to the Lotte New York Palace Hotel**

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:50AM **THE PRESIDENT arrives at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel**

Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:15AM **THE PRESIDENT participates in a meeting with the President of Afghanistan**

Hubbard 1- Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Afghanistan

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Closed Press

10:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Ukraine

Hubbard 1 – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

11:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of the Republic of Korea

Hubbard 1 – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

12:15PM THE PRESIDENT attends a working lunch with the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Republic of Korea

Spellman Room – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

1:30PM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:00PM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Turkey

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs the Lotte New York Palace Hotel en route to the Wall Street Landing Zone

Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:50PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at the Wall Street Landing Zone

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs New York en route to Bedminster, NJ

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:20PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Trump National Golf Club

Trump National Golf Club - Bedminster, NJ

Closed Press

###

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2017
Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 9:06:06 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 15, 2017

**DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2017**

In the afternoon, President Donald J. Trump will depart New York, NY en route Bedminster, NJ. The President will then sign H.R. 3218, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act.

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NY Times
TV Corr & Crew: NBC
Print: Huffington Post
Radio: ABC

EDT

8:30AM **Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time**

2:00PM **THE PRESIDENT departs Trump Tower en route Wall Street Landing Zone via motorcade**

Trump Tower - Residence

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

2:25PM **THE PRESIDENT departs New York, NY en route Bedminster, NJ**

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

2:45PM **THE PRESIDENT arrives Trump National Golf Course - Bedminster, NJ**

Trump National Golf Course - Bedminster, NJ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:00PM **THE PRESIDENT signs H.R. 3218, The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017**

Trump National Golf Course - Bedminster, NJ

Closed Press

###

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

[UTAH – TOP STORIES – MAY 5, 2017](#)

1. [Op-ed: What Bears Ears is really like](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 4 | Brian K. Jones

There are lots of articles about Bears Ears National Monument but very few describe what it's actually like to be there.

2. [County appeal over northern corridor dismissed by board](#)

St George News, May 4 | Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Board of Land Appeals has dismissed an appeal over recent Bureau of Land Management resource plans.

3. [Op-ed: Protecting Land Without Overreaching](#)

Inside Sources, May 4 | Megan Hansen and Camille Harmer

Donald Trump recently signed an executive order that tasks the Interior Department with investigating 24 of the 57 national monuments designated since 1996. Some worry that this order is the first step in allowing presidents to reverse national monument designations.

4. [Op-ed: What Bears Ears is really like](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 4 | Brian K. Jones

There are lots of articles about Bears Ears National Monument but very few describe what it's actually like to be there.

5. [With National Monuments Under Review, Bears Ears Is Focus Of Fierce Debate](#)

NPR, May 5 | Kirk Siegler

A lot of the anger over federal public land in rural Utah today can be traced back to a windy, gray day in Arizona in September 1996. At the Grand Canyon, President Bill Clinton formally designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, more than 100 miles away.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

6. [Record-setting southern Utah tourism highlights stakes of national monument debate](#)

KSL News, May 5 / Dave Cawley

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plan to visit southern Utah next week will place him, and by extension the Trump Administration, in the middle of two bitter fights over public lands in the state.

7. [Op-ed: Why Bears Ears is worth monument status](#)

The Spectrum, May 5 / Mike Small, Iron County Democrats

On Dec. 28, 2016, President Obama proclaimed the Bears Ears National Monument by using his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906. He did this primarily to protect the many cultural resources from vandalism. There are an estimated 100,000 cultural sites in the area and protection of these sites is critically important to Native American people and others.

8. [Patagonia to Zinke: 'Conserve Our Shared Public Lands for Future Generations'](#)

EcoWatch, May 5 / Yvon Chouinard and Rose Marcario

As Secretary of the Interior, you hold the solemn responsibility to steward America's public lands and waters on behalf of the American people who own them. Our public lands, including the national monuments you are now reviewing, represent a vital part of our nation's heritage—a legacy that belongs not just to us, but to all future generations of Americans. It is an important part of your job to safeguard this legacy by making careful and informed decisions about what federal lands can be used for development and what special or vulnerable areas should be preserved for the future.

[E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – TOP STORIES](#)

1. [BLM suspends Resource Advisory Council meetings as part of national review of committees](#)

The Denver Post, May 4 / Jason Blevins

The Bureau of Land Management has suspended Colorado's four Resource Advisory Councils until September as part of a national review of the agency's advisory boards and committees.



2. [**Op-ed: Environment suffers as union diverts funds to clean deserted mine sites**](#)

The Hill, May 5 / Arthur Wardle and Randy Simmons

The Abandoned Mine Land fund (AML) is America's source of funding for reclaiming abandoned coal mines, especially those causing environmental damage. Financed through a tax on coal production, the AML was set up by Congress to serve that goal alone.

3. [**Sage-grouse Population Increases When Interloping Western Juniper is Pushed Back**](#)

Cattlenetwork, May 5 / Chris Branam, Oregon State University

Greater sage-grouse, a bird that has been the subject of intense conservation efforts in recent decades, do better in areas where juniper trees have been removed, new research suggests.

4. [**INTERIOR: Agency suspends advisory panels even as decisions loom**](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Scott Streater

The Interior Department is formally reviewing the "charter and charge" of more than 200 advisory panels that assist federal agencies managing hundreds of millions of acres of public lands at a time when the Trump administration is considering significant changes to land-use designations and management practices.

5. [**Q&A: Bishop serves up politics, plays and Dr Pepper**](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Kellie Lunney

Utah Republican Rep. Rob Bishop knows that timing is everything in theater, music and politics.

6. [**INTERIOR: Industry, enviros to feds — take your time on valuation regs**](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Pamela King

Supporters and opponents of federal regulations to determine royalty rates for oil, gas and coal produced on public lands have a message for the Interior Department: Revising these rules may take a long time.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

7. [PUBLIC LANDS: Mont. business group pressures Zinke on national monuments](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Scott Streater

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke should "stand on the right side of history" and oppose any move to decrease the size of or eliminate already designated national monuments, according to a business coalition from the fifth-generation Montanan's home state.

8. [INTERIOR: More offshore revenue would help morale, backlog — Zinke](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Corbin Hiar

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke suggested today at a "Doggy Days" press event that additional offshore oil and gas drilling royalties could offset potential budget cuts at the department.



UTAH – FULL STORY

1. Op-ed: What Bears Ears is really like

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 4 | Brian K. Jones

There are lots of articles about Bears Ears National Monument but very few describe what it's actually like to be there.

I've been exploring this area for well over 20 years. This is a national issue and few people in the country have any concept of what is actually there. Here is a description of a day. (None of the archaeological sites described here appears on published maps. BLM archeologists have asked me not to mention specific locations.)

The two-track winds through the junipers and pinion pines toward the unmarked trailhead. I park the truck, throw on a pack and walk down the trail into the canyon. There's no one here.

At the bottom of the canyon I turn east, following a faint trail. There's a cave. Ancient steps carved in the sandstone lead up to the floor of a cliff dwelling. There are walls, petroglyphs and handprints.

I cross the creek and beat my way through the brush. On a cliff face there is a long petroglyph panel with many carvings; spirals, zigzags, star-shapes, human forms and goats. A line of moqui steps ascends up through the sandstone.

I follow a trail into a dark alcove. The cottonwoods are thick and the air is cool. Above is a broad overhang and a large rectangular dwelling is perfectly preserved. It is inaccessible from below, inaccessible to looters. As I approach I hear the screeches of birds. An adult great horned owl is fighting with a raven on a long bent limb of a cottonwood. The fight continues for several minutes until the raven retreats and the owl settles into a window in the cliff dwelling. This is her home. Perhaps there are fledglings inside.

I take pictures and set out my digital recorder to capture the sounds. The canyon wrens make their musical descending calls. The spotted towhees twitter in the scrub oak. I pack my gear and move up the arroyo to another alcove.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

The remains of a small dwelling are perched on a ledge. A petroglyph shows a human form. Above the figure, small chips have been cut in the rock in an oval shape, like the balloon in a cartoon. The petroglyph figure is trying to tell me something. I am listening.

I rest in the deep shade of a cliff. The water from my pack is warm but refreshing. I press on up the canyon. Around every corner there is something new.

The sun sets on the canyon. I am tired and dusty. There is a creek back at camp with a swimming hole. It beckons. I have seen 20 ancestral puebloan sites in one canyon. A thousand years ago this was a paradise. I can imagine the corn growing in the arroyo, hear it blowing in the breeze and the sounds of the people working the soil. The odor of their fires still lingers in the timbers of the dwellings. The great drought began around 1300 AD. They could no longer grow enough food, so they built castles on ledges as defense from marauders. Then they were gone.

There are over 100,000 documented archaeological sites in Bears Ears National Monument. Each one tells a story. I've been exploring for over 20 years. Maybe I've seen a thousand. I'm just scratching the surface.

People will debate the designation of this place as a National Monument. I know nothing about that. I only know what it feels like to walk up these canyons and explore the world of The Ancient Ones.

Brian K. Jones, Sandy, is a field geologist, musician and ski instructor. He takes lots of pictures in southeastern Utah but never touches anything.

[BACK](#)

2. **County appeal over northern corridor dismissed by board**

St George News, May 4 | Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Board of Land Appeals has dismissed an appeal over recent Bureau of Land Management resource plans.

Washington County, St. George City and the Washington County Water Conservancy District filed the appeal Feb. 23 over what officials feel is the lack of a satisfactory route for a northern corridor and inadequate utility development protocols in the resource plans.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

The appeal was dismissed April 28 in an order signed by administrative judges James Roberts and Amy Sosin.

“These appeals are dismissed because we do not have jurisdiction to consider challenges to land designations,” the dismissal states. Legal challenges to BLM’s land designation in resource management plans are not within the board’s authority, the judges said.

“When and if BLM makes specific decisions implementing the RMPs’ (resource management plans’) designations of right-of-way exclusion and avoidance areas, adversely affected parties will have the opportunity to challenge those decisions, e.g., right-of-way grant application denials, before the board.”

County officials will continue pursuing their options, Deputy Washington County Attorney Celeste Maloy said.

“We aren’t going to stop working to make sure that we can bring utilities to the residents of the county, provide necessary water and plan for foreseeable future transportation needs,” Malloy said.

We are still regularly communicating with BLM about our concerns. If they can’t solve the problems administratively, then we will focus our time and energy on the legislative and legal avenues.”

The decision was not entirely unexpected and does not signal the end of the county’s appeal process, Washington County Commissioner Dean Cox said.

“Instead, Washington County has embraced a comprehensive plan to pursue all useful avenues of redress including administrative, legislative, and the courts, if necessary,” Cox said.

Opposition

Four conservation groups including the Conserve Southwest Utah, which is based in St. George, oppose any loosening of the management plans and filed motions to intervene in the appeal.

Conserve Southwest Utah President Tom Butine said the group suspects the next move on the county’s part will be federal court, but they would prefer to pursue other options.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

“Rather than proceed down judicial or even legislative paths, we would much rather work with the county commissioners to understand and perhaps mitigate their concerns,” Butine said.

“We think there are practical solutions to the county’s three main issues, and we’re hoping to be able to work with them on those solutions.”

History

The county, city and water district are opposing resource management plans for the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash national conservation areas in Washington County. The Bureau of Land Management recently completed the plans that affect more than 100,000 acres.

Local officials believe the plans do not reflect what was promised by the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, a collaborative effort between the county, municipalities, state and federal governments, and conservation groups that was intended to resolve land use conflicts in the county.

Language in the Act specified that a northern corridor through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area be designated; however, the bill’s language is vague and has been interpreted differently by the interested parties.

The appeal specifically contested the designation of large exclusion areas in the national conservation areas. Exclusion areas are not available for roads, power lines or pipelines, under any conditions and would prevent the construction of the proposed northern corridor.

[BACK](#)

3. **Op-ed: Protecting Land Without Overreaching**

Inside Sources, May 4 | Megan Hansen and Camille Harmer

Donald Trump recently signed an executive order that tasks the Interior Department with investigating 24 of the 57 national monuments designated since 1996. Some worry that this order is the first step in allowing presidents to reverse national monument designations.

But the order addresses a deeper issue — whether a century-old law has been abused by presidents in the last 20 years. While the Antiquities Act may have been important for preserving



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

some Native American artifacts, recent monument designations have allowed presidents to affect the access to and use of millions of acres of land without regard to local effects.

Since 1906, the Antiquities Act has allowed presidents to change the use of land with the stroke of a pen — land that they have frequently never seen. The Antiquities Act was designed to allow presidents to protect lands that are in immediate danger of being damaged.

The Antiquities Act specifies that designated areas must cover “the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” The first monument created under the Antiquities Act, Devil’s Tower National Monument in Wyoming, covers 1,347 acres, less than 3 square miles. The monument covers the Devil’s Tower itself — nothing more.

Bears Ears National Monument, an area in southern Utah designated at the end of 2016, covers far more than the buttes it’s named for. The monument spans 1.35 million acres (roughly 2,100 square miles) and includes neighboring canyons, gulches and even an existing wilderness area.

When national monument designations are made over vast swaths of land, the results can be devastating to locals. In 1996, President Bill Clinton designated Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, an area in southern Utah that covers 1.9 million acres. Clinton announced the designation from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, more than 100 miles from the monument itself. When he announced the monument, locals and Utah officials were blindsided. While some Utahans were concerned about mining in the area, there was no local movement to manage and protect the land with a federal designation. It seems that Clinton might have designated the area purely in a political ploy, not in the interest of protecting the land.

In 2016, near the end of his time in office, President Barack Obama designated Bears Ears National Monument. Prior to the designation, Utah Rep. Rob Bishop, a Republican, proposed the Public Lands Initiative, an alternative to the national monument that would have created 11 national conservation areas and added to or created 41 wilderness areas. In addition, the bill would have opened up some of Utah’s lands to energy development.

While there may have been national support for the monument’s designation, many Utahans and those closest to the area did not want it. The designation restricts grazing and prohibits the collection of wood in the area. Since many locals depend on wood to heat their homes and cook their food, the national monument could hurt local people.



It's easy to agree that the American landscape should be managed in such a way that our great-great-grandchildren will be able to enjoy its beauty. In that respect, the intentions of the Antiquities Act are noble. But designations like Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears that cover millions of acres and ignore local impacts suggest the law has been abused.

With so much evidence of federal overreach, we shouldn't be afraid to examine recent national monument designations. When laws intended to protect some of our most valued landscapes are instead abused to win political battles, both current and future generations of Americans lose.

Megan Hansen is a co-director of policy at Strata, a public policy research center in Logan, Utah. Camille Harmer is a student research associate at Strata.

[BACK](#)

4. **Op-ed: What Bears Ears is really like**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 4 | Brian K. Jones

There are lots of articles about Bears Ears National Monument but very few describe what it's actually like to be there.

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The two-track winds through the junipers and pinion pines toward the unmarked trailhead. I park the truck, throw on a pack and walk down the trail into the canyon. There's no one here.

At the bottom of the canyon I turn east, following a faint trail. There's a cave. Ancient steps carved in the sandstone lead up to the floor of a cliff dwelling. There are walls, petroglyphs and handprints.

I cross the creek and beat my way through the brush. On a cliff face there is a long petroglyph panel with many carvings; spirals, zigzags, star-shapes, human forms and goats. A line of moqui steps ascends up through the sandstone.



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I follow a trail into a dark alcove. The cottonwoods are thick and the air is cool. Above is a broad overhang and a large rectangular dwelling is perfectly preserved. It is inaccessible from below, inaccessible to looters. As I approach I hear the screeches of birds. An adult great horned owl is fighting with a raven on a long bent limb of a cottonwood. The fight continues for several minutes until the raven retreats and the owl settles into a window in the cliff dwelling. This is her home. Perhaps there are fledglings inside.

I take pictures and set out my digital recorder to capture the sounds. The canyon wrens make their musical descending calls. The spotted towhees twitter in the scrub oak. I pack my gear and move up the arroyo to another alcove.

The remains of a small dwelling are perched on a ledge. A petroglyph shows a human form. Above the figure, small chips have been cut in the rock in an oval shape, like the balloon in a cartoon. The petroglyph figure is trying to tell me something. I am listening.

I rest in the deep shade of a cliff. The water from my pack is warm but refreshing. I press on up the canyon. Around every corner there is something new.

The sun sets on the canyon. I am tired and dusty. There is a creek back at camp with a swimming hole. It beckons. I have seen 20 ancestral puebloan sites in one canyon. A thousand years ago this was a paradise. I can imagine the corn growing in the arroyo, hear it blowing in the breeze and the sounds of the people working the soil. The odor of their fires still lingers in the timbers of the dwellings. The great drought began around 1300 AD. They could no longer grow enough food, so they built castles on ledges as defense from marauders. Then they were gone.

There are over 100,000 documented archaeological sites in Bears Ears National Monument. Each one tells a story. I've been exploring for over 20 years. Maybe I've seen a thousand. I'm just scratching the surface.

People will debate the designation of this place as a National Monument. I know nothing about that. I only know what it feels like to walk up these canyons and explore the world of The Ancient Ones.

Brian K. Jones, Sandy, is a field geologist, musician and ski instructor. He takes lots of pictures in southeastern Utah but never touches anything.

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5. **With National Monuments Under Review, Bears Ears Is Focus Of Fierce Debate**

NPR, May 5 / Kirk Siegler

A lot of the anger over federal public land in rural Utah today can be traced back to a windy, gray day in Arizona in September 1996. At the Grand Canyon, President Bill Clinton formally designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, more than 100 miles away.

"On this remarkable site, God's handiwork is everywhere in the natural beauty of the Escalante Canyons," he said.

Clinton didn't set foot in Utah. The planning for the monument was largely done in secret and state leaders had little warning it was coming.

Now, nearly 21 years later, mistrust toward the federal government persists, in the tightknit, mostly Mormon town of Blanding, Utah. Folks can't help but draw a parallel to how President Barack Obama's sweeping Bears Ears National Monument ended up in their backyard.

"I don't understand how it would protect the land when you're inviting thousands of footprints in," says Laura O'Donnell.

O'Donnell, who works at Blanding's modest visitor center, says she's uncomfortable with her town suddenly being the flashpoint in the heated debate over the future of federal public lands.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is keeping a promise to travel into rural Utah beginning this weekend to hear from locals who live around the new 1.35-million acre Bears Ears monument, and the established 1.8-million acre Grand Staircase National Monument to the west. The Trump administration has launched a controversial 45-day review over whether large national monuments like these that protect federal land should be rescinded or shrunk.

In Blanding, Zinke's visit is highly anticipated. Here, opposition to the monument runs deeper than the usual anxieties in sagebrush country about adding more protections to public land that would restrict future mining and other development.

"Monuments should be an honor to an area, and we feel like this one is nothing but a punishment," says Jami Bayles, who founded a group called the Stewards of San Juan County.



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From her office at a small college, you can see the twin "Bears Ears" buttes framing the distant horizon out on the vast Cedar Mesa west of town. While not as visually dramatic as the famous national parks nearby, the area is dense with cliff dwellings and ancient artifacts.

Bayles and many of her neighbors felt offended when the federal government announced additional protections under a new monument because they felt it sent a message that the land was being threatened.

"We keep that place pristine, we keep it clean, we check on it all the time," Bayles says. "I guess my argument is, OK, yeah, it belongs to everybody, but not everybody has been taking care of it."

Bayles says the monument is being pushed by extreme, out-of-state, environmentalists and her side has struggled to be heard.

There are deep pockets behind the campaign to protect Bears Ears.

But San Juan County is about 50 percent Native American. A short drive down the road, on the Navajo Nation Reservation, tribal leaders say it's a lie for people in Blanding to argue that the monument is being pushed on them from the outside.

"For them to be here for 130 years, they should at least understand the Native Americans now," says Kenneth Maryboy, a chapter president.

Native Americans from around the Four Corners region that back the new monument are open about the fact that they're getting outside help and money because they didn't have a voice before, according to interviews with tribal leaders. Many tribes in the region have officially come out in support of the monument, though not all.

Maryboy was involved with the first talks with Utah's congressional delegation almost a decade ago about protecting Bears Ears as a National Conservation Area. They broke down last year, then came President Obama's executive order.

"Our gripe and our fight is to preserve what's there, the Native American artifacts, the antiquities, and all the shrines and the ruins," Maryboy says.



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The sacred burial grounds of the famous Navajo leader Manuelito are included in the new monument, among other things. Maryboy sees the monument as crucial to protecting these antiquities from vandalism and looting, an historical problem in San Juan County.

"The San Juan County good ol' boys don't want to see this happen," says Maryboy. "They adamantly, openly said, 'This is our land. The damn Navajos need to go back to the reservation.'"

It's not an overstatement to say that Secretary Zinke will see deep tension and polarization when he arrives at Bears Ears late this weekend for a two-day tour.

Tribes here point to a history of broken promises with the U.S. government. If the Trump administration moves to abolish Bears Ears, it's not hard to imagine a Standing Rock-inspired protest here. On the other hand, if the monument stays intact, some wonder whether the militias that support Cliven Bundy and his sons would arrive in San Juan County.

Back in Blanding, some locals like Ferd Johnson are floating a compromise. Why not just shrink the monument, and protect the cliff dwellings and other antiquities themselves, they say.

"All these environmentalists, these Navajos, Hopis and the other Indians didn't even know where the Bears Ears was," Johnson says. "Why is it so sacred if they don't even know where it is?"

The tribes dispute this. Some have already signaled they'll sue if, after Zinke's Utah trip, the Trump administration moves to rescind Bears Ears.

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6. Record-setting southern Utah tourism highlights stakes of national monument debate

KSL News, May 5 | Dave Cawley

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plan to visit southern Utah next week will place him, and by extension the Trump Administration, in the middle of two bitter fights over public lands in the state.



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One, a white-hot battle over the 1.3-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County, erupted last December when then-President Barack Obama created the monument at the request of tribal representatives and against the wishes of county and state leaders.

The other fight has simmered for two decades. It deals with an older and even larger monument, blamed by many in southern Utah for slowly strangling the life out of their communities. Yet the disagreement over Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is coming back to a boil even as tourism in the region sets new records year after year.

A review of economic indicators by KSL, including employment data, visitation statistics, tourism-related tax revenues and county building permit records obtained through an open records request, reveals both the struggles and opportunities facing places like Cannonville, Kanab, Boulder and Big Water.

The simmering dispute

An irritated Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, was sick of hearing about the values of southern Utah's tourism economy. During a meeting of the state's House Natural Resource, Agriculture and Environment Committee in late February, the lawmaker unloaded on his colleagues from Salt Lake City.

"People tell me there's all kinds of jobs down there; everything's going great," Noel said. "I really kind of get a gutful of it up here, I really do. It bothers me because it sends a false premise."

Noel represents House District 73, a giant swath of territory covering all of Kane, Garfield, San Juan, Wayne and Piute Counties, as well as pieces of Beaver and Sevier Counties. He chastised urban lawmakers for suggesting federal management of Utah lands has had a positive influence by driving visitors, and by extension their tax dollars, into the rural region he represents.

"I've lived there for 41 years. I've seen what's happened down there and my ancestors have lived there for over 100 years and it's not in a good condition as far as you say, as far as economically and what's happening to families," Noel said.

In recent years Noel has helped lead the charge in several high-profile efforts to take control of federal lands. Key among those lands is the monument at the heart of his district — Grand Staircase-Escalante.



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The maligned monument

As designated by President Bill Clinton in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument covered roughly 1.9 million acres. It's bounded on the east by Capitol Reef National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and on the west by Bryce Canyon National Park. The monument's northern edge abuts the Dixie National Forest, while its southern extremity touches the Arizona border.

Wrapped within it sits a maze of twisted river canyons, eroded sandstone pinnacles and arches, relics of pioneer history and fossilized dinosaur bones.

Rep. Noel's cry to turn over those lands to state management, or to at least prioritize cattle grazing, ATV use and mineral extraction, have support from people like Garfield County Commissioner Leland Pollock.

"200,000 acres would be a stretch, to say that there's antiquities, things of value that meet the Antiquities Act criteria," Pollock said. "What is it? It's BLM range. It's brush land. It's sage brush."

The Bureau of Land Management administers the monument, unlike most other Utah monuments which are instead operated by the National Park Service.

Prior to the designation two decades ago, a bitter fight had raged between the mining company Andalex Resources, Inc. and environmental groups over the company's plans to extract large amounts of coal from the region. Andalex held federal mineral leases around the Kaiparowitz Plateau.

The wording of President Clinton's declaration made clear those existing leases were to be honored. However, the company made the decision not to develop the resources and ultimately gave up the leases in exchange for \$14 million from the Department of the Interior.

Miners were not the only ones with claims to the land. Ranchers also held leases that allowed them to graze their cattle over much of what is now in the monument. Those uses were largely respected and allowed to continue by the Bureau of Land Management, though some parcels were withdrawn from use.



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Monument critics believe the coal reserves could still be developed, to the economic benefit of the region, were the federal land managers not standing in the way.

Recreation opportunities on the monument are expansive, though not without difficulty.

Unlike many national parks, where trails are paved and shuttle buses run on tight schedules, Grand Staircase-Escalante is almost entirely primitive. It holds just three established campgrounds: Calf Creek along state Route 12 between Boulder and Escalante, Deer Creek on the Burr Trail Road and White House on the Paria River. Roads to most popular destinations are unpaved and at times impassable due to weather or damage.

“They did not want tourism,” Pollock said. “The monument itself, they would tell me when I was first sworn in as a commissioner, ‘this wasn’t created for tourism. It was created to study science.’”

The popularity explosion

Want them or not, tourists are coming to Grand Staircase-Escalante in record numbers.

Visitation statistics maintained by the National Park Service show Zion led the pack of Utah parks in 2016, taking in 4.3 million people. Bryce Canyon, the state’s second-most-visited park, welcomed almost 2.4 million. Both figures are nearly double the visitation recorded in 1996, when Grand Staircase-Escalante was born.

BLM records show the monument has also almost doubled its annual visitation during the same period. It set a high-water mark of 923,236 visitors last year, placing it above even Canyonlands and about on par with Capitol Reef National Park.

The rate of visitation growth for Zion, Bryce and Arches accelerated sharply in 2013. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Director Natalie Gochnour noted that in recent years, the Utah Office of Tourism has heavily advertised the parks with the Mighty Five campaign.

“There’s a lot of money that goes into promoting our state and it’s proven to be very well invested ... but you have to be really careful that you also invest in the quality of that experience,” Gochnour said. “Whether it’s roads or campgrounds or bridges or water treatment plants, amenities, you need to invest in the tourism infrastructure business to get a payback from it.”



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In Washington County, home to St. George and the Zion gateway community of Springdale, taxes on short-term lodging and restaurant sales have followed a similar curve as the park's visitation. Grand County, too, has shown strong tourism-related tax growth, boosted by visitors to Arches who also stay and spend in Moab.

The visitation spike has helped accelerate recovery in Washington and Grand Counties following the recession of the late 2000s.

"The tax revenues related to tourism and travel are going up, have been for the last five years," Jennifer Leaver said. She works as a research analyst at Gardner Institute and has spent a good deal of time examining the economics of southern Utah. "Jobs have been either remaining flat or going up. Wages have been going up."

But while Garfield County is home to Bryce Canyon, it has not seen quite the same boost.

Challenges of the tourism economy

The tiny town of Boulder is made up of little more than a few buildings and farms snuggled into the valley where state Route 12 and the Burr Trail meet on the southern slopes of Boulder Mountain. As of the 2010 Census, Boulder claimed a population of 226.

Yet it's exactly where Blake Spalding and her partner chose to start their business, Hell's Backbone Grill, shortly after Grand Staircase-Escalante's creation.

"We really just built it up. This is our 18th season. We have about 45 employees that work with us year after year," Spalding said.

Hell's Backbone Grill, which is located on the grounds of the Boulder Mountain Lodge, has received numerous accolades from both local and national press over the years. It draws clientele with its menu and its reputation, but finding qualified help has proved to be one of the restaurant's biggest challenges.

"There's not a business from a construction company to the school to the towns themselves, certainly my restaurant, that isn't hiring right now. We have jobs aplenty," Spalding said. "What we don't have is residents to fill them."



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Making a life in a place like Boulder can be incredibly difficult, especially for someone accustomed to urban living. Cell phone service is spotty. Cultural options are limited, though outdoor recreation is in abundant supply. Grocery runs can require long drives to bigger towns. And while there are jobs available, many are not the kind capable of providing a steady living.

Lecia Langston, a regional economist with the Utah Department of Workforce Services, said tourism jobs tend to come and go.

“For Garfield County particularly they see a huge amount of seasonality so that during the summer they basically have to import a lot of their labor because they need it, but they don’t need it in the winter,” Langston said.

People who can’t afford to stay the winter on what they earned are forced to leave in search of other opportunities, as work in other more stable fields can prove tough to find.

“Garfield County has the highest percentage of leisure and hospitality services jobs in the state. They run about 43 percent of their total non-farm employment,” Langston said.

The result is a yo-yoing effect. In March, the most recent month for which numbers are available, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Garfield County was 7.1 percent. That was the lowest it’s been since the end of the recession but it was still well above the statewide average of 3.1 percent.

“If you were to look at the raw rate in July for Garfield County it would be very, very, very low,” Langston said. Conversely, it would be much, much higher in December. “Kane County (in March) actually looks fairly low, given the fact that they do have a lot of seasonality. Their unemployment rate right now is 3.2 percent, which is comparable to the state average.”

Kanab on the cusp

Kane and Garfield Counties have much in common, making that difference in their unemployment rate very conspicuous.

“What’s interesting about Kane County is they do have a couple of unusual employers that make their employment numbers look a little bit different,” Langston said. “Kane County’s largest employer is actually Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. They show up in what we call ‘other services’ so they have a really high percentage of employment in that sector. The other thing



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that's important to know about Kane County is they do have some manufacturing. Stampin' Up was a homegrown company that started in Kane County and still has a sizable employment presence."

That little bit of diversity helps make Kane's economy more resilient. Kane County Office of Tourism Executive Director Camille Johnson said the addition of steady jobs has allowed for more stability and, as a result, investment in the visitor experience.

"We had Comfort Suites and Hampton Inn open up in the last year and we've got a La Quinta on line to open in 2018. Then I just learned of one of our local partners that's doing an expansion," Johnson said. "We've had a lot of new restaurants open up."

The city also has geography to its advantage. Kanab sits within striking distance of Zion, Bryce Canyon, the Grand Canyon, Lake Powell and the Wave. The county is promoting Kanab as a place to base camp while visiting the whole variety of southern Utah destinations. The goal is to keep visitors in town long enough to help the local economy, rather than having them simply pass through on their way to another place.

Johnson said overcrowding in the banner locations like Zion also has Kane County pointing increasingly more visitors toward scenic spots outside of the Mighty Five and within Grand Staircase-Escalante.

"Because tourism is such a hot industry for us right now, we're having a little bit of a labor force crisis and a housing crisis," Johnson said. "With the two new hotels opening up and several restaurants, it spread our already thin labor force even thinner."

Up in Garfield County though, the hospitality industry has grown more slowly since the creation of Grand Staircase-Escalante.

Commercial building permit papers obtained by KSL through an open records request reveal much of the new lodging construction over the last 20 years has focused Ruby's Inn or the Bryce Canyon gateway communities. Recently, more rustic rental options like cabins, yurts or RV parks have started to open around Escalante and Tropic.

Back in Kanab, some fear the rapid growth could dilute the history and western character of the region.



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“Locals will say to me ‘we don’t want to be like Moab, we don’t want to be like Springdale, please don’t let that happen’,” Johnson said. “They’re afraid that we’ll lose the spirit of our community and our heritage and then it won’t be appealing for locals to stay here and then they uproot and then we lose that heritage.”

The tale of two Utahs

The loss of locals is already happening and not just in Kanab. It’s evident from the average age in many rural Utah counties.

“There are two different economic realities in our state. We call it ‘the tale of two Utahs’,” Natalie Gochnour said. “They basically have children who left the counties, presumably for employment opportunities, schooling and they don’t come back. And so these counties get older and older and older.”

Why don’t they come back? Experts agree it’s a lack of high-paying skilled work in rural communities.

“It’s kind of a catch-22 because there aren’t necessarily the kinds of jobs young people want, or that pay the kind of wages that they’d really like to have, so they leave and you don’t get the population growth that you need to spur the economic growth,” Lecia Langston, the Workforce Services regional economist, said.

Garfield County even declared a state of emergency in 2015 due to declining enrollment at Escalante High School.

“In 1996 you had about 144 children enrolled at Escalante school, seventh through 12th grade,” Commissioner Leland Pollock said. “When we declared that state of emergency it was down to 51.”

Pollock points to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument as the primary reason for the drop. Others though see the problem in more nuanced terms.

“I think it’s really a time to think very purposefully about rural Utah, particularly rural Utah that’s hurting, and figure out how do we connect and unify and help,” Gochnour said.



She suggested that could mean having policymakers lean on urban Utah's strength, investing the fruits of Wasatch Front productivity into rural counties through infrastructure improvements like better roads or broadband access. At the same time, battles over public lands could be quieted by some good-faith deal-making.

“I think a really productive place for state decision makers to focus is on land exchanges and making all of these state institutional trust lands that are locked up inside federal lands, not accessible, getting them closer to the cities, closer to the towns and letting those towns grow,” Gochnour said.

The Wasatch Front could in turn benefit in the form of reduced air pollution and traffic congestion, as more people disperse into areas outside of the urban core. Gochnour suggested outdoor gear companies already operating in the state could lead the charge, choosing to locate their manufacturing facilities in areas like Kanab.

“Maybe it's time for the state and the federal government, locals, recreationists to all come together and say ‘there is a path forward that can address our needs’.”

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7. **Op-ed: Why Bears Ears is worth monument status**

The Spectrum, May 5 | Mike Small, Iron County Democrats

On Dec. 28, 2016, President Obama proclaimed the Bears Ears National Monument by using his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906. He did this primarily to protect the many cultural resources from vandalism. There are an estimated 100,000 cultural sites in the area and protection of these sites is critically important to Native American people and others.

The truth is that vandalism of Native American cultural sites on Bureau of Land Management-administered lands, while illegal, is relatively common. Vandalism includes organized ongoing looting, grave robbing and destruction of structures. Estimates vary, but some 70 percent of the known sites on BLM-administered land in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona have likely already been vandalized.

The BLM has tried for years to protect the cultural sites but its resources are spread too thin over this large area.



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Reaction to President Obama's proclamation has been split. In general, Native Americans and environmentalists, including the Mormon Environmental Stewardship Alliance, support the designation and believe it will result in greater protection for the cultural and other resources in the subject area.

It is also important to note that 99 percent of the Bears Ears National Monument was existing federal public land administered by either the BLM or U.S. Forest Service. The monument designation merely raises the level of resource protection. This designation did not expand federal government land holdings.

However, nearly all elected Republican officials in Utah — including Gov. Gary Herbert, congressional delegation, county commissioners, and others — strongly oppose the designation. The reason for their opposition is probably political, but local culture may also be key.

Most of the elected officials are white and grew up where arrowhead collecting and buried pot hunting were accepted activities. Unfortunately, thus far the governor's opposition to Bears Ears has only resulted in the Outdoor Retailer Show, which had generated some \$45 million in annual spending, announcing its exit from Utah.

Nationally, President Trump has directed Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to review all the national monuments designated in the last 20 years by Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama and which are more than 100,000 acres, starting with Bears Ears.

Such a review is completely reasonable, especially by a new president. Nonetheless, the legal process by which a president can modify monument designations by previous presidents is unclear.

Hopefully, Zinke will fully involve the tribes, as well as the environmental community and tourism industry, in his review of the Bears Ears. The future of the national monument will depend upon an objective and just review.

Remember, too, that a number of former national monuments have eventually become national parks that contribute greatly to the local and regional economies — for example, Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, Acadia, and Grand Teton.

In closing, and to illustrate how Native Americans may not have been fully considered, on the front page of The Spectrum & Daily News on April 27, Utah House Speaker Greg Hughes was



quoted that he wanted to ensure "... antiquities are preserved, while keeping the lands accessible to the Native Americans and citizens."

It should be pointed out to Hughes that Native Americans are citizens.

Mike Small of Cedar City is a member of the Iron County Democrats.

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8. Patagonia to Zinke: 'Conserve Our Shared Public Lands for Future Generations'

EcoWatch, May 5 / Yvon Chouinard and Rose Marcario

Dear Secretary Zinke,

As Secretary of the Interior, you hold the solemn responsibility to steward America's public lands and waters on behalf of the American people who own them. Our public lands, including the national monuments you are now reviewing, represent a vital part of our nation's heritage—a legacy that belongs not just to us, but to all future generations of Americans. It is an important part of your job to safeguard this legacy by making careful and informed decisions about what federal lands can be used for development and what special or vulnerable areas should be preserved for the future.

That is why the arbitrary 120-day deadline for you to review whether to shrink or rescind dozens of national monuments is absurd. As you know, the process to establish a national monument often takes years, if not decades. It involves significant study of the area of the proposed monument—including its ecological, cultural, archeological, economic and recreation value—and robust consultation with local communities and their elected representatives at every level. Given the unique and complex histories of each monument, there is simply no way to meaningfully review dozens of individual monuments in such a short period.

You justify this review on the false premise that the American people have not yet been heard on the designation of these national monuments. But the communities near the national monuments under your review have already made their voices heard during public input and stakeholder engagement periods prior to designation. For example, notwithstanding the rhetoric of Utah Governor Gary Herbert and members of the Utah Congressional delegation, the designation of



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Bears Ears National Monument involved years of public input gathered by the Obama administration. This process included a series of public meetings in Southeastern Utah in 2016, including several sessions attended by former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. It also included significant engagement with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which represents tribal nations for whom the land is sacred and contains archeological artifacts with immense cultural value. Additionally, in a recent poll, 68 percent of voters in seven Western states said they prioritize the protection of land, water and wildlife for recreation on public land, compared with 22 percent who prioritized increased production of fossil fuels. Your review must account for this extensive record of consultation as you purport to seek public input.

As you undertake this review, we urge you to consider the enormous economic benefits of protected public lands for nearby communities, including many rural areas. A recent study showed that areas in the West with protected lands consistently enjoy better rates of employment and income growth compared to those with no protected lands. In the 22 years since the Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah was declared a national monument, jobs grew by 38 percent in two neighboring counties. The designation of 17 national monuments—including nine monuments covered under your review—led to significant increases in per capita income in regions adjacent to the newly-protected areas.

Rescinding or shrinking the national monuments under review also threatens the fast-growing outdoor recreation economy, which relies significantly on recreation access to protected public lands. These lands are not "locked up," as the Trump administration has said repeatedly declared—they are extremely productive. As you know, since you participated in the outdoor industry's announcement of a new economic study last week, the recreation economy drives \$887 billion in consumer spending every year and supports more jobs (7.6 million) than oil, natural gas and mining combined. Rescinding or shrinking the national monuments under review would significantly impact the strength of the outdoor recreation economy and limit our ability to create and sustain jobs.

Patagonia has been outfitting outdoors people and protecting public lands for more than 30 years. The debate over land and water conservation is always complex and sometimes divisive. But we have never witnessed the legacy of America's federal lands encountering greater risk than we see right now. As you visit these protected places and report back to the president, I urge you to follow in the tradition of President Teddy Roosevelt and conserve our shared public lands for future generations.



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E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – FULL STORY

1. BLM suspends Resource Advisory Council meetings as part of national review of committees

The Denver Post, May 4 | Jason Blevins

The Bureau of Land Management has suspended Colorado’s four Resource Advisory Councils until September as part of a national review of the agency’s advisory boards and committees.

BLM public affairs specialists emailed members of the state’s four Resource Advisory Councils this week, informing them the upcoming June and August meetings were suspended.

The councils — typically 15 citizen-nominated members who meet four times a year — are made up of public land management stakeholders like conservationists, ranchers, outdoor recreation users, energy industry representatives and local leaders. According to a national statement from the BLM, the agency is reviewing more than 200 boards, committees and other advisory councils. The review “necessitates the postponement of all advisory committee meetings” until September, according to the statement.

Greg Zimmerman, deputy director of the Center of Western Priorities conservation group, said the canceled meetings are “a significant development” because they fall while the Interior Department searches for potential violations of the Antiquities Act in the presidential creation of national monuments since 1996.

“Resource Advisory Councils are one of the primary venues for BLM to receive direct feedback from stakeholders ... designed to ensure that the diverse set of stakeholders that care about public lands have a direct say in how lands are managed,” Zimmerman said. “This announcement runs absolutely counter to the Trump Administration’s commitment to listen to rural communities. At the very time they’re discussing major land management changes—eliminating monuments and increasing the pace of development—they’re also choosing to shutout stakeholders.”

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2. Op-ed: Environment suffers as union diverts funds to clean deserted mine sites

The Hill, May 5 | Arthur Wardle and Randy Simmons

The Abandoned Mine Land fund (AML) is America's source of funding for reclaiming abandoned coal mines, especially those causing environmental damage. Financed through a tax on coal production, the AML was set up by Congress to serve that goal alone.

Since its 1977 passage, however, numerous interest groups have managed to jockey for a piece of the fund. In its deliberations over an omnibus spending package, Congress is again being given the chance to review one of largest diversions from the AML: United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) benefits packages.

To ensure the future of abandoned coal mine reclamation, Congress should put an end to AML fund misuse by discontinuing transfers to the UMWA. Instead, Congress appears ready to make the misuse permanent.

The AML was established by Congress in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to reclaim coal mines that had been abandoned, often by long-gone companies. Just under \$6 billion has been spent to date to restore nearly 800,000 acres of land and water in the United States. There's still plenty of reclamation work to be done — the Bureau of Land Management estimates that at least 92,000 sites in need of restoration remain on BLM property in California, Nevada and Utah alone.

The AML's implementation has generally been beneficial, but any large pile of government money attracts vultures, and the AML is no exception. Although misuse takes many forms, UMWA transfers are the most obvious aberration in AML spending. The diversion began in 1992 after Congress first allowed the UMWA to draw upon AML resources for their combined benefit fund (which came with a \$70 million cap).

That cap was later removed. These transfers to the UMWA have been made with woefully inadequate oversight. A recent report from the Office of the Inspector General found that the government failed to verify beneficiary eligibility for fund recipients, provide documentation to support administrative expenses, or reconcile key information, among other abuses.



Protecting the health and pension benefits of retired mine workers is a noble goal, but it is not the intended goal of the AML. Its goal is environmental reclamation, and when funds are diverted to support other priorities, that can only come at the expense of the environment.

Some might be tempted to say that the AML is a good source of funds for anything the coal industry is collectively responsible for, not necessarily just environmental reclamation. By this argument, using AML dollars to fund benefits for workers who may have been physically harmed from working in the coal industry might initially appear to make sense.

This logic would not, however, justify holding the entire coal industry to account for UMWA benefits packages when, in 2015, only a meager 9 percent of domestic coal was produced by UMWA producers.

Coal miners have understandably attracted sympathy from across the political aisle, as many promised retirement and health benefits never materialized. But even if Congress unanimously agrees that UMWA benefits are a worthwhile use of government funds, there is no reason that money should come at the expense of reclamation.

The AML serves an important role in cleaning up abandoned sites left unaddressed by modern regulation. Protecting the financial security of the AML, even from nobly intentioned diversions, is critical to ensure the fund exists for future cleanup efforts. Today, that means standing against attempts to divert AML funds away from reclamation and toward politically-connected unions.

Arthur R. Wardle is a research associate at Strata, a public policy research center in Logan, Utah. Randy T. Simmons is a professor of political economy at the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business at Utah State University and is president of Strata.

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3. Sage-grouse Population Increases When Interloping Western Juniper is Pushed Back

Cattlenetwork, May 5 | Chris Branam, Oregon State University

Greater sage-grouse, a bird that has been the subject of intense conservation efforts in recent decades, do better in areas where juniper trees have been removed, new research suggests.



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The four-year study is the first to link sage-grouse demographics with tree reduction and supports the idea of conserving sage-grouse by controlling conifer expansion into the bird's habitat. In the last half of the 20th century, the proliferation of the western juniper in Oregon and pinyon pine in Nevada and Utah degraded the sagebrush ecosystem by forming dense stands that suck up rainwater and push sagebrush out.

[The findings are published](#) in the journal PLOS ONE.

“We are tremendously excited,” said Christian Hagen, an avian ecologist at Oregon State University and a co-author of the study. “The arrow is pointing in the right direction. The grouse are finding these areas where the juniper was taken out much more quickly than we anticipated.”

This study focused on the encroachment of western juniper in southeast Oregon and just over the border in California and Nevada. Wildlife biologists in Oregon, Idaho and Montana, estimated a 25 percent increase in the sage-grouse population growth rate in an area where western juniper was being removed, either by cutting or burning, where juniper continued to spread slowly and the sage-grouse population did not increase.

The researchers collected data on 219 female sage-grouse and 225 nests from 2010 to 2014 in an area in southeast Oregon where western juniper was being removed and an area with no removal in southeast Oregon, northeast California and northwest Nevada. Both areas involved both public and private lands.

The annual survival of females from one breeding season to the next, and the survival of their nests over a month-long incubation period, both led to population growth over time, Hagen said. In the area where juniper was removed, female sage-grouse annual survival increased 6.6 percent each year, and the nest survival rate increased by 18.8 percent each year.

Encroaching juniper degrades sage-grouse habitat in two ways: by outcompeting the sagebrush and by introducing trees that the birds consider threatening, said Hagen, a senior researcher in the College of Agricultural Sciences.

“Dense tree stands become perches and hiding cover for predators, so sage-grouse avoid them,” Hagen said.



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The trees that were removed were less than a hundred years old, Hagen said. Most of the juniper was cut down by hand-cutting and chainsaws and generally occurred from late fall to early spring, to both maximize shrub retention and minimize negative effects to grouse breeding activities.

The study was led by John Severson, who conducted the research for his dissertation at the University of Idaho. The research was funded by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, through its Conservation Effects Assessment Project and Sage Grouse Initiative.

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4. **INTERIOR: Agency suspends advisory panels even as decisions loom**

E & E News, May 5 | Scott Streater

The Interior Department is formally reviewing the "charter and charge" of more than 200 advisory panels that assist federal agencies managing hundreds of millions of acres of public lands at a time when the Trump administration is considering significant changes to land-use designations and management practices.

The Bureau of Land Management has told members of its 30 resource advisory councils (RACs) to postpone scheduled meetings through at least September as part of the new national review of Interior's advisory panels, both internal and external.

That includes canceling meetings of six other BLM advisory committees affiliated with specific sites within the agency's National Conservation Lands system, as well as two other high-profile panels: the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board and the North Slope Science Initiative Science Technical Advisory Panel in Alaska.

It also affects other panels, such as the National Park System Advisory Board, which advises the NPS director and Interior secretary "on matters relating to the National Park Service, the National Park System, and programs administered by the National Park Service," including the Antiquities Act, which has been targeted by GOP congressional leaders.

The timing means some land management recommendations — including a high-profile review of national monuments — will be completed without the advisory panels' input.



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Heather Swift, an Interior spokeswoman, told E&E News in an email today that the review is part of an ongoing effort by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke aimed at "restoring trust in the Department's decision-making."

Swift said the review of "the charter and charge of each Board/Advisory Committee" is designed to "maximize feedback from these boards and ensure their compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act," the 1972 law that ensures that advice by various advisory committees is objective and accessible to the public.

"This review process necessitates the temporary postponement of advisory committee meetings," Swift said.

But Swift said the review is also designed to ensure compliance with "the President's recent executive orders."

President Trump in the last month has signed a number of executive orders, including one requiring the review of all policies that may "potentially burden" energy production activity on federal lands.

Trump last week also signed one requiring Interior to review the boundaries of dozens of national monuments designated within the last two decades and to decide whether they should be altered or eliminated (Greenwire, April 26).

That executive order is targeted at more than 30 national monuments designated since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres. It will initially focus on the fate of the recently designated 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument but will ultimately include sites like the 1.9-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, both in Utah.

That executive order requires Zinke to submit a report with his recommendations on the national monuments to the president within 120 days, before the Interior review of the advisory committees and boards is completed and the postponement of the meetings lifted.

That means the Utah resource advisory council that provides recommendations to BLM on management of the 22.9 million acres of federal public lands in the state will not weigh in on the



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national monument issue; neither, presumably, will the members of the agency's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument advisory committee.

That concerns Greg Zimmerman, deputy director of the Center for Western Priorities.

"The Trump administration and Interior Secretary Zinke talk a big game about including Western communities in decisionmaking on public lands, but this action proves it's nothing more than talk," Zimmerman said. "They are shutting out input from communities just as the administration takes unprecedented steps toward wiping national monuments from the map."

It's a particular concern for BLM, critics say.

Canceling the BLM RAC meetings "sends a clear signal that Secretary Zinke intends to make decisions behind closed doors and not through an open and transparent public process," Zimmerman said.

The agency's 30 RACs, whose members are appointed by the Interior secretary, are designed to help guide BLM administrators on a wide variety of issues involving major projects such as multistate transmission lines and energy projects.

The advisory panels typically have 10 to 15 members, who are supposed to represent a cross-section of local residents, state government agencies, industry and conservation leaders. They evaluate and submit recommendations on "land use planning, fire management, off-highway vehicle use, recreation, oil and gas exploration, noxious weed management, grazing issues, wild horse and burro herd management issues," and other topics, according to BLM.

Recommendations from the RACs, established by Interior in 1995 during the Clinton administration, are supposed to carry significant weight with BLM leaders.

But there have been some high-profile examples in the past two years where BLM ignored the recommendations of its RACs.

BLM in January approved the final two segments of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project in Idaho over the objections of an eight-member subcommittee of the BLM Boise District's RAC



that concluded the route would unnecessarily affect communities, natural resource values and private landowners (Greenwire, Jan. 20).

And last year, BLM formally approved the 287-megawatt Soda Mountain Solar Project in the Southern California desert, despite the recommendation of BLM California's Desert District RAC against the project and its impacts on wildlife, groundwater quality and other natural resources (E&E News PM, April 5, 2016).

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5. **Q&A: Bishop serves up politics, plays and Dr Pepper**

E & E News, May 5 | Kellie Lunney

Utah Republican Rep. Rob Bishop knows that timing is everything in theater, music and politics.

The seven-term congressman, a former thespian and sometime piano player, is poised to capitalize on the White House's current focus on reviewing the 111-year-old law that gives presidents broad authority to designate national monuments without congressional approval, as well as a major push to upgrade the country's failing infrastructure.

As a Westerner and the chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Bishop, 66, is an influential voice in the debate over the "damn" Antiquities Act, as he's called it. The law became an even greater source of angst for him after President Obama protected 1.35 million acres of land late last year in southeastern Utah as Bears Ears National Monument.

Bishop, known on Capitol Hill for his tart humor and three-piece suits, chatted with E&E News this week about the politics of public lands, why he prefers the House to the Senate, and his favorite drink, Dr Pepper.

Do you think President Trump is interested in, or knowledgeable about, natural resources issues?

No president is. To expect a president to know the details of the stuff that I know? Because when you're in Congress, you specialize. This is my area, this is my state. I know the details of it, more than senators do, so when Obama designated [Bears Ears], I have no qualms in my mind that he



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had no idea where it was. I don't know if he could find it on a map. The people who surrounded him on the White House staff, they should have known. For them, I have a lot less generosity than I do for President Obama.

Where do you disagree with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, with whom you served in Congress?

I don't really see much potential disagreement, to be honest with you. If you listen to what he's talking about, he gets the problem, he understands the dysfunction that the Interior Department has. He understands the department has made people livid. He talks about how he wants to change the culture. We're right on board with that.

Do you think he's going to have free rein in his job?

Based on nothing more than my gut feeling right now, I think he will actually have greater latitude with this White House once he has his team in place. I often thought [Obama administration Interior Secretary] Sally Jewell brought an element to the department that was sadly lacking before with her business background. I ultimately was disenchanted with her performance, because I think a lot of the positive things she could have done [in] reorganizing the place was frustrated, as she had to do what the White House was telling her to do. Left to her own devices, she would have been a much more effective secretary of Interior. I don't think that same interface will happen between Trump and Zinke, but I could be totally wrong.

When do you plan to introduce another Public Lands Initiative bill [his legislative alternative to the Bears Ears designation]?

Most of the leg work has been done, but I'm not going to give myself a timeline; I am going to take some time to do it. The big three issues in front of Congress right now, as everyone knows, are health care, taxes and infrastructure. That's sucking all the air out right now. The stuff I want to do is still kind of on the back burner. That's why I'd like to hurry and get those things done, so we can bring some of these things up.

Are you going to run for the Senate if [Republican Sen. Orrin] Hatch retires?



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[Laughs] I think you'd have to ask yourself, would I rather be a chairman of a full committee in the House, or sit on the back row of the Senate? Then you'd have to ask yourself, why would anyone want to be a senator?

Why not?

Have you seen that chamber? Seen the color of the marble and the carpet?

You used to be a teacher. What did you teach?

Well, allegedly. At the end, I was doing all Advanced Placement government and history classes. But I also taught English, debate and speech, and German for a while.

You were also a thespian, is that right?

Kind of. I did a lot of community theater plays. I met my wife doing a musical, "Once Upon a Mattress." She was the princess, and I was the prince. That's really corny. When I taught, I always directed a few plays for the drama department every year. And I accompanied a couple of them [on piano], as well.

I see you're drinking Dr Pepper. Is that your drink of choice?

As a matter of fact, it is. This is my Dr Pepper story, and it deals with George W. Bush. I had two trips to the White House: The first one, there was a waiter with some shrimp. I love shrimp. So I put a shrimp in my mouth and turned around, and there was George Bush with his hand extended. And all I could do was [makes mouth-full-of-food noises]. [Bush] said, "I caught you with your mouth full, huh, big boy?" Which offended me.

The next year, I was invited back, went over to the bar, and as a good Mormon, I ordered a Diet Pepsi [because they didn't have Dr Pepper]. I turned around, I had just taken a swallow, and there was George W. Bush again. The guy has to have a bell on him. I had the chance of talking to the president of the United States and asking anything I wanted to, and the first question that came to my mind was, "Why don't you have Dr Pepper in the White House?" He was very personable and kind, which I appreciated.



I thought Mormons weren't supposed to have caffeine.

The prohibition is on smoking, alcohol, coffee and tea.

You have nice suits. Has that always been your signature?

Thank you, no. I have to have vests now because it's become the -ism. When I first came here, I was a little bit overweight. I was fat. I dropped about 75 pounds. I started wearing vests because I needed the extra material, and it became a standard. So now I wear a vest. I'm not really a very formal person. If I am not in vests, my choice is to be in shorts and flips. I don't do business casual.

Have you ever worn flip-flops on the Capitol grounds here?

Actually, yes. I used to do that a lot, especially when I was taking people through the Capitol, because it really drove the guards crazy, especially on the Senate side.

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6. INTERIOR: Industry, enviros to feds — take your time on valuation regs

E & E News, May 5 / Pamela King

Supporters and opponents of federal regulations to determine royalty rates for oil, gas and coal produced on public lands have a message for the Interior Department: Revising these rules may take a long time.

Last month, Interior's Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) called for comments on whether and how to revise its regulations on federally produced fossil fuels. Separately, the agency asked for feedback on a proposal to repeal ONRR's "2017 Valuation Rule," the most recent set of reforms to those regulations (Energywire, April 4).

The review and advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) followed a request by Interior to stay litigation related to the ONRR rule. The move garnered praise from oil and gas industry groups, including the American Petroleum Institute (Energywire, March 27).



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In comments filed April 17, API requested more time to analyze the nuanced changes Interior has proposed to the ONRR rule.

"This topic is very complex and requires members to review and consider both the 2017 Valuation Rule as well as the regulations that existed prior to the 2017 Valuation Rule," wrote Emily Hague, API's senior policy adviser for industry and upstream operations. "Any regulatory changes — whether to the 2017 Valuation Rule or to preexisting rules — could significantly impact American energy development."

API asked to extend the comment period, which closed yesterday, an additional 60 days to July 3. The group also asked that ONRR consider presenting the rule revision and all public comments to its newly established Royalty Policy Committee.

Chartered in 2010 by former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, the committee's formation had been on hold until an April 3 call for nominations appeared in the Federal Register. ONRR this week [extended](#) the due date for nominations from May 3 to June 2.

The panel will also include as ex-officio members several Interior officials who have yet to be appointed, such as the directors of the bureaus of Land Management and Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

An ONRR spokeswoman said the agency is tentatively scheduled to announce the committee's appointments in the fall.

The Western Energy Alliance said it supports immediate and complete repeal of the 2017 Valuation Rule.

"The rule if left to stand would do to small independent oil and natural gas producers operating on federal lands what Dodd-Frank did to community banks and what the Affordable Care Act did to independent hospitals: render the federal regulatory environment so complex that small businesses cannot possibly comply," the trade group's president, Kathleen Sgamma, wrote in comments filed yesterday.

Industry has been explaining the faults of the ONRR rule since the proposed regulation came out in 2015, Sgamma wrote in an email to E&E News.



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"We already know the problems with it," she said. "It's time to get on with the repeal and then deal with any targeted regulatory changes in the future."

The Independent Petroleum Association of America, a trade group representing small producers, also supported repeal of the 2017 rule but requested additional time to review options for the existing regulation.

"The ANPR which seeks to offer greater simplicity, certainty, clarity, and consistency is welcomed by our member companies," wrote Daniel Naatz, the group's senior vice president of government relations and political affairs. "However, we feel the short time frame for comments is not adequate given the complex subject matter."

A 'massive waste'

Conservation advocates also called for more time on the ONRR rule — but they ultimately urged caution on scrapping the 2017 reform.

ONRR's rulemaking is premature and muddled, the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), a grass-roots environmental group, wrote in its remarks.

"By simultaneously seeking comment on whether or not to repeal the Valuation Rule and seeking comment on what to replace the rule with, commenters and other members of the public — including WORC — are left to provide substantive comments on hypothetical or imaginary alternative scenarios, never defined by your department," WORC wrote.

The group requested a 60-day extension to the comment period but urged ONRR to altogether halt the ANPR until the agency definitively decides whether to repeal the 2017 Valuation Rule.

The Wilderness Society, a conservation group, called Interior's revisit of the ONRR rule a "massive waste of federal resources" inconsistent with President Trump's goal of reducing regulatory costs.

"The purpose of the current ANPR is to essentially repeat what had already been accomplished with the Final Valuation Rule," wrote Bruce Pendery, energy and climate specialist for the Wilderness Society's BLM Action Center.



Repeal of the 2017 Valuation Rule appears to be a knee-jerk reaction to a pair of industry challenges to the regulation last year, he added (Greenwire, Jan. 9).

"But we would note that these legal challenges only contest 'certain provisions of the Final Valuation Rule,'" Pendery wrote. "If the whole rule is not being challenged, there certainly is no need to dispose of the whole rule just to react to these lawsuits."

House Natural Resources ranking member Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) yesterday echoed the call for additional time in his own letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. He questioned the legality of Interior's postponement of the 2017 Valuation Rule as the agency decided its next steps.

The postponement last week prompted a lawsuit from the states of California and New Mexico (Greenwire, April 27).

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7. PUBLIC LANDS: Mont. business group pressures Zinke on national monuments

E & E News, May 5 | Scott Streater

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke should "stand on the right side of history" and oppose any move to decrease the size of or eliminate already designated national monuments, according to a business coalition from the fifth-generation Montanan's home state.

In a [brief](#) letter to Zinke, Business for Montana's Outdoors writes that it is very concerned with President Trump's executive order last week requiring the Interior Department to review the boundaries of dozens of national monuments designated within the last two decades and to decide whether they should be altered or eliminated (Greenwire, April 26).

The review will ultimately recommend whether the president should rescind, resize or modify the management of about 30 monuments. A final report is due within 120 days.

"The Antiquities Act has a history of preserving natural treasures for the benefit of all Americans, enacted and first used by the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt," according to the letter from the group, which comprises more than 130 businesses including outdoor equipment retailers and manufacturers.



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Zinke, a former Republican congressman from Montana, has often compared his views on public lands and conservation to those of Teddy Roosevelt.

"In Montana, our national monuments not only have a track record of protecting public lands for hunting and fishing but also helping to grow local economies," the letter says.

The group references a 2014 study by Montana-based nonpartisan research group Headwaters Economics that found local economies "grew after the 2001 designation of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument."

"Protected public lands and waters are the backbone of this economy," the letter says. "Creating uncertainty over the future of national monuments will hurt those gateway communities and businesses that rely on these crucial public lands."

It's not clear yet what Interior's evaluation of existing national monuments designated since 1996 and larger than 100,000 acres will recommend.

Zinke has given mixed signals.

During a signing ceremony of Trump's executive order, Zinke said the order would not eliminate any monument designations or weaken environmental protections, even as he criticized unspecified monument designations for placing lands "off-limits to public access for grazing, fishing, mining, multiple use and even outdoor recreation."

But he also emphasized that the monuments should conform to the "smallest area" possible, suggesting the final review could aim to slash the size of numerous sites.

Business for Montana's Outdoors' letter says that would be a bad idea.

"We need not remind you that revoking Teddy Roosevelt's conservation legacy is a highly controversial proposal. No previous administration has ever attempted to revoke a predecessor's monument designation, even where some initial public disagreement over the designation existed," the letter says. "In fact, Administrative action to remove protections for sites protected under the Antiquities Act are widely considered illegal. You are uniquely suited to stand up for a long and bipartisan tradition of protecting national monuments — to stand on the right side of history."



"Given your experience as a fifth-generation Montanan, we encourage you to remember the Montana way of leaving this place better than we found it for all who come after us," the letter concludes.

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8. INTERIOR: More offshore revenue would help morale, backlog — Zinke

E & E News, May 5 | Corbin Hiar

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke suggested today at a "Doggy Days" press event that additional offshore oil and gas drilling royalties could offset potential budget cuts at the department.

"I have an MBA in finance, and I open up both sides of the budget," Zinke said when asked whether more dog-friendly policies at the department could compensate for employee dissatisfaction about the White House's proposed cuts (Greenwire, March 20).

"If you go back to 2008, we made \$15.5 billion more in a year than what we made in the last year," he added. "That's just in offshore."

By comparison, Zinke noted that the department's National Park Service has a backlog of overdue repairs that will cost around \$12.5 billion to fix.

"But \$15.5 billion would cover the entirety of our backlog for our parks — the entirety of it and have \$3 billion more to deliver to go ahead and build in recapitalization on things," he said.

Interior is set to receive \$12.3 billion for the rest of the current fiscal year, an increase of \$42 million from its current spending level (Greenwire, May 1).

That budget boost was included in an omnibus negotiated by lawmakers and sent to President Trump yesterday (E&E News PM, May 4).

The White House has asked Congress to slash Interior's budget 12 percent for fiscal 2018, a drop of \$1.5 billion.

The secretary also acknowledged that morale at the department is not good, something that the "Doggy Days" pilot program seeks to improve on (Greenwire, March 23).



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Interior came in 11th out of 18 large agencies in the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service's most recent governmentwide survey of employee satisfaction. Only about 61 percent of Interior staffers were happy with the department (Greenwire, Dec. 15, 2016).

"A lot of the reasons why we're not last is because Interior has the holdings that are our greatest national treasures," Zinke told reporters, while his dog Ragnar scurried around his wood-paneled office. "We need to take care of them more. And I think our folks — we have good people — they care about public property, too. I've got to give them the tools to do that."

That's why "I do talk a lot about revenue," Zinke added. "And I think that helps morale, too — that they know that I'm paying attention to infrastructure. As I should. We all love clean bathrooms."

Dozens of employees and their dogs streamed into the secretary's office for a chance to shake hands and get a photo with Zinke and Ragnar during the half-hour event. Several employees who came to the meet-and-greet without dogs were turned away.

The department plans to do an "after action" report examining how the first Doggy Day went at Interior's main and south buildings in D.C., the secretary said. One issue that's likely to come up is the difficulty many employees had getting to work without public transportation, which doesn't allow dogs.

The second day of the pilot program at Interior headquarters is scheduled for Sept. 1. But Zinke said the department is also encouraging other Interior offices to consider allowing dogs.

Other departments are also considering following Interior's lead on dogs, he added. The pilot program came up yesterday during a meeting with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Zinke said. He declined to provide further details on their discussion.

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[UTAH – TOP STORIES – MAY 10, 2017](#)

1. [Op-ed: An open letter to Robert Redford](#)

The Deseret News, May 10 / Don Peay

Robert Redford has done an incredible job building and managing a “wilderness” recreation experience at his Sundance Ski Resort, a part of which is leased land from the U.S. Forest Service.

2. [‘Give Your Land a Hand’ volunteers needed](#)

St George News, May 10 / Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – As part of a campaign to keep Washington County’s public lands beautiful, the county and its partners are sponsoring a cleanup project in the Bloomington area of St. George Saturday morning.

3. [Imagine developments in a privatized Logan Canyon](#)

The Herald Journal News, May 10 / Thad Box

I don’t think I’m old, but some of my gray-bearded ex-students do. I celebrated my 88th birthday. Jenny and I will soon fly to Texas to see our first great-grandson. The last time we flew, a hostess our granddaughter’s age stamped “pre-board” on our tickets without our asking. And — I can’t remember what I wanted to write.

[E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – TOP STORIES](#)

1. [Op-Ed: Endangered species should face same Trump test as national monuments](#)

The Hill, May 9 / Terry Anderson

This week, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke is touring two national monuments as part of President Trump’s April 26 executive order to review the last 20 years of national monument designations. The order gave Zinke 45 days to review monuments and determine whether any should be “rescinded, resized or modified in order to better benefit our public lands.”



2. [**REGULATIONS: Interior vows action on methane rule after Senate vote fails**](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Corbin Hiar and Kellie Lunney

The Interior Department this afternoon signaled its intent to overhaul an Obama-era rule on methane waste from oil and gas operations after the Republican-controlled Senate failed today to scuttle the regulation.

3. [**METHANE: Can Zinke follow through on his post-CRA promises?**](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Pamela King

In correspondence persuading Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) to back repeal of a federal rule to curb natural gas emissions from oil production on public land, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke laid out a plan for how his agency would address methane waste without the Obama-era regulation.

4. [**PUBLIC LANDS: 4 states take aim at Trump's coal leasing revival effort**](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Ellen M. Gilmer

Four states are taking the Trump administration to court over plans to restart coal leasing on public lands.

5. [**WILDLIFE: Federal grassland program benefits sage grouse — study**](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Nicholas Geranios, AP

A new study of sage grouse in Eastern Washington found a surprisingly large benefit from a federal program that subsidizes farmers to plant year-round grasses and native shrubs instead of crops.

6. [**EPA: Dems to Pruitt — don't close regional offices**](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Kevin Bogardus

Democrats are urging U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt not to close any of the agency's regional offices.



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7. [POLITICS: Effort to shield documents sparks transparency debate](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Geof Koss

Are House Republicans conspiring with the Trump administration to evade a key federal open-records law? Or is Congress simply reasserting a long-standing legal prerogative it says is essential to conducting oversight of the executive branch?



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UTAH – FULL STORY

1. **Op-ed: An open letter to Robert Redford**

The Deseret News, May 10 / Don Peay

Robert Redford has done an incredible job building and managing a “wilderness” recreation experience at his Sundance Ski Resort, a part of which is leased land from the U.S. Forest Service.

To sustain the “management” of the place, ski and zip line tickets are sold, restaurants charge for food, cabin lots are sold.

Timber has been clear-cut to make ski runs, lifts and cables have been installed to access the tops of the mountains, the river has been dammed to make a reflection pond, and structures have been built for enjoyment of guests. To help “manage” nature, snow-making machines have been installed. Sundance has multiple uses, generates revenues, creates jobs and invests money each year to keep it a wonderful place!

If a president came in and declared that Sundance was so special — which it is — and that it needed to be preserved and past activities be banned, or limited, I would fight against that presidential action, even if the president was of my own party.

So, the exact parallels exist with the monuments — Bears Ears and Grand Staircase. Like Sundance, these areas are wonderful places. For the past 100-plus years, these lands have been managed as multiple-use. Revenues and jobs are created; money is required to have active management of habitats, water and wildlife. Like Sundance, these areas have been kept pristine and natural systems even augmented.

So here is the problem now with the presidential monuments: All of a sudden, someone comes in and wants to put incredible restrictions on past use and, over time, federal agencies demand more and more “natural systems” and no “management.” The parallel at Sundance would be to turn off the snow-making machines and stop skiing, mountain biking and zip line activity because these activities are not “natural.” And people in large cities far away would begin to demonize Redford for making money and pillaging the land. Without consulting, or respecting Redford’s lifetime of work and investment, they would make edicts from afar about how to manage his resort.



Now, Sundance is mostly privately owned. But there are exact parallels in whether you can have certain “management” activities of land, water and wildlife, and if certain functions, such as hunting, grazing and limited mineral development, can take place — and if these traditional uses can continue to be allowed.

If the shoe were on the other foot, Redford would be adamantly opposed to federal mandates from afar. I would join him in his defense.

It would be nice for once for those on the left to say, “Yes, let's protect and preserve these magnificent places. Let's protect historical uses. Let's continue to allow certain renewable activities that generate revenue. And let's not demonize capitalism. And, just like at Sundance, let's recognize that through cooperation and collaboration, on federal lands we can have a multiple-use, 'wilderness' experience.”

Don Peay was founder of both Trump for President Utah and Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife. He holds a bachelor's in chemical engineering and an MBA, both from Brigham Young University.

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2. ‘Give Your Land a Hand’ volunteers needed

St George News, May 10 | Julie Applegate

ST. GEORGE – As part of a campaign to keep Washington County’s public lands beautiful, the county and its partners are sponsoring a cleanup project in the Bloomington area of St. George Saturday morning.

The area near the Bearclaw Poppy Trailhead west of Navajo Drive is heavily used for recreational shooting, all-terrain vehicles, mountain bikers and others and is often littered with trash and debris.

Dozens of Washington County residents cleaned up the area April 1, gathering 30 cubic yards of trash from public lands in the area and significantly improving a recreation area that was once an eyesore, officials said in a written statement. But more help is needed to beautify the area, and the county is asking the public’s help with trash removal.



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Washington County recently launched a new countywide campaign to raise residents' awareness and participation in keeping public lands clean.

Unveiled in November by the Washington County Commission, the "Give Your Land a Hand" campaign encourages residents to clean up after themselves and pick up any garbage they come across while recreating on public lands.

"This is one of those opportunities that everybody from both sides of the political spectrum can get behind and work together on," Public Lands Clean Up Committee Chairman Rev. Jimi Kestin said.

"Because we all believe that our public lands are worthy of being kept clean ... I'm always looking for reasons to unify people."

Kestin is senior pastor at the Solomon's Porch Foursquare Fellowship in St. George and is known for his service in the county's business and faith communities.

For Saturday's event, trash bags and dumpsters will be provided. Participants are asked to supply their own gloves, water and snacks for the event and to wear protective clothing such as boots, hats, long-sleeve shirts and long pants.

The cleanup will run from 8:30 a.m. to noon; however, volunteers are welcome at any point during this time. Event coordinators will be on hand to direct volunteers, Kestin said.

Volunteers are asked to visit the welcome station located at the Bear Claw Poppy trailhead at the west end of Navajo Drive in Bloomington. At the station, they will receive directions to cleanup sites and dumpsters, sign volunteer release waivers and will be given the opportunity to join the Give Your Land a Hand mailing list to obtain notices of future events.

For more information see the county's Give Your Land a Hand webpage or email info@giveyourlandahand.com.

Partners supporting the event include Washington County, Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, the Bureau of Land Management St. George Field Office and Arizona Strip District, Republic Services, Washington County's Interfaith Council, Utah Public Lands Alliance, the State of Utah, Trust Lands Administration, the City of St. George, Walmart, Target and Costco.



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3. **Imagine developments in a privatized Logan Canyon**

The Herald Journal News, May 10 | Thad Box

I don't think I'm old, but some of my gray-bearded ex-students do. I celebrated my 88th birthday. Jenny and I will soon fly to Texas to see our first great-grandson. The last time we flew, a hostess our granddaughter's age stamped "pre-board" on our tickets without our asking. And — I can't remember what I wanted to write.

I clearly remember Cache Valley 58 years ago. Jenny, our 8-month-old son and I arrived in Logan in late June 1959. All of our earthly possessions were in a trailer I built from a wrecked Ford van. We checked into a motel and called my USU department head, Laurie Stoddart. He loaded us in his car and took us up Logan Canyon.

Tired as we were, we knew he was introducing us to precious gifts — fishing holes, picnic spots, hiking trails, nice places to pitch a tent. It was hard for Texans to believe we owned part of that land. And that we could use it and share it with other owners.

Next day we moved into a house we had rented on the phone from a professor on sabbatical. We had no contract. I had paid no deposit. No one was there. A neighbor gave us the house key and made us part of the neighborhood before we unloaded our son's potty chair. Cool, clear water ran down an irrigation ditch that watered the yard and a garden the owner planted for us.

On July 3 I was forced into a crash course on public land. Professor Wayne Cook had a family emergency in Kansas. I had to assume his duties. With Wayne's notes, help from my colleagues and an Independence Day weekend, I prepared to teach at Summer Camp the following Monday. Because I had a wife with a crawling baby in a new town, I chose to commute.

At daybreak each day I turned east on Canyon Road, the main highway to Bear Lake. Herm's sign said it was the last chance. As I passed First Dam and the electrical generating plant, I entered public land. The road narrowed and snaked around three beautiful reservoirs behind dams that diverted irrigation water. No rushes or choking vegetation invaded the mirror-like pools. Well-designed campgrounds built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) welcomed travelers.



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There was a scattering of private inholdings and businesses along the road. Zanavoo consisted of a thriving restaurant, a gift shop and a motel. There was a dance hall near Right Hand Fork where forestry students went for (probably illegal) beer. Sumer cabins were scattered along the river. New ones were under construction in recently opened areas. Most cabins were on long-term leases, an enticement for people to use the public lands.

Land all around me was struggling to recover from a century of exploitation. Each day taught me something about restoring health to damaged land. Decaying stumps, invading weeds and erosion scars on beautiful landscapes told a story of greed, misunderstanding, or both. Each day I tried to relate what I was seeing with what was expected of me in my new job.

To improve the abused environment and service Wayne's research projects, I had to put theory into practice. I borrowed horses, located research plots, collected data and coordinated our college's activities with land users and Forest Service employees. I learned eating supper with ranch families, having coffee with sheepherders who barely spoke English, sharing my water with hikers, jump-starting a fisherman's car and telling hunters where I had seen a four-point buck. Some folks complained about government rules, but I don't remember anyone wanting to put the land in private ownership.

Today most land of Logan Canyon away from roads or rivers is in much better condition than it was 70 years ago. But lands near rivers suffer. The Logan River road was widened and straightened, taking its toll on bottom lands. Reservoirs behind dams are filled with silt and invading plants. Some campgrounds have been abandoned. Private in-holdings are fenced, entrance gates to leased cabin areas are locked and no trespassing signs decorate landscapes.

People in high places, including many Utah elected officials, want the public lands in private ownership. The Kim Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah recently predicted Utah population will nearly double by 2065. We'll need houses for twice as many people in a decade less time than I've been in Utah.

Think of the fortunes that could be made if Logan Canyon land could be bought and "developed." Imagine a four lane highway from Logan to Garden City. Think about macmansions, tennis courts and swimming pools where leased cabins stand, on campgrounds and level spots near that highway. Imagine huge hotels and golf courses for members only.



Pull up Google Earth and look at new housing developments on private land around Bear Lake. Follow the road back to Logan and note places where houses, private clubs, and luxury hotels could turn millionaires into billionaires while local taxpayers pay for infrastructure and services. Then follow the road from Avon to Eden and observe new development in that valley. With a fast growing population, privately owned land and the art of a deal, Logan Canyon development could be huge.

I don't feel old. I feel like I'm only one of a whole bunch of frogs sitting in a pot of calm, warming water.

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E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – FULL STORY

1. Op-Ed: Endangered species should face same Trump test as national monuments

E & E News, May 9 | Emily Yehle

This week, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke is touring two national monuments as part of President Trump's April 26 executive order to review the last 20 years of national monument designations. The order gave Zinke 45 days to review monuments and determine whether any should be "rescinded, resized or modified in order to better benefit our public lands." The tour includes Bears Ears — 1.35 million acres established by President Obama in 2016 — and Grand Staircase-Escalante — 1.9 million acres established by President Clinton in 1996. These are only two of 27 that Zinke has singled out for review.

Zinke sees the review as an opportunity to "give state and local communities a meaningful voice in the process." Doing so could be the environmental legacy of the Trump administration.

Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, presidents can establish monuments without any input or approval from Congress or state and local officials. Hence, Bears Ears is seen as a "massive land grab." That land grab is even bigger considering that Obama created 26 new monuments and expanded 8 more, for a total of 553 million acres, bigger than Alaska, more than any previous president.



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The effect of this executive power abuse on state and local governments is illustrated by Clinton's creation of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. In it, he included 176,000 acres of state lands used to generate revenues for Utah's K-12 public education system. The House Committee on Natural Resources recently cited Utah Geological Survey data that found restrictions for commodity production such as grazing and mineral development caused the value of the state lands to drop by \$8 billion immediately after the designation. Bears Ears locked up another 109,000 acres of state land.

"Families that have lived for generations in affected communities find their families torn apart due to lack of employment opportunities for the next generation," Kathleen Clarke, former head of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management under President Bush, said of the monument. "Populations are declining. In the twenty years since the creation of the Grand Staircase, school enrollment in Escalante has gone from 150 to 57 students."

Obama's designation of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine caused similar concerns. At a recent hearing of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands, Maine Gov. Paul LePage (R) identified economic losses to the forestry industry and public access barriers such as the loss of connectivity for ATV trails. "Not long after the President designated the Monument, Maine residents started to feel the negative effects of having the federal government as their new master," he testified.

The monument review order follows President Trump's Feb. 28 revocation of Obama's "Waters of the United States" rule. That rule gave the Environmental Protection Agency authority to regulate virtually every drop of water from the Mississippi River to a backyard puddle. He has instructed the EPA to unwind Obama's war on coal and signed a congressional resolution overturning the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) seizure of Alaska's authority to manage wildlife on federal refuges.

The president should continue this trajectory by instructing Secretary Zinke to review the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's overreach. For example, in 2014, the FWS added four sub-species of the Mazama pocket gopher in Thurston County, Washington, to its list of threatened animals.

To develop property suitable for gophers, owners must go through a long, costly permitting process. Requiring a permit is not based on the number of gophers, but on the property's suitability as gopher habitat. Landowners with suitable habitat may be required to develop a Habitat



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Conservation Plan approved by FWS, a plan that could cost \$42,000 in habitat offset fees. In one case, a local developer spent over \$3 million to accommodate the furry digger on 77 acres of its land.

Just as Secretary Zinke is seeking local input on national monument designations, he should require FWS to do so with endangered species regulations. When it worked with a nearby military base, they were able to develop a plan whereby gophers thrive along with military training exercises. The same could be done with private landowners.

President Trump's executive orders have signaled that he thinks state and local policymakers can be better caretakers of the environment than Washington bureaucrats. The Trump environmental agenda seems to be following the advice of David Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth — "Think globally, act locally." State and local citizens are better positioned to solve most environmental problems than are bureaucrats in Washington.

Terry L. Anderson is a senior fellow at the Stanford University Hoover Institution and former president of the Property and Environment Research Center in Montana.

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2. **REGULATIONS: Interior vows action on methane rule after Senate vote fails**

E & E News, May 10 | Corbin Hiar and Kellie Lunney

The Interior Department this afternoon signaled its intent to overhaul an Obama-era rule on methane waste from oil and gas operations after the Republican-controlled Senate failed today to scuttle the regulation.

"As part of President Trump's America-First Energy Strategy and executive order, the Department has reviewed and flagged the Waste Prevention rule as one we will suspend, revise or rescind given its significant regulatory burden that encumbers American energy production, economic growth and job creation," Kate MacGregor, Interior's acting assistant secretary for land and minerals, said in a statement.



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"The vote today in the Senate doesn't impact the Administration's commitment to spurring investment in responsible energy development and ensuring smart regulatory protections," she added.

The Bureau of Land Management rule was designed to limit emissions of planet-warming methane from the oil and gas sector, the largest industrial emitter. It requires producers operating on public and tribal lands to incrementally reduce the amount of natural gas vented or flared from wells by capturing more of it over time.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke previously indicated in a letter to Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) that the department would "engage in a robust assessment" of all venting and flaring requirements to ensure industries aren't wasting natural resources or taxpayer money.

He also told Portman, who was wavering on whether to support striking down the regulation, that Interior would revise existing BLM restrictions on the flaring of unmarketable methane, as well as expedite certain permitting processes and eliminate any BLM policies that duplicate flaring restrictions in several Western states, including the one in Colorado, which the Obama administration modeled its rule on.

Those commitments convinced the Ohio moderate to vote for the rule repeal, which fell short by one vote of moving forward this morning (Greenwire, May 10). Three Republicans — Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and John McCain of Arizona — sided with Democrats who voted against moving ahead with the measure.

It's unclear if Zinke will follow the plan he outlined to Portman or devise a new one in light of the failed repeal attempt. Environmentalists have questioned whether such actions would have the effect of reducing methane emissions (Energywire, May 10).

Industry groups were disappointed by the Senate vote but welcomed the news that Interior doesn't plan to let the methane regulations stand as is.

Nevertheless, oil and gas companies will have to start complying with the many provisions of the regulation in January, according to Robert Dillon, spokesman for the American Council for Capital Formation, which opposes BLM's venting and flaring rule. As a result, companies must review their budgets this summer and decide whether it makes more economic sense to comply or shut down production.



"The big thing is uncertainty for companies who don't have time to wait for Interior to unwind the rule," Dillon said.

Supporters of the rule, meanwhile, were critical of MacGregor's announcement. The promise to revise or rescind the rule amounts to the Trump administration "saving the day for the oil and gas special interests who weren't able to muster even a Senate majority to kill the rule," said Amit Narang, regulatory policy advocate at Public Citizen's Congress Watch.

Other rules on the chopping block

MacGregor's comments represent the second firm commitment the department has made to alter or eliminate any of the four oil and gas industry-related rules that Trump's March 28 directive said could "unduly burden the development of domestic energy resources."

Interior previously announced that it was rescinding BLM's high-profile and much-litigated hydraulic fracturing rule, which set new requirements for well construction, wastewater management and chemical disclosure for fracked wells on tribal and public lands (Energywire, March 17).

The department hasn't publicly weighed in on two less controversial rules governing drilling in national wildlife refuges and parks that were also targeted by the executive order (Greenwire, April 25).

Zinke was due to receive a report from his deputy secretary advising him on how to comply with Trump's energy directive, but the secretary is currently out in Utah reviewing national monuments, as called for in a separate executive order (Greenwire, May 10).

Interior didn't immediately respond to a request for more information on how it plans to proceed on the methane, refuges or parks rules.

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3. METHANE: Can Zinke follow through on his post-CRA promises?

E & E News, May 10 | Pamela King



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In correspondence persuading Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) to back repeal of a federal rule to curb natural gas emissions from oil production on public land, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke laid out a plan for how his agency would address methane waste without the Obama-era regulation.

Those promises ring hollow in light of the Congressional Review Act's prohibition of a rule that is "substantially the same" as a regulation tossed under the statute, legal experts and environmental groups said yesterday.

"Secretary Zinke claims that if Congress nullifies the protections that BLM has put in place to reduce wasteful methane venting and flaring on our public lands, he will issue new guidance or rules that will achieve the same end. This is an empty promise," said David Hayes, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and former deputy secretary of the Interior during the Clinton and Obama administrations.

"Industry lawyers are standing by to argue that because of congressional action, the department has no authority to protect taxpayers and the public from the continued waste of valuable public resources," Hayes said.

In his Thursday letter to Ohio's junior senator, Zinke pledged to assess all of Interior's venting and flaring requirements, bolster incentives for methane capture, and expedite approvals for infrastructure to carry excess gas to market.

Interior could also update its Notice to Lessees 4A (NTL-4A) to "take concrete action to reduce methane waste," Zinke wrote.

The secretary's promises convinced Portman — who had previously been publicly undecided on the issue — to back a CRA resolution doing away with BLM's methane rule (E&E Daily, May 9).

"I believe that the Interior Department should do more to prevent methane venting and flaring on federal lands," Portman wrote in a Monday statement. "The Secretary of the Interior has made clear in a letter to me that the Department is committed to acting on this important issue going forward, and he has outlined specific actions it would take to do that."

But Zinke's plan to address methane through the NTL-4A could be legally fraught, dozens of law professors wrote to Senate leadership this week (Energywire, May 9).

"[T]here is a serious legal question whether the Interior Secretary can impose new requirements on lessees by simply revising the existing Notice to Lessees," their letter said. "The CRA clearly provides that, if the



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Waste Prevention Rule is overturned by CRA resolution, the Interior Department becomes legally prohibited from adopting new rules that are 'substantially the same' as the regulations overturned, unless Congress specifically provides the Department with such authority in new legislation.

"The meaning of that limitation is unknown as no court has yet interpreted it."

John Ruple, associate law professor at the University of Utah and one of the letter's signatories, said the legal implications of Zinke's proposal are murky.

"The over-energetic use of the CRA by Congress is potentially dangerous, since the agency that promulgated the rule at issue is prohibited from putting forward a 'substantially similar' replacement — and no one really knows what that means. Facing budget scrutiny and uncertainty regarding their legal footing, it is hard to imagine agencies acting quickly to fill the void created by use of the CRA — especially when agencies are supposed to eliminate two regulations for each new rule they issue," he said in a statement yesterday. "I am concerned that the Department of the Interior may not be able to deliver on the promise of a meaningful replacement."

Methane authority

Industry groups have asked Interior to stay out of methane control altogether.

"There are efforts already underway by the EPA to regulate methane emissions and ensure a fair and equitable return to the American taxpayers," said Dan Naatz, senior vice president of government relations and political affairs at the Independent Petroleum Association of America. "Using the Mineral Leasing Act to regulate air emissions is a non-starter."

Because most of Zinke's strategies would not require a new rulemaking, his promises stand on solid ground, said Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance. Updating the NTL-4A is still within BLM's authority, even if the methane rule disappears, she said.

"Apparently the only threat of litigation to subsequent actions by Secretary Zinke to keep these promises to Senator Portman would come from these same environmental groups, a truly twisted result from what they claim to want," Sgamma said.

The item on Zinke's list that would offer the most effective change is to approve pipeline rights of way — which could be done in a matter of days, she said.



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The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) questioned whether Zinke's proposals would have the effect of reducing methane emissions.

Two of the strategies — assess venting and flaring requirements and eliminate duplicative federal flaring restrictions — would have zero impact on curbing escaped gas, the group wrote in its own letter to Portman.

"Overall, the letter does not identify a single specific 'concrete action' that the Secretary might take to reduce waste," EDF wrote. "The Secretary asks you to accept a page of vague and unfounded assurances in lieu of an 80-page technical rule, enforceable by law."

EDF asked Portman to reconsider his support of the resolution.

A long-delayed Senate vote is expected today.

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4. **PUBLIC LANDS: 4 states take aim at Trump's coal leasing revival effort**

E & E News, May 10 | Ellen M. Gilmer

Four states are taking the Trump administration to court over plans to restart coal leasing on public lands.

California, New Mexico, New York and Washington filed suit yesterday, challenging Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's decision to lift a leasing moratorium that had been in place for more than a year.

The Obama administration froze federal coal leasing in January 2016 to conduct a broad analysis focused on leasing's environmental impacts and royalty calculations. Zinke announced in March that he was tossing the review and restarting the leasing program. The announcement came after President Trump's "energy independence" executive order aimed at boosting domestic energy production.

Yesterday's lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana, says Zinke's decision violated the National Environmental Policy Act. The four states argue that restarting the leasing program amounts to a major federal action that requires fresh environmental review.



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Interior and its Bureau of Land Management oversee coal resources on public lands across the country, with federal leases producing nearly .4 billion tons of coal in 2015. Most of it comes from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana.

"Without the benefit of the hard look at the current environmental impacts of the coal leasing program that a lawful, up-to-date environmental impact review would provide, Defendants' decision to restart the coal leasing program does not even acknowledge, let alone address, the harms to Plaintiffs from the leasing program," the lawsuit says.

The states are asking the district court to freeze the leasing program until Interior conducts additional environmental review. The agency does not comment on pending litigation.

The lawsuit also argues that ending the moratorium "without evaluating whether the program is in the public interest or ensuring that it will provide fair market value to the public" is a violation of the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act — federal laws that govern leasing on public lands.

The states note that they have "long been leaders" in working to cut greenhouse gas emissions and are actively facing effects of climate change, including more frequent and intense storms, reduced snowpack, more frequent wildfires and sea-level rise.

"Plaintiffs have an interest in the responsible use, management, and conservation of our nation's public resources," the suit says. "That interest is particularly strong where, as here, the use of such resources causes adverse environmental impacts that the States are working diligently to address."

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson (D) — who noted that his state also faces impacts from coal-train traffic, with as many as 70 trains per day passing through some Washington rail segments — argued that the Trump administration's approach has ignored concerns about environmental impacts and whether taxpayers are getting a fair return on the federal leases.

"Taxpayers deserve to have their natural resources managed responsibly," he said in a statement. "Responsible stewardship requires an understanding of the costs and benefits of extraction, which just months ago these same agencies admitted they simply don't have. That's unacceptable."



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Joining Ferguson in the suit are New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, all Democrats.

Related litigation

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe and a coalition of environmental groups filed their own lawsuit in March challenging the reversal of the leasing moratorium. They make similar NEPA claims, and Northern Cheyenne argues that Interior also failed to meet its tribal consultation obligations before making the decision (Greenwire, March 30).

Northern Cheyenne President L. Jace Killsback said he was glad to see the four states joining the opposition to the Trump administration's move.

"They are allies to us, and we are an ally to them," he said, noting that their NEPA and consultation claims are complementary.

The environmental groups in that case are the Center for Biological Diversity, ecoCheyenne, Citizens for Clean Energy, Defenders of Wildlife, the Montana Environmental Information Center, the Sierra Club and WildEarth Guardians, represented by Earthjustice.

In a separate lawsuit filed yesterday, the Grand Canyon Trust is accusing Interior of violating the Freedom of Information Act by withholding documents related to the Obama administration's review process for the leasing program. The group first filed its request last summer.

"The federal coal leasing program is failing taxpayers, polluting air and water, and lining the pockets of coal company executives," Energy Program Director Amber Reimondo said in a statement. "The American public deserves to know why our government is turning a blind eye to clear science and the real economics of dirty coal mining."

The group filed its suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Separately, the Center for Biological Diversity has requested records of communication

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5. **WILDLIFE: Federal grassland program benefits sage grouse — study**

E & E News, May 10 | Nicholas Geranios, AP

A new study of sage grouse in Eastern Washington found a surprisingly large benefit from a federal program that subsidizes farmers to plant year-round grasses and native shrubs instead of crops.

The study concluded that is probably the reason that sage grouse still live in portions of Washington's Columbia River Basin.

“Without these lands, our models predict that we would lose about two thirds of the species’ habitat, and that the sage grouse would go extinct in two of three sub-populations,” said Andrew Shirk of the University of Washington’s Climate Impacts Group.

The study was conducted by the UW, plus state and federal researchers, and will appear in an upcoming issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management.

Sage grouse are ground-dwelling, chicken-sized birds found in 11 Western states, from North Dakota to California. As few as 200,000 remain in the U.S., down from a peak population of about 16 million. The males are known for their strutting courtship ritual on breeding grounds, and they produce a bubble-type sound from a pair of inflated air sacks on their necks.

Federal officials in 2015 opted not to list sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act but announced federal land-use restrictions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will review the bird’s listing status within five years.

The Conservation Reserve Program, established in 1985, is voluntary and pays farmers to plant agricultural land with environmentally beneficial vegetation on 10- to 15-year contracts.

Of the roughly 24 million acres planted through the program in the U.S., about 1.4 million acres are in Eastern Washington.

“From the outset, it was envisioned that the CRP program would be good for wildlife,” Shirk said. “But I don’t think anyone expected that it would be this valuable.”



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Will McDow, who works to protect sage grouse for the Environmental Defense Fund, said the report was good news.

“It’s a great example of public-private partnerships,” McDow said Tuesday. “It’s something to celebrate.”

In Eastern Washington, the sage grouse population has stabilized at about 1,000 birds. They live in three main places: the Yakima Training Center, Moses Coulee, and Crab Creek area.

The Yakima Training Center is a U.S. Army facility where the native sagebrush habitat is mostly intact. But the other two areas are heavily agricultural, with irrigated farmland and dryland wheat fields. The birds would likely not have survived there without the CRP program, the study found.

Sage grouse in other Western states are threatened mostly by oil and gas exploration and other types of development.

Previously, studies of sage grouse across their range in the United States suggested Eastern Washington agricultural areas would not be hospitable for the birds. Washington’s habitat is a relatively small island separated from the broader sagebrush seas in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon and Nevada, the study said.

“The other studies generally predicted that Eastern Washington was a place that shouldn’t support sage grouse because most of the habitat was converted to agricultural lands,” Shirk said. “And yet they’re still here.”

The authors’ results show that without the federally-subsidized CRP lands dominated by native grass and big sagebrush, sage grouse in Eastern Washington would only have about one-third the amount of usable habitat, and the two subpopulations in agricultural areas would become so small that they would likely go extinct.

A harsh winter, for example, could decimate a small population, Shirk said.

The study found that if Washington’s CRP lands were extended to be near existing sage grouse populations, the birds’ habitat could be increased by as much as 63 percent.



“We have seen CRP help grassland birds across the country,” McDow said.

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6. **EPA: Dems to Pruitt — don't close regional offices**

E & E News, May 10 | Kevin Bogardus

Democrats are urging U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt not to close any of the agency's regional offices.

All 10 senators who caucus with Democrats and serve on the Environment and Public Works Committee last week sent a letter, obtained by E&E News, to the agency chief. Led by Sens. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) and Tom Carper (D-Del.), the panel's ranking member, they requested that Pruitt commit to not shuttering any of EPA's regional and program offices.

"We ask you to reaffirm your commitment to the agency you are tasked with leading and to the families you took an oath to protect by ruling out the possibility that any regional or program EPA office will be closed or consolidated," they said in the letter.

They added that if Pruitt dismisses EPA's regional staff, "the agency would lose irreplaceable institutional knowledge and a deeper understanding of highly technical and regionally specific environmental issues."

In their letter to Pruitt, the senators said they were "deeply troubled" by an internal EPA budget document that hinted at potential closures and consolidation for some of the agency's regional offices.

"Funding levels incorporate rent cost avoidance from several regional and headquarters offices (Potomac Yards North, Region 1, Region 5, and Region 9), the decommissioning of part of the Las Vegas laboratory, and the release of the headquarters warehouse in Washington D.C.," said the document.

Further, the Office of Management and Budget has reportedly told EPA it must close two regional offices as it prepares the budget for the next fiscal year.



Much of the speculation regarding which office could be closed has centered on EPA's Region 5 branch, based in Chicago. It is the agency's largest regional office, with more than 1,000 employees on its payroll.

Lawmakers have pushed back on that possible closure, with both Democratic and Republican House members from Michigan writing a letter to Pruitt last month urging him to keep Region 5 open.

EPA officials in Chicago and at headquarters in Washington have denied reports that the agency plans to close the Region 5 branch, calling them false and just rumors (Greenwire, April 18).

Pruitt has repeated those denials himself. In an interview with the Tulsa World last week, the EPA administrator said rumors that EPA will close the Chicago office are "pure legend" and that the move "has not been discussed."

[BACK](#)

7. **POLITICS: Effort to shield documents sparks transparency debate**

E & E News, May 10 | Geof Koss

Are House Republicans conspiring with the Trump administration to evade a key federal open-records law? Or is Congress simply reasserting a long-standing legal prerogative it says is essential to conducting oversight of the executive branch?

It depends on whom you ask.

Since January, congressional staffers say they've begun to notice distinct signatures on emails sent to federal agencies from House addresses, which in effect state that the contents of the messages are not considered "agency records" for purposes of compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

"This email and any related documents, notes, draft legislation, recommendations, reports, or other materials generated or received by the members or staff of the Committee on Financial Services are congressional records and remain subject to the Committee's control, and are entrusted to your agency only for use in handling this matter," says one such signature flagged to E&E News recently by a House aide.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

Similar language has been appended to emails from other committees, aides say.

While Congress has long been exempt from FOIA, federal agencies are not, and congressional correspondence to the executive branch is routinely released to media outlets and other requesters under the law.

Those records can shed light on the internal operations on both the executive and legislative branches.

In recent years, documents obtained by E&E News under FOIA have shown a burgeoning investigation into an EPA administrator's email practices, EPA's denial of using controversial "stingray" surveillance technology and even lobbying by agencies to rework legislation to strengthen the public records law.

But the disclaimers could prevent the release of similar documents in the future. A House Democratic aide said recently that senior EPA political staff had discussed ways to evade FOIA with staff from both parties. EPA did not respond to a request for comment.

Rick Blum, the director of News Media for Open Government, said that the email signatures are worrisome and unnecessary, given existing exemptions in the law for Congress.

"Clearly, FOIA allows confidential congressional investigations," he said last month after reviewing one such signature. "FOIA is not an impediment to Congress getting the information it needs and keeping its information gathering confidential to protect investigations, to protect sources."

Furthermore, journalists rely on state and federal open-records laws as part of their reporting.

"Preserving emails and looking at correspondence between agencies and between parts of government should be expected and is part of the newsgathering process more and more," he said. "And it's more a part of the public consciousness."

Gray matter

While Congress is exempt from FOIA, its interactions with other entities that are covered by the statute are somewhat of a gray area.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

The leading case on the subject is a 2004 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, *United We Stand America Inc. v. Internal Revenue Service*, in which the judges ruled that the Joint Committee of Taxation could reserve control over the confidentiality of correspondence it sent to the IRS.

Daniel Metcalfe, the founder and former director of the Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy, who now teaches secrecy law at American University's Washington College of Law, says that decision may support efforts by congressional staff to send something to an executive branch agency and say, "We hereby reserve control over this letter" and perhaps even an attached document.

But he said there's no judicial precedent that supports ongoing congressional efforts to broadly shield all correspondence with an agency from FOIA requests.

The 2004 decision held that "what came into an agency can be deemed a congressional record, and even part of what went back to Congress could be, but only insofar as it reflects the substance or confidential existence of the congressional communication that came in," said Metcalfe, who likened it almost to attorney-client privilege.

While the Financial Services Committee email signature would likely protect the message itself from release under FOIA, Metcalfe said the inclusion of the phrase "any related documents" seemed overly broad, while efforts to reserve control over all documents "received by" the committee from the executive branch "goes way too far."

"It's unprecedented overreaching in the congressional context, very likely impracticable, as well," he said.

Moreover, he added, even where a congressional record can be shielded from release under FOIA, the inclusion of the email disclaimer does not in any way obviate a federal agency's obligation to identify the document, so a requester has the opportunity to challenge its claimed status administratively and in court.

"Otherwise, the agency would be unilaterally removing it from any possibility of disclosure just by saying nothing about it," Metcalfe said.

'Subject to congressional control'



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

Further stoking the debate were the recent revelations by BuzzFeed that House Financial Services Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas) last month had sent letters to multiple federal agencies under the panel's jurisdiction arguing that communications between the panel and agencies are not "agency records" under FOIA and "remain subject to congressional control even when in the physical possession of the agency."

Hensarling's letter to Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin further states that documents "created or compiled by your agency in connection with any responses to the Committee are also records of the Committee and remain subject to the Committee's control."

In a statement, House General Counsel Thomas Hungar said he had provided legal advice to Hensarling's panel and said that position represented "well-established legal principles and practices" that reflect congressional sentiment dating back four decades.

But in a letter sent Tuesday, 21 open-government groups urged Hensarling to "reconsider and rescind" his requests to federal agencies, some of which have already signaled they will comply with the request.

"These assertions improperly restrict the ability of the public to use FOIA to access those documents," wrote the Project on Government Oversight, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Press Club and others, noting that federal law already includes "narrow and specific" FOIA exemptions. "Your letter purports to create a new category of exemption through a unilateral action by a single Member of Congress, a troubling precedent."

Metcalf said there was no precedent for documents that were later generated from initial congressional correspondence being completely screened out of FOIA.

"The only time something so generic and across-the-board has been attempted was when the White House tried it very specifically for Clinton health care task force records in 1993," Metcalfe said, while disclosing that he was the person who advised the Clinton White House on that position. "And with the demise of Hillary Clinton's efforts back then, that was never tested in litigation."

Not everyone sees nefarious motives in the recent push to protect congressional documents from being swept up in routine FOIA requests.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

One House Democratic staffer said recently that the email signatures are the result of a 2016 ruling by the D.C. Circuit, *American Civil Liberties Union v. CIA*, that has sparked concerns that Congress needs to express clear intent of its desire to exempt a document from FOIA.

In fact, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency earlier this month cited that case in its response to Hensarling, in which it said it would decline to produce congressional records in response to FOIA requests.

But Elizabeth Hempowicz, POGO's policy counsel, disputed the relevance of that case to the current debate, saying it related to the interrogation report prepared by the Senate Intelligence Committee and set no applicable precedent.

In a letter to Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), the ranking member on Financial Services, Hensarling this week emphasized that he is not seeking a blanket exemption from FOIA for committee documents.

"[T]he letters that were sent to executive agencies do not mean that the Committee will advocate for the withholding of all records," Hensarling wrote. "We will as we always do, evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis with an eye toward disclosure to the maximum extent feasible. All the Committee has done by issuing these letters is protect its legal rights."

[BACK](#)

From: aef
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Cc: julia@eagles.org; laura@eagles.org
Subject: Dear Heather, American Eagle Day & eagle Challenger visit followup
Date: Monday, June 05, 2017 7:45:22 AM

Dear Heather

Once again, it was a pleasure meeting you and the Secretary of Interior - and his wife and staff - with the bald eagle Challenger present.

Per my conversation with the Secretary regarding the establishment of "American Eagle Day" on June 20th, the American Eagle Foundation would very much appreciate his and your help in getting this very special day proclaimed by President Trump before June 20th, 2017.

During our visit with the Interior Secretary, we provided him with a copy of the wording for such a proclamation which has been used by 49 Governors (Proclamations) and the US Senate and House (Resolutions) during the past decade.

We can provide this Proclamation again by email if necessary.

The Secretary, a true Patriot, appeared to be very sincerely interested in helping us get a Proclamation or Executive Order (preferred) signed by President Trump this year ...making it a permanent annual day to celebrate our National Bird and what has symbolized to all Americans for over 230 years, since the Second Continental Congress in 1782.

Again, we would very much appreciate your kind assistance in helping us arrange for such a Proclamation to be issued by our President....joining Governors in 48 states who have made past proclamations - and the Senate and House resolutions going back to 2007.

Vice President Mike Pence has already proclaimed American Eagle Day for the past 3 years as Governor of Indiana.

Should the President want to invite the eagle Challenger for a formal media announcement of American Eagle Day on or before June 20, then we could make ourselves available for such a special occasion.

President Trump has met Challenger twice in the past...once in George Steinbrenner's suite at Yankee Stadium during a World Series game right after 9-11, and also at Muhammad Ali's Celebrity Fight Night fundraising event for fighting Parkinson's Disease in Phoenix, Arizona.

Thank you so very much for your kind assistance in helping to Make America Great Again.

Respectfully,

Al Cecere
Founder & President
American Eagle Foundation
[Www.Eagles.Org](http://www.Eagles.Org)
865-809-2385
Al@Eagles.Org

AMERICAN EAGLE DAY

A special national day on June 20 to Celebrate Bald Eagle, the USA's National Bird, their dramatic comeback from brink of extinction, their American symbolism, and their importance to the American people throughout the U.S.

This notable day was first established by the non-profit American Eagle Foundation (AEF) in 1995. It has been proclaimed by Governors from 49 states, and has been recognized by U.S. Congressional resolutions for over a decade.

What the AEF and U.S citizens want now is to make American Eagle Day a permanent Patriotic and National Observance where it is automatically proclaimed annually by the US President on June 20th. The American eagle was selected as the central image of Great Seal of the United States on June 20, 1782 by the Second Continental Congress.

Our hope is that President Trump would invite the eagle Challenger to the White House by June 20 to be the first US President to proclaim American Eagle Day.



United States Department of the Interior
Office of Scheduling & Advance, Washington, D.C.
ADVANCE MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

DATE: Tuesday, August 1, 2017
TIME: 9:15 AM
EVENT: Swearing-In of the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior
LOCATION: Office of the Secretary; Washington DC
ATTIRE: Business
PRESS: Closed
REMARKS: Scripted (attached)
CONTACT: Gareth Rees; (202) 208-6291 Office
FROM: Luke Bullock; Secretary's Advance Representative

PURPOSE: Secretary Ryan K. Zinke will officially administer the oath of office to the recently confirmed David Bernhardt as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

PARTICIPANTS: RZ
David Bernhardt
Genna Bernhardt, Wife
Katherine (Katy) Bernhardt, Daughter
Invited Guests
Christopher Salotti Matthew Quinn
Richard Cardinale Duane Galloway
Mariagrazia Caminiti Peg Romanik
Edward Keable Laura Brown
Karen Hawbecker Angela Kelsey

AGENDA: 9:14 AM – Bernhardt family and guest brought from the Secretary's Conf. Room to the Secretary's Office
9:15 AM – RZ & Bernhardt greet family and guests; Photo-Op with group
9:17 AM – RZ & Bernhardt take place; oath of office begins
9:20 AM – Oath of office concludes
9:21 AM – All parties hold for photo-op
9:25 AM – Family and friends exit Secretary's office; meeting with RZ & Bernhardt begins
10:00 AM – Meeting concludes; Bernhardt exits Secretary's office

Note: Celebratory reception to be held in the Office of the Deputy Secretary at 5PM.

ATTACHMENTS

TAB 1: Oath of Office Script

OATH OF OFFICE SCRIPT:

I, DAVID BERNHARDT, do solemnly swear (or affirm)

...that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States...

against all enemies, foreign and domestic;

that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same;

that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation ...

or purpose of evasion;

and that I will well and faithfully ...

discharge the duties of the office ...

on which I am about to enter.

So help me God.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: DOI - Heads up IG report
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 12:21:06 PM
Attachments: [MA_ZinkeTravel_111517.pdf](#)
[Document.pdf](#)

The IG is investigating Zinke's travel. In the process of that, they IDed an area where the paperwork process (done by career officials the same way it was for previous admins) is a bit troublesome. Attached is the letter the IG sent to Dep Sec and the letter Dep Sec sent back.

The IG letter was sent to the Hill so we expect Dems to make hay over it.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Congressional, OIG** <oig_congressional@doioig.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:54 AM
Subject: OIG Management Advisory to Hill & public

Yesterday DOI OIG delivered the attached Management Advisory to Deputy Secretary Bernhardt regarding secretarial travel. (b) (5) [REDACTED] It was just sent to Congress and will be posted publicly tomorrow, 11/17.

Nancy K. DiPaolo
Director, External Affairs
Office of the Inspector General
Department of the Interior
202.208.4357
(c) 202.805.4701



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: May ##, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today named former Louisiana state official Scott A. Angelle as the Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), which fosters safe and responsible energy production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf through regulatory oversight of oil and gas operations. Angelle, who most recently served as Vice Chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, will assume his new position on May ##.

“Scott Angelle brings a wealth of experience to BSEE, having spent many years working for the safe and efficient energy production of both Louisiana’s and our country’s offshore resources,” Secretary Zinke said. “As we set our path towards energy dominance, I am confident that Scott has the expertise, vision, and the leadership necessary to effectively enhance our program, and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible exploration, development, and production of our country’s offshore oil and gas resources.”

Angelle, who will serve as the fourth director in BSEE’s history, has held numerous positions in Louisiana State and Parish governments, including Interim Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Martin Parish President. In the aftermath of the BP oil spill, Angelle served at the request of then Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal as liaison to the federal government, and negotiated an early end of the previous administration’s drilling moratorium.

“I welcome the opportunity to serve President Trump and Secretary Zinke, and work with BSEE staff to meet the critical goal of energy dominance for our country,” said Angelle. “It is an exciting and challenging time for BSEE; I look forward to leading our efforts to empower the offshore oil and gas industry while ensuring safe and environmentally responsible operations.”

Angelle served for eight years as Louisiana's Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Under his leadership, the state's coastal permitting system was reformed, providing for efficient permitting while increasing drilling rig counts in Louisiana by more than 150 percent during his tenure. Angelle has also served as Chairman of the Louisiana State Mineral Board, and as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, Southern States Energy Board, and the Louisiana Coastal Port Advisory Authority.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

Established in 2011, BSEE fosters secure and reliable energy production through a program of efficient permitting, appropriate regulations, compliance monitoring and enforcement, technical assessments, inspections, and incident investigations. The position of BSEE Director is not Senate-confirmed.

More information on BSEE can be found at: <http://www.bsee.gov>

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DRAFT

From: Nachmany, Eli
Subject: DOI Daily Report for 09/27
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 11:19:29 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Fresno Bee: Empire Fire in Yosemite shows that not all wildfires are bad. It is ‘a good fire’](#)

“U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke on Sept. 12 released a memo directing staff to ‘take a serious turn from the past’ by working to prevent forest fires ‘through aggressive and scientific fuels reduction management.’ Zinke’s memo was welcome direction for Shive. ‘We feel encouraged by it because we’ve been doing what amounts to very active fire management for a long time,’ Shive says. ‘And I think that memo is correct, but this has not been widespread practice. There’s a handful of places in the Western U.S that have been doing this for a very long time. Most places have not.’”

[E&E News: Trump's energy focus raises hopes in Alaska](#)

“Alaska Gov. Bill Walker (I) first grasped the dramatic changes in store for his state under the Trump administration when he attended an inaugural event early this year. As Walker and his wife began to leave a late-night reception, they bumped into Ryan Zinke, whom President Trump had already selected to head the Interior Department. As Walker recalled at a recent business forum, ‘We were introduced, and [Zinke] said, ‘You’re the governor of Alaska?’ And I said, ‘Yes I am.’ He grabbed my hand and said, ‘You’re going to love me.’”

[The Daily Republic: Fishing for a Problem](#)

“Fortunately for all anglers/hunters/recreational shooters, President Donald Trump appointed Ryan Zinke as the new Secretary of the Interior. On March 2, 2017, Zinke reversed Order 219. Zinke said, and I will quote, ‘After reviewing the order and the process by which it was promulgated, I have determined that the order is not mandated by any existing statutory or regulatory requirement and was issued without significant communication, consultation or coordination with affected stakeholders.’ Zinke, of Montana, has asked federal agencies to promote outdoor recreation, and regarding this he has said, ‘It worries me to think about hunting and fishing becoming activities for the land-owning elite.’ Let’s hope that he continues to think along these lines.”

[Flathead Beacon: Don’t Let Fake Narrative Block Monuments Review](#)

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has made an admirable attempt to solicit input from Montanans about how national monuments have affected our state. It’s unfortunate that effort has been drowned out by fake advertisements aimed at misleading Montanans and funded by out-of-state environmental groups. Opposition to the monuments review centers on the

ridiculous claim that it will result in the federal government selling federal land to private entities. Not only is that the direct opposite of Secretary Zinke's stated objective, it's illegal for the federal government to sell public land."

Correcting the Record:

[L.A. Times: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke calls his staff disloyal in speech to oil industry](#)

"Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke walked into a big gathering of the National Petroleum Council on Monday already facing at least two government probes for his management of the department's workforce of 70,000 — but that didn't stop him from bashing his employees. Zinke told the gathering that he figured upon taking his post that nearly a third of the people at the department were disloyal. The comment may have shed light on the secretary's reasons for directing department officials to reassign approximately 50 top managers in June, as soon as the move may have been legally permissible."

TALKING POINTS

- The media reports were incomplete and mischaracterized the Secretary's analogy.
- The Secretary is a Navy man and used the analogy of seizing a ship in battle and changing policies and procedures.
- The "flag" was not a literal comparison to the flag of the U.S. or even the Administration. In the military structure, to which the Secretary was alluding, the flag represents the command of an organization and the policies and procedures it seeks to implement
- The Secretary led with the fact that Interior is full of "really good people" but that a small minority are hesitant to changing policy and reforms. This includes the bad actors who are frequently the subject of IG reports who resist any change because they know it will lead to accountability.

[Washington Post: No, we can't -- and shouldn't -- stop forest fires](#)

"The American West is burning, Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) tells us in his recent Post op-ed. He and officials in the Trump administration have described Western forest fires as catastrophes, promoting congressional action ostensibly to save our National Forests from fire by allowing widespread commercial logging on public lands. This, they claim, will reduce forest density and the fuel for wildfires. But this position is out of step with current science and is based on several myths promoted by commercial interests."

TALKING POINTS

- Dead and dying timber from previous fires, and disease infestation, plague our forests and make them more prone to catastrophic fires. By thinning these fuels, fires do not gain in intensity and grow as quickly. This makes them safer and

more manageable to battle.

- The Trump Administration is taking aggressive and preemptive measures to prevent wildfires and combat their spread through active fuels management versus the previous administration's (and these authors') more "naturalist" approach. The naturalist approach allows fuels to build up and forests to thicken, making them more prone to wildfires that are more difficult and dangerous to suppress.
- The Secretary's forest management Secretarial Order does not allow commercial timber harvests in National Parks. It does, however, order preemptive fuels management, like what already happens in parks like Yosemite and Sequoia Kings Canyon National Parks. Secretary Zinke recently visited Montana with Secretary Sonny Perdue of the Department of Agriculture to view the wildfires in the West.

[Washington Post: The National Park Service showed that its bottled water ban worked — then lifted it](#)

“Long before the Trump administration rescinded a ban on the sale of disposable water bottles in select national parks, the Interior Department was aware of a report from the National Park Service that the program worked. The report was quietly made public at the end of the day Friday after organizations submitted Freedom of Information Act requests for its release. In 2011, the parks initiated a water bottle sales elimination program to reduce pollution and the costs of recycling plastic. It resulted in yearly savings of up to two million water bottles, according to an estimate in the report, and ‘demonstrates the commitment of the [National Park Service] to environmental stewardship.’”

TALKING POINTS

- The policy was discontinued to expand healthy hydration options for recreationalists, hikers, and other visitors to national parks. The ban removed the healthiest beverage choice at a variety of parks while still allowing sales of bottled sweetened drinks.
- The Department's changes will improve the visitor experience.
- We will continue to encourage the use of free water bottle filling stations as appropriate, but ultimately it should be up to our visitors to decide how best to keep themselves and their families hydrated during a visit to a national park, particularly during hot summer visitation periods.
- The change in policy came after an NPS internal review of the policy's aims and impact in close consultation with Department of the Interior leadership.

###

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 10:23:04 AM
Attachments: [OIG letter re Travel procedures 111617.pdf](#)

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[U.S. News and World Report: Congress Debates Oil Drilling in Largest US Wildlife Refuge](#)

“A showdown is looming in the nation's capital over whether to open America's largest wildlife refuge to oil drilling. A budget measure approved by the Republican-controlled Congress allows lawmakers to pursue legislation that would allow drilling on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge takes up an area nearly the size of South Carolina in Alaska's northeast corner. Nearly 200,000 caribou in the Porcupine Caribou Herd migrate from Canada to the coastal plain most years.”

[Independent Journal Review: Int Sec Ryan Zinke Spent the Day in Moccasins and a Fashion Staple That Would Make George H.W. Bush Proud](#)

“On Wednesday, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke marked Native American Heritage Month by participating in #RockYourMocs. Zinke ditched the traditional dress shoe usually seen around the Capitol for a pair of moccasins. While former President George H.W. Bush may be well known for his incredible sock game, what the interior secretary sported underneath his moccasins proved Bush isn't alone in his love for fashionable feet accessories...Zinke also offered a statement of remembrance of Native American Veteran Michael Bell and was given a quilt his family made as a gift. Teen Vogue reported that some people took umbrage at Zinke's decision to wear moccasins, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs thanked the secretary on Twitter for celebrating with them. The tweet added they were “honored” to gather around the quilt with him as he remembered Bell.”

[The Daily Sentinel \(CO\): U.S. Lands Open for Biz](#)

“More than 250 people applauded a high-ranking official who came to Grand Junction on Thursday night with news that the federal government is dedicated to making federal lands welcome to energy development. Kate MacGregor, who oversees the Bureau of Land Management, outlined President Donald Trump's and U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plans to remove roadblocks to mining and drilling. Many attendees walked past roughly 40 sign-waving protesters at Two Rivers Convention Center. Grand Junction's Petroleum and Mining Club hosted MacGregor, who delivered the speech, “The Department of the Interior's Role in Energy Dominance.”...MacGregor said the Department of Interior aims to streamline planning and permitting of leases, reduce the regulatory burdens, support and improve pipeline development and improve trust with local, state and tribal partners.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[New York Times: Trump Administration to Lift Ban on ‘Trophy’ Elephant Imports](#)

“The Trump administration will begin allowing hunters to bring into the United States “trophy” elephants killed in Zimbabwe, reversing a 2014 ban on a practice that has received intense scrutiny in recent years. Though African elephants are protected under the Endangered Species Act, the law allows the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to authorize imports of trophies if the agency finds that the hunts in which the animals were killed contribute to the survival of the species. The United States banned such imports from Zimbabwe in 2014 because of a lack of data on conservation efforts there. Now the United States agency says it is satisfied with Zimbabwe’s actions and believes such hunts can be beneficial for the species by bringing money to local communities and providing incentives to conserve elephants. “Since our 2014 and 2015 findings, there are strong indications that the efforts of private landowners and consortiums to manage elephants within their areas of control have received greater support,” the federal agency said in a notice to be published in the Federal Register on Friday.”

- **USFWS Statement:** “Legal, well-regulated sport hunting as part of a sound management program can benefit certain species by providing incentives to local communities to conserve those species and by putting much-needed revenue back into conservation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the hunting and management programs for African elephants in Zimbabwe and Zambia will enhance the survival of the species in the wild. These enhancement findings are required prior to allowing import of these trophies under Endangered Species Act regulations. The finding applies to elephants hunted in Zimbabwe on or after January 21, 2016, and on or before December 31, 2018, and to elephants hunted in Zambia during calendar years 2016, 2017 and 2018, for applications that meet all other applicable permitting requirements.”

[Washington Post: Watchdog says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document travel](#)

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has failed to keep complete records — and in some cases, kept none at all — of his travel since taking office, the agency’s watchdog told department officials this week, saying that management of Zinke’s travel was “deficient” and lacked oversight. A rare alert Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall sent to the secretary’s office Wednesday, obtained by The Washington Post, said her investigation into allegations of improper travel practices by Zinke has been stymied by “absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips.” Interior lawyers and ethics officials also have not shown evidence to investigators that they have been able to “distinguish between personal, political and official travel” or cost-analysis documents to justify his choice of military or charter flights, Kendall wrote. The memo reveals that the inspector general is also scrutinizing the travel of Zinke’s

wife, Lolita, who often accompanied him on official trips. Kendall wrote that the department's documentation was so lacking that investigators cannot determine "the full extent" of her travel and how it was paid for."

PLEASE REFER TO THE ATTACHED LETTER, SENT IN RESPONSE TO THE IG LETTER, FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY BERNHARDT

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[U.S. News and World Report: Justice Department Won't Release National Monument Documents](#)

"Federal officials say they don't have to provide an Idaho environmental law firm with documents possibly outlining legal justifications for President Donald Trump to shrink national monuments because they're protected communications. The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit from Advocates for the West. The environmental law firm filed a public records request for documents on the national monuments earlier this year, and the Justice Department released more than 60 pages in May. The agency withheld 12 pages, however, contending that they are protected under attorney-client privilege and intra-agency communication rules."

[NBC News: Drones are fighting wildfires in some very surprising ways](#)

"Wildfires in the U.S. were brutal last summer, scorching more than 8.8 million acres and cloaking the Pacific Northwest in smoke and ash. In California alone, more than 40 people died and 8,400 buildings were destroyed in the deadliest wildfires in the state's history. Things may only get worse in years to come... But aerial drones may help save the day. From tiny quadcopters to big fixed-wing aircraft, drones are showing that they can detect, contain and even extinguish fires faster and with greater safety. They give firefighters a bird's-eye view of the terrain and help them determine where a fire will spread — so they can make swift decisions about where fire crews should go and which residents need to be evacuated."

###

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Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:42:03 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Bloomberg: Trump, First Lady Welcome Ghosts, Goblins on Halloween Eve](#)

“President Donald Trump dressed up as himself, complete with his trademark red tie, for his first Halloween in the White House. Trump and first lady Melania Trump greeted some of the 6,000 children and adults who were invited for trick-or-treating at the White House on Halloween eve. Children from more than 20 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia attended the festivities on the South Lawn, along with military families and members of unspecified community organizations. Spooky music played over loudspeakers. Machines cranked out fog. Pumpkins carved with the likenesses of past presidents decorated the south entrance of the White House. Black spiders hung from webs spun between the portico's columns. A sign over an awning proclaimed "Halloween at the White House 2017.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[Augusta Free Press \(VA\): Kaine, colleagues urge Trump to rescind proposed national park fee increase](#)

“U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) joined Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and nine other colleagues in a letter to Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke requesting he withdraw his proposal to dramatically increase national park entrance fees at 17 national parks pending further review.

According to the proposal, Shenandoah National Park visitor fees would increase dramatically from \$25 to \$70 per vehicle during peak season.”

- **DOI Statement:** "Entrance fees have long been an important source of revenue used to improve the visitor experience and recreation opportunities in national parks. In fact entrance fees to parks predate the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916. For example, Mount Rainier National Park started charging an entrance fee in 1908. Factoring in inflation, the \$5 entrance fee the park charged in 1914 would be the equivalent of a \$123 entrance fee today. The proposed peak-season entrance fees at 17 parks were determined by analyzing historical NPS entrance fee and visitation data along with entrance fees at other park systems and family attractions. The proposed seasonal pricing structure is intended to balance the need to generate badly needed revenue for improvements to the aging national park infrastructure like roads, bridges, campgrounds, waterlines, and bathrooms while still providing good value to our visitors and maintaining existing prices or free entrance in the vast majority of national park

sites. Only 118 of our 417 national park sites charge entrance fees -- the other 299 national parks do not charge an entrance fee. This proposal is just one potential tool in the toolbox. We are looking at a variety of options specifically intended to address the national park maintenance backlog and to improve the visitor experience at parks."

TALKING POINTS

- Secretary Zinke has spoken at length about addressing the deferred maintenance problem at our National Parks, and this will require a new approach.
- Our parks face an \$11 billion maintenance backlog and need serious improvements to infrastructure if they are to accommodate visitors.
- The higher fees would go directly into funding these infrastructure improvements; in lieu of indiscriminately imposing a tax on the American people, the fee increase represents a free market solution that relies on the citizenry's voluntary use of the parks to fund the sites' future.
- 80% of funds raised, from the fee increase, will go directly back to the specific park at which the permit was bought. The remaining 20% will be dispersed to parks that did not incur a fee increase.
- **By Comparison:** A ticket at Walt Disney World is \$119 per person, peak season. A family of four will pay \$476 for one day. Yellowstone, Yosemite or the other premier national parks propose to raise the fee to \$70 per car for a 7-day permit - \$10 a day, \$2.50 a person for a family of four.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Politico: Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family](#)

"Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group said in a Federal Election Commission complaint that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash. The June RV sale is one of several transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke's family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke's campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits."

[Wall Street Journal: FBI Is Probing Puerto Rico Power Contract](#)

"The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating a decision by Puerto Rico's power

authority to award a \$300 million contract to a tiny Montana energy firm to rebuild electrical infrastructure damaged in Hurricane Maria, according to people familiar with the matter. Agents from the FBI's San Juan field office are looking into circumstances surrounding the deal that the public power monopoly known as Prepa signed with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC, according to the people familiar with the matter. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló canceled the contract Sunday, saying it had become a distraction from the U.S. territory's efforts to restore the devastated grid. Only 30% of the island's power customers have had electricity restored."

Bloomberg: Arctic Refuge Oil Bonanza More Likely to Be Bust for GOP Budget

"Congressional Republicans counting on a \$1 billion windfall from selling oil-drilling rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to help pay for tax cuts may be in for a disappointment. Data from previous Arctic oil lease sales suggest the U.S. is likely to collect less than a fifth of that billion-dollar goal over the next decade-- about \$145.5 million -- from auctioning off territory in the sprawling northeast Alaska refuge where caribou calve and polar bears roam. Oil companies may be scared away by the controversies and costs of drilling in that remote and fragile terrain. Even if they aren't, crude prices would have to be some \$15 more per barrel than they are today to make the effort pay off at all."

Palm Beach Post: Gov. Scott proposes additional \$50 million for Lake O dike

"Gov. Rick Scott is proposing an additional \$50 million to expedite repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike that surrounds Lake Okeechobee. The announcement this morning comes as the lake once again tops 17 feet above sea level, a depth that causes concerns about the integrity of the aging structure. Scott said the \$50 million is part of his 2018-2019 recommended budget and is on top of the \$50 million approved in the current year's budget to kick-start repairs. Florida Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, and House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land O'Lakes, lauded the announcement."

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

SUPPORT FOR DAVID BERNHARDT, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR NOMINEE

On April 28, 2017, President Donald Trump nominated David Bernhardt to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Given his notable and extensive prior experience at the Department of the Interior and in the Commonwealth of Virginia, he has received broad support from his former colleagues, the sporting and conservation community, and Indian Country, including notable mentions such as the following:

- “We believe Mr. Bernhardt is well positioned to help lead the Department of the Interior in a manner that respects and upholds the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian tribes and empowers tribal communities to exercise greater self-determination.” – **National Congress of American Indians (5/25/2017)**.
- “I have known and worked with David Bernhardt for more than 10 years and could not be more pleased with his nomination for Deputy Secretary of the Interior...He is a man with personal and professional integrity that is beyond reproach and has always advocated for the proper implementation of the law.” – **Dale Hall, CEO, Ducks Unlimited, and former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (4/28/2017)**.
- “Mr. Bernhardt is a dedicated hunter-conservationist, and he is committed to facilitating the economic and conservation benefits that result from hunting. He has extensive knowledge and experience in crafting solutions to complex problems of restoring wildlife habitat and developing economic incentives and markets for conservation actions.” – **Boone and Crockett Club (5/11/2017)**.
- “Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to be Deputy Secretary. After I became Secretary of the Interior, Dave was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be the Solicitor, Interior's highest ranking legal officer. Dave provided wide counsel based on thoroughly understanding issues being decided. He is thoughtful and fair. The Solicitor's Office, Interior political and career staff and the Department's diverse stakeholders respected Dave's intellect, leadership and management skill. I commend President Trump and Secretary Zinke for selecting Dave to help manage a Department that has operations in all 50 states and many parts of the world.” – **Former Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne (4/28/2017)**.
- “Given Mr. Bernhardt’s familiarity with our Tribe’s story and his stellar qualifications, we believe that Mr. Bernhardt is well-positioned to help lead the Department of the Interior in a manner that respects the federal responsibility to Indian tribes and empowers tribal communities to exercise greater self-determination.” – **Southern Ute Indian Tribe (5/17/2017)**.
- “During his tenure at DOI, David was responsible for drafting a ten year plan to implement President George W. Bush’s Executive Order 13443, which expanded hunting opportunities on federal lands, as well as the management of game species and their habitats. He clearly understands the vital role hunters play in conserving our natural resources.” – **National Rifle Association of America (5/17/2017)**.
- “Mr. Bernhardt’s extensive experience with the diverse responsibilities and mandates of the Department and its agencies will allow him to move quickly into a leadership role and ensure a smooth transition...Mr. Bernhardt’s significant experience will ensure that issues are assessed and addressed quickly.” – **Delta Waterfowl (5/5/2017)**.

Other support includes the Archery Trade Association; Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Camp Fire Club of America; Colorado Water Congress; Colorado Water District; Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation; Conservation Force; Dallas Safari Club; Family Farm Alliance; Gila River Indian Community; Houston Safari Club; Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation; Mule Deer Foundation; National Cattlemen’s Beef Association; National Shooting Sports Foundation; National Wild Turkey Federation; Oneida Indian Nation; Orion – The Hunter’s Institute; Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable; Penobscot Nation; Pheasants Forever; Professional Outfitters and Guides of America; Public Lands Council; Quail Forever; Quality Deer Management Association; Quapaw Tribe; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Safari Club International; Seneca Nation of Indians; Shikar-Safari Club; Sportsmen’s Alliance; Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Wild Sheep Foundation; Wildlife Forever; Wildlife Management Institute; and Wildlife Mississippi.



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

May 25, 2017

Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior

Dear Chairman Murkowski,

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians, I am writing to express our support for David Bernhardt's nomination to serve as Deputy Secretary for the Department of Interior. The National Congress of American Indians advocates for policies that promote tribal sovereignty and a strong government-to-government relationship between Tribal Nations and the United States, and we believe that Mr. Bernhardt possesses the perspective, knowledge, and skills to serve as an able proponent of such policies.

As you know, Mr. Bernhardt worked for the Administration under President Bush and gained extensive experience with tribal government issues during that time. We believe he understands the complex challenges for economic development, law enforcement, education and transportation on tribal lands, and the need to support tribal solutions to address those challenges. Mr. Bernhardt also has experience working on tribal water rights, an issue that is vital to our future.

In his earlier work, Mr. Bernhardt placed considerable focus on trust mismanagement litigation. Most of that litigation has since been settled, and NCAI is encouraging a new focus on collaboration with tribal governments in implementing the Indian Trust Asset Management Reform Act of 2016. Together with Tribal Nations and Congress, we are starting a new path towards self-determination and economic development in tribal land management, and we urge continuing the restoration of the tribal land base to address the land loss and fractionation that are the legacy of failed policy eras of the past.

We believe Mr. Bernhardt is well positioned to help lead the Department of the Interior in a manner that respects and upholds the federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian tribes and empowers tribal communities to exercise greater self-determination. We urge the approval of Mr. Bernhardt's nomination by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Brian Cladoosby

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
Brian Cladoosby
Swinomish Tribe

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
Fawn Sharp
Quinault Indian Nation

RECORDING SECRETARY
Aaron Payment
*Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa
Indians of Michigan*

TREASURER
W. Ron Allen
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

REGIONAL VICE- PRESIDENTS

ALASKA
Jerry Isaac
Native Village of Tanacross

EASTERN OKLAHOMA
Joe Byrd
Cherokee Nation

GREAT PLAINS
Larry Wright, Jr.
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

MIDWEST
Roger Rader
Potawatomi Band of Potawatomi

NORTHEAST
Lance Gumbs
Shinnecock Indian Nation

NORTHWEST
Mel Sheldon, Jr.
Tulip Tribes

PACIFIC
Jack Pottar, Jr.
Rodding Rancheria

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
Darin Old Coyote
Crow Nation

SOUTHEAST
Larry Townsend
Lumbee Tribe

SOUTHERN PLAINS
Liana Ommen
Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation

SOUTHWEST
Joe Garcia
Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

WESTERN
Bruce Ignacio
Ute Indian Tribe

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jacqueline Pata
Tlingit

NCAI HEADQUARTERS
1516 P Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005
202.466.7767
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www.ncai.org



DU applauds nomination of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Interior

[Read release online »](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – April 28, 2017 – Ducks Unlimited (DU), a leader in wetlands and waterfowl conservation, looks forward to working with David L. Bernhardt, who was nominated by President Trump today to serve as the new Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the department in charge of managing and conserving public land and natural resources in the United States. Bernhardt will serve under recently appointed Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke.

"I have known and worked with David Bernhardt for more than 10 years and could not be more pleased with his nomination for Deputy Secretary of the Interior," said Ducks Unlimited CEO Dale Hall. "He is a man with personal and professional integrity that is beyond reproach and has always advocated for the proper implementation of the law. We urge the Senate to quickly confirm Mr. Bernhardt for this extremely important position to the Department's expansive conservation responsibilities."

In 2006, Bernhardt was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to serve as the solicitor of the DOI. As solicitor, Bernhardt was the chief legal officer and third ranking official for the DOI.

Prior to serving as solicitor, he held several high-level positions with the DOI including Deputy Solicitor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior and Director of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

In 2007, in addition to his DOI duties, Bernhardt was appointed by President George W. Bush to lead the International Boundary Commission between the United States and Canada where Bernhardt was responsible, along with his Canadian counterpart, for maintaining the 5,525-mile international boundary between these two nations.

Ducks Unlimited Inc. is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 14 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. For more information on our work, visit www.ducks.org.

Media Contact:

Gregg Powers

(901) 758-3774

gpowers@ducks.org



Secretary Zinke Applauds Nomination of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

4/28/2017

Last edited 4/28/2017



WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump today announced the nomination of Department of the Interior veteran David Bernhardt as the Interior's Deputy Secretary.

"I am excited to announce the President and I have selected Dave Bernhardt to help me lead the Interior Department," said Secretary Zinke. "Bernhardt's extensive experience

servicing under former Interior Secretaries Norton and Kempthorne and his esteemed legal career is exactly what is needed to help streamline government and make the Interior and our public lands work for the American economy."

"Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to be Deputy Secretary. After I became Secretary of the Interior, Dave was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be the Solicitor, Interior's highest ranking legal officer. Dave provided wide counsel based on thoroughly understanding issues being decided. He is thoughtful and fair. The Solicitor's Office, Interior political and career staff and the Department's diverse stakeholders respected Dave's intellect, leadership and management skill. I commend President Trump and Secretary Zinke for selecting Dave to help manage a Department that has operations in all 50 states and many parts of the world," said former Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

Bernhardt is an avid hunter and fisherman and recently served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia. He has previously served as the United States Commissioner to the International Boundary Commission, U.S. and Canada.

From 2001 and 2009, he held several positions within the Department of the Interior, including serving as Solicitor. Previously he served then-Secretary Norton as a deputy solicitor, deputy chief of staff and counselor to the Secretary, and as director of congressional and legislative affairs and counselor to the Secretary. Currently, Bernhardt chairs the natural resource law practice at Brownstein, Hyatt Farber and Schreck, LLP.

A native of Rifle, Colorado, Bernhardt earned a B.A. from the University of Northern Colorado. He graduated with honors from the George Washington University National Law Center and is admitted to various state and federal court bars. He is married to Gena Bernhardt. They have two children, and reside in Arlington, Virginia.

The position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior is the Chief Operating Officer of the Department and Bernhardt's nomination is subject to confirmation by the United States Senate.

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SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

May 17, 2017

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner
354 Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary for the Department of Interior

Dear Senator Gardner,

On behalf of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, I am writing to express our support for David Bernhardt's nomination to serve as Deputy Secretary for the Department of Interior. Our Tribe advocates for policies that promote Indian energy development, tribal sovereignty, Indian self-determination, and a positive government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States. As you know, Indian country faces many challenges, including reconsolidating fractionated lands, tribal economic development, and providing quality programs and services to tribal members.

After decades of disciplined governance and energy resource development, our Tribe has built an economy that is balanced, mature, and diversified. It is no exaggeration to say that our economy is the engine of growth and household incomes in southwest Colorado. As a result, our Tribe has long been involved in helping the Congress and federal agencies shape a rational, pro-development energy policy.

As a native of Colorado, Mr. Bernhardt is aware of our Tribe's unique history, particularly the role that meaningful self-determination coupled with prudent energy development has played in achieving economic prosperity for our Tribe, our tribal members, and surrounding communities. Given Mr. Bernhardt's familiarity with our Tribe's story and his stellar qualifications, we believe that Mr. Bernhardt is well-positioned to help lead the Department of the Interior in a manner that respects the federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes and empowers tribal communities to exercise greater self-determination. We urge swift approval of Mr. Bernhardt's nomination by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Clement J. Frost
Chairman

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION
11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



Office of the Executive Director
CHRIS W. COX

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

I am writing to express the National Rifle Association's support for David Bernhardt's nomination as Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Originally from Rifle, Colorado, David is an avid hunter, shooter, and fisherman. His commitment to preserving America's wildlife resources is rooted in his own experience as an outdoorsman.

David has extensive knowledge of DOI's operations, having served the Department in multiple capacities throughout his career. In 2006 he was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate for the position of Solicitor, DOI's third-ranking official and chief legal officer. In that role, he provided a wide range of advice and counsel to various DOI agencies on legal and policy matters.

In addition, David served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia, where he currently lives with his wife and children. This experience has provided him with an understanding of the importance of federal-state partnerships in managing America's fish and wildlife populations.

During his tenure at DOI, David was responsible for drafting a ten year plan to implement President George W. Bush's Executive Order 13443, which expanded hunting opportunities on federal lands, as well as the management of game species and their habitats. He clearly understands the vital role hunters play in conserving our natural resources.

For these reasons, the NRA asks that the Senate quickly confirm David Bernhardt for the position of Deputy Secretary at DOI.

Sincerely,

Chris W. Cox



May 5, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Delta Waterfowl is writing today in support of the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. As an organization committed to the future of ducks and duck hunting, we believe Mr. Bernhardt has the experience, expertise and values necessary to conserve our vast and diverse natural resources while serving hunters, anglers and conservationists in this critically important role.

Mr. Bernhardt developed an early appreciation for hunting, fishing and public lands while growing up in Colorado, and these experiences have had a significant impact on his world view and professional life. We believe it is critically important that the Department of the Interior share these core values as one of the primary constituencies of Department are the millions of hunters and anglers who cherish the open spaces and access provided by our nation's public lands.

Mr. Bernhardt's extensive experience with the diverse responsibilities and mandates of the Department and its agencies will allow him to quickly move into a leadership role and ensure a smooth transition. There are a number of pressing priorities within the Department and Mr. Bernhardt's significant experience will ensure that issues are assessed and addressed quickly.

In closing, we request your support of Mr. Bernhardt's nomination as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We believe he will be an effective member of the Department's leadership team and a key advocate for hunters, anglers, and conservationists. We appreciate your consideration of our perspective and thank you for your continued support for America's sportsmen-conservationists.

Sincerely,

John L. Devney
Vice President, U.S. Policy
Delta Waterfowl

Archery Trade Association * Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies * Boone and Crockett Club * Camp Fire Club of America * Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation * Conservation Force * Dallas Safari Club * Delta Waterfowl * Ducks Unlimited * Houston Safari Club * Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation * Mule Deer Foundation * National Shooting Sports Foundation * National Wild Turkey Federation * Orion – The Hunter's Institute * Pheasants Forever * Professional Outfitters and Guides of America * Quail Forever * Quality Deer Management Association * Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation * Safari Club International * Shikar-Safari Club * Sportsmen's Alliance * Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership * Wild Sheep Foundation * Wildlife Forever * Wildlife Management Institute * Wildlife Mississippi

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

On behalf of the millions of hunters, anglers, shooters and outdoor enthusiasts that our organizations represent, we are writing to express our strong support for the confirmation of David Bernhardt as the next Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Through his public service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior (DOI), Mr. Bernhardt has demonstrated an unyielding commitment to conserving and protecting our nation's natural, historic and cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

David has a deeply held passion for conservation and historic preservation that is guided by his unwavering moral compass. David also has a strong track record of collaborating with diverse cross-sections of stakeholders to ensure that their best interests, not partisan politics, inform policy decisions that may affect them.

An avid hunter, angler and shooter, David recently volunteered his time to serve on the Commonwealth of Virginia's Board of Game and Inland Fisheries, Mr. Bernhardt understands the value of state and federal partnerships on issues such as ensuring that states retain primary jurisdiction over fish and wildlife within their borders, and interagency collaboration to enhance and expand the public's access to the lands that the public owns.

In 2006, Mr. Bernhardt was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to serve as the Solicitor of the Department of Interior. As solicitor, David was the chief legal officer and third ranking official for the Department. Prior to serving as Solicitor, David held several other positions at DOI including Deputy Solicitor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior and Director of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

During his time at DOI, Mr. Bernhardt demonstrated his interest and ability in finding solutions to complex problems like restoring wildlife habitat and navigating the complexities of the Endangered Species Act. He served as an integral part of the administration that:

- Worked with Congress and administratively to create 15 new National Wildlife Refuges and emphasized recovery goals under the Endangered Species Act.
- Took efforts to conserve the populations of both the bald eagle and the Yellowstone grizzly bear that led to the recovery and removal of the bald eagle from the Endangered Species List; and the proposed delisting of the Greater Yellowstone grizzly bear population.
- Drafted 10-year plan to implement the Executive Order (E.O. 13443) to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat.

We urge you to approve the confirmation of Mr. Bernhardt, so that the Senate may act to quickly confirm Mr. Bernhardt for this critical position at the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Boone and Crockett Club
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association &
Foundation
Mule Deer Foundation
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America

Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
Shikar-Safari Club
Sportsmen's Alliance
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi



May 15, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
 Committee on Energy and Natural Resources United States Senate
 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510
 VIA FAX 202-224-6163

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

The Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable (ORIR) supports the President’s nomination of David Longly Bernhardt to serve as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, an appointment of great importance to the outdoor recreation industry. As the steward of more than 25% of the nation’s land-base – including prime recreation sites on public lands and waters drawing more than a billion visits annually – the Department is of vital importance to our industry and its customers.

Many of us have known David Bernhardt for years through his prior public service at the Department. We have found him responsive, intelligent and committed to cooperation among government agencies at all levels and the recreation community’s private sector. He understands that we manufacture, sell and service equipment ranging from RVs to boats, skis to fishing equipment and much more that make being outdoors fun. He understands that our industry has designed, built and now operates ski areas and lodging, campgrounds and marinas on public lands, and provides outfitter and guide services – again, helping Americans enjoy and benefit from the shared legacy of our national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, vast BLM-managed assets, the waters overseen by the Bureau of Reclamation and more.

David grew up with an appreciation of the outdoors in and around Rifle, Colorado, and those experiences have shaped his priorities and outlook. We worked with him in his role as Interior’s Director of Congressional Affairs on numerous issues, including the crafting of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, and later during his service as the department’s Deputy Chief of Staff and Solicitor.

The Department needs leadership from those aware of the complexities of balancing recreation, conservation and commodity purposes – and a person who understands that there are usually solutions to even very difficult matters if time is invested in understanding the full range of alternatives and then gaining broad buy-in by the range of interests involved in Interior topics.

Those leading the Department of the Interior will play a central role in determining whether the outdoor recreation industry, now estimated to generate \$887 billion in annual spending

Letter to the Hon. Lisa Murkowski
May 15, 2017, Page Two

and supporting some 7.6 million jobs, will continue to grow and generate economic and health benefits and support long term community sustainability in areas with major public lands. We are convinced that Mr. Bernhardt will respond to these challenges and assist Secretary Zinke in very positive ways. We respectfully request that this letter and its message of support be included in the record of the May 18, 2017, confirmation hearing by your committee on this nomination.

The Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable is comprised of America's leading outdoor recreation trade associations, representing thousands of U.S. businesses that produce and provide equipment, gear, apparel, vehicles and services for some 150 million Americans who enjoy our nation's public lands, waterways, and byways. Spanning outdoor recreational activities such as boating, fishing, hunting, camping, snow sports and powersports, and including recreational vehicles, outdoor equipment and clothing used to pursue these activities, the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable is dedicated to growing diverse outdoor participation, expanding recreational access for Americans and promoting conservation. More information on ORIR is attached.

We look forward to working with Mr. Bernhardt and the team at the Department of Interior to advance the outdoor recreation sector, grow jobs in the U.S., and ensure robust public access and treasured experiences in the outdoors that also boost our nation's physical and mental well-being.

Sincerely,

American Recreation Coalition

Archery Trade Association

BoatU.S.

International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association

Marine Retailers Association of America

Motorcycle Industry Council

National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)

National Marine Manufacturers Association

National Park Hospitality Association

National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.

Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association

Recreation Vehicle Industry Association

Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association

Specialty Equipment Market Association

Specialty Vehicle Institute of America

cc: Members, Energy and Natural Resources Committee, United States Senate



May 23, 2017

The Honorable Cory Gardner
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
(via email)

Dear Senator Gardner:

On behalf of the Colorado River Water Conservation District, I write to endorse and urge your support for confirmation of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary for the Department of the Interior.

The Colorado River District has enjoyed working with David in a variety of capacities in the past. We have worked with David Bernhardt on both legislative and regulatory issues. He has always been an advocate for western water and a problem-solver.

Mr. Bernhardt is highly qualified for this position. He spent his youth in Rifle, Colorado and learned water policy and water law from such exemplary mentors as Russell George and Scott McInnis. More recently, his service as the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior and his other D.C. experience will serve him and Interior extremely well in this new position. As a longtime advocate for western water, coupled with his understanding of both the legislative and regulatory process, make him highly qualified to serve in this position.

The Department and the nation would be well served to have someone with David's qualifications and personal integrity in this position. The Colorado River District encourages your support and that of the US Senate for the prompt confirmation of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "R. Eric Kuhn". The signature is fluid and cursive.

R. Eric Kuhn, General Manager



Colorado Water Congress

THE LEADING VOICE OF COLORADO'S WATER COMMUNITY

May 15, 2017

The Honorable Cory Gardner
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gardner,

On behalf of the Colorado Water Congress, we are writing to express our support for David Bernhardt to serve as Deputy Secretary for the Department of the Interior.

The Colorado Water Congress is the principal voice of Colorado's water community, and our Federal Affairs Committee fully supports Mr. Bernhardt's nomination. We have worked with David on issues affecting our water supplies; storage; delivery and conservation, as well as some regulatory issues, while he worked on Capitol Hill and the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Bernhardt is highly qualified to serve in this position. From his roots in Western Colorado to his prior service as the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior and in many other capacities, David has been a strong advocate for western water. Further, his thorough understanding of both the legislative process and natural resources law make him highly qualified to serve in this position.

David has been a public servant committed to the meaning of the term. He believes in and practices straight talk; is inclusive in consideration of issues brought before; explores all available options on the path to finding workable solutions in the real world where government actions impact real people. He has earned the trust of many because of his ability to communicate effectively and decide fairly.

The Department would be well served to have someone with David's qualifications and personal integrity in this position. Colorado Water Congress encourages the United States Senate to promptly confirm David Bernhardt's nomination so that the important work of the Department of the Interior can move forward.

Sincerely,

Doug Kemper
Executive Director

Andy Colosimo
Federal Affairs Committee Chair

Chris Treese
Federal Affairs Committee Vice Chair



Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture

P.O. Box 216 Klamath Falls, OR 97601
(541)-892-6244 www.familyfarmalliance.org

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairwoman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), we appreciate the opportunity to strongly endorse Mr. David Bernhardt as the next Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior).

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 16 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. We are also committed to the fundamental proposition that Western irrigated agriculture must be preserved and protected for a host of economic, sociological, environmental and national security reasons – many of which are often overlooked in the context of other national policy decisions.

Our organization works constructively with many federal departments and agencies, but the relationship we have with the Department of the Interior – and particularly, with the Bureau of Reclamation – is our closest.

We believe Mr. Bernhardt is a strong leader; a person with vision, common sense and high ethical standards. We have worked with Mr. Bernhardt in the past on several Western water issues and, as a Westerner himself, believe he understands the unique challenges faced by rural ag producers living in states where the federal government is the majority landowner and plays a significant role in the management of land and water that can impact our members.

Mr. Bernhardt has extensive federal policy-level experience gained from his public service both as the Department of the Interior's chief legal counsel and as a policymaker who led efforts related to species conservation, conventional and alternative energy development, natural resources planning, environmental compliance, climate change and Indian affairs at the Department. He has a proven track record at Interior, where he was unanimously confirmed in 2006 by the United States Senate to serve as the Department Solicitor. Prior to serving as Solicitor, he held several other high-level positions in the George W. Bush Administration including: Deputy Solicitor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior, and Director of the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

As Solicitor, Mr. Bernhardt served with distinction as the Chief Legal Officer and third ranking official at Interior. He provided advice and counsel on a wide range of legal and policy matters to each of the agencies that make up the Department of the Interior, while leading a team of nearly 500 attorneys and staff.

It is our hope and expectation that Mr. Bernhardt will bring a level of practical experience, empathy for rural producers, and intelligence into this position that will serve not only the interests of the Trump Administration, but also farmers and ranchers throughout the Western United States.

The Family Farm Alliance respectfully requests your support of David Bernhardt's nomination as the next Deputy Secretary of Interior. We know he will serve our Nation well in this important position.

Sincerely,



Patrick O'Toole
President



Dan Keppen
Executive Director



NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

Headquarters: 11 Mile Hill Road • Newtown, CT 06470-2359 • Tel: (203) 426-1320 x249 • Fax: (203) 426-1087
400 N. Capitol Street NW, Suite 400 • Washington, D.C. 20001 • Tel: (202) 220-1340 x249 • Fax: (202) 220-1349
E-mail: lkeane@nssf.org • nssf.org

LAWRENCE G. KEANE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
& GENERAL COUNSEL

May 10, 2017

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) is the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and recreational shooting sports industry. On behalf of our nearly 13,000 member companies nationwide, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior.

Having grown up hunting and fishing in rural western Colorado on public lands outside the town of Rifle, Mr. Bernhardt remains an active sportsman and recreational shooter.

In his previous capacity as the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior under then-Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, Mr. Bernhardt, who was unanimously confirmed to serve, proved himself to be a champion for sportsmen, shooters and wildlife. We can expect no different if he is afforded the opportunity to serve as Deputy Secretary.

NSSF is proud to offer its strong support of David Bernhardt and we ask for your support for his confirmation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lawrence G. Keane

ONEIDA INDIAN NATION



ONEIDA NATION HOMELANDS

May 31, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski:

Re: Support for David Bernhardt, Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary Nominee

Shekóli. I write on behalf the Oneida Indian Nation in support of the confirmation of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Mr. Bernhardt's experience working for two Interior Secretaries during the Bush Administration convinces us that his knowledge of the Department and experience in dealing with the complex issues under its jurisdiction make him singularly well qualified for the Deputy Secretary position.

As Interior Solicitor, Mr. Bernhardt and his staff were involved in myriad thorny legal issues many of which involved Indian Country in some way, directly or indirectly. During his tenure as Solicitor, he was widely regarded as a thoughtful legal advisor to the Secretary and he was willing to defend final agency decisions in favor Indian tribes. Indeed, the United States Senate recognized his hard work and dedication when confirming him to serve as Interior Solicitor.

Further, as Mr. Bernhardt explained in his confirmation testimony of May 18, 2017, he has been recognized by tribal leaders for his work to resolve major Indian water rights disputes in Colorado, Arizona and Oklahoma. More importantly, we believe that Mr. Bernhardt understands the significance of tribal sovereignty, the real potential for tribal governments and non-tribal governments to resolve disputes by agreement where possible, and the constructive role that the federal government can play to support the negotiations and the resultant agreement.

While Mr. Bernhardt knows and respects the prerogatives of the Secretary, we think it significant that he knows and respects equally the obligation of full and meaningful government-to-government consultation before the United States takes actions that will impact Indian tribes.

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
May 31, 2017
Page 2

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote to report Mr. Bernhardt out of the Committee so that his nomination can be considered by the full Senate as soon as practicable.

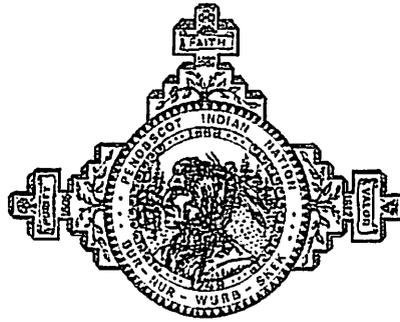
Na ki' wa,


Ray Hairitter
Nation Representative

Office of the Chief and Council

Kirk E. Francis
Chief

Bill Thompson
Vice-Chief



Penobscot Nation
12 Wabanaki Way
Community Building
Indian Island, Maine 04468
(207) 827-7776

June 1, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Nomination of David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department

Dear Chair Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell,

On behalf of the Penobscot Nation, I write to express support for the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Although Mr. Bernhardt previously served at the Department during the Presidency of George W. Bush, the Penobscot Nation did not have any direct interaction with him. We are, however, aware of his interactions with other tribal nations during that time, who informed us that Mr. Bernhardt placed a priority on having honest and transparent interactions and utilizing processes that developed a record which would then provide guidance on the outcome of any decision-making. The Penobscot Nation supports these core principles for decision-making at the Department. For this reason, and those described below, we offer our support for Mr. Bernhardt's nomination.

As described during the hearing on Mr. Bernhardt's nomination, his previous experience at the Interior Department makes him well-qualified to serve in the capacity of Deputy Secretary. Although, he did not interact with the Penobscot Nation during that time, we support the statements made by him during the recent hearing and believe that those views will provide a good foundation for interactions between the Department and tribal nations.

Mr. Bernhardt confirmed that consultation with tribal nations is a necessity and that it must be both meaningful and full. He provided assurances to Senator Martin Heinrich that funding for Indian programs are not suspect and there is a solid legal basis for such funding. He also assured Senator Jeff Flake that the Department will continue to play a constructive and appropriate role in the resolution of water disputes and tribal water issues. The Penobscot Nation agrees with these viewpoints and believes that the Department has a vital role in helping to protect the rights and trust assets of tribal nations.

Murkowski and Cantwell
Page 2
June 1, 2017

For the reasons described herein, we offer our support of Mr. Bernhardt's nomination and look forward to working with him in his capacity as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Francis", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kirk E. Francis
Chief



May 18, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

The Public Lands Council (PLC) and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) would like to take this opportunity to express our support for the confirmation of David Bernhardt to be the Deputy Secretary of the Interior. PLC is the only national organization dedicated solely to representing the roughly 22,000 ranchers who hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands. NCBA is the beef industry's largest and oldest national marketing and trade association, representing American cattlemen and women who provide much of the nation's supply of food and own or manage a large portion of America's private property.

Mr. Bernhardt has a wealth of experience at the Department of the Interior, having previously served as the Department's Deputy Solicitor, deputy chief of staff and counselor to the Secretary, and as director of congressional and legislative affairs and counselor to the Secretary under former Interior Secretary Norton. He then went on to serve as the Solicitor under former Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. He is respected and widely regarded as a leader both inside and outside the Department. In his current capacity, Mr. Bernhardt leads the natural resource law practice at Brownstein Hyatt Farber and Schreck, LLP and has his finger on the pulse of everything that is happening in the natural resource world. Finally, as a native of Colorado Mr. Bernhardt understands western issues and the unique challenges that our members face while operating on public lands in the west.

Western ranchers own approximately 120 million acres of the most productive private land in the west and manage nearly 250 million acres of public land. Ranchers who hold grazing permits on public land do vital work that benefits public land including the improvement of water sources, improvement of wildlife habitat, and maintaining the open space that Americans enjoy. Having leadership at the Department of Interior who understands public lands, and who values true cooperation with stakeholders is in the best interest of all Americans.

PLC and NCBA appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members – the nation's food and fiber producers. We urge the Senate to confirm Mr. Bernhardt without delay.

Sincerely,

Dave Eliason
President
Public Lands Council

Craig Uden
President
National Cattlemen's Beef Association

QUAPAW TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

P.O. Box 765
Quapaw, OK 74363-0765

(918) 542-1853
FAX (918) 542-4694

May 17, 2017

Hon. Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Support for David L. Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary – U.S. Department of the Interior

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

As veteran Senators from large western states, you know of the complexity of the issues affecting western communities. Management of federal and public lands, water, energy and natural resources and Indian affairs are but a handful of issues the U.S. Department of the Interior deals with on a daily basis.

In March 2017 the Senate --- rightly in my view --- voted overwhelmingly to confirm Ryan Zinke to be the Secretary of the Interior. His pro-active, upbeat, can-do attitude is the proper one to tackle the difficult issues facing Interior. Likewise, I believe David L. Bernhardt would be an excellent deputy to Secretary Zinke for the reasons mentioned below.

Mr. Bernhardt is a westerner by birth and orientation. In addition to an accomplished career in the private sector, he has experience working on Capitol Hill and spent 8 years in the Department of the Interior during the presidency of George W. Bush. Mr. Bernhardt wore many hats in his service to Secretary Gale Norton and Secretary Dirk Kempthorne in that 8-year period: Director of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Counselor to the Secretary, Deputy Chief of Staff, Deputy Solicitor, and Solicitor.

As you can imagine, these roles afforded Mr. Bernhardt the widest possible exposure to the most compelling issues of the day including species conservation, energy and natural resource development and management, environmental protection and compliance, and Indian affairs.

I have known and worked with Mr. Bernhardt for many years and know him to be of the highest integrity and professional competence. I therefore commend him to the Committee without hesitation and urge his swift confirmation by the United States Senate.

Sincerely,


JOHN L. BERREY
Chairman



THE SENECA NATION OF INDIANS

12837 Route 438
Cattaraugus Territory
Seneca Nation
Irving, NY 14081
Phone (716) 532-4900
Fax (716) 532-6272

PRESIDENT
Todd Gates

TREASURER
Maurice A. John, Sr.

CLERK
Lenith K. Waterman

90 Ohi:yo' Way
Allegany Territory
Seneca Nation
Salamanca, NY 14779
Phone (716) 945-1790
Fax (716) 945-0150

June 1, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell,

I write on behalf of the Seneca Nation to support the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt to serve as the Deputy Secretary for the Department of the Interior. Our support is based on our previous interactions with Mr. Bernhardt when he served as the Solicitor for the Department during the Presidency of George W. Bush.

In his previous capacity as Solicitor, Mr. Bernhardt was asked to opine on the regulatory framework involving the interplay between the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and the Part 292 regulations regarding restricted fee lands. This was a complex matter that related to the Seneca Nation's ability to use funds from the Seneca Nation Settlement Act to purchase lands in restricted fee status and how those lands would be treated under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. We found Mr. Bernhardt to be diligent, to consult with all stakeholders, to recognize the unique federal responsibility of the Department to tribal nations, and to form a record that carefully analyzed the relevant statutory and regulatory framework. More importantly, we appreciated Mr. Bernhardt not rushing the decision, but acting in a patient and deliberate manner to ensure that whatever the decision would ultimately be it was supported by an adequate record and analysis.

Given our prior interactions with Mr. Bernhardt, we believe that he will be a capable and competent Deputy Secretary who fully understands the relationship between the federal government and tribal nations and the appropriate role the Department of the Interior has to protect the trust assets of tribal nations but also support our self-determination.

Todd Gates, President
SENECA NATION OF INDIANS



Nya:weh,

For these reasons, we support the nomination of Mr. David Bernhard to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department.

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY

Executive Office of the Governor & Lieutenant Governor

"Putting Our People First"

Stephen Roe Lewis
Governor



Monica Lynn Antone
Lieutenant Governor

June 1, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairwoman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski,

I write on behalf of the Gila River Indian Community in support of the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Our support stems from our experience working with Mr. Bernhardt during his previous tenure as a senior official at the Department of Interior.

In particular, we negotiated extensively with Mr. Bernhardt on our water settlement—the Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement that was enacted into law in 2004 as part of the Arizona Water Settlements Act. Mr. Bernhardt was a tough negotiator for the Department but also understood that the Community had legitimate rights to water. He was able to balance his role as an advocate for the Department with the understanding that the Department had a trust responsibility to the Community. Once a final settlement was reached, the Community found Mr. Bernhardt helpful in navigating the legislative process to ensure that Congress understood that the settlement benefited both the Community and the Federal government. As a result, the Community's water settlement was enacted into law and brought critical water resources to the Community and our members.

Based on our experience in negotiating and working on complex issues with Mr. Bernhardt we support his position as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We believe he has an understanding of tribal sovereignty and the United States' trust responsibility to tribal nations, including the Gila River Indian Community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SRL", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Roe Lewis
Governor

525 West Gu u Ki · P.O. Box 97 · Sacaton, Arizona 85147

Telephone: 520-562-9841 · Fax: 520-562-9849 · Email: executivemail@gric.nsn.us

**The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510**

**The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510**

May 11, 2017

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell,

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) supports the nomination of David Bernhardt to become the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

The Department of the Interior has 10 major bureaus, 70,000 employees and manages more than 500 million acres of public land. The mission of the Department of Interior, to protect America's great outdoors and natural resources is of absolutely critical importance to our nation's \$887 billion outdoor recreation economy, which includes America's hunters and anglers.

The importance of the Department of Interior, the chief steward of our national public lands, requires a Deputy Secretary who understands how the department functions and understands the complexities associated with balancing the resource needs of our country, both now, and most importantly, for future generations of Americans. David Bernhardt will provide much needed departmental experience to the Interior leadership team at a time when important natural resource decisions with wide impact are being considered.

The Senate does have a responsibility to examine the potential conflicts of interest brought on by Mr. Bernhardt's private legal career, where he represented various parties with financial stakes in Department of the Interior decisions, and the TRCP supports this examination. In our experience, we have found Mr. Bernhardt to be fair, curious, thoughtful and committed to ensuring the Department of the Interior lives up to its responsibility to conserve the nation's lands and resources for future generations.

Mr. Bernhardt also boasts a first-hand appreciation for public lands, a critical component of his qualifications to help lead the Department. Growing up in Rifle, Colorado, Mr. Bernhardt enjoyed hunting and fishing on national public lands. These same lands were also heavily used for oil and gas production, giving him an early perspective about the necessity of balancing the many uses of our national landscapes. Mr. Bernhardt also understands the close partnership that must exist between the federal government and the states and our neighbors to the north and south. He served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia and was the United States Commissioner to the International Boundary Commission.

In summary, we believe that David Bernhardt has the experience, temperament and judgment to make an excellent Deputy Secretary for the Department of the Interior, and we support his nomination.

Sincerely,



**Whit Fosburgh
President and CEO
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: May 4, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

*****EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 4TH AT 10:00 AM EST*****

Interior Announces “Share the Experience” 2016 Photo Contest Winners

*Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo Placement on
National Public Lands and Waters Pass*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#) and launched the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the

summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America® and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department’s popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America’s national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark/#EncuentraTuParque — a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America’s national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

From: Quimby, Frank
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Paul Ross](#)
Subject: draft DOI release on new BSEE director
Date: Friday, May 12, 2017 2:46:09 PM
Attachments: [DOI Angelle press release - draft ea fq this.docx](#)
[BSEE Angelle Bio - draft.docx](#)

attached is a draft release of secretary announcing new BSEE directordrafted by BSEE's acting director of public affairs Eileen Angelico.

also attached is a draft bio for doi and bsee webpages developed by Tom Lillie, the BSEE director's chief of staff, who says Angelle is having his final meeting

as Public Service Commissioner on the morning of May 19th. He would like to time the announcement as BSEE Director to occur sometime after that meeting, rather than before the meeting. and asks if that will work?

From: Heather Swift
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: DRAFT
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 7:07:30 PM

Honorable Secretary Zinke

1. Please tell us about your hunting background and how you got started.

I grew up in Whitefish, Montana, which at the time was a small timber and railroad town just outside Glacier National Park. Now it's transitioning into a tourism town. I grew up hunting and fishing on America's public lands with my dad and granddad. We would head out at 0400 with bologna sandwiches in our pockets and the hope of getting a big bull elk. We'd hike across miles of forests and plains and river valleys learning the land and wildlife. Then, after Lola and I had our own kids I'd take them out and teach them the tradition. We still like to hunt and fish together.

2. How old were you when you went on your first hunt; who took you and what did you hunt?

3. What kind of firearms did you have early on?

4. What kind did you buy when you were old enough to acquire your first firearm on your own?

5. What's your favorite hunt?

6. How often do you get to hunt now when you're back home in season?

7. Is there a particular species, or a specific place, you've wanted to hunt but haven't had a chance to yet? Perhaps, for example, duck hunting in Arkansas, pheasant hunting in South Dakota or hog hunting in Georgia.

8. What firearms do you own now?

9. Do your wife and children hunt if we may ask?

10. Favorite hunting memory?

11. Largest animal taken? Most exotic?

12. Do you anticipate any weekend excursions from DC this fall during hunting seasons?

13. What weapons did you use while a SEAL? How did they perform for you?

14. Did you have favorite weapon during your service in the Navy?

15. Your first day of work as Secretary...How did it feel to ride up to the headquarters of the Department of Interior on a horse?

16. Please tell us the ways that hunting supports conservation.

Thank you, Secretary Zinke, for your service to the United States of America. And all hunters appreciate your support of hunting in America.

From: ryanzinke
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Durbin BE piece.
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2017 7:41:06 AM

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: Michael Arace <ljchmomas@reagan.com>
Date: 11/11/2017 12:31 PM (GMT-05:00)
To: Ryan Zinke (b) (6) >
Subject: Z, I suspect that a similar situation is holding up any action on

Z,

I suspect that a similar situation is holding up any action on the Fr. Stanislaw Rog immigration status.

The Federal Government is indeed a swamp that needs to be drained.

God bless you and Lolita,

Mike



[Zinke says Democrats are holding Interior nominees 'hostage'](#)

St George News 31m ago

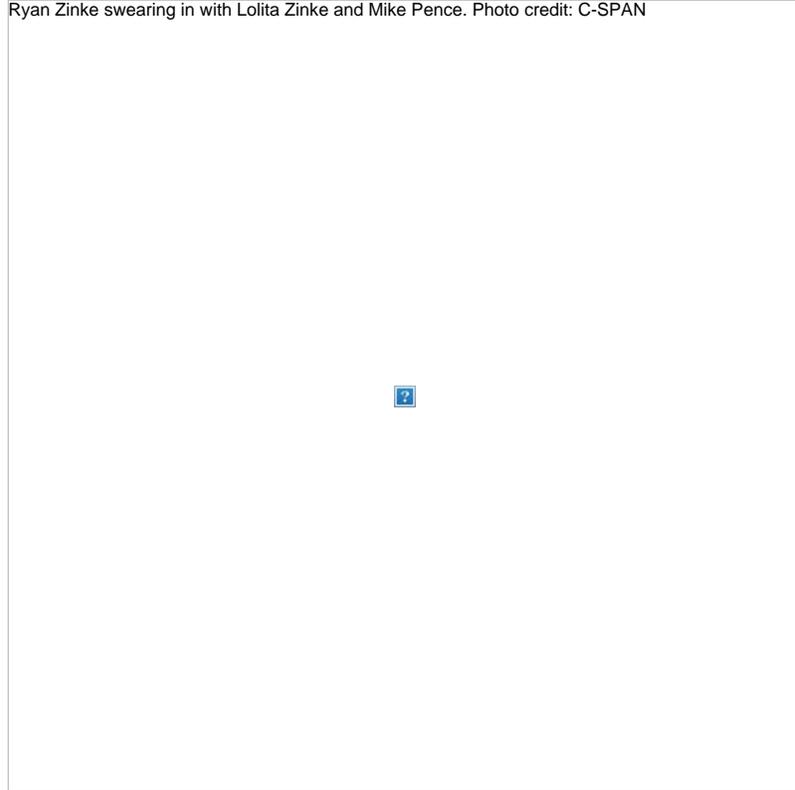
From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Magallanes_Downey](#); [David.Bernhardt](#); [Daniel.Jorjani](#); [Scott.Hommel](#); [Lori.Mashburn](#)
Cc: [Heather.Swift](#); [Newell_Russell](#); [Alex.Hinson](#)
Subject: E&E: Enviro file suit seeking info for Zinke's wife
Date: Thursday, October 05, 2017 4:45:42 PM

INTERIOR

Enviros file suit seeking info for Zinke's wife

Michael Doyle, E&E News reporter
Published: Thursday, October 5, 2017

Ryan Zinke swearing in with Lolita Zinke and Mike Pence. Photo credit: C-SPAN



A green group filed a lawsuit seeking information about the travels of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife, Lolita Zinke. C-SPAN

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife has now been drawn deeper into the Trump administration's travel swirl, with an environmental group suing today in an effort to uncover more details about her activities.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia follows up on a Freedom of Information Act request submitted earlier this year by the Montana-based Western Values Project.

"There should be transparency and accountability for everyone who influences Interior's decisions," Chris Saeger, the environmental group's executive director, said in a statement. "If Lolita Zinke is playing a role at Interior, taxpayers deserve to know if she is playing by the same rules as everyone else who works there."

The Interior secretary, who has been the focus until now, has said his travel has been both appropriate and approved.

"I believe taxpayers absolutely have the right to know official travel costs: It's common sense, and at the department we make those documents and my travel schedule available to everyone," Zinke said Friday. "Using tax dollars wisely and ethically is a great responsibility and is at the good heart of good government."

A group called American Oversight filed the [seven-page lawsuit](#) on behalf of the Western Values Project, which is a frequent critic of Zinke. A number of American Oversight staffers formerly worked for Democratic staffers or campaigns.

In early June, the environmentalists filed an Interior Department FOIA request, seeking documents concerning Lolita Zinke's participation in internal meetings, presence on official trips and emails sent to her in relation to government business, among other matters.

So far, the lawsuit states, the department "has failed" to produce any documents or make any determination concerning the request.

An Interior spokesperson could not be reached late this afternoon for comment.

The FOIA request was one of many bombarding officials. Last year, the Interior Department reported receiving 6,428 FOIA requests. The average response time for a request deemed to be "complex" was 42 days, although responses varied widely.

The lawsuit filed today in support of the underlying FOIA request escalates a campaign occurring on other fronts, as well ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 4).

Two top Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee on Monday urged Interior's Office of Inspector General to include an examination of Lolita Zinke's travel as part of an ongoing inquiry into the Cabinet secretary's travel.

In early September, Zinke's wife was named campaign chairwoman for Republican businessman and Air Force veteran Troy Downing, who is challenging Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) ([E&E Daily](#), Sept. 7).

"Because the secretary's spouse is leading a Senate campaign in Montana, tax-payer funded travel for Mrs. Zinke, especially to or from Montana, deserves heightened scrutiny," Reps. Raúl Grijalva of Arizona and Donald McEachin of Virginia wrote.

Earlier this week, Lolita Zinke praised Downing on Twitter, writing that "he fought for our country and now for us," and she retweeted a commentator who blasted the "Leftist Media" for the coverage of former Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who resigned following reports of his travel.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Micah Chambers](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#)
Cc: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Final: Congressional Testimony Cully
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 3:39:58 PM
Attachments: [Remarks_BulletsCully.docx](#)
[Remarks_Cully_v2.docx](#)

Bullets and full testimony attached. Cleared by Aaron Thiele (who handled military issue for Rep. Zinke) and Micah.

Micah, does the statement for the record need to be formatted any particular way?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Newell, Russell](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: FIRST DRAFT: WH Digital Request, Bios
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 2:28:21 PM
Attachments: [1120 SOI Bios.docx](#)

Hey all,

Below please find the long (273 words) and short (30 words) bios, as requested by the White House. It is attached and below.

Long bio

Ryan K. Zinke is the 52nd United States Secretary of the Interior. Secretary Zinke served 23 years in the Navy SEALs from 1986 through 2008, retiring with the rank of Commander. Prior to accepting a position in President Donald Trump's cabinet, Secretary Zinke represented Montana as a Congressman from the state's at-large district, holding office from 2015 to 2017 and earning the unique distinction of being the first-ever Navy SEAL to be elected to the U.S. Congress. He also served in the Montana State Senate, representing the 2nd district.

A member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Secretary is a Montana native, having grown up in Whitefish, MT. Some of his earliest childhood memories are the times he spent at Glacier National Park. He is an avid hunter. Secretary Zinke attended college at the University of Oregon, where he played Division I football and graduated with a degree in Geology. He has also obtained an M.B.A. and an M.S. degree from National University and the University of San Diego, respectively.

Given the prevalence of Native American tribes in Montana, the Secretary possesses a deep understanding of tribal issues. In the U.S. House of Representatives, Secretary Zinke served on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee, championing legislation that would honor our military and veterans, reform forest management, and protect the rights of Native Americans. Secretary Zinke is an admirer of President Theodore Roosevelt, and he believes in the importance of a multiple-use philosophy for our public lands. He is a proponent of American energy dominance.

Secretary Zinke is married to Lola Zinke. They have three children: Jennifer, Wolfgang, and Konrad.

Short bio

Ryan Zinke is the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A Montana native, the Secretary is a former Navy SEAL Commander. He represented Montana's at-large district in the U.S. Congress.

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: FLOTUS foreign POOL #4
Date: Saturday, September 23, 2017 7:23:31 PM

From: Krissah Thompson (b) (6) >

Date: September 23, 2017 at 7:19:36 PM

Subject: FLOTUS foreign POOL #4

[At 6:35](#), FLOTUS arrived at The Air Canada Centre to attend the opening ceremonies of the Invictus Games.

She first met with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his family. Trudeau teased with his children Ella-Grace and Xavier while awaiting Mrs. Trump's arrival.

"Important job stuff," he said, while moving the children into position and giving them a laugh. Mrs. Trump greeted Trudeau and his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, warmly by giving every member of the family a kiss on the cheek.

"It's good to see you. I saw you a few days ago," Mrs. Trump said to Mrs. Trudeau.

She then leaned down to greet their daughter Ella-Grace. "How are you? Beautiful!" Mrs. Trump said. She similarly greeted their son Xavier.

"I'm so glad you joined us," she said to the children.

She added, "I heard you have a little three-year-old at home?"

The Prime Minister said "It's bedtime for him."

"Of course," said Mrs. Trump.

Mrs. Trudeau kept the conversation going.

"We told Xavier that Barron is playing soccer," she said.

They then chatted about soccer a bit before your pool was ushered out. (Barron is not on the trip with his mother.)

Mrs. Trump will view the opening ceremonies from a VIP suite halfway across the arena from your pooler.

You can view the Invictus Games opening ceremonies here via LiveStream:

<http://sportscanada.tv/invictusgames2017/livestream-schedule>

Krissah Thompson
The Washington Post
Staff Writer
@krissah30

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: FLOTUS Pool Report 1
Date: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 12:14:44 PM

From: Garcia, Julie [mailto:jgarcia@lsj.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2017 12:08 PM
Subject: FLOTUS Pool Report 1

10:30 arrival of First Lady Melania Trump and Second Lady Karen Pence to the Signature Hangar at Corpus Christi International Airport. They are with Cecilia Abbott, wife of Texas Governor Greg Abbott, and Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush.

Trump, Pence, Abbott and Bush met with 40-50 first responders and military personnel at the Signature Hangar of the Corpus Christi airport. Several members of the U.S. Army, Corpus Christi Fire Department, Rockport Police Department and the Nueces County Sheriffs Office we're in attendance.

After about 15 minutes, the group gathered for a group photo with Trump in the center and a Corpus Christi fire engine in the background.

- Julie Garcia, Corpus Christi Caller-Times

[Unsubscribe](#)

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: FLOTUS Pool Report JBA Youth Center
Date: Friday, September 15, 2017 4:35:04 PM

From: Hunter Walker (b) (6) >
Date: September 15, 2017 at 4:14:58 PM EDT
Subject: FLOTUS Pool Report JBA Youth Center

First Lady Melania Trump arrived at the Joint Base Andrews Youth Center at about 2:48 pm on Friday. It is a before and after school facility for children whose parents work and live on the base including military personnel, contractors and civilians.

Trump departed her motorcade and walked into a room with a sign on the door designating it as a "PLAY ZONE." Inside, about eight children sat at three tables. One group was playing with Legos while the other two made art. Trump was accompanied by Dawn Goldfein, the wife of the Air Force Chief of Staff. The pair was greeted by the director of the base's youth programs and Dr. Teichert, the wife of the commander of the 11th wing and Joint Base Andrews. After saying hello to the children at each table and almost sitting at one of the art tables, Trump got up and made her way to the Lego group.

"Oh my god. Amazing. Wow. I love Legos," Trump said as the children showed off their work.

Trump greeted the boy next to her, who had his head in his hand.

"Hi big boy," she said.

The boy kept his hand firmly planted on his forehead.

"He's shy," one of the adults in the room explained.

"What are you building?" Trump asked.

The boy's answer wasn't audible to your pooler.

"I love your house," Trump responded.

Trump asked a girl at the table her name and the child didn't seem to respond.

"Is she shy normally?" Trump asked one of the staffers.

"No, not normally, just today," the man said. "She was so excited to see you. Now you're here."

Trump complimented the girl's hair accessory.

"I love your red bow," Trump said.

The First Lady turned to another girl and asked about the slogan on her t-shirt.

"What is that? Eagle Pride?" Trump inquired.

"This is their school," a staffer explained.

"Beautiful," said Trump.

A young girl made a comment about the president out of your pooler's earshot.

"Do you know him? Do you know who he is?" Trump asked.

One of the children responded that they'd seen the president on television.

"He was dancing," the boy said.

"Oh, he was dancing? Oh I need to see that," said Trump. "Was he funny."

"It's on On Demand," the boy replied.

"OK, let me check it out," Trump said.

Trump next made her way to one of the art tables.

"So beautiful," she said before handing out White House coloring books.

"Which color is your favorite?" she asked one of the girls at the table.

The girl said she prefers pink.

"We have a pink room at the White House," Trump said before pointing to the girl's book. "Will you make a pink room."

Trump also gave the children crayons.

Your pooler was ushered out of the "PLAY ZONE" before Trump departed. We were brought to her next destination, a gymnasium where about 15 children stood at three different stations. There was a group playing with circuit boards, a flight simulator, and a paper plane kit.

Trump arrived soon after and greeted the children with the circuitry and simulator. Your pooler could not make out their conversations. She then went over to the children making paper planes and asked them to demonstrate their work.

"Very good!" Trump declared as one of the planes flew through the air.

Another plane didn't fare so well.

"That one crashed," Trump said.

A third plane turned around mid flight and went behind the group.

"It's like a boomerang," said Trump.

Trump then tried throwing three of the planes herself with mixed results. Her last attempt went a good distance.

"Nice," she said.

Trump then asked the children to demonstrate making a plane.

"Can you show me how you do it?" she asked.

After checking out the planes, Trump began to leave. As she departed, Trump shook hands with the kids at each table. She gave a high five to one of the children on the flight simulator. Trump waved goodbye and left the gymnasium at about 3:19 pm.

Hunter Walker
White House Correspondent
Yahoo News
Twitter: [@hunterw](#)

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From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Stephen Colbert on Twitter!
Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 9:43:40 PM



Who to follow

[Avatar](#)

 **Bernie Sanders**
[@SenSanders](#) [Follow](#)

Sen. Bernie Sanders is the longest serving independent in congressional history. Tweets ending in -B are from Bernie, and all others are from a staffer. - Vermont/DC

2K Following 6.5M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **Hillary Clinton**
[@HillaryClinton](#) [Follow](#)

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

760 Following 19M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **Stephen Colbert**
[@StephenAtHome](#) [Follow](#)

Idiot

39 Following 16M Followers

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San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow Drizzy, Hillary Clinton and CNN on Twitter!
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 7:17:36 PM



Who to follow

[Avatar](#)

 **Drizzy**
@Drake

[Follow](#)

Views From The 6 - Paradise

640 Following 36M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **Hillary Clinton**
@HillaryClinton

[Follow](#)

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

760 Following 18M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **CNN**
@CNN

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It's our job to #GoThere & tell the most difficult stories. Join us!
For more breaking news updates follow @CNNBRK &
Download our app <https://t.co/Xgo5kjl8c>

1.1K Following 38M Followers

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San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow Hillary Clinton, Conan O'Brien and The New York Times on Twitter!
Date: Saturday, January 06, 2018 2:15:58 PM



Who to follow

Avatar



Hillary Clinton
@HillaryClinton

Follow

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

770 Following 21M Followers

Avatar



Conan O'Brien
@ConanOBrien

Follow

The voice of the people. Sorry, people. - Los Angeles

1 Following 28M Followers

Avatar



The New York Times
@nytimes

Follow

Where the conversation begins. Follow for breaking news, special reports, RTs of our journalists and more. Visit nyti.ms/2io2WFI to share news tips. - New York City

880 Following 41M Followers

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Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow Hillary Clinton, The New York Times and CNN on Twitter!
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 7:46:00 PM



Who to follow

.atar



Hillary Clinton
@HillaryClinton

Follow

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

770 Following 20M Followers

.atar



The New York Times
@nytimes

Follow

Where the conversation begins. Follow for breaking news, special reports, RTs of our journalists and more. Visit nyti.ms/2io2WFI to share news tips. - New York City

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.atar



CNN
@CNN

Follow

It's our job to #GoThere & tell the most difficult stories. Join us! For more breaking news updates follow @CNNBRK & Download our app cnn.it/apps

1.1K Following 39M Followers

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Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow KATY PERRY, Hillary Clinton and Justin Timberlake on Twitter!
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 6:23:50 PM



Who to follow

avatar



KATY PERRY
@katyperry



Artist. Activist. Conscious.

200 FOLLOWING 98M FOLLOWERS

avatar



Hillary Clinton
@HillaryClinton



Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

760 FOLLOWING 15M FOLLOWERS

avatar



Justin Timberlake
@jtimberlake



240 FOLLOWING 60M FOLLOWERS

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Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow KATY PERRY, Hillary Clinton and Selena Gomez on Twitter!
Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 4:13:03 PM



Who to follow

[Avatar](#)

 **KATY PERRY**
[@katyperry](#) [Follow](#)

i know nothing

200 Following 100M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **Hillary Clinton**
[@HillaryClinton](#) [Follow](#)

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate. - New York, NY

760 Following 17M Followers

[Avatar](#)

 **Selena Gomez**
[@selenagomez](#) [Follow](#)

Get FETISH ft. Gucci Mane, out now: smarturl.it/FetishSG
Watch the official video: smarturl.it/SGFetishVideo - Los Angeles

1.3K Following 50M Followers

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San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow LeBron James, Justin Bieber and Hillary Clinton on Twitter!
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 9:20:31 PM



Who to follow

 **LeBron James**
[@KingJames](#) Follow

EST. AKRON - ST.V/M Class of '03
LeBronJamesFamilyFoundation... #IPROMISE - Amongst La Familia!

170 Following 37M Followers

 **Justin Bieber**
[@justinbieber](#) Follow

Let's make the world better. Join me on @bkstg at 'justinbieber'.
2U out now. OUR album PURPOSE out NOW

300K Following 97M Followers

 **Hillary Clinton**
[@HillaryClinton](#) Follow

Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS,
Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016
presidential candidate. - New York, NY

760 Following 16M Followers

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Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Follow Michelle Obama, CNN Breaking News and ESPN on Twitter!
Date: Sunday, June 11, 2017 3:36:55 PM



Who to follow

avatar



Michelle Obama
@MichelleObama



Girl from the South Side and former First Lady. Wife, mother, dog lover. Always hugger-in-chief. - Washington, DC

15 FOLLOWING 7.9M FOLLOWERS

avatar



CNN Breaking News
@cnnbrk



Breaking news from reporters and editors on the CNN Digital news team. Now 50M strong. Check @cnn for all things CNN, breaking and more. - Everywhere

120 FOLLOWING 51M FOLLOWERS

avatar



ESPN
@espn



290 FOLLOWING 33M FOLLOWERS

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Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Russell Newell](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#); [John Bockmier](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: FOR AWARENESS: NPS Names Fort Sumter Superintendent
Date: Wednesday, January 10, 2018 12:33:23 PM

All-

NPS will be sending out this release at the Region-level tomorrow, Jan. 11, regarding the new superintendent of Fort Sumter National Monument. Thanks.

-Paul

National Park Service names Tracy Stakely as Fort Sumter National Monument superintendent

ATLANTA — Today, National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin announced the selection of J. Tracy Stakely as superintendent of [Fort Sumter National Monument](#), Fort Moultrie and [Charles Pinckney National Historic Site](#) in South Carolina. This role also includes administrative oversight of [Reconstruction Era National Monument](#). Stakely is currently Congaree National Park superintendent and South Carolina State Coordinator for the NPS Southeast Region Leadership Council, working to ensure cooperation between the NPS sites in South Carolina, South Carolina State Parks, and various other state partners. Stakely assumes his new role January 22, 2018.

“Tracy has extensive experience working to preserve complex natural and cultural resources,” said Regional Director Austin. “He has proven himself to be an accomplished leader intently focused on helping the American people find deeper meaning and connections with their national parks. Tracy is sure to add tremendous value as superintendent of these parks and to the South Carolina lowcountry.”

“It is truly an honor to be selected as the superintendent of sites that preserve resources and stories from some of the most significant periods of our nation’s history,” Stakely said. “I am excited to join park staff, volunteers, partners, and local communities in their efforts to protect these special places. I look forward to helping continue the important work of telling all the relevant stories associated with these sites and increasing public engagement and support for these national treasures.”

For the past five years, Stakely has served as superintendent of Congaree National Park in the South Carolina midlands. Under Stakely’s leadership, the park made significant progress in advancing key strategic goals, including highlighting the park’s natural and cultural resources, expanding educational programming and recreational opportunities, advocating for park wilderness, establishing fiscal sustainability, and improving employee engagement and satisfaction.

During his nineteen years with the National Park Service Stakely has worked effectively with NPS staff, community partners, and contractors in the areas of resource preservation and park

management. He spent several years in the NPS Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta as program lead for the region's Cultural Landscape Program. In that role, Stakely led program staff and contractors in documenting park landscape resources and providing park managers with technical assistance to aid in cultural and natural resource management and preservation. Stakely gained additional park management experience during time spent as Acting Superintendent and Chief of Resource Management at Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park and Acting Superintendent at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Georgia. Prior to his tenure in the southeast region, Stakely was a landscape architect at the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, a NPS technical service center based in Boston, Massachusetts. There he authored cultural landscape reports and related planning documents and provided technical expertise on cultural landscape preservation to park managers and community partners.

Additionally, Stakely has served on national workgroups within the NPS to revise *Director's Order #61: National Cemetery Operations*, *Director's Order #100: Resource Stewardship for the 21st Century*, and the nationwide agreement for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Stakely earned a master's degree in landscape architecture from Louisiana State University and a graduate certificate in Leadership for Public Lands and Cultural Heritage through the Academic Consortium, a learning and development program cosponsored by the NPS, the Eppley Institute for Park Management, and six partner universities.

Both Stakely and his wife Cheri are originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee. They are the parents of two active teenagers, Bryson and Bella.

www.nps.gov

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: FOR AWARENESS: Steven Mietz named Redwood National & State Parks Superintendent
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 12:12:04 PM

All-

Below is a release for your awareness regarding the naming of the new superintendent at Redwood. The position has been fully vetted and approved. Let me know if there's any issues. The Region would like to put it out as soon as it's approved.

-Paul

Steven Mietz named Redwood National & State Parks Superintendent

SAN FRANCISCO - The National Park Service has named Steven Mietz superintendent of Redwood National & State Parks. He is currently the superintendent of Great Basin National Park in Nevada. Mietz replaces Steven Prokop who retired earlier in the year.

“Steve is an exceptional leader who is passionate about building positive relationships to preserve our parks,” said Laura E. Joss, regional director for the National Park Service’s Pacific West Region. “He has a proven track record of collaborating with partners. Along with his strong science background, this makes him an excellent fit for Redwood.”

Mietz has more than 18 years with the federal government, including time with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey. He joined the National Park Service in 2003.

“I am humbled by the opportunity to be a partner in the stewardship of the ecosystem that supports the tallest trees in the world,” Mietz said. “I am very excited about working with the staff and our partners to preserve this awe-inspiring place for the enjoyment and appreciation of all. ”

Under Mietz’s watch, Great Basin National Park was designated an International Dark Sky Park. The park and its nonprofit partners raised \$800,000 to construct the Great Basin Observatory. It will take advantage of some of the best night sky viewing in the nation. He has overseen the completion of several large-scale campsite rehabilitations and ecological restoration projects.

Throughout his National Park Service career, Mietz has served in a variety positions, including as the Midwest Region’s acting associate regional director for natural resources, the superintendent of Missouri National Recreational River, and the deputy chief of science and resource management at Grand Canyon National Park. Prior to working at Grand Canyon, he worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Grizzly Bear Recovery Program, the University of Montana’s Flathead Lake Biological Station, and the Confederated Salish and

Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation.

Mietz is currently on temporary assignment as the superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore in the San Francisco Bay Area. He will return to Great Basin National Park before taking the reins at Redwood, which is expected to be sometime in late fall.

Mietz earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University and his masters from the University of Montana. His personal interests include hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing with his wife, Stephanie, and sons, Jack and Ben.

Most people know Redwood as home to the tallest trees on Earth. The parks also protect vast prairies, oak woodlands, wild riverways, and nearly 40 miles of rugged coastline. For thousands of years people have lived in this verdant landscape. Together, the National Park Service and California State Parks manage the lands for the inspiration, enjoyment, and education of all.

For more information visit: <https://www.nps.gov/redwood>.

- NPS -

The National Park Service has more than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 417 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

Learn more at www.nps.gov.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Lori Mashburn](#); [Willens, Todd](#)
Cc: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: FOR FINAL REVIEW: Press Release Todd
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:32:51 AM

Below is the press release for Todd we'd like to send out this afternoon. Please send me edits by 1:00 PM.

EE is on deadline and is writing about Todd's appointment for NOON publication. I shared the release below, minus Sec quote because it hasn't been approved yet.

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the west, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to

2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee.** "Mr.

Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Micah Chambers](#); [Aaron Thiele](#)
Cc: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 12:42:36 PM
Attachments: [Remarks_Cully_v1.docx](#)

Micah/Aaron - can you please review the remarks for Cully's hearing?

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the Committee: it is an honor to be here today to tell you about an American patriot, a mentor, and a good friend, Captain Cully Stimson.

Captain Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy. I can think of no one more qualified for this job.

As a retired Navy SEAL Commander, I know just how important it is for the Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership, and the man I am introducing today fits the bill.

Captain Stimson and I served together in the Navy; he brings over two decades of experience as a lawyer, having first served in the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps, also known as the JAG Corps, in the 1990s.

In addition to our time together in the Navy, I also had the pleasure of working with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.

To tell Captain Stimson's story is to tell of his lifetime of commitment to both his community and his country. He has been a leader from very early on, serving as Captain of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team at Kenyon College.

He went on to graduate from The George Mason University School of Law, and he joined the Navy as a young lawyer in 1992. For five years, he was on active duty, serving in both San Diego, California and London, England.

Captain Stimson was called back to active duty in 2001, to support the Joint Special Operations Task Force JAG for SEAL Group Two.

In President George W. Bush's administration, Captain Stimson was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs, providing advice and counsel to Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates about the Pentagon's detention operations.

Since leaving public service, he has been with the

Heritage Foundation as a Senior Legal Fellow and Manager of their National Security Law Program.

Captain Stimson has served our nation for over two decades in the Navy, more recently serving as Deputy Chief Judge of the Navy-Marine Corps Trial Judiciary and an adjunct law professor and instructor at the Naval Justice School in a reserve capacity.

A bulleted list of Captain Stimson's professional achievements, however, does not paint the full picture of how this man has demonstrated himself to be the kind of high-character human being fit for service.

From teaching high school to coaching and mentoring hundreds, if not thousands, of young Americans, Captain Stimson has devoted countless hours to cultivating the next generation. He is Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Soccer Foundation, the charitable arm of U.S. Soccer, which offers assistance to more than 35,000 underserved and minority children.

A devoted family man, Captain Stimson has been married since 1995. He and his lovely wife adopted four orphans.

Captain Stimson is the epitome of a military officer,

representing honor, integrity and service. He has always been the first one willing to help others, whether that has meant writing dozens of letters of recommendations for colleges, graduate schools, judicial clerkships, and jobs, or quietly paying the tuition of two of his mentees who could not afford to take the Law School Admission Test. He also founded the Bryon J. Horn Memorial Scholarship Fund, in honor of a fallen fraternity brother.

Captain Stimson is the type of public servant who is comfortable working across party lines. When President Obama's Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson was General Counsel of the Department of Defense, he and Stimson worked together on a number of tough issues aimed to keep our great nation safe.

This bipartisan partnership eventually led to Captain Stimson extending, and Johnson accepting, an invitation to speak to the Heritage Foundation.

In that speech, Secretary Johnson spoke about his job, and one line from his remarks stands out in particular. "The office of General Counsel of the Defense Department," he said. "Particularly in the post-9/11 world, is in the middle of many difficult, front page issues."

In his job as General Counsel of the Navy, Captain Stimson will confront a host of these difficult issues as

well. I would not be here today if I did not have full confidence in his ability to tackle them.

Captain Stimson's partnership with Secretary Johnson was not an isolated event, either; he also developed partnerships with Stephen Preston, who served as General Counsel of both the Department of Defense and the CIA under President Obama. Preston recently spoke on a panel that Captain Stimson hosted at Heritage.

In my friend and brother-in-arms Captain Stimson, the Navy is gaining an imminently qualified attorney, an honorable military officer, and an individual with vast experience, and fidelity to the law and our country.

He has a long career of exemplary service in law and defense, and is an excellent fit for the position to which he was nominated.

I have no doubt he will be a wonderful General Counsel of the Navy.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Rebecca Matulka](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: National Park Service announces leadership changes at Mammoth Cave National Park
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 11:03:00 AM

Laura/Heather-

NPS Southeast Region is looking to put out this release regarding a new deputy regional director as well as a new superintendent for Mammoth Cave National Park. I've been told this cleared ASFWP. No specific target date, just as soon as we can clear. Release looks fine to me. Thanks.

-Paul

National Park Service announces leadership changes at Mammoth Cave National Park

ATLANTA — Today, National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin announced the selection of Mammoth Cave National Park Superintendent Sarah Craighead as deputy regional director, based in Atlanta. With this selection, Austin has also tapped Southeast Regional Chief of Staff Barclay Trimble as Mammoth Cave's next superintendent. Both appointments are effective July 23.

"Sarah and Barclay have distinguished themselves as exceptional leaders within the National Park Service," Austin said. "Sarah has a remarkable ability to tackle tough issues with clear vision, while fostering a strong sense of connection and purpose. I have relied on Barclay extensively for his business acumen and invaluable contributions to regional strategy and operations. I am confident both will continue serving the National Park Service and the American people well in their new roles."

Sarah Craighead, Deputy Regional Director, Southeast Region

Sarah Craighead, who began her NPS career as a cave guide and campground ranger at Mammoth Cave in 1978, has led the central-Kentucky park as superintendent since 2012. Park visitation increased by 10 percent during her 5-year tenure. She fortified partnerships with tourism constituents, volunteers, user groups, and the Friends of Mammoth Cave. Craighead opened the park's renovated visitor center and Big Hollow mountain-bike trail, and supported the removal of 100-year-old Lock & Dam 6 from Green River, returning many miles of surface and cave rivers to natural flow. As the Kentucky NPS coordinator, Craighead led her fellow superintendents to bring widespread recognition to the state's five NPS sites during the agency's Centennial year. Craighead also initiated night-sky programming and the park will complete its International Dark Sky nomination this year.

Prior to joining Mammoth Cave, Craighead spent three years as superintendent of California's Death Valley National Park, the largest national park in the continental U.S. and the lowest place in North America at 282 feet below sea level. She also served as superintendent of Saguaro National Park in Arizona and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma. In her 38-year career, Craighead has also worked at Acadia

National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Independence National Historical Park, and Mesa Verde National Park. While at Mammoth Cave, Craighead completed temporary assignments to the NPS Southeast Regional Office as acting deputy regional director and also as a special assistant to the regional director.

“Whatever I have been able to accomplish at Mammoth Cave was possible because of the park staff’s dedication to excellence in all they do,” said Craighead. “I am particularly pleased with the progress we made in providing concessions services for visitors and that several strategic plans are underway, which will guide Mammoth Cave for years to come. I am honored to begin my new assignment with the Southeast Regional Office, bringing the same enthusiasm and commitment to bear for the region’s 70 national park units.”

Craighead is a native of Cave City, Ky. She is married to Rick Shireman, a National Park Service retiree.

Barclay Trimble, Superintendent, Mammoth Cave National Park

Barclay Trimble has served as the NPS deputy regional director in Atlanta since 2014, assuming the added duties of regional chief of staff last year. He manages 30 superintendents at national parks in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He also oversees regional planning and compliance, land resources, ranger activities, and commercial services.

Prior to joining the NPS Southeast Regional Office, Trimble served as cluster superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Wright Brothers National Memorial and Fort Raleigh National Historic Site in North Carolina; deputy superintendent and acting superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona; recreation fee manager for the NPS Intermountain Region in Colorado; acting chief for the Business Management Office at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Utah/Arizona and chief of finance for the NPS Concessions Program Center in Colorado. In addition to these tenured assignments, Trimble has also provided administrative and management support during temporary assignments at, both, Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska and the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, DC.

“Mammoth Cave National Park boasts amazing resources with equally impressive employees, volunteers and community partners,” Trimble said. “I look forward to joining the park this summer and immersing myself in the majesty of Mammoth Cave.”

A Texas native, Trimble graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio with a degree in Business Administration. In his spare time, Trimble takes every opportunity to enjoy the parks and outdoors with his two children and wife, Lana.

#

[Mammoth Cave National Park](#) is two parks in one. Below the surface, it preserves the extensive Mammoth Cave system and above ground, scenic river valleys and the extreme hills and hollows typical of a karst landscape. Mammoth Cave is the longest cave in the world, with more than 405 miles explored and mapped.

Paul R. Ross

Senior Public Affairs Specialist

Office of Communications

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Rebecca Matulka](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Monday, May 01, 2017 8:13:13 AM

Heather-

Below is a release for your review regarding the annual Share The Experience contest. I believe Rebecca already mentioned this to you. Release is scheduled for Thursday. But we will want to give to some reporters on Wednesday under embargo. All of the other land management agencies and Park Foundation will be putting out their own version of the release. The plan is to work with USA Today on a photo gallery as well as CBS This Morning for announcing the winners. But if there is any other media you'd like to offer an embargo to, let us know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you for awareness. The annual contest, which we partner with the National Park Foundation and other federal land management agencies on, highlights amateur photographers and their work showcasing our public lands. The winning photo is then featured on the America The Beautiful Federal Land Pass.

Thank you!

Interior Announces “Share the Experience” 2016 Photo Contest Winners

*Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo Placement on
Public Lands and Waters Pass*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#), while launching the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America's national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual America the Beautiful federal lands pass.

“These photos encapsulate exactly what public lands mean to the American people,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico or a young boy hiking the Narrows of Zion

National Park to the beautiful landscape of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge or an amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam; they showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes

- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundations in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department's popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America's national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark—a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America's national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

Paul R. Ross
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Foreign Pool Report - Bilateral Meeting between US President and Thailand Prime Minister
Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 3:02:21 PM

From: Ching-Yi [mailto:(b) (6)]
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 1:20 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report - Bilateral Meeting between US President and Thailand Prime Minister

This is the very first Thailand Prime Minister official visit to the White House since 2005. It's a significant one, too, especially after the 2014 coup, the US and Thailand relationship went sour since then.

Your foreign pooler came to the South Lawn at 12:08 PM to wait for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's arrival. Thai Prime Minister's motorcade arrived in the South Portico at 12:25 PM. President Trump and the First Lady greeted the Prime Minister and his wife over there.

Both Thai PM and his wife wear all black. The PM wears black suit and tie, and his wife wears black skirt suit with white pearl necklace.

Your foreign pooler was ushered to the Oval Office at 12:32 PM. In the Oval Office, the Prime Minister first expressed his condolence to the loss of family and children in Las Vegas last night, and said he is "taking solidarity with American people." Also, he expressed his condolences to the loss of Puerto Rico people.

For the bilateral meeting, he said the security cooperation and regional issues of concern will be the topic of discussion. After the Prime Minister's short remark, President Trump added that the bilateral trade is becoming more and more important, the US would like "to sell a little bit more" to Thailand.

In reality, the U.S. has an \$18.9 billion annual trade deficit with Thailand. And between their discussion, arms sales and DPRK (which Thailand has certain tie with) are also expected.

Last but not least, here is the additional info that our colleague, Jessica Stone, obtained from Thailand Embassy:

The Prime Minister of Thailand will express his condolences and solidarity on behalf of the people of Thailand to President of the United States and the American people regarding the tragic incident in Las Vegas last night. The Prime Minister will also extend the solidarity of the Thai people to the American people for the ongoing relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

The Prime Minister of Thailand looks forward to discussing with the President on a wide range of issues of common interest, both bilateral ties and regional issues.

The Thai delegation consists of a number of Cabinet ministers and senior officials.

Best regards,
Ching-Yi Chang
Chief Editor & White House Correspondent
Shanghai Media Group (SMG)
From my iPhone

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Foreign Pool Report - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 2:51:32 PM

From: Richard Latendresse [mailto:Richard.Latendresse@tva.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 2:48 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Foreign Pool Report - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie Grégoire were welcomed on the South lawn by POTUS and FLOTUS.

As they went in as much as when they walked through the Colonnade, Mrs Grégoire and Mrs Trump first, followed by the two leaders, had lively (though inaudible) conversations.

After a short comment, the President invited the Prime minister to talk:

“It’s great to be back here in the Oval Office. As the President said, a lot of things to discuss. We have an incredibly close relationship. Two countries that are interwoven in our economies, our cultures and our people. But we have a good partnership and there’s always ways to improve it. All these issues we need to talk about, that’s why to have an on-going constructive relationship between the President and the Prime minister is always important, And that’s why I’m happy to be here today.”

In French, your pooler asked, if the atmosphere was good between the two of them.
PM Trudeau answered, in French: “Always! It’s always to good meet allies and friends.”

After the President answered ‘yes, he would see that’, to a question on whether he can see a deal with each individual country, if NAFTA doesn’t work out, your pooler asked PM Trudeau, in French, if he would be ready to sign an agreement only with the US. He simply answered in French, ‘we’re negotiating at the moment’.

Contrary to the President who started his comments by stating that “We’re here with a man who’s become a friend of mine.”, the Prime minister didn’t evoke their friendship. Mr Trudeau kept over all a straight face when the President talked about the possibility of not reaching an agreement on NAFTA.

Besides the two leaders and their wives, the only other people that your pooler could see in the room were John Kelly, WH Chief of Staff, and Roy Norton, Canada’s Chief of Protocol.

According to the PM media staff, four advisers will accompany him in the Cabinet Room:

- Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- David MacNaughton, Canadian Ambassador to the US
- Katie Telford, Chief of Staff
- Gerry Butts, Senior Political Adviser

It's the 3rd visit for Justin Trudeau to the WH as Prime Minister.

He was first received by President Obama for a State visit -- the first by a Canadian leader in almost 20 years -- on March 10-11, 2016

Then, President Trump welcomed him on February 13, 2017.

Justin Trudeau also came to the WH in the 1980s as a child when his father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was Prime

Minister.

Richard Latendresse
TVA Nouvelles – Washington, DC
(202) 340-6821, cell.

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Numuwaetu Nawahana

Telling The Peoples News

Volume 11 Issue 4

Fourth Quarter

2017



Haskell Graduates

Congratulations to **Randa M. Deluna**, Community Health Science; **Amos P. Wright**, Community Health Science, and **Alisha J. Numan**, Liberal Arts.

The PLHS Alumni received their Associates Degrees on November 30, 2017 from the Haskell Indian Nations University at Lawrence, Kansas.



Flora Greene, 100 years young, was selected to be the first to receive the new tribal enrollment card on December 15.

Tribal jobs program becomes permanent

The Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Consolidation Act, (H.R. 228) was signed into law recently although there was no statement or release from the White House.

The new law will strengthen and improve the 477 program that will combine employment, education and training-related grants into a single plan, with a single budget and a single reporting system.

“The 477 program is a proven example of promoting tribal self-determination as it provides flexibility in deciding how tribes want to spend the federal funds,” according to the Native American Financial Officers Association. “It allows tribes to combine formula-funded federal grants that come from varied sources related to economic development, employment and job training, higher education, skill development for youth and adults to succeed in the workforce, and welfare-to-work.”

Currently, tribes can draw on funds from Johnson-O’Malley, Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and other key programs at the Department of the Interior, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor. H.R.228 expands 477 to include nearly every other federal agency, including the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice.

“This historic passage occurred after eight years of tribal advocacy,” President Richard Peterson of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska noted in a press release as the bill was presented to Trump for his signature earlier this month.

Peterson’s tribe was the first to take advantage of the 477 program after it became law in 1992. Funds are used to help tribal citizens in southeast

Alaska find jobs and improve their skills and education levels.

Since 1992, 43 tribes have joined the program. Though that’s a small percentage of the 567 recognized Indian nations, supporters hope H.R.228 will draw in more participants because the new law makes 477 permanent, offering more stability in an era of dwindling or stagnant federal funds.

There were no hearings in the House or the Senate on H.R.228 this year but lawmakers had been working on the bill for the past few sessions. The bill was an easy sell in the 115th Congress as a result—it cleared both chambers with unanimous support.

Since there were no hearings, the Trump administration didn’t get an opportunity to state its views on jobs and employment, issue otherwise high on the president’s agenda.

But in his first Native American Heritage

Month proclamation, Trump promised to adopt policies to “enhance economic well-being of Native American communities” and he said that he would “always come to the aid of Native American people in times of crisis.”

A handful of other Indian bills are coming closer to passage through Capitol Hill so Trump will likely have more signing opportunities during the 115th Congress, which is wrapping up its first half this month. The second part runs from January through December of 2018.



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Submission of Articles Policy

Articles for publication must be submitted before the deadline currently set for March 23, 2018. Articles submitted after the deadline will not be published in the upcoming issue.

- Articles may be submitted as typewritten hard copy or in legible handwriting.
Articles sent by email must be in a Word format.
Do not send any articles or ad copy in a .pdf format.
Do not use Publisher for articles or ads because it is extremely difficult to convert to this newspaper's format. Please use Word instead.

Everyone is encouraged to submit articles about news you would like to share: new babies, birthdays and birthday parties, school events, sports, planned events, obituaries/memorials, etc., with or without photos.

Please note that photos printed on flyers or announcements may not always have the same quality as the original but submit them anyway.

Send to: Pyramid Lake Tribal Newspaper,
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E-mail: tribalnews@plpt.nsn.us

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the editor are welcomed. They should be no longer than 250 words and must be in good taste. All letters will be edited for slander and/or libelous content that will not be allowed.

Each letter must contain the name, address and telephone number of the author to verify the authenticity of the writer. Unsigned letters will not be published. Pseudonyms, or fake names, are not allowed unless identified by the person using them.

Letters addressed to specific individuals or offices will not be printed.

All letters must be original unless the letter is a reprint and is in the best interest of the tribal readership and the original source is identified as well as the sender of the letter.

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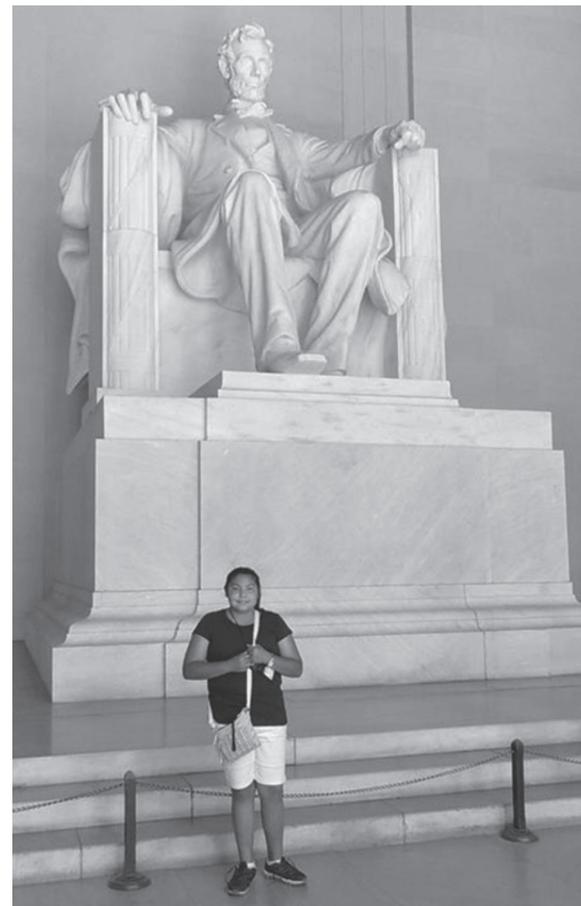
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\$10/business card

All advertisements must be camera-ready and cannot be returned. Each advertisement must be paid in full by the deadline date for publishing.

Contact: Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
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E-mail: tribalnews@plpt.nsn.us

Dejalyn's Trip to D.C.



Hello, my name is Dejalyn Rae Gopher. I am the daughter of Amanda Davis, the granddaughter of Alfred Davis, Jolyne Sander, and Clark Abel. This summer I was given the opportunity to travel to Washington, DC for the Jr. National Young Leadership Conference. I was able to visit the Capital and Harper's Ferry. My favorite place was the Vietnam Memorial. It was a very quiet place and there were thousands of names on the wall. We did a lot of activities and my favorite was when we pretended to work for the President of the United States. We also learned about leadership values and what makes a good leader, which will help me be a better leader in the future.

I want to thank my community and Tribe for all the support.

Thank you, Dejalyn Rae Gopher

Greetings! I would just like to take this time to thank everyone who helped support my daughter Dejalyn on her "DC or Bust" fundraising efforts. Whether you bought raffle tickets, baked goods, dinner plates, breakfast burritos, donated items, or gave words of encouragement—it was all appreciated. Without the support of our family, friends, community, Tribe, and members of the Tribal Council her trip would not have been possible. Thank you very much, from the bottom of our Hearts.

Editor's note: This story was inadvertently left out of the last issue. My sincere apologies.

"The fact that indigenous people seek recognition and not revenge should tell you exactly which culture is the 'civilized' one".
—Ava

PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE
2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Table with 3 columns: Month, Date, Event. Includes January (New Year's Day, Tribal Council Meeting, Martin Luther King Holiday), February (Tribal Council Meeting, President's Day), and March (Tribal Council Meeting, Basketball Tournament, Daylight Savings Time, Pow-Wow, St. Patrick's Day, Basketball Tournament).

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Pyramid Lake Museum and Visitor Center News and Activities

How time flies!! We're already coming into the winter season and the year went by so fast!

The Museum has been extremely busy with professional development training that began in September. Billie Jean attended the American Indian Tourism Conference in Green Bay, Wisconsin; the Nevada Museums Association Conference in Elko; and the International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Santa Ana, New Mexico.

There is always something new to learn, and the training provided the opportunity to meet many museum professionals from throughout the country and from overseas. Important subjects covered at the various conferences included: the mission of the museum drives the exhibits; museums are world-class destinations; the many unique and comical challenges within the museum world; connection to the collections must be passionate and knowledgeable about the subject, and sharing that commitment to the public. It takes a lot of work to get collections known, and exhibits are situational hands-on and should allow the public to get an authentic experience.

At the International Conference in Santa Ana, many workshops were attended and tours of local museums. Some of the workshops included: IMLS Native American Museum Services Grantee meeting; Tips for Successful Exhibit Planning and Development; Lessons Learned; Community Centered Digital Strategies; Collecting Oral Histories of Native American Veterans; Digitizing Crow Oral History; Developing an Oral History Center on a Shoestring Budget; Honoring Ancestral Women and Their Stories; Protecting Traditional Knowledge; and Hard Truths: Examining How Museums Present Traumatic Histories. Tours were made available at the Sky City Cultural Center and Museum, IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Art, and the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

We are a variety of visitors this last quarter that included the Pyramid Lake Jr. High School, Reno Home School, College of Atlantis, French Bloggers, I Can Do Anything Charter School, Alice Maxwell Elementary, Northern Nevada International Center, Kate Smith Elementary, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Van Gorder Elementary, National Indian Health Board, Nevada Museum of Art, UC Berkeley students, and Russian Rural Physicians. From September to November we had over 2,000 visitors at the museum. So far this year, we've had 7,420 visitors that surpass the number of visitors we had in 2016.

Our new IMLS 2-year grant started October 1, 2017. The goals of the grant are to sustain the tribal heritage, culture, and knowledge through strengthened activities with exhibits, educational services, and programming. Specifically, the

museum staff will collect oral history from tribal "Wisdom-Keepers" and develop cultural information into digital stories. The grant project is called "Ki Nasoomookwatu Learning Project." Watch for flyers announcing upcoming public meetings.

John Redhouse donated part of his book collection of 51 books to the Museum. All of the books are on the activist movement defending Native civil rights. Neal Cobb donated 20 books entitled "Divorce Seekers," a book about the Dude Ranches at Pyramid Lake and others near the reservation. Extra books are on sale in the Gift Shop. Anthony Shafton donated a book he wrote called "The Nevada They Knew."

On November 15th we held our annual "Rock Your Mocs" event. This is the 7th year of the event that is part of a worldwide Native American and Indigenous Peoples movement held during National Native American Heritage Month in November. We showed the Las Vegas PBS film, "Common Ground," had door prize drawings, presented the Pyramid Lake High School Dancers, and Round Dancing. Many people wore their favorite pair of moccasins to show their Native Pride. The Pyramid Lake Health Clinic provided lunch for all participants and we are very grateful for their support. We had a number of prize winners: Angey Dunn, Jacob Stump, Betsy Thomas, Debra Harry, Virginia Left Hand, Kierra, Janet Davis, Koomea Blindman, Loretta Garcia, Konch Blindman, Joe Mendes, Estella Pancho, Debbie Barlese, Don L, Nuba Cantsee, Carron Nugent, Darrin Padilla, Teresa Wright, Charlotte Harry, Betty Aleck, Pam Spotted Wolf, Charlene Dressler, Lydia, Boppy Blindman, Rissa, Alex O'Daye, Tsotigh Phillips, Jodessa Kochamp, and Carla Eben. Congratulations to all of the winners and thank you for celebrating Native Heritage at the Museum! A special thanks to our elders who came to participate in the day's activities. The presence of our local community members is a wonderful blessing in the sharing of our culture.



The Numu Book Club began reading "As Long As the River Shall Run" by Martha C. Knack and Omer C. Stewart. It is an ethnohistory of the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation. Meetings are held every other week and the next meeting on December 12th. The members have a great time, sharing their favorite part, Golden Lines and Summaries. Darren Hicks, the Numu Book Club Leader, started an online forum for participating members. The Book Club is an educational way to learn about our Paiute history so feel free to join in person or on-line. Meetings are held at the Pyramid Lake Museum and participating members receive a book discount for the chosen book. The member book cost is \$25.00.

On December 9th the museum hosted a Tule Duck Decoy making class taught by Sandra Eagle. It was a small group and each participant made their own special tule duck. It was a fun day with lots of laughter and visiting. We are grateful to learn one of our traditional survival arts from our very patient and knowledgeable teacher, Sandra. We plan to learn how to make more tule items, such as the Duck Egg Baskets and small boats.

We are looking forward to hosting another Basket Weaving class in February during the Presidents Day holiday weekend. It's time to gather your materials for making the Tsokono'o, cradleboard hood. You will need at least 100 scraped willow rods and willow weaving thread. A Basket Weaving gathering will be held in Lovelock during the Martin Luther King holiday weekend in January for making the boat basket, a newborn's first cradle.

Arrangements are still being planned for a class about Native Plants in our area but it might be moved up to allow for actual harvesting.

Stop by and visit the Museum Gift Shop. We have 2018 calendars for sale featuring beautiful photos from our area. Find your special and unique gifts for everyone on your list!!

Happy New Year!! May your year be filled with Happiness, Good Health, and Prosperity!!

Saa a' Mu Poonedooa!
Billie Jean Guerrero, Director
Jackie Cawelti, Attendant

Transportation Department News

The end of the year is nearly here and we are steadily working on closing out some work for the year and gearing up for next years projects.

The Transportation Planning Department is working with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) and ERFO (Emergency Road Funding Opportunities) to complete work on Surprise Valley Road at the north end of the lake.



Surprise Valley Road near the Willows after the flood.

In addition repair for the Sutcliffe Drive route is still in the process of being designed to certain specifications in order begin work in this area. This has been a long process and somewhat challenging however, the department continues to move forward in finding a resolution to this area's flood issues.

It has been decided that qualified areas of the Surprise Valley Road the Federal Government/ERFO team will be doing the repairs scheduled for this coming spring. This decision was made to keep the cost of repairs and engineering at a minimum to the tribe. The other areas of this road considered ineligible for reimbursement or maintenance repairs are being address by the Roads Department.

The Sutcliffe Drive repair at the Hardscrabble Creek next to Crosby's Lodge is almost shovel-ready. The question of whether this is a bridge repair or a culvert upgrade is still to be determined. The Department hopes to complete work in this area at the beginning of 2018, weather permitting. The flood damage is challenging but work continues to bring road back to normal. In the meantime, the road remains closed until further notice.

The Wadsworth Community Center has been an ongoing project for the Department that will be responsible for the expansion of the park-



Photograph taken from behind existing community center looking west.

ing lot when built. Seeking funds for the project continues while plans for the building and parking area continues and the design is 60 percent completed. This project has great potential and will be an exceptional benefit to the Wadsworth community as well as to the Tribe. It will be a great place to gather for the families and children of the three Pyramid Lake communities.

The Transportation Planning Department has been using the Tribes Strategic Transportation Safety Plan to address the transportation safety needs of our communities. The needs are great but planning and prioritizing area needs will help us move forward on improvements needed to make travel safe and effective for all community members as well as our visitors. Over the past year several changes have been made in this effort to implement the elements listed in the plan.

A Law and Order Committee's recommendation of two safety laws was approved by the Tribal Council and went into effect this year. The Child Passenger Safety Seat Law was

adopted as a primary law and families can be stopped if a Tribal Police Officer suspects a child isn't secured in a safety seat. The Safety Belt law as also adopted as a primary law this year and it requires the use of seat belts for all passengers in a vehicle. These two measures are listed in the Strategic Transportation Safety Plan and are to encourage tribal members to buckle up and secure their children in safety seats to make their travels as safe as possible.

The Transportation Safety Coordinator, Sherry Ely Mendes, has secured additional funding for the Child Safety Seat program that issues safety seats to families in need for no cost. New child safety seats as well as technical assistance on how to install them is given to each qualified family. There are currently 10 Certified Child Safety Seat Technicians on the reservation to assist with the installation and replacement of child safety seats. There will be holding CPS Checkpoints in the coming year to offer this safety service to the public and appointments are available. Call the office at (775) 574-1000 ext. 1107.

During the calendar year 2017 the Department took a survey on the roads currently listed in their inventory including the state routes SR445, SR446, and SR447 that cross the reservation. With the assistance of the State's Department of Transportation Traffic Safety team, a Road Safety Assessment (RSA) was conducted to determine the safety of these routes and the areas of improvement. This was a great exercise and in line with the Tribes Transportation Safety Plan. It revealed the need to focus on prioritizing areas of improvement and once that is completed, locating the necessary funding will be the next step in the process.

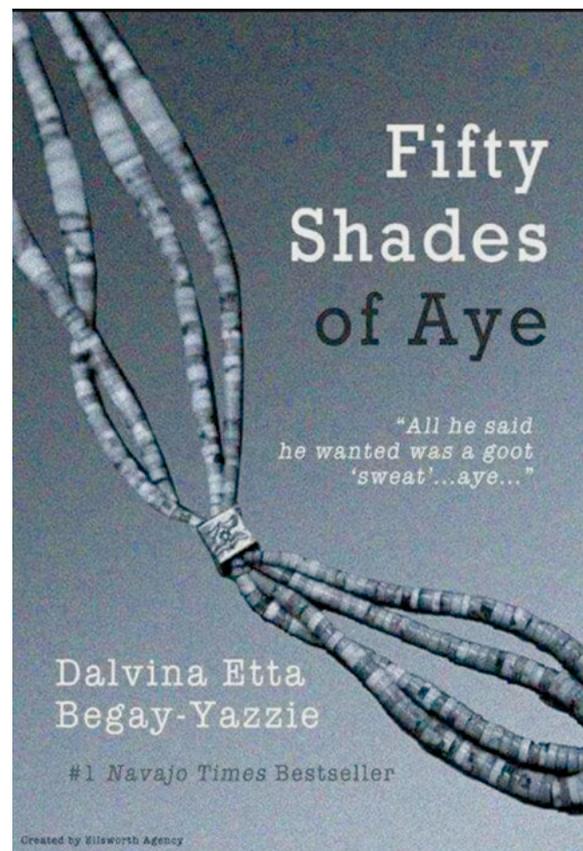
With the information gathered



Fitting a child for a new seat at the Pyramid Lake Tribal Clinic Check Station.

from the RSA on SR447 the Department will focus on the downtown corridor of the Wadsworth community and specifically the stretch of road from the junction to Brady Hill Road. This area has experienced a steady increase in traffic volume from trucks, recreational vehicles and the exceedingly high traffic use during the Burning Man Festival. Special notices is given to the Natchez School Zone that is situated directly on this route, as well as the New Community Center, the Head Start and Day Care centers.

The Transportation Safety Coordinator and the State of Nevada Department of Transportation has recently submitted a grant request to the Federal Highways Tribal Transportation Safety Program to place sidewalks and bike lanes in the Wadsworth area, improving the drainage issues in the area, and upgrading the school zone signs and crosswalks. Also proposed is to add lighting to the road approaches to improve night and day visibility. If the grant is approved plans for this project will begin immediately and construction will start in early 2019. The Department is looking forward to upgrading this area that is a long overdue improvement for a safe route for children and families who regularly attend school and community events.



Environmental Update

Since January 1, 2017 Pyramid Lake has received 1.50 million acre-feet of water. The lake has increased in elevation by 10 feet, given the evaporation over the summer. All of the work involved with the Department contributes to the fishery habitat restoration. Each component of the Department focuses on the benefits to the fishery and to the lake and river habitats.

The task of removing the non-native invasive plants: perennial pepperweed (tall white top); tamarisk; Russian Olive; Russian thistle; purple loosestrife; diffuse knapweed, and curly dock remains an important issue with control and eradication. The treatment areas include the Truckee River corridor, the lakeshores, certain range units, and certain easements and rights of way (road ways).

The effort to inform tribal land users of the treatment and control measures will contribute to controlling the infestation in many areas on the reservation. The Department will publish informational pamphlets in the future and will distribute to the tribal membership.

The Department continues to discover open dumps throughout the reservation. It is important that when these open dumps or satellite dumps



are discovered, they are reported to the Environmental Department. These sites will be assessed by mapping the location, identifying any addresses of the garbage owner(s), reported to the Pyramid Lake Police Department (PLPD), and cleaned up. Please contact the Environmental Department if open or satellite dumps are discovered or you can call the PLPD at (775) 574-0444.

The Department has initiated the Range Inventory and Assessment grant program. This purpose is to inventory the vegetation within the range units on the reservation, conduct an assessment to determine the health and condition of the range units, and begin to update and develop a range management plan.

It is the intent that the program will work with the Pyramid Lake Cooperative Cattlemen's Association. The 2018 wildland fires caused extensive damage to the range areas on the reservation. The damage was so severe that the BIA is planning

to modify the 10-year grazing permit. The Range Inventory program will be important to assist and serve the purposes for determining the condition of the range.

Our cultural resources exist in many forms. It is our responsibility to assure the protection of our sacred places and our sacred resources. It requires stewardship and the ability to report and provide information to the proper authorities. It may lead to the conviction of those that are guilty of vandalism, looting, and destroying these resources. We must be vigilant with identifying suspicious activity and report it to the PLPD. Please contact the PLPD at (775) 574-0444.

Lastly, the Tribal Response Program (Brownfields) continues to inventory unused and abandoned buildings in each of the Tribal communities. The inventory is the first step and next step is to conduct a hazardous materials assessment. If there are hazardous materials present (lead, asbestos, etc.) and a clean up may be initiated once funding is secure to cover the cleanup costs. If and when the cleanup is finished, the Tribe will decide the fate of the building for reuse, renovation, or redevelopment of the site. The Program is completing this process for the Urrutia property in Wadsworth.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (775) 574-0101 x17.

Thank you.

Mervin Wright Jr., Environmental Manager

BURN SEASON

October 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018

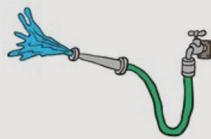
Residential permits for open burning are required for the burning of weeds, old lumber, and yard waste at all residences within the reservation.

You can get your Burn Permit Application at the Natural Resources Building or online at <http://plpt.nsn.us/pud/forms/PUDburnpermit.pdf>.

Keep Your Burn Pile From Starting A Wildfire!



Clear vegetation for 10 feet around your burn pile. Keep your burn pile small and controllable.



Be prepared just in case. Have a source of water and a shovel nearby



You must stay with your fire until it is dead out, even at night. Never leave it unattended.

Notice:

You must notify the Pyramid Lake Emergency Response, Pyramid Lake Dispatch, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Police, or the Pyramid Lake Ranger Station, in case of emergencies during the burn. Emergency Response can supervise burns for your safety.

If you have any questions feel free to call Amanda Davis at the Natural Resource Building at (775)-574-0101 ex: 16.

Enrollment Update



Flora Greene was selected to be the first tribal member to receive the new Tribal Identification Card from Chairman Hawley on December 15, 2017.

The new Tribal ID Cards with an Expiration Date are now available for members 18 years and over. Nevada Senate Bill 399 passed this year al-

lows for any businesses that accepts the Nevada driver's license to accept our new Tribal ID card, this includes air travel.

The new card has a six-year expiration period and has a regular photo of the tribal member plus a security photo on the card. It has a custom laminate featuring the Stone Mother and the Tribal Seal for extra security.

The older ID cards are valid until December 2018. If you are 18 and over and do not wish to have a new ID card please replace your TM (no photo) card with a new laminated TM card.

For those ages 17 and under ID cards with or without photo are not be affected, as they are only temporary cards.

Information on the 18 and over ID cards and card request forms are available on the Tribal website and Facebook plus the Tribal offices.

The new ID card has been an ongoing project for as long as I have been in enrollment and perhaps longer. To the many people involved (past and present) in this team effort from the beginning to the final approved ID cards we give our heartfelt gratitude and thanks for helping the Tribe achieve this historical goal!

We welcome the following new members to the Tribe.

October: Lei'na'ala Athena Borbon Brown, Shaniya Marae Centeno, Lennox D'Andria, Adonis Zane Hernandez, Hayzley Elaine Hicks, Belle Rain O'Neil, Leesa Theresa Perez, Caleb Anthony David Woolley.

November: Jolie Makenzie Reynolds, Dewey Alley Scott, Anthony Isaiah Sienze-Madera, David Edward Tomlin, John Edward Tomlin.

December: Gilbert Gary Davis, Zylah Kane Duncan, Rhonda Celeste Myers Knight, Rylee Ann Rolando.

Enrollment Services forms now available at the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe website:

- Under 18 Card Replacement Request Form
- Expiration Date ID Card 18 and Over Request Form—New!
- Document Request Form
- Enrolled Member Address Update Form
- Name Change Request Form

Please be sure to sign and date the form before mailing to the Enrollment Office

The Office of Enrollment Services is open Monday through Friday during normal work hours closing for lunch between 12 and 12:30 pm. Please call ahead of time to ensure that staff is available to process your requests. Applications and Change of Address forms are also available at the Tribal Office in the lobby.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding membership issues, please call Joanne Shaw at the Enrollment Office at 775-574-1000, Ext. 1115, or email: plenrollment@plpt.nsn.us. Enrollment now has a new direct fax number: 775-201-1941.

Please keep your mailing address current for all future tribal mailings.

You can't make this stuff up...

"Modern air is a little too clean for optimum health."

—Robert Phalen, chairman
EPA science board

Phalen was an air pollution researcher who claimed that children's lungs need to breathe irritants so their bodies can learn to fight them.

ELDER FALL PREVENTION

January 2018
Pyramid Lake Tribal Health Clinic
775-574-1018



Prevent Falls – Do The Penguin Walk!

- Bend slightly and walk flat footed.
- Point your feet out slightly like a penguin.
- Keep your center of gravity over you fee as much as possible.
- Plan where you are going to stop.
- Take shorter, shuffle like steps.
- Keep your arms at your sides, not in your pockets.
- Concentrate on keeping your balance.
- Go S-L-O-W-L-Y.

Winter tips

- ❖ Check your gutters, make sure they are clean and drain properly to avoid ice build-up.
- ❖ Clear your walk ways of ice and snow, ask for help if you cannot do it yourself.
- ❖ Take your time when walk outdoors, do not rush.
- ❖ Stay balanced, do not carry to much at one time.
- ❖ Wear winter shoes that have traction.
- ❖ Schedule outings during the warmest part of the day.

From the Business Office

One of the most exciting developments taking place for our Tribe is to see the actual formation and operationalization of Numu, Inc., our business corporation. This article will give some of the history and background about the corporation, and what it can do in the economic development realm.

Numu, Inc. is a type of structure commonly referred to as a Section 17 corporation. That is because it is a federally-chartered corporation. Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to issue a Federal Corporate Charter to an Indian Tribe under Section 17 thereof (25 U.S.C. § 477, as amended) for the purpose of providing Indian Tribes with the statutory means to charter Tribal businesses that preserve Tribal tax immunities, sovereignty and assets.

The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe began the initial efforts to create a Section 17 corporation several years ago, with the intent that such a corporation will ultimately benefit its members. The Numu Inc. Charter was approved by the Pyramid Lake Tribal Council on April 17, 2015, pursuant to Resolution No. PL 24-15, and in accordance with Tribal law and submitted to the Interior Secretary for approval. The federal approval of the Charter was given on June 15, 2016. Finally, the Tribal Council ratified the Charter and installed a board of directors on October 20, 2017.

There are many benefits associated with Section 17 corporations. As a federally chartered entity, it enables the tribal business entity to waive sovereign immunity to facilitate business transactions without waiving immunity of the tribe itself. This is an important protection for the tribe, as limits the liability of the tribe to only the assets it allocates to the corporation. It shares the same privileges and immunities as the tribe does, including immunity from suit. Typically, Section 17 corporations can be used to operate construction companies, manufacturing, gaming, agricultural enterprises, and government contracting. They can also be utilized as a holding company for tribal subsidiaries.

Finally, the Numu, Inc. is wholly owned by the tribe and operated for the benefit of Tribal members. The Numu, Inc. carries a tremendous responsibility on behalf of the Tribe, and it will be exciting to see economic development strategies come to fruition in our communities.

About Numu, Inc.

It is an exciting time for Native American tribes for embarking on economic development initiatives. We have seen some great successes from the business ventures of various Nevada tribes. Possibly the most visible example is the Fox Peak convenience stores, located in Fernley and Fallon, and the Fox Peak Cinema in Fallon. These enterprises were created by the Fallon Tribal Development Corporation (FTDC), which is a separate and distinct business entity chartered under federal law, to engage in business and economic development activities on behalf of its owner, the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe.

Perhaps one of the best tribal success stories comes from the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe of only 56 members living on 10 acres of tribal land in downtown Las Vegas. They were recognized as a sovereign nation when their Tribal Constitu-

tion was approved in July 1970. In 1983 they obtained additional land after convincing Congress to add about 4000 acres adjacent to Mount Charleston. They opened a smoke shop in 1978 and they claim it is now the largest single retailer of cigarettes in the United States. They have three golf courses and a clubhouse at the Las Vegas Paiute Resort. In keeping with their growth philosophy, they just opened NuWu Cannabis Marketplace, the "Largest marijuana store on the planet" in Las Vegas. This type of success the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe has achieved is very rare and highly attributable to having a great location for business operations.

The Pyramid Tribal Council has decided to utilize some of the economic development money from the TROA settlement. To make the most efficient use of the money and keep politics out of the business, the Tribal Council decided to use the same type of approach that has worked for the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe and has created their own separate and distinct business entity, Numu, Inc.

Numu, Inc. is owned by the Tribe for the benefit of its members. The Tribe sought out applicants for the Board of Directors and the Board is composed of seven directors, one who is an ex officio member of the Tribal Council, and one is the Chairperson. To obtain the expertise needed for effective management of the Corporation, the Board may consist of up to three non-tribal members. The initial board selected includes the following individuals:

Virginia Cline, a tribal member and a logistics professional for J.C. Penny in Reno. She has been a Supervisor, Transportation Rates Supervisor, Service/Projects Manager, Transportation Project Specialist, and a former board member of the Urban Indians in Reno.

Jenell Fellows, a tribal member and currently is the Diabetes Program Coordinator. She has over 11 years of experience in nurse assisting and 4 years in Project and Grants Management. Jenell was elected to be the Vice Chairperson for the Board of Directors.

Brandon Cerocke, a tribal member and Vice President of sales and marketing for IQ Technology Solutions, a Native American owned firm. He has experience with strategic consulting and managed non-profit IT makeover campaigns to deliver products and services to non-profit businesses. He also has experience with strategic planning for 35 local businesses and performed quarterly business reviews for both non-profit and for-profit firms. His education includes degrees in Business Management and Computer Science. Brandon was elected to be the Treasurer of the Board of Directors.

Gary Shaw, a tribal member and is currently a Program/Project Manager for the Renewable Generations department at NV Energy. He has been a Plant Outage Manager, Outage Project Manager, a maintenance Supervisor, Staff Environmental Engineer, and Power Plant Engineer. Tribal experience includes serving on the Tribal Council, the Water Resources Committee, the Law and Order Committee and the Wadsworth Community Development Center Volunteer Committee. Gary was elected to be the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

Cassandra Darrough, a tribal member and currently on the Tribal Council and will be serving as the ex officio member for the Board. Cassandra is currently employed with the Tribe's Fire Rescue Emergency Medical Services.

Shannon Keller O'Loughlin, is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and a lawyer. She is qualified to practice in several jurisdictions and has provided legal counsel to the Tribe in the past. She has experience with Federal Indian law and policy and has led economic development projects. She has expertise in providing counsel for developing legal infrastructure in support of Indian Nation governance, and has performed commercial negotiations and transactions on behalf of Indian governments. Shannon was elected to be the Secretary of the Board of Directors.

Kip Ritchie, a member of the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe and is currently employed with Greenfire Management Services and oversees their construction management firm. He also has experience with the Potawatomi Business Development Corporation of the Forest County Potawatomi Community. He has experience in strategic planning, operations, growth, and business development with the Corporation that he now brings to the table for Numu, Inc.

The first meeting of Numu, Inc. was on December 1, at the Tribal headquarters in Nixon that lasted for a full day. All board members including Vinton Hawley, Tribal Chairman; Deborah Harry, Business Officer, and Bob Klimko, Business Consultant attended the meeting. They had a very aggressive schedule, and immediately went to work. The meeting began with brief introductions, and immediately began drafting a Mission and Vision Statement. Everyone was a very active participant, so they were quickly able to move to strategic planning that began with an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Tribe's business possibilities. They reviewed the seven categories of business opportunities were spelled out in the Tribe's Economic Development Plan. These included Recreation and Fishing, Good Governance and Education, Tribal Enterprises, Industrial and Commercial Development, Tribal Entrepreneurship, Agriculture and Ranching, and Energy. They took each of those categories and had an exercise to imagine all possibilities for the types of business opportunities that may exist for that category.

They then performed an Affinity Analysis to further categorize each opportunity and voted on which sub-categories to concentrate on. At a future meeting they will perform a Business Canvass on each sub-category, which will be described in a future article. In the afternoon, Brian Bonenfant from the Center for Regional Studies at UNR gave a presentation entitled "Regional Economic Climate: Opportunities and Challenges."

The items planned for discussion at the next full meeting include: Finalizing the Mission and Vision Statements; Commenting on, and adopting the proposed Bylaws; Perform a Business Canvass Model on the selected business opportunities; and developing a schedule and plan for the most desirable business options forward.

The board is also planning on holding community outreach sessions in each of the three communities to answer questions and inform the public about Numu, Inc.

Tribal Response Program: Brief Updates

Community members can now access the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's Tribal Response Program website at plptbrownfields.org.

On this website, you can:

- Find important information regarding brownfield and hazardous sites that are located on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation;
- Download the PLPT Brownfield/Hazardous Site Notification Form to report a brownfield or hazardous site that is located on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation;
- Contact the Tribal Response Program directly with any brownfield and hazardous site-related questions or concerns;
- Provide input into the prioritization of brownfield sites (typically, this occurs annually);
- Find information related to hazardous waste and substances.

Please be advised that any of the content on the Tribal Response Program website is subject to change at any time.

As a side note, the Tribal Reponse Program

and the Wetland Program had a successful set of public meetings in late July. Many thanks to Emily Gibson, Neil Bertrando, and Jeremiah Sampson for their collaboration and every community member who attended.

Please be on the lookout for any future meetings.

Ruben-Ramos-Avina
Tribal Reponse Program Coordinator
775-574-0101 Ext. 10

*The Great Spirit
gave you two ears
and only one
mouth, so you can
talk half as much
as you listen.
—Iroquois*

Coeur d'Alene native announces bid for Idaho Governor



Paulette Jordan, 38, a member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, has announced her intention to run for governor of Idaho rather than seek a third term in the Idaho House of Representatives.

She is serving her second term in the House of Representatives representing District 5. She previously served on the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council from 2009 to 2012.

"Service is an inherent value in my family, from my ancestors on down to my sons, and they will carry that tradition forward in their lives. I'm proud to be part of Idaho's family," Jordan said.

"When you are raised by Idaho, it's a matter of giving back. Taking on the governorship would be the best way for me to impact people's lives ... to serve and give back," she said.

Rep. Jordan is a member of the State Affairs Committee; the Idaho House Resources and Conservation Committee; the Energy, Environment & Technology Committee and serves as an appointed Idaho Representative to the Energy and Environment Committee of the Council of State Governments for the Western Region.

Fellow democratic governor contender A.J. Balukoff, recently issued a statement welcoming her to the race as well as giving her a birthday wish.

"Voters deserve a robust primary where issues affecting all hard-working Idahoans get discussed and debated. Idaho needs a positive vision to jump-start prosperity in our state after years of falling behind in education, living in a low-wage economy and losing the ability to compete with the rest of the region. I look forward to hearing Representative Jordan's ideas, and I wish her a Happy Birthday."

She attended the University of Washington, and received specialized certificates from the University of Idaho and the Harvard John F. Kennedy school of government.

"When I asked myself how I could serve Idaho even better, the governor's office was my answer," said Jordan. "Idaho is a state I fall in love with over and over. This is the place that fostered me and this is the place I was raised to serve."

She will be the first native woman to run for governor of any state.

PYRAMID LAKE PUBLIC UTILITIES DISTRICT

REMINDER RATE CHANGE

On October 6, 2017, the Pyramid Lake Tribal Council approved the revised fee schedule.

On **January 1, 2018** the Garbage Services rate for residential customers will **increase** from \$10.00 per month to \$15.00 per month and for commercial customers the new rate will be \$20.00 per month.

The Water Services monthly rate has not changed.

If you are currently paying \$20.00 per month for water and garbage services your new rate as of January 1st will be \$25.00 per month.

If you only pay for garbage services your new rate will be \$15.00 per month.

If you have any questions please contact the Public Utilities District at 574-0101 ex 16.



Recreation News: Keeping the Kids Fit

Holiday Greetings and a Happy New Year Wish from the Tribal Recreation Program! We look forward to another great year in 2018.

The months of November and December have been very busy at our Recreation Department. We participated in the NB3Fit activity, had classes on beading and skirt making, held Youth Coaches Meetings, started our Youth basketball practices, provided adult Volleyball games, and assisted with the Numaga Thanksgiving Dinner, the Tribal Food Bank and Mobile Pantry.

NB3Fit at Natchez Elementary School

In the week of November 5-11, more than 10,000 young people from 110 different tribes participated in a group exercise program for an hour during the week. It was sponsored by the Notah Begay Foundation. The NB3Fit program aims to reverse the epidemic of type 2 Diabetes among Indian children throughout Indian Country plus approximately 50 percent of Native youth are facing a lifetime of obesity and struggling with health problems. Creating

NB3Fit Week during Native American Heritage Month is one of many steps in changing these statistics.

The Recreation Program organized a one-mile run/walk for all of the students at Natchez Elementary School. Nearly 185 kids went outside to run with their classmates and cheer on their friends. It was a great day to be out exercising. Thanks to Markie Wilder, Community in School, and Raving Consultants for their help.

According to the Notah Begay Foundation: 91 Native communities participated in NB3Fit Week, 20 states across the country were represented, and over 100 events were scheduled.

Notah Begay III is a professional golfer and scored an impossible 65 during a tournament game. He was a roommate of Tiger Woods during the time they attended Stanford University in California.

Youth Basketball

Happy to report we had 11 coaches volunteering their time to coach our Youth

basketball teams. A coaches meeting was held in early November to schedule time at the gym and go over rules in taking care of the gym during practice times. Teams were encouraged share practice times per age group to get more practice time in. If you stopped by any time in the evening during the week you would find kids practicing basketball, coaches encouraging and coaching their players. Many parents came by to watch or help out with incidental chores as much as they can. Basketball is always a fun time here at Pyramid Lake!

Skirt Making

It was nice to see everyone making skirts with ribbons to commemorate Native American Heritage Month in November. We plan on doing this activity again perhaps in February. Watch for dates and times, we have plenty of material and ribbons.

Wishing you and yours a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Natchez Elementary School Calendar 2018

JANUARY

- 8 School Resumes
- 9 Families United for Natchez (FUN) Meeting 6pm
- 10 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 12 Birthday Celebration Treat Day
- 15 Martin Luther King Day-No School
- 16 Mustang Mug-9:45 am
- 17 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 22-25 Kindergarten Winter Map Testing
- 26 Student of the Month/Respectful/Football Fan Day/Treat Day
- 31 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program

FEBRUARY

- 6 Families United for Natchez (FUN) Meeting 6:00 pm
- 7 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 9 Birthday Celebration Treat Day/ Mid Quarter Awards
- 13 Mustang Mug 9:45 am/ Valentines Fun Event 6:00 pm
- 14 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 19 President's Day No School
- 21 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 23 Student of the Month/Respectful/Disney Day/Treat Day

- 28 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program

MARCH

- 7 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 9 Birthday Celebration/Treat Day
- 13 Mustang Mug 9:45 am/Science Night 6:00 pm
- 14 Early Release 1:45 pm No After School Program
- 19-23 Student Led Conference Week Dismissal at 12:20 pm NO ASP/ Nevada Reading week
- 22 American Indian Education Summit
- 23 American Indian Education Summit/Student of the Month/ Mindful/ Treat day/ End of Quarter Awards
- 26 SPRING BREAK! Returning April 9th

Passages



In Loving Memory

Glorine "Minnie" Guerrero

May 23, 1935 – November 2, 2017

Thank you to all those who supported the family in our time of need. We appreciate the encouraging words, and acts of kindness in the loss of our mother. We are comforted to know that she was an inspiration to many people on the reservation. She will be greatly missed.

Billie Jean, Ronald, John, and Bobby Guerrero and families.

*May the stars carry your
sadness away,*

*May the flowers fill your
heart with beauty,*

*May hope forever wipe
away your tears,*

And, above all,

*May silence make you
strong.*

—Chief Dan George



Dennis Banks

American Indian Movement co-founder, activist, author and teacher Dennis Banks died at 80 years of age from pneumonia he had contacted following open-heart surgery on October 29, 2017.

Dennis, an Ojibwa/Anishinabe from Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota, was known as one of the co-founders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) with George Mitchell and Clyde Bellecourt.

Joined by fellow AIM activist Russell Means, they participated in the Wounded Knee occupation during which federal agents fought against Native occupiers for 71 days that resulted in the deaths of two tribal members and seriously wounding a federal agent.

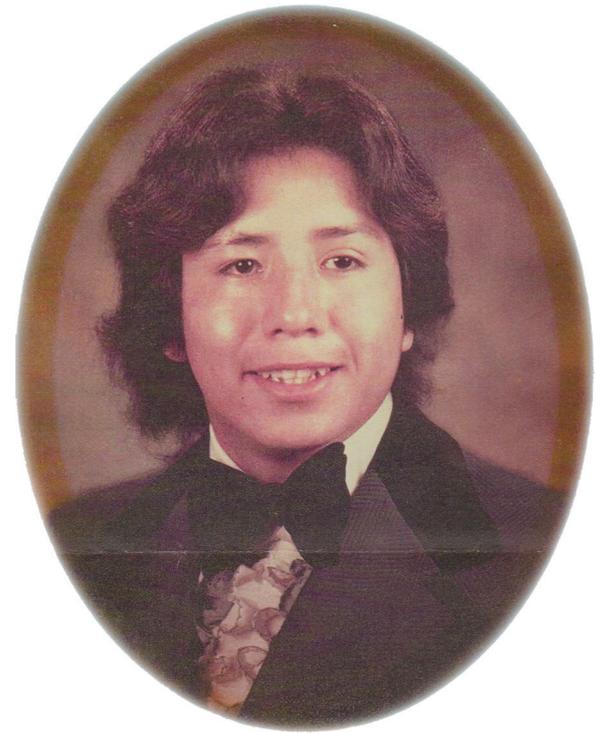
They were charged in 1974 for their participation in the occupation but the presiding federal court judge dismissed the charges on the grounds of federal misconduct.

On April 12, 2012, Dennis received a Living Legends Award in Washington D.C. for his "contributions as a co-founder of the American Indian Movement and his commitment to the well being of the American Indian community."

As a teacher, Dennis Banks taught at D-Q University in Davis, Calif. in the 80's but was later incarcerated on charges stemming from the infamous "Custer riot" in 1973. After serving an 18-month term, he worked as a drug and alcohol counselor at Pine Ridge Reservation and continued his activism fighting for Native gravesite protections and repatriation, and legislation to protect these sites.

Dennis also participated in The Longest Walk, a traditional and spiritual journey from San Francisco to Washington DC. Aspects of the longest walk are still celebrated annually.

In addition to his activism, Dennis appeared in movies such as War Party (1988), The Last of the Mohicans (1992), Thunderheart (1992), and Older Than America (2008). As a musician he released Still Strong (1993) and teamed up with Peter Gabriel on Les Musiques du Monde and with Golden Globe and Grammy Award-winning artist Kitaro on the CD Let Mother Earth Speak.



Armellio Milton Barlese

"Julio", 56, passed away on December 17, 2017 following a long illness. He was born on March 3, 1961 and he was a lifelong resident of Pyramid Lake.

Julio was one of five students who were the first to graduate in 1981 from Nixon High School that was housed in the building now used by the Water Resources Dept.

When Julio married Donna, she bought a formal wedding gown but they decided for a simple ceremony so Donna wore a red dress. Later he wanted her to wear the wedding gown so they married again in a more formal ceremony.

He loved the lake and would take Chris and Misty with him to the lake. When he became ill, he continued to travel with Donna and Jacob.

Julio is survived by wife, Donna, children Claudia Pete, Misty, Christopher, Dustin, Derrick; stepchildren Donetta and Mark; grandchildren Jacob and Jayden; mother Janice and brothers David and Dion, and several nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his father Milton, sister Ann, brother Billy and niece Lauren.

Services were held on December 22 at the Nixon Gym, officiated by his uncle Marty Barlese, and eulogy offered by Kimber Brown. Burial was at the Nixon Cemetery.

The family wishes to thank the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and everyone who offered their support and kind words of comfort and prayer.



In August 2016, he was the vice presidential nominee on the Peace and Freedom Party, a socialist political party in California.

In a 2013 interview with *Indian Country Today*, Dennis said, "There's always going to be a need for change whether it's the American Indian Movement or Idle No More. Whether it's now or 10 years from now, we're always going to need those people to go out and confront the issues and take a stand even if we all become doctors and lawyers and senators and congressmen, even if we all become millionaires. There will still be a need to tell America that there are some very important contracts that were made in the 1700s and 1800s that deal with our land."

Dennis was buried in his home reservation at Leech Lake with traditional services.

Native American Testimony: *Premonitions and Phophecies*

HE WILL USE ANY MEANS TO GET WHAT HE WANTS

Dan Katchongva—his Hopi surname means White Cloud Above Horizon—was a revered spiritual leader from Hotevilla, Arizona. When he repeated this prophecy in 1955, during testimony at a Washington congressional hearing, he was in his eighties. Hopi often mention the Bahana, the Hopi's lost white brother, who vowed to return to the Hopi to establish peace and spread wisdom. Some Hopi say they wait for him still.

IN ANCIENT TIMES it was prophesied by our forefathers that this land would be occupied by the Indian people and then from somewhere a White Man would come. He will come either with a strong faith and righteous religion which the Great Spirit has also given to him, or he will come after he has abandoned that great Life Plan and fallen to a faith of his own personal ideas which he invented before coming here. It was known that the White Man is an intelligent person, an inventor of many words, a man who knows how to influence people because of his sweet way of talking and that he will use many of these things upon us when he comes. We knew that this land beneath us was composed of many things that we might want to use later such as mineral resources. We knew that this is the wealthiest part of this continent, because it is here the Great Spirit lives. We knew that the White Man will search for the things that look good to him, that he will use many good ideas in order to obtain his heart's desire, and we knew that if he had strayed from the Great Spirit he would use *any* means to get what he wants. These things we were warned to watch, and we today know that those prophecies were true because we can see how many new and selfish ideas and plans are being put before us. We know that if we accept these things we will lose our land and give up our very lives.

WHITE RABBIT GOT LOTSA EVERYTHING

In 1939, Lucy Young, a member of the Wintu tribe of northern California, was nearly blind from cataracts and over ninety years old at the time of her story that she recalls probably took place in the 1840s.

MY GRANDPA, before white people came, had a dream. He was so old he was all doubled up. Knees to chin, and eyes like indigo. Grown son carry him in great basket on his back, every place.

My grandpa say: "White Rabbit"—he mean white people—"gonta devour our grass, our seed, our living. We won't have nothing more, this world. Big elk with straight horn come when white man bring it." I think he means cattle. "Nother animal, bigger than deer, but round feet, got hair on his neck." This one, horse, I guess.

My aunt say: "Oh, Father, you out your head, don't say that way."

He say: "Now, Daughter, I not crazy. You young people gonna see this."

People come long way, listen to him dream. He dream, then say this way, every morning.

They leave li'l children play by him. He watch good. Have big stick, wave round, scare snake

away. He had good teeth. All old people had good teeth.

One time they travel, they come to big pile of brush. My grandpa stop, and look at it. He say: "This, good wood. When I die, burn my body to ashes on top of ground. Here gonta be big canoe, run around, carry white people's things. Those White Rabbit got lotsa everything."

"How canoe gonta run round on dry ground all round here?" we askum. "Don't know," he say. "Just run that way." He mean wagon, I guess.

I never grow much. They call me li'l Shorty," but I know pretty near everything that time. My grandpa put his head on my head, smooove my hair, and hold his hand there.

"Long time you gonta live, my child," he say. "You live long time in this world."

Well, I live long enough. I guess 'bout ninety-five next summer, if I living till then.

My grandpa never live to see white people, just dreaming every night 'bout them. People come long way, listen [to] him dream.

My grandpa move down by big spring. One day he couldn't get up. He say: "I gonta leave you today. I used to be good hunter, kill bear, elk, deer, feed my children. Can't feed my children no more. Like old root, just ready for growing now. Pretty soon dead. Speak no more."

All seem like dream to me. Long, long ago. Night-time he die, and in morning, all tied up in deerskin with grass rope. Sit up knees to chin, They tie him up too soon. He roll over, and come back. Scare everybody. He ask for water, and ask for packstrap to basket always carry him in. He ask for li'l basket he always use for cup. He drink lots.

"I starve for water, and want my strap," he say. "That's why I come back."

Then he die. Our people dig big hole, put stick across. Put brush. Put body in. Put more brush. Burn all to ashes. They put basket and strap, too, with him, when he go where people go at last.

EASY LIFE OF THE GRAY-EYED

The old Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico stands atop a steep rocky mesa 357 feet high where James Paytiamo spent his childhood there and the existence of the white man was an established fact. What the old Acoma caciques, or headmen, seem to foretell here are the destructive influences white culture will have on the traditional Acoma way of life.

I CAN JUST REMEMBER the old men of my village. Old age was simply a delightful time, when the old men sat on the sunny doorsteps, playing in the sun with the children, until they fell asleep. At last they failed to wake up.

These old, old men used to prophesy about the coming of the white man. They would go about tapping with their canes on the adobe floor of the house, and call to us children:

"Listen! Listen! The gray-eyed people are coming nearer and nearer. They are building an iron road. They are coming nearer every day. There will be a time when you will mix with these people. That is when the Gray Eyes are going to get you to drink black, hot water, which you will drink whenever you eat. Then your teeth will become soft. They will get you to smoke at

a young age, so that your eyes will run tears on windy days, and your eyesight will be poor. Your joints will crack when you want to move slowly and softly.

You will sleep on soft beds and will not like to rise early. When you begin to wear heavy clothes and sleep under heavy covers, then you will grow lazy. Then there will be no more singing heard in the valleys as you walk.

When you begin to eat with iron sticks, your tones will grow louder. You will speak louder and overtalk your parents. You will grow disobedient. Then when you mix with these gray-eyed people, you will learn their ways, you will break up homes, and murder and steal."

Such things have come true, and I compare my generation with the old generation. We are not good as they were; neither are we healthy as they were.

How did these old men know what was coming? That is what I would like to know.

THE SPIDER'S WEB

Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux holy man, had seen his tribe transformed from buffalo-hunting lords of the Great Plains to hungry, impoverished prisoners, pent up on thirteen government reservations. At the age of nine, Black Elk had gone into a trance and experienced a wondrous vision in which the Six Grandfathers—West, East, North, South, Earth, and Sky—granted him unusual spiritual powers. Thereafter he was dedicated "to bringing to life the flowering tree of his people" by revitalizing the seven sacred rights of the Oglala. Black Elk remembers the ominous dream of an earlier Sioux medicine man.

A LONG TIME AGO my father told me what his father told him, that there was once a Lakota [Sioux] holy man, called Drinks Water, who dreamed what was to be; and this was long before the coming of the Wasichus [white men]. He dreamed that the four-leggeds were going back into the earth and that a strange race had woven a spider's web all around the Lakotas. And he said: "When this happens, you shall live in square gray houses, in a barren land, and beside those square gray houses you shall starve."

They say he went back to Mother Earth soon after he saw this vision, and it was sorrow that killed him. You can look around you now and see that he meant these dirt-roofed houses we are living in, and that all the rest was true. Sometimes dreams are wiser than waking.



Pyramid Lake Jr/Sr High School

Happy Holidays





Mr. Bridge-water's Environmental Science class and Ms. Neil senior History class attended a one day youth summit at UNRs Desert Research Institute.

The summit was part of the "Native Waters on Arid Lands" regional confer-ence held at the Nugget in Sparks. The students listened to climate change issues affecting Native Lands

and it peoples from people as far away as Navajo Tech. University.

In addition, four students were invited to attend two days the actual scientific conference. They listened to current research being done on climate change issues that affect native lands and were able to interact with adults that are on the cutting edge of this issue.

We all came away with a better understanding of the impact of climate change and were able to observe how members of different tribes face the same problems and what they have done that has been successful.



Graduating Class of 1901 Stewart Indian School

Stewart Indian School's Baseball Team
Date unknown



Interior's Top Ten Priorities

In the last issue of *Numuwaetu Nawahana*, the new Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke was introduced. There was some doubt as to whether he would truly be the guardian of the country's public lands or would he endorse Trump's idiocy.

On December 4th Secretary Zinke was on hand to witness Donald Trump as he thoughtlessly reduced two national monuments: Bears Ears by 85 percent and the Grand Staircase-Escalante by over 50 percent (see page 15). Two of the most beautiful places in Southwest Utah will now be open so that the Republican's corporate masters can drill, mine, frack, bulldoze, pollute, and basically destroy the land.

Trump knows nothing but concrete and asphalt, whereas Zinke might have had his equilibrium shifted by the corporate-minded gnomes lurking in the high echelon offices of the Interior Department.

Ecowatch published Interior's "Top 10 Priorities", their 2018-2022 Strategic Plan with some native-oriented editing.



1. Create a conservation stewardship legacy second only to Teddy Roosevelt. Not. Interior wants to strip protections from more than 11 million acres of public lands; 218 acres of marine environment; dismantle wildlife refuges, and undermine laws protecting endangered animals.

2. Sustainably develop our energy and natural resources. Not. Interior cancels the

2016 moratorium on new coal leases; the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced a new round of coal leasing in Wyoming's Powder River Basin; announced offshore oil and gas leases in a 77 million-acre region of the Gulf of Mexico still recovering from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster; and recommended the opening of

(Continued on page 15)

PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE

Supplemental Food Resources Calendar for 2018

Commodity Foods Nixon Gym 8:30 -1:30 pm	Tribal Food Pantry Nixon Gym 11:30-1:30 pm	Mobile Pantry Old Wads. Comm. Bldg. 8:00-9:00 Nixon Gym 10:00-10:45
January 8	January 16	January 23
February 5	February 20	February 27
March 5	March 20	March 27
April 2	April 17	April 24
May 7	May 15	May 22
June 4	June 19	June 26
July 9	July 17	July 24
August 13	August 21	August 28
September 10	September 18	September 25
October 8, 2018	October 16	October 23
November 1	November 20	November 27
December 3	December 18	December 25

Applications will be available on site. Bring your own bags.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
Food and Nutrition Division



(Continued from page 14)

the Pacific Natural Monument to commercial fishing.

3. Restore trust and be a good neighbor. Not. Closed-door dealings; refused to release the national monuments report; suspicious relationships with Political Action Committees; and the special attention to corporate energy interests.

4. Ensure [that] tribal sovereignty means something. Not. Actions speak louder than words and starting with the BIA budget cuts (see last issue) not exactly ensuring meaningful tribal sovereignty; making changes in the *Cobell* settlement agreement *then* pretending to consult the tribes; ignoring the tribes living on both sides of the proposed U.S.-Mexican border wall, and eliminating discretionary grants deemed unnecessary for reclaiming abandoned mining sites many located on Indian lands, especially the dangerous uranium mining sites—to start.

5. Increase revenues to support the department and national interests. Highly questionable. Zinke is seeking to cut Interior's budget: 11 percent from the National Park Service; 13 percent from BLM, U.S. Fish & Wildlife; Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Geological Survey, and nearly half from the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation. To make up for the budget cuts, he's pushing for drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while cancelling a rule that would require energy companies to pay the fair market value for oil, gas, and coal they extract from public lands and that would create a shortfall of about \$75 million in revenue. However, to make up for that loss he wants to triple the entrance fees to the national parks. Better yet, the Zinke announced the government's plan to "have more public-private partnerships" running the National Park Service (NPS) after Trump cut \$360 million from NPS's budget. Privatizing



A National Geographic photo

the national parks seems agreeable to Zinke who once said, "I don't want to be in the business of running campgrounds."

6. Protect our people and the border. Not. Although Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection has jurisdiction over the infamous border wall, Zinke's Interior should be concerned about the devastating effect it would have on the wildlife and habitat, including endangered species, several national wildlife refuges and tribes living on both sides of the border.

7. Strike a regulatory balance. Not. As directed by Trump's "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth" the Interior Department has issued a report identifying policies that are potentially "burdensome" on the domestic energy production of natural resources. Targeted are protections for wildlife and habitat; scientific consultation to protect endangered spe-

cies; protected designation for public land and waters; public planning and appeals processes; and legislative and administrative requirements for permitting, exploring, siting, developing and transporting fossil fuels.

8. Modernize our infrastructure. Not. Despite the requested \$1.6 billion cut in Interior's budget, the National Park Service has a \$12 million maintenance backlog and the National Wildlife Refuge System has a \$2.7 million backlog. If federal projects like roads and bridges ever get built they may not withstand the impacts of climate change. Trump cancelled that order so such projects might be built faster but may not withstand the next big storm.

9. Reorganize the department for the next 100 years. Doubtful. More than 50 senior staff members have been "involuntarily reassigned" to positions for which they have no expertise or experience. One scientist was move to an accounting position after he mentioned the dangers that climate change poses to Native communities in Alaska. Zinke wants "an estimated reduction of roughly 4,000" full-time employees and is planning on transferring hundreds more by moving the headquarters of three agencies from Washington, DC to Denver.

10. Achieve our goals and lead our team forward. Not. After comparing his staff to pirates and says that "30 percent of the crew that's not loyal to the flag", it's questionable if Zinke's goal for moving the department forward can be achieved. A recently resigned employee said that morale at Interior is "in the toilet" and employees are constantly "looking over their shoulder". It appears that in keeping with Trump's agenda, employees are going to have to adapt a totally different attitude towards their jobs as stewards of America's natural resources.



Indian Givers Strike

National Monuments Under Attack

Nevada's Gold Butte National Monument was 1-year-old on December 28 and the *Indian Givers* are proposing to reduce it—just like Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah. Why? Could it be Gold Butte has some secret minerals under all those acres of sandstone? Maybe it's because they don't like the Southern Paiutes wanting to preserve their ancient homeland that was made possible by President Obama.

Even Nevada's Attorney General Adam Laxalt didn't want the monument. He and several Republican congressmen opposed its designation and want it revoked by Congress.

Laxalt has decided to run for Governor of Nevada in 2018.

The only reasonable explanation is the Republican's unreasonable hatred for President Obama. Their unstable leader spent the entire year undoing whatever Obama did—beginning with the Dakota pipeline where multiple tribal groups peacefully demonstrated their opposition only to get beaten up—literally.

Just four months in office, Trump signed an executive order directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to examine any national monument created as of January 1, 1996 and has at least 100,000



Photo by Christian K. Lee/AP

acres. Zinke selected 27, including Katahdin that is 87,500 acres and was donated by the St. Clair family foundation and is currently managed by the Forest Service.

Located in southeastern Nevada, the Gold Butte monument contains nearly 300,000 acres of desert that has ancient Indian petroglyphs and dwellings dating back 12,000 years and are culturally sacred to the local Paiutes. Over the years many of their cultural sites have been vandalized as well as other historic sites including the ghost town of Gold Butte.

The Paiutes, local conservation groups, Nevada and Clark County lawmakers, Congresswoman Dina Titus and former Senator Harry Reid campaigned for the area's protection under the Antiquities Act.

With the monument designation, the area is now closed to industrial development. In 1998, Clark County bought out the area's grazing permits, retired them and no new permits will be issued. The monument will permit development and maintenance of existing water rights and transportation infrastructure, but prohibits future claims.

There are multiple federal jurisdictions within the monument boundary: the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) which manages it, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) so there is the possibility that Gold Butte will be used for land and mineral exchange—a method where one agency will exchange sections of land with another agency to consolidate jurisdiction over a specific area.

The Gold Butte National Monument lies right next to the Arizona border in Clark County and creates a continuous swatch of protected land

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and wildlife corridor essentially connecting the national recreation area of Lake Mead and Grand Canyon's Parashant Monument

The monument status will provide protection to numerous wildlife species, including desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, the banded Gila monster, great horned owls and a great variety of reptiles, birds and mammals. It will eliminate uncontrolled off-road vehicle use that tears up easily damaged soils and the desert tortoise habitat. It will also prevent irresponsible vehicle use; vandalism, theft of Indian artifacts and littering that have been destroying the landscape, rock art and other archaeological sites.

Bears Ears National Monument

Uranium. That is the real reason those *Indian Givers* took back 85 percent of Bears Ears on December 4, 2017.

It wasn't about correcting the "massive federal land grab" as claimed the Great White Fibber. Or that (uranium) mining and drilling played no role in the largest elimination of protected land in U.S. history as repeatedly denied by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Utah Republicans. Curiously the Interior Secretary was twice quoted as saying, "Public lands are for public use and not for special interests."

Ecowatch calls that "doublespeak", Ten Bears called it "speaking with two tongues" and all Indians call it "speaking with forked tongue."

Eight days later on December 12, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upheld a 20-year ban on new uranium mining around the Grand Canyon. However, Energy Fuels Nuclear will be allowed to operate the Canyon Mine because it predates the ban. *Tribal Peoples Survival* (Summer 1988) reported that Energy Fuels Nuclear owns 45,000 mining claims on state and federal lands on both the North and South Rims of the Grand Canyon and "sees a maximum of 50 mines in the area in the next 30 or 40 years."

The Havasupai who live at the bottom of Grand Canyon supports the ban and a tribal representative was on hand to testify at a Dec. 12 hearing of the House Natural Resources subcommittee during which the Republicans warned against putting federal lands off-limits to new (uranium) mining.

Carletta Tilousi spoke of the air and water contamination plus the health risks associated with the uranium mining; some mines located 15 miles from their land. The subcommittee chairman Paul Gosar (R-AZ) accused Tilousi of using "scare tactics" about the dangers of uranium mining and said, "You're not entitled to your own facts." Say what??

The *Tribal Peoples Survival* (April 1979) reported that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission wrote that "Uranium mining and milling are the most significant sources of radiation exposure to the public from the entire nuclear fuel cycle, far surpassing nuclear reactors or high-level waste disposal."

The *Southwest Indian Environmental Monitor* (1983) reported, "Removing uranium from its place in nature is like opening up a Pandora's Box of latent cancer cells. In fact, the dangers from exposure are so great that Dr. David Dreesen of the Los Alamos National Scientific Laboratory suggested, 'Perhaps the solution to the radon problem is to zone the land

in uranium mining and milling districts so as to forbid human habitation'."

For 75 years uranium mining has affected nearly every tribe and pueblo in the Southwest ever since the Bureau of Indian Affairs reported carnotite (a mineral containing both uranium and vanadium) in Monument Valley and the Carrizo Mountains on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. In a short span of 26 years (1942 to 1968) millions of tons of uranium were mined and tribes were victims of radioactive contamination to their air, lands, water, and food sources.

The *Southwest Indigenous Uranium Forum* (1993) reported that Navajo had over 1,000 abandoned open-pit and underground uranium mines, over 600 contaminated homes, a pandemic of cancer and leukemia clusters and birth defects, mine wastes and mill tailings were openly stored there, several hundred former miners had died or were dying of radiation-caused diseases, and a disposal pond at Church Rock breached its dam and released 1,100 tons of radioactive waste and 93 million gallons of mine effluent into the Rio Puerco.

From White Mesa Ute in the north to Mescalero Apache in the south and all Southwest tribes east and west, none were left untouched. Clean up of most of the uranium mining mess has been practically non-existent because the 1872 General Mining Act allows mining companies to avoid cleaning up after themselves. Legislative bills were introduced to amend the Act to include reclamation but they were defeated by the mining lobby. Currently there are more than 500 uranium mines designated as SuperFund sites.

"You know what uranium is, right? It's this thing called nuclear weapons, and other things, like lots of things are done with uranium, including bad things."

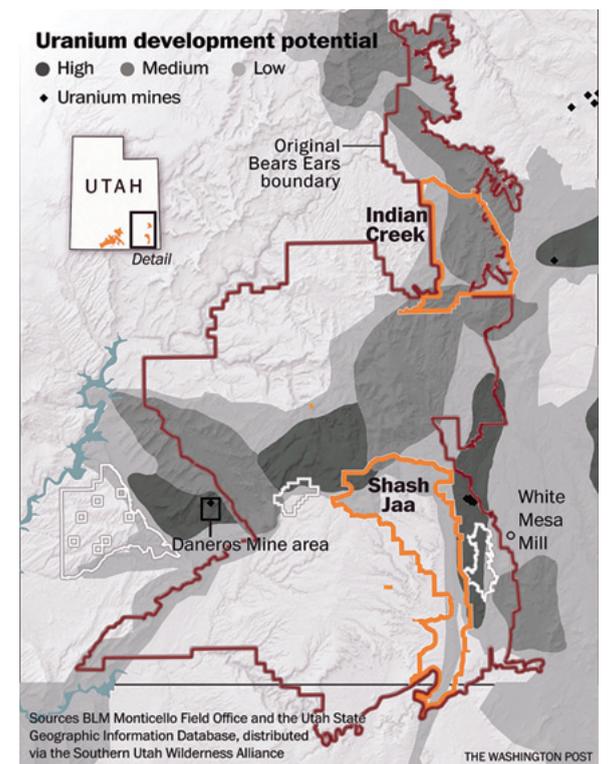
—Donald Trump, 2017

Utah refers to the Bears Ears area as the *San Juan Energy Zone* and they want to open it to mining regardless if Bears Ears is sacred to the Navajo, Hopi, Ute Mountain Utes, Unitah and Ouray, and Pueblo of Zuni. They have fought for Bears Ears for over 80 years. They use the land for their spiritual and cultural needs and it contains thousands of ancient sites and artifacts of their ancestors. It was a refuge for the Navajos who escaped the deadly 400-mile Long Walk to Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico.

But Energy Fuels Resources (USA) Inc. hired lobbyists from the Faegre Baker Daniels firm, led by lobbyist Andrew Wheeler to work on the Bears Ears issue and other federal policies affecting the company. The company and the Department of the Interior (DOI) were instrumental in reducing Bears Ears for easier access to the uranium deposits, the nearby processing mill and revitalizing a now-dormant uranium mine, all located within and next to the monument's current boundary.

The lobbying firm's vice president of operations William Goranson, Wheeler, two other lobbyists, and DOI advisers Downey Magallanes, deputy chief of staff who also supervised the monument review, and Vincent De Vito an energy policy counselor met at a July 17 meeting to discuss Bears Ears.

Earlier DOI's Chief Operating Officer Mark



Chalmers wrote on May 25 that President Obama's creation of Bears Ears "could affect existing and future mill operations." He also noted "There are also many other known uranium and vanadium deposits located within the (boundaries) that could provide valuable energy and mineral resources in the future."

The Natural Resources Defense Council said Trump's action is illegal because there is no federal law that gives Trump the power to undo monument designations of previous presidents. But there are other ways to cripple the federal laws designed to protect the environment.

For instance, Secretary Zinke is advocating for energy development but is proposing to eliminate discretionary grants to reclaim abandoned mine sites. Hopi tribal chairman Herman Honanie said the government should clean up and reclaim existing contaminated sites of polluted soil, washes, aquifers, and drinking water before it promotes renewed uranium mining especially in the Grand Canyon area.

"This is not about energy. There is no mine within Bears Ears." said Interior Secretary Zinke. It is about energy exploitation and uranium mines in Bear Ears. It's about the White Mesa processing mill and the dormant Daneros uranium mine. And it is also about radioactive pollution mining companies don't have to clean up.

"Without question, our public lands are America's treasures." A quote attributed to Secretary Zinke on DOI's official website. *However, one should not listen to what they say but watch what they do.*

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has "an estimated several billion tons of coal and large oil deposits" contained within its boundaries, according to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. Grand Staircase was reduced by over 50 percent on December 4 by Donald Trump following the recommendation of the Interior Secretary.

Former President Clinton established the monument in 1966 that later included a land exchange between Utah and the federal government, ratified by Congress, and incorporated a \$14 million buyout of 17 leases held by the controversial coal mining company, Andalex Resources Inc.*

When large parts of the country are embracing
(Continued on page 17)



Thousands gather in Salt Lake City to protest the reduction of the Bears Ears National Monument.

Photo by Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

(Continued from page 16)

“clean energy sources” like solar and wind, the Trump administration is trying to revitalize the fossil fuel industry. Grand Staircase has been described as a “Dinosaur Shangri-la” because it is full of dinosaur fossils many that can be located on a plateau that contains one of the country’s largest known coal reserves.

Changing the way the two national monuments in Utah are managed, as well as their size, has already produced a number of lawsuits. “No other administration has gone this far,” said Kristen Brengel, vice president of government affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association. “This law (Antiquities Act) was intended to protect places from development, not promote damage to natural and cultural resources.”

A memorandum labeled, “Final Report Summarizing Findings of the Review of Designa-

tions Under the Antiquities Act” claims that both Republican and Democratic presidents went too far in limiting commercial activities in protected areas. The Act gives a president wide latitude to protect public lands and waters but the memo claims that certain monuments were designed to prevent economic development rather than protect specific objects(?).

“Throughout the review, the Secretary has seen examples of objects not clearly defined in the proclamation,” according to the report. “Examples of such objects are geographic areas, ‘viewsheds’ and ‘ecosystems’.”

*Andalax Resources Inc. was bought by Utah American Energy Inc., a subsidiary of Murray Energy Corporation that is one of the nation’s largest coal mining companies.

Andrew Wheeler, a coal lobbyist, has been

nominated by Trump to be deputy administrator in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the number two position in the agency. Wheeler works at the Faegre Baker Daniels law firm and his clients include Murray Energy.

Wheeler, reviled by environmentalist but praised by the coal industry, is known to have the know-how to dismantle Obama-era fossil fuel regulations and “resetting our energy and environmental policies” at the EPA said Thomas Pyle, president of the Institute for Energy Research which promotes fossil fuels and opposes climate change.

Wheeler opposed the Obama administration’s efforts to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants; criticized Obama’s agreement with China to jointly cut carbon pollution; and heralded Murray Energy’s opposition to the Paris Accord on Climate Change. Trump agreed and withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Accord making the U.S. the only country in the entire world that isn’t a member.



Making America Great Again

Dear Readers,

What a year 2017 has been. Have you turned on the news, only to hear– “Today, President Trump has...” and think, “Ahh, Geez, what’s he done now?”

There has never been a president who 1) doesn’t know what he doesn’t know, 2) doesn’t care to know what he doesn’t know, 3) refuses to admit he doesn’t know what he doesn’t know, and 4) refuses to listen to anyone telling him what he should know. And that makes him dangerous.

This past year, Trump has revoked nearly every positive measure President Obama had established on health care, worker safety, environmental protections, food programs for children and the elderly, education opportunities, even the program that offers dogs to the Wounded Warriors Program.

Trump has boasted he will create millions of jobs with his agenda and he has –for the legal profession. Almost everything he’s done and undone has resulted in a lawsuit.

Recently the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) revoked Obama’s **Net Neutrality Rule** that allowed equal access to the Internet by small companies offering internet services (en-Touch, Hughes Net, etc.) or movie services like Netflix. Verizon, Comcast and AT&T lobbied for the change and the Commissioner, Ajit Pai, was happy to oblige his former employer Verizon where he was an attorney for the company. The

(Continued on page 18)

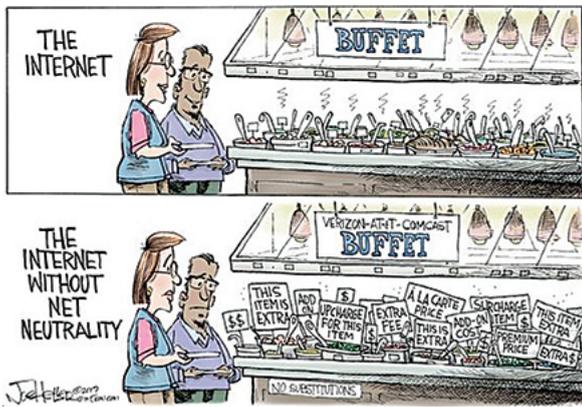


Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

U.S. Park Service Photo

(Continued from page 17)

small companies could be shut out and the large companies will be able to dominate the Internet. It's been speculated that the large internet providers will be able to block certain cable channels or slowdown service then charge to speed it up. Over 20 states have filed lawsuits but Nevada is not listed as one of them. A relatively small amount of fraud was cited as the reason for cancelling the Net Neutrality rule. Those who will be most affected will be the rural communities and isolated Indian reservations. With the exception of Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada can be described as mostly rural.



The above cartoon accurately depicts what the country understands will happen if the Net Neutrality cancellation is approved.

Censorship has become another Trump goal. It has started by banning certain words and phrases used by federal agencies in their reports. The words are: vulnerable, entitlement, diversity, transgender, fetus (?), evidence-based, and science-based. Also, the Affordable Care Act must be called Obamacare in an apparent effort to create a negative view of the health care act. Trump says the Constitution's First Amendment (protecting free speech and freedom of the press) "is disgusting" and he wants to open up "the libel laws" to restrict what journalists can write about him plus curtail the "fake news" published in leading newspapers and reported on news broadcasts. It seems that the *National Enquirer* and Fox News are his standard.

At least **five lawsuits were filed** before the ink dried on Trump's order to reduce Bears Ears and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. He doesn't know that there are no laws that allows him to do that and the Interior Department couldn't tell him because they don't have a solicitor yet. Recently 118 law professors and a number of conservation organizations concluded that the president does not have authority to downsize or revoke national monuments. Trump's effort to scale back these monuments oversteps his authority and is unlikely to stand.

But not knowing the law will not stop him. Just recently he said "I have the absolute right to do what I want to do with the Justice Department." He may not know there is a reason for three separate branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Justice. The key word being *separate* and one branch should not interfere with the other.

Two days into his administration Trump gleefully approved the **Dakota Pipeline** despite the numerous tribal groups opposing it. The treatment The People encountered violated basic human decency and those militarized storm troopers clearly enjoyed abusing them. Trump protecting a Canadian oil company's interest over the native people's sacred land and water can be

considered a traitorous act. Even though Trump said the pipeline is "good for the environment", it sprung a leak on November 16 and spilled over 200,000 gallons of oil onto the South Dakota landscape.

The **Republican's shameless tax reform plan** that is designed to enrich the already rich will hurt many people who are not in a \$150,000-plus income bracket. People earning \$8,000 to \$75,000 will pay the most taxes.

This tax bill was written by lobbyists so very few congressmen knew what was in the bill, didn't have time to read the 500-plus-page document, and voted for it anyway. The bill was crafted in November, voted on in December and will take effect in January—even the IRS will be hard-pressed to write the regulations for it to inform the millions of payroll accountants.

Now teachers can't deduct what they pay for school supplies. It eliminates deductions for personal losses from wildfires (think California and all the western states), earthquakes, and other natural disasters. And no more deductions for medical costs or long-term medical care.

Also Medicare took a major \$25 billion a year hit that will continue until it no longer exists.

When the economy tanks and the national debt becomes too much Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other social programs will be reduced or eliminated so that money can be paid into the national debt.



Twice the Republicans have looted the Social Security fund (FICA taxes paid but not used) to put into the national debt. For some unexplained reason Republican leaders Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell think Social Security and Medicare are entitlements. It is not and people who have paid into Social Security expect that money when they retire and Medicare to help supplement their health care insurance.

For health care Indian people have the Indian Health Service but that only has enough money to pay for operating their hospitals and clinics and not enough for medical care. Medicare and Medicaid supplement the Indian Health Service to a large extent. If those two supplemental programs are taken away, the Indian Health Service would be hard-pressed to provide medical care and Indian people will die, needlessly.

Trump began his administration by firing all the U.S. federal attorneys throughout the country which basically crippled the federal legal system. Tribal governments rely on the federal judicial system for protection. Trump has been extremely slow filling the federal attorney positions and those who have been appointed are conservative and would likely put God before the law.

He has appointed people to Cabinet positions who oppose the ideals of the very departments they are charged with running.



For the **Environmental Protection Agency** Trump selected Scott Pruitt who, as Oklahoma's attorney general, has sued EPA a number of times over EPA's environmental laws. Trump promised to do away with EPA and Pruitt has managed to follow through because so far over 700 employees have left the EPA, 200 were scientists. In addition, Trump has recommended for the number two job in EPA a former coal lobbyist (see Bears Ears story on pages 16-17). Secretary Pruitt has contemplated cutting off EPA reimbursement funds to the Justice Department's Environmental and Natural Resources Division that handles litigation for EPA's SuperFund program. And for EPA's SuperFund Clean Up Task Force, Pruitt hired his former banker, Albert Kelly, for that job. Kelly is no longer a banker because he's been banned from ever holding a job in the banking industry again.

Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke thinks energy exploiters can co-exist alongside Indian people wishing to preserve their sacred grounds. It's quite understandable to think that would work but history has shown the exact opposite will happen again. He criticized the Obama-era ban on uranium mining around the Grand Canyon area that was implemented after area tribes and environmentalists raised concerns that uranium mining would pollute the Colorado River. He said the ban inhibited "much needed growth and jobs." He has filled the top positions at Interior with former employees of energy companies who may be hard-pressed to be protectors of this country's natural resources.

Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry suggested fossil fuels could somehow prevent sexual assaults at an energy event in D.C. "But also from the standpoint of sexual assault, when the lights are on, when you have light that shines, the righteousness, if you will, on those types of acts. So from the standpoint of how you really affect people's lives, fossil fuels is going to play in role in that. I happen to think it's going to play a positive role." Sierra Club's director called on Perry to resign for trying to "exploit this struggle (sexual assaults) to justify further dangerous fossil fuel development. Perry also wants to increase the use of coal, oil, and gas even though many states are moving towards implementing solar and wind energy systems.

Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who reportedly has no experience in this country's educational system except for the private schools she attended, got her position due in large part because her family was a large contributor to Trump's campaign. She advocates for the school voucher system and wants to privatize the public school system. She rescinded the regulations for disabled students and took them off

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

the Education's official website. She will no longer cancel debts of students defrauded by fake universities that gave them fake degrees—like the now-defunct Trump University. She owns a large debt collection company that collects on student loans. During her confirmation, she testified that she was in favor of guns in schools, “like in Wyoming where they might run into grizzly bears.”

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions doesn't believe in the Constitution's provision separating church and state. He has come under fire from Trump, who selected him for the position, for recusing himself from Mueller's investigation on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. He was a senator from Alabama and actively campaigned for Trump.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, formerly a CEO of Exxon, has been constantly undermined by Trump when trying to make diplomatic nice with North Korea. Tillerson, not quite the diplomatic type, has been so frustrated by Trump that at one point he called him a moron. Many career professionals have left his State Department and hundreds of positions have not been filled.

Tribal leaders met with Trump in June to discuss the development of their energy resources and the cumbersome regulations they encounter. Trump said, “But now it's me. The government's different now. Obama's gone; and we're doing things differently now.” He continued, “Chief, chief, what are they going to do? Once you get it out of the ground are they going to make you put it back in there? I mean, once it's out of the ground it can't go back in there.

You've just got to do it. I'm telling you, chief, you've just got to do it.”

Clearly “it” refers to *breaking the law* and “they” refers to officials responsible for upholding the law. That wasn't covered in the story from *Indian Country Today* reprinted in the 2nd quarter issue. Incidentally, politicians always call Indian men “chief” regardless of who they are or when they don't care to remember their names.

Who can forget Trump's Pochontas remark? Using an Indian woman's name to insult a woman Senator who is a thorn in his massive backside. He just couldn't resist using that insult when he was suppose to be honoring the Navajo Code Talkers and then using that Indian killer Andrew Jackson's portrait as a backdrop.

Earlier Trump asked General Kelly, “*How good were these code talkers?*” Kelly replied, “You have no idea.” The gentleman in the wheelchair was a survivor of the Bataan Death March and chances are Trump probably doesn't know about that either.

More than 400 Navajo Marines participated in using their language to transmit coded messages that the Japanese were unable to break during World War II. The Code Talkers are recipients of Congressional gold medals.

Now comes stage two: 2018. Having delivered our government to their privileged friends and benefactors, Trump, House Speaker Ryan and Senate Leader McConnell will make sure



Navajo Code Talkers: Fleming Begaye, Thomas Begay and Peter MacDonald.

that Washington does even less for the vast majority of Americans. Ryan speaks eagerly of wanting to “reform” Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and programs for those with low incomes. Rarely has the idea of “reform” been so degraded.

Indian people will suffer along with other folks when lose their current level of health care, educational opportunities, and have their basic lifestyle turned upside down. The problem is that it will take longer for Indian people to recover.

This country is being torn apart from within because Trump is being used by Russia's Putin and big money. And a gutless Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, who have remained eerily silent. Republicans vote Republican whether it's good for the country or not.

And so did Nevada's Dean Heller. Isn't he up for re-election?



TRUMPISMS

Sometimes you see a little feature called, *You can't make this stuff up* that has totally off-the-wall comments. Well, Donald Trump could fill a whole page with *stuff*. When he's not golfing on his “working vacations” he's trying to erase Obama's accomplishments because he'll never be as smart, as educated, or as cool as Obama. He has a gold toilet but he doesn't have cool.

He brags about himself all the time, trying to convince others or himself. “I have so many words. I have the best words.” Okay then. “I have the best memory... I went to an Ivy League college. I'm very intelligent. I was a nice student... One of the great memories of all time... Ask anyone about Donald Trump.”

During a recent interview with the *New York Times* Trump revealed a few of his thoughts.

The Mueller investigation: “It makes the coun-

try look very bad and it puts the country in a very bad position. So the sooner it's worked out, the better it is for the country.” He adds, “I have absolute right to do what I want with the Justice Department”. He does but he'll be impeached almost immediately if he tries to interfere with the Justice Department and the investigation.

He disputes reports that he doesn't have a detailed understanding of legislation, especially the recently passed tax reform bill. “I know the details of taxes better than anybody. Better than the greatest C.P.A. I know the details of health care better than most, better than most.” Later he added that he knows more about “the big bills” debated in the Congress “more than any president that's ever been in office.”

“I don't want to get into loyalty, but I will tell you that, I will say this: (former U.S. Attorney General) Holder protected President Obama. Totally protected him.” Then he added, “When you look at the things that they did, and Holder protected the president. And I have great respect for that, I'll be honest.”

About the media, Trump said, “Another reason that I'm going to win another four years is because newspapers, television, all forms of media will tank if I'm not there because without me, their ratings are going down the tubes.” Then invoked one of his preferred insults, “Without me, The *New York Times* will indeed be not the failing *New York Times*, but the failed *New York Times*. So they basically have to let me win. And eventually, probably six months before the election, they'll be loving me because they're saying, ‘Please, please, don't lose Donald Trump’. O.K.”

“While the Fake News loves to talk about my so-called low approval rating, at *Fox and Friends*

[they] just showed that my rating on Dec. 28, 2017, was approximately the same as President Obama on Dec. 28, 2009, which was 47%... and this despite massive negative Trump coverage and Russia hoax!”

“Why is the United States Post Office, which is losing many billions of dollars a year, while charging Amazon and others so little to deliver their packages, making Amazon richer and the Post Office dumber and poorer? Should be charging much more!”

“The Democrats have been told, and fully understand, that there can be no DACA without the desperately needed wall at the Southern Border and an end to the horrible Chain Migration and ridiculous Lottery System of Immigration etc. We must protect our Country at all cost!”

A Good Catholic Joke

The Pope and Trump are on the same stage in Yankee Stadium in front of a huge crowd. The Pope leans towards Trump and said, “Do you know that with one little wave of my hand I can make every person in this crowd go wild with joy? This joy will not be a momentary display, but will go deep into their hearts and they'll forever speak of this day and rejoice!” Trump replied, “I seriously doubt that! With one little wave of your hand... Show me!” So the Pope backhanded him and knocked him off the stage! AND THE CROWD ROARED AND CHEERED WILDLY and there was happiness throughout the land!

Artist shows unique photo weavings

Tedra Begay, a Navajo artist, uses her photographs and weaving skills to create her art of textured images. Born and raised in Albuquerque, Tedra (pronounced “Teedra”) spent her summers at Seba Dalkai, Arizona where she learned traditional weaving from her grandmother.

She took photography courses at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe and one day, she sliced up a photograph, then pieced it back together using her weaving skills. The result is a combination of a puzzle with the raised surfaces of Navajo textiles.

Her “Apache Crown Dancer” is a double exposure photograph transferred onto aluminum. She slices her photos into quarter-inch strips and then weaves them back together.

After graduating from IAIA in 2005, she took time off and to decide what she wanted to do. She began doing designs with her weaving, then began experimenting with her photographs and “it came about.” She is planning photography trips to Canyon de Chelly and Monument Valley and hopes to do her art full time. Currently she is working in the library at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute.

Her parents now live in Gilbert, Arizona and she will be taking her father to visit the Grand



Artist with “Harmony”

Photos by Marla Brose

Canyon for a long holiday weekend. She still visits her grandmother and “She’s just awed at what I can do. She loves it.”

Tedra took second place in the digital photography category at the Santa Fe Indian Market in 2013. In 2015 she placed second in photography at the Heard Museum Guild Indian Art Fair. This year she participated again in the Indian Market, selling her photo weavings and also displayed her artwork at the New Mexico State Fair.



“Apache Crown Dancer”

You can’t make this stuff up...

“If we sold a few non-income generating properties, like Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone, we could wipe out the federal debt and overturn Obamacare. That’s what experts call Economics 101.”

**— Michelle Bachman
Fox News, 10/6/13**

PYRAMID LAKE TRIBAL HEALTH CLINIC PATIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY (January 2017)

Thank you for completing this Patient Satisfaction Survey, your time and comments are appreciated.

Questions	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1 How satisfied are you with the services provided to you and your family at the Clinic?					
2 How would you rate the cleanliness of the Clinic?					
3 How satisfied are you with the friendliness of the Clinic staff?					
4 How satisfied are you that patient confidentiality is protected?					
5 How would you rate the Clinic’s appointment system?					
6 How would you rate your ability to come to the Clinic as a walk-in?					
7 How would you rate the quality of care you received at your last visit?					
8 How satisfied are you with the patient educations you receive about your medical condition(s) and medication?					
9 If you received a referral to an outside Provider, how satisfied are you with the Clinic’s follow-up?					
10 If you had a Patient Complaint, how would you rate the Clinic’s resolution to your complaint?					
11 What one improvement you would like to see at the Health Clinic.	<p>Please return Patient Survey to Carla Molina at the Clinic.</p>				

From: Frank Quimby
To: laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov; heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; shandria_dixon@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Frank out
Date: Tuesday, June 13, 2017 9:09:33 AM

I need to take a (b) (6)

Sent from my iPhone

From: Moody, Joan
Subject: Frank's party RSVP, surprises and food commitments needed by 12/6
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 5:30:27 PM

Hi there,

RSVP for December 13: If you are from OCO or OIA and have not RSVPd to Frank's party on December 13 from 3-6, I will assume you are coming unless I hear otherwise from you.

Album--Surprise I am preparing an album into which we can paste photos, old press releases, [etc.to](#) compile Frank's memories of DOI. That is one of the purposes of our "class photo" next week in OCO. If you could send me any photos with Frank and/or his OCO or OIA friends in them, that would be great. If you don't have prints, please send all photos by 12/6. Or feel free to write a letter about his work to be included in the album.

Donations for Gift--Laura has suggested a Visa gift card for Frank (b) (6) [REDACTED] Thanks to those who have contributed. If anyone else would like to do so, please let me know. Completely voluntary and anonymous.

Food--Shandria is keeping a list of what people are bringing. Laura and Vicki are bringing alot. If you want to bring something, please see Shandria.

*Joan Moody
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U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3280
Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov*

From: Agen, Jarrod P. EOP/OVP
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: FW: a quick question related to a meeting with Lola Zinke
Date: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 5:08:32 PM

Hi Heather,

See request from Wash Post below.

The meeting they are referencing was a gathering of the President's Hispanic Advisory Board. She was a member of it. They were an entity prior to inauguration. The meeting was in conjunction with the 5 de Mayo reception since many of them were in town for it.

I was planning to just confirm that for Juliet.

Let me know if any issues.

Thanks

Jarrold

From: Eilperin, Juliet [mailto:Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 3, 2018 3:15 PM
To: Agen, Jarrod P. EOP/OVP <Jarrod.P.Agen@ovp.eop.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] a quick question related to a meeting with Lola Zinke

Dear Jarrod,

I understand that Secretary Zinke's wife Lola met with staffers from the VP's office this spring, I believe it was the first week of May. (A discussion of the meeting cropped up in an email exchange between DOI's White House liaison and Mark Calabria on May 7. I was hoping you could just let me know what the topic of the meeting was, and who attended it.

Thanks so much, and all my contact information is below.

Juliet

Juliet Eilperin
Senior National Affairs Correspondent
Washington Post
Juliet.eilperin@washpost.com
(O) 202-334-7774
(C) 202-302-3663
@eilperin

From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 8:20:25 AM

See below. I'm at my desk until 8:45 a.m. Let's discuss.

Brad Rateike
The White House
Assistant Director of Cabinet Communications

(b) (6)

Desk: (b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)

From: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 8:19 AM
To: Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

Adam, work with Brad. We need some guidance/answers here in case asked.

From: Hemming, Andrew J. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 7:36 AM
To: Boza-Holman, Sofia M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Cheung, Steven EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Ditto, Jessica E. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Ferre, Helen A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Fetalvo, Ninio J. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Grisham, Stephanie A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Hulse, Elliott Y. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Hurley, Carolina L. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Montesi, Janet M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Parkinson, Andrew Z. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Ross, Tyler E. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Sanders, Sarah H. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Shoemaker, Clay M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Short, Michael C. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Sims, Cliff D. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Strom, Natalie M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Walters, Lindsay E. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

A Zinke interview just popped in GQ and he has a couple of eyebrow-raising quotes in there about

Trump.

KEY SECTIONS:

Zinke Calls His Job Interview With Trump Disorganized:

Rumors buzzed that he'd been shortlisted for the job atop the Interior Department, but when Zinke and his wife, Lola, passed through the gilded doors of Trump Tower, he actually had no clue what position he was interviewing for—Priebus had never said definitively. And by the end of a rambling conversation with the president-elect, Zinke still wasn't entirely sure.

"The conversation went a hundred seconds. It went from women in combat to Syria policy to the Chinese to energy independence, a little about public lands, a little about hunting access," Zinke tells me. "Most of the conversation was not really Interior, per se." At one point, Trump proposed the Veterans Affairs post, to which Zinke quipped, "I don't think you hate me that much."

He was flying back to Montana when Mike Pence called him. "The vice president says, 'Well, congratulations!'" Zinke recalls, sharing the moment he was asked to join the Trump Cabinet, "and I asked him, 'What job?'"

Zinke Says The Trump Administration Has Had "A Lot Of Distractions And Chatter":

Thirty minutes into our ride, after snaking through another throng of tourists, we approach the Washington Monument—that stone memorial to the original military man turned president—and Zinke takes stock of these still-early days of the Trump administration. "The president is the best boss I've ever had," Zinke tells me, "but there's a lot of distractions and chatter." He tugs on his reins to pause for a moment and consider the structure, the city's tallest by edict. "You're just always looking for ways to stay above that."

Zinke Complains About How Hard It Is To Bring People Onboard And Notes Government Is Different Than Business:

For all that camera-ready affection for the boss, members of the Trump cabinet, Zinke included, admit to being frustrated with the White House, which they say has left them chronically short-staffed. According to the Partnership for Public Service, the White House has yet to nominate staffers for 357 out of 570 key agency positions. So far, only 50 nominees have been confirmed. (By this time in their first terms, President Obama had gotten 203 confirmed; George W. Bush, 203.)

...

Zinke, four months into the job, has been able to fill only two key positions that require White House approval, out of 15 vacancies. He notes that he's submitted the names of "awfully good, just super people," but that the past few months have been a waiting game. "Operating a business sometimes is a little different from operating in the Oval Office," Zinke says. "[In business], it's just 'All right, you're hired.' But I think the White House is running into the swamp...there's a bureaucracy there

that's very difficult to determine." (Zinke may have himself to thank for recent inaction, though. The day after his unseemly call to Murkowski, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which the Alaska senator chairs, announced that hearings for a slate of Zinke's nominees would be delayed.)

Zinke Said The WH Is "Getting Its Legs Under It" And Says They Were "Getting In Other People's Business A Bit Too Much":

Zinke insists that he and his team have gotten along just fine with their designated White House minder, but John Kelly, who served until last week as the secretary of homeland security, was a bit more candid when we spoke. "I don't need a lot of supervision," he told me. "Obviously the White House is getting its legs under it, but early on it was a bit of a pain. They were getting in other people's business a little bit too much." (Kelly's tune will presumably change: On Friday he was named White House chief of staff.)

<http://www.gq.com/story/ryan-zinke-secretary-of-interior-profile>

From: Michael Doyle
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: FW: ICYMI: Suit filed for Records on Lolita Zinke Travel, Role at Department of the Interior
Date: Thursday, October 05, 2017 12:49:57 PM

In case you missed it, American Oversight launched a joint investigation with Western Values Project into Lolita Zinke's taxpayer-funded travel.

For Immediate Release
October 5, 2017

Media Contact:
press@americanoversight.org
[202-869-5242](tel:202-869-5242)

American Oversight Sues for Records on Lolita Zinke Travel, Role at Department of the Interior

Watchdog Group Expands Investigation into Ryan Zinke's Management of Department of the Interior and Lolita Zinke's Taxpayer-Funded Travel

Washington, DC – Non-partisan watchdog group American Oversight today sued the Department of the Interior (DOI) to force the release of records related to Lolita Zinke, wife of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, and her role at the department, use of taxpayer-funded travel, and participation in official meetings or other events.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the Montana-based Western Values Project which submitted the initial Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking the records.

"Time and again we've seen how personal relationships and political loyalty trump competency in the current administration, and it appears the Department of the Interior is no different," said American Oversight Executive Director Austin Evers. "We're suing the Department of the Interior to uncover the truth about what role Secretary Zinke's wife is playing in running the department, how much it's costing taxpayers, and why she was jetting off to Europe with her husband on a military plane."

"Under Secretary Zinke's leadership the Department of Interior has turned into a front group for special interests," said Chris Saeger, Executive Director of the Western Values Project. "We filed this FOIA because there should be transparency and accountability for everyone who influences Interior's decisions. If Lola Zinke is playing a role at Interior, taxpayers deserve to know if she is playing by the same rules as everyone else who works there."

Lolita Zinke has reportedly joined her husband extensively on his official travel – including on a military plane to Norway, Greenland, and Alaska – and has played an unusually prominent role at the Department of the Interior for the spouse of a cabinet secretary. On October 2nd, DOI’s Inspector General announced it was [opening an investigation](#) into travel by Secretary Zinke.

The lawsuit is part of American Oversight's broader investigation into Secretary Zinke's management of DOI – including his [government-funded travel](#), his involvement in [relaxing standards for toxic chemicals](#), and meetings related to the construction of [President Trump's border wall](#). On Wednesday, American Oversight submitted an additional FOIA request seeking further details about Lolita Zinke's presence and activities at DOI.

In early June, the Western Values Project submitted a FOIA requests to DOI asking for records, communications and documents related to Lolita Zinke’s role in the department, including her participation in internal meetings, presence on official trips, and emails sent to her in relation to government business. DOI failed to adequately respond to the FOIA requests as required by law, and American Oversight filed suit today on behalf of the Western Values Project in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to force the release of relevant documents.

Click [HERE](#) to view the complaint.

Click [HERE](#) to read more about American Oversight’s investigation into Ryan Zinke’s management of DOI.

###

American Oversight is a non-partisan, nonprofit ethics watchdog committed to holding the government accountable. With congressional oversight lacking, American Oversight is stepping in to uncover and publicize information about malfeasance and corruption by administration officials. Follow us at @weareoversight and learn more at <http://www.americanoversight.org>.

The Western Values Project advocates for a responsible approach to the management of public lands and parks throughout the American West. We hold public officials accountable who allow special interests to jeopardize iconic landscapes and their value to the outdoor economy. Learn more at www.westernvaluesproject.org and @Western_Values.

Connect with Us



Info@westernvaluesproject.org

[UNSUBSCRIBE](#)



From: derekhankerson
To: Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fw: National Park Service Gullah Geechee Corridor
Date: Sunday, October 08, 2017 8:22:44 AM
Attachments: [Gullah Geechee Publication Fall 2017 Final LR.pdf](#)

Heather:

It was a pleasure meeting you with Secretary Zinke and seeing Marshall. He and I worked Presidents Trumps campaign in northeast Florida where I had the pleasure of serving as Northeast Regional director.

More to the point Yesterday's event with Congressman Mast was extremely humbling for me considering I've had the pleasure of working with NPS on both the Underground Railroad and the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor in my home county of St. John's as in St. Augustine, FL over the last 12 years.

Attached please find a proof of the NPS Sea Community Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor digital magazine 2nd edition which will roll out on Monday and please consider sharing with Secretary Zinke.

You too will find a film my family and I co produced during the 6th annual NPS Underground Railroad Conference, which we hosted and sponsored in 2012!

Should you'll ever need assistance with the Department of Interior and NPS Gullah Geechee Corridor or the southern route to the Underground Railroad please let me know I'd love to work with you'll.

Also, I'd like to formally ask if I can include Secretary Zinke in the next edition of the magazine?

Thank you and have a great day.

[10/18/2012 Florida Crossroads – Florida's Underground Railroad: Southern Route to Freedom - The Florida Channel](#)



**10/18/2012 Florida Crossroads – Florida's
Underground Railroad: Southern Route to
Freedom - The Florida Channel**

Centuries before a secret network was formed to help slaves escape to Northern states and Canada, The Underground Railroad ran South. As early as 1587, Spain's La Florida was recorded to be a safe haven for freedom seekers resisting enslavement. In

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: FW: Pool Report #2
Date: Thursday, July 27, 2017 3:59:04 PM

From: Baker, Peter [mailto:peter.baker@nytimes.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2017 3:56 PM
To: Coia, Giovanna EOP/WHO <Giovanna.Coia@who.eop.gov>
Subject: Pool Report #2

Pool Report #2
East Room
July 27, 2017

Potus and VPotus held a ceremony in the East Room to honor the police officers who responded to the shooting of Republican congressmen at a baseball diamond in Alexandria, Va., last month and awarded them the Medal of Valor. As always, please check quotes against transcript.

VP Pence opened the ceremony and said Rep. Steve Scalise, who was among those injured during the shooting, was watching. "We're inspired and relieved by your recovery," VP Pence said, addressing the congressman. "It's an answer to a prayer."

VP Pence then invited up to the stage five police officers who responded that day: Officers Kevin Jobe, Alexander Jensen and Nicole Battaglia of the Alexandria Police Department and Special Agents David Bailey and Crystal Griner of the Capitol Police. The three Alexandria officers all wore dark uniforms while the Capitol Police officers were in civilian clothes. Special Agents Griner and Bailey were shot during the incident and Special Agent Griner, with a cast on her lower leg, sat in a chair for much of the ceremony while the other four stood next to her.

Potus then entered and recounted the events of that day, noting that Congressman Scalise, Matt Mika, a lobbyist and former congressional aide, and Zachary Barth, a congressional aide, were each shot. "Fortunately from the moment that gunman began to shoot, he was met by return fire," Potus said. With the officers behind him on stage, he said, "They are American heroes and we salute them."

Potus also saluted other congressmen who shielded each other and helped the injured and he also honored members of the Alexandria Fire Department and U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit who responded. "Thank you for what you did that day and for what you do every day," he said.

He singled out two doctors who have treated Congressman Scalise at MedStar Washington Hospital Center: Dr. Jack Sava, the director of trauma, and Dr. Robert Golden, the director of orthopaedic trauma, who were both in the audience. "You have the gratitude of the entire nation," Potus said.

"Steve is a fighter," he added. "We've known that for a long time. This week he was discharged from the hospital and is now beginning weeks of intensive rehabilitation at an inpatient facility. He will recover. We are praying for him, we are pulling for him and we are sending his family our support and our love."

He recognized the congressman's wife, Jennifer, who was in the audience. "We applaud the strength and courage that she has shown throughout this incredible ordeal."

He noted that a bill in Congress would provide more support for Capitol Police officers and credited Congressman Scalise. "Jennifer, you can tell Steve he pulled it off," he said. "That's better than being a whip. I hope it gets to my desk soon. I will sign it immediately."

Potus said: "The assault on June 14 reminds us that evil exists in this world but it also reminds us that heroes walk in our midst." He thanked law enforcement officers in general "for doing the tough jobs, the dangerous jobs and sometimes the thankless jobs."

He then presented the Medal of Valor to all five officers. Special Agent Griner stood on crutches when Potus draped the medal around her neck.

Reince Priebus walked in shortly before the ceremony began and took a seat in the third row. As guests waited for it to begin, they could hear a musical group in Cross Hall playing Beatles songs, including "Eleanor Rigby" and "When I'm Sixty-Four."

Peter Baker
NY Times
202-557-4871
peterbaker@nytimes.com

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: Jim Youngson
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: FW: RJI - Channel Islands National Park
Date: Monday, May 01, 2017 12:13:17 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[RJI RG 1 Box 28-2 Doc 1.pdf](#)

Hello Heather, wanted to follow up on a couple things: could you locate the pictures we took with Congressman Lagomarsino and the Secretary (they're on his phone, I believe). I'd like to get one to Bob, and for myself. Also, if it's possible to get Ryan's autobiography signed (I have one, so no need on my end) and sent to Bob it'd be very appreciated. I believe Lola was going to discuss with you. Bob's address is: (b) (6).

I appreciate how busy you all are and thank you in advance.

Jim

Jim Youngson

Principal



3 West Carrillo Street, Suite 211

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

805.560.7397 office

805.886.6041 cell

www.terrainconsulting.com

jim@terrainconsulting.com

From: Jim Youngson <jim@terrainconsulting.com>

Date: Saturday, April 15, 2017 at 5:51 PM

To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>, Nita Vail <(b) (6)>, Ryan Zinke <(b) (6)>

Subject: RJI - Channel Islands National Park

Here is the letter I referred to today, where Rep. Lagomarsino spoke about the final purchase of Santa Rosa Island and directly to the future NPS vision.

His edits make this a classic.

Jim Youngson

Principal



3 West Carrillo Street, Suite 211

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jim@terrainconsulting.com

From: Derrick Crandall
To: laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov; [Heather Swift \(heather_swift@ios.doi.gov\)](mailto:Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov); [Jason Funes \(Jason_funes@ios.doi.gov\)](mailto:Jason_Funes@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: FW: US Secretary of Interior Zinke Speaks on Boating Access, Infrastructure on Federal Lands
Date: Wednesday, July 19, 2017 10:17:54 PM

Good report – many more to come.

Derrick

NEWS From BoatUS



Boat Owners Association of The United States
880 S. Pickett St., Alexandria VA 22304

Read this press release online at: <https://goo.gl/WbWJsV>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Contact: D. Scott Croft, 703-461-2864, SCroft@BoatUS.com

Photo Available at: <http://www.BoatUS.com/pressroom/previewlmg/hiRes/1312.jpg>



Photo Caption: (R to L) BoatUS Manager of Government Affairs David Kennedy, BoatUS Government Affairs Program Coordinator Morgan Neuhoff, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, BoatUS Vice President of Government Affairs Chris Edmonston.

US Secretary of Interior Zinke Speaks on Boating Access, Infrastructure on Federal Lands

WASHINGTON, July 19, 2017 -- Just as outdoor enthusiasts enjoy federal lands, recreational boaters need access to federal waters. Access, however, can be threatened due to aging marina infrastructure, lack of funds for ramp and dock maintenance, or government will. The Department of Interior oversees about one-fifth of the nation's land, including the national parks. Boat Owners Association of The United States ([BoatUS](http://www.BoatUS.com)) was eager to sit down with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke yesterday at an event in Washington to discuss his agency's support for maintaining boating infrastructure and growing access to federal waters.

The Secretary's interview with BoatUS was part of a coalition of outdoor recreation industry associations that met with him to highlight the economic importance of outdoor products and the enjoyment they bring American families. These include boats, recreational vehicles, off-road vehicles, and camping, fishing and hunting gear that generate \$887 billion per year in economic activity and provide an estimated 7.6 million direct jobs.

As the nation's largest advocacy, services and safety group, BoatUS supports the recreational boating industry and believes improvements to federal boating-access sites and addressing the Department of Interior's deferred maintenance backlog will improve recreational boating opportunities for the nation's 11.8 million boat owners.

In speaking to BoatUS, Secretary Zinke made clear his advocacy for expanded access to federal public

lands and waters and improving infrastructure at many of the aging facilities. “Pressure to use our public lands will continue to grow, and many of our facilities consist of Eisenhower-era infrastructure,” Zinke said. “We have a \$11.5 billion maintenance and repair backlog at our public parks. We need to look at reinvesting in our public lands.”

Speaking on the boating-access issue, Secretary Zinke said he’s “looking to not only maintain it, but enhance it. ... Public access via water provides an opportunity for improving infrastructure, from maintaining moorings to repairing docks. It’s a field where there can be an enormous amount of improvement.”

He promised, “Fixing the backlog of maintenance items will be a priority in upcoming budgets. ... We are going to catch up on infrastructure, restore trust and show Americans we can be good stewards of our public lands. Revenue from user fees, including contracts with private concessionaires should offset the cost of maintaining facilities. If we work together, everybody wins.”

The Department of Interior will also look at ways to improve the experience at parks, noting Wi-Fi access and air-conditioned buildings are amenities that today’s park visitors ask for. “We’re going to adapt to what Americans want. Our citizens deserve the best uses of our public lands,” he said. “In the past, the answer has been ‘no.’ Our answer should be, ‘How do we get to yes?’”

The Secretary also used the day’s events to announce the formation of an advisory committee consisting of outdoor-industry members assigned to nurture public-private partnerships that he believes can provide the resources to make federal parks “a five-star experience” to enjoy. He stressed, “This is not privatizing our national parks. No one is more passionate about our public lands, and I am adamant against selling our public lands.”

In a related boating topic, Secretary Zinke, whose wife owns a 38-foot powerboat, also noted that boating presents “a unique challenge” when it comes to invasive species, which he said is “a real problem” but stressed the need for the right strategies to combat the threat.

Said BoatUS Manager of Government Affairs David Kennedy, “Boaters need well-maintained, safe and modern boating amenities in good condition. We look forward to the Secretary’s help to address these needs with public-private partnerships. This is not the first time our parks have needed private investment — some of the first such partnerships in national parks were the early and now historic lodges built by the railroads. Well-managed access can be good for boaters, the federal government and for local economies. If you build it, they do come.”

###

Suggested [Tweet](#) and [Facebook](#) post:

Secretary of Interior Zinke speaks on boating access, infrastructure on federal lands
<https://goo.gl/WbWJsV> #BoatUS

About Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS):

Celebrating more than 50 years, BoatUS is the nation’s largest organization of recreational boaters with more than a half-million members. We are the boat owners’ voice on Capitol Hill and fight for their rights. We are The Boat Owners Auto Club and help ensure a roadside trailer breakdown doesn’t end a boating or fishing trip before it begins. When boats break down on the water, TowBoatUS brings them safely back to the launch ramp or dock, 24/7. The BoatUS Marine Insurance Program gives boat owners affordable, specialized coverage and superior service they need. We help keep boaters safe and our waters clean with assistance from the nonprofit BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water. Visit BoatUS.com.

From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Newell, Russell](#); alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov
Subject: FW: WaPo: Where's Zinke? The Interior secretary's special flag offers clues
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 6:38:11 PM

From: Comms Alert [mailto:CommsAlert@gop.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2017 6:28 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WaPo: Where's Zinke? The Interior secretary's special flag offers clues

Where's Zinke? The Interior secretary's special flag offers clues

Washington Post

Lisa Rein

October 12, 2017 – 6:04 PM

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/wheres-zinke-the-interior-secretarys-special-flag-offers-clues/2017/10/12/68672476-aeb2-11e7-9e58-e6288544af98_story.html?utm_term=.49e385a7cc18

At the Interior Department's headquarters in downtown Washington, Secretary Ryan Zinke has revived an arcane military ritual that no one can remember ever happening in the federal government.

A security staffer takes the elevator to the seventh floor, climbs the stairs to the roof and hoists a special secretarial flag whenever Zinke enters the building. When the secretary goes home for the day or travels, the flag — a blue banner emblazoned with the agency's bison seal flanked by seven white stars representing the Interior bureaus — comes down.

In Zinke's absence, the ritual is repeated to raise an equally obscure flag for Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt.

Responding this week to questions from The Washington Post, a spokeswoman for Zinke, a former Navy SEAL commander, defended the Navy flag-flying tradition as "a major sign of transparency."

"Ryan Zinke is proud and honored to lead the Department of the Interior, and is restoring honor and tradition to the department, whether it's flying the flag when he is in garrison or restoring traditional access to public lands," press secretary Heather Swift said in an email.

Zinke, a Stetson-wearing former Montana congressman who has cultivated an image as a rugged outdoorsman, has come under a harsh spotlight in recent weeks for behavior criticized as extravagant for a public official. The agency's inspector general opened an investigation after he ran up bills for travel on chartered jets and mixed business with political appearances, sometimes accompanied by his wife, Lola. It's one of five probes underway of Cabinet secretaries' travel.

Zinke upset some of the 70,000 employees at the agency that manages public lands by stating that 30 percent of the workers are "not loyal to the flag" in a speech to oil and gas executives. It is unclear whether the reference was literal or figurative.

Zinke rode to work on horseback on his first day in office and displays animal heads on his wood-

paneled office walls. For a while, he kept a glass-case display of hunting knives but was asked to remove them because of security risks, according to people familiar with the decision.

He has commissioned commemorative coins with his name on them to give to staff and visitors, but the cost to taxpayers is unclear. Zinke's predecessors and some other Cabinet secretaries have coins bearing agency seals, but not personalized ones.

The flag ritual is unique in President Trump's administration. The White House does not raise the presidential flag when Trump alights at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. There is no Defense secretary's flag atop the Pentagon.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, like his predecessors, has a personal flag that flies beside the U.S. flag in front of the department's Foggy Bottom headquarters. But it's there whether Tillerson is in the building or not.

"We're talking about Cabinet members and federal buildings, not the Queen of England and Buckingham Place," said Chris Lu, deputy Labor secretary in the Barack Obama administration, referring to the British tradition of announcing the queen's presence by raising her personal heraldic flag.

"If we had a secretarial flag at the Obama Labor Department, we never bothered to locate it or use it," Lu said.

Retired Army Col. Steven Warren, who ran the Pentagon's press operation before retiring this year, could not recall the place in Washington hierarchy represented by the raising of a federal official's personal flag.

"Is he trying to send a message?" Warren wondered. "Is he big on pomp and circumstance, or is this a case of 'Look at me?'"

Personal flags for federal government officials have a proud, if arcane, history that originated with the secretary of the Navy in 1866, to help sailing ships in the fleet recognize which one carried the naval commander. The Coast Guard and secretary of war wanted one, too.

By the early 20th century, the civilian heads of the Treasury, Commerce and Labor departments had flags. The first one for Interior was adopted in 1917.

"If you were the secretary of agriculture, you asked yourself, 'Hey, the secretary of war has a flag, how come I don't have one?'" said Joseph McMillan, a retired Defense Department official and student of flag history from Alexandria who is president of the American Heraldry Society.

The flags proliferated by World War Two, with banners for subordinate officials from undersecretaries to assistant attorneys general.

Back when security was not a concern, official government vehicles would display a high-ranking official's personal flag on its left front fender, with the American flag flanking the right. They were considered pretentious, McMillan said, and eventually went out of fashion.

At Lady Liberty Flag and Flagpole in Austin, one of the largest flag vendors for federal offices, Sandra

Dee Merritt said she sells 300 to 500 department flags a year to various Interior offices.

Secretarial flags are no longer in demand. "I haven't sold any of those individual secretarial flags to any agency in forever," Merritt said.

Raising a personal flag to mark an official's presence remains a custom in the military. Field commanders often display their unit's flag when they are at headquarters to signify that the boss is in.

But the personal flag, whether belonging to a general or a Cabinet secretary, stays behind the desk, if it's there at all.

By flying his flag, Zinke is doing exactly what the flag was designed for, McMillan said. Yet he's skeptical. The Interior Department is not the Navy.

"I'm all about tradition," McMillan said. "But I kind of have an aversion to militarizing everything in our government. The world doesn't need to know the secretary of the Interior is in the building."

From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] Politico: "UGH!": Zinke's wife's travel caused headaches for Interior staff
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 6:20:39 PM

Brad Rateike
White House Communications
202.881.8645

Begin forwarded message:

From: Comms Alert <CommsAlert@gop.com>
Date: November 20, 2017 at 6:16:46 PM EST
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Politico: 'UGH!': Zinke's wife's travel caused headaches for Interior staff

'UGH!': Zinke's wife's travel caused headaches for Interior staff

Politico

Ben Lefebvre

November 20, 2017 – 6:12 PM

<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/11/20/ryan-lola-zinke-interior-travel-251108>

Newly released records shed light on the outsize profile Lola Zinke has established compared with the typical Cabinet secretary's spouse.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife has frustrated department staffers by saddling them with extra work when she traveled with him on official business, according to new records that a liberal watchdog group says uncover the potential misuse of government resources.

The records document Lola Zinke's last-minute requests to join high-level dinners and additions to the guest list for a conservative group's event near their home in Southern California earlier this year. The Western Values Project filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit last month to force Interior to release more than 100 pages of [documents](#) related to Lola Zinke's trips with her husband and interactions with Interior staff.

Shared first with POLITICO, the documents shed new light on the outsize profile Lola Zinke has established compared with the typical Cabinet secretary's spouse, including her dictating people to invite to a town hall hosted by the conservative Young America's Foundation for her husband.

New emails also reveal a celebratory dinner the Zinkes attended that was organized in part by a major GOP donor who gave heavily to Ryan Zinke's congressional campaigns. And they show Interior staffers had to accommodate a last-minute request for her to join the secretary at an official dinner with Alaska's governor. The records cover two trips Lola

Zinke joined in the first three months of her husband's tenure as well as some other interactions with Interior staff, such as coordinating her attendance at a White House briefing for Cabinet members' spouses.

While the department says Lola Zinke paid her own way, the records show Interior used staff time to coordinate some of her activities while traveling with her husband. And the trips gave her access to high-level politicians and GOP activists and donors who could benefit her as a political operator in her own right.

"These emails show that the leadership at the Department of Interior treats basic ethical standards like an inconvenience," Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said. "If Secretary Zinke is willing to be so sloppy with something as elementary as this, then God only knows how they're handling big decisions about energy and public lands behind closed doors."

Interior says Lola Zinke pays her own way when she accompanies her husband and that travel is cleared by ethics officials in advance.

"DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence" with the secretary, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Friday.

Interior's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel are investigating the former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL's travel expenses and appearance at political events while on official trips, including those where he was accompanied by his wife. Last week, the IG's office said it could not conduct a thorough investigation because Interior had kept inadequate records. Among other problems, the watchdog said it had "not been able to determine the full extent to which Lolita Zinke, the Secretary's wife, accompanied the Secretary on official travel." Interior officials blamed the shortcomings on inadequate procedures left in place by the Obama administration.

The new records show the secretary's wife helped decide the guest list for a Young America's Foundation town hall forum with Ryan Zinke on April 17 at its Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif., part of a weeklong official trip in the state. Lola Zinke joined her husband for national parks tours and meetings with government officials throughout the week, as well as for a private tour of the Reagan Ranch galleries led by Andrew Coffin, YAF's vice president.

Lola Zinke sent a "list of people I have invited to the event" to two Interior staffers, according to a series of April 7 emails. Caroline Boulton, a special assistant to the secretary, forwarded the list on to an official at YAF, with a warning that more could be added. Interior redacted the names of Zinke's guests before releasing the email.

"She's expecting some of them to bring plus ones and also her list is not yet final," Boulton wrote. "She's said that she doesn't have emails for them all since many of them have been personally told about the event, but I wanted you to have the list!"

YAF is a key pillar of the conservative movement with alumni ranging from White House officials to prominent journalists. The group's donors have reportedly included the Koch

brothers, among others.

Lola Zinke is active in conservative politics. The Santa Barbara native was a member of President Donald Trump's Hispanic outreach team during the 2016 campaign, and in September she became chairwoman for the Senate campaign of Troy Downing, a Montana businessman hoping to unseat Sen. Jon Tester next year.

Lola had previously faced criticism for accompanying her husband on the California trip. She posted a photograph on Twitter from Gov. Jerry Brown's office and accompanied her husband to meetings with DOI regional staff in Sacramento and trips to Fresno and the national parks at Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, the trip manifests show.

The trip also included five days in Santa Barbara and then four days in Zinke's hometown in Whitefish, Mont., an upscale part of the state where the couple owns a home and other real estate.

The secretary bringing his wife along on official trips isn't illegal as long as the government doesn't pay for her expenses. But it can be an ethically gray area, depending on the circumstances, said Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist with good-governance watchdog Public Citizen.

"Spousal travel, especially when paid for by the spouse, suggests that the trip may have less to do with official duties and more resembles a family vacation partially paid for by taxpayers," Holman said.

When Lola Zinke joined an official trip to Norway, Greenland and Alaska, she appears to have caused some headaches by deciding to stay longer than expected. Ryan Zinke sent his staff scrambling to make last-minute arrangements so she could accompany him to dinner with the governor of Alaska and other dignitaries in Anchorage, according to new emails.

Interior staffers apparently found out about the change in plans second-hand from an aide to Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who also was on the trip, along with other senators and their spouses, according to a May 27 email from Director of Scheduling and Advance Russell Roddy to other colleagues at Interior — one day before Lola Zinke had been scheduled to return to Washington.

"I have heard that Mrs. Zinke was now maybe not going to fly out from Fairbanks Sunday morning ... so, I asked Annie if she happened to talk to Mrs. Zinke about her plans. She said Mrs. Zinke said she was now going to head to Byers Lake and Anchorage with RKZ and fly out of Anchorage on Tuesday," Roddy wrote. "UGH! We have all kinds of planes, trains and automobiles manifests to now scramble with."

It is unclear what led to the change in plans. Before the trip, Lola Zinke had apparently been trying to secure a seat on a military plane back to Washington, but the Senate staffer coordinating the trip told Interior that it would be a "safer bet" for her to fly commercial because Ryan Zinke would not be with her. The military typically does not like when members of Congress try to get their spouses on military planes without the member being

present, according to an email from Boulton relaying guidance she had received. "There's a lot of ifs in that, so let me know if you want me to keep pushing on the" military return flight, Boulton wrote to Lola Zinke on May 18.

Lola Zinke joined her husband at a May 29 dinner in Anchorage with Alaska Gov. Bill Walker and other state officials.

"The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal," Swift said. Lola Zinke flew home on a commercial flight from Anchorage the following day.

Lola Zinke also accompanied her husband to an April 10 dinner in Washington that was organized with the help of one of his past campaign donors, Burt Sugarman, who has donated heavily to Republicans.

"We are very excited that Sec Zinke accepted the event," wrote Phil Anderson, president of lobbying firm Navigators Global who helped organize the April 10 dinner sponsored by the National Geographic Society, in a March 24 email to Boulton. "As you know, Burt Sugarman first discussed the dinner with Sec Zinke."

Sugarman and his wife, the former Entertainment Tonight anchor Mary Hart, are members of the National Geographic Society's board of directors.

The Sugarmans gave a combined \$10,800 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign, out of more than \$180,000 they gave to GOP candidates and committees in the last election cycle, according to FEC documents.

On April 27, Lola Zinke was invited to an ethics briefing at the White House for Cabinet spouses. "They stressed the importance of attending since important ethics rules will [be] discussed and questions can be answered by White House counsel," Boulton wrote in an email to Lola Zinke.

"Thank you!" she replied. "It's a good thing I'll be in town then."

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Paul Ross](#); [Jeremy Barnum](#)
Subject: Fwd: *News Alert* Interior official compares \$70 entry fee to cost of a movie
Date: Thursday, November 02, 2017 2:43:59 PM

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Hinson, Alex** <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 2, 2017 at 2:37 PM
Subject: *News Alert* Interior official compares \$70 entry fee to cost of a movie
To:

[E&E News: Interior official compares \\$70 entry fee to cost of a movie](#)
Rob Hotakainen
November 2, 2017

Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt today defended a plan to charge \$70 for a peak-season entry fee at 17 of the busiest national parks next year, saying it's roughly the same cost as taking his family to a 3-D movie.

"It costs me about \$68 and 90 cents for the two kids and my wife and I to go see a movie," Bernhardt said on NPR's 1A, a daily program and podcast produced by NPR member station WAMU.

Bernhardt said park fees have not kept pace with inflation. And he said that higher fees would not keep most low-income Americans from visiting the parks, adding that a bigger problem for them is the cost of transportation and lodging associated with traveling to the parks.

Bernhardt also noted that many parks would not be affected by the new plan, including his favorite, Mesa Verde National Park in southwest Colorado, a park that he often visited as a youngster.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who oversees the 417 national park sites, announced the new fee proposal last week, saying it would raise \$70 million a year for infrastructure projects.

The higher fees would take effect next year at Acadia, Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Denali, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Joshua Tree, Mount Rainier, Olympic, Rocky Mountain, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, Shenandoah, Yellowstone, Yosemite and Zion national parks. Most of the increases would take effect in May or June of 2018.

Under the new plan, peak-season entry fees at the 17 parks would be \$70 for a private vehicle, \$50 for a motorcycle, and \$30 for a person on bike or foot. An annual pass for a park would cost \$75.

Currently, vehicle fees at the 17 parks range from \$25 to \$30, while motorcycle fees range from \$12 to \$25. A person on bike or foot pays from \$10 to \$15, while a park-specific annual fee ranges from \$40 to \$60.

Bernhardt said on the radio program that 80 percent of the money raised by the higher fees would stay in individual parks, helping them pay for maintenance of restrooms, trails and visitor centers, among other things.

And he urged those who want to respond to the plan to make themselves heard by Nov. 23, the deadline for public comment.

"We'll see how those comments line up, and once we have that information, the park service will have an opportunity to rethink its proposal and decide the best course of action," he said.

The plan has set off a backlash on Capitol Hill, with at least 14 senators urging Zinke to scrap the idea.

###

--

Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Daniel DuBray
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Acting BLM Director
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 10:05:57 AM

All you, right?
D

Dan DuBray
Acting Assistant Director - Communications (WO-600)
Director's Office (Room 5645)
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240
Office: [\(202\) 208-5207](tel:(202)208-5207)
Twitter: @DuBray

Begin forwarded message:

From: Scott Streater <ssreater@eenews.net>
Date: November 16, 2017 at 9:54:25 AM EST
To: "ddubray@blm.gov" <ddubray@blm.gov>
Subject: FW: Acting BLM Director

Dan,

Sorry, I meant to also send this to you, not just Heather and Megan Crandall. Please see what I sent them earlier today. I need to hear something back soon. Thanks.

Scott Streater
E&E News reporter
ssreater@eenews.net
719-264-0923 (office)
719-338-4677 (mobile)

E&E NEWS
122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001
www.eenews.net | [@EENewsUpdates](https://twitter.com/EENewsUpdates)
Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Scott Streater
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 7:41 AM
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; mcrandal@blm.gov
Subject: FW: Acting BLM Director

Hey guys,

I need to see if I can get a comment from Interior/BLM on Steed taking over as acting BLM director. Who is taking over Steed's role as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy? Also, where is the agency in terms of nominating a full-time director for BLM?

My deadline is no later than noon EST today.

Thanks in advance!

Scott Streater
E&E News reporter
ssreater@eenews.net
719-264-0923 (office)
719-338-4677 (mobile)

E&E NEWS

122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001
www.eenews.net | [@EENewsUpdates](https://twitter.com/EENewsUpdates)
Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: "Nedd, Michael"

<mnedd@blm.gov>

Date: November 15, 2017 at 3:03:21
PM PST

To: BLM_All_Employees

<blm_all_employees@blm.gov>

Subject: BLM Acting Director

BLM employees:

This week, Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Brian Steed as Acting Director of the BLM, and I want to welcome him as he begins his journey leading this great agency. John Ruhs and I have worked alongside Brian since his appointment as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in October, and we have come to know his ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission. His experience includes working as Chief of Staff to U.S. Representative Chris Stewart of Utah,

teaching and researching economics at the University of Utah, and serving as a Deputy County Attorney in Iron County, Utah. He is a native of Logan, Utah, and now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and three children. Brian's western heritage and values make him a perfect fit for the BLM team.

Since March 15, I have had the honor of leading the BLM. Your tireless dedication to our mission inspires me every day. DOI leaders continually express their confidence in the BLM's leadership in the field and here in Washington, which is a testament to all of you. Thank you for supporting me as the Acting Director over these months, and remaining as ever BLM strong.

During the coming weeks, John and I will transition to different roles. John will return to his position as BLM Nevada State Director, and I will assume the duties of Acting Deputy Director for Operations. I appreciate John's sacrifice over the past seven months while he has lived away from his family and the wide open spaces that he loves.

Please join me in welcoming Brian to

his new position. As we move forward, let's continue to stay focused on our shared mission and values that guide us in our stewardship of America's public lands.

Take care and have a wonderful day! :)
Michael D. Nedd

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Swift, Heather](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Announcing the New NPS AD for Workforce and Inclusion
Date: Friday, July 07, 2017 1:08:01 PM
Attachments: [New Picture \(1\).bmp](#)
[Tony Nguyen Bio \(July 2017\).docx](#)

FYI on a new Associate Director for Workforce and Inclusion starting at NPS on Monday. His bio is attached.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Barnum, Jeremy** <jeremy_barnum@nps.gov>
Date: Fri, Jul 7, 2017 at 12:44 PM
Subject: Announcing the New NPS AD for Workforce and Inclusion
To: Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Tom Crosson <thomas_crosson@nps.gov>

Hi Paul,

Heads up that our new Associate Director for Workforce and Inclusion, Tony Nguyen (brief bio attached) is slated to start on Monday. Nguyen will lead all workforce programs for the NPS including staffing, employee and labor relations, performance management, learning and development, etc.

We're working on a news release to send your way for review ASAP with the aim of sending it out by the end of next week. Would that time frame be okay with DOI?

Thanks!

Jeremy K. Barnum
Public Affairs Officer
National Park Service
Office: (202) 513-7262
Mobile: (202) 617-7973

**FIND YOUR
PARK** 
[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)
[Instagram](#) [YouTube](#)

From: Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
To: [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Fetalvo, Ninio J. EOP/WHO](#); [Strom, Natalie M. EOP/WHO](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; [Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Fwd: Billings Gazette: Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban
Date: Saturday, August 26, 2017 12:15:10 PM

Team Interior

Any guidance on the below?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

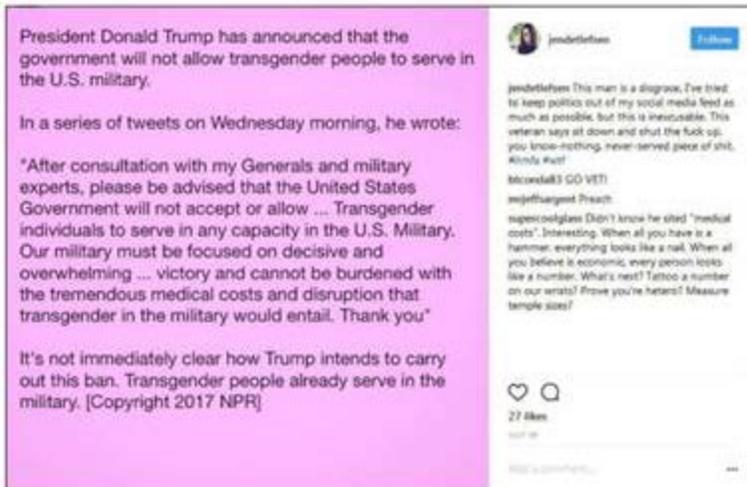
From: Comms Alert <CommsAlert@gop.com>
Date: August 26, 2017 at 12:13:48 PM EDT
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: **Billings Gazette: Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban**

Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban
Billings Gazette
Jayme Fraser
August 25, 2017
>http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/zinke-s-veteran-daughter-excoriates-trump-in-response-to-transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share<

The daughter of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, like her father a Navy veteran, appears, in the rawest of terms, to have excoriated President Donald Trump in a social media post after the announcement that transgender soldiers would be banned from the military.

"This man is a disgrace. I've tried to keep politics out of my social media feed as much as possible, but this is inexcusable," read a July 26 public Instagram post from what appears to be the account of Jennifer Detlefsen, the Navy diver daughter Zinke frequently mentioned in his successful 2016 re-election campaign for the U.S. House. Shortly after the election, Trump chose Zinke to lead the U.S. Department of the Interior.

"This veteran says sit down and shut the (expletive) up, you know-nothing, never-served piece of (expletive)." She also used a hashtag, #itmfa, that is an acronym for "impeach the (expletive) already."



The comments began circulating among national advocates for LGBTQ rights and one of them shared a screenshot of the Instagram post with the Missoulian on Friday, the day Trump signed the order making the transgender ban official.

Interior Press Secretary Heather Swift declined to make Zinke available for an interview or to provide an immediate statement Friday night.

"This is not a matter related to the Department of the Interior so I cannot offer you a statement," Swift wrote in response to a reporter's request.

She later added, "Family members are not elected officials and deserve privacy and respect."

The Instagram account links to a professional page with a resume that matches the name and biographical details of Zinke's daughter. It also includes a Jan. 6, 2015, photo taken from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, the day her father was sworn in for his first term as a congressman from Montana.

The post on that account includes a screenshot of an NPR story describing tweets by the president that "the United States Government will not accept or allow ... Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military." Trump first announced plans for the ban on July 26, the same day of the Instagram post.

Trump's Friday order formalized that Twitter announcement and provided the first details of his plan.

In it, he directs the military not to recruit transgender people, to stop paying for medical treatment regimens of transgender people already serving in the military, and to evaluate existing transgender soldiers and their impact on the military for "effectiveness and lethality, unitary cohesion, budgetary constraints, applicable law, and all factors that may be relevant."

Although some details remain unclear and Trump has indicated he is giving top defense

officials some leeway to implement his plan, the move could effectively reverse a 2016 order by former president Barack Obama to allow transgender individuals to serve openly.

Zinke, a retired Navy SEAL, has not spoken publicly about his opinion of the ban. Nor has his wife, Lolita Zinke. She was a member of Trump campaign outreach efforts for Hispanics and women, and later joined the president's Veterans Administration transition team.

Detlefsen served in the Navy as a Deep Sea Diving Medical Technician and later as a High Risk Instructor of an explosive ordnance disposal training unit. She had worked at Special Operations for America, a military-focused super political action committee founded by Zinke, doing digital consulting and social media work, according to filings with the Federal Elections Commission.

Detlefsen now is a Virginia-based glass artist "bound by themes of masculine/feminine dichotomy, double standards, motherhood, and literature's impact on gender roles."

She could not immediately be reached for comment Friday night. A phone rang without answer and had a voicemail box that was full. Messages sent to two private email accounts also were not immediately returned.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Christensen, Keeley](#)
Subject: Fwd: Courtesy Copy: Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 3:18:16 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

news release



Date: July 12, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

"In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said**. "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said**. "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said**. "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said**. "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said**. "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said**. "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee**. "Mr. Willens is a

conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###



From: Swift, Heather
To: [Willens, Todd](#)
Subject: Fwd: Courtesy Copy: Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 3:18:34 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

news release



Date: July 12, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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###



From: Edwin Roberson
To: [Downey Magallanes](#); [Russell Roddy](#); [Heather Swift](#); kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov
Cc: [Michael Richardson](#); [Anita Bilbao](#)
Subject: Fwd: Daily News Report - May 5
Date: Saturday, May 06, 2017 7:04:35 AM
Attachments: [ATT00001.htm](#)
[Daily News Report May 5.docx](#)

Downey and Kathy,
Friday's news roundup from our office has a well rounded set of articles on the perspectives re: monuments. Good reading before the trip. I'm on my way back to UT this morning. Ed

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Sutherland, Ryan" <rrsutherland@blm.gov>
Date: May 5, 2017 at 5:51:42 PM EDT
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: **Daily News Report - May 5**

Attached is the daily news report for May 5.

Ryan Sutherland
Bureau of Land Management - Utah
Public Affairs Specialist
rrsutherland@blm.gov
801-539-4089

From: Bilbao, Anita
To: [Downey Magallanes](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Edwin Roberson](#); [Michael Richardson](#); [Ashcroft, Tyler](#); [Kathleen Benedetto](#)
Subject: Fwd: Daily News Report - May 10
Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2017 6:55:19 PM
Attachments: [Daily News Report May 10.docx](#)
[Secretary of Interior Visit News Report May 5-10.docx](#)

Downey & Heather,

Summary of the day's news provided by BLM-Utah comms. Hope it has been a good trip - travel well. Anita

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Sutherland, Ryan** <rrsutherland@blm.gov>
Date: Wed, May 10, 2017 at 4:43 PM
Subject: Daily News Report - May 10
To:

Attached is the daily news report for May 10, as well as a more detailed listing with articles related to the Secretary of the Interiors visit to Utah. For archiving purposes, I am adding on to the monuments report. I have added links to the start of each day for navigation purposes.

Ryan Sutherland
Bureau of Land Management - Utah
Public Affairs Specialist
rrsutherland@blm.gov
801-539-4089

--

Anita Bilbao
Associate State Director
Bureau of Land Management - Utah
801-539-4010 (o)
385-315-1211 (c)
<https://www.blm.gov/utah>

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Todd Willens](mailto:Todd.Willens@ios.doi.gov); james_cason@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; daniel_jorjani@ios.doi.gov
Cc: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov); [Russell Newell](mailto:Russell.Newell@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Fwd: FOR AWARENESS: Steven Mietz named Redwood National & State Parks Superintendent
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 12:44:37 PM

Hi team --
Any issues with this announcement?
Thanks,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Ross, Paul" <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>
Date: September 13, 2017 at 12:02:56 PM EDT
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Russell Newell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: FOR AWARENESS: Steven Mietz named Redwood National & State Parks Superintendent

All-

Below is a release for your awareness regarding the naming of the new superintendent at Redwood. The position has been fully vetted and approved. Let me know if there's any issues. The Region would like to put it out as soon as it's approved.

-Paul

Steven Mietz named Redwood National & State Parks Superintendent

SAN FRANCISCO - The National Park Service has named Steven Mietz superintendent of Redwood National & State Parks. He is currently the superintendent of Great Basin National Park in Nevada. Mietz replaces Steven Prokop who retired earlier in the year.

“Steve is an exceptional leader who is passionate about building positive relationships to preserve our parks,” said Laura E. Joss, regional director for the

National Park Service's Pacific West Region. "He has a proven track record of collaborating with partners. Along with his strong science background, this makes him an excellent fit for Redwood."

Mietz has more than 18 years with the federal government, including time with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey. He joined the National Park Service in 2003.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to be a partner in the stewardship of the ecosystem that supports the tallest trees in the world," Mietz said. "I am very excited about working with the staff and our partners to preserve this awe-inspiring place for the enjoyment and appreciation of all."

Under Mietz's watch, Great Basin National Park was designated an International Dark Sky Park. The park and its nonprofit partners raised \$800,000 to construct the Great Basin Observatory. It will take advantage of some of the best night sky viewing in the nation. He has overseen the completion of several large-scale campsite rehabilitations and ecological restoration projects.

Throughout his National Park Service career, Mietz has served in a variety of positions, including as the Midwest Region's acting associate regional director for natural resources, the superintendent of Missouri National Recreational River, and the deputy chief of science and resource management at Grand Canyon National Park. Prior to working at Grand Canyon, he worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Grizzly Bear Recovery Program, the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation.

Mietz is currently on temporary assignment as the superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore in the San Francisco Bay Area. He will return to Great Basin National Park before taking the reins at Redwood, which is expected to be sometime in late fall.

Mietz earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University and his masters from the University of Montana. His personal interests include hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing with his wife, Stephanie, and sons, Jack and Ben.

Most people know Redwood as home to the tallest trees on Earth. The parks also protect vast prairies, oak woodlands, wild riverways, and nearly 40 miles of rugged coastline. For thousands of years people have lived in this verdant landscape. Together, the National Park Service and California State Parks manage the lands for the inspiration, enjoyment, and education of all.

For more information visit: <https://www.nps.gov/redwood>.

- NPS -

The National Park Service has more than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 417 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

Learn more at www.nps.gov.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Subject: Fwd: FOR FINAL REVIEW: Press Release Todd
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 1:17:49 PM

Please load this in gov delivery when you're done with the greater personnel release

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department

and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism

destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee.** "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###

From: Laura Rigas
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 8:03:18 AM

What do you prefer?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Ross, Paul" <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 3, 2017 at 7:59:34 AM EDT
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Matulka, Rebecca" <rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>, "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release

An exclusive. I believe we mentioned them last year to let people know where these would be announced. But I am fine removing and just driving folks to our Instagram.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 7:52 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.
Do we need to mention CBS? Are they a partner or just an exclusive?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 3, 2017, at 7:38 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura-

Below and attached please find the final version of the Share The

Experience release to include a quote from the National Park Foundation President. Thanks.

**Interior Announces “Share the
Experience” 2016 Photo Contest Winners**
*Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo
Placement on
National Public Lands and Waters Pass*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#) and launched the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make

weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America® and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department’s popular [Twitter](https://twitter.com/interior), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/interior) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/interior) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America’s national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to

submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark/#EncuentraTuParque — a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America's national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 4:51 PM, Laura Rigas

<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 2, 2017, at 4:40 PM, Paul Ross

<paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura-

The release will go out from us on Thursday. I'll send a version with the quote as soon as I can. For now, Rebecca will give CBS This Morning the version without the Parks Foundation quote. They are only using it for informational purposes for the segment that will highlight the images and the winners. Thanks.

-Paul

Sent from my iPhone

On May 2, 2017, at 4:15 PM, Laura Rigas

<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Can you pls send the updated release

with the draft quote in it? Is it for today?
Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 2, 2017, at 12:44 PM, Ross,
Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather-

National Park Foundation
has asked if we could also
include this quote from
their president, Will
Shafroth in the release:

“Photos have the power to
inspire curiosity about our
national parks and public
lands,” said Will Shafroth,
president of the National
Park Foundation. “This
contest motivates people to
get out, find their park, and
enjoy these treasured
places.”

Seeing as how they are an
important partner to
NPS/DOI, I don't see a
reason not to. Let me know
your thoughts. Thanks!

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist

Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202)
507-1689

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:56 AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Once was enough :)

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:36 AM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

I'm good with just a
mention :) Unless of
course you want to do it
haha

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:34 AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thanks, and
completely
understand about
being busy the past
few days.

CBS isn't
interviewing anyone
for this segment.
They usually show all
the photo winners and
talk about the contest
(the photo appearing
on the public lands
pass and the call to

action to enter this year's contest). Happy to suggest someone though if you have ideas!

On Tue, May 2, 2017
at 11:26 AM, Swift,

Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Thanks for your patience. Yesterday was busy. Who is doing the interview with CBS? Edits to the secretary's quote below.

"These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation," said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. "Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for 'the benefit and enjoyment of the people.' Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it."

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2,
2017 at 11:04 AM,
Matulka, Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Hi Heather,

CBS has agreed
to cover this on
air, online and on
social media, and
they'll need the
materials tonight.
It'd be great to
send our release
at the same time
as the photos and
captions. We can
always send
without a
Secretary quote if
you need more
time to review.

Thanks!

On Mon, May 1,
2017 at 8:13 AM,
Ross, Paul
<paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Heather-

Below is a
release for your
review
regarding the
annual Share
The Experience
contest. I
believe
Rebecca

already mentioned this to you. Release is scheduled for Thursday. But we will want to give to some reporters on Wednesday under embargo. All of the other land management agencies and Park Foundation will be putting out their own version of the release. The plan is to work with USA Today on a photo gallery as well as CBS This Morning for announcing the winners. But if there is any other media you'd like to offer an embargo to, let us know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you for awareness. The annual contest, which we partner with the National Park Foundation and other federal land management agencies on, highlights amateur

photographers
and their work
showcasing our
public lands.
The winning
photo is then
featured on the
America The
Beautiful
Federal Land
Pass.

Thank you!

**Interior
Announces
“Share
the
Experience”
2016
Photo
Contest
Winners**

*Citizen
Photographers
Compete
for
Photo
Placement
on*

*Public
Lands
and
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Pass*

WASHINGTON

– The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#), while launching the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America's national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be

featured on
the annual
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pass.

“These photos
encapsulate
exactly what
public lands
mean to the
American
people,” said
U.S.

Secretary of
the Interior
Ryan Zinke.

“From riders
kicking-up dirt
at the White
Ridge Trail
System in
New Mexico
or a young
boy hiking the
Narrows of
Zion National
Park to the
beautiful
landscape of
the Oregon
Islands
National
Wildlife
Refuge or an
amazing
sunset behind
Lake Mead
and the
Hoover Dam;
they
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these places
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and
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the people.”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer

months.

“I like
photographing
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because
they’re artistic
– little reptiles
and
amphibians
are gorgeous
to me. I’ve
been studying
them for 60
years now –
patterns,
designs, and
their behavior
all fascinate
me,” said
McIntyre.

“Public lands
are very
important to
me, especially
places like Big
Bend National
Park, Aransas
National
Wildlife
Refuge, and
South Padre
Island
National
Seashore.
These places
and the
habitat need
to be
protected.”

Second place
went to Gary
Hamer of

Robins, Iowa,
for the serene
shot of his
friends
paddling off
on a morning
adventure
surrounded by
calm water
and rising fog
in Boundary
Waters Canoe
Area
Wilderness,
part of
Superior
National
Forest, in
northeastern
Minnesota.

Third place
went to
Christopher
Regala of
Mililani,
Hawaii, for the
photo he
snapped of
his son
experiencing
The Narrows
at Zion
National Park
in Utah.

The grand
prize for the
winning image
is \$10,000,
followed by
\$5,000 and
\$3,000 for
second and

third place.
Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- . Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- . Historical and Cultural
- . Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- . Family, Friends, and Fun
- .

Wildlife

.

Night
Skies

The 2017
*Share the
Experience*
photo contest,
sponsored by
the National
Park
Foundations
in partnership
with
the National
Park Service,
the Bureau of
Land
Management,
the Bureau of
Reclamation,
the U.S. Army
Corps of
Engineers, the
U.S. Fish and
Wildlife
Service,
the U.S.
Forest
Service, and
Recreation.gov,
is now
accepting
entries
through
December 31.
All entries
have the
chance to be
featured on
the Interior
Department's
popular
[Twitter](https://twitter.com),
[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) and

[Facebook](#)

accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America's national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States.

For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit

www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark —a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all

backgrounds
to connect
with,
celebrate, and
support
America's
national parks
and
community-
based
programs.
#FindYourPark
invites people
to discover
and share
their own
unique
connections to
our nation's
natural
landscapes,
vibrant
culture, and
rich history.

###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs
Specialist
Office of
Communications
U.S. Department of
the Interior
Office: (202) 501-
4633 | Cell: (202)
507-1689

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director
of Digital
Interior
Department
202.208.5337

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of
Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of
Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

<DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth
quote.docx>

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Subject: Fwd: FW: Ryan Nelson - Interior - BIO
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 2:16:46 PM
Attachments: [Nelson, Ryan.docx](#)

another press release

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Mashburn, Lori <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 2:01 PM
Subject: Fwd: FW: Ryan Nelson - Interior - BIO
To: "Chambers, Micah" <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Hey all,

Below is the blurb that Ryan Nelson sent in for the WH press release. I have also attached his resume.

Thanks,
Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202.208.1694

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 1:59 PM
Subject: FW: Ryan Nelson - Interior - BIO
To: "Mashburn, Lori" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>

-----Original Message-----

From: Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2017 8:53 AM
To: Bullock, Katja EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
Cc: Bucci, Kristine A. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
Subject: Ryan Nelson - Interior - BIO

Ryan Douglas Nelson of Idaho to be Solicitor, Department of the Interior.

Mr. Nelson is a seasoned attorney with broad experience advising government and corporate executives in the public and private sector. Mr. Nelson has worked for all three branches of government. He served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, where he managed the natural resource, wildlife and appellate sections of the Division, and as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Office of Management and Budget. He also served as Special Counsel for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and as a law clerk for the Senate Legal Counsel. After graduating from BYU Law School with Honors, Mr. Nelson clerked for Judge Henderson on the DC Circuit and for Richard Mosk and Charles Brower on the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal in The Hague, The Netherlands. Mr. Nelson was an associate at Sidley Austin and is currently General Counsel for Idaho-based wellness company, Melaleuca, Inc. He has argued 13 federal courts of appeals cases on complex environmental and constitutional issues. Mr. Nelson resides in his hometown of Idaho Falls, Idaho, with his wife, Barbara Baer Nelson, and their seven children.

Thanks,
Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director for Presidential Personnel

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Helpful process fix
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:27:10 AM

"Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him step into this leadership role and couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands the past few months."

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swift, Heather** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 10:55 AM
Subject: Re: Helpful process fix
To: "Mashburn, Lori" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Downey Magallanes <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov>

Can I confirm Brian's appointment? If so, does this work? "Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him step into this leadership role and couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands the past few months."

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 10:44 AM, Mashburn, Lori <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I knew it was coming, but didn't know when until after the fact. Thought everyone else was already looped in.

Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202.208.1694

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 10:43 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I let the team know that changes were happening, we just didn't know when.

Laura Keehner Rigas

Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 16, 2017, at 10:35 AM, Downey Magallanes <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

As far as I know, this was a stand-alone personnel change that was discussed in more than one 9 am meeting. I will let others weigh in on whether more are coming.

In terms of timing- Scott would have signed this exec sec package, this is not one I would have seen. I do understand the frustration. But not sure how this could have gone differently.

On Nov 16, 2017, at 9:49 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hey sorry to beat a dead horse but if Laura and I could get information on high-profile personnel changes before they are made public that would be very helpful. I got the email below forwarded to me by a reporter. I imagine there will be more to come?

Thanks,

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: "Nedd, Michael"
<mnedd@blm.gov>
Date: November 15, 2017
at 3:03:21 PM PST
To: BLM_All_Employees
<blm_all_employees@blm.gov>
Subject: BLM Acting

Director

BLM employees:

This week, Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Brian Steed as Acting Director of the BLM, and I want to welcome him as he begins his journey leading this great agency. John Ruhs and I have worked alongside Brian since his appointment as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in October, and we have come to know his ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission. His experience includes working as Chief of Staff to U.S.

Representative Chris Stewart of Utah, teaching and researching economics at the University of Utah, and serving as a Deputy County Attorney in Iron County, Utah. He is a native of Logan, Utah, and now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and three children. Brian's

western heritage and values make him a perfect fit for the BLM team.

Since March 15, I have had the honor of leading the BLM. Your tireless dedication to our mission inspires me every day. DOI leaders continually express their confidence in the BLM's leadership in the field and here in Washington, which is a testament to all of you. Thank you for supporting me as the Acting Director over these months, and remaining as ever BLM strong.

During the coming weeks, John and I will transition to different roles. John will return to his position as BLM Nevada State Director, and I will assume the duties of Acting Deputy Director for Operations. I appreciate John's sacrifice over the past seven months while he has lived away from his family and the wide open spaces that he

loves.

Please join me in welcoming Brian to his new position. As we move forward, let's continue to stay focused on our shared mission and values that guide us in our stewardship of America's public lands.

Take care and have a wonderful day! :)
Michael D. Nedd

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#); [Kelly Love](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: hi Heather, from Lisa Rein re: Sec Zinke travel
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 2:51:47 PM

FYI -- Cabinet wide story on travel from WaPo. Below are questions to Zinke I'm dealing with.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 1:10 PM
Subject: hi Heather, from Lisa Rein re: Sec Zinke travel
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Hi there. With Sec. Price in the news, we're looking into travel by other secretaries,, so apologies in advance for the detailed email. I'm working with a colleague, Drew Harwell. We've looked at Sec. Zinke's travel schedule since his confirmation in March, through July. Hoping you and your colleagues will be able to tackle these questions. Obviously an Interior secretary is going to be traveling a lot... We would just like to flesh out some questions. Many thanks, and really appreciate. Lisa

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?
- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.

- What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?
- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?
- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barabra, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?
 - On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
 - Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?
- May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?
- June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?
- July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative

Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.

- What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

Lisa Rein

Staff Reporter

Washington Post

202-334-5190

Cell 202-821-3120

@Reinlwapo

[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Interior secretary draws flak for mixing politics, official travel
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 9:33:30 PM

Not terrible

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: POLITICO Pro Energy <politicoemail@politicopro.com>
Date: October 4, 2017 at 7:34:39 PM EDT
To: <russell_rodgy@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Interior secretary draws flak for mixing politics, official travel
Reply-To: POLITICO subscriptions <reply-fe8a13707d6c007474-1003300_HTML-823306430-1376319-0@politicoemail.com>

Interior secretary draws flak for mixing politics, official travel

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon

10/04/2017 07:31 PM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal

destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a little B.S."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use

government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips he takes outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands

Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then-Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity. Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [canceled](#) his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he [would have been](#) cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter, an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. [Raúl Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and [Donald McEachin](#) (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations, that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. [Amata Radewagen](#), the Republican

delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana where he joined Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/energy/story/2017/10/interior-secretary-draws-flak-for-mixing-politics-official-travel-162869>

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Yes, very	Somewhat	Neutral	Not really	Not at all

You received this POLITICO Pro content because your customized settings include: Energy: Ryan Zinke; Energy: Conservation; Energy: Interior Department. To change your alert settings, please go to <https://www.politicopro.com/settings>



This email was sent to russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA, 22209, USA

From: Willens, Todd
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Scott Hommel](#); [Downey Magallanes](#)
Subject: Fwd: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query re: Susan LaPierre
Date: Saturday, September 30, 2017 9:30:28 AM

FYI. I am likely sharing something you are already aware of. Just making sure though.

Todd Willens
Assistant Deputy Secretary
Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW -- MIB Room 6116
Washington, DC 20240
office: 202-208-6291

NOTE: *Every email I send or receive is subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act.*

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Michael Reynolds** <michael_reynolds@nps.gov>
Date: Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 4:34 PM
Subject: Fwd: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query re: Susan LaPierre
To: Todd Willens <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov>

Just FYI. DOI is in the loop.

Sent from my iPhone-sorry for typos.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Michael Spies <mspies@thetrace.org>
Date: September 29, 2017 at 4:20:56 PM EDT
To: "Slayton, April" <april_slayton@nps.gov>
Cc: Michael Reynolds <michael_reynolds@nps.gov>
Subject: **Re: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query re: Susan LaPierre**

The courtesy of a call would be nice. If you actually read the email I sent to Michael, which was fairly explicit, I clearly know who appoints board members. Similarly, if I thought it would be remotely useful to contact a flak at the Interior Department, I obviously would have done that. I don't mean to be rude, but it often feels like people in your position are deliberately trying to be unhelpful.

Mike

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 3:47 PM, Slayton, April <april_slayton@nps.gov> wrote:
Dear Mike,
I'm replying to you on behalf of Mike Reynolds, who is traveling this week.
Appointments to the National Park Foundation Board are made by the Secretary

of the Interior, so your questions about that process are best answered by the DOI Office of Communications. You can reach the team there at Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov.

Many thanks,
April

--

April Slayton
Assistant Director for Communications
National Park Service
Visit us at www.nps.gov

From: Michael Spies <mSPIES@thetrace.org>
Date: September 29, 2017 at 12:09:04 PM EDT
To: <Michael_Reynolds@nps.gov>
Subject: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query
re: Susan LaPierre

Dear Mr. Reynolds,

I'm a senior reporter at The Trace (thetrace.org), which is an investigative reporting site that covers the gun issue and co-publishes stories with a number of national news outlets, including The New Yorker, Politico, Rolling Stone, and Newsweek. Last month, I broke the story about the appointment of Susan LaPierre (wife of Wayne, the NRA CEO), to the board of the Parks Foundation: <https://www.thetrace.org/2017/08/nra-parks-department-interior-zinke-alaska/>.

I'm still seeking more information on her appointment. I find it odd, for example, that her bio makes no mention of the NRA: <https://www.nationalparks.org/sites/default/files/susan-lapierre.pdf>. It does mention the Women's Leadership Forum, as if it were a standalone entity, which it is not. It's actually called the NRA Women's Leadership Forum, and its chief function is to raise money for the NRA from wealthy women: <http://www.nrawlf.com/>.

Over the spring, when I learned about Susan's appointment, I filed a FOIA request seeking more information about it. That request was fulfilled the other week. If you didn't know, Susan is absolutely not a noted conservationist, and, like her husband, she absolutely does not hunt, and probably does not fish or hike either. The records show that Susan was officially appointed the day before the NRA's April Annual Meeting, where Zinke was slated to speak at the Leadership forum. The records also show that there were backchannel conversations between Chris Cox, the NRA's top lobbyist, and new appointees in the Interior Department about

Susan's appointment.

To be frank: much of this doesn't add up or make sense to me, and it feels like there's something bigger going on. If you have any time today, please call me on my cell. I think we should talk. Here's the number: (b) (6) . Would be happy to meet you in person.

Best,
Mike Spies

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Lola Zinke tweet re: travel
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 2:46:01 PM

.....

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Zack Colman <zcolman@eenews.net>
Date: Wed, Oct 11, 2017 at 2:09 PM
Subject: Lola Zinke tweet re: travel
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Heather,

Wanted to direct you to the responses in this tweet: <https://twitter.com/LolaZinke/status/917711705374937089>

A Twitter user poses this question to Lola: So are you claiming that no taxpayer funds have ever been used to pay for your travel? DOI confirmed that you went along to Norway & AK

Lola then responds: please refer to Senate Select committee travel ethics rules

It appears this is an admission that Lola was on those flights but that she believes she followed all appropriate ethics rules (and, again, there may well have been clearance by ethics). Was Lola on those flights? Can you provide that clearance that ethics provided for her to be on those flights?

Since these responses are public, I'm operating with some considerable time pressure but I also want to get this right. So please let me know.

-Zack

--

Zack Colman

E&E News

White House correspondent

c: 248-563-9744

o: 202-446-0408

twitter: @zcolman

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Lori Mashburn](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#)
Subject: Fwd: More questions from Politico
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 9:10:39 AM

FYIs

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 10:51 AM
Subject: More questions from Politico
To: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Heather, hope your weekend went well. A few questions for you. We're looking to run something this week, so hope to get your input in the next few days:

Chief of Staff Scott Hommel indicated on his OGE form 278 that his wife makes no income over \$1,000 a year, correct?

How much money does Lucretia Hommel make, if any, from doing interior design work for Kimberly Bellissimo's homes in New Jersey and downtown Washington D.C.? Is it a non-profit, or does she make more than \$1,000 a year from this business?

How much money does Lucretia Hommel make a year overall doing interior design for her business, Snobz? How much does she make selling furniture from her Web site, snobz.co? Is there a way to break that down to see how much money she makes, if any, selling Bellissimo's furniture on the Web site?

Did anyone in Interior's ethics office discuss with Hommel how to fill out OGE form 278?

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre

Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: More questions from Politico
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 11:05:04 AM

Just a heads up -- Latest line of questioning for a hit piece from POLITICO. Obviously the Department cannot comment on the personal/business details of individual citizens.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 10:51 AM
Subject: More questions from Politico
To: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

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Did anyone in Interior's ethics office discuss with Hommel how to fill out OGE form 278?

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre

Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: Fwd: OIG Management Advisory to Hill & public
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 12:08:24 PM
Attachments: [MA_ZinkeTravel_111517.pdf](#)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Congressional, OIG** <oig_congressional@doioig.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:54 AM
Subject: OIG Management Advisory to Hill & public
To: Scott Hommel <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov>, April Slayton <april_slayton@nps.gov>, Aurelia Skipwith <aurelia_skipwith@ios.doi.gov>, Casey Hammond <casey_hammond@ios.doi.gov>, David Bernhardt <dwbernhardt@ios.doi.gov>, Douglas Domenech <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov>, Edward Keable <edward.keable@sol.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>, James Cason <james_cason@ios.doi.gov>, Jeremy Barnum <jeremy_barnum@nps.gov>, Laura Keehner Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Micah Chambers <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, Pamela Barkin <pamela_barkin@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, Rich Myers <Richard.Myers@sol.doi.gov>

Yesterday DOI OIG delivered the attached Management Advisory to Deputy Secretary Bernhardt regarding secretarial travel. (b) (5) [REDACTED] It was just sent to Congress and will be posted publicly tomorrow, 11/17.

Nancy K. DiPaolo
Director, External Affairs
Office of the Inspector General
Department of the Interior
202.208.4357
(c) 202.805.4701

From: Funes, Jason
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Alex Hinson](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Cc: [Todd Wynn](#)
Subject: Fwd: Participant List r 6387929
Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 4:53:27 PM
Attachments: [6387929 NWX Dept Of Interior Funes.xls](#)

Attached is the spreadsheet with all of the participants in today's 1pm conference call.

Jason Funes
Special Assistant
Intergovernmental and External Affairs
Office of the Secretary
Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 208-5541

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Conference Center (No Replies Please)** <norepliesplease@mymeetings.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 5, 2017 at 4:26 PM
Subject: Participant List r 6387929
To: JASON_FUNES@ios.doi.gov

Please find attached to this e-mail, the participant list from your recent conference.

If you have any questions or concerns with this list, please feel free to contact the Customer Relations team in your region.

US - (b) (5)
UK and EMEA - (b) (5)
Hong Kong and Asia Pacific - (b) (5)
Japan - (b) (5)

We look forward to assisting you and your company again in the near future.

Regards,

Customer Relations
Conferencing & Collaboration Services

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Davis, Natalie](#)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 8:22:35 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: Mon, Jun 26, 2017 at 7:05 PM
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
To: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Brenda Burman of Arizona to be Commissioner of Reclamation, Department of the Interior.

Ms. Burman is currently Director of Water Strategy at the Salt River Project, which operates one of the original Reclamation projects approved in 1903. Ms. Burman has worked for nearly 20 years on western water matters including Tribal water settlements, Colorado River, and other river basin issues. Under the George W. Bush Administration, Ms. Burman served as Deputy Commissioner, the number two position at Reclamation, before becoming Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science. Ms. Burman holds a J.D. from the University of Arizona and a B.A. from Kenyon College.

Peter B. Davidson of Virginia to be General Counsel, Department of Commerce. Mr. Davidson recently served as Senior Vice President for Congressional Relations at Verizon Communications,

and prior to that, as General Counsel to the United States Trade Representative. He has also served as Vice President for Congressional Relations at USWEST and Qwest, General Counsel and Policy Director to the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Attorney-advisor in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice, director of congressional and media relations at the United States Information Agency, staff to Representatives Dick Arme and Bill Frenzel, and law clerk on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. Mr. Davidson has degrees from Carleton College and The University of Virginia School of Law, where he served as Notes Editor on the Law Review. He was raised in Minnesota and northern Wisconsin and currently resides in Virginia with his wife Kari, and they have three children: Madeleine, Sophie, and Björn.

Douglas W. Domenech of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Insular Affairs. Mr. Domenech currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior. Previously he was the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia, overseeing six state environmental, recreation, and historic resource agencies. He also previously worked for the Forest Resources Association. During the George W. Bush Administration, Domenech served at the Interior Department as White House Liaison and Deputy Chief of Staff to Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne. In addition, he served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs. Mr. Domenech currently serves as the Secretary's appointee to the Advisory Council of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico. His family is from Puerto Rico, and he holds a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech University. He is married to Jeanne Domenech and they reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

Jason Kearns of Colorado to be a Commissioner of the United States International Trade Commission for the remainder of a 9 year term expiring December 16, 2024. Mr. Kearns currently serves as Chief International Trade Counsel (Democratic Staff) to the Committee on Ways and Means in the House of Representatives. In that position, he advises Members of Congress on legislation concerning trade and on oversight issues involving the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and other agencies involved in international trade policy and regulation. Before that, he served for three years in the Office of the General Counsel to the U.S. Trade Representative. From 2000 through 2003, Mr. Kearns worked in the international trade group of the law firm, WilmerHale. Mr. Kearns holds a M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. from the University of Denver. He is married to Lindy Arnof Kearns and they have three children.

###

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From: Heather Swift
To: lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov; [Alex Hinson](mailto:Alex.Hinson); laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov; [Micah Chambers](mailto:Micah.Chambers)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Wednesday, July 19, 2017 8:37:09 PM

Holla!

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: July 19, 2017 at 7:25:06 PM EDT
To: <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 19, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Joseph Balash of Alaska to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Land and Mineral Management. Mr. Balash currently serves as the Chief of Staff to Senator Dan Sullivan. He is the former Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, which has management responsibility for one of the largest single portfolios of land and water resources in the world. Previously he served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources from 2010 to 2013. From 2006 to 2010, he advised two governors on natural resource policy, permitting, and energy. Prior to that, from 1998 to 2006, he served in a variety of legislative staff positions, including Chief of Staff to the President of the Alaskan Senate. He graduated from Ben Eielson Jr.-Sr. High School in 1993. He is married with two children.

Samuel H. Clovis Jr. of Iowa to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics. Mr. Clovis is the Senior White House Advisor to the United States Department of Agriculture. Most recently, he served as the chief policy advisor and national co-chair of the Trump-Pence campaign. He came to the campaign from Morningside College where he was a professor of economics. Mr. Clovis holds a B.S. in political science from the U.S. Air Force Academy, an M.B.A. from Golden Gate University and a Doctorate in public administration from the University of Alabama. He is also a graduate of both the Army and Air Force War Colleges. After graduating from the Academy, Mr. Clovis spent 25 years serving in the Air Force. He retired as the Inspector General of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and the United States Space Command and was a command pilot. Mr. Clovis is married to the former Charlotte Chase of Piketon, OH. He is originally from rural central Kansas.

Daniel Alan Craig of Maryland to be Deputy Administrator, of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Craig was most recently a senior Vice President at the disaster preparedness and recovery consulting firm, Adjusters International, Inc. In this capacity, he oversaw firm sales, business development, marketing, and relationships with clients. Before this position, Mr. Craig was the CEO and President of Tidal Basin Holdings, a company he founded in the emergency management industry. Mr. Craig previously served as the Director of Recovery for FEMA. He managed the Agency's recovery services and funds given to individual victims and the public sector

for damages from more than 120 Presidentially-declared disasters, emergencies, and fires, including September 11th, the Space Shuttle Columbia explosion, the Cerro Grande Fire in Los Alamos, and the Florida Hurricanes of 2004. He holds a B.A. in Political Science from Purdue University as well as an M.B.A. from both Purdue University and Central European University.

J. Steven Dowd of Florida to be United States Director of the African Development Bank for a term of five years. Mr. Dowd has decades of executive experience in trade, logistics, and finance, with a significant focus on Africa. Mr. Dowd co-founded Ag Source, LLC, a global agriculture logistics, transportation, and finance company. His prior experience includes overseeing food aid operations and leading port infrastructure projects in Africa. Mr. Dowd also served as CEO of Marcona Ocean Industries, an international shipping and mining company. Mr. Dowd holds a B.S. in History from Manhattan College, and earned a M.A. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University, where he was designated as a Georgetown Fellow in Foreign Service.

Mark T. Esper of Virginia to be Secretary of the Army. Mr. Esper is an Army, Pentagon, and Capitol Hill veteran who previously served as a Vice President for government relations at the Raytheon Company. Mr. Esper began his career as an Infantry Officer in the 101st Airborne Division, serving with distinction in the first Gulf War. He later served on active duty in Europe and on the Army Staff in Washington, DC, before transitioning to the National Guard and retiring after 21 years of service. He was an airborne ranger and recipient of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, and Meritorious Service Medals, among other awards and qualifications. Mr. Esper worked national security issues on Capitol Hill for Senators Chuck Hagel, Fred Thompson, and Majority Leader Bill Frist. He was also a professional staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations and House Armed Services Committees, and later a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. Mr. Esper's private sector experience includes service as an Executive Vice President at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Policy Director for Fred Thompson for President during the 2008 campaign, and EVP of the Aerospace Industries Association of America. Mr. Esper is a graduate of the United States Military Academy, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, and George Washington University.

Kathleen M. Fitzpatrick of the District of Columbia to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Ms. Fitzpatrick, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1983. She is currently the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State. Ms. Fitzpatrick earned a M.S. from the U.S. National War College, a M.A. from Georgetown University and a B.A. from the University of Dayton. Her languages include Spanish, French, Russian, Dutch and some Arabic.

Daniel J. Kaniewski of Minnesota to be Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness, of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Kaniewski was most recently Vice President for Global Resilience at AIR Worldwide, a catastrophe risk modeling and consulting services firm, and a Senior Fellow at George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security. Previously, Dr. Kaniewski served as the Mission Area Director for Resilience and Emergency Preparedness/Response at the Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute. He was also an adjunct assistant professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, where he taught graduate courses in the Security Studies Program. Before these positions, Dr. Kaniewski served on the White House staff, first as Director of Response and Recovery Policy and later as Special Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Senior Director for Response Policy. Dr. Kaniewski began his career in homeland security as a firefighter and paramedic. He holds a B.S. in Emergency Medical Services from George Washington University, a Master of Arts degree in National Security Studies from the Georgetown University, and a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration from George Washington University.

Anthony Kurta of Montana to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness. Mr. Kurta was most recently fulfilling the duties of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, where he was responsible for health affairs, readiness, civilian and military personnel policy for Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, and civilian members of the Department of Defense. Mr. Kurta previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy and the Director of Navy Flag Officer Management and Development. In addition, Mr. Kurta served 32 years on Active Duty as a Navy Surface Warfare Officer, during which time he commanded the USS Sentry (MCM 3), USS Guardian (MCM 5), USS Warrior (MCM 10), USS Carney (DDG 64), Destroyer

Squadron Two Four and Combined Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). He is a recipient of Defense Superior Service Medals, Legions of Merit, Meritorious Service Medals, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the Secretary of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Award. Mr. Kurta is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Georgetown University, Air Command and Staff College, and was a National Security Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral.

Ted McKinney of Indiana to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. Mr. McKinney is director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, serving from 2014 to present under then Governor Mike Pence, and now Governor Eric Holcomb. Mr. McKinney grew up on a family grain and livestock farm in Tipton, Indiana. He also worked for 19 years with Dow AgroSciences, and 14 years with Elanco, a subsidiary of Eli Lilly and Company, where he was Director of Global Corporate Affairs. His industry and civic involvements include the National FFA Conventions Local Organizing Committee, Indiana State Fair Commission, International Food Information Council (IFIC), the U.S. Meat Export Federation, International Federation of Animal Health (IFAH), and the Purdue Dean of Agriculture Advisory Committee. Mr. McKinney was a 10-year 4-H member, an Indiana State FFA Officer, and a graduate of Purdue University where he received a B.S. in Agricultural Economics in 1981. While at Purdue, he received the G.A. Ross Award as the outstanding senior male graduate. In 2002, he was named a Purdue Agriculture Distinguished Alumnus, and in 2004, received an honorary American FFA Degree. Mr. McKinney and his wife Julie have three children and four grandchildren.

A. Wess Mitchell of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of State, European and Eurasian Affairs. Mr. Mitchell is an expert on NATO and transatlantic relations. In 2005 he co-founded the Center for European Policy Analysis and has served as its President and CEO since 2009. He serves on numerous policy boards in the United States and Europe. Mr. Mitchell earned a B.A. from Texas Tech University, a M.A. from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and recently completed his Ph.D. at Freie Universität, in Berlin, Germany. He speaks German and has studied Dutch and Czech.

Robert L. Wilkie of North Carolina to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Mr. Wilkie currently serves as Senior Advisor to Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina. He most recently served in the Presidential Transition Office, where he was a member of both the Defense Policy Team and Cabinet Affairs Teams. Previously, Mr. Wilkie served as Vice President for Strategic Initiatives for CH2M HILL, one of the world's largest engineering and program management firms. He also served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs as well as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs on the National Security Council during the George W. Bush Administration. On Capitol Hill, Mr. Wilkie served as Counsel and Advisor on International Security Affairs for the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Honorable Trent Lott. Mr. Wilkie currently serves in the United States Air Force Reserve, and previously in the United States Navy Reserve. He is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Loyola University College of Law (New Orleans), Georgetown University Law Center, and the United States Army War College. He is also a graduate of the College of Naval Command and Staff, the Joint Forces Staff College and the Air Command and Staff College.

###

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From: Lori Mashburn
To: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov); micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov; amanda_kaster@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov; todd_willens@ios.doi.gov; [James Cason](mailto:James.Cason@ios.doi.gov); [Douglas Domenech](mailto:Douglas.Domenech@ios.doi.gov); [Daniel Jorjani](mailto:Daniel.Jorjani@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 11:31:25 PM

FYI. The official announcement on Nelson went out.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: July 31, 2017 at 9:22:33 PM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: July 31, 2017 at 9:02:27 PM EDT
To: (b) (6) >
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Daniel M. Gade of North Dakota to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the remainder of a five-year term expiring July 1, 2021. Mr. Gade was born and raised in North Dakota. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (West Point) in 1997, and was wounded in action twice and decorated for valor while serving in Iraq. He served in the administration of President George W. Bush, where his portfolio included veterans, military health care, and United States disability policy. He returned to West Point in 2011 and taught various political science and leadership courses until his retirement from the Army in 2017. He holds an M.P.A. and Ph.D. in public administration and policy from the University of Georgia. He has served on various advisory committees advising the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and was appointed to serve on the National Council on Disability by then-Speaker Boehner in 2015. He cofounded the Independence Project, a Veteran's employment and empowerment experiment.

Melissa Sue Glynn of the District of Columbia to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Enterprise Integration. Until recently, Dr. Glynn led Alvarez and Marsal's public sector practice focused on improving the delivery of government programs, and K-12 and higher education. Previously, she was a Principal with PricewaterhouseCoopers and was responsible for the firm's work with the

Department of Veterans Affairs. Initially, Dr. Glynn's career focused on the development and deployment of innovative technologies associated with collaborative decision-making. She served as Co-Director of the Center for the Management of Information at the University of Arizona concurrent with her doctoral studies. She was also a principal investigator on a cooperative grant from the National Science Foundation and several programs funded by defense research laboratories. A New Jersey native, Dr. Glynn holds a B.A. from Rutgers University and a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona.

John Henderson of South Dakota to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Installations, Environment, and Energy. Mr. Henderson most recently served in the Army as the Commander of the Omaha District, Army Corps of Engineers, where his responsibilities included overseeing an annual program of \$1.5 billion dollars consisting of more than 2,500 projects supporting the nation's water resources infrastructure, military construction, and Federal interagency work in nine States, environmental restoration projects in 41 States, and an extensive program supporting Department of Defense petroleum and energy infrastructure worldwide for the Defense Logistics Agency. Mr. Henderson has over 23 years of active military experience as an Army engineer officer, serving two combat tours to Iraq and one combat tour to Afghanistan as an engineer battalion task force commander. Mr. Henderson possesses a master's degree in civil engineering from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of South Dakota. His military education includes a National Security Studies fellowship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduation from the Joint Combined Warfighters Course, Army War College Fellowship Program, Command and General Staff College, Air Assault School, and Airborne School.

Ryan Douglas Nelson of Idaho to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. Mr. Nelson is a seasoned attorney with broad experience advising government and corporate executives in the public and private sector. Mr. Nelson has worked for all three branches of government. He served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, where he managed the natural resource, wildlife and appellate sections of the Division, and as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Office of Management and Budget. He also served as Special Counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee and as a law clerk for the Senate Legal Counsel. After graduating from BYU Law School with Honors, Mr. Nelson clerked for Judge Henderson on the D.C. Circuit and for Richard Mosk and Charles Brower on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands. Mr. Nelson was an associate at Sidley Austin and is currently General Counsel for Idaho-based wellness company, Melaleuca, Inc. He has argued 13 Federal court of appeals cases on complex environmental and constitutional issues. Mr. Nelson resides in his hometown of Idaho Falls, Idaho, with his wife, Barbara Baer Nelson, and their seven children.

###

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The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Douglas Domenech
To: [Swift Heather; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Swift.Heather;laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, June 26, 2017 7:34:28 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: June 26, 2017 at 7:05:35 PM EDT
To: <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Brenda Burman of Arizona to be Commissioner of Reclamation, Department of the Interior. Ms. Burman is currently Director of Water Strategy at the Salt River Project, which operates one of the original Reclamation projects approved in 1903. Ms. Burman has worked for nearly 20 years on western water matters including Tribal water settlements, Colorado River, and other river basin issues. Under the George W. Bush Administration, Ms. Burman served as Deputy Commissioner, the number two position at Reclamation, before becoming Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science. Ms. Burman holds a J.D. from the University of Arizona and a B.A. from Kenyon College.

Peter B. Davidson of Virginia to be General Counsel, Department of Commerce. Mr. Davidson recently served as Senior Vice President for Congressional Relations at Verizon Communications, and prior to that, as General Counsel to the United States Trade Representative. He has also served as Vice President for Congressional Relations at USWEST and Qwest, General Counsel and Policy Director to the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Attorney-advisor in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice, director of congressional and media relations at the United States Information Agency, staff to Representatives Dick Armey and Bill Frenzel, and law clerk on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. Mr. Davidson has degrees from Carleton College and The University of Virginia School of Law, where he served as Notes Editor on the Law Review. He was raised in Minnesota and northern Wisconsin and currently resides in Virginia with his wife Kari, and they have three children: Madeleine, Sophie, and Björn.

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Virginia Tech University. He is married to Jeanne Domenech and they reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

Jason Kearns of Colorado to be a Commissioner of the United States International Trade Commission for the remainder of a 9 year term expiring December 16, 2024. Mr. Kearns currently serves as Chief International Trade Counsel (Democratic Staff) to the Committee on Ways and Means in the House of Representatives. In that position, he advises Members of Congress on legislation concerning trade and on oversight issues involving the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and other agencies involved in international trade policy and regulation. Before that, he served for three years in the Office of the General Counsel to the U.S. Trade Representative. From 2000 through 2003, Mr. Kearns worked in the international trade group of the law firm, WilmerHale. Mr. Kearns holds a M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. from the University of Denver. He is married to Lindy Arnof Kearns and they have three children.

###

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The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori.Mashburn)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 7:12:52 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **White House Press Office** <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 7:03 PM
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
To: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Ronald L. Batory of New Jersey to be the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation. Mr. Batory has more than 45 years of diverse leadership in the railroad industry. In his last capacity with Consolidated Rail Corporation, he served as President and Chief Operating Officer. Prior to that affiliation, he was President of the Belt Railway Company of Chicago. Mr. Batory earned his B.A. from Adrian College and his M.A. from Eastern Michigan University. Mr. Batory and his wife, Barbara, reside in Mount Laurel, New Jersey.

Susan Combs of Texas to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget. Ms. Combs has an extensive career in elected public office and in the private sector as a small business owner running a ranch in the Big Bend area of Texas. She served in the Texas Legislature, writing and passing the State's private property legislation, and working to ensure

greater transparency in government spending. She was also elected to two Texas statewide offices: as the State's first woman Agriculture Commissioner; and then as the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Treasurer, and Chief Financial Officer. Ms. Combs spent 16 years in statewide elected leadership.

Lewis M. Eisenberg of Florida to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of San Marino. Mr. Eisenberg is a prominent American financier, investor, and philanthropist. Co-founder and managing partner of Ironhill Investments in New York, he has a record of engaging with State and local governments on complex issues. Mr. Eisenberg was the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for six years and was named a Founding Board Member of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, where he chaired its 9/11 Victims' Families and Transportation Advisory Councils. He is an Emeritus Member of Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management Advisory Council and Life Member of the Cornell University Council. He earned a B.A. at Dartmouth College and a M.B.A. at Cornell Johnson School of Business.

Robert P. Kadlec of New York to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Preparedness and Response. Currently, Dr. Kadlec is the Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Previously, he served as a Special Assistant to the President for Biodefense Policy for President George W. Bush. Dr. Kadlec holds a B.S. from the U.S. Air Force Academy; a M.D. from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and a M.A. in National Security Studies, Georgetown University.

Stephen B. King of Wisconsin to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic. Mr. King is a prominent public servant and businessman who successfully acquired, built, and sold a specialty chemical manufacturing business and founded a family investment business. Earlier in his career, Mr. King investigated civil rights violations for the Federal Bureau Investigation, served as an investigator for the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and was named Special Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for liaison between USDA and the Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate. Mr. King earned a M.A. and a B.S. at Western Illinois University.

Randal Quarles of Colorado to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the remainder of a 14-year term expiring January 31, 2018, and for an additional 14-year term expiring January 31, 2032, and to be Vice Chairman for Supervision of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 4 years. Mr. Quarles has had an extensive career in government and international finance. He served as Under Secretary for Domestic Finance in the George W. Bush Administration, and before that as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs and U.S. Executive Director of the IMF. He had earlier served in the George H.W. Bush Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions Policy. He is a founder and managing director of The Cynosure Group, a private investment firm in Salt Lake City. Before founding Cynosure, Mr. Quarles was a partner of The Carlyle Group and, earlier, of the law

firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell. He graduated summa cum laude in philosophy and economics from Columbia University and earned a J.D. from the Yale Law School.

Mary Kirtley Waters of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of State, Legislative Affairs. Since early 2017, Ms. Waters has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs at the State Department. Ms. Waters was a cabinet confirmation team leader for the Presidential Transition Team. Previously, she served as President of the North American Millers' Association, Vice President for Corporate Relations with the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation, and Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at the Department of Agriculture. She spent 15 years as Senior Director and Legislative Counsel in the Washington office of ConAgra Foods. Ms. Waters earned a B.A. from the University of Illinois and a J.D. from George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School.

—

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intended Appointments to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity:

- J. Christian Adams of Virginia
- Alan Lamar King of Alabama

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Lori Mashburn
To: micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov; [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Alex Hinson](#); blake_deeley@ios.doi.gov; [Downey Magallanes](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 9:31:40 AM

FYI.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" (b) (6)
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:02:54 AM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:01:34 AM EDT
To: (b) (6) >
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

William Beach of Kansas to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of 4 years. Mr. Beach is the Vice President for Policy Research at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Mr. Beach previously served as the Chief Economist for the Senate Budget Committee, Republican Staff. Prior to that position, he was the Lazof Family Fellow in Economics at the Heritage Foundation and director of the Center for Data Analysis. Prior to joining Heritage in 1995, Mr. Beach served as a senior economist in the corporate headquarters of Sprint United, Inc., and, from 1991 to 1995, as the president of the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. A graduate of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, Mr. Beach also holds a master's degree in history and economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Ph.D. in Economics from Buckingham University in Great Britain.

Irving Dennis of Ohio to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Dennis recently retired as a Global Client Service Partner with Ernst & Young, LLP where he served as the coordinating assurance partner on several large multinational public companies in various industries. He has an in-depth understanding of business and financial risk and extensive experience advising audit committees and C-suite executives on global corporate governance, financial, and internal control matters. His experience includes finance transformations, enterprise risk management and corporate governance. In addition, Mr. Dennis has held several leadership roles within EY including a Regional Audit Methodology Leader and a member of a Regional Assurance Leadership

Team. Mr. Dennis earned a B.S. Degree in business administration-accounting from Montclair State University and is a Certified Public Accountant. He serves on several not-for-profit boards and has been a member of various accounting-related organizations. Mr. Dennis lives in New Albany, Ohio, with his wife and two children.

Steven Gardner of Kentucky to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Mr. Gardner is President and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a consulting firm where he has focused on natural resources, mining, reclamation, energy, environmental, and health and safety issues. In 2011, he was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. As a licensed professional engineer, Mr. Gardner has worked on projects throughout the United States and internationally. He was the 2015 President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME). He has served on the UK Mining Engineering Foundation, Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors. Mr. Gardner has an M.S. in Mining Engineering with a Graduate Certification in Environmental Systems and a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky.

Kenneth L. Marcus of Virginia to be the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education. Mr. Marcus is currently President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. He previously served as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was delegated the authority of Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights under President George W. Bush. He also previously served as the Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America at the City University of New York's Baruch College School of Public Affairs. Mr. Marcus is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley School of Law and Williams College.

M. Lee McClenny of Washington to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Paraguay. Mr. McClenny, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, began his public service with the U.S. Information Agency in 1986. He is currently the Chargé d'Affaires e.p. of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. He has previously served overseas in Kuala Lumpur, Montreal, Manila, London, Brussels, Guatemala City, Belgrade and Ottawa, as well as in leadership positions at the Department of State and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Mr. McClenny is a recipient of the Presidential Meritorious Service Award, and numerous performance awards from the Department of State and U.S. Information Agency. He received a B.A. from the University of Washington, and speaks Spanish, French, and some Serbo-Croatian and Russian.

Carlos Trujillo of Florida to be the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States with the rank of Ambassador. Mr. Trujillo has been the Florida State Representative for the 105th District in the Florida House of Representatives, Tallahassee, Florida since 2010. An attorney, he simultaneously has been the Founding Partner of Trujillo, Vargas, Gonzalez and Hevia LLP since 2011 and President of Carlos Trujillo, PA, since 2007. Previously, he served as a Florida Assistant State Attorney at the Miami Dade County State Attorney's Office in Miami from 2007 to 2011. He also has been a Board Member of the Public Health Trust of Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. Mr. Trujillo earned a B.S. from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama and a J.D. from Florida State College of Law in Tallahassee. He speaks fluent Spanish.

Peter Hendrick Vrooman of New York to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Rwanda. Mr. Vrooman, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1991. He most recently served as Chargé d'Affaires from 2016 to 2017 and Deputy Chief of Mission from 2014 to 2016 at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mr. Vrooman has held senior positions with the Department of State at home and at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, as well as overseas. He has served at seven embassies in Africa, the Near East and South Asia. Mr. Vrooman possesses a deep knowledge of East African issues, expertise in UN peacekeeping, strong management and public diplomacy credentials, and economic/commercial advocacy experience. He earned a M.S. from the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and a B.A. from Harvard College. He speaks French and Arabic.

The following individuals to be Members of the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service:

- Calvin R. Tucker of Pennsylvania, for the remainder of a term expiring December 8, 2023.
- Robert M. Duncan of Kentucky, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2018, and an additional term expiring December 8, 2025.

- David Williams of Illinois, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2019.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Appoint Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Eddie Joe Williams of Arkansas will serve as the Federal Representative to the Southern States Energy Board.

John Zangardi of Pennsylvania will serve as be Chief Information Officer, Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Zangardi has extensive experience in information technology and security. Most recently, Dr. Zangardi served as the Acting Chief Information Officer at the Department of Defense. He previously served as the Principal Deputy Department of Defense Chief Information Officer. His career also includes experience in acquisition, policy, legislative affairs, resourcing, and operations. Dr. Zangardi is a retired Naval Flight Officer and served in a variety of command and staff assignments. Since his retirement from the Navy, he has held several senior executive positions at the Department of the Navy, including as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Information Operations, and Space and as the Department of Navy Chief Information Officer. Dr. Zangardi holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Scranton, master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, and Doctor of Philosophy degree from George Mason University.

The following individuals will serve as Members of the Advisory Committee on the Arts of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

- Pamela DeVos of Michigan.
- Frederick Davis Jubitz of Oregon.
- Michael S. Lorber of New York.
- Anne N. Reyes of Florida.
- Stephanie Spencer of California.
- Frank Giordano of New Jersey.
- Vance Thompson of South Dakota.
- Geoffrey K. Verhoff of Virginia.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Designate David Kautter to the Internal Revenue Service

David Kautter of Virginia to be the Acting Commissioner of Internal Revenue. This designation will become effective on November 13, 2017. Mr. Kautter was confirmed on August 3, 2017, to be the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Tax Policy.

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Lori Mashburn
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 7:19:27 PM

Susan's announcement just went.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: July 10, 2017 at 7:04:49 PM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: July 10, 2017 at 7:03:45 PM EDT
To: (b) (6) >
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Ronald L. Batory of New Jersey to be the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation. Mr. Batory has more than 45 years of diverse leadership in the railroad industry. In his last capacity with Consolidated Rail Corporation, he served as President and Chief Operating Officer. Prior to that affiliation, he was President of the Belt Railway Company of Chicago. Mr. Batory earned his B.A. from Adrian College and his M.A. from Eastern Michigan University. Mr. Batory and his wife, Barbara, reside in Mount Laurel, New Jersey.

Susan Combs of Texas to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget. Ms. Combs has an extensive career in elected public office and in the private sector as a small business owner running a ranch in the Big Bend area of Texas. She served in the Texas Legislature, writing and passing the State's private property legislation, and working to ensure greater transparency in government spending. She was also elected to two Texas statewide offices: as the State's first woman Agriculture Commissioner; and then as the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Treasurer, and Chief Financial Officer. Ms. Combs spent 16 years in statewide elected leadership.

Lewis M. Eisenberg of Florida to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to

the Republic of San Marino. Mr. Eisenberg is a prominent American financier, investor, and philanthropist. Co-founder and managing partner of Ironhill Investments in New York, he has a record of engaging with State and local governments on complex issues. Mr. Eisenberg was the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for six years and was named a Founding Board Member of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, where he chaired its 9/11 Victims' Families and Transportation Advisory Councils. He is an Emeritus Member of Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management Advisory Council and Life Member of the Cornell University Council. He earned a B.A. at Dartmouth College and a M.B.A. at Cornell Johnson School of Business.

Robert P. Kadlec of New York to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Preparedness and Response. Currently, Dr. Kadlec is the Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Previously, he served as a Special Assistant to the President for Biodefense Policy for President George W. Bush. Dr. Kadlec holds a B.S. from the U.S. Air Force Academy; a M.D. from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and a M.A. in National Security Studies, Georgetown University.

Stephen B. King of Wisconsin to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic. Mr. King is a prominent public servant and businessman who successfully acquired, built, and sold a specialty chemical manufacturing business and founded a family investment business. Earlier in his career, Mr. King investigated civil rights violations for the Federal Bureau Investigation, served as an investigator for the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and was named Special Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for liaison between USDA and the Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate. Mr. King earned a M.A. and a B.S. at Western Illinois University.

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President Donald J. Trump Announces Intended Appointments to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity:

- J. Christian Adams of Virginia
- Alan Lamar King of Alabama

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:49:43 PM

Sorry, meant to include you!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:49:01 PM EDT
To: Jonathan.Hoffman@hq.dhs.gov
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Jonathan: happy to discuss offline, but FYI:
<http://gizmodo.com/trump-official-met-with-palmer-luckey-chuck-johnson-to-1795450059>

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:42:42 PM EDT
To: Dell Cameron <dell.cameron@gizmodo.com>
Cc: Interior Press <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>, Bryan Menegus <bryan.menegus@gizmodo.com>
Subject: Re: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Was tracking down info. The friend is Scott McEwen.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 22, 2017, at 9:12 PM, Dell Cameron

<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

And you can't say who the friend was?

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo

Gizmodo Media Group

Email: dell@gizmodo.com

Signal: (469) 387-1810

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 8:04 PM, Heather Swift

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Dell, the Secretary nor anyone on staff was aware of the behavior you outlined. Regarding setting up the meeting, a friend of the Secretary's suggested he talk with them about their technology. As a result, they had a very brief meeting with the Secretary there was no action after.

For your background, please see this letter then-Congressman Zinke penned denouncing such behavior, tactics and rhetoric

<https://www.daines.senate.gov/news/press-releases/tester-daines-zinke-bullock-fox-stand-against-anti-semitism-and-white-nationalism>

Sent from my iPhone

On May 22, 2017, at 8:23 PM, Dell Cameron

<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Thanks Heather.

Can you say who arranged this meeting?

One of those "gentlemen," Chuck

Johnson, is a fairly controversial figure.

- His website is fundraising for Andrew Anglin, publisher neo-Nazi website Daily Stormer. Link: <http://gizmodo.com/internet-gremlin-chuck-johnsons-website-becomes-inaccess-1794791944>
- Prior to the meeting, Johnson incorrectly identified a student at University of Virginia and

accused her of making false rape accusations (he attacked her online and posted a photo of her). Link: <http://jezebel.com/woman-falsely-idd-as-uvas-jackie-by-conservative-bloge-1671234663>

- He was booted from Twitter after saying he planned to "take out" a black activist. Link: <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/05/troll-charles-johnson-banned-from-twitter-207688>
- He's argued that homosexuality was responsible for an Amtrak derailment. Link: <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/05/15/op-ed-amtrak-accident-isnt-part-gay-agenda>
- He falsely claimed a "left-wing Democrat" nurse in New Jersey had Ebola and offered \$1,000 for pictures of a Republican candidate's wife, who was in a nursing home. Link: <http://bit.ly/139nGar>

Was the secretary aware of Mr. Johnson's... how do I put it.... extremely inappropriate and abusive behavior prior to taking that meeting?

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: (469) 387-1810
PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:23 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there, Dell. The Secretary had a brief meeting where he listened to their ideas about using technology on the border and referred the gentlemen to the Department of Homeland Security.

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 5:03 PM, Dell
Cameron

<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:
Follow up.

Please excuse the language in this email below, I'm quoting one of the attendees of the meeting in which Mr. Zinke, Downey Magallanes, Scott Hommel, Nancy Guiden, as well as acting Communications Director Megan Bloomgren, were all present.

We asked Mr. Luckey if he could elaborate on what was discussed w/ the Secretary at this meeting.

Mr. Luckey told our reporter: "I could give you an answer. Or I could tell you to go fuck yourself."

In response, we're filing a FOIA request for additional information about the meeting & printing a story about the meeting within the hour.

Regards,

Dell Cameron
Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: [\(469\) 387-1810](tel:(469)387-1810)
PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 2:46 PM,
Dell Cameron
<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Good afternoon,

It came to our attention that Sec. Zinke attended a meeting on April 12 with Oculus Rift founder Palmer Luckey and WeSearchr

founder Charles Johnson, as well as four Interior staff members, concerning the construction of a border wall.

Can your office elaborate on what that meeting was about, and why Johnson and Luckey were asked to advise on such a project?

Thanks,

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo

Gizmodo Media Group

Email: dell@gizmodo.com

Signal: [\(469\) 387-1810](tel:(469)387-1810)

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

From: Quimby, Frank
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Paul Ross](#)
Subject: Fwd: Press release: Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:10:02 AM
Attachments: [Angelle Bio - May 2017.pdf](#)
[Angelle annc release - BSEE masthead 5-18-2017 \(1\).docx](#)

BSEE issued its announcement of a new director

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Julian, Gregory** <gregory.julian@bsee.gov>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 10:03 AM
Subject: Press release: Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
To:

THE BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

Office of Public Affairs

Date: May 22, 2017
Contact: Gregory Julian (202) 208-3985

Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former Louisiana state official Scott A. Angelle will head-up the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. As part of the Department of the Interior, BSEE fosters safe and responsible energy production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf through regulatory oversight of oil and gas operations. Angelle, who most recently served as Vice Chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, will assume his new position May 23.

“Scott Angelle brings a wealth of experience to BSEE, having spent many years working for the safe and efficient energy production of both Louisiana’s and our country’s offshore resources,” Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said. “As we set our path towards energy dominance, I am confident that Scott has the expertise, vision, and the leadership necessary to effectively enhance our program, and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible exploration, development, and

production of our country's offshore oil and gas resources.”

Angelle, who will serve as the fourth director in BSEE's history, has held numerous positions in Louisiana State and Parish governments, including Interim Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Martin Parish President. In the aftermath of the BP oil spill, Angelle served at the request of then Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal as liaison to the federal government, and negotiated an early end of the previous administration's drilling moratorium.

“I welcome the opportunity to serve President Trump and Secretary Zinke, and work with BSEE staff to meet the critical goal of energy dominance for our country,” said Angelle. “It is an exciting and challenging time for BSEE; I look forward to leading our efforts to empower the offshore oil and gas industry while ensuring safe and environmentally responsible operations.”

Angelle served for eight years as Louisiana's Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Under his leadership, the state's coastal permitting system was reformed, providing for efficient permitting while increasing drilling rig counts in Louisiana by more than 150 percent during his tenure. Angelle has also served as Chairman of the Louisiana State Mineral Board, and as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, Southern States Energy Board, and the Louisiana Coastal Port Advisory Authority.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

Established in 2011, BSEE fosters secure and reliable energy production through a program of efficient permitting, appropriate regulations, compliance monitoring and enforcement, inspections, technical assessments, and incident investigations. The position of BSEE Director is not Senate-confirmed.

More information on BSEE can be found at: <http://www.bsee.gov>

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-- BSEE --

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Greg Julian

Press Secretary

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

O: 202-208-6184

M: 202-412-8375

Gregory.Julian@bsee.gov

<http://www.bsee.gov/> | <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bureau-of-safety-and-environmental-enforcement> | <https://twitter.com/BSEgov> | <https://www.facebook.com/BSEEgov/>

Home



From: Lisa Friedman
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: PRESS RELEASE: Zinke Commandeered Boat for Channel Islands Jaunt
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 9:37:00 AM

Hey - this is going around now. Is it accurate? Any comment? Ty Heather,
Lisa

Lisa Friedman
Reporter, The New York Times
[202-862-0306](tel:202-862-0306) office
202-251-2083 cell
Lisa.Friedman@nytimes.com
Twitter: @LFFriedman

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kirsten Stade <kstade@peer.org>
Date: October 4, 2017 at 9:01:03 AM EDT
To: Kirsten Stade <kstade@peer.org>
Subject: PRESS RELEASE: Zinke Commandeered Boat for Channel Islands Jaunt

<https://www.peer.org/news/news-releases/zinke-commandeered-boat-for-channel-islands-jaunt.html>

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 4, 2017
Contact: Stephen Duke (202) 265-7337

ZINKE COMMANDEERED BOAT FOR CHANNEL ISLANDS JAUNT
Diverted to Pick Up Wife, Aunt, and Guests He Classified as “Technical Experts”

Washington, DC — Exorbitant travel by the Interior Secretary is not limited to charter planes but includes seagoing vessels, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). In mid-April, Ryan Zinke diverted a National Park Service (NPS) boat to pick him and family members up for a three-hour island tour featuring a Junior Ranger swearing-in ceremony.

On April 18th, the NPS boat Ocean Ranger left its Ventura, California port to travel to Santa Barbara Harbor to pick up Zinke, his wife, and aunt to take them and other members of his party to Santa Rosa Island, part of the Channel Islands National Park, and back that same day.

The party spent more time at sea than on the island, with a three-hour itinerary that consisted largely of photo ops, a tour, lunch, and Zinke swearing in middle school students as Junior Rangers. Notably –

- Use of the government ship cost taxpayers around \$4,000 dollars, including fuel and crew overtime, an estimate that does not include significant time by several NPS staff people;
- Zinke also brought along two local fishermen whom he classified as “technical experts” though on what issue is unclear. As such, they traveled free; and
- To pay for his wife and aunt, NPS presented Zinke with a bill for \$142, which by mid-June increased to \$152 in late fees. The bill appears to have been paid by late June.

“This ‘grip-and-grin’ tour is galling when the Secretary is telling everyone else to tighten their belts,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch who obtained the documents under the Freedom of Information Act after employees complained of the time and expense lost for no discernible purpose. “Taxpayers should not foot the bill for public officials acting as tourists.”

The records also describe Zinke expressing a desire to open a “working demonstration ranch” on Santa Rosa Island to “highlight the island’s ranching heritage,” quoting a note from the park superintendent. The Zinke tour group also included members of the Vail family which ran a cattle ranch on the island until 1998 and a commercial hunting operation there until 2011.

The Channel Islands are often called “the Galapagos Islands of North America” due to the unique and wide diversity of plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. In recent years, NPS has undertaken a major and costly effort to preserve and protect these native resources, including removal of nonnative plants and animals, recovery of island foxes, and reestablishment of bald eagles.

“Cattle and imported game animals are not the ‘heritage’ of Santa Rosa but an aberrant moment in its history,” added Ruch, noting a recent Zinke directive to maximize hunting opportunities even on national park lands. “Our major concern is that Ryan Zinke wants to turn this ecological jewel back into a game preserve.”

###

[Look at records about Ocean Ranger expenses](#)

[See Zinke’s technical experts](#)

[Look at Zinke bill of collection](#)

[View the Zinke itinerary](#)

[Read Zinke “demonstration ranch” idea](#)

[Revisit Channel Islands ecological restoration](#)

From: Heather Swift
To: russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov); scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: PRESS RELEASE: Zinke Commandeered Boat for Channel Islands Jaunt
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 9:40:32 AM

FYI

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kirsten Stade <kstade@peer.org>
Date: October 4, 2017 at 9:01:03 AM EDT
To: Kirsten Stade <kstade@peer.org>
Subject: PRESS RELEASE: Zinke Commandeered Boat for Channel Islands Jaunt

<https://www.peer.org/news/news-releases/zinke-commandeered-boat-for-channel-islands-jaunt.html>

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 4, 2017
Contact: Stephen Duke (202) 265-7337

**ZINKE COMMANDEERED BOAT FOR CHANNEL ISLANDS
JAUNT**

*Diverted to Pick Up Wife, Aunt, and Guests He Classified as
“Technical Experts”*

Washington, DC — Exorbitant travel by the Interior Secretary is not limited to charter planes but includes seagoing vessels, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). In mid-April, Ryan Zinke diverted a National Park Service (NPS) boat to pick him and family members up for a three-hour island tour featuring a Junior Ranger swearing-in ceremony.

On April 18th, the NPS boat Ocean Ranger left its Ventura, California port to travel to Santa Barbara Harbor to pick up Zinke, his wife, and aunt to take them and other members of his party to Santa Rosa Island, part of the Channel Islands National Park, and back that same day.

The party spent more time at sea than on the island, with a three-hour itinerary that consisted largely of photo ops, a tour, lunch, and Zinke

swearing in middle school students as Junior Rangers. Notably –

- Use of the government ship cost taxpayers around \$4,000 dollars, including fuel and crew overtime, an estimate that does not include significant time by several NPS staff people;
- Zinke also brought along two local fishermen whom he classified as “technical experts” though on what issue is unclear. As such, they traveled free; and
- To pay for his wife and aunt, NPS presented Zinke with a bill for \$142, which by mid-June increased to \$152 in late fees. The bill appears to have been paid by late June.

“This ‘grip-and-grin’ tour is galling when the Secretary is telling everyone else to tighten their belts,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch who obtained the documents under the Freedom of Information Act after employees complained of the time and expense lost for no discernible purpose. “Taxpayers should not foot the bill for public officials acting as tourists.”

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[See Zinke’s technical experts](#)

[Look at Zinke bill of collection](#)

[View the Zinke itinerary](#)

[Read Zinke “demonstration ranch” idea](#)

[Revisit Channel Islands ecological restoration](#)

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Douglas Domenech](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Lori Mashburn](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: proposed Outreach Strategy for BSEE Director Announcement
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 7:15:17 PM
Attachments: [BSEE Director Announcement Outreach Strategy - timing.docx](#)
[DOI Angelle press release - revised draft 5-16-17.docx](#)

You guys ok with this rollout strategy and release? Thanks!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Angelico, Eileen** <eileen.angelico@bsee.gov>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2017 at 1:08 PM
Subject: proposed Outreach Strategy for BSEE Director Announcement
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Frank Quimby <frank_quimby@ios.doi.gov>, Richard Cardinale <richard_cardinale@ios.doi.gov>, Katharine Macgregor <katharine_macgregor@ios.doi.gov>

Laura and Heather,

Please see below for the proposed Outreach Strategy for the announcement and introduction of the BSEE Director. I have also attached the document and draft DOI press release. The draft DOI press release has been submitted to Frank Quimby.

We are requesting an issuance date of May 22, 2017. The BSEE Director is expected to report on Tuesday, May 23, 2017.

The only media interview that we are proposing the first week would be with The Advocate, the Baton Rouge daily. The interview would focus on introduction of the new Director and the FY 2018 BSEE Budget Request. This has also been included in BSEE's budget outreach strategy.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Thanks,

Eileen

Eileen P. Angelico, APR
Acting Chief, Office of Public Affairs
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
(202) 208-7746 office
(504) 654-7840 mobile

BSEE Director Announcement Outreach Strategy

Date/Time	Action	Audience	Notes
5-22-2017 10:00 am	DOI Announcement Press Release	DOI and BSEE media distro lists, BSEE social	

		media	
5-22-2017	DOI Announcement Press Release distributed to BSEE Congressional list	Congressional members and staff	
5-23-2017 1:00 pm	BSEE introductory email	all BSEE employees	
5-24-2017 1:00 pm (tentative)	Interview by phone with The Advocate reporter, Baton Rouge, LA (tentative)	Louisiana communities – Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
5-25-2017	Letter to external stakeholders	Industry, NGO's, coastal States	
6-1-2017 (tentative) time TBD	Media Roundtable Discussion (in-person and phone)	Washington bureau and trade reporters	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
6-1-2017	Director's Corner (blog) posted on bsee.gov	Web site viewers	Will be supported by follow-on with social media platforms
June & July Dates TBD	Field visits and all-hands meetings	BSEE field staff	New Orleans, La gulf coast, Houston, Camarilio, CA and Anchorage, AK

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nedra Darling](#)
Subject: Fwd: Pryramid Lake's Tribal Newspaper
Date: Thursday, January 04, 2018 8:54:17 AM
Attachments: [ATT00001.htm](#)
[Fourth Quarter.pdf](#)

FYI - I've been having a dialogue with Carole for a few months now. Just wanted to make you aware in case you work with her.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Carole Wright** <cwrightgraphics@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jan 3, 2018 at 8:32 PM
Subject: Pryramid Lake's Tribal Newspaper
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Good evening Heather,

Attached is the last issue for this year for the Pyramid Lake Tribe.

And you are right, it is opinionated rather than straight news copy. I started working with the Nevada State Journal probably before you were born and my teachers were the reporters and editors on staff. It was their encouragement to “slant” my articles in favor of my Indian people because we had very few chances of letting our views be known. And basically that is what Indian press attempts to do—let our Indian voices talk to our Indian people. Non-Indians have their own media.

Thanks for your critique. I always appreciate knowing what other folks think.

Carole Wright

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:59:14 PM

For Review, from POLITICO -

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denal I

DOI did not pay for the meal. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for the meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

1. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice.

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Question from Politico
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 12:18:19 PM

fyi - I only answered the monument review question. he asked me if I've seen Lola's twitter posts (I had not, but looked and I see two posts with photos/comments from their trip)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ben Lefebvre** <blefebvre@politico.com>
Date: Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 12:08 PM
Subject: RE: Question from Politico
To: "Newell, Russell" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Russell,

As per our phone conversation:

1. Any idea when the Secretary left the U.S. ?
2. Any idea where he is outside the U.s., what his schedule is?
3. Any idea when he's due back in the U.S.?
4. Any idea who is paying Lola Zinke's way on this trip?
5. Is the monument review completed yet?

Thank you,

Ben

From: Newell, Russell [mailto:russell_newell@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2017 11:15 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

Ben - below is a statement from the Secretary regarding Charlottesville.

"

The racism, bigotry, and hate perpetrated by violent white supremacist groups has no place in America. It does not represent what I spent 23 years defending in the United States military and what millions of people around the globe have died for. We must respond to hate with love, unity and justice. I fully support President Trump and Attorney General Sessions in uniting our communities and prosecuting the criminals to the fullest extent of the law.

"

NPS statement on the issue at Gettysburg

"The National Park Service is committed to safe guarding these unique and site-specific memorials in perpetuity, while simultaneously interpreting holistically and objectively the actions, motivations, and causes of the soldiers and states they commemorate," states policy from the U.S. National Park Service.

Russell Newell

Deputy Director of Communications

U.S. Department of the Interior

(202) 208-6232

@Interior

|

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Lori Mashburn](#); [Davis, Natalie](#)
Subject: Fwd: Question re National Park Foundation
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 5:13:40 PM

Question re: LaPierre

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Friedman** <dfriedman@thetrace.org>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2017 at 5:12 PM
Subject: Question re National Park Foundation
To: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Hi. I am a reporter with The Trace, an online publication that cover gun policy matters. I am writing an article on a statement by Susan LaPierre, the head of the NRA Woman's Forum and wife of NRA chief Wayne LaPierre, that Sec. Zinke named her to the board of the National Park Foundation, which raises private funds to support national parks. When does that appointment take effect? Any statement available on this selection. Who else, if anyone, has the secretary named to the board?

Deadline is 10am Thursday.

Thanks.

--

Dan Friedman
Washington Correspondent
The Trace
202.290.5424
dfriedman@thetrace.org

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Question re National Park Foundation
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 5:15:35 PM

he may be calling about this

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Friedman** <dfriedman@thetrace.org>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2017 at 5:12 PM
Subject: Question re National Park Foundation
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Hi. I am a reporter with The Trace, an online publication that cover gun policy matters. I am writing an article on a statement by Susan LaPierre, the head of the NRA Woman's Forum and wife of NRA chief Wayne LaPierre, that Sec. Zinke named her to the board of the National Park Foundation, which raises private funds to support national parks. When does that appointment take effect? Any statement available on this selection. Who else, if anyone, has the secretary named to the board?

Deadline is 10am Thursday.

Thanks.

--

Dan Friedman
Washington Correspondent
The Trace
202.290.5424
dfriedman@thetrace.org

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Kelly Love](#)
Subject: Fwd: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 10:43:33 AM

Brad, inquiry below regarding the campaign PAC.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Esther Whieldon** <ewhieldon@politico.com>
Date: Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 5:56 PM
Subject: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
To: Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

I'm looking over some of the Zinke for Congress PAC expenditures. Please answer the following questions.

1) Please address the sale of the RV to Buttrey and whether the PAC sold it to him for less than it's actual value. And please address whether Lola Zinke may have conversely sold the RV to the PAC for more than it was worth.

2) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported a \$22K-ish payment to First BankCard and listed the underlying transactions as all happening on December 31.

2a) Please provide the dates that the three expenses listed underneath were actually incurred?

recipient_name	recipient_state	disbursement_description	disbursement_amount	disbursement_date
VONS	CA	CAMPAIGN DINNER	314.36	12/31/2016 0:00
WESTHOUSE	NY	LODGING	696.18	12/31/2016 0:00
LIME INN	Virgin Islands	LODGING	522.74	12/31/2016 0:00

3) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported the receipt of this \$13,997.653 transfer on its April Quarterly report, but does not list the individual contributions contained in the transfer-in from Zinke Victory Fund. Why is that?

4) Lastly, please provide a general comment on the extent to which Zinke ensured his campaign PAC followed campaign finance and disclosure laws.

Please respond by 10 am Monday as we plan to run a story at 11 a.m. Apologies for the short notice.

Thanks, Esther

Esther Whieldon
Reporter
POLITICO
301-213-4370 (mobile)
703-672-2788 (office)
ewhieldon@politico.com
Twitter: [@esthernow](https://twitter.com/esthernow)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Subject: Fwd: questions from politico
Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 10:42:27 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Do you want me to respond?

Hi Heather –

I'm hoping you can help confirm some details about a meeting that was listed on Secretary Zinke's August calendar –

<image001.png>

Is that the same Steve Ryan who represented the Zinkes in D.C. Superior Court earlier this year in a lawsuit involving Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church? (background here: <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060058652>)

If so, is he representing the secretary or Lola Zinke in other legal matters?

Is the Jim McCray listed in the description the CEO of Highwood Capital? <http://www.highwoodcap.com/team.html>

Are Brian Ballard, Susie Wiles and Syl Lukis all from the lobbying firm Ballard Partners?

Did all of the listed participants actually attend the meeting?

What did they discuss?

Please let me know if you could get answers to these by the end of the day today.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nick Juliano** <njuliano@politico.com>

Date: Fri, Dec 8, 2017 at 7:27 AM
Subject: Re: questions from politico
To: "Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov" <Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov" <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Heather - just reupping this request. Think you'll be able to provide answers today? Thanks

Nick Juliano
POLITICO
202-557-9390 (mobile)
Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 7, 2017, at 12:32 PM, Nick Juliano <njuliano@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather –

I'm hoping you can help confirm some details about a meeting that was listed on Secretary Zinke's August calendar –

<image001.png>

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Please let me know if you could get answers to these by the end of the day today.

Thanks

Nick

Nick Juliano

Deputy Energy Editor

POLITICO

njuliano@politico.com

703-672-2748

202-557-9390

Twitter: @nickjuliano

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Scott Hommel](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#)
Subject: Fwd: questions
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017 3:59:27 PM

FYI

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Date: Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 1:01 PM
Subject: questions
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Good afternoon:

I am writing a story about Mrs. Zinke, dealing with her role in politics (the Downing campaign), in public commentary (Twitter) and her support for the secretary.

(Parenthetical note: I understand there was a previous E&E story proposed, that never ran. This is not that story; I am a different reporter.)

A couple of questions:

Is Mrs. Zinke available for interview?

How would you characterize her role at the department?

On what occasions will she travel with the secretary?

Does she have work space at the department?

Has she received ethics briefing?

I appreciate the help. My deadline is Friday at 11 a.m.

Thanks.

Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mdoyle@eenews.net

202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: questions
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017 4:02:05 PM

Proposed response: Mrs. Zinke has zero role at the Department. Much like previous secretaries and spouses, She occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling and pays for her meals and travel at her own personal expense. She and all cabinet spouses received a federal ethics briefing.

Discussed other topics off the record.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Date: Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 1:01 PM
Subject: questions
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

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Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mduoye@eenews.net

202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Amanda Kaster
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: RELEASE: Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Date: Friday, July 21, 2017 4:12:21 PM
Attachments: [3F2C747C-3960-4BED-8D36-C01BFD1ECB56.png](#)

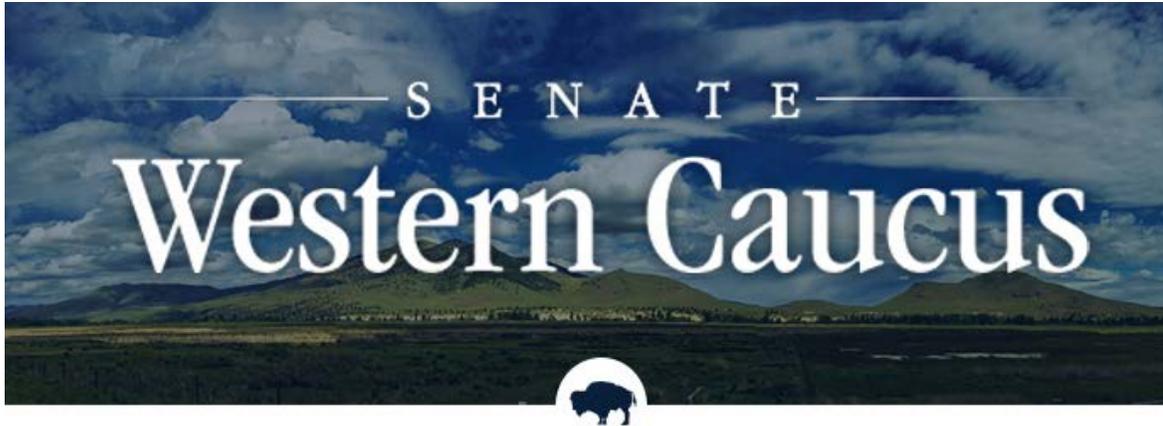
See below.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Marino Thacker, Meghan (Daines)" <[Meghan_Thacker@daines.senate.gov](mailto: Meghan_Thacker@daines.senate.gov)>
Date: July 13, 2017 at 4:02:34 PM EDT
To: "Micah Chambers (micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov)" <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, "Amanda Kaster (amanda_kaster@ios.doi.gov)" <amanda_kaster@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: FW: RELEASE: Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior

From: Press (Daines)
Sent: Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:32 PM
To: Press (Daines) <Press_@daines.senate.gov>
Subject: RELEASE: Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 13, 2017

Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior

U.S. SENATE — Today, the Senate Western Caucus, led by Chairman Steve Daines (R-MT), urged the confirmation of Department of the Interior veteran David Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Bernhardt, a Westerner from Rifle, Colorado, brings years of personal experience as an avid hunter and fisherman as well as professional experience having served under former DOI Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne in multiple positions.

Bernhardt was announced as President Donald J. Trump's choice for Deputy Secretary on [April 28](#) and was subsequently approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on [June 6](#). Less than a month away from the August recess, the Senate has confirmed only 23 percent of President Trump's 216 nominations. By the first August recess during President Obama's first term, the Senate had confirmed 69 percent of his 454 nominations.

U.S. Senator Steve Daines (R-MT): "David Bernhardt will be a partner to Montanans and to Secretary Ryan Zinke – which makes for the best kind of Deputy Secretary of the Interior. David will work to improve access to public lands, restore American energy dominance and empower Montanans ability to best serve their families and communities. We need to confirm David Bernhardt so he can get to work on behalf of Montanans and the West."

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO): "As a native Coloradan from Rifle, David Bernhardt has a deep understanding of Western land issues, and his expertise and experience will serve the Department well. Unfortunately, a partisan minority in the Senate continues to block Mr. Bernhardt's nomination, and I hope that the confirmation process has not become a broken process that disincentives qualified people, like Mr. Bernhardt, who are held in high professional regard, from becoming public servants."

U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ): "David Bernhardt has the deep water background we need to continue efforts to protect our Colorado River supplies" said Senator Jeff Flake, the Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "We need this experienced nominee confirmed without delay."

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT): "I applaud the nomination of Dave Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. President Trump and Secretary Zinke have already made great progress in restoring trust between Westerners and the federal government, but significant work remains, especially in Utah where reduced access to our public land has hurt our rural economies. As a former Interior Solicitor, Dave has the legal and political background necessary to confront some of the most difficult challenges ahead, such as expanding responsible development of our natural resources, protecting and promoting multiple-use, and expanding opportunities for recreational access. I am confident that Dave's breadth of experience makes him uniquely qualified for this position, and I look forward to working with him."

U.S. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT): "I can think of no one who is more qualified to be deputy secretary of the Interior than David Bernhardt. He has a long track record of distinguished service in the department and he understands the importance of efficient and collaborative federal land and resource management. David's extensive knowledge, experience, and leadership will go a long way in advancing Secretary Zinke's goal of restoring the American people's trust in the Interior Department. I urge my colleagues to support David's nomination and confirm him as soon as possible."

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK): "Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to help set strategic direction and run the Department of the Interior on a day-to-day basis. He grew up in the West, has extensive knowledge of issues that are important to Alaskans, and will be a great asset to Secretary Zinke and his team. We reported his nomination from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support more than a month ago, so I urge my colleagues to support the swift confirmation of this well-qualified nominee."

U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ): "David Bernhardt's experience working on water policy and Native American issues makes him uniquely suited to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department Administration. I am confident David will serve the state of Arizona and the nation with distinction, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of his nomination."

Bernhardt also has wide support from across the country:

- National Congress of American Indians
- Ducks Unlimited
- Boone and Crockett Club
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- NRA
- Delta Waterfowl
- Archery Trade Association
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Camp Fire Club of America
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Force
- Dallas Safari Club
- Houston Safari Club
- Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation
- Mule Deer Foundation
- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Orion - The Hunter's Institute
- Pheasants Forever
- Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
- Quail Forever
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Safari Club International
- Shikar-Safari Club
- Sportsmen's Alliance
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Wild Sheep Foundation
- Wildlife Forever
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Wildlife Mississippi
- American Recreation Coalition
- Boat U.S.
- International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
- Marine Retailers Association of America
- Motorcycle Industry Council
- National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)
- National Marine Manufacturers Association
- National Parks Hospitality Association
- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association
- Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- Specialty Equipment Market Association
- Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Colorado Water Congress
- Family Farm Alliance
- Oneida Indian Nation

- Penobscot Nation
- Public Lands Council
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Quapaw Tribe Of Oklahoma
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Gila River Indian Community

Former United States Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ): “Having worked with David Bernhardt for many years on a variety of Department of the Interior matters, in particular on Indian water settlements, I know he’ll be a great addition to the team.”

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###

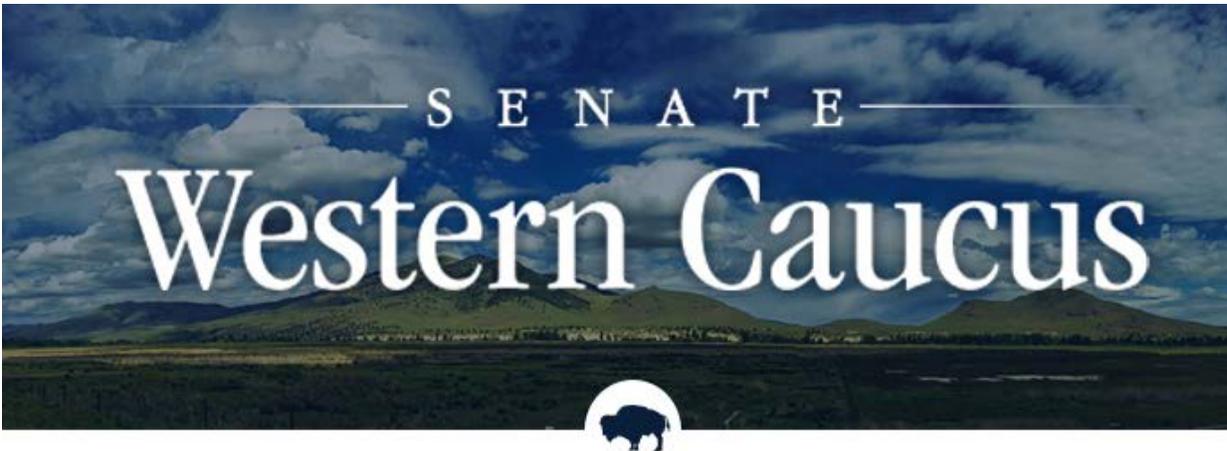
Contact: [Marcie Kinzel](#), [Katie Waldman](#)

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Todd Willens](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Chambers, Micah](#); [Daniel Jorjani](#); [James Cason](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Fwd: RELEASE: Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 4:17:22 PM
Attachments: [3F2C747C-3960-4BED-8D36-C01BFD1ECB56.png](#)

FYI...

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Press (Daines)** <Press@daines.senate.gov>
Date: Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 3:31 PM
Subject: RELEASE: Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior
To: "Press (Daines)" <Press@daines.senate.gov>



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior

U.S. SENATE — Today, the Senate Western Caucus, led by Chairman Steve Daines (R-MT), urged the confirmation of Department of the Interior veteran David Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Bernhardt, a Westerner from Rifle, Colorado, brings years of personal experience as an avid hunter and fisherman as well as professional experience having served under former DOI Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne in multiple positions.

Bernhardt was announced as President Donald J. Trump's choice for Deputy Secretary on [April 28](#) and was

subsequently approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on [June 6](#). Less than a month away from the August recess, the Senate has confirmed only 23 percent of President Trump's 216 nominations. By the first August recess during President Obama's first term, the Senate had confirmed 69 percent of his 454 nominations.

U.S. Senator Steve Daines (R-MT): "David Bernhardt will be a partner to Montanans and to Secretary Ryan Zinke – which makes for the best kind of Deputy Secretary of the Interior. David will work to improve access to public lands, restore American energy dominance and empower Montanans ability to best serve their families and communities. We need to confirm David Bernhardt so he can get to work on behalf of Montanans and the West."

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO): "As a native Coloradan from Rifle, David Bernhardt has a deep understanding of Western land issues, and his expertise and experience will serve the Department well. Unfortunately, a partisan minority in the Senate continues to block Mr. Bernhardt's nomination, and I hope that the confirmation process has not become a broken process that disincentives qualified people, like Mr. Bernhardt, who are held in high professional regard, from becoming public servants."

U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ): "David Bernhardt has the deep water background we need to continue efforts to protect our Colorado River supplies" said Senator Jeff Flake, the Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "We need this experienced nominee confirmed without delay."

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT): "I applaud the nomination of Dave Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. President Trump and Secretary Zinke have already made great progress in restoring trust between Westerners and the federal government, but significant work remains, especially in Utah where reduced access to our public land has hurt our rural economies. As a former Interior Solicitor, Dave has the legal and political background necessary to confront some of the most difficult challenges ahead, such as expanding responsible development of our natural resources, protecting and promoting multiple-use, and expanding opportunities for recreational access. I am confident that Dave's breadth of experience makes him uniquely qualified for this position, and I look forward to working with him."

U.S. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT): "I can think of no one who is more qualified to be deputy secretary of the Interior than David Bernhardt. He has a long track record of distinguished service in the department and he understands the importance of efficient and collaborative federal land and resource management. David's extensive knowledge, experience, and leadership will go a long way in advancing Secretary Zinke's goal of restoring the American people's trust in the Interior Department. I urge my colleagues to support David's nomination and confirm him as soon as possible."

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK): "Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to help set strategic direction and run the Department of the Interior on a day-to-day basis. He grew up in the West, has extensive knowledge of issues that are important to Alaskans, and will be a great asset to Secretary Zinke and his team. We reported his nomination from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support more than a month ago, so I urge my colleagues to support the swift confirmation of this well-qualified nominee."

U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ): "David Bernhardt's experience working on water policy and Native American issues makes him uniquely suited to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department Administration. I am confident David will serve the state of Arizona and the nation with distinction, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of his nomination."

Bernhardt also has wide support from across the country:

- National Congress of American Indians
- Ducks Unlimited
- Boone and Crockett Club
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- NRA
- Delta Waterfowl
- Archery Trade Association
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Camp Fire Club of America
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Force
- Dallas Safari Club
- Houston Safari Club
- Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation
- Mule Deer Foundation
- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Orion - The Hunter's Institute
- Pheasants Forever
- Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
- Quail Forever
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Safari Club International
- Shikar-Safari Club
- Sportsmen's Alliance
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Wild Sheep Foundation
- Wildlife Forever
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Wildlife Mississippi
- American Recreation Coalition
- Boat U.S.
- International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
- Marine Retailers Association of America
- Motorcycle Industry Council
- National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)
- National Marine Manufacturers Association
- National Parks Hospitality Association
- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association
- Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- Specialty Equipment Market Association
- Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Colorado Water Congress
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###

Contact: [Marcie Kinzel](#), [Katie Waldman](#)

From: DuBray, Daniel
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Reminder: Secretary Zinke to Visit New England
Date: Friday, June 09, 2017 2:45:04 PM

I will give Laura \$100 cash if she can get RZ to sing this to Lola at a karaoke bar in Vermont. That's a solid offer. Another \$100 if you can get Ragnar to wear a sash.

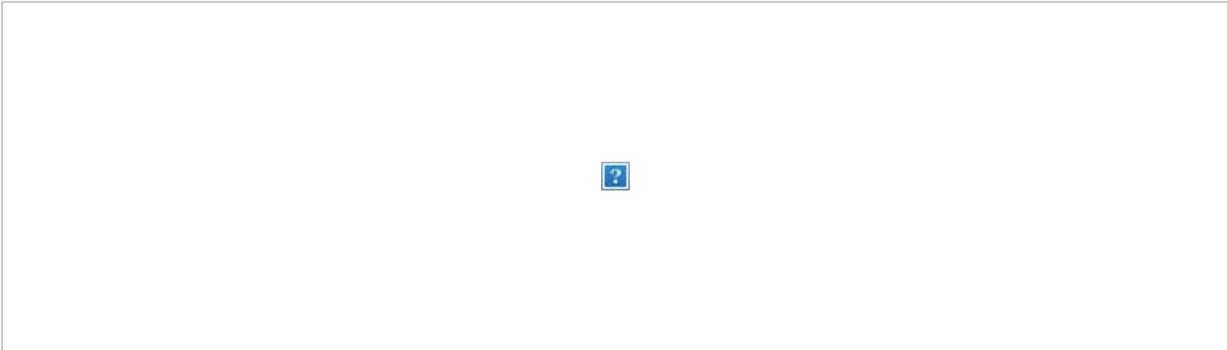
<https://youtu.be/RRWMixC5jpQ>

d

Dan DuBray
Chief, Public Affairs
Commissioner's Office
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street, NW MS-7069
Washington, DC 20240
Direct: (202) 513-0574
Cell: (571) 277-1197
ddubray@usbr.gov
Twitter: @DuBray

----- Forwarded message -----

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: Fri, Jun 9, 2017 at 2:27 PM
Subject: Reminder: Secretary Zinke to Visit New England
To: ddubray@usbr.gov



Date: June 9, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke to Visit New England

Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts

**Last Chance to RSVP for Katahdin Woods and Water National Monument
Review**

WASHINGTON - On Tuesday, June 13, 2017, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke will start a four-day visit to New England. The itinerary will include stops in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. Secretary Zinke will tour Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, which is under

review via President Trump's Executive Order 13792, issued April 26, 2017.

The following is the Secretary's media schedule. **All members of the press must RSVP to Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov with the name, phone number and email address for every member of the reporting team unless otherwise noted.** Please be sure to note which specific events you are RSVPing to.

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Speech to the National Congress of American Indians Mid-Year Conference

****Please contact NCAI for credentialing****

Time: 10:00 a.m. EDT

Location: 1 Mohegan Sun Blvd, Uncasville, CT 06382

Note: The Secretary will not be available for interviews at this event

Major Sportsmen and Conservation Announcement

Time: 3:30 p.m. EDT

Location: Bass Pro Shop, 2 Commerce Drive, Hooksett, NH 03106

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Tour of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument

Time: 9:30 a.m. EDT - 4:00 p.m. EDT

Location: Bangor-area. Exact pickup and drop-off Location TBD

Note: Transportation will be provided and space is extremely limited due to geographic and terrain limitations.

In order to request a spot in the press van, members of the media must RSVP by 5:00 p.m.

EDT on Friday, June 9, 2017

Thursday, June 15, 2017

Breakfast Meeting with Katahdin Chamber of Commerce & Local Councilmen

Time: 8:30 a.m. EDT

Location: Twin Pines Lodge (New England Outdoor Center), 30 Twin Pines Rd. Millinocket, ME

Note: The Secretary will not be available for interviews at this meeting. Press availability will be during the press briefing at 3:30 p.m. EDT.

Meeting with Penobscot Nation

Closed press

Roundtable with Maine Woods Coalition

Closed press

Daily Press Briefing

Time: 3:30 p.m. EDT

Location: Augusta, ME

Friday, June 16, 2017

Boston-area events to be announced

#



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This email was sent to ddubray@usbr.gov by: U.S. Department of the Interior · 1849 C Street, N.W. · Washington DC 20240 · 202-208-3100



From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: REQUEST FOR COMMENT: Civil lawsuit — Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Date: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 6:56:12 PM

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Chris D'Angelo** <chris.dangelo@huffpost.com>
Date: Wed, Aug 9, 2017 at 12:27 PM
Subject: REQUEST FOR COMMENT: Civil lawsuit — Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral
To: Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>, "Hinson, Alex" <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Interior folks,

I'm working on a story and emailing to request a brief interview with/written comment from Sec. Ryan Zinke regarding the settlement of a civil dispute over a property in D.C. that he and his wife rented from Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral.

I've also reached out to Mr. Zinke's attorney in this matter. I can be reached on the cell phone number listed below.

Thank you very much,

Chris D'Angelo
Reporter, [HuffPost](#)
Washington, DC
m: [314-580-0191](tel:314-580-0191)
Twitter: [@c_m_dangelo](https://twitter.com/c_m_dangelo)
huffingtonpost.com/chris-dangelo/

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Bowman, Randal](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: Fwd: Request for comment: DOI/DOC Monument comment sharing
Date: Tuesday, July 25, 2017 2:57:22 PM
Attachments: [072417_DOI_FOIA_Response.pdf](#)
[Rose Atoll_1-export-20170706-013252.csv](#)

Question below on sharing comments with Commerce.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Esther Whieldon** <ewhieldon@politico.com>
Date: Tue, Jul 25, 2017 at 2:37 PM
Subject: Request for comment: DOI/DOC Monument comment sharing
To: Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Anthony Adragna <aadragna@politico.com>

The Center for American Progress claims that FOIA'd records show that Interior has passed along less than 500 copies of comments to the Commerce Department referencing the marine monuments but the group says that more than a half a million comments submitted to Interior actually mentioned the marine monuments. Interior said in the Federal Register notice that people shouldn't duplicate comments between the agencies because DOI would share what it received.

Please comment on this, including the extent to which the Interior passed along information to the Commerce Department in this review. Are you planning on sending more over?

Thanks, Esther

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: Request to Interview Secretary Zinke for The Resurgent
Date: Monday, August 21, 2017 5:44:53 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.htm](#)
[333357-zinke-is-promoting-true-conservation-at-department-of](#)

Let's discuss at some point this week. Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gabriella Hoffman <(b) (6)>
Date: August 21, 2017 at 4:00:29 PM EDT
To: "[Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov)" <Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fw: Fwd: Request to Interview Secretary Zinke for The Resurgent
Reply-To: Gabriella Hoffman <(b) (6)>

Laura,

I apologize for not writing this email sooner. Here's what I sent Heather a while back re: request to interview Secretary Zinke. Here's how our "Outsiders on the Inside" series is formatted.

Let me know if Secretary Zinke would have an interest in discussing true conservation, expanding hunting/fishing rights, the monuments review, and energy independence when his schedule cools down!

My dad says you have a work-related trip tomorrow. Have fun!!

Best,

Gabriella

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Gabriella Hoffman <(b) (6)>
To: "heather_swift@ios.doi.gov" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "natalie_davis@ios.doi.gov" <natalie_davis@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, July 25, 2017, 2:58:29 PM EDT
Subject: Fwd: Request to Interview ^_Secretary^_ ^_Zinke^_ for The Resurgent

Hi Heather,

I hope this email finds you well! Your DOI colleague Natalie Davis recommended I reach out to you directly for an interview request. Sent an email a few weeks ago about interviewing Secretary Zinke for my publication. Below is my original email with details about the publication and a recent post at The Hill I penned praising Secretary Zinke's efforts to promote true conservation. (See attached.)

I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,

Gabriella Hoffman
DC Correspondent, The Resurgent

949-302-8266

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gabriella Hoffman (b) (6) >
Date: June 26, 2017 at 10:24:03 AM EDT
To: "Interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <Interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Request to Interview Secretary Zinke for The Resurgent
Reply-To: Gabriella Hoffman <ghoffman16@yahoo.com>

Hi Heather,

Your DOI coworker Natalie Davis suggested I contact you about media inquiries regarding requests to interview Secretary Zinke.

I'm writing today to see if Secretary Zinke would be interested to talk about his work to promote true conservation at DOI for The Resurgent for our video series "Outsiders on the Inside". We garner an average of 100k-110k daily views at our site. I serve as their D.C. correspondent and have followed the secretary's work very closely at our publication to better highlight his efforts. (I'm a fellow sportsman/outdoor enthusiast.) My original video series "Outsiders on the Inside" currently features lawmakers, but I'm hoping to extend it to department heads - like Secretary Zinke - who boast an outsider mentality here in Washington, D.C. Here's a [recent video](#) I did with Senator Mike Lee, where we discussed Bears Ears National Monument and Secretary Zinke's efforts to reform the Antiquities Act.

If this is something Secretary Zinke would be interested in, please let me know. There is no timeliness for a video interview--especially given the secretary's busy schedule with his efforts to reform the Antiquities Act and to make DOI the "Happy Department."

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for the timely DOI updates via email!

Best,
Gabriella Hoffman
D.C. Correspondent, The Resurgent

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Review CNN
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 4:13:56 PM

just a few tweaks to the 2 "On background" paras. just grammatical tweaks and added the additional qualifier that Western Governors event was a bi-partisan event.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Heather Swift** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Fri, Oct 6, 2017 at 4:06 PM
Subject: Review CNN
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov), russell_newell@ios.doi.gov

You guys good with this? I can't fix the font differences.

“The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources.” - Heather Swift, DOI spokesman

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Consistent with this process, the trip was reviewed and approved in advance by both the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law. In short, the trip - including the Secretary's address to the hockey developmental squad - was completely compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

ON BACKGROUND

Regarding the ownership of the plane: The Secretary's office is

unaware of ownership of any vendor services including government selected vendors for air transport. Some media report the plane is owned by a Mr. Neilson. The Secretary has never met or spoken to Mr Neilson. The charter plane company is a vendor of the federal government. It was selected by career officials a thousand miles away in Boise or Atlanta after cost analysis. Furthermore, that company had years of federal contracts before the Secretary was even sworn into office. The vendor has been used for years by previous administrations.

It is false to say commercial flights are available between LAS and FCA that the Secretary could have taken. There were exactly 0 commercial flights leaving after 8PM that would have gotten the Secretary to FCA in time. The Secretary's itinerary began with meetings at 8:30 AM then included a keynote speech to the Western Governors Association, a (bi-partisan event that was led by Montana's Democratic governor), a press conference, a working lunch with governors, and other engagements.

Mrs. Zinke was not on the Nevada trip.

Mrs. Zinke was one of many spouses invited on the bipartisan CODEL organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which is standard for those trips. Mrs. Zinke's fare was covered personally.

Justification for Mrs. Zinke to have a desk there at Interior? -- **No such desk exists.**

From: "'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
Date: October 6, 2017 at 1:46:09 PM EDT
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "russell_newell@ios.doi.gov" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, "Wallace, Gregory" <gregory.wallace@turner.com>
Subject: **Re: CNN**
Reply-To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Heather,

Circling back again. It's been a few days now.
Reupping the questions CNN has.

What was the purpose of his speech to the Vegas Golden Knights Hockey team in June?

Who invited Zinke to give the speech to the team?

Who owned the plane that Zinke flew on from Vegas to Montana?

Who else was on board the plane from Vegas to Montana?

Zinke's schedule shows on 4/28 he traveled from DC to Atlanta. How did he travel? Commercial? Government plane? Private?

On June 22 how did Zinke travel to his meeting in West Virginia? Did he use a Park Police Chopper? What is the cost estimate for use of the chopper?

On July 7 why did the Secretary travel using a USPP helicopter? What was the cost associated with the use of the helicopter?

Can you tell us about the flight on July 20th. Was that a commercial flight? If so please share the flight details?

CNN is looking for justification for why Zinke's wife accompanied him on the following trips : Las Vegas, Greenland and Alaska?

When on these trips does Mrs. Zinke participate in official meetings with the Secretary?

Justification for Mrs. Zinke to have a desk there at Interior?

Did Mrs. Zinke reimburse the government for these flights? When? How much was reimbursed?

Thank you
Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:24 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Working on it. The person who handles the Secretary's travel is currently out of the office so it's taking a little longer than usual. Apologies for the delay.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:11 AM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather good morning,

Circling back on this request again this morning. Hoping to get something from you today.

Thank you,
Rene Marsh

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2017, at 1:02 PM, Marsh, Rene <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com> wrote:

Good afternoon Heather,

Do you have a sense of timing for when we can expect a response to the below inquiry ?

Thank you
Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2017, at 7:08 PM, Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Rene. Checking into this for
you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 3, 2017, at 4:32 PM, 'Marsh,
Rene' via Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Heather,

CNN has additional
questions on the
Secretary's travel.

What was the purpose of
his speech to the Vegas
Golden Knights Hockey
team in June?

Who invited Zinke to give
the speech to the team?

Who owned the plane
that Zinke flew on from
Vegas to Montana?

Who else was on board
the plane from Vegas to
Montana?

Zinke's schedule shows
on 4/28 he traveled from
DC to Atlanta. How did
he travel? Commercial?
Government plane?
Private?

On June 22 how did Zinke travel to his meeting in West Virginia? Did he use a Park Police Chopper? What is the cost estimate for use of the chopper?

On July 7 why did the Secretary travel using a USPP helicopter? What was the cost associated with the use of the helicopter?

Can you tell us about the flight on July 20th. Was that a commercial flight? If so please share the flight details?

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Friday,
September 29, 2017 at
2:49 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt, Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

The \$12k is for
Nevada.

The \$3k is for the
flights between the
islands.

**Also, for your
reference, Secretary
Jewell also took a
number of charter
aircraft, including
but not limited to
the following:**

- 1/14/16 \$9,800
roundtrip
between
Albuquerque,
NM -->
Farmington,
NM
- 5/3/16 \$13,605
Helena, MT -->
Browning, MT
(this is about a
three hour
drive)
Bronwing, MT --
> Palm Springs

- 8/24/16
\$20,383
Bakersfield, CA
--> Kalispell,
MT -->
Livingston, MT
- There were
also at least
two military
aircraft flights
on 9/5/13
between
Honolulu and
the Marshall
Islands, and
5/13/14 DC to
St. Louis.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at
2:43 PM, 'Marsh, Rene'
via Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi there,

I am getting a bit
confused .

Can you send the
breakdown of flights
and costs so I am clear
on what cost what?

I see \$ 3,150 --- that's
the flight from where
to where

The \$12375- that's
round trip between st.
croix and st. Thomas

We are on deadline .
also looking to confirm
the charter company
used. I see youre
quoted as confirming
that but if reports as
you point out have
been inaccurate I need
to get it confirmed
with you myself.

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Friday,
September 29, 2017
at 2:18 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt, Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

3/31/17 USVI flights
were - \$3,150

-

Heather Swift

Department of the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017
at 1:36 PM, Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

The flight between
two islands in the
US VI. Yes that
cost is correct. We
have not yet been
billed on the
military air asset to
the wildfire.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the
Interior

On Sep 29, 2017,
at 1:21 PM,
'Marsh, Rene' via
Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

You
are
quoted
as
saying
one of
the
flights
costs
12,375.
Which
costs
are
you
waiting
on?
Can
you
provide

the
costs
you
already
have?

Thank
you,

—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:16
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Miranda
Green

Heather
Swift

Press
Secretary

Department
of the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at 1:14
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior

Press

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

We
are
looking
for
the
cost
of
the
flights?

I
don't
see
that
below.

B
=y
the
way
who
did
you
provide
this
info
to
earlier
?

—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:12
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:

CNN

The
below
information
was
supplied
to
your
colleague
earlier.

**On
the
record**

As
is
consistent
with
the
travel
of
previous
Interior
secretaries,
the
Secretary
traveled
on
charter
flights
when

there
were
no
commercial
options
available.

All
travel
is
pre-
approved
by
the
ethics
office
and
the
travel
lawyers
in
the
Division
of
General
Law
(statement
from
them
below)
before
booking,

and
the
charter
flights
went
through
an
additional
level
of
due
diligence.

Taxpayers
absolutely
have
a
right
to
know
how
much
official
government
travel
costs.
It's
common
sense.
At

the
Department
we
make
those
documents
available
to
the
public.
Using
tax
dollars
wisely
and
ethically
is
a
big
responsibility
and
is
at
the
heart
of
good
government.
Unfortunately
there
are

some
times
when
Interior
has
to
utilize
charter
services
because
we
often
travel
to
areas
that
don't
have
a
lot
of
flight
options.

Standard
operating
procedure
is
that
the

Secretary
and
staff
fly
on
a
commercial,
government,
coach
fare
whenever
possible.

**"The
Scheduling
Office
meets
regularly
with
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law
to
ensure
that**

**all
travel
is
thoroughly
reviewed
and
approved
in
advance
and
that
it
is
fully
compliant
with
all
applicable
laws,
rules,
and
regulations.**

**Consistent
with
this
process,
the
trip
was
reviewed
and
approved
in
advance**

by
both
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law.

In
short,
the
trip

-
including
the
Secretary's
address

to
the
hockey
developmental
squad

-
was
completely
compliant
with
all
applicable

**laws,
rules,
and
regulations." -**

-

Joint
Statement
from
Melinda
Loftin
(Department
of
the
Interior
Designated
Agency
Ethics
Official
and
Director
of
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office)
and
Edward
Keable
(Deputy
Solicitor
-
General
Law). Both
are

career
members
of
the
Senior
Executive
Service.

**On
background**

Regarding
the
ownership
of
the
plane:
the
Secretary
has
never
met
or
spoken
to
Mr
Neilson
and
that
the
charter
plane
company

is
a
vendor
of
the
federal
government.

It
was
selected
by
career
officials

a
thousand
miles
away
in

Boise
or
Atlanta
after
cost
analysis.

Furthermore,
that
company
had
years
of
federal
contracts
before
the

Secretary
was
even
sworn
into
office.

The
WP
piece
was
false
through
omission
where
it
said
commercial
flights
are
available
between
LAS
and
FCA.
In
fact
there
are
exactly
0
commercial
flights

leaving
after
8PM
that
would
have
got
the
Secretary
to
FCA
in
time
for
an
8:30AMmeeting.

The
WP
was
wrong
when
said
there
were
multiple
political
events,
there
were
not.
He
attended
single

political
event
for
Senator
Daines
in
Big
Sky
when
he
was
already
scheduled
to
be
in
the
area
and
it
was
no
cost
to
the
Department.

The
WP
piece
is
false
through
omission

on
the
Yellowstone
aspect
by
making
it
sound
like
the
itinerary
was
light.
In
fact,
the
itinerary
in
Yellowstone
was
robust.
Yellowstone
has
a
serious
sexual
harassment
situation?
The
Secretary
traveled
there
to
meet

with
the
superintendent
and
the
staff
about
it.

The
park
is
also
in
hot
negotiations
with
tribes
on
a
number
of
fronts
that
needed
the
secretary's
time.

All
of
these
things
were
also

part
of
the
secretary's
trip
in
addition
to
meeting
the
employees
he
oversees.

On
the
point
of
the
UNITED
STATES
Virgin
Islands.
Again
another
lie
through
omission
and
leading
readers
to
believe
he

is
at
a
foreign
"Caribbean"
islands
rather
than
an
American
territory
that
is
overseen
by
the
Department.
That
itinerary
included
several
hours
of
official
government
events
and
ceremonies
as
well
as
meeting
with
American

military
veterans
from
the
territory
and
a
visit
to
a
National
Park
that
is
under
the
jurisdiction
of
the
Department.

Lastly-
The
politico
piece
did
not
accurately
describe
the
Montana
portion
of

the
trip.
The
Secretary's
itinerary
began
with
meetings
at
8:30
AM
then
included
a
keynote
speech
to
the
Western
Governor's
Association
(which
is
led
by
Montana's
Democratic
governor),
a
press
conference,
a
working
lunch

with
governors,
and
other
engagements.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony
(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government
turning
over
the
Virgin
Islands
to

the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories) Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and
Governor
Mapp
as
well
as
several
other
high
ranking
government
officials.
Flight
Plan:
St
Croix
-
-

>
St
Thomas

-

-

>
St
Croix

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
were
available
for
the
itinerary
of
official
government
events.

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of

the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural
Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee
organized
and

utilized
a charter
in
northern
Alaska.
Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
the
staff

tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kalispell,
MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The
Secretary
had
events
and
speaking
engagements
in
the

evening
in
Nevada
and
in
the
morning
in
Montana.

Flight
Plan:
Las
Vegas
-
-
>
Kalispell

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
available
to
get
the
Secretary
and
necessary
staff
to
the

morning
Montana
events
on
time.
The
Secretary's
speech
ended at 7:45PM and
he
had
a
meeting at 8:30 the
following
morning.

The
charter
landed at 1:30AM.

The
secretary
had
multiple
events
at
the
Western
Governors
Association

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff

tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
the
DOI
budget

Heather
Swift

Press
Secretary

Department
of
the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at
1:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Good
afternoon
Heather,

CNN
is

circling
back
on
this
request.

Thank
you,

—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](https://twitter.com/Rene_MarshCNN)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:
Friday,

September
29,
2017
at
11:16
AM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>,
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Good
Morning
Heather,

CNN
is
looking
to

confirm
the
costs
of
all
of
the
charters
you
outlined
below.

We
are
also
looking
to
confirm
the
name
of
the
charter
company
that
provided
the
flights
for
the
Secretary's
official
travel.

Besides
these
charter
flights
you
noted
below
has
the
Secretary
also
used
military/government

planes?
If
so
can
you
outline
dates,
times,
places,
justification?

Many
thanks,

—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Marsh,

Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:

Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
3:14
PM

To:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>,
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Thank
you
Heather

—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
2:13
PM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
don't
have
that
information
immediately
available.
Will
put
a
request
in.

-

Heather
Swift

Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
2:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thank
you
Heather.

What
type
of
aircraft
were
these
private
planes?
What
was
the
cost
for
these
trips
that
came
out
of
the
DOI
budget?

Thank
you

—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
2:05
PM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:
Re:
CNN

Rene
-
also
want
to
add
on
the
Alaska
portion
that
was
part
of
the
CODEL
arranged
by
Senate
ENR.

-

Heather
Swift

Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017

at
12:17
PM,
Swift,
Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

-

Heather
Swift

Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,

2017
at
11:56
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thanks
Heather.

What
type
of
planes
were
these
charter
flights?
Can
you
please
check
and
confirm?

We
are
also
looking
to
get
a
better
understanding
about
why
commercial
flights
were
listed
as
not

an
option
for
the
5/17
trip?

There
was
no
commercial
flight
available
for
the
route/schedule.
Getting
around
in
the
Arctic
Circle
is
not
like
catching
a
flight
out
of
Washington,
D.C.

For
the
6/26
trip
what
were
the
times
of
his
commitment?

What

time
were
the
events
scheduled
for
in
Nevada?
What
time
was
the
speaking
engagement
scheduled
for
the
next
morning
in
Montana?

The
event
ended
around
8:00PM
in
NV.
He
arrived
in
MT
around
2:00AM
and
the
Secretary
had
meetings
with
governors
and
public
lands
advocates
the
following
morning beginning

at
8:45AM.
The
Western
Governors
Association
-
led
by
a
Democratic
governor
-
invited
the
Secretary
to
speak.

Is
it
safe
to
assume
the
secretary
flew
commercial
from
Washington
D.C.
to
places
like
Vegas,
Alaska
and
St.
Croix
before
boarding
the
private
flights
in
those

places?

Yes

-

the
Secretary
flew
to
Nevada
and
the
USVI
on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.
He
got
to
Alaska
by
way
of
the
CODEL
which
was
arranged
by
the
Senate.
He
left
Alaska
on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.

Thank
you,

—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
11:31
AM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
sent
this
to
Hannah
Lang.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony
(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government

turning
over
the
Virgin
Islands
to
the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories)

Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and
Governor
Mapp.

Flight
Plan:
St
Croix
-
-
>
St
Thomas
-
-
>
St
Croix

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
were
available

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural
Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee
organized
and
utilized
a

charter.

Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kalispell,
MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The Secretary had two speaking engagements, in the evening in Nevada and in the morning in Montana.

Flight Plan:
Las Vegas
-
-
>
Kalispell

Reason:
No commercial flight available to get the Secretary and necessary staff to the event on time.

Payment:
the Secretary and staff tickets were

paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget

The
Secretary
took
a
military
jet
once
with
U.S.
Secretary
of
Agriculture
Sonny
Purdue
after
he
was
invited
by
USDA
to
attend
a
briefing
at
a
wildfire
camp
in
Montana.
The
fire
was
one
of
the
most
high-
priority
in
the

country
and
a
firefighter
had
died
battling
the
blaze
earlier
in
the
summer.
(The
two
departments
co-
manage
wildfire
fighting
efforts
for
the
federal
government.
)

The
Secretary
also
travels
military
jet
when
he
travels
with
POTUS
or
VPOTUS.
There
have
been
three
such
trips
to
Cincinnati,

West
Virginia,
and
Atlanta.

-

Heather
Swift

Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

I

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017

at

11:20

AM,

'Marsh,

Rene'

via

Interior

Press

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Morning
Heather,

I
checked
in
with
my
colleagues
and

they
say
they
never
received
a
response
on
this
topic
from
Interior.
Could
you
please
provide?

We
are
looking
to
find
out
has
the
Secretary
chartered
private
planes
for
his
travels
while
in
office?
Government/military
planes
during
his
time
in
office?
How
many
times?

Was
commercial
considered
as
the

first
option?

Justification
for
flying
private?

Thank
you,

Rene
Marsh

CNN

On
9/22/17,
12:53
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

We
do
it
here
too.

Heather
Swift

Press
Secretary

Department
of
the
Interior

>
On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:44
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>
Apologies.
That's
annoying
on
our
part.

Sorry
we
are
doubling
up.

Will
check
with
them
and
circle
back
if
there
are
any
outstanding
questions.

>

>

—
René
Marsh

>

CNN

>

Correspondent

>

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

>

Office:
202-
777-
7249

>

>

>

On
9/22/17,
12:43
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>

Rene
can
you
please
coordinate
with
your
colleagues?
I've
received

>

this
inquiry
from
several
people
at
CNN.

>

>

Heather
Swift

>

Press
Secretary

>

Department
of
the
Interior

>

>

>>

On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:35
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>>

>>
Hello,

>>

>>
CNN
is
looking
to
get
information
on
Zinke's
travel
information.
When
he
travels
by
plane
does
he
always
fly
commercial?
Private
?

>>

>>
Thank
you,

>>
**Rene
Marsh**

>>
CNN

>>

>>
**Sent
from
my
iPhone**

>

>

From: Roddy, Russell
To: [Heather Swift](#); (b) (7)(C), (b) (6)
Subject: Fwd: Sec. Zinke
Date: Sunday, September 10, 2017 11:55:49 PM

Hey, Heather...please see below from Raul per names and request for parking.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <(b) (7)(C), (b) (6)>
Date: Sun, Sep 10, 2017 at 12:37 PM
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
To: "Roddy, Russell" <russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov>

Armed law enforcement officers going in the building will be (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) (advance), (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) and (b) (7)(C), (b) (6) will be escorting the Secretary.

If possible can they assist us with parking spots for three vehicles?

Thanks
Raul

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 10, 2017, at 12:00 PM, Roddy, Russell <russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Heather Swift** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Sun, Sep 10, 2017 at 11:55 AM
Subject: Fwd: Sec. Zinke
To: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov, mark_asmussen@nps.gov

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Rivera, Anthony" <Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
Date: September 10, 2017 at 9:50:50 AM EDT
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Re: Sec. Zinke**

Good Morning Heather,

I hope you are having a great weekend. I received word that we will be in studio 3 for our pre tape which is good news. Is it possible to give me the names of the security detail coming in. I don't know if the building security is just going to let them up. They get a little stern even if a name maybe misspelled.

Anyways I have the topics/questions that David would like to talk about with Sec. Zinke:

- Responsibilities of the Dept. of the Interior when it comes to Harvey recovery and post Hurricane Harvey.

- What is the department of the interior doing to update and reform its operations to be a more effective agency?

- What are some of the more key points of interaction with individual states?

- Are there regional strategies based on geographical area not just state borders?

These are the main questions David has. He will be thinking of others but for now these are the most important. Thank you Heather!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-1503940572888_SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 1:30:03 PM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Ryan Zinke

Lola Zinke
Heather Swift
+2 Security detail

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 1:24 PM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Actually if we could get on a quick call and work out the logistics that would be better than the email. You can call one of my numbers or just send me your number and I could call you.

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-1503940572888_SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 1:12:44 PM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Oh that would work! He is available Tuesday in the 1PM hour.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 1:09 PM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

What time are you looking for. Maybe we could do a pretape?

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-1503940572888_SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 12:52:47 PM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Shoot, I'm sorry, Anthony. I thought the show went later. Unfortunately the Secretary won't be able to join after all. I will be in touch though and let you know when he's available for call ins in the future.

Again, my apologies for the mistake.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 12:43 PM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Hello Heather,

Just making sure you got my last email. If we can get Sec. Zinke locked in today for next week that would be awesome. Let me know, thanks!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show

SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-1503940572888_SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 11:18:18 AM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Sec. Zinke

Hi there, Anthony. Secretary Zinke will be in NYC next week and would like to come on David's show. What's your availability like Monday-Wednesday?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Russell Newell
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: secretary bio
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 12:46:43 PM

Heads up on bio that is on the website. See below. Can you confirm and ask someone to correct?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Renner, Elinor" <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov>
Date: September 20, 2017 at 11:27:51 AM CDT
To: "Newell, Russell" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: bio

Cully just sent me a correction for future reference:

Sec Zinke did not "enlist" in the Navy in 1985 as the bio below states. He was an officer for his entire career. Enlistees are "enlisted Sailors" not officers.

Rather, it should read: he was "commissioned as an officer in the Navy in 1985..."

On Wed, Sep 20, 2017 at 11:48 AM, Renner, Elinor <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Russell.

Could you send me the blurb for the description of the event today? Heritage wants to start publicizing the event. Allison seats 200, and we don't want an empty auditorium!

Warmly,
Elinor

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tue, Sep 19, 2017 at 5:45 PM
Subject: bio
To: Elinor Renner <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov>

Elinor - they can pull from this bio for the intro and for any materials.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Secretary Ryan Zinke

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

"As a former Navy SEAL, Ryan has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win," President Donald Trump said in nominating the former congressman, who built an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Ryan has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Zinke is widely praised for his voting record supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

"I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior," Zinke said. "I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that our treasured public lands are 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people'. I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come. Most importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve. I look forward to making the Department of the Interior and America great again."

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public

lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations across the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master's degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master's degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



--

Elinor Renner
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6087

--

Elinor Renner
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Special Assistant to the Secretary

Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6087

From: Amanda Kaster
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Secretary Ryan Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with one week left in his monuments attack
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 1:42:44 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Ward, Jimmy" <Jimmy.Ward@mail.house.gov>
Date: August 17, 2017 at 8:49:13 AM AKDT
To: Amanda Kaster <amanda_kaster@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Fwd: Secretary Ryan Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with one week left in his monuments attack**

Begin forwarded message:

From: Center for Western Priorities <info@westernpriorities.org>
Date: August 17, 2017 at 7:46:08 AM AKDT
To: <jimmy.ward@mail.house.gov>
Subject: **Secretary Ryan Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with one week left in his monuments attack**
Reply-To: Center for Western Priorities <info@westernpriorities.org>



CONTACT

Aaron Weiss, Media Director
Center for Western Priorities
aaron@westernpriorities.org
720-279-0019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

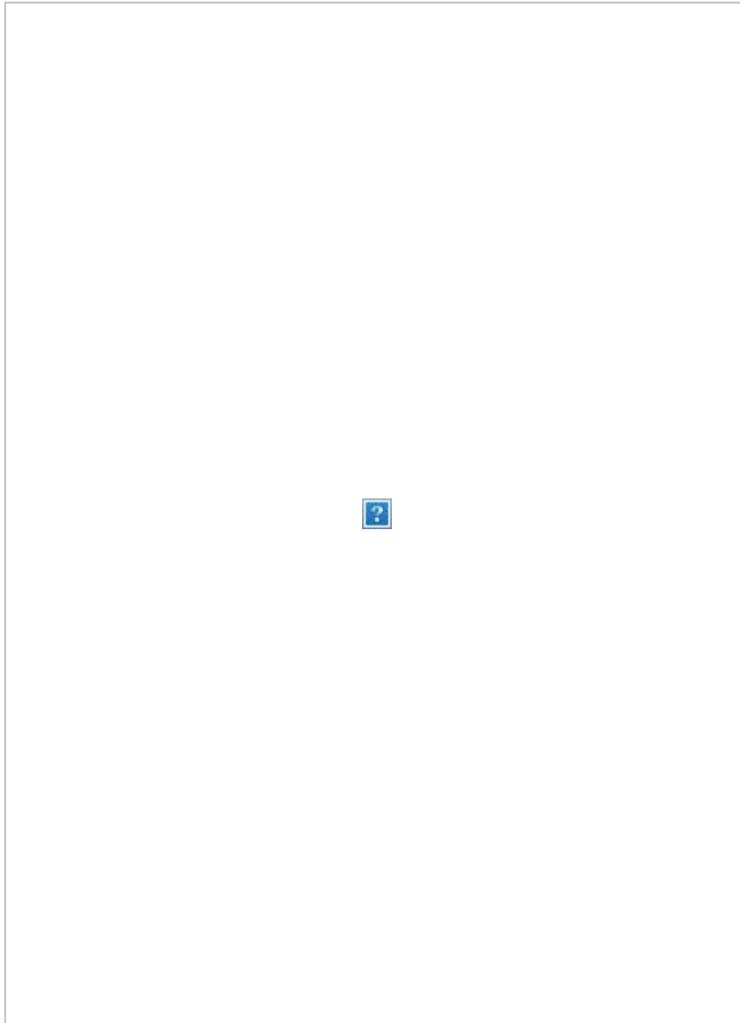
AUGUST 17, 2017

Secretary Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with only one week left to decide the fate of more than a dozen monuments he's never visited

DENVER—One week from today, Interior Secretary Zinke is due to decide the fate of dozens of national monuments protected over the last two decades. Secretary Zinke, who President Trump placed in charge of the review, promised that he would listen to and engage with local communities and national monument stakeholders before permanently closing any national monument lands.

Rather than spending his final week hearing from local communities who have

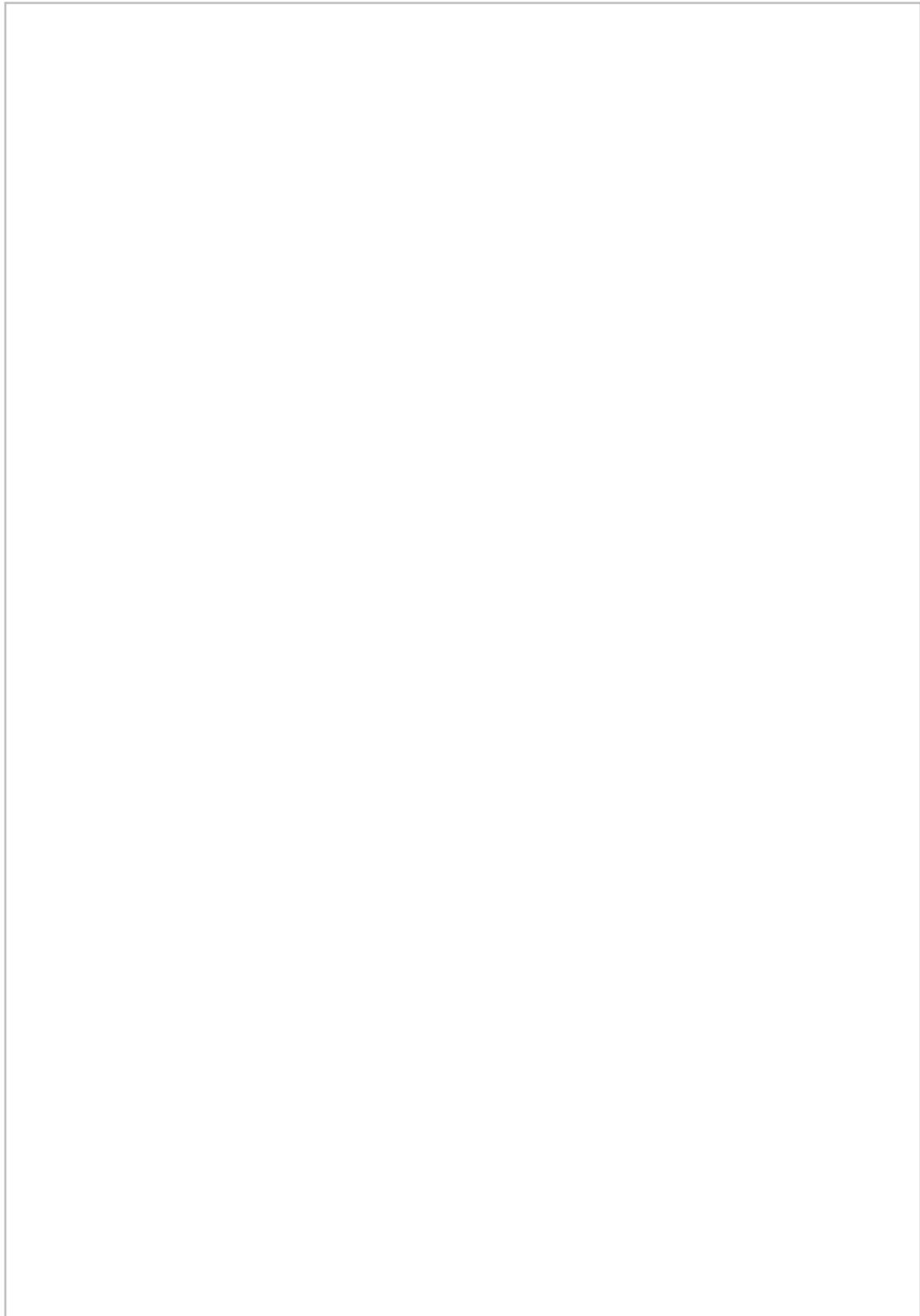
worked tirelessly to protect their natural and cultural heritage as national monuments, Secretary Zinke is on vacation in the Mediterranean. His wife, Lola Zinke, [tweeted a picture early this morning](#) of herself and Secretary Zinke enjoying a sunrise on the Bosphorus Strait.



With only seven days remaining in the review, the secretary has failed to visit most of the national monuments on the chopping block. Of the 27 monuments under consideration for elimination, Secretary Zinke has visited and met with stakeholders at only 8 of them. The visits Secretary Zinke has made were marked by controversy, [failing to meet key stakeholders](#) and even admitting to a [group of veterans](#) in New Mexico that his mind was made up to eliminate national monuments.

The secretary is not expected to make other site visits prior to the August 24th deadline. In advance of next week's decision, the Center for Western Priorities issued the following statement from **Deputy Director Greg Zimmerman**:

“Our national monuments are full of beautiful places to take a summer trip. Secretary Zinke promised a rigorous analysis of national monuments, but what the American public got was a sham review and a foreign vacation. If he bothered to listen, Secretary Zinke would have found that national monuments are cornerstones of Western economies, that they protect exceptional and unique lands, and, most of all, that virtually no Americans support eliminating national monuments. I worry, instead, he’s moving to permanently shut down national monuments.”



Additional Resources

- [Zinke vs. Zinke on National Monuments: Conflicting statements show review lacks consistent criteria, rigorous analysis](#)

- [Analysis finds near-unanimous support of Bears Ears and other national monuments as public comment period closes, including a 9-to-1 margin among Utahns](#)
- [Make no mistake: The Trump administration's monument review is an attack on our national parks](#)

###

The Center for Western Priorities is a conservation policy and advocacy organization focused on land and energy issues across the American West.

[Center for Western Priorities](#) | 820 16th Street Ste 450, Denver, CO 80202 | 303.974.7761

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [view email in browser](#)

From: Heather Swift
To: dwbernhardt@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Secretary Ryan Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with one week left in his monuments attack
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 1:43:51 PM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 17, 2017

Secretary Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with only one week left to decide the fate of more than a dozen monuments he's never visited

DENVER—One week from today, Interior Secretary Zinke is due to decide the fate of dozens of national monuments protected over the last two decades. Secretary Zinke, who President Trump placed in charge of the review, promised that he would listen to and engage with local communities and national monument stakeholders before permanently closing any national monument lands.

Rather than spending his final week hearing from local communities who have worked tirelessly to protect their natural and cultural heritage as national monuments, Secretary Zinke is on vacation in the Mediterranean. His wife, Lola Zinke, [tweeted a picture early this morning](#) of herself and Secretary Zinke enjoying a sunrise on the Bosphorus Strait.



With only seven days remaining in the review, the secretary has failed to visit most of the national monuments on the chopping block. Of the 27 monuments under consideration for elimination, Secretary Zinke has visited and met with stakeholders at only 8 of them. The visits Secretary Zinke has made were marked by controversy, [failing to meet key stakeholders](#) and even admitting to a [group of veterans](#) in New Mexico that his mind was made up to eliminate national monuments.

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of all, that virtually no Americans support eliminating national monuments. I worry, instead, he's moving to permanently shut down national monuments."



Additional Resources

- [Zinke vs. Zinke on National Monuments: Conflicting statements show review lacks consistent criteria, rigorous analysis](#)

- [Analysis finds near-unanimous support of Bears Ears and other national monuments as public comment period closes, including a 9-to-1 margin among Utahns](#)
- [Make no mistake: The Trump administration's monument review is an attack on our national parks](#)

###

The Center for Western Priorities is a conservation policy and advocacy organization focused on land and energy issues across the American West.

[Center for Western Priorities](#) | 820 16th Street Ste 450, Denver, CO 80202 | 303.974.7761

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From: DuBray, Daniel
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather)
Subject: Fwd: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:52:56 AM

I'm going to say his plan is fine. Derrick will confirm and send it all to you. OK?

d

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Press, BLM** <blm_press@blm.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:42 AM
Subject: Fwd: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM
To: Daniel DuBray <ddubray@blm.gov>, Jeff Krauss <jkrauss@blm.gov>, Beverly S Winston <BWinston@blm.gov>

All,

A reporter from Politico wants to confirm the contents of Mike Nedd's message about Brian Steed as current Acting Director of the BLM. She also wants to know when the appointment was made and why. Finally, she wants to know what the new Acting Director's authority will be, now that the Vacancies Act is in play.

I think we can confirm that Mike sent the email that said Mr. Steed is now acting director and refer the rest of the questions (when the appointment was made and why/Vacancies Act) to DOI. DOI weighed in on the Vacancies Act last Thursday in an E&E article ([link here](#)), as follows: "When asked about Vacancies Act issues, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said "we are aware of the deadline and we have taken sufficient administrative actions to ensure that the functions, duties, and responsibilities of the positions are performed.""

What do you all think if this?

Thanks,

Derrick.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Esther Whieldon** <ewhieldon@politico.com>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:18 AM
Subject: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM
To: BLM main press email <blm_press@blm.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>, Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

Can you please confirm the contents of this email - that Zinke has appointed Steed as acting BLM director? What day did Zinke make the appointment and why did he decided to do this? Also, please address how the agency is dealing with the limitations of any BLM acting director's authority now that the vacancies act has kicked in and Trump has not nominated

anyone for BLM director yet.

I'd love to have a response by noon if possible.

Thanks, Esther

From: "Nedd, Michael" <mnedd@blm.gov>
Date: November 15, 2017 at 3:03:21 PM PST
To: BLM_All_Employees <blm_all_employees@blm.gov>
Subject: BLM Acting Director

BLM employees:

This week, Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Brian Steed as Acting Director of the BLM, and I want to welcome him as he begins his journey leading this great agency. John Ruhs and I have worked alongside Brian since his appointment as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in October, and we have come to know his ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission. His experience includes working as Chief of Staff to U.S. Representative Chris Stewart of Utah, teaching and researching economics at the University of Utah, and serving as a Deputy County Attorney in Iron County, Utah. He is a native of Logan, Utah, and now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and three children. Brian's western heritage and values make him a perfect fit for the BLM team.

Since March 15, I have had the honor of leading the BLM. Your tireless dedication to our mission inspires me every day. DOI leaders continually express their confidence in the BLM's leadership in the field and here in Washington, which is a testament to all of you. Thank you for supporting me as the Acting Director over these months, and remaining as ever BLM strong.

During the coming weeks, John and I will transition to different roles. John will return to his position as BLM Nevada State Director, and I will assume the duties of Acting Deputy Director for Operations. I appreciate John's sacrifice over the past seven months while he has lived away from his family and the wide open spaces that he loves.

Please join me in welcoming Brian to his new position. As we move forward, let's continue

to stay focused on our shared mission and values that guide us in our stewardship of America's public lands.

Take care and have a wonderful day! :)
Michael D. Nedd

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Twitter: [@esthernow](https://twitter.com/esthernow)

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Dan DuBray
Acting Assistant Director - Communications (WO-600)
Director's Office (Room 5645)
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240
Office: (202) 208-5207
Twitter: @DuBray

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: StorytellersX
Date: Thursday, November 02, 2017 6:26:54 PM
Attachments: [onepagerstoryteller.pdf](#)

Hi Brad -- before I send this to our scheduling team, want to make sure it was this event that you guys wanted to Secretary to consider in CO for Vet's Day activities. Thanks!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Francavilla, David (VEO)** <David.Francavilla@va.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 2, 2017 at 5:22 PM
Subject: StorytellersX
To: "laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov" <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Wagner, John (Wolf)" <John.Wolf.Wagner@va.gov>

Your invited...!!!

Laura, wanted to make sure you had visibility on this event. This event was a last minute opportunity that Scott Blackburn DEPSEC VA and Jake Leinenkugel (White House advisor) are promoting.

A national press release went out yesterday on this event, and I also enclosed the one pager on why we are doing this.

What: On November 9th, the Mount Carmel Center for Excellence and MyVA Pikes Peak, and The Department of Veteran Affairs will host a conference in which local Veterans will present their stories in a "Ted Talk" like platform. All of our speakers are Veterans from the Colorado community. We have seven speakers scheduled to share their stories of how they excelled as Veteran in their civilian professions and continue to serve their fellow Veterans and community; each presenter will speak for about seven minutes.

Who: Our Confirmed speakers include: Some of the speakers. James Brown - KKTU, Jack Gloriod Berkshire Hathaway, Steve Best – Director of National Cemetery Administration, Randy Read – Former Mayor of Castle Rock; Pat Tetrick, Denver Broncos - Director of Guest Relations. Special Guest from the NFL will include Bronco linebacker Randy Gradishar . Plus we hope to have several local VIPs Garrison Commander of Fort Carson, Mayor, Commandant of the AFA, etc...

Where: 530 Communication Cir, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

When: November 9th, doors open at 3:30pm with the first speaker going on at ~4:00pm

The event will be followed by a social hour to provide an opportunity for community members to network and meet local Veterans and gain an understanding of the Veteran experience, build relationships and connections, and inspire local leaders to empower Veterans to lead again.

David L. Francavilla, MBA, MSS, PMP

Veteran's Experience Office

303-202-8350 (work)

303-748-9992 (cell)

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: Thank you
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:43:02 PM

Photos for consideration, attached. Also, Z asked if we can start doing "profile" pieces on new staff. Let's discuss when we get through the budget. Maybe something for next week when we are in AK.

Thanks,
L

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Skipwith, Aurelia** <aurelia_skipwith@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:37 PM
Subject: Fwd: Thank you
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: (b) (6)

Hi Laura,

At your request, here's the photos from today's run. I'm still recovering...he kicked my tail!

Aurelia Skipwith
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3148
Washington, DC 20240
(202) 208-5837

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Vincent Devito](#)
Subject: Fwd: U.S. Department of the Interior News Briefing for Tuesday, May 2, 2017
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 8:25:32 AM

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bulletin Intelligence** <Interior@bulletinintelligence.com>
Date: Tue, May 2, 2017 at 7:01 AM
Subject: U.S. Department of the Interior News Briefing for Tuesday, May 2, 2017
To: Interior@bulletinintelligence.com

Mobile version and searchable archives available [here](#). Please [click here](#) to subscribe.



DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2017 7:00 AM EDT

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DOI In The News

Secretary Zinke Touts "America First" Energy Policy.

In an op-ed for the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Zinke), Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke writes that like "America's conservationist" president Theodore Roosevelt, President Trump "believes that responsible development of natural resources, conservation stewardship, and outdoor recreation on public lands benefit all Americans." According to Zinke, "developing American energy and achieving American energy independence have three major benefits to the

environment, economy and national security." He recognizes that "while not all public lands are appropriate for energy development, many provide the perfect opportunity to balance energy, conservation and outdoor recreation priorities." Zinke asserts that the Interior Department "leads the way in showing that responsible energy development and conservation stewardship are possible."

Secretary Zinke Says US In Position To Be Energy Dominant. [Bloomberg News](#) (5/1, Blewitt) reports that while speaking at the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said the US is primed to be energy dominant, not just independent, because of hydraulic fracturing and plans to loosen drilling regulations. He said that "fracking is a game-changer – certainly a global game-changer." In regards to the executive order to reconsider regulations about offshore drilling, Zinke said, "My task is to look at it look at where we're going to make changes, recommendations across the board. ... The stars have lined up so we can create energy jobs."

[Reuters](#) (5/1, Hampton) reports Zinke signed two orders on Monday to facilitate offshore oil exploration. The first order directed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to issue a new five-year plan for development on the US Outer Continental Shelf. He said that the order implements President Trump's directive to ban drilling in parts of the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans. Zinke's second order created a new position in his office, counselor to the secretary, to coordinate the department's energy portfolio, which encompasses 10 bureaus.

The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1, Blum) reports Zinke wants the Interior Department to generate more federal revenue from oil and gas production. He also said he wants to reorganize the department to allow for more state and local control. For example, he indicated that Houston and Seattle have different views and priorities on energy development, and those differences should be recognized in policies.

[The Hill](#) (5/1, Cama) reports Zinke said that producing more offshore oil and gas is good for the economy, national security and the environment, because the US has strong safeguards for drilling. He said, "The United States has the most stringent, toughest, best regulatory framework for safety and environmental extraction of our resources in the world, undisputed."

[Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1) reports that Zinke "stressed a balance of careful regulation and energy development, and said he wanted to protect the nation's water and air quality." He was "also careful to credit his inspiration for balancing public and private use of the lands, or a "multi-use" policy, to President Theodore Roosevelt, the founding father of the nation's public forests, prairies and waters."

Additional coverage was provided by [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Blum), [World Oil](#) (5/1), [Oil and Gas Online](#) (5/1), the [Maritime Executive](#) (5/1), and [E&P Magazine](#) (5/1, Vermillion).

BP Says Imaging Technology Identified 1 Billion Potential Barrel In Gulf Of Mexico. [Reuters](#) (5/1) reports Richard Morrison, the head of BP's Gulf of Mexico region, said that the use of a new seismic imaging technology has identified a potential 1 billion additional barrels at four of its US offshore fields. Speaking at the OTC conference, Morrison said the imaging technology was used at its Atlantis, Mad Dog, Thunder Horse and Na Kika fields. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Handy) reports Morrison said that BP's offshore drilling operations have adapted to a lower oil price environment. He said the company can profit at

\$50 a barrel, but will not drill if prices dip lower. He said, "The grit and determination required to weather the last 24 months will be equally important over the next 24 months." The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1, Handy) reports that Morrison said he did not expect conditions in the market to improve in the months ahead. However, he did show that projects can be profitable at \$40 a barrel. He pointed to the Mad Dog project, in which the company decided to use standard industry technology rather than custom designed equipment to cut costs. It also reduced its fleet of vessels and helicopters, along with its workforce. [Rigzone](#) (5/1, Jones) reports the Morrison said the low price environment has not compromised operation safety, adding that accidents did not increase in the Gulf of Mexico or anywhere else within the company. He also said the costs of projects still justify attention in the deepwater industry. He said, "The economics for deepwater investments make as much sense today as they did in 2001. ... BP has rebalanced the cost and revenue equation, so that our Gulf of Mexico free cash, breakeven point is less than \$40 per barrel."

[Upstream Online](#) (5/1) also provided coverage.

Brazil Tries To Draw Investments At OTC. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Eaton) reports that amid recent corruption scandals, Brazil is working to bring oil companies to new exploration contracts by offering the most offshore acreage in its history, and by promising to lower local content rules, taxes and royalties for risky investments. The country plans to auction off 287 exploration blocks in 10 separate rounds over the next three years in an effort to increase daily oil production by 2 million barrels over the next ten decades, according to Brazilian officials at the Offshore Technology Conference. Jorge Camargo, president of the Instituto Brasileiro do Petroleo, said, "Brazil is emerging from the worst economic and political crisis in its modern history. ... We're beginning now a new era where we have a more diverse, competitive, transparent and friendly environment for private investment."

Mexico Inviting Nominations For Deepwater Block Auction. [Platts](#) (5/1, Spencer) reports Mexico is inviting domestic and international oil companies to submit nominations on 119 deepwater blocks available on its side of the Gulf of Mexico. Aldo Flores Quiroga, the country's deputy energy secretary for hydrocarbons said that some of the nominations may be included in a bid round this December. The nomination process, which started in March and will be open for three months, will help decide which and how many blocks to offer in the auction. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1) reports that Flores Quiroga, speaking at the OTC, said that Mexico's energy reforms were not hindered by the oil price bust. He said, "What that means is we're doing this because it makes sense regardless of the price of oil. ... It is indeed a challenge but our commitment — from what you can tell from how we're marching forward — is very strong."

OTC Focusing On Reducing Offshore Costs. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Handy) reports Houston's Offshore Technology Conference started Monday morning as companies seek to highlight new technologies and strategies to rebuild the offshore drilling industry after the oil bust. Industry professionals gather to examine technology that tries to reduce expenses to help deepwater drillers compete with lower cost shale companies. The conference is expected to be more upbeat this year following the market collapse in 2016, when attendance was the lowest since the Great Recession. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1) reports Red Wing Shoes was one of several vendors at OTC who said that fewer unemployed oil

and gas workers have been dropping off resumes at display booths in a sign that the oil and gas job market has improved since last year. Red Wing Shoes has seen sales increase for boots, hard hats and safety goggles for workers heading back into the oil patch. Robert Warren, VP of global sales and distribution for Red Wing, said oil companies are back to conducting manpower studies to see how many workers will be needed for new oil and gas projects. Warren said, "There weren't any manpower studies last year. It was about how many people they needed to get rid of. ... Now they need to hire."

[Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Eaton) reports people at the conference said that even though oil prices are currently sitting around \$50 a barrel, it will still take at least a year before the offshore oil industry recovers after last year's collapse. Peter Moran, a general manager at RSCC, said, "Last year was like a funeral. ... This year is like being in the ICU. Everyone's ready for it to come back." Courtney Smith, a marketing specialist at Varel International Energy Services, said, "With the shale out in Odessa, things have been picking up a lot. ... But it's going to be another year and a half before offshore gets back to where it was before." The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1, Hunn) reports deepwater drillers are looking to standardize technology in order to cut costs, save time and boost production. BP is using its supercomputer to detail the subsea geography to better pinpoint optimum drilling locations. Baker Hughes has a new, more universal tool for deepsea hydraulic fracturing that can save about 25 days of rig time. Dril-Quip has adopted aerospace techniques to build a new subsea wellhead that takes two to three days less to install on the ocean floor. Marcus Smedley, VP of sales and marketing at Dril-Quip, said, "There's a lot of effort in the industry to standardize designs, standardize materials, to make things less expensive." Neal Anderson, chief executive of energy research at Wood Mackenzie, said, "With the deep water, all our clients are asking, 'Where are costs going?'"

Tomlinson: OTC Brings Speakers Who Have An Interest In Industry's Survival.

Chris Tomlinson writes in his column for the [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1, Tomlinson) that while the attendance at the OTC is more subdued than in years past, the industry insists that it is not dead. Speakers used to focus on how new technology would allow them to drill in ultradeepwater or find the most difficult oil reservoirs. As the conference started, the main focus was on reducing costs and choosing contractors wisely to weather the oil price downturn. Tomlinson says that at least two-thirds of the panels this year are about reducing costs, but that the "problem with conferences like OTC is that only those who believe in the industry's future get to speak." Tomlinson said, "Everyone taking the stage has an interest in the industry's survival, and in the case of corporations, no executive will dare say anything that might impact the stock price."

Baker Hughes Bringing Shale Technology To Deepwater. The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1, Blum, Hunn) reports that Baker Hughes is bringing the technological advancement that facilitated the shale revolution to the deepwater industry with its new "DeepFrac" technology. The product, unveiled at the OTC, is intended to produce more oil in concentrated areas while using less time and money. Jim Sessions, Baker Hughes VP for completions, said the technology would not suddenly make the offshore industry profitable again, but it could increase the efficiency of production and lower costs.

OES Unveils New Offshore Life Cycle Inspection Service. [Offshore](#)

[Magazine](#) (5/1) reports OES Oilfield Service Group renamed itself OES Asset Integrity Management and unveiled a new lifecycle inspection technology for the offshore industry at the OTC. The ARCUS platform is supposed to provide a number of services that encompass the life cycle of a range of offshore assets and facilities. It helps to deal with the planning and construction stage and reactivation through all phases of operation until decommissioning.

Houston Chronicle Highlights Realtime Fatigue Monitoring System. The [Houston Chronicle](#) (5/1) highlights Stress Engineering Services' Realtime Fatigue Monitoring System as a method of providing field measurements of stress and fatigue on drilling risers, vertical pipes, wellheads, and other subsea equipment. The OTC recognized the product as an advanced technical solution to the challenges of offshore drilling. Stress Engineering says the system allows engineers to receive data on the integrity of well systems and alter the equipment's safety, increase the efficiency, and reduce downtime to reduce the costs of deepwater production.

Companies Bring Trucks To Turn Heads At OTC. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1, Eaton) reports J.H. Larsen, a Norwegian water recycling equipment company, displayed its giant pumps on a truck at the OTC. The company was one of several to bring a large truck into the exposition hall of the conference in an effort to attract some buyers from the US oil patch. The Texas oil field service company Dragon also brought in a giant truck with equipment that blends 120 barrels of proppant, chemicals and water per minute.

Schlumberger: Two New Technologies Improve Decision Making. Schlumberger writes a piece for [E&P Magazine](#) (5/1) highlighting two new technologies that enable better decision making. The AvantGuard system optimizes well performance from poststimulation operations through production. It provides real-time monitoring to ensure that a well is being operated within a secure operating envelope to protect the well. Second, the saturates, aromatics, resins and asphaltenes (SARA) analysis is used for field development planning. The Maze microfluidic SARA analysis can bring highly accurate measurements from any oil sample and across all labs with a smaller environmental footprint.

Airlines Expect Flights To Oil, Gas Areas To Pick Up Along With Oil Prices. [Fuel Fix \(TX\)](#) (5/1) reports Chad Brossman, head of district sales for Delta Airlines in Houston, said that the company has suspended flights to some energy rich regions around the world, but that travel is starting to pick up again as oil prices increase. International airlines had seen a drop in international travel to oil and gas areas as companies but back on international travel to their drilling sites. Delta, Air France, and KLM have a joint booth at the OTC trade show flow to advertise chairs and services to 45 oil and gas destinations around the world.

Continuing Coverage Of Trump's National Monuments Order.

The [Morning Consult](#) (5/1, Fitzpatrick) reports that the Interior Department "says it does not know how many national monuments it will review as a result of last week's executive order on the Antiquities Act, an agency spokeswoman said." Department spokeswoman Heather Swift on Monday "said the agency does not have a 'final' list of monuments that it plans to review." However, "before Trump signed the order, the department circulated a list of 24 monuments that it called the 'full list' of reviewable monuments."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Rio Grande Valley \(TX\) Morning Star](#) (4/26), the [Kaweah \(CA\) Commonwealth](#) (4/28, Elliott), [Yahoo! News](#) (5/1, Wealey), and [WBUR-FM Boston \(MA\)](#) Boston (5/1, Fahys).

Tribes Near Bears Ears National Monument Press Secretary Zinke For Meeting. [Reuters](#) (5/1, Volcovici) reports that “the Native American tribes that help manage the Bears Ears national monument in Utah raised concerns on Monday” that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has “not responded to requests for a meeting ahead of his visit to Utah next week to review its monument designation.” An Interior Department spokesperson “said she did not know whether Zinke planned to meet with the inter-tribal coalition.” Davis Filfred, a Navajo Nation council delegate, said, “If Secretary Zinke truly believes that ‘sovereignty should mean something,’ as he had said, we hope he will finally respond to the Tribes’ multiple requests to meet with him.”

San Juan County Leaders To Meet With Secretary Zinke About Bears Ears. [KUTV-TV](#) Salt Lake City (5/1, Harris) reports that “the three commissioners of San Juan County are in Washington D.C. ahead of a meeting with the Department of the Interior where they plan to support the repeal of the national monument designation of the Bears Ears.” According to the article, “the commission has a scheduled meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Tuesday morning, in addition to meetings with all of the congressional delegates from Utah.”

Maine Gov. LePage To Voice Opposition To National Monuments. The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that Maine Gov. Paul LePage will “be in Washington this week to voice his opposition to national monuments like the one former President Barack Obama created in the state.” LePage will “testify at a House subcommittee on federal lands hearing on Tuesday on the use of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to create monuments.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Bangor \(ME\) Daily News](#) (5/2, Sambides).

Commentary. For the “Pundits” blog of [The Hill](#) (5/1, Schultz, Contributor), David Schultz, editor of the Journal of Public Affairs Education, writes that President Trump’s national monuments order illustrates his “indifference or misunderstanding of the concepts of constitutionalism and rule of law.” Schultz argues that if Trump is looking to undo national monument designations, he is “wrong” and “lacks the authority to undo what previous presidents did, absent congressional authorization.” According to Schultz, “there is no legal basis for Trump to be able to argue that any use of the Antiquities Act since 1996 was an abuse of presidential power or that he has the legal ability along with an executive order to reverse those uses.”

In a piece for the [Huffington Post](#) (5/1, Brune, Contributor), Michael Brune, the executive director of the Sierra Club, also criticizes the national monuments order as “a brazen attack on the 111-year-old Antiquities Act under which those monuments were designated” and “a barefaced betrayal of the American people.” Brune asserts that “none of these national monuments were designated casually or without extensive deliberation and input from surrounding communities.” In fact, he argues that “our national problem isn’t too many monuments — it’s too few.” He urges the public to tell Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke “that any attempt to revoke or shrink our national monuments is an assault on our historical, cultural, and natural heritage.”

Additional commentary appeared in the [Fairfield \(MT\) Sun Times](#) (5/1,

Miele), the [Missoulian \(MT\)](#) (5/1, Ochenski), the [Salt Lake \(UT\) Tribune](#) (5/1, Gehrke), the [Los Angeles \(CA\) Times](#) (5/1), the [Hawaii Tribune-Herald](#) (5/1), the [Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#) (5/1), the [Tampa \(FL\) Tribune](#) (5/1), the [Harrisburg \(PA\) Patriot-News](#) (5/1), the [Southwest Colorado Journal](#) (5/1), and the [Las Cruces \(NM\) Sun-News](#) (5/1, D'Ammassa).

Interior Budget Would Get \$12.3B Under Omnibus Deal.

[E&E Publishing](#) (5/1) reports that "Congressional leaders reached a bipartisan deal" Sunday night "to fund the government through the rest of the year that avoids steep cuts for U.S. EPA and renewable energy programs sought by the Trump administration." For the Interior Department, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Fish and Wildlife Service "would see slight funding increases." Overall, the Interior Department "would get \$12.3 billion, \$42 million more than enacted levels."

Interior Appoints Top Energy Adviser.

The [Washington Examiner](#) (5/1) reports that the Interior Department announced Monday that "it is appointing an Energy Department veteran to coordinate its energy goals across the agency's nine bureaus." Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Vincent DeVito to serve as the department's counselor for energy policy "to strengthen and better coordinate the department's vast energy portfolio," the Interior Department announced. Zinke said, "Like President Trump and myself, Mr. DeVito recognizes that American energy resources create jobs and revenue and that we can both promote responsible energy development and protect traditional multiple use through responsible stewardship of our treasured public lands for future generations to come."

Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Approves \$17.8M In Grants For Wetland, Waterfowl Conservation.

The [Knoxville \(TN\) Daily Sun](#) (5/1) reports that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, chaired by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, has "approved \$17.8 million in grants for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners to conserve or restore more than 108,000 acres of wetland and associated upland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds and other birds in 14 states throughout the United States." The grants, made through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, will be "matched by nearly \$40 million in partner funds." Zinke said, "Hunting and fishing are the cornerstones of Americans' sportsmen heritage, and today, sportsmen and women are leading efforts in wildlife conservation. The projects approved today by the commission will benefit hundreds of wetland and coastal bird species, other wildlife and their habitats, ensuring we have the ability to pass our shared heritage down to our kids and grandkids."

Cantwell Raises Concerns About Bernhardt.

[Politico Morning Energy](#) (5/1) reports that President Trump's pick to be Interior Deputy Secretary, David Bernhardt is going to face scrutiny in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Sen. Maria Cantwell said, "I am gravely concerned about Mr. Bernhardt's record of working on behalf of corporations at the expense of the environment, and his history at the

Department of Interior during years plagued by ethical scandals. The committee must do its job in closely scrutinizing his record and any conflicts of interest.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Denver \(CO\) Business Journal](#) (5/1, Harden) and [KUSA-TV Denver \(CO\)](#) Denver (5/1).

Additional Coverage: Secretary Zinke Announces Historic Preservation Grants.

Additional coverage of the awarding of \$26.9 million in historic preservation grants and “\$5.7 million in grants to more than 160 tribes for cultural and heritage preservation projects on their tribal lands” was provided by the [Knoxville \(TN\) Daily Sun](#) (5/1) and the [AP](#) (5/1).

WTimes Energy Series: “Unleashing America’s Full Energy Potential.”

The Washington Times published a series of opinion pieces from leading energy officials and experts as part of a Special Report titled, “Energy 2017: Unleashing America’s full energy potential – in all of its forms.” The [Washington Times’](#) (5/1, Department) Advocacy Department, which prepared the series, provides a broad outline of the major energy and environmental policies pursued by the Trump administration in its first 100 days. Specifically, they cite executive orders intended to resurrect the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines; rollback key Obama-era environmental regulations; open up federal lands to coal mining; direct the Interior Department to review national monument designations; and end the ban on new offshore drilling leases.

Secretary Perry: US Energy Security Requires “Unleashing America’s Full Energy” Potential. In his op-ed in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1, Perry) Energy Secretary Rick Perry writes that the Trump administration’s energy policy is focused on “unleashing America’s full energy in all of its forms,” developing “cutting-edge energy technologies,” and overhauling “harmful regulations that prioritized a political agenda over the realistic needs of baseload generation.” At the recent G-7 Energy Ministers’ Meeting, Perry says he discussed energy-security challenges, which the Trump administration believes can be address by utilizing our “abundance of energy resources to advance the national security and economic interests of our friends and our allies.” According to Perry, President Trump “doesn’t just want America to be energy-independent; he wants America to be energy-dominant.”

Assuming a similar tone, Reps. Greg Walden, Fred Upton, and John Shimkus write in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Walden, Upton, Shimkus) that under the Trump administration, the U.S. has “started to to usher in a new era — one that capitalizes on our energy abundance.” They advocate for policies that “build on our nation’s energy abundance, modernize our energy infrastructure, and promote domestic manufacturing and job growth,” and argue that they don’t need to be mutually exclusive with environmental protection.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski: US Must Upgrade Infrastructure, Strengthen Cybersecurity. Sen. Lisa Murkowski writes in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Murkowski) to highlight the “twin energy imperatives” of upgrading energy infrastructure and strengthening cybersecurity. Noting that upgrading and building infrastructure is a “expensive and time-consuming process,” she

praises the Trump administration for making infrastructure a “national priority,” and says she “look[s] forward to working with him” and members of the Senate to develop a broad infrastructure package.

Also in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Chapman), Adrian P. Chapman, President and Chief Operating Officer of WGL Holdings, Inc., writes that our nation’s “aging infrastructure is in significant need of investment and care if we want to ensure a secure future for coming generations.”

“Regulatory Assault” On American Workers Is Over, Says EPA Chief. In an op-ed in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1, Pruitt) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt says that “relief — and prosperity — is on the way” thanks to the Trump administration’s promise to end the “regulatory assault on American workers.” Going forward, Pruitt says that EPA will no longer be allowed to “pick winners and losers through regulation,” and that regulatory certainty will prevail for the states and businesses they affect.

Also in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1, Grande) Bette Grande, a research fellow at The Heartland Institute, praises the Trump administration for quickly moving to eliminate the “onerous Waters of the United States rule, Stream Protection Rule and the Clean Power Plan.” She believes “each state must deal with its own unique issues and impose policies that weigh the true costs and benefits of energy and environmental regulatory schemes.”

Sen. Manchin: Clean Coal Offers Opportunities For US On Global Market. In an op-ed in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1, Manchin) West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin praises coal as “one of our most reliable sources of electricity.” He says that the future of coal should be secured “through pursuing and supporting advanced coal technologies and efficiencies.” Moreover, he views the increase in coal-fired capacity in India and China as an opportunity for the U.S. to bring “clean coal technology to commercialization” and export it to the rest of the world.

Similarly, Republican Rep. David B. McKinley, P.E. who represents the 1st Congressional District of West Virginia, argues in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, McKinley) that the Obama administration’s “war on coal devastated small towns and communities.” He says that over those eight years, 400 mines were closed, 246 coal-fired plants were shut down, and 83,000 jobs were lost. Looking ahead, Rep. McKinley advocates an “all-of-the-above” energy policy that includes research for clean coal technology and fossil fuels.

Meanwhile, Republican Rep. Paul A. Gosar asserts in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Gosar) that most people don’t actually know what an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy entails. He says that such a strategy includes responsible oil and gas production, natural gas exports, expanded use of hydropower, and expedited permitting for major energy projects.

Conservationist Urges EPA To Reconsider Ethanol Mandates. The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Jung) includes an op-ed from Jerry Jung, “a retired businessman and conservationist who became concerned when Monarch Butterflies stopped arriving at his hobby farm in central Michigan after migrating from Mexico.” Jung opposes the EPA’s ethanol mandates, which he claims have resulted in increased emissions; harmful impacts to wildlife and biodiversity; and no proven role in reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Jacobson: Clean Energy Benefits US Consumers, Manufacturers. Lisa Jacobson, President of the Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE), advocates for clean energy in her op-ed in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1,

Jacobson) asserting that energy efficiency, natural gas and renewable energy have clearly been shown to benefit “American consumers, American businesses and American manufacturers.”

Rep. Dan Newhouse writes in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Newhouse) that he is “committed to advocating for hydropower as one of the most affordable — and underutilized — sources of energy that our country is capable of expanding in order to provide more clean, renewable power.” As a new member of the House Appropriations Committee’s Energy and Water Subcommittee, Rep. Newhouse said he will push for legislation to simplify the permitting process for non-federal hydropower projects.

Also in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Kiernan) Tom Kiernan, CEO of the American Wind Energy Association, praises wind energy for its role in “making the grid and America’s electricity mix more diverse, secure, and — now that turbines have scaled up across 41 states — more reliable too.”

Mark McManus, General President of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry, writes in the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, McManus) that his union “wholeheartedly believe[s] that an overall approach — inclusive of economic impact, grid reliability and climate change — is the best formula when it comes to developing a balanced energy mix.” He touches broadly on the positive aspects of all energy sources, including solar and wind power, along with nuclear energy and fossil fuels including natural gas and coal.

Writing in the [Washington Times](#), (5/1, McCallister) Terry D. McCallister, Chairman and CEO of Washington Gas, says “as the cleanest of fossil fuels, natural gas is, and will continue to be, a mainstay of our nation’s energy portfolio going forward.”

Federally-Funded Research Is Critical To Energy Innovation. Jay Faison, founder and CEO of ClearPath Foundation, and Rich Powell, executive director of ClearPath Foundation, enthusiastically support federally-funded energy research in their op-ed in the [Washington Times](#). (5/1, Faison, Powell) According to the authors, the “human genome project, shale gas revolution, nuclear energy, touchscreens and the discovery of dinosaur extinction...all owe their success to the Department of Energy and its predecessors.” They argue that the federal government is better suited to provide long-term investments in major energy research. Moreover, the benefits of such new energy technologies “benefit everybody,” so it’s a natural fit for the government.

America’s Great Outdoors

National Park Service

NPS To Install Parking Meters Along National Mall.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that “free parking on the National Mall will soon be coming to an end.” The National Park Service has “long planned to install parking meters in about 1,200 spaces that are currently free.” The NPS “says installation of those meters will begin on or after May 15.” The meters are set to be activated on June 12.

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by [Fox News](#) (5/1), the [Baltimore \(MD\) Sun](#) (5/1), [Philly \(PA\)](#) (5/1), [U.S. News & World Report](#) (5/1), he

[Washington \(DC\) Post](#) (5/1, Press), the [Daily Mail](#) (5/1), and [WTTG-TV Washington \(DC\)](#) Washington (5/1).

Additional coverage was provided by the [Alexandria \(VA\) News](#) (5/1).

Environmental Group Warns Against New Mexico Foot Race In Bear Country.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that “environmentalists are criticizing the decision to repeat a backcountry trail race after a long-distance runner was attacked by a bear last year at a National Park Service preserve in northern New Mexico.” Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility on Monday said the NPS is “downplaying the threat of interactions between wildlife and participants in a 50-mile race on May 20 at the Valles Caldera National Preserve.” The article notes that “a mother bear with three cubs was euthanized last year by state wildlife officials after attacking and injuring a marathon runner as she raced through the Valles Caldera.” A park service “evaluation of this year’s race describes a continued threat of human interaction with bears and bear cubs, while noting a positive influence on recreation and public relations at the preserve.”

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by the [Albuquerque \(NM\) Journal](#) (5/1), [KCBD-TV Lubbock \(TX\)](#) Lubbock, TX (5/1), and [KOAT-TV Albuquerque \(NM\)](#) Albuquerque, NM (5/1).

Devils Tower National Monument Benefits Local Economy.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that “visitors to Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming spent more than \$31 million in communities near the park last year.” According to the National Park Service report, “the spending by the 498,000 visitors to the nation’s first national monument supported 500 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of nearly \$40 million.” Monument Superintendent Tim Reid “says national park tourism is a significant driver in state and local economies, returning \$10 for every \$1 spent in National Park Service units.”

NPS Proposes Replacing Housing At Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

[Ozark Radio News \(MO\)](#) (5/1) reports that the National Park Service is “proposing to replace obsolete park housing at four locations within Ozark National Scenic Riverways.” The project includes “four existing housing areas that no longer meet minimum housing requirements due to significant deficiencies.”

Fish and Wildlife Service

High Court Declines To Hear Polar Bear Habitat Challenge.

[The Hill](#) (5/1, Wheeler) reports that the Supreme Court on Monday declined “to hear a challenge to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s decision to designate 187,000 square miles of Alaska’s coast and waters a critical habitat for the threatened polar bear.” The high court’s “refusal to hear the case leaves in place a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling upholding the designation.” It “gave no explanation for its decision not to hear the cases.”

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that “Alaska officials, the American Petroleum

Institute and others said the designation was too extensive and accused the agency over overreaching.”

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by [ABC News](#) (5/1), the [Albuquerque \(NM\) Journal](#) (5/1), the [Minneapolis \(MN\) Star Tribune](#) (5/1), [Philly \(PA\)](#) (5/1), the [San Francisco \(CA\) Chronicle](#) (5/1), [U.S. News & World Report](#) (5/1), the [Washington \(DC\) Post](#) (5/1, Press), the [Business Insider](#) (5/1), the [Daily Mail](#) (5/1), and [WRAL-TV Raleigh \(NC\)](#) Raleigh, NC (5/1).

FWS, Seattle To Sign Urban Bird Treaty.

The [Seattle](#) (5/1, Hirsch) reports that on May 5, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service “joins Seattle Audubon, Audubon Washington, Heron Habitat Helpers, Seattle Parks and Recreation Department, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other partners to sign a treaty designating the City of Seattle as an Urban Bird Treaty City.” Robyn Thorson, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Region, said, “Migratory bird conservation is only possible through collaboration with partners. We are proud to recognize the efforts of many diverse partners in the Seattle area whose work has led to this milestone signing, and eager to see what the continued power of collaboration will produce for birds in the Puget Sound area.”

Fire In Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge Could Take Months To Fight.

[Reuters](#) (5/1, Woodall) reports that “a wildfire that has burned more than 100,000 acres (40,469 hectares) at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in southern Georgia could take until November before it is put out, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said on Monday.” According to Mark Davis, spokesman for the service, “the fire has burned about one-fourth of the wildlife refuge, and the blaze is considered only eight-percent contained.” Davis said, “November is the worst-case scenario. The firefighters’ plan is to contain the fire as best they can, hoping that nature will cooperate with some rainfall.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Florida Times-Union](#) (5/1, Dickson) and [WJXT-TV](#) Jacksonville, FL (5/1).

Additional Coverage: Wyoming Assumes Management Of Wolves.

Additional coverage that “the Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., entered its final order in favor of Wyoming in a lawsuit that landed wolves back on the endangered species list in 2014” was provided by the [Casper \(WY\) Star-Tribune](#) (5/1, Peterson) and the [New York \(NY\) Times](#) (5/1, Robbins).

Bureau of Land Management

Ceremony At Fort Huachuca Celebrates New “Hotshots”.

The [Eastern Arizona Courier](#) (5/1, Petermann) reports that Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management Mike Nedd on April 28 flew out from Washington, D.C. “to attend a simple ceremony celebrating a new fire station on Fort Huachuca.” His “comments during a brief ceremony Friday highlighted a relatively new partnership between the BLM and the U.S. Army, utilizing facilities on Fort Huachuca to establish an elite group of ‘Hotshots’ working a three-state area.” The ceremony “christened Arizona’s newest wildland firefighting facility, converting a former motor pool on Fort Huachuca into an

impressive headquarters where equipment can be maintained and stored.”

BLM’s Challis Field Office Finds New, Temporary Home.

[KIFI-TV](#) Idaho Falls, ID (5/1) reports that the Bureau of Land Management Challis Field Office has “found a new temporary home.” BLM said “the office will move to an old Middle School Building at 721 E. Main Avenue, Suite 8, in Challis.” The article notes that “phone lines, e-mail, and normal office hours will be temporarily disrupted the week of May 8 as the office is physically moved.” BLM field manager Todd Kuck. said, “We were fortunate to work with the school district to secure a more permanent location at the old middle school site off Main Street. The school district has been great to work with as we’ve developed plans for our transition.”

US Geological Survey

Low-flying Helicopter To Survey Cedar Rapids For Groundwater Study.

[KCRG-TV](#) Cedar Rapids, IA (5/1) reports that a low-flying helicopter will survey Cedar Rapids over the next few days as part of a groundwater survey for the city and the United States Geological Survey. Greg Delzer, a hydrologist with the USGS, “said the kind of survey the city and federal agency are cooperating on is a vast improvement over older methods.” He said, “We’ve been doing groundwater models for years. This is kind of the wave of the future.”

Securing America’s Energy Future

Offshore Energy Development

Senators Call On Trump Administration To Protect Coastlines From Offshore Drilling.

The [Dover \(DE\) Post](#) (5/1) reports that 27 Democratic senators called on the Trump Administration “to protect the coastlines of the U.S. from offshore oil drilling.” Led by Sens. Edward J. and Robert Menendez, “the group of lawmakers sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke urging him not to revise the 2017-22 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program — Five-Year Plan — to eliminate protections for the east and west coasts, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and for the sensitive marine ecosystems in the Arctic Ocean.” In the letter, the senators say “that oil companies are currently holding and warehousing leases in the Gulf of Mexico that comprise an area nearly the size of Kentucky, so there is no need to open up any new areas to oil drilling and the threat of a spill.”

Additional coverage of the order was provided by the [Press of Atlantic City \(NJ\)](#) (5/1, Skeldon), the [Los Angeles \(CA\) Weekly](#) (5/1, Romero), and [KPBS-TV San Diego \(CA\)](#) San Diego (5/1).

Trump Oil Drilling Review Sets Up Clash Over Florida’s Gulf Waters. [Politico](#) (5/1, Ritchie) reports that Sen. Bill Nelson on Monday “emphasized Pentagon opposition to Gulf oil drilling as an industry representative sought to downplay such concerns.” Nelson said “he received on Monday an April 26 letter from a Pentagon official to U. S. Rep. Matt Gaetz raising concerns about the effect on

training missions in the eastern Gulf of Mexico off Florida, where there is a moratorium on drilling and related activities." The letter was sent in response to a March 27 letter from Gaetz "and other members of the congressional delegation raising concerns about the threat of drilling to military missions."

The [Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#) (5/1, Pittman) reports in its Buzz Florida Politics blog that the Pentagon says keeping the current moratorium on oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico beyond 2022 is "essential for developing and sustaining our nation's future combat capabilities," according to a letter sent to US Rep. Matt Gaetz. Anthony M. Kurta, the acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, wrote the letter in which he indicated that the Department of Defense "cannot overstate the vital importance of maintaining this moratorium."

The [South Florida Sun Sentinel](#) (4/28) reports Florida's lawmakers said the President Trump's actions on offshore drilling pose a threat to Florida's Atlantic coast. Sen. Bill Nelson, along with US Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Ted Deutch, called for a return to the bipartisan consensus among Florida's elected officials against offshore drilling. Deutch said, "There is not a person who lives in Florida on the coastline, a family in Florida who visits our beaches, a small business who thrives on the business generated on our pristine coastline who thinks it's a good idea of have drilling off our pristine coastline."

The [Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#) (5/1) reports in its Buzz Florida Politics blog that Florida Reps. Vern Buchanan and Debbie Wasserman Schultz proposed legislation that would extend the five year moratorium on drilling off Florida's Gulf coast until 2027. The release said, "The legislation also makes the oil company responsible for a spill pay for cleanup efforts and provides grant funding to states. ... Currently oil companies are only held accountable for oil spill cleanup if the oil is transported in a single-hull vessel."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Atlanta \(GA\) Journal-Constitution](#) (5/1, Leary) and [WFOR-TV Miami \(FL\)](#) Miami (5/1, Scouten).

API Urges Regulators To Allow Drilling In Eastern Gulf Of Mexico. [The Hill](#) (5/1, Henry) reports the API wants regulators to consider allowing drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Erik Milito, API's upstream and industry operations group director, said, "The eastern Gulf is in close proximity to existing production and infrastructure, and opening it would spur investment and economic activity that could create thousands of jobs and provide billions of dollars in government revenue." He went on to say, "We're optimistic — we think that it would be essential, from an energy security standpoint, both for national security reasons and for the continuing demand for oil and gas that we're going to see for a long time, for Interior to take a serious look at the eastern Gulf of Mexico."

Executive Order Likely To Be Hindered By Legal Challenges, Oil Market. [E&E Publishing](#) (5/1) reports that while offshore drillers have praised President Trump's executive order to expand drilling around the US, oil and gas from offshore leasing are not likely to flow for years because of legal challenges from environmental groups, continued poor energy prices, and the industry's hesitance to lease in expensive regions. Ken Silverstein writes a contributing piece for [Forbes](#) (5/1, Silverstein) saying that President Trump's executive order will not have much of an effect because the development of traditional oil has been declining for years and it is not economically advantageous for

explorers. He says that with a protracted legal fight over the executive order, investments will move towards alternative energies and unconventional shale oil and gas operations.

Companies Appeal For Seismic Permits For Atlantic Surveys. The [Hampton Roads \(VA\) Virginian-Pilot](#) (5/1, Mayfield) reports that “a half-dozen companies that in early January were denied federal permits for seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic have appealed the decisions, betting that the Trump administration will look more favorably on the controversial testing for oil and gas deposits.” According to the article, “the companies – TGS, WesternGeco, CGG Services, Spectrum Geo, Multi Klient Invest and ION Geophysical – have proposed the surveys off the coast of Virginia and other East Coast states, from Delaware to Florida.” The article says that “it’s been more than 30 years since the last seismic tests along the coastline, and industry officials have said improved technology likely would mean much more accurate estimates of oil and gas reserves out in the Atlantic.”

Helvarg: Trump Should Let Post-Carbon Market Develop In California. David Helvarg, the executive director of Blue Frontier, writes an op-ed for the [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/1, Helvarg) urging for a renewable energy future, rather than drilling for oil off the coast of California. He writes that in order to get to a future that is not under dire threat from global warming, “the president would have to remove his undersized thumb from the scales and let the U.S. post-carbon market, particularly in California, catch up with the green energy industrial expansion of China and Germany.” While Helvarg says, “Trump’s executive order can’t change things immediately, not least because the current price of oil makes offshore drilling much less attractive than it used to be,” he urges concerted action to protect against climate change.

Florida Agrees To Plan To Distribute BP Oil Spill Money.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports Florida lawmakers “have agreed on a plan to hand out millions of dollars given to the state for damages related to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.” On Monday, the Florida Senate “voted unanimously for a bill that would guarantee that \$300 million be distributed to eight Panhandle counties that were hardest hit by the spill.” The legislation goes “back to the Florida House, which is expected to approve it.”

Onshore Energy Development

Environmental, Tribal Groups Urge Court To Block New Mexico Drilling Permits.

[Law360](#) (5/1, Sieniuc) reports that “environmentalists and a Navajo tribal group urged a New Mexico federal court Friday to block the Bureau of Land Management from carrying out any further drilling in New Mexico’s Mancos Shale in their challenge to more than 350 previously issued drilling permits, saying the agency hasn’t completed the proper environmental reviews or public consultations under the National Environmental Policy Act.”

Spending Bill Includes Provision For Coal Miners’ Healthcare Benefits.

[Reuters](#) (5/1, Volcovici) reports the federal “government and coal companies will be required to pay out healthcare to retired coal miners, guaranteeing

benefits to workers even as coal companies face bankruptcy, after Congress on Sunday reached a fiscal spending agreement for 2017." This provision to provide the United Mine Workers' healthcare benefits was part of the spending bill which lawmakers negotiated on Sunday. The article adds that some "22,600 coal miners and their families were on the brink of losing on April 30 their healthcare benefits, which were at risk of default as the industry struggled, with companies trying to recover from bankruptcies."

North Dakota Governor Ask For Federal Aid For Pipeline Protest Costs.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports Gov. Doug Burgum of North Dakota is asking President Trump "for federal reimbursement of \$38 million in state law enforcement costs related to months of protests over construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline." On Saturday, Burgum emailed the president "seeking a presidential disaster declaration to pave the way for federal aid." Officials in the White House did not "immediately comment on the likelihood of Trump declaring a disaster."

The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Richardson) reports Burgum "also encouraged the administration to conduct a review of disaster declaration criteria 'to include intentional human-made disasters,' saying that the months-long Dakota Access demonstration 'underscored the changing nature of protests in America.'" Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota announced yesterday "that the Senate Appropriations Committee has approved up to \$15 million in federal funding to help with the state's Dakota Access costs."

Lummis: Wyoming Integrated Test Center Offers Real World Opportunity To Test Carbon Capture.

Former Rep. Cynthia Lummis writes in [The Hill](#) (5/1) "Pundits Blog" blog that Wyoming is aware that "Coal, once again, has an ally in the White House." He has "signed executive orders to roll back the Clean Power Plan, reopen coal leasing on federal lands and rescind the royalty valuation rule." Yet even with such changes, "low natural gas prices have eroded coal's market share." Wyoming has invested \$15 million in its Wyoming Integrated Test Center in cooperation with Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. The center is at the Dry Fork Station coal plant.

Senate Urged To Nullify Methane Rule.

In an op-ed for the [Morning Consult](#) (5/2, Pyle), Thomas Pyle is president of the American Energy Alliance, urges the Senate to nullify a "Bureau of Land Management regulation dealing with methane venting and flaring on federal lands." Doing so, Pyle argues, "would save American jobs and protect households from higher energy costs." He also argues that the BLM regulation "would only reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 0.0092 percent."

Trump Orders Benefit Coal Country.

In a piece for [TIME](#) (5/1, Phillips), Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, writes that President Trump's "team has delivered on a key campaign promise that will help people to improve their lives: removing regulatory barriers that are denying opportunities to working families." Phillips

points to the executive order “halting the implementation of all pending regulations” and an order “requiring that for every new federal regulation, at least two others be repealed.” In addition, the Trump Administration has “enlisted the help of Congress to repeal regulations through the Congressional Review Act,” including eliminating the “stream protection rule.”

Renewable Energy

BOEM Sets East Coast Offshore Meeting.

[reNews](#) (5/1) reports that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management plans “to meet with federal, state and local officials to discuss offshore wind leasing off the coasts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.” The Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force meeting, “which is taking place on 16 May in Falmouth, will include updates on BOEM’s existing commercial wind leases and plans for future leasing initiatives in the Atlantic.”

Rhode Island Now Receiving More Wind Energy From First US Offshore Farm.

The [AP](#) (5/1) reports that Deepwater Wind’s five turbines, the nation’s first offshore wind farm, is now powering more of Rhode Island after the Block Island Power County shut down its diesel generators. As a result, the power company “says Block Island’s 2,000 electric customers now have access to cheaper and cleaner energy at stable prices.”

Empowering Native American Communities

High Court To Examine Power Of Congress To Affect Outcome Of Court Cases.

[Roll Call](#) (5/1, Ruger) reports that the Supreme Court “agreed Monday to decide a case that could reshape Congress’ power to use legislation to affect the outcome of specific ongoing court cases – in this instance, a 2014 law about a Michigan land tract and its use as a Native American casino.” The action “puts the justices back into a long chain of litigation and legislation about whether the Interior Department could take that tract into trust for the Gun Lake Tribe of Pottawatomi Indians to pave the way for gaming operations – and whether a nearby resident can sue to stop it.” According to Roll Call, “the case likely will be set for arguments in the next term that starts in October, and it will be the second time the Supreme Court rules in the case.”

Additional coverage was provided by [E&E Publishing](#) (5/1, Reilly), [Courthouse News](#) (5/1, Leonard), [MLive \(MI\)](#) (5/1, Harger), the [World Casino Directory](#) (5/1, Kelley), and the [Nation Sun News](#) (5/1).

Alaska Tribal Organization Council Seeks To Put Juneau Parcels Into Trust.

The [Alaska Public Radio Network](#) (5/1, Resneck) reports, “Southeast Alaska’s largest tribal organization has applied to the federal government to put seven parcels in downtown Juneau into a federal trust.” The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska’s “application calls for putting seven

downtown parcels into a federal trust.”

Widow Of Man Killed In Accident With BIA Employee Wins \$2M In Death Case.

[Law360](#) (5/1, Lidgett) reports that “a Oklahoma federal judge has awarded the widow of a man killed in an accident involving a Bureau of Indian Affairs employee almost \$2 million in her wrongful death suit against the federal government, saying the employee didn’t safely operate the bus he was driving.”

Office Of Insular Affairs

GAO: Removal Of Foreign Workers Would Hurt NMI Economy.

The [Saipan \(MNP\) Tribune](#) (5/2, Perez) reports that “the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress believes the CNMI’s economy would take a huge hit if all foreign workers are removed from the labor market.” David Gootnick, International Affairs and Trade director of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, “said in his testimony read in last week’s U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee hearing that foreign workers under the CNMI-Only Transitional Nonimmigrant Worker visa or CW1 program comprised 45 percent of the CNMI’s labor force in 2015.” Gootnick said, “GAO’s preliminary economic analysis projects a 26- to 62-percent reduction in the CNMI’s 2015 gross domestic product—[based on] the most recent GDP [data] available.”

Top National News

Media Analyses: Bipartisan Budget Agreement A Loss For Trump.

Analyses of the agreement on a [1,665-page omnibus budget bill](#) to fund the government through September 30 are in agreement that the deal is a loss for the Trump Administration, with very few of the goals of the President’s budget outline included. Some analyses call the agreement a total loss for the White House, while others say the President at least manages to avoid a government shutdown. But reports highlight that border wall funding and sought-after cuts are not included, and that in addition to showing the continued clout of minority Democrats, the agreement could set an ominous precedent for the Administration in that congressional GOP leaders worked out the agreement without the White House.

The [New York Times](#) (5/1, Kaplan) runs a piece headlined “Winners And Losers Of The Spending Deal (Spoiler Alert: Trump Lost).” The Times says that the “more than \$1 trillion spending deal that congressional leaders reached on Sunday was an act of compromise, a rarity in a highly polarized Congress.” But the White House “has little to brag about in this deal. The agreement provides an additional \$15 billion in military spending, but that is only half of what Mr. Trump had sought.” And many cuts that President Trump sought were not part of the deal. The [AP](#) (5/1, Taylor) says the agreement shows “that Democrats retain considerable clout in Donald Trump’s turbulent presidency.”

[The Hill](#) (5/1, Marcos, Lillis) says that both “congressional Democrats” and “Republican leaders” are winners. Democrats “not only forced GOP leaders

to abandon drastic spending cuts favored by the Trump administration, but also stripped out scores of conservative policy amendments the Republicans had hoped to enact under a unified government." The GOP leaders, recognizing that "they'd likely be blamed for a shutdown while holding unified control of Congress and the White House," managed to avoid that. The Hill says that while the President "had to make significant concessions" he avoids "a messy spending fight three months into his presidency." But OMB Director Mulvaney failed to "slash domestic spending" and to "deny certain funds to 'sanctuary cities'" – his two main objectives.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/1, Bierman, Bennett) writes that while the promise to build a wall along the US-Mexico border was "the most indelible aspect of Trump's political branding...over the past week, Trump gave up on pushing Congress to include the billions needed for the wall" in the spending plan. While it "remains a White House priority...the physical wall itself remains very much in doubt." [Politico](#) (5/1, Kim, Wright) writes, "Congressional members didn't just snub Donald Trump on his border wall: They also used the \$1 trillion spending deal hatched over the weekend to rein in the president's powers." The omnibus agreement would "withhold \$2.5 billion in defense funds until the proposal to battle ISIS is produced," and would also bar Attorney General Sessions from interfering in state medical marijuana laws. It "also contains three separate reminders for Trump, who did not seek congressional approval before launching missile strikes against the Syrian government last month, that he must obey the War Powers Act."

The [New York Times](#) (5/1, Hulse) says the outcome "should worry the new president," since "by cutting a bipartisan spending compromise among themselves, Republicans and Democrats in Congress not only prevented the White House from delivering on President Trump's priorities in his very first budget, they also drafted a handy blueprint for circumventing the Trump administration in the future." [Reuters](#) (5/1, Cowan, Gibson) similarly says that Congress "may be mapping a bipartisan path forward that skirts around [Trump] when he refuses to engage constructively with lawmakers." And congressional leaders of both parties took to Twitter. Senate Minority Leader Schumer [posted 15 tweets](#) in a 45-minute period Monday afternoon, calling the agreement "a big win for Democrats" and highlighting funding that was protected for a wide range of programs. House Speaker Ryan also lauded the agreement in [12 tweets](#) posted throughout the day Monday, most of them highlighting the defense and border security funding in the omnibus.

[McClatchy](#) (5/1, Magness) reports that much of what is "missing from the 1,665-page bill...involves items that President Donald Trump promised during his campaign and the early days of his presidency." The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Dinan) says that the \$1.07 trillion omnibus "spends \$700 million per page – the cost of keeping the basic operations of the government running for a year." [USA Today](#) (5/1, Kelly) outlines "what is, and isn't, in the bill."

Sen. Jack Reed [tweeted](#), "Trump Admin wanted to gut #cleanair & #cleanwater programs. The bipartisan #omnibus spending bill Congress is set to pass won't allow it." Sen. Tom Udall [tweeted](#), "I worked hard to ensure #omnibus included no \$ for border wall/ deportation force, no @PPact cuts, more \$ for @NIH & fighting #opioid crisis."

In an editorial, the [Washington Post](#) (5/1) says that "to judge from" the omnibus, congressional leaders' "priorities are not President Trump's

priorities." The agreement is "a tribute to the Democrats' skillful leveraging of their power, even as a minority in both houses; to the Republicans' pragmatic fear of a politically costly partial government shutdown – and to the stubborn persistence of good old-fashioned political horse-trading, even under this supposedly disruptive president." The Post calls it "a temporary victory for basic common sense."

Conservatives Angry Over Agreement. [McClatchy](#) (5/1, Douglas, Daugherty) reports under the headline "Trump Budget Plans Fade, Conservatives Protest" that "the fiery, never-give-in ultra-conservative wing of the GOP is highly displeased with the budget agreement reached this week." Ken Cuccinelli of the Senate Conservatives Fund said, "Instead of fighting for President Trump's conservative budget priorities, they have surrendered to the Democrats once again." Art Halvorson, a Pennsylvania Tea Party activist, said, "It's no different than if Hillary [Clinton] was elected; it's a huge loss, and I'm livid. Paul Ryan's House is a not conservative House." The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Richardson) reports that anti-abortion groups are also criticizing the agreement. Students for Life of America President Kristan Hawkins "called the proposed legislation 'beyond frustrating.'"

Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-FL) said on [Fox News' Fox & Friends](#) (5/1) that it is "troubling" that the budget deal doesn't have money for a border wall or a deportation force, doesn't contain cuts for sanctuary cities, and contains funds for Planned Parenthood. He added this "suggests that a lot of it is same old same old." DeSantis also said, "I think Congress needs to deliver on the wall."

Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX) [tweeted](#), "I oppose & will be voting against \$1 trillion #omnibus spending bill. This is yet another example why Senate needs to end filibuster abuse." Daniel Horowitz of Conservative Review, who has 31,800 followers, [tweeted](#), "The #omnibus downright BANS the fence. Under current law its totally on the books just needed funding. This makes it WORSE."

A [Townhall](#) (5/1) piece by Guy Benson is headlined "After GOP Strikes Weak Government Funding Deal With Democrats, They'd Better Not Blow It On Obamacare." Benson writes, "Republicans at both ends of Capitol Hill ought to ponder how their base will react if they drop the ball on healthcare. Between that choke job and the new government funding compromise with Democrats – under which Planned Parenthood and sanctuary cities are fully funded, but Trump's wall is not – Republican voters might wonder what the point of winning elections is."

The Monday evening headline on the Drudge Report read, "DEMS CELEBRATE 'REPUBLICAN' BUDGET! MORE PAGES THAN OBAMA STIMULUS". The [Washington Post](#) (5/1) "Daily 202" blog said that "Trump got rolled in his first budget negotiation."

Science Funding Remains Intact. The [Washington Post](#) (5/1, Achenbach, Guarino, Kaplan, Fears) reports that the omnibus does not include the cuts to science and medical research spending that Trump had sought. However, it is not clear if the deal "represents a full-throated repudiation of Trump's goals, or is just an act of political expediency – a rare bipartisan compromise designed to avoid an imminent government shutdown."

Bill More Than Doubles Number Of H-2B Visas. The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Dinan) says the omnibus includes "a sweetheart deal for America's vacation resorts and other seasonal employers": an increase in the number of

H-2B temporary visas from 66,000 to more than 135,000. Bob Dane of the Federation for American Immigration Reform said, "It is a sellout [of] the American worker."

Omnibus Protects Healthcare For Retired Miners. [Reuters](#) (5/1, Volcovici) reports that the federal government and coal companies will be required to pay out healthcare to retired United Mine Workers miners, "guaranteeing benefits to workers even as coal companies face bankruptcy." Approximately 22,600 coal miners and their families "were on the brink of losing on April 30 their healthcare benefits."

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp [tweeted](#), "Great news a permanent fix to provide health care to coal miners is in #omnibus – critical to stand up 4 workers throughout their lives."

Bill Includes More Than \$120 Million For Trump Family Security. The [New York Times](#) (5/1, Fandos) reports, "Congress would allocate more than \$120 million to help cover the escalating costs of protecting the first family and Trump Tower" under the agreement. About half of it is earmarked for the Secret Service, while "another roughly \$60 million would be set aside in a rare provision to reimburse localities, like New York City and Palm Beach County in Florida, that have incurred 'extraordinary law enforcement personnel costs'" associated with protecting the First Family.

LA Times Analysis: GOP Unlikely To Advance Goals In Near-Term. The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/1, Mascaro) writes, "Don't expect other major legislative accomplishments any time soon. Even though Republicans control the House, Senate and White House, the party in power is now at risk of squandering the unique opportunity offered in an administration's early months to muscle through big-ticket priorities in Congress." The Times writes that "the toxic combination of Republican infighting, the White House's failure to provide clear direction and an over-ambitious agenda have hobbled the majority's ability to accomplish its goals."

Trump Says He'd Be "Honored" To Meet Kim Jong-Un If Conditions "Appropriate."

President Trump said in an interview with Bloomberg on Monday that he'd be "honored" to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un under the right circumstances. The remarks, which the networks paired with reporting on Trump's White House invitation to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, prompted critical reports of what was characterized as Trump's openness to the authoritarian leaders. In the interview with [Bloomberg Politics](#) (5/1, Talev, Jacobs), Trump said, "If it would be appropriate for me to meet with him, I would absolutely, I would be honored to do it. If it's under the, again, under the right circumstances. But I would do that." The President added, "Most political people would never say that, but I'm telling you under the right circumstances I would meet with him."

In its lead story, [NBC Nightly News](#) (5/1, lead story, 2:45, Holt) reported that as North Korea on Monday announced it is pushing its nuclear program at "maximum pace," the President was "opening a door to a meeting with dictator Kim Jong-un." The [AP](#) (5/1, Lederman) likewise says "opened the door...to a future meeting" with Kim, "offering unusual praise for the globally ostracized leader at a time of surging nuclear tensions." [ABC World News Tonight](#) (5/1, story 5, 3:05, Muir) reported Trump "told Bloomberg that

under the right circumstances, quote, 'I would be honored to' meet with Kim, who ABC's Jonathan Karl said is "somebody who has starved his own people and threatened to destroyed the United States." Asked about the President's comments, White House press secretary Sean Spicer: "The President understands the threat that North Korea poses, and he'll do whatever is necessarily, under the right circumstances, to protect the country from the threat that its poses." [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1) reported the White House is "frantic" as it tries to "explain President Trump's stunning comment," and the [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Boyer) says Spicer "was peppered with questions about what conditions Mr. Trump would require for a meeting." The [CBS Evening News](#) (5/1, story 3, 2:55, Pelley) reported, "White House officials later stipulated that North Korea would first need to abandon its nuclear weapons." [Townhall](#) (5/1, Barkoukis) quotes Spicer as saying, "We've got to see their provocative behavior ratcheted down."

The [New York Post](#) (5/1, Fredericks) reports Spicer on Monday also "defended" Trump's "praise" of Kim in an interview Sunday with CBS as "a smart cookie," saying, "He assumed power at a young age when his father passed. There was a lot of potential threats that could have come his way. He's managed to lead a country forward, despite the concerns that we and so many people have, he is a young person to be leading a country with nuclear weapons."

The [AP](#) (5/1, Lederman) says that while the White House later "played down near-term prospects for such a meeting, Trump's conciliatory comments marked a departure from his more unforgiving tone toward the North in recent days." It also marked the "latest fluctuation as Trump's administration struggles to articulate its policy for addressing the growing threat from North Korea's nuclear program."

Several lawmakers reacted negatively Monday to the idea of a meeting with Kim. Rep. Kathleen Rice said on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1) that the "international community all agrees" that "the facts are not there to support" a direct meeting with Kim right now. She added, "It's baffling to me how the President of the out can use the word 'honored' when talking about meeting with a dictator who kills members of his own family to assure his power." On [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1), Sen. Chris Coons blasted Trump for "commend[ing] Kim Jong-un of North Korea for his leadership. Kim Jong-un is a brutal dictator who has directly threatened the United States with an attack by an ICBM. I can't imagine what the right conditions would be for a direct meeting between" the two leaders. Coons added that he is "puzzle[d]" that Trump has "abruptly" changed his stance on North Korea.

Rep. Mo Brooks, however, appeared to support the idea of a meeting, saying on [CNN's The Lead](#) (5/1), "It's always a good things to improve relationships with your allies and to create relationships with your foes. And in this case I don't see any harm trying to improve America's relationship with the dictator in North Korea. We may strongly disagree with a lot of things that he does to his people, but nonetheless, if it's going to help preserve peace over the long haul, both in South Korea and the Korean Peninsula generally and with respect to the United States it's worth a shot."

In a separate interview with [Fox News' The Fox News Specialists](#) on Monday, [USA Today](#) (5/1, Estepa) reports Trump said of North Korea: "Nobody's safe. I mean, who's safe? The guy's got nuclear weapons. ... We

have 28,000 troops on the line and they're right there. And so nobody's safe. We're probably not safe over here. If he gets the long-range missiles, we're not safe either." Reporting on Trump's comments to Fox, [Politico](#) (5/1, Conway) says that "instead of seeking to reassure people alarmed by North Korea's attempts to grow its nuclear capabilities, Trump has warned about the potential for conflict with the reclusive country multiple times."

As Trump made his remarks, [Reuters](#) (5/1, Park) reports North Korea accused the US "of pushing the Korean peninsula to the brink of nuclear war" after a pair of strategic US bombers flew over the area in a training drill with the South Korean air force. "The reckless military provocation is pushing the situation on the Korean peninsula closer to the brink of nuclear war," the North's official KCNA news agency said Tuesday.

White House "Defending" Duterte Invitation. During their reports on Trump's remarks about Kim Jong-un, all three networks also continued coverage of President Trump's decision to invite Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to the White House. [NBC Nightly News](#) (5/1, lead story, 2:45, Holt) that while Duterte is "widely condemned for executing thousands of drug suspects in his own country," the White House is "defending" the invitation. Press secretary Sean Spicer: "Obviously, there is human rights component that goes into all of this. And so, it's a balance." [ABC World News Tonight](#) (5/1, story 5, 3:05, Muir) reported that after being offered "kind words" from Trump, Duterte – "a man human rights groups say has committed crimes against humanity for an anti-drug campaign" – is "not ready to commit, saying, 'I am sorry, I am not sure if I can make it to the White House.'" The [New York Times](#) (5/1, Villamor) also reports Duterte indicated Monday that he "cannot make any definite promise" to accept Trump's invitation.

The [CBS Evening News](#) (5/1, story 3, 2:55, Pelley) reported, "It is unusual for an American president to publicly empathize with authoritarian leaders. From Mr. Trump has made a point of praising leaders with an iron grip on power while avoiding condemnation of their abuses." A [USA Today](#) (5/1, Korte) analysis says Trump is "demonstrating a willingness to meet with some of the most notorious leaders on the world stage — a wheeling-and-dealing approach to diplomacy that is both an embrace and a rejection of President Obama's policy of engaging with adversaries." Trump's "businesslike willingness to make deals on the world stage is becoming a central pillar of what could be seen as an emerging Trump Doctrine."

A front-page [Washington Post](#) (5/1, A1, Rucker) analysis similarly says that "as he settles into office, President Trump's affection for totalitarian leaders has grown beyond Russia's president to include strongmen around the globe," including Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Calling it "an undeniable shift in American foreign policy," the Post says Trump is "cultivating authoritarian leaders, one after another, in an effort to reset relations following an era of ostracism and public shaming by Obama and his predecessors."

The President, says the [New York Times](#) (5/1, Landler), "continued his outreach to rogue leaders on Monday," declaring he would meet Kim "provided the circumstances were right." The Times says Trump's "unorthodox overtures...illustrated the president's confidence in his ability to make deals and his willingness to talk to virtually anyone." A [Washington Post](#) (5/1) editorial says Duterte "poses a difficult challenge," but while a "subtle US

policy would recognize the need for US-Philippine cooperation without endorsing the contemptible offenses of the current president," President Trump has instead offered Duterte "an unqualified embrace that effectively blesses his murderous campaign." In so doing, the Post argues that Trump "sends Asians the message that there is no difference between China's amoral foreign policy and that of this US administration." In an editorial, the [New York Times](#) (5/1) says there is "no evidence" that Trump "consulted the State Department, or that the White House has done anything to prepare the groundwork for a Duterte visit. The normal way to mend diplomatic ties is to negotiate privately over months and have the process culminate in, not begin with, a White House meeting."

Rep. Kathleen Rice said on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1) that Trump's remarks on Kim and his invitation to Duterte are part of a "disturbing pension for authoritarian figures, for dictators, for any world leader who will compliment him." Sen. Chris Coons said on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1) that while Duterte "could help" the US in addressing the North Korea threat, "human rights are an absolutely fundamental part of America's values and America's interests, and to turn a blind eye to the sort of gross human rights violations that President Duterte has been carrying out against his own people in the Philippines doesn't in the bigger picture make us safer."

Dana Milbank writes in his [Washington Post](#) (5/1) column that he is "stunned that anybody would be stunned" by Trump's invitation to Duterte, arguing that "in style, if not in scope, the two men are brothers from another mother." Both men, he says, "have employed foul language in public, boasted publicly about their sexual performance and made vulgar references to assaulting women." They have also both "threatened the free press, challenged the legitimacy of the judiciary, attacked opponents as corrupt — and insulted the pope."

US Pushing For More Sanctions On North Korea, Urging Regional Actors To Take Part. [Fox News' Special Report](#) (5/1) reported the House this week is set to consider measures that would expand sanctions targeting North Korean shipping "and those who employ North Korean slave labor." The bill also "requires the Administration to determine whether North Korea is a state sponsor of terrorism." The Administration is pushing other countries, like China, to also implement the sanctions. Secretary of state Tillerson "called out China specifically." Under the headline "Asian Leaders Are Drawn Into US Push On North Korea," the [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1, Watts) reports President Trump also widened his efforts to build cooperation in isolating North Korea, extending White House invitations to the leaders of Thailand and Singapore on Sunday. Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong both said they had accepted the President's invitations.

Ross: Trump Won't Trade US Jobs For China's Help On North Korea. [Reuters](#) (5/1, Lawder) reports Commerce Secretary Ross indicated Monday that President Trump "does not intend to trade away US jobs for China's help on North Korea." In an interview with [CNBC's Squawk On The Street](#), Ross "rowed back from Trump's comments in a CBS interview" that China's help on North Korea "trumps trade." Asked if the need for China's help to contain threats from North Korea had made it more difficult to be tough with Beijing on trade issues, Ross said, "We've been having some very constructive discussions on trade with the Chinese in parallel" to discussions on North

Korea.

Pompeo Visits South Korea Amid Tensions With North. The [AP](#) (5/1, Lee) reports CIA Director Pompeo made an unannounced visit to South Korea, the US Embassy in Seoul confirmed Monday. An embassy official said Pompeo and his wife were in Seoul on Monday, "but wouldn't say for how long." South Korean media reports, however, said the CIA chief arrived in South Korea "over the weekend for meetings with the head of South Korea's National Intelligence Service and high-level officials in the presidential office." The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Muñoz) reports that according to Yonhap News, Pompeo met with Lee Byung-ho, head of South Korea's National Intelligence Service and "other top government officials, as well as US Forces-Korea chief Gen. Vincent Brooks."

THAAD Missile Defense System Now Operational. Barbara Starr reported on [CNN's Situation Room](#) (5/1) that CIA Director Pompeo is in South Korea for meetings with US military and diplomatic personnel. Elsewhere in South Korea, the THAAD defense missile system supplied by the US "has now begun operating with limited capability to shoot down incoming North Korean missiles." [Bloomberg Politics](#) (5/2, Kong) reports the THAAD system set up in Seongju county "is in place and ready to operate, South Korea's defense ministry spokesman Moon Sang-gyun told reporters on Tuesday in Seoul."

Turnbull: Australia Won't Tolerate North Korea's "Reckless" Threats. [Fox News' Special Report](#) (5/1) reported that during a recent event commemorating US and Australian cooperation in WWII, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull responded to North Korea's recent threat of a nuclear attack saying, "We are taking a strong message to North Korea that we will not tolerate reckless, dangerous threats to the peace and stability of the region." The [New York Times](#) (5/1, A1, Cave) reports that while South Korea, Japan and the US "have grown accustomed to North Korea's diatribes," Pyongyang "recently threatened a new target with a nuclear strike: Australia." During a recent visit by Vice President Pence to Sydney, the North warned Australia to think twice about "blindly and zealously toeing the US line" and acting as "a shock brigade of the US master." The Times says North Korea's threat against the country, "far-fetched as it might seem, is an example of how Australia's most important military alliance faces a new challenge: the risk that President Trump will draw the nation into a conflict or other unexpected crisis that destabilizes the region, angers its trading partners or forces it to side with either the United States or China."

White House, Republicans Hoping To Have Healthcare Vote This Week.

News coverage reported that the Trump Administration is hoping for a vote on the Republican healthcare bill this week, but that it may be delayed because of apparent differences among Republicans on requiring insurers to cover those with pre-existing conditions. President Trump was shown on both ABC and CBS saying that the bill would continue such requirements, but both networks said that is not true of the bill as currently crafted.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (5/1, story 7, 2:15, Muir) reported that though "the President said preexisting conditions will be covered," ABC suggests states may be allowed "to opt out of preexisting coverage." Trump was shown saying, "Preexisting conditions are in the bill. And I mandated it. I said it has to be." ABC (Bruce) added, "The bill his party is pushing tonight

actually allows states to opt out" of that protection, and the American Medical Association has said the bill "could effectively make coverage completely unaffordable to people with preexisting conditions."

The [CBS Evening News](#) (5/1, story 6, 1:55, Cordes) reported Trump "insisted his party's bill does not change protections for the sick." Yet "the GOP's latest bill does give states the options to let insurers charge sick people more." Meanwhile, National Economic Council Director Cohn "delivered another mixed message" saying, "We'll get healthcare down to the floor of the House. We're convinced we have the votes." However, added CBS, "that came as a surprise to Republican leaders here on Capitol Hill who have not scheduled a vote," because "at least 20 House Republicans at this point would vote no, and the GOP can only afford to lose 22."

Trump was shown saying on [Fox News](#) (5/1), "I don't want to set deadlines. I think it's going to be approved, it could be soon, but it could be not so soon. It's going to happen. Remember this: I've been really focused on this for like, seven weeks."

[Reuters](#) (5/1, Abutaleb, Heavey) reports that both Cohn and Chief of Staff Priebus "expressed optimism" about a vote coming soon. Priebus said there would be a vote "this week." [Roll Call](#) (5/1, Bennett) says the Administration offered "conflicting messages." Press secretary Sean Spicer said supporters are "closer and closer" to having enough votes, while adding, "I think the President has made it clear he is not instituting a timeline."

The [Washington Times](#) (5/1, Howell) says "many conservatives" support allowing states to "allow insurers to charge healthy people less than sicker ones," while "centrists...say allowing states to charge sicker patients more than healthy ones is inconsistent with pledges Republicans made on a campaign trail." The [Washington Examiner](#) (5/1, Ferrechio) reports the bill has the support of "all but one or two" members of the House Freedom Caucus, but that the "new provisions allowing states to waive Obamacare mandates have driven away some centrist GOP lawmakers." [Politico](#) (5/1, Cheney) reports that Rep. Billy Long (R-MO) has now said that he will not support the bill, explaining that the bill "strips away any guarantee that pre-existing conditions would be covered and affordable." [USA Today](#) (5/1, Shesgreen) calls Long's unexpected opposition "a sign of trouble" for the bill. Long had said about the earlier version of the bill, "If you vote no, you're voting yes for Obamacare."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1, A1, Armour, Peterson, Andrews) cites Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO), characterized as a centrist, saying, "Many moderates...overreacted to the amendment [on preexisting conditions], thinking that it does more than it actually does." He added, "I think people are taking a second look at it." Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA) said on [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360](#) (5/1), "That amendment in my view would remove protections with people with preexisting conditions or it could possibly remove them because the state would have the option to wave out of providing those potential health benefits."

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL) said on [CNN's The Lead](#) (5/1), "My understanding is that it will allow insurance companies to require people who have higher health care costs to contribute more to the insurance pool that helps offset all these costs." Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-FL) said on [Fox News' Fox & Friends](#) (5/1), "This is a compromise repeal and replace bill. ... I think it's

probably the best we can do now. I think we have got to move forward.”

[Politico](#) (5/1, Diamond) says the bill “undermines other key promises” Trump has made, listing five. They are: “every bit as good on pre-existing conditions as Obamacare”; “Insurance for everybody”; “No cuts” to Medicaid; “No lines” for health insurers; and “No one will lose coverage.” Politico says that each of these will be violated by the current bill.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1) says in an editorial that the current bill retains both guaranteed issue and community rating, but allows states to seek a waiver if they have an alternative plan for addressing the problem. Under the current system, argues the Journal, insurers may seek other ways to discourage expensive patients from enrolling, such as narrow networks and high deductibles and copays.

Ryan, Freedom Caucus Allied For Now On New Healthcare Bill. [Politico](#) (5/2, Bade) reports that despite past bad blood, the House Freedom Caucus “is locking arms” with House Speaker Ryan, “at least momentarily. The fragile alliance has been sparked by their shared interest in finally tanking Obamacare, an eagerness to build momentum for the president’s agenda and a belief among hard-liners and leadership that each side has moved cautiously toward the other on health care.” Politico says seeing “the conservatives in Ryan’s corner for once” is “one of the more unlikely turns in recent House Republican history.” Rep. Mark Sanford (R-SC), a Freedom Caucus member, said, “Politics makes for the strangest of bedfellows. Someone you may not have been working with on the last bill, you better stay friends with them because you may need them on the next bill.”

Restriction On Using Tax Credits To Buy Plans Covering Abortion Poses Problems For California And New York. [The Hill](#) (5/1, Sullivan) reports the bill offers tax credits to help buy health insurance, but prohibits them from being used for “plans that cover abortion.” That may make them “largely unusable in some blue states” – California and New York – because those states require policies to cover abortion. California insurance commissioner Dave Jones said, “I would sue the federal government” if the provision becomes law.

Editorial Wrap-Up

New York Times.

“Donald Trump Embraces Another Despot.” In an editorial, the [New York Times](#) (5/1) says there is “no evidence” that Trump “consulted the State Department, or that the White House has done anything to prepare the groundwork for a Duterte visit. The normal way to mend diplomatic ties is to negotiate privately over months and have the process culminate in, not begin with, a White House meeting.”

“Populism, Politics And Measles.” A [New York Times](#) (5/2) editorial says that “one of the tragedies of these post-truth times is that the lies, conspiracy theories and illusions spread by social media and populist politicians can be downright dangerous.” The Times points to opposition to vaccination as one example, noting that “a serious outbreak of measles in Italy and in some other European countries could well be the result of a drop-off in vaccinations caused by utterly misguided and discredited claims about their dangers.” It argues that the outbreak, “unfortunate as it is, does give health authorities an

opportunity to strengthen their case by pointing to concrete evidence of what inevitably follows when vaccinations drop off."

"President Trump Is Asked To Show His Cards." In an editorial, the [New York Times](#) (5/2, Board) says that late Friday, the Office of Government Ethics sent "a little-noticed memo" to the White House, with the subject, "Data Call for Certain Waivers and Authorizations." It could have been titled: "You Said You'd Clean Up Government. Now Prove It." The Times says it is now the job of White House ethics officer Stefan Passantino "to release to the ethics office, and to the public, the names of public servants whom Mr. Trump has allowed to bypass the rules. If he stonewalls, we look again to Republicans," like Sen. Chuck Grassley, "to remind this administration that the American people deserve an accountable government, and to make sure they get it."

Washington Post.

"A Good-Enough Budget." In an editorial, the [Washington Post](#) (5/1) says that "to judge from" the omnibus, congressional leaders' "priorities are not President Trump's priorities." The agreement is "a tribute to the Democrats' skillful leveraging of their power, even as a minority in both houses; to the Republicans' pragmatic fear of a politically costly partial government shutdown – and to the stubborn persistence of good old-fashioned political horse-trading, even under this supposedly disruptive president." The Post calls it "a temporary victory for basic common sense."

"An Unwelcome Invitation." A [Washington Post](#) (5/1) editorial says Duterte "poses a difficult challenge," but while a "subtle US policy would recognize the need for US-Philippine cooperation without endorsing the contemptible offenses of the current president," President Trump has instead offered Duterte "an unqualified embrace that effectively blesses his murderous campaign." In so doing, the Post argues that Trump "sends Asians the message that there is no difference between China's amoral foreign policy and that of this US administration."

"In Brookland, The Good Vs. The Perfect." In an editorial, the [Washington Post](#) (5/1) writes that that answers to questions regarding the extent to which private companies should be pushed to solve public problems in "a contentious, and increasingly ugly, controversy" over a redevelopment proposal for a deteriorating housing complex in Northeast Washington could have broad implications. MidCity Financial Corp. has promised to reserve 373 units for very low-income families of the 1,760 residential units it will build, a proposal the Post says is "unusual" as it is more than the 10 percent moderately affordable units DC law requires. While "promises are easier made than kept," the Post says opponents "seeking to demonize" MidCity are acting in a counterproductive manner. The Post writes that the District "has a responsibility to hold developers to their promises" all the while finding "the right balance between encouraging public-mindedness and keeping business opportunities viable."

Wall Street Journal.

"Pre-existing Confusion." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1) offers its opinion in an editorial on the situation regarding pre-existing conditions, arguing that the current bill retains both guaranteed issue and community rating, but allows states to seek a waiver if they have an alternative plan for addressing the

problem. Under the current system, argues the Journal, insurers may seek other ways to discourage expensive patients from enrolling, such as narrow networks and high deductibles and copays. The Journal argues that it is a small portion of the population that is high risk and that policies other than guaranteed issue and community rating may be more effective at ensuring they get the care they need.

“China’s Case For Trump’s Tax Cuts.” In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1) writes that China provided an argument for President Trump’s proposal to reduce the US corporate tax rate to 15 percent: its leaders fear it will draw manufacturing away from China. The Journal adds that China’s warning shows it understands how important corporate tax rates are growth, concluding that cuts to the US rates are needed to compete globally.

“Barack Obama, Capitalist.” In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (5/1) condemns liberal criticism of former President Obama for accepting a \$400,000 speaking fee from the Wall Street firm Cantor Fitzgerald, arguing that he should be allowed to make a living. The Journal approves that Obama will deal with the high tax rates adopted under his Administration and suggests he might placate his critics by donating to the US Treasury his savings from upcoming tax breaks.

Big Picture

Headlines From Today’s Front Pages.

Wall Street Journal:

[Trump Gambles On Big Health Victory](#)

[Goldman Sachs Embraces Banking’s Bland Side: Lending Money](#)

[Hamas Drops Explicit Call For Israel’s Destruction](#)

[AllianceBernstein’s CEO, Independent Directors Ousted](#)

New York Times:

[Trump Follows Instincts, Not Establishment, With Overtures To Kim And Duterte](#)

[In Palestinian Power Struggle, Hamas Moderates Talk On Israel](#)

[Trump’s Volatility In Asia Distresses A Longtime US Ally: Australia](#)

[With Fox News In Tumult, Another Executive, Bill Shine, Is Ousted](#)

[Trump Discards Obama Legacy, One Rule At A Time](#)

[Unions In France Split Over Whether To Back Emmanuel Macron](#)

[Freak Flags Fly At Met Gala, But Lips Stay Buttoned](#)

Washington Post:

[“Organic” OR NOT?](#)

[Democrats Claim Win On Spending](#)

[GOP Wants To Pass Baton To Senate On Health Care](#)

[College Men Use Anti-Bias Law To Fight Sex-Assault Findings](#)

[Praise For Strongmen Alarms Rights Advocates](#)

Financial Times:

[Macron And Le Pen Fight For Working-Class Vote](#)

[Brussels Set For Power Grab On London Euro-Clearing](#)

[Australia Record Home Sale Highlights Bubble Risks](#)

[Race For China's \\$5.5tn Mobile Payments Hots Up](#)

Washington Times:

[EXCLUSIVE: Trump Blasts Russia Dossier And Democrats' Use Of It](#)

[Cheap Foreign Labor To Flood Workforce After Spending Bill Doubles Number Of Visas](#)

[Democrats Win Spending-Bill Showdown With Trump](#)

[Iranian Presidential Election To Send Message About Obama's Nuclear Deal](#)

[Former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson Snared In Growing Pursuit Of Personal Email](#)

Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:

ABC: Austin-University Stabbing; San Diego-Pool Shooting; Dallas-Neighborhood Shooting; Severe Weather; Trump-North Korea, Philippines Comments; Trump-Jackson Comment; Healthcare Reform Plan; Africa Famine; Mid-Air Turbulence; Toronto-Subway Smoke; Maryland-Escaped Fugitive; Fox News Shake Up; Show Hosts; NFL Player Friendship.

CBS: Severe Weather; Trump-North Korea, Philippines Comments; Trump-Jackson Comment; Trump CBS Interview-Host Comment; Healthcare Reform Plan; Austin-University Stabbing; School Bullying; High School Student Shot; Dallas-Neighborhood Shooting; Young College Student.

NBC: Trump-North Korea, Philippines Comments; Austin-University Stabbing; Severe Weather; Mid-Air Turbulence; School Food Roll-Back; May Day Protests; Fox News Shake Up; Netflix Episodes Hacked; Detroit-Highway Crash; Social Media Meme Warning; Princess Charlotte Birthday; Vietnam War Veterans.

Network TV At A Glance:

Trump-North Korea, Philippines Comments – 8 minutes, 45 seconds

Weather – 8 minutes, 20 seconds

Healthcare Reform Plan – 4 minutes, 10 seconds

Austin-University Stabbing – 4 minutes, 5 seconds

Fox News Shake Up – 2 minutes, 15 seconds

Trump-Jackson Comment – 1 minute, 40 seconds

Story Lineup From This Morning's Radio News Broadcasts:

ABC: May Day Protests; Milwaukee Jail Mishap; Dallas-Neighborhood Shooting; Wall Street News.

CBS: Severe Weather; Healthcare Reform Plan; Austin-University Stabbing; May Day Protests; Met Gala; Wall Street News.

FOX: Austin-University Stabbing; Dallas-Neighborhood Shooting; San Diego-Pool Shooting; South Korea-US Anti-Missile System.

NPR: Trump-North Korea, Philippines Comments; Federal Spending Plan; Airbnb-San Francisco Lawsuit; Austin-University Stabbing.

Washington Schedule

Today's Events In Washington.

White House:

PRESIDENT TRUMP — Participates in the departure ceremony for Lt. Col. Wesley Spurlock, USAF; participates in the U.S. Air Force Academy Commander-in-Chief trophy presentation; speaks with President Vladimir Putin of Russia by telephone; meets with National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster. VICE PRESIDENT PENCE — Joins the President to participate in the U.S. Air Force Academy Commander-in-Chief trophy presentation; participates in the Senate Republican Policy Luncheon; participates in an Israel Independence Day Commemoration event.

US Senate: 10:30 AM Patriotic Millionaires and Dems Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Sander Levin discuss tax reform – Patriotic Millionaires Chair Morris Pearl and Democrats Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Sander Levin discuss tax reform and closing the carried interest loophole, via Capitol Hill press conference, which they say ‘unfairly allows wealthy investment managers to pay capital gains taxes on their earnings instead of income taxes, cutting their tax bill nearly in half, often to lower rates than ordinary working Americans’ Location: SVC-214, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC patrioticmillionaires.org
<https://twitter.com/PatrioticMills>

9:30 AM Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on USTRANSCOM – Hearing on ‘United States Transportation Command’, with testimony from U.S. Transportation Command Commander Gen. Darren McDew Location: Rm G50, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://armed-services.senate.gov/>

10:00 AM Nominations hearing considers Iowa Governor Terry Branstad to be U.S. Ambassador to China Location: Rm 419, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://foreign.senate.gov/>

10:00 AM Senate Natural Resources Committee hearing on resource-dependent communities with tax-exempt federal lands – Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ‘Hearing to examine federal payments to local governments provided through the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program and the need to provide greater fiscal certainty for resource-dependent communities with tax-exempt federal lands’, with testimony from Department of the Interior Budget, Finance, Performance, and Acquisition Deputy Assistant Secretary Olivia Barton Ferriter; Department of Agriculture Forest Service Associate Deputy Chief Glenn Casamassa; Ketchikan Gateway Borough, AL, Mayor David Landis; Valley County, ID, Chairman Commissioner Gordon Cruickshank; Pend Oreille County, WA, County Commissioner Mike Manus; Mark Haggerty (Headwaters Economics); and National Association of Counties – Utah President Mark Whitney Location: Rm 366, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC www.energy.senate.gov

10:00 AM Senate Banking Committee hearing on U.S.-EU covered agreements – Hearing on ‘Examining the U.S. – EU Covered Agreements’, with testimony from former Federal Insurance Office Director Michael McRaith; Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak (on behalf of National Association of Insurance Commissioners); Transatlantic Reinsurance Company President and CEO Michael Sapnar (on behalf of American Insurance Association, American Council of Life Insurers, and Reinsurance Association of America); Western National Mutual Insurance Company President and CEO Stuart Henderson (on behalf of National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies); and University of Pennsylvania

Wharton School Associate Professor of Legal Studies and Business Ethics David Zaring Location: Rm 538, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC

<http://banking.senate.gov/>

10:30 AM Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on responses to the increase in religious hate crimes – Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing on ‘Responses to the Increase in Religious Hate Crimes’, with testimony from Department Of Justice Civil Rights Division Acting Assistant Attorney General Thomas Wheeler; Anti-Defamation League CEO and National Director Jonathan Greenblatt; Department Of Health System Design and Global Health Chair Prabhjot Singh; Leadership Conference For Civil And Human Rights Incoming President and CEO Vanita Gupta; and International Association Of Chiefs Of Police Human And Civil Rights Committee Chair Chief Will Johnson Location: Rm 226, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC

<http://judiciary.senate.gov/>

2:30 PM Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing on U.S. European Command – Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on ‘U.S. European Command: Theater Assessment and European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) Progress’, with testimony from NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and U.S. European Command Commander Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti Location: Rm 124, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://appropriations.senate.gov/> <https://twitter.com/SenateApprops>

US House: 9:30 AM United Airlines CEO testifies at House Transportation Committee oversight hearing on customer service policies – Full committee oversight hearing on U.S. airlines customer service policies and issues, and what can be done to improve the flying experience for American travelers, with testimony from United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz, accompanied by United Airlines President Scott Kirby; American Airlines Senior Vice President of Customer Experience Kerry Philipovitch; Alaska Airlines Senior Vice President of External Relations Joseph Sprague; Southwest Airlines Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer Bob Jordan; and Consumers Union Aviation Consultant William McGee * Follows a high-profile 9 Apr incident when passenger David Dao was dragged off a United Airlines flight by airport police officers after refusing to move when he was chosen at random, along with three other passengers, to give up his seat so that four employees of the company operating the fully booked flight for United could board. Dao last week reached an undisclosed settlement with United, who took full responsibility for the incident Location: Rm 2167, Rayburn House Office Bldg., Washington, DC <http://transportation.house.gov/>

<https://twitter.com/Transport>

9:30 AM Dem Rep. Raul Grijalva speaks on President Trump’s order to review National Monuments – Democratic Rep. Raul Grijalva speaks in opposition to the President Donald Trump’s executive order to review national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act, via press conference with National Parks Conservation Association President and CEO Theresa Pierno, Hispanic Access Foundation President and CEO Maite Arce, and New England Outdoor Center Owner Matt Polstein Location: House Triangle, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC www.wilderness.org <https://twitter.com/Wilderness>

10:00 AM House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on U.S. Special Operations Command – Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee

hearing on 'Three Decades Later: A Review and Assessment of Our Special Operations Forces 30-Years After the Creation of U.S. Special Operations Command', with testimony from Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict Theresa Whelan; and U.S. Special Operations Command Commander Gen. Raymond Thomas Location: Rm 2118, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC www.armedservices.house.gov <https://twitter.com/HASCRpublicans>

10:00 AM Markup hearing on 'H.R. 2105, the NIST Small Business Cybersecurity Act of 2017' Location: Rm 2318, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://science.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/HouseScience>

10:00 AM House Financial Services Committee marks up the Financial CHOICE Act – Hearing on 'H.R. 10, the Financial CHOICE Act of 2017' * Committee held a hearing on the bill last Wednesday, before holding an additional day to the hearing Friday following a demand under the committee's rules by the Committee's Democratic members, who selected the witnesses for the second day Location: Rm 2128, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://financialservices.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/FinancialCmte>

10:00 AM Legislative hearing on the 'Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017' Location: Rm 334, Cannon House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://veterans.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseVetAffairs>

10:00 AM House Natural Resources subcommittee oversight hearing on the Antiquities Act – Federal Lands Subcommittee oversight hearing on 'Examining the Consequences of Executive Branch Overreach of the Antiquities Act' Location: Rm 1324, Longworth House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://naturalresources.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/NatResources>

10:00 AM House Commerce subcommittee hearing on improvements to the regulation of medical technologies – Health Subcommittee hearing on 'Examining Improvements to the Regulation of Medical Technologies', with testimony from International Association of Medical Equipment Remarketers and Servicers General Counsel Robert Kerwin; Johns Hopkins University Associate Professor of Otolaryngology Dr Frank Lin; Powers Consulting's Dr Thomas Powers; Philips North America Health Systems Solutions Senior Vice President Joe Robinson; Medtronic Global Regulatory Affairs Vice President Patricia Shrader; and Food and Drug Administration Center for Devices and Radiological Health Director Dr Jeffrey Shuren Location: Rm 2123, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://energycommerce.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseCommerce>

10:15 AM House Commerce subcommittee hearing on Medicaid's Personal Care Services program – Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on 'Combating Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Medicaid's Personal Care Services Program', with testimony from Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General Chief of Staff Christi Grimm; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services Deputy Director Timothy Hill; and Government Accountability Office Director of Health Care Katherine Iritani Location: Rm 2322, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://energycommerce.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseCommerce>

10:30 AM House Oversight Committee markup hearing – Business meeting to markup 'H.R. 2227 – Modernizing Government Technology Act of

2017', 'H.R. 2196 – To amend title 5, United States Code, to allow whistleblowers to disclose information to certain recipients', 'H.R. 2195 – OSC Access Act', and 'H.R. 2229 – All Circuit Review Act' Location: Rm 2154, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://oversight.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/GOPoversight>

10:30 AM Patriotic Millionaires and Dems Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Sander Levin discuss tax reform – Patriotic Millionaires Chair Morris Pearl and Democrats Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Sander Levin discuss tax reform and closing the carried interest loophole, via Capitol Hill press conference, which they say 'unfairly allows wealthy investment managers to pay capital gains taxes on their earnings instead of income taxes, cutting their tax bill nearly in half, often to lower rates than ordinary working Americans' Location: SVC-214, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC patrioticmillionaires.org <https://twitter.com/PatrioticMills>

10:30 AM Helsinki Commission / Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission briefing on Turkey – Helsinki Commission and Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission joint briefing on 'Turkey Post-Referendum: Institutions and Human Rights', with panelists – Wilson Center Middle East Program Director Henri Barkey, Turkish political scientist Ebru Erdem-Akcay, International Foundation for Electoral Systems Regional Director for Europe and Eurasia Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz, and Freedom House Nations in Transit Project Director Nate Schenkkan – discussing 'how U.S. policymakers can most effectively encourage the protection of human rights to promote the interests of the Turkish people given the strategic importance of the U.S.-Turkey bilateral relationship' Location: Rm 2255, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://www.csce.gov>

11:00 AM House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer regular pen-and-pad briefing Location: H-144, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC www.democraticwhip.gov/ <https://twitter.com/WhipHoyer>

12:00 PM House meets for legislative business – House of Representatives convenes and meets for legislative business, with agenda expected to include 'H.R. 1180 – Working Families Flexibility Act', with agenda for the week also including 'H.R. 1665 – Disaster Declaration Improvement Act', 'H.R. 1679 – FEMA Accountability, Modernization and Transparency Act of 2017', 'H.R. 1678 – To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act concerning the statute of limitations for actions to recover disaster or emergency assistance payments, and for other purposes, as amended', and 'H.R. 1180 – Working Families Flexibility Act of 2017, as amended' * The Chamber is also expected to consider legislation making further appropriations for FY 2017 as they bid to avert a government shutdown ahead of the 5 May deadline Location: Washington, DC <http://www.house.gov/>

12:30 PM Congressional Progressive Caucus unveil 'The People's Budget' – Congressional Progressive Caucus members unveil 'The People's Budget: A Roadmap for Resistance', which 'reinvests in American families, prioritizing funding for education, health care, jobs and clean air and water'. Speakers include Caucus Co-Chairs Reps. Raul Grijalva and Keith Ellison, Vice-Chair Rep. Mark Pocan, and members Democratic Reps. Barbara Lee, Jan Schakowsky, Alan Lowenthal, Adriano Espaillat, Sheila Jackson Lee, Judy Chu, Ted Lieu and John Conyers, along with American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Economic Policy Institute Director of Research Josh Bivens, Demos

Senior Strategist Vijay Das, Vote Vets Director of Government Relations Will Fischer, and Planned Parenthood Director of Legislative Affairs Jacqueline Ayers, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and Leader of Nuns on the Bus Exec Dir Sister Simone Campbell, NARAL Senior VP for Campaigns and Strategy Sasha Bruce, Good Jobs Nation worker Brittany Butler and People Demanding Action Exec Dir Andrea Miller Location: House Triangle, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC cpc.grijalva.house.gov <https://twitter.com/USProgressives>

2:00 PM House Foreign Affairs subcommittee hearing on the Frederick Douglass Reauthorization Act – Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee hearing on ‘Winning the Fight Against Human Trafficking: The Frederick Douglass Reauthorization Act’, with testimony from Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives Senior Advisor Kristin Leary; Human Rights Watch Children’s Rights Division Advocacy Director Jo Becker; and International Justice Mission Policy and Research Manager Tim Gehring Location: Rm 2172, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://www.hcfa.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/HFACRepublicans>

2:00 PM House Oversight subcommittee hearing on management of red snapper fishing in the Gulf of Mexico – Interior, Energy, and Environment Subcommittee hearing on ‘Examining the Management of Red Snapper Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico’ Location: Rm 2154, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://oversight.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/GOPoversight>

2:00 PM Health Subcommittee hearing on ‘VA Specialized Services: Lower Extremity Conditions’ Location: Rm 334, Cannon House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://veterans.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseVetAffairs>

2:00 PM CANCELED: House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on missile defense – CANCELED: Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearing on ‘Fiscal Year 2018 Priorities and Posture of Missile Defense Programs and Activities’, with testimony from U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command Commander Gen. Lori Robinson; Missile Defense Agency Director Vice Adm. James Syring; U.S. Army Missiles and Space Program Executive Officer Barry Pike; and Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities Todd Harvey Location: Rm 2212, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC www.armedservices.house.gov <https://twitter.com/HASCRepublicans>

3:00 PM House Rules Committee hearing – Hearing on Senate Amendments to ‘H.R. 244 — HIRE Vets Act (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017)’ Location: H-313, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC <http://www.rules.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/RulesReps>

3:30 PM House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on sexual harassment and violence at the military service academies – Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing on ‘Overview of the Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies’, with testimony from Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness Dr Elizabeth Van Winkle; U.S. Military Academy Superintendent Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen, Jr.; U.S. Naval Academy Superintendent Vice Adm. Walter Carter, Jr.; U.S. Air Force Academy Superintendent Lt. Gen. Michelle Johnson; and victims of sexual assault Location: Rm 2118, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC www.armedservices.house.gov <https://twitter.com/HASCRepublicans>

House Intelligence Committee holds latest hearing on Russia and the 2016 U.S. election – House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence holds closed hearing on allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, with FBI Director James Comey and National Security Advisor Adm. Michael Rogers having been invited to testify * Committee has also invited former CIA Director John Brennan, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates to appear at an as-yet-unscheduled open hearing on the topic Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC <http://intelligence.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseIntelComm>

Other: 7:00 AM ICBA Capital Summit continues – ICBA Capital Summit, day two, with speakers today including House Financial Services Committee Chairman Rep. Jeb Hensarling * Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin speaks tomorrow Location: Grand Hyatt Washington, 1000 H St NW, Washington, DC <http://www.icba.org/> <https://twitter.com/ICBA>

7:30 AM Adobe Digital Government Symposium 2017 – Adobe Digital Government Symposium 2017 – Reimagine Government: Make Experience Your Business, with speakers including Department of Defense Acting CIO Dr John Zangardi, Republican Rep. Will Hurd, CIA CIO John Edwards, former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Deputy Assistant Attorney General and DOJ CIO Joseph Klimavicz, Department of Commerce Acting CIO Rod Turk, U.S. Census Bureau Chief Customer Experience Officer Michele Bartram, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Public Affairs Mark Weber Location: Ronald Reagan Bldg. and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC www.adobesymp2017gov.com

8:30 AM Connect: ID Conference continues – Connect: ID Conference continues, including biometric: ID: HUB, mobileID: HUB, and secureID: HUB. Day two speakers include House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Rep. Michael McCaul, Democratic Rep. Scott Peters and Future of Privacy Forum CEO and Executive Director Jules Polonetsky Location: Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, DC www.ibia.org <https://twitter.com/ibia>

8:30 AM Sasakawa USA Annual Security Forum: The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Foundation of Asian Security – Sasakawa USA Annual Security Forum: The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Foundation of Asian Security. Speakers include Democratic Rep. Rick Larsen, Japan Ambassador to the U.S. Amb. Kenichiro Sasae, NSC Senior Director for Asian Affairs Matt Pottinger, Japanese Member of the House of Councillors Keizo Takemi, former Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera and Vice Minister Masanori Nishi, Japan Cabinet Office Special Advisor William Saito, Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow for Japan Sheila Smith, Center for Strategic and International Studies Japan Chair Mike Green, Brookings Institution Non-Resident Senior Fellow Evans Revere, Asia Society Policy Institute Diplomat in Residence and Senior Fellow Daniel Russel, and Georgetown University Professor Dennis Wilder Location: Willard InterContinental Hotel, 1401 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC spfusa.org <https://twitter.com/SasakawaUSA>

8:40 AM Religious Action Center Consultation on Conscience continues – Religious Action Center Consultation on Conscience continues, with speakers today including Democrats Sen. Sherrod Brown and Reps. Jamie Raskin, Joe

Kennedy III, Jacky Rosen and Jerrold Nadler, and Republican Rep. Lee Zeldin. Speeches followed by Capitol Hill visits Location: Sixth & I Historic Synagogue, 600 I St. NW, Washington, DC www.rac.org <https://twitter.com/therac>

9:00 AM 'Continuity and change in U.S.-Japan economic relations' Brookings discussion – 'Continuity and change in U.S.-Japan economic relations' Brookings Institution Center for East Asia Policy Studies panel discussion on the future of U.S.-Japan economic relations, with panelists discussing the future of U.S.-Japan economic reforms. Panelists include Japanese Member of the House of Councillors Yoshimasa Hayashi, Japanese Members of the House of Representatives Seiji Maehara and Yasutoshi Nishimura, and Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center Arjay and France Fearing Miller Chair in Federal Economic Policy Senior Fellow and Co-Director William Gale Location: Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC <http://www.brookings.edu> [#USJapan](https://twitter.com/BrookingsInst)

10:00 AM DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics report on police response to domestic violence – Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics release 'Police Response to Domestic Violence, 2006-2015', National Crime Victimization Survey data on nonfatal domestic violence victimizations reported to police, the police response to these victimizations, the prevalence of related arrests or charges, and criminal complaints signed against the offender Location: TBD <http://ojp.gov/>

11:00 AM Bipartisan Rep. Rob Wittman and Joe Courtney speak on 'Congress & Seapower' – 'Congress & Seapower: The View from the Hill' Center for Strategic and International Studies / United States Naval Institute for a Maritime Security Dialogue, with Republican Rep. Rob Wittman and Democratic Rep. Joe Courtney * The series is intended to highlight the particular challenges facing the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, from national level maritime policy to naval concept development and program design Location: CSIS, 1616 Rhode Island Ave., Washington, DC <http://www.csis.org> <https://twitter.com/CSIS>

12:00 PM National Democratic Institute holds 2017 Madeleine K. Albright Luncheon – National Democratic Institute holds 2017 Madeleine K. Albright Luncheon. The event honors Women Act for Living Together (WALT), this year's recipient of the Madeleine K. Albright Grant from the Central African Republic, and features a keynote address from Democratic Sen. Kamala Harris Location: Ritz-Carlton; 1150 22nd St NW, Washington, DC www.ndi.org <https://twitter.com/NDI>

2:00 PM 'The State of Black America' televised town hall taping – TV One and National Urban League host televised town hall taping that will become a two-hour special on 'The State of Black America', with participants including Georgetown University Sociology Professor Michael Eric Dyson, TV host and journalist Toure, Democratic Reps. Karen Bass, Hakeem Jeffries, and Cedric Richmond, Impact Strategies Principal and CEO Angela Rye, Democratic Strategist Symone Sanders, and Political and Legal Analyst Ron Christie Location: The Howard Theatre, 620 T St, NW, Washington, DC <http://tvone.tv>

6:00 PM For the Love of Sight awards dinner – Foundation Fighting Blindness annual For the Love of Sight awards dinner, with speakers including Republican Rep. Pete Sessions Location: Ritz-Carlton, Washington, DC <http://www.fightblindness.org/> <https://twitter.com/fightblindness>

7:00 PM 'First in Human' documentary screening celebrating the work of NIH's 'Building 10' – 'First in Human' documentary screening, celebrating the work of the National Institutes of Health's building 10, the nation's largest research hospital, and exploring the lives of the doctors, researchers, and patients who work there. Attendees include NIH Director Dr Francis Collins, Republicans Sen. Roy Blunt and Rep. Tom Cole, CBS News Chief Medical Correspondent Jonathan LaPool, Discovery Channel EVP of Documentaries and Specials and Director/Producer John Hoffman, and doctors featured in the series including Dr Anthony Fauci, Dr Terry Fry, Dr Steven Rosenberg, Dr Stephanie Goff and Dr John Tisdale. Also expected to attend are Democratic Reps. James Costa, Anna Eshoo, John Conyers and Jacky Rosen, and Republican Rep. John Culberson Location: Reagan Bldg. and International Trade Center Amphitheater, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC <http://www.discovery.com/> <https://twitter.com/Discovery>

National Leadership Summit on 340B – National Leadership Summit on 340B Drug Discount Program – Preserving the True Safety Net. Speakers include Sen. Bill Cassidy, Warren H. Fong and Alice Valder Curran Location: Ronald Reagan Bldg and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 340breform.org <https://twitter.com/Air340B>

Last Laughs

Late Night Political Humor.

Stephen Colbert: "Now Trump has repeatedly said that this hundred-day thing is totally arbitrary, okay. Totally unimportant. And to prove how unimportant it is, he took out a TV ad, he cut a cake on Air Force One, and he held a rally in Pennsylvania. ... He also proved just how unimportant this was with a bunch of interviews over the weekend."

Stephen Colbert: "Trump thinks Kim Jong-Un is a smart cookie, to which all of North Korea replied, 'Cookie? He's a monster.'"

James Corden: "It's the first day of May, and Donald Trump has officially passed his 100th day in office. So to celebrate, we're not going to talk about him at all tonight."

Trevor Noah: "Saturday was the hundred-day mark of Trump's presidency, which means he no longer has that new President smell. If I had to guess, I would say he now smells like nepotism and steak sauce."

Trevor Noah: "Even Donald Trump is shocked that there is a black person in his audience. You see how excited he got. Oh wow, that's really cool. Like he points out black people in his crowd like he is on a whale-watching tour. 'Look over there, look, a black one, it's so majestic. All right, Jeff Sessions, ready the harpoon.'"

Jimmy Fallon: "I'm told that President Trump just did an interview where he wondered why the Civil War ever happened. Then Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said, 'That's easy, Captain America and Iron Man got in a big fight.'"

Jimmy Fallon: "I saw that Trump defended all his trips that he's made to his golf courses, saying that he only goes there to hold meetings. Even guys who go to Hooters for the wings were like, 'Yeah, right.'"

Seth Meyers: "In a recent Reuters interview, President Trump reflected on his first 100 days in office saying, quote, 'I thought it would be easier.' What made you think it was going to be easy? This is what it did to a smart person [President Obama's picture]. By the time you're out of office, you're going to look like the Toxic Avenger."

Seth Meyers: "President Trump said yesterday that being President has been a big burden on his family. 'Yes, but somehow we manage,' said Melania from her penthouse in New York."

Seth Meyers: "In an interview today, President Trump questioned why America fought the Civil War. Even worse, then he questioned whom America fought in the Civil War. 'Wait, I know this one. Was it China?'"

Seth Meyers: "You know, at this rate, the only way Trump is going to get a second term is if he's held back."

Seth Meyers: "President Trump has a button on his desk that he uses to order a coke. Of course, he thinks it orders a nuclear strike, but once he gets the coke in his hand, he forgets what he was so worked up about."

Conan O'Brien: "Over the weekend President Trump invited brutal Filipino dictator Rodrigo Duterte to visit the White House. Yeah. The first time Trump has ever said the words 'Rodrigo, please come to America.'"

Conan O'Brien: "President Trump also said he would be honored to meet North Korean dictator Kim Jung-Un. Trump said, 'He's my kind of guy. He's crazy, overweight, and has a ridiculous haircut. We should get together. It's time we talk.'"

Conan O'Brien: "In another interview, President Trump said he thinks the Civil War could have been prevented. After hearing this, John McCain said, 'Trust me. I did everything I could. I talked to Lee. I talked to Grant.'"

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From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Fwd: upcoming speeches
Date: Thursday, September 14, 2017 2:45:44 PM
Attachments: [Zinke LH \(2\).PDF](#)
[09-25-17 National Petroleum Council Meeting Reception.pdf](#)
[2017 COY Invitation \(2\).pdf](#)
[Zinke invitation \(1\).pdf](#)

FYI.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Getto, Leila** <leila_getto@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Thu, Sep 14, 2017 at 2:21 PM
Subject: upcoming speeches
To: Laura Rigas <Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov>, Kate MacGregor <kate_macgregor@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Richard Cardinale <richard_cardinale@ios.doi.gov>, "Newell, Russell" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, Russell Roddy <russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov>

Please note, the Secretary has 4 in town speeches and 1 event we're hosting September 25-26

Sept 25th - Remarks at NPC meeting (open to the public and press)

Sept 25th - Remarks at National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum on regulatory reform and ESA (note Pruitt is speaking to them on water ways prior to the Secretary - closed to the public - members only but they have trade press as part of their membership) 10 minutes remarks followed by questions from the audience

Sept 26th - Remarks at National Clean Energy Week Symposium. Perry is also confirmed.

Sept 26th - Wild Horse Roundtable (at DOI)

Sept 26th - Brief remarks at Jefferson Island Club - accepting the citizen of the year award

Thanks!
Leila

Leila Sepehri Getto
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Deputy Director, Scheduling and Advance
Direct: (202) 208-5359
Cell: (202) 706-9435

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov); daniel_jorjani@sol.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 2:29:59 PM

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com>
Date: October 4, 2017 at 2:07:01 PM EDT
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov" <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels**

Hi Heather and Team,

Hope you're having a good afternoon. We're publishing a story today on the irregularities in Interior's travel manifest. Lola Zinke appears to be at the center of all of the irregularities we could glean. Your fast response here is greatly appreciated.

We have a few new questions on the matter, and we wanted to give the department a last chance to answer the ones we've asked repeatedly:

- Multiple sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Mic that Interior's photographer was instructed to crop Lola out in official photos from departmental meetings on trips she attended with her husband. Does Interior have a comment on that?

MONTANA

- How did Lola Zinke get to Montana in March 2017 so she could be present for the tribal blessing from the Blackfeet Nation.
- Who paid for Lola Zinke's share of the March 2017 Montana trip?
- How much was it?

CALIFORNIA

- How did Lola Zinke get to California for the secretary's meeting with Gov. Brown?

- Who paid for her share of the trip?
- How much was her share of the trip?
- Why isn't she on the manifest for any part of the trip, including the meeting with Gov. Brown?
- Why isn't she in any of the photos from the meeting currently available on the department's Flickr account?
- Were any photos of Lola at that meeting deleted from the Flickr account?

NORWAY + ALASKA

- We know from Politico and U.S. News that Ms Zinke was on the trip with the secretary to Norway and Alaska. Why isn't she listed on the manifests for any of the air travel related to those trips.
- Why isn't she listed on the manifest at all, except for the cookout at Denali National Park on 5/28?
- Was the cookout the only event she attended?

Thanks,

Anthony

On Tue, Oct 3, 2017 at 10:22 AM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:
Hi Heather and Team,

Just following up here. Thanks for clarifying yesterday that Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with Secretary Zinke.

Still would like to know:

- How Lola got to Montana for the 3/10/17 tribal blessing
- Who paid for her travel
- How Lola got to California for 4/13/17 meeting with Gov. Brown
- Who paid for her travel
- Why she isn't on the manifest for any part of the California trip, including the meeting with Gov. Brown

thanks!

- Anthony

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:46 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:
My mistake on the name of the nation.

I'm not suggesting wrongdoing at all, just following up on a tip.

So if Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with the secretary, how did she travel to Montana and California to show up at those meetings? And why isn't

she listed on Interior's manifest for the meeting with Gov Brown in California?

Thanks,

Tony

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:38 PM, Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I believe you mean the Blackfeet Nation.

She was on no flights with the Secretary.

Are you suggesting there is some wrongdoing here?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 2, 2017, at 5:33 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Hi Heather and DOI press team,

Hope you're having a good Monday afternoon. My name is Tony Smith, and I'm senior reporter for Mic. I'm writing a story on Secretary Zinke's travel, and I had a few questions.

1. I know from Interior's travel manifest that the secretary's wife, Lola, and their son, Wolfgang, showed up to the tribal blessing with the Blackstone Nation on Friday, Mar. 10 2017. However, neither Lola nor Wolfgang are listed on the flight manifest to Montana.

- How did Lola and Wolfgang travel there — on the March 9th flight (United 1532) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did they fly back to D.C.? Who paid for it?

2. I know from DOI's social media that Lola attended a trip to California with the secretary on April 13, 2017. However, she isn't listed on any part of Interior's manifest for that trip: neither for the meeting itself, nor the travel manifest.

- How did Lola travel to California — on the April 12th flight (United 291) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did she fly back to D.C.? Who paid for it?

Thank you so much for taking these questions. I'm on a tight deadline, and do need to publish this story in an hour. I appreciate your timely response.

- Tony

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Senior Staff Writer, News
Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](tel:646.260.7531)

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Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](tel:646.260.7531)

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--



Senior Staff Writer, News
Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](tel:646.260.7531)

From: Heather Swift
To: daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov
Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Fwd: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 11:13:39 AM

Dan, I am beginning to get questions about Mrs. Zinke's travel while accompanying the Secretary. Would it be possible to get another joint statement from Ethics/General Law and also the rules and regulations that permit such travel?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com>
Date: October 3, 2017 at 10:22:34 AM EDT
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov" <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels**

Hi Heather and Team,

Just following up here. Thanks for clarifying yesterday that Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with Secretary Zinke.

Still would like to know:

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Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Thank you so much for taking these questions. I'm on a tight deadline, and do need to publish this story in an hour. I appreciate your timely response.

- Tony

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Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](#)

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Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](#)

--



Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](#)

From: Boulton, Caroline
To: [Russell Newell](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Date: Monday, November 06, 2017 4:18:40 PM
Attachments: [VVMF Veteran's Day Program 35th Anniv.pdf](#)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jim Knotts** <jknotts@vvmf.org>
Date: Mon, Nov 6, 2017 at 4:14 PM
Subject: RE: Vietnam Veterans Memorial
To: "Boulton, Caroline" <caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Luke Bullock <wesley_bullock@ios.doi.gov>, Heidi Zimmerman <hzimmerman@vvmf.org>

All –

Speak for 3-5 minutes. I will introduce him. Attached PDF of the program for Reading of the Names and Veterans Day, shows the run of show for the Veterans Day program.

Program should conclude by 2:00 p.m., but the Secretary could leave 5-10 minutes before that when some people leave the dias for wreath-laying portion of the program. Not sure who NPS expects to lay their wreath, but he might want to be a part of that.

If the Secretary is on-site at 12:30, that will be perfect. Gives him a few minutes to mingle or do media interviews, but not enough time to get bored. I will be able to meet him at whatever point he leaves his car, unless you expect NPS officials to meet him and escort him to the stage.

For Advance, I will be at The Wall off and on for the next four days. Luke can contact me or Heidi Zimmerman, hzimmerman@vvmf.org, 202-765-3773,

Thanks,

- Jim Knotts

VVMF

202-507-3954

jknotts@vvmf.org

From: Boulton, Caroline [mailto:caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Monday, November 06, 2017 3:32 PM

To: Jim Knotts <jknotts@vvmf.org>

Cc: Luke Bullock <wesley_bullock@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: Re: Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Hi Jim,

Thank you for sending Heidi's information! I have a few outstanding questions--

- How long do you expect the Secretary's remarks to last?
- What time do you expect the event to conclude?
- What time would you like the Secretary to arrive to the event?

Luke Bullock, who will be advancing this event for the Secretary, is cc'ed. If there is someone other than yourself that you prefer he work with to advance, please let us know!

Thanks,

Caroline

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 1:09 PM, Jim Knotts <jknotts@vvmf.org> wrote:

Caroline,

The security sweep in front of The Wall is requested to begin at 11:30 a.m.

Visitors get into the seating area as soon as the sweep is completed, which we hope is by noon.

The ceremony is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m.

The program agenda is attached. I'll introduce the Secretary, and we usually keep introductions very short. If there is an intro he wants me to use, please send it and we'll incorporate it into the script.

If I know when and where he plans to arrive, I'll meet him and escort him to his seat on the stage.

The event is open to the media, and there almost always are a few in attendance. If your Public Affairs folks want to arrange something special we can work directly with them. My PR person is Heidi Zimmerman, hzimmerman@vvmf.org, 202-765-3773. Otherwise, the media will be taping the ceremony from a press riser at the back of the seating area.

We will issue a press release and a media advisory. C-Span has confirmed they plan to air the ceremony.

- Jim Knotts

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

From: Caroline Boulton [mailto:caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 12:17 PM
To: Jim Knotts <jknotts@vvmf.org>
Subject: Re: Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Hi Jim,

Do you have a draft agenda for the Saturday event? I'm working with our communications team and we're looking to get an understanding of the length of remarks, who would introduce the Secretary, and the press plan (if there is one).

Thanks!

Caroline

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 25, 2017, at 5:07 PM, Boulton, Caroline <caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Jim,

I apologize for the delay in reaching out to you regarding the events during the week of Veterans Day. Secretary Zinke would be happy to deliver remarks during the Veterans Day Ceremony on the 11th. Would we be able to speak later this week regarding details?

Additionally, if the opportunity is still available for the Secretary to participate in the Reading of the Names, he is also interested in participating in that.

As a veteran himself, this day is extremely important to him so please let us know how we can best coordinate his participation! If needed, you can reach me on my cell at (b) (6)

Best,

Caroline

--

Caroline Boulton

Special Assistant to the Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Scheduling & Advance

Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

--

Caroline Boulton

Special Assistant to the Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Scheduling & Advance

Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

--

Caroline Boulton

Special Assistant to the Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Scheduling & Advance

Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

From: Moody, Joan
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:11:53 PM
Attachments: [05-30-17 Advisor for Alaska Affairs.docx](#)

Heather, Please see the draft release attached and below. Please see the highlighted queries. I would be glad to call Steve for a quote but thought you might rather do so. Are there any photos of him with his family and dog?
Joan



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

ANCHORAGE--Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska affairs. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

“A lifelong Alaskan, Steve is Wackowski is especially suited to advise me on matters in the state because of his exemplary military service; extensive experience with public policy for U.S. senators from Alaska; and work in the private sector with fish, wildlife, and oil and gas operations,” said Secretary Zinke. “His background is invaluable as we focus on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior’s management including Denali and other crown jewels of the national park and wildlife refuge systems.” Zinke just returned from a tour of Denali[MJF1] .

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family’s halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary’s College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley’s Air Force ROTC program[MJF2] .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve’s work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska’s North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce’s* “Top 40 under 40” Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens’ last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski’s reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

[MJF1]Current location?

[MJF2]Did he also go to UC Berkeley or just to the ROTC there while at St. Mary's College?

[MJF3]Red fox Labrador?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swift, Heather** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tue, May 30, 2017 at 12:54 PM

Subject: Fwd: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures

To: Joan Moody <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov>, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Joan, would you mind drafting up a press release for today announcing Stephen as Secretary Zinke's Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs. He will be based in Anchorage and provide a direct line between Alaska and the Office of the Secretary.

Please be sure to note the uniqueness of Alaska and DOI relationship. The vastness of DOI land and waters. Lots of parks, etc.

Thanks!

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Steve Wackowski is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sportfishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

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Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their red fox lab, Cali and two year old son, Lucas.

--

Joan Moody
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of the Secretary MIB 6226
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3280
Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Joan Moody](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Fwd: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:54:30 PM

Joan, would you mind drafting up a press release for today announcing Stephen as Secretary Zinke's Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs. He will be based in Anchorage and provide a direct line between Alaska and the Office of the Secretary.

Please be sure to note the uniqueness of Alaska and DOI relationship. The vastness of DOI land and waters. Lots of parks, etc.

Thanks!

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Steve Wackowski is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sportfishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

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Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their red fox lab, Cali and two year old son, Lucas.

From: ryanzinke
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: Washington Post reporter
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 2:34:48 PM

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: Lolita Zinke (b) (6) >
Date: 09/28/2017 10:53 AM (GMT-05:00)
To: Ryan Zinke <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: Washington Post reporter

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Andrew Coffin <AndrewC@reaganranch.org>
Date: September 28, 2017 at 12:32:15 AM GMT+3
To: (b) (6) " <(b) (6)>
Subject: Washington Post reporter

Hi Lola,

I'm headed up to the ranch, but wanted to quickly let you know but just before leaving the office I received a voicemail from a Washington Post reporter who said she was writing a story about Sec Zinke's travel, and wanted more information about his event here in April. I have not called her back and spoken to her, and probably will not do so... Unless someone on your end thinks that would be helpful.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further.

Hope you and the secretary are well.

Andrew

Sent from my iPhone

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Fwd: White House Digital request, Secretary Zinke bios
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 4:24:36 PM

Hey Brad -- just let us know if you need anything else. Thanks!

The Secretary's headshot is attached to this email

Ryan Zinke

U.S. Secretary of the Interior

@SecretaryZinke

Full Bio:

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Secretary Zinke has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and was a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Secretary Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Secretary Zinke was widely praised for his voting record in Congress, supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic activity, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

As Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20-percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The Department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters, is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states, and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

The Secretary represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was his 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Secretary Zinke was commissioned as an officer in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008: the Navy SEALs. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations around the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and during two tours at SEAL Team Six. He was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Secretary Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC-10 football player; a Master's degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master's degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan Zinke and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. The Secretary is proud to be an adopted member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes in Northeast Montana.

Short Bio:

Ryan Zinke is the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A Montana native, the Secretary is a former Navy SEAL Commander. He represented Montana's at-large district in the U.S. Congress.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

From: Swift, Heather
To: eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Fwd: Willens bio.
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 6:06:50 PM

Eli - Below is bio information for Todd Willens, assistant deputy secretary. Can you please draft a press release announcing his position? I'll forward you supportive quotes to include. Please send by noon tomorrow.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Willens, Todd <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 5:20 PM
Subject: Re: Willens bio.
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

I thought I did a good job over bloating myself. (is that even a term?)

On Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 4:29 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Super helpful.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 10, 2017, at 4:08 PM, Willens, Todd <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather,

This helpful? Can your team make sure I dont have any typos or grammar issues?

Todd Willens – Assistant Deputy Secretary

As the new Assistant Deputy Secretary, Todd Willens brings with him to Interior more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations and private businesses. Willens

has a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's myriad of complex policies such as land, energy, wildlife and water management.

At the Department Willens will be focused on the policy and operations of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation and the US Geological Survey.

Prior to his service at the Department of the Interior, Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM). During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operation oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. Working closely with stakeholders, local government officials, Congress and the previous Administration to increase defense base operations, prevent job killing regulatory actions, and significantly increase federal accountability to the people of New Mexico.

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department he worked on the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle, and the National Parks Centennial. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. As the Senior Policy Advisor, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including passage of the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

Willens is a native Californian and a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, DC with his wife and four children.



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Todd Willens
Assistant Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW -- MIB Room 6116
Washington, DC 20240
office: 202-208-6291

--

Todd Willens
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office: 202-208-6291

From: Paul Bedard
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather)
Subject: Fwd: Zinke Faces Legal Complaint for Failing to Report Contributions and Misusing Campaign Funds
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 12:44:11 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Campaign Legal Center <media@campaignlegalcenter.org>
Date: Mon, Oct 30, 2017 at 12:42 PM
Subject: Zinke Faces Legal Complaint for Failing to Report Contributions and Misusing Campaign Funds
To: pbedard@washingtonexaminer.com



For Immediate Release

October 30, 2017

Contact: Corey Goldstone, [\(202\)-736-7912](tel:(202)736-7912), media@campaignlegalcenter.org

[Zinke Faces Legal Complaint for Failing to Report Contributions and Misusing Campaign Funds](#)

WASHINGTON – Today, Campaign Legal Center (CLC) [filed a complaint](#) with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) alleging Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke violated campaign finance law by failing to report tens of thousands of dollars of contributions received and for using campaign funds for the personal benefit of himself and his family.

Zinke failed to report the identity of multiple individuals who contributed thousands of dollars to his campaign through a joint fundraising committee, potentially concealing contributions in excess of federal limits.

Additionally, several transactions indicate Zinke converted campaign funds to personal use. For

example, in April 2016 the Zinke campaign bought a motorhome from Zinke's wife for \$59,100, spent thousands of dollars maintaining the vehicle, then sold it in July 2017 to a friend for just \$25,000. If the campaign paid Zinke's wife above market rate for the vehicle, or sold it to Zinke's friend below market rate, then it illegally converted funds to personal use. Other transactions, such as a hotel stay in the U.S. Virgin Islands and a five-star hotel in New York City, were misreported on Zinke's FEC reports and may raise additional questions about personal use.

"A campaign's most basic legal obligation is to publicly disclose its major donors, so the Zinke campaign's failure to provide that information is very concerning," said **Adav Noti, senior director, trial litigation and strategy at CLC, who previously served as the FEC's Associate General Counsel for Policy**. "And selling a major campaign asset to the candidate's friend at half price is inherently suspect. The FEC must enforce the longstanding ban on using campaign money for personal benefits."

"The Zinke campaign failed to disclose thousands in contributions, misreported thousands of dollars in spending, and may have misused campaign funds," said **Brendan Fischer, director, federal and FEC reform at CLC**. "The public has a right to know who is funding a candidate and how a candidate is spending that money, but Zinke has disregarded even these basic accountability requirements."

Campaign Legal Center (CLC) marks 15 years of advancing democracy through law (2002-2017). We will continue to fight for democracy reform until the United States' political process is accessible to all citizens, resulting in a representative, responsive and accountable government.

##

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Our mailing address is:

[1411 K St. NW Suite 1400](#)

[Washington, D.C. 20005](#)

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This email was sent to pbedard@washingtonexaminer.com
Campaign Legal Center, [1411 K St. NW, Suite 1400, Washington, District of Columbia](#)
20005, USA
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<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/washington-secrets>

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Subject: FYI - Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 11:49:27 AM

Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family

By ESTHER WHIELDON

10/30/2017 11:01 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group says in a Federal Election Commission complaint that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash.

The June RV sale is one of several transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke's family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke's campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits.

The call for an FEC investigation adds to the scrutiny Zinke is facing over his political activity. He is already under investigation by Interior's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel over travel costs he incurred as secretary to attend political events while on official business, including a fundraiser in the Virgin Islands in his first month in office.

"When you combine the disregard for campaign finance laws when Zinke was a candidate with the disregard that Zinke as Interior secretary has shown for the ethics laws, you certainly get a picture of an individual who may not be taking his responsibilities as an officeholder seriously," Brendan Fischer, who submitted the complaint for CLC, told POLITICO.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift declined to comment.

In the complaint, CLC says the Zinke campaign's RV sale could have violated federal law prohibiting using political donations for personal benefit in one of two ways: Either the campaign overpaid for the vehicle when it purchased it from Lolita Zinke for \$59,100 in April 2016, or it allowed Zinke's friend Ed Buttrey to pay below market value when he bought it for \$25,000 in June of this year. Records also show Zinke for Congress fund spent more than \$6,000 on tires and maintenance work on the RV in 2016.

The RV would have been worth between \$40,000 and \$49,000 when it was sold to Buttrey, according to The Associated Press, which first reported the transaction in August. Federal law requires transactions to be for fair market value when a campaign purchases goods from a candidate's family or sells assets to someone else. CLC's complaint notes it "is extremely

unlikely that the value of the RV declined by 42 percent over the course of a single year."

Buttrey, a Montana state senator who is rumored to be in the running to be nominated as an Interior assistant secretary, did not respond to a request for comment.

CLC's complaint also raises concerns that Zinke has not disclosed the dates of key expenses from the end of last year. Zinke for Congress reported a \$22,744 payment to a credit card on Dec. 31, but the committee itemizes those costs, including for lodging, travel and meals, as happening on the same day, according to CLC.

Masking the dates of the actual expenses makes it impossible to know whether Zinke was actually using the funds for legitimate purposes or to subsidize his personal lifestyle. For example, knowing those details would show whether Zinke used campaign funds to pay for lodging in New York City on the same day he interviewed for the Interior secretary job in Trump Tower, Fischer said. Trump Tower is a mere 10 minute walk from the WestHouse Hotel where Zinke stayed.

The campaign also listed a \$522.74 charge for lodging the Lime Inn in the U.S. Virgin Islands among the Dec. 31 payments, according to CLC's complaint. POLITICO reported last week that Zinke was in the territory in November for an event with the Virgin Islands GOP, a political action committee that critics say uses questionable fundraising practices.

Also in question are a number of payments for events reported as occurring after Zinke was sworn in on March 1. His campaign paid \$2,315.52 to the Capitol Hill Club on March 12 for "event catering" and \$1,750 for "Senate catering" was sent to the same address over the next two months, according to campaign finance records cited in CLC's complaint.

Swift said in an email earlier this month that the "Senate catering" payments were to help the Montana delegation continue its weekly coffees for visiting constituents until Zinke's open seat was filled by Rep. Greg Gianforte. But she could not explain the Capitol Hill Club charge and did not respond to follow-up inquiries.

CLC also says Zinke's campaign failed to disclose the underlying donors for tens of thousands of dollars it received from the Zinke Victory Fund — a joint fundraising committee that disbursed funds among his campaign; his leadership political action committee, SEAL PAC; House Republicans' campaign arm; and the Montana Republican State Central Committee. The group says this lack of transparency prevents the public from knowing whether people may have exceeded the legal \$2,700 contribution cap.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#); [Lori Mashburn](#); [Douglas Domenech](#)
Subject: FYI -- BSEE Director Announcement
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 8:57:39 AM
Attachments: [DOI Angelle press release - revised draft 5-16-17.docx](#)

Hi all --

FYI only (unless you want to weigh in), BSEE plans to issue the attached release on Monday announcing their new Director. His appointment is not subject to Senate Confirmation and has cleared PPO. Please let me know if you have any issues. Rollout plan is below.

Thanks!

My best,

L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
 (202) 897-7022 cell
 @Interior

BSEE Director Announcement Outreach Strategy

Date/Time	Action	Audience	Notes
5-22-2017 10:00 am	DOI Announcement Press Release	DOI and BSEE media distro lists, BSEE social media	
5-22-2017	DOI Announcement Press Release distributed to BSEE Congressional list	Congressional members and staff	
5-23-2017 1:00 pm	BSEE introductory email	all BSEE employees	
5-24-2017 1:00 pm (tentative)	Interview by phone with The Advocate reporter, Baton Rouge, LA (tentative)	Louisiana communities – Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
5-25-2017	Letter to external stakeholders	Industry, NGO's, coastal States	
6-1-2017 (tentative) time TBD	Media Roundtable Discussion (in-person and phone)	Washington bureau and trade reporters	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
6-1-2017	Director's Corner (blog) posted on bsee.gov	Web site viewers	Will be supported by follow-on with social media platforms
June & July Dates TBD	Field visits and all-hands meetings	BSEE field staff	New Orleans, La gulf coast, Houston, Camarillo, CA and Anchorage, AK

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Johnson, Virginia](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#)
Subject: fyi - mike reynolds
Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 10:30:12 AM

Partial EE article below <https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/2017/06/28/stories/1060056682>

For years, Zinke has touted the melting of Grinnell Glacier, one of the park's famous features, as evidence that he understands the impacts of climate change. He often tells a story of visiting the park with his wife, Lolita, and observing the glacier shrinking over lunch.

But it's unclear if Zinke will tackle climate change. President Trump has called it a "hoax" and is attempting to repeal rules aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. After being confirmed, Zinke signed a secretarial order launching a review of climate policies (***Climatewire***, March 30).

Zinke has also disputed the level of influence human actions have on warming. He called that aspect "still unsettled."

Michael Reynolds, acting director of the National Park Service, told E&E News earlier this month the science is settled and the agency is continuing to plan for the impacts of climate change, even if the politics are not.

"The climate, as far as our science tells us, is changing, and so we're dealing with the resiliency factors in it, and we're dealing with the science and the facts as best we can," he said. "There may be some adjustments as we're getting used to a new set of leaders that want us to talk about it in different ways, but we're continuing to work on it."

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Scott Hommel](#); [Magallanes, Downey](#); [Willens, Todd](#); [David Bernhardt](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: FYI "UGH!": Zinke's wife's travel caused some headaches for Interior staff
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 9:55:39 AM

POLITICO

'UGH!': Zinke's wife's travel caused some headaches for Interior staff

By BEN LEFEBVRE

11/20/2017 05:03 AM EST

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife caused some frustration for Interior staffers when traveling with him on official business, according to new records that a liberal watchdog group says uncover the potential misuse of government resources.

The records document Lola Zinke's last-minute requests to join high-level dinners and additions to the guest list for a conservative group's event near their home in Southern California earlier this year. The Western Values Project filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit last month to force Interior to release more than 100 pages of documents related to Lola Zinke's trips with her husband and interactions with Interior staff. Shared first with POLITICO, the documents shed new light on the outsize profile Lola Zinke has established compared with the typical Cabinet secretary's spouse, including her dictating people to invite to a town hall hosted by the conservative Young America's Foundation for her husband.

New emails also reveal a celebratory dinner the Zinkes attended that was organized in part by a major GOP donor who gave heavily to Ryan Zinke's congressional campaigns. And they show Interior staffers had to accommodate a last-minute request for her to join the secretary at an official dinner with Alaska's governor. The records cover two trips Lola Zinke joined in the first three months of her husband's tenure as well as some other interactions with Interior staff, such as coordinating her attendance at a White House briefing for Cabinet members' spouses.

While the department says Lola Zinke paid her own way, the records show Interior used staff time to coordinate some of her activities while traveling with her husband. And the trips gave her access to high-level politicians and GOP activists and donors who could benefit her as a political operator in her own right.

"These emails show that the leadership at the Department of Interior treats basic ethical standards like an inconvenience," Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said. "If Secretary Zinke is willing to be so sloppy with something as elementary as this, then god only knows how they're handling big decisions about energy and public lands behind closed doors."

Interior says Lola Zinke pays her own way when she accompanies her husband and that travel is cleared by ethics officials in advance.

"DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence" with the secretary, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Friday.

Interior's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel are investigating the former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL's travel expenses and appearance at political events while on official trips, including those where he was accompanied by his wife. Last week, the IG's office said it could not conduct a thorough investigation because Interior had kept inadequate records. Among other problems, the watchdog said it had "not been able to determine the full extent to which Lolita Zinke, the Secretary's wife, accompanied the Secretary on official travel." Interior officials blamed the shortcomings on inadequate procedures left in place by the Obama administration.

The new records show the secretary's wife helped decide the guest list for a Young America's Foundation town

hall forum with Ryan Zinke on April 17 at its Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif., part of a weeklong official trip in the state. Lola Zinke joined her husband for national parks tours and meetings with government officials throughout the week, as well as for a private tour of the Reagan Ranch galleries led by Andrew Coffin, YAF's vice president.

Lola Zinke sent a "list of people I have invited to the event" to two Interior staffers, according to a series of April 7 emails. Caroline Boulton, a special assistant to the secretary, forwarded the list on to an official at YAF, with a warning that more could be added. Interior redacted the names of Zinke's guests before releasing the email.

"She's expecting some of them to bring plus ones and also her list is not yet final," Boulton wrote. "She's said that she doesn't have emails for them all since many of them have been personally told about the event, but I wanted you to have the list!"

YAF is a key pillar of the conservative movement with alumni ranging from White House officials to prominent journalists. The group's donors have reportedly included the Koch brothers, among others.

Lola Zinke is active in conservative politics. The Santa Barbara native was a member of President Donald Trump's Hispanic outreach team during the 2016 campaign, and in September she became chairwoman for the Senate campaign of Troy Downing, a Montana businessman hoping to unseat Sen. Jon Tester next year.

Lola had previously faced criticism for accompanying her husband on the California trip. She posted a photograph on Twitter from Gov. Jerry Brown's office and accompanied her husband to meetings with DOI regional staff in Sacramento and trips to Fresno and the national parks at Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, the trip manifests show.

The trip also included five days in Santa Barbara and then four days in Zinke's hometown in Whitefish, Mont., an upscale part of the state where the couple owns a home and other real estate.

The secretary bringing his wife along on official trips isn't illegal as long as the government doesn't pay for her expenses. But it can be an ethically gray area, depending on the circumstances, said Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist with good-governance watchdog Public Citizen.

"Spousal travel, especially when paid for by the spouse, suggests that the trip may have less to do with official duties and more resembles a family vacation partially paid for by taxpayers," Holman said.

When Lola Zinke joined an official trip to Norway, Greenland and Alaska, she appears to have caused some headaches by deciding to stay longer than expected. Ryan Zinke sent his staff scrambling to make last-minute arrangements so she could accompany him to dinner with the governor of Alaska and other dignitaries in Anchorage, according to new emails.

Interior staffers apparently found out about the change in plans second-hand from an aide to Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who also was on the trip, along with other senators and their spouses, according to a May 27 email from Director of Scheduling and Advance Russell Roddy to other colleagues at Interior — one day before Lola Zinke had been scheduled to return to Washington.

"I have heard that Mrs. Zinke was now maybe not going to fly out from Fairbanks Sunday morning ... so, I asked Annie if she happened to talk to Mrs. Zinke about her plans. She said Mrs. Zinke said she was now going to head to Byers Lake and Anchorage with RKZ and fly out of Anchorage on Tuesday," Roddy wrote. "UGH! We have all kinds of planes, trains and automobiles manifests to now scramble with."

It is unclear what led to the change in plans. Before the trip, Lola Zinke had apparently been trying to secure a seat on a military plane back to Washington, but the Senate staffer coordinating the trip told Interior that it would be a "safer bet" for her to fly commercial because Ryan Zinke would not be with her. The military typically does not like when members of Congress try to get their spouses on military planes without the member being present, according to an email from Boulton relaying guidance she had received. "There's a lot of ifs in that, so let me know if you want me to keep pushing on the" military return flight, Boulton wrote to Lola Zinke on May 18.

Lola Zinke joined her husband at a May 29 dinner in Anchorage with Alaska Gov. Bill Walker and other state officials.

"The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal," Swift said. Lola Zinke flew home on a commercial flight from Anchorage the following day.

Lola Zinke also accompanied her husband to an April 10 dinner in Washington that was organized with the help of one of his past campaign donors, Burt Sugarman, who has donated heavily to Republicans.

"We are very excited that Sec Zinke accepted the event," wrote Phil Anderson, president of lobbying firm Navigators Global who helped organize the April 10 dinner sponsored by the National Geographic Society, in a March 24 email to Boulton. "As you know, Burt Sugarman first discussed the dinner with Sec Zinke."

Sugarman and his wife, the former Entertainment Tonight anchor Mary Hart, are members of the National Geographic Society's board of directors.

The Sugarmans gave a combined \$10,800 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign, out of more than \$180,000 they gave to GOP candidates and committees in the last election cycle, according to FEC documents.

On April 27, Lola Zinke was invited to an ethics briefing at the White House for Cabinet spouses. "They stressed the importance of attending since important ethics rules will [be] discussed and questions can be answered by White House counsel," Boulton wrote in an email to Lola Zinke.

"Thank you!" she replied. "It's a good thing I'll be in town then."

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

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The Girl Scout Ranger Program

The *Girl Scout Ranger Program* is a cooperative effort between the National Park Service (NPS) and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA). Through this joint initiative, NPS and GSUSA plan to cooperatively promote opportunities and activities that align with both organizations' missions and to develop a sustainable collaboration to advance our shared goals. This program will help girls get outdoors and to access our nation's natural and cultural resources.

As part of the program, Girl Scouts are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities at NPS sites: to enjoy existing NPS educational and service programs, and to utilize NPS sites as venues for their Girl Scout activities (i.e. working on badges, Journeys, or Take Action/Highest Awards projects). NPS awards girls a certificate for 5 hours of participation, and the Girl Scout Ranger patch for 10 hours of participation.

This new program is designed to:

- Spark girls' awareness of national parks and historic sites and encourage exploration of these sites as places of discovery and adventure.
- Educate girls, Girl Scout volunteers, and NPS staff about how national parks can enrich the Girl Scout Leadership Experience by providing experiences that align with the Girl Scout program.
- Encourage the immediate and future preservation of public lands through education and stewardship activities.
- Provide Girl Scouts with opportunities to experience public land management through field-based learning and exposure to environmental issues and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) careers.
- Support girls in developing the leadership skills needed to serve as the next generation of leaders in resource stewardship and conservation.

NPS and GSUSA announced this partnership on May 2, 2015 at the Golden Gate Bridging event, held at Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco where 6,000 Girl Scouts walked across the Golden Gate Bridge to celebrate "bridging" from a Junior Girl Scout to a Cadette.

For more information: <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/youthprograms/girlscoutranger.htm>

From: Ellie Shechet
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Gizmodo Media request for comment - Zinke vacation before monument deadline
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 2:13:18 PM

Hi Heather,

I'm a reporter at Jezebel, a Gizmodo Media Group website, and I'm hoping to request comment and/or clarification on a vacation Secretary Zinke [appears to be enjoying](#) right now, a week before the deadline for his national monuments review.

According to an [internal tally](#) from conservation group Center for Western Priorities, Sec. Zinke has only visited 8 of the 27 monuments under review, and appears to have no further plans to visit the remaining monuments. Although Sec. Zinke has announced no changes to Grand Canyon-Parashant, Sand to Snow National Monument, Upper Missouri River Breaks, Canyons of the Ancients, Craters of the Moon, and Hanford Reach, that still leaves a number of monuments up for review that Sec. Zinke seems to not have visited in his official capacity.

Is it accurate that Sec. Zinke has visited just 8 of the monuments under review and does not intend to see more before his review deadline? Can you confirm that Sec. Zinke is currently on vacation with his wife outside the U.S., and explain his decision to do so instead of attempting to visit more of these locations?

My deadline is 3 PM EST.

Thanks,
Ellie

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Ellie Shechet
Staff Writer, [Jezebel](#)
@ellieshechet

The National Park Service — Sea Community Gullah Geechee

CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR®

VOLUME 2 SERIES 2, FALL 2017

CELEBRATING 500 YEARS OF FLORIDA

WOMEN OF SEA, SPUDS, ELKTON AND ARMSTRONG COMMUNITY



PROOF



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

GULLAH GEECHEE AWARENESS MONTH IN FLORIDA

WHEREAS, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor was established by federal legislation in 2006 to recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans known as Gullah Geechee, who settled in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Florida, and

WHEREAS, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor assists in interpreting the story of Gullah Geechee people and preserving Gullah Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, and music; and

WHEREAS, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor identifies and preserves sites, historical data, artifacts, and objects associated with the Gullah Geechee people and communities for the benefit and education of the public; and

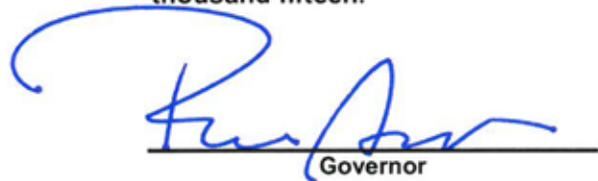
WHEREAS, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission proposed the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan that the boundary of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor be defined to include St. Johns County, Florida, which was not included in the boundary defined in the designating legislation; and

WHEREAS, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission determined that coastal communities in Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties of the state of Florida possess the historic presence of Gullah Geechee people in that area;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Scott, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing October 2015 as *Gullah Geechee Awareness Month in Florida*.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capital, this 13th day of October, in the year two thousand fifteen.


Governor

CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR®



Photo Credit: Derek Boyd Hankerson

SCOTTISH/IRISH ANCESTRY



O.B. Johnson at Family Farm, TN

This edition is dedicated to our Murray and Johnson Clan roots based upon West African and Scottish/Irish ancestry. Both names are of Scottish origin. As a child the ancestry always made logical sense since most people associate, have relationships, fall

in love, and marry people with whom they have a commonality. The Scottish/Irish and West Africans roots of many Americans are derived from the shared experiences related to agriculture and animal husbandry. People of African descent established families with Europeans during the colonial era, and those same families are presently known as “crackers” in Florida. “Cracker” is a term used to define the cracking of the whips which assisted in driving cattle and horses a major occupation of Florida settlers. The Kinsley’s of Northeast Florida was one of the first documented “Cracker” families with livestock, land, and crops.

KINGSLEY PLANTATION

Zephaniah Kingsley, of European descent, married an adolescent girl whom he purchased as a slave in the 1800’s. Transported from Senegal, West Africa, Anna Madgigine Jai whom Kingsley purchased in Havana, Cuba, was of royal blood and eventually became his wife and the mother of three of his children.

On the March 1, 1811, in the Spanish East Florida, plantation owner Zephaniah Kingsley signed a document that forever changed the life of his African wife Anna and of Florida. The document was a manumission paper ensuring her legal freedom. It marked the beginning of the young woman’s freedom in the New World and the beginning of a written record of a remarkable life. Anna petitioned the Spanish government for land, and land grant records show that in 1813 she received title to five acres on the St. Johns River. This property was located across the river from her husband’s plantation, Laurel Grove, south of present day Jacksonville. Anna purchased goods, livestock, and enslaved Africans to begin her business operation. Over time she became one of a significant number of free people of African descent in East Florida.

These free Blacks, among whom were the Haitian liberator Bissau, included farmers, craftsmen, and members of the militia. A majority of the documented eighteen black homesteads and plantations in Northeast Florida owned slaves. Availability of captured imported Africans was through four major Florida ports: St. Augustine, Amelia Island on the Atlantic Coast, Pensacola, and Mosquito Coast.

Although slavery was legally supported, Spanish policies also allowed manumission and self-purchase. Slavery was not exclusively racial or a permanent life-long condition. Under Spanish authority, both the enslaved and free Black population held certain rights and privileges with opportunities to actively participate in the territory’s economic development. Anna Kingsley, like other free people, were determined to be independent and as a business woman sold goods and poultry to neighboring settlers.

PLANTATION MAP

Her blossoming business lasted only a few months, because during an effort to wrestle East Florida from the Spanish, armed US American forces entered the province. Joining with a number of rebellious Floridians, they looted and occupied the homesteads of planters and settlers to obtain supplies and set up bases.

This was known as the Patriots Rebellion and during skirmishes in 1814 after the War of 1812 when many Georgians were making advances into Florida. These insurgents succeeded, and a US system of enslavement replaced the comparatively liberal Spanish policies. A principal concern of many on both sides was what would be the future status of free Black people. When US invaders and their supporters approached her property, Anna ordered her people to set a fire to consume her home and produce, escaping with her children and enslaved people on a Spanish gunboat. The insurrection ended in failure and Anna's loss was not total. A Spanish commandant reported that "the flames devoured grain and other things to the value (of) \$1,500." The governor rewarded her loyalty with a land grant of 350 acres as compensation for her loss.

Laurel Grove was also destroyed as a result of the conflict. In 1814, Zephaniah and Anna Kingsley, with their children and enslaved workers moved to Fort George Island near the mouth of the St. Johns River. While at Fort George, Zephaniah Kingsley's Florida landholdings increased to include extensive timberland and orange groves, four major plantations producing rice, indigo, provisions, and Sea Island cotton. He also owned ships that he captained on trading voyages. Kingsley had African overseers at his various properties to which he entrusted his business operations when he was away.

At the Fort George plantation, Anna eventually assumed total responsibility resulting in Kingsley later declaring that she "could carry on all the affairs of the plantation in my absence as well as I could myself." These "affairs" included overseeing the lives of about sixty enslaved men, women, and children who lived on the Fort George Island plantation.

In 1821, conditions for all of Florida's people of color, free and enslaved, changed drastically when Florida became a territory of the United States. An influential planter, Zephaniah Kingsley was appointed to

the 1823 territorial legislative council. He tried to persuade the new lawmakers to adopt policies similar to those of the Spanish, providing for liberal manumission and rights for the free Black population. Kingsley published his opinions in, "A Treatise on the Patriarchal, or Co-operative System of Society as It Exists in Some Governments, and Colonies in America, and in the United States, Under the Name of Slavery, with Its Necessity and Advantages" in 1828.

His arguments did not convince Floridians new legislators, and the territorial Councils employing fear of slave rebellion established policies that became increasingly oppressive. Florida legislation of the 1820s and 1830s reflects racial discrimination that blurred the distinction between freeman and slave until there was virtually no difference. (Reference: National Park Service).

Spanish Florida's society prior to 1821, in particular, was heavily influenced by Moorish (Islamic) laws and customs that had been transported to the New World by the Iberians. Muslims from North Africa and Arabia invaded major portions of Spain, influencing the culture, education, agriculture, and government policies for more than 700 years. At one time the gap between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa was less than twenty miles. The Muslim (Moors) influence was greatest in the region known as Grenada in southeast Spain.

Many of the methods of livestock practice brought from Spain to the New World originated in North and West Africa. This includes what has become identified as Cracker Cattle and Horse husbandry. Within the year that a majority of the Moors were defeated and Jewish people were expelled, and the Catholic monarchs King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella consolidated Spain, Christopher Columbus received financing by them to search for gold and to spread the Roman Catholic faith.

In fact, many of the laws that were brought to the New Spanish Empire were based upon a culture and legal system grounded in Islamic statutes. This explains how and why freedom was available in Florida for Africans. The Spanish for centuries had incorporated Islamic slave laws based on status, not wealth or race; therefore, all enslaved or indentured people could buy, and/or earn their freedom. One major benefit under the Spanish system was that family units were not broken up in the manner of the British chattel slave system in the English colonies. Marriage and children were protected by church and state no matter the social status of the people.

Photo Credit: Derek Boyd Hankerson



AFRICAN CONNECTION TO THE NEW WORLD

Over the course of the last 15 years the city of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, and our community have worked tirelessly to connect the region's history to the National Park Service (NPS) Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Project, the NPS Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, and to Fort Mose to promote world history! Florida has been a center of international New World events since 1513 and has existed under distinctly different and contrasting sovereign systems: Spanish, British and US.

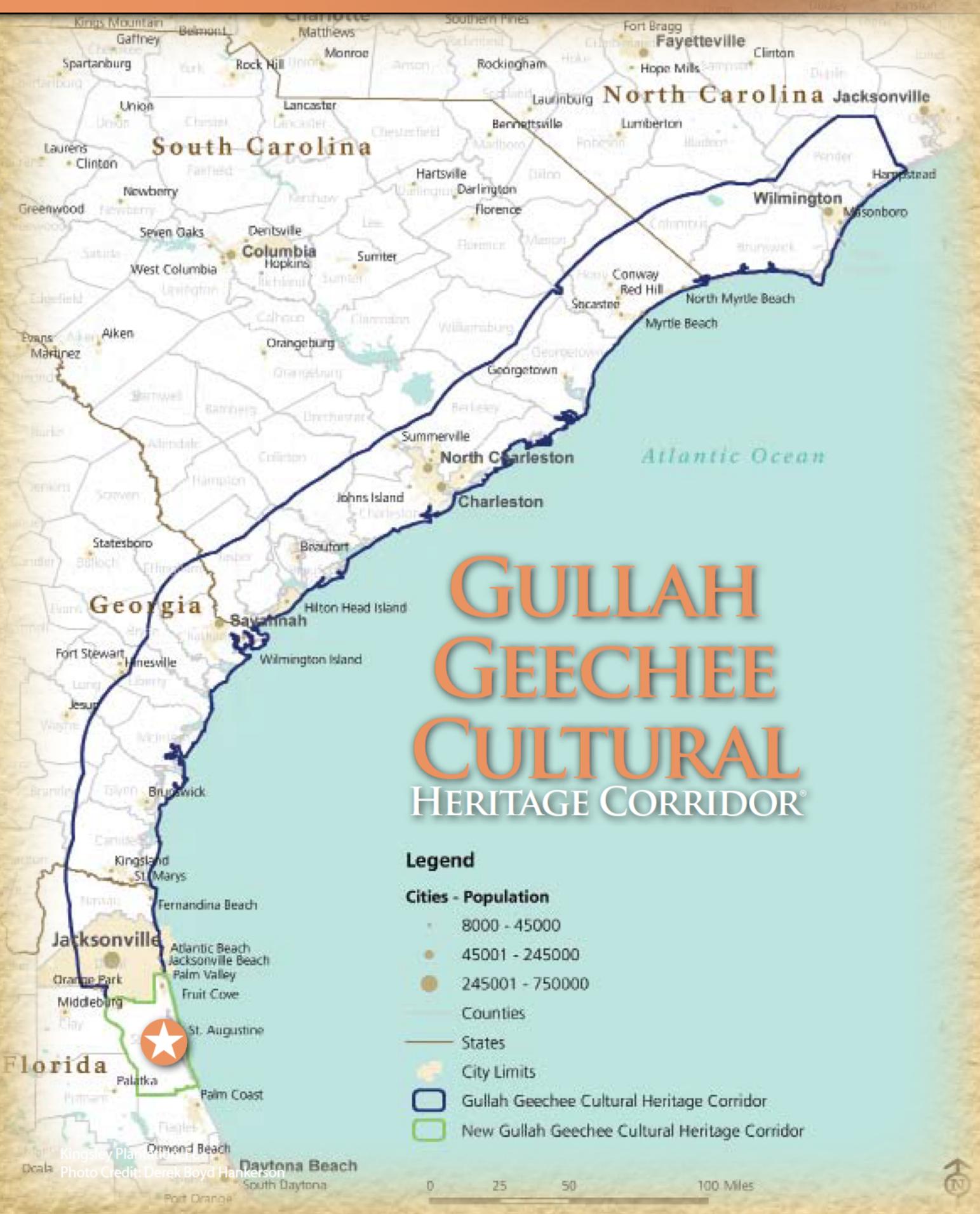
After the British and US acquisitions, Florida's Spanish foundation was sublimated or ignored. That is changing and creates a huge opportunity to reflect a more accurate history through celebrations, observances, and NPS connections. The purpose of these joint efforts is to highlight the rich African and Native people's contributions to Florida. These documented events date back 500 plus years when free African explorers sailed with Christopher Columbus in 1492, when Juan Garrido sailed with Ponce de Leon in 1513 and was the first to grow wheat in the New World, and many others. Sailors, translators, and explorers such as Estevanico the Moor in 1527 arrived on the Gulf Coast and travelled with the Spanish through Mexico, now part of the US southwest. In fact, 40-60 free and enslaved Africans sailed with Pedro Menendez de Aviles to St. Augustine in 1565, 450 years ago, to settle the New World. Also, in 1565 the first militias were established to protect the Spanish settlement of St. Augustine. These military men included Africans who had earned their freedom through service. Although the first St. Augustine militia was organized as early as 1606, the first official Black unit was commissioned in 1620 to protect the town from invaders.

The Spanish Capitol of St. Augustine has always been a place of Black people's freedom. Various edicts and proclamations to that effect were issued in the early part of the 16th and 17th centuries as part of Spain's political and international strategy to weaken the British colonies to the north. They granted enslaved Africans from any northern British colony freedom and citizenship if they made their way to Spanish Florida, swore allegiance to the Spanish crown, and converted to Catholicism. By 1738, over 100 African families had made their way to Florida, settling at Fort Mose – the first legally sanctioned free Black community in North America. This became the destination of the original Underground Railroad, heading south to Florida not north to Canada. This process of achieving civil rights was far different from the 1960s non-violent movement that followed approximately 200 years later in 1964 in St. Augustine. Incidentally, one of the major leaders of the 1960s movement was Asa Philip Randolph, a Crescent City, Florida native. Although each era involved struggle and resistance, during the colonial era circumstances reflected international conflicts on a local scale. By providing protection of Spanish Florida from British invasion, Africans had little choice but to fight to maintain their freedom. When they did succeed, they received land grants for their heroism and many established homesteads and plantations in Florida, or moved to Cuba, Spain, Guam, the Caribbean and Canada securing freedom for themselves and their families. By the 1960s the alternatives were limited: continued local and national denial of civil rights or realization of full citizenship promised but seldom realized after the Civil War. There was no place else to go.

AFRICAN CONNECTIONS TO SPANISH FLORIDA

The Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor connection to Africans may be older and richer than previously realized. This corridor includes northeast Florida, extending from Wilmington, NC to St. Augustine, FL. Recently, the **Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project**, a Florida-based organization that facilitates ancestral remembrance ceremonies and promotes installation of historic markers at sites where Africans first touched land after journeying across the Atlantic Ocean, learned of research that identifies the Heritage Corridor, specifically Sapelo Bay region of Georgia, as possibly the first Middle Passage arrival site on the continental United States. In 1526, near Sapelo Bay Georgia, Spanish explorer Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon arrived after embarking from Santo Domingo with six ships. He had personally received from King Charles of Spain a license to establish a colony and bring enslaved Africans to build it. With 500 people from Hispaniola, of whom a significant number were Africans, on ships fully stocked with olive oil, grain, horses, tools, and armaments they went as far north as Cape Fear, North Carolina, where they were caught in a storm during which a major portion of their cargo and at least one vessel were destroyed. They sailed south and founded the colony of San Miguel de Gaudape on what would later be the Sapelo Bay region of Georgia. The colony lasted barely one year and was doomed by hunger, disease, the death of Lucas Vazquez, indigenous people's attacks, and enslaved Africans' rebellion. After revolting, all the Africans escaped into the interior, integrating into the Native communities.





GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR®

Legend

Cities - Population

- 8000 - 45000
- 45001 - 245000
- 245001 - 750000

— Counties

— States

City Limits

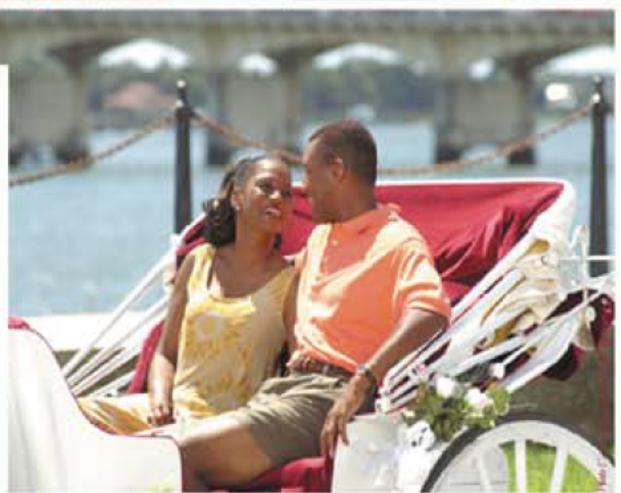
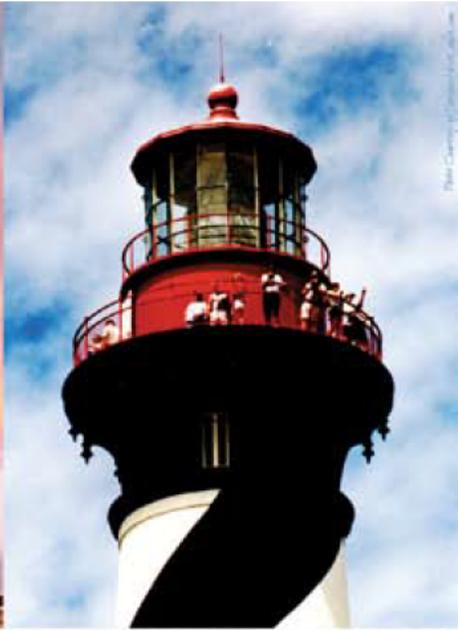
 Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

 New Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

0 25 50 100 Miles



Photo Credit: Derek Boyd Hankerson



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ARMSTRONG COMMUNITY

On Saturday, December 7, 2013, the Sea Community Gullah Geechee Culture Heritage Corridor Organization, honored military veterans - past and present, who gathered at the Armstrong Cemetery during the 2nd Annual Rails to Trails Festival. Rails to Trails is one of three cycling trails running through the rural agrarian area of Armstrong or Sea Community and along the old Railroad Ties diagonal to Rt. 207. This annual event was attended by relatives and family member of the soldiers who served. Former County Commissioner Ken Brayn was the Master of Ceremonies, and in attendance were State Rep Cindy Stevenson, Commissioner Rachel Bennett, State Senator Travis Hutson, and Congressman Ron DeSantis.



Also, the Armstrong community celebrated its 100th Anniversary and the opening of a nine mile stretch of cycling, horseback, and walking trail. As part of an 80 mile planned bike path through northeast Florida, this stretch, known as Rails to Trails, now extends in St. Johns County near

Interstate 95 through Vermont Heights, Elkton, and Armstrong to Spuds. Elected official and community residents recently celebrated the addition of another section of the bike trail in Putnam County that extends across the St. Johns River via a scenic bridge into and along Dunns Creek and the Ravine Gardens Florida State Park.



Development of the Armstrong Community – 40 Acres and a Mule
Armstrong was developed with land near the railroad station donated by Clay Bottoms Farms Company. Developers Keith Canfield and J.L. Cray sub-divided the area into 40 acre lots that were sold to “colored” people. The

community, known earlier as Cokesbury, was established October 5, 1900. It is one of the oldest African American settlements in St. Johns County with origins dating to about 1886 as a saw mill operation. The community was settled on two occasions, but because of its small number of residents the town was not formed nor a Post Office established! The name Armstrong coincided with the extension of the railroad tracks through southwest St. Johns County. Development centered around the saw mill and the town was formally laid out in 1911.



First Baptist Church of Armstrong
The First Baptist Church of Armstrong, organized in 1910 by African Americans, was originally located half a block east of

the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railroad track. It was a small frame building erected by The Turpentine Company for Workers. In 1915,

the structure burned down and was rebuilt; the building blew down in 1928 and 1939, and each time was re-erected. It was a rectangular frame, unpainted, plain structure with a bell tower. The first recorded pastor, Rev. Will Gaynor, served from 1910-1913. Rev. R. B. McHelm became the pastor in 1936.



Saint Mary's Methodist Episcopal Church

Saint Mary's Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1914 and faced the FEC track. It was a small frame building also erected by the turpentine company. After burning down in 1915, services were held in church member's homes until a brown rectangular

frame building with a bell tower was completed and dedicated in 1925. The earliest known pastor was Rev. A. Anderson of Orange Mills, Florida.



Name Change – Cokesbury

The name Armstrong was temporarily replaced by the name Cokesbury around 1915, but it reverted back to Armstrong in the 1920's. And, while the community of Armstrong was not large, it was growing and in need of a post office.



Armstrong Post Office

The first Armstrong post office was established on July 24, 1886; Jun D. Webb was the first postmaster. The second post office was originally established as Cokesbury February 9, 1915, with Rev. Joseph H. Hankerson as the first postmaster. Rev.

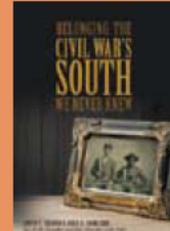
Hankerson served until approximately June 19, 1918, when a successor was appointed. The name was changed to Armstrong on September 16, 1920, and the post office was discontinued on February 15, 1932.



Pentecostal Assemblies of the World

A new African American congregation, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, was organized in Armstrong near the railroad tracks in 1936 and was housed in a two story dwelling with services held in the rear. The

pastor lived in the house.



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It inspires you to lean more!

MAROONS, BLACK SEMINOLES, NATIVE PEOPLE, AND BLACKS

From the 1680s, enslaved Africans fled from the chattel British colonies of the Carolina's and Georgia into Spanish Florida seeking freedom and refuge. Maroon settlements, such as Fort Mose, Angola, Fort. St. Nicholas, and other posts, grew in the jungles and swamps. Although they lived in separate villages, Black Cimarron's (Spanish word for wild, free, and untamed) and Yamassee lived and frequently fought side by side with Native people in a struggle for freedom and sovereignty against the U.S. government.

Cow keeper, or old King Boleck, is identified by many as the originator of the Seminole tribe when the Native people came from Alabama near Eufaula to live in Florida. He was a great friend to the English. As early as 1764 he began providing cattle and protecting the frontiers for Gov. Tonym. When General Andrew Jackson invaded Spanish Florida it was on the pretext of destroying Black settlements and returning escaped Blacks to their US owners. He charged that the Indians were harboring fugitives. In 1814 another force attempted to take control of Florida during the Patriot War staged in northeast Florida.

They were defeated by a combined force of the Fort Mose Militia and Seminole Indians. Fort Negro was abandoned by the British after the war of 1812, and with Jackson's approval, was destroyed by U.S. forces. A series of American generals were in turn repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to end the war and capture runaways. Gen Thomas Jessup wrote "This, you may be assured is a Negro, not an Indian war." Several free Blacks rose to Seminole tribal leadership, often acting as interpreters. Men like Abraham and John Horse spoke for the Native people (including a delegation to Washington D.C. in 1825). Notable figures include Osceola, Wildcat, King Phillip, and Billy Bowlegs. Many Blacks would be transported west and some as slaves of the Creeks or as free people to what is now Oklahoma.

St. Johns County in an effort to combine culture, history, travel, tourism and wellness tourism the Sea Community has taken an interest in forming cycling trails that run over the old railroad ties from Florida East Coast Railroads. The community of Armstrong in St. Johns County is the only community in the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor that is home to 3 bicycle trails. Cyclists, naturalists, and those who enjoy the great outdoors can enjoy these nature and cycling trails while learning the history of Black families who provided their labor for Henry Flagler's entrepreneurial ventures. The background stories of families who built and worked in hotels, on timber and turpentine farm camps, and with the railroads are all part of the experience as you and our family enjoy the great outdoors in this rural agricultural setting. In an effort to highlight this rich American history, the National Park Service, St. Johns County, Department of Environmental Protection, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Sea Island Loop, and the East Coast Greenways all have trail heads in Armstrong off Route 207 in St. Johns County, and home to the only recognized Geechee community in St. Johns County, was Founded and settled by West Africans. These Africans families worked in the silver culture industry for several St. Johns County families, such as Beech, Maguire, and Burrell.

These bike and nature trails afford visitors and cyclists an opportunity to learn much of this history in a traditional setting with the beautiful natural backdrop of towns, registered historic sites, waterways, and verdant woods.

St. Johns County is the only place on the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor which boasts historical sites, cycling, nature, and horse trails combined with parks and recreation for a true Wellness, Culture and Heritage Tourism experience. This nature and touring experience begins at Fort Mose where you and/ or your family can ride in a canoe, kayak on the tributaries and waterways, and/ or ride by bike along a road way. After riding through the city of St. Augustine along San Marco Blvd., cross over the tracks to Route 214, and ride to the beginning of the Rails to Trails on Route 207 to Armstrong and further into Putnam County.





Photo Credit: Derek Boyd Hankerson

RAILS TO TRAILS

Rails to trails are converted rail tracks that combine nature, cycling, and horse trails. As in Armstrong, Florida, thousands of miles of abandoned rail tracks and railway corridors have been transposed into public trails for walking, bicycling, horseback riding, enjoying wildlife habitat and nature appreciation. A rail trail is the conversion of a disused railway into a multi-use path, typically for cycling, walking, and sometimes horse riding. The Palatka to St. Augustine Trail, when completed, will stretch 18 miles. Currently 8.5 miles are complete, and 9.5 more miles are planned with numerous access points, historical markers, interactive and interpretive signs, a rail head (the place where supplies were unloaded), and a station along Route 207.

The trail is co-managed by the cities and counties along the route. The St. Augustine - Palatka Trail is part of the 260 mile St. Johns River to Sea Loop that travels through St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler, Volusia and Brevard counties. This, combined with the Sea Community Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, provides a huge economic development potential that will benefit St. Johns and surrounding counties for generations to come if managed and maintained properly, efficiently, and effectively. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) creates nationwide networks of trails using former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for people. RTC advocates at the local, state, and national level numerous efforts to enact policies in support of trails and greenways for transportation, recreation, conservation, and coordination of areas into a facet of livable communities. The RTC is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Rails to Trails Event

During its 100th Anniversary the community was joined by officials from the Florida Department of Transportation, St. Johns and Putnam County officials, East Coast Greenways Alliance and Rails to Trails Conservancy members. At this event, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Director Donald Forgiore stated, "Trails change the landscape of tourism as they create connections between [the] state's natural beauty and the places people chose to live, work and play."

EAST COAST GREENWAYS (ECG)

The East Coast Greenway is a developing trail system, spanning nearly 3,000 miles from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida, linking all the major cities of the eastern seaboard. Over 25 percent of the route is completed with safe, traffic-free paths. The East Coast Greenway includes US cities, suburbs, and rural areas along the Atlantic Coast. The goal is for the entire Greenway to be on paths completely separated from the road. Nearly a quarter of the route is currently on local, traffic-free, firm-surfaced trails that are safe for all abilities. The remainder is comprised of interim on-road sections that link completed trails together, using occasional ferries and trains where there is currently no safe on or off-road option. Florida boasts the longest portion of Greenway with the most miles of completed trail. North to south, the Greenway enters the state at Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island and continues 584 miles to Key West, the United States' southernmost mainland point. The Greenway travels largely along the coast, through seaside villages, America's earliest historic sites, vast nature preserves, and major cities including Jacksonville and Miami. The route includes 198 miles of completed traffic-free paths and the most bridges of any ECG state. Much of the Greenway through Florida is on wide auxiliary path that parallels Highway A1A and concludes with the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail which hops from island to island for 106 miles (about half of which is completed trail). The Alliance of Cyclist plans an alternate route that will provide access to Florida's Gulf Coast, the Pinellas Trail, and Lake Okeechobee. Thirty-four percent of the Florida route is completed trail, 19% is in development, 36% is in public control and awaiting development, and only 26 miles (4%) is considered "gap" where the route location has not yet been determined.

The ECGA works with regional and county planning agencies, trail developers, researchers of regional impact, and trail advocates to advance the Greenway.

Armstrong Bike Routes

<http://ridewithgps.com/routes/6609363>

<http://ridewithgps.com/routes/6609309>

<http://ridewithgps.com/routes/6609342>

<http://ridewithgps.com/routes/6609586>

Historic Preservation/Community Identity

Many local, community, and elected leaders have been surprised at how trails have become sources of community identity, pride, and successful economic development. These effects are magnified when communities use trails and greenways to highlight and provide access to historic and cultural resources. In fact, many trails and greenways help preserve historically significant transportation corridors.

Economy/Revitalization

The economic effects of trails and greenways are sometimes readily apparent and are sometimes subtle. For example, a company may factor in local amenities as these trails into its decision to locate in a particular community. There is no question, however, that countless communities across America have experienced economic revitalization due in part to trails and greenways. They encourage healthier mobile lifestyles by making possible places to walk, bike, and more. They develop stronger economies by promoting tourism and local businesses, and increasing property values. They support a healthier climate and environment by making alternate transportation a viable option to the automobile. Overall, they contribute to a more vibrant community interaction, connecting people to places where they live, work and play.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

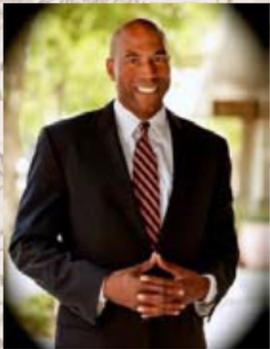
The Gullah Geechee:

A History Of African-Americans In Early Florida

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is partnering with the Spady Cultural Heritage Museum!

Engage with author, professor, film producer, and direct Gullah Geechee descendent Derek Hankerson as he tells the fascinating story of the Gullah Geechee, Florida's Underground Railroad, and how Native American tribes helped freed slaves along their journey south. Gullah Geechee descendants live along the U.S. coast from Florida to North Carolina today.

Watch a 30-minute film about the Underground Railroad, take part in a discussion, and find out more about this little-known piece of Florida's history.



Saturday, November 4, 2017

12:00 - 1:00 pm

Loxahatchee NWR Visitor Center
10216 Lee Road, Boynton Beach, FL

Please call 561-735-3684 for more information



6th Annual  SEA

Rails to Trails Festival

Mende-Gullah-Armstrong: The Tradition Continues 105 YEARS ARMSTRONG STRONG

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In Recognition of Florida State and Florida's History & Legacy



ARMSTRONG PARK

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Sat., Dec. 2, 2017 Noon - 7:00pm

Sun., Dec. 3, 2017 Noon - 6:00pm



BIKE RIDE 9:00AM

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Cultural Arts & Crafts (Quilts!) ... Food Vendors (Low Country Boil!) ...
Mende Film Festival / Historical Films & Heritage Corridor Discussions

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SATURDAY: GOOD PUPPY! ... Willie Green

Doug Carn & Company ... St. Jax Band

Amy Alyssia & Soul Operation

Little Jake and The Soul Searchers

SUNDAY: Gospel Music

Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters



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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Jeremy Barnum](#)
Subject: HARD ASAP deadline -- Can you look at this?
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 2:56:05 PM

Jeremy - I'm sorry for the quick ASAP project but do you see any issues with this? Fact checking and are there any sensitivities I should be aware of with any of the examples I used?

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private-partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition.

Boston Harbor National Recreation Area is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boats between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, provide educational tours, and carry out janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private partners also help maintain our buildings and aging infrastructure.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at the historic Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences like riding the historic

Ford “Red Jammer” busses in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park would not be possible without public-private partnerships.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders and land managers to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can partner together to build upon the All-American Outdoor Experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard is for a food truck in a park’s parking lot, energy-efficient cabins in a national monument, and bringing mobile youth fishing centers to urban areas across the country.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas.

For example, Wi-Fi, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, services like boat, ATV and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. This would be like going on a ski vacation and not being able to rent skis or have access to a lift up the mountain.

This leaves many families without practical and affordable options for camping, hiking, and recreating. Having three kids and two granddaughters myself, I can’t imagine going on a family vacation without some of these basic services.

Now, expanding public-private-partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

Having partners in parks also does not mean the shuttle bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. In fact, some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver greater services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management. Partners are also able to deliver many services to the American people at a lower cost than the

government can.

With the right amount of ingenuity and originality, we can foster the All-American Outdoor Experience through our work at Interior. The Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, “For the enjoyment of the people.” Enjoying recreation on public lands is at the core of our shared American heritage.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it’s also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry supports \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is about products as much as it is about our shared heritage and values. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There’s a reason 330 million people from across the country and the world visit our parks every year, and millions more flock to public lands coast to coast: It’s because these spaces are uniquely American and are the result of a century of public-private partnerships.

This “Made in America” Week, let’s unite under a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Scully, Steve
To: ["Swift, Heather"](#)
Subject: Heather...just wanted to circle back...
Date: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 12:30:53 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Any further thoughts on possibly scheduling this with Secretary Zinke?

Many thanks !
Best
Steve

From: Scully, Steve
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:29 PM
To: 'Swift, Heather' <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: RE: Interview request Heather !

We haven't done that for the others, so to be consistent probably not. It's a quick 25 minute interview that often includes engaging stories...so hopefully we can get that with the Interior Secretary. And of course, I will be asking about her...but likely just with the principle (in this case, him)

SS

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:27 PM
To: Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org>
Subject: Re: Interview request Heather !

Just thinking out loud here, would you be interested in having Mrs. Zinke in for a couple minutes of the personal questions?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Aug 15, 2017 at 2:25 PM, Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org> wrote:

THANKS HEATHER

I can promise you it's the easiest interview he will ever do...it's all about him. And any policy questions are at the 30,000 foot level in terms of his objectives as Interior Secretary, why he decided to leave Congress to take on this job, etc.

Thanks for such a prompt response. I am literally heading out soon for the HHS Secretary Price

interview. Look forward to talking to the Interior Secretary as well
Best
Steve

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:22 PM
To: Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org>
Subject: Re: Interview request Heather !

Hey Steve, this sounds like a fun opportunity. Let me chat with scheduler and see if we can get something

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Aug 15, 2017 at 1:55 PM, Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org> wrote:

Heather,

I am launching a new C-SPAN series titled 'The Appointees.' The goal: To learn about the life stories of key White House staffers, Cabinet Members and Administration officials.

So far, we have interviewed OMB Director Mulvaney, Transportation Secretary Chao, Agriculture Secretary Perdue, HHS Secretary Price, VA Secretary Shulkin, Omarosa Manigault & Sarah Huckabee Sanders

I am reaching out to key cabinet members, including your office, to see if we can schedule a sit-down interview with Interior Secretary Zinke within the next month. I am also attaching links to two recent profiles, to give you a sense of our objective with these conversations. The goal would be the same with the Interior Secretary: to learn about his life and career. With so many key issues involving the department in the months ahead, this is a chance to learn more about the individual who is running Interior.

We can tape this interview IN HIS OFFICE...ideally within the next month. Typically we need 1:15 hour to set up. The interview itself runs

approx. 25-27 minutes. Our interview with the HHS Secretary is airing THIS FRIDAY @ 8pm FYI.

I look forward to working with you on this project, and can answer any of your questions anytime.

Again, thanks Heather!

Steve

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?428272-1/conversation-transportation-secretary-elaine-chao>

OMB Director Mulvaney

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?427821-2/conversation-white-house-budget-director-mick-mulvaney>



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Steve Scully

Senior Executive Producer

White House & Political Editor

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TWITTER: @SteveScully

E-MAIL: SScully@C-SPAN.org

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From: Heather Swift
To: caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Help: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:28:41 PM

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?

1. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Date: November 17, 2017 at 2:13:55 PM EST
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Question from Politico

- Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?
- Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

From: Bergling, Timothy
To: [Rigas, Laura](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Alex Hinson](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Holiday Video 2017
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 3:46:38 PM

Hey there

I know it's not even Halloween yet, but the end of the year is fast approaching, and assuming we want to do a holiday video, it's important to decide what we want it to be asap...if for instance we want to have submissions from around Interior, wildlife refuges, national parks, etc, we'll have to start asking for those submissions soon...if we decide it will be nothing more complicated than the Secretary, his wife and the dog in front of the Christmas tree in his office, holiday music playing underneath, we can literally shoot that one in the morning and send it out in the afternoon...there's also the possibility of having the Secretary -- and his family if you want -- in front of the National Christmas tree

Just want to get it on the radar so it doesn't sneak up on anyone...to me this whole season is Hallowhistmas, it starts on October 1st and ends on January 1st

tb

2016/2015

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSJXQURHI38>

2014

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne69ikeVqu4>

2013

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfdC-B4N5LM>

From: U.S. Department of the Interior
To: alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov; heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: ICYMI: Fox News Opinion-"Made in America: Promoting the All-American outdoor experience": TEST
Date: Monday, July 17, 2017 2:56:12 PM

news release



Date: July 17, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Opinion

Fox News

July 17, 2017

Fox News Opinion-Made in America: Promoting the All-American outdoor experience

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands. The all-American outdoor experience was the idea of visionaries like President Theodore Roosevelt, and has been carried on by the federal government and Congress for years. It could not have been possible without help from philanthropic foundations, American businesses, and thousands of public-private partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition for increased public access.

In my recent visit to Boston Harbor National Recreation Area, I learned how it is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boat transportation between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, lead educational tours, and complete janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private individuals and philanthropic organizations also help maintain our public lands.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and

with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences, like riding a historic Ford “Red Jammer” bus in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park, would not be possible without the valued work of American businesses and workers.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships and products, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can work together to build upon the outdoor experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard are for outdoor recreation outfitters to make investments in our public lands for things like energy-efficient cabins and fishing access points.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services, and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas to preserve and enhance the American outdoor experience.

For example, Wi-Fi access, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, common services like boat, ATV, and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. Our goal is to expand services so public access to our public land is expanded for all Americans.

More partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public, “For the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as the famous Yellowstone Roosevelt Arch states.

Having partners on public lands also does not mean the tour bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. Some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver better services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it’s also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is as much about products as much as it is about the shared American experience created here. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There’s a reason why 330 million people from across the country and around the world visit our parks every year, and why millions more flock to public lands from coast to coast: It’s because these spaces are uniquely American.

This Made in America Week, let's unite with a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

Ryan Zinke is the 52nd Secretary of the Interior. He is a fifth-generation Montanan, former Congressman, an Eagle Scout, and retired Navy SEAL Commander.

Read the article here: [Fox News- Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience](#)

###



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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Paul Ross](#); [Hinson, Alex](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: IG Response DOCs
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 1:36:57 PM
Attachments: [OIG letter re Travel procedures 111617.pdf](#)
[MA_ZinkeTravel_111517.pdf](#)

Paul/Alex - Two attachments. 1. An IG letter to Dep Sec which outlined some issues with the process of approving and reimbursing travel vouchers. This is the same process used by the previous administration. 2. the letter Dep Secretary Bernhardt sent to the IG in response to the management advisory letter they sent to us.

I'm leaving at 2:00 today. WP just asked for comment so I sent the Bernhardt letter. If more inquiries come in and I don't respond to inquiries within 30 minutes, can you please go ahead and forward the Bernhardt letter to reporters for me?

Thanks!

PS here is the statement for Brian Steed - "Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him temporarily step into this leadership role. We couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the initial transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands over the past few months."

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Natalie Davis (via Google Sheets)
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Independence Day Party- Secretary's Office - Invitation to edit
Date: Friday, June 09, 2017 1:07:35 PM

Natalie Davis has invited you to **edit** the following spreadsheet:

 [Independence Day Party- Secretary's Office](#)



"Independence Day" Party. Secretary's office. We will probably send out more invites later once Lola gets me their personal invites.

[Open in Sheets](#)

Google Sheets: Create and edit spreadsheets online.
Google Inc. 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA
You have received this email because someone shared a spreadsheet with you from Google Sheets.



From: U.S. Department of the Interior
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Interior Announces Share the Experience 2016 Photo Contest Winners
Date: Thursday, May 04, 2017 10:08:25 AM

news release



Date: May 4, 2017
Contacts: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Interior Announces Share the Experience 2016 Photo Contest Winners

Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo Placement on National Public Lands and Waters Pass

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 Share the Experience photography contest on the agency’s popular [Instagram account](#) and launched the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America’s best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I’m happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke.

“Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America’s public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

A small green tree frog clings to the stem of a green plant.



“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America® and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 Share the Experience photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department’s popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America’s national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to [#FindYourPark](#)/[#EncuentraTuParque](#) — a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from

all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America's national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

#



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This email was sent to heather_swift@ios.doi.gov by: U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



From: Heather Swift
To: John.Ullyot@va.gov; Curt.Cashour@va.gov; Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov; (b) (6)
Subject: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow
Date: Sunday, October 22, 2017 6:35:42 PM

Hi there John and Curt - could you please put me in touch with the comms person who is running point on tomorrow's board meeting of military family and caretakers? Mrs. Zinke is participating.

Apologies but this is an ASAP request. Can discuss further on the phone (b) (6).

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: (b) (6)
Subject: INTERIOR: Lolita Zinke makes her mark outside the Cabinet -- Friday, October 20, 2017 -- www.eenews.net
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 2:46:09 PM

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/10/20/stories/1060064241>

Lolita Zinke makes her mark outside the Cabinet

[Michael Doyle](#), E&E News reporter Published: Friday, October 20, 2017

INTERIOR



Lolita Zinke (center) plays a uniquely public role as the spouse of a Cabinet secretary. Pamela King/E&E News

Meet Lolita Zinke, the woman dubbed a "real trooper" by her husband.

While Ryan Zinke runs the Interior Department, Lolita Zinke serves as the opinionated campaign chairwoman for one of several Republicans running for a high-profile U.S. Senate seat in Montana.

She sometimes hits the press, hard.

On Wednesday, deploying a #FakenewsCNN hashtag, the California native said on Twitter she would "completely agree" with President Trump's tweeted assessment that most Americans "think the Media is inventing stories about Trump & his Administration."

The wife of a former Navy SEAL and the mother of three, including a Navy veteran, Lolita Zinke wades into other controversies as well. In a Sept. 24 tweet, she denounced as "#disgraceful and #clueless" the football players who knelt during the national anthem.

And, at times, she's right by the Interior secretary's side, although officials characterize this support as familial and nothing out of the ordinary.

"Mrs. Zinke has zero role at the department," Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said today.

An Interior official added that "much like previous secretaries and spouses, she occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling at her own personal expense" and that "she and all Cabinet spouses received a federal ethics briefing."

Still, Lolita Zinke's diverse activities spotlight the sometimes blurry boundaries between public and private spheres that confront family members in every administration. These are perennial issues, now amplified by the social media megaphones that can turn quiet musings into broadcast opinions and by the heightened scrutiny of Cabinet-level ethics ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 12).

On Oct. 5, a frequent Zinke critic called the Western Values Project filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit seeking documents concerning Lolita Zinke's participation in Interior meetings, presence on official trips and emails dealing with government business, among other matters.

So far, the lawsuit stated, the department "has failed" to produce any documents or make any determination concerning the FOIA request first filed in June ([E&E News PM](#), Oct. 5).

The Justice Department, representing Interior, has not yet responded to the lawsuit.

Some spousal activity comes with the territory.

The husband of former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell would attend various D.C. events alongside his wife, such as the annual lighting of the White House Christmas tree. Once, he went hiking with her in Maine. The wife of Ken Salazar, Jewell's predecessor, also took part in some events.

"Both spouses were known to Interior staff, but I think it was rare for them to accompany [the secretaries] on official travel," said one former Interior official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In April, for instance, Lolita Zinke was alongside her husband in Atlanta at an NRA event. She was also with him on a tour the secretary and a group of senators took to Norway, Greenland and Alaska.

Political activity

Outside Interior, Lolita Zinke explicitly entered the political arena in early September, when she was named chairwoman of Republican businessman Troy Downing's Senate campaign. Downing is running for the chance to take on Democratic Sen. Jon Tester, a red-state politician who some thought might someday be challenged by Zinke himself.

Tester voted for Zinke's confirmation, while 31 Senate Democrats opposed him.

"This isn't title only," Lolita Zinke said in a statement last month. "I'm going to be hands-on in this campaign because it's vital for Montana and America that we elect Troy."



Lolita Zinke tweeted this photo in April, writing, "CA's First dog, Calusa Brown. Dogs make people happy, treats make dogs happy." @LolaZinke/Twitter

Downing's campaign filings, covering the period through Sept. 30, do not show any payments to Lolita Zinke. One public way in which she's contributed, though, is through her Twitter account, on which she has tweeted or retweeted more than two dozen pro-Downing messages.

Lolita Zinke has 241 Twitter followers, a small fraction of the 57,376 followers who track the official Interior secretary's Twitter account. A number of her Twitter followers are reporters.

She stands out, in some respects. The wife of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt does not appear to have a Twitter account, while the wife of Energy Secretary Rick Perry last tweeted in 2015.

She's tweeted strictly fun pictures, like one from an August vacation with her husband that she titled "Love on the Bosphorus." She's also tweeted photos that shed some light on how she's by her husband's side at other times, like an April 13 photo of the two in a meeting in Sacramento with California Gov. Jerry Brown (D).

The picture, though, was not the classic political grip-and-grin photo. Instead of Brown, the photo showed the Zinkes and the governor's dog.

"Dogs make people happy," Lolita Zinke wrote. "Treats make dogs happy."

'This knucklehead shows up'

She was born Lolita Hand in Santa Barbara, Calif., and graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara, before attending California Western School of Law. She met Ryan Zinke in 1990 at McP's Irish Pub and Grill, a bar near Coronado, on a night, he recalled decades later, when she was wearing a colorful skirt and black cowboy boots.

At the time, she was a single mom, raising her daughter Jennifer following the death in a car accident of her first husband. Zinke was serving as an instructor at the Navy's famously grueling Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL, or BUD/S, training and going through a divorce from his first wife.

They married in August 1992, when Ryan Zinke was still in the upward trajectory of a high-speed Navy career that often sent him far away.

"I spent years missing birthdays, family dinners, tucking my kids in at night, and anniversaries. Lolita was left raising a family alone with the uncertainty of my return," Ryan Zinke wrote in his 2016 memoir, titled "American

Commander."

"It takes someone special to be a SEAL; it takes someone even more special to be a SEAL's wife," the book added.

Consider, Zinke recounted, what happens when someone returns home from a special warfare deployment. Instead of secret missions and the silent brotherhood, he finds kids running around, teenagers awkwardly growing up and chores that don't include kicking down doors.

"All of a sudden this knucklehead shows up saying that he's the man of the house, and the wives who have been dealing with the usual family drama say, 'Wait a second! The crown is not yet yours!'" Zinke wrote.

While the couple was living in London, Lolita Zinke worked as a civilian quality control specialist, where she was invited to various functions involving the Navy brass.

"That gave me an edge on the flag deck!" Ryan Zinke later recounted.

According to a Republican National Committee summary, "Lolita later continued her public service" as an undercover "operative with the California Department of Motor Vehicles in San Diego." No further details are provided.

She was a member of Trump's Hispanic and women's outreach efforts during the 2016 presidential campaign, writing a pro-Trump article for the arch-conservative Breitbart News Network. In August, she tweeted a photo of herself with Steve Bannon, the former White House strategist who runs Breitbart, writing "[heart] this man!"

"I'm a republican because I believe in fiscal responsibility, economic growth through cutting regulation, and a strong military," she stated on a [Republican National Committee](#) webpage, adding that "my Hispanic values of family first, strong work ethic and a personal, spiritual relationship with God are embodied by the republican values."

She subsequently was a member of the Trump transition team for the Department of Veterans Affairs after the election, and she accompanied her husband to a job interview in Trump Tower that left him uncertain about what position he might be offered.

"I walked out in the hallway and I said, 'Well, Lola, what do you think?'" Zinke subsequently recounted to the Public Lands Council. "She says, 'That meeting went great, but I think he was looking at you for Interior.'"

"I had no idea," Zinke confessed ([E&E News PM](#), March 28).

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
Subject: INTERIOR: Lolita Zinke makes her mark outside the Cabinet -- Friday, October 20, 2017 -- www.eenews.net
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 2:53:14 PM

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/10/20/stories/1060064241>

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[Michael Doyle](#), E&E News reporter Published: Friday, October 20, 2017

INTERIOR



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"I spent years missing birthdays, family dinners, tucking my kids in at night, and anniversaries. Lolita was left raising a family alone with the uncertainty of my return," Ryan Zinke wrote in his 2016 memoir, titled "American

Commander."

"It takes someone special to be a SEAL; it takes someone even more special to be a SEAL's wife," the book added.

Consider, Zinke recounted, what happens when someone returns home from a special warfare deployment. Instead of secret missions and the silent brotherhood, he finds kids running around, teenagers awkwardly growing up and chores that don't include kicking down doors.

"All of a sudden this knucklehead shows up saying that he's the man of the house, and the wives who have been dealing with the usual family drama say, 'Wait a second! The crown is not yet yours!'" Zinke wrote.

While the couple was living in London, Lolita Zinke worked as a civilian quality control specialist, where she was invited to various functions involving the Navy brass.

"That gave me an edge on the flag deck!" Ryan Zinke later recounted.

According to a Republican National Committee summary, "Lolita later continued her public service" as an undercover "operative with the California Department of Motor Vehicles in San Diego." No further details are provided.

She was a member of Trump's Hispanic and women's outreach efforts during the 2016 presidential campaign, writing a pro-Trump article for the arch-conservative Breitbart News Network. In August, she tweeted a photo of herself with Steve Bannon, the former White House strategist who runs Breitbart, writing "[heart] this man!"

"I'm a republican because I believe in fiscal responsibility, economic growth through cutting regulation, and a strong military," she stated on a [Republican National Committee](#) webpage, adding that "my Hispanic values of family first, strong work ethic and a personal, spiritual relationship with God are embodied by the republican values."

She subsequently was a member of the Trump transition team for the Department of Veterans Affairs after the election, and she accompanied her husband to a job interview in Trump Tower that left him uncertain about what position he might be offered.

"I walked out in the hallway and I said, 'Well, Lola, what do you think?'" Zinke subsequently recounted to the Public Lands Council. "She says, 'That meeting went great, but I think he was looking at you for Interior.'"

"I had no idea," Zinke confessed ([E&E News PM](#), March 28).

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: in-town pool report #1/return to White House
Date: Sunday, August 20, 2017 10:03:18 PM

From: "Gillman, Todd" <tgillman@dallasnews.com>

Date: August 20, 2017 at 8:44:35 PM EDT

Subject: in-town pool report #1/return to White House

Marine One touched down on the South Lawn at 8:29 pm under a cloudless sky.

Travel/photo lid called at 8:40.

Shortly after landing, the president emerged from the helicopter with Mrs. Trump and their son Barron, and with Marine One pilot, Maj. Randall White. POTUS waved a few times and shot a thumbs up toward the press pen.

White's family was on hand, excitedly watching the landing amid the press pool. This was his last flight after four years flying Marine One, according to his wife, Lisa. She brought their kids, Clay and Keira. Her husband's parents also were on hand, William and Lynn White. The president called all of them through the ropes. He kissed the pilot's wife, chatted with all of them. The three Trumps posed for photos with the entire White family and then the president called out "Randall, thanks very much."

The Trumps then entered the White House. Moments later, the trio walked the Colonnade into the West Wing and the pool was ushered through the Palm Room doors, so we didn't see if the president went to the Oval Office.

The Pods are gone. Lights were on in the redecorated Oval.

Mrs. Trump was wearing sunglasses throughout. Barron's T-shirt reads: "On your mark tiger shark"

Todd J. Gillman
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[202/441-6840](tel:2024416840) cell
tgillman@dallasnews.com

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: in-town pool report #3 -- attendees and longer quotes
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 3:22:49 PM

From: Matthew Nussbaum [mailto:mnussbaum@politico.com]
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2017 3:21 PM
Subject: in-town pool report #3 -- attendees and longer quotes

Here are some additional quotes from Trump's address before signing the space declaration. Below, as provided by the White House, is a list of attendees. Of note: also in attendance, but neither listed nor mentioned, was Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the moon.

Additional Trump quotes: "We are honored to be joined by Apollo astronaut Jack Schmitt. Exactly 45 years ago, almost to the minute, Jack became one of the last Americans to land on the moon. Today we pledge that he will not be the last, and I suspect we'll be finding other places to land in addition to the moon, what do you think Jack? ... The directive I'm signing today will refocus America's space program on human exploration and discovery. It marks an important step in returning American astronauts to the moon for the first time since 1972 for longterm exploration and use. This time we will not only plant our flag and leave our footprint, we will establish a foundation for an eventual mission to Mars and perhaps, someday, to many worlds beyond. This directive will ensure America's space program once again leads and inspires all of humanity."

The following individuals are expected to attend:

Trump Administration:

Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao
Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster
Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats
Acting Administrator of NASA, Robert Lightfoot
Deputy Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Michael Kratsios
The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Paul J. Selva
Deputy Secretary Pat Shanahan, Department of the Army

Members of Congress:

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL)
Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX)
Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL)
Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)
Rep. Bill Posey (R-FL)
Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX)

External Participants:

Former U.S. Sen. Jack Schmitt (R-NM), Apollo 17 Astronaut
Theresa Fitzgibbon, Wife of Jack Schmitt
Peggy Whitson, NASA Astronaut
Christina Koch, NASA Astronaut
Sandy Magnus, Executive Director of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
Mary Lynn Ditmar, President and CEO of Coalition for Deep Space Exploration
Eric Stallmer, President of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation
Rich Coleman, Executive Director, Space Transportation Association
Mark Albrecht, former Executive Secretary of the National Space Council

—

Matthew Nussbaum
POLITICO White House Reporter
Mnussbaum@politico.com
C: (571)-255-9442
@MatthewNussbaum

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: In-town pool report #4
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 12:26:16 PM

From: Bolen, Cheryl [mailto:CBolen@bna.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 12:23 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In-town pool report #4

More detail from meeting with Senate Finance Committee in the Cabinet Room.

Trump was seated at the middle of the table with Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), the chairman of the committee, to his left and Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) to his right. Senators and administration officials filled the remaining seats of the large table. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), the ranking member of the committee, was seated at the end of the table to the president's right.

Trump read from a paper in front of him, saying they were there to discuss their plan to deliver historic tax cuts for American families, businesses, and workers. "It will be the largest tax cut in the history of our country," he said.

Some of the highlights from their framework include doubling the amount of income taxed at the zero bracket; increasing the child tax credit; ending the estate tax; cut the business tax rate from the highest in the developed world of 35% to no more than 20%, Trump said. According to the Council of Economic Advisers, reducing the rate from 35% to 20% will increase average household income by \$4,000 a year, he said.

The plan would cut taxes on small businesses to the lowest rate in more than 80 years, Trump said. For the next five years, businesses and manufacturers would be able to expense the full value of new equipment, which would have one of the biggest impacts on the economy, he said.

The plan would encourage companies to bring profits back to the U.S., and most Americans would be able to file their taxes on a single sheet of paper, Trump said. This will be a big simplification, or tax cuts and reform, he said. The U.S. will go from being one of the highest-taxed nations in the world to one of the lowest. This will result in more jobs, higher wages, and more products stamped Made in the USA, he said.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, in my opinion," Trump said. He joked with Sen. Wyden that this is something that should get unanimous support, right? Wyden did not respond but smiled broadly.

A little more on the questions:

On the reports of his conversation with the widow of Army Sgt. La David Johnson:

"I didn't say what that congresswoman said, didn't say it at all, she knows it. And she now is not saying it. I did not say what she said. And I'd like her to make the statement again, because I did not say what she said. I had a very nice conversation with the woman, with the wife, who sounded like a lovely woman. I did not say what the congresswoman said and most people aren't too surprised to hear it [inaudible]"

Q. what is the proof, Mr. President?

"Let her make her statement again, and..."

Q. She is saying that you said this

"Let her make her statement again and then you'll find out."

On the question of the Alexander-Murray health care bill:

“We’ll see the bipartisan, and Lamar Alexander is working on it very hard [inaudible]. And if something can happen that’s fine, but I won’t do anything to enrich the insurance companies, because right now the insurance companies are being enriched--they’ve been enriched by Obamacare like nothing anybody’s ever seen before. I’m not going to do anything to enrich the insurance companies. Thank you.”

.....

Cheryl Bolen

White House Correspondent

Bloomberg Government

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cbolen@bna.com

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: In-town print pool No. 3 POTUS remarks
Date: Sunday, December 17, 2017 5:46:41 PM

From: Alex Leary <aleary@tampabay.com>
Date: December 17, 2017 at 5:31:43 PM EST
Subject: In-town print pool No. 3 POTUS remarks

After returning to the White House from Camp David, POTUS answered several shouted questions from reporters.

Do you believe transition emails were “improperly taken?”

POTUS: “Not looking good. It’s not looking good. It’s quite sad to see that. My people are very upset about it. I can’t imagine there’s anything on ‘em, frankly, because as we said, there’s no collusion. There’s no collusion whatsoever. A lot of lawyers thought that was pretty sad.”

He was asked about U.S.-Cuba relations (question not entirely audible on video)

POTUS: “Hopefully everything will normalize with Cuba, but right now, they are not doing the right thing. And when they don’t do the right thing, we’re not going to do the right thing. That’s all there is to it. We have to be strong with Cuba. The Cuban people are incredible people. They support me very strongly. But we’ll get Cuba straightened out.”

Do you intend to fire special counsel Robert Mueller?

POTUS: “No, I’m not.”

POTUS said he spoke with Cindy McCain, wife of Sen. John McCain.

“I wished her well. I wish John well. They’ve headed back (to Arizona). But I understand he’ll come if we ever needed his vote, which hopefully we won’t. But the word is John will come back if we need his vote. It’s too bad. He’s going through very tough time, there’s no question about it. But he will come back if we need his vote.”

A special note of thanks to the TV poolers as the updated guidance of POTUS arrival went to my junk folder.

Alex Leary
Tampa Bay Times
Washington Bureau Chief
aleary@tampabay.com | (202) 306-4807

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: In-town print pool report #3 - photo-op w/ military leaders
Date: Thursday, October 05, 2017 7:45:52 PM

From: Jordan Fabian [mailto:jfabian@thehill.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 5, 2017 7:38 PM
Subject: In-town print pool report #3 - photo-op w/ military leaders

Good evening from your substitute pooler. Around 7:10 PM, after a travel/photo lid was called, White House staff hastily assembled the pool to cover a photo spray with military leaders and their spouses before a dinner with POTUS and FLOTUS.

POTUS made no news, but he did offer some cryptic remarks to the press corps.

Pool was led into the State Dining Room at 7:18 PM. A five-piece Marine Corps band positioned in the entrance hall played classical music. It was a piece of music your uncultured pooler did not recognize.

POTUS and FLOTUS stood side-by-side in the middle of more than a dozen couples who were lined up for an official photo. CJCS Dunford and his wife stood to their left. An unidentified military leader and his wife stood to POTUS' right.

"Tell us when you're ready," POTUS told the photographer. "Be careful, don't push."

"Our faces are tired," one of the spouses joked.

A couple of seconds later, POTUS pointed around the room and asked members of the pool, "you guys know what this represents?"

"Tell us," one reporter responded.

"Maybe it's the calm before the storm," POTUS replied.

"What's the storm?" another reporter asked. "On Iran? On ISIS? On what?"

"We have the world's great military people," POTUS replied. "Thank you all for coming."

Kristen Welker of NBC News asked, "what storm Mr. President?"

"You'll find out," POTUS replied.

"Give us a hint on your Iran decision," another reporter asked.

POTUS said "thank you, everybody" and pool was ushered out of the room.

The entire spray lasted about a minute.

We now have a travel/photo lid, again.

--

Jordan Fabian | White House Correspondent | The Hill | 1625 K Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20006 | jfabian@thehill.com | Desk: (202) 407-8097 | Mobile: (202) 681-5246 | Twitter: @Jordanfabian

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From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Jenna Johnson Tweeted: "They have an on-the-record 'Dear Leader' culture, and an on-background 'This-guy-is-a-joke' culture."
Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 6:58:34 PM



Your Highlights



Jenna Johnson
[@wpjenna](#)

"They have an on-the-record 'Dear Leader' culture, and an on-background 'This-guy-is-a-joke' culture."

Inside the 'adult day-care center': How aides try to control and coerce Trump

Corker's characterization of the White House underscores the difficulty managing an impulsive... [more](#)

[washingtonpost.com](#)



54



650



1.4K



Mike Allen
[@mikeallen](#)

The next CIA director could be Tom Cotton via [@axios](#)

The next CIA director could be Tom Cotton

He's one of the few senators with an easy relationship with Trump

[axios.com](#)



74



95



62



Ed O'Keefe
[@nowthised](#)

3x Tillerson refuses to comment to [@jaketapper](#) [@CNNSotu](#) on whether he called [@realDonaldTrump](#) a 'moron' via [@CNN](#)

Tillerson won't say if he called Trump a 'moron'

During CNN's "State of the Union," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson refused to answer whether... [more](#)

[cnn.com](#)



Josh Dawsey

[@jdawsey1](#)

McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, sits two seats over and smiles the whole time. [twitter.com/abcpolitics/st...](#)



Max Boot

[@MaxBoot](#)

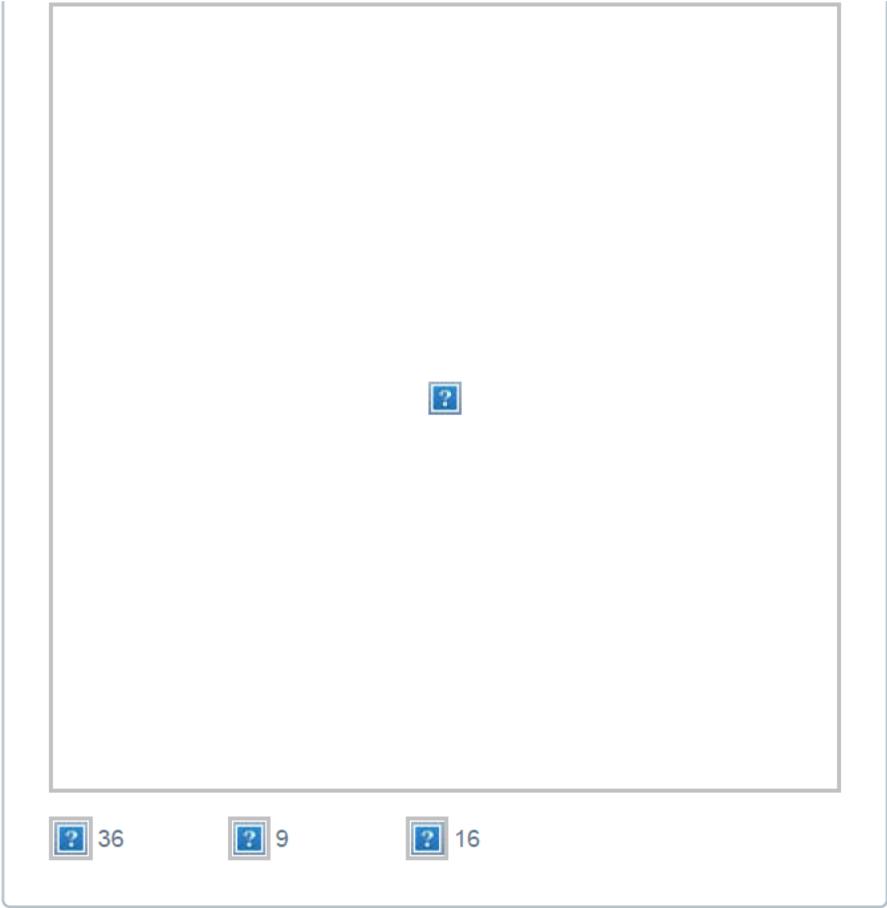
The Clinton presidency is doomed. [twitter.com/scottpresler/s...](#)



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Trump says he and McConnell are "closer than ever before" [axios.com/trump-mcconnel...](#)



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We sent this email to @DogDayInterior
Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: E&E News
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: June 8 -- Greenwire is ready
Date: Thursday, June 08, 2017 1:26:11 PM

[Read today's Greenwire on the web](#)



AN E&E NEWS PUBLICATION

GREENWIRE — Thu., June 8, 2017

 [READ FULL EDITION](#)

1. BRISTOL BAY:

'Homework assignment' — how Pebble lobbied Trump's EPA

Developers of a contentious Alaska mining project launched an early lobbying blitz to President Trump's EPA to reverse restrictions the Obama administration had proposed.

TOP STORIES

2. INTERIOR:

Zinke faces House appropriators unhappy over budget cuts

3. DOE:

Former GOP agency officials, fossil execs warn against cuts

4. NOMINATIONS:

Trump taps N.D. judge at center of WOTUS fight

POLITICS

5. SAGE GROUSE:

GOP governors cheer Interior's review

CONGRESS

6. NOMINATIONS:

Senate panel advances Trump solicitor general pick

7. FORESTS:

GOP's draft management and wildfire bill aims to win over Dems

TRANSITION

8. PEOPLE:

API hires former top Zinke aide

9. INTERIOR:

Trump may recombine drilling agencies

10. NOMINATIONS:

Gulf states fret over Trump's DOJ pick of BP spill lawyer

NATURAL RESOURCES

11. MINING:

Forest Service OKs Ariz. project dogged by species concerns

12. MARINE MAMMALS:

Lolita's tank may be too small after all — USDA IG

13. AGRICULTURE:

Farmers watch their soil blow away

14. ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Leo DiCaprio teams up with Mexican president to save vaquita

15. OCEANS:

Nations vow to reduce plastic pollution

16. MINING:

Tech advances allow companies to chase copper deep underground

ENERGY

17. DOE:

Officials warn of Los Alamos safety problems

AIR AND WATER

18. AIR POLLUTION:

EPA isn't ensuring refiners meet benzene standards — IG

19. DRINKING WATER:

15M people exposed to toxic chemicals — report

PUBLIC HEALTH

20. ZIKA VIRUS:

Pesticide linked to health issues in Chinese babies

21. WESTERN WATER:

Group sues Calif. agency for Oroville Dam asbestos emails

STATES

22. MONTANA:

State wants to overhaul wolf count

23. OREGON:

Governor backtracks, releases emails opposing enviro chief

24. CONNECTICUT:

Legislators weigh plan to buy nuclear power

25. WISCONSIN:

Park gets state's 1st dark-sky designation

INTERNATIONAL

26. PERU:

Government adopts more flexible air quality standards

E&ETV'S ONPOINT

27. GRID:

EPRI's Ray on power-sector shifts, technology plays

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From: Kirsten Fedewa
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: June 27th
Date: Saturday, June 17, 2017 10:47:29 AM
Attachments: [2017 June 27 Tribute to Veterans Fact Sheet Draft.pdf](#)

We have not heard from the Secretary so still hopeful but need to know pretty soon.

If he can't make it, can he send his wife or daughter or someone else?

Kirsten



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

APR 27 2017

Mrs. Susan M. LaPierre
P.O. Box 522
Vienna, Virginia 22183

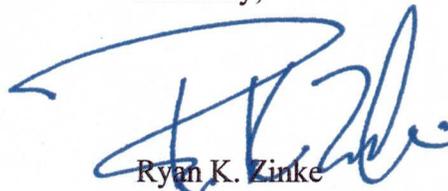
Dear Mrs. LaPierre:

I am pleased to appoint you to the Board of Directors (Board) of the National Park Foundation (Foundation). Your appointment is effective the date of this letter and will extend through September 30, 2023. Your service on the Board will help this unique congressionally chartered Foundation fulfill its obligation of furthering the National Park Service's mission. I am confident you will find service on the Board to be both interesting and rewarding. You will be joining a group of directors who are truly dedicated to helping improve our national parks.

The Foundation's support for the National Park System has grown substantially over the past several years. The Board seeks to significantly increase private philanthropic gifts to the national parks in the coming years. Your insight and experience will be invaluable. I have asked the Board President and CEO Will Shafroth and Vice Chair Bryan Traubert to assist in arranging a formal Board orientation.

I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Ryan K. Zinke
Secretary of the Interior

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nathan Adams](#)
Subject: load er up scottie
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:28:54 PM

photo attached.

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

(ANCHORAGE) Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

“A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues,” said Secretary Zinke. “Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve served in the military, and he then continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior’s management.”

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential," said Wackowski.

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family’s halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary’s College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley’s Air Force ROTC program .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve’s work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska’s North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce’s “Top 40 under 40” Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens’ last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski’s reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: local press pool report.
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 5:15:32 PM

From: "Moritz, John" <John.Moritz@caller.com>
Date: October 25, 2017 at 3:56:43 PM CDT
Subject: [EXTERNAL] local press pool report.

In a building for private aircraft of the president at Dallas Love, several dozen supporters of the president filed through security and waited for about 20 minutes before being escorted to the landing area.

The supporters were huddled behind a short metal fence. Media were staged at a flatbed trailer nearby to await the arrival of Air Force One.

A secret service agent went over the protocol for greeting the president. One rule audible to the press pool: "Keep your hands out of your pocket" once the presidential party begins exiting the aircraft.

The president descended Air Force One at 3:24 p.m. to the chants of "Trump, Trump, Trump" and "We love you Trump."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott greeted the president at the base of the stairs to the jet.

He chatted with the supporters. Many of them took smart phone photos and the president appeared to pose for selfies with some of them.

He also waved a hand-painted sign given to him by children that carried the message, "We played hooky to high five our president."

Inside before the president arrived, Elisa Smith, who called herself "a proud Marine wife," said she kept her kids, 8-year-old Akhyla and Brielle, 6, just for the experience.

"It's great for the girls to have an opportunity to meet the president," she said.

John C. Moritz
USA Today Network
512-7992245

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Ditto, Jessica E. EOP/WHO](#); [Ross, Tyler E. EOP/WHO](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Ferre, Helen A. EOP/WHO](#); [Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO](#); [Spicer, Sean M. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Local response to Sec. Zinke in Alaska: "It's like going to church"
Date: Thursday, June 01, 2017 9:35:51 AM

Today's [front page](#), above the fold article in the Alaska Dispatch News (image attached) featured Secretary Zinke's speech to the Alaska Oil and Gas Association annual conference where he also signed a [secretarial order](#) to jump-start Alaska energy exploration in the NPR-A and 10-02 section of ANWR. (Also, If you missed this editorial check it out: [The right man for Alaska](#))

"Our economy's an oil economy," said Anchorage Republican state Rep. Chris Birch, who said the conference was like "going to church on Sunday. You get up, you get out kind of refreshed."

Alaska Dispatch News | Trump's interior secretary vows to reinvigorate Alaska oil industry

Author: Nathaniel Herz

<https://www.adn.com/politics/2017/05/31/new-interior-secretary-pledges-fewer-roadblocks-for-alaska-oil-development/>

President Donald Trump's interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, drew cheers from some industrial-minded Alaskans on Wednesday when he pledged to pave the way for new development on the North Slope and reinvigorate the state's oil industry.

"The only path for energy dominance is a path through the great state of Alaska," Zinke told the audience at an Anchorage conference hosted by the state's major oil industry group, the Alaska Oil and Gas Association.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke takes questions Tuesday in Anchorage. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Sen. Dan Sullivan and Rep. Don Young listen at right. (Marc Lester / Alaska Dispatch News)

"The president has declared — and thank you Donald J. Trump — that the war on North American energy is now over," Zinke added, equating "energy" and oil.

Flanked by politicians and hard-hat-wearing union members, Zinke signed a secretarial order at the end of his speech aimed at boosting production in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and at updating estimates of the amount of oil beneath the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Alaska politicians welcomed the move, calling it a reversal of Obama-era policies of the past eight years that Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski described as an effort to "close it all off."

"Now, finally, we have an administration that will listen to us — that will work with us to

ensure that we can safely produce our resources," Murkowski said.

But some industry players interviewed at the conference were more tempered in their reaction, saying the federal government is limited in the amount of power it can exert over global market forces that have crashed the price of oil, caused thousands of job losses in Alaska and blown a massive hole in the state's budget.

"The market determines what we can pull the trigger on," said Dave Norton, an engineer and co-owner of Anchorage-based Hawk Consultants, which manages oil and gas projects. "Fracking in Texas is so cheap to do, why would anybody want to come up here?"

Zinke is a retired U.S. Navy SEAL who said Wednesday that he had spent time on the Aleutian islands of Adak and Shemya. His wife also has Alaska credentials, having once worked at the Lucky Wishbone restaurant, though Zinke did slip up once Wednesday, referring to the North Slope as the "North Shore."

His pledge to make the oil industry great again, at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center downtown at the tail end of a nearly weeklong trip through the state, was his first major public address in Alaska. It came before an enthusiastic audience of state and federal lawmakers, staffers and oil industry executives who had often clashed with the Obama administration and its efforts to fight global warming by limiting the production of Earth-warming greenhouse gases — the byproducts of fossil fuels.

"Our economy's an oil economy," said Anchorage Republican state Rep. Chris Birch, who said the conference was like "going to church on Sunday."

"You get up, you get out kind of refreshed," he said.

Zinke's pledge to revitalize the state's oil industry came as Trump prepared to announce Thursday whether he would abandon the landmark Paris climate deal reached in 2015 under Obama — with initial reports claiming he would.

The Paris agreement calls for the United States to make about one-fifth of the globe's emissions reductions through 2030.

Obama used Alaska as a backdrop for his push for the climate deal, describing global warming as a looming crisis for the state and the world in his own speech in Anchorage in 2015 and declaring that "any so-called leader who does not take this issue seriously or treats it like a joke is not fit to lead."

Zinke didn't mention global warming in his speech. He told reporters at a news conference afterward that he thinks the climate is changing. But he said he hadn't read the Paris agreement and argued that there's a lot about climate change that's not understood.

"What can we do about it? What is the influence? That is unsettled," he said, contradicting the latest U.N. scientific report that said it's "extremely likely" that human influence has been the dominant cause of warming in the past half-century.

About 20 people protested Zinke's appearance both inside and outside the convention center, with one, Rachel Cella, 40, saying that she wanted to hear more plans to help move the state's

economy away from oil.

"Obviously we're not going to just shutter the oil fields," she said while holding a handmade sign that said "there are no jobs on a dead planet." She added: "We need to acknowledge what's happening and acknowledge that we can't bury our heads in the sand anymore and think that the oil industry is coming back in Alaska. They're not accepting change and the reality that this is a shifting planet."

Zinke argued that boosting Alaska energy production would create economic opportunities, and he pointed out that he didn't hear any objections to development at a Tuesday round-table meeting with Alaska Native leaders.

Zinke's new order gives his agency three weeks to create a new schedule for review and revision of an Obama-era plan for the Indiana-sized petroleum reserve, on the North Slope. It also directs his agency to create a plan within three weeks for "updating current assessments of the undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources" on the North Slope, with a focus on the petroleum reserve and the coastal plain of the wildlife refuge.

The Obama administration plan for the petroleum reserve, finished in 2013, made about half of the area unavailable for leasing, in a move that could preclude development of as many as 350 million barrels of oil, according to the order.

While Zinke and Alaska politicians described the Obama administration as hostile to oil development on the North Slope, one former top Interior Department official, David Hayes, said that the existing plan for the petroleum reserve was in part shaped by oil industry interest — or lack of it.

"They turned back many of their leases. So the notion that the Obama administration stood in the way of developing responsible oil and gas on the east side of the NPR-A is belied by the facts," said Hayes, a former deputy interior secretary under Obama who's now a lecturer at Stanford Law School. "The economics are challenging up there for companies. It's much cheaper to get shale oil in North Dakota than it is on the North Slope. It's that simple."

But since the 2013 adoption of the plan, oil industry interest in the petroleum reserve and nearby state land has surged following recent announcements of major discoveries by companies like Repsol, Armstrong and ConocoPhillips. And officials with Gov. Bill Walker's administration now describe the area as red-hot.

"Suddenly, now, we have a body of information that suggests geologically, and based on well results and seismic (testing), that wait a minute, we've been missing something," said Andy Mack, the natural resources commissioner. "Now there are these huge, economic discoveries and it's pretty prolific. It's exciting for Alaska."

###

From: White House Press Office
To: (b) (6)
Subject: Local SLC pool report No 1
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 1:30:29 PM

From: Thomas Burr <(b) (6)>

Date: December 4, 2017 at 11:11:29 AM MST

Subject: Local SLC pool report No 1

Trump touches down in SLC

Air Force One arrived at 10:52 am Mountain Time at the Utah Air National Guard base adjacent to the SLC International Airport.

POTUS alighted a few moments later, followed by Sens. Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, sporting a cowboy hat.

They were greeted at the bottom of the steps by Gov. Gary Herbert and First Lady Jeanette Hebert as well as House Speaker Greg Hughes and his wife, Krista.

The president worked the rope line where he found one kid dressed as a mini-Trump and another as mini-Mike Pence.

POTUS didn't answer shouted questions by the pool about his backing of Roy Moore in Alabama and Hatch didn't respond to a question of whether he's going to run again.

Motorcade is on the move now to Welfare Square.

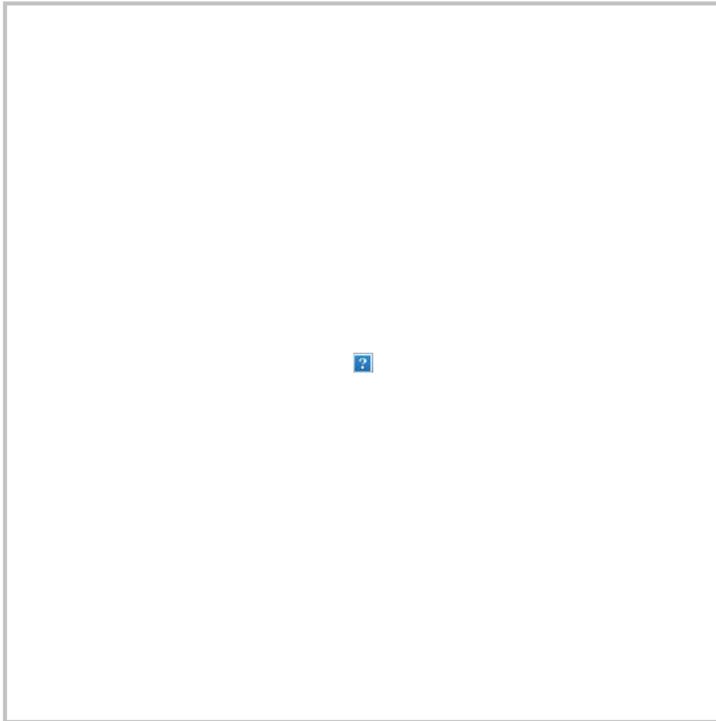
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Follow me on Twitter: www.twitter.com/thomaswburr

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Date: Tuesday, August 22, 2017 9:14:14 AM

‘You’re Fired’ may be harder than Trump thinks when it comes to federal workers



Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

People walk through the atrium of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office headquarters in Alexandria, Va. (Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg News)

By [Lisa Rein](#) August 21 at 8:46 PM

Anxious to remake the federal government, the Trump administration is cracking down on employees who break the rules, taking action in some instances in disciplinary cases that had languished under former president Barack Obama.

The White House in April instructed agencies to “remove poor performers” as they construct [plans](#) to shrink the workforce as part of a federal downsizing. Trump vowed during the campaign to shake up a government awash in “waste, fraud and abuse” — and the new administration has been vocal about its strategy.

Budget director Mick Mulvaney laid out detailed mandates to ensure that poor conduct be handled swiftly and poor performers monitored closely or given “appropriate discipline.”

After years criticizing the Obama administration for going easy on cases involving problem employees, Republicans are taking a hard line against

misconduct at several troubled agencies.

[*\[Trump's hard-line plan for government workers\]*](#)



President Trump promised to shake up the federal workforce if elected. Six months into his presidency, workers see a changing landscape – but while some like it, others don't. (Video: Peter Stevenson/Photo: Calla Kessler/The Washington Post)

Veterans Affairs, still recovering from criticism in 2014 that employee misconduct led to manipulated patient waiting lists at its medical centers, in July began publishing disciplinary actions online, including 525 firings since Trump took office. With 350,000 employees, VA in June became the model for a broader job protections shake-up sought by conservatives when Trump signed a bill creating a quick path for VA Secretary David Shulkin to fire employees who fail to meet conduct or performance standards.

At Homeland Security, the inspector general is conducting an agencywide review of misconduct actions. Employees were asked in a July survey whether the sprawling department created after the 9/11 attacks has “sufficient processes and procedures to address conduct issues.”

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is asking career officials at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to explain how they have handled improper time and attendance reporting, an agency official familiar with the inquiry said. Investigators and congressional Republicans say the problems related to time and attendance tracking have gone unaddressed for years.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has vowed zero tolerance for sexual harassers. This month the Yellowstone National Park superintendent went public with disciplinary actions he is taking against a dozen employees involved in a harassment case.

[*\[Congress clears Trump-backed bill to fast-track firing of VA workers\]*](#)

But in its efforts to fulfill the president's campaign promise to “drain the swamp” of entrenched federal workers, the new political leadership in Washington is meeting resistance from powerful federal employee unions and finding that maneuvering around long-guaranteed civil service

protections is not easy.

This month an administrative board ordered a stay of the firing of the former director of the VA Medical Center in Washington, who had been removed from his post to an administrative job in April. An inspector general's probe found that patient health was endangered by managerial dysfunction.

 Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) makes his way to a meeting with other members of the House Freedom Caucus on Capitol Hill. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

Brian Hawkins was fired for a "failure to provide effective leadership," VA officials said. He claimed wrongful termination

and is back at work while his case is independently reviewed. In a test of the new law, which offers fewer protections for employees, Shulkin plans to remove Hawkins again based on another inspector general's investigation, VA officials said. That inquiry found that he violated agency rules by sharing sensitive information about employees with his wife on their personal email accounts. Hawkins did not respond to a request for comment.

Even cases that Trump officials inherited from the Obama administration have been challenging. The Census Bureau took over litigation that sprang from an inspector general's findings two years ago that employees in its hiring office gamed the system to improperly collect \$1.1 million in salaries. It is still unresolved, an agency spokesman said.

A case now playing out at the Patent and Trademark Office shows the complexities of carrying out Trump's mandate.

After a three-year investigation, the office has moved recently to fire or suspend 18 of about two dozen employees in a clerical support unit that docket trademark applications, according to current and former agency staff and other government officials familiar with the case. One worker has been fired.

[*\[Patent office filters out worst telework abuses in report to watchdog\]*](#)

Agency officials conducted an internal inquiry whose findings were shared with The Washington Post, showing that the employees improperly charged the government hundreds of thousands of dollars over several years. In the most egregious cases, officials found that some employees worked two hours a day but billed taxpayers for eight, plus two more overtime hours.

A union official denied any impropriety, saying his members "were available to work" but often finished their tasks quickly and awaited more assignments, a practice that went on for as long as a decade.

"My employees are not in the wrong," said Harold Ross, president of Local 243 of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents

the unit. “They produce fast. They’re available for the whole time. All of a sudden, management wants to come against them.”

Patent office spokesman Paul Rosenthal said in an email the agency does not comment on specific personnel cases.

“More broadly, the USPTO has always taken its time and attendance policies seriously,” he wrote. “Employees must accurately record their time worked. And the overwhelming majority of our employees do just that. But employees who falsify their work records or work hours . . . will continue to be held accountable.”

In another sign of the Trump administration’s efforts to more forcefully address employee misconduct, Rosenthal cited an agreement — signed by the union representing patent examiners — to allow supervisors to monitor staff work habits with tracking software that indicates whether employees are at their computers. Labor had resisted these changes, which the union signed the day before Trump took office.

Timecard abuse has been documented over several years in reports by the inspector general at the Commerce Department, the patent office’s parent agency. The office has been praised for its flexible work hours and telework policies.

[*\[Patent office workers costs taxpayers millions by playing hooky, watchdog finds\]*](#)

The Post reported in 2014 that an internal investigation found patent examiners repeatedly misrepresented their hours and received unsubstantiated overtime pay and bonuses. Top agency officials removed the most damaging revelations from material turned over to the inspector general, documents provided to The Post showed. Commerce officials said the material was in draft form.

At the time, Obama officials pledged to hold employees accountable. But critics said few patent examiners were punished or paid restitution.

Commerce’s then-acting inspector general, Dave Smith, opened an investigation into the trademark employees, according to government sources. But top patent officials prevailed after asking that they be allowed to conduct their own inquiry.

Last fall, Smith released a computer analysis showing discrepancies between the time claimed by patent examiners and hours worked. But privacy laws prevented the agency from acting against 415 employees identified as the worst offenders. Under a new law, management is allowed to pursue administrative or criminal enforcement in such cases. It is unclear if the patent office plans to act.

Republicans’ frustration with patent officials and the unions boiled over at a House hearing in December after Trump’s election. Rep. Mark

Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's panel on government operations, dressed down the agency's No. 2 Obama appointee, Russell Slifer, and the head of the patent examiners' union for tolerating abuses.

The agency had long suspected timecard abuses in the trademark division, where jobs have been outpaced by automation. But managers could not document it until 2013, when they installed tracking software.

"We had never seen anything like it," recalled Bill House, who retired in 2015 from the employee relations office, which investigates misconduct. The number of cases, the money allegedly bilked and the hours the employees spent not working "was so bad they pulled other [employee relations] specialists to work on it," House recalled.

The treasury employees union is fighting the proposed discipline, said union and management officials who requested anonymity to discuss the subject. An arbitrator is scheduled in October to hear the first case, of the sole employee who has been fired.

Tim Hannapel, the NTEU's national counsel, said the tracking software detects only part of the work employees are asked to do — tasks that include emails, phone calls, and monitoring rules and regulations.

"It's substantive stuff, but there isn't a code that tracks this work," he said.

The union has turned down management's offers to allow employees to resign with clean records if they reimburse taxpayers for unearned compensation, according to union officials and others familiar with the discussions. The employees, who are paid \$59,693 annually on average, remain on the payroll.

The NTEU also is alleging disparate racial treatment because almost all of the employees are black. The union says relatively few higher-paid white patent examiners have been disciplined for similar misconduct claims.



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The agency did not comment on the settlement negotiations or the discrimination claim.

"They turned a blind eye to the other employees," Ross, the local union president, said of patent examiners.

Slifer, now an intellectual-property attorney in Boise, Idaho, said that

when he and the unions worked together to respond to Congress's accountability requests, it was clear that the relationship with the Trump administration would be different.

"The recognition that having a GOP majority in Congress and in the White House certainly put the unions on notice that they don't necessarily enjoy the same support from Republicans as they have from Democrats," he said.

He said employee accountability is more complicated than saying "if someone isn't putting in their 80 hours [every two weeks] they need to be canned. It is important that you provide all employees due process and make sure they understand their responsibilities."

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Date: Thursday, July 20, 2017 5:27:47 PM

Senate advances Bernhardt for deputy

Kellie Lunney, E&E News reporter
Published: Thursday, July 20, 2017

The Senate this afternoon advanced the nomination of David Bernhardt for Interior Department deputy secretary, teeing up the final confirmation vote expected Monday.

Senators voted 56-39 to invoke cloture on the nomination. All Republicans present, six Democrats and one independent voted in favor.

Democrats Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Michael Bennet of Colorado voted with Republicans, as did independent Angus King of Maine.

Senators not voting were: Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.). Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), recovering from surgery and recently diagnosed with brain cancer, was absent.



David Bernhardt. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Bernhardt's nomination has attracted strong support because of his extensive public policy experience in the executive and legislative branches, but also robust opposition from Democrats and green groups alarmed by his ties to oil and gas lobbyists.

The Campaign for Accountability today filed a [complaint](#) with the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia to investigate whether Bernhardt violated the Lobbying Disclosure Act by continuing to lobby despite formally withdrawing his registration in 2016.

Emails obtained through the California Public Records Act show Bernhardt continued to advise the Westlands Water District, a California agricultural organization, after terminating his lobbying registration ([Greenwire](#), July 18).

Bernhardt was registered as a Westlands lobbyist between June 2011 and Nov. 18, 2016, when he was a member of the Trump administration's Interior Department transition team and potential nominee. The president formally picked him in April.

Bernhardt, who had served as chairman of the natural resources department at the law firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP, previously promised lawmakers that if confirmed, he would "not participate personally or substantially in any particular matter involving" his former clients or "specific parties in which I know the firm is a party or represents a party" for two years, unless he receives authorization to do so.

Administration aides have said they thoroughly vetted Bernhardt on ethics. They and other defenders, including Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), call him an experienced nominee.

In addition to his lobbying career, the Coloradan has worked as a Capitol Hill aide and served as an Interior official during the George W. Bush administration.

Bernhardt has taken heat over allegations of mismanagement at Interior during his tenure there, including a drug and sex scandal at the former Minerals Management Service and political interference in endangered species decisions.

'Disqualifying'

Energy and Natural Resources Committee ranking member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) has led the opposition to Bernhardt and spoke on the floor before today's vote.

Cantwell said that while it's true Bernhardt has "considerable" experience to do the job, the revolving-door nature of his career continues to concern her and raises a serious appearance of conflict-of-interest issues.

By putting forward Bernhardt as Interior's No. 2, President Trump is not helping to drain the swamp, "he's helping to fill it," Cantwell said.

The League of Conservation Voters also reiterated its opposition to Bernhardt today after sending a letter last month to the full Senate urging it to reject the nomination.

"Bernhardt's long list of conflicts of interest alone should be disqualifying — but given the Trump administration's incredible disregard for integrity, science and facts, it's no surprise that a top nominee would have a record of altering government science for political gain and overseeing an office plagued by scandal," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, LCV's senior vice president for government affairs.

Sittenfeld added: "We strongly urge senators to oppose Bernhardt's nomination and will continue to hold Congress and the administration accountable for putting polluter profits ahead of our clean air, clean water, public lands and families' health."

Zinke 'miserable' by lack of help

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Gardner on the floor today praised Bernhardt's experience and commitment to public service, noting that other nominees considered by the Energy and Natural Resources panel have toggled between government and the private sector.

"What we see is another nominee, dedicated public servant, who gained experience in the private sector and is willing to come back to public service to give back to our great country," said Gardner, who noted that Bernhardt worked with his wife, Jaime, at Interior during the Bush administration. "Mr. Bernhardt's integrity and ability are two of his strongest qualities for his nomination."

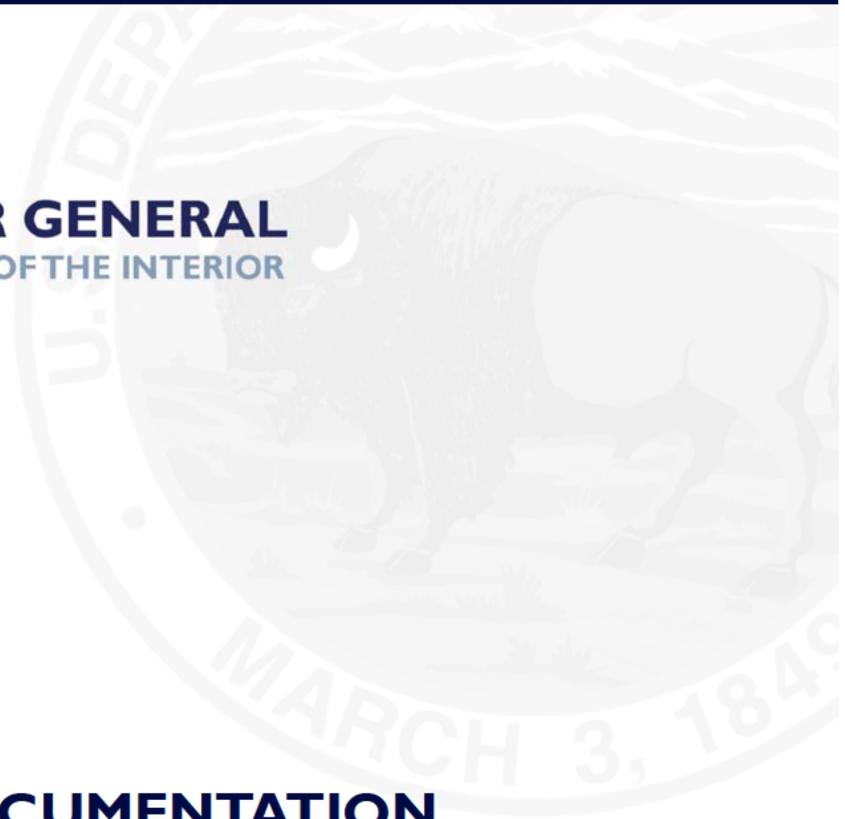
Several stakeholders have voiced their support for Bernhardt as well, including the Colorado River District, Colorado Water Congress, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Yesterday, House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) talked with reporters about the lack of confirmed appointees in place at Interior — and how it's making Secretary Ryan Zinke's life "miserable."

"There are a whole lot of problems that could be solved if Bernhardt was here now," the chairman said. "The Senate waiting as long as it has is wrong, it's simply wrong."



OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



INCOMPLETE DOCUMENTATION IDENTIFIED DURING INVESTIGATION



OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Memorandum

NOV 15 2017

To: David W. Bernhardt
Deputy Secretary

From: Mary L. Kendall 
Deputy Inspector General

Subject: Management Advisory – Incomplete Documentation Identified During Case No. OI-PI-17-1040-I

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is currently investigating multiple allegations regarding Secretary Ryan Zinke's travel. During our work, we discovered several issues that need prompt attention and changes to current IOS procedures.

Our investigation has been delayed by absent, or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips and a review process that failed to include proper documentation and accountability. Although we have received full cooperation from all employees contacted, we have found the documentation and adherence to Departmental travel policies deficient and without proper management oversight and accountability. Many authorizations and vouchers required for Secretary Zinke's fiscal year (FY) 2017 travel have yet to be completed and processed. In addition, we learned that the Office of the Solicitor (SOL) and Department Ethics officials have established a process to review and approve Secretarial travel, but the process does not include sufficient documentation of the legal and ethical analysis conducted to distinguish between personal, political, and official travel, or consistent cost analysis to justify use of non-commercial travel. Finally, based on the documents we have received to date, we have not been able to determine the full extent to which Lolita Zinke, the Secretary's wife, accompanied the Secretary on official travel.

While we have received some requested documentation, we seek your assistance in obtaining additional information necessary for us to complete a thorough and timely investigation of Secretary Zinke's travel. We request that the following be provided to our office no later than December 11, 2017:

- Complete documentation for all FY17 Secretarial travel (authorizations, vouchers, reimbursements).
- Complete documentation for all FY17 travel for the Secretary's wife when she accompanied him on official travel. This documentation should describe all instances when Mrs. Zinke traveled in a government-owned vehicle, watercraft, or aircraft, and whether payment on her behalf was paid in advance, determined to be reimbursable, or no reimbursement required.

In addition, we make the following recommendations for IOS to address:

1. Develop and implement procedures (with appropriate performance management measures) to complete the timely processing of future Secretarial travel documents in accordance with government travel regulations and Department policy.
2. Develop and implement procedures to ensure consistent documentation of the SOL's legal and ethical analysis of the Secretary's future travel, to include the review, analysis, and approval of:
 - Use of non-commercial transportation;
 - Personal and political travel, and need for reimbursement;
 - Accompanied spousal or family travel.

Please provide a written response detailing the actions you will be taking to address our recommendations. You may either email your response to Matthew_Elliott@doioig.gov, or send to:

Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
Room 4427, Stewart Udall Building
Washington, DC 20240

In accordance with the IG Empowerment Act of 2016, we will publish this memorandum on our website no later than 3 days from the date of issue.

If you have questions or need further information concerning this matter, please contact Matthew Elliott, Assistant, Inspector General for Investigations, at 202-208-5745.

From: Angelico, Eileen
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Katharine Macgregor](#); [Richard Cardinale](#)
Cc: [Frank Quimby](#); [Gregory Julian](#)
Subject: Media coverage of "Made in America" week BSEE material
Date: Tuesday, August 08, 2017 3:29:28 PM
Attachments: [Teche News - 08-02-2017 tear sheet.pdf](#)

To all:

We wanted to bring to your attention the placement of BSEE Director's Angelle Op/Ed submitted during Made in America week.

It was published by *Teche News*, St. Martinville, LA on August 2, 2017. See attached tear sheet. The print newspaper also has an online edition, subscription only. *Teche News* is one of 23 newspapers included in the Louisiana State Newspapers network. Each newspaper has an online edition and was given the Op/Ed to run as they choose.

Please let us know if you need any additional information.

Thanks,

Eileen

Eileen P. Angelico, APR
Acting Chief, Office of Public Affairs
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
(202) 208-7746 office
(504) 654-7840 mobile

From: Chris D'Angelo
To: [Interior Press](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: MEDIA REQUEST – Sec. Zinke's trip to Channel Islands National Park
Date: Friday, December 29, 2017 4:30:02 PM

Happy holidays Interior folks,

Hoping to speak with someone about Sec. Ryan Zinke's trip in April to Channel Islands National Park. [Emails](#) show that Zinke's guest list included, among others, his wife; his wife's aunt; Nita Vail, a political supporter; commercial fishermen Jason Robinson and Jeff Maassen; and Jon Jorgeson, an area yacht broker.

It is my understanding that one of the fishermen, Mr. Robinson, was [fined in 2009](#) for illegally fishing in the reserve and that a judge tossed out the charges years later. The emails also show that several guests, including Robinson, Jorgeson and Maassen, were identified by Zinke as technical experts.

A few questions...

Exactly what technical expertise did these guests provide?

Which of Zinke's guests paid their own way and were issued a bill of collections? And who had their travel costs covered by government funds?

How much did Interior spend to bring along these technical experts?

Thanks and Happy New Year!

Chris D'Angelo
Reporter, [HuffPost](#)
Washington, DC
m: [314-580-0191](tel:314-580-0191)
Twitter: [@c_m_dangelo](#)
huffingtonpost.com/chris-dangelo/

From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Concerns mount over mysterious Whitefish Energy contract — Nominees get votes today in EPW — Murkowski's winning streak rolls on
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 5:43:16 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/25/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden, Esther Whieldon and Alex Guillén

QUESTIONS MOUNT OVER WHITEFISH CONTRACT: Lawmakers from both parties expressed concern Tuesday over the \$300 million contract offered to the little-known company Whitefish Energy from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's hometown for electric grid recovery work in Puerto Rico and vowed to pursue additional information about it. "I obviously want to find out more about it because this is quite a substantial contract and one that is really important for the people of Puerto Rico right now," Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) told reporters. She wasn't sure if her committee would tackle the matter, but she plans to hold a hearing on the broader Puerto Rican recovery "within the next week or so."

Bishop has concerns: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) told reporters he wants more information on how many bids there were, the criteria for selection and who made the final call on Whitefish. "We have questions about it, but we need more information," he said. "I'm not reading anything into it because I'd probably be wrong, but there are questions."

Democrats, too: Top Natural Resources Democrat [Raul Grijalva](#) and Senate Energy ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) both called for further probes into the contract. "Today I am calling on the Government Accountability Office to investigate the circumstances surrounding the multi-million dollar contract awarded to Whitefish Energy— a brand new company with two employees," Cantwell said in a statement. The Puerto Rican government [tweeted](#) Tuesday it would audit the contract. Wasting no time, American Oversight filed [a FOIA](#) seeking any information from Interior about Zinke's connection to the deal (the agency has denied he had any role in it).

Vote of full confidence: Even amid the controversy over the Whitefish contract, POLITICO's report of Zinke's [close connections](#) to so-called scam PACs and the secretary's travel habits, Bishop said he isn't worried about Zinke's performance. "I see nothing right now that would say he is not doing a credible performance at his job," he said. "I think he's justified in how he's traveled. We asked the questions in comparison to what happened in the past. I think he'll weather that fairly well."

Headed to Puerto Rico: Bishop said he'll visit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands later this week to view recovery efforts first hand. "I want to make sure that we are structurally there to make sure that what assistance is given can get to the people directly on the immediate humanitarian needs," he said. "That's what I'd like to see." The Utah Republican said he'll hold hearings when he returns, hopefully in coordination with the Senate so officials can make just one trip to Washington.

Oh and in case anyone was wondering: Bishop wholeheartedly endorsed using the emerging tax reform process to explore opening up ANWR to potential drilling. "Hell yes. Give me a rational person that doesn't want to drill in ANWR," he said.

And ICYMI, your ME host and Pro's Nick Juliano [looked at](#) Zinke's separate briefings to House Natural Resources Democrats and Republicans, which Democrats described as "weird."

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and NEI's Robert Powers was first to pick Delaware as the state with the fewest counties (it has three). ME acknowledges the question could have been worded more precisely as neither Alaska nor Louisiana has counties. That said, for today: With Delaware Rep. [Lisa Blunt Rochester](#) assuming office this year, just two states have never elected a woman to Congress. Which ones? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

BIG DAY FOR TRUMP NOMINEES: One week and a mega-RFS fight later, Senate EPW [gavels in](#) today at 10 a.m. to consider a big group of Trump nominees. Most controversial are two EPA selections: Michael Dourson's bid to run the chemicals office and William Wehrum's selection to run the air office. Also on tap are David Ross's selection to run the water office, Matthew Leopold's selection to be general counsel and Paul Trombino's bid to run the Federal Highway Administration. Lawmakers will also consider Jeffery Baran's renomination to the NRC, which Chairman [John Barrasso](#) seemed decidedly cool toward during a confirmation hearing last month. After the votes, the committee will [consider](#) a discussion draft of wildfire management legislation.

Word of caution: These selections may have to wait a while for floor votes after clearing committee. There's a significant backlog and Democrats have already hinted they'll make some of the most controversial selections — think Dourson and Wehrum — jump through procedural hurdles before confirmation. Remember the committee Democrats [demanded information](#) on Dourson's advisory role at EPA on Tuesday.

MURKOWSKI'S MAJOR WINNING STREAK: Less than three months after they reportedly threatened her policy priorities over her refusal to back Obamacare repeal, the Trump administration is seemingly giving Murkowski everything she could want, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). Interior is moving ahead with efforts to help reverse the long decline in Alaska's energy production, mulling new drilling permits off the Alaskan coast, taking the first steps toward opening ANWR to oil exploration and edging toward building a road through the federally protected Izembek wilderness, among other longtime Murkowski priorities now within reach. "She holds the purse strings and occupies key positions on committees for the Interior department, so it's a smart move to keep her happy," said Kate Kelly, a former senior adviser to former Interior secretary Sally Jewell.

Murkowski said the administration isn't trying to sway her: "I think in fairness the administration is working on issues that are important and they care about. And these are matters that we've been talking about with them since they came into office, so this is about priorities that they have laid down, and we agree."

NO MORE CARROT, TIME FOR STICK: House Oversight ranking member [Elijah Cummings](#) asked Chairman [Trey Gowdy](#) in a Tuesday [letter](#) to subpoena Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder for documents related to the Flint water crisis, in particular when he learned about cases involving Legionnaire's disease. "Governor Snyder has been obstructing our investigation for months, and it is now clear that the only way he will turn over the documents we asked for is if he is compelled to do so," Cummings wrote. If Gowdy doesn't want to issue the subpoena himself, Cummings asked the committee to vote on one at its next meeting.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE HOUSE FLOOR? Lawmakers today take up legislation [H.R. 469 \(115\)](#) that would limit the ability of the government to enter into so-called "sue and settle" agreements by requiring settlements to be posted online and opened to additional intervenors. The U.S. Chamber issued a "key vote" [letter](#) ahead of the vote. It comes after the chamber cleared legislation [H.R. 732 \(115\)](#) on Tuesday that would restrict the government's ability to enter into settlement agreements that fund third-party activities by a vote of 238 to 183.

DISASTER AID CLEARED: The Senate sent a second installment of disaster relief funding to Trump's desk Tuesday, signing off on \$36.5 billion to respond to wildfires and hurricanes, including \$16 billion to pay off some of the national flood insurance program's debt so that it can make good on claims. It follows \$15.3 billion that Congress approved in September. The money comes with no changes to the troubled flood insurance program and with no new restrictions on how communities rebuild as they face rising risks from extreme weather exacerbated by climate change. Trump administration disaster response officials have said they don't want to finance risky projects and will consider new flood standards, according to the [Washington Post](#), although they've yet to unveil them.

CAN WE TALK? Members of the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition sent [a letter](#) to House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) requesting a meeting to discuss potential sustainable energy and environmental policies for inclusion in the emerging tax reform package.

BERNHARDT TO SPEAK AT HEARTLAND-SPONSORED CONFERENCE: The number two official at Interior, David Bernhardt, plans to deliver the keynote closing address at the Heartland Institute's [American First Energy Conference](#) in Houston next month, the organization announced Tuesday.

CUOMO'S ENERGY CZAR BASHES PERRY'S PITCH: Richard Kauffman, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's top energy adviser, warned that Energy Secretary Rick Perry's push to bolster coal and nuclear power plants might force the state to keep its two remaining coal plants open and hamper its ability to hit its ambitious climate goals, POLITICO New York's Marie J. French [reports](#).

FUNNY COINCIDENCE! Boy, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds sure has gleaned a ton of face time with the Trump administration lately. She [met with Pruitt](#) on Tuesday, one week after the administrator sent [a letter](#) outlining a number of victories for the Midwest on the Renewable Fuel standard. Pruitt then [tweeted](#) a picture from a roundtable session with the National Association of Home Builders clearly showing his still-unconfirmed enforcement chief Susan Bodine pictured right to his left.

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

CARBON TAX MEETS BUDGET: Connecticut Democrat Rep. [John Larson](#) plans to introduce a carbon tax amendment when the Ways and Means Committee begins debating tax reform, he told [E&E News](#). Larson acknowledged the measure will likely go nowhere in the Republican-controlled Congress, but argued it could help pay for an expensive infrastructure package President Donald Trump wants to pass. Larson's office expects a markup on the

Republican tax plan the week after lawmakers finalize a federal budget.

COMMERCE MARINE MONUMENT REPORT DUE TODAY: Today is Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross's deadline to send the White House his recommendations on 11 national marine monuments and sanctuaries created or expanded by presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. But don't expect to see the report anytime soon as Commerce is expected to take a page from Zinke's playbook and send the document over without releasing it. Trump directed Ross to analyze the costs of maintaining the massive monuments and sanctuaries located in the Great Lakes and far offshore of California, New England states, Hawaii and Pacific remote islands — and to estimate any lost energy development opportunities. Zinke's leaked report to the White House earlier this year recommended opening up three of the monuments to commercial fishing.

GREENS ASK COURT TO RESTORE HIGHER CAFE PENALTIES: [Five states](#) and [several environmental groups](#) separately asked a federal court in New York on Tuesday to restore higher civil penalties for CAFE violators, with the green groups calling the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's delay of the higher penalties "without statutory authority and in blatant disregard of the Administrative Procedure Act." Both coalitions asked the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals for fast action so as not to "reward" NHTSA for an illegal action. "Automakers are deciding, now, whether to comply with fuel-economy standards based on the applicable penalty: delaying the long-overdue penalty increase will thus lead to less efficient vehicles and greater emissions of harmful air pollutants," they wrote. "Meanwhile, the only countervailing purpose for the delay is to make it easier for automakers to evade the standards." The rule boosted the fines, which had not been indexed to inflation, from \$5.50 per tenth of a mile per gallon to \$14 starting with model year 2019 vehicles.

MORE SAGE GROUSE MEETINGS ANNOUNCED: BLM announced more regional public meetings on the changes it could make to its plans for protecting greater sage grouse habitat in Western states. The BLM [Montana/Dakotas office](#) will hold a meeting on Nov. 8 and BLM's [Wyoming office](#) will host sessions on Nov. 6 and 8. The agency has already announced meetings in Colorado, California and Oregon. The agency created the plans in 2015 under an agreement with states in lieu of listing the bird as either endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act but re-opened them at Zinke's bidding.

REPORT: GETTING HOTTER IN HERE: Nearly 210 million Americans live in counties where they face health threats from extreme summer heat events, according to an NRDC [analysis](#). Huge cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston, may experience six times as many dangerously hot summer days by 2100 as they did between 1975 and 2000 on average.

HELPED WANTED? It appears the director position at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy is still vacant, according to the response [Morning Tech](#) recently received to a FOIA request. "OSTP ... was unable to locate any records responsive to this request," the office noted when asked if there was a status update about whether the director's role had been filled (h/t Morning Tech).

TAKE A GLANCE! The Environmental Council of the States unveiled a [new website](#) Tuesday enabling users to look at individual state environmental protection efforts. There are 15 states currently participating in the site with more expected to follow.

QUICK HITS

— The 'sweet spots' fueling the US shale oil boom 'will not last forever,' Saudi Aramco CEO says. [CNBC](#).

— Developers Plan Wind Farms Off Jersey as Christie Era Ends. [Bloomberg](#).

— U.S. considers higher entry fees at 17 popular national parks. [Chicago Tribune](#).

— Coal-export terminal backer sues state over permit denial. [AP](#).

— Robert Redford: Scott Pruitt Is 'Hell-Bent' On Dismantling EPA Rules. [Time](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

8:30 a.m. — "Briefing Ahead of COP23 - What's at Stake in Bonn?" RSVP:
roadtobonn@cop23.com.fj

10:00 a.m. — "[Empowering State Based Management Solutions for Greater Sage Grouse Recovery](#)," House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1324

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds a [business meeting](#) and hearing on "The [Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Act of 2017](#)," Dirksen 406

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources subcommittee [hearing](#) on American Indian lands bill, House Natural Resources Indian, Insular, and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gyQXsp> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/concerns-mount-over-mysterious-whitefish-energy-contract-025211>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano | 10/24/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has directed millions of dollars in political contributions since 2014 to a network of Washington operatives that prominent conservatives have accused of profiting by misleading donors.

Beneficiaries of Zinke's largesse include groups linked to Washington-area political operative Scott B. Mackenzie, organizer of a Virgin Islands GOP political action committee that hosted the secretary at a [St. Croix fundraiser](#) in March. Before that, when Zinke was a Republican congressman from Montana, his political operation steered significant portions of its spending

to a handful of Washington, D.C.-area consulting firms that also have had ties to Mackenzie and his associates.

Zinke has continued this relationship even as other Republicans have recoiled from dealing with Mackenzie, whose critics say he operates "[scam PACs](#)" that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead. The critics include former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, who filed a [suit](#) accusing Mackenzie and other defendants of running a "national fundraising scam" after they gave his 2013 campaign for governor less than a half percent of the money they had raised in his name.

Similarly, Zinke's own leadership PAC also relied heavily on small donors while spending heavily on consultants, in a departure from how most members of Congress operate those kinds of groups.

The details about Zinke's fundraising and spending practices have not been previously reported, nor has his years-long relationship with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands Republican Party, a group that some Republicans in the Caribbean island chain have accused of misrepresenting itself to donors. POLITICO's analysis of Federal Election Commission filings, plus interviews with campaign finance lawyers and people familiar with the Virgin Islands group's fundraising, offer a deeper picture of the political activism of the retired Navy SEAL who serves in President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

None of the records indicate that Zinke violated the law or received any direct compensation from his association with Mackenzie, the Virgin Islands PAC or its consultants. But one campaign finance expert said the information shows that Zinke was not behaving like a typical politician.

"To say the least, this is highly unusual," said Karl Sandstrom, a former Democratic FEC commissioner who now works at the law firm Perkins Coie.

An Interior Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the assistance Zinke has offered to the Virgin Islands group or his use of political consultants. Mackenzie declined to be interviewed, and officials from the Virgin Islands organization — also known as VIGOP — did not respond to requests for comment.

Zinke is separately facing investigations by Interior's internal watchdog and the independent Office of Special Counsel over his habit of [mixing politics and official business](#).

Legal limits on Zinke's partisan activities have tightened now that he's Interior secretary, and he has cut ties with his PACs since being sworn in. Still, he has kept up appearances at fundraisers and other political events — averaging more than one per month — a pace that is unusual for a Cabinet member. Those include his appearance at the March fundraiser in the Virgin Islands, which occurred during a taxpayer-funded trip less than a month after he became secretary.

Complaints among Republicans about "scam PACS" have been on the rise for years, focusing on groups that target conservative voters as a source for donations. Those complaints have repeatedly focused on Mackenzie, the founder of a number of GOP-leaning PACs that have used slogans such as "Stop Hillary Clinton" to raise money from conservatives — then appeared to do little actual politicking.

Such groups make use of what past FEC leaders have described as a loophole in campaign finance law. The commission declined to take action against one of Mackenzie's Virginia-based PACs, the Conservative StrikeForce, after former Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) [complained](#) in 2012 that it had been "fraudulent" in raising money from his supporters while falsely implying it would aid his reelection campaign. While the PAC's actions were "[troubling](#)," the commission's attorneys wrote, they didn't violate any laws or rules that the FEC has the power to enforce.

Cuccinelli made similar criticisms in his 2014 lawsuit, which accused Mackenzie, Conservative StrikeForce and other defendants of using the bulk of the money they had raised in his name to "enrich themselves." The case was eventually [settled](#), with Conservative StrikeForce agreeing to pay Cuccinelli's campaign \$85,000 and turn over its donor lists.

Conservative commentator Erick Erickson [warned](#) campaigns as far back as 2010 that he might not endorse any Republican candidate who used one Mackenzie-linked consulting firm, then known as Base Connect and now called ForthRight Strategy. Montana Democrats accused Zinke of facilitating a "[political Ponzi scheme](#)" with his connections to Mackenzie-linked firms during his 2014 congressional campaign, though the charges apparently gained little traction.

More recently, Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas) — who was angered last year when the Virgin Islands GOP used his photo without his permission on fundraising solicitations — said in a statement to POLITICO that the Virgin Islands group and ForthRight "are preying on seniors in a disgusting attempt to enrich themselves."

Adav Noti, a former FEC associate general counsel who now works for the nonprofit watchdog Campaign Legal Center, said in an interview that he had dealt with the Virgin Islands group and Mackenzie as an FEC official, and that in his opinion, "They are a scam PAC."

"Scott Mackenzie has a number of scam PACs," Noti said. "He was probably the first, or one of the first, with the idea of bilking people out of money through PACs. People are being defrauded, and that needs to stop."

The FEC is scheduled to decide Thursday whether to fine Mackenzie for [less-serious discrepancies](#) in campaign filings by two other PACs of which he's the treasurer, Freedom's Defense Fund and the Conservative Majority Fund.

None of the criticism has seemed to deter Zinke, who used part of a government-paid trip to the Virgin Islands in March to attend a VIGOP fundraiser, where — as POLITICO [reported](#) in early October — an invitation listed tickets costing as much as \$5,000 a couple, and Zinke's schedule indicated that high-dollar donors had a chance to take photos with him. It was at least the third VIGOP event Zinke had attended there since 2015.

VIGOP, which the FEC classifies as a "non-party" PAC, directed more than a third of its spending during the 2016 election cycle to a handful of Washington-area consulting firms, including ForthRight and at least three other companies that share its address on 15th Street Northwest, according to campaign filings and other documents. Those firms also received more than \$3.2 million during the same period from Zinke's congressional campaign, leadership PAC and a super PAC he founded before running for Congress, federal campaign records show.

Between the 2014 and 2016 elections, Base Connect had renamed itself ForthRight Strategy after a former executive [pleaded guilty](#) to child pornography charges. A number of the firm's clients left, but Zinke's campaign and his newly formed leadership PAC not only stayed with the firm but also spent substantially more on it in the next election.

Zinke also publicly endorsed ForthRight's performance in his 2014 congressional race, offering a testimonial that was displayed on the firm's website until this month, when the watchdog group Campaign for Accountability filed an ethics complaint.

"Your results and personal commitment to Team Zinke were bar none!" the company quoted Zinke as saying on its website. "I greatly value the professional as well as the personal relationship we have developed over many years."

This praise came even though Zinke's campaign appears to have received less than it spent from its relationship with the firm.

ForthRight [says](#) it raised \$1.9 million for Zinke's 2014 race by sending out 1.6 million pieces of mail, attracting nearly 44,000 new donors whose average contribution was \$44. About \$550,000 of that haul went to Zinke's campaign for "voter mail, radio ads, TV ads, get-out-the-vote activities and lawn signs," according to the firm's website. But that was less than the \$608,000 that Zinke's campaign spent on postage and direct mail from Century Data Mailing Service, a firm located at the same 15th Street address as ForthRight, according to FEC records.

In the run-up to last year's election, Zinke's campaign and his leadership PAC, known as SEAL PAC, spent about \$3 million combined on ForthRight Strategy, Direct Support Services and Legacy Lists — all of which operate out of the same office and list ForthRight CEO Kimberly Bellissimo among their executives. (Bellissimo did not respond to POLITICO's requests for comment.)

Special Operations for America, a super PAC that Zinke founded in 2012 before running for office, also paid firms at that address a total of about \$1.8 million during the 2014 and 2016 campaign cycles.

Mackenzie is not listed on ForthRight's website or business filings but was long associated with the firm under its previous names, Base Connect and BMW Direct, both of which [listed him](#) as a staff member [as far back as 2007](#).

Besides sharing an affinity for the same consultants as Mackenzie's VIGOP, Zinke's SEAL PAC has also followed a similar fundraising model: It raised two-thirds of its money from small donors in 2016, then steered only 4 percent of its spending to other campaigns, with almost all the rest going to operating expenses and overhead.

Typically, members of Congress use their leadership PACs to cover expenses that cannot be funded from their campaign accounts and to contribute to fellow politicians, using donations of up to \$5,000 from lobbyists and other PACs. But SEAL PAC relied on donations of less than \$200 for about two-thirds of the \$3 million it collected during the 2016 cycle, according to a review of the donations. The group then spent more than \$2.6 million on overhead and gave just \$118,000 to other congressional campaign committees.

Relying heavily on small-dollar donations is one hallmark of the "scam PAC" play, said Brett

Kappel, a partner at the law firm Akerman LLP who specializes in campaign finance, lobbying and government ethics.

"Unfortunately, they generally target the most vulnerable segment of the population with the least disposable income — retired people living on fixed incomes," said Kappel, who declined to discuss specific cases. "Frequently, these are elderly conservative voters who are upset with the direction of the country."

Lorraine Hutchinson, of Butler, Pennsylvania, told POLITICO that these elderly voters included her mother, who she noticed was repeatedly contributing to SEAL PAC and other organizations, though she didn't have the disposable income to spare. Hutchinson said Zinke's PAC was one of the slowest to cease soliciting money when she asked them to stop. At one point, Hutchinson resorted to posting a plea on SEAL PAC's Facebook page.

"It took a great deal of time and effort but I managed to get most of them to stop. The Seal PAC was one of the most persistent," Hutchinson told POLITICO in a Facebook message last week. "I am convinced that these groups knowingly take advantage of the vulnerable elderly and this is a widespread problem without any easy solutions."

Erickson told POLITICO in 2015 that groups that raise political donations without doing much actual politicking are "completely a drain" on the conservative movement, saying they threatened to sap the donors' enthusiasm while achieving no concrete results.

But Bellissimo, the ForthRight CEO, [defended](#) direct-mail fundraising in a 2014 post for The Daily Caller.

Donors who send checks in response to mail solicitations "are some of the most patriotic, conservative, generous, and sophisticated people on the planet. ... They are also 'movement' people," Bellissimo wrote. "They are willing to sacrifice their dollars on a principled conservative even when they know that candidate is an underdog."

Mackenzie has similarly [defended](#) his high operating costs, telling the FEC in response to West's complaint that "fundraising is expensive and getting more so every year."

Bellissimo's firm has played a crucial role in partnering with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands PAC: Several months before Mackenzie filed the VIGOP's initial paperwork with the FEC in December 2013, Virgin Islands Republican Party Chairman John Canegata signed a contract with Base Connect Vice President Timothy Webster making the firm the exclusive fundraiser for the PAC, according to a copy of the confidential document reviewed by POLITICO.

Some Republicans in the Virgin Islands objected to the use of their name in fundraising mailers urging voters to "Stop Hillary Clinton," and Canegata's involvement with Mackenzie has exacerbated divisions within the local party's governing body.

The anti-Clinton pieces, "at best, solicit donations under false pretenses," four members of the Virgin Islands Republican Territorial Committee wrote in a February 2015 internal report, a copy of which was obtained by POLITICO. The members reported that "not a single penny of the funds received through these solicitations have been used for any purpose identifiable to any effort to oppose the election of Hillary Clinton as president."

Bellissimo introduced Zinke to VIGOP in 2015, his first year in Congress, a source familiar

with VIGOP's operations told POLITICO. Zinke, his wife, Lola, and Bellissimo flew to St. Thomas to attend a VIGOP event in November of that year. Photos of the VIGOP members posted on Facebook show Zinke and Bellissimo mingling at the Caribbean venue alongside Canegata and Saul Anuzis, a Michigan-based GOP operative who helped raise money for VIGOP. Neither Anuzis nor Canegata responded to requests for comment.

In February 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo of Zinke speaking at the Hay-Adams hotel across from the White House and bragged that she had "the privilege of playing staffer for Congressman Zinke this afternoon." When a friend commented on the Facebook post, saying the then-House freshman should run for president, she replied: "Maybe someday.... Will you help me campaign for him?"

Zinke returned for another VIGOP event at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Thomas less than two weeks after the 2016 election, according to social media posts. Then came his appearance at the VIGOP fundraiser this past March — this time as a member of Trump's Cabinet.

To view online [click here](#).

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Zinke separately briefs Democrats, Republicans on national security matter [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna and Nick Juliano | 10/24/2017 03:25 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke delivered a pair of secret briefings Tuesday to members of the House Natural Resources Committee, a session Democrats said was confusing and unusual.

Zinke met separately with Republicans and Democrats from the committee in a secure room in the basement of the Capitol typically reserved to discuss classified information. The topic of discussion was a "national security matter," and lawmakers declined to say much more than that.

"Suffice to say that they related to international resource issues," Rep. [Jim Costa](#) (D-Calif.) told POLITICO after the briefing.

"This was a confusing meeting — certainly interesting and important issues — but I can't tell you a damn thing [about it] because it was all wrapped around the veneer of confidentiality," Rep. [Jared Huffman](#) (D-Calif.) said. "It's a check-the-box exercise to say, 'I met with the Democrats.'"

Lawmakers offered few details as they emerged from Zinke's separate sessions with Democrats and Republicans on the House Natural Resources Committee. Ranking Member [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) said it was the first Natural Resources meeting in a SCIF, or sensitive compartmented information facility, during his 14-year tenure in Congress.

Democrats who attended the session said Zinke's presentation and subsequent questions left little time for a host of other issues they hoped to raise with him, such as his review of national monument designations and ethical questions surrounding Zinke's associations with alleged "[scam PACs](#)," non-commercial travel and reorganization plans for the agency.

"He gave a brief statement about his travel and that was it," Costa said, declining to offer additional details.

Rep. [Niki Tsongas](#) (D-Mass.) said Zinke "tried to explain where the costs are coming from," but did not go into any detailed explanation about his participation in political fundraisers while on official trips or say whether Interior had been reimbursed for any of those costs. Tsongas would not elaborate further.

Zinke declined to answer questions from POLITICO as he entered the meeting about his political activity or travel. "It must be a slow news day," he quipped.

Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah) said the use of the SCIF was necessary for "parts of" what Zinke had to say, but he did not anticipate that lawmakers would have to receive additional classified briefings from the secretary. Bishop declined to describe the subject of the meeting.

Grijalva said Zinke's presentation concerned "something that could have been done in another setting" and said "it did keep us from talking about some very substantive stuff."

He add that whether Zinke intended to or not, "the substance of what we came here to talk about — and the majority of members that were there came to talk about — never got talked about."

The briefing comes as new ethics questions swirl about Zinke's activities.

POLITICO reported Tuesday the former Montana congressman has directed millions of dollars to questionable groups that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead. And a little-known energy company, Whitefish Energy, that is based in Zinke's hometown recently [won a \\$300 million contract](#) to help restore Puerto Rico's power grid despite being just two years old.

Those latest controversies come on the heels of the agency's inspector general [looking into](#) Zinke's use of taxpayer-funded charter planes and [concerns about his participation](#) in fundraising or other political events while on official travel. But Democrats said there wasn't enough time to dive into those topics.

"We didn't talk about much that was not directly related" to the national security topic, Rep. [Donald McEachin](#) (D-Va.) said.

Some Democrats said the secure setting was unnecessary.

"We were playing national security games in a [secure room] with the secretary of Interior at a time when we should be asking hard questions about why climate scientists are being reassigned to desk jobs, about why our public lands are being given away," Huffman said afterward. "The swamp is getting worse and worse in this administration. We should have been talking about it, and we were playing war games."

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Democrats want details on Dourson's advisory post at EPA [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/24/2017 02:58 PM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats want EPA nominee Michael Dourson to explain his role as an adviser to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt while he awaits confirmation to become head of the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

The agency [confirmed](#) last week that Dourson is serving as a special adviser on chemicals ahead of his official confirmation.

"Your appointment creates the appearance, and perhaps the effect, of circumventing the Senate's constitutional advice and consent responsibility for the position to which you have been nominated," the 10 lawmakers, led by [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.), wrote in a [letter to Dourson](#). "Your improper involvement in EPA decisions could provide grounds for subjects of EPA regulations and oversight to challenge the legal validity of those decisions in court."

They asked Dourson to describe his duties, his relationship with the career official serving as acting head of the OCSPP and whether any of that official's duties have been delegated to Dourson.

The letter also asked several questions on certain chemical and legal issues Dourson declined to answer ahead of his confirmation. "We expect that you have familiarized yourself with these issues and can be more forthright in answering the questions we previously asked," it said.

Whitehouse last month sent a [similar letter](#) to Susan Bodine, who started as a special adviser to Pruitt on enforcement ahead of her confirmation to run the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. A spokesman did not say whether his office had received a response.

WHAT'S NEXT: Dourson's nomination will receive a committee vote alongside other nominees on Wednesday. It is unclear when he will receive a floor vote.

To view online [click here](#).

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Murkowski draws energy policy wins despite health care stance [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 10/24/2017 05:00 PM EDT

It's been three months since the Trump administration first threatened reprisals against Alaska if Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) didn't get in line on repealing Obamacare.

Instead, it's giving her seemingly everything she could want.

The Interior Department is considering issuing new permits to drill off the Alaskan coast, taking the first steps toward opening the long off-limits Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration, and edging toward building a road through the federally protected Izembek

wilderness, a project long championed by Murkowski.

That's all despite the late July phone call from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to the chairwoman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to warn her that her opposition to the measure killing Obamacare could endanger federal projects in the state — a threat that quickly leaked to the media. And though she never backed the repeal, the administration has remained solidly behind her priorities.

"The Trump team appears to be learning that the tasty carrot is a better way of moving a senator than a poorly wielded stick," said Paul Bledsoe, who worked as a Clinton White House energy aide and is now a lecturer at American University.

Zinke's Interior Department is moving ahead with efforts to help reverse the long decline in Alaska's energy production, a priority for Murkowski, since the oil industry still provides about one-third of the state's jobs.

And President Donald Trump and Zinke have continued to put Alaskans into prominent administration posts, including nominating Tara Sweeney as assistant secretary of Indian Affairs. Sweeney, who was an executive for a corporation of indigenous groups that own millions of acres of oil-rich land, is the wife of Murkowski's former state director, Kevin Sweeney.

Zinke's late July calls to Murkowski and Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#) (R-Alaska) allegedly threatening to pull support from their energy and land priorities prompted lawmakers to seek a GAO [probe](#), although a separate inquiry by Interior's inspector general [ended](#) in August after the two Alaska senators declined to discuss the incident with investigators.

For her part, Murkowski responded to Zinke by delaying her panel's consideration of several Interior and DOE nominees — though she [advanced](#) those nominations a few days later after sitting down with Zinke for a [beer](#).

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift in an emailed statement did not deny that the administration is trying to win Murkowski's support, and she noted Zinke "works with a number of Senators on both sides of the aisle to advance shared priorities" on such things as restoration of the Everglades in Florida and expanding access to the Sabinoso Wilderness in New Mexico.

The support for many of Murkowski's priorities after the dustup doesn't appear to be a coincidence, according to Kate Kelly, a former senior adviser to former Interior secretary Sally Jewell.

"These decisions don't happen in a vacuum," said Kelly, who is now at the Center for American Progress. In addition to heading the committee that oversees much of the Interior's activities, Murkowski also chairs the subcommittee that controls its appropriations.

"She holds the purse strings and occupies key positions on committees for the Interior department, so it's a smart move to keep her happy," Kelly said.

Murkowski maintained that the administration is not trying to sway her.

"Absolutely not," she told POLITICO in a brief interview. "I think in fairness the administration is working on issues that are important and they care about. And these are

matters that we've been talking about with them since they came into office, so this is about priorities that they have laid down, and we agree."

Bledsoe agreed that Murkowski and the Trump administrations share many of the same priorities in boosting energy development on public lands and removing Obama administration restrictions. But he said he saw Interior's actions as an acknowledgment that "they need her every bit as much as she needs them. As the near-misses on their big legislative items have accumulated, the White House is recognizing that they're not immune from old-fashioned politics."

After years of stonewalling by the Obama administration, Murkowski appears to be close to winning Interior's permission for a 12-mile road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to link the isolated city of King Cove to an all-weather airport. Documents obtained through a public records request by Defenders of Wildlife show the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pursuing a land exchange for the road. The records, first [reported](#) by The Washington Post, include emails among staff that say the push for the exchange is coming from Zinke's office.

On the oil front, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is expecting to release a draft five-year offshore oil and gas leasing plan by the end of the year to allow drilling in parts of Alaska's Chukchi and Beaufort seas, which former President Barack Obama had closed off last year.

And Zinke is quietly working on an environmental review that would allow oil companies to perform seismic testing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, according to an Aug. 11 [memorandum](#) from the FWS Alaska region acting Director James Kurth. The House is slated to vote Thursday to formally back the Senate's budget resolution passed last week that included [language](#) that would give Murkowski a path forward for opening ANWR up to drilling.

In August, BLM issued a [call for nominations](#) for new oil and gas leases in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve, an area near ANWR that has long been home to oil production. BLM also published an [order](#) in the Federal Register on Tuesday lifting a ban on mining on 700 acres near Fairbanks that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had set aside as a buffer around an array of weather satellite receivers. The land sits next to an open-pit gold mine owned by Kinross, which has conducted exploratory drilling in the area.

The Interior actions may not be designed to win Murkowski support for any specific Trump policies, said Pat Pourchot, who served as Interior's special assistant for Alaskan affairs under former secretary Jewell, but fostering a good relationship may pay dividends down the road.

"It doesn't matter if it's an exact quid pro quo or not, but it can't hurt to try to have good relationship with people in other branches of government or other branches of congress that might help you on your priorities," Pourchot said.

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POLITICO New York: Energy czar says federal proposal to subsidize coal, nukes threatens state's climate goals [Back](#)

By Marie J. French | 10/24/2017 05:29 PM EDT

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's top energy official said Tuesday that the federal government's proposed rule to subsidize coal and nuclear power plants could force New York to keep its last two coal plants open and threatens the state's climate goals.

Richard Kauffman called the proposed federal rule that would guarantee returns for generators that keep a 90-day fuel supply on hand a "shot across the bow" for New York's ambitious renewable energy and climate goals. The proposed rule being considered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would upend competitive electricity markets and has drawn criticism from a range of industry actors. It's backed by the Trump administration and has drawn support from coal states and the nuclear industry.

"I find it ironic that this administration talks about states' rights until it's something they don't want, in which case there's federal pre-emption," Kauffman said during a talk at the Rockefeller Institute in Albany. "This is an example where states should be permitted to do what we want to do. ... We will absolutely not cede a single bit of our prerogative but ... I'm concerned there are a number of potential routes the federal government could take to get in the way of our policy."

The stated rationale of the federal government's proposal is concern about grid reliability and resilience in the face of declining fuel diversity. Kauffman said after his discussion that he's sympathetic to the spirit behind the proposal because of the lack of value placed on fuel diversity.

"We can be heading to a single source [with natural gas]. ... Natural gas prices in the past have been historically volatile, we don't have a price on carbon in wholesale markets, there's not a wholesale market value for resiliency services," Kauffman said. "We certainly understand the need for a whole variety of market reforms at FERC."

New York has addressed the effect of historically low natural gas prices on nuclear plants, crafting a subsidy based on the environmental benefits of the state's upstate nuclear power plants after they threatened to close. State policymakers and the New York Independent System Operator are also evaluating the possibility of placing a price on carbon in the electric sector in a way that supports the state's policy goals.

Kauffman said it would ultimately be preferable to have a federal price on carbon rather than for states to go it alone.

This story first appeared on [POLITICO New York](#) on Oct. 24, 2017.

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Dourson nomination imperiled as more Republicans undecided — Keystone spill reported days before key decision — Last day of Bonn climate talks
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 6:03:15 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/17/2017 05:50 AM EDT

With help from Sara Stefanini

DOURSON'S IN DEEP TROUBLE: It's not looking good for President Donald Trump's nominee to run EPA chemicals office with at least five more Republicans not ready to back Michael Dourson on Thursday, Pro's Nick Juliano and your ME host [report](#). Republican Sens. [Jeff Flake](#), [Bob Corker](#), [John McCain](#) and [Pat Toomey](#) were all publicly noncommittal about Dourson's nomination with Sen. [Susan Collins](#) going further to say she was "[leaning against](#)" supporting the former industry-funded toxicologist. Remember just one more defection sinks Dourson after Republican North Carolina Sens. [Thom Tillis](#) and [Richard Burr](#) said they wouldn't vote to confirm him.

Toomey's concerns: "Sen. Toomey remains concerned about the PFOA issue in Bucks County and Montgomery County and remains dedicated to addressing it," a spokesman for the Pennsylvania Republican said, naming two Philadelphia-area counties where [toxic firefighting chemicals](#) leached into the ground from [two closed naval bases](#).

Leadership doesn't seem too optimistic about Dourson at this point. "We'll have to see whether it's a viable nomination, and with two against him obviously that doesn't leave us a lot of room," Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) told us. "We haven't made a decisions on that yet, but we'll be revisiting it."

But it may not matter: Dourson is currently at the agency as a senior adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt and none of the Republicans we spoke to seemed anxious to kick him out, even if he lacked support to be confirmed. "I'll leave that up to the EPA to decide," Tillis said. Even Sen. [Joe Manchin](#), who opposes confirmation despite supporting several other Trump nominees, said he was not asking Dourson to leave his current post. But other Democrats, who have criticized the arrangement from the start, want Dourson out of the agency ASAP: "He is a lightning rod that we don't need and I would hope that we don't have to deal with him at EPA," Sen. [Ben Cardin](#) told ME.

Why his selection matters: Dourson, whose prior clients include Dow Chemical, Koch Industries and Chevron, has frequently recommended standards many factors less protective than public health and EPA research suggested. And in the early 2000s, Dourson helped West Virginia set drinking water guidance limits for PFOA at 150 parts per billion. That was 150 times less protective than manufacturer DuPont's own internal standard of 1 part per billion and more than 2,000 times less protective than EPA's [recommendation](#) of 70 parts per trillion.

KEYSTONE SPRINGS A LEAK: Days before Nebraska regulators decide whether to approve its expansion through their state, the original Keystone pipeline spilled 210,000 gallons of heavy Canadian oil in South Dakota Thursday, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Pipeline operator TransCanada [said](#) it shut down the line around 7 a.m. after discovery of the leak in Marshall County and alerted the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration. The leak was on original section of the Keystone pipeline system, opened in 2010, that runs from

Alberta east through Canada and then down through South Dakota until Steele City, Neb. The Nebraska Public Service Commission will decide Monday whether to approve the route of Keystone XL — an expansion of the original system that takes a shorter path from Alberta to Steele City.

Environmentalists seized on the incident: "These pipelines are bound to spill, and they put communities, precious drinking water, and our climate at risk," Greenpeace's Rachel Rye Butler said in a statement. "The Nebraska Public Service Commission needs to take a close look at this spill." And 350.org Executive Director May Boeve said: "This is exactly the kind of disaster we can expect more of if Keystone XL is approved."

WE MADE IT TO FRIDAY EVERYBODY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Andeavor's Stephen Brown first to identify former Rep. Joe Kolter as the other congressman caught up in the post office scandal. For today: Just two Supreme Court justices have ever graced American currency (both out of circulation). Who were they? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

ICYMI: Interior's inspector general said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke hasn't properly documented his travel as secretary, leaving it unable to determine whether he violated government rules or improperly mixed partisan political activity with official business, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt said the Obama administration's "organizational and operational mess" was to blame for the lack on documentation.

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**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2yQ8q7z> **

BONN TRAVAIL: Today's the last day of the climate summit in Bonn, Germany, and most of the high-level activities seem to have already wrapped. Look for final high-level speeches this morning and the closing session in the afternoon. Fingers crossed, everything will be wrapped and settled around midday U.S. time.

One awkward thing: Germany's continued dependence on coal has been a sore spot for this year's summit host. And with difficult coalition talks underway to form a government, Barbara Hendricks, the German environment minister, was caught in a difficult spot when asked about the new [anti-coal alliance](#). "We were asked, whether we want to participate. I have asked for understanding, that we cannot decide this ahead of the next government. The initiative, however, will keep us up to speed about what's happening," she said in an emailed statement.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SCOTT PRUITT? Today the EPA administrator delivers remarks at the Federalist Society's 2017 National Lawyers Convention at 11:15 a.m. Link to the schedule [here](#).

Attractions yet to come: Nearly a year after his confirmation, Pruitt makes his first return visit to Senate EPW on Jan. 31, 2018, your ME hosts [reports](#). Ranking member [Tom Carper](#) said the visit is "long overdue" but adds he's "glad that a date has finally been set." He'll [also](#)

[testify](#) before the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee on Dec. 7.

On Thursday, he met with Washington state Rep. [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) at agency headquarters. Picture [here](#).

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: Here's what various energy groups are saying about House [passage](#) of its tax package [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) Thursday afternoon.

— **Edison Electric Institute President Tom Kuhn** is decidedly on board: "The single most important action we can do to grow our economy and to create jobs is to pass comprehensive tax reform this year, and this is a giant step forward in getting comprehensive tax reform across the finish line."

— **Malcolm Woolf, Senior Vice President of Policy for Advanced Energy Economy**, has mixed feelings about the bill: "While we are encouraged that the House is reducing the corporate tax rate and finally providing equal treatment for technologies like fuel cells, combined heat and power, geothermal, and advanced nuclear, today's vote also completely undermines market certainty for the wind, solar and electric vehicle businesses."

— **API's Jack Gerard** likes what he sees: "By including pro-growth proposals like lowering the corporate tax rate and strong cost-recovery provisions, this legislation will help unleash economic growth and allow our industry to continue providing safe, reliable energy for Americans."

— **The National Enhanced Oil Recovery Initiative**, a coalition of coal, oil, labor and environmental groups, hopes a tax extenders package expected to be considered in the Senate Finance Committee has space for extending a CCS credit: "Carbon capture legislation has unprecedented bipartisan, bicameral support and deserves congressional action."

The Senate Finance Committee cleared its own version of the tax overhaul late Thursday 14 to 12, Pro Tax's Brian Faler [reports](#).

CONFIRMED: Before the Thanksgiving jet fumes got them, the Senate confirmed Brenda Burman to run the Bureau of Reclamation by voice vote, your ME host [reports](#). "FINALLY! Excited to finally have Brenda Burman confirmed to lead @usbr," Zinke [tweeted](#) in response.

NUDGING PEOPLE ON APPROPRIATIONS: The Senate Appropriations Committee plans to unveil its chairman's mark for the Interior and Environment fiscal 2018 spending bill next week, along with three other outstanding packages, Pro Budget & Appropriations Brief's Sarah Ferris [reports](#). They won't be marked up but will allow staff level work on funding to trudge along, as Appropriations Chairman [Thad Cochran](#) ruled out any short-term spending bill that extends past New Year's Eve.

Speaking of which, three sources [tell](#) POLITICO's John Bresnahan, Seung Min Kim and Sarah Ferris the White House will ask today for \$44 billion to help storm-ravaged communities in Texas, Puerto Rico and Florida.

NEW WRINKLE TO TEST! The North American Electric Reliability Corp.'s recent two-day test of energy companies and government agencies' response to simulated cyber and physical attacks featured for the first time "fake news" on social media to gauge how participants react, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). "I think that term has become part of our

lexicon now and so there's an awareness as to is what we're seeing completely accurate or is it designed to fool us?" Marcus Sachs, senior vice president and chief security officer at NERC, said. "Is it potentially a threat actor making something up and trying to psychologically push people in a wrong direction?" More than 6,000 people from the power, oil and gas sectors as well various federal agencies participated in this year's event.

ABOUT THAT PUERTO RICAN OUTAGE: Whitefish Energy said a Wednesday power outage in Puerto Rico had nothing to do with the company's efforts on the island. A since-updated [Mashable article](#) linked to in Thursday's ME suggested the outage might have been related to its repair work. "The outage in PREPA Rico on Wednesday, just like the one last week, has absolutely nothing to do with the work performed by Whitefish Energy on the 50100 transmission line," a spokesman said in a statement. "That line was turned over to PREPA several weeks ago and our crews are no longer in the area as they are working elsewhere on the island." The island's utility blamed the outage on a "technical failure."

MOVING FORWARD: Virginia took the next step toward joining Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative on Thursday as the commonwealth's Air Pollution Control Board released a [plan](#) for public comment that proposes to cap carbon dioxide emissions from power generation in Virginia at 33 million tons or 34 million tons in 2020, with 3 percent annual reduction through 2030, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). Public comments are expected to last at least 60 days once the plan formally appears in the Virginia Register.

HAMMING IT UP: Billionaire Continental Resources chief and Trump supporter Harold Hamm told an Energy Information Administration webinar Thursday its forecasts had overstated oil production this year by 200,000 barrels a day, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Hamm said the estimates were hurting his business. "We believe the EIA must be responsive to changing dynamics and do it on a timely basis," Hamm said. "Shareholders are demanding return on investment. Hopefully we will give the EIA data a more realistic stamp."

SIERRA CLUB HITS BACK ON GRID PUSH: Responding to FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee's [comments](#) about an "interim" grid proposal, the Sierra Club launched targeted ads on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Google Display in 11 states opposing Energy Secretary Rick Perry's grid resiliency push. Watch [here](#).

MAIL CALL! ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO YOU: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#), as well as the committee's subcommittee chiefs, sent [a letter](#) to Trump voicing support for reorganizing Interior. "Any thoughtful DOI reorganization should give serious consideration to relocating select agencies away from Washington," they wrote. "Simply put, federal employees should know and live around the people, lands, and economies they regulate."

CHANGE COURSE ON RFS CUTS: Eighteen House Democrats, led by [Donald Milford Payne](#) and [Ruben Gallego](#), sent [a letter](#) to Pruitt urging him to preserve existing biofuels volume requirement mandates. They fear the proposed 2018 volumes "will curtail investment in innovation and have an adverse impact on our country. It will particularly affect communities of color and urban areas that already face air pollution issues and higher costs of living, especially in regard to gasoline prices."

DON'T DO IT: Colorado Sen. [Michael Bennet](#) sent a letter to Zinke opposing a proposal to raise National Park Service fees. Read it [here](#).

MORE TIME PLEASE: More than two dozen House Democrats asked Zinke for a 45 day extension of the public comment period on Interior's plan to modify or rewrite sage grouse conservation plans. Link [here](#).

GROUPS WANT GRID PUSH RECORDS: The Environmental Working Group and American Oversight filed a public records request Thursday seeking communications, emails and calendar entries for meetings between senior DOE officials and corporations including Peabody Energy and Murray Energy. It also requests any records related to lobbying groups such as the Edison Electric Institute, the Nuclear Energy Institute, and the American and National Coal Councils. Link [here](#).

LIGHTER CLICK: Queen Elizabeth II visited a wind turbine blade factory on Thursday and the pics are about as awesome as you'd expect. Link [here](#).

QUICK HITS

— Fossil Fuels' Fishy New Friends. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#).

— Pope Francis denounces climate change deniers. [AP](#).

— Northern Pass gets federal permit to bring energy across the Canadian border. [Concord Monitor](#).

— As U.S. Debates Ending Electric Car Tax Credit, China Aims to Expand Sales. [New York Times](#).

— Rising U.S. Oil Stocks Weigh on Prices. [Wall Street Journal](#).

— Texas wind energy projects worth about \$11 billion in limbo after U.S. House tax vote. [Dallas Morning News](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

8:00 a.m. — U.S. Gas Infrastructure Exports Initiative Launch Event, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Hall of Flags, 1615 H Street NW

11:15 a.m. — EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt addresses The Federalist Society's National Lawyer Convention, 1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2yQ8q7z> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/11/dourson-nomination-imperiled-as-more-republicans-undecided-026442>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Dourson at risk of rejection as more Republicans lean no [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano and Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominee to a key chemical safety job at the EPA is at risk of rejection after Republican senators balked amid accusations that he is too eager to cover for companies peddling dangerous products.

North Carolina's two GOP senators have said they will vote against confirming Michael Dourson as an EPA assistant administrator, citing a record that included work on a chemical linked to cancer deaths near a Marine Corps base in their home state. And Maine Republican [Susan Collins](#) said Thursday that she is leaning no as well — a vote that would be enough to sink his nomination.

Democrats are optimistic about turning four additional Republicans who they believe should be in play based on contamination issues back home.

Republican leaders have not decided what to do about Dourson's nomination, Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) said Thursday.

"We'll have to see whether it's a viable nomination, and with two against him obviously that doesn't leave us a lot of room," Cornyn told POLITICO. "We haven't made a decisions on that yet, but we'll be revisiting it."

Critics say Dourson, a former industry-funded toxicologist, regularly downplayed the risks of chemicals such as PFOA and trichloroethylene that are contaminating soil and water in communities across the country. Dourson has already begun working at EPA as a senior adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt, an arrangement Democrats have condemned as improper.

"There are all these local contamination issues across the country that have been bubbling up recently or have been out there for years, and because Dourson is this hired gun ... he's almost by nature of his job been working on these really controversial chemicals," said Jack Pratt, chemicals campaign director for the Environmental Defense Fund, which opposes Dourson's nomination.

Republican North Carolina Sens. [Thom Tillis](#) and [Richard Burr](#) said Wednesday that they could not support Dourson because of his past work as a toxicologist who was frequently hired by industry to rebut public health concerns about chemicals. Collins said Thursday that she is "leaning against" confirming him.

A legislative aide said Democrats are eyeing Republican Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) of Arizona, [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska, [Bob Corker](#) of Tennessee and [Pat Toomey](#) of Pennsylvania, although Flake, Toomey and Corker told POLITICO they're still undecided.

"Sen. Toomey remains concerned about the PFOA issue in Bucks County and Montgomery County and remains dedicated to addressing it," a spokesman for the Pennsylvania Republican said, naming two Philadelphia-area counties where [toxic firefighting chemicals](#) leached into the ground from [two closed naval bases](#). Toomey is reviewing the nomination "with these concerns in mind," but the spokesman did not say how he plans to vote.

However, even if the nomination is pulled or rejected, Dourson will still be able to influence

EPA's implementation of a major chemical safety law because he has already started working at the agency. Democrats have criticized that arrangement, though EPA says previous administrations allowed people to begin working there before being confirmed.

EPA's chemical safety office, which Dourson has been nominated to lead, has a heavy workload after Congress in 2016 passed a bipartisan law updating the Toxic Substances Control Act for the first time in nearly 40 years. The office has been charged with evaluating the safety of chemicals already in use and determining how to test new chemicals before they are allowed into the marketplace.

The near-universal support TSCA reform won in Congress last year may help explain the wariness among lawmakers about giving chemical industry allies too much of a foothold in EPA.

"They wanted to give the public some assurance that the products on their shelf are safe, and when you put the chemical industry in charge that's not going to happen," said Madeleine Foote, a legislative representative with the League of Conservation Voters.

Tillis and Burr stopped short of calling for Dourson to step down from his existing position at the agency. "I'll leave that up to the EPA to decide," Tillis told POLITICO.

Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.), who has supported several Trump nominees, said he would vote against Dourson but not object to him continuing to work at EPA.

Before joining EPA last month, Dourson was a professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine's Risk Science Center, and he founded the nonprofit Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment, which was often conducted industry-funded research. He also previously worked at EPA from 1980 to 1995. Past clients of Dourson and his research group have included Dow Chemical, Koch Industries and Chevron, according to [the Associated Press](#).

Critics say Dourson's research routinely concluded that chemicals were safer in far higher concentrations than those recommended by agencies like EPA, putting communities at greater risk of finding toxic substances like perchlorate, TCE or PFOA in their air or drinking water.

Pratt said Dourson's work followed a pattern.

"Over and over again these chemical companies would hire him, he'd look at the research, and say the standard that EPA or whatever regulatory body has is too strict — it should be looser," Pratt said.

Dourson told the Environment and Public Works Committee at his confirmation hearing last month that he did not have a thumb on the scale.

"I can give you as many or more examples of situations where the science that we brought forward as a team actually lowered the safe dose or risk position for various sponsors," Dourson told Sen. [Tom Carper](#) (D-Del.) at the hearing. "If confirmed, I will rely on the guidance of EPA ethics officials."

Tillis and Burr said they could not support Dourson based on his record and North Carolina's history of chemical pollution problems, such drinking water at Camp Lejeune that was contaminated for decades by chemicals including trichloroethylene. TCE is one of the first 10

chemicals EPA must evaluate under the new safety law, but Dourson has previously endorsed health standards that are 1.5 to 15 times less protective than those backed by other researchers, [according to EDF](#).

Retired Marine Corps Master Sgt. Jerry Ensminger, whose daughter died of leukemia linked to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, met with Tills and aides to Burr to urge their opposition, according to the [Wilmington Star News](#).

Among his other industry-funded work, Dourson [appeared](#) before an EPA scientific advisory panel session concerning the pesticide chlorpyrifos on behalf of CropLife America. He led a 2008 [paper](#) on acrylamide, which can form during high-temperature cooking of some starchy foods, that received funding from major food companies like Burger King, Frito-Lay and McDonald's. And he [studied](#) 1-bromopropane, a solvent linked to some neurological and reproductive disorders, in 2004 with funding from Albemarle Corp. and Ameribrom Inc.

In all cases, he recommended standards many factors less protective than public health and EPA research suggested.

He also has done work for industry-friendly state governments. In the early 2000s, Dourson helped West Virginia set drinking water guidance limits for PFOA, also known as perfluorooctanoic acid or C8, at 150 parts per billion. That was 150 times less protective than manufacturer DuPont's own internal standard of 1 part per billion and more than 2,000 times less protective than EPA's [recommendation](#) of 70 parts per trillion.

During his confirmation hearing, Dourson argued that the research had evolved significantly since his recommendation to West Virginia, saying that "the science has progressed, significantly advanced since the time of 2004 and the new science indicates a lower level." And he defended the integrity of his work overall.

"Throughout my career — with EPA, TERA and now with the University of Cincinnati — I have been objective in my work and applied sound science to come to my conclusions," Dourson said.

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Collins 'leaning against' Dourson for EPA chemicals role [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 12:35 PM EDT

Sen. [Susan Collins](#) told reporters today she's "leaning against" backing Michael Dourson's nomination to run EPA's chemicals office, which would leave him without adequate support for confirmation in the closely divided chamber.

"I have a lot of concerns about Mr. Dourson, but I've not yet made a final decision," she said.

North Carolina Republican Sens. [Richard Burr](#) and [Thom Tillis](#) both came out in opposition on Wednesday to Dourson, who is currently working as an adviser at the agency. Both declined to say if he should leave that role today.

Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) also said today he had not decided whether to support the nomination.

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Keystone pipeline spills 210,000 gallons of oil in South Dakota [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/16/2017 05:02 PM EDT

The Keystone pipeline spilled 210,000 gallons of heavy Canadian oil in South Dakota, pipeline operator TransCanada said in a [statement](#) today.

TransCanada shut down the pipeline around 7 a.m. ET after discovering the leak in Marshall County, the company said. Crews isolated the spill and called in emergency responders, the company said. TransCanada also alerted the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration of the spill.

The spill comes less than a week before a local regulatory commission in Nebraska is scheduled to rule whether to approve the route through the state where TransCanada wants to build Keystone XL, an expansion of the original Keystone line.

TransCanada said it has received enough interest from shippers to green-light Keystone XL project if it gets the go-ahead from the Nebraska Public Service Commission.

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Watchdog slams Zinke for failing to document travel [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/16/2017 04:16 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document his travel, the agency's watchdog said Thursday, preventing it from determining whether he had violated government rules.

Zinke has come under scrutiny for mixing taxpayer-funded travel with political activities, as well as taking military or private planes rather than flying commercial, and the investigation by Interior's Office of Inspector General seeks to clarify whether all procedures were correctly followed.

"Our investigation is delayed by absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips and a review process that failed to include proper documentation and accountability," Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said in a letter obtained by POLITICO and first reported by The Washington Post.

Zinke's travels have drawn scrutiny after Interior revealed he had taken non-commercial

flights at taxpayer expense, POLITICO and other news outlets have reported. POLITICO has also reported that the former congressman from Montana [has mixed](#) taxpayer-paid trips with political work, such as when he participated in a fundraiser on behalf of the Virgin Islands GOP.

The IG criticized Zinke for failing to complete documentation for his travel in the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, and said that the process established by Interior's Ethics Office and Office of the Solicitor "does not include sufficient documentation of the legal and ethical analysis conducted to distinguish between personal, political, and official travel, or consistent cost analysis to justify use of non-commercial travel."

The IG asked for documentation of all of Zinke's travel, as well as for the documentation of travel by his wife, Lola Zinke, with documentation for how and when the travel was paid.

Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, the agency's second-ranking official, blamed the lack on documentation on the Obama administration for leaving behind "an organizational and operational mess."

In his response letter, Bernhardt emphasized that Interior employees would continue to cooperate with the IG, and said he would provide documentation as requested.

But he also went on to note that former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell hadn't completed her documentation for 12 trips taken last year and in January of this year, and he said some trips may have never been entered in the system.

"When I arrived at the Department in August 2017 it was clear to me that the Secretary and I had inherited an organizational and operational mess," he wrote. "From my perspective, regarding IOS travel procedures, it appears that the exact same procedures and processes utilized by the previous Administration remain in place and continue to be dysfunctional."

Zinke joins a cast of Trump administration officials, including Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and now-departed Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who are accused of misuse of taxpayer funds for travel.

Esther Whieldon contributed to this report.

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New anti-coal push in Bonn pits nations against U.S. [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/16/2017 03:08 PM EDT

BONN, Germany — Canada and the U.K. on Thursday launched an anti-coal alliance at the global climate summit here, a direct challenge to the Trump administration's bid to promote new high-efficiency coal-fired power plants.

Canadian Environment Minister Catherine McKenna and Claire Perry, the U.K. minister for climate change, formally launched the 27-member group whose declaration said it will seek to

close down existing coal plants and "impose a moratorium on any new traditional coal power stations without operational carbon capture and storage."

"Coal is literally choking our cities, with close to a million people dying every year from coal pollution," McKenna said.

Almost 40 percent of global electricity comes from coal, and while McKenna acknowledged that phasing it out would not be easy, she said it was crucial to achieve climate goals and protect public health.

Other members include France and Italy, which both aim to phase out coal in the next decade, and Finland, Mexico and New Zealand. Two U.S. states — Washington and Oregon — will also join. Both have already announced plans to shutter their coal plants. While the group's members consume only a small fraction of the global coal supply, they aim to form a powerful political partnership.

McKenna said despite the U.S. effort to support coal, the economic case for the fuel was fading.

"There are cheaper, more sustainable sources of power, in particular clean power, renewables," she said. "The economics dictate it, but we need to be supporting countries that want to make the move. We've said that there are developing countries [where] there might be a price differential. We want to be helping to support them. This is the huge opportunity."

Officials from the White House have used the annual climate change conference to tout "cleaner" fossil fuels, including at a [controversial event](#) on Monday that drew protesters. But the head of the American negotiating team delivered a speech to the assembled nations that carefully steered clear of coal.

Judy Garber, an acting assistant secretary at the State Department, at the COP23 high-level session said the U.S. still intends to withdraw from the 2015 Paris deal and is open to rejoining later under "more favorable" terms. The U.S. team has said it was not planning to discuss those terms at the Bonn meeting.

Garber noted "dramatic decreases in the cost of low-emissions technologies and fuels, including natural gas, solar, wind, energy storage and energy efficiency," but also referenced work with China and India capturing carbon emissions from coal.

"We know that each country will need to determine the appropriate energy mix based on its particular circumstances, taking into account the need for energy security, promotion of economic growth and environmental protection," she said. "In that context, we want to support the cleanest, most efficient power generation, regardless of source."

Not all developed countries are on board with the new anti-coal pitch, including Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel is still struggling to form a new government.

"We were asked whether we want to participate. I have asked for understanding, that we cannot decide this ahead of the next government," said Barbara Hendricks, the German environment minister. "The initiative, however, will keep us up to speed about what's happening."

Kalina Oroschakoff contributed to this report.

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Pruitt to testify before EPW in late January 2018 [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 03:55 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will appear before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on Jan. 31, 2018, making his first return to the panel nearly a year after his confirmation, the panel announced today.

"It is important that EPA Administrator Pruitt testifies before the committee," Chairman [John Barrasso](#) said in a statement. "It will give senators the chance to hear about the important work being done at the agency."

Committee Democrats have already expressed outrage Pruitt hasn't returned since his confirmation in February so waiting more than two additional months likely won't mollify that the anger.

"Mr. Pruitt's appearance before our committee, which oversees the agency he leads, is long overdue," Ranking member [Tom Carper](#) said in a statement. "While I think it is unacceptable that members of this committee will have to wait over a year to hear directly from Administrator Pruitt, I am glad that a date has finally been set, and I look forward to his testimony on January 31st."

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt will testify on [Jan. 31](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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Pruitt to testify before House panel Dec. 7 [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/16/2017 12:00 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will [testify](#) before the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee on Dec. 7.

"We're looking forward to receiving a much-needed update from Mr. Pruitt on his priorities for the agency, including his stated policy of getting EPA 'back to the basics' and its impact on the agency's activity going forward," E&C Chairman [Greg Walden](#) and Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#) said in a joint statement. "Following EPA's controversial and expansive interpretation of its authorities during the past administration, it is past time for EPA to refocus on pursuing its important public health and environmental missions as Congress originally intended."

The appearance will be Pruitt's first before the Energy and Commerce Committee. Democrats on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee are also seeking to have Pruitt testify soon, noting he has not appeared before that committee since his confirmation hearing on Jan. 18.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate Finance Committee approves GOP tax reform plan [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 11/16/2017 10:37 PM EDT

The Senate's tax-writing committee this evening approved Republicans' sweeping plan to overhaul the tax code.

The Finance Committee voted along party lines, 14-12, to forward the proposal on to the full Senate. Approval came after four days of sometimes testy consideration, during which Republicans substantially revised the measure while voting down dozens of Democratic amendments.

Senate leaders aim to take up the [bill](#) — which would cut both business and individual taxes while killing Obamacare's individual mandate requiring health insurance — after Thanksgiving.

The Finance panel's vote came hours after the House approved its own competing tax plan. Lawmakers aim to get compromise legislation to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the year.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate confirms Burman to lead Bureau of Reclamation [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 06:11 PM EDT

The Senate cleared Brenda Burman's nomination to run the Bureau of Reclamation by voice vote on Thursday.

"FINALLY! Excited to finally have Brenda Burman confirmed to lead @usbr," Secretary Ryan Zinke [tweeted](#) in response.

Burman's nomination to lead the nation's wholesale water and hydroelectric power provider got caught up in the battle over Zinke's national monument designation review.

Senate Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#) placed a hold on her nomination until he landed a meeting with Zinke to discuss the review and [lifted it](#) after that meeting took place earlier this week.

WHAT'S NEXT: Burman will assume her position running the Bureau of Reclamation.

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Senate appropriators to release details on four spending bills [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 11/16/2017 03:46 PM EDT

The Senate Appropriations Committee plans to unveil its remaining four spending bills next week as it ratchets up pressure on congressional leaders to strike a budget deal.

The committee will release a so-called chairman's mark for each of the fiscal 2018 bills — Defense, Financial Services, Homeland Security and Interior and Environment — early next week. The bills will not be marked up in full committee, according to a GOP aide.

The Senate will not be in session, but the bills will be released to allow staff-level work during the holidays, the aide said. After the Thanksgiving break, Congress will have just days left until government funding expires.

Appropriations Chairman [Thad Cochran](#) announced the plans in a rare statement directed at congressional leadership this afternoon, warning about the fast-approaching Dec. 8 deadline.

"We need a new budget deal to finish our work. Congress and the administration must reach agreement on acceptable top-line funding levels," Cochran wrote. "I urge all parties to those negotiations to redouble their efforts to reach agreement."

In a break with some House conservatives, Cochran (R-Miss.), ruled out any short-term spending bill that extends past New Year's Eve.

Cochran, who also chairs the Defense subcommittee, urged House and Senate leaders to reach an accord that would lift the budget cap for the Pentagon. Without a deal, Cochran said he would be "hard-pressed" to write a bill that "fully meets our national security needs or reflects the priorities of the Senate."

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White House seeks at least \$44B in third disaster request [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan, Seung Min Kim and Sarah Ferris | 11/16/2017 06:57 PM EDT

The White House will ask Congress on Friday to approve at least \$44 billion to help storm-ravaged communities in Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida, according to three sources privy to the request.

It would mark the third aid installment in three months. Congress has already approved \$52 billion in response to the spate of hurricanes that killed 260 people and caused hundreds of billions of dollars in damage.

The latest request falls short of what local officials had sought for their recovery, though the White House is expected to send additional aid proposals in the coming months. Texas had asked for \$61 billion for reconstruction, and Puerto Rico has sought \$96 billion.

Both the House and Senate are expected to take up the request next month, possibly as part of a year-end spending deal. The request comes as lawmakers leave town for a weeklong Thanksgiving break.

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Grid attack simulation exercise includes 'fake news' scenario [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/16/2017 05:10 PM EDT

A two-day exercise to test energy companies and government agencies' response to simulated cyber and physical attacks on the electric grid has added a new wrinkle: using "fake news" on social media to gauge how participants react.

The North American Electric Reliability Corp. holds its so-called GridEx simulations every two years, and this year's event drew about 6,000 people from the power, oil and gas sectors as well as from FERC, NERC, DOD, DHS, DOE and other national agencies.

This year's exercise included simulations similar to the malware attacks made on Ukrainian energy and transport companies earlier this year. And it also included a social media component in which GridEx administrators put out news stories, and allowed utilities to post their own accounts on social media.

"We had some reaction from members questioning whether what they're seeing is accurate, and using the words 'Is this fake news?'," said Marcus Sachs, senior vice president and chief security officer at NERC. "I think that term has become part of our lexicon now and so there's an awareness as to is what we're seeing completely accurate or is it designed to fool us? Is it potentially a threat actor making something up and trying to psychologically push people in a wrong direction?"

The 2015 exercise led companies and agencies to improve their response to natural disasters and create a cyber mutual assistance program, said Kevin Wailes, co-chairman of the electricity subsector coordinating council and CEO of the Lincoln Electric System.

WHAT'S NEXT: NERC expects to publish a report on lessons learned from GridEx IV in March.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Virginia advances proposal to join RGGI [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/16/2017 04:57 PM EDT

Virginia's Air Pollution Control Board today decided to officially move ahead with a proposal for the state to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

The [plan](#), which will now go out for public comment before it's finalized, proposes to cap carbon dioxide emissions from power generation in Virginia at 33 million tons or 34 million tons in 2020, with 3 percent annual reduction through 2030.

Outgoing Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe [announced](#) the decision to join the multi-state program earlier this week at the climate summit in Bonn, Germany. In a statement today backing the board's decision, McAuliffe made a dig at President Donald Trump.

"Virginia is uniquely vulnerable to the threat of climate change and many of our residents are already experiencing its impacts. ... I am proud that Virginia is joining states around the nation that are filling the void of leadership that President Trump has left on transforming the energy sector and protecting our environment," he said.

New Jersey, which exited the pact under Republican Gov. Chris Christie, is also set to rejoin RGGI.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Air Pollution Control Board is expected to take public comments for at least 60 days once it's announced in the Virginia Register.

To view online [click here](#).

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Hamm tells EIA its high oil forecasts are hurting his business [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/16/2017 04:57 PM EDT

Continental Resources chief and Trump supporter Harold Hamm told an Energy Information Administration webinar on Thursday that the agency was overestimating U.S. crude output and hurting his business.

The presentation by Hamm, who is largely credited with sparking the oil rush in North Dakota, is the latest sign of the policy influence that energy executives have in the Trump administration. Like coal magnate Bob Murray and refinery owner Carl Icahn, billionaire Hamm has regularly had Trump's ear.

"When it comes to public policy and politics and being at that table, it appears they now have a seat they didn't necessarily have before," said Jon Haubert, an energy consultant and founder and managing partner of HB Legacy Media.

During his approximately 15-minute presentation, Hamm said he had given input to the EIA

since 2012 in his role as head of the Domestic Energy Producers Alliance, a trade group he co-founded and represents 29 companies. He said that the EIA forecasts had overstated oil production this year by 200,000 barrels a day, a discrepancy he complained was hurting this business with investors. Continental's share price is down about 10 percent from a year ago, but had fallen as much as 40 percent during the summer.

"We believe the EIA must be responsive to changing dynamics and do it on a timely basis," Hamm said. "Shareholders are demanding return on investment. Hopefully we will give the EIA data a more realistic stamp."

EIA has estimated the U.S. oil production will average 9.2 million barrels a day in 2017. Hamm's Continental Resources and other oil companies have suffered from low oil prices, which have been under pressure from high crude inventories and the growth in U.S. production in recent years. A lower estimate from EIA could help lift oil prices and boost oil company profits.

Hamm [met with Energy Secretary Rick Perry in September](#) to argue that the EIA was overestimating U.S. oil output for the next few years. The former wildcatter also appeared onstage with Trump [at an event](#) in Mandan, N.D. earlier that month.

Matt Lee-Ashley, senior fellow at the liberal Center for American Progress, said he believed backing from Trump helped Hamm get a spot in the EIA meeting.

"Harold Hamm has been very clear that he has a financial interest in the EIA's forecasts and he has put political pressure on the EIA to change their forecasts," he said. "This not only hurts the EIA's all-important reputation of being independent, but it raises questions about whether the Trump administration is letting Hamm influence the government's crude oil forecasts for his personal financial benefit."

An EIA spokesman did not reply to questions as to how Hamm came to join the panel. A spokeswoman for Continental Energy and the DEPA declined to answer specific questions, only saying "DEPA has been providing insight to the EIA for years."

Market analysts were less worried that Hamm's participation in the webinar would mar the EIA's reputation for independence.

"Dialogue with industry players should not, in and of itself, create concerns about the reliability of the EIA's data and forecasts," said Pavel Molchanov, a Raymond James energy analyst.

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FERC chief urges critics to 'move past' DOE's proposal [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/16/2017 01:30 PM EDT

FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee said Thursday that the agency was developing its own approach to support grid resilience rather than working from the proposal submitted by Energy

Secretary Rick Perry.

Chatterjee told reporters after FERC's monthly meeting that the issue of supporting baseload coal-fired and nuclear power plants had caused a "hyperbolic reaction" because many people did not understand the agency's process.

"I think part of the problem is that people are still debating the [notice of proposed rulemaking] as it was submitted to us [by the Energy Department]," he said. "What I'm trying to say is we've moved past that and we're moving toward a constructive solution that still answers the questions that Secretary Perry asked in the NOPR in a way that does not distort markets and is legally defensible."

Chatterjee said his effort to implement an "interim" proposal to prop up economically struggling generators in power markets is still being ironed out, but it may direct grid operators to identify what plants are needed for "resilience."

"Once it's fully fleshed out and I feel that it's a defensible product, I want to be able to present that to my colleagues so they can review it," he said, noting that he would ensure that his fellow commissioners would have sufficient time to review it.

In an interview with [Utility Dive](#) on Wednesday, Chatterjee said he was considering an order to require regional grid operators to provide "interim compensation" for power plants that contribute to grid resilience and are at risk of closing before FERC can finish a formal rulemaking, or that those grid operators "show cause that [they] not be required to do so."

Chatterjee said Thursday that "on-site, secure, firm fuel that does not depend on just-in-time delivery," as among the characteristics of power plants that contribute to grid resilience.

The interim FERC chief said that he didn't see any threat to the renewable industry or to natural gas from his plan.

"I genuinely believe that this will not have a negative impact on gas. I believe deeply in natural gas and its value. ... I don't want to do anything to hurt the gas industry," he said.

Chatterjee said that he's pushing an interim proposal to preserve certain power plants because "in the short term, I just want to make sure that the patient doesn't die while we do the longer-term analysis."

However, he didn't envision that his plan — which doesn't appear to have broad support among the FERC leadership yet — would have a mechanism to compensate consumers for paying plants that ultimately turn out not to have been necessary in any long term review.

"As we look through this, we will try and make this as minimally disruptive — we'll try to keep the costs down — to consumers as possible," Chatterjee said, adding that "consumers have paid for things that have a lot less value to the grid than long term resilience and security."

He added: "Thinking about the consequences if we got this wrong, it's a pretty reasonable ask."

Kevin McIntyre, President Donald Trump's pick to lead FERC, is expected to be sworn in in the next few days.

To view online [click here](#).

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Date: Thursday, September 07, 2017 5:47:20 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 09/07/2017 05:45 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Ben Lefebvre and Darius Dixon

TEED UP, READY TO GO: House Rules Committee lawmakers readied 80 EPA and Interior amendments for floor consideration as the chamber moves through its mammoth, 1,300-page spending package [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#) starting today. Here are six worth watching as debate moves along:

1. An [amendment](#) from senior Natural Resources Committee Democrats restoring funding to EPA's environmental justice program by taking funds from the Interior secretary's office,
2. An [effort](#) by New York Republican Rep. [John Katko](#) to restore \$250 million in Clean Water State Revolving Funds, an infrastructure program that usually enjoys broad bipartisan support,
3. A [push](#) by Rep. [Gary Palmer](#) to eliminate funding for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, which helps convert diesel engines to more efficient ones. Several dozen groups sent [a letter](#) to House members opposing the move.
4. A bipartisan [amendment](#) from Republican [Frank LoBiondo](#) and Democrat [Don Beyer](#) to block offshore drilling in a host of Atlantic sites,
5. An [amendment](#) from Rep. [Scott Perry](#) blocking EPA from issuing any regulations under Section 115 of the Clean Air Act, feared by some conservatives as a hidden weapon to mandate carbon regulations,
6. A Republican [amendment](#) that would bar federal agencies from using funds to cover legal fees associated with Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act settlements.

Other Democratic amendments expected to fail would block President Donald Trump's administration from [delaying ozone standards](#), being able to [unilaterally withdraw](#) the Waters of the U.S. rule and preparing a new [five-year offshore oil and gas leasing](#) plan.

A **full list** of amendments is available [here](#).

NOT MUCH ENERGY CHATTER IN MANDAN: Trump's tax talk at Andeavor's refinery in Mandan, N.D., yielded little fresh energy news on Wednesday. Addressing a crowd at the plant that had expanded in 2012 to take in more Bakken crude, Trump warned of a tax code that caused businesses to be "regulated out of existence." Continental Resources CEO and Trump pal Harold Hamm made a brief cameo in sunglasses to say: "You find oil in North Dakota! And the Bakken!"

Trump freestyled on energy regulations and pipelines: "The Dakota Access Pipeline is finally open for business. Now, what other politician, if elected President, would have done that one? They would have stayed so far away. And I did it immediately, and I didn't even do

it in that case for jobs. It was the right thing to do. And that is flowing now beautifully." ME would note that any of the other 2016 GOP presidential candidates would have approved the pipeline if elected.

Memorable: Trump, who [tried a softer touch](#) to get centrist Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) on board with tax reform that he used on Missouri Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#), may have inadvertently written the Democrat's first reelection ad by calling her on stage and proclaiming her a "[good woman](#)." Heitkamp [tweeted](#) an (awkward) selfie with refinery workers, while potential challenger Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) posted [a selfie](#) with Trump.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and NEI's Robert Powers was first up to identify Alaska as our least densely populated state. For today: In what state was the first ATM in the U.S. installed (back in 1969)? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to adragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find safer ways to deliver energy. We're piloting a program that uses drones to monitor tanks and pipelines. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2grzhhE> **

U.S. TERRITORY BRACES FOR IRMA: There are already reports of massive damage from the massive Category 5 Hurricane Irma across the Caribbean, but Puerto Rico's electric company warned Wednesday the storm with 185 miles an hour winds could leave the island without power for four to six months, the Miami Herald [reports](#). Meanwhile, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt approved an [emergency fuel waiver](#) for Florida and the agency said it was securing 22 current or former Superfund sites in the 100 southernmost miles of the state.

In an all-staff email, Pruitt thanked employees for their response efforts to Hurricane Harvey in Texas and said the agency had already begun preparations for Irma's landfall. "While Harvey caused extreme flooding, our biggest health and environmental concerns in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are potential oil spills and the potential impacts of power disruptions on drinking and waste water systems," he wrote. The agency is working with regions 2 and 4 to secure Superfund sites and drinking and waste water systems to prevent spills. And the Miami Herald [looks at](#) what two Florida nuclear plants are doing to get ready.

NEW ENERGY BUYERS GROUP FORMS: A collection of corporate giants — Microsoft, Walmart, Amazon, Salesforce, Lockheed Martin and Aligned Energy, among them — is today launching the [Advanced Energy Buyers Group](#). The new entity, coordinated by Advanced Energy Economy, will push to expand the market for purchasing renewable and other advanced energy sources as large companies seek to hit their sustainability targets. "We've made good progress, but more work needs to be done to advance policies that make it easier and cheaper for more companies, schools, hospitals and families to buy clean energy," Rob Bernard, chief environmental strategist at Microsoft, said in a statement.

ENERGY INDUSTRY HITS BACK AT EXXON STUDY: Energy in Depth argues in a [Wednesday post](#) that a [Harvard study](#) asserting that Exxon Mobil misled the public on climate change left out many of the company's public advertorials on the subject, an oversight that would have "severely weakened" the study's conclusions. They say some of the pieces included in the research came mainly from Mobil before it merged with Exxon, meaning the study "largely compared the climate research of one company with the advertorials of a

different company." Neither author responded to requests for comment.

WILDFIRE FUNDING MAY HITCH A RIDE: Lawmakers are poised pass [an initial injection](#) of relief funding for Hurricane Harvey, but senior Republicans want a second bill to also address the dozens of wildfires throughout the West. "There will be more disaster relief coming up obviously and I would suspect that wildfire will be part of that," Rep. [Mike Simpson](#), a senior appropriator, told reporters. "There are other things than just hurricanes and right now they're burning in the west." House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) said he could go along with that approach, but still hoped to pursue broader reforms to how the federal government responds to wildfires.

RUMOR QUASHED: Any idea that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke might mount a 2018 challenge to Democratic Sen. [Jon Tester](#) seemed to die Wednesday when his wife, Lola, [signed on](#) as campaign chair for Tester challenger Troy Downing. "I first met Troy on a fishing trip and his kindness, intelligence, youthful enthusiasm, business experience and amazing military history made me think that one day he must serve his state and country again," she said. "And right now is the perfect time."

NOMINEE TRAIN KEEPS ON ROLLING: The Senate will take a big step for FERC today when the Energy and Natural Resources Committee runs Trump's latest picks for the agency through the ringer — but don't expect all too much pulse-pounding excitement. Kevin McIntyre, Trump's FERC chairman-in-waiting, is likely to get peppered by Democrats about his long list of energy industry clients during his long stretch with Jones Day, and commitments to maintain FERC's independence. On the other hand, Rich Glick, general counsel for ENR Democrats, is generally well-liked on both sides of the aisle. But the reason FERC nominees, and members of other federal commissions, from different parties tend to move together is so everyone has something to gain and good reason to hold their fire. By all accounts, McIntyre and his record are boring — which will work in his favor. But much like earlier FERC nomination hearings, expect questions about the growth of renewables, the survival of coal and the threats of climate change.

Two Interior noms up too: Joseph Balash, Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#)'s chief-of-staff and a deputy commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, gets his hearing on his bid to become Interior's assistant secretary for land and mineral management. And Ryan Nelson, general counsel for Idaho-based Melaleuca, an online "wellness shopping club" since 2009, gets his day in the hot seat as he vies to become Interior's solicitor. Take a look at his newly-obtained [ethics](#) and [financial](#) documents.

If you go: The [hearing](#) is slated to begin at 10:30 a.m. in Dirksen 366.

SVINICKI SAYS SUMMER SHUTDOWN HIT 35 AT NRC: Plans to scuttle the Summer nuclear project may cause about 35 NRC employees to find other jobs at the agency, NRC Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki said Wednesday. "Summer was in the neighborhood of 35 agency-wide positions impacted," she said at an agency all-hands meeting, amid a years' long effort to resize the NRC's staffing and mission as the nuclear industry declines. But, Svinicki said, in spite of the heartache for those employees, it doesn't represent a major shift for an agency with more than 3,200 employees. "The project has been canceled so efforts are ongoing to look at positions where those same skill sets of those individuals might align," she said.

Svinicki: DOE didn't ask us to help on grid study: An NRC staff meeting is its own kind of

jargonfest, and one staffer took issue with nuclear-related language in DOE's recent grid study that seemed to confuse regulators. Among its recommendations, the study urged the NRC to revisit "nuclear safety rules under a risk-based approach," without giving the term much context. "I'm not certain if they recognized the distinction between risk-informed and risk-based," Svinicki said. The NRC leans more heavily on "risk-informed" regulation, which factors in safety elements that aren't purely calculations of issues that could lead to accidents. The NRC reached out to DOE to help with the report, Svinicki said, but "to my knowledge, they appreciated that but did not take us up on it. I think it's fair to say that the language DOE used was developed by them without really any kind of reaction from NRC or any of our experts."

DOE ELECTRICITY GROUP SHRUNK: Energy Secretary Rick Perry has decided to reduce the size of the Energy Department's Electricity Advisory Committee from 32 to 24 people, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). But he's decided to install six new members even as he reduces the board's overall size. The electricity advisory committee will [meet](#) next Wednesday and Thursday in Arlington, Va.

MURKOWSKI LOOKING AT GRANTS ISSUE: Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#), who oversees the Appropriations subcommittee in charge of EPA funding, told reporters she's looking into [reports](#) the agency halted all grants to Alaska for several weeks in the aftermath of her vote against the GOP healthcare bill. "I want to know, is this really so? Cause, if so, that's kind of upsetting," she said. An agency spokeswoman pushed back on the reports, [telling TPM](#) "a state was never was singled out in the grant review process; grants were never withheld."

STEEL GROUP BACKS SUNIVA SOLAR TRADE PETITION: The Steel Manufacturers Association, representing 30 North American producers, is backing [a bid](#) from Suniva and SolarWorld Americas to have the ITC impose steep tariffs on imported solar cells and modules. "The steel industry fought back in 2001 and was awarded temporary relief that gave the industry the chance to recover," Philip Bell, president of the group, wrote in [a letter](#). "The American solar industry deserves a similar chance."

NEW MEXICANS PUSH ZINKE ON LAND LEASING: Sens. [Tom Udall](#) and [Martin Heinrich](#), as well as Rep. [Ben Ray Lujan](#), asked Zinke to uphold a previous commitment to defer all leases on land near Chaco Culture National Historical Park as the federal government mulls how to manage the area. "We further appreciate your recent public support for the BLM and BIA's cooperative approach, and respectfully request that you maintain the status quo and defer leasing" until the process is completed, they wrote in [a letter](#).

SCALING ON UP: The World Resources Institute, in [a report](#) out today, urges cities to accelerate the shift to cleaner cooking, work to scale up distributed renewable energy sources and prioritize expanding energy efficiency of buildings and appliances as they push to expand energy access amid rapid growth.

AN ELECTRON STORED IS AN ELECTRON EARNED: Utility customers installed a record number of behind-the-meter batteries and other power storage systems in the second quarter of 2017, GTM Research and the U.S. Energy Storage Association say in [a report](#) out this morning. Behind-the-meter systems are typically smaller than big utility-scale systems, and are usually installed by residential or commercial customers. The numbers are still tiny, as only 32 megawatt hours of capacity were installed, led by California, Hawaii and New York, all of which have incentive programs.

CONTOURING THE EVER-ELUSIVE CARBON TAX: The R St. Institute is out with [a new paper](#) this morning looking at how to structure a border-adjusted carbon tax "to deal with imports from and exports to other nations that do not have an equivalent carbon price."

MOVER, SHAKER: Elbert Lin has left his post as solicitor general for West Virginia to go to Hunton & Williams. Lin made his name when he helped persuade the U.S. Supreme Court to put a stay on the Clean Power Plan. Lin will be joined at Hunton by Virginia Solicitor General Stuart Raphael.

Dave Hoppe, Speaker [Paul Ryan](#)'s chief of staff until January, has joined 38 North Solutions as a senior principal. The group advises groups primarily in the energy and tech sectors. "His vast experience in public policy and political strategy complements our team's expertise in clean energy and technology innovation," Katherine Hamilton, the firm's chair, said in a statement.

BROMIGOS? After "[horsing around](#)" during an earlier visit to New Mexico, Heinrich [tweeted](#) a picture of him getting back at Zinke with a headlock Wednesday.

QUICK HITS

— Federal Utility: Coal Ash Removal Would Take 24 Years. [AP](#).

— Oil Companies Leaking Benzene Lobbied Against Pollution Rules. [International Business Times](#).

— Hurricanes Irma, Harvey restart debate on climate change and warmer oceans. [Miami Herald](#).

— Putin Rejects Cutting Off Oil to North Korea. [New York Times](#).

— Large chunk of U.S. chemical production struggling to come back online after Harvey. [Houston Chronicle](#).

— Harvey Swept Hazardous Mercury Ashore. The Mystery: Its Source. [New York Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — "[NAFTA and North American Energy: What Comes Next?](#)" Atlantic Council, 1030 15th ST NW, 12th Floor

10:00 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [hearing](#) on three nominations, Dirksen 366

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find better and safer ways to deliver energy to America. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping capabilities to monitor Chevron wells, tanks, and miles of pipeline. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2grzhHE> **

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/09/little-new-energy-talk-from->

[trump-in-north-dakota-024474](#)

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Trump tries softer touch to woo Heitkamp on tax reform [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Elana Schor | 09/06/2017 05:21 PM EDT

President Donald Trump has already tried negotiation-by-threat in his push for tax reform - but on Wednesday he took a softer touch to woo North Dakota Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp to his side.

Trump invited Heitkamp to join him on Air Force One before a joint appearance in her home base of Mandan to tout his signature legislative goal.

The president is leaning on Democratic senators from states he won in 2016 to support his effort for tax reform in hopes of avoiding the narrow defeat suffered by his health care reform proposal in August.

He used a trip last week to Missouri to take a direct shot at its politically vulnerable Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill, telling his audience at a factory that "you have to vote her out of office" if she doesn't support tax reform.

He did make remarks Wednesday targeting Democrats broadly. "If Democrats don't want to bring back your jobs, cut your taxes, raise your pay and help America win, voters should deliver a clear message," Trump said. "Do your job to deliver for America or find a new job. Do something else. Just do something else."

But he welcomed Heitkamp warmly, declaring her a "good woman."

"Everyone's saying what is she doing up here?" Trump said, gesturing to Heitkamp as she walked on stage. "I'll tell you what. We'll have your support. I hope we have your support."

Later, he added: "You listening, Heidi? She's listening. She heard that. We're not going to put her on the spot. I'm not doing it."

Trump carried North Dakota by 36 points in November. But while Heitkamp has voiced a willingness to support tax reform in the past, it's unclear just how much incentive there will be to cross party lines and hand a win to a president whose approval ratings are mired below 40 percent.

Congressional Republicans plan to pass a tax bill using the filibuster-proof maneuver known as budget reconciliation, signaling to senior Democrats that the GOP will likely pursue cuts for corporate and wealthy taxpayers that are deeply unpopular with their liberal base. Given that initially partisan tone of the tax debate, Democrats are preparing for few if any defections on a bill that may not come to a vote until next year.

Heitkamp, however, is one of the three Democratic senators who declined to sign onto a letter last month committing most of the caucus to opposing any tax bill that cuts bills for wealthy earners. That makes her a ripe target for Trump, who briefly considered appointing the former state tax commissioner to his Cabinet earlier this year.

Heitkamp's looming reelection battle is another potent motivator as Trump courts her vote. One of her potential challengers next year, Rep. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), also joined Trump on Air Force One for the Wednesday flight, as did North Dakota Republican Sen. John Hoeven.

The business community in North Dakota shares some of Trump's optimism that Heitkamp can be wooed on taxes.

"The one thing I know about Sen. Heitkamp is on that on many business issues she is fairly business friendly," said Andy Peterson, president and CEO of the Greater North Dakota Chamber of Commerce, who will be attending Wednesday's event. "On things like energy and taxes and things like that, she generally gets it and understands what it takes to make a business operate. ... She has been very friendly with our office on a lot of issues."

"She's not afraid to vote her conscience on something and then stand up and be accountable for why she voted that way," he added.

But Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, said he is "not concerned about" the caucus sticking together to support the stipulations that most of them committed to last month.

Wyden predicted "exceptional unity" around those conditions, including no tax cuts for the top 1 percent of earners and no bill that adds to the deficit, adding that he has talked taxes with Heitkamp "a number of times in recent weeks - she is arguably one of most knowledgeable people about taxes I've met in public life."

The handful of Democratic senators who didn't sign onto the taxes letter, including Heitkamp, "said they agreed with the overwhelming part of this," Wyden added.

A coalition of liberal groups known as Not One Penny, after their opposition to tax breaks for the wealthy, on Wednesday rolled out a five-figure ad buy targeting Heitkamp and Hoeven on the issue.

Sens. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), who appeared with Vice President Mike Pence in his home state last week, joined Heitkamp in declining to sign the Senate Democratic statement on taxes.

Other red-state Democratic senators facing voters in 2018 appear less inclined to entertain a potential tax-cut plan that adds to the deficit as relief from Hurricane Harvey and other natural disasters takes a separate toll on the Treasury.

"I've got my own guidelines around tax reform: Simplify it, make sure it doesn't add to the debt. Give a break to working families and small businesses," Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) said in an interview.

"But the truth is that we're dealing with a situation right now, with Houston and fires in Montana -- we've got 40 active fires now - \$3 million a day, maybe more than that's going out the window. So we've just got to make sure we're fiscally responsible here moving forward."

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House passes \$7.9 billion aid bill for Hurricane Harvey [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 09/06/2017 12:35 PM EDT

The House overwhelmingly approved a \$7.85 billion measure this afternoon for response to Hurricane Harvey, with the goal of landing the legislation on President Donald Trump's desk by week's end.

The aid bill now heads to the Senate, where GOP leaders plan to link it to a separate effort to raise the debt ceiling. But an [offer this morning](#) from Democratic leaders has complicated that calculus.

Trump is [aiming to quash](#) growing GOP opposition to the strategy to raise the debt ceiling as part of a Hurricane Harvey relief package, according to multiple House and White House officials. And the House is expected to ultimately approve the deal.

"It's 100 percent the Senate is going to put the debt ceiling on Harvey. It'll come back here, and I think it'll get bipartisan support," Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.) said this morning.

Congress aims to deliver the first installment of aid by Friday, when FEMA is expected to [run out](#) of emergency dollars.

House Speaker Paul Ryan told GOP lawmakers in a closed-door meeting this morning that they must agree to a funding deal this week, even if it means staying in town through Saturday.

In contrast to the lump sums allocated for past disasters like Hurricane Sandy in 2012, Congress is expected to send multiple aid packages in the coming months to help with Hurricane Harvey recovery — an effort Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has [estimated](#) at between \$150 and \$180 billion.

The disaster relief package was passed on a 419-3 vote, with Reps. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), Justin Amash (R-Mich.) and Tom Massie (R-Ky.) voting against it.

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DOE shrinks electricity advisory board [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/06/2017 05:34 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry is installing new members to the Energy Department's Electricity Advisory Committee even as he whittles down the size of the board.

The [2016-17 roster](#) for the board, which reports to the assistant secretary for electricity deliverability and energy reliability, had numbered 32 people, but including the new members,

it will now total 24, since 14 members didn't have their terms renewed.

DOE says that three members had asked the agency not to renew their terms because of other commitments or because they had left the country.

Perry installed six new members: Mike Heyeck, a former AEP executive and founder of Grid Group; Paul Hudson, ex-chairman of the Texas Public Utilities Commission; Mladen Kezunovic, an engineering professor at Texas A&M; Bryan Olnick, an executive with Florida Power & Light; David Wade, CEO of the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga; and Tom Weaver, an official with AEP.

EAC members serve two-year terms, but about half of the positions are staggered so that some measure of continuity is maintained.

The board, which typically meets three times a year, is purely advisory and works on a range of power-related issues. The panel's charter [states](#) that there be "approximately 30" members.

Those not returning are: Ake Almgren, Merwin Brown, Paula Carmody, Paul Centolella, Carlos Coe, Phyllis Currie, Mark Lauby, Janice Lin, Anne Pramaggiore, Paul Roberti, Sue Tierney, Rebecca Wagner, Audrey Zibelman, and Carl Zichella.

WHAT'S NEXT: The electricity advisory committee will [meet](#) next Wednesday and Thursday in Arlington, Va.

To view online [click here](#).

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States, foreign governments press ITC to reject solar petition [Back](#)

By Luis Sanchez | 08/15/2017 05:48 PM EDT

Several industry leaders, state government officials and representatives of foreign governments pressed the U.S. International Trade Commission at a hearing Tuesday to reject a petition from two domestic solar manufacturers asking for steep tariffs on imported solar cells and modules.

U.S. solar manufacturer Suniva and SolarWorld Americas have asked the commission to declare that solar cell and module imports from predominantly Asian nations have caused "significant injury" to their domestic business.

"U.S. module manufacturers suffered net losses exceeding a billion dollars over a five-year period," Matthew J. McConkey, a spokesperson for Suniva, said at Tuesday's hearing. "As U.S. demand for solar products increased from 2005 to 2016, foreign suppliers, including those from China, Korea, Canada and Malaysia, began capturing an even larger share of the U.S. market."

If the ITC agrees with the two companies that a "deluge" of solar imports had distorted the U.S. market, it could have huge impact on the renewable energy source that has grown rapidly over the past decade as costs for the panels that turn sunlight into electricity have plunged.

Chinese companies dominate the global production of solar cells and modules, and they have built extensive supply chains and manufacturing operations across Asia. President Donald Trump had often criticized China for its trade practices, and on Monday he issued an [executive memorandum](#) calling for U.S. trade officials to "consider all available options" to get China to stop coercing U.S. companies to hand over valuable technology.

Suniva, which is based in Georgia and is majority-owned by China's Shunfeng International, filed its section 201 petition with the ITC in April, just eight days after it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. SolarWorld later joined the petition.

The commission has until Sept. 22 to make an injury determination and would submit its report on a proposed remedy to the president by Nov. 13. Trump then has until Jan. 12, 2018, to make a decision on a remedy and present his plan to Congress.

Suniva and SolarWorld are seeking an initial tariff of 40 cents per watt of capacity on all imported solar cells and a 78 cents per watt minimum price for modules, roughly twice the current domestic price for solar modules. Suniva alleges that wages for industry workers dropped by 27 percent and 1,200 U.S. manufacturing jobs were lost between 2012 and 2016 because of imports.

The two companies, the two largest surviving domestic manufacturers of solar cells and modules, are seeking the protections to keep cheaper solar modules from being sold on the U.S. market and further hurting the U.S. industry.

However, opponents of the petition said that manufacturing the equipment is only a small part of the U.S. solar industry. Out of the 260,000 people working in the U.S. solar industry, only about 38,000 people work in manufacturing.

The Solar Energy Industries Association argues that tariffs and price floors would damage the whole solar industry, eliminating 88,000 jobs.

"One out of every 50 new jobs created last year in the U.S. was a solar job. Solar is an American success story whose future remains bright," said Matthew Nicely, a spokesperson for SEIA. "Its continued success could be destroyed by the misguided actions of the two petitioners and their small group of supporters whose workers represent less than one percent of all those that work for this dynamic American industry."

Government officials from several U.S. states also expressed their opposition to the petition at Tuesday's hearing, citing potential job and investment losses.

"If this petition is granted, it may save a few hundred cell or module manufacturing jobs, but there are many thousands of good manufacturing installation jobs that will be lost," Jason Saine, a North Carolina state representative said. "A remedy will do more harm than good here with the only benefit going to a small number of companies that frankly don't deserve it."

Al Christopher, director of the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, said that solar projects were not just helping the economy in his state; they also act as "a vital marketing tool in attracting the growing number of companies seeking renewable energy options when deciding where to make investments."

Several representatives of foreign governments also argued the tariffs weren't justified and

they urged the commission to exclude their nations from possible tariffs.

"The value of imports from Korea was quite low for most of the period investigated," Korean Minister Counsellor for Trade, Industry and Energy Chang K. Kim said. When the shipments from his country increased in 2016, the imports went to the "utility segment of the market and were part of the share the domestic industry could not supply."

Sibylle Zitko, a representative for the European Commission, went a step further, contending "inefficiencies" and "bad investments" were more to blame for Suniva and SolarWorld's woes rather than imports.

"The criteria for the inquisition for safeguard measures are clearly not met in this case and thus the investigation should be terminated," Zitko said.

McConkey said the argument that Suniva and SolarWorld brought their financial problems on themselves was both false and offensive, and the petitioners only needed to show at Tuesday's hearing that they had suffered because of the imports. "We'll get to remedy later this fall," he said,

To view online [click here](#).

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Energy companies get something in Russian sanctions deal — Energy and Water hits the floor this week — Zinke gets a lieutenant today
Date: Monday, July 24, 2017 5:42:26 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 07/24/2017 05:40 AM EDT

AGAINST RUSSIA WITHOUT LOVE: House lawmakers are ready to vote this week on a [sweeping sanctions deal](#) against Russia, Iran and North Korea that gave the energy sector at least some of the changes it sought from the Senate-passed version. The compromise package [unveiled](#) Saturday would bar U.S. companies from participating in projects in which sanctioned Russian entities have at least a 33 percent interest or a controlling stake. That's lower than the 50 percent threshold the industry lobbied for but a major shift from the Senate-passed bill, which would have barred U.S. participation in any energy project with a Russian stake.

The bill heads to the floor Tuesday under suspension of the rules, meaning House leadership expects it will clear the two-thirds level of support for expedited passage. In a Saturday statement, House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) and Foreign Affairs Chairman [Ed Royce](#) said the legislation would "bolster the energy security of our European allies by maintaining their access to key energy resources outside of Russia." White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders indicated on ABC's "[This Week](#)" the White House would sign the package if it reaches President Donald Trump's desk. "We support where the legislation is now, and will continue to work with the House and Senate to put those tough sanctions in place on Russia," she said. But new White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci sent a different signal on CNN's "[State of the Union](#)": "[Trump] hasn't made the decision yet to sign that bill one way or the other."

Europe prepares to fight back: The European Commission intends to respond "within days" if the sanctions become law with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker especially worried about the energy-related provisions in the package, POLITICO Europe's Ryan Heath [reports](#). In a note, Juncker said the Commission would seek a public declaration that discretionary powers in the sanctions wouldn't be used against E.U. countries, utilize a regulation to state the U.S. law could not be enforced in Europe and consider possible WTO retaliatory measures. The biggest affected interest would be the mooted Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

RUSSIAN ALLEGATIONS REPUBLICANS LIKE: Amid the ongoing probe about the Trump administration's ties to Russia, conservatives are pushing with renewed vigor a theory that Russia has funneled money to U.S. environmental groups to oppose fracking, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). GOP House members and Energy Secretary Rick Perry are among those in recent weeks who have breathed new life into charges that Moscow has sought to discourage European countries from developing their own natural gas supplies as an alternative to Russian fuel and suggested that support for anti-fracking activism may have extended to U.S. green groups. There's little but innuendo to base those allegations on, but Republicans hope the Treasury Department will look into the claims just the same.

Green groups blast allegations: Advocates like the Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters, named in a letter from House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) letter on the matter,

slammed the charges as a move to distract from Trump's own Russian troubles. "If congressional Republicans are so concerned about Russian influence, they should start seriously investigating that country's interference in our election, not attacking long-standing environmental organizations," said Melinda Pierce, the Sierra Club's legislative director, said. For what it's worth, Brenda Shaffer, an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian and Eastern European Studies, said there's no evidence that Russian money has gone to U.S. green groups nationally and even less evidence that any money would have been well spent given how hard it is to get fracking bans enacted. "It would be almost impossible to prevent fracking in the United States," she said.

WELCOME TO MONDAY! It's a busy sprint this week ahead of August! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and API's Khary Cauthen was first out of the gate to identify Fala as FDR's dog. For today: Which senator claims to have been the sole ever recipient of an endorsement from Ronald Reagan in a Republican primary? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

MUST BE THE MONEY: DOE's [decision](#) Friday to seek early retirements or buyouts from 35 employees in its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy is due to a downward trend in congressional funding, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). The part of the department's budget used for salaries and benefits has declined from \$170 million in 2011 to \$153.5 million now. "In EERE's case, the program direction account decreased for the third year in a row and this adjustment through voluntary separations is necessary to match staffing levels with current appropriations," DOE said in an email.

HOUSE TAKES UP ENERGY APPROPRIATIONS: Lawmakers today kick off consideration of a mini-bus appropriations package that includes the Energy and Water title. Amendments to the bill [H.R. 3219 \(115\)](#) are due today at 10 a.m. and the Rules Committee then [gathers](#) at 5 p.m. to figure out how to structure debate on the measure. House Appropriators [cleared](#) the a \$37.56 billion fiscal 2018 package back on July 12 that would close out DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy program and cut Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy funding in half. Look for potentially hundreds of amendments on the floor and a vote on final passage late in the week. And there's still plenty of work ahead to iron out big differences with the Senate, where energy and water appropriators want to protect ARPA-E and keep EERE's budget about level with this year.

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vFizh5> **

THIS IS HOW WE'LL DO IT: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's energy policy counselor, Vincent DeVito, [sat down](#) with Pro's Esther Whieldon and said he's "absolutely" committed to reducing the permitting process for oil and gas projects on public lands to as little as 30 days. "We do want to shrink it down to 30 days and to make all the processes as short as possible, but at the same time, making sure our environmental stewardship is not breached, all of which is completely doable," he said. "We intend to be a better business partner ... by harmonizing the environmental review process across the board, the one-stop-shopping type of model." DeVito also said he thinks Interior could shrink the timeline for developing the agency's five-year offshore drilling plan as well.

Another theme for DeVito is returning Interior to being good partner "on the business side"

without sacrificing environmental protection. He also reasserted the agency could collect billions more in revenues than it is now despite the current slump of the energy sector. "Punitive policies have caused a decline in energy production on federal lands," he told Esther. "Folks can't say that revenues are down because the markets declined. No, they were investing elsewhere because nobody wanted to do business with the federal government anymore, so federal government revenues went down."

Speaking of Zinke, in between remarks at the Western Conservative Summit and ALEC, he and Sen. [Cory Gardner](#) announced the release of \$20 million in federal funds, along with \$33 million in private funds, to fund high priority maintenance and infrastructure projects at 42 parks in 29 states. "Using public-private partnerships to help address the deferred maintenance backlog remains a priority for the Department and the Trump Administration," Zinke said in a statement Saturday. He also [posted some cute pictures](#) of a visit to Rocky Mountain National Park with Gardner's family.

Send in the reinforcements: Zinke will get a lieutenant later today after the Senate holds a final vote on the nomination of Dave Bernhardt at 5:30 p.m. The deputy secretary nominee [cleared a key procedural hurdle](#) last Thursday with seven members of the Democratic caucus backing his selection.

EPA CHIEFS TALK AGENCY WORK: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt gave [an interview](#) with the Daily Caller News Foundation that went up Saturday. He scoffed at his critics, reasserted the Obama administration was very ineffective at environmental protection and said he was "optimistic" about his ability to work with career staff. Pruitt also touted his commitment to working with states and refocusing EPA's activities in the face of tighter budgets. "We've got to reevaluate how those regions are working. Are they working effectively?... It's good to go through these kinds of processes to reorganize and restructure," Pruitt tells interviewer Ginni Thomas (Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' wife).

A NEW, BETTER DEAL? Senate Majority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) cited the merger of Exxon and Mobil as an example of a merger Democrats will work to prevent as part of their new agenda to be unveiled today. "We have these huge companies buying up other big companies. It hurts workers and it hurts prices," he said on ABC's "[This Week](#)." "How the heck did we let Exxon and Mobil merge? And that was Democrats."

MEET THE NEWEST DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES: Scientists aren't normally known for their political chops but frustrated with Trump's hostility to climate science and other areas of research, many are launching bids for office for the first time, POLITICO California's David Siders [reports](#). Former New Jersey Congressman Rush Holt, a physicist and now chief executive of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said he began fielding more calls from scientists considering running for public office. "It's still not in the dozens [of prospective candidates]. But instead of two or three, it might be 12 or 15," Holt said. "There seems to be a general sense that policy is being made without sufficient attention to scientific evidence." There's now a group called 314 Action, a political action committee, that helps people with scientific backgrounds run for office.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH EPA'S CLIMATE 'DEBATE'? Three senior Democrats on the House Science Committee — [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#), [Don Beyer](#) and [Suzanne Bonamici](#) — sent [a letter](#) to Pruitt Friday seeking details on his proposed "red team-blue team" debate of climate change science. "Your efforts seem to be divorced from reality and reason," they wrote, while asking for information on the format of the review, a timetable for its execution

and how participants in the exercise would be selected.

Speaking of the House Science panel, its Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) on Friday endorsed Rep. [Mo Brooks](#) in the heated Alabama Republican primary for Senate. "This is unusual," Smith said in Huntsville, Ala., according to [AL.com](#), given he rarely gives endorsements in primaries. "But then again, Mo Brooks is an unusually good, strong candidate. I have no hesitation at all." Brooks is seen as locked in a close battle with incumbent Sen. [Luther Strange](#) and former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore for the two slots in a likely runoff.

MOVER, SHAKER: Kevin Bush, a long-time policy strategist for HUD, has been named Washington's first Chief Resilience Officer by Mayor Muriel Bowser. He'll oversee an office dedicated to increasing the city's resilience to shocks and stresses as part of the [100 Resilient Cities](#) initiative.

QUICK HITS

- OPEC Grapples With Growing Threats to Oil Deal. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- Regulators consider first major pipeline since DAPL. [Bismarck Tribune](#).
- Fukushima disaster: Robot finds possible melted nuclear fuel. [BBC](#).
- Cleaner than coal, but is natural gas pipeline through North Carolina worth cost, or needed? [AP](#).
- Renewable energy contract case in Michigan could set precedent. [Crain's Detroit](#).
- Crackdown on East Chicago air polluter stalls under Trump EPA. [Chicago Tribune](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

5:00 p.m. — House Rules Committee [meets to discuss](#) mini-bus, including Energy and Water Appropriations, H-313

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — The Edison Electric Institute, GridWise Alliance, and National Electrical Manufacturers Association host Grid Innovation Expo, Rayburn Foyer

10:00 a.m. — "[No Regulation Without Representation](#)," House Judiciary Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law, Rayburn 2141

10:00 a.m. — "[Examining Advancements in Biofuels: Balancing Federal Research and Market Innovation](#)," House Science Subcommittees on Energy and Environment, 2318 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — "[Efforts on Marine Debris in the Oceans and Great Lakes](#)," Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, Russell 253

10:00 a.m. — "[Developing and Deploying Advanced Clean Energy Technologies](#)," Senate

Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — "[Examining Sue and Settle Agreements: Part II](#)," House Oversight Subcommittees on Interior, Energy and Environment and Intergovernmental Affairs, 2154 Rayburn

WEDNESDAY

9:00 a.m. — Smart Electric Power Alliance hosts [Grid Evolution Summit](#), Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue NW

10:00 a.m. — "[Powering America: A Review of the Operation and Effectiveness of the Nation's Wholesale Electricity Markets](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources hosts full committee [markup](#) of several pending bills, 1324 Longworth

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hosts [business meeting](#), 406 Dirksen

10:00 a.m. — "[How Trump's Deregulatory Agenda Hurts People's Everyday Lives](#)," Center for American Progress, livestream [here](#).

10:00 a.m. — "[Legislative hearing to receive testimony on various bills](#)," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Public Lands, Forests and Mining Subcommittee, 366 Dirksen

10:00 a.m. — "[How to Design and Run Successful Clean-Energy Demonstration Projects](#)," Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, 1101 K Street NW, Suite 610A

10:00 a.m. — "[Renegotiating NAFTA: Energy Opportunities and Challenges](#)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

THURSDAY

9:00 a.m. — USEA 10th Annual [Energy Supply Forum](#), National Press Club, Grand Ballroom, 529 14th Street NW, 13th Floor

10:00 a.m. — Legislative [Hearing](#) on 3 Bills, House Natural Resources Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, 1324 Longworth

12:30 p.m. — Natural Gas Roundtable [hosts](#) INGAA Chair Diane Leopold, University Club, 1135 16th Street, NW

FRIDAY

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vFizh5> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/07/energy-companies-get-something-in-russian-sanctions-deal-023876>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Russia sanctions deal reached without changes Trump sought [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Heather Caygle | 07/21/2017 04:10 PM EDT

Negotiators in both parties on Saturday released a sweeping sanctions deal that does not include changes President Donald Trump's administration sought to make it easier for him to ease penalties against Russia.

The accord on a package of sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea is set for a House vote on Tuesday, according to the announcement from Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy's office. To resolve a partisan clash over giving House Democrats the power to force a vote blocking Trump from easing sanctions on Moscow, the deal expedites House consideration of any anti-Trump vote that the Senate has already passed.

The sanctions legislation is expected to pass with overwhelming majorities in both the House and Senate before lawmakers leave for their annual August recess, giving the Republican-led Congress a major bipartisan achievement to tout amid struggles on health care and taxes — albeit an achievement that delivers a thumb in the eye to Trump.

The White House had pressed to dilute the bill's provisions empowering Congress to block Trump from easing or ending sanctions against Russia, but its request [fell on](#) deaf ears among Republican leaders.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's top Democrat, Ben Cardin of Maryland, hailed the agreement Saturday.

"I believe the proposed changes to the bill have helped to clarify the intent of members of Congress as well as express solidarity with our closest allies in countering Russian aggression and holding the Kremlin accountable for their destabilizing activities," Cardin said in a statement.

Cardin added an encouragement for Trump to sign the bill once it reaches the White House, despite his administration's failure to [secure more](#) "flexibility" to deal with Vladimir Putin's government.

"A nearly united Congress is poised to send President Putin a clear message on behalf of the American people and our allies, and we need President Trump to help us deliver that message," Cardin said.

The sanctions deal makes a technical change to the portion of the bill by ensuring that Congress would not review minor and routine licenses for businesses seeking to operate in partnership with Russian entities.

The deal also gives oil and gas companies some of what they sought in order to avoid what they feared would be undue hindrance of their ability to partner with Russian entities. While

the industry had asked for a 50-percent interest threshold for sanctioned Russian entities before penalties kicked in on joint projects, the final agreement set a 33-percent threshold.

Rachael Bade contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Republicans brewing Russian scandal to target greens [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/23/2017 12:12 PM EDT

Republicans are trying to conjure up a Russian scandal they can get behind.

GOP House members and at least one Trump Cabinet member are pushing years-old allegations from conservative activists that Russia has funneled money to U.S. environmental groups to oppose fracking. The story has reappeared in conservative circles in recent weeks — a respite, perhaps, from the steady drip-drip of news reports about dealings between Russians and President Donald Trump's inner circle.

Allegations have circulated for years that Moscow has sought to discourage European countries from developing their own natural gas supplies as an alternative to Russian fuel. And conservatives have sought to extend those concerns to the U.S. — though there's little but innuendo to base them on.

But the rumors gained new life in late June, when House Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith and fellow Texas Republican Rep. Randy Weber [asked](#) Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to investigate whether the Kremlin is bankrolling green campaigns against the fracking technology that helped the U.S. overtake Russia in gas production.

Among other material, Smith and Weber cited articles in conservative news publications and an alleged Hillary Clinton speech published by WikiLeaks — part of a trove of stolen Clinton campaign documents that U.S. intelligence agencies have linked to Russia's election-meddling efforts.

The reports, the Republican lawmakers wrote in the letter to Mnuchin, suggest "that Russia is also behind the radical statements and vitriol directed at the U.S. fossil fuel sector."

Green groups dismissed Smith's allegations as an attempt to divert attention from all the news surrounding Trump and Russia.

"If congressional Republicans are so concerned about Russian influence, they should start seriously investigating that country's interference in our election, not attacking long-standing environmental organizations," said Melinda Pierce, legislative director for the Sierra Club, one of the groups Smith and conservatives have accused of potentially taking Russian money.

The League of Conservation Voters, another group named in Smith's letter, also blasted the Science Committee's allegations.

"This is false," LCV spokesman David Willett said. "We have no connections to Russia and have been an effective advocate for environmental protection for over 45 years. This seems like nothing more than an attempt at distraction away from the Trump campaign's well-publicized interactions with Russian interests to influence the election."

Still, Fox News and The Wall Street Journal op-ed page have both run items about the committee's letter, and Energy Secretary Rick Perry lent his voice to the effort when a Fox Business anchor asked whether he supported an investigation.

"Absolutely," Perry said in the July 11 [broadcast](#). "Steve is a very capable and very focused business individual who knows that this type of activity has to be investigated, has to be halted."

Spokespeople for the Energy Department and Treasury Department did not respond to questions. A White House spokesperson did not reply to questions about whether the allegations had made their way to Trump.

Anti-fracking sentiment in the U.S. started bubbling up among U.S. environmental groups as soon as the oil and gas production method started surging in the late 2000s, with the documentary "[Gasland](#)" appearing in theaters in 2010 after a year and a half in production. Much of that opposition was driven by local activists in new gas hot spots like Pennsylvania who complained about threats to their drinking water, while major national environmental groups like the Sierra Club were slower to take up the cry.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who oversees an economy almost totally dependent on oil and gas exports, has also slagged fracking technology. He once said that fracking makes "black stuff" come out of people's water faucets, according to a [New Yorker report](#).

Still, there is no evidence that Russian money has gone to U.S. green groups, at least on the national level, said Brenda Shaffer, an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian and Eastern European Studies. And there is even less evidence that any money would have been well spent, given how hard it would be to push widespread fracking bans through the myriad of local, state and federal governments involved in permitting, she added.

"It would be almost impossible to prevent fracking in the United States," Shaffer told POLITICO.

The [evidence](#) the committee cites includes comments that former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen [made](#) at a London-based think tank in 2014, when he said he believed Russia was working with environmental groups in Europe to oppose shale gas development.

"Other officials have indicated the same scheme is unfolding in the U.S.," Smith's letter goes on to say — though from there the trail becomes murkier.

The letter also cites a speech that Clinton allegedly delivered in Canada in 2014, according to Clinton campaign emails published by WikiLeaks, in which the former secretary of state supposedly said she had encountered "phony environmental groups" that opposed pipelines and fracking. The emails were part of a cache of Democratic documents that U.S. intelligence officials believe were originally pilfered by Kremlin-linked hackers.

"I'm a big environmentalist, but these were funded by Russians," Clinton says in the alleged transcript.

But the text does not indicate whether Clinton — who promoted shale gas drilling in Europe — was referring to environmental groups in Europe or the United States. A Clinton campaign aide did not answer questions about the veracity and the context of the speech. The campaign has refused to confirm or deny the content of any of the leaked materials.

Still, the alleged Clinton quotes have taken off in conservative news outlets, with [The Daily Caller](#) and [Washington Times](#) including them in articles published in the past year. Smith, in turn, cited those articles in the footnotes of his letter to Treasury.

"It's a theory, but the reasoning behind it makes sense," said a committee aide, who requested anonymity. "The chairman is saying there's data points pointing to this theory, and he's saying the Treasury secretary can shine some light on this. This isn't out of left field and crazy."

Science Committee aides also argued that last year's [national intelligence report](#) on Russian meddling in the 2016 election supports the concerns raised in Smith's letter. However, the intelligence report doesn't allege any Kremlin outreach to U.S. environmental groups.

The intelligence report's non-classified, [14-page version](#) makes reference to anti-fracking programming broadcast by Kremlin-controlled news channel RT. "This is likely reflective of the Russian Government's concern about the impact of fracking and U.S. natural gas production on the global energy market and the potential challenges to Gazprom's profitability," the report says. Gazprom is a Russian natural gas giant.

Much of the rest of the case that Russia funneled money to U.S. green groups comes from a 2014 [report](#) created by the Environmental Policy Alliance, which describes itself as "devoted to uncovering the funding and hidden agendas behind environmental activist groups."

The group shares a Washington, D.C., address and a phone number with a public relations firm run by Richard Berman, a lawyer and former lobbyist who has also created issue groups such as the [Center for Union Facts](#) and [Center for Consumer Freedom](#) — prompting liberal critics to nickname him "the astroturf kingpin." CBS News once [called](#) him "Dr. Evil" in a 2011 piece focusing on his lobbying efforts on unpopular issues, including a campaign against Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

A representative of the Environmental Policy Alliance confirmed that Berman's firm manages the group.

The group's report and Smith's letter focus on \$23 million that a Bermuda-based philanthropic firm, Klein Ltd., donated in 2010 and 2011 to the San Francisco-based Sea Change Foundation, according to information disclosed in Sea Change's [IRS tax forms](#). Sea Change then awarded around \$55 million in each of those years to the Sierra Club Foundation, U.S. Climate Action Network, Natural Resources Defense Council and other environmental groups to promote energy efficiency and climate change-related operations, according to its IRS tax filings.

"Although the source of Klein's capital has not been documented," the Science Committee's letter says, the panel alleged that various corporate and personal connections "strongly suggest" that the money originated with "the Russian government and energy sector."

But a lawyer representing Klein told POLITICO that none of the money came from sources connected to Russia. And a Sea Change spokesperson said none of its donations to environmental groups were earmarked for opposition to fracking.

"The Klein Foundation grants were given as general support and no requirement was made that the funds be used for specific projects, programs, or activities of the Sea Change Foundation," the spokesperson said.

Berman's report draws on a court case filed in the British Virgin Islands in the mid-2000s that resulted in a money-laundering conviction against IPOC Group, an entity owned by Leonid Reiman, Russia's former telecommunications minister and adviser to Putin, according to an [outline](#) of the case maintained by the World Bank. Roderick Forrest, a lawyer for Wakefield Quin, a law firm representing Klein Ltd., was one of IPOC's directors, according to [case documents](#).

The House committee did not contact Klein as part of its fact-finding, a committee aide said. But Forrest railed against the accusations and said the company was considering legal action following the committee's letter.

"The allegations are completely false and irresponsible," Forrest told POLITICO. "We can state categorically that at no point did this philanthropic organization receive or expend funds from Russian sources or Russian-connected sources, and Klein has no Russian connection whatsoever."

The Sierra Club's Pierce also denied that any of the money it received from Sea Change ultimately came from Moscow.

"We have confirmed that the origin of these funds is a private U.S. donor who cares about climate change and has invested in the work the Sierra Club does to tackle the climate crisis and advance the clean energy economy — not from Russia," she said.

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DOE seeks to buyout 35 EERE employees [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 07/21/2017 03:32 PM EDT

The Energy Department is looking for 35 employees in its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy to take early retirement or buyout offers, according to a [memo](#) obtained by POLITICO and sent to agency staff this afternoon.

The memo, signed by Steven Chalk, EERE's deputy assistant secretary for operations, identifies 16 specific positions that qualify for early retirement and 97 that could seek buyouts at DOE's Golden, Colo., site and headquarters.

"This first window of opportunity will help align EERE staffing levels with recent program direction budget trends so that we are well-positioned entering FY 2018," Chalk states. "[R]equests will be approved based on EERE organizational needs and program requirements

that help reshape EERE to be more efficient.

The applications are to be submitted by Aug. 15 with a resignation date before Sept. 30.

DOE spokesperson Shaylyn Hynes said the request was designed "to align staffing levels with FY 17 program direction appropriations. No additional actions will be taken until we know the outcome of the FY 18 appropriations process."

However, Congress approved a slight spending increase for EERE when lawmakers funded the remainder of fiscal 2017 this spring.

E&E News first reported on the memo earlier this afternoon.

WHAT'S NEXT: Applications for the buyout and early retirement programs are due Aug. 15.

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DOE blames budget for EERE buyouts [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 07/21/2017 05:40 PM EDT

DOE says a downward trend in congressional funding for managing the agency's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy triggered its decision to seek buyouts and early retirements from its staff today.

The "Program Direction" component of EERE's budget, which covers salaries and benefits, declined by 1 percent to \$153.5 million from \$155 million a year earlier. That program direction line has been shrinking since reaching \$170 million in 2011.

Fiscal 2018 energy spending bills in Congress either keep program direction funds flat or call for cuts.

"In EERE's case, the program direction account decreased for the third year in a row and this adjustment through voluntary separations is necessary to match staffing levels with current appropriations," DOE said in an email.

Earlier today, EERE management [told its staff](#) that it's seeking 35 employees to either take buyouts or early retirements.

WHAT'S NEXT: Applications for the buyout and early retirement programs are due Aug. 15.

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House appropriators advance energy and water spending bill [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Annie Snider | 07/12/2017 02:38 PM EDT

The House Appropriations Committee today approved a \$37.56 billion fiscal 2018 energy and water spending bill that would end a popular Energy Department research program and includes a suite of policy riders decried by Democrats.

Appropriators advanced the bill on a voice vote.

The spending bill for the Department of Energy, Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies cuts \$209 million from this year's spending levels, which is still \$3.65 billion more than President Donald Trump proposed.

The measure would make deep cuts in DOE renewable energy programs, close out its Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy program and stop DOE from issuing new loan guarantees.

The measure would provide \$6.16 billion for the Army Corps, a 23 percent increase above Trump's request. It would make use of revenue collected through a barge industry fuel tax for new lock and dam projects and major upgrades, whereas Trump's budget would have left those funds untouched.

Democrats unsuccessfully tried to remove all of the riders from the measure, including one aimed at shielding the Trump administration's withdrawal of the Waters of the U.S. rule from legal challenges, one allowing firearms at Army Corps recreational sites, and one blocking implementation of a National Oceans Policy.

"The majority knows full well that the bulk of these policy riders are so contentious that Democrats cannot vote for bills that include them," said New York Rep. [Nita Lowey](#), the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

WHAT'S NEXT: The energy and water spending bill moves to the House Rules Committee and the House floor.

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: Vincent DeVito, Zinke's energy policy counselor [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 07/24/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Vincent DeVito, a former Boston-based energy lawyer and DOE staffer, returned to Washington in May as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's energy policy counselor, a newly created position designed to help carry out President Donald Trump's promise to expand energy production and shrink regulations.

DeVito, who was on Zinke's congressional leadership PAC, sat down with POLITICO at his Washington office to outline his plans for getting Interior's agencies to break down their silos and streamline their energy permitting processes and regulations.

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

What is your strategy to put all the Interior Department's agencies and bureaus on the same page on energy issues?

What I'm doing here is making sure not only that we're branding the Department of Interior as the Department of Interior "energy" and making sure that folks know that we're not ashamed to wear our energy economy, or our energy resources, on our sleeve ... but also to make sure that within Interior, we're harmonizing across the agencies, bureaus, offices on not only the energy front, [but also] the environmental front, the permitting front.

I learned at the Department of Energy, [where] everybody is in a programmatic office ... they tend to be stovepipes. So they're all operating within their own and they're not interconnecting with each other in any way, shape or form. To have an inability to move the government because people didn't want to necessarily get out of their lane, for a lack of a better phrase, I found discomfoting. Here, we're not like that at all, which is interesting because we have been in the past.

What we've done is created a liaison type of system. So every agency office and bureau has designated one or two people throughout the department to dotted-line report to me, which allows communications from all aspects of energy issues to come to me. That ends up creating a fairly significant stream of information into the secretary's office on the energy portfolio that's never existed before.

Another purpose of the energy liaisons group is to give me some additional bandwidth. So I can process items with a little more information and do my own due diligence as well [regarding] where the numbers come from, what went into the modeling, so I make sure it's not garbage going in. [It ensures] the secretary can make rock-solid decisions when they get to him.

In speeches, Zinke often suggests he can take the Interior back to the days in 2008 when it was pulling in billions more in revenues than it is now. Yet the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management earlier this month lowered the royalties for leases in shallow waters off the Gulf of Mexico in the name of encouraging competition. How can the agency achieve its goal of significantly increasing revenues given that the energy market is in such a slump?

This is how I prioritize things: enhanced production, enhanced revenue, create jobs, environmental stewardship, none of which are mutually exclusive, none of which are contradictory. The fact that we're trying to enhance production and increase revenue by enhanced production is not deterred by market forces. Those are decisions to be made by investors.

We're also the department of common sense. So if something is practical and it makes sense to help us achieve our objectives, we're probably going to do it. If there's no investment, there are no revenues. If it encourages investment, then it will then create revenues and, as the second-largest generator of revenue for the federal government, it's something that we view as an important function for us.

Punitive policies have caused a decline in energy production on federal lands. Folks can't say that revenues are down because the markets declined. No, they were investing elsewhere

because nobody wanted to do business with the federal government anymore, so federal government revenues went down.

I've got an anecdote [in which an investor said], "I can get something online in four months on private land, but if I do it through the federal government it's going to take me 18 months, if I'm lucky." Well, we're addressing that. Why would the timeline be so long? What we're trying to do is make the federal government a good partner, not only on the environmental stewardship side ... but also on the business side. I mean that's the key because folks do want to invest in federal land.

A recent order from Zinke aims to speed up permitting timelines to as little as 30 days. How will you meet that target, particularly for decisions that require environmental reviews, without risking having them thrown out by a court down the road?

There's a real opportunity to make that specific change, and it's one of the items that I'm absolutely focused on. Yes, we do want to shrink it down to 30 days and to make all the processes as short as possible, but at the same time, making sure our environmental stewardship is not breached, all of which is completely doable.

We're not a department of stovepipe agencies anymore. We're a department of collaborating agencies. When you have different offices and bureaus conducting their own environmental review and investors and other stakeholders have to deal with separate processes across the board to meet the same objective for the same project, that is sloppy government.

We intend to be a better business partner ... by harmonizing the environmental review process across the board, the one-stop-shopping type of model. This also applies to ... the five-year [offshore drilling] plan as well, so that we can shorten that process too.

The question is, can we supplement prior environmental reviews? Do we have to have such long gaps between stakeholder meetings, which are important? Can we speed up the process by shrinking the process, but at the same time making sure that what we do, our decisions, determinations, reports and planning have durability in terms of beyond the two terms of this administration but also durability for court review?

Zinke has said he is considering merging BOEM and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, which along with the Office of Natural Resources Revenue were spun out of the Minerals Management Service following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster. What benefits might come from recombining BOEM and BSEE?

You can't set up these separate organizations and have them operate independently and expect optimal safety results or optimal operation results, so the thought behind all that is to at least make sure that folks are talking again.

Is Zinke considering getting the full MMS band back together — merging ONRR, BOEM and BSEE?

No, not that I'm aware of, but I am focused on that group, too. ONRR is an entity in itself that we're going to look at and see how it does business. The financial assurances [requirements for energy development], the program formula for that, is something we're looking at examining pretty aggressively.

The secretary has reinstated and expanded the scope of the agency's royalty policy committee to review rents and royalties for all types of energy. As chair of the committee that is close to launch, what issues do you want it to address first?

I think the first on the list may be the financial assurances. There's a few things we're kicking around, and we haven't finalized the initial agenda yet.

This is going to be a meaningful group. We're going to address substantive items. We're going to have a solid agenda. We're going to meet more than once a year — at least quarterly, I would say. The first meeting is going to be here [in Washington, D.C.], and I would hope the secretary participates in the first meeting at least.

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Bernhardt nomination to Interior clears Senate hurdle [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/20/2017 03:37 PM EDT

The Senate voted 56-39 to invoke cloture on the nomination of Dave Bernhardt to the Interior Department's No. 2 position.

Six Democrats and independent Sen. [Angus King](#) of Maine voted along with Republicans to limit further debate on Bernhardt's nomination as Interior's deputy secretary. A confirmation vote is likely to come the evening of July 24.

Bernhardt has drawn fire from environmental and good-governance groups criticizing his past work as an oil and gas lobbyist and his time as Interior's solicitor under the George W. Bush administration.

He has more recently come under allegations of possibly violating lobbying disclosure laws. Bernhardt told senators he stopped lobbying on behalf of Westlands Water District after Nov. 18, 2016, but activists obtained emails under public records law showing Bernhardt continued to advise the district on legislation.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate likely will vote July 24 to confirm Bernhardt.

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Meet the lab-coat liberals [Back](#)

By David Siders | 07/23/2017 06:55 AM EDT

LOS ANGELES — The lab-coat liberals are marching on Washington.

Dismayed by President Donald Trump's perceived hostility to climate science and other areas of research, a surge of scientists is entering the public arena and running for political office for the first time.

They represent an evolving brand of Democrat that has been gaining steam for months. What began with rogue Twitter accounts and protest marches has graduated into candidacies in House races in places as varied as California, Texas, Pennsylvania and New York.

The handful of scientists who have formally announced their candidacies so far — and the others who are preparing to join them — have cast themselves as a counterforce to the Trump administration's dismissal of climate science and de-prioritization of innovation funding.

But they are also stretching the boundaries of the scientific field into unfamiliar terrain. Researchers traditionally avoided wading into politics. Now, amid winds of anti-intellectualism, they are testing whether a significant number in their ranks can break through.

"It is past time for scientists to step up and get involved ... because that is the only way that we are going to change the course," said Shaughnessy Naughton, a cancer researcher-turned-business owner who twice ran unsuccessfully for Congress in Pennsylvania. She is the founder of 314 Action, a political action committee that helps people with scientific backgrounds run for office. "Traditionally, the attitude has been that science is above politics, and by getting involved in politics, it could possibly pollute science. My response to that is, 'How's that working for you?'"

Researchers have long bemoaned stagnating federal investment in innovation, and advocacy groups have existed for more than a decade to encourage scientists to become more active in civic affairs. But few current members of Congress come from backgrounds in math and science. Among the 435 members of the House, there are seven engineers, one physicist, one microbiologist and one chemist, according to the Congressional Research Service.

For many scientists, Trump's election marked a turning point. Researchers [marched in protest](#) throughout the world in April, and former New Jersey Congressman Rush Holt, a physicist and now chief executive of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said he began fielding more calls from scientists considering running for public office.

"It's still not in the dozens [of prospective candidates]. But instead of two or three, it might be 12 or 15," Holt said. "There seems to be a general sense that policy is being made without sufficient attention to scientific evidence."

Trump, whose dismissal of mainstream climate science had already alarmed researchers, infuriated the scientific community when, soon after taking office, he proposed reducing non-defense research and development spending by about 19 percent, sharply curbing spending on climate and clean energy innovation and basic science and medical research.

Hans Keirstead, a pioneering stem-cell researcher who is running to unseat GOP Rep. Dana Rohrabacher in California's Orange County, said that when he "saw the budget and health care bills starting to come up, that's what tipped me over the edge."

Looking to Washington from a lab where his latest clinical trial on an ovarian cancer treatment is underway, Keirstead said of Congress, "I see it as a grander platform to do good."

While many researchers believe they hold a firmer grasp on science-related policy than politicians from other fields, the mechanics of an election remain largely unfamiliar — and there have been uneven starts to their campaigns.

Despite a torrent of media coverage surrounding her bid to unseat GOP Rep. Steve Knight in Southern California, geologist Jess Phoenix raised just more than \$77,000 in the second quarter of this year. She told a small group of supporters soon after the fundraising period closed that she had finished strong and that the next quarter would be "even better." But other scientists have found the effort too taxing.

Patrick Madden, a computer scientist and university professor who recently abandoned his campaign to unseat Republican Rep. Claudia Tenney of New York, described a jolt when his department chair came to him "a little freaked out" that the university had received a public records request from a conservative opposition group for Madden's emails and other documents.

"In politics, it seems you get ahead by lying, by misleading, by misstating things," Madden said.

He said scientists have a "good skill set" for Congress and that the records request would not have dissuaded him. But he succumbed when it became apparent he could not raise enough money to run a competitive campaign.

"I was hassling all my friends, all my contacts, and it just didn't feel ... I don't want my life to revolve around money," Madden said. "To get up in the morning and worry about money, worry about money all day long — it was no fun."

By one measure, scientists would appear exceptionally well-positioned to run for public office. Seventy-six percent of Americans say they have at least a fair amount of confidence in scientists generally to act in the best interests of the public, according to a Pew Research Center poll last year. That level of confidence outpaces religious and business leaders, educators, the news media and elected officials.

But Pew has also documented wide differences in opinion between scientists and the public on issues ranging from evolution to vaccines and the safety of genetically modified foods. And other research suggests that if scientists wade too deeply into politics, public confidence in them might fall.

Jon Krosnick, a Stanford University professor who has studied public opinion on climate change, has found in surveys that when natural scientists stray from pure science and offer policy prescriptions related to their work, trust in those scientists erodes. And scientists who engage in politics face the additional problem of communicating with lay people unaccustomed to the dialogue of a university or a lab.

"You know, the premise of having more scientists in Congress is an interesting one," said Jennilee Brown, a Republican strategist in Los Angeles who studied chemistry as an undergraduate student. "Initially, I would say that's a fantastic idea because scientists are very used to looking at complex situations and ... finding solutions to things."

However, Brown said, "Where I question scientists running for Congress is more in their ... power of public persuasion."

Joe Trippi, a Democratic strategist who sits on 314's board and has been working with a handful of scientist candidates, said Friday that the challenge for scientists is no different than for lawyers or elected politicians, all of whom must learn to leave their profession's jargon behind when talking with voters. But in contrast to Trump, he said, scientists may cut an especially appealing profile.

"In this environment Trump is setting, where everything is a rhetorical Twitter stream," Trippi said, "I actually think people talking common sense based on the facts ... may be where a sweet spot is" in 2018.

Naughton's political action committee said it is working with 10 congressional candidates and has heard from thousands of people who are interested in running for office at some level. They have hosted candidate trainings to address messaging, fundraising and other tactical concerns, and they have helped candidates find strategists and other advisers to work on their campaigns.

Phoenix, the geologist, said scientists have to work harder to "humanize" their issues, reflecting a view among some academics that without concerted outreach, science can seem out of touch. In a campaign, Phoenix said, "Even if you can't get people excited about, you know, 'Save the whales,'" she said, "you can say, 'Do you want your kids going outside at recess? Yes? OK, then we need to have protections for air quality in place.'"

Andrew Hoffman, a University of Michigan professor who has written about the role of scholars in public life, said many scientists are unprepared to step into the bruising field of politics, with debates that are "much messier" than in evidence-based research. But, like Holt, he said he senses that is changing.

The scientific community is "facing a crisis of relevance, and scientists are starting to feel compelled to stand up for it," Hoffman said.

In Congress, Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Calif.), a wind energy consultant, said last week that "it would be helpful to have more STEM people in both parties, really," saying that "would help us with some of these technical issues."

His own doctorate in mathematics, McNerney said, has given him "a perspective and an appreciation for science and research and what's possible in a technical field," informing his opinion about matters ranging from telecommunications to nuclear energy and data security.

But he acknowledged that when he was first seeking election — as the current crop of scientist candidates is now — his background did not afford him a ready-made network for a political campaign.

"For one thing, people in STEM ... generally shy away from political involvement. So generating support ... developing a support network and getting the sort of grass-roots support that I needed was a real challenge."

Elaine DiMasi, an experimental physicist who has taken a leave from Brookhaven National Laboratory to weigh a run against Republican Rep. Lee Zeldin of New York, said that after watching her friend Madden withdraw from his race, "I think I understand how difficult it's going to be."

DiMasi, who is planning to burn through savings to support herself while campaigning for the rest of the year, said her father was "horrified" at her decision.

"He said, 'You're going to give up your job and be a politician?'" DiMasi said. "And I said, 'I'm going to be a scientist with a job as a legislator working on policy.'"

DiMasi said her parents eventually came around. Perhaps more important for her congressional campaign, she added, "They're donors."

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By Anthony Adragna | 10/03/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Lauren Gardner and Alex Guillén

FERC AIMS FOR QUICK WORK: FERC [is asking](#) for initial comments on DOE's proposed rule that would benefit nuclear and coal-fired power plants to be submitted in just three weeks — a timeline that suggests the independent commission is eager to move quickly on the Trump administration's [proposal](#) that is already generating push-back from a diverse group of major industry players. In a notice out late Monday, FERC set an Oct. 23 comment deadline and said reply comments would be due by Nov. 7.

Energy super-group says slow down: Representatives of oil, natural gas, wind, solar and other sectors urged FERC in a Monday [letter](#) to pump the brakes on Energy Secretary Rick Perry's request for a quick turnaround on the new rules, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). "This is one of the most significant proposed rules in decades related to the energy industry and, if finalized, would unquestionably have significant ramifications for wholesale markets under the Commission's jurisdiction," wrote the 11 groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, Solar Energy Industries Association and Electric Power Supply Association. They called Secretary Rick Perry's proposed timeline "unreasonable on its face."

Murkowski seems lukewarm: Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) also seemed lukewarm to Perry's push, saying in a statement she respects "Secretary Perry for taking an action that he believes is necessary" and "will be following the proceedings closely" at FERC.

DOE's proposal should be a hot topic on the Hill today. The House Science Committee takes a look at grid resilience at a [hearing](#) at 10 a.m. in Rayburn 2318. Then this afternoon a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee will [hear](#) a wide variety perspectives on reliability in a changing electric sector, including representatives of the coal and nuclear industries as well as several of the groups who signed that letter, at 2 p.m. in Rayburn 2123.

TRUMP HEADS TO PUERTO RICO TODAY: President Donald Trump heads to the devastated island of Puerto Rico today even as information released Monday by the federal government hints at the lengthy recovery road ahead. Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said at a news conference that just one in 10 of the island's nearly 3.5 million people are likely to have power within two weeks, and only a quarter of the island should have the lights on by next month. It's a similarly dire situation for drinking water: 47 percent of residents have potable drinking water right now, though Rosselló said that number should climb to around 60 percent by the end of the week.

The president summed up his view of the situation Monday. "It's been amazing what's been done in a very short period of time on Puerto Rico. There's never been a piece of land that we've known that was so devastated," Trump said in Oval Office remarks. "The bridges are down, the telecommunications was nonexistent, and it's in very, very bad shape. The electrical grid, as you know, was totally destroyed. But we've gotten tremendous amounts of food and water, and lots of other things — supplies — generally speaking, on the island." The

White House said San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, who drew Trump's wrath over the weekend, has been invited to events with him today.

Disaster relief request coming: Meanwhile, the Trump administration is expected to by the end of this week request between \$10 billion to \$15 billion to respond to the disaster, Playbook [reports](#).

The Center for American Progress today is out with a [policy roadmap](#) for lawmakers as they consider the next round of assistance for Puerto Rico and other areas impacted by hurricanes. They urge Congress to enact policies to improve resiliency, update flood risk information and prioritize underserved communities, among other ideas, rather than just throwing money at the problem.

PERMANENT JONES ACT REPRIVE? Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) on Monday fast-tracked potential consideration of legislation [S. 1894 \(115\)](#) that would permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act, which bans foreign-flagged ships from traveling between U.S. ports. After sustained pressure, Trump [granted](#) a 10-day Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico last week.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the American Chemistry Council's Jon Corley was first to ID former Rep. Cynthia McKinney as the 2008 Green Party nominee. For today: What "Love Boat" actor went on to serve four terms in Congress for Iowa? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ITC TO GET AN EARFUL ON REMEDY FOR THAT SOLAR BURN: The U.S. International Trade Commission will hear arguments this morning about how to best level the playing field for U.S. solar manufacturers, and it looks like it's going to be [quite a show](#), with hours' worth of speakers lined up. The commission [found last week](#) that U.S. solar manufacturing had been harmed by cheap solar imports, over the objections of the rest of the solar industry.

In this corner, for the installers: The Solar Energy Industries Association, along with solar producer SunPower, told the ITC in its [brief](#) that a tariff will result in the loss of 62,800 jobs in 2018 and 80,000 jobs in later years. Sen. [Martin Heinrich](#) will bat for the no-tariffs team, along with a laundry list of SEIA witnesses. They will also be backed by representatives from the embassies of China, Korea, Brazil, and Mexico.

And in this corner, for the petitioners: In their public briefs, Suniva and SolarWorld Americas [offered](#) the commission two choices: A tariff plus a price floor for solar cells, or a tariff plus a quota. Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) and Rep. [Suzanne Bonamici](#), both of Oregon, will speak in support of their home-state SolarWorld, which wants tariffs and a price floor. "I urge the Commission to recommend a remedy robust enough to repair the serious injury already experienced by the U.S. solar manufacturing sector and to ensure its long-term growth and competitiveness," Wyden will say according to an excerpt of his statement obtained by ME. "In practical terms, that means identifying a remedy that helps to revive a domestic manufacturing sector central to our leadership in energy innovation yet long under siege."

And First Solar shall be first: SEIA also locates a winner if tariffs are imposed, Arizona-based thin film manufacturer First Solar, which does much of its manufacturing in Malaysia. "Thin-film solar directly competes with CSPV solar in the marketplace. Consequently, global

trade restrictions on [crystalline silicon photovoltaic] would raise rivals' costs and drive customers toward First Solar's products, strengthening First Solar's already strong hand."

MORE CONCERNS RAISED OVER RFS POTENTIAL CHANGES: Nearly all major biofuel trades and the corn growers are out with [a letter](#) this morning to Trump urging him to abandon "drastic, unprecedented changes" to change the Renewable Fuel Standard that they said would benefit a select few petroleum refiners. "The proposed changes are inconsistent with the law and threaten the growth and prosperity of the U.S. biofuels industry," wrote signatories of the letter, including National Corn Growers Association, Renewable Fuels Association and Growth Energy. "EPA's changes are also inconsistent with Administrator Pruitt's assurances to uphold the law and your long-standing support of ethanol and the RFS." EPA [released a notice](#) last week suggesting it might reduce the already set 2018 biomass-based biodiesel requirement and shrink the mandate in 2019.

Grassley confirms Trump conversation: Iowa Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) told reporters he discussed his concern over potential changes to the RFS during a Friday phone conversation with Trump. "They're trying to respond to big oil and not take into consideration the needs of alternative energy, biofuels," he said. "Cutting back on the mandate isn't a way you're going to encourage capital and capital is what we need now to get pumps to pump E15 instead of E10."

Seems relevant: The White House previously [granted](#) EPA deputy general counsel Erik Baptist, a senior counsel to the American Petroleum Institute for more than six years, an ethics waiver to work on RFS issues given his "expertise in this program and its policy and implementation." Copy of that waiver [here](#).

NO OZONE DESIGNATIONS AS DEADLINE PASSES: EPA appears to have missed the Oct. 1 deadline to say which parts of the U.S. meet the 2015 ozone standard and which don't, a key step toward implementing the regulation. The agency is remaining mum; a spokesperson told ME Monday that there is "no further information" on when the designations will be released. The matter has been controversial for months, ever since Administrator Scott Pruitt said he would delay the designations by a year — a delay he later reversed following lawsuits from Democratic attorneys general and environmental groups. (The 2015 standard itself is also under review, with no specific timeline attached.) It may be a while before green groups can take Pruitt to court. The Clean Air Act requires them to provide EPA with 60 days' notice before filing a lawsuit over a missed deadline, meaning any suit couldn't be filed until December at the earliest.

Also adding uncertainty to the process is a [pending proposed rule](#) at OMB that appears to set new thresholds for how EPA classifies ozone areas. That rule arrived at OMB on Sept. 21. EPA had previously proposed classification details last November that the agency characterized as only minor changes to the implementation rules for the 2008 ozone standard. An EPA spokesperson declined to comment on a rule under review at OMB.

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2fvfOTm> **

WHAT ABOUT LOLA? Two House Democrats want Interior's inspector general to expand its newly announced investigation into Secretary Ryan Zinke's non-commercial travel to also include his wife, Lola, in light of her involvement with a GOP Senate campaign in Montana, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). "Because the secretary's spouse is leading a Senate campaign in

Montana, tax-payer funded travel for Mrs. Zinke, especially to or from Montana, deserves heightened scrutiny," [Raul Grijalva](#) and [Donald McEachin](#) wrote in [a letter](#) Monday.

HEARING ROUNDUP! SEEMS LIKE A PATTERN HERE: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [axed a vote](#) slated for this morning on the nominations of Steven Winberg to be assistant Energy secretary for fossil energy and Bruce Walker to be assistant Energy secretary for electricity, delivery and energy reliability. No reason was given.

RALLY AGAINST DOURSON: Ahead of Wednesday's hearing on four EPA nominations, Sens. [Tom Udall](#) and [Richard Blumenthal](#) are holding a press conference with advocates today at 2:30 p.m. to protest Michael Dourson's nomination to run the agency's chemicals office. Udall, you'll remember, was a key architect of the revamped national chemicals law last year.

LIFELINE FOR NAVAJO GENERATING? Peabody Energy said Monday it had found "a number of highly qualified potential investors" interested in taking an ownership stake in the Navajo Generating Station that would allow it to continue operating beyond 2019. It did not provide further details. The plant's current owners said back in February they planned to close the facility after 2019, several decades before expected. But Zinke [said in late June](#) that "one of Interior's top priorities" has been finding a way to keep it operating.

MAINE ATTRACTION: Democrat Lucas St. Clair, who led a successful push to create the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, announced Monday he'll challenge incumbent Rep. [Bruce Poliquin](#), the Bangor Daily News [reports](#). St. Clair is the 39-year-old son of Burt's Bees entrepreneur Roxanne Quimby and resigned his post as president of the Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters to run for office.

NOT IN SLO'S BACKYARD: Energy company Phillips 66 will drop its lawsuit challenging a California county's denial of a proposal that would have let the refiner bring millions of gallons of oil per week by train to its facility in Santa Maria, environmentalists who opposed it said Monday. The county's decision to reject the project came after the Surface Transportation Board last year [declined](#) to prevent another California city from denying Valero Energy's bid to expand crude-by-rail operations. The San Luis Obispo Tribune [reports](#) that the parties reached a settlement, which must be approved by a court.

PAUSE BUTTON HIT: Amid the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history, a broad sportsmen's package with controversial gun silencer provisions is no longer expected to get a House vote in the near future, POLITICO's John Bresnahan and Heather Caygle [report](#). Democrats said the Las Vegas massacre was just one more reason to shelve the bill. "There's a lot we need to do in the wake of this mass shooting. We don't need to make it easier to get hold of items that could make mass casualty events even more deadly," Grijalva said in a statement.

TAKE A GLANCE! STUDY: U.S. PAYS BIG FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES: Oil Change International is out with [a report](#) today finding the U.S. provides more than \$20 billion toward oil, gas and coal production annually. Those include \$14.7 billion in annual federal subsidies and \$5.8 billion in yearly state-level incentives.

REPORT: GETTING EASIER TO HIT CLEAN POWER PLAN GOALS: The Institute for Policy Integrity at NYU's School of Law is out with [a report](#) today arguing the emissions reduction targets of the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan are more achievable due to changes in the electric sector. If the agency were to redo its regulatory impact analysis with

recent developments, the report argues compliance costs would be even lower than originally thought.

MOVER, SHAKER: Peter Tomasi has joined Foley & Lardner LLP's environmental practice as of counsel in its Milwaukee office. He was previously a partner at Quarles & Brady LLP.

QUICK HITS

- In the heart of China's coal country, a city bans most coal: Xinhua. [Reuters](#).
- Residents: Tests find toxic chemicals after Texas plant fire. [AP](#).
- Trump closes WH event to highlight deregulation. [Washington Post](#).
- Can Hollywood Movies About Climate Change Make a Difference? [New York Times](#).
- Gina McCarthy holds out hope on climate policy. [High Country News](#).
- EPA nominee has ties to WV chemical controversies. [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — "[Carbon Capture: A Business Opportunity in the Global Low-Carbon Economy](#)," Global CCS Institute, National Press Club, 529 14th Street Northwest

10:00 a.m. — "[Resiliency: The Electric Grid's Only Hope](#)," House Science, Space and Technology Committee, Rayburn 2318

10:00 a.m. — Legislative [hearing](#) on H.R. 3400, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1334

10:15 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds [hearing](#) to consider various nominations, Dirksen 366

10:30 a.m. — "[Full Committee Hearing to Examine Energy Storage Technologies](#)," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Dirksen 366

11:30 a.m. — Manchin, Capito, McKinley and Welch introduce the American Miners Pension Act, S-120

2:00 p.m. — "[Part II: Powering America: Defining Reliability in a Transforming Electricity Industry](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

2:30 p.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee [hearing](#) on various bills, 366 Dirksen

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2fVfOTm> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/heavyweights-weigh-in-on-solar-tariffs-today-024877>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

DOE's Perry pushes FERC to support coal power plants [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The Trump administration on Friday called on FERC to create new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants that are being squeezed by cheaper natural gas and renewable sources, saying they were "indispensable for economic and national security."

Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who [told miners](#) in Pennsylvania on Thursday that "it's time for coal in this country to be revived," pressed electricity regulators to alter power markets and protect the resilience of the power grid with payments to generators that keep fuel supplies on site, a clear reference to the coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

The proposal, which DOE said gave FERC 60 days to create a final or interim rule, comes just a month after Perry's agency issued a report saying FERC should "expedite" its work with grid operators to ensure the stability of the nation's power network.

"In terms of process, this is a pretty bold move," said Tony Clark, a Republican former FERC commissioner. DOE often conducts studies on issues it believes need attention, he said, but "actually forwarding to the commission something specific for action is a pretty bold way of moving the issue right up the batting order at FERC."

The new proposal, directed at FERC under a rarely used Section 403 authority of the Department of Energy Organization Act, stops short of specifically seeking market incentives for coal. But it calls for full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and "ancillary" services — and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. That would exclude most natural gas power plants, which do not typically keep large fuel inventories on hand and instead receive supplies via pipeline.

Perry's request represents a departure from the two decades of U.S. policy that has trended toward more market-based tools, which has helped natural gas to nearly double its power market share. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar, though still modest when compared to fossil fuels or nuclear power, have also grown quickly as federal incentives helped drive down their costs.

But the growth of renewables and natural gas — combined with tighter pollution controls and weak new demand for electricity — has forced hundreds of old coal-fired power plants into retirement. Nuclear power plants in some parts of the country are also under financial pressure, hurt by negative wholesale power market prices that sometimes require the plant owners to pay to deliver their power supplies.

"If this gets the debate started, then my hat's off," said former FERC Chairman Pat Wood, a friend of Perry and a strong advocate for market-based power systems. "But it's a pretty arresting [thing] to wake up and read. That would never have played in Texas. ... If there is a service to be valued, then a market can value that."

In the [grid study](#) ordered by Perry and released in August, DOE experts pointed to low power prices and cheap natural gas as the single [biggest reason](#) for coal ceding its position as the nation's biggest source of electricity. And that report also called for "reforms" to power markets that would help bolster the electricity network's resilience by easing the financial pressures on many power providers.

In its Friday proposal, DOE cited a spike in demand during the 2014 "polar vortex" that hit much of the U.S., which prompted utilities to run many coal plants that were slated for retirement. Without those plants, as many as 65 million people in the PJM market would have seen their power resources threatened, DOE said.

But the new regulatory pitch from the agency also fueled the growing feud between the gas and coal industries.

Paul Bailey, president and CEO American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, commended Perry for "initiating a rulemaking by FERC that will finally value the on-site fuel security provided by the coal fleet."

But the American Petroleum Institute, which also represents natural gas producers, said DOE drew the wrong conclusions from the 2014 event, and that forcing new mandates on the power market wasn't the solution.

"[A]s we review the proposal we are concerned the agency has mischaracterized the lessons learned from past weather-related events and appears to suggest that additional regulation is the answer where markets have already proven the ability to greatly benefit consumers and give our electric system the flexibility needed to meet constantly, and often rapidly, changing electricity demands," said API Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Marty Durbin in a statement.

FERC, which has struggled to integrate states' energy policies that aim to boost renewables or support aging nuclear power plants, has long maintained a fuel-neutral stance in the regional markets that it oversees. If it were to follow Perry's directive to create incentives for grid resilience to plants that maintain their own fuel inventories on site, it would be an implicit move at the national level to alter the electricity markets to support the fuels that both Perry and Trump have touted.

Montana regulator Travis Kavulla [suggested](#) on Twitter that rather than deal with the pressing issues facing the grid, "Instead, this reform is sort of the [@ENERGY](#) equivalent of the Oprah "you get a car, and you get a car. And you? A car!" approach."

However, FERC, whose members are appointed by the president and operate as an independent body, isn't obligated to implement the specific policy pushed by Perry. The commission will so be back to operating with a full five members in the coming weeks, with a Republican majority.

"FERC's going to follow its own procedures," said Marc Spitzer, a Republican former FERC commissioner. "It would be a mistake for people to assume that this is going to be some partisan Republican rubber stamp given the way FERC works."

FERC can spend months or years digging into complex issues that underpin the power markets, and its commissioners tend to seek common ground with each other to ensure that its

rules are clear and ensure long-lasting regulations that give utilities stability to plan their operations.

"Is someone really going to invest [billions of dollars] when it's a 3-2 vote that partisans and the parties can flip next year? Is that a good forum for investment as opposed to a 5-0 order?" Spitzer said.

FERC declined to say when the agency last received a rulemaking from DOE using Section 403.

To view online [click here](#).

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Gas, oil, renewables, utility groups ask FERC to lengthen debate on DOE pricing rule

[Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/02/2017 05:43 PM EDT

Nearly a dozen energy-related trade associations are [pleading with FERC](#) today to pump the breaks on an Energy Department request for rules that would benefit nuclear and coal-fired power plants, calling the Trump administration's proposed timeline "unreasonable on its face."

DOE last week asked FERC to quickly implement a [proposal](#) mandating payments to power plants for their on-site fuel stocks. Today, representatives of oil, natural gas, wind, solar and other sectors were unified in their opposition to that time frame.

"This is one of the most significant proposed rules in decades related to the energy industry and, if finalized, would unquestionably have significant ramifications for wholesale markets under the Commission's jurisdiction," wrote the 11 groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, Solar Energy Industries Association and Electric Power Supply Association. DOE's time frame is "wholly unreasonable and insufficient to allow for an informed consideration of the significant issues proposed therein."

DOE directed FERC to take "final action" on the proposal within 60 days of its publication in the Federal Register, and make it take effect within 30 days after that. Alternately, DOE said regulators should institute it as an interim final rule with the potential for later changes.

The groups, which have asked for FERC to convene a technical conference and offer a 90-day comment period, said the commission "is justified in setting its own schedule for seeking comments on the NOPR, should it choose to notice it or a similar proposed rule for comment at all."

WHAT'S NEXT: The timeline on DOE's proposed rule will start once it's published in the Federal Register, but it is unclear when that might be.

To view online [click here](#).

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White House: Trump to allow foreign ships to supply Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/28/2017 08:59 AM EDT

President Donald Trump will grant a 10-day waiver to the Jones Act to allow non-U.S.-flagged ships to transport supplies to Puerto Rico in a bid to speed the commonwealth's recovery from Hurricane Maria's devastation.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced the waiver Thursday morning via Twitter and said "it will go into effect immediately."

Puerto Rico had petitioned the Department of Homeland Security for a waiver as it struggles with shortages of water and fuel. The administration denied that request two days ago, and the president told reporters Wednesday that, "we have a lot of shippers and a lot of people and a lot of people who work in the shipping industry that don't want the Jones Act lifted."

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló had continued to press the U.S. government for a waiver, including on morning cable news television on Thursday. Senate Republicans John McCain of Arizona and Marco Rubio of Florida also called for the relief, as did most congressional Democrats.

Later Thursday morning House Democrats pushed Trump for more.

"The waiving of the Jones Act was a good idea, but we want to stretch it out to be longer than ... 10 days," Rep. Jose Serrano (D-N.Y.) said. "Much longer than that."

McCain and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) introduced legislation today to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from the Jones Act.

Lawmakers argued that more help was needed from the military as well, needling Trump over reports from Puerto Rico that there's not enough support from the federal government to distribute supplies sitting in the capital of San Juan.

The military response continues to gradually ramp up after the repeated calls from Congress and the commonwealth government.

The deputy commander for the regional Department of Defense command coordinating relief efforts, Brig. Gen. Rich Kim, is scheduled to arrive in Puerto Rico on Thursday. The USS Comfort, a naval hospital ship, will depart Norfolk, Va., on Friday for Puerto Rico.

But that didn't satisfy lawmakers calling for more.

In a [letter](#) sent Thursday afternoon, Rubio pushed for Trump to use his constitutional authority as commander in chief to increase the military's involvement in coordinating disaster relief efforts.

"There is no clear command, control, and communication between local officials on the ground and federal agencies, and many roads and bridges remained unpassable, making it even more difficult for repair crews to restore power and communications to areas of the island outside of San Juan," Rubio wrote. That has resulted in "lifesaving supplies sitting in

containers rather than being distributed upon arrival," he wrote.

"This unique situation requires a well-coordinated response led by the Department of Defense (DOD), which is the only entity capable of executing a recovery effort of this scale and complexity," he said. "I urge you, as commander-in-chief, to make DOD the lead agency in the ground phase of recovery efforts."

"We have the resources," said Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chair Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.), referring to the U.S.

The number of Americans affected by Hurricane Maria in the Caribbean is equivalent to "the combined populations of the states of Wyoming, Vermont and Alaska," she added. "I have no doubt that the responses to those states in this situation would be far different than the situation we're having today."

Several states have offered to help deploy their own personnel to help Puerto Rico, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus chair said House Democrats were looking for ways to expedite that.

In an interview with CBS, Rene Plasencia, a Republican in the Florida state house who accompanied emergency responders to Puerto Rico, said those responders could not get transportation from officials on the ground to provide help.

"We've been trying to get [rescue] planes in [from Florida] since last Friday," Plasencia said.

Democrats also criticized Trump's remarks earlier this week that delivering emergency supplies to Puerto Rico is difficult because it's an island.

"Well, you built a golf course there so you certainly knew where it was," Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) said. He was referring to a Trump brand golf course that went bankrupt a few years after the president began his involvement with the project, leaving the commonwealth government on the hook for millions in debt.

"Mr. President, talk to your national security team," Serrano said. "They certainly had plans for 50 years to invade an island in the Caribbean," he said, referring to Cuba. "So they know how to get troops and the military into an island."

Talk has already begun in Congress around an aid package. Some on the left want a suspension of the law that Congress passed last year to allow the commonwealth to restructure its \$70 billion in bond debt that also instituted an unpopular federal oversight board. But Republicans, who have promised ample disaster relief funding when a request comes from the Trump administration, would likely reject that.

Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-N.Y.) estimated that \$50-\$70 billion would be needed to rebuild Puerto Rico, and Gutierrez pushed for the federal government to pick up the total bill for the cash-strapped island, likening it to a sick patient in the hospital.

"It's bankrupt," Gutierrez said. "There is no money in Puerto Rico to make copayments."

"This is Katrina 2017," he said.

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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White House praises solar manufacturers in statement on trade decision [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/22/2017 01:15 PM EDT

The White House praised the role of U.S. solar manufacturing in providing "energy security and economic prosperity" in its response to a federal trade panel's [finding today](#) that will give President Donald Trump the final word on setting tariffs and quotas on solar imports.

In a unanimous vote, the U.S. International Trade Commission said domestic panel and cell makers had been harmed by cheap imports, agreeing with the petition filed by Suniva and SolarWorld USA.

"The President will examine the facts and make a determination that reflects the best interests of the United States," said Natalie Strom, a White House spokeswoman. "The U.S. solar manufacturing sector contributes to our energy security and economic prosperity."

Solar manufacturing made up 13 percent of the 260,000 jobs in the solar industry was the slowest growing segment between 2010 and 2016, according to the 2016 National Solar Job Census from the nonprofit Solar Foundation.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission will send recommendations for tariffs to the president by Nov. 13.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Suniva, SolarWorld modify remedy proposal in trade case [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/28/2017 07:20 PM EDT

Suniva and SolarWorld USA are pressing a U.S. trade panel to recommend that President Donald Trump institute either a floor price for imported solar equipment or tariffs plus a quota that caps the amount of solar panels and cells that can enter the country.

The two solar panel manufacturers filed a joint brief to the U.S. International Trade Commission, and each recommended different remedies, though they said that either option could be selected.

Suniva recommends a price floor for all solar modules that starts at 74 cents per watt and declines over the four years of the tariff, as well as tariffs for both modules and the solar cells. SolarWorld said it was seeking a a quota of 220 MW on imported cells and 5,700 MW on imported modules.

"Both co-petitioners agree that an effective remedy must include either the co-petitioners' requested tariff plus Suniva's requested module floor price or the co-petitioners' requested tariff plus SolarWorld's requested quota," the companies said in a joint statement.

Briefs were due on Wednesday to the ITC, and the companies publicly released their proposals to today, excluding proprietary company information.

The ITC voted unanimously last week that low-cost imports had harmed the domestic solar manufacturing industry. Under the "safeguard" provisions of the Trade Act, Trump will have the final say in what tariffs to impose.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission will have a hearing on remedies on Oct. 3.

To view online [click here](#).

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Biofuel producers unite against potential EPA biodiesel cuts [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/27/2017 06:57 PM EDT

Biofuels producers and their farm-state backers in Congress are keeping the pressure on EPA, accusing the agency of betraying President Donald Trump's promises to back the Renewable Fuel Standard after the agency signaled it would cut its biodiesel volume mandates.

EPA's Tuesday [notice](#) seeking input on whether to reduce the already set 2018 biomass-based biodiesel requirement and shrink the mandate in 2019 is drawing opposition from both biodiesel and ethanol producers, who say EPA's move marks its second attempt to undermine the program this year.

The new EPA notice has already driven down prices for biofuel credits, which are used by refiners to meet the obligations under the RFS. That's a boon to refiners like CVR Energy, the company owned by former Trump adviser Carl Icahn who had joined with other fuel processors like Valero Energy earlier this year in an unsuccessful effort to shift the compliance burden of the RFS away from their companies.

Trump has repeatedly offered public support for ethanol producers and the RFS, and just last month, he told Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) to [assure Iowans](#) he had their backs on the RFS — a position Trump staked out early in his presidential campaign and which helped him carry Iowa and other Midwestern states.

On Wednesday, Sen. [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) blasted the new EPA move, saying in [a letter](#) to Trump that the biodiesel cut would be "bad for American farmers, American manufacturing and American rural communities," adding that she hoped "that your EPA has not forgotten about the pledges that were made to my constituents and to farmers across the country."

That letter came a day after Grassley said the proposal "seems like a bait-and-switch from the EPA's prior proposal and from assurances from President Trump himself and Cabinet secretaries in my office. ... This all gives me a strong suspicion that Big Oil and oil refineries are prevailing, despite assurances to the contrary."

And biodiesel makers are drawing strong support from the ethanol industry, who see the EPA's move as a step toward undercutting the RFS.

"This would undermine renewable fuel production in the U.S. and cause severe harm to our friends in the biodiesel industry," Robert Walther, vice president of federal advocacy for ethanol producer POET, told POLITICO. "That harm would radiate throughout the entire biofuel value chain from starch biofuel plants, to cellulosic facilities now scaling up, to the corn and soybean farmers who voted overwhelmingly for Trump."

In its Tuesday notice, EPA relied on letters from Valero, the American Petroleum Institute, and the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers to argue the agency expects biodiesel prices to climb because of the expiration of a tax credit last year — as well as the [new tariffs](#) the administration is putting on biodiesel imports from Argentina and Indonesia.

As a result, the agency asked for comment on revising down the amount of biodiesel to be used in 2018 by 15 percent, and on setting 2019 biodiesel requirements possibly as low as the 1 billion gallon floor laid out in the law, less than half the original 2018 level of 2.1 billion gallons.

Biodiesel credits are linked to the ethanol credits — called Renewable Identification Numbers — since U.S. ethanol producers typically fall short of supplying the volumes required under the RFS program. Oil refiners then must buy biodiesel RINs to meet requirements, according to research by University of Illinois economist Scott Irwin.

While corn ethanol credit prices are cheaper than biodiesel RINs, the two tend to move in tandem, so the effect of EPA's notice on RIN prices for ethanol, advanced biofuel and biodiesel was immediate: a 20 percent decline in prices for credits of biodiesel and ethanol after EPA's notice, according to the fuel price tracking service OPIS.

The proposal to cut the biomass-based fuel shocked the biodiesel makers such as Gene Gebolys, CEO of World Energy, who said the industry "froze" as soon as the notice came out.

"The more baffling part is Trump has been consistently supportive of the RFS, over and over and over and over again, he has been supportive of the RFS," he said. "This has been a frontal assault on the RFS. You have to ask yourself, is EPA taking direction from the White House or the oil industry?"

EPA also did not respond to a request for comment. Nor did API or Valero, both of whom EPA cited in its notice, although the AFPM trade association was pleased by the action.

"EPA is on the right track in adjusting renewable fuel requirements," AFPM CEO Chet Thompson said in a statement. "This proposal more appropriately advances Congress's stated purpose of bolstering America's energy independence. American drivers shouldn't have to shoulder more costs to help foreign biofuel producers."

But ethanol producers think EPA may be putting key states in play if it follows through and makes cuts to biodiesel.

"If I am a Democrat thinking of taking Trump on in Iowa and Wisconsin in 2020, I am licking my chops," Walther from POET said.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Grijalva asks Interior IG to include Zinke's wife in travel probe [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 10/02/2017 04:10 PM EDT

Two House Democrats are calling on the Interior Department's inspector general to investigate how often Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife joined him on taxpayer-funded charter or military flights in light of her involvement in a Republican Senate campaign.

Lolita Zinke is chairing the campaign of Troy Downing, a businessman who is vying to unseat Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year.

"Because the secretary's spouse is leading a senate campaign in Montana, tax-payer funded travel for Mrs. Zinke, especially to or from Montana, deserves heightened scrutiny," wrote [Raúl M. Grijalva](#) and [Donald McEachin](#) in a [letter](#) today to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall, the top watchdog within Interior. Grijalva is the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, and McEachin is ranking member of its oversight subcommittee.

POLITICO reported earlier today that the IG's office has opened an investigation into Zinke's travels.

The inspector general's office has not decided on the scope of its investigation but it is "focused on the secretary's travel at this point," said Nancy DiPaolo, IG spokeswoman. The investigation, which was launched Friday, "is at its earliest phases," she said. "We'll likely be looking into travel, modes of travel, costs and schedules, etc."

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STB clears way for California city to block oil train facility [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 09/21/2016 06:41 PM EDT

The Surface Transportation Board declined this week to block a California city from rejecting a plan to build a facility that would enable more oil trains to pass through the area, but only because the project's owner was an energy company, not a railroad.

Oil refiner Valero Energy had petitioned the STB to step in and prevent Benicia, Calif., from denying the company permits to build the facility in the city, which is also home to one of the company's refineries.

Environmentalists cheered the Tuesday rejection as a victory in their effort to encourage local governments — which fear catastrophes like the oil train explosion in Lac Megantic, Quebec, that killed 47 people in 2013 — to reject projects that could bring vast quantities of crude oil

through their communities.

The regulator is likely to find itself at the center of future high-profile cases like this since trains remain one of the most viable methods of transporting oil, much like the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has become a hotbed of controversy as green groups have sought to block permits for pipelines that ship fossil fuels.

But STB made it clear that its members rebuffed Valero in this instance only because it was not a rail carrier, nor was it handling transportation services for one, and therefore does not fall under the board's jurisdiction.

STB's decision that interstate commerce law doesn't allow it to preempt the Benicia government from denying the permits to Valero came hours ahead of a unanimous city council vote scuttling the project.

It's not yet clear whether Valero will take its fight to court. A company spokeswoman said executives are "considering our options moving forward."

"After nearly four years of review and analysis by independent experts and the city, we are disappointed that the city council members have chosen to reject the crude by rail project," Valero spokeswoman Lillian Riojas said.

STB's decision included guidance that even if Benicia had approved the permits, the bayside city near San Francisco wouldn't have carte blanche to impose conditions on Valero, since they could "unreasonably" bleed into operations by Union Pacific, the freight railroad the refiner planned to have service the offloading facility.

"As an initial matter, any attempt to regulate UP's rail operations on its lines would be categorically preempted," STB wrote. "Otherwise, state and local regulation is permissible where it does not unreasonably interfere with rail transportation."

If circumstances changed and the railroad were to build or own the offloading facility project, "then it would clearly be preempted by the federal law," Karen Torrent, federal legislative director at the Environmental Law and Policy Center, said of Benicia's permit denial.

The Association of American Railroads declined to comment on Tuesday's decision, but it had voiced its support for Valero's petition in July, expressing concern that a "patchwork" of rules among states and localities could stymie freight operations.

"This case now presents the Board with the situation where state and local permitting requirements are being applied to rail-served customer facilities with the purpose of controlling — and often preventing — rail transportation," AAR attorney Timothy J. Strafford wrote.

Jackie Prange, a Natural Resources Defense Council staff attorney, said the ruling has broader implications because local governments in California and the Pacific Northwest grappling with similar projects have monitored the Benicia case.

The San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold its final hearing Thursday on a proposal by refiner Phillips 66 to bring millions of gallons of crude per week into its Santa Maria refinery by train. The company asked the county last month to delay the hearing, anticipating that STB would not have issued its decision in the Benicia case by now,

according to a local [report](#).

Staff at the county commission have recommended that officials reject the project.

To view online [click here](#).

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Pruitt's flight, meeting habits raise eyebrows — Four EPA nominees get hearings today — Bishop sends broad letter on Zinke's travel habits
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 5:47:16 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/04/2017 05:43 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén, Eric Wolff, Darius Dixon and Ben Lefebvre

SCRUTINY MOUNTS OF PRUITT'S HABITS: Critics of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt increasingly see a chief who avoids contact with the broader public and distrusts even his own agency's career staff, opting instead for meetings with like-minded industry and political leaders that could prove useful in a future political run, Pro's Emily Holden and Alex Guillén [report](#). The Trump administration doesn't consider Pruitt's \$58,000 in charter and military flight expenses to be as troubling as former HHS Secretary Tom Price's and now consider the controversy resolved after Price's [resignation](#) last week, one administration official said.

Environmentalists and other critics say Pruitt's spending is at best tone-deaf given agency budget reductions and at worst speaks to paranoia. Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican who ran EPA during President George W. Bush's first term, said she recalls taking chartered planes only while visiting remote areas of Alaska that were otherwise inaccessible. "Most people have to wait in line for a long time for planes," Whitman said. "The fact that you just turn around and order a private plane ... that starts to look really problematic. It's a lot of money." The agency said the flights were all cleared by ethics officials and say Pruitt's unprecedented around-the-clock security protection is necessary given increased threats.

Others point to who he met with as especially revealing. An analysis of Pruitt's broader schedule shows he's met most often with oil and gas executives, followed by agriculture and farming interests. And the former Oklahoma attorney general has paid especially close attention to his home state. Of at least 30 meetings or speaking engagements Pruitt had with oil and gas executives or trade groups, seven appear to have connections to Oklahoma. He's also spoken at events or held calls with right-wing policy groups that spend little of their time on environmental issues, such as the Family Research Council, Council for National Policy, State Policy Network and Federalist Society.

PRUITT LIEUTENANTS HOP ONTO HOTSEAT: Sparks are guaranteed to fly as Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hears from four EPA nominees and an NRC candidate today. Expect Democrats to pay close attention to William Wehrum, the EPA air nominee, and his long history as an industry attorney, the same issue that kept him from this post in the pre-nuclear option George W. Bush era. Since leaving EPA a decade ago, Wehrum's [client list](#) is a who's who of industry groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers and the Utility Air Regulatory Group. Wehrum just last week helped industry groups challenge OSHA's silica rule in court — though the judges [indicated](#) they weren't buying his arguments that the agency had failed to prove new health benefits.

Heavy focus expected on Dourson: The other nominee likely to face heat is Michael Dourson, nominee for EPA chemicals and pesticides chief. The job will be vital as EPA works to implement the reformed Toxic Substances Control Act. Critics were also incensed when Pruitt earlier this year rejected agency scientists' suggestion to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos.

Dourson's work as an independent toxicologist often concluded that safe levels of various chemicals and pesticides were significantly higher than the findings of government and university scientists. Dourson is also the author of a [series](#) of self-described "science-Bible stories."

Also slated to attend: Matt Leopold, the nominee for EPA general counsel, and David Ross, the pick to run EPA's water office. Leopold is a Florida lawyer who was previously the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's general counsel. Ross heads the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Environmental Protection Unit and previously helped challenge the Obama administration's WOTUS rule, which EPA is working to repeal and replace. Joining the EPA nominees is Democrat Jeff Baran, who is up for renomination to the NRC through 2023.

If you go: Chairman [John Barrasso](#) will gavel in [the hearing](#) at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 406.

WHAT ABOUT THE BOSS?: Pruitt himself hasn't been to an EPW hearing since he was confirmed in February, and the committee's top Democrat [Tom Carper](#) is out of patience. "It's almost nine months into the administration and we're still waiting for the head of EPA to come in and defend the administration's budget for EPA, which is appalling," Carper told ME.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee has never heard from Pruitt in a public hearing, though it is traditional for the EPA boss to testify there at least once a year. Illinois Republican [John Shimkus](#), who chairs the E&C environment subcommittee, says a visit is overdue, especially in light of the heightened scrutiny of his spending. Shimkus said he thinks Cabinet officials should fly commercial, just like members of Congress do. "We're also stewards of taxpayers' dollars and these agencies, we're asking them to do more with less," Shimkus told ME Tuesday. "It probably would have been better had he come earlier than later."

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Joyce Foundation's Ed Miller first identified Rep. Fred Grandy, aka Gopher from *The Love Boat*, as the Iowa congressman. For today: Who did [Nancy Pelosi](#) succeed when she first won election to Congress in 1987? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ADMINISTRATION PICKS ARMY CORPS CHIEF: Trump announced late Tuesday his choice of R.D. James to lead the Army Corps of Engineers. He's previously served on the Mississippi River Commission where he's provided water resources advice to several administrations and Congress. James has also served as president of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association. Among other responsibilities, James would have a major role as the Trump administration revamps the Waters of the U.S. regulation. An April [report](#) made it sound like James was lukewarm on taking the post: "I'm a country boy, and I can't imagine living up there, but, if chosen, I will, and I will do my very best."

TRUMP STRIKES HARSH TONE IN PUERTO RICO: Visiting the devastated island of Puerto Rico Tuesday, President Donald Trump warned the island's millions of residents — many of whom have been told not to expect electricity or potable drinking water for months — they had "thrown our budget a little out of whack because we've spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico" and avoided a "real catastrophe" like Hurricane Katrina. As POLITICO's Matthew Nussbaum and Nolan D. McCaskill [note](#), Trump maintained his boasts about a wildly successful response effort that hasn't matched the reality of the hurricane-ravaged

island.

At a stop later in the day Trump insisted residents didn't need flashlights (it's unclear what he meant) even though 95 percent of the island lacks electricity. "The power grid, honestly, was devastated before the hurricanes even hit. And then the hurricanes hit and they wiped them out," Trump said, as he repeatedly seemed to blame the island for its poor infrastructure and financial situation. Joining him on the trip were Pruitt and Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

POLITICO's Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim [report](#) the administration will today ask for \$13 billion in hurricane recovery funding, \$16 billion in flood insurance relief and more than \$500 million for wildfires with congressional consideration likely in mid- to late-October.

BISHOP PROBES YEARS OF NON-COMMERCIAL TRAVEL: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) and Rep. [Bruce Westerman](#) sent [a letter](#) to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Tuesday asking for all records of non-commercial travel by the Interior secretary since the start of the Obama administration, as well as copies of department policies on the matter. "When partisan opportunists conflate diligent conformance to scandal, no one wins," they wrote. "Let's get all facts on the table, ensure taxpayers are protected and proceed with the peoples' business."

More questions raised for Zinke: A group of 26 House Democrats, led by [Nanette Barragan](#) and [Don Beyer](#), asked Zinke in a Tuesday [letter](#) to immediately disclose all details of his use of charter aircraft.

Zinke doesn't plan to repay the government for his charter flights, the Associated Press [reports](#).

NUCLEAR WASTE BILL ON ICE — FOR NOW: Shimkus said plans to bring a [committee-passed](#) nuclear waste package, [H.R. 3053 \(115\)](#), to the House floor are on hold for now as Nevada lawmakers, some of the most vocal opponents of the measure, deal with Sunday's massacre. "In light of the tragedy, there's no desire to move quickly," he said.

BISHOP: SILENCER CONTROVERSY 'SILLY': Delaying a broad sportsmen's package over language loosening gun silencer restrictions amid the response to the Las Vegas tragedy would be silly, Bishop told reporters. As your ME host [reports](#), Bishop added: "If that's a hang-up, that's sad that that's a hang-up." GOP sources have previously indicated the SHARE Act, [H.R. 3668 \(115\)](#), likely won't come to the floor anytime soon after the shooting that killed 59 people and injured hundreds others.

COAL, NUCLEAR CAUTIOUSLY BACK PERRY'S PLAN: Representatives of the coal and nuclear industries offered qualified support before a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee for Perry's plan to extend their plants a lifeline through FERC, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). Nuclear Energy Institute CEO Maria Korsnick voiced support for an extended public comment period while Paul Bailey, who heads the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, said he'd back the proposal if forced to answer yes or no with "a huge caveat [that] we're still looking at it."

Lotsa wiggle room: FERC General Counsel James Danly told Senate lawmakers Tuesday the commission intends to act on DOE's resiliency pricing rulemaking proposal within the 60 days outlined by Perry, but he left plenty of room to tease out what that might look like, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#).

Not giving up: Three new groups — the Energy Storage Association, the American Biogas Council, and the Business Council for Sustainable Energy — have [linked arms](#) with the other 11 energy groups asking DOE and FERC to slow down. The groups were spooked by FERC's decision on Monday to take comments on DOE's proposal even before the rulemaking was published but it's unclear how the processes will mesh. They have asked FERC to respond by Friday to their request for an extended comment period and technical conference.

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find safer ways to deliver energy. We're piloting a program that uses drones to monitor tanks and pipelines. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

GREENS PLAN SUIT OVER MISSED OZONE DEADLINE: A group of 10 environmental groups said Tuesday they [plan to sue](#) Pruitt after he missed a deadline to decide which parts of the U.S. do or do not meet the 2015 ozone standard, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). In response, an agency spokesman told ME: "The agency is continuing to work closely with the states to work through the designations process for the 2015 ozone standard."

SEIA GOES TO THE WHITE HOUSE: The Solar Energy Industries Association has a meeting today at the White House with presidential aides and staff from DOE, USTR and other cabinet agencies, Abigail Ross Hopper from the Solar Energy Industries Association said Tuesday. SEIA is trying to ward off tariffs on imported solar panels that will ultimately be decided by the president. The group would not specify who they'd be meeting with. "We are speaking with all of those folks who have a seat at the table and will help advise the president what the right decision is," Hopper said. "This is a conversation about American jobs, American blue collar jobs from many of the states that voted for our president."

LET'S GET TOGETHER, ROYALLY: Interior convenes the initial meeting of its new Royalty Policy Commission today. Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy Vincent DeVito will chair the commission, which he said will help with "looking at financial elements [at Interior] that have not been looked at in quite some time." The department [caught flak](#) earlier this year for stacking the commission with industry representatives but failing to fill slots reserved for public interest groups. NGOs said they will provide public comments, however, with The Wilderness Society set to ask Interior to increase royalty rates for oil and gas developed on public land from the current 12.5 percent. "Remarkably, for oil and gas, this rate has not changed since the 1920s," TWS said in [prepared remarks](#) seen by ME.

MORE JABS AT MANCHIN FROM BLANKENSHIP: Former West Virginia coal executive Don Blankenship released [an ad](#) Tuesday attempting to link Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) to both the Benghazi consulate attack and the deaths at Upper Big Branch Mine, Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard [reports](#). The spot, airing on state television, provocatively asks: "Does Manchin have blood on his hands?" Blankenship, who served a year in prison for conspiring to violate mine safety standards, has previously mused about challenging Manchin for his Senate seat as a Republican.

MURRAY JOBS SUIT REACHES SUPREME COURT: Coal producer Murray Energy [asked](#) the Supreme Court Tuesday to conclude Section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act requires EPA to produce a detailed study of its effects on coal jobs, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). A federal appeals court said that study represents a discretionary duty after a district court judge originally called it a mandatory one. But keep your expectations in check: It'll likely take the administration months to respond and there's no guarantee SCOTUS will ultimately hear the appeal.

AHEAD OF THE CLASS: Solar energy capacity in 2016 was 4,500 percent higher than the government thought it would be 10 years earlier, and wind supply is 350 percent above projections, the Natural Resources Defense Council finds in [a report](#) out Tuesday. "When you look at how clean energy development has exploded beyond official government projections from just 10 years ago, it offers hope that its potential will continue to far surpass expectations and we'll meet our U.S. climate goals," Amanda Levin, co-author of the report, said.

CEI SUES FOR PARIS DOCUMENTS: The Competitive Enterprise Institute filed [a lawsuit](#) Tuesday seeking emails and text messages concerning the communications of three former Obama-era State Department officials in the lead up to the Paris climate agreement being reached. In particular, the lawsuit seeks records related to Todd Stern and Sue Biniaz's communications with officials at NRDC and the World Wildlife Fund.

LAWSUIT FILED OVER ADVISORY BOARD RECORDS: The Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit Tuesday seeking NOAA records concerning its decision to end a federal climate change advisory panel — Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment — over the summer. Copy of the filing [here](#).

MOVERS, SHAKERS: State Energy & Environmental Impact Center at NYU School of Law, which aims to help state attorneys general fight Trump environmental rollbacks, today announced the additions of **Elizabeth Klein** as deputy director and **Chris Moyer** as communications director. Klein was most recently Interior's associate deputy secretary under the Obama administration and Moyer was most recently deputy communications director for California Attorney General Xavier Becerra.

Former FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable has joined the Bipartisan Policy Center as a senior fellow.

QUICK HITS

- EPA Asks Drillers and Miners for Advice on Regulating Them. [Bloomberg](#).
- Pipeline wins federal OK to carry hazardous liquids across Kentucky. [Lexington Herald-Leader](#).
- Former DEP official tapped to lead EPA regional office. [State Impact](#).
- 'The new OPEC bromance': How Saudi Arabia and Russia are bonding over oil. [CNBC](#).
- Coal-state lawmakers introduce bill to shore up pensions for miners. [Washington Examiner](#).
- Miles of Algae Covering Lake Erie. [New York Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — Rob Bishop addresses Heritage Foundation on Antiquities Act, Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE

9:30 a.m. — Natural Gas Supply Association holds its winter outlook media briefing for 2017-2018, RSVP: hinson.peters@ngsa.org

10:00 a.m. — Full committee [markup](#) on various bills, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1334

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds [hearing](#) on various EPA, NRC nominees, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — "[Air Quality Impacts of Wildfires: Perspectives of Key Stakeholders](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

12:45 p.m. — House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop holds a press call to discuss emergency response efforts in hurricane-impacted U.S. Territories, RSVP: molly.block@mail.house.gov

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs holds legislative [hearing](#) on three bills, Longworth 1334

3:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Committee holds members forum to discuss rescue and recovery in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, location: TBD

3:00 p.m. — Senate HELP Committee holds [hearing](#) on mine safety nominee, Dirksen 430

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** Advanced technology is helping us find better and safer ways to deliver energy to America. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping capabilities to monitor Chevron wells, tanks, and miles of pipeline. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/pruitts-flight-meeting-habits-raise-eyebrows-024898>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Pruitt critics see political motives in flights and meetings [Back](#)

By Emily Holden and Alex Guillén | 10/03/2017 07:02 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is facing growing political blowback about his taxpayer-funded spending and meetings with industry allies, with critics seizing on his expensive flights, \$25,000 soundproof phone booth and 18-person security detail just days after lavish travel costs brought down former HHS Secretary Tom Price.

The travel expenses drawing the most scrutiny for Pruitt — \$58,000 at last count — don't come close to the more than \$1 million that taxpayers had spent to fly Price on private and government planes since May. But to his detractors, the EPA chief's spending on charter and government flights, eavesdropper protection and round-the-clock security point to an administrator who avoids contact with the broader public and distrusts even his own agency's career staff.

Instead, according to multiple interviews and POLITICO's review of agency travel records,

Pruitt spends much of his time meeting with like-minded industry and political leaders — the kind of people who could back him in a future political campaign — but meets relatively seldom with environment and public health groups that oppose President Donald Trump's policies.

Pruitt, who spent six years as Oklahoma's elected attorney general, is already facing an EPA [inspector general investigation](#) for taking at least 10 [commercial flights](#) in March, April and May to his home state, where he is widely seen as a [potential candidate](#) for U.S. senator in 2020. Since then, he's been back to Oklahoma several times, including to meet with oil and gas companies and state political leaders and participate in media interviews, according to his published schedule.

Agency records released in the past week show that he has also spent tens-of-thousands of dollars on four private or government flights, including more than \$36,000 to travel on an Air Force plane from Cincinnati to New York in June. House Democrats have asked the inspector general to review those as well. Senate Judiciary Chairman [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) also cited some of Pruitt's travels last week in a letter urging Trump to rein in Cabinet spending.

The White House has taken note of the negative news coverage surrounding Pruitt's travels but doesn't consider his expenses to be as troubling as Price's, one administration official told POLITICO on Tuesday. Administration officials have said they consider the travel-expense controversy to have been resolved by Price's departure, which was quickly followed by an [order](#) requiring Cabinet officials to get chief of staff John Kelly's approval for almost any trips on chartered or government planes.

But environmentalists and other critics say the records raise questions about Pruitt's priorities.

Pruitt "has traveled extensively and spent an inordinate amount of time in Oklahoma, which begs the question of whether or not he's laying the groundwork for a campaign," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, senior vice president of government affairs at the League of Conservation Voters.

Pruitt's staff has defended all his trips, and has said the four non-commercial flights were approved by ethics officials and were necessary for him to make it to key meetings.

But Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican who ran EPA during President George W. Bush's first term, said she recalls taking chartered planes only while visiting remote areas of Alaska that were otherwise inaccessible.

"Most people have to wait in line for a long time for planes," Whitman said. "The fact that you just turn around and order a private plane ... that starts to look really problematic. It's a lot of money."

Whitman said Pruitt's other expenses are troubling, too. The agency already had a secure enclosure where people can talk and use the phone protected from eavesdropping — but, as The Washington Post [reported last week](#), EPA is spending nearly \$25,000 to install a customized private phone booth that is outfitted against eavesdropping inside his office at DC's Federal Triangle.

Whitman said she "can't imagine what the reasoning is behind this, except the paranoia."

One current EPA employee, who requested anonymity to discuss internal agency affairs

without authorization, told POLITICO that it's difficult for anyone outside Pruitt's office to hear someone speaking inside. A few hand-picked administrative staffers work outside the office's thick wooden doors, and beyond that are several unoccupied rooms, which are also guarded by security.

And Whitman said EPA administrators typically haven't needed the around-the-clock protection that Pruitt is demanding. "The problem that I have with it is not that he's getting the security details but that it's at the same time they're cutting the budget of the agency," she said.

Pruitt's aides say he needs his security detail, which is far bigger than what any previous administrator had, to guard him against increased threats. On one of his trips, the agency decided that his security needs warranted chartering a private flight so that Pruitt wouldn't have to fly commercial without a bodyguard or wait for a delayed plane.

His guards were initially drawn away from other duties in EPA's enforcement office until the agency made an exception to a hiring freeze to bring on more officers.

Eric Schaeffer, executive director of the Environmental Integrity Project and a former director of civil enforcement at EPA, called Pruitt's travel habits "arrogant" and "tone-deaf."

"What would Republicans have done if Gina McCarthy had done this?" Schaeffer said, referring to former President Barack Obama's second-term EPA chief. "They would have gone ape. And now they're not concerned."

Penn State climate researcher Michael Mann, a frequent critic of Trump's and Pruitt's environmental policies, said via email Monday that "ethical violations demand that Pruitt step down."

"And by ethical violations, I don't just mean his abuse of the public trust through frivolous personal use of government-funded private plane trips," Mann added. "I also mean the manner in which he has betrayed the citizens he is supposed to represent by endangering them through the dismantling of environmental protections built up over decades, under Democratic and Republican administrations."

Critics say they are most upset because Pruitt's spending comes amid potential budget cuts. He has indicated, for example, that he wants to end payments to Justice Department lawyers who force polluters to pay to clean up Superfund sites, The New York Times [reported](#) last week.

They say his travel records are just as telling in showing whom he chooses to meet with as EPA administrator.

His four non-commercial flights included a trip to visit with Oklahoma farmers, meetings with Republican officials in North Dakota and a tour to criticize a Colorado environmental project mishandled by the Obama administration.

In July, he flew in an Interior Department plane from Tulsa to Guymon, Okla., where he met with farmers as part of a tour highlighting his effort to withdraw an Obama administration water rule. Pruitt and his aides then continued in the plane to visit state officials in Oklahoma City. The total cost for both legs was \$14,434.50.

EPA declined to provide a more detailed schedule or a list of business leaders who were present. Spokesman Jahan Wilcox provided local news clips that [report](#) 90 farmers and

ranchers from Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas attended.

In August, Pruitt toured the site of the Gold King Mine spill, a 2015 mining-waste disaster caused by EPA and its contractors, for a visit in which he said the Obama administration had "failed those who counted on them." He got there via a plane that EPA had chartered from Denver to Durango, Colo., at a cost of more than \$5,000.

The agency says Pruitt had initially traveled on a commercial flight to Denver, only to learn that his planned connection to Durango would be delayed by several hours. Individual seats were available on other commercial planes but didn't have enough space for Pruitt's bodyguard or other staff, the agency said.

In a third trip, Pruitt had lunch with North Dakota Republicans — Gov. Doug Burgum, Sen. [John Hoeven](#) and Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) — in Fargo. He and two staffers then flew with the governor on his state plane to meet farmers and tour an energy research center that studies ways to keep the state's struggling coal industry alive. The ride cost EPA \$2,144.40, according to [The Washington Post](#). A spokesman said Pruitt needed to fly with Burgum to keep up with the governor's schedule. Driving between the two cities would have taken about an hour and a half.

The flight with the biggest price tag, \$36,068.50, was on an Air Force plane from Cincinnati to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on June 7. Pruitt then flew on to Rome, on what Wilcox described as a scheduled commercial flight, where he arrived several days early for a meeting with foreign environment ministers. Wilcox said Pruitt had to find a way to New York after the president invited him at the last minute to Cincinnati to promote infrastructure development.

EPA spokespeople have said they explored all other options for the Rome trip, although they did not comment on why Pruitt couldn't have flown commercially from Cincinnati to another U.S. international hub and then to Italy.

Trump's event with Pruitt was set to conclude by 2:10 p.m., according to the president's schedule. Pruitt's public schedule for the following day, June 8, didn't show any public meetings until 1 p.m., at the U.S. Embassy, and 2 p.m., with a business roundtable — which could have left time for even a lengthy international flight. Travel sites show that on a typical Wednesday, multiple options from Cincinnati to Rome would fit the time window and cost around \$3,000 per person when purchased last-minute.

On June 9, Pruitt met with officials from the Catholic Church and attended a judicial roundtable. Not until June 10 and 11 did he meet with foreign ministers, before leaving the high-profile event early to make it back for a Cabinet meeting at the White House on the morning of June 12, according to his [schedule](#). During the trip, EPA tweeted pictures of Pruitt rolling pasta and eating prosciutto with Italian environment minister Gian Luca Galletti, which critics were quick to highlight when he left ahead of schedule.

A POLITICO analysis of Pruitt's broader schedule, as shown in EPA records, demonstrate he's spent much of his time meeting with key industries, including ones back home. He's met most often with oil and gas executives, followed by agriculture and farming.

Of at least 30 meetings or speaking engagements Pruitt had with oil and gas executives or trade groups, seven appear to have connections to Oklahoma. He's spent time with executives

of companies whose employees donated at least \$37,000 for his 2014 campaign to be Oklahoma attorney general, according to state campaign finance records.

For example, Pruitt met in March with representatives from Oklahoma Gas & Electric, whose executives were a major source of cash for his 2014 reelection campaign. Pruitt has also had face-to-face sit-downs with John Minge, the head of BP America, Duke Energy's Lynn Good and the boards of the National Mining Association, the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, the American Petroleum Institute and American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers.

Pruitt spends far more time with industry and political leaders than with environmental advocates, according to two months of calendars released under public records requests and another six months of far less detailed schedules that the agency has published.

EPA maintains a list of environmental or public health groups the agency has met with, but they do not appear officially on Pruitt's schedule.

The EPA chief has also spoken at events or held calls with right-wing policy groups that spend little of their time on environmental issues. For example, he had a call in May with the Family Research Council, a conservative group that lobbies against abortion rights and believes homosexuality is "unnatural" but has never filed comments on EPA proceedings.

In the same month, he had a speaking engagement with the Council for National Policy, which advocates for limited government and "Judeo-Christian values," and was on a call with the State Policy Network, an umbrella group for state-level conservative think tanks.

He continues to appear at events for the Federalist Society, a group that advocates for an originalist interpretation of the Constitution and has become an established gatekeeper for conservatives seeking judicial posts.

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Price resigns from HHS after facing fire for travel [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond, Rachana Pradhan and Adriel Bettelheim | 09/29/2017 04:40 PM EDT

HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned Friday in the face of multiple federal inquiries and growing criticism of his use of private and government planes for travel, at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$1 million since May.

The White House said the former seven-term Georgia congressman, 63, offered his resignation earlier in the day and that President Donald Trump had accepted it.

Price becomes the first Trump administration Cabinet secretary to step down. The White House said Trump asked Deputy Assistant Health Secretary Don Wright to serve as acting secretary of the agency, which has an annual budget \$1.15 trillion and includes the Medicare and Medicaid programs, as well as the FDA, NIH and CDC.

As late as Thursday, Price said he believed he had the president's support. But the tumult surrounding his travel became another distraction for an administration already reeling from the defeat of repeated Senate efforts to repeal Obamacare and criticism for its hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

Price ran afoul of Trump in part because his actions seemed to symbolize everything the president had inveighed against on the campaign trail by vowing to "drain the swamp." The fallout extended to the entire Cabinet Friday night when the White House [announced](#) that chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Price, in his resignation letter, expressed regret that "recent events" distracted from efforts to overhaul the health care system. "In order for you to move forward without further disruption, I am officially tendering my resignation as the Secretary of Health and Human Services effective 11:59 PM on Friday," he wrote.

Senate Democrats quickly served notice they were preparing for a potential confirmation fight over Price's successor, saying the next HHS secretary must not undermine Obamacare. Under Price, the department cut the law's enrollment period in half and slashed advertising and outreach for the enrollment period starting in November.

"The next HHS secretary must follow the law when it comes to the Affordable Care Act instead of trying to sabotage it," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"Tom Price's replacement needs to be focused on implementing the law as written by Congress and keeping the president's promise to bring down the high cost of prescription drugs," Senate Finance ranking Democrat Ron Wyden of Oregon said in a statement.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, a close ally, praised Price as a dedicated public servant. "His vision and hard work were vital to the House's success passing our health care legislation," Ryan said in a statement.

POLITICO revealed that Price flew at least 26 times on private aircraft at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, a sharp break with his predecessors' practice. Many of Price's flights were between major cities that offered inexpensive alternatives on commercial airlines, including Nashville, Philadelphia and San Diego.

On some of those trips, Price, an orthopedic surgeon, mixed official business with leisure. He took a government-funded private jet in August to get to St. Simons Island, an exclusive Georgia resort where he and his wife own land, a day and a half before he addressed a medical conference he and his wife have long attended. In June, HHS chartered a private jet to fly Price to Nashville, where he owns a condominium and where his son resides. Price toured a medicine dispensary, spoke to a local health summit organized by a friend and had lunch with his son, an HHS official confirmed.

Price also used military aircraft for multi-national trips to Africa, Europe and Asia, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers. The White House said it had approved those trips but not the private jets within the United States.

Price tried to defuse the controversy by promising on Thursday to reimburse the government for the approximately \$52,000 cost of his own seat on his domestic trips. But that wasn't

enough to tamp down the scandal, which had [infuriated](#) the president and prompted a bipartisan inquiry from the House Oversight Committee and separate calls for accountability from lawmakers including Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley. The inspector general of Price's own agency is [reviewing](#) if Price complied with federal travel regulations.

The White House put Cabinet officials on notice Friday that it would crack down on use of private planes, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public, reminding department and agency heads that, by regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

The issue of Cabinet members' travel has already extended beyond Price: POLITICO reported Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides [took several flights](#) on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights in the Caribbean. Zinke dismissed the furor as a "little B.S." during a Friday appearance at the Heritage Foundation.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price reimbursed the agency for his wife's travel, but declined to elaborate.

White House officials have grouched about Price's frequent travels, with one senior White House official saying the HHS secretary was "nowhere to be found" as they mounted a last-ditch unsuccessful push to repeal Obamacare.

Congressional Democrats attacked Price for advocating spending cuts to the health agencies he oversaw and health care programs while spending taxpayer dollars on private jets. "There could not be a clearer statement of the Trump administration's priorities," Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) said. Key Democrats overseeing health issues in Congress had formally requested that HHS's inspector general review Price's travel practices.

In June, Price defended a proposed fiscal 2018 budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price told the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Ethical questions dogged Price even before questions about his travel arose. During his Senate confirmation hearing to helm HHS, Price faced pointed questions about his personal investments in health care companies during his time in Congress. Democrats called on government ethics officials to investigate Price's health care stock trades, following reports that he got a sweetheart deal from a biotech company and invested in Zimmer Biomet, a medical device-maker, just days before writing legislation that would have eased regulations on the sector.

The Senate confirmed Price by a 52-47 margin in February after he maintained full

Republican support.

Price carved out a reputation as a staunch fiscal conservative during his decade-plus tenure in the House of Representatives. He generally supported reducing government spending on health care while shifting more of the financial burden onto individuals. Like most conservatives, he's supported privatizing Medicare so that seniors would receive fixed dollar amounts to buy coverage and limiting federal Medicaid spending to give states a lump sum, or block grant, and more control over how they could use it.

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Trump expected to pick Bush EPA official turned industry lawyer for agency's air office

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By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 10:03 AM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to nominate Bill Wehrum, a former George W. Bush-era EPA official, to run the agency's powerful air office, according to two sources outside the administration familiar with the plans.

While Wehrum would bring critical knowledge of EPA's workings and environmental law, he also represents several high-profile industry groups in lawsuits challenging numerous Obama-era EPA regulations, meaning he may face recusal and conflict issues similar to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Wehrum served as acting assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation from 2005 to 2007. Bush pulled Wehrum's formal nomination to that post after Democrats blocked him as too industry-friendly, though the new simple majority threshold on nominees likely will prevent that from happening again. Wehrum spent 2001-2005 as counsel to Jeff Holmstead, Bush's first air administrator. Holmstead [emerged](#) last month as a possible Trump pick to be EPA deputy administrator, though coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler remains the frontrunner for that job.

In a 2013 [interview](#) with Law360, Wehrum said that despite the Supreme Court's 2007 ruling that said EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases, he believes "Congress never intended the EPA to address an issue such as climate change under the Clean Air Act."

He also called for lengthening the review cycle for National Ambient Air Quality Standards beyond five years — House Republicans recently passed a bill that would stretch that to ten years — and said the Obama administration tried to shift power away from the states and toward EPA, comments since echoed by Pruitt.

And in a 2015 Wall Street Journal [editorial](#), Wehrum said the EPA-caused Gold King mine spill highlighted how the agency "often criminalizes actions that are nothing more than accidents, many far less damaging to the environment than the Animas River disaster." That spill fouled Colorado's Animas River and downstream areas for several weeks before water quality [returned to normal](#) and the river was reopened to recreational activities.

Wehrum pointed to the 2014 chemical spill that fouled drinking water for hundreds of thousands of West Virginia residents, which led to an EPA investigation and the company's bankruptcy, as an example of "unjust" treatment.

For the last decade Wehrum has been a partner at the high-powered D.C. law firm Hunton & Williams, where he currently represents high-profile clients, including two leading oil and gas industry lobbying groups, in a number of ongoing lawsuits against EPA.

Wehrum represents the American Petroleum Institute in a challenge to EPA's methane rule for new oil and gas wells, as well as the separate legal battle over EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's decision to stay that rule while under review, where API has defended Pruitt's stay.

He also represents either API or American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, a refinery sector group, in lawsuits over a 2015 rule limiting pollution from oil refineries; a ["regional consistency" rule](#) that governs how court rulings apply to nationwide EPA regulations; and permitting rules for Indian lands.

He represents the Utility Air Regulatory Group, a coalition that challenges EPA air regulations, in a legal challenge over an Obama-era rule meant to decrease explosions at chemical plants and other facilities. Pruitt has put that rule on hold while it is under review.

Wehrum helped the Gas Processors Association challenge two greenhouse gas reporting rules. He took an EPA boiler regulation to court on behalf of a coalition of industry groups, including the American Chemistry Council, the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Forest & Paper Association. He is challenging an EPA emissions rule for brick manufacturers on behalf of an industry group. And he represented construction interests in various lawsuits against the Labor Department, including an ongoing challenge to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's 2016 silica exposure rule.

Wehrum did not immediately reply to a request for comment on Monday. EPA and White House spokespeople did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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EPA nominee's case against OSHA rule draws skepticism from judges [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/26/2017 12:24 PM EDT

Federal judges seemed skeptical today of arguments made by William Wehrum, President Donald Trump's pick to head EPA's air office, against the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's silica rule.

Wehrum, an attorney at Hunton & Williams, argued on behalf of various industry groups that OSHA had not proven that lowering the silica standard would provide any significant health benefits.

"OSHA had a thumb on the scale" because it had already decided to lower the standard and had "lost objectivity," Wehrum told a three-judge panel at the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge David S. Tatel called Wehrum's comment "curious" and pointed to reams of data and studies OSHA used to justify the new standard.

Chief Judge Merrick Garland noted that there are some legitimate disagreements among scientists about silica's health effects — but he said the law says the regulation in such situations should lean in favor of caution. "There's supposed to be a thumb on the scale in terms of safety," Garland said.

"We believe that skepticism is well warranted," Wehrum replied.

A Justice Department attorney defending the rule faced light questioning from the judges about OSHA's methodologies and called Wehrum's arguments about uncertainty in epidemiology "flimsy."

As air administrator, Wehrum would be charged with implementing or writing new versions of a number of health-based standards, including the 2015 ozone rule. EPA officials last week noted that Wehrum can argue against the OSHA rule since it is not an EPA regulation and is unrelated to his nomination.

WHAT'S NEXT: The D.C. Circuit will weigh Wehrum's argument along with arguments made by other attorneys on technological, economic and union issues with the silica rule. Wehrum's nomination hearing was postponed last week and has not yet been rescheduled.

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Trump brings harsh edge to Puerto Rico trip [Back](#)

By Nolan D. McCaskill and Matthew Nussbaum | 10/03/2017 05:03 AM EDT

President Donald Trump brought a jarring tone to Puerto Rico as he toured the hurricane devastation Tuesday, appearing to blame the U.S. territory for having "thrown our budget a little out of whack" and complimenting officials for sustaining only 16 deaths, compared with

the much higher human toll of Hurricane Katrina.

"I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you've thrown our budget a little out of whack because we've spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico," Trump said as he met with local officials from the island, which declared a form of bankruptcy in May. "And that's fine."

The president also appeared to boast that the death toll in Puerto Rico pales in comparison to the more than 1,800 fatalities that followed Katrina in 2005.

"We saved a lot of lives," said Trump, who added that "every death is a horror" and broached what he called "a real catastrophe" in Katrina.

"Sixteen people versus in the thousands," the president said, overstating Katrina's death toll.

"You can be very proud of all of your people, all of our people working together," he told Gov. Ricardo Rosselló. "Sixteen versus literally thousands of people. You can be very proud. Everybody around this table and everybody watching can really be very proud of what's taken place in Puerto Rico."

A Rosselló spokesman said Tuesday night that the death toll had more than doubled, to 34, news agencies reported.

Trump landed in Puerto Rico on Tuesday after spending much of the past week boasting about a wildly successful response effort that hasn't matched the reality of the hurricane-ravaged island — and after picking a fight over the weekend with San Juan's mayor and other "political motivated ingrates" who have questioned the robustness of the federal response.

The visit came as he's attempting to be soother-in-chief for the nation after a shooting in Las Vegas left at least 59 dead on Sunday night — the first time he's had to navigate two disasters of national scope that are politically perilous for any president, but especially one prone to off-the-cuff riffs.

The Puerto Rico stop marks only the start of emotionally charged travels for Trump this week. On Wednesday, he is scheduled to travel to Las Vegas to meet with the families of victims of Sunday's massacre.

Trump struck a somber and unifying tone Monday when discussing the attack in Las Vegas. But on Tuesday, he traded the scripted and controlled setting of the Diplomatic Room for a storm-ravaged island where more than half of the residents remain without access to drinking water and only 5 percent of the island has electricity.

Throughout the day, he boasted about his administration's response and appeared to repeatedly blame Puerto Rico for its poor infrastructure and financial situation before Hurricane Maria ripped through and left a humanitarian crisis in its wake.

Early on Tuesday, Trump extended praise to his officials and to Rosselló, Puerto Rico's Democratic governor. And he asked the island territory's Republican non-voting congresswoman, Jenniffer González-Colón, to repeat past accolades of the administration's response for the television cameras.

"He's not even from my party, and he started right at the beginning appreciating what we did," Trump said of Rosselló. "Right from the beginning this governor did not play politics. He

didn't play it at all. He was saying it like it was, and he was giving us the highest grades. And on behalf of our country, I wanna thank you."

Trump, however, sought to have the plaudits reciprocated, noting that he watched González-Colón say "such nice things about all of the people that have worked so hard" the other day and asking her to repeat her compliments.

"Jenniffer, do you think you can say a little bit [of] what you said about us today?" Trump asked. "And it's not about me. It's about these incredible people, from the military to FEMA to first responders. I mean, I've never seen people working so hard in my life. Perhaps you could say, congresswoman?"

Cameras captured the president engaging in a conversation with a hurricane victim, asking multiple questions and commending public officials in closing, but also telling another group of victims impacted by the storm to "have a good time."

The pool of reporters accompanying the president described a pair of basketball-related exchanges. Trump asked a teenager whether he played basketball and was going to the NBA. After handing out bags of rice at a church, Trump began tossing paper towels into the crowd — mimicking the motions of a jump shot.

In later remarks Tuesday — as the president handed out flashlights — Trump insisted Puerto Ricans don't need flashlights, though much of the territory is still without power, as he acknowledged to reporters just minutes prior.

"The power grid, honestly, was devastated before the hurricanes even hit. And then the hurricanes hit and they wiped them out," Trump said. "A lot of generators have been already brought to the island. Most of the hospitals are open — or at least partially open. But most of them now are open. And, again, the job that's been done here is really nothing short of a miracle. It's been incredible."

Trump has courted controversy by blasting on Twitter the "poor leadership ability" of Puerto Rican officials, who he said "want everything to be done for them." Trump had also said the island's leaders "are not able to get their workers to help," and he accused Carmen Yulín Cruz, the Democratic mayor of San Juan — who repeatedly slammed the Trump administration's response to Hurricane Maria — of trying to score partisan political points by criticizing him.

"We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico. Outside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates," Trump tweeted on Sunday.

All the while, he's kept up an upbeat tone about the response. He told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday that it's "amazing what's been done in a very short period of time." He added: "There's never been a piece of land that we've known that was so devastated."

Other officials have echoed his attitude. "The federal government is doing everything within our powers and capabilities to first focus on the life-sustaining and life-saving measures as well as on the rebuilding process," press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters on Monday.

But Trump's comments on Tuesday at times distracted from his administration's response efforts, with Cruz, the San Juan mayor, freshly criticizing the president for his comments

about Puerto Rico's impact on the U.S. budget.

"It goes to prove the lack of sensibility," she told CNN in an interview.

Colin Wilhelm contributed to this report.

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White House seeking \$29 billion more in disaster assistance [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Seung Min Kim | 10/03/2017 08:54 PM EDT

The Trump administration is expected to request about \$29 billion in disaster assistance on Wednesday, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

The administration is expected to ask Congress to deliver nearly \$13 billion in funding for recovery from hurricanes that struck Puerto Rico and other parts of the United States, \$16 billion in flood insurance relief, and more than \$500 million for wildfires, the source said. Congress is expected to consider the package in mid- to late-October.

The figures were first reported by the Associated Press. The nearly \$13 billion in FEMA funding is estimated to last through Dec. 31, one source said, although the government has been spending disaster money more quickly than expected because of the recent spate of hurricanes.

Congress previously approved more than \$15 billion in disaster assistance for hurricanes in Texas and Florida in September.

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Nuclear waste bill clears House committee with bipartisan backing [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/28/2017 12:05 PM EDT

The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved nuclear waste reform legislation this morning on a bipartisan 49-4 vote, facing only a handful of Democratic holdouts.

The bill, H.R. 3053, sponsored by E&C Environment Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#), would make the first changes in 30 years to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which names Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole waste repository.

The committee agreed to a compromise [manager's amendment](#) that would let DOE open one interim storage facility while regulators continue to work on a permanent repository. That eliminated most of the [Democratic objections](#) to a draft version of the bill that would have

barred such work until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued a decision on Yucca Mountain.

Yucca Mountain supporters have been concerned that a storage site would take the pressure off of approving a repository. Meanwhile, lawmakers have been anxious to move the waste building up at defunct nuclear power plants in their states.

Another [bipartisan amendment](#), also approved on a voice vote, removed the bill's original language impacting Nevada's water rights and air permitting. The amendment would also increase Yucca's capacity from 70,000 metric tons to 110,000 metric tons.

The bill also authorizes payments to host states and limits work on any defense waste-only repository.

New Jersey Rep. [Frank Pallone](#), the top Democrat on E&C, said that the bill was "a delicate and difficult negotiation, but I believe we have arrived at a very good compromise."

WHAT'S NEXT: Shimkus has said he expects the bill to get a vote by the full House before the August recess, but GOP leaders have not yet scheduled floor time for the bill.

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Bishop: 'Silly' to delay sportsmen's package over silencer provision [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 10/03/2017 02:26 PM EDT

House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) told reporters today it would be "silly" to remove provisions in a broad sportsmen's package, [H.R. 3668 \(115\)](#), loosening restrictions on purchasing gun silencers even after the nation's worst shooting massacre in modern history.

"The suppressor part actually helps people," he said. "To remove it, you're not helping anybody out. That would be silly to do that."

He added: "If that's a hang up, that's sad that that's a hang up."

GOP sources previously [told POLITICO](#) the Las Vegas shooting would derail consideration of the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act at least in the short term.

Bishop said he'd been told by leadership the legislation would get a floor vote "soon," but said he'd never been given a specific date. But the Utah Republican said he hadn't spoken to them about the matter this week.

"To get a floor vote for things, I would strip naked if I had to," he said.

WHAT'S NEXT: Republican sources have previously indicated the SHARE Act is unlikely to get a floor vote in the near future.

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Coal, nuclear industry leaders cautiously supportive of DOE proposal [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/03/2017 05:38 PM EDT

Coal and nuclear power industry representatives offered qualified endorsements today of the Energy Department's proposed regulation that offer their plants an economic lifeline.

Many experts are [already confused](#) about DOE's proposal to FERC, and a strange-bedfellows coalition of energy groups, including oil and renewables trade associations, has asked regulators to [slow down](#).

Testifying before a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee, Nuclear Energy Institute CEO Maria Korsnick said she'd support having another 30 days to comment on the Energy Secretary Rick Perry's plan to FERC, which gave regulators just 60 days to finalize the rule or issue an interim final rule. She said the proposal is "a good baseline but additional conversations need to be had through the rulemaking process."

Paul Bailey, who heads the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, demurred when asked how long FERC should collect comments, stressing that the work "needs to be done very, very quickly." Bailey said he'd back the proposal if he was only given a yes-or-no option, but he added there was "a huge caveat [that] we're still looking at it."

Rep. [Fred Upton](#) (R-Mich.) noted that FERC often allows 180 days to comment on complex proposals.

Meanwhile, Marty Durbin, an executive with the American Petroleum Institute, which has criticized the proposal, said it was "totally inconsistent" with the grid study DOE issued in August.

John Moore, of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said he would toss the proposal "in the trash can because I don't think it meets the minimum standards of due process and the Administrative Procedures Act."

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC has asked for comments on the proposal to be submitted by Oct. 23 and for reply comments by Nov. 7. DOE has not yet published its proposal in the Federal Register, which will kick off the 60-day countdown clock.

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Official: FERC will take 'appropriate action' on DOE pricing rule within 60 days [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/03/2017 04:22 PM EDT

FERC intends to act on the Energy Department's resiliency pricing rulemaking proposal

within the 60 days Energy Secretary Rick Perry directed last week, FERC General Counsel James Danly told lawmakers this afternoon. But his comments left plenty of room for interpretation.

"Right now, the commission is internally reviewing the notice of proposed rulemaking that was put forward by the secretary," Danly told members of a Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee, while noting that FERC has [already requested comments](#) on the proposal.

"We're reviewing the options that are available and we are in the process of building the record by soliciting these comments and reply comments," he said. "Once they're assembled, we're going to review them and take the appropriate action within the 60-day timeframe established by the NOPR."

The law that Perry is using to initiate the rulemaking at FERC directs regulators to take "final action" within a reasonable timeframe, but it's unclear what FERC might consider a final action. Similarly, Danly's phrase "appropriate action" could represent a number of decisions by FERC.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC has asked for comments on the proposal to be submitted by Oct. 23 and for reply comments by Nov. 7. DOE has also not yet published its proposal in the Federal Register, which will kick off the 60-day countdown clock.

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Greens will sue Pruitt over missed ozone deadline [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/03/2017 05:13 PM EDT

Ten environmental groups [say they plan to sue](#) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt for missing the Oct. 1 deadline to decide which parts of the U.S. do or do not meet the 2015 ozone standard, a critical step toward implementing the rule and curbing pollution.

"It's an outrage that Scott Pruitt just willfully ignored his legal and moral obligation to keep American communities safe from dangerous air pollution that sends children to the hospital," Matthew Gravatt of the Sierra Club said in a statement.

Pruitt earlier this year announced plans to delay the designations by one year, citing trouble with data collection from states. Following lawsuits from green groups and Democratic attorneys general, EPA reversed course and said Pruitt would work to meet the deadline. But the deadline passed this week without any word from EPA on any designations.

The underlying 2015 standard is itself under review at EPA, along with a host of other Obama-era regulations. EPA in recent weeks also sent for White House review what appears to be a proposal setting new thresholds for which areas would have to take action to improve their air quality.

EPA on Monday had no comment on when the agency plans to issue the designations.

Groups suing include the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, American Lung Association and National Parks Conservation Association.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Clean Air Act requires anyone suing EPA over a missed deadline to give the agency at least 60 days' notice. The lawsuit could be filed as soon as early December.

To view online [click here](#).

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Taxpayer advocate, Democrats see industry tilt on Zinke's royalties panel [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/14/2017 03:33 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has pledged to increase energy revenue from federal lands, but congressional Democrats and public watchdogs are worried the agency is putting key policy decisions about royalties in the hands of the industry.

Interior officials have said increasing drilling on federal lands would help fulfill President Donald Trump's promise to "usher in a golden age of energy dominance" — and help restore the agency's coffers back to levels seen a decade ago, when they were bolstered by oil prices that flirted with \$150 a barrel.

Now, with oil prices under \$50 a barrel, the portion of Interior's budget from those revenues has dropped to \$6.2 billion, one-quarter of where it was in during the heady market of 2008.

"I will be looking at revenue," Zinke [told](#) senators during a June budget hearing, pointing to the federal income from natural gas, oil and wind. "If you're going to operate on public land, then the public should have a say, because we are all stewards of our public lands. We want to make sure we have a fair return. That return should be transparent."

But public interest groups and Democrats say the 20-member advisory committee Zinke [named](#) to review royalty rates that oil, natural gas and coal companies pay for access to federal land and water is stocked with industry-linked members.

The committee includes five energy company representatives and six others members who hail from energy-friendly, GOP-led local governments. Critics say it lacks representatives from public interest groups or Democrats who might question whether the public is getting a fair deal from new drilling.

"We should be exploring better royalty structures," Sen. [Tom Udall](#) (D-N.M), whose state is the fifth largest oil producer in the country, said in an email. "But I'm skeptical that the royalty policy committee established by Secretary Zinke is structured to ask the most probing and balanced questions to benefit citizens." Udall plans to reintroduce his legislation, [S. 2254 \(108\)](#), next week that would institute royalties on gold, silver and other precious minerals currently excluded from generating royalties.

Ryan Alexander, president of public watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, lauded Zinke's move to restart that commission as an opportunity to make sure taxpayers get a fair

return for energy developed on public lands, but its make-up didn't give her confidence that would happen.

"There's a lot of people who know a lot of stuff on that committee," said Alexander, whose nomination to the committee was rejected by Interior. "But there isn't anyone who focuses on taxpayer interest. It is a definitely a concern that this is weighted toward the industry. We're going to be watching carefully."

Republicans have backed Zinke's exclusion of environmental and public interest groups.

"Many of these public interest groups have been driving this debate in court and so forth at the demise of our natural resource industry, and our economies and jobs in places like Montana," Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) told POLITICO. "So it's time to change it up."

Interior's royalty rates dictate the percentage of the proceeds from oil, gas or other energy produced from federal lands or waters that companies must share with the government. The new committee will "provide advice to the Secretary ... on the fair market value of and on the collection of revenues derived from, the development of energy and mineral resources on Federal and Indian lands," according to the [charter](#) Zinke approved in March.

Oil production on federal lands reached an all-time high of 580 million barrels in 2016 from the surge in offshore production, according to data from the Office of Natural Resources Revenue, an overall increase of 33 percent from 2008.

Even as oil production surged, oil revenues flowing to Interior dropped to \$2.8 billion, however, the lowest point since 2005, largely because of weak market prices. U.S. oil averaged \$43.29 per barrel last year, less than half the price in 2014.

Natural gas volumes have fallen by a third since 2008, with most of the drop because of offshore drillers' shift to more profitable oil production. And coal production on federal land fell by a third between 2008 and 2016, following electric utilities' switching to cheaper natural gas.

Interior's decisions on royalties have a major impact on state budgets. In 2016, Wyoming received \$684 million from federal leases, nearly one-quarter of the state's \$3 billion budget that year, while New Mexico got \$386 million, about 6 percent of the state's total budget.

Interior lowered the minimum royalty payments for oil and gas produced from shallow-water areas of the Gulf of Mexico that it [offered](#) in a lease in August. But that cut failed to attract companies to the area, which is largely tapped out of oil and gas from years of development, and only 10 percent of the tracts up for auction were leased.

Interior has also rolled back an Obama-era rule on assessing the value of coal from federal lands that required mining companies to use the price they sold the coal at on the open market — not to affiliate companies they may have sold it to at a steep discount. Zinke's move did away with a rule that the department [estimated](#) would increase Interior's coal royalty revenues by up to \$85 million a year, but that coal companies complained was too burdensome.

Zinke's appointments to the committee include employees of ConocoPhillips, Anadarko Petroleum and the National Ocean Industries Association, a trade group representing offshore drilling companies.

He also included Matthew Adams, vice president of taxation at Cloud Peak Energy, a Wyoming-based coal company that donated \$10,000 to Zinke's PAC in 2016. Cloud Peak paid the department \$80 million in royalties last year, according to government [data](#).

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift called the commission members "eminently qualified individuals," and added that Cloud Point Energy's donation to Zinke's PAC was "absolutely not" a factor in appointing a company representative to the commission.

Another member of the committee is John Sweeney, an investor relations executive at VWR Corp., a Pennsylvania-based company that provides laboratory services to the pharmaceutical, biotech, industrial and healthcare industries.

Sweeney nominated himself to the commission and was appointed because of "his education and experience in business connecting investors with developers," Swift said. Sweeney did not reply to messages seeking comment.

Swift also pointed to the native American tribes on the commission as operating some renewable energy projects. Those tribes on the board are also heavily invested in oil, gas and coal projects. The Navajo Nation, whose president Russell Begaye is on the royalty commission, runs the largest coal-fired power plant in the western United States, and Begaye [wrote](#) an op-ed in March asking for government assistance to keep plant from shutting.

Zinke promised to appoint up to four members representing "academia and public interest" groups when he announced plans for the commission, and he has stressed the importance of public oversight on royalties.

But the sole slot that was allotted in the end for a representative for the public interest went to Daniel Ruzs, a coal expert from energy industry consulting group Wood MacKenzie.

Interior's Swift initially said the choice came about because "no groups identifying themselves as public interest were nominated or self-nominated." She didn't address the rejection of the Taxpayers for Common Sense nomination, but said the group was "still permitted to attend the public meetings and the public comments are taken into consideration in decision making processes."

The commission also doesn't include any local government representatives identified as Democrats or nominated by Democratic governors. No one from Colorado or California was appointed, despite those two states producing more energy resources from federal lands than Alaska or Texas.

Gov. Steve Bullock, the Democratic head of Zinke's home state of Montana, nominated a Montana Department of Natural Resources employee who helps manage 6.2 million acres in the state that received \$23 million in royalties from Interior in 2016, though that nominee was rejected. Interior did name a Montana representative as an alternate board member in case a sitting member drops out.

Instead, Interior appointed a Clinton Carter, Alabama's Republican state finance director. Alabama received \$1.9 million in royalties from the department in 2016.

The lack of public accountability advocates on the board threatens to undermine its purpose of helping Interior increase public revenue, House Natural Resources committee ranking member

[Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) said in a [letter](#) to Zinke.

Appointing a committee dominated by the fossil fuel industry with no public interest voices does not build "greater trust and transparency," Grijalva said in his letter, adding that the committee "should not be allowed to act as a fig leaf for actions designed solely to favor the interests of drilling and mining companies."

To view online [click here](#).

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Convicted coal exec attacks Manchin in new ad [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 10/03/2017 04:15 PM EDT

Don Blankenship, a former energy executive convicted of a misdemeanor related to the deaths of 29 coal miners in West Virginia, is paying for an inflammatory new television ad attacking Democratic Sen. [Joe Manchin](#).

The [30-second ad](#), which is airing on broadcast television in the state, starts by talking about the deaths of four Americans at the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya and then links it to the deaths at Upper Big Branch Mine, which Blankenship blames on the federal government. The ad repeatedly shows Manchin side-by-side with former President Barack Obama and Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, along with captions asking: "Does Manchin have blood on his hands?"

"In 2012, four Americans were killed by terrorists in Benghazi, Libya. Many say the Obama administration hid the Benghazi truth," a male narrator says. "The truth about more killed Americans has also been hidden. In 2010, 29 Americans were killed. None of them were an ambassador, none were CIA agents, none were killed by terrorists. They were coal miners who were killed when the U.S. government reduced their mines' airflow. President Trump must be told the truth about Obama's deadliest cover-up."

The ad is the latest in a series of amateurish spots Blankenship has paid for attacking Manchin and asserting federal officials are to blame for the deaths at Upper Big Branch. The United Mine Workers of America have blasted the ads as "desperate, low-life attempt to once again shift the blame for a decade of death, destruction and despair at Massey Energy while Blankenship was CEO."

Manchin is considered a slight favorite to win reelection in a state President Donald Trump won handily. Rep. [Evan Jenkins](#) and Attorney General Patrick Morissey are competing in the Republican primary to challenge Manchin in 2018. Blankenship has previously mused about running for the seat himself as a Republican.

To view online [click here](#).

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Murray asks Supreme Court to force EPA study of coal job losses [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/03/2017 03:21 PM EDT

Coal producer Murray Energy has [asked](#) the Supreme Court to force EPA to study how its regulations and other actions affect coal jobs.

A federal judge in West Virginia initially sided with Murray in ruling that Section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act required EPA to produce a separate, detailed study of its effects on coal jobs, despite EPA arguments that it did so on a rolling basis as it worked on each rule.

But just days before the July 1 deadline for EPA to cough up a study going back through 2009, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled](#) that the study is a discretionary duty, not a mandatory one open to enforcement in the courts, thus freeing EPA from having to produce the study.

Last week, Murray appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that the 4th Circuit's ruling "creates a substantial blind spot where EPA will be left to its own devices.

"An evaluation of the job losses that have occurred and those jobs that remain under threat because of EPA's decisions will be a powerful tool in helping EPA, Congress, the States, and Plaintiffs address and correct a policy that, up until now, has been far 'too narrow a policy and a cruel one at that for workers' in the coal industry," Murray wrote.

The [case](#) is *Murray Energy v. Pruitt*, 17-478.

WHAT'S NEXT: It will likely take months for the Trump administration to reply. If the Supreme Court agrees to hear the appeal — a major question — it likely will do so next spring or fall.

To view online [click here](#).

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Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 5:43:47 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/02/2017 05:41 AM EDT

DIRE SITUATION IN PUERTO RICO AMID TRUMP ATTACKS: President Donald Trump spent the weekend tweeting defenses of his administration's response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico from his New Jersey golf resort but his words bear little resemblance to the dire situation on the ground. Just 5 percent of the island has electricity and more than half of people lack access to clean drinking water more than a week and a half after the hurricane.

View from the ground: Trump in a series of weekend tweets bashed the "poor leadership ability" of Puerto Rican officials, who he said "want everything to be done for them," POLITICO's Matthew Nussbaum and Marc Caputo [report](#). But Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, who the Defense Department tapped to lead its response efforts, told [the PBS NewsHour](#) "this is the worst I've ever seen" in terms of damage from the storm. And Carmen Yulín Cruz, San Juan's mayor and the target of a number of Trump's Twitter missives, told ABC's "This Week" of the federal officials responding: "Their heart is in the right place, but we have to cut the red tape. That's the one message."

Several relief officials [told Matthew and Marc over the weekend](#) that the administration's patting itself on the back over the response was not helping, especially as the conditions on the ground in no way matched the rhetoric. "We have to think of this as societal collapse: no power, no water, no food, no nothing," one relief official told them from Puerto Rico. "We came in thinking this would be a traditional model of disaster response ... It is up to us to keep everything moving. Civil society is pretty much gone, and we didn't realize that until like 36 or 48 hours ago. And who knows when it's going to end." Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) summed up his view of the response during an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation": "The bottom line is at least for the first week and a half the effort has been slow footed, disorganized, and not adequate," he said.

Administration mounts defense: FEMA Director Brock Long told "Fox News Sunday" the administration continued to make daily progress on improving the situation but added "absolutely" there was a long road ahead. "This is the most logistically challenging event the United States has ever seen and we have been moving and pushing as fast as the situation allows," Long said. "It's going to be multiple — multiple months before power is restored to many of these areas and that's just a reality." In an update obtained by [Axios](#), Tom Bossert, Trump's homeland security adviser, wrote: "Lack of power and the persistent commodity distribution problems on the island are major focuses right now. This is still an urgent situation."

WELCOME TO MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and NOIA's Nicolette Nye was first up to name Rep. [Dana Rohrabacher](#) as the former Reagan speechwriter. For today: Which former congressperson joined the Green Party in 2008 and became their presidential candidate? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

WHITE HOUSE TIGHTENS REINS ON CABINET TRAVEL: After Tom Price's

[resignation](#) Friday over hundreds of thousands in private flights, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly must now approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft," POLITICO's Matthew Nussbaum [reports](#). "Every penny we spend comes from the taxpayer," OMB Director Mick Mulvaney wrote in a memo shortly after Price's resignation. "We thus owe it to the taxpayer to work as hard managing that money wisely as the taxpayer must do to earn it in the first place." Officials should stick to commercial travel "with few exceptions," he wrote. Remember both EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke have faced scrutiny in recent days for non-commercial travel.

Key line from memo: "Put another way, just because something is legal doesn't make it right."

Questions for Zinke continue: The Campaign for Accountability on Friday [asked](#) Office of Special Counsel and Interior's inspector general to probe whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act by speaking to the NHL's Vegas Golden Knights. He spoke at the dinner organized by team owner Bill Foley, one of Zinke's biggest campaign donors. Then, as POLITICO first [reported](#), he hopped a \$12,000 charter flight to an airport 20 minutes away from his Montana residence.

Some argue Pruitt, Zinke deserve Price's fate: A number of green and progressive groups urged Trump to also fire Pruitt and Zinke due to their non-commercial travel. "Forcing Tom Price from office does not come close to answering questions in the Trump Administration about the abuse of taxpayer funds when Ryan Zinke and Scott Pruitt are unrepentantly wasting hundreds of thousands on their own luxurious travel and sticking hardworking Americans with the bill," Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune said in one statement. "They deserve Price's fate and should be removed from office immediately."

MORE PUSHBACK TO PERRY'S FERC ASK: Count the solar and wind industries among those concerned by Energy Secretary Rick Perry's push to throw a lifeline to the struggling coal and nuclear industries (ICYMI Pro's Darius Dixon [dived deep](#) into the proposal Perry launched Friday). "The best way to guarantee a resilient and reliable electric grid is through market-based compensation for performance, not guaranteed payments for some, based on a government-prescribed definition," Amy Farrell, senior vice president for the American Wind Energy Association, said in a statement.

Same worries for solar: Christopher Mansour, vice president of federal affairs for the Solar Energy Industries Association: "While we agree that wholesale markets should fully compensate generators for all the energy, capacity and ancillary services they provide, healthy competition should always promote the best, most innovative solutions," he said. The conservative R St. Institute [called](#) Perry's plan "an arbitrary backdoor subsidy to coal and nuclear plants."

DEREGULATORY PUSH GETS SPOTLIGHT TODAY: Trump is expected to deliver remarks today at 11 a.m. highlighting his administration's efforts to remove regulatory burdens across the federal government to drive economic growth. Don't expect any major new initiatives to be announced, but ME would be shocked if the efforts of EPA to halt or delay a host of Obama-era regulations don't make a major appearance. That'll be followed by a series of breakout sessions with 10 agencies, including the Energy and Interior departments.

Not on the list? EPA, though the agency is doing its own event Tuesday to launch what it's calling Smart Sectors. EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said it's "a program that aims to facilitate meaningful collaboration with regulated sectors, sensible policies to improve

environmental outcomes, and better EPA practices and streamlined operations." As Pro's learned last week, the event will designate staff liaisons for specific industries including oil and gas and utilities and power generation.

Pre-buttal: Public Citizen and Coalition for Sensible Safeguards put out [their pre-buttal](#) to the speech and say Trump's agenda is "premised on a series of demonstrably false claims about the costs of regulation, defies public opinion and major campaign promises, and represents a craven attempt at self-enrichment and payback to corporate donors." They'll host a press call at 1:30 p.m., along with Rep. [David Cicilline](#), responding to his remarks.

A taste of today's remarks: Here's how Trump summed up his deregulatory efforts to the National Association of Manufacturers on Friday: "We are cutting regulations at a pace that has never even been thought of before — not even thought of. This is a groundbreaking campaign and involves every department and agency across our government."

A preview (via Playbook): A photo inside the White House from a tipster with the pages on the right showing "the number of pages in the [Code of Federal Regulations] today, which is a measure of all regs on the books (Fed Register are just new ones), versus the # about a half-century ago" on the left side. Click [here](#).

**** A message from Chevron:** We're piloting a program that uses drones to keep an eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

ARKEMA UNDER INVESTIGATION: The Harris County District Attorney's Office announced Friday it was investigating the Houston-area Arkema plant whose volatile chemicals exploded in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, The Houston Chronicle [reports](#). "Companies should be on notice that we care when they pollute our air, our water, our environment," District Attorney Kim Ogg said. "We are looking into exactly what happened at the plant. We are gathering facts and we will apply the law. Arkema is under criminal investigation."

MAIL CALL! LET'S DO IT, PRUITT: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats, led by ranking member [Tom Carper](#), sent Chairman [John Barrasso](#) a [letter](#) Friday urging him to schedule a hearing on EPA's budget request where Pruitt would testify. "We are concerned that this necessary hearing is long overdue," they wrote. Barrasso would only tell reporters last week he planned to have Pruitt appear before the committee "this year."

BORING BUT IMPORTANT: POLITICO's Danny Vinik [looks at](#) an important issue likely floating under your radar: the federal government's workforce continues to get older and younger people aren't stepping in to fill in the gaps. "It's that smart agencies develop a plan for a pipeline. The federal government's biggest problem is it's not very good at pipeline planning," Don Kettl, a professor at the University of Maryland who has written extensively on government management, said.

TAKE A GLANCE! Interior released [a report](#) Friday finding it contributed 1.7 million jobs and \$254 billion in economic output during fiscal 2016. Among the conclusions: Interior-managed lands and waters produced 768 million barrels of crude oil, 4.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 310 million tons of coal. Its lands and facilities also generated enough hydropower to power 3.4 million homes.

SOMETHING'S PHISHY HERE: EPA employees were targeted by a phishing scheme seeking to steal large amounts of office supplies from the U.S., according to a podcast released Friday by the agency's inspector general. Photos of some of the phishing messages posted [here](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Brandon VerVelde has joined the House Science, Space and Technology Committee as press secretary and as an on-the-record spokesperson. He was previously director of communications for the Asian American Hotel Owners Association.

LIGHTER CLICK: Count Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) as those sharing super awkward old pictures of themselves to help fundraise help for Puerto Rico (though she left out the key hashtag of #PuberMe). Anyways, pic [here](#). Also, apparently you can catchy your super trendy energy chairman [playing cornhole](#) down by Nats Park during the weekend.

QUICK HITS

- Oil Prices Bounce Back in Third Quarter. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- Ancient bristlecone pine forests are being overwhelmed by climate change. [Los Angeles Times](#).
- Renewable energy investors see opportunity in Puerto Rico's demolished grid. [Reuters](#).
- In a Warming World, Keeping the Planes Running. [New York Times](#).
- A Labor of Love: Coal mining continues despite unsettling trends. [Casper Star-Tribune](#).
- Activists in 4-state pipeline protest embrace unique defense. [AP](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

12:00 p.m. — "[The Trump Administration and Federal Land](#)," Women's Council on Energy and the Environment, Beveridge & Diamond PC, 1350 I Street NW

TUESDAY

9:00 a.m. — "[Carbon Capture: A Business Opportunity in the Global Low-Carbon Economy](#)," Global CCS Institute, National Press Club, 529 14th Street Northwest

10:00 a.m. — "[Resiliency: The Electric Grid's Only Hope](#)," House Science, Space and Technology Committee, Rayburn 2318

10:00 a.m. — Legislative [hearing](#) on H.R. 3400, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1334

10:15 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds [hearing](#) to consider various nominations, Dirksen 366

10:30 a.m. — "[Full Committee Hearing to Examine Energy Storage Technologies](#)," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Dirksen 366

2:00 p.m. — "[Part II: Powering America: Defining Reliability in a Transforming Electricity Industry](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

2:30 p.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee [hearing](#) on various bills, 366 Dirksen

WEDNESDAY

9:30 a.m. — Natural Gas Supply Association holds its winter outlook media briefing for 2017-2018, RSVP: hinson.peters@ngsa.org

10:00 a.m. — Full committee [markup](#) on various bills, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 133

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds [hearing](#) on various EPA, NRC nominees, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — "[Air Quality Impacts of Wildfires: Perspectives of Key Stakeholders](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs holds legislative [hearing](#) on three bills, Longworth 1334

3:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Committee holds members forum to discuss rescue and recovery in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, location: TBD

3:00 p.m. — Senate HELP Committee holds [hearing](#) on mine safety nominee, Dirksen 430

THURSDAY

9:30 a.m. — CSIS [discussion](#) on the future of electrification, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Ave NW

10:00 a.m. — "[Powering America: Consumer-Oriented Perspectives on Improving the Nation's Electricity Markets](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

12:00 p.m. — "[The Growing Role of Liquefied Natural Gas in Latin America](#)," Atlantic Council, 1030 15th ST NW, 12th Floor

12:30 p.m. — "[How Agencies Reverse Policy: Stays, Remands, and Reconsideration](#)," Environmental Law Institute, 1101 K Street, NW, President's Room

FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. — 2017 Veterans In Energy [Forum](#), NRECA, 4301 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA 22203

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about energy, safety, and some truly high-flyin' doin'. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping to help

keep a close eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2xO60oe> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/trump-feuds-as-puerto-rico-struggles-024851>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump picks risky Puerto Rico fight [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum and Marc Caputo | 09/30/2017 07:50 AM EDT

The natural disaster in Puerto Rico has escalated into a firestorm for President Donald Trump, whose Saturday Twitter attack on the mayor of San Juan drew harsh condemnations, new charges of insensitivity, and warnings about political fallout.

In a series of Saturday morning tweets, Trump blasted the "poor leadership ability" of Puerto Rican officials, who he said "want everything to be done for them." Trump also said the island's leaders "are not able to get their workers to help," and accused the Democratic mayor of San Juan — who has publicly criticized his administration's response to Hurricane Maria — of scoring partisan political points.

Even Republicans were uncomfortable seeing television images of suffering Puerto Ricans juxtaposed with Trump's fighting words, tweeted from his luxury golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey.

"He is definitely not helping," said Republican state Rep. Bob Cortes, a Puerto Rico native who lives in Central Florida, which has seen a huge influx of Puerto Rican families in recent years. Cortes added that the controversy "gives [Democrats] a platform to register new voters."

Other Republicans also worry that Trump's comments could be a godsend to Democrats in Florida—a swing state whose Puerto Rican population of more than 1 million is expected to swell as people flee the storm's aftermath.

Ten days after Maria ravaged the island, most of Puerto Rico is still without power and many of its 3.4 million residents, most of them U.S. citizens, lack basic supplies like food and water. Critics say the Trump administration has been slow to help, with some invoking the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans a decade ago.

The perception that George W. Bush oversaw an incompetent and insensitive response to Katrina dealt a crippling blow to his presidency from which he never recovered, helping to drive his approval ratings to the low 20s. Trump officials scoff at the comparison with Katrina, saying their response to Maria has been appropriate.

In Washington, Democrats were swift to condemn Trump's tweets Saturday.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, released a statement calling Trump's tweets "abhorrent, baseless, and ... beneath the dignity of the office of the Presidency."

"Lives are on the line and people are dying," he added.

Trump's early morning broadsides, which began at 7:19 a.m., came after San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz slammed the administration's response repeatedly on Friday amid growing media coverage of the devastation on her island.

"We are dying here," Cruz said in an emotional plea. "If anybody out there is listening to us, we are dying, and you are killing us with the inefficiency and the bureaucracy." Puerto Rican officials say Maria killed at least 16 people there — a number experts believe will grow significantly.

From Bedminster, Trump defended his response while dismissing Cruz as a partisan.

"The Mayor of San Juan, who was very complimentary only a few days ago, has now been told by the Democrats that you must be nasty to Trump," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help."

Trump added that the Puerto Ricans "want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort. 10,000 Federal workers now on Island doing a fantastic job."

But Republicans are anxious about the [political effect](#) the Puerto Rico crisis might have on Trump's national standing as well as their fortunes in Florida, where Gov. Rick Scott is mulling a bid against Democratic incumbent Sen. Bill Nelson next year. The past four top-of-the-ticket races in Florida were decided by 1.2 percentage points or less. Puerto Rican voters already tend to favor Democrats.

"It is a political nightmare for both Trump and Scott," a consultant associated with the Republican National Committee said in a text message. He said the disaster and Trump's "asinine response to criticism" have given Democrats "a way to 1) energize Puerto Rican voters in Florida and 2) motivate Puerto Rican residents who will be Florida residents after this disaster."

While echoing those concerns, Cortes also said Puerto Rico deserves its share of the blame, thanks to the commonwealth's endemic corruption and mismanagement. "It took a storm of this magnitude to show how underprepared they were," Cortes said.

Meanwhile, the White House is fighting against the narrative that it has been slow to act. Trump's Saturday schedule lists five phone calls to discuss the storm response, including one with Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long.

Trump also reiterated his plan to visit the island on Tuesday, saying he would "hopefully" stop off in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Trump's White House social media director, Dan Scavino, joined the fray on Twitter, calling Cruz a "hater" and "an opportunistic politician." Cruz denied that her criticism of Trump was fueled by personal animus.

"Actually, I was asking for help," she told MSNBC on Saturday morning. "I wasn't saying anything nasty about the president." Cruz noted that even Trump's point man for the disaster recovery effort, Army Lt. Gen. Jeff Buchanan, said on Friday that the number of U.S. troops assisting is "not enough." (Buchanan said more manpower and equipment like helicopters were headed to the island.)

Trump's tweets also targeted media outlets that have dedicated increasing amounts of air time to the suffering and chaos on the pummeled island.

"Fake News CNN and NBC are going out of their way to disparage our great First Responders as a way to 'get Trump.' Not fair to FR or effort!" he wrote.

Under mounting pressure, in recent days Trump officials have defended their relief effort as a success. On Thursday, acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke called the response "a good news story."

The comment only inflamed frustrations on an island where a sense of helplessness prevails, however.

"Damn it, this is not a good news story," Cruz told CNN on Friday. "This is a people are dying story. This is a life or death story. This is a there's a truckload of stuff that cannot be taken to people story. This is a story of a devastation that continues to worsen because people are not getting food and water."

Cruz, a liberal Trump critic, initially avoided tussling with the president for fear that it would become a distraction to relief efforts and "not productive."

But as the week unfolded, Puerto Rico officials felt their pleas for faster action and less red tape went unheeded. Then, on Thursday, Trump touted the recovery effort on Twitter, writing, "Governor said 'great job!'" That was an apparent reference to Cruz, who finally let loose with harsh criticism.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) also pointed to problems on the island in a Friday tweet, writing that criticism of the Trump administration response is "missing [the] main problem." FEMA "has sent lots of aid problem is distribution once it gets to #PuertoRico," Rubio wrote.

Rubio, though, [warned](#) the Trump administration privately and publicly that Puerto Rico could become a "Katrina-like" situation.

Behind the sharp debate over disaster response are internal political tensions on the island. Cruz is eyeing the job of Puerto Rico's Republican governor, Ricardo Rossello, who has taken pains to avoid publicly criticizing Trump. She is developing strong ties to Florida Democrats and met Wednesday with Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine, a likely candidate for Florida governor, when he delivered 7,000 pounds of relief supplies to the island.

About 24 hours later, Florida's Republican governor met with Rossello in Puerto Rico, then debriefed Trump on the disaster response over lunch the following day.

"This is not a time for politics," Scott said on the White House lawn Friday, saying that Rossello is "going through an unbelievable crisis."

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Trump's breaking point with Price [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Josh Dawsey and Dan Diamond | 09/29/2017 08:24 PM EDT

Tom Price's downfall was his penchant for pricey jets.

But his demise was months in the making, as the president continued to lose trust in the Health and Human Services secretary who rarely attended Oval Office strategy meetings, had little sway or influence on Capitol Hill, and was associated in the president's mind with one of the administration's biggest defeats — the failure to repeal Obamacare.

Of particular notoriety: A picture of Price in March drinking at Bullfeathers, a famed Capitol Hill bar, as his colleagues tried to wrangle votes for the president's signature initiative.

Price's lack of goodwill with Trump and other senior administration officials ultimately doomed his chances of survival, even though many administration officials believed the furor would blow over when news first broke that Price spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on private jets.

By early this week, however, it became clear that the growing firestorm over Price's travel was only getting worse. A number of officials in the White House said HHS had badly handled the response to the controversy — and was caught off guard by the facts. And it was hard to find a power player in the White House who would defend Price to the president.

POLITICO published five stories over the last 10 days that revealed Price had spent [more than \\$1 million](#) in taxpayer money on travel since May, including overseas flights on military aircrafts and more than two dozen domestic trips on private planes.

Other media outlets amplified the revelations, with cable news frequently running damaging chyrons and reporters peppering Trump and press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders about the growing scandal throughout the week.

The president grew more angry, fuming to West Wing aides about the optics of a member of the administration spending so lavishly. The almost daily drip of revelations — including that Price [took](#) a government-funded private jet in August to get to a Georgia resort where he and his wife own land — further incensed the president.

Meanwhile, Trump was intensely frustrated by his unsuccessful health care push and associated Price with the failure, several aides said. He joked at a rally in July he would fire Price if he didn't get the votes for the Obamacare repeal.

While the White House has weathered a steady stream of mini-scandals since Trump took office, this one was different, according to administration officials, because it made Price look like the kind of creature of Washington that the president had railed against on the campaign trail.

Trump himself blasted Price on Friday for what he suggested was frivolous spending in light of the administration's efforts to impose fiscal conservatism on the federal government.

"I've saved hundreds of millions of dollars," the president told reporters on Friday when he was asked if he had lost confidence in Price. "So I don't like the optics of what you just saw."

Administration officials grew increasingly certain on Friday that Price would be ousted, but the final decision happened quickly, according to aides, who had cautioned as late as Friday afternoon that Trump might change his mind.

Though he nurtured a reputation as a ruthless boss on *The Apprentice*, Trump often hesitates to fire people — and sometimes takes weeks to make a final decision. In this case though, the president was counseled that the travel stories had become a distraction from his policy agenda, especially his tax reform push, according to an administration official.

There was also little personal chemistry between the two men.

The president was initially attracted to Price because he was a doctor, a supporter and "looked the part," one adviser with direct knowledge said, plus he was given positive reviews from House Speaker Paul Ryan and others on Capitol Hill.

He soon became a bit player in the administration.

Price was often left out of senior level meetings in the Oval Office on Obamacare repeal, even as other top deputies attended, according to several people with knowledge of the matter.

The president and a number of top aides had little faith in his political instincts.

Leading the effort to negotiate with senators on the Hill was Seema Verma from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and Marc Short, head of legislative affairs. Two senior White House officials said Price's relationships at the Capitol were not as good as he promised — and that some members preferred not to deal with him. Many members saw him as prickly and not particularly likable, one senior GOP aide said, damaging his ability to negotiate.

Andrew Bremberg, the head of the White House's Domestic Policy Council, was more involved in policy decisions than Price, these people said.

Price was often out of town during key stretches of the presidency, and while several senior officials said they weren't aware of his private jet use, there was a general consensus that he was often nowhere to be found.

"I didn't know he was on private jets," one senior administration official said. "I knew he was never there."

Price's press office initially reassured the White House that the story would quickly pass and argued that Price needed charter jets to respond to public health emergencies like the recent hurricanes.

After POLITICO [identified](#) at least 17 charter flights that took place before the first storm — Hurricane Harvey — hit in late August, and included flights that did not appear to be for urgent public health priorities, HHS then changed its argument: Price needed charter aircraft "to accommodate his demanding schedule," a spokesperson allowed last week.

As he often does when making a big decision, the president began making calls on Thursday night and Friday morning to ask whether he should fire Price.

Trump also told aides that if Price had a defense, he would give it. "I don't think he has any defense for it," one person said, summarizing Trump's comments. "He is just taking it."

Price did make a last-ditch effort to save his job, announcing on Thursday that he would reimburse the federal government for the cost of his seat on the domestic flights, a figure that reportedly totals nearly \$52,000 — just a fraction of the total cost of the trips. The president didn't like that Price was only offering to pay back some of the flights, and was struck by TV coverage that showed the total cost as more than \$1 million, officials said.

The secretary also tried to go on Fox News and assuage the president. It didn't work.

Rumors began swirling in HHS early Friday that Price might be fired. But, in an apparent sign of how quickly the final decision was made, Price was conducting business as usual late Friday.

Just minutes before Price's resignation became official, the secretary sent an email to HHS officials outlining next steps on the "Reimagine HHS initiative," a broad reorganizational effort of the department that was expected to result in staff reductions. The email outlined senior HHS officials who will be spearheading the process.

"Thank you for all your dedication and support, and we look forward to being in touch soon," Price wrote, according to the email, which was obtained by POLITICO.

Across town at the White House, Trump's chief of staff John Kelly was calling Hill leadership to tell them Price was out.

One senior official said the tipping point was when the White House couldn't contain the scandal and it became an administration-wide story.

Other members of Trump's Cabinet were coming under increased criticism for their use of military and private aircraft, including Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, Interior Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

"Got to the point he was causing problems for everybody," this person said. "He could have lasted maybe if it didn't just get worse every day."

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White House to Cabinet: No private air travel without Kelly's approval [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 09/29/2017 06:57 PM EDT

The White House cracked down on Cabinet officials' use of private planes Friday, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft," after Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price [resigned](#) over his own taxpayer-funded flights.

Mick Mulvaney, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public. His exit came after [a series of POLITICO reports](#) about his frequent use of private planes to conduct government — [and sometimes](#)

[personal](#) — business.

"In light of recent events, the President has asked me to remind the heads of all executive departments and agencies of Administration policies on travel," Mulvaney wrote.

He reminded the department and agency heads that, by regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

"However, beyond the law and formal policy, departments and agencies should recognize that we are public servants," Mulvaney wrote. "Every penny we spend comes from the taxpayer. We thus owe it to the taxpayer to work as hard managing that money wisely as the taxpayer must do to earn it in the first place."

Mulvaney added: "Put another way, just because something is legal doesn't make it right."

Officials should stick to commercial travel "with few exceptions," he wrote.

In the wake of the controversy, other administration officials' travels have come under scrutiny. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has used military planes for some trips, [POLITICO reported](#), while EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have also raised eyebrows with their travel itineraries.

President Donald Trump was livid over the Price scandal and accepted his resignation on Friday.

"We have great secretaries, and we have some that actually own their own planes, so that solves that," Trump told reporters earlier on Friday.

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Interior Secretary Zinke traveled on charter, military planes [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/28/2017 07:54 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides have taken several flights on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands, according to documents and a department spokeswoman.

Zinke is at least the fourth senior member of the Trump administration to have used non-commercial planes at taxpayer expense, along with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price. President Donald Trump has [fumed](#) at Price's pricey travel, and Democrats say the revelations demonstrate a cavalier attitude by Cabinet members toward excessive spending.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said Zinke's charter or military plane trips

were booked only after officials were unable to find commercial flights that would accommodate Zinke's schedule and that all were "pre-cleared by career officials in the ethics office." Swift said she had not spoken to Zinke about whether he would reimburse the government for the cost of the flights, as [Price plans to do](#) for some of the \$400,000 tab he racked up on charter flights.

On June 26, a Beechcraft King Air 200 carried Zinke and several staffers from Las Vegas to Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell, Montana, about a 20-minute drive from Zinke's home in Whitefish, according to his [official schedule](#). The flight cost \$12,375, Swift said.

Zinke left after speaking at an event for the city's new professional hockey team, the Vegas Golden Knights Development Camp Dinner, according to his schedule. Earlier in the day, he had been in Pahrump, Nevada, for an announcement related to public lands.

Zinke's flight left Las Vegas at 8:30 p.m. PST and landed in Kalispell around 1:30 a.m. MST. The secretary stayed overnight at his residence, Interior documents show.

Las Vegas is one of the main [connecting](#) airports for commercial flights to Glacier International. Commercial flights between the two cities are available for several hundred dollars a ticket, according to travel planning websites.

In Whitefish, Zinke attended the Western Governors' Association's annual meeting, where he spoke for about 20 minutes without taking questions. He then had a private lunch with association members. In the afternoon Zinke was the subject of a photo shoot with GQ magazine at Lake McDonald and fished while being interviewed by Outside Magazine, the records show.

Zinke and staffers flew commercial back to Washington, D.C., the next day, according to the records.

The trip was not the first in which Interior booked a private jet for Zinke. [On March 31](#), Interior chartered two flights to take Zinke and staff from St. Croix to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend the centennial of the Danish government turning the islands over to the United States. Another two flights were chartered to return to St. Croix later that night.

Swift said she did not know how much the flights cost but that no other arrangements were available.

Commercial flights between the two islands generally run a few hundred dollars, according to travel booking websites.

In May, Zinke and his wife, Lolita, used a military aircraft to travel to Norway. From there, they flew on a military plane to Alaska for events organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The trip included charter planes to travel within Alaska, a common occurrence in the large, remote state. The Zinkes paid for Lolita's share of the trip, the full cost of which was not immediately available, Swift said.

Zinke also took a military helicopter from Fort Bliss to review the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in New Mexico in June, and he used a Bureau of Land Management helicopter to review the Basin and Range National Monument on July 30. "It is difficult to survey a half-million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour-

and-a-half," Swift said.

Along with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Zinke took a military plane to Ravalli County, Montana, to check on wildfires in the area in August. "The military plane was used because of a very tight travel window, with no viable commercial airline options to transport two secretaries, security details, and associated USDA, Forest Service and Interior staff to Missoula in the time required," said USDA spokesman Tim Murtaugh. The cost of the flight was not immediately available, but the two agencies plan to reimburse the Air Force, Murtaugh said.

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DOE's Perry pushes FERC to support coal power plants [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The Trump administration on Friday called on FERC to create new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants that are being squeezed by cheaper natural gas and renewable sources, saying they were "indispensable for economic and national security."

Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who [told miners](#) in Pennsylvania on Thursday that "it's time for coal in this country to be revived," pressed electricity regulators to alter power markets and protect the resilience of the power grid with payments to generators that keep fuel supplies on site, a clear reference to the coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

The proposal, which DOE said gave FERC 60 days to create a final or interim rule, comes just a month after Perry's agency issued a report saying FERC should "expedite" its work with grid operators to ensure the stability of the nation's power network.

"In terms of process, this is a pretty bold move," said Tony Clark, a Republican former FERC commissioner. DOE often conducts studies on issues it believes need attention, he said, but "actually forwarding to the commission something specific for action is a pretty bold way of moving the issue right up the batting order at FERC."

The new proposal, directed at FERC under a rarely used Section 403 authority of the Department of Energy Organization Act, stops short of specifically seeking market incentives for coal. But it calls for full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and "ancillary" services — and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. That would exclude most natural gas power plants, which do not typically keep large fuel inventories on hand and instead receive supplies via pipeline.

Perry's request represents a departure from the two decades of U.S. policy that has trended toward more market-based tools, which has helped natural gas to nearly double its power market share. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar, though still modest when compared to fossil fuels or nuclear power, have also grown quickly as federal incentives helped drive down their costs.

But the growth of renewables and natural gas — combined with tighter pollution controls and

weak new demand for electricity — has forced hundreds of old coal-fired power plants into retirement. Nuclear power plants in some parts of the country are also under financial pressure, hurt by negative wholesale power market prices that sometimes require the plant owners to pay to deliver their power supplies.

"If this gets the debate started, then my hat's off," said former FERC Chairman Pat Wood, a friend of Perry and a strong advocate for market-based power systems. "But it's a pretty arresting [thing] to wake up and read. That would never have played in Texas. ... If there is a service to be valued, then a market can value that."

In the [grid study](#) ordered by Perry and released in August, DOE experts pointed to low power prices and cheap natural gas as the single [biggest reason](#) for coal ceding its position as the nation's biggest source of electricity. And that report also called for "reforms" to power markets that would help bolster the electricity network's resilience by easing the financial pressures on many power providers.

In its Friday proposal, DOE cited a spike in demand during the 2014 "polar vortex" that hit much of the U.S., which prompted utilities to run many coal plants that were slated for retirement. Without those plants, as many as 65 million people in the PJM market would have seen their power resources threatened, DOE said.

But the new regulatory pitch from the agency also fueled the growing feud between the gas and coal industries.

Paul Bailey, president and CEO American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, commended Perry for "initiating a rulemaking by FERC that will finally value the on-site fuel security provided by the coal fleet."

But the American Petroleum Institute, which also represents natural gas producers, said DOE drew the wrong conclusions from the 2014 event, and that forcing new mandates on the power market wasn't the solution.

"[A]s we review the proposal we are concerned the agency has mischaracterized the lessons learned from past weather-related events and appears to suggest that additional regulation is the answer where markets have already proven the ability to greatly benefit consumers and give our electric system the flexibility needed to meet constantly, and often rapidly, changing electricity demands," said API Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Marty Durbin in a statement.

FERC, which has struggled to integrate states' energy policies that aim to boost renewables or support aging nuclear power plants, has long maintained a fuel-neutral stance in the regional markets that it oversees. If it were to follow Perry's directive to create incentives for grid resilience to plants that maintain their own fuel inventories on site, it would be an implicit move at the national level to alter the electricity markets to support the fuels that both Perry and Trump have touted.

Montana regulator Travis Kavulla [suggested](#) on Twitter that rather than deal with the pressing issues facing the grid, "Instead, this reform is sort of the [@ENERGY](#) equivalent of the Oprah "you get a car, and you get a car. And you? A car!" approach."

However, FERC, whose members are appointed by the president and operate as an

independent body, isn't obligated to implement the specific policy pushed by Perry. The commission will so be back to operating with a full five members in the coming weeks, with a Republican majority.

"FERC's going to follow its own procedures," said Marc Spitzer, a Republican former FERC commissioner. "It would be a mistake for people to assume that this is going to be some partisan Republican rubber stamp given the way FERC works."

FERC can spend months or years digging into complex issues that underpin the power markets, and its commissioners tend to seek common ground with each other to ensure that its rules are clear and ensure long-lasting regulations that give utilities stability to plan their operations.

"Is someone really going to invest [billions of dollars] when it's a 3-2 vote that partisans and the parties can flip next year? Is that a good forum for investment as opposed to a 5-0 order?" Spitzer said.

FERC declined to say when the agency last received a rulemaking from DOE using Section 403.

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Date: Monday, November 13, 2017 5:48:30 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/13/2017 05:45 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden

LAISSEZ LES BONN TEMPS ROULER? Government officials and industry executives will urge developing countries to pursue "cleaner" fossil fuel and nuclear power in a presentation today in Bonn, Germany, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). At tonight's event George David Banks, special assistant to President Donald Trump on energy and environment, will make introductory remarks, while Francis Brooke, an aide to Vice President Mike Pence, moderates a discussion with executives from the liquefied natural gas company Tellurian, the coal company Peabody Energy and the nuclear power company NuScale. Barry Worthington, director of the U.S. Energy Association who will participate in the discussion alongside industry executives, told [Climate Home News](#) that striking fossil fuel trade deals was a major goal of the presentation.

Not on the agenda? Paris. Diplomats entering the second week of the COP23 climate negotiations won't be getting any hints from the U.S. delegation about how to convince Trump to stay in an international deal to slash greenhouse gas emissions. A White House official briefing reporters last week said climate mitigation is a "lesser priority" than energy security and economic development, "but it's still a priority" for the White House. "The president has left the door open, the president has said multiple times that he's willing to reconsider our engagement in the Paris agreement if we can find a fairer deal that works for American businesses, taxpayers, consumers, so yeah it's up to the president," the official told reporters.

Out of the shadows: A host of prominent Democratic officials, including five senators, stressed over the weekend that the U.S. remained committed to action on climate change despite Trump's stance on issue, POLITICO California's David Siders and Emily [report](#). "I want to make it clear: The federal government is not just the president of the United States," Sen. [Ben Cardin](#), ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee, [told activists](#) on Saturday. The senators met with delegations from India, Japan, the European Union, Mexico, Indonesia and Canada to assuage concerns about U.S. inaction. They also participated in side events including one decrying efforts to [weaken](#) automobile CAFE standards.

Governors tout actions too: Four Democratic governors — Virginia's Terry McAuliffe, California's Jerry Brown, Washington's Jay Inslee and Oregon's Kate Brown — plan to highlight their climate ambitions in a panel this morning with Christiana Figueres, former executive secretary of the UNFCCC. And that comes after Jerry Brown and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, released [a report](#) touting the role of U.S. states and cities in addressing climate change that nonetheless acknowledged non-federal efforts won't be sufficient to meet the 26 to 28 percent emissions reductions below 2005 levels that the U.S. promised by 2030.

Steyer stays focused (on impeachment): Tom Steyer, the billionaire Democratic donor, on Sunday morning made his case for impeaching Trump to Democrats in Bonn, asking them to "confront the liars and deniers," David also [reports](#). The governors seemed unimpressed, and

Steyer acknowledged himself that congressional Republicans, not voters, would have to back his impeachment campaign for it to work.

IT'S ANOTHER MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and NRDC's Ed Chen was first up to identify the L.A. County board of supervisors as the body with two former congresswomen (Janice Hahn and Hilda Solis). For today: Rahm Emanuel is the most famous former congressman-turned-mayor but there's another former member that now runs the largest city in their state. Who is it? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

NERC CHIEF ON LEAVE AFTER ARREST: Gerry Cauley is on a leave of absence from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation "[until further notice](#)" following his arrest on a domestic violence charge. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution [reports](#) Cauley has been charged with a misdemeanor, battery/family violence. Charles Berardesco has been named interim CEO.

EYEBROWS RAISED BY PERRY ROUNDTABLE: Energy Secretary Rick Perry headlines an intimate gathering today on behalf of the pro-Trump outside group America First Policies in a growing trend of giving donors access to Cabinet officials that many worry is an ethical gray area, POLITICO's Maggie Severns [reports](#). Perry won't solicit donations but America First officials plan to ask for contributions after he departs. He's allowed to take part in events for the group's nonprofit policy arm, which is legally separate from the super PAC even though the same officers run both groups.

But campaign finance reform advocates say the arrangement takes advantage of a loophole. "This is all part of the very close coordination we're seeing between the campaign itself and what's supposedly an outside group," said Craig Holman, the government affairs lobbyist at the good-government group Public Citizen.

INSIDE LOOK AT PRESSURE ON PERRY'S GRID STUDY: Alison Silverstein, the veteran energy consultant who authored Perry's electric grid study, resisted pressure from the agency to blame regulations for the struggles of coal and nuclear plants, Forbes [reports](#). After being hit for not faulting regulations in the first draft, Silverstein said she asked officials to provide data to back up their assertion: "I said, 'Bring me the data. I've been in the building three or four weeks now, you guys are the ones who own the issue. Prove to me, bring me all of your research on how regulation has killed these.' 'Well, we don't have any.' 'Then how am I supposed to do this?'"

ACTIVISTS WILL BE PROSECUTED: The Justice Department said Friday it would aggressively prosecute activists who damage pipelines or "critical energy infrastructure in violation of federal law," Reuters [reports](#). That comes after more than 80 House members [sought information](#) on what DOJ planned to do about an increase in protest activities around pipelines in a late October letter.

ON TAP IN CONGRESS — DISASTER AID REQUEST EXPECTED: The latest disaster relief request is expected to arrive on Capitol Hill sometime this week and is likely to top \$50 billion, Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief [reports](#). Like the two previous requests, it won't be broken down state-by-state. But the governors of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will be town to push for recovery funds and the Texas congressional delegation hopes to meet with OMB Director Mick Mulvaney to make their case for their full \$61 billion request.

Speaking of which, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló and Del. [Jenniffer González](#) hold a press conference at 11 a.m. today at the Hall of States to make their case.

And you're out: Abner Gómez resigned his post as head of Puerto Rico's emergency management department on Friday and Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, who led the Trump administration's military response to the hurricanes, will be reassigned off the island this week, [CNN reports](#).

And remember Whitefish? While senior linemen from Florida working on grid restoration work on behalf of Whitefish Energy earned \$63 an hour working in Puerto Rico, the tiny Montana-based company billed the island's utility \$319 an hour for linemen, the New York Times [reports](#). Experts said those charges were well above normal, even for emergency work, though a spokesman for the company defended the charges, saying "simply looking at the rate differential does not take into account Whitefish's overhead costs," included in the rate.

Status check: More than 7 weeks after Hurricane Maria hit, more than 52 percent of the island remains in the dark and more than 10 percent of residents still lack drinking water, according to [government figures](#).

MINE SAFETY PICK COULD GET VOTE: Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) filed cloture last week on David Zatezalo's selection to be the administration's mine safety chief, teeing up a final confirmation vote as soon as this week. He chaired the coal company Rhino Resources when it received pattern of violation notices in 2010 and 2011, but [said during his confirmation hearing](#) he wouldn't have a problem working with career staff at MSHA that issued those notices.

FLOOD INSURANCE READY TO ROLL! House Republicans are ready to try again with a revised version [H.R. 2874 \(115\)](#) of their flood insurance reauthorization and the Rules Committee [meets today](#) at 5 p.m. That comes even as coastal lawmakers [continued to raise](#) concerns with the proposal. Pro Financial Services' Zachary Warmbrodt with more [here](#).

FORMER EPA ATTORNEYS BASH PRUITT ORDER: Fifty-seven former EPA career attorneys today sent [a letter](#) to Administrator Scott Pruitt "to correct the many mistakes of law and fact" concerning his [October directive](#) boosting the role of industry in settlement negotiations. "It is EPA's failure to comply with legal requirements that is the problem, not the people who sue EPA, the courts that hear the suits, or the EPA and DOJ staff who faithfully negotiate settlements that provide EPA longer and more flexible schedules than it would receive if there were no settlement," they wrote. The former agency attorneys urge Pruitt to revise the directive to promote "fair, transparent, and efficient settlement of well-founded suits against the agency."

NORTH CAROLINA OFFICIAL ALSO ON LEAVE: Donald van der Vaart, a recent appointee to EPA's Scientific Advisory Board and top North Carolina environmental regulator during the prior Republican governor's term, has been placed on "investigatory leave," The News & Observer [reports](#). Van der Vaart's selection to the advisory board [generated significant controversy](#) and prompted the new head of the state's Department of Environmental Quality to say he didn't represent North Carolina on the EPA board. His deputy John Evans was also placed on "investigatory leave" for unspecified reasons. Both men demoted themselves to be shielded from termination under the new incoming Democratic administration.

WHY BROWN'S A CLIMATE WARRIOR: David Siders' [entire profile](#) of Brown is worth your time but of particular interest to ME readers is why termed-out governor has devoted so much energy to climate change. "I find a lot of what is included in politics doesn't count that much, at least for my salvation or my peace of mind or my interest in life," Brown said. The climate, he went on, "is fundamental. It's not like dietary requirements. It's not like a tax measure, or a school curriculum, or many of the issues, even a crime bill. It goes to the essence of being alive, living things. Whether it's humans or fauna, flora, the basis of life is embedded in this chemical structure, biological structure. And it's threatened."

But not good enough for some: Environmental activists interrupted Brown's speech in Bonn Saturday, shouting his refusal to ban fracking in California was a major blemish on his record. But the long-time governor shot back, according to [The Sacramento Bee](#), "I agree with you, 'in the ground. Let's put you in the ground so we can get on with the show here."

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2yQ8q7z> **

MAIL CALL! SAVE TANGIER! Virginia Sens. [Tim Kaine](#) and [Mark Warner](#) asked Trump in [a letter](#) to follow through on his pledge to protect Tangier Island, thought likely to become uninhabitable within 50 years due to rising seas. "We can debate the causes for why this is happening, but regardless, the effects are clear. It is urgent that we address those effects," they wrote.

FOR YOUR RADAR: Delaware Gov. John Carney and Rep. [Donald Norcross](#) headline a rally today at the Delaware City Refining Company at 10 a.m. urging Trump to fix the Renewable Fuel Standard to protect East Coast refining jobs.

HIGH PRICE TO PAY? Food and Water Watch and Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice are out with a report arguing pollution trading programs are "undermining successful environmental laws like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act" by allowing industries to pay to pollute and that they inflict the brunt of the damage on low-income and minority communities. Read it [here](#).

QUICK HITS

- \$300 Billion War Beneath the Street: Fighting to Replace America's Water Pipes. [New York Times](#).
- California Westlands water settlement in limbo. [High Country News](#).
- Can Carbon-Dioxide Removal Save the World? [New Yorker](#).
- Schwarzenegger calls on climate activists to change methods. [AP](#).
- Lessons From Hurricane Harvey: Houston's Struggle Is America's Tale. [New York Times](#).
- Canada, U.K. team up in push to end coal-power use. [The Globe and Mail](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

2:00 p.m. — The Environmental and Energy Study Institute hosts [briefing](#) to examine how high-octane, low-carbon fuel can enable CAFE compliance, Dirksen 106

2:00 p.m. — "[Approaches for International Collaboration and Financing for CCUS Pilot Projects](#)," U.S. Energy Association, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 550

5:00 p.m. — The House Rules Committee holds hearing on [H.R. 2874 \(115\)](#), the National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization bill, H-313

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — "[Hurricane Recovery Efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands](#)," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Dirksen 366

9:30 a.m. — The NAACP, Clean Air Task Force and National Medical Association hold briefing to unveil report on impacts of oil and gas development on African-American communities, National Press Club, 529 14th St NW

10:00 a.m. — "[Response and Recovery to Environmental Concerns from the 2017 Hurricane Season](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — "[Legislative Hearing on S. 1857, S. 203, S. 839 and S. 1934](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Clean Air and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee, Dirksen 406

11:30 a.m. — SEEC, Center for American Progress, the League of Conservation Voters, and more hold press conference touting commitment to Paris accord, Senate swamp

2:00 p.m. — "[The Need for Transparent Financial Accountability in Territories' Disaster Recovery Efforts](#)," House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1324

2:00 p.m. — "[Sustaining U.S. Leadership Against Nuclear Terrorism and Proliferation](#)," Hudson Institute, 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 400

4:00 p.m. — "[Status and Prospects for U.S. Nuclear Power](#)," John Hopkins SAIS, Room 806, 1619 Massachusetts Avenue NW

WEDNESDAY

8:00 a.m. — Roll Call Live's "[Energy Decoded](#)," Newseum, 555 Pennsylvania Ave NW, 8th Floor Knight Conference Center

9:00 a.m. — Business [Meeting](#) to consider Reconciliation Legislation, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Dirksen 366

10:00 a.m. — "[Legislative Hearing on Bills to Empower Indian Tribes, Promote Self-Determination](#)," House Natural Resources Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

10:00 a.m. — House Science Committee [markup](#) of several bills, Rayburn 2318

10:00 a.m. — "[Promoting American Leadership in Reducing Air Emissions Through](#)

[Innovation](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation holds a panel discussion on "[ARPA-E: A Catalyst of Clean Energy Innovation](#)," 1101 K Street NW, Suite 610A

10:30 a.m. — "[Legislative Hearing on National Park, Fish and Wildlife Service Bills](#)," House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee, Longworth 1334

12:30 p.m. — "[Coming Clean: Improving Transparency and Accountability to End Pollution's Chokehold on Development](#)," World Resources Institute, 10 G Street NE, Suite 800

2:00 p.m. — "[Nord Stream and European Energy Security](#)," Jamestown Foundation, Choate Conference Room, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

6:00 p.m. — Press briefing on Marine Mammal Protection Act featuring Actress Miranda Cosgrove, Rayburn 2045

THURSDAY

8:30 a.m. — Progressive Policy Institute and Common Good host a Capitol Hill forum on "[Rebuilding America: What Are We Waiting For?](#)" The Reserve Officers Association Building, Symposium Center, 4th Floor, 1 Constitution Ave NE

10:00 a.m. — "[Successful Pre-Salt Auctions put Brazil's Oil & Gas Sector on Promising Path](#)," Wilson Center, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

12:00 p.m. — "Beyond Batteries: Grid-interactive Efficient Buildings," Alliance to Save Energy, Rayburn 2045

FRIDAY

11:15 a.m. — EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt addresses The Federalist Society's National Lawyer Convention, 1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2yQ8q7z> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/11/trump-team-not-pitching-paris-renegotiation-in-bonn-025509>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

U.S. climate delegation won't outline conditions to stick with Paris deal [Back](#)

By Emily Holden and David Siders | 11/12/2017 03:33 PM EDT

BONN, Germany—The Trump administration does not plan to give international diplomats any clues about how they could convince the U.S. to stay in a global agreement to fight climate change but will use meetings this week as an opportunity to promote U.S. coal, gas and nuclear companies, according to a White House official.

The centerpiece of the White House presence at the climate talks in Bonn, Germany, will be a Monday evening presentation where government officials and industry executives will urge developing countries to pursue "cleaner" fossil fuel and nuclear power — a pitch that could be meant to widen the market for American energy exports.

The White House source said State Department diplomats and Trump aides would not engage on remaining in the 2015 Paris agreement, which Trump has said he would exit unless he got terms more favorable to U.S. businesses.

"We're not going to address that issue," the official said on an embargoed call with reporters on Thursday. "The president has left the door open, the president has said multiple times that he's willing to reconsider our engagement in the Paris agreement if we can find a fairer deal that works for American businesses, taxpayers, consumers, so yeah it's up to the president."

Trump has never repudiated his view that man-made climate change is a hoax, although the White House has since said he "believes the climate is changing" without elaborating on the cause. But the lack of engagement from his negotiating team suggests he has little interest in reaching a better deal to limit global greenhouse gas emissions.

The U.S. panel is not expected to discuss ways to reach the Paris agreement goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions enough to avoid a 2 degrees Celsius rise above pre-industrial levels, which scientists say would be a dangerous tipping point.

"The president believes that we can reduce our emissions while growing our economy," the White House official said.

Climate activists were mulling protest actions ahead of the Monday night forum, while fearing the event would only further cast a shadow over the United States' role in the conference.

"It's what you expect when we have fossil fuel billionaires running our government," said Garrett Blad, executive director of the SustainUS, a youth advocacy group. "I think it's irresponsible and dangerous, and I think the American people know that and are on our side."

Former Vice President Al Gore said he expected the forum would do little to alter dynamics of the conference.

"I think that people will see it for what it is," he said in an interview. "The president has surrounded himself with some of the most notorious climate deniers, and people who come to these meeting know who these characters are, and I think they see it for what it is."

The White House official said he didn't expect other countries to ask what kind of deal the president is looking for, adding that the United Nations conference "is really not the place for that to happen," and that the conversation would be more likely to occur between world leaders. Trump returns Tuesday from a 12-day trip to Asia, which included meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other heads of state. He did not mention climate change once while abroad.

The Trump administration is rolling back President Barack Obama's climate efforts and also trying to boost coal-fired power--a major driver of rising temperatures that are making seas swell and extreme weather intensify.

Despite Trump's stance, a delegation of career officials from the State Department is on site at the United Nations conference to represent U.S. interests as countries negotiate how they will achieve and verify their commitments to curb emissions.

In the discussion Monday, George David Banks, special assistant to President Trump on energy and environment, will make introductory remarks. Francis Brooke, an aide to Vice President Mike Pence, will moderate the talk among executives from the liquefied natural gas company Tellurian, the coal company Peabody Energy and the nuclear power company NuScale, as well as Barry Worthington, director of the U.S. Energy Association.

The panel will outline ways U.S. could encourage developing countries to build "cleaner, more efficient," fossil fuel plants to mitigate climate change, the White House source told reporters last week.

Worthington told [Climate Home News](#) that striking fossil fuel trade deals was a major objective of the discussion.

"The flavor du jour is LNG but we're also exporting crude oil and derivative products and continue to export a sizeable volume of coal," he told the outlet.

The White House source said climate mitigation is a "lesser priority" than energy security and economic development, "but it's still a priority."

Without U.S. involvement, "the Chinese will build the coal plants and use inefficient technology," the official said.

"Quite frankly, if we don't bring it up and want to engage people on it, it's just not going to happen," he said. "It's burying your head in the sand if you don't have a conversation, just simply because of the facts, again because of the role coal is going to play in the energy mix...because of the role that natural gas is going to play."

The official cited International Energy Agency [projections](#) that natural gas demand will grow 50 percent and coal demand will increase by 2040, especially in South and Southeast Asia. And he pointed to [reports](#) that at least 1,600 coal plants are planned or under construction in 62 countries, according to the environmental group Urgewald. Chinese companies are reportedly planning many of them, but the Chinese government in January canceled plans for 103 plants.

As part of the Paris agreement, China pledged to begin shrinking total emissions by 2030. Trump has said it's unfair that China would be able to keep increasing its carbon output in the meantime, although the U.S. over time has contributed more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than any other nation and China's economy was slower to begin growing.

The White House official did not explain how the U.S. would seek to push of more efficient coal plants abroad, but he said the conversation in Bonn Monday would cover "high efficiency, low emissions coal, but then also the more advanced technologies that either improve efficiency, or the carbon capture and utilization pieces."

Trump on his trip to Asia last week unveiled a slate of deals with China, but none were to promote more efficient coal-fired power plants. One is for sales and rentals of Caterpillar mining equipment to China's largest coal mining company and another is a joint venture between a U.S. industrial gases company and state-owned Chinese firm to build a coal-to-syngas facility, according to [Bloomberg](#). Trump's travels focused far more on promoting the export of U.S. liquefied natural gas.

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Top Democrats stage anti-Trump revolt at Bonn climate summit [Back](#)

By David Siders and Emily Holden | 11/12/2017 10:56 AM EDT

BONN, Germany — A handful of Democratic governors and scores of other lawmakers and mayors are mounting an insurgency at the United Nations climate conference here, orchestrating a highly choreographed campaign to persuade world leaders that President Donald Trump doesn't speak for the United States on climate change.

Several Democratic U.S. senators began meeting last week with officials from other countries, seeking to minimize Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement. Meanwhile, the governors of California, Virginia, Oregon and Washington — along with mayors from throughout the nation — were expected to touch off a blitz of public appearances at the conference as the meeting enters its final week.

"We are still in!" Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland told cheering activists Saturday at a pavilion set up just outside the official meeting zone, a de facto headquarters for the opposition. "I want to make it clear: The federal government is not just the president of the United States."

The Democrats' diplomacy — part lobbying, part public relations — comes amid widespread international concern about Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris accord. War-torn Syria announced last week that it would join the agreement, leaving the United States — if it goes through with its withdrawal — as the only country in the world outside of the pact.

On Saturday, Democratic politicians, climate activists and like-minded business interests sought to present the United States as a country divorced from its president. Speakers repeated the slogan, "We are still in," a message splayed across an electronic ticker and on buttons at the unofficial U.S. pavilion. The pavilion's estimated \$235,000 cost was being covered by a coalition including former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer.

Steyer, who is spending millions of dollars on a national television ad campaign calling for Trump's impeachment, was expected to outline his case for Trump's ouster in a speech here Sunday.

While pavilion organizers plied guests with big-name speakers and free beer and wine, a subtler campaign was unfolding inside the conference halls. Starting late last week, a small

delegation of U.S. senators, including Cardin, Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) — began meeting with officials from other countries in an effort to assuage nerves about Trump. Schatz said he and other lawmakers met with delegations from India and Japan and were planning to meet with representatives of the European Union, Mexico, Indonesia and Canada.

The senators argued Trump could not quickly undo eight years of Obama-era climate policies or significantly affect state-level efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"I think that there's an understanding of the American system of government, which is sometimes cumbersome and slow, and frustratingly so, but in this instance it works in favor of climate action," said Schatz. "Whatever the president's rhetoric, he can't prevent us from moving forward on clean energy."

Following a meeting with Mexican officials, Markey said Saturday, "Obviously, I think it's important for them to understand that there are 30 states that have renewable electricity standards, that the fuel economy standards are still the federal law, that the appliance efficiency standards are still federal law."

Democrats trying to thwart attacks on climate action have on their side bureaucracy, the courts and a narrowly divided Congress that often gets stuck in legislative stalemates. Although Republicans control Congress and the White House, they need 60 votes to proceed to most legislation.

The Trump administration is moving to undo President Barack Obama's climate standards — including carbon limits for the roughly one-third of emissions that come from the power sector. Those regulatory rollbacks could take years and will have to stand up to legal review, but in the meantime, the federal government will not move forward to curb greenhouse gases.

Markey promised that Democrats will fight to maintain fuel economy standards and will block any effort to cut back wind and solar tax credits. He told a crowd on Saturday that Trump has "assembled a Cabinet of Big Oil all-stars" but that, "On our side, we have 100 years of science and nearly 100 percent of the scientists in the planet. And inside the United States, we have city after city, state after state, standing up to take action."

Diplomats are paying close attention to American representatives pledging to keep fighting climate change, said Jens Mattias Clausen, a Copenhagen-based climate change adviser for Greenpeace who is attending the talks.

The most important thing those representatives can do is "show the rest of the world that even if the Trump administration refuses to face reality here and continues with this very isolationist style that the rest of the U.S. is actually ready to step up and help with the commitments that they have," Clausen said. In terms of specific numbers they can offer, "the more concrete it gets ... the better," he added.

California Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown and Bloomberg are leading a group called America's Pledge, which aims to release more specific reduction commitments from states and localities next year. On Saturday, they released a report asserting the combined economic power of every state and city that has committed to the Paris agreement would outmatch every country except for China and the U.S.

Yet even their own report acknowledged, as previous studies have, that non-federal efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are not sufficient to meet the United States' commitments under the Paris agreement given Trump's stated policies. And local and state climate efforts are fraught with their own, internal disagreements about how aggressively subnational governments should pursue climate policies on their own. On Saturday, Brown had a speech interrupted for an extended period by activists protesting California's cap-and-trade program and its permissiveness on hydraulic fracturing.

"You have a positive message insofar as what individual states and individuals are doing" about climate change, Mairead McGuinness, a member of the European Parliament, told Brown at a forum last week.

However, she said, "Sometimes when we make a step forward, there are forces that ask us to step back by half."

McGuinness added, "One of the comments we hear from EU citizens is that, why should we act when others are not?"

For all of the Democrats' efforts, Trump looms large over the conference, and the power of the White House is not lost on the international community. Trump, who has called climate change a hoax, is publicly promoting coal production. He has said he is withdrawing from the Paris agreement because it puts the United States at a "big economic disadvantage."

Last week's elections in the United States provided a rare, positive talking point for Democrats trying to combat Trump's message in Bonn. The Democrats' sweep in the off-year contests, they said, presaged a return to Democratic power in Washington and re-engagement in climate talks abroad.

"Tuesday's election marked that Trump is alone and isolated," said Garrett Blad, executive director of SustainUS, a youth advocacy group. "It's going to be our job back home — 2018 is going to be a huge year with the elections — to make sure that states ... are moving forward with the most aggressive action that we can."

When Bloomberg mentioned Saturday that the official U.S. delegation to the conference under Trump was preparing to host a controversial panel on Monday on the use of fossil fuels, the crowd booed.

"The Trump administration did send a delegation here to Bonn, and it might be the first climate conference where — this is not a joke, folks — coal is being promoted as an example of sustainability," Bloomberg said.

He added, "It will also likely be the last. The world is moving on, and so is the United States."

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He added, "I mean, [Trump] can prohibit EPA employees from talking to the public, and he can remove the word 'climate' from all the government websites. But he can't stop the technological and business revolution that's gaining speed around the world and especially in the U.S."

Sara Stefanini contributed to this report.

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Sara Stefanini contributed to this report.

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McAuliffe, top Democrats dismiss impeachment talk [Back](#)

By David Siders | 11/12/2017 11:19 AM EDT

BONN, Germany — Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe said Sunday he does not support impeaching President Donald Trump, after Democratic billionaire Tom Steyer pressed the case for impeachment at the United Nations climate conference here.

"Let [special counsel Robert] Mueller, and let the people who are doing the process, go through and do what they're doing," McAuliffe said after a breakfast speech by Steyer, a supporter of the Virginia Democrat. "You don't prejudge investigations."

Steyer, who is spending millions of dollars running television ads in the United States calling for Trump's impeachment, told a small crowd Sunday that "lack of action is a choice."

But Steyer's message did not appear to resonate with top Democratic politicians in Germany for the climate talks. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, who also attended the breakfast, said she has no position on impeachment, which she said is "something that Congress is going to deal with." California Gov. Jerry Brown was also dismissive.

"Do you want me to start an impeachment movement by saying, 'Yes, I agree with Steyer. Let's go.' What will that do?" Jerry Brown told reporters on Saturday night. "That would be counterproductive. It would undermine all that we're trying to do."

Former California GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a vocal critic of Trump, declined to answer questions about impeachment Sunday.

Steyer, who is considering running for U.S. Senate in California, spoke in a pavilion set up by United States climate advocates and financed by a coalition including Steyer and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

McAuliffe, a potential presidential contender who described Steyer as a friend, said, "He paid for the breakfast. He's entitled to clearly say what he wants."

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Pro-Trump group courts donors with Cabinet access [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 11/10/2017 03:22 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry will headline an intimate gathering of high-powered business executives in Texas next week for the pro-Trump outside group America First Policies, the first in a series of "roundtable discussions" giving donors face time with top Trump officials.

The Houston event featuring Perry, detailed in an invitation sent to a Republican donor and obtained by POLITICO, will include roughly 30 people and cover topics from energy policy

to the Trump administration's broader agenda, America First spokeswoman Erin Montgomery said. Perry will not solicit donations from the attendees at the Monday event, which would be a violation of federal law — but America First officials plan to ask for contributions after Perry leaves the room.

The event highlights the cozy and growing ties between officials in President Donald Trump's administration and outside allies spending millions of dollars pushing administration policies this year. America First is brandishing its relationships with government officials to establish itself as the White House's preferred outside ally, among a mass of pro-Trump groups that have popped up this year.

In addition to holding more roundtable events, America First Policies recently held conference calls featuring White House Legislative Affairs Director Marc Short, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Rep. Erik Paulsen, all key players on tax reform. America First leaders also huddled with White House officials recently.

America First Policies and its affiliated super PAC, America First Action, plan to raise and spend \$100 million supporting Trump's agenda in the next year. Super PACs are not permitted to coordinate with candidates and there are strict rules governing Cabinet officials' political activities. But there is a loophole: Perry and others can participate in events put on by America First's nonprofit policy arm, which is legally separate from the super PAC even though the same officers run both groups.

"As long as the super PAC and the 501(c)(4) each stays in its own lane they can both operate under the same umbrella," said Brett Kappel, a campaign finance lawyer and partner at Akerman LLP.

But campaign finance reform advocates said the arrangement crosses an ethical line.

"This is all part of the very close coordination we're seeing between the campaign itself and what's supposedly an outside group," said Craig Holman, the government affairs lobbyist at the good-government group Public Citizen. The activities constitute "coordination in anyone's definition except for the Federal Election Commission's," he said.

Perry is an ideal ambassador for America First Policies in Texas, where the former governor has deep ties to the energy industry and donors who fueled his state campaigns as well as two presidential bids.

An Energy Department spokesperson did not return a request for comment. Perry was in France this week meeting with energy leaders from other countries. He is slated to attend a similar meeting in Texas on Monday, prior to the America First event, with leaders from Canada and Mexico.

America First was silent for much of this year and went through multiple staff shakeups, but has recently been working to restore its original position as the central group backing Trump's agenda.

But it has competition. Future45, which supported Trump during the 2016 elections with funding from casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson and the Ricketts family, [announced](#) a project that will spend in the tens of millions of dollars promoting tax reform earlier this month. Great America PAC, which is affiliated with former White House strategist Steve Bannon, began

endorsing 2018 candidates in recent days.

Great America PAC's support for Roy Moore broke from Trump's support for Sen. Luther Strange in Alabama. America First plans to stay closely aligned with Trump and Trump's agenda, which Texas businessman Roy Bailey said could be a differentiator.

"We're not second-guessing anything; we're totally confident in [Trump's] ability to lead this nation and we're supporting him and the vice president," said Bailey, who is involved with America First.

That message has intrigued Texas-based energy executive Dan Eberhart, who said he hasn't yet made a donation to America First but is "interested in what they have to say."

"A lot of people who supported Republicans in 2016 are frustrated with the way things have turned out," Eberhart said. "If the Republican establishment won't support the president's agenda, we need alternatives who will."

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Perry's grid study: 4 things that may have legs [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/24/2017 06:56 PM EDT

The Energy Department's study of the electric grid arrived late Wednesday, but it's not yet clear whether Secretary Rick Perry's efforts to help support nuclear and coal-fired power plants will have legs.

The 187-page [report](#) called for DOE to focus mostly on R&D and coordinating efforts to prepare for disasters, and left the heavy lifting for other agencies, such as FERC, EPA, the National Science Foundation and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Among the recommendations are for FERC to "expedite" its work to reformulate how electricity markets pay power generators, and for EPA to revisit its New Source Review permitting program that requires plants to tighten emissions controls when they upgrade their plants — both issues that have proven difficult for the two agencies.

"If these recommendations, as a suite, are something that the administration really wants to do, someone in the White House is going to have to quarterback that," said Greg Gershuny, who served as chief of staff in DOE's Energy Policy and Systems Analysis office during the Obama administration and worked on the Quadrennial Energy Review.

"In the next four or five weeks, as Congress gets back, we'll see if these things are going to move," he said. "How engaged Perry is and how many times a week he's going to the Hill and talking to other agency heads is going to tell us a lot about how serious they are about this."

DOE, which did not submit the report for OMB review before its release, is now taking [public comments](#) on the study. Here's a breakdown of the issues.

Wholesale electricity markets: The new report calls on FERC to speed its work with states, grid operators and market players to "improve" how power producers are paid in the wholesale markets under the agency's jurisdiction. FERC had been grappling with the issue under its "price formation" initiative over the past three years, rolling out proposals and new rules to try to adapt to the increasing complexity of the electric grid — and to make sure power generators are fairly compensated.

However, grid operator PJM has [argued](#) regulators were thinking too small, and it released a trio of working papers earlier this year highlighting FERC's initiative while quickly noting that "fundamental" price formation issues hadn't been addressed. DOE suggested that FERC consider "fuel-neutral" markets to pay for essential grid reliability services.

So far, FERC seems sympathetic.

Soon after President Donald Trump gave him the gavel this month, FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee stressed that generators, including coal and nuclear plants, "need to be properly compensated to recognize the value they provide." FERC has broad authority to alter market pricing rules, but that can be a slow process, and can have vastly different impacts in different states and regions — and draw sharp political pushback.

ClearView Energy Partners analysts warned against dismissing opposition to market rules that raise electricity prices on consumers.

"FERC-led initiatives can often create strange bedfellows, strong alliances and more opposition than state-led proposals," a ClearView report issued Thursday said. "We are reluctant to assume this all goes as quickly as the change advocates hope."

DOE's study also argued that "negative offers should be mitigated to the broadest extent possible," a reference to the fact that renewables like wind power can still make money even if power prices go negative because they can rely on a federal production tax credit.

Grid reliability R&D: The new report says that DOE should "focus R&D efforts to enhance utility, grid operator, and consumer efforts to enhance system reliability and resilience." That view stands in contrast to the Trump administration's first budget proposal, which suggested cutting DOE's electricity office by 42 percent from current levels, to \$120 million.

Nevertheless, Perry has said he wants his agency to focus on "early-stage" research, with the intention of transitioning that work to the private sector as quickly as possible.

DOE's study says more research should be done on technology that will make it easier for grid operators to integrate increasing amounts of renewable power, facilitate technical coordination with Canada and Mexico, and increase "targeted" R&D to boost the efficiency of coal-fired power plants.

Infrastructure development: The new push calls on the federal government to "accelerate and reduce costs for the licensing, relicensing, and permitting of grid infrastructure" — including power plants and transmission — which could easily involve a half-dozen federal agencies.

DOE, the study says, "should review regulatory burdens for siting and permitting for generation and gas and electricity transmission infrastructure and should take actions to

accelerate the process and reduce costs."

The Obama administration sought to quicken the electric transmission permitting process in 2013 with a [memo](#) to the chiefs at the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy and Interior, which resulted in a [final rule](#) last year. Several members of Congress have also pressed the issue in legislation, including in the 2015 highway bill that [included](#) directives to more than a dozen agencies to join a new permitting council tasked with speeding up the federal process for large infrastructure projects.

DOE also recommends that the NRC "ensure the safety of existing and new nuclear facilities without unnecessarily adding to the operating costs and economic uncertainty of nuclear energy" and, without much explanation, "[r]evisit nuclear safety rules under a risk-based approach."

The report doesn't target specific NRC regulations, but does discuss the agency's license renewal process and the expenses associated with equipment upgrades, which may make it a prime target for cost reductions.

Breaking down barriers for coal power: The study recommends that policymakers "encourage EPA to allow coal-fired power plants to improve efficiency and reliability without triggering new regulatory approvals and associated costs." That's a reference to the New Source Review permitting program, which was created under the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments to prevent coal plants and other major emitters from making equipment changes or upgrades that would increase their emissions.

Reforming the program has been an industry priority for decades, with companies arguing that power plants have held back on making upgrades that would increase their efficiency because of concerns that they would have to go through the NSR permitting process. A collection of unions earlier this summer, for example, [called for NSR reform](#) as part of any replacement rule for the Clean Power Plan.

But multiple Bush administration attempts to weaken permitting requirements show that NSR reform is much easier said than done. A 2002 rule was partly [struck down](#) by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, which said several new exemptions were not allowed under the Clean Air Act. Another 2003 rule introducing another major exemption was completely [tossed out](#) by the D.C. Circuit. A third NSR [rulemaking](#), issued in the final days of Bush's presidency, dealt with how sources report emissions changes. Environmentalists sued, and the rule remains under reconsideration at EPA to this day.

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MSHA nominee: 'I was not proud' of violations notice [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 10/04/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominee for assistant secretary of Labor for Mine Safety & Health told a Senate committee today that his coal company ignored safety conditions at one of its mines.

David Zatezalo was chairman of Rhino Resources when it received pattern of violation notices in 2010 and 2011, the Charleston Gazette-Mail previously reported. The company was later fined when a wall collapsed, killing a worker.

When questioned by Sen. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.) about the notice, Zatezalo blamed the mine manager.

"The management of that particular group and that particular site was not doing what they should have been doing," Zatezalo said. "I was not proud of the fact that we got designated as a [potential pattern of violations] mine. I did not try to lawyer up and stop anything from happening."

"I replaced that management," he added, "because I wasn't too happy with their performance and hadn't been for sometime."

Zatezalo appeared before the Senate HELP Committee for a confirmation hearing with Cheryl Stanton and Peter Robb, Trump's nominees for Wage and Hour Division administrator and NLRB general counsel, respectively. Few senators showed up to the hearing, though, and [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.) complained that the Senate's busy schedule didn't leave enough time to probe as deeply as she would have liked.

Zatezalo assured Kaine that he wouldn't have a problem working with career staff at MSHA who issued the notice to his company.

"They did what they were supposed to do," he said.

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Coastal lawmakers push back on House flood insurance proposals [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 11/08/2017 03:59 PM EDT

A bipartisan group of coastal lawmakers is pushing for major changes to the National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization bill that's awaiting a floor vote.

Republicans and Democrats representing the Atlantic and Gulf coasts have filed several amendments, which have been [released](#) by the House Rules Committee.

Some of the amendments would attempt to further shield policyholders from flood insurance premium increases, following concessions won by House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.) that reduced proposed penalties for properties that repeatedly flood.

One [amendment](#) by Reps. [Frank LoBiondo](#) (R-N.J.) and [Peter King](#) (R-N.Y.) would strike three sections of the bill, [H.R. 2874](#), including a prohibition on coverage for buildings valued above \$1 million. Their amendment would also lower the bill's proposed cap on annual premium increases to \$5,000 from \$10,000.

"While discussions continue with the committee, Congressman LoBiondo feels the flood insurance bill is not at a point it needs to be to earn his vote and those of other coastal legislators," LoBiondo chief of staff Jason Galanes said. "He drafted the amendment to address those outstanding concerns."

LoBiondo and King were two of 26 House Republicans who [wrote](#) to House leadership this summer warning that they would not support an earlier iteration of the House Financial Services Committee package in part because they said it would make flood insurance unaffordable for their constituents.

Another lawmaker who signed on to that letter, Rep. [Garret Graves](#) (R-La.), has offered four amendments, including [one](#) that would restrict FEMA from raising insurance rates if a property was at a higher risk of flooding because of actions undertaken by the federal government.

Rep. [Dan Donovan](#) (R-N.Y.), who was part of the group fighting the bill this summer, has offered an [amendment](#) that would freeze insurance premiums in areas where flood maps are being redrawn.

Other coastal Republicans who signed the July letter were trying to put their stamp on the final bill.

Rep. [Leonard Lance](#) (R-N.J.) raised concerns about the bill this week, a spokesman said. Rep. [Clay Higgins](#) (R-La.) is part of the negotiations, his spokesman said.

Rep. [Steven Palazzo](#) (R-Miss.) is pushing for changes addressing several concerns with the bill, including increasing surcharges, how premium rates will be determined for coastal versus inland locations and the lack of provisions that address the NFIP's debt, a spokeswoman said.

"He will continue to push for a program that protects South Mississippians, provides flood insurance that is affordable and available, and ensures the long term success of the program," she said.

House aides said the Financial Services Committee was preparing to [rewrite](#) a section of the bill laying out annual assessments that FEMA charges policyholders to fill a reserve fund.

The new provision would require FEMA to impose a 16 percent assessment on insurance premiums, up from the flood program's current rate of 15 percent.

Aides said the change was being made to address member confusion and issues raised by the CBO.

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House Rules reschedules hearing on flood insurance bill [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 11/10/2017 04:51 PM EDT

The House Rules Committee will hold a hearing Monday on the National Flood Insurance Program reauthorization bill, as Republicans try to move ahead with a floor vote.

The Rules Committee will resume consideration of the bill, [H.R. 2874 \(115\)](#), after postponing a Tuesday hearing on the legislation. At the time, the committee said it delayed the meeting after the CBO flagged a scoring issue.

In the interim, House Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) (R-Texas) decided to [revise](#) a section of the bill that would impose assessments on premiums to fill a reserve fund, [drop](#) a prohibition of coverage for homes worth more than \$1 million and delay the implementation of an exemption for commercial properties subject to mandatory coverage requirements.

This week, a group of coastal lawmakers continued to raise [concerns](#) with the bill and offered several amendments.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Rules Committee hearing on the bill will be at 5 p.m. on Monday.

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SAB appointee doesn't represent North Carolina, state says [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 10:16 AM EDT

Donald van der Vaart, the former head of North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality, will not represent the agency or the state in his recent appointment to EPA's Science Advisory Board, the DEQ [told a local television station](#).

Van der Vaart, a Republican who was considered for a top EPA appointment, demoted himself at DEQ to a non-political position that cannot be removed at will following last fall's gubernatorial win by Democrat Roy Cooper.

But his position on SAB will not come with Cooper's blessing, according to DEQ.

"DEQ does not support his participation on the EPA's SAB," the agency told local TV station WRAL. DEQ will not participate as a representative of the DEQ or North Carolina, the agency added.

Neither van der Vaart nor EPA immediately returned requests for comment this morning.

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Jerry Brown, President of the Independent Republic of California [Back](#)

By David Siders | 11/11/2017 07:06 AM EDT

VATICAN CITY—On his way to the United Nations climate talks in Bonn, Germany, this week, Jerry Brown stopped over at the Vatican, where a doleful group of climate scientists, politicians and public health officials had convened to discuss calamities that might befall a warming world. The prospects were so dire—floods and fires, but also forced migration, famine and war—that some of the participants acknowledged difficulty staving off despair.

California's doomsayer governor did not express much optimism either. Seated between an economist and an Argentine bishop at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Brown leaned into his microphone and said, "It is despairing. Ending the world, ending all mammalian life. This is bad stuff."

"There's nothing that I see out there that gives me any ground for optimism," he went on. Still, he promised action: "I'm extremely excited about doing something about it."

Even though President Donald Trump has abandoned the Paris climate agreement and called climate change a "hoax," and even though he is proceeding to scrap the Obama-era Clean Power Plan and promoting the production of coal, Brown insisted to his audience at the Vatican that these policies do not reflect the true sensibilities of the United States.

"This is not just a top-down structure that we have in the United States," the governor said. The small crowd burst into applause when he added, "Over time, given the commitments that we're seeing in this room today, and what we're seeing around the world, the Trump factor is very small, very small indeed."

In the raw balance of power between a governor and a president, Brown has almost no standing abroad. What he does have is a platform, and a proposition: Crusading across Europe in his Fitbit and his dark, boxy suit, Brown advances California and its policies almost as an alternative to the United States—and his waning governorship, after a lifetime in politics, as a quixotic rejection of the provincial limits of the American governor. In the growing chasm between Trump's Washington and California—principally on climate change, but also taxes, health care, gun control and immigration—Brown is functioning as the head of something closer to a country than a state.

In his final term, Brown has lobbied other states and regions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, while augmenting California's already expansive suite of climate change programs. But Trump's election—and the specter of Brown's own retirement—have lately set the governor on a tear. In a rush of climate diplomacy this year, Brown traveled to China to meet with President Xi Jinping, then to Russia to participate in an international economic forum. This past week saw him address lawmakers in Brussels and Stuttgart, Germany, and he was preparing for roundtable meetings with scientists in Oslo before arriving in Bonn for a climate conference, where Brown will serve as special adviser for states and regions. And he is preparing for California to host an international climate summit of its own next year in San Francisco.

In one sense, Brown's fixation on climate change would seem unremarkable, the predictable conclusion of a career steeped in the ecological and environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, early Earth Day rallies and the Stockholm conference on the environment weighed heavily on the public consciousness when Brown was starting out in politics, and observers of a certain age will still recall him mystifying audiences with pronouncements about "planetary realism" and the "spaceship Earth." He was still talking about the need for a fundamental shift in lifestyle when he said at the Vatican that confronting

climate change will require "a transformation of the relationship of human beings to all the mysterious network of things."

"It's not just a light rinse," Brown said. "We need a total, I might say, brainwashing. We need to wash our brains out and see a very different kind of world."

But in his climate diplomacy today, Brown is performing a more urgent, final act. For nearly all his public life—from secretary of state to governor, to mayor of Oakland and state attorney general before becoming governor once again, at age 72—Brown's near-constant state was to run for public office. Now, for the first time, he is not. Term limits will chase Brown from the state Capitol in January 2019, and today he calls climate change his "campaign," dismissing the idea that after running unsuccessfully for president three times, he might try again in 2020. "I've thought because people like you ask me," he said in an interview before leaving for Europe. "But no, I'm not running."

Now, Brown's future rests on a family ranch in Northern California, where he is nearly finished building a remote, off-the-grid home. These days, he talks more about rattlesnakes and wild boar than the presidential election, and he has turned his focus from electoral politics to more existential concerns.

"I find a lot of what is included in politics doesn't count that much, at least for my salvation or my peace of mind or my interest in life," Brown said. The climate, he went on, "is fundamental. It's not like dietary requirements. It's not like a tax measure, or a school curriculum, or many of the issues, even a crime bill. It goes to the essence of being alive, living things. Whether it's humans or fauna, flora, the basis of life is embedded in this chemical structure, biological structure. And it's threatened."

Sitting in the back of a Ford Crown Victoria on a tarmac at Los Angeles International Airport, Brown added, "This, to me, seems worthwhile."

Brown often borrows from the writer Carey McWilliams' description of California as "the great exception," a colossus that McWilliams said, "always occupied, in relation to other regions, much the same relation that America has occupied toward Europe: it is the great catch-all, the vortex at the continent's end into which elements of America's diverse population have been drawn, whirled around."

Trump's election nearly spun that vortex off its axis. In a state where Democrats had already battered Republicans to near-irrelevance, voters last year installed Democratic super-majorities in both houses of the state Legislature. They approved higher taxes and stricter gun controls, legalized marijuana and made certain felons eligible for early parole. They handed Trump the most lopsided loss a Republican presidential nominee has suffered in California in 80 years. Then they slumped in front of their TV sets as the rest of America went the other way.

The morning after the election, the leaders of the state Senate and assembly issued a joint statement in which they said they "woke up feeling like strangers in a foreign land." Brown had joked before the election that if Trump were to become president, "We'd have to build a wall around California to defend ourselves from the rest of this country."

Now, the state Legislature and a large share of Brown's constituents expected him to hoist it up—to assert California's sovereignty in the Trump state. As Trump started dismantling his predecessor's climate policies, Brown helped organize an alliance of 14 states and the island of Puerto Rico, pledging to meet their share of the U.S. commitment to the Paris climate accord. He redoubled his efforts outside of the United States, expanding on a joint project with the German state of Baden-Württemberg: recruiting nearly 200 mostly subnational governments to sign a nonbinding pact to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius, the threshold beyond which many scientists predict environmental catastrophe. On top of that, Brown negotiated legislation extending California's signature cap-and-trade program for an additional 10 years, then signed an agreement with leaders of Ontario and Quebec to integrate their cap-and-trade systems with California's.

Trump's election shook Brown and his home state in other ways, too: California relied on billions of dollars in federal health care funding that Trump threatened to undo, and the president's hard line on immigration sowed fear among California's large population of undocumented immigrants. When the Trump administration started conducting immigration sweeps in Los Angeles, protesters strung "No I.C.E" signs from freeway overpasses, and Brown—who had signed legislation granting undocumented immigrants driver's licenses and access to college financial aid—negotiated state legislation curbing local law enforcement officials' ability to cooperate with federal immigration agents.

By this fall, California's feuding with Washington had grown so routine that it barely registered as news when, during the span of seven hours one day last month, state Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced four separate lawsuits against the Trump administration on issues ranging from health care and education to immigration and oil extraction on public and tribal lands.

Before Trump's election, Brown existed largely at the margins outside California. When he returned to office in 2011, a fellow Democrat held the White House, and no one had to look West for an expression of leftist causes. In that context, Brown presented as a moderate, taking criticism from environmentalists for his permissiveness of hydraulic fracturing, while others dismissed as insignificant the nonbinding climate agreements he pursued.

But then Trump, less than a month in office, told a national TV audience, "California is in many ways out of control." Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, addressing California Republicans shortly after Brown signed legislation expanding protections for undocumented immigrants, said that if California kept this up, it would eventually "try to secede from the union." The governor factored so heavily in the specter of a civil war that House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, himself a Californian, slipped in a speech last month in which he rebuked one "President Brown."

The nation's most populous state was cleaving from Washington, and Brown was its marshaling force.

"Trump is leaving many vacuums, and I think Jerry Brown has long imagined himself as a kind of global player," says Orville Schell, who wrote a biography of Brown in 1978 and remains in contact with him. "He does see California, as the sixth-largest economy of the world, as capable of playing more of a nation-state-like role."

Brown "sort of accidentally has had the world thrust in his lap through the climate issue, which he passionately believes in," Schell adds. "The opportunity has presented itself, the

inclination is there, and he's sort of ratcheting the state up to rush into that breach that Washington is leaving."

In the role of a statesman, Brown so far has been met with dotting audiences in Europe. When he arrived in Stuttgart for meetings this week, local officials sent a seven-car motorcade to the airport to deliver him to his hotel with lights flashing, an unheard-of accommodation back home. And when Brown spoke in Brussels on Tuesday, before the hemicycle of the European Parliament, the body's president, Antonio Tajani, said the governor's presence gave Europeans "some comfort" in the era of Trump. Muhterem Aras, president of the parliament of Baden-Württemberg, told Brown through an interpreter, "You and your work are needed more than ever." She cast Brown as a warrior "facing a mighty lobby as an adversary."

Yet in the polished, grip-and-grin world of diplomacy, Brown can also seem out of place. He has sprinted through his trip on a borrowed charter plane with his tiny entourage—a handful of aides, a small protective detail and his wife and adviser, Anne Gust Brown, straightening his collar. He maintains an exasperatingly loose schedule, suffers posing for photographs and sometimes wanders on stage.

Before he strode into the Vatican headquarters of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, a 16th century summer residence for Pope Pius IV, Brown darted for a table of coffee and cookies that waiters were starting to clear away.

"You had to eat, didn't you, love?" his wife asked her husband, who has a sixth sense for free food.

Throughout his trip, Brown has also carried copies of two articles he wrote about the threat of nuclear proliferation, his principal concern other than climate change. The first, "Nuclear Addiction: A Response," was written in 1984 for a now-defunct Jesuit publication. The second is Brown's review in the *New York Review of Books* last year of former defense secretary William Perry's *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*. Leaving a meeting one night in Rome with Arturo Sosa, the superior general of the Jesuits, Brown squinted over his hawk-like nose and said that while "going around enlisting allies ... I bring my two little articles and I pass them around."

Depending on his audience and mood, Brown vacillates between optimism and dread for the future. Signing a government guestbook in Brussels this week, he quoted Virgil: "Ad astra per aspera"—to the stars through difficulties. Later, when the elevator taking Brown from a meeting went up instead of down, he first complained, half-joking—"Mistake!"—and then said, "That can happen with missile launches, too."

As frequently as Brown is asked about Trump, Brown has mentioned the president only sparingly on his European tour. Although he has called Trump the "null hypothesis" for climate change, a politician who by "making his case of denial so preposterous, helps the other side," he insists the problem of climate change is bigger than one leader, and has acknowledged he is trying to make "lemonade out of a lemon."

A year ago, it appeared that Brown might not be able even to do that. Two nights before the election, he was eating chips and salsa at an airport bar in Durango, Colorado, where he had spent the day campaigning for Hillary Clinton. If Trump took the White House, he said in an

interview, it would be "game over" for climate change. "Game over," he said again.

Asked about it recently, on the tarmac in Los Angeles, Brown said, "I say a lot of things while waiting for a drink in bars across America."

"We're fighting," he added. "The game is over in Washington for the moment ... But not in the world."

Later, at the Vatican, he put it this way: "You should despair, but that won't help. So be optimistic, and do whatever you can."

Brown said he has met Trump once, when he was mayor of Oakland in the 2000s and considered bringing a casino to the city. The two flew together in Trump's plane to Oakland from Palm Springs. The governor recalled being impressed with a Renoir that Trump had hung on a wall in the plane. "I don't know whether it was real or not," Brown said last year. "But I thought it was. I thought it was a hell of a statement."

Brown, more than many politicians, could appreciate the populist appeal that swept Trump into the White House—and that Brown sought to capture in his own three presidential campaigns. In 1976, he called for an "era of limits," then campaigned against the North American Free Trade Agreement and the influence of corporate money in politics in his 1992 campaign. He refused campaign contributions greater than \$100 and, in rhetoric reminiscent of Trump's "drain the swamp," criticized "the basic fact of unchecked power and privilege."

Pat Caddell, the veteran pollster and political analyst who gave advice to Brown in 1992 and Trump in 2016, says, "Brown was way ahead of his time, really ... I think if Jerry had run in '16, he could have won the Democratic nomination."

Today, Brown's mind is elsewhere. He deflects questions about his legacy, arguing, "Everything we're doing can be framed as either a model for everybody else or building my legacy that I'm going to be reviewing in my dotage." Yet the issues that consume him—climate change and nuclear proliferation—are legacy concerns of humankind.

"Human civilization is on the chopping block," Brown told an auditorium full of lawmakers and students this week in Stuttgart, his voice rising almost to a yell. "We have to wake up the world. We have to wake up Europe, wake up America, wake up the whole world to realize that we have a common destiny."

While climate change has afforded Brown a degree of notoriety outside California, he believes that history is not kind to governors and a politician's relevance quickly fades. "It's just a matter of time before your irrelevance engulfs your total being," he said in Los Angeles, chuckling. "I'm pretty focused on today."

He is at least thinking a little about the near future. Dna Hoover, who is building the Browns' ranch house, said Anne Gust Brown called recently to ask about stucco samples and a generator, and the couple ran a herd of goats through the property, where the Browns have planted olive trees, to chew down grass to prevent fire. "He's ready," Hoover says. "He's really so connected with that place and is ready to get up there full-time."

Brown has even discussed the possibility of creating some kind of meeting space on the ranch.

Before he was to arrive in Bonn on Saturday, he left his aides behind and swung south to Bremen, Germany, to visit with Silja Samerski, who had once helped him organize a salon he called the "Oakland Table," attracting intellectuals such as the late social critic Ivan Illich. "We're going to talk about unfinished issues from the Oakland Table," Brown said of his visit with Samerski. "The good life, and how are we supposed to lead it. What are we doing? So, that's getting ready for the Colusa Institute," he explained, laughing a bit. Colusa is the name of the county where he is building his ranch.

Brown is also contemplating writing when he leaves office, something he tried, but largely gave up, after his first two terms as governor. His work at the time, he says, "didn't rise to the quality that met my standards."

Decades later, Brown says, "I have much more to say."

At an event held alongside the Democratic National Convention last year, Brown had compared his retirement to that of a Roman statesman, "a fellow named *Cincinnatus* who saved the Republic, and then he went back to the plow."

Reminded of that comparison recently, Brown smiled and said, "I like to be on my plow." But he added, "Maybe I'll be sending out pronouncements from the plow."

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By Anthony Adragna | 07/25/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon and Darius Dixon

RUSSIAN SANCTIONS GETS HOUSE VOTE TODAY: House lawmakers vote today on a [package of sanctions](#) against Russia, Iran and North Korea, but it remains an open question what President Donald Trump would do once the measure reaches his desk. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders on Monday appeared to walk back earlier indications of support. "He's looking over where it stands exactly at this point and we'll keep you posted on the decision," she told reporters on traveling with the president on Air Force One. The bill, H.R. 3364, includes language sought by the U.S. energy sector that would allow companies to participate in projects as long as sanctioned Russian firms do not have a controlling interest or more than a 33 percent stake in them. It is expected to easily clear the House.

Speaking of sanctions, any new penalties currently being considered against Venezuela won't start with the country's oil exports, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#), citing a senior administration official. "Everything is definitely on the table" as far as sanctions targets, the official told Ben. But "round one will definitely not" target the country's oil sector, the official added. Analysts have said that targeting Venezuela's oil sector would crash its economy and make the human rights situation there worse. U.S. refiners have also scoffed at the idea.

SUMMER BREAK DELAYED? Frustrated with their leadership's decision to pursue a slimmed-down, mini-spending package this week, House GOP Appropriators are urging the cancellation of the first week of August recess so they can pursue a full, 12-bill omnibus, POLITICO's Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#). "The whole purpose of whipping is to be able to make your case so the fact that we did all this work and it's not going anywhere is really frustrating," steamed appropriator [Tom Rooney](#) said last Thursday. Sources close to GOP leaders said Monday they were considering reversing course and pursuing the broader spending package. But by Monday night it appeared they still sorely lacked the votes.

In the meantime, the House Rules Committee is expected to finalize the structure of the debate for the mini-bus later today. Lawmakers filed [79 amendments](#) to the Energy and Water title of the package [H.R. 3219 \(115\)](#) on everything from funding for Yucca mountain to increasing funds for DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy to barring a rider related to the Waters of the U.S. regulation. Many of those are unlikely to actually see floor time, but we'll have to wait until the committee finishes up its work to see the full list of what made the cut.

In a [statement of administration policy](#) Monday, the White House backed the underlying spending bill but strongly condemned "continued construction" for the MOX project in South Carolina, which the administration called "unaffordable and risky." In addition, the White House voiced concern with a prohibition on using other funds from the Nuclear Waste Fund on interim nuclear waste storage activities and called for lawmakers to "further reduce funding for costly later-stage development, commercialization, and deployment activities" on energy research.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Sen. Orrin Hatch is the [proud booster](#) of the sole Reagan Republican primary endorsement. For today: Who was the first senator in history to be reelected after switching parties? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

[Playbook Exchange Denver](#) — Join POLITICO Playbook co-authors Anna Palmer and Jake Sherman for a special Playbook Exchange event in Denver with Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper. Aug. 1 — 5:30 p.m. MDT / 7:30 p.m. EDT — S&P Global, 1800 Larimer St., 2nd Floor, Denver. RSVP: [Here](#). Watch it live: [Here](#).

BERNHARDT WINS SENATE CONFIRMATION: Senators [voted](#) 53-43 Monday evening to confirm David Bernhardt's nomination as deputy secretary at Interior, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Five members of the Democratic caucus — [Michael Bennet](#), [Joe Donnelly](#), [Heidi Heitkamp](#), [Angus King](#) and [Joe Manchin](#) — joined all Republicans in supporting his bid to serve as Secretary Ryan Zinke's No. 2. "David's extensive experience serving under previous Interior secretaries, his esteemed legal career, and down-right love of our land and resources is exactly what is needed to help streamline government," Zinke said in a statement after the vote.

Green and good governance groups, which criticized Bernhardt as having too many conflicts of interest to fill the position, vowed after the vote they would closely watch his actions at the agency. "Bernhardt is ethically compromised on issues ranging from national monuments to offshore drilling; we expect timely recusals from these decision-making processes," Kelly Mitchell, Greenpeace's climate and energy director, said in a statement.

SPOTTED: Energy Secretary Rick Perry and fellow Eagle Scout Zinke (in a Scout uniform) traveled with Trump to the 2017 National Scout Jamboree in Beaver, W.Va., and stood behind the president on stage as he delivered remarks. Picture of the two Cabinet secretaries [here](#). Trump tweeted [video](#) of them boarding Air Force One as well.

DEEP DIVE INTO USDA SCIENCE PICK: All major farm groups are lining up behind Sam Clovis, Trump's pick to be USDA's chief scientist who lacks scientific experience and has criticized mainstream climate change science, Pro Agriculture's Helena Bottemiller Evich [reports](#). "Some have suggested that Dr. Clovis is not qualified for this position due to his lack of hands-on science and research experience," a coalition of nearly two dozen industry groups [wrote](#). "We do not share this point of view." But environmental and scientific groups say he's not qualified for a position that, by law, must be drawn from "among distinguished scientists with specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research, education and economics." Despite criticism of his credentials, Clovis has been quietly winning over rank-and-file at USDA, which was not seized by the chaos that engulfed other agencies, like EPA, during the first few months of the Trump administration.

DEMS READY TO ROLL ON ENERGY BILL? Whatever shot the Senate's energy package [S. 1460 \(115\)](#) has for movement in the near term likely hinges on today's healthcare vote, but Energy and Natural Resources ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) says her side is good to go. "We hotlined it on our side and everybody's ready to go," she told reporters. Should the healthcare vote fail, the measure's backers hope it could be slotted in for floor time as the chamber plans to stick around into August. But a Democratic committee aide was less equivocal about where things stand later Monday: "We're still working through the

amendment process right now," the aide said.

CARPER BASHES PRUITT: Amid [disclosures showing](#) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt spent nearly half his first three months atop the agency on trips to Oklahoma, Senate EPW ranking member [Tom Carper](#) called for "increased transparency" from the administrator but delivered quite the burn. "Mr. Pruitt has spent more days in Oklahoma at this point than President Trump has spent at his golf courses, which is no minor feat," he said in a statement.

PROBE SOUGHT OVER INTERIOR REASSIGNMENTS: Eight Senate ENR Democrats, led by ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#), asked Interior's inspector general to look into recent moves to reassign senior career staff, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). The move follows the highly publicized transfer of Joel Clement, who was moved from a managerial position involving climate change issues to a job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies. In [a letter](#) to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall, the senators said moving career staff to jobs "where their talents are wasted would constitute a serious act of mismanagement, a gross waste of public funds, and an abuse of authority."

**** A message from Chevron:** We're piloting a program that uses drones to keep an eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vnI0Ve> **

FIRST STEP TOWARD CLIMATE 'RED TEAM'? The Competitive Enterprise Institute's Myron Ebell says EPA might tap Steven Koonin, DOE undersecretary for science from 2009 to 2011, to run its "red team" review of climate science, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Koonin, who wrote in 2014 the science behind climate change "[is not settled](#)," floated the formation of a red team in an April Wall Street Journal [piece](#), where he said such a review "would shine much-needed light on the scientific debates" surrounding the issue. Critics say such an exercise would give the minority disputing the scientific consensus on climate change an outsized public voice.

WOTUS TOURS ROLLS ON: Pruitt headed to South Carolina Monday for further discussion with local officials about the Waters of the U.S. regulation. Attendees included Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#), Rep. [Joe Wilson](#) and state Attorney General Alan Wilson. "[#WOTUS fails common sense test and proven to be government overreach at its worst](#)," Graham [tweeted](#).

ANOTHER PANEL WADES INTO BIOFUELS DEBATE: Two House Science subpanels dip their toes into the ongoing debate over biofuels policy with a hearing at 10 a.m. that the committee says will "examine federal funding of biofuels projects and how it affects the private market." Witnesses include representatives from Oak Ridge National Laboratory and University of Michigan's Energy Institute, as well Growth Energy's CEO Emily Skor and the Heritage Foundation's Nicolas Loris. More info [here](#).

NUCLEAR, CCS TECHNOLOGIES EXAMINED: The Senate EPW Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety today hears from experts on the research, development, and deployment of advanced nuclear and carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration technologies. A committee aide said [the session](#) would "inform potential future legislative proposals and review of regulatory activities." [Lamar Alexander](#), the top Energy appropriator, testifies first. The hearing kicks off at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 406.

HOTTEST TAKE: House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) published [a piece](#) on the Heritage

Foundation's Daily Signal Monday arguing "the benefits of a changing climate are often ignored and under-researched." Read it [here](#).

HEITKAMP DISHES ON CCS BILL: If you, like ME, hadn't known previously that Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) has a podcast, her [latest episode](#) features Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Shelley Moore Capito](#) discussing their efforts to enact legislation boosting carbon capture and sequestration technologies. "I'm a very strong believer in an all-in strategy," Whitehouse said, describing why he's pushing the bill. "We know it's not going to be what it was in the past — we know that and accept that — but we do see it as a baseload energy provider, but if we don't get it cleaner, we're going to have much rockier roads in front of us," Capito said of coal.

LBNL REPORT SAYS STATE RPS PLAYING DIMINISHED ROLE: A new [report](#) by DOE's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory finds that overall state renewable portfolio standards are playing less of a role in renewables growth, particularly where wind generation is concerned. Across the U.S. last year, RPS drove 44 percent of all renewable capacity additions whereas from 2008 through 2014 it accounted for up to 70 percent of new projects. In 2016, only 21 percent of all wind additions were because of state requirements, although 59 percent of new solar was thanks to state RPS. The report attributes the changes partly to corporate contracts for renewable power and growth of utility-scale projects in states that do not have renewable standards.

REPORT: NEW REACTORS COULD MAKE INDUSTRY COMPETITIVE: Advanced reactor tech could make nuclear-generated electricity competitive in the power markets where the industry has states bending over backward to rescue the existing fleet, according to a [report](#) coming out today. The study, being released by the Energy Innovation Reform Project, estimates that the technology under development at eight companies could generate electricity at an average of \$60 per megawatt-hour, nearly 40 percent below what the Vogtle and Summer nuclear expansions will be producing at. "At these costs, nuclear would be effectively competitive with any other option for power generation," the report says. EIRP's executive director will discuss the report at the Nuclear Energy Institute headquarters at 10 a.m.

FORUM LOOKS AT GRID INNOVATION: The Edison Electric Institute, GridWise Alliance and National Electrical Manufacturers Association today at 9:30 a.m. kick-off an expo looking at the latest technologies and projects transforming the electric grid. Held in conjunction with the House Grid Innovation Caucus, the event takes place in the Rayburn Foyer.

DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED FRACKING BAN SOUGHT: Environmental groups from New Jersey, New York and other states will submit a petition with more than 60,000 signatures this week to governors and the Army Corps of Engineers asking for a permanent ban on fracking in the Delaware River watershed area, POLITICO New York's David Giambusso [reports](#). The Delaware River Basin Commission has imposed a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in the river's watershed area since 2010.

MOVER, SHAKER: Robert Scher has been appointed head of international affairs for BP America, effective immediately; he's been serving since 2014 as the assistant secretary of Defense for strategy, plans, and capabilities in the Pentagon.

QUICK HITS

— U.K. Seeking to Fill Climate Leadership Void Left by Trump. [Bloomberg](#).

- Dakota Access protesters claim responsibility for pipeline sabotage. [Des Moines Register](#).
- Study: our Paris carbon budget may be 40% smaller than thought. [Guardian](#).
- Coal Baron Attempts to Halt Critical 'Last Week Tonight' Rebroadcast. [Rolling Stone](#).
- Fighting climate change can boost jobs, cut inequality - New York mayor [Reuters](#).
- Luxury hotels, fine dining for LePage on taxpayers' dime. [Portland Press-Herald](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:30 a.m. — The Edison Electric Institute, GridWise Alliance, and National Electrical Manufacturers Association host Grid Innovation Expo, Rayburn Foyer

10:00 a.m. — "[No Regulation Without Representation](#)," House Judiciary Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law, Rayburn 2141

10:00 a.m. — "[Examining Advancements in Biofuels: Balancing Federal Research and Market Innovation](#)," House Science Subcommittees on Energy and Environment, 2318 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — "[Efforts on Marine Debris in the Oceans and Great Lakes](#)," Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, Russell 253

10:00 a.m. — "[Developing and Deploying Advanced Clean Energy Technologies](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — "[Examining Sue and Settle Agreements: Part II](#)," House Oversight Subcommittees on Interior, Energy and Environment and Intergovernmental Affairs, 2154 Rayburn

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about energy, safety, and some truly high-flyin' doin'. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping to help keep a close eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://bit.ly/2vnIOVe> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/07/white-house-coy-ahead-of-house-russia-sanctions-vote-023899>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Senior U.S. official: Venezuelan oil won't be first target of potential sanctions [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/24/2017 06:51 PM EDT

The U.S. would not include Venezuela's oil exports in any first round of new sanctions currently being considered, a senior administration official said today.

The White House is still weighing its options of how exactly to react to the situation in Venezuela, where President Nicolás Maduro's government has been [clashing](#) with protesters for weeks, the senior official told POLITICO. Sanctions could come before a July 30 vote whether to start the process of rewriting the country's constitution, the official added.

"Everything is definitely on the table" as far as sanctions targets, the official told POLITICO. But "round one will definitely not" target the country's oil sector, the official added.

Oil is Venezuela's main source of foreign currency, which it desperately needs to repay loans from China and Russia. Analysts have said that targeting Venezuela's oil sector would crash its economy and make the human rights situation there worse.

U.S. refiners have also criticized the idea. The U.S. is one of the main destinations for that oil, importing 796,000 barrels of crude oil a day in 2016, according to the EIA. Most of it goes to refineries along the Gulf Coast.

WHAT'S NEXT: A decision on sanctions could come later this week.

To view online [click here](#).

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Unhappy GOP appropriators press leadership to delay recess [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, John Bresnahan and Sarah Ferris | 07/24/2017 05:07 PM EDT

House Republican appropriators are pressing Speaker Paul Ryan to cancel the first week of recess and tackle a massive spending package full of goodies for the base — a strategy leadership rejected last week.

Under the lead of financial services subcommittee chairman Tom Graves (R-Ga.), a handful of appropriators are urging leadership to reconsider and bring up a \$1 trillion appropriations bill before leaving for summer break. They argue they worked at record pace to finish all their spending bills. And they were furious when leadership decided last week to only pursue a smaller, scaled-back version for national security priorities.

Some appropriators even threatened to vote against the so-called "minibus" of Pentagon spending plus-ups and border wall funding unless the other bills were included. Others took leaders to task for failing to sell the idea to the conference, resulting in an inconclusive whip check that showed a lack of support.

"We worked really hard on these bills," steamed appropriator Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) last Thursday. "Then it's put out for a whip check on a Friday — and nobody knows what's in these bills — but they don't give us a chance to make our case? Then they do a whip check and people are all undecided and then they pull it."

He added: "The whole purpose of whipping is to be able to make your case so the fact that we did all this work and it's not going anywhere is really frustrating."

Even Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), an ally of GOP leadership also on the appropriations panel,

was not happy the bills wouldn't hit the floor.

"Look, it's a Republican bill full of Republican policies... But we didn't get a chance to make that argument and I regret that," he said.

To be sure, leaders decided against pursuing the full package of spending bills because they did not have the votes. Should the legislation fail on the floor, it would create an embarrassing episode highlighting Republicans' inability to govern — and leaving a sour taste in their mouths as they depart for the five-week recess.

That's the main reason why Ryan (R-Wis.) and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) decided not to pursue the bigger spending package in the first place. Chief deputy whip Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.) told them and lawmakers in a closed-door meeting last week that they whip came back overwhelmingly "undecided."

Sources close to GOP leaders say they're were once again re-considering a full, 12-bill omnibus instead of the minibus on Monday. By Monday evening, however, it appeared they still sorely lacked the votes.

If leadership decides to reverse course and pursue a full GOP spending package, it's likely the House will stay in session for another week, delaying the first week of recess.

The decision entirely hinges on the number of supporters Graves can muster. He, McHenry and several other whips worked the phones throughout the weekend, trying to move members from "undecided" to "yes," insiders said.

Supporters of the idea are starting to get involved as well to up the pressure game. Republican Study Chairman Mark Walker is attempting to force a vote on a GOP omnibus with a last-minute amendment to this week's slimmer package.

His amendment, which dropped late Monday night, would wrap all 12 bills into a single bundle that would hit the full floor of the House. The RSC chairman has already spoken to House GOP leaders and members of the House Rules Committee about the amendment, according to a senior GOP aide.

"In conversations with members, they're more favorable to this process," a senior GOP congressional aide said.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Senate confirms Bernhardt as Interior deputy [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 07/24/2017 06:31 PM EDT

The Senate today confirmed former lobbyist Dave Bernhardt to the Interior Department's No. 2 spot.

The 53-43 vote to make Bernhardt deputy secretary fills a key position in a department that

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has complained of being severely understaffed. President Donald Trump has tasked Interior with major regulatory reviews and policy changes in a bid to increase oil and gas production.

Bernhardt had worked at Interior in several roles, including solicitor, during the George W. Bush administration.

Bernhardt's confirmation came despite environmental and good governance groups criticizing him as having too many conflicts of interest to fill the position. They also took issue with Bernhardt continuing to work for his old firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP even after he withdrew his lobbying registration to pursue the nomination.

WHAT'S NEXT: Bernhardt will take up his position.

To view online [click here](#).

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The Sam Clovis factor: Scientist? No. Skilled in the science of influencing Trump? Yes.

[Back](#)

By Helena Bottemiller Evich | 07/25/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Sam Clovis, President Donald Trump's pick to be USDA's chief scientist, has been many things in life: He's an F-16 fighter pilot turned defense contractor turned academic; he was a conservative radio host in Sioux City, Iowa, and a failed U.S. Senate candidate in the Hawkeye State who managed to become co-chair of the presidential campaign of a New Yorker who won — against all odds.

These days in Washington, Clovis' critics are obsessing over what he is not: He's not an agricultural scientist, nor is he an agricultural economist, nor does he appear to be qualified for a position that, by law, must be drawn from "among distinguished scientists with specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research, education and economics."

Senate Democrats, activists deeply concerned about climate change and left-leaning science groups predictably seized on Clovis' weak credentials to attack his selection as yet another sign the Trump administration rejects science-based policymaking and endangers the integrity of federal research.

But none of that has deterred the heavyweights in the agriculture industry, who believe, in effect, that Clovis' political savvy is more important than his resume.

The White House announced last week that Trump intends to nominate Clovis, but it has not yet sent the formal paperwork to the Hill. In the coming nomination fight, Clovis, whose early and loyal backing of Trump helped the president win in Iowa, has politics on his side.

Not only does Trump owe him a job, but most major farm groups are now rallying behind his pending nomination despite his lack of hard-science experience. On Monday, a coalition of nearly two dozen industry groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Corn Growers Association, [sent a letter](#) to Senate Agriculture Committee leaders,

urging support for Clovis — a political calculation that has many policy experts in Washington rolling their eyes, considering farm groups constantly fuss about the importance of sound science.

"Some have suggested that Dr. Clovis is not qualified for this position due to his lack of hands-on science and research experience," the groups wrote. "We do not share this point of view. The U.S. Department of Agriculture already employs some of the finest and most dedicated scientists in the world. They do not need a peer. They need someone to champion their work before the administration, the Congress, and all consumers around the world."

What Clovis lacks in science chops, he makes up for in knowing — really understanding — Trump. Back in April, when Trump was on the verge of withdrawing the U.S. from NAFTA, it was widely reported that Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue helped walk the president away from the ledge by showing up at an Oval Office meeting with a map of the U.S. that pointed out areas that would be most harmed by an abrupt withdrawal — many of them counties and states that voted for Trump, and many of them rural.

It was actually Clovis who prepped Perdue for the meeting and Clovis who suggested the secretary take along the map to drive home his point in a visual, high-impact way, multiple sources with knowledge of the exchange said. Clovis did not respond to multiple inquiries from POLITICO.

"It shows that I do have a very big farmer base, which is good," Trump later recalled about the meeting and the map, after [deciding to drop](#) a planned executive order that would have pulled the U.S. from the free trade deal with Mexico and Canada, which has been a boon for agriculture. "They like Trump, but I like them, and I'm going to help them."

If Clovis has special insight into what makes Trump tick, it's because he joined Trump's campaign early on and earned standing in a political universe where family has first-order status and positions of true influence are grounded in loyalty, above all else.

Clovis first bet on Rick Perry in Iowa, but bailed when the former Texas governor sputtered. The Iowan joined the Trump campaign as co-chair and policy adviser in August 2015, two short months after Trump announced his run — back when many in Washington dismissed his candidacy as a joke.

Clovis grew to be an influential part of Trump's lean campaign team, serving as a constant surrogate on cable news and corralling an unwieldy group of unconventional policy advisers.

"He's been with Donald Trump from the very beginning," said Gary Baise, a leading agriculture lawyer in Washington, who Clovis enlisted to help organize farm leaders during the campaign. "He has a masterful understanding of how to appeal to Donald Trump for the benefit of agriculture."

From Sioux City to Trumpland

Clovis, if he had his druthers, really wanted something at DoD — perhaps a more logical choice given his long career in the U.S. Air Force. But USDA undersecretary for research, education and economics — a little-known but crucial post that oversees a budget that approaches \$3 billion — is not a shabby consolation prize.

The Iowa Republican, who led the Trump transition's beachhead team for USDA and currently serves as the department's liaison to the White House, portrays himself as an economist — but his Ph.D. is in public administration. At Morningside College, a small liberal arts school in Sioux City, Clovis taught classes on business, management and public policy, according to internet archives, and didn't appear to publish any major peer-reviewed work.

He's on the record questioning the scientific consensus on climate change, a stance that helped fuel the criticism from Democrats and science advocates that emerged after ProPublica reported in May that Clovis was likely to be Trump's choice for USDA's chief scientist.

"If President Trump wants to keep Americans safe and healthy, ensure prosperity for farmers and rural communities, and follow the law, this nomination is the wrong choice," said Ricardo Salvador, director of the food and environment program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, which has led opposition to Clovis' pending nomination. He disputed the idea that a politically wired advocate for agricultural science would have greater impact than someone with deep research experience.

"These are not mutually exclusive possibilities," he said, "and the nation's food system and ag research investments should not be held hostage to such a false choice."

Senate Agriculture ranking member [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) said last week, after the White House announced Clovis' selection, that she has "strong concerns that Sam Clovis is not qualified" for the position.

Yet science groups and the land-grant universities that work with the division Clovis would lead have been noticeably quiet, choosing instead to avoid a political fight with a nominee who's close to the president, likely to be confirmed and expected to ultimately have much power over the level of federal funding their institutions are to be given.

Other groups, like the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, which represents historically black colleges and universities, jumped on the chance to back Clovis after the White House's announcement. "Shortly after the election results were announced, Dr. Clovis began meeting with TMCF to develop an action plan to deepen the USDA's relationship with our ag schools in order to help them build capacity, infrastructure and career paths for their graduates," said Johnny Taylor Jr., CEO of TMCF. "We are hopeful our positive working relationship with the USDA will continue with Secretary Purdue and, if confirmed, Dr. Sam Clovis."

As Clovis' credentials have publicly drawn fire, he's been quietly winning over rank-and-file at USDA, which was not seized by the chaos that engulfed other agencies, like EPA, during the first few months of the Trump administration. Clovis has proven himself to be a steady hand, impressed career staff and become well-liked, even by some of his critics, who privately acknowledge that tanking his nomination could yield a pick they would view as much worse.

Clovis is also known to have a direct line to the president, a level of access far above that which is usually enjoyed by USDA's head of research — something that is not lost on agricultural groups.

USDA officials, multiple sources said, have simply gotten over the fact that Clovis isn't a scientist. "Their first instinct, given his background, was to not like this guy," said Chuck Conner, president and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, who organized the industry coalition's letter. "But he's won them over in a big way."

Baise, a close ally of Clovis, emphasized the idea that the former professor possesses a rare blend of experience in academia and politics. "We don't have a lot of folks with Ph.Ds who have run for public office," Baise said.

In 2014, Clovis took a leave of absence from his Morningside College post to run for Senate, entering the GOP primary to fill the Iowa seat vacated by the retirement of former Sen. Tom Harkin. Clovis had a conservative talk radio show based out of Sioux City, but he was virtually unknown in Iowa politics. He surprised everyone by coming in second to [Joni Ernst](#), who went on to win the seat. Clovis even bested energy businessman Mark Jacobs, who had sunk more than \$3 million of his own money into his primary campaign. Clovis then ran unsuccessfully for state treasurer, one of his last iterations before he joined Trump's orbit.

Though Clovis' rise in politics has been meteoric, Morningside College wasn't interested in talking up its connection to the Trump administration official when POLITICO inquired about Clovis' academic record for this story. A spokesman for the college refused to answer questions about which classes Clovis taught there and what his research interests were. The spokesman also would not grant faculty members permission to talk about Clovis' time at the school. He left the college in 2015.

Climate science and a 'cool hand'

Clovis' pending nomination has sparked a barrage of snarky headlines and tweets — perhaps more than any other subcabinet pick. "Trump Nominates Sam Clovis, a Dude Who is Not a Scientist, to Be Department of Agriculture's Top Scientist," blared [Gizmodo](#). "Incompetence Looms: Trump To Appoint Non-Scientist As USDA's Chief Scientist," said the headline of an op-ed in [Forbes](#).

And fake news, that newly elevated element of American politics that will forever be linked to the 2016 campaign, has also attached itself to Clovis at times. A few days after the ProPublica report, a site called [USPOLN.com](#) ran a story claiming that Clovis had mocked scientists as "dumb regular people that think dinosaurs existed." The post got so much traction on social media that Snopes and PolitiFact both flagged it as a hoax.

Clovis' name has also repeatedly surfaced in relation to his involvement in another enduring aspect of the 2016 campaign — the Russia question. It was reportedly Clovis who [vetted Carter Page](#), an international businessman, to be a national security adviser to the Trump campaign. As of the summer of 2016, well after Page had joined the campaign, the FBI was said to be surveilling him, suspecting Page may have been acting as an agent of the Kremlin, The Washington Post reported; he was later dropped from the campaign.

But other than the fact Clovis is not a scientist, nothing about his background and work on the campaign and transition has gotten as much attention as his skepticism about climate change, in part because the division he would oversee conducts all manner of climate science research — from studying how to reduce the carbon footprint of food production to coming up with ways for farmers to adapt to more severe weather patterns.

When he was running for Senate in 2014, Clovis did an interview with Iowa Public Radio, during which the hosts pointed out that 97 percent of climate scientists agree that rising temperatures are "very likely due to human activities."

"Do you believe the science?" the hosts asked.

"I am extremely skeptical," he said without skipping a beat. "I have looked at the science and I have enough of a science background to know when I'm being boofed. And a lot of the science is junk science.

"It's not proven," he continued. "I don't think there's any substantive information available to me that doesn't raise as many questions as it does answers. So I'm a skeptic."

But those who have worked with Clovis are unnerved by the breathless criticism in the left-leaning media. They describe him as whip-smart, open-minded, jolly and self-deprecating. He also works long hours and avoids events in Washington that require schmoozing.

"People think he's going to be an a--hole, and then he's not," said one lobbyist who's worked with him.

Another Clovis supporter said the Iowan is "a guy with real balls," noting that one has to be "half-nuts" to fly an F-16 fighter jet, as Clovis did throughout his decadeslong career in the Air Force. He retired in 1996 as a colonel.

In Trumpland, Clovis has developed a reputation for being even-keeled amid an administration known for infighting and volatility. "He was always cool-headed," recalled Sid Miller, the controversial Texas agriculture commissioner who worked with Clovis on the campaign's agricultural advisory committee. "A lot of us would get rattled when Donald Trump would have a bad day. Not Sam. He's a cool hand."

He saw victory outside city limits

Clovis wasn't the kind of campaign operative who assumed victory and ignored political realities. He just happened to understand the political moment in the heartland, which ended up being key to Trump's victory. At an event in Washington just short of three weeks before Election Day, Clovis wasn't banking on his candidate winning.

"I have no idea how this is going to turn out," Clovis told POLITICO at the time.

Clovis had just spent the better part of two hours being peppered with questions about farm policy at the National Press Club in Washington. It was his first appearance before the D.C. hive, and the audience was skeptical, to say the least.

No one in the room, which was packed with food, ag and environmental lobbyists, had any idea who Clovis was. Some had seen him on CNN as a surrogate for Trump. Some had heard he'd run unsuccessfully for Senate in Iowa. But they all couldn't figure out how a little-known professor and conservative talk radio host had become the Trump campaign's lead on agricultural policy.

Clovis, however, had clearly done his homework. He sat back in his chair, eyeglasses perched above his eyebrows, and jumped with ease from farm subsidies and food stamps to the complexities of the peanut program and conservation. He outlined policy stances that were surprisingly moderate. He hammered away on the need for better water quality, said he'd like to wean farmers off price supports, and expressed support for a legal immigrant workforce to meet agriculture's needs.

During the meeting, Clovis also offered brief thoughts on agricultural research, an issue on

which he has almost no record. "I also think the research needs to be transparent," he said after endorsing voluntary GMO labeling, because "consumers have a right to know." He added: "If we have these demands, and we have to fund research in these areas, we should have some accountability on that funding; and the other aspect is it is transparent, to know what we're looking at and what we're investigating."

Clovis offered that one of his personal "pet rocks" is water policy. "I honestly believe if we ever have another civil war in this country, it'll be over water," he said.

After the meeting, even Democrats admitted that Clovis' breadth of knowledge had surprised them.

Trump, for his part, knew he needed to gin up support among rural voters to offset the bludgeoning he'd take in the cities, and he'd tasked Clovis with using farm policy to galvanize the heartland.

"With city limits in the rear-view mirror, it's Trump," Clovis told POLITICO after the Washington meeting, when asked about the widening gap in rural support between Hillary Clinton and Trump. It was something many in the mainstream media and political establishment had missed or disregarded, but Clovis repeatedly pointed to the fact that Trump signs seemed to appear just outside of city limits by a staggering margin compared with Clinton signs.

"Not just yard signs; barn signs. Barns!" he laughed. "People have painted their barns. The sides of their houses. It's nuts," he continued. "There's a lot of angst out there. There really is."

Clovis then explained that the campaign's strategy was to try to make up for getting "trounced" in cities by cultivating hefty returns in rural counties.

And in that, Clovis and Trump certainly had politics on their side.

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Pruitt spent significant time in Oklahoma in spring, records show [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 10:49 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt spent 43 days in March, April and May on trips to his home state of Oklahoma, according to travel records obtained by the watchdog group Environmental Integrity Project.

The [records](#), released under the Freedom of Information Act, include weekend trips home as well as official business in the state, such as a tour of a chemical plant or an awards event hosted by the Oklahoma Well Strippers Association. The records indicate Pruitt [sometimes](#) paid his own airfare but often went at the government's expense.

"These travel records show that Administrator Pruitt is more focused on cultivating his relationships with industry and conservative political organizations in his home state of

Oklahoma than he is on protecting the environment and the public health for the rest of America," EIP Executive Director Eric Schaeffer said in a statement.

The group will ask EPA's inspector general to investigate Pruitt's travel Monday, an EIP spokesman said. As precedent, he pointed to a 2015 IG [report](#) on a regional administrator who scheduled more than half of his official trips to areas near his home in California's Orange County, some of which the IG questioned.

EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in a statement that Pruitt was focused on running EPA, "not running for elected office. The administrator's travel, whether to Utah, Michigan or Oklahoma, all serves the purpose of hearing from hard-working Americans about how EPA can better serve the American people."

Pruitt said at an industry conference in May that his wife would join him in living in Washington this summer since both their children are both now in college, which could decrease his weekend trips home to Oklahoma.

Pruitt's predecessor, Gina McCarthy, paid her own way for trips home to Boston approximately every other week, according to an EIP spokesman.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate Democrats ask Interior IG to probe career staff reshuffle [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 07/24/2017 03:49 PM EDT

Senate Energy and Natural Resources ranking Democrat [Maria Cantwell](#) and seven of her colleagues today asked the Interior Department's inspector general to investigate the agency's recent reassignment of a number of senior executive staff.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in June reassigned about 50 senior executive employees, including Joel Clement, who was moved from a managerial position involving climate change issues to a job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies.

Moving senior executives from the positions in which they may best use their expertise to jobs "where their talents are wasted would constitute a serious act of mismanagement, a gross waste of public funds, and an abuse of authority," the senators said in the [letter](#) to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall.

The senators acknowledged that Zinke is allowed to shuffle senior executives around. But they argued the law requires for reassignments to be made to best accomplish the agency's mission, promote program continuity and to provide for an executive system that is free from improper political interference.

"Any suggestion that the department is reassigning SES employees to force them to resign, to silence their voices or to punish them for the conscientious performance of their public duties is extremely troubling and calls for the closest examination," the letter said.

The letter was also signed by Senate Finance ranking member [Ron Wyden](#) and Sens. [Mazie Hirono](#) (D-Hawaii), [Martin Heinrich](#) (D-N.M.), [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.), [Tammy Duckworth](#) (D-Ill.), [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) and [Al Franken](#) (D-Minn.)

WHAT'S NEXT: It remains to be seen whether the IG will launch an investigation.

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Ebell: EPA eyeing Koonin for 'red team' climate science review [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/24/2017 03:22 PM EDT

EPA is considering picking Steven Koonin, a top DOE official during former President Barack Obama's first term, to run its "red team" review of climate science, according to Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Koonin suggested the formation of a red team in an April Wall Street Journal [piece](#), where he said such a review "would shine much-needed light on the scientific debates" surrounding climate change. Koonin has long been a critic of climate change science, writing in the Journal in 2014 that the science "[is not settled](#)."

Some climate scientists and environmentalists have criticized such a review as giving a minority scientific opinion an outsized voice and laying the groundwork for revoking the 2009 endangerment finding that underlies all of EPA's greenhouse gas regulations.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who [called](#) Koonin's idea "very exciting," has raised the idea of a televised debate.

Ebell, who briefly led President Donald Trump's transition effort at EPA, said today that he is not directly involved in the search but has been told by an "impeccable" source that Koonin is the top choice to lead the climate red team.

A theoretical physicist by training, Koonin was undersecretary for science at the DOE from 2009 to 2011, and since 2012 has been director of the New York University Center for Urban Science and Progress. He previously was chief scientist for BP and provost of the California Institute of Technology.

Koonin did not respond to requests for comment. EPA did not immediately respond to a request for comment today.

To view online [click here](#).

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Zinke's close ties to "scam PACs" scrutinized — Report finds huge costs to federal government from climate change — Comments roll in on Perry's grid resiliency proposal
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 5:43:36 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/24/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon, Heather Caygle, Nick Juliano and Darius Dixon

ZINKE'S 'SCAM PAC' PALS: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has worked for years with a group of Washington political operatives who have been accused by fellow conservatives of raising money on false pretenses, Pro's Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano [report](#). Their investigation sheds new light on Zinke's fundraising practices as a member of Congress and since joining Interior. In his first month on the job, Zinke flew to the Virgin Islands at taxpayers' expense for a series of official events tied to the 100th anniversary of the territory's handover to the U.S. — and while there he squeezed in a personal detour to attend a fundraiser for the Virgin Islands Republican Party. That group, known as VIGOP, is one of several "scam PACs" run by Washington-area political consultant Scott Mackenzie, according to numerous critics that include some Republicans in the Virgin Islands.

Prominent GOP politicians have recoiled from working with Mackenzie and firms that have been linked to him, such as ForthRight Strategy, formerly known as Base Connect and BMW Direct before that. Texas Rep. [Will Hurd](#) says they "are preying on seniors," and former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli filed a lawsuit accusing Mackenzie and others of running a "national fundraising scam." ForthRight CEO Kimberly Bellissimo introduced Zinke to the VIGOP in 2015, when she accompanied him on a trip to the island chain.

But not Zinke. He substantially increased his spending on firms linked to ForthRight between his first race for Montana's sole House seat in 2014 and his re-election two years later, when he spent nearly \$3 million on direct mail fundraising firms operating out of the same address as ForthRight between his congressional campaign and leadership political action committee, SEAL PAC. And he provided a testimonial for the firm's website praising the "professional as well as personal relationship we have developed over many years."

SEAL PAC seemed to operate on the same model as VIGOP and other groups Mackenzie has run, raising huge sums from small donors and spending the vast majority of its money on fundraising consultants. The group raised \$2 million of its \$3 million haul last cycle in increments of \$200 or less, and it spent \$2.6 million on overhead, far more than the \$118,000 it sent to other congressional committees. That made it an outlier among other leadership PACs, which typically court high-dollar donors and allow lawmakers to spread contributions among their colleagues.

There is no evidence Zinke did anything illegal, but his relationship with the consultants and PACs is raising eyebrows. "To say the least, this is highly unusual," said Karl Sandstrom, a former Democratic FEC commissioner now at the law firm Perkins Coie.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and ME baffled the crowd on Monday's trivia. There are seven states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Delaware, Montana, Wyoming and Alaska) with just one congressperson. For today: What state has the

fewest counties? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

IT'S HERE AND IT'S EXPENSIVE: The impacts stemming from climate change are already costing the federal government lots of money to address and will likely continue to grow rapidly over the next several decades, according to [a GAO report](#) out today. Noting that precise economic estimates are difficult to calculate, the report nevertheless urges policymakers to collect better data to prioritize adaptation actions that could blunt the financial risks to the government as the owner of vulnerable infrastructure, insurer of property and crops and provider of disaster assistance.

Requested by the bipartisan duo of Democratic Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) and Republicans Sen. [Susan Collins](#) back in 2015, GAO's release comes as Congress continues to respond to various natural disasters with hundreds of billions in estimated damages. It calls for the executive branch to "identify significant climate risks facing the federal government and craft appropriate federal responses."

"**Our government** cannot afford to spend more than \$300 billion each year in response to severe weather events that are connected to warming waters," Collins said in a statement. "I hope the release of this analysis will cause all of us to think more broadly about this issue, take a harder look at the economic consequences of inaction, and use what is known about climate risks to inform federal policy."

Sound familiar? It should, because former President Barack Obama issued a [similar directive](#) back in 2013 calling for all federal agencies to take steps to prepare for the impacts of climate change. President Donald Trump [rescinded that order](#) as part of a sweeping directive in March that began the process of dismantling his predecessor's climate legacy. Both the White House and EPA declined to provide official comments on the report.

Speaking of adaptation, six state attorneys general released [a letter](#) to congressional leaders Monday calling for the reinstatement of a federal flood standard that requires federally funded construction projects be built to withstand the stronger storms and additional flooding projected to occur as the climate changes. Trump [suspended](#) the measure in August.

**** A message from Chevron:** We're piloting a program that uses drones to keep an eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gzHlxs> **

READ 'EM AND WEEP: FERC's comment deadline for DOE's controversial resiliency proposal hit Monday, and a lot people had a lot to say despite the short timeline. ME plucked the highlights of those that rolled under the closing gate like Indiana Jones. Energy Secretary Rick Perry's plan got praise from state coal associations, FirstEnergy, Exelon, and coal producer Murray Energy, which [said](#) it was threatened with bankruptcy if too much coal power tanked. But some of the state regulators and grid operators expected to be most affected by the proposal were unafraid to brandish their boom sticks.

The heart of PJM: The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio [urged](#) FERC to rejected the plan, found it "deeply concerning" that DOE "makes no attempt to quantify the costs" of the rule (which Perry said was equal to the "the cost of freedom") and suggested it could cost \$8.1 billion a year. Pennsylvania regulators [said](#) DOE's "hastily drafted" plan threatens markets "without adequate justification" and using the 2014 "polar vortex" to justify the proposal is

"inadequate and inappropriate." PJM CEO Andy Ott [said](#) DOE's rule didn't meet legal muster and ISO-New England [said](#) it wouldn't address the region's fuel concerns. The attorneys general of Massachusetts, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington also [submitted](#) a six-point attack.

The Counterintuitive Awards: A few entities tried to praise DOE's goals around resiliency while making it clear that they weren't willing to stomach the proposal at face value. "DOE is heading in the right direction, but the industry needs more time," American Electric Power [argued](#). "[T]he proposal put forward by DOE should not be adopted by FERC without comprehensive discussions and inputs from stakeholders in all sectors of the industry" — a vast departure from DOE's argument that there's already been too much talk. Entergy, which has nuclear plants that could benefit from the proposal, [says](#) DOE's rule is "not well-defined" and could "produce conflicts with current market rules and otherwise create unintended consequences." Even the West Virginia [regulators](#), who aren't thrilled with PJM markets, said having 90 days of fuel on site was "excessive" and urged FERC to do something like 45 days.

The magic minute: People were filing into the docket at such a clip on Monday that five different notices came from the docket at 4:29 p.m. Things got bad enough that we couldn't access FERC's system for a few hours on Monday, and eventually the agency said that it would accept filings for another day.

ZINKE'S SUPER SECRET HILL MEETING: Zinke is scheduled to meet this afternoon with House Natural Resources Committee members in a room typically reserved for issues involving a high-security clearance. Zinke will meet separately with committee Democrats and Republicans and copies of invitations obtained by ME say he will be "raising a confidential matter" and only members and staff with top-secret level clearance may attend.

Topic not specified: The invitations do not say what topics Zinke plans to discuss and the Interior declined to comment. But the agency does oversee park and wilderness areas that abut the US-Mexico border and Zinke raised concerns in a leaked report to the White House earlier this year that Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in New Mexico can be used as a drug smuggling route and needs to be monitored. Also, the U.S. territory of Guam faces possible missile threats from North Korea. Or it could simply be that Zinke, who reportedly flies his official flag over the Interior building when he occupies it, is looking to limit the number of people who know what the agency has in store on a number of topics, such his plans for national monuments.

'Everything about this is weird': A former Interior staffer could not recall a time when prior secretaries Sally Jewell or Ken Salazar ever called a meeting with lawmakers in a secure room on the hill or in the agency's Washington headquarters. "Everything about this is weird," the former staffer said. And Democratic Rep. [Ruben Gallego](#) said there's "nothing normal" about having a meeting with Zinke in such secure meetings and also found it odd the secretary would split up Democrats and Republicans.

MURKOWSKI: 'CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL': Senate Energy committee Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) broke sharply with the party line over the weekend during a speech at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention with the message that climate change is real, and she urged action to install alternative energy systems across her state, KTOO [reports](#). "Climate change is real," she said. "Confronting climate change and adapting to it will take leadership, it will take partnership and attention to social justice if we are to find the strength to tackle the issue together."

HOUSE TO VOTE ON SETTLEMENT BILL: Lawmakers today take up a bill [H.R. 732 \(115\)](#) that would restrict the government's ability to enter into settlement agreements that fund third-party activities. Though the House [report](#) on the package says it "explicitly" permits "payments to remediate environmental damage," it also condemns a settlement with Volkswagen that funded a \$2 billion electric vehicle initiative and says it is "critical that Congress act to prevent these activities in the future."

MAIL CALL! MENENDEZ SEEKS PROBE OF EPA CHEMICAL CHANGES: New Jersey Sen. [Bob Menendez](#) asked EPA's inspector general in a Monday [letter](#) to investigate the influence of a former chemical industry insider in revising regulations in light of a New York Times [report](#). In particular, Menendez wants the inspector general to look into potential suppression of scientific evidence, whether the agency's hiring practices run afoul of ethics and conflict of interest requirements and whether EPA has caved to industry requests in rulemakings.

INFORMATION SOUGHT ON PIPELINE ATTACKS: More than 80 House members sent Attorney General Jeff Sessions [a letter](#) Monday wanting to know what's being done to address recent attacks on pipeline infrastructure around the country. "While we are strong advocates for the First Amendment, violence toward individuals and destruction of property are both illegal and potentially fatal," the letter, led by [Ken Buck](#), said.

GET YOUR GREAT LAKES PITCH IN: A bipartisan group of senators, led by [Rob Portman](#) and [Debbie Stabenow](#), sent a letter to OMB Director Mick Mulvaney on Monday asking for \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the fiscal 2019 budget resolution. "Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy," they wrote. Link [here](#).

DURBIN FIGHTS FOR... UTAH MONUMENTS: Sixteen Senate Democrats, led by Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#), asked Trump in [a letter](#) not to alter the existing boundaries of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments in Utah. "It is clear that any changes to these monuments threaten their important natural, archeological, and cultural resources," they write. The push comes as Zinke is expected to meet later this week with Trump.

SUPPORT URGED FOR CCS TECHNOLOGY: A group of unions, environmental advocates, coal companies and others sent a letter to congressional Appropriations leaders Monday urging full support for the DOE Office of Fossil Energy for fiscal 2018. Link [here](#).

RENEWED PUSH ON ARPA-E LEGISLATION: A bipartisan quartet — Reps. [Mia Love](#), [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#), [Ryan Costello](#) and [Marcy Kaptur](#) — sent a [dear colleague letter](#) urging support for legislation [H.R. 3681 \(115\)](#) that would reauthorize and allow "reasonable growth" in the ARPA-E program through 2022.

WORTH NOTING: A group of deep-pocketed donors gather today at oilman T. Boone Pickens' Mesa Vista ranch to lay out plans to raise money for the Trump-aligned America First Action super PAC ahead of the 2018 and 2020 elections, POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt [reports](#).

WHO'S IN? Leaders of the We Are Still In coalition, which is still aiming to hit the U.S. reduction goals of the Paris agreement, are holding a press call today at 11 a.m. to discuss the upcoming Bonn, Germany, climate meetings. Participants include Washington Gov. Jay Inslee.

REPORT: MARKETS NOT REGULATIONS FOULED COAL PLANTS: Resources for the Future released [a report](#) Monday finding declining energy consumption and low natural gas prices accounted for much of the decline in coal plant profitability. The stringency of regulations affected emissions levels but had little impact on the balance sheets of plants.

TAKE A GLANCE! The Union of Concerned Scientists is out with a [new playbook](#) describing how some companies manipulate the findings of scientists to distort the impacts of their products on public health and the environment. There's also [a PSA](#) from former NFL player Chris Borland.

NEW TOOL! The U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute and Beveridge & Diamond released a [new tool](#) to track regulatory, judicial and legislative developments across the government.

LCV ALL-IN FOR NORTHAM: The Virginia League of Conservation Voters Political Action Committee announced today it's now spent \$3.1 million on the commonwealth's upcoming elections, including Ralph Northam's bid to become governor. That investment includes \$1.1 million of direct contributions to candidates, a \$1.4 million field program and a \$500,000 digital program that includes [a website](#) on Republican Ed Gillespie's environmental record.

DUNCAN JOINS E&C: The House Steering Committee picked Rep. [Jeff Duncan](#) for the spot on the Energy and Commerce Committee that opened up with the resignation of former Rep. Tim Murphy. Chairman [Greg Walden](#) said he was confident Duncan would "make an immediate impact on the committee with some of the broadest jurisdiction in Congress."

TWO MORE JOIN ENERGY COUNCIL: ClearPath CEO Jay Faison and former Aerospace Corp. CEO Wanda Austin are joining American Energy Innovation Council, whose members also include Bill Gates, Tom Fanning and others.

HERE'S RICK PERRY WITH A SHARK: Energy Secretary Rick Perry is in South Africa for Africa Oil Week. On Monday, he tweeted a picture from a speech he delivered with a menacing looking shark in the background. Picture [here](#).

QUICK HITS

- EPA Looks At Cleanup Alternatives For Lead-Contaminated Indiana Site. [AP](#).
- GOP senators propose wildfire management bill. [The Hill](#).
- Russian Troll Efforts Extended To Standing Rock. [BuzzFeed](#).
- Price-Fixing Inquiry Moves From BMW to Daimler and Volkswagen. [New York Times](#).
- Nicaragua will join Paris climate pact, leaving U.S., Syria isolated. [Reuters](#).
- Small Montana firm lands Puerto Rico's biggest contract to get the power back on. [Washington Post](#).
- China: Where natural gas market could boom next. [USA Today](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

10:00 a.m. — 12 energy groups host press event to discuss comments on DOE's grid resiliency proposal, K&L Gates LLP, Conference Room 1-B, 1601 K Street, NW

12:45 p.m. — Sen. Cory Booker and Rep. Raul Ruiz hold call to announce environmental justice legislation, RSVP: Kristin_Lynch@booker.senate.gov

1:00 p.m. — Lawmakers host "Half-Earth Day" celebration and conversation with E.O. Wilson, U.S. Capitol Building Visitor Center: Congressional Auditorium and Atrium

2:30 p.m. — "[Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act: Fisheries Science](#)," Senate Commerce Coast Guard Subcommittee, Russell 253

4:00 p.m. — "[Crude Nation: How Oil Riches Ruined Venezuela](#)," Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Ave. NW

6:00 p.m. — 'Flint' viewing and panel discussion with Rep. Dan Kildee, U.S. Capitol Visitors Center Auditorium

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about energy, safety, and some truly high-flyin' doin'. We're piloting a program that uses drones, HD imaging, and thermal mapping to help keep a close eye on Chevron wells, tanks, and pipelines—all to keep DOERS and what they're doin' safer. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2gzHlxs> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/zinke-close-ties-to-scam-pacs-scrutinized-025188>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Zinke boosted fortunes of 'scam PAC' operators [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano | 10/23/2017 09:48 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has directed millions of dollars in political contributions since 2014 to a network of Washington operatives that prominent conservatives have accused of profiting by misleading donors.

Beneficiaries of Zinke's largesse include groups linked to Washington-area political operative Scott Mackenzie, organizer of a Virgin Islands GOP political action committee that hosted the secretary at a [St. Croix fundraiser](#) in March. Before that, when Zinke was a Republican congressman from Montana, his political operation steered significant portions of its spending to a handful of Washington, D.C.-area consulting firms that also have had ties to Mackenzie and his associates.

Zinke has continued this relationship even as other Republicans have recoiled from dealing with Mackenzie, whose critics say he operates "[scam PACs](#)" that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead.

The critics include former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, who filed a [suit](#) accusing Mackenzie and other defendants of running a "national fundraising scam" after they gave his 2013 campaign for governor less than a half percent of the money they had raised in his name.

Similarly, Zinke's own leadership PAC also relied heavily on small donors while spending heavily on consultants, in a departure from how most members of Congress operate those kinds of groups.

The details about Zinke's fundraising and spending practices have not been previously reported, nor has his yearslong relationship with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands Republican Party, a group that some Republicans in the Caribbean island chain have accused of misrepresenting itself to donors. POLITICO's analysis of Federal Election Commission filings, plus interviews with campaign finance lawyers and people familiar with the Virgin Islands group's fundraising, offer a deeper picture of the political activism of the retired Navy SEAL who serves in President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

None of the records indicate that Zinke violated the law or received any direct compensation from his association with Mackenzie, the Virgin Islands PAC or its consultants. But one campaign finance expert said the information shows that Zinke was not behaving like a typical politician.

"To say the least, this is highly unusual," said Karl Sandstrom, a former Democratic FEC commissioner who now works at the law firm Perkins Coie.

An Interior Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the assistance Zinke has offered to the Virgin Islands group or his use of political consultants. Mackenzie declined to be interviewed, and officials from the Virgin Islands organization — also known as VIGOP — did not respond to requests for comment.

Zinke is separately facing investigations by Interior's internal watchdog and the independent Office of Special Counsel over his habit of [mixing politics and official business](#).

Legal limits on Zinke's partisan activities have tightened now that he's Interior secretary, and he has cut ties with his PACs since being sworn in. Still, he has kept up appearances at fundraisers and other political events — averaging more than one per month — a pace that is unusual for a Cabinet member. Those include his appearance at the March fundraiser in the Virgin Islands, which occurred during a taxpayer-funded trip less than a month after he became secretary.

Complaints among Republicans about "scam PACS" have been on the rise for years, focusing on groups that target conservative voters as a source for donations. Those complaints have repeatedly focused on Mackenzie, the founder of a number of GOP-leaning PACs that have used slogans such as "Stop Hillary Clinton" to raise money from conservatives — then appeared to do little actual politicking.

Such groups make use of what past FEC leaders have described as a loophole in campaign finance law. The commission declined to take action against one of Mackenzie's Virginia-based PACs, the Conservative StrikeForce, after former Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) [complained](#) in 2012 that it had been "fraudulent" in raising money from his supporters while falsely implying it would aid his reelection campaign. While the PAC's actions were "[troubling](#)," the commission's attorneys wrote, they didn't violate any laws or rules that the FEC has the power

to enforce.

Cuccinelli made similar criticisms in his 2014 lawsuit, which accused Mackenzie, Conservative StrikeForce and other defendants of using the bulk of the money they had raised in his name to "enrich themselves." The case was eventually [settled](#), with Conservative StrikeForce agreeing to pay Cuccinelli's campaign \$85,000 and turn over its donor lists.

Conservative commentator Erick Erickson [warned](#) campaigns back as far back as 2010 that he might not endorse any Republican candidate who used one Mackenzie-linked consulting firm, then known as Base Connect and now called ForthRight Strategy. Montana Democrats accused Zinke of facilitating a "[political Ponzi scheme](#)" with his connections to Mackenzie-linked firms during his 2014 congressional campaign, though the charges apparently gained little traction.

More recently, Rep. [Will Hurd](#) (R-Texas) — who was angered last year when the Virgin Islands GOP used his photo without his permission on fundraising solicitations — said in a statement to POLITICO that the Virgin Islands group and ForthRight "are preying on seniors in a disgusting attempt to enrich themselves."

Adav Noti, a former FEC associate general counsel who now works for the nonprofit watchdog Campaign Legal Center, said in an interview that he had dealt with the Virgin Islands group and Mackenzie as an FEC official, and in his opinion, "They are a scam-PAC."

"Scott Mackenzie has a number of scam-PACs," Noti said. "He was probably the first, or one of the first, with the idea of bilking people out of money through PACs. People are being defrauded, and that needs to stop."

The FEC is scheduled to decide Thursday whether to fine Mackenzie for [less-serious discrepancies](#) in campaign filings by two other PACs of which he's the treasurer, Freedom's Defense Fund and the Conservative Majority Fund.

None of the criticism has seemed to deter Zinke, who used part of a government-paid trip to the Virgin Islands in March to attend a VIGOP fundraiser, where — as POLITICO [reported](#) in early October — an invitation listed tickets costing as much as \$5,000 a couple, and Zinke's schedule indicated that high-dollar donors had a chance to take photos with him. It was at least the third VIGOP event Zinke had attended there since 2015.

VIGOP, which the FEC classifies as a "non-party" PAC, directed more than a third of its spending during the 2016 election cycle to a handful of Washington-area consulting firms, including ForthRight and at least three other companies that share its address on 15th Street Northwest, according to campaign filings and other documents. Those firms also received more than \$3.2 million during the same period from Zinke's congressional campaign, leadership PAC and a super PAC he founded before running for Congress, federal campaign records show.

Between the 2014 and 2016 elections, Base Connect had renamed itself ForthRight Strategy after a former executive [pleaded guilty](#) to child pornography charges. A number of the firm's clients left, but Zinke's campaign and his newly formed leadership PAC not only stayed with the firm but spent substantially more on it in the next election.

Zinke also publicly endorsed ForthRight's performance in his 2014 congressional race,

offering a testimonial that was displayed on the firm's website until this month, when the watchdog group Campaign for Accountability filed an ethics complaint.

"Your results and personal commitment to Team Zinke were bar none!" the company quoted Zinke as saying on its website. "I greatly value the professional as well as the personal relationship we have developed over many years."

This praise came even though Zinke's campaign appears to have received less than it spent from its relationship with the firm.

ForthRight [says](#) it raised \$1.9 million for Zinke's 2014 race by sending out 1.6 million pieces of mail, attracting nearly 44,000 new donors whose average contribution was \$44. About \$550,000 of that haul went to Zinke's campaign for "voter mail, radio ads, TV ads, get-out-the-vote activities and lawn signs," according to the firm's website. But that was less than the \$608,000 that Zinke's campaign spent on postage and direct mail from Century Data Mailing Service, a firm located at the same 15th Street address as ForthRight, according to FEC records.

In the run-up to last year's election, Zinke's campaign and his leadership PAC, known as SEAL PAC, spent about \$3 million combined on ForthRight Strategy, Direct Support Services and Legacy Lists — all of which operate out of the same office and list ForthRight CEO Kimberly Bellissimo among their executives. (Bellissimo did not respond to POLITICO's requests for comment.)

Special Operations for America, a super PAC that Zinke founded in 2012 before running for office, also paid firms at that address a total of about \$1.8 million during the 2014 and 2016 campaign cycles.

Mackenzie is not listed on ForthRight's website or business filings but was long associated with the firm under its previous names, Base Connect and BMW Direct, both of which [listed him](#) as a staff member [as far back as 2007](#).

Besides sharing an affinity for the same consultants as Mackenzie's VIGOP, Zinke's SEAL PAC has also followed a similar fundraising model: It raised two-thirds of its money from small donors in 2016, then steered only 4 percent of its spending to other campaigns, with almost all the rest going to operating expenses and overhead.

Typically, members of Congress use their leadership PACs to cover expenses that cannot be funded from their campaign accounts and to contribute to fellow politicians, using donations of up to \$5,000 from lobbyists and other PACs. But SEAL PAC relied on donations of less than \$200 for about two-thirds of the \$3 million it collected during the 2016 cycle, according to a review of the donations. The group then spent more than \$2.6 million on overhead and gave just \$118,000 to other congressional campaign committees.

Relying heavily on small-dollar donations is one hallmark of the "scam PAC" play, said Brett Kappel, a partner at the law firm Akerman LLP who specializes in campaign finance, lobbying and government ethics.

"Unfortunately, they generally target the most vulnerable segment of the population with the least disposable income — retired people living on fixed incomes," said Kappel, who declined to discuss specific cases. "Frequently, these are elderly conservative voters who are upset with

the direction of the country."

Lorraine Hutchinson, of Butler, Pa., told POLITICO that these elderly voters included her mother, who she noticed was repeatedly contributing to SEAL PAC and other organizations, though she didn't have the disposable income to spare. Hutchinson said Zinke's PAC was one of the slowest to cease soliciting money when she asked them to stop. At one point, Hutchinson resorted to posting a plea on SEAL PAC's Facebook page.

"It took a great deal of time and effort but I managed to get most of them to stop. The Seal PAC was one of the most persistent," Hutchinson told POLITICO in a Facebook message last week. "I am convinced that these groups knowingly take advantage of the vulnerable elderly and this is a widespread problem without any easy solutions."

Erickson told POLITICO in 2015 that groups that raise political donations without doing much actual politicking are "completely a drain" on the conservative movement, saying they threatened to sap the donors' enthusiasm while achieving no concrete results.

But Bellissimo, the ForthRight CEO, [defended](#) direct-mail fundraising in a 2014 post for The Daily Caller.

Donors who send checks in response to mail solicitations "are some of the most patriotic, conservative, generous, and sophisticated people on the planet. ... They are also 'movement' people," Bellissimo wrote. "They are willing to sacrifice their dollars on a principled conservative even when they know that candidate is an underdog."

Mackenzie has similarly [defended](#) his high operating costs, telling the FEC in response to West's complaint that "fundraising is expensive and getting more so every year."

Bellissimo's firm has played a crucial role in partnering with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands PAC: Several months before Mackenzie filed the VIGOP's initial paperwork with the FEC in December 2013, Virgin Islands Republican Party Chairman John Canegata signed a contract with Base Connect Vice President Timothy Webster making the firm the exclusive fundraiser for the PAC, according to a copy of the confidential document reviewed by POLITICO.

Some Republicans in the Virgin Islands objected to the use of their name in fundraising mailers urging voters to "Stop Hillary Clinton," and Canegata's involvement with Mackenzie has exacerbated divisions within the local party's governing body.

The anti-Clinton pieces, "at best, solicit donations under false pretenses," four members of the Virgin Islands Republican Territorial Committee wrote in a February 2015 internal report, a copy of which was obtained by POLITICO. The members reported that "not a single penny of the funds received through these solicitations have been used for any purpose identifiable to any effort to oppose the election of Hillary Clinton as president."

Bellissimo introduced Zinke to VIGOP in 2015, his first year in Congress, a source familiar with VIGOP's operations told POLITICO. Zinke, his wife Lola and Bellissimo flew to St. Thomas to attend a VIGOP event in November of that year. Photos the VIGOP members posted on Facebook show Zinke and Bellissimo mingling at the Caribbean venue alongside Canegata and Saul Anuzis, a Michigan-based GOP operative who helped raise money for VIGOP. Neither Anuzis nor Canegata responded to requests for comment.

In February 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo of Zinke speaking at the Hay-Adams hotel across from the White House and bragged that she had "the privilege of playing staffer for Congressman Zinke this afternoon." When a friend commented on the Facebook post, saying the then-House freshman should run for president, she replied: "Maybe someday.... Will you help me campaign for him?"

Zinke returned for another VIGOP event at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Thomas less than two weeks after the 2016 election, according to social media posts. Then came his appearance at the VIGOP fundraiser this past March — this time as a member of Trump's Cabinet.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump signs order to end 'crushing attack' of Obama climate legacy [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 03/28/2017 05:08 AM EDT

President Donald Trump ordered his administration to begin dismantling his predecessor's climate change policies on Tuesday with a sweeping directive to end what he called a "crushing attack" on the U.S. economy — by halting efforts to reduce the carbon pollution of electric utilities, oil and gas drillers and coal miners.

The executive order Trump signed represents his biggest blow yet to former President Barack Obama's climate legacy. But it does not go as far as some conservatives would like to dismantle the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gases, nor will it begin to separate the U.S. from a landmark international climate accord — two areas of intense disagreement within the administration.

"My administration is putting an end to the war on coal," Trump told an audience at the EPA headquarters signing, where he was joined by a group of coal miners whom he promised would be put back to work quickly.

"We're going to have clean coal. Really clean coal," Trump added. "Together we will create millions of good American jobs, also so many energy jobs, and really lead to unbelievable prosperity."

Democrats argue that Trump is ignoring the risks of climate change for the sake of rewarding supporters in the fossil fuel industry.

"Thanks to this executive order, our future is looking darker, it's looking dirtier and it's looking less prosperous," Sen. [Tom Carper](#) (D-Del) told a press conference. "Today Donald Trump is shirking our nation's responsibilities, disregarding clear science and undoing the significant progress that we've made to ensure we leave a better, more sustainable planet for generations to come."

After last week's embarrassing failure of Trump's attempt to repeal and replace Obama's health care law, the energy executive order offers the president a chance to refocus on another key campaign-trail promise: unleashing the American energy industry. The order comes on the heels of Trump's move to [ease](#) Obama's ambitious vehicle fuel efficiency requirements and his

order to reverse EPA's controversial Waters of the U.S. rule. The president has also recently signed legislation undoing Obama-era rules on Appalachian coal mining and energy companies' payments to foreign governments.

Trump order calls for the EPA to rewrite tough rules that critics said make it virtually impossible to build a new coal-fired power plant, and he instructed the Interior Department to end Obama's moratorium on new coal mines on federal lands, among other steps.

Additionally, the president's "energy independence" executive order also repeals several Obama-era environmental directives aimed at reducing the federal government's own carbon footprint, and it directs agencies to ferret out any additional policies that "result in impediments" to U.S. energy production, a likely reference to restrictions on fracking and offshore drilling. The president also told federal regulators to stop using the "social cost of carbon," which attempts to quantify the effects of climate change, in economic analyses of future rules.

"There is every reason to believe that the federal government will no longer seek to punish American consumers and businesses for using the energy resources that fuel our economy," U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue said in a statement welcoming the order.

But Trump has not ordered EPA to reconsider the underlying policy that lets it regulate carbon emissions — the 2009 "endangerment finding" in which it declared that greenhouse gas pollution threatens human health and welfare. Nor will he address whether the U.S. will stay in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

"We're happy with it so far and we look forward to the right decisions on Paris and endangerment, but I think those are still to be made and they're a ways down the road," said Myron Ebell, director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the former leader of Trump's EPA transition team.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt went on national TV earlier this month to [declare](#) that carbon dioxide is not "a primary contributor to the global warming that we see," a statement that is at odds with the conclusions of the vast majority of climate scientists, including those at his own agency. But Pruitt has not followed up on that statement with any effort to reverse the Obama-era endangerment finding — a factor that sources say contributed to last week's [abrupt departure](#) of a Trump appointee from the agency.

On Monday, a writer for Breitbart.com, the site previously run by White House strategist Steve Bannon, suggested that a failure to revoke the endangerment finding would be grounds for Pruitt to resign.

"If Scott Pruitt is not up to that task, then maybe it's about time he did the decent thing and handed over the reins to someone who is," [wrote](#) James Delingpole, a prominent climate skeptic.

The White House has not ruled out later revisiting the endangerment finding, which Trump promised on the campaign trail to review. But environmentalists hope the administration decides that would be too much trouble, given that the policy already survived judicial scrutiny, and that courts are unlikely to support revoking it given the overwhelming scientific data on climate change.

Trump has not nominated anyone to fill key leadership positions below Pruitt and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, leaving open the question of how quickly his order will yield any concrete results.

"It's going to be harder if you don't have those positions filled," said David Doniger, director of the climate and clean air program at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Unless, actually, their intention is never to fill them and work through political operatives who are not accountable."

Trump's advisers are split over whether to withdraw from the Paris climate deal, which Obama joined with a pledge to reduce U.S. emissions at least 26 percent from 2005 levels by 2025. The U.S. would face no penalty for missing that target, but many conservatives nonetheless say Trump should abandon the agreement altogether, as he pledged to do during the campaign.

But more moderate advisers, including Trump's daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, fear that pulling out would damage relations with key U.S. allies. Administration officials are now considering a middle-ground [approach](#): Stay in the deal in exchange for more international support for technologies to reduce emissions from fossil fuels.

The order was also silent on a carbon tax, another issue that has become a [flashpoint](#) in disputes between moderates and hardliners in the White House.

Despite the lofty rhetoric coming out of the White House, Tuesday's order will have relatively little immediate effect.

It will take EPA years to rewrite its Clean Power Plan and accompanying rules on future power plants — both of which courts already had frozen while lawsuits play out.

The Trump administration plans to ask federal courts to suspend lawsuits over the EPA climate regulations and send the rules back to the agency to be rewritten or withdrawn. But the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, which heard arguments on the Clean Power Plan six months ago, does not have to go along. The appeals court judges could rule any day on the Clean Power Plan, and a separate D.C. Circuit panel has scheduled oral arguments on the future plant rule for April 17.

If EPA will not defend the regulation, environmentalists and states like California and New York have indicated they will step up and do so. And the ultimate fate of EPA's climate authority likely will eventually be decided by the Supreme Court, which ruled in 2007 that the agency had to regulate greenhouse gases if they endanger public health — but did not say how.

Trump's plans for the social cost of carbon are less clear.

The Obama administration estimated that each ton of carbon dioxide imposes \$36 in costs to society to evaluate its climate rules. But Republicans and fossil energy supporters argued it arrived at that figure by counting global benefits while specifying only domestic costs — and they complain the metric was not subjected to a traditional notice-and-comment period before it was employed.

Critics also said the Obama administration used the social cost of carbon to impose stricter rules at EPA, the Energy Department and elsewhere that would be too costly to justify

otherwise. Many environmentalists, meanwhile, complained that the amount was too low.

Whether Trump significantly lowers the cost of carbon or abolishes it altogether, the change could have a serious impact on energy regulations that will play out over a period of years. And it remains unclear how the courts might react. Federal judges have upheld agencies' use of the metric before, but some may be inclined to give deference to the Trump administration over what amounts to a highly technical calculation.

Meanwhile, Trump's order will also lead to the resumption of federal coal leasing. But major coal companies are hardly champing at the bit to sign new leases on federal land, although the Bureau of Land Management could make new tracts available relatively quickly. For example, a spokesman for Peabody Energy, which mines more U.S. coal than anyone else, [told](#) Bloomberg that the company will not need a new lease in Wyoming's Powder River Basin for "approximately a decade."

The Obama administration imposed a moratorium in February 2016 as part of a three-year review of the federal coal program. That followed reports from the Government Accountability Office, Interior's inspector general and a coalition of environmentalists and government spending watchdogs that concluded Interior was undervaluing coal on public lands.

Zinke [hinted](#) earlier this month that he will continue the underlying review, despite lifting the moratorium, to ensure taxpayers get the full value of coal being sold off of federal lands.

It's not clear that the moratorium cost any jobs, particularly since most coal mining is happening on private rather than public lands. The National Mining Association has not calculated the costs of the moratorium so far, but the group [noted](#) that coal mines on federal lands employ 14,000 miners.

Anthony Adragna and Esther Whieldon contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump to roll back climate-focused flood standard [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/15/2017 12:41 PM EDT

President Donald Trump will roll back a flood standard designed to protect federal investments from stronger storms as part of an executive order set to be signed this afternoon, according to a White House source.

The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard was established under an [executive order](#) issued by President Barack Obama in 2015. It requires that new federally funded projects — from government buildings like Veterans Administrations hospitals to bridges and schools funded by federal grants — be built to withstand the stronger storms and additional flooding projected to occur as the climate changes. It does not apply to the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Obama administration's standard offers multiple options for achieving greater flood protection, but generally requires construction to withstand a 500-year storm. The previous standard, on the books for more than four decades, required construction to take place outside of the 100-year floodplain. The new standard has not actually taken effect yet; each federal agency is tasked with developing its own regulation for implementing the standard, and none have yet been finalized.

Industry groups objected to the standard, arguing it was developed behind closed doors and could greatly increase costs.

Environmental groups have objected to efforts to repeal the standard.

"Ninety percent of all natural disasters in the United States involve flooding. These events claim lives and strain the capacity of government agencies and local communities to adequately respond and provide relief," Laura Lightbody with the Pew Charitable Trusts said in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump is slated to sign an executive order on infrastructure containing the roll back of the Federal Flood Risk Management standard at 3 p.m. today.

To view online [click here](#).

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PJM CEO: Perry grid plan 'contrary to law' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/23/2017 02:38 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry's proposal to support coal and nuclear power generation is unworkable and may be contrary to law if enacted, according to Andy Ott, CEO of PJM Interconnection.

"Some of the concerns raised by DOE we certainly understand [and] agree with a need for action. However, the DOE's proposed remedy is simply unworkable," Ott told reporters on a conference call this afternoon.

He argued that Perry's plan flew in the face of FERC's core statute and the agency's practice of treating energy sources fairly.

"It's not a uniform proposal across the nation. It seems to be a proposal that's targeted at specific resources, which we think is discriminatory and inconsistent with the Federal Power Act," Ott said. "We believe that it's contrary to law and ... [won't] really solve any problems."

The proposal was discriminatory, he said, because in boosting coal and nuclear power, the rule would create a special group of power sources that are "providing very similar or the same services" to the grid. In addition, Perry's plan was tweaked after its release but before its official publication to stipulate that the rule would apply to power markets that also had capacity markets.

"Certainly, there are generators in non-RTO areas and certainly generators in areas without

capacity markets," Ott said. "The point is, why would they be compensated any differently?"

He added: "I don't know how you incorporate such a proposal without having a significant detrimental impact on markets. "

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC is accepting initial comments on the DOE proposal through the end of today.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Yes, very	Somewhat	Neutral	Not really	Not at all

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Chevron: Zinke's mixing politics with business draws scrutiny — Report: Perry took charter flight last week — Federal judge reinstates parts of methane waste rule
Date: Thursday, October 05, 2017 5:43:27 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/05/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Ben Lefebvre and Darius Dixon

[Morning Energy](#) will not publish on Monday Oct. 9. Our next [Morning Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday Oct. 10. Please continue to follow PRO Energy issues [here](#).

MIXING PUBLIC LANDS AND POLITICS: Over the course of his first months in office, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has met with big donors or political groups more than a half-dozen times while on official travel, raising questions about the appropriateness of those habits even if they don't cross any legal red lines, Pro's Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon [report](#). GOP donors shelled out up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with him during a nearly two-hour Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser during a stop on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. Tickets for the fundraiser, which was attended by local party members and elected officials, ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple.

Though ethics watchdogs said Zinke's appearance was legal, they said attending a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct. "It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen. An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor would say if he planned to continue raising funds.

Zinke's not alone: Obama administration officials had their own struggles mixing official business with politics. A watchdog group requested a probe of whether then-Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama re-election campaign RV tour of Colorado. The Office of Special Counsel [found](#) HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius violated the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" in North Carolina. Former Interior chief Sally Jewell said she thought Zinke was within his rights, noting she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) that she paid her own way to. "If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said.

But some see Zinke's activity as trying to maintain political contacts so can keep his options available for what to do after he leaves the Trump administration. "I think he's definitely got political aspirations, that that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition." He's widely seen an attractive candidate for Montana's open-seat governor's race in 2020.

Quotes that keep coming back to ME: "Put another way, just because something is legal doesn't make it right," OMB director Mick Mulvaney [wrote](#) last week. "So much of what happens around here is based on appearances. If it just appears wrong, don't do it," Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) told reporters last week.

REPORT: PERRY TOOK CHARTER TOO — LAST WEEK: Energy Secretary Rick Perry took a chartered flight last week from Hazleton Regional Airport in Pennsylvania to the Greater Portsmouth Regional Airport in Ohio one day before HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned last week, Reuters [reports](#), citing "PMH Aviation, the company that runs the Portsmouth airport." Information about the cost of the flight were not available and the agency did not respond to requests for comment. PMH declined to confirm the flight when contacted by ME Wednesday night. But [FlightAware](#) has details of a Sept. 28 trip that appears to match Perry's itinerary that day; his tour of a uranium facility started at 8:30 the following morning. After the tour, Perry [tweeted](#) that he was headed to the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.

SPEAKING OF TRAVEL: The Western Values Project told ME it plans to file a [complaint](#) in federal court today complaining Interior has not responded to FOIA requests it filed in June asking the extent that Zinke's wife has accompanied him on official work business. Lola Zinke has accompanied her husband on some official trips, either ceremonial events to which she had been officially invited or on trips on which she has paid her way, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift told ME. And CNN [reports](#) Interior's inspector general expanded its existing probe on Zinke's non-commercial travel to also include a summer visit to the Vegas Golden Knights hockey team.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY EVERYBODY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and DOE's Diane Meck was first up to identify Rep. Sala Burton as the lawmaker Nancy Pelosi replaced in Congress. For today: How many — and which — members of Congress replaced their spouses in their seats? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

"I DID NOT SIGN UP TO GO BLOW UP THE MARKETS": Recently minted FERC Commissioner Robert Powelson didn't hold back Wednesday making it clear that he's not going to be a rubber stamp on the Energy Department's grid pricing proposal, and warned against politicizing FERC. [According to SNL](#), the audience gathered for a meeting of the Organization of PJM States broke into a standing ovation when the former longtime Pennsylvania regulator declared, "We will not destroy the marketplace." Powelson, a Republican, reportedly said he wouldn't support a rule that undoes the power markets FERC oversees. "When that happens, we're done. I'm done; I don't need this job," he said, according to SNL. "FERC does not do politics. We don't do energy politics," he also said. "I did not sign up to go blow up the markets."

Something to keep in mind: Organization of PJM States includes state regulators spanning Illinois to New Jersey and down to North Carolina, and its meetings include not only officials from PJM, the nation's largest power market, but consumer counsels from those states and plenty of power companies. PJM is also the market that would be the most affected by DOE's proposed rule. This is Powelson's crowd.

We need lots of information: Late Wednesday, FERC posted 53 questions and other requests for information as it dives into DOE controversial resiliency pricing proposal, Pro's Darius

Dixon [reports](#). The six-page [document](#) splits those questions into categories looking for feedback on rates, the 90-day on-site fuel requirement envisioned by DOE, and how pricing changes would be implemented, among other issues.

METHANE RULE LIVES — FOR NOW: A federal court in California [ruled](#) Wednesday that BLM unlawfully postponed key compliance dates for a methane waste rule in June, effectively putting the rule back on the books for now. Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Laporte said the agency was too late to delay components of the regulation because its effective date had already passed and therefore should have gone through a round of notice-and-comment rulemaking before suspending any part of the rule. Her decision came the same day Interior [proposed](#) an 18-month delay of the methane waste rule as it works to rewrite it. BLM will accept comments on that proposal for 30 days.

**** A message from Chevron:** When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat—buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2fVfOTm> **

EPA STRATEGIC PLAN DROPS CLIMATE FOCUS: EPA's priorities for the next four years would no longer make reference to climate change or rules to reduce carbon emissions under a [draft strategic plan](#), Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). The document, which went out to EPA employees Wednesday, instead defines the agency's "core mission" as ensuring clean air, water and land, calls for more "cooperative federalism" and touts the "rule of law and process." Accompanying graphic that went to employees [here](#).

DEMOCRATS OFFERING CLIMATE METRIC BILL: Led by Sen. [Michael Bennet](#), eight Senate Democrats today are introducing [a bill](#) — the Transparent Pollution Accounting Act — that would standardize the metric used across the federal government to quantify the cost of climate pollution. The Trump administration suspended use of the existing social cost of carbon earlier this year, prompting the need for a codified value, the Democrats argue.

WATCH THAT WRAP UP TODAY: Murkowski wants to have Kevin McIntyre, Trump's pick to chair FERC, and Rich Glick, who serves as general counsel to energy committee Democrats, onto the commission before the chamber adjourns for the Columbus Day recess, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#).

Barrasso: Baran's renom needs a big offset: If Democrats want to secure a full five-year term for Nuclear Regulatory Commission member Jeff Baran, they're going to have to agree to "a fairly significant, robust [nomination] package for me to agree to allow him through," Sen. [John Barrasso](#) told ME. Democrats have insisted that Baran, a former aide to ex-Rep. Henry Waxman who has been on the commission since 2014, get a new term alongside the confirmations of GOP commission nominees Annie Caputo and David Wright, who were approved by EPW in July.

Barrasso's comments suggest that Democratic support for Caputo and Wright likely isn't enough to get him to go along with Baran, especially considering his frustration with objections to EPA enforcement nominee Susan Bodine. Still, there's not much to hang over the Democrats in the near term: It's a Republican administration with plenty of EPA nominees they don't like, and Baran's seat doesn't expire until June.

ADMINISTRATION SENDS OVER DISASTER FUNDING REQUEST: Officials formally sent over a request for nearly \$30 billion in disaster relief Wednesday that included

\$12.8 billion for FEMA's disaster relief fund, \$16 billion for the National Flood Insurance Program and \$576.5 million for the forest service's firefighting fund, Pro Budget and Appropriations Brief's Sarah Ferris [reports](#). That came as San Juan's mayor [blasted Trump](#) on Wednesday as the "miscommunicator in chief" and called his visit to the island "insulting."

Murkowski's focused on immediate relief: Murkowski expressed concern about the "slow" federal response to Hurricane Maria and said building a more resilient Puerto Rican grid was secondary to getting the lights back on. "When you think about the extent of a disaster like this, we all want to say, 'Okay, let's improve, let's improve the grid here, let's build the Puerto Rican grid of the future,' but first and foremost—we've just gotta try and clean up," she told reporters. An aide said Murkowski planned to visit the island with other lawmakers next week but that those details are still being finalized.

PHMSA, NOAA PICKS ADVANCE: The Senate Commerce Committee advanced the nominations of Howard Elliott to run PHMSA and Timothy Gallaudet to be No. 2 at NOAA by voice vote Wednesday. Add them to the ever-increasing backlog of nominees waiting for a Senate floor vote.

DEMOCRATS SEEK PROBE OF PRUITT'S SPENDING: Two senior House Transportation Democrats — [Peter DeFazio](#) and [Grace Napolitano](#) — asked EPA's inspector general in [a letter](#) to probe "wasteful" spending by Pruitt on round-the-clock security and a \$25,000 soundproof phone booth. "This culture, which is reflected in travel and lifestyle choices from the president on down, seems to embolden senior, politically appointed officials of the Trump administration to undertake lavish spending of taxpayer dollars for their sole and personal benefit, and not for the benefit of the Americans paying the tab," they write.

Udall considering private plane rider: Sen. [Tom Udall](#), top Democrat on Appropriations subcommittee responsible for EPA spending, told ME he was "exploring" some sort of rider barring officials from private plane travel. "What I end up seeing is there's some very wasteful things going on," he said.

SENIOR E&C MEMBER MURPHY TO RETIRE: Rep. [Tim Murphy](#), who chairs the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight, announced late Wednesday he'll retire at the end of his current term, POLITICO's Rachael Bade, Elena Schneider and John Bresnahan [report](#). The staunchly pro-life Murphy allegedly suggested a mistress get an abortion.

MINE SAFETY PICK ACKNOWLEDGES FAULTS: David Zatezalo, Trump's mine safety pick, told a Senate panel Wednesday he was "not proud of the fact" the coal company Rhino Resources he used to run got notices of safety violations, Pro Labor's Ian Kullgren [reports](#). He also said he'd have no trouble working with career staff that issued the notices in 2010 and 2011.

ZINKE HEADS TO FLORIDA: Today, the Interior secretary will get a briefing on "infrastructure upgrades and Everglades restoration at Lake Okeechobee." He'll also visit National Park Service sites Friday impacted by recent hurricanes.

CONSERVATIVES FOR CLEAN ENERGY: Hundreds are expected to gather today at the Hyatt Regency for the Conservative Clean Energy Summit. Multiple lawmakers are expected to address the gathering, including Sens. [Mike Rounds](#), [Rob Portman](#) and [Lindsey Graham](#), as well as Rep. [Scott W. Taylor](#). More information [here](#).

Milestone for House climate caucus: There are now 60 members of the House Climate Solutions Caucus with the additions of Reps. [Pete Aguilar](#) and [Mimi Walters](#).

PERRY AIDE ADDS MORE CLIENTS: Jeff Miller, a former adviser to Energy Secretary Rick Perry during his second presidential run, has signed three new clients — including Pacific Gas and Electric, the massive California utility. Miller reported lobbying DOE in the second quarter on behalf of six clients, including AECOM, Lucid Motors (as a subcontractor to Hobart Hallaway & Quayle), the Nuclear Energy Institute, Occidental Petroleum, Southern Company and Valero Energy. He's signed 15 clients since he started lobbying in Washington this year and Perry became DOE chief (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#)).

END OF A (SHORT) ERA: The Rogue EPA Twitter account is going on hiatus, it announced Wednesday. "We started this account to be sure the public knew what was happening at EPA. Now, the world sees...It may be time to take a step back and let others carry the torch for a while. Those of us at the helm, here, are tired," a [couple of tweets](#) said.

QUICK HITS

— Putin Says He'd Drive a Tesla. [Bloomberg](#).

— Interior Department whistleblower resigns, calling Ryan Zinke's leadership a failure. [Washington Post](#).

— Contrary To Original Plan, Atlantic Coast Pipeline May Extend Beyond North Carolina. [WUNC](#).

— Former AG Sorrell Skips Deposition, Sparks War of Words. [Seven Days](#).

— Here's the leaked anti-leak training email sent to DOE staff. [Wired](#).

— Putin says oil cut deal with OPEC could last to end of 2018. [CNBC](#).

— Climate change could nearly triple airplane turbulence in the next decades, study says. [ABC News](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:30 a.m. — CSIS [discussion](#) on the future of electrification, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Ave NW

9:30 a.m. — Sens. Burr and Cantwell hold press conference on Land and Water Conservation Fund, Senate Swamp

9:30 a.m. — Lawmakers hold press conference to discuss the wildfire threat in the West and potential legislative fixes, HVC 110 Studio B

10:00 a.m. — "[Powering America: Consumer-Oriented Perspectives on Improving the Nation's Electricity Markets](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

12:00 p.m. — "[The Growing Role of Liquefied Natural Gas in Latin America](#)," Atlantic Council, 1030 15th ST NW, 12th Floor

12:30 p.m. — "[How Agencies Reverse Policy: Stays, Remands, and Reconsideration](#),"
Environmental Law Institute, 1101 K Street, NW, President's Room

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from Chevron:** This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2fVfOTm> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/zincke-mixing-politics-with-business-draws-scrutiny-024920>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Interior secretary draws flak for mixing politics, official travel [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/04/2017 07:31 PM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a little B.S."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Justice Department's Office of

Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips he takes outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to

ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then-Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity. Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [canceled](#) his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he [would have been](#) cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter,

an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. [Raúl Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and [Donald McEachin](#) (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. [Jon Tester](#) next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations, that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. [Amata Radewagen](#), the Republican delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana where he joined Sen. [Steve Daines](#) (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Report: Sebelius violated Hatch Act [Back](#)

By Jennifer Haberkorn | 09/12/2012 03:13 PM EDT

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius violated the Hatch Act, which prohibits certain political activity, when she made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" during a speech in her official capacity earlier this year, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel said Wednesday.

The office sent an [official report](#) outlining the rare Hatch Act violation and Sebelius's [response](#) to President Barack Obama.

The special counsel's office said it "found no evidence that Secretary Sebelius made any other political statements in her official capacity."

During a speech to the Human Rights Campaign Gala in North Carolina in February, Sebelius said North Carolina Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton "needs to be the next governor of North Carolina." She also outlined the Obama administration's accomplishments so far and said, "One of the imperatives is to make sure that we not only come together here in Charlotte to present the nomination to the president, but we make sure that in November he continues to be president for another four years."

The Office of Special Counsel said she made the political remarks in her capacity as a federal employee and thus violated the Hatch Act. If Sebelius had made those remarks in her personal capacity, they would have been acceptable.

After that appearance, Sebelius had the event reclassified from official to political, and done in her personal capacity, in an attempt to avoid a Hatch Act violation. She and HHS also reimbursed the Treasury Department for all the costs associated with the trip. At least some of the cost was picked by the Democratic National Committee, according to the OSC.

But the OSC said the reclassification doesn't mean the violation didn't occur, particularly because the gala was advertised using Sebelius's HHS title.

"OSC concluded that Secretary Sebelius violated the Hatch Act by making extemporaneous political remarks," OSC Special Counsel Carolyn N. Lerner wrote in a letter to President Barack Obama. "As the upcoming elections approach, this report offers an opportunity to remind federal employees of the complex Hatch Act restrictions."

Hatch Act violations against sitting Cabinet secretaries are relatively rare.

"This particular type of violation, where you have a Cabinet secretary speaking at an event, is pretty uncommon," said Scott Coffina, a former associate counsel in President George W. Bush's White House and a partner at Drinker Biddle & Reath. He said there are "a lot of very garden-variety violations," citing federal employees who forward political emails or put up campaign photos.

Republicans immediately criticized Sebelius, and conservative groups called for her dismissal.

But Sebelius told the OSC that the endorsements of Obama and the government were unscripted and a "mistake." OSC quoted her as saying that she "got a little caught up in the notion that the gains which had been made would clearly not continue without the president's reelection."

Sebelius, in her response, said the ruling was "somewhat unfair" and the use of her title amounted to a "technical and minor" violation. She said that OSC should have concluded that the violation was "corrected" when the event was reclassified as political.

OSC said that by reimbursing the Treasury, she didn't violate rules prohibiting government-funded political events, but it didn't correct the prohibition on making political statements in an official role.

"It is my understanding that the Hatch Act permits Cabinet members to engage in political activities, without regard to location and duty hours, due to the 24-hour nature of our jobs," Sebelius wrote. "I believe that you should have concluded that the consequence of my going 'off script' at an official event was to change the nature of my appearance for cost reimbursement purposes only.

"Keeping the roles straight can be a difficult task, particularly on mixed trips that involve both campaign and official stops on the same day," Sebelius wrote.

Republicans were quick to pounce on Sebelius's violation.

"That the secretary violated federal law in this manner is disturbing, but hardly a surprise," said Antonia Ferrier, spokeswoman for Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). (The law was named after a different Sen. Hatch: Sen. Carl Hatch of New Mexico.)

"Since almost day one, this administration has had a singular focus on politicking — not governing — that's borne out by the secretary ignoring a strict prohibition on electioneering while working for federal taxpayers," Ferrier said.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa said Obama should carefully consider how to respond to the report.

"As he decides the appropriate consequences for Secretary Sebelius, the president should consider the important leadership role of Cabinet secretaries and the example they must set for the entire executive branch," he said in a statement.

Conservative advocacy groups said the violation warranted her departure.

"This is the most high-profile example of a Hatch Act violation since the act was passed in 1939," said Dan Epstein, executive director of Cause of Action. "Never before has a member of the president's Cabinet been found to have committed a Hatch Act violation. President Obama should immediately fire HHS Secretary Sebelius for her violation of federal law."

Maureen Ferguson and Ashley McGuire of The Catholic Association said most of Sebelius's actions "have advanced the president's political interests" throughout her tenure. "We already know she is willing to violate the First Amendment rights of Americans for political purposes, so why should we be surprised when she bends other laws to score political points?"

This article first appeared on [POLITICO Pro](#) at 3:10 p.m. on September 12, 2012.

To view online [click here](#).

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White House to Cabinet: No private air travel without Kelly's approval [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 09/29/2017 06:57 PM EDT

The White House cracked down on Cabinet officials' use of private planes Friday, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft," after Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price [resigned](#) over his own taxpayer-funded flights.

Mick Mulvaney, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public. His exit came after [a series of POLITICO reports](#) about his frequent use of private planes to conduct government — [and sometimes personal](#) — business.

"In light of recent events, the President has asked me to remind the heads of all executive departments and agencies of Administration policies on travel," Mulvaney wrote.

He reminded the department and agency heads that, by regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

"However, beyond the law and formal policy, departments and agencies should recognize that we are public servants," Mulvaney wrote. "Every penny we spend comes from the taxpayer. We thus owe it to the taxpayer to work as hard managing that money wisely as the taxpayer must do to earn it in the first place."

Mulvaney added: "Put another way, just because something is legal doesn't make it right."

Officials should stick to commercial travel "with few exceptions," he wrote.

In the wake of the controversy, other administration officials' travels have come under scrutiny. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has used military planes for some trips, [POLITICO reported](#), while EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have also raised eyebrows with their travel itineraries.

President Donald Trump was livid over the Price scandal and accepted his resignation on Friday.

"We have great secretaries, and we have some that actually own their own planes, so that solves that," Trump told reporters earlier on Friday.

To view online [click here](#).

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FERC floats dozens of questions on DOE pricing proposal [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 06:52 PM EDT

FERC opened the floodgates tonight for comments on the Energy Department's controversial resiliency pricing proposal, posting 53 questions and other requests for information about the rulemaking.

The [six-page document](#) signed by FERC's director for energy policy and innovation, groups the questions into broader categories looking for feedback on rates, the 90-day on-site fuel requirement envisioned by DOE, and how pricing changes would be implemented, among other issues.

But many of the questions, which are open to anyone seeking to comment before FERC's initial comment deadline of Oct. 23, are directed at the foundation of DOE's proposal.

For example, DOE's 19-page proposal leans heavily on the grid stresses that occurred during the "polar vortex" to press for new regulatory action. But, FERC doesn't treat the premise as a given. "The proposed rule references the events of the 2014 Polar Vortex, citing the event as an example of the need for the proposed reform. Do commenters agree?"

There are also questions directed at how on-site fuel would address power outages triggered by damage to the electric transmission and distribution system, and several questions seeking to define ostensibly basic information about how the 90-day fuel supply concept should be applied.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC's initial comment deadline is Oct. 23, with reply comments due Nov. 7.

To view online [click here](#).

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Judge says Interior delay of methane waste rule was illegal [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/04/2017 07:32 PM EDT

A federal judge [ruled](#) today that the Bureau of Land Management's June postponement of key compliance dates for the methane waste rule was unlawful.

BLM relied on Section 705 of the Administrative Procedure Act to justify the delay. But Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Laporte of the U.S. District Court for Northern California said it was too late because the rule's effective date had already passed. That means BLM should have gone through a round of notice-and-comment rulemaking before suspending any part of the rule, she said.

Coincidentally, the ruling came on the same day that Interior [proposed](#) an 18-month delay of the methane waste rule as it works to rewrite it.

Laporte's ruling acknowledges the pending rulemaking but said it could be months before it is finalized and takes effect, and may not survive its own legal challenge, giving her no reason to pause now.

She vacated the delay and ordered the requirements reinstated. She rejected BLM's arguments that the delay should be kept in place, saying that doing so would create "a free pass for agencies to exceed their statutory authority and ignore their legal obligations under the APA, making a mockery of the statute." And Laporte said any company that misses upcoming

January deadlines because of Interior's delay is in "a problem to some extent of their own making."

Laporte previously used similar legal reasoning to [strike down](#) Interior's delay of a resource valuation rule.

WHAT'S NEXT: BLM will take public comment for 30 days on its new proposal to delay the methane waste rule.

To view online [click here](#).

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BLM proposes 18-month delay to methane rule [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/04/2017 09:59 AM EDT

The Interior Department proposed to suspend enforcement of an Obama-era rule on methane emissions for 18 months as it plans to rewrite it, according to a [document](#) to be filed tomorrow in the Federal Register.

"The BLM is currently reviewing the 2016 final rule and wants to avoid imposing temporary or permanent compliance costs on operators for requirements that may be rescinded or significantly revised in the near future," the agency said in the document.

The agency said it is concerned that the final rule analysis "may have underestimated costs and overestimated benefits, and [BLM] is therefore presently reviewing that analysis for potential inaccuracies."

The 2016 rule was intended to require oil and gas developers on federal lands to capture more of the methane that leaked during their operations. The rule went into effect in January 2017 and survived an effort by Congressional Republicans to repeal it.

WHAT'S NEXT: BLM will accept public comments on the proposal for 30 days.

To view online [click here](#).

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Draft EPA strategic plan drops all reference to climate change [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/04/2017 04:26 PM EDT

The Trump administration has dropped all mention of climate change or rules to reduce carbon emissions from a strategic plan outlining EPA's priorities for the next four years, according to a draft obtained by POLITICO.

The [draft](#) was circulated around EPA for comment earlier today along with an accompanying

one-page [graphic](#).

The document creates a new framework for EPA's mission that reflects the management style of Administrator Scott Pruitt. It defines EPA's "core mission" as ensuring clean air, water and land. It calls for more "cooperative federalism" to empower state governments. And it touts the "rule of law and process," which is meant to "refocus the Agency on its statutory obligations under the law."

The draft was released to EPA employees just days after Pruitt missed a key statutory deadline to implement the 2015 ozone standard. EPA has offered no update on that issue.

"I believe this draft Plan provides the foundation for a more efficient and effective agency, enabling us to accelerate progress and deliver real, tangible results for the American people," Pruitt wrote in an [email](#) to EPA staff today.

The [previous strategic plan](#) released by the Obama administration in 2014 listed climate change as "goal one," along with broader air quality issues. The new draft plan makes no mention of climate change, though it does address non-climate air issues, as well as a litany of other regulatory, permitting and administrative goals for EPA.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will publish the draft plan in Thursday's Federal Register and take comments through Oct. 31.

Lorraine Woellert contributed to this report.

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Lorraine Woellert contributed to this report.

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Murkowski pressing to have FERC nominees approved this week [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 04:17 PM EDT

Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) is aiming to have President Donald Trump's two pending FERC nominees confirmed before the Senate flies off for its recess at the end of the week.

"I was talking with our leadership today about it. I want to try to get it shook loose before we take a break," the Alaska Republican, who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said of the nominees. The Senate is not scheduled to be in session next week.

Kevin McIntyre, Trump's pick to chair the agency, and Rich Glick, who serves as general counsel to energy committee Democrats, were [approved](#) by Murkowski's committee on a voice vote last month to become FERC members.

Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#), the top Democrat on the energy committee, has said she was "favorably impressed" by McIntyre who, when confirmed by the full Senate with Glick, will bring FERC's leadership board back to full strength for the first time since late 2015.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate is scheduled to be on recess for the week of Columbus Day and is rarely in session on Friday, suggesting that the FERC nominees could be confirmed in the next day or so.

To view online [click here](#).

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White House seeks nearly \$30B in disaster aid package [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/04/2017 06:13 PM EDT

The White House this afternoon formally requested nearly \$30 billion in emergency funding for its ongoing recovery efforts in hurricane-battered regions like Puerto Rico, Florida and Texas.

In a letter to congressional leaders, the Trump administration asked for \$12.8 billion for FEMA's disaster relief fund, \$16 billion for the National Flood Insurance Program and \$576.5 million for the forest service's firefighting fund.

"We need the help of Congress to stabilize the affected communities and replenish dwindling and depleted funds," Office of Management and Budget chief Mick Mulvaney wrote. He said the money should be classified as "emergency spending," meaning it would not require spending offsets.

House and Senate appropriators immediately released statements in support of the White House's request and pledged to act quickly. House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) said he would "put legislation forward as soon as possible."

Rep. [Nita Lowey](#), his Democratic counterpart on the panel, said she supported Trump's request for FEMA, but added it needed to go further.

"Congress should add to this request by appropriating funding for flexible Community Development Block Grants; rebuilding coastlines, roads, transit systems, airports, ports, and other infrastructure; small business loans; and repairs to military installations and other federal facilities damaged in the storms," said Lowey, of New York.

The White House's request had previously been [reported](#) by POLITICO.

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Embattled GOP Rep. Tim Murphy to retire [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, Elena Schneider and John Bresnahan | 10/04/2017 02:44 PM EDT

Rep. Tim Murphy of Pennsylvania announced Wednesday that he will retire at the end of his term, after allegations that the married Republican lawmaker, who opposes abortion rights, asked his mistress to terminate a pregnancy.

Murphy admitted several weeks ago to an affair with forensic psychologist Shannon Edwards — news that came to light during the woman's divorce proceedings with her husband.

"After discussions with my family and staff, I have come to the decision that I will not seek reelection to Congress at the end of my current term," Murphy said in his statement. "I plan to spend my remaining months in office continuing my work as the national leader on mental health care reform, as well as issues affecting working families in southwestern Pennsylvania."

Murphy added: "In the coming weeks I will take personal time to seek help as my family and I continue to work through our personal difficulties and seek healing. I ask you to respect our

privacy during this time."

Murphy met privately with Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) before his retirement announcement, as well as with Pennsylvania GOP Reps. Bill Shuster and Charlie Dent.

A number of top Republicans have said privately that Murphy should retire or resign in light of the scandal.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [reported](#) Tuesday that Murphy suggested Edwards get an abortion during a pregnancy scare, citing leaked text messages between the two.

"And you have zero issue posting your pro-life stance all over the place when you had no issue asking me to abort our unborn child just last week when we thought that was one of the options," Edwards texted to Murphy in late January, according to the Post-Gazette.

Edwards was responding to a Facebook post by Murphy touting his anti-abortion position in Congress. Murphy is a member of the House Pro-Life Caucus and voted Tuesday for legislation to ban abortions after 20 weeks.

The story also highlighted a toxic work environment in Murphy's office, citing a June 8 memo in which his chief of staff, Susan Mosychuk, warned Murphy about mistreating staff. The document, titled "Office Conduct and Behavior: Harassment/Legal Compliance," suggests there was a "pattern of sustained inappropriate behavior."

Mosychuk wrote that the office has experienced 100 percent staff turnover over the past several years and attributed it to the congressman's behavior. She said he often worked staff through the weekends, only to berate them for failing to meet expectations.

Murphy's district leans heavily Republican, backing Donald Trump by almost 20 points in 2016 and Mitt Romney by nearly 17 points in 2012. It is likely to remain in Republican hands.

Indeed, national Democrats scoffed at the idea that Democrats might be able to retake the seat — even if Murphy, crippled from scandal, were to run again. One Democratic consultant called it "completely unwinnable" as an open seat.

"[Murphy] is certainly weaker today than he was yesterday, but it'd be a stretch to say this is a Democratic pickup opportunity," another national Democratic strategist said.

The chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, Rep. Steve Stivers of Ohio, likewise said in a statement late Wednesday evening that he was "confident" the district would stay in GOP hands next year.

"While I am extremely disappointed in the circumstances surrounding Congressman Murphy's retirement, I remain confident that PA-18 will remain under Republican control next year," Stivers said. "I look forward to working with the eventual Republican nominee to ensure the district's conservative values are represented in Congress."

Still, Democrats on the ground are more hopeful, pointing to competitive down-ballot results in the district.

"It's a tough district, no doubt about it, but Democrats have been able to keep it close in other races," said Mike Mikus, a longtime Democratic operative in the state. "I think you'll see more

Democrats taking a look at this and considering jumping in now."

A handful of Democrats are already in the race, including Pam Iovino, a Navy veteran and former Veterans Affairs official; Mike Crossey, a former member of the Allegheny County Council; and Bob Solomon, a physician.

But former Rep. Jason Altmire — a centrist Democrat who represented Western Pennsylvania and lost his seat, partially due to redistricting, in 2012 — said "it would have to be the right kind of Democrat" to put the seat in play.

"If you had a social conservative Democrat, it's been proven that a Democrat like that and who fits that mold can win," Altmire said.

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MSHA nominee: 'I was not proud' of violations notice [Back](#)

By Ian Kullgren | 10/04/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominee for assistant secretary of Labor for Mine Safety & Health told a Senate committee today that his coal company ignored safety conditions at one of its mines.

David Zatezalo was chairman of Rhino Resources when it received pattern of violation notices in 2010 and 2011, the Charleston Gazette-Mail previously reported. The company was later fined when a wall collapsed, killing a worker.

When questioned by Sen. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.) about the notice, Zatezalo blamed the mine manager.

"The management of that particular group and that particular site was not doing what they should have been doing," Zatezalo said. "I was not proud of the fact that we got designated as a [potential pattern of violations] mine. I did not try to lawyer up and stop anything from happening."

"I replaced that management," he added, "because I wasn't too happy with their performance and hadn't been for sometime."

Zatezalo appeared before the Senate HELP Committee for a confirmation hearing with Cheryl Stanton and Peter Robb, Trump's nominees for Wage and Hour Division administrator and NLRB general counsel, respectively. Few senators showed up to the hearing, though, and [Patty Murray](#) (D-Wash.) complained that the Senate's busy schedule didn't leave enough time to probe as deeply as she would have liked.

Zatezalo assured Kaine that he wouldn't have a problem working with career staff at MSHA who issued the notice to his company.

"They did what they were supposed to do," he said.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by ExxonMobil: Clean Power Plan reversal comes today — Perry reveals non-commercial travel — Barrasso faces primary challenger?
Date: Tuesday, October 10, 2017 5:44:58 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/10/2017 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Darius Dixon

CLEAN POWER PLAN WALKBACK ARRIVES: From the heart of coal country in Hazard, Ky. and alongside Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced Monday he'd sign a proposed rule today formally kicking off what's expected to be a protracted, years-long regulatory and legal process of withdrawing the Obama-era Clean Power Plan. "The past administration was unapologetic, they were using every bit of power, authority to use the EPA to pick winners and losers on how we pick electricity in this country. That is wrong," Pruitt told the crowd.

POLITICO's Emily Holden and Andrew Restuccia [got the talking points](#) ahead of the announcement, which show President Donald Trump's administration will frame the regulation's repeal as "another step advancing the president's America First strategy." It's worth noting the country is more than halfway toward meeting the rule's goals even though it never formally took effect. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman vowed to sue over that action Monday.

Long haul ahead: It'll take a ton of time to actually formally remove the Clean Power Plan from the books and to defend those actions in court, Emily [reports](#). So environmentalists and Obama-era EPA leaders say Pruitt seems to be setting himself up to never actually issue a replacement rule limiting carbon emissions from power plants. "Scott Pruitt's politics really does militate against him signing a regulation on greenhouse gas emissions," said Joe Goffman, the lead attorney at EPA when it filed the rule in 2015. But even without the rule, many companies and states are moving away from coal, opting for cheaper natural gas or renewable power.

Farmers count more: Pruitt didn't seem too concerned Monday that his schedule includes few meetings with environmental groups. [Speaking](#) at a Kentucky Farm Bureau Monday afternoon, Pruitt said he was asked by reporters earlier about the lack of meetings. "Well, what about those farmers and ranchers in Iowa? What about those farmers and ranchers in North Dakota and Kentucky?" he asked. "Then I sat down and I listened to them about issues that impact them. Do they not count? And the answer is, you count more. Because every single day, what we do impacts you and we have to work together to achieve better outcomes for water and air quality in this country."

Gina McCarthy's thoughts? The former EPA administrator who authored the regulation: "They're using stall tactics to defer action, ignoring the courts and the demands of the American people ... They're adding more pollution into our air and threatening public health at a time when the threats of climate change are growing and the costs are growing immeasurably higher on our children and their future."

Somebody tell Rick Perry: Pruitt blasted the Obama administration, saying "regulatory power should not be used by any regulatory body to pick winners and losers." Not sure where

he might come down on the latest move by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who has [asked FERC](#) to write rules to prop up the struggling coal and nuclear sectors.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and I hope everyone had a wonderful Columbus Day holiday! Senate Energy's Patrick McCormick (a fellow alumnus) identified Susan Collins as the first U.S. Senate Youth Program graduate subsequently elected to the Senate. For today: Who's the most recent physician elected to the Senate? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PERRY RELEASES DEETS ON NON-COMMERCIAL TRAVEL: Joining the ranks of Trump officials utilizing non-commercial travel arrangements while in office, Perry announced Friday he'd spent as much as \$56,246 during four trips on government-owned or chartered aircraft, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). In [a letter](#) to House Oversight and Government Reform Committee leaders, the former Texas governor detailed the trips:

— A mid-May one-day round trip from Reagan to Olathe, Kan. for DOE's Small Business Forum & Expo that cost an estimated \$35,000,

— A private charter flight on Sept. 28 (one day before HHS Secretary Tom Price [resigned](#) after a [series](#) of POLITICO reports on his lavish private plane usage) from Dulles to Hazleton Regional Airport in Pennsylvania that later continued to the Greater Portsmouth Regional Airport in Ohio at a cost of an estimated \$11,000,

— Use of a DOD plane in May to travel from Idaho Falls, Idaho to Santa Fe, N.M. at an estimated cost of \$7,000, and,

— Use of a Bonneville Power Administration plane in August to fly from Seattle to Richland, Wash., to visit the Hanford nuclear site, which cost an estimated \$3,246

DOE spokesperson Shaylyn Hynes said in a statement. "The Secretary travels almost exclusively on commercial aircraft. In the rare instances where government-owned or chartered aircraft have been used, trips were pre-approved by an Ethics officer within the Office of General Counsel."

Speaking of questionable travel, EPA's inspector general confirmed Friday it had expanded a prior investigation to include all of Pruitt's travel, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). The watchdog has faced pressure to look into whether Pruitt's non-commercial flights were necessary and appropriate expenses as it's already looking into whether the former Oklahoma attorney general's frequent trips back to his home state were appropriate.

New probe sought: Meanwhile, the Campaign Legal Center has asked DOJ's Office of Special Council to investigate whether Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's appearance at a political fundraiser in the U.S. Virgin Islands while on an official trip ran afoul of the federal law prohibiting federal officials from using government resources to engage in partisan political activity, Pro's Nick Juliano, Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon [report](#). "This activity constitutes impermissible solicitation of political contributions if event organizers conditioned the opportunity to take a photograph with Secretary Zinke on paying a higher fee," Walter Shaub, the Campaign Legal Center's senior director for ethics, [wrote](#), citing POLITICO's [reporting](#).

Meanwhile, CNN is reporting that Obama's Interior secretaries had spent \$971,000 on non-commercial air travel over seven years. Read it [here](#).

DISASTER FUNDING FIGHT ON TAP: The House is expected this week to consider a massive \$29 billion disaster funding relief package to provide aid to Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico in the aftermath of four consecutive blows from hurricanes. That comes as Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rosselló [asked](#) Congress to provide an additional \$4 billion from various federal programs and agencies to meet the island's "immediate emergency needs."

Congressional delegation vows support: A bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers toured the devastated territory over the weekend and vowed long-term support to rebuild the island. Multiple lawmakers, including Sens. [Cory Gardner](#) and [Ron Johnson](#), said reconnecting the island's electric grid was their top priority. "If you're a utility CEO and you're listening to this right now, I hope you will contact the Puerto Rico power authority," Gardner said, according to [McClatchy](#). "Come into Puerto Rico. Contact them. Let's make sure we get this grid built."

Vice President Mike Pence visited the island on Friday and said the Trump administration would be there for the long haul ahead. "The people of Puerto Rico can be assured that we will be with you every step of the way," he said. "We will see this challenge through." The most recent [government figures](#) show 59.5 percent of residents now have potable drinking water and 15 percent of people have electricity.

Feud with mayor goes on: FEMA Administrator Brock Long dismissed the criticism of the federal government's response by San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz as "political noise" during a Sunday interview on ABC's "This Week." That comes after Cruz [tweeted](#) Sunday "Increasingly painful to understand [sic] the american people want to help and US Gov does not want to help. WE NEED WATER!" She had previously called Trump's remarks during a visit to the island "insulting."

Florida seeks more hurricane relief funding: All of Florida's congressional delegation (except for Rep. [Daniel Webster](#)) signed [a letter](#) Friday seeking nearly an additional \$27 billion in disaster relief as the state recovers from Hurricane Irma.

BARRASSO GETTING A CHALLENGER? Erik Prince, the founder of the security contractor Blackwater, is taking a hard look at challenging Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) for the Republican Senate nomination in deep red Wyoming, the [New York Times](#) and Associated Press [report](#). The brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Prince, wouldn't challenge Barrasso's conservative bona fides, but would instead go after his close ties to McConnell. Steve Bannon is leading the charge for Prince to run despite his scant ties to Wyoming (he had a residence in Wapiti, Wyo. in the late 1990s and early 2000s).

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

JONES ACT WAIVER LAPSES: The Trump administration declined to renew a Jones Act waiver allowing foreign vessels to load ships at domestic ports for delivery to Puerto Rico, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "We believe that extending the waiver is unnecessary to support

the humanitarian relief efforts on the island," DHS spokesman David Lapan said. "There is an ample supply of Jones Act-qualified vessels to ensure that cargo is able to reach Puerto Rico." Ships previously loaded at U.S. ports now have until Oct. 18 to deliver their cargos.

BONN MOVE: Quashing rumors that Pruitt might lead the U.S. delegation to the major international climate change summit in Bonn, Germany next month, the Trump administration has picked the State Department's Thomas Shannon to head up the U.S. delegation, POLITICO's Andrew Restuccia [reports](#). The appointment of Shannon, undersecretary for political affairs at State, comes as the administration has declined to appoint a climate envoy, who would normally lead the trip.

MOVING ON ANTIQUITIES ACT REFORM: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) released legislation [H.R. 3990 \(115\)](#) Monday revamping the Antiquities Act ahead of a Wednesday markup of the bill. "This legislation provides for accountability in the Act's uses," he said in a statement. "It modernizes the law to restore its intent, allowing for the protection of actual antiquities without disenfranchisement of local voices and perspectives. It standardizes and limits the president's power to reshape monuments. "

MAIL CALL! CONSERVATIVES URGE TRUMP TO IMPLEMENT RFS REFORMS: A group of conservative organizations are out with [a letter](#) today urging Trump to revamp the Renewable Fuel Standard by moving its point of obligation, which they describe as a "mandate [that] hinders economic growth and stifles innovation" particularly among smaller companies. "Moving the 'point of obligation' would level the playing field between large oil companies and independent refiners as well as reduce the unfair advantage that the mandate gives large gas station chains over small mom-and-pop gas stations," wrote the groups, including Tea Party Nation and Institute for Liberty. Of course, shifting that obligation to comply with the program had been a major goal of Carl Icahn, the Trump adviser and refinery owner who resigned his unpaid White House position in August amid concerns he was using his influence to help one of his companies.

Lawmakers write letter of their own: Pennsylvania Sens. [Bob Casey](#) and [Pat Toomey](#), as well as 12 House members, sent [a letter](#) Trump urging him to revamp the RIN credit program which they said is "undermining the continued viability" of Northeast oil refiners. "We are concerned that current compliance costs and the volatile RIN market may lead to the closure of one or more these merchant refineries, which would have a devastating impact on the regional economy," they wrote.

WOTUS WATCH AT SCOTUS: Supreme Court justices hear arguments Wednesday on the relatively simple but ultimately important, question of which court should hear arguments over the waters of the U.S. regulation (and a forthcoming replacement), Pro's Alex Guillén reports in [Energy Regulation Watch](#). At issue is whether Clean Water Act cases like this should start at the district courts or, like many Clean Air Act challenges, skip that step and go to the federal appeals court level.

WALK, DON'T RUN: 134 of the the nation's mayors are launching a push today to ensure their citizens live within a 10-minute walk from a park or public green space. "I am proud we're supporting the goal of a 10-minute walk to a quality park for all," New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said in a statement.

FERC ASKS COURT FOR LIMITED REHEARING ON STUDY: FERC [appealed](#) a federal court decision that directed the agency to amend an environmental study for the

Southeast Market Pipelines Project to include an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from the power plants that may use the fuel. On Friday afternoon, regulators said they plan to comply with the [Aug. 22 ruling](#) but asked that the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals provide the agency with more time to address the order as well as reconsider their decision to vacate FERC's certificate approving the project.

"Vacatur would revoke the certificates of public convenience and necessity for these pipelines - pipelines that are currently providing natural gas to power plants in Florida," FERC attorneys wrote in their rehearing request. "Without such certificates, the pipelines would have to cease operating, at least temporarily. That outcome risks significant disruption to natural gas and electricity service to Florida consumers." FERC issued a [5-page](#) draft supplemental environmental impact statement on Sept. 27 to start compliance with the court order, and has asked for comments through Nov. 20. The court could respond in the next few weeks.

ARNOLD'S LIFE AFTER POLITICS: POLITICO's Edward-Isaac Dove [takes a look](#) at what Arnold Schwarzenegger's been up to in the six years since the Republican terminator left the California governor's mansion and gets this quote on climate change efforts that seems like it could have come from Gov. Jerry Brown. "If the federal government, Republicans and Democrats, and Donald Trump and his whole White House would be smart, they would just copy exactly what we are doing in California," he said.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST: One of Texas' largest coal-fired power plants will permanently close Jan. 4, 2018, the Houston Chronicle [reports](#). Vistra Energy's 1,800 megawatt Monticello power plant will lay off approximately 200 employees with the closure. "This was a difficult decision made after a year of careful analysis," CEO Curt Morgan said.

STAFFING UP: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke formally announced six hires on Friday: Jason Larrabee as principal deputy assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks; Austin Ewell as deputy assistant secretary for Water and Science; Brian Steed as deputy director of BLM; Cally Younger as counselor to BLM; Kathleen Benedetto as senior adviser to BLM and Benjamin Cassidy as senior deputy director for Intergovernmental and External Affairs.

SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS: EPA's inspector general has launched 70 investigations into a surge of threats against agency employees this year, NBC Washington [reports](#). Patrick Sullivan assistant inspector general for investigations, told the local news station: "I do feel we've prevented acts of violence through our investigations. I feel very confident we have." There's been a rise in threats against Pruitt, the report says.

But the one that caught ME's eyes was one that targeted McCarthy. In that case, former EPA employee Barbara Jordan wrote an email that she was outside a hotel and that "i am going to murder those (expletive)... and i hope they drop dead like flies." Jordan has pleaded not guilty.

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Two former George W. Bush administration Interior veterans have been named to lead Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck's energy practice. Jon Hrobsky worked in the Office of the Secretary and was also deputy director for policy and planning of the U.S. Minerals Management Service. Luke Johnson was former chief of staff for BLM.

QUICK HITS

— Review of Dakota Access Pipeline to Extend into Spring. [AP](#).

— After Irma, Rubio Vows To Rebuild Everglades National Park 'Stronger Than Ever.' [CBS Miami](#).

— Oil prices stable after OPEC signals possible further action. [Reuters](#).

— Ex-Grassley aide helps his firm makes millions on tax deduction he shepherded in Congress. [Des Moines Register](#).

— Hurricane Nate shuts down about 90% of Gulf of Mexico oil production. [CNBC](#).

— Tony Abbott says climate change is 'probably doing good'. [The Guardian](#).

— In New Rule, Trump EPA Allows Texas Coal Plants to Pollute Even More Than They Already Do. [Texas Observer](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

TUESDAY

9:55 a.m. — NRECA hosts a cybersecurity forum, "Insights on Cybersecurity for Electric Utilities," 4301 Wilson Boulevard, First Floor, Arlington, VA 22203

12:30 p.m. — "[Greening Governance Seminar Series: Open Government for Climate Action](#)," World Resources Institute, 10 G Street NE, Suite 800

3:30 p.m. — "[Party Talks, Trade Dialogue, and the Role of Energy Exports](#)," Atlantic Council, 12th Floor, 1030 15th St. NW

5:00 p.m. — House Rules Committee holds [hearing](#) on Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, H-313

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee holds [hearing](#) on several bills, Longworth 1334

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee holds [a hearing](#) on ASTRO Act, Longworth 1334

THURSDAY

8:00 a.m. — Canadian Embassy hosts the 28th annual [Energy Efficiency Forum](#), Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Ave NW

9:30 a.m. — "[IEA's Renewable Energy Market Report 2017](#)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee holds a legislative [hearing](#) on several bills, Longworth 1334

10:00 a.m. — House Energy and Commerce holds [hearing](#) with DOE Secretary Rick Perry, Rayburn 2123

FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee holds [hearing](#) on onshore energy policy discussion draft, Longworth 1334

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/clean-power-plan-reversal-comes-today-024964>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump's climate rule rollback will focus on 'America First' talking points [Back](#)

By Emily Holden and Andrew Restuccia | 10/07/2017 05:32 PM EDT

The Trump administration plans to highlight its "America First" strategy when unveiling a proposal to roll back the biggest part of former President Barack Obama's climate legacy next week, according to talking points obtained by POLITICO.

An administration official said the final announcement to withdraw the Clean Power Plan — a rule to limit greenhouse gas emissions from coal plants — would probably be made by EPA, not the White House, making the prospect of a Rose Garden speech from the President Donald Trump unlikely.

The official said it's unclear whether EPA will hold an event to make a formal announcement, though multiple sources tracking the issue expect the agency to release its plans on Tuesday.

EPA did not immediately respond to request for comment.

"Repealing the Clean Power Plan is another step advancing the president's America First strategy," guidance from the administration said. The rule was the focal point of the Obama administration's plans to meet its international pledges to curb the carbon emissions that cause climate change.

The lack of a Rose Garden ceremony would give the rule's withdrawal less drama than Trump's June speech outside the White House in which he announced he was exiting the Paris climate agreement — an action he said he took for the "citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris." Both Trump and EPA administrator Scott Pruitt have discounted man-made climate change, with Trump dismissing it as a "hoax" and Pruitt [questioning](#) carbon dioxide's role.

EPA and the White House will say the regulation was "premised on a novel and expansive view of agency authority." It will also emphasize that the Supreme Court stayed implementation of the rule while a lower court reviewed challenges to the regulation — a stay

the administration will describe as "unprecedented and historic," according to a brief summary.

The talking points say the rule "ignored states' concerns and eroded longstanding and important partnerships that are a necessary part of achieving positive environmental outcomes."

Obama's EPA officials have said they talked frequently with states before, during and after finishing the rule.

The Clean Power Plan called on states to write their own plans to reduce carbon levels, by using less coal power, ramping up natural gas and renewable energy use, and limiting power demand by making electricity systems and consumer use more efficient. States also could have grouped together to form trading systems, and coal-heavy states could have purchased allowances from greener states to keep some of their plants online. The U.S. is already more than halfway to meeting the Clean Power Plan's goals, although the rule never took effect.

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Pruitt will take first step to repeal Clean Power Plan but could slow-walk replacement

[Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 10/06/2017 06:20 PM EDT

EPA chief Scott Pruitt is finally making his first move to rescind Barack Obama's marquee climate change rule — but he may not be done by the time President Donald Trump leaves office.

The agency is preparing to publish a proposal to eliminate the Clean Power Plan and may consider replacing it but will not outline options immediately, according to a [draft](#) obtained by POLITICO on Friday. Given the amount of time and effort it will take just to get the current rule off the books — and then to defend that move in court — environmentalists and Obama-era EPA leaders say Pruitt appears to be setting himself up to never have to issue a replacement rule limiting carbon emissions from power plants.

"They're not committing to doing anything at all," said Sean Donahue, an attorney representing environmental groups that support the Clean Power Plan. "This is not a kind of, 'We have a better way to do it.' This is a, 'We really don't want to do it.'"

Pruitt's moves leave federal climate action facing years in limbo as the world experiences warming that is already threatening the environment and public health, with heat waves, drought, sea-level rise and flooding. The Clean Power Plan was the linchpin of U.S. efforts to reduce emissions that cause those problems under an international deal to slow climate change, which Trump has said the country will exit. Even if Pruitt does eventually issue a new rule, he is expected to tailor it so narrowly that it would not lead to any significant carbon reductions.

Joe Goffman, the lead attorney at EPA when it filed the rule in 2015, said it is clear Pruitt's

strategy is to slow-walk any action to replace the rule, delaying any of the regulations to curb carbon emissions that the Supreme Court called for a decade ago.

"Scott Pruitt's politics really does militate against him signing a regulation on greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general who sued the federal government more than a dozen times, including over the Clean Power Plan, has said he wants to lead public debates on the merits of science linking human activity to the Earth's rapid warming. Critics speculate he is [prepping](#) for a future campaign for Congress or a state-wide office.

EPA has a legal obligation to regulate carbon from power plants, following a 2007 Supreme Court decision and the agency's own declaration that heat-trapping gases endanger public health by causing climate change. But environmental groups can't sue until Pruitt officially withdraws the rule and again if he publishes a replacement. It will be years before the courts settle the issue.

Fossil-fuel trade groups on Friday lauded the proposal. Paul Bailey, president of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, said the regulation would have increased energy prices while reducing global temperatures a fraction of a degree.

"We are pleased to see EPA repeal this very bad rule," he said.

National Mining Association CEO Hal Quinn said the Clean Power Plan was "an unlawful attempt to transform the nation's power grid." Nixing it would save coal jobs, he argued.

Green groups still must weigh their options, but Donahue indicated they may try one final push to get the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals to issue its ruling on the Clean Power Plan, which would cement an answer to the legal issues EPA is raising in its repeal effort.

The new draft discounts most of the value that the Obama administration had estimated would come from reducing carbon emissions and air pollutants that cause health problems. It uses the term "climate change" only once.

"That's the problem with this and other things that these guys are doing, is that they do not acknowledge the fundamental health and environmental threats they're charged with protecting people from," Donahue said. "Their whole thing is about rewarding a subset of industry who are their bankrollers."

The Clean Power Plan would have shifted the U.S. away from coal power and toward lower-carbon natural gas and emissions-free renewable power. It still would have secured only a fraction of the emissions cuts the U.S. would need to achieve to comply with its pledge under the Paris climate agreement.

Power-sector emissions are about a third of the country's carbon pollution, and the Clean Power plan aimed to cut them about 15 percent below 2015 levels. Even without the rule, many companies and states are moving away from coal, opting for cheaper natural gas or renewable power.

Goffman said he's optimistic that Trump's moves won't torpedo a global movement away from fossil fuels because countries have already invested political capital in choosing their commitments.

Jeff Holmstead, an EPA deputy under the George W. Bush administration who now represents groups suing against the Clean Power Plan, believes Pruitt will write a replacement rule focused only on coal plants. Holmstead thinks that move will make it hard for a future administration to write different power-sector climate rules.

"The big picture is that if EPA actually does what it's supposed to do under the Clean Air Act, it will push the issue back to Congress," Holmstead said.

EPA's proposal sets the tone for how Pruitt will express his opinions about climate change in regulatory actions.

Joanne Spalding, a climate attorney at the Sierra Club, said the draft shows that "it's completely irrelevant to this administration the harm that these power plants are doing by spewing out all this carbon pollution, and they don't even talk about it."

A replacement rule would be more of a defensive legal maneuver, meant to protect against judges who might require EPA to move forward after federal climate action has languished for more than a decade. A new regulation would probably call on coal plants to run slightly more efficiently, according to arguments EPA laid out in its draft.

"It's basically saying that these dinosaur coal plants that were built in the '60s and '70s decades ago get to operate forever — even though there are all sorts of clean power sources out there that we could be using that are not destroying our health and the planet," Spalding said.

Alex Guillén contributed to this report.

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DOE's Perry pushes FERC to support coal power plants [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The Trump administration on Friday called on FERC to create new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants that are being squeezed by cheaper natural gas and renewable sources, saying they were "indispensable for economic and national security."

Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who [told miners](#) in Pennsylvania on Thursday that "it's time for coal in this country to be revived," pressed electricity regulators to alter power markets and protect the resilience of the power grid with payments to generators that keep fuel supplies on site, a clear reference to the coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

The proposal, which DOE said gave FERC 60 days to create a final or interim rule, comes just a month after Perry's agency issued a report saying FERC should "expedite" its work with grid operators to ensure the stability of the nation's power network.

"In terms of process, this is a pretty bold move," said Tony Clark, a Republican former FERC commissioner. DOE often conducts studies on issues it believes need attention, he said, but

"actually forwarding to the commission something specific for action is a pretty bold way of moving the issue right up the batting order at FERC."

The new proposal, directed at FERC under a rarely used Section 403 authority of the Department of Energy Organization Act, stops short of specifically seeking market incentives for coal. But it calls for full-cost recovery for power generating units that provide essential power and "ancillary" services — and have a 90-day fuel supply on site in case of natural or man-made disruptions. That would exclude most natural gas power plants, which do not typically keep large fuel inventories on hand and instead receive supplies via pipeline.

Perry's request represents a departure from the two decades of U.S. policy that has trended toward more market-based tools, which has helped natural gas to nearly double its power market share. Renewable energy sources like wind and solar, though still modest when compared to fossil fuels or nuclear power, have also grown quickly as federal incentives helped drive down their costs.

But the growth of renewables and natural gas — combined with tighter pollution controls and weak new demand for electricity — has forced hundreds of old coal-fired power plants into retirement. Nuclear power plants in some parts of the country are also under financial pressure, hurt by negative wholesale power market prices that sometimes require the plant owners to pay to deliver their power supplies.

"If this gets the debate started, then my hat's off," said former FERC Chairman Pat Wood, a friend of Perry and a strong advocate for market-based power systems. "But it's a pretty arresting [thing] to wake up and read. That would never have played in Texas. ... If there is a service to be valued, then a market can value that."

In the [grid study](#) ordered by Perry and released in August, DOE experts pointed to low power prices and cheap natural gas as the single [biggest reason](#) for coal ceding its position as the nation's biggest source of electricity. And that report also called for "reforms" to power markets that would help bolster the electricity network's resilience by easing the financial pressures on many power providers.

In its Friday proposal, DOE cited a spike in demand during the 2014 "polar vortex" that hit much of the U.S., which prompted utilities to run many coal plants that were slated for retirement. Without those plants, as many as 65 million people in the PJM market would have seen their power resources threatened, DOE said.

But the new regulatory pitch from the agency also fueled the growing feud between the gas and coal industries.

Paul Bailey, president and CEO American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, commended Perry for "initiating a rulemaking by FERC that will finally value the on-site fuel security provided by the coal fleet."

But the American Petroleum Institute, which also represents natural gas producers, said DOE drew the wrong conclusions from the 2014 event, and that forcing new mandates on the power market wasn't the solution.

"[A]s we review the proposal we are concerned the agency has mischaracterized the lessons learned from past weather-related events and appears to suggest that additional regulation is

the answer where markets have already proven the ability to greatly benefit consumers and give our electric system the flexibility needed to meet constantly, and often rapidly, changing electricity demands," said API Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer Marty Durbin in a statement.

FERC, which has struggled to integrate states' energy policies that aim to boost renewables or support aging nuclear power plants, has long maintained a fuel-neutral stance in the regional markets that it oversees. If it were to follow Perry's directive to create incentives for grid resilience to plants that maintain their own fuel inventories on site, it would be an implicit move at the national level to alter the electricity markets to support the fuels that both Perry and Trump have touted.

Montana regulator Travis Kavulla [suggested](#) on Twitter that rather than deal with the pressing issues facing the grid, "Instead, this reform is sort of the [@ENERGY](#) equivalent of the Oprah "you get a car, and you get a car. And you? A car!" approach."

However, FERC, whose members are appointed by the president and operate as an independent body, isn't obligated to implement the specific policy pushed by Perry. The commission will so be back to operating with a full five members in the coming weeks, with a Republican majority.

"FERC's going to follow its own procedures," said Marc Spitzer, a Republican former FERC commissioner. "It would be a mistake for people to assume that this is going to be some partisan Republican rubber stamp given the way FERC works."

FERC can spend months or years digging into complex issues that underpin the power markets, and its commissioners tend to seek common ground with each other to ensure that its rules are clear and ensure long-lasting regulations that give utilities stability to plan their operations.

"Is someone really going to invest [billions of dollars] when it's a 3-2 vote that partisans and the parties can flip next year? Is that a good forum for investment as opposed to a 5-0 order?" Spitzer said.

FERC declined to say when the agency last received a rulemaking from DOE using Section 403.

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Energy Department discloses \$56K in Perry travel [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/06/2017 07:06 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry has racked up as much as \$56,246 in non-commercial air travel since taking office in early March, the Energy Department disclosed Friday in response to congressional questions about Cabinet-level trips.

Political appointees at DOE did not use private non-commercial aircraft, but on four occasions

Perry did fly on government-owned aircraft or chartered aircraft, DOE Deputy General Counsel Eric Fygi [wrote in a letter](#) to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. That committee is seeking information about Trump administration officials' travel following the revelations that led to Tom Price's resignation from the job as HHS secretary.

Perry's single biggest expense, according to agency documents submitted to the committee, was a one-day round trip in mid-May from Reagan National Airport near Washington D.C. to Olathe, Kan. for DOE's Small Business Forum & Expo, and included a tour of the DOE Kansas City National Security Campus, which is responsible for manufacturing and procuring non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons.

Joining Perry on that trip were a handful of other agency officials, including National Nuclear Security Administrator Frank Klotz and deputy chief of staff Dan Wilmot. The total cost to taxpayers for using the Federal Aviation Administration's Gulfstream IV plane was an estimated \$35,000.

Perry's second most expensive trip was a private charter flight on Sept. 28 from the Washington Dulles Airport to the Hazleton Regional Airport in Pennsylvania, which later continued to the Greater Portsmouth Regional Airport in Ohio, and was disclosed by a [Reuters report](#) earlier this week. The trip, costing an estimated \$11,000, occurred just a day before Price [resigned](#) after a [series](#) of POLITICO reports of him running up a government travel tab exceeding \$1 million — a figure that dwarfs Perry's apparent billing.

After visiting the coal mine in Pennsylvania and a defunct uranium enrichment facility in Ohio, the DOE documents say Perry planned to "secure commercial transportation for the continuation of his travel out of Ohio."

Perry and his staff also made use of a Defense Department plane in May for travel from Idaho Falls, Idaho, to tour the national lab there, to Santa Fe, N.M., to visit the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The trip continued from Santa Fe to Carlsbad, N.M., to visit the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, a low-level nuclear waste storage facility. The estimated cost of the trip was \$7,000.

The last trip documented by DOE was for the round-trip use of plane owned by the Bonneville Power Administration, a quasi-independent utility within DOE, to fly from Seattle to Richland, Wash., to visit the Hanford nuclear site in August. The cost of the trip: \$3,246.

The information sent to Capitol Hill did not include trips senior DOE non-career officials took with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence on government-owned aircraft or trips with officials at other agencies with their own aircraft, such as DoD and DHS.

"This response does not address this travel as such travel arrangements were not made by DOE," Fygi wrote.

"The Department of Energy strictly follows both government-wide and internal DOE travel regulations and policy," DOE spokesperson Shaylyn Hynes said in a statement. "The Secretary travels almost exclusively on commercial aircraft. In the rare instances where government-owned or chartered aircraft have been used, trips were pre-approved by an Ethics officer within the Office of General Counsel."

The White House has backed steep spending cuts across the executive branch, including a roughly 9 percent to DOE for fiscal 2018, a decline of roughly \$2.7 billion compared to current levels.

In the wake of Price's resignation, several other Cabinet-level Trump officials have found their taxpayer spending scrutinized.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has flown on military planes for some trips that also coincided with appearances at fundraising events, raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism, POLITICO has [reported](#). The EPA Inspector General has also recently [expanded a probe](#) into EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's travels.

An [investigation](#) into seven military flights taken by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that cost about \$811,798 ultimately found that the former Goldman Sachs alum had not violated any ethics requirements or other regulations.

The White House began cracking down on Cabinet officials' use of private planes amid Price's resignation, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

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Price resigns from HHS after facing fire for travel [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond, Rachana Pradhan and Adriel Bettelheim | 09/29/2017 04:40 PM EDT

HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned Friday in the face of multiple federal inquiries and growing criticism of his use of private and government planes for travel, at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$1 million since May.

The White House said the former seven-term Georgia congressman, 63, offered his resignation earlier in the day and that President Donald Trump had accepted it.

Price becomes the first Trump administration Cabinet secretary to step down. The White House said Trump asked Deputy Assistant Health Secretary Don Wright to serve as acting secretary of the agency, which has an annual budget \$1.15 trillion and includes the Medicare and Medicaid programs, as well as the FDA, NIH and CDC.

As late as Thursday, Price said he believed he had the president's support. But the tumult surrounding his travel became another distraction for an administration already reeling from the defeat of repeated Senate efforts to repeal Obamacare and criticism for its hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

Price ran afoul of Trump in part because his actions seemed to symbolize everything the president had inveighed against on the campaign trail by vowing to "drain the swamp." The fallout extended to the entire Cabinet Friday night when the White House [announced](#) that chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Price, in his resignation letter, expressed regret that "recent events" distracted from efforts to overhaul the health care system. "In order for you to move forward without further disruption, I am officially tendering my resignation as the Secretary of Health and Human Services effective 11:59 PM on Friday," he wrote.

Senate Democrats quickly served notice they were preparing for a potential confirmation fight over Price's successor, saying the next HHS secretary must not undermine Obamacare. Under Price, the department cut the law's enrollment period in half and slashed advertising and outreach for the enrollment period starting in November.

"The next HHS secretary must follow the law when it comes to the Affordable Care Act instead of trying to sabotage it," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"Tom Price's replacement needs to be focused on implementing the law as written by Congress and keeping the president's promise to bring down the high cost of prescription drugs," Senate Finance ranking Democrat Ron Wyden of Oregon said in a statement.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, a close ally, praised Price as a dedicated public servant. "His vision and hard work were vital to the House's success passing our health care legislation," Ryan said in a statement.

POLITICO revealed that Price flew at least 26 times on private aircraft at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, a sharp break with his predecessors' practice. Many of Price's flights were between major cities that offered inexpensive alternatives on commercial airlines, including Nashville, Philadelphia and San Diego.

On some of those trips, Price, an orthopedic surgeon, mixed official business with leisure. He took a government-funded private jet in August to get to St. Simons Island, an exclusive Georgia resort where he and his wife own land, a day and a half before he addressed a medical conference he and his wife have long attended. In June, HHS chartered a private jet to fly Price to Nashville, where he owns a condominium and where his son resides. Price toured a medicine dispensary, spoke to a local health summit organized by a friend and had lunch with his son, an HHS official confirmed.

Price also used military aircraft for multi-national trips to Africa, Europe and Asia, at a cost of more than \$500,000 to taxpayers. The White House said it had approved those trips but not the private jets within the United States.

Price tried to defuse the controversy by promising on Thursday to reimburse the government for the approximately \$52,000 cost of his own seat on his domestic trips. But that wasn't enough to tamp down the scandal, which had [infuriated](#) the president and prompted a bipartisan inquiry from the House Oversight Committee and separate calls for accountability from lawmakers including Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley. The inspector general of Price's own agency is [reviewing](#) if Price complied with federal travel regulations.

The White House put Cabinet officials on notice Friday that it would crack down on use of private planes, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, sent out the memo soon after Price's resignation was made public, reminding department and agency heads that, by

regulation, "Government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft should not be used for travel by Government employees except with specific justification."

The issue of Cabinet members' travel has already extended beyond Price: POLITICO reported Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides [took several flights](#) on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights in the Caribbean. Zinke dismissed the furor as a "little B.S." during a Friday appearance at the Heritage Foundation.

Price's wife, Betty, accompanied him on the military flights, while other members of the secretary's delegation flew commercially to Europe.

HHS spokeswoman Charmaine Yoest said Price reimbursed the agency for his wife's travel, but declined to elaborate.

White House officials have groused about Price's frequent travels, with one senior White House official saying the HHS secretary was "nowhere to be found" as they mounted a last-ditch unsuccessful push to repeal Obamacare.

Congressional Democrats attacked Price for advocating spending cuts to the health agencies he oversaw and health care programs while spending taxpayer dollars on private jets. "There could not be a clearer statement of the Trump administration's priorities," Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) said. Key Democrats overseeing health issues in Congress had formally requested that HHS's inspector general review Price's travel practices.

In June, Price defended a proposed fiscal 2018 budget for HHS that included a \$663,000 cut to the agency's \$4.9 million annual spending on travel, or roughly 15 percent. "The budgeting process is an exercise in reforming our federal programs to make sure they actually work — so they do their job and use tax dollars wisely," Price told the Senate Finance Committee on June 8.

Ethical questions dogged Price even before questions about his travel arose. During his Senate confirmation hearing to helm HHS, Price faced pointed questions about his personal investments in health care companies during his time in Congress. Democrats called on government ethics officials to investigate Price's health care stock trades, following reports that he got a sweetheart deal from a biotech company and invested in Zimmer Biomet, a medical device-maker, just days before writing legislation that would have eased regulations on the sector.

The Senate confirmed Price by a 52-47 margin in February after he maintained full Republican support.

Price carved out a reputation as a staunch fiscal conservative during his decade-plus tenure in the House of Representatives. He generally supported reducing government spending on health care while shifting more of the financial burden onto individuals. Like most conservatives, he's supported privatizing Medicare so that seniors would receive fixed dollar amounts to buy coverage and limiting federal Medicaid spending to give states a lump sum, or block grant, and more control over how they could use it.

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Price traveled by private plane at least 24 times [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan and Dan Diamond | 09/21/2017 05:58 PM EDT

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price has taken at least 24 flights on private charter planes at taxpayers' expense since early May, according to people with knowledge of his travel plans and a review of HHS documents.

The frequency of the trips underscores how private travel has become the norm — rather than the exception — for the Georgia Republican during his tenure atop the federal health agency, which began in February. The cost of the trips identified by POLITICO exceeds \$300,000, according to a review of federal contracts and similar trip itineraries.

Price's use of private jets represents a sharp departure from his two immediate predecessors, Sylvia Mathews Burwell and Kathleen Sebelius, who flew commercially in the continental United States. HHS officials have said Price uses private jets only when commercial travel is not feasible.

But many of the flights are between large cities with frequent, low-cost airline traffic, such as a trip from Washington to Nashville that the secretary took on June 6 to make a morning event at a medication distributor and an afternoon speech. There are four regular nonstop flights that leave Washington-area airports between 6:59 a.m. and 8:50 a.m. and arrive in Nashville by 9:46 a.m. CT. Sample round-trip fares for those flights were as low as \$202, when booked in advance on Orbitz.com. Price's charter, according to HHS' contract with Classic Air Charter, cost \$17,760.

HHS spokespeople did not respond to questions about specific aspects of Price's travels, including how many charter trips he has taken. Charmaine Yoest, the agency's top spokesperson, said Price's travel for official business "comes from the HHS budget."

In a statement, Yoest said, "The Secretary has taken commercial flights for official business after his confirmation. He has used charter aircraft for official business in order to accommodate his demanding schedule. The week of September 13 was one of those times, as the Secretary was directing the recovery effort for Irma, which had just devastated Florida, while simultaneously directing the ongoing recovery for Hurricane Harvey . . . Some believe the HHS Secretary should be Washington-focused. Dr. Price is focused on hearing from Americans across the country."

Nonetheless, POLITICO identified at least 17 charter flights that took place before the first storm — Hurricane Harvey — hit in late August, and included flights that did not appear to be for urgent HHS public health priorities.

For example, Price took a Learjet-60 from San Diego to the Aspen Ideas Festival — a glamorous conference at the Colorado resort town — that arrived at 3:33 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, June 24, nearly 19 hours before his scheduled panel. That flight likely cost more than \$7,100, according to one charter jet agency estimate.

"If you're going to a conference, you have some [advance] flexibility to book travel" and

shouldn't need last-minute charters, said Walter Shaub, who was the Barack Obama-appointed director of the United States Office of Government Ethics until July. "This shows a complete disregard for the expense to the taxpayer."

Since being confirmed in early February, Price has developed a reputation inside the agency for flying on private charters rather than taking other means of transportation, people inside and outside the Trump administration said.

After a POLITICO [investigation](#) identified five private flights that Price took up and down the East Coast last week, Price took a charter jet to Oklahoma on Tuesday of this week, Sept. 19, where he met with Native American tribes and toured health care facilities by car — although HHS initially explored flying him by charter around the state, two people with knowledge of Price's travels said. "There was a push from political [staff] at HHS to fly him and not drive him to these small communities," said one of the people.

Price's staff cut short his news conference in Oklahoma on Wednesday when reporters raised questions about his use of taxpayer funds, an attendee said.

Price's frequent trips around the country have rankled staff inside the White House, with a senior official saying many trips aren't related to priorities like Obamacare repeal and other items on the president's agenda. While Price has flown to Maine, New Hampshire, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania since last Wednesday, President Donald Trump and Senate Republicans have been frantically rallying support to pass an Obamacare repeal bill by Sept. 30. After that date, the GOP will need 60 Senate votes, not 50, to overturn the 2010 health law.

"No one is quite sure what [Price] is doing," a senior White House official said. "You look at this week, we're doing a last final push trying to get this over the finish line, and he's nowhere to be found."

Many of Price's trips have centered on making announcements related to the use of opioids and holding listening sessions about the epidemic, which Trump labeled a national emergency and continues to contribute to rising death rates from drug abuse. Price has labeled fighting the opioid epidemic one of his top priorities.

But rather than fly commercially to these events, which are scheduled well in advance, Price tends to rent corporate-style jets. Sometimes, he ferries big-name guests along with him. In May, Price and Kellyanne Conway — the White House counselor and former Trump campaign manager who traveled with Price to Philadelphia last week to tour an addiction treatment center — made stops in four different states in the span of two days.

The pair traveled to Lansing, Michigan, and Charleston, West Virginia, for opioid-related meetings in the morning and early afternoon on May 9. That happened to be the same day Trump abruptly fired FBI Director James Comey. On May 10, Conway and Price were in Augusta, Maine, and Concord, New Hampshire, for more opioid-related events.

On July 6, Price again made an opioid-related visit to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he took a private plane, according to two sources with knowledge of the situation. According to records, HHS signed a \$14,570 charter plane contract for Washington to Tennessee travel with a July 6 effective date.

In June, Price spoke at a physicians association conference in San Diego, where he [vowed](#) to

wring out wasteful spending in the government's health care programs. Getting "value" for spending "is incredibly important," he said.

Price took a private plane to get to the meeting, which was one stop on a five-state sprint of charter travel that cost \$50,420.

Josh Dawsey and Josh Gerstein contributed to this report.

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EPA watchdog expands investigation into Pruitt's travel [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/06/2017 03:26 PM EDT

EPA's inspector general says it is expanding the scope of its previously announced probe into Administrator Scott Pruitt's travel to include all of his travel.

The IG's office already opened an audit of Pruitt's travel to and from Oklahoma following complaints that he spent too much time back in his home state. In recent weeks, Democratic lawmakers and outside groups have called for the IG to look at whether Pruitt's non-commercial flights were necessary and appropriate expenses.

According to a [memo](#) dated Thursday and released today, the significantly expanded scope will consider the "frequency, cost and extent" of Pruitt's travel through Sept. 30, as well as whether agency procedures were followed by Pruitt, his security and his staff, and whether those procedures are properly designed to prevent fraud, waste or abuse.

"To accomplish these objectives, we will review supporting documentation and conduct interviews with management and staff to determine whether the EPA followed applicable policies and practices, and complied with federal requirements," the memo says.

WHAT'S NEXT: The investigation is likely to take several months to complete.

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Watchdog group requests Hatch Act probe of Zinke's appearance at Virgin Islands [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano, Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/06/2017 06:14 PM EDT

A watchdog group is asking the Justice Department's Office of Special Council to open a Hatch Act investigation into Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke after POLITICO [reported](#) he had appeared at a political fundraiser in the U.S. Virgin Islands while on an official trip less than a month after being confirmed.

Donors who gave the Virgin Islands Republican Party between \$1,500 and \$5,000 per couple were invited to get their photos taken with Zinke at the March 30 event, according to a copy of the invitation seen by POLITICO and Zinke's official schedule.

The nonprofit Campaign Legal Center says that activity may have run afoul of the federal law prohibiting federal officials from using government resources to engage in partisan political activity.

"This activity constitutes impermissible solicitation of political contributions if event organizers conditioned the opportunity to take a photograph with Secretary Zinke on paying a higher fee," [writes](#) Walter Shaub, the Campaign Legal Center's senior director for ethics, in a request to the OSC, citing POLITICO's story.

The invitation to the event said donors could get into the event at a St. Croix hotel with a contribution of as little as \$75. Zinke's official schedule from that day said he participated in a photo line with "host committee" members and "patrons" at the event. Those designations were given to donors who gave \$1,500 or \$5,000 per couple, according to the invitation.

Shaub, a former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, asked the OSC to investigate whether lower-paying guests also were allowed into the photo line. "Should OSC determine that this privilege was reserved for host committee members and Patrons, OSC should take action against Secretary Zinke," he writes.

The OSC typically opens an investigation in response to complaints it receives.

Interior officials have said all of Zinke's travel was legal and cleared in advance with ethics officials. A spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Campaign Legal Center's request.

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Trump's Interior chief 'hopping around from campaign event to campaign event' [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/05/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity,

even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a little BS."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips has taken outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then- Interior Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity.

Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt canceled his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he would have been cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter, an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Donald McEachin (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. Jon Tester next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations; that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. Amata Radewagen, the Republican delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana, where he joined Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to a joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that

also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Trump administration does not plan to extend Puerto Rico Jones Act waiver past Sunday [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/06/2017 03:58 PM EDT

Foreign vessels may soon be barred again from delivering goods from other U.S. ports to disaster-struck Puerto Rico, DHS said today.

The administration does not plan on renewing the Jones Act waiver, DHS spokesman David Lapan said. The 10-day waiver issued last month ends on Sunday, after which foreign vessels will no longer be able to load ships at domestic ports for delivery to the U.S. territory; those ships will have until Oct. 18 to deliver their cargoes.

"We believe that extending the waiver is unnecessary to support the humanitarian relief efforts on the island," Lapan said in an email to POLITICO. "There is an ample supply of Jones Act-qualified vessels to ensure that cargo is able to reach Puerto Rico."

President Trump [authorized](#) a lifting of the Jones Act on Sept. 28 to help deliver fuel and other goods after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico a week earlier. The island is still recovering from the storm, with electricity only reaching a small fraction of the population.

Rep. [Nydia Velazquez](#) (D-N.Y.) sent a letter to Trump today asking that the waiver be extended for at least a year, her spokesman said, arguing that reinstating it will drive up the cost of shipping supplies to the island.

WHAT'S NEXT: The waiver will end Sunday unless another request is received.

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State Dept's Shannon to lead U.S. delegation to climate talks [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 10/06/2017 07:18 PM EDT

Thomas Shannon, the State Department's undersecretary for political affairs, will lead the U.S. delegation to a major international climate change summit next month in Bonn, Germany, according to an administration official.

The news comes amid swirling rumors that Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt was angling to lead the delegation, a move that would have made a skeptic of established climate science the face of the United States at the talks.

In previous years, the State Department's climate envoy led the U.S. delegation to the annual gathering. But the Trump administration has declined to fill that position.

The Bonn negotiations are aimed at implementing the 2015 Paris climate change agreement, from which President Donald Trump has said he intends to withdraw.

Neither the White House nor the State Department responded to requests for comment.

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D.C. Circuit: FERC must consider GHG emissions tied to gas pipelines [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 08/22/2017 11:38 AM EDT

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled today that FERC must consider the potential greenhouse gas emissions that could result from its 2016 approval of three natural gas pipeline segments in the Southeast, marking a major victory for environmental groups.

The court vacated FERC's approval of the Southeast Market Pipelines Project's three natural gas pipelines now under construction in Alabama, Georgia and Florida, and said the agency must redo the environmental impact statement it used in its decision.

Two of the three judges on court's panel rejected FERC's assertions that it could not know the level of GHG emissions that would result from its projects, specifically from power plants burning the natural gas the pipelines would provide.

"We conclude that at a minimum, FERC should have estimated the amount of power-plant carbon emissions that the pipelines will make possible," the [opinion](#) said, agreeing with the Sierra Club's arguments.

The court in 2016 made a much different ruling when it held FERC did not evaluate the climate change effects of exporting natural gas from LNG terminals since the agency had no legal authority to consider the environmental harm those exports may cause.

But Judge Janice Rogers Brown, a President George W. Bush appointee, dissented and said FERC lacks authority in this case as well, and is not required to consider the downstream emissions. "The truth is that FERC has no control over whether the power plants that will emit these greenhouse gases will come into existence or remain in operation," Brown said.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC will have to rerun its EIS for the pipeline projects.

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FERC amends pipeline study to add climate impact [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/27/2017 04:31 PM EDT

FERC [announced](#) today that it is amending an environmental study for a natural gas pipeline to meet a federal court's requirement that it include an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from the power plants that may use the fuel.

The [new 5-page analysis](#) of the Southeast Market Pipelines Project, which consists of three natural gas pipelines under construction in Alabama, Georgia and Florida, conducted by FERC staff says they "would not result in a significant impact on the environment" so long as the developer followed the mitigation measures mentioned in the final 2015 environmental impact statement.

The original EIS didn't include an assessment of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide emissions associated with use and combustion of the natural gas that would be transported by the project when it was done. Last month, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the Sierra Club and [vacated](#) FERC's approval of the project, saying the agency must redo the EIS it used in its decision.

FERC's move to issue a supplemental EIS on greenhouse gas emissions suggests that it may not appeal the court's decision.

The analysis also states that using the social cost of carbon in its greenhouse gas analysis "is not appropriate for use in any project-level NEPA review."

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC has until Oct. 6 to decide whether it will appeal the D.C. Circuit's Aug. 22 ruling, which could require the agency to revisit the EISs it conducted for several pipelines.

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The Strange Political Afterlife of Arnold Schwarzenegger [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dovey | 10/06/2017 05:04 AM EDT

MUNICH, Germany—The Governor is off to conduct the band at his favorite beer tent at Oktoberfest. Why? Well, he finished his salty half-chicken, gave the photographers the pose he knew they wanted—the one in which he's holding the giant beer stein and mime-biting the oversize pretzel—and he's not quite ready for dessert.

Oh, but *why*? Because he wants to. The crowd chants his name. He crouches forward, making a show of drawing out the tubas with his fingers. He does a muscleman pose. He pretends to blow a trumpet. In the beer tent, he makes his pecs dance.

Welcome to the strange and wondrous political afterlife of Arnold Schwarzenegger, a rural Austrian kid who parlayed his success as perhaps the greatest bodybuilder of all time into a lucrative career as Hollywood's top action hero, then parlayed *that* into becoming the improbable Republican governor of California for two terms.

Now, six years after leaving Sacramento, he's still reinventing himself—as a kind of globetrotting do-gooder, promoting a handful of causes like fighting climate change and gerrymandering. But mostly, he's having a hell of a good time. Wherever he goes, everybody knows him. Everybody loves him. With a net worth estimated at \$300 million, he zips around the world in private jets and has restaurant owners pick up his tab because they're just so honored he chose to eat there. Constant selfies. He sounds off on whatever he wants, but has no actual responsibility. His perfect day is waking up and not knowing what country he'll eat dinner in.

On this particular Tuesday afternoon, Schwarzenegger is stopping at the Munich Oktoberfest just for fun, part of a whirlwind 10-day European tour that began with inspirational speeches in England, then a jaunt to a factory in Austria to test out the new electric Hummer converted just for him, then to Barcelona for his Arnold Classic bodybuilding tournament, then popping up to San Sebastián, Spain, to premiere the 3-D "Wonders of the Sea" movie from Jean-Michel Cousteau that he narrated and produced. Then here to Munich, for a stop he's been making regularly since he was a young bodybuilder and won a stone-lifting contest (508 German pounds, or about 560 American pounds). The next day, he'll have his assistant scramble a plane for a drop-in at Arnie's Life Museum, the Schwarzenegger shrine in the house where he grew up in the hills outside Graz, Austria. Then, it's back to the U.S. to hear oral arguments in *Gill v. Whitford*, the nonpartisan redistricting case that's become his latest passion, and to L.A. again to host an appreciation dinner for Republicans in the California Legislature who backed his push for a stiffer crackdown on greenhouse gases.

All of a sudden, a guy who just turned 70—in Barcelona, he celebrated the 50th anniversary of winning Mr. Universe, which began his breakthrough—and had seen politics pass him by is ... back. But why? Schwarzenegger is barred from another run for governor and has no interest in the Senate; a certain clause in the Constitution is keeping him out of the White House. He's making movies again, though nothing huge. In a Hillary Clinton presidency, he had been planning to be one of the Republican moderate voices urging his party to find ways to work together. The Schwarzenegger Institute at USC would be hosting after-school program summits and earnest environmental speeches. It would have been his own peculiar form of keeping busy, but with nothing like the urgency he feels now.

Instead, Schwarzenegger is back in the public eye because of what he calls "a disastrous situation"—the Trump presidency. It's the topic he can't escape, even at his news conference in San Sebastián about the oceans documentary. *What do you think of Trump? What do you think people should do about Trump?* In Spain, he deflects. He's there to promote the movie, and he wants the headline to be about Cousteau's film, which he backed because the French oceanographer convinced him that people will be more likely to save the ocean if they fall in love with it.

In the air two days later, flying back from checking in on his museum, he answers: He avoids

talking about Trump in these situations because after all those years of having cameras chase him wherever he goes, he knows how the media work—whatever he says about Trump becomes *the* quote, and he wants to talk about his other causes.

But Schwarzenegger is perfectly happy to blow his way into Trump's spotlight when it suits him—he even keeps a bobblehead of Trump in his kitchen that he used for a [viral video](#) in which he lectured the president about racism. Cameras swarmed his after-school summit at USC this year after he made another video slamming Trump for a budget proposing major cuts, and Trump took time out of the National Prayer Breakfast to swipe at him. Every word he says about environmentalism gets more attention since Trump announced the withdrawal from the Paris global climate accord, and he gets to brag about relative GDP growth on his watch: "If the federal government, Republicans and Democrats, and Donald Trump and his whole White House would be smart, they would just copy exactly what we are doing in California," he said in Spain.

He also gets Trump on a visceral level—like they're twins, say, separated at birth. They are the same age. Both have been global celebrities for decades—Schwarzenegger ever since he first won the Mr. Universe competition at age 20, which he later [said](#) was "my ticket to America, the land of opportunity, where I could become a star and get rich." Each has a history of boasting about his sexual conquests and an instinct for the viral quote—like Schwarzenegger's famous riff comparing pumping iron to orgasms. One man claims never to have had a headache, stomachache or allergy; the other's doctor declared him the fittest man ever to seek the presidency. One was underestimated by political elites because of his Austrian accent and bulging physique; the other due to his outer-borough mannerisms and outrageous statements. And whereas Arnold's fame skyrocketed, thanks to showdowns with Lou Ferrigno and the evil T-1000, Donald has turned his penchant for tabloid-fueled feuds into a governing philosophy.

So doesn't it complicate things to have people ask him about Trump all the time, to have the leader of the free world tweet about his *Celebrity Apprentice* ratings?

Not at all, Schwarzenegger says. "Trump helps me." And maybe, in a way, he's even doing more good than harm. "A lot of times, we crucify Trump for doing certain things, and then in the end, deep down inside, [it's like] 'Well actually, that was helpful,'" he says. "People get more educated because he starts talking about things that no one ever thought about."

Schwarzenegger's father was literally a Nazi, though an investigation by the Simon Wiesenthal Center found no evidence his dad had ever committed any atrocities. The general subject of Nazis is one he usually avoids, but he says he can't understand Trump's reluctance to condemn the white supremacists after violent protests in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"We have seen the history of that kind of behavior. It's not like this is new," he tells me. "This has always gone in the wrong fucking direction in history. I'm not a history buff or anything, but there's one thing I know: that that is not good."

"Last Action Hero!" an American woman in the crowd shouts as he walks off the bandstand.

"Save America, Arnold!" shouts another next to her.

***Last Action Hero*, Schwarzenegger tells me later**, was a movie he knew was bad as they

were making it. The director said he wanted to make *E.T. That's not going to work*, he remembers saying in his trailer. People come to see an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, they hear the words "last action hero" and they figure no one else survives and he's shooting his way through.

This is what it's like to hang out with the Governor, who had invited me to tag along with him in Europe because ... well, I'm not exactly sure why. He is bursting with theories and opinions about everything, and enjoys talking about movies, and politics, and culture, and sports, and public policy—and whatever else crosses his mind.

Now we're in the backyard of his childhood home that's been turned into a museum, a two-story yellow house stuffed with memorabilia from his weightlifting and movie careers. For reasons no one can quite explain, the yard is now filled with a collection of giant Transformers sculptures. He wasn't in any of the movies, and he's only seen the first one (it didn't hold him, he says, because it was all explosions and no plot). Nowadays, his tastes run to artier fare, like *Black Swan* or *Dunkirk*—lots of shooting and stuff blowing up, but with a point.

There are three mannequins of him inside, plus the giant flexing bronze outside by the front door. He makes fun of the haircut on the one from his bodybuilding days, now standing in what used to be his parents' bedroom.

"What's it like to have a museum to yourself?" I ask him as he takes a seat at a table set up for us downstairs with glasses of schnapps and a spread of pastries. "I don't think about it," he says. He has a jelly-filled doughnut, and launches into a 10-minute speech about what he learned from the local politicians he admired in Austria as a teenager.

Schwarzenegger speaks in sports metaphors. He says that every policy debate, even health care, has a sweet spot that would make it fly if everyone could just work together to hit it. He also talks in terms of machines and guns, when he's not throwing in the odd reference to Milton Friedman. Certain people have a chip wrong in them, he'll say, or he'll explain the philosophy of how he pursues his causes by imagining how a robot from the future might do it. "It's the shotgun approach versus the rifle approach. This is the rifle approach. Specific target. This is where I go. Let's not spread out and try five different things," he says.

Schwarzenegger throws his money around for what he believes in—"I couldn't tell you a system. It's really a gut reaction kind of thing," he says. He talks about it in \$100,000 chunks. After Charlottesville, the Simon Wiesenthal Center got a chunk, plus all the proceeds from a "Terminate Hate" T-shirt he had made up with red, white and blue flowers sticking out of the barrel in one of his most iconic images, the one of him in the leather jacket and sunglasses. The center's founder, Rabbi Marvin Hier—also famous for delivering the Jewish blessing at Trump's inauguration—questioned whether they should have a gun on an anti-hate T-shirt. *Come on*, Schwarzenegger told him. *It's the Terminator*.

He got involved in after-school programs after visiting schools while working on the president's council on fitness in the 1980s. The Special Olympics taught him the value of government funding. He recycled before he was elected, but only when he was governor did he get interested in actual environmental policy. Infrastructure and immigration stuck with him, and above all, to his surprise, he became attached to the issues of gerrymandering and election reform.

"There were certain things that stuck because I got exposed to it, and then all of a sudden,

something in me found great joy in it," he says.

Schwarzenegger has always been ambitious—he's a firm believer in having a vision of success, and *willing* it to happen, like the first time he bench-pressed 500 pounds—but he got into politics on a whim. He tells the story like this: When he started in movies, Sylvester Stallone was the enemy. Schwarzenegger didn't like him, and didn't like that he was the top box-office draw. He set out to take him down. Twenty years later, he felt like California's then-governor Gray Davis was a jerk to him in a meeting about after-school programs, and suddenly the Terminator became obsessed with knocking him out.

In San Sebastián, over red wine and cheese and bread—after years of fanatic abstemious dieting, he's happy to indulge in some carbs—he whips out his iPad and records a video that he turns into an endorsement on the fly for Rep. Rod Blum, the Iowa Republican who was one of the three dozen members of Congress whom Schwarzenegger called last month, urging them to sign on to an amicus brief in the gerrymandering case. Somewhere over France on the way to Munich the next morning, he tinkers with a statement on an arcane dispute between two warring bodybuilding federations. In Graz the next day, he bats around taking up Prince Albert's offer to have a private jet pick him up for a gala in Monaco celebrating Leonardo DiCaprio and protecting the oceans. Ultimately, he decides not to go. But he was never going to get in a tuxedo for it—"I don't like rules," he explains.

At the Supreme Court on Tuesday for the gerrymandering arguments, he couldn't get around the no cellphone rule. Schwarzenegger loves FaceTime and Snapchat; once, he even pulled out his iPad to record a video in the middle of a papal mass at the Vatican. But he loved seeing the justices in action for the first time, remarking on how they jumped all over the lawyers arguing the case, and each other.

Outside, on the court steps, he rebuts the conservative justices' main argument against killing gerrymandering: that it's a political problem, and not one the courts should adjudicate. "As Einstein said, those who created the problem will not be able to solve it," Schwarzenegger says.

Afterward, at a rally for Common Cause, the good-government group, he explains why of all things, he's made this his cause. In California, he saw gerrymandering lead to the parties running to their respective corners and not getting anything done, and he says the same thing has happened in Washington. "It's time to say, 'Hasta la vista' to gerrymandering. Terminate it!"

The way Schwarzenegger sees it, nothing major has gotten done in America since 2000. Congress has a lower approval rating than herpes, he likes to joke. So that's where he comes in.

"I came to America. I made my money in America. Now, let's fix America," he told me. His adopted country is starting to come apart, he worries, and it's because no one has shown the leadership to bring it together.

"I see down the line a decline, and we get a little bit of a taste of that now. There is a lack of working together. No one sees themselves as a team. It's all about 'Me, me, me.' That's not America," he says. "My biggest fear is: If this plane takes off and the pilot doesn't know where we're going, we'll be flying around and we may crash. Because no one was telling where we're going. Same thing with this."

A friend of Schwarzenegger's, the German bodybuilder-turned-actor Ralf Möller, a towering hulk of a man who played a bruiser in *Gladiator*, tells me at Oktoberfest that he wants me to write that his friend should be secretary of state.

How about that?, I ask Schwarzenegger later.

He responds by rattling off other jobs that might interest him—EPA, Energy. But the State idea clearly intrigues him.

"It's just that if a president asks me, and says, 'Go and step in, you could really move the agenda,' of course, I would do it. We would figure out the rules, figure out what I can do, am I just a puppet in there—'Do I have to ask some schmuck from the White House to go and make a move?'" he says, the misadventures of Rex Tillerson and Jeff Sessions on his mind. "No, I would never do that, because my ego would never allow it. And the country doesn't deserve it."

He says he'd even consider it if the call came in from Trump. His ex-wife's mother, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, he says, taught him, "You never ever turn down a president." (Later, he jokes: "Maybe I can't be in the Cabinet because I fly commercial too much.")

The job he really wants, he knows, is out of reach. "I'd be running in two seconds if I was born in America," he says.

Flying back from his old house to his fancy hotel in Munich in the private jet, having happily obliged the latest airport police officer who slyly slid out his phone for a picture with him, he says he's made his peace with that.

"I can't make myself be angry about it because everything else that I've accomplished is because of America. So how can I complain about the one thing that I can't do? Hello? Look where I'm sitting," he says. "I didn't even dream half of it."

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Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 5:43:29 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/12/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff and Esther Whieldon

PERRY STEPS INTO E&C HOTSEAT: Energy Secretary Rick Perry makes his much-anticipated [debut](#) before the House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee today at 10 a.m. and several members are planning to press him on his [grid resiliency proposal](#), which would benefit coal-fired and nuclear power plants. "I have many concerns with this proposal, starting with the fact that this is chiefly a policy matter that should be left to Congress and the states," ranking member [Frank Pallone](#) will say in his opening remarks. "You are distorting the market, damaging the environment, and delivering preferential treatment to favored industries."

Pallone plans to send a letter seeking more information on Perry's process in developing the proposal — but don't expect criticism of Perry's plan to be a purely one-party affair: Texas Republican Rep. [Pete Olson](#) last week said he was concerned because DOE's proposal "appears to be picking winners and losers" and a normally friendly face, Rep. [Joe Barton](#), declined to discuss his planned line of questioning.

But some panel members are expected to be big fans: West Virginia Rep. [David McKinley](#) told ME he'll be "very supportive" of Perry's request of FERC, and he scoffed at criticism that the plan was unfairly playing favorites by propping up the struggling nuclear and coal sectors. "It's an insurance policy that we never have a blackout in this country. Isn't there some value in that?" he asked. "I don't think it's picking winners and losers at all." ME would look for Reps. [Morgan Griffith](#) and [Bill Johnson](#) to also be big backers of the proposal.

Perry response: According to [a copy](#) of his opening statement, Perry will stress that his request of FERC is just a "first step" in a conversation while at the same time emphasizing he'll take whatever action necessary to protect the U.S. grid's resiliency. "I will not sit idly by when I see a threat to that reliability, or a reasonable course of action that is within my authority to mitigate it," he plans to say.

What else what else? At least three other issues seem likely to crop up throughout the hearing:

—Democrats will ask Perry for guarantees and additional information concerning more than [\\$56,000 in non-commercial travel](#) he took since coming into office. Pallone will ask DOE's inspector general in a letter today to probe his non-commercial travel habits.

—Questions from both parties about DOE's next move in restarting the Yucca Mountain program. Remember Sen. [Dean Heller](#) lifted his hold on DOE Deputy Dan Brouillette's confirmation after unspecified progress on the matter, but we haven't heard much since then.

—Why the agency conditionally [approved](#) a \$3.7 billion increase in federal loan guarantees for the troubled, over-budget Vogtle nuclear project in Georgia and whether it intends to further wade into similar nuclear matters.

If you go: Perry settles into the witness chair at 10 a.m. in Rayburn 2123. More [here](#).

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and EPA's Aaron Ringel was first up to identify Strom Thurmond as the only senator ever reelected in their 90s. For today: Who is the only chemist currently serving in Congress? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

FUNDAMENTAL GHG REGULATORY AUTHORITY PONDERED: EPA plans to question whether it even has the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and how states might craft their own plans to upgrade coal plants as it ponders a replacement to the Clean Power Plan, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#), citing excerpts of a draft notice. The agency continues to mull "whether it is appropriate to propose a rule," and must "ascertain the scope of legal authority that Congress conferred to EPA" before proceeding. In the document — an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking in Washington speak — EPA calls itself as "a creature of statute," and notes that the Clean Air Act delegates air pollution control to states and local governments. Pros [learned](#) the document went over to OMB for review earlier Wednesday.

CAN ALREADY SMELL THOSE JET FUMES: Two days after posting the measure, the House is expected today to clear a \$36.5 billion emergency funding package [H.R. 2266 \(115\)](#) for hurricane and wildfire relief and recovery. Senate consideration will have to wait until next week, at least. "We think it's critical that we pass this legislation this week to give the people in California the support they need to fight these fires, to help the victims, and also to help the communities still recovering and dealing with the humanitarian problems with the hurricanes," Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) said on Wednesday.

Energy bill clears House: Lawmakers cleared by voice vote legislation [S. 190 \(115\)](#) that exempts certain equipment that needs to remain on at all times from energy use restrictions for an additional six years. "Devices like home security alarms or fire detection need to be on 24/7," Olson said on the floor. "But, the 2007 energy law on energy efficiency standards for external power supplies did not allow for this." It now moves to the White House, after having already passed the Senate.

ACCUWEATHER CEO TAPPED FOR NOAA CHIEF: Trump announced late Wednesday his selection of Barry Myers, CEO of weather-forecasting firm AccuWeather, to lead NOAA, POLITICO's Henry C. Jackson [reports](#). CEO since 2007, Myers would take over one of the key agencies in conducting climate research and assessing climate change if confirmed by the Senate. An attorney by training, Myers significant business background fits the mold of many other picks for officials in Trump's administration.

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

HOUSE PANEL PASSES ANTIQUITIES ACT BILL: The House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday passed, on a vote of 23-17, Chairman [Rob Bishop's](#) bill [H.R. 3990 \(115\)](#) that would require a federal environmental review process and approval from local officials to designate any monument bigger than 640 acres in size and block the creation of

new marine national monuments "with no archeological or historic sites in need of protection." The committee rejected [a resolution](#) by Rep. [Raul Grijalva](#) that aimed to have Zinke disclose more information about his review of existing national monument designations.

Bishop defended his bill to ME: "If I was going back to the old mantra of just doing away with the Antiquities Act, [the criticisms] still wouldn't hurt my feelings. We're not doing that. What we're doing is coming up what I think is a moderate, rationale way of establishing process so it's not about any president, it's not about any monument."

But greens and public lands advocates bashed it: "This bill upends a century of the Antiquities Act being successfully used by Republican and Democratic presidents to protect some of the most iconic and loved parks and public lands in our country," [The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks](#) said in a statement. "And this is being done to allow development of these lands that belong to all Americans for the benefit of private companies and individuals."

SENATORS: 'FULLY IMPLEMENT' RUSSIA ENERGY SANCTIONS: Sens. [John McCain](#) and [Ben Cardin](#) urged Trump in a Wednesday [letter](#) to "fully implement" sanctions on companies that engage in Russian energy projects, POLITICO's Elana Schor [reports](#). "The administration must also clearly communicate to energy companies in the U.S. and around the world that it will aggressively enforce all mandatory energy sanctions laid out in the law," the bipartisan duo wrote.

TAKING A FIRM STANCE: Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) and environmental advocates are holding an event today at 2:30 p.m. at a Lower East Side community garden "denouncing the polluter takeover of the EPA and the Republican assault on the agency's budget," according to an advisory.

ZINKE'S FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES DRAW MIXED REACTION: Bishop told ME Wednesday the types of fundraising Zinke's done on official Interior trips has "always been done" and that he wasn't too worried about the revelations. "It's a game that's being played," the Utah congressman said. "I don't take it too seriously." But that's not the unanimous feeling: New Hampshire Democratic Sen. [Maggie Hassan](#) [tweeted](#) Wednesday Zinke's mixing of fundraising with official business, [revealed by POLITICO](#), "needs to be investigated."

Richard Painter, chief ethics adviser to George W. Bush, [tweeted](#) Zinke's attendance of a Montana fundraiser while on official travel was a "Hatch Act violation."

EPA AIR ADVISER PICKED: David Harlow, a lawyer with expertise in the Clean Air Act most recently with Hunton & Williams, has joined EPA in an advisory role to the Office of Air and Radiation, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#), citing multiple sources familiar with the move. His role will most closely resemble that of Joe Goffman, who was senior counsel to the Air Office during the Obama administration. The agency did not respond to requests for comment.

AND THE FIRST SOLAR SHALL BE LAST: After months of remaining mum on a solar trade tariff case, thin film solar producer First Solar waded into the fray Wednesday with a filing to the U.S. International Trade Commission arguing that tariffs would be a good idea. The position is a boost for Suniva and Solar World, who won a unanimous injury determination from the ITC last month. "My overarching point is that the Commission should reject the notion that [crystalline silicon photovoltaic] industry must be left to die so that the downstream solar industry may live," writes Mark Widmar, CEO of First Solar. "I firmly

believe the commission can design an effective remedy that allows solar demand to continue to flourish."

Tariffs wouldn't affect First Solar's supplies: The Solar Energy Industries Association, of which First Solar is a member, has repeatedly pointed out to reporters and the commission that thin film products are not covered by the case. So if the commission recommends a strict remedy to the president, First Solar could see its competition from much the rest of the sector wane.

EPA MOVES ON HARVEY-IMPACTED SUPERFUND SITE: EPA announced Wednesday it approved a plan that would see the removal of tons of dioxins from the Houston-area San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund site that sustained damage and leaked material in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. "EPA is prioritizing Superfund clean-up by making decisions in a decisive, timely manner," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a statement. Cleaning up the site, which was first added to the National Priorities List in 2008, will cost an estimated \$115 million.

Houston-area Democratic Rep. Gene Green thanked EPA for the decision but [said](#): "We will be monitoring the remediation process closely and call on the EPA to move as quickly as possible before more damage is done."

YIKES: There are reports of Puerto Ricans drinking from wells located on Superfund sites on the island, EPA said Wednesday. In a statement, the agency said it "advises against tampering with sealed and locked wells or drinking from these wells." According to [government data](#), just 64 percent of residents have access to potable drinking water and less than 11 percent of the island has electricity.

McKINLEY UPBEAT ON COAL EFFORTS: McKinley says the Trump administration has already made significant progress on 11 of the 14 priority areas to boost coal he presented to Vice President Mike Pence last year. "[Trump] has done a lot of things, but we're not trying to play favorites," he told ME. "Just give us a level playing field." Developed in consultation with the Congressional Coal Caucus, McKinley's [memo](#) calls for rolling back Obama administration climate change efforts and several EPA regulations. He now hopes the administration can work on boosting U.S. coal exports globally, where he says there's "voracious appetite."

MAIL CALL! LAWMAKERS WANT BRISTOL BAY PROTECTED: More than 40 congressional Democrats, led by Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) and Rep. [Jared Huffman](#), sent [a letter](#) to Trump urging him not to loosen protections on Bristol Bay in Alaska that would enable construction of the Pebble Mine. "The EPA's plan to reverse clean water safeguards is egregious and inconsistent with science, and frankly, inconsistent with basic logic," they wrote in a letter.

TWIN LETTERS OPPOSE ANWR IN BUDGET: A collection of [90 professional athletes](#) and [90 outdoor companies and recreation organizations](#) sent separate letters to Congress opposing efforts to opening ANWR to oil drilling in the budget process.

REPORT: INTERNAL CARBON PRICING UP BIG: The number of companies setting an internal carbon price into operations has increased eightfold over the last four years, according to [a report](#) out today from CDP. It concludes a full 75 percent of the energy and utilities sectors' market cap now include an internal carbon price into their operations.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DOE! Both [Perry](#) and Deputy Secretary [Dan Brouillette](#) tweeted pictures of a massive cake and birthday celebration DOE held Wednesday.

FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE: Watch PBS' entire episode of "Frontline" on Pruitt [here](#).

QUICK HITS

- BNP Paribas to Stop Financing Shale, Oil Sands Projects. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- O'Halleran hedges bets on climate change action. [Arizona Daily Sun](#).
- Report: Key changes needed to prevent fiery rail crashes. [AP](#).
- Coal Operator Plans to Idle Western Kentucky Mine. [AP](#).
- Most US oil executives see prices below \$60 per barrel through 2018. [Reuters](#).
- 10 Weeks, 10 Hurricanes, and a 124-Year-Old Record Is Matched. [New York Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

8:00 a.m. — Canadian Embassy hosts the 28th annual [Energy Efficiency Forum](#), Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Ave NW

9:30 a.m. — "[IEA's Renewable Energy Market Report 2017](#)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee holds a legislative [hearing](#) on several bills, Longworth 1334

10:00 a.m. — House Energy and Commerce holds [hearing](#) with DOE Secretary Rick Perry, Rayburn 2123

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/lawmakers-to-grill-perry-on-grid-resiliency-plan-025010>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

DOE grid proposal sparks more questions than answers [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/03/2017 01:36 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry has [prodded](#) federal regulators to rescue economically ailing coal and nuclear plants in the name of "economic and national security."

But several industry players and experts argue that the Energy Department's proposal resembles a back-of-the-envelope sketch more than a regulation, and Capitol Hill is starting to get dragged into the scuffle.

Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee are expected to get an earful about the rule Tuesday during a hearing scheduled before the release of the new rulemaking, as well as later in the week. And [Marc Veasey](#) (D-Texas), on the Science Committee, suggested that DOE may be "redefining grid resiliency to accomplish a political agenda."

The 19-page proposal DOE sent to FERC last week, which directs competitive electricity markets to dole out cash to power plants with 90 days of fuel on-site, raised eyebrows from the moment people looked at the sparse page count. Washington lawyers and policy wonks have been tossing and turning over big gaps in the plan, not to mention a list of unanswered questions about how the regulatory procedure might unfold, where the payments DOE is demanding actually get implemented in the real world, and why Perry put his chips into on-site fuel.

"I'm sympathetic with the 'hurry up and fix something'" attitude, said former FERC Chairman Pat Wood, a Republican who is a strong advocate for markets. "But this is such a draconian way of fixing it that I'm assuming it's put out there to be a lightning rod to get people off their ass and get to focusing on proper solutions to this."

He added: "Everything in our society has a shelf-life and then it goes into retirement."

Even basic issues about how DOE's 60-day timeframe for FERC to take "final action" lines up with routine federal administrative law are unclear, and have already [sparked outrage](#) from a range of energy trade associations that don't usually work together.

Still, late Monday FERC announced that it would take comments on DOE's pitch [for just three weeks](#), even before DOE officially published its proposal in the Federal Register.

Nevertheless, the proposal was hailed as a bold, decisive and proactive measure by the nuclear and coal-fired power industries and their allies.

After speaking with more than a half-dozen experts and reviewing documents, here are the biggest questions DOE plopped in FERC's lap:

How does this process even work?

DOE used Section 403 of the Department of Energy Organization Act to initiate a rulemaking at FERC and directed regulators to take "final action" on the new proposal within 60 days of its publication. No one disputes Perry's right to utilize the process, but few fully understand how it works because the section so rarely tapped — DOE hasn't invoked it in 30 years and has used it fewer than a half-dozen times. Although FERC has already requested comments, Section 403 doesn't define "final action" and while it states that Energy secretaries can set "reasonable time limits," another phrase up for debate.

Analysts at ClearView Energy Partners argued that FERC would put Perry's proposal on the fast-track but takes DOE's timeline with a grain of salt. "We view the aggressive timeline

mostly as an indication of where DOE wants this on FERC's near term priority list than as a true drop-dead date," ClearView analysts wrote in a note to clients.

In a separate letter Perry sent to the commissioners to push his proposal, he said the short countdown clock was necessary because FERC was not doing enough to deal with the "crisis" facing the sector.

"He uses the word 'crisis.' No one believes that," one former FERC official said. "It also asserts ... that every single inflexible coal and nuclear plant is needed for reliability. Those are two huge leaps. But everything is built on that foundation. If either of those, or both of those, are proven incorrect there's no basis for FERC to act."

How does DOE's plan mesh with the markets?

The most vexing issue looming over DOE's proposal is who pays the power plants for having 90 days of fuel and how does the pricing mechanism get factored into existing wholesale energy markets. DOE offers one page of regulatory text for FERC to adopt but doesn't suggest a way for issuing the payments, which "shall" include "operating and fuel expenses, costs of capital and debt, and a fair return on equity and investment."

The pricing mechanism "is, to me, the biggest question mark," said former FERC Commissioner Tony Clark, who echoed just about everyone interviewed for this story. "It dumps it all on FERC. They can try to come up with something out of thin air but the mechanism is not defined in the rule, which is really the whole name of the game."

DOE's proposal, as written, would make all nuclear plants and many coal plants eligible for payments. But should those payments come out of electricity markets, or capacity markets — which generators bid into in exchange for being available when grid operators call on them — or something else? DOE doesn't say.

"If they did decide to define 90 days of fuel supply, for whatever reason, as a valuable attribute to the market, then they would need to figure out what the mechanism is and think about whether there's a semi-market-friendly way to do that," Clark said.

Miles Farmer, a staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, went so far as to say that the plan has too many plot holes to be considered a proposed rule.

"FERC could not simply enact this," Farmer said. "There are no rules for how the plants would be bidding into the market, or not. There are no rules for how one would evaluate whether these payments ever sunset. Are we talking about infinite subsidies forever?"

There's already a process for power plants to delay a retirement on the electric grid if they're needed for reliability. How should those processes overlap? Regions that have capacity markets have also instituted stiff penalties on plants that promised to deliver but don't follow through. But the plan envisioned by DOE doesn't explain whether a power plant should still get paid if it ever falls short of the 90-day rule or can't operate.

ClearView chose a diplomatic approach: "[W]e would not be surprised if the RTOs and ISOs themselves find accommodation of this proposal difficult or problematic."

Why focus on on-site fuel storage?

DOE's proposal says power plants eligible for the new payments must offer some essential energy services and "have a 90-day fuel supply on site in the event of supply disruptions caused by emergencies, extreme weather, or natural or man-made disasters." But 90 days is never explained in the 19-page document and, [according](#) to Paul Bailey, CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, the nation's coal fleet maintains enough on-site fuel supplies to power their plants 73 to 82 days, on average. Those figures line up with [data](#) at the Energy Information Administration.

Another complicating factor for Perry's "grid resiliency pricing rule" is that FERC doesn't have a set definition for what resiliency means in technical terms.

Perry emphasizes the grid stress triggered by the 2014 "polar vortex" to defend the urgency of his new plan. But even there, it's unclear why 90 days was necessary when most outages on the mainland U.S. don't last half that time. Several experts point out that having fuel on-site isn't a panacea for disruptions.

While nuclear plants don't need to swap out their fuel for 18 months or more, some reactors in Florida along the path of Hurricane Irma [shut down](#), including because of a problem with a valve. Last week, Platts highlighted a case where NRG Energy told state regulators in Texas that Hurricane Harvey dumped so much water that stocks of coal at its W.A. Parish power plant were so "saturated with rainwater that coal was unable to be delivered into the silos" and [switched to natural gas](#).

Even with the polar vortex, API's Marty Durbin argues to lawmakers that deliveries cut off during the 2014 cold spell weren't directly weather-related but instead a result of economic decisions made by generators who had customers with "interruptible" contracts.

"I come from an era when major policy and initiatives, including notices of proposed rulemaking, were usually done in 300- or 500-page documents. This looks pretty spare," said former FERC Chairman Jim Hoecker, who served under the Clinton administration. "I'm not sure that the threat that the secretary is alluding to here is imminent. It might be. They just need to explain themselves.

He added: "What they're going to find is that having a different philosophy doesn't relieve the responsibility to testify it."

To view online [click here](#).

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Energy Department discloses \$56K in Perry travel [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/06/2017 07:06 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry has racked up as much as \$56,246 in non-commercial air travel since taking office in early March, the Energy Department disclosed Friday in response to congressional questions about Cabinet-level trips.

Political appointees at DOE did not use private non-commercial aircraft, but on four occasions Perry did fly on government-owned aircraft or chartered aircraft, DOE Deputy General

Counsel Eric Fygi [wrote in a letter](#) to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. That committee is seeking information about Trump administration officials' travel following the revelations that led to Tom Price's resignation from the job as HHS secretary.

Perry's single biggest expense, according to agency documents submitted to the committee, was a one-day round trip in mid-May from Reagan National Airport near Washington D.C. to Olathe, Kan. for DOE's Small Business Forum & Expo, and included a tour of the DOE Kansas City National Security Campus, which is responsible for manufacturing and procuring non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons.

Joining Perry on that trip were a handful of other agency officials, including National Nuclear Security Administrator Frank Klotz and deputy chief of staff Dan Wilmot. The total cost to taxpayers for using the Federal Aviation Administration's Gulfstream IV plane was an estimated \$35,000.

Perry's second most expensive trip was a private charter flight on Sept. 28 from the Washington Dulles Airport to the Hazleton Regional Airport in Pennsylvania, which later continued to the Greater Portsmouth Regional Airport in Ohio, and was disclosed by a [Reuters report](#) earlier this week. The trip, costing an estimated \$11,000, occurred just a day before Price [resigned](#) after a [series](#) of POLITICO reports of him running up a government travel tab exceeding \$1 million — a figure that dwarfs Perry's apparent billing.

After visiting the coal mine in Pennsylvania and a defunct uranium enrichment facility in Ohio, the DOE documents say Perry planned to "secure commercial transportation for the continuation of his travel out of Ohio."

Perry and his staff also made use of a Defense Department plane in May for travel from Idaho Falls, Idaho, to tour the national lab there, to Santa Fe, N.M., to visit the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The trip continued from Santa Fe to Carlsbad, N.M., to visit the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, a low-level nuclear waste storage facility. The estimated cost of the trip was \$7,000.

The last trip documented by DOE was for the round-trip use of plane owned by the Bonneville Power Administration, a quasi-independent utility within DOE, to fly from Seattle to Richland, Wash., to visit the Hanford nuclear site in August. The cost of the trip: \$3,246.

The information sent to Capitol Hill did not include trips senior DOE non-career officials took with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence on government-owned aircraft or trips with officials at other agencies with their own aircraft, such as DoD and DHS.

"This response does not address this travel as such travel arrangements were not made by DOE," Fygi wrote.

"The Department of Energy strictly follows both government-wide and internal DOE travel regulations and policy," DOE spokesperson Shaylyn Hynes said in a statement. "The Secretary travels almost exclusively on commercial aircraft. In the rare instances where government-owned or chartered aircraft have been used, trips were pre-approved by an Ethics officer within the Office of General Counsel."

The White House has backed steep spending cuts across the executive branch, including a

roughly 9 percent to DOE for fiscal 2018, a decline of roughly \$2.7 billion compared to current levels.

In the wake of Price's resignation, several other Cabinet-level Trump officials have found their taxpayer spending scrutinized.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has flown on military planes for some trips that also coincided with appearances at fundraising events, raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism, POLITICO has [reported](#). The EPA Inspector General has also recently [expanded a probe](#) into EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's travels.

An [investigation](#) into seven military flights taken by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that cost about \$811,798 ultimately found that the former Goldman Sachs alum had not violated any ethics requirements or other regulations.

The White House began cracking down on Cabinet officials' use of private planes amid Price's resignation, telling them chief of staff John Kelly must approve almost all travel on "government-owned, rented, leased, or chartered aircraft."

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DOE approves big boost for Vogtle loan guarantees [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/29/2017 11:08 AM EDT

The Energy Department has conditionally approved a \$3.7 billion increase in the federal loan guarantees for the over-budget Vogtle nuclear project in Georgia, the agency announced this morning.

DOE had already approved \$8.33 billion for the two-reactor project under the Obama administration. Now, Energy Secretary Rick Perry is primed to offer an additional \$1.67 billion to Southern Co.'s Georgia Power, \$1.6 billion to Oglethorpe Power Corp. and \$415 million to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia.

The Energy Department had originally extended loan guarantees for \$3.4 billion to Georgia Power, \$3.1 billion to Oglethorpe and \$1.8 billion to MEAG.

WHAT'S NEXT: The new DOE loan guarantees are conditional and the firms will not be able to access the financing until they are finalized. It's unclear how long it will take to finalize.

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EPA draft questions greenhouse gas authority, ponders state rules for coal plants [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 10/11/2017 11:13 PM EDT

EPA's proposal to consider a replacement to the Clean Power Plan will question whether the agency has authority to regulate greenhouse gases from power plants, and how it should let states write their own plans to upgrade coal plants, according to excerpts of the draft notice obtained by POLITICO.

The 34-page EPA document is currently under review by the White House and other agencies, and administration officials have said it will be released in a few weeks.

Any replacement EPA might propose is expected to achieve modest greenhouse gas reductions, especially compared to the Obama administration rule, which sought to shrink carbon dioxide levels from the power sector by 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.

Some conservatives are lobbying EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to forego a replacement and instead challenge the legal finding that requires the agency to regulate emissions. The draft may leave that option open.

EPA is still considering "whether it is appropriate to propose a rule," and must "ascertain the scope of legal authority that Congress conferred to EPA," before determining how best to implement a policy, according to the document.

On Tuesday, EPA proposed to [withdraw](#) the Obama-era power plant standards, arguing they exceeded the agency's authority by pushing electricity companies away from coal and toward natural gas and renewable power.

In the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, or ANPR, EPA refers to itself as "a creature of statute," and notes that the Clean Air Act delegates air pollution control to states and local governments.

"States will have the primary role in deciding who gets regulated and the scope of that regulation," the document says. "While the CAA is a source of authority, it is also a source of carefully crafted limitations, which this agency must and will respect."

The agency interprets Section 111 of the Clean Air Act, the part used to write the Clean Power Plan, as requiring EPA to rely on a demonstrated system for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and to consider the costs of achieving those reductions and any "non-air quality" health effects. In Tuesday's draft withdrawal of the Clean Power Plan, EPA discounted many of the health benefits the Obama administration had cited in 2015 from cutting air pollutants other than carbon dioxide.

"Each state then develops a plan with its own legally enforceable emission standards to implement the emission guidelines, with flexibility to accommodate the State's particular needs and circumstances," the draft ANPR explains.

The ANPR asks for feedback on "several technologies and equipment upgrades—as well as good operating and maintenance practices," that coal plants could pursue to reduce emissions. The draft also considers in detail whether making those changes would trigger a "new source review," which would require plants to obtain air pollution permits. It covers ways that coal plant operators could avoid those reviews.

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White House reviewing proposal to consider Clean Power Plan replacement [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 10/11/2017 03:48 PM EDT

The White House is reviewing EPA's advance proposal to consider a replacement to the Obama administration's climate standards for power plants, according to a [notice](#) that the Office of Management and Budget received the document Tuesday.

EPA officially proposed to [revoke](#) the Clean Power Plan Tuesday. On a call with conservative interests, administration officials said a proposal about a replacement could be issued in the next few weeks, as POLITICO [reported](#).

The agency argued in moving to withdraw the regulation that Obama's EPA illegally set requirements that would have required companies to shift away from coal-fired power plants and use more natural gas and renewable power for electricity. EPA argued it only has authority to regulate coal plants directly.

Officials on the call also suggested the agency is considering letting states set their own standards for coal plants.

The document OMB received is called "State Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Existing Electric Utility Generating Units."

Any replacement rule would likely require coal plants to run more efficiently but is not expected to significantly reduce power-sector carbon dioxide emissions that cause climate change.

EPA has said it has not yet decided whether to pursue a replacement, although a Supreme Court ruling and endangerment finding written by the agency require it to address greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. Some conservatives want Administrator Scott Pruitt to [fight](#) that endangerment finding.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump nominates AccuWeather CEO to lead key climate agency [Back](#)

By Henry C. Jackson | 10/11/2017 10:42 PM EDT

President Donald Trump has nominated the CEO of AccuWeather to run the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a key agency in conducting climate research and assessing climate change.

Barry Myers has served since 2007 as CEO of AccuWeather, a media company in State College, Pennsylvania, that provides worldwide weather predictions. He graduated from Penn State with a degree in business and received a law degree from Boston University, but has no science training.

In a news release, the White House called him "one of the world's leading authorities on the use of weather information." Trump has nominated him to serve as the Commerce Department's under secretary for oceans and atmosphere, which oversees NOAA.

At AccuWeather, Myers has led a global expansion of the company. His significant private-sector experience fits with many of the other high-profile Trump administration appointees.

NOAA has a vast portfolio that includes the nation's weather forecasts and projecting climate change. The agency oversees the National Weather Service and a vast array of research. It also has responsibility for protecting coastal areas and oceans.

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McCain, Cardin urge Trump to get tough with Moscow [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 09/29/2017 04:12 PM EDT

Two senior senators are urging President Donald Trump to fully use the new authority to punish Russia that lawmakers overwhelmingly granted him last month.

Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Ben Cardin (D-Md.) [wrote to Trump](#) on the eve of a key deadline in the Russia sanctions bill, which [won](#) lopsided bipartisan support in Congress and forced the president to get tougher on Moscow over its election meddling. That legislation requires the administration to identify by Friday individuals linked to Russian defense and intelligence operations who could be subject to new penalties.

McCain and Cardin urged Trump to meet the deadline in a way that "expansively defines these actors to ensure that the perpetrators of the attack on our democracy last year — the defense and intelligence sectors — are sanctioned appropriately."

"We are very concerned that Russia may attempt to work around sanctions by funneling the arms trade through companies not included in the administration's guidance," the senators added.

Beyond that deadline, McCain and Cardin pressed Trump to "fully implement" another section of the sanctions measure that adds new penalties for companies connected to Russian oil and gas projects. They also asked Trump to nudge European allies to coordinate their sanctions in line with the U.S. system, asking for a briefing from the State and Treasury Departments.

And the duo also delivered a broader warning to Trump that lawmakers would take advantage of the popular sanctions bill's authority to force a congressional review of any decision to ease or end sanctions against Russia.

"As you know, the law provides for Congress to review any administration determination to remove sanctions designations on individuals or entities," McCain and Cardin wrote. "Based on the overwhelming Congressional support for enacting this law, and that provision in particular, Congress will undoubtedly take that role seriously."

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Zinke's travels: Ski resort and Alaskan steakhouse [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre | 10/10/2017 07:32 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has attended at least two additional political fundraisers while traveling for official business, including a weekend ski getaway less than three weeks after he was sworn in that donors paid up to \$3,000 to attend, according to sources and documents reviewed by POLITICO.

Zinke's previously undisclosed attendance at the events adds to scrutiny he is facing over his habit of mixing political activities with official business when traveling outside of Washington, D.C., and to questions over travel expenses incurred by members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet. In addition to the fundraisers, Zinke has held at least a half-dozen other events with big donors or influential conservative organizations while on official trips.

Zinke, a former Montana congressman who became secretary March 1, started his fundraising appearances even before attending a March 30 Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser in St. Croix that POLITICO [reported](#) last week, at which donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with him. The Office of Special Counsel, which is investigating Zinke's use of travel and political activities in office, has been asked by a watchdog group to look into his appearance there.

In the first of the newly disclosed appearances, Zinke attended a mid-March fundraiser at a ski resort in Big Sky, Montana, organized by committees affiliated with Republican Sen. [Steve Daines](#), according to two attendees who saw him there. And in May, Zinke briefly stopped by a fundraiser for GOP Rep. Don Young at a steakhouse in Anchorage, Alaska, a spokesman for Young's campaign told POLITICO.

All three fundraisers occurred on trips that Zinke took for official Interior Department business. The Hatch Act and other federal laws allow Cabinet secretaries to participate in partisan political activities only if they do so on their own time and do not use any governmental resources. Federal Election Commission records for the campaign committees do not list any reimbursement payments to Interior for the events.

"Both law and common sense tell us that taxpayer resources are supposed to be used when you're doing the taxpayers' business [but] are not supposed to be used to help candidates get elected," said Brendan Fischer of the nonprofit watchdog organization Campaign Legal Center.

An Interior Department spokeswoman did not respond to specific questions about Zinke's attendance at the events nor whether the campaigns reimbursed Interior for any of his travel

expenses, but she said ethics officials sign off on the secretary's trips and all of them comply with the law.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Other guests attending the Montana fundraiser included Sens. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), according to an invitation to the March 17-19 event [posted by a local political blog](#) earlier that month. Donors were asked to contribute \$3,000 if they were attending on behalf of a political action committee or \$1,500 for an individual. Another invitation for events that weekend obtained by POLITICO sought donations as low as \$500 to attend two dinners for Daines.

Hoeven hosted his own reception Friday night before the Daines dinner and a lunch Saturday, according to a campaign invitation obtained by POLITICO, which also informed guests that they could purchase "discounted ski lift tickets" at the resort.

Zinke was not named on the invitations, but his official schedule lists him as attending a "welcoming reception" for Daines on Friday night, spending "personal time with Senator Murkowski" at Big Sky Resort on Saturday and attending a "reception & dinner" for Daines that evening.

Two sources who attended the Daines fundraiser recalled seeing Zinke there. One of the sources, a lobbyist, said Zinke attended the Friday night social and the breakfast buffet the next day. The lobbyist said that when Daines introduced Zinke, the Montana senator mentioned that Zinke was the state's first Cabinet secretary.

The Hatch Act bars Zinke from taking part in political events while acting in his official role as Interior secretary, which includes being identified by his title in invitations. But Richard Painter, a University of Minnesota professor and former White House chief ethics lawyer under President George W. Bush, said Daines referring to Zinke's Cabinet position doesn't appear to violate the law.

Zinke "should take reasonable steps to make sure people aren't using his official title" and not use the title himself at political events, Painter said. "But I don't know that he has an obligation to jump in and tell the senator he can't do that."

The secretary spent most of the day that Friday touring Yellowstone National Park, which the Interior Department manages through the National Park Service. He did not have any other official events listed on his schedule for Saturday and flew back to Washington, D.C., on Sunday.

A [report](#) posted by Interior on Zinke's March travel expenses shows that he claimed 75 percent of his per diem that Friday and did not claim any lodging or reimbursements over that weekend, which he took as personal days off. He did fly home on official taxpayer-funded travel, however.

The Young fundraiser occurred May 31, when Zinke was in Anchorage for a speech to the Alaska Oil and Gas Association's annual conference, where he signed a secretarial order for an

updated assessment of how much oil exists in part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The invitation to the reception, a copy of which was obtained by political blog [Must Read Alaska](#) and shared with POLITICO, does not list Zinke as a special guest, nor does it say how much donors had to contribute to attend.

FEC records for the Alaskans for Don Young campaign committee show it received \$9,800 in campaign contributions from individuals and political action committees on that day.

Young's campaign spokesman, Matt Shuckerow, said in an email that Zinke made "only very brief remarks" at the event, and that the campaign did not confirm his attendance in advance and did not require guests to pay to attend. "Not only did the campaign seek out the guidance of the Interior Department's ethics personnel prior to the event, it took concerted efforts to follow their strict guidance," Shuckerow said. He did not say whether the campaign reimbursed the Interior Department for any costs associated with Zinke's trip.

Zinke's calendar for that day includes a brief stop at Sullivan's Steakhouse in Anchorage, the same venue listed on the invitation, for a "Rep. Don Young Reception." Later that night, Zinke went to dinner with representatives of sportsmen's groups, according to his schedule.

The Anchorage stop came in the middle of a weeklong trip that included the use of a military plane to fly from Washington, D.C., to Norway, Greenland and then Alaska. Interior paid for Zinke and three Interior staff members to take the flight. Zinke's wife, Lola, also accompanied him on the trip but reimbursed the government for the cost of her seat, Interior has said.

In both of the newly disclosed appearances, Zinke did not pose for photos with high-dollar donors, as had been the case with the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser. POLITICO's report on Zinke's appearance in that photo line led Walter Shaub, a former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics who is now with the Campaign Legal Center, to ask the Office of Special Counsel to open [a Hatch Act investigation](#). The OSC typically opens investigations in response to complaints it receives, but a spokesman declined to comment on the status of Shaub's request.

Still, some watchdogs question whether Zinke is focused enough on his day job given how much attention he has paid to politics.

"There's always the risk that a high-level government official spending more time involved in political events may not be attending to their official duties," said Nick Schwellenbach, director of investigations at Project On Government Oversight.

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EPA hires industry lawyer as adviser to air office [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 10/11/2017 05:12 PM EDT

EPA has hired David Harlow, a lawyer with expertise in the Clean Air Act, to serve in an advisory role to the Office of Air and Radiation, EPA sources tell POLITICO.

EPA's press office did not respond to a request for comment, but agency sources say Harlow's role will most closely resemble that of Joe Goffman, who was senior counsel to the Air Office during the Obama administration. Should Bill Wehrum be confirmed to serve as the assistant administrator to the office, Harlow will report to him, sources said.

Harlow, like Wehrum, most recently worked at Hunton & Williams where he advised and representing the power and paper industries in enforcement and permitting cases. His biographical webpage for the firm has been removed, but a [cached](#) version says he helped utilities with new source permit cases and he defended wood pulp and paper mills from Clean Air Act enforcement. Court [documents](#) show that he worked with William Brownell representing the Utility Air Regulatory Group, an informal group of electric utilities who have sued the EPA over regulations many times.

EPA did not respond to a request for comment on Harlow's hiring.

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by ExxonMobil: Reading the tea leaves on Clean Power Plan repeal — More political activity from Zinke revealed — Antiquities Act revamp gets its day in committee
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 5:42:32 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/11/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Emily Holden

LONG CARBON RULE BATTLE LIES AHEAD: President Donald Trump's administration sought to frame Tuesday's [move to rescind the Obama-era Clean Power Plan](#) as fulfilling a campaign process, but it really just kicked off what's likely to be an arduous and lengthy legal and regulatory process that may ultimately result in a replacement rule with very modest reductions in the emissions that fuel climate change. "This is the beginning of the process to carry out the president's promise to make sure that we do our job at the agency within the bounds of the law and don't declare war on certain sections of our economy," EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said on "Fox News," his only public appearance Tuesday to discuss his proposed rule.

Many state officials, environmental advocates, businesses and reporters were left wondering why they hadn't received any sort of briefing or additional background before or after the proposal's release — especially since senior agency officials had a closed phone call Tuesday morning with conservative organizations where they took questions from groups like the Heartland Institute and State Policy Network, as Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). Clint Woods, the director of the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies, which represents mostly conservative state air agencies, said his members got a heads up on timing but would be "looking forward to more engagement prior to major announcements in the future."

Joe Goffman, EPA general counsel when the Clean Power Plan was proposed and finalized, said the agency typically had background conversations with all of those groups when rolling out a major proposal. "We thought that it was an elementary part of our obligation to present information to state governments, to the affected industry, often very broadly defined, and to environmental advocacy groups," Goffman said. A phone call between the administrator and reporters, and a briefing on the Hill for lawmakers was also customary, he said. Pruitt has accused Obama's EPA of not conducting enough outreach or listening enough to states, which Goffman said is "demonstrably false." The agency did not respond to questions about its outreach on the rollback.

ICYMI: Here's links to EPA's [fact sheet](#), [proposal](#) and [regulatory impact analysis](#).

Five things: Pro's Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff [take a look at](#) five of the biggest policy changes the Trump administration has made to try to prop up the prospects of fossil fuels. 1) Killing the crown jewel of Obama's climate change legacy by axing the Clean Power Plan, 2) A push to shore up coal's place in the nation's electricity marketplace, 3) The likelihood of trade barriers on imported solar products, 4) Tapping the brakes on tightened mileage standards that Obama had imposed for cars sold from 2022 to 2025 and 5) Actions designed to make federal lands more amenable to fossil fuel development.

Push to shutter coal plants gets another jolt: Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is at the Sierra Club's HQ this morning at 11:45 a.m. where he'll announce "an increased

commitment" to shutter the U.S. coal fleet even amid the repeal of the Clean Power Plan. That comes as the Union of Concerned Scientists released [an analysis](#) finding 21 percent of the nation's coal fleet uneconomic and an additional 18 percent already slated for retirement or conversion to natural gas.

Quotable: California Senate leader (and potential Sen. [Dianne Feinstein](#) primary challenger) Kevin de Lèon not mincing words on the withdrawal: "Washington's utter failure to confront the existential threat of climate change will go down among the most shameful chapters in US history," he [tweeted](#).

Here's where we are: EPA started the process to roll back the signature Obama-era effort to combat climate change even as the U.S. is reeling from back to back to back to back hits from hurricanes and ferocious wildfires slam California. Assuming a [disaster aid package](#) eventually clears Congress as expected, lawmakers will have spent more than \$50 billion responding to the natural disasters already, and House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) said last week "I do not believe this will be the last of the supplementals." Three weeks after Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, 84 percent of the island still lacks electricity and 36 percent of residents still don't have potable water, according to [official figures](#).

TIMELY TELEVISION VIEWING: "Frontline" titles its episode tonight "War on the EPA," as the PBS show focuses on Pruitt's rise from an anti-EPA crusader as Oklahoma attorney general to running the agency. Trailer for the episode [here](#).

WE'RE ROLLING RIGHT THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Independent Petroleum Association of America's Neal Kirby was first to identify Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#) as our most recent physician elected to the Senate. For today: Who is the only senator to win a reelection race in their 90s? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

SKI RESORTS, ALASKAN STEAKHOUSE, OH MY! Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke attended at least two additional political fundraisers during trips he took for official Interior business, Pro's Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre [scoop](#). Federal law permits Cabinet officials to participate in partisan political activities on their own time and without using any federal resources, but FEC records don't list any reimbursement payments to Interior for the events. "Both law and common sense tell us that taxpayer resources are supposed to be used when you're doing the taxpayers' business [but] are not supposed to be used to help candidates get elected," said Brendan Fischer of the nonprofit watchdog organization Campaign Legal Center.

The two events were:

— A mid-March fundraiser at a ski resort in Big Sky, Mont., organized by committees affiliated with Republican Sen. [Steve Daines](#). Donors were asked to contribute \$3,000 if they were attending on behalf of a political action committee or \$1,500 for an individual. Also in attendance: Sen. [John Hoeven](#) and Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#). He didn't charge for lodging or his per diem for part of the trip.

— A May 31 fundraiser for Alaskan Rep. [Don Young](#) where a Young campaign spokesman, Matt Shuckerow, said the secretary made "only very brief remarks." He said the campaign "took concerted efforts to follow" strict guidance from Interior's ethics personnel.

Interior's response: Spokeswoman Heather Swift said ethics officials signed off on all trips and they all complied with the law. "The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," she said.

NOT PLEASED: Amid weeks of reporting on non-commercial travel and other troubling behavior from Cabinet officials, the acting head of the Office of Governmental Ethics issued [a memo](#) warning he is "deeply concerned" by recent actions. Among the suggestions is "modeling a 'Should I do it?' mentality versus a 'Can I do it?' mentality" in their actions. "It is essential to the success of our republic that citizens can trust that your decisions and the decisions made by your agency are motivated by the public good and not by personal interests," David Apol wrote.

THE WOTUS WITH THE MOSTEST: The Supreme Court today will take up a wonky but important question central to federal water law: Should challenges to the Obama administration's Waters of the U.S. rule go through a district court first or straight to an appellate venue? Of course, the Trump administration is working to repeal WOTUS in the coming months and says it will issue a rewritten version early next year. But this venue question is all but guaranteed to apply again, meaning SCOTUS guidance could prove useful.

What you need to know: The Clean Water Act says that most CWA regulations and actions should be challenged first at the district level, but it lists seven exceptions that would go straight to a circuit court. Two are in play here: one regarding rules affecting effluent limitation guidelines, and one for any action approving or denying discharge permits. The Trump administration argues both exceptions apply, and the suits should go to a circuit court first. Various challengers, led by the National Association of Manufacturers, want it to go through district courts first.

History brief: After the rule was released, lawsuits were filed in both district and circuit courts throughout the country. After some district-level proceedings that led to a stay of WOTUS in 13 states only, the circuit-level cases were consolidated into one mega-case before the 6th Circuit, which then issued a nationwide injunction. The 6th Circuit then issued a complicated 1-1-1 ruling that concluded that it should indeed hear the challenge first. One judge said both exceptions apply, one said only one exception applies and the third said neither applies and the challenges should first go through district courts.

Why it matters: This isn't entirely an esoteric spat. Supporters of district-first litigation argue the Clean Water Act gives more time to challenge regulations that go to lower courts first. It also means challengers can pick the district court where they want to sue, whereas circuit-first challenges would be randomly consolidated. Meanwhile, those who want circuit-first review argue that it provides more certainty and helps avoid patchwork problems — such as the 13-state WOTUS freeze.

EPICALLY BUSY DAY AT HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES: The panel is slated to convene two separate hearings Wednesday to examine controversial measures on offshore drilling and the Antiquities Act:

— At 2 p.m., the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee considers [a draft](#) of the Accessing Strategic Resources Offshore Act, which would expand offshore revenue sharing program to additional states; prevent future presidents from withdrawing sections of the outer

continental shelf from drilling or designating marine sanctuaries; and repeal certain Obama-era rules on Arctic drilling, among other things. Witnesses include former Senate Energy Chairwoman Mary Landrieu.

— The full committee then gathers at 4 p.m. to mark up Chairman [Rob Bishop](#)'s long-awaited effort to overhaul the Antiquities Act. The bill, [H.R. 3990 \(115\)](#), would require a federal environmental review process to designate any monument more than 640 acres in size, require the sign off from local officials on new large monuments and prohibit marine national monuments "with no archeological or historic sites in need of protection." Committee members will also consider [a resolution](#) requiring Zinke to disclose more information about his review of existing national monument designations.

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

A NEW DISASTER EMERGES — CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES: Trump declared a major disaster in California Tuesday as wildfires have forced the evacuations of tens of thousands, cost at least 17 lives to date and caused billions in damage. "We are with you, our prayers are with you, and we will be with you every day until we put the fires out and stand with these families to rebuild these communities," Vice President Mike Pence said alongside McCarthy and Rep. [Jeff Denham](#) after a briefing Tuesday. Separately, California Sen. [Kamala Harris](#) and Feinstein asked Trump in [a letter](#) to take all steps to release federal aid "as soon as possible."

Ryan heading to Puerto Rico Friday: According to [multiple reports](#), Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) heads to Puerto Rico Friday along with [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#), the fourth-highest House Republican; Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#); top Appropriations Democrat [Nita Lowey](#) and Puerto Rico Resident Commissioner [Jenniffer González](#). That comes as the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico hired Williams & Jensen to lobby the federal government on disaster relief and recovery efforts (h/t [POLITICO Influence](#)). The White House late Tuesday asked for an additional \$4.9 billion in emergency hurricane aid to help Puerto Rico as part of a disaster funding package the House is still expected to consider this week, Pro Budget and Appropriation's Sarah Ferris [reports](#).

ON THE HOUSE FLOOR: Lawmakers today are slated to consider a bill of interest to ME fans. The Power And Security Systems Act [S. 190 \(115\)](#) would extend energy efficiency standards exemptions for external power devices and is slated to be considered under suspension of the rules, requiring two-thirds support for passage.

PROTESTING PERRY'S PUSH AT FERC: The Nuclear Information and Resource Service and allied organizations are greeting FERC employees today at 8:45 a.m. to protest Perry's push for new rules that "properly value" the coal and nuclear sectors. That comes as National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson sent Perry [a letter](#) thanking him for "jumpstarting a conversation" about the nation's electric markets.

DRINKING WATER UTILITIES ENTER FARM BILL FRAY: The American Water Works Association wants Congress to include provisions and funding to better protect drinking water sources from agricultural runoff, Pro Ag's Jenny Hopkinson [reports](#). The group is also pushing for "robust overall funding" for the conservation title — keeping it at \$6

billion, if not adding to the current allotment.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF WHERE ARE THEY NOW: With his red sweater, coal plant worker Ken Bone rose to national attention as an undecided voter during last year's presidential race but he's since become quite critical of the Trump administration, [CNN reports](#). "Almost anybody who is currently a Democrat in the Senate, I think I would probably vote for over Trump," he said.

DEPARTMENT OF AWKWARD TIMING: Perry gave an interview to the American Gas Association's magazine that prominently features a picture of the secretary with disgraced Rep. [Tim Murphy](#). Read his interview [here](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Keith Maley has started as director of PR at the Trust for Public Land. He previously was director of regional media in the Obama White House (h/t [Playbook](#)).

Liam Donovan has joined Bracewell's Policy Resolution Group as a lobbyist specializing in tax, infrastructure, energy and other issues. He comes from the Associated Builders and Contractors where he was as senior director of legislative and political affairs.

Amy Graham is starting next week as communications director for Sen. [Todd Young](#). She most recently worked as senior communications adviser and deputy associate administrator at the EPA (h/t [Playbook](#)).

QUICK HITS

— Hillary Clinton at UC Davis: Climate change a factor in Northern California wildfires. [First Coast News](#).

— IMF tells rich nations that greater urgency needed on climate change. [The Guardian](#).

— Foster Friess confirms interest in primarying 'hero' John Barrasso. [Washington Examiner](#).

— Colonial partners with Enterprise for fuel exports from Beaumont terminal. [Reuters](#).

— Despite some opposition from Los Angeles, giant Southern California water agency approves Delta tunnels project. [Sacramento Bee](#).

— Lake Erie algal bloom cleanup falling short of 40 percent phosphorus reduction goal. [Cleveland.com](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

8:45 a.m. — The Nuclear Information and Resource Service and allied organizations protest Perry's planned rules to benefit coal and nuclear sectors, FERC, 888 First Street NE

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee holds [hearing](#) on several bills, Longworth 1334

11:45 a.m. — Michael Bloomberg and other environmental advocates announce "new investment" to retire U.S. coal fleet, Sierra Club, 50 F St NW

12:00 p.m. — Reps. Bishop and Gosar discuss legislation revamping the Antiquities Act,

contact: katie.schoettler@mail.house.gov

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee holds [a hearing](#) on ASTRO Act, Longworth 1334

4:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources holds [markup](#) of Chairman Bishop's Antiquities Act reform, Longworth 1334

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/reading-the-tea-leaves-on-clean-power-plan-repeal-024987>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump administration takes ax to climate rule [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 10/10/2017 02:16 PM EDT

The Trump administration officially moved to kill the Obama-era climate change rule for power plants Tuesday, fulfilling a campaign pledge but setting off what is expected to be a bitter legal battle between the EPA and several states, health and environmental groups.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt signed an agency [proposal](#) to repeal the Clean Power Plan, which would have sped the nation's shift away from coal-burning power plants and toward renewable power and natural gas, which emits less planet-warming carbon dioxide. Less than a third of U.S. emissions come from the power sector, and the rule aimed to shrink them to about 15 percent below 2015 levels by 2030.

Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general who sued Obama's EPA over the rule, claims that it would have cost \$33 billion and is illegal because it pushed for a transition away from coal rather than directly limiting emissions from coal plants. EPA released a photo of Pruitt signing the document but did not hold a public event.

EPA is exploring writing a replacement that would let states set their own standards to require coal plants to run more efficiently, or burn less coal while producing the same amount of power. That would likely achieve few emissions reductions.

"The Obama administration pushed the bounds of their authority so far with the CPP that the Supreme Court issued a historic stay of the rule, preventing its devastating effects to be imposed on the American people while the rule is being challenged in court," Pruitt said in a press release. "We are committed to righting the wrongs of the Obama administration by cleaning the regulatory slate. Any replacement rule will be done carefully, properly, and with humility, by listening to all those affected by the rule."

The Trump administration has hailed the withdrawal as a victory for coal, but market experts say the outlook for the fuel is still dim.

"Withdrawing the Clean Power Plan won't clear the deck for new coal generation. The economics of natural gas and renewables are more favorable, now and in our future scenarios," Bloomberg New Energy Finance Policy Editor Steph Munro said.

During President Barack Obama's two terms, the fracking boom turned the U.S. into a natural gas super power, cutting the cost of the fuel by 75 percent and leading to a boom in natural gas-power generation, which tripled between 2009 and 2016, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Wind power also surged under Obama, tripling in capacity, while solar power grew from virtually zero to become the leading source of new power generation in 2016.

Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, said the withdrawal will give cooperatives, which are owned by customers rather than investors, flexibility to decide when to take coal plants offline. Those co-ops got 62 percent of their power from coal in 2016, compared to 71 percent just two years before, he said.

Still, Matheson wants EPA to write a replacement rule to provide business certainty to the utilities, although he acknowledged that process could take years.

"To the extent we can have a level of clarity over time about what the playing field looks like, that matters," he said. Many electricity companies believe that if Pruitt's EPA can write a replacement rule, it will be more difficult for a future administration to challenge than if he takes no action at all. Critics have contended that Pruitt plans to [slow-walk](#) the process.

Conservative groups praised the repeal, with lobbying group Americans for Prosperity saying it would prevent "dramatically higher" energy costs.

Health advocates say Trump's EPA is vastly overstating the costs of the rule while ignoring the impacts of climate change and other pollutants that come from coal plants, especially by declining [to count](#) the benefits of reducing those emissions in an analysis of the Clean Power Plan.

When EPA finalized the Clean Power Plan, the agency estimated that by 2030 it would annually prevent 3,600 premature deaths, 90,000 childhood asthma attacks and 1,700 heart attacks.

"These are not insignificant benefits, health effects," said Paul Billings, senior vice president of advocacy at the American Lung Association. "I don't necessarily agree with the dollar amount they place on the cost of a human life, but it does create a basis for doing comparisons across rules ... to translate those health effects into dollars costs."

More than half of states sued to stop the Clean Power Plan, and the Supreme Court in early 2016 stayed its implementation while a lower court considered the challenge.

EPA has been asking the court to withhold its decision about whether the rule was legal until the agency has had a chance to withdraw it and explore an alternative.

Tim Profeta, director of Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy

Solutions, said EPA is nixing the rule now to keep the court from issuing a decision.

"The court should decide the case that it has before it in order to clear up any dispute over the extent of EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants," Profeta said.

Since Trump's election, 14 green-leaning states have banded together as part of the Climate Alliance and said they will aim to curb emissions even without the federal government.

"We will push ahead and work with states that share our belief in science and the imperative to combat global warming," California Gov. Jerry Brown said.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee added that "Washington state is already feeling the harmful and costly effects of climate change — in more devastating wildfire seasons, strained water resources, increasingly acidic coastal waters, and more. And we are taking action to respond."

Inslee argued that "the United States Supreme Court has ruled on three separate occasions that the EPA has a responsibility, under the Clean Air Act and other federal laws, to protect American communities from harmful carbon pollution."

The Supreme Court in 2007 ruled that EPA would have authority to regulate carbon if the agency found it to be a danger to public health. EPA subsequently decided that carbon is a pollutant. For Pruitt to avoid climate regulations outright, he would have to fight that finding, which many legal experts say is a losing battle.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report

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EPA lays out options for replacement to Clean Power Plan [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 10/10/2017 02:06 PM EDT

EPA is considering allowing states to set their own efficiency standards for coal-fired power plants to replace the Obama administration climate regulation that would have imposed stricter pollution limits across the electricity sector, senior agency officials said during a conference call with conservative groups Tuesday.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has long argued that the Obama-era Clean Power Plan, which he proposed to withdraw Tuesday, was agency overreach because it set state carbon goals that would have forced a shift away from coal and toward natural gas and renewable power, rather than requiring changes solely at individual coal plants.

A [proposal](#) issued Tuesday raised the possibility of a coal plant-focused replacement, but the comments on the phone call give a clearer indication of what EPA is considering as a replacement.

EPA is proposing to return to its "traditional view of scope and authority" under the law, one

administration official said on the call, "which means we are going out to the facility and setting source-by-source specific standards.

"EPA has authority to set up a process. It is then the states that take that process and based on their source-by-source analysis and respective localized environmental characteristics set standards that are actually feasible and achievable," the official said on the call that POLITICO monitored.

That would "ensure that states can still make the decision to keep a diverse fuel supply," according to the official.

EPA plans to issue an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in a few weeks to take comment on crafting the replacement to the Clean Power Plan, officials said. EPA will also hold a public hearing and take comments for 60 days after the proposal signed Tuesday is published in the Federal Register, according to officials on Tuesday's call.

Another administration official described the Clean Power Plan as a "novel and expansive view of agency authority" that would have cost consumers \$33 billion and forced companies to shut down coal plants.

"Repealing the Clean Power Plan is another step advancing the president's America First strategy and is an example of President [Donald] Trump keeping his promises to the American people," the official said, hewing to [talking points](#) acquired by POLITICO on Oct. 7.

The officials on the conference call with more than a dozen participants heard from climate science opponents who urged the administration to convince Americans that, contrary to mainstream research, carbon dioxide does not cause global warming. And they called on EPA to fight the legal finding that requires it to write a replacement rule and regulate emissions.

"Eventually we really need to move to get rid of the endangerment ruling of the Supreme Court," said Jay Lehr, science director for the Heartland Institute, which argues that human activity does not affect the climate. "I think in order to do this in everything EPA does and the president does, we need to begin laying the groundwork for the American public to understand that carbon dioxide is not a contaminant. It is in fact why we live on this planet, it is a breath of life, it has no endangering aspects."

One official suggested Lehr file that idea as a comment in response to the agency's upcoming notice about replacing the Clean Power Plan.

"That will be especially beneficial for us to consider as we move forward," the official said.

Another questioner from Heartland, research fellow Sterling Burnett, suggested the Obama rule might have cost even more than the \$33 billion that Pruitt's EPA is contending, although that figure has been criticized as too high by former EPA officials and think tanks.

Burnett also urged EPA not to allow states like California to set higher climate standards than the federal government. The administration officials encouraged him to submit that idea to the agency in the comment-gathering period.

The official also noted that EPA's cost estimates were "interim" figures that might be adjusted.

A third administration official added that "if any stakeholders out there feel that the figures

presented in this proposal do not adequately reflect costs for one reason or another, that would be a very good thing I think to submit in comment because that may shape the analysis that's attached with any final action we may take on this proposed repeal."

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5 big things Trump is doing to reverse Obama's climate policies [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff | 10/10/2017 08:34 PM EDT

The Trump administration is gutting President Barack Obama's climate legacy with a series of moves designed to favor the fossil fuel industry while punishing solar and wind energy producers — and [Tuesday's proposal to repeal](#) an Environmental Protection Agency rule on power plants is just the most visible.

President Donald Trump's agencies have also taken steps toward buttressing coal's historically dominant role in the electricity markets, protecting it from rising competition from cleaner sources like natural gas and wind. The administration has opened the door to rolling back the stricter fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks that are due to take effect in 2022. And Trump's Interior Department is loosening Obama's limits on fossil fuel production on federal lands, while potentially clamping down on leases for wind and solar projects.

Also waiting in the wings is an upcoming trade decision that would allow Trump to sharply increase the cost of solar installations in the U.S. — eroding sun-powered electricity's ability to compete just as it weans itself off federal subsidies.

Trump's supporters say the steps are needed to protect jobs and American energy dominance. But clean-energy advocates say the actions imperil the planet's future.

"In the midst of flood and fire, our federal government is resolutely deciding to cover its eyes," said climate activist Bill McKibben, referring to the intense hurricanes and Western wildfires that have ravaged the U.S. "History will judge few things more harshly."

Here are five of the biggest U.S. energy policy shifts taking place under Trump:

1) Killing the power plant rule

The Clean Power Plan that the EPA is moving to revoke was the crown jewel of Obama's climate change legacy — representing the first time the U.S. had gone after the climate-warming pollution that's belched out of coal-fired power plants' smokestacks. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt — a former Oklahoma attorney general who had sued to block the regulation — [signed the paperwork](#) Tuesday to begin the long process of withdrawing the rule, fulfilling a Trump campaign promise.

The power plant rule sought to capitalize on the U.S. electric industry's shift away from coal and toward natural gas and renewables. The Obama EPA had estimated the rule would cut the power sector's carbon dioxide emissions 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. (The U.S. is

already more than halfway to that goal even without the rule.)

"This is a policy that the world wants and that makes sense because of market forces and a policy the world needs because, hello, we're seeing climate change effects on people every day," said Janet McCabe, Obama's former EPA air chief.

EPA's new repeal proposal echoes the coal industry's arguments — and Pruitt's previous legal filings — in contending that the Obama administration overstepped its authority.

Pruitt's agency is considering a potential replacement rule, but one that would yield much smaller emissions cuts. If that effort succeeds, a future Democratic administration could find itself barred from imposing significant regulations on greenhouse gases from other major polluting industries.

2) Securing coal's place in the markets

Energy Secretary Rick Perry issued a surprise directive last month aimed at altering the nation's electricity markets by giving an economic advantage to power plants that keep large fuel supplies on site — a move clearly aimed at helping the coal industry ward off increasingly stiff competition. (It would also benefit nuclear power, another economically struggling sector.)

Coal is the nation's most abundant power-plant fuel, but a combination of environmental regulations, huge surges in natural gas and wind-energy production and slumping demand for electricity have prompted power companies to [shutter](#) many coal-burning plants in the past decade. As recently as 2007, coal fueled more than half the electric power sector's net electricity generation — but as of this summer, that had fallen to less than a third.

Green-energy supporters say simple economics are spelling coal's demise — but Perry has argued that the trend puts the "resiliency" of the nation's power grid at risk, endangering national and economic security. His plan, if enacted by the independent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, would insulate coal and nuclear power plants from the low power prices that have put dozens of older plants into retirement.

DOE's proposal, according to one Montana utility regulator, would be "the largest change to electricity regulation in decades."

Critics say the rule could heap billions of dollars in additional energy costs on homes and businesses without a guarantee that they wouldn't lose power when the next hurricane rips out their power lines or a polar vortex freezes the pile of coal at a power plant.

But that decision will ultimately fall to the five commissioners of FERC, an agency made up largely of technocrats that has long sought to safeguard the energy markets. The markets aren't perfect, but Perry's rule is "a draconian way of fixing it," said Pat Wood, a former FERC chief who was appointed by President George W. Bush.

3) Launching a solar trade war?

A vote by a federal trade panel last month will allow Trump to impose tariffs or a quota on imported solar panels that make up the vast majority of the fast-growing U.S. renewables

market — if he chooses to.

The decision by the U.S. International Trade Commission agreed with bankrupt solar manufacturers Suniva and SolarWorld that the low-cost imports had harmed U.S.-based producers. Now, people following the case expect that Trump will slap trade barriers on the imported solar equipment, which is largely produced by Chinese-based companies at factories across Asia.

Those barriers would help the small number of U.S.-based solar manufacturers that remain in existence but could send costs skyrocketing and hurt the much larger solar installation industry. It would also threaten to end the U.S. solar boom, which saw the technology become the country's biggest source of new power generation last year for the first time ever.

With the help of federal subsidies, which will be fully phased out by 2020, the solar industry has slashed costs far faster than predicted and grown more rapidly than expected. But the production of cells and panels has shifted to countries like Malaysia, Vietnam and South Korea.

The ITC will send its recommendations for trade remedies to Trump by Nov. 13 — though the White House can ultimately implement any barrier it chooses. That has solar installers and project developers in a panic, and many are [stockpiling panels](#) ahead of possible tariffs. The Solar Energy Industries Association is predicting up to 88,000 job losses, or nearly a third of the U.S. sector. And if domestic manufacturing ramps over the next year, 2018 is [likely to see supply shortfalls and price spikes](#) as production fails to catch even reduced demand.

4) Hitting the brakes on fuel economy

Trump announced in March that EPA would reconsider the tightened mileage standards that Obama had imposed for cars sold from 2022 to 2025, a move the former president's agencies had said would lift the average to about 50 miles per gallon. Trump's agency is expected to roll back the requirements.

In a review hastened to completion just before Obama left office, then-EPA chief Gina McCarthy affirmed that the aggressive mileage standard was feasible.

Trump's decision to review the target came amid pressure from U.S. automakers to cut back the standards, but it could backfire. The Clean Air Act includes an exception for California to set its own mileage standards, and if EPA changes the requirements, it won't affect California or the 11 other states that follow the Golden State's lead. For automakers, it opens up the nightmare scenario of producing cars for two different U.S. standards.

5) Opening federal lands to fossil fuels

Trump's Interior Department is seeking to boost oil, gas and coal production by taking a hatchet to Obama-era regulations that govern fossil fuel production on public land. One of the biggest moves so far would reverse Obama's tightened restrictions on leaks of planet-warming methane from drilling wells, pipelines and other infrastructure.

Interior also said it would postpone and rewrite a controversial Obama administration rule that requires drillers to publicly disclose the chemicals they used to frack wells on federal land,

among other things.

Interior also has scuttled a review that probably would likely have increased the royalties that coal companies must pay to mine on federal land. And in August, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke recommended that Trump shrink the size of several national monuments in Utah, Oregon and Nevada, a move that would potentially open them up for drilling or mining. Zinke is aiming to lift restrictions on grazing, mining, fishing and timber harvesting at those and a handful of other monuments.

Besides fighting against previous rules, Interior is trying to take steps it says will increase oil production off the Alaskan coasts and in the long-protected Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Darius Dixon, Ben Lefebvre, Emily Holden and Esther Whieldon contributed to this report.

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Zinke's travels: Ski resort and Alaskan steakhouse [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre | 10/10/2017 07:32 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has attended at least two additional political fundraisers while traveling for official business, including a weekend ski getaway less than three weeks after he was sworn in that donors paid up to \$3,000 to attend, according to sources and documents reviewed by POLITICO.

Zinke's previously undisclosed attendance at the events adds to scrutiny he is facing over his habit of mixing political activities with official business when traveling outside of Washington, D.C., and to questions over travel expenses incurred by members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet. In addition to the fundraisers, Zinke has held at least a half-dozen other events with big donors or influential conservative organizations while on official trips.

Zinke, a former Montana congressman who became secretary March 1, started his fundraising appearances even before attending a March 30 Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser in St. Croix that POLITICO [reported](#) last week, at which donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with him. The Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel, which is investigating Zinke's use of travel and political activities in office, has been asked by a watchdog group to look into his appearance there.

In the first of the newly disclosed appearances, Zinke attended a mid-March fundraiser at a ski resort in Big Sky, Montana, organized by committees affiliated with Republican Sen. [Steve Daines](#), according to two attendees who saw him there. And in May, Zinke briefly stopped by a fundraiser for GOP Rep. Don Young at a steakhouse in Anchorage, Alaska, a spokesman for Young's campaign told POLITICO.

All three fundraisers occurred on trips that Zinke took for official Interior Department business. The Hatch Act and other federal laws allow Cabinet secretaries to participate in partisan political activities only if they do so on their own time and do not use any governmental resources. Federal Election Commission records for the campaign committees

do not list any reimbursement payments to Interior for the events.

"Both law and common sense tell us that taxpayer resources are supposed to be used when you're doing the taxpayers' business [but] are not supposed to be used to help candidates get elected," said Brendan Fischer of the nonprofit watchdog organization Campaign Legal Center.

An Interior Department spokeswoman did not respond to specific questions about Zinke's attendance at the events nor whether the campaigns reimbursed Interior for any of his travel expenses, but she said ethics officials sign off on the secretary's trips and all of them comply with the law.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Other guests attending the Montana fundraiser included Sens. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), according to an invitation to the March 17-19 event [posted by a local political blog](#) earlier that month. Donors were asked to contribute \$3,000 if they were attending on behalf of a political action committee or \$1,500 for an individual. Another invitation for events that weekend obtained by POLITICO sought donations as low as \$500 to attend two dinners for Daines.

Hoeven hosted his own reception Friday night before the Daines dinner and a lunch Saturday, according to a campaign invitation obtained by POLITICO, which also informed guests that they could purchase "discounted ski lift tickets" at the resort.

Zinke was not named on the invitations, but his official schedule lists him as attending a "welcoming reception" for Daines on Friday night, spending "personal time with Senator Murkowski" at Big Sky Resort on Saturday and attending a "reception & dinner" for Daines that evening.

Two sources who attended the Daines fundraiser recalled seeing Zinke there. One of the sources, a lobbyist, said Zinke attended the Friday night social and the breakfast buffet the next day. The lobbyist said that when Daines introduced Zinke, the Montana senator mentioned that Zinke was the state's first Cabinet secretary.

The Hatch Act bars Zinke from taking part in political events while acting in his official role as Interior secretary, which includes being identified by his title in invitations. But Richard Painter, a University of Minnesota professor and former White House chief ethics lawyer under President George W. Bush, said Daines referring to Zinke's Cabinet position doesn't appear to violate the law.

Zinke "should take reasonable steps to make sure people aren't using his official title" and not use the title himself at political events, Painter said. "But I don't know that he has an obligation to jump in and tell the senator he can't do that."

The secretary spent most of the day that Friday touring Yellowstone National Park, which the Interior Department manages through the National Park Service. He did not have any other official events listed on his schedule for Saturday and flew back to Washington, D.C., on

Sunday.

A [report](#) posted by Interior on Zinke's March travel expenses shows that he claimed 75 percent of his per diem that Friday and did not claim any lodging or reimbursements over that weekend, which he took as personal days off. He did fly home on official taxpayer-funded travel, however.

The Young fundraiser occurred May 31, when Zinke was in Anchorage for a speech to the Alaska Oil and Gas Association's annual conference, where he signed a secretarial order for an updated assessment of how much oil exists in part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The invitation to the reception, a copy of which was obtained by political blog [Must Read Alaska](#) and shared with POLITICO, does not list Zinke as a special guest, nor does it say how much donors had to contribute to attend.

FEC records for the Alaskans for Don Young campaign committee show it received \$9,800 in campaign contributions from individuals and political action committees on that day.

Young's campaign spokesman, Matt Shuckerow, said in an email that Zinke made "only very brief remarks" at the event, and that the campaign did not confirm his attendance in advance and did not require guests to pay to attend. "Not only did the campaign seek out the guidance of the Interior Department's ethics personnel prior to the event, it took concerted efforts to follow their strict guidance," Shuckerow said. He did not say whether the campaign reimbursed the Interior Department for any costs associated with Zinke's trip.

Zinke's calendar for that day includes a brief stop at Sullivan's Steakhouse in Anchorage, the same venue listed on the invitation, for a "Rep. Don Young Reception." Later that night, Zinke went to dinner with representatives of sportsmen's groups, according to his schedule.

The Anchorage stop came in the middle of a weeklong trip that included the use of a military plane to fly from Washington, D.C., to Norway, Greenland and then Alaska. Interior paid for Zinke and three Interior staff members to take the flight. Zinke's wife, Lola, also accompanied him on the trip but reimbursed the government for the cost of her seat, Interior has said.

In both of the newly disclosed appearances, Zinke did not pose for photos with high-dollar donors, as had been the case with the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser. POLITICO's report on Zinke's appearance in that photo line led Walter Shaub, a former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics who is now with the Campaign Legal Center, to ask the Office of Special Counsel to open [a Hatch Act investigation](#). The OSC typically opens investigations in response to complaints it receives, but a spokesman declined to comment on the status of Shaub's request.

Still, some watchdogs question whether Zinke is focused enough on his day job given how much attention he has paid to politics.

"There's always the risk that a high-level government official spending more time involved in political events may not be attending to their official duties," said Nick Schwellenbach, director of investigations at Project On Government Oversight.

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White House seeks \$4.9B to shore up Puerto Rico finances [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 10/10/2017 07:11 PM EDT

The Trump administration today sought an additional \$4.9 billion in emergency hurricane aid to stave off what Puerto Rico's governor recently warned could become a fiscal catastrophe.

The OMB sent a formal request to House leadership this afternoon, revising its most recent recovery package request to nearly \$35 billion.

The extra \$4.9 billion would "address the immediate liquidity issue that Puerto Rico is having," OMB spokesman John Czwartacki told POLITICO. It would allow the island government to make its payroll and fund pensions amid its worst natural disaster in decades.

The White House's request exceeds the \$4 billion request from Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló last week, though it would be delivered in the form of a loan, rather than a grant.

In his letter to the White House, Rosselló warned that Puerto Rico's government needed an immediate cash infusion.

"In addition to the immediate humanitarian crisis, Puerto Rico is on the brink of a massive liquidity crisis that will intensify in the immediate future," the governor [wrote](#) to the White House.

The loan funds would likely be added to the storm recovery package that the House is expected to approve this week.

The House Appropriations Committee has received and is reviewing the request, a GOP aide confirmed.

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Drinking water utilities push for farm bill water protections [Back](#)

By Jenny Hopkinson | 10/10/2017 07:17 PM EDT

The American Water Works Association — a group representing drinking water utilities — is urging lawmakers to include in the next farm bill provisions and funding to better protect drinking water sources from agricultural runoff.

Tracy Mehan, AWWA's executive director of government affairs, said the group is getting more involved in the farm bill process than in years past in light of high-profile instances of utilities' source water being contaminated by nitrate and other agriculture-related pollutants — including the Des Moines Water Works' unsuccessful challenge of upstream counties over farm runoff and the algal bloom that shut down Toledo's water supply in 2014.

AWWA is asking lawmakers to include "robust overall funding" for the conservation title — keeping it at \$6 billion, if not adding to the current allotment. The group also wants farm bill conservation programs to prioritize protection of drinking water, increase benefits to farmers for practices that safeguard source water, and ensure at least 10 percent of conservation funds are devoted to water-quality efforts.

"We need to sensitize USDA and the relevant committees to the importance of public health" and the issues that arise from farm runoff and chemicals that make their way into bodies of water, Mehan said. For example, nitrogen, a key ingredient in fertilizer, can cause developmental problems and pose cancer risks if present at high levels in drinking water. [A report](#) earlier this year from the Environmental Working Group found the contaminant to be present in the drinking water of 218 million Americans.

While conservation programs already address water-quality issues, Mehan said AWWA's focus is to get more resources and reporting aimed at potable water sources. "We assume that a lot of the money that they are spending already is probably useful and could be legitimately categorized as [being spent on] source water protection; we would just like to be more specific and track it," Mehan said of his group's requests.

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Date: Thursday, November 09, 2017 5:43:31 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/09/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden and Eric Wolff

HELP'S ON THE WAY: The Senate is expected to confirm William Wehrum today at 11:30 a.m. to run EPA's air office, sending Administrator Scott Pruitt a key, if controversial, lieutenant as he embarks on a sweeping agenda to roll back a host of Obama-era air regulations. Barring any huge surprises (the cloture vote was [along party-lines](#)), Wehrum is expected to receive unanimous Republican backing and universal Democratic opposition.

Al Franken made a candid hot mic comment during the cloture vote. Watch [here](#).

Pressure to testify ramps up: With help on the way to the agency, look for Congress to further lean on Pruitt to return for oversight hearings. House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#) told reporters he's personally told Pruitt within the past two weeks that he needs to appear before the committee. "I know that I said, 'You know you're eventually going to have to come before the committee, and the sooner you do it the better,'" he said. "He was quiet." House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) said in [a letter](#) his staff was working on finding "a mutually convenient time" for Pruitt to come. From ME's perspective, Hill Republicans may have to do more than nicely ask for Pruitt to appear.

Speaking of Pruitt, a tipster tells ME they spotted the administrator in first class on a flight from D.C. to Detroit on Wednesday morning. An agency spokeswoman wouldn't say where he was going or what he was doing once he arrived.

Hey, EPA: That's not how this works. Pruitt is a Cabinet official, not a private citizen. His responsibilities include testifying before Congress regularly, and the public has a right to know where he is on a given day. Unlike Pruitt, other Cabinet officials — including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross (even President Donald Trump himself) — regularly provide their daily schedules in advance.

So where is he today? Pruitt's [slated](#) to meet with the American Chemistry Council's board of directors for 2-1/2 hours on Kiawah Island, S.C.

IF IT'S THURSDAY, ME'S HERE FOR YOU! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and EPA deputy nominee Andrew Wheeler was first (on the morning of his confirmation hearing!) to identify that Sen. Shelley Moore Capito's father, Arch Moore, served three terms as West Virginia governor before legal troubles ended his career. For today: Which former lawmaker left the House to become a public works commissioner? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ANWR LEGISLATION RELEASED: Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) released a

four-page reconciliation [package](#) late Wednesday that would open Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and gas drilling. According to the CBO, the measure would net \$1.092 billion over the 10-year budget while limiting development to 2,000 acres of federal land. The release allows the committee to move on to [a markup](#) on Nov. 15. Efforts to open ANWR to drilling are staunchly opposed by Democrats, including Ranking Member [Maria Cantwell](#), and environmental advocates. Remember instructions in the budget resolution, [H. Con. Res. 71](#), require Murkowski's committee to raise \$1 billion in revenue over the next decade.

Hot docs: Text of the chairman's mark [here](#). Summary of the mark [here](#). Map of the area under consideration [here](#).

NEW EAST V. WEST BEEF: Energy Secretary Rick Perry's grid resiliency push to boost the coal and nuclear sectors is casting a brighter light on the ever-expanding divide between the coal industry's Appalachian mines and Wyoming's Powder River Basin, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). And though the Trump administration has paid close attention to boosting the fortunes of Appalachia in its early months, experts say the industry's future appears brighter out West. "The industry recognizes it's just a fact of geology and Mother Nature and economics," said analyst Michael Dudas of Vertical Research Partners. "Over the past decades, the mix has certainly gone away from Appalachia towards the Powder River Basin."

Eastern and Western coal states have been on different trajectories for decades, with 56 percent of U.S. coal production in 2015 coming from the Western region and just 25 percent from Appalachia. Western coal is easier to access and reserves are so abundant that companies were able to absorb an Obama-era moratorium on new leases largely unfazed. "In the grand scheme of things, economically, we're the better bet for a utility," Travis Deti, executive director of the Wyoming Mining Association, said.

But the nostalgia factor: Appalachia is the nation's sole producer of metallurgical coal, high-grade fuel used to make steel and other metals and is better-positioned to export its coal. But beyond those factors, it continues to occupy an overwhelming cultural and political presence in parts of the country. "Our advantage is we have the best coal miners in the world and we got probably some of the best coal in the world right here. The Lord blessed us in that standpoint," Bill Raney, president of the West Virginia Coal Association, said.

NUCLEAR WASTE BILL HITS NEW HURDLE: A dispute between Shimkus and House Appropriators over how money from the Nuclear Waste Fund is spent must be resolved before a [bipartisan](#) nuclear waste bill can hit the floor, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). At issue is mandatory spending in the Shimkus bill that would go to operating costs related to Yucca Mountain and additional payments through a "benefits agreement" with the state of Nevada. Current law has Congress dole out monies from the fund during the annual appropriations process and lawmakers on that panel don't want to cede that power. "My frustration is that we are serious but the appropriators, right now, are still wedded to a year-to-year process," Shimkus told Darius.

It's a pile-on! Even if the bill gets out of the House, there's been little appetite to move on the issue in the Senate where leadership doesn't want to put vulnerable Nevada Republican Sen. [Dean Heller](#) in a tough spot. "Senate Republicans have made it clear they don't want to move forward on Yucca Mountain because it could hurt Sen. Heller," a senior Senate aide said. Heller said in an interview — with a smile — he'd been pushing Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) to keep Yucca funding out of the next spending package. "I think we'll get there," he added.

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

HOW ABOUT A MEETING? The Senate's number two Democrat has [no plans](#) to lift his hold on multiple Interior nominees until Secretary Ryan Zinke meets with his office about his review of national monument designations, your ME host [reports](#). "A meeting, how about that for a radical idea?" Sen. [Dick Durbin](#) told ME when asked what it would take to lift the holds. "We asked the secretary to meet with us and he won't do it." Zinke demanded the senators "lift the random and senseless holds" in [a tweet](#) late Wednesday.

ROUGH WATERS FOR CORPS NOMINEE? Rickey Dale "R.D." James, Trump's pick to run the Army Corps of Engineers, is likely to face scrutiny today before the Armed Services Committee over what critics say are his conflicts of interests, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). His thousands of acres of valuable Missouri farmland lie within the New Madrid floodway, a relief-valve channel that can be used to divert floodwaters from the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. James, a long-time member of the powerful Mississippi River Commission, has admitted to being conflicted about flooding the area because of his ties there. "I could not displace from my mind what the decision would mean to my friends and neighbors," James [told](#) the Defense Media Network in 2012.

His defenders include both of Mississippi's senators — [Thad Cochran](#) and [Roger Wicker](#) — and major waterways groups. Once he clears the Armed Services Committee, he will go through another hearing and vote before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The [session](#) gavel in at 10 a.m. in Dirksen G-50.

OLD KING COAL: Michael Bloomberg and Bloomberg Philanthropies today will [announce](#) a \$50 million cash infusion to launch the Europe Beyond Coal campaign to reduce the continent's dependence on coal energy. Done in partnership with the European Climate Foundation and a sister campaign on ongoing U.S efforts, both groups plan a Nov. 11 event on the sidelines of the UN's COP23 to discuss their new push.

Taking stock: As the climate confab in Bonn continues, a [new analysis](#) from Data-Driven Yale finds nearly 15,000 subnational and non-state actors have set close to 100,000 goals to curb climate change. The researchers synthesized information from 17 platforms and organizations, finding that more than 7,000 cities representing 17 percent of the world's population have climate targets. Most (5,831) are in Europe, and 554 are in North America. The study identified climate commitments from about 6,225 companies and investors with \$36.5 trillion in revenue, and from 34 of the world's 57 largest banks, as well as 700 U.S. colleges and universities

HYDROPOWERING THROUGH: The House voted 257 to 166 on Wednesday to approve the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act [H.R. 3043 \(115\)](#) revamping the permitting process for hydropower projects. "This bill won't change outcomes or environmental standards. Instead, it will speed up the relicensing process and save time and money," bill sponsor Rep. [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) said in a statement. Twenty-six Democrats backed the measure, while three Republicans voted against it.

BISHOP'S 'DISAPPOINTED' BY PREPA'S ABSENCE: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) told ME he's "disappointed" but not surprised the head of Puerto Rico's utility backed out of a congressional hearing earlier this week. "They would have had to face all the questions about Whitefish, so I kind of understand why they didn't necessarily want to be there," he said. "If we're trying to solve the problem, spending a lot of time on Whitefish would be fun but not necessarily essential with moving forward."

FIGURE IT OUT: Democratic Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Michael Bennet](#) asked FERC in a Wednesday [letter](#) to reverse course and include the social cost of carbon as part of its review of pipeline projects. They included a point-by-point rebuttal of a recent draft FERC analysis in which the commission said it would not include the figure estimating societal costs of carbon pollution in its analyses.

ATLANTIC SUNRISE CAN PROCEED: A three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit denied a request Wednesday from community and environmental groups to halt construction of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline while a broader challenge to FERC approval of the project proceeds, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). "Petitioners have not satisfied the stringent requirements for a stay pending court review," the court said in [its order](#).

MAIL CALL! THANKS, MR. PRESIDENT! A group of advanced biofuel producers, including ethanol giants Archer Daniels Midland and POET, sent a [letter](#) to Trump thanking him for past support of the ethanol industry and asking him to make sure advanced biofuel volumes are raised from proposed levels. "Mr. President, we very much appreciate your ongoing commitment to the biofuels industry and the Americans who work every day to produce biofuels and other bio-based, agricultural products," the letter says.

Hey, House, lay off our wind tax credit: Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo and South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard are asking House tax writers to lay off changes to the wind tax credit. In a [letter](#) to Ways & Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) and ranking member [Richard Neal](#), the pair, who are also the current and past chairmen of the Governors Wind and Solar Energy Coalition, say the bill should drop its provisions that change how wind projects qualify and that eliminate an inflation adjustment. Fifteen House members, led by Rep. [David Young](#), made a similar plea in their [own letter](#) Wednesday.

Not sold: A group of 17 environmental and public health groups sent a [letter](#) to the House on Wednesday strongly opposing the chamber's tax package, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). "The plan puts at risk our clean energy future by preserving tax breaks for dirty energy sources while slashing them for cleaner forms of energy," the letter, signed by groups like the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club and Oil Change International, says. "And if the tax plan itself weren't harmful enough, it is also being packaged in the Senate with unrelated, controversial legislation that hands over the pristine and sacred Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to exploitation by Big Oil."

Energy research can be fun(ded)! A group of business leaders sent a [letter](#) to top House and Senate appropriators urging robust energy research funding. "Ensuring America stays at the forefront of global energy technology research is both an economic and security imperative," the letter, signed by leaders including Southern Co's Tom Fanning, ClearPath's Jay Faison and the U.S. Chamber's Thomas Donohue, says.

GOOD YEAR FOR PARKS: The Trust for Public Land ran the numbers and voters around the country approved \$1.5 billion in local and state ballot measures for parks and conservation.

Twenty-six of the 30 local park and open space measures passed. "At a time when Americans seem to be increasingly divided, one thing we all agree on is that we love our parks, whatever our political party," Will Rogers, the group's president, said in a statement.

TAKE A GLANCE! Energy In Depth, a research program of the Independent Petroleum Association of America, is launching [a website](#) today pushing back on claims made by the #ExxonKnew campaign.

QUICK HITS

- How Coal Giant Peabody's Ideas Ended Up in Trump's Coal Study. [Bloomberg](#).
- Coal-fired plant shifted \$1bn offshore while pocketing \$117m from Australian taxpayers. [The Guardian](#).
- End may be nearing for Diablo Canyon nuclear plant. [San Francisco Chronicle](#).
- Shell Enchilada oil platform in Gulf of Mexico shut after fire. [Reuters](#).
- Homeland nominee questions human role in climate change. [AP](#).
- California Gov. Jerry Brown delivers a blunt climate change message in Germany. [Los Angeles Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:15 a.m. — "[Heavy-Duty Innovation: Energy, Automation & Tech in the Trucking Sector](#)," Securing America's Future Energy, The Loft at 600 F, 600 F Street Northwest

9:30 a.m. — ITC hearing on countervailing and anti-dumping duty investigations into Argentine and Indonesian biodiesel, 500 E St., SW

9:30 a.m. — "[What Lessons Can Be Learned from Power Africa?](#)" Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

10:00 a.m. — Various nomination [hearing](#), including head of the Army Corps of Engineers, Senate Armed Services Committee, Dirksen G-50

10:15 a.m. — "[H.R.____, Farm Regulatory Certainty Act](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2322

11:00 a.m. — FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee holds discussion with Platts reporters and other credentialed press, S&P Global Platts Washington office, 1200 G St., NW, Ste. 1000

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/11/senate-expected-to-send-pruitt-an-air-chief-today-025463>

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Wehrum clears cloture hurdle [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/08/2017 05:30 PM EDT

The Senate invoked cloture on William Wehrum's nomination to run EPA's air office, leaving just one final vote until Administrator Scott Pruitt lands his first lieutenant.

The vote was 49-46 along party lines.

It's been an arduous process for Wehrum, a veteran of the George W. Bush Office of Air and Radiation in EPA. A vote in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee was [briefly delayed](#) due to Republican concerns over the agency's plans for the Renewable Fuel Standard.

Democrats and environmental groups oppose his selection. During his confirmation hearing, Wehrum said the degree that human activity drives climate change remains an "[open question](#)," contradicting mainstream science.

WHAT'S NEXT: A final vote on the nomination is likely sometime on Thursday.

To view online [click here](#).

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Nuclear waste bill clears House committee with bipartisan backing [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/28/2017 12:05 PM EDT

The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved nuclear waste reform legislation this morning on a bipartisan 49-4 vote, facing only a handful of Democratic holdouts.

The bill, H.R. 3053, sponsored by E&C Environment Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#), would make the first changes in 30 years to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which names Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole waste repository.

The committee agreed to a compromise [manager's amendment](#) that would let DOE open one interim storage facility while regulators continue to work on a permanent repository. That eliminated most of the [Democratic objections](#) to a draft version of the bill that would have barred such work until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued a decision on Yucca Mountain.

Yucca Mountain supporters have been concerned that a storage site would take the pressure off of approving a repository. Meanwhile, lawmakers have been anxious to move the waste building up at defunct nuclear power plants in their states.

Another [bipartisan amendment](#), also approved on a voice vote, removed the bill's original language impacting Nevada's water rights and air permitting. The amendment would also increase Yucca's capacity from 70,000 metric tons to 110,000 metric tons.

The bill also authorizes payments to host states and limits work on any defense waste-only repository.

New Jersey Rep. [Frank Pallone](#), the top Democrat on E&C, said that the bill was "a delicate and difficult negotiation, but I believe we have arrived at a very good compromise."

WHAT'S NEXT: Shimkus has said he expects the bill to get a vote by the full House before the August recess, but GOP leaders have not yet scheduled floor time for the bill.

To view online [click here](#).

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Shimkus: Nuclear waste bill mired in dispute with appropriators [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/08/2017 06:10 PM EDT

Rep. [John Shimkus](#) is in the midst of a face-off with members of the powerful Appropriations Committee over language in his [bipartisan](#) nuclear waste bill that would limit their say in how money from the Nuclear Waste Fund is spent.

The Illinois Republican's bill, [H.R. 3053](#), would authorize the Energy Department to open one interim storage facility while regulators review plans to permanently house it at Yucca Mountain, which would be expanded in size. But the measure also sets aside mandatory spending from the fund, an account amassed from fees on nuclear-generated electricity that was [valued](#) at \$46 billion last year.

Mandatory spending in the Shimkus bill includes operating costs related to Yucca Mountain and additional payments through a "benefits agreement" with the state of Nevada. Under existing law, Congress spends money from the fund through annual appropriations bills, a process that allowed Democrats to block required regulatory reviews of Yucca Mountain for the last several years.

"We want to be able to send a signal to not just DOE to move forward and that there's going to be some consistent funding, but we also want to send a signal to the state of Nevada that if there's going to be an agreement on benefits that that's not at the whim of a year-to-year process," Shimkus told POLITICO on Wednesday. "My frustration is that we are serious but the appropriators, right now, are still wedded to a year-to-year process."

GOP leadership "wants us to resolve this conflict" before bringing the bill to the floor, Shimkus said.

Given the fund's \$46 billion value last year, Shimkus' bill would permit DOE to spend at least \$500 million annually for the construction and operation of a Yucca Mountain facility as well as payments to Nevada for hosting "without further appropriation."

Shimkus said the negotiations with appropriators over his bill are separate from the omnibus spending bill lawmakers need to address next month, making it difficult to estimate when the conflict might be resolved.

The showdown is only the latest hurdle for long-suffering nuclear advocates who want the U.S. to establish a permanent waste repository.

Even if Shimkus and the appropriators resolve their differences on his bill, the Senate has shown little appetite this year for addressing a permanent nuclear waste repository, despite the retirement of former Democratic Leader Harry Reid, Yucca Mountain's No. 1 foe. Nevada Republican [Dean Heller](#), who faces one of the toughest reelection fights next year, has become the biggest roadblock in the upper chamber. The House included \$150 million to restart Yucca in its fiscal 2018 spending bill for the Energy Department and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but the Senate did not follow suit and seems unlikely to go along with including the funds in an omnibus.

"Senate Republicans have made it clear they don't want to move forward on Yucca Mountain because it could hurt Sen. Heller," a senior Senate aide said.

Sen. [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.), who chairs the appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over Yucca, acknowledged in a recent interview that Heller is "a well-respected, influential U.S. senator, so his views will be paid attention to by lots of senators," but that it was too soon to tell how a final deal would shake out.

Heller himself wouldn't say whether he'd secured any assurances from Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) to keep new Yucca funds out of the next spending law. "I keep urging it," he said with a smile. "I think we'll get there."

The Senate is "not passionate about this," said Tim Peckinpaugh, a partner at K&L Gates, a law firm that was involved with the lawsuits that sued to force the federal government to continue work on the Yucca Mountain application. "I don't see a John Shimkus in the Senate," he said. "He has passion and incredible persistence on this issue. But I do see broad-based support. I'm convinced that if there's an up-or-down vote in the Senate, it would pass by big numbers — more than 60 — and I think both sides know that, quite frankly."

Simply looking at the map of where the commercial and defense nuclear waste destined for a site like Yucca Mountain currently sits, logical supporters of the new funding would include members of the Senate Democratic leadership like Sens. [Chuck Schumer](#) of New York, [Dick Durbin](#) of Illinois and [Patty Murray](#) of Washington.

But Sen. [Catherine Cortez Masto](#) (D-Nev.), like Heller, opposes Yucca in line with the rest of her state's congressional delegation. And she's convinced that Schumer, the Senate minority leader, won't support new cash for the project next month.

"I don't anticipate that there's going to be any funding," she said. "I've talked to my leadership about it. ... Sen. Schumer is opposed to it."

To view online [click here](#).

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Durbin freezes Interior nominees over monument review [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/08/2017 04:17 PM EDT

Senate Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#) said in [a letter](#) today that he's placed a hold on multiple Interior nominees until the agency responds to an earlier October letter concerning his review of national monument designations.

"I remain hopeful that a meeting can be scheduled in the near future to discuss these important issues," he wrote to Micah Chambers, acting director of Interior's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs. "Please let the Secretary know that while my colleagues and I await his scheduling decision, my holds on Department of Interior nominees will continue."

In that previously unreleased October [letter](#), Sens. [Tom Udall](#), [Martin Heinrich](#) and [Jeff Merkley](#) and Durbin asked Zinke to meet with Durbin's office to explain his recommendations to shrink several national monuments created under the Antiquities Act by prior administrations.

They also requested maps, documentation and justifications for those recommendations and called for his report to be released publicly.

Zinke sent a letter earlier today to Senate leadership demanding "[immediate action](#)" on multiple Interior nominations that have been held up for months.

WHAT'S NEXT: Durbin said his hold on the nominees will continue until Zinke agrees to a meeting.

To view online [click here](#).

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Army Corps nominee to face scrutiny over Mississippi River project [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 06:36 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's pick to run the Army Corps of Engineers, Rickey Dale "R.D." James, is likely to draw some scrutiny on Thursday over what critics complain is his conflict of interest over a controversial Mississippi River flood control project.

James, a civil engineer by training, was recommended to Trump by Sens. [Thad Cochran](#) (R-Miss.) and [Roger Wicker](#) (R-Miss.) to head the agency with a \$6 billion budget that takes the lead on major water infrastructure projects across the U.S.

The pair were impressed by James' 36 years sitting on the Mississippi River Commission, which along with the Corps oversees water projects on the nation's biggest river and its many tributaries.

"He has been a friend to Mississippi in terms of supporting projects and policies to improve navigation and flood control in our state," Cochran said in a statement.

Cochran chairs the Appropriations Committee and thus exercises great power over the Army Corps' budget, while Wicker is a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, which will host Thursday's hearing.

Major waterway groups are pleased as well.

"Given his tenure on the Mississippi River Commission, he really has an in-depth knowledge of the Corps of Engineers and the importance of investing in infrastructure," said Amy Larson of the National Waterways Conference.

But James' critics say he used his position on the powerful commission to protect his own interests, which include thousands of acres of valuable Missouri farmland sitting inside a controversial floodway.

"He has a long history of advocating for environmentally devastating and costly projects that benefit a handful of special interests," said Melissa Samet, a water attorney at the National Wildlife Federation. "And a lot of that advocacy has been carried out despite what we see as a clear conflict of interest with his position at the Mississippi River Commission."

James and his wife own New Madrid farmland worth between \$2.5 million and \$11 million, according to his [financial disclosure](#). Some of that land is rented out via a family limited partnership. If confirmed to the Army Corps post, James has promised to hand over control of the farmland and a company he owns to his son, although he will still receive crop rent income.

James' farmland lies squarely within the New Madrid floodway, a relief-valve channel that can be used to divert floodwaters from the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. But using the floodway — as has happened twice in the last 90 years — means damaging James' farm and the land of other politically powerful landholders.

Following the most recent flooding in 2011, the Army Corps delayed blowing out a levee that would activate the floodway, and the state even sued in an attempt to stop it, despite rising flood levels in Cairo, Ill., up the Mississippi River. James, who consulted on the decision, said he had been conflicted about flooding the Missouri farmland because of his family's holdings.

"My family's land lies within the floodway, and I could not displace from my mind what the decision would mean to my friends and neighbors," James [told](#) the Defense Media Network in 2012.

The political battle over whether to replace that levee, which would protect the land owned by James and other farm owners but leave small Illinois towns at risk of flooding in the future, continues to this day.

James will likely also find himself at the center of budget battles between the White House, which has proposed a steep 16 percent spending cut in the Army Corps' budget to \$5 billion, and lawmakers who are desperate to fund more major civil works projects in their states.

The Senate budget package calls for a small boost to \$6.2 billion, slightly above the \$6.16 billion sought by the House. It is unclear whether those increases will survive whatever spending deal Congress eventually strikes, but the Army Corps' funding is unlikely to decrease from fiscal 2017.

Larson said James' personal experiences with Corps projects means he is well placed to pressure the White House to maintain or increase project funding. "Given his position, he understands that we need additional funds for investments in the nation's infrastructure," she said.

And James will play a major role in helping EPA rewrite its Waters of the U.S. regulation, which will determine the waterways that fall under federal jurisdiction. EPA has indicated it will not propose a new version of the Obama rule until early next year.

Once James clears the Armed Services Committee, he will go through another hearing and vote before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

In addition to the farm, James manages a Missouri cotton gin and grain elevator company. His term on the Mississippi River Commission is the group's second-longest tenure, and he was most recently reappointed by former President Barack Obama in January.

James has given more than \$21,000 to federal candidates since the 1990s, according to FEC records. Most of that money went to Missouri lawmakers, including former Sen. Jim Talent and former Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, both Republicans, and Rep. Marion Berry, a Democrat from Arkansas' 1st Congressional District. The only presidential campaign he gave to was Rudy Giuliani in 2007.

James and his wife report owning stocks in the utilities Dominion Energy and American Electric Power, natural gas company Spectra Energy and oil giant Shell.

To view online [click here](#).

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Appeals court denies stay on Atlantic Sunrise pipeline construction [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/08/2017 06:22 PM EDT

A federal court panel today denied a request from community and environmental groups to halt construction of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline while those organizations challenge FERC's approval of the project.

"Petitioners have not satisfied the stringent requirements for a stay pending court review," a three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals said in the [order](#).

The panel [instituted](#) an administrative stay on Monday while it weighed whether to grant the full stay, which would've been in place until the lawsuit, *Allegheny Defense Project, et al v. FERC*, 17-1098, was resolved.

WHAT'S NEXT: The court still needs to establish the briefing schedule for the lawsuit and has not decided when or whether to hold oral arguments.

To view online [click here](#).

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Date: Friday, November 10, 2017 5:44:06 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/10/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Alex Guillén, Adam Behsudi, Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre

AT LAST MY TAX IS COMPLETE AGAIN! Senate tax writers waited until 9 p.m. Thursday to roll out their [tax bill](#), and here's what jumped out to ME's bleary-eyes:

— **The big stuff everyone gets:** The Senate bill, like the House bill, cuts the corporate tax rate to 20 percent, something pretty much all the energy companies will like. And the bill provides a temporary ability to use 100 percent expensing of capital, a boon to capital-intensive energy industries like oil, natural gas, coal mining, and even renewables, though solar companies have an interaction between the Investment Tax Credit and expensing that may cause unpleasant side-effects.

— **Oil gets a change to treatment of foreign income:** ME noticed that oil comes up several times in the tax bill, but the one that jumped out was the oil industry got a \$4 billion boost from a change to the treatment of refining and pipeline operations overseas in the Senate bill, the same as it got in the House bill. An industry source told ME earlier in the week that the change actually has little impact on bottom lines, since it mostly changes in what tax year foreign subsidiaries transfer money up to parent companies. The source was baffled as to why the Joint Committee on Taxation gave it a score in the House version, and will no doubt still be baffled at the score in the Senate version.

— **Utilities keep their exception to the interest deduction changes.** The Senate bill cuts the amount of interest businesses can deduct, but utilities, who favor the provision much more than 100 percent expensing, get a carveout.

— **No home for the orphans:** Senate tax writers opted not to deal with a slew of expired energy tax credits that found homes in the House bill. Nothing for fuel cells, small wind, microturbines, or even the nuclear tax credit extension. And there appeared to be nothing related to a carbon capture and sequestration credit [pushed](#) by a bipartisan group.

— **Then again, windies can becalmed:** The senators also did not include the changes the House made to Production Tax Credit. Iowa Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) has said the House bill didn't need to make its changes, since the PTC was already going to phase out under a 2015 agreement. "The Senate tax reform bill keeps a promise to America's more than 100,000 wind energy workers and restores the confidence of businesses pouring billions of dollars into rural America," Tom Kiernan, CEO of the American Wind Energy Association, said in a statement.

— **Charged up for EVs:** The Senate did not follow the House lead on electric vehicles, either. While the House wiped out a \$7,500 tax credit, the Senate bill is silent.

Environmental groups are already trashing the effort. "The GOP is once again trying to redirect taxpayer money to the super-rich and super-polluting fossil fuel industry — and they expect us to pay for it by giving up our healthcare, our safety, and our children's future," Janet

Redman, U.S. policy director for Oil Change International, said in one typical statement.

Bigger picture: There are massive differences between the House and Senate versions of the tax overhaul that signal hard bargaining lies ahead, POLITICO's tax gurus Aaron Lorenzo, Brian Faler and Bernie Becker [report](#). Their take: "Reconciling the House and Senate plans and getting sign-off from Trump is likely to be daunting." Score of the Senate proposal [here](#).

IT'S THE END OF THE WEEK AS WE KNOW IT! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Renewable Fuels Association's Rachel Gantz was first to pick Rep. Candice Miller as the congresswoman turned public works commissioner. Your end-of-the-week puzzler: Which powerful governing body out West has two former members of Congress among its five slots? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

CLIMATE HAWKS LAND IN BONN: Five Democratic senators — [Ben Cardin](#), [Ed Markey](#), [Sheldon Whitehouse](#), [Brian Schatz](#) and [Jeff Merkley](#) — are on the ground at the Bonn climate talks this weekend and will hold a call today at 12:30 p.m. to discuss their goals. But their message is clear: "We're not all nuts," Whitehouse told ME.

Still in it to win it: On Saturday, California Gov. Jerry Brown and former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg will unveil America's Pledge with a report detailing the scope of the actions planned by non-federal entities to fight climate change. Joining them to reiterate U.S. commitment to aggressive climate action: Cardin, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, COP23 President and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama and Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, among others.

Big spenders: The World Resources Institute announced Thursday a private cash infusion of \$2.1 billion in private funds to help restore degraded lands in Latin America and the Caribbean. "With more than \$2 billion of investments earmarked for Latin America alone, restoration is a climate solution that works and is a great investment," Walter Vergara, coordinator of the new push, said in a statement. More information [here](#).

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

WHEN HE'S NOT WRITING OP-EDS: Energy Secretary Rick Perry, back from a trip to Paris this week, will headline a "roundtable discussion" in Houston on Monday afternoon on behalf of America First Policies, the pro-Trump political nonprofit, Campaign Pro's Maggie Severns [reports](#). America First has been quiet much of the year but is now pushing to give a jolt to its fundraising and reassert its close ties to President Donald Trump. But Texas businessman Roy Bailey, who has deep ties to group, said Perry won't be there looking to raise funds. "It's a nice opportunity for people to understand what's going on at the Energy Department," Bailey said.

Remember: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has generated controversy and several investigations over [his habit](#) of mixing political activities with official government business.

CORNSTATERS NOT ALL SOLD ON WHITE: Kathleen Harnett White, Trump's pick to

chair the Council on Environmental Quality, will need the support of all the Midwesterners on the Senate Environment committee if she's going to advance, and it looks like she still has some work to do on that front. Despite disavowing her previously staunch opposition to the Renewable Fuel Standard thanks to "new data" from Sen. [Joni Ernst](#), White doesn't yet have Ernst's backing. "We're still debating that one," Ernst told ME. Veteran ME readers know the Iowa Republican extracted concessions from EPA on the RFS before backing new agency air chief Bill Wehrum.

Nebraska's [Deb Fischer](#) is also "still debating" White's nomination, and she is still looking for more information on how White would do her job. The CEQ chair doesn't have a regulatory role on RFS, but she would offer advice to Trump. "If you look at the questioning I had, I was looking at also how she would present options to the president," Fischer told ME. "That's going to be her job, not necessarily on the RFS, but where she gets her data from, how she prepares that and what kind of facts she has. We'll see how it shakes out."

Rounds a tentative yes: [Mike Rounds](#) of South Dakota said he's not totally on board, but, "I would lean yes as opposed to no." He thought she answered his questions well. "What I wanted to make sure people understood is that the RFS in its current form is the minimum we can do," he said.

PRUITT ADDRESSES ANTI-CLIMATE ACTION CONFERENCE: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt delivered a two-minute video address to a conference in Houston sponsored by the Heartland Institute, the group that opposes action to fight climate change. "I want to say to you at the Heartland Institute, thanks for what you're doing to advance energy, thanks for what you're doing to advance natural resources," Pruitt said. "There's great optimism across the country and I pray you feel that in Houston, Texas."

PAUSED FURTHER: A federal appeals court once again ordered lawsuits over the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan held [in abeyance](#) for another 60 days, until Jan. 8, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). The D.C. Circuit ordered EPA to file status updates on its CPP repeal effort every 30 days.

BLUNT MESSAGE FOR BARRASSO: Whitehouse told ME he understands why Pruitt might not want to testify before the Senate EPW committee but that Chairman [John Barrasso](#) should not let him off. "There's a point where oversight becomes a responsibility irrespective of your loyalties," he said. "I think there will be really awkward questions for him and I think the farther he stays away from a forum where he has to tell the truth, the happier he is."

DOURSON REALLY IN TROUBLE? If a vote came up today, ranking member [Tom Carper](#) told reporters, Michael Dourson, Trump's pick to run EPA's chemicals office, wouldn't have the necessary votes. "Privately, in my conversations with a number of Republicans, they have expressed deep concerns," he said. "We're going to make sure at the end of the day that he does not have the votes." And North Carolina's [Thom Tillis](#) confirmed Wednesday he's not yet ready to back Dourson: "We've heard the concerns and we're working on getting the background information."

ZINKE SAYS HE'S READY TO MEET WITH DURBIN: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said in a [letter](#) Thursday said he would be "happy to meet ... to discuss any issue" involving the agency with Senate Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#) who has put the confirmation of multiple Interior nominees on hold until he gets a meeting with the secretary to discuss his review of several dozen national monument designations. Zinke pointed out that he talked with a number

of Democrats prior to sending the report to the White House in late August and also with Sen. [Tom Udall](#) in mid-September on the New Mexico Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Rio Grande Del Norte monuments. In a [tweet](#) Thursday, Zinke said he'd be "happy to talk monuments and nominees. Call anytime, Dick."

MORE INFORMATION SOUGHT ON PERRY'S PLAN: Four environmental groups — the Sierra Club, Earthjustice, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council — filed FOIA requests with [Energy](#) and [FERC](#) seeking information on the development of Energy Secretary Rick Perry's grid resiliency proposal to FERC. "It's outrageous that there is so little transparency at DOE that we have to repeatedly file these Freedom of Information Act requests instead of Rick Perry simply allowing the public and energy stakeholders to inform the policy making process," the Sierra Club's Mary Anne Hitt said in a statement.

HERE'S SOMETHING: The compromise version of the National Defense Authorization Act would require the Pentagon to rank the top 10 installations in each military branch's that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change over the next two decades, Pro Defense's Connor O'Brien [reports](#). Conservatives sought to take out the provision during House floor debate earlier this year, but Democrats and moderate Republicans teamed up to leave it in.

ZINKE DENIES IMPROPRIETY IN WHITEFISH DEALINGS: During an interview with Fox News late Thursday, Zinke denied playing any role in his son landing a job with controversial Whitefish Energy — "he got a job by himself" — and said he had no role in the Montana-based company getting a now-cancelled contract to repair Puerto Rico's electric grid. "I didn't have any influence, didn't have any knowledge of the contract. Puerto Rico is not under Interior. And those elitists that would think from being a small town somehow is a crime, shame on ya," he said.

MAIL CALL! CONSERVATIVES ENDORSE 'BIGGER' MONUMENT REVIEW: Twenty-four House Republicans sent [a letter](#) to Trump Thursday urging him to "think big and act bigger" as he mulls final recommendations about what to do to a host of prior national monument designations. It recommends the outright rescission of several monuments and significant downsizing of others. "We ask that you take these recommendations to heart and that you not be deterred by a few vocal special-interests groups from finishing what you set out to accomplish with this review," they wrote.

Democrats to GAO: Expand adviser probe: Ten members of the Senate Democratic caucus, led by Whitehouse, asked GAO in a Thursday [letter](#) to expand its existing probe into EPA scientific advisory appointments to evaluate Pruitt's new order barring scientists who receive grants from serving on advisory boards. "When a policy, like this one, does not on its face address the problem it purports to solve it should get exacting scrutiny to determine what in fact its true purpose is," they wrote.

How about that coal memo? Frustrated by the lack of response from the White House and EPA, Whitehouse [demanded](#) Murray Energy head Bob Murray turn over a copy of the three-page "action plan" he gave to the administration. The document became a [major focus](#) of Andrew Wheeler's nomination hearing to be EPA deputy administrator on Wednesday.

Think of us: The Petroleum Marketers Association of America sent a letter to Barrasso on Thursday asking him to urge the Trump administration "to reduce the ethanol mandate given that the [underground storage tank] system compatibility issues present severe economic harm

to small businesses" as senators discuss the RFS with administration officials. Link [here](#).

ETHANOL, GRAINS PRODUCERS WANT BRAZIL PUNISHED: U.S. ethanol and grains producers are urging the U.S. Trade Representative to suspend Brazil's tariff benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences, which grants tariff relief on imports from developing countries, because of complaints that the South American country has put in place a restrictive quota on ethanol imports. "Brazil's decision to engage in protectionist trade measures as a result of a short-term and market-oriented deficit against the largest agriculturally related product imported from the U.S. is not in keeping with the spirit of the GSP program," the Renewable Fuels Association, Growth Energy and the U.S. Grains Council wrote in a [letter](#) to Lighthizer on Thursday.

SKEPTICISM OVER CBO'S ANWR ESTIMATE: Count Taxpayers for Common Sense among the deep skeptics that Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#)'s proposal to open ANWR would generate more than \$1 billion in revenue over the next decade, as the Congressional Budget Office estimated it would. The non-partisan group forecasts that oil and gas companies would have to bid at levels 10 times higher than historic norms to meet the \$1 billion CBO estimates would flow into federal coffers. "If Congress were to enact legislation that opened up the 1002 Area to oil and gas leasing, it is unlikely — near to the point of impossibility — that such leasing would generate the amount of revenue to the Treasury that the CBO predicts," the group's new [fact sheet](#) states. It released a second fact sheet outlining [a series of other options](#) to raise revenue through federally-owned natural resources.

California's dirty secret? The Center for Biological Diversity released a report finding three-quarters of California's oil is as harmful to the environment as Canadian tar sands. Link [here](#).

High stakes in the desert: Failing to keep the Navajo Generating Station open could put at risk the reliability of Arizona's electric grid and the regional power supply, according to [a study](#) funded by coal giant Peabody Energy. Among the cities potentially hardest hit include Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson and Flagstaff, according to the study. Summary link [here](#).

NO FUN! Amid [reports](#) the National Park Service is considering closing the National Mall to softball and frisbee games permanently, the Sierra Club's DC-based softball team, the Conservation Laborers Against Wrong, vowed a fight. "Maybe the hundreds of Congressional Republican staffers who play organized softball every summer will let Zinke and Trump know there is nothing to drill or mine for underneath the Mall," the team's coach Lauren Lantry quipped.

BLOWN AWAY? Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg visited an Oklahoma wind farm where he said "it's clear that wind and renewables are the future." Full post [here](#).

QUICK HITS

— Millions Of Puerto Ricans Just Lost Power Again After A Line Repaired By Whitefish Energy Failed. [BuzzFeed](#).

— With Christie Out, New Jersey Poised To Rejoin New England In Climate Pact. [WNPR](#).

— As China Moves To Other Energy Sources, Its Coal Region Struggles To Adapt. [NPR](#).

— Oil prices rise on supply cuts and political tensions in Saudi Arabia. [Reuters](#).

— One of the World's Biggest Miners Is About to Go Coal-Free. [Bloomberg](#).

— FitzPatrick Nuclear Power Plant experiences leak within facility. [WSKG](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — The Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment and Princeton E-affiliates Partnership hosts [annual meeting](#) with EDF's Fred Krupp keynoting, Maeder Hall, 86 Olden Street, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

12:30 p.m. — U.S. Senators to Hold Press Phone Call from Major UN Climate Conference in Germany, RSVP: Sean_Bartlett@foreign.senate.gov

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Senate GOP's tax bill points to nasty fight ahead [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker, Brian Faler and Aaron Lorenzo | 11/09/2017 11:49 AM EDT

Yawning divisions have emerged between the House, Senate and White House over tax reform, raising doubts about whether Republicans will be able to achieve their most important political and policy priority before the end of the year.

The Senate and House are split on some key issues, including the top tax rate and the timing of the corporate tax cut, and also at odds with President Donald Trump in many areas. Hard bargaining, battles between GOP factions and an onslaught of lobbying are the gauntlets Republicans will have to run to get legislation to Trump's desk by the end of the year — and into their mailers and ads for the 2018 elections.

If one thing unifies Republicans and makes the job easier than it might appear, it's the fear that they will have nothing to take into those contests after the failure of another marquee effort, repealing and replacing Obamacare. House Speaker Paul Ryan and other GOP leaders used the drubbing the party took in Tuesday's election in Virginia as a warning to the rank and file: Pass tax reform or face the wrath of Republican voters.

"We are going to conference," Ryan told reporters Thursday, after the Senate unveiled its long-awaited plan and House tax writers advanced theirs to the House floor. "Yes, the Senate bill is going to be different than the House bill because that's the legislative process."

The House Ways and Means Committee approved its bill on a party-line 24-16 vote, and

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said the full House would vote on it next week. The Senate Finance Committee will start working on its bill next week, maybe as early as Monday.

One of the first differences to emerge was the Senate's plan to delay slashing the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent until 2019. The House wants to cut the tax immediately, and has the White House on its side.

Cutting the corporate rate is the centerpiece of the GOP plan to lower tax rates and spur faster economic growth. But the Senate is trying to limit the revenue impact to allow a bill to pass with just 51 votes and avoid a possible Democratic filibuster.

In another break with Trump, neither the Senate bill or the House bill includes a repeal of the Obamacare individual mandate requiring Americans to have health insurance. But Senate Republicans are still considering a repeal to help cover the cost of making some tax cuts permanent.

GOP leaders are talking with rank-and-file members to assess whether they have the necessary 50 votes to scrap the least popular part of Obamacare.

"I'd sure like to do that," said Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) "I think we're counting votes. It sure gives us a lot more flexibility."

Trump has pushed for repealing the mandate, along with conservative senators and House members. But many lawmakers said reopening the health care debate would just make passing the tax bill harder.

The Senate plan would set a top individual tax rate of 38.5 percent, compared to the House's 39.6 percent for annual income above \$1 million, and keep deductions for people with high medical bills and for student loan interest that the House wants to discard.

It would completely eliminate a federal deduction for state and local taxes, while the House had to mollify a group of GOP lawmakers from high-tax blue states by keeping the deduction for property taxes, up to \$10,000.

The Senate kept the maximum mortgage deduction at the interest on loans up to \$1 million. The House would cut it to \$500,000.

The House targeted the estate tax — a favorite foil of conservative Republicans — for elimination in 2025, after doubling the current exemptions to about \$11 million for individuals and \$22 million for married couples. The Senate is proposing only to double the exemptions.

The House proposed expanding the child tax credit to \$1,600 per child from \$1,000. The Senate set the increase at \$1,650.

But that is still too low for some senators who want a \$2,000-per-child credit because they worry some middle-income people could otherwise see their taxes go up under the plan — and they have an ally in Ivanka Trump. "While we are glad to see an increase to the child tax credit, like the House bill, it is simply not enough for working families," Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah), the main champions of the issue in the Senate, said in a joint statement.

On another hot-button issue, the treatment of "pass-through" businesses that pay individual tax

rates, the Senate would set a top rate of 30 percent, while owners of those businesses have been clamoring for parity with corporations. The House is offering a super-low 9 percent rate on the first \$75,000 those businesses earn, which attracted praise from the powerful National Federation of Independent Business, which had panned the House bill last week.

Both bills would shift the U.S. to a "territorial" tax system that would largely shield offshore corporate income from U.S. taxation. But they parted ways on a mechanism to discourage more companies from moving abroad to take advantage of the change.

As the first details were trickling out about the Senate plan, Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) unveiled a new round of changes to the House GOP's plan.

Their tax plan had ballooned beyond their budget, allowing them to cut taxes by no more than \$1.5 trillion, after Republicans earlier this week gutted a plan to crack down on international tax avoidance hated by the Koch brothers and a number of multinational corporations.

The revisions include hundreds of billions of dollars in new revenue aimed at filling that budget hole. Republicans did it in part by taking back much of the money — \$87 billion — they had lost when they watered down those overseas tax avoidance provisions.

Another \$70 billion would come from charging companies more in a one-time tax on their overseas earnings. Under the new plan, they'd pay 14 percent on their liquid assets and 7 percent on illiquid ones like factories overseas. That's up from 12 percent and 5 percent, respectively, under the previous proposal.

House lawmakers want to raise another \$20 billion by requiring people claiming the popular child tax credit to provide a Social Security number for their child, a provision long sought by Republicans aimed at preventing undocumented immigrants from taking the break.

Delaying their plans to repeal the estate tax by another year saved them \$21.5 billion. They'd raise another \$109 billion from companies tapping a long-standing break for research and development expenses.

Other House provisions would expand a tax on private university endowments and impose a surtax on life insurance companies.

The plan also would allow organizations such as charities and churches to engage in political speech without risking their tax-exempt status, and it restored a tax break for adopting children that had been on the chopping block.

Senate Finance Committee aides said the panel was still working to make its bill compliant with the chamber's budget rules, which don't allow the tax bill to add to deficits outside the 10-year budget window.

Given the GOP's slim majority in the Senate and the danger of a repeat of their Obamacare fiasco, some House Republicans were resigned to more or less having to defer to the Senate.

"I look at it more as a priority of process and procedure over substance," said Rep. Dennis Ross (R-Fla.). "While there are some very good things, don't get me wrong, substantively in our bill, I think the canvas will probably be painted in its final stage in the Senate once we give them the vehicle."

Ben White, Josh Dawsey, Colin Wilhelm, Seung Min Kim, Elana Schor and Jennifer Haberkorn contributed to this report.

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Perry to headline Texas event for pro-Trump outside group [Back](#)

By Maggie Severns | 11/10/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry will attend an event in Texas next week put on by America First Policies, the pro-Trump political nonprofit, according to an invitation obtained by POLITICO.

The invitation, which was sent to a Republican donor, says that Perry will headline a "roundtable discussion" in Houston on Monday afternoon. Details of the event's location will be available only to those who RSVP shortly before the event, the invitation said.

Perry's trip to Texas comes at an auspicious moment for America First Policies and its affiliated super PAC, America First Action. The organization is working to lock in support from donors and establish itself as a center of gravity for pro-Trump activity with close ties to the Trump administration.

America First was silent for much of this year, prompting some to question what role, if any, it would play for President Donald Trump, but organizers are working to reinvigorate the group's fundraising and reassert America First's close ties to the president. The group aims to [spend](#) \$100 million promoting tax reform and supporting 2018 candidates in the next year. Leaders of the group have convened at the White House in recent weeks, and with donors at a Texas ranch owned by megadonor T. Boone Pickens. Donald Trump Jr. was present at the ranch to signal his support.

Perry has deep ties to both the energy industry and donors in Texas, which helped power his two presidential runs. But Perry will not be in Houston asking for funds, said Texas businessman Roy Bailey, who is deeply involved in America First Policies. "It's a nice opportunity for people to understand what's going on at the Energy Department," Bailey said.

An Energy Department employee did not return a request for comment. Perry was in France this week meeting with energy leaders from other countries.

America First is ramping up activity as other high-profile Republican operatives and donors are accelerating pro-Trump outside efforts of their own.

Future45, which supported Trump during the 2016 elections with funding from casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson and the Ricketts family, [announced](#) a project that will spend in the tens of millions of dollars promoting tax reform earlier this month. Great America PAC, which is affiliated with Steve Bannon, began endorsing 2018 candidates in recent days.

Great America PAC's support for Roy Moore broke from Trump's support for Sen. [Luther Strange](#) in Alabama. America First plans to give unwavering support to Trump's agenda, which Bailey said could be a differentiator from other groups.

"We're not second-guessing anything; we're totally confident in [Trump's] ability to lead this nation and we're supporting him and the vice president," Bailey said.

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Trump's Interior chief 'hopping around from campaign event to campaign event' [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Esther Whieldon | 10/05/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Republican donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke at a fundraiser held during a taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents reviewed by POLITICO — raising questions about his habit of mixing official government business with political activism.

The new details about Zinke's March trip to the Caribbean, including the previously undisclosed invitation to the Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser, emerged after weeks of scrutiny of the former Montana GOP congressman's travels. The nearly two-hour event was one of more than a half-dozen times Zinke has met with big donors or political groups while on department-paid trips, Interior travel records and other documents show.

Ethics watchdogs say Zinke is combining politics with his Interior duties so frequently that he risks tripping over the prohibitions against using government resources for partisan activity, even though his appearance at the Virgin Islands event seems to have been legal. Democrats have also seized on the issue, including 26 House members who wrote in a letter Tuesday that Zinke's travels "give the appearance that you are mixing political gatherings and personal destinations with official business."

Zinke has said all his actions have obeyed the law, dismissing concerns about his travel as "a little BS."

But some ethics advocates say Zinke's attendance at a fundraiser during his first month as secretary is not in line with past administrations' conduct, even if he crossed no legal red lines.

"It happens on occasion with other Cabinet secretaries, perhaps even a little more often as you get near the election, but it is not a very common practice for Cabinet members to be hopping around from campaign event to campaign event like we're seeing with Zinke," said Craig Holman, government affairs specialist for government watchdog Public Citizen.

The secretary is already under investigation by his department's inspector general over his use of taxpayer-funded private planes for some of the trips, and the Office of Special Counsel is looking into an activist group's allegations that he violated the Hatch Act, the law limiting political activism by federal employees. The White House has cracked down on Cabinet members' travel habits following former HHS Secretary Tom Price's resignation on Friday, which occurred after POLITICO reported on his own expensive flights.

Zinke visited the Virgin Islands from March 30 to April 1 on an official trip related to the Interior Department's role overseeing the U.S. territory. On his first day, following a "veterans

meet and greet" and a reception with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, he appeared in his personal capacity at a March fundraiser for the local Republican Party at the patio bar of the Club Comanche Hotel St. Croix, department records show.

Tickets for the fundraiser ranged from \$75 per person to as much as \$5,000 per couple to be an event "Patron," according to Zinke's official calendar and a copy of the invitation. Patrons and members of the host committee, who paid \$1,500 per couple, could get a photo with Zinke at the start of the event, which was attended by local party members and elected officials.

The following day, Zinke took a \$3,150 flight on a private plane, paid for by the department, from St. Croix to official functions on St. Thomas and returned later that evening. Interior Department officials said there was no other way to accommodate his schedule, which included official events on both islands commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Dutch government transferring control of the islands to the United States.

Zinke is allowed to engage in partisan political activity in a "purely personal (not official) capacity," so long as he does not use government resources, according to Interior Department guidelines on the Hatch Act and other federal laws. The invitation to the GOP fundraiser did not identify Zinke by his official title and included a disclaimer that the money is being solicited by the local party and "not by any federal official."

All told, Zinke has spent around \$20,000 for three charter flights as secretary, nowhere near the \$1 million tab Price racked up on non-commercial trips. But he has on numerous occasions attended political receptions, spoken to influential conservative groups or appeared alongside past campaign donors during trips has taken outside of Washington, D.C., for official department business.

In one instance, Zinke gave a motivational speech for a professional hockey team owned by a major campaign contributor that he said was official business — and which required him to charter a \$12,000 flight to Montana for an appearance at the Western Governors Association the next day.

In another case, during a speech to the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he was [introduced](#) via a recorded voice as the Interior secretary and Zinke proceeded to talk about the agency's priorities. The summit was organized by the Centennial Institute, which bills itself as Colorado Christian University's think tank and is a part of the State Policy Network of organizations that collectively push for conservative state-level legislation.

An Interior spokeswoman said Zinke always follows the law but declined to answer specific questions about his appearance at the Virgin Islands fundraiser, nor say whether he would keep raising political money. The agency also has yet to post Zinke's trip expenses involving any of the political events.

"The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources," spokeswoman Heather Swift said in a statement.

Swift did not respond to questions about whether the department had gotten reimbursement for the political portion of Zinke's three-day Virgin Islands trip, as the head of one watchdog group says it should have.

"Some of this travel is clearly political and that part of the travel should have been paid for by the RNC, NRCC, state political parties, a campaign committee or Zinke personally," said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability.

No payments to the department are listed in the Virgin Islands Republican Party's FEC records.

Zinke is not the first Interior secretary, or Cabinet member, to have his activities questioned.

In 2012, a watchdog group called Cause of Action urged the Office of Special Counsel to investigate whether President Barack Obama's then- Interior Secretary Ken Salazar had violated the Hatch Act while taking an Obama reelection campaign RV tour of Colorado with a couple of lawmakers and the state lieutenant governor. Local organizers of one stop on that tour had billed Salazar on its online events calendar as attending the political rally in his official role. OSC would not say whether its investigation uncovered any problems, but [travel records](#) Interior has posted show that one of Salazar's aides had told the tour's coordinator the schedule "should not refer to (Salazar as) 'secretary.'" Salazar did not respond to a request for comment.

A former Salazar aide, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said the Obama administration generally tried to avoid scheduling political events that coincided with official travel because it was difficult to divvy up what expenses should be reimbursed by a campaign.

The special counsel's office [found](#) Obama HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in violation of the Hatch Act in 2012, saying she had made "extemporaneous partisan remarks" by endorsing a candidate for North Carolina governor during a speech she made in her official capacity. Sebelius tried to scrub the violation by reclassifying the appearance as political and reimbursing the Treasury Department for costs associated with the trip.

Sally Jewell, who was Interior secretary during Obama's second term, said Zinke was within his rights to appear at the fundraiser in the Virgin Islands. Jewell said she once appeared at a fundraiser for Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell while in Obama's Cabinet, though she paid her own way to Washington state and was not identified by her official title.

"If he had legitimate business while he's on the island, to do a political thing on the side, I don't think that is that unusual," Jewell said in an interview.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt canceled his scheduled appearance at a fundraiser for the Oklahoma Republican Party in April because an invitation had identified him by his official title and said he would discuss his work at the agency. EPA ethics officials said he would have been cleared to attend the event if not for that language on the invitation.

Watchdog groups say Zinke's behavior fits a pattern for Trump's Cabinet.

"These government resources have been abused by this administration," said Virginia Canter, an executive branch ethics counsel for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington who previously worked as an ethics official for Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Obama. "To the extent that some of that supports their political ambitions is inconsistent with the intent of this authority."

The Campaign for Accountability [called](#) on Interior's inspector general and the Office of

Special Counsel to investigate whether Zinke violated the Hatch Act or department ethics rules with his speech to the hockey team, which the group said appeared to be a favor for a donor. Interior's IG office announced its investigation earlier this week, and OSC told the Campaign for Accountability that it was looking into the group's complaint, according to an email shared with POLITICO. The OSC declined to comment.

Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Donald McEachin (D-Va.) have asked Interior's IG to also look into any trips on which the secretary was accompanied by his wife, Lola Zinke, who is chairing the campaign of Montana Republican Troy Downing, a candidate to unseat Democratic Sen. Jon Tester next year. Swift said Lola Zinke was not in the Virgin Islands and has paid her own way whenever she has traveled with her husband on official trips.

Many who know him see Zinke's travels as an attempt to keep in touch with political contacts as he contemplates what he will do after leaving the Trump administration. Back home, the 55-year-old former Montana congressman is seen as an attractive candidate for the open-seat governor's race in 2020, when Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock will have to step down because of term limits.

"I think he's definitely got political aspirations; that's one of the reasons why he is where he is at right now," said Land Tawney, executive director of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a Montana-based sportsman group that supported Zinke's bid for Interior secretary. "You don't go from being a Montana legislator to a first-term congressman to [Interior] secretary without having ambition."

The Virgin Islands trip was Zinke's first interaction with big donors or influential conservative groups during his travel as Interior secretary.

A weeklong trip in May that took Zinke through Montana, Utah and California also offered a chance to squeeze in some political events.

Zinke delivered the keynote speech at the RNC spring meeting on May 11 in Coronado, Calif. Zinke had flown to California the previous night, after several days touring monuments in Utah, and the RNC speech was his only event in the state aside from a meeting earlier that afternoon with Rep. Amata Radewagen, the Republican delegate from American Samoa, and members of the American Tunaboat Association.

The next day, Zinke flew back to Montana, where he joined Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Vice President Mike Pence to tour a coal mine on the Crow Indian reservation operated by the Westmoreland Coal Co.

The trip offered Zinke and Pence an opportunity to tout the Trump administration's work to promote new coal mining on federal lands — and it allowed them to make a brief detour to promote Zinke's congressional replacement. That Friday night, Zinke, Pence and Daines attended a political rally for GOP candidate Greg Gianforte, and Zinke attended a get-out-the-vote event for the Montana GOP the next day.

Zinke apparently paid for his return trip to Washington out of his own pocket — it was marked "personal travel" on his calendar, a designation not applied to the other flights on that trip.

Gianforte, whose wife is a [major](#) political donor in Montana, won the May 25 special election

to take over Zinke's House seat.

Greg and Susan Gianforte donated more than \$10,000 to Zinke's 2016 congressional campaign and another \$10,000 to a joint Zinke-Daines PAC, according to [federal](#) records. The couple donated \$5,000 for his earlier run for Congress.

Zinke met with big influencers and donors in June as well.

On June 25, he flew from D.C. to Reno, Nev., where his only scheduled event was a meeting of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a group of Republican attorneys general that has been linked to the Koch brothers, where he spoke and took questions for about 30 minutes, according to his schedule.

After his remarks, he sat at a dinner table with Montana's attorney general, the government relations specialist for the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and Las Vegas Sands, and Koch Industries lobbyist Allen Richardson, Interior documents show.

The next day, Zinke flew to Las Vegas for an event on public lands in nearby Pahrump, Nev., and a speech that night to the National Hockey League's Vegas Golden Knights. Bill Foley, the team owner and chairman of Fidelity, introduced Zinke. Foley donated \$7,800 to Zinke's 2014 campaign, while employees and PACs associated with Fidelity and related companies gave another \$180,000. Interior officials said the speech to the NHL team was part of Zinke's official duties, and they pointed to scheduling conflicts it created to justify his use of a \$12,000 private plane to get to a Western Governors Association meeting in Montana the next day.

In July, Zinke spoke to several conservative groups in Colorado during a three-day trip that also included tours of Interior Department facilities in the state. He flew into Denver on July 20 so he could appear that evening at a closed-door reception for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of conservative state legislators, lobbyists and industry groups that has pushed for more state control over federal lands.

And over the next two days, he was a featured speaker at a Republican committee roundtable and attended the Western Conservative Summit in Denver.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

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Court again freezes Clean Power Plan litigation for 60 days [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/09/2017 04:55 PM EDT

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today once again placed the lawsuits over the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan [in abeyance](#) for another 60 days, until Jan. 8.

The court's single-page order did not include any sort of note such as the one included in the court's previous 60-day abeyance order on Aug. 8. In that order, two of the judges attached a

stern [note](#) saying EPA was skirting its statutory duty to regulate greenhouse gases.

EPA last month released its proposed repeal, and will take public comment through Jan. 16. The agency has yet to release its advance notice of proposed rulemaking seeking suggestions on whether and how to craft a narrower replacement regulation.

WHAT'S NEXT: The court ordered EPA to file status updates on its CPP repeal effort every 30 days.

To view online [click here](#).

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Final defense policy bill would require Pentagon climate change study [Back](#)

By Connor O'Brien | 11/09/2017 04:04 PM EDT

The Pentagon would be required to detail threats posed by climate change to military installations under to the compromise version of the National Defense Authorization Act, [H.R. 2810 \(115\)](#), released today.

The legislation calls on the Pentagon to rank the 10 most vulnerable installations within each service to the effects of climate change over the next two decades — including from rising sea levels, flooding, drought and wildfires — and outline steps to mitigate any damage.

The report would be due within a year of the bill's enactment.

The climate change study was included in the House version of the defense policy bill, and the Senate accepted the provision in a joint conference committee.

Conservatives attempted to strip the provision during House floor debate in July, but Democrats and moderate Republicans [joined to preserve](#) the study requirement.

To view online [click here](#).

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Wheeler attended Murray meetings on DOE coal aid but says he didn't write company's pitch [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/08/2017 01:08 PM EDT

Andrew Wheeler, the nominee for EPA deputy administrator, says he represented Murray Energy in meetings with Energy Department and congressional officials to support Trump administration efforts to prop up ailing coal-fired power plants.

Wheeler, who counted Murray among his clients as a lobbyist at Faegre Baker Daniels, faced numerous questions at his confirmation hearing today over his work for the company, which

would be one of the [main beneficiaries](#) of DOE's proposed grid rule, and its CEO Bob Murray, a top supporter of President Donald Trump. Wheeler said he attended a Murray Energy meeting at DOE where the grid proposal was discussed several months ago, as well as a meeting on Capitol Hill on the subject. He said he de-registered as a lobbyist in August.

Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) pressed Wheeler over Murray's comments in a recent PBS Frontline documentary. The CEO said he gave Trump "an action plan" outlining coal policies to pursue, including eliminating the Clean Power Plan.

"I did not work on that and I do not have a copy of that memo," Wheeler told Whitehouse at the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing.

Wheeler said Murray gave him a copy to read in December or January. "I looked at it and handed it back to him, I don't have it," Wheeler said, adding that he did not recall any specifics.

Whitehouse said he hopes to get a copy of the plan with the help of EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) now that Wheeler confirmed its existence.

WHAT'S NEXT: The committee will likely vote on Wheeler's nomination in the coming weeks.

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Date: Monday, November 06, 2017 5:42:38 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/06/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff and Kalina Oroschakoff

BONN JOUR! Starting today, international negotiators gather in Bonn for the COP23 — the first U.N. climate summit to be chaired by a small island nation, Fiji. It's also the first meeting after President Donald Trump announced his intention to pull the U.S. out of the landmark Paris accord in June. Let's take a quick look at what to expect between now and the conference's end on Nov. 17:

—**The U.S. question:** An open question remains how much the U.S. decision to withdraw from the Paris accord will be a distraction to the nitty gritty work of filling out the details of the 2015 pact. The Trump administration [opted to send](#) longtime diplomat Thomas Shannon as the delegation's lead in Bonn rather than a cabinet member, suggesting a low-key role on the sidelines. But U.S. officials are expected to tout the benefits of nuclear energy and fossil fuels in combating emissions, according to the [New York Times](#). Meanwhile, a high-profile delegation of U.S. governors, mayors, private sector leaders and others are traveling the conference as a signal that much of the country remains committed to aggressive climate action.

—**Loss and damage:** Fiji, backed by other vulnerable island countries, is keen to focus attention on the loss and damage already linked to climate change (think, hurricanes, floods and rising sea levels). Many island nations are raising pressure on negotiators, especially from wealthy nations, to tackle loss and damage issues such as funding, risk preparedness, weather forecasting and new insurance proposals. This, compounded by a number of high-profile weather events this year, will make it one of the more challenging discussions at the summit, according to Camilla Born from the environmental think tank E3G.

—**Working out the rules:** Another challenge will be to advance work on rules to make sure countries meet the Paris agreement's goals ahead of next year's COP24 — when parties said they would sign off on the rulebook underpinning the deal. A thorny discussion here will be around setting a common and transparent monitoring and reporting system that ensures emissions reductions can be compared across countries. It's a sensitive issue with emerging economies such as China, long wary of letting outsiders glance their domestic books, but a priority for the EU, which wants to make sure everyone pulls their weight. The battle could therefore be over whether it will be a bifurcated system, setting different guidelines for developed and developing countries, or universal.

—**Assessing progress:** Negotiators will also have to work out how the first stock-take of national progress toward achieving climate pledges will play out next year. The idea behind the 2018 meeting is to pave the way for countries to increase their emissions reduction targets in 2020, when parties are for the first time required to communicate renewed (and ideally strengthened) commitments, as set out under the Paris deal. The outgoing Moroccan COP22 presidency and the incoming Fijian presidency have published a [joint document](#) outlining their vision for the meeting.

—**Who's coming?** According to [the UNFCCC](#), close to 20 world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, are slated to attend. Also expected to participate: Arnold Schwarzenegger, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, California Governor Jerry Brown, UN Special Envoy Michael Bloomberg and several U.S. lawmakers, including Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Brian Schatz](#). EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [won't attend](#), though other agency staff will.

ICYMI: POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff and Pro's Emily Holden's seven people to watch during the summit [here](#).

WELCOME TO MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Hunton & Williams' Joe Stanko was first to identify Laika as the first dog in space 60 years ago. For today: Which current senator is a former shoe store owner? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

NEXT STEP IN WOTUS UNWIND: EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers sent a proposed rule delaying the effective date of the Waters of the U.S. Rule to the White House for review, a move designed to give the administration more time to design its own version, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). An agency spokeswoman said the action would "amend the effective date associated with the 2015 Clean Water Rule to give the agencies time to consider the two-step process proposing to rescind and revise the 2015 rule." The new proposed rule is separate from any rule intended to replace WOTUS. The agency declined to say when the new effective date would be or if it would make any other tweaks to the regulation.

DEMOCRATS TALK DISASTER RELIEF PRIORITIES: Thirty members of the Senate Democratic caucus sent [a letter](#) Friday to OMB Director Mick Mulvaney outlining their priorities for a third disaster supplemental spending package expected to be requested by the administration later this month. "We can invest in technology, conservation and infrastructure that will mitigate further damage and make our communities more resilient," they wrote. Particular requests include "specific legislative language" concerning electric grid reconstruction in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as "further investments" in NOAA's weather infrastructure and forecasting capabilities.

High-profile visitors: House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) and Ranking Member [Peter DeFazio](#), Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and Senate EPW Ranking Member [Tom Carper](#) were among those lawmakers visiting Puerto Rico this weekend, according to [local media](#). Also along: Sen. [Kamala Harris](#), Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#), Sen. [Al Franken](#) and Rep. [Garret Graves](#).

Let's reschedule: House Homeland Security ranking member [Bennie Thompson](#) wrote to Chairman [Michael McCaul](#) asking for the panel to reschedule a hearing on hurricane response and recovery that was suddenly shelved last week. Link to letter [here](#).

QUITE THE PUBLIC PITCH: Tweeting at 2:49 a.m. in Hawaii, Trump [asked](#) Saudi Arabia to list shares of its biggest oil company on the New York Stock Exchange. "Would very much appreciate Saudi Arabia doing their IPO of Aramco with the New York Stock Exchange. Important to the United States!" he [wrote](#). That comes as Saudi Arabia moves toward an offering of shares of its state-run oil company — the world's largest energy company — on international markets. He later told reporters aboard Air Force One: "They're not looking at it,

but I want them to strongly consider the New York Stock Exchange or NASDAQ, or frankly anybody else located in this country, but those are the big two... I just spoke to the king a little while ago, and they will consider it."

ANOTHER INVESTIGATION ARRIVES: GAO agreed last week to probe whether Pruitt's appearance in an August [video](#) from National Cattlemen's Beef Association violated laws "on the use of appropriated funds for lobbying and publicity or propaganda purposes and the Antideficiency Act," Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). House Democrats asked GAO to begin the investigation.

TEAM ETHANOL FIRES BACK: If Trump watches the ads on Fox & Friends, then he's getting an earful on the Renewable Fuels Standard these days. Starting today and through the Nov. 20, Fuels America, an umbrella group of ethanol producers and trade associations, will be running an [ad](#) reminding Trump of his promises to farmers and accusing oil refiners of demanding a taxpayer funded bailout. The refiners had the inverse ad up during Fox & Friends last week.

Ticking clock: EPA's final RFS rule went to the White House for review last week, and Pruitt has promised to release it by the statutory Nov. 30 deadline.

**** Presented by ExxonMobil:** We're collaborating with FuelCell Energy on a novel idea to use fuel cells to capture carbon at natural gas power plants, and in the process reduce emissions and increase electrical output. This technology could be a game changer in addressing the world's growing need for energy, while also reducing the impact on the environment. [Learn more.](#) **

HIT THE FLOOR! House lawmakers this week are expected to vote on the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act [H.R. 3043 \(115\)](#), which aims to speed the regulatory approval process for hydropower projects. And they're also expected to consider compromise legislation [H.R. 2874 \(115\)](#) overhauling the National Flood Insurance Program to impose new penalties on homeowners with repeat flooding, though with softer consequences than originally floated.

MEGA HOUSE ENERGY PACKAGE GETS MARKUP: The House Natural Resources Committee is expected Wednesday to [mark up](#) a broad new energy package [H.R. 4239 \(115\)](#) on Wednesday after its introduction on Friday, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Among other provisions, the SECURE American Energy Act would roll back Obama-era offshore drilling rules, create an offshore oil and gas revenue program for East Coast drilling and give more oil and gas permitting power to the states.

CLIMATE REPORT AT ODDS WITH TRUMP STANCE: Even as the White House stuck with its line the climate "has changed and is always changing," scientists from the 13 agencies who worked on the [National Climate Assessment](#) that concluded human activity is driving climate change said they saw no effort from the administration to meddle in their work, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#).

In response, Paul Bledsoe, who helped release the first national climate assessment while at the Clinton White House in 2000, emails his take: "The White House clearly judged that the firestorm over delaying or suppressing the report release, especially ahead of the Bonn climate talks, would be greater than from the findings themselves."

NEW TACTIC IN CLIMATE FIGHT: Speaking at the Vatican over the weekend, California Gov. Jerry Brown asked the Catholic Church to throw its weight behind his efforts to undermine Trump's climate rollbacks abroad, POLITICO California's David Siders [reports](#). Brown urged religious establishments to help "awaken the world" to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and described the president's rejection of mainstream climate science as a "lie within a lie."

PRINCE OF WYOMING? Blackwater founder Erik Prince tells [NBC News](#) he's still "mulling" a challenge to Wyoming Sen. [John Barrasso](#). "They have been in the wilderness for eight years, saying oh, if only we had a Republican president and now they have one," he said. "[They're] kind of out of excuses." One fact of note: Barrasso has received just 5.5 percent of his total \$2.4 million haul of itemized individual contributions since the start of 2013 from Wyoming. There's no public polling on how the theoretical Barrasso v. Prince matchup would go.

MAIL CALL! TIME OUT! Two top Energy and Commerce Committee Democrats — [Frank Pallone](#) and [Bobby Rush](#) — sent [a letter](#) asking that [a hearing](#) slated for Tuesday on two bills making significant changes to the Energy Star programs and efficiency standards for ceiling fans be postponed until witnesses from EPA and DOE are available. "These bills would make substantial changes to the popular Energy Star Program and efficiency standards for ceiling fans, and should not be rushed through the Committee process without adequate input from the agencies tasked with executing these potential changes," they wrote to Chairman [Greg Walden](#) and Energy Subcommittee Chairman [Fred Upton](#).

DEMOCRATS TO PRUITT: WITHDRAW SCIENCE ADVISER POLICY: Six senior House Democrats on the Science and Energy and Commerce committees [asked](#) Pruitt to withdraw his "biased, harmful" policy barring scientists who receive agency grants from serving on scientific advisory panels. "We advise you to follow [Federal Advisory Committee Act] regulations and policy in selecting qualified individuals to serve on EPA's science advisory committees just as previous administrations led by both parties have done. Anything less is a great disservice to the public interest," they wrote.

CALIFORNIA TALLIES WILDFIRE NEEDS: Golden State bigwigs, including Brown, Sens. [Dianne Feinstein](#) and [Kamala Harris](#) and 39 California House members, sent a letter to Trump Friday asking for \$7.4 billion in federal funds to help the state recover from devastating wildfires. Letter link [here](#).

MORE TIME NEEDED: A bicameral group of 81 Democrats, led by Sens. [Maria Cantwell](#) and [Tom Udall](#) and Reps. [Jared Polis](#) and [Raúl Grijalva](#), asked Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in [a letter](#) released Friday to extend the public comment period on its proposed repeal of BLM's methane waste rule from 30 to 90 days and to offer public hearings in the Western U.S. "The American people deserve to get a proper return on this natural gas resource, and any attempt to roll back this rule would represent a giveaway to industry polluters," they wrote.

THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL: In light of U.S. Forest Service recommendations to potentially allow new uranium mining near the Grand Canyon, House Natural Resources Ranking Member [Raúl Grijalva](#) wrote Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) [a letter](#) to ask for a hearing on his bill [H.R. 360 \(115\)](#) to create a national monument in the area. Grijalva separately [asked](#) Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue for his rationale behind the recommendation and whether the public would have the opportunity to comment.

NEW PHASE OF KEYSTONE FIGHT: Volunteers with Bold Nebraska went door-to-door in the five Nebraska Public Service Commissioners home districts to raise concerns about the use of eminent domain and environmental concerns surrounding the Keystone XL pipeline. The Nebraska regulators expect to make a final decision on the pipeline permit by the end of the year.

ADS URGE NO DRILLING IN ANWR: The League of Conservation voters is targeting Republican Reps. [Bruce Poliquin](#) and [Darrell Issa](#) with ads (sample [here](#)) urging them not to support opening ANWR to drilling. It's part of an ongoing \$200,000 campaign.

NO REAL RUSH ON METHANE: EPA is now all-but-certain not to take any final action on the Obama-era 2016 methane regulation targeting emissions rule for new oil and gas wells until the next year, Pro's Alex Guillén reports in [Energy Regulation Watch](#). That comes as the agency issued [a notice](#) last week floated the idea (offered by the American Petroleum Institute) to implement longer phase-in periods for key requirements of the rule rather than seeking an outright stay.

MOVER, SHAKER: Katie Waldman leaves her post as press secretary for Montana Sen. [Steve Daines](#) this Thursday for a "new opportunity."

QUICK HITS

— Donald Trump accused of obstructing satellite research into climate change. [The Guardian](#).

— To make coal plants in southern Illinois competitive, Dynegy seeks lawmakers' help. [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).

— In the Country Where Coal Is King, a Battle With the EU Looms. [Bloomberg](#).

— Contractor wasted millions on unnecessary supplies for S.C.'s failed nuclear reactors. [Post and Courier](#).

— Ohio city refuses to give up fight against gas pipeline. [AP](#).

— Wyoming's quiet governor faces a brash Interior Secretary, with a bird in the balance. [Casper Star-Tribune](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

9:00 a.m. — "[The New Eurasia Energy Landscape](#)," German Marshall Fund, 1744 R Street NW

12:00 p.m. — House Ways and Means [markup](#) of GOP tax overhaul bill, 1100 Longworth

5:00 p.m. — House of Representatives Committee on Rules meeting on Hydropower Policy Modernization Act of 2017, H-313

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. — House Energy and Commerce Committee [hearing](#) on energy bills, House

Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — "[Examining Challenges in Puerto Rico's Recovery and the Role of the Financial Oversight and Management Board](#)," House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1324

2:00 p.m. — "[Legislative Hearing on Discussion Draft Legislation to Overhaul Federal Lands Energy Policy](#)," House Natural Resources Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

5:00 p.m. — "[Re-energizing Nuclear Security](#)," The Stimson Center, 1211 Connecticut Ave, NW, 8th Floor

WEDNESDAY

9:45 a.m. — Senate Commerce Committee holds [vote](#) on the Bridenstine nomination and others, Dirksen 106

10:00 a.m. — The House Science Committee's Energy Subcommittee and Environment Subcommittee hold a [joint hearing](#) on "Geoengineering: Innovation, Research, and Technology," Rayburn 2318

10:00 a.m. — [Markup](#) on Offshore-Onshore Energy Bill, 8 Additional Measures, House Natural Resources Committee, 1324 Longworth

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds [hearing](#) on White and Wheeler nominations, Dirksen 406

THURSDAY

9:15 a.m. — "[Heavy-Duty Innovation: Energy, Automation & Tech in the Trucking Sector](#)," Securing America's Future Energy, The Loft at 600 F, 600 F Street Northwest

9:30 a.m. — ITC hearing on countervailing and anti-dumping duty investigations into Argentine and Indonesian biodiesel, 500 E St., SW

9:30 a.m. — "[What Lessons Can Be Learned from Power Africa?](#)" Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

10:15 a.m. — "[H.R. ____, Farm Regulatory Certainty Act](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2322

11:00 a.m. — FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee holds discussion with Platts reporters and other credentialed press, S&P Global Platts Washington office, 1200 G St., NW, Ste. 1000

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/11/what-to-watch-for-as-bonn-climate-talks-kick-off-025389>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

State Dept's Shannon to lead U.S. delegation to climate talks [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 10/06/2017 07:18 PM EDT

Thomas Shannon, the State Department's undersecretary for political affairs, will lead the U.S. delegation to a major international climate change summit next month in Bonn, Germany, according to an administration official.

The news comes amid swirling rumors that Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt was angling to lead the delegation, a move that would have made a skeptic of established climate science the face of the United States at the talks.

In previous years, the State Department's climate envoy led the U.S. delegation to the annual gathering. But the Trump administration has declined to fill that position.

The Bonn negotiations are aimed at implementing the 2015 Paris climate change agreement, from which President Donald Trump has said he intends to withdraw.

Neither the White House nor the State Department responded to requests for comment.

To view online [click here.](#)

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EPA, Army Corps seek delay to WOTUS start date [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/03/2017 05:48 PM EDT

The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers sent to the White House a proposed rule on Friday delaying the effective date of the Waters of the United States regulation to give the administration more time to craft a new version of rule, according to an agency spokeswoman.

EPA declined to specify the new effective date for the regulation, also called the Clean Water Rule. Nor would it say if the proposed rule would make other changes. The notice will appear on the OMB's website this morning.

"In order to provide regulatory certainty, EPA and the Department of the Army have sent a proposed rule to the Office of Management and Budget for interagency review that would amend the effective date associated with the 2015 Clean Water Rule to give the agencies time to consider the two-step process proposing to rescind and revise the 2015 rule," the spokeswoman said.

In June, EPA proposed a repeal of the rule, which aimed to clarify which waters fall under federal jurisdiction. The comment period closed in September with 190,000 comments filed.

The proposed rule is separate from any rule intended to replace WOTUS.

"The agency is also in the process of holding listening sessions with states, tribes and stakeholders as we work to develop a proposed step 2 rule that would revise the definition of 'waters of the United States,'" the spokeswoman said.

The current rule was stayed by the 6th Circuit in some states last year.

WHAT'S NEXT: OMB will send the proposed rule back to EPA for release and publication in the Federal Register.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump urges Saudi Arabia to list state oil company on N.Y. stock exchange [Back](#)

By POLITICO Staff | 11/04/2017 09:58 AM EDT

President Donald Trump on Saturday urged Saudi Arabia to list shares of its biggest oil company on the New York Stock Exchange.

"Would very much appreciate Saudi Arabia doing their IPO of Aramco with the New York Stock Exchange. Important to the United States!" Trump tweeted shortly before he was due to leave Hawaii on the first leg of a 13-day trip to Asia.

Saudi Arabia is preparing to sell shares of its state-run oil company — the world's largest energy company — on international markets.

Saudi Prince Mohammed has said the initial public offering of about \$100 billion could value the company at some \$2 trillion, according to Reuters.

In an on-the-record meeting with reporters aboard Air Force One later Saturday, Trump clarified: "Aramco is going public. It will be perhaps the biggest going public ever. It's the Saudi Arabian oil company and it will be just about the biggest ever.

"And I want them to consider, because right now they're not looking at it, because of litigation, risk and other risk, which is very sad, they're not looking at it, but I want them to strongly consider the New York Stock Exchange or NASDAQ, or frankly anybody else located in this country, but those are the big two

"I just spoke to the King a little while ago, and they will consider it."

The Trump administration has been working hard to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia.

Trump in August described his relationship with King Salman of Saudi Arabia as "very great," calling him "a friend of mine."

Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner made an unannounced visit to Saudi Arabia at the end of October — his third trip to the country this year. He was accompanied by

deputy national security adviser Dina Powell and Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt.

Kushner is tasked with leading the administration's efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. The White House would not say who Kushner met with on his visit.

In August, Trump offered to personally mediate a dispute between Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Arab countries centered around alleged support of terrorism.

"I was telling the emir before that if I can help between UAE and Saudi Arabia ... if I can help mediate between Qatar and, in particular, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, I would be willing to do so," he said at the time.

Trump visited Saudi Arabia with a large White House entourage in May, committing the United States to a deeper alliance with the "sacred land."

As a presidential candidate, Trump had previously accused the Muslim-majority kingdom of complicity in the World Trade Center attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

To view online [click here.](#)

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GAO to review Pruitt appearance in beef group's anti-WOTUS video [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/03/2017 06:22 PM EDT

The Government Accountability Office will investigate EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's appearance in an industry group's video calling for public comments in favor of repealing the Waters of the U.S. rule, according to a [letter](#) released today by House Democrats.

Rep. [Peter DeFazio](#) (D-Ore.) asked GAO to investigate whether Pruitt's actions violated laws "on the use of appropriated funds for lobbying and publicity or propaganda purposes and the Antideficiency Act," according to the letter, dated Oct. 31.

The [video](#) was posted on Aug. 16 by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a major critic of the Obama-era WOTUS regulation. It includes an interview in which Pruitt discusses his criticisms of the rule, along with text urging viewers to submit pre-written comments via the NCBA's website.

The video quickly drew criticisms from environmental groups. EPA at the time [said](#) Pruitt sought "engagement with all stakeholders, especially those who felt their voices were ignored by the previous Administration."

GAO previously dinged the Obama-era EPA in 2015 when it [concluded](#) the agency's use of a "Thunderclap" social media campaign promoting the WOTUS rule amounted to "covert propaganda."

WHAT'S NEXT: GAO's letter does not specify how long the inquiry will take.

To view online [click here.](#)

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House Natural Resources Committee unveils new energy bill [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/03/2017 03:34 PM EDT

House lawmakers today unveiled a new [energy bill](#) that would roll back Obama-era offshore drilling rules, create an offshore oil and gas revenue program for East Coast drilling and give more oil and gas permitting power to the states.

Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.) introduced the bill, with House Natural Resource Committee Chairman Rep. [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah) and Texas Democratic Reps. [Henry Cuellar](#) and [Vicente Gonzalez](#). The bill is expected to move through the committee next week and hit the House floor "in the near future," committee spokesman Parish Braden said.

Among the bill's provisions is a directive to create an offshore oil and gas revenue program for states along the Atlantic coast and Alaska, where the Interior Department is [exploring](#) opening more of the waters for offshore oil drilling.

The bill would also require Congress to approve any future removals of offshore acres from lease sales or establishment of new marine sanctuaries, an apparent response to the Obama administration's [last-minute removal](#) of some Alaska and Atlantic waters from development.

Onshore, the bill would also allow states to oversee drilling plans on federal land within their borders.

The bill calls on Interior to hold a lease sale for wind power projects off the California coast within one year of the bill's passage. Interior would also conduct feasibility studies for wind lease sales off the coasts of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam, with results due in six months and possible sales within a year of the bill's passing.

WHAT'S NEXT: The House Natural Resources Committee expects to take up the bill next week.

To view online [click here](#).

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New U.S. climate report at odds with Trump policy [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/03/2017 05:10 PM EDT

A sweeping new U.S. government [report](#) concludes that humans have pushed global temperatures to the highest level seen by modern civilization, defying the Trump administration's pronouncements that climate change is a hoax or based on unsettled science.

The report, produced by 13 agencies as part of the congressionally required National Climate Assessment, reinforced years of research that shows human activity was the main reason

temperatures have soared in the past century — and they are likely to keep climbing, boosting sea levels and threatening environmental disasters.

The report contradicts President Donald Trump's rejection of climate science, his plan to withdraw the U.S. from a global pact to fight climate change and his moves to unwind a slate of policies put in place under former President Barack Obama to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Foremost, we conclude based on extensive evidence, that it is extremely likely that human activities are the dominant causes of global warming," said David Fahey, one of the lead authors. "For the warming over the last century, there is no convincing alternative explanation for the warming observed."

However, the White House stuck to its stance that climate "has changed and is always changing," and it pointed to portions of the report about the uncertainty around the Earth's sensitivity to greenhouse gas emissions.

White House spokesman Raj Shah said in a statement that the Trump administration "supports rigorous scientific analysis and debate," and the U.S. will continue to promote access to "affordable and reliable energy needed to grow economically," support technology and infrastructure that reduce emissions and "enable us to address future risks, including climate related risks."

Fahey, a scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told reporters on a conference call that he saw no attempt to influence the report by the Trump administration.

"I'm quite confident to say there's been no political interference in the scientific messages of this report," Fahey said.

Virginia Burkett, an Interior Department climate scientist and chair of the subcommittee on Global Change Research, emphasized that the report steered clear of recommending any policies to deal with climate change, saying it was limited to "strictly the science."

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who said he did not believe that man-made emissions were the main cause of climate change and has moved to eliminate Obama's rules curbing carbon dioxide pollution from power plants, did not comment on the report.

The report was reviewed by scientists at the National Academies, released for public comment and screened by federal agencies under both the Obama and Trump administrations.

Juanita Constible, a special projects director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a blog post the report confirms what many other previous studies had shown.

"It's essential that our federal leaders in Congress and the Executive Branch take seriously the dire conclusions from the painstaking and authoritative work in the [the report] — and more importantly, to urgently act on the findings," Constible wrote.

Bob Kopp, a climate scientist at Rutgers University and a report contributor, said the findings "reaffirmed that climate change is real, that humans are the dominant cause of warming, and that it is having an effect in the U.S. And those effects will grow more severe as long as we continue to emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere."

Sea levels are expected to rise one to four feet by the end of the century and could swell by up to eight feet if emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise, the Climate Science Special Report says.

Episodes of heavy rainfall are becoming more frequent and intense, and heat waves will become more common. Kopp said the report also shows the U.S. can expect more compounded extreme weather events, like the multiple hurricanes and wildfires that occurred this summer.

Annual global average temperatures are expected to rise by 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050. And although the growth in global carbon dioxide emissions is slowing, that trend is moving too slowly to keep temperatures below a dangerous tipping point of 3.6 degrees, or 2.0 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels that would see more devastating impacts, the scientists found.

The report is the most comprehensive study since the last National Climate Assessment was published three years ago and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its physical science report four years ago, Kopp said.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program, which coordinates the assessment, also released a draft of a second [volume](#), which examines impacts on public health and the environment, and a draft of a [report](#) on changes in carbon levels.

The report about how climate change impacts Americans, which will undergo public comment, notes that "Americans are responding to rapid changes affecting their everyday lives and livelihoods," because of climate change.

Reservoir managers in the Colorado River Basin are adjusting to lower water levels, cities along the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts are seeing more flooding and storm surge from rising seas and heavier rains. Farms in the Midwest are adopting new crop management strategies, and communities in the western U.S. face more wildfires, it notes.

Some risks are already unavoidable while others could be reversed if greenhouse gas emissions decline, according to the report.

"Climate change puts many things Americans care about at risk, both now and in the future, and risks will intensify without action," the report says.

Eric Wolff contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

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Jerry Brown's holy war on Donald Trump [Back](#)

By David Siders | 11/05/2017 07:12 AM EDT

VATICAN CITY — California has opened a new front in its war on Donald Trump — the Vatican, where Gov. Jerry Brown on Saturday sought to enlist the Catholic Church in his

effort to undermine the president's climate policies abroad.

Brown, addressing a somber gathering of scientists, politicians and religious leaders here, rebuked Trump's rejection of mainstream climate science as a "lie within a lie," urging religious establishments to help "awaken the world" to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The conspicuous repudiation of the president, in this center of Christendom on the eve of this week's international climate talks in Bonn, Germany, served to underscore Brown's role as one of the most prominent figures in the anti-Trump resistance. But it also highlighted California's deep antipathy toward the president on a global stage, allying the nation's most populous state with the international community against the backdrop of simmering tension between the White House and Pope Francis on climate change.

The pope, who did not appear at the conference, implicitly criticized the president in October for withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, a decision that weighed heavily over the gathering.

Brown wasn't the only Californian emphasizing the American divide over global warming — or the state's determination to blaze its own trail on the issue. Rallying the same audience the previous day, California Democratic state Senate leader Kevin de León cast California's leaders — and not, explicitly, Washington's — as the "faithful stewards of God's creation."

Daniel Kammen, the University of California, Berkeley, professor who resigned noisily from his role as science envoy to the State Department in August, called Trump's election America's "existential crisis" and encouraged efforts to impeach him. And California Democratic Congressman Scott Peters said the relatively large proportion of U.S. Congress members who are Catholic is "one reason why Pope Francis' commitment to making environmental stewardship a priority of his papacy has such a potential to affect American climate policy."

The meeting, hosted by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, preceded two weeks of climate talks in Bonn, where Brown and leaders of other Democratic states will seek to persuade the world's nations that wide swaths of the United States remain committed to the Paris agreement. Trump's withdrawal from the pact has cast a cloud over the upcoming gathering in Germany.

Still, California's Democratic governor minimized the significance of Trump's withdrawal from the accord, saying the decision helped focus public attention on the issue.

In comparison to worldwide efforts to address climate change, Brown said, "The Trump factor is very small, very small indeed."

Instead, Brown called for a fundamental transformation of people's way of life.

"It's not just a light rinse," Brown said. "We need a total, I might say brainwashing. We need to wash our brains out and see a very different kind of world."

Yet the Catholic Church's ability to move American public opinion on climate change remains in doubt. For one thing, relations between Trump and the spiritual leader of America's more than 50 million Catholics remain cool after Pope Francis criticized Trump on issues ranging from climate change to immigration to refugee resettlement.

"The state of relations between the pope and Trump is not good and has never been good," longtime Vatican analyst Iacopo Scaramuzzi said in an email. "They are openly at odds on almost every point, from personal style of life to issues as climate change or migrations, from attitude towards China, Iran or Cuba to the concept of 'people' and 'populism.'"

While the pope's encyclical on the environment served as an inspiration for negotiations in Paris two years ago, many climate activists hoped lobbying by a popular religious figure might also nudge public opinion on climate among conservatives in the United States. There is little evidence that has happened.

Following the encyclical's release and the pope's 2015 U.S. tour, researchers at the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication found a short-term increase in the number of Americans who said climate change was a "moral," "social justice" or "poverty" issue. Soon after, however, they found public opinion returned to pre-encyclical levels.

"It was him coming to the United States, where he got 24-7, wall-to-wall coverage we saw a significant impact on public opinion," said Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. "We also found that six months later, that effect had faded away."

Bob Inglis, a former Republican congressman whose progressive views on climate change contributed to his defeat in a South Carolina primary in 2010, said of the pope's encyclical, "I do acknowledge that it hasn't exactly — it hasn't yet turned into the barn burner that I had hoped that it might have been."

For conservatives, Francis may be an imperfect messenger, controversial for his relatively progressive views not only on climate, but on marriage and immigration. The pope and Trump traded jabs during the presidential campaign last year about Trump's proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, and Trump announced his withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement just days after a visit in which the pope handed him a copy of his encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

"I've got a Catholic friend in Congress who will go nameless, who told me that, and he was only halfway joking, that he thinks this pope is the anti-Christ," Inglis said. "There's a contingent of American Catholics who really think that the pope has left the reservation."

Inglis said he is optimistic for the long-term effect of the pope's advocacy on climate change, as the issue is taught in local parishes and other religious organizations. Climate activist Bill McKibben said the Catholic Church is "one of those bureaucracies through which things work their way kind of slowly," and he said its effects will likely percolate for years.

But Francis is also suffering in America from a problem that he shares with Trump: a declining base. Though about 1 in 5 American adults are still affiliated with the Catholic Church, their numbers are in decline. A survey last month from the Pew Research Center found a majority of U.S. adults do not think it is necessary to believe in God to be moral. And regardless of religious affiliation, climate change has failed in recent elections to register a top level of concern for most voters.

Jim Nicholson, the former secretary of Veterans Affairs and Republican National Committee chairman who served as ambassador to the Holy See under George W. Bush, said Trump's relationship with the Vatican "got off to a ragged start" but has improved steadily and is now

"pretty good." He cited Trump's nomination of Callista Gingrich, the wife of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, to be ambassador to the Holy See.

"There are obvious differences on some subjects, like climate and immigration and the death penalty, always. But there's an awful lot of alignment in values — religious freedom and trafficking and life," he said.

Trump has said he is withdrawing from the Paris agreement because it puts the United States "at a very, very big economic disadvantage." But he heartened many religious leaders with his appointment of Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court and his opposition to funding for nongovernment organizations that perform abortions.

For many religious voters, said Mitch Hescoc, president of the Evangelical Environmental Network, matters such as abortion and Supreme Court nominations carry more weight at the ballot box than climate change.

"The problem is that [climate change] is not on the radar screen of the reasons they vote yet at this point in time," Hescoc said. "That's my job, is to help them to see why it is as important as being pro-life. Our No. 1 message is that climate change is a pro-life issue."

Climate experts stewed throughout the Vatican meeting over global climate projections they described as "horrific," "terrifying" and "depressing."

Brown, who left the Vatican for an 80-minute meeting with Arturo Sosa, the superior general of the Jesuits, said Saturday night that he is "going around enlisting allies" in the battle over climate change.

"What it all comes down to is we've got to act sooner, and we have to act more decisively, and that's not happening," Brown said. "There's real horror in store for us if we don't take action."

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by POET: White House expects earful on climate in Sicily — EPA shelves compliance deadlines for effluent limits rule — More ask Zinke not to alter monument designations
Date: Friday, May 26, 2017 5:48:09 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 05/26/2017 05:44 AM EDT

CIAO PRESIDENTE! LET'S TALK CLIMATE: Expect President Donald Trump to get an earful about climate change and the 2015 Paris agreement from the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom as the G-7 kicks off in Sicily. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn told reporters to expect a discussion of climate issues during a session on "global issues" sometime this afternoon. "He's interested to hear what the G7 leaders have to say about climate," Cohn said. "It will be a fairly robust discussion on that." He added Trump's heard "arguments that are persuasive on both sides" about climate change, and noted the president's concern the existing emissions reduction pledge is too ambitious and would be "highly crippling to the U.S. economic growth."

Eyebrow-raising comment from Cohn on U.S. energy mix: "Coal doesn't even make that much sense anymore as a feedstock. Natural gas, which we have become an abundant producer [of], which we're going to become a major exporter of, is such a cleaner fuel. If you think about how solar and how much wind power we've created in the United States, we can be a manufacturing powerhouse and still be environmentally friendly."

Climate has already popped up repeatedly on Trump's European swing: Cohn said Trump had been pushed on climate change and the Paris pact at every bilateral meeting with world leaders during his time in Europe. Newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters he had an "extremely direct and very frank" conversation with Trump about not making a hasty decision on Paris. "I reminded him of the importance these agreements have for us," Macron said, according to [Reuters](#). "My wish in any case is that there should be no hasty decision on this subject by the United States because it is our collective responsibility to retain the global nature of this pledge, which was a first."

European Council President Donald Tusk said there were [unresolved questions](#) about the U.S. position on climate change following his meeting with the president. And that comes on the heels of Pope Francis gifting Trump a copy of his climate change-related encyclical and Vatican officials urging the U.S. to stick with the Paris deal.

Commitment sought: As Trump touched down in Sicily Thursday night, European leaders still hadn't gotten a clear sense of where he stood on the Paris deal, and diplomats from other nations said their top priority was keeping Trump in the pact, POLITICO's Tara Palmeri [reports](#). The U.S. indecision is a departure from standard practice at international summits where policy commitments are typically agreed to in advance.

Bottom line: Trump is expected to make a final decision about Paris once he returns from the trip.

TGIF MY FRIENDS! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Southern Environmental Law Center's Navis Bermudez was first to identify Alexander Stephens as the only Confederate vice president. For today: The late 1960s expulsion of which House member was followed by a Supreme Court ruling allowing them to regain their seat? Send your tips, energy gossip and

comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PROGRAMMING NOTE - Due to the Memorial Day holiday, Morning Energy will not publish on Monday, May 29. Our next Morning Energy will publish on Tuesday, May 30. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

GIANFORTE WINS IN MONTANA: One day after allegedly [assaulting](#) a reporter, Montana voters sent Republican Greg Gianforte to Congress to fill the seat once held by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. The race went for Gianforte, a former technology executive who lost a gubernatorial bid in 2016, over Democrat Rob Quist, a folk singer and first-time candidate. The race for Montana's sole congressional seat had narrowed even before the "bodyslam" of The Guardian's Ben Jacobs, even though Trump won the Big Sky State by more than 20 points last fall. POLITICO's Scott Bland has more on the race [here](#).

COMPLIANCE DATES PUSHED FOR EPA RULE: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt signed a [proposed regulation](#) Thursday suspending compliance dates for an Obama administration regulation limiting toxic discharges from coal-fired power plants, Pro's Annie Snider [reports](#). The agency will accept public comment for 30 days on its plan to suspend compliance dates implementing two aspects of the rule, which limits waterborne pollutants like arsenic and lead. Those requirements would be indefinitely suspended "until EPA promulgates a final rule specifying compliance dates."

**** A message from POET - one of the world's largest ethanol producers:** With scientists and engineers, POET operates 30 biofuel facilities & America's first cellulosic biofuel plant. We produce a cleaner fuel for millions of drivers, every day. We're POET and we're driving innovation, from the ground up. Learn more [here](#). **

MORE PRESSURE FOR ETHICS WAIVERS: Additional voices are pushing the Trump administration to release copies of ethics waivers it has granted so that lobbyists can serve in its ranks. House Natural Resources Ranking Member [Raul Grijalva](#) sent [a letter](#) to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue requesting all copies of the waivers. "The current Administration's refusal to comply with this completely reasonable and standard request for information flies in the face of the President's repeated claims to support an open and transparent government," he wrote. That letter comes after Earthjustice filed FOIA requests with [EPA](#), [Energy](#) and [Interior](#) for copies of all waivers already granted.

YOU DON'T GOT THE POWER! As the public comment period on what to do about Bears Ears National Monument closes, the top four congressional Democrats — Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#), House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) and Minority Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) — sent Zinke [a letter](#) urging him not to alter existing national monument designations. "It is unconscionable to think that this administration would sell out America's outdoor heritage to benefit corporate interests in the oil, gas and mining industries," they wrote.

But wait, there's more! 86 House Democrats, led by [Raul Grijalva](#), sent Zinke [a letter](#) arguing he lacks the power to rescind or revise national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act. "Congress has not delegated authority to significantly diminish or abolish an existing national monument," they wrote. "The Constitutional authority to revoke or shrink a national monument lies with the Congress."

Meanwhile, politicians split on Maine designation: While comments on another two dozen previously designated monuments roll on, Sen. [Angus King](#) sent [a letter](#) Thursday urging Zinke "in the strongest possible terms" to let the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, designated by the Obama administration, remain in its current form. "I am absolutely convinced that the prompt conclusion of this review and reaffirmation of the Monument designation would be a positive step," King wrote. "This Monument is some of the first positive news for the Katahdin region in a long time; please don't let it be taken away." That comes as [a map](#) from Gov. Paul LePage's office shows what it says are shuttered recreational opportunities in the area since the monument's designation.

JETTING OFF: Zinke will travel to Norway, Greenland and Alaska on a congressional delegation led by Senate ENR Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) this weekend.

ONE MORE FROM GRIJALVA: The Arizona Democrat also asked Zinke in [a letter](#) for information about who asked the U.S. Geological Survey to remove references to the relationship between climate change and sea level rise from a press release. "The public needs reassurance that his Administration will not persecute scientists or suppress the findings of their work," he wrote.

Grijalva's office tells ME he has yet to receive any response to 11 different letters sent to Interior and related agencies dating to mid-February. ME remembers Republicans loudly decrying the slow response times to their inquiries of Obama-era officials, but they don't appear to be concerned now that roles have reversed. Interior did not respond to requests for comment.

NEARLY EVERGREEN AT THIS POINT: Senior House Republican leaders, rife with divisions in their ranks about government spending, are already plotting how to avoid a government shutdown this fall, POLITICO's Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#). Congress only has 43 legislative days left to pass appropriations bills before they hit the Sept. 30 deadline to keep the lights on, so Speaker Paul Ryan in a closed-door GOP conference meeting Thursday morning raised the possibility of clumping appropriations bills together in an omnibus to save time.

The takeaway from one GOP source: "This is gonna be a brutal battle. Defense hawks want \$640 [billion], appropriators want \$516 [billion] for non-defense, moderates don't want any changes to mandatory. And yet everyone says the budget still has to balance. Those numbers don't add up. And a budget that doesn't have serious deficit reduction isn't going to make it out of committee."

THEY'RE GETTING FASTER AT THIS! Just two days after the [announcement](#), Trump's White House formally sent the nomination of David Jonas to be DOE's general counsel to the Senate. The landing team member and an expert on nuclear nonproliferation has been a partner at the Virginia law firm Fluett, Huber and Hoang since 2016.

ICYMI: Three of the four protesters that [interrupted](#) Thursday's confirmation hearings for two FERC nominees and the No. 2 DOE post were sent to jail after being charged with misdemeanors, a spokeswoman for the Capitol Police tells ME. The other paid a fine and left. Pro's Esther Whieldon has a look at the rest of the hearing [here](#).

MAIL CALL! SENATORS PUSH FOR DRINKING WATER FUNDING: A bipartisan group of more than two dozen senators, led by Sen. [Ben Cardin](#), sent [a letter](#) to top

Appropriators urging them to continue strong funding for grant programs to reduce lead in drinking water. "We can no longer delay needed upgrades to our infrastructure, strengthening drinking water protections and removing lead and other contaminants out of public water supplies," they wrote.

GROUPS FIGHT METHANE RULE RECONSIDERATION: A coalition of more than 60 conservation, public health, labor and faith groups are urging Pruitt not to suspend requirements for oil and gas companies to find and fix leaks from their facilities as he reconsiders those standards for new and modified wells. "EPA's methane standards are national protections that will ensure all communities benefit from these common sense best practices — and not just those located in states that have adopted such regulations," the groups, which include the Environmental Defense Fund, Clean Air Task Force and Earthworks, wrote in [a letter](#).

BLANKENSHIP ASKS SUPREMES TO STEP IN: Former Massey Energy chief Don Blankenship [asked](#) the Supreme Court on Thursday to toss out his 2015 misdemeanor conviction of conspiracy to violate mine safety standards, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). He recently left prison after serving a year for that conviction, which stemmed from the 2010 Upper Big Branch mine disaster that killed 29 of his workers.

DIRECTOR OF NEBRASKA BOARD OVERSEEING KEYSTONE RESIGNS: Jeff Pursley, executive director of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, has resigned effective June 12. A commission spokeswoman tells ME the departure will have "no impact" on the commissioners' review of Keystone XL's proposed route currently before the panel.

OVERDRAWN: An employee within Interior's Office of the Chief Information Officer knowingly used her government-issued travel card to pay for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars and gasoline, according to an inspector general [report](#) out Thursday. The official, Tracy Hamm, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor credit card fraud and received a year of probation.

MOVER, SHAKER: David Leiter, the longtime ML Strategies president who served in the Clinton administration's DOE and as chief of staff to Sen. John Kerry, has formed [Plurus Strategies](#). One of its first clients is Exxon Mobil.

John Stapleton is leaving his position as communications director for Rep. [David McKinley](#) and begins a new role with the House Homeland Security Committee next week.

Natalie Mamerow, an adviser to the director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management at the Interior Department during the final year of the Obama administration, has joined the American Society of Civil Engineers as a senior manager of federal government relations, where she'll be lobbying for water, energy and environmental infrastructure. She previously worked as a legislative assistant for Rep. [Ron Kind](#) (h/t POLITICO Influence).

SPOTTED: Former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz coming out of [The Bottom Line](#) in Washington around 1 p.m. Thursday.

QUICK HITS

— New York U.S. Lawmakers Urge Feds To Expand Hudson River Cleanup. [WAMC](#).

— Utility owner, ex-regulator, lobbyist indicted on bribery, fraud charges. [Arizona Republic](#).

- Iran sees breakthrough in oil deals following Rouhani re-election. [Reuters](#).
- Coal Mines Are Reimagined as a New Power Source. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- Perry Says His Dad Helped Make Him a Cowboy and a Politician. [AP](#).
- Climate Change Could Uncover An Abandoned Arctic Nuclear Base. [Huffington Post](#).

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/05/white-house-expects-earful-on-climate-in-sicily-023024>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump still hasn't given allied leaders what they want [Back](#)

By Tara Palmeri | 05/25/2017 08:49 PM EDT

SICILY — Despite a day of pitches from European leaders, President Donald Trump has yet to give them what they want — a commitment to the Paris climate accord ahead of the G7 summit.

Trump departed late Thursday from Brussels, where he met with his fellow NATO heads of state, and headed to Sicily, where he embarks Friday on his first meeting with leaders of the G7.

Trump's national economic advisor Gary Cohn set the bar low for any strong commitments from the U.S. at the global summit, where Trump will meet with his Canadian, French, German, Italian, Japanese and British counterparts.

"The G7 is set up to be more of an ad-hoc session where the leaders get together and they listen and talk to each other," Cohn told U.S. reporters on the way to Italy.

"The president has told you that he's going to ultimately make a decision on Paris and climate when he gets back," Cohn added. "He's interested to hear what the G7 leaders have to say about climate. It will be a fairly robust discussion on that."

That position is a departure from standard practice for international summits, at which policy commitments are typically agreed in advance.

Diplomats from other nations said their top priority was keeping Trump in the Paris accord, a 2015 agreement intended to limit global warming.

Trump has argued that the regulations imposed hamper domestic economic growth but has said he would consider some pollution limits.

"This time there's going to be a substantive negotiation that can last late into the night Friday into Saturday on a final communiqué," warned a French official. "We want the most ambitious agreement possible, and we don't want the United States to leave."

While the EU leaders described the meeting as "cordial" and "friendly," it was clear that the new and unpredictable American president had not offered reassurances on some [core areas of concern](#) for Brussels.

European Council President Donald Tusk said they had found common ground on fighting terrorism, and appeared to be "on the same line" about the conflict in Ukraine. But Tusk said there were unresolved questions on trade and climate change - two topics that will be addressed at the G7 summit.

"Some issues remained open like climate and trade," EU Council President Donald Tusk told reporters shortly after a meeting at EU headquarters in Brussels on Thursday morning.

He reserved his most pointed remarks for the U.S. position on Russia though. "I am not sure that we can say 100 percent today that we have a common position, common opinion about Russia," Tusk said.

Sanctions on Russia were also raised at the NATO summit, but Trump has not taken a position either way. "I think the president is looking at it. Right now, we don't have a position," Cohn said.

There is one point Trump has been clear on -- the fight against terrorism. Trump will continue his discussion from the middle east portion of his trip about raising funding to fight terrorism. His goal is to get the G7 and then G20 involved. Cyber security will also be a major topic.

"Terrorism is going to be a very big topic," Cohn said. "It's going to lead off."

He suggested that Trump may give more clues on his trade policy on Friday in Sicily.

"We are going to continue to fight for what we believe is right, which is free, open and fair trade, which the president has been very clear on what that means," he said.

"We will have a very robust discussion on trade and we will be talking about what the president means by free and open is, we will treat you the way you treat us, meaning if you don't have barriers to trade or you don't have tariffs, we won't have tariffs."

David Herszenhorn contributed to this report.

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Montana House GOP candidate cited after reporter says he 'body-slammed me' [Back](#)

By Hadas Gold and Gabriel Debenedetti | 05/24/2017 08:36 PM EDT

HELENA, Mont. — Montana Republican congressional candidate Greg Gianforte was issued a citation late Wednesday after he allegedly "body-slammed" a reporter at a campaign event on the eve of a hotly contested special election.

Ben Jacobs, a reporter for The Guardian [tweeted](#) that Gianforte "body-slammed me and broke my glasses" at a campaign event in Bozeman, Montana — minutes before what was to be the last campaign rally of the campaign. Jacobs said he had asked Gianforte about a new budget analysis of House Republicans' effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Late Wednesday, Gallatin County Sheriff Brian Gootkin issued a statement saying the Republican congressional candidate had been cited for "misdemeanor assault" and that Gianforte would have to appear in court by June 7 to resolve the matter. "The nature of the injuries did not meet the statutory elements of felony assault," the sheriff said in his statement.

The incident rocked a closely watched contest, just hours before voters cast their ballots in Thursday's special House election in Montana to replace Ryan Zinke, who is now the Trump administration's secretary of the interior. Gianforte, a technology executive, is running against Democrat Rob Quist, a folk singer and first-time candidate. The race in the traditional Republican stronghold is [turning out to be closer](#) than many thought it would be.

The encounter on election eve immediately captured statewide and even national attention. At least one local station interrupted prime-time programming for a breaking news report and reports bannered all of Montana's biggest newspapers.

The Billings Gazette, The Helena Independent Record and The Missoulian subsequently [rescinded their endorsements](#) of the Republican candidate.

Gianforte's campaign acknowledged an incident but offered a starkly different version of events — one contradicted by witnesses and by audio posted by The Guardian. Gianforte spokesman Shane Scanlon blamed Jacobs for being "aggressive" as he asked questions and for creating a scene.

"Tonight, as Greg was giving a separate interview in a private office, The Guardian's Ben Jacobs entered the office without permission, aggressively shoved a recorder in Greg's face, and began asking badgering questions. Jacobs was asked to leave," Scanlon said.

"After asking Jacobs to lower the recorder, Jacobs declined. Greg then attempted to grab the phone that was pushed in his face. Jacobs grabbed Greg's wrist, and spun away from Greg, pushing them both to the ground. It's unfortunate that this aggressive behavior from a liberal journalist created this scene at our campaign volunteer BBQ."

Audio of the incident [posted by The Guardian](#) seemed to directly contradict the Gianforte campaign's version, as did a number of witnesses — including a Fox News crew that was in the room during Wednesday's incident.

Alicia Acuna [wrote](#) on Fox News' website that she and a crew were preparing for an interview with Gianforte when Jacobs walked into the room, produced a voice recorder and asked Gianforte a question. After Gianforte rebuffed Jacobs, and Jacobs asked a follow-up question, Gianforte grabbed him by the neck, Acuna wrote.

"Gianforte grabbed Jacobs by the neck with both hands and slammed him into the ground behind him," she wrote. "Faith, Keith and I watched in disbelief as Gianforte then began punching the man, as he moved on top the reporter and began yelling something to the effect of 'I'm sick and tired of this!'"

In audio of the incident, Gianforte can clearly be heard getting upset. In it, Jacobs asks Gianforte about the Republican health care bill. Gianforte tells him, "Let me talk to you about that later" as Jacobs continues trying to ask a question. "Speak with Shane," Gianforte says, referring to his spokesman.

"The last guy did the same damn thing," Gianforte says.

"You just body-slammed me and broke my glasses," Jacobs says.

"Get the hell out of here," Gianforte yells.

Gootkin, the sheriff, initially declined to file charges, saying that he had not yet listened to full audio of the incident. He subsequently issued a citation.

In March, Gootkin donated \$250 to Gianforte's campaign, according to an FEC filing.

"After the press conference it was brought to my attention that people were commenting on a contribution that I made to the Gianforte campaign. I did contribute \$250.00 on March 23, 2017. This contribution has nothing to do with our investigation which is now complete," the sheriff stated.

The sheriff said charges followed multiple interviews and an investigation by the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office. He said it was a misdemeanor based on "the nature of Jacobs' injuries."

Other reporters on the scene confirmed via Twitter that they witnessed some sort of altercation between the two.

"I'm not sure I've seen anything like this before," BuzzFeed reporter Alexis Levinson, who was on the scene, [tweeted](#) in a long thread. "This happened behind a half-closed door, so I didn't see it all, but here's what it looked like from the outside. Ben walked into a room where a local TV crew was set up for an interview with Gianforte. All of a sudden, I heard a giant crash and saw Ben's feet fly in the air as he hit the floor."

"Ben walked out holding his broken glasses in his hand and said: 'He just body-slammed me,'" Levinson continued.

Whitney Bermes, a reporter for the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, [tweeted](#) that the police were called to the scene. The Daily Chronicle also reported that Jacobs was treated by an ambulance on the scene, and Bermes later [tweeted](#) that one person was transferred to the hospital.

"Gianforte sitting in a Jeep. Sheriff's deputies were talking to him earlier. Now a medic is at the window talking with him," Bermes also [tweeted](#).

Gianforte then left the event before he was scheduled to speak, according to reporter tweets.

In an interview, Jacobs told MSNBC he approached Gianforte and asked him about the

Congressional Budget Office's score of the House bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

"It was the strangest moment in my entire life reporting," Jacobs said.

He said after calling his editor and police, he went to the hospital to have X-rays because he fell on his elbow.

The Guardian, in a statement released late Wednesday, said it stood by its reporter.

"The Guardian is deeply appalled by how our reporter, Ben Jacobs, was treated in the course of doing his job as a journalist while reporting on the Montana special election," U.S. editor Lee Glendinning said. "We are committed to holding power to account, and we stand by Ben and our team of reporters for the questions they ask and the reporting that is produced."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee called on Gianforte to drop out of the race "after his alleged violent assault of an innocent journalist," spokesman Tyler Law said.

Quist declined to comment on the news after his first Missoula event of the evening, then also didn't address it at his second, a quick rally to thank his supporters at a brewery.

The candidate instead walked on stage, joined his opening act for a song, and repeated much of his stump speech for roughly seven minutes. He then walked off the stage and again declined to answer questions about Gianforte.

Elena Schneider and Cristiano Lima contributed to this report.

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Gianforte wins Montana special election [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 05/25/2017 07:07 PM EDT

Republican Greg Gianforte won Montana's special House election Thursday night, beating Democrat Rob Quist a day after Gianforte was charged with assault for allegedly attacking a reporter covering his campaign.

The incident threatened to sink a red-state campaign that was already worrying Republicans nationally, despite President Donald Trump's 20-point win in Montana just last year. But Gianforte's win preserved the GOP's 24-seat edge in the House of Representatives, frustrating Democratic activists who poured money into Quist's campaign and demanded more help from party groups that saw the uphill, red-state race as unwinnable.

Gianforte, a technology executive, had 51 percent of the vote when The Associated Press called the race at about 10:30 p.m. Mountain Time. Quist, a folk singer and first-time candidate, had 44 percent of the vote. A Libertarian candidate, Mark Wicks, had 6 percent.

The hotly contested special election to replace Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in Congress took

a violent turn Wednesday night when Ben Jacobs, a reporter for The Guardian, asked about Gianforte's reaction to the Congressional Budget Office score of the House Republican health care plan. Jacobs said Gianforte "body-slammed" him and broke his glasses, an account which was corroborated by audio of the incident and eyewitness accounts from a Fox News reporting team in the room. The accounts directly contradicted Gianforte's campaign, whose spokesman, Shane Scanlon, called Jacobs' behavior "aggressive."

But over a quarter-million voters cast their ballots before the incident, limiting its impact on the results of the special election.

Republicans including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Montana Sen. Steve Daines called on Gianforte to apologize Thursday, which Gianforte did in a victory speech late Thursday night before supporters in Bozeman, Mont.

"When you make a mistake, you have to own up to it. That's the Montana way," Gianforte said. "Last night I made a mistake and I took an action that I can't take back. I'm not proud of what happened. I should not have responded in the way that I did and for that I am sorry."

"I should not have treated that reporter that way and for that I am sorry Mr. Ben Jacobs," he added. Gianforte, however, did not address his campaign's contradictory statement released last night.

Republicans acknowledged that Gianforte has work to do to reset his image.

One Republican survey showed the news of the incident reached most voters in Montana. Ninety-three percent of likely Election Day voters in the state told Remington Research Group in an automated poll that they had heard about the altercation between Gianforte and Jacobs. Nine percent of those Election Day voters said they flipped their votes to Quist after hearing about the story.

"Gianforte's brand for the rest of his political career is going to be 'the body slammer,'" said Titus Bond, the pollster. "Every single room he walks into in D.C., that'll be the chatter, that's what they'll say."

"He won't be the only hot-headed lunatic in the House, but doesn't mean it's an easy situation for Republicans to deal with," said one national Republican strategist. "The Speaker was smart to say he should apologize, and most smart people agree he needs to make this right fast."

Quist told supporters that he conceded to Gianforte but wants them to stay involved in politics.

"I know Montanans will hold Mr. Gianforte accountable," Quist said. "Do not be discouraged. Be determined."

Gianforte always led the race, but even before the incident, private polling showed Gianforte's lead slipping from double-digits to single-digits in Montana. Even then, Democratic groups did not match the millions in outside spending poured in by the GOP, much to the frustration of Democratic activists, including a number of backers of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who endorsed Quist.

DCCC chairman Ben Ray Lujan said in a statement that Democrats intend to "compete hard for this seat" in 2018. "Unfortunately, the alleged violent assault of an innocent reporter and subsequent criminal charges have tainted this election at the very end and further clarified that

Greg Gianforte is unfit to represent Montana," Lujan continued. "There's no question in my mind that Gianforte should not be sworn into office."

National Republicans took the opportunity to swipe at House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, after linking Quist to her in TV ads painting him as too liberal for Montana.

"Greg Gianforte will be the next congressman from Montana and Nancy Pelosi and liberals in Washington were rejected again," NRCC chairman Steve Stivers said in a statement.

Some Republicans had privately been criticizing Gianforte for not putting away the race more easily before the explosive end of the campaign. Democrats effectively tagged Gianforte as a millionaire from New Jersey who was trying to buy the election. All through last year's gubernatorial race, Democrats also attacked Gianforte over reports that he sued to block access to a stream in front of his ranch, kicking up a public lands dispute that "probably followed him into this House race," said Jeff Essman, the chairman of the Montana Republican Party.

Gianforte's episode with the reporter followed three weeks of intense pressure and questions on health care, after Gianforte was taped praising the GOP health care bill in a conversation with lobbyists while publicly refusing to commit to the plan. As Quist's campaign attacked Gianforte over his comments and provisions in the bill, private surveys showed Gianforte's lead slipping from double-digits to a slim, single-digit gap.

Quist's campaign win was powered by Democrats' online grassroots, which helped him raise more than \$6 million — including \$1 million in the final week of the race. But those activists grew frustrated over the course of the race as their investment was not matched by Democratic groups. Republicans spent more than \$7 million on TV ads to about \$3 million from Democrats.

Meanwhile, Republicans brought big names to the state, with Vice President Mike Pence and Donald Trump Jr. holding rallies with Gianforte in the final weeks of the race to stir up GOP voter enthusiasm.

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EPA moves to suspend compliance for coal plant discharges rule [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 05/25/2017 06:15 PM EDT

EPA is proposing to suspend compliance dates for an Obama administration regulation limiting toxic discharges from coal-fired power plants while the Trump administration decides how to proceed with the underlying regulation.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today signed a [proposed regulation](#) that would suspend the date by which some facilities would have to implement two aspects of the rule, which limits waterborne pollutants like arsenic and lead. Under the final 2015 rule, compliance requirements for those aspects would kick in Nov. 1, 2018.

Pruitt's new proposed rule would postpone those requirements "until EPA promulgates a final

rule specifying compliance dates."

EPA moved in April to [reconsider](#) the rule, known as effluent limitation guidelines, following industry requests. A federal court has also put pending litigation on hold amid EPA's review. Environmental groups are [suing](#) over EPA's decision to indefinitely suspend the rule.

"This proposed rule is one of nearly two dozen significant regulatory reform actions I have taken during my short time as EPA Administrator to protect the environment, jobs and affordable, reliable energy. Today's action, if finalized, will provide relief from the deadlines under the existing ELG Rule while we carefully consider the next steps for this regulation," Pruitt said in a statement.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA is setting a 30-day public comment period on the proposed rule to suspend compliance dates, which would begin once the rule is published in the Federal Register.

To view online [click here](#).

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House GOP leaders already plotting to avoid fall shutdown [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan | 05/25/2017 02:30 PM EDT

House Republican leaders, facing a serious time crunch this fall, are already plotting ways to avoid a government shutdown at the end of September — a real possibility given partisan divisions over spending priorities.

Speaker Paul Ryan in a closed-door GOP conference meeting Thursday morning laid out the legislative calendar, showing lawmakers they're approximately four months behind schedule in the appropriations process for 2018, in part because President Donald Trump's budget landed later than usual.

The early discussion about salvaging the annual spending process underscores how much Trump, Ryan and other party leaders are struggling to govern now that they run Washington.

House Republicans can't agree on their own budget blueprint for next year, clashing internally over cuts to entitlement programs and safety net initiatives such as food stamps and housing aid, all while trying to create space for tax reform and a big defense spending increase. In addition, they still have to find money for Trump's priorities, including the hugely controversial border wall between the United States and Mexico.

Congress needs to pass a funding bill by Sept. 30 to keep the lights on at federal agencies. Yet with lawmakers out for the August recess, they only have 43 legislative days left to pass appropriations bills before they hit that deadline. Obamacare repeal efforts are likely to suck up much of that time in the Senate. Tax reform — or even a tax-cut package — would also take up more time and energy.

Aware of the looming deadline, Ryan raised the possibility of clumping appropriations bills together in an omnibus to save time. Passing a continuing resolution, that essentially maintains

current spending levels and priorities in order to keep the government open, was also discussed.

The idea, GOP insiders say, was to manage expectations of what's possible and what's not. Republicans for years have vowed to bring back "regular order" if they were in charge, with Congress debating and passing 12 separate spending bills each year. But even having the White House and Congress is not enough for Republicans. Regular order, for now, will remain a memory from a bygone era.

"We talked about how we might move forward on appropriations at this juncture... Putting all the appropriations together in one package is one option," said Rep Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.), a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee. "I think certainly, when you look at the calendar, you've got to say: It's crunch time, and of course trying to do all these appropriations bills in that short period of time" would be difficult.

Under the Budget Control Act, Republicans in fiscal 2018 face \$5 billion in across-the-board cuts to defense and non-defense programs unless they take action. Trump wants to increase defense spending and request new money to build a border wall with Mexico. That, however, would require Congress to raise spending caps put in place years ago.

In order to do that, Republicans would need the support of at least eight Democrats in the Senate, which is extremely unlikely at this point. Democrats typically demand dollar-for-dollar funding boosts for non-defense programs, such as transportation or housing, in order to support defense increases. They've also sworn to never support funding for Trump's wall, something the White House wants to push for in earnest this fall — even at the risk of a shutdown fight.

During Thursday's House GOP conference meeting, Republicans harped on Senate rules requiring 60 votes for passage instead of a simple majority. They discussed the possibility of convincing Senate Republicans to go nuclear on spending bills, as they did to confirm Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch — though that's unlikely at best.

"We do our appropriations in the House... then, it goes over to the Senate and they say, 'No, we have to work with Democrats,'" said Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.), who often rants about Senate rules and wants Senate Republicans to eliminate the filibuster. "What will come out of this process is going to be a significantly, in large part, a Democrat omnibus ... We don't seem to have the courage to face the real problem head on."

Republicans, however, can't point to Democrats for all their budget problems: The conference faces a critical moment right now over how far they go in their own budget. Conservatives want drastically lower spending and are pushing GOP leaders to use reconciliation to cut safety-net programs. But that idea is sure to repel moderate Republicans, putting GOP leaders in the awkward situation of trying to find a way to garner 216 votes for passage. In the past, they've had to turn to Democrats to pass spending bills.

Defense hawks want dramatically higher spending. And all Republicans talk about balancing the budget, which is only possible if they raise taxes — an anathema — or cut entitlement programs. Trump has already said we won't touch Social Security retirement funds or Medicare.

"This is gonna be a brutal battle," said one GOP source. "Defense hawks want \$640 [billion],

appropriators want \$516 [billion] for non-defense, moderates don't want any changes to mandatory. And yet everyone says the budget still has to balance. Those numbers don't add up. And a budget that doesn't have serious deficit reduction isn't going to make it out of committee."

Much is at stake. If Republicans don't agree on a blueprint, they will never get to tax reform. That's because only after passing the budget can they unlock the fast-tracking tool known as reconciliation that allows them to pass tax reform without a single Democratic vote in the Senate.

When asked when — and if — House Republicans would unveil their own budget, Budget Committee Chairwoman Diane Black (R-Tenn.) was non-committal.

"We're working on it, and we'll let you know when we get to that point," Black said. "We're going to bring it out as soon as we get consensus and get all of our people together."

And Black faithfully repeated that line several time no matter what question she was asked about the budget. "That's all I'm gonna give you, that we're working on it," Black said. GOP insiders expect the budget to be released in June.

There isn't much time to deliberate.

While the budget process typically starts in February, after the president releases his budget, Trump waited until the end of May to release the details of his fiscal blueprint. Even though the Trump budget — with huge spending cuts to domestic problems, big tax cuts and some fuzzy math to make it balance — was dead on arrival, the delay in sending it to Capitol Hill set lawmakers back, all while the issues dividing the Republican Conference are just becoming tougher and tougher.

"People know that we have an abbreviated timeframe for the appropriations process," said Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), who sits on both the Appropriations and Budget panels.

Cole said Appropriations Committee Republicans met privately on Wednesday night to discuss the situation, but he acknowledged GOP lawmakers will miss the Sept. 30 deadline for passing spending bills.

"We're prepared to work Saturdays, whatever we need to do," Cole said. "We can get the bills ready to get all 12 bills out of committee. The real question is do you have the time to do them on the floor? Probably not. So you're gonna have 'minibuses' or an omnibus. I think there's just probably not the time given health care, given tax reform and everything else we've gotta get done."

Kentucky Rep. John Yarmuth, top Democrat on the House Budget Committee, says the GOP infighting over spending priorities is par for the course.

"We've got a Republican majority that's having a hard time governing," Yarmuth said. "We saw it on health care. It doesn't surprise that's it happening on the budget as well."

Yarmuth said his aides tried on Thursday to find out from their GOP counterparts whether a budget would be marked up in June.

"They clearly are undecided about what they're going to do," Yarmuth added.

Yarmuth, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) — ranking member on Appropriations — and party leaders want to get rid of any spending limits so they can boost funding for domestic programs.

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Trump to tap nonproliferation expert as DOE's top lawyer [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/23/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump plans to nominate David Jonas to be the Energy Department's general counsel, the White House announced today.

Jonas, a partner at the Virginia law firm Fluet, Huber and Hoang since 2016, was also a DOE landing team member and is an expert on nuclear nonproliferation.

He previously served as the general counsel for the National Nuclear Security Administration, DOE's nuclear security arm, from 2001 to 2010, according to his LinkedIn page. From 2012 to 2014, Jonas was general counsel for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an independent agency that advises DOE on nuclear defense facilities.

Jonas's resume also includes a year as DOE's director of legal strategy and analysis and a year as a vice president at the Pentagon Federal Credit Union. He holds advanced law degrees in military law and international law.

Jonas's wife, Tina Jonas, served as chief financial officer for the FBI under Robert Mueller and later as CFO and under secretary of Defense from 2004 to 2008.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee likely will schedule a hearing on his nomination for sometime after Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess in early June.

To view online [click here](#).

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Protesters disrupt FERC, DOE nominees' hearing [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 05/25/2017 11:34 AM EDT

A handful of climate change and anti-natural gas protesters took turns interrupting the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee nomination hearing of President Donald Trump's two FERC appointees and an Energy Department deputy this morning.

The disruptions at the hearing for FERC nominees Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson and

deputy Energy secretary candidate Dan Brouillette started about 45 minutes into the meeting, with one protester screaming "FERC hurts families. Shut FERC down!"

Three other protesters interrupted the hearing in the next 15 minutes.

"I am compelled to interrupt this because I have seen the destruction that climate change [causes]," one woman said, as Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) peppered the nominees with questions.

As the woman and another protester were escorted out, and Manchin was assured by Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) that he had not lost any of his time questioning the nominees, he looked at the nominees and said "God bless America," drawing laughs from the audience.

Several organizations have signed onto a [pledge](#) to oppose any of Trump's appointments to FERC, and anti-gas protesters have regularly interrupted meetings at the agency's headquarters for more than two years.

The number of seats available to the public were limited at the hearing because the nominees brought more than 30 family members and friends.

WHAT'S NEXT: Murkowski told committee members today that they should expect to vote on the three nominees, along with Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, shortly after the upcoming week-long Memorial Day recess.

To view online [click here](#).

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FERC nominees: Grid needs all-of-the-above energy mix [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 05/25/2017 03:46 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's picks to fill two of the vacancies at FERC stuck to largely conservative talking points on the role of renewables and nuclear generation on the electricity grid at their confirmation hearing today, advocating for an all-of-the-above approach.

Neil Chatterjee, an aide to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), and Rob Powelson, a Pennsylvania utility regulator, were asked by lawmakers on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee what they think the nation's energy mix should look like in the future, and how FERC should address state policies that affect regional power market prices.

Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.), who has argued that coal-fired generation was crucial for grid reliability, quizzed the nominees on their definition of baseload fuels.

Powelson said that in the PJM Interconnection market in the Mid-Atlantic region, those baseload supplies were nuclear, coal and natural gas, but that "renewables are playing a part of this energy mix."

"But they're the resources right now that seem to be evolving, and on a national level as well," Powelson said. "There's a tectonic shift taking place across the U.S."

Chatterjee agreed with Powelson, saying all generation sources were important. "We need coal, we need nuclear, we need hydro and we need renewables and then I think obviously gas plays an important role. Sometimes it serves as baseload, sometimes it serves as backup," and sometimes it's used opportunistically, he said.

If confirmed, Chatterjee and Powelson, both Republicans, will join the agency that has been without a quorum and unable to make any major decisions for almost four months. Among the major issues they would help decide if confirmed is how FERC should accommodate state policies that promote nuclear and renewables but could affect grid reliability and power prices, whether the grid can provide better incentives for battery storage, and how FERC should address state efforts to prevent solar developers from using the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act to force utilities to sign power purchase contracts.

The Trump administration has pushed policies to reverse the decline in the coal industry while stimulating new oil and natural gas production, veering sharply from the Obama administration's emphasis on curbing climate change and promoting renewables. Under the leadership of former chairmen Jon Wellinghoff and Norman Bay, FERC used its authority to promote demand response, storage and other clean-energy technologies.

Sen. [Tammy Duckworth](#) (D-Ill.), who noted her state aimed to keep its nuclear power plants from closing, asked if the two "agree that state legislatures [are] the appropriate place for these policies to be decided, and as FERC commissioners would you act to pre-empt these laws as some have suggested?"

Both nominees pledged to keep an "open mind" on the issues and said they respect states' rights to establish their own energy policies. But Powelson noted earlier in the hearing that FERC may have to "step in" if state actions prevent the agency from following its own market and grid reliability mandates.

Sen. [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) asked how FERC should respond to [pressure](#) from the solar industry to intervene in moves by some states to staunch the flow of new projects they are building under PURPA, which is overseen by FERC but implemented at the state level.

"While you have my assurance I would work very seriously on these issues should I be confirmed, I think any major changes need to come from this body and not from FERC," Chatterjee said.

To view online [click here](#).

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Blankenship appeals conviction to Supreme Court [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/25/2017 05:42 PM EDT

Former Massey Energy chief Don Blankenship [asked](#) the Supreme Court today to overturn his conviction related to the 2010 Upper Big Branch mine disaster that killed 29 of his workers.

A jury in 2015 acquitted Blankenship of various felony charges related to the disaster, but convicted him on a misdemeanor, conspiracy to violate mine safety standards. He was recently

released from prison after serving a one-year sentence.

His appeal to the 4th Circuit was [rejected](#) in January, and now Blankenship has asked the Supreme Court to intervene because of two alleged infirmities with his trial.

One involves how a witness was questioned, while the other argues that the jury was given bad instructions about whether Blankenship had to "willfully" violate the law. Blankenship has long maintained that federal prosecutors did not prove he was specifically aware of the issues that led to the explosion.

It is unclear whether the Supreme Court will take Blankenship's appeal.

However, the high court last year overturned another high-profile criminal conviction out of the 4th Circuit — [former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell](#). A unanimous court ruled that McDonnell had been wrongly convicted on bribery charges that were defined too broadly. The government decided [not to re-try](#) McDonnell.

While Blankenship's case is significantly different, he does cite McDonnell's exoneration in his Supreme Court filing to argue that "instructional error [is] not harmless where it allowed conviction for conduct that is not a crime."

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by POET: Will climate change pop up as Trump, Pope meet? — Fiat sued in latest emissions cheating scandal — Trump taps another for DOE role
Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 5:46:11 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 05/24/2017 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Anca Gurzu and Esther Whieldon

ON THE ROAD TO ... ST. PETER'S: All eyes turn to Vatican City this morning where Pope Francis and President Donald Trump are meeting for the first time. Of course, the two hold starkly different views is climate change — Francis wrote an entire encyclical urging action to confront the problem while Trump has dismissed it as a Chinese hoax — and many observers expect the issue to come up in their discussions as U.S. weighs whether to pull out of the Paris agreement. Archbishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, told [an Italian news agency](#) last week he thought the pope might be able to influence Trump on the issue. "This president has already changed about several things, so perhaps on this as well," he said. The pope, for his part, said he didn't have a strategy to sway Trump on any political issue: "We'll talk, each of us will say what he thinks. Each of us will listen to the other," Francis said on May 13, according to [Bloomberg](#).

ME FIRST — Democrats urge Trump to stick with Paris: Forty Senate Democrats, led by Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), are sending [a letter](#) to Trump this morning urging him not to abandon the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change. "Backing out of the Paris Agreement now, after the years of painstaking negotiations and strong U.S. leadership it took to get the world to this point, would be a self-inflicted injury to America's credibility and influence on the world stage," they wrote. Schumer, as well as Democratic Sens. [Tom Carper](#), [Maria Cantwell](#), [Ben Cardin](#), [Sheldon Whitehouse](#), [Brian Schatz](#), and [Ed Markey](#), will hold a press conference in the Capitol at 10 a.m.

Meanwhile, the European Union, China and Canada have agreed to co-host a global ministerial gathering in September to move the Paris agreement forward, Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete [tweeted](#) Tuesday evening. "The three parties agree on the need for urgent climate action and are ready to lead the way," he said in a statement. "No one should be left behind but our message today is very clear: we are moving ahead."

U.S. allies are frustrated by Trump's vague stances on climate change and trade in the days preceding the G-7 summit in Taormina, Italy on Friday and Saturday this week, POLITICO's Tara Palmeri [reports](#). The lack of clarity on those matters is holding up the crafting of the formal statement usually released at the end of the conferences. "Trade and climate are holding up the communique," a senior French official said.

BUDGET URGES EVEN CHEAPER ENERGY: Don't expect many oil, natural gas and power producers to jump aboard the Trump budget's calls for even lower energy costs as they continue to struggle with the soft prices for their products and as the U.S. energy burden for most households is at its lowest level in decades, Pro's Ben Lefebvre and Darius Dixon [report](#). Tuesday's document explicitly makes the call "for strengthening our national security, lowering the price of electricity and transportation fuels, and driving down the cost of consumer goods so that every American individual and business has more money to save and

invest."

But oil producers are just regaining their footing after prices rebounded from lows in the [mid-\\$20s per barrel](#) early last year. "Closing your eyes and keeping your fingers crossed that the market will always move in one direction with fossil fuels — which, in essence, is what the Trump administration proposes with this budget — is not what any smart business person or political leader would pin their future economic hopes to," Josh Freed, Third Way's vice president for clean energy, said. Not to mention that if oil price do sink, sustained low prices could stall the deployment of new technologies, such as electric cars, potentially putting the U.S. at risk of falling behind the rest of the world.

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Nuclear Energy Institute's Robert Powers was first to identify Rep. Darrell Issa as the wealthiest current member of Congress. For today: Just two U.S. vice presidents have ever resigned. Who are they? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

NON VA BENE: Fiat Chrysler faces potentially billions of dollars in fines after DOJ accused the company of selling almost 104,000 diesel vehicles equipped with software designed to cheat on emissions testing, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Fiat Chrysler faces fines of \$37,500 to \$45,268 per vehicle sold, along with further penalties for each undisclosed software device and reporting violations.

The automaker flatly denied the accusations. "The company intends to defend itself with strength especially against the accusations that it has deliberately planned to install manipulative technology to apply to U.S. emission tests," Fiat said in a statement. As POLITICO Europe's Joshua Posaner [reports](#), Fiat said it has cooperated with an ongoing investigation by EPA and the California Air Resources Board.

TRUMP TAPS ANOTHER FOR DOE POST: David Jonas, a partner at the Virginia law firm Fluet, Huber and Hoang since 2016, has been tapped by the Trump administration to be general counsel at DOE, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). He was previously general counsel for the National Nuclear Security Administration, DOE's nuclear security arm, from 2001 to 2010, and then general counsel for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an independent agency that advises DOE on nuclear defense facilities, from 2012 to 2014. Expect a confirmation hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee sometime after the Memorial Day recess.

**** A message from POET - one of the world's largest ethanol producers:** With scientists and engineers, POET operates 30 biofuel facilities & America's first cellulosic biofuel plant. We produce a cleaner fuel for millions of drivers, every day. We're POET and we're driving innovation, from the ground up. Learn more [here](#). **

PRUITT SPEAKS: Look for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to deliver keynote remarks today at noon during an energy symposium hosted by Faegre Baker Daniels Consulting. Also worth flagging: Pruitt's [expected](#) No. 2 EPA pick, Andrew Wheeler, is slated to deliver closing remarks at 3 p.m., after FERC Commissioner Tony Clark speaks on a panel entitled "The Future of the Electric Grid" at 2 p.m.

This is weird: Pruitt [tweeted](#) he met with Rep. [Fred Upton](#), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, about "the importance of protecting the Great Lakes"

during a Wednesday meeting. That came after Trump's budget zeroed out the \$300 million program cleaning up the Great Lakes. In addition to Upton, Pruitt also mentioned meetings with California Democrat Rep. [Jim Costa](#) and the [Congressional Western Caucus](#).

TOP DEMOCRAT PUSHES FOR ETHICS WAIVERS: Schumer said on Tuesday he pressed OMB Director Mick Mulvaney to release copies of waivers the Trump administration granted to former lobbyists to get around their ethics pledge. That came after the White House sent a letter to Walter Shaub Jr., the head of the Office of Government Ethics, asking him to withdraw a request for those waivers. "There is absolutely no excuse for the Administration to keep these waivers from the OGE or the American people," Schumer said in a statement. "[Mulvaney] assured me that he would take my concerns under consideration — I hope they make this change for the good of our country."

PESTICIDES BILL ON THE FLOOR: Expect House floor action today on legislation — the [Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act](#) (H.R. 953) — that would exempt pesticide applicators from needing a Clean Water Act permit for spraying over water. It's broadly opposed by most Democrats as well as the environmental and public health communities. Similar legislation cleared the House in May 2016.

ZINKE TEES UP INTERIOR REORG: Look for proposals in the next couple of months aimed at reorganizing the Interior Department, Secretary Ryan Zinke said Tuesday. As Pro's Esther Whieldon and Annie Snider [report](#), he hopes to increase coordination on issues like wildlife corridors, watersheds and trail systems that span multiple federal agencies, as well as state and local ones. "I view this as a century reorganization to look at how best to manage, protect, use our public lands in the next 100 years given that we have a number of challenges," Zinke said during a conference call.

ANOTHER PUBLIC KEYSTONE MEETING SCHEDULED: The Nebraska Public Service Commission announced Tuesday it would hold an additional public meeting on June 7 on the Keystone pipeline's proposed route through the state. That meeting will be held in O'Neill, Neb., from 1 to 8 p.m. "We recognize the emotion and conviction surrounding this application," Jeff Pursley, executive director of the commission, said in a statement. The notice said even more meetings are possible and a public hearing on the application will be held sometime during the week of Aug. 7-11 at the Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

TAKING AIM AT SUE AND SETTLE: Two House Oversight subcommittees today [receive testimony](#) on "sue and settle" agreements, in which federal agencies agree to regulatory actions as part of settlement deals with outside groups. Republicans have long contended that Democrats and greens engaged in the practice, which they say imposes significant economic burdens on regulated industries without giving them an opportunity to participate in the process. The hearing gavel today at 2 p.m. in Rayburn 2154.

PANEL EXAMINES NATURAL RESOURCES LAWS: The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations holds [a hearing](#) this morning on the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the Wilderness Act of 1964, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, paying special attention to "instances where federal agencies' application of these three federal laws has strayed beyond their original purposes and intent." Chairman [Raul Labrador](#) kicks things off today at 9 a.m. in Longworth 1324.

SOLAR PANEL TRADE PROBE LAUNCHED: The U.S. International Trade Commission

[announced](#) Tuesday it would take the first step in investigating U.S.-based solar cell manufacturer Suniva's request for trade tariffs to protect the manufacturing sector, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). Suniva argues a flood of cheap solar panel modules and cells, mainly from Chinese companies, are severely harming its business. In a statement, the Solar Energy Industries Association pledged to "remain at the forefront of the opposition to Suniva's requested remedies."

INTERIOR REVIEWING PAST MOUs: The Interior Department late Monday ordered assistant secretaries to have their agencies report by June 2 on any memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement they signed last year and until Trump's January inauguration that "are high level and national or regional and represent a commitment of resources or memorialize policy direction," according to a copy of the email obtained by ME. Zinke has ordered a full review of the agency's actions under the last administration. Among those that could be targeted are Interior's MOU with Mexico on resource management, its MOU with California to coordinate on renewables and a multi-agency MOU creating a wildland fire leadership council.

FERC LOOKS FOR MORE INPUT ON MARKET DESIGN: FERC staff is [asking](#) for additional comments following up on an early May technical conference on how the agency should design long-term solutions to problems facing the three Eastern power markets. FERC will be accepting comments for 30 days.

LAWSUIT SEEKS CLIMATE CENSORSHIP RECORDS: The Center for Biological Diversity filed [another lawsuit](#) against the Trump administration Tuesday seeking public records showing federal employees at DOE, EPA, Interior and State have been barred from using climate change-related terms in official communications. "Just as censorship won't change climate science, foot-dragging and cover-ups won't be tolerated under the public records law," CBD's Taylor McKinnon said in a statement.

MAIL CALL! SENATORS URGE CAREFUL MONUMENT REVIEW: Twenty-three Republican senators [urged](#) Zinke to "keep all remedies on the table as you consider how to correct past abuses of the Antiquities Act" and ensure a "more measured approach" is taking moving forward with monument designations. Meanwhile, Sen. [Cory Gardner](#) and Rep. [Scott Tipton](#) urged Zinke in their [own letter](#) not to make any changes to the designation of the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Southwest Colorado.

RELEASE THE FUNDS: Fifty-eight Democratic congressmen, led by [Don Beyer](#), [Paul Tonko](#) and [Anna Eshoo](#), sent [a letter](#) to Energy Secretary Rick Perry Wednesday seeking the immediate release of funds for previously approved ARPA-E projects and more information on existing procedures for approving and funding grants. "Agencies may not thwart the intent of Congress by withholding or impounding funds directed for a specific purpose," they wrote.

REPORT: GOVERNMENT GIVING BILLIONS IN DRILLING SUBSIDIES: A collection of environmental groups led by Oil Change International today released [a report](#) finding the government provides at least \$7 billion per year in subsidies to support fossil fuel production on federally held lands and offshore waters. It argues the fossil fuel leasing program on public lands should be phased out, among other recommendations.

REPORT: CLIMATE LITIGATION ON THE RISE: The number of countries with active litigation over climate change has tripled since 2014 and there are three times as many cases involving the issue in the U.S. than the rest of the world combined, according to [a report](#) out

Tuesday from the United Nations Environment Programme and Columbia Law School's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. "Judicial decisions around the world show that many courts have the authority, and the willingness, to hold governments to account for climate change," Michael Burger, executive director of the Sabin Center, said in a statement.

MOVER, SHAKER: Andrew Malcolm has become a manager of public advocacy at Exelon; he was previously with Rep. [Greg Walden](#) for seven years.

SEEN AROUND TOWN: At the Hall of States for the Large Public Power Council's 30th Anniversary reception Monday: Sen. [Cory Gardner](#) (R-Colo.); acting FERC Chairman Cheryl LaFleur; former Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.); former Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.); Tom Kuhn, president of Edison Electric Institute; Sue Kelly; president and CEO of the American Public Power Association; and John Di Stasio, president of the LPPC (h/t POLITICO Influence).

QUICK HITS

- Trump's Interior Secretary Took Time To Discuss The Border Wall With A Far-Right Troll. [Huffington Post](#).
- State appeals court rules Exxon must give records to NY prosecutor. [Reuters](#).
- The Rise of the Amateur Oil Sleuths. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- FERC Will Not Delay Pipeline At Senators' Urging. [New England Public Broadcasting](#).
- Hit Hard by Coal's Decline, Eastern Kentucky Turns to Drones, Tomatoes, Solar Energy. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- While wrangling over undoing Bears Ears continues, treasures go unprotected. [Salt Lake Tribune](#).
- Tackling climate change will boost economic growth, OECD says. [CNBC](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources subcommittee [hearing](#) on federal natural resource laws, 1324 Longworth

9:15 a.m. — Report release on the state of American cities, National League of Cities Office, City-County Leadership Center, 660 North Capitol St. NW

10:30 a.m. — House Energy and Water Subcommittee Appropriations hearing on the FY2018 budget request, 2362-B Rayburn

10:30 a.m. — "[Energy & Environmental Symposium: What Can We Expect From the New Administration and Congress?](#)" Faegre Baker Daniels, The City Club of Washington, 555 13th Street NW

10:30 a.m. — "[Corps of Engineers \(Civil Works\) and the Bureau of Reclamation FY 2018 Budget Requests](#)," House Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee, 2362-B Rayburn

1:00 p.m. — "[The Kremlin's Gas Games in Europe: Implications for Policy Makers](#)," The Atlantic Council, 106 Dirksen

2:00 p.m. — "[High Risk American Indian and Alaska Native Programs \(Education, Healthcare, Energy\)](#)," House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, 2007 Rayburn

2:00 p.m. — "[Examining 'Sue and Settle' Agreements: Part 1](#)," House Oversight and Government Reform subcommittees, 2154 Rayburn

2:30 p.m. — "[Department of Energy Atomic Energy Defense Activities and Programs](#)," Senate Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee, G50 Dirksen

3:00 p.m. — Deutch, Curbelo Host Climate Solutions Caucus Meeting on Coastal Issues, 2020 Rayburn

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/05/will-climate-change-pop-up-as-trump-pope-meet-022979>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump's budget calls for even cheaper energy [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Darius Dixon | 05/23/2017 06:47 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's budget proposal released Tuesday says lowering energy costs must be a national priority to benefit U.S. households — but that call's likely to fall flat with many oil, natural gas and power producers that have been struggling with the weak prices for their products in recent years.

And the call to lower energy prices, which follows Trump's campaign promises to boost U.S. oil and gas output, seems to overlook data that shows the energy burden for most households is at its lowest level in at least 25 years.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has moved to open up new lands and offshore areas for drilling, approved the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines and removed Obama-era rules that the industry has complained stood in the way of its growth.

And Tuesday's budget calls for increasing energy production explicitly "for strengthening our national security, lowering the price of electricity and transportation fuels, and driving down the cost of consumer goods so that every American individual and business has more money to save and invest."

But U.S. oil producers have been breathing a sigh of relief since oil prices rebounded from lows in the [mid-\\$20s per barrel](#) early last year. That selloff triggered a wave of bankruptcies and tens of thousands of layoffs in the industry. Now, with oil prices hovering near \$50, oil producers have resumed drilling new wells, raising expectations that production could reach record levels next year — even as retail gasoline prices hover near \$2.36 a gallon.

"When oil prices were high and U.S. economy was weak — at \$100 a barrel and 10 percent unemployment — upstream jobs made a big difference," said Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners. "Now that oil prices are low and the economy is stronger — \$50 a barrel and 5 percent unemployment — policy emphasis appears to have returned to its usual focus: end-users."

The White House is also seeking to sell much of the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserves. Trump's budget would put 270 million barrels of oil on the market, a move the White House says could shave \$16.6 billion off the federal deficit over the coming decade by selling half the inventory the Energy Department holds for emergencies. However, in this case, the budget takes a bullish stance for oil prices: To reach the deficit reduction goal, DOE would have to sell the oil at more than \$61 a barrel, 20 percent higher than the current price.

In the power sector, retail electricity prices in the U.S. have been rising steadily over the past two decades — but they have lagged inflation, shrinking their hold on household budgets.

In fact, Americans in 2015 spent the smallest share of their income on energy since the Energy Information Administration started tracking [the number](#) in 1992. U.S. consumers are spending less than 6 percent of U.S. GDP to buy electricity, gasoline, natural gas and other fuels, according to EIA statistics, down from nearly 10 percent in 2008.

Many power producers have struggled as demand growth for electricity flattened out in recent years, and as cheap wind and solar power — as well as plentiful natural gas — cut deeply into the profits of nuclear and coal-fired power over the past decade. In the West, solar power has made electricity in California so inexpensive that it's even thrown the economics of some gas-fired power plants there into question and the state has resorted to shipping excess electricity across state lines.

Meanwhile, several states across the Midwest to the East Coast have seen power prices fall to their lower point since the decade began, fueled in large part by the rising flow of natural gas. The prices are so low that some utilities and power companies with large "baseload" facilities have pressed states and federal regulators to craft new market rules the industry hopes will provide more cash for those big plants.

The American Petroleum Institute, American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers and the Edison Electric Institute declined to comment on the Trump budget call for lower prices.

While voters and lawmakers alike lament spikes in gasoline prices, sustained low prices can also stall the deployment of new technologies, such as electric cars, potentially putting the U.S. at risk of falling behind the rest of the world and missing a big trade opportunity.

"There's an enormous emerging market in China for electric vehicles. Do we want to be exporting to China?" said Josh Freed, Third Way's vice president for clean energy. "It wouldn't appear so from this budget."

Trump's budget also leans too heavily on cost factors while ignoring the need to sustain a mix of energy sources on the electric grid that are also clean, Freed said.

"Leaving it to one or two cheapest-at-the-moment commodities is a very, very risky bet for the future of the American economy, our ability to create jobs and American security," he said. "Closing your eyes and keeping your fingers crossed that the market will always move in one direction with fossil fuels — which, in essence, is what the Trump administration proposes with this budget — is not what any smart business person or political leader would pin their future economic hopes to."

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EPA sues Fiat Chrysler over emissions cheating allegations [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/23/2017 03:49 PM EDT

The Justice Department and EPA today [sued](#) Fiat Chrysler, contending the automaker sold almost 104,000 diesel vehicles equipped with software designed to cheat on emissions testing, threatening the Italian-owned company with billions of dollars in fines.

The agencies first went public with their allegations in January, when Obama-era officials [demanded](#) Fiat Chrysler explain whether its "auxiliary emission control devices" were acting as defeat devices on Ram 1500 and Jeep Grand Cherokee models.

Those defeat devices, consisting of at least eight software features that were undisclosed to EPA during the company's certification process, boost performance under real-world driving conditions by increasing nitrogen oxide emissions, according to DOJ.

Fiat Chrysler faces fines of \$37,500 to \$45,268 per vehicle sold, along with further penalties for each undisclosed software device and for reporting violations, which could add up to billions of dollars.

Fiat last week said it was in talks with the DOJ to settle the allegations, though today's filing does not indicate the parties have reached a deal. DOJ said in a release the talks continued but that timing was unclear.

Fiat on Friday announced it has taken a first step toward getting its 2017 model year diesel vehicles approved by EPA and the California Air Resources Board, and will install updated emissions software in 2014-2016 vehicles.

The Fiat allegations come after Volkswagen settled its own emissions cheating scandal for a record \$4.3 billion.

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Trump to tap nonproliferation expert as DOE's top lawyer [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/23/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump plans to nominate David Jonas to be the Energy Department's general counsel, the White House announced today.

Jonas, a partner at the Virginia law firm Fluett, Huber and Hoang since 2016, was also a DOE landing team member and is an expert on nuclear nonproliferation.

He previously served as the general counsel for the National Nuclear Security Administration, DOE's nuclear security arm, from 2001 to 2010, according to his LinkedIn page. From 2012 to 2014, Jonas was general counsel for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an independent agency that advises DOE on nuclear defense facilities.

Jonas's resume also includes a year as DOE's director of legal strategy and analysis and a year as a vice president at the Pentagon Federal Credit Union. He holds advanced law degrees in military law and international law.

Jonas's wife, Tina Jonas, served as chief financial officer for the FBI under Robert Mueller and later as CFO and under secretary of Defense from 2004 to 2008.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee likely will schedule a hearing on his nomination for sometime after Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess in early June.

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Sources: Trump expected to tap Wheeler as EPA deputy [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Alex Guillén and Anthony Adragna | 03/16/2017 08:00 PM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to tap Andrew Wheeler, a coal lobbyist and former aide to Sen. Jim Inhofe, to be deputy administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, sources familiar with the hiring process told POLITICO.

Sources cautioned that the decision has not yet been finalized, but they said Wheeler is expected to get the job. It's unclear when Trump will make the announcement, but one source said it could be weeks before Wheeler is officially tapped.

Wheeler worked as an EPA staffer earlier in his career. He later joined Inhofe's Senate office and then spent more than a decade as a Republican staffer on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, where he worked on several major pieces of legislation, including the 2005 and 2007 energy bills.

He has worked at the law firm Faegre Baker Daniels since 2009. He now co-leads the firm's energy and natural resources practice.

Wheeler is a registered lobbyist for Murray Energy, the nation's largest privately owned coal company, which regularly filed lawsuits against the Obama administration over its environmental regulations.

As a lobbyist, Wheeler may need to obtain a waiver to serve at the EPA.

Trump signed an [executive order](#) in January that bars registered lobbyists from participating in "any particular matter" on which they lobbied in the past two years. Those lobbying restrictions last for two years from the time the person joins the administration.

But the executive order says the administration can grant "any person a waiver of any restrictions" in its ethics and lobbyist requirements. Unlike an order signed by former President Barack Obama in 2009, Trump's executive order [doesn't require](#) public disclosure of the waivers.

Aside from Murray, Wheeler also lobbies on unspecified energy and energy efficiency issues for Underwriters Laboratories, an Illinois-based lab company, and on agricultural issues for cheese maker Sargento. His former clients include Xcel Energy and Bear Head LNG, as well as a cooking oil-recycling company, an auto auctioner and a medical isotope coalition.

Wheeler won't be the only energy lobbyist to join the Trump administration. Mike Catanzaro, a lobbyist at the firm CGCN Group whose clients included several fossil fuel companies, [took a job](#) at the White House last month as an energy and environmental adviser at the National Economic Council. Catanzaro is a former EPW staffer to Inhofe.

Meanwhile, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, a fellow Oklahoman, has also brought former Inhofe aide Ryan Jackson on as chief of staff. Byron Brown, a former Inhofe aide, is EPA's deputy chief of staff and Mandy Gunasekara, a former EPW counsel, is now a senior policy adviser to Pruitt.

More aides with ties to Inhofe are expected to join the EPA in the coming weeks. Susan Bodine and Brittany Bolen, two EPA staffers, are widely expected to be offered jobs at EPA.

Wheeler, a White House spokeswoman and an EPA spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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Zinke to unveil Interior 'century' reorganization plan [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon and Annie Snider | 05/23/2017 03:00 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said today he will begin releasing proposals in the next couple of months to reorganize the agency.

"I view this as a century reorganization to look at how best to manage, protect, use our public lands in the next 100 years given that we have a number of challenges," Zinke said in a conference call about the fiscal 2018 budget proposal.

Zinke said the reorganization will be aimed at coordinating on issues like wildlife corridors, watersheds and trail systems that span multiple federal agencies, as well as state and local ones.

He said his staff has already begun exploring ways of applying military models, he said, and for natural resources, the concept could be based around different watersheds to push more authority down to the "front lines."

Zinke has met with White House officials and interest groups including from the energy industry and environmental sectors about a reorganization options. And he met with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to discuss fighting forest fires. POLITICO in January [reported](#) Zinke was mulling proposing congress move USDA's Forest Service to the Interior.

WHAT'S NEXT: With a few exceptions, Zinke will need congressional approval for any major reorganization of the Interior's nine bureaus or for bringing over bureaus from other agencies.

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U.S. trade commission launches investigation into Suniva solar trade complaint [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 05/23/2017 06:10 PM EDT

The U.S. International Trade Commission has initiated an investigation into the request by U.S.-based solar cell manufacturer Suniva that the Trump administration create temporary trade tariffs to protect the manufacturing sector.

The move, [announced](#) today, clears the first first hurdle in the process.

In April, Suniva filed a [petition](#) with the USITC [asking](#) the agency to recommend Trump grant for temporary relief under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 and to impose trade restrictions for four years on imported solar cells and modules. Suniva is going through a bankruptcy proceeding and agreed to file the Section 201 petition in [exchange](#) for an additional line of credit.

The company contends that an influx of cheaper solar panel modules and cells largely from China are putting it out of business.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission said it will accept pre-hearing briefs on the case through Aug. 8. It hopes to determine the extent to which the cheaper solar panels are causing injury by Sept. 22 and to send recommendations to Trump by Nov. 13.

Doug Palmer contributed this report.

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by the National Biodiesel Board: FERC green lights two controversial pipelines — The Texas think tank helping to staff the Trump administration — Probe sought on Puerto Ricans drinking from Superfund sites
Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 5:43:23 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 10/16/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Alex Guillén, Sara Stefanini and Darius Dixon

FERC APPROVES CONTROVERSIAL GAS PROJECTS: FERC [gave its blessing](#) late Friday to two contentious pipelines that would carry gas out of the Marcellus shale formation in West Virginia. The 2-1 approval came over the objections of Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur, who said the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipeline projects were not in the public interest. Atlantic Coast would run through Virginia's Shenandoah Valley on its way to North Carolina, while Mountain Valley would end in southern Virginia. At the heart of LaFleur's 5-page dissent is concern about the footprints and redundant elements of the 900 miles of new gas infrastructure, which she believed could've been reined in in order to limit their collective environmental impacts. Although Atlantic Coast has documented demand for all of its capacity, MVP could only account for 13 percent of its capacity, she wrote.

LaFleur's dissent highlighted two alternative approaches requested by FERC staff that they ultimately dismissed because of how much of a design overhaul they would require, significantly upsetting proposed schedules. One option would've shaved 173 miles off the collective 900 miles, and avoided the Monongahela National Forest and the George Washington National Forest while reducing the number of crossings of the famous Appalachian Trail and Blue Ridge Parkway. The second alternative — a single, larger pipeline — would essentially remove all the environmental impacts associated with the Mountain Valley project. "[T]he decision before the Commission is simply whether to approve or reject these projects, which will be in place for decades. Given the environmental impacts and possible superior alternatives, approving these two pipeline projects on this record is not a decision I can support," she wrote. LaFleur, who doesn't seem to have voted against a natural gas project approval since a controversial compressor station decision in 2012, [went to Twitter](#) Friday night to say that her dissent "was a very difficult decision."

It's an issue in the Virginia governor's race: Republican nominee Ed Gillespie said in a Saturday [statement](#) he was "glad" for FERC's decision and called on Democratic nominee Ralph Northam to voice support for the projects. According to [The Roanoke Times](#), Northam did not take a firm stance on the pipeline Saturday, noting the Army Corps of Engineers and Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality must still sign off on them. Elana Schor [wrote](#) about the dicey politics of the Atlantic Coast pipeline in 2015, when Virginia Republicans were fighting the project's route.

More pipeline drama in New York: FERC's approval of both projects came the same day New York lobbed a new test of the authority that states have to block natural gas pipelines, when Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration challenged the commission's decision to overrule a state denial of a water quality permit for the 7.8-mile Millennium Valley Lateral project, POLITICO New York's Marie J. French [reports](#).

And out of Europe: Russian gas giant Gazprom didn't think it would have much trouble

expanding the Nord Stream pipeline, but those beliefs are being severely challenged, POLITICO Europe's Anca Gurzu [reports](#). And Trump administration officials went to Brussels last week to reiterate U.S. opposition to the project.

AND WE'RE ROLLING INTO A NEW WEEK! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Duke Energy's Michael Sewell was first to pick Sen. Luther Strange as the tallest in U.S. history. For today: Which two-term congressman did Paul Ryan succeed as representative of Wisconsin's 1st? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

NEW MEMBERS OF THE INNER CIRCLE: A conservative Texas think tank that had close ties to Energy Secretary Rick Perry while he served as Texas governor has now seen three members of its staff selected for energy and environmental posts in President Donald Trump's administration, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). The latest addition from the Texas Public Policy Foundation is Kathleen Hartnett White, Trump's controversial nominee to lead the White House's Council on Environmental Quality. Sometimes viewed as too far right even among Texas GOPers, the think tank has already landed staff in important roles overseeing oil and gas rules and federal enforcement of environmental standards.

Brian Roberts, a University of Texas professor specializing in political institutions and interest groups, said the group's rise appears reflective of the mutual disdain between Trump and D.C.-establishment Republicans that's forced the administration to look outside traditional GOP channels to fill political slots across the federal government. "Texas is a very large state that's been under Republican control for a generation, so it hardly seems far-fetched that there might be some conservative policy talent here," Roberts said. "Couple that with the fact that the Trump administration is going out of its way to avoid 'establishment' talent — those most likely to be resting comfortably in D.C.-area think tanks — it makes even more sense that we find them fishing for talent outside the swamp."

Other TPPF veterans in Trump slots: Susan Combs, who is [awaiting](#) Senate approval to become Interior's assistant secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget, and Doug Domenech, tapped to be Interior's assistant secretary of Insular Areas.

Sen. John Barrasso called White, an "excellent choice" in a statement to ME. "She deserves full and fair committee consideration, followed by a Senate vote," the Environment and Public Works Committee chairman said.

ON THE PRESIDENT'S MIND: Trump shot back at a New York Times [story](#) examining his struggles at implementing a host of campaign promises by largely touting his accomplishments in the energy arena. "The Failing [@nytimes](#), in a story by Peter Baker, should have mentioned the rapid terminations by me of TPP & The Paris Accord & the fast.....approvals of The Keystone XL & Dakota Access pipelines. Also, look at the recent EPA cancelations & our great new Supreme Court Justice!" he [tweeted](#). ME would just note Trump merely kicked off the multi-year process of withdrawing from Paris and those EPA "cancelations" must still go through the formal rulemaking process and survive vigorous legal challenges.

OIL RIG EXPLODES IN LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN: One person is missing and six others are injured after an oil rig reportedly owned by Clovelly Oil Co. exploded in Lake Pontchartrain, La. shortly after 7 p.m. Sunday, The New Orleans Advocate [reports](#). Video [footage](#) filmed shortly afterward showed the platform still on fire. The Coast Guard and local

police are [reportedly](#) responding to the scene.

KING COVE ROAD COMING? Turns out Interior's been working quietly behind-the-scenes on a land swap that would enable the construction of a [long-sought one-lane gravel road](#) from the isolated southwestern Alaska village of King Cove through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, The Washington Post [reports](#). Opponents of the road fear it would harm the habitats of a variety of animals and potentially endanger other wildlife refuges throughout the country. The proposal would turn federal land over to King Cove Corporation that would enable construction of a road through the refuge that could be connected to roads on both sides. This has long been a pet project of Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and briefly delayed the confirmation of Obama-era Interior chief Sally Jewell.

FEINSTEIN GETS A CHALLENGER: California state Senate leader Kevin de León, who ushered ambitious climate legislation and an extension of the state's cap and trade program through his chamber, announced a primary bid against Sen. [Dianne Feinstein](#), POLITICO California's David Siders [reports](#). "California needs a senator who will stand up and fight for Medicare for All, one that prioritizes the fight against climate change, that will protect Dreamers and our economic prosperity," he said in an interview.

NEW PUSH TO FILL POLITICAL VACANCIES: Even as his boss has repeatedly voiced comfort leaving hundreds of high-level political appointments vacant, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly has granted Cabinet officials new autonomy to select top political appointees, POLITICO's Nancy Cook [reports](#), citing 10 interviews with White House officials and advisers close to the administration. According to the Partnership for Public Service, the Senate has confirmed to date roughly 142 political appointees out of the 602 key jobs throughout the government.

— **Four EPA nominees**, including the highly controversial picks of Michael Dourson as chemicals chief and William Wehrum as lead air official, get votes Wednesday in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Also on the to-do list are the nominations of David Ross to head the water office, Matthew Leopold to be general counsel and Jeff Baran's re-nomination to the NRC, which Barrasso called a "[big ask](#)" even if packaged with two GOP selections.

PROBE SOUGHT INTO SUPERFUND DRINKING WATER: In light of reports some Puerto Ricans were drinking water from Superfund sites out of desperation, Homeland Security Ranking Member [Bennie Thompson asked](#) DHS to investigate whether that behavior was occurring and what could be done to stop it. Nearly one month after the storm, just 15 percent of the island has electricity and 31 percent of people still lack potable drinking water, according to [government figures](#).

MICROBREWED LNG WITH A SIDE OF AVOCADO TOAST: Today is the last day to comment on the Energy Department's [proposal](#) to setup a special application process for the export of small batches of liquefied natural gas to countries that are not part of free trade agreements with the United States. According to its Federal Register notice, DOE wants to ease approvals for applications to export LNG in quantities up to 140 million cubic feet per day, so long as they don't require an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act. The agency expects that the small-scale shipments will serve LNG customers in the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America. A few weeks after issuing this NOPR, DOE [approved](#) small-scale LNG exports to the Caribbean from a site in Florida.

FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#)'s full half-hour interview with C-Span's "Newsmakers" is available [here](#). He said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has "exceeded my expectations" so far. Other topics included wildfires, Antiquities Act and Puerto Rico, among others.

BIPARTISAN GROUP BASHES BIODIESEL CUTS: A bipartisan group of at least 25 senators — led by [Heidi Heitkamp](#), [Roy Blunt](#), [Patty Murray](#) and [Chuck Grassley](#) — are today sending EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt a letter urging him to reverse course on proposed cuts the advanced biofuel volume for 2018 and his intention to hold biomass-based diesel volume stagnant for 2019. "The industry is poised for growth, in accordance with the intent of the law, if EPA sends the market signals with increased volumes. Reducing volumes and especially those RVOs that were previously finalized is disruptive, unprecedented, and very troubling," the letter said.

ME FIRST — RFA REPORT SAYS RIN PRICES DON'T HURT GAS PRICES: The Renewable Fuels Association is out with a [report](#) today arguing that a jump in prices for credits under the Renewable Fuel Standard had little impact on gas prices. The report is an attempt to rebuff arguments from oil refiners that volatility in the market for Renewable Identification Numbers drive up gas prices, and thus EPA should act to reduce those costs. "This analysis demonstrates that EPA's efforts will have no impact on consumer gasoline prices," RFA CEO Bob Dinneen said in a statement. "If finalized, however, these proposals will have a decidedly negative impact on the U.S. ethanol industry by artificially cannibalizing demand."

EPA FOUND A CARBON RULE IT CAN LIKE: Sure EPA is proposing to roll back the Clean Power Plan, but that doesn't mean all carbon rules are off the table: The agency is even now working on a rule to regulate carbon from jet engines, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). The rule would implement an agreement struck by the International Civil Aviation Organization to increase jet efficiency and thereby reduce carbon emissions on international flights. The rule is crucial for Boeing, which needs federal agencies to certify its engines before it can sell aircraft overseas in 2020, when the agreement takes effect. "For Boeing, GE and Pratt and Whitney, it's critical," said Daniel Rutherford, marine and aviation program director for ICCT. "If they want to sell aircraft after 2020, they need this rule."

A good sign for HFCs agreement? The ICAO agreement had the strong backing of industry, much as does an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to reduce use of global warming hydrofluorocarbons. "Without reading too much into it, the administration's pending carbon emission rule for aircraft could be a positive sign for its eventual support of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol," Francis Dietz, spokesman for the Air Conditioning Refrigeration, and Heating Institute, told ME. "Just as the ICAO agreement has the U.S. aircraft industry's support, so too is Kigali strongly supported by U.S. manufacturers, who would like to see a unified, global phase down of HFC refrigerants rather than the hodgepodge of national, regional, and even state policies that would likely be the case without it."

**** Presented by the National Biodiesel Board:** President Trump repeatedly pledged to protect biodiesel and the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). But EPA's latest actions threaten the 64,000 jobs supported by biodiesel. A strong RFS will be key to keeping these jobs and upholding his promise. Tell EPA to grow the RFS: <http://bit.ly/2ghDL03> **

REPORT: ACTING EPA SCIENCE ADVISER STEPPING DOWN: Robert Kavlock,

currently EPA's acting assistant administrator for the Office of Research and Development, plans to leave that role Nov. 3, CNN [reports](#). Though the agency's top science adviser initially declined to comment on the reasons for his departure, he later said "the time was right to go for a variety of reasons" and that his retirement was not early.

ALASKA OFFICIAL TO RUN EPA REGION 10 — REPORT: Chris Hladick, Alaska's commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, has been picked to run EPA's Region 10, according to the website [Must Read Alaska](#), citing unnamed sources familiar with the pick. Region 10 is headquartered in Seattle and covers Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Region 10 is home to one of the more contentious matters EPA faces: The proposed Pebble Mine, which the agency is allowing to apply for mining and discharger permits but is opposed by Gov. Bill Walker. As commissioner, Hladick oversees several divisions and corporate agencies, including the Alaska Energy Authority and the Alaska Gasline Development Corps. He previously served as city manager of Unalaska.

GREEN MESS WITH TEXAS (HAZE RULE): Environmentalists have major issues with the Trump administration's recent [federal haze rule](#) covering Texas, calling it in a Friday [court filing](#) "a sham rule that flagrantly violates notice and comment procedures mandated by the Clean Air Act." Greens say EPA put out a "drastically different" final rule compared to what the Obama administration proposed in January and that the new version could actually allow for an increase in emissions. The groups ask the court to toss the rule and force EPA to issue a new version closer to the proposal within 30 days.

Also likely to affect the proceedings are the [recent announcements](#) from Texas utility Luminant about plans to close three coal plants that were major emitters of haze-forming pollutants. Those retirements could affect this rulemaking, though the filing didn't address the closures.

GOOD MONDAY READ: POLITICO's Michael Grunwald [looks at](#) why Trump's been laser-focused on the coal industry and why the industry's thrilled about his first flurry of actions.

QUICK HITS

— A small town in Texas. A huge explosion. An unsolved mystery — and the long road back. [Washington Post](#).

— Australia Debates: Does a Warming Planet Really Need More Coal? [New York Times](#).

— Approaching storm may help clear smoke from Bay Area skies. [Mercury News](#).

— Trump says he ended the 'war' on coal companies. But it's too late to save them. [Washington Post](#).

— OPEC Sees 'Healthy' Oil Demand Growth to 2022. [Bloomberg](#).

— ConocoPhillips Alaska plans largest exploration season in 15 years. [Alaska Dispatch News](#).

— Western Arizona tribes could lease Colorado River water to areas thirsty for development. [Arizona Central](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

9:00 a.m. — American Association of Blacks in Energy hosts an energy policy summit, The National Press Club, 529 14th St. NW

11:00 a.m. — Press call with former EPA staff on agency budget cuts, RSVP: brooke@smoottewes.com

12:00 p.m. — [Launch](#) of the Johns Hopkins University Initiative for Sustainable Energy Policy, SAIS, Nitze Building, 1740 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Kenney Herter Auditorium

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — Senate Appropriations subcommittee [markup](#) of Interior-Environment bill, 124 Dirksen

9:30 a.m. — "[Working Towards Clean Cars and Clear Skies in Los Angeles, Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta](#)," Wilson Center, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

11:15 a.m. — Democratic senators host press conference calling for removal of Arctic Refuge drilling language from budget, Senate swamp

WEDNESDAY

9:00 a.m. — Former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz [discusses](#) the role U.S. nuclear energy plays in achieving national security objectives, 400 New Jersey Ave. NW

9:00 a.m. — "[DNV GL Energy Transition Outlook](#)," United States Energy Association, Fourth Estate Room, The National Press Club, 529 14th Street, NW

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds business meeting on various nominations, Dirksen 406

THURSDAY

10:30 a.m. — Senate Appropriations Committee [markup](#) of Homeland Security and Interior bills, Dirksen 106

12:30 p.m. — "The Past, Present, and Future of U.S. Energy Policy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. — The National Capital Area Chapter of the United States Association for Energy Economics [hosts](#) Munich Re's Edward V Byrns Jr., Carmine's, 425 7th St NW

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** Presented by the National Biodiesel Board:** Made from an increasingly diverse mix of resources such as recycled cooking oil, soybean oil and animal fats, biodiesel is a renewable, clean-burning diesel replacement that can be used in existing diesel engines without

modification. More than 64,000 workers rely on biodiesel to support their livelihood. What happens to biodiesel matters to American workers, rural communities and real families. But EPA's latest actions threaten the future of those jobs by proposing cuts to the successful Renewable Fuel Standard. Administrator Pruitt should respect the promises made by President Trump. Watch the president promise to protect the RFS here: <http://bit.ly/2xn5Sgm> **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/ferc-green-lights-two-controversial-pipelines-025055>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Divided FERC approves Atlantic Coast, Mountain Valley pipeline projects [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/13/2017 08:00 PM EDT

FERC gave a green light to the contentious Atlantic Coast natural gas pipeline project tonight, with Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur as a dissenting vote.

FERC voted 2-1 on approvals for both [Atlantic Coast](#) as well as a the [Mountain Valley Pipeline Project](#).

"Given the environmental impacts and possible superior alternatives, approving these two pipeline projects on this record is not a decision I can support," LaFleur wrote in a 5-page dissent attached to both orders, saying that "I cannot conclude that either of these projects as proposed is in the public interest."

To view online [click here](#).

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Pipeline politics: Virginia's Keystone? [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 05/03/2015 01:32 PM EDT

Call it the Keystone next door.

A core group of Virginia Republicans and other landowners is leading the charge against a proposed natural gas pipeline near their backyards and using tactics similar to the environmental crusade against the Keystone XL oil pipeline — the very project Republicans in Congress have elevated into a matter of national economic survival.

Financial services super-lobbyist Phil Anderson is joining other politically active Republicans in carrying out a well-funded campaign against Dominion's \$5 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which would cross Virginia's Shenandoah Valley while running 550 miles from West Virginia's fracking fields to North Carolina. They're calling the effort "All Pain, No Gain," which echoes the "All Risk, No Reward" coalition that Keystone opponents formed two years ago.

"Job One is to stop this route — it would be a tragedy for the state of Virginia," said

Anderson, whose family has owned land for more than a century along Atlantic Coast's proposed path 20 miles west of Charlottesville. His allies include other landowners in the area, as well as Tom Harvey, a national security staffer in the George H.W. Bush administration; and Taylor Keeney, a former spokeswoman for Republican ex-Gov. Bob McDonnell.

The pipeline opponents say their fight is neither Republican nor Democratic, and Anderson said his campaign against Atlantic Coast is "not mutually exclusive" with the overwhelming GOP support for Keystone. He notes that Dominion could use condemnation to acquire access to private property for the project if it can't work out agreements with the owners.

"A lot of conservatives oppose this pipeline — eminent domain for a pipeline that's not providing any true public utility," Anderson said. He added: "The XL debate obviously has raised talking points about pipelines to a higher level, but in many ways they are not germane to this issue in Virginia. It's a different type of pipeline, a different sort of need."

Still, Atlantic Coast's opponents acknowledge the parallels with the anti-Keystone push that has pitted President Barack Obama against a chorus of GOP lawmakers in Washington. The dispute is also a reminder of how Keystone has changed the politics of pipelines nationwide, offering a template that activists from New England to Minnesota and Wisconsin are using to grind projects to a halt.

"In some ways, I think we're not too far from the crowd of folks who say, 'No pipelines, nowhere,'" said campaign co-Chairwoman Charlotte Rea, an Air Force veteran and self-described independent. "We have a lot of common ground with those folks, more common ground probably than we do differences."

The activists leading the fight against the Alberta-to-Texas Keystone XL project say: Welcome aboard, Virginians.

"Any effort to slow the building of new fossil fuel infrastructure is a blow for climate sanity at this point," said Bill McKibben, co-founder of the group 350.org.

"I am happy to see Republicans got their backbone back after selling out landowners along the Keystone XL route for the very same risks and concerns about property rights and water," said Nebraska anti-Keystone activist Jane Kleeb. She added, "If the K Street lobbyists want to learn how to run a grass-roots campaign to protect property rights and water, they can come visit us in Nebraska."

Anderson, whose firm Navigators Global has represented big-name clients such as AIG and AT&T, said his main concern is blocking Atlantic Coast's current route — not necessarily "nuances of opinion about subsequent routes [or] having no pipelines at all." He complained that Dominion "consulted with no one" before choosing the path.

He also contends that Virginians have no guarantee that they would benefit from either the fuel the pipeline would carry or the jobs it would create, saying that "there is very little gain for the citizens of Virginia from this pipeline." That's pretty much Obama's slam on Keystone, which he has said would be "very good for Canadian oil companies" but not even "a nominal benefit to U.S. consumers."

Atlantic Coast's foes are aiming their political pressure at Gov. Terry McAuliffe and Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, all of them Democrats, and have been running television and

radio ads in the Virginia heartland urging people to contact the senators. Anderson said the campaign aims to grab the politicians "by the shoulders and say, 'Let's have a conversation about how this thing should go.'"

Fundraising for the All Pain, No Gain campaign is halfway to organizers' \$1 million goal, Anderson said. The Global Environment & Technology Foundation, an Arlington, Virginia-based nonprofit that Harvey chairs, is the vehicle for donations to the campaign.

Although McAuliffe was among Atlantic Coast's earliest backers, activists still hope to persuade him to shrug off what Anderson quipped is Dominion's "letter jacket." McAuliffe spokesman Brian McCoy seemed to offer little hope for a change of heart, underscoring McAuliffe's support in a statement that said the governor "has no role in the planning of the project" but "has urged the companies involved to proceed with as much deference to the concerns of landowners and local communities as possible."

But McAuliffe, a longtime ally of Bill and Hillary Clinton, suggested new caveats for the pipeline on Thursday in an interview with Richmond radio station WRVA. McAuliffe told a caller that the state should "pick the best route that doesn't affect the homeowners. I want a route that doesn't affect our pristine environmental areas."

Warner and Kaine have steered clear of any firm stance on the project, though both have spent weeks urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend its initial public comment period before starting an environmental review.

Kaine and his aides have met with landowners and environmentalists about Atlantic Coast, and the senator "believes their concerns are worthy of careful consideration," a spokeswoman said. Warner remains "committed to listening to the concerns of constituents, taking into consideration the environmental impacts, and carefully monitoring the final pipeline route to ensure it is in the best interest of the state," spokeswoman Rachel Cohen wrote in an email.

The campaign has stirred a battle royal with Dominion, the state's dominant electricity supplier. Dominion is a 45 percent partner in the Atlantic Coast project, along with Duke Energy, Piedmont and the Atlanta-based energy services company AGL. Dominion began its own ad campaign in support of Atlantic Coast even before All Pain, No Gain's ads started. It has also prepared a "Myth vs. Fact" sheet that seeks to counter the opponents' arguments, including their contentions that the pipeline would be used export fuel as well as criticisms of gas as bad for the climate.

Dominion wants "to find the route with the least impact to the environment, to historical and cultural resources, and that's what we believe we're doing through conversations with landowners," spokesman Jim Norvelle said. He added that the green movement "also wants to close coal-fired power stations," which makes Atlantic Coast's gas important for power companies that "still have a responsibility to keep the lights on."

Norvelle acknowledged that fewer landowners in Rea's home of Nelson County have given Dominion access to their land than in any of the other Virginia counties where surveying for the pipeline is underway — although he added that they seem willing to "bring reporters on their property."

All Pain, No Gain co-Chairwoman Nancy Sorrells countered that Dominion would be unable to find any "alternate responsible routes" for the pipeline through Augusta County, where she

lives, or in Rea's county. "Our economy is too dependent on things that would be harmed," she said.

Sorrells, who like Rea is an independent, said the group wants Dominion and its partners to show a demonstrated need to ship 1.5 billion cubic feet of gas through their state every day. (Atlantic Coast's annual capacity is more gas than Virginia consumed last year, according to the Energy Department.) It also has significant questions about the safety of building a 42-inch pipeline across Nelson and Augusta counties, which depend on agriculture and tourism.

Meanwhile, Republicans in neighboring states are pressing FERC to sign off on the project. West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito recently urged the agency "to proceed without further delay" on the review, while North Carolina Sens. Thom Tillis and Richard Burr called for "a robust and transparent public process" in a letter that hails the economic benefits of Atlantic Coast.

Those benefits would include \$377 million in lower annual energy bills for Virginia and North Carolina customers, according to a Dominion-commissioned study released earlier this year.

Glen Besa, director of the Sierra Club's Virginia chapter, said his group's activists and the new crew of plugged-in Atlantic Coast opponents have indeed found an agenda they can share. They're "all pushing to minimize the impact of any pipeline that's built, and from our perspective stop any pipeline from being built," he said.

"In one sense," Besa added, "there's a common enemy: Dominion Virginia Power."

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POLITICO Pro New York: State challenges feds to block pipeline for natural gas power plant [Back](#)

By Marie J. French | 10/13/2017 05:19 PM EDT

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration is challenging a federal decision to overrule New York's denial of a water quality permit, in a test of the authority that states have to block natural gas pipelines.

The Department of Environmental Conservation on Friday [filed a petition for a rehearing](#) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission over the commission's decision to overrule the DEC's rejection of the 7.8-mile Millennium Valley Lateral project.

DEC rejected the permit in August, arguing federal regulators hadn't considered the project's climate change impacts. FERC didn't account for the emissions from the CPV Valley power plant the pipeline would supply, the department said.

In September, FERC ruled that the DEC waived its authority to approve or deny a water quality permit because the agency missed its statutory one-year deadline to act on the permit under federal law. That ruling has already led the backers of the Constitution Pipeline, for which the Cuomo administration rejected a key permit, to [appeal to FERC](#) on the same

grounds.

The state's petition focuses on whether the one-year deadline for action was triggered by the first application submitted by Millennium, which the state said was incomplete, or the refiled application.

"Under FERC's erroneous interpretation of Section 401, the waiver period would commence upon the Department's receipt of any request for a [water quality certificate], however perfunctory," the petition states.

If DEC simply denied incomplete applications as FERC's September decision suggested, it "would be inefficient and penalize both the Department and an applicant by foreclosing the opportunity to work cooperatively to ensure that a given application contains all the necessary information for a Department to render a decision on the merits," it says.

The state's requirement for a complete application is also consistent with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' practice, according to the state.

The power plant the pipeline would supply is part of a corruption case against Joe Percoco, a top former aide to Cuomo. Environmental activists have seized upon that link in calling for blocking the plant. The alleged corruption scheme did not involve permits or other state actions benefiting the 685 megawatt Orange County plant, but Percoco did play a role in a bi-state agreement — since ended — with New Jersey that benefited a CPV plant in that state.

This story first appeared on [POLITICO Pro New York](#) on Oct. 13, 2017.

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The Texas think tank filling out Trump's energy, environment team [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 10/16/2017 05:00 AM EDT

The nomination of Kathleen Hartnett White to lead the White House's Council on Environmental Quality makes her the third member of a conservative Texas think tank to land a prominent energy or environmental job in the Trump administration.

That think tank, the Texas Public Policy Foundation, was closely tied to Energy Secretary Rick Perry during his years as governor. And though it sometimes skewed too far to the right for even some Texas GOP members, it's finding success in filling prominent positions overseeing oil and gas rules and federal enforcement of environmental standards.

"It seems to be there is expertise outside of D.C.," said Heritage Foundation research fellow Nick Loris. "In some sense, it's refreshing to get some folks from outside the bubble."

The foundation's rising profile appears to reflect the mutual disdain between Trump and D.C.-establishment Republicans, which has prompted the White House to search further afield for staff, said Brian Roberts, a University of Texas professor specializing in political institutions and interest groups.

"Texas is a very large state that's been under Republican control for a generation, so it hardly seems far fetched that there might be some conservative policy talent here," Roberts said. "Couple that with the fact that the Trump administration is going out of its way to avoid 'establishment' talent — those most likely to be resting comfortably in D.C.-area think tanks — it makes even more sense that we find them fishing for talent outside the swamp."

As head of the CEQ, White would help guide federal environmental initiatives and develop the administration's policies on issues such as implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, the landmark 1970 law that requires environmental analyses for federal projects.

But she's drawn sharp criticism for her unconventional views, including her stance that carbon emissions are harmless.

"Appointing a climate denier and friend of the fossil fuel industry like [White] to such a vital environmental policy position is a complete joke," said Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters.

White, who also chaired the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, pressed "the moral case" for fossil fuels in a 2014 [paper](#) for the Foundation, arguing that coal, oil and gas should not be moved aside for "inferior energy sources" given their role in spurring the Industrial Revolution. And in a controversial 2014 [blog post](#), she credited the rise of fossil fuels with helping to end slavery.

The TPPF first set up shop in Texas in 1989 to push the issue of school vouchers in the state. It has since gotten behind [policies](#) that, among other things, would repeal all Texas taxes except a sales tax, and has called for a convention of states to rewrite parts of the U.S. Constitution. It also seeks to end state-backing of programs curbing greenhouse gas emissions and boosting renewable energy.

"Our founder's goal almost 30 years ago was to produce Heritage-caliber research on Texas issues," said Alicia Pierce, TPP spokeswoman, referring to the Heritage Foundation. "As we've realized so many state policies are hamstrung by federal actions, we've started to explore those angles in a way that supplements the work done by our friends such as Heritage, not to encroach on their work."

Heritage, for its part, has welcomed the the Texas group's growing role, and it hosted a TPPF-sponsored event in Washington. The group has also recommended experts for panel discussions, Loris said.

The TPPF flourished during Rick Perry's record-long stint as Texas governor, and Perry's policies and [budgets](#) often followed the direction of Foundation policy papers, Texas political analysts said. TPPF Chief Executive [Brooke Rollins](#) served as Perry's deputy general counsel and later his policy director in Austin. [Chip Roy](#), another Foundation expert, was Perry's senior adviser in Texas, as well as a staff member for Republican Sens. [John Cornyn](#) and [Ted Cruz](#).

"A lot of Republican leaders here in Texas take their cues from a small selection of conservative think-tanks, and the TPPF is one of them," said Adrian Shelley, director for the Texas branch of government watchdog Public Citizen.

The relationship with Perry's administration helped the Foundation attract donors. By the time

Perry finished his 15-year tenure as governor, the Foundation's annual revenue had grown tenfold, to nearly \$11 million in 2015, according to [IRS filings](#).

The ties with Perry were strong enough that the foundation even [named](#) a part of the \$20 million headquarters it built in Austin in 2015 the "Governor Rick Perry Liberty Balcony." Its website also [offered](#) Perry as an expert available for interviews.

An Energy Department spokesman did not reply to questions about Perry's relationship with the Foundation.

Another TPPF alumnus called to make the jump to Washington is Susan Combs, a former Texas comptroller under Perry, who is [awaiting](#) Senate approval to become Interior's assistant secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget.

Democrats are sure to probe Combs' long-running fight to against the Endangered Species Act. During her tenure as Texas comptroller, a little-noticed amendment to a state spending bill [empowered](#) her office to manage the Texas Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species list. Combs used that power to help block the FWS from designating as an endangered species the dunes sagebrush lizard, a small reptile that lives mainly in the oil-rich Permian Basin in west Texas.

The decision was made over the protest of a career FWS scientist who was subsequently transferred out of the state, according to a whistleblower [complaint](#) the scientist filed in 2014.

Combs, whose [website](#) offers her as a public speaker on topics such as "Winning the Battle Over Regulatory Issues Under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)," was unavailable for comment.

Trump has also tapped Doug Domenech to be Interior's assistant secretary of Insular Areas. He joined the TPPF in 2015 as director of the think tank's Fueling Freedom Project, [billed](#) as a way "to combat the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan" and "push back against the EPA's onerous regulatory agenda that threatens America's economy, prosperity, and well-being."

Domenech has also [praised](#) a booklet written by Dr. Roy Warren Spencer, a climate change denialist who has also questioned the theory of evolution. Separate from the Foundation, Domenech has written for the Capital Research Center, a group that has [argued](#) that carbon dioxide is harmless and regulating would destroy jobs. Domenech said in Senate testimony that he doesn't "minimize that the climate is changing," but he has also [written](#) that the change is "in very small ways."

Domenech was also Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources for four years up to January 2014, who's emails contained an unusual footer message: "It's OK to print this email. Paper is a Biodegradable, Renewable, Sustainable product made from trees and recycled paper. Growing and harvesting trees provides jobs for millions of men and women."

Domenech and White were not available for comment.

Perry's successor, Gov. Greg Abbott, has remained close to the group, and some of TPPF board members have [bankrolled](#) challenges to lawmakers who blanch at implementing many of its conservative policy proposals. But other Texas Republicans have been wary of whether

the group pushes ideological stances over sound policy, including its dubious claims about state spending in a bitter 2013 state budget battle.

And its argument in its effort to repeal Texas' corporate and property taxes have also raised eyebrows, said Jim Keffer, a Republican who served 20 years in the Texas Legislature before stepping down last year.

"They swing a lot of weight, no doubt about it," Keffer said of the foundation. "But I think the data is skewed. We would have had to raise our [sales] tax from six percent to 20 percent for the sales tax to do what they wanted to do as far as getting rid of all the other taxes. That would literally ruin the Texas economy."

Another problem is that while the foundation has had Texas lawmakers' ears, they haven't had much success in getting their policies passed into law, notes Scott Braddock, editor of the Quorum Report, which focuses on Texas politics. Despite school choice being its core policy issue since its founding, there remains no school voucher system in Texas, Braddock notes.

"For someone who prides himself on getting things done, there is some irony in Trump choosing folks who are increasingly legislatively ineffective in their home state and importing them to Washington," Braddock said.

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Alaska's long road war [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 04/04/2014 05:00 PM EDT

In the fall of 1998, Frank Murkowski took to the Senate floor to make an impassioned plea for the authority to build a one-lane gravel road from the isolated southwestern Alaska village of King Cove to a neighboring community with an all-weather airport.

"This is a road to life for the residents of King Cove," he said.

More than 15 years later, his daughter, Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski — along with the rest of the Alaska congressional delegation — is still fighting for the road, insisting it's the only viable way to ensure that King Cove's 965 largely native Alaskan residents have access to emergency medical care.

([Also on POLITICO: Full transportation and infrastructure policy coverage](#))

What seems like a simple request is anything but. The proposed road would cut through federally protected wilderness land in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, a 315,000-acre sanctuary near the tip of the Alaska Peninsula. And the Interior Department says the road would threaten vulnerable plants and animals that rely on the area's unique ecology.

The oftentimes ugly fight has pitted Alaska politicians against the federal government for decades, sowing mistrust and frustration. It has also reinforced the view of many in Alaska that policymakers in the Lower 48 are out of touch with their needs.

At the same time, the battle has laid bare tensions between Alaskan leaders and conservation groups, which argue that approving the road could set a dangerous national precedent in other protected wilderness areas.

Lisa Murkowski and Alaska Democratic Sen. Mark Begich, who faces a tight reelection fight, are vowing to do everything in their power to win approval for the road, even though the Interior Department rejected the proposal late last year after a four-year analysis.

([PHOTOS: 10 tough Senate races for Democrats](#))

Murkowski is using her position as the top Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to elevate the issue, expressing her outrage at hearings and in floor speeches and holding a series of news conferences with King Cove residents. She has also [lambasted](#) Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, who [announced](#) the most recent rejection of the road just two days before Christmas.

"I am not willing to let a day go by without raising this as an issue," Murkowski said in an interview.

The road would give King Cove residents access to the larger airport in the nearby community of Cold Bay when extreme weather grounds flights at the smaller King Cove airport. King Cove has a medical clinic, but residents often have to travel to Anchorage for major procedures and emergencies.

The road, proponents argue, is the best solution to the transportation problems that have long plagued isolated King Cove.

Besides its small airport, the town has access by boat across the Izembek Lagoon, but foul weather can make air and boat travel difficult, residents say. Supporters of the road say at least 19 deaths over the years have resulted from plane crashes or an inability to obtain adequate medical care.

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Della Trumble, a King Cove resident and longtime advocate for the road, said its approval is a matter of life and death.

"I just feel strongly that the human factor far outweighs the wildlife," she said. "We will protect the wildlife. It's who we are."

Trumble and other residents have made dozens of trips to Washington to make their case, telling stories of family and friends who have been hurt or killed trying to get out of the community during storms. Trumble said she watched as her niece was flown out for a medical emergency amid winds of 70 to 80 mph. She said another niece was born on the galley table of a crab boat during an evacuation attempt.

Just this week, an injured fisherman was flown out of King Cove by the Coast Guard, marking the fifth medical evacuation of the year, according to [King Cove officials](#).

But opponents say the road would wreak havoc on the refuge and its wildlife. The refuge hosts more than 200 species, including caribou, grizzly bear and, in the fall, about 98 percent of the

world's Pacific black brant. It also has one of the largest eelgrass beds on the planet and was one of the first areas in the U.S. to be designated as a [wetland of international importance](#).

"You can't punch a road through there without doing serious damage," said Don Barry, who served as Interior's assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks during the Clinton administration.

In addition, the proposed road faces major legal hurdles. In 1980, Congress designated most of the refuge as wilderness, the highest level of public land protection.

Barry, now a senior official at the conservation group Defenders of Wildlife, said it would be unprecedented to allow a road through a wilderness area. Though the refuge has some old military roads, they were built before the conservation laws were enacted.

Several opponents raised concerns that approving the road would lead to a push for development in other protected areas.

"Once you carve a road of this kind right through the middle of a national wildlife refuge, where does it stop?" former Clinton administration Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt asked.

Babbitt and other opponents have also suggested that the road could be used for commercial purposes, noting that Peter Pan Seafoods has a cannery in King Cove. "But despite pledges and promises to the contrary, the real purpose for building the road is the same as it ever was: moving fish and workers to and from King Cove's canneries," Babbitt [wrote](#) in the Los Angeles Times last month.

Peter Pan has [rejected](#) those accusations, and Murkowski notes that her legislation calling for approval of the road specifically bars using it for commercial purposes.

The fight over the road burst into public view in the late 1990s, when then-Sen. Frank Murkowski pushed legislation that would allow for approval of the road as part of a land exchange. The bill passed the Senate in 1998 but never passed the House. President Bill Clinton threatened a veto amid concerns about the road's effect on wildlife.

Soon after, then-Sen. Ted Stevens launched into a tense series of negotiations with the Interior Department. The resulting compromise was a \$37.5 million appropriation approved by Congress to improve the King Cove medical clinic and airport and make accommodations for a hovercraft to transport residents to Cold Bay. The hovercraft was used until 2011, but it is being sold because, operators said, it was too expensive to operate.

"Finally it was settled — and now it turns out it isn't," said Babbitt, who worked with Stevens to negotiate the deal and strongly opposed the road.

Within several years, the issue was back on the table. Lisa Murkowski included a provision in a 2009 bill calling on the Interior Department to analyze the road and proposing another land exchange. In exchange for setting aside land in the refuge for the road, the federal government would receive more than 43,000 acres of Alaska state land and more than 13,000 acres of land owned by the King Cove Native Corp.

The provision set off a four-year analysis by Interior that culminated in December with the department's rejection of the road.

"While the proposed land exchange would bring many more acres of land into the Refuge System, the analysis indicates that the increased acreage could not compensate for the unique values of existing refuge lands, nor the anticipated effects that the proposed road would have on wildlife, habitat, subsistence resources and wilderness values of the Refuge," the department said in a statement at the time.

The decision infuriated the Alaska delegation and has strained Murkowski's relationship with Jewell.

After hearing about the decision, Murkowski [said](#) she told Jewell, "I cannot forgive the fact that you have delivered this, that you have dashed all hope for the people of King Cove, and the fact that you did this the week of Christmas is absolutely callous and cold-hearted."

Other Alaska lawmakers have similarly taken Jewell to task. "If someone dies out of King Cove, I want you to really think about it and be ashamed of yourself," Rep. Don Young told Jewell at a hearing Thursday.

The road's opponents say viable alternatives exist — a notion that Murkowski and others reject. Opponents also argue that the road, which would snake through isolated land often battered by extreme weather, would pose its own dangers.

At a recent Senate hearing, Jewell said she is committed to working with King Cove residents to find alternatives. During a recent meeting with Begich, she said she will again listen to the community's concerns.

"Jewell committed to reviewing the information that the community plans to provide on the issue and to provide a response to the senators, State of Alaska and the community on their request to reconsider the final decision," Interior spokeswoman Jessica Kershaw said in an email.

Alaska lawmakers face major hurdles toward changing Interior's mind but say they're not giving up.

Begich said in a recent interview that he hopes to attach his bill approving the road to upcoming Interior appropriations legislation. Murkowski vowed to continue hammering away as well.

"This secretary has made a decision, and I think she thought the people of King Cove were tucked far enough away that nobody would be making a big deal about this," Murkowski said. "But I'm not forgetting them, and it's not just an idle threat."

CORRECTION: A previous version of this story offered an incorrect name for the city where King Cove residents sometimes have to travel for major medical procedures.

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Feinstein draws primary challenge from Democrat de León [Back](#)

By David Siders | 10/15/2017 01:56 PM EDT

LOS ANGELES - Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) will face a primary challenge from California state Senate leader Kevin de León, who cast himself on Sunday as a progressive champion of California's resistance to President Donald Trump.

Launching his campaign, de León said in an email to supporters that he will "take the fight to Trump from California to Washington DC," doing his part "to work even harder to reunite this nation with a progressive agenda."

The announcement, which had long been expected, comes less than a week after Feinstein [announced](#) her re-election bid.

De León did not mention Feinstein in his public campaign roll-out. In a subsequent interview with POLITICO, he avoided criticizing Feinstein by name. "California needs a senator who will stand up and fight for Medicare for All, one that prioritizes the fight against climate change, that will protect Dreamers and our economic prosperity," he said.

He said he was a "bundle of nerves" and that the announcement was "just like jumping off a cliff."

"It will be David and Goliath...I'm under no illusion," he said.

De León, a Los Angeles lawmaker, faces an uphill climb in his effort to unseat Feinstein. First elected to the Senate in a 1992 special election, Feinstein has long served as a pillar of California's Democratic Party and has connections that could make fundraising difficult for de León. The state's junior senator, Kamala Harris, endorsed Feinstein immediately after she announced her re-election campaign, as did former Sen. Barbara Boxer and Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, the Democratic frontrunner to succeed Jerry Brown as governor.

Still, Feinstein's more centrist politics could present an opening for de León, who will run against her from the left. Feinstein, 84, has come under criticism from progressive activists for her skeptical view of single-payer health care legislation and her support for some of Trump's earliest nominees.

De León this year championed a failed universal health care measure and a successful bill granting additional protections to undocumented immigrants. De León cheered Feinstein's critics earlier this year when, seizing on Feinstein's remark that Trump could become a "good president," he said Democrats should "not be complicit in his reckless behavior."

Yet Feinstein's public approval ratings, though slipping slightly since Trump's inauguration, remain relatively favorable in California. And de León is little known statewide. When the Berkeley-IGS Poll asked Californians in April who they would support for U.S. Senate if Feinstein opted not to run, De León polled at 3 percent.

De León, who will soon have to leave the state Senate due to term limits, had few options for advancement. The 50-year-old had considered entering California's race for governor, but the field is already crowded with Democrats.

It remains unclear if de León will be the only high-profile Democrat challenging Feinstein. Billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer is mulling a run, and Joseph Sanberg, a wealthy Orange County progressive activist, is considered another potential candidate. Some long-shot

candidates are already in the race, including a progressive lawyer, Pat Harris.

Under California's primary rules, the top two finishers in next year's primary will advance to a November runoff regardless of party affiliation.

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Kelly tries to get empty administration jobs filled fast [Back](#)

By Nancy Cook | 10/15/2017 05:42 PM EDT

White House chief of staff John Kelly is giving Cabinet secretaries more autonomy to pick top political appointees, reversing efforts under his predecessor Reince Priebus to run most appointments through the West Wing.

Kelly's goal, according to 10 interviews with White House officials and advisers close to the administration, is to do a better job of finding candidates for the hundreds of jobs throughout the administration that remain vacant almost nine months into President Donald Trump's first term.

"Being somebody from the Department of Defense, normally you've got key people in place and a clear chain of command," said Leon Panetta, a former White House chief of staff himself and former Secretary of Defense, who spoke to Kelly around the time he accepted the White House job. "It's very difficult to run anything if you don't have people responsible in those positions."

Kelly entered the White House with an unusually clear understanding of the flaws of the personnel process, according to two people close to him.

As a Cabinet pick and then as Department of Homeland Security secretary, Kelly was frequently exasperated during the transition and early days of the administration over his inability to choose his own staff. He got into frequent spats with the White House over filling a handful of top jobs in his department, according to one of the people close to him.

Other Cabinet secretaries, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, have had their [own problems](#) with the White House personnel office, with Mattis trying to circumvent it and hire his own staff.

"Look, everyone in the White House is upset. It's both a problem of getting candidates through the bureaucracy and through the Senate. Of course Kelly is upset," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, an informal adviser to Trump whose wife, Callista, has been nominated as Trump's Vatican ambassador. "The whole system is totally screwed up."

Part of the problem stems from the Trump administration's criteria for hiring staffers and top political appointees. Potential candidates must be loyal to the administration and not have spoken harshly about the president during the campaign.

That has created a particular problem when it comes to filling national security jobs, because

scores of Republican experts, many of whom served in the George W. Bush administration, signed a letter criticizing the future president before the election.

Many experienced Republicans who ordinarily would have vied for middle- and top-level posts under a Republican president also decided to sit out the Trump administration in January, starving the president of choices when it came to picking appointees.

The president himself seems willing to tolerate vacancies indefinitely.

"I'm generally not going to make a lot of the appointments that would normally be - because you don't need them," Trump told Forbes in an interview which posted last week. "I mean, you look at some of these agencies, how massive they are, and it's totally unnecessary. They have hundreds of thousands of people."

The White House press office did not respond to requests for comment.

Filling vacant jobs has taken on particular urgency in recent weeks, as the White House contends with thorny policy questions such as North Korea's growing nuclear might and the fate of the Iran deal. The administration is also trying to re-negotiate the NAFTA trade agreement and roll back parts of Obamacare through regulations and executive orders.

At the State Department, more than 78 jobs do not have a nominee out of 149 key positions, and 32 countries still don't have ambassadors in place, according to data kept by the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service.

The Treasury Department has 15 key slots open out of 28 significant Senate confirmed positions as the White House dives into selling tax reform.

Just last week, Treasury announced it would [not fill](#) its No. 2 deputy secretary slot after a second candidate dropped out of the running for it.

Kelly's own former job remains open two and a half months after he moved to the White House, with Trump nominating Kelly's No. 2 Kirstjen Nielsen this week after other potential nominees were passed over.

The Department of Health and Human Services, the agency responsible for overseeing the Affordable Care Act, lacks a Cabinet secretary after former Rep. Tom Price resigned after spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to charter private jets for government trips.

So far, the Senate has confirmed roughly 142 political appointees out of the 602 key jobs throughout the government, according to the Partnership for Public Service.

The presidential personnel office also got off to a rocky start. Its director Johnny DeStefano, who started right after the inauguration, had to find candidates for hundreds of key Senate-confirmed jobs without an existing pool of applicants after the administration discarded lists compiled by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was fired as transition head days after the election in November.

DeStefano also entered the job with no formal experience in executive recruiting or hiring. Previously, he worked for House Speaker John Boehner and the National Republican Congressional Committee.

At the White House, both Priebus and Steve Bannon, the former White House chief strategist, were seen as his high-level protectors. Their departures this summer have left DeStefano adrift inside Kelly's new power structure, according to two people close to the administration.

Kelly recently asked DeStefano to oversee the Office of Public Liaison, whose head George Sifakis left in August following Priebus' ouster.

DeStefano, who also retains his title as head of the personnel office, did not respond to requests for comment.

Outside conservative activists and groups are no longer blaming Senate Democrats for holding up confirmations.

Last week, over 100 conservatives released a letter to remind both the administration and Capitol Hill that "personnel is policy."

The letter demands that Senate leadership schedule committee and floor action every Thursday and Friday and to work full weeks until Trump's nominees get confirmed. Among the signatories are Edwin Meese, former Attorney General under Ronald Reagan; Becky Norton Dunlop, a former Reagan adviser who worked on the Trump transition; Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, and Adam Brandon, President of FreedomWorks.

Republicans say that the slow pace of appointments impedes Trump's agenda. It ends up leaving much of the agency-level, or diplomatic work to government careerists who aren't necessarily supportive of the Trump agenda.

"The career people know how to keep the government going and respond to citizens, but if there is any desire to change what the government is doing, that is most effectively done if it is being led by a political appointee," said Clay Johnson, who oversaw presidential personnel under Bush. "So without the hundreds of political appointees at each of the key agencies, the administration of government will continue, but it will be hard for the Trump administration to change or eliminate something, or create something new."

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EPW to vote next week on EPA, NRC, DOT nominees [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/13/2017 04:42 PM EDT

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will vote Oct. 18 on four EPA nominees, plus appointments to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Federal Highway Administration.

The committee will vote on Michael Dourson to run the EPA's chemicals and pesticides office, William Wehrum to run the air office, David Ross to head the water office and Matthew Leopold to be general counsel.

Sen. [Tom Carper](#), the committee's top Democrat, indicated last week that he will oppose Wehrum over his strong ties to industry and Dourson because he declined Carper's request to recuse himself from issues he worked on previously as an independent toxicologist.

The committee will also vote on Jeff Baran's re-nomination to the NRC. Chairman [John Barrasso](#) called Baran's re-confirmation, even in exchange for Democrats moving two Republican NRC nominees, as a "big ask."

And the committee will vote on Paul Trombino as administrator of the FHWA. His nomination hearing was held last week.

Barrasso indicated last week that he is working to get a package of energy-related nominees onto the floor, including possibly several pending nominations to FERC and the Energy Department.

WHAT'S NEXT: The vote is scheduled for Oct. 18 at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 406.

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Barrasso: Baran renomination to NRC is a 'big ask' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 10/04/2017 10:59 AM EDT

Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) complained this morning that re-confirming Nuclear Regulatory Commission member Jeff Baran may be too high a price for Republicans to pay in exchange for Democrats easing their opposition to GOP nominees to the agency.

"Senate Democrats have refused to advance the nominations of Annie Caputo and David Wright to the NRC until Commissioner Baran is confirmed to a new five-year term," Barrasso said at nomination hearing with Baran and four nominees to the EPA. "To be clear, Mr. Baran's nomination is a big ask."

Caputo and Wright [secured](#) the blessing of EPW in July but Sen. [Tom Carper](#) has [pressed](#) that Baran, whose seat expires in June, get a new five-year term and move alongside Republican picks as a bipartisan package.

But Barrasso bristled at the notion of having Baran on the NRC longer than President Donald Trump's GOP nominees, as well as NRC Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki. Wright and Caputo are up for terms expiring in June 2020 and June 2021, respectively. The Wyoming Republican also said he's hardly seen reason to drop his long-held opposition to Baran since former Sen. Barbara Boxer originally pushed him through the Senate years ago.

"In December 2014, the last time the Senate confirmed Mr. Baran, only one Republican voted in favor of his confirmation," Barrasso said. "Since then, Commissioner Baran has given me little reason to reconsider my vote."

WHAT'S NEXT: EPW has not yet scheduled a vote on the nominees.

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DOE gives nod to Florida small-scale LNG project [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/15/2017 01:37 PM EDT

The Energy Department approved a company's application to export small amounts of liquefied natural gas from Florida, the agency [said](#) today.

Eagle LNG Partners Jacksonville II LLC is now authorized to ship 10 million cubic feet a day of natural gas in intermodal containers, DOE said. The company [plans](#) to ship the LNG to Caribbean islands to be used mainly as ship fuel, according to its website.

DOE has now approved up to 21.35 Bcf/d of natural gas exports.

WHAT'S NEXT: The U.S. is expected to become a net exporter of natural gas this year, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts.

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Trump administration restarts work on airplane carbon rule [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 10/13/2017 02:48 PM EDT

The EPA confirmed it is developing a rule to regulate carbon emissions from aircraft, a rare step by the Trump administration to address climate change, and one that's seen as critical for the U.S. aerospace industry.

The rule, still under development, is part of the effort agreed to by a United Nations body last year to set a global carbon standard for international flights. Aircraft manufacturer Boeing, and its engine-makers Pratt & Whitney and GE, supported the agreement, and the companies need EPA to create the emissions regulation that would allow DOT to certify its equipment for international sale.

The rulemaking runs counter to President Donald Trump and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's steadfast opposition to efforts to combat climate change, and their rollback of Obama's climate policies. EPA had paused development of the aircraft rule over the summer as part of Trump's broader deregulatory push. But official schedules show Pruitt met with Boeing and GE in July, and the agency restarted the work this fall.

In crafting the rule, the administration appears to be willing to support a climate change effort that is strongly backed by industry, and could be an indicator of how it will consider a treaty to limit global warming-causing coolants. The carbon rule for aircraft is essential for Boeing, one of the top U.S. exporters.

"If the U.S. does not write a rule, U.S. manufacturers, particularly this would be Boeing, and manufacturers of engines on planes, they would not be able to sell those on international service and U.S. airlines would not be able to buy them for international operations," said Nancy Young, vice president for environmental affairs for the lobby group Airlines for America.

A committee of the International Civil Aviation Organization, an international standards-setting body, first agreed to the carbon standard for aircraft engines early in 2016. New engine designs in 2020 would be required to be an average of 4 percent more efficient than 2015 engines, and all new aircraft will have to meet the standard by 2024. ICAO issued a final approval in the spring, and EPA had already begun work on the rule, publishing an endangerment finding in July last year.

But Trump's election put the effort in doubt, and work on the rule paused over the summer as part of the new administration's regulatory reviews. Pruitt's schedule showed he had at least one meeting with Boeing over the summer, and work has begun now in earnest to produce a rule implementing the agreement.

"EPA is working on CO2 standards for aircraft to align them with the ICAO agreement," an EPA spokesman told POLITICO, confirming news first reported by Bloomberg BNA. The agency had said in its [deregulatory agenda](#) on July 20 that work on the rule had been suspended.

ICAO sets a wide variety of technical and safety standards, and federal agencies like the FAA and DOT typically implement them with little fanfare. Agreements by the body do not typically require Senate ratification. The ICAO agreement requires action by EPA to set the emission standards, and DOT would use those standards to certify engines promoted by Boeing, but it would not require Senate ratification.

But any carbon rule seemed unlikely under the Trump administration, which has spent its first months in office erasing regulatory efforts to fight climate change, including the Clean Power Plan and the U.S. participation in the Paris climate agreement.

Without an EPA rule implementing the deal, Boeing would have been unable to export its aircraft, or would have been forced to get them certified by another country that had implemented the deal, like Canada or Mexico. Boeing is a major exporter: The U.S. exported \$136 billion in aerospace equipment in 2016, and Boeing exported \$25 billion in aircraft to China alone. The International Council on Clean Transportation, a transportation think tank, characterized the stakes by noting Boeing's \$250 billion order backlog that could be at risk without a rule.

Boeing declined to comment for this story.

Boeing and GE met with Pruitt on July 13, a week before the public learned the rule had been paused, according to a schedule of Pruitt's meetings released by EPA last month.

"For Boeing, GE and Pratt and Whitney, it's critical," said Daniel Rutherford, marine and aviation program director for ICCT. "If they want to sell aircraft after 2020, they need this rule."

Greens are split on the ICAO standard. Bill Hemmings, who leads aviation work at Transport and Environment, an international green group, lambasted it at the time as "a nice try" that fell short of making major strides to reduce emissions. According to ICCT's analysis, Boeing will exceed the standard with the products in their pipeline by 10 percent.

But defenders of the agreement say it has value for preventing backsliding in engine efficiency, and for stopping other countries from producing less efficient products that undercut higher-quality U.S. goods.

"With this agreement, ICAO created the first-ever standards for carbon dioxide performance for a major sector of the economy, the aviation industry," said Rick Duke, a former aide to Obama who worked on the agreement. "It's good for American industry because we produce efficient aircraft and so we want to make sure that laggards are not grabbing market share with poor-performing aircraft."

The administration's action could also be good news for the U.S. coolant-making industry, which is strongly backing a separate agreement struck at the end of last year to limit global-warming hydrofluorocarbons. The industry supports the agreement reached in Kigali, Rwanda, because U.S. companies are the leaders in next-generation coolants. But unlike the ICAO agreement, the amendment to the Montreal Protocol requires Senate ratification.

Now, the willingness of Trump's EPA to write a carbon rule on behalf of industry could signal at least tacit approval to remain part of the international business arrangement, if not administration support for the Kigali agreement itself.

"I think that's what we saw happen last year with the Kigali agreement with HFCs where U.S. industry strongly pushed for successful outcome there," Duke said. "And like the aircraft sector, the industry produces high-performing products, and they very much appreciate having a level playing field and allows them to have a clear path."

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Texas utility to shut down two major coal plants [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/13/2017 11:30 AM EDT

Texas utility Luminant announced plans today to shut down two major coal-fired power plants that it said are "economically challenged."

The plants, with a combined 2,300 megawatts of capacity, were undercut by "low wholesale power prices, an oversupplied renewable generation market, and low natural gas prices," Luminant, a subsidiary of Vistra Energy, said in a release.

The plants are Big Brown, a 1,150-megawatt plant about 80 miles southeast of Dallas, and Sandow, a 1,137 MW-plant that sits 45 miles northeast of Austin.

Both plants burn lignite coal. The mine associated with Big Brown, Turlington, was already scheduled to close this year, according to Luminant. The Three Oaks mine that supplies

Sandow will close down soon as well.

About 650 workers at all those sites will be affected. Luminant said it will provide severance and help finding new work.

Environmentalists have targeted those plants, and particularly Big Brown, for years. But Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, in a statement downplayed the notion that the closures are a further sign of trouble for coal "but rather as an important part of an increasing diverse array of generation sources."

Luminant last week announced it will shut down its 1,800-megawatt Monticello coal plant about 100 miles east of Dallas on Jan. 4. It was supplied by coal from the Powder River Basin.

WHAT'S NEXT: Assuming the decommissioning process is approved by ERCOT, the Texas grid regulator, Big Brown will shut down on Feb. 12 and Sandow will close on Jan. 11.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump's Love Affair with Coal [Back](#)

By Michael Grunwald | 10/15/2017 07:06 AM EDT

In February, surrounded by coal miners at the White House, President Donald Trump signed a bill repealing the Obama-era Stream Protection Rule, which would have restricted coal companies from burying streams. "This is a major threat to your jobs," Trump said, "and we're getting rid of this threat." He did not mention streams.

In March, this time surrounded by coal miners at the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump signed an executive order vowing to roll back Obama-era climate change policies, including the Clean Power Plan limiting carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants. "C'mon fellas, you know what this says?" Trump asked. "You're going back to work!" He did not mention climate or pollution.

So it was no surprise when, last week, Trump's EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, announced he was launching the formal process to repeal the Clean Power Plan in a speech to coal miners in the coal town of Hazard, Kentucky. He proclaimed, as his boss has many times, that "the war on coal is over." There was once again little pretense that the move had much to do with the EP part of the EPA.

As the Trump administration has battled internally and seesawed publicly over issues like trade, health care, infrastructure and even immigration, there's no issue where it's been more consistent and emphatic than its support for coal. Miners held up "Trump Digs Coal" signs at his raucous campaign rallies, and sure enough, he's been a relentless advocate for this small and beleaguered industry.

He has stocked his administration with coal veterans, hacked away at coal regulations, and done what he can to prop up struggling coal companies. He probably won't be able to keep his promise to revive a once-dominant fossil fuel that has been declining around the world—and

most rapidly in the United States—but he is already changing the policy landscape around our dirtiest source of energy. He is also sending a political message to his base that he is waging a war on the war on coal, standing with tough guys who earn their living underground against tree-huggers who whine about climate change and clean air.

So far, coal is continuing its slump despite Trump's support. Utilities have announced the retirements of 12 more coal-fired power plants since he took office, including two massive ones in Texas added to the closure list on Friday. That announcement marked a milestone: Half of America's coal fleet has been marked for mothballs since 2010, a total of 262 doomed plants. And as jobs go, coal mining is now a tiny sliver of the U.S. economy, employing about 52,000 Americans last month, down 70 percent over three decades. (The count is up about 4 percent since Trump took office, but mostly because a snafu in China's steel industry temporarily boosted U.S. exports.) By contrast, the solar and wind industries employed almost 10 times as many Americans last year, and they're both enjoying explosive growth.

Coal is America's leading source of the carbon emissions that warm the planet, as well as a host of other air and water pollutants. And the economics of coal has cratered. Still, politically, the coal industry is one of the purest distillations of Trump's base, uniting right-wing business executives who hate environmental regulations and taxes along with blue-collar miners who wish America was more like it used to be when coal was king. While polls suggest that fewer than one-third of Americans approve of Trump's indelicate approach to the environment, more than two-thirds of the Republicans he's courted approve. At the ceremony where he erased the stream rule, Trump ticked off a list of coal states—West Virginia, Kentucky, Wyoming, Ohio—that all happened to have been big Trump states in November.

"Special people, special workers, we're bringing it back and we're bringing it back fast," he crowed.

So even if Trump can't stop the decline of coal, the industry is thrilled that he's doing his part to try to slow it, especially after eight years of an eco-friendly, climate-concerned Democrat in the White House. Bob Murray, a prominent coal CEO and early Trump backer, says in a new *Frontline* documentary that he handed Trump a 3½-page action plan when he took office, and the president has already plowed through Page 1.

"From a government whose avowed aim for eight years was to destroy the industry, we've understandably benefited from one that for eight months has helped us," says Luke Popovich, vice president of the National Mining Association.

Trump began by hiring coal-friendly aides like Pruitt, who had repeatedly teamed up with fossil-fuel interests to sue President Barack Obama's EPA when he was Oklahoma attorney general, and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, the founder of a coal company that once had a deadly disaster in one of its mines. Trump's nominee to be Pruitt's deputy is a coal lobbyist; his nominee to be assistant labor secretary for mine safety and health ran a mining company with a checkered safety record.

The result has been a flurry of coal-friendly actions. Pruitt is taking aim not only at Obama's carbon plan for the power industry but a host of other rules limiting mercury, soot, smog and other discharges from coal operations. The president defied the world by withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, specifically complaining that it was unfair to American coal. His administration has also lifted Obama's moratorium on coal leases on federal land, ended Obama's restrictions on financing coal projects overseas, and shut down a study of the health

effects of coal mining that blasts away entire mountains. His energy secretary, Rick Perry, recently proposed new subsidies for coal plants that keep stockpiles of coal handy, galvanizing opposition from an odd coalition of renewable energy advocates, environmentalists, Koch Industries and other oil and gas interests, manufacturers and other electricity consumers.

At a hearing last week, a Democratic congressman asked Perry why he was pushing a plan that could prop up outdated coal plants and increase costs to ratepayers. The secretary's response summed up the administration's approach to coal: "I think you take costs into account, but what's the cost of freedom? What's the cost to keep America free? I'm not sure I want to leave that up to the free market."

Coal's long decline did get worse during the Obama years—partly because of his anti-pollution regulations, partly because of the Sierra Club's well-funded and well-executed [anti-coal campaign](#), but mostly because of the cruel realities of the market: Natural gas and even renewables got cheaper. And the slump is only expected to accelerate, since scores of still-operating coal plants are already scheduled to shut down over the next few years, and nobody is building new coal plants. Even if the economics made sense, and even if utilities didn't have to worry about carbon emissions, coal plants belch all kinds of pollution into the air and water; the American Lung Association believes its particulates kill about 7,500 Americans every year.

Still, Trump is a fan, and he's unusually forthright in his fandom. He's often either misleading or misinformed about the impact of his other policies—claiming his tax plan wouldn't help the rich, or that his health policies would expand access and protect pre-existing conditions—but when it comes to coal, Trump is clear about his goals, and transparent about whose interests he's pushing. Murray, the coal executive, was by his side when he signed the order attacking Obama's climate policies. Vice President Mike Pence, Pruitt, Perry and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke have all toured coal operations this year.

So it was no surprise that the National Mining Association held a board meeting this month at the Trump International Hotel in Washington, putting money in its presidential benefactor's pockets. And as the *Washington Post* first reported, three Cabinet secretaries spoke to the group—Perry, Ross and Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, who was once an attorney for a Murray Energy subsidiary in a dispute with its union. Zinke couldn't make it, but he sent his deputy, former fossil-fuel lobbyist David Bernhardt, in his place.

The meeting was private, but an activist at the Climate Investigation Center sent me photos the group obtained of Bernhardt speaking to the group—including photos of his notes. They appear to show that Interior is "considering appropriate adjustments" to the Obama administration's decisions to prohibit mining claims on certain environmentally sensitive public lands. Bernhardt's notes described some of those decisions as "nothing short of uninformed, arbitrary, and frankly senseless." Bernhardt had also jotted down the cellphone number of Luke Russell, vice president of external affairs for Hecla Mining. Hecla is seeking permits from Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service for two copper mines in Montana, and Russell said in an interview that the process has been dragging out for years.

"We're encouraged by the actions of this administration to try to move things along and get to a yes or no much quicker," Russell said.

The Interior Department did not respond to a request for comment. But the department's leaders have not been shy about their belief that Obama treated mining companies and other extractive industries unfairly. In August, for example, they rescinded an Obama-era rule that closed a loophole coal mining firms and other fossil-fuel companies were using to evade federal royalties on public lands. Zinke argued that the rule was causing too much "confusion and uncertainty" and holding back U.S. energy development.

Trump administration officials often frame their attacks on energy-related rules as an aversion to "picking winners and losers," accusing their predecessors of harming coal in order to help wind (which tripled its capacity under Obama) and solar (which increased about 40-fold). But environmentalists point out that Obama's EPA, for example, never targeted the coal industry; it targeted pollution, and coal happens to produce an inordinate amount of pollution. Bruce Nilles, senior director of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, says a distraught EPA career official recently told him the agency's political bosses have given clear marching orders: Do whatever you can to promote coal. That certainly sounded like picking winners.

"The insanity is, it's not a secret," Nilles says. "They make no bones about it. They see their job as helping coal companies pollute as much as they want."

The EPA's focus has often shifted with the partisan winds, but it's still a bit jarring to see an agency founded to fight pollution used so aggressively to assist some of America's biggest polluters. Pruitt believes the EPA has strayed far beyond its original mandate, and he has been open about his desire to give the subjects of its regulations a break. He recently told a group of farmers that he's often asked why he meets so much more with industry groups than environmental groups, and he was surprisingly forthright: "The answer is, you count more."

Pruitt has tried to ditch or delay just about all of Obama's coal regulations—prominent ones limiting carbon, mercury and ozone as well as lesser-known ones dealing with coal ash, "nonattainment areas" and "regional haze." Two weeks ago, his agency gave one of the Trump administration's most consequential gifts to the industry so far, gutting an Obama-era effort to force the state of Texas to rein in coal-fired pollution around Big Bend National Park.

But neither coal-friendly Texas nor the coal-friendly EPA could stop Luminant, considered one of the coal-friendliest utilities, from announcing the retirements of four Texas coal plants in the past 10 days. Coal used to be dirty but cheap, but now it's just dirty—and utilities who have to make long-term investment decisions can't assume that Trump's willingness to ignore coal pollution will continue beyond his term in office. American Electric Power, a coal-heavy utility that is America's largest carbon emitter, recently invested \$4.5 billion in the nation's largest wind farm—in Pruitt's home state of Oklahoma.

The Supreme Court had put the Clean Power Plan on hold even before Trump took office, but the U.S. electricity sector has already met the plan's 2030 target for reducing coal use, and it is on track to meet its overall [emission goals next year](#). And while the EPA has not yet proposed a replacement for the plan, it is still bound by a Supreme Court decision requiring it to regulate carbon pollution, so it will have to defend whatever it decides in court. The same goes for Pruitt's efforts to gut Obama's other coal-related rules as well as unrelated rules. Rules are rules, and while it's pretty easy for administrations to ignore them, it's much harder to change them to guide future administrations.

Nilles talked to me from Oakland, where he could see haze from California's historic wildfires, this month's awful reminder of the dangers of climate change. I talked to him from Miami, where I could still see debris from Hurricane Irma, one of last month's awful reminders of the dangers of climate change. Trump has described global warming as a hoax manufactured in China, and his newly announced chair of his Council on Environmental Quality is a climate denier who has written florid praise of carbon emissions. But the impacts are getting harder to ignore—even China is shutting down coal plants around Beijing—and the American executives making electricity investments do not seem to think they will be ignored for long.

"Trump can't revive coal. The transition is already happening," Nilles says. "What Trump can do is allow more pollution and death during the transition."

The mining association's Popovich pushed back a bit, noting that coal exports and production are up slightly so far this year, "thanks in part to this regime change." But he says the Obama-era retirements have battered the industry badly, and even Trump's support can't magically fix a stagnant market.

"Conditions," he says, "are still challenging."

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Date: Thursday, September 21, 2017 5:43:32 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 09/21/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Darius Dixon

MARIA HITS PUERTO RICO ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE HARD: Nearly 3.5 million Americans are without electricity on Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria's direct hit, but the impacts to its bankrupt power provider could be felt for months after what its governor called an "unprecedented atmospheric system." The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority declared bankruptcy on July 2 after being bogged down by old power plants that need of billions in repairs and the island's heavy reliance on imported oil. Ahead of Hurricane Irma earlier this month, Moody's Investors Service [warned](#) that "longterm power outages will have negative impacts on PREPA's revenues and will pose added challenges in Puerto Rico's overall recovery from this natural disaster." And consumers on the island already pay "more for their power than consumers in any state except Hawaii," according to the [Energy Information Administration](#). San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz summed up the devastation to [MSNBC](#): "We're looking at four to six months without electricity" in Puerto Rico.

President Donald Trump's administration said in a statement it "continues to direct all necessary Federal resources to protect the people of the United States territories affected by Hurricane Maria" and Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello [said](#) he'd requested a disaster declaration that could help speed the deployment of federal assistance. Dangerous winds and flood surges are possible over the coming days, according to federal officials. Another thing to watch is the status of the island's 18 Superfund sites. EPA said it had "temporarily paused all response operations" until the storm passed but pledged to "ramp up response activities quickly" once it is safe to do so. In a statement late Wednesday, House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) said: "Both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are in dire need of our assistance and we will do everything in our power to ensure that all necessary resources are made available."

Nelson, Rubio request help: Florida Sens. [Marco Rubio](#) and [Bill Nelson](#), still dealing with the impacts of Hurricane Irma on their own state, asked Trump in [a letter](#) to closely monitor the needs of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. And they separately [wrote](#) to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt urging the agency to expedite federal assistance to local entities to reduce sewage and wastewater exposure risks stemming from Irma. They also asked Pruitt for help to improve existing water systems so they're less vulnerable to damage in future hurricanes.

Looking ahead: Expect the recovery needs from Maria to factor into the next disaster relief package likely to take shape in Congress in the weeks ahead. Senior House members, including Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) and Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#), toured areas in Florida hardest hit by Hurricane Irma on Wednesday.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Hunton & Williams' Joe Stanko first identified Richard Nixon as the famous "[sock it to me](#)" guest on "Laugh-In." For today: Which president hosted the first Passover Seder at the White House? (And a very

Happy New Year to those celebrating!). Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

STATES ON TRACK FOR PARIS-STYLE REDUCTIONS: A bloc of 14 states representing 40 percent of the U.S. economy — or equal to the world's third-largest economy if they were a single nation — said Wednesday they expect to slash their greenhouse gas emissions 24-29 percent by 2025, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). "While Donald Trump has told the world to count us out, our message is simple in New York City this week — you can count us in," Washington Gov. Jay Inslee said at a press conference. But while those reductions are in line with the U.S. target under the Paris deal Trump vowed to withdraw from, the members of the bipartisan Climate Alliance account for only about one-fifth of the country's net emissions, according to 2015 figures from the analysis firm Rhodium Group. The group released a report on their progress available [here](#).

Environmentalists hailed the status update: "President Trump can keep attacking climate action, but he can't stop local innovation from continuing our progress," League of Conservation Voters State Policy Director Bill Holland said in a statement.

Getting lonely out here: Syria and the U.S. will soon be the lone holdouts from the Paris climate agreement after Nicaragua announced Wednesday it would ratify the accord in solidarity with other nations suffering from climate impacts, local media [reports](#). The nation's previous resistance to the international deal was because it had said it doesn't go far enough and doesn't do enough to hold major emitters accountable.

May lightly hits Trump over Paris exit: British Prime Minister Theresa May lightly rebuked Trump for withdrawing from the accord during Wednesday remarks at the U.N. General Assembly, POLITICO Europe's Paul Dallison [reports](#). "It is this rules-based system which we have developed — including the institutions, the international frameworks of free and fair trade; agreements such as the Paris climate accord; and laws and conventions like the Non-Proliferation Treaty — which enables the global co-operation through which we can protect those values," the British PM said.

BIWEEKLY PRUITT SCHEDULE COMING SOON, AGENCY SAYS: EPA will soon begin publicly releasing Administrator Scott Pruitt's schedule, an agency attorney tells ME. Requests for records are up this year, and Pruitt's schedule is of particular interest, but the agency so far has only released his schedule for February and March. Now the agency's plan is to release every other week an "abbreviated version" of Pruitt's doings, going back to when he was confirmed, according to the attorney. It's not yet clear just how thorough the releases will be, but it appears internal EPA meetings will be included. Daily schedules released under the previous administrator, Gina McCarthy, typically revealed only public appearances at conferences or other venues.

**** A message from the Nuclear Energy Institute:** Nuclear is doing more than ever before. It's powering the grid, boosting the economy by billions, creating jobs, propelling space travel and even helping doctors. It's moving us forward in ways we never thought possible. Explore all nuclear energy is doing at discovernuclear.com. **

GREEN AD HITS LAWMAKERS OVER SPENDING BILL: The League of Conservation Voters is out with a digital ad today hitting six congressmen for their votes in favor of a spending package [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#) with a host of cuts to environmental programs.

Targets of campaign are [Darrell Issa](#), [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#), [Ken Calvert](#), [Collin Peterson](#), [Barbara Comstock](#) and [Mimi Walters](#). Sample ad [here](#). LCV will also thank [Betty McCollum](#) and [Frank LoBiondo](#) for voting against the bill.

LAWMAKERS PRESS GRID OPERATOR FOR CARBON STUDY: Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Bernie Sanders](#) have asked ISO-New England to assess the impact of using a carbon price in their power markets. New York's ISO brought in the Brattle Group to study the same thing for their state, and the New England lawmakers suggested that "the current system may discriminate against carbon-free resources in the absence of a carbon price." The pair also point to utility regulators in Minnesota and Colorado using carbon metrics to size up energy projects. But there's an obvious elephant in the room: ISO-New England serves six states and despite looking like tiny hardcore liberal states from the outside, they're hardly a monolith on this issue. Back in May, the ISO's chief economist [told us](#) that New England states "currently have a regional greenhouse gas market that exists, they govern it, many states have indicated a comfort retaining that and a discomfort with going beyond that." The Whitehouse-Sanders [letter](#).

CALIFORNIA SUES OVER TRUMP'S WALL: California Attorney General Xavier Becerra challenged the legality of Trump's push to build a border wall in [a lawsuit](#) filed in federal court in San Diego on Wednesday, POLITICO's Josh Gerstein [reports](#). Among the allegations is that the administration failed to comply with National Environmental Policy Act and the Administrative Procedure Act by failing to prepare an environmental impact statement for projects related to the border wall in San Diego and Imperial counties.

GREEN QUILTS TRADE BOARD OVER CLIMATE: Bill Snape, a law professor at American University and attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, has resigned from a federal trade advisory board with a [letter](#) where the first letter in each paragraph spells out N-O-T-A-H-O-A-X — a reference to Trump's comments on climate change and in the [same acrostic-style flair](#) employed by previous resignees in recent months. Snape had been a member of the U.S. Trade and Environment Policy Advisory Committee, overseen by the U.S. Trade Representative, since 2005. He wrote in his letter that TEPAC can be "enormously useful," but that "I do not believe in this president, or his severely shortsighted and harmful policies" and that "it's time to be real about global warming."

JUSTICE FOR MANCHIN? GOP West Virginia Gov. (and former coal executive) Jim Justice appeared to back Democratic Sen. [Joe Manchin](#)'s reelection bid over the Republican candidates — Rep. [Evan Jenkins](#) and Attorney General Patrick Morrisey — during remarks to state Republican lawmakers this week, West Virginia Metro News [reports](#). "Joe Manchin is — and I know this — Joe Manchin is Donald Trump's liaison with the Democrats. And you want, and I want, what Donald Trump is trying to get done," Justice said, adding he liked both Morrisey and Jenkins but considered Manchin a "friend."

NEW SENSE OF PURPA? FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee told reporters Wednesday the agency might look at changing its rules on facilities that qualify for preferential treatment under the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). "Any major changes to PURPA I think are going to have to come from Congress," he said. But "what we could look to here are what potential changes we could do within our purview whether it relates to the one-mile rule or other items."

LAST VOICES WEIGH IN ON SUNIVA CASE: A group of retired military officials warned the International Trade Commission that slapping tariffs on imported solar products,

as requested by Suniva and SolarWorld USA, would harm the Defense Department's energy security and resilience efforts in [a letter](#) sent Wednesday. "The proposed tariffs and minimum prices would double the cost of imported solar cells and modules used in utility-scale defense energy projects," they write. "This dramatic cost-increase could potentially jeopardize the financial viability of planned and future solar investments on or near domestic military bases."

SWING AND A MISS? Germany appears poised to miss its 2020 renewable energy target by more than previously estimated, POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff [reports](#), citing a German Renewable Energy Federation [report](#) out Wednesday. Renewables should account for 18 percent of Germany's energy consumption by 2020 under European Union targets, but the new forecast estimates it will reach only 16 percent by that year. That's lower than a previous estimate [of 16.7 percent](#), which the group blamed on higher fuel consumption and low use of renewables in the heating and transport sectors.

REVIEWS ARE IN: NRDC chief Rhea Suh slammed Trump's Tuesday U.N. speech for leaving out all mentions of climate change in [a tweetstorm](#). "Did you watch Trump's UN address yesterday? Me too. Somehow he fit in an Elton John reference, but missed an important issue: climate change...His silence is especially troubling when you consider who was in the audience: reps from 193 countries there to shape and change our future...Neglecting to mention climate change in his speech is outrageous, and It reflects Trump's deeply misguided world view."

ZINKE'S WIFE RETWEETS CONSPIRACY THEORY: Lola Zinke, wife of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, [retweeted](#) a user who raised questions about the death of Democratic National Committee staffer Seth Rich, a popular target for conspiracy theorists. His murder sparked Pizzagate-like internet chatter among fringe groups, but those theories have been debunked by police.

McKIBBEN ENDORSES LAMAR SMITH CHALLENGER: Environmentalist Bill McKibben endorsed Democrat Derrick Crowe Wednesday in his bid to unseat House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#). "Derrick Crowe has long been active in the fight for a working environmental future, and now it's very good to see him enter the political arena," McKibben said in a statement.

LOOKING AT FOSSIL FUEL CEO PAY: Food and Water Watch released [an analysis](#) Wednesday arguing nine oil and gas CEOs received approximately \$88,000 per million metric tons of greenhouse gases they emitted last year. The group said "almost without exception" greater greenhouse gas emissions led to greater take-home pay for the executives.

TWO NAMED TO SENIOR NRC SLOTS: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced the selection of two career staff Wednesday for new positions within the agency. Mary Muessle will direct the Office of Administration and Anne Boland will run the Office of Enforcement. Both appointments are effective Oct. 29.

QUICK HITS

- Groups demand Duke Energy show coal ash disaster maps. [AP](#).
- Interior secretary swims with the sharks at WOW. [Springfield News-Leader](#).
- Brazil's Temer says government not considering privatizing Petrobras. [Reuters](#).

- Hurricanes Propel Forward Thinking on Risk, Resilience. [Engineering News-Record](#).
- Oil Jumps as Fuel Draw Adds to Talk of More OPEC Cuts. [Bloomberg](#).
- Long-delayed Expansion of Kansas Coal Plant Now Considered Unlikely. [Power Magazine](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

10:00 a.m. — "Keeping It Green: Shared Impacts of Environmental Justice," Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 47th Annual Legislative Conference, Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Room 147-B, 801 Mt Vernon Place N.W.

12:00 p.m. — "Caring for His Creation: How the Faith Community Leads on Environmental Justice," Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 47th Annual Legislative Conference, Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Room 147-B, 801 Mt Vernon Place N.W.

3:30 p.m. — "Energy for All: Examining America's Diverse Infrastructure," Walter E. Washington Convention Center, 801 Mt Vernon Place NW

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/09/hurricane-maria-strikes-big-blow-to-puerto-ricos-energy-sector-024696>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Moody's issues warning on Puerto Rico power utility over Irma [Back](#)

By Colin Wilhelm | 09/07/2017 04:45 PM EDT

Moody's Investors Service issued a preliminary statement on how it views Hurricane Irma's effect on the billions in bond debt owed by Puerto Rico's electric power authority.

Reports of widespread power outages "highlight longstanding liquidity pressures and an aging infrastructure that have beleaguered [the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority] for many years," Rick Donner, a Moody's senior credit officer, wrote.

"Longterm power outages will have negative impacts on PREPA's revenues and will pose added challenges in Puerto Rico's overall recovery from this natural disaster," he said. "Any damage from the storm will also add to the stress related to PREPA's recent default and could impact ultimate recovery for bondholders."

Seventy percent of PREPA's customers have reportedly lost power.

WHAT'S NEXT: Though experts anticipate the Federal Emergency Management Agency will help with the immediate costs following Irma, the cash-strapped utility could face longer term infrastructure problems and lose customers due to increased emigration from the U.S. territory to the mainland.

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14 states expect to cut emissions on par with Paris pledge [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 09/20/2017 02:51 PM EDT

The 14 states that plan to keep shrinking their carbon footprint despite President Donald Trump's plan to abandon the Paris climate agreement say they are on track to slash greenhouse gas emissions 24-29 percent by 2025.

In proportional terms, that is in line with the U.S. target under the Paris deal — a 26-28 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2025. But the states, members of the bipartisan Climate Alliance, account for only about one-fifth of the country's net emissions, according to 2015 figures from the analysis firm Rhodium Group.

"While Donald Trump has told the world to count us out, our message is simple in New York City this week — you can count us in," Washington Gov. Jay Inslee said at a press conference in New York today.

The states represent 40 percent of the U.S. economy, equal to the third largest economy in the world if they were a single nation, Inslee added.

The states in the alliance are California, New York, Washington, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia, plus Puerto Rico.

Former Secretary of State John Kerry, who joined the press conference, slammed Trump's decision to exit Paris.

"He forfeited American leadership, he put at risk the momentum that has been created and he said to the American people, 'I'm buying into the denial hoax,'" Kerry said, citing Hurricanes Harvey and Irma as signs that climate change is already exacerbating severe weather.

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FERC mulls carbon pricing as salve for tensions with states [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Esther Whieldon | 05/03/2017 05:04 AM EDT

The Trump administration's doubts about climate change were nowhere to be found this week in discussions among state officials, power companies and federal regulators seeking a compromise that might meld power markets with state carbon-cutting plans.

The stark contrast between President Donald Trump's push to rescind his predecessor's climate rules, such as the Clean Power Plan, and the detailed technical discussions among FERC and state officials about the merits of policies such as a carbon tax drew the attention from a few speakers.

FERC is the "only federal building where there is a discussion of carbon pricing," said Susan Tierney, a senior adviser at the Analysis Group and who worked with both Clinton and Obama administration Energy Departments.

States and Congress have nibbled at the electricity markets for more than a decade through state renewable portfolio mandates and federal wind and solar tax credits. But after New York and Illinois — fearing a loss of jobs and emissions-free electricity — created large incentive programs for nuclear power plants in their states, market operators, economists and other energy power generators cried foul fearing energy companies would distort markets by increasingly pressuring states for special subsidies instead of trying to deliver the cheapest possible electricity.

"The status quo is just not sustainable," Richard Mroz, president of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, told FERC leaders and staff. "You've got the industry and the markets potentially now chasing the next subsidy that comes from a state. The concern is that it will continue to destabilize the market. That's not good for anyone."

One of the few areas of agreement among most speakers — few of which veered away from their long-held positions about state policies — was that FERC needed to exert itself, offer policy guidance and start setting timelines for action.

"The one message that seems to resonate right now with the commissioners and the staff is that FERC's gotta do something," Mroz later said in a brief interview. "FERC has to show some leadership in these issues and heretofore FERC has been either reluctant or really not fully appreciated the fact that it needed to help lead to a solution."

Acting FERC Chairman Cheryl LaFleur and outgoing Commissioner Colette Honorable, both Democrats, each acknowledged that putting a market price on carbon was one obvious solution to easing the jurisdictional tension between states and the federal government, an option often touted by environmental groups and economists but spurned by many Republicans.

"I want to say from the start I know that pricing carbon makes sense," LaFleur said. But both commissioners also noted that some states may not be so keen on that idea particularly since they want the option of choosing exactly what technologies are being promoted and they don't want to [pay](#) for other state policy decisions.

But with three vacancies on the five-member commission curtailing most of its policy work, FERC may be unable to act before states push new policies that markets have to work around.

"I think the tech conference moves the issue very little for the sole reason that there's not a lot of reasons for people to move off their positions," said former FERC staffer Jeff Dennis, who worked in ex-Commissioner John Norris' office and led FERC's policy development division. "You don't know who the commission's going to be."

Still, Dennis, who is now at Akin Gump, said, "FERC staff did an excellent job of laying out several potential paths forward to try to close the gap."

The White House has given no indication of when it might announce nominees, although sources close to the process say the administration has [identified](#) its picks.

Until at least one new member is confirmed, FERC will be unable to act on requests to review complaints charging that state policies unfairly interfere with the operation of the markets. New York's "zero emission credit" program started last month and Illinois' begins in June. Both are being challenged in federal lawsuits that will not be resolved for months.

The Electric Power Supply Association, which represents independent generators, filed complaints in January calling on FERC to ensure electricity prices in upcoming spring auctions in the [New York](#) and the mid-Atlantic area [PJM Interconnection](#) markets were not artificially lowered by state decisions to subsidize struggling nuclear plants.

LaFleur acknowledged in an interview Tuesday that "there seems to be a clear urgency to take action on this issue of state policies in the market." But without a quorum, "we're limited to soft power like having tech conferences and making statements."

The topic of carbon pricing, normally a radioactive subject in Washington, permeated the two-day technical conference as perhaps the most straightforward way of setting up a market-based system that could reflect state environmental goals.

But states participating in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a cap-and-trade program that has already effectively put a price on carbon in its nine participating states, have signaled that they're wary to do more.

"The states have expressed considerable reservations about pricing carbon beyond what they currently do," said ISO-New England's chief economist Matthew White. "They currently have a regional greenhouse gas market that exists, they govern it, many states have indicated a comfort retaining that and a discomfort with going beyond that."

For some states, their programs are more than dealing with carbon emissions, Mark Vannoy, chairman of the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

"At the end of the session we have a lot of bills that relate to out-of-market purchases of various types of resources for a whole variety of reasons other than just carbon," he said of his state legislature.

New York may be a test case for the idea. Bradley Jones, the CEO for the state's grid operator, said it's doing preliminary analyses on factoring in a carbon price but said that implementing one would take at least three years.

LaFleur said she hopes the FERC summit will lead the grid operators and their market players to come up with their own solutions faster.

"Hopefully, this will help spur the RTOs and some of the market participants to work together," she said. "The idea was to try to give a push for action."

Yet that worries some consumer advocates concerned about the transparency rules and governance structure of the market operators, who are private entities largely driven by the energy industry.

The RTOs already have a "deeply flawed stakeholder process," said Tyson Slocum, who directs Public Citizen's energy program. "What's going to come from this technical conference is an accelerated timeline of action by the RTOs."

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California sues to block Trump's border wall [Back](#)

By Josh Gerstein | 09/20/2017 09:01 AM EDT

The state of California is suing to block President Donald Trump's plan to construct a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, the top lawyer for the state told reporters Tuesday.

The [lawsuit filed](#) in federal court in San Diego on Wednesday argues that the effort violates federal law and the Constitution by intruding on state authority, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said.

"They're violating the 10th Amendment and infringing on a lot of state laws, not just federal laws, that affect our state. At the same time, they're trying to do something that only Congress can do," Becerra told journalists in Washington in advance of an official announcement he plans to make in San Diego on Wednesday.

Becerra said the suit contends that federal officials are running afoul of the law by declaring the expansion of the border wall to be an emergency that justifies waiving environmental studies and usual contracting procedures.

During the presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly promised to create a border wall that the Mexican government would pay for. Mexican officials have flatly rejected contributing any funds to such a project. With most Democrats in Congress staunchly opposed to the idea, it's unclear how Trump will get money for construction.

Nevertheless, Trump administration officials are pressing forward with studies and prototypes. In recent weeks, the Department of Homeland Security awarded contracts to eight companies to produce prototypes of potential barriers. Half the awards were for concrete wall designs, while the others will explore use of other materials.

Becerra announced the suit during a press conference at a state park near the border.

One of the Trump administration's most outspoken supporters of tougher measures at the border — Attorney General Jeff Sessions — was nearby a bit earlier on Wednesday announcing record drug seizures.

Asked about the suit, Sessions said: "Well, in the United States, anybody can sue, but the United States of America has a border. The United States government has the control of that border and a responsibility to secure it. We would expect to be fully successful in moving forward with a border wall as Congress gives us the money to do so."

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Chairman says FERC mulling tweaking PURPA one-mile rule [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 09/20/2017 04:48 PM EDT

FERC may change its rules that determine what facilities qualify for preferential treatment under the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act, including one that prevents developers from getting around size restrictions by breaking large projects up into smaller ones within one mile of each other.

"Any major changes to PURPA I think are going to have to come from Congress," Chairman Neil Chatterjee told reporters today following the agency's meeting. But "what we could look to here are what potential changes we could do within our purview whether it relates to the one-mile rule or other items."

PURPA requires utilities to buy power from relatively small "qualifying facilities" such as wind and solar projects of 80 megawatts or smaller that are located within the utilities' service territory. FERC also has a rule that any projects with the same owner or affiliated owners that are within one mile of each other will be counted as one project in calculating whether they exceed the megawatt cap.

FERC earlier this month dodged requests by developers of two wind projects in Montana to change how it calculates the distance between projects under the one-mile rule. The commission [held](#) it didn't have to answer that question because the owners of the Beaver Creek II and Beaver Creek III projects were not affiliated with each other. FERC hasn't acted on the PURPA applications of two other nearby and similarly named wind projects.

Chatterjee in a statement attached to the decision said FERC should continue to examine the one-mile rule policy.

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Subject: Morning Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: Time running out for GOP to avoid shutdown — Hatch unveils tax extenders package — McIntyre leads first FERC confab today
Date: Thursday, December 21, 2017 5:45:27 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/21/2017 05:43 AM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon and Eric Wolff

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Morning Energy](#) will not publish from Dec. 25-Jan. 1. Our next [Morning Energy](#) newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Jan. 2. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

GETTING CR-AZY: Less than 48 hours before the government shuts down, Republican leaders now plan to hold a separate votes today on a short-term government funding package and a massive \$81 billion disaster package responding to a string of hurricanes and wildfires, POLITICO's Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan [report](#). But there are significant internal tensions within the House GOP and it remains to be seen what the Senate does with whatever the House ultimately passes. And there's concern that resistance to the disaster aid package in the Senate may push its consideration into 2018, which would infuriate Texas and Florida lawmakers who have vowed not to leave town for the holidays until they get the disaster funding approved.

Retiring Pennsylvania Rep. Charlie Dent summed it up: "It would be an act of political malpractice, after a successful tax reform vote, to shut the government down. Talk about stepping on your own message. I mean really, how dumb would that be? But anything's possible around here. This is Congress."

Twenty-four environmental groups sent a letter to lawmakers asking them to ensure adequate funding for environmental programs, no anti-environmental policy riders and equal treatment for defense and non-defense programs as Congress mulls lifting budget caps. Link [here](#).

A HOLIDAYS CHRISTMAS PRESENT! Meanwhile, the Senate Finance Committee gave out special interest holiday gifts Wednesday in the form of [a bill](#) that will revive, extend or expand just about every energy credit anyone ever lobbied for, Pro Tax's Aaron Lorenzo [reports](#). Tax writers didn't do a bunch of creative heavy lifting, since they mostly changed the end dates for credits that were gone.

Cold water: Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) said Wednesday he "doesn't want to do extenders" right now, but said he'd turn to a strategy for how to advance them "after we get back" from the holiday break, Aaron also [reports](#). A spokesperson for Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) wouldn't offer specifics on timing either but said the Utah Republican wants to addressing the extenders "in short order."

The heavy hitters: The bill includes all three of the credits that have attracted the most support: A nuclear tax credit extension, an expansion of the carbon capture tax credit, and the biodiesel blenders' credit. Those three credits bring the support of South Carolina's delegation, the Midwesterners, and the unusual combination of states concerned about climate change and states with heavy coal production.

And the list: Santa gathered up all the wishlists and compiled them together into this bill. This bill retroactively applies and extends tax credits through 2018 for biodiesel blenders, cellulosic biofuel producers, fuel cells, energy efficient homes, energy efficient commercial buildings, small wind, two-wheeled electric scooters, solar water heaters, geothermal heat pumps, and coal production on Indian land.

The one that got away? Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) had made no secret that he wanted to convert the biodiesel blenders' credit, which goes to companies that mix biodiesel into petroleum diesel (think truck stops), into a producers credit, which would go to the folks who make the biofuel. He didn't get it. The Finance Committee simply extended the expired blenders' credit and made it retroactive.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Andrew Wheeler correctly identified Oklahoma (and South Carolina) as the states who had elections for both Senate seats at the time in 2014. For today: Everyone now knows Don Young is the longest-serving current congressman, but who is the second-longest serving? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

MERRY FERCMAS: To understate things a bit, this has been a bizarre year for FERC. The quorum loss, four chairs, four new members, and curious senior staffing choices. Like court opinions, every FERC decision is important to someone but let's be honest: The agenda for today's meeting is not the centerpiece of the agency's monthly get-together.

Kevin McIntyre, who has a term running into 2023, will smack down the FERC gavel publicly for the first time and set a tone for how he plans to lead and what his priorities are. For his part, McIntyre said, in an [agency podcast](#) recorded last week and posted Wednesday, he hopes to bring greater transparency to FERC's processes. As journalists, we hope that extends to a forthrightness with the press and clarity on a range of issues that happened over the past few months that set the rumor mill spinning. And between now and the agency's first meeting of 2018, FERC will take some "final action" on Energy Secretary Rick Perry's controversial grid resilience proposal.

Oh, and about that agenda: Although today's agenda isn't particularly long, it does include a rulemaking on "fast-start" power sources, one element of FERC's so-called price formation initiative that largely stalled when FERC lost its quorum in February. A year ago, FERC issued a proposed rule aimed at boosting market payments to resources that can cycle up quickly when grid operators need additional electricity. Today, FERC leaders seem poised to issue a final rule that sends instructions to the grid operators. The agenda also includes a new docket on cybersecurity incident reporting standards, which could be a proposed rule or something more early-stage, such as a request for information. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. at FERC headquarters and is [livestreamed](#).

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. **

ALASKANS TAKE VICTORY LAP: Recognizing a long-held Republican policy goal of opening ANWR to drilling, the Alaskan congressional delegation took was front in center at the White House on Wednesday afternoon as President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans took their victory lap on the tax bill's [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) passage. "Perseverance overcomes intelligence any day of the year" is how Alaska Rep. [Don Young](#) summed up the achievement, which he said he's been pushing for 37 years (after Trump mistakenly called him "Dan," prompting the gruff Alaskan to shoot back "It's Don!"). Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#) also spoke.

Anyone think this is Harold Hamm? Trump said during the press conference: "So a friend of mine called up about ANWR -- he's in the oil business — he said, 'You didn't get ANWR?' And I said, 'Tell me about ANWR.' He said, 'We've been trying to get that passed. The whole country — the world — they tried in Ronald Reagan. They tried with the Bushes. They tried with everybody. They never got ANWR.' But we got ANWR in this bill."

Photo of Murkowski, Young and Sullivan celebrating [here](#).

But the victory lap may be short-lived: Conservatives aren't pleased with a looming package — colorfully referred to by some as the "shit sandwich" — that will likely include billions in spending that won't be offset. POLITICO's Rachael Bade and Seung Min Kim with more [here](#).

Quick analysis: The American Council on Renewable Energy released a quick analysis of the tax package now headed to Trump's desk that it deemed "a measured victory for renewable energy." Read it [here](#).

LAST NUKE STANDING: The eyes of the nuclear energy community turn to Georgia this morning. Leaders of the Georgia Public Service Commission are considering an [order](#) from agency staff that would prevent Georgia Power from billing nearly \$500 million the company spent on the Vogtle nuclear project to consumers. Southern Co.'s Georgia Power has asked regulators to greenlight \$542 million in expenses it paid on the two-reactor project — the only units under construction in the U.S. — over the first six months of the year. But the commission's Public Interest Advocacy staff have said that the company should only be allowed to pass \$44 million to ratepayers, arguing that payments to Westinghouse, the lead contractor who filed for bankruptcy this spring, were "not deemed reasonable."

Commission staff criticized Georgia Power, which has the largest single stake in Vogtle, for offering less than "active" oversight of Westinghouse and said that it deserves blame for missing the window to receive nuclear production tax credits. The utility has also asked that if the project is eventually cancelled, that regulators let it "recover its prudently incurred investment in the partially completed facility along with the cost of carrying the unamortized balance of that investment." Commission will hold a special energy committee [meeting](#) at 9 a.m., followed immediately by a special administrative session to vote. The audio will be broadcast [here](#).

So what'll happen? Georgia Public Service Commission Chairman Stan Wise told [WABE](#) he expects the panel will allow the project to continue under certain conditions. "This commission will not say, 'Do not continue this plant,'" he said. "The commission will say, 'Here's what we think that you should have to do to continue the plant. Accept or reject.'"

ASSESSING NEW EPA REGIONAL CHIEFS: Anne Idsal, the new EPA Region 6 chief, told the [Dallas Morning News](#) she doesn't "necessarily" buy the consensus view that human

activity is driving climate change. "I think it's possible that humans have some impact on climate change, the extent of which I have not made up my mind on," she said. Meanwhile, critics warn Cathy Stepp, the new EPA Region 5 Administrator, left the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources "in tatters" following her tenure there where she infamously scrubbed its website of climate change information. According to [MLive](#), prominent Midwest leaders including Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker praised her selection.

ANOTHER CITY SUES FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY OVER CLIMATE CHANGE:

Santa Cruz County and the city of Santa Cruz on Wednesday filed [two lawsuits](#) against 29 oil, gas and coal companies asking them to be held accountable for the impacts associated with climate change including sea level rise and exacerbated wildfires. "It's time for oil companies to pay for the damage they've caused, rather than ask local residents to pick up all the costs associated with protecting us from sea level rise, increasing fires, and severe weather," County Supervisor Ryan Coonerty said in a statement. Similar lawsuits were filed over the summer by cities like San Francisco and Oakland.

In response to the lawsuits, Linda Kelly, senior vice president and general counsel of the National Association of Manufacturers, said: "Sadly this is just the latest in a long line of actions taken by wealthy activists and plaintiff's attorneys with an agenda to undermine manufacturing in America and rake in millions of dollars through the courts by politicizing natural disasters. The place to solve these issues is not in the courts."

SCHNEIDERMAN BACKS CARBON TAX: New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman became the first New York statewide elected official to back a carbon tax this week, POLITICO New York's Danielle Muoio [reports](#). "That includes passing legislation to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including a carbon tax, while expanding investment in the people and places hit hardest by climate change," he said in a statement.

MILLIONS REMAIN WITHOUT POWER IN PUERTO RICO: More than three months after Hurricane Maria hit, the Army Corps of Engineers doesn't think it will fully restore power to Puerto Rico until next May, CBS News [reports](#). Power restoration is expected to hit 95 percent in February. More than 3,600 linemen are working to restore electricity "neighborhood by neighborhood," a senior DOE official told the news service.

ACCEPTED: Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) announced Wednesday GAO had accepted his request to examine White House calculations of the social cost of carbon and other similar figures. The agency said it would begin its review in the coming months. Whitehouse and six other Democrats expressed concern in their [original request](#) that the Trump administration's lowered estimates could undermine a host of environmental regulations.

MAIL CALL! TOO MUCH AUTONOMY? A 16-state coalition of governors and attorneys general, led by Texas AG Ken Paxton, sent [a letter](#) to Trump on Wednesday calling for the administration to "extend greater regulatory oversight to independent agencies." Though they weren't mentioned by name, independent agencies affected by such a move could include FERC, NRC and the Chemical Safety Board.

Information sought on sage grouse review: Thirteen Democratic senators sent a letter to the Forest Service seeking information on its role in the review of management plans for the greater sage grouse and an extension of the public comment period by 45 days. Link [here](#).

REPORT ROUNDUP! DRILL, MAYBE, DRILL? Resources for the Future is out with a

report looking at how various local communities have coped and responded to volatility in local demand for drilling over the last decade. It found most local communities reported "net fiscal benefits" from expanded oil and gas drilling, and that fiscal conditions had generally improved in 2016 and 2017. Read it [here](#).

Keep getting more efficient: Energy efficiency programs in the electric utility industry saved 183 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2016 and savings have grown 45 percent over the past 5 years, according to [a report](#) from the Institute for Electric Innovation.

Industry report: Methane emissions declining: A [report](#) from Energy In Depth argues there have been continued reductions in methane emissions within the country's most productive shale basins. Emissions from the San Juan Basin, for example, have dropped 47 percent since 2011.

THERE'S A TRADE GROUP FOR EVERYTHING: The International Mountain Biking Association has split with its San Diego chapter over a proposal from Rep. [Tom McClintock](#) to allow bikes in federally designated wilderness areas, The Los Angeles Times' Evan Halper [reports](#). "Resentment of these cyclists over the longstanding ban on 'mechanized' transportation in that fraction of the nation's public lands presents a political opportunity for Republicans eager to drill fissures in the broad coalition of conservation-minded groups united against the GOP environmental agenda. 'People who enjoy mountain biking have just as much right to use the public trails as those who enjoy hiking or horseback riding,'" McClintock said during a hearing on the bill, which has passed committee. The mountain biking association opposes the bill, while the San Diego chapter supports it (h/t POLITICO Influence).

LIGHTER CLICK! Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his wife, Lola, sent out a holiday greeting complete with their pup Ragnar. Watch it [here](#).

QUICK HITS

— Longtime oil and gas leader pushing energy tax in Oklahoma. [AP](#).

— EPA Using Controversial Process to Push Cleanup of America's Most Toxic Sites. [The Weather Channel](#).

— Trump signs executive order to expand critical minerals production, says it will end America's 'vulnerability'. [Washington Post](#).

— 3 competing offshore wind developers submit bids to produce electricity for Massachusetts utilities in Clean Energy RFP. [Mass Live](#).

— Pipeline Project Continues to Dominate News in North Dakota. [AP](#).

— Republicans Blow Their Chance to Pass a Carbon Tax. [The Atlantic](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

Nothing

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard,

helping to clean the air, was signed into law ten years ago this week. According to a January 2017 analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, corn ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 43% compared to gasoline. Additionally, the same study found that by 2022, corn ethanol could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 76% compared to gasoline. Ethanol is the best tool available to reduce tailpipe emissions of other harmful pollutants, including carbon monoxide, air toxics like benzene and fine particulate matter. Learn more at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RFS2-Ten-Years.pdf>. #thankyouRFS
**

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/time-running-out-for-gop-to-avoid-shutdown-059392>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Hatch releases tax extenders bill [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/20/2017 05:12 PM EDT

Legislation to extend lapsed tax benefits related to race horses, race tracks, railroad maintenance and a raft of energy provisions officially emerged today.

The [bill](#), introduced by Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah), would revive a range of tax extenders that expired at the end of 2016 under the PATH Act, which made a number of other extenders permanent and gave two- and five-year extensions to others.

The legislation would also extend and alter other energy credits, including the Investment Tax Credit, the nuclear production tax credit and the credit for carbon dioxide sequestration.

"Extending these provisions would help families, individuals and small businesses in Utah and across the country, and the chairman is committed to working with members to address the expiring extenders in short order," said an email from Katie Niederee, a Senate Finance spokesperson.

She offered no more specifics on timing, though pressures have been mounting from influence groups to attach extenders to any end-of-year legislation still moving through Congress.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

GOP senators revive tax extender legislation, again [Back](#)

By Aaron Lorenzo | 12/20/2017 08:40 PM EDT

Senate Republicans introduced legislation Wednesday to breathe new life into a host of lapsed tax benefits, the same day they also passed a wider-reaching tax overhaul that they previously touted as the end of temporary tax policy.

The so-called extenders [bill](#), introduced by Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah),

would give another two years of life to nearly three dozen tax provisions that expired at the end of 2016.

They include benefits related to owning race horses, building auto-racing tracks and ongoing railroad maintenance. The [bill](#) also would let homeowners continue to itemize their mortgage insurance premiums and would extend and alter energy credits, including the Investment Tax Credit, the nuclear production tax credit and the credit for carbon dioxide sequestration.

No cost for Hatch's bill was provided, but supporters of the broader tax legislation, [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), already claimed a fiscal benefit.

They declared about \$500 billion in savings from the cost of extending the numerous tax provisions, using what's known as a current policy baseline, which assumes the provisions would stay on the books since they have been routinely extended. By contrast, using a current law baseline would recognize the scheduled expiration of the benefits, meaning proposals to extend them would cost money.

Hatch's House counterpart, Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas), declined to comment on the accounting method.

"You're talking to the chairman who doesn't want to do extenders," Brady said.

The extenders included in the new package were last renewed at the end of 2015 under the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes, or PATH, Act. It made a number of extenders permanent and gave two- and five-year extensions to others.

The strategy to advance this new bloc of extenders hasn't been determined, Brady said.

"We'll turn to that after we get back" from the holiday break, he said. "That's my anticipation."

A spokesperson for Hatch, Katie Niederee, offered no more specifics on timing, though pressure has been mounting from influence groups to attach extenders to any end-of-year legislation still moving through Congress.

"Extending these provisions would help families, individuals and small businesses in Utah and across the country, and the chairman is committed to working with members to address the expiring extenders in short order," Niederee said in an email.

A [letter](#) to Hatch, Brady and other congressional leaders from about 60 trade associations representing energy, housing, transportation, agriculture and other interests called on Congress to preserve all the benefits dear to their member companies.

"Allowing these tax provisions to remain lapsed creates confusion in the marketplace, and effectively increases taxes on entities that create jobs and economic growth," said the letter. "Accordingly, we respectfully ask that Congress add a multi???year extension, beginning January, 2017, of these important tax provisions to any end???of???year legislative vehicle."

But conservative groups have weighed in with opposition.

Extenders represent tax code carve-outs to special interests and continuing them would be wrong, said Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity. The group, funded by the conservative, billionaire Koch brothers, worked closely with Brady, Hatch and other

congressional Republicans to get the broader tax overhaul legislation to President Donald Trump.

"We have not made any deals to look the other way on extenders," said Phillips, insisting that he wouldn't back down from opposing the effort to yet again revive temporary tax policy.

To view online [click here](#).

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Tax victory may be fleeting for Ryan and McConnell [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade and Seung Min Kim | 12/20/2017 02:36 PM EDT

A beaming Speaker Paul Ryan high-fived and hugged his lieutenants after the House first passed the GOP tax bill Tuesday. As the Senate prepared to follow suit hours later, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was elated.

"Couldn't be better," he said in an interview with POLITICO.

Capitol Hill Republicans have every reason to feel euphoric. Ryan and McConnell have ushered the biggest tax overhaul in a generation through Congress and delivered President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory since Inauguration Day.

But on the periphery is palpable angst, particularly in the House. Just hours before the Tuesday vote, some House Republicans fretted privately about the prospect of getting railroaded into propping up Obamacare by the end of the week. And conservatives have been stewing quietly over a looming legislative package coming in early January that most believe will increase spending and codify an Obama-era immigration program they believe is illegal.

"It's kinda like leaving a hospital finding out you're cancer free and getting run over by a Mack truck," said Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker. On the one hand, the North Carolina Republican cheered passage of the tax plan. But he was also aghast that a unified Republican government was even discussing the possibility of enacting Obamacare subsidy payments they campaigned against for years.

Ryan and McConnell scored an undeniable win this week when Congress passed a sweeping tax overhaul. For the speaker, it was a chance to check his No. 1 policy goal off his bucket list. For the majority leader, it was an opportunity to regroup with a once-in-a-generation success, particularly after the Senate failed to repeal Obamacare this summer.

But the victory lap for both men may be short-lived.

By Friday Republicans will have to figure out how to fund the government, and there are no good options. House Republicans hoped to increase defense spending without giving Democrats any funding boost for their own priorities — an idea GOP leaders retracted after realizing it would go nowhere in the Senate. McConnell, for his part, recently backed the idea of adding Obamacare stabilization payments to the short-term spending bill — something House Republicans have flat-out rejected.

That's to say nothing of January, when Congress is expected to raise strict spending caps without equivalent cuts and potentially offer deportation relief to Dreamers. Both could repel the conservative base even more.

Republicans throughout Washington have begun calling the January legislative agenda the "shit sandwich."

"It's going to take a lot of the win away and a lot of the momentum away if we go back on our principles, and to me that's why the [Obamacare] payments are toxic," said Rep. Warren Davidson (R-Ohio), a Freedom Caucus member who enjoys a strong relationship with Ryan and even sat with him on the floor in the moments before the House vote Tuesday. On Wednesday afternoon, Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) said they would not push for an Obamacare stabilization measure to hitch a ride on this week's stopgap spending bill and would instead seek passage early next year.

Ryan may have sensed that other policy matters were about to infringe on the tax triumph: Just three hours before the House first passed the bill Tuesday, the Wisconsin Republican told his colleagues in a closed-door conference meeting to treasure the moment they passed the tax overhaul and remember it as Republicans tackle a series of thorny year-end issues. Be proud, Ryan said — and don't get bogged down in the drama.

Some heeded his advice; others did not. As Republicans streamed out of the room, several balked at Ryan's suggestion that McConnell might tack Obamacare subsidies onto the government-funding bill at week's end. Minutes later, when the gavel fell on tax reform in the House, some conservatives declined to join the party's standing ovation on the floor, frustrated over leadership's handling of the year-end to-do list.

Republicans' mixed emotions will again be on full display Wednesday: Around 3 p.m., GOP lawmakers will head to the White House for a celebration, where most will laugh and pat each other on the backs like one big happy family. But right after, House leaders expect to call a private conference meeting to discuss how to avert a shutdown — a discussion that's likely to displease conservatives, appropriators and defense hawks alike.

The Senate, a more bipartisan body comprised of more centrist Republicans, is having less heartburn for now. McConnell is determined that his hard-fought legislative victory on taxes — in which he kept together his fractious conference — not be swiftly overshadowed by a shutdown battle that could bruise Republicans.

"I think there's a bipartisan desire to wrap up our business here in a fairly non-contentious way, and I think you'll see that develop at the end of the week," McConnell told POLITICO. "This is not a place we haven't been before."

His top deputy, Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), was also adamant that the looming battles wouldn't detract from the tax win: "I don't know anybody that believes we're going to shut down."

A shutdown just two days before Christmas would tar the victory that GOP leaders on both ends of the Capitol have spent months working toward. Democrats have criticized the messy legislative process and accused the GOP of rushing through the tax bill with little public scrutiny, charges Republicans dismiss.

"I think it's a real tribute to our majority leader that he's been able to get this up and hopefully out," Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said.

Winning over Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the lone GOP senator to reject the Senate's version of the tax bill, was also a feat for McConnell.

At a party lunch on Tuesday, Corker spoke to his fellow Republican senators about how he came around on the tax measure despite initially opposing it out of concerns it would blow through the deficit. He didn't mention, according to one senator, the controversy that exploded around him in the final days of the tax fight after a report suggested he flipped his vote only after securing provisions in the tax bill that would profit him personally.

McConnell came to Corker's defense in the interview with POLITICO, calling such suggestions about the Tennessee senator "absolutely outrageous."

The majority leader was unconcerned with the perception that some lawmakers could benefit financially from the tax overhaul. McConnell noted that his own accountant ran through how the Kentucky Republican would fare under the tax bill, and "I come out almost exactly where I am now."

"Every taxpayer in America has got a different set of facts," McConnell said. "Not a single member [was] casting a vote on this bill based upon their own personal tax situation."

In the House, there was never really a question about whether tax reform could pass. Ryan was able to muscle through an Obamacare repeal bill earlier in the year, and his conference was so sick of losing that they were willing to swallow almost any tax bill if it meant a legislative victory.

"It's a feather in his cap," said Rep. Bill Posey of Florida of Ryan. "He said this was one of his goals since the day he was on staff. And that says a lot, that it's been important to him — but also very important to the president and the country."

Even if GOP leaders iron out their government funding differences in the next three days with little drama, January is sure to be harder. While Republicans could pass tax and health care bills by themselves, negotiations on spending and immigration will require Democratic votes.

And Democrats, most lawmakers and aides on the Hill agree, have the upper-hand in those talks. That means it's only a matter of time before Republicans cut loose their right flank. But perhaps when that happens, and the intra-party bickering reaches a new crescendo, they'll look back to the day tax reform passed with fond memories.

"The nice thing about doing a big package that has been in the making and overdue for 31 years is this is going to have lasting impacts," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who hopes Republicans will keep talking about tax reform well beyond the shutdown drama. "I don't think any of us are going to lose any of our enthusiasm or gonna stop talking about it."

To view online [click here](#).

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POLITICO Pro New York: Schneiderman expresses support for a carbon tax [Back](#)

By Danielle Muoio | 12/20/2017 08:47 PM EDT

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman this week voiced his support for a state carbon tax, joining ranks with a statewide coalition pushing for the legislation.

His comments, made in the Flatiron District, make Schneiderman the first statewide elected official to endorse the implementation of a carbon tax. They come as Schneiderman prepares to sue the Trump administration over its decision to repeal the Clean Power Plan.

"New York must invest in an equitable transition to a clean energy future — one that creates jobs, protects workers, and supports the communities most affected by climate change," Schneiderman said in a statement. "That includes passing legislation to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including a carbon tax, while expanding investment in the people and places hit hardest by climate change."

The coalition, called New York Renews, is composed of clean energy, environmental justice and labor groups. It has said it will push legislation in 2018 calling for a carbon tax that would generate revenue for investments in renewables and energy efficiency projects.

A carbon tax has been proposed in the Legislature, but this is the first time a large coalition of environmental groups have made a concerted campaign to pass the measure. The New York Independent System Operator, which runs the state's power market, has also begun the first stages of examining what such a tax may look like.

"Sea levels are rising, major storms are occurring with increasing frequency — and it is low-income communities and communities of color who are hit the hardest," ALIGN Executive Director Maritza Silva-Farrell, a coalition member, said in a statement. "New York must dramatically increase its use of renewable energy to combat the threat of climate change. ... The fairest and most effective way to do this is to put a fee on pollution."

Schneiderman expressed support for the Climate and Community Protection Act, also a main focus for the coalition. The act would turn New York's renewable goals into law and set benchmarks for clean energy initiatives.

The Cuomo administration has been [hesitant to support a carbon tax](#) outright, noting that federal action would be needed to ensure it doesn't hurt the state's economic competitiveness.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has committed New York to reducing emissions by 40 percent by 2030 as part of his Reforming the Energy Vision. Under the plan, the state is tasked with getting 50 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

This report first appeared on [POLITICO Pro New York](#) on Dec. 20, 2017.

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Yes, very



Somewhat



Neutral



Not really



Not at all

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by the Renewable Fuels Association: Sizing up the tax bill's energy provisions — Turn your shutdown countdown clocks back on — National Security Strategy could drop climate change as security threat
Date: Monday, December 18, 2017 5:42:28 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/18/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén, Eric Wolff and Emily Holden

POISED FOR TAX PACKAGE PASSAGE: Congressional Republicans are poised this week to pass a massive tax package [HR 1 \(115\)](#), and the final text that emerged Friday evening was mostly good news for the renewables industry that had been unnerved by provisions in earlier versions. And the package will realize a decades-old GOP dream of opening the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling that Speaker [Paul Ryan](#)'s office hailed as "a win for American energy" Sunday. Check out some of the highlights via Pro's Eric Wolff and Ben Lefebvre [here](#).

—**Spared:** The final bill leaves wind and solar tax credits untouched, meaning they will continue to be phased down as originally envisioned in a 2015 bill. It preserves a tax break for electric vehicles and restores credits for abandoned oil wells and enhanced oil recovery that the House-passed bill removed. And it keeps a provision allowing utilities to continue to deduct interest on loans without the limitation placed on other businesses.

—**What's on oil's mind?** The bill keeps Senate language permitting the selloff of up to \$600 million in Strategic Petroleum Reserve oil if revenues from opening ANWR drilling come up short of the \$1 billion forecast, as many critics have warned is likely. It adds a provision offering deductions to investors in master limited partnerships, the corporate structure for many pipeline companies. And it temporarily lifts the cap on Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production revenue sharing to facilitate additional coastal restoration and protection projects.

—**Can't stop the BEAT:** Senate taxwriters made an effort to tweak the Base Erosion Anti-Abuse Tax in ways that would help renewable project developers. The tax is intended to keep U.S. profits domestic — but the final version doesn't go far enough to solve the problem in earlier iterations, renewables backers say. The fix in the conference bill allows banks to take 80 percent of the production tax credit and investment tax credit until 2025, but also expands which institutions are affected and makes other tweaks. "We are uncertain how the marketplace will react to the fact that more multi-national firms may now be covered by the BEAT, and tax credits may not all be useable in any given year," Gregory Wetstone, president and CEO of the ACORE, said in a statement. If you really want to get down and dirty with the BEAT and how other parts of the tax bill affected renewable projects, check out [this blog](#) post by Keith Martin, the co-head of U.S. projects for the law firm of Norton Rose Fulbright.

—**Not there:** As expected, none of the expired tax credits for small wind, fuel cells, and other "orphans" made it into the finished product. There's some chatter of moving an additional package before breaking for the holidays, but count ME as decidedly skeptical. Lawmakers will find the energy for such a push.

Timeline on this: Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) expressed confidence the bill would pass his chamber this week "probably on Tuesday" during an appearance on ABC's "This Week." Pro Tax's Bernie Becker has [an excellent look](#) at how the bill's expected passage is the culmination of half a life's work for a large number of Washington tax insiders.

FINAL SPRINT TO THE HOLIDAYS! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Bracewell's Frank Maisano was first up to identify former Alabama Rep. Parker Griffith as the last sitting congressman to switch parties. For today: How many current senators are older than 80? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to adragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

SHUTDOWN WATCH: Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin isn't expecting a government shutdown at the end of this week, though he said during a Sunday appearance on "Fox News Sunday" he couldn't be sure. POLITICO's Martin Matishak [reports](#). "I can't rule it out, but I can't imagine it occurring," he said. Remember, facing a Friday deadline, lawmakers still aren't sure how much money they'll have to spend in fiscal year 2018 since they haven't reached a spending cap deal. POLITICO's Rachael Bade, Seung Min Kim and Jennifer Haberkorn look at the sticky situation facing the GOP this week [here](#).

Ahead of the deadline, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló [asked](#) congressional leaders to provide emergency assistance to his devastated island before they skip town for the holidays. "No governor should ever be put in the position of having to deny that hope in the aftermath of a catastrophic disaster due to the inaction of Congress," he said. Lawmakers from Florida and Texas have also been pushing aggressively for disaster relief in this stopgap spending package.

ICYMI: A White House document circulating among agencies and obtained by POLITICO is setting the stage for a solar trade war with China, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). The administration appears to be preparing its messaging ahead of setting punitive tariffs on Chinese-made solar power equipment. The tariffs would increase the cost of solar power in the U.S. and could slow expansion of the energy source and eliminate installation jobs. But the White House paper suggests trade barriers may be necessary to foster domestic solar manufacturing, particularly for advanced solar technologies.

The document notes solar power demand in the U.S. and abroad is growing rapidly and argues "federal policies should ensure that the United States can benefit from this expansion." And it argues the administration should consider "the potential negative impact on U.S. energy security of increased reliance on imported energy technology," in carrying out an executive order on energy independence and in developing a response to the Section 201 trade case from the two domestic manufacturers. "China will likely expand its dominance to include advanced solar technologies," the paper says. "U.S. policy should be focused on creating competitive conditions for U.S. companies to thrive in the global marketplace, and compete against China and other solar players."

Suniva, one of the companies seeking the tariffs, issued a statement in response to the article: "Suniva applauds the Trump Administration for championing American manufacturing in the face of cheating by China and its proxies who want to kill American jobs and make America dependent on China for its energy and security needs."

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump. The RFS has been an unmitigated success, helping to clean the air, lower gasoline prices, provide greater energy security and boost local economies. Learn more at www.ethanolrfa.org **

SOMETHING ELSE TO WATCH: President Donald Trump is expected to discuss his National Security Strategy today and his administration will remove climate change from the list of national security threats, [The Federalist reports](#). The Obama administration's Pentagon called climate change a "threat multiplier" and the former president [warned](#) back in 2015: "Climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security, and, make no mistake, it will impact how our military defends our country." Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [told a Senate committee](#) back in January he didn't consider climate change an "imminent national security threat." According to excerpts, the new document will state: "Climate policies will continue to shape the global energy system. The United States will continue to advance an approach that balances energy security, economic development, and environmental protection."

UNDER SCRUTINY: A lawyer working with America Rising has been filing public records requests for EPA employees who have been critical of Administrator Scott Pruitt's leadership of the agency, the New York Times [reports](#). "This is a witch hunt against EPA employees who are only trying to protect human health and the environment," Gary Morton, an agency employee in Philadelphia, said. That comes as a group associated with America Rising, Definers Public Affairs, has been hired by EPA for "media monitoring" services to track how the agency is being covered.

NYC PLANS 'PEOPLE'S HEARING' ON CLEAN POWER PLAN: After being snubbed by EPA for a public hearing on its plans to repeal the Clean Power Plan, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Friday they'll hold a "people's hearing" on the regulation Jan. 9 where they'll hear and compile testimony for the agency. Registration [here](#). ME readers no doubt remember Schneiderman is leading a group of states and localities defending the Obama-era regulation's legality.

DEPARTMENT OF BAD TIMING: Just a few days ahead of a Thursday vote on the future of Georgia Power's two new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle, Hartfield-Jackson International Airport suffered an hours-long power failure that grounded thousands of travelers as the holiday travel season kicked into high gear, USA Today [reports](#)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! Today marks two years since Congress passed and then-President Barack Obama signed legislation that [lifted the crude oil export ban](#) as part of a broader package that also extended prized tax credits for the wind and solar industries

GREENS SUE OVER EPA'S PLAN FOR TEXAS HAZE: Environmental groups on Friday sued EPA over its [federal plan](#) to limit haze-causing pollution from Texas power plants. The rule has been supposed to have been in place by 2007, a delay that prompted a federal court to order a plan be finalized by either Texas or EPA by September. Without a submission from Texas, EPA was forced to finalize a federal version, but environmentalists complained that the Trump administration's plan was a "sham rule" that would not reduce pollution nearly as much as the Obama administration's proposal would have. In addition to a [lawsuit](#) in the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, the groups also submitted a [petition for reconsideration](#) to EPA.

KEEP AN EYE OUT: Pro's Alex Guillén notes in [Energy Regulation Watch](#) that while the holidays tend to be a slower time for regulatory news, EPA told a federal court this week that its Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for a replacement to the Clean Power Plan will publish "in the upcoming weeks." That notice, which OMB completed its review of on Thursday, sets the stage to replace the Obama-era rule.

PUBLISH THE RULE! Three senior House Energy and Commerce Democrats — [Frank Pallone](#), [Paul Tonko](#) and [Diana DeGette](#) — aren't pleased by Pruitt's plan to gather more input on the agency's Lead and Copper Rule and urged him to immediately move ahead with a proposed rule. "Administrator Pruitt is hiding this delay behind the guise of a novel consultation process with the states, but the states need to see the proposed rule in order to provide relevant comments," they said in a statement. "The EPA previously pledged to publish a proposed rule to revise the Lead and Copper Rule this month, and therefore we call on Administrator Pruitt to publish the proposed rule immediately."

FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE: POLITICO New York's Keshia Clukey takes a look at how new SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson, a former official with the U.S. Department of Energy under the Obama administration, is proposing the use of 21st century innovation to help solve SUNY's fiscal and infrastructure problems. The benefits of making campuses more energy efficient are threefold, she told POLITICO. The lion's share of SUNY's energy use is attributed to its approximately 2,800 buildings — 2,346 of which are state-operated, including academic buildings, hospitals and residence halls. Upgrades could include weatherizing buildings, using more efficient heating and cooling techniques, or even adding solar panels. This helps the bottom line, saving campuses money, reducing operating costs and giving "local budget relief, which allows them and the presidents to do more for the academic mission," Johnson said. [Read more here](#).

ANYBODY WANT IN? Republicans are struggling to find a top-tier candidate to challenge North Dakota Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) even though she represents a state that was a solid win for Trump, the Associated Press [reports](#). Perhaps the highest-profile potential challenger, Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#), has been reticent about launching a bid even though the president strongly pushed him to run earlier this fall. "I'm not sure that our party fully grasps or understands the magnitude of a campaign against Heidi Heitkamp," former Republican Gov. Ed Schafer said.

PERDUE WRITES GRIJALVA ON GRAND CANYON MINING: Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue attempted to reassure House Natural Resources Ranking Member [Raúl Grijalva](#) in a [letter](#) that a recommendation from the administration to look into lifting a moratorium on uranium mining near the Grand Canyon was merely "for consideration" and did not represent a federal action. But that didn't reassure Grijalva: "Opening up new uranium mines or allowing new claims to be filed in this region is a dead issue. Let's drop it and move on once and for all," he said in a statement.

SPOTTED: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his wife, Lola, at Arlington National Cemetery on Saturday morning for the annual Wreaths Across America event. Picture [here](#).

QUICK HITS

- North Cascades grizzly bear recovery work halted by Interior Department [The Missoulian](#)
- E P A Contractor Has Spent Past Year Scouring the Agency for Anti-Trump Officials [New York Times](#)
- More than \$600,000 spent on police gear for pipeline protest [AP](#)
- Coal leases OKd, suit immediately follows [Grand Junction Daily Sentinel](#)
- Clean coal plant in Wyoming slated for operation by summer [AP](#)
- Cuba's Castro and Russian oil executive meet in Havana [Reuters](#)

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

3:30 p.m. — "IEA's Coal 2017: Analysis and Forecasts to 2022," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. — Senate Banking Committee [holds vote](#) on nominations including Scott Garrett's to run the Export-Import Bank, Dirksen 538

1:00 p.m. — Environmental and Energy Study Institute hosts a [briefing](#) about the takeaways from the latest global climate talks, Dirksen 562

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. — "[Freight Movement: Assessing Where We Are Now And Where We Need To Go](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from the Renewable Fuels Association:** The Renewable Fuel Standard, helping to provide consumer choice at the pump, was signed into law ten years ago this week. Thanks to the RFS, consumers have greatly benefitted in the past decade, with cleaner air, lower gasoline prices and a boost to local economies. Recently, President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency finalized a strong RFS for next year that maintains the statutory 15 billion gallon requirement for conventional renewable fuels like corn ethanol. President Trump understands that consumers benefit when the RFS is implemented as Congress intended. Learn more at [www.ethanolrfa.org](#) #thankyouRFS **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/sizing-up-the-tax-bills-energy-provisions-054933>

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Solar, wind get reprieve in final tax bill [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff and Ben Lefebvre | 12/15/2017 06:57 PM EDT

The [conference tax bill](#) released Friday by Congressional Republicans resolves a slew of issues faced by the energy industry

— **Wind and solar credits saved:** The final tax bill, [HR 1 \(115\)](#), follows the Senate's bill when it comes to the production tax credit and the solar tax credit, meaning both are left untouched. The House bill had proposed reducing the value of the PTC and changing when a project qualified for it, and it had proposed dropping the permanent 10 percent credit for the ITC. Both credits will phase down as agreed to in a deal struck in 2015.

— **MLP benefits added:** It also includes language Sen. [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) proposed that would give deductions to investors in master limited partnerships, the corporate structure for many pipeline companies.

— **EVs roll on:** A tax credit for electric vehicles was preserved.

— **Oil recovery restored:** Credits for abandoned oil wells and enhanced oil recovery that were eliminated in the House version were restored in the final bill.

— **Selling off the oil:** The bill retains the Senate language that would sell up to \$600 million in Strategic Petroleum Reserve oil to offset any shortfall from opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling. The Senate language forecast drilling in ANWR would generate \$1 billion in revenue over 10 years, an estimate critics have said is too optimistic.

— **More revenue sharing:** The bill also temporarily lifts offshore Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production revenue sharing caps to \$650 million annually for fiscal years 2020 and 2021, up from a previous limit of \$500 million, to support coastal restoration and protection projects.

— **Base erosion eased for renewables:** Tax writers created some room to keep banks and other financiers of renewable projects in the game by allowing them to take 80 percent of the credits for the PTC and the ITC.

— **No tax extenders:** Numerous senators have been saying it for weeks now, and the bill makes it official: None of the expired tax credits for small wind, fuel cells, and other "orphans" made it into the conference bill. The extension of the nuclear tax credit that was in the House bill has also been dropped.

— **Utilities still get to deduct interest:** The bill preserves provisions in both the House and Senate versions that allowed utilities to continue to deduct interest on loans without the limitation placed on other businesses.

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Tax bill a dream come true for some GOP wonks [Back](#)

By Bernie Becker | 12/17/2017 06:58 AM EDT

For the large contingent of Washington supply-siders and tax-cutters, the sweeping tax overhaul that President Donald Trump is poised to sign into law this week has been a generation in coming — and the culmination of half a life's work that started during Ronald Reagan's 1980s.

Grover Norquist, arguably the best-known anti-tax activist in the country, started Americans for Tax Reform at then-President Reagan's request to help marshal support for the 1986 tax overhaul. He's been working ever since to rally support for more tax cuts.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) for years said his dream job was to be House Ways and Means chairman, a position that would have allowed him to quarterback the sort of tax revamp that his mentor, the late Jack Kemp, helped get through Congress in 1986.

When he became Speaker, Ryan said he was reluctantly passing the title of Ways and Means chairman, and the opportunity to focus attention on tax reform, to Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas).

Now, the 2017 tax revamp will bring the American tax system more into lockstep with those conservatives' thinking than perhaps ever before — making the idea that what works for corporate America will work for the country at large a central plank of U.S. policy for decades to come, maybe even a generation or more.

"This tax cut and reform will drive further reforms and reductions for the next 50 years," Norquist said Friday.

The corporate rate would be slashed from 35 percent to 21 percent under the GOP plan, which would also allow businesses to immediately write off investments for five years and scrap Obamacare's individual mandate. In an extra bonus for the right, it also shrinks the deduction for state and local taxes, an incentive that mostly helps blue, high-tax states.

"This is a pretty historical moment for the conservative movement," said Stephen Moore, another of those supply-siders, who has over the years worked at the Club for Growth, The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal editorial page.

"I've been in this game for 30-some years. This, if it passes, will be the single biggest policy triumph for conservatives since the 1996 welfare reform. It's up there with the '81 Reagan tax cuts," added Moore, who's an informal adviser to the president and, along with fellow supply-sider Larry Kudlow, helped then-candidate Trump craft his tax plan.

The start of the conservative tax-cutting movement is frequently traced back to 1974, when a young economics professor named Arthur Laffer met an equally young Dick Cheney, then a top aide to President Gerald Ford, at a restaurant. Laffer doodled on a napkin the case that cutting taxes can increase revenues for the government, a theory now known as the Laffer Curve.

That case is maybe most famously argued by Kudlow, who worked in Reagan's White House and has spent more than 15 years defending its merits on CNBC. Perhaps even more importantly, Moore said, Kudlow worked overtime to pitch the GOP tax plan to skeptical Republicans like Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Bob Corker of Tennessee, both of whom now seem likely to back the measure.

It might be hard to imagine now, but the Republican Party hasn't always been dominated by would-be tax cutters. Former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) once joked that "the good news is that a bus full of supply-siders went off a cliff. The bad news is that two seats were empty," according to "Showdown at Gucci Gulch," the book about the 1986 tax overhaul.

But the supply-side theory eventually won out, if in fits and starts. Reagan's 1981 tax package cut the top individual rate from 70 percent to 50 percent — with the rate getting down all the way to 28 percent in 1986.

Republicans now credit those 1981 tax cuts with sparking years of economic growth, higher wages and job creation. But with the economy floundering in 1982, Dole and other Republicans pushed through a tax increase. And Democrats have long said that there was no trickle in the GOP's "trickle-down economics," pointing to a 1990s economic boom that happened after President Bill Clinton raised taxes.

Conservatives believe the growth had more to do with a cut in the capital gains rate under Clinton's watch, which itself was followed several years later by the two rounds of tax cuts under George W. Bush.

Now, 15 years later, all that work by supply-siders has culminated in a new kind of tax reform, which marries the theory that tax cuts for business will be a boon for

the economy with tax reform's customary discarding of various tax incentives that have collected over the years and that they say distort the economy

Marty Sullivan of Tax Analysts said the 2017 tax overhaul looks more like the 1981 and 2001 tax cuts enacted under Republican presidents, as opposed to tax overhauls in 1969, 1976 and 1986. The 1986 tax reform, while lowering the top corporate rate from 46 percent to 34 percent, actually hiked taxes on corporations to pay for tax relief for individuals, and to keep from adding to deficits.

"Those were all workman-like reforms where the staff and members looked hard for unfair and complicated tax breaks to take out of the code to simplify it, make it fair and reduce rates," said Sullivan, a former economist for both the Treasury Department and the Joint Committee on Taxation. "In this bill, tax cutting is the primary motivation and reform is an afterthought."

The next question is whether this bill will jolt the economy the way its supporters predict. Trump and other top Republicans have said that the economic growth created by the tax cuts will more than offset its current \$1.456 trillion price tag.

But while outside analysts and JCT have found that the Republican tax plan would create hundreds of billions of dollars in new revenue, none of them have found that the plan would come close to paying for itself. On top of that, Democrats are already making it clear that they'll do everything in their power to unwind this year's tax bill, especially if they win back some power in Washington next year.

"One of the lessons of '86 is it's really hard to get tax reform, but it's even harder to keep it," said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a former Congressional Budget Office director and president of the conservative American Action Forum. "I think it's a concern. The partisan nature makes it ripe for change the moment the Democrats get the opportunity."

For their part, conservatives say they're in better shape than ever to protect the new tax cuts. Republicans were united against former President Barack Obama's efforts to allow Bush-era rates for the wealthy to expire, though they weren't successful in the end, and Norquist notes that bipartisan efforts that erased parts of the 1986 tax overhaul came before practically all GOP lawmakers were signing his organization's pledge against tax hikes.

But Moore also called the 2017 tax cuts a "riverboat gamble," echoing the late Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker's thoughts on the 1981 Reagan tax cuts. Their success or failure, Moore added, will have a big impact on whether the supply-siders' influence grows or diminishes over the next generation.

"We say it will work, and they say it won't and this will be put to the test," Moore said. "If this doesn't work, I'll eat some crow."

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Mnuchin won't rule out a shutdown, but doesn't see one coming [Back](#)

By Martin Matishak | 12/17/2017 10:00 AM EDT

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin on Sunday wouldn't rule out the possibility of a federal government shutdown at the end of the week, but said he doesn't see one coming.

"I can't rule it out, but I can't imagine it occurring," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

"I would expect that both the House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats, understand if they can't agree on this they need to have another short-term extension to move this to January," Mnuchin added.

"We can't have a government shutdown in front of Christmas," he emphasized.

The government is set to run out of money Friday, unless Congress acts. Lawmakers are expected to take up a funding measure after they deal with the \$1 trillion-plus tax bill early in the week.

House GOP leaders have proposed a partisan funding bill that covers a full year of defense spending at \$640 billion but keeps the doors open at other federal agencies only until Jan. 19. Many of the provisions, however, likely won't pass muster in the Senate, adding to the time crunch.

Mnuchin declined to comment on what impact a shutdown might have on the U.S. economy, but said he "can't imagine sending government workers home for Christmas."

"I hope that Congress gets this done," he said.

The Treasury secretary also declined to weigh in on whether short-term funding bills is the right way to run the government.

"That's something we'll talk about more. Hopefully we'll look at reforms for different things next year," he said.

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GOP leaders in House, Senate endorse conflicting shutdown strategies [Back](#)

By Rachael Bade, Seung Min Kim and Jennifer Haberkorn | 12/17/2017 06:22 PM EDT

Republican leaders in both houses of Congress face a sticky situation this week as they try to avert a government shutdown: Each side has promised its members things that will not fly in the other chamber.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) told moderate Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) he'd support passage of legislation by the end of the year to prop up Obamacare insurance markets — so long as she votes for tax reform. That addition, however, puts Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) in a pickle: His members are loath to be seen as bailing out a health care law they hate.

Ryan, meanwhile, green-lighted a short-term spending strategy that funds the Pentagon but does nothing for Democratic priorities — and suggested House members could leave town to try to "jam the Senate" into accepting their bill. But McConnell needs eight Democrats to pass anything, so the House plan is sure to fail in his chamber.

"Right now, they're just headed straight off a cliff," one person familiar with the negotiations said of the House. "[The] Senate's not likely to jump with them."

Instead of addressing the obvious inconsistencies, GOP leaders have tried to put off the issue and focus on tax reform for now. They're eager to delay internal spending fights until the tax package — which Republicans view as critical to maintaining their congressional majorities in the 2018 midterm elections — reaches

the Oval Office for President Donald Trump's signature sometime this week

"It's going to be a bipartisan [spending] deal; [some House Republicans] are going to be unhappy with that — and you don't want to have the tax issues as the place they decide to retaliate," said Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), a member of the House appropriations panel, hinting at House GOP fears that conservatives could hijack tax reform to make a stand on spending issues

But time is running out, and the GOP's tax-reform tunnel vision has left Republican leaders without a clear strategy for the spending legislation. All this is quietly raising concerns that the government could shut down after Friday, when, short of congressional action, federal coffers are set to dry up.

While Democrats have at times struggled to fend off GOP legislative efforts, this time they have leverage. Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi of California and Chuck Schumer of New York appear to have backed off immigration demands they initially wanted addressed by the new year, but they're still adamant that any boosts in defense money be matched by increases in domestic spending.

Leaders in both chambers hoped to strike a deal to raise strict spending caps for both by Friday. But the so-called Big Four — Ryan, Pelosi, McConnell and Schumer — have yet to agree on those numbers. The most likely outcome, some Republicans now say, is kicking everything into 2018: They predict another short-term funding bill, leaving a broader spending and immigration agreement until January.

There has been some progress on the immigration front, aides say. A bipartisan group of seven senators met multiple times last week to try and hammer out an immigration deal that combines legislation for Dreamers — hundreds of thousands of whom are losing their temporary work permits and deportation protections due to actions by Trump — with other immigration enforcement measures.

The group includes Democratic Sens. Dick Durbin of Illinois and Michael Bennet of Colorado, and GOP Sens. Jeff Flake of Arizona, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, James Lankford of Oklahoma, Cory Gardner of Colorado and Thom Tillis of North Carolina. They want to be able to strike a deal on immigration they can subsequently present to their leadership.

It's unclear, however, whether Democrats will go along with pushing major issues into next year, upping the pressure on Republicans to come up with a funding proposal that can avert a shutdown.

First up this week is tax reform. House Republicans expect to pass the tax bill Tuesday morning, huddling for a rare Monday night conference to discuss the final package negotiated with Senate Republicans. After that, the Senate will take up the bill as the House sends them its "continuing resolution" through Jan. 19, which also includes Republicans' much-desired Pentagon funding boost.

The upper chamber is expected to amend the government funding bill and send it back to the House — which is where things could get ugly. Leadership sources in both chambers say the Senate version of the spending bill could include the bipartisan Obamacare stabilization effort, written by Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.), to satisfy Collins.

The White House is expected to back that approach because the tax bill repeals another part of Obamacare that conservatives despise: the requirement that everyone carry health insurance.

It's unclear, however, whether even a Trump endorsement would make the Obamacare language on the spending bill palatable to House conservatives. House GOP leaders during a Thursday afternoon conference last week began running the idea by lawmakers — but it didn't go over well. Multiple Republicans encouraged leaders to continue with the "jam the Senate" strategy rather than accepting changes made by the other chamber. GOP leaders said they needed to make sure the conference gives them "flexibility" to negotiate with the Senate.

Privately, senior Republicans say any House plan to stick the Senate with a bill it can't pass would be political suicide. They worry it could lead to a shutdown — which could backfire in the November midterms.

Even more complications could still arise for the spending legislation. Anti-abortion groups with strong connections to House conservatives have said recently that if the bill includes the Obamacare subsidies patch, they want it to also include language barring federal funding for abortions. Senate Democrats, whose votes are needed for passage, would likely push back.

"Any Member voting for the Alexander-Murray proposal, or other Obamacare stabilization legislation not covered by the Hyde amendment, would not only be voting to sustain what many have called the largest expansion of abortion since *Roe v. Wade*, but would also be voting to directly appropriate taxpayer dollars for insurance that includes abortion," wrote Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, in a letter to lawmakers.

Beyond that, lawmakers also have to iron out several less-discussed policy matters that could wind up tied to the spending bill. One of those includes funding for a popular children's health insurance program whose funding has expired; another includes reauthorizing the government's surveillance authority.

A third has become more than a little contentious: a sorely needed disaster aid package for hurricane-ravaged areas in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We've been told time and time again by the speaker and the House leadership that the supplemental's going to be coming, but it never seems to come," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), one of the loudest voices urging for more aid for his home state, said last week. "The can always seems to be kicked down the road. It's a source of more than a little frustration on my part and I think on the entire Texas delegation."

Nonetheless, Trump administration officials and senior Republican lawmakers are publicly confident that funding for the government won't dry up — particularly three days before Christmas. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin told "Fox News Sunday" that while he couldn't rule out the prospects of a government shutdown, "I can't imagine it occurring." And Senate GOP leaders, from McConnell on down, have been adamant that Congress will successfully avert one by the end of the week.

"I think we're determined that it's not going to happen, and it won't happen," Cornyn said late last week.

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U.S. setting stage for solar trade war with China [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/15/2017 05:13 PM EDT

An unreleased White House document offers the strongest hint yet that the Trump administration is laying the groundwork for punitive tariffs on Chinese-made solar power equipment — a step that would promote the president's "America First" trade agenda while sharply increasing the costs of solar power in the U.S.

The prospect of such tariffs, which President Donald Trump could announce in January, has deeply alarmed the U.S. solar installation industry. It warns that it could lose tens of thousands of jobs if the cost of solar spikes, slowing the booming growth that sun-powered energy enjoyed during the Obama administration.

But the White House is preparing to argue that trade barriers are needed to foster solar manufacturing inside the United States, something it calls important to both national security and the economy, according to a document draft obtained by POLITICO. The paper argues that cheap solar imports allow China to unfairly profit

from Americans' use of renewable power and gain influence in the developing world's energy infrastructure

"While solar energy is forecast to play a larger role in the world's energy mix, other countries stand to benefit significantly more than U S workers," says the four-page paper, which is circulating within executive branch agencies for comment

Trump has not said whether he intends to initiate the trade barriers on solar equipment imports, but he has accused China of "ripping off" the U S in international trade and called for the U S to become energy dominant by hiking production of oil, natural gas and coal The new paper is likely to inspire a debate about whether the White House's rhetoric about creating U S -based solar manufacturing masks an effort to kneecap a growing, green alternative to fossil fuels such as coal — an energy source that Trump has repeatedly championed on the stump

While the administration has touted an "all of the above" energy approach, it has instead taken significant steps to bolster fossil fuels, proposing measures to give financial support to coal-fired power plants even as it works to repeal the Obama administration's climate rules for the power industry It has also pushed to grow U S exports of liquefied natural gas, and sent EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to Morocco this week to promote U S gas shipments

Trump must decide by Jan 26 whether to institute the tariffs that the U S International Trade Commission recommended last month, after two U S solar manufacturers, Suniva and SolarWorld Americas, filed complaints accusing Chinese competitors of undercutting them

Suniva, which is majority owned by a Chinese investor and is in bankruptcy, and SolarWorld, whose German parent is also in bankruptcy, say the flood of solar cells and panels from factories across Asia that are owned by Chinese companies has driven prices too low for them to compete

Suniva spokesman Mark Paustenbach welcomed the White House's approach

"Suniva applauds the Trump Administration for championing American manufacturing in the face of cheating by China and its proxies who want to kill American jobs and make America dependent on China for its energy and security needs," he said in a statement Friday

But the U S Solar Energy Industries Association has said the drop in solar panel prices has triggered a boom in sales across the U S , and establishing high tariffs could eliminate more than a third of the 260,000 solar jobs in the United States Solar energy prices have tumbled dramatically over the past decade, and large, utility-scale plants in the Southwest are cost-competitive with natural gas and coal-fired power plants now The industry fears that tariffs would reverse those cost declines, dealing a blow to project developers just as federal incentives for solar power phase out over the next four years

The companies suing have countered that they believe tariffs could result in a [net increase](#) in jobs across the solar industry

The Office of the U S Trade Representative heard from both sides at a hearing earlier this month and will soon send its own report to the White House

The White House also opposes incentives for renewable energy The paper advises against the federal and state tax incentives and mandates that have helped fuel the growth of renewable power, saying they are "subsidized by U S taxpayers," and "become overseas job creation programs "

The new White House paper says the international solar sector, "including its supply chain and critical minerals requirements, will grow in importance from an economic and energy security perspective," and it cites estimates that the global solar market will expand to \$140 billion in 2023 from \$65 billion in 2015 Chinese companies hold about 80 percent of the solar manufacturing capacity, although the U S is the second-largest market for solar energy, the paper says The U S has about 38,000 solar manufacturing jobs, and China has 1.5 million, it notes

The document says that depending on foreign countries for energy technology imports also jeopardizes U S energy independence and dominance

It suggests the U S could focus on advanced solar technologies, rather than current ones already dominated by other countries, but it doesn't offer any potential policies Trump has announced a review of the nuclear power sector, and the White House document says that might be necessary for solar and other energy sectors

The White House document claims China has used its "monopoly" to punish U S industries that are part of the global supply chain, including by imposing its own tariffs

U S producers "could benefit from moves designed to undermine China's monopoly over much of the sector and generate competition, including steps to revitalize U S manufacturing," it says "Yet questions remain about the scope and extent of those potential benefits, especially in the context of various policy options that, depending on the course chosen could backfire on the U S supply chain, while imposing minimal harm on Chinese state-owned enterprises "

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'Time is running out' to slow climate change, Obama tells Coast Guard grads [Back](#)

By Sarah Wheaton | 05/20/2015 01:25 PM EDT

President Barack Obama delivered a somber lecture on the science of climate change to the graduates of the United States Coast Guard Academy on Wednesday as argued that global warming poses a threat to national security

Obama's call to cut carbon emissions, which emphasized the impact that Arctic ice melt would have on the Coast Guard, came just over a week after he opened Alaska's Arctic Coast to oil drilling — and about seven months ahead of a United Nations summit in Paris at which the president hopes to cement his legacy as a global leader on climate change

"Climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security, and, make no mistake, it will impact how our military defends our country And so we need to act — and we need to act now," Obama told cadets at an outdoor ceremony in New London, Connecticut "After all, isn't that the true hallmark of leadership?"

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Though he didn't name a political party or individual, Obama castigated "folks back in Washington who refuse to admit that climate change is real "

Or those, he added, "who will equivocate They'll say, 'I'm not a scientist ' Well, I'm not either But the best scientists in the world know that climate change is happening "

Obama cited a Pentagon's assessment that climate change is a "threat multiplier," telling cadets that they will be on the front lines in responding to an increase in

climate refugees He contended that the terrorist group Boko Haram took advantage of drought in Nigeria, and that famine was a factor underlying the civil unrest in Syria

One of Congress's top climate skeptics, Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), responded by calling Obama's threat assessment a "severe disconnect from reality."

In a statement that cited a litany of issues — including nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran, the military success of the militant groups known as the Islamic State and potential chemical weapons in Syria — Inhofe continued: "The president's repeated failure to understand the real threat to our national security and inability to develop a coherent national security strategy has put this nation at an unknown level of risk with consequences that will span over decades."

Outside of the dire warnings, Obama took on a jaunty tone with the graduates, peppering his speech with inside jokes and references to "Swab Summer," "Rodeo Buffing" — "that looks dangerous," he said, noting that he saw the video — and apparent high jinks committed in campus buildings

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[Hillary Clinton says her Iraq war vote was a 'mistake'](#)

[ADAM B. LERNER](#)

"Which reminds me," he said, "in keeping with longstanding tradition, I hereby absolve all cadets serving restrictions for minor offenses."

But the majority of the speech was devoted to the challenges this generation of servicemembers will face, from budget cuts to shifting coastlines.

Obama also put special emphasis on a frigid region with potential to become a new global hot spot.

"We're witnessing the birth of a new ocean," Obama said, describing the effect of receding Arctic ice.

A White House [report](#) released Wednesday predicted that as "shorter shipping routes become more accessible and more profitable, increased ship traffic and human activity in the region will require that the United States be more prepared to respond to emergencies in this remote region."

Even as his administration warns about new dangers in the Arctic, his administration gave Shell the green light last week to drill for oil in the Arctic as part of its "all-of-the-above" energy strategy. The move infuriated environmental groups, who've tried to keep the Chukchi Sea off limits to the oil industry and fear a spill would be devastating to the ecosystem.

"The president has made it a real priority to deal with climate change — it's clearly part of the legacy he's building — and saying yes to drilling in the Arctic doesn't fit in that frame," said the Sierra Club's Lena Moffitt. "That's something they're going to have to reconcile."

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In his speech, Obama emphasized his administration's efforts on the cleaner parts of his energy strategy, noting new standards to double the fuel efficiency of cars, strict new rules for coal-burning plants, and the military's experimentation with solar power and biofuels.

"Today we can be proud that our carbon pollution is near its lowest levels in almost two decades," Obama said, adding that he is committed to doubling the pace of cutting carbon emissions.

"There comes a point where the worst effects will be irreversible, and time is running out," Obama warned. "That's why I've committed the United States to leading the world on this challenge."

Obama is hoping to spearhead history's [most sweeping agreement](#) to curb carbon emissions at a climate conference in Paris in December which would set climate policy decades beyond his tenure.

"If you see storm clouds gathering or dangerous shoals ahead, you don't do nothing. You take action," Obama told the cadets. "Anything less would be dereliction of duty."

Meanwhile, the fate of one of the most symbolic environmental issues of Obama's presidency remains open. Asked whether the administration had completed its assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, White House spokesman Eric Schultz replied: "That is a policy review that's underway at the State Department."

Elana Schor contributed to this report.

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Tillerson: Climate change isn't 'imminent national security threat' [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 01/11/2017 05:08 PM EDT

Rex Tillerson challenged assertions that climate change is a major national security threat, arguing that the science linking global warming to destabilizing events around the world isn't conclusive.

"I don't see it as the imminent national security threat that perhaps others do," Tillerson, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for secretary of State, said during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing today.

Asked about the contention by many military officials and scientists that climate change is exacerbating droughts and extreme weather that in turn leads to international tumult, Tillerson said, "The facts on the ground are indisputable in terms of what's happening in terms of drought, disease." But he added, "The science behind the clear connection is not conclusive."

Tillerson also said that the fact that we can't predict climate change with "precision" doesn't mean we should do nothing.

The former Exxon Mobil CEO said he is opposed to pulling out of international climate talks in part because they give the United States a window into other countries' commitment to slashing emissions.

"I think we're better served by being at that table than leaving that table," Tillerson said

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Congress approves spending deal lifting oil export ban [Back](#)

By Darren Goode | 12/18/2015 12:03 PM EDT

Congress sent a massive spending deal to the White House Friday that would lift the 40-year-old ban on crude oil exports while extending clean energy tax breaks and preserving President Barack Obama's ability to adhere to the commitments he made as part of the global climate deal reached in Paris this month

The oil and renewable provisions negotiated as part of the \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill represent the most significant energy policy enacted in years, a compromise that delivered major wins to interests on either side of the ideological spectrum. The omnibus sailed through the House 316-113, with the winning votes split virtually evenly among the two parties. The omnibus was packaged with a \$680 billion tax cut package that passed the House Thursday, and the combined bill cleared the Senate, 65-33.

The compromise handed a major victory to Republicans and oil-state Democrats. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) was the first to call for an end to the Ford-era ban on crude exports early last year, and the campaign quickly accelerated amid falling prices and the impending end to sanctions on Iran's oil industry. But it remains to be seen whether the ban's end will have much immediate impact, amid a global supply glut that has left prices well under \$40 a barrel.

But Democrats gained a big haul in return. The deal [extends](#) and phases out the wind production tax credit until 2020, and phases down the solar investment tax credit until 2022. That should provide a [bridge](#) until the administration's Clean Power Plan takes hold to further boost demand for carbon-free power.

And notably, the bill contains no Republican riders targeting major elements of President Barack Obama's environmental and climate agenda and legacy. It leaves in place EPA greenhouse gas restrictions for power plants and [its Waters of the U.S. rule](#), as well as Interior Department rules on hydraulic fracturing and stream buffer zone controls, among other high-profile initiatives.

The bill also [does not block](#) the administration's ability to contribute to the Green Climate Fund, the United Nations-run bank tasked with helping poor countries deal with the effects of climate change, to which Obama has pledged a total of \$3 billion.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi overcame objections from progressive Democrats to lifting the oil export ban, arguing that Republicans' "desperate thirst" to do so led them to give up clean energy provisions that would "eliminate around ten times more carbon pollution than the exports of oil will add" and preserve the rest of the administration's climate agenda. In the end, just 18 House Democrats opposed the deal.

The lack of riders incensed some coal-state Republicans who said they were promised more by GOP leaders in a final deal. "I feel we were disregarded," said Rep. David McKinley (R-W. Va.), chair of the Congressional Coal Caucus, who voted against the spending deal.

House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.) touted language [directing Interior to consult with states](#) on the stream buffer rule and an [infusion of economic assistance](#) to clean up abandoned coal mines, especially in Appalachia.

EPA funding would remain flat from last year around \$8.1 billion — which Republicans noted also was the lowest level of funding for the agency since 2008. The Interior Department would receive \$12 billion, more than \$1 billion above last year. The Energy Department would see [funding increased](#) across its accounts. And the Army Corps of Engineers would see its budget [rise 10 percent](#).

The White House backed the measure, noting it was "largely free of new unrelated ideological riders" and praised the wind and solar tax incentives as "driving significant reductions in carbon pollution and other dangerous air pollutants and providing certainty for investments in clean energy."

Despite these wins, the overall deal was viewed as a convoluted mixed bag, leading the League of Conservation Voters to [decline](#) to include it in its annual scorecard. Groups linked to the Koch brothers, as well as to more liberal environmental groups [both opposed](#) the deal, representing dissatisfaction on both poles of the energy-politics divide.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute: Zinke took non-commercial flights too — Pruitt doesn't plan to pay back his non-commercial flights — How U.S.-Mexico got to yes on water deal
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 5:43:45 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 09/29/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon

ZINKE JOINS FLIGHT CLUB: Turns out Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has also used military and charter airplanes while in office, including a charter plane he took to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#), citing documents and a department spokeswoman. That makes him at least the fourth member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet to bill the costs of non-commercial flights to U.S. taxpayers while in office. Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the agency selected those options because they couldn't find commercial flights that would work with Zinke's schedule and that ethics officials had given them the all-clear.

Among the most notable trips is a June 26 charter flight Zinke and several staffers took from Las Vegas to an airport about 20 minutes from his residence in Whitefish, Mont., at a cost of \$12,375. Commercial flights between Vegas and Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell, Mont., are available for several hundred dollars, according to travel planning websites. During his time in Vegas, Zinke gave a motivational speech at an event for the city's new NHL team hosted by Bill Foley, chairman of Fidelity National Financial, a company whose employees were among Zinke's largest donors during his two congressional campaigns, according to [The Washington Post](#), which also reports the plane Zinke flew on was owned by oil and gas executives.

Zinke and staff also took two chartered flights on March 31 from St. Croix to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend the centennial of the Danish government turning the islands over to the United States. No other arrangements were available, according to Swift, though websites show commercial flights between the two islands generally run a few hundred dollars.

As for your next question: Swift said she had not spoken to Zinke about whether he would reimburse the government for the cost of the flights, as HHS Secretary Tom Price [said he would](#) late Thursday. But Zinke will be at the Heritage Foundation today for what's billed as "a major policy address" entitled "A Vision for American Energy Dominance" and slated to take questions. More information [here](#).

CAN YOU PUT A PRICE ON PRUITT'S NON-COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS? Amid growing criticism from members of both parties on Capitol Hill, EPA said late Thursday that Administrator Scott Pruitt wouldn't pay out of pocket for the \$58,000 worth of non-commercial flights he and his staff have taken on four occasions, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). "If a reimbursement was necessary, we would have been told during the approval process and acted accordingly," agency spokeswoman Liz Bowman said. EPA's general counsel provided [ethics approvals](#) for at least three of the four trips.

Concern from some Republicans: [Lisa Murkowski](#) expressed openness to adding language to a spending bill that would prevent Pruitt from taking private flights but hoped it wouldn't

come to that, your ME host [reports](#). "I don't think it's appropriate," Murkowski said regarding Pruitt's and Price's use of private aircraft. (We spoke to her before the Zinke news broke.) Meanwhile, Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) asked Trump in [a letter](#) Thursday for information on what steps Cabinet secretaries are taking to ensure the "most fiscally responsible travel."

But not everyone was so concerned. EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) wanted more information before he could judge appropriateness of Pruitt's flights and would only commit to having him testify "this year." Barrasso and Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) were among the Republicans who wouldn't answer the broad question of whether Cabinet officials should take private transportation. And others like Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) defended the flights. "If there is a problem with it, then there would be a rule against it and there isn't one," Inhofe, a friend of Pruitt's, said. "That's why he checked first to make sure there wouldn't be a problem."

Meanwhile, Sen. Tom Udall, top Democrat on the Appropriations subpanel responsible for EPA spending, asked Pruitt in [a letter](#) for details on his flying habits and further information on his "privacy booth" that cost taxpayers \$25,000. "I do think we can both agree that a fundamental part of any federal agency's 'core mission' must be the proper and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars," he wrote. And three House Democrats introduced [a bill](#) — the SWAMP FLYERS Act (points for creativity) — barring the U.S. of taxpayer funds on non-commercial travel.

WE MADE IT TO FRIDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Growth Energy's Chris Bliley was first up to identify Wilt Chamberlain as the NBA Hall-of-Famer who endorsed Richard Nixon in 1968. For today: Which congressman worked as speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan for seven years? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

PUERTO RICO STILL REELING: More than a week after Hurricane Maria struck, most of Puerto Rico remains without electricity, phone services and potable water as fuel shortages persist and supplies remain trapped at the port. Trump's Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert said the administration was providing "as much federal relief into Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as we can muster," but the government sent a three-star general, Lt. Gen. Jeff Buchanan to help coordinate the response.

More aid sought now: House Democrats are banging the drums for another relief package now, according to Pro's [Budget & Appropriations Brief](#). "This has to happen soon, not weeks from now, not in late October," [Nydia Velazquez](#) said at a press conference. "We need to see action as early as next week." But Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) said those aggressive timelines aren't what first-responders on the ground actually need and vowed to act on a disaster request once received from the White House. Meanwhile, 19 House Democrats [asked](#) the Natural Resources Committee to hold an oversight hearing on the government's response.

Three tweets from POTUS: "FEMA & First Responders are doing a GREAT job in Puerto Rico. Massive food & water delivered. Docks & electric grid dead. Locals trying.....really hard to help but many have lost their homes. Military is now on site and I will be there Tuesday. Wish press would treat fairly!...Puerto Rico is devastated. Phone system, electric grid many roads, gone. FEMA and First Responders are amazing. Governor said "great job!"

THEY MADE A DEAL! U.S. and Mexican negotiators overcame tensions between the two nations because of Trump's immigration and trade stances to address issues caused by

shrinking supplies from the Colorado River, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). "Water is the lifeblood of this region," Jennifer Pitt, Colorado River Project director for the National Audubon Society, said. "It's just too important for the two countries not to have good relations over (it) and not have a plan in place about how to manage supplies reliably for that enormous population." Failing to reach a deal risked years of litigation in a crisis that would force choices between cutting off water supplies to either farms and sensitive wildlife habitats or to major population centers.

COMPANIES TWEAK SOUGHT SOLAR RELIEF: Suniva and SolarWorld USA submitted a joint brief to the International Trade Commission recommending different remedies to imported solar equipment but said that either option could be selected, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). Suniva recommends a price floor for all solar modules that starts at 74 cents per watt and declines over the four years of the tariff, as well as tariffs for both modules and the solar cells. SolarWorld said it was seeking a quota of 220 MW on imported cells and 5,700 MW on imported modules. Trump has the final call on what to select.

Group: Use caution: The Advanced Energy Buyers Group released [a letter](#) Thursday asking the ITC not to set "excessive remedies" on imported solar products as it considers a response to the initial ruling last week that imports harmed U.S. manufacturers of solar panels. "We recommend a balanced approach with respect to remedies that avoids unduly increasing the cost of solar energy," they wrote. "This case has already had a damaging effect on solar projects, raising costs as solar providers prepare for shortages."

FAMED WOTUS JUDGE GETS A PROMOTION: The Senate confirmed Judge Ralph Erickson, 95-1, Thursday to a seat on 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Massachusetts Sen. [Elizabeth Warren](#) was the lone vote against. Among energy watchers, Erickson gained national attention when he issued a nationwide stay on the Obama-era Waters of the U.S. regulation back in 2015.

A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS: Zinke's loaded up his advisory board on staffing and personnel issues with just political appointees, including several former industry lobbyists, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). The move contradicts federal guidelines that recommend giving career employees an equal voice in such discussions with the Executive Resources Board.

EPA CONFIRMS DAMAGE TO HOUSTON-AREA SUPERFUND SITE: After confirming the protective cap on the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site sustained damage during Superfund Harvey, EPA directed International Paper and Industrial Maintenance Corporation, the potentially responsible parties at the site, to take "immediate action" to repair the damage. Sampling from one of the areas showed dioxins present at 70,000 nanograms per kilogram, far above the recommended clean up levels of 30 ng/kg.

EPW DEMOCRATS WANT SUPERFUND ANSWERS: All the EPW Democrats sent [a letter](#) to Pruitt Thursday asking him to affirm his agency would continue to reimburse Superfund litigation costs assumed by the DOJ Environment and Natural Resources Division, after the New York Times [reported](#) those payments may be on the chopping block. "If these cuts are adopted, neither EPA nor State regulators will be able to adequately fund site clean-ups or enforce clean-up agreements, and DOJ will be unable to prosecute polluters in order to compel clean-ups to be paid for by those who caused the contamination in the first place," they wrote.

FLOOD INSURANCE-LESS FAA BILL CLEARS CONGRESS: Senators stripped out

controversial private flood insurance language and the House then approved a stopgap FAA measure [H.R. 3823 \(115\)](#) on Thursday, Pro Transportation's Lauren Gardner [reports](#). A bipartisan group of senators objected to language in the original package encouraging private insurance companies to enter the flood arena. "We can't have a situation happen where people can't sell or buy property because you can't get a mortgage unless you get flood insurance, and you can't get flood insurance because there's none available that's cost-effective," Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) said.

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** Coming soon, our team of policy experts will be providing timely reactions and analysis of energy news as it happens at *Fuel for Thought*, the Global Energy Institute's new blogging hub. Sign up now to receive these updates in your inbox: <http://bit.ly/2yJpM29> **

MAIL CALL! BISHOP SEEKS REVIEW OF MINERAL WITHDRAWALS: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) sent [a letter](#) to Zinke and USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue asking for them to review mineral withdrawals done over the past eight years of the Obama administration. "Millions of acres of federal lands were inappropriately withdrawn from mineral access due to false premises of environmental protectionism and the intentional misuse of statutory authority," he wrote.

PELOSI CRITICIZES TIMING OF BILL WITH GUN MEASURE: House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) criticized the House GOP for pushing a sportsmen's package with a provision that relaxes rules on purchasing gun silencers — expected to come up for a vote shortly — so soon after welcoming back House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#), POLITICO's Heather Caygle [reports](#). "This is not a sportsmen's package. This is an NRA wish list," a spokesman for Pelosi said. No date for a vote has yet been announced.

PERRY'S IN OHIO: He had to cancel a planned July trip to DOE's Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion plant due to a Cabinet meeting, but Energy Secretary Rick Perry will be in Piketon, Ohio today to tour the Cold War nuclear site that has been undergoing decommissioning since 2011. Joining Perry are Ohio Sens. [Rob Portman](#) and [Sherrod Brown](#) as well as Reps. [Bill Johnson](#) and [Brad Wenstrup](#).

The secretary tweeted out a bunch of pictures from his Thursday visit to a Pennsylvania coal mine (sample [here](#)), as well a shot of him enjoying a local delicacy, "[cold pizza](#)."

NO FLY ZONE: The FAA and Interior announced Thursday they had restricted the operation of drones within 400 feet of the boundaries of ten Interior sites, including the Folsom, Glen Canyon, Grand Coulee, Hoover and Shasta dams. The restrictions, which also include the Statue of Liberty and Mount Rushmore, take effect Oct. 5. More information [here](#).

N.Y. POL PICKED FOR EPA REGION 2: Pruitt announced Thursday his selection of New York assemblyman Pete Lopez to run EPA's Region 2 office, which covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Lopez, a Republican, has been in the state assembly since 2007 and currently represents a district southwest of Albany.

PAGING LOLA ZINKE! Troy Downing, a Big Sky businessman challenging incumbent Montana Sen. Jon Tester in 2018, faces seven misdemeanor charges accusing him of trying to buy Montana resident hunting or fishing licenses as an out-of-state resident, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle [reports](#). Lola Zinke, wife of the Interior secretary, chairs his campaign.

PEER BLASTS ZINKE'S STAFF LOYALTY COMMENTS: Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility is slated today to send a letter to its subscribers blasting Zinke for earlier this week questioning the loyalty of staff and not following through on his promise to give the front-line staff more say over decisions. "Public employees work for the public, not for politicians," PEER will say. The very idea of a civil service "was to replace a spoils system where employment was based on political allegiance."

NOT MINCING WORDS: Former FWS biologist Felix Smith, who in the 1980s [blew the whistle](#) on the mass poisoning of migratory birds in California's Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge, sent an angry email to Zinke Wednesday blaming him for any pushback he is getting from staff. "You and President Trump have chilled or killed the moral of a large portion of the rank and file of DOI. I hope they hunker down until this experiment with democracy passes," Smith said in an email obtained by ME.

TAKE A GLANCE! The Institute for Policy Integrity New York University School of Law is out with [a report](#) Thursday arguing the Trump administration's cost-benefit analysis for its Waters of the U.S. rule repeal selectively ignores data on the benefits of the rule based on the age of supporting research studies. It says similar tactics likely appear throughout various regulatory proposals.

BIG BENEFITS FROM REDUCING AIR POLLUTION: Reductions in nitrogen oxides and ozone pollution saved \$800 million a year in reduced medication use and benefits of \$1.3 billion a year in 1,975 fewer deaths each summer, according to a [new report](#) from the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago

QUICK HITS

- Global carbon emissions stood still in 2016, offering climate hope. [The Guardian](#).
- China Sets Tough Electric-Car Production Target. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- Majority of Americans now say climate change makes hurricanes more intense. [Washington Post](#).
- Standing Rock tribal head who led Dakota Access pipeline fight voted out. [Argus Leader](#).
- Spicer Says Rolling Back Regulations Helping Economy. [The Allegheny Front](#).
- Fighting the Toxic Nightmare Next Door. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — "[Global Hotspots and Security Challenges: A Conversation with Senator Joni Ernst](#)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW

11:30 a.m. — Secretary Ryan Zinke delivers remarks and takes questions at the Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

**** A message from the U.S. Chamber's Global Energy Institute:** For the last decade, we've been at the forefront of energy discussions in Washington and around the nation. Now, as the

Global Energy Institute, we're ready for an even larger role, reflecting America's growing influence as an energy superpower. Without our vast grassroots network, we're positioned to help lead the charge for common sense energy solutions that will grow our economy and improve our security. Visit our website to learn more. www.globalenergyinstitute.org **

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/09/zinke-took-non-commercial-pricey-flights-too-024828>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Interior Secretary Zinke traveled on charter, military planes [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/28/2017 07:54 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and his aides have taken several flights on private or military aircraft, including a \$12,000 charter plane to take him to events in his hometown in Montana and private flights between two Caribbean islands, according to documents and a department spokeswoman.

Zinke is at least the fourth senior member of the Trump administration to have used non-commercial planes at taxpayer expense, along with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and HHS Secretary Tom Price. President Donald Trump has [fumed](#) at Price's pricey travel, and Democrats say the revelations demonstrate a cavalier attitude by Cabinet members toward excessive spending.

Interior Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said Zinke's charter or military plane trips were booked only after officials were unable to find commercial flights that would accommodate Zinke's schedule, and that all were "pre-cleared by career officials in the ethics office." Swift said she had not spoken to Zinke about whether he would reimburse the government for the cost of the flights, as [Price plans to do](#) for some of the \$400,000 tab he racked up on charter flights.

On June 26, a Beechcraft King Air 200 carried Zinke and several staffers from Las Vegas to Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell, Mont., about a 20-minute drive from Zinke's home in Whitefish, according to his [official schedule](#). The flight cost \$12,375, Swift said.

Zinke left after speaking at an event for the city's new professional hockey team, the "Vegas Golden Knights Development Camp Dinner," according to his schedule. Earlier in the day, he had been in Pahrump, Nev., for an announcement related to public lands.

Zinke's flight left Las Vegas at 8:30 p.m. PST and landed around 1:30 a.m. MST in Kalispell. The secretary stayed overnight at his residence, Interior documents show.

Las Vegas is one of the main [connecting](#) airports for commercial flights to Glacier International. Commercial flights between the two cities are available for several hundred dollars a ticket, according to travel planning websites.

In Whitefish, Zinke attended the Western Governors' Association's annual meeting, where he spoke for about 20 minutes without taking questions. He then had a private lunch with association members. In the afternoon Zinke was the subject of a photo shoot with GQ magazine at Lake McDonald and fished while being interviewed by Outside Magazine, the

records show.

Zinke and staffers flew commercial back to Washington, D.C., the next day, according to the records.

The trip was not the first in which Interior booked a private jet for Zinke. [On March 31](#), Interior chartered two flights to take Zinke and staff from St. Croix to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to attend the centennial of the Danish government turning the islands over to the United States. Another two flights were chartered to return to St. Croix later that night.

Swift said she did not know how much the flights cost but that no other arrangements were available.

Commercial flights between the two islands generally run a few hundred dollars, according to travel booking websites.

In May, Zinke and his wife, Lolita, used a military aircraft to travel to Norway. From there, they flew on a military plane to Alaska for events organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The trip included charter planes to travel within Alaska, a common occurrence in the large, remote state. The Zinkes paid for Lolita's share of the trip, the full cost of which was not immediately available, Swift said.

Zinke also took a military helicopter from Fort Bliss to review the Organ Mountains monument in New Mexico in June, and he used a Bureau of Land Management helicopter to review the Basin and Range National Monument on July 30. "It is difficult to survey a half-million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour and a half," Swift said.

Along with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Zinke took a military plane to Ravalli County, Mont., to check on wildfires in the area in August. "The military plane was used because of a very tight travel window, with no viable commercial airline options to transport two secretaries, security details, and associated USDA, Forest Service and Interior staff to Missoula in the time required," said USDA spokesman Tim Murtaugh. The cost of the flight was not immediately available, but the two agencies plan to reimburse the Air Force, Murtaugh said.

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Price says he'll repay taxpayers for his private jet travel [Back](#)

By Rachana Pradhan | 09/28/2017 04:23 PM EDT

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price said he will write a personal check to the federal government for his costs of traveling on private jets and will permanently halt his use of charter flights.

"The taxpayers won't pay a dime for my seat on those planes," Price said in a statement Thursday afternoon.

The announcement follows a POLITICO investigation that found Price has taken at least 26 charter flights costing taxpayers more than \$400,000 since May to conduct official business within the country. Price's travel, which was first reported over a week ago, has increasingly come under fire from President Donald Trump and former colleagues in Congress.

HHS confirmed to several media outlets that Price will write a check to the U.S. Treasury worth \$51,887.31 — just a fraction of the total travel costs. The department did not confirm those details to POLITICO, which broke the story of his chartered flights. HHS did not address the costs of the staff and security officials who accompanied Price on those flights.

Price, whose use of private jets is being investigated by the HHS inspector general and Congress, said he will no longer charter flights for official business. "No exceptions," he said.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday wouldn't commit to keeping Price in his administration, saying only "we'll see" when asked whether Price would be fired. Trump has privately fumed over Price's use of expensive charter jets, and some aides have [called for firing](#) Price. Hours before Price's announcement, the White House on Thursday said it had ordered HHS to halt all private flights.

"As the president said yesterday, he's not thrilled — certainly not happy with the actions," White House press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

Many of Price's flights were between major cities that offered inexpensive alternatives on commercial airlines, including Nashville, Philadelphia and San Diego. On some of those trips, Price mixed official business with personal affairs.

Price's statement came after increasing scrutiny from the Hill. The House Oversight Committee on Wednesday launched a bipartisan investigation into the use of private planes by all Cabinet secretaries. Sen. Chuck Grassley on Thursday sent a letter asking the White House to rein in officials' travel costs.

Price's decision to reimburse just the costs of just his airfare is unlikely to satisfy Democratic lawmakers, who've ripped him for lavishly spending taxpayer dollars while advocating for major cuts to health insurance programs covering low-income Americans.

"Until @SecPriceMD has paid back the full amount of his private jet flights he is still ripping off taxpayers," tweeted Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Finance Committee.

Price, who appeared at a White House event on opioid abuse with First Lady Melania Trump on Thursday, gave no indication that he planned to step down amid the outcry over his private travel. Earlier in the day, Price told reporters he believed the president still supported him, but he later refused to say whether he was worried about losing his job.

"I work at the pleasure of the president," Price said on Fox News, adding that he hopes to "regain the trust" of the American people and those working in the administration. Price said he's complying with the inspector general's review and contended that all his trips passed legal review.

Other Cabinet officials' travel has also come under recent scrutiny. Department auditors are reviewing private and military flights taken Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

Price, who represented Georgia for more than a decade in the House, has a longstanding reputation as a fiscal hawk and a staunch opponent of Obamacare. As a former chair of the House Budget Committee, he proposed federal spending plans that would have repealed the 2010 health law and culled hundreds of billions from health care entitlement programs. During his time as secretary, Price backed the White House's proposal to cut \$6 billion from the National Institutes of Health and slash overall HHS spending by 18 percent. Congress has opposed those cuts.

On Thursday, Price said he regretted the concerns that his travel practices has raised.

"All of my political career I've fought for the taxpayers," Price said. "It is clear to me that in this case, I was not sensitive enough to my concern for the taxpayer."

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Pruitt won't cover costs for private flights [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 09/28/2017 06:48 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt doesn't plan to pay out of pocket for the \$58,000 worth of non-commercial flights he and his staff have taken on four occasions, according to an agency spokeswoman.

Pruitt has taken three private government flights and one chartered plane. EPA has said those flights represented the only travel options for reaching scheduled events in time, including taking an Air Force plane to New York at a cost of \$36,068.50 to travel to events ahead of an international energy ministers' meeting in Italy. The agency received [ethics approvals](#) from EPA's acting general counsel for three of the four trips.

"If a reimbursement was necessary, we would have been told during the approval process and acted accordingly," agency spokeswoman Liz Bowman said.

HHS Secretary Tom Price today said he would [write a personal check](#) to the federal government to cover the cost of his seat on private jet flights that cost more than \$400,000 since May.

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Senate Republicans offer mixed reviews on Pruitt's pricey plane trips [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 09/28/2017 05:14 PM EDT

Senate Republicans were split Thursday over whether to condemn, defend or sidestep questions about EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's expensive use of charter and military planes.

[Lisa Murkowski](#), who oversees the Appropriations subpanel responsible for EPA funding, said she was open to adding language to a spending bill that would prevent Pruitt from taking private flights, after reports this week revealed EPA spent more than \$58,000 for charter flights on private or government-owned planes. But the Alaska Republican said she hopes it doesn't come to that.

"I don't think it's appropriate," Murkowski said regarding Pruitt's and HHS Secretary Tom Price's use of private aircraft. "That is clearly something that the executive reins in. You tell your people, 'Look, there's no charter flights.' You set the standard. You set what is acceptable. And I think that should be done."

Pruitt used non-commercial flights during trips to Oklahoma, North Dakota and Colorado, as well as to ensure he made a connecting flight to an energy ministers meeting in Italy. The agency's general counsel signed off on the trips, though their high cost has drawn criticism as the Trump administration seeks to slash the agency's budget by one-third.

But not everyone was ready to criticize the trips.

[Jim Inhofe](#) (R-Okla.), the former Environment and Public Works chairman and a friend of Pruitt, defended the administrator's flights.

"If there is a problem with it, then there would be a rule against it and there isn't one," Inhofe told POLITICO in an interview. "That's why he checked first to make sure there wouldn't be a problem."

Current EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) said he was "going to wait and see what comes out" before weighing in on the appropriateness of Pruitt's flights. He did not commit to holding a hearing on the issue, saying only that Pruitt would testify before the committee sometime this year.

Asked if it was generally appropriate for Cabinet officials to take private aircraft, or if he would have similarly held off criticism if it were an Obama administration official involved, Barrasso said, "I want to see what the information is." He added, "With Cabinet members, sometimes it's the only way to get from place to place."

Other Republicans declined to answer the broad question of whether Cabinet officials should take private transportation or said they were unaware of the details of Price and Pruitt's travel. "Good to talk with all of you," Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) told reporters when asked if Cabinet officials should fly in private jets.

[Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa), meanwhile, said he has more questions about Pruitt's and Price's plane tabs. Grassley sent [a letter](#) to President Donald Trump requesting information on what steps Cabinet secretaries are taking to ensure the "most fiscally responsible travel."

Democrats demanded a full accounting of the trips and wanted to know if Trump officials are getting different treatment than Obama Cabinet members.

"I wonder why Scott Pruitt is different from [former EPA Administrator] Gina McCarthy in terms of his needs," [Brian Schatz](#) (D-Hawaii) said. "Whatever they need [in terms of security], I think we ought to give it to them, but they shouldn't get anything more than they need."

[Tom Carper](#) (D-Del.), top Democrat on EPW, called for Pruitt to testify in the near future.

"This is one of those situations where the best disinfectant is sunshine," Carper said.

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House Democrats want White House briefing on Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle | 09/28/2017 02:02 PM EDT

House Democrats want top Trump administration officials to brief the caucus as soon as possible on what lawmakers say has been the White House's anemic response to the devastation in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley (D-N.Y.) on Thursday invited White House Chief of Staff John Kelly and acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke to come speak to the caucus, according to [a letter](#) obtained by POLITICO.

"We are deeply concerned by the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a result of the recent devastating hurricanes, and what has seemed to be an inadequate response by the federal government to date," wrote Crowley and several other Democrats with close ties to Puerto Rico.

"Natural disasters know no political bounds and have no party affiliations. That is why a meeting between the both of you and the House Democratic Caucus is needed," they added.

Democrats also say they're concerned by reports that the White House might not send Congress a formal request for disaster aid until several weeks from now, something lawmakers say is unacceptable given the state of the two U.S. territories.

Puerto Rico remains without power and many of its 3.5 million U.S. citizens have limited access to basic human necessities including food and clean water. The U.S. Virgin Islands and its more than 100,000 inhabitants were also devastated by the storm.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have chided the Trump administration for what they say is an indefensibly slow response to help the territories after they were devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The White House [said Thursday](#) it would temporarily grant Puerto Rico a reprieve from the Jones Act, a decades-old law that blocks non-U.S. ships from transporting goods to the island.

The Trump administration denied a similar request two days ago, with the president telling reporters Wednesday that the shipping industry had objected to granting the waiver.

But some Democrats criticized the move saying the waiver — which will last for 10 days — doesn't provide nearly enough time for supplies to get to the island to start the rebuilding process. DHS has said the waiver can be extended if necessary.

Democrats, in the letter, inviting Kelly and Duke, say the administration should also be sending telecommunication supplies to Puerto Rico to restore phone service and refrigeration units for food and medicine.

"We also cannot forget that residents of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are citizens of the United States, and they are deserving of our federal government's full attention and resources," the lawmakers wrote.

Other members who signed the letter include House Democratic Caucus Vice Chair Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.), Reps. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.), José Serrano (D-N.Y.), Luis Gutiérrez (D-Ill.), Darren Soto (D-Fla.) and U.S. Virgin Island Delegate Stacey Plaskett.

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House Democrats want White House briefing on Puerto Rico [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle | 09/28/2017 02:02 PM EDT

House Democrats want top Trump administration officials to brief the caucus as soon as possible on what lawmakers say has been the White House's anemic response to the devastation in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley (D-N.Y.) on Thursday invited White House Chief of Staff John Kelly and acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke to come speak to the caucus, according to [a letter](#) obtained by POLITICO.

"We are deeply concerned by the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a result of the recent devastating hurricanes, and what has seemed to be an inadequate response by the federal government to date," wrote Crowley and several other Democrats with close ties to Puerto Rico.

"Natural disasters know no political bounds and have no party affiliations. That is why a meeting between the both of you and the House Democratic Caucus is needed," they added.

Democrats also say they're concerned by reports that the White House might not send Congress a formal request for disaster aid until several weeks from now, something lawmakers say is unacceptable given the state of the two U.S. territories.

Puerto Rico remains without power and many of its 3.5 million U.S. citizens have limited access to basic human necessities including food and clean water. The U.S. Virgin Islands and its more than 100,000 inhabitants were also devastated by the storm.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have chided the Trump administration for what they say is an indefensibly slow response to help the territories after they were devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The White House [said Thursday](#) it would temporarily grant Puerto Rico a reprieve from the

Jones Act, a decades-old law that blocks non-U.S. ships from transporting goods to the island.

The Trump administration denied a similar request two days ago, with the president telling reporters Wednesday that the shipping industry had objected to granting the waiver.

But some Democrats criticized the move saying the waiver — which will last for 10 days — doesn't provide nearly enough time for supplies to get to the island to start the rebuilding process. DHS has said the waiver can be extended if necessary.

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U.S., Mexico set aside Trump tensions for Colorado River deal [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 09/29/2017 05:02 AM EDT

The water-sharing pact signed this week by the U.S. and Mexico emerged despite tensions caused by President Donald Trump's policies on immigration and trade, showing the negotiators' willingness to take on problems caused by shrinking supplies from the Colorado River, according to western water experts.

That deal signed Wednesday was supported by state water agencies and major users in both countries, and sets out procedures to reduce off-take during times of drought that are expected to persist for the foreseeable future.

"Water is the lifeblood of this region," Jennifer Pitt, Colorado River Project director for the National Audubon Society, said in an interview. "It is fundamentally important to the economies of southwestern U.S. and northwestern Mexico. ... It's just too important for the two countries not to have good relations over [it] and not have a plan in place about how to manage supplies reliably for that enormous population."

Representatives from the International Boundary and Water Commission of the United States and Mexico signed the pact, called [Minute 323](#), that largely carries forward for another nine years a prior agreement that was due to expire this year. Water levels at the Colorado River's most important reservoir, Lake Mead, have been plummeting, and both the U.S. and Mexico could have faced the threat of mandatory supply cuts starting as early as next year.

The river supplies drinking water to tens of millions of people in both countries and irrigation for millions of acres of agriculture, both of which would suffer unless the countries reached a deal.

Federal officials failed to sign a deal before the end of the Obama administration, [raising fears](#) that Trump's calls to build a wall along the Mexican border and the reopening of NAFTA would undo years of progress in the negotiations. But the officials, supported by state water agencies and Mexico water license holders, knew they had to reach a deal or risk years of litigation in a crisis that would force them to choose between cutting off water supplies to farms and sensitive wildlife habitats or to major population centers.

"In a crisis, you would have winners and losers, and some of the biggest losers would be agriculture and the environment," said Ted Kowalski, director of the Colorado River initiative at the Walton Family Foundation. "I think it's highly unlikely the Bureau of Reclamation is going to turn off the city of Las Vegas or the city of Phoenix."

So the officials continued plodding away at negotiations, hoping the Trump administration would in the end agree to a deal.

The water agency officials were "largely insulated from the political conversation between Washington, D.C., and Mexico," said Chuck Cullom, Colorado River programs manager for the Central Arizona Project. The water managers "focused on providing the greatest benefits for the country and the communities ... rather than the political winds that might be blowing in a number of directions," he said in an interview.

The basin states made reaching a deal a top priority this year, according to Pitt.

"There's a long-standing balance of power between the states and the federal government on the Colorado River where the federal government tries to as much as possible defer to the states, who are really the owners of the water. So as the states made it clear to the incoming administration this was a priority, the administration said, 'We will support you on this,'" she said.

A key sticking point in the negotiations had been Mexico's insistence that the lower basin states of California, Arizona and Nevada first agree to a drought contingency plan under which they would voluntarily conserve additional water beyond mandatory cuts in order to increase reservoir levels.

Mexico officials were worried they would be left holding the bag if a water crisis occurred before the states reached a deal. But Mexico eventually agreed to make additional cuts once the states pass a contingency plan.

Mexico is very dependent on the upstream dams in the U.S. for its water delivery, since a 2010 earthquake damaged its dams. But Mexico also took the position that the original 1944 treaty between the countries only required it to cut supplies if the U.S. suffered extreme drought, a vague term that left too much open to interpretation.

"That was a big concession for Mexico to follow our lead," said Tom Buschatzke, director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources. But the U.S. also agreed to fund \$31.5 million in water efficiency projects in Mexico through 2026 and to explore the possibility of investing in a desalinization plant that could help address future water supply challenges.

What made the deal possible is "the hard work that long preceded Trump," said Stephen Mumme, a political science professor at Colorado State University. "This is a classic example of ... a situation where not doing it could be really costly, and the sheer complexity of the number of players and the importance of the U.S. stake in this policy arena really overrode the Trump administration," he said.

"It's a good example in my mind of the limits of rhetorical breast beating and name calling and wall building."

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Suniva, SolarWorld modify remedy proposal in trade case [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/28/2017 07:20 PM EDT

Suniva and SolarWorld USA are pressing a U.S. trade panel to recommend that President Donald Trump institute either a floor price for imported solar equipment or tariffs plus a quota that caps the amount of solar panels and cells that can enter the country.

The two solar panel manufacturers filed a joint brief to the U.S. International Trade Commission, and each recommended different remedies, though they said that either option could be selected.

Suniva recommends a price floor for all solar modules that starts at 74 cents per watt and declines over the four years of the tariff, as well as tariffs for both modules and the solar cells. SolarWorld said it was seeking a quota of 220 MW on imported cells and 5,700 MW on imported modules.

"Both co-petitioners agree that an effective remedy must include either the co-petitioners' requested tariff plus Suniva's requested module floor price or the co-petitioners' requested tariff plus SolarWorld's requested quota," the companies said in a joint statement.

Briefs were due on Wednesday to the ITC, and the companies publicly released their proposals to today, excluding proprietary company information.

The ITC voted unanimously last week that low-cost imports had harmed the domestic solar manufacturing industry. Under the "safeguard" provisions of the Trade Act, Trump will have the final say in what tariffs to impose.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission will have a hearing on remedies on Oct. 3.

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Zinke stacks staffing board with political aides, former lobbyists [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 09/28/2017 03:41 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has assigned only political appointees, including several former industry lobbyists, as members of an advisory board on staffing and personnel issues, a move critics say sidelines members of the government workforce who are supposed to get a seat at the table.

The makeup of the Executive Resources Board contradicts federal guidelines that recommend giving career employees an equal voice in such discussions, and it is fueling criticism Zinke is crowding out independent experts and giving too much voice to the industries his department oversees.

The nine-member board is being led by Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, a former [lobbyist](#) whose clients included oil and gas interests; Associate Deputy Secretary James Cason, who worked energy issues for Kelly, Anderson & Associates, Inc.; and White House liaison Lori Mashburn, among other political staff with history of lobbying for the oil and gas industry.

Zinke established the board to "oversee all aspects of the management of executive resources," including senior managers, scientists and policy staff at the department, according to an Aug. 11 [memo](#).

"This is very much of a pattern," said Chris Saeger, executive director of the Western Values Project, which obtained the memo through a Freedom of Information Act request and shared it with POLITICO. "They have made a practice of shuffling career staff, marginalizing them. They're sending a very clear message, that they want to consolidate power with people who are loyal to Zinke and President. "

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift did not answer questions about why Zinke included only political appointees as members of the ERB. She did point out that two career employees, acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity Mary Pletcher and Deputy Solicitor for General Law Ed Keable, will serve as advisers to the board.

Zinke came under fire earlier this week when he [questioned](#) the loyalty of many Interior staffers, and he has previously raised eyebrows for [shuffling senior employees](#) into jobs they did not seem suited for, in one instance reassigning a manager overseeing climate change issues to a job collecting oil and gas royalties. Interior's inspector general has launched an investigation into the staff moves.

The secretary's decision does not comport with recommendations from the Office of Personnel Management, which has suggested that such boards consist of a mix of career staff, senior executive staff and political staff.

"It is not advisable to have an ERB that is exclusively or predominantly career executives, nor is it recommended to have an ERB that is exclusively or predominantly political appointees; both perspectives should be well represented to ensure a balanced view, when possible," OPM said in a 2009 [report](#).

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House clears FAA stopgap, avoiding shutdown [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 09/28/2017 04:24 PM EDT

Congress Thursday voted to extend the FAA's tax authority for six months after senators jettisoned private flood insurance language that had threatened the bill's chances, with just days before portions of the FAA's authorities were set to lapse.

After wrangling between the House and Senate over the flood insurance language, Congress wrapped the measure, [H.R. 3823 \(115\)](#), up two days before the FAA's authority to collect and spend excise taxes was set to expire.

Allowing that authority to lapse would have led to a partial shutdown of the FAA, affecting the agency's airport funding, equipment and research and development functions and leading to the furlough of thousands of employees. (Air traffic control and safety operations would have continued, albeit without pay for the employees.)

The House was forced to act a third time on the measure after a bipartisan group of senators objected to the original package's language encouraging private insurance companies to enter the flood arena.

While some of those members support changes to the National Flood Insurance Program, they've argued that any effort to promote a private market should be considered as part of broader legislation that addresses the existing federal program.

"We can't have a situation happen where people can't sell or buy property because you can't get a mortgage unless you get flood insurance, and you can't get flood insurance because there's none available that's cost-effective," Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) said.

Thursday wasn't the first time this week the House had to take a mulligan on the extension bill.

GOP leaders put the legislation, which also includes tax relief provisions for victims of recent hurricanes and extensions for certain health care programs, on the suspension calendar Monday, meaning they needed two-thirds of lawmakers present to vote in favor of the bill for it to pass. But Democrats revolted, and the vote came up short.

House leaders then tweaked the bill to broaden eligibility for tax breaks to U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands — addressing a criticism lobbed by Democrats — and prepared it for a quick floor debate where only a simple majority was needed for passage; it succeeded.

But senators who are active on NFIP policy began agitating against the House bill, with Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) conceding Thursday evening that his colleagues would likely change the bill and kick it back to the House.

House leaders had left themselves some breathing room for such a scenario through the way the rule governing debate on their bill was crafted. But it wasn't clear whether the Senate

would try to jam the House until Thursday afternoon, when leadership surveyed lawmakers on whether they would object to an FAA extension that dropped the flood insurance language.

While this week's drama over the FAA extension was tied to policy outside the aviation space, House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) is still gunning for a massive overhaul of the FAA's air traffic control operations.

His broader bill, [H.R. 2997 \(115\)](#), which would strip those functions from the agency and put them under the control of a nonprofit corporation, could get a floor vote next month, provided he rounds up enough support.

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Pruitt taps New York lawmaker for EPA Region 2 job [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/28/2017 11:27 AM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has picked New York Assembly member Pete Lopez to run EPA's Region 2 office, which covers New York and New Jersey — as well as the hurricane-devastated Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

Both territories suffered significant damage to their electric and water systems, with an estimated 42 percent of Puerto Ricans without access to potable water, [according to](#) the FEMA.

Lopez, a Republican, has been in the state assembly since 2007 and currently represents a district southwest of Albany. He ran to replace Rep. [Chris Collins](#) (R-N.Y.) but dropped out of the race early last year.

"His familiarity with the region and his experience working to solve environmental problems in New York will be invaluable in helping EPA serve Americans in the Northeast and the Caribbean," Pruitt said in a statement.

Judith Enck, the Obama administration's previous Region 2 chief, [told the Times Union](#) that Lopez "cares about the environment" and is "is as good as it's going to get in this administration."

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Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 5:47:44 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/13/2017 05:45 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden, Alex Guillén, Eric Wolff, Ben Lefebvre and Sara Stefanini

LET'S MAKE A DEAL? The White House is hoping it can get out of a bind between its oil industry supporters and its agricultural supporters by bringing representatives for the two groups together today for a preliminary meeting on a grand bargain for the Renewable Fuel Standard, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). Refiners, with some backing from unions, say they're drowning under heavy RFS compliance costs, and the biofuel industry insists it needs the mandates in the RFS to keep expanding and to grow advanced biofuels.

Who's attending? Aides from the pro-ethanol Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#), [Joni Ernst](#) and [Deb Fischer](#) will be there for the corn-state contingent, while staffers for Sens. [Ted Cruz](#) and [Pat Toomey](#) will make the case for refiners. Staff from EPA, the Department of Agriculture and the National Economic Council will also join.

What about Congress? Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) declined Tuesday to offer any details on the plan he and Sen. [John Cornyn](#) are working on to address the issue, but said it would have to address the exploding cost of buying biofuel credits that EPA uses to ensure refiners are blending the required amounts of biofuel into the nation's fuel supply. "The RIN values are a huge consideration because you're talking about millions and millions. And it wasn't meant to be that way. Anytime you have a value system that jumps around from eight cents to 800 dollars, that shows it's a broken system," Inhofe said.

Important context: Senators like Grassley are desperate to get Bill Northey, the nominee to be USDA undersecretary for farm production and conservation, confirmed since he'll play a crucial role in crafting the farm bill that lawmakers are three months behind schedule in drafting, Pro Agriculture's Catherine Boudreau [reports](#). Cruz, who was upbeat after last week's meeting but declined comment on Northey, placed a hold on his selection recently after corn-state Republicans extracted concessions from EPA on the RFS.

Can there be a bargain, grand or petite? Ethanol producers have been deeply skeptical of any kind of deal to be made with the oil industry, which they feel wants to squeeze them out of the fuels market if at all possible. But it's not even clear what parameters there are for a deal. University of Illinois economist Scott Irwin [said on Twitter](#), the mandates in the RFS drive up RIN costs. You can't push down RIN costs without undermining the mandates. "There is no 'win-win' on the RFS concerning mandates and RINs," he wrote in a thread. "Lower RINs prices go with lower mandates and vice versa. Straightforward economics."

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and API's Khary Cauthen was first to identify Erskine Bowles as the former White House chief of staff who lost consecutive Senate bids in North Carolina. For today: Sens. [Bernie Sanders](#), [Angus King](#) and Joe Lieberman are well-known third-party senators. Who was the last independent senator to serve before them? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

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NO MOORE: Sen.-elect Doug Jones [shocked the political world](#) by winning the Senate election in ruby-red Alabama on Tuesday evening, but it's worth pointing out he ran on a pretty [progressive platform](#) on environmental and climate change issues. His website says he "believe[s] in science" and opposed Trump's decision to leave the Paris accord. One thing to watch now is the committee shuffle: outgoing Sen. [Luther Strange](#) will vacate a spot on the Energy Committee (so some other Republican will get it).

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, PRUITT: EPA revealed Tuesday night that Administrator Scott Pruitt has been in Morocco this week promoting "the potential benefit of liquefied natural gas imports on Morocco's economy," as well as U.S.-Moroccan environmental cooperation. Pruitt's visit included a meeting with Morocco's energy minister to "discuss new and ongoing areas of collaboration under the Free Trade Agreement and the country's interest in importing LNG," according to EPA. The agency said he also met with top foreign affairs and justice officials. Morocco produces little natural gas and relies heavily on imports, although it also plans a major expansion of solar and wind power, according to the Energy Information Administration.

ROUNDUP FROM PARIS: The private sector took the center stage at the One Planet Summit in Paris Tuesday to show what they're willing and able to close the €179.6 billion (\$210.9 billion) a year gap between the investment needed to fulfill the goals of the Paris climate agreement and what's foreseen in policies adopted so far. POLITICO Europe's Sara Stefanini with [the roundup](#) and here's a sampling of the goings on:

— **Moving on from Trump:** Six months after Trump announced he wanted to leave the Paris agreement, the world is going ahead without him. "If we're here, so many of us today, it's because we've decided not to accept America's decision," French President Emmanuel Macron said [in a speech](#). Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry agreed when asked if non-state actors can make up for a lack of federal leadership: "It is possible, yes," he told reporters.

— **Carbon pricing in the Americas:** Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, the governors of California and Washington and the premiers of Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec [launched](#) a cooperative framework on carbon pricing.

— **ING ditches coal:** Dutch bank ING said that by the end of 2025 it [will quit financing](#) utilities that are over 5 percent reliant on coal-fired power in their energy mix. The bank already does not finance companies that are over 10 percent reliant on coal — up from ING's pre-Paris threshold of 50 percent. Greenpeace applauded the latest announcement.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT! Democrats vowed to keep a watchful eye after GAO [found](#) the Trump administration illegally withheld \$91 million budgeted for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy program earlier this year, your ME host [reports](#). Top Senate Energy Democrat [Maria Cantwell](#) said in a statement: "The President cannot ignore statutory requirements or funding direction provided by Congress. I expect nothing less than Secretary [Rick] Perry's full compliance with the law." DOE ultimately relented and released all the funds.

AROUND CONGRESS — EPW LOOKS AT NRC: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee gavel in at 9:45 a.m. to vote on R.D. James' nomination to run the Army Corps of Engineers and then holds an oversight hearing on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission immediately afterwards. Watch [here](#).

Looking at solar energy deployment: A House Science subcommittee holds a hearing at 2 p.m. entitled "Advancing Solar Energy Technology: Research Trumps Deployment." Witnesses include: Daniel Simmons, principal deputy assistant secretary with DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and Martin Keller, director of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Watch [here](#).

Natural Resources holds mega-markup: Lawmakers on House Natural Resources Committee hold a markup of 15 bills today at 10 a.m. More information [here](#).

Examining the future of North American energy trade: The House Energy and Natural Resources Energy Subcommittee holds a hearing entitled "The Impacts and Future of North American Energy Trade." Witnesses representing the National Association of Manufacturers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers and Resources for the Future appear. Background [memo](#) and watch [here](#).

Congressional Democrats, including House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) and Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#), rally at 10:30 a.m. to push lawmakers to protect pensions, including those of retired miners, from cuts as they weigh end-of-year spending legislation.

INTERIOR STAFF SHUFFLE INVITES LAWSUIT: Interior Department employee Matt Allen has filed a FOIA lawsuit in an effort to determine why he and other senior employees were suddenly transferred earlier this year. Interior's Inspector General's office is already [investigating](#) Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plans to shuffle dozens of Senior Executive Service employees, and another now-former employee [filed](#) a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel and [a lawsuit](#) after being reassigned. Allen, who became a BLM spokesman in the waning days of the Obama administration, was reassigned to a public affairs position at BSEE in September. "My client's demotion reeks of reprisal, and these documents will provide us the tools we require to prove that," plaintiff's lawyer Katherine Atkinson said in a press release. An Interior spokesperson was not immediately available to comment.

NOT GIVING UP: Senate EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) told ME Tuesday he's not giving up on Michael Dourson's nomination to run EPA's chemicals office even as [Republican defections](#) have put a damper on his confirmation prospects. "It's a question of how Sen. McConnell chooses to prioritize them," the Wyoming Republican said, downplaying the challenges facing Dourson, a former industry-funded toxicologist.

CURTAINS FOR GARRETT? Former New Jersey Rep. Scott Garrett, Trump's pick to run the Export-Import Bank, is likely to have his nomination blocked after Sen. [Mike Rounds](#) came out against his selection on Tuesday, Pro Financial Services' Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). "I believe him to be a proponent of the abolition of the bank rather than a reformer of the bank," Rounds said. "I'm looking for reformers, not abolitionists." Garrett's selection has been roundly criticized by the business community. The Senate Banking Committee has 12 Republicans and 11 Democrats, so Rounds' defection would sink the selection in committee.

MURKOWSKI UPBEAT ON ANWR'S PROSPECTS: Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) told ME Tuesday she's optimistic language opening ANWR to oil and gas drilling

will make it into the final Republican tax package [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#), even though a dozen of her House colleagues [oppose](#) its inclusion. "I'm feeling pretty good about where we are with ANWR right now," she said. "We just need to make sure that we're able to come together as conferees and get a package that both bodies can support."

Speaking of which, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania and PennFuture are running [a full page ad](#) in the Philadelphia Inquirer today urging Republican Reps. [Pat Meehan](#), [Ryan Costello](#) and [Brian Fitzpatrick](#) to vote against any final tax package that contains ANWR drilling. You'll remember they were three of the 12 House Republicans who said in the letter they opposed opening the Arctic area to oil and gas drilling.

Murkowski also said she wasn't ready to weigh in on whether Zinke's [use of helicopters](#) to attend Washington area events, like a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, was appropriate until she got more information. "I think we all recognize that there is a responsibility that we have as lawmakers, when you're using the taxpayer dollar, that you do so in a responsible way and something that's not wasteful," she said. "But I also understand that there are sometimes requirements of the job that require you to perhaps take a different mode of transportation."

And she told your ME host she hadn't been following the ongoing battle between Patagonia and Zinke, but that she too had been irked by the outdoor clothing giant's advocacy for barring drilling in ANWR last year. "Last Christmas, I actually looked at the Patagonia catalog that came to my house," Murkowski said. "I didn't think they were marketing their outdoor clothing. It was a full on effort to build support for turning ANWR into wilderness ... It was enough to get me, as a consumer, riled up enough to say 'I'm not buying Patagonia products.'"

UNUSUAL MOVE IN VIRGINIA: A state panel granted the Atlantic Coast pipeline's water quality permits, but took the unusual step of delaying their effective date until soil and erosion control plans and stormwater management plans are finished, the Associated Press [reports](#). "While this is most definitely not what Dominion wanted and gives opponents of the pipeline more time to push for rejection, the [Virginia State Water Control Board] should have rejected the certificate outright," Lorne Stockman with Oil Change International said in a statement.

SOLAR FOR SAMARITANS: EPA says it's partnering with the non-governmental organizations in Puerto Rico to provide generators or solar panels to run drinking water pumps and wells that supply water to 3 percent of the population and are not managed by the island's government. EPA and other U.S. and Puerto Rican agencies are working with Water Mission, Samaritan's Purse, Project Hope and RCAP Solutions. Solar panels have been installed in four communities and will be provided to four more before Christmas, EPA said in a press release.

More than two months after Hurricane Maria hit, about 43 percent of island residents didn't have power and 17 percent didn't have drinkable water, according to statistics issued on November 20 by the U.S. territory's government. The Natural Resources Defense Council [finds](#) that, according to government test results, more than two-thirds of the population was at potential risk of exposure to bacterial contamination in water systems.

MAIL CALL! SICK OF THOSE TALKING POINTS: The EPW Democrats asked Kathleen Hartnett White, nominee to lead the White House Council on Environmental Quality, to redo her responses to questions for the record after they contained identical language as previous nominees. Link [here](#).

DON'T DO IT! The Environmental Working Group is urging Toyota in [a letter](#) not to enter into a management partnership with EPA as Pruitt suggested the automaker was going to do at a congressional hearing last week. "By partnering with Mr. Pruitt's EPA, you are aiding and publicly aligning yourself with his irresponsible agenda," EWG President Ken Cook wrote, warning Toyota it risked "irreparable harm" to its brand by pairing with Pruitt.

LEARNING FROM THE DRUG COMPANIES? The Hamilton Project at Brookings is out with a report today arguing energy research and development could be improved by implementing some practices from the pharmaceutical industry. Those include: Creating a strong system of contract research, implementing consistent technical standards and offering better incentives for electric utilities to deploy and test new technologies. Link [here](#).

TAKE A GLANCE! Texans for Natural Gas is out with [an analysis](#) this morning finding that even as exports of natural gas have increased dramatically, prices have fallen. That goes against the previous [predictions](#) of the Energy Information Administration, which warned more exports would cause price spikes.

SPOTTED: Energy Secretary Rick Perry receiving the Ronald Reagan Award from the Texas Public Policy Foundation on Tuesday night. Pics [here](#) ... Zinke and his wife, Lola, walking through the White House's Christmas decorations. Pic [here](#).

LIGHTER CLICK: NRDC trustee Robert Redford made a video asking people to urge Congress to vote against the final tax package because of the provision opening ANWR to drilling. Watch [here](#).

QUICK HITS

— JEA wants out of struggling nuclear power deal, disputes negative credit report. [Jacksonville.com](#).

— Former Republican EPA chiefs blast controversial Alaska mining project. [The Hill](#).

— State panel urges temporary shutdown of Mackinac pipeline. [AP](#).

— National Park Service slashes number of free-access days from 10 to four in 2018. [Denver Post](#).

— Trump's Stand-In Bureaucrats May Have Overstayed Limits. [Bloomberg](#).

— Top Interior Official Stayed At Montana Resort That Secretary Zinke's Billionaire Friend And Donor Owns. [Huffington Post](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:45 a.m. — "[Oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#)" and [Business Meeting](#), Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Committee holds [markup](#) of 16 bills, Longworth 1324

10:30 a.m. — Congressional Democrats, including Leaders Schumer and Pelosi, rally to protect workers' pensions, Senate Visitors Center rooms 208-209

10:15 a.m. — "[The Impacts and Future of North American Energy Trade](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2322

1:30 a.m. — "[Advancing U.S. Innovation by Reforming Patent and R&D Policy](#)," The Hamilton Project at Brookings, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW

2:00 p.m. — "[Advancing Solar Energy Technology: Research Trumps Deployment](#)," House Science, Space and Technology Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2318

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White House to host Senate staff for biofuels talks [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/12/2017 04:16 PM EDT

The White House will host a meeting Wednesday with Senate staffers in the hopes of striking a deal between oil refiners and biofuel producers who have clashed over the Renewable Fuel Standard, sources tell POLITICO.

A White House aide confirmed the meeting would take place. Sources said it's a preliminary conversation intended to explore whether a deal can be reached to both help refiners, who say they are struggling with the costs of complying with the RFS, and continue supporting the biofuel industry that has matured under the RFS.

Industry sources and Republican Senate aides say that staff for pro-ethanol Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) and [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) will attend, and aides to Sens. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and [Pat Toomey](#) (R-Pa.) will be there to represent refiners. Staff from EPA, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Economic Council will also join the meeting.

A spokeswoman for Sen. [Deb Fischer](#) (R-Neb.) said her staff would also be attending the meeting, which was first reported by Reuters.

Midwestern senators scored a win when they forced EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to backtrack on efforts to alter parts of the RFS, but Cruz forced the White House to get involved after he put a hold on Bill Northey, who is up for a USDA undersecretary position.

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Grassley: Senate Ag is 3 months behind in drafting farm bill [Back](#)

By Catherine Boudreau | 12/12/2017 11:10 AM EDT

Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) said today that senators are three months behind schedule in drafting the next farm bill and that he had previously anticipated the Agriculture Committee would have advanced legislation before Christmas.

"We can't horse around any longer," Grassley told reporters during a conference call, adding that the farm bill should be finished in the first half of next year so producers have predictability.

Senate Agriculture Chairman [Pat Roberts](#), during an [interview](#) on C-SPAN on Sunday, said he is aiming to have the panel finish a farm bill "blueprint" by February and to bring the measure to the Senate floor in early spring.

A factor that could thwart progress on drafting the farm bill is the uncertainty surrounding Bill Northey, the nominee to be USDA undersecretary for farm production and conservation, who has not been confirmed, Grassley said.

Northey, the Iowa agriculture secretary, continues to see his nomination held by Sen. [Ted Cruz](#). He would oversee three agencies that implement key farm bill programs, including loans, commodity subsidies, crop insurance and conservation.

Cruz placed a hold on Northey in retaliation after corn-state lawmakers — Grassley included — used political power to stymie a recent effort by the EPA to weaken the Renewable Fuel Standard. Cruz and other oil-state lawmakers believe those changes create the potential for job losses among refiners, and held up Northey until a meeting with the White House could be arranged.

Cruz and company left a meeting with President Donald Trump on Thursday with a directive to find a compromise with their colleagues, but the Texas Republican did not comment on whether he'd let Northey advance.

Grassley said he hopes Northey doesn't get fed up with the politics of Washington and withdraw from consideration. He said he doesn't have any indication Northey would do that, however.

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Alabama earthquake: Democrat Jones wins [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 12/12/2017 06:08 PM EDT

Democrat Doug Jones defeated Roy Moore in a special election earthquake Tuesday, flipping an Alabama Senate seat to Democrats for the first time in a quarter-century and dealing a huge political setback to President Donald Trump.

The Associated Press called the race for Jones, a former U.S. attorney, who had 49.9 percent of the vote to Moore's 48.4 percent with all precincts reporting — a difference of more than 21,000 votes.

Still, Moore declined to concede, saying there were still military and other votes that need to be counted. Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill told CNN it would be "highly unusual and highly unlikely" for the outstanding ballots to change the results of the race.

In Alabama, an automatic recount is triggered when the margin between the two candidates is under 0.5 percentage points. A candidate, however, has the option of seeking a recount if the margin is wider than that but has to pay for it, Merrill said.

Barring a miracle, all of that pointed to a victory for Jones.

"I am truly overwhelmed," the Democratic told ebullient supporters in a Birmingham hotel ballroom after the race was called. "At the end of the day, this entire race has been about dignity and respect. This campaign has been about the rule of law. This campaign has been about common courtesy and decency."

Jones' win — after Moore was accused of sexual assault and other misconduct by multiple women — will shrink Republicans' already tenuous Senate majority to 51-49, just as the party approaches final consideration of its sweeping tax bill and prepares for the 2018 midterm elections in a difficult political environment.

Moore's loss does relieve Senate Republicans from one burden: Considering whether they would expel him from the chamber if he won. But the party will have a reed-thin margin for error in the coming months as it tries to push through its agenda. And Moore's defeat was a major setback for Trump, who gave the candidate a full-throated endorsement in the final days of the race, in a state he carried with over 60 percent of the vote in 2016.

"Congratulations to Doug Jones on a hard fought victory," Trump tweeted. "The write-in votes played a very big factor, but a win is a win. The people of Alabama are great, and the Republicans will have another shot at this seat in a very short period of time. It never ends!"

The election is also a major defeat for the president's former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, who as the head of Breitbart led a bare-knuckles campaign to elect Moore and drag down Jones. Bannon had cast the race as an existential showdown between the activist base and Washington elites, but only to wind up on the losing end.

The president set up the election as one with outsized consequences for his administration and the GOP, tweeting repeatedly that Alabama could not afford to elect Jones. Trump also praised Moore at a rally in nearby Pensacola, Florida, and the Republican National Committee injected late money into the race after Trump reengaged.

It was a surreal scene at Moore's election night gathering in Montgomery.

The night started out with tons of energy in the room, but it dissipated as the vote returns accumulated until eventually the room fell silent. After the race was called but before Moore delivered his concession speech, a man took the stage and sang Christmas hymns.

When Moore emerged, he would not say the race was over, telling supporters that he wanted to consult with the secretary of state's office about next steps.

"Part of the problem with this campaign is we've been painted in unfavorable and unfaithful light," Jones said. "We've been put in a hole, if you will."

Trump's late play for Moore went against the will of Senate Republicans, who abandoned Moore after women came forward to say that Moore had pursued relationships with them when they were teenagers and he was in his 30s, including one who described sexual contact with Moore when she was 14.

"The people of Alabama deemed Roy Moore unfit to serve in the U.S. Senate," said National Republican Senatorial Committee chairman Cory Gardner, who had called for Moore to be thrown out of the Senate if elected. "I hope Senator-elect Doug Jones will do the right thing and truly represent Alabama by choosing to vote with the Senate Republican Majority."

Steven Law, the president of the super PAC aligned with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, blamed Bannon for Jones' victory.

"This is a brutal reminder that candidate quality matters regardless of where you are running," Law said in a statement. "Not only did Steve Bannon cost us a critical Senate seat in one of the most Republican states in the country, but he also dragged the President of the United States into his fiasco."

As Moore's campaign fought scandal, Jones became cause of national Democrats eager to defeat the Republican. Online donors flooded his campaign with money as Jones criss-crossed Alabama focusing on what he called "kitchen table issues" (and rarely mentioning his party). His TV ads blanketed the airwaves, hammering Moore as a sexual predator while also introducing Jones as a Second Amendment-supporting federal prosecutor who had convicted Ku Klux Klansmen involved in the bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church during the civil rights era.

Jones rode a surge of energy among black voters and got a key bump from white-collar suburbanites who often vote Republican but turned away from the controversial Moore. The GOP nominee's history of inflammatory comments about women, Muslims and LGBT people had already damaged his standing — and the sexual misconduct allegations scared more voters away.

Moore still won college-educated white voters 57 percent to 41 percent, according to the National Election Pool exit poll — but the group shifted hard in Democrats' direction compared to past Alabama elections.

Trump prompted the special election by nominating former Sen. Jeff Sessions to be his attorney general. Jones will replace appointed Republican Sen. Luther Strange and will hold the Senate seat until 2020, when Sessions' old term expires.

Alex Isenstadt contributed to this report.

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GAO: Administration illegally withheld \$91 million in ARPA-E funds [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/12/2017 05:17 PM EDT

The Trump administration violated federal law when it withheld \$91 million budgeted for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy program earlier this year, the GAO said in a [letter](#) released today.

House Science Committee ranking member [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#) (D-Texas) [asked](#) GAO to investigate in May amid [reports](#) the agency was withholding money for grants that were already approved. In a Nov. 29 letter to GAO, the agency confirmed all funds had been released to be dispensed.

"I hope that the Administration now understands that Federal agencies must provide lawfully directed appropriations to the programs to which they are dedicated," Johnson said in a statement. "It cannot attempt to shut down an agency or starve a program it doesn't like by withholding funds. It is illegal and we in Congress will not allow it."

ARPA-E, which the Trump administration proposed eliminating entirely in its budget this year, selects energy technology projects and awards funding as those ventures meet a series of development milestones.

The Energy Department didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

WHAT'S NEXT: Congress must decide how much funding to award ARPA-E in the future.

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Interior IG probing Zinke's senior staff reshuffle [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 09/08/2017 05:09 PM EDT

The Interior Department's internal watchdog has launched a probe into Secretary Ryan Zinke's June reassignment of a number of senior executive staff, an official told POLITICO today.

The inspector general's office is auditing Zinke's decision to [reassign](#) dozens of senior executive service employees, including Joel Clement, who was moved from a managerial position involving climate change issues to a job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies. The office has begun interviewing key agency staff and asked the secretary's office to hand over documents, IG spokeswoman Nancy DiPaolo said.

The audit follows a [request](#) in July from Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) (D-Wash.) and seven of her colleagues for Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall to look into the matter.

Depending on what the audit uncovers, it could lead to a broader investigation to determine whether any laws were broken.

WHAT'S NEXT: DiPaolo said the IG hopes to wrap up its work within a few months.

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Interior official files whistleblower complaint over job reassignment [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre | 07/19/2017 07:06 PM EDT

A former senior Interior Department official has filed a whistleblower complaint after the agency transferred him from a leadership position focused on climate change to a desk job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies.

In a [complaint](#) and [disclosure](#) filing with the Office of Special Counsel and in a Washington Post [op-ed](#), former Interior Office of Policy Analysis Director Joel Clement claimed he was [reassigned](#) to a position at the Office of Natural Resources Revenue to stop him from publicly discussing climate change impacts on native Alaskan coastal communities.

Clement was among dozens of senior executive staff reassigned to other jobs in June.

Clement told POLITICO no Interior political staffers ever raised concerns about his activities prior to his reassignment. "It was kind of obvious to reassign the climate adaptation experts to the accounting office where they collect fossil fuel royalty checks. That was pretty flagrant, I would say, in terms of sending the message. So that message was received loud and clear that they wanted me to quit."

Clement said he'd like his old job back, and he hoped other staff would also complain.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the personnel moves were "conducted to better serve the taxpayer and the Department's operations."

Clement may have difficulty proving his case because agencies have wide discretion to reassign staff, according to Jeff Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. "It sounds like he's being retaliated against because of his job, not because of any disclosure he made," Ruch said. "He's suffering due to the nature of his job, and maybe because he did it too well."

Annie Snider contributed to this report.

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Dourson at risk of rejection as more Republicans lean no [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano and Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 05:55 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominee to a key chemical safety job at the EPA is at risk of rejection after Republican senators balked amid accusations that he is too eager to cover for companies peddling dangerous products.

North Carolina's two GOP senators have said they will vote against confirming Michael Dourson as an EPA assistant administrator, citing a record that included work on a chemical

linked to cancer deaths near a Marine Corps base in their home state. And Maine Republican [Susan Collins](#) said Thursday that she is leaning no as well — a vote that would be enough to sink his nomination.

Democrats are optimistic about turning four additional Republicans who they believe should be in play based on contamination issues back home.

Republican leaders have not decided what to do about Dourson's nomination, Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas) said Thursday.

"We'll have to see whether it's a viable nomination, and with two against him obviously that doesn't leave us a lot of room," Cornyn told POLITICO. "We haven't made a decisions on that yet, but we'll be revisiting it."

Critics say Dourson, a former industry-funded toxicologist, regularly downplayed the risks of chemicals such as PFOA and trichloroethylene that are contaminating soil and water in communities across the country. Dourson has already begun working at EPA as a senior adviser to Administrator Scott Pruitt, an arrangement Democrats have condemned as improper.

"There are all these local contamination issues across the country that have been bubbling up recently or have been out there for years, and because Dourson is this hired gun ... he's almost by nature of his job been working on these really controversial chemicals," said Jack Pratt, chemicals campaign director for the Environmental Defense Fund, which opposes Dourson's nomination.

Republican North Carolina Sens. [Thom Tillis](#) and [Richard Burr](#) said Wednesday that they could not support Dourson because of his past work as a toxicologist who was frequently hired by industry to rebut public health concerns about chemicals. Collins said Thursday that she is "leaning against" confirming him.

A legislative aide said Democrats are eyeing Republican Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) of Arizona, [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska, [Bob Corker](#) of Tennessee and [Pat Toomey](#) of Pennsylvania, although Flake, Toomey and Corker told POLITICO they're still undecided.

"Sen. Toomey remains concerned about the PFOA issue in Bucks County and Montgomery County and remains dedicated to addressing it," a spokesman for the Pennsylvania Republican said, naming two Philadelphia-area counties where [toxic firefighting chemicals](#) leached into the ground from [two closed naval bases](#). Toomey is reviewing the nomination "with these concerns in mind," but the spokesman did not say how he plans to vote.

However, even if the nomination is pulled or rejected, Dourson will still be able to influence EPA's implementation of a major chemical safety law because he has already started working at the agency. Democrats have criticized that arrangement, though EPA says previous administrations allowed people to begin working there before being confirmed.

EPA's chemical safety office, which Dourson has been nominated to lead, has a heavy workload after Congress in 2016 passed a bipartisan law updating the Toxic Substances Control Act for the first time in nearly 40 years. The office has been charged with evaluating the safety of chemicals already in use and determining how to test new chemicals before they are allowed into the marketplace.

The near-universal support TSCA reform won in Congress last year may help explain the wariness among lawmakers about giving chemical industry allies too much of a foothold in EPA.

"They wanted to give the public some assurance that the products on their shelf are safe, and when you put the chemical industry in charge that's not going to happen," said Madeleine Foote, a legislative representative with the League of Conservation Voters.

Tillis and Burr stopped short of calling for Dourson to step down from his existing position at the agency. "I'll leave that up to the EPA to decide," Tillis told POLITICO.

Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.), who has supported several Trump nominees, said he would vote against Dourson but not object to him continuing to work at EPA.

Before joining EPA last month, Dourson was a professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine's Risk Science Center, and he founded the nonprofit Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment, which was often conducted industry-funded research. He also previously worked at EPA from 1980 to 1995. Past clients of Dourson and his research group have included Dow Chemical, Koch Industries and Chevron, according to [the Associated Press](#).

Critics say Dourson's research routinely concluded that chemicals were safer in far higher concentrations than those recommended by agencies like EPA, putting communities at greater risk of finding toxic substances like perchlorate, TCE or PFOA in their air or drinking water.

Pratt said Dourson's work followed a pattern.

"Over and over again these chemical companies would hire him, he'd look at the research, and say the standard that EPA or whatever regulatory body has is too strict — it should be looser," Pratt said.

EPA defended the nominee.

"Dr. Michael Dourson is a highly qualified scientist to lead EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution," EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said in a statement. "He worked at EPA for 15 years, founded a program that characterized the health hazards of chemicals, performed pro-bono work that saved a family near Cincinnati and his expertise on TCE contamination resulted in settlements that helped 130 families outside of San Francisco."

Dourson told the Environment and Public Works Committee at his confirmation hearing last month that he did not have a thumb on the scale.

"I can give you as many or more examples of situations where the science that we brought forward as a team actually lowered the safe dose or risk position for various sponsors," Dourson told Sen. [Tom Carper](#) (D-Del.) at the hearing. "If confirmed, I will rely on the guidance of EPA ethics officials."

Tillis and Burr said they could not support Dourson based on his record and North Carolina's history of chemical pollution problems, such drinking water at Camp Lejeune that was contaminated for decades by chemicals including trichloroethylene. TCE is one of the first 10 chemicals EPA must evaluate under the new safety law, but Dourson has previously endorsed

health standards that are 1.5 to 15 times less protective than those backed by other researchers, [according to EDF](#).

Retired Marine Corps Master Sgt. Jerry Ensminger, whose daughter died of leukemia linked to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, met with Tills and aides to Burr to urge their opposition, according to the [Wilmington Star News](#).

Among his other industry-funded work, Dourson [appeared](#) before an EPA scientific advisory panel session concerning the pesticide chlorpyrifos on behalf of CropLife America. He led a 2008 [paper](#) on acrylamide, which can form during high-temperature cooking of some starchy foods, that received funding from major food companies like Burger King, Frito-Lay and McDonald's. And he [studied](#) 1-bromopropane, a solvent linked to some neurological and reproductive disorders, in 2004 with funding from Albemarle Corp. and Ameribrom Inc.

In all cases, he recommended standards many factors less protective than public health and EPA research suggested.

He also has done work for industry-friendly state governments. In the early 2000s, Dourson helped West Virginia set drinking water guidance limits for PFOA, also known as perfluorooctanoic acid or C8, at 150 parts per billion. That was 150 times less protective than manufacturer DuPont's own internal standard of 1 part per billion and more than 2,000 times less protective than EPA's [recommendation](#) of 70 parts per trillion.

During his confirmation hearing, Dourson argued that the research had evolved significantly since his recommendation to West Virginia, saying that "the science has progressed, significantly advanced since the time of 2004 and the new science indicates a lower level." And he defended the integrity of his work overall.

"Throughout my career — with EPA, TERA and now with the University of Cincinnati — I have been objective in my work and applied sound science to come to my conclusions," Dourson said.

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Trump Ex-Im Bank nominee will likely be blocked [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 12/12/2017 04:20 PM EDT

Scott Garrett, President Donald Trump's pick to lead the Export-Import Bank, will likely be blocked by bipartisan opposition after he struggled to convince lawmakers that he should run an agency he once tried to kill in Congress.

Garrett's fate was all but sealed Tuesday when Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) said he would oppose the former congressman's confirmation when it comes up for a vote at the Senate Banking Committee on Dec. 19. The panel has 12 Republicans and 11 Democrats, and all the Democrats are expected to oppose Garrett.

"I believe him to be a proponent of the abolition of the bank rather than a reformer of the

bank," Rounds told POLITICO. "I'm looking for reformers, not abolitionists."

Rounds had raised concerns that small contractors in his state could be hurt if their larger customers lost access to financing. U.S. companies rely on the agency to provide loan guarantees to the foreign buyers of American exports.

If Garrett's nomination were blocked or withdrawn, it would be a major victory for companies and manufacturing groups, including Boeing and the National Association of Manufacturers. They have fought to stop his Senate confirmation based on his record of trying to shut down the bank while serving in Congress.

Before losing reelection in his New Jersey district last year, Garrett said the bank "embodies the corruption of the free enterprise system." As he tried to save his nomination in recent months, he struck a less aggressive tone and pledged publicly to keep the bank running.

Garrett's attempts to shore up support fell flat, and opposition to his nomination could grow before next Tuesday's vote.

Other Republicans on the committee said they had not yet made up their minds.

Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.), whose vote is one of the most closely watched on the panel, represents a state that's home to plants operated by Boeing and GE, two of the bank's most prominent beneficiaries. He has raised concerns with Garrett's record but has not announced how he would vote.

"My attention's all on the tax reform package," Scott said in an interview today. "I'm sure I'll have enough time before Tuesday to come to a decision."

Asked if Garrett will drop out or if the White House is looking for a new nominee, an administration official told POLITICO, "We plan on having a vote."

The administration has warned for months that if Garrett failed to advance then GOP lawmakers critical of the bank would hold up the confirmation of other nominees to head the agency. Sens. Pat Toomey (R-Penn.) and Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) have threatened to derail other Ex-Im appointees if Garrett were not cleared.

Four less controversial nominees for the bank's board are also scheduled for a committee vote on Dec. 19, and they're expected to move forward. Their confirmation would help the bank's board regain a quorum that's needed to approve transactions worth more than \$10 million.

Shelby said on Tuesday that if Garrett were blocked, "a lot of us will probably vote against all of them," but he conceded that "we're probably outliers — the minority."

In an interview Friday, White House director of legislative affairs Marc Short declined to say what the administration would do if Garrett fell short of the necessary votes in committee.

"There are some who look at it myopically and will say, 'Here's your challenge in committee,'" Short said. "But I think focusing on the committee in and of itself doesn't factor in other members of Congress who will oppose a different nominee."

Underscoring the wedge that the Export-Import Bank has driven between Republicans, manufacturers on Tuesday applauded Rounds for announcing his opposition, while

conservative groups went on the attack.

"Sen. Rounds is placing special interests and lobbyists above the interests of the American people," Club for Growth President David McIntosh said. "A vote against Scott Garrett is a vote for business as usual in Washington. Rounds' opposition will serve to protect the swamp and its creatures rather drain it."

Andrew Restuccia contributed to this report.

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ANWR drilling in tax bill draws opposition from a dozen House Republicans [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 11/30/2017 06:33 PM EDT

A dozen House Republicans raised concerns today about a rider in the Senate tax bill that would allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The lawmakers did not mention the tax bill by name in [their letter](#), and they stopped short of promising to pull their support if ANWR drilling is included. But they said they had "concerns with any proposal that would implement an oil and gas leasing program in the Refuge" and questioned whether new drilling there was necessary.

"Further, the resources beneath the Refuge's Coastal Plain simply are not necessary for our nation's energy independence," wrote Reps. [Brian Fitzpatrick](#), [Dave Reichert](#) and 10 of their GOP colleagues.

Six of the 12 lawmakers already voted against the House tax bill earlier this month, citing objections such as its elimination of the state and local tax deduction.

Opening ANWR is a priority for Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#), a key swing vote in the upper chamber, which hopes to pass its version of the bill as soon as this week.

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Zinke booked government helicopters to attend D.C. events [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/07/2017 06:31 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to take himself and staff to and from official events near Washington, D.C., in order to accommodate his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for his replacement in Congress and a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, according to previously undisclosed official travel documents.

The travel logs, released to POLITICO via a Freedom of Information Act request, show Zinke using taxpayer-funded vehicles from the U.S. Park Police to help accommodate his political events schedule.

In a case detailed in the new documents, Zinke ordered a U.S. Park Police helicopter to take him and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on June 21.

Zinke's staff justified the \$8,000 flight by saying official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m., too late to make the two-hour drive to the exercise, according to the documents.

The event that prevented Zinke from leaving before 2 p.m. was the swearing-in ceremony for Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.), according to Zinke's [official Interior calendar](#). Gianforte, who won a special election for Zinke's old seat in May after assaulting a reporter, contributed along with his wife \$15,800 to Zinke's two congressional campaigns.

"Secretary Zinke's last engagement in Washington D.C. is at 2 p.m.," an Interior staffer wrote as justification for using the helicopter. "Driving to [the West Virginia event] would not enable him to be on time and fully participate as scheduled."

Interior defended the trips.

"The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Thursday. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

Zinke also ordered a Park Police helicopter to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Va., on July 7 in order to be back in Washington in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Pence. The trip cost about \$6,250, according to the documents.

The horseback ride through Rock Creek Park also included Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, according to a [post](#) on Pence's Facebook page.

While in Yorktown, Zinke completed a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion, according to the documents. The day before the trip, an Interior trip planner added to the schedule a 30-minute flyover of an area where Dominion Energy [is building](#) high-voltage electric transmission lines to run across the James River.

Interior officials originally estimated that driving to Yorktown would take about three hours, although one noted that "there is a major construction project on I-64, which will slow things down."

In an email to Interior travel scheduler Tim Nigborowicz, an Interior employee justified Zinke's using the helicopter instead of less expensive method by saying "the Secretary will be able to familiarize himself with the in-flight capabilities of an aircraft he is in charge of" and that the Park Police staff on board would "provide an added measure of security to the Secretary during his travel."

Interior officials certified ahead of the flight that Zinke's use of the helicopter would not

compromise law enforcement obligations.

The Park Police helicopter, [Eagle One](#), is deployed for medevac and emergency response situations around Washington, a part of its mission Zinke praised later that month.

"U.S. Park Service helicopter pilot and crew provided a life-saving medevac flight during the attack on members of Congress during baseball practice," Zinke said in the July 25 [video](#) celebrating American Heroes Week.

The former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL is [already being investigated](#) by the Interior Department's Inspector General and the independent Office of Special Counsel for his [mixing of official travel and political events](#). Interior earlier this year released records documenting Zinke's use of charter and military aircraft, including a \$12,000 flight from Las Vegas to Montana that allowed him to give a speech for a hockey team owned by a major campaign donor.

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By Anthony Adragna | 08/22/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Lauren Gardner, Alex Guillén and Esther Whieldon

PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS: Solar panels across a swath of the U.S. went dark Monday as the first domestic total solar eclipse since 1979 transfixed the country, but the electric grid appeared to weather the disruption easily. Applying lessons Europe learned during its own 2015 eclipse, utilities leaned more heavily on alternate supplies to fill in gaps in solar generation. As Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#), Eric Schmitt, California ISO's vice president of operations, told reporters about 3,000 megawatts to 3,500 megawatts of solar generation stopped during the eclipse, but hydropower and natural gas power supplies filled in that gap. "We didn't have any major challenges on the system, even minor challenges," he said. "We're very pleased with how smooth it went. All the resources performed the way they were supposed to perform."

How'd others do? The PJM Interconnection, the grid operator for more than a dozen Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states saw a decrease of about 520 megawatts utility scale solar during the eclipse, which is not even a drop in the bucket for the system that has 185,000 megawatts of power on call. Duke Energy estimates it saw a drop of 1,700 megawatts-worth of output from utility-scale solar generation in North Carolina. (The grid's success did not extend to [traffic](#) where [numerous apocalypses](#) were reported after the eclipse passed).

Cabinet secretaries took a break. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tweeted it was a "[pretty cool view](#)" from his agency's rooftop, while EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said his staff enjoyed a "[great view](#)" from headquarters. Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the total eclipse "[rocks](#)" and [linked](#) to National Renewable Energy Laboratory staff enjoying the view.

Away from Washington, senior lawmakers did as well. Senate EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) "[really enjoyed watching the eclipse](#)" from Casper, Wyo. (where the totality lasted more than two-and-a-half minutes). Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) was underground in a "[permafrost tunnel](#)" near Fairbanks, Alaska, at peak eclipse, but later [caught a glimpse](#) from visiting Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and SEIA's Christopher Mansour was first to name Italy as the spot with two other independent countries within its borders (San Marino and Vatican City). For today (in honor of Monday's incredible eclipse): What is the only major U.S. city (more than 500,000 people) that enjoyed more than two minutes of totality? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

THE MITCH MCCONNELL CONNECTION: Anthony Pugliese exited the Department of Transportation to join FERC as its chief of staff, Transportation Pro's Lauren Gardner [scooped](#) for Pros. He was DOT's senior White House adviser — a role that was intended to help 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. keep tabs on their goings-on. In this case he served next to Cabinet Secretary Elaine Chao, wife of Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), and the two didn't

appear to have gotten along. POLITICO reported in May how Pugliese informed Chao that he expected her to check in with him on all policy moves, a declaration that got a chilly reception.

Now Pugliese has a job as the top staffer for newly anointed FERC chairman Neil Chatterjee — for years McConnell's top energy policy aide — despite limited energy experience. The FERC [announcement](#) says Pugliese learned energy matters from his time working for Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett, where he spent a year working for the department of Community and Economic Development, and as a consultant for Pugliese Associates, a Pennsylvania lobbying shop founded by Pugliese's father, Rocco. The company's [website](#) shows that its energy clients included Tesla Motors, a filling station chain, and an energy efficiency non-profit. Pugliese's lobbying disclosure form for the state of Pennsylvania show his only energy client was Tesla.

BIODIESEL PRODUCERS CROSSING FINGERS FOR COMMERCE TRADE

RULING TODAY: The Commerce Department is expected to issue a preliminary ruling today on whether to impose a tax on Argentine and Indonesian imports of biodiesel to counter those two countries' subsidies. Biodiesel exporters have been arguing for months that biodiesel feedstocks in Argentina and Indonesia are underwritten by their governments so they can sell into the U.S. market.

RFS credits in discord: Today's decision could drive up the biofuel credits that oil refiners use to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard, because it would potentially shrink supplies and increase the price of biodiesel. Those biodiesel credits can be used for compliance with the ethanol part of the program, too. But Tom Kloza, a founder of the oil tracking service OPIS, says RIN prices have been buffeted by "cross winds" since a [court ruling](#) last week that let some small refiners out of the program. "There's a little uneasiness about this small refinery exemption," he said. Today's "ruling isn't as big as the anti-dumping. It would probably provide an upward lift, but right now you have this downdraft related to small refinery exemption."

Just the first step in the trade dispute tango: A victory today for domestic producers would signal what may be a larger victory in October, when Commerce will rule on whether the two countries dumped biodiesel on the U.S. market in an effort to undermine U.S. production. Kloza said that one could potentially rattle biofuel markets. Neither decision will likely be finalized until next year.

A PRIZE PODCAST: This week's episode of [Global POLITICO](#) podcast features Dan Yergin, the Pulitzer-winning historian and expert on the geopolitics of energy, as well as Angela Stent, a former U.S. national intelligence officer for Russia, discussing the current "frigid, antagonistic, confrontational" relationship between U.S. and Russia. Yergin also discusses the dissolution of Trump's advisory council of business leaders last week, which he called very much "a comment about what's happening to our politics."

CALIFORNIA'S CLIMATE PUSH FUELS ECONOMIC GROWTH: Since the adoption of landmark climate legislation in 2006, California's gross domestic product growth has nearly doubled what's been seen at the U.S. more broadly, but the rate of the state's emissions reductions have slowed recently due to a spike in transportation-related emissions, according to a [new report](#) out from the nonpartisan group Next 10. "Transportation sector emissions vastly outweigh other carbon-producing areas of California's economy, and the recent spike should alert policy-makers that despite our best efforts, more must be done," Adam Fowler, an

economist at Beacon Economics, which prepared the report, said in a statement. Among the other findings: Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in California were down 12.5 percent in 2016 from their 2006 levels and renewable energy made up 21.9 percent of total electricity generation in the state.

CHECK OUT THAT HASHTAG: Zinke's wife Lola raised a few eyebrows around Washington with [a tweet](#) of her and the secretary on a run to the Capitol that included the hashtag #senaterun. ME readers likely remember the Montana congressman was considered [a likely Senate candidate](#) against Democrat [Jon Tester](#) — who's up for reelection next year — prior to being tapped by the Trump administration for the Interior slot.

MAIL CALL! SCHATZ CRIES FOUL OVER EPA GRANT POLICY: Hawaii Democratic Sen. [Brian Schatz](#) sent [a letter](#) Monday to EPA's Pruitt urging him to reverse course on a new directive in which a political appointee — John Konkus within the Office of Public Affairs — now will evaluate grant solicitations. "I fail to understand the beneficial role a political appointee, without any meaningful scientific background, could have in the grant review process," Schatz wrote. He added the new policy appeared to be in "direct conflict" with the agency's scientific integrity policy.

THERE'S A HEARING! It may be August recess, but the Senate EPW Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management and Regulatory Oversight, chaired by [Mike Rounds](#), today holds a field oversight hearing at his former office — the South Dakota state capitol. It'll examine efforts from the Army Corps of Engineers to manage the Missouri River to "make certain the agency is working in an appropriate and responsible manner." More information [here](#).

DEMOCRATS TOUT ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF MONUMENTS: Ahead of Interior's Zinke's Thursday deadline to issue recommendations on the fate of nearly two dozen national monuments, the Joint Economic Committee Democrats released a [series of fact sheets](#) highlighting what they say are the substantial economic benefits the sites provide to local communities. "Removing designation in whole or in part from national monuments, as the Trump administration has proposed, would eliminate this economic engine," Sen. [Martin Heinrich](#), the committee's ranking Democrat, said in a statement.

PUT UP YOUR DUKES: The nomination of one of their own, former New Jersey Rep. Scott Garrett, to run the Export-Import Bank has emerged as the latest battle in the Republican Party's civil war, POLITICO's Zachary Warmbrodt [reports](#). Business groups are expected to ramp up efforts to block his appointment, while opponents of the bank are warning the Senate Banking Committee about the consequences of failing to advance Garrett's nomination. "The divides among congressional Republicans appear to be deepening, and I am left with the sense that for some issues, the GOP is closer to a coalition government than a unified party," Compass Point analyst Isaac Boltansky said.

TAKE A GLANCE! DISSECTING NEW YORK'S ENERGY GOALS: The Manhattan Institute is out with [a report](#) today arguing, among other findings, New York's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050 is "unrealistic, unobtainable, and unaffordable." In addition, meeting renewable energy and GHG goals will mean shifting to electric-powered equipment across most sectors of the state's economy "adding many billions of dollars in costs in both the private and public sectors," the report argues. Lower-income New Yorkers would bear more of the brunt of those policies to hit the interim reduction goals, it says.

NOT A FAN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel slammed her predecessor Gerhard Schroeder for taking a high-paying post at Russian oil company Rosneft, POLITICO Europe's Victor Brechenmacher [reports](#). "I do not find what Mr. Schroeder is doing appropriate," Merkel told German daily [BILD](#). Schroeder has drawn criticism in Germany for his involvement in the Russian energy sector and [his friendship](#) with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He already holds a leadership role at Nord Stream AG, a gas-pipeline consortium set up by Gazprom, to transport Russian gas across the Baltic Sea and into Germany.

LET THERE BE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR! A former Alabama environmental regulator will serve as EPA's Region 4 Administrator, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Trey Glenn was director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management from 2005 through 2009 and has owned an engineering consulting firm in Birmingham for the last eight years. Alabama's ethics commission found "probable cause" back in 2007 that Glenn may have violated ethics laws but a grand jury in 2009 concluded there were no "provable violations." Regional administrators do not require Senate confirmation.

COURT REVIVES DUGONG SUIT: The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has [revived](#) an environmentalist lawsuit dating back to 2003 alleging a plan to place a U.S. Marine Corps air base in Okinawa, Japan, threatens a local population of dugongs, which are similar to manatees. A lower court previously said the green groups did not have standing to bring the case, and the suit raised "political questions" the court could not answer. But the 9th Circuit reversed that Monday, saying the case must be heard. The green groups will now get to present their case that the new military base will threaten the Okinawa dugong, which is listed as endangered in the U.S. and Japan. However, they may still fail to change anything about the base; the 9th Circuit said the green groups "may face challenges in securing relief on the merits." The base construction has been controversial for reasons beyond dugongs, with the prefecture government [taking](#) Japan's central government to court this summer to halt work on seawalls and new land.

LOTS OF FREE TIME? Sebastian Gorka, Trump's deputy assistant, posted the personal phone number and other contact information of a blogger after he put up a [post](#) detailing how Gorka's son made an environmental documentary, Death and Taxes [reports](#). The video at issue, made by 18-year-old Paul Gorka, looks at how plastic pollution contributes to water quality issues.

REPORT: NUCLEAR NEEDS CONGRESSIONAL HELP: Kirk Lippold, an energy policy expert who served as commanding officer of USS Cole, is out with a [new report](#) arguing Congress must extend a nuclear production tax credit for the U.S. to remain a worldwide leader in that energy sector. "It is incumbent for that leadership to continue through public support of this clean energy source in order for it to remain a reliable power backbone for decades into the future," he writes in the paper for the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council.

QUICK HITS

— Most new Permian oil likely to be exported from Houston, Corpus Christi. [Houston Chronicle](#).

— Coal country is ready for tech jobs — if techies will just give them a chance. [Recode](#).

— Saudis Could Get \$21 Billion Non-Oil Boost in 2018, BofA Says. [Bloomberg](#).

— OPEC to discuss ending or extending production cut in November: Kuwait minister. [Reuters](#).

— Support for climate change bill is haunting a California Republican leader. [The Mercury News](#).

— UT System oil money is a gusher for its administration — and a trickle for students. [Texas Tribune](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

10:00 a.m. — [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#) hosts a teleconference highlighting the impending launch of a new [low-enriched uranium bank](#) in Kazakhstan, contact: tsmith@mrss.com

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/08/electric-grid-weather-total-eclipse-of-the-sun-024338>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

California grid emerges from solar eclipse unscathed [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 08/21/2017 03:53 PM EDT

The California grid survived today's total solar eclipse without a hitch, California Independent System Operator officials said.

About 3,000 megawatts to 3,500 megawatts of solar generation stopped producing power during the eclipse, and the grid operator was able to cover that loss largely with hydropower and natural gas power supplies, Eric Schmitt, ISO vice president of operations, told reporters.

The grid operator had expected to lose up to 4,600 megawatts of utility scale solar during the eclipse and about 1,300 megawatts of residential rooftop solar.

Schmitt said months of planning had enabled the grid operator to accommodate the solar event.

"We didn't have any major challenges on the system, even minor challenges," he said. "We're very pleased with how smooth it went. All the resources performed the way they were supposed to perform."

Electricity prices were normal, peaking in the low \$20s per megawatt-hour. But as the eclipse abated, they then went negative — meaning generators would need to pay to ship their power — as the solar power plants began to come online, Schmitt said.

WHAT'S NEXT: The ISO expects to release more details about how the grid performed during the solar eclipse, such as how much battery storage was used and how much rooftop solar went offline, at a later time.

To view online [click here](#).

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DOT adviser jumps to FERC [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner | 08/21/2017 12:33 PM EDT

Anthony Pugliese has left DOT to become the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's chief of staff, POLITICO has learned.

Brigham McCown, a former Republican DOT official who worked on the Trump administration's transition team with Pugliese, confirmed the move.

Pugliese was the department's senior White House adviser, a role that Cabinet secretaries across the administration have [chafed](#) against.

A FERC spokesman confirmed the move. DOT didn't respond to a request for comment.

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Court says EPA overstepped in denying small refiners RFS exemption [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 08/15/2017 02:09 PM EDT

The Obama administration in 2016 wrongly forced two small refineries in Wyoming to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard, a federal court [ruled](#) today.

The Sinclair Oil-owned facilities had requested exemptions from the RFS, citing language in the law that allows EPA to spare small refiners from the program's biofuel blending requirements if they would experience "disproportionate economic hardship." While DOE recommended granting them a 50 percent waiver, EPA in October 2016 said both facilities were profitable enough to bear the RFS's costs and thus would have to comply fully with the program.

However, a split panel from the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals today said EPA overstepped its authority by concluding that the exemption could only be granted if complying with the RFS presented a long-term, "existential threat" to the refineries' survival.

EPA "chose a definition of economic hardship plainly at odds with Congress's statutory command," concluded the two majority judges, Timothy Tymkovich, a George W. Bush appointee, and Nancy Moritz, an Obama appointee. They sent the matter back to EPA for further action.

In a dissent, Carlos Lucero, a Clinton appointee, said he believed EPA had relied on "a more nuanced analysis" than the majority said which may have been permissible.

The decision comes just weeks after the D.C. Circuit [ruled](#) in a separate case that the Obama EPA had misappropriated a broader waiver authority under the RFS to require using less corn ethanol in 2016 than Congress required.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA must review the refineries' petitions in light of the ruling. The agency could find further reasons for denying the petitions or it may grant Sinclair the sought-after exemptions.

To view online [click here](#).

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2018 showdown looms: House Republicans vs. Democratic senators [Back](#)

By Elana Schor and Burgess Everett | 11/18/2016 05:22 AM EDT

As Democratic senators weigh when to fight and when to compromise with Donald Trump, Republicans on the other side of the Capitol are watching — with 2018 in mind.

Several of the 10 Democrats up for reelection in states that Trump won are likely to face off against members of the House Republican Conference. And on Thursday, one of those potential Senate hopefuls, Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke, fired a warning shot at his possible rival, Democratic Sen. Jon Tester.

"What I'm hoping, quite frankly, is that Sen. Tester moves rapidly to the middle," Zinke said of the two-term incumbent he is considering taking on. "His votes have not been consistent with Montana."

Zinke said he's preparing "to get a lot of pressure" to run against Tester, who chaired the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee during a disappointing 2016 election cycle for his party. The two-term congressman has met with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) about a possible bid.

Tester would be "a formidable opponent, should I run," Zinke added. "I'm in no hurry to make a decision."

Democrats had hoped to defeat Zinke this year to kill off the Senate prospects of the affable former Navy SEAL. But despite Tester's personal [attention](#) to the campaign of Democrat Denise Juneau, who challenged Zinke for Montana's at-large House seat, the Republican coasted to an 18-point victory.

Tester said Thursday he'd bet a steak dinner that Zinke will run against him. No matter what, the Democrat is girding for a fight.

"They're going to get someone tough," Tester said Thursday.

Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.), who was elected in 2014 in the increasingly red state, said it was "too soon" to say definitively how much trouble Tester might be in.

"Every election has a different dynamic," Daines said. "You saw what happened last cycle. It

was assumed we were going to lose the majority."

Beyond Montana, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) could face a strong challenger in Rep. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.). Like Zinke, Cramer was an early backer of Trump's presidential bid even as the Republican establishment chafed at the New York developer.

Cramer often appears on [short lists](#) to lead Trump's Department of Energy, though one source working on the president-elect's transition said the two-term Republican is expected to take on Heitkamp rather than join the administration.

Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), the former House member chairing the National Republican Senatorial Committee for 2018, praised Cramer as a "tireless advocate."

"He puts the people of North Dakota before everything else, and that's what people want in their elected member of the Senate," Gardner said. "And obviously, in the 2018 election cycle, we just have to plan on winning every race. And of course, he'd be very good at it."

Heitkamp has long made clear that she expects a bruising reelection battle and plans to remind voters of her work with the GOP.

"My whole purpose in being here is trying to bridge some of these partisan divides and try and get things done," Heitkamp said. "I don't care what their label is. When I agree with them, we're going to do business. When I disagree with them, we're going to have a conversation."

Democrats are expecting a challenge to Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) from either Rep. Evan Jenkins (R-W.Va.) or state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey. Manchin is hoping for a repeat performance of this year's election, when his state installed a Democratic governor at the same time it overwhelmingly voted for Trump.

"It's a very good sign. Basically people look at the individual," Manchin said. Voters "know who I am."

Still, Manchin acknowledged that his next campaign is "going to be more challenging." He [joined](#) an expanded Senate Democratic leadership slate on Wednesday, giving him a chance to make his case for making deals with Trump — but also potentially allowing Republicans to directly tie Manchin to any Democratic obstructionism.

Given how quickly his state has gone from blue to red, it's unclear how effective Manchin's earlier campaign strategies for governor and senator might be.

"I've been in office since 2001, the state has dramatically changed its politics," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who added: "Every election's a challenge and he knows that, I think. He's up for the challenge. He's a very intuitive politician."

In Missouri, which Trump carried by 19 points, several GOP House members are seen as potential challengers to Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill: Reps. Vicky Hartzler, Ann Wagner, or Billy Long. Incumbent GOP Sen. Roy Blunt just survived a nimble challenge in the state by Democrat Jason Kander.

In Indiana, meanwhile, Republican Rep. Luke Messer could end up squaring off against Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly. Trump won the Hoosier State by a staggering 28 points.

Historically the party in power has lost ground during the first midterm election under a new president. In 2010, Democrats lost the House and relinquished six Senate seats as voters recoiled at some of Barack Obama's early initiatives, especially his health care law.

The 2018 Senate map gives the GOP a buffer to weather that trend. But if the country doesn't like what the next two years out of Washington brings, Republicans won't be able to shirk the blame.

Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) said he and other Republicans who were elected to the Senate in 2014 ran as outsiders vowing to shatter the status quo. Asked if Republicans will have to retool that message after they take the wheel in Washington, he said, "That depends on whether or not we actually deliver on what we said we were going to do. So the first 100 days with the new president are going to be critical."

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GOP divided over Trump's Ex-Im Bank nomination [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 08/21/2017 02:30 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nomination of former Rep. Scott Garrett to lead the Export-Import Bank has opened up yet another front in the Republican Party's civil war.

Pro-business trade groups, free-market advocates and even social conservatives and gay-rights activists are targeting GOP senators with competing lobbying efforts as they clash over Garrett's past attempts to shut down the bank and his controversial views on LGBT issues.

The issue could come to a head this fall if Senate Republicans move forward with a hearing and confirmation votes for Garrett. Some of the leading groups opposed to the credit export agency are warning the Senate Banking Committee about the consequences of failing to advance the nomination. Meanwhile, business groups are expected to ratchet up efforts to block Garrett's appointment.

That has raised the political stakes around the New Jersey Republican's confirmation and underscored divisions that have contributed to the GOP's lack of success in pushing major legislation through Congress.

"The logjam over the Ex-Im Bank is just the most recent battle in the ongoing ideological war within the GOP between its pro-business wing and the free-market absolutists," Compass Point analyst Isaac Boltansky said. "The divides among congressional Republicans appear to be deepening, and I am left with the sense that for some issues, the GOP is closer to a coalition government than a unified party."

Outside groups are stepping up their efforts as the Trump administration gives Garrett a chance to sell his nomination, which has been under fire since the president announced his pick in April.

At least three Senate Republicans — the number it would take to block his confirmation if

Democrats uniformly were to oppose him — have indicated they are on the fence.

Businesses that rely on the Export-Import Bank are stepping up their drive to rally opposition to Garrett because of his attempts to kill the agency when he served in Congress. In 2015, he said the bank "embodies the corruption of the free enterprise system" by promoting crony capitalism.

The bank, which offers loan guarantees to foreign buyers of U.S. exports, hasn't been able to back deals that exceed \$10 million since 2015, when its authorization temporarily lapsed and it lost a needed quorum of board members. Though its charter was renewed by Congress in December of that year, the lack of a quorum continues today.

U.S. manufacturers including Boeing and GE view it as a critical financial backstop.

As Garrett met with senators on Capitol Hill earlier this month, he offered a friendlier public message than he had while in Congress. He said he backed the president's desire to have a "functional" agency and that his job would be to "fulfill the administration's agenda of creating more jobs and helping manufacturing in this country."

But his pitch left a bipartisan group of senators less than satisfied.

"He lost his reelection bid last year, and he's now saying lots of things to try to get a new job," said Hamilton Place Strategies partner and former Bush administration official Tony Fratto, who represented a business coalition that supported the Export-Import Bank.

In response to the industry lobbying, outside groups that have worked for years to close the bank are jumping in to help push Garrett's nomination.

On Aug. 7, the Club for Growth and Heritage Action for America were among the conservative organizations that sent a letter to Senate Banking Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) warning that they would oppose any appointments to the agency's board if Garrett's name did not move forward.

Even after rushing to Garrett's defense, the bank's opponents would still like the agency to be shuttered. And if he ends up saying he's now in favor of reauthorizing the bank as part of his attempt to win confirmation, "it's politics, pure and simple," said Andrew Roth, Club for Growth's vice president of government affairs.

"The fact remains, if the bank is going to have a president, the only person out there that's capable of reforming the bank or reducing its size is Scott Garrett," Roth said.

Another issue dogging Garrett among Republicans is his record on gay rights.

His views attracted controversy in July 2015, when POLITICO reported that he told a group of fellow Republicans that he had refused to pay National Republican Congressional Committee dues because it recruited gay candidates.

Garrett later denied that he was against gay candidates and said his concern was with support for same-sex marriage. But the political fallout contributed to his failed 2016 reelection bid and is becoming a more prominent issue in his Senate confirmation.

American Unity Fund, a pro-LGBT conservative group founded in 2013, plans to aggressively

lobby to defeat his nomination if it proceeds, said Tyler Deaton, a senior adviser for the organization.

Deaton said nominating someone with Garrett's record of "vilifying gay Americans" is like "throwing a wrench into something that's already complicated."

"We've shared our concerns with the White House," he said. "They've not even tried to defend Mr. Garrett's anti-gay behavior."

The White House declined to comment on Garrett's LGBT record.

The Family Research Council, the conservative Christian nonprofit that describes homosexuality as "unhealthy and destructive," has come to Garrett's defense. The group has also been critical of the Export-Import Bank.

In a post last month, the group said Garrett's views on sexuality had "absolutely nothing" to do with his résumé.

"Scott Garrett's got a strong history of supporting not only free markets but fighting against government largess," said David Christensen, the Family Research Council's vice president for government affairs, in an interview. "He would be good at leading the Ex-Im bank. We also think it's unfair for some groups to try to raise his stance on social issues as a weapon against him."

To view online [click here](#).

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Pruitt picks ex-Alabama regulator for regional chief [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 08/21/2017 04:57 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has appointed a former Alabama environmental regulator as the agency's Region 4 Administrator, EPA announced today.

Trey Glenn was director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management from 2005 through 2009. For the last eight years, Glenn has owned an engineering consulting firm in Birmingham.

Glenn "will help us carry out President Trump's vision of creating a more streamlined and efficient EPA that focuses on the Agency's core mission, while also providing more regulatory certainty to our nation's businesses," Pruitt said in a statement.

Alabama's ethics commission in 2007 found "probable cause" that Glenn, in his prior job as director of the state Office of Water Resources, may have violated ethics laws to land the ADEM position. But a grand jury in 2009 concluded there were no "provable violations," according to local [news reports](#).

EPA's 10 regional administrators are political appointees but do not require Senate confirmation. EPA's Region 4 covers Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida,

Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina.

To view online [click here](#).

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Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 5:53:36 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 09/13/2017 05:49 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Alex Guillén, Esther Whieldon and Darius Dixon

EPA PLANS FOR CLEAN POWER PLAN REPLACEMENT: EPA plans to take the first step toward replacing the Clean Power Plan by the first week of October as it publishes its plan to rescind the Obama administration's carbon limits for power plants, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#).

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt had been averse to replacing the rule, and sources tell Emily that when OMB first began reviewing the Clean Power Plan withdrawal in June the agency did not have plans to replace it. The decision to signal the agency will write a replacement comes after months of lobbying from electric company executives and suggests Pruitt may not challenge the legal finding that EPA must regulate greenhouse gases. One likely approach to a new emissions regulation would focus on improving coal-plant efficiency, so generators make more power while burning less coal.

The repeal-and-replace proposals come as patience was wearing thin at the D.C. Circuit, which has avoided issuing an opinion on the Clean Power Plan itself while EPA reconsidered the rule. In an August warning shot to EPA, judges said failing to propose a replacement meant the agency was avoiding a "statutory duty" to regulate carbon emissions, though it agreed to keep the case on ice through Oct. 7. EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said she "would not comment on proposals going through interagency review."

TRUMP OFFICIAL TO HOST CLIMATE MEETING: National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn will host a breakfast meeting to discuss "international energy and climate issues" the day before the opening of the U.N. General Assembly next week, POLITICO's Andrew Restuccia [reports](#). The invitation obtained by POLITICO says the huddle is an "opportunity for key ministers with responsibility for these issues to engage in an informal exchange of views and discuss how we can move forward most productively." But an administration official stressed the meeting will not focus solely on climate change.

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Analysis Group's Sue Tierney was first up to identify Massachusetts as the home of eight previous House speakers. For today: Two speakers have gone on to serve as vice president. Name them. Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

New! Legislative Compass: A powerful, easy-to-use tool that simplifies federal and state legislative tracking. [Learn More.](#)

HILLARY'S CAMPAIGN IDEA [THAT ALMOST WAS BUT THEN WASN'T](#): Among other revelations contained in her new book, Hillary Clinton said she was intrigued by Peter Barnes' [proposal](#) to create a sort of Alaska Permanent Fund for the whole country. The idea, dubbed by her campaign "Alaska for America," would have taken royalties from oil and gas

production — plus receipts from a carbon tax, financial transactions taxes, fees on airwaves used by cell phones and broadcasters, and other resources — and used them to give Americans a guaranteed minimum income. But, alas, as she and Bill worked the calculator, they found the math didn't work.

"We decided it was exciting but not realistic, and left it on the shelf. That was the responsible decision," she wrote in "What Happened." "I wonder whether we should have thrown caution to the wind and embraced 'Alaska for America' as a long-term goal and figured out the details later."

About that carbon tax: Clinton says her campaign also looked more specifically at the idea of a carbon tax dividend, but once again could not get math to work out without new costs for the middle class, which she had vowed against. "Still," she added, "it's tantalizing."

Canary was the coal mine: Clinton argues the Obama team's slow efforts to counter the emerging Republican narrative that his administration began a "war on coal" hurt Democrats in 2016, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). "The Obama administration was slow to take on this false narrative," she wrote. Clinton encouraged Obama to roll out the Clean Power Plan in 2015 in coal country, and pair it with a major initiative to bring new investments and jobs to the region as a way of softening the blow.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke also makes a cameo: Clinton recounts an awkward encounter at the inauguration when she said she was surprised Zinke came over to greet her because in 2014 he had called her the "Antichrist." "Maybe he'd forgotten, because he didn't come equipped with any garlic or wooden stakes, or whatever one uses to ward off the Antichrist. But I hadn't forgotten," Clinton writes, adding that she absolutely reminded Zinke of his remark. "He was taken aback and mumbled something about not having meant it. One thing I've learned over the years is how easy it is for some people to say horrible things about me when I'm not around, but how hard it is for them to look me in the eye and say it to my face." (Zinke's wife, Lola, [disputed](#) the story.)

CARPER WON'T BACK WEHRUM: Top EPW Democrat [Tom Carper](#) told reporters Tuesday he won't back Trump's [nominee](#) to run the EPA's air office, Bill Wehrum. "This nominee is troubling," he said. "I don't say that about all of this administration's nominees, but this one is troubling." Chairman [John Barrasso](#) told reporters the committee would have "four or five" confirmation hearings next week, though he wouldn't specify which nominees that includes. He separately said EPW was "working on a time" for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to come testify before it.

NELSON: GOP 'DENYING REALITY' ON CLIMATE CHANGE: Even as he said he didn't want to play partisan politics in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, Florida Sen. [Bill Nelson](#) knocked Republicans — including his likely 2018 opponent Gov. Rick Scott — for opposing action to address manmade climate change, POLITICO's Michael Grunwald [reports](#). "It's denying reality," Nelson said. "You can call it politics or whatever, but the Earth is getting hotter. This storm is another reminder of what we're going to have to deal with in the future." He added it would be a crucial issue during his reelection contest.

EPA-INTERIOR VOTES EXPECTED: You'd be forgiven for forgetting the House is still working through its mega-spending package [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#), but five outstanding EPA and Interior-related amendments should get votes today. The amendments would bar EPA from enforcing its methane rule, block the social cost of carbon from future rule makings, prohibit

the closure of EPA regional offices and slash the agency's budget by an additional \$1.87 billion, among others. Full list of all pending amendments to the bill [here](#).

CCS WEEK KICKS OFF IN EARNEST: Senate EPW today holds [a hearing](#) on how to accelerate deployment of carbon capture and sequestration technologies around the country. Look for lots of discussion of the FUTURE Act, [S. 1535 \(115\)](#), one of the few pieces of legislation ME can remember that boasts the support of both Barrasso and [Sheldon Whitehouse](#). Witnesses include Matthew Fry, a policy adviser to Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead and former DOE senior official Julio Friedmann.

HELPING OUT THE LITTLE GUYS? The House Energy and Commerce Committee's environment panel will hold a hearing today on a quartet of bills aimed at postponing or loosening various emissions regulations. [H.R. 1917 \(115\)](#) would delay the brick MACT until legal challenges have played out (coincidentally, the D.C. Circuit revealed Tuesday that oral arguments over that rule will take place Nov. 9). [H.R. 1119 \(115\)](#) would expand Cross-State Air Pollution Rule compliance options for 19 plants, mostly in Pennsylvania, that burn coal waste for electricity. [H.R. 453 \(115\)](#) would extend some deadlines for a residential wood heater emissions rule. And [H.R. 350 \(115\)](#) aims to clarify that anti-tampering provisions in vehicle emissions rules do not apply to vehicles used only for racing, an issue that flared up last year under EPA's Phase 2 heavy-duty truck rule. Some of these bills passed the House in previous years, but failed to gain traction in the Senate. If you go: The hearing kicks off at 10 a.m. in Rayburn 2123.

ENDANGERED SPECIES MEASURES GETTING MARKED UP: A litany of controversial measures get [marked up](#) today at the House Natural Resources Committee, including [H.R. 3668 \(115\)](#) a sportsmen's package that Democrats have condemned as enabling the deregulation of gun silencers and five bills taking bites at the Endangered Species Act. They are: [H.R. 424 \(115\)](#), which would redo Interior rules delisting the gray wolf; [H.R. 2603 \(115\)](#), which would bar non-native species from being listed as endangered or threatened under the statute; [H.R. 3131 \(115\)](#), which would lower attorney fees that could be awarded in ESA litigation; [H.R. 717 \(115\)](#), which would allow federal agencies to factor cost into listing decisions and prioritize listing petitions rather than decide them in the order they're received; and [H.R. 1274 \(115\)](#), which would require the availability of all data used in listing decisions to impacted states. The fun kicks off at 10 a.m. in Longworth 1334.

BLAST FROM THE PAST: ME got to briefly chat with former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy after she met with Senate climate caucus members to "catch up" on various environmental issues. She declined to weigh in on Pruitt's comment that it's "insensitive" to discuss climate change in the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, but said, "I think we all know that storms like that get as intense as those storms were because of an impact on climate. If you want safe and healthy communities, you're going to have to address the issue of climate change. Period."

ICAHN'T BELIEVE EPA: Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) cast a jaundiced eye over Pruitt's [letter](#) denying email communication with billionaire Carl Icahn. "On its face, this letter suggests Mr. Icahn had far less control over RFS policymaking than he had suggested publicly," Whitehouse spokesman Rich Davidson told ME. "On the other hand, Pruitt has a long-established skill in obscuring his contacts with the industry that pulls his strings." Pruitt said the agency searched the inboxes of 39 agency officials and came up empty on Icahn emails.

RESHUFFLED ELECTRICITY BOARD REVS UP TODAY: DOE's [newly configured](#)

Electricity Advisory Committee assembles this afternoon to kick off a meeting with a half dozen fresh faces and a [two-day agenda](#) that will cover the agency's much-discussed electric grid study, include a two-hour panel on cybersecurity and a rundown of a National Academies report on grid resiliency. Perry let the membership of 14 EAC members lapse recently and installed six new members, effectively shrinking the board's overall size. But the person Perry tapped as the new EAC chairman, Michael Heyeck of American Electric Power, isn't apparently able to attend, according to the agenda, which describes ERCOT engineer John Adams as acting chairman this week. Most of the cybersecurity talk — including panel discussion and a presentation on a draft DOE multiyear energy sector cybersecurity plan — is slated for Thursday morning. The meeting starts at 1:30 p.m. at the offices of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Arlington, Va.

GAO TO PROBE PERRY'S HEALTHCARE TWEETS: GAO has [agreed to a request](#) from Rep. [Frank Pallone](#), top Energy and Commerce Democrat, to issue a legal opinion on whether DOE's use of its Twitter account to promote an op-ed by Secretary Rick Perry on health care violated the Antideficiency Act, the Anti-Lobbying Act and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017. Pallone first made the request in late July.

ZINKE TELL STAFF TO UP GAME ON FIRE PREVENTION: Zinke directed staff on Tuesday to be much more proactive on fire prevention, including by hiring contractors if necessary to clear dead trees, removing vegetation away from roads and buildings that could prove quick fire fodder and to include fire prevention in resource management planning. The move comes as wildfires rage in the West. "It makes little sense to be thinning to protect structures when we see flames on the ridge and smoke in the air—fuel management is more effective when undertaken before fires break out," Zinke said in the memorandum.

ITC VOTE ON SOLAR TRADE CASE COMING NEXT WEEK: The U.S. International Trade Commission will vote Sept. 22 on whether the U.S. solar industry has been injured by low-cost imports, according to an ITC website [announcement](#). The case has the solar industry on tenterhooks, as domestic companies that install cheap foreign-made panels believe raising equipment costs will harm business. A Trump administration official has already signaled the administration would likely impose tariffs if the ITC determines there has been injury.

MAIL CALL! HOUSE SCIENCE PROBES OBAMA APPOINTEE: After DOE's inspector general found the government spent \$138,000 on an employee's graduate degree unrelated to his job, House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) sent [a letter](#) requesting documents on what the agency is doing to prevent something similar from happening again. "The Committee is concerned this could be an indication of a more widespread occurrence of inappropriate training authorizations and expenditures within DOE," Smith wrote.

McCOLLUM HITS PRUITT OVER ATTACK ON JOURNALIST: Rep. [Betty McCollum](#), who oversees the Appropriations Interior and EPA Subcommittee, sent [a letter](#) to Pruitt Tuesday condemning the agency's personal attacks on an AP reporter as an "inappropriate use of taxpayer resources" and urging the agency to "act in a more professional manner and refrain from such unacceptable personal attacks."

WEIGHING IN ON TAX REFORM: Citizens For Responsible Energy Solutions Forum sent letters to [House](#) and [Senate](#) tax writers outlining their priorities as tax reform efforts get off the ground in earnest. Atop their wish-list? Maintaining existing energy investment and production tax credits, sunseting tax credits for mature energy industries and reducing the corporate tax rate to at least 25 percent.

PRIORITIES OUTLINED FOR STATE ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORS:

Wyoming's Todd Parfitt became president of the Environmental Council of the States on Tuesday and said in a [welcome note](#) a key priority would be "reorienting the state-U.S. Environmental Protection Agency relationship." He's also a rumored candidate for regional EPA administrator.

MOVER, SHAKER: Sam Hirsch, former principal deputy at DOJ's Environment and Natural Resources Division, has rejoined Jenner & Block as a partner in its Washington office.

FREE FOOD ALERT! Stop by 406 First Street SE today between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. for some Old Bay, Parmesan garlic and sea salt french fries courtesy of the National Biodiesel Board and some of the city's best food trucks. You'll also learn how the oil used to cook the fries can be turned into clean-burning biodiesel.

QUICK HITS

- OPEC Discusses Extending Oil Cuts by More Than Three Months. [Bloomberg](#).
- Pompton Lakes DuPont site needs Superfund status, advocates say. [NorthJersey.com](#).
- EPA long-term plans to manage Hanford office in limbo. [Tri-City Herald](#).
- Harvey toppled storage tanks in the oil patch, spilled nearly 2,000 barrels. [Houston Chronicle](#).
- Florida Power & Light Co. nuclear reactors still down, but unharmed by Hurricane Irma. [TC Palm](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

8:30 a.m. — API holds an event on the natural gas and oil industry's impact in all 50 states, G11 Dirksen

10:00 a.m. — "[Big Relief for Small Business: Legislation Reducing Regulatory Burdens on Small Manufacturers and Other Job Creators](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — The full House Natural Resources Committee holds a [markup](#) of pending calendar business, Longworth 1334

10:00 a.m. — "[Expanding and Accelerating the Deployment and Use of Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Sequestration](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

11:00 a.m. — National Biodiesel Board holds its BioFry event for congressional staff, 406 1st St. SE

12:00 p.m. — Save the U.S. EPA holds a press conference and march to the EPA, National Press Club, Zenger Room, 529 14th Street N.W., 13th floor

2:30 p.m. — "[The Venezuela Crisis: The Malicious Influence of State and Criminal Actors](#),"

The House Foreign Affairs Committee Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, 2200 Rayburn

3:00 p.m. — "The Economic Impacts of Climate Change on Tourism and Recreational Activities," House Climate Solutions Caucus, Longworth 1142

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/09/epa-plans-carbon-rule-replacement-024564>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

EPA to replace Clean Power Plan [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 09/12/2017 09:04 PM EDT

EPA plans to publish its proposal to rescind the Clean Power Plan and take its first step to replace the rule by the first week of October, according to a source familiar with the process.

The decision to publish an advance notice of EPA's intent to issue a new regulation on carbon emissions from power plants comes after months of lobbying from electricity company executives who think it would be the smart legal move. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt had previously been resistant to replacing the Obama-era rule.

Without a rule on the books, environmental advocates could sue the agency — leaving businesses in limbo while the courts sort out the issue, industry officials had warned.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has frozen consideration of lawsuits against the Clean Power Plan while asking for status updates from EPA. In August, judges [told](#) EPA that without a replacement rule in place it was avoiding a "statutory duty" to regulate carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act. The judges agreed to keep the case on hold through Oct. 7.

EPA's decision to pursue a replacement rule suggests Pruitt may not challenge a legal finding that EPA must regulate greenhouse gases.

The agency told the court it would publish a rule to withdraw the Clean Power Plan this fall. The OMB first reviewed the rule withdrawal in June. At that time, EPA did not have plans to replace the Clean Power Plan, sources said.

Pruitt, as attorney general of Oklahoma, joined other states' lawyers in arguing that the Obama administration went too far in trying to curb carbon levels by encouraging states to shift away from burning coal and toward renewable power and natural gas.

One likely approach to a replacement rule would focus on improving coal-plant efficiency, so generators make more power while burning less coal.

"We aren't going to comment on proposals going through interagency review," EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said via email.

To view online [click here](#).

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Cohn to participate in energy, climate discussion at United Nations [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 09/12/2017 03:37 PM EDT

National Economic Council director Gary Cohn will host an energy and climate change discussion with international officials in New York next week, an administration official confirmed.

The Monday meeting comes the day before the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, where President Donald Trump and dozens of other world leaders will speak.

Cohn invited officials from more than a dozen countries to the breakfast meeting to discuss "international energy and climate issues," according to a copy of the invitation obtained by POLITICO.

The invitation, which Cohn sent on Sept. 7, says the huddle is an "opportunity for key ministers with responsibility for these issues to engage in an informal exchange of views and discuss how we can move forward most productively."

The administration official stressed that the meeting, first reported by the New York Times, will not focus solely on climate change.

Trump infuriated foreign diplomats when he [announced](#) in June that he would withdraw from the Paris climate change agreement, which has won the support of nearly 200 nations. Cohn was among White House officials pushing Trump not to exit the Paris agreement at the time.

But so far, the United States has not formally withdrawn, and Trump administration officials have sent mixed signals about whether it is willing to reach a deal to remain in the pact.

The State Department [announced](#) last month that the U.S. would continue participating in international climate change negotiations, including talks aimed at implementing the Paris pact, "to protect U.S. interests and ensure all future policy options remain open to the administration."

Trump, who has called climate change a "hoax" perpetrated by the Chinese, has said the United States is getting an unfair deal in the Paris agreement.

To view online [click here](#).

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Clinton: Obama was too slow to counter 'war on coal' narrative [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/12/2017 03:30 PM EDT

Hillary Clinton says in her new book that former President Barack Obama took too long to challenge Republican criticism that his administration had started a "war on coal," which hurt

Democrats in last year's election.

"The Obama administration was slow to take on this false narrative," she wrote in "What Happened."

But Clinton did admit that her [infamous comment](#) at a March 2016 town hall event that "we're going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business," was a gaffe and an "unfortunate comment."

And she argued that the politics around coal are a microcosm of how Democrats have fallen out of touch with white working class voters.

Democrats' support for air and water pollution regulations made them an "easy scapegoat" for long-term misfortunes in coal country, Clinton wrote, "despite strong evidence that government regulation is not the primary cause for the industry's decline."

The former secretary of State wrote that she suggested Obama roll out the Clean Power Plan in 2015 in coal country, and pair it with a major initiative to bring new investments and jobs to the region. "That might have softened the blow a little," she wrote.

Obama ultimately announced the regulation from the White House alongside EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, which Clinton argued was "seen by many folks in West Virginia as another signal that Democrats didn't care about them. Once that perception takes hold, it's hard to dislodge."

Embracing a narrative about how industrial areas can "reinvent" themselves for 21st century jobs was a vote-winner, according to Clinton. Clinton lost Pennsylvania, but won a landslide victory in Pittsburgh, the city President Donald Trump cited as a concern when he pulled out of the Paris climate agreement earlier this year.

"Trump may think of that city as an emblem of the industrial past ... but the reality is that Pittsburgh has reinvented itself as a hub of clean energy, education, and biomedical research," Clinton writes.

Pittsburgh's mayor has [committed the city](#) to meeting the Paris deal's reduction goals, even as the U.S. withdraws from the agreement.

But ultimately, the coal issue remains as one of her top disappointments, particularly since it contributed to her losses in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

"Did they turn against me because I served as Obama's Secretary of State and believed climate change was a real threat to our future? Or did their rage flow from a deeper tribal politics?" she wrote. "All I knew for certain was they were angry, they were loud, and they hated my guts."

Despite the campaign promises of Trump, "the hard truth is that coal isn't coming back," Clinton wrote, adding, "Politicians owe it to communities that have relied on the industry for generations to be honest about the future."

Clinton also criticized Don Blankenship, who headed Massey Energy when its Upper Big Branch disaster killed 29 workers in 2010. Shortly before he reported to prison last year, he showed up outside a Clinton campaign event in West Virginia.

"Blankenship endangered his workers, undermined their union, and polluted their rivers and streams, all while making big profits and contributing millions to Republican candidates," Clinton writes. "He should have been the least popular man in West Virginia even before he was convicted in the wake of the death of twenty-nine miners. Instead, he was welcomed by the pro-Trump protesters in Williamson. One of them told a reporter that he'd vote for Blankenship for President if he ran.

"Meanwhile, I pledged to strengthen the laws to protect workers and hold bosses like Blankenship accountable — the fact that he received a jail sentence of one year was appalling — yet I was the one being protested."

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump picks Bush-era EPA official for air chief [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 09/07/2017 07:16 PM EDT

President Donald Trump has nominated Bill Wehrum, a George W. Bush-era EPA official who since has represented a variety of energy industry interests, to run EPA's powerful air office.

POLITICO [reported](#) in July that Wehrum was expected to receive the nod.

As head of EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, Wehrum will play a key role in undoing many of the Obama-era regulations most opposed by Republicans, including the Clean Power Plan, the 2015 ozone standard and forthcoming vehicle emissions rules. Wehrum has been critical of EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gases, even after the Supreme Court's 2007 ruling saying EPA did have such authority.

He served as a counsel to Jeff Holmstead, Bush's first-term air chief, before replacing Holmstead in an acting capacity from 2005 to 2007. Bush nominated Wehrum to the job permanently, but Democrats blocked his nomination from proceeding in the Senate.

Wehrum spent the past decade as a partner at the Washington, D.C., law firm Hunton & Williams. His clients have included the American Petroleum Industry, American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, the Utility Air Regulatory Group, the American Chemistry Council, the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Forest & Paper Association.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will review Wehrum's nomination in what is certain to be a contentious process.

To view online [click here](#).

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Florida Sen. Bill Nelson: Republicans 'denying reality' on climate change [Back](#)

By Michael Grunwald | 09/12/2017 09:06 PM EDT

Democratic Senator Bill Nelson of Florida, after surveying the damage that Hurricane Irma inflicted across his state, blasted Republican politicians who reject the science and minimize the importance of climate change—including his likely opponent in 2018, Governor Rick Scott.

In an interview Tuesday evening with POLITICO, Nelson said it's clear that manmade global warming made Irma worse by increasing the temperature and the height of the seas that fueled the storm. He said he didn't want to play partisan politics in the aftermath of a hurricane, but then went on to criticize Republicans in general and Scott in particular—though not by name—for opposing climate action. He noted that both the Trump administration in Washington and the Scott administration in Tallahassee have reportedly discouraged government employees from even talking about climate change.

"It's denying reality," Nelson said. "You can call it politics or whatever, but the Earth is getting hotter. This storm is another reminder of what we're going to have to deal with in the future."

Nelson, a former astronaut, launched into a detailed explanation of the science of climate change and the greenhouse effect, and how it has helped make the waters around Florida higher and warmer in recent decades. He said it would be a crucial issue in his reelection campaign, even as he avoided the words "Rick Scott."

"It's certainly going to be an important issue, and if certain people such as the one you mentioned is my opponent, there's a significant contrast in what we believe," Nelson said.

Florida is a swing state in presidential elections, but its state government and statewide offices tilt heavily Republican; Nelson has been an exception to the red wave, but a well-known, well-funded opponent like Scott would be by far his most difficult challenge to date. He clearly sees climate as a potential wedge issue in a state with a heavily coastal population and increasing vulnerability to Irma-type disasters. Scott did not discuss the issue in his frequent Irma briefings; a spokesperson for the governor, when asked about Nelson's comments, said, "Now is not the time for politics. This storm is not a partisan issue. Now is the time to focus on helping Florida rebuild."

But in the past, he has questioned climate science—or declined to affirm the scientific consensus that it's being caused by humans, often noting, "I am not a scientist"—and fossil-fuel interests have supported his campaigns. In 2015, the Miami Herald [reported](#) that Scott's administration had even banned the use of the terms "climate change," "global warming" and "sustainability" in official documents.

Nelson is not known in Washington as a leader on climate issues, but he said he's focused on them since he was Florida's insurance commissioner in the 1990s. He's fought against President Trump's proposed cuts to climate science at agencies like NOAA, NASA and EPA, and said he helped persuade the Obama administration to launch a satellite, first dreamed up by Al Gore, that takes continuous pictures of the Earth from deep space.

But Nelson didn't really argue that he deserved kudos for accepting the conclusions of the

scientific community; he argued that Republicans on the other side of the issue need to explain why they think "99.5 percent of climate scientists" are wrong. Several prominent Republicans in South Florida—including Miami-Dade County mayor Carlos Gimenez and Reps. Carlos Curbelo and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen—have made it clear they believe Washington needs to take climate seriously. Nelson pointed out that politicians don't question government scientists when they say a hurricane is coming—but when the same agencies use the same scientific instruments to measure long-term climate trends, opinions suddenly differ.

"It's ironic, isn't it?" Nelson said. "They accept the hurricane information, but deny the climate information ... Look, some people still think the Earth is flat."

To view online [click here](#).

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Pruitt: EPA had no emails communications with Icahn [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 09/12/2017 02:28 PM EDT

EPA had no email communication with billionaire and former Trump adviser Carl Icahn, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt told Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.) in a [letter](#) this week.

In the letter sent Monday and provided to POLITICO by an EPA official, Pruitt said EPA searched the inboxes of 39 high-ranking officials for messages to or from Icahn between Feb. 17 and Aug. 18, and they found no emails on any subject.

Pruitt's letter was a response to four different letters from Whitehouse and other Senate Democrats seeking information on Icahn's efforts to modify the Renewable Fuel Standard to benefit his refining company. Icahn was an unpaid adviser to Trump until last month, when he resigned his title after questions arose about his advocating for policies that would help his businesses.

Pruitt did acknowledge meeting with Icahn as part of his vetting process to join the Trump administration.

"Mr. Icahn was one of many of the president's advisors that I met with during my confirmation process," he wrote. "During that meeting, I made no assurances with regard to the point of obligation or any other substantive issue."

To view online [click here](#).

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DOE shrinks electricity advisory board [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 09/06/2017 05:34 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry is installing new members to the Energy Department's Electricity

Advisory Committee even as he whittles down the size of the board.

The [2016-17 roster](#) for the board, which reports to the assistant secretary for electricity deliverability and energy reliability, had numbered 32 people, but including the new members, it will now total 24, since 14 members didn't have their terms renewed.

DOE says that three members had asked the agency not to renew their terms because of other commitments or because they had left the country.

Perry installed six new members: Mike Heyeck, a former AEP executive and founder of Grid Group; Paul Hudson, ex-chairman of the Texas Public Utilities Commission; Mladen Kezunovic, and engineering professor at Texas A&M; Bryan Olnick, an executive with Florida Power & Light; David Wade, CEO of the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga; and Tom Weaver, an official with AEP.

EAC members serve two-year terms, but about half of the positions are staggered so that some measure of continuity is maintained.

The board, which typically meets three times a year, is purely advisory and works on a range of power-related issues. The panel's charter [states](#) that there be "approximately 30" members.

Those not returning are: Ake Almgren, Merwin Brown, Paula Carmody, Paul Centolella, Carlos Coe, Phyllis Currie, Mark Lauby, Janice Lin, Anne Pramaggiore, Paul Roberti, Sue Tierney, Rebecca Wagner, Audrey Zibelman, and Carl Zichella.

WHAT'S NEXT: The electricity advisory committee will [meet](#) next Wednesday and Thursday in Arlington, Va.

To view online [click here](#).

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Date: Thursday, December 14, 2017 5:44:36 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/14/2017 05:41 AM EDT

MUDDLING THROUGH THE TAX MESS: What's clear at this point is Republicans [intend to include](#) language opening ANWR to oil and gas drilling in their compromise tax package, but the fate of other energy-related measures remains murky at best. Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) said a whole host of energy provisions, including a tax break for electric vehicles and tweaks to the wind production tax credit, remained "in flux" following the first meeting of the conference committee on Wednesday, Utility Dive [reports](#). Multiple Senate Republicans have floated adding energy-related provisions, as well as other "orphan" tax credits, into another extenders package before the end of the year though House leaders have seemed cool to the idea.

As prominent wind-backer Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) said he wasn't aware of the wind production tax credit's fate in the final package, 10 House Republicans sent tax leaders [a letter](#) urging them to remove a provision in the House-passed bill that would substantially reduce the value of the PTC, as well as the so-called BEAT provision that would result in high taxes on equity investments for renewable energy projects. Bloomberg [reported](#) the final package would save the wind production tax credit, as well as the electric vehicle tax break, but would eliminate the corporate alternative minimum tax staunchly opposed by the coal industry after its inclusion in the Senate bill.

The ever-quotable conferee Rep. [Don Young](#) on ANWR: "Thank God I'm wearing my cowboy boots today. You know why cowboys wear cowboy's boots? To keep their damn pants clean from the horse manure that comes from people that don't know what the hell they're talking about."

Reality check: Call ME skeptical at best that Congress will have any appetite for a separate tax extenders package after they wrap up their work on the tax bill and funding the government. Jet fumes (especially around the holidays) are a potent force in Washington.

Meanwhile, Democrats and liberal groups asked for the tax bill to be put [on hold](#) until Alabama Democrat Doug Jones is sworn in. "There should be no votes on the despicable GOP tax scheme or other dangerous efforts to put the profits of corporate polluters and billionaires before the people until the voice of every voter is represented in the Senate," Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said in a statement Wednesday.

DOURSON'S OUT: Michael Dourson, the controversial toxicologist with deep ties to industry, withdrew his selection to run EPA's chemical offices on Wednesday after it became clear he lacked the votes to clear the GOP-led Senate, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). North Carolina Republican Sens. [Thom Tillis](#) and [Richard Burr](#) opposed his selection, while Maine Sen. [Susan Collins](#) made clear she was leaning against his selection. Jones' victory on Tuesday may have been the final nail in the coffin for his nomination. However, it was not immediately clear whether Dourson would remain at EPA in his adviser role.

That comes as The New York Times [reports](#) having obtained [documents](#) from Greenpeace

showing Dourson, while working at the University of Cincinnati, sent a draft paper to the American Chemistry Council, after having accepted money from the trade group, for review prior to submitting it to a journal for review. At issue was trichloroethylene, known as TCE, which Dourson would have had to decide how to regulate if confirmed to his post at EPA (the agency had proposed banning it).

EPW Ranking Member [Tom Carper](#) hailed the news: "The withdrawal of Dr. Dourson's nomination should serve as a lesson to the Senate. In this body, our responsibility is to provide advice and consent — not to rush to approve unqualified or controversial nominees or ill-advised legislation for shortsighted political wins. I hope that we can all learn from this moment."

As did environmental advocates: "It was clear from the beginning that Dr. Dourson was a dangerous choice. His record of mercenary science made clear he would have undermined public health and damaged the historic chemical safety reforms passed by Congress last year. The administration should now nominate a person of integrity, with a demonstrated commitment of protecting public health," Richard Denison, lead scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund, said in a statement.

No word from EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (who told ME on Tuesday he remained committed to the Dourson nomination), EPA or the White House.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Southern Environmental Law Center's Nat Mund was first to identify former Sen. Jim Jeffords as the most recent Independent to serve prior to Sens. Sanders, King and Lieberman. For today: With Minnesota's Tina Smith joining the Senate, Minnesota will have two female senators. How many states currently have two female senators? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

Faster, Smarter Legislative Tracking: Don't wait until 2018 to try [Legislative Compass](#), POLITICO Pro's powerful, easy-to-use tool for federal and state legislative tracking. 2017 preferred pricing expires 12/31. [Start my trial](#).

TROUBLE ON THE HORIZON: House Republicans released a short-term spending package late Wednesday that would provide a full year of defense spending and fund the rest of the government through Jan. 19, but kick the can on disaster spending until next month. However, Florida Rep. [Tom Rooney](#) told his party's leadership at a meeting Wednesday that a majority of Texas and Florida lawmakers would oppose a spending bill if they don't have help for their stricken states by Christmas, Pro Budget & Appropriations Brief's Sarah Ferris [reports](#). Several lawmakers from the storm-battered states say they refuse to accept a January timeline and won't leave for Christmas without approving the rebuilding money. More [here](#).

Simpson agrees: House Appropriations Energy cardinal [Mike Simpson](#) told reporters Wednesday he wasn't sure how Congress would resolve the year end spending package yet but expressed his strong desire for disaster spending to be included. "Get it done — whether you do it individually or put it in the CR. It's got to get done. Everyone knows it's got to be done. Do it however you can," he said.

PRUITT'S ODD MOROCCAN TRIP: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, accompanied by four staffers, racked up a total of \$40,000 for his four-day trip to Morocco where he pushed

fossil fuels, The Associated Press [reports](#). Rep. [Betty McCollum](#), top Democrat on the House panel that oversees EPA spending, questioned the appropriateness of the trip: "I question whether promoting fossil-fuel sales abroad aligns with the EPA's core mission of protecting human health and the environment." ME would note EPA's stated mission is to protect human health and the environment, while making no mention of energy or trade issues that would typically fall to the departments of Energy, State or Commerce.

STILL ON HOLD: Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) confirmed to ME he still has hold in place on Bill Northey, the nominee to be USDA undersecretary for farm production and conservation, but touted "real progress towards a productive solution" that balances the needs of ethanol sector with oil refiners struggling with high compliance costs under the Renewable Fuel Standard. "We're making positive and productive steps forward to reaching a win-win solution that both protects corn farmers and avoids bankrupting refineries," he said, declining to provide a time frame for when that agreement might emerge.

Waiting on details: No major breakthroughs emerged following a closely-watched meeting at the White House Wednesday that included aides to pro- and anti-RFS senators as well as executive branch staffers. One Senate GOP aide said Cruz's staff said they want to reduce the price of biofuel credits but did not offer any "win-win" proposals to do so. Cruz is expected to propose a cap on RIN prices, but that's an idea that RFS defenders say would run afoul of the law's intent, according to the aide.

A spokesman for RFS champ Grassley after Wednesday's White House meeting: "The next step is for Sen. Cruz to circulate specific proposals for consideration. The integrity of the RFS is Sen. Grassley's priority and there was an understanding expressed broadly in the meeting that any outcome can't undermine the integrity of the RFS." And Sen. [Joni Ernst](#)'s office said: "While we are happy to review any proposals Senator Cruz offers in the time ahead, we remain firm that our top priority in these meetings is ensuring that the spirit and the letter of the RFS is supported as intended by Congress." Sources say there is no timeline for when Cruz might circulate his proposals.

BISHOP OKAY WITH PATAGONIA WAR OF WORDS: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) isn't concerned by the escalating war of words between Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and outdoor clothing retailer Patagonia. "If that company is engaged in public policy discussions — and especially if the company calls the president evil and everyone in Utah wackos — we have a right to say they're wrong, they're lying," he said. "Patagonia is wrong."

A House Natural Resources subcommittee takes a first look at legislation [H.R. 4558 \(115\)](#) codifying Trump's reductions to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument last week and establishing management plans for the area. Watch [here](#) at 9:30 a.m. and check out a background memo [here](#).

Not concerned by helicopter flights: Bishop also said he wasn't concerned by Zinke [spending more than \\$14,000](#) on several helicopter flights this summer, including to get back for a horseback ride with the vice president. "Unless he can levitate, it's as good as any other means of doing it," he said.

NOAA NOMINEE ADVANCES: A split Senate Commerce Committee [advanced](#) the nomination of Barry Myers to run NOAA on Wednesday by a 14-13 vote. Remember the selection of Myers, currently CEO of AccuWeather, has [raised alarm](#) from some who fear he'll

place restrictions on the products that the National Weather Service offers to the public.

TRANSPARENCY PUSH IN CROSSHAIRS: The House Financial Services Committee voted Wednesday to advance a bill, [H.R. 4519 \(115\)](#), permanently axing a requirement for U.S. oil and gas companies to disclose payments they make to foreign governments. The vote was 33-27. "To act any further on this bill would be a gift to kleptocrats and unscrupulous oil companies that seek to do deals behind closed doors," the Natural Resource Governance Institute said in a statement. Congress used the Congressional Review Act to nullify an Obama-era regulation from 2016 on the topic earlier this year, but that did not strike the underlying provision from Dodd-Frank.

BACK FROM THE DEAD? The future of Nord Stream 2, a second 1,200-kilometer Baltic pipeline between Germany and Russia, appears once again alive and kicking with the Social Democrats now back in the German government's coalition picture, POLITICO Europe's Matthew Karnitschnig reports. Read about the complicated European pipeline politics [here](#).

MAIL CALL! ABOUT THAT DIRECTIVE ... Democratic Sens. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and Carper sent letters to [DOJ](#) and [EPA](#) seeking information about a [new directive](#) from Administrator Scott Pruitt meant to address what he's called the agency's "sue and settle" practices. "We are concerned that the Directive may introduce unnecessary delays and extra costs into a litigation process that was previously more straightforward, sensible and transparent," they wrote in the letter to Pruitt.

KING DROPS GRID BILL: Independent Sen. [Angus King](#) today is unveiling legislation he says will remove barriers to the deployment of distributed energy resources as the country looks to build a more resilient grid. Among the provisions of the legislation: Establishing a right of interconnection for distributed energy resources under PURPA; asking states and electric utilities to conduct assessments of their grid systems and develop plans for incorporating the technology; and pushing state regulators to consider new models for utility regulation. Link to one-pager [here](#).

REPORT LINKS EXTREME WEATHER TO CLIMATE CHANGE: New research released Wednesday finds clear ties between human-caused climate change and record global heat in 2016, extreme heat in Asia and unusually warm waters in the Bering Sea. The report, released in a supplement to the "Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society," presents 27 peer-reviewed analyses of extreme weather across five continents and two oceans during 2016. "Finding multiple extreme events that weren't even possible without human influence makes clear that we're experiencing new weather, because we've made a new climate," Jeff Rosenfeld, editor-in-chief of the journal, said in a statement. Read it [here](#).

Another good quarter for solar: For the eighth consecutive quarter, the solar industry installed more than 2 gigawatts of solar photovoltaics in spite of policy uncertainty and higher prices across all parts of the market, according to [a report](#) released by GTM Research and the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Getting more efficient: The amount of tech devices in U.S. homes has increased 21 percent since 2010 but they use 25 percent less residential energy than they did then, according to a Consumer Technology Association [study](#) out Wednesday.

MORE REINFORCEMENTS: Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring will receive

backing from the State Energy & Environmental Impact Center at NYU School of Law to hire staff focused on clean energy, climate and environmental matters. They join the AGs of seven other states who already received fellows through the program.

QUICK HITS

— Study Links Lower Birth Weights to Living Near Fracking Sites. [Wall Street Journal](#).

— Trump is pushing coal abroad. Markets may abide — for now. [E&E News](#).

— Climate change made Harvey's 51 inches of rain 3 times more likely, scientists say. [Houston Chronicle](#).

— Jones Win Resurrects Extinct Species—Southern Pro-Climate Senator. [Bloomberg Environment](#).

— Nobody hurt in Central Texas natural gas pipeline fire. [AP](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:30 a.m. — House Natural Resources subcommittee [hearing](#) on the Grand Staircase Escalante Enhancement Act, Longworth 1334

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/fate-of-some-energy-provisions-remains-murky-in-tax-overhaul-051910>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

McConnell: ANWR drilling included in final tax bill [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/13/2017 03:23 PM EDT

Language opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will be included Republican compromise tax package, Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said in prepared remarks today.

"Our legislation will also provide for our nation's energy future," McConnell said. "By further developing Alaska's oil and gas potential, this bill will help create jobs, support energy independence and promote our national security."

The provision's inclusion is not surprising given the presence of two powerful Alaskans, Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and former House Natural Resources Chairman [Don Young](#), on the conference committee.

Current House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) confirmed opening the ANWR area to oil and gas drilling would be included in Title II of the legislation. "I'm very proud of that particular section and I appreciate all those who worked so hard on that," he said at the tax conference open meeting.

Democrats remained staunchly against the move, arguing it posed a threat to the wildlife refuge and would not generate the revenues that have been forecast.

"This should be taken out," Rep. [Raúl Grijalva](#) said. "It's wildly optimistic that because of what's going to happen in the Arctic refuge that somehow that is going to offset part of the huge deficit that's being created by this legislation. We don't need the oil."

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans have apparently reached an agreement on the bill but final text has not yet been released.

To view online [click here](#).

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Dourson withdraws nomination for EPA's chemicals office [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/13/2017 07:22 PM EDT

Michael Dourson has withdrawn his nomination to run EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, according to a Senate source.

His withdrawal, first reported by Bloomberg this evening, comes after it became clear that Dourson lacked the votes to be confirmed by the full Republican-controlled Senate.

Dourson, a longtime toxicologist and university professor, was opposed by Democrats and environmental groups who said his history of studying chemicals for corporations showed he set looser safety standards than other authorities, including, oftentimes, EPA.

Although he cleared the Environment and Public Works Committee on strict party lines, Dourson's nomination came into doubt after North Carolina Sens. [Richard Burr](#) and [Thom Tillis](#) said they would not support him. Other Republican senators, including [Susan Collins](#) of Maine, were thought to be leaning against him as well, and Tuesday's election of Democrat Doug Jones in Alabama made Dourson's confirmation even more unlikely.

Dourson also drew criticism after he began working as an adviser on chemical issues to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt shortly after his confirmation hearing in October. Democrats complained that it bypassed the Senate's confirmation process.

EPA's chemicals office is charged with implementing the updated Toxic Substances Control Act and is reviewing several high-profile substances, including asbestos.

WHAT'S NEXT: It was not immediately clear whether Dourson would remain at EPA in his adviser role. Neither EPA nor the White House immediately returned questions.

To view online [click here](#).

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Aid for disaster-stricken states could be punted into January [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/13/2017 04:41 PM EDT

Lawmakers from Texas and Florida are exceedingly anxious that hurricane recovery aid will be sidelined in next week's government funding scramble amid internal disputes over who should get how much cash.

Congress was widely expected to approve its next multibillion-dollar disaster request as part of the year-end spending bill. But with just days to go until the Dec. 22 deadline when government funding expires, lawmakers are still haggling over the fine points of the next round of disaster aid.

House GOP leaders are now preparing to take up a stopgap spending bill next week that [would not](#) include any money for hurricane relief, potentially causing problems for passage if members from affected states rebel.

In a closed-door meeting Wednesday afternoon, GOP leaders cautioned lawmakers that the disaster package may not be ready by next week, according to members who were in the room.

The biggest holdup is over how much money should be spent on rebuilding in the Lone Star state, according to lawmakers briefed on the talks. Appropriators are still sifting through a massive binder of requests, worth over \$61 billion, from Texans alone.

The delay is rattling lawmakers from both Texas and Florida. Rep. Tom Rooney, (R-Fla.), a vocal advocate for his state's ailing citrus industry, stood up during Wednesday's meeting, warning that a majority of Texas and Florida lawmakers would oppose a spending bill if they don't secure help for stricken states by Christmas.

Even the No. 2 Republican in the Senate now fears disaster assistance could be punted another month.

"We've been told time and time again by the speaker and the House leadership that the supplemental is going to be coming, but it never seems to come," Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) told reporters Tuesday. "The can always seems to be kicked down the road."

"Now I'm worried that it may end up moving us into January. So I'm very concerned," Cornyn added.

House GOP appropriators say they're closing in on a final agreement for the disaster package and hope to release the text by next week. Lawmakers involved in the negotiations are expecting the package to exceed \$60 billion, far more than the White House's \$44 billion request.

Still, those members say they've received no assurance that the package would be included in the Dec. 22 continuing resolution — the last must-pass bill Congress is slated to consider this month.

"It's a possibility, but no guarantees," Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla) told POLITICO after the meeting.

That could be problematic for House GOP leaders as they look to round up votes to avert a

government shutdown when funding expires.

Several lawmakers from the storm-battered states, including Rooney and Curbelo, say they refuse to leave for Christmas without approving the money. They fear that a month-long delay would lessen the political urgency needed to pass a multi-billion-dollar package.

At least some of those members have vowed to take a hard line on the issue. A bipartisan coalition of more than 60 lawmakers from Texas and Florida said in early December that they would block any year-end spending bill that doesn't include disaster funding.

That includes Texas Republicans with powerful perches, like House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) and Homeland Security Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas).

Since then, Texas and Florida lawmakers have been meeting regularly and have largely agreed to vote as a bloc to increase their leverage on disaster aid.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) told POLITICO on Tuesday that she won't back a spending bill if it doesn't include "adequate" recovery dollars for Florida or Texas. "This is how our delegations feel about this," said Wasserman Schultz, whose district spans parts of Miami Beach, which was eroded by Hurricane Irma.

If they make good on their threat, those Texas and Florida lawmakers — representing two of Congress' largest state delegations — would have enough votes to tank the final spending bill.

With a government shutdown on the line, however, that's a big "if."

Rep. John Carter, who is both a Texan and chairman of the spending subcommittee that funds federal disaster assistance, said he won't threaten to oppose a funding bill before the final details are worked out, with or without disaster funding.

"I'm born and raised in Houston. I want disaster aid," Carter said. "I'm not going to say how I'll vote until I see what the plan is. We got to get the disaster aid right now, not six months from now. I'm not a one-issue voter. I vote for the big picture."

Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas), who also has not drawn an ultimatum on the disaster aid, said he has repeatedly voiced his demands for funding to House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

"I've indicated to anybody who will listen that we need to get that supplemental done before we leave for Christmas," Conaway told POLITICO, adding that McCarthy and Speaker Paul Ryan "understand how important I think it is."

If the package isn't included on the next spending bill, Conaway said GOP leaders could simply put the disaster measure on the floor for a standalone vote — as long as it's done before Dec. 22.

Another appropriator, Calvert, also said that scenario is possible. And some Republicans even speculated Wednesday that a supplemental package could be attached to a controversial bill to reauthorize online surveillance powers, which would also require Democratic votes.

Under the House GOP's plan, the next spending deadline would be Jan. 21 — about 20 weeks after Hurricane Harvey wrecked hundreds of thousands of homes in Houston.

Texans, in particular, fear this package will be their last shot at securing aid for Hurricane Harvey victims. The White House has said more money is coming for Puerto Rico but has not promised to revisit funding needs in Texas.

At this point, many of the unmet demands come down to "a guarantee" about where money will be spent, according to Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas), a leadership ally.

Faced with a barrage of funding requests from cash-strapped local officials, Sessions said GOP leaders have asked every state to narrow down its top priorities and "to understand what it's going to get."

Among the lawmakers lobbying for more funding: dozens of California lawmakers who have seen deadly wildfires burn large swaths of their state.

That includes senior members like McCarthy and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. A group of California members, led by McCarthy, met with Vice President Mike Pence on Tuesday to discuss the federal response to the wildfires.

Votes for next week's spending bill may also be scarce among the many New York Democrats with close ties to Puerto Rico. Members like Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) have taken a hard line demanding Puerto Rico funding.

The White House formally [asked](#) Congress for a \$44 billion disaster package on Nov. 17, but members quickly panned that request, which they called paltry, and appropriators began writing their own version. The final bill is expected to far exceed the White House's request, in Congress' latest rebuke of the White House's budget office.

Congress has already approved \$52 billion for this year's unexpectedly catastrophic storm season — a small fraction of what local officials say is needed to rebuild. Puerto Rico alone requested \$96 billion. Texas and Florida asked for \$61 billion and \$27 billion, respectively.

The next funding package will be largely focused on Texas and Florida, where residents began rebuilding before Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in late September.

Still, aides acknowledge there could be additional pressure to make more funding available for Puerto Rico after a blistering [New York Times investigation](#) found that as many as 1,000 people may have died from Hurricane Maria. The official death toll is 64 people.

Jennifer Scholtes, Seung Min Kim and John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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House Republicans unveil 'defense-only' spending bill [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris | 12/13/2017 07:29 PM EDT

House GOP leaders are forging ahead with a controversial spending strategy that would jam the Senate with a politically untenable product before the Dec. 22 government funding cliff.

The House Appropriations Committee released [a bill](#) this evening that would fund the Pentagon for a full year while covering five weeks of domestic spending — legislation Senate Democrats have already panned.

Under the House GOP measure, H.J. Res. 124, domestic funding would run out again on Jan. 21.

The stopgap strategy was the focus of a closed-door House Republican conference meeting this afternoon. During the hour-long session, Republicans mostly agreed to go ahead with the bill, even as some members openly predicted it would be rejected in the Senate.

The vast majority of Senate Democrats have said they would oppose any spending bill that doesn't increase budgets for the Pentagon and all other domestic departments by equal amounts.

GOP leaders, however, have so far rejected the Democratic demands for "parity," which has led to a weeks-long standstill on a deal for overall spending caps.

Congressional leaders must agree to raise spending levels in the next few weeks to avoid the triggering of automatic cuts to both domestic and defense programs. The House GOP's bill would permanently waive that automatic sequester, which was created under the 2011 Budget Control Act, but only for defense programs.

The bill would also extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years.

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Zinke booked government helicopters to attend D.C. events [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/07/2017 06:31 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to take himself and staff to and from official events near Washington, D.C., in order to accommodate his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for his replacement in Congress and a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, according to previously undisclosed official travel documents.

The travel logs, released to POLITICO via a Freedom of Information Act request, show Zinke using taxpayer-funded vehicles from the U.S. Park Police to help accommodate his political events schedule.

In a case detailed in the new documents, Zinke ordered a U.S. Park Police helicopter to take him and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on June 21.

Zinke's staff justified the \$8,000 flight by saying official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m., too late to make the two-hour drive to the exercise, according to the documents.

The event that prevented Zinke from leaving before 2 p.m. was the swearing-in ceremony for Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.), according to Zinke's [official Interior calendar](#). Gianforte, who won a special election for Zinke's old seat in May after assaulting a reporter, contributed along with his wife \$15,800 to Zinke's two congressional campaigns.

"Secretary Zinke's last engagement in Washington D.C. is at 2 p.m.," an Interior staffer wrote as justification for using the helicopter. "Driving to [the West Virginia event] would not enable him to be on time and fully participate as scheduled."

Interior defended the trips.

"The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Thursday. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

Zinke also ordered a Park Police helicopter to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Va., on July 7 in order to be back in Washington in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Pence. The trip cost about \$6,250, according to the documents.

The horseback ride through Rock Creek Park also included Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, according to a [post](#) on Pence's Facebook page.

While in Yorktown, Zinke completed a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion, according to the documents. The day before the trip, an Interior trip planner added to the schedule a 30-minute flyover of an area where Dominion Energy [is building](#) high-voltage electric transmission lines to run across the James River.

Interior officials originally estimated that driving to Yorktown would take about three hours, although one noted that "there is a major construction project on I-64, which will slow things down."

In an email to Interior travel scheduler Tim Nigborowicz, an Interior employee justified Zinke's using the helicopter instead of less expensive method by saying "the Secretary will be able to familiarize himself with the in-flight capabilities of an aircraft he is in charge of" and that the Park Police staff on board would "provide an added measure of security to the Secretary during his travel."

Interior officials certified ahead of the flight that Zinke's use of the helicopter would not compromise law enforcement obligations.

The Park Police helicopter, [Eagle One](#), is deployed for medevac and emergency response situations around Washington, a part of its mission Zinke praised later that month.

"U.S. Park Service helicopter pilot and crew provided a life-saving medevac flight during the attack on members of Congress during baseball practice," Zinke said in the July 25 [video](#) celebrating American Heroes Week.

The former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL is [already being investigated](#) by the Interior Department's Inspector General and the independent Office of Special Counsel for his [mixing of official travel and political events](#). Interior earlier this year released records documenting Zinke's use of charter and military aircraft, including a \$12,000 flight from Las Vegas to Montana that allowed him to give a speech for a hockey team owned by a major campaign donor.

To view online [click here](#).

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Trump's pick for NOAA chief causes a storm [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 10/12/2017 07:59 PM EDT

As a top executive at AccuWeather, Barry Myers has pushed for limits on the kinds of products that the National Weather Service offers to the public, saying they offered unfair competition to his industry.

Now, President Donald Trump's nomination of Myers to lead the weather service's parent agency could allow him to make those kinds of restrictions mandatory — to the benefit of his family-run forecasting company.

The AccuWeather CEO's nomination to head the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is stirring criticism from people who worry he would hobble the weather service, which provoked an industry backlash more than a decade ago by making hour-by-hour forecasts, cellphone alerts and other consumer-friendly data widely available online. A [bill](#) that Myers supported 12 years ago, sponsored by then-Sen. Rick Santorum, would have prohibited the agency from competing with private providers in most circumstances.

Myers, who has served as a NOAA adviser, has more recently [spoken of cooperation](#) with the agency, including industry's advocacy for Congress to fund its budget. But his critics expressed misgivings nonetheless.

"I fear that he'll do irreparable harm to an agency whose primary mission is to save lives," said Daniel Sobien, the president of the National Weather Service Employees Organization, which strongly opposes Myers' nomination. "There seems to be a huge conflict of interest considering his business background and belief system."

Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) agreed, calling Myers a "questionable" choice.

"As the CEO of AccuWeather, Barry Myers views NOAA as a direct competitor that provides high-quality forecasts for free," Schatz said in a statement Thursday. He added that "Mr. Myers will have to work very hard to persuade me that he will run NOAA for the public good."

Myers' defenders say they hope he'll use his long experience running a major weather enterprise to modernize NOAA, which also oversees fisheries, marine sanctuaries, endangered species, climate research, satellite data and its own [uniformed officer corps](#).

"In past decade, AccuWeather has embraced 'Big Data' and become an advertising & digital innovation behemoth under Myers' leadership," wrote Ryan Maue, the chief operations officer at the website Weather.us, in a [post](#) on Twitter. Maue separately told POLITICO: "I expect Myers to bring that same vision to NOAA and enhance collaboration with the private sector especially in the role of space-based remote sensing and satellites."

Myers did not return a call to his office Thursday, and a lobbyist who works with AccuWeather did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Myers, whose brother Joel founded AccuWeather in 1962, would join a roster of other business leaders whom Trump has installed atop his agencies — many of them bringing considerable potential conflicts of interest to the job. He has degrees in law and business, not the science and math degrees that Bush's and President Barack Obama's NOAA chiefs had.

Richard Painter, who served as the top ethics official for President George W. Bush, said Myers can probably meet the legal requirements to separate himself from his business. But, he added: "The appearances are awful. He should recuse from any matter that could have a financial impact on the company. And he should sell the stock."

Myers indeed "will be liquidating all of his private sector holdings," said a spokesman for NOAA's parent agency, the Commerce Department, adding that he'll "be subject to the same ethics and recusal requirements as any federal official."

The spokesman also rejected suggestions that Myers would clamp down on the weather service's public offerings. He said Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who chose Myers for the job, "sees the provision of timely, accurate data to the public as one of the Department's core missions. This includes weather data provided by the NWS, so there is no risk that Myers will restrict NWS provision of data to the public."

"Myers has also been a strong proponent of free and open weather data to the public," the spokesman added.

But in 2005, Myers supported Santorum's [widely panned bill](#), which would have prohibited the weather service from offering a product or service "that is or could be provided by the private sector" — a provision that would have benefited companies like AccuWeather.

The bill made some exceptions, including information needed to protect life and property, but weather entrepreneurs, hobbyists, airline pilots and open-government advocates said it would have choked off a wealth of data that the National Weather Service had begun making widely available. The legislation would have countered a [2004 policy change](#) by the Bush administration that had eased restrictions on the weather service's ability to offer new products and services.

"It is not an easy prospect for a business to attract advertisers, subscribers, or investors when the government is providing similar products and services for free," Santorum [said](#) when introducing his bill. Critics, including Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), noted that taxpayers had already paid for the weather service's data.

Myers [told](#) The Palm Beach Post at the time that he wanted the weather service to return to its "core mission ... which is protecting other people's lives and property," rather than spending "hundreds of millions of dollars a year, every day, producing forecasts of 'warm and sunny.'"

"We work hard every day competing with other companies and we also have to compete with the government," he [told](#) ABC News a month later.

Myers had donated \$1,000 to Santorum's Senate campaign in 2004 and 2005, though the executive also has a track record of donating to both Democratic and Republican politicians, including Trump, Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney. Santorum and Myers are both prominent alumni of Penn State University, and AccuWeather is based near the school's main campus in State College, Pa.

Santorum's bill went nowhere, however — an outcome that Maue said turned out to be "the best thing that could have happened for Accuweather as they were on the ground floor of the digital/smart phone App revolution for weather apps."

More recently, Myers [testified](#) to the House Science Committee last year about the need for "embracing free and open data in all situations," while maintaining that "the best public facing forecasts and information comes from the weather industry." Still, he said government, industry and academia each bring their own strengths to the relationship, adding that "NWS need not do everything to keep Americans safe. Others can share the load."

Myers estimated that cooperation among the federal government, the private weather industry and academic researchers had saved 1 million to 2 million lives since the late 1950s.

But Sobien, the union chief, expressed skepticism about the kind of partnership Myers envisions.

"In the past, he has supported proposals that essentially made it so the National Weather Service's only function was to provide data to companies like AccuWeather who would then repackage that data and sell them," Sobien said.

AccuWeather, which says its forecasts appear on more than 200 major television stations, 900 radio stations and 180,000 websites, has also been aggressive over the years in criticizing the weather service for what it sees as its shortcomings. Among other incidents, the company complained that the weather service had [underestimated the strength](#) of Hurricane Claudette before it hit Texas in 2003, and it said the federal agency was late to issue warnings about a [2015 tornado in Oklahoma](#).

As recently as February, AccuWeather's website [highlighted an incident](#) in which some of NOAA's weather data suffered a "significant outage," while noting that "AccuWeather-produced services remained available and reliable."

AccuWeather's sharp-elbowed approach also extends to [competition](#) with its rival The Weather Channel, which it [replaced](#) two years ago on Verizon's FiOS television lineup. AccuWeather's website has also inspired [eye-rolling](#) among some in the weather community by offering 90-day forecasts, which one meteorologist blogging for the American Geophysical Union [dismissed](#) as "scientifically indefensible" and "even worse than the Farmer's Almanac."

Members of the small community of weather watchers, who never forgot AccuWeather's support for Santorum's bill, contend it will be nearly impossible for Myers to fully eliminate his conflicts of interest.

Myers' brother Joel still serves as the company's president and chairman of the board. Their

brother Evan is the chief operating officer.

"His family owns the business and he knows the decisions he makes are going to affect the business for years and potentially decades to come," said Andrew Rosenberg, director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Center for Science and Democracy. He added, "My biggest concern is not that somebody has a business background, but do they genuinely recognize that a job in government is a fundamentally different one from managing and running a private business for profit."

Others are reserving judgment.

David Titley, a former NOAA official during the Obama administration, said he prefers not to comment on personnel decisions. "We will all have to wait & see in what direction Barry wants to take NOAA," he said in an email.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Pruitt issues EPA directive to curb 'sue and settle' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/16/2017 12:34 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today signed a [directive](#) and accompanying [memo](#) meant to curtail what he has criticized as EPA's "sue and settle" practice.

The new directive calls for more agency outreach to industry groups and will require EPA to post various documents related to such lawsuits online.

Pruitt and other Republicans have long been critical of EPA for settling suits with environmental groups over missed statutory deadlines. Green groups and Democrats note the consent decrees generally only lock in a timeline for the agency to act, not the underlying regulatory details.

To view online [click here](#).

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Morning Energy: FERC may have an August pulse — Asian carp plan set to jump — No changes for Grand Canyon-Parashant
Date: Monday, August 07, 2017 5:44:26 AM

By Darius Dixon | 08/07/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon, Annie Snider, Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff

AUGUST WATCH: Free of Congress, wilting from the heat and anxious for some vacation time before the kids are back in school, most of Washington's policy apparatus is likely to shut down now for the rest of August. But this summer may be different for FERC since the Senate approved two nominees last week. After losing its quorum for the first time in its history early this year, the pressure is on for the agency to shrink the backlog that built up over the past six months. Remember, it's not just natural gas pipelines. There are also mergers, rehearings, and electric and natural gas rate cases, not to mention enforcement probes and potential settlements. Digging out from under that backlog — while dealing with the day-to-day workload — will take several months to get FERC caught up.

Neil Chatterjee and Rob Powelson were confirmed to FERC last Thursday, but it's not clear when they'll take the oath. When former FERC Chairman Norman Bay was confirmed by the Senate as a commissioner three years ago, he wasn't sworn in for 20 days. Of course, the circumstances are a bit more urgent now and a lot of people who depend on FERC may get more than a bit impatient if Chatterjee and Powelson head out for summer vacation. Just remember: They weren't the ones who brought FERC's work to a standstill or slowed the confirmation process. FERC commissioners don't normally hold a monthly meeting in August, but that's just tradition, not a rule. They also aren't limited to holding only one meeting a month, and there's plenty they can approve without having a public session. All in all, this may be a different sort of August for FERC.

BROUILLETTE IN THE BUILDING? One of the Senate's last votes before jetting out of town last week was to confirm Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette, a move that was welcomed by the Energy Department and those groups and companies who work with the agency. One of the most frequent complaints inside and outside the agency for months has been about the lack of confirmed nominees (Brouillette is just the second at DOE) to help take the bureaucratic busy work off of Perry's plate. Although it's August, we may see more activity out of the agency as Brouillette settles in. His swearing-in date hasn't been publicly released yet.

HAPPY MONDAY! I'm Darius Dixon, returning to the morning slot and attempting to fill Anthony's big ME shoes. Hayley Moller at Glover Park Group was the first by a mile to call out the myth/rumor of President William Howard Taft getting stuck in a bathtub. He [apparently](#) weighed about 354 pounds around the time of his inauguration in 1909. Annie dove into atomic history trivia last week and your new host can't resist jumping in the deep end. What Manhattan Project physicist later founded a science museum? Name the museum and its location. Send your answers to moi — along with your tips, energy gossip and commentary — at ddixon@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@dariusss](#), [@aadragna](#), [@bjlefebvre](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#). And tell me if that was too easy!

CARP PLAN A-COMING: The Army Corps of Engineers is poised to dodge a major

controversy when it releases a long-awaited draft plan for blocking invasive Asian carp from reaching Lake Michigan. A [notice](#) posted in the Federal Register Friday indicates the plan, due out today, will recommend using noise, electric barriers, water jets and other measures to deter carp from migrating further upstream, where recreational and environmental interests fear they would devastate the ecosystem and pose a safety threat to boaters. That's a much less controversial approach than others under consideration, like shutting down barge traffic on the waterway. The draft plan was originally due out at the end of February, but the Trump administration put it on hold amid worries from shippers. That delay drew an outcry from Great Lakes lawmakers, and multiple appropriations riders were aimed at speeding its release.

One fish, two fish, every fish! If you're reading about Asian carp then you probably know how frustrating they are to deal with. But for the uninitiated, who may not know how crazy this fish is, watch [this](#).

NEVERMIND! NO EPA RFS ANNOUNCEMENT AFTER ALL: EPA has changed course, and will not announce its intent to leave the Renewable Fuel Standard as-is, multiple sources tell ME. Instead, it will wait until the official documents are ready for the Federal Register, most likely in a few weeks. The sources say nothing has changed with the agency's policy decision, which is backed by the president: It will still leave refiners on the hook for the cost of complying with the program. But while it had been planning to announce the decision last week or today, it has now decided that industry and the public were sufficiently notified by POLITICO and other media reports last week. No public statement will be issued until all the t's are crossed and i's are dotted.

MC ZINKE WON'T TOUCH THIS: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced on Friday that Arizona's Grand Canyon-Parashant national monument is "no longer under review" and that he's recommending that it be left alone amid a White House-directed study. The monument, which spans more than a million acres, was designated by President Bill Clinton in 2000. "The land has some of the most pristine and undeformed geological formations in North America, which show the scientific history of our earth while containing thousands of years of human relics and fossils," Zinke said. He has now officially removed five monuments from the original list. Seventeen remain under the microscope.

GREENS SCORE KEY WIN IN COAL ASH SUIT: A federal judge ruled for the first time Friday that a coal-fired power plant would have to remove the material from a leaky coal ash pond, rather than simply cap it and leave it in place — a pricey proposition. The lawsuit, brought by the Southern Environmental Law Center and a local Tennessee group, challenged the Tennessee Valley Authority's management of coal ash at its Gallatin Fossil Plant, although the conditions there are similar to those at plants across the south. "While the burden of closure by removal may be great, it is the only adequate resolution to an untenable situation that has gone on for far too long," Chief District Judge Waverly Crenshaw, Jr. of the Middle District of Tennessee wrote in his [order](#).

DOCS SHOW ENERGY CONNECTIONS AMONG EPA APPOINTEES: Key Trump administration appointees at EPA previously provided legal representation or held investments in some of the companies the agency regulates, according to newly released financial disclosures. [Erik Baptist](#), EPA's senior deputy general counsel who arrived from the American Petroleum Institute in June, recently sold off investments of less than \$1,000 apiece in Exxon Mobil and ConocoPhillips. Another top appointee in the general counsel's office, [David Fotouhi](#), still holds a number of energy-related investments, according to his disclosure. They include Phillips 66, Dow Chemical, Halliburton, Clorox, Solar Capital Ltd. and Energy Select

Sector SPDF, an index with oil and gas holdings. Fotouhi, previously an attorney at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, had a client list there that included Tesoro, General Electric and oil company Maxus Energy.

Meanwhile, [Patrick Traylor](#), the deputy assistant administrator in the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, previously represented a number of energy interests at Hogan Lovells, including Southern California Edison, the American Petroleum Institute, Transocean, Koch Minerals, NRG Energy, Venture Global LNG, Delfin LNG, Denbury Resources, AES Corp., Vopak, Flint Hills Resources, The C. Reiss Coal Company, BHP Billiton and Bloom Energy, as well as Daimler Truck North American and U.S. Steel. And [Byron Brown](#), EPA's deputy chief of staff, disclosed that his wife owns between \$265,000 and \$550,000 in stock in Hess, where she is a senior lobbyist.

Meanwhile, a new Interior nom is Mr. Clean: Trump's pick for Interior Department assistant secretary on land and minerals management, Joe Balash, has an [ethics agreement](#) and [financial disclosure](#) form that are as boring as they come, listing his pension fund and less than a handful of index funds. Balash, who works for Sen. Dan Sullivan, is a former Alaska Department of National Resources commissioner and ex-staffer for Sarah Palin when she was governor. Balash has advocated for opening up the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska for additional leases — a goal he shares with Zinke.

BOEM WRAPS UP WORK ON STALLED CAPE WIND: The Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on Friday issued its [final supplemental environmental impact statement](#) for the stalled 468-megawatt Cape Wind project after a court in July 2016 held the agency should have used better data to determine the conditions of the seafloor for the project before it issued a lease for the project. The final EIS says that the additional data it gathered does not change its prior finding that drilling foundations for the project in the seabed would only temporarily disturb sedimentation and the overall impacts to water quality would be minor. Cape Wind is on ice after it missed a financing deadline, prompting National Grid and NStar (now Eversource) to cancel contracts to buy power from the project.

SCANA CHIEF 'SORRY' FOR SHUTTING NUCLEAR PROJECT: The CEO of SCANA made a public apology to its customers for its plans to walk away from its V.C. Summer nuclear project last week. "I want to express that I am deeply disappointed and sorry that we were unable to complete the new nuclear units. You put your trust in us to build these units in order to bring additional clean, reliable energy to our state," CEO Kevin Marsh [wrote in an op-ed](#). "I understand your frustration and share in your disappointment."

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Susanna Murley has taken over as the head of communications for the Energy Department's SunShot Initiative. Murley replaces Jamie Nolan who left last week. Murley's previous jobs include at the Solar Energy Industries Association and the Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

QUICK HITS

— Under Trump, coal mining gets new life on U.S. lands. [The New York Times](#).

— Keystone XL foes rally in Lincoln ahead of hearings on pipeline route. [Omaha World-Herald](#).

— Power grid showing its age as more renewable energy produced. [The Maui News](#).

- Pa. Senate's budget package raises hackles of environmental groups. [The Associated Press](#).
- South Carolina's cloudy energy future: Will it affect manufacturing? [The Post and Courier](#).
- Rep. Polis touts green energy in gubernatorial campaign stop in Pueblo. [The Pueblo Chieftain](#).

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Morning Energy: FERC wants more time to decide on Perry's grid resiliency push — Democrats try to breathe new life into ANWR doubts — Zinke's helicopter flights draw scrutiny
Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 5:43:24 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/08/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén, Eric Wolff, Aaron Lorenzo and Emily Holden

FERC SEEKS EXTRA TIME: Within hours of being sworn in as the new FERC chairman, Kevin McIntyre asked Energy Secretary Rick Perry for a 30-day extension to take action on DOE's proposal calling for new rules to protect coal-fired and nuclear power plants. "The proposed extension is critical to afford adequate time for the new Commissioners to consider the voluminous record and engage fully in deliberations," McIntyre writes in [a letter](#) issued Thursday night that cites the fact that two new commissioners have joined the agency in the past two weeks. "The DOE Act does not limit the means by which deadlines can be altered or amended but instead vests such determinations squarely in the discretion of the Secretary."

McIntyre also notes the high volume of comments —more than 1,500 — received on the proposal. Remember FERC is currently slated to take action on Dec. 11, the end of the 60-day deadline set by DOE, a much shorter timeline than the agency typically has for making big decisions. A DOE spokeswoman responds from Qatar: "We have received the Chairman's letter to the Secretary and it is being reviewed."

Perry's urgency seems to be driven by fears that coal-fired power plants operated by FirstEnergy Solutions could shut down if the company falls into bankruptcy — an occurrence that Murray Energy chief Bob Murray has warned would sink his coal mining company. (More on the Murray-Perry links below.)

REDOING THE MATH ON ANWR?: Democrats are asserting that the weak demand from oil companies in this week's [lackluster lease sale](#) in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is a good reason not to buy Republican claims in their tax package [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) that [allowing drilling in a portion of ANWR](#) would generate \$1 billion over 10 years, Pro's Ben Lefebvre and your ME host [report](#). House Natural Resources ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) and two other committee members asked CBO Director Keith Hall in [a letter](#) to redo its math in light of the poor lease sale, which generated only \$1.2 million. Energy and Natural Resources ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) summed up her position: "The dismal response to this lease sale proves what we've been saying all along: even the small amount the GOP claims will be raised by drilling in the Arctic is a sham."

But Republicans were unmoved: Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) said it was misleading to compare Wednesday's sale with prospects for ANWR, noting the refuge is believed to hold as much as 10 times the billion barrels of oil estimated to lie buried in the petroleum reserve. "Different fields, different prospectivity," Murkowski told reporters. And Rep. [John Shimkus](#), another conferee, noted the plan had always been to fill whatever revenue shortfall from the ANWR proceeds with cash raised from selling oil from the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. "Part of the reason why the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is now part of the tax bill is that in the 10-year window, ANWR doesn't score anyway," he told ME. (The [latest report](#) from the CBO, shared internally with budget staffers, estimated ANWR revenues would fall short by about \$366 million).

Bottom line: With Murkowski and Alaska Rep. [Don Young](#) on the tax conference, ANWR won't lack for support even if the outlook for leases is weak.

ZINKE'S HELICOPTER HABIT: Travel [logs](#) show Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters over the summer, [Ben reports](#). In one case, Zinke took a \$8,000 ride so he could make emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on June 21 because he said official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m. What was that business? The swearing-in ceremony for Zinke's congressional successor, Rep. [Greg Gianforte](#).

In another instance, Zinke ordered a Park Police helicopter — at a cost of about \$6,250 — to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Va., on July 7 so he could make a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence. He was coming from a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion. Heather Swift, an agency spokeswoman, told ME: "The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training. Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

TGIF MY FRIENDS! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Caitlin Hart from Sen. Bill Nelson's office was first to identify Arizona as the state with the most national monuments. For today: How many states overall have at least one national monument? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

LET'S MAKE A DEAL! Oil-state Republican senators left a Thursday meeting with President Donald Trump with a directive to get to work on a biofuels compromise that will benefit both gasoline makers and corn growers, your ME host reports. "[Trump] wants us to come to him with something that's going to make both sides happy, and I believe we can do it, and believe he thinks we can do it after this meeting," [Jim Inhofe](#) said, adding he and [John Cornyn](#) had begun working with corn-state Republicans on possible solutions.

What's Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) think? "I'm waiting for Senator Cruz to give me a plan. He said he had a win-win plan."

Team ethanol not so thrilled: Ethanol Industry groups Growth Energy and the Renewable Fuel Association were skeptical of Cruz's claims that RIN prices were hurting biofuels. RFA noted the numerous analyses that show refiners are making money on RINs this year, while Growth suggested that maybe they could take the pressure off by allowing year-round sale of E15. And a spokesman for POET, which makes more ethanol than anyone, minced no words. "It looks like Ted Cruz is doing the same old thing playing with the facts," said Kylie Gilley, POET Senior Vice President of External Affairs & Communications. "The fact is in the current market, some oil companies win and some don't playing the RIN market."

EPA floats administrative action: Senators who attended the meeting said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt floated administrative actions to cut the costs refiners bear to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard. "There's some indication that the EPA administrator could have some authority with regard to the RINs prices," Cornyn said. "So I think that was kind of interesting to hear from the EPA administrator that is something they might be able to do." An agency spokesman did not confirm Pruitt's remarks, but said EPA had the authority under RFS to take action to alter RIN pricing.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley on the meeting: "President Trump had a productive meeting today with senators and administration officials. The president confirmed his commitment to RFS and his support for our farmers and energy workers. He understands there are differing views on this issue, and the administration looks forward to working with all the stakeholders toward a mutually agreeable path forward."

A THOUSAND WORDS: Photos published Thursday show coal magnate Bob Murray personally pitching Perry on his plan to save struggling coal companies just three weeks before Perry [ordered](#) a grid study later used to support a proposed rule to reward coal and nuclear power plants for providing "grid resiliency," Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). Among those in attendance was Andrew Wheeler, a lobbyist for Murray Energy Corp. at the time, who has since been nominated as EPA's No. 2 official. [One of the photos](#) obtained by In These Times shows Perry and Murray in a big bear hug.

DOE's spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes responds: "Industry stakeholders visit the Department of Energy on a daily basis. The DOE proposal to FERC was about the future and resiliency of the nation's power supply, an issue much bigger than one industry or company."

NO SHUTDOWN! Lawmakers cleared a two-week stopgap spending package Thursday to avoid a government shutdown but remain a ways away on a broader budget agreement, POLITICO's John Bresnahan, Sarah Ferris and Nancy Cook [report](#).

MORE VIEWS ON TAX CONFERENCE: The Business Council for Sustainable Energy released [a letter](#) Thursday outlining its priorities and suggestions for the final compromise version of the tax bill. It finds flaws in both versions with some in the House's "extremely problematic" for how they treat a variety of energy technologies. "We urge Congress to address these issues during the conference on the tax reform legislation or in a year-end extenders bill," it suggests.

DECISION WITH BIG CONSEQUENCES: How the Securities and Exchange Commission rules on a shareholder proposal from Jantz Management LLC that asks Apple to set a specific date for when it could eliminate its carbon footprint will have major implications for investors, Pro Financial Services' Patrick Temple-West [reports](#), citing an asset manager involved in a fight with the company. If the agency allows Apple to block the proposal, the decision "could have serious repercussions not just for Apple shareholders, but for investors in all other companies," said Jantz. "The SEC has long made it clear that proposals on a company's actions on climate change are not ordinary business, and that there is a dire need for leading companies to set a timeframe to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions aggressively now," the company said.

O CANADA! Rather than trying to eliminate the NAFTA energy chapter, the U.S. should work with Canada and Mexico to improve it, Pro Trade's Doug Palmer [reports](#), citing the head of the Canadian Electricity Association. "We believe ... the chapter has worked well and that it does not require major fixing or nixing," CEA President and CEO Sergio Marchi said Thursday. "It provides a consolidated energy space in NAFTA, and offers an effective framework for adding new elements as we modernize this agreement."

A SCIFMAS CAROL: Pruitt testified before lawmakers on Thursday that his new secure phone booth is for both classified matters and communicating with the White House. "There are secure conversations that need to take place at times," he told Rep. [Diana DeGette](#). "I believe there are secure conversations that need to take place that I didn't have access to. ...

Cabinet-level officials need to have access to secure communications." Pruitt would not say how much time he spends working in the booth. DeGette [wrote](#) on Facebook later that she was concerned Pruitt "couldn't say how often it's used" given the \$25,000 price tag and the administration's proposed budget cuts.

Spotted: Pruitt taking his staff to dinner at Le Diplomate.

MAKING HIS CASE: As lawsuits against Trump's Monday order to shrink two national monuments continue to pile up, Zinke defended the case for downsizing both the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in a CNN [op-ed](#). "The Antiquities Act is not a weapon for presidents to arbitrarily restrict the uses of hundreds of thousands of acres of land to prevent uses like timber harvesting and cattle grazing," he writes. "It is also not a tool for presidents to use to restrict access for outdoor recreation on land that belongs to all of us."

REMOVED: EPA has removed references to climate change and greenhouse gases on web pages about its own sustainability plans and dialed back language on its commitment to using renewable energy, according to changes that the Environmental Data & Governance Initiative [reports](#) happened in September. EDGI says EPA also took down some links to climate adaptation resources.

LAUTENBERG'S WIDOW SLAMS DOURSON: Bonnie Lautenberg, the wife of late-Sen. Frank Lautenberg and tireless advocate for the overhaul of TSCA, slammed Trump's pick to run the EPA's chemicals office and urged senators to oppose Michael Dourson's nomination. "Michael Dourson will only serve to undermine Frank's legacy and threaten the safety of families and children across our country," she [wrote](#) on CNN.

TAKE A GLANCE! Environment New York released its scorecard Thursday evaluating the state delegation's environmental voting records. Though its lawmakers are above the national average, the group knocked seven House Republicans — [Lee Zeldin](#), [Pete King](#), [Dan Donovan](#), [John J. Faso](#), [Claudia Tenney](#), [Tom Reed](#) and [Chris Collins](#) — for their anti-environmental voting records. Read it [here](#).

MAIL CALL! WATCHING OUT FOR THE WATCHDOG: Ten Democratic senators urged appropriators to protect EPA's inspector general from budget cuts in the upcoming spending packages. Read the letter, led by [Sheldon Whitehouse](#), [here](#).

SAVE THE EV CREDIT! Mayors from 22 cities, including Atlanta, Phoenix, Louisville, Ky., and Los Angeles, sent [a letter](#) to tax conferees urging them to protect an electric vehicle tax credit as they negotiate a final package. "Electric vehicles afford Americans greater energy independence by reducing demand for imported fossil fuels," they write.

FOR YOUR RADAR: EDF Action is launching a training program to help candidates at all levels incorporate successful environmental messaging into their political campaigns. Candidates will learn through a web-based curriculum about how to develop an environmental message, keep it consistent through the campaign and respond to attacks. More information [here](#).

TAKE A GLANCE! LCV's Chispa is out with a new video urging governors to take advantage of funding available through the VW settlement to transform diesel-powered school bus fleets to electric. Watch it [here](#).

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Former FERC Chairman **Norman Bay** has joined the Duke University Energy Initiative and Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions for a three-year term as a non-resident senior fellow.

The Edison Electric Institute has added **Seth Levey** as director of external affairs. He previously worked for Exxon Mobil. (h/t POLITICO Influence)

Molly Block started as press secretary at EPA on Monday. She was previously House National Resources press secretary (h/t Playbook).

QUICK HITS

- Areas cut out of Utah monuments are rich in oil, coal, uranium. [Washington Post](#).
- Rising threat: As the climate changes and seas swell, coastal colleges struggle to prepare. [Chronicle of Higher Education](#).
- U.S. Interior Department wants more oil drilling, expedite ANWR permits. [Reuters](#).
- N. Carolina regulators want more information on pipeline. [AP](#).
- Trump officials examining states' authority in pipeline delays. [Houston Chronicle](#).
- Oil rises over 1 percent on threatened Nigeria strike, short covering. [Reuters](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

POSTPONED — "[Examining the Role of the Department of Energy in Energy Sector Cybersecurity](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

'Largest ever' Interior Alaska oil lease sale draws little interest [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/06/2017 08:26 PM EDT

The Interior Department received only seven bids from two companies today in what it had billed as the "[largest ever](#)" oil and gas lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

The bids on the 10.3 million unleased acres in the NPR-A generated just \$1.2 million in high bids, according to a Bureau of Land Management summary. The relatively low amount could undercut GOP arguments that opening up the nearby Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would generate \$1 billion in revenue.

A BLM Alaska [lease sale last year](#) generated \$18 million for 1.4 million acres offered.

Subsidiaries of ConocoPhillips and Anadarko were the only two companies that participated in the lease sale. The companies only bid for 80,000 acres, or less than 1 percent of the acreage offered. The highest bid amount was \$14.99 per acre.

Low oil prices and the relatively cheap and plentiful land available for hydraulic fracturing in the lower 48 has hurt oil company interest in the out-of-the-way fields of Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) have pushed to open more public land to drilling, however, saying that doing so is important to increase domestic energy production.

Zinke had previously said that today's "large and unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American Energy Dominance."

An Interior spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions.

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans hope to keep ANWR drilling provisions in their budget proposal.

To view online [click here](#).

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Democrats worry Arctic National Wildlife Refuge being lost amid tax debate [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/29/2017 05:17 AM EDT

Democrats' fight to keep oil and gas rigs out of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is losing ground as the Republican tax plan advances — and it's almost as if no one has noticed.

The prospect of drilling in the untouched Alaskan tundra is as close to reality as it's been in more than a decade, with none of the political drama that in past decades turned the refuge's fate into a top-tier rallying cry for liberals. Legislation to allow drilling in ANWR is quietly hitching a ride on the tax code overhaul that Senate Republicans [hope to complete](#) by the end of the week, overshadowed by larger debates on whether the bill is a giveaway to rich people and corporations at the expense of the poor and working class.

"It's really not gotten the attention that it should," Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, told POLITICO about the ANWR provision. "It's not just the budget discussion. It's about everything else that's going on, the flurry of all sorts of other news."

Angus King (I-Maine) said Republicans were trying to shield ANWR from opposition by adding it to the larger bill rather than bringing it to the floor separately under rules, which would require it to win support from 60 senators to overcome a filibuster.

"Well, clearly the strategy is to try to get it through as part of this tax reform effort and thereby avoid a direct up-or-down vote," King said in an interview earlier this month.

The nonstop news cycle and preponderance of other concerns with the tax bill are making it difficult to focus on an issue that normally fires up Democratic voters.

"I do think that putting ANWR in the budget reconciliation package hasn't drawn as much extremist opposition because it is completely overshadowed by tax reform, which is the center of the package," said Chris Guith, senior vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute. "But there are some who aren't exactly supportive of tax reform that support ANWR, and it's possible to see ANWR bring a vote or two to help pass tax reform."

Senate Energy Chair Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) easily advanced [legislation](#) through her committee directing the Interior Department to hold two lease sales for drilling in ANWR over the next decade. It would raise \$1 billion over that period, according to the Congressional Budget Office, making it eligible for inclusion in a budget reconciliation package that Democrats cannot filibuster.

The reconciliation package also will include Republicans' tax plan and a repeal of the Obamacare individual mandate. While Murkowski helped scuttle the Obamacare repeal push earlier this year, she says she [supports](#) ending the mandate. Murkowski's office did not respond to a request for comment.

ANWR, a swath of tundra on the northern Alaska coast, is home to polar bears, porcupine caribou and a landscape that hasn't been touched in thousands of years. Congress designated the 19 million-acre area a wildlife refuge in 1980, but it set aside a 1.5-million-acre parcel known as "10-02" for possible drilling if future lawmakers approved such a plan. The U.S. Geological Survey [estimated in 1998](#) that part of ANWR could hold up to 12 billion barrels of oil, and President Donald Trump and Alaska Republicans have called it essential for their plans for American "energy dominance."

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who is undecided on the tax bill for a several reasons, said she will support an amendment on the Senate floor to eliminate the ANWR language, but she said success there is not a prerequisite for her to vote for the underlying bill. "No it is not, but I would certainly try to get it out of the package," Collins told reporters Tuesday. Collins was the only Republican to cross the aisle on an unsuccessful [amendment](#) to keep pro-drilling language out of the underlying budget resolution, meaning it is unlikely that she would be able to strip the ANWR provision from a reconciliation bill.

But Democrats say that passing a deficit-increasing tax bill in order to open ANWR would actually harm energy-producing states. That's because the \$1.5 trillion shortfall from the GOP tax cuts would trigger required "pay-as-you-go" cuts to mandatory spending programs, according to a CBO [analysis](#) sent to House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

One of the programs on the pay-go chopping block would be the energy royalty revenue sharing program carried out through the Mineral Leasing Act. Cutting those payments would lose Alaska [an estimated \\$15 million](#) in energy royalty payments next year alone, an amount important to a state already facing budget shortfalls.

"Communities throughout the West would be impacted by the loss of revenue, which is used to support a variety of needs including infrastructure, school funding, conservation, and recreation," Hoyer said in a statement to POLITICO. "This is yet another example of the consequences associated with forcing through legislation to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit in order to give tax cuts to the wealthy."

Pay-go cuts also would hit popular programs like Medicare and student loans, but Congress can waive the law with 60 votes in the Senate. Democrats are not yet on board with that

approach.

The current push to open ANWR, coming amid a swarm of competing headlines and buried in larger legislation, has come nearer to succeeding than the GOP's two previous attempts. President Bill Clinton vetoed a budget package in 1995 that included language opening ANWR, while a Democratic filibuster thwarted a second attempt in 2005.

Environmental groups have targeted public engagement at only a handful of congressional districts. The League of Conservation Voters spent \$550,000 on television ads in three Republican congressional districts. The LCV also paid for a bipartisan polling firm to probe public opinion on opening ANWR, but even that focused only on registered voters in eight congressional districts.

"The reason they're trying to sneak it into the tax package is they know they don't have the votes otherwise," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, the league's senior vice president of government affairs. "They know they can't pass it under regular order, that's why they're doing a sneak attack."

Even ANWR supporters are staying out of the spotlight.

"I haven't seen any full-out, front-page ads, nothing like that," Alaska Oil and Gas Association President Kara Moriarty said. "We're a little battle-weary, to be honest. Alaskans support opening up ANWR. There's been a few statements reiterating that."

Nick Juliano contributed to this report.

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Poor Alaska lease sale sows confusion on ANWR drilling plan [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Anthony Adragna | 12/07/2017 05:47 PM EDT

The weak results from the lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska are giving Democrats ammunition in their fight to stop Republicans from opening the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge under the tax bill.

Democrats are making hay out of the fact [only two companies bid](#) in what Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke had hailed as an "unprecedented" offering of acreage in the NPR-A, and they say the lease sale, which generated only \$1.2 million, undercuts Republican claims that [allowing drilling in a portion of ANWR](#) would generate \$1 billion over 10 years. The [latest report](#) from the CBO, shared internally with budget staffers, estimated ANWR revenues would fall short by about \$366 million.

House Natural Resources ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and two other committee members sent a letter to CBO Director Keith Hall asking for a re-do on ANWR drilling revenue estimates in light of the poor NPR-A showing.

But [Sen. Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska), the driving force behind putting the refuge in the budget

package, said the lease sale had little bearing on prospects for ANWR, however. The refuge is believed to hold as much as 10 times the billion barrels of oil estimated to lie buried in the petroleum reserve, Murkowski said.

"Different fields, different prospectivity," Murkowski told reporters.

Meanwhile, House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) (R-Utah) said negotiations over ANWR and how much money it might bring to federal coffers is ongoing.

"I'm going to see all sorts of numbers being thrown out at the last few minutes," Bishop told POLITICO. "We'll look at them. We'll still negotiate this process."

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans will meet in conference to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the tax bill.

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Zinke booked government helicopters to attend D.C. events [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/07/2017 06:31 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to take himself and staff to and from official events near Washington, D.C., in order to accommodate his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for his replacement in Congress and a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, according to previously undisclosed official travel documents.

The travel [logs](#), released to POLITICO via a Freedom of Information Act request, show Zinke using taxpayer-funded vehicles from the U.S. Park Police to help accommodate his political events schedule.

In a case detailed in the new documents, Zinke ordered a U.S. Park Police helicopter to take him and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on June 21.

Zinke's staff justified the \$8,000 flight by saying official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m., too late to make the two-hour drive to the exercise, according to the documents.

The event that prevented Zinke from leaving before 2 p.m. was the swearing-in ceremony for Rep. [Greg Gianforte](#) (R-Mont.), according to Zinke's [official Interior calendar](#). Gianforte, who won a special election for Zinke's old seat in May, and his wife contributed \$15,800 to Zinke's two congressional campaigns.

"Secretary Zinke's last engagement in Washington D.C. is at 2 p.m.," an Interior staffer wrote as justification for using the helicopter. "Driving to [the West Virginia event] would not enable him to be on time and fully participate as scheduled."

Interior defended the trips.

"The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift wrote in an email Thursday. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

Zinke also ordered a Park Police helicopter to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Virginia, on July 7 in order to be back in Washington in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Pence. The trip cost about \$6,250, according to the documents.

While in Yorktown, Zinke completed a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion, according to the documents. The day before the trip, an Interior trip planner added to the schedule a 30-minute flyover of an area where Dominion Energy [is building](#) high-voltage electric transmission lines to run across the James River.

Interior officials originally estimated that driving to Yorktown would take about three hours, although one noted that "there is a major construction project on I-64, which will slow things down."

In an email to Interior travel scheduler Tim Nigborowicz, an Interior employee justified Zinke's using the helicopter rather than a less expensive method by saying "the Secretary will be able to familiarize himself with the in-flight capabilities of an aircraft he is in charge of" and that the Park Police staff on board would "provide an added measure of security to the Secretary during his travel."

The former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL is [already being investigated](#) by the Interior Department's inspector general and the independent Office of Special Counsel for his [mixing of official travel and political events](#). Interior earlier this year released records documenting Zinke's use of charter and military aircraft, including a \$12,000 flight from Las Vegas to Montana that allowed him to give a speech for a hockey team owned by a major campaign donor.

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Perry seeks plan for new grid study by Wednesday [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 04/17/2017 03:17 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry's memo starting a review of federal policies affecting the electric grid calls on his staff to submit an "implementation schedule" by Wednesday.

The [text](#) of Perry's Friday memo to his chief of staff, Brian McCormack, urges that the "full resources and relationships available to the [Energy] Department" should be used to determine which federal taxes and regulations have undermined baseload power plants.

"By Wednesday, April 19, 2017, present to me an implementation plan to complete this study 60-days [sic] from that date," Perry wrote.

The study would focus on the evolution of wholesale electricity markets, whether wholesale energy and capacity markets are adequately paying baseload power sources, and "extent to which continued regulatory burdens ... are responsible for forcing the premature retirement of baseload power plants."

Many of the issues targeted by Perry have been high on FERC's agenda for more than a year under its so-called price formation initiative, which focuses on how power plants are paid in an increasingly complex grid. FERC is also trying to navigate the complicated impacts of several state-level energy policies.

DOE, under former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, spent roughly a year [analyzing](#) the electric grid, including many of the issues raised in Perry's memo. The memo also raises concerns about the "diminishing diversity" of fuel types on the grid.

Bloomberg first reported on the memo Saturday.

WHAT'S NEXT: Perry's senior staff will submit a plan Wednesday for getting the full grid study to him by June 18, which is a Sunday and may push the deadline to the following day.

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Bob Murray had early access to Rick Perry to share coal plan [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/07/2017 05:30 PM EDT

Coal magnate Bob Murray pitched Energy Secretary Rick Perry on his plan to throw an economic lifeline to coal companies less than a month before Perry set in motion plans to aid the industry, according to newly disclosed photographs that show the two meeting.

The liberal magazine [In These Times](#) obtained pictures of Murray and Perry from a March 29 meeting at Energy Department headquarters, less than a month after Perry was [sworn in](#). Several other officials were in attendance, including Andrew Wheeler, who at the time was a lobbyist for Murray and has since been nominated as the Environmental Protection Agency's No. 2 official.

The meeting puts Murray and Perry together at a crucial moment in the timeline of the Trump administration's push to save the struggling coal industry, an effort that would benefit Murray Energy in particular while raising electricity prices for potentially millions of people. A month before the meeting, one of Murray's biggest customers, FirstEnergy, told investors it was seriously considering seeking bankruptcy protection for its merchant division, FirstEnergy Solutions, a move that would likely void its supply contracts with Murray's coal mines.

Three weeks after Murray's visit, Perry would order a grid study that later became part of the justification for a proposed rule to reward coal and nuclear power plants for providing "grid resiliency." FERC, which has jurisdiction over the proposal, must make a decision on it by Monday.

At the time of the meeting, Wheeler was [already the leading candidate](#) to become the deputy administrator for EPA. Wheeler, who represented Murray as a lobbyist for Faegre Baker Daniels, would not be officially nominated for months. Wheeler, who has acknowledged participating in meetings on Murray's coal plan at DOE and on Capitol Hill, cleared committee last week and is awaiting Senate confirmation.

Murray is an outspoken supporter of President Donald Trump and held a fundraiser for him during the 2016 campaign.

DOE did not dispute the validity of the photos.

"Industry stakeholders visit the Department of Energy on a daily basis," DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes said, when asked about the meeting. "The DOE proposal to FERC was about the future and resiliency of the nation's power supply, an issue much bigger than one industry or company."

The photographs show Perry sitting at the head of a table in the Department of Energy, with Bob Murray, CEO of Murray Energy, to his left, and Wheeler down the table from Murray.

"Enclosed is an Action Plan for achieving reliable and low cost electricity ... and to assist in the survival of our Country's coal industry, which ... power grid reliability and low cost electricity," Murray writes in a cover letter to Perry, parts of which are visible in one photo from the meeting.

Though the document has never been publicly released, DOE critics say Murray's plan appears to have inspired DOE's grid study and the proposed rule Perry sent FERC in September. Copies are visible at the seats of most of the participants, including Perry and Murray. Wheeler, who told members of the Senate Environment Committee he had only seen the memo briefly, is not holding a copy in the photos obtained by In These Times. Murray [told](#) Greenwire in November he "didn't have any involvement" in writing the rule.

Murray has acknowledged sharing the plan with Trump.

"I gave Mr. Trump what I called an action plan very early," Murray said in a recent [PBS Frontline](#) documentary on EPA. "It's about three-and-a-half pages and — of what he needed to do in his administration. He's wiped out page one."

The meeting appears to have been successful for all. One of the photos shows Perry and Murray in a big bear hug.

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Congress clears spending bill, averting shutdown [Back](#)

By John Bresnahan, Sarah Ferris and Nancy Cook | 12/07/2017 09:10 AM EDT

Congress passed a two-week funding bill Thursday, staving off a government shutdown a day ahead of the deadline. But lawmakers face a turbulent next few weeks as they try to clinch a

broader budget deal by the end of the year.

Senators approved the measure on a 81-14 vote, soon after the House passed it 235-193. Despite initial reluctance from conservative House Republicans, GOP leadership was ultimately able to pass it with votes to spare.

The more interesting action was arguably taking place across Pennsylvania Ave.

President Donald Trump met with the "Big Four" congressional leaders — Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer — at the White House on Thursday afternoon in a bid to jump-start negotiations over a two-year budget deal.

Per one senior Democratic aide, the vast majority of the talks focused on spending levels, and the two parties did not come to a consensus. Democrats want parity for any defense and non-defense spending boost, while Republicans want to see the Pentagon get the bulk of any spending increase.

"We had a good meeting. We agreed to keep on talking," McConnell said after returning from the meeting. Asked if they were any closer to a deal on spending caps, he said, "I wouldn't say that, but it was a good meeting. Everybody wants to get to an outcome."

"We had a productive conversation on a wide variety of issues," Pelosi said in a statement following the meeting. "Nothing specific has been agreed to, but discussions continue."

The group also discussed the fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. GOP leaders argued the issue would have to be dealt with separately from funding the government — something many Democrats will not support.

Earlier in the day, Pelosi told reporters, "We will not leave here without a DACA fix."

The shutdown dance comes as Republican leaders and the White House are pushing to finish work on a trillion-dollar-plus tax cut plan being hashed out by House and Senate tax writers. Ryan and McConnell are hoping to buy enough time in the budget talks to complete work on the tax bill, all while mollifying their defense hawks and conservative hard-liners in the House Freedom Caucus. And that's to say nothing of Democratic demands for a deal to help hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who face possible deportation next year, as well as a host of other controversial policy issues.

Ahead of the meeting, a senior administration official said Trump's main push would be to keep DACA out of the budget deal, increase defense spending without boosting non-defense funding, and get Democrats to agree to allow his hugely controversial border wall project.

That, Democrats say, is a White House pipedream. During a Thursday speech on the floor, Schumer said Trump and Republicans will have to be open to real negotiations in order to reach a budget deal, and added that the GOP would pay politically if there is a shutdown.

"Congressional negotiators are making good headway on a budget deal that would meet our commitments to our military and also urgent priorities here at home," Schumer said on the floor.

"Unfortunately, the progress here in Congress is in stark contrast to the rhetoric coming from

the White House. President Trump again suggested yesterday that 'a shutdown could happen.' If a shutdown happens, as the president seemed to be rooting for in a tweet earlier this year, it will fall on his shoulders. His party controls the Senate, the House, and the presidency."

But first, Republicans had to put up the 217 votes to keep the government open Thursday — not an easy feat for a conference populated with conservatives who rarely vote for any spending bills.

That's why Ryan, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and other GOP leaders spent much of Wednesday huddling with conservative hard-liners unhappy with the leadership plan to avert a shutdown. McCarthy even brought in McConnell to talk to frustrated rank-and-file members grumbling about the strategy at one point.

By Thursday morning, however, House GOP leaders were predicting they'd have the votes to pass the continuing resolution. And they were right.

Rachael Bade, Jennifer Scholtes and Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Apple's fight with shareholders tests SEC stance on activist proposals [Back](#)

By Patrick Temple-West | 12/08/2017 05:01 AM EDT

How the Securities and Exchange Commission rules on a bid by Apple Inc. to block a shareholder proposal could have "serious repercussions" for investors, an asset manager involved in a fight with the iPhone-maker [said](#) on Thursday.

Boston-based Jantz Management LLC argues that Apple is "out of line with longtime SEC rulings" in its request to block a shareholder proposal from Jantz that asks the company to set a specific date for when it could eliminate its carbon footprint.

Apple's defense is untested because it is using little-noticed SEC guidance [published](#) on Nov. 1 to ask the agency for permission to block Jantz's proposal.

The guidance said the SEC would weigh any recommendation by a company's board of directors on whether a shareholder proposal involves a significant policy issue and should be included, or if it is "ordinary business" and should be disallowed.

Apple said its board determined that the Jantz proposal should not be considered at the company's 2018 annual shareholder meeting.

The Cupertino, Calif.-based company says it is already working to eliminate the carbon footprint in its supply chain. The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The matter is pending before the SEC. If the agency allows Apple to block the proposal, the decision "could have serious repercussions not just for Apple shareholders, but for investors in

all other companies," said Jantz, which has about \$41 million of assets under management.

"The SEC has long made it clear that proposals on a company's actions on climate change are not ordinary business, and that there is a dire need for leading companies to set a timeframe to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions aggressively now," said Jantz, which often tries to agitate for politically progressive changes at companies with shareholder proposals.

Apple is also asking the SEC for permission to block a shareholder proposal offered by Zevin Asset Management that's seeking a report about how CEO Tim Cook's compensation could be tied to sustainability metrics, including diversity among senior executives. In this dispute, Apple is also using the SEC's Nov. 1 guidance to bolster its case.

Zevin is a Boston-based socially responsible investment fund with \$554.5 million under management.

Historically, "proposals related to environmental matters or executive compensation are generally considered weighty policy matters and not ordinary business," law firm Davis Polk said in a client note last month.

An SEC spokesman declined to comment.

Shareholder activism can have a big impact on corporate actions. In May, almost two-thirds of Exxon Mobil's shareholders defied corporate executives and voted for the company to incorporate the Paris climate agreement into its business models, regardless of what the U.S. government does.

Similar resolutions won majority shareholder support at Occidental Petroleum and PPL Corp.

In response, the Trump administration in October proposed making it harder for shareholders to file proposals, which can cost companies tens of millions of dollars to deal with.

The Treasury Department recommended that the SEC raise the thresholds for when an investor can resubmit a proposal that previously drew low voter support. From 2007 to 2016, almost a third of all shareholder proposals were resubmissions, Treasury said.

Treasury argued that big investors with overt social, religious or policy objectives — and just six individual investors — were responsible for two-thirds of all shareholder proposals filed in 2016.

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Canadian industry leader urges U.S. not to dump NAFTA energy chapter [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 12/07/2017 03:59 PM EDT

The United States should abandon the idea of eliminating the NAFTA energy chapter and work with Canada and Mexico to improve its provisions, the head of the Canadian Electricity Association said today.

"We believe ... the chapter has worked well and that it does not require major fixing or nixing," CEA president and CEO Sergio Marchi said during a discussion on NAFTA energy issues hosted by the Washington International Trade Association. "It provides a consolidated energy space in NAFTA, and offers an effective framework for adding new elements as we modernize this agreement."

That is also Canada's position, a Canadian embassy spokesman said. Mexico has also expressed support for including an energy chapter in the revamped agreement now being negotiated. That's a major change from 25 years ago, when it insisted on being excluded from NAFTA energy commitments.

Marchi, a former Canadian trade minister, said his group has been told the U.S. wants to eliminate the chapter based on the rationale its provisions can be covered by other sections of the agreement.

"We also hear, for example, that without a chapter it makes it a lot easier for USTR to run the show, rather than relying on interdepartmental consultations," Marchi said.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative declined to comment on whether the U.S. was proposing to eliminate the chapter.

Marchi said scrapping the chapter wouldn't necessarily undo the energy reforms contained in the pact. But he argued it would make it appear the chapter hasn't worked, when that's not the case.

"We think [eliminating the chapter] would be a mistake," Marchi said, adding that Canada and Mexico could just as easily argue that the U.S. demand for a textiles chapter is unnecessary.

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Subject: Morning Energy: Grading Pruitt on his promises — Questions raised over Lola Zinke's role — Decision day for crucial Keystone XL permit
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 5:43:32 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/20/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Sara Stefanini

IS HE KEEPING HIS WORD? EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt came into office boasting of returning the agency to its mission of cleaning up the air, water and land, but Pro's Alex Guillén and Emily Holden [look at](#) what he's accomplished so far and how it stacks up to his ambitious rhetoric.

- **Tackling air pollution:** He's rolled back or delayed a host of air quality regulations from the Obama administration, but signed off on 378 actions related to state plans as of Sept. 25, compared with 213 during the same period under Obama. Some environmentalists worry those quick approvals suggest laxer plans that are inadequately protective.
- **Cleaning up Superfund sites:** Pruitt's taken action to develop a top 10 list of priority Superfund sites and issued task force recommendations designed to speed up cleanups, but critics say the actions are toothless and actually hurt other cleanup efforts.
- **Upgrading drinking water infrastructure:** He's identified the need to upgrade water infrastructure to avoid similar crises like Flint, Mich., but hasn't offered many details on how to pay for it.
- **Undoing Obama's climate agenda:** Pruitt's stuck to his vows to unravel Obama administration actions addressing climate change through steps like revoking the Clean Power Plan and promising to open up a debate on climate science.
- **Expanding outreach to states and businesses:** The former Oklahoma attorney general has conducted outreach to almost entirely to Republican-controlled states, while industry groups have given high marks to Pruitt's approach.

EPA's take: "We're only 10 months on the job and eight years from today, Americans will be impressed with how President Trump and Administrator Pruitt were able to protect the environment and American jobs," agency spokesman Jahan Wilcox said.

LOLA ZINKE ROLE SCRUTINIZED: New [documents](#) show Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife, Lola, used Interior staff time to coordinate some of her activities while traveling with her husband during jaunts that gave her access to high level politicians and GOP donors who could benefit her as a political operator in her own right, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "These emails show that the leadership at the Department of Interior treats basic ethical standards like an inconvenience," Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said.

In one instance, records show the secretary's wife helped decide the guest list for a Young America's Foundation town hall forum with her husband on April 17 at its Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara. She sent a "list of people I have invited to the event" to two Interior staffers, according to a series of April 7 emails. Interior says she pays her own way when she accompanies her husband and that travel is cleared by ethics officials in advance. "DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence" with the secretary, Interior spokeswoman

Heather Swift said in an email Friday.

GOBBLE GOBBLE GOBBLE! IT'S THANKSGIVING WEEK! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and DNV GL's Ethan Tremblay was first to identify John Marshall and Salmon P. Chase as our Supreme Court justices who once graced currency. For today: In what year did Congress pass a resolution formally setting Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday of November? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PROGRAMMING NOTE: [Morning Energy](https://www.morningenergy.com) will not publish from Nov. 23-Nov. 26. Our next [Morning Energy](https://www.morningenergy.com) newsletter will publish on Nov. 27. Please continue to follow Pro Energy issues [here](#).

YOU GOTTA MAKE A DECISION: What once was a sleepy little panel in Nebraska today decides whether to allow the Keystone XL pipeline to follow the path that developer TransCanada has proposed in the latest battle over the pipeline that's become a national fight. The Nebraska Public Service Commission, consisting of four elected Republicans and one Democrat, will decide whether to grant a permit to 1,200-mile proposed pipeline that would carry up to 830,000 barrels of oil per day. It's the last regulatory hurdle for the project, which President Donald Trump has pushed to complete and which has galvanized mass protests from the environmental movement.

Commissioners have faced intense lobbying from the White House, environmental advocates, TransCanada lobbyists and their own state politicians ahead of the decision. One development they won't be taking into account, though, is the spill of 210,000 gallons of oil from the existing Keystone pipeline in Amherst, South Dakota last Thursday. Officials said Nebraska law bars the consideration of spills or pipeline safety in the decision-making process. TransCanada said in an update the spill is "under control and that there is no significant environmental impact observed or threat to public safety" but that it continued to send crews to the site. But green groups immediately seized upon the incident as an example of what they say are the safety and environmental risks of moving forward with Keystone XL.

Regardless of the decision, environmental and Native American groups say they will continue to fight the project's completion. They'll hold a press conference in Lower Brule, South Dakota and sign a treaty against Keystone XL after the commission meets in the morning. "Nothing has changed at all in our defense of land, air and water of the Oceti Sakowin Lands," said Faith Spotted Eagle, a member of the Yankton Sioux Nation. "If anything, it has become more focused, stronger and more adamant after Standing Rock," referring to the protests of the Dakota Access pipeline. TransCanada, for its part, hasn't committed to building the controversial project yet, though it said earlier this month it was "[quite encouraged](#)" by industry interest in reserving space on Keystone XL. Oh, and the Associated Press [reports](#) the commission's decision is subject to legal challenges, setting up another potentially lengthy court battle.

Watch the meeting, which kicks off at 11 a.m. EST, online [here](#).

IT'S A WRAP FROM BONN: The White House left climate talks in Bonn, Germany feeling pretty good about its efforts and the international community seemed relieved by the constructive role career negotiators played in quieter diplomatic efforts to help write the rulebook for the Paris deal, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#) from Germany. Most political leaders at the talks sought to highlight U.S. activity in the negotiating rooms rather than the

provocative move to press the case for the fuels blamed for warming the Earth and boosting sea levels. "You couldn't have expected more," said German Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks. "It's diplomats who are working here, they act professionally."

White House energy adviser George David Banks said the U.S. had in fact been "indispensable in thwarting efforts by some countries to get a free pass" under the Paris agreement. The American negotiating team, he said, had "led across many issues, promoted U.S. national interests, and protected U.S. taxpayers and businesses."

Potential pitfalls ahead: The success of the Paris agreement, which built on cooperation between the U.S. and China in the run-up, was that it set up a system that gives flexibility to developing countries that lack the capacity to meet its goals, Todd Stern, the Obama administration's special envoy for climate change, told POLITICO Europe's Kalina Oroschakoff and Sara Stefanini on Friday. That marked a change from the "firewall" between rich and poor built into many years of climate negotiations and agreements. "In a world where somewhere between 60-65 percent of global emissions are coming from developing countries at this point — you can't have that," Stern said. Read their Q&A with Stern [here](#).

Meanwhile, an agreement to phase down emissions of hydrofluorocarbons, extremely potent greenhouse gases, will go into effect in 2019 after getting enough countries to ratify the deal on Friday, the New York Times [reports](#). That mark was hit when Sweden [became](#) the 20th country to ratify the Kigali amendment, which is expected to hold down climate change by 0.5° C [0.9° F] by 2100. The State Department still hasn't sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification, despite the entreaties of industry to do so.

INTERIM UTILITY HEAD NAMED IN PUERTO RICO: After Ricardo Ramos [resigned](#) his post as the head of Puerto Rico's utility Friday, its governing board named Justo González the interim chief, El Nuevo Día [reports](#). Ramos said his resignation "has nothing to do with any matter covered in the media," but described it as "very personal." And the island's government said it had begun searching for a permanent head of the utility "inside and outside Puerto Rico."

Quick check: More than two months after the hurricane, more than 50 percent of the island still lacks electricity. Stats [here](#).

WHAT'S THE VETTING CRITERIA? The Climate Solutions Caucus has added Reps. [Josh Gottheimer](#) and [Matt Gaetz](#) to its ranks, but it's the latter's inclusion that caught ME's attention. Gaetz introduced legislation [H.R. 861 \(115\)](#) abolishing the EPA earlier this year and [told a Florida newspaper](#) in 2016: "In our fervor to protect the environment, we lose sight of economic and scientific reality."

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: The Supreme Court will visit Water World on Jan. 8, when in its first arguments of the new year the court will hear arguments in two high-profile water cases. First up is *Texas v. New Mexico and Colorado*; this case is about Texas's allegations that New Mexico is sucking too much water out of the Rio Grande. These arguments aren't to settle the dispute, merely to determine [whether](#) the federal government can play a role in the proceedings. Next on the docket will be *Florida v. Georgia*, a fight over the use of water from the Apalachicola River. The case's "special master" recommended the justices dismiss the suit, as POLITICO Pro Florida's Bruce Ritchie [reported](#) last month.

HIS MIND SEEMS MADE UP: Trump seemed like his mind was pretty made up not to

reverse an Obama-era ban on importing elephant hunting trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia ([reversing course](#) on his administration's original decision last week) in a Sunday evening [tweet](#). "Big-game trophy decision will be announced next week but will be very hard pressed to change my mind that this horror show in any way helps conservation of Elephants or any other animal," he offered.

COAL ASH GETS ITS DAY IN COURT: The D.C. Circuit hears oral arguments today (at the unusual time of 2 p.m. so heads up) on EPA's 2015 coal ash regulation and Pro's Alex Guillén runs through in [Energy Regulation Watch](#) all of the twists and turns in recent months leading up to today's hearing. Judge Karen LeCraft Henderson, a George H.W. Bush appointee, and two Obama appointees, Judges Patricia Millett and Cornelia Pillard, will today consider hear arguments about whether to put the case on hold indefinitely at the Monday arguments, alongside the various legal and technical challenges. Remember EPA intends to reconsider various aspects of the regulation and Congress made a major change to the rule's enforcement mechanism last year.

Alex's take: "This sustained tug-of-war has made things a little hazy, and it's not clear where the court will land on all this. This suit has been pending for more than two years, and the court did not grant EPA the same indefinite delay it did on a cavalcade of other rules. But the judges could still decide to wipe their hands of it and avoid the headache of navigating their way to a ruling."

LEFT OUT: Not included in the White House's latest \$44 billion disaster recovery request was a \$12 billion Houston area coastal barrier project sought by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). The so-called coastal spine project aims to protect communities and infrastructure from massive storm surges, but green groups want the federal government to finish an environmental review on the project before it moves forward.

ICYMI: Merchant power companies are afraid an exemption included in the Senate and House tax bills for regulated power utilities — but not them — would leave them at a disadvantage, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). Both bills would exempt the regulated entities from the new cap on interest deductions for businesses at 30 percent of their adjusted income. "Since we compete with [regulated utilities], the tax provisions likely raise competitive issues which we will need to raise on the Hill," said John Shelk, CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association.

MAIL CALL! AIDING ZINKE'S CAUSE: Echoing Zinke's [own calls](#) from a couple weeks ago, 16 Senate Republicans released a letter Friday asking Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) to prioritize four Interior nominees for confirmation. The chamber [confirmed](#) one of the four — Brenda Burman — on Thursday, but the senators still want action on the nominations of Susan Combs to be Interior's assistant secretary of policy management and budget, Joseph Balash to be assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management and Ryan Nelson to be agency solicitor. "As you proceed in scheduling the next nominations to bring to the floor, we urge you to make these well-qualified nominees a top priority," the [letter](#), led by [Steve Daines](#), says.

Please, pretty please? Seven Senate Democrats are once again urging Trump to nominate a science adviser and fill other positions within Office of Science and Technology Policy. "Without adequate OSTP staffing, the country lacks key insights from those with deep experience in science and technology," the [letter](#), led by [Maggie Hassan](#), says.

Another RFS plea: Seven House Democrats asked Pruitt to reverse course in EPA's final renewable volume obligations regulation so it does "not unreasonably reduce advanced biofuels and cellulosic biofuel blending targets." Link [here](#).

Solar plea to Trump: Six solar finance firms are [asking](#) Trump to consider the broader ramifications of whether to slap steep tariffs on imported solar equipment would have on broader markets and industries. "Tariffs not only will substantially and negatively impact the U.S. solar sector and the 260,000-plus well paying manufacturer, supplier, developer and installer jobs it supports, but also seriously undermine the billion-dollar financial markets and companies, such as ours, that rely on the success of the domestic solar industry," they wrote.

TAKE A GLANCE! The Center for American Progress is out with [a report](#) identifying members of Congress hostile to national monuments and who sponsored bills targeting public lands access. There are 19 members, with a heavy presence of Alaskans and Utahns, called out specifically.

MOVER, SHAKER: Tom Simchak starts Nov. 28 at the National Governors Association's Environment, Energy, and Transportation Division. Simchak (an American) was previously an energy policy adviser at the British embassy.

QUICK HITS

- Former Murray maintenance chief sentenced to probation. [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#).
- Owners: Coal-Fired Power Plant Losing Money, May Be Closed. [AP](#).
- PFAS record may sink Trump EPA chemical safety nominee. [MLive](#).
- Pipeline opponents claim Enbridge skirted permit rules for storage yard. [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#).
- Norway Oil Bosses Insist End Isn't Nigh After \$35 Billion Shock. [Bloomberg](#).
- What Nevada can learn from its attempt (and failure) to deregulate the energy market in the 1990s. [Nevada Independent](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

9:30 a.m. — "[Modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement](#)," Senate Finance Committee field hearing, San Antonio Marriott Plaza Hotel, Cavalier Meeting Room, 555 S. Alamo Street, San Antonio, Texas

12:00 p.m. — "[The Carbon IRA: The Most Rad Idea You've Never Heard of For Shrinking Our Carbon Footprint](#)," U.S. Energy Association, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 550

12:00 p.m. — "[Cities Research Seminar Series: Powering Cities in the Global South: How Energy Access for All Benefits the Economy and the Environment](#)," World Resources Institute, 10 G Street NE, Suite 800

1:00 p.m. — NRDC Experts Discuss Tax Bill and the Arctic in phone call, RSVP:

eheyd@nrdc.org

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — The American Coal Ash Association holds its annual production and use news conference, National Press Club (Lisagor Room) - 529 14th Street NW

WEDNESDAY

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/11/grading-pruitt-on-his-promises-027892>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

TransCanada 'encouraged' by interest shown in KXL shipments [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/09/2017 12:39 PM EDT

TransCanada says it is "encouraged" by industry demand to reserve space on Keystone XL, but it hasn't yet committed to building the controversial project.

TransCanada received enough commitments to ship oil along the proposed 1,200-mile pipeline to make it profitable, but the company is still analyzing the conditions shippers requested, Paul Miller, TransCanada's president of liquids pipelines told a conference call. The company is targeting commitments to ship 500,000 barrels a day via 20-year contracts, he added.

"We're quite encouraged by the results," Miller said during the company's third-quarter earnings call. "I believe the conditions are manageable."

The company still needs the approval from Nebraska's Public Service Commission for the pipeline's proposed route through the state. That decision is expected later this month

"We still have a lot of work to do," Miller said. "We are still working through the bid conditions, and that will take some time. It will take us some time to review the decision from the PSC."

Overall commitments to ship oil are "substantially similar" to what the company received when Keystone XL was first proposed nearly a decade ago, TransCanada said in its quarterly earnings report.

TransCanada had asked the Alberta government to reserve space on Keystone XL to help push the project forward, according to a Bloomberg [report](#).

To view online [click here](#).

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How the Bonn climate talks survived Trump [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/17/2017 07:52 PM EDT

BONN, Germany — The White House goaded activists at the international climate talks by pushing coal and other fossil fuels. But behind closed doors, U.S. negotiators stuck to their Obama-era principles on the 2015 Paris deal — despite President Donald Trump's disavowal of the pact.

State Department negotiators at the U.N. conference that ended Saturday hewed to the United States' long-established positions on the details of how to carry out the Paris agreement. And that's the U.S. role that most foreign political leaders sought to highlight, despite the low expectations inspired by Trump's "America First" agenda and his dismissal of human-caused climate change as a hoax.

"You couldn't have expected more," said German Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks, who described the U.S. delegation as constructive and neutral. "Its diplomats who are working here, they act professionally."

White House energy adviser George David Banks portrayed the outcome in even more glowing terms, saying the U.S. had been "indispensable in thwarting efforts by some countries to get a free pass" under the Paris agreement.

The American negotiating team, Banks said, had "led across many issues, promoted U.S. national interests, and protected U.S. taxpayers and businesses."

Among the contentious issues that arose were efforts by poorer nations to allow them to use less arduous systems than wealthier countries to ensure they are measuring their greenhouse gas emissions. China had led that [push](#), which the European Union and U.S. have long opposed, though ultimately the issue was left largely unsettled.

Negotiations at the conference, which began Nov. 6, wrapped up Saturday morning after developing nations launched an 11th-hour campaign to require wealthier nations to outline in advance how much climate funding they will provide — a sticking point for countries like the U.S. that amend their budgets each year.

Although observers said the U.S. made no effort to disrupt the talks, former Obama administration climate diplomat Todd Stern said Washington was "not in the negotiations with the same credibility as before."

"It's not that the U.S. isn't there, but it's not the same," said Stern, who had led the U.S. negotiators in Paris nearly two years ago. "It's the EU, the U.K. ... New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Japan, etc. They don't weigh as much as the U.S. did, but they can be very important."

The State Department sent fewer than 20 staffers, a far smaller delegation than it has sent to other climate gatherings in recent years.

Some observers said a U.S.-sponsored panel discussion earlier this week that promoted coal, natural gas and nuclear power appeared designed to please Trump's political base and energy industry supporters in the U.S. At the event, which provoked a high-profile [protest](#), Banks told the audience that the U.S. would support "universal access" to affordable and reliable energy, which for many places in the world meant coal.

Andrew Light, who was part of Obama's delegation and is now a fellow at the World Resources Institute, said bringing that pro-fossil fuel event to the climate talks showed that the U.S. can remain a party to the international talks without substantively changing its positions.

"This administration can continue telegraphing its core beliefs, whether or not anyone one believes that with them," Light said. "In the long run there's everything to be gained from an environment where the United States does cooperate with other parties on whatever they want to cooperate on."

Other U.S. representatives, from companies to a group Democratic governors and mayors led by California Gov. Jerry Brown, sought to reassure the world that many in the U.S. still want to take action to ratchet down carbon pollution, even without Trump. Microsoft Corp. announced own its goal to slash carbon emissions 75 percent by 2030 and pitched sustainable technology, including for agriculture and land-cover mapping, in meetings it held with foreign governments.

But the talks on carrying out the Paris agreement will face major hurdles before the next major gathering next year in Poland. Countries will also face a deadline to finish deciding how they achieve the deal's goal of keeping global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius, the mark that scientists warn would cause irreversible damage.

"Parties haven't allowed the threatened U.S. withdrawal to derail this process," said Elliot Diringer, a former Clinton administration adviser who is executive vice president for the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. "They've made good progress and set themselves up for a more focused negotiation next year. At the same time, the talks here have underscored the significant political challenges ahead next year."

But Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu, the lead climate change specialist for the environment ministry in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said many major issues were pushed until next year. "I have a feeling that people were a little bit complacent," he said, disappointed in what he called a "self-fulfilling prophecy" that countries wouldn't make much progress this year.

Environmental advocates insisted they still aren't seeing the emissions reductions or money necessary to achieve the goals of the Paris deal.

"The conference gets a grade of 'meets expectations,'" said Andrew Deutz, director of international governmental relations for The Nature Conservancy.

Deutz said that while the U.S. didn't blow up the process, "the absence of national U.S. leadership was evident within the negotiating process this week and for driving more ambitious climate action in the future."

Island nations that face the most immediate threats from climate change and sea-level rise pressed their case throughout the two weeks. Allen Chastanet, the prime minister of Saint Lucia, told reporters that island nations are "paralyzed," because they can't stop rising temperatures alone.

Hurricane Maria demolished Barbuda and brought heavy damage to Puerto Rico, after passing just 40 miles from Saint Lucia.

"I have to say to you deep down inside of me I'm angry, I'm anxious and I'm fearful," he told a

news conference. "It can't be that a prime minister's only resource is to get on the side of your bed on your knees and pray, and that's what I feel every time I'm here and a hurricane is developing over the Atlantic, is 'Lord, please take care of our people.'"

Kalina Oroschakoff and Sara Stefanini contributed to this report.

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Q&A with former U.S. climate envoy Todd Stern [Back](#)

By Kalina Oroschakoff and Sara Stefanini | 11/19/2017 02:12 PM EDT

BONN, Germany — The United States traditionally pushed hard during international climate talks to ensure that both developed and developing countries shoulder the burden of dealing with global warming.

But a weakened U.S. delegation played a much more marginal role at the COP23 summit that wrapped up Friday, thanks to the Trump administration's decision to pull out of the Paris agreement.

That helped lead to the resurgence in Bonn of the idea of "differentiation," under which poorer countries do less, arguing that the rich ones caused the problem of climate change thanks to more than a century of industrialization.

Without U.S. support, the rest of the developed world is having a tougher time arguing back.

Todd Stern, the U.S. special envoy for climate change from 2009 to April 2016, spoke to POLITICO on the sidelines of the summit about what a lower-profile America means for climate talks.

This summit was meant to make progress on rules that are due at the 2018 meeting in Poland. What will be at stake at the COP24?

It's the place where all these various guidelines get done. It might be boring for readers, but it's actually really important.

Setting up a transparent monitoring system for national emissions is critical to tracking progress toward the Paris agreement's goals. Why are the discussions on the topic so tough?

One of the important sentences that we actually negotiated with China talks about essentially setting up a system where there will be flexibility provided to those developing countries who need it on basis of capacity. If you instead take that flexibility and say, OK, it applies to all developing countries, then you are kind of de facto getting back to a bifurcated system. The U.S. was always the loudest, strongest voice in pushing that back.

And now?

There were many, many countries supporting us, but that was something we cared about a lot, both for substantial reasons and political reasons. The U.S. is not in the negotiations with the same credibility as before. The EU, the U.K., the Umbrella Group countries — New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Japan, etc. — they don't weigh as much as the U.S. did, but they can be very important. There's no reason this should get messed up, but there are a bunch of countries who would like it to get messed up.

The Paris agreement helped bury the idea of differentiating responsibilities for the developing and developed sides, but the idea made a comeback in Bonn. What's behind that?

The DNA of these negotiations was [this separation](#), this firewall. It's built into the Kyoto Protocol, and it's been an article of faith for all these years for developing countries, which in the period of time from Copenhagen [in 2009] to Paris, bit by bit, got pushed back and turned into something that was absolutely still a form of differentiation but not that sharp division. It's not that countries are trying to just throw grenades. They want to go back to that more comfortable system where they're not expected to do much.

And that's a problem?

In a world where somewhere between 60 percent and 65 percent of global emissions are coming from developing countries at this point, you can't have that. We shouldn't be fighting this battle all over again. We're going to have to fight it a little bit because people are pushing. We just need to have these guidelines, implementing measures, to be faithful to what happened in Paris.

What role did coal play at this conference? A White House [coal event](#), for instance, provoked public protest in the conference halls.

I think the U.S. did a kind of stunt with that. It was designed to provoke the kind of reaction it got, I suppose. Coal continues to be a difficult political issue in Germany. It's a difficult political [issue in the U.S.], but it was a difficult issue before the election. There are not very many coal miners in either country, but there's a lot of this political attachment to that world and the symbolism of it.

Several developing countries pushed hard for a greater focus on climate efforts up to 2020. Why?

Pre-2020 is a hobby horse that a number of countries have been riding for several years now. One thing we know for sure is that issue is going to fade away before too long because it will become 2020. Obviously, what countries are doing now matters, but most countries, and this is all about developed countries, are doing what they pledged to do after Copenhagen. They have legislation, regulation, all of that. At least an element of this, I think, is a tactical way of trying to put developed countries on the defensive again. Pre-2020 is still seen as a period where the capacity to say you're the ones who are supposed to be acting is greater than post-2020.

Again, I think there's a certain amount of political theater going on.

This interview was edited for clarity and length.

This article first appeared on [POLITICO.EU](#) on Nov. 19, 2017.

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Reports: PREPA chief resigns [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/17/2017 01:53 PM EDT

The head of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority has resigned from the utility following extended power outages on the island in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, according to [news reports](#).

PREPA Director Ricardo Ramos had come under fire for signing a \$300 million contract with Whitefish Energy to restore the power grid that was destroyed by the storm. That contract with Whitefish Energy, which had only two employees when the storm hit Puerto Rico, has come under scrutiny in Congress.

The resignation will take effect today. Neither PREPA nor the governor's office were immediately available for comment.

The FBI and the House Natural Resources Committee are probing PREPA's \$300 million contract with Whitefish Energy, which had two employees when it won the no-bid contract to rebuild Puerto Rico's electric grid after the territory suffered a direct hit from Hurricane Maria in September.

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Supreme Court to settle federal role in Texas-New Mexico water dispute [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 10/10/2017 11:38 AM EDT

The Supreme Court today [said](#) it will hear oral arguments about federal involvement in a long-running water dispute between Texas, New Mexico and Colorado.

The case involves allegations from Texas that irrigators in New Mexico are sucking up water from the Rio Grande that should flow downstream under a 1938 compact. The federal government intervened as an interested party, arguing that New Mexico's actions affect its obligation to deliver Rio Grande water to Mexico, and it is seeking a court order prohibiting New Mexico from continuing the water use.

The case's special master, New Orleans attorney Gregory Grimsal — a lawyer picked by the justices to hear the case — [recommended](#) earlier this year that the Supreme Court reject parts of the U.S.' claims that apply under the compact.

The federal government objected, [arguing](#) that it can bring claims under the compact even though it is not a member because it is a "third-party beneficiary." Meanwhile, Colorado

[argued](#) that the U.S. claims should be limited to those brought under the 1906 Boundary Waters Convention between the U.S. and Mexico.

Grimsal did recommend the justices hear certain claims brought by the U.S. under federal reclamation laws.

The justices agreed to weigh only the issues determining what the federal government can contest, focusing on the "threshold" issue of the federal government's role in the case, not the underlying water use dispute, which likely will take several more years to resolve.

WHAT'S NEXT: Arguments likely will occur this winter, with a decision coming in the spring.

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POLITICO Pro Florida: U.S. Supreme Court sets arguments in Florida v. Georgia water lawsuit [Back](#)

By Bruce Ritchie | 10/10/2017 11:47 AM EDT

The U.S. Supreme Court today said it is setting oral arguments in Florida's lawsuit against Georgia over the use of water from the Apalachicola River.

That means the court isn't inclined to act quickly on a special master's recommendation to dismiss the case.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott, in 2013, sued Georgia in the Supreme Court seeking a cap on Georgia's use of water from the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers, following the collapse of the Apalachicola Bay oyster population.

After a six-week hearing in the fall of 2016, court special master Ralph Lancaster last February [recommended dismissal](#) because Florida had not included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the lawsuit, which operates federal hydropower dams on the Chattahoochee River.

Even if water use by Georgia cities and farms was capped, there was no guarantee the Corps of Engineers would provide more water to Florida, Lancaster wrote.

But the court allowed the states to file exceptions in the case and other interested parties to file briefs.

In disputing Lancaster's recommendation, [Florida told](#) the Supreme Court that it represents the state's last legal remedy for saving the Apalachicola River and the oysters and people who depend on it.

But [Georgia argued](#) that Lancaster got it right and that Florida failed to show how potentially "catastrophic" cuts in water use would benefit the downstream state.

A timetable for hearings was not set by the court today.

View the Supreme Court's Oct. 10 [list of orders here](#).

This article first appeared on [POLITICO Pro Florida](#) on Oct. 10, 2017.

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Trump reverses hunting trophy decision, says he will review [Back](#)

By Akela Lacy | 11/17/2017 08:42 PM EDT

President Donald Trump on Friday reversed his own administration's decision to allow hunters to import elephant hunting trophies from two African countries, saying he will perform a review before making changes.

Earlier this week, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced it would allow imports of wildlife trophies, including elephants, from Zimbabwe and Zambia. The move sparked immediate outcry from conservation groups and even some of President Trump's most staunch supporters.

"Put big game trophy decision on hold until such time as I review all conservation facts," Trump tweeted Friday night. "Under study for years. Will update soon with Secretary Zinke. Thank you!"

After Trump's tweet, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke released a statement confirming the decision.

"President Trump and I have talked and both believe that conservation and healthy herds are critical. As a result, in a manner compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, the issuing of permits is being put on hold as the decision is being reversed," the statement from Zinke reads.

Early Saturday, Trump retweeted prominent media figures who'd expressed their support for the policy reversal.

The original announcement made late Wednesday at the African Wildlife Consultative Forum in Tanzania received immediate backlash from conservationists and wildlife supporters, including groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and Conservation International.

Fox News host Laura Ingraham, a vocal supporter of the president, also tweeted her opposition to the measure. "I don't understand how this move by @realDonaldTrump Admin will not INCREASE the gruesome poaching of elephants. Stay tuned," Ingraham tweeted Thursday.

The National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action had applauded the move.

The decision, pending further review, would have reversed an Obama-era 2014 [decision](#) to ban all imports of elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Put big game trophy decision on hold until such time as I review all conservation facts. Under study for years. Will update soon with Secretary Zinke. Thank you!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [November 18, 2017](#)

Environmental groups applauded Trump's decision to review the policy change.

"It's great that public outrage has forced Trump to reconsider this despicable decision, but it takes more than a tweet to stop trophy hunters from slaughtering elephants and lions," said Tanya Sanerib, senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, in response to Trump's apparent change of heart. "We need immediate federal action to reverse these policies and protect these amazing animals."

A spokesperson for the Center for Biological Diversity also noted that the Fish and Wildlife Service already began issuing permits to import trophies from lion hunting. That began over a month ago, according to [ABC News](#).

During a press briefing Friday, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the decision to reverse the ban came after a review that showed the original criteria for establishing it — insufficient data from Zimbabwe and Zambia on whether or not they were effectively managing wildlife — indicated that "both Zambia and Zimbabwe had met new standards, strict international conservation standards that allowed Americans to resume hunting in those countries."

Sanders added that "a ban on importing elephant ivory from all countries remains in place," emphasizing that the process of the review of the ban's criteria started under the Obama administration, which Trump also noted in his tweet.

The White House did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

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Texas coastal spine left out of Trump disaster recovery request [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/17/2017 05:39 PM EDT

The White House's latest request for congressional disaster recovery funding does not include a \$12 billion Houston area coastal barrier project sought by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, handing a win to green groups that want the federal government to finish an environmental review on the project before it moves forward.

The White House on Friday asked lawmakers to approve \$44 billion in additional funding to aid storm-ravaged areas in Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida, including \$12 billion for a flood mitigation program run by the Community Development Block Grant.

But the coastal barrier project that was part of Abbott's \$61 billion storm recovery funding

request in late October would not qualify for that program under the rules set by the White House because it would not address the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey in August. Instead the state's so-called coastal spine project aims to protect communities and infrastructure from the kind of storm surges last seen during Hurricane Ike in 2008 that caused about \$30 billion in damages.

One of a few possible designs for the proposed coastal spine would extend a 10-mile seawall at Galveston Bay by another 50 miles and include massive floodgates that could be closed ahead of a storm to block the surges of water from pummeling the coastline.

Environmental advocates say they are not opposed to the project that's designed to protect coastal communities, critical marine and avian habitat, the Port of Houston, the Houston Ship Channel and oil refining and processing plants that are all vital to the state's economy and could create an environmental disaster if damaged.

But they say its not yet clear how a new barrier would affect the flow of water, and whether it could hurt marine and other ecosystems.

"We don't know what that would do to the ecology of the bay or to the shoreline there," said Amanda Fuller, National Wildlife Federation deputy director of Gulf of Mexico Restoration. "It's just a bunch of unknowns at this point."

The Army Corps of Engineers is performing a five-year study it expects to complete in 2021 on design options for the coastal spine that would avoid harming the marine and avian ecosystem of the Galveston Bay area that serves as a nursery for marine creatures before they mature and move into the Gulf of Mexico.

Bob Stokes, president of the Galveston Bay Foundation, which focuses on wetland preservation and restoration, said the project could be funded in the future through federal appropriations and he continues to "firmly believe that [the study] process is necessary before we fund the coastal spine."

Senate Majority Whip [John Cornyn](#) of Texas — who has [placed a hold](#) on President Donald Trump's nomination of Russell Vought to be deputy director of OMB until the Texas funding comes though — has called the president's latest recovery request "wholly inadequate."

Abbott's office did not respond to requests for comment.

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Independent power sector worried by tax carve-out for regulated utilities [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/17/2017 05:23 PM EDT

A tax carve-out for regulated power utilities included in both the House and Senate tax bills doesn't apply to merchant power companies, which fear the provision could put them at a competitive disadvantage.

Both the Senate bill that advanced out of committee and the bill passed by the House Thursday would cap interest deductions for businesses at 30 percent of their adjusted income. That would serve to offset "bonus depreciation" that the two bills include that allow businesses to deduct the full cost of capital investments from their taxes.

But regulated utilities convinced congressional tax writers to insert an exemption in the bills for them — but didn't provide the same exemption for the merchant power companies or subsidiaries of regulated companies that sell power into the competitive wholesale markets.

"Since we compete with [regulated utilities], the tax provisions likely raise competitive issues which we will need to raise on the Hill," John Schelk, CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association, a trade association which represents the owners of merchant plants. "Needless to say, our argument will be we should get equal treatment."

Winning the exception to the interest deduction has been a high priority for all power providers, since building power plants requires huge capital expenditures, and the debt required to finance them extends for decades. Regulated utilities' expenses are covered by payments from ratepayers, and they prefer using straight-line depreciation that stretches over years for their assets rather than the bonus depreciation. That bonus depreciation can threaten their rate base, since state regulators often view the quicker depreciation as a tax benefit that must be returned to ratepayers.

But independent power producers, which include market-only power plant owners as well as divisions of companies like Dynegy, NRG Energy and FirstEnergy that run competitive power plants don't get that benefit — and they want it. Companies that own merchant power plants tend to have a lot of debt from past investments, but they aren't building many new plants.

"For them, expensing the capital is not a big deal right now, so it doesn't help them," said Toby Shea, an analyst with Moody's. "But the interest expense, which they have a lot of, would help them a lot."

And while regulated utilities and unregulated utilities do not generally compete inside markets like PJM or Texas, there are exceptions. For example, Schelk points out that power plants run by regulated utilities in South Carolina and North Carolina that sometimes sell power into PJM's market would be able to offer lower prices thanks to their exemption.

"Good example is right here in Virginia," Schelk said. "Virginia is in the PJM regional market, but Dominion has rate-based generation while there are also merchant generation IPP plants in [the state]. They compete to be dispatched in PJM and also compete for procurement of new projects."

Other analysts were skeptical that the bill as written would create a big problem for independent power providers. Christi Tezak, managing director for ClearView Energy Partners, said that if competitive arms of holding companies are treated the same as independent power producers, then it's hard to see how either has an advantage in markets.

But, utilities could win a change to the bill in conference or on the Senate floor that would expand the carve out to their competitive divisions.

"If [utility holding companies] get it and IPPs don't then there would be a competitive issue vis-à-vis the two different owners.," she said.

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Zinke demands 'immediate action' on 4 Interior nominees [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/08/2017 10:59 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke sent [a letter](#) to Senate leadership demanding "immediate action" on four agency nominees, some of whom have waited four times as long as their predecessors for a vote.

"Several of our nominees for leadership positions have been waiting an exorbitant amount of time to be confirmed in the Senate," he wrote in the letter obtained today. "These delays are hampering DOI's ability to do the work of the people we are all supposed to be serving."

He called for the chamber to immediately process the nominations of Brenda Burman to lead Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, Susan Combs to be Interior's assistant secretary of policy management and budget, Joseph Balash to be assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management and Ryan Nelson to be agency solicitor.

Zinke bashed senators for working "behind the guise of the cloakroom, putting random and unknown holds on these nominations," a practice he called "senseless and unexplainable."

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Senate confirms Burman to lead Bureau of Reclamation [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 11/16/2017 06:11 PM EDT

The Senate cleared Brenda Burman's nomination to run the Bureau of Reclamation by voice vote on Thursday.

"FINALLY! Excited to finally have Brenda Burman confirmed to lead @usbr," Secretary Ryan Zinke [tweeted](#) in response.

Burman's nomination to lead the nation's wholesale water and hydroelectric power provider got caught up in the battle over Zinke's national monument designation review.

Senate Minority Whip [Dick Durbin](#) placed a hold on her nomination until he landed a meeting with Zinke to discuss the review and [lifted it](#) after that meeting took place earlier this week.

WHAT'S NEXT: Burman will assume her position running the Bureau of Reclamation.

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Yes, very	Somewhat	Neutral	Not really	Not at all

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Subject: Morning Energy: Murray benefits big league under Perry grid plan — Oil's big tax bill win — FERC back at full strength after Senate confirmations — Lamar Smith announces retirement
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 5:41:45 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 11/03/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Ben Lefebvre, Darius Dixon, Nick Juliano and Esther Whieldon

ONE REALLY BIG FAN OF PERRY'S PUSH: Energy Secretary Rick Perry's push to require power markets to cover the costs to run coal and nuclear plants that are being squeezed economically has earned a powerful supporter in President Donald Trump's orbit in the form of coal magnate Bob Murray, Pro's Darius Dixon and Eric Wolff [report](#). The proposal, which must be approved by FERC, would be mostly limited to plants in a stretch of the Midwest and Northeast where Murray's mining company, Murray Energy, is the predominant supplier. One stretch of the Rust Belt and Appalachia, overseen by an electricity market called the PJM Interconnection, accounts for roughly 44 percent of Murray's sales and Perry's rule was "certainly targeted at the PJM region," said Andy Ott, CEO of PJM.

An unlikely group of allies that includes environmental groups, the natural gas, wind and solar industries and the American Petroleum Institute has vocally opposed Perry's plan. "Customers get less than nothing while a few companies and their investors get a whole lot of something," Nora Mead Brownell, a Republican former electricity regulator, said of Perry's plan. "Money that gets spent there doesn't get invested in doing what you really need to do, which is upgrading the grid." Perry argues his proposal is an effort to ensure that the power network can withstand threats like terrorist attacks or severe weather.

Among the nation's roughly 280,000 megawatts of coal-fired power, Perry's rule is tightly written to affect only about 40,000 megawatts, according to POLITICO's analysis. Murray Energy acknowledged in written comments it has a "vital and critical interest" in whether the plan flies. "Given the current threats to those resources, Murray Energy, along with other coal producers and related industries ... is threatened with bankruptcy and significant economic harm if those resources are forced out of the market by unreasonable and unsupportable market pricing mechanisms," it wrote. Since Trump's swearing-in, Murray has made personal pleas for help in face-to-face meetings with Trump and DOE officials, including Perry and Brian McCormack, Perry's chief of staff.

WELCOME TO FRIDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and your state attorneys general turned senators are: Luther Strange, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tom Udall, John Cornyn, Kamala Harris, Heidi Heitkamp, Richard Blumenthal and Catherine Cortez Masto. For today: It was 60 years ago that the Russians sent the first animal into space. What was she and what was her name? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to adragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

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FOR YOUR AFTERNOON RADAR: Three major scientific reports acknowledging manmade climate change are expected to be released today by the Trump administration, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). They include: two volumes of the National Climate Assessment and a

draft of the State of the Carbon Cycle Report. The documents will go against numerous public statements by Trump Cabinet officials refusing to accept mainstream climate science.

OIL'S TAX WIN: Along with keeping most of their existing incentives, multinational oil companies won a new tax break that would cost the government nearly \$3.9 billion over the next decade in the latest GOP tax proposal. The House bill's elimination of a tax on "foreign base company oil related income" received relatively little attention in the initial flurry of tax-bill coverage Thursday, and it caught even some seasoned policy-watchers off guard. The tax typically applies to income from refineries, pipelines and other assets near multinational oil companies' overseas operations, according to a research note from ClearView Energy Partners. The industry has long complained that it is being treated unfairly compared to other types of industries, such as manufacturing. "FBCORI surprised us, but it appears to reinforce the pro-fossil bent of House Republican leadership," ClearView analysts wrote Thursday night.

Two thumbs up: The oil industry also loves the 20 percent corporate rate outlined in the proposal and is happy to see no changes to two provisions that favor its high-capital, low-operating-cost business model (the intangible drilling cost deduction and well depletion allowance, for those paying attention at home). Meanwhile, a pair of credits/deductions the House plan does jettison won't shave too much off the bottom line for most companies, industry folks tell ME. In a statement, API President Jack Gerard said "significant proposals, like lowering the corporate tax rate and strong cost-recovery provisions, will help ensure that our tax system is smart, fair and pro-growth to benefit American consumers, businesses, and the economy."

Horse-trading ahead: Release of the House bill is a starting point for tough negotiations in the weeks and months to come, in which energy provisions will, admittedly, play a relatively minor role. One House idea already encountering headwinds from the upper chamber is the proposal to [slash the value](#) of the production tax credit. "The wind energy production tax credit is already being phased out under a compromise brokered in 2015. It shouldn't be reopened," Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) said in a statement. "I'm working within the Senate Finance Committee to see that the commitment made to a multi-year phase-out remains intact."

FULL HOUSE: For the first time in more than two years, when Phil Moeller left the agency, FERC is on the path to having all five leadership seats filled again. Kevin McIntyre, President Donald Trump's pick to lead the agency, and Democratic commissioner Rich Glick, were confirmed Thursday afternoon. The pair still need to be officially sworn in to seal the deal, but they're both locals so we expect them to take the oath pretty soon. McIntyre and Glick have terms running through 2023 and 2022, respectively.

The hot potato: FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee passes the baton. During Kentucky native's brief tenure in the agency's center seat, Perry lobbed — as former FERC Chairman Pat Wood has called it — "a scud missile of the NOPR" at regulators, directing them to act on a controversial plan to prop up coal and nuclear power plants. FERC is taking reply comments through Tuesday, and the agency is expected to stick to the Dec. 11 deadline to take some "final action." Given the particularly political lens FERC has been seen through over the past few months, FERC World will also be trying to read between the lines of McIntyre's staffing decisions and how he addresses the agency's independence.

Filling out DOE: The Senate sent Perry a few extra hands to run the Energy Department. Paul Dabbar and Mark Menezes were confirmed as undersecretaries of science and energy, respectively. Steven Winberg, Trump's pick to lead the agency's fossil energy office, also got a

thumbs-up from lawmakers.

Attractions yet to come: William Wehrum's nomination to run EPA's air office may get a Senate floor vote as soon as next week after Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) filed cloture Thursday, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#).

Oh, and: Trump announced late Thursday his nomination of Linda Capuano, a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy's Center for Energy Studies, to run the Energy Information Administration. She's previously been a vice president at both Marathon Oil Co. and Advanced Energy Industries. Biography [here](#).

SCIENCE CHAIRMAN CALLS IT QUILTS: Noting his House Science chairmanship runs out next year, [Lamar Smith announced](#) his retirement Thursday. Since ascending to the top of the science panel in 2013, the controversial Texan has [tussled](#) with academics, scientific organizations and government regulators, with Obama-era figures from the National Science Foundation, EPA and DOE among those who ended up in his crosshairs. The vocal climate science skeptic undermined the Obama administration's efforts to address climate change and elevated the minority of scientists who question that human activity drives the problem to equal footing as others. Pro's Darius Dixon has more [here](#).

Smith's take: "The time is the right time. No regrets. Well, I should quote Frank Sinatra in 'My Way' where he said 'regrets I have a few but too few to mention,'" he told reporters.

Science organizations and green groups welcome his exit: Andrew Rosenberg with the Union of Concerned Scientists expressed hope his exit would allow the science community to rebuild its relationship with Congress. "I hope that the next representative to serve as chair will return this committee to its intended purpose—strengthening America's scientific enterprise, providing thoughtful and constructive oversight of federal policy and protecting the health and safety of the people Congress is supposed to serve," he said.

Who might the next chairman be? Current Vice Chairman [Frank Lucas](#) didn't rule out a bid to succeed Smith but noted Financial Services Chairman [Jeb Hensarling](#) is also departing Congress. "Life's all about options, right?" he quipped to reporters.

IT'S LAW: Trump signed into law legislation [S. 190 \(115\)](#) that exempts certain equipment that needs to remain on at all times from energy use restrictions for an additional six years.

STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE: Two corn-state Republican EPW senators — [Deb Fischer](#) and [Joni Ernst](#) — are publicly undecided about Kathleen Hartnett White's nomination to run the White House Council on Environmental Quality after meeting with her over past critical comments toward the Renewable Fuel Standard. "I am withholding judgement right now," Fischer told reporters Thursday. A spokeswoman for Ernst said she plans to ask additional questions on White's views at her Nov. 8 confirmation hearing. Remember: Just one Republican defection sinks a nomination in the tightly divided EPW panel.

What has White said about the RFS? She has been far more vocally opposed than even Bill Wehrum, whose selection to run the air office was briefly delayed over the issue. Back in July 2013, she [wrote](#): "It is time to repeal the renewable fuel standard — not to expand or entrench this market distortion." White also wrote its importance to the Iowa presidential caucuses explains the durability of the "counterproductive and ethically dubious" RFS in [her book](#).

She's [repeatedly argued](#) biofuels are creating a "[global food crisis](#)" and urged Congress to end the program's "destructive food-as-fuel folly."

Fears of a repeat from some: [Jim Inhofe](#) told ME "there's reason to suspect" the bloc of biofuels backers might withhold support for White over her RFS stance and called their efforts to impede the Wehrum nomination "a little extreme." But Chairman [John Barrasso](#), as always, projected confidence when asked if he worried they'd derail the confirmation process: "I'm committed to the president's nominees and we're going to go ahead with the hearing next week."

WITH SOME HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS: In the 24 hours before he sent his hotly anticipated national monument report to the White House, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke called just one non-GOP lawmaker — Maine Independent Sen. [Angus King](#), Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#), citing copies of Zinke's [August](#) and [September](#) calendars. Among those he called on Aug. 23 were Sens. [Orrin Hatch](#), [Dean Heller](#) and Murkowski, Reps. [Rob Bishop](#) and [Greg Walden](#), and the Republican governors of Utah, Maine and New Mexico.

Speaking of which, six green groups are suing Interior and the White House Council on Environmental Quality for copies of Zinke's national monuments report and related review records. The [suit](#), filed Thursday by Earthjustice on behalf of the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Wilderness Society and three other groups, say the agency has not responded to their public records requests.

MORE QUESTIONS ON WHITEFISH: Senate Homeland Security ranking member [Claire McCaskill](#) released a [set of letters](#) to FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers and Whitefish Energy seeking additional information on the now-cancelled grid restoration contract. Among other things, she alleges the Puerto Rican utility may have already used FEMA funds to pay Whitefish, notes the Army Corps also considered using the tiny Montana-based company and questions a similar \$200 million contract with Oklahoma-based Cobra Acquisitions.

9/11 invoked in EPA's Puerto Rican response: New York Rep. [Jerry Nadler](#) slammed EPA's assurances that drinking water around Superfund sites in Puerto Rico is safe to drink as "eerily similar" to the agency's response following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "This is exactly what we got from EPA after 9/11... and thousands of people are sick and hundreds of people are dead because [air quality levels] weren't fine. And that's why I'm skeptical," he said. Video [here](#).

MAIL CALL! GET SERIOUS ABOUT TRANSPORTATION-RELATED EMISSIONS: The New England Power Generators Association, along with several environmental and science groups, asked four governors — Massachusetts' Charlie Baker, Connecticut's Dan Malloy, Rhode Island's Gina Raimondo and Vermont's Phi Scott — to develop and implement a "regional, market-based policy" to address greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. Letter link [here](#).

Waiver please? Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf asked Pruitt in [a letter](#) Thursday to waiver RFS volume requirements. "I request that you reduce the 2017 and 2018 volumes to a level that avoids the severe economic harm experienced by the Northeast region of the United States as a result of the high costs of purchasing RINs to comply with the RFS," he wrote.

Higher park fees? Please no! Ninety House Democrats, led by Arizona's [Tom O'Halleran](#), sent Zinke [a letter](#) Thursday urging him not to follow through with plans to raise entrance fees to 17 national parks. "Raising the entrance fees to these popular destinations will make our

public lands inaccessible to hardworking families, and it will devastate tribal and rural economies that support tourism," they wrote.

NEW SCIENTIST WHISTLEBLOWER HOTLINE LAUNCHED: 314 Action invited 36,638 government scientists at EPA, NASA and the National Science Foundation to anonymously report examples of science being undermined. Website with more information [here](#).

PRICE SHOCKER! Resources for the Future released a study Thursday finding releases from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve can have substantial effects on oil prices and spreads. Link [here](#).

POINTS FOR HONESTY: Via Rolling Stone's [Matt Laslo](#): "I don't think frankly that you need an EPA period," Rep. [Liz Cheney](#) tells me... "98% of the environmental regulation being done effectively at the state level that's where it ought to be," Cheney continued

WHO'S GRAMIN': Jack Gerard, the president and chief executive of the American Petroleum Institute, has joined Instagram, which the association says makes him the first head of a Washington trade group who's active on the platform. You can check out his Instas of children and the Oval Office [here](#) (h/t POLITICO Influence).

QUICK HITS:

— The Puerto Rico Contract's Lack Of Transparency? It's Not Unusual. [International Business Times](#).

— EPA's Pruitt and staff to attend chemical industry meeting at luxury resort next week. [Washington Post](#).

— Clash emerges over Puerto Rico power restoration. [AP](#).

— Kentucky coal report shows no sustained job rebound so far under Trump. [Lexington Herald-Leader](#).

— US coal's upturn favours open-pit mines in western states. [Financial Times](#).

— Trump Team to Promote Fossil Fuels and Nuclear Power at Bonn Climate Talks. [New York Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

12:30 p.m. — "[Dr. Ben Zaitchik on Water, Food, and Energy in the Eastern Nile Basin](#)," Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies , 1619 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Rome Auditorium

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/11/murray-benefits-big-league-under-perry-grid-plan-025368>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Major climate science reports coming Friday [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 11/02/2017 06:19 PM EDT

The Trump administration will release three major scientific reports on Friday acknowledging manmade climate change, according to a source familiar with the studies.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program will publish two volumes of the National Climate Assessment, which is required by law to be issued every four years and expected in late 2018. The first volume is a final version of the Climate Science Special Report. The second is a draft for public comment that focuses on impacts of climate change on humans and the environment.

USGCRP also will post a draft of the State of the Carbon Cycle Report, a supporting document.

An early version of the science report, published by the New York Times in August, found that human activity is the driving force behind increasing temperatures that are already intensifying extreme weather and causing sea-level rise.

The reports will contradict President Donald Trump and cabinet officials like EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who have expressed doubts about mainstream climate science. Some green advocates had worried the administration might suppress the research.

The source told POLITICO that the reports, which include the work of multiple agencies and are reviewed by outside scientists, are expected to stick to the science, avoiding discussions of politics or mitigation policies.

USGCRP was not available to comment.

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House tax bill slashes value of wind energy tax credit [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 11/02/2017 02:20 PM EDT

The House tax bill released Thursday would substantially reduce the value of a key wind energy incentive, tighten requirements on what renewable energy companies have to do to qualify for tax credits, extend a nuclear energy tax break, and restore support for clean energy technologies that had been "orphaned" from an earlier tax extenders law.

The bill also eliminates an electric vehicle tax credit and jettisons some little-used oil industry tax breaks — as well as getting rid of the more significant domestic production tax deduction enjoyed by oil companies and other manufacturers.

The wind industry was quick to condemn the changes to its tax treatment.

"Despite comments to the contrary, this proposal reneges on the tax reform deal that was already agreed to, and would impose a retroactive tax hike on an entire industry," Tom Kiernan, CEO of the American Wind Energy Association, said in a statement. "The House proposal would pull the rug out from under 100,000 U.S. wind workers and 500 American factories, including some of the fastest growing jobs in the country. We expect members of the House and Senate to oppose any proposal that fails to honor that commitment, and we will fight hard to see that wind energy continues to work for America."

Here are some highlights from the [text](#) and a [section-by-section summary](#) provided by the Ways and Means committee.

— **PTC cutbacks:** The bill would reduce the value of the Production Tax Credit to 1.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, the level it was set at in 1992, rather than indexing it for inflation. That would reduce its value far beyond the terms of a tax credit phase-out that was implemented with bipartisan support in 2015. Wind farms and other eligible projects that begin construction this year can now claim a 1.9 cents/kWh credit, down from 2.3 cents/kWh for projects that started last year. The credit is scheduled to disappear for projects built after 2019 under current law, a schedule maintained in the House bill.

Developers also would face tougher requirements to claim the credit, the value of which is determined by when construction begins. The House bill requires a "continuous program of construction" until a facility comes online in order to qualify for the credit, eliminating provisions of existing law that allow developers to make "safe harbor" investments to qualify. The Joint Committee on Taxation says eliminating the inflation-adjustment and tightening the construction requirements will save \$12.3 billion over 10 years, according to the bill summary.

— **ITC repealed after 2027, orphan credits revived :** The House bill extends the investment tax credit for a set of "orphaned" technologies left out of the 2015 legislation phasing out the ITC and PTC over five years. Fuel cells, small wind turbines, combined heat and power systems and microturbines can now claim the ITC until Jan. 1, 2022, with the credits phasing down at the same rate as the solar ITC. But what was to be a permanent 10 percent tax credit for solar investments will now terminate at the end of 2026. The House bill includes similar "continuous construction" requirements for the ITC as for the PTC. The changes would cost the government \$1.2 billion in reduced revenues over 10 years, according to JCT estimates cited in the bill summary.

— **Advanced nuclear tax credit extended:** The bill extends a tax credit for advanced nuclear projects, allowing the secretary of Treasury to transfer unused credits after 2020, which was the in-service deadline under current law. The extension has long been a priority for South Carolina Republican Sens. [Lindsey Graham](#) and [Tim Scott](#), among others. The credits would cost \$400 million over 10 years.

— **Utilities keep interest deduction:** The bill would change how much loan interest some businesses can deduct from their taxes, while allowing them to take advantage of full expensing of capital investments. However, it excludes regulated utilities from the new rules, providing a win for the industry. Eric Grey, director of government relations for the Edison Electric Institute, a trade group, told POLITICO in September that losing the interest tax deduction was a major concern for utilities. Overall, JCT estimates the deduction-and-expensing changes would save the government \$172 billion over 10 years.

— **No more 199:** The House bill would eliminate the domestic manufacturing credit known as

section 199. Current law allows certain oil and gas companies to claim a 6 percent tax deduction, and other manufacturers can claim a 9 percent deduction, but the House bill would strip section 199 from the tax code starting next year. Doing so would save \$95.2 billion over 10 years.

— **Minor oil credits repealed:** The bill repeals two small oil industry credits that have barely been used because they only kick in when commodity prices are low. Repealing the enhanced oil recovery credit would cost the government about \$200 million over 10 years, while eliminating the marginal well production credit would have no effect on revenues.

— **EVs lose credit:** The bill repeals a \$7,500 tax credit for electric vehicles. It is part of a slew of tax credits, along with a mortgage credit, and an adoption credit, that the bill proposes repealing. Repealing all of the credits would save \$4 billion over 10 years, but the summary does not include a JCT estimate for the electric vehicle credit alone.

— **Biodiesel, CCS missing:** An expired biodiesel blenders credit was not restored, something likely to become an issue in the Senate where Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) wants it revived as a producers credit; and a credit for carbon capture and sequestration did not get in the text, despite having bipartisan support.

To view online [click here](#).

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Senate tees up Wehrum vote next week [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/02/2017 05:56 PM EDT

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) filed cloture today on William Wehrum's nomination to run EPA's air office, setting up a floor vote for as early as next week.

Wehrum's committee vote last week was held up briefly over a spat between corn-state Republicans and an EPA proposal to weaken biodiesel mandates. EPA subsequently promised not to roll back the mandates and Wehrum cleared committee on an 11-10 party-line vote.

It is not clear precisely when the Wehrum vote will occur.

McConnell also filed cloture on nominees to the Transportation Department, Justice Department and National Labor Relations Board. A vote on the DOJ nominee is slated for noon on Tuesday.

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Lamar Smith won't seek reelection to House [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/02/2017 03:40 PM EDT

Rep. Lamar Smith, the controversial chairman of the House Science Committee, announced Thursday that he will leave Congress when his term ends in 2018.

The 16-term Texas Republican is one of the longest-serving members of the state's congressional delegation, and has often tussled with academics, scientific organizations and government regulators since become Science chairman in 2013. In a letter to constituents, Smith said there were several reasons he is choosing not to seek reelection next year, including that he will complete his term as chairman of the House Science Committee. Smith said he is looking forward to spending more time with his grandchildren, and "I hope to find other ways to stay involved in politics."

This year, Smith has been instrumental in [resurfacing](#) old allegations about Russian efforts to fund activists opposed to oil and gas drilling, an effort critics say is designed to distract from controversy over whether any members of President Donald Trump's campaign were involved with Russia's efforts to disrupt last year's election. On Tuesday, he [wrote](#) to executives at Facebook, Twitter and Alphabet requesting information about Russian purchases of anti-fracking ads on social media platforms.

Smith said he looks forward to staying busy.

"With over a year remaining in my term, there is still much to do," he wrote in the letter Thursday. "There is legislation to enact, dozens of hearings to hold, and hundreds of votes to cast."

During the Obama administration, officials at the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Energy Department all found themselves in Smith's cross-hairs. The 69-year-old lawmaker, who previously chaired the House Judiciary Committee, also made regular attempts to expand his committee's jurisdiction over cybersecurity to launch far-reaching probes targeting the New York Federal Reserve, Healthcare.gov and the companies that provided software to Hillary Clinton's email server.

He antagonized the broader science community when he touted a number of NSF grants as "frivolous" and sought to restructure how different areas of science were funded by the federal government.

Smith has also used his perch on the Science panel to undermine the Obama administration's efforts to address climate change, elevating several global warming skeptics to question the agreement among the vast majority of climate scientists that humans are the main driver of the phenomenon.

Smith's 21st District, which takes in parts of Austin and San Antonio as well as rural counties to the west, has been solidly Republican in the past. Mitt Romney won nearly 60 percent of the vote there in 2012.

But Trump got 52 percent to Hillary Clinton's 42 percent in the district in 2016, and several Democrats saw an opportunity to challenge Smith before he announced his retirement. One Democrat, veteran Joseph Kopser, outraised Smith in the third quarter and has over \$219,000 in his campaign account.

"The people of Texas are losing a dedicated public servant and skilled legislator, but we are confident they will select another conservative Republican like Chairman Smith who shares

their values," said National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Steve Stivers (R-Ohio).

Smith' relationship with Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, the top Democrat on the Science Committee and a fellow Texan, has been rocky for years. Both lawmakers are soft-spoken and have served together in Congress for more than two decades. But Johnson has accused Smith of bringing "disrepute to our institution" and turning his panel into "little more than an arm of the Republican National Committee," particularly when he started issuing subpoenas in 2013, the first in 21 years.

Smith has subpoenaed the EPA for health data used for clean air regulations, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the suspicion that a scientific paper on climate change was mishandled.

Scott Bland and John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Lamar Smith plows through criticism to create 'activist' Science Committee [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 08/12/2016 05:03 AM EDT

The escalating subpoena showdown between Rep. [Lamar Smith](#) and two state attorneys general is the culmination of a long-running effort by the Science chairman to assert unclaimed territory and turn a once-sleepy panel into an investigative powerhouse.

The Texas Republican, who took over as chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee in 2013, has tried to shift federal science dollars toward basic research and away from ambitious efforts to reshape the energy system that he feels the private sector should be tackling instead. But Smith has earned more attention for a series of confrontations with scientists, activists and public officials that have raised the public profile of what has traditionally been a B-list committee.

Smith accuses the Obama administration and environmental activists of politicizing scientists' findings about climate change in an effort to expand the size of government and more aggressively regulate businesses. Democrats say Smith is doing the bidding of his donors in the fossil fuel industry to shield companies from having to pay to reduce their carbon emissions.

The National Science Foundation, NOAA, EPA and the Energy Department all have found themselves in Smith's crosshairs, and the 69-year-old lawmaker has seized on his jurisdiction over cybersecurity to launch far-reaching probes targeting the New York Federal Reserve, Healthcare.gov and the companies that provided software to Hillary Clinton's email server.

When Congress reconvenes next month, Smith will have to decide whether to escalate his showdown with the AGs of New York and Massachusetts, both of whom [rejected subpoenas](#) from Smith seeking records related to their own [investigations](#) into whether ExxonMobil misled the public about climate change. Smith also has subpoenaed several nonprofit groups

who worked with the AGs. The chairman acknowledges his request is likely unprecedented but says his goal is to protect scientists from political interference.

"It's bigger than Exxon. It's the whole idea of trying to silent dissent and trying to silent what I consider to be legitimate scientific skepticism maybe," Smith told POLITICO last month in a wide-ranging interview in his personal office. "But they clearly are trying to intimidate individuals and trying to stop them from claiming that the science is not settled and that's about as basic as it comes when you talk about academic freedom, scientific right of speech or whatever."

Smith's critics argue that it's the chairman who is guilty of using intimidation tactics.

"He's using the chairmanship of the Science Committee, in my view, not only in a very partisan way but as a political tool, not really in consultation with or listening to the science community," said Andrew Rosenberg, a former regional administrator at NOAA and professor of natural resources at the University of New Hampshire.

"He's basically turned the entire discussion around the Exxon issue on its head," added Rosenberg, who now directs the Center for Science and Democracy with the Union of Concerned Scientists, which is refusing to comply with a subpoena from Smith. "That somehow we, the Union of Concerned Scientists and other organizations and state attorneys general, are trying to stifle scientific speech when in fact what we are saying is that Exxon did that — they suppressed the science that they had internally."

Rep. [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#), a fellow Texan, has excoriated Smith's work from her post as the panel's top Democrat.

Both lawmakers are soft-spoken and have served together in Congress for more than two decades, which makes her criticism all the more biting. In a series of dismissive letters and statements challenging his various investigations, Johnson has accused Smith of bringing "disrepute to our institution" and turning his panel into "little more than an arm of the Republican National Committee."

Johnson first felt that Smith was veering off-course in 2013 when he issued the [committee's first subpoena](#) in 21 years, hoping to get the EPA to turn over health data it used for its clean air regulations even though the agency said the information belonged to Harvard and the American Cancer Society.

Last year, Smith subpoenaed records from NOAA under the suspicion that a [scientific paper](#) refuting a widely touted "hiatus" in global warming was mishandled because it did not incorporate satellite data. Smith accused the agency of relying on "clearly cherry-picked" data to produce "politically correct science." Smith says an anonymous whistleblower told the committee the paper was rushed and the episode has made him question the peer review process at Science, which has long enjoyed a reputation as one of the most respected journals.

NOAA says the paper's nine authors did not incorporate satellite measurements because they were studying a dataset of land stations, ships and buoys at sea, and 23 [former NOAA scientists](#), who have collectively worked under every president since Richard Nixon, say Smith's charge is baseless. Moreover, after corrections were made to satellite data this spring, they too [refuted the hiatus](#), although there's still [debate](#) over the degree of warming. There also haven't been any complaints filed with NOAA's anonymous scientific integrity system, the

agency said.

Smith's critics say the episode exemplifies the chilling effect that such inquiries can have on the scientific community.

"Anybody can look at the paper, the methods and the data, and the results. And they can disagree with them or can come up with a different analysis — knock yourself out. That's the scientific process," Rosenberg said. "Now, we're going to investigate somebody's emails because you didn't like the answer? Tell them to take a month out of their time, compile everything you've ever written with the word 'climate' in it? That's not supporting the science work of the country."

Given the long odds of Democrats flipping control of the House next year, Smith is likely to return to his post, where he is eligible for one more term as chairman under party rules and could try to stretch his portfolio even further.

"Certainly, we are taking initiatives that haven't been taken on before, but I feel like I'm in Congress to do more than just vote," Smith said in the interview. "I want to maximize the potential of the committee, simple as that. And one way to maximize the potential is to explore the jurisdiction that we have."

Those following the Science Committee scratched their heads when Smith pinged the New York Fed about a [Bangladeshi "cyberheist."](#) subpoenaed Healthcare.gov, and sent letters to companies involved with the server Hillary Clinton used while secretary of State.

But the Science Committee has jurisdiction over federal cybersecurity programs as well as cyber standards developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

People weren't thinking about cybersecurity 15 years ago, said David Stonner, who led NSF's congressional affairs for 16 years. "And the fact that it has become a huge issue opens the door for whoever on the Hill wants to be responsible for oversight of this issue, rather than oversight of just an agency."

Smith says he takes a special point of pride in all the buzz around the committee's work.

"I will say that one of my goals when I became chairman was to make the committee a committee that attracted members — that people wanted to be a part of what we were doing," Smith said. When he took over the panel, he said, it was the first time in 20 years that there were more Republican lawmakers who wanted to be on the committee than there were spots for.

Rep. [Randy Weber](#), a two-term Texas Republican who chairs a Science subcommittee, was attracted to Smith's panel by an opportunity to represent his constituents who work at NASA's nearby Johnson Space Center and to scrutinize activities across the federal government.

"Chairman Smith does a great job attracting new members, because he gives every member an opportunity to take a leading role in committee action," Weber said in an emailed statement. Smith, he added, "consistently reinforces the principle of good governance and fiscal responsibility over the federal agencies the committee oversees."

Johnson, on the other hand, is convinced that Smith has driven the committee off the reservation.

"I don't expect that we're going to agree on everything. But it's really not a political committee," said Johnson, who has served on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in addition to the science panel over her nearly 24 years in Congress. "For the most part I'd bragged for all these years that I was on two committees that didn't get into the politics and would stick to the issues. ... I can no longer say that."

For all his activism, Smith is not one to display a bombastic personality. He doesn't raise his voice and says that he doesn't let the many critiques of his leadership sink in.

Oddly enough, Smith has an unlikely advocate on the Science Committee: Rep. [Alan Grayson](#), a controversial left-wing Senate candidate uninhibited in his criticisms of Republicans.

"The chairman is a fair-minded, honest person," the Florida Democrat said of Smith. "In his heart he is a legislator, not an ideologue."

Smith appears to be a man who truly loves science — he draws inspiration from an "ultra-deep" field photograph of galaxies taken by the Hubble Space Telescope hanging near his desk, and talks fondly of taking physics and astronomy in college — but the Texan is considerably out of step with the larger science community on climate change.

He considers himself a "climate skeptic" who wants more detail in the science behind global warming — a position that distinguishes him from someone like GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump, who dismisses the issue as a hoax.

"I think human activity does have an impact on climate," Smith said. "I don't think we know exactly how much of an impact and I think that is a separate legitimate debate despite what some people might suggest."

To Smith, in clamoring for government programs to reduce carbon emissions, policymakers have lost faith in technology.

"Throughout our nation's history technology has always solved our problems and why suddenly now we don't think technology will solve our problems, I don't know," he said, adding that he supports more spending on R&D for "coming up with technological breakthroughs to address climate change."

Alongside his battle with NOAA, Smith ruffled feathers in the broader science community when he touted a number of NSF grants as "frivolous."

"The purpose of the science committees should be to help research progress, to get the barriers out of the way, not to generate barriers," said Rush Holt, a physicist and former Democratic congressman who is the CEO for the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Holt, who said he didn't have "personal bone to pick" with Smith, said, "it was not lost on the science community that the House Science Committee, several times in the couple of years, has substituted political opinion for peer review."

Basic R&D is the bread-and-butter issue of the Science Committee, and Smith's support of it isn't unusual for a Republican. But he still managed to ruffle the ranks of the science community last year in his efforts to renew the America COMPETES Act, a major piece of research legislation. The bill cut spending levels for renewables and earth science, parceled

out funds depending on preferred fields and would require NSF grants to include an explanation of why they're in the "national interest."

Smith and his staff say that Congress has a responsibility to set priorities, and to some degree believe previous Science committee leaders have treated the science community with kid gloves even though most of them are accepting taxpayer cash.

"I think that there was initially pushback by academics and other researchers because they weren't used to anybody conducting any kind of oversight as to how the taxpayer dollars were being spent," Smith said. "And I consider that ... to be my obligation and responsibility."

A member of Smith's staff put it more bluntly: "Back in the good old days, very often, chairmen of the Science Committee were shoveling gold off the stagecoach. We're not in that era right now. We're in an era of very tight fiscal constraints and in general, if you can maintain the fraction of the federal spending dollars that basic research gets, it's a win every year."

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Lamar Smith won't seek reelection to House [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 11/02/2017 03:49 PM EDT

Rep. [Lamar Smith](#), the controversial chairman of the House Science Committee, announced Thursday that he will leave Congress when his term ends in 2018.

The 16-term Texas Republican is one of the longest-serving members of the state's congressional delegation, and has often [tussled](#) with academics, scientific organizations and government regulators since become Science chairman in 2013. In a letter to constituents, Smith said there were several reasons he is choosing not to seek reelection next year, including that he will complete his term as chairman of the House Science Committee. Smith said he is looking forward to spending more time with his grandchildren, and "I hope to find other ways to stay involved in politics."

This year, Smith has been instrumental in [resurfacing](#) old allegations about Russian efforts to fund activists opposed to oil and gas drilling, an effort critics say is designed to distract from controversy over whether any members of President Donald Trump's campaign were involved with Russia's efforts to disrupt last year's election. On Tuesday, he [wrote](#) to executives at Facebook, Twitter and Alphabet requesting information about Russian purchases of anti-fracking ads on social media platforms.

Smith said he looks forward to staying busy.

"With over a year remaining in my term, there is still much to do," he wrote in the letter Thursday. "There is legislation to enact, dozens of hearings to hold, and hundreds of votes to cast."

During the Obama administration, officials at the National Science Foundation, the

Environmental Protection Agency and the Energy Department all found themselves in Smith's cross-hairs. The 69-year-old lawmaker, who previously chaired the House Judiciary Committee, also made regular attempts to expand his committee's jurisdiction over cybersecurity to launch far-reaching probes targeting the New York Federal Reserve, Healthcare.gov and the companies that provided software to Hillary Clinton's email server.

He antagonized the broader science community when he touted a number of NSF grants as "frivolous" and sought to restructure how different areas of science were funded by the federal government.

Smith has also used his perch on the Science panel to undermine the Obama administration's efforts to address climate change, elevating several global warming skeptics to question the agreement among the vast majority of climate scientists that humans are the main driver of the phenomenon.

Smith's 21st District, which takes in parts of Austin and San Antonio as well as rural counties to the west, has been solidly Republican in the past. Mitt Romney won nearly 60 percent of the vote there in 2012.

But Trump got 52 percent to Hillary Clinton's 42 percent in the district in 2016, and several Democrats saw an opportunity to challenge Smith before he announced his retirement. One Democrat, veteran Joseph Kopser, outraised Smith in the third quarter and has over \$219,000 in his campaign account.

"The people of Texas are losing a dedicated public servant and skilled legislator, but we are confident they will select another conservative Republican like Chairman Smith who shares their values," said National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman [Steve Stivers](#) (R-Ohio).

Smith' relationship with Rep. [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#), the top Democrat on the Science Committee and a fellow Texan, has been rocky for years. Both lawmakers are soft-spoken and have served together in Congress for more than two decades. But Johnson has accused Smith of bringing "disrepute to our institution" and turning his panel into "little more than an arm of the Republican National Committee," particularly when he started issuing subpoenas in 2013, the first in 21 years.

Smith has subpoenaed the EPA for health data used for clean air regulations, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under the suspicion that a scientific paper on climate change was mishandled.

Scott Bland and John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

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Calendar: Zinke primarily called GOP lawmakers, governors ahead of sending monuments report [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 11/02/2017 07:20 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke called mostly Republican lawmakers and governors the day before he sent his national monument report to the White House, according to copies of Zinke's [August](#) and [September](#) calendars the Interior Department released today.

Zinke's calls on Aug. 23 included Sens. [Lisa Murkowski](#), [Orrin Hatch](#) and [Dean Heller](#), Reps. [Rob Bishop](#) and [Greg Walden](#), and the governors of Utah, Maine and New Mexico, among others. Sen. [Angus King](#) (I-Maine) was the only non-Republican to receive a call that day, less than 24 hours before Zinke [submitted](#) his draft monument recommendations. Zinke met earlier in the month with Democratic Sens. [Ron Wyden](#) and [Jeff Merkley](#).

White House officials involved in the monument discussions included energy advisor Mike Catanzaro, Intergovernmental Affairs Director Justin Clark, Domestic Policy Council Director Andrew Bromberg, Cabinet Secretary Bill McGinley and White House deputy chief of staff Rick Dearborn, according to Zinke's calendar entries.

The calendar also showed that Zinke was off for two weeks earlier in August, just before the report was due. The secretary's wife, Lolita, posted photos to social media of the couple vacationing in the Mediterranean, drawing flak from [critics](#) who said he was not sufficiently focused on the monument review.

Only a few meetings were listed in August and September involving energy issues including one with oil and gas exploration company Hilcorp Energy CEO Jeffrey Hildebrand and some on more general topics such as sage grouse in early August and another on "solar emphasis areas" in early September.

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Subject: Morning Energy: Offshore wind faces serious legal test — Trump team won't rule out international energy sanctions — Signs of life in filling political agency vacancies
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 5:49:57 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 05/15/2017 05:43 AM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff, Esther Whieldon and Anca Gurzu

OFFSHORE WIND'S BIGGEST HURDLE? Legal action from several cities, fisheries and fishery associations in New England, New York and New Jersey is threatening to delay the growth of the nascent offshore wind industry, Pro's Esther Whieldon [reports](#). The suit threatens to set back a clean energy industry that has found itself in the new administration's good graces. Notwithstanding President Donald Trump's [past battles](#) with offshore wind farms and his work to reverse Obama-era climate change policies, his administration has so far supported offshore wind projects. Of more than 14,000 megawatts of offshore wind power installed globally, just 30 megawatts are so far operating in the U.S., but wind developers are eager to grow that number. BOEM is considering additional lease sales in Massachusetts, New York, California, South Carolina and Hawaii.

A loss in the New York case "would likely delay the new American energy revolution by a couple years," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, a wind industry supporter. The U.S. District Court for D.C. in February [rejected](#) the fisheries' request to put Statoil's lease on hold, but a hearing has not been scheduled. Plaintiffs argue BOEM violated the National Environmental Policy Act by failing to adequately consider the effects of granting offshore wind leases on their businesses or to consider alternative sites. "They have offered no off-ramp, no way to avoid litigation in this matter because they never offered a process to discuss location," Drew Minkiewicz, a partner at the firm Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, tells Esther.

EVERYTHING 'ON THE TABLE' FOR SAUDI ARABIA: The president departs for his first international trip Friday and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley told ABC's "[This Week](#)" Sunday that everything's "on the table" to get Saudi Arabia — where he will be stopping first — more involved in the fight against ISIS. "I would never say that there's anything off the table," Haley said when asked if Trump would halt purchasing oil from Saudi Arabia if they didn't commit additional ground troops or funds to the fight. "But that's not the intention of why he's going." Trump told [The New York Times](#) in March 2016 "Oh yeah, sure. I would do that" when asked if he'd consider stopping oil purchases from Saudi Arabia.

On North Korea: Haley also raised the possibility of invoking new sanctions on North Korea, including several energy-related ones, after the reclusive nation [tested another missile](#) over the weekend. "I mean there's a lot of sanctions left that we can start to do, whether it's with oil, whether it's with energy, whether it's with their maritime ships, exports, we can do a lot of different things that we haven't done yet," she said. "So our options are there."

WELCOME TO MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the 18th-century era George Clinton was our nation's second-longest serving governor. For today: What are the three U.S. states that were previously independent countries? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ADMINISTRATION FINALLY STAFFING UP: There are signs Trump may finally be getting serious about bringing his Cabinet secretaries some reinforcements to carry out his policy agenda. Late Friday, the Trump announced his intent to tap Susan Bodine, chief counsel on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to be EPA's assistant administrator for enforcement and compliance assurance. As Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#), she's the latest EPW staffer with ties to Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) (R-Okla.) to land at the agency and previously served the last three years of the George W. Bush administration as EPA's top waste official.

EPW Chairman [John Barrasso](#) praised her selection in a Saturday statement: "Susan is committed to finding commonsense ways to protect America's land, air, and water. In this new role, I know that she will work to help communities and small businesses comply with the law, while holding polluters accountable." Her selection comes on the heels of Trump [nominating two](#) to fill vacancies at FERC last week. And it comes as the Senate Energy and Natural Resources panel prepares to take consider the nomination of David Bernhardt to be number two at Interior this Thursday. They're small steps, but appear to indicate the White House is finally heeding the pleas of Senate Energy Committee Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) and Cabinet officials themselves to fill political vacancies across the agencies.

PETITION SEEKS RECONSIDERATION OF COAL ASH RULE: The Utility Solid Waste Activities Group [petitioned](#) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Friday to reconsider "specific portions" of the agency's regulation governing coal ash. The petition argues aspects of the rule warrant changes due to legislation passed last year that [included changes](#) to permitting and enforcement provisions, and also asks the agency to put a legal challenge on ice while it reconsiders those aspects of the rulemaking. In addition, USWAG seeks an extension of upcoming compliance deadlines. "USWAG believes that the modifications to the Rule identified in this Petition will result in a more practical and workable, yet equally protective regulatory program," Jim Roewer, the group's executive director, wrote in a [cover letter](#).

Greens slam request: Environmental groups warned pulling back on the October 2015 rule would endanger human health and the environment. "The new EPA safeguards were finally starting to make progress in protecting people from what is now the nation's second-biggest industrial waste problem," Lisa Evans, an attorney with Earthjustice, said in a statement. "Cutting back protections at this point would be reckless and would put people's health at risk."

CANTWELL VISITS HANFORD: Senate Energy ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) toured the Hanford site Saturday in Eastern Washington less than a week after a tunnel storing nuclear waste collapsed. "The events of last week highlight the need for America to keep our commitment to the Hanford site cleanup, and I stand ready to make sure my colleagues and this administration do just that," she said in a statement after being briefed. Picture from the tour [here](#).

BIG GOP GUNS RALLY TO DEFEND ZINKE'S SEAT: Vice President Mike Pence and Donald Trump Jr. rallied in support for Republican Greg Gianforte across Montana as they try to rev up GOP enthusiasm to keep Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional seat in their party's hands, POLITICO's Elena Schneider [reports](#). "I talked to the president this afternoon and he asked me to say two things. First, he said, 'Tell Montana, thanks,'" Pence said at a rally Friday evening, referring to Trump's 2016 victory. "And then he said to me, 'Tell them that

Trump needs Greg Gianforte in the Congress of the United States."

The trip comes as public and private polling shows Gianforte's margin against Democrat Rob Quist, the folk singer and political novice, has dropped to single digits in the last weeks of the race. "To me, it just shows they're really worried," Quist said. "They're bringing out all their big guns. They know that they're in danger of losing this race." And that comes as Quist outraised Gianforte \$2.36 million to \$1.77 million from April 1 through May 5, though the Republican has more cash to spend in the weeks before the May 25 vote, POLITICO's Scott Bland [reports](#).

And, ICYMI, Pence toured the Westmoreland Coal Company's Absaloka Mine on the Crow Indian Reservation by horseback on Friday afternoon. "I just want to assure you that this administration is absolutely determined to continue to expand the opportunities to develop American energy in an environmentally responsible way," the vice president said after the tour, according to the [Billings Gazette](#). Pics from [Pence](#), [Zinke](#) and Sen. [Steve Daines](#) from the visit.

FRANCIS VOWS SINCERE TALK WITH TRUMP: Pope Francis promised to be sincere during a meeting with Trump later this month, but said he wouldn't try to soften the president's views on policy matters such as the environment, according to [the Associated Press](#) (complete the awesome dateline of "ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE"). "That is a political calculation that I don't allow myself to make. Also in the religious sphere: I don't proselytize," he said. Francis, of course, issued an encyclical calling for action to address climate change back in 2015, while Trump has denied the scientific consensus that human activity is fueling climate change.

SEIA OBJECTS TO SUNIVA TRADE CASE: The Solar Energy Industries Association in a [letter](#) to the U.S. International Trade Commission said the agency should not launch a formal review of Suniva's request to impose trade restrictions on imported solar cells and modules. Not only would such a move, which could lead to Trump's creation of import tariffs or minimum prices, be "extremely damaging" by driving up the cost of the cells in the U.S., but doing so would not necessarily stimulate domestic production, the letter said.

COURT FREEZES MARINE MONUMENT SUIT: The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Friday stayed a lawsuit by fisheries groups over President Barack Obama's creation last year of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Marine Monument off the East Coast. The Commerce Department and Interior Department [asked](#) to stay the case while Commerce reviews the monument designation under a Trump directive.

INTERN PROTECTION BILL GETS HOUSE VOTE: Not much on the House floor this week in terms of energy policy, but a bill guaranteeing unpaid government interns get workforce protections from sexual harassment is due to get a vote on Wednesday. [The Federal Intern Protection Act](#) (H.R. 653), introduced by Rep. [Elijah Cummings](#), came after the Oversight and Government Reform Committee heard testimony in July 2015 that a young EPA intern was inappropriately touched and kissed by an employee called a "predator" by Chairman [Jason Chaffetz](#).

MAIL CALL! DON'T MESS WITH JERSEY: Nine New Jersey lawmakers, led by top Energy and Commerce Democrat [Frank Pallone](#), sent Zinke a letter Friday urging him to reconsider plans to allow offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. "The costs and risks associated with drilling in the Atlantic are simply too high for New Jersey," they wrote.

"Elected leaders on both sides of the aisle have long opposed any efforts to potentially open the Atlantic to oil and gas development." Both senators — [Robert Menendez](#) and [Cory Booker](#) — also signed onto the letter.

OTHER ENERGY GROUPS ENTER PERRY'S GRID STUDY: Representatives from the hydropower, biomass, waste-to-energy, biogas and geothermal energy sectors sent [a letter](#) to Energy Secretary Rick Perry last week requesting a meeting as the agency conducts its review of the electric grid. "We believe this review will demonstrate the need to better recognize, value, and properly compensate renewable baseload technologies for the grid benefits and services they provide," they wrote.

POET IS A POET, DONCHA KNOW IT: Ethanol giant POET took to the DC air waves starting with ads during Sunday morning newscasts on broadcast and cable. POET is based in Sioux Falls, S.D., but has refineries in five other Midwestern states. The company wants to make its reach more obvious to policy makers and legislators considering key decisions. The campaign will broaden beyond video and run through the end of the year.

RALLYING FOR NAVAJO PLANT: The Arizona Mining Association hosts a rally in Phoenix today in support of the continued operation of the Navajo Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant. That comes as the Interior Department kicks off four listening sessions this week across the state to gather input on what to do about the plant. The four utility owners [announced](#) back in February that they would end their three-quarter stake in the plant by the end of 2019

PERRY'S CLOSE TO HOME: Perry tours the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston today at 10 a.m. CST as the Energy Department touts a new partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs to "better understand trends specific to veterans and combat problems such a veteran suicide, prostate cancer, cardiovascular disease, and more."

WINNING: Kára McCullough, the Miss District of Columbia who became Miss USA 2017 on Sunday night, works at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, according to her [official biography](#). She describes her as a "scientist" and "technical reviewer" in her [LinkedIn profile](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Lisa Hymas starts today as climate and energy program director for *Media Matters For America*; she was previously a senior editor for *Grist*.

QUICK HITS

- West Texas oil boom threatens recovery in Canadian oilpatch. [CBC](#).
- Signs of oil boomlet in North Dakota after pipeline finished. [AP](#).
- Power plant owners limit Toshiba's Westinghouse liabilities: sources. [Reuters](#).
- Rising conservative voices call for climate change action. [PBS Newshour](#).
- Trump is deleting climate change, one site at a time. [The Guardian](#).
- As Tesla's focus shifts, so do plans for Buffalo solar factory. [Buffalo News](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

10:30 a.m. — "[Digitizing the Power Sector](#)," Bipartisan Policy Center, 1225 Eye Street NW, Suite 1000

12:30 p.m. — "[Energy Emergency Preparedness: A Critical Federal-State-Private Sector Partnership](#)," The Environmental and Energy Study Institute and the National Association of State Energy Officials, 334 Cannon

2:30 p.m. — Infrastructure and green jobs briefing, NRDC, 406 Dirksen

TUESDAY

8:30 a.m. — "Distorting Financial Markets: The Role of Disclosure, Sustainability and the Importance of Materiality," U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H St. NW

10:30 a.m. — Business groups presentation on advanced and renewable energy, Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP, 601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 10th floor, conference room #10340

12:00 p.m. — Natural Gas Roundtable featuring New York Commissioner Diane Burman, American Gas Association, University Club, 1135 16th St. NW

3:15 p.m. — "[Leveraging Federal Funding: Innovative Solutions for Infrastructure](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, 406 Dirksen

6:30 p.m. — "[Sustainable Profit: Investment Opportunities in a Changing Climate](#)," Harvard Business School Club, US Trust Penthouse, 730 15th Street NW

WEDNESDAY

8:30 a.m. — The American Council for Capital Formation Center for Policy Research and the ClearPath Foundation energy policy forum, Newseum, 8th floor conference room, 555 Pennsylvania Ave NW

10:00 a.m. — "[Energy Opportunities in South America](#)," House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, 2172 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — "[Reviewing Recent State Successes with the Rigs to Reefs Program](#)," House Natural Resources Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, 1324 Longworth

10:00 a.m. — "[Improving America's Transportation Infrastructure: The Road Forward](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, 406 Dirksen

11:00 a.m. — Climate Reality Project panel on carbon pricing, The Climate Reality Project, First Floor Conference Room, 750 9th St. NW

1:00 p.m. — House Appropriations Committee hearing on Native Alaskan funding, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, 2007 Rayburn

1:00 p.m. — "[The Future of Energy Infrastructure in the DC Metro Region](#)," AECOM, 3101 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Va.

2:00 p.m. — "[Seeking Better Management of America's Overgrown, Fire-Prone National Forests](#)," House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands, 1324 Longworth

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Committee [hearing](#) on water rights and western power, 1324 Longworth

10:00 a.m. — "[Building a 21st Century Infrastructure for America: Improving Water Quality through Integrated Planning](#)," House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, 2167 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — [Hearing](#) on nomination of Bernhardt for deputy Interior secretary, Senate Energy and Natural Resources, Dirksen 366

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. — "[Petroleum Geology of Shale Gas & Tight Oil -and- How To Do It](#)," National Capital Area Chapter of the U.S. Association for Energy Economics, Chinatown Garden, 618 H St. NW

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/05/signs-of-life-in-filling-political-agency-vacancies-022823>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump tweeted about Scottish wind farm 60 times [Back](#)

By Brent Griffiths | 11/22/2016 11:32 AM EDT

President-elect Donald Trump's unusual move of pressing his opposition to wind turbines [during a meeting](#) with politician Nigel Farage of the United Kingdom is far from the first time the New York businessman has complained about a project that would alter the landscape surrounding one of two Scottish golf courses he owns.

Starting in 2012, Trump began firing off tweets about the offshore turbines, which he said would spoil views of the coastal course, which is named Trump International Golf Links. All told, the incoming commander-in-chief has sent at least 60 tweets about the project over several years.

Trump purchased his resort near Aberdeen in 2006, but he soured on the country and its leaders after an [11-turbine windfarm](#) was proposed near the course. Trump's mother immigrated to the United States from Scotland before he was born.

Beginning with a simple message calling for English taxpayers to "stop subsidizing the destruction of Scotland by paying massive subsidies for ugly wind turbines," Trump launched a full-on Twitter tirade against local politicians and the company that dare to finance the proposed off-shore wind farm — at one point, even then Prime Minister David Cameron became a target.

Offline, Trump took his opposition to the project all the way to the highest court in the U.K. But in a unanimous decision, the U.K. Supreme Court [rejected his case](#) in 2015.

The Swedish company Vattenfall [announced](#) in July that it was moving ahead with the project, formally known as the [European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre](#), but the Trump Organization said it would continue its efforts to stop it.

"There are 16 planning conditions which have not been purified, and we intend to lodge formal written objections with Marine Scotland, challenging each one of them," the Trump Organization said. "The project can't proceed until the conditions are satisfied and we will also pursue additional remedies before the European Courts as necessary."

Trump last tweeted about the wind farms on May 1, 2015 — more than a month before he announced his presidential bid.

But according to Andy Wigmore, a Farage ally who was in the meeting with Trump, the president-elect remains passionate about the issue.

"[O]ne thing Mr Trump kept returning to was the issue of wind farms," Wigmore [told](#) Britain's Express newspaper this week. "He is a complete Anglophile and also absolutely adores Scotland, which he thinks is one of the most beautiful places on Earth. But he is dismayed that his beloved Scotland has become overrun with ugly wind farms which he believes are a blight on the stunning landscape."

To view online [click here](#).

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U.S. will 'tighten the screws' on North Korea, Haley says [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 05/14/2017 12:33 PM EDT

The U.S. and its international partners will continue to "tighten the screws" on the regime of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un following its test of a ballistic missile over the weekend, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said Sunday morning.

Haley told ABC's "This Week" that Kim is "in a state of paranoia" and that his nation's barrage of missile tests are a symptom of that. She also said that pressure imposed by the U.S. has already been felt by the Kim regime.

"Well, I think you first have to get into Kim Jong Un's head, you know, which is he's in a state of paranoia. He's incredibly concerned about anything and everything around him," Haley told ABC anchor George Stephanopoulos. "What we're going to do is continue to tighten the screws. He feels it. He absolutely feels it. And we're going to continue, whether it's sanctions, whether it's press statements, anything that we have to do."

While President Donald Trump and other White House officials have met North Korea's most recent bout of saber-rattling with harsh rhetoric and promises of collaboration with the Chinese government to more fully rein in the Kim regime, the president himself has also said

that he would be "honored" to meet with the North Korean dictator under the right circumstances.

On Sunday morning, Haley said North Korea's missile test would preclude those circumstances from coming about.

"Having a missile test is not the way to sit down with the president, because he's absolutely not going to do it," the former South Carolina governor said. "And I can tell you, he can sit there and say all the conditions he wants, until he meets our conditions, we're not sitting down with him."

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Trump picks Inhofe aide for EPA compliance chief [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/12/2017 06:45 PM EDT

President Donald Trump plans to nominate Susan Bodine, chief counsel on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to be EPA's assistant administrator for enforcement and compliance assurance.

Bodine is the latest EPW staffer with ties to Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) (R-Okla.) to land at EPA. Other former Inhofe aides at the agency include chief of staff Ryan Jackson, deputy chief of staff Byron Brown and deputy associate administrator for policy Brittany Bolen.

Before joining EPW in 2015, Bodine spent six years as a partner at Barnes & Thorburg. She spent the last three years of the George W. Bush administration as the Senate-confirmed assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (now the Office of Land and Emergency Management).

The White House's "skinny budget" in March [proposed](#) cutting \$129 million from the OECA budget, to \$419 million, with the savings coming from reducing EPA efforts to areas not policed by the states. Critics say there actually is not much overlap and that federal investigation is often required as states tighten their own belts.

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Trump to nominate Chatterjee, Powelson to FERC [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 05/08/2017 08:47 PM EDT

President Donald Trump tonight announced he planned to appoint Neil Chatterjee and Rob Powelson to fill two of the three vacancies in the FERC leadership, according to an official White House statement.

Chatterjee, a senior energy adviser to Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), and Powelson, a Pennsylvania regulator, would take positions that expire in 2021 and 2020, respectively. POLITICO [has reported](#) that both were expected to be tapped for the FERC.

The new Republican members would, if confirmed by the Senate, restore the agency's quorum.

FERC has been operating with just two sitting commissioners for more than two months, since Norman Bay resigned the chairmanship after Trump elevated Cheryl LaFleur to that position. While staff can address most of the agency's business, the absence of a quorum hinders FERC's ability to enact final orders dealing with interstate natural gas pipeline projects and contested electricity rate plans.

POLITICO has also reported that Kevin McIntyre, who co-leads Jones Day's global energy practice, is expected to fill the third FERC vacancy. Some sources have suggested that he may be in line for the chairmanship.

In recent months, [members](#) of [Congress](#) and more than a [dozen industry groups](#) have pressed the administration to appoint new members.

WHAT'S NEXT: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#) has vowed to prioritize moving new FERC nominees through her committee, although the full confirmation process could easily take several weeks to complete.

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Bipartisan coal ash provision included in final WRDA [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/05/2016 04:28 PM EDT

The final version of the [Water Resources Development Act](#) released today by House and Senate negotiators includes a tweaked version of language passed earlier this year by the Senate that would change the permitting and enforcement regime for EPA's coal ash rule.

The language will require states to get EPA approval for their coal ash disposal permitting plans, and the agency will also gain more enforcement powers, on top of potential citizen lawsuits.

"This new permitting authority fixes the main problems with the recent coal ash regulation issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, by removing citizen suits as the sole means of enforcement and allowing states to tailor permit requirements on a case-by-case basis," Sens. [Jim Inhofe](#), [Joe Manchin](#), [Shelley Moore Capito](#) and [John Hoeven](#) said in a joint statement.

The provision won bipartisan backing, although various environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, Environmental Integrity Project and the Waterkeeper Alliance, raised issues with the language.

The new language would also extend EPA's timeline to review authorized state programs from every five years to every 12 years. And it gives EPA more time to review state programs, includes language allowing states to ask EPA to review a neighboring state's program, and requires EPA to operate a backstop permit program for states without authorized programs.

The bill is expected to hit the House floor this week.

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Pence, Trump Jr. rally GOP as Montana special election tightens [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 05/12/2017 11:58 PM EDT

BILLINGS, Mont. — Vice President Mike Pence and Donald Trump Jr. crisscrossed Montana in the last 24 hours to gin up support for Republican Greg Gianforte in the upcoming special House election, as Gianforte's margin in public and private polling has shrunk to single digits in the last weeks of the race.

While President Donald Trump's poll numbers sag nationwide, Gianforte has tied himself closely to the administration ahead of the May 25 red-state special election. The Trump surrogates, along with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Sen. Steve Daines, are trying to rev GOP enthusiasm back up six months after Trump carried Montana by 20 percentage points in the presidential race. Republican groups are also pouring in millions of dollars to avoid unexpected surprises after some closer-than-expected special elections in Georgia and Kansas.

"I talked to the president this afternoon and he asked me to say two things. First, he said, 'Tell Montana, thanks,'" Pence said at a rally Friday evening, referring to Trump's 2016 victory. "And then he said to me, 'Tell them that Trump needs Greg Gianforte in the Congress of the United States.'"

But Democrat Rob Quist, the folk singer and political novice who's running against Gianforte, has broken \$4 million in contributions for his underdog campaign — powered by the same anti-Trump fervor that raised millions of dollars for Georgia Democrat Jon Ossoff in the other high-profile House special election.

"To me, it just shows they're really worried," Quist said. "They're bringing out all their big guns. They know that they're in danger of losing this race."

Quist has also embraced national help, with Sen. Bernie Sanders set to headline four rallies across the state next weekend.

But Republican jitters are calmed somewhat by Trump's popularity here. Despite low approval numbers nationwide, WPA Intelligence, the Republican polling and analytics firm, estimated in its national voter models that that Montana voters who approve of Trump's job performance outnumbered disapprovers 2.4 to 1 last month.

"I voted for Obama twice and I got caught up in his message, but I love Trump," said Chris Groscop, a 40-year-old small business owner who attended the rally with his wife, Brandy.

"He speaks to us. I like that it's something different every day with him."

In embracing Trump for the special election to replace Zinke in the House in 2017, Gianforte is breaking with his own losing campaign for governor in 2016.

Gianforte didn't campaign with Trump during his sole appearance in the state last May, and several GOP operatives noted that there was "chatter that he wasn't very pro-Trump," as one Republican source in the state put it. (A Gianforte spokesman said that Gianforte had already committed to another campaign event on the same day last year.)

"Greg's team probably thinks using Trump is a good move because Trump won the state, and Greg didn't," said one Republican strategist who's worked in Montana. "But Trump wasn't a factor in the governor's race, and now it's their whole strategy to ride [Trump's] coattails to win."

While Trump scored a dominant victory in 2016, Gianforte lost to Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock by 4 points in Montana last year.

Gianforte's supporters attribute the loss to Bullock's incumbency and Gianforte's failure to "get in front of some attacks that had a lot of untruths in them, as maybe he should have done," said state Rep. Sue Vinton. "I think he's learned from that in this race."

But Democrats say the problems that dogged Gianforte in his gubernatorial race are sticking to him again in the House race. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's TV ads describe Gianforte as a millionaire transplant who doesn't support access to public lands, echoing Bullock's strategy from 2016.

"You've seen it before — millionaires buying trophy ranches in Montana, then suing to block you out. Well, it's exactly what this millionaire from New Jersey did," the narrator says in one DCCC ad. "When he wanted to be governor, Montana said 'no.' Now Gianforte is desperate to be congressman, but Montana is not buying it."

Quist echoed the sentiment on the stump in Great Falls, where he said to three-dozen supporters, "We don't need more millionaires in Washington, D.C."

"Gianforte is a millionaire lapdog," said Marla Embody, a 62-year-old retiree who attended the Quist event, which featured a musical performance by Quist's daughter. "If Trump says jump, he says how high."

While Gianforte draws on national Republicans to boost his campaign, the GOP is also using a time-honored strategy of linking Quist to national Democrats, to paint Quist as a bad fit for Montana.

Quist "wants to join liberal Nancy Pelosi in Washington to spend even more and stick us with the bill," one National Republican Congressional Committee ad says. The GOP has also attacked Quist's financial troubles, spotlighting debts that are "piling up" in "property taxes liens, over \$400,000 in foreclosure notices, collections."

At the rally Friday, Republicans also hammered Quist's position on guns and his "F" rating from the National Rifle Association, which has endorsed Gianforte.

"Let me tell you something — when you flunk the gun test in Montana, you flunk the

election," Daines said to loud cheers. One sign read: "NRA + Greg = A+."

Quist said his financial struggles are relatable to Montana voters, who see him as "one of us," who's "fallen on hard times and gotten out of them," he added.

Republicans are girding for a close finish on May 25 — an unusually timed Thursday election, just before Memorial Day weekend, which has strategists uncertain about voter turnout. But the GOP is already arguing that a small winning margin months after Trump crushed Hillary Clinton in the state won't signal doom for Republicans in 2018.

According to Yellowstone County Commissioner Denis Pitman, Montana isn't the place to look for answers on national politics, given how regularly the state has elected both Democrats and Republicans to major offices.

"Is it going to be a referendum on Trump? Montanans are fairly independent-minded," Pitman said. "We don't always send very clear signals."

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Quist outraised Gianforte leading up to MT-AL special [Back](#)

By Scott Bland | 05/14/2017 09:45 AM EDT

Democrat Rob Quist outraised Republican Greg Gianforte in the FEC reporting period before Montana's special election, but Gianforte had more cash to spend in the weeks before the May 25 vote.

Quist raised \$2.36 million to Gianforte's \$1.77 million from April 1 through May 5, according to his [FEC report](#). Most of Gianforte's money came from a \$1 million loan from the candidate himself, according to [his report](#). Quist's money came largely from small donations (\$1.69 million), as Democrats around the country continue pouring online cash into campaigns and other political causes at a high rate.

Quist spent \$2.38 million and had \$669,000 on hand for the final days of the special election, while Gianforte spent \$1.49 million and had \$826,000 left in the bank on May 5.

Outside spending has favored Gianforte: Congressional Leadership Fund, the NRCC and the RNC have combined to spend over \$3.8 million attacking Quist and helping Gianforte, according to FEC disclosures. The DCCC has announced transferring nearly \$200,000 to the state Democratic Party and, per the FEC, has spent another \$340,000 on a media buy so far. Planned Parenthood Action Fund and the Progressive Turnout Project have spent about \$300,000 combined backing Quist and hitting Gianforte.

Gianforte is favored in the red-state special election, but his [polling margin has shrunk to single digits](#) as Quist tries to capture the longtime Republican district.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Morning Energy: On TSCA the world — WOTUS repeal imminent — Zinke goes paperless
Date: Friday, June 23, 2017 5:43:09 AM

By Eric Wolff | 06/23/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon, Alex Guillén, Annie Snider, and Kathryn Wolfe

ON TSCA THE WORLD: The suite of rules released by EPA to implement last year's bipartisan reforms to the Toxic Substances Control Act include significant, industry-friendly changes **compared to** the proposal released by the Obama administration in January - changes that were overseen by a former industry advocate now at EPA. A shift to allow EPA to look only at certain uses of potentially hazardous chemicals has drawn particular ire, not just from environmentalists and congressional Democrats, but also from EPA experts, according to a May EPA staff memo that POLITICO cited earlier this week. More from Annie Snider and Alex Guillén [here](#).

The American Chemistry Council, the industry's influential lobbying group and former employer of Nancy Beck, currently the top political appointee at the EPA office working on TSCA, said it still needs to digest the details, but it expects EPA to "establish the framework for a modern chemical management system capable of meeting 21st century demands."

Soon after the implementation rules came out Thursday, environmentalists and Democrats started having a bad reaction. Rep. [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.), the ranking member on the Energy and Commerce Committee, said they undermine the "bipartisan intent" of the TSCA law. "In an apparent handout to industry, EPA is committing to labeling as many chemicals safe as possible in order to avoid review," he said. Richard Denison, the Environmental Defense Fund's lead senior scientist, said the changes "heighten our concern" that the Trump administration won't protect public health. And Scott Faber of the Environmental Working Group said that "Trump's lackeys will ensure that cancer-causing chemicals... continue to sicken and kill our friends and families," adding: "See you in court, Donald."

Hot docs: Click for the [prioritization rule](#), [evaluation rule](#), [inventory "reset" rule](#) and [guidance for submitting draft risk assessments](#).

SCOPE OUT THE SCENE: EPA also released [scoping documents](#) for the first 10 chemicals chosen for review, laying out what uses the agency will review and how. The A-list celebrity among the ten is asbestos, which EPA infamously was unable to ban under the old TSCA law. Other chemicals on the list include TCE, a degreaser that EPA is already considering banning from several uses, along with PERC, a dry cleaning chemical, and a purple dye used in paints and coatings.

Industry groups were cautiously optimistic about the scoping documents last night. ACC said it needs to review the proposals to ensure they rely on the "best available, verified information" and focus on uses that pose the greatest risks. The American Cleaning Institute, meanwhile said that EPA's proposed scope for a chemical used in waxes and varnishes is "an important development that hopefully demonstrates a pragmatic approach." It will take several more years for EPA to actually study those chemicals and potentially restrict or ban them.

WOTUS REPEAL COMING: EPA's first formal repeal of a major Obama-era environmental regulation could come as soon as today. The proposed rule to formally take the 2015 Clean Water Rule off the books and put the previous rule and guidance back on the books has been undergoing White House review since the beginning of May.

While the rule itself is expected to be fairly straight-forward, it's virtually certain to set off a court fight with environmentalists, blue states and other supporters of the Obama rule, and could preview other similar fights over Trump administration rollbacks of environmental rules.

FRIDAY FRIDAY KICK IT DOWN IT'S FRIDAY! I'm your fill-in host Eric Wolff, covering for Anthony as he celebrates his nuptials. ME sure does host some life events, no? Longtime readers will recall my twins were born almost two years ago, shortly after I took over the newsletter controls. Now as then, send your tips, quips and comments to me, ewolff@politico.com for your Monday news, or send 'em to blefebvre@politico.com for Tuesday and Wednesday. Your man Anthony will be back Wednesday, along with trivia answers, so don't lose his address: aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@ericwolff](https://twitter.com/ericwolff), [@aadragna](https://twitter.com/aadragna), [@bjlefebvre](https://twitter.com/bjlefebvre), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

WHERE ARE OUR NOMINEES? Kristine Svinicki, the chairwoman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairwoman, is on the move: The Senate is slated to vote on her confirmation at 5:30 p.m. Monday, and she may be one of the few energy nominees getting any love. Svinicki's something of a special case: She's got well-placed friends on Capitol Hill, a scary June 30 hard-stop on her term, and, as one Senate aide told ME, "just retains the status quo."

Yet after months of dramatic demands from energy industry associations to restore FERC's leadership quorum, it's become clear that the agency's partial paralysis will stretch well into its fifth month, given the upcoming July 4 recess. Democrats have insisted that their price for not gumming up the gears of the Senate is that Republican nominees to regulatory agencies get packaged with Democratic picks (See: Sen. [Tom Carper](#)'s efforts to pair up GOP NRC picks David Wright and Annie Caputo, with a renomination of NRC Commissioner Jeff Baran). FERC nominees Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson, whose nominations have already been voted out of committee, don't have Democratic dance partners yet. The debate over healthcare is also likely to consume next week.

Remember DOE? Rick Perry was in the spotlight this week, but Trump's pick to be the No. 2 at the Energy Department, Dan Brouillette, seems to have fallen off the map. He was approved by the Senate energy committee more than two weeks ago, and while there is plenty of competition for the Senate's attention these days, two sources tell ME that Nevada Sen. [Dean Heller](#) has put a hold on Brouillette. (Heller's office hasn't responded to our questions about it, but there's likely a direct line to the senator's concern with Trump's plans to revive the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project in his state).

THE DOE POLITICAL APPOINTEE AND THE 'DISTURBING' TWEETS: Trump appointee William C. Bradford published a slew of "disturbing" Tweets before taking a job working with tribes at the Department of Energy, the Washington Post [reports](#). Bradford has now deleted his account, but last year he posted slurs on Obama and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, and Megyn Kelly, and he called Japanese internment camps "necessary". Whitford is responsible for assisting Native American and Alaskan tribes with energy projects.

ZINKE GOES PAPERLESS?: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he'd be responsive to letters from legislators of both parties, but not through written responses, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Zinke was making the rounds for budget hearings this week, and when pressed on his department's failure to answer Democrats, he said, "If I can't answer them in written form I will call you directly."

But Democrats want a paper trail. "The executive branch has, since the founding of our democracy, been expected to respond to the inquiries of Congress, regardless of party or majority or minority status," Sen. Tom Udall said. "I expect Secretary Zinke to uphold this standard and his commitment to respond in writing to our questions — not as a 'courtesy' to members of Congress, but because of his obligations to serve the public interest."

NUCLEAR WASTE APPLICATION DECISION SUSPENSE: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission suspended an application by Waste Control Specialists to build a high-level nuclear waste facility in Texas. The news comes a day after a judge prevented WCS from merging with Energy Solutions, a company that handles low-level waste.

This application has been fairly drama-prone but, interestingly enough, a failed merger may boost the chances of WCS following through with the application to build a nuclear waste storage site. Energy Solutions has honed a business around managing low-level nuclear waste, and wanted to buy a competitor. But some industry observers are skeptical that the company would want to delve into the uncertain world of handling high-level material that was supposed to go to Yucca Mountain.

[FERCIN' 9-5, WHAT A WAY TO MAKE A LIVIN'](#): FERC dug into cybersecurity, gas-electric coordination, and reached out for advice from international partners Thursday at its annual reliability conference. In general, grid reliability has improved, according to a recent report from NERC, the grid reliability company, but threats abound, especially from hacking. Witnesses on the cybersecurity panel discussed a variety of threats to the system, including a few quality minutes on the danger posed by the "Internet of Things," i.e. the hacking vulnerabilities created by all the smart light bulbs, smart appliances, and possibly rooftop solar panels now getting connected to the 'net.

It's been an Honor: FERC Commissioner Collette Honorable sure sounded like she was sitting in her last meeting as a FERC commissioner as she gave her closing remarks Thursday. Honorable has said she wouldn't seek a second term, and there's no quorum to hold future meetings. "My time at FERC has been the highest honor and that's been because of the man and women I've served with," she said at the end of the meeting.

DEPARTURE LOUNGE: DOE SAFETY OFFICIAL ANNOUNCES EXIT: The Energy Department's director of Enterprise Assessments, Glenn Podonsky, announced in a Thursday afternoon email to office staff that he plans to leave the federal government at the end of the summer. Enterprise Assessments has the thankless job of conducting enforcement and independent oversight of environmental, safety, health, cybersecurity and emergency management programs at DOE, including those under the National Nuclear Security Administration. Podonsky, who joined the agency in 1984, said that he expects his deputy of the past eight years, Bill Eckroade, to take his place but didn't have a chart mapped out for himself. "As far as any future plans for myself I have absolutely no idea what lies ahead, but I do know that my wife is not interested in having twice the husband with only half the pay, so some form of employment is inevitable," Podonsky wrote, though he made it clear that he won't look for other work until after he leaves.

PRUITT BACK TO THE HILL TUESDAY: If last week's appropriations hearing was any indication, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt won't get his way on Tuesday when he goes before a subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee: he'll be told he's getting more money than he wants. Pruitt will meet with the senators at 9:30 a.m. sharp with nothing but his protective glasses and senior adviser Holly Greaves to shield him.

ME FIRST — ADS GO LIVE AGAINST ZINKE'S SAGE GROUSE REVIEW: The Western Values Project will go live today with a six-figure print and [tv ad](#) campaign aimed at winning support for the existing sage grouse plan. The ads are scheduled to coincide with a meeting next week of the Western Governors Association. Zinke is [reviewing](#) than the current Obama-era state-local-federal collaboration.

BETSY, GRAB YOUR GUN: Interior declared on Thursday the grizzly bear population in Yellowstone National Park has sufficiently recovered and will no longer receive federal protection. The decision covers parts of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho, though populations in other areas will still be protected under the Endangered Species Act. "This achievement stands as one of America's great conservation successes," Zinke said in a statement.

Reax: The Center for Biodiversity called the decision "tragic." But ME imagines Education Secretary Betsy DeVos must be [relieved](#) that well-armed school staff can now, at least around Yellowstone, let loose upon grizzlies.

OLD WATER BILL, KEEP ON ROLLIN': Rep. [Tom McClintock](#) can sit back and wait for the Senate to do its work now that the House passed his bill Thursday, 233-180, to streamline permitting for water storage projects and give the Bureau of Reclamation more authority to approve dams and reservoirs. The mostly party-line vote saw eight Democrats vote yes and five Republicans vote no. Democrats opposed the bill in committee out of concern that it could short-circuit environmental review.

DO COAL MINING ROBOTS DREAM OF SOOT-COVERED SHEEP? The Senate draft of a bill to reauthorize the FAA would not regulate robots used underground for mining purposes. That makes sense — FAA regulates things that fly, not dig — but it also highlights a growing trend toward automated mining that bodes ill for Trump's promise to re-employ coal miners. A McKinsey study in 2015 [said](#) that 45 percent of all mining work could be automated, and mining giants Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton are [experimenting](#) with automated trucks and drillers at mining sites.

QUICK HITS

- [Trump's putdown of wind energy whips up a backlash in Iowa](#), AP
- [Renewable energy no longer a niche to institutional investors](#), Reuters
- [Clarion call for scientists: 'Use your voice ... or lose it'](#), E&E News
- [Traders test OPEC 'whatever it takes' resolve to defend oil price](#), Reuters

HAPPENING FRIDAY

8:30 a.m. — "What Works: Miami," POLITICO Magazine, Eden Roc, Pompeii Room - 4525 Collins Ave, Miami Beach, FL

12:00 p.m. — "[Energy Demand Disruptions: Aspirations vs Reality](#)," National Capital Area Chapter of the U.S. Association for Energy Economics, Chinatown Garden, 618 H St. NW

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EPA staffers, Trump official clashed over new chemical rules [Back](#)

By Annie Snider and Alex Guillén | 06/22/2017 07:28 PM EDT

The Trump administration released the nation's most important chemical-safety rules in decades Thursday — but only after making a series of business-friendly changes overseen by a former industry advocate who holds a top post at the EPA.

Career agency employees had raised objections to the changes steered by EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator Nancy Beck, who until April was the senior director of regulatory science policy at the American Chemistry Council, the chemical industry's leading lobbying group. Those include limits on how broadly the agency would review thousands of potentially hazardous substances, EPA staffers wrote in an internal memo reviewed by POLITICO.

Such limits could cause the agency to fail to act on potential chemical uses "that present an unreasonable risk to health or the environment," EPA's top chemicals enforcement official argued in the May 23 memo.

The rules are meant to implement last year's landmark rewrite of the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act, a major bipartisan achievement in a deeply divided Congress. Both parties agreed that the law needed an update — the original version didn't even allow EPA to ban asbestos, a known carcinogen, and some states had begun to step in and create their own patchwork of regulations for chemicals.

But the Trump administration's steps to implement the law, and Beck's role in particular, are drawing alarm from environmental groups and congressional Democrats.

Melanie Benesh of the Environmental Working Group [called](#) Beck the "scariest Trump appointee you've never heard of," and pointed to a 2009 Democratic congressional [report](#) that accused Beck of working to delay and undermine EPA's chemical studies during her previous tenure at the OMB.

New Jersey Rep. Frank Pallone, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, argued in a [letter](#) to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday that Beck's appointment "has the potential to undermine the scientific integrity of EPA's TSCA implementation and the consumer confidence we sought to build with a reformed TSCA." Pallone is seeking information about Beck's involvement with the chemicals rules and the issues she is ethically allowed to work on.

Beck told POLITICO that she has been "very involved" with the rulemaking for the past two months at EPA. She also defended the changes in the rules.

"The development of a rule when you go from proposal to final, or even as you develop a rule, it just evolves over time," she said in an interview Wednesday, before the rules came out. "So I think that this has been a moving target, and will continue to be a moving target until it gets through the OMB review process."

A statement from EPA's senior ethics counsel said Beck did not need to recuse herself from working on the TSCA rules because they are "matters of general applicability." The counsel added that Beck was cleared to consider comments her former employer had submitted.

The American Chemistry Council spent more than \$9 million on lobbying last year, and its employees and PAC donated \$541,000 to federal candidates in the 2016 cycle, giving Republicans 2½ times as much as it gave Democrats, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

EPA officials told POLITICO that the issues raised in the memo from the agency's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance were part of a typical intra-agency consultation process.

Jeff Morris, director of EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics — the division charged with writing the rules implementing TSCA — said chemical safety officials met with the enforcement office "and talked through their comments, and based on that discussion, we moved forward with the rule. At the end of the day, OECA concurred on our approach."

That doesn't mean the final rules necessarily incorporated OECA's suggestions, he added, but in the end it produced a rule "that we could all support."

Thursday marked the anniversary of the 2016 revamp of the 40-year-old TSCA, which regulates the tens of thousands of chemicals used in the United States. It took Congress two years to hash out the compromise, ultimately winning support from chemical makers and some environmental groups for legislation that beefed up EPA's power to regulate harmful chemicals.

Rather than relying on EPA to prove that a substance was dangerous, the law shifted some of the burden to industry to show a chemical's safety. But TSCA also gave EPA latitude to determine how to go about examining thousands of chemicals — effectively setting the scope of the review for substances ranging from corrosive chemicals used in refining to the paints and plastics in children's toys.

EPA's plans to implement TSCA came out Thursday in the form of three final regulations known as the "framework rules." One rule lays out how EPA will set priorities for its assessments of chemicals, dividing them into high- and low-risk categories. Another rule details methods for studying the health and environmental risks of each chemical. And the third culls from EPA's list any substances not used commercially since 2006.

That last change will ultimately shrink the inventory from 85,000 chemicals to around 30,000, once companies weigh in on which chemicals they still use, according to a recent estimate from Jim Cooper, a senior petrochemical adviser at American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers. Future use of those chemicals will be prohibited until the agency reviews them.

Pruitt has made TSCA a top priority under his ["back to basics"](#) strategy, which has been

marked by the rollback of several Obama-era environmental regulations, especially major rules on climate change. Funding for TSCA implementation would be increased under the Trump administration's 2018 budget proposal, while other chemical safety programs and nearly every other aspect of EPA would be cut sharply.

"The activities we are announcing today demonstrate this Administration's commitment to providing regulatory certainty to American businesses, while protecting human health and the environment," Pruitt said in a statement releasing the rules.

EPA's political leaders have pressed the agency's staff to meet the law's aggressive deadlines for writing new rules and evaluating individual chemicals, but environmentalists say they are more concerned with the substance of the implementation rules. Congressional Democrats and green activists were already worried about the approach an anti-regulatory administration might take to toxic substances, especially given President Donald Trump's past support for asbestos, which he once complained got a "bad rap."

Those fears rose with the arrival of Beck, who worked as an OMB analyst for a decade before joining the American Chemistry Council. She represented the council at a March Senate hearing where she criticized the Obama administration's proposed TSCA implementation.

EPA career employees, in turn, have expressed concern about the changes the implementation rules have taken since Beck arrived.

The staff memo reviewed by POLITICO was sent by the head of EPA's Waste and Chemical Enforcement Division to Wendy Cleland-Hamnett, the acting assistant administrator for EPA's chemical office, on the same day part of the final rules package was sent to the White House for review. It laid out a number of concerns about changes the Trump administration made to a section of the Obama EPA's January proposal governing which chemicals warrant the most thorough safety evaluation.

Among those concerns was that EPA would consider only a limited set of uses for a chemical when deciding whether it warrants further scrutiny and then determining the risks to human health, rather than examining all the ways people could be exposed to it. For instance, while most Americans think of asbestos as a building material, its largest use by far in the U.S. today is in equipment used to make chlorine gas. Chemicals manufacturers have argued that that use needn't be considered, saying humans are highly unlikely to come in contact with the asbestos during that process, but environmentalists contend that EPA shouldn't ignore it when deciding how risky the chemical is for human health.

In an interview, Cleland-Hamnett said EPA is aiming to set the highest priorities for the chemical uses that present the greatest risk, and that it wasn't prohibiting a broader analysis.

"Not that those are the only uses we would evaluate, but we do want to make sure that we're evaluating those uses," she said. "So I think we've addressed the concern that we might not evaluate the uses that could prevent unreasonable risk."

This issue has been a chief sticking point among environmentalists, public health advocates and the industry. Chemical manufacturers may produce a substance for a specific use, said Richard Denison, lead senior scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund, but once it's put on the market, it can end up being used in a wide variety of ways.

"That chemical that the company may intend to use solely in industrial settings may very well be bought by another company that decides to put it in a consumer product that is sold at your local hardware store," he said.

But Mike Walls, vice president of regulatory and technical affairs at the American Chemistry Council, said the process should differentiate among various uses of each chemical to determine specific restrictions for each.

"Risks can be managed along a spectrum of measures, running from a ban at its most extreme, to things like labeling or warning requirements," he said. "So that risk-evaluation process is really critical."

EPA also released a [decision](#) on the scope of its [first 10 chemical reviews](#), which include asbestos, several dry-cleaning chemicals and a purple dye thought to hurt fish and other aquatic life. Industry groups are closely watching whether EPA decides to review those chemicals for all possible exposures, or whether it will limit its review to narrow, specific uses. Further study of those chemicals will take years.

But even as greens have raised alarms about the efficacy of the new chemicals law under the Trump administration, both sides say industry has an interest in making sure it works. After all, it was lack of public trust in the old system that brought everyone to the table a year ago to fix it, said Dimitri Karakitsos, who negotiated the chemicals overhaul measure as a staffer for Senate Republicans.

"Industry and Republicans care very much about a credible system that works, and so does EPA," said Karakitsos, now a partner at the law firm Holland & Knight. "If implementation isn't happening, states ramp up activity again, and that can result in an inconsistent patchwork of regulations and significant impediments to interstate commerce."

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Zinke pledges transparency, but Democrats worry paper trail will disappear [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 06/22/2017 04:05 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has promised to make his department more transparent, but Democrats are complaining his office is actually pulling a disappearing act.

Zinke promised congressional Democrats during budget hearings this week that although he hasn't responded to letters from their offices, he would be happy to make time to call them or meet in person if necessary — but pushed back against having to put his words in writing.

"I intend to be the most transparent Interior there's been at least in my lifetime," Zinke said during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee budget hearing on Wednesday. "I will be happily transparent and responsive. Public lands stewardship is not a partisan issue."

But ranking member [Tom Udall](#) (D-N.M.) reminded Zinke he had not responded to 11 letters the senator's staff sent inquiring about recent Interior policy decisions. He then asked Zinke to

promise to review and respond to them.

Zinke agreed to review the letters, but hedged on whether he would send a written reply, saying the information might fall under executive privilege.

"If I can't answer them in written form I will call you directly," Zinke said.

His refusal to commit to reply in writing comes after the White House's [instructions to](#) Cabinet secretaries to communicate only with committee chairman, a move that would effectively keep Democrats out of the policy loop.

"The executive branch has, since the founding of our democracy, been expected to respond to the inquiries of Congress, regardless of party or majority or minority status," Udall said in an email to POLITICO. "I expect Secretary Zinke to uphold this standard and his commitment to respond in writing to our questions — not as a 'courtesy' to members of Congress, but because of his obligations to serve the public interest."

Interior has been rolling back several Obama-era environmental regulations, including calling for shrinking the Bears Ears monument established by the former president. Zinke has pledged to open up more coastal waters for oil and gas drilling and has said he is preparing to shuffle about a quarter of the agency's senior staff and lay off up to 4,000 regular employees.

Tyson Slocum, energy program director for Public Citizen, said while telephone or face-to-face meetings may be more efficient, they make it more difficult to keep a record of public policy decision-making and also avoid creating a paper trail that could be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests.

"There is a certain advantage of cutting to the chase" through in-person meetings, Slocum said. "But it can't serve as a substitute for establishing a document trail. It's important for effective transparency for a paper trail to exist."

At a House Natural Resources Committee budget hearing Thursday, Zinke repeated his stance of only dealing with Democrats on a verbal basis. Ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) complained to Zinke that he has not responded to letters they sent him seeking explanations of his department's policy.

Zinke sidestepped the issue, only saying he would respond to them in the future — but not necessarily in writing.

"I'll talk to you in person — I think that's a better service," Zinke said.

To view online [click here](#).

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Interior Department releases order for sage grouse rule review [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 06/08/2017 10:35 AM EDT

The Interior Department released the [order](#) Department Secretary Ryan Zinke signed

Wednesday night calling for an internal review of the department's sage grouse conservation plans.

The orders directs the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey to identify parts of BLM's land use management plans that should be tweaked or rescinded because of their effect on development or due to differences with each state's own plans.

WHAT'S NEXT: Interior will take 10 days to choose a team to conduct the review.

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Subject: Morning Energy: Peer-reviewed study finds Exxon misled public on climate — Monument decisions imminent — U.S. biodiesel sector gets trade win
Date: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 5:43:40 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 08/23/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Esther Whieldon, Alex Guillén, Adam Behsudi and Eric Wolff

PEER-REVIEWED STUDY FINDS EXXON MISLED ON CLIMATE: Harvard researchers are out this morning with a [peer-reviewed analysis](#) concluding Exxon Mobil misled the public over the course of 40 years of climate change communications. After poring over its scientific research, internal company memos, and paid, editorial-style advertisements, the study concluded that 83 percent of Exxon scientists' peer-reviewed papers and 80 percent of the company's internal communications acknowledged climate science — but just 12 percent of its advertisements did so, and 81 percent actually doubted human activity's role in the problem.

"We conclude that ExxonMobil misled the public," the report concludes. "We stress that the question is not whether ExxonMobil 'suppressed climate change research,' but rather how they communicated about it." The study, supported by Harvard University Faculty Development Funds and by the Rockefeller Family Fund, acknowledges "textual analysis is inherently subjective" but says the overall trends are "clear." The findings will be published in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*.

Exxon, which did not have advance access to the study, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday night. A spokesman for the fossil fuel giant [previously said](#) allegations from environmental groups it misled the public and investors on climate change were based on "distorted reports that they have commissioned and a distorted history of climate research that we've done openly with government bodies."

MONUMENT DECISIONS IMMINENT: Rumors are swirling around Washington that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke may send over his verdict as soon as today on what to do with the nearly two dozen national monuments the White House put up for review. The House Natural Resources Democratic staff released [a report](#) complaining Zinke used a secretive review process, obscuring the true purpose was to open up lands for fossil fuel development. "If President Trump and Secretary Zinke don't listen, then the courts and the voters will teach them that our public lands are not industry playthings to dispose of as they see fit," Ranking member [Raul Grijalva](#) said in a statement.

Religious leaders weigh in: A group of Christian leaders sent Vice President Mike Pence [a letter](#) Tuesday urging the administration to "not rescind or rollback any designations" of the national monuments currently under consideration. They called the Antiquities Act an "important tool" for "protecting the special places of God's Creation where we play, pray and learn."

Irony alert: During an interview with Fox News' "[Fox and Friends](#)," Pence said he was in favor of building more monuments around the country rather than tearing down existing ones. "I'm someone who believes in more monuments, not less monuments," he said in response to questions about whether statues commemorating the Confederacy should be removed. We'll

see if that desire to preserve monuments extends to ones designated by other presidents. Remember Zinke already [preliminarily suggested](#) shrinking Utah's Bears Ears National Monument back in April.

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and ACC's Jonathan Corley nailed Nashville as the biggest U.S. city to glimpse Monday's total eclipse. For today: What is the only U.S. state to grow coffee commercially? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

DO YOUR DUTIES: Biodiesel shipments from Argentina and Indonesia will face import duties after the National Biodiesel Board notched up an early victory in a trade case from the Commerce Department Tuesday, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). In light of the preliminary ruling, Argentine and Indonesian companies will have to pay a cash deposit on shipments to the U.S. to cover potential future penalties. The Commerce Department will now take comment on the preliminary ruling and then issue a final decision likely next year. Here are the decisions on [Argentina](#) and [Indonesian](#) biodiesel.

RIN-sanity: The price for credits in biodiesel jumped 8 cents on the news, to \$1.17, the oil tracking service OPIS tells ME. Biodiesel credits are critical for refiners who need to buy them to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard. EPA requires more ethanol blending than happens in reality, and some refiners buy the biodiesel credits to make up the difference. The ruling from Commerce has now raised their compliance costs.

MORE MURKOWSKI INTRIGUE: Zinke's [July calendar](#), which the agency released Tuesday, was relatively light compared to prior months on meetings with energy industry interests. But it did provide further evidence that the secretary may have pressed Alaska Sen. [Dan Sullivan](#) on July 26 over Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#)'s vote on the healthcare bill, something the secretary has not denied doing. Hours before calling Sullivan that day, Zinke had a number of White House meetings and calls, including with Vice President Mike Pence, then-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon and Trump's top energy aide Mike Catanzaro. Zinke's calendar did not include a call with Murkowski, but the senator has said they did talk that day.

Zinke's July calendar also included a meeting with President Donald Trump's daughter-in-law Lara Trump on wild horses and animal welfare issues and a call with a number of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, including Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee ranking Democrat [Maria Cantwell](#).

Fascinating tidbit: From an excellent New York Times report on the simmering feud between Trump and Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#): "Senator [Lisa Murkowski](#) of Alaska told colleagues that when Mr. Trump's interior secretary threatened to pull back federal funding for her state, she felt boxed in and unable to vote for the health care bill." Back in late July, Murkowski told [the Alaska Dispatch News](#) that Zinke's forceful call didn't sway her vote on the healthcare bill.

FIRSTENERGY'S TOUGH SELL: FirstEnergy Solutions, a unit of FirstEnergy Corp., wanted the federal government to use its emergency powers to save coal plants that teetered on the edge of insolvency — saving some of Trump supporter Robert Murray's coal mines that supply fuel for the plants — but it had a major problem: The power from the plants isn't deemed especially critical. The federal government has authority to keep plants open when crucial to local supplies, but PJM Interconnection, which manages the largest grid in the

country, has plenty of power. In an April [letter](#), the grid operator told Ohio Governor John Kasich that thanks to its capacity market, which pays power plants to remain on standby even if they don't run, it had 6 percent more power on reserve than it needed. The letter also said the operator maintained a robust process for managing retirements, and that typically new plants could come in to replace older ones.

That badly undermined FirstEnergy's position, as did the fact that the company asked for a three-year commitment to keep the plants operating. Normally the authority granted under section 202 of the Federal Power Act is used for short periods when there's an unexpected disruption, like when in April [lightning struck](#) a plant in Oklahoma, creating a need to change how nearby transmission operated for a few months. Keeping the plants open for so long would entail paying their owners to stay available — which presumably was FirstEnergy's point, but it adds costs for PJM and its ratepayers.

ICYMI: Pro's Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff [look at](#) how two wealthy backers of Trump — coal magnate Robert Murray and Wall Street billionaire Carl Icahn — failed to get their policy priorities turned into action despite the president's backing. Murray's failure to get DOE to use its emergency powers to force some Rust Belt coal-fired power plants to stay open, and Icahn's earlier inability to convince EPA to alter its ethanol rule, show the limits of trying to circumvent the federal bureaucracy even with a sympathetic ear in 1600 Pennsylvania.

INSIDE TRUMP WORLD'S NAFTA STRUGGLES: The Trump administration is grappling with its position on an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism in NAFTA, ratcheting up concerns among businesses eager to see the U.S. make a clear commitment to continue with the controversial provision as it has in past trade deals, according to sources with knowledge of the deliberations. The controversial international arbitration mechanism allows private companies to seek damages from government actions that violate their investment rights under a trade deal. Business groups, particularly in the oil and gas sector, have launched a full-court press on Hill offices to request that they put pressure on the administration to include the dispute provision. One lobbyist source said the energy sector's support of a modernized NAFTA deal hinges directly on the inclusion of ISDS.

Speaking of which, Trump on Tuesday night in Phoenix: "I think we'll probably end up terminating NAFTA at some point."

DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS, GUYS: Trump's administration may seek to secure stakes in Afghanistan's vast mineral deposits — estimated at \$1 trillion by one U.S. government [report](#) — as a way to offset ongoing military costs there, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "We're looking at all those types of options," a senior White House adviser said. Analysts caution extracting and processing tons of minerals from a war zone and then transporting them out of a country with little modern infrastructure won't be happening anytime soon.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: A coal industry source tell ME the Energy Department's big grid study will finally be released on Thursday.

DAKOTA ACCESS COMPANY SUES 'ECO-TERRORIST' GROUPS: Energy Transfer Partners, the owner of the Dakota Access pipeline, filed a lawsuit Tuesday against Greenpeace International and Earth First!, asserting they worked to spread misinformation about the project and damage the company, Diamond Naga Siu [reports](#). The federal racketeering lawsuit alleges the groups launched "attacks [that] were calculated and thoroughly irresponsible, causing enormous harm to people and property along the pipeline's route."

In response, Greenpeace USA General Counsel Tom Wetterer bashed the filing as the second "meritless" lawsuit filed against them by the law firm led by Trump's former personal attorney Marc Kasowitz. And Earthjustice President Trip Van Noppen called the lawsuit "an unprovoked and malicious attack on those who would use the power of the law and free speech for good."

EPA IG TO REVIEW TSCA DATA REPORTING: EPA's inspector general has begun an inquiry into chemical data reporting under the reformed Toxic Substances Control Act, according to a newly posted [memo](#). The reformed law requires chemical makers and importers to give EPA key data about those chemicals used to review potential risks, and to update that data every four years. Investigators will look specifically at "how the EPA is ensuring that companies are compliant" and whether EPA is using that data to prioritize which chemicals to review for health and environmental risks.

PELOSI, OTHERS TALK MARINE MONUMENTS: House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#), Reps. [Jared Huffman](#) and [Jackie Speier](#), and others are hosting a public forum today at the Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito, Calif. on protecting national marine sanctuaries and monuments. As a reminder, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has until Oct. 25 to send Trump a report on the potential for offshore fossil fuel production, among other things, in 11 marine national monuments and sanctuaries. Members of the public will have an opportunity to comment at the event, which kicks off at 10:30 a.m. PST and can be streamed [here](#).

MAIL CALL! PUMP THE BRAKES ON LNG EXPORTS: The Industrial Energy Consumers of America sent [a letter](#) Tuesday to the Trump administration asking for a moratorium on additional approvals of natural gas exports. "If we export too much LNG, prices will eventually rise to global levels," Paul Cicio, the manufacturing group's president, wrote. "At that point, foreign nations demand for LNG will dictate what price Americans pay. This is certainly not in the interests of the American public."

ELECTRIC CONTRACTORS OPPOSE SUNIVA PETITION: The National Electrical Contractors Association sent [a letter](#) to the International Trade Commission Tuesday opposing an effort from Suniva and SolarWorld to have imported solar cells or panels slapped with steep tariffs. "We believe the proposed remedies will significantly harm American manufacturers of solar parts and panels and ultimately crush demand for solar installations nationwide," the group wrote.

ME FIRST — CLEAN ENERGY WEEK EXPANDS! The Center for Liquefied Natural Gas has joined the steering committee of National Clean Energy Week, bringing the number of groups planning the events of the week of Sept. 25 to 29.

HERE'S ZINKE IN AN APRON: His wife, Lola, tweeted a picture of him cooking breakfast in a pretty sweet apron. Check it out [here](#).

REPORT: HERE'S HOW TO BOOST RGGI: Resources for the Future released [a report](#) Tuesday outlining ways to strengthen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Their top idea is a new mechanism known as an emissions containment reserve, which would be triggered when carbon allowance prices drop below a threshold that would be set to ensure it was still driving emissions reductions.

MOVER, SHAKER: Colin O'Neil has been promoted to legislative director at the Environmental Working Group where his portfolio includes agriculture and food, cosmetics

and chemicals outreach efforts on Capitol Hill. Before joining EWG, he was director of government affairs at the Center for Food Safety.

QUICK HITS

- In Italy's Drought-Hit Vineyards, the Harvest of a Changing Climate. [New York Times](#).
- Chris Christie Leaves A Trumpian Legacy On Climate Change. But It Won't Last. [Huffington Post](#).
- Kentuckians to Trump: Restart study of how surface mining hurts health. [Lexington Herald-Leader](#).
- California sees strong results from cap-and-trade auction after program extension. [Los Angeles Times](#).
- Oil prices climb as traders eye another U.S. crude drawdown. [Reuters](#)
- In Alaska, One Man Fights To Save Oil Fund As Reserves Dry Up. [NPR](#).
- Climate change serves as central concern at annual Lake Tahoe Summit. [Tahoe Daily Tribune](#).

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Exxon scrambles to contain climate crusade [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia | 05/09/2016 05:28 AM EDT

On Nov. 3, ExxonMobil dispatched its top lobbyists to Capitol Hill on an urgent mission — tamping down an escalating campaign aimed at making the country's largest oil company pay a legal and political price for its role in warming the planet.

The meeting marked a striking shift in Exxon's handling of the controversy. The notion of holding oil companies responsible for global warming, in the same way tobacco companies had to pay billions of dollars in damages over the health effects of cigarettes, had long been seen as a quixotic quest led by scruffy, oil-hating extremists. But POLITICO's interviews with dozens of activists, industry officials and lawmakers suggest that support for a legal crusade against Exxon is growing far beyond the political fringe — and now poses the biggest existential threat the company has faced in decades.

Just five days before the meeting on Capitol Hill, Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary

Clinton had urged the Justice Department to investigate whether the petroleum giant spent decades deceiving the public about the threat of climate change. State attorneys general had Exxon in their sights as well, preparing to issue subpoenas that would eventually rope in virtually all of Washington's conservative policy apparatus. A four-year effort by green activists, scientists and lawyers to turn Big Oil's biggest player into the poster child for climate change — deliberately patterned after the successful campaign to take down tobacco — was shaking the descendant of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil empire to its core.

So the four Exxon executives arrived at the office of California Democrat Rep. [Ted Lieu](#) with one job: convincing four of their most vocal congressional critics that the company wasn't the polluting villain its enemies were making it out to be.

Exxon supports "sound climate policy" and has tripled its greenhouse-gas cuts since 2008, the executives boasted to the lawmakers in a 10-page [glossy presentation](#), later obtained by POLITICO. Exxon was even on record in favor of a tax on carbon emissions — a climate remedy more radical than anything President Barack Obama has proposed.

The company left empty-handed, though, after refusing to directly answer questions about whether it had suppressed internal research that underscored the threat of climate change while publicly sowing doubt about climate science, according to people in the room.

The presentation made at least one thing clear, however: After years of shrugging off pressure from eco-activists, Exxon was showing signs of worry.

And Exxon wasn't the only one with reasons to be nervous.

Interviews with advocates on both sides of the feud reveal how quickly the anti-Exxon movement has sprouted, to the point that it's now consuming op-ed pages, airwaves and courtrooms across the country. Once merely intent on shaming the oil giant into better behavior, environmentalists are pursuing a strategy to discredit the company, weaken it politically and perhaps make it pay the kinds of multibillion-dollar legal settlements that began hitting the tobacco industry in the 1990s.

The campaign — led by some of the same climate activists who defied Beltway wisdom by [killing the Keystone XL oil pipeline](#) — has mushroomed into far more than a greens-versus-Exxon feud.

Just last week, a leaked [subpoena](#) from the attorney general in the U.S. Virgin Islands revealed a vast probe that demanded Exxon's communications with more than 100 free-market think tanks, conservative consulting firms and climate-skeptic scientists — proof, the company's supporters say, that environmentalists are using the legal system to launch a broad attack on their political opponents. The subpoena targets Exxon's dealings with parties including the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the Hoover Institution, George Mason University and scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Alabama and the University of Delaware.

The first subpoena to Exxon came from New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who used his state's powerful consumer fraud law to hit the company with legal papers just a day after the lobbyists' meeting on the Hill. AGs in California and Massachusetts have also launched investigations into the company.

Members of Congress have weighed in too, with Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.) and presidential contender Sen. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) urging DOJ to consider bringing civil racketeering cases against oil companies.

"Obviously, we take it extremely seriously," Exxon spokesman Alan Jeffers told POLITICO, noting that the company is complying with the New York subpoena while it fights the racketeering summons from Virgin Islands Attorney General Claude Walker. The greens' campaign is built on "distorted reports that they have commissioned and a distorted history of climate research that we've done openly with government bodies," Jeffers added.

Both sides describe the political stakes of the campaign as huge.

"Exxon's been able to work its political will for a quarter of a century — they shouldn't be able to," said climate activist Bill McKibben, a leader of the fight against Keystone. "They should be a toxic political brand."

"Exxon is taking this real seriously, and that tells you something, doesn't it?" Matt Pawa, a Massachusetts lawyer who has repeatedly gone after Exxon in court, said in an interview. "Maybe they've got something to hide."

Even rival oil companies that disdain Exxon's support for a carbon tax are spooked about how far the greens' campaign has gotten, especially when the industry is already reeling from a huge slump in fuel prices.

"Industry doesn't look at this and say, 'Too bad for Exxon,'" one fossil-fuel lobbyist said. "We say it's very chilling, a horrible precedent, and no one wants to see themselves next."

Underscoring the industry's anxiety is the breadth and intensity of the counterattack it has mounted. Industry consultants are accusing the state AGs of colluding with environmentalists, and have questioned the role of foundations created by the Rockefeller family — petroleum heirs turned anti-oil activists — in helping bankroll some news organizations' Exxon investigations.

The industry is even exploring the idea of launching a counter-probe: A lobbyist for one of Exxon's industry rivals told POLITICO he has reached out to red-state attorneys general to gauge their interest in probing where environmental groups are getting their funding. No takers have emerged so far.

But industry backers' main argument is that the greens are assaulting the constitutional rights of anyone who dissents from mainstream climate science. Heritage Foundation fellow Hans von Spakovsky has [denounced](#) Schneiderman's probe as a "Soviet-Style investigation," while conservative columnist George Will [called](#) it an example of "gangster government."

"Instead of honoring legitimate academic and scientific inquiry, the far-left has gone to extremes to silence those who disagree," Oklahoma Republican Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#), the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, said Wednesday. He added, "This is nothing more than a misuse of power to score cheap political points."

Exxon itself has made similar arguments, fighting the Virgin Islands subpoenas in court as an infringement on the company's free-speech rights. But Walker, the territory's AG, dismissed that reasoning.

"The First Amendment is not a defense to fraud," Walker told POLITICO through a spokesman, and "the Constitution provides no right to mislead shareholders."

"The tobacco companies," he added, "raised exactly these arguments. ... That was soundly rejected by the courts."

The seeds of the Venus flytrap closing around Exxon were planted in June 2012 in the wealthy seaside town of La Jolla, Calif., where two dozen scientists, lawyers and academics huddled for a scholarly conference on an issue that had vexed the environmental movement for decades: How, on a planet filled with 7 billion people, do you hold oil companies liable for

their role in worsening climate change?

"This wasn't a strategy session," said Peter Frumhoff, a conference organizer and the director of science and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "This was a kind of first cut at, for lack of a better word, an exercise in applied scholarship."

But attendees emerged with two strategies that would set the tone for today's anti-Exxon fight.

First, they underscored the importance of building a catalogue of peer-reviewed research making the case that individual corporations could be held responsible for their contributions to climate change, a step that could serve as Exhibit A in future legal action. That tactic took a page from Exxon itself, which funded research after its 1989 Valdez spill arguing that Alaska's Prince William Sound was already recovering from the damage.

Richard Heede, a climate researcher who helped organize the La Jolla conference, said the attendees realized the "value" of having credible peer-reviewed research.

Working with other academics like Naomi Oreskes, whose book "Merchants of Doubt" drew parallels between the climate and tobacco fights, Heede published articles in peer-reviewed journals that placed the responsibility for climate change at the feet of major fossil fuel companies. In a November 2013 [study](#), for example, Heede estimated that 63 percent of worldwide emissions of industrial carbon dioxide and methane came from a group of 90 "carbon major" entities. (ExxonMobil was prominent in the list.) Environmental groups like Greenpeace immediately [trumpeted](#) the research.

"For a long time, fossil fuel companies have benefited from the idea that everyone is responsible for climate change — and if everyone is responsible, then nobody is responsible," said Carroll Muffett, the president of the Center for International Environmental Law. "Now the science is moving into a much finer resolution."

Second, the La Jolla attendees agreed that obtaining and publicizing internal corporate documents was the key to turning public opinion against the oil companies and eventually securing a legal victory.

"A key breakthrough in the public and legal case for tobacco control came when internal documents came to light showing the tobacco industry had knowingly misled the public," the 2012 conference organizers wrote in a [memo](#) on the meeting. "Similar documents may well exist in the vaults of the fossil fuel industry and their trade associations and front groups, and there are many possible approaches to unearthing them."

Exxon's opponents are likely to get hold of more internal records as the attorneys general proceed with their investigations. Schneiderman's aides are culling through tens of thousands of pages of documents from the company, according to a person familiar with the probe.

"I'd be amazed if there aren't several paper trails that will be found through subpoenas," said veteran lawyer Richard Ayres, one of the Natural Resources Defense Council's co-founders and an attendee at the 2012 conference. "Once subpoenas are answered, the trails will begin to be more visible and people will find this idea of litigation a lot more appealing."

The source familiar with Schneiderman's probe said the wide leeway afforded by his state's financial fraud law, the Martin Act, aided his request for documents. Those include records of

Exxon's internal research into climate change's causes, the role of climate information in business decisions, and marketing, advertising and company communications.

From the start, Exxon's critics drew heavily on the lengthy legal crusade against tobacco companies that culminated in a massive settlement in 1998 totaling hundreds of billions of dollars.

Tobacco critics made little headway in the 1950s, when few Americans knew of the dangers of smoking. But the anti-tobacco fight gained steam as studies directly linked cigarettes to cancer and other ailments, eventually allowing the states to collect huge windfalls from the tobacco companies as compensation for smoking's health costs.

For the people gathered in La Jolla, even getting to the lawsuit stage would be a victory. "No matter what the outcome, litigation can offer an opportunity to inform the public," anti-tobacco litigator Sharon Eubanks said at the meeting, according to the meeting notes.

At the heart of any legal strategy is proof of a conspiracy or fraud — in this case, an alleged effort by oil companies to conceal their internal knowledge of their product's contributions to climate change. The activists' big break came in September and October, when the nonprofit investigative website InsideClimate News and the Los Angeles Times [published](#) stories [alleging](#) that Exxon's scientists had known as far back as the 1970s that the company's fossil fuels would cook the planet, even as its executives hid that knowledge.

The stories, citing internal Exxon documents, didn't make an immediate splash in Washington. Lieu and Rep. [Mark DeSaulnier](#) (D-Calif.) didn't ask DOJ to launch an investigation until Oct. 15. Exxon addressed the controversy for the first time [on Oct. 21](#), singling out InsideClimate as "an anti-oil and gas activist organization" — the first of many times that the industry would slam the news outlet for taking money from the anti-fossil-fuel Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Rockefeller Family Fund.

Then the activists scored a political coup on Oct. 29 by injecting the issue into the mainstream of the presidential race. Responding to a question at a New Hampshire town hall, Hillary Clinton [told](#) an activist from McKibben's climate group that the Justice Department should look into Exxon's activities, saying, "There's a lot of evidence they misled."

Days later, Exxon's lobbyists were taking the meeting in Lieu's office with Lieu, DeSaulnier and two other liberal House Democrats. They aimed to "show the source documents that we think are the complete opposite of what the media reports have showed," Exxon spokesman Jeffers said afterward.

Their message: Exxon "believes in climate change, they believe it's largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels and human activity, and they support a fee on carbon," Lieu recalled in an interview. "That is the company line."

But when Lieu asked if Exxon supported any current proposal to tax the carbon in its nearly 25 billion barrels in proved worldwide oil reserves, the lobbyists said no. Nor would the company admit to the greens' accusations of deceiving the public.

"The basic questions were not at all resolved or seriously addressed in the meeting," Rep. [Peter Welch](#) (D-Vt.) told POLITICO. DeSaulnier called Exxon's pitch an attempt at "damage control," rather than an effort to be "open and honest and corrective."

American oil companies are coping with the anti-Exxon campaign at a uniquely vulnerable time, with oil prices dropping to a 13-year low in February. Exxon lost its top-ranked credit rating last month thanks to a debt load that has more than tripled since 2012 and earnings that fell by 50 percent last year.

To be sure, Exxon's status as one of the world's most profitable companies remains unshaken. Its market value is nearly double that of Chevron, the nation's second-biggest oil and gas company.

But as the greens' campaign matures, Washington's conservative firmament is broadcasting its fury at what it sees as a fishing expedition aimed at ferreting out embarrassing information about the company.

Among those fighting back is CEI-affiliated conservative activist Chris Horner, who has used public records requests to uncover internal documents about coordination between activists and state attorneys general. Horner, who runs an anti-environmentalist research machine called E&E Legal, [released emails](#) last month that showed the attorneys general consulting with an anti-Exxon lawyer and an official at the Union of Concerned Scientists before holding a news conference in March with former Vice President Al Gore.

Two BakerHostetler litigators, David Rivkin and Andrew Grossman, have also founded a project called Free Speech in Science accusing the environmentalists of attacking climate skeptics' constitutional rights.

"You don't normally choose a target first, based on their speech, and say you're going to pursue all theories" available to attack that target, said Grossman, also an adjunct scholar at the conservative Cato Institute. "What's really going on here is intimidation."

Leaders of the Federalist Society, an alliance of conservative lawyers that counts Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito as members, have penned lengthy [attacks](#) on Schneiderman and other attorneys general investigating Exxon. [National Review](#), [Reason](#), [Powerline](#) and others followed suit in defending the oil giant, as have [members](#) of The Wall Street Journal's editorial board.

Exxon is "considering all of our options" for potential legal action against InsideClimate News, the Los Angeles Times or activist groups, spokesman Jeffers told POLITICO.

Aside from the company itself, the most vocal resistance to the greens has come from FTI Consulting, a firm filled with former Republican aides that has helped unify the GOP in defense of fossil fuels. Under the banner of Energy in Depth, a project it runs for the Independent Petroleum Association of America, FTI has peppered reporters with emails that suggest "collusion" between green activists and state AGs, and has raised questions over InsideClimate's Rockefeller grants.

The intensity of Energy in Depth's counter-assault reflects the degree of potential pain the entire industry faces from Exxon's troubles. IPAA senior vice president Jeff Eshelman said its efforts "haven't been to defend one company or interest, but rather to showcase [InsideClimate's] ongoing attacks on the American oil and gas industry that seem to be funded by multi-million-dollar activists."

InsideClimate News, which was named a Pulitzer Prize finalist last month for its Exxon stories, says it has received \$25,000 from the Rockefeller Family Fund, or about 2 percent of the company's budget. The idea that the funding is influencing its news coverage is "an easy accusation, but it's completely baseless," founder and publisher David Sassoon told POLITICO. "Our funders have no access to our editorial and they never have."

As for Exxon, he said: "They have never asked us for a correction. They don't dispute the authenticity of the documents that our report is based on."

While nearly 200 nations hammered out a global climate agreement in Paris in December, many establishment environmentalists took a victory lap. But the anti-Exxon forces were girding for their next fight.

On the sidelines of the United Nations conference in Paris, Pawa — the Massachusetts lawyer — delivered a private talk to activists that McKibben described as his "opening argument in the case" against Exxon. Columbia Law School professor Michael Gerrard also spoke that day at Pawa's request about what he described as "some of the defenses that would be raised" by a corporation facing legal threats linked to its greenhouse gas emissions.

Pawa is a veteran Exxon antagonist, having won a \$236 million judgment against Exxon in 2013 for polluting New Hampshire's groundwater. He helped an Alaskan Inuit village sue the company in 2008 over the rising seas that threatened the local economy.

And the previously unreported closed-door huddle in Paris wasn't the only place Pawa has touted his legal theory of Exxon's culpability.

He delivered a courtroom-style presentation titled "What Exxon Knew About Global Warming, and What it Did Anyway" in March at an [environmental law conference](#) in Oregon. Later that month, he led a closed-door briefing with Democratic attorneys general and their staff, according to [emails](#) obtained by Horner's conservative think tank.

Pawa's central role in the escalating bombardment of Exxon has made him a target, as the company's allies liken him to a puppet master orchestrating the campaign behind the scenes. But he told POLITICO that he is not formally involved in any state investigations, even as he suggested that more AGs could jump into the fray.

"There will be a successful outcome some day, whether it's my or another generation of lawyers," Pawa said. He added: "I do think we will be successful. I hope it's in the short term."

Activists plan to make a public stand at Exxon's annual shareholder meeting May 25, where several resolutions intended to force the company into acknowledging the climate threat will come to a vote.

The calls for a DOJ racketeering investigation from Clinton, Sanders, Lieu and Whitehouse, a former state attorney general, are also paying off. The Justice Department told Lieu in March that it had referred the requests to the FBI, a move that doesn't preclude DOJ later filing a civil complaint.

Walker, the Virgin Islands' AG, predicted that his Exxon probe will take longer than the four

months it took for his office to secure an \$800 million settlement in a separate case against Hess Oil. But otherwise, he said, a thorough inquiry "takes time, and my job is to get it done right, not fast."

Oil companies may face yet another headache if Democrats regain the Senate in November: Lawmakers such as Whitehouse told POLITICO they will push to hold hearings like those in the 1990s where tobacco executives had to testify under oath.

The prospect of intensifying political trouble for Exxon and other major oil companies while a legal case drags on is an integral design feature of activists' campaign against the company. Whether the endgame is the type of multibillion-dollar settlement that crippled cigarette makers, or whether it's a Beltway surrender that forces the company to do more on climate change, no longer matters.

What matters, the company's critics say, is sending a message to the industry that its days of climate obstructionism are over.

In the meantime, Whitehouse is betting that the flood of internal Exxon documents emerging as a result of the investigations will uncover damaging information.

"It wouldn't surprise me if some of these organizations were busily scrubbing their files to get rid of culpatory materials," he said.

Meanwhile, the industry's seemingly united pro-Exxon front belies a paradox: Other American oil companies are frustrated by the company's stated advocacy of a "revenue-neutral" carbon tax. No Democrat or environmentalist takes that stance seriously, but Exxon's willingness to even utter the phrase makes it an outlier among U.S. drillers and refiners, which fear that a levy on greenhouse gases could gain momentum if Clinton wins in November.

Many in the industry are also skeptical of Exxon's ties to the Democratic front-runner: The company's Washington office includes senior lobbyist Theresa Fariello, who bundles contributions for Clinton's campaign, and former Democratic aide Dan Easley, both of whom attended the Election Day meeting in Lieu's office.

"Exxon was one of the first companies out of the gate on a carbon tax, and they've made no secret they want to get along with the Clinton guys," said one fossil-fuel lobbyist unaffiliated with the company. "Their chickens are coming home to roost."

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Zinke recommends shrinking Bears Ears monument [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 06/12/2017 04:07 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke proposed shrinking the Bears Ears National Monument on Monday, trimming back the controversial Utah monument created by former President Barack Obama during his final days in office.

A preliminary review of the 1.4 million-acre monument that Zinke sent to the White House over the weekend shows his "belief that the monument needs to be right-sized," Zinke said in a statement.

Any move by President Donald Trump to alter the monument designed to protect thousands of sensitive archaeological sites will set off a legal fight with tribes and conservation groups that have complained the Native American ruins there were being damaged and would be threatened by oil and gas development in the area.

Zinke's [preliminary recommendations](#) to Trump show he did not plan to go as far as revoking Obama's monument designation — a move that has been sought by the state's congressional delegation.

"Rescinding the monument was an option, but looking at it, there are some antiquities within the monument that I think deserve to be protected," he said in a press call.

Trump has ordered Zinke to review 22 of the national monuments that were established in the past two decades to determine if they should be altered or revoked. The secretary has until Aug. 24 to send his final recommendations to the White House, and Zinke has extended the comment period on Bears Ears to July 10.

Zinke is also pressing Congress to look at the Bears Ears boundaries "to see whether the lands are more appropriately designated as national conservation areas or national recreation areas," he said. "There's certainly a high demand of recreation. There's certainly a demand for conservation in some parts, but we believe that those areas are better suited under congressionally mandated designations than they are a monument."

The secretary also asked Congress to grant tribes the ability to co-manage specific areas within Bears Ears, and for Congress to clarify how wilderness areas that overlap with monuments should be treated, an issue for Bears Ears and some other monuments under review.

A former congressman from Montana, Zinke cited his concern that the federal government restricts activities on the land it designates as protected, saying that designating a monument the size of Bears Ears where "multiple-use management is hindered or prohibited is not the best use of the land and is not in accordance with the intention of the Antiquities Act."

President Barack Obama created the monument in southeast Utah in December, angering Republicans who accused the administration of federal overreach by ignoring locals who opposed the move and using the Antiquities Act to cut off commercial activity such as mining and oil and gas drilling.

Prior legislative attempts by the Utah delegation to curb federal monuments in the state have [failed](#). Utah Republicans [Rob Bishop](#) and [Jason Chaffetz](#) did manage last year to get their [Utah Public Lands Initiative](#) legislation through the Natural Resources Committee, which Bishop chairs, but it never received a floor vote.

If Trump ultimately decides to alter Bears Ears or the other monuments on the list, he is certain to face legal challenges from environmental groups. "An attack on one monument is an attack on all of them," said Jesse Prentice-Dunn, advocacy director at the Center for Western Priorities.

Past presidents have changed the size of monuments but none have revoked them entirely, and legal questions remain as to whether the law allows a president to fully undo their predecessor's actions.

Zinke last month traveled to the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments and this week he will head to New England to visit the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine, which is also under review.

Zinke has repeatedly talked about the need to balance conservation with commercial and recreational demands on public lands, and has already this year ended the moratorium on new coal leases and launched reviews on ways to open up more areas for oil and gas development.

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U.S. biodiesel industry gets early win in trade case [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 08/22/2017 05:05 PM EDT

The Commerce Department will impose import duties on biodiesel shipments from Argentina and Indonesia as a result of a trade case brought by domestic producers, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Tuesday.

"The U.S. values its relationships with Argentina and Indonesia, but even friendly nations must play by the rules," Ross said in a statement announcing the rulings.

The department found the Argentine and Indonesian governments set up subsidies in violation of international trade laws, and penalties are needed to even out prices. "The subsidization of goods by foreign governments is something that the Trump administration takes very seriously, and we will continue to evaluate and verify the accuracy of this preliminary determination," Ross added.

Because the ruling is preliminary, companies in Argentina and Indonesia will have to pay a cash deposit on exports to the U.S. to cover potential future penalties. The cash deposit rates will range from 50.29 percent to 64.17 percent of the value of Argentine biodiesel, and from 41.06 percent to 68.28 percent for product from Indonesia.

Commerce also imposed a retroactive penalty so that the deposit rates will apply to biodiesel exports to the U.S. from those countries dating back to May, rather than starting Tuesday, as would normally be the case.

The National Biodiesel Board and 15 biodiesel producers brought the case in response to rapidly increasing imports of biodiesel from the two countries.

"The Commerce Department has recognized what this industry has known all along — that foreign biodiesel producers have benefited from massive subsidies that have severely injured U.S. biodiesel producers," Doug Whitehead, NBB's chief operating officer, said in a statement.

The National Association of Truck Stop Operators opposed the rulings, arguing they would raise fuel prices in the U.S. and ultimately lead to higher costs for consumer goods transported by truck in the U.S. "Any outcome that results in cutting off Americans' access to cleaner burning fuels, such as biodiesel, from foreign markets is a bad day for the United States," David Fialkov, NATSO's vice president of government relations, said in a statement.

Commerce will take comment on the preliminary rulings and then issue final decisions, which are likely to come next year.

Commerce is expected in October to issue a preliminary ruling in a separate case on whether Argentina and Indonesia deliberately dumped biodiesel in the U.S., undermining U.S. producers. NBB and the 15 biodiesel producers brought that action as well.

A memo Commerce released Tuesday on Argentine imports is [here](#). The decision is [here](#). A memo on Indonesian imports may be read [here](#). The decision is [here](#).

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Trump rejects wealthy friends' pleas for help [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén and Eric Wolff | 08/22/2017 07:30 PM EDT

Coal magnate Robert Murray has just joined Wall Street billionaire Carl Icahn in an exclusive club — wealthy backers of President Donald Trump who tried and failed to get lucrative concessions from his administration.

Murray, CEO of Murray Energy, one of the nation's biggest and most politically active coal miners, complained in an Aug. 4 [letter](#) made public Tuesday that the Energy Department had dragged its feet on his request that it use its emergency powers to force some Rust Belt coal-fired power plants to stay open. Trump was so taken by the idea that he immediately turned to Energy Secretary Rick Perry and ordered him to do it, wrote Murray, who said he had witnessed the conversation.

But DOE said no.

Murray's failure to shift the policy, and Icahn's earlier inability to convince the Environmental Protection Agency to alter its ethanol rule, raises questions about the limits of bulldog business leaders to circumvent the government's bureaucracy, even in an administration run by a sympathetic billionaire.

"These are two people who really don't understand how government works talking to a president who came into office not understanding how government works," said Jeff Navin, a founder of Boundary Stone Partners and former acting chief of staff at the Department of Energy under President Barack Obama. "What they're asking for causes serious legal problems for the agencies they're asking to take these steps."

Some conservatives, meanwhile, praised Trump for sticking up for market principles by refusing to grant favors to individual supporters.

The Trump administration "is committed to making sound policy decisions based on market principles and the rule of law, not political favoritism," said Tom Pyle, president of the industry-funded American Energy Alliance and former head of the Trump transition team at the Energy Department. "This is welcome news for Main Street and a wake-up call for K Street."

Icahn was an early Trump supporter — the two men go back decades — and though Murray started 2016 backing Texas Sen. [Ted Cruz](#), he eventually boarded the Trump train, hosting a major fundraiser in West Virginia and offering to educate Trump on coal issues. Trump's victory in November meant both had a chance to advance pet policies, especially since it seems both men have regular access to the president.

Yet both met with defeat.

The Energy Department rejected Murray's request that it use a special authority meant to protect the electric grid during emergencies to order FirstEnergy Solutions, part of Ohio-based utility FirstEnergy Corp., to keep open its coal-fired plants supplied by Murray's mines, even if the utility enters bankruptcy proceedings and would otherwise shut them down. Murray said that if those power plants shut down, it would force his company into bankruptcy.

Trump seemed fully supportive in private meetings, Murray revealed in [letters](#) to the White House, which were first published by The Associated Press.

At one meeting with the president, Trump turned to Perry in front of Murray "and said three (3) times 'I want this done,'" the coal company owner wrote. During a subsequent meeting with Murray and FirstEnergy Corp. CEO Charles Jones, Trump told an aide to "'tell [National Economic Council Director Gary] Cohn to do whatever these two want him to do.'"

But despite Trump's reported enthusiasm about granting Murray's unusual request, and despite Murray's assurances that other coal producers would benefit as well, the administration this week rejected it. DOE said in a short statement that "the evidence does not warrant the use of this emergency authority."

A White House spokeswoman did not address whether Trump had made the promises to Murray but said the president had acted on behalf of coal miners by killing Obama-era rules.

"Whether through repealing the Clean Power Plan and the 'Waters of the U.S. Rule,' removing the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, or signing legislation to overturn rules and policies designed to stop coal mining, President Trump continues to fight for miners every day," White House spokeswoman Kelly Love said in a statement.

Similarly, Icahn's push to change a federal biofuel program to help his oil refining company CVR Energy suffered defeat earlier in the month. The Wall Street investor for years had railed against the EPA's Renewable Fuel Standard, which requires gasoline refiners to blend ethanol into their fuel, and Icahn's role as an unofficial Trump adviser on regulations presented him the opening he had sought.

In the early weeks of the Trump administration, Icahn presented the White House with language for an executive order to overturn the rule, which was costing his company hundreds of millions of dollars. But Icahn's effort hit a wall of opposition from oil companies and biofuel makers, and by spring, the proposal was largely left for dead. Sources [told](#) POLITICO

earlier this month that the president would not be changing the biofuel program, though EPA has yet to make the decision official.

Icahn "comes in hot, his guy wins, Trump places a crown on Icahn's head, and Icahn says 'OK, it's corporate raider time,'" said Tyson Slocum, energy director for the nonprofit consumer advocacy group Public Citizen. "He knows hardball tactics. What Carl Icahn doesn't know is D.C."

Last week, Icahn resigned his title, and in another sign that he was wrapping up his affairs in D.C., he settled a court challenge to an enforcement action brought by the Federal Railroad Administration against American Railcar Industries, another Icahn-controlled company. That final settlement largely resembles the inspection regime the agency originally imposed, an FRA spokeswoman said.

One critic said the lack of experience in the new administration appeared to open the door for both Icahn and Murray, even if neither managed to step through it.

"I think we've seen, in this administration, at least, reports of an under-attentiveness to those procedural and institutional safeguards. That creates risk for unsound decisions to be made," said Ali Zaidi, a former Obama White House energy adviser now at the law firm Morrison & Foerster.

Icahn and Murray aren't the only ones seeking special treatment.

Coal billionaire-turned-West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice has proposed a federal subsidy for Appalachian coal in a plan that could net his own mines millions of dollars.

Justice privately pitched Trump on a subsidy that would pay utilities \$15 per ton of Appalachian coal burned, and he said in a [recent interview](#) the president was "really interested" in the plan, which would cost an estimated \$4.5 billion a year and likely require congressional approval.

But Justice's proposal has not been received well by key circles. It's gone over "like a fart in church" with Western coal miners, according to Travis Deti, executive director of the Wyoming Mining Association. And Wyoming's congressional delegation — including Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#), a Republican — [panned the idea](#) in a letter to Trump. Democrats, environmentalists and budget-hawk Republicans are also opposed to any coal subsidy.

Justice might look to the results that Icahn and Murray got.

Icahn and Murray "both became completely consumed with their own narrow self-interest, and they completely lost sight that there are a lot of stakeholders — including corporate stakeholders — that may not like their proposals," said Public Citizen's Slocum.

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White House eyes Afghanistan resources to defray costs [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 08/22/2017 03:01 PM EDT

President Donald Trump may press for a U.S. role in tapping Afghanistan's vast mineral reserves to defray the cost of military operations there, a senior adviser to Trump confirmed to POLITICO Tuesday.

Trump, who repeatedly called for the U.S. to take Iraqi oil to pay for its mission in that country, [plans to increase](#) troop levels in Afghanistan. But while he vowed in his policy [speech](#) on Monday that the U.S. would not engage in "nation-building again," he also said the U.S. would "participate in economic development to help defray the cost of the war to us."

Asked whether Trump was considering grabbing a stake in Afghanistan's vast mineral deposits — estimated at \$1 trillion by one U.S. government [report](#) — a senior White House adviser said it was on the table.

"We're looking at all those types of options," the adviser said.

A White House spokeswoman said there were no new announcements at the moment.

The war-torn country has an estimated 60 million metric tons of copper and 2.2 billion metric tons of iron ore, plus deposits of magnesium, gold, silver, rubies and other valuable resources spread across the country, according to a U.S. Geological Survey [study](#). It also holds up to 1.6 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, according to [government](#) data — a relative pittance compared to some of its Middle East neighbors, but enough that Exxon Mobil and other oil companies [sniffed](#) around the area briefly.

But extracting and processing tons of minerals in a war zone and transporting it out of the mountainous country with few modern roads or bridges is not something that can be done anytime soon, analysts said. Armed guerrilla groups and warlords currently mine the deposits to fund their own operations, according to a [study](#) by Global Witness, a nonprofit that campaigns for transparency in mining, oil and gas sectors.

Afghanistan's inherent infrastructure difficulties, both physical and political, blocked the building of a natural gas pipeline through the country in the late 1990s.

In 1997, Unocal, which was later bought by Chevron, joined a group of companies seeking to build a \$2.5 billion pipeline transporting natural gas from across the country, but it [abandoned](#) the effort. A company executive [told](#) the House Foreign Relations Committee in 1998 the lack of a strong government in the country posed a serious challenge to getting any energy infrastructure built there.

Trump can look at China for an example of how things can go wrong on the mining front, said Tony Cordesman, Burke chair in strategy at the Center for Strategic International Studies.

In 2007, two Chinese mining companies obtained Afghan government [permission](#) to extract copper from the country's Aynak region. A decade later, the project has [stalled](#) amid security concerns, contract disputes and controversy over the Chinese consortium's handling of Buddhist relics at the site.

"Above all it's a security problem. Is there mineral wealth there? Yes. Are we in position to secure a mine? If you don't have security, it is extremely difficult," Cordesman said.

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Dakota Access owner sues green groups [Back](#)

By Diamond Naga Siu | 08/22/2017 04:44 PM EDT

Dakota Access Pipeline owner Energy Transfer Partners filed a federal racketeering lawsuit today against Greenpeace International and Earth First!, contending the environmental groups worked together to spread false information about the company to raise money and damage Energy Transfer's business.

"The alleged Enterprise is comprised of rogue environmental groups and militant individuals who employ a pattern of criminal activity and a campaign of misinformation for purposes of increasing donations and advancing their political or business agendas," ETP and its parent company said in a statement. "The Complaint asserts that the attacks were calculated and thoroughly irresponsible, causing enormous harm to people and property along the pipeline's route."

The 187-page complaint additionally alleges that "smaller, more violent eco-terrorist organizations and radicalized individuals" are mishandling their funds and instead of using it to help the environment, they used the money for personal gain.

"Under the 'Greenpeace Model,' raising money and the network's profile is the primary objective, not saving the environment," their complaint wrote. "Greenpeace's most senior leaders have admitted that their goal is not to present accurate facts, but to 'emotionalize' issues and thereby 'pressure' (i.e. manipulate) their donor audiences into parting with their money."

Greenpeace USA General Counsel Tom Wetterer said this is the second "meritless" lawsuit filed against them by the law firm led by President Donald Trump's former personal attorney Marc Kasowitz.

"They are apparently trying to market themselves as corporate mercenaries willing to abuse the legal system to silence legitimate advocacy work," Wetterer said in a statement.

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Date: Thursday, December 07, 2017 5:45:34 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/07/2017 05:43 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden, Eric Wolff and Alex Guillén

WELCOME TO CONGRESS, MR. PRUITT: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt makes his long-awaited first appearance before a House Energy and Commerce subpanel this morning where he's expected to get grilled on a host of issues. The session will be broken into two segments — 10-11 a.m. and then 2 p.m. onwards — to allow Pruitt to attend a White House meeting on biofuels (more on that below). Look for E&C Environment Chairman [John Shimkus](#) to recognize the arrangement is "not ideal, but gives members maximum ability to personally question the administrator about the agency's mission" during his opening remarks.

What Republicans will say: Expect Chairman [Greg Walden](#) to press Pruitt on budget transparency and his plans to address staffing issues: "I expect that 'Back to Basics' is not an abdication of environmental protection, but rather a rededication to mastering the most fundamental aspects of EPA's mission," he'll say, according to prepared remarks glimpsed by ME. Shimkus said his questions could touch on a range of topics, including TSCA, brownfields, safe drinking water and the agency's staffing.

And Democrats? "We're all noticing the orientation toward the environment is completely different with respect to budgeting, with respect to climate change, potentially with respect to methane, particulates," Rep. [Scott Peters](#), a subcommittee member, told ME. "So, I just think we want to get a sense of where he's going and how he'll measure success." The committee's top Democrat, [Frank Pallone](#), wouldn't reveal what he intends to grill Pruitt about when ME caught up to him in the hall.

Pro's Alex Guillén's expectations for Pruitt's first Capitol Hill appearance in six months: "Lawmakers have probably built up some serious questions in that time, so we could see questioning on practically any issue before EPA: the Clean Power Plan repeal effort; the Waters of the U.S. rewrite; Superfund work; proposed budget cuts; Pruitt's decision earlier this year not to ban chlorpyrifos; and his increased security and travel. Pruitt's [prepared testimony](#) offers a standard overview of his EPA philosophy."

Rally time: Environmental and public health advocates, including the Union of Concerned Scientists, Sierra Club, Business Forward and the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, will rally outside Rayburn at 9:20 a.m. to draw attention to Pruitt's lagging enforcement efforts, spending habits and overhauls of science advisory panels. Ahead of the session, the Environmental Defense Fund updated their "[Pruitt Playbook](#)" and the Union of Concerned Scientists offers some [suggested questions](#) to ask.

If you go: The [hearing](#) kicks off at 10 a.m. in Rayburn 2123.

WHY PRUITT'S LEAVING: Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) has secured a meeting today at 11:30 a.m. with President Donald Trump and several Cabinet members, including Pruitt, for what he told ME is likely to be a "free-ranging discussion" about biofuels and the [recent fights](#) over the

Renewable Fuel Standard. His message? "We need to find a solution that is a win-win. That is a win for corn farmers across the Midwest but at the same time is a win for blue-collar union members who work in refineries and right now are being bankrupted by a regulatory system that isn't working," the Texas Republican said. Other Senate Republicans are expected to attend as well (perhaps the ones who signed [this letter](#)). Remember Cruz still has a hold on Bill Northey's USDA's farm and conservation mission nomination, so watch to see if that's lifted as the most immediate outcome of the session.

Oilies only: Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) wasn't invited to the meeting, his spokesman said, but not to worry: Grassley has said that a White House RFS meeting would be "a waste of time." And if there's one thing energy world knows now, it's that if you don't have Gang Grain, you got nothing.

WELCOME TO THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and no one was able to name the Father Millet Cross national monument (which has since been transferred by Congress to a state park) as our nation's smallest at just 0.0074 acres when designated. For today: Which state currently has the most national monuments at 18? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

ARCTIC LEASE SALE FLOP: Despite touting the "[largest ever](#)" lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, BLM [received](#) just bids on seven of the 900 tracts offered, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Those bids, generating just \$1.2 million in high bids, came jointly by ConocoPhillips and Anadarko for 80,000 acres, or less than 1 percent of the acreage offered. The highest bid amount was \$14.99 per acre. The relatively low amount could undercut GOP arguments that opening up the nearby Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would generate \$1 billion in revenue. Leasing of state land did quite a bit better, according to the [Anchorage Daily News](#).

For perspective: At the price of \$14.99/acre, "leasing the entirety of the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain's 1.5 million acres would raise slightly more than \$11 million in revenue for the federal government, a far cry from the billion dollar lie that Trump and Republicans are feeding the American public," the Alaska Wilderness League's Kristen Miller said in a statement. Remember the Republican budget calls for Senate ENR to kick in \$1 billion in revenue (which CBO [said would come](#) through ANWR drilling), though the lease results seem to bolster skepticism from environmental advocates and Democrats about those estimates.

Situational awareness: Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) was named a tax conferee late Wednesday, along with Sens. [Orrin Hatch](#), [Mike Enzi](#), [John Cornyn](#), [John Thune](#), [Rob Portman](#), [Tim Scott](#) and [Pat Toomey](#). "With Congressman [[Don Young](#)] representing the House of Representatives on our energy provisions, Alaskans will have a very strong voice at the table to ensure this bill crosses the finish line," she said in a statement.

No (strategic petroleum) reservations: Count Shimkus, a tax conferee, among the backers of the Senate's approach of selling off 7 million barrels from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve as part of the final tax package [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#). "There was a reason to have the SPR," he told ME. "There is a credible reason to debate whether, for now and in the immediate future, there is a need." He also said he's a "big ANWR supporter" and that he doesn't see the Arctic drilling provision getting pulled from the final version.

INHOFE, PRUITT'S TOXIC LEGACY: POLITICO Magazine's Malcolm Burnley takes [a](#)

[deep dive](#) into the contaminated Oklahoma region of Tar Creek, an area so poisonous that only 10 holdouts live there, and he finds a buyout program for residents that left Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) awash in scandal and litigation. Then-Attorney General Scott Pruitt ultimately concluded an audit into possible criminal wrongdoing didn't warrant charges and he shielded his review from public release, only to have some in the state believe his efforts were designed to spare Inhofe embarrassment. Many residents in the polluted zone of Tar Creek continue to express shock that no one was prosecuted over what happened in their federal buyout program

Pruitt and Inhofe flatly denied there was any political motivation in shielding the audit. "It was important to protect the individuals' reputation that were in that investigation," Pruitt said in an interview. "You would think that this wouldn't be a political issue, that people wouldn't put on the red and blue jerseys." One interesting fact though: Ryan Jackson, now Pruitt's chief of staff, was once Inhofe's point person on the Tar Creek issue. Photo gallery [here](#).

Pruitt's new gig: Trump named the EPA administrator to chair the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, a group formed after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill restore the ecosystems and economies of the Gulf Coast, your ME host [reports](#). Pruitt named Kenneth Wagner, a senior adviser, to be his designee on the council.

MAY FERC NOW BE WHOLE: New FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre will be sworn in today, bringing the five-member agency to full power, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). His swearing-in will put to rest rumors that either the Trump administration or McIntyre himself were delaying his start date to give current Chairman Neil Chatterjee enough service time to make staffing changes

MORE HEARINGS COMING ON CLEAN POWER PLAN: EPA announced Wednesday it would hold additional public hearings on its plan to repeal the Clean Power Plan in San Francisco; Gillette, Wyo.; and Kansas City, Mo., Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). Pruitt said the change was "due to the overwhelming response" and the agency will announce the dates and locations of the meetings in the coming weeks.

SPLIT OVER EXTENDERS? Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) told reporters Wednesday he doesn't like the idea of moving a package of extenders this year but hasn't made a final decision yet, Pro Tax's Brian Faler [reports](#). "It's horrible policy and process," he said. But those comments come as Thune, the Senate's number three Republican, said lawmakers will revive biodiesel, geothermal and other energy-related breaks along with other "cats and dogs." Doing an extenders package as the chambers work to iron out differences between their broader tax bills is likely to test tax writers' bandwidth.

Shutdown watch: Congressional leaders head to the White House for a meeting with Trump on government funding today, but GOP lawmakers expect to pass a two-week spending package despite internal division within their party, POLITICO's Rachael Bade and Sarah Ferris [report](#). House Freedom Caucus leaders have been asking for a commitment GOP leadership does not believe it can give them: a promise to "hold the line" and refuse Senate Democrats' demands for increased spending on non-defense programs.

House Democrats, including Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, hold a press conference at 10 a.m. in Cannon 234 to call on Republicans to take up additional federal assistance for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Watch [here](#).

ICYMI: Both sides framed their arguments at a hearing of the U.S. Trade Representative over

whether to impose tariffs on solar equipment imports in language aimed at swaying Trump, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#).

PATAGONIA SUES OVER BEARS EARS: A coalition of groups, including Patagonia, became the latest to file a lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's downsizing of Bears Ears National Monument on Monday. Link to the lawsuit filed in Washington federal court [here](#).

ENDANGERMENT FINDING PUSHBACK STALLS: Conservative state lawmakers and businesses that are members of the American Legislative Exchange Council on Wednesday shot down an effort to urge Pruitt to challenge a science-based endangerment finding that requires EPA action on greenhouse gas emissions. "In subcommittee, a substantive conversation occurred where arguments were made for and against the draft model policy," said Bill Meierling, executive vice president of external relations for the group. "After debate, it was clear that neither the public nor the private sector supported the draft as written."

Meierling added that "ALEC members prefer to advance policy only after a consensus opinion has been reached." Reports suggested later the resolution had been pulled in the aftermath of strong opposition, including from Exxon Mobil. Pruitt was expected to speak at the ALEC meeting on Friday but canceled due to a "scheduling conflict," Meierling said.

NO COMMENT: Murkowski forcefully [urged](#) Sen. [Al Franken](#) to step down amid sexual harassment allegations on Wednesday, but a spokeswoman declined to state whether Roy Moore would be welcome on her committee if he wins the Alabama special election next week. "We aren't commenting until after the special election and decisions about committee seats are made by conference," she said. Outgoing Alabama Sen. [Luther Strange](#) currently has a slot on the energy panel.

THERE'S ALWAYS A TIE: Congressional Democrats said Tuesday they have evidence then-national security adviser Michael Flynn sent assurances to former business partners that a U.S.-Russia energy partnership in the Middle East, which reportedly would have included more than two dozen nuclear plants in the region, was "good to go," POLITICO's Kyle Cheney [reports](#). The revelations from a whistleblower came in [a letter](#) released Tuesday.

MAIL CALL! LET'S BOOST EFFICIENCY CAPS! A collection of energy efficiency organizations, led by the Alliance to Save Energy, sent a letter to congressional appropriators on Wednesday urging them to boost "budget cap allocations for federal energy efficiency programs." Failure to do so could result in steep cuts to EPA and DOE programs across the board, the groups warn. Link [here](#).

TAKE A GLANCE! LESSONS FROM THE RFS: The American Enterprise Institute is out with [a report](#) looking at policymaking lessons from the RFS. It argues the biofuels mandate would be better as a rate standard than a volume standard, EPA should issue multiyear rather than annual rules and that uncertainty should be explicitly incorporated into future rulemakings, among other things.

BAD SOLAR ACTORS: Campaign for Accountability released the results of a years-long investigation concluding two companies — Vivint and SolarCity — received more complaints about their sales tactics than others in the solar industry. "Unfortunately, the deceptive sales tactics of solar companies, like Vivint and SolarCity, are making rooftop solar a risky bet," Daniel Stevens, the group's executive director, said in a statement. Read it [here](#).

DREAMS TURNED REALITY? The Center for Western Priorities is out with a report finding the Trump administration has already granted 13 of the energy industry's 24 top priorities. Read it [here](#).

SUGGESTIONS GIVEN: American Council for Capital Formation released a paper this morning with ten ideas for improving the regulatory process. It's the product of a November 2016 roundtable with Sens. [Mike Rounds](#), [Angus King](#), [James Lankford](#) and others. Link [here](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Michael Boucher has joined Crowell & Moring LLP environment and natural resources practice as a partner in Washington. He joins from Dentons US LLP, where he led that firm's chemical, pesticide, and consumer product regulation team.

QUICK HITS

- California AG on Trump EPA: 'It's almost as if they believe they're above the law'. [The Hill](#).
- Wall Street's Fracking Frenzy Runs Dry as Profits Fail to Materialize. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- The IHS Markit electric resiliency study - much less than meets the eye. [Utility Dive](#).
- Patagonia sues over Trump's monuments order. [AP](#).
- Volkswagen Official Gets 7-Year Term in Diesel-Emissions Cheating. [New York Times](#).
- Pipeline explodes in southeastern New Mexico oil patch. [AP](#).
- Christie backs nuclear subsidies but won't sign 'wish list' bill from environmental groups. [POLITICO New Jersey](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — The Washington International Trade Association holds an event as part of its NAFTA series: "[Energy and the NAFTA](#)," Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

10:00 a.m. — EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [appears before](#) the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — "[Transforming the Department of the Interior for the 21st Century](#)," House Natural Resources Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

11:00 a.m. — The World Bank conference call briefing on the One Planet Summit, RSVP: himtia@worldbankgroup.org

12:00 p.m. — "[The Business Case for Tax Incentives Promoting Energy Efficiency](#)," Alliance to Save Energy, Rayburn 2203

2:00 p.m. — The House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee holds [a hearing](#) on various bills, Longworth 1324

2:00 p.m. — "[OPEC's World Oil Outlook 2017](#)," Center for Strategic and International

Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/pruitt-heads-to-house-grilling-today-043377>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Biofuel backers claim victory in EPA battle [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 10/20/2017 05:37 PM EDT

Biofuels backers were breathing a sigh of relief on Friday after EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt backed away from changes to the Renewable Fuels Standard, a reversal that left oil refiners frustrated.

Pruitt [acceded](#) to demands from Sen. [Joni Ernst](#) that he publicly promise not to pursue plans to change the biofuel program rules — changes that had been sought by oil refiners who have long complained about the costs of implementing the program that many see as a giveaway to the corn states.

Pruitt's letter to Ernst, Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) and five other Midwestern Republican senators delivered what they'd asked for: A promise not to expand the group of companies required to comply with the program, to keep the biodiesel volume requirements at levels proposed in July, to not alter the policy that strips RFS credits from exported ethanol, and to explore allowing year-round sale of gasoline with 15 percent ethanol nationwide.

The quick reversal by Pruitt — at the [direction](#) of President Donald Trump — showed the influence of the biofuel lobby, corn growers and farm-state lawmakers to scuttle changes in the decade-old policy sought by the energy industry.

"This was a basket of bad ideas for biofuels," said Brooke Coleman, head of the industry lobby group Advanced Biofuels Business Council. "And there's no way that we could have any other response than to take this approach. [Pruitt] didn't kick tires on changing the RFS, he tried to take a baseball bat to the program, and the response was matching and in response to, from a magnitude perspective, to the initial foul."

The push by the senators, as well as Midwestern governors, "made a huge difference in this matter," said Michael McAdams, head of the Advanced Biofuels Association. "In addition, the collective unity of the entire biofuels industry, including those who distribute and market these fuels, made a significant impression on the importance and support for the RFS program."

But oil refiners who have said the high cost of biofuel credits, called Renewable Identification Numbers, was costing them hundreds of millions of dollars, lamented the power of the biofuels lobby and the corn-belt lawmakers.

"The [Pruitt] letter is a result of political pressure applied by Midwestern politicians," said one refining source. "Some Midwesterners cannot accept any premise that the RFS could be improved. As a result, their overreaction included everything from holds on confirmations to even more personal threats launched at the White House and EPA."

The unified and vociferous campaign by the biofuels industry in attacking the proposal that would have lowered biodiesel volume mandates surprised some in the refining industry, as well as the political staff in the EPA, sources tell POLITICO.

The Trump administration's embrace of the oil industry had raised refiners' hopes that it could have the best opportunity in years for significant RFS changes, and refining giant Valero Energy, along with a group of Pennsylvania companies, believed they would get relief from what they considered an onerous program.

But Grassley took to the Senate floor to blast Pruitt's biofuel plans as a "betrayal" of Trump's promises to protect ethanol, and he arranged a call with Trump and Pruitt that led to the meeting in his office with Pruitt and Ernst as well as [Deb Fischer](#) (Neb.), [John Thune](#) (S.D.), [Ben Sasse](#) (Neb.), [Pat Roberts](#) (Kan.) and [Mike Rounds](#) (S.D.). Following that meeting, Ernst demanded the public statement from Pruitt, and said she would withhold her support for Bill Wehrum, who was nominated to run the agency's air office, forcing a delay in the Environment and Public Works Committee's vote until next week.

Ernst spokeswoman Brook Hougesson told POLITICO, "Now that Sen. Ernst has received the assurances that the EPA will support the spirit and the letter of the RFS, she will support Mr. Wehrum."

Valero was disappointed its efforts to change the program had been shot down by the fierce political opposition.

"These senators have intervened in a regulatory process, and the proposals and concepts in the letter address RFS implementation problems to which these senators have offered no constructive solutions," Valero said in a statement. "The only unifying principle of their bullying opposition seems to be a desire to maintain the status quo at all costs and to protect windfall profits associated with unregulated trading of renewable identification numbers, or RINs. Their position advances neither the goals nor the efficient implementation of the RFS, and places U.S. manufacturing jobs at risk."

But in a statement, the White House made clear that Trump remained fully behind the biofuels program.

"President Donald J. Trump promised rural America that he would protect the Renewable Fuel Standard, and has never wavered from that promise," spokeswoman Kelly Love said in a statement. "The president has had constructive conversations with several key officials about the RFS over the past week, and he understands their concerns. The Trump administration will protect the RFS and ensure that our Nation's hardworking farmers continue to fuel America."

One energy executive said the biofuel backers were victorious because they were unified in their support for the RFS, while Republicans, the oil industry, and even the refiners were not on the same page.

"The ethanol boys won this round, no doubt, but at a pretty high cost," said Stephen Brown, vice president for federal government affairs for Andeavor. "The refining industry is anything but united on the RFS beyond a sunset as individual companies have each made investments and honed mitigation strategies to comply with the statute. As those investment decisions become increasingly operationally embedded, the industry will continue to splinter on the

suite of RFS issues."

But some producers are still wary of Pruitt's pledge in his Thursday letter, and they note that he promised to release a final rule in which none of the mandatory volumes will be less than he proposed in July. For some producers, those volumes were already too low.

"There's some work to do here," Coleman said. "We won't know until the rule is done. And we recognize it's an ongoing rulemaking, it's not like they're going or republish the rule, they've said what they can say. The final rule really matters."

To view online [click here.](#)

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'Largest ever' Interior Alaska oil lease sale draws little interest [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/06/2017 08:26 PM EDT

The Interior Department received only seven bids from two companies today in what it had billed as the "[largest ever](#)" oil and gas lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

The bids on the 10.3 million unleased acres in the NPR-A generated just \$1.2 million in high bids, according to a Bureau of Land Management summary. The relatively low amount could undercut GOP arguments that opening up the nearby Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would generate \$1 billion in revenue.

A BLM Alaska [lease sale last year](#) generated \$18 million for 1.4 million acres offered.

Subsidiaries of ConocoPhillips and Anadarko were the only two companies that participated in the lease sale. The companies only bid for 80,000 acres, or less than 1 percent of the acreage offered. The highest bid amount was \$14.99 per acre.

Low oil prices and the relatively cheap and plentiful land available for hydraulic fracturing in the lower 48 has hurt oil company interest in the out-of-the-way fields of Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) have pushed to open more public land to drilling, however, saying that doing so is important to increase domestic energy production.

Zinke had previously said that today's "large and unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American Energy Dominance."

An Interior spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions.

WHAT'S NEXT: Republicans hope to keep ANWR drilling provisions in their budget proposal.

To view online [click here.](#)

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Democrats worry Arctic National Wildlife Refuge being lost amid tax debate [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 11/29/2017 05:17 AM EDT

Democrats' fight to keep oil and gas rigs out of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is losing ground as the Republican tax plan advances — and it's almost as if no one has noticed.

The prospect of drilling in the untouched Alaskan tundra is as close to reality as it's been in more than a decade, with none of the political drama that in past decades turned the refuge's fate into a top-tier rallying cry for liberals. Legislation to allow drilling in ANWR is quietly hitching a ride on the tax code overhaul that Senate Republicans [hope to complete](#) by the end of the week, overshadowed by larger debates on whether the bill is a giveaway to rich people and corporations at the expense of the poor and working class.

"It's really not gotten the attention that it should," Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, told POLITICO about the ANWR provision. "It's not just the budget discussion. It's about everything else that's going on, the flurry of all sorts of other news."

Angus King (I-Maine) said Republicans were trying to shield ANWR from opposition by adding it to the larger bill rather than bringing it to the floor separately under rules, which would require it to win support from 60 senators to overcome a filibuster.

"Well, clearly the strategy is to try to get it through as part of this tax reform effort and thereby avoid a direct up-or-down vote," King said in an interview earlier this month.

The nonstop news cycle and preponderance of other concerns with the tax bill are making it difficult to focus on an issue that normally fires up Democratic voters.

"I do think that putting ANWR in the budget reconciliation package hasn't drawn as much extremist opposition because it is completely overshadowed by tax reform, which is the center of the package," said Chris Guith, senior vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute. "But there are some who aren't exactly supportive of tax reform that support ANWR, and it's possible to see ANWR bring a vote or two to help pass tax reform."

Senate Energy Chair Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) easily advanced [legislation](#) through her committee directing the Interior Department to hold two lease sales for drilling in ANWR over the next decade. It would raise \$1 billion over that period, according to the Congressional Budget Office, making it eligible for inclusion in a budget reconciliation package that Democrats cannot filibuster.

The reconciliation package also will include Republicans' tax plan and a repeal of the Obamacare individual mandate. While Murkowski helped scuttle the Obamacare repeal push earlier this year, she says she [supports](#) ending the mandate. Murkowski's office did not respond to a request for comment.

ANWR, a swath of tundra on the northern Alaska coast, is home to polar bears, porcupine caribou and a landscape that hasn't been touched in thousands of years. Congress designated the 19 million-acre area a wildlife refuge in 1980, but it set aside a 1.5-million-acre parcel known as "10-02" for possible drilling if future lawmakers approved such a plan. The U.S.

Geological Survey [estimated in 1998](#) that part of ANWR could hold up to 12 billion barrels of oil, and President Donald Trump and Alaska Republicans have called it essential for their plans for American "energy dominance."

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who is undecided on the tax bill for a several reasons, said she will support an amendment on the Senate floor to eliminate the ANWR language, but she said success there is not a prerequisite for her to vote for the underlying bill. "No it is not, but I would certainly try to get it out of the package," Collins told reporters Tuesday. Collins was the only Republican to cross the aisle on an unsuccessful [amendment](#) to keep pro-drilling language out of the underlying budget resolution, meaning it is unlikely that she would be able to strip the ANWR provision from a reconciliation bill.

But Democrats say that passing a deficit-increasing tax bill in order to open ANWR would actually harm energy-producing states. That's because the \$1.5 trillion shortfall from the GOP tax cuts would trigger required "pay-as-you-go" cuts to mandatory spending programs, according to a CBO [analysis](#) sent to House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.).

One of the programs on the pay-go chopping block would be the energy royalty revenue sharing program carried out through the Mineral Leasing Act. Cutting those payments would lose Alaska [an estimated \\$15 million](#) in energy royalty payments next year alone, an amount important to a state already facing budget shortfalls.

"Communities throughout the West would be impacted by the loss of revenue, which is used to support a variety of needs including infrastructure, school funding, conservation, and recreation," Hoyer said in a statement to POLITICO. "This is yet another example of the consequences associated with forcing through legislation to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit in order to give tax cuts to the wealthy."

Pay-go cuts also would hit popular programs like Medicare and student loans, but Congress can waive the law with 60 votes in the Senate. Democrats are not yet on board with that approach.

The current push to open ANWR, coming amid a swarm of competing headlines and buried in larger legislation, has come nearer to succeeding than the GOP's two previous attempts. President Bill Clinton vetoed a budget package in 1995 that included language opening ANWR, while a Democratic filibuster thwarted a second attempt in 2005.

Environmental groups have targeted public engagement at only a handful of congressional districts. The League of Conservation Voters spent \$550,000 on television ads in three Republican congressional districts. The LCV also paid for a bipartisan polling firm to probe public opinion on opening ANWR, but even that focused only on registered voters in eight congressional districts.

"The reason they're trying to sneak it into the tax package is they know they don't have the votes otherwise," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, the league's senior vice president of government affairs. "They know they can't pass it under regular order, that's why they're doing a sneak attack."

Even ANWR supporters are staying out of the spotlight.

"I haven't seen any full-out, front-page ads, nothing like that," Alaska Oil and Gas Association

President Kara Moriarty said. "We're a little battle-weary, to be honest. Alaskans support opening up ANWR. There's been a few statements reiterating that."

Nick Juliano contributed to this report.

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The Environmental Scandal in Scott Pruitt's Backyard [Back](#)

By Malcolm Burnley | 12/06/2017 05:57 PM EDT

PICHER, Okla. — Tar Creek, Oklahoma, is breathtaking in a terrible way: At one time the world's deepest source of lead and zinc, the three-town region is now a cratered landscape so poisonous that no one, aside from 10 holdouts, can live there. Mountains of ashlike "chat," a toxic residue from lead-zinc milling, rise majestically among the remains of homes torn from their foundations. Abandoned pets forage around the ruins. A child's teddy bear lies sprawled in a ghostly living room. A gorilla statue fronts an empty high school, atop a sign proclaiming "1A Football State Champs, 1984."

Tar Creek is also part of the environmental legacy of one of the state's—and nation's—leading politicians, Senator Jim Inhofe, and his longtime ally, Scott Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general who is now head of President Donald Trump's Environmental Protection Agency. After the EPA struggled to clean up the area, in 2006, Inhofe endorsed a plan in which a trust overseen by local citizens would use federal dollars to purchase homes and businesses in the toxic region so residents could move elsewhere. Then, when the plan proved so problematic that it spawned more than a half-dozen civil lawsuits and an audit into possible criminal wrongdoing, Pruitt, as the state's attorney general, invoked an exception to state freedom-of-information laws to keep the audit from being an open public record.

Now, that decision is coming into new light as many Oklahomans clamor for the audit to be released, suggesting that its revelations will prove embarrassing to Inhofe, who played a key role in designing the buyout plan, and cast doubt on Pruitt's decision not to move forward with charges. Last week, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit called the Campaign for Accountability raised the stakes even further, filing suit in Oklahoma courts to force the release of the audit.

"If you take a look at Scott Pruitt's record, you see a general disregard for transparency," said Daniel Stevens, the group's executive director. "I don't think it's outside our bounds to say that Pruitt is trying to hide evidence of criminal wrongdoing."

Pruitt, in an interview, dismissed the idea that he was covering anything up, saying his former office's grand jury unit reviewed the audit and determined that no charges were warranted. He said he declined to make it public because he didn't want innocent people to be besmirched, even though the auditor rejected that reasoning and maintained it should be a public document. "It was important to protect the individuals' reputation that were in that investigation," Pruitt said.

Nonetheless, the mess at Tar Creek continues to follow Pruitt in other ways. As EPA administrator, he has assumed full responsibility for the still-faltering cleanup. And eyebrows

were raised in Oklahoma this past January when, as Pruitt was awaiting confirmation for his EPA post, a White House spokesperson told Bloomberg News that the handling of Tar Creek was emblematic of Pruitt's philosophy: "national standards, neighborhood solutions."

Pruitt, in an interview, said he knew nothing about the Bloomberg article, saying only that he endorses the EPA's current work at Tar Creek and the principle of combining federal resources and state and local leadership, rather than the buyout that occurred before his time as EPA administrator, while he was Oklahoma's attorney general.

"I think as far as a model going forward outside of the buyout, what we're trying to do is have a renewed focus on what I think are some of the most beneficial things we can do for citizens across the country, and that's to address some of these legacy sites that have substantial environmental challenges that allow them to once again enjoy the communities in their backyard," he said.

But many residents of the Tar Creek area, who gave up their homes in a buyout they considered both coercive and corrupt, continue to blame Pruitt for the fact that no one was prosecuted. They described a program so rife with good-old-boy corruption that certain individuals received outsize payoffs while some homeowners got so little they couldn't relocate anywhere nearby; meanwhile, they said, the people hired to demolish the homes received inflated contracts through a flawed process.

"We were lied to and deceived from Day One," said Gloria Workman, who said her son has learning disabilities from growing up in the polluted zone of Tar Creek, which had lead-poisoning levels in children that were three times higher than those registered in Flint, Michigan, during the peak of its recent water crisis. "Not only were we losing our homes, we were raped in the process."

"It was a nightmare," said Mary Thompson, who was still awaiting a resolution from the trust when an EF4 tornado ripped through Tar Creek in 2008, throwing bodies and trailers through the sky, killing six people and destroying more than 100 homes. Without homes, many people took lower-than-expected buyout offers—however insufficient they were perceived to be—because they had nothing left, she said.

"They preyed on us after the tornado," said Thompson, whose home was leveled.

Nonetheless, Inhofe, in a 2015 news release touting the completion of the buyout, cast it as a success because it did not lead to an expanded federal role.

"This is an example of a government program created for a specific purpose and then dissolves after the job is completed," Inhofe proclaimed.

Now, he continues to defend it but sounds less celebratory. "The first thing to know about the Superfund site at Tar Creek is that it's what's called a 'mega-site' and that it is an exceptional circumstance in every way. You can't compare it to any other Superfund site in the country," Inhofe said in a statement to POLITICO. "The voluntary relocation assistance to get people out of harm's way was right for the situation at Tar Creek, but may not be for every other Superfund—that is why state and local partnership is critical."

To many former residents, who still want the investigative report by the state auditor to see the light of day, even these modest and conditional endorsements feel like slaps in the face.

"People hate the government out here, and it's because of things like this," said Aletha Redden, a lifelong resident of the area who has a Donald Trump bumper sticker on her pickup truck. "I want Scott Pruitt to know: This is not the model."

A flat expanse of dusty roads and scrubby vegetation situated in the heart of Tornado Alley, the Tar Creek area was once the mainstay of the Quapaw Tribe, which was forcibly relocated there by the U.S. government in 1834. At the time, the territory had little economic value, but a half-century later, prospectors discovered enormously rich ore. By the turn of the 20th century, companies broke ground with drill rigs on Quapaw land.

Many of those firms made fortunes, luring white settlers into an uneasy state of coexistence with the Quapaw. Tar Creek proved to be the deepest reservoir of lead-zinc ore in the world, producing a whopping \$1 billion in minerals between 1908 and 1950, according to the Oklahoma Historical Society. Picher, the largest of the mining towns, swelled to a population of 14,000.

Almost every aspect of life in Tar Creek traced back to the mines. The high school took on the mascot of a gorilla, a reference to workers in the mines who broke up boulders with hammers. Children played in sandboxes filled with chat, the chalky mining debris. Teenagers earned the nickname "chat rats" for climbing up the pillowy piles of toxic rubble throughout town and rolling tires down their slopes.

By the end of World War II, however, the boom was over. Most of the mining companies decamped for richer pastures. For the families left behind—including that of Yankees slugger Mickey Mantle, who grew up in the Tar Creek area in the 1940s—it was a slowly unfolding disaster. The extent of Tar Creek's collapse was reflected in the words of John F. Kennedy, who barnstormed into Joplin, Missouri—25 miles away from Tar Creek—in the closing days of the 1960 presidential campaign.

"My own judgment is I know no tougher occupation in the world that [sic] to be a miner, lead, zinc, coal. I am always glad to meet them because I think they live with peril," Kennedy declared. "They have as tough a life as there is. Every other one whose hand you shake has a finger off, a foot crushed, the chances of in 20 years their having a bad accident are more than any of the rest of us. And yet in this community and in West Virginia and Idaho and in other sections of the United States, there has been no group that has been harder hit, no group that has been more forgotten."

Indeed, after the last prospector looking for ore packed up and left in the mid-1970s, people looked to casinos and farming to make a living. But the residue from decades of mining was poisoning them. In 1979, acid mine water leached into the ground, threatening the area's aquifers, killing fish and turning creeks a rusty orange color. When the federal Superfund program—designed to clean up the nation's most polluted and contaminated land—kicked off in the early 1980s, Tar Creek was named to the inaugural National Priorities List. It's still on the list.

The EPA has spent more than \$176 million over the past 25 years on cleanup work inside the 42-square-mile-area, on projects from plugging mine shafts to removing contaminated surface soil in people's yards. Though the amount of money sounds large, it hasn't been nearly enough to remove the toxic dangers, and many residents insist the cleanup was mishandled from the

get-go. In some cases, the removal of soil resulted in sloping yards, which, during bouts of rain, caused flooding and mold inside houses. In 2000, the FBI raided the offices of the EPA's prime contractor at Tar Creek, Morrison-Knudsen. The company later settled a lawsuit brought by the federal government alleging false representation of billing and progress reports for a sum of \$1 million. In the settlement, the company made no admission of wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, the environmental hazards began to multiply: Shortly after the start of that Superfund spending spree, in 1993, researchers at the University of Oklahoma found that 34 percent of Quapaw children were living with lead concentrations above the federal limit. Further studies found alarming rates of lead and arsenic in both the tribal and non-tribal populations. In 1997, a university-lead study estimated that 21 percent of children near Tar Creek had elevated blood-lead levels (defined as 10 micrograms per liter at the time), which is three times higher than the highest measurements found in Flint, Michigan, in 2015. The learning disabilities and memory loss that had plagued the schools and curtailed lifespans for decades suddenly had a culprit.

As the dangers became ever-more visible and the cleanup lagged, residents rallied around the idea that the government should quickly buy them out of their homes, rather than wait for the hazardous materials to be removed. They thought they might have an ally in the state's senior senator, Inhofe, a Republican who was chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. But Inhofe, who has a skepticism about environmental science that exceeds that of any of his colleagues, refused to consider the idea. "There will never be a buyout. I promise you that," Inhofe told the *Tulsa World* in late 2003.

Inhofe's refusal to take action of any sort was often criticized in local press, due in part to the relentless attacks of a young Democratic congressman named Brad Carson. "If you'd asked people in Oklahoma politics at the time, they'd say we were mortal enemies," said Carson, referring to himself and Inhofe. "I was elected [to Congress] in 2000, and my goal was to untie the Gordian knot. The area is desperately poor. If it was in suburban Tulsa or Oklahoma City, there would've been outrage."

In 2004, Governor Brad Henry signed a bill authorizing the use of state dollars for the relocation of roughly 100 families with children under the age of 6. Under pressure to take further action, the senior senator began to come around. At first, he secured \$2 million in federal funding to pay for a study that discovered that 286 homes within Tar Creek were at risk of being swallowed up from cave-ins of underground mine shafts. This provided an opportunity for Inhofe to reverse himself on the buyout, supporting it on the grounds of protecting residents from cave-ins.

"The stability with the underground mine workings was worse than anyone had previously been thought," recalls Ed Keheley, a retired nuclear engineer and native of Picher who co-authored the study's final report. In the spring of 2006, Inhofe announced a joint federal and state buyout program that would begin with \$20 million in funding, with the express purpose of relocating any and all people who'd voluntarily leave Tar Creek.

Having once opposed the buyout to his political detriment, Inhofe now used his clout to keep on funding it, but with the idea that decision-making would be concentrated among local leaders, not the federal government. With Inhofe's support, the Oklahoma legislature created a nine-member panel called the Lead Impacted Communities Relocation Assistance Trust to assume control over the project. The members were all volunteers, helping their community, but some had a vested interest in the buyout: They included, for example, a local banker

whose institution would later give loans to people to help them relocate; local property owners whose own homes—and those of relatives—would be subject to the buyout; town officials; and a leader of the Quapaw Tribe.

Inhofe cast himself in the role of the community's protector, putting out a 2008 campaign ad that declared: "Tar Creek: poisoned earth, the threat of schools and churches sinking into abandoned mines. Everyone thought it would be too much to tackle, except for one stubborn man named Inhofe."

But over a five-year period, the buyout would become the subject of a host of civil lawsuits and the subject of a state investigation.

The local members of the trust—few, if any, of them schooled in environmental management—had two major tasks: figuring out how much each property owner should be paid for their home or business, and then choosing a company to demolish the properties. Both tasks would become the subject of complaints about cronyism, with residents saying the trust members rewarded their friends and politically connected individuals.

It didn't help that the trust often met behind closed doors, and that the vice chairman of the trust resigned within a year. The trust's sole employee, operations manager Sonya Harris, also quit, declaring in her resignation letter that she could no longer continue "with a clear conscience without recommending a change; I will not place myself in a position to be perceived as approving of the operations to this point."

The first case to raise eyebrows involved the mayor of Picher, Ernest "Sam" Freeman. In 2005, when the buyout was first being discussed as a probability, he acquired three large parcels of former mining land covered with chat from the Picher Development Authority, which he chaired. Freeman bought them at 3 cents per square foot, for a total price of \$2,088.50, according to the findings of a state audit at the time. It was, the audit declared, a violation of state laws forbidding members of public boards from entering into contracts with those boards. Ottawa County District Attorney Eddie Wyant called on Freeman to return the properties to the development authority in lieu of charges.

"If Sam wanted to buy that land, he needed to get off the board and purchase it legally," Wyant told a local newspaper at the time. "I am not one to put anyone in jail over this, but he needs to clear it up." Wyant, when reached by phone, declined to comment further.

Freeman returned the land, but, in a move that enraged some neighbors, profited off it anyway. The trust had decided that, because so much former mining land had been taken over by state authorities and tribal members, those who owned mobile homes or other shelters on land they didn't own would be eligible for buyouts. Freeman made a claim based on the fact that he had been maintaining and renting out homes on the chat-infested property for years before he tried to buy it.

Trust documents show that Freeman received at least \$274,000 from the buyout, more than half of which came from the same lots he had been ordered to return by law enforcement. (Freeman told POLITICO a payout of more than a quarter-million sounded accurate enough, though he declined to provide an exact figure.) Neighbors suspected cronyism. Freeman, who is no longer mayor, denied receiving any preferential treatment. "These people thought I

bought the lots to make a killing in the buyout," he said. "I don't think I got more than anyone else would have."

The size of the mayor's profit diminished public confidence in the trust, just as it was engaged in the most delicate part of its task, figuring out how much to pay each individual property owner. Property owners were supposed to receive fair market prices as if pollution hadn't existed in Tar Creek, based on the sales of similar properties elsewhere in northeast Oklahoma. But those calculations appeared to lack uniformity.

The average payout for the 695 properties involved in the buyout was just over \$65,000, but the disparity in prices between two properties could be dramatic. Residents complained about lowball offers on some decent properties and overly high payouts for others that were rundown or minuscule in size.

"I got \$3,000 for my gun shop. It took me \$16,000 to build it," said former Tar Creek resident John Frazier.

Wally Long said he and his wife got \$35,000 for their Dairy Queen, while another Dairy Queen right up the road got substantially more.

"We were told [by the trust] that's all the money there is," Long said. "It bothered my wife a lot. She put 23 years of her life into this business."

Meanwhile, a trust member named Janell Trimble got \$185,000 for her house, and her brother collected \$115,000 for his fiberboard house.

"I may be a member of the [relocation trust's committee], but I honor my duties and I recuse myself when family members are involved," Trimble told the [Tulsa World in 2008](#). "[B]ut as a buyout participant I also expect to be treated just like the next person."

Nonetheless, both Trimble and her brother received more than 35 percent above the average price per square foot. On the other end of the spectrum, an elderly woman named Betty Betts received an offer of \$12,000 for her home; when she protested, the appraised value was raised to \$20,000. Many people got so little for their homes that they had to turn around and take out loans in order to resettle elsewhere in Oklahoma. In the end, the trust finished up with millions in unspent funds.

Residents concentrated their anger on the company that the trust hired to conduct the appraisals, Cinnabar, which had previously made headlines for its management of a noise-insulation program at the Tulsa Airport, which involved [multiple lawsuits](#). In response, the trust engaged an "appraisal reviewer" to go back over Cinnabar's work. But the reviewer, a company named Van Tuyl Associates, quickly came under criticism as well. "They [often] didn't get out of their car. They never entered these homes," said Keheley, who was a member of the trust at the time. (Van Tuyl Associates is now defunct; its former president could not be reached for comment.)

When the unrest over the buyout made the local newspapers, the trust's leadership pointed to a 95 percent acceptance rate for buyout offers. But some residents accused trustees of pressuring them with "take it or leave it" offers, according to a class-action lawsuit brought against the trustees, Cinnabar and Van Tuyl by more than 250 residents affected by the buyout. Plaintiffs also complained that they were denied the right to view the appraisal paperwork. There was

even a fake camera—and posters notifying residents they were being videotaped—in the room where buyout offers were made, an apparent attempt to compel residents to take the offers, according to documents in the suit.

The suit, filed in Oklahoma district court, accused the defendants of cheating average property owners and rewarding friends and associates of the trustees. Depositions revealed an explanation for some of the inconsistencies in appraisals: For certain properties, Cinnabar expanded the boundaries of where it could find "comparables"—properties in adjacent counties whose sale prices were used to calculate the appraisals—with the approval of a state employee named J.D. Strong, who, according to the lawsuit, played a significant role in overseeing the trust.

One of the properties appraised in this fashion was that of Trimble, whose \$185,000 payout, according to appraisal documents, had infuriated other residents.

When, in 2008, residents outlined their frustrations in a scathing six-page letter to Inhofe, Henry and other elected officials, Strong dictated the governor's reply, which was co-signed by Inhofe, lawyers for the plaintiffs asserted in his deposition. "I may have drafted this," Strong responded, when presented with a copy of the letter saved on Strong's computer.

In an interview, Strong defended the trust and its system of appraisals: "We knew going in that we weren't going to be the most popular. We went in with the idea that we were going to be fair. I can honestly say that, looking back, we were fair and unbiased and frugal."

During the six years the lawsuit was making its way through the state court system, both Cinnabar and Van Tuyl Associates declared bankruptcy. Eventually, the plaintiffs and the trust settled the case in 2015 for \$1.3 million, which, after deducting attorney fees, meant that each resident ended up receiving an additional \$2,600.

But that didn't satisfy many property owners.

"The people of Tar Creek were treated like second-class citizens, based on where they were born and lived," concluded Wally Kennedy, a columnist at the *Joplin Globe* who reported on northeast Oklahoma, including Tar Creek, for more than 30 years. "For someone to portray the buyout of the people of Tar Creek as a successful program is lying through their teeth."

Once the trust obtained the properties on the toxic land, the next problem was how to destroy the empty structures that were on them.

Inhofe made sure there was enough money for the job. Even as he joined fellow Republicans in condemning President Barack Obama's 2009 stimulus bill as an unwarranted giveaway, the senior senator helped secure an additional \$15.7 million in the bill to help the trust finish its work.

The trust hired a local businessman named Jack Dalrymple to oversee bids for the demolition contract. He was best known for organizing an annual deer hunt for paralyzed veterans, an endeavor that earned him a lifetime achievement award from a local Chamber of Commerce. His payment was to be 10 percent of the value of the winning bid. He formulated a scoring system to evaluate bids and, in March 2010, the trust awarded the contract to Stone's Backhoe,

the most expensive of all four bids. At \$2.1 million, it was nearly four times the cost of the lowest bidder.

Just 14 days after Stone's was declared the winner, it asked that the contract be reassigned to two subcontractors, CWF Enterprises, a carpet-cleaning business, and Vision Construction and Management. Former residents contend that there were longstanding ties between Dalrymple and the subcontractors. Whether or not they were friends before, they soon became hunting buddies. In October 2012, local coverage of Dalrymple's annual event for paralyzed veterans pictured the heads of the two firms setting up the flag for the hunt.

One of the losing contractors filed suit against the trust and individual trustees in Oklahoma district court, accusing them of violating the state's open-meeting act and competitive bidding act. The district county judge sided with the plaintiff, reopening the bidding process.

But rather than blame Dalrymple, the trust gave him a new contract. It included a flat rate for his services, \$305,472—about \$100,000 more than he would have received had the contract remained with Stone's.

In January 2011, a \$1.7 million demolition contract was awarded to none other than CWF Enterprises, the carpet-cleaning business, which was also the least expensive of the three bids received. A month later, however, the estimated cost of the contract ballooned to \$3,050,786—almost exactly 10 times what Dalrymple received in his new contract.

While many residents cried foul, Andy Lester, the trust's attorney, attributed the increase to the fact that the EPA-controlled repository for dumping debris had just closed down. Trekking the remains of the houses and businesses to a dumping ground further away caused the massive change order, and a near doubling of the contract.

Lester also defends the choice of Dalrymple to handle the bids, contending that he was an engineer with some prior experience with public contracts and that the trust members couldn't handle the process on their own.

"It is important to remember that the trust board consisted of nine members—including, for example, a physician, a school teacher, and a mushroom farmer. They were volunteers, not professionals at this kind of work," Lester said. "Jack Dalrymple is a professional engineer with significant experience. And candidly, there are very few professional engineers in northeast Oklahoma."

Nonetheless, lawyers out of the Tulsa region filed a lawsuit in 2012 under the False Claims Act that accused the trust members, Dalrymple and the heads of the companies hired to do demolition work of being part of a "good old boy network" and defrauding federal taxpayers.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs, Zach and Brad Barron, say the lawsuit fizzled when the Department of Justice took the stance that "the government didn't sustain damages" from the charges laid out in the complaint. In a false claims lawsuit, where the plaintiffs are effectively trying to recoup money that's owed to the government, a lack of willingness from the government is effectively a death knell, the Barrons said. The lawsuit was eventually dismissed.

In an interview, Dalrymple insisted the allegations of cronyism were entirely unfounded.

"There were a lot of emotions and feelings during that period," he said. "When you ask someone to leave their home, it's a tough thing. But ... there was nothing there."

Still, the drumbeat of complaints continued, eventually reaching the ear of Jerry Morris, the state director for Oklahoma's then-junior senator, Republican Tom Coburn.

It was no secret that Coburn, a physician who cast himself as a political outsider, didn't look upon Inhofe with any sort of fond feelings of mentorship.

"I think they were often seen as having very different approaches to politics," said David Blatt of the Oklahoma Policy Institute. "Inhofe is seen as a classic, pork-barrel politician who'd bring federal dollars to Oklahoma, the more the merrier." Whereas Coburn, Blatt says, "hated that kind of politics and did as little of it as he possibly could. In fact, he spoke disdainfully and caustically about it the whole time he was in the Senate."

Coburn was not shy about stepping on his fellow Republican's toes. Morris forwarded a memo with a lengthy list of allegations related to the awarding of contracts in the Tar Creek buyout, especially regarding the demolition work, to then-Attorney General Pruitt. In April 2011, Pruitt asked the state auditor and inspector, Gary Jones, to look into the memoranda sent from Coburn's office.

"I have determined that these concerns are serious in nature such that an investigation of the matter is warranted," Pruitt wrote to Jones. A 17-point list of allegations for Jones to investigate followed, including whether there was collusion between Dalrymple and the contractors hired to do the demolition work.

After spending almost two years on the investigation, Jones turned over the results of the audit to the attorney general's office in January 2014, apparently believing it had uncovered important information.

For a year and a half, the attorney general sat on the findings. Then, in May 2015, Pruitt announced that he wouldn't press charges. In addition, he vowed to keep the audit secret by refusing to release it.

Jones fired back at the attorney general's office days later, penning a letter to Pruitt that described his rationale for withholding the audit as "baffling."

"To our knowledge, the individuals named in the report are members of a public trust or contractor whose services were retained as part of this substantive project," Jones wrote. Further, he contended, "our office has received no inquiries from you or your staff regarding the content of the audit report."

Pruitt justified the secrecy by comparing the investigation results to the findings of a grand jury. "Specifically, our office is concerned about publication of unsubstantiated criminal allegations against private citizens," Pruitt wrote in a 2015 statement.

In an interview with POLITICO, Pruitt appeared to go one step further, suggesting the audit had in fact been vetted by a grand jury.

"You're addressing issues that it's been some months since I've looked into," Pruitt said. "I

know the decision I made at that time was based upon the investigative audit. The investigative audit didn't yield anything to the grand jury, and, as such, it was important to protect the individuals' reputation that were in that investigation."

But when asked to clarify, a Pruitt staff member indicated that he was using the term "grand jury" as shorthand for the Multi-County Grand Jury Unit, a division of the AG's office, headed at the time by a Pruitt appointee, which decides whether to take cases to a grand jury for indictment.

It's not the same as a grand jury finding. Nonetheless, the attorney general's office, now overseen by Mike Hunter, Pruitt's former top deputy, has denied all open records requests for the audit, declaring it to be "under the supervision of the Multi-County Grand Jury Unit." A spokeswoman for the Oklahoma attorney general's office said that if there was in fact a grand jury, the office couldn't confirm or deny that.

These rationales befuddle open records experts.

"I don't think there's anything in the law that would prohibit it [the investigation] from being released," said Joey Senat of Oklahoma State University, the president of FOIA Oklahoma. "The law doesn't require that the audit be kept secret. What would its release be harming? They've closed the investigation and decided not to prosecute."

Jones, who is now running for governor, reiterated his call for the attorney general's office to release the audit, saying in a statement that "regarding any investigation of this kind, we always err on the side of transparency and the people of Oklahoma have a right to know."

Concluded Senat: "When you have the state auditor [Gary Jones] saying these are not unsubstantiated claims and this is a serious problem, good government would call for letting the public know what happened and showing the public the audit. Transparency helps alleviate a lot of concerns about favoritism, corruption, and incompetency—if those are indeed unfounded."

Tar Creek today looks like an abandoned landfill. Illegal dumping has added a fresh layer of grime to the already ruined patch of earth. Giant craters from collapsed mine shafts, some as large as 200 feet in diameter, are filled with Bud Light cans, shotgun shells and the tangled remains of kids' playground equipment. "We call this urban renewal, Picher style," quipped former resident Gloria Workman.

Abandoned houses that were not part of the buyout are now coated with graffiti. The charred remains of the former mining museum in Picher, which burned down at the hands of arsonists, stands as a teetering monument to Tar Creek's former way of life. And the sense of danger and destruction extends beyond the former buyout area: On rainy days, local fields used for football practice bleed a toxic shade of orange.

The EPA is continuing its now 33-year-old cleanup effort, and it's thrust the Quapaws back into stewardship of the land. Although the tribe leased away or sold off significant chunks of Tar Creek to mining companies throughout the 20th century, the Quapaws have at least temporarily regained control of all of it. Since 2012, the tribe—a sovereign nation with roughly 5,500 members—has been the primary EPA contractor for environmental remediation

at Tar Creek. It's the first time any tribe has been a prime contractor on a Superfund site, assigning all the contracts and overseeing all the work.

"It's a great story," said Craig Kreman, assistant environmental director of the Quapaw tribe. "We're employing tribal members a lot of the time and members of the community. So that income [from the EPA contract] stays here in this community and is being spent in this community. We're not hiring a contractor out of Georgia."

Every day, a steady stream of trucks haul away more than 2,000 tons of soil saturated with cadmium, lead and other metals at the site. Each patch of earth requires years of passive soil treatments before it tests clean enough to plant row crops like winter wheat. Half-acre by half-acre, the hope is that Tar Creek can be put into productive agricultural use decades from now.

In August, after touring the abandoned area and surrounding towns, Pruitt's senior adviser Albert "Kell" Kelly, praised the EPA's efforts surrounding Tar Creek in sweeping terms: "People from all across the country count on the Superfund program to address pollution and revitalize their communities. Tar Creek cleanup is an excellent example of how the program should work. State and local partners, tribal partners, and EPA—all working together year after year to address historical pollution at this mega-site. It's cooperative federalism working at its best."

But many local observers, including Ed Keheley, aren't nearly as positive.

"Usually, the EPA comes in, they do their dirty work, sprinkle some wheat seed, take a picture to show Congress, and next year it looks like this," he said, pointing to a barren pasture. "Clearly, the EPA hasn't had the best interests of the people at heart. So I get personally offended when people like Scott Pruitt suggest otherwise."

For his part, Pruitt announced a fresh grant of \$5 million to the Quapaw-led project last May, and he is quick to distance this experiment in local control from the one that preceded it.

"We [the EPA] can't impact the buyout. We didn't authorize the buyout. I didn't manage the buyout and its unique situation," Pruitt said. "I think what's most tangible is what we can do together with the tribe to advance and continue remediation."

When asked to respond to the undying complaints of residents in rural Ottawa County, where Tar Creek is located—a county in which Trump received 71 percent of the vote in November 2016—Pruitt changed the subject. "I had no experience with Tar Creek, to be honest with you," he said.

That's true, except it was his office's decision, when he was attorney general, not to prosecute the people accused of mishandling the trust money, Keheley and other local residents point out.

But what galls them more than the failure to prosecute is the failure to release the results of a government investigation—an audit that they believe will raise questions about Pruitt's unwillingness to press charges and cast a negative light on a project near and dear to Inhofe's heart.

Pruitt's connections to Inhofe are extensive. One of Pruitt's first hires as EPA chief was Ryan Jackson, a longtime Inhofe staffer and the senator's point person on Tar Creek, who is now

Pruitt's chief of staff. He also brought on four other former aides to Inhofe, the Senate's leading proponent of the idea that man-made pollution contributing to climate change is a conspiracy and a hoax. Three of them are Pruitt's senior advisers on air, climate and legal issues.

"It gives me a level of comfort to know that we have a bureaucracy that's actually going to be serving instead of ruling," Inhofe told the *Washington Post*, applauding Pruitt for hiring his staff.

Numerous veteran Oklahoma political watchers, some of whom spoke to POLITICO on condition of anonymity, suggest that there may be an ulterior motive in Pruitt's embrace of Inhofe: It's widely believed that Pruitt, who is 49, wants to run for Inhofe's seat when the senator retires. Many observers think Inhofe is unlikely to seek reelection in 2020, when he'll be 85. And some have noted that Pruitt's decision not to advance the case against the buyout trust spared Inhofe the embarrassment of seeing the program he personally tailored and promoted go down in scandal.

"Pruitt is a rising Republican political star previously in Oklahoma and now nationally," said one journalist who closely follows the Oklahoma political scene. "There have been rumblings that Pruitt might have his eye on higher office. ... Pruitt would do everything to keep Inhofe close, assuming he wants to run for that seat."

Wally Kennedy, the *Joplin Globe* columnist who has covered the Tar Creek trust more closely than any other journalist, said, "My sense of the way that unfolded was that Pruitt decided he was not going to do any kind of prosecution, and then Inhofe writes a letter saying what an outstanding job the trust did. My reaction was 'Huh?'"

"The fact that the audit was not publicly disclosed tells me that somebody is hiding something," he added. "This is Oklahoma taxpayers' money being committed to ratting out what appears to be some apparent corruption. But everybody looks the other way. That's why I'm talking to you. Because if you can shed a light on this, maybe somebody will say 'We need to take a second look at this.'"

Pruitt, however, insists his decisions were strictly based on the law, and an Inhofe staffer flatly dismissed the possibility of Inhofe influencing Pruitt's decision.

"Senator Inhofe would have had no involvement in the case or in any of then-Attorney General Pruitt's decisions," the staffer said.

Pruitt was similarly bemused by the idea that there would have been any sort of political calculation behind his decision to shield the audit. The only politics in this case, he suggested, was on the part of those who want to embarrass him and Inhofe.

"You would think that this wouldn't be a political issue, that people wouldn't put on the red and blue jerseys," Pruitt said in frustration.

Others argue that transparency in this case is not a political issue as much as a legal right.

"The open records act seems pretty clear this audit should be released," said Stevens, executive director of Campaign for Accountability. "You have to ask why he's not releasing it? Pruitt should have to be held accountable for this."

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Pruitt named chair of Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 12/06/2017 07:28 PM EDT

President Donald Trump announced today that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt would chair the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council.

The group, formed in 2012 after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, helps restore the ecosystems and economies of the Gulf Coast. Pruitt was unanimously selected by Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, the five states on the council.

"I am honored to be selected by the states and look forward to working with the governors to continue the excellent work of this Council to further the critical mission of restoring the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem," he said in a statement.

Pruitt named Kenneth Wagner, a senior adviser, to be his designee on the council. He takes over the chairmanship from the Secretary of Agriculture.

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt begins his chairmanship of the group.

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Powelson says McIntyre to be sworn in Thursday [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/06/2017 03:33 PM EDT

New FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre will be sworn in on Thursday, FERC Commissioner Rob Powelson told an audience of electric power officials in Philadelphia today.

"At a general session this afternoon in Philadelphia, one of the key speakers was FERC Commissioner Rob Powelson, and during his speech this afternoon he confirmed that Kevin McIntyre will be sworn in tomorrow," PJM Interconnection spokeswoman Susan Buehler said.

President Donald Trump nominated McIntyre, a partner at the law firm of Jones Day, to be commissioner and designated him to be chair months ago. The Senate confirmed him in early November, and he received his signed commission just before Thanksgiving.

His swearing in will put to rest rumors that either the Trump administration or McIntyre himself were delaying his start date to give current Chairman Neil Chatterjee enough service time to make staffing changes. Chatterjee will miss that deadline by a day.

It also puts McIntyre in charge of the process initiated by Energy Secretary Rick Perry that is

aimed at supporting coal-fired and nuclear power plants in an effort to protect the power grid's resilience. Action on that proposal is expected by Monday.

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EPA to hold more hearings on Clean Power Plan withdrawal [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/06/2017 03:28 PM EDT

EPA will hold three additional public hearings on a proposal to withdraw the Clean Power Plan, in San Francisco; Gillette, Wyo.; and Kansas City, Mo., the agency announced today.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in a press release said the change was "due to the overwhelming response" to two days of hearings in West Virginia last week. Many environmental advocates criticized EPA for initially scheduling hearings only in coal country.

The agency will announce the dates and locations of the meetings in the coming weeks, and speakers must [register](#).

The Obama administration, by comparison, held public hearings on the proposed climate standards in 2015 in Pittsburgh, Denver, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

WHAT'S NEXT: Comments on the draft withdrawal are due Jan. 16.

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Republicans divided over taking up tax extenders this year [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 12/06/2017 05:40 PM EDT

Republican leaders are divided over whether to take up a second tax-cut bill this year.

Senate Republicans want to move legislation reviving a rump group of tax "extenders," separate from their more sweeping plan to rewrite the code.

But the House's top tax writer isn't so sure.

"I don't like the extenders," said House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas). "It's horrible policy and process."

"No decision yet," he added, saying lawmakers need to talk it over.

His comments came after Sen. [John Thune](#), the chamber's No. 3 Republican, said today lawmakers will revive biodiesel, geothermal and other energy-related breaks along with other "cats and dogs," including a tax credit to maintain short-line railroads.

Thirty-four temporary tax provisions expired at the end of last year, including 16 energy ones, and lawmakers are now facing demands to revive them. Some want to attach the provisions to funding legislation needed to keep the government open [H.J. Res. 123 \(115\)](#).

Many Republicans had sworn off the "extender" ritual after a 2015 tax agreement made many of the breaks permanent while giving others what lawmakers said was one final extension — which, for some, ended last year.

Putting together an extender bill, even as lawmakers negotiate a final compromise on their tax-overhaul plans, is likely to test tax writers' bandwidth.

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Solar pitches target Trump at USTR hearing [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/06/2017 03:46 PM EDT

Supporters of tough trade tariffs on solar energy equipment and their opponents squared off again at a hearing of the U.S. Trade Representative today, with both sides coloring their arguments in language aimed at swaying the White House.

The two companies seeking tariffs on foreign shipments of solar panels and cells, Suniva and SolarWorld Americas, pressed the case that barriers were vital for protecting U.S. manufacturing of the clean energy technology because of its importance for national security — issues at the heart of President Donald Trump's "America First" agenda.

"A strong remedy is required to persevere the U.S. industry, provide breathing space for this American-invented manufacturing technology," said Matt Card, vice president of operations for bankrupt Suniva. "Anything less would ... result in the loss of this industry. That would have a dramatic negative impact on national security."

Witnesses at the hearing opposed to instituting tariffs raised the same issues, but contended that trade barriers would threaten other businesses, and that the benefits of tariffs would help only a narrow segment of the solar industry.

"Factories in South Carolina and across the nation would suffer from solar tariffs," South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster told the panel. "While there is only one operating factory in the U.S. petitioning for these tariffs, there are over 50 American-owned factories employing thousands of people that would be the ones harmed, including a steel mill in South Carolina that provides American-made steel for many of the U.S. factories that produce metal equipment for the utility scale solar farms."

The panel, which included representatives from the departments of Energy, Treasury, State, Labor and Commerce, and from the Council of Economic Advisers, appeared unmoved by the national security arguments, and instead peppered parties with detailed questions about the potential tariffs' impacts on U.S. solar power demand. Panel members also questioned whether a few years of trade protections would be enough time for Suniva and SolarWorld to hike their

production enough to catch up to overseas competition.

They pressed witnesses from both side on how tariffs would effect the domestic solar market, whether a modest tariff would be effective, and their opinions on the recommendations the U.S. International Trade Commission sent the White House last month. ITC members [recommended](#) a range of options, from sliding scale of tariffs to a cap on total shipments.

The Trade Representative will send the White House a recommendation, and Trump has until Jan. 26 to make a decision.

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By Anthony Adragna | 12/04/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

TRUMP'S MONUMENTAL DECISION: The news spotlight will shift to Salt Lake City today, where President Donald Trump is expected to unveil his decision to drastically trim Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments after deciding the designations under the Antiquities Act were overreach. The moment marks a huge victory for the state's congressional delegation, which fought hard to undo the designation. "Every elected official from the mayors to the commissioners, every single elected representative, got engaged in it. It was the real, Utah cumulative, everybody-pull-together kind of thing," Boyd Matheson, president of the Sutherland Institute, told the [Salt Lake Tribune](#). Look for a whole bunch of VIPs, including Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Sen. Orrin Hatch and House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#), to be on hand for the Trump's announcement.

But expect the pushback to be instantaneous and lengthy legal battles to follow. Some 5,000 people protested the anticipated decision outside the Utah State Capitol over the weekend (picture via League of Conservation Voters [here](#)). Look for Native American, public lands and environmental groups to lodge lawsuits arguing the Antiquities Act doesn't provide the president authority to change a prior designation. Representatives from the Navajo, Ute, and Hopi Tribes will hold a telephone press conference tomorrow at 5 p.m. EST responding to announcement.

Trump is due to speak at 2:40 p.m. EST in Salt Lake City. One thing to watch for is whether his comments touch on the other national monument designations that Zinke recommended shrinking such as Cascade-Siskiyou, Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks, Rio Grande del Norte and Katahdin Woods and Waters.

Also, look for Trump to use the trappings of a presidential trip — and a roundtrip flight on Air Force One — to heap praise on Hatch as he tries to persuade the seven-term Utahn to seek reelection and block Mitt Romney's path to the Senate, POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt [reports](#).

ANWR IN AS HOUSE-SENATE MOVE TO TAX CONFERENCE: House lawmakers vote today on whether to go to conference on their tax plans [H.R. 1 \(115\)](#) after senators [voted](#) 51 to 49 early Saturday morning to pass their massive tax overhaul. Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#)'s push to block language opening ANWR to oil and gas drilling fell short on largely party lines 48 to 52 during the debate. Here's what the energy and environment world had to say following the vote:

—**Clean energy groups:** "We applaud the reduction in the corporate tax rate and preserving frameworks that support the clean energy sector. However, we are concerned about provisions that will have a negative impact on clean energy investments, including Base Erosion Anti-Abuse Tax (BEAT) provision and the impact of the corporate Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) on investment tools that have been critical to the growth of the clean energy sector," a statement, signed by six groups including American Wind Energy Association and Citizens

for Responsible Energy Solutions, reads.

—**Oil, gas and utility industry groups liked what they saw** and encouraged the chambers to iron out their differences ASAP. "We are encouraged that both the House and Senate agree that reducing the corporate tax rate is vital to modernizing the tax code, and urge Congress to quickly finalize legislation for the President to sign into law," American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers said in a statement.

—**Environmental groups warned the bill** would undermine public health and environment: "The bill would threaten the climate by leaving billions of dollars of fossil fuel subsidies intact while changing the tax code in ways that would jeopardize the financing of numerous clean energy projects under construction and discourage future clean energy investments in wind and solar," Ken Kimmell, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said in one such statement.

Someone's not happy: Coal magnate Bob Murray bashed the Senate's plan as a "mockery" of the tax reform process and warned it might put him out of business, according to the [Wall Street Journal](#). "This is not job creation. This is not stimulating income. This is driving a whole sector of our community into nonexistence," he said.

Speaking of ANWR, two-thirds of voters (including 43 percent of Republicans) don't think Congress should make ANWR drilling a major priority, according to a new poll conducted by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and POLITICO, Pro's Ben Lefebvre reports.

What's next on taxes? Pro Tax's Brian Faler has an [excellent rundown](#).

WELCOME TO MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Squire Patton Boggs' James Eklund was first to identify Michael Bennet as the senator who once led the public schools of his state's largest city. For today: Which current senator was once roommates (briefly) with former Sen. Trent Lott? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

Legislative Compass - Preferred Pricing for 2017: Test out POLITICO Pro's powerful, easy-to-use tool that simplifies federal and state legislative tracking. [Get started](#).

THE PLAYBOOK POWER LIST: 18 TO WATCH IN 2018: The final Playbook Power List of the year highlights 18 politicians, activists and operatives across the country who are poised to make waves in 2018. From the anti-Trump "Resistance" on the left to the far right Bannontite wing trying to remake the GOP, keep an eye on these people over the next 12 months. [Click HERE](#) to find out who made the list.

Please welcome to the stage: The Pro Energy team's Darius Dixon and his wife recently expanded their family. Marcus Inali Dixon was born at 3:06 a.m. Friday at a healthy 8lbs. 10oz. All is well with the Dixon clan but it's not yet clear whether Marcus will share Dad's interest in FERC and nuclear waste. Here's [a pic!](#)

EPA SAYS NEVERMIND ON MINE BONDING RULE: EPA on Friday evening backtracked on the Obama administration's proposal to require hardrock miners to prove they have the money to clean up their mines, saying that it's actually "not appropriate" to regulate. The issue has been brewing for years following an environmentalist lawsuit that said EPA had

never fulfilled part of the Superfund law requiring it to write financial assurance regulations for industries that could leave behind toxic messes. The Obama administration's proposed rule required hardrock miners to obtain some type of bonding or collateral would have cost \$171 million annually and was projected to save taxpayers \$527 million in Superfund clean-ups over 34 years. It was strongly opposed by industry and Republicans.

On Friday, at the court-ordered deadline to finalize a rule, [EPA said no regulation was necessary](#). "EPA is confident that modern industry practices, along with existing state and federal requirements address risks from operating hardrock mining facilities," Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a statement. "Additional financial assurance requirements are unnecessary and would impose an undue burden on this important sector of the American economy and rural America, where most of these mining jobs are based." The final rule noted especially that the savings for taxpayers would have been "relatively small" and that miners would have faced costs "an order of magnitude greater" than the government's savings.

Industry, Republicans celebrate: Supportive statements flooded in Friday night from the National Mining Association, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#), Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#), and Bishop. EPA's own release included praise from three Republican governors and Sen. [Steve Daines](#), who chairs the Senate Western Caucus. Earthjustice, which represented a coalition of green groups in the lawsuit, vowed to sue over the decision in a statement over the weekend.

Two more points: 1) The Obama administration's plans to write similar rules for chemical makers, electric utilities and petroleum and coal products manufacturers are looking unlikely to happen following this decision. 2) Coal mines are regulated differently and are required to obtain financial assurance, a practice regulated by the states. Hardrock mining covers a variety of non-fuel resources, including gold, copper, silver, iron, gypsum and sulfur.

TAKE A PASS? Ahead of a Thursday [meeting](#) between Trump, Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) and other senior officials about biofuels policy, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott formally asked for a Renewable Fuel Standard waiver from Pruitt. "The time is ripe for EPA to grant substantive relief from the unique, adverse impacts the RFS program is having on the state of Texas," he wrote in a Friday [letter](#). "The extreme, detrimental impacts on large portions of the refining sector have now placed unacceptable burdens on the Texas economy and the economy and security of the nation as a whole." Abbott, in particular, cited high RIN prices as causing hardship to refiners across the state.

SHUTDOWN? WHAT SHUTDOWN? Senior Republicans projected strong confidence Sunday they'd be able to avoid a government shutdown by passing a short-term funding package before the Friday deadline, POLITICO's Kevin Robillard [reports](#). "There's not going to be a government shutdown," Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) said on ABC's "This Week." "It's just not going to happen." House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) on Friday released a two-week CR that would keep the lights on through Dec. 22.

But disaster aid will wait: House Republicans are tentatively planning to package the next installment of disaster aid with the Dec. 22 stopgap funding bill, Pro Budget & Appropriations Brief [reports](#). "There's working agreement to that model," Texas Rep. [Pete Sessions](#) said Friday. "I think some of these things all collide together." No word yet on how much bigger that package will be compared to the White House's \$44 billion request.

WHITEFISH HIRES MORE LOBBYISTS: Whitefish Energy, the tiny Montana-based company that drew controversy for its now-canceled \$300 million grid repair contract in Puerto Rico, hired the Tallahassee office of Foley & Lardner to lobby on its behalf, POLITICO's Matt Dixon [reports](#). Lead lobbyists will be Robert Hosay, a former Gov. Jeb Bush administration official, and Jason Allison, who once led the Scott administration's Agency for State Technology. The hiring comes as the company filed a lawsuit Friday alleging a subcontractor interfered with tens of millions in payments, the Associated Press [reports](#).

Speaking of which, Senate Homeland Security ranking member [Claire McCaskill](#) sent a letter Friday seeking additional information about a \$200 million contract inked by Puerto Rico's utility with Cobra Acquisitions LLC, another newly-formed company, for grid restoration work. Link [here](#).

OBAMA LAMENTS CLIMATE LEADERSHIP PAUSE: Speaking in France on Sunday, former President Barack Obama said U.S. states and cities were making up for what he called "a temporary absence of American leadership" on climate action, Reuters [reports](#). Obama also met with French President Emmanuel Macron, his predecessor Francois Hollande and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo.

CALLING ALL COMMENTERS! EPA convenes a public hearing this morning at 10 a.m. at agency headquarters on [its plan](#) to repeal the Obama-era Phase 2 emissions rule for heavy-duty trucks that classified "glider kits" as new vehicles or engines that are subject to more stringent requirements. More information [here](#).

PERRY'S IN THE MIDDLE EAST: Energy Secretary Rick Perry continues his Middle East swing this week. Among this weekend highlights: [Meeting](#) with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia and [touring](#) Aramco's facilities in Dhahran. ME readers will of course remember that Trump asked the oil giant to make its hugely anticipated stock offering on the New York Stock Exchange.

GETTING IN THE FAST LANE: Zinke used a trip to Louisiana over the weekend to pledge to remove regulatory barriers slowing down coastal restoration projects, The Advocate [reports](#). "Louisiana and the coastline are important, and we're losing too much of it. ... There's a lot of things that Interior can do," Zinke said. Photos from his visit [here](#) and [here](#).

CLARIFYING: ME wrote last week that coal magnate Robert Murray said at a conservative energy conference that he had met with Pruitt seven times. A spokesman clarified that Murray was referring to all meetings with anyone from the Trump administration, not just Pruitt, including "before and after the election." It was previously reported Murray has met several times this year with President Trump himself to discuss strategies to boost the coal industry, including his ultimately unsuccessful proposal to use the Energy Department's emergency authority to keep coal plants operating.

QUICK HITS

- VW Bosses Coached Me to Lie, Jailed Manager Tells U.S. Judge. [Bloomberg](#).
- Anchorage's climate change conundrum. [The Week](#).
- A county in Utah wants to suck 77 million gallons a day out of Lake Powell, threatening

the Colorado River. [Los Angeles Times](#).

— Builders Said Their Homes Were Out of a Flood Zone. Then Harvey Came. [New York Times](#).

— Blankenship has told courts that Las Vegas is his 'home'. [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#).

— Study aims to determine feasibility of underground carbon storage. [Bismarck Tribune](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

10:00 a.m. — EPA holds hearings on proposed repeal of emission requirements for glider vehicles, glider engines, and glider kits, 1201 Constitution Avenue NW

5:00 p.m. — Representatives from the Navajo, Ute, and Hopi Tribes will hold a telephone press conference tomorrow on national monuments, RSVP: BearsEars@fenton.com

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — U.S. International Trade Commission holds [meeting and vote](#) on "Biodiesel from Argentina and Indonesia," 500 E Street SW

10:00 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds [a hearing](#) on nominations, Dirksen 366

2:30 p.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Energy Subcommittee holds a [hearing](#) on a series of bills, Dirksen 366

5:30 p.m. — "[Subnational Climate Diplomacy: New Roles Post-Paris](#)," German Marshall Fund, 1744 R Street NW

WEDNESDAY

9:30 a.m. — USTR hearing on crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells, 1724 F Street NW, Rooms 1 and 2

10:00 a.m. — [Hearing](#) on "Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Extension Act of 2017," House Natural Resources Water Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

10:00 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works holds a [hearing](#) on the nomination of R.D. James to be assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, Dirksen 406

12:00 p.m. — "[The Role of Natural Gas in the US Economy](#)," Women's Council on Energy and the Environment, Denton's, 1900 K Street NW

12:30 p.m. — "[Agriculture and the environment in 2018: Conservation programs, the waters of the United States, and the Renewable Fuel Standard](#)," American Enterprise Institute, 1789 Massachusetts Avenue NW

1:00 p.m. — "[Fleeing Change: Relocating the Village of Newtok, Alaska](#)," Wilson Center,

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

2:30 p.m. — "[Challenges Facing Superfund and Waste Cleanup Efforts Following Natural Disasters](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Superfund and Waste Management Subcommittee, Dirksen 406

2:45 p.m. — Senate Indian Affairs Committee hearing on water rights, Dirksen 628

THURSDAY

9:00 a.m. — The Washington International Trade Association holds an event as part of its NAFTA series: "[Energy and the NAFTA](#)," Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

10:00 a.m. — EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [appears before](#) the House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — "[Transforming the Department of the Interior for the 21st Century](#)," House Natural Resources Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

11:00 a.m. — The World Bank conference call briefing on the One Planet Summit, RSVP: himtiaz@worldbankgroup.org

12:00 p.m. — "[The Business Case for Tax Incentives Promoting Energy Efficiency](#)," Alliance to Save Energy, Rayburn 2203

2:00 p.m. — The House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee holds [a hearing](#) on various bills, Longworth 1324

2:00 p.m. — "[OPEC's World Oil Outlook 2017](#)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. — "[Examining the Role of the Department of Energy in Energy Sector Cybersecurity](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2123

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/trump-visits-utah-for-monument-announcement-today-038971>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump moves to block Romney from the Senate [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 12/03/2017 08:23 PM EDT

Donald Trump is going all out to persuade seven-term Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch to seek reelection — a push aimed in no small part at keeping the president's longtime nemesis, Mitt Romney, out of the Senate.

Romney has been [preparing](#) to run for Hatch's seat on the long-held assumption that the 83-year-old would retire. Yet Hatch, the longest-serving Republican senator in history, is now refusing to rule out another campaign — a circumstance Romney's infuriated inner circle blames squarely on the president. Their suspicions are warranted: Trump has sounded off to friends about how he doesn't like the idea of a Senator Romney.

The president's mostly behind-the-scenes campaign to sway Hatch will burst into public view on Monday, when he arrives in Salt Lake City to hold a well-choreographed event designed to showcase his affection for the powerful Senate Finance Committee chairman.

Trump's appearance is ostensibly official in purpose: He will announce his decision to reduce the size of Utah's Bears Ears and Grand-Staircase Escalante national monuments, a cause that Hatch has championed. But it's also undeniably political: To use the trappings of presidential power to get a veteran lawmaker to rethink his long anticipated plans to leave the Senate.

Trump is slated to ride with Hatch both ways on Air Force One — a total of roughly nine hours round-trip. After descending from the plane together, the two will meet with Mormon leaders and then head to the state capitol for the signing of the executive order, according to three White House officials. Hatch will introduce Trump, who in turn is expected to lavish praise on the senator. After the order is signed, Hatch is expected to receive the president's pen.

The public display of affection isn't just about blocking Romney, senior administration officials say. Trump has felt loyal to Hatch since the senator defended him in the wake of the "Access Hollywood" tape episode late in the 2016 campaign. Hatch stuck by Trump even as other members of Utah's Republican delegation withdrew their support.

More recently, Hatch has played a key role in moving Trump's prized tax reform bill through the Senate.

Trump aides say the president's bond with Hatch began long before Romney emerged as a potential successor. Hatch visited Trump in the Oval Office during the first week of his presidency for a lengthy discussion about the then-vacant Supreme Court seat and Utah's national monuments.

Yet people close to Romney are convinced that Trump's main motivation is to keep the 2012 GOP presidential nominee out of the Senate. Romney himself has expressed frustration with the ongoing uncertainty about Hatch's plans, said three Republicans who've spoken with him recently. The former Massachusetts governor has pointed out that it was Hatch who urged him to consider running in the first place, but now appears to be wavering on whether to step aside.

"Hatch is a known entity for Trump and has been really good for the president for the most part," said Kirk Jowers, a friend of Romney who formerly served as the chairman and general counsel of his political action committee. "He knows for a fact he's not going to get that with Romney. I don't know that he knows what he's going to get with Romney, but it's not going to be what he's got with Hatch."

Indeed, there's widespread concern within the White House that Romney in the Senate could make Trump's life difficult. During the 2016 campaign, the former Massachusetts governor emerged as the de-facto leader of the GOP establishment's "Never Trump" campaign, delivering a nationally-watched speech in which he blasted candidate Trump as a "phony, a

fraud" and implored the party to stop him.

Hatch, by contrast, went all-in for Trump in Utah, where Trump received just 46 percent of the vote but still carried the state because of a third-party candidate. Before the election, the senator also campaigned for Trump in four states, hitting the trail with the candidate's son, Donald Trump Jr. While many Republicans air their issues with Trump publicly, Hatch has usually chosen to telegraph his concerns in private discussions with the president.

"I'll just put it this way. Sen. Hatch was one of the leading voices for the president during the entire campaign," said Don Peay, a Trump family friend who led his Utah campaign. "Hatch clearly was a strong supporter of Trump from the beginning," said Peay, who helped to organize Monday's event.

Trump's push to get Hatch to run for an eighth term has taken place in furtive phone calls and West Wing visits. In early October, the senator called the president to invite him to Utah to announce his monument plan, said one person briefed on the discussion.

Near the end of the call, the president conveyed a request. "Orrin," he said, "I really hope you will consider running again."

Hatch told Trump he hadn't made up his mind.

Their mutual endearment has at times been public. When Hatch was asked last week by reporters about Trump's decision to retweet several anti-Muslim videos, the senator said he wasn't "aware" of the firestorm — and then praised Trump.

"I'll say this for ya.' He's been one of the best presidents I've served under, and the reason is he's not afraid to make decisions. He's not afraid to take on the big boss around here," Hatch said.

Trump responded by tweeting out a video of the remark. "Thank you @SenOrrinHatch," he added. "Let's continue MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

Romney's post-election relationship with Trump has been far more ... complicated.

During the transition, Trump considered appointing Romney as secretary of state. Trump was expecting not to like Romney but was surprised by how well they gelled during the interview process, something he told aides repeatedly at the time. Trump ultimately decided against Romney.

As the year wore on, the former governor praised the new president for some of his personnel choices. But he also made his differences known.

During an appearance in Park City, Utah, in June, Romney told a group of prominent Republican donors that Trump's White House was too consumed by palace intrigue. He also offered an [implicit critique](#) of the president's "America First" approach to foreign policy, growing emotional as he outlined the country's humanitarian responsibilities overseas.

Then, in August, Romney struck again — this time to implore the president to apologize for equating white supremacists who sowed violence in Charlottesville, Va. with their counter-protesters.

"Mr. President," Romney wrote in a Facebook message, "act now for the good of the country."

Romney has been making the rounds in Utah amid speculation that Hatch is nearing retirement, huddling with an array of Republican figures including state House Speaker Greg Hughes. Romney has told people that while he wouldn't be reflexively anti-Trump as a senator, he would be more than willing to let his criticisms be known.

Some Trump allies contend that Utah would be better served by having a presidential loyalist in the seat.

"I think he could be a great ally of the president but, as you well know, they're very different people and have very different personalities," said Hughes, who recently met with Romney in his office in the state capitol. "Sen. Hatch," he added, "understands the president very well."

Asked who the president would rather have in the seat, Hughes, who was once mentioned as a candidate for a position in the Trump administration, said he had little doubt: "I think the president enjoys having a strong ally."

Romney, for his part, won't be at Monday event. He was invited but, several people close to him said, will be out of town.

Over the weekend, Romney wrote a tweet that underscored his respect for Hatch but also, perhaps, hinted at a belief that the senator had now accomplished what he needed to before moving on.

"A very big week for Utah's own Senator @OrrinHatch," he wrote, "with tax reform, Bears Ears reversion, and a presidential visit."

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Trump to meet with Cruz over biofuel policy [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Andrew Restuccia | 12/01/2017 04:04 PM EDT

President Donald Trump will meet with Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas) and several Cabinet members next week to discuss U.S. biofuel policy and fuel efficiency standards, an administration official told POLITICO on Friday.

The Thursday meeting is an attempt by the White House to reach a compromise between Cruz, who has held up a Trump nominee to the Agriculture Department nominee over the administration's support for the Renewable Fuel Standard, and the farm-state lawmakers who pressured EPA to back down from potential changes to the regulations for biofuels.

The White House had until now [ignored](#) Cruz's requests for a meeting. Cruz and eight other senators sent a [letter](#) in October requesting changes to the program overseen by EPA, which sets the minimum volumes of ethanol and biodiesel to be used in the fuel market. Refiners must either purchase the biofuels to blend with their gasoline or diesel fuel, or buy credits to show their compliance — credits the refiners say are too expensive and threaten to push some

refiners out of business.

Cruz retains a hold on Trump's nomination of Bill Northey to a senior USDA post, a move seen as payback after EPA backed down from considering changes in how the biofuels program is implemented amid an outcry from farm-state lawmakers.

"The key here is they need to get Cruz something to get rid of that hold," said one industry representative familiar with the meeting.

The meeting will include Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, the administration official said, though the person added that the attendee list could change. No industry representatives are expected to attend.

While biofuels will most likely be the first topic discussed, attendees will also delve into the higher CAFE standards the Obama administration put into place, as well as octane requirements. The Trump administration has delayed implementing an increase in civil fines for automakers who violate the fuel economy standards, a move that [triggered](#) a lawsuit from environmentalists.

Cruz and Trump have had a rocky relationship in the past, including after Trump linked Cruz's father to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during the 2016 campaign, though they have been on better terms in recent months.

Cruz's office did not reply to a request for comment, and the White House declined to comment.

To view online [click here](#).

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McConnell: 'There's not going to be a government shutdown' [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 12/03/2017 10:16 AM EDT

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Sunday he was confident there wouldn't be a government shutdown when funding runs out at the end of the week.

"There's not going to be a government shutdown," he said on ABC's "This Week" when asked whether the Republican-controlled Congress could keep the government running. "It's just not going to happen."

Democrats have threatened to withhold their votes for government funding unless Congress acts to provide legal relief to tens of thousands of children of undocumented immigrants who are protected by an Obama-era program that is set to end in March.

McConnell argued there is no "crisis" that would justify tying saving the so-called Dreamers to government funding.

"That's a ridiculous position. There is no crisis," McConnell said. "There's no emergency. The

president has given us until March to address it. I don't think the Democrats would be very smart to say they want to shut down the government over a non-emergency."

Government funding is expected to run out on Friday.

OMB Director Mick Mulvaney, appearing on CBS' "Face The Nation," was slightly less confident, but predicted Republicans would be able to avoid a shutdown despite a "broken" system of government spending.

"I think there's a group of right-wingers in the House who say they want to shut the government down," he said. "There's a group of Democrats who want to shut the government down over DACA. And there's a group of lawmakers from some of the hurricane states who want to shut the government down until they get what they want. This just sheds light on the fact that the appropriations, the spending system is broken when any little group can sort of hold the government hostage. We need to get beyond that. I think that we will, I don't think you'll see a government shutdown."

When host John Dickerson noted Mulvaney was once a fiscal hardliner in the House, the OMB director replied: "All the more reason the system should be fixed. We don't spend money properly in Washington, D.C."

To view online [click here](#).

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EPA proposes repealing 'glider kit' part of truck rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 11/09/2017 12:48 PM EDT

EPA today [proposed repealing](#) part of the Obama-era Phase 2 emissions rule for heavy-duty trucks that classified "glider kits" as new vehicles or engines that are subject to more stringent requirements.

Glider kits are new truck chassis with rebuilt engines and can cost significantly less than a new truck with a new engine. The proposal argues that EPA does not have the authority to regulate glider kits under the Clean Air Act.

In a statement, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said the Obama administration unlawfully tried to expand the Clean Air Act's reach. "Gliders not only provide a more affordable option for smaller owners and operators, but also serve as a key economic driver to numerous rural communities," he said.

Pruitt announced plans to revisit that part of the rule in August following a May meeting with and a July [petition](#) from Fitzgerald Truck Sales, the biggest U.S. manufacturer of glider kits.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will take public comment through Jan. 5 and hold a hearing on Dec. 4 at EPA headquarters in Washington.

To view online [click here](#).

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By Anthony Adragna | 01/03/2018 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Ben Lefebvre, Eric Wolff, Darius Dixon, Annie Snider, Emily Holden and Alex Guillén

DIDN'T AGENCY THAT COMING: President Donald Trump's deregulatory agenda is expected to shift into high gear in 2018. Expect to see more moves to open more land to fossil fuel exploration, aggressive pushes to rewrite (or ax altogether) Obama-era rules and major legal battles take shape in the courts. With that in mind, here's what ME will be on the lookout for across a host of agencies this year:

—**FERC response to DOE grid proposal:** Regulators at FERC are slated to weigh in next week on the Energy Department's controversial effort to prop up struggling coal and nuclear power plants in the name of making the electric grid more resilient across the Northeast and parts of the Midwest. The "final action" could take one of several forms — technical conferences, a new proposed rule, requests for information etc. — and recently minted FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre expects the agency to meet its new Jan. 10 deadline.

—**What'll happen on Clean Power Plan?** EPA officials are hoping to finalize a narrow replacement to the Clean Power Plan quickly enough to ensure that the Trump administration gets to defend it as the regulation winds its way through the courts. Promised [additional opportunities](#) for public comment on the regulation's withdrawal in San Francisco; Gillette, Wyo.; and Kansas City, Mo. are not yet on the calendar even as the Jan. 16 comment deadline approaches. But Democrats are trying to use climate change and the environment as a wedge against the Trump administration, as attorneys general in New York, Delaware and Maryland hold their own hearings next week.

—**Will Trump dim solar trade prospects?** The Trump administration has until Jan. 26 to decide whether or not to put a tariff on solar imports. The U.S. International Trade Commission said last year that cheap foreign imports harmed the U.S. solar industry, and it sent recommendations to the White House. Now the U.S. Trade Representative is preparing a report for Trump, who will make the final call.

—**See you in court (a bunch):** Litigation will start really moving for various delays and withdrawals of rules that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt did last year — a product of courts usually taking their time on these matters. His agency is going to have to fight off lawsuits over its ozone implementation, as well as litigation over its decision not to require financial assurance for hardrock miners. So many other rules are in hiatus this year that future litigation or regulatory rollbacks are difficult to predict. Meanwhile, Pruitt likely will dig in on revamping the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and New Source Review air quality programs, although those are likely to be fairly private processes.

—**More acreage, more drilling?** Interior's new five-year offshore drilling plan is expected out any moment now and could open up waters in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, the mid-Atlantic and even the Pacific. Only time will tell if the agency's strategy of offering every acre

available will generate any new demand for federal leases while oil prices remain low.

—**Reorganization across the nation:** Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has talked a big game of reorganizing his sprawling agency, so significant attention goes to whether he decides to go ahead with combining BSEE and BOEM. (The Obama administration cleaved the agencies from the larger Mineral Management Service following the Deepwater Horizon disaster.) There remain questions about how Zinke could feasibly do that and whether it's a good call in the first place. Significant attention will also go to whether he follows through on idea of moving BLM headquarters to Denver and reshaping agencies' local jurisdictions to be based on watersheds instead of states.

—**How corny will EPA be?** The agency spent last year courting controversy over the Renewable Fuel Standard, but it eventually yielded to the influence of corn-state senators and took the path of least resistance. The RFS is an annual exercise, so EPA will get another run at setting blending requirements this year. What Pruitt will do remains to be seen, including whether he would take the dramatic step of offering small oil refiners a blanket waiver from the program. Taking all of these small plants out of the program would cut credit prices, no doubt once again inflaming Gang Grain.

—**Can the WOTUS knot be detangled?** Trump's promise to repeal and replace the Obama administration's controversial water rule may sound simple, but it's proven to be anything but. EPA's schedule for the undertaking keeps slipping, with the latest plan being to finalize the repeal in April and propose a new rule defining a narrower scope for the Clean Water Act in May. Not only are those moves apt to provoke lawsuits from environmental groups and blue states, but that slower timeline means the Obama-era rule could actually take effect for a time, if the Supreme Court rules that challenges should have first gone through district court and an appellate court stay dissolves before EPA can finalize a stop-gap rule to delay its effect.

—**Rebuilding our water infrastructure:** EPA is due to propose changes to the rule governing lead levels in drinking water this year, albeit seven months later than previously planned. The agency will next week collect input from state, local and stakeholder groups ahead of its August deadline for proposing a new rule. Pruitt has promised a "war on lead," and public health advocates say that would mean full removal of all lead water lines - a pricey proposition that raises questions about who would pay: homeowners or utilities. Keep an eye out for this issue, too, as talk of an infrastructure package on Capitol Hill continues.

WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Clean Energy Business Network's Andy Barnes was first to identify the Gettysburg Address and President Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural address as the two speeches etched on the Lincoln Memorial. For today: Which president's initials at birth were H.U.G.? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

SHUSTER EXIT FUELS T&I SHUFFLE: The [departure](#) of House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#) guarantees the Republican leadership on the panel will look radically different next year. Three current subcommittee chairmen — [Frank LoBiondo](#), [Lou Barletta](#) and [Jeff Denham](#) — are either leaving the chamber or face competitive reelection bids, perhaps allowing others to move up in leadership of the committee. Of particular interest to ME readers will be the move of current Water Resources and Environment Chairman [Garret Graves](#).

New senators arrive: Two new Democratic senators — Alabama's Doug Jones and Minnesota's Tina Smith — are expected to take their seats today but their committee assignments remain unclear to date. Both succeed members of the Senate Energy Committee, though a spokesman for Smith told ME they "don't know committee assignments just yet but hopefully will soon."

CRAMER TOUTS TRUMP BACKING: He's still playing coy about his plans, but Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) left a Tuesday meeting with Trump vowing the president promised to endorse and campaign for him if he takes the plunge to challenge Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) in North Dakota, according to a [local television interview](#). Meanwhile, Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard [reports](#) Cramer's history of paying his family members more than \$150,000 and receiving more than \$200,000 in reimbursements from his campaign account has raised eyebrows among ethics watchdogs.

O EPA OFFICIALS, WHERE ARE THOU? Two uncontroversial EPA nominees who were confirmed by a voice vote on Dec. 14 apparently have not yet arrived at the agency. EPA's website does not list Matthew Leopold as general counsel or David Ross as head of the water office. Both positions are key to the Trump administration's environmental agenda, with EPA reworking the Waters of the U.S. and Clean Power Plan regulations. It's not clear why they haven't been sworn in yet, but there are several possible reasons for a delay, including Senate paperwork issues, the holidays and personal requirements as both men relocate to Washington. EPA did not explain the delay or say when Leopold or Ross will arrive at the agency.

— It's not clear who is running the water office for the moment. Mike Shapiro, the career deputy who served as the acting assistant administrator for 2017, was slated to retire on Dec. 31. The office's [site](#) still lists Shapiro as the acting AA.

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE: Sam Coleman, the retiring acting administrator for EPA Region 6, is confident the agency will make it through the Trump administration with its mission intact, he [told](#) the Tulsa World. "It's running the way it always has," he said. "The thing about government that I will say is our democracy always has its problems until you compare it to anything else — and then it looks pretty dag-gum good." Coleman supervised the agency's response to Hurricane Katrina back in 2005.

CALM BEFORE THE OIL STORM: Ongoing government [protests](#) in Iran, combined with the Trump administration's [looming decision](#) later this month on whether to reimpose some sanctions on the country, are leading some to fear the turmoil could raise oil prices. "Renewed US sanctions would not only result in an oil price spike by removing nearly 1 million barrels per day of Iranian crude exports from global markets, but would likely cause the entire nuclear deal to unravel," Joe McMonigle, senior energy policy analyst at Hedgeye Potomac Research, writes in a note. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Tuesday the administration hadn't made any final decisions but would "certainly keep our options open" with regards to sanctions.

ANOTHER PUNT? Some GOP lawmakers are already mulling yet another stopgap funding bill for fiscal 2018, Pro Budget & Appropriations Brief [reports](#). Rep. [Tom Cole](#) said Tuesday that another short-term bill could kick the Jan. 19 deadline until President's Day. "Until we have an agreement, I don't think you have a choice but to think about another CR," he said about the still-unsettled issue of overall budget caps. "Both sides need to get back to running the government." And POLITICO's Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes [report](#) there's little sign

of conciliation as congressional leaders from both parties sit down with top White House officials today to try and iron out the details of a potential budget agreement.

NEW YORK UNVEILS NEW ENERGY GOALS: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced a host of unilateral actions in the energy space Tuesday meant to help his state hit ambitious emissions reduction and renewable energy goals, POLITICO New York's Marie J. French [reports](#). They include setting specific amounts of offshore wind the state will procure and a new target for energy storage. "With this proposal, New York is taking bold action to fight climate change and protect our environment, while supporting and growing 21st century jobs in these cutting-edge renewable industries," the governor said in a statement.

MOVER, SHAKER: Jessica Bennett has joined the Renewable Fuels Association as vice president of external affairs. She was previously with the National Corn Growers Association as director of renewable fuels.

Jungmin Kang, a former research fellow with the Natural Resources Defense Council, has been sworn in as chairman of South Korea's Nuclear Safety and Security Commission.

QUICK HITS

- Trump plan to shrink ocean monuments threatens vital ecosystems, experts warn. [The Guardian](#).
- Coal, oil get a boost from Northern cold snap. [Utility Dive](#).
- Proposed Changes to Offshore Drilling Rules Raise Safety Questions. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- Golf, Beaches and Power: How utilities wine and dine the public officials that set your rates. [Post and Courier](#).
- China, Moving to Cut Emissions, Halts Production of 500 Car Models. [New York Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

2:00 p.m. — The Federalist Society hosts [a teleforum](#) about the Clean Power Plan, RSVP: massenmacher@crcpublicrelations.com

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2018/01/what-to-expect-in-agency-action-in-2018-062946>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

EPA to hold more hearings on Clean Power Plan withdrawal [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/06/2017 03:28 PM EDT

EPA will hold three additional public hearings on a proposal to withdraw the Clean Power Plan, in San Francisco; Gillette, Wyo.; and Kansas City, Mo., the agency announced today.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in a press release said the change was "due to the overwhelming response" to two days of hearings in West Virginia last week. Many environmental advocates criticized EPA for initially scheduling hearings only in coal country.

The agency will announce the dates and locations of the meetings in the coming weeks, and speakers must [register](#).

The Obama administration, by comparison, held public hearings on the proposed climate standards in 2015 in Pittsburgh, Denver, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

WHAT'S NEXT: Comments on the draft withdrawal are due Jan. 16.

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Pennsylvania's Shuster to join GOP exodus [Back](#)

By Tanya Snyder, Elena Schneider and Jake Sherman | 01/02/2018 03:21 PM EDT

House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster announced Tuesday that he's stepping down at the end of his term, joining a fast-growing wave of GOP lawmakers heading for the exits.

Since he is term-limited out of the committee's chairmanship after three terms, many insiders had speculated that this would be Shuster's last year in Congress.

With Tuesday's announcement, the Pennsylvanian joins a long list of Republicans stepping down in 2018, including Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Frank LoBiondo of New Jersey, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Vice Chairman John Duncan of Tennessee and committee member Blake Farenthold of Texas.

The news of Shuster's impending departure was overshadowed by the announcement that Orrin Hatch of Utah, the longest-serving GOP senator, would also be stepping down in 2018, opening the door to a juicy contest involving President Donald Trump's nemesis, Mitt Romney, the 2012 GOP presidential nominee.

Shuster said he planned to devote his final year to pushing for an infrastructure bill, an initiative both parties have said is long overdue but which has yet to gain momentum because of Congress' failure to identify politically viable funding options.

"Rather than focusing on a reelection campaign, I thought it wiser to spend my last year as Chairman focusing 100 percent on working with President Trump and my Republican and Democratic colleagues in both Chambers to pass a much needed infrastructure bill to rebuild America," Shuster said in a [statement](#) sent by his congressional office.

Shuster and Trump met last month, and both were surprisingly tight-lipped afterward about what they discussed. A source close to Shuster said he won't be joining the administration.

Shuster hasn't faced a serious general election challenge for his southwestern Pennsylvania

seat, winning reelection by wide margins in a district that backed Trump by 42 points. But in 2016, he squeaked by frequent primary challenger Art Halvorson by 2 points. Halvorson went on to run against Shuster as a Democrat in the 2016 general election, losing by 26 points. Halvorson announced later Tuesday that he would again run for the seat.

Republican operatives identified state Sen. John Eichelberger Jr. as a potential candidate to replace Shuster, and other candidates are expected to jump into the race now that the nine-term congressman formally confirmed his retirement. Despite the absence of any declared candidates, National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Steve Stivers claimed victory for the party in a statement: "PA-09 is a solidly red district and we look forward to electing the next Republican leader to represent it."

In 2015, POLITICO [reported](#) that Shuster was dating Shelley Rubino, a top lobbyist at Airlines for America, the trade group that at the time represented all the major U.S. air carriers. Airlines for America spends millions of dollars lobbying Congress on behalf of the airlines, including the House Transportation Committee — which Shuster has led since 2012. In 2014, as Shuster and his wife were divorcing, the congressman filed paperwork to disclose the relationship to his committee. Shuster [said](#) Rubino would not lobby him or his staff.

But Shuster advanced some of Airline for America's priorities. In 2014, he muscled the Travel Transparency Act through the House. The legislation allowed airlines to advertise the price of tickets without including fees and taxes. In promoting the bill, Shuster and A4A used similar verbiage. GOP leaders stood by Shuster at the time, despite some internal Republican unease regarding Shuster's personal relationship with Rubino.

POLITICO also reported in 2015 that Shuster [attempted](#) to rewrite an obscure rule regulating the number of passengers on uninspected charter boats in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where the congressman owns a timeshare. Later that month, he held a fundraiser on the island. Many of the donors said they gave him money because he worked to overturn the rule.

Finally, Shuster has campaigned relentlessly to separate the air traffic control system from the Federal Aviation Authority, putting it under the authority of a nonprofit corporate board. General aviation interests, Democrats and appropriators of all stripes opposed the plan, which stymied passage of a long-term FAA reauthorization in 2016 and again in 2017.

Shuster's assertion that he's now throwing his full focus behind the infrastructure push is likely the nail in the coffin for his air traffic control plan, which is already on life support since he failed to garner enough backing in the GOP-controlled House to bring it to the floor. It's the latest in a decades-long string of disappointments for proponents of the spin-off scheme.

The infrastructure plan will need all the help it can get from well-positioned lawmakers like Shuster. Though infrastructure spending is wildly popular with Democrats, it tends to be lower on the GOP priority list.

But so far, Democrats are recoiling from Trump's plan. The details that have been floated so far involve no new spending, with a \$200 billion down payment on the "trillion-dollar" infrastructure plan paid for by cutting other domestic programs. Proposals to make up the other \$800 billion with private investment or state and local dollars have also turned off Democrats.

News of Shuster's retirement was first reported by the [Washington Examiner](#).

Lauren Gardner contributed to this report.

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Paying family with campaign funds could dog Cramer in Senate bid [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 01/03/2018 05:02 AM EDT

North Dakota GOP Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#), who is being courted by President Donald Trump to challenge Democratic Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) this year, has paid his family members more than \$150,000 and received more than \$200,000 in reimbursements from his campaign account, a practice ethics watchdogs have questioned in the past.

Cramer, who met with Trump on Tuesday to discuss a run against Heitkamp, publicly hemmed and hawed on a run for much of 2017. National Republicans initially viewed him as a top recruit but soured on him after a series of gaffes last spring. Trump won North Dakota by more than 30 points in 2016, and the GOP views Heitkamp as one of the three most vulnerable Democratic senators up for reelection in 2018.

But a number of other candidates have passed on challenging Heitkamp, including state Treasurer Kelly Schmidt and businesswoman Tammy Miller, so Republicans have now returned to recruiting Cramer as an alternative to self-funding potato farmer and state legislator Tom Campbell.

In a phone interview in December, Cramer said he hoped to make a decision by late January and was in "pretty regular contact" with Trump and Senate Republican leaders about possibly entering the race.

"I want to be cognizant of the fact that Tom Campbell is in the race, and there are others looking at the congressional race," he said.

After meeting with Trump on Tuesday, Cramer told a local television station Trump has promised to back him in the contest.

"What's most important is that we have his strong moral support, that he will endorse me, that he'll come out in full support and that he will campaign as his schedule allows," Cramer said, adding that the president had "obvious infinite power but a finite calendar."

If Cramer did enter the race, he'd instantly become the front-runner in the GOP primary. Republicans, including Cramer himself, persistently claim he leads Heitkamp in internal polling. And the GOP is now less worried about his history of gaffes, saying the state's voters have been inoculated against his verbal missteps over his past three statewide congressional runs.

But Cramer's history of paying his family out of his campaign account could become an issue in the Senate contest. Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a watchdog group, released a report in 2012 documenting how members can legally use campaign funds to pay their family members, as long as they don't pay above market rate.

The practice is "legally alright but morally kind of sticky," said Jordan Libowitz, the communications director at CREW. "It's important for supporters to know this money is basically going back into [the candidate's] own pocket."

FEC records show Cramer has paid his wife, Kris, nearly \$140,000 since 2013. That includes \$119,000 in salary, plus thousands more in mileage, per diems and other reimbursements. He's paid Reel Love Videos, a video production company owned by one of his daughters, over \$11,000. Other family members have received about \$12,000, including a \$327 payment for "event babysitting" to one of his daughters.

Cramer defended the payments as a way to save donors' money. He said his wife has served as his campaign manager. Cramer hasn't faced a serious challenge since his Republican primary in 2012 and said he would hire a new campaign manager if he ran for Senate.

"She's considerably cheaper than a 25-year-old from Washington," Cramer said.

And Cramer defended the \$200,000 in reimbursements to himself as a way of saving taxpayer money, saying he charges basically all travel expenses to his campaign instead of to his congressional office.

"I'm pretty sure I haven't turned in a finance voucher since my first year in office," he said.

Heitkamp could be a tough out for Republicans. She had \$3.7 million on hand as of Sept. 30, a significant amount in a state where airtime is dirt-cheap. (Cramer had about \$824,000 in his campaign account, while Campbell has already spent about \$500,000 on television ads tying himself to Trump.)

The Democratic incumbent — a former state agriculture secretary who ran 12 points ahead of President Barack Obama in 2012 and earned just over 50 percent of the vote against then-Rep. Rick Berg — has staked out moderate positions on energy and agriculture issues designed to appeal to the state's voters.

The importance of those issues to the state is also weighing on Cramer, who could quickly move up the ranks of the House Energy and Commerce Committee because of the departure of more seniors members like [Marsha Blackburn](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Joe Barton](#) (R-Texas).

"It all becomes part of a formula to make a difficult decision more difficult," he said. "It's a factor that I'm considering for sure. We only have one member from an entire state. Influence matters all the more."

Anthony Adragna contributed to this report.

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As protests rage in Iran, Trump backs demonstrators, blames Obama [Back](#)

By Louis Nelson | 01/02/2018 07:49 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's administration backed anti-government protesters in Iran on Tuesday, seizing an opportunity to criticize not just a foreign government that the White House has framed as a chief foe but also the administration of Barack Obama.

Trump tweeted that "the U.S. is watching" the ongoing anti-government demonstrations across Iran, blaming the nuclear deal struck with the support of former President Obama for, he said, lining the pockets of the Iranian government.

"The people of Iran are finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime. All of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave them went into terrorism and into their 'pockets,'" the president wrote on Twitter. "The people have little food, big inflation and no human rights. The U.S. is watching!"

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the U.S. would call for emergency sessions of the U.N. security and human rights councils in New York and Geneva, respectively, to address the Iranian government's crackdown on protesters. She said the Islamic Republic's suggestion that the protests had been fueled by outside influences was "complete nonsense."

"This is the precise picture of a long-oppressed people rising up against their dictators. The international community has a role to play on this," Haley said at a news conference at the U.N. in New York. "If the Iranian dictatorship's history is any guide, we can expect more outrageous abuses in the days to come. ... The people of Iran are crying out for freedom. All freedom-loving people must stand with their cause."

Tuesday marked the sixth day of protests in Iran, where a flagging economy and an uptick in food prices have prompted demonstrators to chant anti-government slogans. The Associated Press reported Tuesday that at least nine people had been killed overnight, including a member of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, raising the overall death toll from the protests to at least 20.

In Tehran, the Iranian capital, 450 protesters have been arrested since demonstrations began, the AP reported.

The protests are the largest in Iran since 2009, when the disputed reelection of Iran's then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sparked anti-government demonstrations. In what seemed a veiled criticism of the Obama administration's response to those demonstrations, Haley said Tuesday that "the international community made the mistake of failing" to support Iranian protesters in 2009. "We must not make that mistake again."

At Tuesday's news briefing, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders echoed Haley's warning, telling reporters that "the international community cannot sit silent as it did" in 2009. She stopped short of saying that the president would like to see regime change in Iran, instead listing Trump's priorities as "basic human rights" for the Iranian people and an end to Iran's support for groups deemed by the U.S. government to be terrorist organizations.

"The Iranian people are angry at the rising tide of corruption in their daily lives. The people are tired of paying the price for their violent and corrupt rulers," Sanders said. "The citizens of Iran have paid a heavy price for the violence and extremism of their leaders, and the Iranian people long to reclaim their country's proud history, its culture, its civilization and its cooperation with its neighbors."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif took a shot on Twitter at Trump and U.S. foreign policy, writing that "Iran's security and stability depend on its own people, who — unlike the peoples of Trumps [sic] regional 'bffs' — have the right to vote and to protest. These hard-earned rights will be protected, and infiltrators will not be allowed to sabotage them through violence and destruction."

U.S. Undersecretary of State Steve Goldstein on Tuesday called on Iran, however, to stop blocking social media sites, including Instagram and the messaging service Telegram, calling them "legitimate avenues for communication," according to an [Associated Press report](#). The U.S. has an obligation "not to stand by," Goldstein said, and will "encourage the protesters to continue to fight for what's right."

Trump's Tuesday tweet echoed sentiments he had expressed online over the previous three days. He has long been critical of the landmark nuclear deal negotiated in part by the Obama administration, [taking steps last year to imperil it](#) without yet making good on his campaign promise to remove the U.S. from it entirely.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hinted that outside influence may be playing a role in the unrest in his nation, suggesting via a statement on his official website that "in the recent days' incidents, enemies of Iran utilized various means — including money, weapon, politics and intelligence apparatuses — to create problems for the Islamic system."

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Iran protests could move Trump to kill nuclear deal [Back](#)

By Michael Crowley and Eliana Johnson | 01/02/2018 07:40 PM EDT

Anti-government protests in Iran offer President Donald Trump a new reason to scrap the Iran nuclear deal later this month — a risky move that Trump's supporters are cheering but that critics warn could play into Tehran's hands.

Trump and his senior officials have offered rhetorical support for the protesters and denounced the government in statements and on Twitter. They are also exploring such further steps as targeted sanctions and warnings to social media companies not to comply with Iranian censorship.

But Trump will have an opportunity for far more dramatic action in less than two weeks, when he must decide by law whether to continue waiving economic sanctions against Iran that were lifted by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The sanctions waivers must be renewed every 120 days.

Trump could be further motivated to move boldly given bipartisan complaints that President Barack Obama failed to act forcefully in response to the last round of major Iranian protests, in 2009, sources familiar with administration deliberations said.

Although Trump has repeatedly threatened to withdraw unilaterally from the nuclear deal, his senior national security team has persuaded him that the diplomatic costs outweigh the benefits of keeping a campaign promise and undoing one of Obama's proudest achievements.

But some people familiar with administration deliberations say that the moment of vulnerability for Iran's nearly 40-year-old fundamentalist regime may move him to grander action.

"He's not going to want to waive sanctions and keep money flowing to dictators when there are people protesting in the streets," said Richard Goldberg, a former Senate Republican aide who helped design Iran sanctions and is now a senior adviser at the hawkish Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Another Middle East analyst with ties to the Trump administration agreed.

"I think there's a calculus that you take advantage of this moment and you don't waive the sanctions, and put further pressure on a regime which is already facing a lot of economic problems," said Andrew Bowen, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "You use this as a wedge to try to renegotiate the deal."

Many other Middle East experts and former U.S. officials dispute that rationale, however, warning that pulling the plug on the nuclear deal would throw Iran's embattled Islamist leaders a lifeline. The agreement retains strong support from the five other nations that negotiated it with Tehran — China, Russia, Great Britain, France and Germany.

"I would not walk away" from the nuclear deal, said Dennis Ross, a Middle East adviser to three presidents of both parties. "It basically diverts attention back onto us. We have an interest in keeping the spotlight on what the Iranians are doing, not shifting it to a step that we took."

A senior administration official told POLITICO that waiving the sanctions again, amid the popular upheaval in Iran's streets, "sends a horrible message," but that Trump would also be presented with the option of preserving the deal. Even if Trump decides to continue providing Tehran with sanctions relief, the official said, the protests offer the U.S. "additional pressure over the Europeans" to modify the terms of the nuclear agreement.

Iran insists it will not renegotiate the nuclear deal. The July 2015 agreement slowed Iran's steady march toward a nuclear weapons capability, scaling back and limiting its atomic program in return for an end to punishing U.S. and European economic sanctions.

Obama called Washington's furious argument over the deal "the most consequential foreign policy debate that our country has had since the invasion of Iraq," and warned that the alternatives were a nuclear-armed Iran or war.

As a candidate, Trump repeatedly denounced the nuclear deal and vowed to shred it once in office. He has been dissuaded by top officials, including national security adviser H.R. McMaster, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. None are enthusiastic defenders of the agreement, but all say the costs of withdrawing now — including international isolation and the risk of a second nuclear emergency even as Trump confronts North Korea — are not worth the uncertain benefits.

European leaders have also urged Trump to preserve the deal, arguing that restored U.S. sanctions would empower regime hard-liners who say the U.S. cannot be trusted and would lead Iran to restart its nuclear program.

Confronted with an Oct. 15 legal deadline to certify whether Iran had complied with the deal, Trump declined to do so — despite the findings of international inspectors who say Iran has complied with its obligations, which include dismantling centrifuges and limiting uranium enrichment.

Trump's refusal to certify Iran's compliance was mainly symbolic. But he warned that unless Congress and European countries took unspecified steps to crack down on Tehran, "the agreement will be terminated."

No such action has followed, although Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been talking with his Democratic counterpart, Ben Cardin of Maryland, about legislation that might satisfy Trump that the deal has been strengthened while still winning 60 votes for Senate passage. That would require coming up with language that would not violate the nuclear deal's terms while providing Trump with political cover to preserve the agreement.

Senate aides familiar with the negotiations, however, said it was unlikely that the upper chamber would produce that sort of legislation by the time the president has to decide — on Jan. 11 and over the following week — whether to certify the deal and, more important, to waive the sanctions the agreement lifted.

Seizing on the drama of the protests, Republican hawks are now pushing for a tougher bill. Corker is working to win over one of those hawks, Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a confidant of McMaster and an influential foreign policy adviser to the administration. Two sources familiar with administration thinking say it's unlikely the president would support a bill that Cotton himself has not signed on to.

Cotton is pushing for legislation that targets short-range missiles, which have become a matter of contention in the negotiations. Because they are not nuclear missiles, they fall outside the purview of the nuclear agreement, yet they pose a real threat to Iran's neighbors in the region.

"That is outside the nuclear deal, and that gives the Democrats and the Europeans heartburn," a senior administration official said.

Congress could also pursue legislation in response to the protests, unrelated to the nuclear agreement. Potential bills include enforcing provisions of existing laws against the Tehran, including the Global Magnitsky Act, a 2016 law that expanded an initial statute targeting human rights abusers in Russia to violators worldwide.

Another option would be for the Senate to pass transparency legislation cleared by the House in December that would make public the financial assets of top Iranian officials.

Sources with ties to the administration said the protests may have raised the bar for what new action against Iran will satisfy Trump when it comes to the nuclear deal.

"The protests come at a time when the politics were really against Trump and the administration internationally. Now you have a situation where Iranians are pouring into the streets. [The protests] are a reminder of the type of regime you've been dealing with," said Goldberg, the former Senate Republican aide. "I think the threshold" for congressional action "goes up much, much more."

Some supporters of the nuclear deal unhappily agree.

"I suspect that this is giving him the pretext to do what he was planning to do anyway," said Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. "It is definitely going to make him more comfortable, but the U.S. will still be isolated and other countries will be upset."

Parsi added that negating the nuclear deal would also do a favor to Iranian hard-liners, who he said would blame President Hassan Rouhani of Iran for brokering a failed bargain with the U.S.

Obama administration officials viewed Rouhani and Mohammad Javad Zarif, his foreign minister and Iran's lead nuclear negotiator, as reformers willing to thaw decades of U.S.-Iranian hostility. Critics say that was never true, and that Rouhani's crackdown on the protesters reveals his lack of genuine support for greater political freedom.

At least 20 people have been killed over nearly a week of protests in several cities around the country, with 450 arrested in Tehran alone, according to The Associated Press.

Ross, who served as a top national security aide in the Obama White House during Iran's so-called Green Revolution in 2009, said Obama did not respond forcefully enough at the time, and he applauded the Trump administration's repeated statements drawing attention to the protests and their violent repression.

Trump administration officials are trying to back the protests without playing into Iranian propaganda that accuses the U.S. of fomenting "regime change" inside the country. In a Tuesday news conference, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, quoted anti-government chants from some of the demonstrations, noting: "Those are not my words. Those are not the words of the United States. Those are the words of the brave people of Iran."

But Ross, who supports non-nuclear sanctions against Tehran, cautioned that top Iranian officials — including the nation's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a militant Shiite cleric — would happily exploit a decision by Trump to walk away from the nuclear deal.

"Reimposing all the nuclear sanctions allows the regime to say they are standing up to pressure from the outside," Ross said. "They want to turn this into a nationalist issue. We want to raise the costs of a crackdown. Don't give them a reason to focus on us."

Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Shutdown threat revived as Congress returns [Back](#)

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 01/02/2018 06:55 PM EDT

Another shutdown showdown looms this month, and Congress isn't even back yet. Happy New Year, Washington.

Congressional leaders from both parties will sit down with top White House officials on Wednesday to haggle over the basics of a budget deal they were supposed to settle last spring. And while aides say the talks will stick to spending, a fight over immigration looms, along with a host of other thorny policy disputes that will shape the 2018 legislative agenda.

Ahead of the meeting, there was little sign of conciliation on either side.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi sent a letter to her Democratic colleagues on Tuesday insisting that Democrats would demand higher domestic spending. President Donald Trump tweeted a broadside at Democrats, saying the party is "doing nothing for DACA — just interested in politics." That missive came days after Trump egged on Democrats over his plan to eliminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, tweeting that "there can be no DACA deal" without a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border — which Democrats have ruled out.

Whether the parties can reach a deal on immigration is still unclear, but one certainty is that they need to come together by Jan. 19 to avoid a shutdown.

The key players meeting Wednesday afternoon at the Capitol are Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, White House legislative director Marc Short and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney.

Republicans are eager to separate a debate on Dreamers from the latest budget fight, with White House officials saying Tuesday that the meeting's focus will be on raising stiff budget caps for defense and domestic programs over the next two years — not on immigration.

"The president wants a two-year budget deal that provides realistic budget caps, and provides certainty for our national security," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Tuesday. "That'll be the focus, front and center, for the conversations that are taking place this week."

A senior congressional aide said the meeting was called by the speaker's office, with the topic focused specifically on trying to reach a budget caps deal.

But Democratic votes will be needed for any spending measure, giving them leverage to force the issue.

Wednesday's meeting is the first of several key strategy sessions taking place in the coming days. Trump is meeting with Ryan and McConnell at Camp David this weekend to map out the GOP agenda, including whether and how to tackle welfare programs, health care and infrastructure. House and Senate Republicans will hold their annual joint retreat at month's end.

However, even if a budget deal can be clinched soon, aides and lawmakers say Congress still will likely need to pass another short-term funding bill to avoid a shutdown later this month. That would mark the fourth patch in as many months.

"Until we have an agreement, I don't think you have a choice but to think about another CR," Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), a longtime spending leader, told POLITICO on Tuesday. He said he expects another continuing resolution to last possibly through Presidents Day.

"We've been waiting 110 days for five people to come to a deal, and they're holding up the

entire funding of the government of the United States because they can't sit down and find a common number," Cole said, though rank-and-file Republicans also acknowledged they previously slow-walked spending negotiations to avoid derailing their tax overhaul push.

Democratic leaders say they'd be willing to back another stopgap bill as long as both parties have agreed to an overall budget deal.

"If you have a situation where everything is done and this is just about inking the deal, then it's not going to be controversial to do a short-term CR," a Democratic House aide said.

Along with immigration, the parties are split over federal spending levels.

Democratic leaders have demanded a spending deal that matches every additional dollar spent at the Pentagon with a dollar for domestic programs.

Republicans have blasted the idea, accusing Democrats of holding the Pentagon hostage to their domestic priorities. Some conservatives say they'd prefer that Trump attend the meeting. But with two of the administration's most fiscally conservative officials at the other end of the negotiating table, Democrats may be hard-pressed to secure their demands.

In her letter to Democrats on Tuesday, Pelosi said she and Schumer will "continue to insist on parity" in the defense and nondefense budget caps during the Wednesday meeting. She also said they will be fighting for additional spending on veterans programs, disaster relief, the National Institutes of Health, the Children's Health Insurance Program, community health centers, combating the opioid epidemic and propping up faltering pension plans.

Other key deadlines Congress must address by Jan. 19 include extending federal spying powers under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program.

Lawmakers also are under pressure to quickly approve a massive disaster relief package to help communities rebuild from deadly hurricanes and wildfires last year and to raise the debt ceiling before the nation reaches its borrowing limit in the next few months.

All of those issues were punted at the end of last year.

While Pelosi also wrote in her letter that Democratic leaders are "firmly committed to swiftly passing the DREAM Act," the letter was silent on a demand for a DACA fix in return for their support of a spending agreement.

Instead, congressional leaders have chosen to let a group of negotiators in the Senate try to strike a deal that would offer permanent protection for Dreamers — undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as minors — while including border security and other restrictive immigration provisions.

The informal group of seven senators, including Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), have been quietly working with White House officials on the issue.

Late last month, White House chief of staff John Kelly pledged to send senators a list of immigration provisions that the Trump administration wants to see attached to any agreement

for Dreamers. But the White House has yet to send over such a list, three congressional aides said Tuesday.

Senators have been open to modest boosts in border security and have discussed somewhat restricting the ability of Dreamers to sponsor relatives for permanent residency. McConnell has said he would bring an immigration bill to the Senate floor by the end of January if lawmakers and the White House can reach a compromise.

Heather Caygle and Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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Subject: Morning Energy: What to expect when you're expecting a new congressional term — Administration rolls back fracking, drilling rules — Pruitt headed to Israel in late January
Date: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 5:44:43 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 01/02/2018 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Ben Lefebvre, Daniel Lippman and Eric Wolff

WELCOME TO 2018! We're heading into year two of the Trump presidency, and the administration's deregulatory drive is expected to keep chugging along. Congress will start the year with a lengthy potential to-do list on ethanol mandates, energy tax credits and EPA funding, among other things, but there's no guarantee lawmakers will get much done before attention shifts to the midterm elections. Here's what your ME host [reports](#) is likely to top lawmakers' attention in the coming year.

—**An ethanol 'grand compromise':** Oil- and corn-state Republicans kick off the year hoping to strike a bargain that would help refineries struggling with high compliance costs associated with the Renewable Fuel Standard while protecting the overall integrity of the biofuels program. It's an issue that's consistently vexed the GOP, fouling everything from agency confirmations to Congressional Review Act challenges during 2017. And some observers are skeptical the new push will ultimately bear fruit: "Corn-state stakeholders still lack a compelling reason to come to the table," says Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners.

—**Funding those federal agencies:** It's déjà vu as Congress has just three weeks to strike a deal by Jan. 19 to avoid a government shutdown and set spending levels for EPA and the Energy and Interior departments. The GOP-led Congress shrugged off most of the deepest cuts pushed by the Trump administration, but its spending packages contained numerous riders deemed unworkable by Democrats.

—**Energy tax extenders:** Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) unveiled [a bill](#) containing a smorgasbord of renewable energy credits just before the holidays, and even though he doesn't like extenders on principle, House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) has pledged to explore a way to move them this year.

—**Infrastructure opportunities:** Trump is [expected](#) to unveil a long-awaited statement of infrastructure "principles" and some see the forthcoming infrastructure push as an opportunity to advance energy priorities and water infrastructure investments. "It's a good context to revisit things like siting, permitting, certainly some of the export terminal issues," Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) told ME.

—**New nomination challenges:** Two new Democratic senators — Alabama's Doug Jones and Minnesota's Tina Smith — join the chamber this week, and the Republican Senate majority will shrink to 51-49. That means just two GOP defections would kill a selection and just one would force Vice President Mike Pence to break the tie. An early test will be Kathleen Hartnett White, Trump's controversial selection to run the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

—**Ambition? Do we have more ambition?** Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) is

ready to roll on her energy legislation [S. 1460 \(115\)](#) and House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) hopes his own bill [H.R. 4239 \(115\)](#) will hit the floor early in January so both chambers "can actually go to conference." Other lawmakers have talked a big game of overhauling the Antiquities Act, Endangered Species Act and reauthorizing DOE, though those efforts have steered clear of the Democratic buy-in needed to get them out of the Senate.

WHAT ABOUT THE REGULATORY FRONT? ME will have a second part of agency expectations for 2018 tomorrow, but here's a couple of important things that happened while you were opening presents.

—**Fracking rule repealed:** Interior [repealed](#) the Obama-era rule requiring companies to disclose what chemicals they use in fracking operations on Friday, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). In its notice, the agency said "any marginal benefits" of the regulation did not outweigh the costs "even if those costs are a small percentage of the cost of a well." The rescission takes effect immediately, so ME expects lawsuits to swiftly follow.

—**Rolling back offshore drilling rules:** The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement [proposed](#) undoing a series of rules put in place following the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The agency said the move will address "certain unnecessary regulatory burdens" and implement a series of changes to the rules long-sought by industry. The changes will be open for public comment until Jan. 29.

—**Another ozone-related lawsuit:** Eight state attorneys general, led by New York's Eric Schneiderman, [sued](#) EPA for deciding in October to [deny their petition](#) to add nine upwind states to the Ozone Transport Region, a move that would have required those new states to implement more stringent pollution controls.

—**Oil reserves hiked:** Shortly before Christmas, Interior boosted its estimates for the amount of oil contained in Alaska's lands and waters to more than 17 billion barrels, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#).

—**Flying free:** Energy companies and others will no longer face charges for inadvertently harming protected bird species under a new Interior legal memorandum, Pro's Nick Juliano [reports](#).

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and I hope everyone enjoyed some family time over the holiday season. A couple of weeks back, the Duberstein Group's Dan Meyer was first to name Canada's Justin Trudeau as our nearby neighbor with the Christmas birthday. For today: Which two speeches are inscribed into the Lincoln Memorial? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

POINT OF PERSONNEL PRIVILEGE: It's been ME's distinct honor to hit your inboxes each morning for the last year and a half, but soon it will be time to pass the baton to someone new. Pros will recognize ME's talented successor, Kelsey Tamborrino, as the author of our subscriber-only Afternoon Energy. For anyone worried, ME's not going far: I'll be headed over to full-time duties covering energy and environmental issues on Capitol Hill.

ICYMI, Pros got a ton of amazing articles over the holiday break, so here's a roundup:

—**Cabinet secrecy:** Pro's Emily Holden (aided by two dozen POLITICO reporters) [looked at](#)

how Trump officials often shield their schedules from public view, keep their travel plans secret and won't release information on the groups with whom they meet.

—**DOE Deputy speaks:** Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette tells Pro's Darius Dixon in [an interview](#) the new Energy team wants to prioritize nuclear waste cleanups and he pushed back on critiques that senior DOE staff lack adequate scientific expertise.

—**Delivering on 'energy dominance'?** Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#) the Trump administration's pro-fossil fuel policies come as the U.S. hits record high oil and gas production (though that may be nearing a plateau), but they have also hindered the shift to newer technologies like renewable energy and electric vehicles that are likely to play a key role in the global economy in the coming years.

—**Weapon no more?** EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's moves to ease enforcement on new pollution limits under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards are drawing praise from industry groups and conservatives who say the air quality program that's reduced emissions of ground-level ozone, particulate matter and carbon monoxide is in need of fixing, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#).

—**Praying for Puerto Rico:** Pro's Eric Wolff [examines](#) the regulatory and legal obstacles facing Puerto Rico as the island looks to transform its grid, add renewables, and develop microgrids in the aftermath of devastating hurricanes.

USITC FILLS LEGAL GAP AS SOLAR TARIFF DECISION APPROACHES: Trump has until Jan. 26 to decide whether or not to impose tariffs or quotas on solar equipment imports under a "safeguard" provision in the U.S. trade law. While most of U.S. solar industry exerts is pushing hard to sway Trump's decision, the U.S. International Trade Commission closed a key legal loophole over the break, issuing [a report](#) stating the surge in Chinese solar production that the agency said harmed U.S. solar manufacturing could not have been predicted. "Unforeseen by the U.S. negotiators ... the government of China implemented a series of industrial policies, five-year plans, and other government support programs favoring renewable energy product manufacturing, including CSPV products," the agency said. The document, which was requested by U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer last year, will be critical if a future tariff is challenged under World Trade Organization rules. The WTO ruled against U.S. steel tariffs in 2003 in part because it felt the U.S. had failed to prove the rise of cheap overseas steel manufacture was unforeseen.

MURRAY FURIOUS WITH GREENS AS FERC GRID RESILIENCE DECISION LOOMS: FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre and his band of merry commissioners [have until Jan. 10](#) to decide whether and how to pay nuclear and coal generators for providing vaguely defined resiliency services to the grid, and if he's going to go down, coal magnate Bob Murray wants to go down fighting. Murray's target in his Boxing Day [filing](#) is a Dec. 20 [submission](#) by the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Earthjustice highlighting photos uncovered by In These Times [showing](#) Energy Secretary Rick Perry meeting with Murray in March. The green groups assert the photos show that Murray essentially wrote the grid resiliency rule, an argument Murray calls "replete with absolute lies." Murray accuses the groups of contradicting their own earlier filing, and saying, "Murray Energy has never proffered a proposed Grid Resiliency Rule to Secretary Perry or DOE."

HMMM: Pruitt will visit Israel from Jan. 26-28, according to a [list](#) released Monday from the country's Foreign Affairs Ministry. Couple of questions: What's the purpose of the trip? Who's

paying for it? The agency didn't respond to request for comment. Hard to imagine Pruitt will be promoting LNG, as he did in Morocco, since Israel is sitting on some [fairly lucrative fields](#).

STILL DESPERATE IN PUERTO RICO: More than 100 days after Hurricane Maria pummeled the island, just 55 percent of Puerto Rico's 1.5 million electric customers have power and not everyone will get it until May, the Associated Press [reports](#). That comes as an additional 1,500 workers from member companies of the Edison Electric Institute are expected to hit the ground in early January to help get the lights back on.

ROOKIE MISTAKE: The record cold East Coast temperatures did not escape Trump's radar, who [tweeted](#), "Perhaps we could use a little bit of that good old Global Warming that our Country, but not other countries, was going to pay TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS to protect against." The president seems to have conflated short-term regional weather patterns with longer-term changes in the overall climate. But that comes as former White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci said over the weekend people would be "[surprised](#)" about the president's views about climate change. Good New York Times explainer [here](#).

ACCOUNTING MISTAKE: Interior will pay for a nearly \$40,000 helicopter trip Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke took of a Nevada national park from a "more appropriate account" after Newsweek [questioned](#) why the agency initially used wildfire preparedness funds to pay for it. "There are different accounts for different functions, and it's the department's position that there are more appropriate accounts to fit this particular expenditure," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said.

OILED AGAIN! South Korea on Sunday seized a second ship suspected of transporting oil to North Korea in violation of international sanctions, the BBC [reports](#). That comes after Trump blamed China last week for allowing illegal shipments to reach North Korean shores. "Caught RED HANDED - very disappointed that China is allowing oil to go into North Korea. There will never be a friendly solution to the North Korea problem if this continues to happen," the president [tweeted](#) on Dec. 28.

UNIMPEACHABLE MOTIVES? What started as a quixotic Trump impeachment push by billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer has instead garnered four million digital signatures and left Democrats around the country wondering what he'll use his newly-gathered tool for, POLITICO California's Carla Marinucci and David Siders [report](#). Mike Madrid, a Republican consultant in California, said Steyer's efforts show "there's a huge vacuum for somebody like Tom Steyer to come in and tap into the activist base — and even beyond that — where some are willing to sign up." During a C-Span "Newsmakers" [appearance](#), Steyer refused to rule out a run for higher office: "I haven't ruled it out, and I'm actually trying to determine what will have the most positive differential impact," Steyer said. "I'm absolutely ambitious."

NO MORE: Major oil services company Halliburton closed its Washington D.C. government affairs shop as of December 31, a source tells ME. A Halliburton spokeswoman did not immediately elaborate on the thinking behind the closure, but the new absence of any D.C. representation whatsoever for one of the biggest names in the oil patch raises questions of whether at least some in the industry are banking on the Trump administration's continued good graces.

MOVER, SHAKER: Brandon Breczynski has joined the Alaska Oil and Gas Association as external affairs manager. He's worked for years in various roles in the state legislature.

QUICK HITS

- Fighting Climate Change, One Laundry Load at a Time. [New York Times](#).
- Feds optimistic Utah's history of failing to meet air quality rules is coming to an end, new EPA boss says. [Salt Lake Tribune](#).
- The Daughter Of An Ex-Coal Executive Helped Lead Trump's National Monuments Review. [Huffington Post](#).
- Clock runs out on proposed coal export terminal in Plaquemines Parish. [New Orleans Advocate](#).
- Christine Todd Whitman Sees Danger in New EPA Approach. [WCAI](#).
- Environmental deregulation helped Trump win rural America. Now some fear he's gone too far. [Washington Post](#).

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Election year politics leaves low expectations for energy policy [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 01/02/2018 05:06 AM EDT

Ethanol mandates, energy tax credits and EPA funding are among the issues fighting for attention as Republicans begin their second year with unified control of the government.

But first, Congress has less than three weeks to avoid a government shutdown. Passing a yearlong spending bill by Jan. 19 will be lawmakers' top priority, and President Donald Trump has lofty plans for a major infrastructure bill to follow his first significant legislative achievement, the tax law he signed last month.

Republicans have some ideas about overhauling major environmental statutes and grand compromises, but it remains to be seen whether any turn into actual policy victories.

Momentum for heavy legislative lifts tends to wither during election years — not to mention if the political climate worsens for Republicans — and several senior GOP lawmakers weren't able to articulate specific goals for 2018.

"Let's get through this year first," Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman [John Barrasso](#) said when asked before the holiday break what his committee hoped to accomplish in the coming year.

As Congress settles in, here's six things to look for from lawmakers on the energy and environment front this year.

1. Pursuit of a 'win-win' grand RFS compromise

Oil- and coal-state Republicans start 2018 engaged in talks with the White House in hopes of reaching a grand bargain that would rein in high prices of credits needed to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard, while maintaining the integrity of the underlying program. Texas Sens. [John Cornyn](#) and [Ted Cruz](#) are seeking a deal on behalf of refiners in their states, though Cruz's initial pitch to the White House of capping the biofuels credits, also known as Renewable Identification Numbers, or RINs, at 10 cents per gallon, [landed with a thud](#).

Iowa Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#), an ally of biofuels producers, plans to meet with several senators on the issue after the holidays, but he was unwilling to tip his hand. "I don't want to talk about it, because we'll be negotiating in the press," Grassley told POLITICO. Some observers remain skeptical such a "win-win" agreement can be found, noting similar efforts have come up short multiple times previously. "Corn-state stakeholders still lack a compelling reason to come to the table," Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners, said.

It's a high-stakes battle for both sides. Last fall, Cruz placed a hold on USDA nominee Bill Northey, who's expected to play a key role in negotiating this year's farm bill, and continues to block him even after meeting Trump on the issue. But the Texan halted the nomination only after Sen. [Joni Ernst](#) temporarily blocked EPA air chief Bill Wehrum's nomination and [won concessions](#) from the agency not to make changes to the RFS. With their narrow 51-49 margin in the chamber this year, small blocs of oil- or corn-state Republicans could wreak havoc on their own party's agenda this year if they don't get their way.

Negotiations over potential RFS reform continue in the House as well where House Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee Chairman [John Shimkus](#) hopes to move some sort of legislative package this year. But, in spite of months of behind-the-scenes talks about the issue, he said reaching agreement would remain an uphill climb. "It's hard. It's always been hard," he told POLITICO. "It's just, how many things can you juggle at one time?"

2. More agency funding fights

Congress left town after passing a short-term spending patch for federal agencies through Jan. 19, but they'll have to almost immediately figure out where to set spending levels for EPA and the departments of Energy and Interior. The Trump administration pushed deep cuts to those agencies in its fiscal 2018 budget, but even most congressional Republicans seemed cool to many of those such as trimming EPA by an additional third. More than 40 Senate Democrats sent [a letter](#) urging the removal of any anti-environmental riders from spending legislation back in December, so look for a similar push to emerge this month as well.

Senate Appropriators have released legislation covering EPA and Interior that would spend [\\$32.6 billion](#) in fiscal 2018, roughly \$5.3 billion above what the administration requested. House lawmakers cleared their \$31.4 billion version back in September as part of a broader spending package, [H.R. 3354 \(115\)](#). Both measures avoid the deepest cuts by Trump but contain riders deemed unworkable by Democrats.

3. Tax extenders and energy legislation

Before breaking for the holidays, Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) unveiled [legislation](#) extending or expanding just about every energy credit imaginable. House Ways and Means Chairman [Kevin Brady](#) vowed to [explore a strategy](#) for moving the extenders package early this year but comes starting off as "the chairman who doesn't want to do extenders."

The Senate bill contains a smorgasbord of renewable energy credits long sought by various industries. Chief among them are a nuclear tax credit extension, an expansion of the carbon capture tax credit and the biodiesel blenders credit. But the package would also extend incentives through 2018 for biodiesel blenders, cellulosic biofuel producers, fuel cells, energy efficient homes, energy efficient commercial buildings, small wind, two-wheeled electric scooters, solar water heaters, geothermal heat pumps, and coal production on Indian land.

4. Infrastructure packaging

Trump plans to start off the year [pushing](#) a lengthy statement of infrastructure "principles" that's expected to call for as much as \$200 billion in federal spending over the next decade. Surface transportation and water infrastructure authorization laws are set to expire next year, providing a possible starting point for a legislative push. And some see that as an opportunity to advance energy priorities.

"It's a good context to revisit things like siting, permitting, certainly some of the export terminal issues," Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#), who advised Trump on energy issues during his campaign, told POLITICO.

Others see the still-evolving infrastructure package as a moment to push new investments in drinking water infrastructure, as well as efforts to address coastal erosion.

5. New nomination dynamics

With Republicans' Senate majority falling to 51-49 once Alabama Democrat Doug Jones is sworn in, confirming Trump's nominees will get even tougher. Just two GOP defections would kill a selection (and just one Republican "no" would force Vice President Mike Pence to break the tie). "Whether it's any of our [nominees] or just generally, when you've got a closer margin some of these are perhaps going to be a bit more difficult," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) said.

There will likely be several early tests of whether Republicans can hold their caucus in line to approve controversial nominees. Chief among them will likely be Kathleen Hartnett White's selection to run the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Democrats forced the Senate to return her nomination to the White House at the end of the year, forcing the process to start anew. Maine Republican Sen. [Susan Collins](#) has already expressed concerns about her dismissal of climate science, and Democrats believe they may be able to convince other GOP senators to buck the nominee too.

Renominating White also could complicate things for Andrew Wheeler, who has been nominated to be EPA deputy administrator. "If the administration wants to continue to push hard on [White's] nomination, I think it makes progress on Andy Wheeler more difficult," top Senate EPW Democrat [Tom Carper](#) said before the holidays.

6. More ambitious energy or environmental bills?

Republican chairmen talked an ambitious agenda of environmental statute overhauls last year, but it remains to be seen whether they turn that lofty rhetoric into actual legislation this year. Furthest along the path is House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#), who has already unveiled a broad overhaul of the Antiquities Act and intends to tackle a Land and Water Conservation Fund bill as well. Senior House Energy and Commerce member [Joe Barton](#) has been working on a DOE reauthorization package, but his [unexpected retirement](#) announcement may pump the brakes on those efforts.

Across the way, Barrasso [vowed to overhaul](#) the Endangered Species Act as chairman and held a number of hearings on the topic last year, so is expected to produce some sort of legislation along this year. But it's worth noting none of these efforts have included Democratic participation, which would be needed to get any of the measures out of the tightly-divided Senate.

Murkowski and ranking member [Maria Cantwell](#) unveiled their energy legislation, [S. 1460 \(115\)](#), in June that is nearly a carbon copy of a version that garnered more than 80 votes last Congress, and the Alaskan vowed to make moving it an early priority of 2018. "That's first up because we're ready to go," Murkowski told reporters before the holidays. Across the Capitol, Bishop is pushing his own bill, [H.R. 4239 \(115\)](#), which he expects to be "on the floor in the first part of January" so both chambers "can actually go to conference on it."

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Democrats cool to Trump's infrastructure pitch [Back](#)

By Lauren Gardner and Tanya Snyder | 12/14/2017 05:07 AM EDT

The White House is preparing to unveil its long-awaited \$1 trillion infrastructure plan soon after President Donald Trump signs the GOP tax overhaul, hoping to begin 2018 with another big legislative win — but its approach is already drawing resistance from Democrats who are in no mood to cooperate.

The plan set for release in January is expected to call for as much as \$200 billion in federal spending over the next decade, with the rest coming from private investment, state or local funding and cuts to other federal programs. An administration official added new details this week, [telling POLITICO](#) that a wide variety of projects — from bridges to broadband — would have to compete for federal assistance, while showing they're prepared to put their own money on the table.

The "primary" factor for cities and states wanting help from Washington would be how much revenue they are willing to raise, from taxes, fees or other sources, the official said.

White House officials have said they plan to release their plan as a lengthy statement of "principles" sometime before Trump delivers his State of the Union address Jan. 30. It would be up to Congress to convert it into legislation — and it's unknown how quickly that will happen as lawmakers wrestle with other priorities like a spending bill, potential changes to [safety net programs](#) or perhaps another whack at repealing Obamacare.

None of the package's details so far are music to the ears of Democrats, who have pitched their own proposal for \$1 trillion in new federal infrastructure money and who have said they won't support a plan stuffed with budget cuts and environmental rule rollbacks. An infrastructure package would need 60 votes in the Senate, making Democrats the key to its success, even before Alabama Sen.-elect Doug Jones' upset victory Tuesday.

Many questions remain, but Democrats say they've already heard enough about the still-unreleased plan to be skeptical.

"I don't know what the path is," said Rep. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, the top Democrat on the House Transportation Committee. "I think we're lost in the wilderness."

DeFazio observed that the administration has been "rolling out concepts for a year," and ticked off some of the ways its proposal has morphed since Trump took office. Those include the administration's flirtation with so-called public-private partnerships, in which private entities would use tolls or other revenue to recoup the costs of projects — a concept that Trump [told lawmakers](#) in September he had soured on.

"They've gone from a trillion dollars to \$200 billion that would be done with [public-private partnerships], and then Trump doesn't like [public-private partnerships], so it's \$200 billion that [White House aide D.J. Gribbin] said last week would be cut from other domestic spending," DeFazio said.

Florida Sen. Bill Nelson, the Senate Commerce Committee's top Democrat, scoffed at the thought that states and localities would raise their own taxes or enter into public-private partnerships to pay for infrastructure needs, including those already covered by the cash-strapped Highway Trust Fund.

"They're not going to do that to repair the Interstates. They're not going to do that to repair the 50,000 bridges that are structurally unsound," Nelson said. "They're not going to do that for the expansion of sewer and water systems and broadband."

Even a top Republican infrastructure advocate, House Transportation Chairman [Bill Shuster](#), has had questions about the idea of expecting states and local governments to pick up at least some of the tab.

"Well, I gotta see exactly what they mean by it," the Pennsylvania Republican said last week. "Some of it sounds a little bit like devolution. And I've not talked to a single governor that wants the federal government not to have a role. It's a national transportation system."

Shuster later met with Trump in the White House on Monday to discuss the plan. He has declined repeatedly to elaborate on what was discussed, beyond a short statement declaring the meeting "productive."

The administration is well aware it needs Democrats on board to get its infrastructure push formalized into legislation and then passed by Congress, the White House official told POLITICO this week.

"I think we are very cognizant of the fact that this bill is not going to be under reconciliation and we'll need 60 votes in the Senate, so it needs to be a bipartisan effort," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a plan that has yet to be unveiled.

But he said Democratic governors and mayors — without naming them — have given positive feedback "on components of the plan," particularly regarding its focus on doling out dollars to state and local governments who can raise some of the money needed for infrastructure projects on their own.

The plan is engineered to give those levels of government a greater say in how infrastructure decisions are made, the official said. "That plays not surprisingly well to them," he added.

Asked whether states want more control over infrastructure decisions, Nelson responded: "I'm sure they do." But he added, "They don't have the money."

The White House has said the \$200 billion federal share of the package would be split into four buckets: funding for states and localities that promise to take on more of the financial burden of infrastructure building and upkeep; block grants for rural areas; existing federal loan programs; and money for "transformational" projects "that will truly change the face of our country."

Potential uses for the money include transportation needs such as highways, bridges, railroads, airports and transit, including potentially the \$30 billion ["Gateway" rail tunnel](#) between New Jersey and Manhattan that is a major priority of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. But a range of other types of projects may also qualify, including upgrades to veterans hospitals and expansions of rural broadband service.

The administration has not made it clear exactly where it would find even \$200 billion for the federal share of the package, beyond saying it would come from cuts from other places in the federal government. Democrats had expressed interest over the years in getting the cash from corporations' "repatriated" overseas earnings as part of an overhaul of the tax code — but that opportunity is vanishing with the GOP's tax bill, which doesn't steer any of that money to infrastructure.

The administration official said White House aides have met with several Democratic members and aides on infrastructure, including leadership. But one Democrat who has been a champion of using repatriated dollars for infrastructure said that outreach doesn't appear to be widespread.

"They haven't really talked to any Democrats as best I can tell," said Maryland Rep. John Delaney, who is retiring to pursue a 2020 presidential bid. "And it seems like their plan is based on regulatory relief — some of which may make sense, I bet a bunch of it doesn't — and if you really want to do infrastructure on any kind of meaningful scale, it has to have some funding associated with it from the federal government. And if they want to fund that by cutting other programs that we think are important, no Democrat is going to support it."

Delaney has long railed against the Trump administration for failing to tie infrastructure to the tax code overhaul barreling through Congress, arguing that would have been the best — and most realistic — shot at infusing a large chunk of federal money into infrastructure.

Administration officials likely have their work cut out for them in wooing congressional Democrats after a long year of partisan bickering over nominations, health care and taxes — especially given the monthslong wait for a plan that was originally promised within the first 100 days of Trump's presidency.

"In terms of what they're going to share with us, it's always 'next month,'" said Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, the Environment and Public Works Committee's top Democrat. "And I'm just looking forward to when 'next month' actually arrives."

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Interior repeals Obama-era fracking rule [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/28/2017 10:04 AM EDT

The Interior Department will repeal the Obama administration's fracking rule that would have required companies to disclose what chemicals they use, according to a [notice](#) to be published in Friday's Federal Register.

"The BLM believes that the 2015 rule, which would impose compliance costs and information requirements that are duplicative of regulatory programs of many states and some tribes, is redundant and therefore unnecessarily burdensome on regulated entities," the Bureau of Land Management wrote in its notice. "Any marginal benefits provided by the 2015 rule do not outweigh the rule's costs, even if those costs are a small percentage of the cost of a well."

The rule's rescission will take effect immediately.

The Trump administration made repealing the rule a priority as part of its effort to expand oil and gas production on federal lands. The rule never took effect, having been frozen by a federal judge who ruled it an unconstitutional expansion of Interior's regulatory powers.

An ongoing appeal to the 10th Circuit was halted recently after the judges concluded the impending repeal of the fracking rule made the matter moot. The 10th Circuit said it would wipe the lower court's ruling off the books in a move that could allow environmental groups to press for a new version of the fracking rule.

On Wednesday, the court [gave](#) Interior until Jan. 12 to finish repealing the rule.

WHAT'S NEXT: The repeal will be published in Friday's Federal Register with immediate effect.

To view online [click here](#).

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Interior hikes Alaska oil, natural gas reserve estimates [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/22/2017 02:58 PM EDT

The Interior Department sharply hiked its estimate of oil reserves contained in Alaska's lands and waters today, estimating that more than 17 billion barrels of oil could be tapped there.

The estimate from the U.S. Geological Survey and [BOEM](#) comes after Congressional Republicans opened a portion of the Alaska National Wilderness Refuge to drilling in their tax package this week, and as President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke press to boost oil and gas drilling in Alaska as part of the effort to achieve "energy dominance."

The updated estimates put the undiscovered, technically recoverable resources on federal, state and tribal land and offshore at 17.6 billion barrels of oil and more than 50 trillion cubic feet of gas.

"That's important because with the scientific knowledge, industry partners are more willing to explore the area," Zinke said. "New discoveries have changed our geologic knowledge of the area — and these assessments show that the North Slope will remain an important energy hub for decades to come in order to meet the energy needs of our nation."

USGS estimates a mean of 8.7 billion barrels of oil and 25 trillion cubic feet of gas could be recovered from the NPR-A. A 2010 resource assessment had put the figure at 1.5 billion barrels of oil.

BOEM's updated estimates of undiscovered technically recoverable resources in the Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf Planning Area are 8.9 billion barrels of oil and 27.7 trillion cubic feet of gas, up 700 million barrels from its 2016 assessment.

Interior has struggled to sell oil and gas drilling leases in Alaska, particularly those on shore, as current low fossil fuel prices makes it difficult to profitably drill and transport oil from Alaska to market in the lower 48.

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Interior says accidental bird deaths won't trigger prosecution [Back](#)

By Nick Juliano | 12/22/2017 05:13 PM EDT

The Interior Department today said it will no longer bring charges under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act against energy companies or others who inadvertently harm the protected creatures.

A [legal memo](#) released this afternoon reverses an Obama administration opinion that found accidental deaths or injuries to migratory birds could be prosecuted under the law.

The MBTA "is a law limited in relevant part to affirmative and purposeful actions, such as hunting and poaching," wrote Daniel H. Jorjani, Interior's principle deputy solicitor, in the memo to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and other top officials.

The Trump administration move is welcome news for oil companies and wind energy developers, among others.

"Like many other laws, the MBTA was abused by the Obama Administration, in this case to apply Endangered Species Act-type liability for impacts to birds that are not listed as

threatened or endangered," Kathleen Sgamma, president of Western Energy Alliance, an oil and gas industry-backed group, said in a statement. "Those restrictions that reduce jobs and economic opportunity are justified when birds are truly threatened or endangered and any impact can threaten their survival, but not for species that are not."

Conservationists decried the move.

"Christmas came early for bird killers. By acting to end industries' responsibility to avoid millions of gruesome bird deaths per year, the White House is parting ways with more than 100 years of conservation legacy," David O'Neill, the Audubon Society's chief conservation officer, said in a statement.

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Where is Trump's Cabinet? It's anybody's guess. [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/26/2017 05:05 AM EDT

The Cabinet members carrying out President Donald Trump's orders to shake up the federal government are doing so under an unusual layer of secrecy — often shielding their schedules from public view, keeping their travels under wraps and refusing to identify the people and groups they're meeting.

A POLITICO review of the practices of 17 Cabinet heads found that at least eight routinely decline to release information on their planned schedules or travels — information that was more widely available during the Obama and George W. Bush administrations. Four other departments — Agriculture, Labor, Homeland Security and Education — provide the secretaries' schedules only sporadically or with few details. The Treasury Department began releasing weekly schedules for Secretary Steven Mnuchin only in November.

In addition, at least six Cabinet departments don't release appointment calendars that would show, after the fact, who their leaders had met with, what they discussed and where they traveled — a potential violation of the [Freedom of Information Act](#), which says agencies must make their records "promptly available to any person." Two departments — Education and the Environmental Protection Agency — have released some of those details after watchdog groups sued them.

This information clampdown is occurring with little oversight by Trump's White House, which said only that agencies should follow the law when it comes to deciding what information to release.

"The White House does not issue guidance specifically addressing the daily schedules of Cabinet agency heads," deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley said in a statement. On the other hand, he added, "The White House expects federal agencies to comply with FOIA requests."

Government watchdog groups and activists who closely follow the departments' policies say the secrecy is more than just a Trumpian swipe at political enemies and a meddlesome news media: It's an attempt, they say, to conceal the special access that some powerful interests have

gotten in shaping policies that directly affect them.

"How officials spend their time is the best window into what their priorities are," said Austin Evers, a former Obama State Department lawyer who heads the watchdog group American Oversight, which has sued for the calendars of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. "When public officials resist public disclosure of what they do, people should be skeptical of what they're trying to hide."

Criticisms that some agency heads are concealing meetings with businesses they're supposed to regulate have been leveled especially often against Pruitt, a former Oklahoma attorney general who has made it his explicit mission to ease regulatory burdens on industries including oil, gas, coal, auto manufacturing and agriculture.

Pruitt meets frequently with leaders of these and other industries, based on the three months of [detailed calendar records](#) that American Oversight managed to pry out of EPA under a court order. But the agency makes it difficult to track his activities in real time — refusing to provide schedules or advisories of his upcoming meetings, confirm his attendance at specific events, or say what city he plans to be in on a given day.

Recent events that EPA refused to disclose ahead of time include a speech Pruitt delivered at a fuel marketers' conference in Chicago co-sponsored by BP, whose U.S. oil and gas interests are governed by EPA regulations. Pruitt's staff wouldn't even say where he was headed that day, after POLITICO asked about a tip that he was seen sitting in first class on a Delta Air Lines flight.

Earlier this month, EPA wouldn't disclose information about a dinner discussion that Pruitt was holding with a pro-business think tank in D.C. It gave no advance notice that he was traveling to Morocco on a trip that included a discussion of the country's interest in importing U.S. natural gas, a fuel source his agency helps regulate. EPA also wouldn't confirm that Pruitt was scheduled to speak this month in Nashville before the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative policy organization — even though the printed program listed him as a lunchtime speaker. (ALEC later said Pruitt had canceled his appearance.)

Even after the fact, EPA resists releasing the detailed calendars that would make it easier for journalists and watchdogs to track how often Pruitt meets with business leaders before making decisions that benefit their bottom lines.

The records released to date offer some clues, however: In May, for instance, Pruitt met with executives from an automotive company, Fitzgerald Truck Sales, to discuss an Obama-era air pollution rule for refurbished heavy trucks, according to the calendars obtained by American Oversight. Six months later, Pruitt agreed to [weaken](#) the rules, as the company had requested.

The partial meeting records released to date reveal similar meetings Pruitt has held with auto executives affected by his upcoming decision on whether to ease greenhouse gas requirements for cars and trucks; coal mining and power executives opposed to Obama-era regulations on their industries; and developers who received Pruitt's approval to seek a permit for a proposed gold and mineral mine in Alaska, according to documents previously obtained and analyzed

by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Alarmed that many more such examples must exist, at least three watchdog and environmental groups have filed separate suits seeking detailed copies of Pruitt's calendars. The Times and reporter Eric Lipton filed a similar suit against EPA this month, arguing in court documents that calendars are "often the only way the public has visibility into who provides Administrator Pruitt with input as he devises policy positions that affect all Americans."

Pruitt "uses the word transparency a lot," said Ann Weeks, legal director for the Clean Air Task Force, an environmental group not involved in the suits. But she added, "To whom is the transparency being offered? Because it's not the American people because we're not able even to see who he's talking to."

EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman calls the criticism baseless, arguing that the agency is providing more information to the public than past administrations, "despite lawsuits from The New York Times for the sake of scoring political points and making headlines." As evidence, she cites actions such as listing EPA's upcoming regulatory actions online — as required by law — as well as a posting a public online [calendar](#) for Pruitt that often omits the names of the people he's meeting with and the topic of discussion.

"The fact is that the current EPA is the most transparent EPA has been in years," Bowman said.

Pruitt isn't the only Cabinet member holding unpublicized meetings with businesses or groups who have a stake in his decisions.

While the Interior Department readily provides calendars after the fact for Secretary Ryan Zinke, it doesn't publish his schedule ahead of time for events such as a [September speech](#) to the National Petroleum Council, whose members include companies that drill for oil and gas on federal land. (He made headlines that day by declaring that 30 percent of Interior employees aren't "loyal" to his and Trump's agenda.) It also issued no advance notice of political fundraisers he attended in Alaska, Montana and the Caribbean that are now under investigation by government watchdogs.

In August, after Zinke's wife [tweeted photos](#) showing the couple relaxing along the Bosphorus, an Interior spokesperson would not say when the secretary had left the U.S., when he was returning or whether the trip to Turkey was a vacation.

Similarly, when then-Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price went to an Ohio drug manufacturer in April as part of a listening tour about the opioid epidemic, Price [tweeted](#) about the trip only after he had already visited. HHS' press office also didn't email national news organizations about the trip until two days later — after he published an op-ed in The Cincinnati Enquirer that mentioned it.

Since Sept. 29, when Price [resigned](#) following POLITICO's revelation that he had charged taxpayers for at least \$1 million in private and military flights, HHS has refused to publish schedules for acting Secretary Eric Hargan. Department employees responding to POLITICO's request for Price's calendars have said they're swamped with FOIA requests they're working to fulfill.

The departments of Commerce, Energy, Transportation and Veterans Affairs and the office of

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer also do not release advance schedules for their leaders.

"These are top public officials who work for the U.S. citizens, and they have a right to know who they're meeting with and what they're doing," said Sean Moulton, the open government program manager at the Project on Government Oversight, a watchdog group.

Several of the Trump agencies' policies on releasing schedules and calendars are notably more restrictive than either the Obama or George W. Bush administrations — though they, too, faced criticism for lack of transparency.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney won a [court battle](#) to avoid having to disclose details about his energy task force's meetings with industry executives, rejecting a challenge by the Sierra Club and the conservative group Judicial Watch. Under Obama, The Associated Press [sued](#) the State Department for copies of former Secretary Hillary Clinton's calendars. The department said at the time that it was coping with a load of records requests but "does its best to meet its FOIA responsibilities."

More than 40 journalism and watchdog organizations also [objected](#) in 2015 to what they called a growing array of "constraints on information in the federal government" under Obama, including agencies that prohibited rank-and-file staff from talking to reporters.

Hiding information ultimately harms the agencies themselves, said Christine Todd Whitman, who led EPA during Bush's first term and said she posted her schedule for the entire EPA staff to see and made reporters aware when she was traveling.

"It all leads to an atmosphere of distrust, even if you're doing absolutely nothing wrong," Whitman said.

She added that she is wary of Pruitt's secrecy and has been "startled" by his frequent meetings with industry. "I worry about meeting with people who might have enforcement action coming before the agency, and, on the flip-side, seeming at this point to be locking out the environmentalists, because you've got to hear from both sides," she said.

Under Obama, Education Secretary Arne Duncan's staff emailed reporters a schedule of his upcoming week of activities, typically on Fridays. DeVos, in contrast, provides a much sparser public schedule that often omits meaningful details about the vast majority of her meetings.

The Department of Homeland Security also released weekly alerts during the Bush and Obama eras for the news media about the secretary's events, even if it wasn't always complete. Under Trump, DHS has yet to issue such schedules on a regular basis, although its staff will confirm information about specific events.

Obama Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx not only provided his weekly schedule in advance but held monthly question-and-answer sessions with reporters. Trump's DOT chief, Elaine Chao, declines to provide advance schedules, and has yet to hold this type of session in Washington, D.C.

Bush's environmental agencies also publicized any events where leaders would speak publicly, said Jim Connaughton, who headed the White House Council of Environmental Quality at the

time. And under Obama, then-EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy noted that her office provided a week-ahead guidance about her activities and regularly published her calendars after the fact.

"When we were delayed at all, we would certainly hear from reporters," McCarthy said.

But the Energy Department didn't publish then-Secretary Ernest Moniz's schedules when Obama was in the White House — and doesn't publish them for Secretary Rick Perry now. In both cases, however, DOE staff have sent advisories to the press for most of the secretaries' public events.

The Project on Government Oversight has called for years for Cabinet-level secretaries to at least publish their calendars online, calling it "the fundamental floor of what all agencies should be disclosing."

"It has been hit or miss, even under the Obama administration," Moulton said. But he said the Trump White House set the tone when it announced in April that it would refuse to publish its visitor logs on the grounds of "national security risks and privacy concerns," breaking with the Obama administration's policy. (POLITICO has responded by publishing its own [unofficial White House visitor log](#), based on publicly available information.)

Agency officials offer varying explanations for not releasing this information, including a crush of backlogged FOIA requests, as well as previous statements by EPA and the Education Department that they're concerned about security. EPA staff says Pruitt has gotten an unusually high number of death threats — several times more than former Obama's agency chiefs received — while DeVos' staff notes that her public appearances have drawn [protesters](#), including a crowd that briefly blocked her from entering a D.C. middle school in February.

On the other hand, Cabinet members who have immense security concerns are more open about their plans, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, whose offices issue daily advisories to the media about their public plans.

Pruitt and DeVos also don't lack for protection: Each has a round-the-clock security entourage, unusual by the standards of their predecessors. DeVos' security detail, projected to cost as much as [\\$6.54 million](#) during the current fiscal year, consists of U.S. marshals. Pruitt maintains tight secrecy even when he's in his headquarters a few blocks from the White House, according to news reports that say he [restricts employees' access](#) to his office area, ordered a \$25,000 [soundproof communications chamber](#) installed in his office and recently had his office [swept for bugs](#).

For some of Trump's Cabinet appointees, who include wealthy business executives with little exposure to the often-harsh scrutiny of public life, secrecy may be less about hiding a policy agenda than about discomfort with the spotlight.

DeVos, the billionaire charter-school activist who never before held public office, puts some of her events on social media but leaves them out of her department's official communications with the news media.

People following her online might have known she had met with the Saudi education minister in October — based on a photo she posted on [Flickr](#) — but the department never issued any information about it or said what they had discussed. The state-run Saudi Press Agency was more forthcoming, [disclosing](#) that the leaders had talked about "the importance of educational cooperation" between their countries' universities.

In November, DeVos visited Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., where she [said in a later post on Instagram](#) that she learned about education for the deaf and hard of hearing. The Education Department issued no advisories before or after the event.

DeVos' public schedule is riddled with so many omissions that U.S. News and World Report [lamented](#) in October that "civically engaged citizens" would have had no way of knowing she planned to speak at a Future Farmers of America convention in Indianapolis, attend a roundtable on students with disabilities or make a March visit to a Roman Catholic school in Orlando.

Mnuchin, the former Goldman Sachs partner turned Treasury secretary, was slow to begin releasing his weekly schedule — in contrast to former Obama Treasury Secretary Jack Lew, who put one out every day. In June, when Mnuchin [talked regulations and tax reform](#) with former Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke at the Brookings Institution, the public's first clue came when Mnuchin [tweeted](#) about it afterward.

In late December, Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta issued only an after-the-fact news release when he visited hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Some agencies, including the departments of Justice, Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development, provide partial guidance about their secretaries' schedules, either to the public or on background or off-the-record for the media. HUD, for example, usually provides reporters with an emailed heads-up about Secretary Ben Carson's official events, although it doesn't publicize all his appearances — his schedule didn't include his attendance at last month's [opening](#) of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., for instance.

Even the less-forthcoming agencies insist that they're following the law and keeping the public informed.

"Every official event that is open to the public is posted on the Secretary's public schedule," Education Department press secretary Liz Hill wrote in a response to questions. "There isn't a 'transparency issue' simply because members of the media want more of a head's up."

Even so, Hill confirmed that security is a factor as the department plans and issues information on DeVos' public schedule.

Pruitt's admirers even praise him for stiff-arming reporters' request for information: A [story](#) Dec. 15 in The Weekly Standard — which EPA's press office distributed by email hours later — lauded Pruitt's "fearless defiance of his political and media foes." The story's first paragraph notes that POLITICO and The New York Times ask EPA for Pruitt's upcoming schedule every week, and "the press office ignores the emails."

Sen. Jim Inhofe, a Republican ally from Pruitt's home state of Oklahoma, said the EPA chief has "a job to do and he doesn't want to be distracted on everything."

"He may be working on something that is the best interest in the United States that would not be doable if the other side were to find out about it," Inhofe said.

While the law doesn't compel agencies to create advance schedules for the news media, the Freedom of Information Act does require them to turn over records such as their leaders' appointment calendars after the fact. Congress has also directed agencies to automatically make available any records they anticipate would be in high demand — a category some legal experts say includes the calendars of agencies' top officials.

"People have a right to know what officials are doing day to day," said Kevin Goldberg, a lawyer focusing on First Amendment and FOIA issues at the Washington firm of Fletcher, Heald & Hildreth. He added, "There should be and there is a way to do this proactively. ... It doesn't seem to make sense that in 2017 we can't get that right."

Congress told agencies in a 2016 update to hew to a presumption of openness, but that command has been slow to take hold. Goldberg, whose clients include the American Society of News Editors and the Association of Alternative Newsmedia, said it's too soon to say whether the lag is because of typical bureaucratic inertia or ill intent from the Trump administration.

But Goldberg said the administration has sent some worrying signals. Those include the Justice Department's lag in carrying out a late-Obama-era proposal to implement a "release to one, release to all" policy for FOIA records. Under that policy, any documents an agency releases under FOIA would be automatically made available to everybody.

Margaret Townsend, a lawyer for the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the environmental groups suing EPA, argued that it's also illegal for agencies to create two sets of calendars — a bare-bones one for media and public consumption, and a more detailed set for internal use — and then refuse to provide the latter in response to FOIA requests. But EPA appears to be doing just that.

EPA has declined several requests to offer an on-the-record explanation of its refusal to release the calendars. In court documents responding to lawsuits, the agency described American Oversight's FOIA request as "overbroad" and said EPA staff had conversations about what the Environmental Defense Fund was seeking for several months before the activist group filed suit.

Moulton, of the Project on Government Oversight, called it "troubling" that agencies have forced groups to resort to litigation to obtain records that have long been recognized as subject to FOIA.

"There are simple and complex requests," he said. "This should be one of those simple requests."

Anthony Adragna, Caitlin Emma, Nick Juliano, Lauren Gardner, Kathryn Wolfe, Ben Lefebvre, Alex Guillén, Darius Dixon, Wesley Morgan, Jacqueline Klimas, Rachana Pradhan, Josh Gerstein, Ted Hesson, Lorraine Woellert, Patrick Temple-West, Doug Palmer, Adam Behsudi, Connor O'Brien, Catherine Boudreau, Helena Bottemiller Evich, Ian Kullgren, Michael Crowley, Victoria Guida, Adam Cancryn, Stephanie Beasley, P.J. Joshi and Andrew Restuccia contributed to this report.

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POLITICO Pro Q&A: Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 12/29/2017 09:10 AM EDT

Dan Brouillette returned to the Energy Department in August as deputy energy secretary, the agency's chief operating officer, which ensures he has a say in just about everything at the agency, including its recently announced reorganization.

Brouillette, who previously led the DOE's congressional affairs office in President George W. Bush's administration, also worked stints with the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Ford Motor Co. before joining USAA in 2006 to lead the company's government and industry relations shop in Texas.

In an interview with POLITICO, Brouillette said the new DOE team wants to focus on nuclear waste cleanup at sites like Hanford, and he pushed back on critiques that the staff filling senior positions lacked technical expertise.

"I know there are folks who have said things like, 'Well, they don't have scientific backgrounds,'" he said. "What we do have are management backgrounds."

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

During his [reorganization](#), former Secretary Ernest Moniz emphasized that many of DOE's challenges involved managing enterprises like nuclear waste cleanup or MOX. When the new reorganization was announced there was an emphasis on greater efficiency. Where does that efficiency come from?

I can't speak to the motives of Secretary Moniz or why he did what he did. I'm sure it made a lot of sense for the priorities established by the Obama administration and the priorities he would have as secretary. I'm sure his structure made a lot of sense for him.

I would almost guess ... that the structure had something to do with the people that he had in place — the skill sets that he had in place. So, for him efficiency probably meant having somebody dedicated day-in and day-out looking at things like contracting or management efficiency and performances. For us, in our administration, the priorities are different [and] the personnel are different. ... I know there are folks who have said things like, "Well, they don't have scientific backgrounds." What we do have are management backgrounds.

Look at guys like Paul Dabbar, who spent 20-plus years at JPMorgan doing business deals. Mark Menezes, the new undersecretary of energy who spend a lot of time both in the legal field and the policy field but also within a utility and at Berkshire Hathaway doing both management and investments. When you [put] people like that in place you can use that talent at a lower level to accomplish the things that you want. In that sense, decisions get made faster, they get made closer to the ground, and that presents its own efficiency.

Is that why you gave Dabbar the environmental management and legacy offices? EM has

been the responsibility of three different undersecretaries under three different Energy secretaries.

Exactly.

So, a lot of the changes are personality-based?

It's a little bit two-fold. One, it's personality-based because Paul has a great business background, so in that sense he brings a lot of talent to the field. The other part of it is that Paul is an engineer who graduated from the Naval Academy [and] Columbia University, in the business school there. Importantly, he sat on the EM advisory board for 12 years. He knows that program very very well.

The reason why we moved it there really was to tie the science programs to EM. When I first came to the Hill in 1989 or 1988, the first thing I was told was the Hanford's a special case because it's very complicated and complex and very technical. That's all true. But at DOE we have the best and the brightest in terms of scientific talent, so why not utilize that talent to tackle this problem? I'm not suggesting that it hasn't been done in the past but if you tie the mission together that closely, then perhaps we'll find the solutions we need to get that waste out of there. That is the mission of the department. It's not to study it — it's to move it out of there.

On that topic, I was a little surprised there wasn't a spot in the reorganization for the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management given your support and administration's plan to pursue a license for Yucca Mountain.

You don't put it on the [organizational] chart unless you have the ability to pay for it.

The bottom line is that Yucca Mountain's a political topic that's not going to be resolved with an organizational chart. Until the Senate decides to appropriate the funds for Yucca Mountain, there isn't really much that we could do. That's just the honest truth.

We're just going to wait until the Senate appropriates the funds. If they get to a deal, then we'll appropriately create the office and move forward, as directed.

Moniz also had a strong emphasis on having the applied energy offices and the Office of Science report to the same undersecretary in order to cross-pollinate those missions. Was it better to split them up again? Or was the goal to fuse EM with Science?

Everybody focuses on the amount — the cost — that we spend on places like Hanford and some of the other cleanup sites. Some of that, to be honest, is contracting issues around that, performance issues. There are contractor management issues around that. Those things are all true. Congress knows this and it's only part of the problem.

The larger part of the problem is that the stuff that's in the tanks keeps changing every minute of every day, so we don't know exactly what it is. We have to find out what it is. We can build facilities, we can hire new contractors, we can talk about moving waste out. But until we understand exactly what we're dealing with there's no way to treat it, there's no way to get it out or really address the problem. We're just going to take a slightly different approach.

We're not going to ignore the contracting issues or the contractor problems or the safety issues. We're not putting that by the wayside. What we want to do is tackle the technical issues

now. Tackle them first and aggressively, and then let's move to the next step: getting it offsite.

Moniz had a focus on project management — things like MOX. They set up different committees to address what he called "little alligators" before they became "big alligators." Are you keeping those?

Some of them we're going to retain and they have done a good job.

[Moniz] actually setup the process by which they [re]evaluated MOX in South Carolina and they came to the conclusion that it's too big an alligator. It's gonna eat the department alive. And we agree.

Seeing that you sent many of the managerial functions back to the deputy's office, how much of the reorganization is to reflect the structure when you were previously at DOE?

I'm not interested in reliving old times or anything. For lack of a better way to say it, what does a COO do, if not manage the building? ... Why would you push that function down if not, for lack of a better term, trying to create a job for somebody to do?

I've met with [former Deputy Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall] and went to her house a number of different times getting ready for this position, and [her predecessor] Dan Poneman has been a great friend. I've known all the deputy secretaries all the way back to Henson Moore.

Secretaries push the mission but deputies traditionally run the day-to-day operations. Do enough people embrace that outside the building?

Everything goes through [the deputy's office]. That's the way it is in corporate America. That's the way it is in government as well. If you talk to other agencies, you'll find the same thing. That's a model that works very well. Again, why would want to push those functions down? You really want your deputy to be the eyes and ears inside the building and to do that you have to have your finger on the pulse of the building and you have to understand what's going on. The way you do that is to actually manage those management and staff functions — human capital, general counsel, CFO functions.

You want the deputy doing that. That's my view and I think that's the secretary's view.

Moniz's reorganization was popular with the lab directors because they enjoyed having greater access to the secretary. How much were the lab directors involved in this?

I asked them for their advice and they gave me their input. They actually put together a plan that we adopted to some degree. There were a couple things that they recommended that, candidly, just went outside the statute.

What did they offer that you liked?

The biggest thing that we agreed on was that they wanted a fuller dedication to the mission of science that was created in the 2005 Energy Policy Act. That was something we believe strongly in as well. That is one of the fundamental missions of the department so on that part, we agreed immediately. The rest of it was really structural things that they were asking us to do — it was more so operating style. What the lab directors told me was that, "We really want to know what it is you would like us to focus on — what it is you'd like us to do. But don't tell

us how to do it. ... Trust us enough to do that." My natural reaction is, "Absolutely. That's why you're here and that's what you do."

There are officials from the Obama administration that see things as being undone by this administration simply because Obama did them. Did that play into the re-separating of the energy and science office?

No.

Then what's the view for the applied offices?

The applied offices are going to report to Mark Menezes, the undersecretary of energy, but we're going to focus on technology transfer. That's going to be our mission with those applied offices. A lot of that technology should be moved to the private sector.

But the Office of Technology Transitions stayed under the undersecretary for science.

Yeah, but we're going to make some additional [changes].

Do you envision further organizational changes in 2018?

Yeah. There are going to be further changes in 2018 and we anticipate further changes because the market's changing. The energy space is ... changing day by day and we're going to accommodate that.

Previous org charts itemized many of the internal DOE committees. The new one lumps them into "boards and councils."

The secretary's going to focus in on which of those he feels provide the most value to him and he hasn't yet made that decision. ... So we didn't want to spell out what they might be.

New councils?

It could be new councils. I think we're going to keep a lot of the same ones. The Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, for instance, that's going to continue. That's a very valuable board. The members will change ... but the basic concept of SEAB is going to remain would be my guess. I don't want to get out in front of the secretary.

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Is Trump delivering 'energy dominance'? [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/27/2017 09:11 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's pledge to establish U.S. "energy dominance" has been a key pillar of his America First platform, but after a year in office, his efforts seem destined to have only a modest impact on oil and gas production while setting back some of the fastest growing energy technologies.

Trump's call for energy dominance dates back to his May 2016 campaign rally in North Dakota, and pushing for energy production growth was the subject of one of his first [executive orders](#). That directive was designed to unshackle the industry from what Republicans had decried as the burdens placed by the Obama administration on fossil fuel companies.

"They put American energy under lock and key," Trump said of the Obama administration in a [speech](#) unveiling the [National Security Strategy](#) earlier this month. "We have unlocked America's vast energy resources."

The good news for Trump is that the country is ending 2017 with record high oil and gas production. But the bad news is that the surge in energy output that started a decade ago may be nearing a plateau, and some experts worry that Trump's policies will hinder the shift to newer technologies that are likely to play a central role in the global economy in the coming years.

That includes renewable energy and electric vehicles, which could suffer setbacks if Trump erects trade barriers to solar imports and rolls back the aggressive vehicle fuel economy rules put in place under the Obama administration that experts say are crucial to driving investments in electric vehicles.

"The highest growing energy sources in the world are emerging technologies — electric vehicles and renewables — and this administration has proposed slashing the budget for clean energy," said Jason Bordoff, founding director of Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy. "We need to continue to invest in tomorrow's technologies, not only the ones we're using today."

U.S. oil production has [nearly doubled](#) during the past 10 years to an estimated 9.2 million barrels per day in 2017, and [natural gas output](#) has climbed by about 5 percent over that period to 73.5 billion cubic feet per day this year, a result of the massive investments by companies to deploy hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling technologies to unlock the resources trapped in shale rock. And now, industry consultants Wood MacKenzie are forecasting production will [flatten out](#) at 11.5 million barrels a day by 2026.

While adding another 2 million barrels a day to U.S. production is significant, it's a far cry from what Trump claimed at [a rally in Pensacola](#), Fla., this month, when he said, "We are pursuing American energy dominance. And by the end of this year we will be totally self-sufficient." Even with the rising oil production, the U.S. imports nearly [8 million](#) barrels of crude per day.

Trump's big bet is that cutting regulations and opening up areas that have long been closed off for drilling will boost oil and gas production even further. But the federal government's influence mainly extends to federal lands, so there may be little effect on the industry that is mostly clustered on private property in west Texas, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and elsewhere, analysts said.

"Shale resources are on private and state-owned lands, so that's where economic resources are," said Nick Loris, The Heritage Foundation's Fellow in Energy and Environmental Policy Nick Loris. "Because we were fortunate that the shale plays were on state and privately owned lands, we are already energy dominant."

Interior Department records show that companies have pulled back on the amount of federal

land they've sought for drilling since 2006, when oil prices reached a peak near \$145 a barrel. After the latest drop in prices in 2014, the number of oil and gas leases issued by the Bureau of Land Management fell to just 520 in 2016, the latest year for which [information is available](#), far below the 3,746 it approved in 2006.

The number of wells drilled on federal land peaked at 5,343 in fiscal year 2007 before steadily dwindling to 847 last year, a decline that's in line with the drop in the U.S. oil price benchmark. But it also represents a relative pittance in overall U.S. drilling activity: Exxon Mobil and other companies started 38,186 wells throughout the country in 2008, a number that only experienced a prolonged significant drop when it fell to 19,014 in 2015, according to data from S&P Platts Global. The number was 16,806 near the end of December 2017.

The Trump administration's effort to draw companies back onto federal land has so far been a bust. In December, Interior offered every acre it had available in Alaska to drilling companies. Only two companies bid — ConocoPhillips and Anadarko Petroleum — yielding a modest \$1.2 million for the federal coffers according to [auction results data](#).

And with oil prices now at little more than a third of their June 2008 peak, expensive drilling operations in the federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico also lost their luster just as the shale gas boom starting to gain traction onshore. In March 2013, companies bid \$1.2 billion for 1.7 million acres just in the central Gulf region, far more demand than the August sale for the entirety of the Gulf of Mexico that drew just \$121 million for 508,096 acres.

Still, energy industry lobbyists contend that opening more federal acres to drilling is keeping in the spirit of a free market. Oil and gas companies may not need the acres today, but would prefer to have them on hand in case oil demand picks up, said Chris Guith, senior vice president for policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute.

"Some areas might not garner initial interest," Guith said. "But I'd prefer that possibility to there being great interest but regulators preventing access."

Trump has also said his approvals of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipeline have helped U.S. move toward energy dominance. While Dakota Access has been delivering oil from North Dakota to the Midwest, Keystone XL has still not started construction, and its developer, TransCanada, is still deciding whether to proceed after regulators in Nebraska approved added new restrictions on its route through the state.

Meanwhile, the administration is pushing exports of liquefied natural gas, even sending EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on an unusual trip to Morocco this month to pitch the fuel. That business could be promising, but so far, of the 11 LNG export projects approved under the Obama administration, only one, Cheniere's Sabine Pass plant, has finished construction and started shipping.

The Trump administration's moves clearing the way for LNG shippers to deal directly with China, may offer an opportunity for LNG shipments grow and create more demand for U.S. gas, but so far they have [come up short](#). Even an announcement of potential deal between China's Sinopec to buy into an Alaskan LNG project has drawn some skepticism, since several U.S. companies have previously walked away from the project, whose cost is believed to be far higher than the \$43 billion estimated by Sinopec and the Alaska Gasline Development Corp.

European buyers have also been reluctant to commit to long-term contracts with U.S. LNG producers, and instead seem content to buy on the open market that is well supplied.

And part of the difficulties in winning new business could be partly to blame on Trump's talk of dominating global energy markets, which has raised hackles in Europe, said Frank Verrastro, senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"We always derided other countries such as Russia that used energy as a geopolitical lever," Verrastro said. "Dominance suggests there is a subordinate role, and some people chafe at that."

Trump has pointed to a bounce in coal production as a victory for his policies, since output, which languished for years as coal-fired power plants shut down, grew eight percent during the first 11 months of this year to reach 719 million tons on the back of rising exports. But the Energy Information Administration expects that domestic coal production will fall next year "because of lower exports and no growth in coal consumption."

So far, the one new coal mine to open this year, the Acosta Mine near Pittsburgh, will employ 70 people full-time to mine a type of coal used in making steel, not the more prevalent thermal coal.

While the administration is giving the next wave of renewable energy short shrift, solar, wind and other next-generation power sources are forecast to generate 10 percent of the country's electricity this year, according to the EIA. Instead of looking to renewable to decrease the country's still-sizable dependency on oil imports, Trump has often dismissed the sector's potential and proposed slashing federal research into lowering the cost of solar power projects, and has come under fire for illegally withholding grant money awarded to advance energy research projects.

Trump, a long time foe of wind power, also dismissed the technology at his recent rally in Florida. "The windmills are wonderful, but when the wind does not blow, it causes problems. 'We have no energy this week,'" Trump said.

The biggest setback for renewables could come next month, when the administration is expected to erect tariffs on imports of solar panels, a move supported by Suniva, a company majority-owned by a Chinese firm, and the German-owned SolarWorld. Advocates of the trade barrier says it will level the playing field with Chinese solar manufacturers that have received state support, and help bolster U.S. panel manufacturing. But the U.S. solar industry and [even the conservative Wall Street Journal editorial board](#) are largely opposed to moves that will drive up the cost of solar, which has become competitive with coal and natural gas in many parts of the country.

"The solar industry created one in every 51 jobs last year, and grew 17 times faster than the rest of the economy," said Solar Energy Industries Association President and Chief Executive Abigail Ross Hopper. "President Trump can put America First and play a significant role in the growth of our industry by rejecting the tariff requests of two foreign-owned companies."

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EPA's anti-pollution weapon in the crosshairs [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 12/26/2017 09:10 AM EDT

After nearly five decades, the EPA has dramatically cut down on the worst pollutants fouling American skies by wielding a powerful weapon — one that its critics in industry say has outlived its usefulness.

Known as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, the program created in 1970 under the Clean Air Act played a major role in healing the damage to the U.S. environment, reducing the smog that occluded the skies, soot that choked people's lungs, and gases that produced acid rain and haze.

Now there are signs that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who is already rescinding the Obama EPA's landmark climate change regulations and Waters of the U.S. rule, may be easing enforcement on new pollution limits under the air quality program. That is bringing praise from industry groups, which complain that the rules nowadays yield only modest health benefits at a high cost to companies.

"It could certainly use some modernization," said Ross Eisenberg, vice president of energy and resources policy at the National Association of Manufacturers. "That low-hanging fruit is now gone. And so you have a fairly heavy-handed statute with very rigid deadlines that may not work as well as it should for modern environmental problems."

Business groups and conservatives have long chafed under the program, known in policy circles by the acronym NAAQS, arguing that the ever-tighter pollution limits required would cripple the economy. Environmentalists and public health advocates dismiss those complaints as knee-jerk resistance to rules that companies have always managed to meet.

Now the NAAQS critics have a sympathetic EPA chief in Pruitt, who has already sparked lawsuits by failing to even reveal which areas of the country are failing to meet the Obama administration's 2015 ozone standard. Pruitt's delay means areas with poor air quality can continue to avoid actions to come into compliance, at least for now. Democratic states and public health groups have sued EPA to force Pruitt to act, even as the agency reviews that underlying 2015 standard — which Pruitt sued over during his tenure as Oklahoma's attorney general.

For the six specific pollutants that are regulated under NAAQS — including ground-level ozone, particulate matter and carbon monoxide — EPA is required to establish a level safe for human health, with an "adequate margin of safety" to err on the side of caution. And the agency isn't supposed to consider the costs of meeting those safe levels when setting the standards. Once the federal standards are set, states determine their own path to reduce their emissions, which gives them flexibility to target the easiest cuts first.

But under the law, those pollution levels must be reviewed and potentially tightened every five years — lightning speed for Washington's regulatory world. If EPA fails to meet the deadlines as it regularly has under both parties, environmentalists can sue to force it to act, making that five-year review period a top target of NAAQS critics who believe they may be able to convince Congress to ease it,

NAAQS "is unworkable in the five-year period," said Howard Feldman, senior director of regulatory and scientific affairs at the American Petroleum Institute. "That has been proven to be the case in Republican and Democratic administrations."

Five years does not give states the breathing room they need, critics say, because just as they start work on reducing emissions to meet one standard, EPA could ratchet it down further.

"I often compare it to the movie 'Groundhog Day,' where basically every five years, EPA misses the deadline and then is sued, and then has to either litigate that or settle and agree to a rushed process, which can lead to mistakes or missing key details," said Eisenberg. "And then that process takes a few years, and then that's litigated, and then by the time they actually get around to implementing that standard, we're already close to having to do the next one."

As an example, critics cite the ozone standard, which was updated in 2008 and then again in 2015, even though major portions of the country were still struggling to meet the previous levels.

Both NAM and API have sued EPA over the 2015 ozone standard, arguing it was too strict, while environmentalists' lawsuits called the standard too lenient.

Pruitt has said about 40 percent of Americans live in areas that don't meet ozone pollution standards, a point he often raises when arguing that EPA should focus on cleaning up that air before issuing new regulations.

But Congress included the five-year review requirement for a reason: Agencies rarely act unless forced, according to Thomas Jorling, who as a Republican congressional aide helped write the Clean Air Act of 1970. That tight timeframe was designed to allow citizen lawsuits to prod the agency to move more quickly.

However, Jorling thinks it may be time to extend that five-year deadline.

"I can say yes, now, in retrospect, the timetables were — perhaps especially after the first go-around — a bit too tight," he said. "But again, the purpose is to compel agencies to act."

For years Republicans have pushed legislation that would lengthen the review period to 10 years, though they've never been successful.

Environmentalists argue that the five-year review generally takes seven to eight years in reality, and that a 10-year review will really translate to at least 12 to 13 years between revisions.

The American Lung Association said industry complaints about rapid review times amount to crocodile tears.

"They spend time trying to delay the implementation of the NAAQS and then they argue we shouldn't update the NAAQS because they haven't implemented the previous NAAQS," said Paul Billings, senior vice president for advocacy at American Lung Association. "Heads they win, tails we lose."

Janet McCabe, who as a top air official in the Obama administration worked on several NAAQS reviews, acknowledged that the five-year review is "challenging" for all sides, including EPA. But, she said, it serves an important role in recognizing the ever-changing

science underlying these rules.

"That's one of the things that's always true about science: You never have the perfect answer," she said. "But when you're a regulator or legislator wanting to make sure we have clean, healthy air in this country, you don't wait for the perfect answer, you work with the information that you have."

Plus, McCabe argued, even if cities still struggle to meet the older standards, there's value in telling the public what level EPA considers safe so people can take action on their own, such as keeping asthmatic children from outdoor activities on high-ozone days.

Any push to alter the five-year review period in Congress would face long odds, since any bill targeting it would need to win 60 votes in the Senate, where it would encounter heavy Democratic opposition. And any effort to update the broader Clean Air Act, which has not happened in 27 years, remains pie-in-the-sky thanks to deep partisan divides over regulations for greenhouse gases.

"The actual increment of time, whether it's five years or seven years or 10 years, I think is less important than the fact that there has to be a mandate to review these, because science does not stand still," said Jorling.

Having helped create the NAAQS program nearly 50 years ago, Jorling declined to say if or when the program might eventually reach a point when the standards no longer need revision.

"There may be a time when science says the 340 million people in the United States can breathe this level of air and not suffer either premature mortality or morbidity of one sort or another," said Jorling. "I'd love to be able to say science can produce that knowledge, but it's some distance off."

The future could come down to whether scientists can ever be more precise about the granular health effects of different standards of pollution concentrations, which are often measured in parts per billion.

For some pollutants, like lead, scientists generally agree there is no safe level for all humans, although the lead standard was designed to protect vulnerable populations such as children and fetuses. Other more widely emitted pollutants like ozone are more complicated, as the standard approaches levels that occur naturally in certain parts of the U.S..

"I don't know if it's possible for science to ever to prove they've hit that magic point, because that would imply that everything that is known now is all that could be known about a topic," said Billings of ALA.

But there could come a time when review after review takes place without one of the more controversial standards being revised.

It's already happened with some — the carbon monoxide standard has been in place since 1971 and gone unchanged through three reviews, and every part of the U.S. meets that standard.

In the meantime, EPA continues with its regular NAAQS reviews.

The agency is expected to issue rules in the next few years that will maintain the current

standards for nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide. Deadlines to finish those reviews were set under a court order — because EPA missed the five-year deadlines.

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Regulatory and legal obstacles cloud visions of Puerto Rico's grid rebuild [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/28/2017 09:11 AM EDT

Puerto Rico's hurricane-devastated power system opens an opportunity to upgrade its dilapidated electric grid with cutting-edge technology, but would-be visionaries face obstacles ranging from a decades-old federal law to the island's massive debt and stubborn utility.

The U.S. territory's government and federal agencies are still working to end the blackout that has kept much of the island in the dark since Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck in September. But Puerto Rico's energy regulator is developing a long-term plan to transform its grid, add renewables, and develop microgrids that would provide their own generation in the event of another disaster.

While the technology exists to create an advanced grid, regulation and legal hurdles must be overcome first. Making matters more complicated, PREPA has a long reputation among solar installers and analysts for hindering the island's shift to renewables in an effort to protect its centralized generation business model.

"As creative as we want to be on the technology side of things, we will need to be equally creative on the regulatory and financial side of things as well," said Katherine Gensler, director of government affairs for the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which hit Sept. 7 and 20, struck the island with such fury as to wipe out much of the distribution grid, knock out generation, and take out the critical transmission lines that link the power plants on the south side of the island with the population centers on the north. Many of the power plants survived the storms, but the storms exposed aging and decrepit power infrastructure that has proven difficult to repair without replacing. And while [65 percent of generation capacity](#) has been restored, the Army Corps of Engineers estimates that outlying customers won't have power back until May.

Congress has approved \$52 billion in disaster relief funding this year, for states and territories affected by the hurricanes as well events such as the wildfires out West; another \$81 billion bill passed the House last week and is [awaiting action](#) in the Senate when lawmakers return from break.

FEMA, which oversees disaster relief efforts, says its immediate focus is to restore power to the island. Over the long term, the agency will work with the Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Energy and others "on options for permanent work, to include resilience as FEMA programs allow." In statement, FEMA pointed to DOE's work to improve the grid, "including relocating substations to less flood-prone areas, using simulations to identify better locations for wind and solar generation, integrating distributed energy resources, and hardening towers and other energy infrastructure on the island."

However, proponents of renewable energy, batteries and related technologies say some of those efforts may be hampered by bureaucratic red tape. The Stafford Act, which governs disaster spending, directs states and territories to rebuild damaged infrastructure based on how it operated before a disaster struck. That makes it difficult to use FEMA dollars to replace Puerto Rico's badly outdated electric grid with the latest technology.

It's a problem that members of Congress from both parties say they want to fix.

"It makes little sense to require, as under current law, that buildings and infrastructure be rebuilt in the ways that made them so vulnerable to Hurricanes Irma and Maria," House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#) (R-Calif.) and Minority Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) (D-Md.) wrote in a November [op-ed](#) in The Washington Post. "Instead, we ought to work across the aisle to give these communities the chance to come back stronger. Making those investments now will save taxpayer dollars in the long run. Both of us are committed to advancing this issue and working to bring our colleagues on board in this effort."

The Puerto Rico Energy Commission saw an opportunity to rebuild a system better able to withstand future storms and avoid the high fuel costs that make the Energy Information Administration [says](#) costs 55 percent more than the US average. The island has some coal, gas and wind power, but most of its generation is supplied by oil-fired generating plants.

"The main issue in Puerto Rico is too little generation and too many lines to get around," said Alejandro Uriarte, CEO of Puerto Rico solar installer New Energy, which has 2,500 solar customers on the island. "You need to have smaller ecosystems, make sure that generation comes closer to the areas that are more densely populated."

The commission heard dozens of proposals. PREPA and the Puerto Rico Energy Commission joined with the New York Power Authority, ConEd, Edison International, Long Island Power Authority, the Department of Energy, the Electric Power Research Institute, two national labs, and collaborated to write a [report](#) proposing a \$17 billion capital expenditure to build far stronger power poles, hardened substations, smart-grid technology and the use of microgrids to support critical infrastructure.

[Another](#), from power company AES, proposes a mesh of seven regional microgrids, each of which could supply its own power and come back quickly in the event of another hurricane. It doesn't provide a cost estimate, but it says the operating costs of solar-plus-battery installations would be a third lower than the current oil plants, and that solar generation alone could be two-thirds cheaper than current generation. In addition, the microgrids would be designed to separate themselves from the main grid when one area goes down, providing resiliency in a major storm.

Chris Shelton, chief technology officer for AES, emphasized that all of this technology is well tested, if not on this scale.

"What we're talking about is not new," he said. "It's not R&D, it's been running for years."

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has offered his company's solar and battery technology as a solution to the island's energy woes, and Puerto Rico's governor announced that [six systems](#) had been installed as of earlier this month.

But the island needs to revamp its utility, or give it stricter oversight before any of these can come to pass. PREPA has a longstanding reputation of dragging its heels in setting up interconnections for solar, solar installers like Uriarte say. Texas-based solar company Sunnova Solar Energy is the largest solar installer on the island, says that it has struggled with PREPA's "unique recalcitrance" for years, and now, as it tries to bring solar to the islands many residents.

"The inaction and lack of cooperation on PREPA's part has made it difficult," Sunnova CEO John Berger said in a statement. "The utility has continued to obstruct our ability to connect customers' solar systems to the grid."

PREPA did not respond to a request for comment.

Puerto Rico's demolished grid has relieved some installers from the need to interconnect as battery systems become more popular. Uriarte says he's been able to work faster because he's mostly been building battery-solar hybrids that are independent from the grid. He's gone from selling 10 battery systems a year to 350 since the hurricane. All the systems are built to last decades and could easily become part of a future microgrid set up.

"The main challenge getting it done is to have the proper regulation implemented in Puerto Rico that would allow the installations to interact with the grid effectively," Uriarte told POLITICO. Microgrids need to connect their generation and storage resources over utility-owned distribution lines in order to function.

Microgrids were illegal in Puerto Rico until last year, and installers like Uriarte are waiting for PREPA and the commission to develop the necessary framework and standards to allow interconnection. Uriarte hopes the commission can finish the regulatory work by next spring.

PREPA is also loathe to give up control of any of its distribution, transmission, or generation control, because all of those assets can be used to put up bonds. But the utility, which is owned by the commonwealth government, may no longer have a choice. Congress created a federal oversight board through the PROMESA Act in 2016, and in October that board [installed a former Air Force officer](#) to oversee PREPA and the power grid's recovery.

The commonwealth's \$70 billion of debt, including the \$9 billion held by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, will make it hard to find creditors willing to lend money to rebuild.

Thanks to the storms and the creation of the oversight board, Commonwealth government has been able to be more aggressive in dealing with its creditors. FEMA has waived key cost-sharing requirements, and in September the government [rejected](#) an offer from PREPA creditors of a bridge loan and a reduction in debt.

Some critics would like to see the utility privatized and possibly bought out.

"You could wash out all of PREPA's debt and let the new private company get a clean start," said Shayle Kann, a senior adviser to GreenTech Media. "And in privatizing have it get bought by a larger company with a balance sheet that is creditworthy."

Sunnova's Berger would like to see the federal government allow use of the Investment Tax Credit as a grant program for Puerto Rico projects, similar to a program used as part of the 2009 stimulus law. As SEIA's Gensler points out, PREPA's long history of management

problems and deep debts make it unattractive to lenders, which could make the grant system the best way to generate upfront capital costs.

However it gets rebuilt, the island's disaster may offer a major learning opportunity for other islands.

"This is a travesty, the worst disaster in a long time," Kann said. "But the silver lining is some innovative thinking. This problem that Puerto Rico is facing is a combination of a hurricane and something that is common to all island grids, so a lot of that stuff could apply to all other islands. I find that really exciting, despite the fact that it's coming out of a real crisis."

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DOE grants FERC extension on resiliency proposal [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/08/2017 06:53 PM EDT

Energy Secretary Rick Perry today granted another 30 days to FERC to consider a proposal to support coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

In a [letter](#) filed with FERC, Perry asserted that he had sole authority to grant the extension, and though he preferred a faster outcome, he approved the extra time.

"The better course would be for the commission to adopt the proposal within this reasonable deadline," Perry wrote. But he went on to say, "on the assumption the Commission cannot act on the proposal within the 60-day deadline, I hereby grant the request for an extension of time for the commission to deliberate and take final action on the Grid Resiliency and Pricing Rule."

Newly fledged chairman Kevin McIntyre [requested](#) the delay on Thursday, hours after being sworn in.

FERC had been expected to issue a decision on Perry's proposal by Monday.

WHAT'S NEXT: FERC has until Jan. 10 to take action on the proposal.

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Bob Murray had early access to Rick Perry to share coal plan [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/07/2017 05:30 PM EDT

Coal magnate Bob Murray pitched Energy Secretary Rick Perry on his plan to throw an economic lifeline to coal companies less than a month before Perry set in motion plans to aid

the industry, according to newly disclosed photographs that show the two meeting.

The liberal magazine [In These Times](#) obtained pictures of Murray and Perry from a March 29 meeting at Energy Department headquarters, less than a month after Perry was [sworn in](#). Several other officials were in attendance, including Andrew Wheeler, who at the time was a lobbyist for Murray and has since been nominated as the Environmental Protection Agency's No. 2 official.

The meeting puts Murray and Perry together at a crucial moment in the timeline of the Trump administration's push to save the struggling coal industry, an effort that would benefit Murray Energy in particular while raising electricity prices for potentially millions of people. A month before the meeting, one of Murray's biggest customers, FirstEnergy, told investors it was seriously considering seeking bankruptcy protection for its merchant division, FirstEnergy Solutions, a move that would likely void its supply contracts with Murray's coal mines.

Three weeks after Murray's visit, Perry would order a grid study that later became part of the justification for a proposed rule to reward coal and nuclear power plants for providing "grid resiliency." FERC, which has jurisdiction over the proposal, must make a decision on it by Monday.

At the time of the meeting, Wheeler was [already the leading candidate](#) to become the deputy administrator for EPA. Wheeler, who represented Murray as a lobbyist for Faegre Baker Daniels, would not be officially nominated for months. Wheeler, who has acknowledged participating in meetings on Murray's coal plan at DOE and on Capitol Hill, cleared committee last week and is awaiting Senate confirmation.

Murray is an outspoken supporter of President Donald Trump and held a fundraiser for him during the 2016 campaign.

DOE did not dispute the validity of the photos.

"Industry stakeholders visit the Department of Energy on a daily basis," DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes said, when asked about the meeting. "The DOE proposal to FERC was about the future and resiliency of the nation's power supply, an issue much bigger than one industry or company."

The photographs show Perry sitting at the head of a table in the Department of Energy, with Bob Murray, CEO of Murray Energy, to his left, and Wheeler down the table from Murray.

"Enclosed is an Action Plan for achieving reliable and low cost electricity ... and to assist in the survival of our Country's coal industry, which ... power grid reliability and low cost electricity," Murray writes in a cover letter to Perry, parts of which are visible in one photo from the meeting.

Though the document has never been publicly released, DOE critics say Murray's plan appears to have inspired DOE's grid study and the proposed rule Perry sent FERC in September. Copies are visible at the seats of most of the participants, including Perry and Murray. Wheeler, who told members of the Senate Environment Committee he had only seen the memo briefly, is not holding a copy in the photos obtained by In These Times. Murray [told](#) Greenwire in November he "didn't have any involvement" in writing the rule.

Murray has acknowledged sharing the plan with Trump.

"I gave Mr. Trump what I called an action plan very early," Murray said in a recent [PBS Frontline](#) documentary on EPA. "It's about three-and-a-half pages and — of what he needed to do in his administration. He's wiped out page one."

A spokesman for Bob Murray said that during the March 29 meeting, Murray did not discuss the DOE's proposed rule, and he added that he was not involved in drafting Perry's proposal.

The meeting appears to have been successful for all. One of the photos shows Perry and Murray in a big bear hug.

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Scaramucci: Trump doesn't deny climate change [Back](#)

By David Cohen | 12/31/2017 09:55 AM EDT

Former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci on Sunday defended President Donald Trump's tweet last week on climate change as a common-sense statement.

"In the East, it could be the COLDEST New Year's Eve on record. Perhaps we could use a little bit of that good old Global Warming that our Country, but not other countries, was going to pay TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS to protect against," Trump wrote Thursday on Twitter. "Bundle up!"

Critics observed that the president didn't seem to understand the distinction between weather and climate — or that a few days of freezing cold were not going to prove anything about climate.

Scaramucci defended Trump's remarks, telling CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union" that he was not a denier of climate change, just an opponent of the Paris climate accord. Earlier this year, Trump withdrew the United States from the agreement, which is designed to combat global warming.

"I think you guys should ask him directly if he's a climate change denier or not. I think you will find you will be surprised by that answer," he said of Trump.

"He didn't want to just sign it and go along with the crowd," said Scaramucci, who said he expected the president to be proved right on the issue: "My prediction is, is that some time at the end of 2018, people will look back at him and say, wow, he had a lot of common sense by getting out of that climate accord."

Scaramucci also joked to Bash: "It is freezing here on this beautiful Sunday morning."

On other issues, Scaramucci said he believes the president is not particularly concerned with Robert Mueller's ongoing Russia investigation.

"I know that he's not worried about it," he said, adding that he thinks Trump is "frustrated about it."

Scaramucci also said: "Washington has this magnificent way of finding scandals to hit people with to distract them from their agendas. The great news about the president is: He's undistracted, he's undeterred, and I think he is going to have a phenomenal 2018."

To view online [click here](#).

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'We have tapped into something': Impeachment drive builds digital army to take on Trump [Back](#)

By Carla Marinucci and David Siders | 12/27/2017 05:04 AM EDT

SAN FRANCISCO — When billionaire Democratic donor Tom Steyer launched a digital petition drive to impeach President Donald Trump two months ago, some Democratic Party leaders dismissed it as an unhelpful vanity project — and even Steyer thought he'd top out at a million signatures.

But nearly 4 million digital signatures later, the philanthropist and environmental activist's unlikely campaign has seized on an issue — impeaching Trump — that could become part of the Democratic mainstream in 2018. It's placed at his fingertips a potentially powerful tool: an email list of millions of motivated activists whom he can reach instantly for organizing and fundraising and that could become the hottest trove of data in Democratic politics since the [email list](#) that Bernie Sanders' insurgent campaign against Hillary Clinton collected in 2016.

Steyer's digital success is fueling intense curiosity about what he'll do with that tool — and whether he'll use it beyond his California base for a White House bid of his own.

"That's how you build a grass-roots operations for a presidential campaign. And if you are that guy who started this, that's certainly a leg up in organizing a 50-state strategy," said Mike Madrid, a Republican consultant in California who is advising former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, a Democrat, in his gubernatorial campaign. "That's what he's building, and it's probably second only to Bernie Sanders' list, and may be eclipsing it. Every election cycle has its own dynamics, and whoever is tapping into the sentiments of their own base usually has an advantage."

Despite the opposition of party leadership, Madrid said Steyer has shown "there's a huge vacuum for somebody like Tom Steyer to come in and tap into the activist base — and even beyond that — where some are willing to sign up."

Campaign experts say Steyer's petition drive is breaking new ground in digital organizing in the nontraditional political terrain of the Trump era, though it's been anchored by an traditional media onslaught — national television ads that have been running nonstop since Oct. 20. So far, 3.73 million people have signed on to Steyer's [NeedToImpeach.com](#) drive, which has brought his message into the living rooms of millions of average Americans.

An [NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll](#) released this week showed 41 percent of Americans

now back impeachment hearings — higher than the percentage that would support Trump in a 2020 election. And in a recent vote, 58 House Democrats backed Rep. Al Green's call for impeachment — a dramatic shift from the two who supported impeachment at the start of Steyer's drive in October.

Steyer himself acknowledged shock at the avalanche of grass-roots support for Trump's impeachment in a recent interview, amid clear disapproval from Democratic Party leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, who have suggested that it distracts from the party's agenda. "We have tapped into something much larger than we thought," Steyer said in a recent C-SPAN interview. He says he's upped his original goal of 1 million signatures to 5 million.

As one of country's leading political donors in 2016, and a major party activist in California on issues like climate change, Steyer has long been the focus of buzz about a possible 2018 run for governor or the U.S. Senate. But the impeachment drive has fueled speculation that he could be even eyeing a run for the White House.

Asked about his political intentions in a C-SPAN "Newsmakers" interview to air this week, Steyer gave some of his most expansive comments to date. "I haven't ruled it out, and I'm actually trying to determine what will have the most positive differential impact," Steyer said. "I'm absolutely ambitious ... to try and be part of the group of people who gets America back on a just and prosperous course."

While Steyer acknowledged that "I have to make this decision fairly soon," he added that the determining factor will be "what can I do to stand up against what I consider to be a deep threat to the safety and health of the American people."

Political insiders say that Steyer's most recent effort — which he says represents an investment of more than \$20 million — represents a game-changer in how political players use digital media.

"He's not only communicating to a national audience through a massive nationwide ad buy, but he's also running an intense digital campaign," noted Dave Jacobson, a veteran Democratic consultant in California. "Tom Steyer is broadening his footprint digitally. And if 2016 taught us anything, it's that conventional norms have been flipped — and your traditional cookie-cutter campaigning doesn't apply. Digital is king."

"I think it begs the question of whether or not he's running for president in 2020," said Jacobson, who's also a regular CNN analyst. "He's set his sights on building up a national apparatus; he's capitalizing on the new norm, which is digital persuasion."

Erik Olvera, communications director for NeedtoImpeach.com, notes that the effort has "increased dramatically within a very short period of time — and we've grown the campaign into something that's huge."

"A digital army"

As a result, Steyer — once known largely to Democratic political insiders and deep-pocketed donors — has become something of a celebrity to average voters and grass-roots activists.

"He's literally walking down the street, and people are stopping him, thanking him, congratulating him" — and asking him to pose for selfies, Olvera said.

Steyer's goal has been to create "a digital army, this movement all through digital platforms," Olvera said. "He's reached out to millions of people through Facebook and Twitter — and he has made them feel part of something."

One example: Steyer's drive last Tuesday launched what's known in the digital world as a ["thunderclap"](#) — a platform that allowed him to tap millions of activists in his base and see if they wanted to participate en masse in a specific action. In this case, 37,000 [NeedtoImpeach.com](#) followers signed on, gave their credentials and then — "all at the exact same time, posted or tweeted" their impeachment message on Facebook and Twitter," said Olvera. The move appears to have reached more than 18 million online, Olvera said.

Steyer also [launched a 2½-minute video](#) on Facebook last week, which argued that Trump has already committed multiple impeachable offenses, along with [a new TV ad on Christmas Day](#) that first ran on Facebook.

Steyer, pressed on how he might use the power of his impeachment movement and his email list, told C-SPAN, "it's true that people signing up gives us communication with people. But it's not so much we're trying to use them. ... The question is: How can we use the collective voice of Americans to change the debate ... and to let that voice be heard — so that the American people's will can be followed."

"That's what that list is really for: These people's voice, together, can be an incredibly strong force for change," he argued.

But some skeptical Democrats suggest he may be overplaying the value of his movement and his email list — both to the party and to his own political aspirations.

Still relatively unknown

"I don't know what it's worth to him," said veteran Democratic strategist Garry South, a former senior adviser to former California Gov. Gray Davis, and an adviser to presidential candidates Al Gore and Joe Lieberman. "People who put their name on a petition to impeach the president are not necessarily givers to a future campaign. It won't mean all of a sudden 4 million people will send him money," he said.

And South said he would prefer to see Steyer use his money elsewhere to aid the Democratic agenda. "I'd rather he take his big money and buy up big media outlets like Sinclair Broadcasting," the conservative media giant that is snapping up dozens of TV stations nationwide, South said.

"As much as I hate Trump, I think [the impeachment drive] is off-message for Democrats," he said. "Remember, a Democratic president — Bill Clinton — was impeached by Republicans, and it boomeranged on them."

Pollster Mark DiCamillo of the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California Berkeley said his recent polling in December underscored the hurdles for Steyer, a figure outside traditional political circles.

In the IGS California poll in December, just 14 percent of likely voters expressed a favorable view of Steyer, versus 9 percent who had an unfavorable view — and 77 percent had no

opinion, DiCamillo noted. "It's kind of an eye-opener, literally, the difficulty these people have becoming known in the state like California, where voters are only casually paying attention."

Still, Steyer has caught the attention of Trump, who name-checked him on Twitter as being "wacky" and "totally unhinged."

And that's playing well with Democratic Party activists like Larry Stone, a longtime Democratic fundraiser and a former mayor of Sunnyvale.

"Tom will be a player in the 2018 midterms. I mean, there's no question about it," said Stone, who is now Santa Clara County assessor. "Democrats are pretty optimistic right now, with significant justification, and I love Tom Steyer."

"I don't believe that it's in the Democratic Party's interest to pursue, to seriously pursue impeachment of Donald Trump," he said. "But I think it's great to talk about it every day."

Darren Samuelsohn contributed to this report.

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Subject: Morning Energy: Zinke defiant amid helicopter controversy — Perry grants FERC more time in grid resiliency push — Enforcement slips dramatically at EPA in first months of Trump term
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 5:43:26 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 12/11/2017 05:41 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén

LASHING OUT: Taking a cue from his boss, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke continues to bash Patagonia and "the DC media" amid the latest wave of headlines. Reports that Zinke spent more than \$14,000 for government helicopters so he could attend events in D.C., including to go horseback riding with Vice President Mike Pence, were "total fabrications and a wild departure from reality," the Interior secretary wrote in a [statement](#) on Twitter Saturday, without providing any new facts to contradict POLITICO's initial [report](#), which was based on Interior Department [travel logs](#). "All of these instances were thoroughly vetted and scrutinized before being approved by the department's career ethics officers and solicitors," he said in a posted Saturday. "We will continue to use government resources efficiently." More from Pro's Ben Lefebvre [here](#).

That came after Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#), top Democrat on the Energy and Natural Resources called for the agency's inspector general to add the trips to its ongoing probe of Zinke's travel habits: "If the Secretary misused public funds, he should write the treasury a check for the full amount and apologize," she said in a statement.

Questions, meanwhile, have arisen after Zinke and the Trump administration repeatedly attacked Patagonia, which filed a lawsuit challenging the decision to downsize Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. Zinke, in a Friday [appearance](#) on "Fox News," bashed the company by name as "made in China" and said Patagonia "should focus on how to bring manufacturing back into this country rather than lying to the public about losing federal land." (The House Natural Resources Committee made their [own jab](#)).

That prompted Walter Shaub, former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, to urge the company to explore its legal options. "I don't know if there's any legal recourse, but I hope Patagonia has a law firm research the issue," he [tweeted](#). "The federal govt officially and publicly calling a company a liar for political reasons is a bizarre and dangerous departure from civic norms. It's also decidedly anti-free market." And he [added](#) later Saturday: "Zinke is the poster child for this lawless administration's misuse of governmental authority & resources. His thuggish interference with a business is outside the scope of his duties, raising a question as to whether a sovereign immunity defense might fail if @patagonia sues."

Speaking of monuments, the uranium company Energy Fuels Resources lobbied the Trump administration to trim Bears Ears, the Washington Post [reports](#). Zinke and Utah Republicans repeatedly insisted that mining and drilling considerations played no role in the decision.

One more thing: The FEC fined Zinke's congressional campaign committee \$3,929 for failing to properly disclose contributions it received just before the 2016 election, Ben also [reports](#), citing commission [documents](#).

WELCOME TO MONDAY! Hope everyone in the Washington area enjoyed the first flakes

of winter on Saturday! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Safer Chemicals Healthy Families' Liz Hitchcock was first to guess that 31 states (plus D.C.) have at least one national monument. For today: Just three presidents never used their authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a national monument since the program begun. Who are they? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

SEE YOU IN JANUARY: FERC now has until Jan. 10 to take final action on DOE's grid resiliency proposal that would prop up coal and nuclear plants after Energy Secretary Rick Perry granted the commission an extra 30 days late Friday, Pro's Eric Wolff [reports](#). In [a letter](#), Perry said that he preferred a faster outcome but would allow the extra time [requested](#) by new FERC chairman Kevin McIntyre hours after being sworn in.

DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes: "Secretary Perry understands and respects the reasons for the Chairman's request and looks forward to swift action from the Commission to promptly address grid security."

Eric reads the tea leaves and [reports](#) the extension could indicate there's no consensus among the five commissioners on what to do. The commission is unlikely to either fully reject or adopt outright the proposal from Perry that calls for power plants that keep 90 days of inventory on site to receive full cost recovery, but could try to split the difference. Observers think FERC could call for a technical conference, or opt for a plan reportedly being considered by Commissioners Cheryl LaFleur and Rob Powelson to close the current DOE docket and open a new one that seeks input from grid managers.

Though his company told Eric they'd "defer" to Perry's judgement, coal magnate Robert Murray [told](#) The Washington Examiner he was deeply disappointed by the delay in considering Perry's plan. "We must have it. The 30-day delay is disappointing. I am concerned. It needs immediate action," he said. Remember Murray, a big Trump backer, [had early access](#) to Perry and other administration officials to push his ideas to save the struggling coal sector.

And long-time former FERC staffer (and now consultant) Alison Silverstein summed it up to [The Washington Post](#): "The secretary's proposal seems to me to be unsupported by facts of any kind."

TROUBLING SIGNS ON ENFORCEMENT: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's agency has been far more lenient on enforcement actions during its first nine months than either the Obama or George W. Bush administrations, according to [analysis](#) conducted by the New York Times. The 1,900 civil cases started during the first nine months of Trump era are one-third fewer than under Lisa Jackson and one-quarter fewer than George W. Bush's first months, according to the Times. Pruitt's agency has sought \$50.4 million in civil penalties to date, just 39 percent of what the Obama administration sought and about 70 percent of what the Bush administration sought. And the agency hasn't forced companies to retrofit their facilities to prevent pollution as much: the \$1.2 billion in injunctive relief sought under Pruitt is just 12 percent of what was sought under Obama and 48 percent under Bush.

In addition, enforcement staff must now seek permission from Washington before ordering certain air and water pollution tests, according to [documents](#) obtained by The Times. "Certain people who are polluting are doing it with impunity right now and I think it is horrible," Nicole Cantello, an EPA lawyer in Chicago, said.

EPA responds: The agency told the Times it focuses "more on bringing people back into compliance than bean counting." In a statement Sunday, EPA said "Pruitt has not directed EPA staff to decrease their enforcement efforts," and questioned the Times methodology. "EPA and states work together to find violators and bring them back into compliance, and to punish intentional polluters. As part of this effort, we are collaborating more with states and we are focusing more on outcomes. Unless the activity is criminal, we focus more on bringing people back into compliance," the agency said.

QUITE THE PREDICTION! Speaking at his rally in Florida Friday, Trump promised the U.S. would be "totally self-sufficient" on the energy front by the end of the year and suggested using profits from energy exports to "start paying off our \$20 trillion in debt." The International Energy Agency [has said](#) that "by the mid-2020s, the United States [could] become the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporter and a few years later a net exporter of oil" though still a major importer of some types.

CALIFORNIA'S 'NEW NORMAL': Devastating wildfires still ablaze in Southern California have been exacerbated by impacts from climate change, California Gov. Jerry Brown said at a press conference, according to the [Los Angeles Times](#). "This could be something that happens every year or every few years," Brown said. "We're about to have a firefighting Christmas." During a Sunday interview on "60 Minutes," Brown bemoaned that Trump doesn't have a "fear of the wrath of God" and offered him some advice with regards to the Paris agreement: "Take a deeper look now is not the time to undo what every country in the world is committed to," POLITICO's Brent D. Griffiths [reports](#).

SEE YOUTH IN COURT! The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear arguments today over whether a lower court should be allowed to hear a novel lawsuit brought by children and young adults using a public trust doctrine argument to try to force the federal government to take drastic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This litigation is simply over whether the lower court can even hear this case, not the ultimate outcome of any such litigation. A federal judge in Oregon previously ruled the case could at least go to the trial phase, although many legal observers believed the suit was still a long shot. But the Trump administration asked the 9th Circuit to step in early and block the proceedings on the grounds that the judicial branch is not supposed to answer such sweeping questions about environmental policy, a job it says should be left to Congress and the executive branch. Watch a video livestream of the hearing [here](#) starting at 1 p.m. EST (10 a.m. PST).

The case could get even more attention because of one of the three judges assigned to the panel: Alex Kozinski, a Reagan appointee. The Washington Post on Friday [reported](#) that six former clerks or staffers said Kozinski "subjected them to a range of inappropriate sexual conduct or comments," including allegedly viewing pornography in his chambers. Kozinski later [told the Los Angeles Times](#), "If this is all they are able to dredge up after 35 years, I am not too worried." Also on the panel are Chief Judge Sidney Thomas and Judge Marsha Berzon, both Clinton appointees.

21 (SUPERFUND) SHOTS: EPA on Friday released [a list](#) of 21 Superfund sites, ranging from Rhode Island to California to Oklahoma, that it's targeted for "immediate and intense action," Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). Those top-tier polluted properties include: the San Jacinto Superfund site in the Houston area, which was damaged by flooding during Hurricane Harvey; the West Lake Landfill in Missouri that contains radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project and is next to another site with a long-burning underground fire and the

East Chicago, Ind. site Pruitt visited earlier this year. "The Administrator will receive regular updates on each of these sites," the agency said.

BARRASSO LANDS A CHALLENGER: Democratic businessman Gary Trauner, who narrowly lost a bid for Wyoming's lone House seat in 2006, announced he'd challenge incumbent Sen. [John Barrasso](#) on Friday, Wyoming Public Radio [reports](#). "The system is rigged, D.C. is broken, and that's why people aren't getting ahead anymore," he said in his [introductory video](#). He'll, of course, face long odds against the popular incumbent in the deep red state.

FLOOR WATCH: A trio of energy-related bills are due to hit the House floor Tuesday under suspension. One of them [H.R. 2872 \(115\)](#) would ask FERC to create procedures for expediting hydropower permitting at existing non-federal dams without hydroelectric facilities. Another [H.R. 2880 \(115\)](#) would aim to speed the approval FERC of closed loop pumped storage projects. And there's a bill [H.R. 1733 \(115\)](#) requiring the government to issue a report on the environmental and energy-related benefits of re-refining used lubricating oil.

MOVING OUT (WEST)? Two Colorado Democrats — [Ed Perlmutter](#) and [Jared Polis](#) — are backing calls from their fellow Republicans to move the headquarters of BLM out West, according to [a report](#) in Western Wire, a project of the Western Energy Alliance. "I know the perfect home for the agency: Colorado," Polis, who's running for governor, said. "We would welcome the BLM with open arms. With the agency closer to the vast public lands we all cherish and share, they would have better insight into what the lands mean to the western way of life. It makes perfect sense to have the agency nearby."

HEADED TO PUERTO RICO: The electric industry sent seven different teams to Puerto Rico over the weekend where each of them will head to a separate part of the devastated island to support power restoration efforts. Members of the American Public Power Association, the Edison Electric Institute and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association will help the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers get the lights back on. Months after a hurricane slammed into the island, the government [says](#) less than 60 percent of electric capacity has been restored.

That comes as the New York Times [reports](#) the death toll on the island may actually be well over 1,000 rather than official count of 64.

TAKE A GLANCE! The Center for American Progress is out with a [new analysis](#) this morning warning of significant damage to wildlife like polar bears, migratory birds and caribou if ANWR is opened up as part of the Republican tax package.

What about Paris? A collection of environmental groups, including BankTrack and Rainforest Action Network, find in a new report that some \$600 million has been processed by commercial banks since the Paris accord was signed that has gone to the top 120 companies planning to build new coal plants. Chinese and Japanese banks have been most involved in the deals. Link [here](#).

SPOTTED: Senior EPA and Interior officials speaking at the Congressional Western Caucus' Winter Roundtable. EPA officials attending included senior policy advisor Mandy Gunasekara and senior advisor Albert Kelly, while the Interior officials were special assistant to the secretary Marshall Critchfield and adviser Amanda Kaster-Averill. Picture [here](#).

MOVER, SHAKER: Christopher Smith, former assistant secretary for fossil energy at DOE during the Obama administration, has joined Cheniere as senior vice president for policy, government and public affairs.

QUICK HITS

- Interior secretary pushing controversial road project. [CNN](#).
- Environmental groups file lawsuit to try to block pipeline. [AP](#).
- Koch-Backed Business Group Splinters in Climate-Change Dispute. [Bloomberg](#).
- Lawmakers, groups urge fast deployment of Asian carp defense. [AP](#).
- Power Failure: How utilities across the U.S. changed the rules to make big bets with your money. [Post and Courier](#).
- Kuwait oil minister: exit strategy of global cuts to be discussed before June. [Reuters](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

8:00 a.m. — Axios hosts a discussion on energy policies and priorities under Trump, Newseum, Knight Studio, 3rd Floor, 555 Pennsylvania Ave NW

9:30 a.m. — "[Bridging the Entrepreneurial Gap: Addressing Barriers to Small Business Formation and Growth](#)," House Small Business Agriculture, Energy, and Trade Subcommittee, Deerfield, Ill.

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. — "[Update on the Corporate Average Fuel Economy Program and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Motor Vehicles](#)," House Energy and Commerce Environment and Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Subcommittees, Rayburn 2123

10:00 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee [hearing](#) on energy infrastructure projects, Dirksen 366

2:00 p.m. — "[Examining Consequences of America's Growing Dependence on Foreign Minerals](#)," House Natural Resources Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, Longworth 1324

2:30 p.m. — "[National Ocean Policy: Stakeholder Perspectives](#)," Senate Commerce Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard Subcommittee, Russell 253

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. — "[Oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#)," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406

10:00 a.m. — House Natural Resources Committee holds [markup](#) of 16 bills, Longworth 1324

10:15 a.m. — "[The Impacts and Future of North American Energy Trade](#)," House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2322

2:00 p.m. — "[Advancing Solar Energy Technology: Research Trumps Deployment](#)," House Science, Space and Technology Energy Subcommittee, Rayburn 2318

THURSDAY

9:30 a.m. — House Natural Resources subcommittee [hearing](#) on the Grand Staircase Escalante Enhancement Act, Longworth 1334

FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. — "[The Trump Administration, Latin America and Energy: Mexico, Natural Gas and Liquid Natural Gas Exports](#)," Inter-American Dialogue, National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, 13th Floor

10:00 a.m. — Bipartisan Policy Center hosts [discussion](#) with former FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee, 1225 Eye Street NW, Suite 1000

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2017/12/zinke-defiant-amid-helicopter-controversy-046343>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Zinke booked government helicopters to attend D.C. events [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/07/2017 06:31 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent more than \$14,000 on government helicopters this summer to take himself and staff to and from official events near Washington, D.C., in order to accommodate his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for his replacement in Congress and a horseback ride with Vice President Mike Pence, according to previously undisclosed official travel documents.

The travel logs, released to POLITICO via a Freedom of Information Act request, show Zinke using taxpayer-funded vehicles from the U.S. Park Police to help accommodate his political events schedule.

In a case detailed in the new documents, Zinke ordered a U.S. Park Police helicopter to take him and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on June 21.

Zinke's staff justified the \$8,000 flight by saying official business would prevent him leaving Washington before 2 p.m., too late to make the two-hour drive to the exercise, according to the documents.

The event that prevented Zinke from leaving before 2 p.m. was the swearing-in ceremony for Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.), according to Zinke's [official Interior calendar](#). Gianforte, who

won a special election for Zinke's old seat in May after assaulting a reporter, contributed along with his wife \$15,800 to Zinke's two congressional campaigns.

"Secretary Zinke's last engagement in Washington D.C. is at 2 p.m.," an Interior staffer wrote as justification for using the helicopter. "Driving to [the West Virginia event] would not enable him to be on time and fully participate as scheduled."

Interior defended the trips.

"The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Thursday. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

Zinke also ordered a Park Police helicopter to fly him and another Interior official to and from Yorktown, Va., on July 7 in order to be back in Washington in time for a 4 p.m. horseback ride with Pence. The trip cost about \$6,250, according to the documents.

The horseback ride through Rock Creek Park also included Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, according to a [post](#) on Pence's Facebook page.

While in Yorktown, Zinke completed a walking tour of the local Revolutionary War battlefield and attended a boating industry roundtable discussion, according to the documents. The day before the trip, an Interior trip planner added to the schedule a 30-minute flyover of an area where Dominion Energy [is building](#) high-voltage electric transmission lines to run across the James River.

Interior officials originally estimated that driving to Yorktown would take about three hours, although one noted that "there is a major construction project on I-64, which will slow things down."

In an email to Interior travel scheduler Tim Nigborowicz, an Interior employee justified Zinke's using the helicopter instead of less expensive method by saying "the Secretary will be able to familiarize himself with the in-flight capabilities of an aircraft he is in charge of" and that the Park Police staff on board would "provide an added measure of security to the Secretary during his travel."

Interior officials certified ahead of the flight that Zinke's use of the helicopter would not compromise law enforcement obligations.

The Park Police helicopter, [Eagle One](#), is deployed for medevac and emergency response situations around Washington, a part of its mission Zinke praised later that month.

"U.S. Park Service helicopter pilot and crew provided a life-saving medevac flight during the attack on members of Congress during baseball practice," Zinke said in the July 25 [video](#) celebrating American Heroes Week.

The former Montana congressman and Navy SEAL is [already being investigated](#) by the Interior Department's Inspector General and the independent Office of Special Counsel for his [mixing of official travel and political events](#). Interior earlier this year released records documenting Zinke's use of charter and military aircraft, including a \$12,000 flight from Las Vegas to Montana that allowed him to give a speech for a hockey team owned by a major campaign donor.

To view online [click here](#).

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Zinke attacks reporting on helicopter rides [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/09/2017 10:18 PM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Saturday attacked POLITICO's coverage of his use of \$14,000 in taxpayer-funded helicopter rides in the D.C. area — but offered no facts that contradicted the [story](#) that ran Thursday.

"Here are the [#facts](#) the DC media refuses to print," Zinke said in a [statement](#) on his official Twitter account. "Recent articles about official Interior Department helicopter usage are total fabrications and a wild departure from reality."

His statement went on to note — as POLITICO's story had said — that the trips in question had included a visit to an emergency management exercise in West Virginia and a flyover of a power line project in Virginia.

Zinke also defended a separate helicopter flight last summer over two national monuments in Nevada. POLITICO had [reported](#) in September on that flight, which Interior Department documents said cost at least \$40,000.

POLITICO's reporting was based on records that the Interior Department had released under the Freedom of Information Act. Zinke's travels got more attention Friday in a [follow-up story](#) by The Associated Press that mentioned all the helicopter trips.

In his statement Saturday, Zinke wrote: "On these instances, I conducted an aerial survey of a million acres of federal monument lands, an aerial survey of power line project which was under scrutiny for possible compensatory migration corruption from the previous administration, and a national comment authority directed emergency response exercise." He added that all his trips "were thoroughly vetted and scrutinized."

Zinke's tweet came as prominent Democrats criticized his use of U.S. Park Police helicopters to fly between Washington, D.C., and the events in West Virginia and Virginia. The use of the speedy aircraft also allowed him to fit in two events in D.C. — a horseback ride through Rock Creek Park with Vice President Mike Pence, and the swearing-in ceremony of Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.), Zinke's successor in the congressional seal and a donor to Zinke's past campaigns.

Senate Environment and Resources Committee ranking member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) said [in a tweet](#) Friday that she had asked Interior's inspector general to add the helicopter flights to [its investigation](#) of the secretary. The IG's office is already looking into Zinke's past mixing of official business with political events, including his use of a charter flight after speaking to the Las Vegas professional hockey team owned by a major donor.

In one of the flights POLITICO wrote about this week, Interior's staff at first approved Zinke's use of a Park Police helicopter to travel to a July 7 meeting of boating industry representatives

in Yorktown, Virginia. Days later, it added an overview of a proposed high-voltage transmission line site to the same trip.

In justifying the use the helicopter, Interior's staff said on June 29 that it was needed to ensure he could make it back to D.C. in time for his "official event" with Pence. The Park Service approved the request on July 1, and Interior staff added the transmission line site review to the itinerary on July 6, according to official emails. The helicopter trip cost about \$6,250.

"Following his visit to Yorktown, Secretary Zinke must return to Washington D.C. to attend an official event with Vice President Mike Pence at Rock Creek Park," an Interior staffer said in a July 4 email.

Earlier, Zinke and his chief of staff, Scott Hommel, used a helicopter to fly from the capital to attend an emergency management exercise in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on June 21. Interior staff justified the flight by saying Zinke needed to attend Gianforte's swearing-in in Washington earlier in the day. That flight cost \$8,000.

"Scott confirmed that we would like to use the helicopter to go round trip," Zinke's special assistant Caroline Boulton wrote in a June 16 email to department schedulers.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift had defended the flights in an email POLITICO published Thursday: "The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training," she wrote. "Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress."

According to official Interior documents, Zinke also used a Bureau of Land Management helicopter on July 30 to survey the Gold Butte and Basin and Range national monuments outside Las Vegas as part of the national monument review President Donald Trump had tasked him with. Zinke proposed reducing the size of both monuments.

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FEC fines Zinke campaign committee [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 12/08/2017 05:50 PM EDT

The Federal Election Commission fined Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee \$3,929 for failing to properly disclose contributions it received just before the 2016 election, according to [commission documents](#) released this week.

The 18 donations to Zinke for Congress came less than two weeks before Election Day and totaled \$37,900, according to the FEC case file. FEC regulations calls for all donations of more than \$1,000 made in the final weeks of an election cycle to be reported within 48 hours, a deadline the FEC said Zinke's campaign committee missed. The Montana Republican was reelected to the state's lone House seat last year before stepping down to join President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

Zinke for Congress Treasurer Lorna Kuney in a written response to the FEC in September

attributed the mistake to a data entry error that she said was "truly just an unfortunate mistake" and asked the fine be dropped. The FEC declined her request, and Kuney paid the fine in October, according to the case file, which was made public Thursday. The document was first [reported](#) by the Center for Public Integrity's Dave Levinthal on Twitter.

The FEC last month in a separate case [asked](#) a leadership PAC established by Zinke, SEAL PAC, to explain discrepancies in its disclosure filings, including reporting \$200,000 more cash on hand on Jan. 1, 2017, than it reported having a day earlier.

What's Next: SEAL PAC has until Dec. 26 to respond to the FEC's questions about discrepancies in its reports.

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FERC's McIntyre presses for time [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/08/2017 04:26 PM EDT

New FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre is hoping to give himself and his new colleagues a month to weigh their options before making a decision that could rewire large parts of the nation's electric grid.

McIntyre [asked the Department of Energy](#) late Thursday for another 30 days for him and the four other FERC commissioners to address Energy Secretary Rick Perry's request to alter power market rules to support struggling coal and nuclear power plants in the name of bolstering grid resiliency.

FERC is unlikely to either fully reject or adopt outright the proposal from Perry that calls for power plants that keep 90 days of inventory on site to receive full cost recovery — a requirement that only coal and nuclear power plants could meet. Instead, FERC observers said the agency could buy time by calling for a technical conference, or considering a plan such as the one The Energy Daily reported was being crafted by Commissioners Cheryl LaFleur and Rob Powelson to seek input through a "Notice of Inquiry" to regional power grid operators to report back on the resilience of their power networks and what could be improved.

Former Chairman Neil Chatterjee has hoped to help generators by putting an interim measure in place to support power plants facing closure while the commission sought a permanent solution, but that plan appeared to lack the support among the other commissioners.

DOE had asked FERC to take action by Monday, but McIntyre's request for more time could indicate there's no consensus among the five commissioners on what to do.

"We said (earlier this week) that if there weren't three votes for something, the issue could sit until there were," said Christi Tezak, managing director at analytics firm ClearView Energy Partners. "It appears to us that McIntyre would like to explore something between Chatterjee's preference for an interim solution and the LaFleur-Powelson NOI angle. This is something we thought was a reasonable outcome."

DOE has not yet replied to McIntyre's letter.

Perry's proposal has drawn broad criticism as a carve out that would cost power customers billions of dollars and was designed to support the [coal industry](#) in the PJM Interconnection, and the mining company run by coal magnate [Bob Murray](#) in particular.

Powelson, a Republican appointed by President Trump, has been vocally opposed to the proposed DOE rule. The plan that he and LaFleur have crafted would reportedly close the current DOE docket and open a new one that seeks input from grid managers — an idea that could create a long delay before any action was taken.

McIntyre's request for more time could create problems for Murray Energy, which has emphasized the need for a speedy outcome: One of Murray's top customers, FirstEnergy Solutions, is considering bankruptcy, which could be the first step to closing some big coal plants. But Murray Energy said it was not concerned with a possible 30-day delay.

"We believe that the sooner this rule is implemented, the better it will be for the American people," a spokesman said. "With that said, this extension request is a matter between FERC and Secretary Perry, and we defer to their judgment."

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Bob Murray had early access to Rick Perry to share coal plan [Back](#)

By Eric Wolff | 12/07/2017 05:30 PM EDT

Coal magnate Bob Murray pitched Energy Secretary Rick Perry on his plan to throw an economic lifeline to coal companies less than a month before Perry set in motion plans to aid the industry, according to newly disclosed photographs that show the two meeting.

The liberal magazine [In These Times](#) obtained pictures of Murray and Perry from a March 29 meeting at Energy Department headquarters, less than a month after Perry was [sworn in](#).

Several other officials were in attendance, including Andrew Wheeler, who at the time was a lobbyist for Murray and has since been nominated as the Environmental Protection Agency's No. 2 official.

The meeting puts Murray and Perry together at a crucial moment in the timeline of the Trump administration's push to save the struggling coal industry, an effort that would benefit Murray Energy in particular while raising electricity prices for potentially millions of people. A month before the meeting, one of Murray's biggest customers, FirstEnergy, told investors it was seriously considering seeking bankruptcy protection for its merchant division, FirstEnergy Solutions, a move that would likely void its supply contracts with Murray's coal mines.

Three weeks after Murray's visit, Perry would order a grid study that later became part of the justification for a proposed rule to reward coal and nuclear power plants for providing "grid resiliency." FERC, which has jurisdiction over the proposal, must make a decision on it by Monday.

At the time of the meeting, Wheeler was [already the leading candidate](#) to become the deputy administrator for EPA. Wheeler, who represented Murray as a lobbyist for Faegre Baker Daniels, would not be officially nominated for months. Wheeler, who has acknowledged participating in meetings on Murray's coal plan at DOE and on Capitol Hill, cleared committee last week and is awaiting Senate confirmation.

Murray is an outspoken supporter of President Donald Trump and held a fundraiser for him during the 2016 campaign.

DOE did not dispute the validity of the photos.

"Industry stakeholders visit the Department of Energy on a daily basis," DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes said, when asked about the meeting. "The DOE proposal to FERC was about the future and resiliency of the nation's power supply, an issue much bigger than one industry or company."

The photographs show Perry sitting at the head of a table in the Department of Energy, with Bob Murray, CEO of Murray Energy, to his left, and Wheeler down the table from Murray.

"Enclosed is an Action Plan for achieving reliable and low cost electricity ... and to assist in the survival of our Country's coal industry, which ... power grid reliability and low cost electricity," Murray writes in a cover letter to Perry, parts of which are visible in one photo from the meeting.

Though the document has never been publicly released, DOE critics say Murray's plan appears to have inspired DOE's grid study and the proposed rule Perry sent FERC in September. Copies are visible at the seats of most of the participants, including Perry and Murray. Wheeler, who told members of the Senate Environment Committee he had only seen the memo briefly, is not holding a copy in the photos obtained by In These Times. Murray [told Greenwire](#) in November he "didn't have any involvement" in writing the rule.

Murray has acknowledged sharing the plan with Trump.

"I gave Mr. Trump what I called an action plan very early," Murray said in a recent [PBS Frontline](#) documentary on EPA. "It's about three-and-a-half pages and — of what he needed to

do in his administration. He's wiped out page one."

A spokesman for Bob Murray said that during the March 29 meeting, Murray did not discuss the DOE's proposed rule, and he added that he was not involved in drafting Perry's proposal.

The meeting appears to have been successful for all. One of the photos shows Perry and Murray in a big bear hug.

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Brown: Trump doesn't fear 'wrath of God' [Back](#)

By Brent D. Griffiths | 12/10/2017 07:00 PM EDT

California Gov. Jerry Brown slammed President Donald Trump as a man who is not afraid of "the wrath of God."

"I don't think — President Trump has a fear of the Lord, the fear of the wrath of God, which leads one to more humility," Brown said in an interview airing Sunday on "60 Minutes" on CBS. "And this is such a reckless disregard for the truth and for the existential consequences that can be unleashed."

In the past, Trump has called climate change a hoax pushed by the Chinese.

Brown, a four-term governor of the state, said California is "not waiting for the deniers" as it confronts its most destructive wildfire season on record and prepares for what may become the new normal.

An outspoken advocate on the subject, Brown was among a handful of blue-state politicians who promised to stay the course of combating climate change even after Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord, saying it was not good for the country. Brown called that notion "preposterous."

"I'd say to Mr. Trump: Take a deeper look now is not the time to undo what every country in the world is committed to," Brown said.

On this and other issues, Brown argued that his state's reputation as being a Democratic bastion that is far out of touch with the rest of America is simply incorrect. Instead, he said, California is America's future; it just arrived sooner than everyone else — with Brown specifically pointing to states like Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania where Trump won just enough votes to win the White House.

"There's more confidence here; there's less fear. People are looking to the future," Brown said. They're not scared, they're not going inward, they're not scapegoating, they're not blaming — Mexican immigrants. They're not blaming the stranger Just the opposite. it's is a place that's alive."

As for his future, Brown told "60 Minutes" that he is looking forward to retiring in 2019 and

spending time on his ranch north of Sacramento.

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EPA announces 21 Superfund sites to prioritize [Back](#)

By Emily Holden | 12/08/2017 04:13 PM EDT

EPA has named 21 Superfund sites on its [priority list](#) for cleanup.

The list follows [recommendations](#) from a task force convened this summer. Administrator Scott Pruitt had previously said he would make a top-10 list of sites that needed the most attention.

"The list is designed to spur action at sites where opportunities exist to act quickly and comprehensively," EPA said in a press release. "The Administrator will receive regular updates on each of these sites."

There are more than 1,300 of the toxic waste sites around the country, and environmental advocates have [warned](#) that prioritizing just a few may take resources away from others and allow Pruitt to provide resources in states run by his political allies.

The new list includes sites in red states but also in New England and on the West Coast. It includes the San Jacinto Superfund site in the Houston area, which was damaged by flooding during Hurricane Harvey. EPA has already ordered two companies to pay \$115 million for cleanup efforts there.

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From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Morning Energy: Zinke's drilling plan lands with a thud — East Coast grid weathering "snow bomb" well — Big day for Supreme Court on energy issues
Date: Friday, January 05, 2018 5:44:38 AM

By Anthony Adragna | 01/05/2018 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Kelsey Tamborrino, Eric Wolff, Nick Juliano and Alex Guillén

A COASTAL NON-STARTER: The Trump administration's [proposal](#) Thursday to open virtually every nook and cranny from Alaska and Florida to offshore oil and gas companies didn't get much love from lawmakers whose formerly off-limits coastlines would face potential new drilling. Florida Tea Party Republicans along with California progressive Democrats bashed the drilling plan unveiled by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and vowed to fight it. ICYMI, here's Pro's Ben Lefebvre with [deets](#) of the plan and some reactions:

It's hard to find support for Zinke's plan from a single congressional Republican whose district would face potential new drilling. Rep. [Matt Gaetz](#), a Tea Party-aligned Floridian who's called for eliminating the EPA, bashed the proposal as bad for national security: "Not only does offshore drilling threaten the Gulf Coast with another potential catastrophe like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010, it also jeopardizes our national security," he said in a statement. South Carolina Rep. [Mark Sanford](#), a Freedom Caucus member, said it ignored local wishes: "Whether you are for or against offshore drilling, I think we could all agree that locals should have some degree of voice on what happens in their backyard," he said in a statement. "Unfortunately, this proposal explicitly ignores local opposition."

Three Democratic West Coast governors — California's Jerry Brown, Oregon's Kate Brown and Washington's Jay Inslee — said they "won't forget history or ignore science" and "do whatever it takes to stop this reckless, short-sighted action." Florida Republican Gov. Rick Scott was first out of the gate to bash the proposal, prompting White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders to [state](#) its "goal certainly isn't to cross Gov. Scott." North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper vowed to "pursue every option to prevent oil drilling near North Carolina's beaches, coastal communities, and fishing waters."

Of course, the plan had its defenders: Louisiana Sen. [Bill Cassidy](#), whose home state is a hub for existing offshore drilling, said on the Senate floor he was sensitive to concerns about impacts to the tourism industry and military, but vowed energy development could co-exist with them. "I share my colleagues' interest in protecting our communities, businesses, and the environment. The reality is that these goals are not mutually exclusive, especially on the Gulf Coast," he said. And Senate Energy Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) praised it as a "positive step" that "launches a new discussion with local stakeholders to determine where responsible energy development should take place."

How to fight back? Various people who criticized the proposal said they'd push back against it without any details of what that might look like. But one concrete idea came from Sam Jammal, seeking the nomination to take on California Rep. [Ed Royce](#): "The CA congressional delegation must oppose any funding deals unless Trump stops attempts to drill on our coast," he [tweeted](#). California Attorney General Xavier Becerra also noted an important point: "It should be underscored that regulatory agencies in our State will have a say in whether any offshore drilling ultimately does occur," he said in a statement.

I thought we were friends! Interior's offshore drilling announcement even came in for criticism from some Republicans who had previously counted on support from the leadership PAC Zinke had as a Montana congressman. Florida Rep. [Brian J. Mast](#), whose campaign received \$6,000 from Zinke's SEAL PAC in the 2016 election cycle, [called](#) Thursday's announcement "extremely alarming and unacceptable." And New Jersey Rep. [Frank LoBiondo](#), recipient of a \$1,000 SEAL PAC check in the last campaign, took [to Twitter to declare](#) the idea the "ABSOLUTELY WRONG APPROACH for #SouthJersey & Atlantic Ocean." Maine Rep. [Bruce Poliquin](#), who received \$5,000 from SEAL PAC, said in a statement that he is "opposed to oil drilling off the coast of" the state, citing jobs in the marine and tourism industries and the need to protect "Maine's unique natural resources." Florida Rep. [Ron DeSantis](#), recipient of a \$10,000 SEAL PAC contribution, agrees with Gov. Rick Scott's statement, a spokeswoman for the congressman told ME. Two other Republicans from coastal districts received SEAL PAC donations last cycle — \$5,000 apiece to Reps. [Scott W. Taylor](#) and [Lee Zeldin](#) — but neither weighed in Thursday. The \$32,000 SEAL PAC gave to those six coastal Republicans represented more than one-fourth of its total donations to other candidates or party committees (but only about 1 percent of its overall spending, the bulk of which [went to](#) direct mail and political consultants).

Important bottom line from Ben: "Even if Interior's plan becomes a reality, it's not likely oil and gas companies would immediately ready their drill ships. Offshore drilling remains expensive and time consuming, a combination that may not make immediate sense in an era of cheap oil and ready-to-access onshore shale plays."

SO FAR, SO GRID: Grid operators are encouraged after a day of brutal winter weather that the East Coast's power grid seems to be holding its own and say it shows the effectiveness of a series of measures put in place after 2014's infamous "polar vortex," Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). "After the polar vortex, the ISOs did a good job in hardening their systems coming out of that experience and how close they came to having real problems," said Steven Winberg, the Energy Department's assistant secretary for fossil energy. "They went back and did a post-mortem on it to harden their systems ... and I think that some of that work is exhibiting itself this week." Grid operators in New York, New England, and PJM said power demand on Thursday closely tracked their forecasts and peak usage fell well below their available power electricity generating capacity.

What's DOE doing? The Energy Department continues to monitor outages and fuel issues across the territories of five regional grids and help coordinate state-level responses from Maine to Virginia, Bruce Walker, DOE's top official on electricity issues, tells Darius. But Walker declined to weigh in on whether the storms add fuel to Secretary Rick Perry's push to bolster coal-fired and nuclear power plants. "This is a good demonstration as to what the value of a diverse portfolio is of fuel mixes, and what that means from a reliability and resiliency standpoint," Walker said. Remember, ME faithful, the wintry blast tests the grid less than a week before regulators at FERC decide how to address Perry's proposal.

One hiccup: Pilgrim nuclear plant — one type of facility that would benefit from Perry's proposal — went offline on Thursday afternoon after one of the two lines that connect the facility to the grid went down, Reuters [reports](#), though the outage did not lead to immediate reports of reliability issues in the area. ISO-New England also seemed unfazed.

New York: We're good: New York's independent grid operator says it's ready and prepared for the cold weather ahead as residents crank up the heat, although it noted many downstate

electric generators are switching to oil, POLITICO New York's Marie J. French [reports](#). The New York Independent System Operator said Thursday it is confident generators have sufficient fuel supplies to meet projected peak demand on Friday and Saturday — likely to be the two coldest days of the year.

TGIF MY FRIENDS! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, but please as of now start also sending your tips, quips and other gossip to Kelsey (ktamborrino@politico.com), who will be shadowing me for a few days ahead of the official ME handoff. And please be sure to follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@KelseyTam](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#). Now, trivia-wise, Cook-Joyce Inc.'s Joe Pere was the first to identify former Massachusetts Gov. Endicott Peabody as the most recent to seek a Senate seat (unsuccessfully, it turns out) in another state (New Hampshire). Today's end-of-the-week puzzler: Which son of a former president was either present or nearby when three presidential assassinations occurred?

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CLICK IT: Nonprofit group Resources for the Future launched an interactive tool for viewing the projected effects of DOE's proposed grid resiliency rule, including effects under various natural gas price futures. See it [here](#).

JUSTICES TO DISCUSS ENERGY CASES TODAY: The Supreme Court meets privately today for their regular conference with several high-profile energy-related cases on its list. It's not clear whether any of these cases will pique the justices' interest, so we'll keep an eye on Monday morning's release of orders from today's conference. Here's a brief rundown of the energy cases by topic.

—**EPA coal jobs study:** Murray Energy is appealing the 4th Circuit ruling from last year that said EPA was not legally obligated under the Clean Air Act to produce a study specifically considering coal industry job losses caused by its regulations. The Trump administration opposes requiring EPA to produce the study Murray wants and has urged the Supreme Court not to take the case. But EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt [said in October](#) that his agency will give greater consideration to coal jobs via some type of study in the future. The case is 17-478, *Murray v. Pruitt*.

—**Climate change and endangered species:** This case is a big deal for green groups after the 9th Circuit ruled that the Obama administration appropriately justified Endangered Species Act protections for an Alaskan seal based entirely on the future loss of critical sea ice habitat caused by climate change. Critics argue the law was not meant to extend to species that are not currently endangered but likely will be decades down the line. The Trump administration maintains the future threat of climate change is appropriate justification. The case is 17-118, *Alaska v. Ross*.

—**Single-state endangered species:** This challenge brought by a group of Utah property owners questions whether the Fish and Wildlife Service can prohibit the "take" of Utah prairie dogs that live only within the state and are not used in interstate commerce. It's the latest in a long history of such challenges to federal authority over intrastate animals, but several courts have previously ruled that the ESA applies to species without a commercial market. The case is 17-465, *People for the Ethical Treatment of Property Owners v. FWS*.

—**NAAQS implementation:** The 9th Circuit ruled in 2016 that EPA wrongly approved part

of Arizona's particulate matter clean-up plan that counted already completed actions — such as paving dirt roads — as required "contingency measures" meant to help Maricopa County meet the standard. Arizona argues that similar approvals have happened dozens of times in recent decades, and that the 5th Circuit ruled previously in favor of that scheme. The Trump administration urged the Supreme Court not to get involved, saying the circuit split "does not create any unmanageable practical difficulties." The case is 16-1369, *Arizona v. Bahr*.

—**Administrative law judges:** The administrative law world has been buzzing about this case for a while, and while it directly challenges only the constitutionality of ALJs at the SEC, the outcome could affect ALJs used at various energy agencies as well. The case involves whether ALJs should have to go through the same rigorous presidential appointment and confirmation process as top executive and judicial branch workers. A split on the issue between the D.C. and 10th circuits could boost the chances before the high court. EPA has three ALJs, FERC has 13, Interior has nine and the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission uses 15. The lead case is 17,130, *Lucia v. SEC*.

Reminder: The court hears two hours of arguments on Monday in water use battles between Texas and Colorado over the Rio Grande, and Georgia and Florida over the Apalachicola River.

FISCHER NOT DIGGING CRUZ RFS PROPOSAL: Sen. [Deb Fischer](#), one of the few hearty legislators undaunted by Thursday's deep freeze and still at the Capitol, told reporters she was "not super excited about" Sen. [Ted Cruz](#)'s proposal to change the Renewable Fuel Standard. Cruz staffers passed a proposal to the White House last month that would hold down biofuel credit prices to 10 cents, and shift sales of the credits to EPA. Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) said before the break that corn-state senators would meet to discuss the proposal, but Fischer said nothing had materialized yet.

WHAT'S ON KEVIN CRAMER'S MIND: With the [retirement](#) of Mississippi Rep. [Gregg Harper](#), Energy and Commerce Oversight Subcommittee Chairman, yet another spot opens up for ambitious members. Senior lawmakers with expansive jurisdiction already leaving the committee include Vice Chairman [Joe Barton](#) and Communications and Technology Chairman [Marsha Blackburn](#). Remember Cramer [told ME](#) before the holidays his ability to advance up the panel was a crucial consideration as he mulls whether to challenge incumbent Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#).

NPS TO TAP FORMER OFFICIAL FOR ACTING DIRECTOR: Former National Park Service official P. Daniel Smith is expected to take over the agency as acting director, potentially as soon as next week, sources tell National Parks Traveler. Notably, DOI's Inspector General found Smith "improperly used his position" when he was special assistant to former NPS Director Fran Mainella "to apply pressure and circumvent NPS procedures" in permitting the owner of the Washington Redskins to cut down trees on a scenic easement along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. Read [more](#).

WHY THEY'RE MOVING ON: POLITICO's Edward-Isaac Dove and Ben Baker have [a super interesting look](#) at why more than two dozen members of Congress have already announced their exits. Here's how House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) summed it up: "It is a lot easier to enjoy your job when you're a committee chairman and a member of the majority," he said. The whole article (which features an amazing pic of Rep. [Sander Levin](#) munching on a donut) is worth your time. More [here](#).

MORE NOMS: Trump on Thursday nominated Tim Thomas of Sen. [Mitch McConnell](#)'s Kentucky staff to be federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Thomas currently serves as a field representative for McConnell's Bowling Green office.

NEW JERSEY ABANDONS NUCLEAR BILL (FOR NOW): Powerful New Jersey Democrats are irked that Gov.-elect Phil Murphy apparently played a role in pulling a nuclear subsidy bill from potential consideration, POLITICO New Jersey's Danielle Muoio [reports](#). "Holding this legislation hostage at this juncture is not only shortsighted, but it is a mistake. We are talking 2,000 direct jobs and thousands of indirect jobs. We are talking about the generation of 40 percent of the state's electricity," Senate President Steve Sweeney said. A spokesman for Murphy said he wanted to ensure the legislation had provisions for clean energy investments.

NO 'TIT-FOR-TAT' ON DISASTER AID: Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) laid out his list of demands for a final deal Thursday in the ongoing budget debate, including the need for disaster aid, Pro's Budget & Appropriations Brief [reports](#). The Democratic leader took a swipe at House Republicans who are now pushing for disaster aid after voting against similar assistance post-Hurricane Sandy. "I know that lots of Republican congressmen from the House want aid, even though many of them opposed aid when New York and New Jersey had the crisis," Schumer said on the floor. "We are not going to play tit-for-tat. But we want a fair bill."

MOVER, SHAKER: Kelly Robbins will take over as Arkansas Petroleum Council executive director. Robbins previously served as executive vice president of the Arkansas chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America.

— **Michael Levi is joining TIAA**, leaving his role as senior adviser to ClearView Energy Partners LLC. Levi previously was a special assistant to Obama for energy and economic policy on the National Economic Council.

QUICK HITS

- Interior revokes climate change and mitigation policies. [High Country News](#).
- Shareholders in Brazil demand Petrobras match \$3 billion U.S. settlement. [Reuters](#).
- Zinke's World View. [Outdoor Life](#).
- Norway oil: Environmentalists lose Arctic exploration case. [BBC](#).

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Stories from POLITICO Pro

White House: Goal of oil drilling expansion 'isn't to cross Gov. Scott' [Back](#)

By Cristiano Lima | 01/04/2018 03:37 PM EDT

The Trump administration's newly unveiled plan to allow oil and gas drilling in federal waters including Florida wasn't intended to alienate Republican Gov. Rick Scott, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday, though his opposition didn't appear set to derail it.

The Interior Department announced a new five-year plan Thursday, as [first reported by POLITICO](#), that could open up waters in the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as well as the eastern Gulf of Mexico, to drilling. The move, which would roll back policies implemented by past administrations to protect the regions, quickly encountered pushback from Florida officials.

Scott, a supporter of President Donald Trump, criticized the measure and requested a meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to request that Florida be removed from consideration for the drilling expansion.

"My top priority is to ensure that Florida's natural resources are protected," Scott said in a statement.

Sanders said at Thursday's press briefing that the relationship between the White House and the Florida governor remains strong.

"Our goal certainly isn't to cross Gov. Scott," she said. "Just because we may differ on issues from time to time doesn't mean that we can't have an incredibly good and strong relationship."

Scott is widely expected to run for Senate in Florida and challenge Sen. Bill Nelson, a Democrat who has already vowed to fight drilling in the state's coastal waters. Trump has repeatedly urged Scott to run since he became president.

During a conference call Thursday, Zinke touted the decision to expand drilling as a victory for the U.S. energy sector.

"This is the beginning of an opening up," Zinke said. "We will listen to all the communities of stakeholders. The states will have a voice."

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Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano | 10/24/2017 05:04 AM EDT

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has directed millions of dollars in political contributions since 2014 to a network of Washington operatives that prominent conservatives have accused of profiting by misleading donors.

Beneficiaries of Zinke's largesse include groups linked to Washington-area political operative Scott B. Mackenzie, organizer of a Virgin Islands GOP political action committee that hosted the secretary at a [St. Croix fundraiser](#) in March. Before that, when Zinke was a Republican congressman from Montana, his political operation steered significant portions of its spending to a handful of Washington, D.C.-area consulting firms that also have had ties to Mackenzie and his associates.

Zinke has continued this relationship even as other Republicans have recoiled from dealing with Mackenzie, whose critics say he operates "[scam PACs](#)" that raise small-dollar donations from conservative voters but then spend the bulk of the money on consultants and overhead. The critics include former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, who filed a [suit](#) accusing Mackenzie and other defendants of running a "national fundraising scam" after they gave his 2013 campaign for governor less than a half percent of the money they had raised in his name.

Similarly, Zinke's own leadership PAC also relied heavily on small donors while spending heavily on consultants, in a departure from how most members of Congress operate those kinds of groups.

The details about Zinke's fundraising and spending practices have not been previously reported, nor has his years-long relationship with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands Republican Party, a group that some Republicans in the Caribbean island chain have accused of misrepresenting itself to donors. POLITICO's analysis of Federal Election Commission filings, plus interviews with campaign finance lawyers and people familiar with the Virgin Islands group's fundraising, offer a deeper picture of the political activism of the retired Navy SEAL who serves in President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

None of the records indicate that Zinke violated the law or received any direct compensation from his association with Mackenzie, the Virgin Islands PAC or its consultants. But one campaign finance expert said the information shows that Zinke was not behaving like a typical politician.

"To say the least, this is highly unusual," said Karl Sandstrom, a former Democratic FEC commissioner who now works at the law firm Perkins Coie.

An Interior Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the assistance Zinke has offered to the Virgin Islands group or his use of political consultants. Mackenzie declined to be interviewed, and officials from the Virgin Islands organization — also known as VIGOP — did not respond to requests for comment.

Zinke is separately facing investigations by Interior's internal watchdog and the independent Office of Special Counsel over his habit of [mixing politics and official business](#).

Legal limits on Zinke's partisan activities have tightened now that he's Interior secretary, and he has cut ties with his PACs since being sworn in. Still, he has kept up appearances at fundraisers and other political events — averaging more than one per month — a pace that is unusual for a Cabinet member. Those include his appearance at the March fundraiser in the Virgin Islands, which occurred during a taxpayer-funded trip less than a month after he became secretary.

Complaints among Republicans about "scam PACS" have been on the rise for years, focusing on groups that target conservative voters as a source for donations. Those complaints have

repeatedly focused on Mackenzie, the founder of a number of GOP-leaning PACs that have used slogans such as "Stop Hillary Clinton" to raise money from conservatives — then appeared to do little actual politicking.

Such groups make use of what past FEC leaders have described as a loophole in campaign finance law. The commission declined to take action against one of Mackenzie's Virginia-based PACs, the Conservative StrikeForce, after former Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) [complained](#) in 2012 that it had been "fraudulent" in raising money from his supporters while falsely implying it would aid his reelection campaign. While the PAC's actions were "[troubling](#)," the commission's attorneys wrote, they didn't violate any laws or rules that the FEC has the power to enforce.

Cuccinelli made similar criticisms in his 2014 lawsuit, which accused Mackenzie, Conservative StrikeForce and other defendants of using the bulk of the money they had raised in his name to "enrich themselves." The case was eventually [settled](#), with Conservative StrikeForce agreeing to pay Cuccinelli's campaign \$85,000 and turn over its donor lists.

Conservative commentator Erick Erickson [warned](#) campaigns as far back as 2010 that he might not endorse any Republican candidate who used one Mackenzie-linked consulting firm, then known as Base Connect and now called ForthRight Strategy. Montana Democrats accused Zinke of facilitating a "[political Ponzi scheme](#)" with his connections to Mackenzie-linked firms during his 2014 congressional campaign, though the charges apparently gained little traction.

More recently, Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas) — who was angered last year when the Virgin Islands GOP used his photo without his permission on fundraising solicitations — said in a statement to POLITICO that the Virgin Islands group and ForthRight "are preying on seniors in a disgusting attempt to enrich themselves."

Adav Noti, a former FEC associate general counsel who now works for the nonprofit watchdog Campaign Legal Center, said in an interview that he had dealt with the Virgin Islands group and Mackenzie as an FEC official, and that in his opinion, "They are a scam PAC."

"Scott Mackenzie has a number of scam PACs," Noti said. "He was probably the first, or one of the first, with the idea of bilking people out of money through PACs. People are being defrauded, and that needs to stop."

The FEC is scheduled to decide Thursday whether to fine Mackenzie for [less-serious discrepancies](#) in campaign filings by two other PACs of which he's the treasurer, Freedom's Defense Fund and the Conservative Majority Fund.

None of the criticism has seemed to deter Zinke, who used part of a government-paid trip to the Virgin Islands in March to attend a VIGOP fundraiser, where — as POLITICO [reported](#) in early October — an invitation listed tickets costing as much as \$5,000 a couple, and Zinke's schedule indicated that high-dollar donors had a chance to take photos with him. It was at least the third VIGOP event Zinke had attended there since 2015.

VIGOP, which the FEC classifies as a "non-party" PAC, directed more than a third of its spending during the 2016 election cycle to a handful of Washington-area consulting firms, including ForthRight and at least three other companies that share its address on 15th Street

Northwest, according to campaign filings and other documents. Those firms also received more than \$3.2 million during the same period from Zinke's congressional campaign, leadership PAC and a super PAC he founded before running for Congress, federal campaign records show.

Between the 2014 and 2016 elections, Base Connect had renamed itself ForthRight Strategy after a former executive [pleaded guilty](#) to child pornography charges. A number of the firm's clients left, but Zinke's campaign and his newly formed leadership PAC not only stayed with the firm but also spent substantially more on it in the next election.

Zinke also publicly endorsed ForthRight's performance in his 2014 congressional race, offering a testimonial that was displayed on the firm's website until this month, when the watchdog group Campaign for Accountability filed an ethics complaint.

"Your results and personal commitment to Team Zinke were bar none!" the company quoted Zinke as saying on its website. "I greatly value the professional as well as the personal relationship we have developed over many years."

This praise came even though Zinke's campaign appears to have received less than it spent from its relationship with the firm.

ForthRight [says](#) it raised \$1.9 million for Zinke's 2014 race by sending out 1.6 million pieces of mail, attracting nearly 44,000 new donors whose average contribution was \$44. About \$550,000 of that haul went to Zinke's campaign for "voter mail, radio ads, TV ads, get-out-the-vote activities and lawn signs," according to the firm's website. But that was less than the \$608,000 that Zinke's campaign spent on postage and direct mail from Century Data Mailing Service, a firm located at the same 15th Street address as ForthRight, according to FEC records.

In the run-up to last year's election, Zinke's campaign and his leadership PAC, known as SEAL PAC, spent about \$3 million combined on ForthRight Strategy, Direct Support Services and Legacy Lists — all of which operate out of the same office and list ForthRight CEO Kimberly Bellissimo among their executives. (Bellissimo did not respond to POLITICO's requests for comment.)

Special Operations for America, a super PAC that Zinke founded in 2012 before running for office, also paid firms at that address a total of about \$1.8 million during the 2014 and 2016 campaign cycles.

Mackenzie is not listed on ForthRight's website or business filings but was long associated with the firm under its previous names, Base Connect and BMW Direct, both of which [listed him](#) as a staff member [as far back as 2007](#).

Besides sharing an affinity for the same consultants as Mackenzie's VIGOP, Zinke's SEAL PAC has also followed a similar fundraising model: It raised two-thirds of its money from small donors in 2016, then steered only 4 percent of its spending to other campaigns, with almost all the rest going to operating expenses and overhead.

Typically, members of Congress use their leadership PACs to cover expenses that cannot be funded from their campaign accounts and to contribute to fellow politicians, using donations of up to \$5,000 from lobbyists and other PACs. But SEAL PAC relied on donations of less

than \$200 for about two-thirds of the \$3 million it collected during the 2016 cycle, according to a review of the donations. The group then spent more than \$2.6 million on overhead and gave just \$118,000 to other congressional campaign committees.

Relying heavily on small-dollar donations is one hallmark of the "scam PAC" play, said Brett Kappel, a partner at the law firm Akerman LLP who specializes in campaign finance, lobbying and government ethics.

"Unfortunately, they generally target the most vulnerable segment of the population with the least disposable income — retired people living on fixed incomes," said Kappel, who declined to discuss specific cases. "Frequently, these are elderly conservative voters who are upset with the direction of the country."

Lorraine Hutchinson, of Butler, Pennsylvania, told POLITICO that these elderly voters included her mother, who she noticed was repeatedly contributing to SEAL PAC and other organizations, though she didn't have the disposable income to spare. Hutchinson said Zinke's PAC was one of the slowest to cease soliciting money when she asked them to stop. At one point, Hutchinson resorted to posting a plea on SEAL PAC's Facebook page.

"It took a great deal of time and effort but I managed to get most of them to stop. The Seal PAC was one of the most persistent," Hutchinson told POLITICO in a Facebook message last week. "I am convinced that these groups knowingly take advantage of the vulnerable elderly and this is a widespread problem without any easy solutions."

Erickson told POLITICO in 2015 that groups that raise political donations without doing much actual politicking are "completely a drain" on the conservative movement, saying they threatened to sap the donors' enthusiasm while achieving no concrete results.

But Bellissimo, the ForthRight CEO, [defended](#) direct-mail fundraising in a 2014 post for The Daily Caller.

Donors who send checks in response to mail solicitations "are some of the most patriotic, conservative, generous, and sophisticated people on the planet. ... They are also 'movement' people," Bellissimo wrote. "They are willing to sacrifice their dollars on a principled conservative even when they know that candidate is an underdog."

Mackenzie has similarly [defended](#) his high operating costs, telling the FEC in response to West's complaint that "fundraising is expensive and getting more so every year."

Bellissimo's firm has played a crucial role in partnering with Mackenzie's Virgin Islands PAC: Several months before Mackenzie filed the VIGOP's initial paperwork with the FEC in December 2013, Virgin Islands Republican Party Chairman John Canegata signed a contract with Base Connect Vice President Timothy Webster making the firm the exclusive fundraiser for the PAC, according to a copy of the confidential document reviewed by POLITICO.

Some Republicans in the Virgin Islands objected to the use of their name in fundraising mailers urging voters to "Stop Hillary Clinton," and Canegata's involvement with Mackenzie has exacerbated divisions within the local party's governing body.

The anti-Clinton pieces, "at best, solicit donations under false pretenses," four members of the Virgin Islands Republican Territorial Committee wrote in a February 2015 internal report, a

copy of which was obtained by POLITICO. The members reported that "not a single penny of the funds received through these solicitations have been used for any purpose identifiable to any effort to oppose the election of Hillary Clinton as president."

Bellissimo introduced Zinke to VIGOP in 2015, his first year in Congress, a source familiar with VIGOP's operations told POLITICO. Zinke, his wife, Lola, and Bellissimo flew to St. Thomas to attend a VIGOP event in November of that year. Photos of the VIGOP members posted on Facebook show Zinke and Bellissimo mingling at the Caribbean venue alongside Canegata and Saul Anuzis, a Michigan-based GOP operative who helped raise money for VIGOP. Neither Anuzis nor Canegata responded to requests for comment.

In February 2016, Bellissimo posted a photo of Zinke speaking at the Hay-Adams hotel across from the White House and bragged that she had "the privilege of playing staffer for Congressman Zinke this afternoon." When a friend commented on the Facebook post, saying the then-House freshman should run for president, she replied: "Maybe someday.... Will you help me campaign for him?"

Zinke returned for another VIGOP event at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Thomas less than two weeks after the 2016 election, according to social media posts. Then came his appearance at the VIGOP fundraiser this past March — this time as a member of Trump's Cabinet.

To view online [click here](#).

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East Coast power system weathering 'snow bomb' [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 01/04/2018 06:55 PM EDT

The power system along the East Coast has so far survived a brutal winter storm pummeling the region with snow and frigid temperatures, a testament to the effectiveness of measures put in place after the harsh winter four years ago, according to grid operators.

That 2014 storm — dubbed the "polar vortex" — has been regularly cited by Energy Secretary Rick Perry as a reason to implement "grid resiliency pricing" that would support power plants that maintain 90 days of fuel on site, a requirement that could only be met by coal-fired and nuclear generators. Perry has given FERC until Jan. 10 to take action on his proposed rule.

Grid operators in New York, New England, and PJM, which spans from the Midwest to New Jersey and Virginia, largely saw power demand on Thursday closely track their forecasts, or fall below them, and peak power usage well below their available power electricity generating capacity.

"After the polar vortex, the ISOs did a good job in hardening their systems coming out of that experience and how close they came to having real problems," said Steven Winberg, the Energy Department's assistant secretary for fossil energy. "They went back and did a post-mortem on it to harden their systems ... and I think that some of that work is exhibiting itself this week."

During major weather events that threaten to disrupt the energy supply, DOE helps facilitate

communication between the private sector, states and other federal agencies, like the Department of Homeland Security.

DOE has had several calls this winter with committees representing power companies, and oil and natural gas firms, to assess how the federal government can help out, said Bruce Walker, DOE's top official on electricity issues.

"But, at this point we're not continuing to have calls because they've reported [that] they don't have any unmet needs or any major concerns," he said.

The agency is monitoring outages and fuel issues across the territories of five regional grids and coordinating on a state-level between Maine and Virginia, Walker said.

In New England, which bore the brunt of the "snow bomb" storm, even the shutdown of a nuclear power plant after a power line outage Thursday afternoon didn't trigger a major supply problem.

"There are no immediate reliability issues to the local area" after the shutdown of the 688-megawatt capacity Pilgrim plant, a spokeswoman at ISO-New England [told Reuters](#).

Still, there are some point of stress on the system.

Traditionally, transmission-constrained areas like New York City and most of New England are seeing their wholesale power prices spike as natural gas prices rise or the fuel is diverted to heating needs.

In New England, where natural gas pipeline infrastructure has long limited the flow of gas into the region, Winberg said that he's closely tracking the deliveries of fuel oil there.

In a phone interview, he cited reports of oil shortages in the Northeast "but nothing yet that constitutes an inability to get the oil." Those deliveries, which come in by ship and go to plants that typically only run during the highest-demand periods, get help in coordinating their movements by the U.S. Coast Guard if any hiccups occur in that process.

Meanwhile, one challenge PJM will be working on over the next several days is shipping cheaper power from its western regions across its vast territory to coastal areas where prices are at times more than three times as high.

"The focus will be on increased transfers of power from the western portion of PJM to the east. Higher power flows in times of high demand require careful monitoring," PJM spokesman Ray Dotter said in an email.

The cold snap has also triggered a seasonal reshuffling of the electric system's fuel mix.

In PJM, coal has seen its share of the region's generation climb by a third from a month ago, hitting about 40 percent this past week, according to the grid operator's public data. And in New England, oil has become the dominant power source when demand is high, blowing past coal, nuclear and gas — a surge that's typical in the winter months. But the region still tends to have more than 1,300 MW in surplus power available during peak times.

The timing of the storm — less than a week before regulators at FERC decide how to address Perry's demand to bolster coal-fired and nuclear power plants — has advocates for various

fuel sources and renewable energy proponents touting their value to the overall electric system. But asked if the latest chill help make the case for the principles in Perry's proposal, Walker demurred.

"This is a good demonstration as to what the value of a diverse portfolio is of fuel mixes, and what that means from a reliability and resiliency standpoint," he said.

While power demand has closely tracked with daily predictions, PJM did need to boost its estimates for Thursday's peak demand from forecasts made just the day before. On Wednesday, regional grid operators didn't expect to crack 134,000 megawatts anytime in the next week — below the 2014 peak of nearly 141,900 MW. But by Thursday morning, Thursday's peak was slated to hit more than 135,000 MW.

"The load forecast is updated constantly through the day," Dotter said in the email, noting that it's typical to see fluctuations in power predictions during challenging weather events.

"Changes can be driven by changes in the weather forecast (higher or lower temperatures, for example) and changes in human behavior (people's use of electricity). One particular factor in the increase was wind chills... the increase in the wind chill factor, which increases the need for heating."

One thing DOE plans to do once the brutally cold weather passes is to look at what facilities on the grid were critical to the system.

"Once we get through this cold snap, something that we will be taking a look at is the potential retirements of generation ... and see if it creates potential induced risk the next time one of these cold snaps comes through," Winberg said.

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POLITICO New York: NYISO: No reliability issues because of cold, downstate generators switching to oil [Back](#)

By Marie J. French | 01/04/2018 05:46 PM EDT

ALBANY — Executives at the state's independent grid operator say New York's electric system is fully prepared for the two coldest days of a prolonged cold snap, although many electric generators are switching to oil as residents across the Northeast crank up the heat and drive natural gas prices higher.

Most generators that can operate on dual fuel, which is roughly 50 percent of the state's total generating capacity, have switched to oil, according to the New York Independent System Operator. Those that have switched are primarily in the downstate region.

The grid operator is confident that generators have sufficient fuel supplies to meet projected peak demand on Friday and Saturday, which are likely to be the two coldest days of the year. NYISO implemented additional procedures to do surveys of the amount of fuels generators have available and to work with generators to ensure they have sufficient on-site storage or reliable plans to replenish their supply.

"This is something that we've enhanced significantly since the polar vortex" in 2013-2014, said Rich Dewey, executive vice president at NYISO.

Electric generators are being driven to switch to oil, which has higher emissions, because of increased natural gas prices. The generators are not at risk of running into emissions limits under their state permits as a result of that switch, according to NYISO.

With the cold weather, natural gas utilities in New York are seeing high demand from residential customers and many have told interruptible customers — usually large commercial users the utility has contracted with that have the capability to switch fuels — that they must switch to oil or propane.

Con Edison issued a switch notice for its about 600 interruptible customers in the New York City area starting Dec. 27 and expects that to continue through this weekend, spokesman Mike Clendenin said.

National Grid has asked interruptible customers to switch as of Friday, spokesman Nate Stone said.

That will "take some of the strain off our system," he said. "It helps in times like this when there's a lot of demand."

National Fuel, which serves about 500,000 customers in western New York, briefly asked customers in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties to turn down their thermostats by 5 degrees and large commercial customers to voluntarily reduce their natural gas usage. The utility experienced a deliverability issue after a problem at a transmission facility in Pennsylvania.

Spokeswoman Karen Merkel said no customers have lost service amid the cold weather but noted that field crews would face challenging conditions that they're being prepared for.

"Nearly 70 percent of the New York market demand will be met by gas that is currently in our area in storage," she said in a statement.

Advocates for more natural gas infrastructure have pointed to high natural gas prices during the cold snap as one reason the state should approve additional transmission projects. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration has been [criticized for blocking](#) some natural gas pipelines by the state's power generators and business groups, while environmentalists have criticized the governor for allowing other small projects to move forward.

"Supply concerns and the lack of needed infrastructure approvals are straining the system," said the New Yorkers for Affordable Energy coalition, which includes business and labor groups as well as pipeline and other gas infrastructure companies. "As the state continues its push toward a greener future, we remind our leaders that investing in natural gas development is among the best ways to ensure our environment is protected and our state's residents and businesses have the energy they need at a price they can afford."

This article first appeared on [POLITICO New York](#) on Jan. 4, 2018.

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Rep. Harper won't seek reelection [Back](#)

By Heather Caygle | 01/04/2018 02:22 PM EDT

Rep. Gregg Harper, chairman of the House Administration Committee, won't run for reelection, he announced Thursday.

Harper, 61, has been in Congress since 2009 representing Jackson, Mississippi, and the surrounding area. In a statement, the five-term congressman said he has been thinking about when he would step down for nearly two years and made the final decision over the holiday break.

"After spending time over Christmas and New Year's with my family, we made the very difficult decision to say that 10 years will be long enough," Harper said.

"I never intended for this to be a career, and it will soon be time for another conservative citizen legislator to represent us. I will work hard over the final 12 months of my term this year, but I will not seek re-election for a sixth term."

Harper had been floated as a potential replacement for Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), amid [speculation](#) that he will soon retire. Harper didn't say what he plans to do after he leaves Capitol Hill beyond spending more time in Mississippi with his family and working "on policy issues that matter."

Harper overwhelmingly won his reelection in 2016 and the district is heavily favored toward Republicans.

Harper has led the House Administration Committee since January 2017, a panel that has been thrust into the spotlight as Congress grapples with sexual harassment scandals that have rocked the institution in recent months.

Harper's committee is the primary House panel tasked with overseeing sexual harassment and reporting policies in the lower chamber, which most lawmakers agree are in dire need of updating since they were first enacted in the mid-1990s.

The committee is expected to focus heavily in the coming months on advancing legislation that would make the reporting process more friendly to victims and less secretive.

Pennsylvania Rep. Bob Brady, the top Democrat on the House Administration Committee, had nothing but praise for Harper in a statement, calling him a "true gentleman."

"He has sought bipartisanship where it has been possible, he has managed the House in a truly professional manner and he has always focused on the people of Mississippi's Third District," Brady said. "His polite, but results focused, approach has made this institution a better place."

Harper's impending exit makes him the seventh Republican committee chairman to announce plans to retire or leave Congress early. House Transportation Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) announced his retirement earlier this week.

House Financial Services Chairman Jeb Hensarling and House Science Chairman Lamar Smith, both from Texas, and House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte from Virginia will also step down after this term.

Rep. Diane Black announced in late December she was stepping down as House Budget chair to focus on her run for governor of Tennessee. And former Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), then chairman of the House Oversight Committee, abruptly retired last summer.

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Two Dozen Members of Congress Can't Wait to Leave D.C. Here's Why. [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove and Ben Baker | 01/04/2018 05:04 AM EDT

A few months ago, Charlie Dent was taking a break from his usual work for Pennsylvania's 15th District—home of Hershey, and of a Crayola factory, and many of the Keystone State constituents who voted for Donald Trump—and talking to a politician from India, a country whose rough-and-tumble politics includes literal fistfights in a legislature that makes the U.S. Congress look downright tame.

"Your system of government is brilliant," the Indian lawmaker told Dent, laughing at the 24-7 circus American politics have become. "It would work far better [in India] than it works in your own country."

Dent, a moderate Republican who's become the go-to source for reporters looking for searing criticism of the GOP in the Trump era, is one of a couple dozen members of Congress who have announced their retirements last year (not counting the ones who have gone down in sexual harassment scandals), with more likely coming amid an expected Democratic wave in the 2018 midterm elections. People retire every cycle. But this year's group is a bumper crop of members wondering whether Congress is broken forever—even as they insist they love their own jobs.

The ferocity of the Gingrich Revolution, President Bill Clinton's impeachment—even the Tea Party shutdown wars of 2011 and 2013 seem like the good old days to them now. Capitol Hill is an angry, scattered mess; each party is storing up grudges to get revenge for the next time it gets the chance; and the victories are always fleeting. When pressed, the departees will confess to deep concerns that flow from Trump, the reaction to Trump, and the politics that created and elected Trump.

"I've never experienced as much anger and hatred as I did in the first few months of [2017]," says Representative John Duncan, an affable ultraconservative Republican from Knoxville, Tennessee, who is retiring after 30 years in the House.

"All the incentives are wrong now," says Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, a onetime conservative star who is retiring after nearly two decades in the House and the Senate.

Several big committee chairs are leaving, too, because they're term-limited by the GOP's own

rules, and don't want to think about slinking back into the rank and file. They gush about the chance to spend more time with their grandchildren. House members in swing districts, meanwhile, talk with dread about having to defend their seats next year.

Republican Representative Frank LoBiondo of New Jersey, who came in with the Gingrich Revolution in 1994 and has been a target for House Democrats in pretty much every cycle since, decided it was worth hanging on to the chairmanship of the Aviation subcommittee, and to get on the Intelligence Committee. No longer. He's not going to miss all the time in the car driving to barbecue after barbecue all through South Jersey on weekends, but his eyes sparkle when he talks about the 20 international trips he has made in the past eight years.

"If there had been different committees, I probably would have jumped off the Capitol dome a long time ago," LoBiondo says. "I don't know how some members do it."

Years of deepening tribalism and dysfunction have taken their toll, which they gripe about while mostly blaming their political opponents, or the other chamber, or the media, though they talk up their friendships across the aisle and the long-forgotten bipartisan bills they've passed.

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The future of the job, they fear, is competing for who can flip out the most on YouTube videos, punctuated by fundraising calls and reading polls that show just how much Americans hate them. And most think the Trumpian era of base-playing politics is still closer to its beginning than its end.

And no one seems to have any real sense of what to do about it. Some blame reporters for sensationalizing the problems. They plead for more individual responsibility among their colleagues to lower the temperature. Fix the primary system. Don't be so divided. The Senate should get rid of the filibuster—or the Senate should build the filibuster back up again. House leadership should land harder on members who vote against their bills—or be tougher on lawmakers who were never going to vote for the bills in the first place.

"The way you solve this problem," Dent says, "is you marginalize the members who can't get to yes on these basic matters of governance." Put more bills on the floor, Dent says, and see what passes. "What I've often found here," he said, "is they talk about the need for a majority of the majority to be there on a bill until they don't."

Bob Corker, the retiring senator from Tennessee, stresses that he is leaving for his own reasons, and despite his public fights with Trump, says he was very comfortable with his chances for reelection. He cherishes his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and insists the Senate was broken years before Trump. "There's going to be additional glass-breaking," he says. And until we have "a president committed to wanting strong bipartisan legislation," very little will change.

Dent uses an optimistic line I heard from many of his fellow retiring members: "The pendulum will swing back."

How? Why? No one could answer that question, beyond faith. "It ebbs and flows," says Texas

Democratic Representative Gene Green. Most acknowledged it looked more like a downward spiral.

I asked Flake if he thinks all the people who are rushing to run for Congress are nuts. He laughed.

"One of the problems with the internet is it creates a sense on the part of some people that it's all just a referendum." —**Bob Goodlatte** (R-Va.)

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"High praise these days: I go home to the grocery store, and they say, 'Thank you for being sane.'" —**Charlie Dent** (R-Pa.)

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Two Dozen Members of Congress Can't Wait to Leave D.C. Here's Why. [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dove and Ben Baker | 01/04/2018 05:04 AM EDT

A few months ago, Charlie Dent was taking a break from his usual work for Pennsylvania's 15th District—home of Hershey, and of a Crayola factory, and many of the Keystone State constituents who voted for Donald Trump—and talking to a politician from India, a country whose rough-and-tumble politics includes literal fistfights in a legislature that makes the U.S. Congress look downright tame.

"Your system of government is brilliant," the Indian lawmaker told Dent, laughing at the 24-7 circus American politics have become. "It would work far better [in India] than it works in your own country."

Dent, a moderate Republican who's become the go-to source for reporters looking for searing criticism of the GOP in the Trump era, is one of a couple dozen members of Congress who have announced their retirements last year (not counting the ones who have gone down in sexual harassment scandals), with more likely coming amid an expected Democratic wave in the 2018 midterm elections. People retire every cycle. But this year's group is a bumper crop of members wondering whether Congress is broken forever—even as they insist they love their own jobs.

The ferocity of the Gingrich Revolution, President Bill Clinton's impeachment—even the Tea Party shutdown wars of 2011 and 2013 seem like the good old days to them now. Capitol Hill is an angry, scattered mess; each party is storing up grudges to get revenge for the next time it gets the chance; and the victories are always fleeting. When pressed, the departees will confess to deep concerns that flow from Trump, the reaction to Trump, and the politics that created and elected Trump.

"I've never experienced as much anger and hatred as I did in the first few months of [2017]," says Representative John Duncan, an affable ultraconservative Republican from Knoxville, Tennessee, who is retiring after 30 years in the House.

"All the incentives are wrong now," says Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, a onetime conservative

star who is retiring after nearly two decades in the House and the Senate.

Several big committee chairs are leaving, too, because they're term-limited by the GOP's own rules, and don't want to think about slinking back into the rank and file. They gush about the chance to spend more time with their grandchildren. House members in swing districts, meanwhile, talk with dread about having to defend their seats next year.

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Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 8:34:54 PM



Your Highlights

Natasha Geiling
[@ngeiling](#)

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has spent ****\$913,000**** on private flights, 24/7 security, and that soundproof booth

Here's All The Expensive Nonsense Trump's EPA Chief Is Wasting Your Taxes On

That swamp is looking mighty cushy.

[huffingtonpost.com](#)

160

1.9K

1.6K

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[@elianayjohnson](#)

Here's the bipartisan nightmare scenario for 2018: GOP picks up a few seats...with candidates like Roy Moore -

Moore's win conjures 2018 nightmare — for both parties

Republicans might pad their majority — but with troublemakers who owe Mitch McConnell nothing.

[politico.com](#)

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220

430

Dan Diamond

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SCOOP w [@rachanadixit](#): Price's travel on charter jets, government planes has topped \$1 million since May.

Price took military jets to Europe, Asia for over \$500K

Accompanied by his wife, the HHS secretary journeyed to Geneva, Berlin, Beijing, Tokyo and ot... [more](#)
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 **Ed O'Keefe**
@edatpost

Tasty scoop of news here... twitter.com/carrasquillo/s...

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 **Dan Pfeiffer**
@danpfeiffer

This Gary Cohn interview is an epic political and messaging disaster.

Trump adviser 'can't guarantee' taxes won't go up for middle class

Gary Cohn said today that he can't guarantee that taxes won't go up for some middle-class fam... [more](#)
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 **Peter Baker**
@peterbakernyt

Trump likes to promise that policy achievements will happen "soon" or "very soon." But 75% of the time they do not.

'Soon,' 'Very Soon,' 'Eventually': A Detailed List of Things Trump Said Would Happen

An account of presidential predictions, from Obamacare to a border wall.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: National Thanksgiving Turkey Pardoning Ceremony
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 4:18:01 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 16, 2017

National Thanksgiving Turkey Pardoning Ceremony

On Tuesday, November 21st, President Donald J. Trump will pardon the National Thanksgiving Turkey in a ceremony in the Rose Garden. This year, the President will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the National Thanksgiving Turkey presentation, as he reflects on our Nation's rich Thanksgiving traditions and wishes American families a safe and healthy holiday.

After the pardoning, the turkeys will join last year's turkeys at Virginia Tech's "Gobblers Rest" exhibit, where students and veterinarians care for the turkeys, and the public can visit and learn about the university's teaching, research, and outreach programs in animal and poultry sciences and veterinary medicine.

Both birds were raised in Western Minnesota under the supervision of National Turkey Federation Chairman Carl Wittenburg and his wife Sharlene, along with five young women from the Douglas County 4-H chapter.

The National Turkey Federation will also bring two turkeys from Jaindl's Turkey Farm of Orefield, Pennsylvania, for the First Family to donate. The First Family will donate the turkeys to Martha's Table in Washington, D.C.

###

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From: Hinson, Alex
Subject: News Alert: Senate advances Bernhardt for Deputy
Date: Thursday, July 20, 2017 5:37:59 PM

[E&E News: Senate advances Bernhardt for deputy](#)

July 20, 2017

The Senate this afternoon advanced the nomination of David Bernhardt for Interior Department deputy secretary, teeing up the final confirmation vote expected Monday.

Senators voted 56-39 to invoke cloture on the nomination. All Republicans present, six Democrats and one independent voted in favor.

Democrats Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Michael Bennet of Colorado voted with Republicans, as did independent Angus King of Maine.

Senators not voting were: Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.). Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), recovering from surgery and recently diagnosed with brain cancer, was absent.

Bernhardt's nomination has attracted strong support because of his extensive public policy experience in the executive and legislative branches, but also robust opposition from Democrats and green groups alarmed by his ties to oil and gas lobbyists.

The Campaign for Accountability today filed a complaint with the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia to investigate whether Bernhardt violated the Lobbying Disclosure Act by continuing to lobby despite formally withdrawing his registration in 2016.

Emails obtained through the California Public Records Act show Bernhardt continued to advise the Westlands Water District, a California agricultural organization, after terminating his lobbying registration (Greenwire, July 18).

Bernhardt was registered as a Westlands lobbyist between June 2011 and Nov. 18, 2016, when he was a member of the Trump administration's Interior Department transition team and potential nominee. The president formally picked him in April.

Bernhardt, who had served as chairman of the natural resources department at the law firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP, previously promised lawmakers that if confirmed, he would "not participate personally or substantially in any particular matter involving" his former clients or "specific parties in which I know the firm is a party or represents a party" for two years, unless he receives authorization to do so.

Administration aides have said they thoroughly vetted Bernhardt on ethics. They and other defenders, including Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), call him an experienced nominee.

In addition to his lobbying career, the Coloradan has worked as a Capitol Hill aide and served as an Interior official during the George W. Bush administration.

Bernhardt has taken heat over allegations of mismanagement at Interior during his tenure

there, including a drug and sex scandal at the former Minerals Management Service and political interference in endangered species decisions.

'Disqualifying'

Energy and Natural Resources Committee ranking member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) has led the opposition to Bernhardt and spoke on the floor before today's vote.

Cantwell said that while it's true Bernhardt has "considerable" experience to do the job, the revolving-door nature of his career continues to concern her and raises a serious appearance of conflict-of-interest issues.

By putting forward Bernhardt as Interior's No. 2, President Trump is not helping to drain the swamp, "he's helping to fill it," Cantwell said.

The League of Conservation Voters also reiterated its opposition to Bernhardt today after sending a letter last month to the full Senate urging it to reject the nomination.

"Bernhardt's long list of conflicts of interest alone should be disqualifying — but given the Trump administration's incredible disregard for integrity, science and facts, it's no surprise that a top nominee would have a record of altering government science for political gain and overseeing an office plagued by scandal," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, LCV's senior vice president for government affairs.

Sittenfeld added: "We strongly urge senators to oppose Bernhardt's nomination and will continue to hold Congress and the administration accountable for putting polluter profits ahead of our clean air, clean water, public lands and families' health."

Zinke 'miserable' by lack of help

Gardner on the floor today praised Bernhardt's experience and commitment to public service, noting that other nominees considered by the Energy and Natural Resources panel have toggled between government and the private sector.

"What we see is another nominee, dedicated public servant, who gained experience in the private sector and is willing to come back to public service to give back to our great country," said Gardner, who noted that Bernhardt worked with his wife, Jaime, at Interior during the Bush administration. "Mr. Bernhardt's integrity and ability are two of his strongest qualities for his nomination."

Several stakeholders have voiced their support for Bernhardt as well, including the Colorado River District, Colorado Water Congress, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Yesterday, House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) talked with reporters about the lack of confirmed appointees in place at Interior — and how it's making Secretary Ryan Zinke's life "miserable."

"There are a whole lot of problems that could be solved if Bernhardt was there now," the chairman said. "The Senate waiting as long as it has is wrong, it's simply wrong."

###

--

Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

From: E&E News
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: November 8 -- Greenwire is ready
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GREENWIRE — Wed., November 8, 2017

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1. **NOMINATIONS:**

Farm-state senators rough up Trump's CEQ pick

President Trump's nominee to lead the White House Council on Environmental Quality faced tough questions at her Senate confirmation hearing today from farm-state Republicans upset about her past criticism of biofuels.

TOP STORIES

2. **INTERIOR:**

Seeking reinforcements, Zinke turns up heat on Senate

3. **NATURAL RESOURCES:**

Panel passes major energy development bill

4. **FORESTS:**

New weapon against wildfire: Cameras in the woods

CONGRESS

5. **NOMINATIONS:**

Committee advances NASA, NOAA, CPSC picks

6. **EPA:**

House Science panel may ask Pruitt to testify

7. **SUPERFUND:**

After FDIC stymies Kelly probe, Cummings seeks Gowdy's help

8. **FLOOD INSURANCE:**

Support mounts for House bill

POLITICS

9. PESTICIDES:

Former agribusiness lobbyist oversees USDA rule rollbacks

10. ADVOCACY:

Hill staffers, energy vets launch D.C. firm

11. BRISTOL BAY:

Ex-University of Alaska president tapped to promote mine

12. ENERGY POLICY:

FERC collects more comments on Perry's grid proposal

13. CAMPAIGN 2018:

Lola Zinke's candidate faces charges over hunting licenses

NATURAL RESOURCES

14. INTERIOR:

Zinke launches panel to promote international hunting

15. COAL:

Wyo. mulls bonding overhaul as Interior freezes reforms

16. WESTERN WATER:

Calif. approves \$400M plan to rescue Salton Sea

17. AGRICULTURE:

Farmers must stop using strong antibiotics on animals — WHO

18. WILDLIFE:

Citizen scientists seek clues to seabird die-offs

LAW

19. COAL ASH:

2 weeks before arguments, EPA seeks to remove key issues

20. NATIONAL PARKS:

Court upholds Grand Teton elk-hunting plan

ENERGY

21. HURRICANE MARIA:

Solar industry, Clinton Foundation work to restore power

22. NUCLEAR:

Exelon plant powers down over leaky fuel rods

FEDERAL AGENCIES

23. NOAA:

4 security guards arrested on extortion charges

TRANSPORTATION

24. AUTOS:

NASA, Uber set sights on flying taxis

25. ELECTRIC VEHICLES:

Lamborghini promises self-healing supercar

AIR AND WATER

26. GREAT LAKES:

Erie algal bloom tied for 3rd worst this century — NOAA

27. OIL AND GAS:

Company tried to hide spill near school, whistleblower says

28. FLINT CRISIS:

Mayor survives recall vote

29. WATER POLLUTION:

Pet flea treatments may be polluting San Francisco Bay

STATES

30. WISCONSIN:

Bill to allow copper, gold mining heads to governor's desk

31. SOUTH CAROLINA:

Governor launches investigation of Conservation Bank

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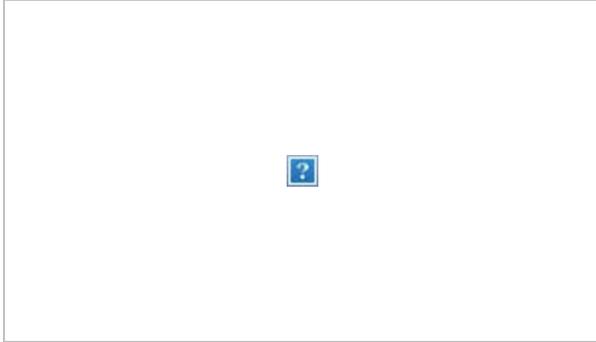
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From: Kurt Repanshek
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: NRA-NPF
Date: Sunday, August 27, 2017 9:16:03 AM
Attachments: [NPT Logo Inform and educate 300.tiff](#)



Heather,

I understand Susan LaPierre was added to the National Park Foundation Board in May by the secretary. Do you have a release on that appointment that you could send me?

Beyond that, could you outline the benefits of having the wife of the NRA president on the board? I can see where that could tap into another large sector of potential fundraisers, but isn't it also a controversial appointment in that parks are not typically associated with hunting, and the recent news about the NPS's authority in managing hunting and fishing in the parks?

Thanks,

Kurt

Kurt Repanshek
Founder and Editor
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Park City, UT 84098

National Parks Traveler is the nation's No. 1 editorially

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E&E NEWS PM — Thu., October 5, 2017

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1. SAGE GROUSE:

BLM reopens plans, cancels 10M-acre mining ban

The Interior Department continued its effort to dismantle Obama-era greater sage grouse conservation plans, announcing today it will reopen the plans to public review with the likely outcome that they will be significantly altered.

TOP STORIES

2. EPA:

Trump picks former Inhofe aide for deputy chief

3. WESTERN WATER:

Audit finds Brown's tunnel project violated state law

4. DOE:

Questions surround Perry's reported charter flight

THIS AFTERNOON'S STORIES

5. EPA:

Utility executive to lead Denver office

6. INTERIOR:

Enviros file suit seeking info for Zinke's wife

7. INTERIOR:

Bishop requests briefing on agency document leaks

8. AIR POLLUTION:

State AGs threaten lawsuit over ozone standard delay

9. EPA:

Dems call for probe of Pruitt's phone booth

10. CAMPAIGN 2018:

Blackburn enters Senate race to replace Corker

11. SCIENCE:

EPA IG to review use of citizen research

12. FEDERAL WORKFORCE:

Oversight Dems ask for hearings on downsizing

UPCOMING HEARINGS AND MARKUPS

13. CALENDAR:

Activity for October 2 - October 8, 2017

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GREENWIRE — Fri., October 20, 2017

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1. INTERIOR:

Lolita Zinke makes her mark outside the Cabinet

Meet Lolita Zinke, the woman dubbed a "real trooper" by her husband.

TOP STORIES

2. BIOFUELS:

Refiners seethe over Trump's bow to King Corn

3. WILD HORSES:

BLM advisory panel urges aggressive action to cull growing herds

4. EPA:

Agency defends enforcement as cops return from Pruitt detail

POLITICS

5. OFF TOPIC:

Ex-CEQ boss on 'highly qualified' Trump pick, climate action

6. DOE:

'I'm not going to run for public office again' — Perry

7. WATER POLICY:

Industry groups want EPA out of dredge-and-fill permitting

NATURAL RESOURCES

8. GULF OF MEXICO:

Oil spill much larger than first reported

9. OCEANS:

NOAA links climate change to shifts in food web

10. WILDLIFE:

Birds might be evolving to fit bird feeders — study

11. ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Search team snags a rare vaquita calf but has to release it

LAW

12. FOREST SERVICE:

Court upholds Idaho, Mont. wilderness plans

13. WILDFIRES:

15-year-old boy charged in Eagle Creek blaze

CLIMATE CHANGE

14. COAL:

Group takes on emissions from Colo.'s largest mine

15. ARCTIC:

Navy, Coast Guard take first step toward a new icebreaker

ENERGY

16. PEOPLE:

BP chairman to step down after 8 tumultuous years

17. NUCLEAR WASTE:

DOE will dig out tons of salt to expand N.M. dump

AIR AND WATER

18. CHEMICALS:

Plant that exploded during Harvey could face state penalty

19. SUPERFUND:

EPA's Gold King cleanup workers find lead contamination

20. WESTERN WATER:

Oroville Dam repair costs nearly double

PUBLIC HEALTH

21. SCIENCE:

Pollution is deadlier than war, world hunger — study

22. PESTICIDES:

WHO's cancer review of glyphosate left out evidence — report

23. DOE:

31 Hanford workers inhaled radioactive material

TRANSPORTATION

24. HYPERLOOP:

Musk to dig Md.-D.C. tunnel, says governor: 'So, get ready'

INTERNATIONAL

25. INDIA:

Despite festival firework ban, toxic haze blankets capital

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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

NOV 16 2017

Ms. Mary L. Kendall
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Deputy Inspector General Kendall:

Thank you for providing me with the November 15, 2017 Management Advisory (Advisory), regarding the Immediate Office of the Secretary (IOS) travel procedures. It is my understanding that the purpose of the Advisory is to communicate recommendations for program improvement. We are committed to implementing the best management practices throughout the Department of the Interior (Department).

I appreciate your acknowledgement that you have “received full cooperation from all employees contacted.” You will continue to receive full cooperation from Department employees, and we will accommodate your additional document production request timeframe.

Last week, you and I discussed your office’s need for additional documents as part of your office’s review. Per my direction, the requested materials were promptly provided.

When I arrived at the Department in August 2017, it was clear to me that the Secretary and I inherited an organizational and operational mess from the previous Administration. From my perspective, regarding IOS travel procedures, it appears that the exact same procedures and processes utilized by the previous Administration remain in place and continue to be dysfunctional.

For example, it is my understanding that travel vouchers for Secretary Jewell’s trips beginning on the dates set forth below have yet to be completed. Indeed, until late last week, it was apparently unclear whether all of Secretary Jewell’s vouchers had even been entered into the Department’s tracking system.

- 1) September 13, 2016 (CA-NV);
- 2) September 21, 2016 (Denver);
- 3) October 12, 2016 (ME);
- 4) October 19, 2016 (CA-AK-WA);
- 5) October 26, 2016 (AL-GA-DE);
- 6) November 10, 2016 (Philadelphia);
- 7) November 16, 2016 (Denver);
- 8) November 19, 2016 (MT-WY);

- 9) December 7, 2016 (NM);
- 10) December 13, 2016 (CA-TX-NV-WY);
- 11) January 2, 2017 (ID); and
- 12) January 10, 2017 (Chicago-NYC).

For IOS document production, the primary point of contact for your investigators should be Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Argo.

In response to your two additional documents requests, please see below:

- 1) Secretarial Travel: Per your request, the Department will work to provide available documentation for all Fiscal Year 2017 Secretarial travel (authorizations, vouchers, and reimbursements). Subsequently, as part of this effort, the Department will also work to provide available documentation for the 12 travel vouchers arising from Secretary Jewell's travel that remain incomplete.
- 2) Spousal Travel: Per your request, the Department will document and provide information for all instances when a Secretary's spouse traveled in a Government-owned vehicle, watercraft, or aircraft, and document whether payment on his/her behalf was paid in advance, determined to be reimbursable, or deemed no reimbursement required.

I appreciate your recommendations for IOS. As I evaluate them and initiate implementation, I request input from your office on specific examples, objective metrics, and measures that you are aware of that help build a process that both creates value and ensures compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Finally, I also request all Management Advisories regarding IOS issued by your office over the past 10 years be provided to me immediately, so that I can better identify the full scope of the systemic problems that potentially exist.

On behalf of the Department, I thank you for your office's diligence and sense of urgency in identifying ways that the Department can improve its program operations.

Sincerely,



David L. Bernhardt

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: op ed
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 2:48:41 PM
Attachments: [OpEd_MadeInAmerica_Rec_V1.docx](#)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private-partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition.

Boston Harbor National Recreation Area is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boats between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, provide educational tours, and carry out janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private partners also help maintain our buildings and aging infrastructure.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at the historic Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences like riding the historic Ford “Red Jammer” busses in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park would not be possible without public-private partnerships.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders and land managers to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can partner together to build upon the All-American Outdoor Experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard is for a food truck in a park’s parking lot, energy-efficient cabins in a national monument, and bringing mobile youth fishing centers to urban areas across the country.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas.

For example, Wi-Fi, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, services like boat, ATV and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. This would be like going on a ski vacation and not being able to rent skis or have access to a lift up the mountain.

This leaves many families without practical and affordable options for camping, hiking, and recreating. Having three kids and two granddaughters myself, I can't imagine going on a family vacation without some of these basic services.

Now, expanding public-private-partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

Having partners in parks also does not mean the shuttle bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. In fact, some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver greater services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management. Partners are also able to deliver many services to the American people at a lower cost than the government can.

With the right amount of ingenuity and originality, we can foster the All-American Outdoor Experience through our work at Interior. The Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, "For the enjoyment of the people." Enjoying recreation on public lands is at the core of our shared American heritage.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it's also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry supports \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is about products as much as it is about our shared heritage and values. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There's a reason 330 million people from across the country and the world visit our parks every year, and millions more flock to public lands coast to coast: It's because these spaces are uniquely American and are the result of a century of public-private partnerships.

This "Made in America" Week, let's unite under a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

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More partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Out of town pool report #14 / POTUS arrived at Eiffel Tower for dinner
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:38:19 PM

From: "Bennett, Brian" <brian.bennett@latimes.com>

Date: July 13, 2017 at 9:32:32 PM GMT+2

Subject: **Out of town pool report #14 / POTUS arrived at Eiffel Tower for dinner**

The motorcade departed the Ambassador's residence around 9:20 pm and arrived at the Eiffel Tower around 9:28 pm. Your pooler did not see POTUS but is told he has arrived here. POTUS, FLOTUS, Macron and his wife will have dinner at the Jules Verne restaurant inside the tower, per White House.

Brian Bennett
Los Angeles Times
Cell (202)294-9860
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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Out of town pool report 2 - Trump remarks at JBA
Date: Friday, September 15, 2017 5:14:51 PM

From: "Stokols, Eli" <eli.stokols@wsj.com>

Date: September 15, 2017 at 4:19:16 PM EDT

Subject: Out of town pool report 2 - Trump remarks at JBA

At 3:58 p.m., President Trump took the stage inside Hangar 6 at JBA with First Lady Melania Trump after spending the better part of an hour at the air show (apologies, my last note wrongly stated that he would speak prior to the tour). According to the White House schedule, he was set to take part in a "demonstration of the fleet" and then a "discussion with airmen." Your pooler was not given access to these events.

The remarks here were open press, but here is a short summary (please check quotes against WH transcript for accuracy):

Mrs. Trump spoke first briefly about her visit to the children's center and then thanked the assembled group of several hundred airmen and women. "We know that we are free because you are brave," she said. "We are grateful for your service." She then introduced her husband.

The president spoke from behind a lectern with the help of a teleprompter. A large B-2 bomber was staged behind him, above which a large American flag hung from the wall.

He thanked his wife, noting that she is "very very popular."

Then he addressed the national security threats of ISIS and the North Korean regime.

"Our heart goes out to the people of London," the president said, noting that he'd spoken earlier Friday "with a wonderful woman, British Prime Minister Theresa May." The president reaffirmed "our absolute commitment to eradicating the terrorists from our planet. Radical Islamic terrorism -- it will be eradicated," he said.

The president also spoke of North Korea's recent missile test, saying that the country had "once again shown its utter contempt for its neighbors and for the entire world community."

"After seeing our capabilities, I am more confident than ever that our options are not only effective but overwhelming."

Speaking mostly from the teleprompter, POTUS marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Air Force and America's "air superiority."

He also called on Congress to "end the defense sequester once and for all" and promised the USAF would maintain its dominance.

"I am always on your wing," the president concluded.

The president left the stage at 4:18 p.m. We are now motorcading back across the tarmac to Air Force One and will be wheels up shortly for New Jersey.

Eli Stokols
WHITE HOUSE REPORTER



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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Out of town report #2
Date: Thursday, August 03, 2017 6:35:56 PM

From: "Wagner, John" <John.Wagner@washpost.com>

Date: August 3, 2017 at 6:30:38 PM EDT

Subject: **Out of town report #2**

A bumpy wheels down in Huntington at 6:11 p.m.

Greeters on the tarmac included

[Linda McCarthy](#), WV State Executive Committee member

John Deptuch Navy Veteran and local GOP volunteer

His Wife Faye Deptuch

John Buckland, founder of "heroes for hire"

During the flight, Lindsay Walters gagged for about 9 minutes. No major headlines, but she addressed the West Wing renovations, decried the leaks of the transcripts of POTUS's conversations with the leaders of Mexico and Australia and referred Mueller questions to outside counsel.

Walters started off by referencing Steven Miller's portion of Thursday's briefing.

"Sorry to disappiont, but today is not going to be nearly as lively as yesterday was," she said.

After introductory remarks on economic growth and "keeping promises to American heroes," she turned to planned reonovations to the West Wing.

"Beginning Friday, all staff will be relocated to the EEOB to accomodate necessary renovations to the West Wing. These renovation plans have been approved by the previous administration following the completion of the Phase One but were never actually initatived."

HVAC system is 27 years old, but due to 24-7, 365-day usage the estimated age based on usage is 81 years

The South Portico steps on the South Lawn will be repaired. They haven't been restored in 64 years.

In addition, they will renovate the Navy mess kitchen, the West Wing lower lobby and the IT system and "generic cosmetic upgrades."

Questions

Q: Where will the president be working?

Will take off to Bedminster on Friday for a “working vacation.”

“As I mentioned, with the HVAC system being replaced, that means that the West Wing will be without air conditioning for the next two weeks, which is why the staff and the president is moving out, because I don’t think any of you would like to be in the West Wing on an August DC summer day when it’s over 100 degrees with no air conditioning.”

Q: Going to WV today. Opioid commission recommended declaring a crisis. Will he be making a recommendation?

“I don’t want to get ahead of what the president’s announcement will be tonight. This week the opioid commission did submit their interim report. As you know, this is an issue that is very important to the president, something that he discussed on the campaign trail and has continued throughout his administration to advocate for as it’s plaguing many of the states across our country.”

Q: Timeline for announcement of head of Mine Safety and health administration?

“We don’t have any personnel announcement at this time.

Q: Regulations and rise in coal worker injuries.

A: “The regulations that the president’s doing are to help create jobs. He’s not lowering any safety regulations. Safety is still at top priority. But as the president said, we need to create jobs, we need to bring jobs back to our shores.”

“Nothing he is doing is cutting back on the safety. Safety is a top priority, but our main focus is on creating and growing jobs in these communities that rely on the coal industry as a main source of income.”

Q: WaPo transcripts:

A: “I’m not going to comment on leaked you know calls. I said before, this is—it’s a national security matter when phone call transcripts are being leaked out. It prevents the president from being able to do you know what he does best, and negotiate with foreign leaders. What I can tell you regarding the border wall is that the president spoke about this on the campaign, continues to echo it now, and having a secure border is [unintelligible] to the safety of our country and that is something that he had promised his supporters and has continued to focus on is making sure that we have a secure border.

Q: New Hampshire Apology?

A: “He was talking about the opioid epidemic up there which has affected a lot of lives in New Hampshire. I can tell you that that is an important focus of his.”

Q: He referred to it as a drug infested den...

A: “Again, this is a conversation that was leaked out. I am not going to get into commenting on that conversation. I can just echo the fact that combatting the drug abuse, and substance and opioid— is important to the president.”

Q: So no apology?

A: “I am not going to comment any further.”

Q: Does POTUS intend to act on opioid commission report?

A: “Let me check back with you regarding what next steps are.”

Q: How did the transcripts get out?

A: I am not going to get into leaked conversations, but I can tell you is that it's damaging to our national security and it's something that we take very seriously." "We need to end these leaks and it's not beneficial to anyone to be having documents being leaked out."

Q: Is that being investigated then?

A: "I'll get back to you."

Q: What's the 'Big announcement'?

A: "If it did that it wouldn't be the surprise he was talking about earlier."

Q: Comment on legislation to protect Mueller?

A: "Let me look into that. I can refer you to Ty Cobb, but I will get back to you on that."

Q: Why is POTUS taking a vacation after calling on Congress to stay, criticizing Obama for vacations?

A: "As I said, the president's going to continue to work. We all need to be relocated out of the West Wing due to these renovations that should have taken place before and we're at a position where we're now in a dire need and they either need to be repaired or replaced. And it's not something that can go on while we're still occupying the West Wing. So the President will continue to work over the next two weeks."

An addition to the previous report: Also on the plane were Joe Hagin and Steven Miller

Big thanks to Zeke Miller for help with the gaggle notes and other tidbits

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Desk: 202-334-6293
Twitter: @WPJohnWagner

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K – 12 OUTDOOR PROGRAM FRAMEWORK



From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Out-of-town pool #8/tour of Les Invalides and the tomb of Napoleon
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 10:59:40 AM

From: "Bennett, Brian" <brian.bennett@latimes.com>

Date: July 13, 2017 at 4:53:03 PM GMT+2

Subject: Out-of-town pool #8/tour of Les Invalides and the tomb of Napoleon

President Trump, FLOTUS, President Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron toured Hotel National des Invalides, built by in the 1670s by King Louis XIV to care for injured and disabled war veterans.

After reviewing a line of French troops inside a grand courtyard, the two leaders and their wives walked into the large and gilded Dome Church. The couples stopped and talked for about five minutes with a tour guide and then at about 4:04 pm walked down a marble staircase to the Tomb of Napoleon.

Both couples held hands down the steps.

Napoleon was buried here in 1861, when his body was returned to France from where he had died in exile. The tomb itself is made of red quartzite and stands on a green Voges granite base.

Trump and Macron stopped to look at the tomb and appeared engaged in conversation. Your pooler could not hear or understand anything they said during the tour.

When POTUS and FLOTUS started walking again, your pooler saw Macron tap his wife on the rear end. She looked surprised and smiled.

Continuing the tour, at about 4:10 pm the two couples entered the alcove that holds the tomb of French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, commander of the allied armies in WWI.

Trump and Macron spoke and gestured to each other. Trump pointed to the tomb a few times. Macron at one point punched his hand into his fist to make a point.

The press pool was ushered out of the alcove at 4:20 pm.

The tour was given by David Guillet, director of the French army museum, according to a White House aide.

As Maggie Haberman my fellow pooler reported, the motorcade began rolling at 4:41 pm.

Brian Bennett
Los Angeles Times
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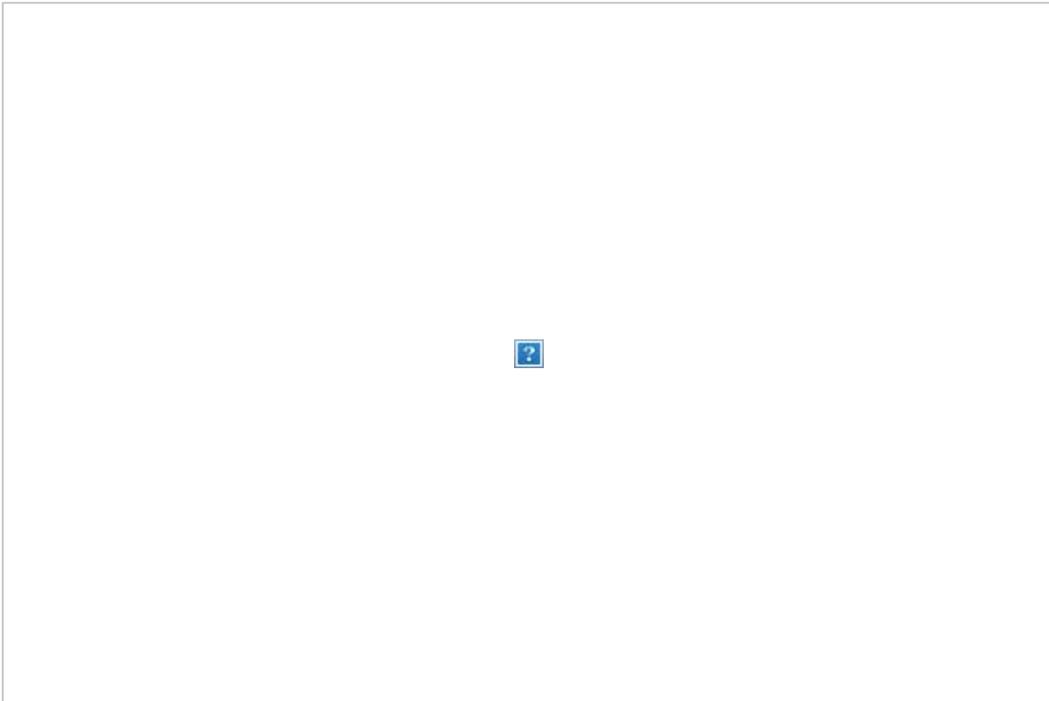
From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Photos of the Foreign Trip
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 4:46:11 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2017

Photos of the Foreign Trip

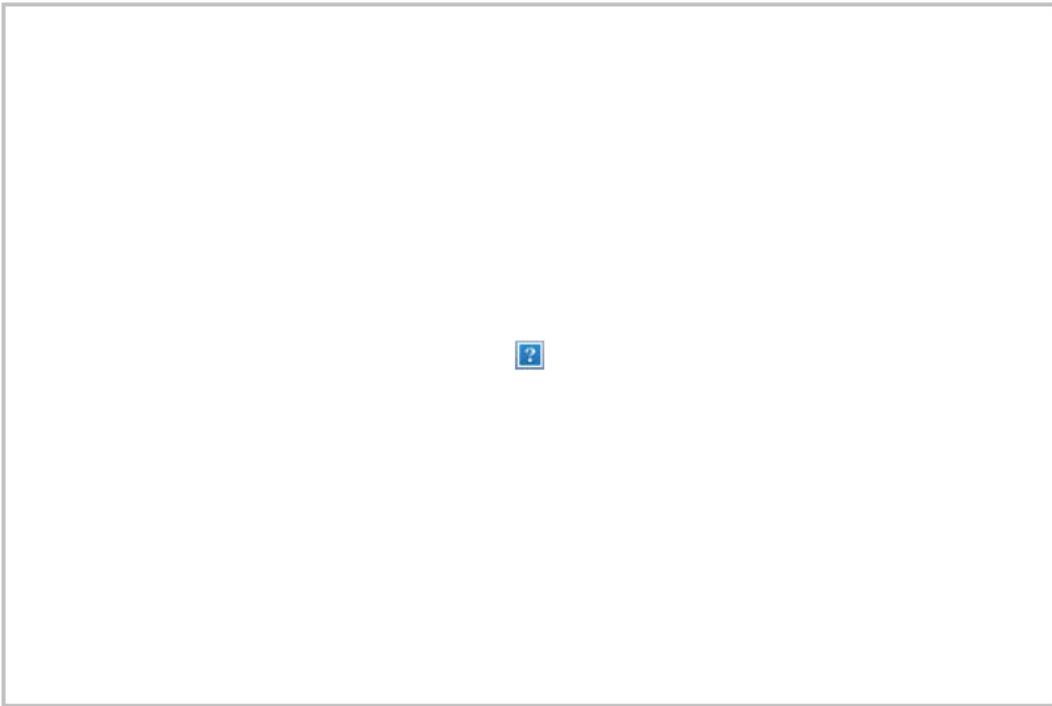
WASHINGTON, D.C.



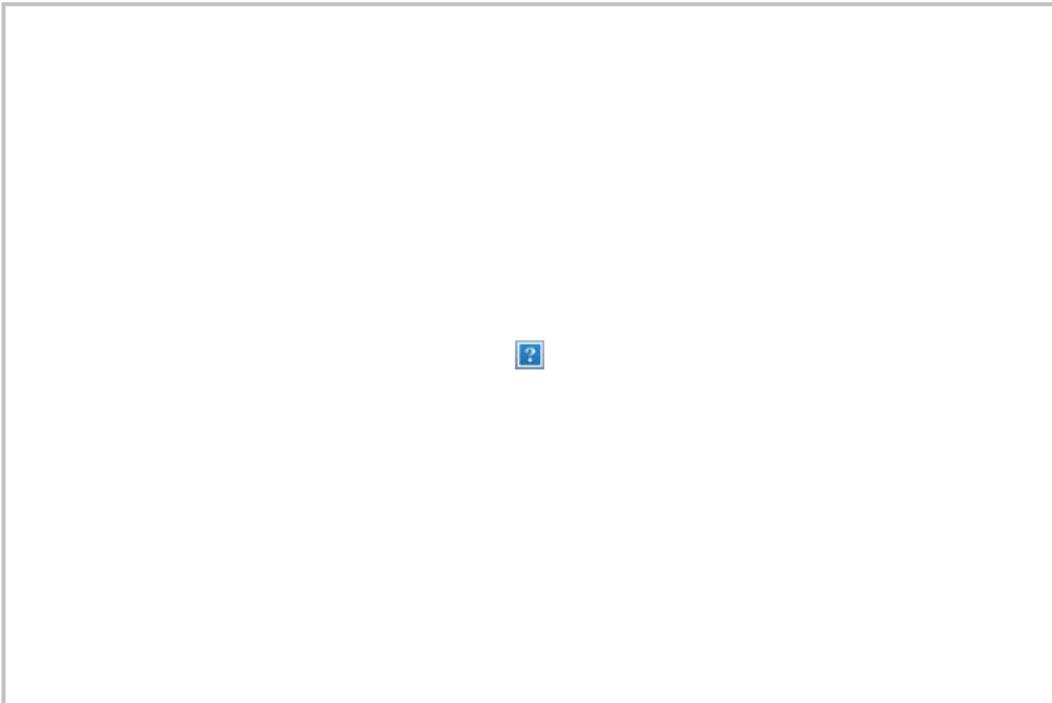
President Donald J. Trump, joined by First Lady Melania Trump, stops to speak with the White House Press Corps, Friday, November 3, 2017, prior to their departure from the South Lawn at the White House to begin their trip to Asia.

(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

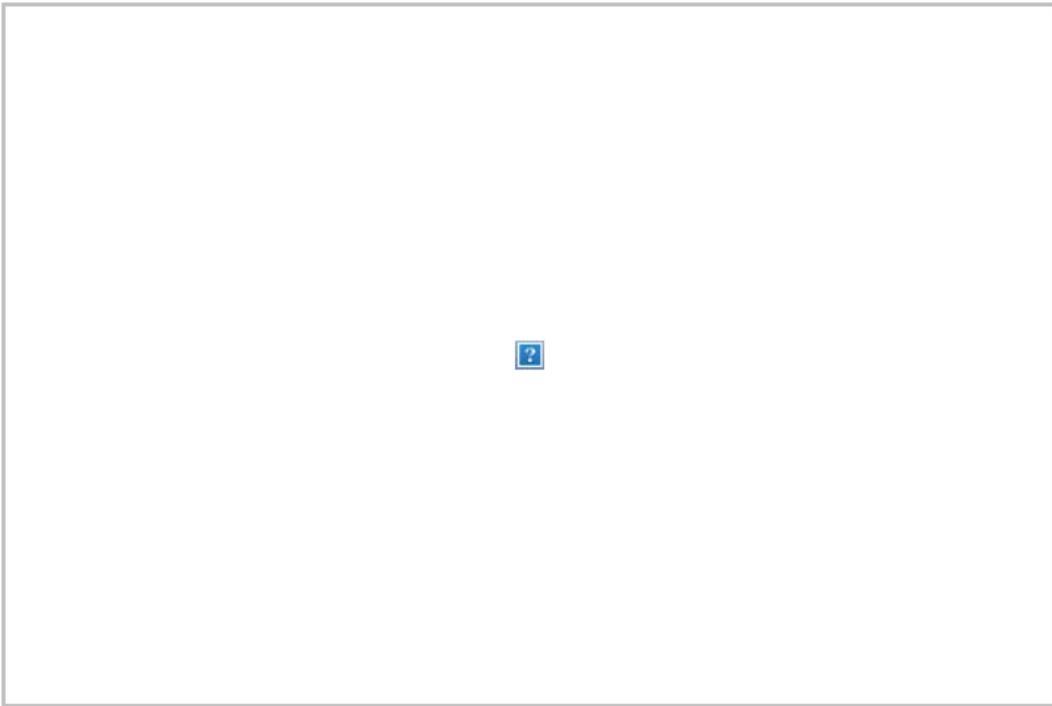
HAWAII



President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump receive traditional Hawaiian leis upon their arrival to Joint Base Hickam AFB, Friday, November 3, 2017, in Honolulu, Hawaii.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

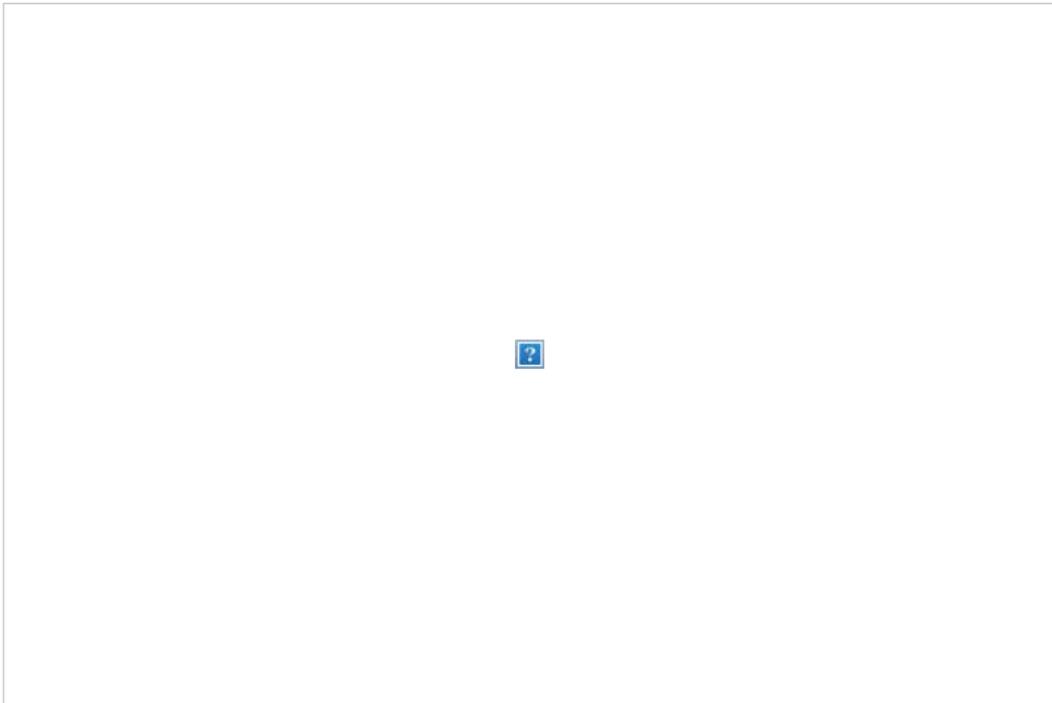


President Donald J. Trump receives a U.S. Pacific Command briefing at the United State Pacific Command Headquarters, Friday, November 3, 2017, in Aiea, Hawaii.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

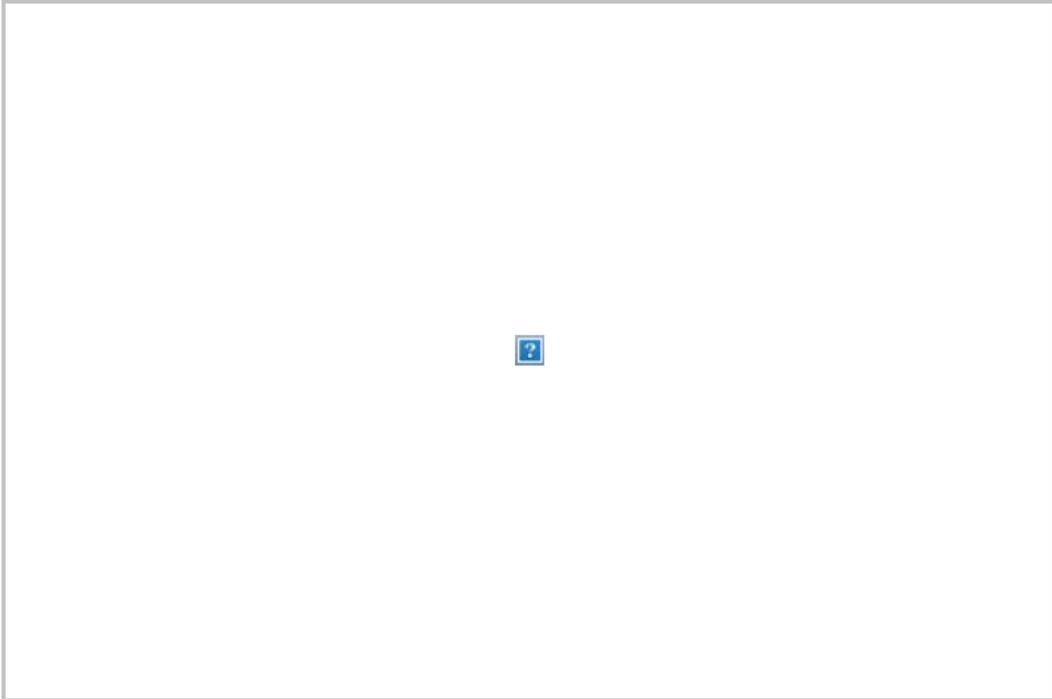


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump share a moment on the barge tour after departing the USS Arizona Memorial, Friday, November 3, 2017, in Honolulu, Hawaii.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

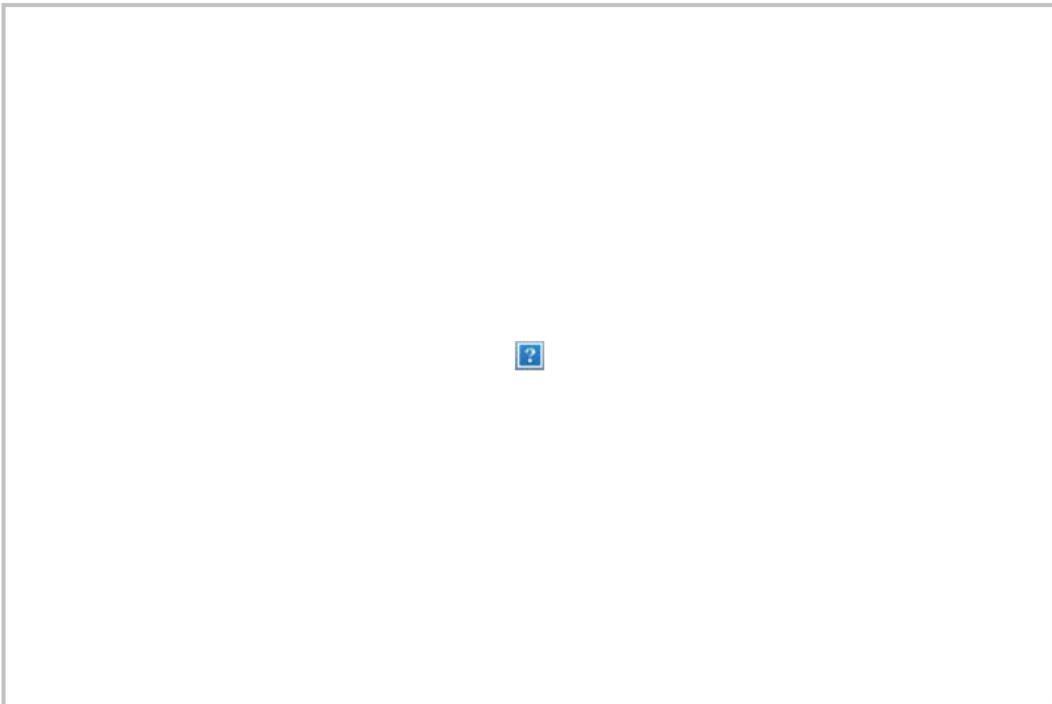
JAPAN



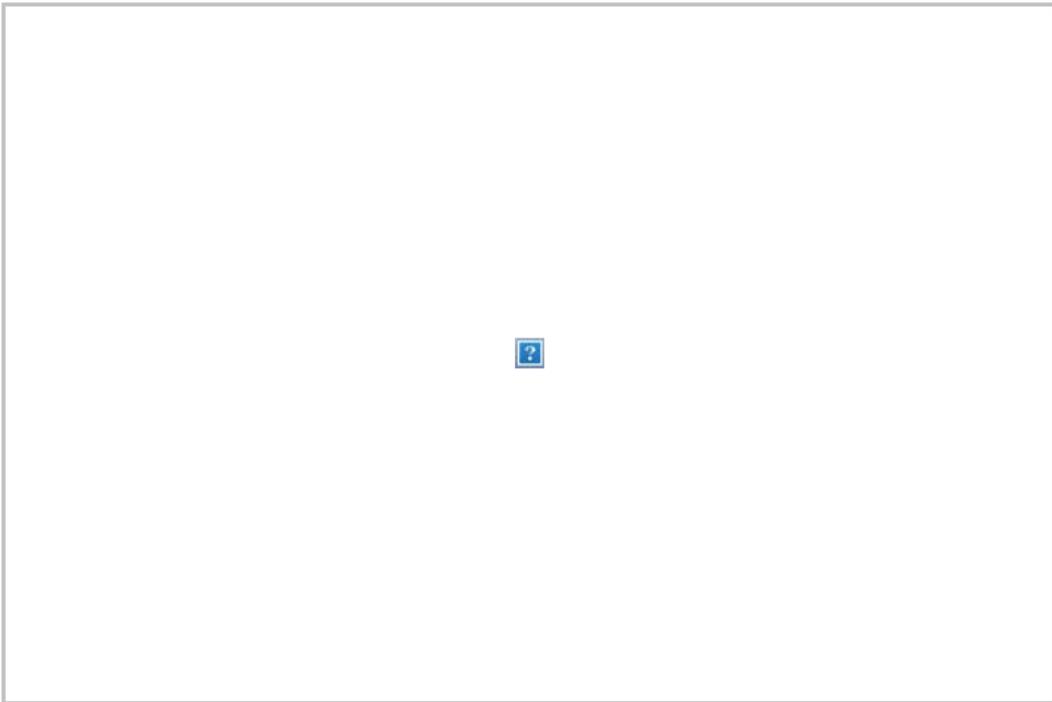
President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump are welcomed by hundreds of U.S. troops after arriving at the Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, Japan, Sunday, November 5, 2017, the start of President Trump's five-nation trip to Asia.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump participate in an event with troops at Yokota Air Base, Sunday, November 5, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

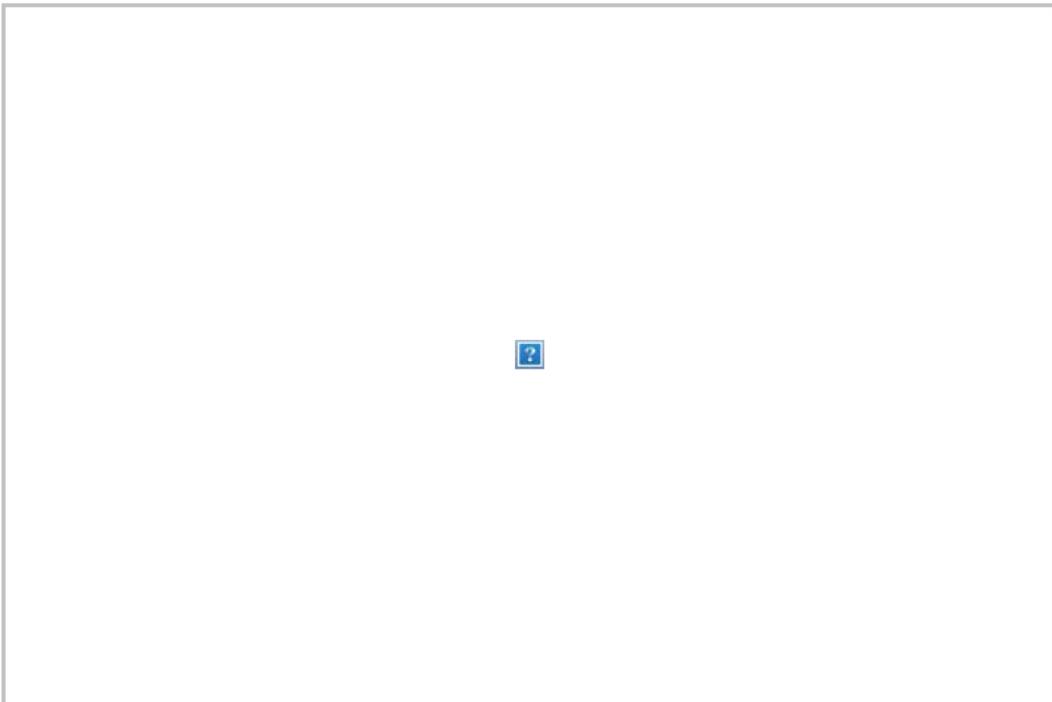


First Lady Melania Trump has tea with Mrs. Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at the Mikimoto store Sunday, November 5, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



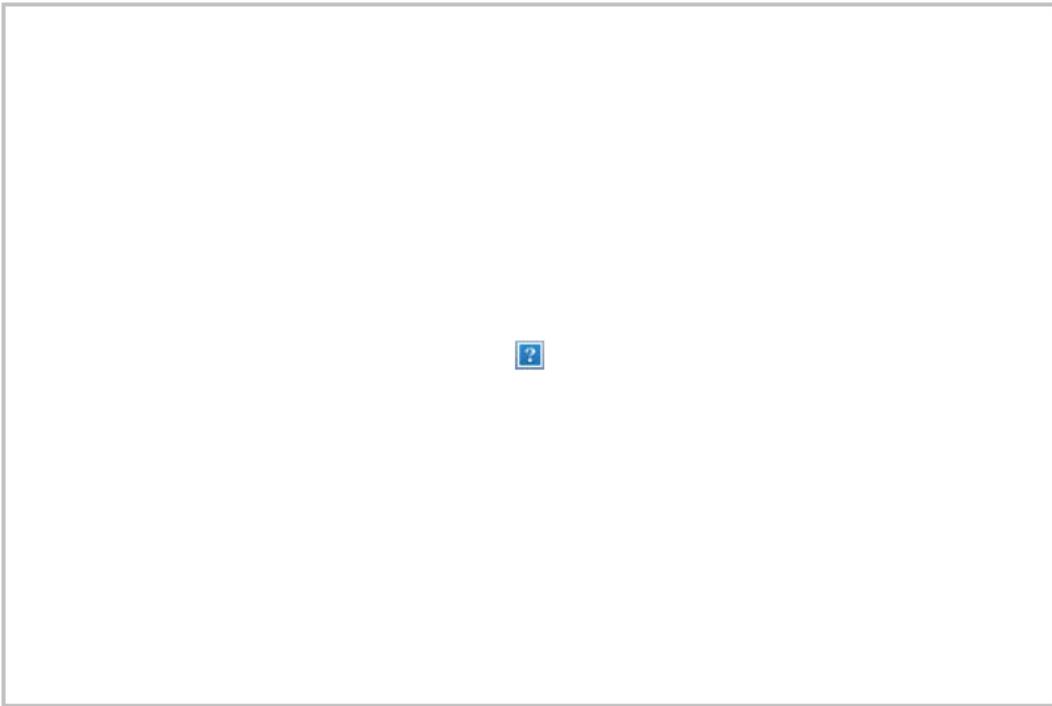
First Lady Melania Trump and Mrs. Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, visit the Mikimoto flagship store, Sunday, Nov. 5, 2017, in Tokyo, where they were given a tour and shown the traditional style of Ama divers, women who dive for the pearl oysters, in a Japanese tradition that is more than a thousand years old.

(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

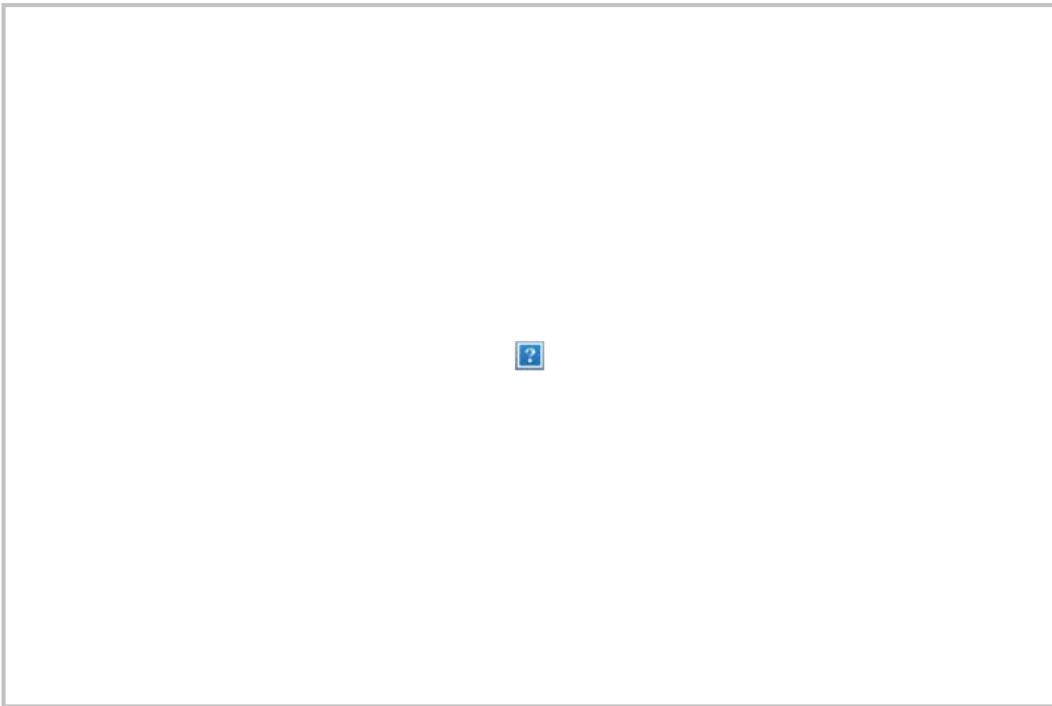


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump have dinner with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Mrs. Akie Abe at Ginza Ukai Tei, Sunday, November 5, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.

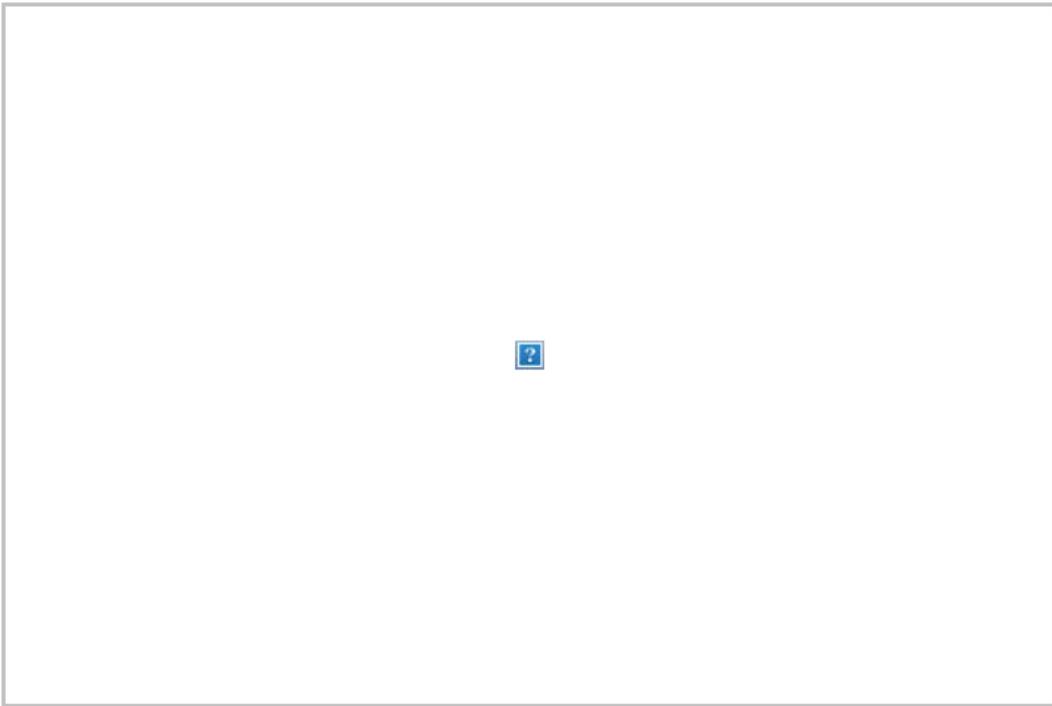
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



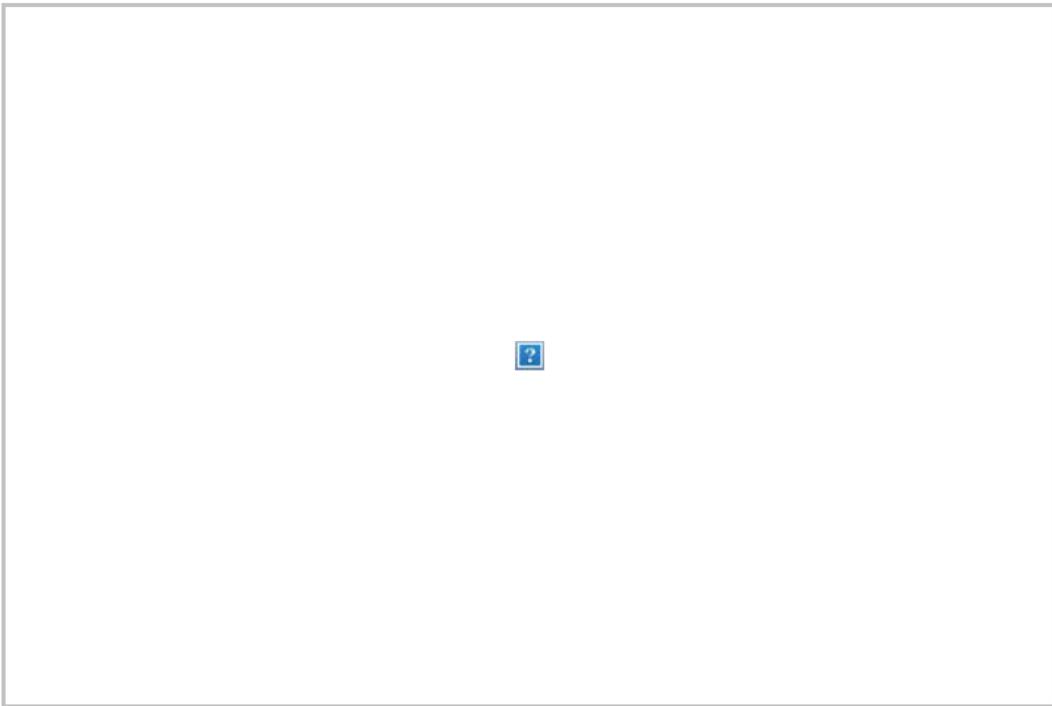
President Donald J. Trump delivers remarks to U.S. and Japanese business leaders at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence, Monday, November 6, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson attends.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



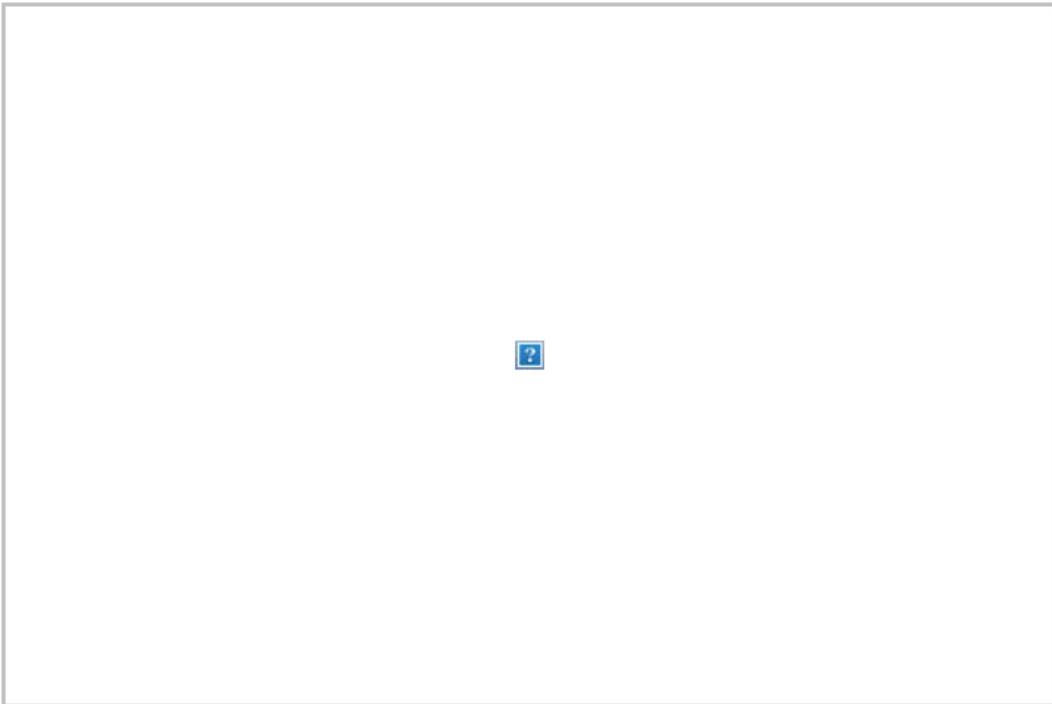
President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Monday, November 6, 2017, on their arrival to the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Stephanie Chasz)



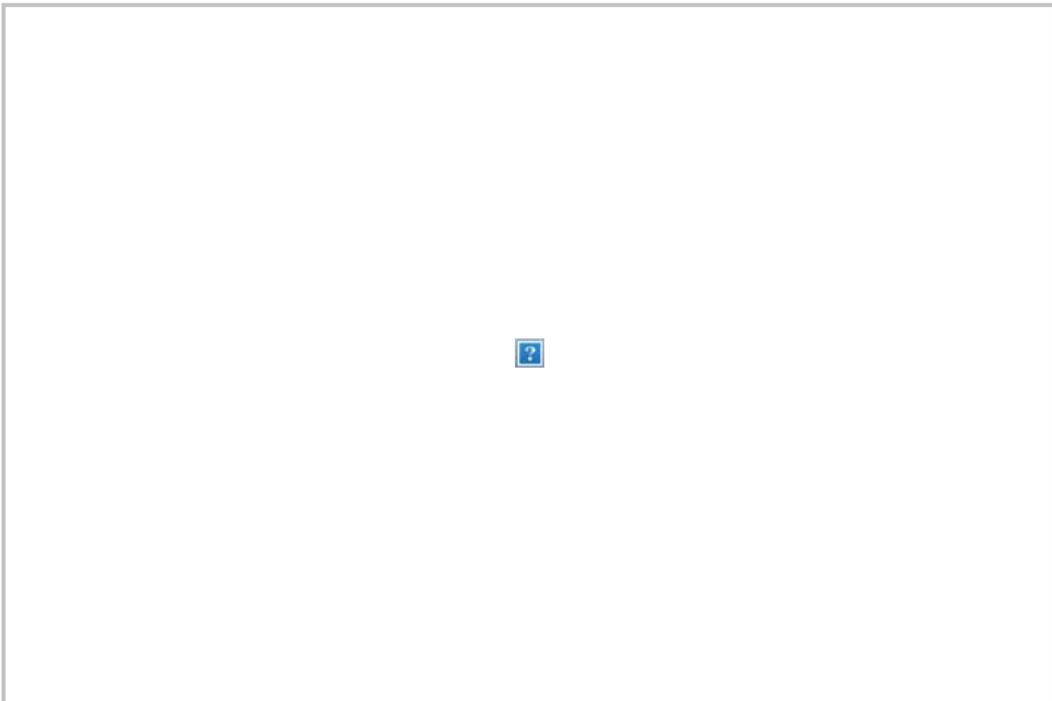
President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump along with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Mrs. Akie Abe participate in an honor guard ceremony at the Akasaka Palace, Monday, November 6, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



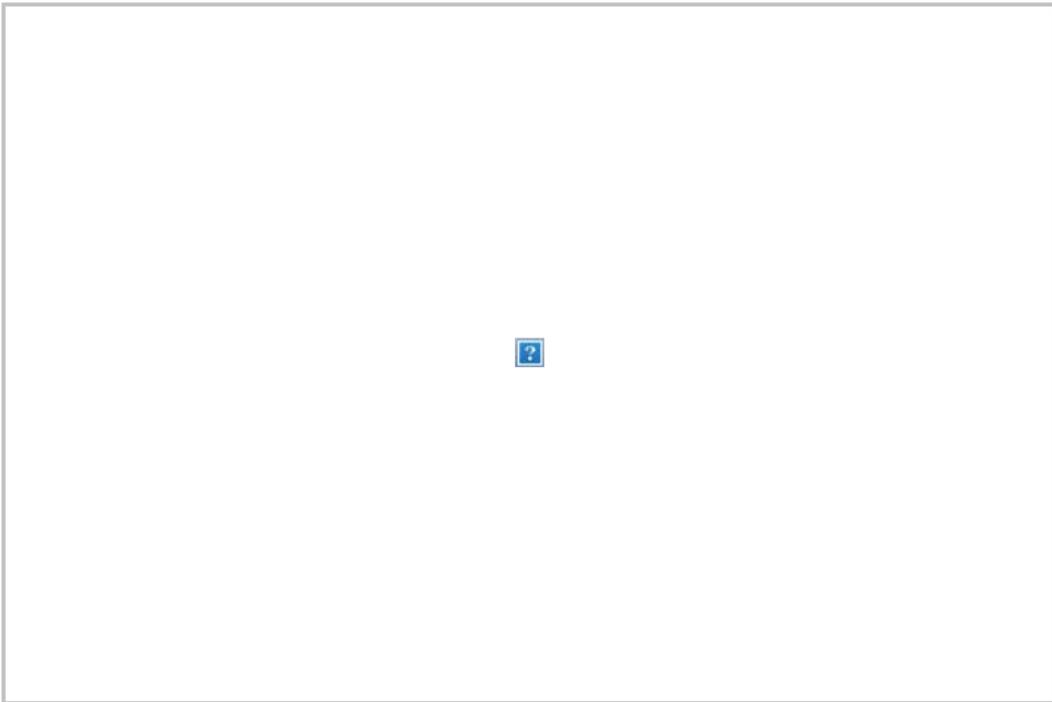
President Donald J. Trump has lunch with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Akasaka Palace, Monday, November 6, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



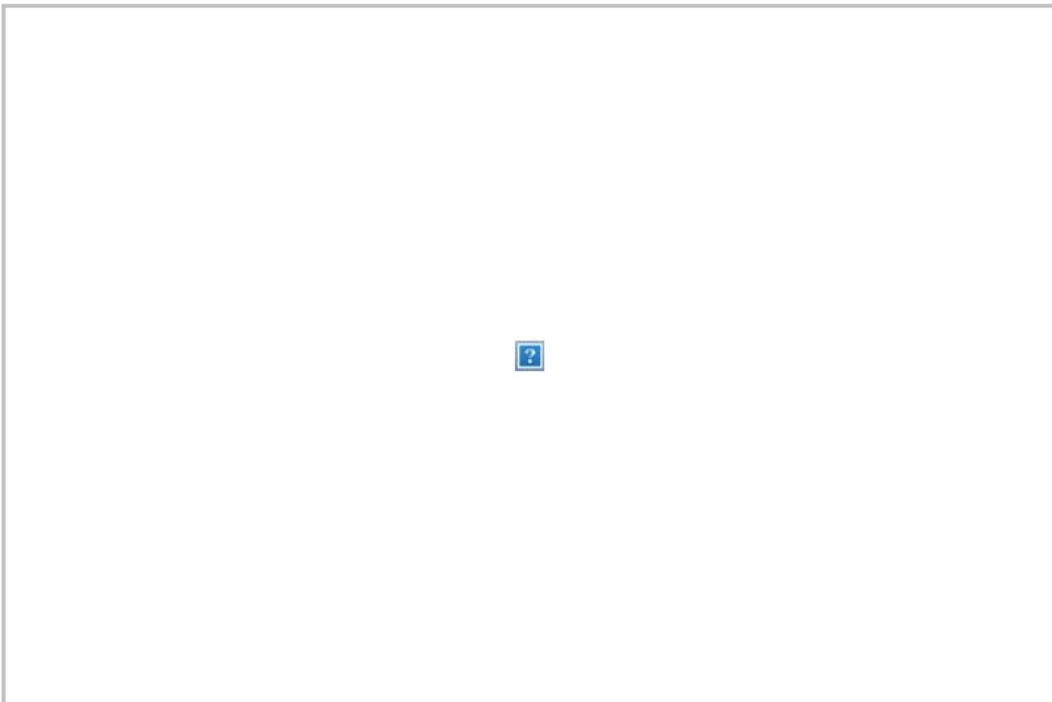
President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe along with First Lady Melania Trump and Mrs. Akie Abe meet with family members of abducted Japanese citizens in North Korea, Monday, November 6, 2017, at the Akasaka Palace, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe participate in a joint press conference at the Akasaka Palace, Monday, November 6, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan. First Lady Melania Trump attends.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

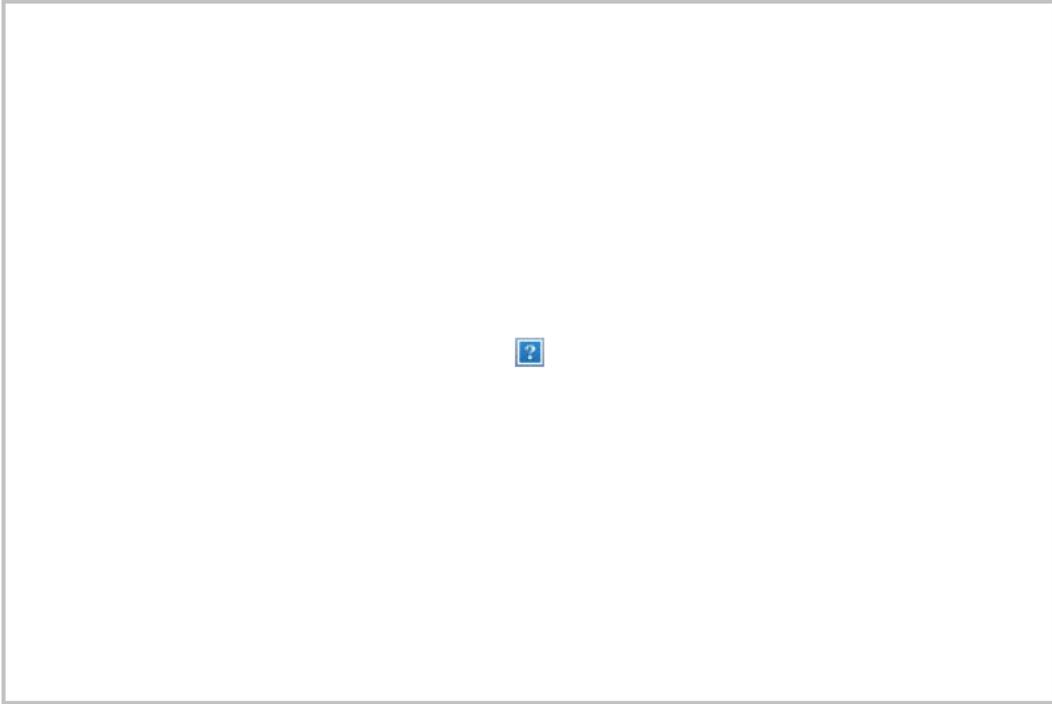


First Lady Melania Trump and Mrs. Akie Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, visit Kyobashi Tsukiji Elementary School, Monday, November 6, 2017, in Tokyo, Japan.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

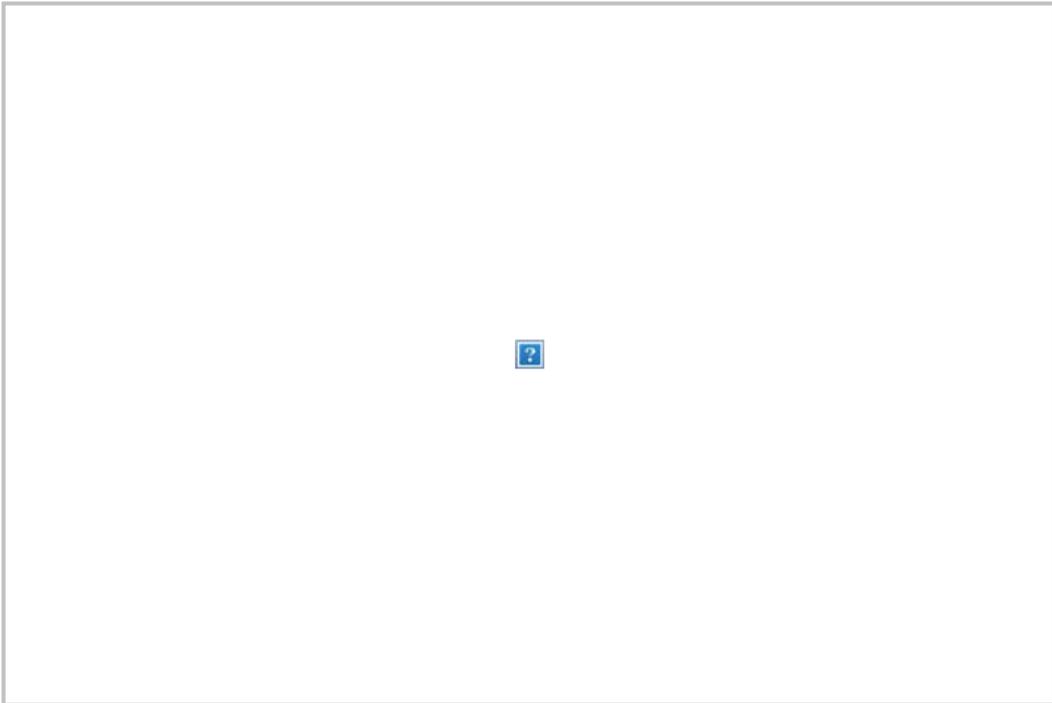


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump are greeted at their departure, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, by U.S. Ambassador William F. Hagerty and U.S. military personnel at Yokota Air Base on the outskirts of Tokyo, as they leave for their flight to Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

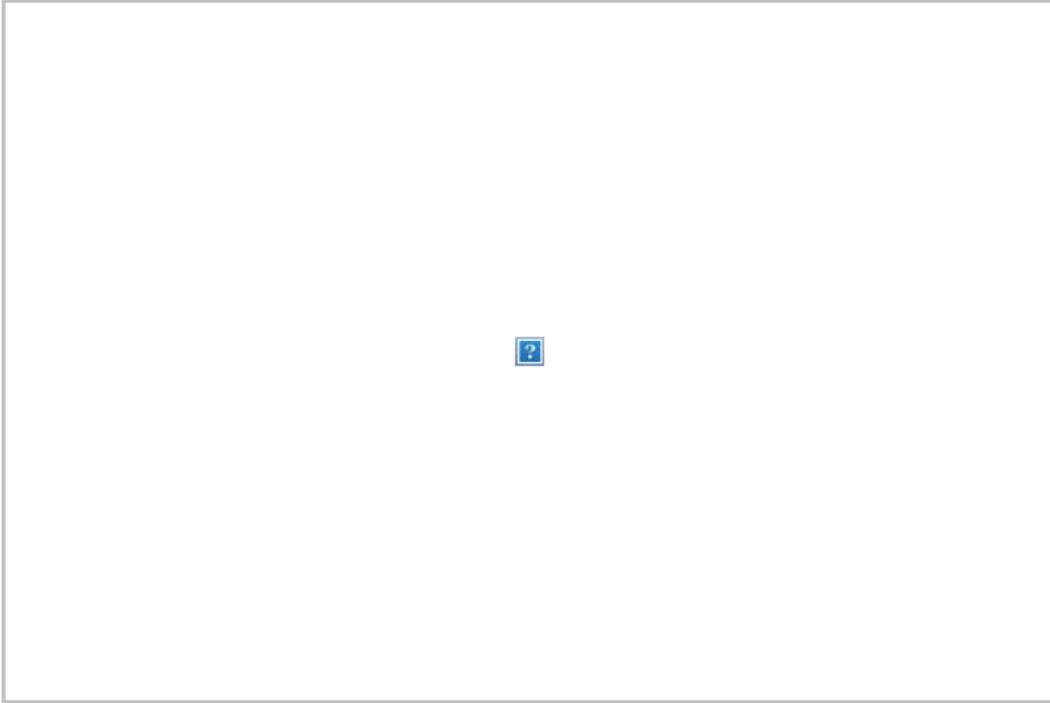


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump disembark Air Force One at Osan Air Base, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, and are greeted by Charge d' Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, Translator, Mrs. Suzuko Knapper, Commander of the United States Forces Korea, Gen. Vincent Brooks, 1st Vice Foreign Minister, Lim Sung-Nam, Commander 51st Fighter Wing and Col. Andrew Hansen, in Pyeongtaek, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

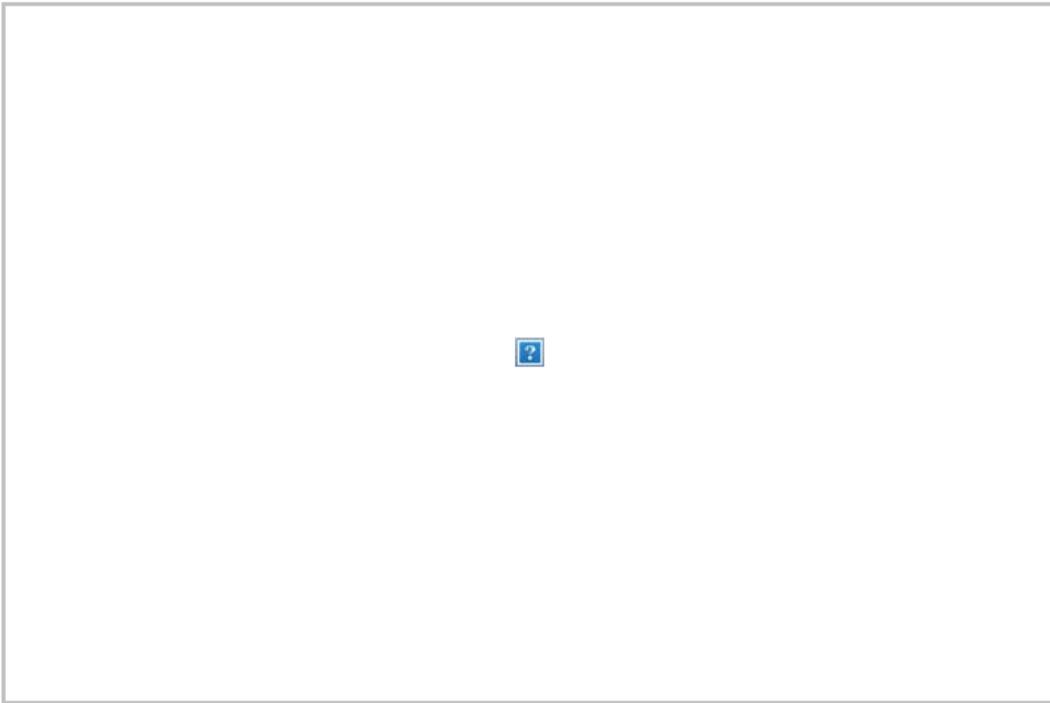


President Donald J. Trump has lunch with U.S and South Korean troop at Camp Humphreys Provider Dining Facility, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in the Republic of Korea. President Moon Jae-in attends.

(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

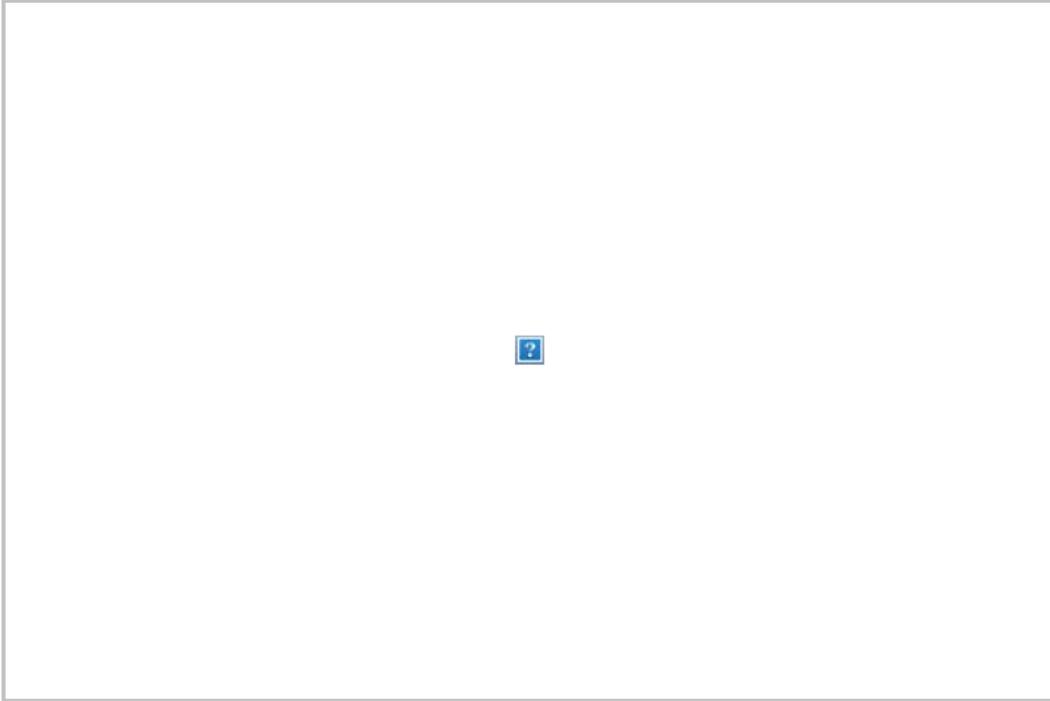


President Donald J. Trump poses for a photo with General Vincent Brooks, ROKA General Kim Byeoung-Joo (T), Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, LTG Thomas Vandal, MajGen James Lukeman, RDML Brad Cooper, and Brig Gen Tony Bauernfeind at the 8th Army HQ Building, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, after receiving an Operational Briefing, in the Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



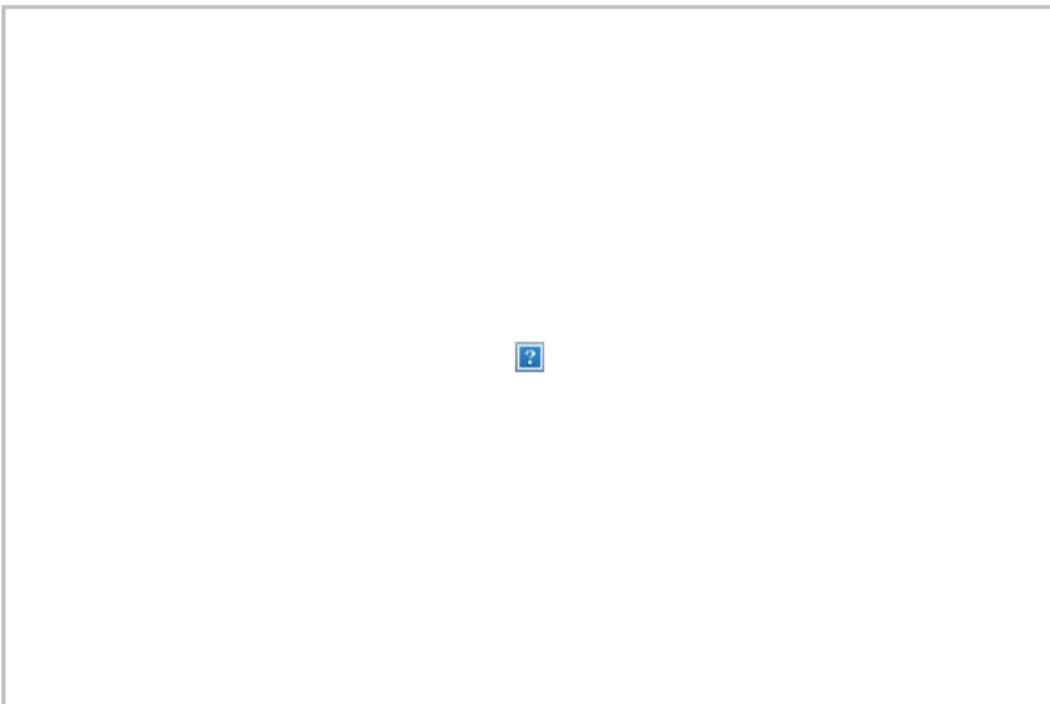
First Lady Melania Trump boards Executive Foxtrot 1 and departs Osan Air Base, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, en route to Yongsan Garrison Camp in the Republic of Korea.

(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



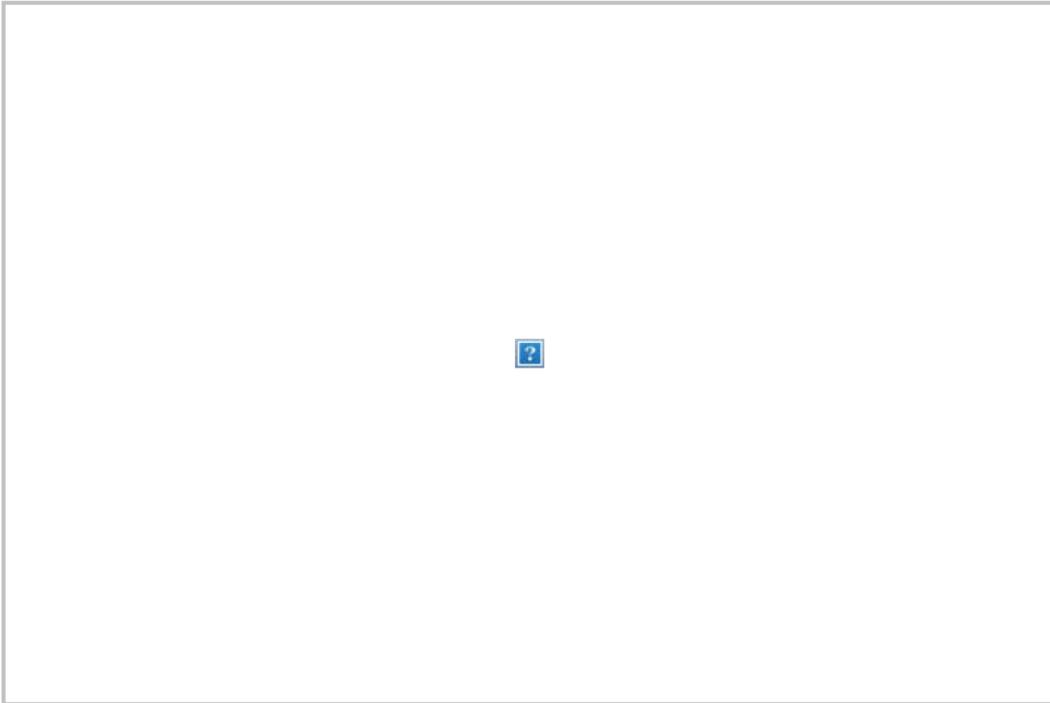
First Lady Melania Trump meets with middle school students following her address, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, at the "Girls Play 2" initiative launch at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

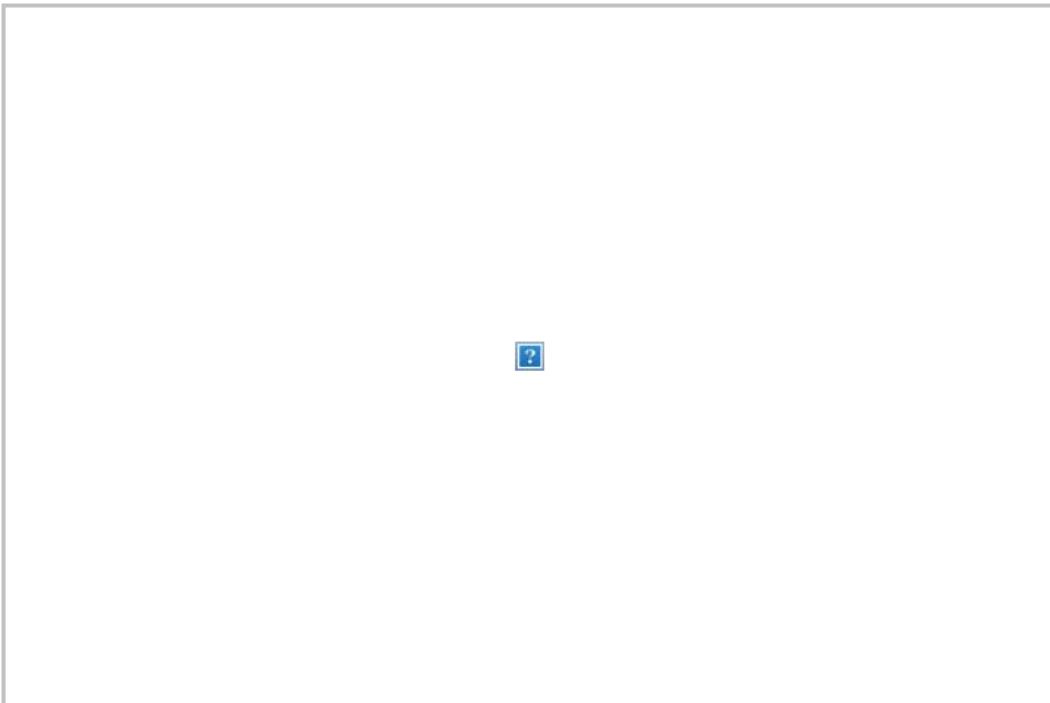


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, President Moon Jae-in and First Lady Kim Jung-sook, at a welcoming ceremony, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, at the presidential residence, Blue House, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

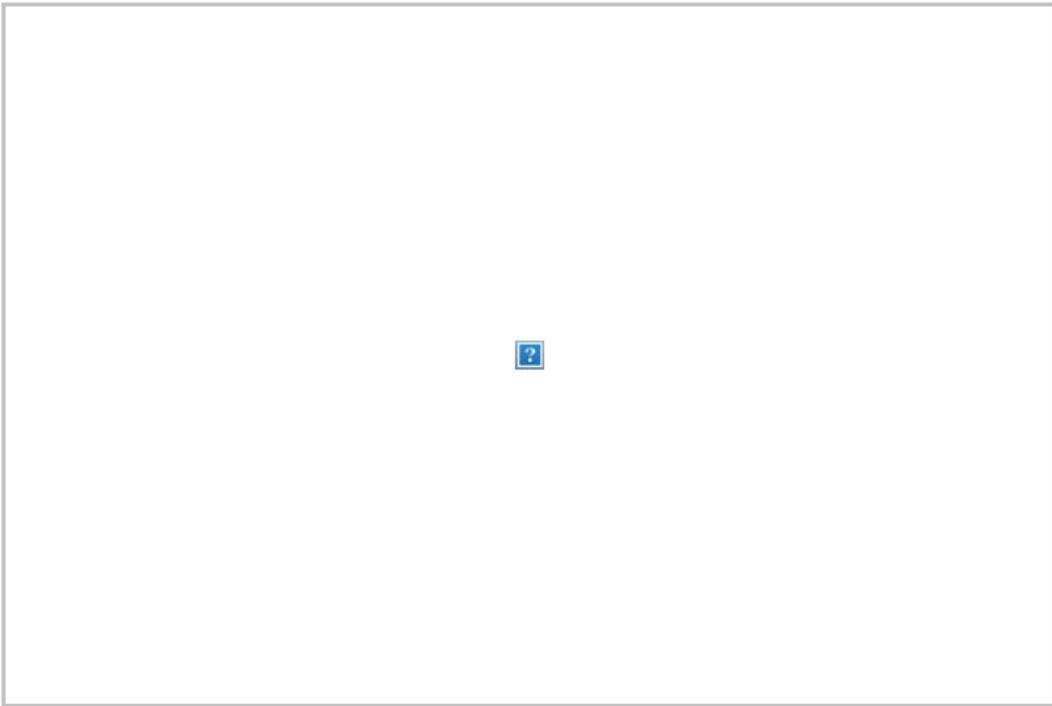
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



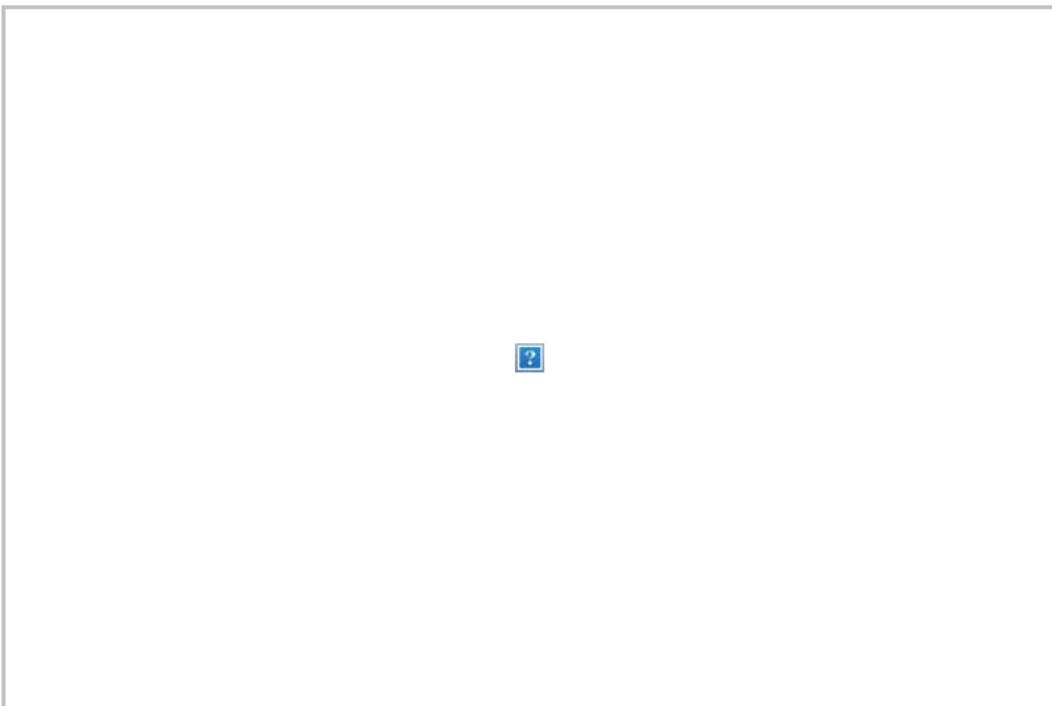
President Donald J. Trump participates in a one-on-one meeting with President Moon Jae-in at the Blue House, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



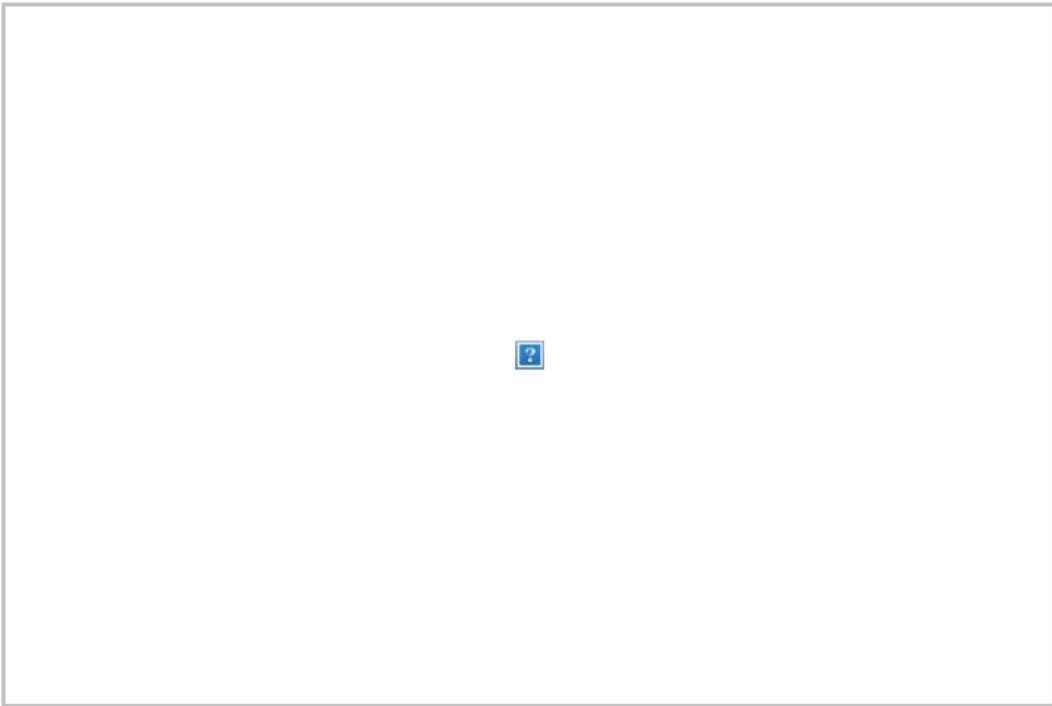
President Donald J. Trump participates in an expanded bilateral meeting at the Blue House, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



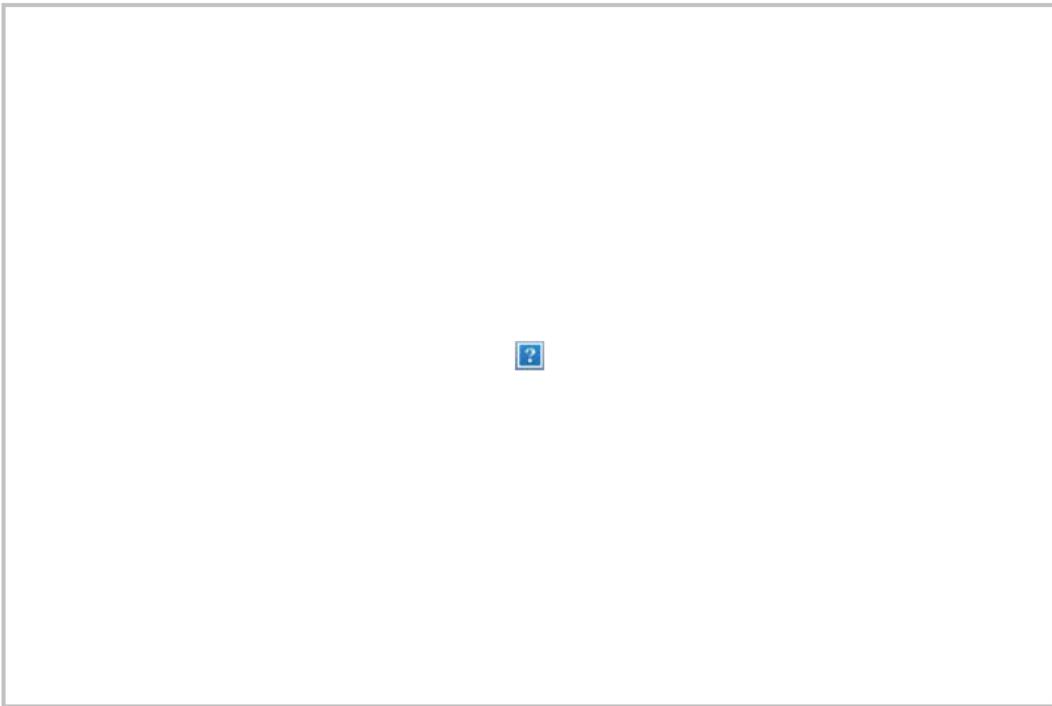
First Lady Melania Trump, joined by First Lady Kim Jung-sook, presents gifts to children, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in the garden of the presidential residence, Blue House, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



First Lady Melania Trump has tea with Mrs. Kim Jung-sook, wife of President Moon Jae-in, at the Blue House, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



President Donald J. Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, President Moon Jae-in, and his wife Mrs. Kim Jung-sook pose for photos in front of the Sangchunjae after having tea, Tuesday, November 7, 2017, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



President Donald J. Trump addresses the South Korean National Assembly, November 8, 2017.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

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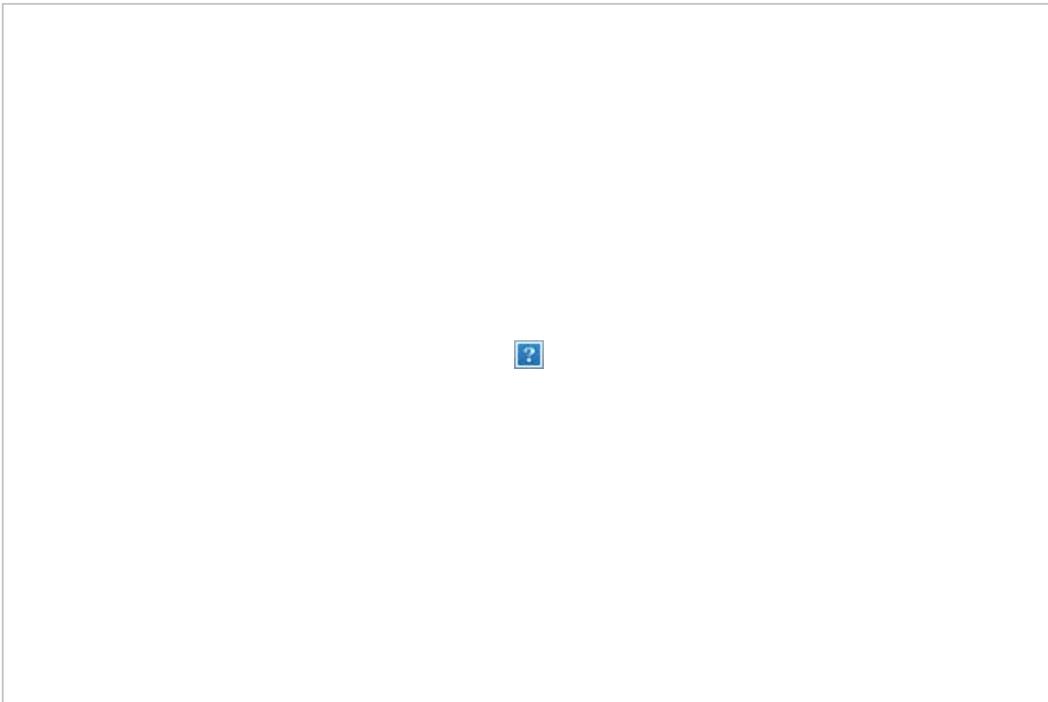
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Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 6:08:43 PM

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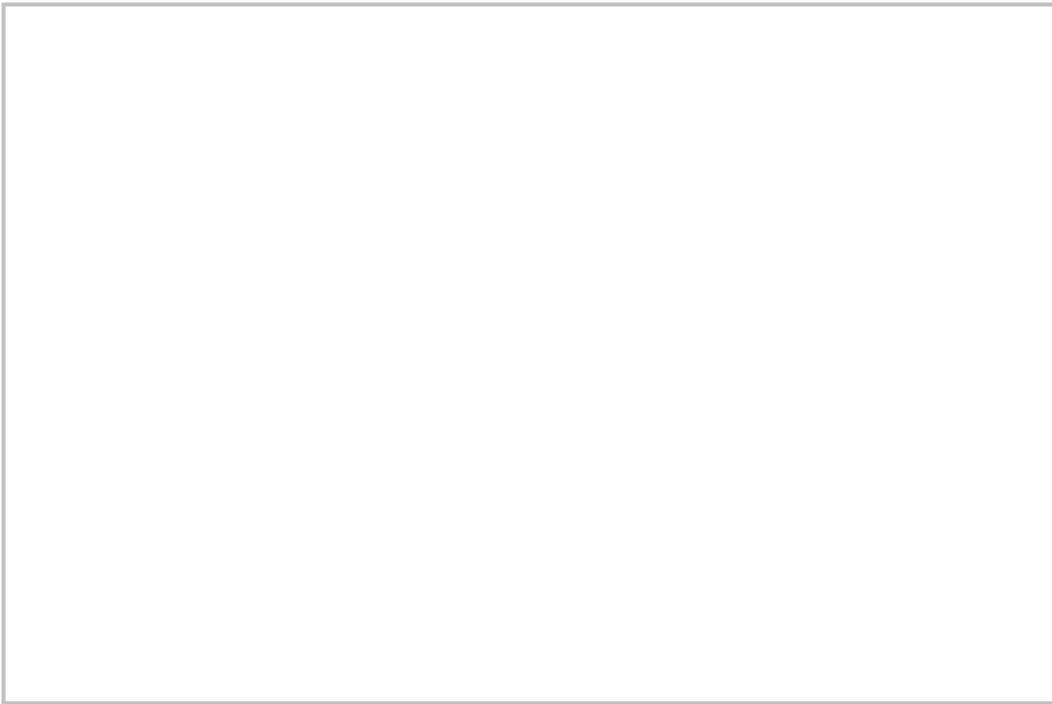
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Photos of the Week

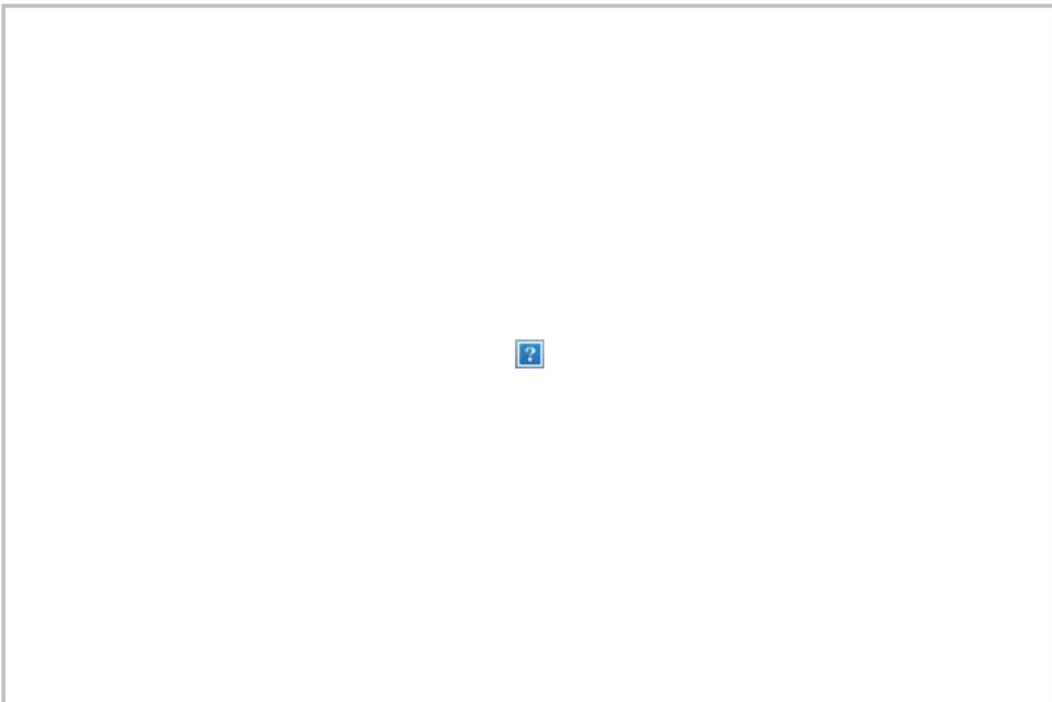
Monday, December 4, 2017



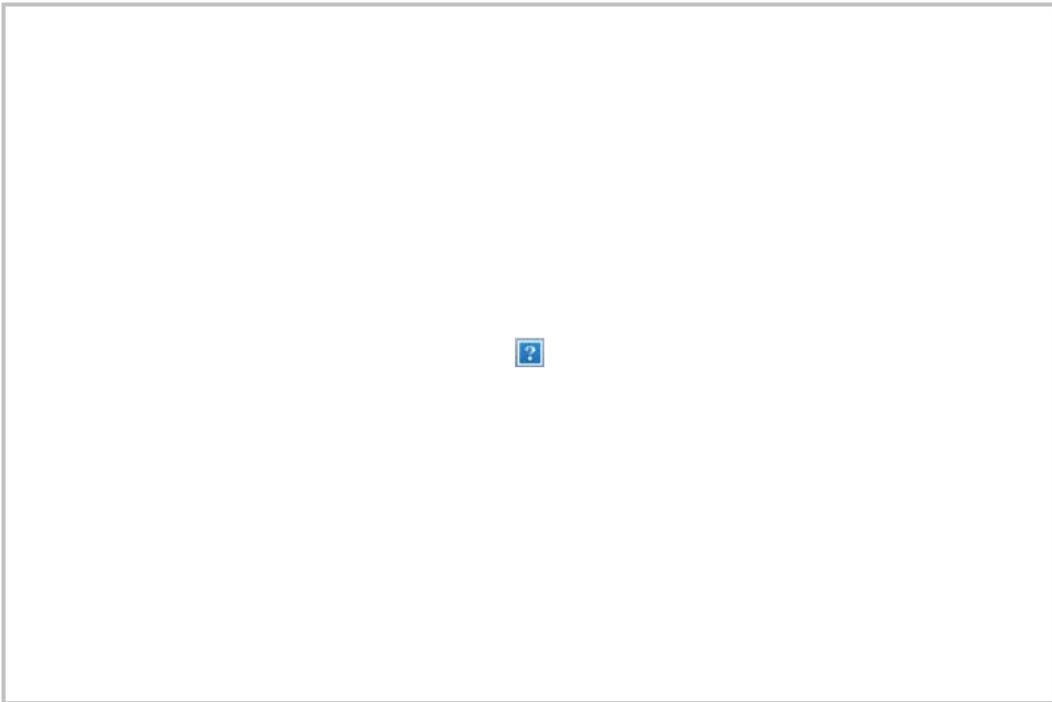
President Donald J. Trump speaks with reporters on the South Lawn, Monday, December 4, 2017, prior to boarding Marine One at the White House in Washington, D.C., en route Salt Lake City, Utah, via Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)



President Donald J. Trump is greeted by an enthusiastic crowd on his arrival to Salt Lake City International Airport, Monday, December 4, 2017, in Salt Lake City.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

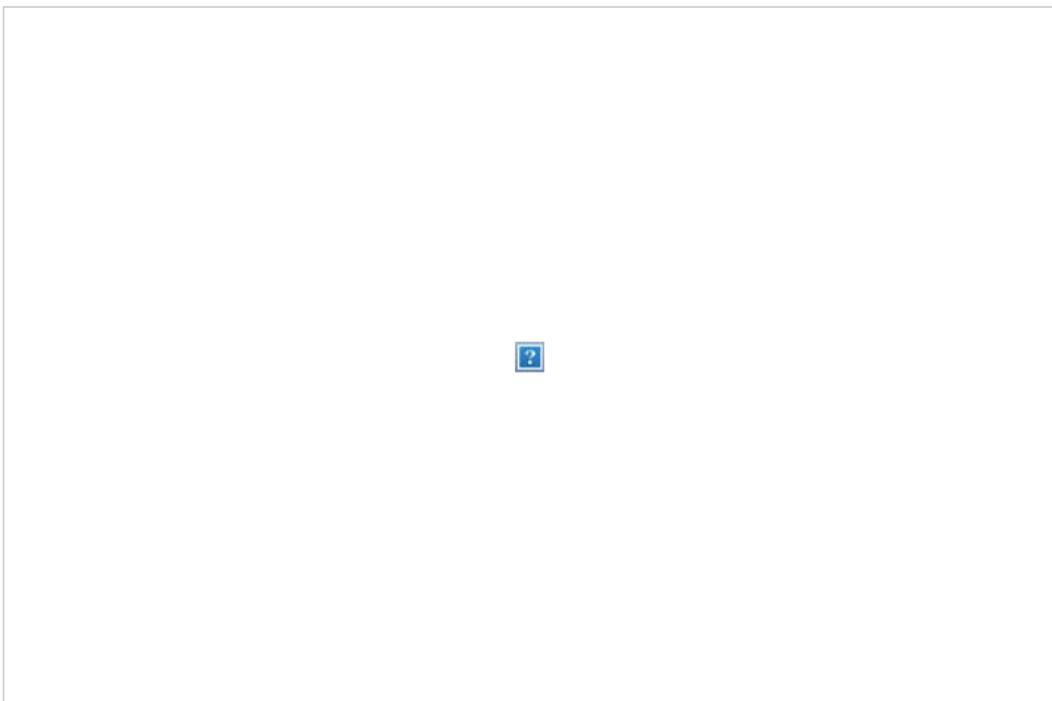


President Donald J. Trump, joined by U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, R-UT, meets with leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Monday, December 4, 2017 Henry Eyring, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Russel Nelson, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Salt Lake City, UT.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



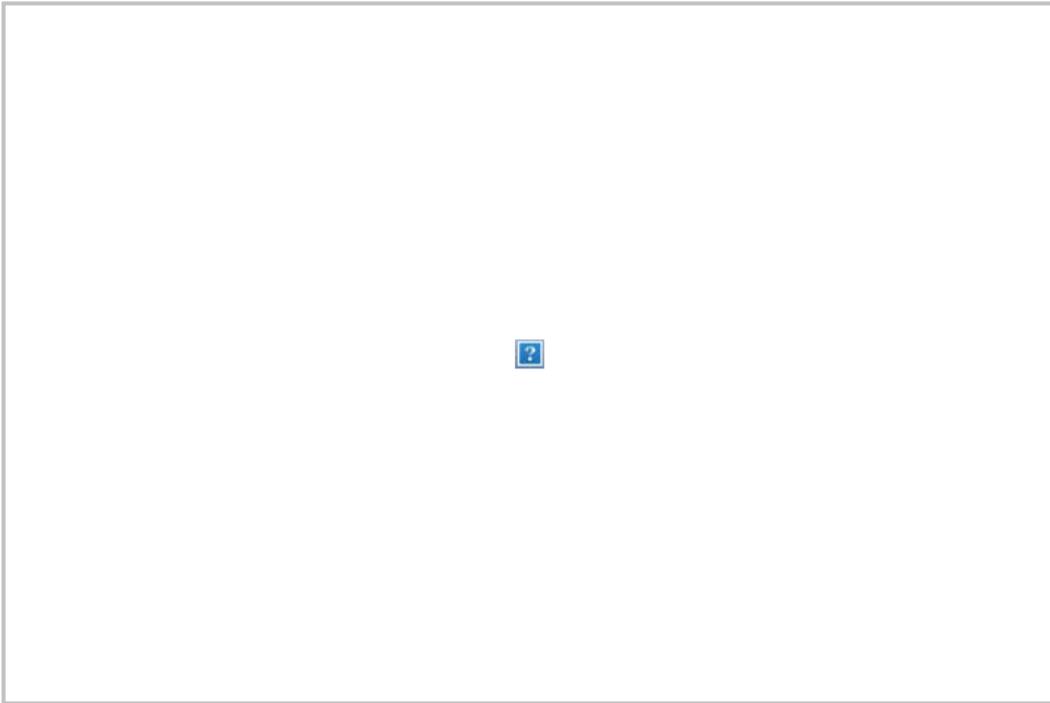
President Donald J. Trump delivers remarks at the Utah State Capitol, Monday, December 4, 2017, prior to signing a pair of Executive Orders to modify the size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments, at ceremonies in Salt Lake City, Utah.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

Tuesday, December 5, 2017



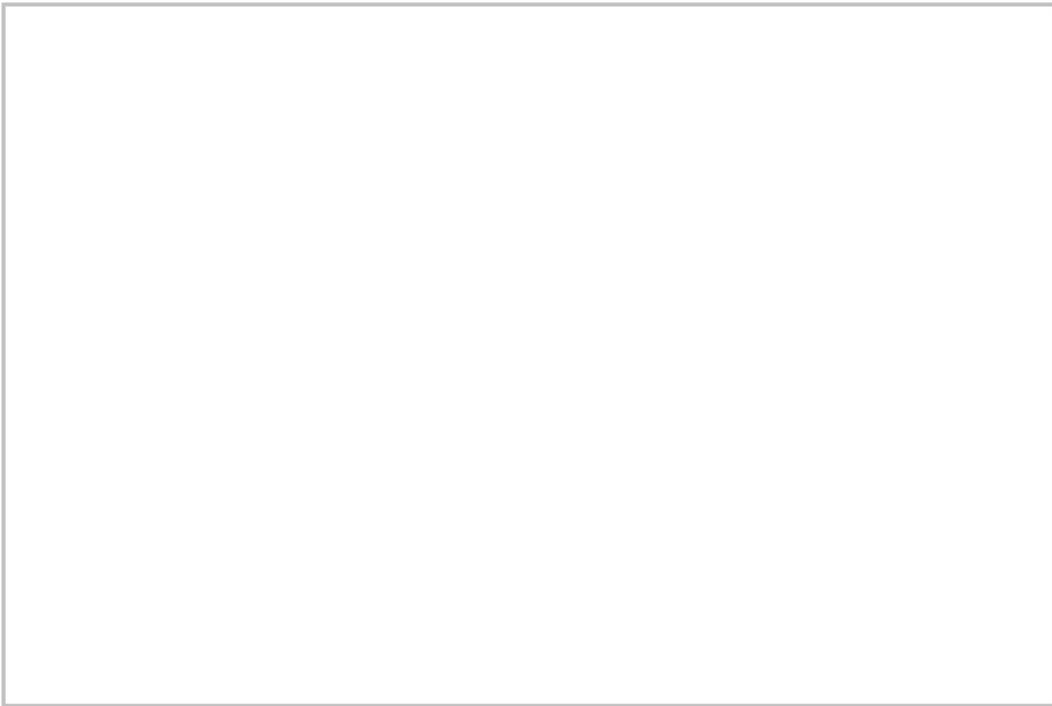
President Donald J. Trump, speaking to members of the White House press corps, is joined by Republican U.S. Senator Jeff Flake, R-AZ, center-right, and U.S. Senator Joni Ernst, center-left, also U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander, R-TN; Deb Fischer, R-NE; Cory Gardner, R-CO; and Lindsey Graham, R-SC,

at a working lunch in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, Tuesday, December 5, 2017, in Washington, D.C., discussing NAFTA and agricultural issues.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

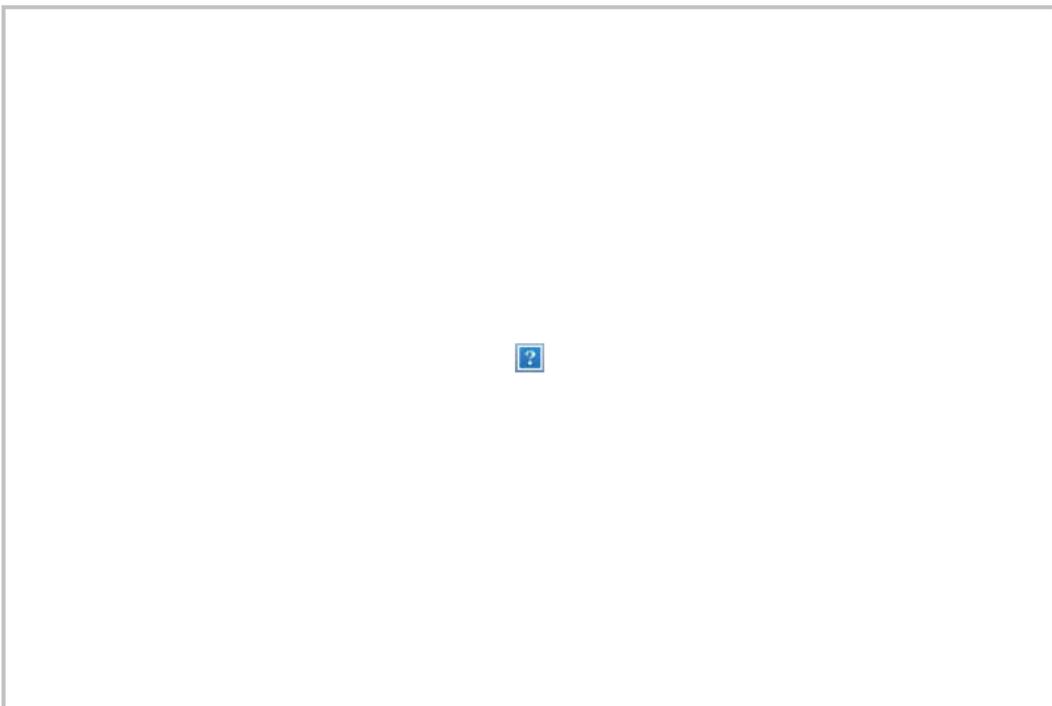


President Donald J. Trump joins in a high-five with Aaron Williams Sr. holding his son, Aaron Williams, during a tax payer family event in the Oval Office at the White House, Tuesday, December 5, 2017, in Washington, D.C., meeting with business owners and middle-class citizens on how tax reform will benefit them.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

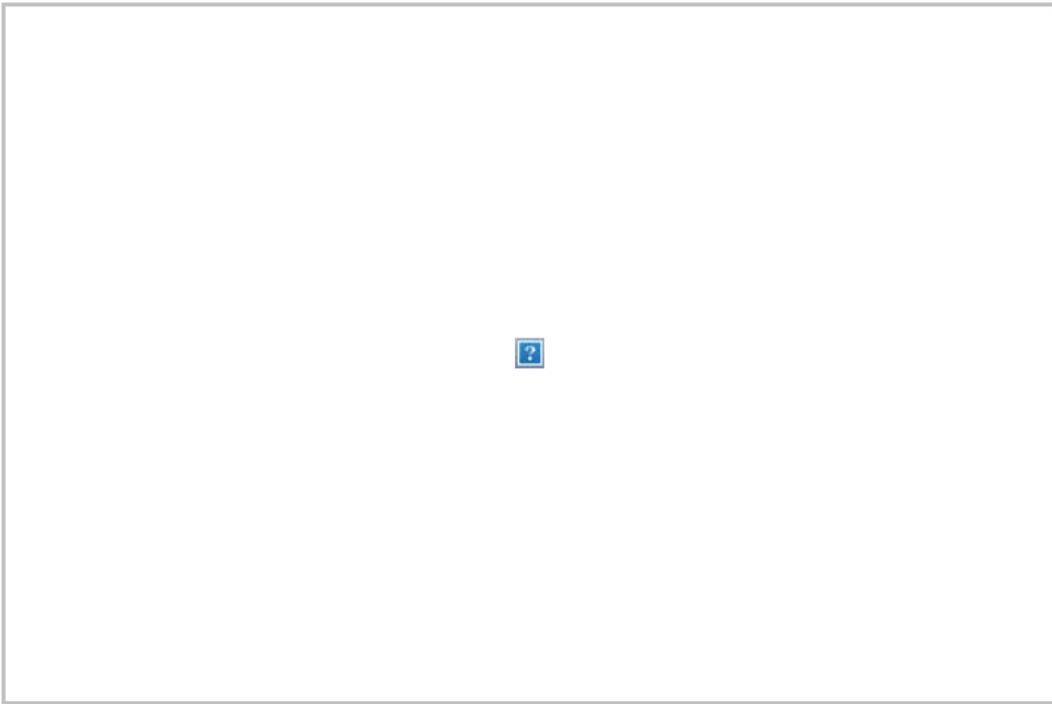
Wednesday, December 6, 2017



President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence participate in a cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room at the White House, Wednesday, December 6, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by D. Myles Cullen)

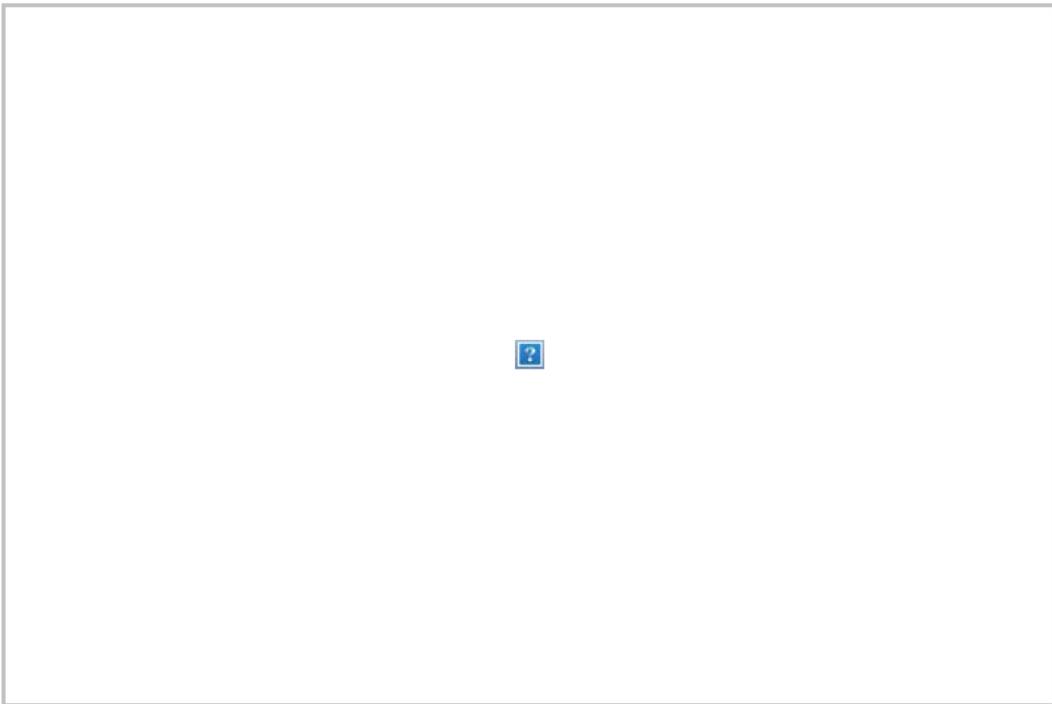


President Donald J. Trump, joined by Vice President Mike Pence, signs an Executive Order for the United States to now recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, at a ceremony in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House, Wednesday, December 6, 2017, in Washington, D.C. President Trump officially announced plans to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



First Lady Melania Trump and Mrs. Karen Pence are greeted by Cecilia Abbott, wife of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, and Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, on their arrival to attend the Harvey Heros Meet and Greet at Corpus Christi International Airport, Wednesday, December 6, 2017, in Corpus Christi, Texas.

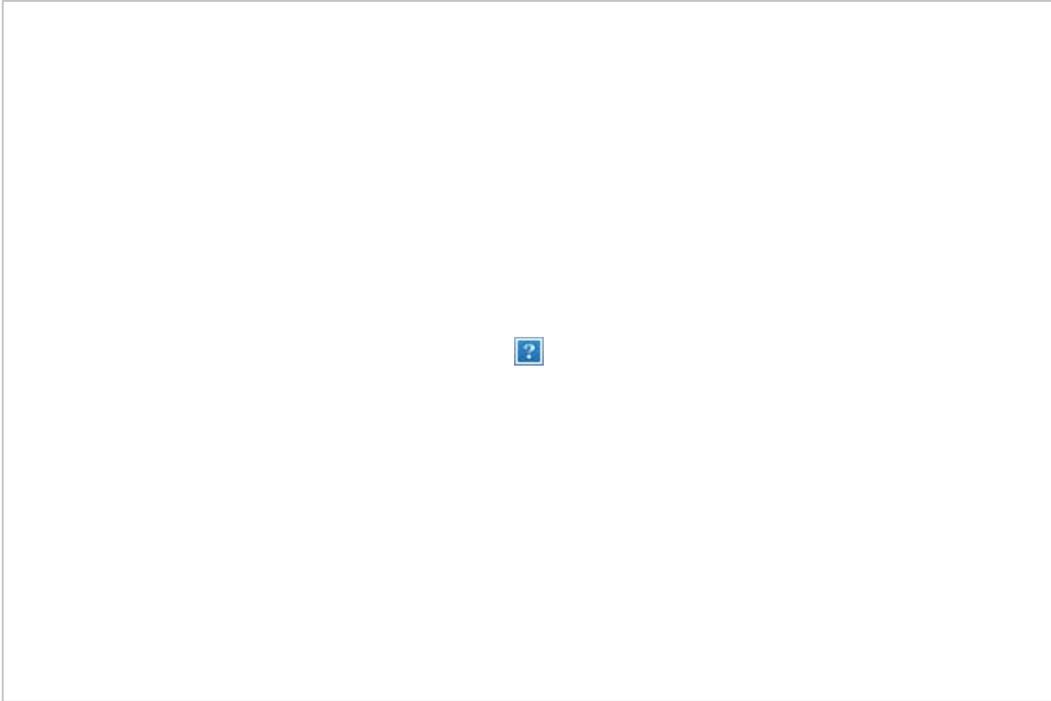
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



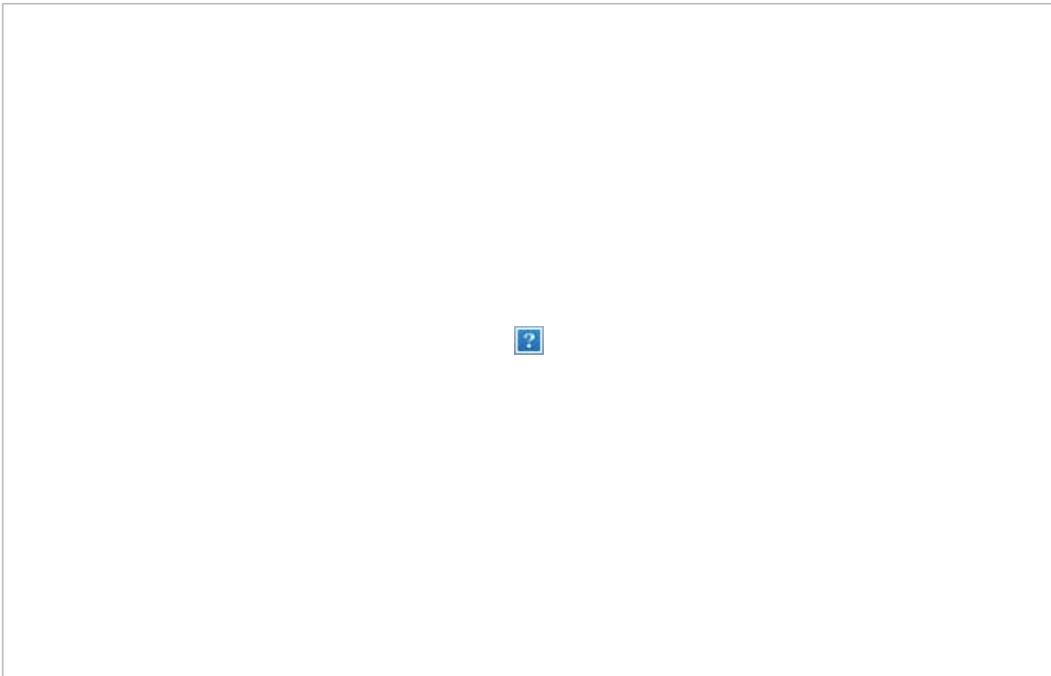
First Lady Melania Trump and Mrs. Karen Pence visit a family impacted by Hurricane Harvey, and observing the progress to rebuild their homes, Wednesday, December 6, 2017, in Rockport, Texas.

(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

Thursday, December 7, 2017

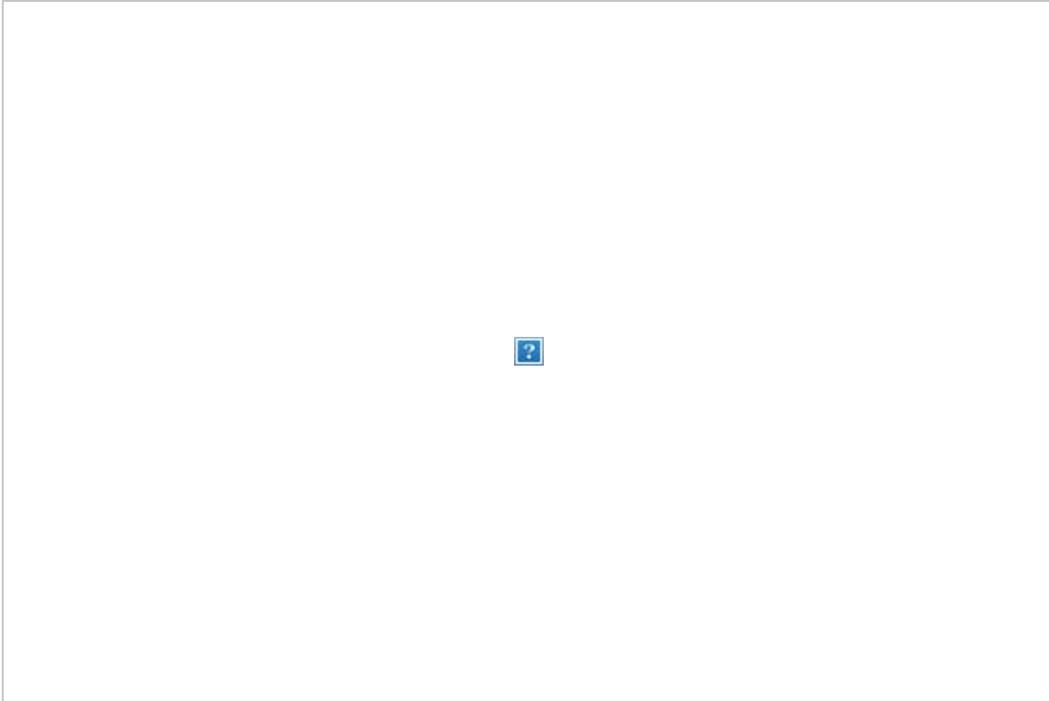


The U.S. flag flies at half-staff over the White House, Thursday December 7, 2017, in Washington, D.C., in honor of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.
(Official White House Photos by Joyce N. Boghosian)



President Donald J. Trump, joined veterans of Pearl Harbor, addresses his remarks prior to signing a proclamation for National Pearl Harbor Reembrace Day in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, Thursday, December 7, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

Friday, December 8, 2017



President Donald J. Trump looks on as Vice President Mike Pence swears-in newly confirmed U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen, Friday, Dec. 8, 2017, in the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington, D.C. A cybersecurity expert, Nielsen, formerly served in the role as chief of staff and then as deputy to former DHS Secretary and now White House Chief of Staff Gen. John Kelly.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

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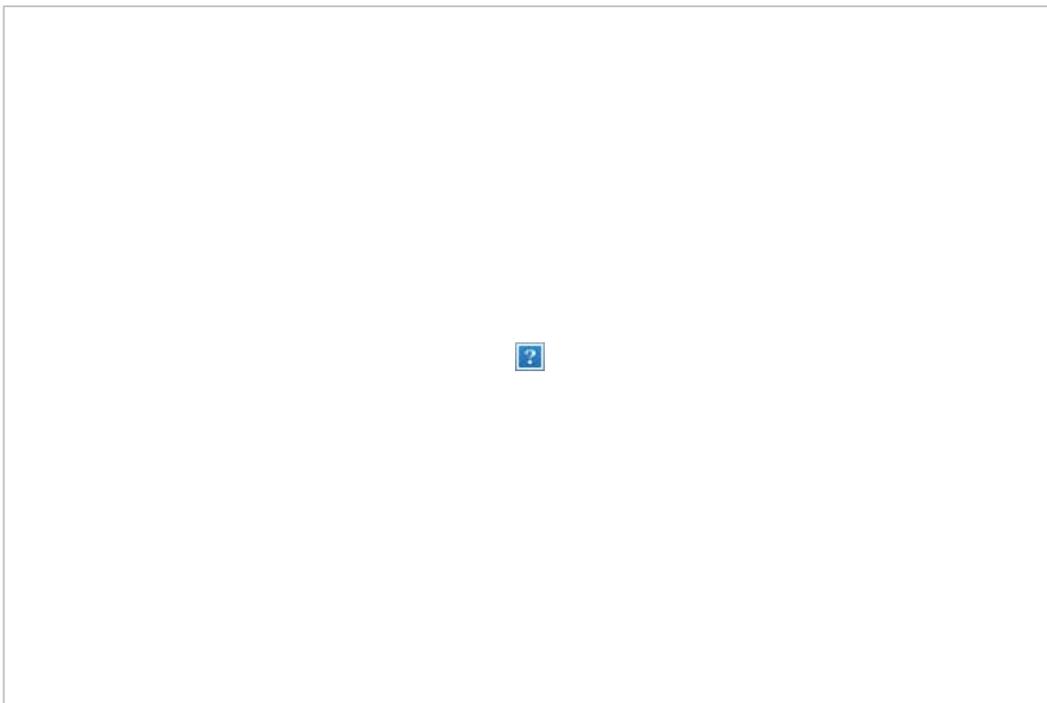
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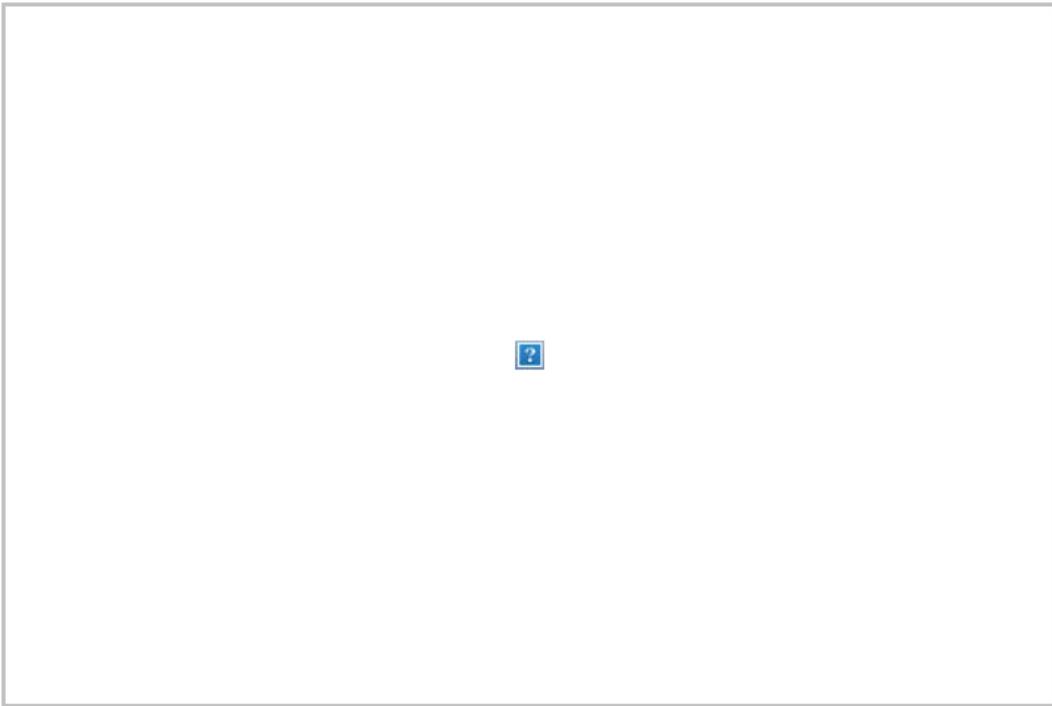
Photos of the Week

Sunday, October 1, 2017

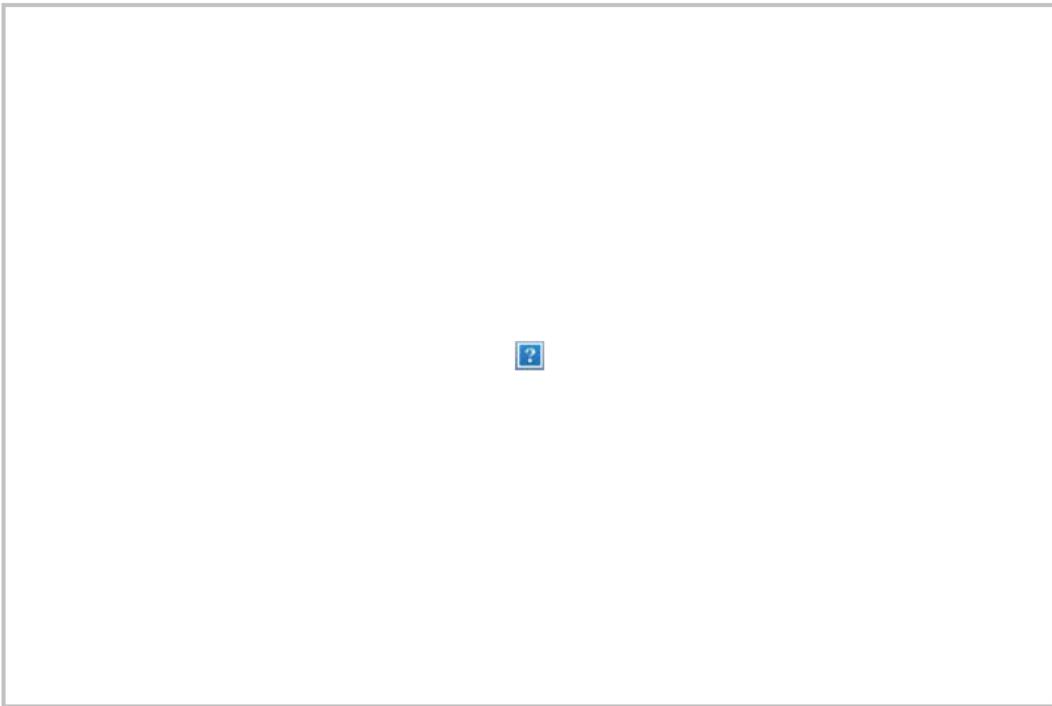


President Donald J. Trump aboard Marine One prepares to land at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, New Jersey, Sunday, October 1, 2017.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

Monday, October 2, 2017

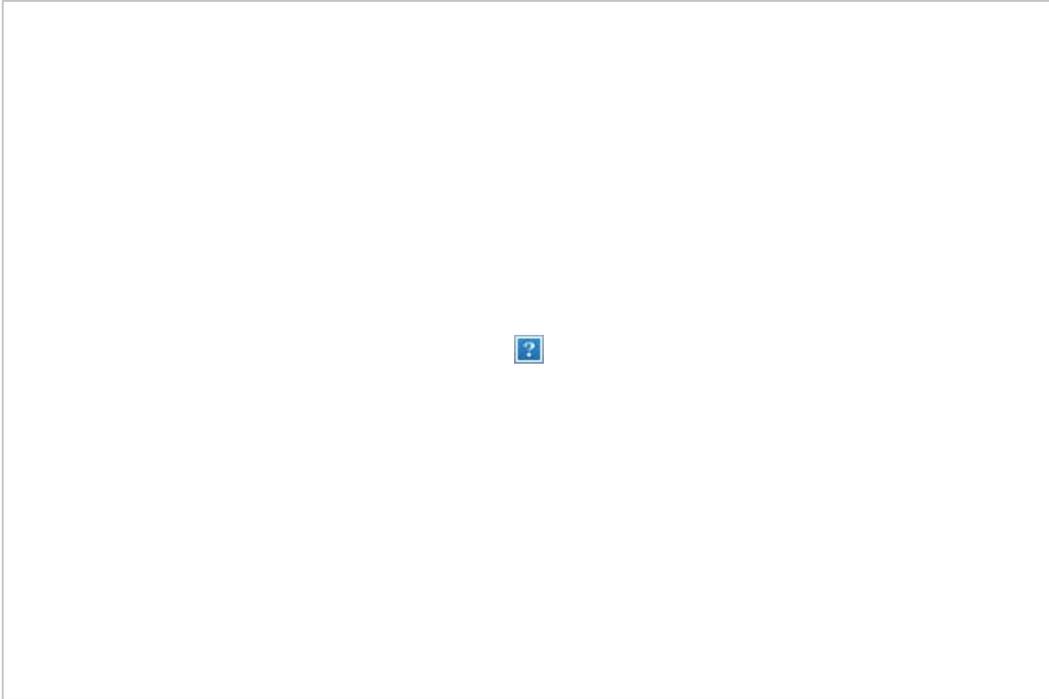


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, joined by Vice President Mike Pence and Mrs. Karen Pence participate in a moment of silence honoring the victims of the Las Vegas Shooting, Monday, October 2, 2017, on the South Lawn of the White House, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

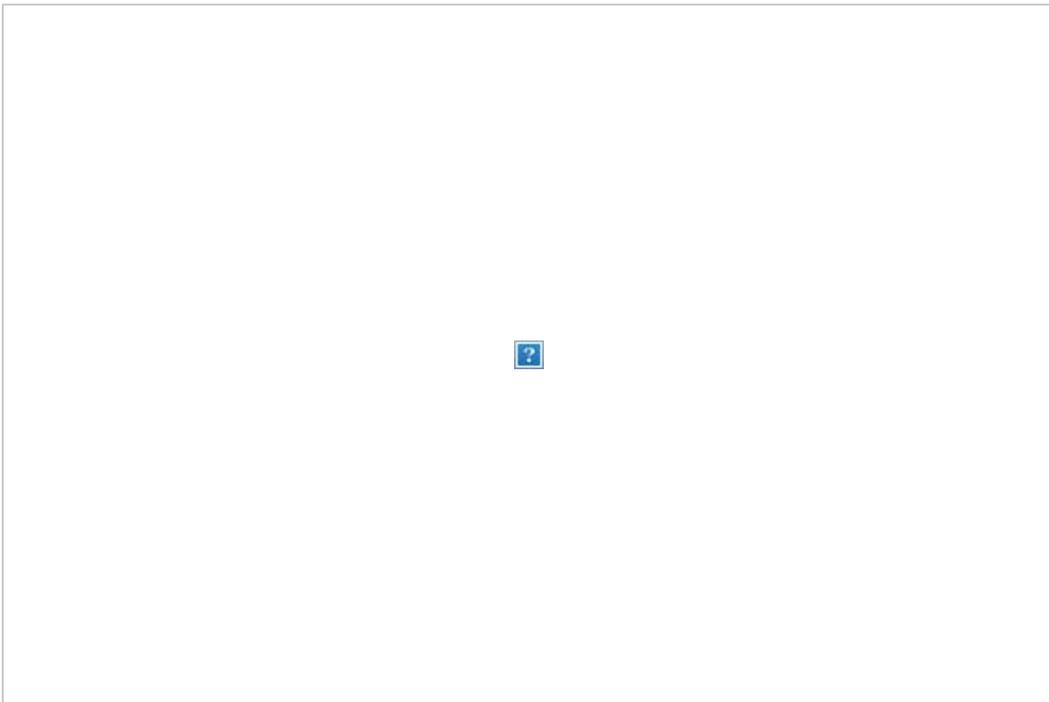


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with Thailand Prime Minister, Prayut Chan-o-cha and his wife Assoc. Prof. Madam Naraporn Chan-o-cha in the Oval Office at the White House, Monday, October 2, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

Tuesday, October 3, 2017



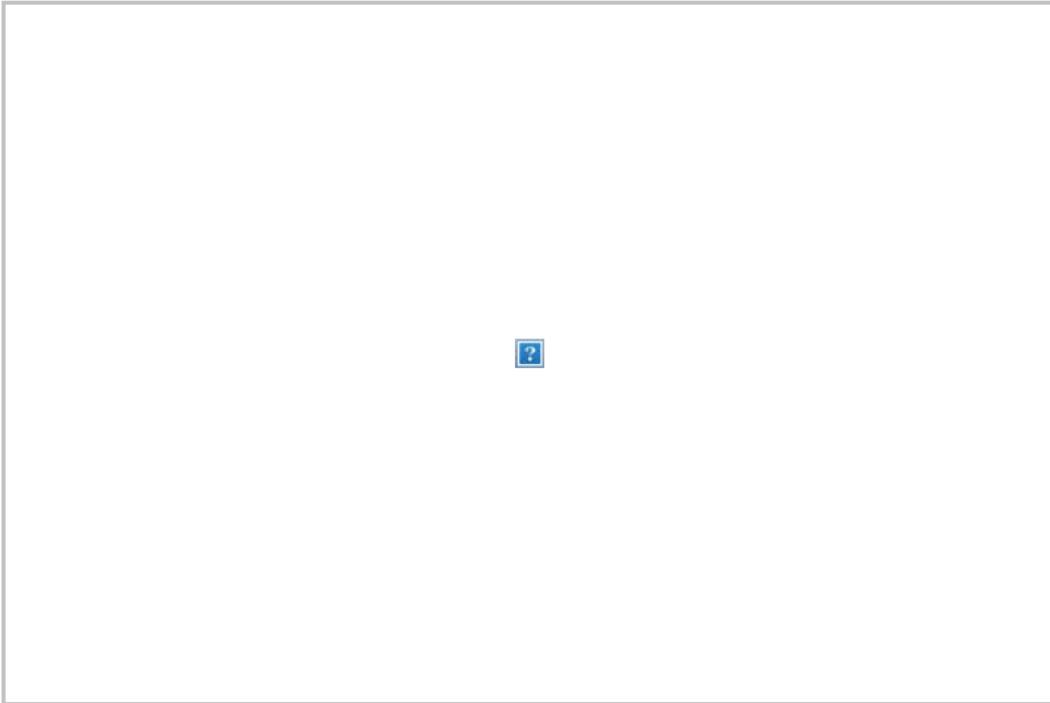
President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump attend a briefing in an aircraft hangar at Muniz Air National Guard Base, joined by Ricardo Rossello, Governor of Puerto Rico, left, and his wife Beatriz Isabel Rossello, right, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, as President Trump receives an update on relief and recovery efforts for those impacted by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico from FEMA, Military personnel and Cabinet members.
(Official White House Photo Andrea Hanks)



President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, joined by FEMA administrator Brock Long,

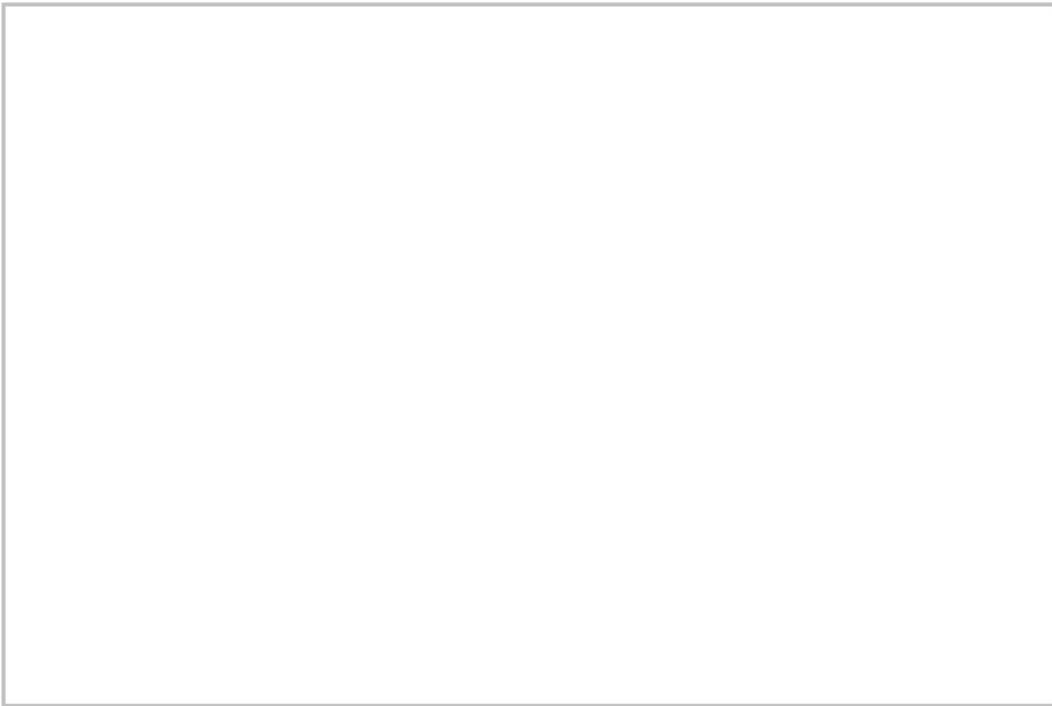
right, meet with individuals, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, as they tour a neighborhood in Carolina, Puerto Rico, impacted by Hurricane Maria. President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump also attended briefings on the ongoing relief and recovery efforts to provide shelter, food, clear roadways, and restore water and electric utilities to the island.

(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

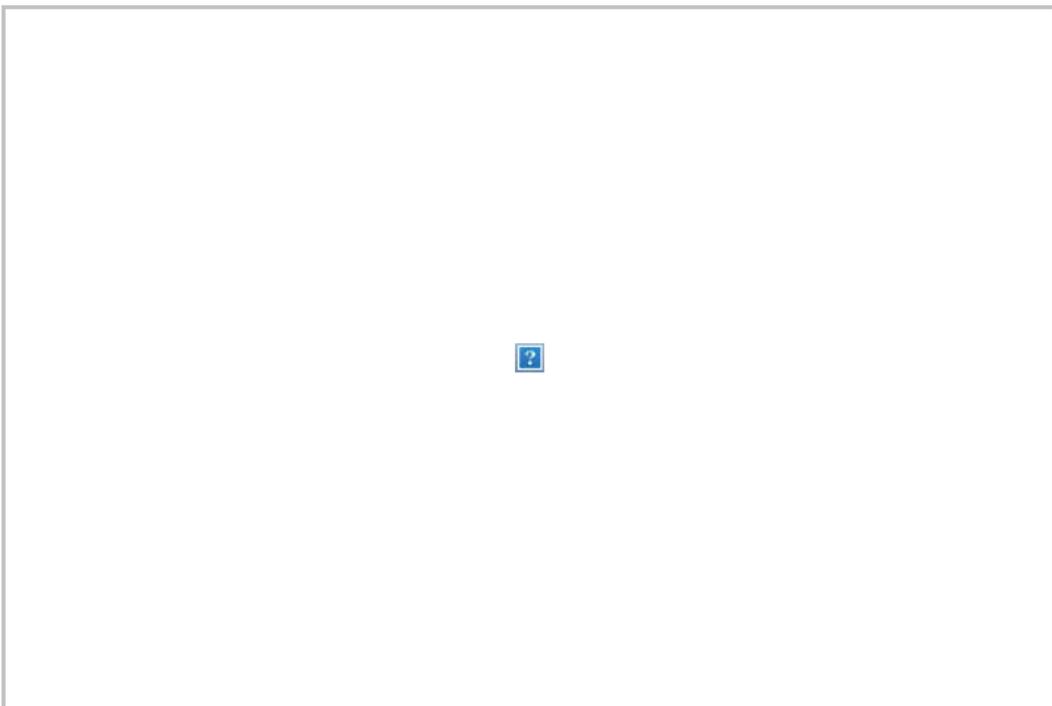


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with individuals and families, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, in Carolina, Puerto Rico, who were impacted by Hurricane Maria. President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump also attended briefings on the ongoing relief and recovery efforts to provide shelter, food, clear roadways, and restore water and electric utilities to the island.

(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

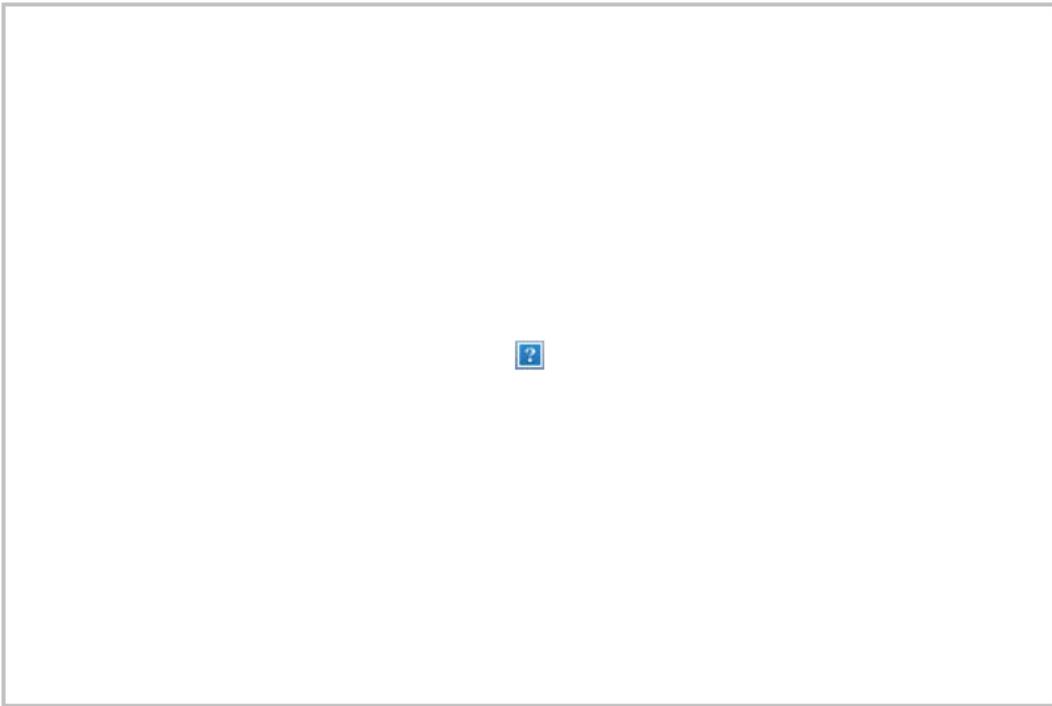


President Donald J. Trump salutes as he and First Lady Melania Trump arrive aboard the USS Kearsarge, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, off the coast of Puerto Rico.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

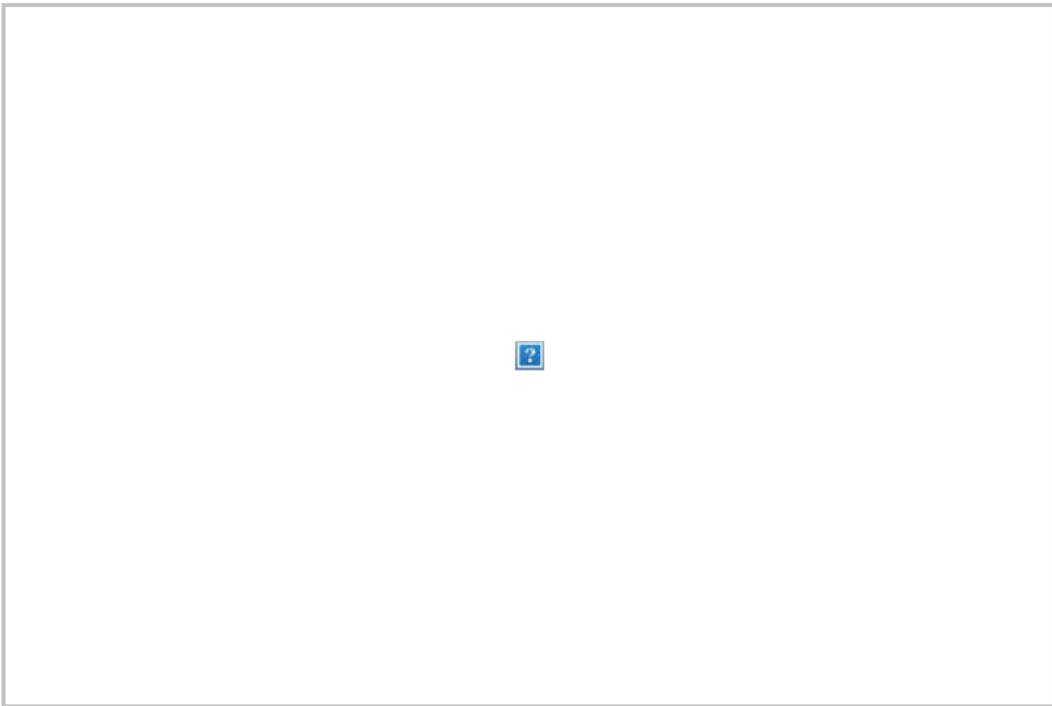


Vice President Mike Pence talks with patrons at Ajo Al's Mexican Café, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, in Phoenix Arizona, after a conversation on tax reform attended by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

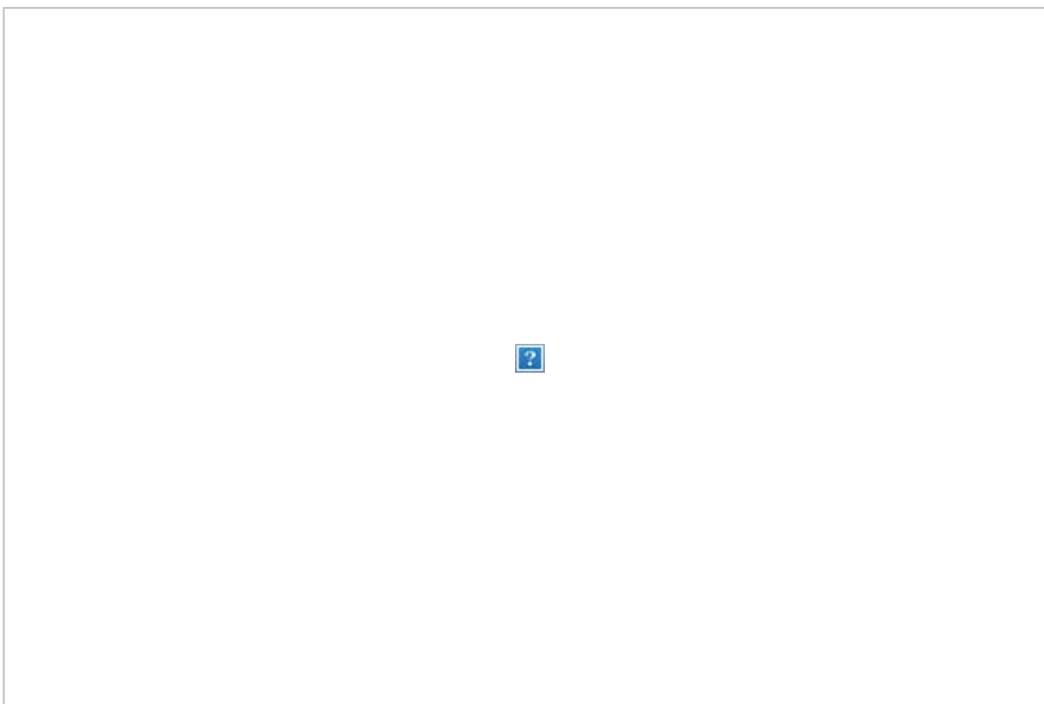


President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump visit with patient Tiffany Huizar, Wednesday, October 4, 2017, at the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada, who was injured in the mass shooting, Sunday, October 1, 2017, in Las Vegas, Nevada.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



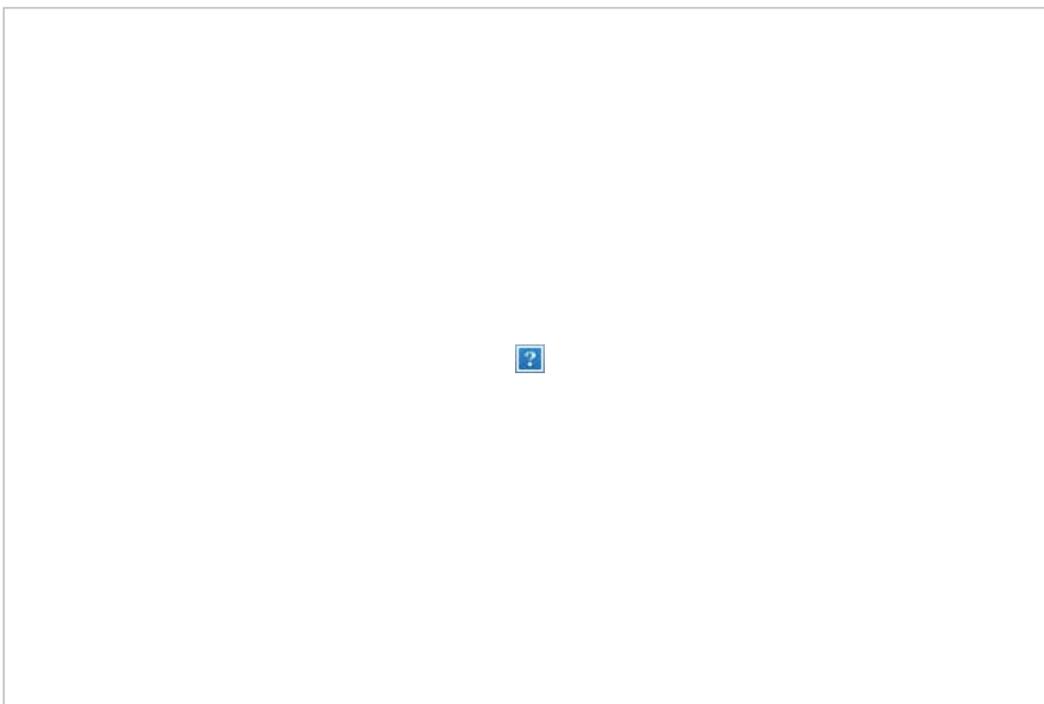
Vice President Mike Pence greets local law enforcement at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, Wednesday, October 4, 2017, prior to boarding Air Force Two en route to Joint Base Andrews, in Maryland.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

Thursday, October 5, 2017



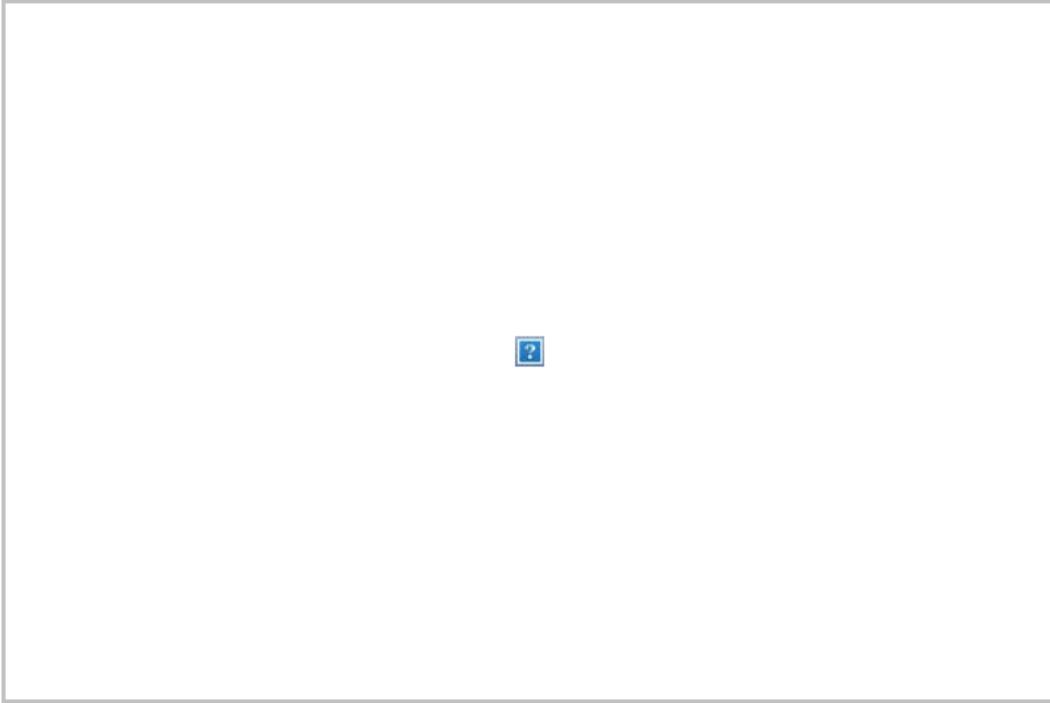
Vice President Mike Pence tours the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, Thursday, October 5, 2017, in Chantilly, Virginia, prior to participating in the inaugural meeting of the National Space Council Meeting.
(Official White House Photo by D. Myles Cullen)

Friday, October 6, 2017



President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, joined by U.S. Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta,

left, and U.S. Treasurer Jovita Carranza, celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, Friday, October 6, 2017, in the East Room at the White House, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)



President Donald J. Trump signs the National Manufacturing Day Proclamation, Friday, October 6, 2017, in the Oval Office at the White House, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

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Sent: Monday, June 19, 2017 12:13 PM
Subject: Pool Report #1

Arrival and Oval Office remarks with President of Panama

The Oval Office remarks from President Trump and Panama's President Juan Carolos Varela did not stray far from the standard expressions of welcome, gratitude and expectations for a productive discussion. The only variation came when the president voiced approval of the way the Panama Canal was constructed before its opening in 1914.

"We have many things to discuss. We're going to spend quite a bit of time today," said the president. "The Panama Canal is doing quite well." Then, looking toward his visitor who was seated in the chair to his right, the president added, "I think we did a good job building it, right?" President Varela responded, "Very good job."

President Trump then resumed: "But things are going well in Panama. The relationship has been very strong. We are developing new things to do and only getting stronger. Also our friendship with the president is very, very good. So I just want to thank you very much. It is an honor to have you at the White House."

President Varela responded: "I would like to thank President Trump and his wife for receiving us today at the White House. It is an honor for me to be here. It is long relationship between Panama and the United States and we face the same challenges in the region. So the idea for this visit is to work closely together as we face the same challenges we have in the region of Central America and Latin America... So I am happy to be here today and for four days in Washington. I am looking forward to this meeting and the meetings with the other directors of the agencies to establish, to work together very closely with the President Trump administration for the future of the region."

While the pool was in the Oval Office, President Varela's wife, journalist Lorena Castillo, was the only one seated on the couch on the side of the Panamanian president. She was wearing green. U.S. First Lady Melania Trump, wearing blue, was on the other couch.

The arrival was brief and as scheduled. The Trumps emerged from the South Diplomatic entrance at 11:34. The car bearing the visiting couple arrived and the two couples shook hands, turned and posed for pictures. After one wave to the cameras, they went inside to the Diplomatic Reception Room. Within two minutes, they emerged and walked along the Colonnade toward the Oval Office, the two presidents went first followed at some distance by the two first ladies. The two presidents waved to the pool cameras. They then paused at the steps leading down to the Rose Garden, turned and waved again at 11:37. By 11:39, they were seated and speaking to the pool.

George Condon, National Journal

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: POOL Report #3 -- More from two Oval Office sprays
Date: Friday, September 01, 2017 3:36:12 PM

From: Alexis Simendinger <asimendinger@realclearpolitics.com>

Date: September 1, 2017 at 3:01:13 PM EDT

Subject: POOL Report #3 -- More from two Oval Office sprays

Pool Report #3 — sending along some summary details from the Oval Office sprays tied to hurricane relief and response today.

Event #1: Faith-based and clergy (plus VP Pence)

You have the transcript... A group clergy and representatives of faith-based organizations, including one woman, stood in a circle around President Trump, who sat at the Resolute desk.

Attendees, per WH spokesperson:

Gary Bauer, President of American Values
Tim Clinton, President of American Association of Christian Counselors
Kelvin Cobaris, Bishop of Impact Orlando
Jentezen Franklin, Senior Pastor of Free Chapel
Harry Jackson, Senior Pastor of Hope Christian Church
Robert Jeffress, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas
Todd Lamphere, Staff Pastor of New Destiny Christian Church
Johnnie Moore, Founder of The KAIROS Company
Tom Mullins, Senior Pastor of Christ Fellowship
Frank Page, CEO of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention
Ralph Reed, Founder of Faith and Freedom Coalition
Jay Strack, President of Student Leadership University
Paula White, Senior Pastor of New Destiny Christian Church
Pasqual Urrabazo, Senior Pastor of International Church of Las Vegas
Ramiro Pena, Senior Pastor and President of Ramiro Pena Ministries
Mario Bramnick, President of Latino Coalition for Israel

The president read from notes on a double-spaced piece of paper, which rested on top of a binder on the desk. The binder contained a proclamation for a Day of Prayer for the Victims of Hurricane Harvey and for our National Response and Recovery Efforts, designated Sunday, Sept. 3. The president signed a piece of paper. The guests applauded when the president completed his signature.

Eight of the guests, including Reed and Bauer, offered remarks at the president's invitation. One guest (Trump called him "Pastor Jeffress") led the group in prayer. At least five hands could be seen stretched out to touch the president's suit jacket on his shoulders while the group prayed with bowed heads. The president closed his eyes, bowed his head slightly and kept his two hands clasped together on top of the desk during the prayer. Pence clasped his hands in front of his light gray suit jacket and closed his eyes during the prayer, as well.

Trump, wearing a blue suit and pale blue & white checked tie and cufflinks, called the assembled group of guests "people of faith" who he commended as "respected" and "loved."
The day of prayer was for everyone Sunday, but especially for those "horribly affected" by the hurricane disaster, he said.

Spotted in the Oval Office, standing behind the cameras and POOLers, were Staff Secretary Rob

Porter, Jared Kushner, Dan Scavino (recording the event with a smart phone), Sarah Sanders & Lindsay Walters, Keith Schiller, and CoS John Kelly, who came in late while tucking in his shirt under his suit jacket (he departed before all the remarks concluded).

Event #2: Disaster support representatives + First Lady and VP Pence)

Attendees, per WH spokesperson:

- Commissioner David Hudson, national commander, The Salvation Army USA
- Gail J. McGovern, president and CEO, The American Red Cross
- Kevin Ezell, president of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief

The president referred to two pages of single-spaced remarks on paper on the desk in front of him. His guests were to his right. Pence to his left. Mrs. Trump behind the seated president.

"These people have been absolutely incredible with what they've done...helping people affected by Hurricane Harvey," he said, later commending them after each spoke, adding "great job, great job."

The president said the hurricane was of "epic proportions." He said the people of Texas and Louisiana were "hit very hard." At one point, he referred to a map of Eastern/Coastal Texas, showing it to the cameras to underscore where help was deployed.

Trump called the federal, state and local coordination "pretty much unprecedented."

Trump, reading from his prepared notes, praised the organizations represented by his guests, and the many nonprofits working to help the victims of the hurricane disaster. He noted that they "represent the generosity and determination and unbreakable spirit of the American people."

The vice president, asked to speak, noted that he had visited Texas on Thursday and had witnessed the "resilience, the fortitude and the strength" of those impacted by the storm and flooding. Pence said the administration "will be seeking resources from Congress," and he referenced the website, NVOAD.org (national volunteer organizations in action).

The first lady wore a black, sleeveless dress with diagonal buttons across the bodice, cinched with a thin black belt. The president asked his wife if she wanted to say anything, and when she was finished, praised her, adding that the first lady had not known in advance that he would ask her to speak off-the-cuff.

"I want to thank all the volunteers all across the country," the first lady said. "Fantastic job." She noted that she and the president would be in Texas on Saturday. Her message to disaster victims, she added, gazing into the cameras, was, "be strong, and everything will be okay at the end."

Spotted in the Oval Office were Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert (thanked by Trump during his remarks) and Staff Secretary Rob Porter.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report #3 - Three Seas family photo and roundtable
Date: Thursday, July 06, 2017 5:38:54 AM

From: "Phillip, Abby" <abby.phillip@washpost.com>
Date: July 6, 2017 at 11:35:16 AM GMT+2
Subject: Pool report #3 - Three Seas family photo and roundtable

President Trump and leaders of Baltic and Central European countries entered the Counsel Room with the Royal Palace at 11:13 am local time. They stood for several minutes for the "family photo."

Trump separately greeted Polish President Duda and Croatian President Graves-Kitarovic, shaking their hands and saying a few words that were inaudible to your pooler.

Minutes before the heads of state arrived, your pooler spotted the U.S and Polish delegations entering an adjacent room where a Three Seas roundtable will be held. Among them: Ross, Kushner, Mnuchin, and NSC spokesman Michael Anton.

Your pool entered the Assembly Room within the Palace, a massive gold ornate room where a large Oval table has been set up. (Photo attached.)

Trump sat beside Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin on his right and President Duda on his left.

"This is a beautiful room, I must say. I love beautiful rooms," Trump commented.

Wilbur Ross and Jared Kushner sat behind Trump to his right.

This region has a special importance to me. As you know, my wife is from Slovenia," Trump added.

"We stand with the Three Seas nations," Trump said. "We welcome his historic opportunity to deepen our economic partnership with your region."

"Your people have been held back by the old roads, railway and pipelines..."

Trump said the US supports the creation of the Three Seas business forum.

He commented on US economy, stating that the stock market had reached historic highs. "We picked up in market value almost \$4 trillion dollars" since the election, Trump said.

"Personally, I've picked up nothing. Everybody else is getting very rich. That's ok."

Trump congratulated Poland on the receipt of the first liquefied natural gas shipment from the United States.

"The United States will never use energy to coerce your nations," Trump said.

"We stand ready willing and able to help with your energy needs and other needs."

Your pool was escorted out just as the President of Croatia began to speak at 11:33 am.

We are now holding...



Sent from my iPhone.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report #3
Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 11:32:32 AM

From: Kumar, Anita [mailto:akumar@mcclatchydc.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 5, 2017 11:30 AM
Subject: Pool report #3

The White House passes along this information to the pool:

Today, the President will host four families from around the country in the Oval Office to hear how tax reform will empower them to grow their businesses and provide a better life for themselves and their children. They will be joined by Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway and United States Treasurer Jovita Carranza, who were both small business owners prior to joining the Administration.

They were chosen to ensure that the group would be a good representation of the businesses around the country that stand to benefit from tax reform. Some of the individuals were also mentioned by the President during his speeches on tax reform (highlighted in yellow).

Jessica Unruh – Representative for the Coteau Properties Co. Freedom Mine In Mercer County, North Dakota; Chairwoman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in North Dakota legislature, and cattle rancher

Hometown: Beulah, North Dakota

Personal Story: Jessica is an environmental specialist with The Coteau Properties Company Freedom Mine in Beulah, North Dakota. The Freedom Mine is one of the largest lignite coalmines in the United States. Jessica provides a unique perspective on the impact tax reform would have on North Dakota's energy industry as she serves in a management capacity with an energy company and as head of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Jessica understands the important role the energy sector plays in North Dakota's economy, and with some energy prices declining, believes the federal government can help provide momentum by enacting comprehensive tax reform. Jessica feels North Dakota's energy companies would be more inclined to hire and grow if the business tax rate were lowered. She also believes that preferential tax treatment of certain types of energy is unproductive and is harmful to North Dakota's largest energy companies.

Jessica is also a mother of 2, was one of the youngest members ever to serve in the North Dakota Senate, and owns a family cattle ranch. As active professionally as Jessica is, she anticipates that the type of middle class tax relief the President has called for would be a major help to her family and allow Jessica to provide her family with more.

Aaron Williams – Director of Field Marketing and Analyst Relations at Topcoder

Business Locations: Indianapolis

Hometown: Indianapolis

Personal Story: Aaron, married with two young children, is an employee of Topcoder, a creative company that crowdsources solutions to companies' IT needs. Through his business, he sees first-hand how our sky-high corporate tax rate encourages offshoring and stifles the ability for American companies to reinvest in their employees. Aaron witnesses the disabling effect of our tax code at work, and then experiences it, first-hand at home. He and his wife are blessed with the opportunity to work in an emerging technology sector, but the complex personal tax system forced upon his family a burden of thousands of additional, unexpected dollars in federal taxes. When filing his federal tax return, he craves simplicity, as do many other Americans. And ultimately, he wants to reduce his tax burden so that he may reinvest in his children, providing for them opportunities in life that he did not have.

Jason Beardsly – owner of The Underground Movement

Hometown: Columbus, Ohio

Personal Story: Jason Beardsley is a Green Beret and Special Operations Forces veteran who founded his company, 'The Underground Movement' (TUM), in 2012 after more than 20 years of distinguished military service. TUM is an apparel company that celebrates rugged individualism with unique graphic designs

on custom T-shirts and other wearable pieces; all made in the United States. Jason and his employees bring a passion for American exceptionalism – honoring those men, women, and events that shaped our nation into the land of liberty.

As Jason puts it, he went from “the most interesting job in the world” to entrepreneurship. Jason: “I went from chasing terrorist to chasing cotton.”

Jason recently transitioned from a brick and mortar retail operation to an online business model to keep pace with the changing dynamics of the apparel business.

Jason insisted a reduction in the business tax rate would allow him to put more money into research and development and improve his company’s products. Jason believes superior product offerings are his key to sustained growth for his firm.

Jason believes tax reform would further enhance “the American resurgence” already underway under the Trump administration. As a business owner, Jason can sense the improved economic confidence that everyday Americans are only recently experiencing and believes that a tax cut for middle class Americans will benefit companies like his.

Brian Steorts – owner of Flags of Valor

Hometown: Alexandria, Virginia

Personal Story: Brian is a veteran of 15 and a half years. After 8 consecutive combat deployments to the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa, he found himself rehabbing from a service-related injury. He needed a new way to focus his mind while he rebuilt his body.

Brian began woodworking initially as a means of therapy, but his woodworking eventually went from a hobby to an obsession. After donating several pieces he created to the families of fallen EOD soldiers, he realized there was a lot more work to do.

Brian transformed his passion into Flags of Valor, a Veteran-owned, Veteran-operated, Veteran-made company, crafting beautiful works of American art. His dream became a reality – employing veterans, raising money for veteran and first-responder charities, and providing Americans with an exceptional product.

Brian launched the company two years ago and currently has two facilities. Has over 27 employees, 18 of which are former combat veterans, the majority of which were wounded during their time in service.

Brian plans to open additional facilities soon. Brian would like to open his facilities near VA hospitals to ensure he can continue to hire veterans for full time work and also offer transitional employment while they` are staying in the hospital.

Brian believes that a cut in the business tax rate would help bring his growth plans closer to a reality. Brian prides himself on the fact that 18 veterans and their families rely on his business for their livelihood and wants to continue to grow to provide opportunities to more veterans.

--

Anita Kumar

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: pool report #3/White House Christmas tree lighting starting
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2017 5:44:19 PM

I From: "Gillman, Todd" <tgillman@dallasnews.com>

L

Subject: pool report #3/White House Christmas tree lighting starting

Greetings from President's Park on The Ellipse, on a lovely late fall evening for the National Christmas tree lighting ceremony. Temperature in the mid-50s with little breeze.

The program will air Monday night Dec. 4 on the Hallmark Channel. (Main page of program attached.) The co-hosts were Kathie Lee Gifford and Dean Cain. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is scheduled to introduce the first couple. The stage was covered in red carpet and decorated generously with poinsettias, and boxes stacked like Christmas presents, wrapped in red and white paper – designs included waves, reindeer, and paisley – and with golden ribbon and bows. The crowd waited patiently and, fortunately, without discomfort on a mild evening.

The pool was seated in the front VIP section, facing the stage and the U.S. Navy band. Seat labels nearby were labeled for House Whip Steve Scalise, “Kushner family” and “Donald Trump Jr. family.” Don Jr. and his wife walked in, with Tiffany Trump, and Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, with kids, a few minutes before the 5 p.m. scheduled start time.

The U.S. Navy Sea Chanters began singing Christmas carols, Carol of the Bells, then The Little Drummer Boy while awaiting the president. A lectern with presidential seal was on stage surrounded on three sides -- open facing the White House -- with protective glass.

According to the White House Historical Association, the first Christmas tree in the White House was placed in the second floor Yellow Oval Room in 1889, during the Benjamin Harrison administration. Grover Cleveland was the first to use electric lights on a family Christmas tree, in 1894. And Calvin Coolidge was the first president to preside over the National Christmas tree lighting ceremony on the Ellipse, in 1923. More [here](#).

Warm-up show included a chat in the audience with a few Girl Scouts from Kentucky. One girl said she wanted a hover board, others said they wanted an American Girl doll. One wanted a pony.

More to come.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report #4
Date: Monday, May 29, 2017 12:05:54 PM

From: Chris Johnson <cjohnson@washblade.com>
Date: May 29, 2017 at 12:02:24 PM EDT
Subject: Pool Report #4

POTUS entered the amphitheater at 11:15, joining the official party to the sound of the "Hail to the Chief" and applause.

Beginning his remarks at around 11:30, POTUS in honor of Memorial Day paid tribute to America's fallen troops, saying words cannot express "the purity of their love of the totality of their courage."

POTUS observed both the sacrifice of the fallen as well as their families.

"Special, special people," POTUS said.

Among the losses POTUS acknowledged was the loss of DHS Secretary John Kelly's son Robert in Afghanistan.

"Today, 300 million American hearts are joined together with yours," POTUS said.

Acknowledging Gold Star families in general, POTUS said "they were angels sent to us by God, and they share one title, the title of hero."

POTUS also the military service during WWII of former Sen. Bob Dole, who was present with his wife Sen. Elizabeth Dole.

POTUS told the stories of other fallen troops. One of them, Andrew Byers, died in Afghanistan protecting an Afghan soldier and U.S. troops after running through a "hail of bullets" to rescue them, POTUS said. POTUS recognized his parent David and Rose Byers in the audience.

Also noted by POTUS was a service member named Chris. POTUS recognized his wife Jane who was present. Your pooler missed Chris' last name.

"To every Gold Star family, God is with you and your loved ones are with Him," POTUS said.

"Their stories are now woven into the soul of our nation, into the Stars and Stripes of our flag and into the beating hearts of our great, great people," POTUS said.

POTUS also recognized the Unknown soldiers, saying they "fought and died in a greet and noble act."

POTUS concluded his remarks at 11:51 and was escorted back to motorcade.

The first speaker at the event was Chair of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunlap, who urged attendees to "do something more" than mark the graves of fallen service members on Memorial Day and "find a method" of serving the nation.

Introducing POTUS was Defense Secretary James Mattis, who called Arlington Cemetery the place of "America's courageous dead" and told his audience to remember the fallen with acts in their memory.

--

Chris Johnson
Washington Blade

Chief Political & White House Reporter

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report #5
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:57:13 AM

From: Annie Karni <akarni@politico.com>

Date: May 22, 2017 at 1:52:45 PM GMT+3

Subject: Pool Report #5

Sorry for the delay. We were wheels up from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, via helicopter, at 1:28 p.m. We were wheels down at 1:40 p.m., but Marine One has not yet landed.

Here is the report about the welcome ceremony:

POTUS and FLOTUS, dressed in a bright, white skirt suit, deplaned at 12:39 p.m. The moment was commemorated with a short trumpet honk.

The greeting for POTUS in Israel couldn't have been more different from the greeting in Saudi Arabia. The red carpet here at Ben Gurion Airport was flanked with IDF soldiers in uniform — many of them women wearing skirts that revealed their legs, and carrying machine guns. Some people in the audience were wearing white baseball caps that read: "Ever Stronger: President Trump in Israel 2017," and featured a picture of an American and an Israeli flag.

Netanyahu and his wife, Sara, dressed in a red dress, greeted POTUS and FLOTUS at the bottom of the stairs, along with President Rivlin and his wife.

Staffers spotted seated at the welcome ceremony: Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump (wearing an incredibly conservative, longsleeved outfit and a fascinator), Hope Hicks, Dina Powell, Jason Greenblatt, Gary Cohn, Stephen Miller, H.R. McMaster and Ambassador Dermer.

Trump made a circuit down the carpet and around the IDF soldiers and then stood at attention next to FLOTUS and the Netanyahus for the American and the Israeli national anthems.

There were welcome remarks from Rivlin, Netanyahu and Trump, in that order, all underscoring the importance of the unbreakable bond between Israel and the United States.

Some extended excerpts. Pardon the lack of punctuation and/or caps.

Rivlin: "your visit is a symbol of the unbreakable bond between Israel and America. you are the president of Israel's greatest, most important ally. you are a true friend of Israel and of the Jewish people. mr. president — the world needs a strong United States. the Middle East needs a strong United States. Israel needs a strong united states. and may i say, the united states also needs a strong israel.

"in the middle east, an area that suffers from terrorism and madness, the partnership between the united states and israel shines like a beacon of liberty and promise the bond between us is one between states but also between people. we share common values, and we share the hope for peace. the people of israel are excited by your arrival and have great expectations for this visit. we thank you for your commitment to israel's ability to face the threats of today and of tomorrow."

"mr. president, today i will have the honor to host you in jerusalem. we are honored to have you here with us as we mark 50 years of jerusalem day.... jerusalem is the beating heart of the jewish people as it has been for 3,000 years. mr. president, you come here to israel from saudi arabia. you will be at the western wall and visit the holy church and then you are going to the vatican. in just one journey you will visit the three holiest places for islam, judaism and christianity. we each have different beliefs, but more importantly the same god. we can work together toward a better future, we can continue to do so together mr. president.

"welcome to israel. god bless you, god bless the first lady, god bless america, god bless israel."

Netanyahu welcome remarks extended excerpt:

"Never before has the first foreign trip of a president of the united states included a visit to israel. thank you mr. president, thank you for this powerful expression of your friendship to israel. yesterday in Saudi Arabia you delivered a forceful speech of clarity and conviction. you called on all nations to drive out terrorists and extremists, you called for the forces of civilization to confront the forces of barbarism. for 69 years, israel has been doing precisely that. we've been on the front lines...we've fought terrorism, and we've built a modern vibrant democratic jewish state. in doing so we've protected all faiths: muslims, christians everyone.

throughout the middle east, christian communities are decimated, minorities persecuted. here in israel, we're proud to have growing and thriving christian communities. and we guarantee the rights of all.

"we've already made peace with egypt. ..israels hand is extend to all nations, including the palestinains. ... mr. president, you just flew from riyadh to tel aviv, i hope that one day an israeli prime minster will be able to fly from tel aviv to riyadh. may your first trip to our region prove to be historic...

"donald and melania, on behalf of the government and the people of israel we welcome you to the state of israel may god bless you mr. president may god bless israel and may god bless the united states of america."

Trump remarks, extended excerpts:

"Thank you and shalom. it is wonderful to be here in israel. to president rivlin, mrs rivlin, PM netanyau, mrs netanyahu, i'm deeply grateful for your invitation and very, very honored to be with you....i have come to the sacred and ancient land to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between the United States and the state of Israel. in this land so rich in history, israel has built one of the worlds great civilizations, a strong, resilient determined and prosperous nation. it is also a nation forged in the commitment that we will never allow the horrors and atrocities of the last century to be repeated. "

He said he wants to help "build a future where the nations of the region are at peace and all of our children can grow, and grow up strong, and grow up free from terrorism and violence."

In Saudi Arabia, he said, "i have found new reasons for hope. just concluded a visit to Saudi Arabia. yesterday i met with king Salmon and with the leaders from across the muslim and arab world. in that visit, we reached historic agreements to pursue greater and greater cooperation in the fight against terrorism. ...

we have before us a rare opportunity to bring security and stability and peace to this region and to its people. defeating terrorism and creating a future of harmony, prosperity and peace."

Pool was ushered to the copters before Trump was finished with his remarks.

Annie Karni

White House Reporter

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report #6 - Info on Walter Reed
Date: Thursday, December 21, 2017 6:52:20 PM

From: Chris Johnson [mailto:cjohnson@washblade.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 6:50 PM
Subject: Pool Report #6 - Info on Walter Reed

From White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders:

The President met with injured and ill from all branches of our Armed Forces in various stages of recovery today at Walter Reed Medical Center. Details about a few of the men and women he met with are below.

Purple Heart Recipient:

First Lieutenant Victor Prato (25) of the 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina was injured in November of 2017 while deployed in Afghanistan where he suffered multiple soft tissue injuries following a vehicle-borne IED blast and motor vehicle rollover. He has served in the Army for 2 years and is from Somers, New York.

USO Center (where press was present):

Sergeant John Peck and his wife Jessica

Staff Sergeant Liam Dwyer and his wife Meghan

Chief Warrant Officer Bradley Palm and his wife Keri

Petty Officer Raven Thomas

Staff Sergeant Franz Walkup

Staff Sergeant Daniel Frawley and his wife Susan along with his children Joshua and Amber

--

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: pool report #7 - French readout of call
Date: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 2:01:21 PM

From: John Bennett [mailto:JohnBennett@cqrollcall.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 1:47 PM
Subject: pool report #7 - French readout of call

Pool report #7 - June 27, 2017

Fox News Radio's Jon Decker passes along this readout of President Trump's call with French President Macron, **via the Élysée Palace:**

President Trump began the exchange with a congratulatory message to the President following victory in the legislative elections.

The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for the bilateral meeting of the two presidents during the G20 meeting in Hamburg on 7 and 8 July.

They also took stock of the Syrian issue and the need to work towards a common response to a chemical attack in Syria.

The two presidents spoke about the situation in the Gulf and the need to avoid any escalation in the region. Both stressed that the fight against terrorism and its financing is a common challenge for all the countries of the region.

President Macron renewed his invitation to President Trump and his wife to attend the parade on July 14th during which this year will be celebrated the 100 years of the entry of the United States into the war with the French troops during the First World War.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report #8
Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 3:02:30 PM

From: Kumar, Anita [mailto:akumar@mcclatchydc.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 5, 2017 3:00 PM
Subject: Pool report #8

Family comments from the Oval Office event:

Brian Steorts:

He said he is part of a small veteran family who runs his own business.

"Anything that is less complex with lower rates....I can't tell you what page 391 of a 500-page document says but what I can tell you is those funds we can reinvest into our people and our company."

Steorts was the one who gave POTUS the flag that was made by combat veterans in Ashburn, Va. He was seated next to what looked to his wife and two young daughters.

Jason Beardsly:

"It means a lot to us seeing the reform. The resurgence in the economy will allow companies to onshore their business...Too many things have gone offshore....Putting the energy back in the consumer is where it belongs. Everything you do to make taxes easier for us informs and strengthens the rest of America."

Jessica Unruh:

"We don't want handouts. We just want relief. We want tax relief."

He said she was also thankful for his decrease in regulations. "Regulatory reform coupled with tax reform is exactly what we need to help make America great again."

Unruh gave POTUS the Make Coal Great Again hat.

Aaron Williams:

Williams made a reference to POTUS taking Mike Pence from Indiana. "You took one of our finest."

"This tax reform is a huge thing for our country. It's significant."

Williams had the young boy on his lap who POTUS spoke to. The boy's name is Aaron Williams, same as his dad.

Other POTUS quotes:

Regarding taxes:

"We are going to get rates way down."

Regarding trade deals:

"We have people sitting in this position that made the worst deals I have ever seen....We're going to be fixing that."

"These are great families that are doing well and now they are doing much better, maybe much better than ever before. A lot of changes have taken place over the last 10 months and we're very happy to have all of you here....This is nothing compared to what it will be over a period of years. It's happening a lot faster than anyone projected."

Bios are in pool report #3

POTUS did not answer any shouted questions.

Please check quotes against transcript.

--

Anita Kumar
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McClatchy Newspapers

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report #9- return to the guest house
Date: Friday, July 07, 2017 6:15:54 PM

From: "Phillip, Abby" <abby.phillip@washpost.com>
Date: July 8, 2017 at 12:07:21 AM GMT+2
Subject: Pool report #9- return to the guest house

After an incredibly long night, we are rolling at 11:54 pm local time toward the guest house.

At around 11:50 pm a few minutes before we departed, the Russian delegation's motorcade passed us and left the dinner venue. The French delegation, including President Emmanuel Macron and his wife on foot, walked passed out motorcade just before that.

We arrived at the guest house not long after, at roughly 12:04 pm.

We haven't seen POTUS in many hours but he has reached his temporary home in Hamburg.

We have a travel photo lid. Goodnight, everyone.

Sent from my iPhone.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: pool report #9
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 2:52:02 PM

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 2:48:24 PM EDT
Subject: pool report #9

Forwarding from White House:

Hi, All -

From a White House spokesman the President is having lunch with Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, Stephen Miller, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and his wife.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report 4
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 12:17:31 PM

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 11:41:47 AM EDT
Subject: Pool report 4

The commissioning ceremony is being streamed and open to credentialed press but here are some highlights and notes. As always please check quotes against transcript.

President Trump spoke for 17 minutes and did not make news.

Just before 11:30, he declared "I hereby place the United States Ship Gerald R. Ford in commission."

A flag was then hoisted on deck while those in attendance clapped.

"American hands and American steel constructed a 100,000 ton message to the world. American might is second to none," Trump said.

Trump called for an end to the defense sequester.

"Sequester, not good" has led to deferred maintenance, lack of investment and "shortfall in military readiness," he said.

He said he reached a deal to secure an additional \$20b for defense this year and asked for additional \$54 b next year.

"Now we need Congress to do its job and pass the budget" that gives stable funding to military needs.

"President Trump, I will tell you, you will get it...but I don't mind getting a little hand so call that congressman and call that senator and make sure you get it...**and by the way you can also call those senators to make sure you get healthcare.**"

The line about calling Congress to get defense funding drew loud applause.

He called the Ford "the newest, largest, most advanced aircraft carrier in the history of the world" and praised the builders as the best. He also paid tribute to President Ford's career, including his naval service, and his wife Betty. If he could see this ship today, "president Ford would see his vision brought to life and he would see his legacy of service being carries out by each and every one of you."

About 6,500 people – many in uniform -- were crowded onto the main deck, the hangar bay, a vast space partially enclosed by high white rafters with exposed pipes and hanging lights. It was very hot and many were sweating. Another 2,500 were watching from the pier on jumbotrons, per the Navy. The roof over the speakers' platform has a large American flag. Two blue banners with yellow writing spell out "USS Gerald R. Ford Commissioning" and the ship's slogan, "Integrity at the Helm."

Announced attendees sated at a platform with red, white and blue bunting include former Def. Sec. Don Rumsfeld, former Vice President Cheney, Sens Wicker of Mississippi, Sen Peters of Michigan, Gov. McCauliffe of Virginia and Gov. Rick Snyder of Michigan. Sec. Mattis and Pres Trump drew loudest applause. Pres Trump walked on stage and waved in both directions and stood smiling and straight ahead at the military band played "Hail to the Chief" and sailors performed a 21 gun salute from the pier's entrance.

The ship's sponsor, Susan Ford Bales, daughter to the late president, was also introduced several times to applause and spoke as part of the commissioning. She gave the final command: "Man our ship and bring her to life." At that call, sailors dressed in white ran from a formation on deck inside the hangar as the band played "Anchors Away." The crowd clapped in rhythm and cheered.

The ship then sounded all its horns, including the crash, collision and fog horn (like a bay's first cry) as POTUS and other dignitaries sat on the platform.

Sorry for earlier typos as I was sending from an iphone while walking down ladders below the flight deck.

Best,

Noah Bierman

Los Angeles Times

Washington Bureau

202-824-8351

@noahbierman

Los Angeles Times • Chicago Tribune • The Baltimore Sun • Newport News Daily Press •
Hartford Courant • Allentown Morning Call • Orlando Sentinel • South Florida Sun Sentinel •
San Diego Union-Tribune • The Virginia Gazette • Carroll County Times • Annapolis Capital Gazette

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report 4
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 12:01:12 PM

From: "Diaz, Kevin B" <Kevin.Diaz@chron.com>

Date: June 14, 2017 at 11:53:20 AM EDT

Subject: Pool report 4

POTUS spoke in the Diplomatic Reception Room for about 4:30 minutes, praising the quick action of the congressional security detail and Alexandria police and fire.

Announced death of assailant.

FBI leading probe.

Praised Scalise as a 'friend ' patriot ' and 'fighter'

'He will recover from this assault'

Said he, Melania and America are praying for him.

Offered help to Scalise's wife 'anything '

Called for unity:

"We may have our differences, but we do well in times like this."

"We can all agree that we are blessed to be Americans."

"Please take a moment today to cherish those you love."

More quotes to come, and likely WH transcript.

Kevin Diaz

Houston chronicle/ HEARST

202-689-5157

Sent from my iPhone

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report 5 : fuller quotes from Trump live, televised statement on shooting
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 12:25:53 PM

From: "Diaz, Kevin B" <Kevin.Diaz@chron.com>

Date: June 14, 2017 at 12:14:35 PM EDT

Subject: Pool report 5 : fuller quotes from Trump live, televised statement on shooting

Here are some fuller quotes from the president's announcement a little after 12:30 pm.

"Congressman Steve Scalise, a member of House leadership, was shot and badly wounded, and is now in stable condition at the hospital, along with two very courageous Capitol Police officers.

At least two others were also wounded. Many lives would have been lost if not for the heroic actions of the two Capitol police officers who took down the gunman despite sustaining gunshot wounds, during a very, very brutal assault.

Melania and I are grateful for their heroism and praying for the swift recovery of all victims.

Congressman Scalise is a friend, and a very good friend. He's a patriot, and he's a fighter.

He will recover from this assault, and Steve, I want you to know, you have the prayers, not only of the entire city behind you, but of the entire nation, and frankly, the entire world.

America is praying for you, and America is praying for all of the victims of this terrible shooting."

Said he talked to Scalise's wife, Jennifer, and pledged "full and absolute support – anything she needs."

Expressed his admiration for the courage of the wounded officers.

"Our brave Capitol Police perform a challenging job with incredible skill, and their sacrifice makes Democracy possible."

Commended the first responders from Alexandria police and fire.

"Everyone on that field is a public servant. Our courageous police, our congressional aides, who work so tirelessly behind the scenes with enormous devotion, and our dedicated members of Congress who represent our people."

"We may have our differences, but we do well in times like these to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country. We can all agree that we are blessed to be Americans, that our children deserve to grow up in a nation of safety and peace, and that we are strongest when we are unified and when we work together for the common good."

Kevin Diaz

Houston Chronicle/Hearst

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report 13: dinner spray
Date: Thursday, June 29, 2017 6:50:31 PM

From: Alice Ollstein [mailto:alice@talkingpointsmemo.com]

Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 6:40 PM

Subject: Pool report 13: dinner spray

Pool was brought in to the State Dining Room at 6:21. About two dozen guests sat around a long, lavishly set table adorned with fresh flowers.

President Trump spoke over the clatter of camera shutters, saying welcome to Moon, who sat immediately to his right, saying it was a "great honor" to have him and "your very beautiful, lovely wife."

"We very much respect you and very much respect the people of South Korea," POTUS said.

He continued: "We're going to have tremendous discussions tonight" that may go late into the evening, on topics including "North Korea and trade and other things." POTUS also congratulated Moon on his election victory, saying: "It was a great victory. A lot of people didn't expect that. I did expect it. I thought that was going to happen. So I want to congratulate you very much."

A quartet of string musicians played classical music in an adjoining room. Pool was ushered out at 6:26. As we left, your pooler observed POTUS and President Moon speaking through translators who bent over their shoulders.

Alice Miranda Ollstein
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@AliceOllstein

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report 16
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 10:09:39 PM

From: "Diaz, Kevin B" <Kevin.Diaz@chron.com>

Date: June 14, 2017 at 10:03:27 PM EDT

Subject: Pool Report 16

Sean Spicer gaggled with pool upon return to WH. Said Trumps met with Scalise doctors, including Ira Rabin, vice president for medical operations. They also talked to Scalise's wife Jennifer.

Spicer: "He entered the room, spoke with Scalise's family, and sat by his bedside with Mrs. Trump."

They were accompanied to the hospital by Trump's personal physician, Dr. Ronny Jackson. Jackson rode in the motorcade, but had been to the hospital to confer on Scalise earlier.

Melania offered the family a bouquet of the white flowers seen earlier by pool.

The first couple also met with Capitol Police Officer Crystal Griner and her wife. They got the second bouquet of flowers.

Spicer said the first couple also talked to other Capitol Police who were at the hospital.

Dr. Rabin was seen accompanying the Trumps to the exit when they left.

Spicer noted that Trump does not plan to attend the congressional baseball game Thursday, out of security and logistical concerns.

"While the president would like to attend the game and show his support for all of these brave public servants, he has been advised that there is not enough time to follow Secret Service protocols."

That's all for now.

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www.facebook.com/TexasInsideTheBeltway

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report No. 4 – Foxconn announcement
Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 6:14:45 PM

From: Gabriella Morrongiello [mailto:gmorrongiello@nypost.com]
Sent: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 6:13 PM
Subject: Pool Report No. 4 – Foxconn announcement

President Trump entered the East Room at 5:40pm, following remarks from Foxconn chairman Terry Gou, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, House Speaker Paul Ryan, and Vice President Pence.

The president praised Gou, who joined him in announcing a \$10 billion investment in Wisconsin for a manufacturing facility that will create around 13,000 new jobs. Trump called Gou “one of the great businessmen anywhere in the world.”

“I would see Terry, and I would say ‘Terry, you have to give us one of these massive places you do great work with,’” Trump said, later telling Gou “the American worker will not let you down.”

Trump turned to Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) at the beginning of his remarks to make a comment about the current effort to repeal Obamacare. “I think we’re doing OK, Ron. I’m hearing good things.”

He returned to the topic of repealing Obamacare later in his remarks, saying: “We better get that done, fellas. Please. We need that so badly.”

The president also said his administration will be “submitting an infrastructure bill in the not so very distant future [and] we’re going to be submitting a tax bill very soon.”

Trump left the East Room at 5:47pm after receiving a standing ovation and giving a shoutout to Steve Wynn, a billionaire Republican booster who was seated in the front row with his wife.

More quotes from other distinguished guests:

Gou said the U.S. does not currently have the capabilities “to produce a complete 8K system,” referring to the highest high definition (HD) television resolution.

“We are going to change that and it starts today with this investment in Wisconsin,” Gou said.

Walker said Foxconn’s investment in his state is the “single largest economic development initiative in Wisconsin’s history.”

“In fact, Terry and I came up with a new name: We call it ‘Wisconn Valley,’” Walker said in reference to the region in which the new Foxconn factory will be built.

Ryan thanked Walker for “quarterbacking” the entire effort and said the announcement proves that Trump is committed “to driving American manufacturing and bringing new jobs home.”

Additional information from a background briefing earlier:

The White House struck a deal with global electronics manufacturer Foxconn to build a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Wisconsin. The deal is expected to generate 3,000 new American jobs in the Badger State, a figure that could grow to as many as 13,000 over time.

“This is a culmination of many months of discussions between the White House Office of American

Innovation and Foxconn, and numerous meetings here at the White house,” said a senior administration official. “One of the reasons this is such a meaningful day is it does represent a milestone in bringing back advanced manufacturing, specifically in the electronics sector, to the United States.”

The SAO said Foxconn chairman Terry Gou, who Trump personally met with, “believes in... the policies of the Trump administration – from deregulation policies that have been put into place already... to the ‘Buy American’ principles and commitment of the administration to pass major tax reform and infrastructure spending and investment.”

“Foxconn and chairman Gou believe that with this commitment, there will be an ability for America to not only compete but to be a globally dominant player in skilled and advanced manufacturing,” said the SAO, adding that this will be “the first of many [investments Foxconn] will be making in the United States.”

The White House said no new federal programs were created to incentivize the transaction. They directed all questions about the location of the manufacturing plant to the office of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

--

Gabby Morrongiello
Washington Bureau Chief
New York Post

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool report No. 5 – POTUS' remarks
Date: Thursday, June 22, 2017 8:30:10 PM

From: Gabriella Morrongiello <gmorrongiello@nypost.com>

Date: June 22, 2017 at 7:57:44 PM EDT
Subject: Pool report No. 5 – POTUS' remarks

June 22, 2017

Vice President Pence and Second Lady Karen Pence took the stage at 7:26pm.

"It's Central Park on the South Lawn," Pence said, looking out at the crowd.

Pence thanked GOP leaders in the House and Senate before inviting a round of applause for "all the men and women who serve in our Congress."

"It's always about family and always about being able to leave politics outside the gate," he said of the picnic.

President Trump and the First Lady entered at 7:30pm. Trump wore a red and white tie, while Melania was dressed in a striped black & white sundress.

"This has truly become, as you know, a wonderful tradition," Trump said. "It is the very first congressional picnic that Melania and I have the pleasure of hosting."

Trump said he and his wife have "developed friendships with some really great people – mostly," drawing laughter from attendees.

Also in the crowd were House Majority Whip Steve Scalise's son and daughter.

"Steve and Jennifer's children – Harrison and Madison – are here. We just gave them a tour of the White House. We gave them the A tour. You know, sometimes we give the B, the C, the F, the D tour. But we gave them the A tour," Trump said.

Trump spent quite some time talking about the recent shooting in Virginia. He thanked special agents Crystal Griner and David Bailey of the Capitol Hill Police for their "lifesaving actions."

Trump told the crowd he had hoped to attend the Congressional baseball game last week "but the folks from Secret Service said 'maybe we better take a pass.'"

"I wanted to be there so badly you have no idea," he said.

Some more quotes from the president:

"It's our hope that the unity that was displayed that evening can maybe continue to grow and thrive between Republicans and Democrats. I think we'd all be doing a lot better and I know the country would be doing a lot better."

"Tonight let us enjoy the comfort of our loved ones and tomorrow let us continue to do the people's bidding and create the optimistic future our citizens so richly deserve."

Trump's remarks ended at 7:36pm. He exited the stage with FLOTUS and shook hands with attendees.

Pool was ushered out minutes later.

--

Gabby Morrongiello
Washington Bureau Chief
New York Post

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Pool Report No. 7a
Date: Thursday, November 23, 2017 10:44:55 AM

From: "Johnson, Jenna" <Jenna.Johnson@washpost.com>
Date: November 23, 2017 at 10:36:01 AM EST
Subject: **Pool Report No. 7a**

At 10:18am, President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump walked into the mess hall at the Coast Guard Station Lake Worth Inlet. The president had removed his tie and the First Lady was dressed in a button down, black pants, tennis shoes and a ball cap. The Trumps provided the food on the table.

Commanding officer Gene Gibson and his wife, Jessica, and their son, Colin, welcomed the Trumps to the mess hall and thanked them for the spread.

"It is an honor to be here," the president said.

He noted that "there is no brand that went up like the Coast Guard" during the hurricanes in Texas, the Gulf Coast and Puerto Rico. He recognized the Coast Guard for rescuing 16,000 people in Texas after Hurricane Harvey, a number that he says few know or believe.

"Incredible people, you've done an incredible job," Trump said.

The First Lady jumped in to tell the group: "Happy Thanksgiving!" She smiled and waved with both hands as she spoke.

The president offered to take questions from the Coast Guard, although no one spoke up — which the president says he loves.

"The country's doing really well," he told them.

He noted that he had just spoken with troops based overseas and said: "You folks are fighting so hard and working so hard."

Trump noted that the stock market is higher now that it has even been in their lives, which he says is good for their 401Ks.

"You have a country and that's really starting to turn," the president said.

Trump noted that until he took office, the military had faced budget cuts and was "depleted."

At 10:25am, the president started handing out sandwiches to the Coast Guard members, shaking hands with them and marveling at what "great shape" they are in.

As he sized up one particularly ripped Coast Guard member, the president asked if he would be able to beat him at an arm wrestling contest.

After about a minute, the press pool was led out of the mess hall.

Stay tuned for another pool report with full quotes.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 9:02:34 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Daniel M. Gade of North Dakota to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the remainder of a five-year term expiring July 1, 2021. Mr. Gade was born and raised in North Dakota. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (West Point) in 1997, and was wounded in action twice and decorated for valor while serving in Iraq. He served in the administration of President George W. Bush, where his portfolio included veterans, military health care, and United States disability policy. He returned to West Point in 2011 and taught various political science and leadership courses until his retirement from the Army in 2017. He holds an M.P.A. and Ph.D. in public administration and policy from the University of Georgia. He has served on various advisory committees advising the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and was appointed to serve on the National Council on Disability by then-Speaker Boehner in 2015. He cofounded the Independence Project, a Veteran's employment and empowerment experiment.

Melissa Sue Glynn of the District of Columbia to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Enterprise Integration. Until recently, Dr. Glynn led Alvarez and Marsal's public sector practice focused on improving the delivery of government programs, and K-12 and higher education. Previously, she was a Principal with PricewaterhouseCoopers and was responsible for the firm's work with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Initially, Dr. Glynn's career focused on the development and deployment of innovative technologies associated with collaborative decision-making. She served as Co-Director of the Center for the Management of Information at the University of Arizona concurrent with her doctoral studies. She was also a principal investigator on a cooperative grant from the National Science Foundation and several programs funded by defense research laboratories. A New Jersey native, Dr. Glynn holds a B.A. from Rutgers University and a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona.

John Henderson of South Dakota to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Installations, Environment, and Energy. Mr. Henderson most recently served in the Army as the Commander of the Omaha District, Army Corps of Engineers, where his responsibilities included overseeing an annual program of \$1.5 billion dollars consisting of more than 2,500 projects supporting the nation's water resources infrastructure, military construction, and Federal interagency work in nine States, environmental restoration projects in 41 States, and an extensive program supporting Department of Defense petroleum and energy infrastructure worldwide for the Defense Logistics Agency. Mr. Henderson has over 23 years of active military experience as an Army engineer officer, serving two combat tours to Iraq and one combat tour to Afghanistan as an engineer battalion task force commander. Mr. Henderson possesses a master's degree in civil engineering from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of South Dakota. His military education includes a National Security Studies fellowship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduation from the Joint Combined Warfighters Course, Army War College Fellowship Program, Command and General Staff College, Air Assault School, and Airborne School.

Ryan Douglas Nelson of Idaho to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. Mr. Nelson is a seasoned attorney with broad experience advising government and corporate executives in the public and private sector. Mr. Nelson has worked for all three branches of government. He served as Deputy

Assistant Attorney General in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, where he managed the natural resource, wildlife and appellate sections of the Division, and as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Office of Management and Budget. He also served as Special Counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee and as a law clerk for the Senate Legal Counsel. After graduating from BYU Law School with Honors, Mr. Nelson clerked for Judge Henderson on the D.C. Circuit and for Richard Mosk and Charles Brower on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands. Mr. Nelson was an associate at Sidley Austin and is currently General Counsel for Idaho-based wellness company, Melaleuca, Inc. He has argued 13 Federal court of appeals cases on complex environmental and constitutional issues. Mr. Nelson resides in his hometown of Idaho Falls, Idaho, with his wife, Barbara Baer Nelson, and their seven children.

###

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Friday, August 25, 2017 7:53:55 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Jeffery Martin Baran of Virginia to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a five-year term beginning July 1, 2018. Mr. Baran currently serves as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a position he has held since October 2014. Prior to his tenure on the Commission, he served as Staff Director for Energy and Environment for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce. Previously, Mr. Baran served on the Committee staff as senior counsel from 2011 to 2014, and as counsel from 2009 to 2010. He served as counsel on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform from 2003 to 2008. From 2001 to 2003, Mr. Baran worked as a law clerk for Judge Lesley Wells of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio. Mr. Baran received a B.A. and an M.A. from Ohio University and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. He lives with his wife and three children in Arlington, Virginia.

Michael T. Evanoff of Arkansas to be an Assistant Secretary of State, Diplomatic Security. Mr. Evanoff is the Vice President for Asset Protection & Security at International Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. in Arkansas, a position he has held since 2014. Previously he served as Chief Security Officer at Coca-Cola in Zug, Switzerland and Athens, Greece and as Global Director of Security at Och-Ziff Capital Management Group in New York. He served as a special agent in the Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security from 1985 to 2011, holding senior posts with Overseas Security Advisory Council, NATO Office of Security, Secretary of State Protection Detail, and eight U.S. Missions overseas. He was also diplomatic security liaison officer to the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany. Mr. Evanoff earned a B.S. at Eastern Kentucky University. He and his wife, Kate Milner Evanoff, have a two-year old son, Luke.

Andrei Iancu of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce. Mr. Iancu is currently the Managing Partner of Irell & Manella LLP, where his practice focuses on intellectual property law. Mr. Iancu has advised plaintiffs and defendants across a wide variety of industries. He has appeared in front of the Patent and Trademark Office, the U.S. International Trade Commission, U.S. district courts, and the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. He has published and spoken on intellectual property issues, and taught patent law at UCLA. Mr. Iancu earned his J.D., M.S. in mechanical engineering, and B.S. in aerospace engineering, from UCLA. Prior to law school, Mr. Iancu was an engineer at Hughes Aircraft.

Adam I. Klein of the District of Columbia to be a Member and Chairman of the Privacy & Civil Liberties Oversight Board. Mr. Klein is the Robert M. Gates Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, where his research centers on the intersection of national security policy and law. He previously served as a law clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia of the U.S. Supreme Court and Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. He has also worked on national security policy at the RAND Corporation, at the [9/11](#) Public Discourse Project (the nonprofit successor to the [9/11](#) Commission), and as a legislative assistant in the office of Rep. C.W. "Bill" Young. He is a graduate of Columbia Law School and Northwestern University.

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to be Representatives of the United States of America to the Seventy-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, with the personal Rank of Ambassador while performing the duties as the Representatives of the United States of America to the Seventy-second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations:

- Congressman Christopher Smith of New Jersey - Speaker of the House Rep.
- Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California - Minority Leader of the House Rep.
- Lloyd Claycomb of Arizona
- Carlos Trujillo of Florida

###

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Friday, September 01, 2017 7:49:29 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 1, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

James Thomas Abbott of Virginia to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for the remainder of a five-year term expiring July 1, 2020. Mr. Abbott has served as Chief Counsel to the Federal Labor Relations Authority since 2007, currently with Acting Chairman Patrick Pizzella and previously with Chairman Dale Cabaniss and Member Thomas Beck. Prior to his appointment to the Authority, Mr. Abbott served as Deputy General Counsel for the Congressional Office of Compliance, from 2004 to 2007. Earlier in his career, Mr. Abbott served as the Senior Associate District Counsel for Personnel and Ethics at the Defense Contract Management Agency; Chief Counsel at Corpus Christi Army Depot, U.S. Army Materiel Command; and Senior Labor Counsel at the HQ Depot Systems Command, U.S. Army Materiel Command. Mr. Abbott received his J.D. from Temple University Beasley School of Law in Philadelphia, and was a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Malone University.

Larry Edward Andre Jr. of Texas to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Djibouti. Mr. André, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1990. He is currently the United States Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Previously a two-time Deputy Chief of Mission with appointments to nine American missions abroad, mostly in Africa, Mr. André has held senior policy positions at the State Department in Washington. His excellent leadership skills and experience working closely with the U.S. military provide him expertise on the challenges and opportunities of the Horn-of-Africa region and deep understanding of the context of United States policy goals there. Mr. André earned a B.A. at Claremont McKenna College and an M.B.A. at American Graduate School of International Management.

Robert Behler of Pennsylvania to be Director of Operational Test and Evaluation, Department of Defense. Mr. Behler most recently served as Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Director for Carnegie Mellon University Software Engineering Institute, where he worked to advance software engineering and cybersecurity to solve national cyber challenges through focused research, development, and transition to the broader software engineering community. Previously he served as President and Chief Operation Officer of SRC, Inc. and as Senior Vice President and General Manager at MITRE Corporation and the Business Area Executive of Precision Engagement at John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. Mr. Behler was formerly Commanding General at the Air Force Command and Control & Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center as well as the Deputy Commander at Joint Headquarters North, NATO. He is a U.S. Air Force retired Major General, and the recipient of various Distinguished Service Medals. He is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School, a National Security Fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and holds an M.B.A. from Marymount University, and an M.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Oklahoma.

James Bridenstine of Oklahoma to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Mr. Bridenstine was elected in 2012 to represent Oklahoma's First Congressional District. He serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the Science, Space and Technology Committee. Mr. Bridenstine began his Naval aviation career flying the E-2C Hawkeye off the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. It was there that he flew combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While on active duty, he transitioned to the F-18 Hornet and flew as an “aggressor” at the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center. After leaving active duty, Mr. Bridenstine returned to Tulsa, Oklahoma to be the Executive Director of the Tulsa Air and Space Museum & Planetarium and flew counter-drug missions in Central and South America in the Navy Reserve. He holds a triple major from Rice University and an M.B.A. from Cornell University. Mr. Bridenstine is currently a member of the 137th Special Operations Wing of the Oklahoma Air National Guard.

Thomas L. Carter of South Carolina to be the Representative of the United States on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization with the Rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service.

Mr. Carter, a former military and commercial pilot, retired from the U.S. Air Force Reserve in 2009 with the rank of Major General after a 34-year career. He flew 12 years for USAirways and attained B737 Captain status. Mr. Carter served as Vice President for Government Relations at Elbit Systems of America, Arlington, Virginia (2009-2015) and President of Commonwealth Consulting Corporation, Arlington, Virginia (2005-2009). He was Senior Counselor to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) for Legislative Affairs in Baghdad, Iraq (2003-2004) and served as Assistant to the Chairman for Government Affairs of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board in Washington, D.C. Mr. Carter’s earlier government service included positions as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and a staffer for the Senate Republican Leader, Bob Dole. He earned a B.S. from the University of Memphis and a MA from Georgetown University.

John C. Demers of Virginia to be an Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, at the Department of Justice.

Mr. Demers is Vice President and Assistant General Counsel at The Boeing Company. He has held several senior positions at the company including in Boeing Defense, Space, and Security and as lead lawyer and head of international government affairs for Boeing International. From 2006 to 2009, Mr. Demers served on the first leadership team of the National Security Division, first as Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General and then as Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Law & Policy. Before that, he served in the Office of Legal Counsel. For the past eight years, he has taught national security law as an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center. Mr. Demers worked in private practice in Boston and clerked for Associate Justice Antonin Scalia of the U.S. Supreme Court and Judge Diarmuid O’Scannlain of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He graduated from Harvard Law School and the College of the Holy Cross.

Nina Maria Fite of Pennsylvania to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Angola.

Ms. Fite, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1990. She is currently Principal Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Montreal, Canada, a position she has held since 2014. Ms. Fite is known for her leadership skills, knowledge of Angola, and strong record promoting United States trade and foreign direct investment, including as a negotiator in the office of the U.S. Trade Representative. She has served at seven United States Missions overseas and in senior leadership positions at the Department of State. Ms. Fite earned an M.S. at the National Defense University, an M.B.A. at Thunderbird School of Global Management and a B.Arch. at Carnegie-Mellon University. She speaks Portuguese, French, Spanish, and Hungarian.

Daniel Lewis Foote of New York to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Foote, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1998. He is currently a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the Department of State. A two-time Deputy Chief of Mission overseas, Mr. Foote has held diverse senior foreign policy positions at home and abroad and is known for his leadership acumen, judgment, and management of several of the United States Government’s largest overseas programs in some of the world’s most challenging, high-threat environments. Mr. Foote earned a B.A. from Columbia University. He speaks Spanish.

Timothy Gallaudet of California to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

Dr. Gallaudet is a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy whose most recent assignment was Oceanographer of the Navy and Commander of the Navy Meteorology and Oceanography Command. During his 32 years of service, Dr. Gallaudet has had experience in weather and ocean forecasting, hydrographic surveying,

developing policy and plans to counter illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, and assessing the national security impacts of climate change. Dr. Gallaudet has led teams of Navy Sailors and civilians performing such diverse functions as overseeing aircraft carrier combat operations, planning and conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster response efforts, assisting Navy SEAL Teams during high visibility counter-terrorism operations, and developing the Navy's annual \$52 billion information technology, cyber security, and intelligence budget. Dr. Gallaudet holds a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Naval Academy and master's and doctoral degrees from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, all in oceanography.

Mark L. Greenblatt of Maryland to be Inspector General for the Export-Import Bank. Mr. Greenblatt has been serving as the Assistant Inspector General for Investigations at the Department of Commerce since 2016. He was previously Director of Special Investigations and then the Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Compliance and Ethics at the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General (OIG) from 2014 to 2016. Prior to serving in the Commerce OIG, Mr. Greenblatt was an investigative counsel at the Department of Justice OIG. Prior to joining DOJ, Mr. Greenblatt was Minority Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Earlier in his career, Mr. Greenblatt served as a law clerk to U.S. District Court Judge Anita Brody and then worked as a litigator in New York City. Mr. Greenblatt received his law degree from Columbia University, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar, and received an A.B., with distinction, from Duke University.

Richard Grenell of California to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Germany. Mr. Grenell, a foreign policy writer and commentator, founded the international consulting firm Capitol Media Partners in 2010. For nearly two decades, he has served as the primary communications adviser for public officials at the local, state, Federal, and international levels, as well as for a Fortune 200 ranked company. Mr. Grenell is the longest serving United States spokesman at the United Nations (2001-2008) having served four United States Ambassadors. He earned a B.A. from Evangel University and an MPA from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Gregory Ibach of Nebraska to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Mr. Ibach earned his B.S. in Agriculture from the University of Nebraska with majors in Animal Science and Agricultural Economics. Mr. Ibach has been a visionary leader for Nebraska's agriculture effectively supervising Departmental staff and programs, with the ability to analyze issues, develop strategies, and create solutions for domestic and global initiatives. Mr. Ibach has oversight of Nebraska's plant and animal health regulatory functions. He has been actively involved in foreign and domestic marketing and development activities. Mr. Ibach has been inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement and honored with the Service to Agriculture Recognition from the University of Nebraska- Lincoln, College of Agriculture Science and Natural Resources, among other honors. Mr. Ibach is the immediate past President of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. Mr. Ibach and his wife, Teresa, have three grown children and live on their farm and ranch in Sumner, Nebraska.

Robert Jackson of New York to be a Member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for the remainder of a 5-year term expiring June 5, 2019. Mr. Jackson is a Professor at Columbia Law School and Director of its Program on Corporate Law and Policy. Mr. Jackson's academic work focuses on corporate governance and the use of advanced data science techniques to improve transparency in securities markets. His career has spanned the public and private sectors. Mr. Jackson served as a senior advisor at the Department of the Treasury during the financial crisis, assisting Kenneth Feinberg in his work as Special Master for TARP Executive Compensation, and previously worked as a lawyer in private practice. Mr. Jackson holds two bachelor's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.B.A. in Finance from the Wharton School of Business, a master's degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and a law degree from Harvard Law School. Born in the Bronx, New York, Mr. Jackson currently lives in New York City.

Kenneth I. Juster of New York to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of India. Mr. Juster most recently served as the Deputy Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council.

Mr. Juster has previously served as Under Secretary of Commerce from 2001-2005, Counselor (acting) of the State Department from 1992-1993, and deputy and senior adviser to the Deputy Secretary of State from 1989-1992. In the private sector, he has been a partner at the investment firm Warburg Pincus LLC, Executive Vice President at Salesforce.com, and senior partner at the law firm Arnold & Porter. He has also served as Chairman of Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, and as Vice Chairman of The Asia Foundation. Mr. Juster holds an A.B. in Government (Phi Beta Kappa) from Harvard College, an M.P.P. from the Harvard Kennedy School, and a J.D. from the Harvard Law School.

Colleen Kiko of North Dakota to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, for a term of five years beginning July 30, 2017 and, upon confirmation, designated chair. Ms. Kiko was born and raised in North Dakota. She currently serves as a Judge of the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board in the Department of Labor. Ms. Kiko has a long history with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). She worked in its predecessor agency and, when the FLRA opened its doors on January 1, 1979, Ms. Kiko began work in the Washington Regional Office investigating unfair labor practices. She ultimately moved into positions within the headquarters of the FLRA. In 2005, she returned to serve as General Counsel of the FLRA. Ms. Kiko has served in the Justice Department in various capacities, as an associate counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, and in the private practice of law. She holds a J.D. from Antonin Scalia Law School and a B.S. degree from North Dakota State University. Ms. Kiko lives in Virginia with her husband, Phil. They have four children and four grandchildren.

W. Robert Kohorst of California to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia. Mr. Kohorst, President and founder of Everest Properties in Pasadena, California, is a prominent American businessman with expertise in law, real estate and finance. His company is a large commercial enterprise that purchases and operates apartment, self-storage and retail properties throughout the United States. Mr. Kohorst has contributed to public service organizations and educational institutions as director and chairman of the Young Presidents' Organization (San Gabriel Valley Chapter), Regent of Loyola Marymount University, Trustee of La Salle High School in Pasadena, and President of the San Gabriel Valley Council, Boy Scouts of America in Los Angeles. He earned a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and a B.S. from the University of Dayton.

Matthew Z. Leopold of Florida to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, General Counsel. Mr. Leopold is a lawyer in Tallahassee, Florida with the law firm of Carlton Fields. He is the former General Counsel of the Florida Department of Environment Protection and a former attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division. He has 10 years of combined Federal and State government experience. Mr. Leopold's practice focuses exclusively on environment law, policy, and litigation. He has represented the State and Federal governments on complex environmental litigation, including *Florida v. Georgia*, an original action in the United States Supreme Court, and *United States v. BP Exploration and Production, Inc.*, to address the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. He also represented Florida in the long-running Everglades case, and worked with policy makers to help move comprehensive restoration forward. Mr. Leopold previously served as an environmental policy advisor in the Washington, D.C. office of Governor Jeb Bush.

Tom Marino of Pennsylvania to be Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Mr. Marino was born and raised in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, where his father worked two jobs as a firefighter and janitor. He followed his father's example and went to work on the floor of a manufacturing facility after high school. He advanced into management and, at age 30, decided to pursue a college education. With the support of his family, friends, and the community, Mr. Marino graduated magna cum laude from Lycoming College and earned his law degree from Dickinson School of Law – all within five years. He practiced law before being elected Lycoming County District Attorney in 1991. In 2002, President George W. Bush appointed him to serve as the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. He returned to private practice until 2010 when he was elected to represent Pennsylvania's 10th District in Congress. Mr. Marino and his wife Edie have two children.

Cheryl L. Mason of Virginia to be Chairman of the Board of Veterans Appeals for a term of six years. Ms. Mason is currently the Interim Principal Deputy Vice Chairman at the Board of Veterans Appeals.

She previously served as Deputy Vice Chairman, Chief Veterans Law Judge, Veterans Law Judge, and Counsel at the Board of Veterans Appeals. Ms. Mason's government experience also includes serving as an attorney with the Federal Labor Relations Authority and as a Department of the Air Force civilian at HQ United States Air Forces in Europe at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Ms. Mason also served as a contract attorney investigator for Department of Justice Civil Rights Division specializing in the American with Disabilities Act, a military services paralegal coordinator for Europe, and an instructor at Central Texas College, Kapaun Air Station, Germany. Ms. Mason began her legal career in private practice in Omaha, Nebraska. While attending college, Ms. Mason served an LBJ Intern for Congressman Bob McEwen (R-OH) of Ohio. Ms. Mason is married to Lieutenant Colonel, USAF (retired) Brett S. Mason and is the daughter of a World War II Navy Veteran. Ms. Mason received her B.A. with Distinction in Political Science and Psychology from Ohio Northern University and her J.D. from Creighton University School of Law. Ms. Mason resides in Virginia with her family.

Admiral Edward Masso to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Estonia. Mr. Masso is a highly decorated Naval Officer who is the founder and president of Flagship Connection, a consulting company focused on business development, strategic planning, and operations analysis in the areas of missile defense, cyber security, and data analytics. During his distinguished 32-year career in the U.S. Navy, he held nine command assignments, including Commander, Navy Personnel Command/Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel. He has served in NATO and the United States European Command. Mr. Masso is a Senior Fellow at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies in Cyber Security. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1977.

Katherine Brunett McGuire of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. Ms. McGuire currently serves as Chief of Staff to Congressman Randy Hultgren of Illinois. She previously served as Staff Director of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee under the Chairmanship of Senator Mike Enzi. Prior to her role on the Committee, she served as Legislative Director to Senator Enzi and also Staff Director on the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs' Subcommittee on Securities and Investment. She earlier served in senior posts in the Senate with Assistant Republican Leader Alan K. Simpson and Senator Richard Lugar. Her private sector experience includes leading BSA The Software Alliance's global public policy and government relations division as Vice President, concentrating on promoting innovation and intellectual property protection. Ms. McGuire earned a B.S. and M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Wyoming. She resides with her husband and two children in Virginia.

Edward T. McMullen, Jr. of South Carolina to be to Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Swiss Confederation, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Liechtenstein. Mr. McMullen has served in public policy, political, and business positions for 31 years. Currently, he is President of McMullen Public Affairs with offices in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina and Washington, D.C. The firm is a full service advertising and corporate public affairs company that implements advertising, alliance development, corporate communications, predictive data analytics, and strategic consulting solutions for challenging business and public policy environments. Clients have included several fortune 100 companies. Mr. McMullen has been appointed by South Carolina state leaders to serve on key statewide boards and commissions. He earned a B.A. from Hampden Sydney College in Hampden Sydney, Virginia.

Jonathan F. Mitchell of Washington to be Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the United States for a term of 5 years. Mr. Mitchell most recently served as a Visiting Professor of Law at Stanford Law School. From 2010-2015, Mr. Mitchell served as the Solicitor General of Texas, where he argued three cases before the United States Supreme Court, argued dozens of cases in other courts, and authored more than one hundred briefs. Mr. Mitchell has also served on the faculties of the University of Texas School of Law, the George Mason University School of Law, and the University of Chicago Law School. Before entering the legal academy, Mr. Mitchell served as a law clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia of the United States Supreme Court and to Judge J. Michael Luttig of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Mr. Mitchell earned his B.A., summa cum laude, from Wheaton College and his J.D., with high honors, from the University of Chicago Law School, where he was inducted into the Order of the Coif and served as an articles editor of the University of Chicago Law Review.

Thomas B. Modly of Maryland to be Under Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Modly is currently a Managing Director in PricewaterhouseCoopers' Global Government and Public Services sector and is the firm's Global Government Defense Network Leader, where he is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of solutions for government defense clients worldwide. Prior to this, Mr. Modly served as the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Financial Management and as the first Executive Director of the Defense Business Board. He also has extensive private sector expertise as a corporate development and mergers and acquisition specialist. Mr. Modly is a graduate with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy, holds a Master's Degree in Government from Georgetown University, and an M.B.A. with honors from Harvard Business School. He served on active duty in the U.S. Navy as a helicopter pilot.

Emily Webster Murphy of Missouri to be Administrator of General Services. Currently, Ms. Murphy is Senior Advisor to the Administrator at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Previously, Ms. Murphy served as Counsel at the House Armed Services Committee, specializing acquisition policy and reform. A procurement policy expert, Ms. Murphy's career includes appointments at the U.S. Small Business Administration and at the GSA, where she served as its first Chief Acquisition Officer. Additionally, she served under three Chairmen of the House Small Business Committee. Her private sector experience includes five years in executive positions at a technology startup company engaged in Federal contracting and three years as a government contracts attorney with two top D.C. law firms. She has been recognized by Women Impacting Public Policy and the Small Business Technology Council, among others. A Missouri native, Ms. Murphy is a 1995 graduate of Smith College and a 2001 graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law.

Jennifer Gillian Newstead of New York to be Legal Adviser at the Department of State. Ms. Newstead is a partner in the law firm of Davis, Polk & Wardwell LLP, where she has a global practice representing clients in cross-border regulatory, enforcement and litigation matters. Ms. Newstead previously served in several senior government positions, including as General Counsel of the Office of Management and Budget, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Policy, and Associate Counsel to the President. Ms. Newstead previously served as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C and earlier in her career clerked for Justice Breyer of the U.S. Supreme Court and for Judge Silberman of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. She is a 1994 graduate of Yale Law School, and a 1991 graduate *magna cum laude* of Harvard University.

William Northey of Iowa to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. Mr. Northey is a 4th generation farmer from Spirit Lake, Iowa and is currently serving his 3rd term as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. Under Mr. Northey's leadership, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship has promoted science and new technologies to better care for our air, soil, and water and focused on telling the story of agriculture. Mr. Northey is a past-president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and serves as co-chair of the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force. Mr. Northey served as President of the National Corn Growers Association from 1995 to 1996. He served on the Iowa U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency State Committee and as a Dickinson County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner. Mr. Northey graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Agricultural Business and received a M.B.A. from Southwest Minnesota State University. Mr. Northey and his wife Cindy have 3 grown daughters and 5 grandchildren.

Frederick Nutt of Virginia to be Controller of the Office of Federal Financial Management, Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Nutt is currently Senior Advisor at the Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Nutt previously worked as Senior Advisor to the Vice President for Management at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation where he was responsible for managing financial resources supporting information technology, acquisition, facilities, and security operations. Previously, Mr. Nutt was at the then newly authorized Millennium Challenge Corporation, working to start up the management operations, including financial and management information systems. Prior to this, Mr. Nutt was Senior Advisor to the Chief Financial Officer at the Environmental Protection Agency where he worked on implementing the President's Management Agenda, and the migration of select financial

management systems to federal shared service providers. He also worked on budget and appropriations legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives, while serving in the Office of the Speaker. Mr. Nutt is from Reedville, Virginia and is a graduate of Virginia Tech.

Jeff Tien Han Pon of Virginia to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management. Dr. Pon most recently served as the Chief Human Resources and Strategy Officer for the non-profit professional membership organization, the Society for Human Resource Management as well as the Chief Operating Officer for Futures Inc., an organization dedicated to helping transitioning military explore careers, find jobs, and transition to civilian jobs. Dr. Pon previously served as a Principal at Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc. in the consulting service areas of Human Resources, IT, and Change Management and as the U.S. Department of Energy's Chief Human Capital Officer. He also was the Deputy Director of eGovernment at the U. S. Office of Personnel Management where he and his teams brought about HR Shared Service Centers, Payroll Modernization, and the stand-up of USAJobs. Dr. Pon is a graduate of the University of Southern California, and holds a Ph. D. and Masters of Science degree from the California School of Professional Psychology. He is the recipient of the Grace Hopper Award, Fed 100, and multiple secretarial Distinguished Service Awards.

Randy Reeves of Mississippi, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs. Mr. Reeves currently serves as Executive Director of the Mississippi Veterans Affairs Board and serves as President of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs. He is a retired Commander and Surface Warfare Officer in the United States Navy. Prior to being commissioned in the Navy, he served as an enlisted airman in the United States Air Force. Mr. Reeves received his Bachelor's degree in Management from Peru State College (Nebraska) and a Master's degree in Health Sciences. He also completed the Senior Executive Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

David Dale Reimer of Ohio to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mauritius and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Seychelles. Mr. Reimer, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1991. He is currently the Director of the Office of West African Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State, a position he has held since 2015. A former Deputy Chief of Mission and Office Director, Mr. Reimer is known for his extensive knowledge of Africa and outstanding leadership skills, particularly in high-threat environments. He earned an M.P.I.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and a B.A. from Goshen College. He speaks French, Italian and German.

David Ross of Wisconsin to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water. Mr. Ross currently serves as the Director of the Environmental Protection Unit for the Wisconsin Department of Justice. He previously served as a senior assistant attorney general in the Wyoming Attorney General's Office, where he represented the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality on water quality matters. Mr. Ross also represented the State of Wyoming on the Assumable Waters Subcommittee of the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology. Prior to entering public service, Mr. Ross practiced environmental law in Washington DC and worked as an environmental consultant in California. Mr. Ross attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison for undergraduate studies, and grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin. He earned his law degree and a Master of Studies in Environmental Law from Vermont Law School. While in law school, Mr. Ross served as Editor-in-Chief of the Vermont Law Review.

Christopher R. Sharpley of Virginia to be Inspector General for the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Sharpley has been serving as the Acting Inspector General at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) since 2015. He was previously the Deputy Inspector General at the CIA from 2012 to 2015. Prior to serving in the CIA OIG, Mr. Sharpley was Deputy IG for Investigations at the Federal Housing Finance Authority and Deputy Special IG for Investigations as the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (SIGTARP). Prior to these roles, Mr. Sharpley was the Deputy IG for Investigations and Inspections at the Department of Energy and a Director of Security Operations in the U.S. Air Force. Mr. Sharpley received an M.A. from the Naval Postgraduate School and a B.A. from American University.

Cheryl Marie Stanton of South Carolina to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor. Ms. Stanton currently serves as the Executive Director for the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, a position to which she was appointed in 2013 by then-Governor Nikki R. Haley. Prior to that role, Ms. Stanton worked as a labor and employment attorney in both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, she served as Associate White House Counsel for President George W. Bush. In that role, Stanton was the administration's principal liaison to the U.S. Department of Labor, National Labor Relations Board and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Ms. Stanton also served as a law clerk to the Honorable Samuel A. Alito, Jr., U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. She received her J.D. from the Law School at the University of Chicago and her B.A. from Williams College. In 2016, then-Governor Nikki R. Haley awarded Ms. Stanton the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor in the State of South Carolina.

Suzanne Israel Tufts of New York to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Administration. Ms. Tufts is a consultant and attorney with extensive experience in turnaround management and operations in the public and not-for-profit sectors. Ms. Tufts is the founder of her own consulting firm, which focuses on providing services for tax-exempt organizations and emerging companies. She is a nationally recognized expert in the field of inner city social programming in the areas of microenterprise, education and women's issues and has been responsible for programs in housing authorities in New York. Ms. Tufts previously worked as President and CEO of the American Woman's Economic Development Corporation, the nation's first women's entrepreneurship training center. Under her leadership, AWED created emergency small business crisis services within 72 hours of the 9/11 attacks, work for which she was recognized by President George W. Bush and then-Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao. Ms. Tufts graduated summa cum laude with an A.B. in Bio-Medical Ethics from Princeton University in 1977, and graduated from the University of Virginia Law School where she was awarded a Dillard Fellowship. Ms. Tufts lives in Forest Hills, Queens with her husband Bob.

Stephen Alexander Vaden of Tennessee to be General Counsel, Department of Agriculture. Mr. Vaden is a native of Union City, Tennessee. Mr. Vaden received his B.A. in American History from Vanderbilt University and his law degree from Yale Law School. Following graduation, Mr. Vaden completed two clerkships, first with The Honorable Julia Smith Gibbons of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and then with The Honorable Samuel H. Mays, Jr., of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. Mr. Vaden has practiced law at the Washington, D.C. firms of Patton Boggs and Jones Day. At both firms, Mr. Vaden's practice focused on litigation, particularly at the appellate level, along with election law and administrative law. When not in Washington, Mr. Vaden continues to make his home in Union City where he lives with his brother Samuel Vaden and mother Wanda Stephens Vaden. His late father John Marshall Vaden was a farmer for most of his 97 years.

Bruce J. Walker of New York to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy, Electricity, Delivery and Energy Reliability. Mr. Walker is the founder of Modern Energy Insights, Inc., which specializes in evaluating risk for utilities' critical electric infrastructure. He has more than 25 years of electric utility experience, previously working at National Grid as the Vice President of Asset Strategy and Policy. Earlier, he worked for Consolidated Edison of New York, where he last held the position of Director of Corporate Emergency Management and served on the Biological Chemical Weapons Response Team. He has served as a member of DOE's Electricity Advisory Committee, DOE's Advisory Committee for the Mega-Watt scale integration lab, and was a member of GridWise Alliance, Inc. He is the co-founder of the Global Smart Grid Federation. Mr. Walker is the Deputy County Executive for the County of Putnam and is the Acting Energy Sector Chief for the Hudson Valley Infragard. He received his law degree from Pace University and holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Manhattan College.

Margaret Weichert of Georgia to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget. Ms. Weichert is currently Senior Advisor at the Office of Management and Budget. Ms. Weichert is a seasoned business executive who has served as a Principal at Ernst & Young, LLP since 2013. In her 25 year professional career, Ms. Weichert has also held executive leadership positions at Market Platform Dynamics, First Data Corporation, Bank of America, and Andersen Consulting focused on strategy, innovation, and business process improvement in banking and payments technology. An innovator and entrepreneur, Ms. Weichert also co-founded an Internet company, Achex, Inc., and sold

that company to First Data in 2001. As a result of her innovative work in payment technology, Ms. Weichert has been named as an inventor on 14 successful U.S. patents. An avid supporter of technology innovation in Georgia, Ms. Weichert has served since 2010 on the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG)'s Fintech Steering Committee. She holds a B.S. of Foreign Service (Magna Cum Laude) from Georgetown University, a post-graduate diploma in Economics with distinction from the University of Sussex (UK) and a Masters of Business Administration from the University of California at Berkeley. Ms. Weichert also is certified as a Green Belt in Six Sigma, Design for Six Sigma.

Eric P. Whitaker of Illinois to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Niger. Mr. Whitaker, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1990. He is currently the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Africa and the Sudans in the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State. A two-time Deputy Chief of Mission overseas and a senior official at the Department of State at home and abroad, his diplomatic career has been diverse, and included consular, economic, commercial, political, and refugee assignments. He has served at U.S. embassies in ten African countries and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines. Mr. Whitaker earned an M.P.P. from Princeton University, an M.P.A from the University of Pittsburgh, and an M.S. and B.S. from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. He speaks Spanish, Portuguese, French, Visayan, and Korean.

Steven E. Winberg of Pennsylvania to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy, Fossil Energy. Mr. Winberg has extensive corporate management experience and strong leadership credentials in fossil energy. He is a recognized expert in fossil energy R&D, advanced clean coal technology, and natural gas production and use. As Vice President for R&D for CONSOL Energy, Inc., and more recently as a Senior Program Manager with the Battelle Memorial Institute, he has demonstrated leadership on energy policy issues including addressing emissions legislation/regulation and electricity/natural gas deregulation. Mr. Winberg was the board chair for the FutureGen Industrial Alliance, a coalition of power producers, coal producers and equipment manufacturers, established to pursue a public/private partnership to build the world's first near-zero emissions coal-fueled power plant. Mr. Winberg holds two patents related to NOx emissions reduction using coal and natural gas. He has a bachelor's degree in nuclear science from SUNY Maritime College and an M.B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh.

Dean L. Winslow of Delaware to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs. Dr. Winslow most recently served as Professor and Vice Chair of Medicine at Stanford University. Previously, he served as Chair of the Department of Medicine and Chief of the Division of AIDS Medicine at the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. Prior to joining Stanford he worked for 15 years in pharma and biotech industry where he helped develop several antiretroviral drugs and the first pharmacogenomics diagnostic device approved by the FDA. Dr. Winslow is a retired United States Air Force Colonel with several distinguished military decorations for his service. After 9/11 he deployed twice to Afghanistan and four times to Iraq as a flight surgeon supporting combat operations in OPERATION Enduring Freedom and OPERATION Iraqi Freedom. Dr. Winslow is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Jefferson Medical College, the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, and Air War College. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases.

David G. Zatezalo of West Virginia to be the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health. Prior to his retirement as Chairman of Rhino Resources GP, LLC in late 2014, he had served as President and CEO, and was previously Chief Operating Officer of Rhino as well as President of Hopedale Mining, LLC. Mr. Zatezalo began his mining career in 1974 with Consolidation Coal Company as a UMWA Laborer, became a foreman and subsequently General Superintendent for Southern Ohio Coal Company and General Manager of AEP's Windsor Coal Company. He later rose to be Vice-President of Operations of AEP's Appalachian Mining Operations. Mr. Zatezalo also worked in Australia for Broken Hill Proprietary, Ltd as a General Mine Manager. Mr. Zatezalo is a Mining Engineering graduate from West Virginia University where he received the 1977 West Virginia University Student Foundation Merit Award. He became a Professional Engineer and received an award for high grade on the mining exam in 1981. He also completed the Masters of Business Administration program at Ohio University in 1994.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 11:26:10 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Christopher Caldwell of Arkansas to be Federal Co-Chairman of the Delta Regional Authority. Mr. Caldwell currently serves as the Director of Special Projects for Senator John Boozman (R-AR). Mr. Caldwell was the Campaign Manager for Senator Boozman's 2016 re-election campaign, as well as the Political Director for Boozman's 2010 Senate campaign. He has also served on several other campaigns, including Governor Mike Huckabee's 2007 presidential bid and Senator Tim Hutchinson's 2002 Senate campaign. Beyond his political and government service, Mr. Caldwell has held various roles in the private sector and is an active volunteer in his community. He graduated with a B.A. in Communications from the J. William Fulbright School at the University of Arkansas. Mr. Caldwell resides in Little Rock with his wife Ashley and their two children.

Walter Copan of Colorado to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology. Dr. Copan is President and CEO of IP Engineering Group Corporation and Board member of Rocky Mountain Innovation Partners, supporting Federal labs, academic institutions, and entrepreneurial businesses. He was Managing Director – Technology Commercialization and Partnerships at Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Technology Transfer at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Among his entrepreneurial ventures was Clean Diesel Technologies, Inc. (CDTi) which he led as CTO and Executive VP onto NASDAQ. During his 28 years with Lubrizol Corporation, he held top leadership positions including research, development, and business unit management. Dr. Copan earned dual undergraduate degrees, and a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Case Western Reserve University. He has served as board member and advisor to many organizations, including the Federal Laboratory Consortium.

Brian D. Montgomery of Texas to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Housing Commissioner. Mr. Montgomery is currently Vice Chairman of The Collingwood Group, an advisory firm focused on business consulting, risk management, and compliance within the financial services industry. Previously he served as Assistant Secretary of Housing/Federal Housing Commissioner. He also served as Acting Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in January 2009. Earlier he served as Deputy Assistant to the President, and from 2003-2005, he directed the Office of Cabinet Affairs, serving as a liaison between President Bush and his Cabinet, and all Federal agencies in the Executive Branch. Under his leadership as FHA Commissioner, FHA successfully spearheaded legislative efforts to preserve the Nation's affordable rental housing stock by maintaining the long-term physical and financial integrity of properties, while reducing rental assistance costs and the cost of FHA insurance claims. FHA provided access to affordable financing to preserve, refinance, or develop more than 300,000 rental units, a portion through risk-sharing agreements with State and local housing finance agencies. He assisted in HUD's recovery and rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast and New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, and chaired HUD headquarters' Hurricane Recovery and Response Center. Mr. Montgomery holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Houston.

George Bryan Slater of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, Administration and Management. Mr. Slater is currently serving as the Assistant Secretary for Administration at the U.S.

Department of Transportation. Previous to his current appointment, Mr. Slater served as the Director of Operations and Facilities for Freedom Partners Shared Services. Throughout his career, Mr. Slater has held many leadership positions within Federal and State governments, including serving at the Department of Labor for five years. Mr. Slater received a bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond.

Glen R. Smith of Iowa to be a Member of the Farm Credit Administration Board for the remainder of a term expiring May 21, 2022. In 1982, Mr. Smith is president and co-owner of Smith Land Service, a company he founded in 1982. The company specializes in farm management, land appraisal and farmland brokerage services, working in about 30 Iowa counties. Mr. Smith also owns and serves as president of Smith Generation Farms, Inc., a family farm operation that encompasses about 2000 acres of primarily corn and soybeans in western Iowa. He is a native of Atlantic, Iowa where he was raised on a diversified crop and livestock farm. His "hands-on" farm experience started at a very early age when his father was involved in a disabling farm accident. He graduated from Iowa State University in 1979 with a B.S. in Agricultural Business and accepted a position with Doane Agricultural Services as State Manager of their real estate division. Glen and his wife, Fauzan, have four grown children and three grandchildren.

James E. Trainor III of Texas to be a Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission for the remainder of a 6-year term expiring April 30, 2021. Mr. Trainor is currently a partner at Akerman, LLP, and has more than 10 years of private practice experience involving election law, campaign finance, and ethics representation for government officers, interest groups, corporations, and others (two presidential campaigns). He recently served as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense in the Office of General Counsel. Mr. Trainor's prior government service includes positions as General Counsel to the Texas Secretary of State (also an appointed member to the Standards Advisory Board, Elections Assistance Commission) and Counsel to the Texas House Committee on Regulated Industries and various other state legislative roles. Mr. Trainor was born and raised in Texas. He graduated from Texas A&M University (Corps of Cadets member) in 1997 and earned his law degree from Texas A&M University School of Law in 2002. Mr. Trainor currently resides in Driftwood, Texas, with his wife Lucy and their six children.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 6:49:09 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 3, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

R.D. James of Missouri to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works. Mr. James has most recently served as a civilian member and engineer on the Mississippi River Commission, originally appointed in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan, where he provided water resources engineering direction and policy advice to several Administrations, Congress, and the Army for a drainage basin that covers roughly 41 percent of the United States. He is a self-employed farmer and manager of cotton gins and grain elevators in New Madrid, Missouri. Over the past 35 years, Mr. James has developed a wealth of knowledge about our nation's critical infrastructure. He previously served as president of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association, he served on the board of directors and executive committee of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association, the Cotton Producers of Missouri, the Board of Directors of U.S. Bank of Sikeston, and the board of directors of Osceola Products. Mr. James is the recipient of the prestigious Bronze de Fleury medal for his significant contributions to Army engineering, the Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Award, and was formerly named the New Madrid County Outstanding Conservation Farmer. Mr. James received his degree in civil engineering from the University of Kentucky.

Kimberly A. Reed of West Virginia to be First Vice President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2021. Ms. Reed most recently was president of the International Food Information Council Foundation, a non-profit collaborating with governments, the food and agricultural supply chain, and health professionals on issues surrounding the feeding of the global population. She previously served as senior advisor to U.S. Treasury Secretaries John Snow and Henry Paulson, and led the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, where she awarded nearly \$4 billion in tax credits, loans, and grants to financial institutions and economic development groups for investing in economically distressed communities. She also was counsel to three Congressional committees in the U.S. House of Representatives: Ways and Means, Government Reform and Oversight, and Education and the Workforce, and vice president for financial markets policy relations at Lehman Brothers. Ms. Reed is recognized as one of the "100 Women Leaders in STEM" (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and serves on several boards. She is the first woman chair of the Republican National Lawyers Association. She holds a B.S. in biology and government from West Virginia Wesleyan College and J.D. from West Virginia University College of Law.

David J. Ryder of New Jersey to be Director of the United States Mint. Mr. Ryder served as manager and managing director of currency for Honeywell Authentication Technologies. Previously, Mr. Ryder served as CEO of Secure Products Corporation, which was acquired by Honeywell in 2007. In 1991, Mr. Ryder was nominated by President George H.W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as Director of the U.S. Mint. His prior government service also included Deputy Treasurer of the United States, Assistant to the Vice President and Deputy Chief of Staff to Vice President Daniel Quayle. Mr. Ryder was born in Billings, Montana and raised in Boise, Idaho. A graduate of Boise State University, Mr. Ryder is married with two children.

Leon "Lynn" A. Westmoreland of Georgia to be a Member of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term

of five years. Congressman Lynn A. Westmoreland served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 12 years after serving 12 years in the Georgia House of Representatives. During his time in Congress, he served on the subcommittee on railroads, pipelines, and hazardous materials of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for six years. Congressman Westmoreland also served on the Financial Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Congressman Westmoreland started his own construction business in 1982 and did residential and light commercial construction until his election to Congress in 2004. He currently serves as principal of Westmoreland Strategies LLC, which provides strategic advice to a variety of clients. He and his wife of 48 years, Joan, have three children and seven, soon to be eight, grandchildren.

Mitchell Zais of South Carolina to be Deputy Secretary of Education. Most recently, Mr. Zais served as South Carolina's elected State Superintendent of Education. During his term in office, the department's budget was reduced while on-time high school graduation rates increased every year to an all-time high. The number of public charter schools increased 78 percent, the number of public charter school students increased 155 percent, and the number of students taking online courses grew 130 percent. Prior to that, he served 10 years as president of Newberry College in South Carolina. The College was recognized for the first time by *U.S. News* as one of "America's Best Colleges." He served 31 years as an infantry soldier in the U.S. Army. He retired as a Brigadier General. Mr. Zais holds a B.S. in engineering from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, an M.A. degree in military history, plus M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in organizational behavior and social psychology from the University of Washington. He served as South Carolina Commissioner of Higher Education and is a recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, the states' highest civilian award.

The following individuals to be Members of the Board of Directors of the Export Import Bank:

- Claudia Slacik of New York, for the remainder of a 4-year term expiring January 20, 2019, and an additional 4-year term expiring January 20, 2023.
- Judith Delzoppo Pryor of Ohio, for the remainder of a 4-year term expiring January 20, 2021.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 2:53:56 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 4, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump yesterday announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

R.D. James of Missouri to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works. Mr. James has most recently served as a civilian member and engineer on the Mississippi River Commission, originally appointed in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan, where he provided water resources engineering direction and policy advice to several Administrations, Congress, and the Army for a drainage basin that covers roughly 41 percent of the United States. He is a self-employed farmer and manager of cotton gins and grain elevators in New Madrid, Missouri. Over the past 35 years, Mr. James has developed a wealth of knowledge about our nation's critical infrastructure. He previously served as president of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association, he served on the board of directors and executive committee of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association, the Cotton Producers of Missouri, the Board of Directors of U.S. Bank of Sikeston, and the board of directors of Osceola Products. Mr. James is the recipient of the prestigious Bronze de Fleury medal for his significant contributions to Army engineering, the Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Award, and was formerly named the New Madrid County Outstanding Conservation Farmer. Mr. James received his degree in civil engineering from the University of Kentucky.

Kimberly A. Reed of West Virginia to be First Vice President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2021. Ms. Reed most recently was president of the International Food Information Council Foundation, a non-profit collaborating with governments, the food and agricultural supply chain, and health professionals on issues surrounding the feeding of the global population. She previously served as senior advisor to U.S. Treasury Secretaries John Snow and Henry Paulson, and led the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, where she awarded nearly \$4 billion in tax credits, loans, and grants to financial institutions and economic development groups for investing in economically distressed communities. She also was counsel to three Congressional committees in the U.S. House of Representatives: Ways and Means, Government Reform and Oversight, and Education and the Workforce, and vice president for financial markets policy relations at Lehman Brothers. Ms. Reed is recognized as one of the "100 Women Leaders in STEM" (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and serves on several boards. She is the first woman chair of the Republican National Lawyers Association. She holds a B.S. in biology and government from West Virginia Wesleyan College and J.D. from West Virginia University College of Law.

David J. Ryder of New Jersey to be Director of the United States Mint. (UPDATED) If confirmed, David J. Ryder of New Jersey will serve as Director of the United States Mint. David J. Ryder served as Global Business Development Manager and Managing Director of Currency for Honeywell Authentication Technologies. Previously, Ryder served as CEO of Secure Products Corporation, which was acquired by Honeywell in 2007. In 1991, Ryder was nominated by President George H.W. Bush to serve as Director of the U.S. Mint and served from September 1992 to November 1993. His prior government service also included Deputy Treasurer of the United States, Assistant to the Vice President and Deputy Chief of Staff to Vice President Daniel Quayle. Ryder was born in Billings, Montana and raised in Boise, Idaho, Ryder attended Boise State University and is married with two children.

Leon “Lynn” A. Westmoreland of Georgia to be a Member of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years. Congressman Lynn A. Westmoreland served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 12 years after serving 12 years in the Georgia House of Representatives. During his time in Congress, he served on the subcommittee on railroads, pipelines, and hazardous materials of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for six years. Congressman Westmoreland also served on the Financial Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Congressman Westmoreland started his own construction business in 1982 and did residential and light commercial construction until his election to Congress in 2004. He currently serves as principal of Westmoreland Strategies LLC, which provides strategic advice to a variety of clients. He and his wife of 48 years, Joan, have three children and seven, soon to be eight, grandchildren.

Mitchell Zais of South Carolina to be Deputy Secretary of Education. Most recently, Mr. Zais served as South Carolina's elected State Superintendent of Education. During his term in office, the department's budget was reduced while on-time high school graduation rates increased every year to an all-time high. The number of public charter schools increased 78 percent, the number of public charter school students increased 155 percent, and the number of students taking online courses grew 130 percent. Prior to that, he served 10 years as president of Newberry College in South Carolina. The College was recognized for the first time by *U.S. News* as one of "America's Best Colleges." He served 31 years as an infantry soldier in the U.S. Army. He retired as a Brigadier General. Mr. Zais holds a B.S. in engineering from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, an M.A. degree in military history, plus M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in organizational behavior and social psychology from the University of Washington. He served as South Carolina Commissioner of Higher Education and is a recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, the states' highest civilian award.

The following individuals to be Members of the Board of Directors of the Export Import Bank:

- Claudia Slacik of New York, for the remainder of a 4-year term expiring January 20, 2019, and an additional 4-year term expiring January 20, 2023.
- Judith Delzoppo Pryor of Ohio, for the remainder of a 4-year term expiring January 20, 2021.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Robert Weaver to the Department of Health and Human Services
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 6:46:49 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Robert Weaver to the Department of Health and Human Services

If confirmed, Robert M. Weaver of Oklahoma will serve as Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for a term of four years. Mr. Weaver is an enrolled member of the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma. He serves as the consultative representative to U.S. Government Relations for his tribe in the area of healthcare. Mr. Weaver brings nearly two decades of experience in hospital, mental health administration, and entrepreneurship. He is the founder and owner of four companies that provide healthcare consulting services to tribal governments, their enterprises, and their members. He works at the tribal, State, and Federal levels to improve access and affordability to quality healthcare for American Indians and Alaska Natives through improving employee benefit plans and creating tribal member wellness plans. The National Indian Health Board awarded Mr. Weaver the Regional/Area Impact Award in 2012. One of his companies, RWI Benefits LLC was named the 2017 American Indian Business of the Year from the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development. He and his wife currently reside in northeast Oklahoma with their four children.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 8:58:30 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Frank T. Brogan of Pennsylvania to be the Assistant Secretary of Education for Elementary and Secondary Education. Mr. Brogan most recently served as chancellor of Pennsylvania's public universities. He began his career as a fifth grade teacher in Martin County, Florida and later served as a dean of students, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent before being elected Florida's Commissioner of Education in 1994. Mr. Brogan continued his advocacy for public education when elected Lieutenant Governor of Florida in 1998 and 2002. After five years in that role, he was named president of Florida Atlantic University – a position he held until 2009, when he was selected to serve as chancellor of Florida's public universities. A native of Ohio, Mr. Brogan was the first member of his family to attend college – earning a bachelor's degree in education *magna cum laude* from the University of Cincinnati and a master's degree in education from Florida Atlantic University. He and his wife, Courtney, have a 12-year-old son, Colby John.

Lisa Gordon-Hagerty of Virginia to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, Department of Energy. Ms. Gordon-Hagerty is president of Tier Tech International, Inc., a national security consulting company. She also serves as president of LEG Inc., providing strategic advice and counsel in domestic and national security issues. Ms. Gordon-Hagerty was previously executive vice president and chief operating officer of USEC, Inc. She was a member of the White House National Security Council staff for more than five years, serving as the Director for Combating Terrorism. Ms. Gordon-Hagerty previously served as the U.S. Department of Energy's Director of the Office of Emergency Response, and as Acting Director of the Office of Nuclear Weapons Surety. Before that, she was a professional staff member for the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Energy and Commerce. She began her professional career as a health physicist at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Ms. Gordon-Hagerty earned a Master of Public Health degree in health physics and a Bachelor of Science degree, both from the University of Michigan.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Wednesday, July 26, 2017 7:25:31 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Samuel Dale Brownback of Kansas to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Department of State. Mr. Brownback has been Governor of Kansas since 2011. Previously, he served as a U.S. Senator (1996-2011) and a U.S. Representative in the House of Representatives (1995-1996) from Kansas. While a member of the Senate, he worked actively on the issue of religious freedom in multiple countries and was a key sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. He also served as Kansas Secretary of Agriculture (1986-1993) and was a White House Fellow in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (1990-1991). Mr. Brownback was a private attorney in Kansas and taught agricultural law at Kansas State University. He co-authored two books on the subject. He earned a B.S. from Kansas State University and a J.D. from the University of Kansas. He and his wife Mary have five children.

Daniel J. Kritenbrink of Virginia to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Mr. Kritenbrink, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1994. He is currently the Senior Advisor for North Korea Policy at the Department of State. A former Deputy Chief of Mission in Beijing, China, Mr. Kritenbrink has held senior leadership positions at the Department of State and served as a Senior Director at the National Security Council. He has two decades of experience overseas and in Washington working on Asian affairs as a policy maker, analyst, and practitioner. Mr. Kritenbrink earned a M.A. from the University of Virginia and a B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. He speaks Chinese and Japanese.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 8:10:28 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Barry Myers to the Department of Commerce

If confirmed, Barry Myers of Pennsylvania will serve as Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, Department of Commerce. Mr. Myers has served as CEO of AccuWeather since 2007, and since then the company has experienced its highest grossing years, and its largest global web and mobile audience growth. He is one of the world's leading authorities on the use of weather information. He has given remarks at the World Meteorological Organization, World Federation of Scientists, American Meteorological Society (AMS), and many other organizations. For two decades, he served as a member of the nationally recognized Smeal College of Business. Mr. Myers is from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He graduated from the Smeal College of Business at Penn State and received a J.D. from Boston University Law School. He and his wife Holly have five children.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Appoint John Rood to the Department of Defense

John C. Rood of Arizona will serve as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Mr. Rood most recently served as the Senior Vice President for Lockheed Martin International, where his responsibilities included developing and executing strategies to grow Lockheed Martin's international business, managing marketing and government relations activities, and overseeing offset and industrial cooperation activities. Mr. Rood's previous industry experience was at the Raytheon Company where he served as Vice President of U.S. Business Development. Mr. Rood served for more than 20 years in Federal Government positions, including Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, and Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation. He also served at the National Security Council as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of Counterproliferation and Director of Proliferation Strategy for Counterproliferation in Homeland Defense. Mr. Rood served at the Defense Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Forces Policy, and at the Central Intelligence Agency as an analyst following missile programs in foreign countries. In addition, Mr. Rood has also served as senior policy advisor to U.S. Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 9:01:34 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

William Beach of Kansas to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of 4 years. Mr. Beach is the Vice President for Policy Research at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Mr. Beach previously served as the Chief Economist for the Senate Budget Committee, Republican Staff. Prior to that position, he was the Lazof Family Fellow in Economics at the Heritage Foundation and director of the Center for Data Analysis. Prior to joining Heritage in 1995, Mr. Beach served as a senior economist in the corporate headquarters of Sprint United, Inc., and, from 1991 to 1995, as the president of the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. A graduate of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, Mr. Beach also holds a master's degree in history and economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Ph.D. in Economics from Buckingham University in Great Britain.

Irving Dennis of Ohio to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Dennis recently retired as a Global Client Service Partner with Ernst & Young, LLP where he served as the coordinating assurance partner on several large multinational public companies in various industries. He has an in-depth understanding of business and financial risk and extensive experience advising audit committees and C-suite executives on global corporate governance, financial, and internal control matters. His experience includes finance transformations, enterprise risk management and corporate governance. In addition, Mr. Dennis has held several leadership roles within EY including a Regional Audit Methodology Leader and a member of a Regional Assurance Leadership Team. Mr. Dennis earned a B.S. Degree in business administration-accounting from Montclair State University and is a Certified Public Accountant. He serves on several not-for-profit boards and has been a member of various accounting-related organizations. Mr. Dennis lives in New Albany, Ohio, with his wife and two children.

Steven Gardner of Kentucky to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Mr. Gardner is President and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a consulting firm where he has focused on natural resources, mining, reclamation, energy, environmental, and health and safety issues. In 2011, he was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. As a licensed professional engineer, Mr. Gardner has worked on projects throughout the United States and internationally. He was the 2015 President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME). He has served on the UK Mining Engineering Foundation, Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors. Mr. Gardner has an M.S. in Mining Engineering with a Graduate Certification in Environmental Systems and a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky.

Kenneth L. Marcus of Virginia to be the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education. Mr. Marcus is currently President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. He previously served as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was delegated the authority of Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights under President George W. Bush. He also previously served as the Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America at the City University of New York's Baruch College School of Public

Affairs. Mr. Marcus is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley School of Law and Williams College.

M. Lee McClenny of Washington to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Paraguay. Mr. McClenny, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, began his public service with the U.S. Information Agency in 1986. He is currently the Chargé d'Affaires e.p. of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. He has previously served overseas in Kuala Lumpur, Montreal, Manila, London, Brussels, Guatemala City, Belgrade and Ottawa, as well as in leadership positions at the Department of State and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Mr. McClenny is a recipient of the Presidential Meritorious Service Award, and numerous performance awards from the Department of State and U.S. Information Agency. He received a B.A. from the University of Washington, and speaks Spanish, French, and some Serbo-Croatian and Russian.

Carlos Trujillo of Florida to be the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States with the rank of Ambassador. Mr. Trujillo has been the Florida State Representative for the 105th District in the Florida House of Representatives, Tallahassee, Florida since 2010. An attorney, he simultaneously has been the Founding Partner of Trujillo, Vargas, Gonzalez and Hevia LLP since 2011 and President of Carlos Trujillo, PA, since 2007. Previously, he served as a Florida Assistant State Attorney at the Miami Dade County State Attorney's Office in Miami from 2007 to 2011. He also has been a Board Member of the Public Health Trust of Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. Mr. Trujillo earned a B.S. from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama and a J.D. from Florida State College of Law in Tallahassee. He speaks fluent Spanish.

Peter Hendrick Vrooman of New York to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Rwanda. Mr. Vrooman, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1991. He most recently served as Chargé d'Affaires from 2016 to 2017 and Deputy Chief of Mission from 2014 to 2016 at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mr. Vrooman has held senior positions with the Department of State at home and at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, as well as overseas. He has served at seven embassies in Africa, the Near East and South Asia. Mr. Vrooman possesses a deep knowledge of East African issues, expertise in UN peacekeeping, strong management and public diplomacy credentials, and economic/commercial advocacy experience. He earned a M.S from the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and a B.A. from Harvard College. He speaks French and Arabic.

The following individuals to be Members of the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service:

- Calvin R. Tucker of Pennsylvania, for the remainder of a term expiring December 8, 2023.
- Robert M. Duncan of Kentucky, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2018, and an additional term expiring December 8, 2025.
- David Williams of Illinois, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2019.

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President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Appoint Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Eddie Joe Williams of Arkansas will serve as the Federal Representative to the Southern States Energy Board.

John Zangardi of Pennsylvania will serve as be Chief Information Officer, Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Zangardi has extensive experience in information technology and security. Most recently, Dr. Zangardi served as the Acting Chief Information Officer at the Department of Defense. He previously served as the Principal Deputy Department of Defense Chief Information Officer. His career also

includes experience in acquisition, policy, legislative affairs, resourcing, and operations. Dr. Zangardi is a retired Naval Flight Officer and served in a variety of command and staff assignments. Since his retirement from the Navy, he has held several senior executive positions at the Department of the Navy, including as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Information Operations, and Space and as the Department of Navy Chief Information Officer. Dr. Zangardi holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Scranton, master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, and Doctor of Philosophy degree from George Mason University.

The following individuals will serve as Members of the Advisory Committee on the Arts of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

- Pamella DeVos of Michigan.
- Frederick Davis Jubitz of Oregon.
- Michael S. Lorber of New York.
- Anne N. Reyes of Florida.
- Stephanie Spencer of California.
- Frank Giordano of New Jersey.
- Vance Thompson of South Dakota.
- Geoffrey K. Verhoff of Virginia.

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President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Designate David Kautter to the Internal Revenue Service

David Kautter of Virginia to be the Acting Commissioner of Internal Revenue. This designation will become effective on November 13, 2017. Mr. Kautter was confirmed on August 3, 2017, to be the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Tax Policy.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Thursday, January 04, 2018 7:02:29 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 4, 2018

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

Sean Cairncross of Minnesota, to be Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge

Corporation. Mr. Cairncross currently serves as a Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff. Before joining the White House, Mr. Cairncross served as the Chief Operating Officer of the Republican National Committee for the 2016 election cycle. Before that, Mr. Cairncross was a partner at a Washington, D.C.-area law firm, and served as general counsel to a policy analytics firm. He has also served as the Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee for the 2010 and 2012 cycles, and as Chief Counsel to the RNC for the 2008 cycle. Before that, Mr. Cairncross worked as an associate at a large Washington, D.C. law firm. Mr. Cairncross holds a J.D. from NYU School of Law, an M.Phil in international relations from Cambridge University, and a B.A., summa cum laude, from American University. Originally from Minnesota, he currently lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife and two children.

Tim Thomas of Kentucky, to be the Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Mr. Thomas currently serves on the State staff of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as a field representative based in the Senator's Bowling Green office. A native Kentuckian, Mr. Thomas previously served in the administration of former Kentucky governor, Ernie Fletcher, in the Kentucky Environmental Cabinet as a special assistant to the Secretary handling matters including legislative initiatives for the agency. While at the cabinet, Mr. Thomas also served as Federal facilities coordinator, overseeing environmental regulation of Federal sites, including Department of Energy and United States Army installations. Mr. Thomas' last position in State government was as executive director of the Kentucky Infrastructure Authority, an agency tasked with helping finance the expansion of water and wastewater services throughout the State. After leaving State government, Mr. Thomas was employed by Swift & Staley, Inc., a government infrastructure support services contractor based in western Kentucky. He is a graduate of Murray State University and the University of Louisville School of Law.

Kevin Edward Moley of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Organizational Affairs). Mr. Moley, a prominent businessman, Federal Government official and former Ambassador, was a private investor in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Williamsburg, Virginia, from 2006-present and 1998-2001. From 2001-2006 he was Representative of the United States to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland, with the rank of Ambassador. Previously, he was a senior executive in the health care industry and served the Federal Government as Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services (1992-1993), Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget, Department of Health and Human Services (1989-1992), and in senior positions in the Health Care Financing Administration (1984-1988). He played key leadership roles in the Reagan-Bush, Bush-Quayle, and Bush-Cheney Presidential campaigns. From 1965-1971, Mr. Moley served honorably in the Marine Corps as a Sgt. (E-5), receiving a Purple Heart and a Navy Commendation Medal w/Combat V (Valor). He has served as Chairman of the Board of Project Concern International, a San Diego based NGO (2007-2015), and on Federal Government commissions, such as Vice Chairman of the President's Council on Management Improvement (1989-1991).

Andrew Gellert of New Jersey, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile. Mr. Gellert, President of Gellert Global Group in Elizabeth, New Jersey, is a prominent American businessman. He leads an enterprise consisting of many North American food importing companies, including Atalanta Corporation, the largest privately held food

importer in the United States. He has served as Chairman of the Association of Food Industries (AFI), which is part of a coalition of food importing associations pursuing the mutual trade interests of overseas suppliers and United States importers before the FDA, and within the food legislation arena. In addition, he is a member of the Young Presidents Organization and a Board member of the Elizabeth Development Corporation. Mr. Gellert earned a B.S. from Cornell University.

Leandro Rizzuto of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Barbados, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary America to St. Kitts and Nevis and to Saint Lucia. Mr. Rizzuto, a prominent businessman, is past Chairman of the Professional Beauty Association (PBA). He has been Director of North American Beauty Events since 2005, the producer of Cosmoprof NA – America’s largest B2B Beauty Show – creator and publisher of “Style Source Magazine.” For over 30 years, he helped build his family’s business, Conair, into one of the largest private companies in the United States, with offices in Asia, Europe, Australia, and Latin America. At Conair, he was Senior Vice President for Professional Global Business Units and had increased sales from \$25 million to \$300 million and was credited with over 25 United States patents. Mr. Rizzuto attended Arizona State University, where he majored in marketing.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Appoint Personnel to Key Administration Posts

James Lynn Woodworth of Arkansas, to be Commissioner of Education Statistics, Department of Education, for the remainder of a six year term expiring June 21, 2021. Mr. Woodworth joined the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University’s Hoover Institute in 2012. Prior to his time at CREDO, he performed research, program evaluations, and administered performance pay programs at the Office for Education Policy as part of his duties as a Distinguished Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. Before his time at the University of Arkansas, Mr. Woodworth spent 11 years as a public school teacher in Arkansas. He earned a B.A., Magna Cum Laude, in music education and a M.Ed. in educational leadership from Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, Arkansas, and earned his PhD. in education policy at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Mr. Woodworth is a veteran of Marine Corps.

Michelle Giuda of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Public Affairs). Ms. Giuda has been the Senior Vice President of Global Corporate Communications at Weber Shandwick in New York, New York, since 2014. She oversees global communications strategy across 81 countries at Weber Shandwick, a global public relations firms with offices in major media, business, and government capitals around the world. During her tenure, Weber Shandwick became the most awarded public relations firm at the 2016 Cannes Lion Festival of Creativity, the first firm to be named PRWeek’s Global Agency of the Year for three consecutive years, and the only PR agency on Advertising Age’s A-List in 2014 and 2015. Ms. Giuda was named one of the Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business by the Asian American Business Development Center in 2016. Previously, she served as Deputy National Press Secretary to Speaker Newt Gingrich and Communications Director for GOPAC in Washington, D.C. Ms. Giuda graduated, cum laude, with a B.A. from the University of California Los Angeles, where she won an NCAA Championship and captained the UCLA Women’s Gymnastics Team; and she earned an M.P.S. from George Washington University.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 7:27:43 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Ernest W. DuBester of Virginia to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) for the remainder of a five year term expiring on July 1, 2019. Mr. DuBester has served as a Member of the FLRA since August 2009. He was also FLRA Chairman from January to November 2013. With over 40 years of experience in labor-management relations, he began his career at the National Labor Relations Board as counsel to former Chairman and Member John Fanning. He was also a union attorney with the firm of Highsaw & Mahoney, and legislative counsel to the AFL-CIO. From 1993-2001, he was Chairman and Member at the National Mediation Board. From 2001-2005, Mr. DuBester was the Professor and Director of the Dispute Resolution Program at the Antonin Scalia Law School. Mr. DuBester received his A.B. from Boston College, his J.D. from Catholic University, where he served as Recent Developments Editor of the Law Review, and his Masters of Law in Labor Law from Georgetown University Law Center. He is married to Karen Marie Kremer.

Neil Jacobs of North Carolina to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Environmental Observation and Prediction. Dr. Jacobs is the Chief Atmospheric Scientist at Panasonic Avionics Corporation, where he directs the research and development of both the aviation weather observing program, as well as the numerical forecast models. He is the Chair of the American Meteorological Society's Forecast Improvement Group, and also serves on the World Meteorological Organization's aircraft-based observing systems expert team. Prior to joining Panasonic (AirDat) in 2005, Dr. Jacobs worked on various analyses and modeling projects including NASA's Earth Systems Science Program, GOES satellite program, and the Department of Energy's Ocean Margins Program. He has dual B.S. degrees in mathematics and physics from the University of South Carolina, and a M.S. in air-sea interaction and Ph.D. in numerical modeling from North Carolina State University. He resides in Durham, NC, with his wife Dr. Jennifer Modliszewski and sons Nicolaus and Theodore.

Timothy Kelly of Michigan to be Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Department of Education. Mr. Kelly is currently a State representative from the 94th district in Saginaw County, Michigan. Mr. Kelly, serving in his third and final term in the Michigan House of Representatives, is the chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on School Aid, which oversees K-12 spending, and also chairs the House Education Reform policy committee. Prior to his election as a State representative, Mr. Kelly served one term as an elected county commissioner in Saginaw County. He also served in former Michigan Governor John Engler's administration as the governor's education policy advisor, and as a special advisor to the director of the Michigan Department of Career Development. Mr. Kelly also served in the administration of Governor Evan Bayh in Indiana as the executive director of the Indiana Human Resources Investment Council, the executive director of the Indiana Council on Vocational Education, and as a development specialist for the Indiana Department of Commerce. Before working in the public sector, Mr. Kelly worked in various subsidiaries and States for Bituminous Materials Co., Inc., his family's emulsified asphalt business. Mr. Kelly is a graduate of the University of Denver. Among many awards and recognitions for his work in the legislature, he is the 2016 recipient of the Michigan College Access Network's Compass Award, and was the MIRS 2013 Freshman Legislator of the Year.

David Christian Tryon of Ohio to be the Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business

Administration. Mr. Tryon, a litigation partner with the law firm of Porter Wright Morris and Arthur, has been practicing law for over 31 years. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School and has a business degree from Brigham Young University. He was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Tryon has served as the President of the Brecksville/Broadview Heights School Board and is currently an Executive Board Member for the Boy Scouts of America, Lake Erie Council, a member of the Ohio Advisory Committee for the United States Commission on Civil Rights and President of the Cleveland Lawyers Chapter for the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy. He is also a lay clergyman in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition to representing both large and small corporate matters in court, Mr. Tryon has handled public interest matters on a pro bono basis.

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President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Appoint Paul Packer to the Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint Paul Packer of New York to be a Member of the Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad for the remainder of a 3-year term expiring February 27, 2019 and upon appointment designate chair.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump to Award the Medal of Honor
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 4:02:24 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 2017

President Donald J. Trump to Award the Medal of Honor

WASHINGTON, DC – On October 23, 2017, President Donald J. Trump will award the Medal of Honor to United States Army Captain Gary M. Rose (retired) for conspicuous gallantry during the Vietnam War.

Captain Rose will receive the Medal of Honor for voluntarily risking his life on multiple occasions during combat operations, while serving as a medic with the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). From September 11 through September 14, 1970, while his unit was engaged with a much larger force deep in enemy-controlled territory, then-Sergeant Rose repeatedly ran into the line of enemy fire to provide critical medical aid to his comrades, using his own body on one occasion to shield a wounded American from harm.

On the final day of the mission, although wounded himself, Sergeant Rose voluntarily exposed himself to enemy fire while moving wounded personnel to the extraction point, loading them into helicopters, and helping to repel an enemy assault on the American position. As he boarded the final extraction helicopter, intense enemy fire hit the helicopter, causing it to crash shortly after takeoff. Again, ignoring his own injuries, Sergeant Rose pulled the helicopter crew and members of his unit from the burning wreckage and provided medical aid until another extraction helicopter arrived.

Rose enlisted in the Army after attending San Fernando State College. He attended Officer Candidate School in 1973 and earned a bachelor's degree in general education and military science from Cameron University in 1977. He retired from the Army in 1987. After retiring, Captain Rose earned a master's degree in communication from the University of Oklahoma and later worked as a technical consultant in the defense and automobile industries, developing user and maintenance manuals and training programs and materials.

Today, Captain Rose lives in Huntsville, Alabama, with his wife Margaret, and is involved in a number of charitable organizations. He is a lifetime member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, the Knights of Columbus, the Military Officers Association of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Special Forces Association, the Special Operations Association, and the Vietnam Veterans Association. He and Margaret have two daughters, Sarah and Claire, and one son, Michael.

THE MEDAL OF HONOR:

The Medal of Honor is awarded by the President, in the name of Congress, to members of the Armed Forces who distinguish themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while:

- engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
- engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or
- serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

The meritorious conduct must involve great personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his or her comrades and must have involved risk of life. There must be incontestable proof of the performance of the meritorious conduct, and each recommendation for the award must be considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.

PRESS CREDENTIALING: The award ceremony will take place at the White House. Additional information about media credentials will be released at a later date.

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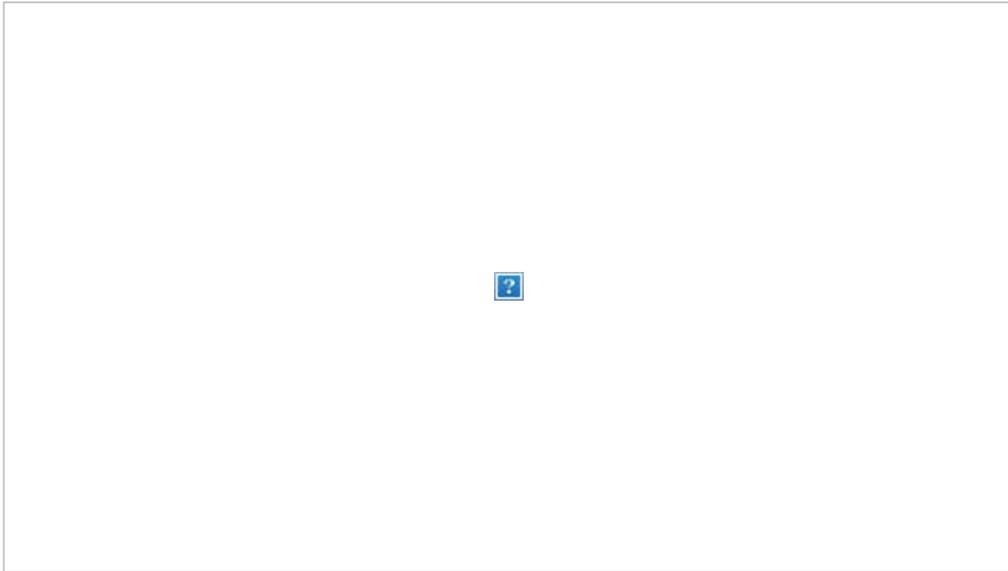
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: President Donald J. Trump's Weekly Address
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 4:32:10 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2017

President Donald J. Trump's Weekly Address



The President's Weekly Address is now available to watch on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [WH.gov](#).

Transcript:

My fellow Americans,

On Wednesday, I traveled to Las Vegas to visit with the victims of the horrific shooting, speak with their families, and thank the brave citizens, first responders and medical personnel who saved so many lives.

We struggle to grasp the evil that occurred on Sunday evening when a murderer shot into a crowd of more than 20,000 people. Men, women, and children were gathered to enjoy a concert. They never imagined it would become the worst day of their lives.

But in the wake of such shock and horror, it was a matter of seconds before the goodness of the human spirit broke through. When the shooting began, a mother laid on top of her daughter to shield her from gunfire. A husband died to protect his beloved wife. Strangers rescued strangers, police officers and first responders rushed into danger.

When the worst of humanity strikes, the best of humanity responds.

The men and women who risked their lives to save their fellow citizens give proof to the words of this Scripture: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Americans defied

death and hatred with love and courage.

This week our nation remembers all the wonderful people we have lost and all of the grace they brought into our lives and our communities. Among the fallen were young students full of limitless potential, law enforcement personnel, a nurse, teachers dedicated to our children's future, and many others. They were mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. They were husbands and wives, and sons and daughters. They will be dearly missed, and they will never be forgotten.

To all those who lost a loved one, we cannot imagine your pain, or erase your sorrow. Our hearts grieve for you. We stand with you now, and every day after. And we pray that God may carry you through the anguish and sorrow.

We can never fill the void of those who perished, but we pledge to honor them by living as they would have wished – with lives full of purpose, with hearts full of love, and with hope for a better tomorrow.

May God comfort the broken-hearted. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders and Chief of Staff General John Kelly
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017 5:02:52 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

October 19, 2017 For Immediate Release

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL JOHN KELLY

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:01 P.M. EDT

MS. SANDERS: Catch you off guard when we're on time. Good afternoon.

As you all saw, earlier today the President met with the Governor of Puerto Rico this morning to discuss the ongoing hurricane recovery efforts. The administration is working tirelessly to help our fellow citizens recover and rebuild, and we will stand with them throughout this process.

It's been a while since I've had the opportunity to share a letter to the President from the podium, and I have one today that I think you'll all enjoy.

This one is from Mackenzie of Dalton, Georgia. Mackenzie is seven years old and is in the second grade. And she wrote:

"Dear President Trump, I'm writing to tell you how much I appreciate all you're doing. I think you're an awesome President. In fact, I voted for you in my school election. My mom is bringing me to D.C. on spring break this year, and I'm very excited. I've never been there before, and I can't wait to see everything.

I am most excited to see the White House. My mom said we have to write someone to ask to come in, and I hope we can. I know you're a busy man, but if you could meet me, or at least see your office, it would make my day. And I would love to shake your hand.

You're our leader, a hero, and a great man, and I can't wait to see you and help make America great again. Sincerely, Mackenzie, you're biggest fan.

P.S. If you would like, I can bring something to eat when I come. I've always heard food brings people together."

Well, Mackenzie, I had the opportunity to share your letter with the President earlier today, and he said he would love for you to come and visit us here at the White House during spring break. I'll give you a tour personally, and if the President is here, he'd love to meet you as well.

Finally, you're very right about food bringing people together, and so the press staff would like to invite you to have lunch here in the Navy Mess downstairs in the West Wing. We look very much forward to

your visit and hope that you'll be in touch so that we can make sure that that happens.

On a more serious note, we've had a lot of questions come in, and I certainly addressed quite a few of them yesterday, and thought today it might be more appropriate to have the Chief of Staff address some of those questions specific to outreach to Gold Star families. He'll address questions on that topic, and if you have other questions throughout the day, the press staff will be here and happy to answer those after the briefing later this afternoon.

Thanks, guys.

GENERAL KELLY: Well, thanks a lot. And it is a more serious note, so I just wanted to perhaps make more of a statement than an -- give more of an explanation in what amounts to be a traditional press interaction.

Most Americans don't know what happens when we lose one of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, our Coast Guardsmen in combat. So let me tell you what happens:

Their buddies wrap them up in whatever passes as a shroud, puts them on a helicopter as a routine, and sends them home. Their first stop along the way is when they're packed in ice, typically at the airhead. And then they're flown to, usually, Europe where they're then packed in ice again and flown to Dover Air Force Base, where Dover takes care of the remains, embalms them, meticulously dresses them in their uniform with the medals that they've earned, the emblems of their service, and then puts them on another airplane linked up with a casualty officer escort that takes them home.

A very, very good movie to watch, if you haven't ever seen it, is "Taking Chance," where this is done in a movie -- HBO setting. Chance Phelps was killed under my command right next to me, and it's worth seeing that if you've never seen it.

So that's the process. While that's happening, a casualty officer typically goes to the home very early in the morning and waits for the first lights to come on. And then he knocks on the door; typically a mom and dad will answer, a wife. And if there is a wife, this is happening in two different places; if the parents are divorced, three different places. And the casualty officer proceeds to break the heart of a family member and stays with that family until -- well, for a long, long time, even after the internment. So that's what happens.

Who are these young men and women? They are the best 1 percent this country produces. Most of you, as Americans, don't know them. Many of you don't know anyone who knows any one of them. But they are the very best this country produces, and they volunteer to protect our country when there's nothing in our country anymore that seems to suggest that selfless service to the nation is not only appropriate, but required. But that's all right.

Who writes letters to the families? Typically, the company commander -- in my case, as a Marine -- the company commander, battalion commander, regimental commander, division commander, Secretary of Defense, typically the service chief, commandant of the Marine Corps, and the President typically writes a letter.

Typically, the only phone calls a family receives are the most important phone calls they could imagine, and that is from their buddies. In my case, hours after my son was killed, his friends were calling us from Afghanistan, telling us what a great guy he was. Those are the only phone calls that really mattered.

And yeah, the letters count, to a degree, but there's not much that really can take the edge off what a family member is going through.

So some Presidents have elected to call. All Presidents, I believe, have elected to send letters. If you elect to call a family like this, it is about the most difficult thing you could imagine. There's no perfect way to make that phone call.

When I took this job and talked to President Trump about how to do it, my first recommendation was he not do it because it's not the phone call that parents, family members are looking forward to. It's nice to do, in my opinion, in any event.

He asked me about previous Presidents, and I said, I can tell you that President Obama, who was my Commander-in-Chief when I was on active duty, did not call my family. That was not a criticism. That was just to simply say, I don't believe President Obama called. That's not a negative thing. I don't believe President Bush called in all cases. I don't believe any President, particularly when the casualty rates are very, very high -- that Presidents call. But I believe they all write.

So when I gave that explanation to our President three days ago, he elected to make phone calls in the cases of four young men who we lost in Niger at the earlier part of this month. But then he said, how do you make these calls? If you're not in the family, if you've never worn the uniform, if you've never been in combat, you can't even imagine how to make that call. I think he very bravely does make those calls.

The call in question that he made yesterday -- or day before yesterday now -- were to four family members, the four fallen. And remember, there's a next-of-kin designated by the individual. If he's married, that's typically the spouse. If he's not married, that's typically the parents unless the parents are divorced, and then he selects one of them. If he didn't get along with his parents, he'll select a sibling. But the point is, the phone call is made to the next-of-kin only if the next-of-kin agrees to take the phone call. Sometimes they don't.

So a pre-call is made: The President of the United States or the commandant of the Marine Corps, or someone would like to call, will you accept the call? And typically, they all accept the call.

So he called four people the other day and expressed his condolences in the best way that he could. And he said to me, what do I say? I said to him, sir, there's nothing you can do to lighten the burden on these families.

Well, let me tell you what I told him. Let me tell you what my best friend, Joe Dunford, told me -- because he was my casualty officer. He said, Kel, he was doing exactly what he wanted to do when he was killed. He knew what he was getting into by joining that 1 percent. He knew what the possibilities were because we're at war. And when he died, in the four cases we're talking about, Niger, and my son's case in Afghanistan -- when he died, he was surrounded by the best men on this Earth: his friends.

That's what the President tried to say to four families the other day. I was stunned when I came to work yesterday morning, and broken-hearted at what I saw a member of Congress doing. A member of Congress who listened in on a phone call from the President of the United States to a young wife, and in his way tried to express that opinion -- that he's a brave man, a fallen hero, he knew what he was getting himself into because he enlisted. There's no reason to enlist; he enlisted. And he was where he wanted to be, exactly where he wanted to be, with exactly the people he wanted to be with when his life was taken.

That was the message. That was the message that was transmitted.

It stuns me that a member of Congress would have listened in on that conversation. Absolutely stuns me. And I thought at least that

was sacred. You know, when I was a kid growing up, a lot of things were sacred in our country. Women were sacred, looked upon with great honor. That's obviously not the case anymore as we see from recent cases. Life -- the dignity of life -- is sacred. That's gone. Religion, that seems to be gone as well.

Gold Star families, I think that left in the convention over the summer. But I just thought -- the selfless devotion that brings a man or woman to die on the battlefield, I just thought that that might be sacred.

And when I listened to this woman and what she was saying, and what she was doing on TV, the only thing I could do to collect my thoughts was to go and walk among the finest men and women on this Earth. And you can always find them because they're in Arlington National Cemetery. I went over there for an hour-and-a-half, walked among the stones, some of whom I put there because they were doing what I told them to do when they were killed.

I'll end with this: In October -- April, rather, of 2015, I was still on active duty, and I went to the dedication of the new FBI field office in Miami. And it was dedicated to two men who were killed in a firefight in Miami against drug traffickers in 1986 -- a guy by the name of Grogan and Duke. Grogan almost retired, 53 years old; Duke, I think less than a year on the job. Anyways, they got in a gunfight and they were killed. Three other FBI agents were there, were wounded, and now retired. So we go down -- Jim Comey gave an absolutely brilliant memorial speech to those fallen men and to all of the men and women of the FBI who serve our country so well, and law enforcement so well.

There were family members there. Some of the children that were there were three or four years old when their dads were killed on that street in Miami-Dade. Three of the men that survived the fight were there, and gave a rendition of how brave those men were and how they gave their lives.

And a congresswoman stood up, and in the long tradition of empty barrels making the most noise, stood up there and all of that and talked about how she was instrumental in getting the funding for that building, and how she took care of her constituents because she got the money, and she just called up President Obama, and on that phone call he gave the money -- the \$20 million -- to build the building. And she sat down, and we were stunned. Stunned that she had done it. Even for someone that is that empty a barrel, we were stunned.

But, you know, none of us went to the press and criticized. None of us stood up and were appalled. We just said, okay, fine.

So I still hope, as you write your stories, and I appeal to America, that let's not let this maybe last thing that's held sacred in our society -- a young man, young woman going out and giving his or her life for our country -- let's try to somehow keep that sacred. But it eroded a great deal yesterday by the selfish behavior of a member of Congress.

So I'm willing to take a question or two on this topic. Let me ask you this: Is anyone here a Gold Star parent or sibling? Does anyone here know a Gold Star parent or sibling?

Okay, you get the question.

Q Well, thank you, General Kelly. First of all, we have a great deal of respect -- Semper Fi -- for everything that you've ever done. But if we could take this a bit further. Why were they in Niger? We were told they weren't in armored vehicles and there was no air cover. So what are the specifics about this particular incident? And why were we there? And why are we there?

GENERAL KELLY: Well, I would start by saying there is an investigation. Let me back up and say, the fact of the matter is, young men and women that wear our uniform are deployed around the world and there are tens of thousands, near the DMZ in North Korea [sic], in Okinawa, waiting to go -- in South Korea -- in Okinawa, ready to go. All over the United States, training, ready to go. They're all over Latin America. Down there, they do mostly drug and addiction, working with our partners -- our great partners -- the Colombians, the Central Americans, the Mexicans.

You know, there's thousands. My own son, right now, back in the fight for his fifth tour against ISIS. There's thousands of them in Europe acting as a deterrent. And they're throughout Africa. And they're doing the nation's work there, and not making a lot of money, by the way, doing it. They love what they do.

So why were they there? They're there working with partners, local -- all across Africa -- in this case, Niger -- working with partners, teaching them how to be better soldiers; teaching them how to respect human rights; teaching them how to fight ISIS so that we don't have to send our soldiers and Marines there in their thousands. That's what they were doing there.

Now, there is an investigation. There's always an -- unless it's a very, very conventional death in a conventional war, there's always an investigation. Of course, that operation is conducted by AFRICOM that, of course, works directly for the Secretary of Defense.

There is a -- and I talked to Jim Mattis this morning. I think he made statements this afternoon. There's an investigation ongoing. An investigation doesn't mean anything was wrong. An investigation doesn't mean people's heads are going to roll. The fact is they need to find out what happened and why it happened.

But at the end of the day, ladies and gentlemen, you have to understand that these young people -- sometimes old guys -- put on the uniform, go to where we send them to protect our country. Sometimes they go in large numbers to invade Iraq and invade Afghanistan. Sometimes they're working in small units, working with our partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America, helping them be better.

But at the end of the day, they're helping those partners be better at fighting ISIS in North Africa to protect our country so that we don't have to send large numbers of troops.

Any other -- someone who knows a Gold Star fallen person.

John?

Q General, thank you for being here today and thank you for your service and for your family's sacrifice. There has been some talk about the timetable of the release of the statement about the -- I think at that point it was three soldiers who were killed in Niger. Can you walk us through the timetable of the release of that information? And what part did the fact that a beacon was pinging during that time have to do with the release of the statement? And were you concerned that divulging information early might jeopardize the soldiers' attempt to be (inaudible)?

GENERAL KELLY: First of all, that's a -- you know, we are at the highest level of the U.S. government. The people that will answer those questions will be the people at the other end of the military pyramid.

I'm sure the Special Forces group is conducting it. I know they're conducting an investigation. That investigation, of course, under the auspices of AFRICOM, ultimately will go to the Pentagon. I've read the same stories you have. I actually know a lot more than I'm letting on, but I'm not going to tell you.

There is an investigation being done. But as I say, the men and women of our country that are serving all around the world -- I mean, what the hell is my son doing back in the fight? He's back in the fight because -- working with Iraqi soldiers who are infinitely better than they were a few years ago to take ISIS on directly so that we don't have to do it. Small numbers of Marines where he is working alongside those guys. That's why they're out there, whether it's Niger, Iraq, or whatever. We don't want to send tens of thousands of American soldiers and Marines, in particular, to go fight.

I'll take one more, but it's got to be from someone who knows -- all right.

Q General, when you talk about Niger, sir, what does your intelligence tell you about the Russian connection with them? And the stories that are coming out now, they're --

GENERAL KELLY: I have no knowledge of any Russian connection, but I was not, in my position, to know that. That's a question for NORTHCOM or for -- not NORTHCOM -- for AFRICOM or DOD.

Thanks very much, everybody.

As I walk off the stage, understand there's tens of thousands of American kids, mostly, doing their nation's bidding all around the world. They don't have to be in uniform. You know, when I was a kid, every man in my life was a veteran -- World War II, Korea, and there was the draft. These young people today, they don't do it for any other reason than their selfless -- sense of selfless devotion to this great nation.

We don't look down upon those of you who that haven't served. In fact, in a way we're a little bit sorry because you'll have never have experienced the wonderful joy you get in your heart when you do the kinds of things our service men and women do -- not for any other reason than they love this country. So just think of that.

And I do appreciate your time. Take care.

END

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 2, 2017

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:10 P.M. EDT

MS. SANDERS: Good afternoon. Our thoughts and prayers today are with the victims and survivors in Las Vegas, and with the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands where massive storm recovery efforts are ongoing.

The President will be flying to Puerto Rico tomorrow to view the devastation, and he will assure the people there that we are with them 100 percent today and for the long haul. Puerto Ricans have shown incredible resilience, and we are fully committed to helping them rebuild their lives.

Last night, thousands of our fellow citizens endured what the President has rightly called an "act of pure evil" in Las Vegas. The President has ordered our flags to half-staff. And to further honor those lost in the attack, we will hold a moment of silence on the South Lawn this afternoon at 2:45 p.m. Eastern Time.

The President will visit Las Vegas on Wednesday to grieve with the friends and family of the victims, to offer his support to those recovering from their wounds, and to thank the courageous first responders.

In the coming days, this attack will directly impact communities all over our country whose residents were visiting the entertainment capital of the world to attend a concert. One man, 29-year-old Sonny Melton, had traveled from Tennessee to Las Vegas for the concert with his wife, Heather. When the bullets began raining down from above, Sonny shielded her from danger, selflessly giving up his life to save hers. They had been married for just over a year.

Others risked their own lives to save people that they had never met. Mike McGarry of Philadelphia laid on top of students at the concert to protect them from the gunfire. "They're 20, I'm 53," he said, "and I've lived a good life."

Lindsay Padgett and her fiancé, Mike Jay, fled for cover during the attack, and immediately returned to the scene with their pick-up truck to help transport the wounded to nearby hospitals.

Gail Davis, who was attending the concert with her husband, said she owes her life to a brave police officer who instinctively served as a human shield, protecting her from harm.

Sadly, multiple police officers, both on duty and off duty, were among those killed or injured. But what these people did for each other says far more about who we are as Americans than the cowardly acts of a

killer ever could.

The Gospel of John reminds us that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend. The memory of those who displayed the ultimate expression of love in the midst of an unimaginable act of hate will never fade. Their examples will serve as an eternal reminder that the American spirit cannot and will not ever be broken. In the days ahead, we will grieve as a nation, we will honor the memory of those lost as a nation, and we will come together, united as one nation, under God, and indivisible.

And with that, I'll take your questions. Major.

Q Can you tell us a little bit about how the President first learned about it, and your engagement with him -- his own personal reaction to the events of today? And he also said in the Oval he might spend more than a day in Las Vegas. Was he referring to a couple of days there?

MS. SANDERS: We're still finalizing the details of the travel that will take place. We know for sure that he'll be there on Wednesday. And beyond that, we'll keep you guys posted as those arrangements are finalized.

In terms of activity this morning, the President was briefed early this morning by General Kelly, and has been updated regularly and constantly throughout the day, and will continue to as new information is provided by law enforcement officials.

Q Have you had a chance to talk to him about his own -- how he dealt with this?

MS. SANDERS: I've seen him today, and I think he, like most of America, is saddened. And certainly, his heart and compassion goes out to those that were affected.

Jeff.

Q Sarah, many times when these horrible massacres occur, it leads to questions about gun control. Has this particular massacre made the President think anything more about pursuing tighter gun laws, such as background checks, to prevent massacres like this from happening again?

MS. SANDERS: Look, this is an unspeakable tragedy. Today is a day for consoling the survivors and mourning those we lost. Our thoughts and prayers are certainly with all of those individuals. There's a time and place for a political debate, but now is the time to unite as a country. There is currently an open and ongoing law enforcement investigation. A motive is yet to be determined, and it would be premature for us to discuss policy when we don't fully know all the facts or what took place last night.

Jeff.

Q To follow on that, Sarah, though, do you believe that -- or does the President believe that this is a moment -- that this is a time when this should not be a political discussion, it should be a policy discussion? Does he believe that he could bring something new to the gun debate that has been, I guess, locked in typical politics for so many years?

MS. SANDERS: I think today is more, again, like I said, a day of reflection, a day of mourning, a day of gratefulness for those that were saved. And I think that there will be, certainly, time for that policy discussion to take place, but that's not the place that we're in at this moment. But certainly, I think that there's a time for that to happen.

Q If I could follow -- before he was elected President, some 15 or 16 years ago, he did have a different view on guns than he had during the campaign. Does he believe that this is something that he could lead a bipartisan effort on at some point? At what point would that be appropriate?

MS. SANDERS: I think that's something that we can talk about in the coming days and see what that looks like moving forward. I think one of the things that we don't want to do is try to create laws that won't stop these types of things from happening.

I think if you look to Chicago, where you had over 4,000 victims of gun-related crimes last year, they have the strictest gun laws in the country. That certainly hasn't helped there, so I think we have to -- when that time comes for those conversations to take place, then I think we need to look at things that may actually have that real impact.

Matthew.

Q Thanks, Sarah. On Puerto Rico, can you tell us a little bit about the President's aims for his visit tomorrow? And do you expect any tension, given some of his comments over the weekend?

MS. SANDERS: We have several stops that we'll put out later this afternoon in terms of the specifics of that trip. We are going to be spending a significant time there in Puerto Rico, meeting both with first responders as well as the storm survivors. And we'll, again, put out the details of that exact schedule later today.

Q And from some of his comments over the weekend, like that folks down there wanted everything done for them, do you expect that to come up in any of his conversations?

MS. SANDERS: I expect the focus to be on the recovery efforts, which we're fully committed to. The top priority for the federal government is certainly to protect the lives and the safety of those in affected areas, and provide life-sustaining services as we work together to rebuild their lives. That's going to be the focus, not just in the conversations tomorrow, but certainly the focus that we've had since this began.

Cecilia.

Q Can I just pick up on that? Who exactly wants everything done for them, when he said "they"?

MS. SANDERS: I haven't talked to him specifically about a defined of who "they" might be. Again, the federal government is doing everything within our powers and capabilities to first focus on the life-sustaining and lifesaving measures, as well as on the rebuilding process. We've got over 12,000 federal staff on the ground. Sixty-four hospitals out of 67 are partially or fully operational; 14 are now back on the electrical grid. Forty-five percent of customers in Puerto Rico have access to drinking water. Eight commercial airports are operational. Sixty-five percent of gas stations are open. All of these things are things that we're continuing to push, continuing to move forward, and will be part of that effort.

Q And then just back on today's tragedy really quickly, if I may. Does the President believe that what happened amounts to an act of domestic terrorism?

MS. SANDERS: Again, we're still in a fact-finding mission. This is an ongoing investigation and it would be premature to weigh in on something like that before we have any more facts. And we'll leave that to local law enforcement to work with, [and] also the federal law enforcement to make those determinations.

John.

Q Over the weekend -- this was pointed out -- the President was very sharply critical of Carmen Yulín Cruz, who is the Mayor of San Juan. Other than her comments on Friday morning, in which she criticized Elaine Duke for saying this was a "good news" story, in terms of DHS getting supplies out to areas that were needed, what was she doing that prompted such criticism from the President?

MS. SANDERS: Look, right now our focus is to bring the mayor into the coordination efforts. This administration, as well as other members on the ground, have reached out to her. We hope that she will join with us in those efforts and be a part of things. She's been invited to participate in the events tomorrow, as well. And we hope that those conversations will happen and we can all work together to move forward.

Ashley.

Q Has Tom Price reimbursed the government yet for his seat on those flights? And if not, is there a specific deadline when you and the President expect him to do so by?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not sure on the timeframe for that or whether or not it's already taken place. But we'll certainly keep you posted on that.

Jordan.

Q Thank you, Sarah. Given what the President said about Secretary of State Tillerson's outreach to North Korea over the weekend, does the President still have confidence in him as Secretary of State?

MS. SANDERS: He does, yes.

Q And has he spoken to him since those -- since he sent out those tweets?

MS. SANDERS: I believe so. I'll have to verify.

John.

Q Thanks a lot, Sarah. It's a very sad day in this country, as you mentioned at the top. And as the President said in his remarks, he said that when he goes out to Las Vegas, he's going to meet with first responders and, in addition to that, families of the victims that were impacted by this. What's the message to each of those groups when he goes out there?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I think it's very simple to say that his goal is simply to be there to show the support of people from around the country, and to stand united in not only this act of evil but against all acts of evil. And I think that was clear in the President's remarks today and something, certainly, that you'll see from his visit on Wednesday.

Jessica.

Q Sarah, thank you. Following up on the tweets about the DPRK over the weekend, the President tweeted, "Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" So is it the stated position of the White House that you're trying to get back to talks? Or have you given up?

MS. SANDERS: No, this is -- we've been clear that now is not the time to talk. The only conversations that have taken place, or that would, would be on bringing back Americans who have been detained. Like with Otto, those were the type of conversations that this administration

was willing to have. Beyond that, there will be no conversations with North Korea at this time.

Q The Secretary of State talked about those three --

MS. SANDERS: There are three Americans still detained in North Korea.

Q -- (inaudible) lines of communication with Pyongyang. That's what you're primarily using it for? You're not using it to try to get major --

MS. SANDERS: That would be the only reason for us to have conversations with them at this time.

Hallie.

Q Sarah, can I follow on that? I also want to ask about today. But does the President believe diplomacy then is not worth pursuing in North Korea?

MS. SANDERS: There's a difference between talking and putting diplomatic pressure. We still strongly support putting diplomatic pressure on North Korea, which we're continuing to do. But now is not the time simply to have conversations with North Korea.

We've encouraged all of our allies and partners to do more, and we're going to continue to keep all options on the table when it comes to that.

Q And on the activities of today as well, you've talked about how now is not the time to get into a gun control debate or to talk about policy. After the Orlando shooting, the President that day was out on Twitter talking about policy. He was talking about this travel ban. So when, for example, Senator Chris Murphy says, "It's time for Congress to get off its ass and do something," does the President agree?

MS. SANDERS: I actually agree with him that Congress should get up and do something. I'm not sure that it's specific to that, but I think Congress has had several months of doing very little and we'd like to see some actual legislation come through.

Q So related to gun control, what would the President like to see Congress do -- is the question I want to get at.

MS. SANDERS: Again, we haven't had the moment to have a deep dive on the policy part of that. We've been focused on the fact that we had a severe tragedy in our country. And this is a day of mourning, a time of bringing our country together, and that's been the focus of the administration this morning.

Q Can you explain where that's different from Orlando, though, Sarah -- when at that day he was talking about the travel ban, saying he didn't want congratulations, essentially? Why is this --

MS. SANDERS: I think there's a difference between being a candidate and being the President.

Q Thanks, Sarah. I do want to ask -- because before last night's massacre, the bill was advancing through the House; Republicans cleared it through the House Committee on Natural Resources that would, among other things, make it easier for people to buy silencers. Hillary Clinton tweeted about it this morning. She said that, "Imagine the deaths in Las Vegas if the shooter had a silencer, which the NRA wants to make easier to get." Does the White House have a position on this particular legislation?

MS. SANDERS: Again, I haven't spoken with the President about that

specific issue, but I don't think that that is something that would have changed. Again, I think before we start trying to talk about the preventions of what took place last night, we need to know more facts. And right now we're simply not at that point.

It's very easy for Mrs. Clinton to criticize and to come out, but I think we need to remember the only person with blood on their hands is that of the shooter. And this isn't a time for us to go after individuals or organizations. I think that we can have those policy conversations, but today is not that day.

Q Sarah, are there any policy prescriptions that the President considers to be out of bounds on the policy debate that will happen in the next few weeks? Could you articulate a little bit what his position on gun control is?

MS. SANDERS: The President has been clear that he's a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, and I don't have anything further at this point.

I'll take one more question. Fred.

Q Thanks, Sarah. Yes, a couple of questions. One, ahead of the trip to Puerto Rico tomorrow, I wanted to ask about -- there's a bill in the Congress, the McCain-Lee Act, which would give a permanent exemption to Puerto Rico from the Jones Act. Would the administration consider either a permanent repeal of the Jones Act or at least an exemption permanent for Puerto Rico?

MS. SANDERS: I don't think that's something that's necessary at this time. If we deemed that it was, we could have that discussion then. But certainly something that we don't feel like is necessary today, so I wouldn't imagine that would be something needed.

Q Also, on the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, there's have been some attacks among senators, some in the media, on her religious beliefs. Does the White House have some concerns about that?

MS. SANDERS: We certainly support religious freedom and would ask that Congress also support that as well.

As you all know, we've got a moment of silence taking place on the South Lawn here momentarily. And so, with that, I'll close.

And just again, I think we ask collectively that everyone across the country keep the people both in Las Vegas and in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in our prayers.

Thanks.

END

2:25 P.M.

EDT

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From: White House Press Office
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Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 4:30:02 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
October 18, 2017

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:49 P.M. EDT

MS. SANDERS: Good Afternoon. I know it's been a few days since I've been up here. I'm sure that you have all missed me as much as I've missed you.

As many of you will recall, one of President Trump's core campaign promises was to defeat ISIS. With the stunning fall of Mosul in June, and now with ISIS nearly eradicated from Raqqa, it is clear that ISIS's so-called caliphate is crumbling across Iraq and Syria.

This eminent victory by the global coalition and our brave servicemembers comes at a high cost, particularly to the Syrian Democratic Forces who suffered many casualties as they fought to liberate their own country from the oppression of ISIS.

Instead of caring for the urgent humanitarian needs of Raqqa's residents, ISIS utilized the money it stockpiled to finance terrorist attacks across the world, including against many Muslims.

As coalition and our partner forces closed in around them, ISIS used civilians as human shields and killed those who attempted to flee. ISIS's barbaric acts have left many scars across the region, and we remain committed to supporting stabilization efforts and local security forces in liberated areas through a political transition in Syria.

Unfortunately, the Syrian regime and its supporters hinder the efforts to liberate Raqqa. Instead of focusing on fighting ISIS, the pro-regime forces attacked our partners and attempted to block them from liberating the Syrian people from the brutality of ISIS.

While we know ISIS and its destructive ideology will remain a threat, the liberation of Raqqa will mark the beginning of a new phase in the Syrian conflict. As we and our partners take away the ability of ISIS to plot and carry out attacks from territory they control, we will continue to seek the de-escalation of violence in other battlefields across Syria.

Looking ahead to tomorrow, we will be welcoming Governor Rosselló of Puerto Rico to the White House to talk about the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts. We will continue working hand-in-hand with local leaders in all areas of our country that have been impacted by several natural disasters in recent months. And as President Trump has repeatedly said, we stand with our fellow citizens; we're here to help and get them back on their feet.

And with that, I will take your questions. Quiet.

John.

Q Sarah, the President stated earlier today that he would not allow insurance companies to pad their pockets with money from the federal government. The White House has some concerns about the Alexander-Murray bill. Can you articulate what those concerns are?

MS. SANDERS: Look, we've said all along that we want something that doesn't just bail out the insurance companies, but actually provides relief for all Americans, and this bill doesn't address that fact. So we want to make sure that that's taken care of. We think that this is the step -- a good step in the right direction. This President certainly supports Republicans and Democrats coming to work together. But it's not a full approach, and we need something to go a little bit further to get onboard.

Q Can you articulate specifically what the White House is concerned about and -- something about outreach dollars and making sure that the money doesn't go to insurance companies?

MS. SANDERS: Some of the things that the President has stated before: He wants to lower premiums, he wants to provide greater flexibility, he wants to drive competition, he likes the idea of block grants to states. Those are a lot of the ideas that he'd like to see in a healthcare plan.

Q Thanks, Sarah. Let's go to the President's tweet this morning, if we can. What proof does President Trump have when he says Congresswoman Wilson is not telling the truth? Are there recordings of his phone call with Myeshia Johnson?

MS. SANDERS: No, but there were several people in the room from the administration that were on the call, including the Chief of Staff, General John Kelly.

Q The President also said that he has called every family of someone who has died. Is that true? There are reports that --

MS. SANDERS: The President has made contact with all of the families that have been presented to him through the White House Military Office.

Q There have been families that have since come forward to the Associated Press -- the names are in these reports -- who say they've not actually heard from this White House in any capacity.

MS. SANDERS: All of the individuals that the President has been presented with through the proper protocol have been contacted through that process.

Jeff.

Q Sarah, just to follow up on the healthcare question. Is it correct, then, to say that President Trump does not support this deal in its current form?

MS. SANDERS: Correct. I think he stated that pretty clearly today.

Q And then just as a follow-up on another issue. He had a conversation today with Governor Reynolds of Iowa. Can you tell us a little bit about what they discussed? And then, did he make any assurances about the renewable fuel standard during that discussion?

MS. SANDERS: They didn't make any assurances on that specific issue. It was discussed, and they're going to continue to look at that

process. But no definitive decision was made on RFS on today's call, but it was discussed.

Justin.

Q Today, Secretary Mnuchin was talking about the tax framework, and he said it was "very hard not to give tax cuts to the wealthy" as part of a framework that cuts rates across the board. It seems like an acknowledgement of the realities -- math and sort of the independent analysis -- of the President's tax plan. But as recently as a month ago, the President said that this plan would not benefit the wealthy.

MS. SANDERS: That's not the focus of the tax plan. That focus, as we've said, time and time again -- the focus and the priority of the framework that the White House has laid out is to benefit the middle class, and that's what the priority is.

Q But you would agree with Secretary Mnuchin, then, that --

MS. SANDERS: That there may be some people that receive tax cuts that are also in the wealthy bracket? Yes. But the fact is, the priority again remains that middle-class Americans are the ones that are most impacted, and that's where the priority and the focus lies.

Q Sarah, what is the criteria that the White House Military Office uses for presenting names of families to the President after there's been casualties in combat?

MS. SANDERS: So there's a process that is a standard protocol. Once a person is killed in action, the first steps -- the process begins with a DOD Casualty Assistance Officer making next-of-kin notifications. After that, they create a package that's sent to the White House Military Office. That package is then reconfirmed. All of the details and the contents of the package have to be confirmed by the White House Military Office. Once that process is completed, the President or other members of the administration can engage in contact.

Q Just to follow up on that: So are you saying that if the President hasn't contacted the family members of every servicemember who's been a casualty since he came to office, it's because of the protocols of that office?

MS. SANDERS: That's my understanding. If there's a specific case, I'd have to look into it. But as a whole, and generally speaking, that's my understanding.

Q And just to follow up on this week: Why did the President wait 12 days to speak publicly about the Green Berets in Niger?

MS. SANDERS: As I just said -- I walked you through that process. So the DOD package that was sent to the White House arrived on Thursday of last week. The White House Military Office confirmed the contents of that package on Monday. And the letters that had been drafted over the weekend, they were sent once that confirmation was completed, and calls were scheduled on Monday to be made on Tuesday.

Major.

Q But I wasn't just asking about the families. I was asking about why he didn't make public remarks.

Q So, separate from this controversy about contact, is the President satisfied he has learned everything he wants to know about the situation itself in Niger? Pentagon sources have described it as what was interpreted to be initially as a low-risk mission. The ambush was a big surprise. There was no air cover; 30 minutes for French air cover to arrive. Questions about the speed of the evacuation and having, perhaps, that something to do with whether or not these military

personnel survived or not. Is the President satisfied -- he knows everything he needs to know about this particular raid, rules of engagement, and everything about it?

MS. SANDERS: I believe they're still looking into the details of that, but I don't think that the President can ever be satisfied when there's loss of life from men and women in the uniform.

Q Is there anything he wants to know more about this that he's learned so far?

MS. SANDERS: I can't get into the specifics in terms of --

Q Because some of these issues have been raised with him by the families he's contacted.

MS. SANDERS: Right. I can't get into the specifics of the details of the raid at this point. But again, I don't think you can ever use the word "satisfied" with the process when there's a loss of life for someone in the military.

Q Sarah, and on tax reform, because Secretary Mnuchin said yesterday --

MS. SANDERS: I'll come back. Deborah.

Q I have a Las Vegas question. Is the administration looking at having the ATF ban bump stocks? Or does the President think that Congress should do it?

MS. SANDERS: We're certainly still looking into, and having a review done, of that process. And when there's an official policy position, I'll make that announcement.

John.

Q Thank you, Sarah. Two questions. When the Alexander-Murray bill came up at the scrum in the Rose Garden on Monday, there were questions about whether it would contain federal funding for abortions. And these concerns have been raised by several pro-life lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Will the President rule out signing any kind of measure that includes funding for abortion?

MS. SANDERS: The President stated that he would like to see a healthcare bill that does not include funding for abortion.

Q Will he rule out signing one that does?

MS. SANDERS: I believe that that is probably something that would be a priority for him. But in terms of negotiating what that healthcare package would look like, I'm not going to do that from the podium today.

Q My second question --

MS. SANDERS: I'm going to try to take one question today to get to everybody.

Jon Decker.

Q Thank you, Sarah. A question about the NFL. Roger Goodell, the commissioner of the NFL, earlier today said that all players should stand during the playing of the national anthem. Earlier this week, there was no change in policy as it relates to the NFL mandating that all players in the NFL stand for the national anthem. Does the President believe that he's winning this argument, or has won this argument, as it relates to what he said about whether players should

stand for the playing of the national anthem?

MS. SANDERS: I think it's certainly a step in the right direction. As we've said many times before, the President supports standing for the national anthem, saluting the flag, and honoring those men and women in uniform that fight to protect it.

Q Sarah, does the President feel as a matter of principle that it is not adequate to simply send a letter of condolence to the family of a slain servicemember as President Bush and President Obama typically did? And does he feel that it was not adequate for President Obama to have sent a letter to General Kelly but not call General Kelly on the death of his son?

MS. SANDERS: I don't think that there's anything that any President can do. There's never going to be enough that a President can do for the families of those that are killed in action. The point the President was making is that there's a different process. Sometimes they call. Sometimes they write letters. Sometimes they engage directly. The comments were certainly, I think, taken very far out of context by the media. And if there's any frustration, I think that's where it should be focused.

Blake.

Q Let me ask you about something Steve Mnuchin had said, since you guys talk about the stock market a lot and the President does, as well. He said, and I quote here: "There's no question in my mind that if we don't get it done" -- meaning tax reform -- "that you're going to see a reversal of significant amount of these gains." Essentially saying if tax reform doesn't happen, there could be a major correction on the corner of Wall and Broad. How concerned is the President at this point of that possibility?

MS. SANDERS: We're confident that we're going to get tax cuts done, and so that's what we're focused on. And we're going to continue pushing forward until we get there.

Q And on the healthcare bill, if you don't mind, what changed --

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry. I'm just going to take one question today.

Q The President tweeted about the California wildfire situation. Does he have any plans at this point to visit California and to survey the damage in person? And if he doesn't, does that speak to a lack of interest in helping the state recover from the wildfires?

MS. SANDERS: Not at all. Again, the administration has been very engaged throughout this process. We're going to continue to be there. We're continuing to talk with state and local officials on the ground and work with those individuals to make sure that whatever aid is needed, that we can help provide that process.

Q Is he going to go to the state, though?

MS. SANDERS: There's not a trip planned at this time, but it certainly hasn't been ruled out either.

Phillip.

Q Thank you, Sarah. Can you please clarify the President's position on Kurdistan, especially -- on Iraqi Kurdistan -- especially given the takeover of Kirkuk? And does the President see Kurdistan as an ally in general?

MS. SANDERS: As we've said before, that position hasn't changed. I know I've talked about it a couple times. We urge all sides to avoid

escalating this further. We oppose the violence from any party, and we'd like for them to be focused on helping continue in the fights against ISIS and Iran. And that's where we'd like to see their energy focused.

Q Does that mean that they're keeping the status quo?

MS. SANDERS: Sorry, I'm going to keep to one question.

Q Thanks, Sarah. It's been more than two months since the President said that he would declare the opioid epidemic a national public emergency. On Monday, he said he'd get it done next week, but that to get to that step a lot of work had to be done, and called it time-consuming work. Can you explain why it's taking so long, and detail some of what this time-consuming work is and what players are involved in this process?

MS. SANDERS: There's a very in-depth legal process that goes with declaring a national emergency. We'll make further announcements on that next week, but there have been multiple people -- it's an interagency process. A lot of different stakeholders have been involved, and we'll have further announcements on that next week like the President said.

Q Can you talk about that? Is there --

MS. SANDERS: Sorry, I'm going to stick to the one question.

Q Just following on the tax reform meeting today, can you just sort of talk about the strategy from the White House going forward on this? I know that Marc Short had told us before that Democrats were a must-have on this bill or on tax reform. Is that still where things are?

MS. SANDERS: I think it's pretty simple: The strategy is to get enough votes to pass tax cuts.

Q Okay, but can you just elaborate a little bit on the Democratic -- getting Democrats onboard?

MS. SANDERS: Look, we'd love to see them get onboard. We don't why any Democrat would want to be against providing tax relief and tax cuts, specifically to middle-class America. I don't know why anybody wouldn't want to get onboard with that.

Hunter.

Q Thank you, Sarah. It's been almost a month since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. Almost 80 percent of the island is without power, and about a million Americans -- a third of the population there -- still don't have reliable drinking water. Does the administration consider the current state of affairs in Puerto Rico acceptable? And when it comes to Puerto Rico, does the buck stop with President Trump?

MS. SANDERS: Look, we're continuing to do everything that we can to help the people of Puerto Rico. It's one of the reasons that the governor will be here at the White House tomorrow, to continue those conversations, to talk about how best the federal government can help aid state and local governments, and help in the rebuilding and recovery efforts.

Eamon.

Q Thank you, Sarah. On the Fed Chair search, the President once said that he considers himself to be a low-interest-rate guy. Does he still consider himself to be a low-interest-rate guy? And will that have any bearing on who he selects to run the Fed?

MS. SANDERS: As the President said yesterday, he's interviewed a number of very qualified individuals and he'll make that announcement in the coming days, and we can deliberate all of the details of that once that happens.

Q Days not weeks?

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry?

Q Days not weeks?

MS. SANDERS: Days do add up to weeks, so -- (laughter) --

Q Are you signaling anything there, Sarah? That's all I'm trying to get at.

Q Can I clarify -- back on the phone call real quick. What exactly is the President denying? Is he denying that he ever spoke these words to the widow, "that he must have known what he signed up for"? Or is he just saying that she took it the wrong way and it was taken out of context, his words?

MS. SANDERS: The President's call, as accounted by multiple people in the room, believe that the President was completely respectful, very sympathetic, and expressed the condolences of himself and the rest of the country, and thanked the family for their service, commended them for having an American hero in their family. And I don't know how you could take that any other way.

Q So it was context. It wasn't that he didn't say those words. It was that the context -- he felt that she put it in the wrong context. Is that it?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not going to get into the back-and-forth. I think that the sentiment of the President was very clear. He took the time to make a call to express his condolences to thank the family for this individual's service. And I think it, frankly, is a disgrace of the media to try to portray an act of kindness like that and that gesture, and to try to make it into something that it isn't.

Peter.

Q Sarah, did the President speak to his Chief of Staff, General John Kelly, before invoking his son's death in what has become a political argument?

MS. SANDERS: I know he's spoken to General Kelly multiple times yesterday and today.

Q On this very topic? In other words, did General Kelly know he would be raising the issue of his son's memory when talking about the outreach?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not sure if he knew of that specific comment, but they had certainly spoken about it, and he's aware. And they've spoken several times since then.

Q So can you describe how General Kelly feels about it? Is he comfortable with the way his son's memory has been --

MS. SANDERS: I think that General Kelly is disgusted by the way that this has been politicized and that the focus has become on the process and not the fact that American lives were lost. I think he's disgusted and frustrated by that. If he has any anger, it's towards that.

Fred.

Q The House, a few weeks back, passed the ban on (inaudible) abortions. (Inaudible) has said that the President would sign this legislation. Is the White House putting pressure on the Senate to pass the Lindsey Graham bill that would ban the 20-week --

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry, what was the last part of the question?

Q Is the White House putting pressure on the Senate to pass the Lindsey Graham 20-week ban?

MS. SANDERS: I know that there have been conversations about that, and the administration supports that policy. But beyond that, I don't know if there have been further conversations or pressure applied, but certainly support that effort.

April.

Q Sarah, Congresswoman Wilson -- I talked to her a couple of hours ago, and she says that this is the President's Benghazi. She says that Jackson was -- and his Green Berets were -- in Niger trying to find out information and doing a mission about Boko Haram. And she said that his transmitter was still emitting for two days -- emitting a signal when he was located. And she says that makes no sense why he wasn't located.

What say you about that? And also, what do you say about her comment that he did not know, and the wife, the widow, said that the President did not know his name? He kept saying, "Your guy, your guy."

MS. SANDERS: Just because the President said "your guy," I don't think that means that he doesn't know his name. As the President stated, the hardest job he has is making calls like that. I think it is appalling what the congresswoman has done and the way that she's politicized this issue, and the way that she is trying to make this about something that it isn't.

This was a President who loves our country very much, who has the greatest level of respect for men and women in the uniform, and wanted to call and offer condolences to the family. And I think to try to create something from that that the congresswoman is doing is, frankly, appalling and disgusting.

Q What do you say about what she said about Boko Haram in Niger? What do you say about what she said about the mission and then comparing it to Benghazi?

MS. SANDERS: As I said to Major before, I'm not going to get into the details of that action at this point.

Q Was she right? Was she right?

MS. SANDERS: As I said before, I'm not going to get into the details of that action at this time. And when we have further information, I'll be happy to discuss it with you.

Hallie.

Q Thank you. I just want to -- setting aside the congresswoman, setting aside the discussion about the politicization of this, the woman who raised Sergeant Johnson spoke to the Washington Post and said she felt like her son had been disrespected. And again, I'm not asking you about what Congresswoman Wilson had to say. I'm not asking you about any of that.

But given that somebody who -- as you rightly note, making these phone calls is probably one of the hardest things a Commander-in-Chief has to do. Given that, is the President at all reconsidering the way that he communicates with these families? Has General Kelly counseled

him on, perhaps, how he might want to choose or change his words in the future?

MS. SANDERS: General Kelly was present for the call and thought it was completely appropriate. He thought the call was respectful, and he thought that the President did the best job he could under those circumstances to offer condolences on behalf of the country.

Philip.

Q Thank you, Sarah. On NAFTA, Canadian and the Mexican negotiators have rejected the U.S. proposals -- proposals that were described as unconventional and troubling. Is NAFTA dead?

MS. SANDERS: Not yet. But as the President said, it's a bad deal and he wants to make sure that we have a deal that benefits American workers. That's what this administration is focused on. We're going to continue to push forward, and if we can't get there then we'll let you know what the changes are.

Francesca.

Q Thank you, Sarah. In a tweet this morning, President Trump said that former FBI Director James Comey had lied, leaked, and totally protected Hillary Clinton. He also asked, "Where is the Justice Department on this?" What exactly does the President want the Justice Department to do? Is he calling for a prosecution of James Comey? What's he asking for here?

MS. SANDERS: Look, the White House hasn't and won't offer a legal opinion on Comey's conduct. But, in fact, to the contrary, the White House has actually deferred, as it should, any and all legal questions regarding Director Comey to the Department of Justice. That's the appropriate venue for those things to be dealt with.

Q So what's he asking the Department of Justice to do, though, in his tweet this morning? That's what I'm asking.

MS. SANDERS: We refer any legal action to the Department of Justice. Anything on that front would be handled by them.

Sara.

Q Sarah, normally when the President is upset about something, we hear from him pretty quickly about it, whether it's an issue with a senator, whether it's an issue with the NFL. So why did it take nearly two weeks for him to say something about this ISIS ambush -- not to reach out to the families, necessarily, but even to offer public condolences or to explain to the American public what happened and how the deadliest combat mission involving American troops went so wrong?

MS. SANDERS: As I said before, there is a protocol for that. But there's also -- we did make public remarks from the administration. I know I did, in short order after that happened, from the podium, at the direction of the President. And I speak on his behalf. And I did that on behalf of the President and the administration.

Q Sarah, you've brought up politicizing a couple of times, in relation to Congresswoman Wilson. But did the President politicize General Kelly's son's death by bringing it up as a defense for his claims about what past Presidents did or did not do with fallen soldiers?

MS. SANDERS: He was responding to a question and stating a fact.

Q Just to clarify your earlier answer, you're not denying that in some point in the conversation the President used the words, "it's what he signed up for"?

MS. SANDERS: I spoke specifically to the sentiment that was offered by the President. I didn't get into the details of a personal call because I don't find that to be that appropriate.

Trey.

Q Thank you, Sarah. You opened up at the top discussing the liberation of Raqqa. So my question for you is: How does the President envision future U.S. involvement in both Syria and Iraq, post-ISIS?

MS. SANDERS: We want to continue to work with our coalition forces to completely destroy and defeat ISIS. Right now, that's the priority and that's the focus, and that's what we're going to continue to be focused on at this time.

Thank you, guys, so much for today. And we'll see you tomorrow.

END

3:13 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Press Gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Lindsay Walters en route Fort Myers, FL
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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

14, 2017 For Immediate Release September

PRESS GAGGLE
BY DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY LINDSAY WALTERS
AND DEPUTY HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR JOHN DALY

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Fort Myers, Florida

10:10 A.M. EDT

MS. WALTERS: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to quickly run through what the President will be doing on the ground in Florida when we arrive before I take your questions here.

When we land in Fort Myers, the President will be greeted by FEMA Administrator Brock Long, Governor Rick Scott and his wife, Ann, Senator Marco Rubio, and Attorney General Pam Bondi.

The President will then receive a briefing on Hurricane Irma relief efforts by FEMA, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. National Guard, and local first responders and volunteers.

He will then lift to Naples where he, along with the Vice President, Secretary Perry, Acting Secretary Duke, Administrator Long, Senator Rubio, Representative Diaz-Balart, will visit a neighborhood that was devastated by the hurricane and meet with storm survivors.

After that, he will return to Fort Myers and depart for Washington, D.C. And with that, I will take your questions.

Q So is there a deal or is there not a deal on DACA? Who's right here?

MS. WALTERS: The President made that pretty clear this morning that there is no deal. There was a constructive conversation last night with the Democratic minority leaders, but there was no deal made.

Q Isn't this issue of "agreement" or "deal" semantics? Do you see a difference between "agreement" and "deal" if those words are used?

MS. WALTERS: What I can tell you is that a deal was not reached. There was a conversation on the legislative priorities for the fall, which include tax reform, infrastructure, and DACA. But by no means was any deal ever reached last night.

Q So was an agreement reached?

MS. WALTERS: There was, as I said, a constructive conversation to move forward. In terms of DACA, which is important to the minority leaders, this is something that Congress needs to work on. They need to continue to have constructive conversations amongst themselves to figure out what they're going to do to enable real and responsible immigration

reform, and bring that to the President's desk before the six-month window expires.

The President has made it clear that he's willing to reach across the aisle and work with Democrats and Republicans alike. He wants to have bipartisan support. You saw that through the different various meetings and dinner this week. And he'll continue to do that. But this notion that a deal was made -- to have the minority leaders say that -- you've seen them have to go back and re-amend their statement from last night -- just shows that it's silly. There was no deal met, and they know that.

Q How do you respond to the criticism -- there's a lot of criticism coming that he's offering amnesty. You're seeing on Breitbart they're calling him "Amnesty Don." How does he respond to those critiques from the right?

MS. WALTERS: The President has been clear in the past that there will be no amnesty. The Trump administration will not be discussing amnesty. What the Trump administration will discuss is a responsible path forward in immigration reform. That could include legal citizenship over a period of time. But absolutely by no means will this White House discuss amnesty, and the President has made it clear how he feels about no amnesty.

But again, this is Congress. Congress needs to put together what they're going to do before the six-month window runs out and bring it to the President. And this falls back on Congress. The President has encouraged the Republicans and Democrats to come together to have real immigration reform that is legal and substantial.

Q How do you define amnesty?

MS. WALTERS: I'm not going to sit here and litigate what the definition of amnesty is. What I will tell you is the President has made it clear that he does not support amnesty. I think I was clear when I said that --

Q You weren't clear. You said that he could support a path forward to citizenship. That is the definition of amnesty to many, many Republicans, especially in the House.

MS. WALTERS: Again, I'm not going sit here and litigate what the definition of amnesty is, what I will tell you is right now Congress needs to focus on getting real immigration reform to move forward so that there is a legal path forward instead of right now. DACA was illegal. The President took the responsible action, and now this is in the hands of Congress to put something on the President's desk.

Q Did the President agree not to push for border wall funding as part of a DACA deal?

MS. WALTERS: The President made it very clear that we will need to have massive border security. You heard him say this again this morning. That was made clear in the meeting last night that there will be massive border security included in any agreement that is eventually met.

Q What does that include, Lindsay? If not a wall, what does massive border security include?

MS. WALTERS: The President has been clear that there will be a wall. A wall is part of massive border security, but we need to ensure that we are having -- as he ran before that there will be border security. We need to secure our borders and protect the American people. The wall is very much still in play, and the President has been clear that we need to have massive border security. You heard him say that this morning; you heard the Democrats walk back their statement.

Q So why remove -- why separate the wall and DACA in the negotiations? A lot of people would say that taking the wall out really takes away a leverage point for him in terms of getting something from Democrats.

MS. WALTERS: We haven't said yet where the wall funding is being tied to, what vehicle. It's too premature at this point to say where that funding vehicle will be tied in. Right now the President is focused on massive border security, as well as getting a wall.

But what we need to -- the Democrats are pushing DACA. They need to look at their colleagues in the Congress and work with them to put something in front of the President that's responsible immigration reform.

Q What is this -- what is this massive border security that the President is looking for immediately?

MS. WALTERS: There are several ways you can have massive border security. I will let DHS speak more to that, but I can tell you that massive -- securing our borders is very important to this President. We will still have a wall. He has not backed down from that wall or a structure being on the southern border. And we'll continue to keep you abreast as developments --

Q Several Democrats in the meeting yesterday at the White House, the bipartisan meeting, came out in the White House driveway and said on the record that the President was very clear that the border wall would not need to be tied to the DACA bill, that they would be separate. And they made clear they would not tie those two together, and the President reiterated that he agreed. Is that true?

MS. WALTERS: What I said to you earlier is it's too premature to say what vehicle the funding for the wall will be tied to at this time.

Q But the President made clear in the meeting, according to all these Democrats, not -- even before the Pelosi and Schumer meeting -- that it may be too early to tell where the border wall money would be, but it would in a separate bill from DACA. Are they wrong?

MS. WALTERS: The President has made clear that we need to have massive border security in whatever deal is made regarding DACA, and that's what we will move forward on.

Q One more on the wall. Nancy Pelosi said in her statement that both sides agreed that the White House and Democratic leaders would work out a border security package. Is that your understanding that it's going to be the Democrats and the White House putting together the border security package and basically cutting out Republicans from the process?

MS. WALTERS: Republicans will not be cut out from this process. The President said this morning that the Republican leaders are all aware. This is a process that will work through both Republicans and Democrats. The President wants this to be a bipartisan effort, and that's what we will focus on -- it being a bipartisan effort with both the Democrats and the Republicans.

Q Then why weren't Ryan and McConnell in the meeting last night to talk about DACA?

MS. WALTERS: The President is leader of the Republican Party. He was having dinner with the minority leaders on the Democratic side. He speaks frequently to the other Republican leaders, and that doesn't -- I wouldn't look into who was and who wasn't. This is not a tit-for-tat on who attended the dinner last night.

Q How do you respond to Representative Steve King who said that the Trump base is blown up, destroyed, irreparable, and disillusioned beyond repair and no promise is credible?

MS. WALTERS: I can't speak -- I'll let Representative King speak for himself. What I can tell you is that the President has made it clear what his priorities are this fall. We need to get tax reform. We need to have real and responsible -- sensible immigration reform.

And that's what he's focused on. He's focused on reaching across the aisle and working with both parties, both Republicans and Democrats, to get real solutions for the American people. The American people elected him to do this for our country, and that's what he's doing. He's working across the aisle and looking to cut deals with both parties in the benefit of the American people.

Q Can I ask about taxes? What did the President mean yesterday when he said taxes for the wealthy may have to go higher?

MS. WALTERS: We're still in the early forms of tax reform. We've made it clear there are four principles in tax reform: We need to make it easier, make it fair, win again, and bring it home.

The President, as well as his senior principals, are continuing to meet with leaders on the Hill to discuss tax reform. This is a high priority. We need to be able to bring jobs back to the American shores and have a tax reform plan that works for the middle-class, working Americans.

With that, because we're about to land, I want to introduce --

Q The plans that we've seen so far from the White House would lower the rate for individuals. Is the President talking about raising rates for some income levels with his comments about the wealthy?

MS. WALTERS: The President said his comments yesterday, he was clear in what he said about tax reform for the wealthy. What I can tell you is right now we're going through a process of determining what is the most reasonable tax reform for the American -- that will benefit the American people; that will grow the economy; put more money back in the pockets of everyday citizens and bring jobs back.

Q He won't rule out raising rates on the wealthy?

MS. WALTERS: I'm not going to commit to anything at this time. I do need to introduce John Daly, who is going to give an update on the hurricane as we're about to land here and what the recovery-relief efforts are.

Q Can I just clear up one thing you said earlier? Just I'm just trying to make sure I understand. You said at one point the words "path the citizenship" and indicated that this White House, this President will be open to some sort of path to citizenship. You weren't specific about for who or how many people. But is that true that this President would consider a path to citizenship for some undocumented immigrants?

MS. WALTERS: You're parsing what I said. What I said is that the President does not support amnesty. This White House will -- the administration will not discuss amnesty, but that it's in the hands of Congress to come up with a real and responsible immigration reform and a path forward. And when you pushed on the amnesty and the definition of amnesty, what I was saying to you is that in a real and responsible path forward there are many different options. One, for example -- not committing to but as an example -- could be a program that over a set period of time through a certain -- through a program and a process that you could eventually.

But again, this is in Congress. They need to come back. The White

House is not leading --

Q You could eventually have a path to citizenship --

MS. WALTERS: You are parsing my words. The White House is not leading this effort. We need Congress to work together to come to the President to say what their immigration policy is moving forward, and we'll review it then. I'm not going into any further details.

MR. DALY: Hi, I'm John Daly. I'm the Deputy Homeland Security Advisor.

Since we're going to be landing here shortly, I want to give you a little bit more detail about today's trip with respect to the President's meeting with local officials, emergency responders, and survivors from Hurricane Irma.

As you know, our commitment right now is still on the life-sustaining activities and recovery operations. There are still some search-and-rescue efforts underway as well, particularly in areas of Florida that might see some flooding and the rivers that still have not crested.

The immediate threats from Irma with respect to heavy rains and flooding may have surpassed or passed us already, but there are still some concerns that we need to be thinking about with respect to the survivors that were left in the wake of the storm.

The President has made clear his commitment that the entire federal government is here to support the Governor of Florida, as well the Governors of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands as they execute their recovery efforts.

With respect to our priorities over the next couple of days, power is a significant issue, particularly in power restoration in Florida. The last three days have been an excellent response by the electricity subsector to get power back turned on.

On September 11th, at the peak of the power loss, there were about 7.8 million customers that did not have power. That number is down to 3.6 million in less than three days. So great effort by everybody involved to get power restored. That's an important step towards the recovery efforts.

In addition to power, there's a lot of discussions about fuel. The Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Duke extended the Jones Act waiver, which allows for fuel to be brought into the state of Florida more readily.

On Tuesday, 12 million gallons were actually delivered to the port of Tampa, 18 million gallons to Port Everglades, and those fuels will be actually trucked into key areas within the state that are currently short of fuel.

As far as Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands, please keep in mind that they are still in the recovery mode as well. Ninety-two percent of the power in Puerto Rico has been restored. Governor Rossellò and Governor Mapp meet with FEMA Administrator Brock Long yesterday during his visits down to the islands, and Governor Rossellò is at the White House today meeting with officials, including Mr. Tom Bossert, the Homeland Security Advisor, to work through some recovery plans for the next few weeks.

I'll stop there with any questions that you like.

Q Is there any value in the President going to the Virgin Islands?

MR. DALY: Yeah I won't speak to the Virgin Islands opportunity. I

think there's a -- the key thing today is for the President to meet and focus on the survivors here in Florida and meet with the emergency officials, the state officials, and the first responders and volunteers who have done amazing work to actually help our fellow citizens. That will be the focus today. We'll look at the Virgin Islands later and make that determination at that time.

Q We've heard in the Virgin Islands, that they're not going to have the sustained attention. Can you assure that the people there -- that the United States government is totally committed to helping with their recovery?

MR. DALY: Absolutely, the President has been very clear that he is committed to expecting all the members of the Cabinet to provide all resources necessary to support all of the locations that have been impacted, including the territories. For example, Department of Defense has been -- and the State Department actively involved in getting resources down to the Caribbean, not only for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, but also other foreign nations down there that need assistance.

DOD has marshaled unprecedented levels of resources to provide that support, including evacuating people from the islands that needed it for medical reasons. So yes, the President is committed to providing the support to the Virgin Islands -- to the recovery efforts.

Q What specifically will the President see in the areas he's going to today?

MR. DALY: So the first stop will actually be meeting with the state officials, local officials, the people who are really getting the job done, including the Governor and his team, and the first responders and the volunteers. After that, we'll make a trip down to Naples where the President will spend some time meeting with survivors -- a neighborhood that was directly impacted by the storm.

Unfortunately, as we throw numbers around, we have to remember that every person that's impacted is just that, they're impacted. And it's important to them to see the President's support, to see the Cabinet's support, to see the federal government's support.

We have over 40,000 federal employees deployed to support Irma -- victims right now in the state of Florida. Over 7 million meals have been deployed, commodities have been deployed. And the President will have the opportunity to meet with some of those survivors and hear some of their personal stories.

Q The President proposed cuts to FEMA's grant programs. Do you think he's reconsidering that in the wake of what he's seeing in Texas and now here?

MR. DALY: The good thing is that FEMA is in a good position right now to provide all the level of support that's needed for the request, not only from the governors of the impacted areas for Irma, but also the Governors of Texas and Louisiana.

Q Do you favor more money, though, and keep that money -- increase the budget?

MR. DALY: (Inaudible) why I want to focus on the visit today, and the visit today is about the survivors and making sure that the folks are getting what they need in order to be able to get back on their feet. The President's message is going to be very clear today that the President of the United States, his entire federal workforce, all of his Cabinet are here to support the Governor, the state and local officials in order to be able to ensure that we recover appropriately and restore normalcy back to post-Irma.

Q (Inaudible) for the rest of it, when people will be able to get down to the Lower Keys?

MR. DALY: So, the actual inspections were done on the actual roadways of the Keys, I'll leave it to the state and local officials to make a determination on that.

The bottom line is that, remember, there are still threats to individual safety. So the message that we need to give the American people, particularly the Floridians that are returning to their homes, is that they need to listen to their state and local officials, the local officials in particular, on when it's safe to return. It may look like there may not be threats, but in actuality with downed power lines, with standing water, there are still threats to people's safety. It's imperative people listen to the messages of their state and local officials.

MS. WALTERS: Thank you, guys.

END

10:27 A.M. EDT

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 20, 2017

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRINCIPAL DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
AND OMB DIRECTOR MICK MULVANEY

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:27 P.M. EDT

MR. SANDERS: Good afternoon. Before we get into the briefing today, I wanted to reiterate the President's statement from last night and say that the thoughts and prayers of the entire administration are with Senator John McCain, his wife Cindy, and their entire family.

As the President said, throughout his life, a distinguished career in public service, Senator McCain has always been a fighter, and we know that he will bring that unflappable spirit to his latest challenge.

This morning, the Office of Management and Budget released the first unified agenda update of the Trump administration, which shows that we are blowing away our initial one in and two out goal for regulatory reform.

And with that, I'd like to bring out Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, to talk more about the administration's war on waste, and how it's helping our economy grow.

Also, as a few of you may know, tomorrow is the Director's birthday. While I don't want to insult him by getting into too many specifics, I can tell you that the CBO estimates that this will be his 75th birthday. But actually -- (laughter) -- took a couple of you a little longer to pick up on that. But actually, it's just the last day he can answer questions as a man in his forties. So please do a favor and speak really loudly so you can make sure that he can hear you.

And with that, Director Mulvaney.

MR. MULVANEY: Thank you. That's absolutely lovely. Thank you.

Q Before you begin, Director, the visual aids, is it still off-camera given that you guys have this? I just had to ask.

MS. SANDERS: Yes.

MR. MULVANEY: Good. I'm glad we got that out of the way. Yes, happy birthday to me. This is a great way to spend my birthday. We actually started a Twitter account this morning for the sole purpose of getting into a Twitter war with my good friend, Congressman Gowdy, who tweeted out this morning that he thought I had turned 50 a long time ago. I tweeted back that he had two deep, dark secrets; one of which was that he's a lot older than I am -- which is true -- and also that he needs help counting to 50 -- which is also true.

I'm going to talk a little bit about MAGAnomics, talk a little bit

about what used to be called the unified agenda, which is a terrible name. And we'll talk about that in a second, and then take your questions.

Thirty-five years ago, the situation the country was in had some similarities to where we were as we ended the Obama administration. Things were kind of rough. I was in the homebuilding business. My dad was; I was only 13 at the time. And I remember what it was like. We had stagflation, we had malaise, we had all these challenges that the country faced economically.

And in response to that, Ronald Reagan came out with Reaganomics -- a term, by the way, that I'm not even sure he created. I think his opposition used that as a derogatory term to begin with, but it came to be associated with his presidency.

And I think if we look back on it, we know what its basic, fundamental tenets were. It was a monetary policy to fix inflation, tax cuts, spending restraints, and a little bit of regulatory relief.

Fast-forward to where we are today, here we are. It's been more than 10 years since our last year of a really healthy American economy, which we define as greater than 3 percent -- or 3 percent growth. And we think it's time for the next iteration of that, the next plan. And that is what we've put together as MAGAnomics. It's supposed to be this unifying theme of just about everything that we do.

You all have seen me up here before, when we walk through the budget. You say, "Mulvaney, why are you doing this? Why are you doing that?" And I talked about the importance of getting back to 3 percent growth.

I talked about the historical importance of that, the historical achievability of that -- about how if you're 30 years old in this country, you've never had a job during your adult lifetime, in a healthy American economy, and you think that 1.9 or 2.1 or 2.5 percent growth is typical, and it doesn't have to be. It's not.

I remember in the mid-1990s, when I had my first real job -- if I had been fired, it wouldn't have been that big a deal because I knew I could go find something else, because you could do that in a healthy economy. I actually ended up quitting my job so that I could start my own business, because you know you can do that in a healthy economy.

It's been a long time since we've been there. And our fear is that if we don't get back there quickly, there will be people who never know what 3 percent means. There will be people who have forgotten what 3 percent can be like. And I don't think it should come as a surprise that there are some people who don't want you to remember what 3 percent growth would be like, because it would be a tremendous sort of damnation of what happened in the previous administration.

So, what is MAGAnomics? It is tax reform. It is, what we're calling the "regulatory accountability project" -- regulatory accountability project. It's longer, but it's at least a little bit more descriptive than "unified agenda." Took me about six months here to figure out what the unified agenda was. And they told me, and I said, what is it really? And they said, well, it's a way to bring to some accountability to regulations. I said, great, it's now the regulatory accountability project.

Energy dominance is part of this. Welfare reform is part of this. Infrastructure is part of this. Our trade policies is part of this. Even the spending restraint that we tried to introduce in the budget is part of this. All of those things are designed towards one common end, and that is 3 percent sustained economic growth in this country again. We've done it before. In fact, we've always done it. The last 10 years was the first time we have not been able to do it, I think, ever. We

can do it again. We absolutely fully believe that.

And I want to talk a little bit today about one piece of that, which is our deregulatory agenda. The regulatory accountability project -- used to be called the unified agenda -- released -- last night? Today?

MR. CZWARTACKI: This morning.

MR. MULVANEY: This morning. When the President came into office, he gave me some pretty specific instructions over the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs -- what we call OIRA -- O-I-R-A -- part of OMB. In fact, I still think OMB should be called OMBRA -- the Office of Management and Budget and Regulatory Affairs. That's how important it is to us. That's the priority that the President has set for it over at OMB. He said, look, get over there and tell everybody at all the agencies that we're on a two-for-one policy on new regs.

You cannot put out a new reg until you get two old regs off the books. That was our two-for-one policy. He also said -- and no new burden. No new financial burden. If you come out with a new reg that raises the burdens on the private sector by a dollar, you got to go find me a reg you get rid of to reduce that burden by a dollar. So, zero net impact on the regulatory financial burden in this country.

This is our first chance today to sort of get a temperature check on how we are doing on that. So the goal is two-for-one. When it comes to major actions -- we're at 16 to 1. Sixteen major deregulatory actions in the first six months of this administration. There's one new one. Is anybody going to guess what it is? Does somebody know? No dentists here? You know what it is? Yes. The dental amalgam rule. Apparently we're now regulating something to do with the stuff we put in our teeth when we get --

Q Mercury and waste water.

MR. MULVANEY: There you go. All right? So that's the only significant new reg we put out in the first six months. We've gotten rid of 16. Twelve of those are CRAs you're probably familiar with, and four of them have gone through the agency process and so forth.

But it doesn't -- it's not just those big ones, okay? The number that I use -- 860 regulatory actions removed or withdrawn -- 860.

By the way, I asked for a list of them, and I got news for you: None of them are very sexy. None of them are very glamorous. None of them really rise to the level of getting national attention. But think about that -- 860 of them. I describe it as that -- sort of that slow accretion, that slow cancer that can come from regulatory burdens that we put on our people.

Ryan Zinke, over at the Department of Interior, has already made some changes on how they streamline the paperwork for outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen -- people who want to go out in our national parks. That's really small. We know that. It's not going to change the world. But when you do that 860 times in the first six months, it can have a benefit. Plus, if you're a citizen and you're not out there and it's now easier for you to use the national parks, to use our public lands, that's got to have a positive impact on you. We think that it does.

By the way, of the 860, and this is one that I think -- I don't think anybody knows about this because I didn't know about it until about 24 hours ago. The Obama administration had a secret list of regs. Back in 2011, they were doing their unified agenda. They had a bunch of things that they wanted to regulate. And what we're hearing is that they just didn't want to tell you about it. They thought it would be bad for their reelection prospects in 2012, so they created a secret

list of regs that were not disclosed to you folks, and we are disclosing it.

And by the way, when we threatened to disclose it, a lot of the agencies came up with those 860 things that we got rid of. So there will be no more of that, by the way. There will be none of that in this administration. We will not have a secret list. We will not have a hidden list of regulations that we're thinking about doing but we're not going to tell you about. That's going to end effective immediately. In fact, it has already ended. We're not going to do that anymore.

By the way, where's my stack? So I'd love a little graphics. This is the last week of the Obama administration -- the regs put out by the Obama administration in their last week in office. This is ours from our first week in office. I can't lift both of those together, can I? I don't think I can.

In the last six months here, the Obama administration put on over \$6 billion in new regulatory burden. The last six months, just over \$6 billion. We had zero. In the first five months in their administration back in 2009, they had over \$3 billion of new regs. We cleared the decks of \$22 million of regs. So we actually went the other way.

So I cannot express to you enough how much things have changed when it comes to the regulatory burden, the attitudes towards regulations in this country, and you're just going to see more of that for the next eight years.

So I think that's everything I wanted to cover. Is it? I forget. So if I got any questions -- yes, sir. Right there.

Q Thank you, Director. You talked about regulations in terms of the cost to business. Is there any other metric that you think is appropriate for measuring the effectiveness or necessity of regulations, such as whether they improve people's -- improve quality of life, improve safety in products, improve any sort of thing? Because it seems like all you talk about is how much this costs business. So is there any other metric that you look at?

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: Yeah, in fact, we're required by law to do exactly that. We're required by law to do cost-benefit analyses before we put on new regs or take off old regs. It's what we're supposed to do. Our attitude has been, and our philosophy has been that the previous administration fudged the numbers, that they either overstated the benefits to people or understated the costs. And we're going to look at it in a much more pragmatic perspective.

Q I mean, the reason I ask is because, you know, you just talked about the previous administration overstating the benefits. Are there benefits? I mean, talk about the regulations --

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: Were you healthy and safe before this came out? Yes, you were. And you'll be healthy and safe with this gone.

Q I don't know what's in those, Director. What I'm asking you is -- and you just said it; you talked about benefits to people. Is there any other measure? Because all you do is talk about the cost. And you talked about what your first week in office -- you know, what the benefit to the ones that you held up for you all's first week?

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: I think I answered that question. Yes, we are going through a cost-benefit analysis. We are obligated by law to do that and we continue to do that.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Can you tell us more about the secret list from the Obama administration? (Laughter.) What it was and what was in it?

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: I don't know. John, have we got details on that? You want to push that?

MR. CZWARTACKI: They called it a "pending list."

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: They called it the "pending list" or something like that -- previously undisclosed. We can get you a list of the examples that came off of it.

Q So it wasn't available anywhere? It was completely secret?

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: 2011 -- I think they did a unified agenda in the spring of 2011?

MR. CZWARTACKI: Yeah, in the fall, they did 2011. But the '12 spring agenda, they didn't do.

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: They didn't do it.

MR. CZWARTACKI: And instead, they put things they wanted to advance -- they kind of parked them on something they called the "pending agenda" and they kind of just went with that. And so when the fall full agenda came out, conveniently after the election, it was missing some things. So it was a trigger to a lot of academics who said, something's not right here, because there was this secret list being held back that was filled with all this.

DIRECTOR MULVANEY: Fast forward to when we started this process and we started asking the agencies to send us their ideas about de-reg. Listen, it's been a challenge. Start to think about the last time that the federal government has engaged in a full board deregulatory type of action and attitude. There's a lot of folks who work for the federal government who have never been asked to do this.

In fact, one of the anecdotes we've got is that -- I can't remember which agency it was -- but there was actually -- there was no box they could check on whether or not an action was deregulatory or regulatory. There was no column for deregulation. We're asking the federal government to use muscles it hasn't used in a long time, and it's hard to do.

But I will tell you this, when we first started looking at this a couple months back, and we noticed there wasn't -- we had done a pretty good job at all the agencies of slowing new stuff, but we hadn't done a very good job of clearing the decks of the old stuff -- the stuff that was already in the pipeline -- getting rid of it until we found this secret list and threatened to go ahead and expose it. And then they said, well, you know what, maybe we'll get rid of those. And that's how we ended up with our 860 here --

Q Can you assure us -- on one side of the ledger, then, you have secret lists from the Obama administration of potential new regulations. Can you assure us that there are no secret lists and will be no secret lists in this administration of regulations you want to do away with? Is all that public?

MR. MULVANEY: Yes.

Q You have no secret lists anywhere?

MR. MULVANEY: I like questions like that. That's an easy one.

Q When you went back up on the Hill -- last time you were on the Hill -- some of your critics had said that 3 percent --

MR. MULVANEY: I have critics on the Hill? Really?

Q Yeah, can you believe it? (Laughter.) They were saying that you had -- that it's a pie-in-the-sky to believe that we can reach 3 percent. What is your response to those critics who say that you'll never reach 3 percent?

MR. MULVANEY: It's outrageously pessimistic. You guys have heard my answer on that before.

Q Specifically.

MR. MULVANEY: Specifically is this -- is that, yeah, you can get there again. They say, oh well, there's not enough people here anymore, all right. We're a graying population. There's almost 7 million people right now in between -- and I hate to get too technical -- U3 and U6. U3 is the general broad measure of unemployment. U6 are the folks who are working part-time or temporarily against the -- they want to work full-time but they can't find it. Almost 7 million people in that gap between U3 and U6 who could move into the full-time workforce tomorrow if they had the opportunity to do that. They want to do that, we just haven't given them the chance to do that. There's a big part of your workforce base -- move to productivity, okay. We also need productivity to be higher than it has been in the past couple years.

Look at our tax plan. That's why the whole thing has worked together. That first answer, by the way, was welfare reform. How do you get people from U6 to U3? Economic opportunity plus welfare reform. Now we look at tax reform and its impact on productivity. We have to have the capital investment necessary to boost productivity, and we have to get that -- we can get that -- through our tax reform. It's why we focus so heavily on corporate tax reform. We need those businesses to invest in capital in order to increase their employees' productivity because that's how we get to 3 percent GDP.

Q Just a quick follow up, though. Isn't -- just real quick. Your critics say that what that will do is help further destroy the tax base and the middle class. How do you address that?

MR. MULVANEY: The tax base is -- I wish they had asked me that -- how is the tax base eroded by having people go back to work? That's absurd. So no, we are going to broaden the tax base by making sure there's more folks working.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Two part question. First, in terms of the 3 percent growth, can you give us your latest target for when you think that might be possible?

And then as the second part of that, you talked about tax reform. Without overhauling Obamacare, if you don't get those tax cuts repealing the Obama-era tax cuts that you're looking toward, can you actually achieve comprehensive tax reform or do you then go to a series of tax cuts? What's your latest thinking in terms of what's --

MR. MULVANEY: Okay, let me see if I can get this right. The first question is, what's our sort of schedule, our plan, or how do we get to --

Q When you can achieve 3 percent --

MR. MULVANEY: I don't think we've adjusted the -- we put out the midseason report or the midyear report, something like that, a couple weeks ago. That's where you may have seen we changed sort of our -- we've measured actual receipts in the deficit and so forth. The deficit was a little bit higher than we expected. So we sort of go back in and say, well when we introduce our budget this is what we thought the world would look like. Here's what it looks like today. That would have been

an opportunity for us to change our economic projections from the budget. We didn't do that. I think our projection for this year is still 2.3 percent and then 2.5 percent and then 2.7 percent or something like that. So the goal is to be at that 3 percent plateau in about three or four years.

To your second question about the Obamacare taxes and so forth, let me answer it this way and see if I've answered your question. Yeah, I think we're a little disappointed. The most recent proposed version of the Senate healthcare bill left some of those taxes in place, but I agree with many of my Republican colleagues on the Hill who say well, yeah, but you get another bite of that apple on tax reform. Is that your question?

Q Do you think you can do comprehensive tax reform if you don't repeal and replace Obamacare? Or do you then have to go to a series of tax cuts?

MR. MULVANEY: I think it becomes easier to do comprehensive tax reform after healthcare for political reasons, for reasons of momentum and so forth, but I don't --

Q The math --

MR. MULVANEY: Well, the math comes back to the issue of the deficit, so let's talk about that for a second. What is OMB's thoughts on this, right? You know that I've worked with Paul Ryan for many, many years. I believe that we should be willing to take on short-term increases on deficits if it's what it takes to get an increase in our long-term sustained growth.

By the way, that's one of the big fiscal hawks in town saying that. Okay? That I'm okay with larger deficits in the short run if the tradeoff is 3 percent growth, and if we need more aggressive tax reform in order to get to 3 percent, then I'm more than willing to argue that despite the fact that it may increase the deficit.

By the way, where did I learn this message about how important growth is in order to save the country long-term? Does anybody know? From Paul Ryan. So I can tell you, I think I've studied with some of the best, and I think I can make the case to him that while I appreciate and understand his position on deficit neutrality, when it comes to the tax reform, I think that growth needs to be paramount in that and that we're willing to take on short-term deficit increases.

We got one question here, and then I have to give it back to Sarah. Yes, sir.

Q Okay. Two-parter, one on the regulation and one on tax reform. On tax reform, there's a current-law baseline in the House budget that assumes that current tax cuts are going to expire, which means you'll have to pay for them. Is that going to make it hard -- will that make tax reform harder?

MR. MULVANEY: I'm sorry, there are no -- the current tax cuts that are proposed? Because there are no current tax cuts. Are you talking about like when the Bush tax cuts were going to expire a couple of years ago?

Q Right.

MR. MULVANEY: Those are all taken care of. I don't think -- if there are tax cuts on the books right now that expire in the future, I'm sorry, I'm not aware of those. Maybe I don't understand your question.

Q Fair enough. Let me ask you one about the regulation then. Bigger picture here, does this make it cheaper to run your regulatory agencies, and will you have a cut following '18 or '19?

MR. MULVANEY: Well, you saw some of our proposals in our budget and our budget blueprint about some of the reductions we made, for example at the EPA. And yes we do foresee a fundamental difference in the way that agency functions, and we think they should be able to function in the future with a much smaller workforce. That's a reasonable conclusion from the proposals that we made in the budget, but I don't think it's fair to say we're doing this in order to make it cheaper to run the government. What we're doing is making it easier to run a country. That's what's driving the regulatory reform.

Listen, I'd love to do this again, but I promised Sarah the last 10 minutes. Thanks very much, and thank you for not making a big deal about the fact that I'm getting old.

MS. SANDERS: We'll let you leave those there so you don't throw your back out carrying those out of here. Thank you, Director Mulvaney.

As the Director pointed out, today also marks six months since President Trump took office. On top of the historic results of our efforts to streamline regulation led by Director Mulvaney, the President has also made significant progress toward the rest of his top policy priorities.

In part due to the deregulation, our economy is booming again, and Americans are going back to work in construction sites, mines, and factories across the country. And those workers can rest easy knowing that they have a staunch defender in the White House, as the President shows time and again that he is putting America first in trade negotiations, pursuing reciprocal agreements with our trading partners so that everyone benefits.

He's prioritized the enforcement of immigration laws to protect all Americans and ensure that our system treats everyone fairly. He's opened up American energy after years of political opposition, putting us on track for energy dominance. Secretary Shulkin and his team at the VA are making sure our veterans get the care they deserve after the sacrifices they've made for our country by holding failing employees accountable.

And in these first six months, President Trump has put America first in world affairs and national security, delivering historic speeches calling on our allies to come together in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism and calling out our enemies for the destructive behavior the previous administration neglected to address.

As you can see, President Trump has taken serious action on everything from energy to defense to immigration, even as he faces historic obstruction from Senate Democrats, who are pulling every trick in the book to prevent him from putting his team in place.

This week, we've seen even more evidence of Senate Democrats' pattern of holding up this administration's qualified nominees in unprecedented fashion. Here are some startling facts. To date, Senate Democrats have filibustered 34 of the 54 nominees that have eventually been confirmed. By contrast, in President Obama's entire term, his nominees faced four filibusters in total.

This President's Cabinet nominees faced more Senate filibusters than all other Presidents combined. And as we've mentioned they've filibustered nominees that enjoyed unanimous support, including a judge that President Obama had previously nominated, and who was eventually confirmed by a vote of 100-0.

They've filibustered key national security positions, like Patrick Shanahan to be the number two at the Department of Defense, who enjoyed bipartisan support and eventually received over 80 votes.

And recent reports show that their refusal to hold votes on the President's nominees for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which approves potential new pipelines, is preventing an estimated \$14 billion in pipeline projects. These are projects like the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which will create 17,000 new jobs and \$2.7 billion in economic activity in Virginia and North Carolina, just through construction, while generating \$377 million in annual energy cost savings.

There are thousands more jobs like these that won't happen, and the Democratic senators of states like Ohio, West Virginia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania are standing by as party leadership puts politics over what's best for their constituents.

To be clear, they're slow-walking because they can't justify blocking these nominees who are both qualified and non-controversial, but this is part of a deliberate strategy to obstruct this President's agenda and resist the will of the American people.

Consider this fact: At this pace, it would take an astounding 11 years to confirm all of this President's qualified nominees and finally have these important leadership positions fully staffed -- 11 years, clearly well after the President's two terms.

We call on Senator Schumer and Senate Democrats to stop this reckless partisanship, which is undermining national security, undermining our judiciary, undermining health care, job creation, energy production, and our basic functions of government, and swiftly approve this President's qualified nominees.

And with that, I will take your questions.

Q Sarah, thank you for the question. Does the President have confidence in his Attorney General? Does he want the Attorney General to stay in this post?

MS. SANDERS: The President said -- as the President said yesterday, he was disappointed in the Attorney General Session's decision to recuse himself. But clearly he has confidence in him, or he would not be the Attorney General.

Q Sarah, can I follow up on that one? You said the President has confidence in the Attorney General. Does the President believe that the Attorney General serves the President or the Constitution?

MS. SANDERS: I believe that the President -- I think that's kind of a both. Obviously, the Attorney General's job is to follow and uphold the Constitution. But also, every member of the Cabinet and the administration serves at the pleasure of the President.

Q Would the President prefer the Attorney General resign?

MS. SANDERS: I believe I've answered that question.

Q It's a little bit of a slightly different nuance, so that's why I'm asking it. You say he has confidence in him. Does that mean he does not want him to resign?

MS. SANDERS: I think you know this President well enough to know that if he wanted small business to take an action, he would make that quite clear.

Q But clearly there's a difference of opinion here because the President thinks what the Attorney General did was improper, yet the Attorney General, in recusing himself last spring, believes that he was taking the appropriate action, given the potential conflict of interest in him leading the Russia investigation. So how do you explain that split? And what --

MS. SANDERS: As I said, the President is disappointed in the decision and I think he's spoken about his feelings on this quite clearly.

Matthew.

Q Thanks, Sarah. A question about healthcare. The President has repeatedly said that 21-year-olds can pay \$12 a year for health insurance under the Republican plan. He said it again yesterday to the New York Times. What does he mean by that? Is the White House aware of a health insurance plan that charges only \$12 per year? And if not, why does the President keep making that claim?

MS. SANDERS: I'll have to check on the specifics.

Q Can you get back to me on that --

MS. SANDERS: Sure.

Q -- because the CBO estimates that it would be about \$1,100 dollars a year, even for the lowest income 21-year-olds.

MS. SANDERS: Okay, I'll check on that.

Q The President said that if Robert Mueller were to look at his finances or the family finances, it would constitute a red line. How is that not a threat to the special counsel?

MS. SANDERS: I think that the President -- the point he's trying to make is that the clear purpose of the Russia investigation is to review Russia's meddling in the election, and that that should be the focus of the investigation. Nothing beyond that.

Q That should not be viewed as a threat, as a warning to what the special counsel should or should not be looking at as it relates to the President's and his family's finances?

MS. SANDERS: The President is making it clear that the special counsel should not move outside the scope of the investigation.

Q Let me try to come at this one different way.

MS. SANDERS: I have a feeling we might do this for a little while.

Q Why does the President have confidence in his Attorney General? Maybe you can explain it that way.

MS. SANDERS: I believe that the Attorney General has made significant progress in terms of things like MS13. They've taken great action on that front -- certainly on the front of immigration. He spoke today about some of the cybersecurity measures that they're taking, and I think those are great examples of successes that they've had at the Department of Justice.

Q It was reported last month that there was this rift between the President and the Attorney General and it ended up that the Attorney General had offered his resignation. Did that happen? How did that process play out? And why did the President at that time decide not to accept the resignation?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not aware of that taking place so I can't speak to that.

Q One more question. From his sickbed, Senator McCain today issued a statement that questioned why, six months into the administration, there still is not an Afghanistan strategy. He said they're still waiting. Why is there still not an Afghanistan strategy,

and when can we expect it?

MS. SANDERS: I believe that the President has empowered Secretary Mattis to make decisions on that front, and I would refer you to the Department of Defense for those specific questions.

Kristen.

Q Sarah, thanks. I want to go back to the President's comments about Robert Mueller. He was asked if Mr. Mueller does, in fact, look into his finances as part of his special counsel, would he consider firing him. The President said, I can't answer that question because I don't think it's going to happen.

Does that mean that firing the special counsel is something that's on the table for this President?

MS. SANDERS: I've answered this question several times before. Although the President has the authority to do so, he doesn't intend to do so.

Q And, Sarah, if the President is not concerned about this probe, why does it matter? Why does he care if Robert Mueller looks into his finances?

MS. SANDERS: I think it's clear that the President is frustrated by the continued witch hunt of the Russia investigation, and he'd love for this to come to a full conclusion so that everyone can focus fully on the thing that he was elected to do. And that's what he'd like to be focused on.

Q And just one more about Senator John McCain. The President, like so many others, sent out letters of prayers last night to the Senator. Has he had any time to reflect on some of his past comments about Senator McCain? Does he regret saying he likes people who weren't captured?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not sure about that. I do know that he certainly hopes that the Senator makes a full and speedy recovery. I don't have anything beyond that.

Q Sarah, it's been over a month since the President promised a press conference on discussing the administration's ISIS strategy. The Daily Beast had an article about this ISIS strategy document, and so can we expect this press conference to take place soon? And if the strategy is completed, then what's the delay about having this so far?

MS. SANDERS: We'll certainly make sure that there's an announcement if there's a press conference and that you are all invited.

Roberta.

Q Sarah, can you tell us a little bit more about the President's meeting today at the Pentagon? What was discussed? What was sort of the main focus there?

MS. SANDERS: Sure. Obviously, it's important for the President to have continued conversations and dialogue. The President met with members -- key members of his Cabinet and national security team, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, primarily to discuss challenges and opportunities.

They discussed how to integrate U.S. actions around the world to promote American prosperity, enhance American security, and extend American influence.

Q So was it a certain part of the world? Or all parts of the world?

MS. SANDERS: It was a broad discussion.

Q Did North Korea come up?

MS. SANDERS: I cannot get into the specifics of the detailed conversation.

Q Sarah, a finer point on Mueller: The President said if he does investigate his or the family's finances, that's crossing a red line. There's a report today that Mueller is investigating a broad range of the family's financial transactions. If that report is true, then he has crossed the red line. Does that mean he fires him?

MS. SANDERS: Again, as I said earlier, the President has no intention to do so at this time.

Q Even if he crosses the red line? So the red line doesn't mean anything?

MS. SANDERS: That's not what I said. I don't believe everything I read in the paper. We'll have to see as we get more details on that.

Q But he said that. It's on audio. He said, that's crossing a red line. That's not something you read in the paper. You can listen to the audio.

MS. SANDERS: I'm talking about the investigation looking into the finances.

Q But if it's true --

MS. SANDERS: The President has been clear many times before that he has no financial dealings whatsoever with Russia. The point the President is making is that the investigation should stay within the confines of meddling -- Russia meddling in the election and nothing beyond that.

Q And if it doesn't, he fires him.

MS. SANDERS: I'm not going to get into that.

Q Why does the President expect loyalty from his aides, from members of his Cabinet when he's constantly criticizing them and undercutting them and contradicting them in -- particularly in media outlets that he constantly tries to discredit?

MS. SANDERS: I don't believe that the President is undermining them. I think he was being very candid about feelings that he had. But as I said, he has confidence in his ability.

April.

Q Sarah, how does the process play out when the President is very candid about what he thinks about his Attorney General, about what he thinks about Mueller? How does this process play out?

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry -- what?

Q The investigation -- the investigation, the whole process of relationships between Sessions and the President; the process of this investigation by Mueller. How does this play out with the President being very upset over the process and openly criticizing everyone and people in fear?

MS. SANDERS: I think it's pretty clear how the process will turn out from our side is that this will be proven to be the witch hunt that it is, and that nothing further will happen.

Trey.

Q I have two more questions.

MS. SANDERS: Two more?

Q Yes, two more. There's a belief that these conversations with the New York Times, with -- whatever reporters are pieces of intimidation to go to Mueller, to go to Sessions. What do you say to that?

MS. SANDERS: I think that's ridiculous.

Third question.

Q And then lastly, Baltimore. Does the President regret what he said about Baltimore? He threw Rosenstein under the bus for the wrong city. He's not from Baltimore, he's from Philadelphia. And there are people in Baltimore saying there are a lot of Republicans there even though the city is led by a Democratic mayor.

MS. SANDERS: I think he's making a general statement.

Trey.

Q But it was wrong. The statement was wrong.

MS. SANDERS: He's spent a lot of time and has worked pretty extensively in Baltimore.

Q Has President Trump spoken with the Attorney General in the past 24 hours?

MS. SANDERS: No, not that I'm aware of.

Q And a follow-up, does he regret appointing Jeff Sessions to be his Attorney General?

MS. SANDERS: I don't believe so. I think if he did, then he probably wouldn't be in that position.

Q And a quick one on Afghanistan policy: Following his meeting this morning at the Pentagon, is the President any closer to unveiling a policy towards Afghanistan? And should the American people expect that we will be sending more troops to the region?

MS. SANDERS: As I said earlier, the President has empowered Secretary Mattis in that front, and I would direct you to the Department of Defense.

Q Sarah, can we just reconcile what you just said? You said the President does not regret appointing Jeff Sessions, yet he said in that interview with the New York Times that he does regret it because had he known what he was going to do before he appointed him, he would have said, sorry, Jeff, I'm going to get someone else.

MS. SANDERS: I think --

Q So I just wondering, how do you come to those two thoughts?

MS. SANDERS: Sorry. I may have misunderstood what Trey was asking. My understanding --

Q He asked, does the President regret appointing Jeff Sessions -

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry. I thought you'd asked if he regretted not

taking action to remove Jeff Sessions.

Q So does he regret appointing Jeff Sessions?

MS. SANDERS: The President has spoken very clearly on this in the interview yesterday. And as he said, he was disappointed that the Attorney General made the decision to recuse himself and certainly that he didn't tell him that before taking the job.

Q But he also said had he told him that he wouldn't have appointed him. So does he regret now in retrospect appointing Jeff Sessions?

MS. SANDERS: I haven't asked him specifically.

Q When asked about Mueller today a couple of times you've used conditional language that he doesn't intend to -- it's at this time. How can his independence be guaranteed if you're saying in conditional tense that he's not going to try to have him removed?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I can't predict everything that could possibly take place in the future and what Mueller could potentially do that might create an outrageous reason not to take action, so I'm not going to talk about hypotheticals. I can talk about where we are today, and that's the position of the President.

Q Sarah, you've been asked multiple times today about the war in Afghanistan. Both times you referred us to the Defense Department. But President Trump is still the Commander-in-Chief. Does he take full responsibility for whatever happens on the conflict in Afghanistan?

MS. SANDERS: I would think so. But again, he has empowered Secretary Mattis in terms -- I've been asked specifically about troop levels and decisions on specific instances, and in that regard, I would refer you to the Department of Defense.

John.

Q Thank you, Sarah. You spoke earlier about -- apparently about confidence in General Sessions staying there. Does the President have the same confidence and lack of regret in name Ron Brownstein [sic] deputy attorney general? Mr. Brownstein being --

MS. SANDERS: Rosenstein, Rosenstein. I don't know who that guy is, but -- (laughter). So I'm not going to speak about him. But Rod Rosenstein, as I stated, if the President didn't have confidence, he wouldn't be in that position.

Guys, I hate to cut us short today, but the President has -- hold on, I'm not finished. The President has an announcement that he'll be making here shortly --

Q Here at the podium?

MS. SANDERS: No. (Laughter.) Here at the White House, and so I'm going to cut it short today. Thanks, guys.

END

3:06 P.M. EDT

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From: Julian, Gregory
Subject: Press release: Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:03:27 AM
Attachments: [Angelle Bio - May 2017.pdf](#)
[Angelle annc release - BSEE masthead 5-18-2017 \(1\).docx](#)

THE BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

Office of Public Affairs

Date: May 22, 2017
Contact: Gregory Julian (202) 208-3985

Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former Louisiana state official Scott A. Angelle will head-up the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. As part of the Department of the Interior, BSEE fosters safe and responsible energy production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf through regulatory oversight of oil and gas operations. Angelle, who most recently served as Vice Chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, will assume his new position May 23.

“Scott Angelle brings a wealth of experience to BSEE, having spent many years working for the safe and efficient energy production of both Louisiana’s and our country’s offshore resources,” Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said. “As we set our path towards energy dominance, I am confident that Scott has the expertise, vision, and the leadership necessary to effectively enhance our program, and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible exploration, development, and production of our country’s offshore oil and gas resources.”

Angelle, who will serve as the fourth director in BSEE’s history, has held numerous positions in Louisiana State and Parish governments, including Interim Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Martin Parish President. In the aftermath of the BP oil spill, Angelle served at the request of then Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal as liaison to the federal government, and negotiated an early end of the previous administration’s drilling

moratorium.

“I welcome the opportunity to serve President Trump and Secretary Zinke, and work with BSEE staff to meet the critical goal of energy dominance for our country,” said Angelle. “It is an exciting and challenging time for BSEE; I look forward to leading our efforts to empower the offshore oil and gas industry while ensuring safe and environmentally responsible operations.”

Angelle served for eight years as Louisiana’s Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Under his leadership, the state’s coastal permitting system was reformed, providing for efficient permitting while increasing drilling rig counts in Louisiana by more than 150 percent during his tenure. Angelle has also served as Chairman of the Louisiana State Mineral Board, and as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, Southern States Energy Board, and the Louisiana Coastal Port Advisory Authority.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

Established in 2011, BSEE fosters secure and reliable energy production through a program of efficient permitting, appropriate regulations, compliance monitoring and enforcement, inspections, technical assessments, and incident investigations. The position of BSEE Director is not Senate-confirmed.

More information on BSEE can be found at: <http://www.bsee.gov>

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-- BSEE --

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Greg Julian

Press Secretary

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

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[BSEEGov/](#)

Home



From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Print pool 3: POTUS to make statement
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 11:09:07 AM

From: "Diaz, Kevin B" <Kevin.Diaz@chron.com>

Date: June 14, 2017 at 11:02:57 AM EDT
Subject: Print pool 3: POTUS to make statement

At 11:30am the President will make a statement from the Diplomatic Room in the White House. Coverage will be pool only.

Pool gather time is 11:15am. In lower press.

For background: The President and Vice President were both notified of the situation in Alexandria this morning. The President has spoken to the Speaker of the House, the Senate Majority Leader, the wife of Rep. Steve Scalise, the Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Scalise, and the Chief of the Capitol Police. The Vice President has spoken with the Speaker of the House, House Majority Leader, Rep Joe Barton, Senator Jeff Flake and Francis Brooke, a member of the Vice President's staff and a coach on the GOP baseball team who was present.

Kevin Diaz
HEARST/ Houston Chronicle
202-689-5157

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Print Travel Pool #3
Date: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 1:30:36 PM

From: Steven Miller <smiller@washingtontimes.com>

Date: June 7, 2017 at 12:53:48 PM EDT

Subject: Print Travel Pool #3

The White House provided this background on “Victims of Affordable Care Act/Obamacare”:

The members of two families, one from Troy, Ohio and another from Louisville, Kentucky, will be available to speak to media after President departs from tarmac in Cincinnati.

Meeting the the President:

Mrs. Raya Whalen, co-owner of PlayCare, LLC in Troy, OH

Mr. Dan Withrow, president of DSS Distribution Group Inc. in Louisville, KY

Mrs. Raya Mafazy Whalen and her husband, Michael, are owners of PlayCare, an Ohio-based small business that specializes in the design, sale, installation, and maintenance of commercial playground equipment. PlayCare employe 15 Ohioans; given its size and health policy exemptions, some might underestimate the disastrous impact of Obamacare; the Whalens story proves otherwise.

Prior to Obamacare’s enactment, the Whalens’ company offered affordable health care options to its employees the Whalens purchased healthcare through heir own company as well. However, following Obamacare’s enactment, the company’s plan was considered unacceptable by the government due to over burdensome regulations. They and their employees were forced to purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act exchanges.

They were far from affordable and did not fulfill the promise that “if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.”

Not for the Whalens. When Raya discovered she and her husband were expecting their first child, she visited with her extended family’s OB-GYN, who informed her that she could not accept her insurance which was devastating to Raya as their doctor had delivered her 9 nieces and nephews.

For Raya to stay with that doctor, she would have had to pay \$50 thousand out of pocket with she could not do. She was force dot find another doctor.

Under Obamacare, the cost of monthly healthcare for Raya and her family skyrocketed from roughly \$170 to \$800 a month, almost the cost of a mortgage, and her deductible is nearly \$15 thousand.

Recently, Raya’s 7 month old child needed to be hospitalized and the child, fortunately, is well. The cost of the hospitalization for the child left Raya and her husband with a \$5000 cost. It is as if Raya did not [have] health insurance at all when it does not cover medical needs.

Raya founded the Young Republican Women of Cincinnati.

Raya will be accompanied by her husband Michael Whalen and their 7-month old baby Colette.

Mr. Dan Withrow, president of DSS Distribution Group Inc., in Louisville, KY

Dan Withrow is the owner of DSS Distribution Group Inc, an 11 employee small business in Louisville, KY that distributes pallets, packaging materials and automated equipment. Prior to Obamacare's enactment, Dan's company provided multiple options to his employees through a group plan, given the competitive market place, his employees were satisfied with the options they had.

Following the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, the healthcare options began to increase in cost, some as much as 150%.

As a result, in order to provide his employees benefits and be able to retain them, Dan and his company assumed a greater financial burden of their employees' healthcare, diverting his profits away from hiring more employees and growing his business.

Dan is hopeful that Obamacare is repealed and replaced so that he can once again provide his employees with a lower cost for health care and be able to hire more employees and expand his business.

Dan will be accompanied by his wife Mindy Withrow, and their children Hallie age 15, and triplets Ella, Nicholas and Christian age 12.

--

S.A. Miller
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Print Travel Pool #5
Date: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 2:23:11 PM

From: Steven Miller <smiller@washingtontimes.com>

Date: June 7, 2017 at 1:42:30 PM EDT

Subject: Print Travel Pool #5

After meeting with victims of Obamacare on Air Force One, the president made remarks on the tarmac in Cincinnati. Behind the president stood the two families he met with: Raya Whalen, her husband Michael Whalen and their 7-month old baby Colette; and Dan Winthro, his wife Windy Withrow, and their children Hallie age 15, and triplets Ella, Nicholas and Christian age 12.

Air Force One was in the background.

"They've had their lives completely upended by the disaster known as Obamacare," said the president.

"The president said the two families were "giving voice to the millions and millions and millions of Americans who are going through turmoil."

"Raya and Dan are just two of the victims of the health care catastrophe caused by congressional Democrats," said the president.

The president said that Capitol Hill Democrats now would not help pass Republican health care legislation if it was the best plan in history.

"We have not help, only obstruction from Democrats," said the president.

"We will be doing something great. We are in the process of doing it," said the president. "We're working very hard to fix this big problem."

--

S.A. Miller
White House Correspondent
The Washington Times
Cell: 443-621-4008
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From: Carole Wright
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Pyramid Lake's Tribal Newspaper
Date: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 8:38:39 PM
Attachments: [Fourth Quarter.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)

Good evening Heather,

Attached is the last issue for this year for the Pyramid Lake Tribe.

And you are right, it is opinionated rather than straight news copy. I started working with the Nevada State Journal probably before you were born and my teachers were the reporters and editors on staff. It was their encouragement to “slant” my articles in favor of my Indian people because we had very few chances of letting our views be known. And basically that is what Indian press attempts to do—let our Indian voices talk to our Indian people. Non-Indians have their own media.

Thanks for your critique. I always appreciate knowing what other folks think.

Carole Wright

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#)
Subject: question: language re Mrs. Zinke
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:14:05 PM

Dan - Meg told me you had some specific legal language regarding the spouse of the secretary sitting in meetings. Can you share that with me please?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Honorable Secretary Zinke

1. Please tell us about your hunting background and how you got started.
2. How old were you when you went on your first hunt; who took you and what did you hunt?
3. What kind of firearms did you have early on?
4. What kind did you buy when you were old enough to acquire your first firearm on your own?
5. What's your favorite hunt?
6. How often do you get to hunt now when you're back home in season?
7. Is there a particular species, or a specific place, you've wanted to hunt but haven't had a chance to yet? Perhaps, for example, duck hunting in Arkansas, pheasant hunting in South Dakota or hog hunting in Georgia.
8. What firearms do you own now?
9. Do your wife and children hunt if we may ask?
10. Favorite hunting memory?
11. Largest animal taken? Most exotic?
12. Do you anticipate any weekend excursions from DC this fall during hunting seasons?
13. What weapons did you use while a SEAL? How did they perform for you?
14. Did you have favorite weapon during your service in the Navy?
15. Your first day of work as Secretary...How did it feel to ride up to the headquarters of the Department of Interior on a horse?
16. Please tell us the ways that hunting supports conservation.

Thank you, Secretary Zinke, for your service to the United States of America. And all hunters appreciate your support of hunting in America.

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Quotes
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 10:24:24 AM

Hey Heather,

I have a few quotes from Todd Willens. Please let me know which we should add in, and who we should bump.

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Club's Policy Committee.** "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Comms
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 5:05:16 PM

in the reuters response only include the statement.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 4:25 PM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

10/27/2017

DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Department of the Interior Communications Team

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Press Inquiries:

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- **E&E News:** (Maxine Joselow) --**REQUEST**—As I'm the regulations reporter for E&E News. I'm in charge of helping with our Q&A section, and I was wondering if you'd be able to set up a short phone interview with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife Lola Zinke for a Q&A. I understand Ms. Zinke is very busy, so the conversation could be as short as 15 minutes, and it could occur anytime in the next month or so. I'm just hoping to ask her about leading Sen. John Tester's campaign, traveling with her husband, and other matters related to her daily life and activities.--**RESPONSE**--

The Department does not facilitate Mrs. Zinke's schedule.

- **Reuters:** (Susan Heavey)—**REQUEST--** Does the Interior Dept or the secretary have any comment on this (FEMA statement on Whitefish Energy contact)? Also, can you tell us what is on the agenda for the secretary's meeting with the president later today? —**RESPONSE—** Today, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke issued the following statement in response to false reports alleging any ties to Whitefish Energy, a company which was contracted by PREPA and the Puerto Rican government. "I had absolutely nothing to do with Whitefish Energy receiving a contract in Puerto Rico. Any attempts by the dishonest media or political operatives to tie me to awarding or influencing any contract involving Whitefish are completely baseless. Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime. "Neither myself nor anyone in my office has advocated for this company in anyway. After the initial contract was awarded, I was contacted by the company, on which I took no action. All records, which are being made available to appropriate officials, will prove no involvement. "I welcome any and all investigations into these allegations, and encourage the Interior Department's Inspector General to investigate this matter fully."

Top Stories

- **Washington Post:** [Trump says he will shrink Bears Ears National Monument, a sacred tribal site in Utah](#)
- **Los Angeles Times:** [Trump plans to shrink two national monuments in Utah, senator says](#)
- **THE HILL:** [White House: Zinke told Trump he had 'no role' in Puerto Rico contract](#)
- **Washington Examiner:** [Ryan Zinke tells Trump he had no involvement in \\$300 million Whitefish contract for Puerto Rico power grid](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Secretary Zinke met with POTUS.
- Next week, Secretary Zinke is out on personal leave.

###

--
Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Comms
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 4:01:02 PM

good

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 3:56 PM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

10/24/2017

DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Department of the Interior Communications Team

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Press Inquiries:

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- ****Multiple Inquires** (NBC-Gabe Gutierrez, NYT- Deborah Acosta, Reuters- Emily Flitter)—REQUEST--** Would someone from Secretary Zinke's office call me to discuss Whitefish Energy. Here are my questions: 1) Did Sec. Zinke play any role in securing the contract for Whitefish Energy to work in Puerto Rico? 2) Does Sec. Zinke know the company's chief executive, Andy Techmanski? 3) The Washington Post reported that one of Sec. Zinke's sons once worked a summer job at one of the

company's construction sites. Is that correct? Also, confirming this statement provided to the Post: "The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company."—**RESPONSE**-- On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.

- **CNN: (Rene Marsh)—REQUEST 1**-- CNN is looking for information/clarity on Secretary Zinke and his familiarity with Andrew Techmanski, the CEO of Whitefish Energy. Have the two worked together before? In what capacity? How Does the Secretary know Techmanski? Has Techmanski or any of his business partners worked with Zinke on any projects either as Secretary or when Zinke was a member of congress? Did Zinke recommend Whitefish Energy for the contract to help restore Puerto Rico? Did Zinke have any influence or involvement either directly or indirectly with Whitefish securing the contract in Puerto Rico? Has this company or any of its leadership, including the CEO, had any political connections to Zinke or his wife during their political careers. Donations directly or indirectly? What was/is the Secretary's involvement in the overall recovery process for Puerto Rico?
—**RESPONSE 1**-- On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites. **REQUEST 2**— Did the Secretary work with or communicate with Techmanskis in the aftermath of the hurricane? Were they in communication after the hurricane discussing any aspect of the recovery effort or anything else?—**RESPONSE 2**-- Background: No. The gentleman sent an email but there was not action taken on it (no reply, forward, discussion, etc). Not for a statement, just for your context - The secretary's phone number and email address have been published multiple times over the years so he gets a lot of emails/cold calls/letters.—**REQUEST 3**-- One additional question beyond the content of the email sent from Techmanski to Zinke. I understand in 2016, then-Congressman Rep. Zinke's office reached out to local officials in Montana about a Whitefish Energy project. Can you the Secretary provide you with insight on why he intervened? What sort of assistance did Zinke's office provide to Whitefish?—**RESPONSE 3**-- On background: That is not accurate. No intervention was taken by Zinke or his office. I'm understand a local field representative in the Congressional office was contacted by an employee of the business, the field rep listened politely took no action and referred him to the Senators' offices.
- **E&E News: (Pamela King)—REQUEST**-- I was wondering if Interior has any initial thoughts to share on the HOARD Act introduced today by Rep. Lowenthal: https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/10/24/document_gw_03.pdf. The bill would require annual reports to Congress on APD data.—**RESPONSE**-- The Department has not taken an official position on the bill at this time. FYI - So far this year the BLM has decreased their processing time for APDs by an average of 46 days.
- **E&E News: (Kellie Lunney)—REQUEST**-- Politico ran this item today. Is this accurate? Will the secretary be on the Hill today to meet with members of the Natural

Resources Cmte? Why the secrecy? **ZINKE'S SUPER SECRET HILL HUDDLE**
- Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke will meet this afternoon with House Natural Resources Committee members in a room typically reserved for issues involving a high-security clearance. Zinke will meet separately with committee Democrats and Republicans. Copies of invitations obtained by Huddle say he will be "raising a confidential matter" and only members and staff with top-secret level clearance may attend. Democratic Rep. [Ruben Gallego](#) told Huddle there's "nothing normal" about meeting with Zinke in such secure spot given his department has very little oversight over clandestine issues and said it's likely a way to limit participation since very few staffers on the panel have a security clearance.—**RESPONSE--** I'm not at liberty to discuss conversations that may or may not be held in a secure location.

Top Stories

- **New York Post:** [No-name firm with Zinke ties lands \\$300M Puerto Rico power contract](#)
- **Politico:** [Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs](#)
- **Missoulian:** [Whitefish firm's \\$300 million repair contract in Puerto Rico raises questions](#)
- **Washington Examiner:** [Trump administration plans 'largest oil and gas lease sale in US history'](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Interior announced oil and gas lease sale #250. This is set to be the largest acreage sale in the history of the Gulf of Mexico. The press release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Today, Secretary Zinke hosted two hour-long meetings with the House Natural Resources Committee Rs and Ds.
- Tonight, Secretary Zinke is joining conservative reporters for an off the record dinner.
- This week, Interior will release the Energy Burdens Report.
- This week, Interior will announce an oil and gas lease sale in Alaska at the National Petroleum Reserve.
- Thursday, Interior will host an event with VSOs to improve coordination with and services for veterans. The event will be open press.
- Friday, the Secretary will meet with POTUS.

###

Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:38:29 AM

good, thank you Alex

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
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****With edits from Russ**

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- 80% of funds raised, from the fee increase, will go directly back to the specific park at which the permit was bought. The remaining 20% will be dispersed to parks that did not incur a fee increase.
- **By Comparison:** A ticket at Walt Disney World is \$119 per person, peak season. A family of four will pay \$476 for one day. Yellowstone, Yosemite or the other premier national parks propose to raise the fee to \$70 per car for a 7-day permit - \$10 a day, \$2.50 a person for a family of four.

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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 10:24 AM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:27:14 AM

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Department of the Interior

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To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
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Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:34:06 AM

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Deputy Press Secretary
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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:30:12 AM

gtg

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:37:05 AM

****With edits from Russ**

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Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
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Palm Beach Post: Gov. Scott proposes additional \$50 million for Lake O dike

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###

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 10:26 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
By Comparison: A per-person ticket at Walt Disney World is \$119 per person, peak season. A family of four will pay \$476 for one day. Yellowstone, Yosemite or the other premier national parks propose to raise the fee to \$70 per car for a 7-day permit - \$10 a day, \$2.50 a person for a family of four.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 10:24 AM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

Bloomberg: Trump, First Lady Welcome Ghosts, Goblins on Halloween Eve

“President Donald Trump dressed up as himself, complete with his trademark red tie,

for his first Halloween in the White House. Trump and first lady Melania Trump greeted some of the 6,000 children and adults who were invited for trick-or-treating at the White House on Halloween eve. Children from more than 20 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia attended the festivities on the South Lawn, along with military families and members of unspecified community organizations. Spooky music played over loudspeakers. Machines cranked out fog. Pumpkins carved with the likenesses of past presidents decorated the south entrance of the White House. Black spiders hung from webs spun between the portico's columns. A sign over an awning proclaimed "Halloween at the White House 2017."

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[Augusta Free Press \(VA\): Kaine, colleagues urge Trump to rescind proposed national park fee increase](#)

"U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) joined Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and nine other colleagues in a letter to Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke requesting he withdraw his proposal to dramatically increase national park entrance fees at 17 national parks pending further review. According to the proposal, Shenandoah National Park visitor fees would increase dramatically from \$25 to \$70 per vehicle during peak season."

TALKING POINTS

- Secretary Zinke has spoken at length about addressing the deferred maintenance problem at our National Parks, and this will require a new approach.
- Our parks face an \$11 billion maintenance backlog and need serious improvements to infrastructure if they are to accommodate visitors.
- The higher fees would go directly into funding these infrastructure improvements; in lieu of indiscriminately imposing a tax on the American people, the fee increase represents a free market solution that relies on the citizenry's voluntary use of the parks to fund the sites' future.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Politico: Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family](#)

"Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group said in a Federal Election Commission complaint that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash. The June RV sale is one of several

transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke's family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke's campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits."

Wall Street Journal: FBI Is Probing Puerto Rico Power Contract

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From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Cc: [Newell, Russell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 10:55:54 AM

I'm good on the EITI talkers

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

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- Transparency and good governance in extractive sectors in developing nations is a worthy goal, and remains an aspect of the United States' foreign policy objectives. At the same time, President Donald Trump's America-First agenda prioritizes American national security and American energy dominance. Going forward, our participation as a supporting member of EITI will continue as proof of our commitment to the advancement of democracy and freedom around the world, but it will also be judged on how it benefits our citizens.
- The notion of our U.S. government compelling American companies to publish their books, a component of full EITI implementation, runs counter to the pillars of the free market system that built our nation – this is a serious violation of American business' informational privacy. We must be vigilant in the defense of privacy and economic freedom for our own citizens and

institutions first. In this spirit, the steps required to become an implementing member of EITI run counter to American law. In light of this impossible hurdle, our nation will not implement the initiative, but we will continue to support its goals in other nations around the world.

- The United States has led the global initiative in providing revenue related data and information in an interactive, open-source data portal and by regularly engaging with other implementing countries to share our best practices.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Oregon Public Broadcasting: The Teddy Roosevelt Legacy At Ryan Zinke's Interior Department](#)

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From: Newell, Russell
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 10:50:14 AM

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To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 10:54:59 AM

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- A 2009 report by the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there are 10.35 billion barrels of oil available within the Alaska 1002 area, with 80-90% of that being economically recoverable at \$43/barrel.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Oregon Public Broadcasting: The Teddy Roosevelt Legacy At Ryan Zinke’s Interior Department](#)

“The Department of the Interior is outlining steps aimed at increasing energy production on federal lands. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke says boosting production of resources like oil and gas creates jobs and enhances the nation’s energy security. It’s another pro-industry headline for a secretary touting himself as not only an avid outdoorsman, but a follower of the conservation ideals of the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. If the manager of most of our federal lands is going find inspiration from someone, it would be hard to find a more appropriate muse.”

[U.S. News and World Report: Groups Sue for Details on Trump Plan for National Monuments](#)

“Environmentalists sued the administration of President Donald Trump on Thursday seeking to pry loose details of plans to shrink national monuments and marine areas and open protected areas to commercial fishing, energy extraction, logging and other industries. The lawsuit alleges the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Interior Department illegally ignored Freedom of Information Act requests for documents related to the issue. Trump has said intends to shrink two monuments in Utah — Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante.”

###

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Eli Nachmany](#)
Subject: Re: *DRAFT DOI Daily Report
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:28:50 AM

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Bloomberg: Trump, First Lady Welcome Ghosts, Goblins on Halloween Eve](#)

“President Donald Trump dressed up as himself, complete with his trademark red tie, for his first Halloween in the White House. Trump and first lady Melania Trump greeted some of the 6,000 children and adults who were invited for trick-or-treating at the White House on Halloween eve. Children from more than 20 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia attended the festivities on the South Lawn, along with military families and members of unspecified community organizations. Spooky music played over loudspeakers. Machines cranked out fog. Pumpkins carved with the likenesses of past presidents decorated the south entrance of the White House. Black spiders hung from webs spun between the portico's columns. A sign over an awning proclaimed "Halloween at the White House 2017.”

CORRECTING THE RECORD:

[Augusta Free Press \(VA\): Kaine, colleagues urge Trump to rescind proposed national park fee increase](#)

“U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) joined Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and nine other colleagues in a letter to Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke requesting he withdraw his proposal to dramatically increase national park entrance fees at 17 national parks pending further review.

According to the proposal, Shenandoah National Park visitor fees would increase dramatically from \$25 to \$70 per vehicle during peak season.”

TALKING POINTS

- Secretary Zinke has spoken at length about addressing the deferred maintenance problem at our National Parks, and this will require a new approach.
- Our parks face an \$11 billion maintenance backlog and need serious improvements to infrastructure if they are to accommodate visitors.
- The higher fees would go directly into funding these infrastructure improvements; in lieu of indiscriminately imposing a tax on the American people, the fee increase represents a free market solution that relies on the citizenry's voluntary use of the parks to fund the sites' future.
- **By Comparison:** A ticket at Walt Disney World is \$119 per person, peak

season. A family of four will pay \$476 for one day. Yellowstone, Yosemite or the other premier national parks propose to raise the fee to \$70 per car for a 7-day permit - \$10 a day, \$2.50 a person for a family of four.

OTHER TOP STORIES:

[Politico: Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family](#)

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s congressional campaign committee bought an RV from his wife then sold it to a friend a year later at a steep discount, a watchdog group said in a Federal Election Commission complaint that alleges an illegal scheme to convert political donations into personal cash. The June RV sale is one of several transactions the Campaign Legal Center says may have provided illegal benefits to Zinke’s family or friends. The group also cites hotel stays in the Virgin Islands and New York that Zinke’s campaign paid for after the Montana Republican was tapped to join then-President-elect Donald Trump’s Cabinet, as well as catering expenses the campaign incurred after Zinke was confirmed. CLC also says in the complaint that Zinke may have relied on a joint fundraising committee to allow donors to give money to his campaign above federal contribution limits.”

[Wall Street Journal: FBI Is Probing Puerto Rico Power Contract](#)

“The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating a decision by Puerto Rico’s power authority to award a \$300 million contract to a tiny Montana energy firm to rebuild electrical infrastructure damaged in Hurricane Maria, according to people familiar with the matter. Agents from the FBI’s San Juan field office are looking into circumstances surrounding the deal that the public power monopoly known as Prepa signed with Whitefish Energy Holdings LLC, according to the people familiar with the matter. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló canceled the contract Sunday, saying it had become a distraction from the U.S. territory’s efforts to restore the devastated grid. Only 30% of the island’s power customers have had electricity restored.”

[Bloomberg: Arctic Refuge Oil Bonanza More Likely to Be Bust for GOP Budget](#)

“Congressional Republicans counting on a \$1 billion windfall from selling oil-drilling rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to help pay for tax cuts may be in for a disappointment. Data from previous Arctic oil lease sales suggest the U.S. is likely to collect less than a fifth of that billion-dollar goal over the next decade-- about \$145.5 million -- from auctioning off territory in the sprawling northeast Alaska refuge where caribou calve and polar bears roam. Oil companies may be scared away by the controversies and costs of drilling in that remote and fragile terrain. Even if they aren’t, crude prices would have to be some \$15 more per barrel than they are today to make the effort pay off at all.”

[Palm Beach Post: Gov. Scott proposes additional \\$50 million for Lake O dike](#)

“Gov. Rick Scott is proposing an additional \$50 million to expedite repairs to the Herbert

Hoover Dike that surrounds Lake Okeechobee. The announcement this morning comes as the lake once again tops 17 feet above sea level, a depth that causes concerns about the integrity of the aging structure. Scott said the \$50 million is part of his 2018-2019 recommended budget and is on top of the \$50 million approved in the current year's budget to kick-start repairs. Florida Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, and House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land O'Lakes, lauded the announcement."

###

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 10:26 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

By Comparison: A per-person ticket at Walt Disney World is \$119 per person, peak season. A family of four will pay \$476 for one day. Yellowstone, Yosemite or the other premier national parks propose to raise the fee to \$70 per car for a 7-day permit - \$10 a day, \$2.50 a person for a family of four.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 10:24 AM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

INTERIOR DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

NEWS TO SHARE:

[Bloomberg: Trump, First Lady Welcome Ghosts, Goblins on Halloween Eve](#)

"President Donald Trump dressed up as himself, complete with his trademark red tie, for his first Halloween in the White House. Trump and first lady Melania Trump greeted some of the 6,000 children and adults who were invited for trick-or-treating at the White House on Halloween eve. Children from more than 20 schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia attended the festivities on the South Lawn, along with military families and members of unspecified community organizations. Spooky music played over loudspeakers. Machines cranked out fog. Pumpkins carved with the likenesses of past presidents decorated the south entrance of the White House. Black spiders hung from webs spun between the portico's columns. A sign over an awning proclaimed "Halloween at the White House 2017."

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[national park fee increase](#)

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[Politico: Watchdog urges probe of whether Zinke campaign benefited friend, family](#)

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Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló canceled the contract Sunday, saying it had become a distraction from the U.S. territory's efforts to restore the devastated grid. Only 30% of the island's power customers have had electricity restored."

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"Gov. Rick Scott is proposing an additional \$50 million to expedite repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike that surrounds Lake Okeechobee. The announcement this morning comes as the lake once again tops 17 feet above sea level, a depth that causes concerns about the integrity of the aging structure. Scott said the \$50 million is part of his 2018-2019 recommended budget and is on top of the \$50 million approved in the current year's budget to kick-start repairs. Florida Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, and House Speaker Richard Corcoran, R-Land O'Lakes, lauded the announcement."

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: [Hinson, Alex](#)
Subject: Re: *News Alert* Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke vows to end culture of harassment and intimidation in Park Service
Date: Friday, October 13, 2017 7:53:43 PM

Outlet?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 13, 2017, at 12:52 PM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

[Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke vows to end culture of harassment and intimidation in Park Service](#)

Louis Sahagun

October 13, 2017

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Friday announced a plan to combat sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation of employees within America's national parks system and to hold managers accountable if inappropriate behavior is ignored.

The plan aims to change an embedded culture that Zinke said has allowed senior officials to downplay or stonewall complaints from mostly female workers of being physically threatened, propositioned for sex and inappropriately touched.

"Under my leadership we're going to hold people accountable," Zinke announced during a visit to the National Park Service's Grand Canyon headquarters. "We're also fixing the problem of victims being afraid of retaliation or inaction by codifying the right of victims to report abuse to any manager at any location across the service, and by bringing on an independent investigative partner."

Zinke's announcement comes as the entertainment industry and other businesses are roiled by resignations of high-profile figures in harassment scandals, such as movie titan Harvey Weinstein and Uber Technologies Chief Executive Officer Travis Kalanick, who allegedly fostered a "men's club" work environment that tolerated abuse and exploitation of women.

The announcement follows a series of investigations and congressional hearings into allegations of hostile work environments and sordid incidents that a year ago led to the resignations of several senior Park Service officials, including the superintendents of Yosemite and Grand Canyon.

Zinke's plan will strengthen the agency's ability to investigate and address harassment complaints by adding 14 employees to its labor relations and ethics staffs. It will also expand training to support harassment prevention efforts.

The results of a recent survey of about half of all Park Service employees underlined the problem: The agency has failed to shield its employees from work environments that, in some cases, included routine groping.

The survey found that about 10% of those surveyed reported experiencing sexual harassment in the last 12 months. About 38% of employees reported experiencing some form of harassment over the same time period.

Stories of Park Service employees being preyed upon by men in positions of authority, agency critics say, have circulated for years within the agency that likes to project a lofty image of itself as caretaker of America's natural treasures.

Until recently, critics say, most harassment cases were handled internally, with managers sweeping the allegations under the rug, or handing down minimal penalties.

"This is the fourth declaration of zero tolerance of sexual harassment we've heard from the Interior Department in the past three years alone," Jeff Ruch, executive director of the advocacy group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. "The problem is that people at the highest levels never wind up facing consequences. Instead, they tend to kick troublemakers upstairs, or offer them the option of resignation."

For example, Ruch's group cites a female staffer's complaints of unwanted hugs, lingering handshakes and inappropriate comments from Jorge Acevedo, superintendent of De Soto National Memorial in Florida. The complaints prompted an Interior Office of Inspector General investigation.

Acevedo, whom the woman also accused of lying prone on her desk while she tried to work, was transferred in April to a new position as manager of a complex of small parks in Alabama at his previous salary. He also received a \$1,000 performance bonus, according to an Interior Office of Inspector General report the advocacy group obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

"If, as the Park Service claims there is zero tolerance, then why aren't these firing offenses?" Ruch said.

The harassment allegations erupted last year, after the disclosure of an inspector general's investigation prompted by a 2014 letter to then Interior Secretary Sally Jewell from 13 current and former female employees. The women alleged that their complaints — of being threatened and inappropriately touched and photographed by boatmen in charge of educational floats along the Colorado River — had not been addressed.

Congressional hearings led to the removal of David Uberuaga, superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, and Myrna Palfrey, superintendent of Canaveral National Seashore in Florida, for their failure to appropriately handle such accusations.

The hearings also prompted Don Neubacher to retire in 2016 as superintendent of

Yosemite National Park, where employees had complained of a systematic failure to investigate and address allegations of harassment at the California landmark renowned for its majestic waterfalls, granite ridges and serene valleys.

A few weeks later, his wife, Patty Neubacher, deputy regional manager for the Park Service's Pacific West Region, which covers 56 national parks in six states, stepped down amid allegations that she used her position to protect her husband during the harassment scandal.

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Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Subject: Re: *News Alert* Trump wished country 'Merry Christmas' instead of 'Happy Holidays' at tree lighting, making good on campaign promise
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 9:27:59 AM

locking down the Canadian vote!

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

On Fri, Dec 1, 2017 at 9:23 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
if only it was an american paper :-P

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Dec 1, 2017 at 9:21 AM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
[The Toronto Star: Trump wished country 'Merry Christmas' instead of 'Happy Holidays' at tree lighting, making good on campaign promise](#)
Jill Colvin
December 1, 2017

WASHINGTON—Ring in the holidays for the first time from Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump lit the National Christmas Tree Thursday evening, wishing the country “a Merry Christmas” — as he vowed to do during his campaign.

Taking part in the annual ritual, Trump counted down from 10 before his wife, Melania, pushed a button to set the tree aglow with golden lights and silver stars.

“Today’s a day that I’ve been looking very much forward to all year long,” said Trump. “And now, as the president of the United States, it’s my tremendous honour to finally wish America and the world a very merry Christmas.”

During his campaign, Trump had promised that, when he was elected, people would be saying “Merry Christmas again,” a reference to what he characterized as the country’s obsession with political correctness. In Trump’s view, the move toward the use of the more inclusive “happy holidays” phrase minimized the Christian celebration.

Trump was introduced by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who called Trump “a man who loves our parks, loves our military, and loves our country. The man who brought ‘Merry Christmas’ back to our nation’s capital — and you did, sir.”

Speaking from behind a bullet-proof glass enclosure, Trump also bragged about the mild weather, which hovered in the mid-50s, and compared himself to President Ulysses S. Grant, who signed legislation making Christmas a federal holiday.

“I sort of feel we’re doing that again,” he said to an audience that included many of his family members.

The program, which will air Monday on the Hallmark Channel, was hosted by Kathie Lee Gifford and actor Dean Cain and featured performances by the Beach Boys, Jack Wagner, Wynonna Judd, Craig Campbell and others. It was a less high-profile lineup than last year, when the performers included Kelly Clarkson, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood, Marc Anthony, Yolanda Adams, The Lumineers, James Taylor and Chance the Rapper.

This year marks the 95th annual National Christmas Tree Lighting. The tradition began in 1923 with President Calvin Coolidge and takes place in President’s Park, just south of the White House.

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Davis, Natalie
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Subject: Re: 4th Invites
Date: Monday, June 19, 2017 4:20:31 PM

He approved and I just sent out email.

On Mon, Jun 19, 2017 at 2:51 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
This is just for Zinke's consideration: Bill Kenyon (he would remember Bill as Fred Davis' partner) and his wife and 13 year old son. Email address is (b) (6)

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jun 19, 2017 at 2:48 PM, Davis, Natalie <natalie_davis@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Hi Heather,

Can you send me the names and emails of the people that need to be invited?

Thanks!

--

Natalie Davis, Special Assistant
Immediate Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
202.208.4928

--

Natalie Davis, Special Assistant
Immediate Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
202.208.4928

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Adams, Nathan](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Bergling, Timothy](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Alex Hinson](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#); [Larry Gillick](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#)
Subject: Re: 2018 Holiday Video
Date: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 3:19:07 PM

GOOD HERE

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Dec 19, 2017 at 2:43 PM, Adams, Nathan <nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Something like...

To the entire Interior family, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Holidays.
[However you celebrate the season](#), I hope you spend it with those nearest to your heart.



Happy New Year,
Secretary Zinke, Lolita and Ragnar

On Tue, Dec 19, 2017 at 2:28 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I'd like it to be. Can someone pls write a quick intro? Thx.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 19, 2017, at 2:25 PM, Adams, Nathan <nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Will this be sent to all employees from the Secretary's address like the Thanksgiving video? Is anyone writing the text for the message?

Thanks,
Nate

On Tue, Dec 19, 2017 at 2:16 PM, Bergling, Timothy
<timothy_bergling@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

EDIT: Re-crops frame slightly higher

<http://youtu.be/UdFNdArvQE8>

Suggest we send this out Wednesday am before noon to catch the "going out of town" crowd

tb

--
Nate Adams
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-208-2060

--
Nate Adams
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-208-2060

From: Eilperin, Juliet
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: a question related to Secretary Zinke's Channel Islands trip
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 12:25:29 PM

Also, I had one other minor question related to this, which I wanted to clarify: it has been reported that Beatrice Walder is the Secretary's aunt, but my understanding is that she's Mrs. Zinke's aunt. Can you just confirm that my understanding is correct?
Thanks, Juliet

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2017 9:07 AM
To: Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: a question related to Secretary Zinke's Channel Islands trip

What do you mean by this -> especially since in one of the emails, the NPS superintendent seems to indicate that he had heard about Zinke's plans to address the conservative group, and may have extended the invitation to visit after learning about this commitment.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 9:05 AM, Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com> wrote:

Dear Press Team,

An advocacy group has shared some documents from a FOIA request that concern the Secretary's April 17-18 trip to the Channel Island. The documents show that the federal government incurred extra government expense of more than \$2,000 because the boat normally sails from Ventura Harbor. The reason for the change in harbor appears to be due to the fact that the Secretary chose to address the Young America's Foundation town hall in Santa Barbara.

I plan to post an item of this today (most likely, in the late morning), but I wanted to check in with you all first, especially since in one of the emails, the NPS superintendent seems to indicate that he had heard about Zinke's plans to address the conservative group, and may have extended the invitation to visit after learning about this commitment. So I would like a little more clarity on that.

Thanks so much. I am reachable all of the usual ways, below.
Juliet

Juliet Eilperin
Senior National Affairs Correspondent

Washington Post

Juliet.eilperin@washpost.com

(O) 202-334-7774

(C) 202-302-3663

@eilperin

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Anzelmo-Sarles, Jenny](#)
Cc: [Shelby Galvin](#)
Subject: Re: access and blankets
Date: Friday, November 24, 2017 2:33:52 PM

You're amazing! Thank you sooooo much! Mom and dad will be very happy (and warm).

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Nov 24, 2017 at 1:55 PM, Anzelmo-Sarles, Jenny <jenny_anzelmo-sarles@nps.gov> wrote:

Heather,
Adding my colleague Shelby to this note. She can come swing by your office Tuesday or Wednesday to pick up blankets. We will hold them in our on-site office. What room number are you?

We'll also be able to assist with a golf cart escort for the guest we discussed. Please let me know what time he'll arrive. Please have him go to the press check-in tent (its green with an arrowhead on it) across from C st on 17th. After he goes through security we'll be able to escort him and his wife around to their seats.

Thanks,
Jenny

Jenny Anzelmo-Sarles
Spokesperson
National Park Service
National Capital Region

Office: (202) 619-7177
Cell: (307) 690-2355



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA ®

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Loeb, Stephanie](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: Re: Announce the Secretary's participation?
Date: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 1:53:27 PM

Hi Stephanie, yes, you can announce the Secretary's participation. Can you please send me a draft?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 6, 2017 at 12:43 PM, Loeb, Stephanie <stephanie_loeb@nps.gov> wrote:

Thank you, Caroline, I'll get you those details as soon as I can.

Heather, any update on the announcement?

Stephanie Loeb
[Regional Visual Information Specialist](#)
[Office of External Affairs](#)
National Park Service - [Northeast Region](#)
Office: 215-597-4942 | Cell: 215-268-2614



I am a proud graduate of the GOAL Leadership Academy. Ask me about the program!

On Wed, Sep 6, 2017 at 10:28 AM, Boulton, Caroline <caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Stephanie,

Bumping for comms to respond regarding the release.

On the other issues: the Secretary's wife (Mrs. Lolita Zinke) will be attending. We do not have lunch plans so provisioning lunch would be great! Just let us know the usual ethics information so that we can submit it (cost, who paid for it).

Best,
Caroline

On Tue, Sep 5, 2017 at 11:35 AM, Loeb, Stephanie <stephanie_loeb@nps.gov> wrote:

Good morning, Heather:

Following up on this request and also wanted to check in on a couple other issues for the 10th.

Will the Secretary have any family attending so that we can reserve seating?

What are the Secretary's plans for lunch? Our team can provision lunch for him, we just need to know.

Thank you,
Stephanie

Stephanie Loeb
[Regional Visual Information Specialist](#)
[Office of External Affairs](#)
National Park Service - [Northeast Region](#)
Office: 215-597-4942 | Cell: 215-268-2614



I am a proud graduate of the GOAL Leadership Academy. Ask me about the program!

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 12:53 PM, Loeb, Stephanie <stephanie_loeb@nps.gov> wrote:
Thank you for the introduction, Steve.

Greetings team. I understand the hold on announcing the Secretary's participation. In years past the NPS and DOI issued a joint media advisory announcing the Secretary as keynote along with other speakers, and media RSVP information.

Is this something we can work together on this year? When would be an optimal time to distribute?

Thank you,
Stephanie

Stephanie Loeb
[Regional Visual Information Specialist](#)
[Office of External Affairs](#)
National Park Service - [Northeast Region](#)
Office: 215-597-4942 | Cell: 215-268-2614



I am a proud graduate of the GOAL Leadership Academy. Ask me about the program!

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 12:23 PM, Russell Newell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Great - will do! Thanks Steve.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 31, 2017, at 12:22 PM, Clark, Stephen <stephen_m_clark@nps.gov> wrote:

Thank you Heather...

Incidentally, if you, Russell and Caroline can work directly with Stephanie Loeb (copied above) who is serving as our Chief Public Information Officer for the event, I would appreciate it. Please cc me and Adam if you would so we can track things here at the park level.

Thanks again,

Steve

Stephen M. Clark, Superintendent
National Park Service / Western Pennsylvania Parks
c/o Flight 93 National Memorial
P.O. Box 911
Shanksville, PA 15560
814-893-6531 (office)
267-252-1909 (cell)

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 9:23 AM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Checking with the security team

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 9:19 AM, Boulton, Caroline
<caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Steve,

We usually wait to announce his attendance at events for security purposes, but I defer to the comms office. Russell and Heather are cc'ed here for input!

Best,
Caroline

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 7:14 AM, Stephen Clark
<stephen_m_clark@nps.gov> wrote:

Good morning Caroline,
I wanted to check in and make sure it was ok with your office for us to announce that the secretary will be in attendance on

September 10
at this time...
Thank you.
Steve

Stephen M. Clark, Superintendent
National Park Service / Western Pennsylvania Parks
c/o Flight 93 National Memorial
P.O. Box 911
Shanksville, PA 15560
814-893-6322 (office)
267-252-1909 (cell)

--

Caroline Boulton
Department of the Interior
Scheduling & Advance
Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

--

Caroline Boulton
Department of the Interior
Scheduling & Advance
Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

From: Michael Doyle
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: appointment
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:49:11 AM

Great, I really appreciate your quick turnaround! Helps me with my new bosses!

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:46 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: appointment

Either me or a DOI spokesperson is fine.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 11:44 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Thanks!
To whom should I attribute this?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:42 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: appointment

Oh my word. I'm sorry for all those formatting problems. Our email runs on gmail and I try to strip out the formatting in the body of the email to fix those spacing problems.

Quote --- > Todd Willens is an exceptionally-qualified natural resources professional, and we are lucky and excited to have him return to a leadership position within the Interior. His western roots and decades of experience working with sportsmen, Tribal and local governments, and the Congressional delegations will be an incredible asset to the Department and the American people moving forward.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 11:35 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Awesome, thanks!

Yes, I definitely would welcome quote

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:33 AM

To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>

Subject: Re: appointment

below is the *DRAFT* press release we are issuing later today. Just waiting on the secretary's quote but don't want to hold you up. If you want a quote from the Department I'm happy to provide.

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official

Todd Willens as

Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Official, Others

Praise Selection

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former

C

chief of

S

taff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt.

Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

Insert quote from Secretary

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my

abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country.

As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to workin

g with Todd in his new capacity.”

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

“The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens’ appointment,” **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club’s Policy Committee.** “Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 11:02 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Thanks.

Honestly, I've been told we need something in the earlier Greenwire, since the Herald has already posted something.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 10:57 AM

To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>

Subject: Re: appointment

roger dodger. I'll try to get it to you by then. If not can you hold for PM edition?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 10:53 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

FYI, just checked with editor, writing for today's Greenwire, so deadline of 11:45...

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 10:49 AM

To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>

Cc: Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: Re: appointment

Hey Mike - If you can wait a few, we will have a press release shortly I'm happy to give you the lead on. Are you writing for Daily or PM?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 10:42 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Good morning:

I am trying to confirm a report that a Todd Willens has been nominated as an assistant secretary. Do you have anything on that?

Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mdoyle@eenews.net

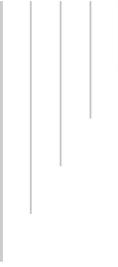
202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

E&E NEWS

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www.eenews.net | [@EENewsUpdates](https://twitter.com/EENewsUpdates)



Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, E&ETV

From: Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: article
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 9:44:58 AM

I would say reporters who have inquired. These are on my list so far. I don't know how many we'll be able to add, but just wanted to check with you as well.

Jim Carlton - WSJ (San Francisco)
Jim.carlton@wsj.com

Rebecca Worby - High Country News
Beccaw@hcn.org

Keith Schneider - LA Times (Utah correspondent)
Keith.schneider@latimes.com

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2017 9:42 AM
To: Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: article

do you want a list of UT reporters or national?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Dec 1, 2017 at 9:40 AM, Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

Thanks Heather! Do you have a list of reporters who want to attend the events in Utah? I'm putting together a list for Carolina, who handles our regional media.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2017 9:25 AM
To: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >; Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
Subject: article

Here's a really tremendous article from last night. Great for social.

The Toronto Star: Trump wished country 'Merry Christmas' instead of 'Happy Holidays' at tree lighting, making good on campaign promise

Jill Colvin
December 1, 2017

WASHINGTON—Ring in the holidays for the first time from Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump lit the National Christmas Tree Thursday evening, wishing the country “a Merry Christmas” — as he vowed to do during his campaign.

Taking part in the annual ritual, Trump counted down from 10 before his wife, Melania, pushed a button to set the tree aglow with golden lights and silver stars.

“Today’s a day that I’ve been looking very much forward to all year long,” said Trump. “And now, as the president of the United States, it’s my tremendous honour to finally wish America and the world a very merry Christmas.”

During his campaign, Trump had promised that, when he was elected, people would be saying “Merry Christmas again,” a reference to what he characterized as the country’s obsession with political correctness. In Trump’s view, the move toward the use of the more inclusive “happy holidays” phrase minimized the Christian celebration.

Trump was introduced by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who called Trump “a man who loves our parks, loves our military, and loves our country. The man who brought ‘Merry Christmas’ back to our nation’s capital — and you did, sir.”

Speaking from behind a bullet-proof glass enclosure, Trump also bragged about the mild weather, which hovered in the mid-50s, and compared himself to President Ulysses S. Grant, who signed legislation making Christmas a federal holiday.

“I sort of feel we’re doing that again,” he said to an audience that included many of his family members.

The program, which will air Monday on the Hallmark Channel, was hosted by Kathie Lee Gifford and actor Dean Cain and featured performances by the Beach Boys, Jack Wagner, Wynonna Judd, Craig Campbell and others. It was a less high-profile lineup than last year, when the performers included Kelly Clarkson, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood, Marc Anthony, Yolanda Adams, The Lumineers, James Taylor and Chance the Rapper.

This year marks the 95th annual National Christmas Tree Lighting. The tradition began in 1923 with President Calvin Coolidge and takes place in President’s Park, just south of the White House.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Bill Boyle
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Bears Ears visit
Date: Wednesday, December 06, 2017 5:16:41 PM
Attachments: [SJR2017-12-06-0-001.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-002.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-003.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-004.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-006.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-008.pdf](#)
[SJR2017-12-06-0-009.pdf](#)

Heather,

These are the pages that included coverage of the monument.

Bill

On Dec 6, 2017, at 1:54 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Wow. I'm so glad you were able to join the pool. Would you mind sending me a digital copy of the paper when you have it handy?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 6, 2017, at 3:39 PM, Bill Boyle <sjreditor@frontier.com> wrote:

Heather,

Wow! Thank you for your assistance with the President's visit to Salt Lake City on Monday. It was an amazing day for me and my readers!

One of the stories covered by the local NBC affiliate was my participation in the press pool.

If you click on the "Show 7 more videos" button in the attachment and then the "Southern Utah photographer..." button, it tells a little bit about my day!

<https://www.ksl.com/?sid=46210587&nid=148&title=trump-public-lands-will-once-again-be-for-public-use>

Bill Boyle
San Juan Record

On Dec 1, 2017, at 2:04 PM, Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Perfect! I wanted to make up for the hiccup we had last time. Glad it will work out.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 1, 2017, at 3:49 PM, Bill Boyle
<sjreditor@frontier.com> wrote:

Heather,

Yes, I talked to Carolina Hurley.
Everything is worked out. Thanks so much
for your help.

Bill

On Dec 1, 2017, at 1:10 PM,
Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Bill, did a young woman from
the White House press office
contact you?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov 1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Dec 1, 2017 at 11:37
AM, Bill Boyle
<sjreditor@frontier.com>
wrote:

Thanks for the note Heather.

I plan to be in attendance at
the event on Monday. I hope

that I can secure press access. Michael Richardson at the BLM tells me that DOI is the coordinating team. Please let me know what I need to do to cover this event I will be traveling back to San Juan County after the event and have Tuesday as the production deadline. It would be very helpful to have maps, press release, etc. as soon as is feasible.

If needed, I can be reached on my cell phone at (b) (6)

Thanks,
Bill

On Dec 1, 2017,
at 7:53 AM,
Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Bill - Heather Swift here from Secretary Zinke's office. You and I met back in May when the Secretary was in town. I'm wondering if you plan to drive up to SLC on Monday for the announcement with POTUS.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the

Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doigov

On Tue, May 9,
2017 at 5:33 PM,
Bill Boyle
<sjreditor@frontier.com> wrote:

Thank you

On May 7,
2017, at 11:00
PM, Heather
Swift wrote:

> Hi there.
Unfortunately,
we do not have
a press pool,
each reporter is
> responsible
for their own
travel to the
trail head. The
Secretary will
> deliver his
daily press
briefing at 2:30
at the trail head
and then
> embark on
the hike. News
media will be
permitted to
follow the
troupe
> from a
distance to
snap photos but
the Q/A will be
done in the
> beginning at
the trail head.
Could you

please tell me
your name?

>

> Thanks,

> Heather

>

> Sent from my
iPhone

>

>> On May 7,
2017, at 10:04

PM, Editor

<[sjreditor@fro
ntier.com](mailto:sjreditor@frontier.com)>

wrote:

>>

>> I am the
editor of the
San Juan
Record in
Monticello
Utah and I am
very interested
in covering
secretary
Zinkie while he
is here. I would
like to
accompany the
group to house
of fire ruin, if
possible. Of
course, I can
travel in a press
pool but I know
the area very
well and can
meet the group
there, if that
works. Please
let me know if
you need any
additional
information I
can be reached
at 435-459-
1929 or at this
email address

>>

>> Sent from

my iPhone

>>

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Daly, Matthew](#)
Cc: [Rigas, Laura](#); [Interior Press](#)
Subject: Re: Bernhardt
Date: Friday, July 21, 2017 4:19:57 PM
Attachments: [3F2C747C-3960-4BED-8D36-C01BFD1ECB56.png](#)
[DOI Deputy Secretary Nominee David Bernhardt Support Letter Package.pdf](#)

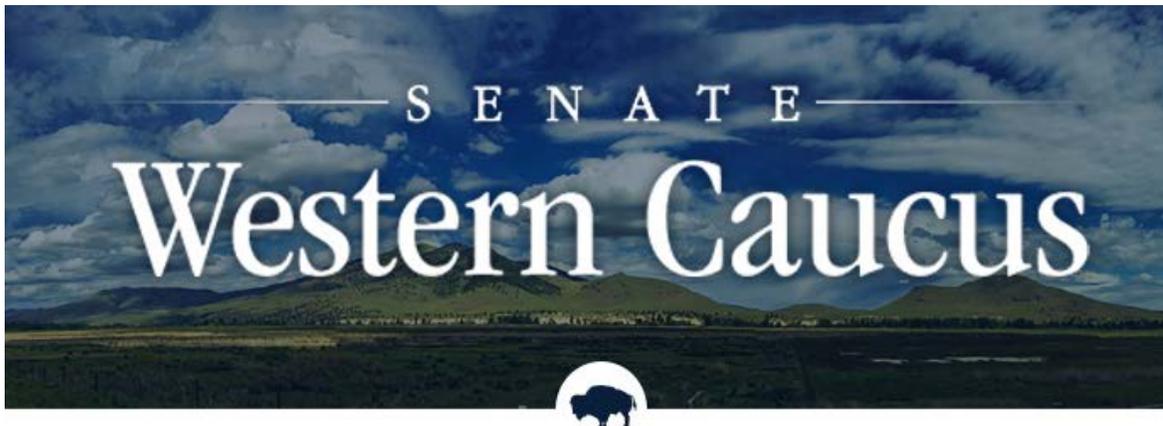
Hey there, Matthew - it's too late in the date on a summer Friday for you to be working. Go home! :)

Statement for your question --> The Interior is excited to have David Bernhardt, a highly-qualified, veteran official, return to the Department to help advance Secretary Zinke and President Trump's America First policy priorities. Strongly-worded press releases issued by special interest groups alleging any wrongdoing are patently false and are desperate attempts to stop the progress that is being made at the Department on behalf of the American people.

Please see the Secretary's statement when David Bernhardt was announced. The Secretary stands by his word. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-zinke-applauds-nomination-david-bernhardt-deputy-secretary-interior>

Background --> Please see the attached doc with countless statements in support of Bernhardt's nomination from individuals and organizations who actually worked with him during his time at Interior.

Lastly, see below the press release from U.S. Senator Daines and the Western Caucus which demonstrates broad support for Bernhardt.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior

U.S. SENATE — Today, the Senate Western Caucus, led by Chairman Steve Daines (R-MT), urged the confirmation of Department of the Interior veteran David Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Bernhardt, a Westerner from Rifle, Colorado, brings years of personal experience as an avid hunter and fisherman as well as professional experience having served under former DOI Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne in multiple positions.

Bernhardt was announced as President Donald J. Trump's choice for Deputy Secretary on [April 28](#) and was subsequently approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on [June 6](#). Less than a month away from the August recess, the Senate has confirmed only 23 percent of President Trump's 216 nominations. By the first August recess during President Obama's

first term, the Senate had confirmed 69 percent of his 454 nominations.

U.S. Senator Steve Daines (R-MT): “David Bernhardt will be a partner to Montanans and to Secretary Ryan Zinke – which makes for the best kind of Deputy Secretary of the Interior. David will work to improve access to public lands, restore American energy dominance and empower Montanans ability to best serve their families and communities. We need to confirm David Bernhardt so he can get to work on behalf of Montanans and the West.”

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO): “As a native Coloradan from Rifle, David Bernhardt has a deep understanding of Western land issues, and his expertise and experience will serve the Department well. Unfortunately, a partisan minority in the Senate continues to block Mr. Bernhardt’s nomination, and I hope that the confirmation process has not become a broken process that disincentives qualified people, like Mr. Bernhardt, who are held in high professional regard, from becoming public servants.”

U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ): “David Bernhardt has the deep water background we need to continue efforts to protect our Colorado River supplies” said Senator Jeff Flake, the Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “We need this experienced nominee confirmed without delay.”

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT): “I applaud the nomination of Dave Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. President Trump and Secretary Zinke have already made great progress in restoring trust between Westerners and the federal government, but significant work remains, especially in Utah where reduced access to our public land has hurt our rural economies. As a former Interior Solicitor, Dave has the legal and political background necessary to confront some of the most difficult challenges ahead, such as expanding responsible development of our natural resources, protecting and promoting multiple-use, and expanding opportunities for recreational access. I am confident that Dave’s breadth of experience makes him uniquely qualified for this position, and I look forward to working with him.”

U.S. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT): “I can think of no one who is more qualified to be deputy secretary of the Interior than David Bernhardt. He has a long track record of distinguished service in the department and he understands the importance of efficient and collaborative federal land and resource management. David’s extensive knowledge, experience, and leadership will go a long way in advancing Secretary Zinke’s goal of restoring the American people’s trust in the Interior Department. I urge my colleagues to support David’s nomination and confirm him as soon as possible.”

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK): “Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to help set strategic direction and run the Department of the Interior on a day-to-day basis. He grew up in the West, has extensive knowledge of issues that are important to Alaskans, and will be a great asset to Secretary Zinke and his team. We reported his nomination from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support more than a month ago, so I urge my colleagues to support the swift confirmation of this well-qualified nominee.”

U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ): “David Bernhardt’s experience working on water policy and Native American issues makes him uniquely suited to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department Administration. I am confident David will serve the state of Arizona and the nation with distinction, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of his nomination.”

Bernhardt also has wide support from across the country:

- National Congress of American Indians
- Ducks Unlimited
- Boone and Crockett Club
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- NRA
- Delta Waterfowl
- Archery Trade Association
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Camp Fire Club of America
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Force
- Dallas Safari Club
- Houston Safari Club
- Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation
- Mule Deer Foundation

- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Orion - The Hunter's Institute
- Pheasants Forever
- Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
- Quail Forever
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Safari Club International
- Shikar-Safari Club
- Sportsmen's Alliance
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Wild Sheep Foundation
- Wildlife Forever
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Wildlife Mississippi
- American Recreation Coalition
- Boat U.S.
- International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
- Marine Retailers Association of America
- Motorcycle Industry Council
- National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)
- National Marine Manufacturers Association
- National Parks Hospitality Association
- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association
- Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- Specialty Equipment Market Association
- Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Colorado Water Congress
- Family Farm Alliance
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Penobscot Nation
- Public Lands Council
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Quapaw Tribe Of Oklahoma
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Gila River Indian Community

Former United States Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ): “Having worked with David Bernhardt for many years on a variety of Department of the Interior matters, in particular on Indian water settlements, I know he’ll be a great addition to the team.”

David Allen President/CEO Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: “The Senate has not yet acted on several important positions that remain unfilled at the Interior Department. Among them is the nomination of David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary. This is a critical position that not only ensures the Department’s programs are run effectively, but also succeeds the Secretary in certain situations. Bernhardt is a Coloradan, a hunter and angler, and former high-ranking officer at Interior who understands the issues important to sportsmen and women. We encourage the Senate to act on his nomination without delay.”

Dale Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Ducks Unlimited: “I have known and worked with David for more than 10 years and could not be more pleased with his nomination for Deputy Secretary of the Interior. For David Bernhardt, integrity is doing the right thing even when the easiest decision would be to continue with the status quo. I believe David is a man with personal and professional integrity that is beyond reproach and has always advocated for the proper application of science and implementation of the law, especially when it comes to species conservation. I believe David will continue to advocate for sound and balanced resource management and advocate for the use of best available science.”

Whit Fosburgh, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership President and CEO: “The Department of Interior, the chief steward of our national public lands, requires a Deputy Secretary who understands how the department functions and understands the complexities associated with balancing the resource needs of our country, both now, and most importantly, for future generations of Americans. David Bernhardt will provide much needed departmental experience to the Interior leadership team at a time when important natural resource decisions with wide impact are being considered.”

Jeffrey Vorberger, Vice President, Policy & Government Affairs of NOIA:

“NOIA strongly encourages the Senate to confirm David Bernhardt as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior sooner rather than later. Strong, experienced leadership at all levels of the Department are necessary as America strives to become energy dominant. David has a proven record, is beyond qualified and his extensive experience serving the Department of Interior under the George W. Bush administration will make him a vital asset to Secretary Zinke. Further delay on his confirmation is a lost opportunity.”

Peter Hayes, Associate General Manager & Chief Public Affairs Executive, Salt River Project: “David Bernhardt has for many years exhibited strong leadership on federal land, water, and natural resources policies, having previously served the public as a senior official at the Department of the Interior. SRP urges quick confirmation in the Senate for Mr. Bernhardt and looks forward to continuing its long-standing collaborative partnership with the Department under Secretary Zinke and Mr. Bernhardt’s leadership.”

Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation: “Mr. Bernhardt brings years of experience working on Indian country’s most pressing issues. I look forward to working with him and the rest of the Department of the Interior leadership team to bring the Bureau of Indian Affairs into the 21st century.”

Stephen Roe Lewis, Governor, Gila River Indian Community, AZ: “Based on our experience in negotiating and working on complex issues with Mr. Bernhardt, we support his position as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We believe he has an understanding of tribal sovereignty and the United States’ trust responsibility to tribal nations, including the Gila River Indian Community.”

White Mountain Apache Tribal Council, AZ: “David Bernhardt is respected by the White Mountain Apache Tribe and enjoys widespread respect in Indian Country as being fair and well versed in Native American issues and the historic time-honored government to government and trust relationship between Indian Nations and the United States.”

The position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior is the Chief Operating Officer of the Department and Bernhardt’s nomination is subject to confirmation by the United States Senate.

Bernhardt also previously served as the United States Commissioner to the International Boundary Commission, U.S. and Canada. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Northern Colorado and graduated with honors from George Washington University National Law Center. He recently served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia, where he resides in Arlington with his wife Gena and their two children. As Deputy Secretary, Bernhardt will make Interior a better neighbor, ensure American energy dominance to create jobs and return Endangered Species Act to its original intent.

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Contact: [Marcie Kinzel](#), [Katie Waldman](#)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Jul 21, 2017 at 3:52 PM, Daly, Matthew <MDaly@ap.org> wrote:

Does Sec. Zinke have a comment on Bernhardt nomination?
I am doing a preview for Monday ahead of Senate vote.
Dems are challenging his work as a lobbyist for Calif water group.
Thanks.

Matthew

Matthew Daly
Congressional Reporter
The Associated Press
202-641-9481 direct
202-365-2993 cell
Follow me on Twitter: @MatthewDalyWDC

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From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Fetalvo, Ninio J. EOP/WHO](#); [Strom, Natalie M. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; [Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Billings Gazette: Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban
Date: Saturday, August 26, 2017 4:22:05 PM

Please let us know how you are handling inquiries.

Brad Rateike
White House Communications
(b) (6)

On Aug 26, 2017, at 2:20 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

What would you like guidance on?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Aug 26, 2017, at 12:15 PM, Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)> wrote:

Team Interior

Any guidance on the below?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Comms Alert <CommsAlert@gop.com>
Date: August 26, 2017 at 12:13:48 PM EDT
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: Billings Gazette: Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban

Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban
Billings Gazette
Jayme Fraser
August 25, 2017
>><http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/zinke-s-veteran-daughter-excoriates-trump-in-response-to->

[transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share](https://www.washingtonpost.com/transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share)

The daughter of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, like her father a Navy veteran, appears, in the rawest of terms, to have excoriated President Donald Trump in a social media post after the announcement that transgender soldiers would be banned from the military.

"This man is a disgrace. I've tried to keep politics out of my social media feed as much as possible, but this is inexcusable," read a July 26 public Instagram post from what appears to be the account of Jennifer Detlefsen, the Navy diver daughter Zinke frequently mentioned in his successful 2016 re-election campaign for the U.S. House. Shortly after the election, Trump chose Zinke to lead the U.S. Department of the Interior.

"This veteran says sit down and shut the (expletive) up, you know-nothing, never-served piece of (expletive)." She also used a hashtag, #itmfa, that is an acronym for "impeach the (expletive) already."

<image003.jpg>

The comments began circulating among national advocates for LGBTQ rights and one of them shared a screenshot of the Instagram post with the Missoulian on Friday, the day Trump signed the order making the transgender ban official.

Interior Press Secretary Heather Swift declined to make Zinke available for an interview or to provide an immediate statement Friday night.

"This is not a matter related to the Department of the Interior so I cannot offer you a statement," Swift wrote in response to a reporter's request.

She later added, "Family members are not elected officials and deserve privacy and respect."

The Instagram account links to a professional page with a resume that matches the name and biographical details of Zinke's daughter. It also includes a Jan. 6, 2015, photo taken from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, the day

her father was sworn in for his first term as a congressman from Montana.

The post on that account includes a screenshot of an NPR story describing tweets by the president that “the United States Government will not accept or allow ... Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.” Trump first announced plans for the ban on July 26, the same day of the Instagram post.

Trump's Friday order formalized that Twitter announcement and provided the first details of his plan.

In it, he directs the military not to recruit transgender people, to stop paying for medical treatment regimens of transgender people already serving in the military, and to evaluate existing transgender soldiers and their impact on the military for “effectiveness and lethality, unitary cohesion, budgetary constraints, applicable law, and all factors that may be relevant.”

Although some details remain unclear and Trump has indicated he is giving top defense officials some leeway to implement his plan, the move could effectively reverse a 2016 order by former president Barack Obama to allow transgender individuals to serve openly.

Zinke, a retired Navy SEAL, has not spoken publicly about his opinion of the ban. Nor has his wife, Lolita Zinke. She was a member of Trump campaign outreach efforts for Hispanics and women, and later joined the president's Veterans Administration transition team.

Detlefsen served in the Navy as a Deep Sea Diving Medical Technician and later as a High Risk Instructor of an explosive ordnance disposal training unit. She had worked at Special Operations for America, a military-focused super political action committee founded by Zinke, doing digital consulting and social media work, according to filings with the Federal Elections Commission.

Detlefsen now is a Virginia-based glass artist “bound by themes of masculine/feminine dichotomy, double standards, motherhood, and literature's impact on gender roles.”

She could not immediately be reached for comment Friday night. A phone rang without answer and had a voicemail box

that was full. Messages sent to two private email accounts also were not immediately returned.

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Billings Gazette: Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates Trump in response to transgender military ban
Date: Saturday, August 26, 2017 5:23:05 PM

Thx.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Aug 26, 2017, at 11:37 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura - I briefly connected with Kaelan.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Aug 26, 2017, at 4:09 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thx. Not sure we can offer any more.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Aug 26, 2017, at 9:20 PM, Heather Swift
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Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Zinke's veteran daughter
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to transgender military ban**

Zinke's veteran daughter excoriates
Trump in response to transgender
military ban

Billings Gazette

Jayne Fraser

August 25, 2017

>[http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/zinke-s-veteran-daughter-excoriates-trump-in-response-to-](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/zinke-s-veteran-daughter-excoriates-trump-in-response-to-transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share)

[transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/zinke-s-veteran-daughter-excoriates-trump-in-response-to-transgender/article_0fb2413e-92fe-5db6-9be8-e4c17f0b9055.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share)

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She could not immediately be reached for comment Friday night. A phone rang without answer and had a voicemail box that was full. Messages sent to two private email accounts also were not immediately returned.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Johnson, Christie](mailto:Johnson.Christie)
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?
Date: Tuesday, October 10, 2017 12:30:49 PM

Hey Christie, I wanted to thank you for your help last week. Your conversation with Rene's editor really shaped the story and I think influenced her decision to run the story on the Jewell/Salazar travel.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Oct 6, 2017 at 3:48 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 3:42 PM, Johnson, Christie <Christie.Johnson@turner.com> wrote:

Spoke to the team. Best bet on this one is to answer Rene's questions directly and/or send her any statement you want her to include if she runs the story. So you're aware-I have raised your concerns with her boss.
Call if you need anything else

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Johnson, Christie
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 2:23:26 PM
To: Heather Swift
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

Will do. Call around 230

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313

Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 1:58:30 PM
To: Johnson, Christie
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

Hey Christie, I called the phone number but it's not reaching you. Can you give me a ring (b) (6)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 9:38 AM, Johnson, Christie <Christie.Johnson@turner.com> wrote:

If not I'll be around at noon and we can talk

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Johnson, Christie
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 9:35:59 AM
To: Heather Swift
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

No chance you can talk now right?

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 9:31:58 AM
To: Johnson, Christie
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

Ok. I'm about to go out of cell service until noon. Rene Marsh is

working on a story though if you could possibly put it on hold until we talk that would be appreciated. I don't know when she plans to run but Mrs. Zinke got a VM.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 9:23 AM, Johnson, Christie
<Christie.Johnson@turner.com> wrote:

We're wrapped

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 8:12:40 AM
To: Johnson, Christie
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

Ok

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 7:59 AM, Johnson, Christie
<Christie.Johnson@turner.com> wrote:

Just got a note our Morning Meeting is at 8:30 this morning. It should be done around 9:10ish. If you can catch me before or after that, that would be ideal.

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017 7:53:30 AM
To: Johnson, Christie
Subject: Re: Can we talk later?

Great. I'll give you a ring in about 45 minutes.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 7:47 AM, Johnson, Christie <Christie.Johnson@turner.com> wrote:

Here when you're ready (b) (6)

[REDACTED]

Christie (Bear) Johnson
CNN
Senior Producer
C: 646-763-2313
Christie.Johnson@turner.com
www.cnn.com

From: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2017
7:44:03 AM
To: Johnson, Christie
Subject: Can we talk later?

Hey there Christie. Can we talk later this afternoon? One of your colleagues is about to embarrass themselves by running a really nasty and factually incorrect story about Mrs. Zinke.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: [Timothy Cama](#)
Subject: Re: Can you please correct this
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 10:07:52 PM

As with previous Interior secretaries, the Secretary traveled on charter flights when there were no commercial options available. All travel is pre-approved by the ethics office (statement from them below) before booking, and the charter flights went through an additional level of due diligence.

The politico piece did not accurately describe the Montana portion of the trip. The Secretary's itinerary began with meetings [at 8:30 AM](#) then included a keynote speech to the Western Governor's Association (which is led by Montana's Democratic governor), a press conference, a working lunch with governors, and other engagements.

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Consistent with this process, the trip was reviewed and approved in advance by both the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law. In short, the trip - including the Secretary's address to the hockey developmental squad - was completely compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

Three Charter Flights

[3/31](#)

Trip: USVI Centennial Transfer Day Ceremony (The 100 year anniversary of the Danish government turning over the Virgin Islands to the United States. DOI has jurisdiction over territories) Also attending the ceremonies were the Danish Prime Minister and Governor Mapp as well as several other high ranking government officials.

Flight Plan: St Croix --> St Thomas --> St Croix

Reason: No commercial flight were available for the itinerary of official government events.

Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

[5/17](#)

Trip: CODEL to Norway and Greenland with additional stops in Alaska
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee organized the Arctic CODEL. The Committee organized and utilized a charter in northern Alaska.

Flight Plan: Deadhorse, AK --> Alpine, AK --> Fairbanks

Reason: Commercial flights were not an option

Payment: the Secretary and the staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

[6/26](#)

Las Vegas to Kalispell, MT for the Western Governors Association annual meeting. The Secretary had events and speaking engagements in the evening in Nevada and in the morning in Montana.

Flight Plan: Las Vegas --> Kalispell

Reason: No commercial flight available to get the Secretary and necessary staff to the morning Montana events on time. The Secretary's speech ended [at 7:45PM](#) and he had a meeting [at 8:30](#) the following morning. The charter landed [at 1:30AM](#). The secretary had multiple events at the Western Governors Association

Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 28, 2017, at 10:06 PM, Timothy Cama <tcama@thehill.com> wrote:

Ok cool. I'll pass it along and make sure Julia sees it. Thanks.

On Sep 28, 2017 at 10:03 PM, <[Heather Swift](#)> wrote:

A flight "to the Caribbean" is incorrect. He took a commercial flight to the USVI and then once there took a round trip flight between two islands in the US territory.

"to attend an event with the Danish government" is incomplete and incorrect through omission. The Secretary attended several events with both the Governor of the USVI and the Danish Prime Minister... as well as many other government officials.

"In addition to using charter flights, Zinke used a military plane to travel to Norway with his wife" incorrect. This was a CODEL arranged by SENR. Mrs Zinke met the CODEL, including congressional spouses, in Norway. She joined the rest of the trip with other spouses at personal cost.

"Swift said she could not to confirm to Politico whether Zinke would reimburse the government for the cost of his travel." It was official government travel for official business. There was no personal time what so ever.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 28, 2017, at 9:44 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I realize your colleague simply wrote about another article but this is really a hack job. Didn't even bother to email.

<http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/353026-zinke-used-private-military-planes-for-travel-report>

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Eilperin, Juliet
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Channel Islands
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 5:22:51 PM

Dear Heather,

Thanks for this. The story has already been turned around for print, but let me see if we can get some of this in there, and I will update the story online.

Best,

Juliet

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2017 5:07 PM
To: Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com>
Subject: Channel Islands

The Western Values Project is a **classic dark money group** which is run by current and former Democratic Party members and campaign staff.

The Secretary's visit to Cha

n

nel Islands National Park was part of a multi-day visit to multiple Department of the Interior assets across the state from Sacramento all the way south to the Channel Islands. The Secretary had always planned to meet with the team at Channel Islands National Park, and the office of scheduling reached out to the superintendent's office as soon as it was clear when he could go.

Concerning the cost of boat, no costs were incurred due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. The Zinke's personally paid via check for

her and her

aunt's boat fare.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Wackowski, Stephen](#)
Subject: Re: Christmas social media opportunity
Date: Saturday, December 23, 2017 7:44:03 PM

Get me some pix! Santa hats are always appreciated :) see USVI team on Z twitter

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 23, 2017, at 6:07 PM, Wackowski, Stephen <stephen_wackowski@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

See Below, great positive social media opportunity here. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

Steve Wackowski
Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs
Department of the Interior
[4230 University Drive, Suite 300](#)
[Anchorage, AK 99508](#)
907-271-5485

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Fesmire, Mark <mark.fesmire@bsee.gov>
Date: Sat, Dec 23, 2017 at 5:08 PM
Subject: BSEE Arctic Inspector's Christmas plans.
To: Scott Angelle <scott.angelle@bsee.gov>, Stephen Wackowski <Steve_wackowski@ios.doi.gov>, Kevin Pendergast <kevin.pendergast@bsee.gov>

Director:

I flew back from Seattle last night on the same plane as Steve Wackowski. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Steve stated that that was something you might want to know.

(b) (5)

There are no "show stoppers" so far and our guys are anticipating being able to come back on the day after Christmas.

The two personnel are Mike Jordan (chief and only inspector) and John McCall (engineer), both Air Force veterans. Mike's children are older (high school and College) and John has no children, but his wife is one heck of a good holiday cook.

They have a cell phone with good coverage (b) (6) but may be on the rig and not able to hear or carry the phone.

Merry Christmas.

Mark E. Fesmire, PE JD

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)

Alaska Regional Director

Cell 907-830-4810

Anchorage Office 907-334-5300 (5303 Direct)

Camarillo Office 805-384-6300 (6310 Direct)

From: Russell Newell
To: [Scott Angelle](mailto:Scott.Angelle)
Cc: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift); [Joe Balash](mailto:Joe.Balash); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas); [Wackowski, Stephen](mailto:Wackowski.Stephen); [Wynn, Todd](mailto:Wynn.Todd)
Subject: Re: Christmas social media opportunity
Date: Sunday, December 24, 2017 7:39:03 PM

Awesome! Thanks and merry Christmas all!

On Sun, Dec 24, 2017 at 4:29 PM Scott Angelle <scott.angelle@bsee.gov> wrote:
Just FYI I personally spoke to the 2 BSEE employees at this facility earlier today . They were appreciative that someone from Washington knew they existed and aware of their holiday efforts. I thanked them on behalf of secretary zinke and wished them a merry Christmas !

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 23, 2017, at 9:17 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Merry Christmas!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 23, 2017, at 7:43 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Strong.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 23, 2017, at 6:07 PM, Wackowski, Stephen <stephen_wackowski@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

See Below, great positive social media opportunity here. (b) (5)



(b) (5)

Steve Wackowski
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Mark E. Fesmire, PE JD
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
(BSEE)
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Camarillo Office 805-384-6300 (6310 Direct)

--

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



From: Scott Angelle
To: [Wackowski, Stephen](#)
Cc: [Wynn, Todd](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Christmas social media opportunity
Date: Saturday, December 23, 2017 6:12:14 PM

24 / 7 / 365. Energy dominance lives here !

Sent from my iPhone

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[REDACTED]

Steve Wackowski
Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs
Department of the Interior
[4230 University Drive, Suite 300](#)
[Anchorage, AK 99508](#)
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(b) (5) [REDACTED]

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They have a cell phone with good coverage (b) (6), but may be on the rig and not able to hear or carry the phone.

Merry Christmas.

Mark E. Fesmire, PE JD

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)

Alaska Regional Director

Cell 907-830-4810

Anchorage Office 907-334-5300 (5303 Direct)

Camarillo Office 805-384-6300 (6310 Direct)

From: Nathaniel Herz
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Christmas stories
Date: Sunday, December 24, 2017 4:46:00 PM

Thanks! I'll check in w/ Steve and see if this is a good fit.

On Sun, Dec 24, 2017 at 12:31 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey Nat, I do! We have a couple BSEE guys working through Christmas to get Eni permitted to spud their well ASAP. This is an exploratory well into the Federal OCS in the Beaufort Sea, which if proven, could raise millions in revenue. Eni could be ready to go as early as Tuesday with the guys working through Christmas. Wouldn't that be a nice Christmas present!?!?

The two personnel are Mike Jordan (chief and only inspector) and John McCall (engineer), both Air Force veterans (bless them). Mike's children are older (high school and College) and John has no children, but we hear his wife is one heck of a cook.

Steve can fill in more details and put you in touch if you're interested. I can get you a Sec quote too.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 24, 2017, at 4:12 PM, Nathaniel Herz <nherz@adn.com> wrote:

Hey Heather, Steve, you guys know of anything interesting DOI employees are doing on Christmas? Looking for story ideas for the next couple days.

--



Nathaniel Herz

Reporter

nherz@adn.com | 907-793-0312

Anchorage Daily News | adn.com
[300 W. 31st Ave.](#)
[Anchorage, AK 99503](#)



--

Nathaniel Herz

Reporter

nherz@adn.com | 907-793-0312



Anchorage Daily News | adn.com
300 W. 31st Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99503



From: "Marsh, Rene" via Interior Press
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Marsh, Rene](#)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov; russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; [Levitt, Ross](#); [Wallace, Gregory](#)
Subject: Re: CNN
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 5:53:31 PM

Thanks Heather.

While this answers some questions it does not answer all of the questions below. I do understand that it is now Friday and almost 6p so we likely wont get all of them answered now. That said we'd like to get the rest of the questions highlighted in yellow below answered.

But more immediately how much did Mrs. Zinke reimburse the government for the trip and when?

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Friday, October 6, 2017 at 5:23 PM
To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>
Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "russell_newell@ios.doi.gov" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>
Subject: Re: CNN

“The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources.”
- Heather Swift, DOI spokesman

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Consistent with this process, the trip was reviewed and approved in advance by both the Departmental

Ethics Office and the Division of General Law. In short, the trip - including the Secretary's address to the hockey developmental squad - was completely compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

ON BACKGROUND

Regarding the ownership of the plane: The Secretary's office is unaware of ownership of any vendor services including government selected vendors for air transport. Some media report the plane is owned by a Mr. Neilson. The Secretary has never met or spoken to Mr Neilson. The charter plane company is a vendor of the federal government. It was selected by career officials a thousand miles away in Boise or Atlanta after cost analysis. Furthermore, that company had years of federal contracts before the Secretary was even sworn into office. The vendor has been used for years by previous administrations.

It is false to say commercial flights are available between LAS and FCA that the Secretary could have taken. There were exactly 0 commercial flights leaving after 8PM that would have gotten the Secretary to FCA in time. The Secretary's itinerary began with meetings at 8:30 AM then included a keynote speech to the Western Governors Association, a (bi-partisan event that was led by Montana's Democratic governor), a press conference, a working lunch with governors, and other engagements.

Mrs. Zinke was not on the Nevada trip.

Mrs. Zinke was one of many spouses invited on the bipartisan CODEL organized by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which is standard for those trips. Mrs. Zinke's fare was covered personally.

Justification for Mrs. Zinke to have a desk there at Interior? --
No such desk/office/furniture exists.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 5:18 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather,

We have repeatedly asked the press office for answers to the below questions and for 4 days now we have been told you are working on it and today we've received no response at all. We are asking questions that the public has every right to know as these are their tax dollars and for Interior not answer any of the below questions is really hard to understand. Is the DOI issuing a no comment on all of the below questions?

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date: Friday, October 6, 2017 at 1:46 PM

To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "russell_newell@ios.doi.gov" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

Heather,

Circling back again. It's been a few days now.
Reupping the questions CNN has.

What was the purpose of his speech to the Vegas Golden Knights Hockey team in June? Who invited Zinke to give the speech to the team? Who owned the plane that Zinke flew on from Vegas to Montana? Who else was on board the plane from Vegas to Montana? Zinke's schedule shows on 4/28 he traveled from DC to Atlanta. How did he travel? Commercial? Government plane? Private? On June 22 how did Zinke travel to his meeting in West Virginia? Did he use a Park Police Chopper? What is the cost estimate for use of the chopper? On July 7 why did the Secretary travel using a USPP helicopter? What was the cost associated with the use of the helicopter? Can you tell us about the flight on July 20th. Was that a commercial flight? If so please share the flight details?

CNN is looking for justification for why Zinke's wife accompanied him on the following trips : Las Vegas, Greenland and Alaska?

When on these trips does Mrs. Zinke participate in official meetings with the Secretary?

Justification for Mrs. Zinke to have a desk there at Interior?

Did Mrs. Zinke reimburse the government for these flights? When? How much was reimbursed?

Thank you

Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:24 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Working on it. The person who handles the Secretary's travel is currently out of the office so it's taking a little longer than usual. Apologies for the delay.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:11 AM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather good morning,

Circling back on this request again this morning. Hoping to get something from you today.

Thank you,
Rene Marsh

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2017, at 1:02 PM, Marsh, Rene <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com> wrote:

Good afternoon Heather,

Do you have a sense of timing for when we can expect a response to the below inquiry ?

Thank you
Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2017, at 7:08 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Rene. Checking into this for you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 3, 2017, at 4:32 PM, 'Marsh,
Rene' via Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Heather,

CNN has additional
questions on the
Secretary's travel.

What was the purpose of
his speech to the Vegas
Golden Knights Hockey
team in June?

Who invited Zinke to give
the speech to the team?

Who owned the plane
that Zinke flew on from
Vegas to Montana?

Who else was on board
the plane from Vegas to
Montana?

Zinke's schedule shows
on 4/28 he traveled from
DC to Atlanta. How did
he travel? Commercial?

Government plane?
Private?

On June 22 how did
Zinke travel to his
meeting in West

Virginia? Did he use a
Park Police Chopper?

What is the cost estimate
for use of the chopper?

On July 7 why did the
Secretary travel using a
USPP helicopter? What
was the cost associated
with the use of the
helicopter?

Can you tell us about the
flight on July 20th. Was
that a commercial flight?
If so please share the

flight details?

Thank you,
— René Marsh

CNN
Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Friday,
September 29, 2017 at
2:49 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt, Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

The \$12k is for
Nevada.
The \$3k is for the
flights between the
islands.

**Also, for your
reference, Secretary
Jewell also took a
number of charter
aircraft, including
but not limited to
the following:**

- 1/14/16 \$9,800
roundtrip
between
Albuquerque,
NM -->
Farmington,
NM
- 5/3/16 \$13,605
Helena, MT -->
Browning, MT
(this is about a
three hour
drive)
Bronwing, MT --
> Palm Springs
- 8/24/16
\$20,383
Bakersfield, CA
--> Kalispell,
MT -->
Livingston, MT
- There were
also at least
two military
aircraft flights
on 9/5/13
between
Honolulu and
the Marshall
Islands, and
5/13/14 DC to
St. Louis.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at
2:43 PM, 'Marsh, Rene'
via Interior Press

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Hi there,

I am getting a bit
confused .

Can you send the
breakdown of flights
and costs so I am clear
on what cost what?

I see \$ 3,150 --- that's
the flight from where
to where

The \$12375- that's
round trip between st.
croix and st. Thomas

We are on deadline .
also looking to confirm
the charter company
used. I see youre
quoted as confirming
that but if reports as
you point out have
been inaccurate I need
to get it confirmed
with you myself.

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift,
Heather"

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Friday,
September 29, 2017

at 2:18 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt, Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

3/31/17 USVI flights
were - \$3,150

-

Heather Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017
at 1:36 PM, Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

The flight between
two islands in the
US VI. Yes that
cost is correct. We
have not yet been
billed on the
military air asset to
the wildfire.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the
Interior

On Sep 29, 2017,
at 1:21 PM,

'Marsh, Rene' via
Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

You
are
quoted
as
saying
one of
the
flights
costs
12,375.

Which
costs
are
you
waiting
on?
Can
you
provide
the
costs
you
already
have?

Thank
you,
—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:16
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Miranda
Green

Heather
Swift
Press
Secretary
Department
of the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at 1:14
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

We
are
looking
for
the
cost
of
the
flights?

I
don't
see
that
below.

B
=y
the
way
who
did
you
provide
this
info
to
earlier
?

—
René
Marsh

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:12
PM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace

[<gregory.wallace@turner.com>](mailto:gregory.wallace@turner.com)

Subject:

Re:
CNN

The
below
information
was
supplied
to
your
colleague
earlier.

**On
the
record**

As
is
consistent
with
the
travel
of
previous
Interior
secretaries,
the
Secretary
traveled
on
charter
flights

when
there
were
no
commercial
options
available.

All
travel
is
pre-
approved
by
the
ethics
office
and
the
travel
lawyers
in
the
Division
of
General
Law
(statement
from
them
below)
before

booking,
and
the
charter
flights
went
through
an
additional
level
of
due
diligence.

Taxpayers
absolutely
have
a
right
to
know
how
much
official
government
travel
costs.
It's
common
sense.

At
the
Department
we
make
those
documents
available
to
the
public.
Using
tax
dollars
wisely
and
ethically
is
a
big
responsibility
and
is
at
the
heart
of
good
government.
Unfortunately
there

are
some
times
when
Interior
has
to
utilize
charter
services
because
we
often
travel
to
areas
that
don't
have
a
lot
of
flight
options.

Standard
operating
procedure
is
that

the
Secretary
and
staff
fly
on
a
commercial,
government,
coach
fare
whenever
possible.

**"The
Scheduling
Office
meets
regularly
with
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law
to
ensure**

that
all
travel
is
thoroughly
reviewed
and
approved
in
advance
and
that
it
is
fully
compliant
with
all
applicable
laws,
rules,
and
regulations.
Consistent
with
this
process,
the
trip
was
reviewed
and
approved
in

**advance
by
both
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law.**

**In
short,
the
trip**

**-
including
the
Secretary's
address
to
the
hockey
developmental
squad**

**-
was
completely
compliant
with
all**

**applicable
laws,
rules,
and
regulations." -**

-

Joint
Statement
from
Melinda
Loftin
(Department
of
the
Interior
Designated
Agency
Ethics
Official
and
Director
of
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office)
and
Edward
Keable
(Deputy
Solicitor

-

General
Law). Both

are
career
members
of
the
Senior
Executive
Service.

**On
background**

Regarding
the
ownership
of
the
plane:
the
Secretary
has
never
met
or
spoken
to
Mr
Neilson
and
that
the
charter

plane
company
is
a
vendor
of
the
federal
government.
It
was
selected
by
career
officials
a
thousand
miles
away
in
Boise
or
Atlanta
after
cost
analysis.
Furthermore,
that
company
had
years
of
federal
contracts

before
the
Secretary
was
even
sworn
into
office.

The
WP
piece
was
false
through
omission
where
it
said
commercial
flights
are
available
between
LAS
and
FCA.
In
fact
there
are
exactly
0

commercial
flights
leaving
after
8PM
that
would
have
got
the
Secretary
to
FCA
in
time
for
an
8:30AMmeeting.

The
WP
was
wrong
when
said
there
were
multiple
political
events,
there
were
not.
He

attended
single
political
event
for
Senator
Daines
in
Big
Sky
when
he
was
already
scheduled
to
be
in
the
area
and
it
was
no
cost
to
the
Department.

The
WP
piece
is
false

through
omission
on
the
Yellowstone
aspect
by
making
it
sound
like
the
itinerary
was
light.
In
fact,
the
itinerary
in
Yellowstone
was
robust.
Yellowstone
has
a
serious
sexual
harassment
situation?
The
Secretary
traveled
there

to
meet
with
the
superintendent
and
the
staff
about
it.

The
park
is
also
in
hot
negotiations
with
tribes
on
a
number
of
fronts
that
needed
the
secretary's
time.

All
of
these
things

were
also
part
of
the
secretary's
trip
in
addition
to
meeting
the
employees
he
oversees.

On
the
point
of
the
UNITED
STATES
Virgin
Islands.
Again
another
lie
through
omission
and
leading
readers
to

believe
he
is
at
a
foreign
"Caribbean"
islands
rather
than
an
American
territory
that
is
overseen
by
the
Department.
That
itinerary
included
several
hours
of
official
government
events
and
ceremonies
as
well
as
meeting

with
American
military
veterans
from
the
territory
and
a
visit
to
a
National
Park
that
is
under
the
jurisdiction
of
the
Department.

Lastly-
The
politico
piece
did
not
accurately
describe
the
Montana

portion
of
the
trip.
The
Secretary's
itinerary
began
with
meetings
at
8:30
AM
then
included
a
keynote
speech
to
the
Western
Governor's
Association
(which
is
led
by
Montana's
Democratic
governor),
a
press
conference,
a

working
lunch
with
governors,
and
other
engagements.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony
(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government
turning
over
the
Virgin

Islands
to
the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories) Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and
Governor
Mapp
as
well
as
several
other
high
ranking
government
officials.
Flight
Plan:
St
Croix

-
-
>
St
Thomas

-
-
>
St
Croix

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
were
available
for
the
itinerary
of
official
government
events.

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid

out
of
the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural
Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee

organized
and
utilized
a charter
in
northern
Alaska.
Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and

the
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kalispell,
MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The
Secretary
had
events
and
speaking
engagements

in
the
evening
in
Nevada
and
in
the
morning
in
Montana.

Flight
Plan:
Las
Vegas
-
-
>
Kalispell

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
available
to
get
the
Secretary
and
necessary
staff

to
the
morning
Montana
events
on
time.
The
Secretary's
speech
ended at 7:45PM and
he
had
a
meeting at 8:30 the
following
morning.
The
charter
landed at 1:30AM.
The
secretary
had
multiple
events
at
the
Western
Governors
Association

Payment:
the
Secretary

and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget

Heather
Swift
Press
Secretary
Department
of
the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at
1:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Good
afternoon
Heather,

CNN
is
circling
back
on

this
request.

Thank
you,
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:
Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
11:16
AM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>,

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Good
Morning
Heather,

CNN
is
looking
to
confirm
the
costs
of
all
of
the
charters
you
outlined
below.
We
are
also
looking
to

confirm
the
name
of
the
charter
company
that
provided
the
flights
for
the
Secretary's
official
travel.

Besides
these
charter
flights
you
noted
below
has
the
Secretary
also
used
military/government
planes?
If
so
can
you
outline
dates,
times,
places,
justification?

Many
thanks,
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:

202-

777-

7249

From:

"Marsh,

Rene"

<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:

Thursday,

September

28,

2017

at

3:14

PM

To:

"Swift,

Heather"

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>,

"Marsh,

Rene"

<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,

"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"

<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Thank
you
Heather

—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Thursday,
September

28,
2017
at
2:13
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
don't
have
that
information
immediately
available.
Will
put
a
request
in.

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of

the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
2:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thank
you
Heather.

What
type
of
aircraft
were
these
private
planes?
What
was
the
cost
for
these
trips
that
came
out
of
the
DOI
budget?

Thank
you
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
2:05
PM

To:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:
"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"

<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Rene

-
also
want
to
add
on
the
Alaska
portion
that
was
part
of
the
CODEL
arranged
by
Senate
ENR.

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at

12:17
PM,
Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
11:56
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thanks
Heather.

What
type
of
planes
were
these
charter
flights?
Can
you
please
check

and
confirm?
We
are
also
looking
to
get
a
better
understanding
about
why
commercial
flights
were
listed
as
not
an
option
for
the
5/17
trip?

There
was
no
commercial
flight
available
for
the
route/schedule.
Getting
around
in
the
Arctic
Circle
is
not
like
catching
a
flight
out

of
Washington,
D.C.

For
the
6/26
trip
what
were
the
times
of
his
commitment?

What
time
were
the
events
scheduled
for
in
Nevada?

What
time
was
the
speaking
engagement
scheduled
for
the
next
morning
in
Montana?

The
event
ended
around
8:00PM
in
NV.
He
arrived
in

MT
around
2:00AM
and
the
Secretary
had
meetings
with
governors
and
public
lands
advocates
the
following
morning beginning
at
8:45AM.
The
Western
Governors
Association
-
led
by
a
Democratic
governor
-
invited
the
Secretary
to
speak.

Is
it
safe
to
assume
the
secretary
flew
commercial
from
Washington
D.C.
to
places

like
Vegas,
Alaska
and
St.
Croix
before
boarding
the
private
flights
in
those
places?

Yes
-
the
Secretary
flew
to
Nevada
and
the
USVI
on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.
He
got
to
Alaska
by
way
of
the
CODEL
which
was
arranged
by
the
Senate.
He
left
Alaska

on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.

Thank
you,
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:
Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
11:31
AM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
sent
this
to
Hannah
Lang.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony
(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government

turning
over
the
Virgin
Islands
to
the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories)

Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and
Governor
Mapp.

Flight
Plan:
St
Croix

-

-

>

St
Thomas

-

-

>

St
Croix

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
were
available

Payment:
the

Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural
Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee
organized
and
utilized
a

charter.

Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kalispell,
MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The
Secretary
had
two

speaking
engagements,
in
the
evening
in
Nevada
and
in
the
morning
in
Montana.

Flight
Plan:
Las
Vegas
-
-
>
Kalispell

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
available
to
get
the
Secretary
and
necessary
staff
to
the
event
on
time.

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the

DOI
budget

The
Secretary
took
a
military
jet
once
with
U.S.
Secretary
of
Agriculture
Sonny
Purdue
after
he
was
invited
by
USDA
to
attend
a
briefing
at
a
wildfire
camp
in
Montana.
The
fire
was
one
of
the
most
high-
priority
in
the
country
and
a
firefighter
had
died

battling
the
blaze
earlier
in
the
summer.
(The
two
departments
co-
manage
wildfire
fighting
efforts
for
the
federal
government.
)

The
Secretary
also
travels
military
jet
when
he
travels
with
POTUS
or
VPOTUS.

There
have
been
three
such
trips
to
Cincinnati,
West
Virginia,
and
Atlanta.

-
Heather

Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
11:20
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Morning
Heather,

I
checked
in
with
my
colleagues
and
they
say
they
never
received
a
response
on
this
topic
from
Interior.
Could
you
please
provide?

We
are
looking
to
find
out
has
the
Secretary
chartered
private
planes
for
his
travels
while
in
office?
Government/military
planes
during
his
time
in
office?
How
many
times?

Was
commercial
considered
as
the
first
option?

Justification
for
flying
private?

Thank
you,

Rene
Marsh

CNN

On
9/22/17,
12:53
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

We
do
it
here
too.

Heather
Swift

Press
Secretary

Department
of
the
Interior

>
On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:44
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>
Apologies.
That's
annoying
on
our
part.
Sorry
we
are
doubling
up.
Will
check
with
them
and
circle
back
if
there
are
any
outstanding
questions.

>

>

—

**René
Marsh**

>

CNN

>

Correspondent

>

**Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN**

>

**Office:
202-
777-
7249**

>

>

>

On
9/22/17,
12:43
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>

Rene
can
you
please
coordinate
with
your
colleagues?
I've
received

>

this
inquiry
from
several
people
at
CNN.

>

>

Heather
Swift

>

Press
Secretary

>

Department
of
the
Interior

>

>

>>

On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:35
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>>

>>

Hello,

>>

>>

CNN
is
looking

to
get
information
on
Zinke's
travel
information.
When
he
travels
by
plane
does
he
always
fly
commercial?
Private
?

>>

>>
Thank
you,

>>
Rene
Marsh

>>
CNN

>>

>>
Sent
from
my
iPhone

>

>

From: Russell Newell
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather_Swift)
Subject: Re: CNN
Date: Saturday, October 07, 2017 2:23:58 PM

She sounds like one

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 7, 2017, at 7:34 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Rene is a fucking idiot.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 8:31 PM, Russell Newell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I was about to send this to Rene but I'll send to you instead and maybe it will make me feel better. Just had to get it off my chest. The double standard is nauseating.

Rene - I'm curious whether you ever asked these types of questions to Jewell or Salazar - about how they traveled and whether they took charters or spoke at political events or had spouses participate in any events with them. I don't recall the same level of concern about how they spent the taxpayer's dollars or the public's right to know about their travel. Have you ever bothered to learn about their travel to try to provide some context or do you care?

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 6, 2017, at 5:18 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather,

We have repeatedly asked the press office for answers to the below questions and for 4 days now we have been told you are working on it and today we've received no response at all. We are asking questions that the public has every right to know as these are their tax dollars and for Interior not answer any of the below questions is really hard to understand. Is the DOI issuing a no comment on all of the below questions?

Thank you,
— René Marsh
CNN
Correspondent
Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN
Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date: Friday, October 6, 2017 at 1:46 PM

To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "russell_newell@ios.doi.gov" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

Heather,

Circling back again. It's been a few days now.
Reupping the questions CNN has.

What was
the
purpose of
his speech
to the
Vegas
Golden
Knights
Hockey
team in
June?
Who
invited
Zinke to
give the
speech to
the team?
Who
owned the
plane that
Zinke flew
on from
Vegas to
Montana?
Who else
was on
board the
plane from
Vegas to
Montana?
Zinke's
schedule
shows on
4/28 he
traveled
from DC to
Atlanta.
How did
he travel?
Commercial?
Government
plane?
Private?
On June 22
how did

Zinke
travel to
his
meeting in
West
Virginia?
Did he use
a Park
Police
Chopper?
What is the
cost
estimate
for use of
the
chopper?
On July 7
why did
the
Secretary
travel
using a
USPP
helicopter?
What was
the cost
associated
with the
use of the
helicopter?
Can you
tell us
about the
flight on
July 20th.
Was that a
commercial
flight? If
so please
share the
flight
details?

CNN is looking for justification for why Zinke's wife accompanied him on the following trips : Las Vegas, Greenland and Alaska?

When on these trips does Mrs. Zinke participate in official meetings with the Secretary?

Justification for Mrs. Zinke to have a desk there at Interior?

Did Mrs. Zinke reimburse the government for these flights? When? How much was reimbursed?

Thank you
Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:24 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Working on it. The person who handles the Secretary's travel is currently out of the office so it's taking a little longer than usual. Apologies for the delay.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 5, 2017, at 9:11 AM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather good morning,

Circling back on this request again this morning.
Hoping to get something from you today.

Thank you,
Rene Marsh

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2017, at 1:02 PM, Marsh, Rene <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com> wrote:

Good afternoon Heather,

Do you have a sense of timing for when we can expect a response to the below inquiry ?

Thank you
Rene Marsh
CNN

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2017, at 7:08 PM,
Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Rene. Checking into this for you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the
Interior

On Oct 3, 2017, at 4:32 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via

Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Heather,

CNN has additional questions on the Secretary's travel.

What was the purpose of his speech to the Vegas Golden Knights Hockey team in June?

Who invited Zinke to give the speech to the team?

Who owned the plane that Zinke flew on from Vegas to Montana?

Who else was on board the plane from Vegas to Montana?

Zinke's schedule shows on 4/28 he traveled from DC to Atlanta.

How did he travel?

Commercial?
Government plane?
Private?

On June 22
how did
Zinke travel
to his
meeting in
West
Virginia?
Did he use a
Park Police
Chopper?
What is the
cost
estimate for
use of the
chopper?
On July 7
why did the
Secretary
travel using
a USPP
helicopter?
What was
the cost
associated
with the
use of the
helicopter?
Can you tell
us about
the flight on
July 20th.
Was that a
commercial
flight? If so
please
share the
flight
details?

Thank you,
— René
Marsh

[CNN](#)

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)
Office:
202- 777-
7249

From:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Friday,
September
29, 2017 at
2:49 PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re: CNN

The \$12k
is for
Nevada.
The \$3k is
for the
flights
between
the
islands.

**Also, for
your
reference,
Secretary
Jewell
also took
a number
of charter
aircraft,
including
but not**

**limited to
the
following:**

- 1/14/16
\$9,800
roundtrip
between
Albuquerque,
NM
-->
Farmington,
NM
- 5/3/16
\$13,605
Helena,
MT -
->
Browning,
MT
(this
is
about
a
three
hour
drive)
Browning,
MT -
->
Palm
Springs
- 8/24/16
\$20,383
Bakersfield,
CA -
->
Kalispell,
MT -
->
Livingston,
MT
- There
were
also
at
least
two
military
aircraft
flights
on
9/5/13
between
Honolulu

and
the
Marshall
Islands,
and
5/13/14
DC
to
St.
Louis.

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri,
Sep 29,
2017 at
2:43 PM,
'Marsh,
Rene' via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi there,

I am
getting a
bit
confused

.
Can you
send the
breakdown
of flights
and costs
so I am
clear on
what cost
what?

I see \$
3,150 ---

that's the
flight
from
where to
where
The
\$12375-
that's
round
trip
between
st. croix
and st.
Thomas

We are
on
deadline
. also
looking
to
confirm
the
charter
company
used. I
see youre
quoted
as
confirming
that but
if reports
as you
point out
have
been
inaccurate
I need to
get it
confirmed
with you
myself.

— René
Marsh
CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:

202- 777-
7249

From:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Friday,
September
29, 2017
at 2:18
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

3/31/17
USVI
flights
were -
\$3,150

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri,
Sep 29,
2017 at
1:36
PM,
Heather
Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

The
flight
between
two
islands
in the
US
VI.
Yes
that
cost is
correct.
We
have
not yet
been
billed
on the
military
air
asset
to the
wildfire.

Heather
Swift
Press
Secretary
Department
of the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at 1:21
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

You

are
quoted
as
saying
one
of
the
flights
costs
12,375.
Which
costs
are
you
waiting
on?
Can
you
provide
the
costs
you
already
have?

Thank
you,
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
[@Rene_MarshCNN](#)

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
Heather
Swift
[<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>](mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov)

Date:

Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:16
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Miranda
Green

Heather
Swift
Press
Secretary
Department
of
the
Interior

On
Sep
29,
2017,
at
1:14
PM,
'Marsh,

Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

We
are
looking
for
the
cost
of
the
flights?

I
don't
see
that
below.

B
=y
the
way
who
did
you
provide
this
info
to
earlier
?

—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

Heather
Swift

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
1:12
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"

<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,

"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"

<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,

"Levitt,
Ross"

<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,

Gregory
Wallace

<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

The
below
information
was
supplied
to
your
colleague
earlier.

On
the

record

As
is
consistent
with
the
travel
of
previous
Interior
secretaries,
the
Secretary
traveled
on
charter
flights
when
there
were
no
commercial
options
available.
All
travel
is
pre-
approved
by
the
ethics
office

and
the
travel
lawyers
in
the
Division
of
General
Law
(statement
from
them
below)
before
booking,
and
the
charter
flights
went
through
an
additional
level
of
due
diligence.

Taxpayers
absolutely
have
a
right

to
know
how
much
official
government
travel
costs.
It's
common
sense.
At
the
Department
we
make
those
documents
available
to
the
public.
Using
tax
dollars
wisely
and
ethically
is
a
big
responsibility
and
is
at

the
heart
of
good
government.
Unfortunately
there
are
some
times
when
Interior
has
to
utilize
charter
services
because
we
often
travel
to
areas
that
don't
have
a
lot
of
flight
options.

Standard
operating

procedure
is
that
the
Secretary
and
staff
fly
on
a
commercial,
government,
coach
fare
whenever
possible.

**"The
Scheduling
Office
meets
regularly
with
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law
to
ensure
that**

**all
travel
is
thoroughly
reviewed
and
approved
in
advance
and
that
it
is
fully
compliant
with
all
applicable
laws,
rules,
and
regulations.**

**Consistent
with
this
process,
the
trip
was
reviewed
and
approved
in
advance
by
both
the
Departmental**

**Ethics
Office
and
the
Division
of
General
Law.**

**In
short,
the
trip**

**-
including
the
Secretary's
address
to
the
hockey
developmental
squad**

**-
was
completely
compliant
with
all
applicable
laws,
rules,
and
regulations." -**

**-
Joint
Statement
from
Melinda**

Loftin
(Department
of
the
Interior
Designated
Agency
Ethics
Official
and
Director
of
the
Departmental
Ethics
Office)
and
Edward
Keable
(Deputy
Solicitor
-
General
Law). Both
are
career
members
of
the
Senior
Executive
Service.

**On
background**

Regarding

the
ownership
of
the
plane:
the
Secretary
has
never
met
or
spoken
to
Mr
Neilson
and
that
the
charter
plane
company
is
a
vendor
of
the
federal
government.
It
was
selected
by
career
officials
a
thousand
miles
away

in
Boise
or
Atlanta
after
cost
analysis.
Furthermore,
that
company
had
years
of
federal
contracts
before
the
Secretary
was
even
sworn
into
office.

The
WP
piece
was
false
through
omission
where
it
said
commercial
flights
are

available
between
LAS
and
FCA.
In
fact
there
are
exactly
0
commercial
flights
leaving
after
8PM
that
would
have
got
the
Secretary
to
FCA
in
time
for
an
8:30AMmeeting.

The
WP
was
wrong
when
said
there
were

multiple
political
events,
there
were
not.
He
attended
single
political
event
for
Senator
Daines
in
Big
Sky
when
he
was
already
scheduled
to
be
in
the
area
and
it
was
no
cost
to
the
Department.

The
WP

piece
is
false
through
omission
on
the
Yellowstone
aspect
by
making
it
sound
like
the
itinerary
was
light.
In
fact,
the
itinerary
in
Yellowstone
was
robust.
Yellowstone
has
a
serious
sexual
harassment
situation?
The
Secretary
traveled
there
to

meet
with
the
superintendent
and
the
staff
about
it.

The
park
is
also
in
hot
negotiations
with
tribes
on
a
number
of
fronts
that
needed
the
secretary's
time.

All
of
these
things
were
also
part
of
the
secretary's

trip
in
addition
to
meeting
the
employees
he
oversees.

On
the
point
of
the
UNITED
STATES
Virgin
Islands.
Again
another
lie
through
omission
and
leading
readers
to
believe
he
is
at
a
foreign
"Caribbean"
islands
rather
than

an
American
territory
that
is
overseen
by
the
Department.
That
itinerary
included
several
hours
of
official
government
events
and
ceremonies
as
well
as
meeting
with
American
military
veterans
from
the
territory
and
a
visit
to
a
National
Park

that
is
under
the
jurisdiction
of
the
Department.

Lastly-
The
politico
piece
did
not
accurately
describe
the
Montana
portion
of
the
trip.
The
Secretary's
itinerary
began
with
meetings
at
8:30
AM
then
included
a
keynote
speech

to
the
Western
Governor's
Association
(which
is
led
by
Montana's
Democratic
governor),
a
press
conference,
a
working
lunch
with
governors,
and
other
engagements.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony

(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government
turning
over
the
Virgin
Islands
to
the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories) Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and
Governor
Mapp
as
well
as
several
other

high
ranking
government
officials.

Flight

Plan:

St

Croix

-

-

>

St

Thomas

-

-

>

St

Croix

Reason:

No

commercial

flight

were

available

for

the

itinerary

of

official

government

events.

Payment:

the

Secretary

and

staff

tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural
Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee
organized

and
utilized
a charter
in
northern
Alaska.
Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
the
staff
tickets
were
paid
out

of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kalispell,
MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The
Secretary
had
events
and
speaking
engagements
in
the
evening
in
Nevada
and
in
the
morning
in

Montana.

Flight
Plan:
Las
Vegas

-

-

>

Kalispell

Reason:

No
commercial
flight
available

to

get

the

Secretary

and

necessary

staff

to

the

morning

Montana

events

on

time.

The

Secretary's

speech

ended at 7:45PM and

he

had

a

meeting at 8:30 the

following
morning.
The
charter
landed at 1:30AM.
The
secretary
had
multiple
events
at
the
Western
Governors
Association

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget

Heather
Swift
Press
Secretary
Department
of
the
Interior

On
Sep

29,
2017,
at
1:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Good
afternoon
Heather,

CNN
is
circling
back
on
this
request.

Thank
you,
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:

Friday,
September
29,
2017
at
11:16
AM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>,
"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Good
Morning
Heather,

CNN
is
looking
to
confirm
the
costs
of
all
of
the
charters

you
outlined
below.
We
are
also
looking
to
confirm
the
name
of
the
charter
company
that
provided
the
flights
for
the
Secretary's
official
travel.

Besides
these
charter
flights
you
noted
below
has
the
Secretary
also
used
military/government
planes?
If
so
can
you
outline
dates,
times,
places,
justification?

Many
thanks,
—

René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Date:

Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
3:14
PM

To:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>,
"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,

Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Thank
you
Heather

—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
2:13
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
don't
have
that
information
immediately
available.
Will
put
a
request
in.

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
2:09
PM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior

Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thank
you
Heather.

What
type
of
aircraft
were
these
private
planes?
What
was
the
cost
for
these
trips
that
came
out
of
the
DOI
budget?

Thank
you
—
René
Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:
202-
777-
7249

From:

"Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Thursday,
September
28,
2017
at
2:05
PM

To:

"Marsh,
Rene"
<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,
"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"
<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,
"Levitt,
Ross"
<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,
Gregory
Wallace
<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

Rene

-

also
want
to
add
on
the
Alaska
portion
that
was
part
of
the
CODEL
arranged
by
Senate

ENR.

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
12:17
PM,
Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
11:56
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Thanks
Heather.

What
type
of
planes
were
these
charter
flights?
Can
you
please
check
and
confirm?

We
are
also
looking
to
get
a
better
understanding
about
why
commercial
flights
were
listed
as
not
an
option
for
the
5/17
trip?

There
was
no
commercial
flight
available
for
the
route/schedule.
Getting
around
in
the
Arctic
Circle

is
not
like
catching
a
flight
out
of
Washington,
D.C.

For
the
6/26
trip
what
were
the
times
of
his
commitment?

What
time
were
the
events
scheduled
for
in
Nevada?
What
time
was
the
speaking
engagement
scheduled
for
the
next
morning
in
Montana?

The
event
ended
around
8:00PM
in
NV.
He
arrived
in

MT
around
2:00AM
and
the
Secretary
had
meetings
with
governors
and
public
lands
advocates
the
following
morning beginning
at
8:45AM.
The
Western
Governors
Association
-
led
by
a
Democratic
governor
-
invited
the
Secretary
to
speak.

Is
it
safe
to
assume
the
secretary
flew
commercial
from
Washington
D.C.
to
places
like
Vegas,
Alaska
and
St.
Croix

before
boarding
the
private
flights
in
those
places?

Yes

-
the
Secretary
flew
to
Nevada
and
the
USVI
on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.

He
got
to
Alaska
by
way
of
the
CODEL
which
was
arranged
by
the
Senate.

He
left
Alaska
on
a
commercial,
coach,
government
fare.

Thank
you,
—
René

Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter:

@Rene_MarshCNN

Office:

202-

777-

7249

From:

"Swift,

Heather"

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date:

Thursday,

September

28,

2017

at

11:31

AM

To:

"Marsh,

Rene"

<Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc:

"interior_press@ios.doi.gov"

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>,

"russell_newell@ios.doi.gov"

<russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>,

"Levitt,

Ross"

<Ross.Levitt@turner.com>,

Gregory

Wallace

<gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject:

Re:
CNN

I
sent
this
to
Hannah
Lang.

Three
Charter
Flights

3/31

Trip:
USVI
Centennial
Transfer
Day
Ceremony
(The
100
year
anniversary
of
the
Danish
government
turning
over
the
Virgin
Islands
to
the
United
States.
DOI
has
jurisdiction
over
territories)

Also
attending
the
ceremonies
were
the
Danish
Prime
Minister
and

Governor
Mapp.

Flight
Plan:
St
Croix

-

-

>

St
Thomas

-

-

>

St
Croix

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
were
available

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

5/17

Trip:
CODEL
to
Norway
and
Greenland
with
additional
stops
in
Alaska

Senate
Energy
and
Natural

Resources
Committee
organized
the
Arctic
CODEL.
The
Committee
organized
and
utilized
a

charter.

Flight
Plan:
Deadhorse,
AK

-

-

>

Alpine,
AK

-

-

>

Fairbanks

Reason:
Commercial
flights
were
not
an
option

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff
tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget.

6/26

Las
Vegas
to
Kali spell,

MT
for
the
Western
Governors
Association
annual
meeting.

The
Secretary
had
two
speaking
engagements,
in
the
evening
in
Nevada
and
in
the
morning
in
Montana.

Flight
Plan:
Las
Vegas
-
-
>
Kalispell

Reason:
No
commercial
flight
available
to
get
the
Secretary
and
necessary
staff
to
the
event
on
time.

Payment:
the
Secretary
and
staff

tickets
were
paid
out
of
the
DOI
budget

The
Secretary
took
a
military
jet
once
with
U.S.
Secretary
of
Agriculture
Sonny
Purdue
after
he
was
invited
by
USDA
to
attend
a
briefing
at
a
wildfire
camp
in
Montana.
The
fire
was
one
of
the
most
high-
priority
in
the
country
and
a
firefighter
had
died

battling
the
blaze
earlier
in
the
summer.
(The
two
departments
co-
manage
wildfire
fighting
efforts
for
the
federal
government.
)

The
Secretary
also
travels
military
jet
when
he
travels
with
POTUS
or
VPOTUS.
There
have
been
three
such
trips
to
Cincinnati,
West
Virginia,
and
Atlanta.

-
Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Thu,
Sep
28,
2017
at
11:20
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Morning
Heather,

I
checked
in
with
my
colleagues
and
they
say
they
never
received
a
response
on
this
topic
from
Interior.
Could
you
please
provide?

We
are
looking
to
find
out
has
the
Secretary
chartered
private

planes
for
his
travels
while
in
office?
Government/military
planes
during
his
time
in
office?
How
many
times?

Was
commercial
considered
as
the
first
option?

Justification
for
flying
private?

Thank
you,

Rene
Marsh

CNN

On
9/22/17,
12:53
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

We
do

it
here
too.

Heather
Swift

Press
Secretary

Department
of
the
Interior

>
On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:44
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>
Apologies.
That's
annoying
on
our
part.
Sorry
we
are
doubling
up.
Will
check
with
them
and
circle
back
if
there
are
any
outstanding
questions.

>

>
—
René
Marsh

>
CNN

>
Correspondent

>

Twitter:
@Rene_MarshCNN

>

Office:
202-
777-
7249

>

>

>

On
9/22/17,
12:43
PM,
"Heather
Swift"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

>

>

Rene
can

you
please
coordinate
with
your
colleagues?
I've
received

>

this
inquiry
from
several
people
at
CNN.

>

>

Heather
Swift

>

Press
Secretary

>

Department
of
the
Interior

>

>

>>

On
Sep
22,
2017,
at
11:35
AM,
'Marsh,
Rene'
via
Interior
Press

[<interior_press@ios.doi.gov>](mailto:interior_press@ios.doi.gov)

wrote:

>>

>>

Hello,

>>

>>

CNN
is
looking
to

get
information
on
Zinke's
travel
information.
When
he
travels
by
plane
does
he
always
fly
commercial?
Private
?

>>

>>
Thank
you,

>>
Rene
Marsh

>>
CNN

>>

>>

Sent
from
my
iPhone

>

>

From: "Marsh, Rene" via Interior Press
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov; Paul Ross; Levitt, Ross; Wallace, Gregory
Subject: Re: CNN
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 2:46:16 PM

One additional question beyond the content of the email sent from Techmanski to Zinke. I understand in 2016, then-Congressman Rep. Zinke's office reached out to local officials in Montana about a Whitefish Energy project. Can you the Secretary provide you with insight on why he intervened? What sort of assistance did Zinke's office provide to Whitefish?

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 1:37 PM
To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>
Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>
Subject: Re: CNN

yep

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 1:36 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hoping for transparency on the content of that email as I am sure the Secretary can confirm.

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 1:33 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

Will get back to you if i find out if there was a request or not.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 1:30 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

What was the request?

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 1:27 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

there was no action taken on it.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 1:25 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thank you. What was the gentleman (I assume you mean Mr. Techmanskis?) requesting in the email that you mention?

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 1:21 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

background: No. The gentleman sent an email but there was not action taken on it (no reply, forward, discussion, etc).

Not for a statement, just for your context - The secretary's phone number and email address have been published multiple times over the years so he gets a lot of emails/cold calls/letters.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 1:07 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press
<interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks Heather.

Did the Secretary work with or communicate with Techmanskis in the aftermath of the hurricane? Were they in communication after the hurricane discussing any aspect of the recovery effort or anything else?

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 12:20 PM

To: "Marsh, Rene" <Rene.Marsh@cnn.com>

Cc: "interior_press@ios.doi.gov" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Paul Ross <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>, "Levitt, Ross" <Ross.Levitt@turner.com>, Gregory Wallace <gregory.wallace@turner.com>

Subject: Re: CNN

On background

Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company and played no role in anything to do with any contracts.

The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.

Interior has jurisdiction of the territories and insular areas however does not oversee Puerto Rico. DOI employees in Puerto Rico are continuing with response and recovery operations. There efforts focuses on accounting for employees at impacted parks and refuges, organizing for the work ahead, and bringing in additional staff resources that will conduct damage assessments, coordinate debris removal, and provide access to park areas. DOI employees also coordinate closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in support of Federal response Emergency Support Functions.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Oct 24, 2017 at 12:16 PM, 'Marsh, Rene' via Interior Press

<interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Good afternoon Heather,

CNN is looking for information/clarity on Secretary Zinke and his familiarity with Andrew Techmanski, the CEO of Whitefish Energy.

Have the two worked together before? In what capacity?

How Does the Secretary know Techmanski?

Has Techmanski or any of his business partners worked with Zinke on any projects either as Secretary or when Zinke was a member of congress?

Did Zinke recommend Whitefish Energy for the contract to help restore Puerto Rico?

Did Zinke have any influence or involvement either directly or indirectly with Whitefish securing the contract in Puerto Rico?

Has this company or any of its leadership, including the CEO, had any political connections to Zinke or his wife during their political careers. Donations directly or indirectly?

What was/is the Secretary's involvement in the overall recovery process for Puerto Rico?

We are working on deadline.

Thank you,

— René Marsh

CNN

Correspondent

Twitter: @Rene_MarshCNN

Office: 202- 777-7249

From: Jorjani, Daniel
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Connecting appointees
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 11:27:18 AM

Happy to reach out to her and grab a cup of coffee.



Daniel H. Jorjani
U.S. Department of the Interior
Acting Solicitor & Principal Deputy Solicitor
Main Interior Building, Suite 6356
 202-219-3861 (Voice)
 202-706-9018 (Cell)

daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov

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On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 11:07 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Dan - just for consideration, one of our friends at EPA , John Konkus, has asked me if there are any solicitors at Interior who would be willing to have a cup of coffee with his wife , Mary Thomas <Mary.Thomas2@usdoj.gov>.

She is an attorney with DOJ with a background in land use. (see details below) John said she's looking for some networking and professional relationships , particularly those in land use law since that's where her experience and interest is.

Mary has been in practice since 2005. She was the FL Department of Community Affairs Assistant General Counsel for land use, growth management and administrative law. From there she became Governor Rick Scott's land use and environmental attorney for the majority of his first term and was his negotiator during the BP oil spill settlement. Governor Scott then selected her to be an agency general counsel. She also has an LL.M. in real property development from the University of Miami School of Law.

Please don't feel like you have to fit this in as a favor to me. I don't know Mary, I have worked with her husband and found him to always be helpful to us.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Tami Heilemann](#); timothy_bergling@ios.doi.gov; thomas_baptiste@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Content for AK Video
Date: Thursday, June 01, 2017 12:07:57 PM

Perfecto

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 1, 2017, at 12:05 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>

> Hi from the air--

> I defer to Heather and Tim to wordsmith these blurbs for the video,

> but below please find his schedule with some notes from each

> meeting/event that I think would be worthy of inclusion. Use as

> needed. They are in chron order.

> Thanks!

> L

>

> Byers Lake/Rolling Thunder

> I was not there but understand that the Secretary joined Sen.

> Murkowski and GOV Walker at a moving Memorial Day ceremony (where he

> offered remarks). The day also included a motorcycle ride with fellow

> vets. Tami, anything else to add? How many attendees?

>

> Stopped by the Denali National Park and Preserve Visitor's center

> where he was greeted by Superintendent Don Striker and other NPS

> regional leadership. Got his passport stamped.

>

> Enjoyed meeting the dog sled pups, which are now almost full grown.

> Then had a BBQ with Park leadership and their spouses where they

> enjoyed some local game.

>

> Went on a few mile hike in Denali with the Superintendent and his wife

> and other NPS leadership. We could also add that it's Denali 's 100th

> anniversary this year (just celebrated in Feb). We saw a Moose on the

> way out of the park.

>

> When in Anchorage, he met with Alaska Native Veterans, mostly Vietnam

> vets in Sen. Sullivan's office. They presented him with a beautiful

> choker necklace made locally.

>

> Toured the DOI Regional Office of Aviation services and learned about

> how they service the planes for all DOI bureaus in the region. I'm

> sure you could google some quick facts if you want to add color.

> Enjoyed a lunch BBQ with local aviation staff as well as regional

> leadership from all bureaus in Alaska.

>

> Was then briefed by BOEM and BLM regional leadership about energy

> development in Alaska.

>

> Enjoyed spending time speaking at an "all hands" meeting for all AK

> DOI staff where he laid out his vision for the department. The large

> convention room was packed, standing room only. Had an extensive

> question and answer period with the Secretary. He really appreciated
> their engagement and feedback.
>
> Then he had a very positive and productive meeting with a dozen or so
> Native Alaskan leaders and the leadership of the Alaska Federation of
> Natives, hosted by Senator Murkowski and joined by Rep. Don Young and
> Sen. Dan Sullivan. They then had a media availability afterward
> talking about how the Secretary is making sure that Alaskans and
> Native Alaskans have a voice and collaboration with locals and
> consultation with Tribes and Native Alaskans will be cornerstones of
> the Trump administration.
>
> Secretary then met with the North Slope Borough Mayor Harry Brower,
> Jr. they had a productive conversation where the mayor talked about
> the importance of energy development and sustainable hunting for their
> people.
>
> Secretary offered keynote remarks at the Alaska Oil and Gas
> Association Annual Conference and signed the Secretarial order (you
> can pull language from the press release).
>
> To round out his visit, he went to the Arctic Valley Nike Site Summit
> by helo and enjoyed a nice hike. I wasn't on that part of the trip.
>
> Hope this is helpful.
> Thanks,
> L
>
>
> Laura Keehner Rigas
> Communications Director
> U.S. Department of the Interior
> (202) 897-7022 cell
> @Interior

From: Rees, Gareth
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); [Bullock, Wesley](#); [Todd Willens](#); [Lori Mashburn](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Dep Sec Swearing-In Doc
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 4:35:50 PM
Attachments: [Dep_Sec_Bernhardt_Swearing_In.docx](#)

See attached

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:33 PM, Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Luke - can you send me the attached please?

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:30 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Thanks. Looping in Russ as he is running point on DB's communications. FYI - I'm out of the office with the Congressional Sportsmens Foundation tomorrow. Will be in around 2:00.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 3:59 PM, Bullock, Wesley <wesley_bullock@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

All,

Please take a look at the attached document. Note, that the oath of office script will be on a card for the Secretary to use. Please let me know if I need to make any additions or edits.

Thanks,

Luke

--

Wesley L. Bullock

Office of the Secretary

(202) 208-4894 Office

(202) 897-7225 Mobile



--

Gareth C. Rees

Office to the Deputy Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

Tel: 202-208-6291

Fax: 202-208-1873

Cell: 202-957-8299

From: Bullock, Wesley
To: [Swift, Heather](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Cc: [Rees, Gareth](#); [Todd Willens](#); [Lori Mashburn](#)
Subject: Re: Dep Sec Swearing-In Doc
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 4:50:52 PM
Attachments: [Dep_Sec_Bernhardt_Swearing_In.docx](#)

Attached updated.

Thanks,

WLB

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:48 PM, Bullock, Wesley <wesley_bullock@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I can get pix. Angela is removed. Todd and Jim are added.

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:46 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Will need a member of staff to snap a couple pix on their iphone for Z and DB twitter accounts.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:45 PM, Rees, Gareth <gareth_rees@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
We should also remove Angela Kelsey, she no longer is at DOI

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 4:37 PM, Rees, Gareth <gareth_rees@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
We should probably add Todd and Jim to the guest list

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 3:59 PM, Bullock, Wesley <wesley_bullock@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

All,

Please take a look at the attached document. Note, that the oath of office script will be on a card for the Secretary to use. Please let me know if I need to make any additions or edits.

Thanks,

Luke

--

Wesley L. Bullock

Office of the Secretary

(202) 208-4894 Office

(202) 897-7225 Mobile

--

Gareth C. Rees
Office to the Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
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--

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(202) 208-4894 Office

(202) 897-7225 Mobile

--

Wesley L. Bullock

Office of the Secretary

(202) 208-4894 Office

(202) 897-7225 Mobile

From: Timothy Williams
To: [Chambers, Micah](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); [Roddy, Russell](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Caroline Boulton](#); [Downey Magallanes](#); [Steven Smith](#)
Subject: Re: Details for Antietam
Date: Monday, July 03, 2017 3:20:54 PM

The Governor will be unable to attend the event.

Tim Williams

Timothy Williams
External and Intergovernmental Affairs
Department of the Interior
Cell: (202) 706-4982

On Jul 3, 2017, at 9:17 AM, Chambers, Micah <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Did we get any sort of confirmation/readout on the Governor?

On Mon, Jul 3, 2017 at 8:45 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Rusty. What we are thinking is having press van leave DOI around 8:00-8:30. Press would do an abbreviated tour and the press conference.

Do you think it would be possible to have some sort of B-Roll and photography opportunities for press to get Z at the battlefield and where the POTUS donation will be spent?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Sat, Jul 1, 2017 at 11:52 PM, Roddy, Russell <russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey...not sure if anyone replied...but, this is what we have SO FAR (will be out there on Monday to do walk thru with them at 1:00 pm...and will finalize all details then). Note: not sure if you are planning to go or who else is planning to go and how but wanted to give you a head's up that Mrs. Zinke will be going with the Secretary so you can plan briefing, etc. ahead of time accordingly:

8:00-9:30am EDT: Depart Residence en route Sharpsburg, MD
Location:

Antietam National Battlefield
5831 Dunker Church Road
Sharpsburg, MD 21782

9:30-9:45am EDT: Arrive Antietam National Battlefield // Proceed to Passenger Van

Location: Visitor Center

Antietam National Battlefield

Greeted By:

Jim Lighthizer, Civil War Trust President

Will Shafroth, National Park Foundation President

John Nau, Civil War Trust and National Park Foundation Board Member and guest

Susan Trail, Antietam NB Superintendent

Keith Snider, Antietam NB Chief of Interpretation

Paul Coussan or Jim Campi, Civil War Trust

9:45-11:30am EDT: Driving Tour of Antietam National Battlefield

To See:

The Cornfield

Bloody Lane

Lower Bridge

11:30-12:15pm EDT: Civil War Grant Announcement & Media Availability

Location: Maryland Monument

Participants:

RKZ

Susan Trail, Superintendent, Antietam National Battlefield

Jim Lighthizer, President, Civil War Trust

John Nau, Chairman emeritus, Civil War Trust

Will Shafroth, National Park Foundation President

12:15-12:30pm EDT: Meet & Greet with DOI Employees

Location: Maryland Monument

12:30-1:30pm EDT: Lunch

Location: Mumma Barn

1:30-3:00pm EDT: Depart Sharpsburg, MD en route DOI

On Fri, Jun 30, 2017 at 11:58 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi guys --

Can you pls send the address for the event and the general sketch of
the timing so we can send to our respective constituencies?

Thanks!

My best,

L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

--

Micah Chambers
Acting Director
Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs
Office of the Secretary of the Interior

From: Domenech, Douglas
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [David Bernhardt](#); [Scott Hommel](#); [Micah Chambers](#)
Subject: Re: Did you see?
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 2:42:57 PM

ha

Doug Domenech
Senior Advisor
US Department of the Interior

NOTE: *Every email I send or receive is subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act.*

On Wed, Sep 13, 2017 at 2:23 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Yep. From the person who has spent the past three decades trying to rewrite history.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 13, 2017, at 2:11 PM, Domenech, Douglas <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke also makes a cameo: Clinton recounts an awkward encounter at the inauguration when she said she was surprised Zinke came over to greet her because in 2014 he had called her the "Antichrist." "Maybe he'd forgotten, because he didn't come equipped with any garlic or wooden stakes, or whatever one uses to ward off the Antichrist. But I hadn't forgotten," Clinton writes, adding that she absolutely reminded Zinke of his remark. "He was taken aback and mumbled something about not having meant it. One thing I've learned over the years is how easy it is for some people to say horrible things about me when I'm not around, but how hard it is for them to look me in the eye and say it to my face." (Zinke's wife, Lola, [disputed](#) the story.)

Doug Domenech
Senior Advisor
US Department of the Interior

NOTE: *Every email I send or receive is subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act.*

From: Vincent Devito
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Micah Chambers](#)
Subject: Re: DOI comments to FERC: Grid Reliability and Resilience Pricing # RM18-1-000
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 10:55:57 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.htm](#)
[policy-international-affairs](#)

Hi: Please post to one of our pages. Maybe this is best - a policy page:

From: Hinson, Alex
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: DOI Daily Comms
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 5:34:27 PM

Ah! Thanks a ton for letting me know! I'm headed (b) (6) but thanks again for the heads up.

On Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 5:30 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
A bunch of us are at The Exchange

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 27, 2017, at 5:21 PM, Hinson, Alex <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

INTERIOR
WASHINGTON
10/27/2017

DAILY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

TO: White House Cabinet Affairs Communications

FROM: Department of the Interior Communications Team

SUBJECT: Communications Update

Press Inquiries:

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- **E&E News:** (Maxine Joselow) --**REQUEST**—As I'm the regulations reporter for E&E News. I'm in charge of helping with our Q&A section, and I was wondering if you'd be able to set up a short phone interview with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife Lola Zinke for a Q&A. I understand Ms. Zinke is very busy, so the conversation could be as short as 15 minutes, and it could occur anytime in the next month or so. I'm just hoping to ask her about leading Sen. John Tester's campaign, traveling with her husband, and other matters related to her daily life and activities.--**RESPONSE**-- The Department does not facilitate Mrs. Zinke's schedule.
- **Reuters:** (Susan Heavey)—**REQUEST**-- Does the Interior Dept or the secretary have any comment on this (FEMA statement on Whitefish Energy contact)? Also, can you tell us what is on the agenda for the secretary's meeting with the president later today?—**RESPONSE**— "I had absolutely nothing to do with Whitefish Energy receiving a contract in Puerto Rico. Any attempts by the dishonest media or political operatives to tie me to awarding or influencing any

contract involving Whitefish are completely baseless. Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime. “Neither myself nor anyone in my office has advocated for this company in anyway. After the initial contract was awarded, I was contacted by the company, on which I took no action. All records, which are being made available to appropriate officials, will prove no involvement. “I welcome any and all investigations into these allegations, and encourage the Interior Department’s Inspector General to investigate this matter fully.”

Top Stories

- **Washington Post:** [Trump says he will shrink Bears Ears National Monument, a sacred tribal site in Utah](#)
- **Los Angeles Times:** [Trump plans to shrink two national monuments in Utah, senator says](#)
- **THE HILL:** [White House: Zinke told Trump he had 'no role' in Puerto Rico contract](#)
- **Washington Examiner:** [Ryan Zinke tells Trump he had no involvement in \\$300 million Whitefish contract for Puerto Rico power grid](#)

Top Issues and Accomplishments

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Secretary Zinke met with POTUS.
- Next week, Secretary Zinke is out on personal leave.

###

--
Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

<WH Daily comms update 10-27.docx>

--
Alex Hinson

**Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior**

From: Swift, Heather
To: Konkus, John
Subject: Re: Downstairs
Date: Thursday, November 30, 2017 12:57:10 PM

He's such a good egg.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 12:45 PM, Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov> wrote:

Mary is meeting with Dan at 1pm...FYI. Thank you Heather!

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 11:45 AM
To: Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Downstairs

Our solicitor, Dan Jorjani, emailed her.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 11:05 AM, Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov> wrote:

'Thomas, Mary (OJP)' <Mary.Thomas2@usdoj.gov>

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:39 AM
To: Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Downstairs

What's her email?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 10:36 AM, Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov> wrote:

Thank you Heather!

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:34 AM

To: Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov>

Subject: Re: Downstairs

Great - I'll get some folks emails for you.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 10:32 AM, Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov> wrote:

She's been in practice since 2005. She was the FL Department of Community Affairs Assistant General Counsel for land use, growth management and administrative law. From there she became Governor Rick Scott's land use and environmental attorney for the majority of his first term and was his negotiator during the BP oil spill settlement. Governor Scott then selected her to be an agency general counsel. She also has an LL.M. in real property development from the University of Miami School of Law.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:24 AM

To: Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov>

Subject: Re: Downstairs

Always a busy day when you're fighting for America!

We for sure have a few folks here she should talk with. May I ask how long she has been in practice and what her experience with land use is?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 10:21 AM, Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov> wrote:

Heather: I see they're keeping you busy over there :) On a friendly note, I'm looking for an Interior political whom my wife can meet with in a networking capacity. Maybe you? Maybe someone you know? My wife (Mary Thomas) is a political appointee at DOJ. Her practice area is land use. She was offered the deputy water job here at EPA but decided to go to DOJ instead. However, her long term interest remains land use. Is there anyone in your agency you would

recommend she meet with, just for coffee?

Thank you!

John

-----Original Message-----

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Monday, March 27, 2017 12:49 PM

To: Konkus, John <konkus.john@epa.gov>; Freire, JP <Freire.JP@epa.gov>

Subject: Downstairs

Sent from my iPhone

From: Maxine Joselow
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: E&E News inquiry regarding Lola Zinke
Date: Friday, October 27, 2017 1:35:03 PM

OK, thanks for the response.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 27, 2017 1:27 PM
To: Maxine Joselow <mjoselow@eenews.net>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: E&E News inquiry regarding Lola Zinke

The Department does not facilitate Mrs. Zinke's schedule.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 10:42 AM, Maxine Joselow <mjoselow@eenews.net> wrote:

Hello,

I'm the regulations reporter for E&E News. I'm in charge of helping with our Q&A section, and I was wondering if you'd be able to set up a short phone interview with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife Lola Zinke for a Q&A.

I understand Ms. Zinke is very busy, so the conversation could be as short as 15 minutes, and it could occur anytime in the next month or so. I'm just hoping to ask her about leading Sen. John Tester's campaign, traveling with her husband, and other matters related to her daily life and activities.

Thanks very much for your consideration. Looking forward to hearing back.

Best,
Maxine

--

Maxine Joselow
E&E News reporter
202-737-4369
@maxinejoselow

E&E NEWS

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Heather Swift
To: [Paul Bedard](#)
Subject: Re: Facebook likes, really?
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 8:47:51 AM

Oh good lord.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 30, 2017, at 6:24 AM, Paul Bedard <pbedard@washingtonexaminer.com> wrote:

The Post is "reporting" that it reported on the wife's likes? And that's an indictment? Oh boy...

--

Paul Bedard
The Washington Examiner
1152 15th St. NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
202-459-4901
pbedard@washingtonexaminer.com
<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/washington-secrets>

From: Benjamin Wolfgang
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Following up on Bernhardt
Date: Friday, July 21, 2017 4:41:17 PM

Great, thank you! Have a great weekend, Heather.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 21, 2017, at 4:17 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Ben - The Interior is excited to have David Bernhardt, a highly-qualified, veteran official, return to the Department to help advance Secretary Zinke and President Trump's America First policy priorities. Strongly-worded press releases issued by special interest groups alleging any wrongdoing are patently false and are desperate attempts to stop the progress that is being made at the Department on behalf of the American people.

Please see the Secretary's statement when David Bernhardt was announced. The Secretary stands by his word. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-zinke-applauds-nomination-david-bernhardt-deputy-secretary-interior>

Background

Please see the attached doc with countless statements in support of Bernhardt's nomination from individuals and organizations who actually worked with him during his time at Interior.

Lastly, see below the press release from U.S. Senator Daines and the Western Caucus which demonstrates broad support for Bernhardt.

<3F2C747C-3960-4BED-8D36-C01BFD1ECB56.png>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

Senate Western Caucus Urges Confirmation of Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Interior

U.S. SENATE — Today, the Senate Western Caucus, led by Chairman Steve Daines (R-MT), urged the confirmation of Department of the Interior veteran David Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Bernhardt, a Westerner from Rifle, Colorado, brings years of personal experience as an avid hunter and fisherman as well as professional experience having served under former DOI Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne in multiple positions.

Bernhardt was announced as President Donald J. Trump's choice for Deputy Secretary

on [April 28](#) and was subsequently approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on [June 6](#). Less than a month away from the August recess, the Senate has confirmed only 23 percent of President Trump's 216 nominations. By the first August recess during President Obama's first term, the Senate had confirmed 69 percent of his 454 nominations.

U.S. Senator Steve Daines (R-MT): "David Bernhardt will be a partner to Montanans and to Secretary Ryan Zinke – which makes for the best kind of Deputy Secretary of the Interior. David will work to improve access to public lands, restore American energy dominance and empower Montanans ability to best serve their families and communities. We need to confirm David Bernhardt so he can get to work on behalf of Montanans and the West."

U.S. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO): "As a native Coloradan from Rifle, David Bernhardt has a deep understanding of Western land issues, and his expertise and experience will serve the Department well. Unfortunately, a partisan minority in the Senate continues to block Mr. Bernhardt's nomination, and I hope that the confirmation process has not become a broken process that disincentives qualified people, like Mr. Bernhardt, who are held in high professional regard, from becoming public servants."

U.S. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ): "David Bernhardt has the deep water background we need to continue efforts to protect our Colorado River supplies" said Senator Jeff Flake, the Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "We need this experienced nominee confirmed without delay."

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT): "I applaud the nomination of Dave Bernhardt for Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. President Trump and Secretary Zinke have already made great progress in restoring trust between Westerners and the federal government, but significant work remains, especially in Utah where reduced access to our public land has hurt our rural economies. As a former Interior Solicitor, Dave has the legal and political background necessary to confront some of the most difficult challenges ahead, such as expanding responsible development of our natural resources, protecting and promoting multiple-use, and expanding opportunities for recreational access. I am confident that Dave's breadth of experience makes him uniquely qualified for this position, and I look forward to working with him."

U.S. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT): "I can think of no one who is more qualified to be deputy secretary of the Interior than David Bernhardt. He has a long track record of distinguished service in the department and he understands the importance of efficient and collaborative federal land and resource management. David's extensive knowledge, experience, and leadership will go a long way in advancing Secretary Zinke's goal of restoring the American people's trust in the Interior Department. I urge my colleagues to support David's nomination and confirm him as soon as possible."

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK): "Dave Bernhardt is an excellent choice to help set strategic direction and run the Department of the Interior on a day-to-day basis. He grew up in the West, has extensive knowledge of issues that are important to Alaskans, and will be a great asset to Secretary Zinke and his team. We reported his nomination from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support more than a month ago, so I urge my colleagues to support the swift confirmation of this well-qualified nominee."

U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ): “David Bernhardt’s experience working on water policy and Native American issues makes him uniquely suited to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department Administration. I am confident David will serve the state of Arizona and the nation with distinction, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of his nomination.”

Bernhardt also has wide support from across the country:

- National Congress of American Indians
- Ducks Unlimited
- Boone and Crockett Club
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- NRA
- Delta Waterfowl
- Archery Trade Association
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Camp Fire Club of America
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Force
- Dallas Safari Club
- Houston Safari Club
- Masters of Foxhounds Association & Foundation
- Mule Deer Foundation
- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Orion - The Hunter's Institute
- Pheasants Forever
- Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
- Quail Forever
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Safari Club International
- Shikar-Safari Club
- Sportsmen's Alliance
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Wild Sheep Foundation
- Wildlife Forever
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Wildlife Mississippi
- American Recreation Coalition
- Boat U.S.
- International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
- Marine Retailers Association of America
- Motorcycle Industry Council
- National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC)
- National Marine Manufacturers Association
- National Parks Hospitality Association
- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association
- Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- Specialty Equipment Market Association
- Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Colorado Water Congress

- Family Farm Alliance
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Penobscot Nation
- Public Lands Council
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Quapaw Tribe Of Oklahoma
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Gila River Indian Community

Former United States Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ): “Having worked with David Bernhardt for many years on a variety of Department of the Interior matters, in particular on Indian water settlements, I know he’ll be a great addition to the team.”

David Allen President/CEO Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: “The Senate has not yet acted on several important positions that remain unfilled at the Interior Department. Among them is the nomination of David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary. This is a critical position that not only ensures the Department’s programs are run effectively, but also succeeds the Secretary in certain situations. Bernhardt is a Coloradan, a hunter and angler, and former high-ranking officer at Interior who understands the issues important to sportsmen and women. We encourage the Senate to act on his nomination without delay.”

Dale Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Ducks Unlimited: “I have known and worked with David for more than 10 years and could not be more pleased with his nomination for Deputy Secretary of the Interior. For David Bernhardt, integrity is doing the right thing even when the easiest decision would be to continue with the status quo. I believe David is a man with personal and professional integrity that is beyond reproach and has always advocated for the proper application of science and implementation of the law, especially when it comes to species conservation. I believe David will continue to advocate for sound and balanced resource management and advocate for the use of best available science.”

Whit Fosburgh, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership President and CEO: “The Department of Interior, the chief steward of our national public lands, requires a Deputy Secretary who understands how the department functions and understands the complexities associated with balancing the resource needs of our country, both now, and most importantly, for future generations of Americans. David Bernhardt will provide much needed departmental experience to the Interior leadership team at a time when important natural resource decisions with wide impact are being considered.”

Jeffrey Vorberger, Vice President, Policy & Government Affairs of NOIA:

“NOIA strongly encourages the Senate to confirm David Bernhardt as the Deputy Secretary of the Interior sooner rather than later. Strong, experienced leadership at all levels of the Department are necessary as America strives to become energy dominant. David has a proven record, is beyond qualified and his extensive experience serving the Department of Interior under the George W. Bush administration will make him a vital asset to Secretary Zinke. Further delay on his confirmation is a lost opportunity.”

Peter Hayes, Associate General Manager & Chief Public Affairs Executive, Salt River Project: “David Bernhardt has for many years exhibited strong leadership on federal land, water, and natural resources policies, having previously served the public as a senior official at the Department of the Interior. SRP urges quick confirmation in the Senate for Mr. Bernhardt and looks forward to continuing its long-standing collaborative partnership with

the Department under Secretary Zinke and Mr. Bernhardt's leadership.”

Russell Begaye, President of the Navajo Nation: “Mr. Bernhardt brings years of experience working on Indian country's most pressing issues. I look forward to working with him and the rest of the Department of the Interior leadership team to bring the Bureau of Indian Affairs into the 21st century.”

Stephen Roe Lewis, Governor, Gila River Indian Community, AZ: “Based on our experience in negotiating and working on complex issues with Mr. Bernhardt, we support his position as Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We believe he has an understanding of tribal sovereignty and the United States’ trust responsibility to tribal nations, including the Gila River Indian Community.”

White Mountain Apache Tribal Council, AZ: “David Bernhardt is respected by the White Mountain Apache Tribe and enjoys widespread respect in Indian Country as being fair and well versed in Native American issues and the historic time-honored government to government and trust relationship between Indian Nations and the United States.”

The position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior is the Chief Operating Officer of the Department and Bernhardt's nomination is subject to confirmation by the United States Senate.

Bernhardt also previously served as the United States Commissioner to the International Boundary Commission, U.S. and Canada. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Northern Colorado and graduated with honors from George Washington University National Law Center. He recently served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia, where he resides in Arlington with his wife Gena and their two children. As Deputy Secretary, Bernhardt will make Interior a better neighbor, ensure American energy dominance to create jobs and return Endangered Species Act to its original intent.

###

Contact: [Marcie Kinzel](#), [Katie Waldman](#)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Jul 21, 2017 at 2:50 PM, Benjamin Wolfgang

<bwolfgang@washingtontimes.com> wrote:

Hey Heather, just following up on David Bernhardt. Headed to a meeting this afternoon so I wanted to check in one more time.

Criticism is rolling in. I got this from the Northwest Guides and Anglers Association today:

"Before they vote on David Bernhardt's nomination, I hope Senators remember Bernhardt helped suppress scientific data during his time at Interior in the George W. Bush Administration. His lack of respect for the role of science in decision-making on issues affecting sportsmen and wildlife habitat raises major red flags for me. Senators should be equally concerned, and should vote against David Bernhardt."

And, as I mentioned earlier, this from Center for Biological Diversity, citing the complaint about his lobbying for Westlands Water District while on the transition team.

"These disturbing revelations should slam the brakes on this confirmation," said Noah Greenwald, the Center's endangered species director. "Bernhardt's close ties to the very industries he'd be charged with regulating at Interior are bad enough. But now that it appears he may have violated federal lobbying law, this appointment should be a sunk ship."

Writing a story to run in Monday's paper, ahead of the Senate vote. Does Interior have responses to these specific charges, or any other comment? Thanks!

Best,

Ben

--

Ben Wolfgang
Energy & Environment Reporter
The Washington Times
bwolfgang@washingtontimes.com
cell: 717-571-1913

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<DOI Deputy Secretary Nominee David Bernhardt Support Letter Package.pdf>

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unauthorized copying, disclosure or distribution of the material in this e-mail and any attachments is strictly forbidden.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Diaz, Ileana](#)
Cc: (b) (6); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Re: following up Secretary Zinke
Date: Tuesday, July 18, 2017 9:13:48 AM

Will you have the news van with you?

Below is the run of show for the day. I've highlighted what is open press. If you can't get there by 10:45 I would say that's no problem at all. The meat and potatoes of the event is the outdoor portion that begins at noon.

Below the run of show, for your reference only at this point, I've included the template press release that will be filled in with quotes from our partners.

Local Angle: So if you wanted to localize the story, there are a number of vendors and private partners who operate in National Parks in the Capital region. The swan boats on the tidal basin and the canoe and kayaks on the Potomac are both easy examples. There will also be some reps from the NPS and local vendors who you could talk with.

Made In America Week Event

Outside Preparation

7am – DC Metro Police shuts down C Street

8am – Vehicles start to arrive on C Street

8am – 9:30am – Vehicles and outdoor equipment begins to stage

10am – Participants for Roundtable meeting begin to arrive

10:45am – Round table meeting

Round Table Meeting

10:45AM Thomas Dammrich, President, National Marine Manufacturers Association (MC) delivers opening remarks and introduces RKZ

10:48AM RKZ delivers remarks and facilitates roundtable introductions

Note: Media escorted to C street event after completion of introductions

11:00AM Outdoor Recreational Industry PowerPoint presentation

11:35AM Frank Hugelmeyer, President, Recreation Vehicle Industry Association presents propositions for public/private projects

11:40AM Q & A Session with RKZ & roundtable participants

12:00PM Conclusion of meeting

Outside Portion of Event

12:05pm – 12:25pm Tour of Made in America outdoor recreational equipment

12:25pm – 12:30pm Photo Op with RKZ & Roundtable participants

12:30pm – 1:00pm RKZ Press Gaggle and B-Roll with Made in America outdoor recreational equipment

1:00pm – 1:15pm Depart DOI with media en route Theodore Roosevelt Island

1:15pm – 1:25pm Arrive Theodore Roosevelt Island & proceed with media to TR Statue

Met by: Alex Romero, Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway and Cheryl Breese, NPS Ranger

1:25pm – 1:40pm RKZ participates in small press gaggle at TR statue

1:40pm – 1:50pm Depart TR statue en route vehicle

1:50pm – 2:05pm Depart Theodore Roosevelt Island en route DOI

2:05pm Arrive DOI

Secretary Zinke Announces Made in America Recreation Advisory Committee

Hosts events to promote public-private partnerships on public lands

WASHINGTON - Today, at an event with Members of Congress and representatives from America's outdoor recreation industry, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke announced a new advisory committee that will focus on expanding public-private partnerships on America's public lands. The Secretary hosted a roundtable meeting which focused on leveraging public-private partnerships in order to improve visitor experiences on public lands and waters and to help reduce the Department's maintenance backlog. Public-private partnerships are already extensively used across the National Park Service and other agencies for services ranging from campgrounds and restaurant management to providing kayak and RV rentals.

"One of my top priorities is to expand recreational access to public lands and waters. Today I'm excited to announce that for the first time the Department of the Interior will host a recreation advisory committee that is dedicated to looking at public-private partnerships across all public lands with the goal of expanding access to and improving the infrastructure on public lands," **said Secretary Zinke**. "We already have thousands of private partners who operate on federal lands, whether it's the iconic Jammers in Glacier National Park, the historic El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or the kayaks that you can rent on the Potomac River, American workers are at the heart of helping American families experience our great outdoors."

QUOTE PARTNER

QUOTE CONGRESS

Roundtable participants gave specific examples about how public-private partnerships can make the outdoor recreation experience even better, and how the economy can be impacted by the tens of thousands of American manufacturing jobs these products support. Members of the outdoor industry presented a variety of proposals to the Interior, including:

- EXAMPLE
- EXAMPLE
- EXAMPLE

Outdoor recreation is vital to the economic and physical well-being of America and its citizens. According to **industry analysis**, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$887 billion in direct spending and supports 7.6 million jobs across all 50 states.

"Not everyone can access the backcountry and sleep in a hammock tethered to a rock wall. We need to encourage families and folks of all interest levels to enjoy our parks and other outdoor areas and make our land accessible to them," **said Zinke**. "We have absolutely incredible partners who proudly make Made in America outdoor products that can be leveraged to help address the maintenance backlog on things like boat ramps, RV hookups, campgrounds, and cafeterias as long as the government is a willing partner."

QUOTE PARTNER

QUOTE CONGRESS

###

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 18, 2017 at 8:48 AM, Diaz, Ileana <jdiaz@wusa9.com> wrote:
Sounds good.

My shift starts today at 10:30am so trying to figure out logistics.

Any idea when you will be wrapping up the C street event and headed into the RVs? I want to make sure we give ourselves enough time to park and coordinate.

Thanks,
Ileana (213)500-0391 cell

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, July 17, 2017 11:31:22 PM
To: Diaz, Ileana
Cc: (b) (6) Alex Hinson
Subject: Re: following up Secretary Zinke

External Email – Be Suspicious of Attachments, Links and Requests for Login Information

That's great! The Secretary is hosting an outdoor recreation focused round table followed by an outdoor event at the C street entrance of DOI with outdoor recreation companies and vendors that operate on public lands. Then your ride along would begin after the event at C Street. The Secretary and a couple others would drive in that RV from DOI to TR Island and back. I can explain more tomorrow. Also CCing my colleague Alex

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 17, 2017, at 9:34 PM, Diaz, Ileana <jdiaz@wusa9.com> wrote:

Heather,

Nice to meet you over email. My husband, Joel Waldman from Fox News, passed along your email and the information below.

If the offer for a ride-along is still available for tomorrow please let me know what time and where to meet you. I would love this opportunity to meet and speak with Secretary Zinke in the RV.

Thanks,

Ileana Diaz

WUSA-9 News

idi@wusa9.com

(213) 500-0391 cell

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Waldman, Joel** <joel.waldman@foxnews.com>

Date: Monday, July 17, 2017

Subject: Fwd: following up

To: Ileana "Bugsy" Diaz <(b) (6)>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: July 17, 2017 at 6:04:35 PM EDT

To: "Waldman, Joel" <joel.waldman@foxnews.com>

Subject: Re: following up

Yes, we'd love to have her! She can do a ride-along with the Secretary in the RV to Roosevelt Island if she'd like

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 17, 2017 at 5:53 PM, Waldman, Joel <joel.waldman@foxnews.com> wrote:

Thanks so much – I did see it.

We're down a photographer, so I don't think it's going to happen.

My wife is a freelance anchor/reporter at WUSA ---- is it okay if I pass along to her? Her name is Ileana Diaz.

Thanks

Joel

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Monday, July 17, 2017 5:12 PM

Subject: following up

Hey just wanted to make sure you saw the advisory for the Secretary's Made in America event tomorrow. Great events that impact local communities. Let me know if you need more details.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **U.S. Department of the Interior** <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>

Date: Mon, Jul 17, 2017 at 12:51 PM

Subject: Made in America: Secretary Zinke & Members of Congress host event to highlight America's Outdoor Recreation

To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov

Date: July 17, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Made in America: Secretary Zinke & Members of Congress host event to highlight America's Outdoor Recreation

WASHINGTON - On Tuesday, July 18, 2017, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, Members of Congress, and senior members of the outdoor recreation industry will meet at the U.S.

Department of the Interior, for a discussion about using public-private partnerships to improve visitor experiences on public lands and waters and help reduce the Department's maintenance backlog. The event will also include a showcase of great American products that make the great outdoors fun.

Following the meeting, Secretary Zinke will lead the group outside to a showcase of American-made outdoor recreation equipment including boats, RVs, off-road vehicles and more. Exhibitors will have information about the tens of thousands of American manufacturing jobs these products support.

WHEN: July 18, 2017
Recreation Leadership Meeting: 10:45am - 11:05am
Made in America Outdoor Recreation Media Event: 12:15pm - 1:00pm

WHERE: Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240

WHO: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke
Members of Congress
Senior outdoor recreation industry members
Department officials

MEDIA: Media are invited to hear opening comments at the roundtable by Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and senior members of the outdoor recreation industry in the Secretary's Conference Room beginning at 10:45am.

There will be press availability and opportunities for b-roll and photos at the Made in America Outdoor Recreation event with the Secretary, industry officials and Members of Congress following the meeting at 12:15pm on C Street outside of the Department. A number of Made in America recreation products will be on display, as well as informative posters highlighting the industry's economic contribution.

RSVP: Members of the media must RSVP to Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov no later than 4:00PM EST on Monday July 17.

Outdoor recreation is vital to the economic and healthful well-being of America. The industry generates \$88.7 billion in direct spending and supports 7.6 million jobs across all 50 states. Secretary Zinke, members of the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable, key national park concessioners and other senior administration officials will discuss how improving infrastructure, encouraging innovation, and developing new and enhanced public-private partnerships will give the American people more opportunities to enjoy healthy, active fun on their public lands and waters, while helping outdoor recreation continue to grow as a powerful and positive force in America.

###



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This email was sent to heather_swift@ios.doi.gov by: U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



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From: Heather Swift
To: Waldman_Joel
Subject: Re: following up
Date: Monday, July 17, 2017 11:26:56 PM

No sweat. Thanks for sharing with the Misses!

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 17, 2017, at 8:39 PM, Waldman, Joel <joel.waldman@foxnews.com> wrote:

My wife is sending to her desk now. She Will try to coordinate in AM. Fox News told me they may just send a Photog to get broll. Wish I could help more!

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 17, 2017, at 5:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey just wanted to make sure you saw the advisory for the Secretary's Made in America event tomorrow. Great events that impact local communities. Let me know if you need more details.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 17, 2017 at 12:51 PM
Subject: Made in America: Secretary Zinke & Members of Congress host event to highlight America's Outdoor Recreation
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov



Date: July 17, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Made in America: Secretary Zinke & Members of Congress host event to highlight America's Outdoor Recreation

WASHINGTON - On Tuesday, July 18, 2017, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, Members of Congress, and senior members of the outdoor recreation industry will meet at the U.S. Department of the Interior, for a discussion about using public-private partnerships to improve visitor experiences on public lands and waters and help reduce the Department's maintenance backlog. The event will also include a showcase of great American products that make the great outdoors fun.

Following the meeting, Secretary Zinke will lead the group outside to a showcase of American-made outdoor recreation equipment including boats, RVs, off-road vehicles and more. Exhibitors will have information about the tens of thousands of American manufacturing jobs these products support.

WHEN: July 18, 2017
Recreation Leadership Meeting: 10:45am - 11:05am
Made in America Outdoor Recreation Media Event: 12:15pm - 1:00pm

WHERE: Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240

WHO: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke
Members of Congress
Senior outdoor recreation industry members
Department officials

MEDIA: Media are invited to hear opening comments at the roundtable by Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and senior members of the outdoor recreation industry in the Secretary's Conference Room beginning at 10:45am.

There will be press availability and opportunities for b-roll and photos at the Made in America Outdoor Recreation event with the Secretary, industry officials and Members of Congress following the meeting at 12:15pm on C Street outside of the Department. A number of Made in America recreation products will be on display, as well as informative posters highlighting the industry's economic contribution.

RSVP: Members of the media must RSVP to Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov no later than 4:00PM EST on Monday July 17.

Outdoor recreation is vital to the economic and healthful well-being of America. The industry generates \$887 billion in direct spending and supports 7.6 million jobs across all 50 states. Secretary Zinke, members of the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable, key national park concessioners and other senior administration officials will discuss how improving infrastructure, encouraging innovation, and developing new and enhanced public-private partnerships will give the American people more opportunities to enjoy healthy, active fun on their public lands and waters, while helping outdoor recreation continue to grow as a powerful and positive force in America.

###



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This email was sent to heather_swift@ios.doi.gov by: U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



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From: Laura Rigas
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Ross, Paul](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#)
Subject: Re: FOR AWARENESS: Kevin Tillman named superintendent of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
Date: Monday, November 06, 2017 8:02:12 AM

Thx.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 6, 2017, at 8:00 AM, Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

checking with Todd

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Mon, Nov 6, 2017 at 7:28 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Laura/Russell-

Apologies as NPS sent this to me last week and I somehow let it get buried in my inbox. They'd like this to go out at the local level tomorrow if possible. The superintendent is scheduled to start Nov. 12. No concerns here.

-Paul

Kevin Tillman named superintendent of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

DENVER — Kevin Tillman, chief ranger of Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area in Montana and Wyoming, has been named superintendent of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument in southern New Mexico. Tillman, a 27-year veteran of the National Park Service (NPS), served as acting superintendent at Gila Cliff Dwellings from February to June of this year. He will assume his new post the week of Nov. 12.

“Kevin’s years of experience in a variety of Park Service locations across the country will serve him well in managing one of America’s very first national monuments,” said Kate Hammond, acting director of the NPS’s Intermountain Region, which includes New Mexico. “We value Kevin’s management insight as he supports the Gila Cliff Dwellings staff and partners in caring for the monument and

its archeological wonders of the Mogollon culture.”

“I am honored to be returning to Gila Cliff Dwellings to work as superintendent again with our monument staff,” Tillman said. “I look forward to continued cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and our other partners, including Silver City, Mimbres, Bayard and the other local communities of the area, as well as Western New Mexico University.”

Tillman, who grew up in the Denver area, began his NPS career in 1991 as a seasonal law enforcement ranger at Yosemite National Park. After a second season at Grand Canyon National Park, he took his first permanent assignment as a law enforcement ranger in 1993 at Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming. He later served at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Joshua Tree National Park and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. In 2011, Tillman transferred to Bighorn Canyon as chief ranger. Tillman also served as acting deputy chief ranger of Yellowstone National Park in 2014 and acting deputy chief of operations in 2012 for the Park Service’s Law Enforcement Security & Emergency Services branch in Washington, DC.

Tillman is a 2015 graduate of the GOAL Academy, the NPS’s leadership and management training program. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Northland College.

Tillman will move to New Mexico with his wife, Christiann, and son, Cole. They also have two grown sons, Clayton and Adam.

-- www.nps.gov --

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Willens, Todd](mailto:Willens.Todd)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas); [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori.Mashburn); [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany.Eli)
Subject: Re: FOR FINAL REVIEW: Press Release Todd
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:51:35 AM

good call. Thanks.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 11:48 AM, Willens, Todd <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I am good on the facts. Do we want to capitalize all the uses of "west" in the Sec's quote? I defer to you all on that. Otherwise, good from me.

Todd Willens
Assistant Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW -- MIB Room 6116
Washington, DC 20240
office: 202-208-6291
cell: 202-706-9041

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 11:32 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

**Below is the press release for Todd we'd like to send out this afternoon.
Please send me edits by 1:00 PM.**

**EE is on deadline and is writing about Todd's appointment for NOON
publication. I shared the release below, minus Sec quote because it hasn't
been approved yet.**

**Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as
Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior**

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public

policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the west, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul**

Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said. “Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior’s trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration.”

“The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn’t be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior,” **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** “A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity.”

“The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior,” **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** “In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America’s battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations.”

“The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens’ appointment,” **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club’s Policy Committee.** “Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Vincent Devito](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW - REMARKS FOR AOGA
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 6:31:29 PM

Thanks, Heather. Vincent, can you please review these asap tonight? Wanted to have you and Kate clear these before we share them more widely tomorrow (and of course go over them with the boss). Kate's edits are included.

My best,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 2:19 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thank you, XXXXXX, for that introduction.

I love Alaska. My wife Lola and I actually both have ties. Her dad worked up here while she was growing up and I did quite a bit of training while I was in the military.

And, as I say to my friend Senator Murkowski, Montana and Alaska aren't all that different...both states have a robust outdoor culture and a frontier outlook and we're both blessed with abundant energy resources.

Speaking of, some of you may know that my path to Interior Secretary was a little different than most. I hadn't spent much time in Washington, D.C., or served as a career politician. Instead, I served in the military, just like 10 percent of all

Alaskans. Your state and mine have highest percentage of veterans. We should be proud of that.

So during my Navy years, in addition to getting up to Alaska to train, I also spent a lot of time in the Middle East on oil platforms. Though it was a little different than what you all did. I was mostly keeping bad guys off of them.

I'm pleased to be with the thousands of forward-looking and hard-working men and women of the Alaska energy industry.

In my view, energy is important for three reasons.

First, it's better for the environment that the U.S. produces energy. Thanks to advancements in technology, we can responsibly develop our energy resources and return the land to equal or better quality than it was before.

I've spent a lot of time overseas, and I can tell you with 100 percent certainty it is better to develop our energy here under reasonable regulations, than have it produced overseas under little or no regulations.

Second, energy production is an absolute boon to the economy, supporting more than 9 million

jobs and supplying affordable power for manufacturing, home heating, and transportation needs. And I can tell you, it's going to take a whole lot of energy to rebuild America's aging infrastructure.

And lastly, achieving American energy independence will strengthen our national security by reducing our reliance on foreign oil and allowing us to assist our allies with their energy needs.

As a military commander, I saw how the power of the American economy and American energy defeated our adversaries around the world. The world is safer when American is strong.

I am an unabashed supporter of Teddy Roosevelt whose views about America's holdings are best inscribed on the Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park – “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Contrary to what some believe, being a good steward of our land and resources does not mean locking it up and banning public access. Teddy Roosevelt himself said that, "Conservation means development as much as it does protection.”

Yet during the previous administration, nearly 94 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf was off limits for responsible development. And about half of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was out too.

As of March 1, 2017, only 16 million acres in the OCS (out of a total 1.7 billion acres) are under lease for oil and gas development. Of the little area that is open to development, more than 97 percent of the leases are in the Gulf of Mexico.

Offshore leasing revenues have been the second highest source of revenue to the Treasury behind personal income taxes paid. In 2008 the U.S. Treasury collected nearly \$18 billion in federal OCS leasing revenues.

Yet by contrast, last year in 2016, leasing revenues collected fell to only \$2.8 billion.

That's a drop of more than \$15 billion that would otherwise partially go toward funding important conservation programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Infrastructure, and our parks.

That's in part why President Trump and I got to work to rewrite the Five-Year Plan and get more people back to work on rigs, platforms, and other onshore oil and gas jobs.

I recognize that not all areas are appropriate for energy development, but many places provide the perfect opportunity to balance energy and conservation priorities. Thanks to new developments in science and technology, it is possible to responsibly develop American energy resources while being good stewards of the environment.

There is no debate that the federal government should regulate energy production within its borders and that the taxpayer should get fair value for the resources extracted. But when regulation becomes a punitive tool of political advocacy rather than public interest, there needs to be a change of course.

President Trump's America First Offshore Energy Executive Order began that course correction. That order directed me to conduct a review of the current five year offshore development plan for the Outer Continental Shelf, streamline permitting for seismic research and reconsider a host regulations hampering development.

The President and I are committed to energy dominance and his executive order was a decisive step in common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

I then took immediate action to implement the

President's offshore energy policy by signing two Secretarial Orders.

Those orders are meant

- to enhance opportunities for energy exploration, leasing, and development on the Outer Continental Shelf;
- establish regulatory certainty for OCS activities; and
- promote conservation stewardship, by providing jobs, energy security, and revenue for the American people.

The first order directed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to immediately initiate development of a new "Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program," with full consideration given to leasing the OCS offshore Alaska, the mid- and south-Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico. It also directs expedited consideration of appealed, new, or resubmitted seismic permitting applications for the Atlantic and the review or rescission of other regulations outlined in the President's executive order.

Just a couple weeks ago, I appointed Scott Angelle the new Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and he will work with our energy team to promote safety, protect the environment and conserve resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy industry operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

He joined the bureau after more than 30 years of reforming agencies and organizations in both the public and private sectors of Louisiana. His career is characterized by a strong desire to achieve results that lead to greater success.

Today, I am announcing additional steps in our common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

Today, I am signing a third Secretarial Order that will jump-start Alaskan energy production in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska and update resource assessments for the "1002 area" of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The order calls for the development of a revised

Integrated Activity Plan for the National Petroleum Reserve that strikes an appropriate statutory balance for promoting development while protecting surface resources.

It also calls for an evaluation, under the existing Integrated Activity Plan, of ways to efficiently and effectively maximize the tracts offered for sale during the next National Petroleum Reserve lease sale.

The order also directs the Assistant Secretaries of Land and Minerals Management and Water and Science to submit a joint plan to the Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy for updating assessments of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources on Alaska's North Slope, focusing on Federal lands that include the National Petroleum Reserve and the Section 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

This joint plan shall include consideration of new geological and geophysical data, as well as the potential for reprocessing existing geological and geophysical data.

I'm a geologist. Science is a wonderful thing – it helps us understand what is going on deep below the surface of the earth. We need to use science to update our understanding off the 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as Congress

considers important legislation to responsibly develop there one day. This order takes the important first step in a smart and measured approach to energy development in ANWR.

Regarding the National Petroleum Reserve, this land was set up with the sole intention of oil and gas production and serves a critical role in both our energy and national security. However, years of policy politics put roughly half of the National Petroleum Reserve off-limits.

Using this land for its original intent will create good paying jobs and revenue for our Northern-most city and strengthen our energy and national security.

Working with the Alaska Native community, Interior will identify areas in the National Petroleum Reserve where responsible energy development makes the most sense and devise a plan to extract resources.

We will do it in a way that respects both the environment and traditional uses of the land and maintains subsistence hunting and fishing access.

Let me close by saying that for all the needed changes we are making to the previous administration's energy policies, one thing does

not change -- and that is our commitment to safety and our environment.

That remains our priority.

Nothing in the Secretarial Order I am signing today would reduce, eliminate, or modify any environmental or regulatory requirements for energy development.

We have thousands of talented and dedicated employees working on our frontlines who are focused on the safe and responsible development of our nation's energy resources.

We are going to keep it that way and we will hold companies accountable. Good stewardship of our lands and waters and maintaining U.S. energy dominance are not mutually exclusive.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to be here today. I'll now sign this order with you.

###

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 6:16 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

I told Vincent to look at the remarks after Kate did. We are at the all staff meeting now. Do you want to accept all edits and send to me and Vincent or another way? Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 2:15 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Awesome. Thanks!

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 6:09 PM, MacGregor, Katharine <katharine_macgregor@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Alright my edits are attached. I want to flag this sentence - because I think it (b) (5)



Does that make sense? I made a suggested edit to help provide an idea how to fix.

-Kate

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:49 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Attached, remarks for Z tomorrow.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--
Kate MacGregor
1849 C ST NW
Room 6625
Washington DC 20240

202-208-3671 (Direct)

<Remarks_AOGA_aslmok.docx>

From: Mashburn, Lori
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: For Review = press release
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:29:08 PM

I made some edits in red. Also, does Sen. Murkowski prefer to be called a "Chairman"? If so, all cool. Just wanted to be sure it was intentional. This is really good. Thank you for pulling this together.

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

(ANCHORAGE) Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

"A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues," said Secretary Zinke. "Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve served in the military, and he then continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's management."

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential," said Wackowski.

Wackowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce's "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is an avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox Lab, Cali.

Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202.208.1694

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:18 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Lori - any changes?

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

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-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany_Eli)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 12:50:36 PM

Idk... I think he's about to be qualified.

Thanks. Once MC and AT sign off, need to cut this down to 2 pages of bullets.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:48 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Quick note: third-to-last graf, "gaining" has an extra "g" and "imminently" should be "eminently"

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:41 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Micah/Aaron - can you please review the remarks for Cully's hearing?

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the Committee: it is an honor to be here today to tell you about an American patriot, a mentor, and a good friend, Captain Cully Stimson.

Captain Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy. I can think of no one more qualified for this job.

As a retired Navy SEAL Commander, I know just how important it is for the Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership, and the man I

am introducing today fits the bill.

Captain Stimson and I served together in the Navy; he brings over two decades of experience as a lawyer, having first served in the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps, also known as the JAG Corps, in the 1990s.

In addition to our time together in the Navy, I also had the pleasure of working with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.

To tell Captain Stimson's story is to tell of his lifetime of commitment to both his community and his country. He has been a leader from very early on, serving as Captain of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team at Kenyon College.

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Thiele, Aaron
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: [Chambers, Micah](mailto:Chambers_Micah); [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany_Eli)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 1:31:40 PM

I didn't see anything. It looks good.

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 1:18 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Oh dear -- I'm told he is introducing Cully.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Chambers, Micah <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
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On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:41 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
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Micah Chambers
Acting Director
Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs
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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Chambers, Micah](mailto:Chambers.Micah)
Cc: [Aaron Thiele](mailto:Aaron.Thiele); [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany.Eli)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 1:20:37 PM

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Heather Swift
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On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Chambers, Micah <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
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On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:41 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
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From: Chambers, Micah
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Aaron Thiele](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 1:17:05 PM

Is RZ introducing him at hearing or just a submitted statement of support?

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Office of the Secretary of the Interior

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Cully statement
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 12:48:53 PM

Quick note: third-to-last graf, "gaining" has an extra "g" and "imminently" should be "eminently"

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:41 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
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From: Russell Newell
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Adams, Nathan](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Hispanic Heritage Month photo gallery
Date: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 4:15:12 PM

I think so

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 6, 2017, at 4:06 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Do we have somebody who can translate this into espanol?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 6, 2017 at 3:58 PM, Adams, Nathan <nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

All,

Hispanic Heritage Month begins September 15 and we developed a photo gallery to highlight Interior-managed sites dedicated to preserving Hispanic American history. It's very similar to what we've done in the past for [Black History Month](#) and [Women's History Month](#).

Please let us know if you have any red flags. We'd like to post this next Thursday morning.

Thanks!

PHOTO GALLERY - NOT A BLOG

Discover Hispanic heritage at these historic sites

Hispanic Heritage Month starts on September 15. Interior and its bureaus preserve and interpret historic sites across the country. For American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America, these places connect them to our nation's shared history. From early explorers to modern day leaders, Hispanic Americans have impacted America's culture and played an important role in society.

Celebrate [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) by [visiting one of the historic sites near](#)

[YOU.](#)

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail

In the 17th century, Spanish explorers made military expeditions into the future states of Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. Building on Native American trading paths, the Spanish created “royal roads,” called camino reals. Competing against British and French colonial expansion, they established military forts, trading posts and missions for the religious and social conversion of American Indians. These settlements and cultural exchange laid the foundation for art, architecture, language, music, food and traditions that define the region today. Visit [El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail](#) and [San Antonio Mission National Historical Park](#) in Texas and [El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail](#) in New Mexico to experience this rich history.

Assateague Island National Seashore

Not far offshore of [Assateague Island National Seashore](#) in Virginia, two Spanish shipwrecks rest under the ocean waters. Testaments to the dangers of colonial era shipping, artifacts from the *La Galga* and the *Juno* shipwrecks are on display in the visitor center. According to popular legend, which Marguerite Henry famously retold in her classic children’s book *Misty of Chincoteague*, Assateague’s Chincoteague ponies are descendants of Spanish horses that came ashore after escaping the *La Galga* or another shipwreck.

César E. Chávez National Monument

[César E. Chávez National Monument](#) in California preserves the office and burial place of one of the most important Latino leaders during the 20th century in the United States. César E. Chávez led farm workers and supporters in the establishment of the country’s first permanent agricultural union -- the United Farm Workers of America. His leadership brought sustained international attention to the plight of farm workers, and secured them higher wages and safer working conditions. This had a major impact on labor rights and the recognition of Hispanic Americans to the economy and culture.

Fort Frederica National Monument

The British colony of Georgia was founded in part to act as a buffer zone between South Carolina and the Spanish territory of Florida. Fort Frederica was built on St. Simon’s Island as a military installation, but it also became a lively commercial center. Under founder James Oglethorpe, the settlement furthered a social agenda that advocated for penal reform and the abolition of

slavery. It is best remembered as the site of the 1742 Battle of Bloody Marsh between the British and Spanish, which ensured English dominion over Georgia and limited Spanish influence to Florida. Today, [Fort Frederica National Monument](#) preserves the fort's remains and helps tell the story of the cultures that shaped the area's early history.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

Alaska might be the last place in America people think of when it comes to Spanish influence, but a series of Spanish expeditions along the West Coast in the 1700s left their mark on the Last Frontier. As part of a five-year scientific voyage, Alessandro Malaspina's expedition took botanical and mineralogical findings, updated maps, searched for new trade routes and made contact with the Tlingit Alaskan Natives. While the Spanish eventually lost all claim to Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, the Spanish legacy is still evident in places like the [Malaspina Glacier](#) in [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park](#).

Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

After the United States annexed Mexico's northern territories in 1848, many of the new American citizens moved north and east. One of these Hispanic Americans was Teofilo Trujillo, who settled with his wife in Colorado's San Luis Valley west of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in 1865. The Trujillo homesteads are now a National Historic Landmark and part of the [Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area](#). The two ranches, where the Trujillo family had struggles and success, help reveal the settlement history and influences of Hispanic culture in the Southwest.

Freedom Tower in Miami

Originally built as a newspaper headquarters, the [Freedom Tower](#) in Miami, Florida, is considered the "Ellis Island of the South" for its role as the Cuban Assistance Center from 1962 to 1974. A National Historic Landmark, the Freedom Tower is the single most important physical manifestation of this period of Cold War era politics and the Cuban exodus experience. The 17-story building, based on the design of a Spanish cathedral tower, served as a symbol of hope and freedom, and the firm belief that democracy should be available to all who fight against tyranny. The Cubans who passed through its halls became a vital part of the South Florida community.

Santa Fe National Historic Trail

In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain's 200 years of control and unlocked a great gateway to the West -- the Santa Fe Trail. From 1821 until 1880, trade between Mexico and the United States flourished and

western migration expanded. People shared their products and culture along the trail at places like [Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#) in Colorado and [Pecos National Historical Park](#) in New Mexico. Today, living historians recreate the sights, sounds and smells of the past with guided tours, demonstrations and special events.

National Mall and Department of the Interior Building

Just off the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Virginia Avenue runs directly in front of the Department of the Interior headquarters. Along this street [stand five statues](#) that honor Hispanic liberators José Gervasio Artigas, Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, Bernardo de Gálvez and Benito Juárez. These statues were gifts from Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela to the United States as a gesture of mutual commitment to freedom and democracy. The shared history of revolution against colonial powers binds together the nations of the Americas.

Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument

Spanish culture remains prevalent throughout the Southwest. You can see it in the architecture, accents, food, music and religion. It's been almost 400 years since Fray Francisco Fonte arrived in New Mexico and began establishing missions to convert native Pueblo people to Christianity. Franciscan Friars met stiff resistance and when drought, epidemics and natural disasters began to decimate the population of the Salinas Valley, the Pueblo peoples felt they had insulted the spirits and returned to their old beliefs. This story comes alive at the extensive ruins preserved at [Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument](#).

San Juan National Historic Site

This Spanish system of fortifications in San Juan, Puerto Rico is the oldest European construction in U.S. territory and one of the oldest in the New World. Expanded many times over 150 years, the walls eventually protected the entire city of San Juan against repeated attacks from the British and Dutch. Designated a World Heritage Site, [San Juan National Historic Site](#) preserves these massive fortifications and offers programs on the Spanish and Latino history of the island forts. These remarkable buildings are an important part of Puerto Rico's history and provide a stunning backdrop to the vibrant culture of San Juan.

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

[Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge](#) is a natural oasis in the urban landscape of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Urban refuges like Valle de Oro offer [unique environmental education and recreation opportunities in highly populated areas](#) while promoting the mission of the refuge system to protect

wildlife and their habitats. The refuge works closely with the neighboring Hispanic community to improve residents' well-being and access to green space and inspire the next generation of public land stewards.

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Rebecca Matulka](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: National Park Service announces leadership changes at Mammoth Cave National Park
Date: Friday, June 23, 2017 11:35:37 AM

Laura-

Below is another NPS Superintendent announcement in addition to the previous one on the e-mail chain. I've been told ASFWP's office has signed off. NPS would like to distribute as soon as possible. These announcements will be made at the local level. Thanks.

-Paul

Steven Sims Chosen as Superintendent of Valley Forge National Historical Park, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site

PHILADELPHIA - National Park Service (NPS)—National Park Service (NPS) Acting Northeast Regional Director Cynthia MacLeod has named Steven Sims as the new superintendent of Valley Forge National Historical Park and Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site in Pennsylvania. Currently serving as Northeast Region's Chief of Facility Management, Sims will begin his new assignment in late June. He replaces Kate Hammond, who was named Intermountain Region Deputy Regional Director last October after serving as superintendent since March of 2012. Mark Alexander, the division chief of line item construction and transportation, will step into Sims' former position as acting chief of facility management in the interim.

"Steve brings a broad set of skills that will be very beneficial to both the park units. He is skilled at bringing partners together to work towards a common goal and values the importance of community engagement," said MacLeod. "His background as a West Point graduate and military officer will provide the leadership needed to define and carry out the mission of the parks."

"I am honored to have been selected to serve as the superintendent of Valley Forge National Historical Park and Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site," said Sims. "As a former Army Officer, I feel a deep responsibility for the privilege of caring for the hallowed grounds of Valley Forge where, unarguably, the spirit of the American soldier was born. Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site is also a relatively unknown gem that provides a fantastic look at a 19th Century iron plantation industrial culture. I look forward to this opportunity to serve these parks and our neighbors in this new role."

During his 20-year federal career, Sims has served as the Facility Manager for Independence National Historical Park and was the Civil Engineer and Facility Manager for the National Mall and Memorial Parks in Washington DC from 2007 until 2011. Prior to working for the National Park Service he served as a consultant engineer for Alpha Corporation and an Army Engineer Officer. He is a registered professional engineer, a

certified facility manager and a project management professional. He holds a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the United States Military Academy, a master's degree in Engineering Management from the University of Missouri and a master's in Business Administration from Norwich University.

Sims is originally from Tehachapi, CA. He is married and has two teenage children. His hobbies include hiking, fly fishing, beekeeping and riding motorcycles.

—www.nps.gov—

About the National Park Service: More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 417 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit us at www.nps.gov, on Facebook www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
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U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Wed, Jun 21, 2017 at 11:02 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura/Heather-

NPS Southeast Region is looking to put out this release regarding a new deputy regional director as well as a new superintendent for Mammoth Cave National Park. I've been told this cleared ASFWP. No specific target date, just as soon as we can clear. Release looks fine to me. Thanks.

-Paul

National Park Service announces leadership changes at Mammoth Cave National Park

ATLANTA — Today, National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin announced the selection of Mammoth Cave National Park Superintendent Sarah Craighead as deputy regional director, based in Atlanta. With this selection, Austin has also tapped Southeast Regional Chief of Staff Barclay Trimble as Mammoth Cave's next superintendent. Both appointments are effective July 23.

"Sarah and Barclay have distinguished themselves as exceptional leaders within the National Park Service," Austin said. "Sarah has a remarkable ability to tackle tough issues with clear vision, while fostering a strong sense of connection and purpose. I have relied on Barclay extensively for his business acumen and invaluable contributions to regional strategy and operations. I am confident both will continue serving the National Park Service and the American people well in their new roles."

Sarah Craighead, Deputy Regional Director, Southeast Region

Sarah Craighead, who began her NPS career as a cave guide and campground ranger at Mammoth Cave in 1978, has led the central-Kentucky park as superintendent since 2012. Park visitation increased by 10 percent during her 5-year tenure. She fortified partnerships with tourism constituents, volunteers, user groups, and the Friends of Mammoth Cave. Craighead opened the park's renovated visitor center and Big Hollow mountain-bike trail, and supported the removal of 100-year-old Lock & Dam 6 from Green River, returning many miles of surface and cave rivers to natural flow. As the Kentucky NPS coordinator, Craighead led her fellow superintendents to bring widespread recognition to the state's five NPS sites during the agency's Centennial year. Craighead also initiated night-sky programming and the park will complete its International Dark Sky nomination this year.

Prior to joining Mammoth Cave, Craighead spent three years as superintendent of California's Death Valley National Park, the largest national park in the continental U.S. and the lowest place in North America at 282 feet below sea level. She also served as superintendent of Saguaro National Park in Arizona and Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma. In her 38-year career, Craighead has also worked at Acadia National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Independence National Historical Park, and Mesa Verde National Park. While at Mammoth Cave, Craighead completed temporary assignments to the NPS Southeast Regional Office as acting deputy regional director and also as a special assistant to the regional director.

"Whatever I have been able to accomplish at Mammoth Cave was possible because of the park staff's dedication to excellence in all they do," said Craighead. "I am particularly pleased with the progress we made in providing concessions services for visitors and that several strategic plans are underway, which will guide Mammoth Cave for years to come. I am honored to begin my new assignment with the Southeast Regional Office, bringing the same enthusiasm and commitment to bear for the region's 70 national park units."

Craighead is a native of Cave City, Ky. She is married to Rick Shireman, a National Park Service retiree.

Barclay Trimble, Superintendent, Mammoth Cave National Park

Barclay Trimble has served as the NPS deputy regional director in Atlanta since 2014, assuming the added duties of regional chief of staff last year. He manages 30 superintendents at national parks in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He also oversees regional planning and compliance, land resources, ranger activities, and commercial services.

Prior to joining the NPS Southeast Regional Office, Trimble served as cluster superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Wright Brothers National Memorial and Fort Raleigh National Historic Site in North Carolina; deputy superintendent and acting superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona; recreation fee manager for the NPS Intermountain Region in Colorado; acting chief for the Business Management Office at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Utah/Arizona and chief of finance for the NPS Concessions Program Center in Colorado. In addition to these tenured assignments, Trimble has also provided administrative and management support during temporary assignments at, both, Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska and the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, DC.

“Mammoth Cave National Park boasts amazing resources with equally impressive employees, volunteers and community partners,” Trimble said. “I look forward to joining the park this summer and immersing myself in the majesty of Mammoth Cave.”

A Texas native, Trimble graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio with a degree in Business Administration. In his spare time, Trimble takes every opportunity to enjoy the parks and outdoors with his two children and wife, Lana.

#

[Mammoth Cave National Park](#) is two parks in one. Below the surface, it preserves the extensive Mammoth Cave system and above ground, scenic river valleys and the extreme hills and hollows typical of a karst landscape. Mammoth Cave is the longest cave in the world, with more than 405 miles explored and mapped.

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From: Matulka, Rebecca
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Ross, Paul](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 11:34:23 AM

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To: [Matulka, Rebecca](mailto:Matulka_Rebecca)
Cc: [Ross, Paul](mailto:Ross_Paul); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura_Rigas)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 11:36:47 AM

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202.208.5337

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Ross, Paul](#)
Cc: [Matulka, Rebecca](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 4:16:03 PM

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This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual America the Beautiful federal lands pass.

“These photos encapsulate exactly what public lands mean to the American people,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico or a young boy hiking the Narrows of Zion National Park to the beautiful landscape of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge or an amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam; they showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

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- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
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The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundations in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S.

Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department's popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

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Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark—a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America's national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

Paul R. Ross
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U.S. Department of the Interior
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Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

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From: Matulka, Rebecca
To: [Ross, Paul](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 11:04:35 AM

Hi Heather,

CBS has agreed to cover this on air, online and on social media, and they'll need the materials tonight. It'd be great to send our release at the same time as the photos and captions. We can always send without a Secretary quote if you need more time to review.

Thanks!

On Mon, May 1, 2017 at 8:13 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather-

Below is a release for your review regarding the annual Share The Experience contest. I believe Rebecca already mentioned this to you. Release is scheduled for Thursday. But we will want to give to some reporters on Wednesday under embargo. All of the other land management agencies and Park Foundation will be putting out their own version of the release. The plan is to work with USA Today on a photo gallery as well as CBS This Morning for announcing the winners. But if there is any other media you'd like to offer an embargo to, let us know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you for awareness. The annual contest, which we partner with the National Park Foundation and other federal land management agencies on, highlights amateur photographers and their work showcasing our public lands. The winning photo is then featured on the America The Beautiful Federal Land Pass.

Thank you!

**Interior Announces “Share the Experience” 2016 Photo
Contest Winners**

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--

Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Matulka, Rebecca](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 12:08:02 PM

Thanks!

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 12:07 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I defer to you guys on the CBS mention. I'm good with the rest. Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 3, 2017, at 7:59 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

An exclusive. I believe we mentioned them last year to let people know where these would be announced. But I am fine removing and just driving folks to our Instagram.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
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On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 7:52 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.
Do we need to mention CBS? Are they a partner or just an exclusive?

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Below and attached please find the final version of the Share The Experience release to include a quote from the National Park Foundation President. Thanks.

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“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

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###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 4:51 PM, Laura Rigas
<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 2, 2017, at 4:40 PM, Paul Ross
<paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura-

The release will go out from us on Thursday. I'll send a version with the quote as soon as I can. For now, Rebecca will give CBS This Morning the version without the Parks Foundation quote. They are only using it for informational purposes for the segment that will highlight the images and the winners. Thanks.

-Paul

Sent from my iPhone

On May 2, 2017, at 4:15 PM, Laura Rigas
<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Can you pls send the updated release
with the draft quote in it? Is it for
today? Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 2, 2017, at 12:44 PM, Ross,
Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather-

National Park Foundation
has asked if we could also
include this quote from
their president, Will
Shafroth in the release:

“Photos have the power to
inspire curiosity about our
national parks and public
lands,” said Will
Shafroth, president of the
National Park
Foundation. “This contest
motivates people to get
out, find their park, and
enjoy these treasured
places.”

Seeing as how they are an
important partner to
NPS/DOI, I don't see a
reason not to. Let me
know your thoughts.
Thanks!

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On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:56 AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Once was enough :)

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:36 AM, Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

I'm good with just a
mention :) Unless of
course you want to do
it haha

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2, 2017
at 11:34 AM,
Matulka, Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Thanks, and
completely
understand about
being busy the past
few days.

CBS isn't

interviewing anyone for this segment. They usually show all the photo winners and talk about the contest (the photo appearing on the public lands pass and the call to action to enter this year's contest). Happy to suggest someone though if you have ideas!

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 11:26 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Thanks for your patience. Yesterday was busy. Who is doing the interview with CBS? Edits to the secretary's quote below.

"These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation," said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. "Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail

System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for 'the benefit and enjoyment of the people.' Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2,
2017 at 11:04
AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

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Release is
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But we will
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But if there is
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an embargo
to, let us
know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you
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The annual
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Interior

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Army Corps
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Engineers,
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Recreation.gov,
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and
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<DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth
quote.docx>

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Paul R. Ross
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Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to

me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

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The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America® and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and [Recreation.gov](#), is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department’s popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America’s national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark/#EncuentraTuParque — a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America’s national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to

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###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 4:51 PM, Laura Rigas
<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

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National Park Foundation has asked if we could also include this quote from their president, Will Shafroth in the release:

“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Seeing as how they are an important partner to NPS/DOI, I don't see a reason not to. Let me know your thoughts. Thanks!

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On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 11:56 AM, Matulka, Rebecca

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Once was enough :)

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I'm good with just a
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course you want to do it
haha

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Heather Swift
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Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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11:34 AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Thanks, and
completely
understand about
being busy the past
few days.

CBS isn't
interviewing anyone
for this segment.
They usually show all
the photo winners and
talk about the contest
(the photo appearing
on the public lands
pass and the call to
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Thanks for your
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Who is doing the
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Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2,
2017 at 11:04 AM,
Matulka, Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

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CBS has agreed to cover this on air, online and on social media, and they'll need the materials tonight. It'd be great to send our release at the same time as the photos and captions. We can always send without a Secretary quote if you need more time to review.

Thanks!

On Mon, May 1,
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Ross, Paul
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wrote:

Heather-

Below is a release for your review regarding the annual Share The Experience contest. I believe Rebecca already mentioned this to you. Release is scheduled for Thursday. But we will want to

give to some reporters on Wednesday under embargo. All of the other land management agencies and Park Foundation will be putting out their own version of the release. The plan is to work with USA Today on a photo gallery as well as CBS This Morning for announcing the winners. But if there is any other media you'd like to offer an embargo to, let us know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you for awareness. The annual contest, which we partner with the National Park Foundation and other federal land management agencies on, highlights amateur photographers and their work showcasing our public lands. The winning photo is then

featured on the
America The
Beautiful
Federal Land
Pass.

Thank you!

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“Share
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2016
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This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America's national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual America the Beautiful federal lands

pass.

“These photos encapsulate exactly what public lands mean to the American people,” said U.S.

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke.

“From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico or a young boy hiking the Narrows of Zion National Park to the beautiful landscape of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge or an amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam; they showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’”

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Second place
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on a morning
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surrounded by
calm water
and rising fog
in Boundary
Waters Canoe
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Wilderness,
part of
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Forest, in
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Regala of
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Hawaii, for the
photo he
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The grand
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Winners also
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courtesy of
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and an annual
National
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Prizes are
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and the
following six
category
winners:

- .
Adventure
and
Outdoor
Recreation
- .
Historical
and
Cultural
- .
Scenic,
Seasons,
and
Landscapes
- .
Family,
Friends,
and
Fun
- .
Wildlife
- .
Night
Skies

The 2017
Share the Experience
photo contest,
sponsored by
the National
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Foundations
in partnership
with
the National
Park Service,
the Bureau of
Land
Management,
the Bureau of
Reclamation,
the U.S. Army
Corps of
Engineers, the
U.S. Fish and
Wildlife
Service,
the U.S.
Forest
Service, and
Recreation.gov,
is now
accepting
entries
through
December 31.
All entries
have the
chance to be
featured on
the Interior
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popular
[Twitter](https://twitter.com),
[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) and
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Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America's national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark—a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support

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#FindYourPark
invites people
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###

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Rebecca Matulka
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of Digital
Interior
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202.208.5337

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<DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth
quote.docx>

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura_Rigas); [Matulka, Rebecca](mailto:Matulka_Rebecca)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 12:13:07 PM

Yeah. I was going to remove it. Thanks all for the review!

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
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On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 12:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
i prefer to drive to insta

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 12:07 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I defer to you guys on the CBS mention. I'm good with the rest. Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 3, 2017, at 7:59 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

An exclusive. I believe we mentioned them last year to let people know where these would be announced. But I am fine removing and just driving folks to our Instagram.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
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On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 7:52 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul.
Do we need to mention CBS? Are they a partner or just an exclusive?

Laura Keehner Rigas

Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 3, 2017, at 7:38 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura-

Below and attached please find the final version of the Share The Experience release to include a quote from the National Park Foundation President. Thanks.

Interior Announces “Share the Experience” 2016 Photo Contest Winners

Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo Placement on National Public Lands and Waters Pass

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#) and launched the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

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Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

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<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

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northeastern
Minnesota.

Third
place went
to
Christopher
Regala of
Mililani,
Hawaii, for
the photo
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snapped
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The
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Zion
National
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Utah.

The grand
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by \$5,000
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second
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Winners
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receive
outdoor
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provided
by
Celestron
and
Osprey
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courtesy
of Historic
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and an
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Prizes are
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for fan
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and the
following
six
category
winners:

- Adventure
and
Outdoor
Recreation
- Historical
and

Cultural

·

Scenic,
Seasons,
and
Landscapes

·

Family,
Friends,
and
Fun

·

Wildlife

·

Night
Skies

The 2017
*Share the
Experience*
photo
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sponsored
by
the National
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Foundations
in
partnership
with
the National
Park
Service,
the Bureau
of Land
Management,
the Bureau
of
Reclamation,
the U.S.
Army
Corps of
Engineers,
the U.S.
Fish and
Wildlife

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Ross
Senior Public
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<DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth
quote.docx>

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Ross, Paul](#); [Matulka, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 12:12:21 PM

i prefer to drive to insta

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 12:07 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
I defer to you guys on the CBS mention. I'm good with the rest. Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
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On May 3, 2017, at 7:59 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

An exclusive. I believe we mentioned them last year to let people know where these would be announced. But I am fine removing and just driving folks to our Instagram.

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*Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo
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This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

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Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

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On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:56 AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Once was enough :)

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at
11:36 AM, Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

I'm good with just a
mention :) Unless of
course you want to do
it haha

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

I

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2, 2017
at 11:34 AM,
Matulka, Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

Thanks, and
completely
understand about
being busy the past

few days.

CBS isn't interviewing anyone for this segment. They usually show all the photo winners and talk about the contest (the photo appearing on the public lands pass and the call to action to enter this year's contest). Happy to suggest someone though if you have ideas!

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 11:26 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks for your patience. Yesterday was busy. Who is doing the interview with CBS? Edits to the secretary's quote below.

"These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation," said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. "Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for

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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2,
2017 at 11:04
AM, Matulka,
Rebecca
<rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hi Heather,

CBS has agreed to cover this on air, online and on social media, and they'll need the materials tonight. It'd be great to send our release at the same time as the photos and captions. We can always send without a

Secretary quote
if you need
more time to
review.

Thanks!

On Mon, May
1, 2017 at 8:13
AM, Ross, Paul
<paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Heather-

Below is a
release for
your review
regarding the
annual Share
The
Experience
contest. I
believe
Rebecca
already
mentioned
this to you.
Release is
scheduled for
Thursday.
But we will
want to give
to some
reporters on
Wednesday
under
embargo. All
of the other
land
management
agencies and
Park
Foundation
will be
putting out
their own
version of the
release. The
plan is to
work with

USA Today
on a photo
gallery as
well as CBS
This Morning
for
announcing
the winners.
But if there is
any other
media you'd
like to offer
an embargo
to, let us
know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you
for
awareness.
The annual
contest,
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partner with
the National
Park
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and other
federal land
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highlights
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Thank you!

**Interior
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“These
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“From riders
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From: Ross, Paul
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
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Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 7:59:41 AM

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"From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico or a young boy hiking the Narrows of Zion National Park to the beautiful landscape of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge or an amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam; they showcase that these places are truly for 'the benefit and enjoyment of the people.'"

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<DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth quote.docx>

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Ross, Paul](#)
Cc: [Matulka, Rebecca](#); [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 7:53:04 AM

Thanks, Paul.

Do we need to mention CBS? Are they a partner or just an exclusive?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
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Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 7:39:03 AM
Attachments: [DOI Share The Experience Release FINAL vNPF Shafroth quote.docx](#)

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Below is a release for your review regarding the annual Share The Experience contest. I believe Rebecca already mentioned this to you. Release is scheduled for Thursday. But we will want to give to some reporters on Wednesday under embargo. All of the other land management agencies and Park Foundation will be putting out their own version of the release. The plan is to work with USA Today on a photo gallery as well as CBS This Morning for announcing the winners. But if there is any other media you'd like to offer an embargo to, let us know.

Laura-

I've cc'd you for awareness. The annual contest, which we partner with the National Park Foundation and other federal land management agencies on, highlights amateur photographers and their work showcasing our public lands. The winning photo is then featured on the America The Beautiful Federal Land Pass.

Thank you!

**Interior Announces
“Share the Experience”
2016 Photo Contest
Winners**

*Citizen Photographers
Compete for Photo Placement
on*

Public Lands and Waters Pass

WASHINGTON – The U.S.

Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#), while launching the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual America the Beautiful federal lands pass.

“These photos encapsulate exactly what public lands mean to the American people,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico or a young boy hiking the Narrows of Zion National Park to the beautiful landscape of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge or an amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam; they showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

Dabbling in wildlife photography since

the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of

Historic Hotels of America and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundations in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department's popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America's national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great

example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark—a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America’s national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Matulka, Rebecca](#)
Cc: [Ross, Paul](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 11:26:08 AM

Thanks for your patience. Yesterday was busy.
Who is doing the interview with CBS?
Edits to the secretary's quote below.

"These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation," said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. "Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for 'the benefit and enjoyment of the people.' Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it."

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 2, 2017 at 11:04 AM, Matulka, Rebecca <rebecca_matulka@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Heather,

CBS has agreed to cover this on air, online and on social media, and they'll need the materials tonight. It'd be great to send our release at the same time as the photos and captions. We can always send without a Secretary quote if you need more time to review.

Thanks!

On Mon, May 1, 2017 at 8:13 AM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather-

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amphibians are gorgeous to me. I've been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

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###

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
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U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

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Rebecca Matulka
Deputy Director of Digital
Interior Department
202.208.5337

From: Ross, Paul
To: [Rigas, Laura](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#)
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Superintendent of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Announced
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 3:45:47 PM

Thanks!

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

On Fri, Oct 20, 2017 at 3:43 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Paul. I will alert the front office. Please have them proceed unless you hear from me.

My best,
L

*Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior*

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 2:32 PM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

All-

Below is a release announcing the new superintendent of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The region would like to announce on Monday so that the Southeast Region may begin the approval and recruitment process for a new SER Chief Ranger being vacated by the new superintendent. The SER position is critical given the disasters and issues in the Southeast.

The hiring has been approved through the DOI process.

Release looks good. No concerns from me.

-Paul

Midwest Regional Office News Release

Superintendent of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Announced

Omaha — David Horne has been selected as the next Superintendent of Pictured

Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan. Horne is a 23-year veteran of the National Park Service and currently the Chief Ranger for the Southeast Region of the National Park Service. He will begin his new assignment in January 2018.

“We are very pleased to welcome Dave as the new Superintendent of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore,” stated Regional Director Cam Sholly. “He has a proven track record of successfully managing complex operations, building strong teams, and collaborating closely with communities and partners.”

A graduate of Humboldt State University in northern California with a bachelor’s degree in biology, Horne spent four years in the U.S. Coast Guard, stationed primarily in Kodiak, Alaska. His career with the National Park Service began in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in natural resource management. He then joined the ranks of Visitor and Resource Protection working at Sequoia & Kings Canyon, Big Bend, Yosemite, and Pinnacles National Parks as well as Lake Mead National Recreation Area and in the Intermountain Regional Office.

“I am honored to be selected as the Superintendent of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and for the opportunity to work with the park’s talented staff,” Horne said. “My family and I are also very much looking forward to moving to the Upper Peninsula.”

Horne and his wife, Carol, have three young sons who are very active in scouting. He and his sons completed a week-long 50-mile canoe trip with the scouts this past summer, and they expect to continue this passion in their new home.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, was established in 1966. It is a water-based park consisting of 73,236 acres offering the opportunity to explore miles of pristine beaches, hike over 100 miles of trails, and experience the serenity of the northern hardwood forest.

www.nps.gov

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Fox and Friends
Date: Monday, July 17, 2017 4:58:56 PM
Attachments: [WAVES Template Submission HS.xlsx](#)

Attached. And just a reminder my (b) (6) but the doc doesn't recognize it.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 17, 2017 at 4:51 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

Think you need to fill out that spreadsheet. Do you have it?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, July 17, 2017 4:47 PM
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: Fox and Friends

Yes - 8:15 from Pebble. Does the regular link work for WAVES? <https://events.whitehouse.gov/form?rid=BQ9RPV3WY8>

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 17, 2017 at 4:45 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

Is the Secretary confirmed tomorrow?

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO](mailto:Shah.Raj.S.EOP/WHO)
Cc: russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: From Interior
Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 10:52:56 AM

sure. thanks.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 10:34 AM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <[<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5))> wrote:

[<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5))
[<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5))

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 10:05 AM
To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO [<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5)); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: From Interior

Raj - As it's a bit more reaching than the standard travel inquiry I wanted to double check what you all wanted us to do with it. There's A LOT of wrong information in here, such as the claim that there were political events in California, Nevada, others. I have the answers for all of these questions, just for your reference.

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?

- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?

- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.
 - What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?

- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?

- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barabra, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?
 - On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
 - Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means

include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?

- May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay? At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?

- June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?

- July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.
 - What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: Eilperin, Juliet
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: FW: a question about the FOIA the Western Values Project received on Lola Zinke's travel
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 4:43:54 PM

The Western Values Project is a partisan hatchet group run by democratic campaign staffers.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and his wife. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. And, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

The Department provided the extensive list of documents once they were compiled.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Nov 20, 2017 at 4:29 PM, Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com> wrote:

Dear All,

The story has posted <http://wapo.st/2Ah9i5f> and is running in print tomorrow. I would welcome a comment from someone if that's doable. Thanks.

Juliet

From: Eilperin, Juliet
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:49 AM
To: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: a question about the FOIA the Western Values Project received on Lola Zinke's travel

Dear Press Team,

We are doing a post on the result of the FOIA that the Western Values Project obtained, in which they filed a lawsuit to receive a response. Here are a couple of things I was hoping to get answered:

1. Do you have a comment as to why Lola Zinke weighed in on the guest list for a town hall hosted by the conservative Young America's Foundation with the Secretary, and why she joined a dinner with Alaska Gov. Walker when it meant staff would have to redo her travel itinerary?

2. Why did department only provide the documents after facing a lawsuit?

Thanks so much, and I am best reached via email or cell today.

Juliet Eilperin

Juliet Eilperin

Senior National Affairs Correspondent

Washington Post

Juliet.eilperin@washpost.com

(O) 202-334-7774

(C) 202-302-3663

@eilperin

From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: RE: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 2:53:55 PM

Thank you! Sorry I overlooked this...

Brad

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 2:51 PM
To: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

Brad, here's the statement.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 1:44 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

The Secretary spent a number of hours with the reporter over a several month span, where they talked about everything from his love of public lands, admiration of the President and his cabinet, and the Administration's shared vision to Make America Great Again. The reporter selectively used quotes out of context to write a story that fit her pre-conceived narrative. Secretary Zinke looks forward to continuing to carry out the President's agenda and fulfill Interior's mission to protect and manage our nation's natural resources and cultural heritage.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 8:20 AM, Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

See below. I'm at my desk until 8:45 a.m. Let's discuss.

Brad Rateike
The White House
Assistant Director of Cabinet Communications

(b) (6)
Desk: (b) (6)
Mobile: (b) (6)

From: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 8:19 AM
To: Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)>
Subject: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

Adam, work with Brad. We need some guidance/answers here in case asked.

From: Hemming, Andrew J. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 7:36 AM
To: Boza-Holman, Sofia M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>;
Cheung, Steven EOP/WHO (b) (6)>; Ditto, Jessica E.
EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Ferre, Helen A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Fetalvo, Ninio J. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Grisham, Stephanie A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Hulse, Elliott Y. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Hurley, Carolina L. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Montesi, Janet M. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Parkinson, Andrew Z. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Ross, Tyler E. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Sanders, Sarah H. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Shoemaker, Clay M. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Short, Michael C. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Sims, Cliff D. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Strom, Natalie M. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Walters, Lindsay E. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>
Subject: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

A Zinke interview just popped in GQ and he has a couple of eyebrow-raising quotes in there about Trump.

KEY SECTIONS:

Zinke Calls His Job Interview With Trump Disorganized:

Rumors buzzed that he'd been shortlisted for the job atop the Interior Department, but when Zinke and his wife, Lola, passed through the gilded doors of Trump Tower, he actually had no clue what position he was interviewing for—Priebus had never said definitively. And by the end of a rambling conversation with the president-elect, Zinke still wasn't entirely sure.

"The conversation went a hundred seconds. It went from women in combat to Syria policy to the Chinese to energy independence, a little about public lands, a little about hunting access," Zinke tells me. "Most of the conversation was not really Interior, per se." At one point, Trump proposed the Veterans Affairs post, to which Zinke quipped, "I don't think you hate me that much."

He was flying back to Montana when Mike Pence called him. "The vice president says, 'Well, congratulations!'" Zinke recalls, sharing the moment he was asked to join the Trump Cabinet, "and I asked him, 'What job?'"

Zinke Says The Trump Administration Has Had “A Lot Of Distractions And Chatter”:

Thirty minutes into our ride, after snaking through another throng of tourists, we approach the Washington Monument—that stone memorial to the original military man turned president—and Zinke takes stock of these still-early days of the Trump administration. "The president is the best boss I've ever had," Zinke tells me, "but there's a lot of distractions and chatter." He tugs on his reins to pause for a moment and consider the structure, the city's tallest by edict. "You're just always looking for ways to stay above that."

Zinke Complains About How Hard It Is To Bring People Onboard And Notes Government Is Different Than Business:

For all that camera-ready affection for the boss, members of the Trump cabinet, Zinke included, admit to being frustrated with the White House, which they say has left them chronically short-staffed. According to the Partnership for Public Service, the White House has yet to nominate staffers for 357 out of 570 key agency positions. So far, only 50 nominees have been confirmed. (By this time in their first terms, President Obama had gotten 203 confirmed; George W. Bush, 203.)

...

Zinke, four months into the job, has been able to fill only two key positions that require White House approval, out of 15 vacancies. He notes that he's submitted the names of "awfully good, just super people," but that the past few months have been a waiting game. "Operating a business sometimes is a little different from operating in the Oval Office," Zinke says. "[In business], it's just 'All right, you're hired.' But I think the White House is running into the swamp...there's a bureaucracy there that's very difficult to determine." (Zinke may have himself to thank for recent inaction, though. The day after his unseemly call to Murkowski, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which the Alaska senator chairs, announced that hearings for a slate of Zinke's nominees would be delayed.)

Zinke Said The WH Is “Getting Its Legs Under It” And Says They Were “Getting In Other People’s Business A Bit Too Much”:

Zinke insists that he and his team have gotten along just fine with their designated White House minder, but John Kelly, who served until last week as the secretary of homeland security, was a bit more candid when we spoke. "I don't need a lot of supervision," he told me. "Obviously the White House is getting its legs under it, but early on it was a bit of a pain. They were getting in other people's business a little bit too much." (Kelly's tune will presumably change: On Friday he was named White House chief of staff.)

<http://www.gq.com/story/ryan-zinke-secretary-of-interior-profile>

From: Swift, Heather
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
Subject: Re: FW: ZINKE QUESTION FOR TMRW
Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 2:28:18 PM
Attachments: [WAVES Template Submission HS.xlsx](#)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jun 28, 2017 at 2:18 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6) > wrote:

Please fill out the attached

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 2:15 PM
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Hurley, Carolina L. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: FW: ZINKE QUESTION FOR TMRW

I'll be there

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jun 28, 2017 at 2:13 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6) > wrote:

Hi Heather – who is coming with the secretary tomorrow? We'll wave you all in.

From: Larocco, Lori Ann (NBCUniversal) [mailto:LoriAnn.Larocco@nbcuni.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 2:10 PM
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: ZINKE QUESTION FOR TMRW

Heather Swift from interior wanted to know if a WH comms officer needs to “WAVE” her in. Can you please let me know? I told her I would ask

Lori Ann

Lori Ann LaRocco

Sr. Talent Producer

Author, “Opportunity Knocking”, “Dynasties of the Sea”, “Thriving in the New Economy”

Phone: 201-735-3044 | **Cell:** 201-618-1566 |  @loriannlarocco



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CNBC is also available nationwide on Sirius XM channel 112.

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Swift_Heather](#)
Subject: Re: FYI: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs: TEST
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:53:30 PM

Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 12:51 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

She signed off on it separately.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:51 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Adding Lori.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 12:49 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

FYI -- This is going out momentarily.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:46 PM
Subject: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs: TEST
To: nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov, heather_swift@ios.doi.gov

news release



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

ANCHORAGE - U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

"A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues," said Secretary Zinke. "Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve served in the military, and he then continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's management."

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential," said Wackowski.

Wackowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour, Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce's "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is an avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

Steve Wackowski stands in a boat holding the antlers of a moose.



###



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This email was sent to Email Address by: U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington DC
20240 202-208-3100



From: Laura Rigas
To: [Domenech, Douglas](mailto:Domenech.Douglas)
Cc: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: FYI: Share The Experience Winners Release
Date: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 10:20:42 AM

Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 3, 2017, at 10:05 AM, Domenech, Douglas <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I do not see any issues. People should know the prizes are not from tax dollars and it says that.

Doug Domenech
Senior Advisor
US Department of the Interior

On Wed, May 3, 2017 at 7:45 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi all --
FYI, this is going out today. Please let us know by 10am if you have any issues. Also, there's a quote from the NPF President. Any concerns with that?
Thanks,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

**Interior Announces “Share the
Experience” 2016 Photo Contest Winners**
*Citizen Photographers Compete for Photo
Placement on*

National Public Lands and Waters Pass

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today, along with the National Park Foundation and other participating federal recreation land agencies, announced the winners of the 2016 “Share the Experience” photography contest on CBS This Morning and Interior's popular [Instagram account](#) and launched the 2017 contest.

This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America’s national parks and public lands. The winning picture, captured by Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas, will be featured on the annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass.

“These incredible photos represent some of America's best recreation, wilderness and wildlife, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to share them with the nation,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Expanding access for hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, hiking and more is a cornerstone of my agenda for America's public lands. From riders kicking-up dirt at the White Ridge Trail System in New Mexico to the amazing sunset behind Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, the photos showcase that these places are truly for ‘the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’ Hopefully they inspire some young people to get outside and enjoy it.”

More than 16,500 photos were submitted with more than 710,000 photo views over the course of the contest, which ran from April 28, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2016. The contest saw a 50 percent increase in new users and almost a 10 percent increase in overall photo submissions from the previous contest year.

“Photos have the power to inspire curiosity about our national parks and public lands,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation. “This contest motivates people to get out, find their park, and enjoy these treasured places.”

Dabbling in wildlife photography since the early 1970s, grand prize winner Craig McIntyre of Rockport, Texas and his wife make weekly visits to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge during the summer months.

“I like photographing the frogs because they’re artistic – little reptiles and amphibians are gorgeous to me. I’ve been studying them for 60 years now – patterns, designs, and their behavior all fascinate me,” said McIntyre. “Public lands are very important to me, especially places like Big Bend National Park, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and South Padre Island National Seashore. These places and the habitat need to be protected.”

Second place went to Gary Hamer of Robins, Iowa, for the serene shot of his friends paddling off on a morning adventure surrounded by calm water and rising fog in Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest, in northeastern Minnesota.

Third place went to Christopher Regala of Mililani, Hawaii, for the photo he snapped of his son experiencing The Narrows at Zion National Park in Utah.

The grand prize for the winning image is \$10,000, followed by \$5,000 and \$3,000 for second and third place. Winners also receive outdoor gear provided by Celestron and Osprey Packs, hotel packages courtesy of Historic Hotels of America® and an annual National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Prizes are awarded for fan favorites and the following six category winners:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- Historical and Cultural
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Wildlife
- Night Skies

The 2017 *Share the Experience* photo contest, sponsored by the National Park Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and Recreation.gov, is now accepting entries through December 31. All entries have the chance to be featured on the Interior Department's popular [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Share the Experience is the official photo contest of America's national parks and federal recreational lands, showcasing the more than 500 million acres of federal lands and drawing entries from all across the United States. For a full listing of prizes and rules, or to submit a photo, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org.

Share the Experience is a great example of the countless ways there are to #FindYourPark/#EncuentraTuParque — a public awareness and education movement to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support America's national parks and community-based programs. #FindYourPark invites people to discover and share their own unique connections to our nation's natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history.

###

From: Magallanes, Downey
To: [Virginia Johnson](mailto:virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov)
Cc: [Douglas Domenech](mailto:Douglas.Domenech); [Scott Hommel](mailto:Scott.Hommel); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas); [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather); [Caroline Boulton](mailto:Caroline.Boulton); [Timothy Williams](mailto:Timothy.Williams); [Aurelia Skipwith](mailto:Aurelia.Skipwith)
Subject: Re: Girl Scouts of the USA's invitation to Secretary Zinke
Date: Saturday, June 03, 2017 4:31:12 PM

Not sure if anyone has responded already but from the proposal this sounds like a great event. Looks like only July 15 or 29 would work. We can put this in the scheduling queue.

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 11:09 PM, Virginia Johnson <virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I'm forwarding the invitation below from the Girl Scouts of the USA. Alice and I previously worked together at the American Red Cross.

Please see their proposal below and let me know how we might best proceed. This sounds like a very positive opportunity for the Secretary. It promotes partnership of Girl Scouts in the NPS with a focus on stewardship and infrastructure projects, is close to D.C. and focuses on girls from troops who are daughters of Marines at Quantico and the National Capital Region.

Many thanks,
Virginia

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Hockenbury, Alice" <AHockenbury@girlscouts.org>
Date: May 31, 2017 at 9:11:52 AM EDT
To: "Johnson, Virginia" <virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Ryan, Denise" <DRyan@girlscouts.org>
Subject: Girl Scouts of the USA's invitation to Secretary Zinke

Virginia,

Thank you for taking the time yesterday to discuss our invitation to Secretary Zinke to celebrate the on-going partnership between Girl Scouts of the USA with the Department of the Interior. As we discussed, this invitation is extended to Secretary and Mrs. Zinke to join the Girl Scouts of the USA at an event at the National Park Service's Prince William Forest Park in Triangle, Virginia this summer with approximately 100 local girls from the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital with a specific outreach to Girl Scouts in military families at Marine Corps Base Quantico just five miles to the East. We welcome Secretary Zinke at the event for as long as he is available to attend and understand it may only be for the opening program. **Attached you will find a proposed overview of the event.**

At the event we would like to promote the Girl Scout Ranger Program where girls can earn a patch for 10 hours of service in a National Park. **Attached you will find an overview of the Girl Scout Ranger Program.** We would like to also highlight a new series of Girl Scout outdoor badges – many of which can be earned at national parks **Attached you will find an overview of the new Girl Scout Outdoor Badges.** After the opening program, the girls will take part in a service project at Prince William Forest Park to assist in deferred or annual maintenance at the park and learn to be stewards of our nation's resources.

We propose holding the event on a Saturday to allow the girls and supporting adults and families to participate outside of the normal work day. However, if the Secretary's schedule can't accommodate a Saturday, we are flexible to work with your team to find a mutually acceptable date. We request one month lead-time to organize the event and suggest the following dates: July 15, July 29 or August 5. We would also like to invite senior women serving at the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to attend the event as they will be excellent role models and an inspiration to the girls.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Denise Ryan at drayn@girlscouts.org or 202 478-9827 if you have any questions.

Thank you for consideration of our invitation.

Best,

Alice

--

Downey Magallanes
Acting Deputy Chief of Staff

Senior Advisor and Counselor
downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
202-501-0654 (desk)
202-706-9199 (cell)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rigas, Laura](#)
Cc: [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Re: GOING SOON: Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior: TEST
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 2:51:51 PM

weird! I fixed that before sending. Alex, you'll have to strip the formatting in another program and copy paste it back in.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 2:49 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
There's something funny with the spacing, too...

*Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior*

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 2:41 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
GOING SOON

news release



Date: July 12, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department’s many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department,” **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** “Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the

West, and Todd’s intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior’s mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities.”

“It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary,” **Willens said.** “I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again.”

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

“Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies,” **Congressman Pearce said.** “More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position.”

“The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior,” **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** “In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd’s expertise and experience will be a valuable asset.”

“I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular,” **Chairman Paul Torres of the**

All Pueblo Council of Governors said. “Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior’s trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration.”

“The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn’t be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity.”

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

“The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens’ appointment,” **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club’s Policy Committee.** “Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###



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This email was sent to Email Address by: U.S. Department of the Interior - 1849 C Street, N.W. - Washington DC 20240 - 202-208-3100



From: Swift, Heather
To: Barnum, Jeremy
Subject: Re: HARD ASAP deadline -- Can you look at this?
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:18:48 PM
Attachments: [New Picture \(1\).bmp](#)

TY!

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 3:14 PM, Barnum, Jeremy <jeremy_barnum@nps.gov> wrote:
I'm going to this over to a subject matter expert really quick on legal/\$\$ stuff.

A couple of quick things that came to my mind at first blush:

"America's tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private-partnerships across our public lands."

I know a lot of my colleagues would say this is made possible through federal protection and congressional appropriations for roads, trails, etc. but I know that's not the tenor of the piece.

"Having partners in parks also does not mean the shuttle bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers."

Per our philanthropic policies we do have have some donor recognition that includes vehicles wrapped with decorative material based on park based designs. You may see a vehicle with a short, unobtrusive credit line but only when the donation relates to the vehicle. You will not see vehicles emblazoned with advertising slogans.

Jeremy K. Barnum
Public Affairs Officer
National Park Service
Office: (202) 513-7262
Mobile: (202) 617-7973

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[Instagram](#) [YouTube](#)

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 2:55 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Jeremy - I'm sorry for the quick ASAP project but do you see any issues with this? Fact checking and are there any sensitivities I should be aware of with any of the examples I used?

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private-partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition.

Boston Harbor National Recreation Area is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boats between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, provide educational tours, and carry out janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private partners also help maintain our buildings and aging infrastructure.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at the historic Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences like riding the historic Ford “Red Jammer” busses in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park would not be possible without public-private partnerships.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders and land managers to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can partner together to build upon the All-American Outdoor Experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard is for a food truck in a park’s parking lot, energy-efficient cabins in a national monument, and bringing mobile youth fishing centers to urban areas across the

country.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas.

For example, Wi-Fi, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, services like boat, ATV and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. This would be like going on a ski vacation and not being able to rent skis or have access to a lift up the mountain.

This leaves many families without practical and affordable options for camping, hiking, and recreating. Having three kids and two granddaughters myself, I can't imagine going on a family vacation without some of these basic services.

Now, expanding public-private-partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

Having partners in parks also does not mean the shuttle bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. In fact, some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver greater services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management. Partners are also able to deliver many services to the American people at a lower cost than the government can.

With the right amount of ingenuity and originality, we can foster the All-American Outdoor Experience through our work at Interior. The Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, "For the enjoyment of the people." Enjoying recreation on public lands is at the core of our shared American heritage.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it's also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry supports \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is about products as much as it is about our shared heritage and values. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There's a reason 330 million people from across the country and the world visit our parks every year, and millions more flock to public lands coast to coast: It's because these spaces are uniquely American and are the result of a century of public-private partnerships.

This "Made in America" Week, let's unite under a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Barnum, Jeremy](mailto:Jeremy.Barnum@nps.gov)
Subject: Re: HARD ASAP deadline -- Can you look at this?
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 4:15:11 PM
Attachments: [New Picture \(1\).bmp](#)

Awesome! Thanks for this feedback. Very nuanced. It's the same op ed just taken in a different direction

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 13, 2017, at 4:12 PM, Barnum, Jeremy <jeremy_barnum@nps.gov> wrote:

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Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

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Department of the Interior

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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Barnum, Jeremy
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: HARD ASAP deadline -- Can you look at this?
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 4:12:57 PM
Attachments: [New Picture \(1\).bmp](#)

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From: Barnum, Jeremy
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: HARD ASAP deadline -- Can you look at this?
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:14:52 PM
Attachments: [New Picture \(1\).bmp](#)

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From: Heather Swift
To: [Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO](mailto:Shah.Raj.S.EOP/WHO)
Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](mailto:Love.Kelly.A.EOP/WHO); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](mailto:Rateike.Bradley.A.EOP/WHO)
Subject: Re: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 8:33:32 PM

FYI. Awaiting a call back from AP.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

> On Oct 3, 2017, at 8:12 PM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:
>
> Heather call me ASAP (b) (6)
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
> Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 7:11 PM
> To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
> Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
> Subject: Re: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke
>
> I'm on in flight until about 9:30 but available after: (b) (6).
>
> Sent from my iPad
>
>> On Oct 2, 2017, at 6:30 PM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:
>>
>> Heather what's best #? I'll call in a little
>>
>> -----Original Message-----
>> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
>> Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 6:28 PM
>> To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov); Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
>> Subject: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke
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>> Heads up. Expecting articles about Mrs. Z travel (at personal expense)
>> to hit WP, Politico and Mic tonight. I'm wheels up until 9:00PM.
>>
>> Heather Swift
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Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](#); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 10:41:08 PM

He said he would clarify that the statement was made last week.

Sent from my iPad

> On Oct 3, 2017, at 8:12 PM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO (b) (6) > wrote:
>
> Heather call me ASAP (b) (6)
>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
> Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 7:11 PM
> To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
> Cc: [Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov](#); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#) <(b) (6)>; [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#) <(b) (6)>
> Subject: Re: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke

> I'm on in flight until about 9:30 but available after: (b) (6)

> Sent from my iPad

>> On Oct 2, 2017, at 6:30 PM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO (b) (6) > wrote:
>>
>> Heather what's best #? I'll call in a little
>>
>> -----Original Message-----
>> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
>> Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 6:28 PM
>> To: [Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov](#); [Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO](#) <(b) (6)>; [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#) <(b) (6)>; [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#) <(b) (6)>
>> Subject: Heads Up - Mrs. Zinke

>> Heads up. Expecting articles about Mrs. Z travel (at personal expense)
>> to hit WP, Politico and Mic tonight. I'm wheels up until 9:00PM.

>> Heather Swift
>> Press Secretary
>> Department of the Interior

From: Argo, Michael
To: [Swift, Heather](#); [Wesley Bullock](#)
Cc: [Michael Argo](#)
Subject: Re: Hello and welcome!
Date: Friday, November 10, 2017 3:12:38 PM
Attachments: [1 Michael Argo BIO VETSDAY 11 NOV 2017.docx](#)

I CLEANED this up a little:

Michael Argo – Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary

Michael Argo is a former U.S. Navy SEAL Captain who served for three decades which included combat during Operation Just Cause in Panama and service in Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq. He served as Commander and Commanding Officer for four separate commands, worked three Joint commands and toured on numerous operational deployments around the world. CAPT Argo played college football at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; he holds a B.A. in Education and an M.S in Geography. [AM*1] More recently, CAPT [AM*2] Argo served as a strategist and planner at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, DC with the KENNEDY Irregular Warfare Center and worked briefly[AM*3] at the Department of Homeland Security in the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office.

INTRODUCTION OF CAPT Michael P. Argo: U.S. NAVY SEAL CAPTAIN RETIRED

CAPTAIN (retired) Michael P. Argo served as a U. S. NAVY SEAL for three decades. He served as the first Commodore of the SEAL's Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven (**NSWG-11**) in San Diego California, as an Action Officer at the NAVY SEAL Headquarters, Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado California, and as the Commanding Officer for three separate Navy [AM*4] Operational Support Centers (NOSCs); CO of NOSC Los Angeles, CO of NOSC Denver and CO of NOSC Hartford.

OPERATIONALLY, CAPTAIN Argo served as the EXECUTIVE OFFICER and OPERATIONS OFFICER of **SEAL TEAM TWO**, [AM*5] where he fought in Combat Operations [AM*6] during Operation JUST CAUSE in PANAMA [AM*7] and was awarded the **Combat Action Ribbon**[AM*8]. He also served a period in **Fallujah** [AM*9] Iraq during **Operation Iraqi Freedom**. Throughout his career he has toured [AM*10] on numerous deployments in Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, Korea, South West Asia and Central Asia.

Additionally, CAPT Argo served as both a Pilot and Navigator [AM*11] of a NAVY SEAL Mini-submarine, known as a SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV), where he conducted numerous s launch and recovery operations off a Nuclear Submarine.

EARLIER[AM*12] in his Career:

-CAPTAIN (Ret) Argo graduated, as a collegiate athlete, [AM*13] from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

-He received his NAVY commissioned [AM*14] from Navy ROTC.

-His first tour was onboard a Navy Destroyer, the USS John King (DDG-3), where he served as First Lieutenant, Legal Officer and Electrical Officer.

-He graduated from Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL School Class training with Class 134

-He deployed to Haiti during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY as the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Operations Officer

-He did a tour at Special Boat Unit Twenty (SBU-20) in Little Creek VA.

CAPT Argo's most profound accomplishments have been graduating from BUDs, establishing Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven, standing up SEAL Teams SEVENTEEN and EIGHTEEN, and convincing his beautiful wife Margot to marry him and share their lives with *four* daughters!

Today, CAPT Argo serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Department of Interior under TEAMMATE Secretary Ryan Zinke, CAPT Argo is an active Board[AM*15] member of the SEAL FAMILY FOUNDATION and Member of the UDT/SEAL Association.

SHORT SUMMARY SHORT

CAPT (Ret) Michael Argo has served as the Commander and Commanding Officer for four separate commands, worked in three Joint Commands (Theater Special Operation Command –TSOC's) and has toured on numerous deployments in Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, Korea, South West Asia and Central Asia. He deployed to Haiti during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY as the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Operations Officer. CAPT Argo severed at SEAL TEAM TWO, SEAL DELIVERY TEAM TWO (SDV), SPECIAL BOAT TEAM [AM*16] TWENTY as Executive Officer, Operations Office, Training Officer and Platoon Commander, respectively-. He served as a Pilot and Navigator [AM*17] for a SEAL min-sub; Delivery Vehicle (SDV) at SDV TEAM TWO and conducted numerous s launch and recovery operations off a Nuclear Submarine.

His Command Tours include: Commander of Naval Special Warfare Group Eleven (NSWG-11), Commanding Officer of Navy Operation Support Center Los Angeles (NOSC-LA), Navy and Marine Corps Center, Denver and Navy and Marine Corps Center, Hartford.

CAPT (Ret) Argo had a successful Naval career and has severed in **Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)**. He served in **Desert Shield and Desert Storm**

and fought in Operation “**Just Cause**” in Panama with SEAL TEAM TWO where he was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon.

CAPT (Ret) Argo has a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and a Masters of Geography from Central Connecticut State University in Hartford Connecticut.

CAPT Argo is married to the former Margaret Lee Davis of Raleigh North Carolina, Who graduated from Salem College in NC and teaches Special Education for Fairfax Count Public School.

CAPTAIN and Margo Argo have four beautiful daughters who have graduated from University of Californian Berkeley, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara and One still in school at Sonoma State University just north of San Francisco CA.

And the same Navy SEAL Slogan hold true with these four girls. “The only easy day was yesterday.”

Today, CAPT Argo serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Department of Interior under TEAMMATE Secretary Ryan Zinke, CAPT Argo is an active Board[AM*18] member of the SEAL FAMILY FOUNDATION and Member of the UDT/SEAL Association.

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 6:14 PM, Argo, Michael <michael_argo@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks,

Let me know if that is too long...you can cut it down, i attach my old bio so you know more of my old background.

Mike Argo

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 5:55 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Many thanks! Nice to see you this afternoon.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 5:53 PM, Argo, Michael <michael_argo@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Sorry for the delay.....You can word smith or cut it down.

Michael Argo – Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary

Michael Argo is a decorated former U.S. Navy SEAL Captain who served for three decades to include fighting in combat during Operation Just Cause in Panama to serving up to Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq. He served as Commander and Commanding Officer for four separate commands, worked three Joint commands and deployed on numerous deployment around the world. CAPT Argo played college football at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and earned a B.A. degree in Education. He also has as MS in Geography. More recently, CAPT Argo serve as a strategist and planner at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington DC with the KENNEDY Irregular Warfare Center and a short stint with the Department of Homeland Security at the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office.

On Tue, Nov 7, 2017 at 1:14 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there Mike and Rick - Heather Swift here. I'm the press secretary at Interior and need a couple sentences about each of you that I can share with press. I've included two examples below for your reference. Look forward to meeting you both!

Scott Hommel - Chief of Staff to the Secretary

Scott Hommel is a decorated Marine veteran who served in the Gulf War. He has two decades of experience in state and federal government as well as work on behalf of military organizations like the National Guard Association of the United States. Most recently, Mr. Hommel served as then-Congressman Zinke's Chief of Staff in the House.

Heather Swift – Press Secretary

Before her appointment as the Department's Press Secretary, Heather Swift was a member of the Interior Beachhead Team. She joined after serving in Zinke's congressional office as Communications Director and as his Deputy Campaign Manager. Prior to her service with Zinke, Ms. Swift held various communications positions at public affairs firms and U.S. Senate races across the country. She is a two-time graduate of Saint John's University in New York City, where she earned a Bachelors of Science in Public Relations and graduated summa cum laude with a Master's of Science in International Communications.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Boulton, Caroline
To: Swift, Heather
Subject: Re: Help: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:54:15 PM

I would agree with that.

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 2:51 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks -- Is it fair to say the Department did not incur any expenses due to Lola's presence?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 2:44 PM, Boulton, Caroline <caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

He did pay for her dinner. It was recent because the Governor's office didn't give us a final cost per person for the dinner until the last two weeks so I'm not sure if the State of Alaska has processed it yet. There was no official reason per say, and she had planned to already have left Alaska by then until a few days prior. (b) (5)

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 2:28 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?
1. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Date: November 17, 2017 at 2:13:55 PM EST
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Question from Politico

- Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?
- Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior

staff had originally advised against it.

--

Caroline Boulton
Special Assistant to the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Scheduling & Advance
Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

--

Caroline Boulton
Special Assistant to the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Scheduling & Advance
Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: Mashburn, Lori
Cc: Laura Rigas; Downey Magallanes
Subject: Re: Helpful process fix
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:47:48 AM

thanks!

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:36 AM, Mashburn, Lori <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Below is the way I would phrase it.

"Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him temporarily step into this leadership role until a permanent Director is confirmed by the Senate. We couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the initial transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands over the past few months."

Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202.208.1694

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:28 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Should we make it clear that Brian is also temporary until the Director is named?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 16, 2017, at 10:56 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Can I confirm Brian's appointment? If so, does this work? "Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him step into this leadership role and couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands the past few months."

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 10:44 AM, Mashburn, Lori

<lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I knew it was coming, but didn't know when until after the fact. Thought everyone else was already looped in.

Lori K. Mashburn

White House Liaison

Department of the Interior

202.208.1694

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 10:43 AM, Laura Rigas

<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I let the team know that changes were happening, we just didn't know when.

Laura Keehner Rigas

Communications Director

U.S. Department of the Interior

(202) 897-7022 cell

@Interior

On Nov 16, 2017, at 10:35 AM, Downey Magallanes

<downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

As far as I know, this was a stand-alone personnel change that was discussed in more than one 9 am meeting. I will let others weigh in on whether more are coming.

In terms of timing- Scott would have signed this exec sec package, this is not one I would have seen. I do understand the frustration. But not sure how this could have gone differently.

On Nov 16, 2017, at 9:49 AM, Swift, Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey sorry to beat a dead horse but if Laura and I could get information on high-profile personnel changes before they are made public that would be very helpful. I got the email below forwarded to me by a reporter. I imagine there will be more to come?

Thanks,

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: "Nedd,
Michael"
<mnedd@blm.gov>

Date:
November 15,
2017 at 3:03:21
PM PST

To:
BLM_All_Employees
<blm_all_employees@blm.gov>

**Subject: BLM
Acting Director**

BLM
employees:

This week,
Secretary Ryan
Zinke appointed
Brian Steed as
Acting Director
of the BLM, and
I want to
welcome him as
he begins his

journey leading
this great
agency. John
Ruhs and I have
worked
alongside Brian
since his
appointment as
Deputy Director
for Programs
and Policy in
October, and we
have come to
know his ethic,
his intellect, and
his passion for
our multiple-use
and sustained
yield mission.
His experience
includes
working as
Chief of Staff to
U.S.
Representative
Chris Stewart of
Utah, teaching
and researching
economics at the
University of
Utah, and
serving as a
Deputy County

Attorney in Iron
County, Utah.
He is a native of
Logan, Utah,
and now resides
in Northern
Virginia with his
wife and three
children.

Brian's western
heritage and
values make him
a perfect fit for
the BLM team.

Since March 15,
I have had the
honor of leading
the BLM. Your
tireless
dedication to our
mission inspires
me every day.
DOI leaders
continually
express their
confidence in
the BLM's
leadership in the
field and here in
Washington,
which is a
testament to all
of you. Thank

you for
supporting me
as the Acting
Director over
these months,
and remaining
as ever BLM
strong.

During the
coming weeks,
John and I will
transition to
different roles.
John will return
to his position as
BLM Nevada
State Director,
and I will
assume the
duties of Acting
Deputy Director
for Operations.
I appreciate
John's sacrifice
over the past
seven months
while he has
lived away from
his family and
the wide open
spaces that he
loves.

Please join me
in welcoming
Brian to his new
position. As we
move forward,
let's continue to
stay focused on
our shared
mission and
values that guide
us in our
stewardship of
America's
public lands.

Take care and
have a
wonderful day! :
)
Michael D.
Nedd

From: Elaina Plott
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Hey Elaina
Date: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 6:20:18 PM

Amazing! I'll email Brad now. Thanks so much.

On May 31, 2017, at 5:32 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Haha no problem.

There's a number of folks at Interior/WH who work with each other. Mostly the COS, Comms, and Doug. It's a really good relationship. We all have open lines of communication.

You should talk with Brad Retike in Cabinet Affairs. (b) (6)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 5:22 PM, Elaina Plott <(b) (6)> wrote:

Ha! Oh no, they shouldn't be nervous. Just thought I'd send out a mass email instead of needling you about contacts. I'm trying to best understand the relationship between Interior and the White House -- would Doug Domenech be best for that?

On May 31, 2017, at 5:18 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Elaina, I'm getting a lot of calls from colleagues that you're sending out emails to interview them. Would you mind sending me who you'd like to interview and I'll see if they are interested? It might surprise you but a lot of folks get nervous when reporters contact them.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 2:27 PM, Elaina Plott

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Oh also I'd LOVE to talk to Lola -- is she in town anytime soon?

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 2:18 PM, Elaina Plott

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Perfect! Want to say Friday around 4 at the Jefferson? They have fun summer drinks right now.

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 2:16 PM, Swift, Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry I didn't see your email come in on Thursday! Yes, let's do coffee or a drink on Friday afternoon. I'll get contacts for you on the other three.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 31, 2017 at 2:08 PM, Elaina Plott

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hey Heather! Wanted to circle back to this. Do you have time to grab coffee or a drink tomorrow or Friday?

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:52 PM, Elaina Plott

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Who would the best contact for Mattis be? I emailed a somewhat generic DOD media email, but I imagine it went into a black hole. I've chatted with Senator Daines, but not Rob O'Neill or Rich Brooks -- do you have contacts for them?

As for background info, yes! I'd love to chat and get more color about the trip to Trump Tower. Are you in town next week?

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:47 PM, Swift, Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Awesome. Definitely link up with Mattis. They served together in Iraq in 2004. Senator Steve Daines and he have known each other since 1979. Rob O'Neill (the SEAL who shot bin laden) and his old football coach from University of Oregon Rich Brooks.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:42 PM, Elaina Plott

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hey Heather! This all sounds great. Let's arrange for riding on the week of the 5th -- I can chat with my editor about what our hard deadline is and see if New England can work as well. Thanks so much for keeping me in the loop.

I have an interview later today with Secretary Kelly, which should be great. I'd love suggestions of other folks to speak to, especially those who are close with the Secretary right now.

Yours,
Elaina

On May 25, 2017, at 11:20 AM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there, Elaina - I wanted to follow up with you about catching Zinke in the field. Please keep this information close for now, we are not ready to announce his schedule, but the Secretary will travel to New England on the week of June 12th and make several stops throughout the week that you're welcome to tag along for. If that's too far out, we can arrange for a horseback ride around the DC area the week of the 5th.

Lastly, we had talked about interviews with other cabinet secretaries and people who have known the Secretary for a number of years. Can I get you any of those contacts?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Elaina Plott
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift.Heather)
Subject: Re: Hey Elaina
Date: Monday, June 12, 2017 12:40:50 PM

Hey! (b) (6)

On Jun 12, 2017, at 11:20 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey lady, I forgot my work phone at the office. What's your number?

Also, Laura Rigas will be on the call with Mrs. Z. I'm slammed over here.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Elaina

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-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Doherty, Brian](#)
Subject: Re: Hi Alexa, are u still my poc at the WH? would Secy Zinke be avail tmrw (Friday) in the 2pm hr? thank you!
Date: Thursday, August 24, 2017 12:29:06 PM

Ok cool. Will let you know.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Aug 24, 2017, at 10:26 AM, Doherty, Brian <Brian.Doherty@foxnews.com> wrote:

Ok copy that—the piece informed me that the review was almost complete & that’s about it—we wanted to see his review & have him discuss it on FOX—if he’s avail next week in the 2pm hr, please lemme know
Thanks!

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 11:53 AM
To: Doherty, Brian
Subject: Re: Hi Alexa, are u still my poc at the WH? would Secy Zinke be avail tmrw (Friday) in the 2pm hr? thank you!

Hey Brian Zinke is not available, he's traveling, but just so you know the pitch you just sent has a lot of falsehoods. Background below

1. Zinke recommended no monuments be eliminated.
2. Monuments have been shrunk by presidents at least 18 times
3. Tawny is a democratic activist whose organization is funded by environmental groups. <https://flatheadbeacon.com/2017/08/23/chasing-big-bucks/>

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Aug 24, 2017, at 9:26 AM, Doherty, Brian <Brian.Doherty@foxnews.com> wrote:

THANK U!

From: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
[mailto:(b) (6)]
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 11:26 AM
To: Doherty, Brian
Cc: Swift, Heather
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To: Allison Putala
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Allison 202-421-3211

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Principal

Kaminsky Putala Public Relations – KPPR

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Subject: Re: Hi Alexa, are u still my poc at the WH? would Secy Zinke be avail tmrw (Friday) in the 2pm hr? thank you!
Date: Thursday, August 24, 2017 1:02:23 PM

Also I talked to Kaelan and he can do Afghanistan too. Z is VERY dialed in and reputable on that given his history.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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National monument review

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From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#); [Caroline Boulton](#)
Subject: Re: hi Heather, couple of questions
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 4:41:59 PM

Pls also make it clear that other spouses actually attended, rather than just were invited.
Thanks.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Fri, Oct 6, 2017 at 4:23 PM, Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
did you want that spelling of bologna or baloney?

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Fri, Oct 6, 2017 at 4:14 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
You good with this?

“The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources.” - Heather Swift, DOI spokesman

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward

Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

On Background -

Mrs. Zinke has never taken a flight at the expense of the department. She has never been on a flight chartered by the Department. She and a number of other spouses were invited to the Arctic CODEL, per standard procedure, and her fare was not paid for by the Department. She occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling and pays for her meals and travel at her own personal expense. There are no plans to hire her and any rumors to that point or that she runs or participates in DOI meetings are bologna.

From: "Rein, Lisa" <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Date: October 5, 2017 at 6:16:15 PM EDT
To: 'Heather Swift' <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: RE: hi Heather, couple of questions

Ah, why don't you tell me what it is?

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 05, 2017 6:13 PM
To: Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: hi Heather, couple of questions

Lisa - off the record you have a lot of really bad information here regarding Mrs. Zinke.

Heather Swift

Press Secretary

Department of the Interior

On Oct 5, 2017, at 6:03 PM, Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com> wrote:

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This is a really interesting new thing, don't think other Cabinet members have done.. And, yes I had no idea there was even a secretarial flag for each agency! But see the bison with the stars.

So, wanted to ask about the practice, why the secretary does it (I am thinking this is an old military tradition?) and who is responsible for putting up the flag,, I assume the contract security folks?

Second:

From the secretary's travel schedule, we see that Mrs. Zinke has traveled with him several times, to the VI, the CODEL to the Arctic, to California for the meeting with Gov Brown,etc. Also, she has been present at meetings with employees and other meetings at Interior.

Wondering if you can tell me a bit about this.. Whether the Zinkes reimbursed the government for the cost of her travel when she has travelled and if her presence presents any conflict of interest since she is running Troy Downing's campaign.

Are there any plans to hire Mrs. Zinke as a government employee? (Sort of in the Ivanka Trump mold?)

Ok, thanks much.

Lisa Rein

Staff Reporter

Washington Post

202-334-5190

Cell 202-821-3120

@Reinlwapo

[Send me a confidential tip](#)

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Lisa Rein
Staff Reporter
Washington Post
202-334-5190
Cell 202-821-3120
[@Reinlwapo](#)
[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rein, Lisa](#)
Subject: Re: hi Heather, from Lisa Rein re: Sec Zinke travel
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 2:25:20 PM

roger dodger!

Also - I didn't see if you wrote on the firings. Did you?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 1:38 PM, Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com> wrote:

Again, sorry for the long email

End of the day tomorrow or Friday at the latest would be great.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 1:35 PM
To: Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: hi Heather, from Lisa Rein re: Sec Zinke travel

What is your deadline?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 1:10 PM, Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com> wrote:

Hi there. With Sec. Price in the news, we're looking into travel by other secretaries,, so apologies in advance for the detailed email. I'm working with a colleague, Drew Harwell. We've looked at Sec. Zinke's travel schedule since his confirmation in March, through July. Hoping you and your colleagues will be able to tackle these questions. Obviously an Interior secretary is going to be traveling a lot... We would just like to flesh out some questions. Many thanks, and really appreciate. Lisa

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?

- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?

- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.
 - What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?

- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?

- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barabra, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did

these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?

- On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
 - Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?
- May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?
- June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?
- July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.
 - What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for

this trip, and who covered the expenses?

Lisa Rein

Staff Reporter

Washington Post

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@Reinlwapo

[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rein, Lisa](#)
Subject: Re: hi Heather, from Lisa Rein re: Sec Zinke travel
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 2:53:18 PM

Is this a cabinet wide inquiry? Was there a reason these specific trips were IDed?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 1:10 PM, Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com> wrote:

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Lisa Rein

Staff Reporter

Washington Post

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Cell 202-821-3120

@Reinlwapo

[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Rein, Lisa
To: ["Heather Swift"](#)
Subject: RE: hi Heather, touching base again
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 6:16:04 PM

Heather I never said that Mrs Zinke runs meetings, either. Never asked you that question .

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 06, 2017 5:30 PM
To: Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: hi Heather, touching base again

“The Interior Department under the Trump Administration has always and will always work to ensure all officials follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including seeking commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure the efficient use of government resources.” - Heather Swift, DOI spokesman

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

On Background -

Mrs. Zinke has never taken a flight at the expense of the department. She has never been on a flight chartered by the Department. She and a number of other spouses were invited to and attended the Arctic CODEL, per standard procedure, and her fare was not paid for by the Department. She occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling and pays for her meals and travel at her own personal expense. There are no plans to hire her and any rumors to that point or that she runs or participates in DOI meetings are baloney.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 6, 2017, at 3:46 PM, Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com> wrote:

Just checking to see if you will have anything by COB today.
Many thanks.

Lisa Rein
Staff Reporter

Washington Post
202-334-5190
Cell 202-821-3120
@Reinlwapo
[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Rein, Lisa
To: ["Heather Swift"](#)
Subject: RE: hi Heather, touching base again
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 5:56:12 PM

Ok, thanks. I have never said there were rumors about hiring her. I asked the question myself because of her presence at official agency functions/meetings/ whatever.
The flag? Can you explain the reason, how it works.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 06, 2017 5:30 PM
To: Rein, Lisa <Lisa.Rein@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: hi Heather, touching base again

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Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Lisa Rein
Staff Reporter
Washington Post
202-334-5190
Cell 202-821-3120
@Reinlwapo
[Send me a confidential tip](#)

From: Brian Pavlik
To: Swift_Heather
Subject: Re: Idea for SLOTUS
Date: Tuesday, November 07, 2017 2:01:22 PM

Yes, just that topic, see you at 230

On Nov 7, 2017, at 1 59 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

OK - Is it on this subject specifically?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 7, 2017 at 1:53 PM, Pavlik, Brian <brian_pavlik@nps.gov> wrote:
I am meeting with him at 2:30 today if you would like to join If so stop by office at 2:30 I am at 3129

On Tue, Nov 7, 2017 at 1:30 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Brian - when are you and Tom available to sit down this week and go over options for SLOTUS initiative?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 7, 2017 at 1:28 PM, Downey Magallanes <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Ok, thanks If this hasn't already been followed up on, I think Heather should sit down with Tom and Brian when he has options to present

On Nov 3, 2017, at 11 01 AM, Larrabee, Jason <jason_larrabee@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Ladies,
Following up here
Tom Medema is the career POC in NPS and Brian Pavlik will be bird-dogging to ensure we have timely and successful events Brian is copied as well

Jason Larrabee
Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
[1849 C Street, NW](mailto:1849.C.Street.NW) -- MIB Room 3154
Washington, DC, 20240
office: 202-208-4416

NOTE: Every email I send or receive is subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act.

On Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 12:18 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Thanks Downey!

Jason, art therapy for patients of all ailments, not just mental illness

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 23, 2017, at 12:08 PM, Downey Magallanes <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Can you assign someone to put together ideas

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Mashburn, Lori" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Date: October 18, 2017 at 9:44:19 AM EDT
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>, "Magallanes, Downey" <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov>, Scott Hommel <scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Idea for SLOTUS

That would be a wonderful idea!

Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202 208 1694

On Wed, Oct 18, 2017 at 9:10 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Love it

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U S Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Oct 18, 2017, at 8:46 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Mrs. Pence is really big into art therapy for those with mental illness (see article below). Perhaps we could do a joint event with her and NPS resident artists, or have her at a park to launch an initiative for art therapy in Parks. The Secretary's mother-in-law passed away from Alzheimer's disease so it's something that touches his family.

Karen Pence to outline goals for art therapy initiative

By Darlene Superville | AP October 18 at 7:25 AM

Heather Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec

WASHINGTON — When Karen Pence found out that an art therapist in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico couldn't afford the clay her clients needed, she sprang into action.

A trained watercolor artist and advocate of the little-known mental health profession, Vice President Mike Pence's wife went to the Virginia art supply store she frequented when they lived in the state during his tenure in Congress, bought 120 pounds of self-drying clay and packed it aboard Air Force Two for their flight down to survey the damage.

"She cleaned him out," the vice president said of the store's owner.

Mrs. Pence made art therapy her cause ever since she first learned about it more than a decade ago. She has visited numerous art therapy programs, both in the U.S. and abroad, and on Wednesday in Florida, nine months into the administration, she planned to formally announce the goals for her art therapy initiative.

She wants to help people understand the difference between art therapy and arts and crafts, and to grasp that art therapy is a viable option for treating trauma, injury and other life experiences. She also wants to encourage young people to choose art therapy as a career.

"I don't think that a lot of people understand the difference between therapeutic art and art therapy," Mrs. Pence, a trained watercolor artist, told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview before the announcement at Florida State University in Tallahassee. The school has an art therapy program she described as "tremendous."

Blabbing to a girlfriend can be therapeutic, she explained, but it is not the same as art therapy, which has three elements: a client, a trained therapist and art.

As passionate as she is about raising art therapy's profile, other issues help make Karen Pence tick, too.

One of them is helping military families, especially spouses. Her only son, Michael, is in the Marines.

There's also her interest in honeybees. Mrs. Pence installed a beehive on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory, where the vice president's official residence is located, to help call attention to a decline in managed bee colonies that officials say could negatively affect U.S. agricultural production. She had a beehive at the Indiana governor's residence for the same reason.

Now 60 and married to the vice president since 1985, Mrs. Pence has long been viewed as one of her husband's most trusted political advisers. They are often together on trips, at the White House, or at the observatory, almost always holding hands.

Since returning to Washington in January (the family lived in the area when her husband served in Congress), she has accompanied the vice

president on goodwill tours of Europe, Asia and Latin America, as well as trips to survey recent hurricane damage in Texas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She tries to visit art therapy programs wherever she goes. Journalists who travel with Pence often keep an eye out for his wife; she often brings them cookies when he ventures back to the press cabin for small talk.

She's even done a little campaigning, urging Virginians to vote next month for Ed Gillespie in what's viewed as a tight gubernatorial race.

"It really makes a difference, I can tell you. Nobody thought that we were going to win," she said, an apparent reference to the Trump-Pence ticket.

The vice president often refers to his wife as the family's "prayer captain." She has led congregations in prayer during their hurricane-damage trips.

"We're people of faith so we just try and approach everything with prayer," Mrs. Pence said from her sunny, second-floor office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in the White House complex, where she and her staff enjoy coveted views of the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial. Art therapy drawings given as gifts adorn the outer office.

She proudly displayed several of her paintings, including of the Capitol dome, the vice president's residence, a Ball canning jar-turned-flower vase, a cardinal bird and a pink peony. She turns many of her watercolors into prints and boxed notecards that she gifts to art therapists she meets.

Except for myriad pets, including two cats, a dog and a rabbit named Marlon Bundo, the Pences are empty nesters. Their son and two adult daughters are off on their own.



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"I think for us this is a good time in our life for this role because our kids are out of college. They're living their own lives," Mrs. Pence said.

She's also launching a blog in conjunction with Wednesday's announcement to chronicle her visits to art therapy programs.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsuperville>

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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--
Brian Pavlik
National Park Service
[1849 C St. NW Rm #3129](#)
[Washington, DC 20240](#)
202-354-1827 (Office)
202-641-3709 (Mobile)

From: Daniel Jorjani
To: [Melinda Loftin](#); [Edward McDonnell](#); [Joshua Campbell](#); heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Inquiry from Reporter re: Mrs. Z
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 10:55:36 AM

Adding Heather.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 22, 2017, at 6:48 PM, Jorjani, Daniel <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:

Josh - Please work with Melinda and Ed to have a draft response prepared for my review by 11 am tomorrow. Thank you. Dan

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swift, Heather** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:47 PM
Subject: Inquiry from Reporter re: Mrs. Z
To: Daniel Jorjani <daniel_jorjani@ios.doi.gov>

Below is the inquiry I received from E&E (very nasty wording) and then below that in blue is what I've drafted so far as a response.

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

(b) (5)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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From: Daniel Jorjani
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Daniel Jorjani](#)
Subject: Re: Inquiry from Reporter re: Mrs. Z
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 10:51:14 AM

You said noon yesterday!

Sent from my iPhone

On May 23, 2017, at 9:49 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

any update? I have to respond by 11am

-

Heather Swift
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From: Jorjani, Daniel
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Daniel Jorjani](#)
Subject: Re: Inquiry from Reporter re: Mrs. Z
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:48:11 PM

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On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:47 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Below is the inquiry I received from E&E (very nasty wording) and then below that in blue is what I've drafted so far as a response.

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

(b) (5)



-
Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Davis, Lynda
To: [Ullyot, John](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Cashour, Curtis](#); [Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov](#); (b) (6)
Cc: [Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.](#); [Wagner, John \(Wolf\)](#); [Hutton, James](#)
Subject: RE: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 7:11:12 AM

Got it!

Lynda C. Davis, Ph.D.
Chief Veterans Experience Officer
Department of Veterans Affairs

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

From: Ullyot, John
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 4:08:06 AM
To: Heather Swift; Cashour, Curtis; [Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov](#); (b) (6)
Cc: Davis, Lynda; Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.; Wagner, John (Wolf); Hutton, James
Subject: Re: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow

Thanks Heather — I'm connecting you here with Lynda Davis and Latriece Prince-Wheeler, who can help you with information on that event.

Thanks again,

John U.

On 10/22/17, 6:35 PM, "Heather Swift" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov<mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>> wrote:

Hi there John and Curt - could you please put me in touch with the comms person who is running point on tomorrow's board meeting of military family and caretakers? Mrs. Zinke is participating.

Apologies but this is an ASAP request. Can discuss further on the phone (b) (6)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Davis, Lynda](mailto:Lynda.Davis@va.gov)
Cc: [Wagner, John \(Wolf\); O'Shea, Laura; \(b\) \(6\); Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.; Hutton, James; Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov; Cashour, Curtis; Ullyot, John](mailto:Wagner, John (Wolf); O'Shea, Laura; (b) (6); Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.; Hutton, James; Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov; Cashour, Curtis; Ullyot, John)
Subject: Re: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 8:21:00 AM

Thanks all. Dr. Davis and I were able to connect via email late last night.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior.Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 7:11 AM, Davis, Lynda <Lynda.Davis@va.gov> wrote:

I've got this thanks a million

Lynda C. Davis, Ph.D.
Chief Veterans Experience Officer
Department of Veterans Affairs

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

From: Wagner, John (Wolf)
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 4:10:37 AM
To: O'Shea, Laura
Cc: [\(b\) \(6\); Davis, Lynda; Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.; Hutton, James; Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov; Cashour, Curtis; Ullyot, John; Heather Swift](mailto:(b) (6); Davis, Lynda; Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.; Hutton, James; Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov; Cashour, Curtis; Ullyot, John; Heather Swift)
Subject: Re: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow

Also, found out last night Laura is a staff POC for Dr Davis. Looping her in as well

John 'Wolf' Wagner
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Public and Intergovernmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
O: 202-461-7500
john.wolf.wagner@va.gov<mailto:john.wolf.wagner@va.gov>>

[cid:65DA3D97-9296-40CA-BE93-6CC05BD3DE07]

From: "Ullyot, John" <John.Ullyot@va.gov<mailto:John.Ullyot@va.gov>>

Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 at 7:08 AM
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov<mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>>,&br/>"Cashour, Curtis" <Curt.Cashour@va.gov<mailto:Curt.Cashour@va.gov>>,&br/>"Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov" <mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov>"
<Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov<mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov>>,"Rateike, EOP/WHO"
(b) (6) <mailto:(b) (6)>>
Cc: "Davis, Lynda" <Lynda.Davis@va.gov<mailto:Lynda.Davis@va.gov>>,"Latriece
Prince-Wheeler" <Latriece.Prince-Wheeler@va.gov<mailto:Latriece.Prince-
Wheeler@va.gov>>,"Department of Veterans Affairs Department of Veterans Affairs
<john.wolf.wagner@va.gov<mailto:john.wolf.wagner@va.gov>>,"Hutton, James"
<James.Hutton@va.gov<mailto:James.Hutton@va.gov>>
Subject: Re: Interior Dept Assist - Board meeting tomorrow

Thanks Heather — I'm connecting you here with Lynda Davis and Latriece Prince-Wheeler, who can help you with information on that event.

Thanks again,

John U.

On 10/22/17, 6:35 PM, "Heather Swift" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov<mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>> wrote:

Hi there John and Curt - could you please put me in touch with the comms person who is running point on tomorrow's board meeting of military family and caretakers? Mrs. Zinke is participating.

Apologies but this is an ASAP request. Can discuss further on the phone (b) (6).

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Scully, Steve
To: ["Swift, Heather"](#)
Subject: RE: Interview request Heather !
Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:29:34 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

We haven't done that for the others, so to be consistent probably not. It's a quick 25 minute interview that often includes engaging stories...so hopefully we can get that with the Interior Secretary. And of course, I will be asking about her...but likely just with the principle (in this case, him)

SS

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:27 PM
To: Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org>
Subject: Re: Interview request Heather !

Just thinking out loud here, would you be interested in having Mrs. Zinke in for a couple minutes of the personal questions?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Aug 15, 2017 at 2:25 PM, Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org> wrote:

THANKS HEATHER

I can promise you it's the easiest interview he will ever do...it's all about him. And any policy questions are at the 30,000 foot level in terms of his objectives as Interior Secretary, why he decided to leave Congress to take on this job, etc.

Thanks for such a prompt response. I am literally heading out soon for the HHS Secretary Price interview. Look forward to talking to the Interior Secretary as well

Best
Steve

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2017 2:22 PM
To: Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org>
Subject: Re: Interview request Heather !

Hey Steve, this sounds like a fun opportunity. Let me chat with scheduler and see if we can get something

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Aug 15, 2017 at 1:55 PM, Scully, Steve <SSCULLY@c-span.org> wrote:

Heather,

I am launching a new C-SPAN series titled 'The Appointees.' The goal: To learn about the life stories of key White House staffers, Cabinet Members and Administration officials.

So far, we have interviewed OMB Director Mulvaney, Transportation Secretary Chao, Agriculture Secretary Perdue, HHS Secretary Price, VA Secretary Shulkin, Omarosa Manigault & Sarah Huckabee Sanders

I am reaching out to key cabinet members, including your office, to see if we can schedule a sit-down interview with Interior Secretary Zinke within the next month. I am also attaching links to two recent profiles, to give you a sense of our objective with these conversations. The goal would be the same with the Interior Secretary: to learn about his life and career. With so many key issues involving the department in the months ahead, this is a chance to learn more about the individual who is running Interior.

We can tape this interview IN HIS OFFICE...ideally within the next month. Typically we need 1:15 hour to set up. The interview itself runs approx. 25-27 minutes. Our interview with the HHS Secretary is airing THIS FRIDAY @ 8pm FYI.

I look forward to working with you on this project, and can answer any of your questions anytime.

Again, thanks Heather!

Steve

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?428272-1/conversation-transportation-secretary-elaine-chao>

OMB Director Mulvaney

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?427821-2/conversation-white-house-budget-director-mick-mulvaney>



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Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001

Steve Scully

Senior Executive Producer

White House & Political Editor

C-SPAN Networks

202.626.7956

TWITTER: @SteveScully

E-MAIL: SScully@C-SPAN.org

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CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail may contain information that is privileged, confidential or otherwise protected from disclosure. If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please notify the sender immediately by return e-mail, purge it and do not disseminate or copy it.

From: Swift, Heather
To: Slayton, April
Subject: Re: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query re: Susan LaPierre
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 4:39:27 PM

Pardon my language but what an ass!

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 4:32 PM, Slayton, April <april_slayton@nps.gov> wrote:

Mike - your message to me arrived not 20 minutes ago, so forgive me for being a little put off by the tone of your message and your expectation that courtesy requires an instantaneous response to every message.

As my original message conveyed, the process is managed by the Secretary and his staff, not the National Park Service. Consequently, I don't have any additional information that would warrant a phone conversation at this time, nor do I believe that any of my colleagues at NPS can be helpful in your reporting.

I apologize if you find my work unhelpful, but I prefer to acknowledge reporters who ask questions, even in cases where I am not able to provide information on the topics they are asking about.

April

--

April Slayton
Assistant Director for Communications
National Park Service
Visit us at www.nps.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 4:20 PM, Michael Spies <mspies@thetrace.org> wrote:

The courtesy of a call would be nice. If you actually read the email I sent to Michael, which was fairly explicit, I clearly know who appoints board members. Similarly, if I thought it would be remotely useful to contact a flak at the Interior Department, I obviously would have done that. I don't mean to be rude, but it often feels like people in your position are deliberately trying to be unhelpful.

Mike

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 3:47 PM, Slayton, April <april_slayton@nps.gov> wrote:

Dear Mike,

I'm replying to you on behalf of Mike Reynolds, who is traveling this week.

Appointments to the National Park Foundation Board are made by the Secretary of the Interior, so your questions about that process are best answered by the DOI Office of Communications. You can reach the team there at Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov.

Many thanks,

April

--

April Slayton
Assistant Director for Communications
National Park Service
Visit us at www.nps.gov

From: Michael Spies <m spies@thetrace.org>
Date: September 29, 2017 at 12:09:04 PM EDT
To: <Michael_Reynolds@nps.gov>
Subject: Investigative Reporter Reaching Out w/ Urgent Query re:
Susan LaPierre

Dear Mr. Reynolds,

I'm a senior reporter at The Trace (thetrace.org), which is an investigative reporting site that covers the gun issue and co-publishes stories with a number of national news outlets, including The New Yorker, Politico, Rolling Stone, and Newsweek. Last month, I broke the story about the appointment of Susan LaPierre (wife of Wayne, the NRA CEO), to the board of the Parks Foundation: <https://www.thetrace.org/2017/08/nra-parks-department-interior-zinke-alaska/>.

I'm still seeking more information on her appointment. I find it odd, for example, that her bio makes no mention of the NRA: <https://www.nationalparks.org/sites/default/files/susan-lapierre.pdf>. It does mention the Women's Leadership Forum, as if it were a standalone entity, which it is not. It's actually called the NRA Women's Leadership Forum, and its chief function is to raise money for the NRA from wealthy women: <http://www.nrawlf.com/>.

Over the spring, when I learned about Susan's appointment, I filed a FOIA request seeking more information about it. That request was fulfilled the other week. If you didn't know, Susan is absolutely not a noted conservationist, and, like her husband, she absolutely does not hunt, and probably does not fish or hike either. The records show that Susan was officially appointed the day before the NRA's April Annual Meeting, where Zinke was slated to speak at the Leadership forum. The records also show that there were backchannel conversations between Chris Cox, the NRA's top lobbyist, and new appointees in the Interior Department about Susan's appointment.

To be frank: much of this doesn't add up or make sense to me, and it feels like there's something bigger going on. If you have any time today, please call me on my cell. I think we should talk. Here's the number: [973 809 0419](tel:9738090419). Would be happy to meet you in person.

Best,
Mike Spies

From: Heather Swift
To: [Ricalde, Katy](mailto:Ricalde_Katy)
Subject: Re: Invitation for Sec. and Mrs. Zinke from Bret Baier
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 4:53:04 PM

I would be mortified. The Secretary too. Totally appreciate the heads up!

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 13, 2017, at 4:31 PM, Ricalde, Katy <katy.ricalde@foxnews.com> wrote:

Cool—sorry! Otherwise I would totally say yes! I just know how I would feel if I were in that situation and showed up to find neighbors and college buddies haha

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 4:17 PM
To: Ricalde, Katy
Subject: Re: Invitation for Sec. and Mrs. Zinke from Bret Baier

Oh no you are totally right. Awkward city.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 13, 2017, at 4:16 PM, Ricalde, Katy <katy.ricalde@foxnews.com> wrote:

It will just be friends of the Baiers—neighborhood couples, FOX couples, and a few others ---they only invited a handful of Members of Congress and Sec. Zinke was the only Cabinet Official.

I can ask Bret, but it might be awkward for you all—would be only staffers present.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 4:11 PM
To: Ricalde, Katy
Subject: Re: Invitation for Sec. and Mrs. Zinke from Bret Baier

Katy, I'm about to RSVP the Secretary however Mrs. Zinke is unable to attend. The Secretary has asked if it is permissible for the invite to transfer to me or another member of his team?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 12, 2017, at 1:22 PM, Ricalde, Katy <katy.ricalde@foxnews.com> wrote:

Yes—thank you! Hope all is well with you also.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 1:15 PM
To: Ricalde, Katy
Subject: Re: Invitation for Sec. and Mrs. Zinke from Bret Baier

Great, thanks Katy. Hope all is well!

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 12, 2017, at 1:12 PM, Ricalde, Katy
<katy.ricalde@foxnews.com> wrote:

Heather,

I am going to send an evite your way. It is for Secretary Zinke and his wife from Bret and Amy Baier.

Thank you,

Katy Ricalde

New Media Specialist
Assistant to Bret Baier & Brit Hume
400 North Capitol Street, NW / Suite 550
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202.824.6471

This message and its attachments may contain legally privileged or confidential information. It is intended solely for the named addressee. If you are not the addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for delivery of the message to the addressee), you may not copy or deliver

this message or its attachments to anyone. Rather, you should permanently delete this message and its attachments and kindly notify the sender by reply e-mail. Any content of this message and its attachments that does not relate to the official business of Fox News or Fox Business must not be taken to have been sent or endorsed by either of them. No representation is made that this email or its attachments are without defect.

From: Timothy Cama
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Invitation for you and your family December 6
Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 3:41:33 PM

Looks like Jen got an invite too, so we're already going. Thank you though!

--

Timothy Cama, Staff writer
The Hill
(202) 695-6245
Secure: timothy.cama@protonmail.com

On Wed, Nov 29, 2017 at 1:21 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Tim, on behalf of the Secretary and the office of communications I'd like to invite you, your wife and daughter to a White House East Wing Christmas tour on Wednesday, December 6, 2017 at 4:00PM

Arrival information will be emailed to you upon RSVP.

Please use this link to input your information: <https://events.whitehouse.gov/form/RsvpFormHoliday?rid=PCMKX9JB4Q>

If you cannot go, please let me know.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Michael Doyle](mailto:Michael.Doyle@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Invitation for you and your lovely wife
Date: Friday, December 01, 2017 12:45:09 PM

No worries

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 1, 2017, at 12:37 PM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Hey, I was just about to drop you a line...unfortunately, after checking with my Keeper of the Schedule, I was reminded that we are already (b) (6), so we can't make it. I'm sorry about that, and appreciate the invite.

Mike

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 12:33 PM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: Invitation for you and your lovely wife

Mike. You need to RSVP today if you want to go.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Nov 29, 2017, at 1:37 PM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Thank you very much, I will check with my bride!

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 1:31 PM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Invitation for you and your lovely wife

Hi Mike - On behalf of the Secretary and the office of communications I'd like to invite you and your wife to a White House East Wing Christmas tour on Wednesday, December 6, 2017 at 4:00PM, hosted by Interior.

Arrival information will be emailed to you upon RSVP. Please use this link to input your

information: [https://events.whitehouse.gov/form/RsvpFormHoliday?
rid=PCMKX9JB4Q](https://events.whitehouse.gov/form/RsvpFormHoliday?rid=PCMKX9JB4Q)

If you cannot go, please let me know.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Scott Cameron
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 7:56:10 PM

Just the bear facts.

Thanks,
Scott
Scott J. Cameron
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Policy, Management and Budget
Department of the Interior

Cell 202-706-9031
Desk 292-208-4242

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 9, 2017, at 7:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

This makes the Secretary's advice ring even more true: *Bring bear spray. The big can.*

NY Post
Bear swipes car for joyride

He's (slightly) smarter than the av-er-age bear!

A bear broke into an SUV and took it for a joyride in Colorado — before crashing it, trashing the interior and pooping inside, according to new reports.

“It would have taken a human being hours to do what this bear did in a couple minutes,” said Ron Cornelius, who found the car after the animal mowed down his mailbox, told the Durango Herald.

The bear hijacked the Subaru from Cornelius' neighbor early Friday — likely releasing the parking brake and causing the vehicle to roll down the driveway and crash into a utility box and the mailbox, the paper reports.

The ruckus woke Cornelius and his wife and they dashed outside to find the totaled SUV and called 911, fearing humans were still inside.

The couple didn't see the bear, but they did find the steering wheel and radio ripped out, the back window broken — and tell-tale bear poop left behind, they told the paper.

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-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Casey Hammond
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 11:08:38 PM

Awesome. Just as we spotted our first grizz in Yellowstone.

On Aug 9, 2017, at 5:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

This makes the Secretary's advice ring even more true: *Bring bear spray. The big can.*

NY Post
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-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Casey Hammond](#)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2017 8:48:12 AM

haha nice! from a far i hope

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Aug 9, 2017 at 11:02 PM, Casey Hammond <casey_hammond@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Awesome. Just as we spotted our first grizz in Yellowstone.

On Aug 9, 2017, at 5:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

This makes the Secretary's advice ring even more true: *Bring bear spray. The big can.*

NY Post
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The couple didn't see the bear, but they did find the steering wheel and radio ripped out, the back window broken — and tell-tale bear poop left behind, they told the paper.

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Katharine MacGregor
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2017 8:52:38 AM

Aghhh bears...

On Aug 9, 2017, at 7:12 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

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NY Post
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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Benedetto, Kathleen
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2017 10:10:05 AM

Excellent

On Wed, Aug 9, 2017 at 7:11 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

This makes the Secretary's advice ring even more true: *Bring bear spray. The big can.*

NY Post

Bear swipes car for joyride

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The ruckus woke Cornelius and his wife and they dashed outside to find the totaled SUV and called 911, fearing humans were still inside.

The couple didn't see the bear, but they did find the steering wheel and radio ripped out, the back window broken — and tell-tale bear poop left behind, they told the paper.

###

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--

Kathleen Benedetto
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

(202) 208-5934

From: Alan Mikkelsen
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride
Date: Wednesday, August 09, 2017 8:29:19 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.htm](#)

You should always carry bear spray. Bears like seasoning on their dinner...

Alan Mikkelsen
Deputy and Acting Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
Chair, SIWRO Working Group
MIB 7653
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC. 20240

Phone: 202-513-0583
Cell.: 406-240-0703

----- Original Message -----

From: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Wed, August 09, 2017 5:12 PM -0600
To:
Subject: Just for Fun: Bear swipes car for joyride

This makes the Secretary's advice ring even more true: *Bring bear spray. The big can.*

NY Post

Bear swipes car for joyride

He's (slightly) smarter than the av-er-age bear!

A bear broke into an SUV and took it for a joyride in Colorado — before crashing it, trashing the interior and pooping inside, according to new reports.

“It would have taken a human being hours to do what this bear did in a couple minutes,” said Ron Cornelius, who found the car after the animal mowed down his mailbox, told the Durango Herald.

The bear hijacked the Subaru from Cornelius' neighbor early Friday — likely releasing the parking brake and causing the vehicle to roll down the driveway and crash into a utility box and the mailbox, the paper reports.

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###

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Kirsten Fedewa
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Kick-off to Summer Cocktails & Tribute to Vets and Those Serving in Congress (RSVP details here)!
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 12:35:45 PM

Ok. We haven't heard back so thought I would check with you.

Hopefully you can come as our guest either way.

Cheers,
Kirsten

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 21, 2017, at 12:27 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey Kirsten, Please go through the scheduling office. I don't have anything to do with the calendar process.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 21, 2017, at 12:11 PM, Kirsten Fedewa <kfedewa@fedewaconsulting.com> wrote:

Any word re Secretary Zinke?

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



R.S.V.P. for June 27th Cocktails & Tribute to Vets and Those Serving in Congress

Greetings: Service is a noble calling.

As we look ahead to Independence Day and summer's lazy days, we remember the contributions of our Founding Fathers who dreamed of liberty and fought so that we can be free. That torch has been carried by generations we honor: the hard-working civilians, politicians, and most notably, those who risked and lost their lives in military uniform. There is also a rare group who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and now serve in public office. Their contributions are beyond measure.

Invited guests will include members of the U.S. Armed Forces, all House and Senate members of Congress, senior military officers, senior Congressional staff, and others in the Washington, D.C. community. The reception begins at 6 p.m. Program at approx. 6:45 p.m. (Details below).

Other details:

[Jennifer Griffin](#), National Security Correspondent, FOX News as Emcee (pending confirmation)

Hospitality to include selection of premium whiskies hosted by Beam Suntory Ambassador Mark Eber; California wines by Wine Institute. and American beer by Beer Institute.

A veteran (with his war dog) helped by [American Humane](#) will speak briefly on the life-saving power

of military and service dogs.

Special performance by internationally-acclaimed tenor [Anthony Kearns](#), who recently performed in the televised concert, America Salutes You, last fall. Check out his rendition of [O'America](#).

Networking opportunity to meet editors/ reporters from The Washington Examiner, including Tom Rogan (FOX and CNN Contributor) and others.

Special guests include:

- Colonel James Hickey (USAF-retired) and senior adviser to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. Colonel Hickey was a part of the elite group that captured Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.
- The Honorable James Gilmore, former Governor of Virginia and chairman of the Congressionally-appointed Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (informally called the Gilmore Commission).
- Christine "CJ" Johnson, co-manager of the State Department program serving veterans with higher education who seek to continue service in foreign affairs.
-

Other special guests TBA.

To attend and/or support this fantastic annual event, please RSVP to [here](#). I hope to see you there!

This event was designed to comply with House and Senate rules.

With warmest regards,

Kirsten

President, Kirsten Fedewa & Associates, L.L.C.

Former House/ Senate Press Secretary

c. [202.365.6936](tel:202.365.6936)

o. [703.684.3339](tel:703.684.3339)

www.fedewaconsulting.com

A Special Invitation: Join us on June 27, 2017



Featured, left, a soldier with his war dog, sharing an incredible bond.

Join us on Tuesday, June 27, 2017 for a fabulous annual evening reception featuring a selection of premium whiskies, fabulous wines, American beers, light hors d'oeuvres, and very special guests -- TBA!

Members of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate are invited to attend as our honored guests, in addition to top military and government officials, and many others in the Washington, D.C. community.

See photos from recent events!

From the Photo Album:

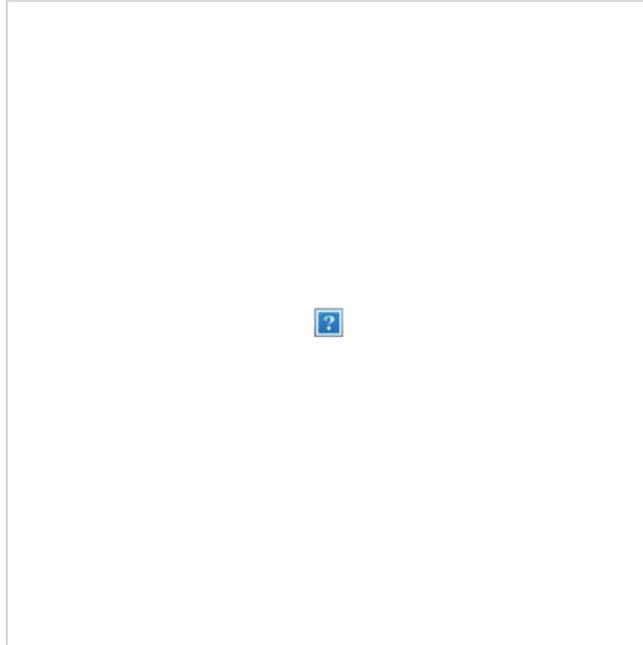


From the 2015 Tribute: General Steve Ritchie, the Air Force's only fighter pilot ace since Korea (far left), his wife Mariana, Kirsten Fedewa, and Kearns. Photos courtesy of Miguel Leonardo



Please email rsvpjune27vets@gmail.com for additional information!

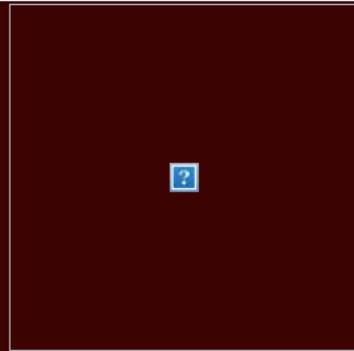
For sponsorship information, please contact me at kirsten@fedewaconsulting.com. Thank you!



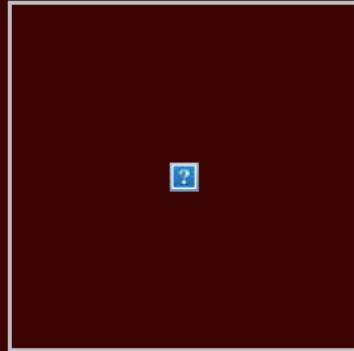
Anthony Kearns and CBS White House Senior Chief Correspondent Major Garrett as Master of Ceremonies at the 2015 Annual Tribute to Veterans.
Photo credit: Miguel Leonardo.

"The Man in the Arena"

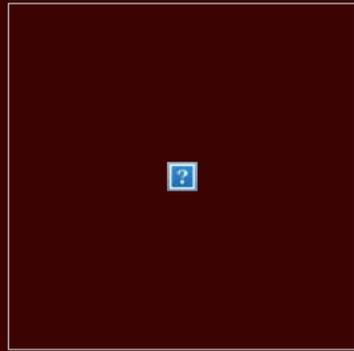
"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with



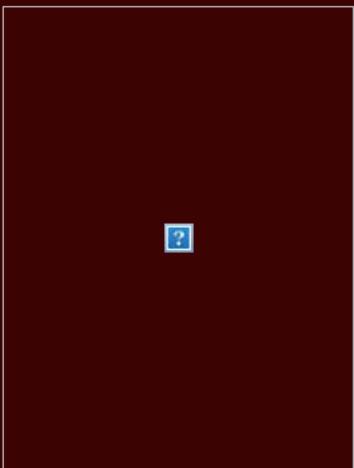
Anacostia Marine Color Guard



Congressman Charlie Rangel (NY)



Cong. Darrell Issa (CA) and U.S. Marines.



Cong. Ryan Zinke, (MT, left) and Rep. Mike Coffman (CO) featured

those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

--President Theodore Roosevelt, April 23, 1910.

speakers.



Get Your Tickets Now for the June 27th Tribute!

The June 27th "Tribute to Veterans and Those Who Service in Congress" will feature a performance by renowned tenor Anthony Kearns.

Now living in the U.S., [Anthony Kearns](#) headlined a concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts as part of the "Ireland 100" celebrations. The festival coincided with the larger global celebration commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, which led to the independence of Ireland.

Recently, Mr. Kearns sang for Pope Francis I during his first historic visit to the United States. He also sang at the 2014 National Memorial Day Concert on PBS and during the Military Tribute at the 2016 Preakness Stakes. (Featured here before opening the National Memorial Day Parade in Wash, D.C.)

[RSVP HERE](#)



Designed by Kirsten Fedewa & Nancy Velasquez.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nathan Adams](#)
Subject: Re: load er up scottie
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:44:15 PM

Small edits in red.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:28 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
photo attached.

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

(ANCHORAGE) Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

"A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues," said Secretary Zinke. "Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve served in the military, and he then continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's management."

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential," said Wackowski.

Wackowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce's "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is **an** avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Lola Zinke tweet re: travel
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 10:35:18 AM

will do

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Thu, Oct 12, 2017 at 1:29 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Can you pls keep Brad and me in the loop on the response? Thx.

On Oct 11, 2017, at 2:45 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

.....

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Zack Colman** <zcolman@eenews.net>
Date: Wed, Oct 11, 2017 at 2:09 PM
Subject: Lola Zinke tweet re: travel
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Hi Heather,

Wanted to direct you to the responses in this tweet:
<https://twitter.com/LolaZinke/status/917711705374937089>

A Twitter user poses this question to Lola: So are you claiming that no taxpayer funds have ever been used to pay for your travel? DOI confirmed that you went along to Norway & AK

Lola then responds: please refer to Senate Select committee travel ethics rules

It appears this is an admission that Lola was on those flights but that she believes she followed all appropriate ethics rules (and, again, there may well have been clearance by ethics). Was Lola on those flights? Can you provide that clearance that ethics provided for her to be on those flights?

Since these responses are public, I'm operating with some considerable time pressure but I also want to get this right. So please let me know.

-Zack

--

Zack Colman

E&E News

White House correspondent

c: 248-563-9744

o: 202-446-0408

twitter: @zcolman

From: DuBray, Daniel
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Media Inquiry: Dan DuBray at BLM
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017 11:28:10 AM

"It's not that big of a deal"? Ha! Tell that to my wife.

:~)

d

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 11:10 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Definitely reach out to BLM for their statement but from the Department's perspective, "Dan is a westerner and a seasoned Interior professional, and we are thankful for him stepping into this temporary role at a time of transition. His previous experience at BLM will be a huge asset as the bureau continues to create revenue for state and local communities. There's no shortage of talent at Interior and we are confident that Dan, and Reclamation's acting chief of public affairs, Patti Aaron, will continue to do phenomenal jobs."

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 10:11 AM, Scott Streater <ssstreater@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi Heather,

I see that Dan DuBray is now the new acting BLM communications director. If this is something that BLM communications can handle, just let me know. It's not that big of a deal. But can you or someone at BLM give me a quote this morning on this move? Dan comes from the Bureau of Reclamation, I see, and was a former Interior press secretary during the George W. Bush administration. Not sure if this is a temporary reassignment or a permanent move.

I need to file my story, as usual, by noon EST today.

Thanks much!

Scott Streater
E&E News reporter
ssstreater@eenews.net
719-264-0923 (office)
719-338-4677 (mobile)

E&E NEWS

122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001

www.eenews.net | [@EENewsUpdates](#)

Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

--

Dan DuBray
Acting Assistant Director - Communications (WO-600)
Director's Office (Room 5645)
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240
Office: (202) 208-5207
Twitter: @DuBray

From: Chris D'Angelo
To: [Interior Press](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: MEDIA REQUEST – Sec. Zinke's trip to Channel Islands National Park
Date: Tuesday, January 02, 2018 3:50:24 PM

Bumping this email. On deadline.

Chris D'Angelo
Reporter, [HuffPost](#)
Washington, DC
m: [314-580-0191](#)
Twitter: [@c_m_dangelo](#)
huffingtonpost.com/chris-dangelo/

On Fri, Dec 29, 2017 at 4:29 PM, Chris D'Angelo <chris.dangelo@huffpost.com> wrote:

Happy holidays Interior folks,

Hoping to speak with someone about Sec. Ryan Zinke's trip in April to Channel Islands National Park. [Emails](#) show that Zinke's guest list included, among others, his wife; his wife's aunt; Nita Vail, a political supporter; commercial fishermen Jason Robinson and Jeff Maassen; and Jon Jorgeson, an area yacht broker.

It is my understanding that one of the fishermen, Mr. Robinson, was [fined in 2009](#) for illegally fishing in the reserve and that a judge tossed out the charges years later. The emails also show that several guests, including Robinson, Jorgeson and Maassen, were identified by Zinke as technical experts.

A few questions...

Exactly what technical expertise did these guests provide?

Which of Zinke's guests paid their own way and were issued a bill of collections? And who had their travel costs covered by government funds?

How much did Interior spend to bring along these technical experts?

Thanks and Happy New Year!

Chris D'Angelo
Reporter, [HuffPost](#)
Washington, DC
m: [314-580-0191](#)
Twitter: [@c_m_dangelo](#)
huffingtonpost.com/chris-dangelo/

From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: More questions from Politico
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 11:31:56 AM

You can also try his email at njuliano@politico.com .

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 11:20 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: More questions from Politico

No he didn't. Can you please give me the contact information for your editor?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 11:08 AM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Official DOI business would be to see whether the DOI Chief of Staff has a false statement on his OGE form.

As for lying, that does not enter into this. As soon as she picked up the phone, I identified myself as a Politico reporter, told her I'm writing a story on Kimberly Bellissimo (story will be out in the next day or two) and have her on the record. Not sure where lying would enter into that.

Please let me know if you have anything on Hommel's OGE form and whether there's income coming in he didn't report.

Cheers,
Ben

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 11:01 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: More questions from Politico

Ben can you please explain what the official Department of the Interior business is here? I understand you call and lied to the wife of our Chief of Staff to try and get personal information.

-
Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 10:51 AM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather, hope your weekend went well. A few questions for you. We're looking to run something this week, so hope to get your input in the next few days:

Chief of Staff Scott Hommel indicated on his OGE form 278 that his wife makes no income over \$1,000 a year, correct?

How much money does Lucretia Hommel make, if any, from doing interior design work for Kimberly Bellissimo's homes in New Jersey and downtown Washington D.C.? Is it a non-profit, or does she make more than \$1,000 a year from this business?

How much money does Lucretia Hommel make a year overall doing interior design for her business, Snobz? How much does she make selling furniture from her Web site, snobz.co? Is there a way to break that down to see how much money she makes, if any, selling Bellissimo's furniture on the Web site?

Did anyone in Interior's ethics office discuss with Hommel how to fill out OGE form 278?

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre

Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Ben Lefebvre](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: More questions from Politico
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 5:46:12 PM

always glad to help answer questions about actual issues and not employee's wives' hobbies.

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Mon, Oct 23, 2017 at 12:47 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Well, I asked about GOMESA a few minutes ago. Feel free to field that one if you need something to do.

From: Russell Newell [mailto:russell_newell@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 12:44 PM
To: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>; interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: More questions from Politico

Ben, I'm still wondering if you plan to ever cover oil and gas policy

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 23, 2017, at 11:20 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

No he didn't. Can you please give me the contact information for your editor?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 11:01 AM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: More questions from Politico

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre

Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefevre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefevre

From: Critchfield, Marshall
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Need bio info
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 2:27:21 PM

This is a variation of what I sent the sportfish guys for the round-table last week... Let me know if its enough to work with.

Marshall Critchfield is currently serving as an advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior. Prior to joining the administration, Mr. Critchfield served in numerous roles for the Trump/Pence campaign in the battleground states of Iowa, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Marshall comes to Interior with nearly twenty years of experience in project management and public affairs and is a lifelong sportsman - growing up on the edge of the game-rich Florida Everglades. He has worked with many non-profits over the years to conserve habitat and educate young people about the value of conservation and the thrill of the chase.

Mr. Critchfield holds a bachelor's degree from Florida Atlantic University in History and an MBA from Palm Beach Atlantic University. He and his wife Stephanie currently reside in Arlington, VA with their two daughters.

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 2:09 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I'm preparing a press release announcing new hires and you're included. Please send me 1-3 sentences highlighting your career and education.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--

Marshall Critchfield

**Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks**
Office (202) 208-5996
Mobile (202) 706-4998
marshall_critchfield@ios.doi.gov

From: Boulton, Caroline
To: [Magallanes, Downey](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); [Timothy Williams](#)
Subject: Re: News Alert: Trump Can Save Atlantic Fishing Industry by Reversing Obama Order
Date: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 3:20:15 PM

Lola is flying in on Friday--we can check, but highly doubt RZ will want to stay Saturday.

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 3:12 PM, Magallanes, Downey <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

If he is good with a Saturday and you all decide after chatting he should meet with him I am all for it.

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 3:11 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Downey, maybe he can fly up to Boston and take Z fishing on Saturday to talk about the monument.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 3:03 PM, Magallanes, Downey <downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

you and I- on the same page!! I just emailed Tim he said he would track him down

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 2:44 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Downey, should we see if the author of this would like to meet with Zinke? He could be a good ally for a number of sportsmen/angler issues.

His bio is below.

Tred Barta (born March 28, 1952) is an American hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman, who hosts The Best and Worst of Tred Barta on the Versus Channel. As a fisherman, Barta has amassed several world records, some still current. Barta experienced spinal stroke and cancer in 2009, leaving him paralyzed from the armpits down. However, Barta continues to hunt and fish as he did before the accident. Overcoming limitations and fears is part of "The Barta Way" which is Tred's inspiring message to audiences to take on every challenge despite the obstacles. As Tred often says, "I can do it, you can do it."

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Hinson, Alex** <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 2:39 PM

Subject: News Alert: Trump Can Save Atlantic Fishing Industry by Reversing Obama Order

To:

[Trump Can Save Atlantic Fishing Industry by Reversing Obama Order](#)

June 6, 2017

First and foremost, I love my country. I voted for President Trump and I believe he is doing an excellent job for this great nation. I salute him for getting out of the mess known as the Paris Environmental Accord, but when it comes to saltwater issues greatly effecting the American public, President Trump gets an "F" for his missed opportunities.

I have written before in [Newsmax](#) and other outlets, but to refresh your memory, Obama used a 1916 loophole called the Antiquities Act. He roped off an area the size of Connecticut to abolish commercial fishing. He will allow recreational fishing, but it's completely up to the whim of the commerce department. The Aquatic National Monument undermines the regional economy and will deprive countless families of their livelihood.

Now listen up everyone. This 5,000 square mile area is rich in lobster, crab, squid, swordfish, tuna, and other high-demand seafood. The Hudson Canyon, right off New York City, is still in nomination for further sanctuary inventory and is in initiation of the nomination process. If Trump does not move to suppress, cancel, or obliterate the current national park, commercial and recreational fishermen will see a devastation of their businesses and their sport.

Soon, new members will be nominated for the Regional Fisheries Management Advisory Council which presently is riddled with left-wing anti-fishing council members. Trump must intervene. Earl Comstock of the Commerce Department met with the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and must do his job and get this message to President Trump!

Right now, the black sea bass population in New England is up 300 percent after a 6-year hiatus and rebuilding of their stock. At the same time, recreational fishermen are under strict regulations and may only catch five fish per day. Some of the best fishing is in November and December when tackle shops and marinas are barely hanging on. If a charter goes 15 miles offshore and drops anchor, in less than 5 minutes he will catch his 5 fish. The limit is grossly light because it's based on old science. Summer flounder is another example, because extremely restrictive, bad legislation affects the charter industry. It's based on 6-year-old data! The same problem exists with red snapper in the Gulf.

President Trump, you are my president. I give you an "A+" for protecting our country, expanding our economy, and being a leader of the free world, but you must address the flaws in the Magnuson-Steven's Act. You must strike down the Aquatic National Monuments off the New England coast which is seriously crippling the American fishing industry.

President Trump, I want to see you carry the vote of the fishermen in the 2020 elections. Invite me to the White House, give me 10 minutes of your time and I assure you, you will understand how important this is to the livelihood of the American fisherman. The recreational and commercial fishing industry beg you to do something. It is an unequivocal crime that Earl Comstock of the Commerce Department and Ryan Zinke of the Department of the Interior have not conveyed to President Trump the pleas, the letters, and phone calls not only from myself, but

millions of fishermen.

President Trump, help us, we are the American people. You promised to “Make America Great Again.” Why have you not struck down the executive order of Obama for the Aquatic National Monuments? The time for reversing this ridiculous executive order is now!

###

--
Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary
Department of the Interior
C: 202-641-5381

--
Downey Magallanes
Acting Deputy Chief of Staff
Senior Advisor and Counselor
downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
202-501-0654 (desk)
202-706-9199 (cell)

--
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--
Caroline Boulton
Department of the Interior
Scheduling & Advance
Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

From: Paul Ross
To: [Rigas, Laura](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida based superintendents
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:49:54 PM

Got it.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 22, 2017, at 7:48 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Paul -- our A/S, Virginia, was not aware of this. Please ask them to HOLD until we can clear through her. Once we get through the budget, let's talk about process.
Thanks!

*Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior*

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 4:35 PM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Laura-

NPS has a release regarding a new superintendent at De Soto National Memorial. They also have an if-asked statement regarding the superintendent of Canaveral National Seashore returning to work after a sexual harassment investigation that led to the dismissal of the park's chief ranger. Both are below for your review.

The superintendent at Canaveral goes back to work sometime this week. De Soto want to put out their announcement tomorrow but NPS is asking them to wait until Wednesday.

-Paul

IF-ASKED

“The National Park Service has taken final personnel action in the investigation into sexual harassment at Canaveral National Seashore. NPS maintains a zero-tolerance policy with regard to discrimination and harassment and remains firmly committed to holding employees accountable for misconduct. We are working closely with Canaveral National Seashore staff to help them heal and move forward.”

For background, not for direct attribution:

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Myrna Palfrey is concluding her temporary assignment with the regional partnerships office and will return as park superintendent, effective May 28. The superintendent took appropriate action to report charges of sexual harassment at the park.

Nathan Souder Selected as New Superintendent of De Soto National Memorial

ATLANTA – Today, National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director Stan Austin announced that Nathan Souder has been selected as the new superintendent of De Soto National Memorial in Bradenton, FL. Souder has been the acting superintendent there since March and officially begins his new role May 28, 2017.

“Nathan’s deep commitment to public service and civic engagement makes him a great fit for the job,” Austin said. “He brings with him broad experience and sound management skills. Nathan has dynamic employees he will lead in advancing the mission of De Soto National Memorial.”

Souder began his NPS career as a seasonal backcountry ranger in 2001 at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. His 16-year tenure with the agency has included assignments with increasing responsibility in legislative and congressional affairs, public affairs, budget, construction project management, and volunteer and youth programs. For the last two years, Nathan served as one of ten Urban Fellows across the country charged with increasing relevancy and collaboration for the National Park Service. As the Urban Fellow for Jacksonville, Florida, he split his time between working at Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve and downtown Jacksonville in City Hall.

“I am truly honored to be trusted with the responsibility of caring for this amazing memorial,” Souder said. “The park’s staff, volunteers and partners form an outstanding team that I am excited to continue working with. Together we will continue to engage with the local community and introduce new audiences to this hidden treasure.”

Souder holds a Bachelor of Science degree in public management from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He and his wife Sarah have two children, Elias, 6, and Ethan, 4, who are already fond of Bradenton's people, beaches and clear water.

[De Soto National Memorial](#) commemorates the landing of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto in Florida in 1539 and the first extensive organized exploration by Europeans of what is now the southern United States. The memorial, established in 1948, received nearly 233,000 visitors in 2016 who spent an [estimated \\$13.6 million](#) in local gateway regions while visiting De Soto National Memorial. These expenditures supported 210 jobs and \$19.1 million in total economic output in local economies surrounding the park.

Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [James Cason](#); [Daniel Jorjani](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida based superintendents
Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 4:55:47 PM

Hi all -- just checking in. Jim, did this go through the proper personnel process? Thanks!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Tue, May 23, 2017 at 9:42 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi-- per our discussion. Thx.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Virginia Johnson <virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 23, 2017 at 9:36:50 AM EDT
To: "Rigas, Laura" <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida based superintendents

Good morning. We're heading out and away from comms soon. These look fine. Thanks again for flagging for me!

Virginia

On May 22, 2017, at 5:49 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Absolutely, will do. Many thanks and safe travels!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 7:46 PM, Virginia Johnson

<virginia_johnson@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi, Laura.

Thanks for flagging this.

I had not seen. I'm at Yellowstone with sketchy service but traveling with Mike Reynolds. Will discuss with him and get back to you soonest but if not too late please hold until I can learn more.

Thanks.

Virginia

On May 22, 2017, at 3:35 PM, Rigas, Laura
<laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Virginia -- are you aware of this? ok with you?
Thanks!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ross, Paul** <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 4:35 PM
Subject: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida
based superintendents
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>, "Swift,
Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Laura-

NPS has a release regarding a new superintendent at De Soto National Memorial. They also have an if-asked statement regarding the superintendent of Canaveral National Seashore returning to work after a sexual harassment investigation that led to the dismissal of the park's chief ranger. Both are below for your review.

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-Paul

IF-ASKED

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Paul R. Ross
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Ross, Paul](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida based superintendents
Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 4:01:52 PM

Nope, pls hold. Thanks!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Wed, May 24, 2017 at 2:15 PM, Ross, Paul <paul_ross@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura-

Circling back here to see if this has received clearance yet? Thanks!

Paul R. Ross
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Office of Communications

U.S. Department of the Interior

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From: Laura Rigas
To: [Ross, Paul](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: NPS Statement/Release on two Florida based superintendents
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 8:35:17 AM

Hi Paul --
This these are cleared, subject to any edits Heather may have.
Thanks so much!
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Office: (202) 501-4633 | Cell: (202) 507-1689

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: op ed
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 3:23:58 PM
Attachments: [Made in America.docx](#)

Attached as Word Doc

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 3:14 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition.

Boston Harbor National Recreation Area is a unique example of a public-private partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land; provide boats between islands; restore historic lighthouses and forts; provide deliver educational tours; and carry out janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private partners also help maintain our buildings and aging infrastructure.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at the historic Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences like riding the historic Ford “Red Jammer” buses in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park would not be possible without public-private partnerships.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders and land managers to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can partner together to build upon the All-American Outdoor Experience on public lands. A couple of ideas I’ve already heard are installing energy-efficient cabins in a national monument, and bringing mobile youth fishing centers to urban areas across the country.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services

and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas.

For example, Wi-Fi, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, services like boat, ATV and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. This would be like going on a ski vacation and not being able to rent skis or have access to a lift up the mountain.

This leaves many families without practical and affordable options for camping, hiking, and recreating. Having three kids and two granddaughters myself, I can't imagine going on a family vacation without some of these basic services.

Now, expanding public-private-partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

Having partners in parks also does not mean the shuttle bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. In fact, some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

More partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver greater services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management. Partners are also able to deliver many services to the American people at a lower cost than the government can.

With the right amount of ingenuity and originality, we can foster the All-American Outdoor Experience through our work at Interior. The Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, "For the enjoyment of the people." Enjoying recreation on public lands is at the core of our shared American heritage.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it's also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry **generates** \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is about products as much as it is about our shared heritage and values. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There's a reason 330 million people from across the country and the world visit our parks every year, and millions more flock to public lands coast to coast: It's because these spaces are uniquely American. and are the result of a century of public-private partnerships.

This "Made in America" Week, let's unite **with** common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions

that have stood the test of time.

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 2:47 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Chuck Plunkett
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Op-Ed from Secretary Zinke
Date: Friday, July 14, 2017 3:07:32 PM

This doesn't quite strike me as that exclusive Heather, so we'll pass on this one. But do keep us in mind with future offerings of course.

Another note: This one is almost 800 words. We have space in our print editions for no more than 700 words and 650 is better.

Here's hoping you have a great weekend! And again, thanks for thinking of The Denver Post.

Chuck Plunkett
Editor of the Editorial Pages
The Denver Post
303.954.1333 o
303.810.6129 c

On Fri, Jul 14, 2017 at 12:36 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Chuck, below is the op-ed from the Secretary. [Here's his headshot.](#)

Would Monday/Tuesday be a realistic target?

Thanks!

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience
By Secretary Ryan Zinke

This week, President Trump kicked off “Made in America Week.” At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America’s tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands. The all-American outdoor experience was the idea of visionaries like President Theodore Roosevelt, and has been carried on by the federal government and Congress for years. It could not have been possible without help from philanthropic foundations, American businesses, and thousands of public-private partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition for increased public access. The Far View Lodge at Mesa Verde is one such project that benefits from partnering with private business.

In my recent visit to Boston Harbor National Recreation Area, I learned how it is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boat transportation between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, lead educational tours, and complete janitorial

and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private individuals and philanthropic organizations also help maintain our public lands.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences, like riding a historic Ford “Red Jammer” bus in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park, would not be possible without the valued work of American businesses and workers.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships and products, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can work together to build upon the outdoor experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard are for outdoor recreation outfitters to make investments in our public lands for things like energy-efficient cabins and fishing access points.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services, and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas to preserve and enhance the American outdoor experience.

For example, Wi-Fi access, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, common services like boat, ATV, and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. Our goal is to expand services so public access to our public land is expanded for all Americans.

More partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public, “For the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as the famous Yellowstone Roosevelt Arch states.

Having partners on public lands also does not mean the tour bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. Some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver better services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it’s also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is as much about products as much as it is about the shared American experience created here. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There's a reason why 330 million people from across the country and around the world visit our parks every year, and why millions more flock to public lands from coast to coast: It's because these spaces are uniquely American.

This Made in America Week, let's unite with a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

Ryan Zinke is the 52nd Secretary of the Interior. He is a fifth-generation Montanan, former Congressman, an Eagle Scout, and retired Navy SEAL Commander.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Jul 14, 2017 at 2:05 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Understood, thanks, Chuck. Would you be able to do Monday or Tuesday?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Jul 14, 2017 at 12:49 PM, Chuck Plunkett <cplunkett@denverpost.com> wrote:

Thanks for reaching out Heather. We would always welcome submissions from Secretary Zinke of course. Some things to know:

Our production schedule for Sunday means that I would have to have had a heads up earlier in the week, like Wednesday. We put our Perspective section together and to bed on Thursdays. We also ask that op-eds we receive for possible publication be exclusive to us.

So this Sunday would be out, but please we could consider an exclusive op-ed submission for early in the week.

Thanks so much.

Chuck Plunkett

Editor of the Editorial Pages
The Denver Post
[303.954.1333](tel:303.954.1333) o
[303.810.6129](tel:303.810.6129) c

On Fri, Jul 14, 2017 at 10:37 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi there Chuck - Heather Swift here from the Dept. of the Interior. I'm wondering if the Post is interested in a submission from Sec. Zinke for Sunday's paper.

Next week is "Made in America Week" in the Trump administration and the Secretary will highlight in the op-ed made in America partnerships in parks and public lands and touch on his priorities with expanding them.

Let me know if you're interested.

Thanks!
Heather
[202-208-5338](tel:202-208-5338)

ps - the gent who answers the phones is very polite.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Bowman, Liz
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Rigas, Laura](#)
Subject: RE: Op-Eds on Red/Blue
Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 1:55:36 PM

Hi Heather and Lara – The email below was in response to questions you all were getting about Red/Blue, just so you had the background. I didn't think you guys were planning to make an announcement on this, it was just for background, in case there was a desire to schedule a call or meeting between the two principals on the issue. Thanks again – Liz

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2017 3:41 PM
To: Bowman, Liz <Bowman.Liz@epa.gov>
Cc: Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Op-Eds on Red/Blue

Awesome. Thanks Liz. For the next several weeks we are packed with hunting, fishing and conservation work so I don't think it immediately fits into our message calendar.

Sent from my iPad

On Sep 21, 2017, at 11:52 AM, Bowman, Liz <Bowman.Liz@epa.gov> wrote:

Hi Heather and Laura -- Below, please find some two op-eds that Administrator Pruitt refers to with regard to his inspiration on a Red Team/Blue Team exercise. The first is a piece that ran today from the CEO of the Heartland Institute praising the exercise. That follows the original two pieces that inspired the Administrator to start working on this exercise. If this is something that Secretary Zinke is interested in discussing, please let me know and we can set up a call/meeting between the two Cabinet members. Please let me know if you all have questions. Thank you – Liz, (b) (6)

September 21, 2017

[The Hill: Red team-blue team exercise will expose the junk science that filled Obama's EPA](#)

By: Op-Ed, Roger Bezdek and Joseph Bast, Heartland Institute

Former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman has leveled a number of error-riddled accusations against the current administrator, Scott Pruitt. Perhaps she is troubled by the fact that Pruitt's term in office will likely be marked by a landmark contribution to the scientific debate while her legacy was middling.

Whitman's main concern is that Pruitt will establish a "red team-blue team" exercise to examine whether the EPA has falsely claimed scientific certainty on unresolved questions in the debate over anthropogenic global warming (AGW). Such questions include whether human-produced carbon dioxide is the major driver of global warming and climate change, and if it is possible to accurately forecast future climate conditions and even weather events.

Whitman contends there is "broad consensus" and "no debate" on these matters, and that "the red-team idea is a waste of the government's time, energy and resources."

The first question to ask Whitman is, if the science is settled, the evidence overwhelming, and the answer is a slam-dunk, what is she afraid of? If she is right, the debate will last all of five minutes. She would seem to have nothing to lose.

We believe Whitman's real fear is that an objective, transparent, and rigorous red team-blue team exercise would reveal that the science behind current EPA climate policies was manipulated, biased toward alarmism, and is therefore not a reliable basis for public policy.

Claims about global warming coming from EPA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and international groups such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are loaded with appeals to secret, hidden, or "missing" files and to pre-conceived conclusions, subject to overt political interference, and protected by a deep corruption of the peer review process. A red team-blue team exercise would expose all this dirty laundry.

How could an open and public debate result, as Whitman contends, in the public knowing "less about the science of climate change than before"? This is insulting to millions of people who are better trained to understand the science debate than she is.

The red team-blue team methodology was pioneered by the national security community to test assumptions and analyses, identify risks, and reduce — or at least understand — uncertainties. The process is considered a best practice in complex high-consequence situations such as intelligence assessments, spacecraft design, and major industrial operations. Would not Whitman agree that global warming is a complex high-consequence situation?

A red team-blue team exercise has staunch supporters outside the Trump

administration. Earlier this year, Dr. Steven Koonin called for a more formal exercise to be overseen by an interagency group similar to the Obama-era and now disbanded Interagency Working Group on the Social Cost of Carbon. Others who have joined the call include Dr. William Happer at Princeton University, Dr. Judith Curry of the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Dr. Freeman Dyson at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

An international exercise has been underway since 2003, when Dr. S. Fred Singer, a distinguished atmospheric physicist, launched a Team B to critique an upcoming report from the United Nations' IPCC. That effort is ongoing and is called the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change.

None of these distinguished scientists fits Whitman's demeaning reference to the "tiny minority of contrarians who publish very little and are funded by fossil fuel interests." Dr. Koonin, just to focus on one, served as Undersecretary of Energy for Science under President Obama, served a decade as provost at Caltech, and is founder and currently the Director of New York University's Center for Urban Science and Progress.

Whitman argues that a red team-blue team exercise would be a waste of government resources and "a slap in the face to fiscal responsibility and responsible governance." Frankly, it would be a well-deserved slap in the face of past EPA administrators, including her, and other federal agency leaders who shamefully allowed climate science to become politicized and unreliable.

It is fiscally irresponsible and irresponsible governance to spend trillions of dollars on uneconomical technologies, forcing consumers to buy products they do not want, and destroying entire industries on the basis of untested hypotheses and inaccurate forecasts.

A red team-blue team investigation of the truth about global warming is absolutely imperative. We know why Whitman opposes it. For the rest of us, this exercise is long over-due.

Joseph L. Bast is CEO of The Heartland Institute, a conservative nonprofit group based in Illinois, and Roger H. Bezdek, Ph.D., is president of Management Information Services, Inc, an economic research and consulting firm.

April 28, 2017

[New York Times: Climate of Complete Certainty](#)

By: Bret Stephens, Op-Ed Columnist

This is Bret Stephens's first column.

When someone is honestly 55 percent right, that's very good and there's no use wrangling. And if someone is 60 percent right, it's wonderful, it's great luck, and let him thank God.

But what's to be said about 75 percent right? Wise people say this is suspicious. Well, and what about 100 percent right? Whoever says he's 100 percent right is a fanatic, a thug, and the worst kind of rascal.

— An old Jew of Galicia

In the final stretch of last year's presidential race, Hillary Clinton and her team thought they were, if not 100 percent right, then very close.

Right on the merits. Confident in their methods. Sure of their chances. When Bill Clinton suggested to his wife's advisers that, considering Brexit, they might be underestimating the strength of the populist tide, the campaign manager, Robby Mook, had a bulletproof answer: The data run counter to your anecdotes.

That detail comes from "Shattered," Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes's compulsively readable account of Clinton's 2016 train wreck. Mook belonged to a new breed of political technologists with little time for retail campaigning and limitless faith in the power of models and algorithms to minimize uncertainty and all but predict the future.

"Mook and his 'Moneyball' approach to politics rankled the old order of political operatives and consultants because it made some of their work obsolete," Allen and Parnes write about the campaign's final days. "The memo that one Hillary adviser had sent months earlier warning that they should add three or four points to Trump's poll position was a distant memory."

There's a lesson here. We live in a world in which data convey authority. But authority has a way of descending to certitude, and certitude begets hubris. From Robert McNamara to Lehman Brothers to Stronger Together, cautionary tales abound.

We ought to know this by now, but we don't. Instead, we respond to the inherent

uncertainties of data by adding more data without revisiting our assumptions, creating an impression of certainty that can be lulling, misleading and often dangerous. Ask Clinton.

With me so far? Good. Let's turn to climate change.

Last October, the Pew Research Center published a survey on the politics of climate change. Among its findings: Just 36 percent of Americans care "a great deal" about the subject. Despite 30 years of efforts by scientists, politicians and activists to raise the alarm, nearly two-thirds of Americans are either indifferent to or only somewhat bothered by the prospect of planetary calamity.

Why? The science is settled. The threat is clear. Isn't this one instance, at least, where 100 percent of the truth resides on one side of the argument?

Well, not entirely. As Andrew Revkin wrote last year about his storied career as an environmental reporter at The Times, "I saw a widening gap between what scientists had been learning about global warming and what advocates were claiming as they pushed ever harder to pass climate legislation." The science was generally scrupulous. The boosters who claimed its authority weren't.

Anyone who has read the 2014 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change knows that, while the modest (0.85 degrees Celsius, or about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit) warming of the earth since 1880 is indisputable, as is the human influence on that warming, much else that passes as accepted fact is really a matter of probabilities. That's especially true of the sophisticated but fallible models and simulations by which scientists attempt to peer into the climate future. To say this isn't to deny science. It's to acknowledge it honestly.

By now I can almost hear the heads exploding. They shouldn't, because there's another lesson here — this one for anyone who wants to advance the cause of good climate policy. As Revkin wisely noted, hyperbole about climate "not only didn't fit the science at the time but could even be counterproductive if the hope was to engage a distracted public."

Let me put it another way. Claiming total certainty about the science traduces the spirit of science and creates openings for doubt whenever a climate claim proves wrong. **Demanding abrupt and expensive changes in public policy raises fair questions about ideological intentions. Censoriously asserting one's moral superiority and treating skeptics as imbeciles and deplorables wins few converts.**

None of this is to deny climate change or the possible severity of its consequences. But ordinary citizens also have a right to be skeptical of an overweening scientism. They know — as all environmentalists should — that history is littered with the human wreckage of scientific errors married to political power.

I've taken the epigraph for this column from the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, who knew something about the evils of certitude. Perhaps if there had been less certitude and more second-guessing in Clinton's campaign, she'd be president.

Perhaps if there were less certitude about our climate future, more Americans would be interested in having a reasoned conversation about it.

April 20, 2017

Wall Street Journal

[A 'Red Team' Exercise Would Strengthen Climate Science: Put the 'consensus' to a test, and improve public understanding, through an open, adversarial process.](#)

By: Steven Koonin, Energy Department Undersecretary, Opinion Columnist

Tomorrow's March for Science will draw many thousands in support of evidence-based policy making and against the politicization of science. **A concrete step toward those worthy goals would be to convene a "Red Team/Blue Team" process for climate science, one of the most important and contentious issues of our age.**

The national-security community pioneered the "Red Team" methodology to test assumptions and analyses, identify risks, and reduce—or at least understand—uncertainties. The process is now considered a best practice in high-consequence situations such as intelligence assessments, spacecraft design and major industrial operations. It is very different and more rigorous than traditional peer review, which is usually confidential and always adjudicated, rather than public and moderated.

The public is largely unaware of the intense debates within climate science. At a recent national laboratory meeting, I observed more than 100 active government and university researchers challenge one another as they strove to separate human impacts from the climate's natural variability. At issue were not nuances but fundamental aspects of our understanding, such as the apparent—and unexpected—slowing of global sea-level rise over the past two decades.

Summaries of scientific assessments meant to inform decision makers, such as the United Nations' Summary for Policymakers, largely fail to capture this vibrant and developing science. Consensus statements necessarily conceal judgment calls and debates and so feed the "settled," "hoax" and "don't know" memes that plague the political dialogue around climate change. We scientists must better portray not only our certainties but also our uncertainties, and even things we may never know. Not doing so is an advisory malpractice that usurps society's right to make choices fully informed by risk, economics and values. Moving from oracular consensus statements to an open adversarial process would shine much-needed light on the scientific debates.

Given the importance of climate projections to policy, it is remarkable that they have not been subject to a Red Team exercise. Here's how it might work:

The focus would be a published scientific report meant to inform policy such as the U.N.'s Summary for Policymakers or the U.S. Government's National Climate Assessment. A Red Team of scientists would write a critique of that document and a Blue Team would rebut that critique. Further exchanges of documents would ensue to the point of diminishing returns. A commission would coordinate and moderate the process and then hold hearings to highlight points of agreement and disagreement, as well as steps that might resolve the latter. The process would unfold in full public view: the initial report, the exchanged documents and the hearings.

A Red/Blue exercise would have many benefits. It would produce a traceable public record that would allow the public and decision makers a better understanding of certainties and uncertainties. It would more firmly establish points of agreement and identify urgent research needs. Most important, it would put science front and center in policy discussions, while publicly demonstrating scientific reasoning and argument. The inherent tension of a professional adversarial process would enhance public interest, offering many opportunities to show laymen how science actually works. (In 2014 I conducted a workshop along these lines for the American Physical Society.)

Congress or the executive branch should convene a climate science Red/Blue exercise as a step toward resolving, or at least illuminating, differing perceptions of climate science. While the Red and Blue Teams should be knowledgeable and avowedly opinionated scientists, the commission should have a balanced membership of prominent individuals with technical credentials, led by co-chairmen who are forceful, knowledgeable and independent of the climate-science community. The Rogers Commission for the Challenger disaster in 1986, the Energy Department's Huizenga/Ramsey Review of Cold Fusion in 1989, and

the National Bioethics Advisory Commission of the late 1990s are models for the kind of fact-based rigor and transparency needed.

The outcome of a Red/Blue exercise for climate science is not preordained, which makes such a process all the more valuable. It could reveal the current consensus as weaker than claimed. Alternatively, the consensus could emerge strengthened if Red Team criticisms were countered effectively. But whatever the outcome, we scientists would have better fulfilled our responsibilities to society, and climate policy discussions would be better informed. For those reasons, all who march to advocate policy making based upon transparent apolitical science should support a climate science Red Team exercise.

Mr. Koonin, a theoretical physicist, is director of the Center for Urban Science and Progress at New York University. He served as undersecretary of energy for science during President Obama's first term.

Appeared in the April 21, 2017, print edition.

Liz Bowman
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Office: 202-564-3293

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Barnum, Jeremy](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Paul Ross](#); [April Slayton](#)
Subject: Re: PEER News Release on SOI at Channel Islands
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 5:31:02 PM

thanks Jeremy - yes, please send them our way.

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Wed, Oct 4, 2017 at 5:28 PM, Barnum, Jeremy <jeremy_barnum@nps.gov> wrote:

DOI Colleagues,

We were just alerted to the below news release related to a PEER FOIA request from earlier this year related to the Secretary and Channel Islands.

The park is planning to refer queries to Interior Press, unless you would like for us to do otherwise.

Thanks,

Jeremy

<https://www.peer.org/news/news-releases/zinke-commandeered-boat-for-channel-islands-jaunt.html>.

For Immediate Release: Oct 04, 2017
Contact: Kirsten Stade (202) 265-7337

ZINKE COMMANDEERED BOAT FOR CHANNEL ISLANDS JAUNT
Diverted to Pick Up Wife, Aunt, and Guests He Classified as “Technical Experts”

Posted on Oct 04, 2017 | Tags: California, DOI, NPS

Washington, DC — Exorbitant travel by the Interior Secretary is not limited to charter planes but includes seagoing vessels, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). In mid-April, Ryan Zinke diverted a National Park Service (NPS) boat to pick him and family members up for a three-hour island tour featuring a Junior Ranger swearing-in ceremony.

On April 18th, the NPS boat Ocean Ranger left its Ventura, California port to travel to Santa Barbara Harbor to pick up Zinke, his wife, and aunt to take them and other members of his party to Santa Rosa Island, part of the Channel Islands National Park, and back that same day.

The party spent more time at sea than on the island, with a three-hour itinerary that consisted

largely of photo ops, a tour, lunch, and Zinke swearing in middle school students as Junior Rangers. Notably –

Use of the government ship cost taxpayers around \$4,000 dollars, including fuel and crew overtime, an estimate that does not include significant time by several NPS staff people; Zinke also brought along two local fishermen whom he classified as “technical experts” though on what issue is unclear. As such, they traveled free; and

To pay for his wife and aunt, NPS presented Zinke with a bill for \$142, which by mid-June increased to \$152 in late fees. The bill appears to have been paid by late June.

“There is nothing deeply wrong with this ‘grip-and-grin’ tour but it is galling when the Secretary is telling everyone else to tighten their belts,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch who obtained the documents under the Freedom of Information Act after employees complained of the time and expense lost for no discernible purpose. “Taxpayers should not foot the bill for public officials acting as tourists.”

The records also describe Zinke expressing a desire to open a “working demonstration ranch” on Santa Rosa Island to “highlight the island’s ranching heritage,” quoting a note from the park superintendent. The Zinke tour group also included members of the Vail family which ran a cattle ranch on the island until 1998 and a commercial hunting operation there until 2011.

The Channel Islands are often called “the Galapagos Islands of North America” due to the unique and wide diversity of plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. In recent years, NPS has undertaken a major and costly effort to preserve and protect these native resources, including removal of nonnative plants and animals, recovery of island foxes, and reestablishment of bald eagles.

“Cattle and imported game animals are not the ‘heritage’ of Santa Rosa but an aberrant moment in its history,” added Ruch, noting a recent Zinke directive to maximize hunting opportunities even on national park lands. “Our major concern is that Ryan Zinke wants to turn this ecological jewel back into a game preserve.”

###

Look at records about Ocean Ranger expenses

See Zinke’s technical experts

Look at Zinke bill of collection

View the Zinke itinerary

Read Zinke “demonstration ranch” idea

Revisit Channel Islands ecological restoration

<https://www.peer.org/news/news-releases/zinke-commandeered-boat-for-channel-islands-jaunt.html>

From: Myers, Gregory
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Pics from Last Night
Date: Friday, December 15, 2017 11:26:27 AM

I didn't see them on the wall, outside you office.

On Fri, Dec 15, 2017 at 10:15 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Check out the wall outside my office.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 15, 2017, at 9:55 AM, Myers, Gregory <gregory_myers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hello Heather. Did you get the chance to develop the pictures of me and wife, last night? If so, when can I drop by and get them? Thank you.

--

Gregory Myers

Immediate Office of the Secretary

Department of the Interior

(202) 208-5024 Direct Line

gregory_myers@ios.doi.gov

--

Gregory Myers

Immediate Office of the Secretary

Department of the Interior

(202) 208-5024 Direct Line

(202) 208-6956 Fax

gregory_myers@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Myers, Gregory](#)
Subject: Re: Pics from Last Night
Date: Friday, December 15, 2017 1:42:32 PM

I think somebody accidentally took your photo. Here is the digital copy. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/157076256@N07/25208020398/in/album-72157691046262845/>

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Dec 15, 2017 at 9:55 AM, Myers, Gregory <gregory_myers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hello Heather. Did you get the chance to develop the pictures of me and wife, last night? If so, when can I drop by and get them? Thank you.

--

Gregory Myers

Immediate Office of the Secretary

Department of the Interior

(202) 208-5024 Direct Line

gregory_myers@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rigas, Laura](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: POLITICO Playbook, presented by BP: ABOUT that tax bill delay -- POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT poll: voters like tax reform, but they're cool to corporate cut -- TRUMP says he'll tighten vetting after NYC attack -- BETSY DEVOS profile -- B'DAY: David Bo..
Date: Wednesday, November 01, 2017 9:13:58 AM

I already spoke to Lippman

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Nov 1, 2017 at 9:05 AM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
ok. They should have put him in the list below at minimum.

*Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior*

On Wed, Nov 1, 2017 at 9:02 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
he's in power briefing apparently.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Nov 1, 2017 at 8:49 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Did I miss the boss?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anna Palmer Jake Sherman Daniel Lippman
<politicoplaybook@politico.com>
Date: November 1, 2017 at 6:35:25 AM EDT
To: <Laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: POLITICO Playbook, presented by BP: ABOUT that tax bill delay -- POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT poll: voters like tax reform, but they're cool to corporate cut -- TRUMP says he'll tighten vetting after NYC attack -- BETSY DEVOS profile -- B'DAY: David Bossie

Reply-To: POLITICO subscriptions <reply-fe8913717260017a72-630318_HTML-795262248-1376319-0@politicoemail.com>

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Today's POLITICO Playbook presented by BP

By JAKE SHERMAN (sherman@politico.com; [@JakeSherman](https://twitter.com/JakeSherman)), ANNA PALMER (anna@politico.com; [@apalmerdc](https://twitter.com/apalmerdc)) and DANIEL LIPPMAN (daniel@politico.com; [@dlippman](https://twitter.com/dlippman))

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DRIVING THE DAY

Happy Wednesday morning, and welcome to November.

TAX ROLLOUT: TOP RATE STAYS AT 39.6, ROLLOUT DELAYED -- WSJ'S RICH RUBIN, SIOBHAN HUGHES and KRISTINA PETERSON: "The House Republican tax plan will

preserve a top individual tax rate of 39.6%, according to people familiar with the matter, though party leaders are delaying its release by a day to iron out unresolved issues.

"The plan for the top rate marks a retreat for Republicans on a question that has spurred intense debate in Washington: How will a tax overhaul treat the most affluent Americans? Republicans last year had been discussing a top rate of 33%, and then moved to 35% earlier this year. But they left themselves open to the possibility of keeping it unchanged or lowering it by some smaller amount." <http://on.wsj.com/2z3p02P>

-- **RACHAEL BADE, BERNIE BECKER, BRIAN FALER and AARON LORENZO:** "Ryan told conservative group leaders Thursday that the [top] income threshold for the top rate would likely be higher than it currently is, likely between \$750,000 and \$1 million. He said the estate tax would likewise be repealed but may have to be phased out to save money in the short term.

"But it's the unresolved issues that caused Ways and Means members the most heartburn this week -- and ultimately led to the delay. Those include: how to win over GOP lawmakers from high-tax states that are balking over curbing the state and local tax deduction, which their constituents rely on. There are also question about how to ensure that wealthy individuals don't take advantage of the lower 25 percent small business or 'pass-through' rate. Many of the unresolved items are hot-button issues, including what to do with 401(k) retirement plans."

<http://politi.co/2zn8fAl>

-- **MORE DETAILS FROM NANCY COOK:** "Ryan was fuzzy with them on where the one-time repatriation tax would fall. The estate tax is definitely going away but might have to be phased out. It would definitely be gone by year three. ...

"The delay on the timing of the House GOP tax bill also forced the White House to re-jigger its roll-out plans. President Trump had tentatively planned to host some Republican members of the House Ways & Means Committee to the Oval Office for a photo-op

and statements, following the unveil of the House bill, according to a congressional source familiar with the planning -- but that too got disrupted."

ABOUT THE DELAY ... The idea that this bill rollout would slip to Thursday truly isn't a surprise to people in Washington. We put in Playbook Tuesday that President Trump was going to do a tax event "if House Republicans are able to get their tax bill out."

TWO WAYS TO THINK ABOUT THIS -- ... Republicans want you to think this delay isn't a big deal. And, in many ways, it's not. Massive bills -- and this one will be 1,000-plus pages -- are hard and they take time. That's why it was nonsensical that the White House wanted this done before the end of the year. (Although clearing this before year end would allow another run at health care in early 2018.) And, from a practical standpoint, this isn't a big setback. The rollout is delayed by one single day.

-- BUT, BUT, BUT ... Tax reform isn't a walk in the park. This is only going to get harder. Remember: we haven't seen a single detail yet. Not one. The delay helps highlight that this is a long, arduous and tricky process.

REMINDER -- Up on Capitol Hill and among Republican political operatives, the success of tax reform is seen as existential, and binary. Finish it and get it into law, and keep the House. Fail, and the House could be gone. **IT'S SO IMPORTANT -- AMERICAN ACTION NETWORK**, the top House GOP outside group, is likely to spend between \$20 million and \$25 million to support the package. They've already spent close to \$15 million.

BEHIND THE SCENES -- TRUMP sat down with nearly a dozen trade association heads to talk about tax reform Tuesday. He asked how many of them had been working on tax policy when Congress and President Ronald Reagan rewrote the code in the 1980s. **THE ANSWER:** Just 2. **TOM DONOHUE** of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and **DIRK VAN DONGEN** of the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors. **SPOTTED:** Robert Cresanti of IFA, Matt Shay of NRF, Karen Kerrigan of the Small

Business & Entrepreneurship Council and Rob Nichols of ABA, among others. **MISSING: JERRY HOWARD**, head of the National Association of Homebuilders, who has come out against the tax package.

YOU'RE INVITED! DEPT. OF GOOD TIMING -- JAKE and ANNA will sit down **FRIDAY** with **HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS CHAIRMAN KEVIN BRADY** -- Kevin Brady is the House's top tax writer, putting him in the middle of Republicans' biggest and most important legislative push. He will explain the tax bill to us -- and to Washington -- in a Playbook Interview. **LOCATION:** The Newseum ([555 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW](http://www.newseum.org)). **TIME:** Doors open at 11:30 a.m., and the event starts at noon. **RSVP** <http://bit.ly/politicobradys> **EMAIL US** if you have questions for the chairman. Our coordinates are at the top of the newsletter.

-- @ChadPergram at 10:43 p.m.: "McConnell, Ryan, WH Cos Kelly, Nat'l Sec Adviser McMaster & DefSec Mattis all had dinner tonight".

***** **A message from BP: We operate the largest renewables business of any major oil and gas company in the world. [Learn more in our Economic Impact Report.](#)** *****

NEW POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT POLL -- "Poll: Voters like tax reform overall but cool to corporate cut," by Toby Eckert: "Overall public support for the tax plan outlined in September by President Donald Trump and GOP Hill leaders remains steady, but opposition to a corporate rate cut has edged up, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll. Forty-eight percent of registered voters who responded to the poll said they "strongly support" or "somewhat support" the overall proposal based on what they knew about it, compared to 37 percent who opposed it. Those numbers are unchanged from a similar poll earlier this month, conducted shortly after the White House and congressional Republicans released their tax overhaul framework.

"The proposal's popularity was driven by overwhelming

Republican support, with 83 percent of GOP voters supporting it, compared to 24 percent of Democrats and 39 percent of independents. But a key part of the plan, lowering the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 35 percent, remains one of its least popular aspects. A plurality of respondents - 41 percent - said it shouldn't be part of tax legislation, compared to 39 percent who said it should." <http://politi.co/2xIsHXV>

THE LATEST ON THE TERROR ATTACK IN NYC -- "NYC truck attack: Investigators scour driver's background," by AP's Colleen Long and Matt Sedensky: "Investigators worked through the night to determine what led a truck driver to plow down people on a riverfront bike path near the World Trade Center, brandishing air guns and yelling 'God is great' in Arabic as his deadly route of terror ended with a crash, authorities said.

"Eight people were killed and 11 seriously injured in a Halloween afternoon attack that the mayor called 'a particularly cowardly act of terror.' The driver - identified by officials as an immigrant from Uzbekistan - was in critical condition but expected to survive after a police officer shot him in the abdomen." <http://bit.ly/2ikTIdz>

-- **NYT:** "The rampage ended when the motorist - whom the police identified as Sayfullo Saipov, 29 - smashed into a school bus, jumped out of his truck and ran up and down the highway waving a pellet gun and paintball gun and shouting 'Allahu akbar,' Arabic for 'God is great,' before he was shot in the abdomen by the officer. He remained in critical condition on Tuesday evening." <http://nyti.ms/2huDEq2>

-- **"A Mangled School Bus, Bodies Everywhere; 'It Was Surreal',"** by NYT's Jose DelReal and Corey Kilgannon: <http://nyti.ms/2zaaUfJ>

--**"Terror suspect was a 'very friendly' Uzbek immigrant who drove for Uber,"** by N.Y. Post's Gabrielle Fonrouge: "Kobiljon Matkarov, 37, met suspected terrorist Sayfullo Saipov in Florida about five years ago shortly after Saipov came from Uzbekistan-

the two connected over their mutual heritage. 'He is very good guy, he is very friendly... he is like little brother... he look at me like big brother,' Matkarov said by phone Tuesday from his home in Miamisburg, Ohio. Matkarov said he'd been working for Uber and living in New Jersey as recently as this summer."

<http://nyp.st/2iQXrU4>

--N.Y. POST cover, "TERROR RETURNS TO NYC"

<http://nyp.st/2gZUCQ0> ... N.Y. Daily News cover, "BIKE PATH BLOODBATH" <http://nydn.us/2iQ4MTT>

-- TRUMP'S REACTION -- @realDonaldTrump at 5:30 p.m.: "In NYC, looks like another attack by a very sick and deranged person. Law enforcement is following this closely. NOT IN THE U.S.A.!" ... at 6:31 p.m.: "We must not allow ISIS to return, or enter, our country after defeating them in the Middle East and elsewhere. Enough!" ... at 6:57 p.m.: "My thoughts, condolences and prayers to the victims and families of the New York City terrorist attack. God and your country are with you!" ... at 9:26 p.m.: "I have just ordered Homeland Security to step up our already Extreme Vetting Program. Being politically correct is fine, but not for this!"

***** A message from BP: From coast to coast, we spent \$16 billion with local businesses last year. [Take 30 seconds to see how we're supporting jobs across the U.S.](#) *****

AP'S ZEKE MILLER: "The real John Kelly slowly revealing himself at White House": "In his three months on the job, John Kelly has been credited with bringing order to a chaotic West Wing, but don't call him a moderate. President Donald Trump's chief of staff was the enforcer of Trump's controversial immigration policies, has frequently criticized the president's enemies, and this week echoed his boss' defense of Confederate monuments. It all suggests that 'The Chief,' as he is known among aides, may have instilled order, but he is more ideologically aligned with Trump than many believed.

"Much has been made of the imagery of Kelly silently lurking on the sidelines of presidential addresses, seeming to cringe when

Trump gets out of line. But it may be wishful thinking by Trump's critics to believe that he's tugging the president in another direction. White House officials and Kelly allies say he is not so much partisan as he is ideological, holding hawkish views on issues like immigration and national security."

<http://bit.ly/2zX8QoE>

WHERE TRUMP'S HEAD IS -- "Trump rejecting Bannon's hard line against Mueller -- for now," by CNN's Jeff Zeleny, Gloria Borger and Kevin Liptak: "President Donald Trump has decided -- for now -- to stick with his strategy of cooperation with special counsel Robert Mueller, a day after the Russia investigation ensnared three of his campaign aides. That's despite being urged to take a harder line by his former chief strategist, Steve Bannon. Bannon spoke with Trump following Monday's announcements from the special counsel, and advocated taking a harsher approach to Mueller ...

"While Trump encouraged Bannon to lead the public charge against Mueller, the President made clear to aides Tuesday that he's not adopting Bannon's advice. As the President stewes about the recent developments in the Russia investigation, he's receiving conflicting arguments about how to proceed. His current legal team and strategy has the support of White House chief of staff John Kelly and -- perhaps most importantly -- members of the President's family." <http://cnn.it/2yiQsKJ>

MUELLER WATCH -- "Papadopoulos Claimed Trump Campaign Approved Russia Meeting," by Bloomberg's Greg Farrell, David Voreacos and Henry Meyer: "Former Trump adviser George Papadopoulos made a significant claim in an email: Top Trump campaign officials agreed to a pre-election meeting with representatives of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The message, if true, would bolster claims that Trump's campaign attempted to collude with Russian interests. But it's unclear whether Papadopoulos, who pleaded guilty to lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was merely boasting when he sent the July 14, 2016, email to a Kremlin-linked contact. There's also no indication such a meeting ever occurred."

<https://bloom.bg/2z8v8GO>

-- "**Andrew Weissmann, Mueller's Legal Pit Bull,**" by NYT's Matt Flegenheimer: "It is not clear if President Trump and his charges fear Mr. Weissmann as they gird for the slog ahead. It is quite clear, former colleagues and opponents say, that they should. 'I'm no fan of Donald Trump,' said Dan Cogdell, a Houston defense lawyer who tangled with Mr. Weissmann when Mr. Weissmann helped lead the federal task force investigating Enron in the early 2000s. 'Frankly, I can't think of two people who deserve each other more than Andrew Weissmann and Donald Trump.'" <http://nyti.ms/2gTk7Ps>

THE NEXT TURN OF THE SCREW -- "Mueller schedules interview with Hope Hicks," by Annie Karni and Josh Dawsey: "President Donald Trump's longtime aide and current communications director, Hope Hicks, is scheduled to speak with special counsel Robert Mueller's team in mid-November, following the president's trip to Asia, multiple people familiar with the schedule told POLITICO. Mueller's team is also expected to interview three or four other current White House officials as early as this week ...

"Mueller's team already has interviewed former aides, including Trump's first chief of staff Reince Priebus and former press secretary Sean Spicer. But the latest round of interviews appears to mark a new phase of the investigation - hauling in current administration officials for daylong depositions." <http://politi.co/2z2H9OA>

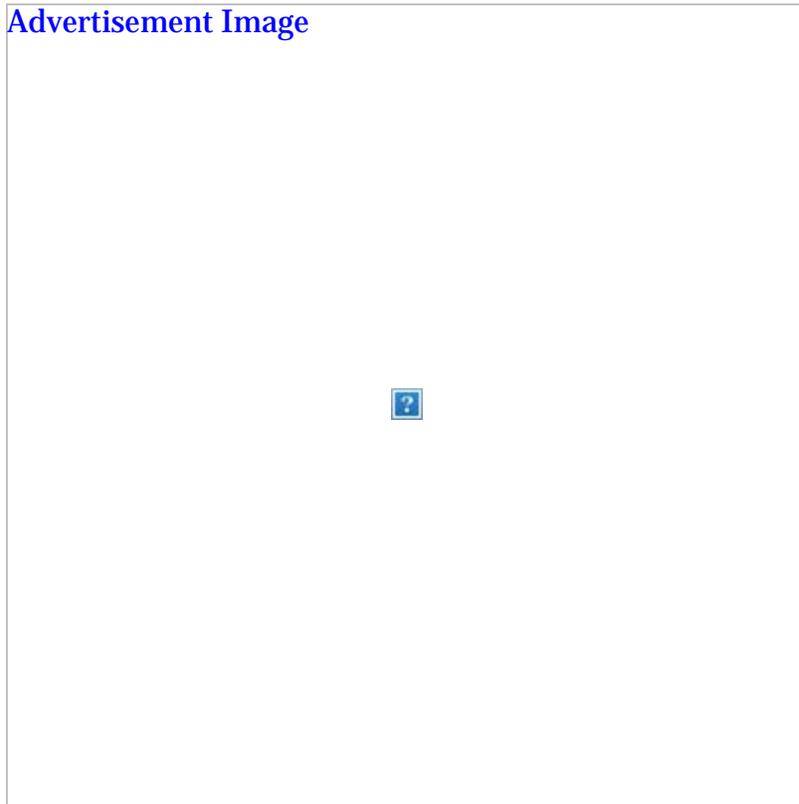
GETTING POTUS READY FOR ASIA -- "Trump advisers try to focus the president's attention on Asia trip," by Andrew Restuccia, Nahal Toosi, and Josh Dawsey: "President Donald Trump has been holed up in a series of rapid-fire briefing sessions on his upcoming 12-day, five-country tour through Asia - an effort the White House hopes will help avoid the kind of diplomatic snafus that have dogged his presidency. ... Trump's top advisers - including national security adviser H.R. McMaster, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and U.S. Trade Representative Robert

Lighthizer - have met with the president in recent days to go over details of the trip, including in an hourlong briefing Friday in the Oval Office, according to administration officials.

"Top aides have sought to keep the briefings short to avoid overloading the president with details but have scheduled dozens of them to plan public remarks and outline what he should say about North Korea on defense and China on trade."

<http://politi.co/2z87B92>

Advertisement Image



FOR YOUR RADAR -- "Exclusive: U.S. pursues direct diplomacy with North Korea despite Trump rejection," by Reuters' Arshad Mohammed and Matt Spetalnick: "The United States is quietly pursuing direct diplomacy with North Korea, a senior State Department official said on Tuesday, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's public assertion that such talks are a waste of time. Using the so-called 'New York channel,' Joseph Yun, U.S. negotiator with North Korea, has been in contact with diplomats at Pyongyang's United Nations mission, the official

said, at a time when an exchange of bellicose insults between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has fueled fears of military conflict." <http://reut.rs/2lBgBOS>

TRUMP'S WEDNESDAY -- Trump is holding a cabinet meeting. This afternoon he will sign the National Veterans and Military Families Month Proclamation. He is having lunch with VP Mike Pence, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis. He will also meet with RNC Chair Ronna Romney McDaniel. He will also sign a bill "Disapproving of the Consumer Financial Bureau's Arbitration Agreements Rule."

SPORTS BLINK -- TONIGHT: World Series, Game 7, Astros vs. Dodgers, 8:20 p.m. at Dodgers Park in Los Angeles

PLAYBOOK READS



PHOTO DU JOUR: Authorities stand near a damaged Home Depot truck after a motorist drove onto a bike path near the World Trade Center memorial, striking

and killing several people. Officials called the incident an act of terror. | Craig Ruttle/AP Photo

BETSY DEVOS PROFILE -- TIM ALBERTA in the Nov./Dec. issue of POLITICO Magazine, "**The Education of Betsy DeVos: President Donald Trump's most controversial, ideological Cabinet pick is discovering the limits of her power**": "It is strange, if a bit unsettling, to see U.S. Marshals constantly hovering near the U.S. secretary of education, a 59-year-old evangelical Christian grandmother whose hobbies are bike riding, yoga and visiting grade schools. But as Betsy DeVos approached Kansas City Academy on a sunny Friday morning in mid-September, it was clear why she wants them there.

"**It was the final day** of her 'Rethink School' tour, the familiar fly-around trip taken by a Cabinet secretary to capture some local news coverage and emphasize priorities-in DeVos' case, to highlight unique and innovative learning environments across the country. But at this particular stop, tension filled the air. Several hundred protesters gathered outside-vastly outnumbering the 76 students, grades 6 through 12, who attend the school-while a procession of speakers denounced DeVos as a destroyer of public education and an enabler of campus rape."

<http://politi.co/2h0r0lx>

K STREET FILES -- "Podesta's downfall sends shock waves through K Street: The departure of the Democratic super-lobbyist, and indictment of Paul Manafort, has other firms working to make sure they're not next," by Theo Meyer:

<http://politi.co/2ijCXzp>

ROBERT DRAPER on the cover of the N.Y. Times Magazine, "**A Post-Obama Democratic Party in Search of Itself:** Barack Obama left office as one of the most popular departing presidents in American history. He also left behind a Democratic Party struggling to find an identity and a future without him - and to reconnect with voters in time for the 2018 elections": "Most if not all Democrats are more than happy to watch Bannon's kamikaze antics wreak havoc on the opposition. Still, some in the party rue the lack of pugnacity on their own side. 'There are two types of

Democrats,' David Krone, Harry Reid's former chief of staff, told me one afternoon this summer in the Midtown Manhattan office where he now works as a consultant for an investment firm.

'There are killers, and there are whiners. Unfortunately, we have too many of the latter and not enough of the former.'

<http://nyti.ms/2ijwuUZ> ... **The cover** <http://politi.co/2ht2mqH>

THE HARASSMENT FILES -- "NPR's top editor placed on leave after accusations of sexual harassment," by WaPo's Paul Farhi: "NPR is investigating allegations by two women who said the head of its news department made unwanted physical contact with them while he was employed by another news organization nearly two decades ago. The women, both journalists at the time of the alleged incidents, made the accusations in recent weeks against Michael Oreskes, senior vice president of news and editorial director at the Washington-based public broadcasting organization. In response to the allegations, NPR said Tuesday that it has placed Oreskes on indefinite leave.

"In separate complaints, the women said Oreskes -- at the time, the Washington bureau chief of the New York Times - abruptly kissed them while they were speaking with him about working at the newspaper. Both of them told similar stories: After meeting Oreskes and discussing their job prospects, they said he unexpectedly kissed them on the lips and stuck his tongue in their mouths." <http://wapo.st/2hs1YJ6>

JOHN HEILEMANN SPEAKS OUT - "Mark Halperin's 'Game Change' Partner Says He Was Unaware," by NYT's Michael M. Grynbaum: "'I had never heard of, been exposed to or had any inkling of the notion that he had engaged in any behavior that could be described in even the broadest sense of being sexual harassment or sexual assault,' Mr. Heilemann said, in his first public remarks since the claims against Mr. Halperin surfaced. He added, 'I was flabbergasted and shocked.' ... It remains unclear what will become of Mr. Halperin's contributions to the scuttled third installment in the 'Game Change' series.

"The pair had conducted roughly 300 interviews for the book

in recent months, Mr. Heilemann said. 'We've done reporting that touches on important things both for history and for the current national dialogue,' he said. ... 'Mark was my friend,' Mr. Heilemann said. 'I cared about him then, and I care about him now. It's also the case that Mark wasn't in the circle of my closest friends.' ... Showtime said that the network remained on good terms with Mr. Heilemann and that it was examining whether 'The Circus' will go on without Mr. Halperin."

<http://nyti.ms/2gPQaQ5>

MEDIAWATCH -- "I want to quit': Fox News employees say their network's Russia coverage was 'an embarrassment,'" by CNN's Oliver Darcy: "I'm watching now and screaming,' one Fox News personality said in a text message to CNN as the person watched their network's coverage. 'I want to quit.' 'It is another blow to journalists at Fox who come in every day wanting to cover the news in a fair and objective way,' one senior Fox News employee told CNN of their outlet's coverage, adding that there were 'many eye rolls' in the newsroom over how the news was covered. The person said, 'Fox feels like an extension of the Trump White House.'" <http://cnnmon.ie/2za3IjV>

-- **MAJOR GARRETT** is publishing a new book called "Mr. Trump's Wild Ride: The Thrills, Chills, Screams, and Occasional Blackouts of the First Year with America's 45th President," which is expected to come out in fall of 2018. The publisher is All Points Books, the political and current affairs imprint of St. Martin's Press.

PLAYBOOKERS

SPOTTED: Frank Luntz in the second row behind home plate at World Series Game 6 yesterday - (Rep. Kevin McCarthy tweeted a pic of Frank on TV) <http://bit.ly/2ijkMtK> ... at a bipartisan Senate "Halloween dog costume celebration" yesterday on the Hill, hosted by Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.): Sens. Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) and Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) along with 100 dogs and at least 200 people - *pic of Tillis and a dog*

<http://politi.co/2z50g8c>

OUT AND ABOUT -- Among the trick or treaters at Robert and Elena Allbritton's house last night, which had a doughnut truck in the driveway (Mama's Doughnut Bites): Ivanka and her kids, Mark and Sally Ein, and CBS' Nancy Cordes - *pics*

<http://bit.ly/2h2pLCm> ... <http://bit.ly/2ijF7il> ...

<http://bit.ly/2zWoQY1> ... <http://bit.ly/2z1ROqf>

-- **SPOTTED** at the Adrienne Arsht Day of the Dead party last night at her Massachusetts Heights mansion: Sens. Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.), Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Hilary Ross, Kellyanne Conway, Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.) and Marie Royce, Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos (wearing full skeleton face paint) and Dick DeVos, Ret. Gen. Jim Jones and Diane Jones, Amb. Stuart Bernstein, Stuart and Gwen Holliday ...

... **Mexican Amb. Geronimo Gutierrez**, Amb. Capricia and Rob Marshall, Kathleen Biden, Boyden Gray, Brazilian Amb. Sergio Silva Do Amaral, Susan Blumenthal, Israeli Amb. Ron Dermer, Patrick Steel and Lee Satterfield, Monaco Amb. Maguy Doyle, Kathleen Stevens, Lucky Roosevelt, Jordanian Amb. Dina Kawar, Tom and Anne LeBlanc, Michelle Kosinski, Michael LaRosa, Katherine Bradley, Robert Pullen, and Paige Ennis.

TRANSITIONS -- **WILL JOHNSON** has joined DailyKos as senior vice president for advertising strategy. He will lead the creation of a new unit focused on digital advertising sales. He is an alum of Talking Points Memo, NGP VAN, Bully Pulpit Interactive and Change. ... **Melika Willoughby** starts today as comms director for Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio). She is a Hillsdale alumna who served as communications director for Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback.

-- **John Thornton** and former Singapore Amb. to the U.S. **Chan Heng Chee** have been named new co-chairs of the Asia Society. **Caroline Kennedy** and **Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud** have been named to the board. The organization is starting a \$135 million capital campaign.

BIRTHDAYS OF THE DAY: David Bossie, president of Citizens United and former Trump deputy campaign manager. **How he's celebrating:** "Enjoying dinner with my wife and four children at our favorite place GrillMarx, a small restaurant in Olney, Maryland." **Read his Playbook Plus Q&A:**

<http://politi.co/2lzIbvI> ... WaPo non fiction book critic **Carlos Lozada**. **How he got his start in journalism:** "I started off as an associate editor at Foreign Policy magazine, beginning in late 1999. I was working at the Federal Reserve but wanted to try something new, and I'll always be grateful to Moises Naim and James Gibney for hiring me. I had no business getting that job, but it sent me on my way." **Q&A:** <http://politi.co/2A4g2Qx>

BIRTHDAYS: Charles Koch is 82 ... Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) is 64 ... Katie (Walsh) Shields (hubby tip: Mike) ... Apple CEO Tim Cook is 57 ... Vanessa Morrone (hat tip: Sean Spicer) ... Lee Fang, investigative journalist at The Intercept ... Francesco Guerrera, head of EMEA at Dow Jones Media Group and publisher of Financial News ... Politico's Jason Shervinski and Cristina Brownell ... GPG's Alex Byers ... Brian Mahoney ... Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R-Maine) is 64 ... John Oxtoby, VP of strategy and corporate development at Ariel Investments and Obama alum (h/t Andrew Bates) ... Michael Byerly ... Ram Sivalingam ... Jamie Sterne, founder of hedge fund Skye Global Management ... Eric Liu ... Megan Wilson, lobbying reporter for The Hill (h/t Neil Grace) ... Les Novitsky ... Jay Villegas, bartender extraordinaire at Tosca (h/ts Maggie and Jon) ...

... **Liz Dougherty**, general counsel and corporate secretary at Business Roundtable ... Larry Flynt is 75. He's celebrating with friends and family (h/t Nadia Szold) ... Clare Steinberg, associate at Gibson, Dunn ... Tyler Hernandez ... Fergus M. Bordewich, historian and author of "The First Congress" (h/t Jean) ... Chloe Mullins Taylor of Hawk Partners and alum of Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner ... Ali Ahmad ... Pearson Cummings, SVP for tech policy and public affairs at Edelman ... Peter Urban ... Jordan Mason ... Greg Werkheiser ... Bill Deere ... Peter Newell ... Leslie Pollner ... Gabe Cramer is 23 (h/t Jewish Insider) ... Doug Stevens ... Jordan

Mason ... John Stipicevic ... former Rep. John Spratt (D-S.C.) is 75 ... Anthony DeAngelo, media relations manager at APCO Worldwide ... Anthony Fragale ... Sue Mahsem ... Bo Harmon ... John Seeley ... Mitchell Wohlberg ... country singer Richard Samet "Kinky" Friedman is 73 ... CNN's Marshall Cohen ... Senate Chaplain Barry Black is 69 ... Siri Uotila (h/t Teresa Vilmain)

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From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Cc: [Douglas Domenech](mailto:Douglas.Domenech@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, June 26, 2017 7:22:38 PM

Happy dance

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 26, 2017, at 7:14 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Congrats!!!!!!!!!!!!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Jun 26, 2017, at 4:07 PM, Douglas Domenech <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: June 26, 2017 at 7:05:35 PM EDT
To: <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Brenda Burman of Arizona to be Commissioner of Reclamation, Department of the Interior. Ms. Burman is currently Director of Water Strategy at the Salt River Project, which operates one of the original Reclamation projects approved in 1903. Ms. Burman has worked for nearly 20 years on western water matters including Tribal water settlements, Colorado River, and other river basin issues. Under the George W. Bush Administration, Ms. Burman served as Deputy Commissioner, the number two position at Reclamation, before becoming Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science. Ms. Burman holds a J.D. from the University of Arizona and a B.A. from Kenyon College.

Peter B. Davidson of Virginia to be General Counsel, Department of Commerce. Mr. Davidson recently served as Senior Vice President for Congressional Relations at Verizon Communications, and prior to that, as General Counsel to the United States Trade Representative. He has also served as Vice President for Congressional Relations at USWEST and Qwest, General Counsel and Policy Director to the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Attorney-advisor in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice, director of congressional and media relations at the United States Information Agency, staff to Representatives Dick Armey and Bill Frenzel, and law clerk on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. Mr. Davidson has degrees from Carleton College and The University of Virginia School of Law, where he served as Notes Editor on the Law Review. He was raised in

Minnesota and northern Wisconsin and currently resides in Virginia with his wife Kari, and they have three children: Madeleine, Sophie, and Björn.

Douglas W. Domenech of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Insular Affairs. Mr. Domenech currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior. Previously he was the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia, overseeing six state environmental, recreation, and historic resource agencies. He also previously worked for the Forest Resources Association. During the George W. Bush Administration, Domenech served at the Interior Department as White House Liaison and Deputy Chief of Staff to Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne. In addition, he served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs. Mr. Domenech currently serves as the Secretary's appointee to the Advisory Council of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico. His family is from Puerto Rico, and he holds a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech University. He is married to Jeanne Domenech and they reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

Jason Kearns of Colorado to be a Commissioner of the United States International Trade Commission for the remainder of a 9 year term expiring December 16, 2024. Mr. Kearns currently serves as Chief International Trade Counsel (Democratic Staff) to the Committee on Ways and Means in the House of Representatives. In that position, he advises Members of Congress on legislation concerning trade and on oversight issues involving the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and other agencies involved in international trade policy and regulation. Before that, he served for three years in the Office of the General Counsel to the U.S. Trade Representative. From 2000 through 2003, Mr. Kearns worked in the international trade group of the law firm, WilmerHale. Mr. Kearns holds a M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. from the University of Denver. He is married to Lindy Arnof Kearns and they have three children.

###

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The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Micah Chambers
To: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori_Mashburn)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura_Rigas); [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather_Swift); amanda_kaster@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov; todd_willens@ios.doi.gov; [James Cason](mailto:James_Cason); [Douglas Domenech](mailto:Douglas_Domenech); [Daniel Jorjani](mailto:Daniel_Jorjani)
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Tuesday, August 01, 2017 12:34:05 AM

Thanks. His press release has been ready for weeks haha

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 31, 2017, at 11:31 PM, Lori Mashburn <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

FYI. The official announcement on Nelson went out.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: July 31, 2017 at 9:22:33 PM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: July 31, 2017 at 9:02:27 PM EDT
To: <(b) (6)>
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Daniel M. Gade of North Dakota to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the remainder of a five-year term expiring July 1, 2021. Mr. Gade was born and raised in North Dakota. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (West Point) in 1997, and was wounded in action twice and decorated for valor while serving in Iraq. He served in the administration of President George W. Bush, where his portfolio included veterans, military health care, and United States disability policy. He returned to West Point in 2011 and taught various political science and leadership courses until his retirement from the Army in 2017. He holds an M.P.A. and Ph.D. in public administration and policy from the University of Georgia. He has served on various advisory committees advising the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and was appointed to serve on the National Council on Disability by then-Speaker Boehner in 2015. He cofounded the Independence Project, a Veteran's employment and empowerment experiment.

Melissa Sue Glynn of the District of Columbia to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Enterprise Integration. Until recently, Dr. Glynn led Alvarez and Marsal's public sector practice focused on improving the delivery of government programs, and K-12 and higher education. Previously, she was a Principal with PricewaterhouseCoopers and was responsible for the firm's work with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Initially, Dr. Glynn's career focused on the development and deployment of innovative technologies associated with collaborative decision-making. She served as Co-Director of the Center for the Management of Information at the University of Arizona concurrent with her doctoral studies. She was also a principal investigator on a cooperative grant from the National Science Foundation and several programs funded by defense research laboratories. A New Jersey native, Dr. Glynn holds a B.A. from Rutgers University and a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona.

John Henderson of South Dakota to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Installations, Environment, and Energy. Mr. Henderson most recently served in the Army as the Commander of the Omaha District, Army Corps of Engineers, where his responsibilities included overseeing an annual program of \$1.5 billion dollars consisting of more than 2,500 projects supporting the nation's water resources infrastructure, military construction, and Federal interagency work in nine States, environmental restoration projects in 41 States, and an extensive program supporting Department of Defense petroleum and energy infrastructure worldwide for the Defense Logistics Agency. Mr. Henderson has over 23 years of active military experience as an Army engineer officer, serving two combat tours to Iraq and one combat tour to Afghanistan as an engineer battalion task force commander. Mr. Henderson possesses a master's degree in civil engineering from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of South Dakota. His military education includes a National Security Studies fellowship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduation from the Joint Combined Warfighters Course, Army War College Fellowship Program, Command and General Staff College, Air Assault School, and Airborne School.

Ryan Douglas Nelson of Idaho to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. Mr. Nelson is a seasoned attorney with broad experience advising government and corporate executives in the public and private sector. Mr. Nelson has worked for all three branches of government. He served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, where he managed the natural resource, wildlife and appellate sections of the Division, and as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Office of Management and Budget. He also served as Special Counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee and as a law clerk for the Senate Legal Counsel. After graduating from BYU Law School with Honors, Mr. Nelson clerked for Judge Henderson on the D.C. Circuit and for Richard Mosk and Charles Brower on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands. Mr. Nelson was an associate at Sidley Austin and is currently General Counsel for Idaho-based wellness company, Melaleuca, Inc. He has argued 13 Federal court of appeals cases on complex environmental and constitutional issues. Mr. Nelson resides in his hometown of Idaho Falls, Idaho, with his wife, Barbara Baer Nelson, and their seven children.

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Douglas Domenech](#)
Cc: [Swift Heather](#)
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts
Date: Monday, June 26, 2017 7:22:23 PM

Congrats!!!!!!!!!!!!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Jun 26, 2017, at 4:07 PM, Douglas Domenech <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: June 26, 2017 at 7:05:35 PM EDT
To: <douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Brenda Burman of Arizona to be Commissioner of Reclamation, Department of the Interior. Ms. Burman is currently Director of Water Strategy at the Salt River Project, which operates one of the original Reclamation projects approved in 1903. Ms. Burman has worked for nearly 20 years on western water matters including Tribal water settlements, Colorado River, and other river basin issues. Under the George W. Bush Administration, Ms. Burman served as Deputy Commissioner, the number two position at Reclamation, before becoming Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science. Ms. Burman holds a J.D. from the University of Arizona and a B.A. from Kenyon College.

Peter B. Davidson of Virginia to be General Counsel, Department of Commerce. Mr. Davidson recently served as Senior Vice President for Congressional Relations at Verizon Communications, and prior to that, as General Counsel to the United States Trade Representative. He has also served as Vice President for Congressional Relations at USWEST and Qwest, General Counsel and Policy Director to the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Attorney-advisor in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice, director of congressional and media relations at the United States Information Agency, staff to Representatives Dick Armey and Bill Frenzel, and law clerk on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. Mr. Davidson has degrees from Carleton College and The University of Virginia School of Law, where he served as Notes Editor on the Law Review. He was raised in Minnesota and northern Wisconsin and currently resides in Virginia with his wife Kari, and they have three children: Madeleine, Sophie, and Björn.

Douglas W. Domenech of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Insular Affairs. Mr.

Domenech currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior. Previously he was the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia, overseeing six state environmental, recreation, and historic resource agencies. He also previously worked for the Forest Resources Association. During the George W. Bush Administration, Domenech served at the Interior Department as White House Liaison and Deputy Chief of Staff to Secretaries Gale Norton and Dirk Kempthorne. In addition, he served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs. Mr. Domenech currently serves as the Secretary's appointee to the Advisory Council of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico. His family is from Puerto Rico, and he holds a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech University. He is married to Jeanne Domenech and they reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

Jason Kearns of Colorado to be a Commissioner of the United States International Trade Commission for the remainder of a 9 year term expiring December 16, 2024. Mr. Kearns currently serves as Chief International Trade Counsel (Democratic Staff) to the Committee on Ways and Means in the House of Representatives. In that position, he advises Members of Congress on legislation concerning trade and on oversight issues involving the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and other agencies involved in international trade policy and regulation. Before that, he served for three years in the Office of the General Counsel to the U.S. Trade Representative. From 2000 through 2003, Mr. Kearns worked in the international trade group of the law firm, WilmerHale. Mr. Kearns holds a M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. from the University of Denver. He is married to Lindy Arnof Kearns and they have three children.

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Micah Chambers](mailto:micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov)
Cc: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori.Mashburn@ios.doi.gov); [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov); [Alex Hinson](mailto:Alex.Hinson@ios.doi.gov); blake_deeley@ios.doi.gov; [Downey Magallanes](mailto:Downey.Magallanes@ios.doi.gov); [Scott Hommel](mailto:Scott.Hommel@ios.doi.gov); [Russell Newell](mailto:Russell.Newell@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 11:18:18 AM

Already went out. Included Congressional quotes.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Oct 26, 2017, at 11:16 AM, Micah Chambers <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Who's coordinating it and do you want to wait for codel quotes?

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 26, 2017, at 8:49 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks! I believe our release should be ready to release today. Has Steven signed off?
My best,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Oct 26, 2017, at 9:31 AM, Lori Mashburn <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

FYI.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:02:54 AM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:01:34 AM EDT
To: (b) (6) >
Subject: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

William Beach of Kansas to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of 4 years. Mr. Beach is the Vice President for Policy Research at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Mr. Beach previously served as the Chief Economist for the Senate Budget Committee, Republican Staff. Prior to that position, he was the Lazof Family Fellow in Economics at the Heritage Foundation and director of the Center for Data Analysis. Prior to joining Heritage in 1995, Mr. Beach served as a senior economist in the corporate headquarters of Sprint United, Inc., and, from 1991 to 1995, as the president of the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University. A graduate of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, Mr. Beach also holds a master's degree in history and economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Ph.D. in Economics from Buckingham University in Great Britain.

Irving Dennis of Ohio to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Dennis recently retired as a Global Client Service Partner with Ernst & Young, LLP where he served as the coordinating assurance partner on several large multinational public companies in various industries. He has an in-depth understanding of business and financial risk and extensive experience advising audit committees and C-suite executives on global corporate governance, financial, and internal control matters. His experience includes finance transformations, enterprise risk management and corporate governance. In addition, Mr. Dennis has held several leadership roles within EY including a Regional Audit Methodology Leader and a member of a Regional Assurance Leadership Team. Mr. Dennis earned a B.S. Degree in business administration-accounting from Montclair State University and is a Certified Public Accountant. He serves on several not-for-profit boards and has been a member of various accounting-related organizations. Mr. Dennis lives in New Albany, Ohio, with his wife and two children.

Steven Gardner of Kentucky to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Mr. Gardner is President and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a consulting firm where he has focused on natural resources, mining, reclamation, energy, environmental, and health and safety issues. In 2011, he was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. As a licensed professional engineer, Mr. Gardner has worked on projects throughout the United States and internationally. He was the 2015 President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME). He has served on the UK Mining Engineering Foundation, Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors. Mr. Gardner has an M.S. in Mining Engineering with a Graduate Certification in Environmental Systems and a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky.

Kenneth L. Marcus of Virginia to be the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education. Mr. Marcus is currently President and General Counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. He previously served as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was delegated the authority of Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights under President George W. Bush. He also previously served as the Lillie and Nathan Ackerman Chair in Equality and Justice in America at the City University of New York's Baruch College School of Public Affairs. Mr. Marcus is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley School of Law and Williams College.

M. Lee McClenny of Washington to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Paraguay. Mr. McClenny, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, began his public service with the U.S. Information Agency in 1986. He is currently the Chargé d'Affaires e.p. of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. He has previously served overseas in Kuala Lumpur, Montreal, Manila, London, Brussels, Guatemala City, Belgrade and Ottawa, as well as in leadership positions at the Department of State and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Mr. McClenny is a recipient of the Presidential Meritorious Service Award, and numerous performance awards from the Department of State and U.S. Information Agency. He received a B.A. from the University of Washington, and speaks Spanish, French, and some Serbo-Croatian and Russian.

Carlos Trujillo of Florida to be the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States with the rank of Ambassador. Mr. Trujillo has been the Florida State Representative for the 105th District in the Florida House of Representatives, Tallahassee, Florida since 2010. An attorney, he simultaneously has been the Founding Partner of Trujillo, Vargas, Gonzalez and Hevia LLP since 2011 and President of Carlos Trujillo, PA, since 2007. Previously, he served as a Florida Assistant State Attorney at the Miami Dade County State Attorney's Office in Miami from 2007 to 2011. He also has been a Board Member of the Public Health Trust of Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. Mr. Trujillo earned a B.S. from Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama and a J.D. from Florida State College of Law in Tallahassee. He speaks fluent Spanish.

Peter Hendrick Vrooman of New York to be Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Rwanda. Mr. Vrooman, a career member of the Senior

Foreign Service, class of Counselor, has served as an American diplomat since 1991. He most recently served as Chargé d'Affaires from 2016 to 2017 and Deputy Chief of Mission from 2014 to 2016 at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mr. Vrooman has held senior positions with the Department of State at home and at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, as well as overseas. He has served at seven embassies in Africa, the Near East and South Asia. Mr. Vrooman possesses a deep knowledge of East African issues, expertise in UN peacekeeping, strong management and public diplomacy credentials, and economic/commercial advocacy experience. He earned a M S from the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and a B.A. from Harvard College. He speaks French and Arabic.

The following individuals to be Members of the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service:

- Calvin R. Tucker of Pennsylvania, for the remainder of a term expiring December 8, 2023.
- Robert M. Duncan of Kentucky, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2018, and an additional term expiring December 8, 2025.
- David Williams of Illinois, for the remainder of a seven-year term expiring December 8, 2019.

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President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Eddie Joe Williams of Arkansas will serve as the Federal Representative to the Southern States Energy Board.

John Zangardi of Pennsylvania will serve as be Chief Information Officer, Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Zangardi has extensive experience in information technology and security. Most recently, Dr. Zangardi served as the Acting Chief Information Officer at the Department of Defense. He previously served as the Principal Deputy Department of Defense Chief Information Officer. His career also includes experience in acquisition, policy, legislative affairs, resourcing, and operations. Dr. Zangardi is a retired Naval Flight Officer and served in a variety of command and staff assignments. Since his retirement from the Navy, he has held several senior executive positions at the Department of the Navy, including as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Information Operations, and Space and as the Department of Navy Chief Information Officer. Dr. Zangardi holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Scranton, master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, and Doctor of Philosophy degree from George Mason University.

The following individuals will serve as Members of the Advisory Committee on the Arts of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

- Pamela DeVos of Michigan.
- Frederick Davis Jubitz of Oregon.
- Michael S. Lorber of New York.
- Anne N. Reyes of Florida.
- Stephanie Spencer of California.
- Frank Giordano of New Jersey.
- Vance Thompson of South Dakota.
- Geoffrey K. Verhoff of Virginia.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Designate David Kautter to the Internal Revenue Service

David Kautter of Virginia to be the Acting Commissioner of Internal Revenue. This designation will become effective on November 13, 2017. Mr. Kautter was confirmed on August 3, 2017, to be the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Tax Policy.

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Micah Chambers
To: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas)
Cc: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori.Mashburn); [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift); [Alex Hinson](mailto:Alex.Hinson); blake_deeley@ios.doi.gov; [Downey Magallanes](mailto:Downey.Magallanes); [Scott Hormel](mailto:Scott.Hormel); [Russell Newell](mailto:Russell.Newell)
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Thursday, October 26, 2017 11:18:47 AM

Ha nvm, clearly hadn't checked all my emails. Nice work Blake

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 26, 2017, at 8:49 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks! I believe our release should be ready to release today. Has Steven signed off?
My best,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Oct 26, 2017, at 9:31 AM, Lori Mashburn <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

FYI.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:02:54 AM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Fwd: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: October 26, 2017 at 9:01:34 AM EDT
To: <(b) (6)>
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

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Office of the Press Secretary

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October 26, 2017

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- Frederick Davis Jubitz of Oregon.
- Michael S. Lorber of New York.
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—

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###

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: Scott Hommel
To: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori.Mashburn)
Cc: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas); micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; douglas_domenech@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 7:32:25 PM

Outstanding

Scott C. Hommel
Chief of Staff
Department of the Interior

On Jul 10, 2017, at 7:19 PM, Lori Mashburn <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Susan's announcement just went.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Locetta, Jennifer R. EOP/WHO" <(b) (6)>
Date: July 10, 2017 at 7:04:49 PM EDT
To: "lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov" <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**

Jennifer R. Locetta
Special Assistant to the President
Associate Director, Presidential Personnel Office

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: July 10, 2017 at 7:03:45 PM EDT
To: (b) (6)
Subject: **President Donald J. Trump Announces Key Additions to his Administration**
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intent to Nominate Personnel to Key Administration Posts

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key positions in his Administration:

Ronald L. Batory of New Jersey to be the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation. Mr. Batory has more than 45 years of diverse leadership in the railroad industry. In his last capacity with Consolidated Rail Corporation, he served as President and Chief Operating Officer. Prior to that affiliation, he was President of the Belt Railway Company of Chicago. Mr. Batory earned his B.A. from Adrian College and his M.A. from Eastern Michigan University. Mr. Batory and his wife, Barbara, reside in Mount Laurel, New Jersey.

Susan Combs of Texas to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget. Ms. Combs has an extensive career in elected public office and in the private sector as a small business owner running a ranch in the Big Bend area of Texas. She served in the Texas Legislature,

writing and passing the State's private property legislation, and working to ensure greater transparency in government spending. She was also elected to two Texas statewide offices: as the State's first woman Agriculture Commissioner; and then as the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Treasurer, and Chief Financial Officer. Ms. Combs spent 16 years in statewide elected leadership.

Lewis M. Eisenberg of Florida to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of San Marino. Mr. Eisenberg is a prominent American financier, investor, and philanthropist. Co-founder and managing partner of Ironhill Investments in New York, he has a record of engaging with State and local governments on complex issues. Mr. Eisenberg was the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for six years and was named a Founding Board Member of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, where he chaired its 9/11 Victims' Families and Transportation Advisory Councils. He is an Emeritus Member of Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management Advisory Council and Life Member of the Cornell University Council. He earned a B.A. at Dartmouth College and a M.B.A. at Cornell Johnson School of Business.

Robert P. Kadlec of New York to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Preparedness and Response. Currently, Dr. Kadlec is the Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Previously, he served as a Special Assistant to the President for Biodefense Policy for President George W. Bush. Dr. Kadlec holds a B.S. from the U.S. Air Force Academy; a M.D. from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and a M.A. in National Security Studies, Georgetown University.

Stephen B. King of Wisconsin to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Czech Republic. Mr. King is a prominent public servant and businessman who successfully acquired, built, and sold a specialty chemical manufacturing business and founded a family investment business. Earlier in his career, Mr. King investigated civil rights violations for the Federal Bureau Investigation, served as an investigator for the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and was named Special Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for liaison between USDA and the Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate. Mr. King earned a M.A. and a B.S. at Western Illinois University.

Randal Quarles of Colorado to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the remainder of a 14-year term expiring January 31, 2018, and for an additional 14-year term expiring January 31, 2032, and to be Vice Chairman for Supervision of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 4 years. Mr. Quarles has had an extensive career in government and international finance. He served as Under Secretary for Domestic Finance in the George W. Bush Administration, and before that as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs and U.S. Executive Director of the IMF. He had earlier served in the George H.W. Bush Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions Policy. He is a founder and managing director of The Cynosure Group, a private investment firm in Salt Lake City. Before founding Cynosure, Mr. Quarles was a partner of The Carlyle Group and, earlier, of the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell. He graduated summa cum laude in philosophy and economics from Columbia University and earned a J.D. from the Yale Law School.

Mary Kirtley Waters of Virginia to be an Assistant Secretary of State, Legislative Affairs. Since early 2017, Ms. Waters has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs at the State Department. Ms. Waters was a cabinet confirmation team leader for the Presidential Transition Team. Previously, she served as President of the North American Millers' Association, Vice President for Corporate Relations with the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation, and Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at the Department of Agriculture. She spent 15 years as Senior Director and Legislative Counsel in the Washington office of ConAgra Foods. Ms. Waters earned a B.A. from the University of Illinois and a J.D. from George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School.

President Donald J. Trump Announces Intended Appointments to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity

President Donald J. Trump today announced his intent to appoint the following individuals as members of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity:

- J. Christian Adams of Virginia
- Alan Lamar King of Alabama

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 9:26:09 AM

Heather – Tried you, but realized that’s the wrong number. Call me this morning when you’re able.

(b) (6)

From: Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:26 PM
To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Ditto, Jessica E. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Hemming, Andrew J. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Dubke, Michael D. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Cheung, Steven EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Flagging the below for the broader team - they've responded that they didn't know who he was when they accepted invite, etc.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:13:21 PM EDT
To: <(b) (6)>, "Love, Kelly A. EOP/ Who" <(b) (6)>, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Kelly, can you give me a call? 202-8897-7111

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:04:25 PM EDT
To: Dell Cameron <dell.cameron@gizmodo.com>
Cc: Interior Press <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>, Bryan Menegus <bryan.menegus@gizmodo.com>
Subject: Re: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Hi Dell, the Secretary nor anyone on staff was aware of the behavior you outlined. Regarding setting up the meeting, a friend of the Secretary's suggested he talk with them about their technology. As a result, they had a very brief meeting with the Secretary there was no action after.

For your background, please see this letter then-Congressman Zinke penned denouncing such behavior, tactics and rhetoric
<https://www.daines.senate.gov/news/press-releases/tester-daines-zinke-bullock-fox-stand-against-anti-semitism-and-white-nationalism>

Sent from my iPhone
On May 22, 2017, at 8:23 PM, Dell Cameron
<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Thanks Heather.

Can you say who arranged this meeting? One of those "gentlemen," Chuck Johnson, is a fairly controversial figure.

- His website is fundraising for Andrew Anglin, publisher neo-Nazi website Daily Stormer. Link: <http://gizmodo.com/internet-gremlin-chuck-johnsons-website-becomes-inaccess-1794791944>
- Prior to the meeting, Johnson incorrectly identified a student at University of Virginia and accused her of making false rape accusations (he attacked her online and posted a photo of her). Link: <http://jezebel.com/woman-falsely-idd-as-uvas-jackie-by-conservative-blogge-1671234663>
- He was booted from Twitter after saying he planned to "take out" a black activist. Link: <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/05/troll-charles-johnson-banned-from-twitter-207688>
- He's argued that homosexuality was responsible for an Amtrak derailment. Link: <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/05/15/op-ed-amtrak-accident-isnt-part-gay-agenda>
- He falsely claimed a "left-wing Democrat" nurse in New Jersey had Ebola and offered \$1,000 for pictures of a Republican candidate's wife, who was in a nursing home. Link: <http://bit.ly/139nGar>

Was the secretary aware of Mr. Johnson's... how do I put it.... extremely inappropriate and abusive behavior prior to taking that meeting?

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: (469) 387-1810

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:23 PM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there, Dell. The Secretary had a brief meeting where he listened to their ideas about using technology on the border and referred the gentlemen to the Department of Homeland Security.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov 1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 5:03 PM, Dell Cameron
<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Follow up.

Please excuse the language in this email below, I'm quoting one of the attendees of the meeting in which Mr. Zinke, Downey Magallanes, Scott Hommel, Nancy Guiden, as well as acting Communications Director Megan Bloomgren, were all present.

We asked Mr. Luckey if he could elaborate on what was discussed w/ the Secretary at this meeting.

Mr. Luckey told our reporter: "I could give you an answer. Or I could tell you to go fuck yourself."

In response, we're filing a FOIA request for additional information about the meeting & printing a story about the meeting within the hour.

Regards,

Dell Cameron
Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: (469) 387-1810
PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 2:46 PM, Dell Cameron

<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Good afternoon,

It came to our attention that Sec. Zinke attended a meeting on April 12 with Oculus Rift founder Palmer Luckey and WeSearchr founder Charles Johnson, as well as four Interior staff members, concerning the construction of a border wall.

Can your office elaborate on what that meeting was about, and why Johnson and Luckey were asked to advise on such a project?

Thanks,

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo

Gizmodo Media Group

Email: dell@gizmodo.com

Signal: [\(469\) 387-1810](tel:4693871810)

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

From: Rigas, Laura
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Nathan Adams](#)
Subject: Re: Press release: Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:55:31 PM

Sorry for the delay. Nope, just a BSEE announcement. Thanks!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 2:50 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Is this supposed to go out from DOI too?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Julian, Gregory** <gregory.julian@bsee.gov>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 10:03 AM
Subject: Press release: Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
To:

**THE BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
ENFORCEMENT**

Office of Public Affairs

Date: May 22, 2017
Contact: Gregory Julian (202) 208-3985

**Former Louisiana State Official Scott A. Angelle
Named as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental
Enforcement**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former Louisiana state official Scott A. Angelle will head-up the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. As part of the Department of the Interior, BSEE fosters safe and responsible energy production on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf through regulatory oversight of oil and gas operations. Angelle, who most recently served as Vice Chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, will assume his new position May 23.

“Scott Angelle brings a wealth of experience to BSEE, having spent many years working for the safe and efficient energy production of both Louisiana’s and our country’s offshore resources,” Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said. “As we set our path towards energy dominance, I am confident that Scott has the expertise, vision, and the leadership necessary to effectively enhance our program, and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible exploration, development, and production of our country’s offshore oil and gas resources.”

Angelle, who will serve as the fourth director in BSEE’s history, has held numerous positions in Louisiana State and Parish governments, including Interim Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and St. Martin Parish President. In the aftermath of the BP oil spill, Angelle served at the request of then Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal as liaison to the federal government, and negotiated an early end of the previous administration’s drilling moratorium.

“I welcome the opportunity to serve President Trump and Secretary Zinke, and work with BSEE staff to meet the critical goal of energy dominance for our country,” said Angelle. “It is an exciting and challenging time for BSEE; I look forward to leading our efforts to empower the offshore oil and gas industry while ensuring safe and environmentally responsible operations.”

Angelle served for eight years as Louisiana’s Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Under his leadership, the state’s coastal permitting system was reformed, providing for efficient permitting while increasing drilling rig counts in Louisiana by more than 150 percent during his tenure. Angelle has also served as Chairman of the Louisiana State Mineral Board, and as a member of the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, Southern States Energy Board, and the Louisiana Coastal Port Advisory Authority.

Angelle is a native of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, and a cum laude graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Land Management. He and his wife Dianne are the proud parents of five children and four grandchildren.

Established in 2011, BSEE fosters secure and reliable energy production through a program of efficient permitting, appropriate regulations, compliance monitoring and enforcement, inspections, technical assessments, and incident investigations. The position of BSEE Director is not Senate-confirmed.

More information on BSEE can be found at: <http://www.bsee.gov>

###

-- BSEE --

--

Greg **Julian**

Press Secretary

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

O: 202-208-6184

M: 202-412-8375

Gregory.Julian@bsee.gov

<http://www.bsee.gov/> | <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bureau-of-safety-and-environmental-enforcement> | <https://twitter.com/BSEEGov>

| <https://www.facebook.com/BSEEGov/>

Home



From: Angelico, Eileen
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Frank Quimby](#); [Richard Cardinale](#); [Katharine Macgregor](#); [Gregory Julian](#)
Subject: Re: proposed Outreach Strategy for BSEE Director Announcement
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:27:07 AM
Attachments: [Angelle annc release - BSEE masthead 5-18-2017.docx](#)

Laura and Heather,

Thanks for everyone's feedback. Please find attached the BSEE announcement press release with a revised lead paragraph and on BSEE masthead.

We are awaiting your okay to set the release day Mon, 5/22 and to schedule The Advocate interview next Weds., 5/24.

Thanks,

Eileen

Eileen P. Angelico, APR
Acting Chief, Office of Public Affairs
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
(202) 208-7746 office
(504) 654-7840 mobile

On Thu, May 18, 2017 at 8:16 AM, MacGregor, Katharine
<katharine_macgregor@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

This looks great.

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 7:15 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Eileen. Will get back to you asap but this generally sounds right to me. Kate, welcome your input as well.

My best,

L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 1:08 PM, Angelico, Eileen <eileen.angelico@bsee.gov> wrote:

Laura and Heather,

Please see below for the proposed Outreach Strategy for the announcement and introduction of the BSEE Director. I have also attached the document and draft DOI press release. The draft DOI press release has been submitted to Frank Quimby.

We are requesting an issuance date of May 22, 2017. The BSEE Director is expected to report on Tuesday, May 23, 2017.

The only media interview that we are proposing the first week would be with The Advocate, the Baton Rouge daily. The interview would focus on introduction of the new Director and the FY 2018 BSEE Budget Request. This has also been included in BSEE's budget outreach strategy.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Thanks,

Eileen

Eileen P. Angelico, APR
 Acting Chief, Office of Public Affairs
 Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
 (202) 208-7746 office
 (504) 654-7840 mobile

BSEE Director Announcement Outreach Strategy

Date/Time	Action	Audience	Notes
5-22-2017 10:00 am	DOI Announcement Press Release	DOI and BSEE media distro lists, BSEE social media	
5-22-2017	DOI Announcement Press Release distributed to BSEE Congressional list	Congressional members and staff	
5-23-2017 1:00 pm	BSEE introductory email	all BSEE employees	
5-24-2017 1:00 pm (tentative)	Interview by phone with The Advocate reporter, Baton Rouge, LA (tentative)	Louisiana communities – Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
5-25-2017	Letter to external stakeholders	Industry, NGO's, coastal States	
6-1-2017 (tentative) time TBD	Media Roundtable Discussion (in-person and phone)	Washington bureau and trade reporters	Areas of discussion – BSEE Director's intro and BSEE FY 2018 Budget Request
6-1-2017	Director's Corner (blog) posted on bsee.gov	Web site viewers	Will be supported by follow-on with social media platforms
June & July Dates TBD	Field visits and all-hands meetings	BSEE field staff	New Orleans, La gulf coast, Houston, Camarillo, CA and Anchorage, AK

--

Kate MacGregor
1849 C ST NW
Room 6625
Washington DC 20240

202-208-3671 (Direct)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Ben Lefebvre](mailto:Ben.Lefebvre)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:14:58 PM

Fort Bliss supplied and paid for the helo.

The CODEL Was Norway, Greenland, AK. She was on the entire CODEL.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 4:11 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

And more follow-up:

When you say Fort Bliss supplied a helicopter, does that mean DOI did not pay for its use? Any idea on cost?

Did Mrs. Zinke attend the Norway leg of the trip? I'm just confused if the Greenland/Norway leg of that trip was an official CODEL, or if the CODEL was just the Alaska bit.

Thank you,

Ben

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:03 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Thank you. A few more. Sorry for the dribble dribble on this.

1. The August flight to Ravalli County, that was tied to this August 24 Tweet? (Re: This: <https://twitter.com/Scavino45/status/889679192685780992>)

No, that appears to be a July tweet.

2. What transportation was used for his visit to Basin & Range Monument visit on July 30? (<https://twitter.com/SecretaryZinke/status/891861787234058240>) If military or charter, reasoning and cost?

It was a BLM helicopter. (I don't immediately have the cost information available)

3. Did the Secretary use a military vehicle to review the Organ Mountains monument in New Mexico in June? If so, reasoning and cost?

Fort Bliss supplied a helicopter so the Secretary and Ft Bliss personnel were able to discuss their needs and concerns as related to the monument. Reasoning - it is difficult to survey a half million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour and a half.

4. Did the Secretary use a charter flight to visit Florida in April? If so, reasoning and cost?

The Secretary has not been to Florida.

5. I see on the Secretary Trip Summary that Mrs. Zinke was with him during the Alaska trip in May. Did she also travel with him to Norway (i.e., the leg of the trip before the events in Alaska)? If so, did DOI pay anything for her travel, lodging or food budget? Or did the Zinke's reimburse DOI her part of the trip out of their private bank accounts?

Mrs. Zinke personally paid for all of her expenses while traveling on the CODEL and in Alaska.

6. For the flights on AF1 to visit the Boy Scout jamboree and the Youngstown POTUS rally, did DOI pay anything toward the flights?

Yes. (I do not have this information immediately available)

Thank you,

Ben

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:35 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Apart from events with POTUS/VPOTUS, the Secretary took military air once. He was invited by USDA Secretary Sonny Purdue to go to a wildfire camp at a Type 1 fire in Ravalli County Montana in August. The fire claimed the life of one firefighter. It is still burning but 90% contained. The USDA and DOI co-manage wildfire fighting on federal lands. The USDA was the lead on the trip. DOI has not been billed for it.

Three Charter Flights

3/31

Trip: USVI Centennial Transfer Day Ceremony (The 100 year anniversary of the Danish government turning over the Virgin Islands to the United States. DOI has jurisdiction over territories)

Flight Plan: St Croix --> St Thomas --> St Croix

Reason: No commercial flight were available

Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

(waiting on cost/staff)

5/17

Trip: CODEL to Norway and Greenland

and

Alaska

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee organized the Arctic CODEL. The Committee organized and utilized a charter

.

Flight Plan: Deadhorse, AK --> Alpine, AK --> Fairbanks

Reason: Commercial flights were not an option

, please contact SENR for more details about their choice of aircraft

Payment: the Secretary and

1

staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

(waiting on cost)

6/26

Las Vegas to Kalispell, MT for the Western Governors Association annual meeting.
The Secretary had

a

speaking engagement in the evening in Nevada and

meetings

in the morning in Montana.

Flight Plan:

8:30PM

Las Vegas -->

1:40AM

Kalispell

Reason: No commercial flight available to get the Secretary and staff to the event on time.

Payment:

\$12,375

(

Secretary and

4

staff

)

was

paid out of the DOI budget

.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 2:43 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hello all,

Has Secretary Zinke used military aircraft for travel during his time as Interior Secretary, and, if such travel happened, how much are the trips estimated to have cost? You can exclude travel with the POTUS on Air Force 1.

Also, has Secretary Zinke used charter flights for official travel during his time as Secretary? If such travel happened, how much are the trips estimated to have cost? I see on his public calendar that only a few flights were explicitly described as commercial flights, a July 30-31 United flight from LAS to IAD, for example. Were any of the trips listed in his public calendar on chartered flights?

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre

Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefevre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefevre

From: Heather Swift
To: [Ben Lefebvre](mailto:Ben.Lefebvre)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:11:53 PM

Yes. It's also on Zinke's twitter act. Lots of pix.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 28, 2017, at 4:10 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Whoops, 1) Should have been this Tweet:

<https://twitter.com/SteveDaines/status/900727259920834560>

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:03 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Thank you. A few more. Sorry for the dribble dribble on this.

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Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:35 PM

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Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

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4
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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre
Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro
Desk: 703-647-8775
Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537
Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com
Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 5:56:00 PM

The Beechcraft from Las Vegas to Glacier International, yeah.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 5:48 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Are you asking if the Secretary plans to reimburse DOI for the Secretary's flights for official business?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 5:45 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather,

Does Zinke intend to reimburse DOI for any of the charter flights?

Thank you,
Ben

From: Ben Lefebvre
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:12 PM
To: 'Swift, Heather' <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: question form Politico on Secretary travel

And more follow-up:

When you say Fort Bliss supplied a helicopter, does that mean DOI did not pay for its use? Any idea on cost?

Did Mrs. Zinke attend the Norway leg of the trip? I'm just confused if the Greenland/Norway leg of that trip was an official CODEL, or if the CODEL was just the Alaska bit.

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Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Thank you. A few more. Sorry for the dribble dribble on this.

1. The August flight to Ravalli County, that was tied to this August 24 Tweet? (Re: This: <https://twitter.com/Scavino45/status/889679192685780992>)
No, that appears to be a July tweet.
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The Secretary has not been to Florida.
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Mrs. Zinke personally paid for all of her expenses while traveling on the CODEL and in Alaska.
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Three Charter Flights

3/31

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Flight Plan: St Croix --> St Thomas --> St Croix

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Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.
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Trip: CODEL to Norway and Greenland
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Las Vegas to Kalispell, MT for the Western Governors Association annual meeting.

The Secretary had

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Thank you,

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Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefevre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefevre

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Ben Lefebvre](mailto:Ben.Lefebvre)
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 6:31:50 PM

Did you ever inquire into whether Sally Jewell or Ken Salazar personally paid for official government travel?

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Heather Swift
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Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

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trips for some reason. Is that what you're getting at?

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(waiting on cost/staff)

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Flight Plan:

8:30PM

Las Vegas -->

1:40AM

Kalispell

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Payment:

\$12,375

(

Secretary and

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)

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.

-

Heather Swift

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Thank you,

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Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

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Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Ben Lefebvre](#)
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:58:15 PM

Roger. We have not been billed for it to date.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:53 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:
Oh, and USDA told me they're splitting the cost of the military flight with DOI.

Ben Lefebvre
Politico Pro, oil & gas energy reporter
Office: 703-647-8775
Mobile: 313-473-0537
@bjlefebvre

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:38:12 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

I'll have a statement from the ethics office by the end of the night. The lead official is out of state on leave because (b) (6)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:37 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
roger dodger.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:35 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Web team says redacting is going to be PIA, so they're just putting your quote about it being cleared up higher and removing doc.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:31 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

THANK YOU! I owe you a beer.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:30 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

I just sent word on redacting the info to the production guys.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:27 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Would you be willing to magic marker over the career officials' (Raul Matias and Sherman Hogue) salary and GS levels on the second page of the form? I know it's all publicly releasable information, I just want to release it in the press if it's not necessary

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

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On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:24 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

What's up?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:19 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Could I ask a small favor off the record?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

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On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 7:17 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Thank. Including a link to the doc.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:13 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

FYI - here's the flight approval doc from Nevada

-

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I think tonight.

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Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

is your piece running tonight or tomorrow?

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No problem. I know how it is....

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ah, sorry. that's my word salad. I haven't talked with the Secretary about personally paying for official government travel.

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On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 6:41 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

You said: "I have not had the opportunity to discuss that with the Secretary however the trip is fully compliant and approved government travel."

Sorry, that means you haven't had the opportunity to discuss what with the Secretary? Reimbursement? Clearing the flights with ethics department? Sorry – I know it's getting late. Just want to make sure I have things correct.

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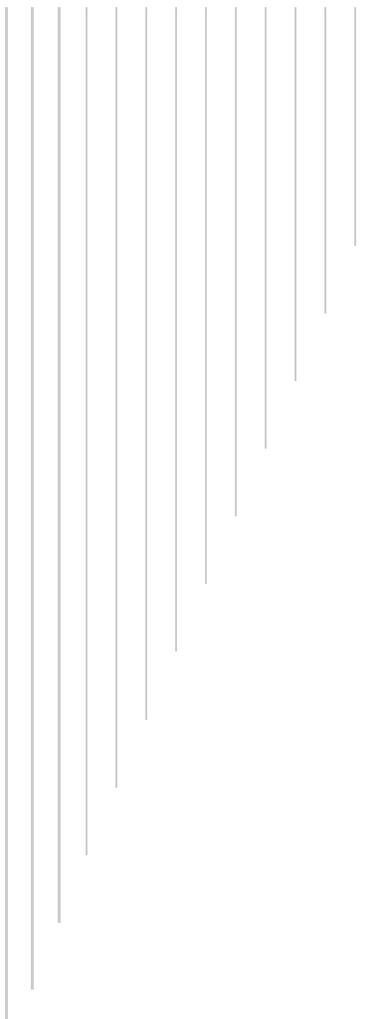
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Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 7:52:05 PM

Story is going to Web now. I can get the ethics officer statement in a follow-up for tomorrow. Any progress on the costs of the Virgin Island flights or BLM helicopter use?

Ben Lefebvre
Politico Pro, oil & gas energy reporter
Office: 703-647-8775
Mobile: 313-473-0537
[@bjlefebvre](#)

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To: Ben Lefebvre
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

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Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
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Ben I am getting the sense that you believe these were not official government trips for some reason. Is that what you're getting at?

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To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel

Are you asking if the Secretary plans to reimburse DOI for the Secretary's flights for official business?

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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Does Zinke intend to reimburse DOI for any of the charter flights?

Thank you,

Ben

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Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: RE: question form Politico on Secretary travel

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When you say Fort Bliss supplied a helicopter, does that mean DOI did not pay for its use? Any idea on cost?

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1. The August flight to Ravalli County, that was tied to this August 24 Tweet? (Re: This: <https://twitter.com/Scavino45/status/889679192685780992>)

No, that appears to be a July tweet.

2. What transportation was used for his visit to Basin & Range Monument visit on July 30? (<https://twitter.com/SecretaryZinke/status/891861787234058240>) If military or charter, reasoning and cost?

It was a BLM helicopter. (I don't immediately have the cost information available)

3. Did the Secretary use a military vehicle to review the Organ Mountains monument in New Mexico in June? If so, reasoning and cost?

Fort Bliss supplied a helicopter so the Secretary and Ft Bliss personnel were able to discuss their needs and concerns as related to the monument. Reasoning - it is difficult to survey a half million-acre piece of land with few roads by foot or car in an hour and a half.

4. Did the Secretary use a charter flight to visit Florida in April? If so, reasoning and cost?

The Secretary has not been to Florida.

5. I see on the Secretary Trip Summary that Mrs. Zinke was with him during the Alaska trip in May. Did she also travel with him to

Norway (i.e., the leg of the trip before the events in Alaska)? If so, did DOI pay anything for her travel, lodging or food budget? Or did the Zinke's reimburse DOI her part of the trip out of their private bank accounts?

Mrs. Zinke personally paid for all of her expenses while traveling on the CODEL and in Alaska.

6. For the flights on AF1 to visit the Boy Scout jamboree and the Youngstown POTUS rally, did DOI pay anything toward the flights?

Yes. (I do not have this information immediately available)

Thank you,

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Apart from events with POTUS/VPOTUS, the Secretary took military air once. He was invited by USDA Secretary Sonny Purdue to go to a wildfire camp at a Type 1 fire in Ravalli County Montana in August. The fire claimed the life of one firefighter. It is still burning but 90% contained. The USDA and DOI co-manage wildfire fighting on federal lands. The USDA was the lead on the trip. DOI has not been billed for it.

Three Charter Flights

3/31

Trip: USVI Centennial Transfer Day Ceremony (The 100 year

anniversary of the Danish government turning over the Virgin Islands to the United States. DOI has jurisdiction over territories)
Flight Plan: St Croix --> St Thomas --> St Croix
Reason: No commercial flight were available
Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

(waiting on cost/staff)

5/17

Trip: CODEL to Norway and Greenland

and

Alaska

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee organized the Arctic CODEL. The Committee organized and utilized a charter

.
Flight Plan: Deadhorse, AK --> Alpine, AK --> Fairbanks

Reason: Commercial flights were not an option

, please contact SENR for more details about their choice of aircraft

Payment: the Secretary and

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(waiting on cost)

6/26

Las Vegas to Kalispell, MT for the Western Governors Association annual meeting.

The Secretary had

a

speaking engagement in the evening in Nevada and

meetings

in the morning in Montana.

Flight Plan:

8:30PM

Las Vegas -->

1:40AM

Kalispell

Reason: No commercial flight available to get the Secretary and staff to the event on time.

Payment:

\$12,375

(

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4

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Has Secretary Zinke used military aircraft for travel during his time as Interior Secretary, and, if such travel happened, how much are the trips estimated to have cost? You can exclude travel with the POTUS on Air Force 1.

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Thank you,

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Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Heather Swift
To: [Ben Lefebvre](#)
Subject: Re: question form Politico on Secretary travel
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:09:17 PM

Ben your description of the events in Montana is off. The Secretary had meetings starting at 8:30AM and then went to WGA. He gave a 45 minute speech then held a press conference. The then had a working lunch with governors.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 28, 2017, at 7:54 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Oh, and USDA told me they're splitting the cost of the military flight with DOI.

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Fairbanks

Reason: Commercial flights were not an option

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Las Vegas -->

1:40AM

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Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro

Desk: 703-647-8775

Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537

Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com

Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Wallace, Gregory](#)
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; [Killough, Ashley](#)
Subject: Re: question from CNN regarding Mrs. Zinke
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 4:46:44 PM

Ooof, I just reread what I wrote and just want to reorganize all those sentences to appear in chronological order, rather than in the crazy order in my head...

The trip was a bipartisan trip organized by the U.S. Senate where several spouses were invited to attend. Mrs. Zinke prolonged her trip because the Senator invited her to participate in the Rolling Thunder ride and ceremony.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and the Governor's wife (a key point both Politico and WP left out). The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

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On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 4:44 PM, 'Wallace, Gregory' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thank you, Heather.

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Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 4:33 PM
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The trip was a bipartisan trip organized by the U.S. Senate where several spouses were invited to attend. DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and the Governor's wife (a key point both Politico and WP left out). The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska. Additionally, Mrs. Zinke prolonged her trip because the Senator invited her to participate in the Rolling Thunder ride and ceremony.

Further, it's also important to remember that the group launching this nonstory is run by left wing political campaign staffers. They aren't exactly unbiased observers here.

-

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On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 4:25 PM, 'Wallace, Gregory' via Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Good afternoon, Heather and colleagues,

We're working on a story this afternoon involving the Department scheduling and email documents Western Values Project received.

The story looks at how the Secretary's office coordinated Mrs. Zinke's travel when she accompanied her husband.

Do you have any comment on this, and has the Secretary or Mrs. Zinke reimbursed the government for her travel expenses?

Thank you, Greg

Gregory Wallace

CNN

202-738-3113

From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather_Swift)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 10:15:37 AM

On the Downing stuff? It would have an impact if she's using executive office vehicles to campaign as part of a Senate race, I believe.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 10:14 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March

I'm trying to understand the angle on since she became a volunteer chair and it's impact on the Secretary.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 10:11 AM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

No accusations - just fact finding. Basically trying to see if any of the secretaries have been misusing taxpayer funds. We're asking all the Secretarial offices these sorts of questions. But we have to be thorough and make sure all the buttons are buttoned, information-wise. I know what my editors will ask so I want have the info to answer them.

Ben Lefebvre
Politico Pro, oil & gas energy reporter
Office: 703-647-8775
Mobile: 313-473-0537
[@bjlefebvre](https://twitter.com/bjlefebvre)

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 9:50:53 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March

Can you explain this more? Is there an accusation of wrongdoing?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 9:46 AM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Ok. Thanks for that. And last one (for now), which will probably come out of the earlier question – did Mrs. Zinke travel with the Secretary on official business at any time since she started working as a campaign chairman for Troy Downing? If so, do you know which trips?

Thank you,
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Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March

No she didn't. I'll put a request in for that information

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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Mrs. Zinke has personally footed the bill for any travel she did accompanying her husband. She was not on the USVI or the Nevada flights, helos, or wildfire flight.

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Still waiting on the cost from OAS. No, Mrs. Zinke was not on the trip.

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Desk: 703-647-8775
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Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com
Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 11:15:41 AM

And just to follow up on this , to make sure we have this correct – Mrs. Zinke was not on the flight to USVI. Was she in the USVI at all for the trip? I know the Sec. met with Sen. Murkowski and the Senator’s husband for dinner. Mrs. Zinke was not at the dinner, correct?

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Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 11:36:10 AM

Thank you.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, October 4, 2017 11:18 AM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March

Background She was not at USVI

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 4, 2017, at 11:17 AM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

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Cc: interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Question from Politico re: Virgin Islands trip in March
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 10:31:20 AM

Oh that is definitely not happening. Still waiting on the itineraries.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Heather Swift
To: [Ben Lefebvre](#)
Subject: Re: question from Politico
Date: Thursday, December 07, 2017 8:08:26 PM

To more fully respond to your ridiculous line of questioning.

After a congressional hearing, the Secretary attended an official Congressional event with the Congressman from Montana and the Speaker of the House before going to an emergency management briefing. On the other occasion he did an aerial survey of a power line corridor, which was pending before the Department, while traveling back from meetings in southern Virginia in order to get to a meeting with the Vice President. All official government business despite your own opinions.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 7, 2017, at 6:28 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

The swearing in of the Congressman is absolutely an official event, as is emergency management training. Shame on you for not respecting the office of a Member of Congress.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 7, 2017, at 3:46 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather,

Hope you are well. I was glancing at some newly released DOI OS travel documents I received via FOIA. I see that on June 20, Sec. Zinke justified ordering a USPP helicopter to fly him to an 3 p.m. event in West Virginia, with the justification that he had to attend an event in D.C. until 2pm. But the D.C. event was Rep. Gianforte's swearing-in. Does DOI consider that swearing-in official business, especially given that Gianforte and his wife donated to Zinke's Congressional campaigns?

Also, on July 7, Zinke took a USPP helicopter to an event in Yorktown, Va., justifying it by saying he needed to be back in D.C. for a 4 p.m. event. That D.C. event was horseback riding with VP Pence. Again, did DOI consider that official business of the sort that necessitated a ~\$6,000 helicopter ride?

I know you already gave us a list of the times Sec. Zinke has used charter flights. Is there a way to get a more complete list of the times he has used government aircraft?

Thank you,

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From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: RE: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:40:55 PM

Did she take a military flight? One of the emails says she had asked about taking one, though not sure whether that request was granted.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:28 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

The trip was not prolonged. The Secretary always planned to stay in Alaska a few days. We had multiple press events that had been planned and actually we sent out the advisory with the events on 5/26. It's on the website.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 2:19 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

On May 28, Caroline Burton wrote:

Mrs. Zinke will now be staying in Alaska postCODEL, a decision she and the Secretary made on the trip. The schedule has been adjusted to reflect that, including now driving from Denali as was originally the plan before the charter flight.

My concern for now is primarily the Monday dinner with the governors office, as paid for by the governors office. The Secretary wants her to join and has said he will personally reimburse them for her meal. I know this is taking place tomorrow and we're not giving you much time so apologies for the short turn around.

Seeing as how the CODEL officially ended May 28, a May 28 email saying Mrs. Zinke will "now" be staying in Alaska and apologies for "the short turn around" seems to make things a bit spur of the moment.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:17 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

Why do you think the trip was "prolonged"?

Heather Swift

Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 2:14 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather,

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1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?
2. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.
3. When was the May trip to Anchorage planned? From the DOI emails, it seems that the Secretary and Mrs. Zinke added a few days to the trip as of May 26 or 27, so not sure if it was part of the original schedule. If it was tacked on during the last week of May, what was his purpose in prolonging the trip? And when exactly did Mrs. Zinke leave Alaska? It's not noted on the trip schedule. Did DOI pay for the return trip to the lower 48 for either of the parties who prolonged the trip?

Looking for end of day for deadline.

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From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 4:17:33 PM

Two more questions (and I apologize for keeping you busy on a Friday afternoon):

1. Any indication who paid for the Nat Geo dinner on April 10th at Hubbard Hall? It was to celebrate the Secretary's appointment.
2. And did Mrs. Zinke accompany her husband to the Safari Club dinner in Alaska on May 31st? She's not listed, but wanted to double check.

Thank you,
Ben

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:31 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and his wife. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice, which we did.

Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

Secretary Zinke flew to Boise, Idaho, to visit the wildland firefighting center. <https://www.doi.gov/mediaadvisories/tomorrow-secretaries-perdue-and-zinke-speak-about-forestry-issues-and-policies-boise>

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 2:33 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

I see. The Secretary's plan did not change. How about Lola's stay in Alaska? Burton's email specifically says she adjusted the schedule to reflect that. Did the zinke's reimburse DOI for her prolonged stay? Or did it not happen as per Burton's email? When exactly did Mrs. Zinke leave

Alaska?

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From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Subject: RE: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:35:24 PM

Got it. Thanks.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:34 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

To be clear: " the Governor and his wife." means the Governor's wife.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 3:32 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Thank you.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:31 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
Subject: Re: Question from Politico

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and his wife. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice, which we did.

Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

Secretary Zinke flew to Boise, Idaho, to visit the wildland firefighting center. <https://www.doi.gov/mediaadvisories/tomorrow-secretaries-perdue-and-zinke-speak-about-forestry-issues-and-policies-boise>

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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I see. The Secretary's plan did not change. How about Lola's stay in Alaska? Burton's email specifically says she adjusted the schedule to reflect that. Did the zinke's reimburse DOI for her prolonged stay? Or did it not happen as per Burton's email? When exactly did Mrs. Zinke leave Alaska?

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:28 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: Question from Politico

The trip was not prolonged. The Secretary always planned to stay in Alaska a few days. We had multiple press events that had been planned and actually we sent out the advisory with the events on 5/26. It's on the website.

Heather Swift

Press Secretary

Department of the Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 2:19 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

On May 28, Caroline Burton wrote:

Mrs. Zinke will now be staying in Alaska postCODEL, a decision she and the Secretary made on the trip. The schedule has been adjusted to reflect that, including now driving from Denali as was originally the plan before the charter flight.

My concern for now is primarily the Monday dinner with the governors office, as paid for by the governors office. The Secretary wants her to join and has said he will personally reimburse them for her meal. I know this is taking place tomorrow and we're not giving you much time so apologies for the short turn around.

Seeing as how the CODEL officially ended May 28, a May 28 email saying Mrs. Zinke will "now" be staying in Alaska and apologies for "the short turn around" seems to make things a bit spur of the moment.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 2:17 PM

To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>

Subject: Re: Question from Politico

Why do you think the trip was "prolonged"?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 2:14 PM, Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather,
Hope all is well. We received some FOIA'd emails from Interior re: the Secretary's travel schedule for certain trips. As such, a few questions for you:

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denali?
2. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.
3. When was the May trip to Anchorage planned? From the DOI emails, it seems that the Secretary and Mrs. Zinke added a few days to the trip as of May 26 or 27, so not sure if it was part of the original schedule. If it was tacked on during the last week of May, what was his purpose in prolonging the trip? And when exactly did Mrs. Zinke leave Alaska? It's not noted on the trip schedule. Did DOI pay for the return trip to the lower 48 for either of the parties who prolonged the trip?

Looking for end of day for deadline.

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre
Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro
Desk: 703-647-8775
Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537
Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com
Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 4:20:25 PM

And just a reminder to see if you can address my earlier question of when exactly Mrs. Zinke left Alaska. Did she attend any other events with the Secretary while in the state?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:34 PM
To: Ben Lefebvre <blefebvre@politico.com>
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Department of the Interior

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Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre
Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro
Desk: 703-647-8775
Mobile/WhatsApp: 313-473-0537
Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com
Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 3:12:15 PM

And I assume we are talking about the dinner at Cook Hotel?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 2:08 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

very good points. will do.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 3:06 PM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Could we add “which we did” at the end of the second question, second sentence? Also should we add that the wife of the AK GOV also attended the dinner?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 17, 2017, at 1:59 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

For Review, from POLITICO -

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola’s meal at the governors meeting in Denal I

DOI did not pay for the meal. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for the meal. Further, DOI incurred no

expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

1. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice.

From: Newell, Russell
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Question from Politico
Date: Friday, November 17, 2017 5:24:56 PM

when can we use the "We're on to Cincinatti" response with Politico? (ref. Bill Belichick)

:)

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 2:58 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

For Review, from POLITICO -

1. Did Secretary Zinke reimburse DOI for Lola's meal at the governors meeting in Denal

I

DOI did not pay for the meal. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for the meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

1. Was there any reason for Lola to attend that dinner? I know that Interior staff had originally advised against it.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rigas, Laura](mailto:Rigas.Laura)
Subject: Re: Question re National Park Foundation
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 5:20:38 PM

That's what that email meant. He was probably calling about that inquiry from the anti gun blog.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 5:19 PM, Rigas, Laura <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Ha. Will from the NPS Foundation just called me as a head's up as well. They are going to defer to you on this.

I am fine with confirming. Were there any other appointments?

*Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior*

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 5:15 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
he may be calling about this

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Dan Friedman <dfriedman@thetrace.org>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2017 at 5:12 PM
Subject: Question re National Park Foundation
To: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Hi. I am a reporter with The Trace, an online publication that cover gun policy matters. I am writing an article on a statement by Susan LaPierre, the head of the NRA Woman's Forum and wife of NRA chief Wayne LaPierre, that Sec. Zinke named her to the board of the National Park Foundation, which raises private funds to support national parks. When does that appointment take effect? Any statement available on this selection. Who else, if anyone, has the secretary named to the board?

Deadline is 10am Thursday.

Thanks.

--

Dan Friedman
Washington Correspondent
The Trace
202.290.5424
dfriedman@thetrace.org

From: Davis, Natalie
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: [Lori Mashburn](mailto:Lori_Mashburn)
Subject: Re: Question re National Park Foundation
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 6:58:04 PM

You're welcome. Let us know if you need anything else.

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 6:44 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Thanks, gals!

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 6:43 PM, Davis, Natalie <natalie_davis@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
See attached.

On Wed, May 17, 2017 at 6:42 PM, Lori Mashburn <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Hello Heather,

Susan was appointed to NPF on April 27, 2017. We have not appointed (or reappointed) anyone to any other boards. Natalie will share the appointment letter. I don't think NPF has done a public announcement yet.

Lori

Sent from my iPhone

On May 17, 2017, at 5:13 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Question re: LaPierre

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Dan Friedman
Washington Correspondent
The Trace
202.290.5424
dfriedman@thetrace.org

--

Natalie Davis, Special Assistant
Immediate Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
202.208.4928

--

Natalie Davis, Special Assistant
Immediate Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
202.208.4928

From: Thomas Crosson
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: RE: questions about Every kid in a park
Date: Monday, June 26, 2017 10:02:34 AM

We'll just take this one if that is ok.

For future EKIP questions, please send them to Kathy Kupper. kathy_kupper@nps.gov

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 9:21 AM
To: Thomas Crosson
Cc: Alex Hinson
Subject: Re: questions about Every kid in a park

Yep - do you want us to send directly to that person?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jun 26, 2017 at 9:18 AM, Thomas Crosson <Thomas_Crosson@nps.gov> wrote:
You can go head and forward them to us. We have an EKIP-savvy person here in our office who can handle these.

OK with you?

Tom Crosson
Chief of Public Affairs
National Park Service
NEW NUMBER: (202) 513-7260
Visit us at www.nps.gov

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 9:15 AM
To: Thomas Crosson; Hinson, Alex
Subject: Fwd: questions about Every kid in a park

Tom - how should Alex respond to these EKIP inquiries?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b) (6) <(b) (6)>
Date: Sun, Jun 25, 2017 at 11:18 PM
Subject: questions about Every kid in a park
To: interior_press@ios.doi.gov

Dear sir or Madam,

My (b) (6) in on June 22, 2017. His school sent home an informational sheet about the "Every kid in a park". According to the information they sent, "This summer you (b) (6) ."

My wife and I are confused according to the information on your web page, we cannot apply for the pass until September 1, whereas our school says go ahead apply for it now (ie. 6/25/2017) and it will be good until 8/31/2018.

What is correct?

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 2:28:07 PM

The department cannot comment on political matters.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 30, 2017 at 2:11 PM, Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

How are you handling these PAC questions?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2017 10:43 AM
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data

Brad, inquiry below regarding the campaign PAC.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Esther Whieldon <ewhieldon@politico.com>
Date: Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 5:56 PM
Subject: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
To: Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

I'm looking over some of the Zinke for Congress PAC expenditures. Please answer the following questions.

1) Please address the sale of the RV to Buttrey and whether the PAC sold it to him for less than it's actual value. And please address whether Lola Zinke may have conversely sold the RV to the PAC for more than it was worth.

2) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported a \$22K-ish payment to First BankCard and listed the underlying transactions as all happening on December 31.

2a) Please provide the dates that the three expenses listed underneath were actually incurred?

recipient_name	recipient_state	disbursement_description	disbursement_amount	disbursement_date
VONS	CA	CAMPAIGN DINNER	314.36	12/31/2016 0:00
WESTHOUSE	NY	LODGING	696.18	12/31/2016 0:00
LIME INN	Virgin Islands	LODGING	522.74	12/31/2016 0:00

3) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported the receipt of this \$13,997.653 transfer on its April Quarterly report, but does not list the individual contributions contained in the transfer-in from Zinke Victory Fund. Why is that?

4) Lastly, please provide a general comment on the extent to which Zinke ensured his campaign PAC followed campaign finance and disclosure laws.

Please respond by 10 am Monday as we plan to run a story at 11 a.m. Apologies for the short notice.

Thanks, Esther

Esther Whieldon

Reporter

POLITICO

301-213-4370 (mobile)

703-672-2788 (office)

ewhieldon@politico.com

Twitter: @esthernow

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nick Juliano](#)
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: questions from politico
Date: Friday, December 08, 2017 2:48:14 PM

Please direct your questions to Mr. Ryan.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Dec 8, 2017 at 7:27 AM, Nick Juliano <njuliano@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather - just reupping this request. Think you'll be able to provide answers today?
Thanks

Nick Juliano
POLITICO
202-557-9390 (mobile)
Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 7, 2017, at 12:32 PM, Nick Juliano <njuliano@politico.com> wrote:

Hi Heather –

I'm hoping you can help confirm some details about a meeting that was listed on Secretary Zinke's August calendar –

<image001.png>

Is that the same Steve Ryan who represented the Zinkes in D.C. Superior Court earlier this year in a lawsuit involving Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church? (background here: <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060058652>)

If so, is he representing the secretary or Lola Zinke in other legal matters?

Is the Jim McCray listed in the description the CEO of Highwood Capital?
<http://www.highwoodcap.com/team.html>

Are Brian Ballard, Susie Wiles and Syl Lukis all from the lobbying firm Ballard Partners?

Did all of the listed participants actually attend the meeting?

What did they discuss?

Please let me know if you could get answers to these by the end of the day today.

Thanks

Nick

Nick Juliano

Deputy Energy Editor

POLITICO

njuliano@politico.com

703-672-2748

202-557-9390

Twitter: @nickjuliano

From: Downey Magallanes
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: questions
Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017 5:36:04 PM

Good

On Oct 19, 2017, at 5:22 PM, Daniel Jorjani <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:

If there is a report/rumor that she is an ombudsman or has some other official role, that report/rumor is false. Your statement is correct.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 19, 2017, at 2:08 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Please see the press inquiry below this email.

Proposed statement: "Mrs. Zinke has zero role at the Department."

Background: *Much like previous secretaries and spouses, she occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling and pays for her meals and travel at her own personal expense. She and all cabinet spouses received a federal ethics briefing.*

I also talked to him about a number of other issues off the record.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Good afternoon:

I am writing a story about Mrs. Zinke, dealing with her role in politics (the Downing campaign), in public commentary (Twitter) and her support for the secretary.

(Parenthetical note: I understand there was a previous E&E story proposed, that never ran. This is not that story; I am a different reporter.)

A couple of questions:

Is Mrs. Zinke available for interview?

How would you characterize her role at the department?

On what occasions will she travel with the secretary?

Does she have work space at the department?

Has she received ethics briefing?

I appreciate the help. My deadline is Friday at 11 a.m.

Thanks.

Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mdoyle@eenews.net

202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

E&E NEWS

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Michael Doyle
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: questions
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 11:08:35 AM

OK, thanks.

Statement attributed to you?

Background attributed to Interior official?

I'll call at 11:30 or so, if you're free.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 11:05 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: questions

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Background: Much like previous secretaries and spouses, she occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling at her own personal expense. She and all cabinet spouses received a federal ethics briefing.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 1:01 PM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

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Does she have work space at the department?
Has she received ethics briefing?

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Thanks.

Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mdoyle@eenews.net

202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Michael Doyle
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: RE: questions
Date: Friday, October 20, 2017 12:39:43 PM

Thanks.

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 12:39 PM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: questions

Thanks for the readout

Yep to spox

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 20, 2017, at 12:15 PM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Swift move!

I'll say: you guys will have absolutely no reason to be concerned with story. It's basically a profile, with material from his book, stuff about Twitter and campaign, mentions FOIA lawsuit...all pretty routine.

On the background quote, can we attribute to Interior 'spokesperson' rather than 'official?'

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 11:54 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: questions

Ugh No. I'm getting bandaged up after taking a tumble into a hedge row. I'm not kidding.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 20, 2017, at 11:35 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

You free now?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 11:05 AM

To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>

Subject: Re: questions

statement: "Mrs. Zinke has zero role at the Department."

Background: Much like previous secretaries and spouses, she occasionally meets her husband while he is traveling at her own personal expense. She and all cabinet spouses received a federal ethics briefing.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 1:01 PM, Michael Doyle

<mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Good afternoon:

I am writing a story about Mrs. Zinke, dealing with her role in politics (the Downing campaign), in public commentary (Twitter) and her support for the secretary.

(Parenthetical note: I understand there was a previous E&E story proposed, that never ran. This is not that story; I am a different reporter.)

A couple of questions:

Is Mrs. Zinke available for interview?

How would you characterize her role at the department?

On what occasions will she travel with the secretary?

Does she have work space at the department?

Has she received ethics briefing?

I appreciate the help. My deadline is Friday at 11 a.m.

Thanks.

Mike

Michael Doyle

Reporter

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@MichaelDoyle10

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: MacGregor, Katharine
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Recent Articles
Date: Monday, June 05, 2017 7:33:57 PM

Hmmm...we can work with this.

On Mon, Jun 5, 2017 at 6:55 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Recent, topical articles from the reporter, Nathaniel Herz, are bulleted and copy/pasted below.

- [Interior secretary vows to reinvigorate Alaska oil industry](#)
- [Here's the infrastructure wish list that Alaska Gov. Walker sent to President Trump](#)
- [Anchorage mayor vows to reduce greenhouse gas emissions after Trump's Paris pullout](#)

[Interior secretary vows to reinvigorate Alaska oil industry](#)

President Donald Trump's interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, drew cheers from some industrial-minded Alaskans on Wednesday when he pledged to pave the way for new development on the North Slope and reinvigorate the state's oil industry.

"The only path for energy dominance is a path through the great state of Alaska," Zinke told the audience at an Anchorage conference hosted by the state's major oil industry group, the Alaska Oil and Gas Association.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke takes questions Tuesday in Anchorage. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Sen. Dan Sullivan and Rep. Don Young listen at right. (Marc Lester / Alaska Dispatch News)

"The president has declared — and thank you Donald J. Trump — that the war on North American energy is now over," Zinke added, equating "energy" and oil.

Flanked by politicians and hard-hat-wearing union members, Zinke signed a secretarial order at the end of his speech aimed at boosting production in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and at updating estimates of the amount of oil beneath the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Alaska politicians welcomed the move, calling it a reversal of Obama-era policies of the past eight years that Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski described as an effort to "close it all off."

"Now, finally, we have an administration that will listen to us — that will work with us to ensure that we can safely produce our resources," Murkowski said.

But some industry players interviewed at the conference were more tempered in their reaction, saying the federal government is limited in the amount of power it can exert over global market forces that have crashed the price of oil, caused thousands of job losses in

Alaska and blown a massive hole in the state's budget.

"The market determines what we can pull the trigger on," said Dave Norton, an engineer and co-owner of Anchorage-based Hawk Consultants, which manages oil and gas projects. "Fracking in Texas is so cheap to do, why would anybody want to come up here?"

Zinke is a retired U.S. Navy SEAL who said Wednesday that he had spent time on the Aleutian islands of Adak and Shemya. His wife also has Alaska credentials, having once worked at the Lucky Wishbone restaurant, though Zinke did slip up once Wednesday, referring to the North Slope as the "North Shore."

His pledge to make the oil industry great again, at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center downtown at the tail end of a nearly weeklong trip through the state, was his first major public address in Alaska. It came before an enthusiastic audience of state and federal lawmakers, staffers and oil industry executives who had often clashed with the Obama administration and its efforts to fight global warming by limiting the production of Earth-warming greenhouse gases — the byproducts of fossil fuels.

"Our economy's an oil economy," said Anchorage Republican state Rep. Chris Birch, who said the conference was like "going to church on Sunday."

"You get up, you get out kind of refreshed," he said.

Zinke's pledge to revitalize the state's oil industry came as Trump prepared to announce Thursday whether he would abandon the landmark Paris climate deal reached in 2015 under Obama — with initial reports claiming he would.

The Paris agreement calls for the United States to make about one-fifth of the globe's emissions reductions through 2030.

Obama used Alaska as a backdrop for his push for the climate deal, describing global warming as a looming crisis for the state and the world in his own speech in Anchorage in 2015 and declaring that "any so-called leader who does not take this issue seriously or treats it like a joke is not fit to lead."

Zinke didn't mention global warming in his speech. He told reporters at a news conference afterward that he thinks the climate is changing. But he said he hadn't read the Paris agreement and argued that there's a lot about climate change that's not understood.

"What can we do about it? What is the influence? That is unsettled," he said, contradicting the latest U.N. scientific report that said it's "extremely likely" that human influence has been the dominant cause of warming in the past half-century.

About 20 people protested Zinke's appearance both inside and outside the convention center, with one, Rachel Cella, 40, saying that she wanted to hear more plans to help move the state's economy away from oil.

"Obviously we're not going to just shutter the oil fields," she said while holding a handmade sign that said "there are no jobs on a dead planet." She added: "We need to acknowledge what's happening and acknowledge that we can't bury our heads in the sand anymore and

think that the oil industry is coming back in Alaska. They're not accepting change and the reality that this is a shifting planet."

Zinke argued that boosting Alaska energy production would create economic opportunities, and he pointed out that he didn't hear any objections to development at a Tuesday round-table meeting with Alaska Native leaders.

[New interior secretary says he's ready to share federal management duties with Alaska Natives]

Zinke's new order gives his agency three weeks to create a new schedule for review and revision of an Obama-era plan for the Indiana-sized petroleum reserve, on the North Slope. It also directs his agency to create a plan within three weeks for "updating current assessments of the undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources" on the North Slope, with a focus on the petroleum reserve and the coastal plain of the wildlife refuge.

The Obama administration plan for the petroleum reserve, finished in 2013, made about half of the area unavailable for leasing, in a move that could preclude development of as many as 350 million barrels of oil, according to the order.

While Zinke and Alaska politicians described the Obama administration as hostile to oil development on the North Slope, one former top Interior Department official, David Hayes, said that the existing plan for the petroleum reserve was in part shaped by oil industry interest — or lack of it.

"They turned back many of their leases. So the notion that the Obama administration stood in the way of developing responsible oil and gas on the east side of the NPR-A is belied by the facts," said Hayes, a former deputy interior secretary under Obama who's now a lecturer at Stanford Law School. "The economics are challenging up there for companies. It's much cheaper to get shale oil in North Dakota than it is on the North Slope. It's that simple."

But since the 2013 adoption of the plan, oil industry interest in the petroleum reserve and nearby state land has surged following recent announcements of major discoveries by companies like Repsol, Armstrong and ConocoPhillips. And officials with Gov. Bill Walker's administration now describe the area as red-hot.

"Suddenly, now, we have a body of information that suggests geologically, and based on well results and seismic (testing), that wait a minute, we've been missing something," said Andy Mack, the natural resources commissioner. "Now there are these huge, economic discoveries and it's pretty prolific. It's exciting for Alaska."

[Here's the infrastructure wish list that Alaska Gov. Walker sent to President Trump](#)

Alaska Gov. Bill Walker has sent President Donald Trump a wish list of projects for inclusion in a potential federal infrastructure package — roads, ports, assistance for the state's gas pipeline project and cash to relocate rural villages threatened by climate change.

Walker sent the seven-item list to Trump and Mick Mulvaney, Trump's budget director, on May 15. That was two weeks before Trump said he would pull out of the Paris accord on climate change, a move followed by a muted statement from Walker on the announcement.

The letters and list were obtained through a public records request to Walker's office.

Walker's seven requests are:

- An expedited state-federal land exchange to hurry construction of the road between King Cove and Cold Bay through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, on the Alaska Peninsula — a proposal rejected by former President Barack Obama's administration.
- \$124 million to help relocate the erosion-threatened Southwest Alaska village of Newtok. The village is disappearing as sea levels rise and land sinks, though Walker doesn't mention climate change in his letter to Trump, who has claimed that global warming is a hoax.
- Federal loan guarantees, faster environmental permitting and investment for AKLNG, the proposed \$43 billion natural gas pipeline and liquefied natural gas export project that would run from Alaska's North Slope to the Kenai Peninsula.
- Permits, planning assistance and cash or low-interest loans for a proposed new road project that would run through the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska on the North Slope. The road, at a cost of \$300 million or more, would run from Utqiagvik, the town formerly known as Barrow, to the village of Nuiqsut.
- \$125 million to finish the stalled rail extension to Port MacKenzie, across the Knik Arm from Anchorage.
- Money or low-interest loans to help rebuild the aging Port of Anchorage, as well as a resolution to Anchorage's long-running lawsuit against the federal Maritime Administration, or MARAD, over bungled work on the project.
- Construction of a naval base and expansion of Coast Guard operations in Alaska — an effort that Walker's administration predicts could ultimately cost as much as \$30 billion just for the first phase. Walker's current request is for a defense department report assessing "future security requirements" for Arctic ports, as well as "timely designation of one or more strategic Arctic ports in Alaska."

Walker's letter to Mulvaney ends with what Walker calls three "additional areas of need in Alaska": basic sewer and water infrastructure, since 3,300 rural Alaska homes lack flush toilets and running water; assistance for relocating Kivalina, Shaktoolik and Shishmaref, three more erosion-threatened coastal villages; and support for enhanced broadband internet across the state.

Trump touted his plans for a \$1 trillion infrastructure package while campaigning, but has yet to lay out a concrete proposal.

He's expected to give a speech Wednesday as part of an "infrastructure week" in which he'll lay out broad plans for more state, city and corporate spending on infrastructure — instead

of cash from the federal government, The New York Times reported Saturday.

Walker said in his letter to Mulvaney that he expects to send more lists with additional energy, transportation and municipal projects "in the coming months." Walker has already solicited ideas for additional proposals from local officials across the state, distributing a letter that asks for nominations.

[Anchorage mayor vows to reduce greenhouse gas emissions after Trump's Paris pullout](#)

Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz is promising to maintain efforts to lower greenhouse gas emissions following President Donald Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris climate deal, while some advocates question why Alaska Gov. Bill Walker hasn't approached the issue more energetically.

"We'll continue to address climate change," Berkowitz said in a phone interview Friday, a day after Trump's announcement. "And we're doing it because it is a part of looking out for the future of the local economy and it's about making sure we're good stewards of the place we live."

A group of American cities and states has quickly coalesced around upholding the Paris emissions targets despite Trump's announcement, with former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg coordinating an effort to submit a pledge by the group to the United Nations.

Anchorage hasn't developed a comprehensive analysis of its emissions or outlined formal targets for reductions, steps taken by dozens of other major cities around the country and world. And Berkowitz didn't commit to formally joining the group of mayors, governors and businesses coordinated by Bloomberg.

But the city has commissioned just such an emissions analysis from an Anchorage firm, DeerStone Consulting, and expects its results within weeks. Berkowitz also pointed to ongoing efforts that should help reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

The city has replaced thousands of streetlights with more energy-efficient LED bulbs, and the municipal utility just opened a new natural gas power plant that emits 30 percent less carbon dioxide to generate the same amount of electricity as legacy plants.

Berkowitz, a Democrat in an officially nonpartisan office, framed the issue in economic terms rather than political ones, pointing to endorsements of the Paris agreement by oil companies like BP, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil — along with climate change's disproportionate impact in northern latitudes, with the Arctic warming twice as fast as the rest of the world.

Global warming threatens Anchorage with higher fire danger, infestations of invasive species and road damage from more freeze-thaw cycles, Berkowitz said.

"This is common sense about making sure that we show leadership in an area where we're

disproportionately impacted," Berkowitz said. "These are business decisions."

Berkowitz's pledge came as Walker faces growing pressure from environmental advocates and Democratic legislators for more aggressive state action on climate change.

The governor issued a statement Thursday that neither endorsed nor denounced Trump's proposal, saying that in spite of the withdrawal, "Alaska will continue to work to boost national defense and security measures for our 6,640 miles of Alaskan coastline, increase resilience for Arctic communities and provide energy leadership for the nation."

Both Republicans and Democrats said Walker's reaction was perplexing, with one GOP writer, Suzanne Downing, calling it "mystifying" and saying it was a "tortured statement that signifies nothing."

Addressing climate change was a central state policy a decade ago. Former Gov. Sarah Palin created a subcabinet and working groups to develop a climate change strategy, while the Legislature established its own commission to assess impacts of global warming.

But Palin's efforts stalled as her political aspirations rose, and climate change ceased to be a priority of her successor, Republican Sean Parnell.

"You had industry representatives as well as conservation organizations — the whole hierarchy of government sitting down together and talking through issues. It kind of went dead in the water," said Bruce Botelho, the former attorney general, who sat on a climate advisory group.

Walker is a Republican-turned-independent who aligned himself with Democrats to defeat Parnell, raising the hopes of Alaskans who support more aggressive action on climate change. Advocates point to erosion that threatens coastal villages, ocean acidification that could hurt Alaska fisheries and thawing permafrost that could damage state infrastructure.

Administration officials have said they're considering reviving the climate subcabinet. And Walker, at his State of the State speech in January, said officials were developing a "framework" to respond to global warming and to "maintain the integrity of our lands, air and water for future generations."

But no such framework has been announced, and neither has any action emerged on the subcabinet, frustrating some who wanted to see more decisive moves.

"We've been frustrated at the pace of change," said Bob Shavelson, head of the Homer-based environmental group Cook Inletkeeper.

"The governor says the right things," he added. "But we need to back it up. We can't simply continue to put the blinders on and pretend that we can continue to be an oil and gas state forever."

The Walker administration plans to advance its global warming initiative once this year's legislative session is over, with the potential to issue an administrative order, said Claire Richardson, chief of staff to Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott, a Democrat who's played a major role in developing the climate strategy.

"A lot of things have been put on the back burner as we face the fiscal crisis," Richardson said. "You're going to see more focus on this once we get through the legislative session."

Walker's administration, in a partnership with research program Alaska Sea Grant, just hired a new fellow, Danielle Meeker, who's finishing a master's degree in climate science this month, Richardson said. Her yearlong fellowship in the governor's office will include work on global warming.

The Legislature, however, remains divided over how to tackle climate change.

Members of the largely Democratic House majority coalition are proposing legislation to create a response commission bankrolled by a penny-per-barrel tax on oil that flows through the trans-Alaska pipeline, since oil is a fossil fuel and its burning contributes to global warming.

But members of the Republican-led Senate majority oppose the bill, with North Pole Republican Sen. John Coghill panning the effort as an "anti-development agenda" that attacks "the very industry that fuels our economy."

That same schism persists among some of the politicians eyed as potential replacements for Walker.

Wasilla Republican Sen. Mike Dunleavy, who's considering a run for governor next year, said he doesn't think the state can make more than a minuscule impact on the global climate.

"We don't have emissions. I think it's a moot issue for Alaska — it's 780,000 people spread over a subcontinent," Dunleavy said in a phone interview. "If Anchorage thinks it will make people feel better, emotionally, to change out light bulbs and stuff, then more power to them."

If the city tries to adhere to the Paris accord, Dunleavy argued, it would benefit the Mat-Su, his home region, "because people will move there and businesses will move there."

Former U.S. Sen. Mark Begich, a Democrat viewed by state GOP leaders as another potential gubernatorial candidate, argued that adaptation to global warming's threat could boost the state's economy, and that ignoring it risks missing out on new jobs.

Alaska could be a test site for alternative fuels for military planes and wind power could lessen the state's dependence on fossil fuels, Begich said. New research projects could study the impact of global warming on fish and wildlife populations.

The state, Begich added, should be a "center for excellence and innovation when it comes to climate change."

"The governor and the Legislature should be on this thing without a second thought," he said. "Unless I missed something, I haven't seen much. I think there's a void there."

Heather Swift
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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--

Kate MacGregor
1849 C ST NW
Room 6625
Washington DC 20240

202-208-3671 (Direct)

From: Scott Hommel
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather_Swift)
Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov); downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Remarks by President Trump on Antiquities Act Designations
Date: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 12:25:42 AM

Pretty awesome!

Scott C. Hommel
Chief of Staff
Department of the Interior

On Dec 5, 2017, at 12:05 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Boss' shoutout today in POTUS speech.

And I have to say, really -- talk about a very special guy that I made Secretary of the Interior. Does he know the interior. He's knows it, he loves it. He loves seeing it and riding on it. Ryan Zinke, who truly believes in protecting America -- he is protecting America. And nobody loves it more. Ryan. (Applause.) Thank you. Just as he protected America as an officer of the legendary Seal Team Six. He's a tough cookie and you've done a great job. Thank you, Ryan.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: White House Press Office <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>
Date: December 4, 2017 at 1:34:14 PM MST
To: <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Remarks by President Trump on Antiquities Act Designations
Reply-To: <whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov>

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 4, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
ON ANTIQUITIES ACT DESIGNATIONS

Utah State Capitol
Salt Lake City, Utah

12:20 P.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you to a very special man, Orrin Hatch, for the introduction. And that was truly a nice introduction and I appreciate it.

You are a true fighter, Orrin. And I have to say, I've gotten to know him very well. I've gotten to know a lot of people very well. You meet fighters and you meet people that you thought were fighters but they're not so good at fighting. He's a fighter. We hope you will continue to serve your state and your country in the Senate for a very

long time to come. (Applause.)

I want to especially thank you for the tremendous work in ushering massive tax cuts and reform through the Senate. Just happened, and we have a final step to go. And I predict we're going to be very successful. We're talking about massive, massive tax cuts. (Applause.) It's tax cuts and reform, but I always mention tax cuts first because that's what people like to hear.

We're now one huge step closer to delivering to the American people the historic tax relief as a giant present for Christmas. Remember I said we're bringing Christmas back? Christmas is back, bigger and better than ever before. We're bringing Christmas back. (Applause.) And we say it now with pride. Let me just say, to those here today and all across the country: Merry Christmas to everybody. (Applause.) And also, happy holidays and a great New Year. We're going to have a great, great year.

Joining us at this ceremony are many other tremendous leaders from Utah, including your great senator, Mike Lee. Where's Mike? Mike, come! Come here, Mike. Get up here, Mike. (Applause.) He worked along with Orrin and the rest of them. We got it done. Mike, thank you very much. (Applause.)

You want to say something?

SENATOR LEE: It's not every day the President of the United States asks you to take the microphone from him. But I want to say, Mr. President, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for being here. Thank you for standing with the people of Utah. We appreciate it deeply. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike.

I also want to recognize your fantastic representatives who are with us -- Rob Bishop, John Curtis, Chris Stewart, and Mia Love. Thank you all. You're here. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And I have to say, really -- talk about a very special guy that I made Secretary of the Interior. Does he know the interior. He's knows it, he loves it. He loves seeing it and riding on it. Ryan Zinke, who truly believes in protecting America -- he is protecting America. And nobody loves it more. Ryan. (Applause.) Thank you. Just as he protected America as an officer of the legendary Seal Team Six. He's a tough cookie and you've done a great job. Thank you, Ryan.

Governor Gary Herbert. Where is Gary? Come on Gary. Come on, Gary. Get over there, Gary. So they can -- (applause) -- and you're your wife, the First Lady, is fantastic. Thank you very much. First Lady. Thank you, First Lady.

Attorney General Sean Reyes. Sean, thank you. (Applause.) Thank you. An original supporter of mine. You know, you always remember those original supporters. Greg Hughes. Greg, thank you. (Applause.) He was an original right at the beginning. Thank you, Greg. He had a feeling.

Finally, I want to recognize the members of the local Utah Navajo. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Really appreciate it. We're profoundly honored by your presence here today, and I'm thrilled to be here with so many wonderful friends, so many people that saw something a little special and they said, we're with him, and I'm really working hard to put it back. And that's what we're doing today. This magnificent capitol, in your incredible state. And it is special people in a special state. Thank you very much for being here.

I've just come from touring Welfare Square with Senator Hatch and some amazing people from the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. (Applause.) Special. I spent a lot of time with them. In fact, I went around the store, I wanted a nice can of tuna fish -- (laughter) -- and they had plenty. They really help people. Incredible.

After our visit, I can truly say firsthand that Utah's awesome natural beauty is exceeded only by the warmth and grace and hospitality

of its citizens. This state has many natural treasures, but its greatest treasure by far is its people. (Applause.) And we will ensure the right of the people to live according to the faith in their hearts, which is why we will always protect your religious liberty. (Applause.) And we've been doing that.

I know all of you feel blessed to be living among some of the most glorious natural wonders anywhere in the world. You cherish Utah's gleaming rivers and sweeping valleys. You take inspiration from its majestic peaks. And when you look upon its many winding canyons and glowing vistas, you marvel at the beauty of God's great creation. (Applause.)

And that is why I'm here today: Because some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington. And guess what? They're wrong.

The families and communities of Utah know and love this land the best, and you know the best how to take care of your land. You know how to protect it, and you know best how to conserve this land for many, many generations to come.

Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away. They don't know your land, and truly, they don't care for your land like you do. (Applause). But from now on, that won't matter. I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

But before I began -- because I understood how big it is -- I'm a real estate developer. When they start talking about millions of acres, I say, say it again? That's a lot. So, before I began, I met with Senator Orrin Hatch, who loves Utah and loves the people of Utah. I called Senator Mike Lee, who loves Utah and loves the people of Utah. I called your governor. I called my original -- where is he? There he is. I called all of the friends that I have in Utah. I said, what do you think? I said, will this be good for our country, and will it be good for your state? They said this would be incredible for our country, will be incredible for Utah. Finally, you would be giving people back their access to the land they know, to the land they understand, and most importantly, to the land that they love.

I also said, will it be at all controversial? They all told me no. (Laughter.) How did that happen? I don't think it is controversial, actually. I think it's so sensible.

Therefore, today, on the recommendation of Secretary Zinke, and with the wise counsel of Senator Hatch, Senator Lee, and the many others, I will sign two presidential proclamations. These actions will modify the national monuments designations of both Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante. (Applause.)

As many of you know, past administrations have severely abused the purpose, spirit, and intent of a century-old law known as the Antiquities Act. This law requires that only the smallest necessary area be set aside for special protection as national monuments. Unfortunately, previous administrations have ignored the standard and used the law to lock up hundreds of millions of acres of land and water under strict government control.

These abuses of the Antiquities Act give enormous power to faraway bureaucrats at the expense of the people who actually live here, work here, and make this place their home. This is where they raise their children. This is the place they love.

For example, the previous administration designated more than a half a billion acres of land and water, including Bears Ears. It did so over the loud objections of the people of this state and their elected representatives. Governor -- right?

The results have been very sad and very predictable. Here, and in other affected states, we have seen harmful and unnecessary restrictions on hunting, ranching, and responsible economic development. We have seen grazing restrictions prevent ranching families from passing their

businesses and beloved heritage on to the children -- the children that they love.

We've seen many rural families stopped from enjoying their outdoor activities. And the fact they've done it all their lives made no difference to the bureaucrats in Washington.

We have seen needed improvements, like infrastructure upgrades and road maintenance, impeded and foreclosed. We have seen how this tragic federal overreach prevents many Native Americans from having their rightful voice over the sacred land where they practice their most important ancestral and religious traditions. (Applause.)

These abuses of the Antiquities Act have not just threatened your local economies; they've threatened your very way of life. They've threatened your hearts.

Our precious national treasures must be protected. And they, from now on, will be protected. (Applause.) Under my administration, we will advance that protection through a truly representative process, one that listens to the local communities that knows the land the best and that cherishes the land the most. (Applause.)

With the action I'm taking today, we will not only give back your voice over the use of this land, we will also restore your access and your enjoyment. Public lands will once again be for public use -- (applause) -- because we know that people who are free to use their land and enjoy their land are the people most determined to conserve their land.

One values the splendor of Utah more than -- I'll tell you what, there's nobody out there. I just came in, and I'm looking around with Orrin and with Mike and with the governor and with everybody, and I'm just saying, what a beautiful picture it is. But no one values the splendor of Utah more than you do, and no one knows better how to use it.

With your help in treating our natural bounty with respect, gratitude, and love, we will put our nation's treasures to great and wonderful use. Families will hike and hunt on land they have known for generations, and they will preserve it for generations to come. Cattle will graze along the open range. Sweeping landscapes will inspire young Americans to dream beyond the horizon. And the world will stand in awe of the artistry God has worked right here in your great state.

Together, we will usher in a bright new future of wonder and wealth, liberty and law, and patriotism and pride all across this great land.

Thank you to the wonderful people of Utah. May God bless you and may God bless America. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

And in your honor, I will now, with your representatives, sign this very, very important proclamation. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you. (Applause.)

(The proclamation is signed.)

END

12:37 P.M. MST

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20500 202-456-1111

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Retraction - false editorial
Date: Saturday, November 25, 2017 9:09:02 PM

Yup. Thx. Any response from her?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 25, 2017, at 11:34 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I was so annoyed when I read this last night. I BCCed you on it since it's Boston and you may get calls about it from friends and family.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Nov 25, 2017, at 8:25 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thx!!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 24, 2017, at 11:43 PM, Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hello Marjorie - Please allow me to introduce myself to you and your team as I have not yet have the pleasure of being contacted by anyone over there. I'm Heather, the press secretary at Interior. I saw your recent editorial about Secretary Zinke and am requesting a full retraction on the grounds of multiple inaccuracies.

1. The headline and the thrust of the story is patently false. The

enhancement finding by USFWS had zero impact on ivory and the import of elephant tusks. That is still illegal.

2. There was no "cleaned house"

3. The Obama Administration Interior Secretaries spent about a million dollars on charter aircraft

4. Mrs. Zinke did not cause "headaches for department staffers"

5. Zinke has zero ties to the company Whitefish Energy and had nothing to do with the contract - that contract was awarded by the state run utility in Puerto Rico. (Which is led by a democrat governor) In fact, the Secretary invited a full investigation into the matter.

6. At no point did the President distance himself from Zinke. In fact, he tweeted a statement that he and the secretary talked about the USFWS decision, referencing Zinke by name.

7. Again, ivory is excluded from the enhancement finding which means tusks cannot be imported.

8. Poaching is very different from legal hunting. Only individuals who have extensive paperwork to prove the hunt was legal and within all applicable regulations are able to apply for an import permit.

9. There was no "ban" on importing elephant trophies during the Obama years. The import was being reviewed while the enhancement finding was being processed. Trophies from other African nations were still permitted such as Namibia and South Africa.

10. Lastly, and I truly cannot stress this enough, there is a major difference between hunting and poaching and under no circumstances

should the two terms be used interchangeably as they are in this opinion piece.

In the future, I'm happy to answer any questions you and your team have before you write. Many many many editorial page writers reach out to me before they write and find the information helpful.

Please let me know when the article is retracted.

Warmest regards,

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: Heather Swift
To: [Vincent Devito](#)
Cc: laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Revised
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 8:13:43 PM

Nice. Thanks, Vincent!

Sent from my iPhone

On May 30, 2017, at 8:08 PM, Vincent Devito <vincent_devito@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thank you, XXXXXX, for that introduction.

I love Alaska. My wife Lola and I actually both have ties. Her dad worked up here while she was growing up and I did quite a bit of training while I was in the military.

And, as I say to my friend Senator Murkowski, Montana and Alaska aren't all that different...both states have a robust outdoor culture and a frontier outlook and we're both blessed with abundant energy resources.

Speaking of, some of you may know that my path to Interior Secretary was a little different than most. I hadn't spent much time in Washington, D.C., or served as a career politician. Instead, I served in the military, just like 10 percent of all Alaskans. Your state and mine have highest percentage of veterans. We should be proud of that.

So during my Navy years, in addition to getting up to Alaska to train, I also spent a lot of time in the Middle East on oil platforms. Though it was a little different than what you all did. I was mostly keeping bad guys off of them.

I'm pleased to be with the thousands of forward-looking and hard-working men and women of the Alaska energy industry.

In my view, energy is important for three reasons.

First, it's better for the environment that the U.S. produces energy. Thanks to advancements in technology, we can responsibly develop our energy resources and return the land to equal or better quality than it was before.

I've spent a lot of time overseas, and I can tell you with 100 percent certainty it is better to develop our energy here under reasonable regulations, than have it

produced overseas under little or no regulations.

Second, energy production is an absolute boon to the economy, supporting more than 9 million jobs and supplying affordable power for manufacturing, home heating, and transportation needs. And I can tell you, it's going to take a whole lot of energy to rebuild America's aging infrastructure.

And lastly, achieving American energy independence will strengthen our national security by reducing our reliance on foreign oil and allowing us to assist our allies with their energy needs.

As a military commander, I saw how the power of the American economy and American energy defeated our adversaries around the world. The world is safer when American is strong.

I am an unabashed supporter of Teddy Roosevelt whose views about America's holdings are best inscribed on the Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park – “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Contrary to what some believe, being a good steward of our land and resources does not mean locking it up and banning public access. Teddy Roosevelt himself said that, "Conservation means development as much as it does protection.”

Yet during the previous administration, nearly 94 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf was off limits for responsible development. And about half of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was out too.

As of March 1, 2017, only 16 million acres in the OCS (out of a total 1.7 billion acres) are under lease for oil and gas development. Of the little area that is open to development, more than 97 percent of the leases are in the Gulf of Mexico.

Offshore leasing revenues have been the second highest source of revenue to the Treasury behind personal income taxes paid. In 2008 the U.S. Treasury collected nearly \$18 billion in federal OCS leasing revenues.

Yet by contrast, last year in 2016, leasing revenues collected fell to only \$2.8 billion.

That's a drop of more than \$15 billion that would otherwise partially go toward funding important conservation programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Infrastructure, and our parks.

That's in part why President Trump and I got to work to rewrite the Five-Year Plan and get more people back to work on rigs, platforms, and other onshore oil and gas jobs.

I recognize that not all areas are appropriate for energy development, but many places provide the perfect opportunity to balance energy and conservation priorities. Thanks to new developments in science and technology, it is possible to responsibly develop American energy resources while being good stewards of the environment.

There is no debate that the federal government should regulate energy production within its borders and that the taxpayer should get fair value for the resources extracted. But when regulation becomes a punitive tool of political advocacy rather than public interest, there needs to be a change of course.

President Trump's America First Offshore Energy Executive Order began that course correction. That order directed me to conduct a review of the current five year offshore development plan for the Outer Continental Shelf, streamline permitting for seismic research and reconsider a host regulations hampering development.

The President and I are committed to energy dominance and his executive order was a decisive step in common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

I then took immediate action to implement the President's offshore energy policy by signing two Secretarial Orders.

Those orders are meant

- to enhance opportunities for energy exploration, leasing, and development on the Outer Continental Shelf;
- establish regulatory certainty for OCS activities; and
- promote conservation stewardship, by providing jobs, energy security, and revenue for the American people.

The first order directed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to immediately initiate development of a new "Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas

Leasing Program,” with full consideration given to leasing the OCS offshore Alaska, the mid- and south-Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico. It also directs expedited consideration of appealed, new, or resubmitted seismic permitting applications for the Atlantic and the review or rescission of other regulations outlined in the President’s executive order.

Just a few weeks ago,

Vincent DeVito was appointed by to serve as the department's counselor for energy policy to strengthen and better coordinate the department's vast energy portfolio. Also, I recently appointed Scott Angelle the new Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and he will work with our energy team to promote safety, protect the environment and conserve resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy industry operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

These are a series of continuing actions at the Department. For instance, we also have a focus on changing punitive regulations. A good example is our work regarding the new flaring regulations. After they were not repealed under the Congressional Review Act, we immediately went to work to assist production and workers. As a result, we Are planning to issue notice to adjust compliance deadlines of the federal regulations governing flaring and gas leaks on public lands, and we will propose to revise or withdraw certain regulations that are not needed to prevent waste.

Today, I am announcing additional steps in our common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

Today, I am signing a third Secretarial Order that will jump-start Alaskan energy production in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska and update resource assessments for the "10-0-2 area" of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The order calls for the development of a revised Integrated Activity Plan for the National Petroleum Reserve that strikes an appropriate statutory balance for promoting development while protecting surface resources.

It also calls for an evaluation, under the existing Integrated Activity Plan, of ways to efficiently and effectively maximize the tracts offered for sale during the next National Petroleum Reserve lease sale.

The order also directs the offices of Land and Minerals Management and Water and Science to submit a joint plan to the Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy for updating assessments of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources on Alaska's North Slope, focusing on Federal lands that include the National Petroleum Reserve and the Section 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

This joint plan shall include consideration of new geological and geophysical data, as well as the potential for reprocessing existing geological and geophysical data.

I'm a geologist. Science is a wonderful thing – it helps us understand what is going on deep below the surface of the earth. We need to use science to update our understanding of the 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as Congress considers important legislation to responsibly develop there one day. This order takes the important first step in a smart and measured approach to energy development in ANWR.

Regarding the National Petroleum Reserve, this land was set up with the sole intention of oil and gas production and serves a critical role in both our energy and national security. However, years of policy politics put roughly half of the National Petroleum Reserve off-limits.

Using this land for its original intent will create good paying jobs and revenue for our Northern-most city and strengthen our energy and national security.

Working with the Alaska Native community, Interior will identify areas in the National Petroleum Reserve where responsible energy development makes the most sense and devise a plan to extract resources.

We will do it in a way that respects both the environment and traditional uses of the land and maintains subsistence hunting and fishing access.

Let me close by saying that for all the needed changes we are making to the previous administration's energy policies, one thing does not change -- and that is our commitment to safety and our environment.

That remains our priority.

Nothing in the Secretarial Order I am signing today would reduce, eliminate, or modify any environmental or regulatory requirements for energy development.

We have thousands of talented and dedicated employees working on our frontlines who are focused on the safe and responsible development of our nation's energy resources.

We are going to keep it that way and we will hold companies accountable. Good stewardship of our lands and waters and maintaining U.S. energy dominance are not mutually exclusive.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to be here today. I'll now sign this order with you.

###

From: Heather Swift
To: [Elinor Renner](mailto:Elinor.Renner)
Subject: Re: Scheduling Lincoln Tours
Date: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 7:51:32 AM

Got it!!

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 18, 2017, at 10:33 PM, Elinor Renner <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Heather,

We're doing separate tours for non Politicals on Tuesday at 3:45-4:30 and 4:30-5:15. I had Mike on the 4:30 tour. I'm happy to add his wife then!

Warmly,
Elinor

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 18, 2017, at 7:38 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Z invited reporter mike Coleman and his wife tomorrow. They will go to the 2:15.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 18, 2017, at 5:39 PM, Renner, Elinor
<elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Good Evening Everyone,

As Scott mentioned in the Politicals Meeting a few weeks ago, the Secretary has offered to give everyone a special tour of the Lincoln Memorial. These tours are closed to the public and can only be accessed by the Secretary of the Interior. This includes a guided tour of the basement, where you can view graffiti from workers who helped to build the Memorial and the stalagmites and stalactites throughout the underground, and the fantastic view of Washington from the rooftop.

The Secretary will be leading tours this Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

during the times below:

1. Tuesday from 2:15-3:00
2. Tuesday from 3:00-3:45
3. Wednesday from 5:30-6:15
4. Thursday from 3:45-4:30
5. Thursday from 5:15-6:00
6. Thursday from 6:00-6:45

Each political may bring one guest. Please email me your preferred tour time slot and if you will be bringing a plus one. I will email you back to confirm your tour time and give you the information on where to meet.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Warmly,
Elinor

--

Elinor Renner
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6087

From: Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: RE: Sec. Zinke GQ
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 2:13:30 PM

Terrific

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, May 25, 2017 12:39 PM
To: Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
Cc: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke GQ

(b) (5)

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:25 PM, Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO

(b) (6) > wrote:

This is so helpful. Thank you! (b) (5)

Thanks!

Sent from my iPhone

On May 25, 2017, at 11:29 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Renee, thanks for the call. Below are some topline messaging on the Secretary and his bio. Let me know if there's anything else you need.

TOPLINE

- Secretary Ryan Zinke is a fifth-generation Montanan and a 23-year veteran of the U.S. Navy SEALs
 - Zinke is a guy that the average American connects with. He's a veteran, comes from a blue collar family (three generations of plumbers), and like the President is incredibly close with his wife and adult children.

- Zinke is a total work horse whose leadership at Interior has been bold and decisive.
 - Zinke has signed a number of Secretarial orders to implement the President's American Energy First agenda.
 - Zinke is a hands-on leader who does extensive travel to the places impacted by his Department, like his four-day trip to Utah to conduct a review of the national monuments under the President's executive order.

- He is well-liked and well-respected by his colleagues in the cabinet and in the White House.
 - Zinke is always willing to go the extra mile and collaborate on projects

Secretary Ryan Zinke Bio

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

“As a former Navy SEAL, Ryan has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win,” President Donald Trump said in nominating the former congressman, who built an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Ryan has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Zinke is widely praised for his voting record supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

“I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior,” Zinke said. “I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that

our treasured public lands are ‘for the benefit and enjoyment of the people’. I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come. Most importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve. I look forward to making the Department of the Interior and America great again.”

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation’s lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations across the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master’s degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master’s degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Altman, Travis
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; raul_matias@ios.doi.gov
Subject: RE: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 3:16:45 PM

Thanks so much, this is very helpful!

-----Original Message-----

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 3:15 PM
To: Altman, Travis
Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou

Hi Travis, it's a better approach to look at what action the entire federal government is taking for USVI relief. Interior is responsible for coordinating federal policy for the territories, but the disaster relief efforts are really a holistic operation. Those efforts include HHS medical teams, US Coast Guard search and rescue and port rebuilding, Department of Energy power restoration, and humanitarian aid from DoD.

Specifically within the Interior Department we have extra law enforcement officers keeping the peace, conducting search and rescue and evacuations, and a quick reaction team. We have scientists monitoring flood waters. And the crews from National Park Service and other bureaus assessing infrastructure damage.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

> On Sep 11, 2017, at 2:52 PM, Altman, Travis <Travis.Altman@foxnews.com> wrote:

>
> Hi Heather, thanks again for helping us out! Lou is curious to know what elements of the Department of Interior are most directly involved in the hurricane relief effort, would you be able to help me get that information?

> -Travis

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
> Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 1:23 PM
> To: McCarton, Anne
> Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); Altman,
> Travis; Leo, Chelsea
> Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou

>

> Great!

>

> Arriving with the Secretary:

> Lola Zinke

> heather swift

> (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (armed personal protection detail) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (armed
> personal protection detail

>

> Heather Swift

> Press Secretary

> Department of the Interior

>

>
>> On Sep 11, 2017, at 1:20 PM, McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@foxnews.com> wrote:
>>
>> Introducing you here to Travis who will produce the segment. And feel free to send the list of attendees my way!
>>
>> Thank you Heather. I look forward to meeting you.
>>
>> I am also ccing our Guest Greeter Chelsea should anyone need to arrive early or need to do a walk through etc.
>>
>>
>>

>> -----Original Message-----
>> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
>> Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 12:46 PM
>> To: McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@FOXNEWS.COM>
>> Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; raul_matias@ios.doi.gov
>> Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou

>>
>> Oh wonderful! Yes 7:05 hit with 6:30 arrival is perfect.
>>
>> I'm just CCing my colleagues who are on the Secretary's personal protection detail for their awareness.
>>
>> Heather Swift
>> Press Secretary
>> Department of the Interior
>>
>>

>>> On Sep 11, 2017, at 12:17 PM, McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@foxnews.com> wrote:
>>>
>>> Hello Heather:

>>>
>>> Could he possibly join us at 705p. This would be terrific.
>>>
>>>
>>>

>>> Sent from my iPhone
>>>

>>>> On Sep 10, 2017, at 2:11 PM, "heather_swift@ios.doi.gov" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
>>>>

>>>> Hi Anne. Heather Swift here from Secretary Zinke's office. The
>>>> secretary will be in New York tomorrow and would like to join Lou
>>>> in studio if possible. Topics included 9/11 ceremony he is
>>>> attending in Shanksville with the vice president earlier in the day
>>>> and hurricane Irma.

>>>>
>>>> Thanks for your consideration.
>>>>

>>>> Heather Swift
>>>> Press Secretary
>>>> Department of the Interior
>>>>

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attachments are without defect.

>>>

From: Leo, Chelsea
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Cc: [McCarton, Anne](mailto:McCarton.Ann@foxnews.com)
Subject: RE: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 1:30:33 PM

Thank you for sending this over, Heather. I will check Zinke's team into security and escort them to the studio upon arrival. If there's any changes, please let me know!

Chelsea Leo

Guest Greeter
Fox Business Network
631.903.9780

-----Original Message-----

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 1:23 PM
To: McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@FOXNEWS.COM>
Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); Altman, Travis <Travis.Altman@FOXNEWS.COM>;
Leo, Chelsea <chelsea.leo@FOXBUSINESS.COM>
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou

Great!

Arriving with the Secretary:
Lola Zinke
heather swift
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (armed personal protection detail)
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (armed personal protection detail)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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> Introducing you here to Travis who will produce the segment. And feel free to send the list of attendees my way!
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> Thank you Heather. I look forward to meeting you.
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> I am also ccing our Guest Greeter Chelsea should anyone need to arrive early or need to do a walk through etc.
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>
>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
> Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 12:46 PM
> To: McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@FOXNEWS.COM>
> Cc: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov; raul_matias@ios.doi.gov
> Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke in studio with Lou
>
> Oh wonderful! Yes 7:05 hit with 6:30 arrival is perfect.
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> I'm just CCing my colleagues who are on the Secretary's personal protection detail for their awareness.

>

> Heather Swift

> Press Secretary

> Department of the Interior

>

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>> On Sep 11, 2017, at 12:17 PM, McCarton, Anne <Anne.McCarton@foxnews.com> wrote:

>>

>> Hello Heather:

>>

>> Could he possibly join us at 705p. This would be terrific.

>>

>>

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone

>>

>>> On Sep 10, 2017, at 2:11 PM, "heather_swift@ios.doi.gov" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>>>

>>> Hi Anne. Heather Swift here from Secretary Zinke's office. The secretary will be in New York tomorrow and would like to join Lou in studio if possible. Topics included 9/11 ceremony he is attending in Shanksville with the vice president earlier in the day and hurricane Irma.

>>>

>>> Thanks for your consideration.

>>>

>>> Heather Swift

>>> Press Secretary

>>> Department of the Interior

>>

>> This message and its attachments may contain legally privileged or confidential information. It is intended solely for the named addressee. If you are not the addressee indicated in this message (or responsible for delivery of the message to the addressee), you may not copy or deliver this message or its attachments to anyone. Rather, you should permanently delete this message and its attachments and kindly notify the sender by reply e-mail. Any content of this message and its attachments that does not relate to the official business of Fox News or Fox Business must not be taken to have been sent or endorsed by either of them. No representation is made that this email or its attachments are without defect.

>>

From: Heather Swift
To: [Rivera, Anthony](mailto:Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com)
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 7:44:58 AM

Thanks. They should have LE plates but I'll ask

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 7:29 AM, Rivera, Anthony <Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Thank you. I actually don't know how the parking works around here. I can ask my boss to see if they can do anything for you.

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 6:31:55 AM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Armed law enforcement officers going in the building will be (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (advance), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) and (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) will be escorting the Secretary.

If possible can you assist us with parking spots for three vehicles?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 10, 2017, at 9:51 AM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Good Morning Heather,

I hope you are having a great weekend. I received word that we will be in studio 3 for our pre tape which is good news. Is it possible to give me the names of the security detail coming in. I don't know if the building security is just going to let them up. They get a little stern even if a name maybe misspelled.

Anyways I have the topics/questions that David would like to talk about with Sec. Zinke:

- Responsibilities of the Dept. of the Interior when it comes to Harvey recovery and post Hurricane Harvey.

- What is the department of the interior doing to update and reform its operations to be a more effective agency?

- What are some of the more key points of interaction with individual states?

- Are there regional strategies based on geographical area not just state borders?

These are the main questions David has. He will be thinking of others but for now these are the most important. Thank you Heather!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 1:30:03 PM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Ryan Zinke
Lola Zinke
Heather Swift
+2 Security detail

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 1:24 PM, Rivera, Anthony

<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Actually if we could get on a quick call and work out the logistics that would be better than the email. You can call one of my numbers or just send me your number and I could call you.

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera

Producer – David Webb Show

SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125

Office: (212) 901-6403

Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 1:12:44 PM

To: Rivera, Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Oh that would work! He is available Tuesday in the 1PM hour.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 1:09 PM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

What time are you looking for. Maybe we could do a pretape?

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 12:52:47 PM
To: Rivera, Anthony
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Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Subject: Sec. Zinke

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Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 10:39:19 AM

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Department of the Interior

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Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 10:31:55 AM

FYI

I called Rivera twice - left him a message I have not heard back from him. Do you have an different POC?

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 11, 2017, at 9:55 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks :)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
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Thanks

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<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
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Subject: Fwd: Sec. Zinke
To: russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov,
mark_asmussen@nps.gov

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Rivera, Anthony"
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>

Date: September

10, 2017 at 9:50:50
AM EDT
To: "Swift,
Heather"
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

**Subject: Re: Sec.
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Good Morning
Heather,

I hope you are
having a great
weekend. I
received word that
we will be in studio
3 for our pre tape
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to give me the
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To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 10:32:37 AM

We would like to do about 45 minutes.

Sent from my iPhone

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**Subject: Re: Sec.
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Hurricane Harvey.

-What is the department of the interior doing to update and reform its operations to be a more effective agency?

-What are some of the more key points of interaction with individual states?

- Are there regional strategies based on geographical area not just state borders?

These are the main questions David has. He will be thinking of others but for now these are the most important. Thank you Heather!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David
Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot
Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-
6403
Cell: (347) 753-
3461

<OutlookEmoji-1503940572888_SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday,
September 8, 2017
1:30:03 PM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec.
Zinke

Ryan Zinke
Lola Zinke
Heather Swift
+2 Security detail

-

Heather Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8, 2017
at 1:24 PM, Rivera,
Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Actually if we
could get on a
quick call and
work out the
logistics that
would be better
than the email.
You can call one
of my numbers or
just send me your

number and I
could call you.

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer –
David Webb
Show
SiriusXM Patriot
Ch. 125
Office: (212)
901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-
3461
<OutlookEmoji-
1503940572888_
SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday,
September 8,
2017 1:12:44 PM

To: Rivera,
Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec.
Zinke

Oh that would
work! He is
available
Tuesday in the
1PM hour.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8,
2017 at 1:09 PM,
Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

What time are
you looking for.
Maybe we
could do a
pretape?

Kind Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer –
David Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot Ch.
125
Office: (212)
901-6403
Cell: (347)
753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-
1503940572888_
SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday,
September 8,
2017 12:52:47
PM

To: Rivera,
Anthony

Subject: Re: Sec.

Zinke

Shoot, I'm
sorry,
Anthony. I
thought the
show went
later.
Unfortunately
the Secretary
won't be able
to join after
all. I will be in
touch though
and let you
know when
he's available
for call ins in
the future.

Again, my
apologies for
the mistake.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 8,
2017 at 12:43
PM, Rivera,
Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Hello
Heather,

Just making
sure you got
my last email.
If we can get

Sec. Zinke
locked in
today for
next week
that would
be awesome.
Let me know,
thanks!

Kind
Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer –
David Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot Ch.
125
Office: (212)
901-6403
Cell: (347)
753-3461
<OutlookEmoji-
1503940572888_
SiriusXM.jpg>

From: Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Friday,
September 8,
2017 11:18:18
AM

To: Rivera,
Anthony
Subject: Sec.
Zinke

Hi there,

Anthony.
Secretary
Zinke will be
in NYC next
week and
would like to
come on
David's
show.
What's your
availability
like
Monday-
Wednesday?

-

Heather
Swift
Department of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Rivera, Anthony](mailto:Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com)
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke
Date: Monday, September 11, 2017 11:09:14 AM

Perfect

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 11:07 AM, Rivera, Anthony <Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Yes, he called my office number but during the show I am in the studio. He got in touch with me through my cell though. We are all squared off for today. Will see him at 12. Thank you Heather!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 10:32:55 AM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

 Said he called and left 2 messages.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 10:28 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

He is available 12-2 today.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 10:27 AM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Ok great. Just let them know I will be available from 12-2pm today so hopefully they can make it then. Thank for your help!

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 9:51:06 AM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

I do not. I'll remind them to call you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 9:40 AM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

Great. I just put them in the system. Do you know what time they will be getting in today for the check in?

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 9:37:08 AM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

Armed law enforcement officers going in the building will be (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) and (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 9:35 AM, Rivera, Anthony <Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com> wrote:

And Security for today?

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-6403
Cell: (347) 753-3461



From: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11,
2017 7:29:16 AM
To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke

He will arrive around 12:50. We have a hard stop at 1:30 because he has Willow at 1:40

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 11, 2017, at 7:21 AM,
Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Please also let me know what time they will be coming in. I will be doing a show from 9am-12pm ET. Will be free from 12pm-2pm ET.

Kind Regards,

Anthony Rivera
Producer – David
Webb Show
SiriusXM Patriot
Ch. 125
Office: (212) 901-
6403
Cell: (347) 753-
3461



From: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Monday,
September 11, 2017
6:31:55 AM

To: Rivera, Anthony
Subject: Re: Sec.
Zinke

Armed law enforcement officers going in the building will be (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (advance), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) and (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) will be escorting the Secretary.

If possible can you assist us with parking spots for three vehicles?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 10, 2017, at 9:51 AM, Rivera, Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Good
Morning
Heather,

I hope
you
are
having
a great
weekend.

I
received
word
that
we will
be in
studio
3 for
our pre
tape
which
is good
news.

Is it
possible
to give
me the
names
of the
security
detail
coming
in. I

don't
know if
the
building
security
is just
going
to let
them
up.

They
get a

little
stern
even if
a name
maybe
misspelled.

Anyways
I have
the
topics/questions
that
David
would
like to
talk
about
with
Sec.
Zinke:

-
Responsibilities
of the
Dept.
of the
Interior
when
it
comes
to
Harvey
recovery
and
post
Hurricane
Harvey.

-What
is the

department
of the
interior
doing
to
update
and
reform
its
operations
to be a
more
effective
agency?

-What
are
some
of the
more
key
points
of
interaction
with
individual
states?

- Are
there
regional
strategies
based
on geographical
area
not
just
state
borders?

These
are the
main
questions
David
has. He
will be
thinking
of
others
but for
now
these
are the
most
important.
Thank
you
Heather!

Kind
Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer

—

David
Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot
Ch.
125
Office:
(212)
901-
6403
Cell:
(347)
753-
3461



From:

Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent:

Friday,
September
8, 2017
1:30:03
PM

To:

Rivera,
Anthony

Subject:

Re: Sec.
Zinke

Ryan
Zinke
Lola
Zinke
Heather
Swift
+2
Security
detail

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri,
Sep 8,
2017 at
1:24
PM,
Rivera,
Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Actually
if we
could
get
on a
quick
call
and
work
out
the
logistics
that
would
be
better
than
the
email.
You
can
call
one
of
my
numbers
or
just
send
me
your
number
and I

could
call
you.

Kind
Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer

–

David
Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot
Ch.

125
Office:
(212)
901-
6403
Cell:
(347)
753-
3461



From:

Swift,
Heather

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent:

Friday,
September
8,
2017
1:12:44
PM

To:

Rivera,
Anthony

Subject:

Re:
Sec.
Zinke

Oh
that
would
work!
He
is
available
Tuesday
in
the
1PM
hour.

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of the
Interior

@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Fri,
Sep
8,
2017
at
1:09
PM,
Rivera,
Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

What
time
are
you
looking
for.
Maybe
we
could
do
a
pretape?

Kind
Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer

—

David
Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot
Ch.
125
Office:
(212)
901-
6403
Cell:
(347)
753-
3461



From:
Swift,
Heather

[<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>](mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov)

Sent:

Friday,
September
8,
2017
12:52:47
PM

To:

Rivera,
Anthony

Subject:

Re:
Sec.
Zinke

Shoot,
I'm
sorry,
Anthony.
I
thought
the
show
went
later.
Unfortunately
the
Secretary
won't
be
able
to
join
after
all.
I
will
be
in
touch
though
and
let
you

know
when
he's
available
for
call
ins
in
the
future.

Again,
my
apologies
for
the
mistake.

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Fri,
Sep
8,
2017
at
12:43
PM,
Rivera,
Anthony
<Anthony.Rivera@siriusxm.com>
wrote:

Hello
Heather,

Just

making
sure
you
got
my
last
email.
If
we
can
get
Sec.
Zinke
locked
in
today
for
next
week
that
would
be
awesome.
Let
me
know,
thanks!

Kind
Regards,

Anthony
Rivera
Producer

—

David
Webb
Show
SiriusXM
Patriot
Ch.
125

Office:
(212)
901-
6403
Cell:
(347)
753-
3461



—
From:

Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent:

Friday,
September
8,
2017
11:18:18
AM

To:

Rivera,
Anthony

Subject:

Sec.
Zinke

Hi
there,
Anthony.
Secretary
Zinke
will
be
in
NYC
next
week
and

would
like
to
come
on
David's
show.
What's
your
availability
like
Monday-
Wednesday?

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov

1

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Russell Newell
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: secretary bio
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 12:49:21 PM

That would be great - thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 20, 2017, at 11:48 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Larry can fix. Want me to ask him?

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Sep 20, 2017, at 12:46 PM, Russell Newell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heads up on bio that is on the website. See below. Can you confirm and ask someone to correct?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Renner, Elinor" <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov>
Date: September 20, 2017 at 11:27:51 AM CDT
To: "Newell, Russell" <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: bio

Cully just sent me a correction for future reference:

Sec Zinke did not "enlist" in the Navy in 1985 as the bio below states. He was an officer for his entire career. Enlistees are "enlisted Sailors" not officers.

Rather, it should read: he was "commissioned as an officer in the Navy in 1985..."

On Wed, Sep 20, 2017 at 11:48 AM, Renner, Elinor
<elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Russell.

Could you send me the blurb for the description of the event today? Heritage wants to start publicizing the event. Allison seats 200, and we don't want an empty auditorium!

Warmly,
Elinor

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Newell, Russell** <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tue, Sep 19, 2017 at 5:45 PM

Subject: bio

To: Elinor Renner <elinor_renner@ios.doi.gov>

Elinor - they can pull from this bio for the intro and for any materials.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Secretary Ryan Zinke

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

"As a former Navy SEAL, Ryan has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win," President Donald Trump said in nominating the former congressman, who built an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Ryan has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Zinke is widely praised for his voting record supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

"I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior," Zinke said. "I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that our treasured public lands are 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people'. I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come. Most importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve. I look forward to making the Department of the Interior and America great again."

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567

federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations across the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master's degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master's degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications

U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232

@Interior



--

Elinor Renner
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6087

--

Elinor Renner
U.S. Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6087

From: Adams, Nathan
To: Swift_Heather
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs: TEST
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:59:46 PM

Copy that. Thanks.

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:57 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Definitely yes on the pic. AK and PAM.

Can you schedule it for 5:45?

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:47 PM, Adams, Nathan <nathan_adams@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Pic or no pic?

PAM, Internal and AK? Anyone else?

Just let me know when.

Thanks.

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:46 PM, U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov> wrote:

news release



Date: May 30, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

ANCHORAGE - U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

"A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues," said Secretary Zinke. "Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve served in the military, and he then continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's management."

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential," said Wackowski.

Wackowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-

AA football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour, Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce's "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is an avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

Steve Wackowski stands in a boat holding the antlers of a moose.

###



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This email was sent to Email Address by: U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



--

Nate Adams
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-208-2060

--

Nate Adams
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-208-2060

From: Swift, Heather
To: Adams_Nathan
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs: TEST
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:58:52 PM

and as always..... I have an update lol. Please include the quote below under Steve's quote.

"I've known and worked with Steve for years, and I'm incredibly pleased that he will be the point person for Alaskan issues at the Department of the Interior," Murkowski said "Secretary Zinke is building a strong team for Alaska, putting good people in the right places to help our state I'm excited to see what we can all do together to help address the wide range of Interior-related issues that we are facing "

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 4:57 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Definitely yes on the pic. AK and PAM.

Can you schedule it for 5:45?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Pic or no pic?

PAM, Internal and AK? Anyone else?

Just let me know when.

Thanks.

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news release



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

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###



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--

Nate Adams
Office of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-208-2060

From: Daigle, Nicole (Energy)
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Hughes Brian \(Energy\)](#); [Petersen Karina \(Murkowski\)](#)
Cc: [Micah Chambers](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 5:51:57 PM

Thanks! The Senator's will go out momentarily.

From: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 5:46 PM
To: Brian Hughes <Brian_Hughes@energy.senate.gov>, Nicole Daigle <nicole_daigle@energy.senate.gov>, Karina Petersen <karina_petersen@murkowski.senate.gov>
Cc: Micah Chambers <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: May 30, 2017 at 1:45:32 PM AKDT
To: <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Reply-To: <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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From: Daigle, Nicole (Energy)
To: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura_Rigas)
Cc: [Hughes_Brian \(Energy\); Petersen_Karina \(Murkowski\); Micah Chambers; Heather Swift](mailto:Hughes_Brian_(Energy)_Petersen_Karina_(Murkowski)_Micah_Chambers_Heather_Swift)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 6:11:31 PM

I understand. Just wanted to be sure someone got back to him. Thank you!

From: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 6:06 PM
To: Nicole Daigle <nicole_daigle@energy.senate.gov>
Cc: Brian Hughes <Brian_Hughes@energy.senate.gov>, Karina Petersen <karina_petersen@murkowski.senate.gov>, Micah Chambers <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

Hi-- he reached out but unfortunately we can't make it happen. Did Rick live this am, Dave tomorrow at the conference, and will do NBC live TV tomorrow. Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 2:00 PM, Daigle, Nicole (Energy) <Nicole_Daigle@energy.senate.gov> wrote:

Laura,

Nick McDermott with KTVA just called me and is interested in interviewing, live if possible, Steve about the announcement. If you could get back to him, that would be great. He can be reached at nickm@ktva.com or 907-274-1111.

Thanks,
Nicole

From: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 5:46 PM
To: Brian Hughes <Brian_Hughes@energy.senate.gov>, Nicole Daigle <nicole_daigle@energy.senate.gov>, Karina Petersen <karina_petersen@murkowski.senate.gov>
Cc: Micah Chambers <micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: May 30, 2017 at 1:45:32 PM AKDT
To: <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Reply-To: <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>



Date: May 30, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



From: Swift, Heather
To: [Erica Martinson](#)
Cc: [Interior Press](#)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 6:42:11 PM

Mr. Wackowski is currently serving in that role, and we plan to include a number of other qualified and capable Alaskans in our staffing plan in the coming weeks and months.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 6:08 PM, Erica Martinson <emartinson@alaskadispatch.com> wrote:

Is this position filling the slot for Senior Advisor for Alaskan Affairs that operated out of the secretary's immediate office in Washington, D.C. during the last administration? Or is it in addition to that position?

Thanks,

--
Erica Martinson
Washington, DC reporter
[Alaska Dispatch News](#)
cell/Signal: 202-436-4234
[@EricaMartinson](#)

On 5/30/2017 5:45 PM, U.S. Department of the Interior wrote:

news release



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



From: Lori Mashburn
To: Swift_Heather
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 6:41:01 PM

Yes, that totally works.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 30, 2017, at 6:24 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Can I say, "Mr. Wackowski is currently serving in that role and we plan to include a number of other qualified and capable Alaskans in our staffing plan in the coming weeks and months."

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 6:19 PM, Mashburn, Lori <lori_mashburn@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

It is filling that role for now. We have (b) (5)

We think we have AK pretty well covered.

Lori K. Mashburn
White House Liaison
Department of the Interior
202.208.1694

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 6:09 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Lori?

-

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Erica Martinson
Washington, DC reporter
[Alaska Dispatch News](#)
cell/Signal: 202-436-4234
[@EricaMartinson](https://twitter.com/EricaMartinson)

On 5/30/2017 5:45 PM, U.S. Department of the Interior wrote:

news release



Date: May 30, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: jlawrence@usatoday.com; dmastio@usatoday.com; [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Op-Ed Pitch
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 5:17:06 PM
Attachments: [OpEd_MadeInAmerica_Rec_FINAL.docx](#)

Jill, Heather Swift here - press secretary at the Department of the Interior.

Attached is an op-ed from Secretary Ryan Zinke written exclusively for USA Today. [Also here is a high-res headshot.](#)

Please let me know if you're interested in running this in the Sunday edition, or on Monday.

Happy to discuss any edits as well.

Best,
Heather

(b) (6)

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 12:54 PM, Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Jill,

Hi - we're branding next week "Made in America" and would love to kick it off by placing an op-ed with you by Secretary Zinke on America's public lands and how public private partnerships can and will create a world-class outdoor experience. We'd love this to go in your weekend edition or to run on Monday.

Are you interested in the exclusive? We'll have the copy by the end of the day to review.

Thanks,
Kelly

Kelly Sadler
Special Assistant to the President
Office of Communications
White House

C: (b) (6)

From: Mark Carter
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Promotes Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Conservation with Employee "Showdown" at Department of the Interior
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 11:31:50 AM
Attachments: [Questions for Secretary Zinke from AmericaHunt.docx](#)

Heather,

Questions for the proposed Q-and-A feature with Secretary Zinke are attached. Thank you again. (Our staff actually had more, but I edited down to 16. We're grateful for any he has time to answer.)

Mark Carter
America Hunt

On Sep 19, 2017, at 5:00 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

For sure!

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 19, 2017, at 5:52 PM, "mark@americahunt.com" <mark@americahunt.com> wrote:

Heather,
That's awesome. Thank you again for sharing.
Mark

Sent from myMail for iOS

Tuesday, September 19, 2017, 4:35 PM -0500 from Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>:

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: U.S. Department of the Interior <interior_news@updates.interior.gov>
Date: Tue, Sep 19, 2017 at 4:43 PM
Subject: Secretary Zinke Promotes Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Conservation with Employee "Showdown" at Department of the Interior
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov

news release



Date: September 19, 2017
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

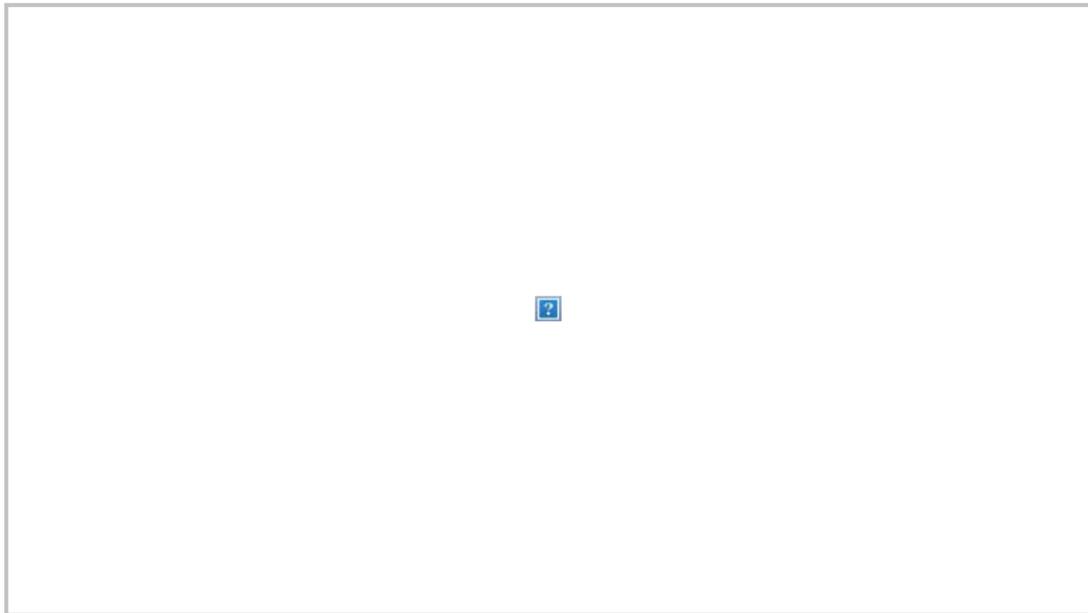
Secretary Zinke Promotes Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Conservation with Employee "Showdown" at Department of the Interior

WASHINGTON – Today, on the heels of a groundbreaking directive to expand hunting access on public lands, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke announced his latest initiative to reemphasize hunting and fishing at the Department with a new temporary addition to the employee cafeteria: the arcade game “Big Buck Hunter Pro.” The Secretary also announced the “Secretary’s Shotgun Showdown,” a fun employee competition on the game, with the winner earning bragging rights and a “Beverage on the Balcony” with the Secretary. The contest runs from today, September 19th, 2017, until Wednesday, October 11th, 2017.

Completing the Department’s goals and objectives hinges on employee awareness and involvement. Having the “Big Buck Hunter Pro” arcade game will get many employees involved in Sportmen’s Season, in turn furthering the Department’s mission of wildlife and habitat conservation.

“Some of my best memories are hunting and fishing with my dad and granddad, and then later teaching my own kids to hunt and fish . That’s something I want more families to experience,” said Secretary Zinke. “ Hunters and anglers are the backbone of wildlife and habitat conservation in America . because sportsmen contribute billions of dollars to conservation . From my perspective, the more sportsmen we have in the woods and waters, the better our wildlife and land will be. The “Shotgun Showdown” will help reignite the passion and emphasis of hunting and fishing at the Department, and will be a fun way to advance our mission of wildlife and habitat conservation.”

The Secretary kicked off the Shotgun Showdown by facing off against U.S. Fish and Wildlife career employee Casey Stemler from Littleton, Colorado. For over 45 years, Casey has enjoyed hunting and fishing on National Wildlife Refuges across the nation from California to Maryland and big-game hunting on BLM lands throughout the west.



This September and October, the Department of the Interior is setting its sights on the continued role that hunters and anglers play in wildlife conservation. Earlier this month, Secretary Zinke [signed a directive](#) to support and expand hunting and fishing, enhance conservation stewardship, improve wildlife management, and increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. The move was widely praised by sportsmen and wildlife conservation organizations.

On his first day in office, Secretary Zinke reversed an order that would have banned lead ammo and tackle on National Wildlife Refuge lands, and he began the process of expanding hunting and fishing opportunities on public lands across the Department. In August, the Secretary announced a proposal to expand hunting and fishing opportunities at 10

National Wildlife Refuges, and he announced the initial stages of a plan to acquire land to make the Bureau of Land Management Sabinoso Wilderness Area accessible for the first time ever to hunters, hikers, and wildlife watchers.

In addition, Secretary Zinke recently made recommendations to President Trump on 27 national monuments, calling for changes to some that, while still protecting the land, would also protect and expand public access to that land for citizens who want to hunt, fish, hike, and experience the joy and beauty of those public lands.

###



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Washington DC 20240 202-208-3100



Mark Carter
Editor, America Hunt
501.680.7542
Mark@AmericaHunt.com
AmericaHunt.com

 **AMERICA HUNT**
www.AmericaHunt.com

From: Russell Newell
To: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: SECRETARY: Upcoming Speaking Engagements
Date: Thursday, September 07, 2017 8:42:49 PM

Eli - great work. This will be a huge help. Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 7, 2017, at 5:18 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Laura,

As requested, here is an exhaustive summary of all upcoming Secretary speaking engagements that Leila has sent us. I will update this document periodically and send it along, and can even make this into a constantly-updating Google Doc if you think it to be a better idea than the calendar (probably easier to organize and easier to read).

This is all draft text and I welcome edits, suggestions, etc. I've left the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation event information a bit bare, as Heather suggested I pull from RZ interview tomorrow. Working on two different speeches for 9/11 (one for 9/10, one for 9/11). Russ and I have connected on DepSec speech for hunting, and will work on getting this done.

Document is attached and text is also included below in the body for your convenience. Thanks.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements for Secretary Ryan Zinke (Strategic Calendar)

September 10, 2017

EVENT: Flight 93 Soundbreaking for "Tower of Voices"

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Shanksville, PA

NOTES: 3 minute remarks, keynote speech is September 11th VPOTUS
(Secretary introducing him for 3 minutes there as well)

TYPE: Formal, but brief enough for notecard

AUDIENCE: General public

PRESS: Open

September 13, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet -- VIP Reception and Banquet

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Dovetails with broader push for sportsmen engagement

TYPE: Secretary likely doesn't need formal remarks here, given familiarity with the issues and the audience; "5-10 minutes of remarks about his passion for the outdoors and highlight one or two top priorities he's focusing on as Secretary."

AUDIENCE: Foundation VIPs and reception guests

PRESS: Closed

September 20, 2017

EVENT: Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium at the Bass Pro HQ -- Gala Dinner Event

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Springfield, MO

NOTES: Event staff sent over detailed information, will sort through prior to drafting remarks

TYPE: Informal remarks on conservation, appreciation of the outdoors/wildlife, likely one notecard is fine

AUDIENCE: Conservation leaders

PRESS: Closed

September 22, 2017

EVENT: NRA Women's Leadership Forum Summit

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Irving, TX

NOTES: Secretary could talk about strong women in his personal life (mother, wife, daughter) or professional life (military, political staff, Cabinet/Congressional colleagues). Big theme of NRA Women's push recently has been safety for females – women are safer when allowed to conceal carry.

TYPE: Formal, keynote remarks – opportunity to tell stories here

AUDIENCE: NRA forum participants, likely heavy female demographic

PRESS: Closed

September 25, 2017

EVENT: National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Seems like a niche topic that may require specific remarks – will need to coordinate here with OCL. Website notes “Waters of the U.S. rule,” “MSHA's workplace exams rule,” and “long term highway funding” as topics to be discussed over the forum, which runs 4 days all told. This one is likely worth a call to Association POC.

TYPE: Formal, 10 minute remarks on aggregates production and “ESA” issues – flagging for prebrief on this unless Secretary is particularly well-read here, Q&A is included

AUDIENCE: Industry folks and other forum attendees

PRESS: Likely industry press

September 26, 2017

EVENT: Jefferson Island Club Citizen of the Year Award

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary is being honored as Citizen of the Year; it's for "legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service, and contributions in the spirit of America's founding fathers."

TYPE: Informal remarks, will reach out to find out more about the event

AUDIENCE: Jefferson Island Club members

PRESS: Closed

October 11, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Coal Caucus

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: U.S. recently announced first-ever coal export to Ukraine, WSJ piece on "Coal Makes a Comeback" has good nuggets as well. Secretary was a member of the Caucus. Blake Deeley running point on this from OCL, finding out if we want to put in an "ask" or "call to action."

TYPE: Informal, brief remarks at a roundtable

AUDIENCE: Members of Congress and their staff

PRESS: Closed

November 9, 2017

EVENT: America First Energy Conference (Heartland Institute)

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NOTES: Organization appears very pro-administration, focused on deregulation

TYPE: Formal remarks, possibly good to write them out given specificity of deregulation accomplishments and opportunity to get back on energy as hunting season winds down

AUDIENCE: Conference attendees (energy industry and policy folks)

PRESS: Presumably closed, will check

MISC. FLAGGING: Upcoming Deputy Secretary speech on hunting, upcoming Secretary speech on energy (Heritage Foundation), upcoming Vincent DeVito speech on tech (Oceans 17)

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

<Upcoming Speaking Engagements 0907.docx>

From: Bergling, Timothy
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Alex Hinson](#); [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Re: Secretary's Holiday Video
Date: Monday, December 18, 2017 2:25:22 PM

My feeling is that dog is wicked cute, and the Secretary's interactions with him are very, very likable and relatable...I could even see this getting shared with notes that say "check out the cute dog"...

Either way if there's a decision to re-shoot we need to set it up with prompter/camera folks asap, I don't know their schedules or even if they're here this week

tb

On Mon, Dec 18, 2017 at 2:12 PM, Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Just watched this. Ragnar is a little busy in the video and it is distracting. I like that he's with Mrs. Zinke and the dog however, which may outweigh doing it over again with just him. People will like the dog - they'll relate to a feisty pet.

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Mon, Dec 18, 2017 at 11:59 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
She's already gone home. He knew the dynamics and was fine with it.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 18, 2017, at 11:57 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I'm not wild about this. Can we perhaps redo it tomorrow without ragnar? He's a little squirrely.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Dec 18, 2017 at 11:49 AM, Bergling, Timothy
<timothy_bergling@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

<https://youtu.be/QNtnMRjvAkA>

From: Esther Whieldon
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:51:58 AM

Thanks

Esther Whieldon
Reporter
POLITICO
301-213-4370 (mobile)
703-672-2788 (office)
ewhieldon@politico.com
Twitter: [@esthernow](#)

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:47 AM
To: Esther Whieldon
Cc: BLM main press email; Interior Press
Subject: Re: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM

"Brian has been an incredible asset to the Bureau since his first day. We are excited to have him temporarily step into this leadership role. We couldn't be more thankful to Mike Nedd for leading the Bureau during the initial transition. Nedd helped execute big wins for sportsmen's access, multiple-use, and energy development on BLM lands over the past few months."

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:18 AM, Esther Whieldon <ewhieldon@politico.com> wrote:

>

> Can you please confirm the contents of this email - that Zinke has appointed Steed as acting BLM director? What day did Zinke make the appointment and why did he decided to do this? Also, please address how the agency is dealing with the limitations of any BLM acting director's authority now that the vacancies act has kicked in and Trump has not nominated

anyone for BLM director yet.

>

>

> I'd love to have a response by noon if possible.

>

>

> Thanks, Esther

>

>

>

> From: "Nedd, Michael" <mnedd@blm.gov>

> Date: November 15, 2017 at 3:03:21 PM PST

> To: BLM_All_Employees <blm_all_employees@blm.gov>

> Subject: BLM Acting Director

>

>

> BLM employees:

>

>

> This week, Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Brian Steed as Acting Director of the BLM, and I want to welcome him as he begins his journey leading this great agency. John Ruhs and I have worked alongside Brian since his appointment as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in October, and we have come to know his ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission. His experience includes working as Chief of Staff to U.S. Representative Chris Stewart of Utah, teaching and researching economics at the University of Utah, and serving as a Deputy County Attorney in Iron County, Utah. He is a native of Logan, Utah, and now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and three children. Brian's western heritage and values make him a perfect fit for the BLM team.

>

>

> Since March 15, I have had the honor of leading the BLM. Your tireless dedication to our mission inspires me every day. DOI leaders continually express their confidence in the BLM's leadership in the field and here in Washington, which is a testament to all of you. Thank you for supporting me as the Acting Director over these months, and remaining as ever BLM strong.

>

>

> During the coming weeks, John and I will transition to different roles. John will return to his position as BLM Nevada State Director, and I will assume the duties of Acting Deputy Director for Operations. I appreciate John's sacrifice over the past seven months while he has lived away from his family and the wide open spaces that he loves.

>

>

> Please join me in welcoming Brian to his new position. As we move forward, let's continue to stay focused on our shared mission and values that guide us in our stewardship of America's public lands.

>

>

> Take care and have a wonderful day! :)

> Michael D. Nedd

>

>

> Esther Whieldon

> Reporter

> POLITICO

> 301-213-4370 (mobile)

> 703-672-2788 (office)

> ewhieldon@politico.com

> Twitter: @esthernow

>

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Olson, Jeffrey](#)
Cc: [Russell Newell](#); [April Slayton](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Barnum, Jeremy](#); [Paul Ross](#)
Subject: Re: Senator Rubio to Independence NHP
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2017 3:13:59 PM

Thx!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 27, 2017, at 2:39 PM, Olson, Jeffrey <jeffrey_olson@nps.gov> wrote:

FYSI

Senator Marco Rubio, his wife and 4 children will visit Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia on Friday, December 29th and Saturday, December 30th. He will arrive at 10:00 a.m. on the 29th for a tour of the Liberty Bell Center, Congress Hall, West Wing and Independence Hall. They will then go to City Tavern for lunch. On the 30th, they will arrive at the Ben Franklin Museum at 10:30 a.m., where they will be greeted by Interpretation & Education staff and then will explore the museum on their own. *FYI* - They will also visit the Museum of the American Revolution Friday afternoon and the National Constitution Center Saturday afternoon.

--

Jeffrey G. Olson
Public Affairs Officer
The National Park Service
1849 C Street NW Room 3310
Washington, DC 20240

Office:202-513-7261
Mobile:202-230-2088

www.nps.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: Jorjani, Daniel
Subject: Re: Short Deadline for White House
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 4:08:07 PM

thank you! appreciate it.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 4:06 PM, Jorjani, Daniel <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:
Looks good. Only proposed edit is in the last line -

This "Made in America" Week, let's **unite** with **under** a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 3:24 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Apologies for the short deadline. Below and attached is an op-ed for USA Today drafted for the Secretary titled, *Made In America :Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience*

Please review and return edits NO LATER THAN 4:30.

This has been run through NPS PPPs. They are getting back to me if there are any issues we need to be aware of on the examples chosen.

Made in America: Promoting the All-American Outdoor Experience

This week, President Trump kicked off "Made in America Week." At the Department of the Interior, we are taking this opportunity to promote and strengthen America's tradition of outdoor recreation on public lands, which is made possible, in large part, thanks to private foundations, American businesses, and the thousands of public-private-partnerships across our public lands.

We already have thousands of partners across the country who fund and assist

with visitor services, infrastructure, and even land acquisition.

Boston Harbor National Recreation Area is a unique example of a public-private-public partnership where federal, state, and private organizations work together to manage the land, provide boats between islands, restore historic lighthouses and forts, provide educational tours, and carry out janitorial and maintenance tasks. All of this could not be possible without the joint effort.

Private partners also help maintain our buildings and aging infrastructure.

For example, earlier this year, President Trump donated his first quarter salary of about \$78,000 to the National Park Service to restore historic battlefields. Private foundations like the Civil War Trust, National Park Foundation, and Save Historic Antietam all chipped in, and with matching donations we were able to fund a \$263,000 project to restore a historic structure and nearly mile-long fence at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.

Some of our most-iconic, all-American outdoor experiences, like riding a historic Ford “Red Jammer” bus in Glacier National Park, staying overnight in the El Tovar lodge at the Grand Canyon, or whale watching in Alaska’s Glacier Bay National Park, would not be possible without public-private partnerships.

To highlight and expand on Made in America partnerships, this week Interior is hosting a roundtable with outdoor recreation industry leaders to brainstorm innovative ideas for how we can work together to build upon the outdoor experience on public lands. Some ideas I’ve already heard is for a food truck in parking lot, energy-efficient cabins in a national monument, and mobile youth fishing centers in urban areas across the country.

The Department is focused on identifying and expanding the best existing services and bringing in new services to parks and recreation areas.

For example, Wi-Fi, internal transportation, campgrounds, boat ramps, concessions, and even restrooms are not available on many public lands. Also, once somebody gets to a recreation area, services like boat, ATV and fishing pole rentals are often unavailable. This would be like going on a ski vacation and not

being able to rent skis or have access to a lift up the mountain.

This leaves many families without practical and affordable options for camping, hiking, and recreating. Having three kids and two granddaughters myself, I can't imagine going on a family vacation without some of these basic services.

More partnerships does not mean privatizing our parks as some have wrongly suggested. I am opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and under my watch our public lands will remain public.

Having partners on public lands also does not mean the tour bus will look like a race car covered in corporate stickers. Some of our most iconic features are only possible thanks to partnerships.

Expanding partnerships will allow parks and public lands to deliver greater services to more visitors, while allowing our rangers to focus on things like the health of the ecosystem, guided tours, educational services, and land management. Partners are also able to deliver many services to the American people at a lower cost than the government can.

With the right amount of ingenuity and originality, we can foster the All-American Outdoor Experience through our work at Interior. The Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park reads, "For the enjoyment of the people." Enjoying recreation on public lands is at the core of our shared American heritage.

The All-American Outdoor Experience is part of who we are as Americans, but it's also a big economic driver for communities across the country. As a whole, the outdoor recreation industry generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs, according to industry analysts. In addition, the revenue the industry produces is a major boost to our economy.

Made in America is about products as much as it is about our shared heritage and values. It is about making memories by taking a kid fishing for the first time, or in my case, taking my wife hiking early in our relationship.

There's a reason 330 million people from across the country and the world visit our parks every year, and millions more flock to public lands coast to coast: It's because these spaces are uniquely American.

This "Made in America" Week, let's with under a common pride in our country, standing behind American businesses and engaging in American outdoor traditions that have stood the test of time.

#####

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 2:08 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heads up - you'll have an oped to review in about an hour.

The WH would like us to write an op-ed for Made in America Week focusing on the all-American outdoor experience which are made possible by public private partnerships. Target is Sunday USA Today.

Unfortunately they need it COB TODAY to hit deadline!

I'm finalizing first draft and will send around 3 o'clock.

Thanks.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Newell, Russell](#)
Subject: Re: SPAM DANGER?
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2017 10:51:33 AM

Not a fan of this format.

Sent from my iPad

On Oct 12, 2017, at 10:48 AM, Newell, Russell <russell_newell@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

just asked Jeff - techMIS is a potential new vendor to take over the service Bulletin has been providing. Jeff said this is test or sample of what news clips would look like under them. We'd have the ability to tweak. Jeff wants to sit down with Laura and me today to discuss

Russell Newell
Deputy Director of Communications
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 208-6232
@Interior



On Thu, Oct 12, 2017 at 10:42 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Any idea what in the world the world this is? Did we get another service?

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: DOI Daily <doi@techmis.com>
To: Burt Squires - TechMIS <Burt.Squires@techmis.com>
Subject: DOI Daily Briefing (10-12-17)

DOI DAILY BRIEFING

Prepared for the Office of Communications (OCO)

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)

By TechMIS

<<http://www.techmis.com/>> www.TechMIS.com

<<http://techmis.com/doi/epub/2017/Oct/12/Target%201/>> Mobile
User Copy

TO:

U.S. Department of the Interior & Staff

DATE:

Thursday, October 12, 2017 7:00 AM ET

DOI In The News

Ethics office director rebukes agency heads

Watchdog Uses Years Old Endorsement To Claim Zinke Violated
Ethics Rules As
Trump's Interior Secretary

Zinke's Mix Of Fundraisers, Government Work Raises New Ethics
Concerns

Zinke blasted over travel; will not touch Confederate monuments
on federal
lands

House committee advances bill to limit Antiquities Act

[MA] Feds ignore objections to Cape Wind

[UT] Op-ed: Utah delegation needs a clear message about our
monuments

[NV] Nevada's Heller, Laxalt join Sandoval in supporting sage
grouse
decision

[CA] Fears grow of wildfires merging in California

[CA] Whole towns evacuated as Northern California firestorm

grows; at least
23 people are dead, 285 missing

[CA] Wildfires Burning Through Cash, Not Just Landscape

[CA] Wildfires trample California's \$58 billion wine industry

[CA] Will wine country disaster push Congress to fix fire budget?

[CA] Fire restoration activities planned

[CA] Rives Mansion hits the market for \$1.3 million

Bureau of Indian Affairs

[MA] Taunton City Council extends emergency services agreement
with tribe

[SD] Family sues Indian boarding school in Pierre for wrongful
death

[MT] Homeland Hero

[AZ] The Largest Coal-Fired Power Plant in the West Is Slated for
Closure

[AZ] Navajo Nation President Begaye Testifies before Congress to
Fix
Problems with 1974 Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act

[CA] Camp 4 Final Deal Getting Close

Bureau of Land Management

[TN] Villagers help create a 'hidden gem'

[CO] Legal Protest Targets Trump Fracking Plan That Threatens
Colorado River

[CO] Suit seeks to stop oil-gas drilling on 9 parcels

[WY] US government halts Wyoming wild horse roundup amid
dispute

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Scientists Eavesdrop on Little-known Beaked Whales to Learn
How Deeply They
Dive

[NJ] New Jersey Gov. Christie Rejects President's Offshore Drilling Plan

Bureau of Reclamation

[AZ] The Sierra Club's Shadowy History with the Navajo Generating Station

Fish and Wildlife Service

250 Years After Washington Drained It, Feds Soak A Swamp

Mussel, once feared extinct, brought back to Ohio River

Bee-Killing Pesticide Found in 75 Percent of Global Honey Samples

[KY] Bald Eagle Population Soars in Kentucky

[SD] The only ND man indicted in a SD sting for selling eagle parts is in custody

[MT] Controversy Over Grizzly Bear Protection Continues

[CA] Opinion: Tiny Mouse Is Huge Success Story for Endangered Species Act

US Forest Service

Wildfires: How They Form, And Why They're So Dangerous

[NH] White Mountains forest fire still burning a week later

[SC] More than 150 roads in need of repair around National Forest

[IN] Region parks, parkways to lose hundreds of trees

[OR] Forest Service needs to alter their procedures

[CA] Drought and heat, worsened by humans, help fuel California fires

[CA] The Napa Fire Is a Perfectly Normal Apocalypse

[CA] Bulldozing Forests Isn't the Answer to Controlling California's Wildfires. Here's What Is.

[CA] Forest Service visitor-use surveys begin

US Geological Survey

[WY] Geologists Map the Plumbing Beneath Yellowstone's Old Faithful Geyser

[WY] 'Supervolcano' Under Yellowstone May Have Planet-Killing Potential

National Park Service

National parks need investment from private companies to thrive

No more parks?

[NY] Stonewall National Monument's rainbow flag plan was going fine, then things got weird

[NC] Mysterious debris washes ashore in Hatteras, leading to a lot of questions

[TN] Chimney Tops Trail reopens

[MS] Barrier islands to remain closed after Nate

[TX] New EPA Rule Will Allow Twice The Pollution From Texas Coal Plants

[MT] Glacier National Park sets annual attendance record

[WY] September 3rd busiest in Yellowstone's history

[WY] Traffic accident kills 4 bison in Grand Teton park

[WY] Yellowstone Death Linked to a Search for Forrest Fenn's Treasure

[WY] 'UFO' Sighted Zig-Zagging Over Yellowstone Supervolcano

[WY] Devils Tower plans prescribed fire

[WY] Experts expect record year for lake trout removal

Office of Insular Affairs

[PR] Three weeks since Hurricane Maria, much of Puerto Rico still dark, thirsty and frustrated

[PR] Puerto Rico's hurricane death toll rises to 45

[PR] Puerto Rico: US officials privately acknowledge serious food shortage

[PR] Trump's Puerto Rico video tells positive story, leaves misery on cutting-room floor

[PR] Puerto Rico Relief Bill Cancels \$16 Billion in Debt — But Not for Puerto Rico

[PR] Puerto Rico's treasured rainforest another victim of Hurricane Maria

[PR] Puerto Rico's Solar Rush

[VI] Has America Forgotten the Virgin Islands?

[VI] US Virgin Islands getting back to business following September storms

Headlines

The Washington Post

The New York Times

The Wall Street Journal

ABC News

NBC News

CBS News

Washington Schedule

President

Vice President

Senate

House of Representatives

Editorial Note: This Brief represents summarized content - click on

the
hyperlink to access full-text articles for these news summaries.

Note: The DOI News Briefing is a collection of news articles generated by a set of search terms related to DOI's mission. The inclusion of particular stories is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse the political viewpoints or affiliations included in news coverage.

DOI In The News

Ethics office director rebukes agency heads

<<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ethics-office-director-rebuked-agency-heads/>>

CBS News [10/11/2017 10:21 AM, Rebecca Shabad, 14389K] reports that the acting director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics is warning the leaders of government agencies that they should promote an "ethical culture," while suggesting some have practiced the opposite. In a memo issued to agency heads, David Apol, the acting director and general counsel of the Government Ethics office, wrote that he's grateful to leaders who have demonstrated a commitment to ethical service. "At the same time, I am deeply concerned that the actions of some in government leadership have harmed perceptions about the importance of ethics and what conduct is, and is not, permissible," Apol wrote. Apol called on these agency heads to "redouble" their commitment to ethics in government. Officials' use of charter flights such as by Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and

Environmental Protection Agency head Scott Pruitt have recently come under scrutiny.

The
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-cabinet-cant-seem-to-stop-ta-king-private-planes/2017/10/11/358f83fe-a87c-11e7-850e-2bdd1236be5d_story.html?utm_term=.0075cb7f8e3a> Washington Post [10/11/2017 7:27 PM, Editorial Board] reports now that former health and human services secretary Tom Price has been drummed out of government for swanning around the nation in private planes at exorbitant expense to taxpayers, other members of the Trump administration are jockeying to claim the mantle of haughtiest Cabinet member. Among the leading contenders is Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who seems to have learned contempt for the people who pay his salary at the knee of Mr. Price. Mr. Zinke thought nothing of spending \$12,375 on a charter flight from Las Vegas, where he spoke at the behest of a political patron, to his home state of Montana in June. He waved away criticism of the flight as "a little B.S. over travel."

<<http://www.msnbc.com/the-beat-with-ari-melber/watch/new-trump-cabinet-official-under-fire-for-ethics-spending-1070659139597>> MSNBC [10/11/2017 7:44 PM, Staff, 4332K] reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke follows Tom Price using government resources for personal travel. Trump's ethics chief says he's "deeply concerned" with the administration's actions.

Additional reporting:
<<http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/editorials/>>

[article178397746.html](#)> Miami Herald [10/11/2017 9:23 PM, Staff, 4830K, FL]

Watchdog Uses Years Old Endorsement To Claim Zinke Violated Ethics Rules As Trump's Interior Secretary

<<http://dailycaller.com/2017/10/11/zinke-violated-ethics-regulations-with-years-old-statement-govt-watchdog-says/>>

The Daily Caller [10/11/2017 6:02 PM, Tim Pearce, 5106K, DC] reports a government watchdog group is calling for an ethics investigation into Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke after a statement from Zinke endorsing a fundraising firm was found on the firm's website. Campaign for Accountability (CfA) filed a request for investigation with the Office of Government Ethics Wednesday, claiming Zinke broke federal ethics regulations by using his office as a platform to endorse a private business. ForthRight Strategy, a fundraising firm hired by Zinke during his 2014 congressional race, featured an apparent endorsement from Zinke on the front page of its website, according to CfA.

"You guys are in large part why I had the money and support that afforded me the opportunity to become a Congressman for the at-large seat in Montana," Zinke's statement read. "Your results and personal commitment to Team Zinke were bar none! I greatly value the professional as well as the personal relationship we have developed over many years! Thank you!" The statement is several years old, predating when Zinke was nominated to serve as secretary of the Interior, CfA confirmed to The Daily Caller News Foundation.

Zinke's Mix Of Fundraisers, Government Work Raises New Ethics Concerns

<<http://www.abcactionnews.com/newsy/zinkes-mix-of-fundraisers-government-wor>

k-raises-new-ethics-concerns> ABC Action News [10/11/2017 9:50 AM, Lindsey Pulse and Katherine Biek, 517K, FL] reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has made some seemingly questionable travel decisions, and media outlets just uncovered some more. Politico uncovered two more instances of the Cabinet official attending fundraisers when the U.S. government paid for his travel. In March, Zinke reportedly went to a fundraiser affiliated with Rep. Steve Daines at a ski resort in Montana, and in May, he's said to have attended a fundraiser for Rep. Don Young at a steakhouse in Alaska. The outlet says Zinke also attended several other events with donors while on official trips.

<<http://my.tvey.es/Sz25G>> CNN [10/11/2017 9:49 PM, Staff, 888K] reports that ethics hawks are zeroing in on Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's travel and whether he violated a federal law intended to insulate federal employees from political influence.

<<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/10/11/reading-the-tea>

-leaves-on-clean-power-plan-repeal-222739> Politico [10/11/2017 10:00 AM, Anthony Andragna, 10378K] reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke attended at least two additional political fundraisers during trips he took for official Interior business, Pro's Esther Whieldon and Ben

Lefebvre
scoop. Federal law permits Cabinet officials to participate in
partisan
political activities on their own time and without using any federal
resources, but FEC records don't list any reimbursement payments
to Interior
for the events. "Both law and common sense tell us that taxpayer
resources
are supposed to be used when you're doing the taxpayers' business
[but] are
not supposed to be used to help candidates get elected," said
Brendan
Fischer of the nonprofit watchdog organization Campaign Legal
Center.
Spokeswoman Heather Swift said ethics officials signed off on all
trips and
they all complied with the law. "The Interior Department under the
Trump
Administration has always and will always work to ensure all
officials
follow appropriate rules and regulations when traveling, including
seeking
commercial options at all times appropriate and feasible, to ensure
the
efficient use of government resources," she said.

<<http://www.govexec.com/management/2017/10/zinke-mnuchin-travels-raise-still-more-questions/141692/>> Government Executive [10/11/2017 1:23 PM, Charles
[S. Clark, 156K](#), DC] reports that the array of issues swirling around
Trump
Cabinet members' taxpayer-funded travel now include potential
violations of
the Hatch Act. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Tuesday was
reported by
Politico to have attended two political fund-raisers during official
travel
and leisure trips, raising questions about whether he properly
complied with
Hatch Act restrictions on mixing politics with government
business. Zinke,
Politico disclosed, has attended at least three "political fundraisers
while
traveling for official business, including a weekend ski getaway
less than
three weeks after he was sworn in that donors paid up to \$3,000 to

attend,"
according to sources and documents the publication reviewed.
"Zinke has held
at least a half-dozen other events with big donors or influential
conservative organizations while on official trips," the report said.
His
mixing of travel purposes is under review by the Interior
Department's
inspector general. The newest wrinkle is whether Zinke has
violated the
Hatch Act. While Cabinet members may conduct partisan political
activities,
rules require them to do so on their own time, with their own
resources, and
without invoking their government job title. An Interior spokesman
said
Zinke's travels were approved by ethics officials and were
compliant with
the law.

Additional reporting:

<<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/10/12/ryan-zinke-interior-secre-tary-travel-federal-law-marsh-dnt-ac.cnn>> CNN [10/11/2017 10:37 PM, Rene Marsh, 15712K]

<<http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/zinkes-travel-continues-to-raise-ethical-questions/ar-AAAtjJP5>> MSN [10/12/2017 12:44 AM, Rene Marsh and Gregory Wallace, 880K]

<<http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/secretary-zinke-having-awesome-time-with-taxpayer-money-1071065155746>> MSNBC [10/12/2017 12:27 AM, Rachel Maddow, 4332K]

<<http://my.tvey.es/Sa9c3>> Time Warner Cable News Buffalo [10/11/2017 1:25 PM, Staff, NY]

<http://www.wral.com/news/national_world/national/video/

[17010733/](#)> WRAL
[10/12/2017 6:05 AM, Staff, 1045K, NC]

<[http://missoulain.com/opinion/letters/zinke-should-apologize-to-employees/a](http://missoulain.com/opinion/letters/zinke-should-apologize-to-employees/article_bc8ee1d2-3ef8-5464-ae93-3351f1df03b1.html)
rticle_bc8ee1d2-3ef8-5464-ae93-3351f1df03b1.html> Missoulain
[10/11/2017
9:45 AM, Ed Gilk, 180K, MT]

<[https://www.salon.com/2017/10/11/ryan-zinkes-magical-taxpayer-tour-ski-reso](https://www.salon.com/2017/10/11/ryan-zinkes-magical-taxpayer-tour-ski-resort-alaskan-steakhouse/)
rt-alaskan-steakhouse/> Salon [10/11/2017 9:31 AM, Taylor Link,
5434K, CA]

Zinke blasted over travel; will not touch Confederate monuments
on federal
lands

<<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-energy-202/2017/10/11/the-energy-202-the-other-scientific-consensus-the-epa-is-bucking/59dcff9230fb0468cea81e52/>> Washington Post [10/11/2017 10:19 AM, Dino Grandoni, 39042K] reports that Zinke told Breitbart News over the weekend that there are some monuments on federal lands he will not touch — Confederate monuments. "No monuments are going to be removed from federal land," Zinke said. "Where do you start and where do you stop?... If you're a native Indian, I can tell you, you're not very happy about the history of General Sherman or perhaps President Grant." Zinke continued: "I think we should never hide from our history or erase our history. I think we should embrace the history and understand the faults and learn from it. But when you try to erase history, what happens is you also erase how it happened and why it happened and the ability to learn from it."

<https://www.metro.us/news/politics/ryan-zinke-confederate-monuments-removed>

Metro [10/11/2017 5:20 PM, Erin Tiernan, 1106K, NY] reports Interior

Secretary Ryan Zinke said if the government caves to leftist demands and has Confederate monuments removed it could lead to a "slippery slope" where next Native Americans will be calling for the removal of statues commemorating leaders who lead violence against their ancestors. "Where do you start and where do you stop?" Zinke asked in an interview with conservative Breitbart News on Sunday. "It's a slippery slope. If you're a native Indian, I can tell you, you're not very happy about the history of General Sherman or perhaps President Grant." Zinke's rhetoric falls in line with that of conservative commentators and President Donald Trump himself. Zinke said removing monuments is equivalent to erasing history and vowed the Department of Interior would not remove any Confederate monuments. "I think we should never hide from our history or erase our history. I think we should embrace the history and understand the faults and learn from it. But when you try to erase history, what happens is you also erase how it happened and why it happened and the ability to learn from it," Zinke told Breitbart. But critics are calling bull on what they said is a simplistic response from Zinke that kind of just misses the point.

House committee advances bill to limit Antiquities Act

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/house-committee-advances-bill-to-limit-an>

tiquities-act/article/2637232> Washington Examiner [10/11/2017 6:08 PM, Josh Siegel, 3567K, DC] reports that the House Natural Resources Committee advanced legislation Wednesday that would limit the power of presidents to designate public land as national monuments. The National Monument Creation and Protection Act, moved by a 23-17 vote, would overhaul the 1906 Antiquities Act, which gives the president unilateral power to protect structures of "historic and scientific interest."

Separately on Tuesday, the Natural Resources Committee considered a resolution authored by Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona requiring Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to disclose more information about his review of recent national monument designations. The measure did not advance. President Trump ordered the Interior Department to undertake a review of 27 national monuments shortly after his inauguration. Zinke issued a report to Trump in August, but it was not made public. A memo leaked to the media revealed that Zinke recommends shrinking or changing the boundaries of six national monuments and proposes management changes to four others that could reopen areas to logging, cattle grazing and commercial fishing. The Bears Ears National Monument in Utah is perhaps the most contentious one Zinke pegs for a size reduction.

<https://thinkprogress.org/house-bill-limit-presidential-authority-monuments>

-b44751cedee4/> ThinkProgress [10/11/2017 2:09 PM, Jenny Rowland, 3037K, DC] reports the full House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday is marking up a bill that would limit the president's authority to protect historic places and landscapes. H.R. 3990, introduced by Rep. Rob Bishop, who chairs

the committee, would radically re-imagine the Antiquities Act - the law allowing presidents to create national monuments - by imposing acreage caps, narrowing the definition of what deserves protection, and prohibiting national monuments that protect oceans, among other restrictions. The committee will also address another bill, a resolution of inquiry filed by Rep. Grijalva and 25 other House Democrats, aimed at getting the administration to provide Congress with more information about Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's national monument review and report. Zinke has come under fire recently for the secret nature of his report which would significantly reduce at least four national monuments. Ironically, Bishop's bill undercuts many of the recommendations made in the leaked version of Zinke's report as well as the Trump Administration's overall agenda on national monuments.

The <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/oct/11/national-monument-creation-and-protection-act-limi/> Washington Times [10/11/2017 8:34 PM, Ben Wolfgang, 3771K, DC] reports that the bill, expected to pass the GOP-led House, overhauls the 1906 Antiquities Act and sets new limits on what land can be designated as a monument and lays out the level of consultation that must take place between the federal and local governments during the process. The House legislation comes amid a review of recent monument designations by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who has recommended to President Trump that a handful of monuments – most notably the sprawling Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, both in Utah – be drastically cut down in size.

Additional reporting:

<<https://wtop.com/congress/2017/10/house-gop-moves-to-revamp-law-on-national-monuments/>> WTOP [10/11/2017 4:58 PM, Associated Press, DC]

<http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/ap/nation/house-gop-moves-to-revamp-law-on-national-monuments/article_778c77de-0352-529a-bba3-22b636e80995.html>

The Press of Atlantic City [10/11/2017 4:58 PM, By Matthew Daly, 142K, NJ]

<<https://www.ecowatch.com/congress-public-lands-2495535091.html>> EcoWatch [10/11/2017 11:18 AM, Staff, 564K, OH]

<<https://www.ksl.com/?sid=46125948&nid=757>> KSL [10/11/2017 3:32 PM, Amy Joi O'Donoghue, KSL, 1018K, UT]

<<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/politics/2017/10/11/house-gop-bi-ll-would-give-states-veto-power-over-large-national-monuments/755776001/>> Statesman Journal [10/11/2017 2:17 PM, Matthew Daly, 258K, OR]

<<http://kuer.org/post/national-monuments-revamp-gets-house-panel-ok>> KVER [10/11/2017 8:15 PM, Judy Fahys, CA]

[MA] Feds ignore objections to Cape Wind

<<http://www.mvtimes.com/2017/10/11/feds-ignore-objections-cape-wind/>> Martha's Vineyard Times [10/11/2017 12:18 PM, June Parker, MA] reports that the federal government is continuing to ignore us when it comes to

Cape Wind. The recent rubberstamp of Cape Wind's long-term lease of 46 square miles of Nantucket Sound disregards the wishes of the state, the local government, and the Wampanoag tribes on both Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod. Why don't the feds realize this project is too expensive, outdated, and unwanted in our waters? Over the objections of the locals, the U.S. Department of the Interior first issued a lease to Cape Wind in 2010. In 2017, nothing has changed. The Steamship Authority, fishermen, the Cape and Islands delegation, the tribes, and many others all wrote to the Department of the Interior telling them Cape Wind does not belong in Nantucket Sound, there are far too many conflicts here and to cancel Cape Wind's lease. Their response? To continue to ignore us and instead rubber stamp approval.

[UT] Op-ed: Utah delegation needs a clear message about our monuments

<<https://www.deseretnews.com/article/865690796/Op-ed-Utah-delegation-needs-a-clear-message-about-our-monuments.html>> Deseret News [10/11/2017 10:10 AM, Josh Boling, 1322K, UT] reports that if the Trump administration, Ryan Zinke and our Utah representatives wanted us to truly trust them then they would stop doing literally everything they could to undermine their own words. The latest: a leak from Trump's White House detailing Interior Secretary Zinke's monument review in which he recommends downsizing both Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments.

[NV] Nevada's Heller, Laxalt join Sandoval in supporting sage grouse decision

<<http://www.nevadaappeal.com/news/government/nevadas-heller-laxalt-join-sand>

oval-in-supporting-sage-grouse-decision/> Nevada Appeal

[10/11/2017 6:42 PM,

Staff, 22K, NV] reports that Sen. Dean Heller and Attorney General Adam

Laxalt have now joined Gov. Brian Sandoval in applauding the BLM decision to

cancel withdrawal of federal lands in six western states. The original plan

was to withdraw 10 million acres of land – a third of that total in Nevada –

to protect the sage grouse. The rules would have severely limited mining and

energy development in those areas. But Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke signed

an order last week canceling that withdrawal and giving states more flexibility to manage the grouse population.

The

<[http://www.buffalobulletin.com/opinion/columns/article_1581a422-ae8d-11e7-8](http://www.buffalobulletin.com/opinion/columns/article_1581a422-ae8d-11e7-8041-cfff0ef30173.html)

041-cfff0ef30173.html> Buffalo Bulletin [10/11/2017 8:04 AM, Staff, 1K, WY]

reports that Wyoming spent a decade tailoring a sage-grouse conservation

plan, and when it comes to preserving greater sage-grouse habitat, few

states do it better than our own. The Department of the Interior and the BLM

should proceed with caution before they attempt to amend federal land use

plans regarding the greater sage-grouse. And quite honestly, if it ain't

broke, don't fix it. Wide-sweeping changes could backfire as putting the

quirky bird's habitat at risk could lead to a listing on the Endangered

Species Act, and that would mean more restrictions on everything from

agriculture to energy.

Earlier this year, Ryan Zinke, Interior secretary, ordered a review of the sage-grouse plans and later released a report calling for changes to portions of the existing plan. The review and report were in response to industry representatives who said the current plan is too restrictive and expansive. Zinke said he's attempting to find balance between local economies and sage-grouse conservation. We hope that's the case and the Interior isn't attempting to appeal to a single group. Doing so will not protect sage-grouse or our Wyoming way of life.

[CA] Fears grow of wildfires merging in California

<http://thewashingtonpostnie.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showarticle.aspx?article=b4c0fbe9-1a9b-4a1f-8740-110e8c326eae>> Washington Post [10/12/2017 4:56 AM, Cleve R. Wootson Jr., Kristine Phillips and Joel Achenbach, 3K] reports that the wind known as the Diablo is picking up again, the air is dry, there is no rain in sight and the killer wildfires that have scorched the wine country of Northern California remain almost completely uncontained. Officials warned Wednesday that some of the big fires could merge.

Statewide, 8,000 firefighters are working to contain 22 wildfires that cover 170,000 acres — a collective area larger than the city of Chicago. The worst are in Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino counties, where 4,500 homes and businesses had been burned at last count. The fire has put a strain on federal resources, too. Coming on the heels of catastrophic hurricanes, the California wildfires in total represent just one of 22 disasters that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is managing across the nation. Eighty-five percent of FEMA's 9,900 full-time employees are working "in the

field," away from their assigned offices, agency spokesman Mike Cappannari said. With some of the fires in the Sierras and Southern California nearing containment, Cal Fire is shifting resources — which include 73 helicopters and 30 air tankers — to the most dangerous fires in and around wine country. The U.S. Forest Service said it has dispatched 740 personnel. "We are in a wickedly dangerous fire situation and when one of us needs help, all of us come," said Bob Baird, director of fire and aviation management for the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest region.

[CA] Whole towns evacuated as Northern California firestorm grows; at least 23 people are dead, 285 missing

<<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-fires-northern-california-20171011-story.html>>

Los Angeles Times [10/11/2017 10:05 PM, Phil Willon, Paige St. John, Louis Sahagun, Chris Megerian and Alene Tchekmedyian] reports the death toll rose to 21 Wednesday as multiple wildfires continued to spread across Northern California's wine country. As firefighters were dealing with wind shifts Wednesday afternoon, new evacuation orders were issued. All residents of Calistoga were ordered to leave their homes. State and federal officials portrayed an all-out effort to fend off the devastating wildfires at a news conference at a state emergency operations center outside Sacramento. The situation remains very dangerous, officials said. According to Cal Fire spokeswoman Heather Williams, 11 people have died in Sonoma County, six in Mendocino County, two in Yuba County and two in Napa County.

<<http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/11/us/california-fires-updates/index.html>> CNN

[10/11/2017 8:45 PM, Jason Hanna, Nicole Chavez and Steve Almasy] reports that in hard-hit Sonoma County, Sheriff Rob Giordano said his office has received 600 reports of missing people, of which detectives have been able to locate 315 people. Giordano believes many of the 285 people who are unaccounted for will be located once telecommunications issues are solved, but he also fears more bodies will be found.

<<https://ww2.kqed.org/news/2017/10/11/at-least-21-dead-3500-structures-destroyed-in-northern-california-fires/>> KQED

[10/11/2017 4:49 PM, Staff, 1027K, CA] reports that Cal Fire Chief Ken Pimlott gave an updated death toll late Wednesday morning, calling the series of wildfires in wine country "a serious, critical, catastrophic event." He says 8,000 firefighters are focusing on protecting lives and property as they battle the flames from 21 fires that are chewing through critically dry vegetation. Pimlott says Oregon, Nevada, Arizona and Washington are sending firefighters and the U.S. Forest Service is sending fire engines, bulldozers and hand crews.

<<http://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/tns-wine-country-wildfires-firefighters.html>> Governing

[10/11/2017 7:31 AM, Lizzie Johnson, Trisha Thadani, Melody Gutierrez and Peter Fimrite, 306K, DC] reports that the dire situation was clear as the U.S. Forest Service was called in to help exhausted state firefighters battle 17 active wildfires, which have blackened more than 115,000 acres statewide, and, Pimlott said, the number is expected to keep rising.

<<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/10/11/as-death-toll-climbs-evacuations-expands-in-wine-country-fires/>> Mercury News [10/11/2017 12:06 PM, Mark Gomez, Katy Murphy, Erin Baldassari and David DeBolt, 4169K, CA] reports that at a news conference Tuesday morning, officials with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Cal Fire and other agencies reported that 17 fires statewide had burned a combined 115,000 acres and sent 3,200 evacuees to 28 shelters — and that the major fires in Napa and Sonoma were zero percent contained. Some 4,000 people are battling the fires, including crews from Nevada and the U.S. Forest Service. Air tankers dropped 266,000 gallons of retardant from the skies Monday.

<<http://my.tvey.es/Le67A>> Good Morning America [10/11/2017 10:05 AM, Staff, 32K, NV] reports that there were a new batch of evacuation orders in Northern California overnight, with thousands of people on the move. Everywhere you look you see melted metal, which goes on for block after block in a moonscape of gray ash; in many places the only thing left standing are the chimneys. As firefighters continue to defend downtown Santa Rosa from the onslaught of flames, from the ground and from the air, residents are taking stock of all they have lost in the heart of California wine country. The state of California is asking for reinforcement from the U.S. Forest Service. [Editorial note: consult source link for video]

[CA] Wildfires Burning Through Cash, Not Just Landscape

<https://ww2.kqed.org/news/2017/10/11/wildfires-burning-through-cash-not-just-landscape/>

KQED Public Radio [10/11/2017 3:00 PM, Ryan Levi, 920K, CA]

reports wildfires continue to strain government resources throughout California, creating a vicious cycle of fires and land burdened with excess fuels, which leads to bigger fires. About a third of California is federal land, where fire response and prevention falls mostly to the U.S. Forest Service. All Forest Service fire funds come from its base operating budget, so when firefighting costs shoot skyward as they have over the last several years, resources have to be cribbed from other budget lines like fire prevention and forest health in a system called "fire borrowing." The Forest Service has already spent a record-breaking \$2 billion-plus on fire suppression this year, and it estimates that it will have to transfer more than a half-billion dollars from other Forest Service programs to cover fire response for the year.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, who oversees the Forest Service, has repeatedly spoken out about the need for Congress to establish a dedicated reserve funding source for wildfires similar to what exists for other natural disasters like hurricanes. "This whole department at USDA is going to fight hard to communicate to Congress and the administration that we need permanent fire funding and stop this fire borrowing once and for all," Perdue said at an event last month to introduce new Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke.

[CA] Wildfires trample California's \$58 billion wine industry

<http://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/wildfires-trample-californias-dollar>

58-billion-wine-industry/ar-AAthjmw> MSN [10/11/2017 9:28 AM, Jennifer

Kaplan, Lydia Mulvany and Jeffrey Taylor, 66K] reports that the fires

ravaging Northern California stand to leave the area's renowned wine

industry with damage that will be felt long after the final flames burn out.

At least four Napa Valley vineyards have been destroyed or significantly

damaged, and the toll may be even worse in Sonoma County to the west. The

fires mark the second natural disaster in three years for the area, which

was hit by a magnitude 6.0 earthquake in 2014 that caused at least \$500

million in economic damage, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The

efforts to quench the fires are far from complete, said Jonathan Cox, a

spokesman for Cal Fire, the state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

[CA] Will wine country disaster push Congress to fix fire budget?

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/article178381396.html>

McClatchy DC [10/12/2017 3:01 AM, Emily Cadei, 1478K, DC] reports that

it's a rare point of bipartisan agreement in divided Washington: The federal

system for funding firefighting is broken, and that's hurting our ability to

prevent fires from breaking out in the first place. But lawmakers are at a

loggerheads over how to fix the problem, a split that breaks down on largely

regional, rather than partisan, grounds. Some in the House and Senate now

hope that national coverage of Northern California's devastating fires could

finally spur a congressional compromise, a bit of a silver lining emerging out of all the destruction.

At the root of the problem is the fact that forest fires are not treated like other natural disasters. While the Federal Emergency Management Agency can tap emergency funds for hurricane or tornado response, the U.S. Forest Service has to raid its other program budgets – including fire prevention – if it runs out of firefighting funds. That's become increasingly common in recent years, as fires have grown more intense and destructive. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho notes that the Forest Service spent over half of its budget last year on firefighting, compared to 16 percent in 1995. In effect, the Forest Service has been transformed from a "management agency to a firefighting agency," Risch says.

[CA] Fire restoration activities planned

<http://www.trinityjournal.com/news/local/article_8b4c6c4a-ae20-11e7-9111-e7f11cc010b.html> The Trinity Journal [10/11/2017 9:15 AM, Sally Morris, 4K, CA] reports that once a fire is out, there's a lot more work to be done as soil scientists, hydrologists and other field experts assess the damage to predict and prepare for future environmental impacts within the burned areas. It is officially called the Burned Area Emergency Response process, and with the Helena fire more than 91 percent contained as of last week, that process is well underway through the multi-agency efforts of the U.S. Forest Service, BLM and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[CA] Rives Mansion hits the market for \$1.3 million

<[http://www.thedowneypatriot.com/articles/rives-mansion-hits-the-market-for-](http://www.thedowneypatriot.com/articles/rives-mansion-hits-the-market-for-13-million)

13-million> The Downey Patriot [10/11/2017 11:56 AM, Alex Dominguez, 4K, CA] reports that Downey's historic Rives Mansion is officially for sale. After what has been a turbulent few years for Downey's iconic property, the foreclosed mansion officially went on the market Oct. 6 with the bank listing it at \$1.3 million. Built in 1911, the home was constructed by L.A. County district attorney James Rives and is listed on the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Landmarks as "a most interesting link to its agricultural past before Downey's mass suburbanization after World War II."

Bureau of Indian Affairs

[MA] Taunton City Council extends emergency services agreement with tribe

<[http://www.tauntongazette.com/news/20171011/taunton-city-council-extends-em](http://www.tauntongazette.com/news/20171011/taunton-city-council-extends-emergency-services-agreement-with-tribe)

ergency-services-agreement-with-tribe> Taunton Daily Gazette [10/11/2017 12:38 PM, Charles Winokoor, 96K, MA] reports that the 151-acre site of the stalled Mashpee Wampanoag resort casino project in East Taunton will continue to be accessible to police, fire and emergency medical services – at least for the next six months. The Taunton City Council, on the recommendation of City Solicitor Jason D. Buffington, voted unanimously Tuesday night to extend a memorandum of understanding with the tribe, so that those first responders continue to have legal access to the land.

The barren Stevens Street site has been fenced off and devoid of construction activity since a federal judge in 2016 ruled in favor of 25 plaintiffs – who challenged the federal Department of the Interior and its 2015 decision to place the Taunton land and 170 acres in Mashpee "in trust" as Indian reservation territory.

[SD] Family sues Indian boarding school in Pierre for wrongful death

<<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2017/10/11/wrongful-death-lawsuit-aga-inst-indian-boarding-school-family-girl-who-died-after-suicide-attempt-fed/753904001/>> Argus Leader [10/11/2017 1:34 PM, John Hult, 106K, SD] reports that the family of a girl who died after a suicide attempt at a federal Indian boarding school has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the federal government. Emerson Little Elk of Todd County says the Pierre Indian Learning Center's staff failed to adequately monitor his granddaughter, who had a history of depression and threats of suicide, and that the center's staff was slow to respond when they were informed of her suicide attempt in October 2015. The family has charged negligence and asks a jury to award compensation for funeral expenses, compensation for pain and suffering and attorney fees. The case was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in South Dakota. The girl was 14 years old when the incident took place at the Pierre boarding school, which is overseen by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Education. The school serves Native American students from first through eighth grades, focusing on those with behavioral, mental health and

emotional needs.

[MT] Homeland Hero

<<https://flatheadbeacon.com/2017/10/11/homeland-hero/>> Flathead Beacon

[10/11/2017 7:00 AM, Tristan Scott, 27K, MT] reports that as a Pikuni (or Blackfeet) warrior and veteran of the United States Marines Corps, Jesse DesRosier believes it is his duty and obligation to protect his country and lands, as well as to uphold the tribe's traditions and culture while safeguarding its natural resources for future generations.

DesRosier is marshaling resources to defend a critical aspect of Blackfeet identity — the natural landscape where Blackfeet derived much of their spirituality. Specifically, he and dozens of other Native American veterans and active-duty members have petitioned U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to defend a sacred ancestral homeland known as the Badger-Two Medicine, a 130,000-acre area named for the two rivers that define it. DesRosier and other tribal members, as well as numerous conservation groups, are seeking to furnish the wild and sacred Badger-Two Medicine with permanent protections from oil and gas drilling. They're currently calling on the Interior Department to defend the Obama administration's cancellation of the last remaining oil and gas leases and to protect the area in perpetuity.

[AZ] The Largest Coal-Fired Power Plant in the West Is Slated for Closure

<<http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2017-6-november-december/feature/largest-coal-fired-power-plant-west-slated-for-closure>>

Sierra Club
[10/12/2017 4:00

AM, Evelyn Nieves, 227K] reports that Percy Deal, 68, has been fighting the coal industry all of his adult life. In the late 1960s, Peabody Energy started to mine Black Mesa's vast coal deposits. In the process, the company began using billions of gallons of the Navajo Aquifer's water-as much as 3 million gallons a day-to move the coal via a slurry pipeline to the Mohave Generating Station, outside Laughlin, Nevada.

Deal's quest to find answers fueled a career in politics and made him a prominent voice in the grassroots movement to monitor the coal business on the reservation. Now, things are poised to change again as the coal mining and the coal-fired energy production on and around Black Mesa are winding down. The Navajo Generating Station, a 2,250-megawatt coal plant on Navajo land that is the largest coal-fired power plant west of the Mississippi River, is set to shut down as early as 2019. Since the NGS is the sole customer of Peabody's Kayenta Mine on Black Mesa, that, too, is supposed to close-unless the tribes can find a way to ship coal outside the region, which many industry analysts consider highly unlikely.

[AZ] Navajo Nation President Begaye Testifies before Congress to Fix Problems with 1974 Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act

<<http://nativenewsonline.net/currents/navajo-nation-president-begaye-testifies-congress-fix-problems-1974-navajo-hopi-land-settlement-act/>>

Native News
[10/12/2017 12:02 AM, Staff, 57K, MI] reports that on Wednesday, Oct. 4,

President Russell Begaye testified before the House Natural Resources Committee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs supporting HR 2402. The legislation aims to unencumber Navajo lands that have been encumbered by preference right lease applications (PRLAs). "This important legislation brings to a close one chapter of a four-decade-old federal statutory obligation to the Navajo Nation that was authorized in the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act of 1974," President Begaye said.

Introduced by Congressman Ben Ray Luján, HR 2402 is an attempt to rectify a quandary resulting from the Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act of 1974. The 1974 Act committed Congress to provide the Navajo unencumbered lands that the Nation would select from federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

[CA] Camp 4 Final Deal Getting Close

<<http://www.independent.com/news/2017/oct/12/camp-4-final-deal-getting-close>

/> Santa Barbara Independent [10/12/2017 5:54 AM, Kelsey Brugger, 81K, CA] reports that resentment and bitterness has built up for years in the Santa Ynez Valley. Valley residents have adopted a "just say no" approach to the Chumash tribe's plans to expand the existing roughly 138-acre reservation. This tentative agreement surrounds Camp 4, the 1,400-acre property east of Highway 154.

County supervisors Joan Hartmann and Das Williams met privately with Chumash chair Ken Kahn and vice chair Raul Armenta for six months after years of public negotiations failed. The tribe has for six years petitioned the U.S. government to bring Camp 4 into the reservation, saying they need

to build more housing. Annexation, which was granted on the last day of the Obama administration, frees the land from the county's firm development codes and property-tax rolls. The deal would stipulate that the tribe would pay \$178,500 annually while the county would drop its formal opposition. The property would be divided into 143 one-acre plots, one for each tribal member. The agreement would be in place until 2040, which Hartmann said is about longest timeframe federal regulators at the Department of the Interior would likely allow.

Bureau of Land Management

[TN] Villagers help create a 'hidden gem'

<http://www.tellicovillageconnection.com/news/article_178952cc-21d8-5287-8573-c86acd9eb73e.html> The Connection [10/11/2017 8:00 AM, Staff, TN] reports that nestled in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains and spanning 31 miles along the eastern shore of Tellico Lake, the East Lakeshore Trail provides plenty of opportunity for those in the region to enjoy the outdoors. In 2002, Tennessee Valley Authority sold land for the development of what is now the WindRiver community. A small group of citizens from Tellico Village, Vonore and Greenback voiced concerns about possible damage the new development could cause. From there, the Watershed Association of the Tellico Reservoir, or WATeR, was born.

"It is an all volunteer, not-for-profit organization whose focus is on water pollution, soil erosion and promoting environmental education and appropriate outdoor recreational pursuits," Bob Martin, WATeR

board member,
said. "It has sponsored an annual lakeshore cleanup for many years." The East Lakeshore Trail was officially designated as a National Recreation Trail by the United States Department of the Interior on May 30, 2012.

[CO] Legal Protest Targets Trump Fracking Plan That Threatens Colorado River

<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2017/fracking-10-11-2017.php> Center for Biological Diversity [10/11/2017 2:26 PM, Staff, 72K]
reports conservation groups on Tuesday challenged a Bureau of Land Management decision to auction off more than 27,000 acres of western Colorado public lands in December for fracking operations. Fracking would threaten the dwindling water supply in the Colorado River, a water source for about 40 million people. It also would worsen Colorado's air, water and greenhouse gas pollution and further imperil endangered Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker. Warming temperatures driven by greenhouse gas pollution have already reduced flows in the Colorado River, which supplies water to seven western states and Mexico. Scientists project that flow declines could exceed 30 percent by mid-century and 55 percent by the end of the century if greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated.

[CO] Suit seeks to stop oil-gas drilling on 9 parcels

<<http://www.postregister.com/articles/west/2017/10/11/suit-seeks->

[stop-oil-ga](#)

s-drilling-9-parcels> Post Register [10/11/2017 8:17 AM, Associated Press, 47K, ID] reports that a Colorado county and three environmental groups have sued the federal government, saying the sale of nine oil and gas leases on public land in southwestern Colorado could harm the threatened Gunnison sage grouse. The lawsuit filed in Denver federal court Tuesday says the federal Bureau of Land Management didn't consult with wildlife managers and didn't conduct required reviews before selling leases in March. The lawsuit asks a judge to invalidate the leases. Agency spokesman Jayson Barangan said officials hadn't seen the lawsuit and couldn't comment. The Gunnison sage grouse was protected under the Endangered Species Act in 2014. Only about 5,000 remain, all in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah. The suit was filed by the San Miguel County commissioners, Rocky Mountain Wild, San Juan Citizens Alliance and Conservation Colorado.

[WY] US government halts Wyoming wild horse roundup amid dispute

<<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/oct/11/us-government-halts-wyoming>

-wild-horse-roundup-ami/> The Washington Times [10/11/2017 4:29 PM, Mead Gruver, 3771K] reports the U.S. government has agreed to halt a Wyoming wild horse roundup amid a legal dispute over whether it should count foals toward the roundup quota. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management and roundup opponents agreed in a court filing Tuesday the roundup would stop at 1,560 horses of all ages, a number the BLM was set to reach Wednesday. U.S. District Judge Nancy Freudenthal in Cheyenne was set to rule within days

whether to allow the roundup to resume while a lawsuit filed by the opponents moves ahead. The roundup began Sept. 23 and originally was expected to take four to six weeks. The Wild Horse Preservation Campaign and two photographers sued Friday, claiming the BLM was deviating from past practice by not counting captured foals toward the roundup's 1,560-horse limit. A spokeswoman for the BLM's Wyoming State Office, Kristen Lenhardt, declined comment citing agency policy not to comment on pending litigation.

<<http://www.sweetwaternow.com/blm-gathered-1062-horses-12-deaths/>>

SweetwaterNOW [10/11/2017 4:04 PM, Katie Glennemeier, 25K, WY] reports that as of October 10, the project has gathered 1,062 adults horses, 269 foals, and returned 4 animals to the range. Twelve horses been euthanized, all categorized as having chronic or pre-existing conditions diagnosed with a prognosis of "hopeless for recovery" by a veterinarian. Those conditions include conditions like poorly healed fractures, club feet, and deformities. According to the daily reports, the BLM has also shipped 1,148 horses to contracted holding facilities in Rock Springs; Axtell, Utah; and Bruneau, Idaho.

Additional reporting:

<<http://kgab.com/wyoming-wild-horse-roundup-halted/>> KGAB [10/11/2017 2:36 PM, Associated Press, 16K, WY]

<https://www.heraldandnews.com/news/local_news/blm-working-to-determine-cause-of-wild-horse-deaths/article_9cabb0e2-8e0d-5dd2-82b7-c2cb8f941fd7.html>

Herald and News [10/11/2017 6:45 PM, Staff, 28K, OR]

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Scientists Eavesdrop on Little-known Beaked Whales to Learn How Deeply They Dive

<<http://www.sciencenewsline.com/news/2017101115440026.html>>

ScienceNewsline

[10/11/2017 8:46 PM, Staff, 12K] reports that scientists have reported the

first dive depths for Gervais' and True's beaked whales, two of the least

known beaked whale species known as mesoplodonts. The study is also the

first to use a towed linear hydrophone array to document dive depths for

beaked whales, and researchers say it's a promising method to obtain dive

depths for other beaked whale species.

The findings by NOAA scientists from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center

(NEFSC) in Woods Hole, Mass. and a colleague now at Hydroacoustics Inc in

Rochester, NY were recently reported in the Journal of the Acoustical

Society of America. "Much of what we know about beaked whales and their dive

depths is from two or three species, and from a few locations. We know so

little about Gervais' and True's beaked whales, but now we know something

about how deep they dive and at what depths they are foraging, so this is a

step forward," said Annamaria Izzi DeAngelis, lead author of the study and a

marine mammal researcher in the passive acoustics group at the NEFSC. The

study was funded by NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Navy N45 Program, and the

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Data were collected as part of the

Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species

(AMAPPS) program.

[NJ] New Jersey Gov. Christie Rejects President's Offshore Drilling Plan

<<https://www.heartland.org/news-opinion/news/new-jersey-gov-christie-rejects>

-presidents-offshore-drilling-plan> The Heartland Institute
[10/12/2017 7:27

AM, Kenneth Artz, IL] reports that Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey is officially objecting to President Donald Trump's proposal to open the Atlantic Ocean coastline to offshore oil and gas exploration and production. Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey filed formal objections to President Donald Trump's proposal to open the Atlantic Ocean coastline to offshore oil and gas exploration and production.

In formal comments filed on August 16, the Christie administration reaffirmed the governor's opposition to any oil and gas production off the New Jersey coast, saying it would endanger the state's natural resources, coastal communities, and overall economy. New Jersey officials have long opposed drilling in the Atlantic, saying they believe any spills could put the state's \$700 billion worth of coastal properties at risk. In addition, New Jersey's \$45 billion shore-based tourism industry and its commercial fishing industry, which generates \$8 billion annually and supports approximately 50,000 jobs, could also be harmed by a spill, state officials say. In a letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management filed August 16, Bob Martin, commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, outlined the state's opposition to any offshore drilling.

Bureau of Reclamation

[AZ] The Sierra Club's Shadowy History with the Navajo Generating Station

<<http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/sierra-club-s-shadowy-history-navajo-gener>

ating-station> Sierra Club [10/12/2017 7:27 AM, Bill Corcoran, CA] reports

that when, in 2009, the Sierra Club launched a campaign pressing for the

closure of the Navajo Generating Station, a massive power plant in the Four

Corners region, the move seemed in-line with the organization's new

priorities in the age of climate change. The Club's Beyond Coal campaign was

beginning to hit its strides in halting or retiring coal-burning power plants nationwide, and the Navajo Generating Station, the largest coal plant

west of the Mississippi River and the seventh largest source of carbon

pollution in the United States, was a natural target.

While the Sierra Club had been working with Navajo and Hopi community

leaders over many decades on a variety of issues, there had not been a

clearing of the air about the organization's history regarding Navajo Generating Station. As the advocacy targeting the plant intensified, tribal

activists rightly called for an airing of that history to ensure that the Sierra Club did not repeat past mistakes.

The story begins like this: In the early to mid-1960s, the Sierra Club

spearheaded a national campaign to prevent construction of two hydroelectric

dams in the Grand Canyon. For the Arizona political elite and the federal

Bureau of Reclamation, the proposed dams would be the keystone of the

Central Arizona Project—a massive infrastructure scheme to enrich agricultural and development interests by getting water and electricity to

the booming cities of Phoenix and Tucson.

[Editorial note: consult source link for additional commentary]

Fish and Wildlife Service

250 Years After Washington Drained It, Feds Soak A Swamp

[https://www.wfdd.org/story/250-years-after-washington-drained-it-feds-soak-](https://www.wfdd.org/story/250-years-after-washington-drained-it-feds-soak-swamp)

swamp> 88.5 WFDD [10/11/2017 1:17 PM, Ben Finley, 8K, NC] reports that this is a story about a future president who tried to drain a swamp, and government workers who are making it wet again. By returning the habitat to its natural state, they just might keep the Great Dismal Swamp from heating up the planet. It was a young George Washington, working as a surveyor 254 years ago, who saw profits in the wetlands straddling the Virginia-North Carolina border. The seemingly impenetrable swamp had been dismissed as a deadly morass where explorers vanished and runaway slaves escaped. Today, scientists have discovered that the swamp's peat soil is a vital piece of the climate change puzzle, able to either contain or release a greenhouse gas that causes global warming. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is trying to undo damage by gradually "rewetting" the swamp. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the last two big fires at the Great Dismal Swamp released an estimated total of 6.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide – more than the annual output of a million cars.

The

<<http://democratherald.com/news/national/years-after-washington-drained-it-f>

eds-soak-a-swamp/article_7d5a0d2d-b6f3-57ab-b1ce-e341db202c91.html> Albany

Democrat-Herald [10/11/2017 11:59 AM, Ben Finley, 49K, OR] reports that now

a years-long project is under way to make the swamp wet again in the

113,000-acre national wildlife refuge in Virginia and North Carolina, where

ditches dug to reach lumber dried out the peat, releasing climate-changing

carbon and making wildfires more frequent. Scientists say that when peat is

in its naturally wet state, it holds onto carbon from plants that have died

over the course of centuries. Dried-out peat, however, releases that carbon

into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming.

Mussel, once feared extinct, brought back to Ohio River

<<http://www.outdoornews.com/2017/10/11/mussel-feared-extinct-brought-back-oh>

io-river/> Outdoor News [10/11/2017 11:29 AM, Associated Press, 18K, MN] A

century ago, the mussel, named for the color of its inner shell and a small

protuberance on its outer shell that resembles a feline foot, was also once

found in streams as distant as Illinois, Indiana and Alabama, according to a

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fact sheet. In announcing the mussel's

endangered status, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared that, unless

reproducing populations of the purple cat's paw could be found or developed,

"the species will become extinct in the foreseeable future." With the

world's only known population of purple cat's paw

pearlymusselsbarely

numbering two dozen, "a decision was made to relocate them and breed them in

captivity and not to just rely on nature," said Michael Schramm,

public
outreach specialist for Ohio River Islands National Wildlife
Refuge.

Bee-Killing Pesticide Found in 75 Percent of Global Honey Samples

<http://gearsofbiz.com/bee-killing-pesticide-found-in-75-percent-of-global-honey-samples/118833>> Gears Of Biz [10/11/2017 12:21 PM, Helen Clark, 223K]
reports that there's nothing sweet at all about the results of a recent study of honey from around the world. In samples from every continent except Antarctica, traces of neonicotinoid pesticides were found in 75 percent of them – even in honey from remote places like Tahiti. Almost half the samples contained at least two different types of pesticides.

The contamination rates were highest in North America, where a shocking 86 percent of the honey samples contained at least one neonicotinoid. For Asia, it was 80 percent; for Europe, 70 percent. The rate was lowest in South America (57 percent). In the study, published this month in the journal *Science*, researchers from the University of Neuchatel in Switzerland tested honey collected by citizen scientists from nearly 200 sites around the world. Earlier this month, the NRDC announced it is suing the Environmental Protection Agency for approving the use of neonicotinoids without consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ascertain the insecticides' impact on threatened or endangered species. The failure to do so is in violation of the federal Endangered Species Act.

[KY] Bald Eagle Population Soars in Kentucky

<<http://beforeitsnews.com/outdoors/2017/10/bald-eagle-population-soars-in-ke>

ntucky-2477411.html> Before It's News [10/11/2017 10:26 AM, Meredith

Abercrombie, 578K] reports that the bald eagle population in Kentucky

continues to flourish, with 164 nesting pairs recorded so far in 2017,

according to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. This is

twice as many as seven years ago.

There are multiple factors that have contributed to the rise in the eagle

population. The ban of DDT, a pesticide that caused eagle eggs to become

fragile, has improved their health significantly. This, along with the nationwide reintroduction program for the birds and an increase in suitable

habitats in the state such as water reservoirs and large wetlands, has helped the once-fleeting population come back to Kentucky, the Kentucky

Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources reports. This trend is also common

nationwide, with breeding pairs increasing since the implementation of the

Endangered Species Act of 1973, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service.

[SD] The only ND man indicted in a SD sting for selling eagle parts is in custody

<[http://www.grandforksherald.com/news/4342142-only-nd-man-indicted-sd-sting-](http://www.grandforksherald.com/news/4342142-only-nd-man-indicted-sd-sting-selling-eagle-parts-custody)

selling-eagle-parts-custody> Grand Forks Herald [10/11/2017 4:38 PM, Barry

Amundson, 87K, ND] A man who was the only North Dakotan to be indicted in an

undercover operation where 15 people were indicted recently for

selling and purchasing eagle and other protected migratory bird parts has denied the charges in a court appearance in federal court in Pierre. Sheldon Tree Top, 43, of Mandan, who faces up to two years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, was taken into custody last Friday by the U.S. Marshal Service pending his trial. No trial date has been set. He entered a not guilty plea at the hearing. In a two-year operation, an informant with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased protected eagle parts, as well as those from other migratory birds in danger, from a number of people mostly in South Dakota starting in 2014 and lasting into 2016.

[MT] Controversy Over Grizzly Bear Protection Continues

<<http://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/10/11/grizzly-bear-protection-montana>>

90.9 WBUR [10/11/2017 12:26 PM, Cooper McKim, 783K, MA] reports that federal officials are considering removing grizzly bears in a northern Montana region from the endangered species list. This comes on the heels of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decision to delist bears in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem – which took decades to resolve. But, the debate is far from over. Several groups have filed lawsuits to stop the switch and keep the grizzlies under federal management. Wyoming Public Radio's Cooper McKim reports.

[Editorial note: consult source link for audio]

[CA] Opinion: Tiny Mouse Is Huge Success Story for Endangered Species Act

<https://timesofsandiego.com/opinion/2017/10/11/tiny-mouse-huge-success-story-endangered-species-act/>

Times of San Diego [10/11/2017 5:15 PM, Brett Hartl, 60K, CA] reports hikers exploring the canyons and bluffs of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park may not know it, but they are in the midst of the incredible comeback of one of California's most endangered species. Pacific pocket mice recently released into the San Joaquin Hills by the San Diego Zoo have begun breeding on their own. It's a milestone for this tiny animal once thought extinct and a testament to the power of the Endangered Species Act. Habitat loss from development decimated the population to the point that it was believed to be extinct. Luckily a small population was "rediscovered" in 1993. They quickly received emergency endangered species protection from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a captive breeding program was initiated shortly after.

US Forest Service

Wildfires: How They Form, And Why They're So Dangerous

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/10/wildfire-california-danger-envir>

onment-spd/> National Geographic News [10/11/2017 2:27 PM, Austa Somvichian-Clausen, 10973K] reports as deadly wildfires continue to rage across Northern California's wine country, with winds picking up speed overnight and worsening conditions to now include a combined 54,000 acres of torched land, it now seems more important than ever to understand how wildfires work, and their lasting implications on our health and the environment. Though the exact source of Sonoma County's wildfires is

unclear, authorities have pointed to the fact that 95 percent of fires in the state of California are started by people, according to CNN. Meteorologists aren't yet able to forecast wildfire outbreaks, but there are three conditions that must be present in order for a wildfire to burn. Firefighters refer to it as the fire triangle: fuel, oxygen, and a heat source.

The suppression of naturally occurring, low-intensity forest fires has actually aided in the ability for high-intensity wildfires to run rampant. In the first half of the 20th century, the U.S. Forest Service suffered from what historian Stephen Pyne calls "Pyrophobia," or the desire to suppress all wildfires. In some places, the path toward a safer, more ecologically sound relationship with fire is being blazed with prescribed fire, and what's being called by officials as "Managed wildfire." Fire crews put their efforts to suppress wildfires around the most fire-prone areas, such as communities, municipal watersheds, and sequoia groves. Otherwise they are learning to let some fires burn themselves out, as nature intended.

[NH] White Mountains forest fire still burning a week later

<<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/10/11/white-mountains-forest-fire-has-burned-for-week/YwrgyRqhDY8HdsikVs9JI/story.html>> Boston Globe [10/11/2017 12:55 PM, Ben Thompson, 4047K, MA] reports that a forest fire that has burned for more than one week on a cliff in Woodstock, N.H., still covers around 70 acres and will continue to smolder until extinguished by heavy precipitation, the U.S. Forest Service said. "While rain over the weekend and holiday helped to dampen the fire's intensity, the fire is not

out," U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman Tiffany Bennasaid in a statement Tuesday. "Due to the very steep rugged terrain and fuels in the burn, this fire will continue to burn at various intensities until extinguished by a rain or snow event."

"The fire continues to retain heat and to burn in the duff and root systems," White Mountain National Forest acting Deputy Forest Supervisor Joe Koloski said in the statement. "Weather will play a large role in the fire's behavior over the next few weeks." The blaze first broke out early last Tuesday morning on Dilly Cliff near Lost River Gorge in Woodstock, and local, state, and federal firefighters have been on scene since then working to contain the fire.

[SC] More than 150 roads in need of repair around National Forest

[http://counton2.com/2017/10/11/more-than-150-roads-in-need-of-repair-around](http://counton2.com/2017/10/11/more-than-150-roads-in-need-of-repair-around-national-forest/)

-national-forest/> Count On News 2 [10/11/2017 7:02 PM, Rebecca Collett, 66K, SC] reports potholes pepper the roads through the Francis Marion National Forest. Severe flooding in 2015 coupled with Hurricane Matthew in 2016, led to widespread erosion and damage impacting 157 National Forest System roads. Amid a News 2 investigation into the road problems, the National Forest Service release information they are working to fix the problems. "The Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest has been aware of our road system needs and has been taking steps to address this need," according to Francis Marion National Forest Acting District Ranger Warren Tucker. The agency recently awarded two contracts to fix the biggest

problems. Priority will be given to arterial roads, roads within established school bus routes, roads leading to private residences and roads identified as emergency evacuation routes.

[IN] Region parks, parkways to lose hundreds of trees

[http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/region-parks-parkways-to-lose-hundreds-of](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/region-parks-parkways-to-lose-hundreds-of-trees/article_253abbc2-91f6-59c0-bc4d-02e2aa7aac94.html)

[trees/article_253abbc2-91f6-59c0-bc4d-02e2aa7aac94.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/region-parks-parkways-to-lose-hundreds-of-trees/article_253abbc2-91f6-59c0-bc4d-02e2aa7aac94.html)

Times of

Northwest Indiana [10/12/2017 5:00 AM, Ed Bierschenk, 212K,

IN] reports that

trees are beginning to show off their colorful fall finery, but unfortunately for hundreds of them, it will be their last appearance in

parks and parkways in Hammond and other communities in Lake and Porter

counties. Leaves actually already have left many of these trees, as they

succumbed to the larvae of emerald ash borers that have decimated trees

through much of Northwest Indiana and the nation.

Some 50 years after The Beatles invaded America, another set of invaders are

leaving their mark on the U.S. This time the tune the beetles are singing

could be titled, "I Want to Eat Your Land," and is not music to the ears of

tree lovers. Hundreds of ash trees throughout Lake, Porter and LaPorte

counties have come down over the last several years, and more will come down

in the coming years. In Gary, summer interns with the city's Green Team,

urban conservation team members and U.S. Forest Service workers tagged

infested trees in public areas, including the Broadway corridor, GreenLink

trail, and Barnes, Gateway, Jackson and Reed parks.

[OR] Forest Service needs to alter their procedures

<http://www.nrtoday.com/opinion/letters/forest-service-needs-to-alter-their-procedures/article_c041d941-786b-5801-96fa-b332289d1993.html> News Review
Today [10/11/2017 2:25 PM, Don Wilson, 36K, OR] reports that I found it disturbing that a Forest Service official stated that about 75 percent of the North Umpqua fires were "good" and just cleaned out the underbrush. Was it planned that way, or were we just lucky? I suspect the latter. I'm sure had areas been thinned, the taxpayers would have gotten a break from the timber sold, plus the fire would have been easier to contain - which would have saved money, and smoke wouldn't have filled the air for weeks, even if thinning slash were burned, because managers can choose days when winds are favorable. It seems to me if the Forest Service had an aggressive commercial thinning program 10,000 to 20,000 acres a year - yes, even cutting some big old trees, where managers decided when, where, what and how trees were removed - that the vital resources, soils, water and air would be better protected than if left to the whim of a lightning bolt.

[CA] Drought and heat, worsened by humans, help fuel California fires

<<https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/10/11/drought-and-heat-worsened-by-humans-help-fuel-california-fires/23239738/>> Aol. [10/11/2017 7:31 AM, James Rainey, 15926K] reports that it may take weeks to determine the spark that touched off each of the firestorms that consumed hunks of more than a dozen

California communities this week. But the consensus in the scientific community is that the conditions that cleared a path for the tsunami of flame were made by humans. Decades of aggressive firefighting left too much fuel on the ground. And more than a century of carbon emissions exacerbated the state's drought and the record high temperatures that baked brush and timber to an explosive dryness.

The damage from the wind-driven flames – which destroyed thousands of buildings and killed at least 17 people – is also more grievous because of another man-made initiative: building more and more homes in hilly communities adjacent to brush and woodlands. The early 1900s brought a public campaign for fire suppression after a series of deadly blazes. The U.S. created the national Forest Service, whose founding mission was to suppress fire on public lands. "Consequently, there is now a forest 'fire deficit' in the western United States attributable to the combined effects of human activities, ecological, and climate changes," a paper by Jennifer R. Marlon of Yale's School on Forestry and Environmental Studies, concludes.

<https://www.democracynow.org/2017/10/11/as_deadly_wildfires_rage_in_califor

nia> Democracy Now [10/11/2017 11:57 AM, Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, 359K, IL] In California, powerful winds and bone-dry conditions are fueling massive wildfires. The wildfires come after the US Forest Service warned last year that an unprecedented 5-year drought led to the deaths of more than 100 million trees in California, setting the stage for massive fires. Climate scientists believe human-caused global warming played a major role

in the drought. Park Williams, bioclimatologist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and co-author of a 2016 report, shows that global warming is responsible for nearly half of the forest area burned in the western United States over the past three decades.

[Editorial note: consult source link for video]

[CA] The Napa Fire Is a Perfectly Normal Apocalypse

<https://www.wired.com/story/the-napa-fire-is-a-perfectly-normal-apocalypse/>

Wired [10/11/2017 7:00 AM, Adam Rogers, 13620K, CA] reports that no one

yet knows the cause of the more than a dozen fires ablaze around California, but fires start where humans meet the wild forests, where people build for solitude or space or beauty. Things go wrong in those liminal spaces, at the interface between the wilds and the built.

This past weekend it was Napa and Sonoma, and the town of Santa Rosa. At least 15 people are dead. More than 1,500 houses are gone. Pushed by the wind, fires can throw burning embers a mile and a half ahead. The fire front starts moving faster than anyone can respond, jumping from ridgeline to ridgeline. A fire's progress through the forests and wildlands of North America isn't exactly formulaic, but scientists understand it reasonably well. "A wildfire typically doesn't last in one spot more than a minute or two. In grass it can be like 10 seconds," says Mark Finney, a U.S. Forest Service researcher at the Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory. "But structures can burn for a long time. That means they have a long time to be

able to spread the fire, to be able to ignite adjacent structures." They throw off embers as they decompose, and those wide walls emit and transfer heat.

[CA] Bulldozing Forests Isn't the Answer to Controlling California's Wildfires. Here's What Is.

<<http://fortune.com/2017/10/11/wildfires-in-california/>> Fortune [10/11/2017 3:14 PM, Steve Pyne, 8011K] reports on October 8, 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the first European to explore California, sighted smoke around San Pedro Bay. We've been sighting smoke in California and commenting on it ever since. The outbreak of wildfires in Napa and Sonoma, Calif. 475 years later reminds us that we may need to keep commenting until we truly learn what those smokes are signaling. They tell us that California is intrinsically fire-prone and that people have to live there in ways that accommodate this reality. For some fires, one factor may matter more than others, but they are all present. Still, two factors are particularly immediate and amenable, and they are the focus of a national cohesive strategy the American fire community has tried to promote. The first is that rural communities and exurban enclaves are towns and should be treated by the same codes and zoning that had taken fire out of America's long-combustible cities. The second is trickier because it involves cultural values and the landscapes that have become the breeding ground for fire.

[CA] Forest Service visitor-use surveys begin

<http://www.trinityjournal.com/news/local/article_able4248-ae23-11e7-af1b-6f95cbebd47c.html>

The Trinity Journal [10/11/2017 9:15 AM, Staff, 4K, CA] reports that beginning in October 2017 and continuing through September 2018, volunteers in orange vests standing near signs saying "Traffic Survey Ahead" will be asking motorists at various locations across the Shasta-Trinity National Forest to participate in a visitor-use survey. The purpose of this survey is to determine what activities visitors pursue on National Forest System lands, how visitors evaluate the quality of their trips, and recreationists' opinions about facilities and management policies.

The information collected is useful for national forest management planning as well as local community tourism. Survey participation is voluntary, responses are confidential and surveys will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. When survey volunteers have the opportunity to speak with local people who use the forest, as well as out-of-area visitors, then all types of visitors may be represented in the study.

US Geological Survey

[WY] Geologists Map the Plumbing Beneath Yellowstone's Old Faithful Geyser

<<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/seeing-beneath-old-faithful-180965230/>>

Smithsonian [10/11/2017 11:04 AM, Ben Panko, 3009K] Dubbed "Old Faithful" in 1870, this natural wonder produces bursts of water every 60 to 110 minutes that spurt more than 100 feet in the air. But exactly what supplies the regular eruptions of water? In the new study, published

in the journal *Geophysical Review Letters*, geologists took a more passive tact, writes Sean Reichard of *Yellowstone Insider*. They scattered 133 seismographs across a 250-acre region surrounding Old Faithful to measure the tiny vibrations the water and steam make as they move underneath the geyser. Over the course of two weeks, geologists tracked these tiny tremors, using them to measure the reservoir beneath Old Faithful. It turns out, it was surprisingly large, spanning more than 650 feet across and holding more than 79 million gallons of water—far more than the roughly 8,000 gallons released by the geyser in each of its eruptions. Water is heated by magma that underlies this massive chamber as the pressure climbs; the water is eventually ejected out of the surface cracks in a column of scorching-hot water.

[WY] 'Supervolcano' Under Yellowstone May Have Planet-Killing Potential

<[http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2017/10/11/supervolcano-yellowstone-national-pa](http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2017/10/11/supervolcano-yellowstone-national-park/)
rk/> CBS New York [10/11/2017 12:56 PM, Staff, 1220K, NY] reports according to reports, a "Supervolcano" sleeping underneath Yellowstone National Park has the destructive capability to send the entire planet into a volcanic winter. Even more unnerving, researchers believe that the Yellowstone volcano could be ready to erupt within the next few decades. Researchers at Arizona State University have presented new data that claims pressure beneath Yellowstone may build up much quicker than previously thought. The findings are changing the timetable for a potential eruption from thousands of years to as early as the 2030's. In the hopes of preventing the

next
global catastrophe, NASA has been working on a complicated plan
to cool down
the fiery time bomb. According to reports, NASA is looking to drill
down
into the great volcano to open a path for water to be pumped in.
The plan
may also unlock a new source of geothermal energy for use.

<<https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/yellowstone-supervolcanos-nast>

y-surprise-only-decades-to-prepare-for-an-eruption/ar-AAAtj7Kb>
MSN

[10/11/2017 2:20 PM, Trevor Nace, 880K] reports that scientists
have relied
upon is that when Yellowstone's supervolcano begins to rumble
and its magma
chambers begin to fill, we would have centuries to prepare for the
devastating eruption. Recent studies find that the speed at which the
volcano can fill its magma chamber and erupt is on the order of a
few
decades. That means Yellowstone supervolcano could go from its
usual
activity like today to erupting in 2032s.

Additional reporting:

<<http://latestnewsnetwork.com/build-up-to-yellowstone-eruption-could-take-just-10-years/>>

LatestNewsNetwork [10/11/2017 10:12 AM, Staff, 8K]

<<http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2017/10/11/supervolcano-yellowstone-nation>

al-park/> CBS Philly [10/11/2017 12:56 PM, Staff, 838K, PA]
reports that
with so much talk lately

National Park Service

National parks need investment from private companies to thrive

<http://www.elkharttruth.com/opinion/national-parks-need-investment-from-private-companies-to-thrive/article_be6597ee-0ca7-5628-9593-63d1c8f3aaa8.html>

vate-companies-to-thrive/article_be6597ee-0ca7-5628-9593-63d1c8f3aaa8.html>

Elkhart Truth [10/12/2017 6:00 AM, Frank Hugelmeyer and Thomas Dammrich,

13K, IN] reports that with fall upon us, millions of Americans will head to

America's iconic public lands and waters to soak up what's left of warmer

weather and get a glimpse of fall's renowned foliage. Ensuring Americans'

ability to enjoy our country's outdoor spaces is big business and critical

to the \$887 billion outdoor recreation industry. Given their significant

role in providing healthy, outdoor recreation for Americans and the millions

of jobs and thousands of small businesses they support, it's time our national parks, waterways and other public outdoor spaces get the attention

they deserve.

In recent months, the decision by the Trump Administration to review the

size of 27 National Monuments has spurred an important debate.

Yet, there is

a much greater threat to the nation's recreation economy looming than

monument borders and it is an issue that receives little to no attention.

Improvements to our outdated recreation infrastructure have gone largely

unaddressed by both political parties for decades, no matter who lives in

the White House or is in the majority on Capitol Hill. The good news is

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is trying something different. He has laid out

a course of action that addresses the nearly \$20 billion maintenance backlog

crippling many of our outdoor spaces and emphasizes the need to modernize

services, lodging, marinas and campgrounds.

No more parks?

<<http://www.sierraclub.org/lay-of-the-land/2017/10/no-more-parks>> Sierra Club [10/11/2017 11:58 AM, Emily Lande, 227K] On Wednesday, October 11th, the House Natural Resources Committee is going to take a vote on a piece of legislation that Chairman Rob Bishop and his anti-parks caucus have been building towards for years. This bill, H.R. 3990, would gut the Antiquities Act, one of the key tools for public lands protection that has been used by 16 Presidents, democrat and republican, since it became law in 1906. With Secretary of the Interior Zinke's sham monuments review we saw them going after existing monuments; this bill goes after future monuments by making it next to impossible for any president to designate a monument ever again.

[NY] Stonewall National Monument's rainbow flag plan was going fine, then things got weird

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/10/11/stonewall-national-monuments-rainbow-flag-plan-was-going-fine-then-things-got-weird/?utm_term=.70cbe1784d5e> Washington Post [10/11/2017 6:01 PM, Juliet Eilperin and Darryl Fears, 967K] reports the plan to celebrate the rainbow flag flying over Stonewall National Monument was going smoothly. Then things got weird. Activists had pressed for months to get the flag - a long-standing symbol of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community - hoisted atop the flagpole adjacent to the national monument that President Barack Obama

designated last year to commemorate the LGBT civil rights movement. The National Park Service agreed to do it, providing a flag that went up Sept. 28, and it worked with activists to put on an event commemorating the act on Wednesday, which was also National Coming Out Day. Joshua Laird, commissioner of the National Parks of New York Harbor, said in an interview Wednesday that Interior Department officials had made "an inquiry" late last week to his office to determine whether the rainbow flag would be the first one to fly on the ground of a national monument.

NPS officials determined that the flagpole was on city property, rather than the 7.7-acre patch of land in Christopher Park that constitutes the monument itself. Laird emphasized that the rainbow flag was never removed and that the National Park Service has donated it to the city. He said that Interior Department officials in Washington did want to know whether "it was accurate" that the rainbow flag would set a precedent by flying on federal property but that he would not describe administration officials as raising "a concern" about it. "It's still up, it's still flying there," Laird said of the flag. "Visitors to Stonewall National Monument will see it, and 99 percent of them will not care if it's on our property or property."

The
<<http://www.sfchronicle.com/news/us/article/Rainbow-flag-flies-at-US-monument-but-not-on-12271009.php>> San Francisco Chronicle [10/11/2017 4:19 PM, Staff, 94110, CA] reports gay rights activists who worked to get a rainbow flag installed at the new Stonewall National Monument in New York City are upset the National Park Service says the flag isn't actually on federal land but on city property. The distinction may seem like a minor one because the

flag is flying either way. The group that lobbied for the flag to be flown at the site says the Park Service's announcement the city, not the federal government, would be maintaining the flag seems like a betrayal.

<https://boston.edgemedianetwork.com/news/national/250157/trump_admins_natio_nal_park_service_kills_support_of_rainbow_flag_dedication_at_stonewall_monument> Edge Media Network [10/11/2017 2:11 PM, Staff, 2615K, MA] reports that the National Park Service (NPS), which had originally approved and sponsored a ceremony to be held Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. at Stonewall National Monument to dedicate the Rainbow flag, has suddenly withdrawn. The event, however, will go on. LGBT activists planning the event with NPS officials cite bureaucratic homophobia for the last-minute change in plans, as the Trump Administration has systematically rolled back LGBT rights at the federal level since January. This historic event had originally been planned as the first time that the LGBT flag will wave over federally-funded land, under the permanent stewardship of the National Park Service. NPS personnel were scheduled to speak at the event, but will no longer be in attendance.

[NC] Mysterious debris washes ashore in Hatteras, leading to a lot of questions

<[https://pilotonline.com/news/local/aeronautical-debris-possibly-from-a-rock-et-washes-ashore-in-hatteras/article_133984be-00b4-556d-8449-14140254166e.ht](https://pilotonline.com/news/local/aeronautical-debris-possibly-from-a-rock-et-washes-ashore-in-hatteras/article_133984be-00b4-556d-8449-14140254166e.html)ml> Virginian-Pilot [10/11/2017 10:29 AM, Jeff Hampton, 633K, VA] reports

that rough surf on the Outer Banks just keeps on giving. A piece of aeronautical debris washed ashore Sunday evening in Hatteras Village. It's white, about 15 feet long and maybe 10 feet wide, made of metal and synthetic material. The rounded piece had a serial number on it and appears broken from off from something else. It did not have many barnacles on the surface indicating it had not been in the water long.

Photographer Erin Everlee and her neighbors found the object. They called authorities with the National Park Service and later began an internet search. Rocket fairings – protective nose cones – are jettisoned after the rocket gets beyond the earth's atmosphere. Park rangers loaded the piece onto a flatbed truck and hauled it away. Air Force authorities were glad to help, and said they would let them know what it was soon.

[TN] Chimney Tops Trail reopens

<<http://www.smokymountainnews.com/outdoors/item/20963-chimney-tops-trail-reo>
pens> Smoky Mountain News [10/11/2017 4:03 PM, Staff, 10K, NC] reports that for the first time in nearly a year, the Chimney Tops Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is open to hikers. The trail was closed off last November when a small fire was discovered on the rugged Chimney Tops pinnacle, and when that fire metastasized into a fiery blaze that swept down through the park and into Gatlinburg, it severely damaged the summit, resulting in long-term trail closure.

The final quarter-mile of trail that once led to the Chimney Tops pinnacles is still closed, due to heavy fire damage resulting in safety concerns.

However, the trail is now open as far as a newly developed observation point that offers views of Mount LeConte and the Chimney Tops pinnacles. The Road Prong Trail, whose closure had coincided with that of Chimney Tops, is now open as well. "We are excited to complete the work on the Chimney Tops Trail in time for the fall color season in Great Smoky Mountains National Park," said Acting Superintendent Clay Jordan.

[MS] Barrier islands to remain closed after Nate

<<http://www.wtvm.com/story/36576102/barrier-islands-to-remain-closed-after-n>

ate> WTVM [10/11/2017 6:44 PM, Joyce Philippe, 55K, GA] reports that Mississippi barrier islands will remain closed after post-hurricane assessments revealed moderate to significant damage in multiple areas. The initial evaluations took place at West Ship and Horn Islands. Additional inspections will need to be completed on the other islands before they can be reopened to the public.

A structural engineering team from the National Park Service will arrive in the area on Thursday to begin formal assessments. The team will survey the Davis Bayou fishing pier, government dock, boardwalks and overlooks, as well as the infrastructure at West Ship and Horn Islands on Friday. Mississippi's barrier islands are managed by Gulf Islands National Seashore under the National Park Service. NPS officials say that all properties will open for public use once necessary repairs are completed.

[TX] New EPA Rule Will Allow Twice The Pollution From Texas

Coal Plants

<<http://hpr.org/post/new-epa-rule-will-allow-twice-pollution-texas-coal-pla>

nts> High Plains Public Radio [10/11/2017 10:12 PM, Jonathan Baker, 5K, TX]

reports that a new rule enacted by Donald Trump's EPA will allow coal plants

to increase the amount of pollution they pump into the atmosphere, reports

The Texas Observer. The new rule will allow coal power plants to emit almost

twice as much sulfur dioxide as the previous restrictions instituted by the

Obama Administration.

Sulfur dioxide is known to exacerbate respiratory illnesses like asthma, and

the pollutant is a major contributor to acid rain. The substance famously

created haze problems in Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains national parks.

Texas resisted the previous pollution rule under the previous administration, until the Obama White House ultimately forced Texas to

comply. In response, Texas sued. Now, it appears Texas coal plants have won

the day.

[MT] Glacier National Park sets annual attendance record

<<http://mtstandard.com/news/state-and-regional/glacier-national-park-sets-an>

nual-attendance-record/article_05b42339-2692-5703-a28a-7a81f1b702ab.html>

Montana Standard [10/11/2017 1:45 PM, Associated Press, 36K, MT] reports

National Park Service statistics show that more than 3 million people

visited Glacier National Park so far this year, making 2017 the busiest year

in park history. The Flathead Beacon reported Tuesday that 3.3 million

people had visited the park through September, a nearly 13-percent increase during the same nine-month period in 2016. Last year, the park fell short of the 3 million mark by just 37,000 visitors. Total visitation in September, however, was down compared to the same month last year due to a fire that closed a large swath of the west side of the park, including the popular Going-to-the-Sun Road.

[WY] September 3rd busiest in Yellowstone's history

<<http://billingsgazette.com/lifestyles/recreation/september-rd-busiest-in-ye>

llowstone-s-history/article_b11ec58c-9902-5359-804b-8c3a94a990df.html>

Billings Gazette [10/11/2017 12:20 PM, Staff, 195K, MT] reports that

Yellowstone National Park hosted 640,068 visits in September, the third

busiest on record, but down 8.79 percent from September 2016.

Visits may

have declined due to several days of snowy weather. Road closures resulting

from snow, ice and avalanche danger occurred on seven days.

Portions of the

Beartooth Highway were also closed from Sept. 15 to 28.

So far in 2017, the park has hosted 3,872,776 visits, down 2.47 percent from

the same period in 2016 (which was the highest on record). Even with the

decline, year-to-date visitation in 2017 is 19.6 percent higher than five

years ago.

[WY] Traffic accident kills 4 bison in Grand Teton park

<<http://www.postregister.com/articles/west/2017/10/11/traffic-accident-kills>

-4-bison-grand-teton-park> Post Register [10/11/2017 8:19 AM, Associated Press, 47K, ID] reports that Grand Teton National Park rangers are investigating a traffic accident that left four bison dead in northwest Wyoming. The accident occurred Oct. 2 in the park on a foggy night on U.S. 26/89/191 when a pickup truck hit one bison on the highway, rolled and then struck and killed three more nearby bison.

The National Park Service says the Casper woman who was driving alone escaped with minor injuries. Park spokesman Andrew White tells the Jackson Hole News & Guide that a citation has not been issued but isn't out of the question if it's determined the motorist was traveling too fast for the conditions. Wildlife-vehicle collisions are common on the highway, which has posted speed limit of 45 mph at night.

[WY] Yellowstone Death Linked to a Search for Forrest Fenn's Treasure

<<http://www.kcwy13.com/content/news/Yellowstone-Death-Linked-to-a-Search-for>

-Forrest-Fenns-Treasure--450461673.html> KCWY [10/11/2017 11:26 PM, Penny Preston, 15K, WY] reports that Yellowstone National Park is confirming the first death there this year was connected to a search for the Forrest Fenn treasure. Forrest Fenn, a New Mexico art collector, hid a box with jewels and coins worth millions in the Rockies. Two men died while searching for the treasure in New Mexico. 53-year old Jeff Murphy reportedly started his day hike in Yellowstone on Rescue Creek trail June 7th, 2017. But, a park press release said Murphy's wife reported him missing the next day, so the search for Murphy began. On June 9th, searchers found Murphy's

body. Park
spokeswoman Morgan Warthin said he apparently died from a fall.

[WY] 'UFO' Sighted Zig-Zagging Over Yellowstone Supervolcano

<<http://beforeitsnews.com/survival/2017/10/ufo-sighted-zig-zagging-over-yell-owstone-supervolcano-2680071.html>> Before It's News
[10/11/2017 8:12 AM, Staff, 578K] A new video has surfaced on YouTube which shows what appears to be a UFO zig-zagging it's way over the Yellowstone supervolcano in northern Wyoming. Yellowstone has long been a hotspot for alien sightings and UFO enthusiasts. The famed Yellowstone volcano has garnered national interest in recent months, especially over the summer when more than 400 earthquakes hit in one week near the volcano. Experts at the U.S. Geological Survey say the risk of the Yellowstone supervolcano erupting is quite low, with a probability of one in 730,000.

[WY] Devils Tower plans prescribed fire

<http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/devils-tower-plans-prescribed-fire/article_9c1031a2-0a8a-5890-82f1-d136c37b4553.html> Rapid City Journal
[10/11/2017 7:00 AM, Staff, 107K, SD] reports that Devils Tower National Monument will implement a prescribed burn this fall as conditions permit, according to a news release. Fire management officials from the Northern Great Plains Fire Office and Devils Tower National Monument plan to burn 171 acres in the North Terrace Unit during the next few weeks. The last time a

prescribed burn was completed in the North Terrace Unit was during the fall of 2005.

The burn is needed to remove buildup of dead fuels and woody herbaceous growth, and encourage the growth of native prairie grasses and forbs. If conditions are not acceptable on the scheduled day of the burn, it will be postponed until desirable conditions return.

[WY] Experts expect record year for lake trout removal

<<http://www.postregister.com/articles/west/2017/10/11/experts-expect-record-year-lake-trout-removal>> Post Register [10/11/2017 8:20 AM, Mark Davis, 47K, ID] reports that the cutthroat trout conservation team at Yellowstone National Park expects to break a record this year, ridding Yellowstone Lake of more than 360,000 lake trout. The high mark was set last year, with 358,000 removed from the lake. "They're on a record pace," said Jonathan Shafer, Yellowstone public affairs officer.

There are 35 to 40 miles of nets in the lake every day during the mid-May to mid-October effort. Crews made up of both Park Service employees and subcontractors man the nets six days a week in an attempt to crash the lake trout population. Nearly 3 million lake trout have been removed since the program began.

Office of Insular Affairs

[PR] Three weeks since Hurricane Maria, much of Puerto Rico still

dark,
thirsty and frustrated

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/three-weeks-since-hurricane-maria-much-of-puerto-rico-still-dark-dry-frustrated/2017/10/11/3a263b22-ade7-11e7-9e58-e6288544af98_story.html?utm_term=.ac16cf50cd17>
Washington Post
[10/11/2017 7:56 PM, Manuel Roig-Franzia and Arelis R. Hernández] reports it has been three weeks since Hurricane Maria savaged Puerto Rico, and life in the capital city of San Juan inches toward something that remotely resembles a new, uncomfortable form of normalcy. Roughly half of Puerto Ricans have no working cellphone service, creating islands of isolation within the island and cutting off hundreds of thousands of people in regions outside the largest metropolitan areas from regular contact with their families, aid groups, medical care and the central government. Accompanying that vision of the future are worries about outbreaks of diseases such as scabies and Zika, which is transmitted by mosquitoes breeding in standing water. Just 63 percent of the island's residents have access to clean drinking water, and only 60 percent of wastewater treatment plants are operating, according to figures released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

[PR] Puerto Rico's hurricane death toll rises to 45

<<http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/11/us/puerto-rico-maria-crisis/index.html>> CNN
[10/11/2017 9:11 PM, Ray Sanchez] reports nearly three weeks after Hurricane Maria pummeled Puerto Rico, the vast majority of the island remains without power and the death toll from the storm has risen to 45, authorities

said At least 113 people remain unaccounted for, according to Karixia Ortiz, a spokeswoman for Puerto Rico's Department of Public Safety. The recovery has moved slowly since Maria struck the US territory on September 20, leaving most of the island without basic services such as power and running water, according to residents, relief workers and local elected officials. As of Wednesday 89% of the island was without electricity and almost 47% had no phone service, according to a website set up by the Puerto Rican government. Some 43% of the island's 313 bank branches remained closed, it said.

[PR] Puerto Rico: US officials privately acknowledge serious food shortage

<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/11/puerto-rico-food-shortage-hurricane-maria>> The Guardian [10/11/2017 8:06 PM, Richard Wolffe, UK] reports federal officials privately admit there is a massive shortage of meals in Puerto Rico three weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Officials at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) say that the government and its partners are only providing 200,000 meals a day to meet the needs of more than 2 million people. That is a daily shortfall of between 1.8m and 5.8m meals. The scale of the food crisis dwarfs the more widely publicized challenges of restoring power and communications. More than a third of Puerto Ricans are still struggling to live without drinking water. Conditions on Puerto Rico remain dire; just 16% of islanders having access to electricity. While commercial flights have resumed, and most gas stations have reopened, much of the island's economy remains at a

standstill.

[PR] Trump's Puerto Rico video tells positive story, leaves misery on cutting-room floor

<[http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/presidential/trump-puerto-rico-v](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/presidential/trump-puerto-rico-video-tells-positive-story-leaves-misery-on-cutting-room-floor-20171011.html)
ideo-tells-positive-story-leaves-misery-on-cutting-room-floor-20171011.html>

Philadelphia Inquirer [10/11/2017 8:21 AM, Jenna Johnson, 2100K, PA] reports

that a few minutes into a video about Puerto Rico relief efforts that President Trump tweeted out this week is a short clip about U.S.

Forest

Service workers clearing fallen trees off a road in the rural interior.

Over

the sound of chain saws, the Forest Service's fire chief explains how this

will allow for the easier distribution of food, medical supplies and other

aid. But his full comments are cut off by a shift to footage of a ship used

as a hospital.

Had the road-clearing clip continued for 15 seconds, the president's millions of Twitter followers would have heard the fire chief praise the

people of Puerto Rico for successfully clearing many roads before the

federal government arrived. The sentiment seems contrary to the president's

repeated criticism of local efforts and his claim in the tweet accompanying

the video: "Nobody could have done what I've done for #PuertoRico with so

little appreciation. So much work!"

[PR] Puerto Rico Relief Bill Cancels \$16 Billion in Debt — But Not for Puerto Rico

<https://theintercept.com/2017/10/11/puerto-rico-relief-bill-cancels-16-bill>

ion-in-debt-but-not-for-puerto-rico/> The Intercept [10/11/2017 12:01 PM, David Dayen, 1825K] reports that House Republicans unveiled a \$36.5 billion disaster relief supplemental package Tuesday night, intended to pay for relief and rebuilding efforts for the floods, hurricanes, and wildfires of the past several months. It includes money for Puerto Rico's ongoing struggle with the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, though only a fraction of that headline number. In fact, \$5 billion of the funds earmarked for Puerto Rico comes in the form of a loan, increasing the amount of money the island will eventually need to pay back. And in a cruel irony, the bill also contains \$16 billion in debt relief – just not for Puerto Rico's crushing debt.

The full House chamber will vote on the bill from the House Appropriations Committee this week. The committee also proposes \$576.5 million in U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior grants for wildfire suppression and management.

[PR] Puerto Rico's treasured rainforest another victim of Hurricane Maria

[http://www.post-gazette.com/news/nation/2017/10/11/Puerto-Rico-s-treasured-](http://www.post-gazette.com/news/nation/2017/10/11/Puerto-Rico-s-treasured-rainforest-another-victim-of-Hurricane-Maria/stories/201710110228)

rainforest-another-victim-of-Hurricane-Maria/stories/201710110228> Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [10/12/2017 6:30 AM, Luis Ferré-Sadurní, 968K, PA] reports that when you looked up, you could once see nothing but the lush, emerald canopy of tabonuco and sierra palm trees covering El Yunque National

Forest. That was before Hurricane Maria obliterated the only tropical rain forest in the U.S. forest system. Left behind was a scene so bare that on a recent visit, it was possible to see the concrete skyline of San Juan about 30 miles west — a previously unimaginable sight.

El Yunque has been an enormous source of pride in Puerto Rico and one of the main drivers of the island's tourism industry. The 28,000-acre forest on the eastern part of the island h

<DOI Daily Briefing (10-12-17).docx>

<DOI Daily Briefing (10-12-17).pdf>

<image002.png>

From: Erika Walter
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Speaker invitation for Secretary Zinke
Date: Thursday, July 06, 2017 5:17:36 PM

Truly appreciate the guidance that you passed along, Heather! As a quick re-introduction, I am the former press secretary for Majority Whip Steve Scalise. You and I coordinated when I bosses did the New Orleans morning show interview on WWLTV when they did the offshore energy tour together! What an incredibly heavy month it's been, huh?

I hope you are well and enjoying your new opportunity at Interior. I saw Zinke walking down the Mall with his wife and dog about a month ago and he waved at me. Please tell him it was so nice to see him.

Erika Walter
Press Secretary
Partnership for Public Service
202.775.9111

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, July 6, 2017 5:13 PM
To: Jim Seymour <JSeymour@ourpublicservice.org>
Cc: Erika Walter <EWalter@ourpublicservice.org>
Subject: Re: Speaker invitation for Secretary Zinke

scheduling@ios.doi.gov

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 6, 2017 at 5:11 PM, Jim Seymour <JSeymour@ourpublicservice.org> wrote:

Thank you Heather.

Is Russell Roddy the appropriate person to contact, or do you recommend another POC?

Best,
Jim

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, July 6, 2017 4:45 PM
To: Jim Seymour <JSeymour@ourpublicservice.org>

Cc: Erika Walter <EWalter@ourpublicservice.org>

Subject: Re: Speaker invitation for Secretary Zinke

Hello there, Jim. Please contact the scheduling office with questions regarding event requests.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 6, 2017 at 4:36 PM, Jim Seymour <JSeymour@ourpublicservice.org> wrote:

Dear Heather,

My colleague Erika Walter recommended that I contact you regarding the attached invitation to Secretary Zinke to speak at a town hall style event on Thursday, July 20 at the Partnership for Public Service. We have not heard back yet regarding the Secretary's participation and wonder if you might be able to help check his availability that afternoon. We are currently targeting 4:00-5:00 p.m. for his participation, but can be a little flexible on his actual start time, if needed.

Also attached are a couple press clips from Fox News and the New York Times honoring the dedicated and talented civil servants in our federal workforce. We hope to generate similar media attention around this conversation on the 20th.

The event will take place in the Partnership for Public Service's conference center and will include a networking reception for our Service to America Medal finalists and alumni and other leaders to connect and share experiences across federal agencies and deliver even better results for the American people.

Please feel free to call or email if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you and best wishes,

Jim Seymour

Director, Programs and Events

Partnership for Public Service

1100 New York Ave NW, Suite 200 East
Washington, DC 20005

(202) 775-2758 direct

(202) 775-9111 main

[@RPublicService](mailto:RPublicService)

From: Heather Swift
To: [Chris Peterson](#)
Subject: Re: Sperry Chalet rebuild
Date: Saturday, September 16, 2017 7:23:06 AM

:) happens to me all the time. It's amazing how embarrassing we get over typos.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 15, 2017, at 7:43 PM, Chris Peterson <cpeterson@hungryhorsenews.com> wrote:

Wife! Whups! THanks

On Fri, Sep 15, 2017 at 5:31 PM
Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Chris there's a typo in your headline. "Sherry"

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 15, 2017, at 10:24 AM, Chris Peterson
<cpeterson@hungryhorsenews.com> wrote:

Would he be available to talk about it a little bit?

On Sep 15, 2017, at 7:19 AM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

The Secretary more than supports rebuilding
Sperry, he has already begun the process.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Sep 13, 2017 at 12:32 PM, Chris Peterson
<cpeterson@hungryhorsenews.com> wrote:

In an interview with Sen. Jon Tester this morning, he noted that in order to rebuild the Sperry Cahlet, Sec. Zinke would have to support such a measure.

Does Ryan support rebuilding the chalet?

--

Chris Peterson
Hungry Horse News
(406) 892-2151
mobile (406) 249-4344

--

Chris Peterson
Hungry Horse News
(406) 892-2151
mobile (406) 249-4344

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Michael Doyle](#)
Subject: Re: statement on this?
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:18:08 AM

This is what I sent to Ben.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and his wife. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice, which we did.

Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Nov 20, 2017 at 11:10 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Now, THAT'S what I call a statement.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:08 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: statement on this?

Politico continues it's rapid descent into tabloid sensationalism.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Nov 20, 2017 at 11:00 AM, Michael Doyle <mduoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi:

Statement on this?

LOLA ZINKE ROLE SCRUTINIZED: New [documents](#) show Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's wife, Lola, used Interior staff time to coordinate some of her activities while traveling with her husband during jaunts that gave her access to high level politicians and GOP donors who could benefit her as a political operator in her own right, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). "These emails show that the leadership at the Department of Interior treats basic ethical standards like an inconvenience," Western Values Project Executive Director Chris Saeger said.

In one instance, records show the secretary's wife helped decide the guest list for a Young America's Foundation town hall forum with her husband on April 17 at its Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara. She sent a "list of people I have invited to the event" to two Interior staffers, according to a series of April 7 emails. Interior says she pays her own way when she accompanies her husband and that travel is cleared by ethics officials in advance. "DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence" with the secretary, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email Friday

Michael Doyle

Reporter

mduoyle@eenews.net

202-446-0467 x467

@MichaelDoyle10

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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Michael Doyle
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: statement on this?
Date: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:21:34 AM

thanks

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:17 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: statement on this?

This is what I sent to Ben.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and his wife. The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence.

It's not accurate to say staff advised against it. Staff simply stated it would need to get it approved by ethics under short notice, which we did.

Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Nov 20, 2017 at 11:10 AM, Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net> wrote:

Now, THAT'S what I call a statement.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 11:08 AM
To: Michael Doyle <mdoyle@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: statement on this?

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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
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Hi:

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Michael Doyle
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Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM

From: Stephen Wackowski
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Steve - please review your press release
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 4:17:16 PM

In the boss's quote strike "enlisted" and replace with "served"

"It's an incredible honor to be asked to serve on Secretary Zinke's staff. I look forward to working with our state, local, and First Alaskan partners to help unlock Alaska's potential."

Sent from my iPhone

On May 30, 2017, at 11:23 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Steve- can you please drop in a quote and make any edits?

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

(ANCHORAGE) Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

“A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues,” said Secretary Zinke. “Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve enlisted in the military and then he continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior’s management.”

QUOTE STEVE

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family’s halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary’s College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley’s Air Force ROTC program .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce's* "Top 40 under 40" Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

From: Davis, Natalie
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#); laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Thank you!
Date: Friday, July 07, 2017 1:30:21 PM

Brad,

It was great meeting you! So glad you both had a great time.

Have a great weekend,
Natalie

On Fri, Jul 7, 2017 at 1:19 PM, Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Laura, Heather and Natalie,

Thank you for your kind invitation to join you for the 4th of July fireworks. My wife and I had a wonderful time and so appreciate all the work that went into it. Thank you all for being such wonderful hosts!

I hope that I can return sometime in the future! Thank you again!

All the best,

Brad

Brad Rateike
Assistant Director of Cabinet Communications

(b) (6)

Desk: (b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)

--

Natalie Davis, Special Assistant
Immediate Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
202.208.4928

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Re: Todd Willens Press Release
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 11:13:11 AM

General edits:

1. This is not a PAS position so POTUS did not nominate, Zinke appointed him.
2. Please draft quote from Sec and ask Todd for a quote.
3. Please ask Todd for a quote from Rep. Pearce

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials Praise Selection as a Win for the West

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former chief of staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior . In that role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt.

Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and

the

private

sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

DRAFT QUOTE SECRETARY

DRAFT QUOTE WILLENS

“The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior,” **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** “In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd

handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country.

As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd Willens has worked on difficult Indian Country issues, proving himself to be a close listener to Native concerns and demonstrating the diplomatic skills necessary in the government-to-government relationship between the United State and Native Nations," **Jackson Brossy, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, said.** "Todd's addition to the leadership at Interior will bring practical, on-the-ground experience with Indian Country, to the benefit of both Interior and Tribes. The Navajo Nation looks forward to working closely with Todd."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

"For tribes, it is critically important to have knowledgeable and trusted leadership at Interior," **Governor Kurt Riley of the Pueblo of Acoma said.** "Todd has long proved his exceptional understanding of Indian issues and his willingness to work with tribes to find practical solutions. Todd is an outstanding choice for Assistant Deputy Secretary."

Willens is a native of California and is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany_Eli)
Subject: Re: Todd Willens Press Release
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 12:50:00 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 12:29 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

DRAFT QUOTE SEC. ZINKE:

“

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department,” Secretary Ryan Zinke said. “Most of Interior’s holdings and responsibilities are in the west, and Todd’s intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior’s mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities.”

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 11:12 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

General edits:

1. This is not a PAS position so POTUS did not nominate, Zinke appointed him.
2. Please draft quote from Sec and ask Todd for a quote.
3. Please ask Todd for a quote from Rep. Pearce

**Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official
Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior**

*Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials Praise Selection as a Win for the
West*

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the

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Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs
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government-to-government relationship between the United State and Native Nations,”
Jackson Brossy, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, said.
“Todd's addition to the leadership at Interior will bring practical, on-the-ground

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Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

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Willens is a native of California and is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

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From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather.Swift)
Subject: Re: Todd Willens Press Release
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 7:00:21 PM

Also in Torres' quote we may want to change "leadership" to "leader" for grammar.

On Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 6:59 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Native American Leaders Praise Todd Willens as President Donald Trump's Nominee for Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

President Donald Trump has announced the nomination of former Interior Department official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Willens brings with him to Interior more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and private businesses. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

At the Department, Willens will focus on the policy initiatives and daily workings of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Charged with a host of responsibilities, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service oversees the protection of endangered species, the restoration and conservation of wildlife habitats, and the distribution of excise taxes to State fish and wildlife agencies. The National Park Service administers the United States' national parks. Additionally, the Bureau of Reclamation manages water and other resources in the American West, while the U.S. Geological Survey strives to better understand the Earth and its resources through scientific examination.

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

“Todd Willens has worked on difficult Indian Country issues, proving himself to be a close listener to Native concerns and demonstrating the diplomatic skills necessary in the government-to-government relationship between the United State and Native Nations,” **Jackson Brossy, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, said.** “Todd’s addition to the leadership at Interior will bring practical, on-the-ground experience with Indian Country, to the benefit of both Interior and Tribes. The Navajo Nation looks forward to working closely with Todd.”

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Willens is a native of California and is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Michael Coleman](#)
Subject: Re: Todd Willens to DOI/ Zinke trip
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 2:52:43 PM

Did you get this? I got a bounce back

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 2:44 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Here you go, Michael. This is going around 2PM CT

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at

defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said**. "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said**. "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said**. "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said**. "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said**. "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee**. "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California

native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jul 12, 2017 at 2:28 PM, Michael Coleman <mcolemab@abqjournal.com> wrote:
Muchas gracias!

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 12, 2017, at 1:07 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there Michael - we are announcing Todd's role today. Will send you our press release ahead of time.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jun 27, 2017 at 4:20 PM, Michael Coleman <mcolemab@abqjournal.com> wrote:

Hello:

Michael Coleman with the Albuquerque Journal DC bureau here. I'm hearing that Todd Willens, formerly Rep. Steve Pearce's chief-of-staff is headed to Interior to take a senior management role after the 4th.

Do you have any kind of statement or release on his hiring?

Also, any more details yet on when Sec. Zinke is headed to NM? Just want to make sure to keep an eye on that visit.

Thank you,

Michael Coleman

From: "Heather Swift" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
To: "Michael Coleman" <mcoleman@abqjournal.com>
Cc: "interior press" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "Alex Hinson" <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 5:18:50 PM
Subject: Re: Zinke trip to NM

In progress

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 21, 2017, at 5:10 PM, Michael Coleman <mcoleman@abqjournal.com> wrote:

Was just listening to the hearing webcast. He mentioned he's coming to NM in a couple of weeks at Sen. Heinrich's invitation. Have the dates been nailed down yet?

From: "Heather Swift" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
To: "Michael Coleman" <mcoleman@abqjournal.com>
Cc: "interior press" <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, "Hinson, Alex" <alex_hinson@ios.doi.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 4:41:01 PM
Subject: Re: Interior staff reorganization

Regarding reorganization: The Secretary draws inspiration from his days in the military and from the way the USDA and DOI co-manage wildfire fighting. The Secretary's planned reorganization will allow us to push more funding and resources to the local offices and parks through joint management areas. This will allow bureaus to work together and come to solutions that better suit local communities rather than operate in silos and deliver

conflicting opinions.

Regarding moving Senior Executive Staff:
The President signed an executive order to reorganize the federal government for the future and the Secretary has been absolutely out front on that issue. In fact, he mentioned a Department-wide, front lines-focused reorganization on his first day address to all employees. Personnel moves are being conducted to better serve the taxpayer and the Department's operations through matching Senior Executive skill sets with mission and operational requirements.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 21, 2017, at 4:17 PM, Michael Coleman <mcoleman@abqjournal.com> wrote:

Hello:

Michael Coleman with the Albuquerque Journal Washington bureau here. I saw that Sen. Tom Udall of NM was questioning Sec. Zinke [today](#) about the management reorganization at Interior but I didn't get to see his responses (was in another hearing).

Has Interior issued any kind of statement about what is happening, or is there any guidance you can give me on making sure the secretary's rationale is reflected in what I write about it? I don't see anything on the subject in my inbox from Interior.

Thanks for any help you can provide.

Michael
[202-329-4743](tel:202-329-4743)

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: TPs
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:05:57 PM

Many thx!!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 4, 2017, at 11:03 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hey guys, please see some guidance for off topic talking points.
I don't see the Secretary getting asked but want him to be prepared just in case.
Please let me know if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Budget And Government Shutdown

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On Gen. Flynn:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

Roy Moore:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On DOJ:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Ebbs, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Re: Travel document release
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:36:01 AM

On the Alaska portion of the trip, Mrs. Zinke stayed longer because Senator Murkowski invited her to participate in the Rolling Thunder ride and ceremony for Memorial Day.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 10:26 AM, Ebbs, Stephanie <Stephanie.Ebbs@abc.com> wrote:

Thanks Heather.

Do you know if it was common for the spouse to come on trips with previous secretaries as well?

Stephanie Ebbs

ABC News-Washington

(desk) 202-222-7300

(cell) 202-875-4377

@stephebbs

From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:04:47 AM

To: Ebbs, Stephanie

Subject: Re: Travel document release

It's a non-story and everything was in full compliance. The story is being pushed by a political group that's run by former campaign staff.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and the Governor's wife (a key point both Politico and WP left out). The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 10:02 AM, Ebbs, Stephanie <Stephanie.Ebbs@abc.com> wrote:

Good morning,

Do you have a statement or any more information about the documents released regarding Mrs. Zinke's travel with the secretary? Was her travel approved by the ethics office and would you be able to share those documents?

Thank you

Stephanie Ebbs

ABC News-Washington

(desk) 202-222-7300

(cell) 202-875-4377

@stephebbs

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Ebbs, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Re: Travel document release
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:33:43 AM

Yes. It is not uncommon for the spouse of the secretary to join at their own cost. On the Arctic trip, the spouses of the bipartisan group of Senators were invited and attended.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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(cell) 202-875-4377

@stephebbbs

From: Heather Swift
To: [Jennifer A. Dlouhy](mailto:Jennifer.A.Dlouhy)
Subject: Re: travel, Heritage
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 12:11:08 PM

She was not on the USVI flight or the Nevada flight. She paid personally for the Alaska CODEL flight. Several Congressional spouses were on the CODEL.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 12:05 PM, Jennifer A. Dlouhy (BLOOMBERG/ NEWSROOM:) <jdlouhy1@bloomberg.net> wrote:

Thank you. One follow up: I appreciate the clarity here on staff seats too. Did Lola Zinke travel on any of those three charter flights, and if so, how were her tickets paid?

Thanks,

Jen.

Jennifer A. Dlouhy
jdlouhy1@bloomberg.net / jendlouhyenergy@gmail.com
reporterjen@protonmail.com
Desk: 202.807.2159
Cell/Text/Signal: 202.905.3257
Twitter: @jendlouhyhc
Stories: <http://bloom.bg/23Crpvk>

From: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: travel, Heritage

On the record

As is consistent with the travel of previous Interior secretaries, the Secretary traveled

on charter flights when there were no commercial options available. All travel is pre-approved by the ethics office and the travel lawyers in the Division of General Law (statement from them below) before booking, and the charter flights went through an additional level of due diligence.

Taxpayers absolutely have a right to know how much official government travel costs. It's common sense. At the Department we make those documents available to the public. Using tax dollars wisely and ethically is a big responsibility and is at the heart of good government. Unfortunately there are some times when Interior has to utilize charter services because we often travel to areas that don't have a lot of flight options.

Standard operating procedure is that the Secretary and staff fly on a commercial, government, coach fare whenever possible.

"The Scheduling Office meets regularly with the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law to ensure that all travel is thoroughly reviewed and approved in advance and that it is fully compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Consistent with this process, the trip was reviewed and approved in advance by both the Departmental Ethics Office and the Division of General Law. In short, the trip - including the Secretary's address to the hockey developmental squad - was completely compliant with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations." --Joint Statement from Melinda Loftin (Department of the Interior Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office) and Edward Keable (Deputy Solicitor - General Law). Both are career members of the Senior Executive Service.

On background

Regarding the ownership of the plane: the Secretary has never met or spoken to Mr Neilson and that the charter plane company is a vendor of the federal government. It was selected by career officials a thousand miles away in Boise or Atlanta after cost analysis. Furthermore, that company had years of federal contracts before the Secretary was even sworn into office.

The WP piece was false through omission where it said commercial flights are available between LAS and FCA. In fact there are exactly 0 commercial flights leaving after 8PM that would have got the Secretary to FCA in time for an 8:30AM meeting.

The WP was wrong when said there were multiple political events, there were not. He attended single political event for Senator Daines in Big Sky when he was already scheduled to be in the area and it was no cost to the Department.

The WP piece is false through omission on the Yellowstone aspect by making it sound like the itinerary was light. In fact, the itinerary in Yellowstone was robust. Yellowstone has a serious sexual harassment situation? The Secretary traveled there to meet with the superintendent and the staff about it. The park is also in hot negotiations with tribes on a number of fronts that needed the secretary's time. All of these things were also part of the secretary's trip in addition to meeting the employees he oversees.

On the point of the UNITED STATES Virgin Islands. Again another lie through omission and leading readers to believe he is at a foreign "Caribbean" islands rather than an American territory that is overseen by the Department. That itinerary included several hours of official government events and ceremonies as well as meeting with American military veterans from the territory and a visit to a National Park that is under the jurisdiction of the Department.

Lastly- The politico piece did not accurately describe the Montana portion of the trip. The

Secretary's itinerary began with meetings at 8:30 AM then included a keynote speech to the Western Governor's Association (which is led by Montana's Democratic governor), a press conference, a working lunch with governors, and other engagements.

Three Charter Flights

3/31

Trip: USVI Centennial Transfer Day Ceremony (The 100 year anniversary of the Danish government turning over the Virgin Islands to the United States. DOI has jurisdiction over territories) Also attending the ceremonies were the Danish Prime Minister and Governor Mapp as well as several other high ranking government officials.

Flight Plan: St Croix --> St Thomas --> St Croix

Reason: No commercial flight were available for the itinerary of official government events.

Payment: the Secretary and staff tickets were paid out of the DOI budget.

5/17

Trip: CODEL to Norway and Greenland with additional stops in Alaska

Senate Energy and Natural Resources

Committee organized the Arctic CODEL. The Committee organized and utilized a charter in northern Alaska.

Flight Plan: Deadhorse, AK --> Alpine, AK --> Fairbanks

Reason: Commercial flights were not an option
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6/26

Las Vegas to Kalispell, MT for the Western Governors Association annual meeting.

The Secretary had events and speaking engagements in the evening in Nevada and in the morning in Montana.

Flight Plan: Las Vegas --> Kalispell

Reason: No commercial flight available to get the Secretary and necessary staff to the morning Montana events on time. The Secretary's speech ended at 7:45PM and he had a

meeting at 8:30 the following morning. The charter landed at 1:30AM. The secretary had multiple events at the Western Governors Association

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Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 11:57 AM, Jennifer A. Dlouhy (BLOOMBERG/ NEWSROOM:) <jdlouhy1@bloomberg.net> wrote:

Of course!

And yes -- agree

Jennifer A. Dlouhy
jdlouhy1@bloomberg.net / jendlouhyenergy@gmail.com
reporterjen@protonmail.com
Desk: 202.807.2159

Cell/Text/Signal: 202.905.3257
Twitter: @jendlouhyhc
Stories: <http://bloom.bg/23Crpvk>

From: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: travel, Heritage

Will you take on record and background?

Dang it's cold in here!

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Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 11:54 AM,
Jennifer A. Dlouhy (BLOOMBERG/
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I have his statement just now, of course, but do you have the full details -- dates, costs -- of these trips, as provided to Politico?

Thanks,

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Jennifer A. Dlouhy](mailto:Jennifer.A.Dlouhy)
Subject: Re: travel, Heritage
Date: Friday, September 29, 2017 3:14:57 PM

USVI flights were \$3,150
Nevada flight was \$12,375
We have not been billed for the military air wildfire trip

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 12:13 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
CORRECTION - Mrs Z was not on the charter in Alaska either.

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Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Sep 29, 2017, at 11:57 AM, Jennifer A. Dlouhy
(BLOOMBERG/ NEWSROOM:) <jdlouhy1@bloomberg.net> wrote:

Of course!

And yes -- agree

Jennifer A. Dlouhy
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reporterjen@protonmail.com
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Twitter: @jendlouhyhc
Stories: <http://bloom.bg/23Crpvk>

From: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: travel, Heritage

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Press Secretary
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Desk: 202.807.2159

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Twitter: @jendlouhyhc
Stories: <http://bloom.bg/23Crpvk>

From: Daniel Jorjani
To: [Heather Swift](mailto:Heather_Swift)
Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola"s travels
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 11:14:36 AM

Will take a look.



Daniel H. Jorjani
U.S. Department of the Interior
Acting Solicitor & Principal Deputy Solicitor
Main Interior Building, Suite 6356
' [202-219-3861](tel:202-219-3861) (Voice)

 [202-706-9018](tel:202-706-9018) (Cell)

 daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov

This electronic message contains information generated by the US Department of the Interior solely for the intended recipients. Any unauthorized interception of this message or the use or disclosure of the information it contains may violate the law and subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 3, 2017, at 11:13 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Dan, I am beginning to get questions about Mrs. Zinke's travel while accompanying the Secretary. Would it be possible to get another joint statement from Ethics/General Law and also the rules and regulations that permit such travel?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com>
Date: October 3, 2017 at 10:22:34 AM EDT
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov" <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels**

Hi Heather and Team,

Just following up here. Thanks for clarifying yesterday that Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with Secretary Zinke.

Still would like to know:

- How Lola got to Montana for the 3/10/17 tribal blessing
- Who paid for her travel
- How Lola got to California for 4/13/17 meeting with Gov. Brown
- Who paid for her travel
- Why she isn't on the manifest for any part of the California trip, including the meeting with Gov. Brown

thanks!

- Anthony

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:46 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

My mistake on the name of the nation.

I'm not suggesting wrongdoing at all, just following up on a tip.

So if Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with the secretary, how did she travel to Montana and California to show up at those meetings? And why isn't she listed on Interior's manifest for the meeting with Gov Brown in California?

Thanks,

Tony

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:38 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I believe you mean the Blackfeet Nation.

She was on no flights with the Secretary.

Are you suggesting there is some wrongdoing here?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 2, 2017, at 5:33 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Hi Heather and DOI press team,

Hope you're having a good Monday afternoon. My name is Tony Smith, and I'm senior reporter for Mic. I'm writing a story on

Secretary Zinke's travel, and I had a few questions.

1. I know from Interior's travel manifest that the secretary's wife, Lola, and their son, Wolfgang, showed up to the tribal blessing with the Blackstone Nation on Friday, Mar. 10 2017. However, neither Lola nor Wolfgang are listed on the flight manifest to Montana.

- How did Lola and Wolfgang travel there — on the March 9th flight (United 1532) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did they fly back to D.C.? Who paid for it?

2. I know from DOI's social media that Lola attended a trip to California with the secretary on April 13, 2017. However, she isn't listed on any part of Interior's manifest for that trip: neither for the meeting itself, nor the travel manifest.

- How did Lola travel to California — on the April 12th flight (United 291) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did she fly back to D.C.? Who paid for it?

Thank you so much for taking these questions. I'm on a tight deadline, and do need to publish this story in an hour. I appreciate your timely response.

- Tony

--



Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](tel:646.260.7531)

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From: Heather Swift
To: [Daniel Jorjani](mailto:Daniel.Jorjani@sol.doi.gov)
Cc: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 2:45:56 PM

If we could get a joint statement from gen law and ethics, I think that would be helpful. Then the answer to the question of payment is Mrs. Zinke personally pays for her expenses when she travels. She traveled on her own to meet her husband in Montana and California. She and all the other spouses traveled with the CODEL.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 4, 2017, at 2:33 PM, Daniel Jorjani <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather - Thank you. How can I help?

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 4, 2017, at 2:29 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

Begin forwarded message:

From: Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com>
Date: October 4, 2017 at 2:07:01 PM EDT
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: "Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov"
<Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: **Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels**

Hi Heather and Team,

Hope you're having a good afternoon. We're publishing a story today on the irregularities in Interior's travel manifest. Lola Zinke appears to be at the center of all of the irregularities we could glean. Your fast response here is greatly appreciated.

We have a few new questions on the matter, and we wanted to give the department a last chance to answer the ones we've asked repeatedly:

- Multiple sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Mic that Interior's photographer was instructed to crop Lola out in official photos from departmental meetings on trips she attended with her husband. Does Interior have a comment on that?

MONTANA

- How did Lola Zinke get to Montana in March 2017 so she could be present for the tribal blessing from the Blackfeet Nation.
- Who paid for Lola Zinke's share of the March 2017 Montana trip?
- How much was it?

CALIFORNIA

- How did Lola Zinke get to California for the secretary's meeting with Gov. Brown?
- Who paid for her share of the trip?
- How much was her share of the trip?
- Why isn't she on the manifest for any part of the trip, including the meeting with Gov. Brown?
- Why isn't she in any of the photos from the meeting currently available on the department's Flickr account?
- Were any photos of Lola at that meeting deleted from the Flickr account?

NORWAY + ALASKA

- We know from Politico and U.S. News that Ms Zinke was on the trip with the secretary to Norway and Alaska. Why isn't she listed on the manifests for any of the air travel related to those trips.
- Why isn't she listed on the manifest at all, except for the cookout at Denali National Park on 5/28?
- Was the cookout the only event she attended?

Thanks,

Anthony

On Tue, Oct 3, 2017 at 10:22 AM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

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Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 4, 2017, at 2:09 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Hi Heather and Team,

Hope you're having a good afternoon. We're publishing a story today on the irregularities in Interior's travel manifest. Lola Zinke appears to be at the center of all of the irregularities we could glean. Your fast response here is greatly appreciated.

We have a few new questions on the matter, and we wanted to give the department a last chance to answer the ones we've asked repeatedly:

- Multiple sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Mic that Interior's photographer was instructed to crop Lola out in official photos from departmental meetings on trips she attended with her husband. Does Interior have a comment on that?

MONTANA

- How did Lola Zinke get to Montana in March 2017 so she could be present for the tribal blessing from the Blackfeet Nation.
- Who paid for Lola Zinke's share of the March 2017 Montana trip?
- How much was it?

CALIFORNIA

- How did Lola Zinke get to California for the secretary's meeting with Gov. Brown?
- Who paid for her share of the trip?
- How much was her share of the trip?
- Why isn't she on the manifest for any part of the trip, including the

meeting with Gov. Brown?

- Why isn't she in any of the photos from the meeting currently available on the department's Flickr account?
- Were any photos of Lola at that meeting deleted from the Flickr account?

NORWAY + ALASKA

- We know from Politico and U.S. News that Ms Zinke was on the trip with the secretary to Norway and Alaska. Why isn't she listed on the manifests for any of the air travel related to those trips.
- Why isn't she listed on the manifest at all, except for the cookout at Denali National Park on 5/28?
- Was the cookout the only event she attended?

Thanks,

Anthony

On Tue, Oct 3, 2017 at 10:22 AM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Hi Heather and Team,

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Still would like to know:

- How Lola got to Montana for the 3/10/17 tribal blessing
- Who paid for her travel
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thanks!

- Anthony

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:46 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

My mistake on the name of the nation.

I'm not suggesting wrongdoing at all, just following up on a tip.

So if Lola Zinke wasn't on any of the flights with the secretary, how did she travel to Montana and California to show up at those meetings? And why isn't she listed on Interior's manifest for the meeting with Gov Brown in California?

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On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 5:38 PM, Heather Swift

<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

I believe you mean the Blackfeet Nation.

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Are you suggesting there is some wrongdoing here?

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 2, 2017, at 5:33 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

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- How did Lola and Wolfgang travel there — on the March 9th flight (United 1532) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did they fly back to D.C.? Who paid for it?

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- How did Lola travel to California — on the April 12th flight (United 291) with Secretary Zinke, or on another flight? When did she fly back to D.C.? Who paid for

it?

Thank you so much for taking these questions. I'm on a tight deadline, and do need to publish this story in an hour. I appreciate your timely response.

- Tony

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Senior Staff Writer, News
Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](tel:646.260.7531)

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Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](#)

From: Heather Swift
To: [Anthony Smith](#)
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola's travels
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 4:12:18 PM

Will look into this for you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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From: Anthony Smith
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Urgent inquiry inre: story on Secretary Zinke and Lola"s travels
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 10:21:53 AM

Good morning Heather,

Just checking in on previous request. Also: Does Interior have comment on this suit, filed yesterday? <https://www.americanoversight.org/document/complaint-behalf-western-values-project>

On Thu, Oct 5, 2017 at 10:31 AM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Hi Heather,

Hope you're having a good morning. My deadline's been tightened on this — need answers from your team by 12:30 PM EST today.

Thanks for accommodating,

Anthony

On Wed, Oct 4, 2017 at 4:12 PM, Anthony Smith <asmith@mic.com> wrote:

Thanks, Heather.

On Wed, Oct 4, 2017 at 4:12 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Will look into this for you.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Senior Staff Writer, News

Anthony Smith

[@AnthonyBLSmith](#) | [646.260.7531](#)

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Francesca Chambers](mailto:Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com)
Cc: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Urgent: the secretary's wife
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 9:11:21 AM

Thx. Pls call Heather if you need to speak with someone. She can answer questions.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 21, 2017, at 9:01 AM, Francesca Chambers <Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com> wrote:

Hey Laura,

I also emailed Heather this am, hoping I'd get one of you.

I hear what you're both saying – which is why I wanted to speak to you.

If that's how DOI feels, someone has to say that – and Heather did, so I have that high up.

From: Laura Rigas [mailto:laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 8:57 AM
To: Francesca Chambers <Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com>; interior_press@ios.doi.gov
Cc: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Urgent: the secretary's wife

External Sender

Hi Francesca — I am out this am but pls work with Heather our Press Secretary, CC'd. There's honestly not a story so I want to make sure you get all the facts.

Thanks,

L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Nov 21, 2017, at 8:32 AM, Francesca Chambers
<Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com> wrote:

I have been assigned to do something on the secretary's wife based on the Politico article.

This has a short fuse – I'm going to have to publish based on what's available in the next hour and a half.

I know you're quite busy, but I wanted to involve you, in case you want to talk on background/OTR.

Francesca Chambers

White House Correspondent

Daily Mail | 51 Astor Place, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10003

<image001.jpg>

<image002.jpg>

M: +1 913 755 8280

E: francesca.chambers@mailonline.com

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Francesca Chambers](#)
Subject: Re: Urgent: The secretary's wife
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 8:51:26 AM

yes

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 8:49 AM, Francesca Chambers
<Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com> wrote:

Am I able to use that?

That's more or less what I was asking for/offering – the ability to comment and point me to anything you think is being left out here.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 8:48 AM
To: Francesca Chambers <Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com>
Subject: Re: Urgent: The secretary's wife

External Sender

Nothing to discuss. It's a non-story pushed by a political hatchet group that's run by left wing campaign staff.

DOI did not pay for the meal with the Governor and the Governor's wife (a key point both Politico and WP left out). The Secretary personally paid the State of Alaska for Mrs. Zinke's meal. Further, DOI incurred no expenses due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. Mrs. Zinke paid for her own commercial airfare home from Alaska.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 8:44 AM, Francesca Chambers <Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com> wrote:

That's what I was hoping I could get five minutes of your time to discuss....preferably on the phone....

Francesca Chambers

White House Correspondent

Daily Mail | [51 Astor Place, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10003](#)

Daily**Mail**.com



M: +1 913 755 8280

E: francesca.chambers@mailonline.com

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 8:42 AM

To: Francesca Chambers <Francesca.Chambers@mailonline.com>

Subject: Re: Urgent: The secretary's wife

External Sender

Just curious - what's the big bad wolf here? What did Mrs. Zinke or DOI do wrong?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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This has a short fuse – I'm going to have to publish based on what's available in the next hour and a half.

I'm sure you're quite busy this am, but I'd obviously like to get your take. I saw you were quoted in the original piece.

Thanks.

Francesca Chambers

White House Correspondent

Daily Mail | [51 Astor Place, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10003](#)

DailyMail.com

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From: Jones, Leslie
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#); [Wade, Anne-Berry](#); [Russell Newell](#); [Joan Moody](#); [Judy Nowakowski](#)
Subject: Re: URL for USGS critical minerals report
Date: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 9:13:45 AM

No, he is not.

We are very pleased to announce the new Program Coordinator is **Tom Crafford** who holds a Bachelor's degree in Geology from the University of Washington and a Master's in Geology from Dartmouth College, where he conducted research in volcanology in Central America. He spent the next 38 years in Alaska in a succession of geological and geology-related positions. His professional career began as an exploration geologist for Anaconda Minerals in Alaska working on field programs from the Brooks Range to the Southeast Alaska Panhandle. He subsequently served as the primary exploration geologist at the Greens Creek Mine, a structurally and mineralogically complex Ag-Au-Pb-Zn volcanogenic massive sulfide deposit on Admiralty Island near Juneau. Tom then worked as Manager, Minerals and Coal, for Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI), an Alaska Native Corporation, as well as Vice President of CIRI's mining subsidiary, North Pacific Mining Corporation. After working for several years as an independent geological consultant, Tom accepted a position as the Minerals Section Chief with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) before transitioning to the role of the Mining Coordinator where he was responsible for coordinating the environmental permitting of hardrock mining projects. His work as Mining Coordinator led to his appointment as Director of the Office of Project Management and Permitting in the ADNR Commissioner's Office where he served under then Commissioner, now U.S. Senator, Dan Sullivan. In 2014, Tom, his geologist wife Liz Jones Crafford and his daughter, Alice, relocated to Washington, D.C. where Tom served as an Associate Director for Government Relations in the Alaska Governor's DC Office. Tom is truly tickled (his wording) to return to his geological roots as USGS's Minerals Program Coordinator.

On Tue, Dec 19, 2017 at 9:04 AM, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Also, is Tom a PhD? For title purposes? Thx.

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 19, 2017, at 8:58 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

AB - is your team bringing copies of the PPT for the reporters?

Heather Swift

Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Dec 18, 2017, at 5:45 PM, Wade, Anne-Berry <abwade@usgs.gov> wrote:

Here is the url that will host the USGS critical minerals report. This is what the DOI should use as a hyperlink in your news release. It won't work until the report is actually posted.

<https://doi.org/10.3133/pp1802>

A.B. Wade
[USGS](#) Press Officer
703-648-4483 desk
703-317-7871 mobile

--

~~~~~  
Leslie W. Jones  
Science Publishing Network Chief and  
Deputy Associate Director, Office of Communications and Publishing  
U.S. Geological Survey  
MS 119 National Center  
Reston, VA 20192  
703-648-4354      FAX: 703-648-4466  
[ljones@usgs.gov](mailto:ljones@usgs.gov)  
~~~~~

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Moody, Joan](#)
Cc: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Re: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:22:33 PM

Thanks so much, Joan. Heather, any edits? Once you are ok, I'll work with Steve to answer Joan's questions and get a quote from him.
My best,
L

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

> On May 30, 2017, at 11:11 AM, Moody, Joan <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
>
> Heather, Please see the draft release attached and below. Please see the
> highlighted queries. I would be glad to call Steve for a quote but thought
> you might rather do so. Are there any photos of him with his family and dog?
> Joan
>
>
>
> Date: May 30, 2017
> Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
>
> *Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs*
>
> ANCHORAGE--Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve
> Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska affairs. Zinke made
> the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.
>
>
>
> "A lifelong Alaskan, Steve is Wackowski is especially suited to advise me
> on matters in the state because of his exemplary military service;
> extensive experience with public policy for U.S. senators from Alaska; and
> work in the private sector with fish, wildlife, and oil and gas
> operations," said Secretary Zinke. "His background is invaluable as we
> focus on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska
> Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior's
> management including Denali and other crown jewels of the national park and
> wildlife refuge systems." Zinke just returned from a tour of Denali[MJF1] .
>
>
>
> Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik
> for his family's halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After
> graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA
> football at Saint Mary's College, where he earned a degree in Computer
> Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air
> Force ROTC program[MJF2] .

>
> He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base
> Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on
> several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including
> contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.
>
> After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the
> remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in
> Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for
> oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and
> helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce's* "Top 40 under 40" Award
> in 2015.
>
> His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff
> member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and
> as the late Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most
> recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's
> reelection campaign.
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> Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished
> by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with
> their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox[MJF3] lab, Cali.
>
>
>
> -----
>
> [MJF1]Current location?
>
> [MJF2]Did he also go to UC Berkeley or just to the ROTC there while at St.
> Mary's College?
>
> [MJF3]Red fox Labrador?
> ----- Forwarded message -----
> From: Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
> Date: Tue, May 30, 2017 at 12:54 PM
> Subject: Fwd: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
> To: Joan Moody <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov>, Laura Rigas <
> laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
>
>
> Joan, would you mind drafting up a press release for today announcing
> Stephen as Secretary Zinke's Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs. He will be
> based in Anchorage and provide a direct line between Alaska and the Office
> of the Secretary.
>
> Please be sure to note the uniqueness of Alaska and DOI relationship. The
> vastness of DOI land and waters. Lots of parks, etc.
>
> Thanks!
>
>
> -
> Heather Swift
> Department of the Interior

> @DOIPressSec
> Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
>
>
> Steve Wackowski is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and
> spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and
> salmon sportfishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High
> School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's
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> After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as
> the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in
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>
>
>
> --
> *Joan Moody*
> *Senior Public Affairs Specialist*
> *Office of the Secretary MIB 6226*
> *U.S. Department of the Interior*
> *1849 C Street, N.W.*
> *Washington, D.C. 20240*
> *202-208-3280*
> *Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov <Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov>*
> <IMG_7307.JPG>
> <IMG_7310.JPG>
> <IMG_7300.JPG>
> <05-30-17 Advisor for Alaska Affairs.docx>

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Moody, Joan](#)
Cc: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:04:24 PM

Hi Joan -- sorry to ask when you were only asked 2 hour ago, but when might we be able to see a draft? We need to get this out asap today. Thx so much!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On May 30, 2017, at 8:56 AM, Moody, Joan <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

will do

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 12:54 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Joan, would you mind drafting up a press release for today announcing Stephen as Secretary Zinke's Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs. He will be based in Anchorage and provide a direct line between Alaska and the Office of the Secretary.

Please be sure to note the uniqueness of Alaska and DOI relationship. The vastness of DOI land and waters. Lots of parks, etc.

Thanks!

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of the Secretary MIB 6226
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3280
Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov

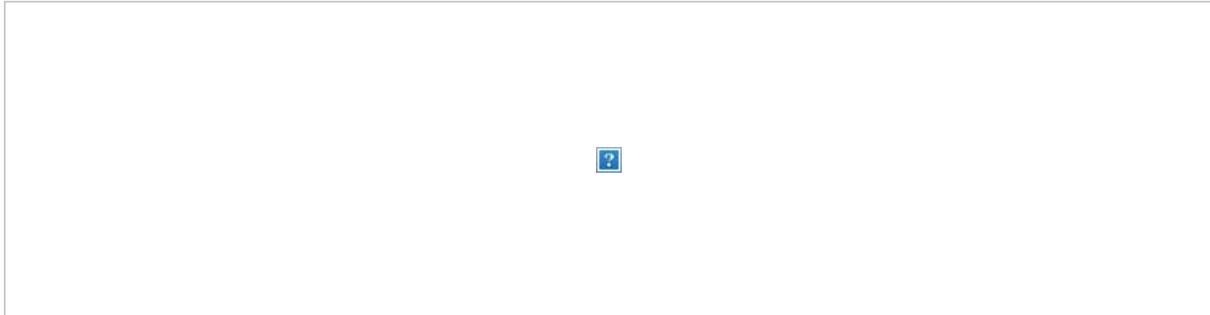
From: Moody, Joan
To: [Heather Swift](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:34:59 PM
Attachments: [05-30-17 revAdvisor for Alaska Affairs \(1\).docx](#)

i found a typo of mine in the second paragraph. On the attached copy, I have marked it and removed watermark

On Tue, May 30, 2017 at 3:11 PM, Moody, Joan <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather, Please see the draft release attached and below. Please see the highlighted queries. I would be glad to call Steve for a quote but thought you might rather do so. Are there any photos of him with his family and dog?

Joan



Date: May 30, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

ANCHORAGE--Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska affairs. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

“A lifelong Alaskan, Steve Wackowski is especially suited to advise me on matters in the state because of his exemplary military service; extensive experience with public policy for U.S. senators from Alaska; and work in the private sector with fish, wildlife, and oil and gas operations,” said Secretary Zinke. “His background is invaluable as we focus on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior’s management including Denali and other crown jewels of the national park and wildlife refuge systems.” Zinke just returned from a tour of Denali[MJF1] .

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family’s halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary’s College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley’s Air Force ROTC program[MJF2] .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve’s work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska’s North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce’s* “Top 40 under 40” Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens’ last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski’s reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

[MJF1]Current location?

[MJF2]Did he also go to UC Berkeley or just to the ROTC there while at St. Mary's College?

[MJF3]Red fox Labrador?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swift, Heather** <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Date: Tue, May 30, 2017 at 12:54 PM

Subject: Fwd: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures

To: Joan Moody <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov>, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Joan, would you mind drafting up a press release for today announcing Stephen as Secretary Zinke's Senior Adviser for Alaskan Affairs. He will be based in Anchorage and provide a direct line between Alaska and the Office of the Secretary.

Please be sure to note the uniqueness of Alaska and DOI relationship. The vastness of DOI land and waters. Lots of parks, etc.

Thanks!

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Steve Wackowski is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sportfishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

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Joan Moody
Senior Public Affairs Specialist
Office of the Secretary MIB 6226
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1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3280
Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov

--

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U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3280
Joan_Moody@ios.doi.gov

From: Jorjani, Daniel
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Wash Post Q/A
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 2:36:13 PM

Yes, it just (b) (5) . Give me a call when you have a chance at 202-706-9018.



Daniel H. Jorjani
Principal Deputy Solicitor
U.S. Department of the Interior
Main Interior Building, Suite 6356
202-219-3861 (Voice)
202-706-9018 (Cell)



daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov

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On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 2:32 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Dan. Can I say: The Western Values Project is a politically biased organization which is run by current and former Montana Democratic Party members and campaign staff.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 2:29 PM, Jorjani, Daniel <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:

WVP is not a "political" organization as defined by the IRS, so edit your first statement to read as follows:

The Western Values Project is run by current and former Montana Democratic Party members and campaign staff.

That is objectively true and can be easily documented by going to the WVP website. Again, it is not a 527.

Daniel H. Jorjani
Principal Deputy Solicitor



U.S. Department of the Interior
Main Interior Building, Suite 6356
202-219-3861 (Voice)
202-706-9018 (Cell)

daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov

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On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 1:59 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Here is the WP inquiry and below in pink is my proposed response.

WP

An advocacy group has shared some documents from a FOIA request that concern the Secretary's April 17-18 trip to the Channel Island. The documents show that the federal government incurred an extra government expense of more than \$2,000 because the boat normally sails from Ventura Harbor. The reason for the change in harbor appears to be due to the fact that the Secretary chose to address the Young America's Foundation town hall in Santa Barbara.

There is an email on March 20 from Stephanie Burkhart (associate regional director, communications, oversight and analysis for NPS Pacific West Region) to NPS press staff in DC which says:

"Russell Galipeau (CHIS superintendent) heard from on-the-ground sources that SOI Zinke will be speaking to the Republican Club in Santa Barbara Apr. 17. Rumor has it that his staff asked NOAA to take him out to the islands. CHIS park staff are more than happy to take him out. Have you heard anything about this? Thanks!"

Now, this seems to indicate that it was the Secretary's staff that requested the trip, after booking the speaking event, but I just wanted to make sure it was not the other way around. Is that clearer?

Response

The Western Values Project is (b) (5)

The Secretary's visit to Channel Islands National Park was part of a multi-day visit to multiple Department of the Interior assets across the state from Sacramento all the way south to the Channel Islands. The Secretary had always planned to meet with the team at Channel Islands National Park, and the office of scheduling reached out to the superintendent's office as soon as it was clear when he could go. Discussion of the visit began in early April when the Secretary spoke with The Nature Conservancy, who helps manage the Islands.

Concerning the cost of boat, no costs were incurred due to Mrs. Zinke's presence. The Zinke's personally paid via check for aunt's boat fare.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Keable, Edward
To: [Swift, Heather](mailto:Swift_Heather)
Cc: [Jorjani, Daniel](mailto:Jorjani_Daniel); [Scott Hommel](mailto:Scott_Hommel); [Boulton, Caroline](mailto:Boulton_Caroline); [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura_Rigas)
Subject: Re: Wash Post Q/A
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 3:28:37 PM

OK, then I am good with this answer. Ed

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 3:26 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Mrs. Zinke was brought up in an additional email from the reporter.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 3:22 PM, Keable, Edward <edward.keable@sol.doi.gov> wrote:
Heather,

Even as amended, I am not sure why we would introduce Mrs. Zinke into the answer when she is not part of the question, at least not overtly. The question appears to be about the speech to the Republican Club of Santa Barbara and its origin, not about Mrs. Zinke.

Maybe I am missing something.

Ed

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 2:29 PM, Jorjani, Daniel <daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov> wrote:
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Principal Deputy Solicitor
U.S. Department of the Interior
Main Interior Building, Suite 6356
 202-219-3861 (Voice)
 202-706-9018 (Cell)



daniel.jorjani@sol.doi.gov

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Response

The Western Values Project is (b) (5)

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Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--

Edward T. Keable
Deputy Solicitor-General Law
Office of the Solicitor
U.S. Department of the Interior
Phone: 202-208-4423
Fax: 202-208-5584
edward.keable@sol.doi.gov

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Boulton, Caroline](mailto:Caroline.Boulton@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: Re: Wash Post Q/A
Date: Monday, December 11, 2017 2:22:15 PM

Thanks, thought I mentioned that but good catch!

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 2:19 PM, Boulton, Caroline <caroline_boulton@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
They also paid for Lola's boat fare via check (since that seems like something they might nit-pick).

Technically my first invite from TNC was in late March if that matters.

On Mon, Dec 11, 2017 at 1:59 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Here is the WP inquiry and below in pink is my proposed response.

WP

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Response

The Western Values Project (b) (5)

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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

--

Caroline Boulton

Special Assistant to the Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Scheduling & Advance

Caroline_Boulton@ios.doi.gov | Scheduling@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Davis, Aaron](#)
Subject: Re: WashPost request
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 8:51:14 AM

No she doesn't. She is a private person and has no need for a press person.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 29, 2017, at 3:17 PM, Davis, Aaron <aaron.davis@washpost.com> wrote:

Hi Heather, does Mrs. Zinke have a press person? Someone sent me Facebook interactions between Lolita Zinke and Amanda Techmanski. I have to ask how he two know each other socially.

Thank you,
Aaron

[Aaron C. Davis](#)
[The Washington Post](#)
Mobile: [202.302.3699](tel:202.302.3699)
Office: [202.334.9599](tel:202.334.9599)
Twitter: [@byaaroncdavis](https://twitter.com/byaaroncdavis)

On Oct 20, 2017, at 11:53 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 20, 2017, at 11:40 AM, Davis, Aaron

<aaron.davis@washpost.com> wrote:

That's how I initially read it, so where's the response to the NBC report? Did Techmanski request help on PR transport, and what came of it?

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 11:39 AM

To: Davis, Aaron <aaron.davis@washpost.com>

Subject: Re: WashPost request

The last graph refers to 2016 congressional office

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 20, 2017, at 11:30 AM, Davis, Aaron
<aaron.davis@washpost.com> wrote:

Hey Heather, sorry to be a nag, question from editor: What part of the background below refers to the PR request? The field rep contact? The conversation in Columbia Falls? Both? When was the last time Techmanski and Zinke spoke?

A local field representative had a conversation with an employee of the business and politely referred him to the Senators' offices. The business owner was also at a public event the Congressman was at in Columbia Falls (a neighboring town) where he listened to the gentleman but no action was taken.

From: Swift, Heather

[mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2017 10:42 AM

To: Davis, Aaron <aaron.davis@washpost.com>

Subject: Re: WashPost request

That's all included in the background.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 10:31 AM, Davis,
Aaron <aaron.davis@washpost.com> wrote:

10-4. And could you add one line directly
addressing the NBC report? A la what we
discussed otr?

From: Swift, Heather
[mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2017 10:15 AM
To: Davis, Aaron
<aaron.davis@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: WashPost request

affirmative. background please.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov |
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Oct 19, 2017 at 9:50 AM, Davis,
Aaron <aaron.davis@washpost.com> wrote:

Hi Heather, I want to make sure I'm
reading the pronouns correctly in this
section:

".. his son joined a friend who worked a
summer job at one of their construction
sites. "

Is this accurate: One of Zinke's sons "joined a friend who worked a summer job" at one of Techmanski's construction sites, according to Zinke's office.

Also, any chance you'll put it on the record?

From: Davis, Aaron
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 10:17 PM
To: Heather Swift
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: WashPost request

Thank you, Heather. But what's wrong with any of that being on the record? Sounds pretty benign - and would carry more weight with your name attached to it.

[Aaron C. Davis](#)
[The Washington Post](#)
Mobile: [202.302.3699](tel:202.302.3699)
Office: [202.334.9599](tel:202.334.9599)
Twitter: [@byaarondavis\[twitter.com\]](https://twitter.com/byaarondavis)

On Oct 18, 2017, at 9:44 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

On background:

The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any

meetings or action on behalf of this company.

The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.

Previous reports of action by Zinke's Congressional office are inaccurate. A local field representative had a conversation with an employee of the business and politely referred him to the Senators' offices. The business owner was also at a public event the Congressman was at in Columbia Falls (a neighboring town) where he listened to the gentleman but no action was taken.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

On Oct 18, 2017, at 3:53 PM,
Davis, Aaron
<aaron.davis@washpost.com>
wrote:

Yes - I can call in

10 mins.

[Aaron C. Davis](#)
[The](#)
[Washington](#)
[Post](#)

Mobile: [202.302.3699](#)

Office: [202.334.9599](#)

Twitter: [@byaarondavis\[twitter.com\]](#)

On Oct 18,
2017, at 3:51
PM, Swift,
Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
wrote:

Hey
Aaron,
can
you
give
me
a
call
off
the
record?
202-
208-
5338

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
|
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Wed,

Oct
18,
2017
at
2:54
PM,
Davis,
Aaron
<aaron.davis@washpost.com>
wrote:

Hi
Heather,
we
are
writing
about
Whitefish
and
that
it
has
secured
a
large
share
of
the
recovery
work
in
Puerto
Rico.

U.S.
Army
Corps
of
Engineers
and
Department
of
Energy
say
Whitefish

is
working
for
PREPA
on
a
separate
track
from
their
work
and
that
it
is
an
unusual
set-
up,
counter
to
the
mutual
aid
arrangements
that
are
typically
activated
in
such
disaster-
response
situations.

Given
that
Sec.
Zinke
has
advocated
for
the
company
before,

and
that
it
hails
from
Whitefish,
we
want
to
make
clear
if
the
secretary
intervened
to
help
Whitefish
secure
the
job,
and/or
to
what
degree
he
has
helped
the
company
in
recent
weeks
as
it
had
trouble
deploying?

Happy
to
talk
through
it
more:

202.302.3699

-

Aaron

From:

Swift,
Heather

[mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent:

Wednesday,
October
18,
2017
1:54
PM

To:

Davis,
Aaron

<aaron.davis@washpost.com>

Cc:

Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Subject:

Re:
WashPost
request

Hello,
Aaron.
What's
your
deadline
and
can
you
please
tell
me
more
about
your
article?

-

Heather
Swift
Department
of
the
Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov
I
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On
Wed,
Oct
18,
2017
at
1:47
PM,
Davis,
Aaron
<aaron.davis@washpost.com>
wrote:

Hello,
Aaron
Davis
at
The
Washington
Post.
I
am
working
on
an
article
about
electricity
restoration
in
Puerto
Rico,

including
the
role
of
Whitefish
Energy.

I
have
a
couple
questions
for
the
Secretary's
office:

1. NBC
Montana
[reports\[nbcmontana.com\]](https://www.nbcmontana.com)

that
Whitefish
and
Secretary
Zinke
have
been
in
contact
about
facilitating
the
company's
work
in
Puerto
Rico:

"..
*[Whitefish
CEO]
Andy
Techmanski
said
planes
are
backed*

*up
at
the
airports
so
getting
the
personnel
and
equipment
down
there
has
hit
a
snag.
He's
been
in
touch
with
Interior
Secretary Ryan
Zinke
to
try
to
free
up
more
resources..."*

What
resources
did
Whitefish
request
and
what,
if
any,
help
was
Secretary

Zinke
able
to
free
up
to
assist
Whitefish
personnel
and
equipment
in
reaching
PR?
What
actions
did
the
secretary
take
to
make
that
happen?
What
government
resources
were
used,
did
the
company
need
planes?
Priority
landing
approval
in
PR?
Something
else?

2. Did
Secretary
Zinke

help
introduce
Whitefish
Energy
to
PREPA?
Did
he
encourage
the
company
to
seek
the
relief
work
advertised
by
PREPA
following
Hurricane
Irma?
An
industry
official
says
Doug
Domenech
was
involved.
Did
he
reach
out
at
the
secretary's
request?

3. Secretary
Zinke
has
previously
worked

to
help
Whitefish,
[according
to
reports\[hungryhorsenews.com\].](#)

“...
[Columbia
Falls]
said
the
city
would
work
with
Montana’s
congressional
delegation,
adding
that
U.S.
Rep.
Ryan
Zinke’s
office
has
already
reached
out
to
her
about
the
project...”

What
is
the
relationship
between
Secretary
Zinke
and
Andy

Techmanski?

Is
it
accurate
to
describe
Secretary
Zinke
as
a
supporter
of
Whitefish?
The
company
has
a
low
profile
and
small
number
of
employees
in
Montana,
does
the
secretary
see
Whitefish
Energy
as
a
valued
employer,
if
so,
why?

Thank
you
for
your
attention

to
these
questions.
Please
feel
free
to
contact
me
by
phone
if
it
would
be
more
expedient,
Aaron
202.302.3699

[Aaron
C.
Davis
The
Washington
Post](#)
202.334.9599

—
office
202.302.3699

—
mobile
aaron.davis@washpost.com
[Twitter:](#)
[@byaaroncdavis\[twitter.com\]](#)

From: Yakhour, Wadi
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Roddy](#); [Downey Magallanes](#)
Subject: Re: Wednesday Press
Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2017 9:55:38 AM
Attachments: [Trip5.6MontanaUtahMontana \(1\).docx](#)

Here's the updated schedule.

Wadi (Wuh-dee-uh) Yakhour
DOI Office of the Secretary
Scheduling and Advance
O - (202) 208-5359
C - (202) 706-9041
Rm. 6013

On Tue, May 9, 2017 at 7:43 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Wonderful!

Sent from my iPhone

> On May 10, 2017, at 9:39 PM, Wadi Yakhour <wadi_yakhour@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>

> Yes I just updated it so that it'll be at the monument prior to our

> departure to the airport. I'll send it to you when I get up to my

> computer and I'll also have a print out

>

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On May 10, 2017, at 7:35 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>>

>> Do we have a new line by line schedule for today? We aren't found to

>> do the one on one interviews at the airport

>>

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone

>>

>>> On May 10, 2017, at 6:31 AM, Wadi Yakhour <wadi_yakhour@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>>>

>>> Raul says about 1.5 hours.

>>>

>>> Sent from my iPhone

>>>

>>>> On May 10, 2017, at 7:17 AM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

>>>>

>>>> How far away from the helo drop off is the air port?

>>>>

>>>> Sent from my iPhone

>>>>

>>>>> On May 10, 2017, at 12:58 AM, Roddy, Russell <russell_rodny@ios.doi.gov>

wrote:

>>>>>

>>>>> Hey...just looked at the schedule for tomorrow and saw something not sure about. From 5:00-6:00pm, RKZ is listed as participating in an afternoon event listed as "Hold for Media Interviews:...followed immediately by "Daily Media A.vailability" from 6:00-6:30 pm.

>>>>>

>>>>> Is his total time for press a 1.5 time frame? If not, it needs to be amended on schedule.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](mailto:Nachmany_Eli)
Subject: Re: Willens bio.
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 6:14:52 PM

Many thanks! Apologies, I'm slammed today and didn't expect you to be up and running today. Alex had like three days of lag time with meetings, briefings, trainings, and tech issues. I'll have a more detailed plan for you and alex tomorrow.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 6:11 PM, Nachmany, Eli <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Yes, I'm on it.

On Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 6:06 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Eli - Below is bio information for Todd Willens, assistant deputy secretary. Can you please draft a press release announcing his position? I'll forward you supportive quotes to include. Please send by noon tomorrow.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Willens, Todd <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 5:20 PM
Subject: Re: Willens bio.
To: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

I thought I did a good job over bloating myself. (is that even a term?)

On Mon, Jul 10, 2017 at 4:29 PM, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Super helpful.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 10, 2017, at 4:08 PM, Willens, Todd <todd_willens@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Heather,

This helpful? Can your team make sure I dont have any typos or grammar issues?

Todd Willens – Assistant Deputy Secretary

As the new Assistant Deputy Secretary, Todd Willens brings with him to Interior more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations and private businesses. Willens has a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's myriad of complex policies such as land, energy, wildlife and water management.

At the Department Willens will be focused on the policy and operations of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation and the US Geological Survey.

Prior to his service at the Department of the Interior, Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM). During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operation oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. Working closely with stakeholders, local government officials, Congress and the previous Administration to increase defense base operations, prevent job killing regulatory actions, and significantly increase federal accountability to the people of New Mexico.

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department he worked on the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle, and the National Parks Centennial. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. As the Senior Policy Advisor, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including passage of the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

Willens is a native Californian and a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, DC with his wife and four children.



--

Todd Willens
Assistant Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW -- MIB Room 6116
Washington, DC 20240
office: 202-208-6291

--

Todd Willens
Assistant Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW -- MIB Room 6116
Washington, DC 20240
office: 202-208-6291

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](#)
Subject: Re: Willens Release
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 11:28:11 AM

Edited below. Please send to Todd and let him know we will issue later today. Ask him to send edits by 1:00PM

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," Secretary Ryan Zinke said. "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the west, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said.** "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said.** "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said.** "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee.** "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic

recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###

From: Eilperin, Juliet
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: would you mind giving me a call at your convenience?
Date: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 3:03:54 PM

OK, thanks. And I've got a meeting around 3:15, but if I miss you, I will just call you back.
Best, Juliet

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 3:02 PM
To: Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com>
Subject: Re: would you mind giving me a call at your convenience?

You'd have to call the VP's office if such a meeting occurred. It's not an official matter relating to the Interior so it wouldn't be my area.

I know the report you're talking about. Will call shortly.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jan 3, 2018 at 2:57 PM, Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com> wrote:

On BIA, there's a report that came out about an employee this fall, which just came to my attention. He resigned in May, after it seemed that his superiors ignored the complaints for some time (under the previous administration, I would assume, though the timeline isn't exactly clear): [https://www.doi.gov/reports/insufficient-actions-bia-management-and-human-resource-officials-response-sexual-harassment\[doi.gov\]](https://www.doi.gov/reports/insufficient-actions-bia-management-and-human-resource-officials-response-sexual-harassment[doi.gov])

And it was also one of the agencies that ranked the highest in terms of employees complaining about harassment in the survey that you issued last month. (On sexual harassment specifically it was at 10.4%, same as NPS). So b/w those two items, I wondered if there was a larger issue there worth exploring.

On the issue of this meeting in the spring, why would the meeting with the vice president's staff be a personal matter? Wouldn't that be an official matter? Is there perhaps someone else I should direct the question to?

Thanks, Juliet

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 2:50 PM

To: Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com>

Subject: Re: would you mind giving me a call at your convenience?

I have no information on either. Do you have anything you can share on BIA so I can get some background from our people before I call?

I wouldn't have any info or Department position on Mrs. Zinke since that's a personal matter.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jan 3, 2018 at 2:47 PM, Eilperin, Juliet <Juliet.Eilperin@washpost.com> wrote:

Dear Heather.

I just wanted to ask you about two different things. One is a question related to sexual harassment at the BIA, to determine if there's a story there. The second is just to get a sense of the topic of a meeting between Mrs. Zinke and the vice president's aides in May.

Thanks so much,

Juliet

Juliet Eilperin

Senior National Affairs Correspondent

Washington Post

Juliet.eilperin@washpost.com

(O) 202-334-7774

(C) 202-302-3663

@eilperin

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Zinke next week Mornings w Maria
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 1:24:56 PM

Yes.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO

<[\(b\) \(6\)](#)> wrote:

Hey! Apologies for the delay. Have you been coordinating with FEMA on the visit? Just want to double check.

I think it would be good to do press but I want to make sure we're sensitive about this and coordinating with DHS/FEMA.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 8:22 AM
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <[\(b\) \(6\)](#)>
Subject: Zinke next week Mornings w Maria

Alexa - Next week Zinke will be in south florida touring a lot of the hurricane damage at four national parks and also visiting some FEMA sites. Are you OK with Zinke doing FBN Mornings w/ Maria Thursday or Friday next week? We'd probably want to have a camera crew go to the tour he does at a FEMA site. We are also looking into if he can meet with displaced PR families. His wife Lola is a native spanish speaker so she will accompany as well.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Michael Coleman
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Re: Zinke visit to NM
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017 3:54:23 PM

Thanks for the heads up, Heather - appreciate it!

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 12, 2017, at 2:55 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey Mike, this press release will go out soon, Mike. Feel free to publish.

news release



Date: July 12, 2017

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

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In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department,” **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** “Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd’s intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major

asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said**. "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

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###

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 4:52 PM, Michael Coleman
<mcoleman@abqjournal.com> wrote:

got it -- thanks

From: "Heather Swift" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
To: "Michael Coleman" <mcoleman@abqjournal.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 4:49:30 PM
Subject: Re: Zinke visit to NM

nothing to announce - just for your own planning and not for publication but no announcement will be made until just before the secretary's visit due to security concerns regarding any cabinet secretary's travel schedule

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jul 11, 2017 at 4:45 PM, Michael Coleman

<mcoleman@abqjournal.com> wrote:

Hi Heather:

Michael Coleman with the Albuquerque Journal here. Any new information on Sec. Zinke's visit to NM?

Also, I'm doing a Washington notebook for tomorrow (sorry for late notice - just realized I needed to do it) on the fact that the public comment period for the monuments review has ended. Any new comment or information regarding the secretary's intentions regarding NM or other monuments nationally?

Thank you,

Mike

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Readout of President Donald J. Trump's Meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman Jr.
Date: Friday, October 06, 2017 6:50:02 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2017

Readout of President Donald J. Trump's Meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman Jr.

President Donald J. Trump met with U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman Jr., and his wife, Mary Kaye Huntsman, to wish them well as they return to Moscow to represent the United States and work toward improving our relationship with Russia.

###

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Nachmany, Eli](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: Remarks - Ohio Heroes' Week
Date: Monday, July 24, 2017 11:53:34 AM
Attachments: [Remarks_HeroesWeek_v1.docx](#)

The Secretary wanted the remarks printed as is. No note cards. He also asked if they would be loaded into the prompter.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump After Security Briefing | 8/10/2017
Date: Thursday, August 10, 2017 7:27:07 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

10, 2017 For Immediate Release August

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AFTER SECURITY BRIEFING

Trump National Golf Club
Bedminster, New Jersey

3:41 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. We are having a meeting today. We actually had a much larger group than this. This is the finals. But we discussed many things. One of them obviously was North Korea. We discussed Venezuela. We discussed Afghanistan and the Middle East, generally. We had some very good meetings, some very good ideas, very good thoughts, and lot of decisions were made. This was a very important day, actually. We made a lot of decisions.

With that, if you have any questions. Yes?

Q Did you make any decision on Afghanistan in order to add additional troops?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, we're getting close. We're getting very close. It's a very big decision for me. I took over a mess, and we're going to make it a lot less messy. But that has been a place -- 17 years -- our longest war, I read in one of your columns. And, frankly, it's going to be a decision that's going to be made very soon.

Q And do you have full confidence in your national security advisor?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I do. General McMaster -- absolutely. He's our friend. He's my friend. And he's a very talented man. I like him and I respect him.

Q Sir, why did you decide to announce the transgender ban reversal a couple of weeks ago? And are you betraying a community that you pledged to support?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. Look, I have great respect for the community. I think I have great support -- or I've had great support from that community. I got a lot of votes. But the transgender -- the military is working on it now. They're doing the work. It's been a very difficult situation. And I think I'm doing a lot of people a favor by coming out and just saying it. As you know, it's been a very complicated issue for the military. It's been a very confusing issue for the military. And I think I'm doing the military a great favor.

Q Mr. President, do you have any response to the Russian President expelling 755 workers from our embassies?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I want to thank him because we're trying to cut down on payroll. And as far as I'm concerned, I'm very thankful

that he let go of a large number of people because now we have a smaller payroll. There's no real reason for them to go back. So I greatly appreciate the fact that they've been able to cut our payroll for the United States. We'll save a lot of money.

Q Mr. President, was it appropriate for the FBI to raid the home of Paul Manafort predawn?

THE PRESIDENT: I thought it was a very, very strong signal or whatever. I know Mr. Manafort. I haven't spoken to him in a long time, but I know him. He was with the campaign, as you know, for a very short period of time -- relatively short period of time. But I've always known him to be a good man.

Q He was the chairman.

THE PRESIDENT: I thought it was a very, you know -- they do that very seldom. So I was surprised to see it. I was very, very surprised to see it. We haven't really been involved.

Q Have you spoken to the FBI Director about it?

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me?

Q Have you spoken to the FBI Director about it, or the Attorney General?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I have not. I have not. But to do that early in the morning, whether or not is was appropriate, you'd have to ask them. I've always found Paul Manafort to be a very decent man. And he's like a lot of other people -- probably makes consultant fees from all over the place. Who knows. I don't know. But I thought that was a very -- that was pretty tough stuff, to wake him up. Perhaps his family was there. I think that's pretty tough stuff.

Q Mr. President, speaking of the Attorney General, have you -- how would you categorize your relationship with Attorney General Sessions? Have you guys spoken about some of the differences you've had in the past?

THE PRESIDENT: It's fine. It is what it is. It's fine. He's working hard on the border. I'm very proud of what we've done on the border. I'm very proud of General Kelly, what he's done on the border. One of the reasons he's my Chief of Staff right now is because he did such an outstanding job at the border. We're down 78 percent. Nobody thought that would be -- I mean, in the old days, with other administrations, if you were down 1 percent, it was considered a big thing. We're down 78 percent at the border, and nobody thought that was possible. So I'm very proud of General Kelly. He's now Chief of Staff.

At the same time, I'm very proud of what we've done over the last six months, between Supreme Court, between tremendous amounts of legislation that's been passed. We had 42 to 48 bills passed. I'm not talking about just executive orders, I'm talking about bills passed. We had massive executive orders. We got rid of record-setting amounts of regulations, and a lot of it is statutory, where it's a 90-day period that you have to wait. Then it's another 90-day period, and you have to wait 30 days. Much more is coming now.

And I believe in regulation. You have to have to some regulation. But we're going to have a small percentage of regulation compared to what we have. And I think that's why you see business enthusiasm is the highest it's been in 18 years; why unemployment is the lowest it's been in 18 years. And the unemployment rate just came out; it's the lowest it's been in 18 years. And with that being said, we have companies moving into the United States, whether it's Foxconn. You saw the two large auto companies moving back; probably they'll go to Michigan, but

they're negotiating with various states.

We have had -- we have done a lot in a short period of time. So I'm very proud of it. I think that General Kelly is going to be a fantastic Chief of Staff, however.

Q Mr. President, are you going to increase U.S. military presence in Asia?

THE PRESIDENT: We are going to look at what's happening in Asia. We're looking at it right now. We're constantly looking at it. I don't like to signal what I'm going to be doing, but we are certainly looking at it. And obviously we're spending a lot of time looking at -- in particular, North Korea. And we are preparing for many different, alternative events if North Korea -- if -- he has disrespected our country greatly. He has said things that are horrific. And with me, he's not getting away with it. He got away with it for a long time, between him and his family. He's not getting away with it. It's a whole new ballgame.

And he's not going to be saying those things, and he's certainly not going to be doing those things. I read about, 'We're in Guam by August 15th.' Let's see what he does with Guam. If he does something in Guam, it will be an event the likes of which nobody has seen before -- what will happen in North Korea.

Q What do you mean?

THE PRESIDENT: You'll see. You'll see. And he'll see. He will see.

Q Is that a dare?

THE PRESIDENT: It's not a dare, it's a statement. It has nothing to do with dare. That's a statement. He's not going to go around threatening Guam, and he's not going to threaten the United States. And he's not going to threaten Japan, and he's not going to threaten South Korea. No, that's not a dare, as you say. That is a statement of fact.

Q Mr. President, can you talk about the nuclear posture and what your priorities are there?

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah. Nuclear to me -- number one: I would like to de-nuke the world. I know that President Obama said global warming is the biggest threat. I totally disagree. I say that it's a simple one: Nuclear is our greatest threat worldwide. Not even a question, not even close. So I'd like to de-nuke the world. I would like Russia and the United States and China and Pakistan, and many other countries that have nuclear weapons, get rid of them.

But until such time as they do, we will be the most powerful nuclear nation on Earth by far. The first order I gave to my generals, as you know -- you know, Mike -- my first order was: I want this, our nuclear arsenal, to be the biggest and the finest in the world. And we spent a lot of money, a lot of time, and a lot of effort. And it's in tip-top shape, and getting better and getting stronger. And until such time as this scourge disappears, we will be so much better and so much stronger than anybody else. And nobody, including North Korea, is going to be threatening us with anything.

Q Sir, what specifically have you changed in the nuclear arsenal? And the reason I ask is that a lot of experts yesterday, in response to your tweet, said that modernizing the arsenal takes many years; it can't be done in six months. That's a long process, and that's only just begun.

THE PRESIDENT: We've done a lot of modernization, but we've done a lot of renovation. And we have it now in very, very good shape. And it

will be in much better shape over the next six months to a year. It's a very important thing. Actually, it was the first -- the military is very important to me. As you know, I did extremely well with the military vote, Mike and I.

But we are -- my first order was, we have to do the military, but before we do the military per se, we're going to do the nuclear. And we are in very strong shape. We are going to be increasing our budget by many billions of dollars because of North Korea and other reasons having to do with the anti-missile. So we are going to be increasing our budget by many billions of dollars. We'll probably be able to report that over the next week.

As you know, we reduced it by 5 percent, but I've decided I don't want that. We're going to be increasing the anti-missiles by a substantial amount of billions of dollars.

Q Mr. President, can you share your latest thoughts on Iran, speaking of nuclear deals, and whether you feel like they are in compliance or will be in compliance?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think Iran is in compliance. We wrote them a very tough letter to the -- as you know, to the Congress. I personally don't think they're in compliance. But we have time, and we're going to see. We also put down a lot of defaults, or potential default situations. I don't think they're living up to the spirit of the agreement. President Obama in his wisdom gave them \$150 billion. He gave them \$1.8 billion in cash, which is -- that's a hard one to figure. But that was his decision. I think it's a horrible agreement. But they are not in compliance with the agreement, and they are certainly not in the spirit of the agreement in compliance.

And I think you'll see some very strong things taking place if they don't get themselves in compliance. But I do not believe they are in compliance right now.

Q And, Mr. President, what's the latest on the leak investigation that the Attorney General announced late last week? And is there any separate investigation that you're looking at --

THE PRESIDENT: Yeah, sure. We're looking. We're always looking. You have two leaks. You have the leaks coming out of intelligence and various departments having to do with Syria, having to do with all sorts of different places, having to do, frankly, with North Korea. And those are very serious. And then you have the leaks where people want to love me and they're all fighting for love. (Laughter.) Those are not very important, but certainly we don't like them. Those are little inner-White House leaks. They're not very important. But, actually, I'm somewhat honored by them.

But the important leaks to me -- and they're leaks that the Attorney General is looking at very strongly -- are the leaks coming out of intelligence. And we have to stop them for the security and the national security of our country.

Q Mr. President, are you passing notes to the special counsel, Bob Mueller? Can you talk a little bit about --

THE PRESIDENT: No, not notes. We're working with him. I mean, we have a situation which is very unusual. Everybody said there's no collusion. If you look at the counsels that come in, we have a Senate hearing, we have judiciary, we have intelligence, and we have a House hearing. And everybody walks out, even the enemies, and they said, no, there is no collusion, there's no collusion.

So they're investigating something that never happened. There was no collusion between us and Russia. In fact, the opposite. Russia spent a lot of money on fighting me. And if you think about it, I want

a strong military. You see our budget is up by -- it will be hundreds of billions of dollars, our military budget. Russia doesn't like that. Hillary was going to cut the budget substantially, the military budget. Russia is -- very important for Russia -- oil. Oil and gas. We are now an exporter -- because of an incredible six months that I have -- an exporter of oil and gas. That's bad for Russia.

I always said, I don't think Russia wants me because I want a strong military and I want low energy prices. Energy is a disaster. Low energy prices is a disaster for Russia. Additionally, it seems that Russia spent a lot of money on that false report, and that was Russian money, and I think it was Democrat money, too. You could say that was collusion. Plus, the Democrats colluded on the Ukraine. So they colluded. And then when you get down to it, why isn't the FBI looking at the DNC server? You have a server that they refuse -- the Democrats refuse to give to the FBI. Now, I don't know how the FBI can investigate something if the DNC, the Democrats, refuse to give the server.

So we have an investigation of something that never took place. And all I say is, work with them -- because this is an event that never took place.

Now, as far as somebody else, where did they file the right papers or did they forget to file a paper, you know, I guarantee if you went around to look at everybody that made a speech or whatever these people did, that's up to them. Did they do something wrong because they didn't file the right document or whatever? Perhaps. You'll have to look at them. But I guarantee you this: Probably a lot of people in Washington did the same thing.

Q Mr. President, given your harsh criticism of Democrats just now, how are you going to bring them in on things like infrastructure or --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we'll have to see. I'm not sure that we will bring them in. I mean, maybe we'll bring them in, maybe not. I think the infrastructure bill will be bipartisan. In fact, frankly, it may have more support from the Democrats. I want a very strong infrastructure bill.

We've, as of this moment, spent over \$6 trillion in the Middle East. As far as I'm concerned, when I say "spent," we've wasted \$6 trillion in the Middle East, and yet we can't fix our roads and our bridges and our schools and our airports. And I think that's a very sad situation. So I'm very strong on infrastructure, and a lot of Republicans are, but I know a lot of Democrats are also. I think that will work out. I think it's going to work out very well.

Q Mr. President, have you sought -- thought about or considered leading the dismissal of the Special Counsel? Is there anything that Bob Mueller could do that would send you in that direction?

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't given it any thought. I mean, I've been reading about it from you people. You say, oh, I'm going to dismiss him. No, I'm not dismissing anybody. I mean, I want them to get on with the task, but I also want the Senate and the House to come out with their findings.

Now, judging from the people leaving the meetings -- leaks -- but they leave the meetings all the time and they say, no, we haven't found any collusion. There is no collusion. You know why? Because I don't speak to Russians.

Look, I won because I suppose I was a much better candidate than her. I won because I went to Wisconsin, I went to Michigan, I won Pennsylvania. I fought a smart battle. That's why I win. I didn't win because of Russia. Russia had nothing to do with me winning. We had a

great team, and I guess I did a good job. And you know what, honestly, they spent much more money than I did, by a lot. You know that. They spent a lot more money, and, honestly, they did not do a very good job of campaigning.

Q And one more question about Senate Leader McConnell. You talked about him outside a little bit earlier, but have you reached out to him since your phone call yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q And have you given any consideration to asking his wife, your Transportation Secretary, to help bridge whatever --

THE PRESIDENT: Elaine is doing a very good job. We're very proud of Elaine as Secretary of Transportation -- as you know -- as you said, Mitch's wife. She is doing a very, very good job. I'm very disappointed in Mitch. But if he gets these bills passed, I'll be very happy with him. I'll be the first to admit it. But honestly, repeal and replace of Obamacare should have taken place, and it should have been on my desk virtually the first week that I was there -- or the first day that I was there. I've been hearing about it for seven years.

So repeal and replace should have taken place. The tax bill, tax cuts, tax reform, hopefully they get that done. I hope they get it done. And the other thing would be the infrastructure bill.

In addition to that -- you know, we've passed a lot of things. We passed accountability with the VA. We passed a lot. We're doing a lot of great work at the VA. And we're doing a lot of great work all over. You look at what's happening with the coal industry where they're putting on -- I mean, I looked at West Virginia the other day -- I was in West Virginia making a speech, and they are doing great as a state. The great governor of West Virginia, Jim -- who you saw -- he just became a Republican. He left. This is the first time in many, many years that a thing like that's happened. He just left the Democratic Party and he became a Republican, which was a great moment. Hasn't happened in many years.

So we're very, very happy with what's happened. We think it's been an incredible six months. We've done a lot of record-setting business. It's incredible. You look at what's going on with the economy. And, you know, to me, very important, you look at the enthusiasm of businesses. You look at companies moving back in. You just saw on Friday the two big car companies that are coming in. You saw last week, Foxconn. They make the Apple iPhones -- they make all of it -- desktops. They're the biggest in the world. They're coming into Wisconsin with an unbelievable plant like we've never seen before.

And I actually said to Tim Cook of Apple -- I said, you know, Tim, I won't consider myself successful as President unless I see you start building those big, beautiful plants that you have all over China -- if you start building them in the United States. And he's going to do that.

Q Mr. President, you were critical of the intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq War. Should we question the intelligence now we're hearing about North Korea?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's different intelligence. I have Mike Pompeo. I have great confidence in him. That doesn't mean I had confidence in his predecessor. Okay? Which I didn't, actually, although --

Q But all the intelligence (inaudible) --

THE PRESIDENT: Although he did say good things about me. He did

say he had no information or no anything on collusion. So I shouldn't maybe say that, but I will say it. But I have tremendous confidence in Mike Pompeo. Dan Coats, fantastic. I mean, we have people. I think your new head of the FBI is going to be -- I think I've done a great service for this country. I think that Christopher will do a fantastic job as the head of the FBI.

So, look, nobody has greater respect for intelligence than Donald Trump, but you have to have the right leaders. I think we have great leaders right now. And you can look at the intelligence over the years. It was intelligence that got people to make one of the worst decisions ever made in the history of our country -- going into Iraq. Because they said there were no weapons. You know, you look at it -- it ended up being there were no weapons of mass destruction. I mean, listening to them, they said weapons of mass destruction were all over the place, but they were not there. That was intelligence.

I have great respect for intelligence as led by the people that I have in charge now. We have great people, and I think it's going to lead us to tremendous victories. And that's what we need.

Q What is that intelligence telling you about North Korea and the nuclear --

THE PRESIDENT: It's telling me a lot of things, but you'll probably find out about it before anybody else, right? (Laughter.) With your leaks. We got to stop the leaks. The leaks are very dangerous for our country. But I have great respect for the intelligence community. And I think with the leadership we have right now, hopefully it will be a very, very successful eight years for this country. And then, after that, we'll continue onward.

But we have a lot of things we have to straighten out. You have the Middle East, you have North Korea. We have a lot of places of tremendous conflict and tremendous danger for this country.

I will say, getting the 15-0 vote at the United Nations from the Security Council the other day, that's something that very few Presidents would have been able to get. And I have great respect for the fact that China and Russia went along with it. That was a tremendous day for the United States. I think it will have a strong impact on North Korea. I don't know that it will be the end all, but I think it will be a very, very -- I think it will have a big impact on North Korea and what they're doing.

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

END

4:01 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and American Taxpayers on Tax Reform
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 4:17:51 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 13, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND AMERICAN TAXPAYERS
ON TAX REFORM

Grand Foyer

3:02 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you, everyone. Please.

We're joined today by college students, young entrepreneurs, families, workers, mothers, and fathers from all over our nation. You make this country run. It's an honor to be with you, and it's an honor to have you at the White House. And thank you all for being here -- really fantastic. Thank you. Great people. (Applause.)

As a candidate, I promised we would pass a massive tax cut for the everyday, working American families who are the backbone and the heartbeat of our country.

Now we're just days away -- I hope, I hope -- you know what that means, right -- from keeping that promise and delivering a truly amazing victory for American families. We want to give you, the American people, a giant tax cut for Christmas. And when I say giant, I mean giant. (Applause.)

As we speak, Congress has reached an agreement on tax legislation that will deliver more jobs, higher wages, and massive tax relief for American families and for American companies.

The typical family of four earning \$75,000 will see an income tax cut of more than \$2,000, slashing their tax bill in half. It's going to be a lot of money. You're going to have an extra \$2,000.

But there are many more things than that. Our plan expands the child tax credit for working families. You'll hear the numbers very soon, but they're even larger than anticipated.

It nearly doubles the amount of income taxed at the rate of zero. I don't know if any of you are paying zero. I hope you're not; I hope you're paying above that. But a lot of people who are having it a little bit tough are going to be paying zero.

It closes special interest loopholes; it lowers tax rates for families; and our plan also cuts taxes on businesses, which is expected to raise income by an average of more than \$4,000. So your income goes up. It's like having a \$4,000 increase, which isn't bad, which isn't bad.

It's a lot of money to spend. A lot of jobs are going to be created with the money that you spend -- very special. And it makes

America competitive again so we can bring back that simple but beautiful phrase, you've heard it before: Made in the USA. Right? I don't know if they've heard it, but you've heard it. (Applause.)

Our current tax code is burdensome, complex, and profoundly unfair. It has exported our jobs, closed our factories, and left millions of parents worried that their children might be the first generation to have less opportunity than the last. Our factories have left. So many of them, gone. But they're all coming back. And you see it, even before we do this, that they're starting to come back. Our country is starting to do really well again, and as a country we're being respected again. We're being respected again.

I'm here today to tell you that we will never let bad things happen, with respect to the economy of our country. We're not going to lose our businesses again like has happened over the last number of decades. America is coming back bigger and better and stronger than ever before. Okay? They'll see it, and they're going to see the result.

America isn't content just by getting by. America is about getting ahead, about finding the best in ourselves and in each other. We are reclaiming our destinies as Americans, a nation that thinks big, dreams bigger, and always reaches for the stars. We didn't become great through massive taxation and Washington regulation. And, by the way, we are cutting regulation at a rate never seen before in the history of our country.

We became great because our people, our families -- and because of our freedom. We became great because of our drive to find the next horizon, to unlock the next mystery, and to begin the next adventure. You know what I'm talking about. And that's who we are: a nation of strivers and builders and dreamers and doers, people who treasure their independence and don't know how to quit. Never quit. Never, ever give up -- never, ever.

I say that, also, to our great Cabinet. And they've done a great job. A lot of things have happened. Nobody's done the job that we've done.

When government loosens its grip, there is no summit we cannot reach. Our tax cuts will break down, and they'll break it down fast -- all forms of government, and all forms of government barriers -- and breathe new life into the American economy. They will unleash the American worker; they will tear down the restraints on discovery, innovation, and creation; and they will restore the hopes and dreams of the American family.

Millions of middle-class families will win under our plan. And today we are honored to hear from a few of those wonderful and truly great families.

Bryant and Ashley Glick -- right -- are from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I know it well. They have two beautiful children with a third on the way. Bryant manages a farm equipment store. Ashley works in healthcare. This year, they were in the 15-percent tax bracket.

Under our plan, they will drop to the 12-percent bracket. That's a big drop. Instead of itemizing their deductions, they will be able to file their taxes on a single, little, beautiful sheet of paper. That's good. That's good. (Applause.) And instead of paying \$2,600 in income taxes, they will get it down to \$2,000. They'll save at least \$600 and probably more than that.

Bryant, Ashley, how about saying a few words? You want to? Come on. Thank you very much.

MR. GLICK: Well, thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be

here. On behalf of the good people of Lancaster County; my family; and, specifically, my grandmother, Linda Martin, well done. Many of your predecessors promised that this reform was coming, but you did it. We are greatly excited about this.

With the tax savings that we are going to see, we are going to put that money into home renovations. And I'm excited that you were the one that got it over the finish line. Thank you, Mr. President.
(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: The Kovacs family also joins us today from Ohio. That's a great state. A lot of success in Ohio. (Laughter.) Adam is a veteran who works in telecommunications, Lindsay works in administration admissions at a university, and they have two beautiful children.

This year, they're currently in the 25-percent bracket and pay nearly \$14,000 in taxes. Our plan gives them their time back because they won't have to itemize, and it gives them nearly one-third of their money back -- more than \$3,500 for one year.

I'd like to invite the Kovacs to explain what our tax cuts will mean for them. They've studied it very closely. These are very smart, sharp people. They know exactly what we're doing here, and they like it. Come on up. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. KOVACS: Thank you, Mr. President. It is truly an honor that you invited the Kovacs family to the White House today. This is going to be great for our family. We have home renovations that we want to take care of, and hopefully save for our two children to go to college.

Thank you so much, Mr. President. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: The Giampolo family is from Polk County, Iowa. Anthony is a police officer and Aubyn is a 911 emergency dispatcher. When they're not at work protecting and serving their fellow citizens, their hands are full with four wonderful children.

This year, they were in the 25-percent bracket, their itemized deductions, and they've done everything they can. They paid more than \$19,000 in taxes -- thank you very much, by the way; that's a lot of money. (Laughter.) Under our plan, they will file on a single page and save \$2,700. Anthony, Aubyn, maybe you'd like to say a few words? Come on in. (Applause.)

MR. GIAMPOLO: I just want to thank President Trump. Education is very important to our family. Under this bill, our family will be able to save a lot of money. We have a lot of people going to school. My wife and I are both in graduate school, finishing up, and we still got three other -- four other kids to get through college. So, it will help out a lot. (Laughter and applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Leon and Maria Benjamin are pastors of New Life Harvest Church -- and it's a beautiful church in Richmond, Virginia -- and they have three wonderful children.

Under our plan, they will get a larger tax refund to help them pay their bills. They'll receive a tax refund, this year, of \$3,000. Leon and Maria, I would love you to discuss your middle-class tax cut a little bit with the millions of people watching right now on television. (Laughter.) You do very well, and we're very proud of you. And it is indeed a beautiful church. I got to see a very, very nice picture. We'll have to get there someday soon. Thank you. Come on in, please, please. (Applause.)

MR. BENJAMIN: (Laughter.) To God be the glory. Thank you, President Trump, for inviting us here. On behalf of the Benjamin family and of course, Richmond, Virginia, we represent a cadre of many families across the nation. African American families, urban communities, and

families all across need this now. And it's time for a change, and it's time that we recognize that our President is making good on his promises. (Applause.) Thank you, Mr. President. God bless you, and we'll continue to keep praying for you and your team as you move forward and forge ahead with this new future in America. God bless you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: He can be my minister anytime. (Laughter.)

The Howard family lives in Tenino, Washington. Issac owns an espresso machine service company, and Emily takes care of their four beautiful children. They are currently in the 15-percent bracket and pay \$2,500 in taxes. Our plan will totally wipe out their tax bill, and they might even get a refund of substantially more than \$700. I'd like to introduce them. Come on up. (Applause.)

MRS. HOWARD: I'm going to speak for us today. (Laughter.) We are absolutely blessed to be here, so thank you, Mr. President. It's our joy to stand before you guys. And what this means to us as a family is that we will be able to pour out into our community -- whatever that looks like -- giving away to families that are in need, or setting them up for success in any way that -- whatever God has planned for our family.

I think that that is our goal, and that we are blessed to have such an amazing President -- and what a good steward he is of our country.

So thank you, Mr. President. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you all. It's critically important for Congress to quickly pass these historic tax cuts, and that's going to take place, I think, even before the media -- I used the word "media." Did you notice? As opposed to "fake news media" -- I don't say. (Laughter.) Because today is a very important day. We want everybody to be covered very accurately.

So I'm excited to announce that if Congress sends me a bill before Christmas, the IRS -- this is just out, this is breaking news -- has just confirmed that Americans will see lower taxes and bigger paychecks beginning in February, just two short months from now. (Applause.) Just got that. We just got that.

Fifty-five years ago this week, President John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, launched a historic effort to pass sweeping top-to-bottom tax cuts. A half a century later, we're reminded that lowering taxes is neither a Republican or Democrat idea, but an American principle and an American idea.

The goal of my administration is for every American to know the dignity of work, the pride of a paycheck, and the satisfaction of a job well done. We want people to love waking up in the morning and going to work -- just with that incredible enthusiasm that we have in this country. And that's what we're going to be doing, and that's what's going to be happening.

Today we stand on the verge of a new economic miracle. Our economy has already surged to 3 percent growth -- far ahead of schedule, by the way -- far, far ahead -- in each of the last two quarters. And if we didn't have the hurricanes, we could have hit four last quarter. Four -- a number that was unthinkable two years ago when I started the campaign, and even my first month in office -- that was an unthinkable number. And I'll tell you what, it's going to go higher than that.

We've created 2.2 million jobs since the election. Unemployment is at a 17-year low. The unemployment rate in the manufacturing business is the lowest in recorded history. Consumer confidence is a 17-point high. Pensions and retirement accounts are soaring as the stock market hits 85 new record highs since the election. How are we doing? Are we

doing okay? Not bad, right? (Applause.)

And if Congress sends me a tax reform, this is only a small beginning to the incredible things that our people will achieve over a very short period of time, and the tremendous heights that we will reach economically and so many other ways in our country.

Every day, as this victory draws closer -- I mean, we are so close, right now. So close. In fact, almost -- I don't want to talk about it. Maybe we shouldn't talk about it. (Laughter.)

The cynical voices that opposed tax cuts grow smaller and weaker, and the American people grow stronger. I heard one of our opponents stand up the other day and say, this is for the rich. They had no idea. They didn't even see the final bill. I didn't see the final bill. This is for the people of middle-income. This is for companies that are going to create jobs. This is for very, very special people, the great people of America.

Everyday, hardworking Americans know that the future of this nation will never belong to those who say you can't; it will always belong to the American people who will say we will.

It belongs to people like the Glicks, the Kovacs, the Giampolos, the Benjamins, the Howards, and the millions of Americans just like them across our nation, who pour out their hearts and souls every single day to take care of their families and the country they love and that we love.

We are going to have a country that celebrates you again -- hardworking, great people. You're being celebrated again. Remember that. Because you were a little bit forgotten. We had called it "the forgotten people." Somebody else called me and everybody else the "deplorables." Have you ever heard that term? Right? We're proud to be the deplorables, and we're doing well.

We're going to make our tax system work for you again. We're going to make our economy work for you again. And we are going to make the American Dream -- and that's the real dream -- that will be the dream that you want for your children and your grandchildren once again.

But we need your help to get Congress across that finish line. We'll have very little Democrat support, probably none, and that's purely for political reasons. They like it a lot, and they can't say it. They don't like what's happening. But they can't say it. Some day we have to come together and do bipartisan, and hopefully it can happen soon. Right? (Applause.)

If you make your voices heard, this moment will be forever remembered as a great new beginning, the dawn of a brilliant American future shining with patriotism, prosperity, and pride.

With your help, we will bring back our jobs; we will bring back our wealth as a country; and, for every citizen across this beautiful land, we will bring back our great American Dreams.

Thank you and God bless you all. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

3:22 P.M. EST

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and President Macron of France Before Bilateral Meeting
Date: Monday, September 18, 2017 4:23:55 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

Release For Immediate
September 18, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRESIDENT MACRON OF FRANCE
BEFORE BILATERAL MEETING

Lotte New York Palace Hotel
New York, New York

3:16 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much, everybody. It's a great honor to be with President Macron of France, who's had one of the great election victories of all time, I will tell you. That was an exciting evening. (Laughter.) And I must say that I watched every moment of it. It was a very, very exciting time.

He's doing a terrific job in France. He's doing what has to be done. He's respected by the French people, and I can tell you he's respected by the people of the United States.

So we have a lot of things to talk about. We'll be discussing many different elements. I'm not sure we should discuss all of it with the media -- (laughter) -- but they'll probably know before we know.

So I just want to thank you all for being here. I want to thank your representatives for being here, many of whom I know already. And we will have very productive meetings. France is a great country, it's a beautiful country. I won't soon forget our dinner on top of the Eiffel Tower where we really got to know each other and our families. And thank you very much.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you, Donald. Thank you, everybody. I will say a few words. I totally concur with Donald on what did you state, so I will just say a few words in French for the French people here.

(President Macron speaks French.) (No English interpretation provided.)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, thank you very much, Emmanuel. And I do want to say that I was your guest at Bastille Day, and it was one of the greatest parades I've ever seen. It was two hours on the button, and it was military might, and I think a tremendous thing for France and for the spirit of France.

And people don't know what great warriors they are in France, but when you see that and you see all the victories, it was a tremendous thing. And to a large extent, because of what I witnessed, we may do something like that on July 4th in Washington, down Pennsylvania Avenue. (Laughter.) I don't know. We're going to have to try and top it. But we had a lot of planes going over and we had a lot of military might, and it was really a beautiful thing to see. They had representatives from different wars and different uniforms. It was

really so well done.

But I came back, and one of my early calls were, I think we're going to have to start looking at that ourselves. So we're actually thinking about 4th of July, Pennsylvania Avenue, having a really great parade to show our military strength.

You know, we're spending this year \$700 billion -- more than we've ever spent on the military -- which is a good thing for you because we're friends. Okay? And I think we're looking forward to doing that. I'm speaking with General Kelly and with all of the people involved, and we'll see if we can do it this year. But we certainly will be beginning to do that.

So I appreciate it. And again, most importantly, I appreciate you being here. Thank you, Emmanuel.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you. And I have to say just for the American people, that our people in France were very proud to have you and your wife, Melania, in Paris the 14th of July, for Bastille Day. And people were very proud to have you in front of them and participating to this ceremony and this parade.

Thanks very much for your presence.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I was proud to be there. And also, when Emmanuel called me, he said, it's the 100th year in terms of timing of the first world war. One hundred years. And I said, well, that's a very important period. So we went and really -- I was very proud to say that we're very, very, very good friends with France. That was a beautiful day. And thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you, everybody.

END

3:21 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea Before One-on-One Bilateral Meeting
Date: Tuesday, November 07, 2017 3:15:25 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 7, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRESIDENT MOON OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
BEFORE ONE-ON-ONE BILATERAL MEETING

Blue House
Seoul, Republic of Korea

3:39 P.M. KST

PRESIDENT MOON: (As interpreted.) As President of the United States, this is the first state visit to Korea in 25 years. And since the launch of my new administration, this is the first state visit that I'm receiving from overseas. I would like to warmly welcome you and Mrs. Trump both to Korea and to Cheong Wa Dae.

So I hope that I will have an opportunity to repay the warm hospitality that I received from you when I visited Washington, D.C. in June.

And I heard this past Sunday there was some tragic news from Texas. I believe that you would have the even more heavier heart because you were traveling overseas when this happened. On behalf of the Korean government and the Korean people, I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to you, Mr. President, and the American people.

And also, I would like to congratulate you in advance. Tomorrow is your one-year anniversary of your election victory. And I believe it has not been one year yet, your time in office, but you have already -- you are already making great progress on making America great again, as you have promised on the campaign trail.

And I would like to congratulate you on the progress that you've been making on the economy and also the fact that the stock market has continued to break new records every day. And thanks to that, the stock market in Korea is also performing very well. It is good to know that both of us are doing very well.

And I would also like to commend you on your efforts in leading the international collaboration and unity when it comes to countering North Korea nuclear issue. I know that you have put this issue at the top of your security agenda.

So I hope that your visit to Korea and to the Asia Pacific region will serve as an opportunity to relieve some of the anxiety that the Korean people have due to North Korea's provocations, and also serve as a turning point in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.

The Korean people welcome you as one, and we have great expectations.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much. President Moon, I want to thank you so much for that beautiful ceremony. It doesn't get more beautiful than that, and I know the work that was put into it. And I watched all of those tens of thousands of people along the route in

proudly waving your flag, your great flag, and also waving the American flag, in many cases. I was very happy to see such spirit. You have tremendous spirit in this country, and it's a great country.

I just have to say that it's an honor to be with you and your beautiful wife. And we look forward to having a very successful, really, day of talks. We'll start right now and we'll conclude sometime tomorrow. And then I go off to China, where we look forward to a tremendous success, also. We just left Japan, and there's a great spirit. It's a great part of the world, and it's a very tremendous honor to be here and to be with you.

And again, I very much appreciate the reception. Thank you very much.

END

3:45 P.M. KST

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of Finland in Joint Press Conference
Date: Monday, August 28, 2017 10:10:21 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 28, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ OF FINLAND
IN JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

East Room

4:20 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you. Thank you very much. It is my great honor to welcome President Niinistö to the White House. We've just concluded a very positive meeting.

And I want to begin today by extending my thoughts and prayers for those affected by Hurricane Harvey and the catastrophe of flooding and all of the other difficulties that they're currently going through in Houston, in southeast Texas, and now it's looking more and more like the state of Louisiana will be also affected.

My administration is coordinating closely with state and local authorities in Texas and Louisiana to save lives, and we thank our first responders and all of those involved in their efforts.

We're working directly with Texas Governor Greg Abbott -- who, by the way, is doing a fantastic job -- and his entire staff, likewise, as well as with Governor John Bel Edwards, who's very much involved in starting the process of Louisiana. We've pledged our full support as Texas and Louisiana battle and recover from this very devastating and historic storm. There's probably never been anything like this.

Under the supervision of FEMA Administrator Brock Long, there has been a tremendous amount of work done. He has been so outstanding in so many ways. More than 8,500 federal workers are involved in the Texas effort alone. I've also today declared emergencies in Louisiana at the request of Governor Edwards.

Recovery will be a long and difficult road, and the federal government stands ready, willing, and able to support that effort. Right now, the single most important thing is the safety and security of those still in harm's way, including the first responders who have been so terrific and brave. Protecting the lives of our people is my highest priority. Every asset at my command is at the disposal of local officials.

Tragic times such as these bring out the best in America's character. Strength, charity and resilience are those characters. We see neighbor helping neighbor, friend helping friend, and stranger helping stranger. And you see that all over. If you watch on television, you just see such incredible work and love, and teamwork.

We are one American family. We hurt together, we struggle together, and, believe me, we endure together. We are one family.

To the people of Texas and Louisiana: We are 100 percent with

you. We're praying for you, we're working closely with your leaders and officials, and I will be visiting the impact zone tomorrow to ensure that you're receiving full support and cooperation from the federal government. And on Saturday, we think we're going back to Texas, and also we will be going to Louisiana.

Nothing can defeat the unbreakable spirit of the people of Texas and Louisiana. Right now, every American heart sends its love and support to those whose lives have been upended -- totally upended -- totally -- by this very horrible storm.

We ask God for his wisdom and strength. We will get through this. We will come out stronger. And, believe me, we will be bigger, better, stronger than ever before. The rebuilding will begin, and in the end it will be something very special. And I just want to thank everybody in the affected area, because it has been absolutely incredible to watch -- the spirit, the cooperation, and the love.

I would also like to share a message to the people of Finland who have recently suffered a terrorist attack in Turku: We stand in solidarity with you against the terrorist threat. We must all work together to deny terrorists safe havens, cut off their finances, and defeat their very wicked ideology.

Mr. President, Americans are grateful for your steadfast support as an ally in the fight against terrorism -- appreciate it -- including your membership in the coalition to defeat ISIS. Finland makes important contributions to the coalition and its effort in Afghanistan, and has troops on the ground in Iraq training Iraqi soldiers.

In Afghanistan, Finland provides troops and financial contributions to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces on a modern-day frontier between barbarism and civilization. That's what you have -- it's barbarism versus civilization. We are particularly grateful to the Finnish citizens who have sacrificed for our mutual security.

Finland is a leading expert in cybersecurity. In fact, we should be calling you pretty soon. You do do a fantastic job with cybersecurity, and I congratulate you. And I think in a very short period of time, we're going to be right there with you, believe me. The United States is a very proud partner of Finland's European Center of Excellence to counter modern threats, including cyberattacks.

In addition, we look forward to your leadership as chair of the Arctic Council. The Arctic region has strategic and economic importance for both of our nations -- very much so.

The foundation of our friendship is our shared love of freedom. On behalf of all Americans, I congratulate you and the Finnish people on the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence -- 100 years. Fantastic.

In honor of Finland's centennial, the United States is contributing an additional half-million dollars to the Fulbright Finland Foundation. Through the Fulbright program, we are sending more of our best and brightest to Finland, forging lasting connections between Americans and Finns.

On the economic front, we seek fair and reciprocal trade to benefit both of our countries. I applaud Finnish companies for their commitment to increase investment in the United States, adding new technologies and adding good jobs for hardworking Americans. Thank you.

The U.S.-Finnish partnership is rooted in our shared interests and common values. As President -- and I must say, and I want to thank you, President -- we've discussed and we look forward to further strengthening these bonds of culture, commerce, and cooperation between our two countries so that our citizens and our nations can thrive and

prosper together.

Mr. President, I'd like to thank you very much for being at the White House and a great meeting in the Oval Office. It's my honor to have you here. Thank you. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Mr. President, I want to thank you for your very kind words. And I just want to tell you that it is a great pleasure and honor to be here today. I thank you also for the discussions we have had. They have been of most interest.

We have been closely following Hurricane Harvey. Our thoughts are with the people of Texas and Louisiana. They and you, Mr. President, have shown strength and courage to overcome this catastrophe. It has been touching to watch the TV and see how people help each other. That is what we basically are built of -- helping each other.

Finland highly appreciates our close relationship with the United States. Today, they are broader than ever, ranging from security to defense cooperation, to trade and innovation. We are indeed celebrating our 100 years of independence. I want to thank you for the generous gift presented to the Fulbright Finland Foundation.

I want to also take this opportunity to greet the almost 700,000 Americans who have Finnish origin. Mr. President and I exchanged views on several international issues. Our broad headline was security. We discussed the importance of the transatlantic bond between the European Union and the United States. History has taught us Europeans the value of unity.

The U.S. and NATO presence in Europe are -- and in Baltic Sea -- are most important, and they are increasing rapidly. Finland is doing its part. We promote dialogue. To reduce risks, Finland has proposed steps to improve flight safety in the Baltic Sea area. They are small, but positive steps in reopening dialogue between NATO and Russia. We remain committed to supporting Afghanistan, and we are a dedicated member of the global coalition against ISIS.

Finland took the chairmanship of the Arctic Council from the United States in May. We can't afford losing the pristine Arctic nature. Finland firmly believes that business and environment can both be winners in the Arctic. A good example is reducing black carbon.

Mr. President, I'm looking forward to even closer cooperation with you and your great nation.

I want to thank you. Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: So we'll take a couple of questions. How about we go to Texas. Todd Gillman. Todd.

Q Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes.

Q I'm wondering what you can tell the people of Texas to expect in terms of long-term recovery efforts. And, in particular, you have been feuding with some key congressional leaders. You've also threatened a government shutdown, potentially next month, over border wall funding. Are these going to hamper long-term -- the funding that will be needed long term for recovery?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, Todd. I think that you're going to very rapid action from Congress, certainly from the President. And you're going to get your funding. It's a terrible tragedy. Your governor has been absolutely outstanding in the job he's done, and his entire staff.

And I will say that -- I just spoke with Greg, and he is working

like 24/7. We expect to have requests on our desk fairly soon, and we think that Congress will feel very much the way I feel. In a very bipartisan way -- that will be nice. But we think you're going to have what you need and it's going to go fast.

Texas is a unique place. It's a great, great state, great people, and I think you you'll be up and running very, very quickly. Really, very quickly. So, yeah, I think you're going to be in fantastic shape. I have already spoken to Congress and everybody feels for you and feels for what you're going through. But at the same time, they have great respect -- even additional respect for the state, because you've handled it so well, so brilliantly.

But it's a long road. Still pouring, still a lot of rain. Nobody has ever seen anything like it. I've heard the words "epic," I've heard "historic" -- and that's what it is. But you will have what you want, I think, very, very quickly.

And, Todd, you can ask a question the President.

Q Sure, thank you. Does this situation make you reconsider the possibility of a government shutdown?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I think it has nothing to do with it, really. I think this is separate. This is going to go really very, very quickly. Again, I have spoken to many of the people we're talking about, and everybody feels the same way I do.

Q Thank you. And, Mr. President, I wanted to ask you: Your neighbor Russia has meddled in U.S. politics. They have a military exercise coming up in the next few weeks. In the Baltic, there are tensions over there. What kind of advice have you offered, and can you offer, to the United States in dealing with this adversary?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Sir, we are not feeling ourselves as advisors, but we are feeling ourselves as doing all what is possible to maintain peace. And that is what we are doing in Baltic Sea area too.

With the -- actually, you refer to a different kind military training, which is going to happen there. I have to tell you that a couple of weeks ago, I met President Putin, and there were media interested in why Chinese navy is having training together with Russians in Baltic Sea area. Putin answered that it is not a bloc, it is not against anybody. My answer was that we are also training in Baltic Sea with United States and Sweden, and it's not bloc, it's not against anybody.

So we have to be very careful that this huge training, huge military trafficking over politics doesn't cause any accidental problems. Because we know that from accidents might grow whatever. And that is why I think it's important that we continue to work with NATO to enhance, like I said, dialogue between Russia and NATO. And it is going forward.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You have a question?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Finnish Broadcasting Company. Where you are? Okay.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question to President Trump, if I may. As President Niinistö told, he's been raising the issue about the security situation in the Baltic region and the Baltic Sea, specifically, and has been concerned about the Russian planes flying there without transponders on. So my question to you, Mr. President, would be: Mr. Trump, would you consider Russia as a security threat? Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I consider many countries as a security

threat, unfortunately, when you look at what's going on in the world today. As you know, a few weeks ago our great Vice President, Mike Pence, who's right here, was in the region and spent quite a bit of time there. We consider that a very, very important part of the world. We have great relationships there. We have a great relationship with Finland.

And so I would consider many countries threats, but these are all threats that we'll be able to handle if we have to. Hopefully, we won't have to handle them, but if we do, we will handle them.

Q Can I have a follow-up, as he had also? So if the situation in the Baltic were to escalate, what would the U.S. be ready to do in that unfortunate circumstances? Thanks.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, we are very protective of that region. That's all I can say. We are very, very protective. We have great friends there, great relationships there. We are extremely protective. Okay? Thank you.

Q Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: A question for the President? Yes.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: No. Sometimes he --

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Do you have a question for the President? Do you have a question for the President?

Q What if --

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It's all right. Somebody else could.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: You don't have to. (Laughter.)

Q Mr. President, (inaudible) from Finland.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Okay.

Q Did you speak about climate change at all? And what about your, Mr. President Niinistö, initiative about cleaning up the Arctic and doing it together with the United States? What kind of response did your idea receive here in Washington, D.C.?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: We discussed a lot about black carbon. And to explain to everybody: What happens is that, from atmosphere, black carbon covers the Arctic, and we know what happens when sunshine meets black. It melts the ice. And the problem is not only Arctic; if we lose the Arctic, we lose the globe. That is reality.

So we must fight against those emissions spreading black carbon. I understood that the United States is going to put it in half, and we know that black carbon sources are a lot of them in Russia. They are old-fashioned energy plants producing heating. The other problem is flaring. You know that in oil fields, they flare up the extra gas, and the amount is huge. Yearly, they flare 40 times more than Finland spent gas.

So if we can -- and here comes also a business picture -- it would be a good business to renew those old-fashioned plants, to make more with less energy. It would be the business to stop flaring, to take use of that gas which is now burned (inaudible).

And I think that these elements are shots that we can continue discussing in Arctic Council. We have inherited the chairmanship from the United States, and we continue the work.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We had a very good discussion, in particular on

the Arctic and black carbon. And I think we have much in agreement.

One of the things we also agree on: We want crystal-clean water, and we want clean air -- the cleanest ever. Very important. So we have a lot of agreement.

John Roberts, yes.

Q Mr. President, thank you so much. President Niinistö, I have a question for you as well, but if I could start with President Trump. In the middle of Hurricane Harvey hitting on Friday night, you chose to pardon former Sheriff Joe Arpaio. I wonder if you could tell us what was behind your thinking for issuing the pardon for the Sheriff. And, as well, what do you say to your critics, even some in your own party, who say it was the wrong thing to do?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, a lot of people think it was the right thing to do, John. And actually, in the middle of a hurricane, even though it was a Friday evening, I assumed the ratings would be far higher than they would be normally. You know the hurricane was just starting, and I put it out that I had pardoned, as we say, Sheriff Joe.

He's done a great job for the people of Arizona. He's very strong on borders, very strong on illegal immigration. He is loved in Arizona. I thought he was treated unbelievably unfairly when they came down with their big decision to go get him right before the election voting started, as you know. And he lost in a fairly close election. He would have won the election, but they just hammered him just before the election. I thought that was a very, very unfair thing to do.

When I mentioned him the other night -- you saw the massive crowd we had. The people went crazy when I said, "What do you think of Sheriff Joe?" or something to that effect. The place went absolutely crazy when I was in Arizona last week.

And as far as pardons are concerned, I actually did this just before the meeting because I assumed that somebody would ask me the question. I didn't know it would be you, as you can attest. You didn't even know you were going to be called. But I thought I would. And, you know, Sheriff Joe is a great veteran of the military, great law enforcement person, somebody that's won many, many elections in the state of Arizona. But I wanted to look at some of the other people that were pardoned over the years.

And if you look at, as an example, President Clinton pardoned Marc Rich, who was charged with crimes going back decades, including illegally buying oil from Iran while it held 53 American hostages -- wasn't allowed to do that, selling to the enemies of the United States. He was pardoned after his wife donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Clintons.

Then you have dangerous criminals. President Clinton pardoned Susan Rosenberg, a member of the Weather Underground, charged as part of a bank robbery that led to a guard and two police officers being killed.

Drug dealers. President Clinton commuted the sentence of Carlos Vignali, a central player in a cocaine ring that stretched from California to Minnesota.

Criminal leaker. You've heard the word "leaker." President Obama commuted the sentence of Chelsea Manning, who leaked countless sensitive and classified documents to WikiLeaks, perhaps and others. But a horrible, horrible thing that he did. Commuted the sentence and perhaps pardoned.

President Obama commuted the sentence of Oscar Lopez Rivera, who was charged as part of a violent independence group from Puerto Rico, responsible for 28 Chicago-area bombings and many deaths in the 1970s

and 1980s.

Sheriff Joe is a patriot. Sheriff Joe loves our country. Sheriff Joe protected our borders. And Sheriff Joe was very unfairly treated by the Obama administration, especially right before an election -- an election that he would have won. And he was elected many times.

So I stand by my pardon of Sheriff Joe, and I think the people of Arizona, who really know him best, would agree with me.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, I'd like to claim prescience that you did all the research, but I'm afraid I have to confess the question was fairly obvious.

And President Niinistö, I'm sure that President Trump either briefed you today, or you're aware of his new plan for Afghanistan that really relies, at its core, in bringing the Taliban to the table for negotiations. Given the history and the ideology of the Taliban, do you ever believe that they would honor any kind of an agreement that was ever made? Or would they, when the United States and Finland and other countries leave Afghanistan, renege on that deal?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Yes, first of all, I want to underline that Finland has been involved from the very beginning to all the attempts to solve the situation in Afghanistan. We have troops there. We have also financial aid going on all the time.

We have to try. We have to try in all possible ways to solve the situation in Afghanistan. It has been ongoing quite a long time, for decades. But to solve it by negotiations, surely you have to have full respect to the one you negotiate, and to also full believe that what is negotiated is also fulfilled.

These elements have to be all the time present when you discuss with whichever party in Afghanistan.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I know there might be a couple of more questions, but do you want to take one more? Would you want to take one more? Go ahead, pick. (Laughter.) Go ahead.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Please.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Again? You're going to give her the same one?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: No, she's not the same lady. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Go ahead.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: They are sitting side-by-side.

Q We have a lot of blonde women in Finland.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Go ahead.

Q Mr. President Trump, what kind of role do you see as Finland having in the U.S.-Russia relations? Do you think Finland could be of assistance, helping U.S. get better relations with Russia?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I hope that we do have good relations with Russia. I say it loud and clear, I've been saying it for years: I think it's a good thing if we have great relationships, or at least good relationships with Russia. That's very important, and I believe someday that will happen. It's a big country, it's a nuclear country, it's a country that we should get along with, and I think we will eventually get along with Russia.

Finland is respected by Russia. Finland has been free of Russia, really -- just about one of the few countries in the region that has been -- for 100 years. And Russia has a lot of respect for Finland, so that's always good. But I think Finland is doing fine with Russia, and I hope that the United States will someday be able to have a very good relationship with Russia also. I think that's very good for world peace and for other things.

Thank you.

Q As a follow-up, if Finland's relationship with Russia were to deteriorate, would the U.S. -- what kind of assistance would the U.S. be willing to give to Finland bilaterally, if we needed it?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, as I said before, that, you know, our relationship with Finland is a very close one and we're always ready to help Finland. One of the things that is happening is you're purchasing large amounts of our great F-18 aircraft from Boeing, and it's one of the great planes, one of the great fighter jets, and you're purchasing lots of other military equipment, and, I think, purchasing very wisely. I know all of the military equipment and I actually agree with everything you purchased. We talked about it before.

I think Finland is really a respected country militarily. It's got large armed forces for its size as a country. Really, proportionally, probably one of the biggest in the world if you think of it.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: I guess so.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: But they're very respected militarily, and they're respected beyond militarily. So hopefully it will never come to that. Thank you.

Q And President Niinistö? President Niinistö, did you discuss Russia? And did you offer any assistance to the U.S. with their relationship with Russia?

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Well, like I said earlier on, we did discuss about Russia. But actually, I don't feel myself or Finland being any advisor to anybody, but we try to do our best, and hopefully we get also results from that.

I want to remind you that, in NATO meeting, a year ago approximately, it was stated by all NATO countries that with Russia you have to be deterrence, but you have to exercise dialogue too. These two-way elements have to be there.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yeah, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Trey Yingst with One America News. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, do you believe that cutting FEMA's budget is the right thing to do?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No, I think what's going to happen is the FEMA money is relatively small compared to the rebuilding money. So FEMA -- right now, we have the money necessary for Texas and Louisiana, if we need, but the real number, which will be many billions of dollars, will go through Congress. I think it'll happen very quickly, it'll go very fast, and I want to congratulate you on the network. It's a great network.

Q Thank you. If I may follow up on one other question from earlier -- the southern border wall. Is your plan still to have Mexico pay for the wall?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes, they will. One way or the other, Mexico is going to pay for the wall. That's right. It may be through reimbursement, but one way or the other, Mexico will pay for the wall.

We're right now negotiating NAFTA. In my opinion, Mexico has been very difficult, as they should be. Why wouldn't they be? They had a sweetheart deal for so many years. It's one of the great deals of all time for them. One of the worst trade deals ever signed. I guarantee you, Mr. President, Finland would never have signed NAFTA with Russia or whoever you wanted. This is not a deal that you would want to sign. This is not a deal that Finland would know about.

NAFTA is one of the worst trade deals ever signed at any time, anywhere in the world. And I can understand why Mexico is being difficult because why wouldn't they be? They've had it their way.

But, no, Mexico will pay for the wall. It may be through a reimbursement. We need the wall very badly. As you know, Mexico has a tremendous crime problem -- tremendous -- one of the number two or three in the world. And that's another reason we need it. And the -- just to add on, tremendous drugs are pouring into the United States at levels that nobody has ever seen before. This happened over the last three to four years in particular. The wall will stop much of the drugs from pouring into this country and poisoning our youth.

So we need the wall. It's imperative. We may fund it through the United States. But ultimately, Mexico will pay for the wall.

Q Sir, if I may follow up. On Tuesday, you said, if we have to close down our government, we are building that wall.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I hope that's not necessary --

Q If Mexico is paying for wall, why would you close down our government?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Let me just tell you -- yeah, I hope that's not necessary. If it's necessary, we'll have to see. But I hope it's not necessary. The wall is needed from the standpoint of security. The wall is needed from the standpoint of drug -- tremendous, the drug scourge, what's coming through the areas that we're talking about. As you know, I have General Kelly here. We stopped traffic coming through -- 78 percent. It's going to be, I think, 81 percent this quarter, which is a record. In other administrations, if they stopped it just a little bit, like one, or two, or three percent, they considered that a great thing. We're up to almost 80 percent. We'll soon be over 80 percent.

But you need the wall to do the rest, and you need the wall for the drugs. The drugs are a tremendous problem. The wall will greatly help with the drug problem, and ultimately that's a good thing for Mexico also. We have a very good relationship with Mexico, but I will say that dealing with them -- I've always said -- I've talked about NAFTA, you've heard me many times -- and I've said that we will either terminate it or renegotiate it.

We're in the process of renegotiating -- right now renegotiating the deal. I believe that you will probably have to at least start the termination process before a fair deal could be arrived at because it's been a one-sided deal. And this includes Canada, by the way. Great respect for Canada, great love for Canada, but it's been a one-sided deal for Canada and for Mexico.

And the United States workers, all of these incredible people who have lost their jobs because of NAFTA, they're not going to be suffering any longer. It's been unfair for too long.

So we will build the wall, and we will stop a lot of things, including the drug -- the drugs are pouring in at levels like nobody has ever seen. We'll be able to stop them once the wall is up.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

PRESIDENT NIINISTÖ: Thank you.

END

4:54

P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and President Rajoy of the Government of Spain in Joint Press Conference
Date: Tuesday, September 26, 2017 3:51:26 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 26, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRESIDENT RAJOY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN
IN JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

Rose Garden

1:56 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Good afternoon. I'm greatly honored to welcome President Mariano Rajoy of Spain, and it's a great honor to have you at the White House. Thank you very much.

We've just concluded a very productive conversation on a crucial range of economic and security issues.

Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to send America's hearts and prayers to the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Both have been devastated -- and I mean absolutely devastated -- by Hurricane Maria, and we're doing everything in our power to help the hard-hit people of both places, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. And a massive effort is underway, and we have been really treated very, very nicely by the governor and by everybody else. They know how hard we're working and what a good job we're doing.

As we speak, FEMA, our great first responders, and all available federal resources, including the military, are being marshaled to save lives, protect families, and begin a long and very, very difficult restoration process. I have directed all relevant departments and agencies to assist in the response and recovery effort.

As Governor Rosselló just told me this morning, the entire federal workforce is doing great work in Puerto Rico, and I appreciated his saying it. And he's saying it to anybody that will listen. Our team has been incredible after having gone through Texas and then Florida, with other stops along the way. And he further went on and he said, "And through the Trump administration's leadership, the relationship between FEMA and my team is very, very strong." I will be going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday. I'll also be going to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Over the last several weeks our nation has been tested by the destructive force of Mother Nature, but we will respond to it with an even mightier force: the resolve of the American spirit. Texas, Louisiana, and Florida are in really good shape and moving along well. We thank all of the first responders and volunteers who have risked their lives. And that's what they did -- they risked their lives.

To all of those impacted by the trouble and these horrible hurricanes and storms that have affected and impacted our country, I thank you. The recovery process will be a very, very difficult one. We will get through this, and we will get through it together. We will be stronger. We will be bigger. We will be better. Thank you very much.

The United States and Spain are great friends and close allies.

Our bonds, culture, and commerce go back many centuries. Our schools teach American children about Spain's history of exploration. Our museums treasure beautiful Spanish works of art. And your country's contributions to architecture, music, and film are admired all over the world. It's a greatly admired country. The deep relationship between our two people is a strong foundation for lasting cooperation.

On behalf of the American people, I want to express our support and extend our prayers to all of those affected by the vile terror attack in Spain last month. I want to assure the people of Spain that America stands with you in confronting this evil that threatens all of humanity. We will continue to deny the terrorists their funding, their territory, and any form of support for their wicked ideology.

In this common fight, America greatly appreciates Spain's contribution to the coalition to defeat ISIS. Spanish troops and police have trained more than 30,000 members of the Iraqi security forces. We also thank the Spanish people for being such gracious hosts to the American servicemembers stationed at Spanish bases.

The United States and Spain together face many critical dangers and challenges, from North Korea, to Iran, to Venezuela. We thank Spain for its recent decision to expel its North Korean ambassador and for standing with us in our efforts to isolate the brutal North Korean regime.

It is time for all responsible nations to join forces to isolate the North Korean menace. North Korean nuclear weapons and missile development threaten the entire world with unthinkable loss of life. All nations must act now to ensure the regime's complete denuclearization.

I appreciate the United Nations Security Council voting twice, unanimously -- 15 to nothing, twice -- to adopt hard-hitting resolutions against North Korea. I have recently issued tough new sanctions against those who do business with this outlaw regime, and I applaud China's latest action to restrict its trade with North Korea. And, in particular, I applaud China for breaking off all banking relationships with North Korea -- something that people would have thought unthinkable even two months ago. I want to thank President Xi.

Here, in the Western Hemisphere, we have seen the heartbreaking tragedy of Maduro's socialist rule in Venezuela. Spain has been especially helpful in promoting the interests and wellbeing of the Venezuelan people, and we thank you for your efforts.

We hope our friends in the EU will soon follow the United States, Canada, and many Latin American nations in sanctioning the Maduro regime. We need everybody involved. The citizens of Venezuela have endured immense suffering, poverty, starvation, and dangerous political unrest under Maduro's oppressive socialist regime.

Together, Spain and the United States hope for peace, for the restoration of democracy, and for the release of all political prisoners. Wherever socialism spreads, misery follows. The people of Venezuela deserve a future of freedom. These are great people.

In the economic arena, we support trade that benefits both Spain and the United States, which means it must be fair and it must be reciprocal -- such an important word. It hasn't been used very much in the United States -- "reciprocal." Spain is the 10th largest investor in the United States, and I commend Spanish business leaders for their confidence in America and the American worker. And considering the fact that our stock market has just hit all-time highs, I think they probably like the United States very much right now.

This is a time for both tremendous opportunity for our world, but also serious dangers. As I said at the United Nations, which future

really is up to us. If we empower our citizens, serve their needs, and appeal to all that is best in the human spirit, then I have no doubt we will succeed like never, ever before.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with you to build this future of prosperity and peace for both Spain and for the United States of America. Thank you very much. Thank you

PRESIDENT RAJOY: (As interpreted.) Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I would like to start by expressing my solidarity -- that of my government and that of the Spanish people -- with the people in the U.S. government after the terrible events President Trump just referred to and that took place in Texas, Florida, and other U.S. regions, and in Puerto Rico.

We hope and we wish that even if what happened can't be changed, we hope that in the future we can do as best as possible for everyone.

President Trump and I had a working meeting today, which was very productive. And we went through our bilateral relations. Spain and the United States are two great partners. We share values, democracy, freedom, respect for human rights, the rule of law. And we have institutional and cultural -- corporate ties which are very important.

Relations between the two countries have been excellent, and we must continue to work to strengthen those relations even more, especially in the economic arena. That's why our priorities of strengthening the economy and job creation are key. Trade between the two countries is growing sustainably. The United States is our second top trading partner outside of Europe. The United States is our top destination of exports outside the European Union.

And regarding investments, it's the second top destination of Spanish investments and the top investor in Spain. For many years, Spanish companies have invested in the U.S. They're creating many stable and high-quality jobs in different sectors, such as the financial industry and energy. And this has been possible thanks to the establishment of subsidiaries in the United States by 600 Spanish companies, and they will continue to create jobs. That's why they follow closely investment opportunities in the United States, and they can contribute their technology and their experience to the United States.

I've also given details to President Trump on Spain's role in different crises, which are important to us all. For instance, he referred to our participation in the coalition against Daesh and the crisis due to nuclear proliferation in North Korea.

Combatting terrorism was something we talked about at length. Spain has a longstanding experience in this area. And just like the United States, we've been hit by jihadi terrorist attacks on our soil. Both countries agree on anti-terrorist policy, and we cooperate very closely on police, military, and intelligence areas. I've also said that I'm sure that we still have to do a lot in the area of intelligence. We need to improve the coordination mechanisms in the area of cybersecurity or preventing recruitment and financing of terrorists.

I've also underscored Spain's role as a member of the global coalition against terrorism, and our deployment in Iraq, which is very large. We're the fourth-largest contributor and we've trained over 32,000 officers. In addition to that, I've told President Trump that we would increase our commitment with the new phase after the fall of Mosul by contributing a new financial package to rebuild Iraq.

We also have long relations in the area of defense, both in NATO and bilaterally with the Spanish bases, which are used by both our countries in Rota and Moron, which are increasingly important

strategically. Our defense agreement goes back to 1988. At the time, Spain was in the backseat of the alliance; right now we're at the forefront -- Daesh, Sahel, Libya. So the defense and security relation is excellent, but we would like that to spill over into other areas of the bilateral relation. President Trump and I have gone through the political and economic situation in our countries.

Regarding the international situation, we've agreed that the challenge by North Korea to the non-proliferation regime is an intolerable violation of the international legality. And I've expressed the full support of the Spanish government to the stepping up of sanctions, as approved by the United Nations the other day. As we know, the European Union is working on new additional measures, and in that context, Spain will continue to press for a firm, common stance supportive of the U.S. and its regional allies.

I've also reminded President Trump that the Spanish government has taken measures that have reduced the diplomatic presence of North Korea in our country. President Trump has thanked me for the firm position my government has taken and the measures we've adopted.

Regarding Venezuela, we've exchanged views on the worrying totalitarian direction the country is moving in and its impoverishment with the implications that has in the humanitarian area. We've noted that there's a need to sustain international pressure on the Venezuelan government so that it commits to negotiations which will enable us to find a democratic negotiated and peaceful solution to the current crisis. I've also reminded President Trump that Spain and the EU have spearheaded the adoption of sanctions, which were first individual and targeted.

So we've gone through the political and economic situation of both our countries. Spain and the United States are two democracies, friends and allies with many common values and interests. And we've agreed to work together in the area of defense of those values with a comprehensive and cooperative vision.

I would like to thank the warm welcome that was extended to us by President Trump and his team at the White House. And I would also like to underscore the friendship that exists between the United States and Spain. Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much.

Steve Holland, please. Reuters. Don't get nervous, Steve.
(Laughter.)

Q There's some concern that you were preoccupied with the NFL instead of dealing with Puerto Rico. Why isn't that a fair assessment?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I wasn't preoccupied with the NFL. I was ashamed of what was taking place, because to me that was a very important moment. I don't think you can disrespect our country, our flag, our national anthem. To me, the NFL situation is a very important situation. I've heard that before about was I preoccupied. Not at all. Not at all. I have plenty of time on my hands. All I do is work.

And to be honest with you, that's an important function of working. It's called respect for our country. Many people have died -- many, many people. Many people are so horribly injured. I was at Walter Reed Hospital recently, and I saw so many great young people, and they're missing legs and they're missing arms. And they've been so badly injured. And they were fighting for our country. They were fighting for our flag. They were fighting for our national anthem. And for people to disrespect that by kneeling during the playing of our national anthem I think is disgraceful.

So I will also say that -- again, I read you part of his quote --

but the Governor of Puerto Rico is so thankful for the great job that we're doing. We did a great job in Texas, a great job in Florida, a great job in Louisiana. We hit little pieces of Georgia and Alabama. And frankly, we're doing -- and it's the most difficult job because it's on the island. It's on an island in the middle of the ocean. It's out in the ocean. You can't just drive your trucks there from other states.

And the Governor said we are doing a great job. In fact, he thanked me specifically for FEMA and all of the first responders in Puerto Rico. And we're also mentioning with that the U.S. Virgin Islands. It was devastated. So we are totally focused on that.

But at the same time, it doesn't take me long to put out a wrong, and maybe we'll get it right. I think it's a very important thing for the NFL to not allow people to kneel during the playing of our national anthem, to respect our country and to respect our flag.

Okay? Thank you.

Q If I could ask the Prime Minister -- if I could ask a Prime Minister a question. It's going to take a war to rein in North Korea. And what is your advice to the President on dealing with this?

PRESIDENT RAJOY: (As interpreted.) No one wishes for there to be a war anywhere in the world, but it's true that the recent events in North Korea with implications in the neighboring countries -- very important countries -- means that we all have to be forceful. And those of us who defend the values of democracy, freedom, and human rights have to let North Korea know that it isn't going anywhere in that direction.

For the time being, sanctions have been adopted. Spain will support any political decision which will contribute to putting an end to this situation, which has nothing to do with the principles and values most Western and global democracies defend.

Q (As interpreted.) Thank you. Jose Emil Blanco (ph) from SA. We don't know whether during your conversation you discussed the Catalan situation. And this is a question for President Trump. Do you support what the Spanish government is doing regarding Catalonia? And I'd like to ask the President of the Spanish Government whether he fears there might be a unilateral declaration of independence in Catalonia, and what would the government do then.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I think that Spain is a great country and it should remain united. We're dealing with a great, great country, and it should remain united.

I've been watching that unfold, but it's actually been unfolding for centuries. And I think that nobody knows if they're going to have a vote. I think the President would say they're not going to have a vote. But I think that the people would be very much opposed to that.

I can say only speaking for myself, I would like to see Spain continue to be united.

PRESIDENT RAJOY: (As interpreted.) The decision to unilaterally declare independence is not something -- it's not a decision I would make. It's a decision which will have to be made, or not, by the Catalan government. I think it would be very wrong. And I think that right now, when everyone knows that the referendum can't take place because there isn't an electoral committee, there isn't a team at the Catalan government organizing the referendum. There aren't ballots, there aren't people at the voting stations. So it's just crazy. All this will lead to is noise. But certainly there can't be a valid democratic referendum with guarantees -- with minimum guarantees.

I think that what would make sense in a situation such as this is to go back to common sense and put an end to this whole story. The only

thing it's doing is generating division, tensions, and it's not contributing in any way to the citizen situation. So I want this to be resolved as soon as possible. And I want us to go into a new stage where the rule of law, dialogue, and common sense will prevail. Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you. Major Garrett. Yes, CBS.

Q Good afternoon.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Yes, hi.

Q The day began in Puerto Rico with government officials saying (inaudible) and talking about the threat of debt a mere hours away. Are you truly satisfied with what the government has done so far in Puerto Rico? And can you tell the people there that things are actually going great, and government officials there are (inaudible) people there? And you have an official meeting this afternoon. Are you contemplating the deployment of special naval assets or air assets to Puerto Rico to address the problems there?

And on North Korea, very quickly, the Foreign Minister said you have declared, effectively, war on North Korea. And the North Korean government has threatened to shoot down or aim at American planes flying in international airspace. I would like your reaction to that.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Okay, well, I'll answer the second one first. We're totally prepared for the second option; not a preferred option. But if we take that option, it will be devastating --I can tell you that -- devastating for North Korea. That's called the military option. If we have to take it, we will.

He's acting very badly. He's saying things that should never, ever be said. And we're replying to those things, but it's a reply. It's not an original statement; it's a reply. But the things that he said over the last year -- and if you look back, the things that he said to past administrations -- North Korea is a situation that should have been handled 25 years ago, 20 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago, and five years ago, and it could have been handled much more easily.

You had various administrations -- many administrations which left me a mess. But I'll fix the mess. So we'll see what happens with North Korea.

As far as Puerto Rico is concerned, I think just the opposite. We have had tremendous reviews from government officials, as we have in Texas and Louisiana, and as we have in Florida, as you know, from Governor Scott and Greg Abbott. Great governors. And this morning, the governor made incredible statements about how well we're doing.

We understand it's a disaster; it's a disaster that just happened. The grid was in bad shape before the storm. And Puerto Rico didn't get hit by one hurricane, it got hit by two hurricanes, and they were among the biggest we've ever seen -- with the second one being even worse. I mean, the second one hit Puerto Rico as a Category 5. I don't believe anybody has ever seen that happen before -- hit land with that kind of velocity.

The governor has been extremely generous and I appreciated it. We right now have our top people from FEMA, and they have been there. We're are unloading, on an hourly basis, massive loads of water and food and supplies for Puerto Rico.

And this isn't like Florida where we can go right up the spine, or like Texas where we go right down the middle and we distribute. This is a thing called the Atlantic Ocean. This is tough stuff.

The governor has been so incredible in his statements about the job

we're doing. We're doing a great job. Don't forget, their police force has been decimated because many of the police in Puerto Rico have lost their homes. So, sure, they want to be police but they also want to be able to watch their families and find their families, and they have to live. So we're also very much involved in security in Puerto Rico.

So everybody has said it's amazing the job that we've done in Puerto Rico. We're very proud of it. And I'm going there on Tuesday. Now, with all of that being said, record -- if you look at the amount of water dropped on that island, between the two hurricanes -- and the first they just barely got by with, but they were devastated. And the second was a complete wipeout. I mean, this was a place that was destroyed.

So I think we've done a really good job. We're continuing to -- we are literally unloading, on an hourly basis, water, food, supplies. We have our top people from FEMA and our first responders and everybody else. We're going to be deploying Navy ships -- they've already been deployed. And we are going to do far more than anybody else would ever be able to do. And it's being recognized as such, but it is a tough situation.

Would you have a question or the President?

Q Mr. Prime Minister, if I may sir, do you share President Trump's hostility toward the Venezuelan regime? And what is your opinion, generally, of his -- that is to say, President Trump's suggestion that U.S. military intervention might be required if the Venezuelan government doesn't change course? Do you support that? And would you be an advocate within the EU for tougher sanctions against the Venezuelan government?

PRESIDENT RAJOY: (As interpreted.) Well, we're spearheading in the European Union a proposal to impose sanctions on Venezuela. What is happening in Venezuela is unacceptable. Venezuela, traditionally, was a democratic country, and at this time it's no longer a democratic country. There are political prisoners in Venezuela. There are people who are in jail only because they think differently than Mr. Maduro.

And I was the first Prime Minister to receive Lilian Tintori, who is the wife of Leopoldo López, who was jailed because Mr. Maduro didn't like him. But there were many others who were sent to jail.

In Venezuela, there was a parliament, and the government has made up this other parliament which has its meeting next to the other parliament, and it enacts legislation. They've created a commission for the truth, which is an anti-democratic tool which only serves to judge people without respecting minimum human rights standards.

Venezuela is on the road to dictatorship unless that can be stopped. So all of us who share values such as democracy, freedom, and human rights have to do something. At this time, sanctions are important. It's important that there be an international coalition putting pressure on Maduro so that political prisoners are freed and democracy is restored, because this lack of democracy and the attack against human rights and freedoms come in conjunction with a terrible economic situation with a 300 percent inflation rate, with problems supplying foods and medicines to people.

So it's a really tragic situation, and I think that we have -- we, the United States and Spain, have a responsibility towards Venezuela. There are a lot of Spaniards living in Venezuela, and I'm worried about them -- about them and the rest. But they certainly worry me. So I think that the international community should be forceful with regards to Venezuela.

Q Thank you. Pilar Santos from El Periódico de Catalunya. I have a question for each of you.

For President Trump: With the serious political crisis in Spain because of the referendum on Sunday, what solution do you think there is? Have you given advice to President Rajoy on this matter? Do you think there should be a dialogue between the Generalitat and the government to find a solution?

And now a question for Prime Minister Rajoy. It seems that what you're doing in Catalonia -- the way you're managing things in Catalonia -- is having an impact on the budget. And I would also like to know whether you think that situation with the PNV Party can be resolved, or do you think that you will have to call early elections. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I think the people of Catalonia have been talking about this for a long time. But I bet you if you had accurate numbers and accurate polling, you'd find that they love their country, they love Spain, and they wouldn't leave. So I'm just for united Spain.

I speak as the President of the United States, as somebody that has great respect for your President, and also has really great respect for your country. I really think the people of Catalonia would stay with Spain. I think it would be foolish not to. Because you're talking about staying with a truly great, beautiful, and very historic country.

PRESIDENT RAJOY: (As interpreted.) We will be delaying the budgets in parliament because we think that when we submit the budgets we will need the needed support to approve them. We're talking with different political parties, as you know, and I don't think we'll have any problems if we continue to work down this line. I don't think we'll have any problems in approving them within a reasonable timeframe, but we are looking for a majority, just like we did last time around when we voted the budget.

At any rate, I'm not thinking at all about calling early elections as a result of what we were saying.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Mr. President, thank you very much. Thank you.

END

2:27 P.M.

EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and President Xi of China Before Expanded Bilateral Meeting | Beijing, China
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Release For Immediate
November 9, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRESIDENT XI OF CHINA
BEFORE EXPANDED BILATERAL MEETING

Great Hall of the People
Beijing, China

11:12 A.M. CST

PRESIDENT XI: (As interpreted.) (In progress) -- this government and Chinese people extending warm welcome to President Trump on your state visit to China.

From yesterday afternoon to the present, we have had in-depth exchange of ideas on China-U.S. relations and important issues of shared interest. We reached many common understandings. We both believe that China-U.S. relations are important to the wellbeing of our two peoples, and bear on peace, stability, and prosperity of the world.

For China and the United States, cooperation is the only viable choice, and win-win cooperation can take us to a better future. We agree that China-U.S. relations have made important progress this year. We have agreed to further promote strategic guidance of summit diplomacy for bilateral relations; strengthen interactions at high and all levels; make the most of the four high-level dialogue mechanisms; expand interactions and cooperation on economy and trade, mil-to-mil relations, law enforcement, people-to-people exchange, and in other areas; enhance communication and cooperation on the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan, and other major international and regional issues; and work together to take China-U.S. relations to even greater development.

The China-U.S. relationship now stands at a new starting point. China is ready to work with the United States to enhance cooperation and properly manage differences in a spirit of mutual respect and mutual benefit. This way, it will enable our two peoples, the region, and people across the world to benefit more from China-U.S. relations. Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Mr. President, thank you very much. It's an honor to be with you. There can be no more important subject than China-U.S. relation. We have, between us -- and we have to include some other countries which would quickly come in -- we have a capacity to dissolve world problems for many, many years to come.

Our meeting last night was absolutely terrific. Our dinner was beyond that. We had a dinner that was going to last quickly -- 20, 25 minutes -- because I was traveling and you were so nice, and you said, we'll just do a quick dinner. And I think it had to last at least two hours, and we enjoyed every minute of it with your beautiful wife and Melania together. Their relationship is a great one, and our

relationship has already proven to be a great one.

Our meeting this morning, in front of your representatives and my representatives, was excellent, discussing North Korea -- and I do believe there's a solution to that, as you do; discussing trade with the United States, knowing that the United States really has to change its policies because they've gotten so far behind on trade with China and, frankly, with many other countries.

And I have great respect for you for that, because you're representing China. But it's too bad that past administrations allowed it go get so far out of kilter. But we'll make it fair, and it will be tremendous for both of us.

My feeling toward you is an incredibly warm one. As we said, there's great chemistry, and I think we're going to do tremendous things for both China and for the United States. And it is a very, very great honor to be with you. Thank you very much.

The hosting of the military parade this morning was magnificent, and the world was watching. I've already had people calling from all parts of the world. They were all watching. Nothing you can see is so beautiful.

So I just want to thank you for the very warm welcome, and I look forward to many years of success and friendship, working together to solve not only our problems but world problems, and problems of great danger and security. I believe we can solve almost all of them and probably all of them.

Thank you very much for having us. Very much appreciate it.

END

11:18 A.M. CST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe of Japan at State Dinner | Tokyo, Japan
Date: Monday, November 06, 2017 8:04:24 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 6, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AND PRIME MINISTER ABE OF JAPAN
AT STATE DINNER

Akasaka Palace
Tokyo, Japan

7:31 P.M. JST

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (As interpreted.) Good evening, everyone. My name is Shinzo Abe. I'm extremely delighted to host tonight's banquet here at the State Guest House in honor of the very first visit to Japan by my dear friend, President Trump, and Madam First Lady, Ms. Melania Trump.

Yesterday's golf diplomacy between Donald and me attracted so much attention, and we actually made everything public, except for the score. And, through golf, we could demonstrate to the world how strong the bond is between Japan and the United States.

But Donald and I are not the first to promote this unique golf diplomacy. Just 60 years ago, my grandfather, Prime Minister Kishi, and President Eisenhower are the ones who initiated this tradition. And after the golf match, President Eisenhower shared two lessons with my grandfather. One, once you become a President of the United States, you need to be at a table with a group of people whom you don't like to hang out. Second, when it comes to playing golf, you can play golf only with those who you really, really like to hang out.

But speaking of my relationship with President Trump, that is not enough. If I may add another lesson to the legacy of Prime Minister Kishi and President Eisenhower, I would say it like this: When you play golf with someone not just once, but for two times, the person must be your favorite guy.

So, yesterday, we had the pleasure of playing golf together with Mr. Hideki Matsuyama. And, tonight, we are so honored to have the participation of Mr. Isao Aoki, who is a pioneer in Japanese golf. (Applause.)

Even during the time that played golf with President Trump, the President and I were talking about Mr. Aoki. It is all about how his putting that was something that the entire world were mesmerized. And Donald told me as follows: Mr. Aoki's putting was just like super, super artistic. But you should never try to do the same, because that is the only thing that Mr. Aoki can only do, and you will not be able to do that. So next time we play golf together, I would love to have Mr. Aoki to join us and enjoy the time that I will spend with Mr. Trump.

Speaking of the First Ladies, I understand that my wife Akie and Madam First Lady had a chance to try Japanese calligraphy. Each wrote one Chinese character, or kanji: "hei" by Madam First Lady, which means being smooth and calm; and "wa" by my wife Akie, which stands for

harmony. And when combined, these two letters literally mean "peace." And I think their wonderful joint work represents our alliance very nicely.

Under our alliance, Japan and the United States work hand-in-hand to contribute to regional and global peace.

For two days, President Trump and I spent many, many hours together, and had an in-depth discussion on various global challenges. And I'm particularly grateful for President Trump and Madam First Lady, who kindly spent their time with a former abductee and the family members of those who had been abducted by North Korea.

And it's been only one year since I first saw President Trump in New York City. And looking back over the half-century history of Japan-U.S. alliance, we have never seen two leaders of Japan and the United States forging as close relationship as ours and as strong bond in ours in just one year.

Of course, I'm very proud of my relationship with President Trump, but we are not the only ones who have supported this invaluable friendship between Japan and the United States. And on this occasion, I would like to acknowledge tremendous efforts by leaders from various fields, including political, business, and cultural leaders who are here today.

In honor of such contribution to our invaluable friendship, I invited many distinguished guests who have been making every effort to deepen our friendship. And I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and also ask for further support for the development of our bilateral relationship.

Last but not least, let me share with you my honest impression about President Trump's visit to Japan this time. As I said, this was the very first visit by President Trump and it was indeed a historic visit. And I do hope that you will enjoy your last night in Tokyo as you wish. And also, I sincerely hope that you will have a really successful trip to Asia this time, which started here in Japan.

So with that, I now would like to propose a toast wishing all the best to President Trump and Madam First Lady, and also wishing for the further development of the friendship between Japan and the United States.

(A toast is offered.) (Applause.)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe, this has been a really wonderful two days. We have to spend more time together because I have enjoyed every minute of it, even though he's a very, very tough negotiator. And, Melania, a real friend of yours now is Mrs. Abe. And I know you enjoyed it with me. You enjoyed it in Florida and you enjoyed it here, and maybe even more so. But I want to thank you for the royal welcome.

And it was really a -- very much a working holiday, even on the golf course. So we can call it a couple of days off, but it wasn't. It was full work. Even as we played golf, all we did was talk about different things. (Laughter.) We better not go into it. But I have to tell you, we did, and we made a lot of progress on a lot of fronts.

I do want to congratulate Mr. Aoki. He was one of the great putters -- probably still is. They say you never lose your putting. When you're a great putter, you never lose your putting.

But I remember a specific tournament, believe it or not, because it was one of the best I ever saw. It was the greatest putting display that I ever saw. It was you and Jack Nicklaus. Was that the U.S. Open? The U.S. Open. And you would get up and sink a 30-footer. He'd

get up and sink a 25-footer. And this went on for the whole back nine. And then, ultimately, Jack won by one stroke. I thought it was one of the greatest putting displays anybody has ever seen and there ever was. And I even know your putting stroke -- very flat.

And I spoke yesterday with the great Matsuyama, who is doing great, right? He's going to be a big star, and he's going to be great. I don't even know if he's with us tonight. I don't think he's with us tonight. But he does want to get together in New York, and we're going to get together. And even though I want to have a great interpreter, but he's rapidly learning the language.

But I will tell you that it's an honor to be with you because everyone in the world of golf talks about that one great afternoon. Just putt after putt, and it was really great. So congratulations. Great gentleman, great gentleman. (Applause.)

So my relationship with Shinzo got off to quite a rocky start because I never ran for office, and here I am. But I never ran, so I wasn't very experienced. And after I had won, everybody was calling me from all over the world. I never knew we had so many countries. (Laughter.)

So I was now President-elect. But I didn't know you were supposed to not see world leaders until after you were in office, which was January 20th. So you were just not supposed to because it was considered bad form. It was not a nice thing to do, and I understand that from the standpoint of the President whose place you were taking.

So you can only take so many calls from world leaders -- because, you know, everybody was calling. But Japan, you take. And some others -- we took Germany, we took Russia, we took China, we took -- we took your Prime Minister.

So it's November, and he said to me, "Congratulations on your victory, it was a great victory, I would like to see you. I would like to see you as soon as possible." And I said, "Anytime you want, just come on in, don't worry about it." But I was referring to after January 20th. (Laughter.) So I said, don't worry about it. Anytime you want, I look forward to seeing you. Just give us a call, no problem, anytime you want. And all of the sudden, I get a call from, actually, Japan press. And they said that our Prime Minister is going to New York to meet with the President-elect.

So the press is going crazy because the Prime Minister of Japan is coming to see me. I think it's absolutely fine, but I didn't really mean now. I meant some time in February, March, or April. Meaning, you have a very aggressive -- very, very aggressive, strong, tough Prime Minister. That's a good thing, by the way -- not a bad thing. (Laughter.)

So then the New York media started calling me, and I was getting all sorts of signals from Hope and Sarah, in a different position, and everybody. And they're going crazy. They're saying, "You cannot see him. It's so inappropriate. It looks bad." I say, "What's wrong?" They said, "It's a bad thing to see him. You have to wait until after, in all fairness, Barack Obama leaves office." And I said, "What do I do?" And they said, "Let's call."

So I called him, and he wasn't there. He was on the airplane flying to New York. (Laughter.) And I said, "You know what? There's no way he's going to land and I'm not seeing him."

So I saw him, and it worked out just fine. Do you agree with that? (Laughter.) And he actually brought me the most beautiful golf club I've ever seen. It was a driver that's totally gold. Right? It's gold. (Laughter.) And I looked at it -- I said, "If I ever use this driver -- me -- to use that driver at a golf club, I will be laughed off every course I ever go onto." But it is the most beautiful weapon I've

ever seen, so I thank you for that.

But we had a great meeting. It lasted forever. It was a very long meeting in Trump Tower. And for some reason, from that moment on, we had a really -- and developed a really great relationship. And here we are today and better than ever, and we're going to work together. And it's going to get more and more special, and we're going to work out problems of Japan and problems of the United States. And it's going to be something very, very special for both countries.

And I just want to finish by saying that Melania and I today visited the palace. This is a beautiful, beautiful place. And we met two very beautiful people, the Imperial Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress, and spent a long time talking to them today. And there was a lot of love in that room for all of you people -- I can tell you -- from everyone from Japan. They love the people of Japan, they love this country dearly, and they have great, great respect for your Prime Minister. And they truly think that your Prime Minister did very, very well when he decided to marry -- or she decided to marry him, Mrs. Abe. But they have great, great respect -- I can tell you that.

And I just want to conclude by saying that our two great countries will have incredible friendship and incredible success for many centuries to come -- not years, not decades, but for many centuries to come.

And again, it's an honor to have you as my good friend, and I just want to thank you and Mrs. Abe. This is a very, very special two days. We will not forget, and we will be back soon. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

(A toast is offered.) (Applause.)

END

7:55 P.M. JST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence in a Meeting on Immigration with Republican Members of the Senate
Date: Thursday, January 04, 2018 1:28:38 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
January 4, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP AND VICE PRESIDENT PENCE
IN A MEETING ON IMMIGRATION
WITH REPUBLICAN MEMBERS OF THE SENATE

Roosevelt Room

11:34 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Important meeting. Thank you very much for being here. We're making a lot of progress on a lot of different things.

Today, I'm with the Senate working group on immigration. It's become a very big subject. I think that started around November 8th, and maybe a year and a half before that, starting with the campaign.

We're all working in an effort to develop an immigration reform plan that will serve the interests of the American workers and the American families and safety.

I want to thank Chairman Grassley, along with Senators Tillis and Lankford, Cornyn, Cotton, and Graham for being here today. These are great people. They've become friends of mine, and they love this country.

I also want to acknowledge Senator Perdue, who is likewise a terrific person, who has become a very close friend of mine. And he'll be briefed as to what's happening.

Our current immigration system fails Americans. Chain migration is a total disaster, which threatens our security and our economy and provides a gateway for terrorism. Likewise, the visa lottery is bad for our economy and very bad for security. You saw that recently in New York along the West Side Highway.

We need a physical border wall. We're going to have a wall -- remember that -- we're going to have a wall to keep out deadly drug dealers, dangerous traffickers, and violent criminal cartels. Mexico is having a tremendous problem with crime, and we want to keep it out of our country.

We need to ensure our immigration officers finally have the resources, tools, and authorities that they desperately deserve and need to save and protect American lives. Even the Border Patrol agents, as you saw recently, killed -- a couple of them killed; one very badly hurt. It's a rough job and they're incredible people, along with the ICE agents. These are incredible people. They've been with me right from the beginning, and they love what we're doing.

That's why our position has been clear and very clear from the beginning. Any legislation on DACA must secure the border with a wall.

It must give our immigration officers the resources they need to stop illegal immigration and also to stop visa overstays. And, crucially, the legislation must end chain migration. It must end the visa lottery. Dangerous. And I think many of the Democrats agree with us on that now.

The lottery system is a disaster. Tom and I talk about it all the time. They put down their probably worst people -- who knows. But they're not looking to get rid of their best people, so they put their worst people in the hopper, and we're picking out the people. And then we find out: What do we have? It's not a good situation. So we're going to end it. The lottery system has to be laughed at by countries outside of our country when they send these people in.

I want to thank the senators for working with us because it really has been a very collaborative effort. We are, believe it or not, working also with Democrats. I think that's correct. Right, Tom? We're moving across the aisle and trying to get support, and I think we have a lot of support. But we'll soon see. We'd love to take care of DACA, but we're only going to do it under these conditions. So we appreciate it very much.

Mr. Vice President, do you have anything to say?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, you've made immigration a centerpiece in the national debate over the last year and a half. And you said all along the way we're going to build a wall and reform our immigration system. We're going to enforce the laws of this country for the citizens of this country.

But you've also said along the way we're going to do it with a big heart. And you've opened the door to an agreement on DACA, and today is part of an ongoing discussion with these Republican leaders but also with Democrats on Capitol Hill to accomplish that. And I look forward to being a part of it.

THE PRESIDENT: Very good. Thank you, Mike. And, Senator Grassley, anything to say?

SENATOR GRASSLEY: Of course, what you said, we were here, I think, with you on November the 8th. We set out a program that we all agreed to here. We know that there has to be negotiations in regard to that, but you've laid out some principles that we will not compromise on.

THE PRESIDENT: And you've been a great voice in a lot of different ways and we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Lindsey used to be a great enemy of mine, and now he's a great friend of mine. I really like Lindsey. Can you believe that? I never thought I'd say that, but I do like him a lot.

SENATOR GRAHAM: Thank you. I like me too, so we have something in common. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: We all know that. (Laughter.)

SENATOR GRAHAM: Obama couldn't do it. Bush couldn't do it. I think you can do it. There's a bill to be had. If you want it bad enough, we'll get it and it will be good for the country. Everybody has got to give a little bit. But I've never been more optimistic about an immigration reform proposal making it to the President's desk right now.

THE PRESIDENT: I think we have a good chance. Tom Cotton?

SENATOR COTTON: Thank you for having us, Mr. President. As Senator Graham said, I think there's a deal to be had here. The President has made clear that he wants to provide some kind of protections for those who receive the DACA work permits, but at the same

time, we have to deal with the negative consequences of that.

We have to end chain migration to prevent a future set of new chain migrants coming. We have to secure our border. We have to enforce our laws on the interior, as well, to decrease the illegal immigration that will inevitably encourage overstays.

The President and our group have been clear on that from the very beginning. And I hope the Democrats will sit down with us and finally take yes for an answer on it.

THE PRESIDENT: Good. I think we've got a good shot. I really do. Tom? Anything?

SENATOR TILLIS: Mr. President, I just want to say exactly what Lindsey did. And if you think about in the Obama administration, when you had the votes to pass Obamacare and you couldn't get the DREAM Act passed, then you know there's something structurally wrong with just the baseline. I mean, if you just think about it, you're providing the leadership to come up with a balance where you're going to produce a bipartisan solution and a solution that's consistent with your principles, which I think are important for us to fulfill the promises that we made to the American people. And we can provide certainty to the DACA population.

And shame on anybody for getting caught up in words. The wall, for example -- when we've got the opportunity to provide a solution, achieve your objectives, and do something good for the DACA population, then I think we should.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tom, very much. You're right 100 percent. James?

SENATOR LANKFORD: Mr. President, thank you for bringing all of us together. I mentioned to you in September, when you first made the announcement about DACA, that you'd given a tremendous gift to the American people. It's been 20 years since we've had a vote on immigration of any type that's actually passed and become law.

The immigration issues are very hard, they're very emotional. But there's been no deadline. So every time that Congress starts to work on it, they work on it for a while and then drop it because it's difficult. You gave us a deadline, and setting that for March the 1st, and that's a tremendous gift to be able to get that done.

Thanks for your engagement on this. I do absolutely agree with your heart on the issues on DACA and for those kids, and be able to find -- we've got to get a legislative solution, but we've got to deal with every other issue as well or we'll just keep having DACA votes every 10 years, and we can't do that. So, thanks. And, by the way, thanks for the new leadership in DHS as well. And looking forward to seeing your leadership in the days ahead.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have to tell you, James Lankford has been a tremendous help, not only on what we just passed, but will be a tremendous help on this. And, James, I want to thank you for your support.

SENATOR LANKFORD: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You've been really fantastic. And I can say that for all of the men and the people in this room. They've been fantastic. And, John, you have been really been -- we can't even call you the whip, but you have been more than a whip. You've been so fantastic on the taxes and the tax cuts and reform, and the success of that.

And certainly it wasn't easy. It went right to the last minute,

and you were right there. And we all want to thank you. The job you did is fantastic.

So, Senator Cornyn, want to say a few words?

SENATOR CORNYN: Well, Mr. President, thank you for having us here. America is the most generous country in the world when it comes to legal immigration, but that generosity has been abused by people who are exploiting the vulnerabilities we have along the border with the lack of enforcement.

And we saw the previous administration that tried to usurp the authority that only Congress and the White House have in passing immigration laws. They tried to do it by executive action and the courts, who struck that down.

So I do think this is an important opportunity for those of us who care not only about the people and about our legal immigration system that's benefitted us all, but also are determined to eliminate and stop illegal immigration, along with the drugs and the harm that that causes. And I do think this is a great opportunity. I hope we make the most of it.

Coming from a border state with 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, my constituents in Texas all understand the importance of border security and enforcement. At the same time, they're people with big hearts.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true.

SENATOR CORNYN: And like you and like the rest of us who want to do the right thing by these young adults who came here as children, and I think we have a great opportunity.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you very much. And I have to tell you that as I walked into the room -- I don't know if you heard the latest, but the market is up about 150 points. And we broke a very, very big barrier -- 25,000. And there were those who'd say we wouldn't break 25,000 by the end of the eighth year, and we're in the eleventh month. We broke 25,000 just as we came in now. I have to be a little careful, because as we walk out maybe it goes down. (Laughter.) You always have to be careful with that, Tom.

But we did, in fact, break 25,000 -- very substantially break it, very easily. So I guess our new number is 30,000. (Laughter.) But what it means is every time you see that number go up on Wall Street it means jobs, it means success, it means 401(k)s that are flourishing.

I was in New York at a big event recently, and I take a lot of pictures with police and with firemen and with the military. And one of the policemen came up, an officer, and he said, "Sir, I want to thank you. My 401(k) is through the roof. My wife thinks I'm a brilliant investor." (Laughter.) He said he was up 39 percent. I said, "You should be doing better than that, actually." (Laughter.) But he said, "I'm up 39 percent in nine months." And he said, "I've never seen anything like it. My wife is so happy, my family is so happy."

And people with 401(k)s, unless they're really having difficulties in life, they're doing very, very well. So I just want to congratulate everyone in the room because you worked so hard.

I may finish off with our new secretary, who's just in the position but, I will tell you, respected by everybody. I got a very good vote. Got a very good vote. And would you like to say anything?

SECRETARY NIELSEN: Yes. I just want to thank you for your leadership on this issue. And I really appreciate your support of the men and women at DHS. They do have a very dangerous job, one that we

don't often like to talk about. But they do put their lives in danger for all of us every day.

And I really look forward to working with all of you, and learning today about your progress. As you know, border security, we have to have the wall and the technology and personnel that go with that, but we also need to close the loopholes that we can do the expedited removal because that's a core part of border security.

So I look very much forward to working with you and others in Congress to get this done.

THE PRESIDENT: You're going to break all of General Kelly -- who's right over here -- you're going to break all of his records, rights? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY NIELSEN: Absolutely.

THE PRESIDENT: Because he had some pretty good records; 78 percent is -- so far, that's the best number. So you have to break 78 percent. That's tough, but you'll do it.

SECRETARY NIELSEN: All right. Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. Appreciate it.

Q Your message to DREAMers, Mr. President? Your message to DREAMers, Mr. President? What do you say?

THE PRESIDENT: Hopefully, everything is going to work out very well. We really want it to work out. I can tell you the Republicans want to see it work out very well. If we have support from the Democrats, I think DACA is going to be terrific. We have people that have been working on this issue for a long time. As Lindsey said, as others have said, we really are at a point where I think we could do something spectacular for the people on the border, the people coming through.

We have to be careful because there's a drug epidemic like the likes of which we've never seen in this country. We need protection. We need the wall. We need all of those things. And, frankly, I think a lot of Democrats agree with us. When they see what's happening, when they see the kind of problems we're having at the border, they really understand it. Whether they'll vote that way is another situation, but they really understand it.

So we want to thank you all for being here. We have a great spirit going in the Republican Party. I think it can be bipartisan. I hope it's going to be bipartisan. And we take care of a lot of problems. We can take care of a lot of problems. It would be really nice to do it in a bipartisan way. Okay?

Thank you all.

Q Did Steve Bannon betray you, Mr. President? Any words about Steve Bannon?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know, he called me a great man last night. So, you know, he obviously changed his tune pretty quick. All right, thank you all very much.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't talk to him. I don't talk to him. I don't talk to him. That's just a misnomer. Thank you.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Ceremony Recognizing the First Responders to the June 14 Shooting Involving Congressman Scalise
Date: Thursday, July 27, 2017 5:19:31 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 27, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT CEREMONY RECOGNIZING THE FIRST RESPONDERS
TO THE JUNE 14 SHOOTING INVOLVING CONGRESSMAN SCALISE

East Room

3:25 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Please sit down. Thank you. And thank you to Vice President for doing a fantastic job and for the introduction. We welcome you all, members of Congress and distinguished guests. We are gathered here today for a very, very special occasion, as we pay tribute to real heroes whose courageous actions under fire saved so many lives in Alexandria, Virginia just six weeks ago.

On the morning of June 14th, several members of Congress began their day on the baseball diamond, practicing for one of this town's greatest traditions -- the annual charity Congressional baseball game. It was just another beautiful morning until the unthinkable happened. The familiar sounds of baseball were suddenly interrupted by loud, vicious gunfire.

Matt Mika, Zachary Barth, and beloved Congressman, and my friend, Steve Scalise were each shot during an attack. Others were injured trying to evade the incoming bullets, of which there were many.

Fortunately, from the moment that gunman began to shoot, he was met by return fire. Capitol Police Special Agents David Bailey and Crystal Griner raced through the bullets -- and that's exactly what they did, they raced through the bullets -- and immediately engaged the gunman.

Minutes later, members of the Alexandria Police Department arrived on scene. Officers Nicole Battaglia, Kevin Jobe, and Alex Jensen joined the fight. Special Agent Griner was shot in the leg -- visited her in the hospital, she was hurt very badly -- and shrapnel injured Special Agent Bailey as bullets swirled around him.

Despite their injuries, both officers heroically continued to face down the gunman until they brought him down. And he had rifles; they had handguns. That's a big difference.

These officers saved the lives of every innocent person on the field that day -- many of them friends of Mike and myself. They are American heroes and we salute them. (Applause.) Fantastic. That is so beautiful. Thank you.

We also salute the members of Congress who acted with such bravery in the face of danger, shielding each other and caring for the injured. We honor today the emergency dispatchers who directed the first responders to the scene within seconds. They really acted quickly.

I especially want to recognize all of the personnel from the

Alexandria Fire Department and the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit for providing life support in a crisis where every second mattered. Thank you for what you did that day and for what you do every single day. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

We also express our deep appreciation for the paramedics, doctors, nurses, and surgeons from MedStar Washington Hospital and George Washington University Hospital for saving the lives of the wounded.

Joining us today is Congressman Scalise's medical team: Dr. Jack Sava -- where's Jack? Dr. Sava. Stand up, Jack. Come on. (Applause.) That's beautiful. MedStar's Director of Trauma Surgery, and Dr. Robert Golden, the Director of Orthopedic Trauma. Doctor, doctor -- congratulations. (Applause.) They were a lot more worried that night at the hospital, weren't they? Great job.

You have the gratitude of the entire nation. Thank you for caring for the victims and for your dear friend Steve -- and he is our dear friend. Steve is a fighter. We've known that for a long time.

This week, he was been discharged from the hospital and is now beginning weeks of intensive rehabilitation at an in-patient facility. He will recover. We are praying for him, we are pulling for him, and we are sending his family our support and our love.

Steve's great wife -- who I have gotten to know -- Jennifer is here with us today, and we applaud the strength and courage that she has shown throughout this incredible ordeal. Thank you, Jennifer. (Applause.) Thank you, Jennifer.

Other Americans responded to this tragedy in ways that remind us how much stronger we are when we are united. When the Congressional baseball game was played just one day later, nearly 25,000 people turned out -- by far, a record. They raised more than \$1.5 million for charity -- also, by far, a record. The citizens of Steve's home parish organized a blood drive in his name, and Vice President Pence donated his blood at the Congressional blood drive. Thank you, Mike. (Applause.)

Just recently, House Republicans and Democrats introduced a bill to provide support to Capitol Police officers who are injured on duty. People have been looking at this for a long time. But Jennifer, you can tell Steve that he pulled it off, okay? That's better than being a whip. I hope it gets to my desk soon. I will sign it immediately. (Applause.)

The assault on June 14th reminded us that evil exists in this world. But it also reminded us that heroes walk in our midst, that love triumphs over tragedy, and that our resolve is stronger than ever. We praise America's law enforcement -- and I've been praising them for a long time, they are unbelievable people -- for doing a tough -- for doing the tough jobs, the dangerous jobs, and sometimes thankless job with tremendous integrity, devotion, and courage. So I just want to thank law enforcement generally. Thank you. (Applause.)

I can only tell you from the campaign, the people love you, they respect you, and they admire you. So I know you go through a lot, but they have great admiration. So just remember that, please.

Today I am deeply honored to present our nation's highest award for a public safety officer -- the Medal of Valor to Special Agent Crystal Griner, Special Agent David Bailey; and Alexandria Police Department Officers Nicole Battaglia, Kevin Jobe, and Alex Jensen.

The Medal of Valor is reserved for those who go above and beyond the call of duty as each of these men and women did on that fateful day. And they did it with great courage, and they did it with instinct. When our human instincts tell us to run -- there's danger --

our police and first responders run straight at it, standing in the breach, protecting the innocent, and keeping our loved ones safe.

Now I would like the military aide to read the citation, as these American heroes step forward to receive the Medal of Valor.

MILITARY AIDE: Special Agent Crystal Griner. Medal of Valor presented to Special Agent Crystal Griner, U.S. Capitol Police District of Columbia, for bravery and composure while engaged in an active shooter incident. Despite being shot, Special Agent Griner placed herself in mortal danger to save the lives of members of Congress, attending family members, and congressional staff during a charity softball practice at Eugene Simpson Memorial Park in Alexandria, Virginia. (Applause.)

Special Agent David Bailey. Medal of Valor presented to Special Agent David Bailey, U.S. Capitol Police District of Columbia, for taking brave and decisive action to subdue an active shooter. Special Agent Bailey was shot during the exchange of gunfire, but continued to advance the shooter without benefit of cover until the active shooter was subdued, saving the lives of members of Congress, attending family members, and congressional staff. (Applause.)

Officer Nicole Battaglia. Medal of Valor presented to Officer Nicole Battaglia, Alexandria Police Department, Virginia, for demonstrating extraordinary courage in saving the lives of two U.S. Capitol Police officers, members of Congress, their families, and congressional staff. Officer Battaglia engaged the assailant, exchanging gunfire at close range and ultimately neutralizing him. (Applause.)

Officer Alexander Jensen. Medal of Valor presented to Officer Alex Jensen, Alexandria Police Department, Virginia, for swift and valiant action in responding to an active shooter. Officer Jensen put himself in harm's way during the active shooter incident, moving without cover and drawing fire from the assailant until the assailant was subdued and the safety of the members of Congress, their families, and congressional staff was ensured. (Applause.)

Officer Kevin Jobe. Medal of Valor presented to Officer Kevin Jobe, Alexandria Police Department, Virginia, for placing himself in grave danger to protect two U.S. Capitol Police officers, members of Congress, their families, and congressional staff. Officer Jobe engaged an active shooter, neutralizing a volatile gunman, and preventing further injuries to innocent bystanders in the park. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Very brave people. Great people. Congratulations to all of you. We are forever in your debt. Thank you. God bless you. God bless our truly amazing law enforcement. And God Bless America. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

3:44 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Commissioning Ceremony for the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78)
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 2:12:11 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 22, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT COMMISSIONING CEREMONY FOR THE USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN-78)

Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78)
Newport News, Virginia

11:09 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Secretary Mattis, for that wonderful introduction and for your devoted service to our nation. Nobody has done it like you. I'm thrilled to be back on this magnificent ship for this historic moment with the amazing men and women of the United States Navy. (Applause.)

I was with you four months ago, and I knew that I had to be here today, and I told you I'd be back to congratulate you and the crew and everybody involved on commissioning the newest, largest, and most advanced aircraft carrier in the history of this world. That's a big achievement.

After today, wherever this ship sails, you will all carry a proud title: plankowner of the USS Gerald R. Ford. (Applause.) For the rest of your lives, you'll be able to tell your friends and family that you served on the greatest ship in the United States Navy and, in my opinion, on the greatest ship anywhere in the world. Everyone should take a moment to celebrate this incredible achievement.

I want to thank the many public servants who have joined us here today: Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, Governor Snyder, Governor McAuliffe, Senator Wicker, and members of Congress, Secretary Stackley, Admiral Richardson, senior military leaders, and, of course, the great Captain McCormack. (Applause.)

Captain, I know you will exemplify integrity at the helm. And have a good time doing it, Captain. Proud of you.

Thanks to the entire Ford family -- Susan, Jack, Steve, and Mike -- for all that you've done to support this ship on its voyage. Thank you, Susan. (Applause.) Thank you.

I also want to recognize two other people who were very special to President Ford. Thank you, Vice President Cheney and former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. Thank you. (Applause.) They look great. They look great.

As we put this stunning ship into the service of our nation, we must also pay tribute to the thousands of citizens, military and civilian, who helped design and build her. Their love of country has been poured into every rivet and bulkhead on this vessel. You hammered, chiseled, and sculpted this mighty hull.

You were there when the first steel was cut, when the turbines first roared to life, and when those beautiful bronze propellers first began to spin -- and spin they did. And now you are here to witness the

moment when your incredible work of art becomes the pride of the United States Navy and a symbol of American power and prestige, no matter where in the world you go.

American steel and American hands have constructed a 100,000-ton message to the world: American might is second to none, and we're getting bigger, and better, and stronger every day of my administration. That I can tell you. (Applause.)

Wherever this vessel cuts through the horizon, our allies will rest easy and our enemies will shake with fear because everyone will know that America is coming and America is coming strong. (Applause.)

To every worker from Newport News Shipbuilding and every craftsman and engineer who helped build this incredible fortress on the sea, today we salute you. Thank you. (Applause.)

Your skill and your grit build the instruments of war that preserve peace. This ship is the deterrent that keeps us from having to fight in the first place. But this ship also ensures that if a fight does come, it will always end the same way; we will win, win, win. We will never lose. We will win. (Applause.)

When it comes to battle, we don't want a fair fight. We want just the opposite. We demand victory, and we will have total victory, believe me. (Applause.)

Having the best technology and equipment is only one part of the American military dominance. Our true strength is our people. Our greatest weapon is all of you. Our nation endures because we have citizens who love America and who are willing to fight for America. (Applause.) We are so very blessed with warriors who are willing to serve America in the greatest fighting force in the history -- the United States military.

Today this ship officially begins its role in the noble military history of our great nation. In a few moments, I will commission this wonderful, beautiful, but very, very powerful warship. Captain McCormack will assume command. He will set the first watch, and then the crew of the Gerald R. Ford will man the ship and bring her to life. (Applause.)

A ship is only as good as the people who serve on it, and the American sailor is the best anywhere in the world. Among you are great welders, radar technicians, machine operators, and pilots. You take pride in your work and America takes pride in you. We love you. We are proud of you. Thank you. (Applause.)

But that is why it is so fitting that this ship is named after a sailor of tremendous character, integrity, and wisdom. You know that, Susan. Gerald Ford was raised in American heartland. He grew up in Grand Rapids and became an Eagle Scout. He played football at the University of Michigan on a team that won two national championships. And listen to this: On that great team, he was named MVP. Not bad.

He then went to Yale Law School, and after Pearl Harbor, he volunteered to serve. President Ford joined the Navy and asked to be sent to sea. He wanted to do that very badly. He never really knew why; he felt it was a calling. He was assigned to a new carrier -- the Monterey -- becoming a plankowner himself on its commissioning in 1943.

From there, he sailed to the Pacific and saw action -- and a lot of action -- in the Pacific War. Like so many others of his generation, Gerald Ford returned home and started a family. He ran for Congress, where he served the people of Michigan with honor for many years. From there, he became Vice President and then President of the United States of America.

With this ship, we honor him for his lifetime of selfless and distinguished service. We also remember his wife, Betty -- I remember her well -- and we honor the bravery she showed in living her life so that her experiences could help others. Susan, she was a great woman -- a great woman. (Applause.)

Gerald Ford said that his time in the Navy convinced him that our lack of military preparation before World War II has only encouraged our enemies to fight harder and harder and harder. He learned a lot. In the future, Ford said, I felt the United States had to be strong. Never again could we allow our military to be anything but the absolute best. If he could see this ship today, President Gerald Ford would see his vision brought to life, and he would see his legacy of service being carried on by each and every one of you. (Applause.)

Gerald Ford embodied American values like few others: love of family, love of freedom, and, most of all, love of country. He knew that patriotism is the heartbeat of a nation. He knew that we must love our country in order to protect it. And he knew that we must have pride in our history if we are going to have confidence in our future.

The men and women of America's Armed Services are part of a living history. You uphold timeless customs and traditions, and you protect our nation and our freedom for the next generation to come. You are fulfilling your duty to this nation, and now it is the job of our government to fulfill its duty to you. (Applause.)

For years, our government has subjected the military to unpredictable funding and a devastating defense sequester. You remember that? Sequester -- not good. This has led to deferred maintenance, a lack of investment in new equipment and technology, and a shortfall in military readiness. In other words, it's been a very, very bad period of time for our military. That is why we reached a deal to secure an additional \$20 billion for defense this year -- and it's going up -- and why I asked Congress for another \$54 billion for next year.

Now we need Congress to do its job and pass the budget that provides for higher, stable, and predictable funding levels for our military needs that our fighting men and women deserve -- and you will get, believe me. President Trump, I will tell you -- you will get it. Don't worry about it. But I don't mind getting a little hand, so call that congressman and call that senator and make sure you get it. (Applause.)

And by the way, you can also call those senators to make sure you get healthcare. (Applause.)

We must end the defense sequester once and for all. We must also reform defense acquisitions to ensure that we are getting the best equipment at the best prices so that our dollars are used only for the best interests of our country and those who serve. We do not want cost overruns. We want the best equipment, but we want it built ahead of schedule and we want it build under budget. (Applause.)

This is the very least we can do for the patriots who have volunteered to give their sweat, their blood, and, if they must, their very lives for our great nation. The commissioning of this new American carrier marks the renewal of our commitment to a future of American greatness. Greater than ever before, remember that -- greater than ever before.

Just moments from now, the Captain will set the first watch on the USS Gerald R. Ford and, with God's grace, a watch will stand until the day she is decommissioned 50 years or more from now.

Most of you who will man this ship today are just about 20 years old. Together, you are embarking on a truly great adventure. The journey will require all of your talents, all of your efforts, and all

of your heart. As you know, the sea holds many challenges and threats. But starting today, you will face, together as a team aboard this ship, which is your responsibility and your home.

Three generations of Americans will eventually man these decks. Perhaps even some of your own children and grandchildren someday. You will inspire many more American patriots to follow your lead and to serve. And one day, when you are old and have lived a long and hopefully happy and successful life, you may find yourselves back aboard this ship surrounded by your family to mark its decommissioning. And on that day, our entire nation will honor not just this carrier, it will honor you and the role you will have played in keeping America safe, strong, and free.

To every patriot who will serve on this ship today and throughout history, I say this: Keep the watch, protect her, defend her, and love her. Good luck and Godspeed. Thank you to the Ford family, and thank you to every sailor in the greatest navy on Earth. God bless you, God bless the Gerald R. Ford, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. God bless you all. (Applause.)

CAPTAIN MCCORMACK: Thank you, Mr. President. And I would be honored if you would place Gerald R. Ford in commission.

Will the guests please rise. Ship's company, attention.

THE PRESIDENT: I hereby place United States Ship Gerald R. Ford in commission. May God bless and guide this warship and all who shall sail in her. God bless you. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

11:27 A.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Presentation of Medal of Honor to Captain Gary Michael Rose, United States Army
Date: Monday, October 23, 2017 4:36:41 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 23, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT PRESENTATION OF MEDAL OF HONOR TO
CAPTAIN GARY MICHAEL ROSE,
UNITED STATES ARMY

East Room

3:27 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Chaplain Hurley. Vice President Pence, Secretary Shulkin, members of Congress, members of the Armed Forces, and distinguished guests, please join me in welcoming Captain Gary Michael Rose to the White House. (Applause.)

For many years, the story of Mike's heroism has gone untold. But today we gather to tell the world of his valor and proudly present him with our nation's highest military honor.

Joining Mike today is his wife, Margaret, their three children, Sarah, Claire, and Michael, and their two grandchildren, Kaitlyn and Christian. Kaitlyn and Christian, I want you to know that the medal that we will present today will forever enshrine your grandfather -- and he is a good man. We just spoke to him for a long time, and you are great, great young people. But this will enshrine him into the history of our nation.

We're also grateful to be joined by nine previous Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Their courage, character, and conviction is beyond measure. Please stand. (Applause.) We are honored to be in their presence.

This afternoon, I want to take a few moments to share with you the incredible story of Mike's heroic deeds.

Raised in Watertown, New York, Mike's father was a metalworker and a World War II veteran. He taught his son that we live in the greatest country in the world, and that we must love it, cherish it, and always defend it.

Mike took that very much to heart. After his first year in college, he enlisted in the Army, and by the time he was 22, Mike was a medic for the Fifth Special Forces Group in the Vietnam War.

On September 11, 1970, Mike was called on his second combat mission. He was the only medic for 136 men who embarked on one of the group's biggest missions of the war: Operation Tailwind.

Their goal was to prevent the North Vietnamese from funneling weapons along the Ho Chi Minh Trail to use against our American troops. Helicopters dropped the unit into Laos. Before they even touched the ground, enemy fire struck three men.

Once they landed in the clearing, they rushed to the jungle for much needed cover. Soon, another man was shot outside their defensive perimeter. Mike immediately rushed to his injured comrade, firing at the enemy as he ran. In the middle of the clearing, under the machine gun fire, Mike treated the wounded soldier. He shielded the man with his own body and carried him back to safety.

But this was just the beginning of Mike's harrowing four-day mission. Mike and his unit slashed through the dense jungle, dodged bullets, dodged explosives, dodged everything that you can dodge because they threw it all at him, and continuously returned fire as they moved deeper and deeper and deeper into enemy territory.

Throughout the engagement, Mike rescued those in distress without any thought for his own safety. I will tell you, the people with him could not believe what they were witnessing. He crawled from one soldier to the next, offering words of encouragement as he tended to their wounds.

On the second day, one of the allied soldiers was shot outside their company perimeter. Again, Mike raced to the side of the soldier, exposing himself to constant fire. As bullets flew in every direction, Mike fired at the enemy with one arm while dragging the injured soldier back to the perimeter with the other.

Soon after they returned to their unit, a rocket-propelled grenade exploded nearby and shot smoldering metal into Mike's back and into his leg. He was seriously, seriously wounded. The shrapnel left a gaping hole in Mike's foot. For the next 48 excruciating hours, he used a branch as a crutch and went on rescuing the wounded. Mike did not stop to eat, to sleep, or even to care for his own serious injury as he saved the lives of his fellow soldiers.

On the second and final night of the mission, the enemy surrounded the company. All night long, Mike treated the wound and dug trenches to protect them from blazing rockets and grenades. After four days of constant engagement with the enemy, and after successfully destroying an enemy base camp, Mike's unit prepared to evacuate.

When the helicopters arrived, Mike fought back the enemy as his fellow soldiers boarded the aircraft. He boarded the last chopper, limping up to the craft while still warding off the enemy forces that were fast approaching.

As Mike puts it, "If you don't believe in God, then you should have been with us that day. And I can tell you, it'll make a believer out of you because we should not [ever] have survived." Mike, today, we have a room full of people and a nation who thank God that you lived. (Applause.)

Mike's story doesn't end there. Soon after the helicopter lifted off the ground, the chopper was hit by enemy fire. Mike, this is serious stuff. (Laughter.) This was not a good four days. (Laughter.)

The bullets tragically struck a young Marine gunner in the throat. Again, Mike rushed to help. As he wrapped a cloth around the Marine's neck, the engine of the helicopter failed, and the aircraft crashed less than a mile from where it had taken off. Mike was thrown off the aircraft before it hit the ground, but he raced back to the crash site and pulled one man after another out of the smoking and smoldering helicopter as it spewed jet fuel from its ruptured tanks.

Finally, another helicopter rescued them, and by the time they reached the base, Mike was covered in blood. He refused treatment until all of his men had been cared for first. In every action during those four days, Mike valiantly fought for the life of his comrades, even if it meant the end of his own life.

Mike, you will -- I mean, I have to say, you really -- your will to endure, your love for your fellow soldier, your devotion to your country inspires us all. I have to tell you, that is something. Nations are formed out of the strength and patriotism that lives in the hearts of our heroes.

Mike never knew for certain whether or not that Marine gunner who was shot on the helicopter survived until earlier this year, when Mike learned that the Marine had endured a painful and difficult recovery, but that he had made it and lived a long and very full life before passing away in 2012. As Mike said, "That in itself made it all worth it."

That Marine was one of many men Mike saved. Throughout those four days, Mike treated an astounding 60 to 70 men. Their company disrupted the enemy's continual resupply of weapons, saving countless of additional American lives.

Today, we are joined by many of Mike's brothers-in-arms who fought alongside him in Operation Tailwind, along with brave airmen and Marines who provided critical support throughout the mission. As Mike put it, "If it wasn't for those air crews, all of us would still be in Laos."

Among those here today are 10 members of Mike's unit. Please stand up as I call your name: Sergeant Major Morris Adair, Sergeant Don Boudreau, First Sergeant Bernie Bright, Captain Pete Landon, Sergeant Jim Lucas, Lieutenant Colonel Gene McCarley, First Sergeant Denver Minton, Sergeant Keith Plancich, Specialist Five Craig Schmidt, and Staff Sergeant Dave Young.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

To Mike and all the servicemembers who fought in the battle: You've earned the eternal gratitude of the entire American nation. You faced down the evils of communism, you defended our flag, and you showed the world the unbreakable resolve of the American Armed Forces. Thank you. And thank you very much.

After serving in Operation Tailwind, Mike went on to become an officer in the Army and served for over 20 years.

Now Mike and his wife, Margaret -- Margaret, stand up, Margaret. (Applause.) I met Margaret. Margaret is lovely -- reside in a fantastic place, where I just left -- Huntsville, Alabama -- where he lives by a core conviction: You serve your country by fixing your block or fixing your neighborhood.

Mike volunteers with the American Legion, the Knights of Columbus, and many other organizations. He volunteers at a local soup kitchen, fixes broken appliances for elderly and disabled neighbors, donates his hair for those suffering from cancer, makes lunches for children in need, and organizes community gatherings to bring people closer together -- which is something we need all over the world and certainly in our country.

He's a loyal friend to his fellow servicemembers, many of whom are, in addition, here today. And every Wednesday, Kaitlyn and Christian come over for homework night with grandpa and grandma.

I think Kaitlyn and Christian will agree -- and I just met them. You have to stand up. Come on, Christian. Come on. Kaitlyn. (Applause.) But I think that Kaitlyn and Christian will agree this fieldtrip is their best homework assignment yet. Right? What do you think, Christian? (Laughter.) Yes? He said yes.

I'm told that recently Christian asked his grandfather, "What exactly is the Congressional Medal of Honor?" That is a wonderful

question, Christian. It's the award given to America's bravest heroes who earn our freedom with their sacrifice. Those who receive the Medal of Honor went above and beyond the call of duty to protect their fellow servicemembers and defend our nation.

Kaitlyn and Christian, you are about to witness your grandpa receive our nation's highest military honor, and America is about to witness Captain Gary Michael Rose recognized as the true American hero that he is: a patriot who never gives up, never gives in, and always stands strong for God, for family, and for country.

Mike, we honor you, we thank you, we salute you, and with hearts full of admiration and pride, we present you with the Congressional Medal of Honor.

And now I would like the military aide to come forward and read the citation.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

MILITARY AIDE: The President of the United States of America, authorized for by Act of Congress, March 3rd, 1863, has awarded, in the name of Congress, The Medal of Honor, to Sgt. Gary M. Rose, United States Army for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

Sergeant Gary M. Rose distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity while serving as a Special Forces Medic with a company-sized exploitation force, Special Operations Augmentation, Command and Control Central, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam.

Between 11 and 14 September 1970, Sergeant Rose's company was continuously engaged by a well-armed and numerically superior hostile force deep in enemy-controlled territory. Enemy B-40 rockets and mortar rounds rained down while the adversary sprayed the area with small arms and machine gun fire, wounding many and forcing everyone to seek cover.

Sergeant Rose, braving the hail of bullets, sprinted fifty meters to a wounded soldier's side. He then used his own body to protect the casualty from further injury while treating his wounds. After stabilizing the casualty, Sergeant Rose carried him through the bullet-ridden combat zone to protective cover.

As the enemy accelerated the attack, Sergeant Rose continuously exposed himself to intense fire as he fearlessly moved from casualty to casualty, administering life-saving aid.

A B-40 rocket impacted just meters from Sergeant Rose, knocking him from his feet and injuring his head, hand, and foot. Ignoring his wounds, Sergeant Rose struggled to his feet and continued to render aid to the other injured soldiers.

During an attempted medevac, Sergeant Rose again exposed himself to enemy fire as he attempted to hoist wounded personnel up to the hovering helicopter, which was unable to land due to unsuitable terrain.

The medevac mission was aborted due to intense enemy fire and the helicopter crashed a few miles away due to the enemy fire sustained during the attempted extraction.

Over the next two days, Sergeant Rose continued to expose himself to enemy fire in order to treat the wounded, estimated to be half of the company's personnel. On September 14, during the company's eventual helicopter extraction, the enemy launched a full-scale offensive.

Sergeant Rose, after loading wounded personnel on the first set of extraction helicopters, returned to the outer perimeter under enemy

fire, carrying friendly casualties and moving wounded personnel to more secure positions until they could be evacuated.

He then returned to the perimeter to help repel the enemy ~~under~~ [until] the final extraction helicopter arrived. As the final helicopter was loaded, the enemy began to overrun the company's position, and the helicopter's Marine door gunner was shot in the neck.

Sergeant Rose instantly administered critical medical treatment onboard the helicopter, saving the Marine's life. The helicopter carrying Sergeant Rose crashed several hundred meters from the extraction point, further injuring Sergeant Rose and the personnel on board.

Despite his numerous wounds from the past three days, Sergeant Rose continued to pull and carry unconscious and wounded personnel out of the burning wreckage and continued to administer aid to the wounded until another extraction helicopter arrived.

Sergeant Rose's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were critical to saving numerous lives over that four-day time period. His actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the 1st Special Forces, and the United States Army.

(The Medal of Honor is presented.) (Applause.)

(A prayer is given.) (Applause.)

END

3:47 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Presentation of Medal of Honor to Private First Class James C. McCloughan, U.S. Army
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 4:52:04 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 31, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT PRESENTATION OF MEDAL OF HONOR TO
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JAMES C. MCCLOUGHAN,
UNITED STATES ARMY

East Room

3:15 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you, Chaplain Hurley. Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary Mattis, Secretary Shulkin, Senator Stabenow, Congressman Upton, and members of the Armed Forces: Thank you for joining us as we award our nation's highest military honor to Specialist Five James C. McCloughan.

Today, we pay tribute to a veteran who went above and beyond the call of duty to protect our comrades, our country, and our freedom.

Joining Jim today is his wife Cherie, his brothers Mike and Tom, his sons Jamie and Matt, and many other members of his very large and beautiful family.

We're also gratified to be joined by eight previous Medal of Honor recipients. Now, Jim's name will stand forever alongside theirs in our history and in our hearts. I want to take a few minutes to tell you about Jim and how he earned this place among legends.

Jim was raised in Bangor, Michigan. His father built their house from scratch and worked 40 years at a piano factory. Jim's dad taught him a simple but powerful lesson: Never do anything halfway. Always do your best. Jim took that lesson very much to heart. He played for four varsity sports in high school and three in college.

In August of 1968, Jim was drafted into the Army. Within six months, he was trained as a medic and arrived in Vietnam. Right away, Jim poured all of himself into his duties treating the sick and the wounded. Before long, all his fellow soldiers called him "Doc."

On May 13, 1969, less than three months after he arrived, Jim was one of 89 men in Charlie Company to embark on a mission to secure a transportation route near Nui Yon. As Jim and his men jumped out of the helicopter, it quickly became clear that they were surrounded by enemy troops. Within minutes, two choppers were shot down, and one of his men was badly wounded in the middle of an open field.

Jim did not hesitate. He blazed through 100 meters of enemy fire to carry the wounded and the soldier to safety. But this was only the first of many heroic deeds Jim would perform over the next 48 hours.

After tending to the first wounded soldier, Jim joined a mission to advance toward the enemy, and advance they did. Before long, they were ambushed. Again, he ran into danger to rescue his men. As he cared for two soldiers, shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade slashed open the back of Jim's body from head to foot.

Yet that terrible wound didn't stop Jim from pulling those two men to safety, nor did it stop him from answering the plea of another wounded comrade and carrying him to safety atop his own badly injured body. He was badly injured.

And so it went, shot after shot, blast upon blast. As one of his comrades recalled, whoever called "medic" could immediately count on McCloughan. He's a brave guy.

As day turned to dusk, nearly all of those who could and really, really had to make it back -- they were finally within their night defensive position, except for one soldier whose plea Jim could not ignore.

Again, "Doc" did not hesitate. He crawled through a rice paddy thick with steel rain. That means bullets all over the place. As soldiers watched him, they were sure that was the last time they would see "Doc." They thought that was the end of their friend, Jim.

But after several minutes passed, Jim emerged from the smoke and fire carrying yet another soldier. He immediately ~~badgered~~ [bandaged] and fixed and worked, but he got the wounds fixed and lifted the soldier to a medevac helicopter.

His lieutenant ordered Jim to get in, too. "Get in," he said, "get in." But Jim refused. He said, "You're going to need me here." As Jim now says, "I would have rather died on the battlefield than know that men died because they did not have a medic."

Over the next 24 hours, Jim fired at enemy soldiers, suffered a bullet wound to his arm, and continued to race into gunfire to save more and more lives.

And yet, as night approached again, after nearly two days of no food, no water, and no rest, Jim volunteered to hold a blinking light in an open field to signal for a supply drop. He would not yield, he would not rest, he would not stop, and he would not flinch in the face of sure death and definite danger.

Though he was thousands of miles from home, it was as if the strength and pride of our whole nation was beating inside of Jim's heart. Jim did what his father had taught him -- he gave it his all and then he just kept giving.

In those 48 hours, Jim rescued 10 American soldiers and tended to countless others. He was one of 32 men who fought until the end. They held their ground against more than 2,000 enemy troops.

Jim, I know I speak for every person here when I say that we are in awe of your actions and your bravery. But let me tell you one thing, and one more story about Jim. On the second day of that bloody fight, Jim found a few soldiers and a fellow soldier who had been shot badly in the stomach. He knew the soldier wouldn't make it if he flung him on the back, so he lifted him up and carried him in his arms.

As Jim was carrying the soldier, a thought flashed through his mind. Although Jim had always been very close to his father, he realized that it was not since he had been a young boy that he had told his dad those three very simple but beautiful words: "I love you."

In that moment, Jim offered up a prayer. He asked God, "If you get me out of this hell on Earth so I can tell my dad I love him, I'll be the best coach and the best father you could ever ask for." As he prayed, a great peace came over him. And if it was God's will for him to live, he'd keep his promise to God as soon as he had the chance.

Jim made it out of that hell on Earth. He made it; here he is. And the first thing he did when he arrived back on American soil was to say those beautiful words: "I love you, Dad. I love you." Jim said

those words over and over again for the next 22 years until the last time he saw his father, the night before his dad passed on.

Today, I'd venture to say his dad is the proudest father in heaven. Jim fought with all of the love and courage in his soul. He was prepared to lay down his life so his brothers-in-arms could live theirs.

With us today are 10 of the men who fought alongside Jim, and five of those he saved. To Bill, Randy, Mike, Joe, Kent, Robert, John, Charles, Michael, Orestes -- thank you for your service and sacrifice. Stand up wherever you may be. Where are you? Where are you? (Applause.) Thank you, fellas. That's great.

For over two centuries, our brave men and women in uniform have overcome tyranny, fascism, communism, and every threat to our freedom -- every single threat they've overcome. And we've overcome these threats because of titans like Jim whose spirit could never be conquered.

That's what this award is, and Jim's life represents so well: America's unbreakable spirit. It's been 48 years since Jim's battle in Vietnam. He is now a husband, a father, and a grandfather. He coached high school football, wrestling, and baseball for 38 years, just like he said he would. And he brought together every member he could find of his beloved Charlie Company.

To many people in this room, Specialist Five McCloughan has always been their friend, "Jim." To others, he's been "Coach." To those who bravely served with him in Vietnam, he's still called their "Doc." To his parents Scotty and Margaret, both watching from heaven, he will always be their son. But today, [to] 320 million grateful American hearts, Private McCloughan carries one immortal title -- and that title is "hero."

Specialist Five McCloughan: We honor you. We salute you. And with God as your witness, we thank you for what you did for all of us.

Now I would like the military aide to come forward and read the citation.

MILITARY AIDE: The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, March 3rd, 1863, has awarded in the name of Congress the Medal of Honor to Private First Class James C. McCloughan, United States Army, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

Private First Class [James] C. McCloughan distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty from May 13th through 15th, 1969, while serving as a combat medic with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division.

The company air assaulted into an area near Tam Ky and Nui Yon Hill. On May 13th, with complete disregard for his life, he ran 100 meters in an open field through heavy fire to rescue a comrade too injured to move and carried him to safety. That same day, 2nd Platoon was ordered to search the area near Nui Yon Hill when the platoon was ambushed by a large North Vietnamese Army force and sustained heavy casualties.

With complete disregard for his life and personal safety, Private First Class McCloughan led two Americans into the safety of a trench while being wounded by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade. He ignored a direct order to stay back, and braved an enemy assault while moving into the "kill zone" on four more occasions to extract wounded comrades.

He treated the injured, prepared the evacuation, and though bleeding heavily from shrapnel wounds on his head and entire body,

refused evacuation to safety in order to remain at the battle site with his fellow soldiers who were heavily outnumbered by the North Vietnamese Army forces.

On May 14th, the platoon was again ordered to move out towards Nui Yon Hill. Private First Class McCloughan was wounded a second time by small arms fire and shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade while rendering aid to two soldiers in an open rice paddy. In the final phases of the attack, two companies from 2nd North Vietnamese Army Division and an element of 700 soldiers from a Viet Cong regiment descended upon Charlie Company's position on three sides.

Private First Class McCloughan, again with complete disregard for his life, went into the crossfire numerous times throughout the battle to extract the wounded soldiers, while also fighting the enemy. His relentless and courageous actions inspired and motivated his comrades to fight for their survival. When supplies ran low, Private First Class McCloughan volunteered to hold a blinking strobe light in an open area as a marker for a nighttime resupply drop. He remained steadfast while bullets landed all around him and rocket-propelled grenades flew over his prone, exposed body.

During the morning darkness of May 15th, Private First Class McCloughan knocked out a rocket-propelled grenade position with a grenade, fought and eliminated enemy soldiers, treated numerous casualties, kept two critically-wounded soldiers alive through the night, and organized the dead and wounded for evacuation at daylight. His timely and courageous actions were instrumental in saving the lives of his fellow soldiers.

Private First Class McCloughan's personal heroism, professional competence, and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Americal Division, and the United States Army.

(The Medal of Honor is presented.) (Applause.)

(A prayer is given.)

THE PRESIDENT: Jim, thank you. God bless you. God bless your family. God bless the United States of America. Thank you, Jim. (Applause.)

END

3:35 P.M. EDT

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Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Tax Reform Event
Date: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 5:52:42 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 27, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT TAX REFORM EVENT

Farm Bureau Building
Indianapolis, Indiana

3:30 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. You just want massive tax cuts. That's what you want. That's the only reason you're going so wild. (Applause.)

But it's wonderful to be back in the great state of Indiana. What a place. (Applause.)

I want to thank Senator Todd Young, Senator Joe Donnelly, Representative Jackie Walorski, Representative Susan Brooks, and Representative Mike [sic] Messer for joining us today. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for being here. Appreciate it. (Applause.)

I also want to thank members of my economic team, Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Director Gary Cohn, for joining us, as well. We appreciate it. (Applause.)

Let me begin by saying that our hearts and prayers go out to the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands who are suffering in the wake of yet another catastrophic hurricane. I mean, their island was virtually destroyed. Federal agencies are working closely with local partners to help these communities get back on their feet as soon as possible.

Texas, Florida, and Louisiana are doing great, and the recovery process is happening very, very quickly.

I will be going down to Puerto Rico next week to get an on-the-ground briefing about the disaster recovery and to see all of our great first responders and to meet a lot of the people who were so affected by these storms. We are with you now, I tell them, and we will be there every step of the way until this job is done. It is truly catastrophic what happened in Puerto Rico. (Applause.)

And massive amounts of water, food, and supplies, by the way, are being delivered on an hourly basis. It's something that nobody has ever seen before from this country, I can tell you that. And I'm very proud of all of the folks that have worked so hard in FEMA, all of our first responders, all of our police that have gone to the island because their police force has been so badly affected. And many of their policemen -- in fact, most of the police people have lost their homes, and it's been a tough go. But we are -- we're going to get it back.

Before we go on to discuss the largest tax cut in our country's history, I also want to provide a brief update on healthcare. We have the votes on Graham-Cassidy. But with the rules of reconciliation,

we're up against a deadline of Friday -- two days. That's just two days. And yes-vote senator -- we have a wonderful senator, great, great senator -- who is a yes vote, but he's home recovering from a pretty tough situation. And with so many great features, including all of the block granting, the money to the states, et cetera, et cetera, our healthcare plan is really going to be something excellent. It's going to be better managed for the people that it serves. Having local healthcare representatives is far better than having healthcare managed from Washington, D.C. Not even a contest. (Applause.)

And many, many governors, as you also see, have agreed with us and approved it and really look forward to running it properly. But again, because the reconciliation window is about to close, we have to wait a few months until it reopens before we take a vote. So we're getting all of the good signs from Alaska and the others to repeal and replace Obamacare. And I was hoping this would be put on my desk right after we won the election, and I'd come in and sign. But it didn't work that way. There were a couple of people that -- I won't say anything. (Laughter.) But early next year when reconciliation kicks back in, in any event long before the November election, we're going to have a vote. And we're going to be able to get that through, and I think we'll actually get it through very easily and the time makes it easier.

But speaking of reconciliation, the Republican Senate needs to get rid of the filibuster rule, which is blocking so many great legislative reforms the American people badly want and deserve. By the way, the Democrats, if they had the opportunity, which hopefully they won't for many, many years, they would get rid of it on day one. And most of you know exactly what I'm talking about.

We're here today in Indiana to announce our framework to deliver historic tax relief to the American People. (Applause.)

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and I guess it's probably something I can say that I'm very good at. I've been waiting for this for a long time. We're going to cut taxes for the middle class, make the tax code simpler and more fair for everyday Americans, and we are going to bring back the jobs and wealth that have left our country -- and most people thought left our country for good. (Applause.)

We want tax reform that is pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-worker, pro-family, and, yes, tax reform that is pro-American. (Applause.) It's time to take care of our people, to rebuild our nation, and to fight for our great American workers. (Applause.)

Indiana is a tremendous example of the prosperity that is unleashed when we cut taxes and set free the dreams of our citizens. This state has claimed a powerful competitive edge built on low taxes and less regulation -- and are we cutting regulation? (Applause.)

And businesses all across the country have taken notice. In recent years, Indiana has welcomed dozens of companies fleeing high taxes and high-tax states. Thousands of new jobs and massive capital investment have followed -- meaning a better quality of life for the people of Indiana.

All of this is possible because the people of this state have made a decision. They chose to make Indiana competitive again. They chose, and their choice was so important. It included electing a governor, who you may have heard of -- (laughter) -- who signed the largest income tax cut in the state's history, our very, very terrific person and terrific Vice President, Mike Pence. (Applause.)

It's time for Washington to learn from the wisdom of Indiana. We need Washington to promote American jobs instead of obstructing them. That is what I have been working to achieve every day since I took office. That is what I talked about on the campaign trail.

Already, we're seeing the results of an economic policy that finally puts America first. (Applause.) Unemployment is at a 16-year low. Unemployment for African Americans is near its lowest point since the turn of the millennium. It's really a fantastic thing to see. (Applause.)

Wages are rising. Optimism among manufacturers has reached all-time highs. GDP growth last quarter reached 3 percent way ahead of schedule; nobody thought that was going to happen for a long time. (Applause.) And this quarter, I believe, would have been better, but the hurricanes will have an impact. But other than that, it would have been, in my opinion, even better.

Your government is working for you once again, not for the donors, not the special interests, but the hardworking taxpaying citizens of our country. (Applause.)

America is back on the right track. And I see so many red hats -- Make America Great Again. That's what we're doing -- Make America Great Again. (Applause.) But our country and our economy cannot take off like they should unless we dramatically reform America's outdated, complex, and extremely burdensome tax code. It's a relic. We've got to change it. We have to compete -- compete with other countries.

The current tax system is a colossal barrier standing in the way of America's economic comeback because it can be far greater than it's ever been. But we're going to remove that barrier to create the tax system our people finally, finally, finally -- and want and deserve.

For several months, my administration has been working closely with Congress to develop a framework for tax reform. Over the next few months, the House and Senate will build on this framework and produce legislation that will deliver more jobs, higher pay, and lower taxes for middle-class families -- for the working man and woman -- and for businesses of all sizes. I look forward -- (Applause.) Thank you.

I look forward to working with Congress to deliver these historic tax cuts and reforms to the American people. These tax cuts are significant. There's never been tax cuts like what we're talking about.

Our framework is based on four key ideas: First, we will cut taxes for the everyday, hardworking Americans -- the people that work so long, so hard, and they've been forgotten. But they're not forgotten anymore. I think we proved that on November 8th. (Applause.)

Under this framework, the first \$12,000 of income earned by a single individual will be tax free, -- (applause) -- and a married couple won't pay a dime in taxes on their first \$24,000 of income. So, a married couple -- up to \$24,000 -- can spend their money on their family, on their children, on what they have to do. So much better.

In other words, more income for more people will be taxed at a rate of zero. (Applause.) At this zero percent rate, taxable income will be subject to just three tax rates of 12 percent, 25 percent, and 35 percent.

Jonathan Blanton and his wife Jamie from Greentown are here with us today. Where are they? Oh, hello, Jonathan. How are you? (Applause.)

Jonathan does industrial janitorial work and Jamie works at an auto company. Together they're raising four beautiful children, and last year they earned less than \$90,000. Under our tax plan they would have saved more than \$1,000, and it could be substantially more. And that's just on federal taxes. So they would have saved at least \$1,000.

Middle-income families will save even more money with an increased

child tax credit for children under the age of 17, which so many families have been calling for. (Applause.)

We will eliminate the marriage penalty in the existing credit and expand eligibility to include even more middle-income families. Greatly expanded.

We're also expanding the child tax credit because we believe the most important investment our country can make is in our children. (Applause.) And this is just one more critical way that we're targeting relief to working families.

In addition, under our framework, those caring for the elderly loved -- and we love these people, but we're caring, and we take such care of the elderly and other adult dependents -- will receive financial relief in the form of a \$500 tax credit. (Applause.)

We're doing everything we can to reduce the tax burden on you and your family. By eliminating tax breaks and loopholes, we will ensure that the benefits are focused on the middle class, the working men and women, not the highest-income earners. (Applause.)

Our framework includes our explicit commitment that tax reform will protect low-income and middle-income households, not the wealthy and well-connected. They can call me all they want. It's not going to help. I'm doing the right thing, and it's not good for me. Believe me. (Applause.)

But what is good for me -- not only as President and legacy -- what is good for me is if everything takes off like a rocket ship, like it should have for 20 years. That's good for me. That's good for everyone. (Applause.) And that's what I think is going to happen. (Applause.) And a lot of very wealthy people feel the same way, believe me.

In fact, we are eliminating most itemized deductions that primarily benefit the wealthiest taxpayers. We've also given Congress the flexibility to add an additional top rate on the very highest income earners to provide even more tax relief for working people.

Second, our framework will make the tax code simple, fair, and easy to understand, finally. (Applause.)

Americans waste money. Americans waste so much money -- billions and billions of dollars and many hours each year to comply with our ridiculously complex tax code. More than 90 percent of Americans use assistance to prepare their taxes. Under our framework, the vast majority of families will be able to file their taxes on a single sheet of paper. (Applause.)

We are also repealing the alternative minimum tax, or AMT. About time. (Applause.)

The AMT is actually a shadow tax system that requires many people to calculate their taxes two different ways and pay the higher of the two amounts. You're all familiar with it. Under our framework, the AMT will make even less sense because we are repealing many of the special interest tax breaks that it was designed to deal with. We are making our taxes simple again. We are simplifying our tax system.

To protect millions of small businesses and the American farmer, we are finally ending the crushing, the horrible, the unfair estate tax, or as it is often referred to, the death tax. (Applause.)

That means, especially for all of you with small businesses that are really tremendous businesses, you'll be able to leave them to your family, and your family won't have to run out and do a fire sale to try and get the money to pay the tax -- lose the business, ends up going out

of business. All of those jobs are lost. The farmers in particular are affected. They have wonderful farms, but they can't pay the tax, so they have to sell the farm. The people that buy it don't run it with love. They can't run it the same way, and it goes out. So that death tax is a disaster for this country and a disaster for so many small businesses and farmers. And we're getting rid of it. (Applause.)

Now if you don't like your family, it won't matter, okay?
(Laughter.) But for those that love your family, it matters a lot.
(Laughter.)

With us today is Kip Tom, a family farmer from Leesburg -- Where's Kip? Go ahead, Kip. Hi, Kip -- (applause) -- who fears that his family's farming heritage -- it's been a long time. How long, Kip? A hundred and eighty-seven years -- that's peanuts, Kip. (Applause.) Wow. That's a long time. But that great heritage could come to an end because of the death tax, or the estate tax, and could make it impossible for him to pass that legacy to his wonderful family. We're not going to let that happen.

We are not going to allow the death tax to steal away the American Dream from these great, great families, many of which are in this room today. (Applause.)

We will protect our farmers, our ranchers, and our small businesses, and we will make taxes simple, easy, and fair for all Americans. Okay? (Applause.)

Third, we will cut taxes on American businesses to restore our competitive edge and create more jobs and higher wages for American workers. (Applause.)

In Indiana, you have seen firsthand that cutting taxes on businesses makes your state more competitive and leads to more jobs and higher paychecks for your workers. Now, we want to do the same thing for America, making our country more competitive with other nations. And in many cases, those other nations are taking advantage of us in so many ways. They say they're friends, and perhaps they are, but believe me, I am renegotiating our trade deals, including NAFTA, including many other trade deals. (Applause.)

And through regulation, all you have to do is look at the massive pipelines -- Dakota Access. You take a look, 48,000 jobs immediately approved. So we're letting that happen.

But in terms of the tax and the tax strategy that Ronald Reagan used to create an economic boom in the 1980s: When our economy took off, the middle class thrived, and the family income of all families was increasing more and more. And it was a beautiful sight to behold.

Since then, other nations have adopted, unfortunately, our playbook and ran it even better than we did. And I shouldn't say even better because we didn't run it well at all, and we let other nations come in and take advantage of us and take our jobs away and take our businesses out. And we're stopping that, and you see it right here what we've done.

Today, our total business tax rate is 60 percent higher than our average foreign competitor in the developed world. That's not good. We have surrendered our competitive edge to other countries, but we're not surrendering anymore. We're not surrendering anymore.

Under our framework, we will dramatically cut the business tax rate so that American companies and American workers can beat our foreign competitors and start winning again. (Applause.) We will reduce the corporate tax rate to no higher than 20 percent. That's way down from 35 and 39 -- (applause) -- which is substantially below the average of other industrialized nations.

This is a revolutionary change, and the biggest winners will be the everyday American workers as jobs start pouring into our country, as companies start competing for American labor, and as wages start going up at levels that you haven't seen in many years. (Applause.)

When our companies move to other countries, it's our loyal American workers who get hurt. And when companies stay in America, and come to America, it's our wonderful workers who reap the rewards.

And I just left the United Nations last week, and I was told by one of the most powerful leaders of the world that they're going to be announcing, in the not-too-distant future, five major factories in the United States -- between increasing and new -- five. (Applause.) You'll be hearing about that very soon.

And I said thank you very much, and he said, "you know what? It's starting to happen in the United States. It's starting to happen." So I just wanted to let you know that. I promised I wouldn't say who. I'll keep my word. Okay? (Laughter.) Unless you force me. (Laughter.)

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Who?

THE PRESIDENT: Members of both parties -- it happens to be in the automobile industry. That's a good industry. (Laughter.) Members of both parties should agree that we need a tax code that keeps jobs in our country and brings jobs back to our country. (Applause.)

And for the millions of small businesses and farms that file their taxes as sole proprietors, S corporations or partnerships, we will cap the tax rate they pay at 25 percent -- much lower. Big difference. (Applause.) This will be the lowest top marginal income tax rate for small and mid-size businesses in this country in more than 80 years. (Applause.)

To give businesses even more reason to boost their investment in America, for the next five years, our framework will allow to fully write off -- listen to this -- the cost of equipment in the year they buy it. That is big. (Applause.) And that's instead of having to take deductions and deduct the cost over a long period of time. Now that's called incentive. That's called incentive. (Applause.) This will be tremendously important to help American businesses afford the heavy industrial machinery and other capital investments they need to grow big and grow strong.

Joining us today is John Gannon, the owner of a custom wood fencing and deck construction company in Indianapolis. John is the father of nine children, and recently celebrated his 35th wedding anniversary. Congratulations, John. (Applause.)

And John is in the fencing company, as you heard, and I'm just thinking -- I have to mention this -- you know, we have a fence around the White House. (Laughter.) We have a fence around the White House, and they want to build a new fence. And I figured, you know -- I'm pretty good at construction -- I figured, I don't know, maybe a million, maybe a million-and-a-half. And this has been taking place over a long period of time -- previous administrations.

So I said, "how much is the fence you're talking around the White House?" "Sir, the fence will cost approximately \$50 million." I said, "What?" (Laughter.) I kid you not, and we have thousands of things like that. Thousands. We're going to get it all down, but think of that: \$50 million. Now, I assume it's a strong fence. (Laughter.) Okay? So, John, do you think you could do it for slightly less than \$50 million? I think he could take \$49 off right now and he'd have plenty of profit. Right? Right, John? It's crazy. (Applause.) It's crazy. Never understand it, but we're working on it.

John says that a tax cut like we're proposing will make his business more competitive, allowing him to expand, hire more workers, and raise wages for his current employees. Right, John?

Also with us is Aaron Williams, a father of two who works in the field of information technology. Where's Aaron? Hello, Aaron. Hi. (Applause.) It's a good field.

Aaron has seen the disastrous effects of high -- and just literally, high corporate tax rates right up close and personal, as more and more high-tech jobs are shipped overseas. You've been watching it, Aaron. Right? All over. Like millions of other Americans, Aaron wants to bring those jobs back to the United States.

We're going to reduce the tax rate on American businesses so they can keep jobs in America, Aaron; create jobs in America; compete for workers in America; and raise wages right here in America. You're going to be in a much different position. Okay? (Applause.) Thank you. Tremendous incentives.

We want more products proudly stamped with those four beautiful words: Made in the USA. Right? (Applause.) Made in the USA.

Finally, our framework encourages American companies to bring back the trillions and trillions of dollars in wealth that's parked overseas. Our current tax system -- (applause) -- trillions. And by the way, for years I've been hearing it's 2.5 trillion. So I've been hearing this for about five years, so I assume it's much more. Right? But Democrats want to do it, and Republicans want to do it. For years -- who doesn't want to do it? They want to bring -- but they can't do it because it's so restrictive, and the taxes are so ridiculous. So they can't do it. So the money stays in other countries, and it's invested in other countries. We want to bring it back.

But think of it, it's one of the few things -- Democrats want it and Republicans want it. So they both want it, and yet for years they haven't been able to do it. Now we're doing it. We're doing things. (Applause.)

You know, it's one thing when we want a healthcare and they want a healthcare, and there's a dispute. But here's something everybody wants and they can't do it. So you can tell you, there's a broken system in D.C., but we're getting it fixed rather -- I think -- rather rapidly. You'll be seeing that over the next few months.

Our current tax system makes us one of the few developed nations in the world to punish our companies when they bring wealth earned overseas back into our country. We're punishing them for bringing the money back in.

As a result, corporations have parked many trillions of dollars in foreign countries, and many have incorporated abroad in order to avoid our punitive tax system altogether. And some companies actually leave our country because they have so much money overseas -- so much, it's an incredible amount -- that they move the company to get their money. We're going to let them bring the money back home. (Applause.)

Our framework will stop punishing companies for keeping their headquarters in the United States. We're punishing companies under our codes for being in the United States. We will impose a one-time low tax on returning money that is already offshore so that it can be brought back home to America where it belongs and where it can be put to work and work and work. (Applause.)

The framework I've just described represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reduce taxes, rebuild our economy, and restore America's competitive edge. Finally. (Applause.)

And I have to say, just before coming here we released some of the details of the tax and the tax reform and the tax cuts, and it has really received tremendous, tremendous reviews. And if Senator Donnelly doesn't approve it, because you know he's on the other side, we will come here. We will campaign against him like you wouldn't believe. (Applause.) I think they're going to approve it. I think we'll have -- actually, I think we'll have numerous Democrats come across because it's the right thing to do.

These reforms will be a dramatic change from a failed tax system that encourages American businesses to ship jobs to foreign countries that have much lower tax rates. It's what we can't do. Our competitors have much lower tax rates. But no longer. My administration strongly rejects this offshoring model, and we have embraced the new model. It's called -- the American model. (Applause.)

Under the American model, we are reducing burdens on our businesses as long as they do business in our country. That's what we want. We want them to do business in our country, not to leave our country like a number of firms from Indiana. Some made some great promises to me, but those promises are only being partially kept because they're incentivized to leave. But now they're going to be incentivized to stay. And if that doesn't work, then we'll get even tougher than that. Okay?

We want our companies to hire and grow in America and to raise wages for American workers, and to help rebuild American cities and towns. (Applause.)

That is how we will all succeed together and grow together as one team, one people, and one American family. We want it to happen here. (Applause.)

Tax reform has not historically been a partisan issue, and it does not have to be a partisan issue today. I really believe we're going to have numerous Democrats come over and sign because it's the right thing to do. I believe that it's the right thing to do, and I know many of them. And they're telling me it is the right thing to do. President Reagan's tax cuts were passed with significant bipartisan majorities at a time when there was a Democrat majority in the House and a Democrat Speaker -- Tip O'Neill.

Before that, Democrat President John F. Kennedy championed tax cuts that surged the economy and massively reduced unemployment. As President Kennedy very wisely said, "The single most important fiscal weapon available to strengthen the national economy is the federal tax policy. The right kind of tax cut at the right time" -- at the right time, this is the right time -- "is the most effective measure that this government could take to spur our economy forward." That was President Kennedy. (Applause.)

My fellow Americans, this is the right tax cut, and this is the right time. Democrats and Republicans in Congress should come together, finally, to deliver this giant win for the American people and begin middle-class miracle -- it's called a middle-class miracle, once again. It's also called a miracle for our great companies; a miracle for the middle class, for the working person.

I truly believe that many Democrats want to support our plan, and with enough encouragement from the American people, they will find the courage to do what is right for our great country. (Applause.) But they'll only do it if you, the American people, make your voices heard. Only if you tell Congress to give us a tax code that puts American jobs first. And that's what we're doing. (Applause.)

History has proven time and time again that there is no power on Earth more awesome than the will of the American people. That is why today I am asking all Americans -- Republican, Democrat, independent --

to join with me, and with each other to demand tax reform that will truly, truly, truly make America great again. (Applause.)

Call your congressmen. Call your senators. Let them know you're watching. Let them know you're waiting. Tell them that today is the day for decision. That now is the time to heal this self-inflicted economic wound. And that with their action, the future will belong to all of us.

If you demand it, the politicians will listen. They will answer, and they will act. And someday, many years from now, our children and our grandchildren will remember this moment in history as the time when ordinary Americans took control of their destiny and chose a future of American patriotism, prosperity, and pride. (Applause.)

With your help and your voice, we will bring back our jobs, we will bring back our wealth, and for every citizen across this land, we will bring back our great American dreams.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

END

4:13 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at the 2017 Values Voter Summit
Date: Friday, October 13, 2017 11:46:02 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 13, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT THE 2017 VALUES VOTER SUMMIT

Omni Shoreham Hotel
Washington, D.C.

10:22 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Tony. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE: USA! USA! USA!

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. You know, I've been here before. (Laughter.) You do know that. Before the big day on November 8th, I was here. I want to thank Mark Meadows and all of the folks that have really made this possible. And, Tony, tremendous guy.

We have some incredible people that we love and that we're involved with. So we all know that. And I'm being followed by Mr. Bennett -- you know that, right? And I've been watching him say nice things about me before I knew him. Those are the ones I like -- (laughter) -- where they speak well of you before you know them. Right?

But I really want to thank everybody, and, Tony, for your extraordinary leadership of this organization. And I want to thank, also, Lawana, for your dedication to the faith community and to our nation. Work so hard.

It's great to be back here with so many friends at the 2017 Values Voter Summit, and we know what that means. (Applause.) We know what that means. America is a nation of believers, and together we are strengthened and sustained by the power of prayer. (Applause.)

As we gather for this tremendous event, our hearts remain sad and heavy for the victims of the horrific mass murder last week in Las Vegas. It was an act of pure evil.

But in the wake of such horror, we also witnessed the true character of our nation. A mother laid on top of her daughter to shield her from gunfire. A husband died to protect his beloved wife. Strangers rescued strangers, police officers -- and you saw that, all of those incredible police officers, how brave they were, how great they were running into fire. (Applause.) And first responders, they rushed right into danger.

Americans defied evil and hatred with courage and love. The men and women who risked their lives to save their fellow citizens gave proof to the words of this scripture: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (Applause)

All of America is praying for the wounded and the grieving, and we will be with them today and we will be with them forever. (Applause.)

Just want to finish by saying that -- really, and we understand it was so horrific to watch and so terrible -- but to those who lost the ones they love: We know that we cannot erase your pain, but we promise to never, ever leave your side. We are one nation, and we all hurt together, we hope together, and we heal together. (Applause.)

We also stand with the millions of people who have suffered from the massive fires, which are right now raging in California, and the catastrophic hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands. And I will tell you, I left Texas, and I left Florida, and I left Louisiana, and I went to Puerto Rico, and I met with the ~~president~~ [governor] of the Virgin Islands.

These are people that are incredible people. They've suffered gravely, and we'll be there. We're going to be there. We have, really -- it's not even a question of a choice. We don't even want a choice. We're going to be there as Americans, and we love those people and what they've gone through. And they're all healing, and their states and territories are healing, and they're healing rapidly.

In the wake of the terrible tragedies of the past several weeks, the American people have responded with goodness and generosity, and bravery. You've seen it. The heroism of everyday citizens reminds us that the true strength of our nation is found in the hearts and souls of our people.

When America is unified, no force on Earth can break us apart. (Applause.) We love our families. We love our neighbors. We love our country. Everyone here today is brought together by the same shared and timeless values. We cherish the sacred dignity of every human life. (Applause.)

We believe in strong families and safe communities. We honor the dignity of work. (Applause.) We defend our Constitution. We protect religious liberty. (Applause.) We treasure our freedom. We are proud of our history. We support the rule of law and the incredible men and women of law enforcement. (Applause.) We celebrate our heroes, and we salute every American who wears the uniform. (Applause.)

We respect our great American flag. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And we stand united behind the customs, beliefs and traditions that define who we are as a nation and as a people.

George Washington said that "religion and morality are indispensable" to America's happiness, really, prosperity and totally to its success. It is our faith and our values that inspires us to give with charity, to act with courage, and to sacrifice for what we know is right.

The American Founders invoked our Creator four times in the Declaration of Independence -- four times. (Applause.) How times have changed. But you know what, now they're changing back again. Just remember that. (Applause.)

Benjamin Franklin reminded his colleagues at the Constitutional Convention to begin by bowing their heads in prayer.

Religious liberty is enshrined in the very first amendment of the Bill of Rights. And we all pledge allegiance to -- very, very beautifully -- "one nation under God." (Applause.)

This is America's heritage, a country that never forgets that we are all -- all, every one of us -- made by the same God in Heaven. (Applause.)

When I came to speak with you last year, I made you a promise.

Well, one of the promises I made you was that I'd come back. See? (Applause.) And I don't even need your vote this year, right? That's even nicer. (Laughter.)

But I pledged that, in a Trump administration, our nation's religious heritage would be cherished, protected, and defended like you have never seen before. That's what's happening. That's what's happening. You see it every day. You're reading it.

So this morning I am honored and thrilled to return as the first sitting President to address this incredible gathering of friends -- so many friends. (Applause.) So many friends. And I'll ask Tony and all our people that do such a great job in putting this event together -- can I take next year off or not? (Laughter.) Or do I have to be back? I don't know.

AUDIENCE: No!

THE PRESIDENT: He's saying -- they're saying no. Lawana is saying no. That's means no. (Laughter.)

So I'm here to thank you for your support and to share with you how we are delivering on that promise, defending our shared values, and in so doing, how we are renewing the America we love.

In the last 10 months, we have followed through on one promise after another. (Applause.) I didn't have a schedule, but if I did have a schedule, I would say we are substantially ahead of schedule. (Applause.)

Some of those promises are to support and defend the Constitution. I appointed and confirmed a Supreme Court Justice in the mold of the late, great Justice Antonin Scalia, the newest member of the Supreme Court, Justice Neil Gorsuch. (Applause.)

To protect the unborn, I have reinstated a policy first put in place by President Ronald Reagan, the Mexico City Policy. (Applause.) To protect religious liberty, including protecting groups like this one, I signed a new executive action in a beautiful ceremony at the White House on our National Day of Prayer -- (applause) -- which day we made official. (Applause.)

Among many historic steps, the executive order followed through on one of my most important campaign promises to so many of you: to prevent the horrendous Johnson Amendment from interfering with your First Amendment rights. (Applause.) Thank you. We will not allow government workers to censor sermons or target our pastors or our ministers or rabbis. These are the people we want to hear from, and they're not going to be silenced any longer. (Applause.)

Just last week, based on this executive action, the Department of Justice issued a new guidance to all federal agencies to ensure that no religious group is ever targeted under my administration. It won't happen. (Applause.)

We have also taken action to protect the conscience rights of groups like the Little Sisters of the Poor. You know what they went through. (Applause.) What they went through -- they were going through hell. And then all of the sudden they won. They said, how did that happen? (Laughter.)

We want to really point out that the Little Sisters of the Poor and other people of faith, they live by a beautiful calling, and we will not let bureaucrats take away that calling or take away their rights. (Applause.)

We are stopping cold the attacks on Judeo-Christian values. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. And something I've said

so much during the last two years, but I'll say it again as we approach the end of the year. You know, we're getting near that beautiful Christmas season that people don't talk about anymore. (Laughter.) They don't use the word "Christmas" because it's not politically correct. You go to department stores, and they'll say, "Happy New Year" and they'll say other things. And it will be red, they'll have it painted, but they don't say it. Well, guess what? We're saying "Merry Christmas" again. (Applause.)

And as a Christmas gift to all of our hardworking families, we hope Congress will pass massive tax cuts for the American people. (Applause.) That includes increasing the child tax credit and expanding it to eliminate the marriage penalty. (Applause.) Because we know that the American family is the true bedrock of American life. So true. (Applause.) This is such an exciting event because we are really working very hard, and hopefully Congress will come through.

You saw what we did yesterday with respect to healthcare. It's step by step by step. (Applause.) And that was a very big step yesterday. Another big step was taken the day before yesterday. And one by one it's going to come down, and we're going to have great healthcare in our country. We're going to have great healthcare in our country. (Applause.) We're taking a little different route than we had hoped, because getting Congress -- they forgot what their pledges were. (Laughter.) So we're going a little different route. But you know what? In the end, it's going to be just as effective, and maybe it will even be better. (Applause.)

For too long, politicians have tried to centralize the authority among the hands of a small few in our nation's capital. Bureaucrats think they can run your lives, overrule your values, meddle in your faith, and tell you how to live, what to say, and how to pray. But we know that parents, not bureaucrats, know best how to raise their children and create a thriving society. (Applause.)

We know that faith and prayer, not federal regulation -- and, by the way, we are cutting regulations at a clip that nobody has ever seen before. Nobody. (Applause.) In nine months, we have cut more regulation than any President has cut during their term in office. So we are doing the job. (Applause.) And that is one of the major reasons, in addition to the enthusiasm for manufacturing and business and jobs -- and the jobs are coming back.

That's one of the major reasons -- regulation, what we've done -- that the stock market has just hit an all-time historic high. (Applause.) That just on the public markets we've made, since Election Day, \$5.2 trillion in value. Think of that: \$5.2 trillion. (Applause.) And as you've seen, the level of enthusiasm is the highest it's ever been, and we have a 17-year low in unemployment. So we're doing, really, some work. (Applause.)

We know that it's the family and the church, not government officials, that know best how to create strong and loving communities. (Applause.) And above all else, we know this: In America, we don't worship government -- we worship God. (Applause.) Inspired by that conviction, we are returning moral clarity to our view of the world and the many grave challenges we face.

This afternoon, in a little while, I'll be giving a speech on Iran, a terrorist nation like few others. And I think you're going to find it very interesting. (Applause.)

Yesterday, things happened with Pakistan, and I have openly said Pakistan took tremendous advantage of our country for many years, but we're starting to have a real relationship with Pakistan and they're starting to respect us as a nation again, and so are other nations. They're starting to respect the United States of America again, and I appreciate that. (Applause.) And I want to thank the leaders of

Pakistan for what they've been doing.

In this administration, we will call evil by its name. (Applause.) We stand with our friends and allies, we forge new partnerships in pursuit of peace, and we take decisive action against those who would threaten our people with harm. (Applause.) And we will be decisive -- because we know that the first duty of government is to serve its citizens. We are defending our borders, protecting our workers, and enforcing our laws. You see it every single day like you haven't seen it in many, many years -- if you've seen it at all. (Applause.)

In protecting America's interests abroad, we will always support our cherished friend and partner, the State of Israel. (Applause.) We will confront the dangers that imperil our nation, our allies, and the world, including the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. (Applause.)

We have made great strides against ISIS -- tremendous strides. I don't know if you've seen what's going on, but tremendous strides against ISIS. They never got hit like this before. (Laughter.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: Stand up. Stand up. Let me see -- he's a rough guy. I can see it.

But they've been just ruthless and they've ruthlessly slaughtered innocent Christians, along with the vicious killing of innocent Muslims and other religious minorities. And we've made their lives very, very difficult -- believe me. (Applause.)

We've done more against ISIS in nine months than the previous administration has done during its whole administration -- by far, by far. (Applause.) And ISIS is now being dealt one defeat after another. We are confronting rogue regimes from Iran to North Korea, and we are challenging the communist dictatorship of Cuba and the socialist oppression of Venezuela. And we will not lift the sanctions on these repressive regimes until they restore political and religious freedom for their people. (Applause.)

All of these bad actors share a common enemy, the one force they cannot stop, the force deep within our souls, and that is the power of hope. That is why, in addition to our great military might, our enemies truly fear the United States. Because our people never lose faith, never give in, and always hope for a better tomorrow.

Last week, Melania and I were reminded of this in a powerful way when we traveled to Las Vegas. We visited a hospital where some of the survivors were recovering from absolutely horrific wounds. We met a young man named Brady Cook. He's 22 and a brand-new police officer. That night was Brady's second day in field training -- his second day as a policeman, can you believe that? But when the shooting began, he did not hesitate. He acted with incredible courage, rushing into the hail of bullets, and he was badly shot in the shoulder.

This is what Brady said: "I didn't expect it, but it's what I signed up for. When stuff goes down, I want to be there to face evil and to protect the good, innocent people that need it." And here's a young guy, great guy -- and second day. I said, Brady, don't worry about it, it's going to be easier from here. (Laughter and applause.) Brady is a hero, and he can't wait to get back on the job.

Several weeks before, when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, a local furniture storeowner, who's known in Texas as "Mattress Mack," decided he had to help. When the rain began to flood the streets of the city, he sent out his furniture trucks to rescue the stranded. He brought them back to his stores, and gave them food and a clean, dry place to stay, even if it meant ruining countless dollars' worth of furniture.

As "Mattress Mack" put it, "My faith defines me, it's who I am." "We can afford [the cost]...what we can't afford" -- we can't -- and he said this very strongly, "what we can't afford is to cause people to lose hope."

In Brady and Mack, we see the strength of the American spirit. This spirit of courage and compassion is all around us, every day. It is the heartbeat of our great nation. And despite certain coverage, that beat is stronger than it's ever been before. You see right through it. (Applause.) That beat is stronger than it's ever been.

We see this spirit in the men and women who selflessly enlist in our armed forces and, really, who go out and risk their lives for God and for country. And we see it in the mothers and the fathers who get up at the crack of dawn; they work two jobs and sometimes three jobs. They sacrifice every day for the furniture and -- future of their children. They have to go out. They go out. They work. The future of their children is everything to them. They put it before everything. And they make sure that the future of their children has God involved in it. So important to them. (Applause.)

We see it in the church communities that come together to care for one another, to pray for each other, and to stand strong with each other in times of need.

The people who grace our lives, and fill our homes, and build our communities are the true strength of our nation, and the greatest hope for a better tomorrow.

As long as we have pride in our country, confidence in our future, and faith in our God, then America will prevail.

We will defeat every evil, overcome every threat, and meet every single challenge. We will defend our faith and protect our traditions. We will find the best in each other and in ourselves. We will pass on the blessings of liberty, and the glories of God, to our children. Our values will endure, our nation will thrive, our citizens will flourish, and our freedom will triumph.

Thank you to the Value Voter Summit. Such an incredible group of people you are. Thank you to all of the faithful here today. And thank you to the people of faith all across our nation and all over the world.

May God bless you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. (Applause.)

END

10:51 A.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at the National Thanksgiving Turkey Pardoning Ceremony
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 1:59:13 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 21, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT THE NATIONAL THANKSGIVING TURKEY PARDONING CEREMONY

Rose Garden

1:07 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you all for being here, and welcome to the White House. A very special place. On behalf of Melania, Barron, and the entire Trump family, I want to wish you and all Americans a very happy and blessed Thanksgiving. And I hear that beautiful turkey. (Laughter.)

We are here today to continue a wonderful American tradition. Today, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I will grant a presidential pardon to a turkey. (Laughter.)

I'm especially pleased that we're joined for this great occasion by Carl Wittenburg, Chairman of the National Turkey Federation, along with his wife, Sharlene, and sons, Nate and Wyatt.

It was 70 years ago that the National Turkey Federation first presented the National Thanksgiving Turkey to President Harry Truman -- who, I might add, did not grant the pardon. He refused. He was a tough cookie. (Laughter.) Today, I'm going to be a much nicer President.

Over the past 10 months, Melania and I have had the pleasure of welcoming many, many special visitors to the great White House. We've hosted dozens of incredible world leaders, members of Congress, and, along the way, a few very strange birds. But we have yet to receive any visitors quite like our magnificent guest of honor today -- Drumstick. Hi, Drumstick. Oh, Drumstick, I think, is going to be very happy.

I'm pleased to report that, unlike millions of other turkeys at this time of the year, Drumstick has a very, very bright future ahead of him. Drumstick was raised on Carl and Sharlene's turkey farm in Douglas County, Minnesota, with the help of five young women from the Douglas County 4-H chapter who are here with us today. And I want to say, great work. Where are they? Please stand. Great job you've done. (Applause.) 4-H. That's great. Thank you.

Upon being pardoned, Drumstick and his friend, Wishbone, will live out their days at "Gobbler's Rest" -- beautiful place. It's custom-built; it's an enclosure on the campus of Virginia Tech. Tremendous school. There, they'll join Tater and Tot, the two turkeys pardoned last year by President Obama.

As many of you know, I have been very active in overturning a number of executive actions by my predecessor. However, I have been informed by the White House Counsel's Office that Tater and Tot's pardons cannot, under any circumstances, be revoked. So we're not going to revoke them. So, Tater and Tot, you can rest easy.

I'd also like to thank the National Turkey Federation for bringing along two other turkeys from Jaindl's Turkey Farm in Orefield, Pennsylvania -- the great state of Pennsylvania. We're donating these turkeys to Martha's Table, a truly fantastic charity right here in Washington D.C., which provides warm meals to people in need. They do a fantastic job.

Before we get to the pardon, I would like to take a moment to extend our very heartfelt special message: Thanks. Thanks, folks -- to the finest and bravest people in the entire world, our great men and women in uniform: the military, law enforcement, first responders. These are incredible people. So, thank you.

Many of you are always -- and you know your loved ones -- and you're far away, and you spend so much time away. This Thanksgiving, I want each of you to know that we're forever grateful for the incredible job and for the incredible sacrifices that you and your families make in defense of our nation, our freedom, and our truly great American flag.

I'd also like to express my thanks to the wonderful citizens of our country -- the people who care for our communities, raise America's children, uphold our laws and our values, and make this amazing land into our national home.

As we gather together with our families on Thanksgiving and give thanks for our many blessings, we are reminded of the national family to which we all belong as citizens of this incredible country.

This Thursday, as we give thanks for our cherished loved ones, let us also renew our bonds of trust, loyalty, and affection between our fellow citizens as members of a proud national family of Americans.

And now I think Drumstick and Wishbone would be very thankful if we would just get around to the pardon. They say, "Enough talk, please pardon us."

So I want to thank everybody for being here today and wish everybody a very, very happy Thanksgiving -- very special people a very special country.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

1:14 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at the Opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum
Date: Saturday, December 09, 2017 8:37:12 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 9, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP

AT THE OPENING OF THE MISSISSIPPI CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM

Mississippi Civil Rights Museum

Jackson, Mississippi

11:05 A.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. And I do love Mississippi. It's a great place.

And thank you, Governor Bryant, for that kind introduction and for honoring me with this invitation to be with you today.

I also want to recognize Secretary Ben Carson and his wonderful wife, Candy, for joining us. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you, Ben. Thank you, Candy.

I especially want to thank you, Justice Reuben Anderson -- great man with a great reputation -- even outside of the state of Mississippi. I have to tell you that. (Applause.) So, thank you. Thank you very much. And you are an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Judge.

And we're here today to celebrate the opening of two really extraordinary museums -- and I just took a tour -- the Mississippi State History Museum and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

To all who helped make these wonderful places possible, we are truly grateful. We thank you. We admire you. It was hard work. It was long hours. It's a lot of money, and I know the Governor helped with that, and that was a great thing you've done. That's a great legacy, Phil, right there. Just that in itself. But it really is a beautiful, beautiful place. And it's an honor.

These museums are labors of love -- love for Mississippi, love for your nation, love for God-given dignity written into every human soul.

These buildings embody the hope that has lived in the hearts of

every American for generations -- the hope in a future that is more just and more free.

The Civil Rights Museum records the oppression, cruelty and injustice inflicted on the African-American community, the fight to end slavery, to break down Jim Crow, to end segregation, to gain the right to vote, and to achieve the sacred birthright of equality here. (Applause.) And that's big stuff. That's big stuff. Those are very big phrases. Very big words.

Here, we memorialize the brave men and women who struggled to sacrifice, and sacrificed so much so that others might live in freedom.

Among those we honor are the Christian pastors who started the Civil Rights movement in their own churches preaching, like Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. -- a man that we have studied and watched, and admired for my entire life -- that we're all made in the image of our Lord.

Students like James Meredith, who were persecuted for standing up for their right to the same education as every other American student. Young people, like the nine brave students who quietly sat. And they sat very stoically, but very proudly, at the Jackson Public Library in 1961. And, by the way, I would add the word "very bravely" -- they sat very bravely.

And, finally, martyrs like Sergeant Medgar Wiley Evers -- (applause) -- whose brother I just met at the plane, and who I liked a lot -- I have to -- stand up, please. Come on. Stand up. You were so nice. I appreciate it. (Applause.) You were so nice. Thank you very much.

Medgar joined the U.S. Army in 1943, when he was 17 years old. He fought in Normandy in the Second World War. And when he came back home to Mississippi, he kept fighting for the same rights and freedom that he had defended in the war. Mr. Evers became a civil rights leader in his community. He helped fellow African Americans register to vote, organize boycotts, and investigated grave injustices against very innocent people.

For his courageous leadership in the Civil Rights movement, Mr. Evers was assassinated by a member of the KKK in the driveway of his own home.

We are deeply privileged to be joined today by his incredible widow -- somebody that's loved throughout large sections of our country -- beyond this area. So I just want to say hello to Myrlie. Myrlie. Where is Myrlie? (Applause.) How are you, Myrlie? Thank you so much. Highly respected. Thank you. Thank you, Myrlie. And his brother, Charles. Thank you, Charles, again.

For decades, they have carried on Medgar's real legacy -- and a legacy like few people have and few people can even think of. And I want to thank them for their tremendous service to our nation.

Less than a month before Mr. Evers's death, he delivered a historic televised address to the people of Jackson on the issue of civil rights.

In that speech, he said the following: The African American "has been here in America since 1619. This country is his home. He wants to do his part to help make this city, state, and nation a better place for everyone, regardless of color or race."

Medgar Evers loved his family, his community, and his country. And he knew it was long past time for his nation to fulfill its founding promise: to treat every citizen as an equal child of God. (Applause.)

Four days after he was murdered, Sergeant Evers was laid to rest in

Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. In Arlington, he lies beside men and women of all races, backgrounds, and walks of life who have served and sacrificed for our country. Their headstones do not mark the color of their skin, but immortalize the courage of their deeds.

Their memories are carved in stone as American heroes. That is what Medgar Evers was. He was a great American hero. That is what the others honored in this museum were: true American heroes.

Today, we strive to be worthy of their sacrifice. We pray for inspiration from their example.

We want our country to be a place where every child, from every background, can grow up free from fear, innocent of hatred, and surrounded by love, opportunity, and hope.

Today, we pay solemn tribute to our heroes of the past and dedicate ourselves to building a future of freedom, equality, justice, and peace.

And I want to congratulate your great Governor, and all of the people in this room who were so inspirational to so many others to get out and get this done. This is an incredible tribute, not only to the state of Mississippi -- a state that I love, a state where I've had great success -- this is a tribute to our nation at the highest level.

This is a great thing you've done, and I want to congratulate you, and just say God bless you, and God bless America.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all very much.
(Applause.)

END

11:15 A.M. CST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump at Visit with Survivors from the USS Arizona
Date: Friday, July 21, 2017 4:51:09 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 21, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT VISIT WITH SURVIVORS FROM THE USS ARIZONA

Oval Office

2:51 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Today it's my distinct privilege to welcome to the White House three of the five living survivors of the USS Arizona. This is their first time to our nation's capital -- Ken, Lauren, and Don. I hope this trip does honor to you and your truly heroic service and we wanted to thank you all. That is so good. Thank you very much. Thank you for giving me the nicest hardware, plus a beautiful patch. Thank you.

For these three World War II veterans, December 7th, 1941, the brutal attack on Pearl Harbor is forever seared into their memories. It's also seared into America's memory because, on that grim day, this mighty nation was roused to defend freedom itself.

Each of them has a harrowing story of courage to share. They tell us of the American spirit under fire, and of the will of our people to defeat threats to our nation and to the civilized world.

One of the heroes with us today is Ken Potts. Ken was on the shore at Pearl Harbor when the attack began. Rather than flee from the fire and the chaos, he drove his small boat into the blazing hot water. He climbed aboard the sinking Arizona, and he carried off passengers one by one.

Ken, it is an honor to meet you, an American hero whose love of our country and love of his brothers was greater than his concern for his own safety. And he paid a very big price. He's gone through life in a little bit worse condition than he could have but he was very, very happy that he did it.

We're deeply grateful that you are here today with us nearly 76 years after that December morning. You are a living witness to history and a living example of true American courage. Ken, how are you doing? Are you all right?

MR. POTTS: All right.

THE PRESIDENT: You doing good?

MR. POTTS: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: You're feeling good?

MR. POTTS: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: You better believe it. (Laughter.) He looks good to me. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Lauren Bruner and Donald Stratton are also with us. They were on the deck of the USS Arizona, doing their duty, when the ship was engulfed by massive, massive flames. They were both fortunate enough to be rescued by another courageous hero, Joe George, whose daughter, Joe Ann, is with us today.

Joe was in a boat next to the USS Arizona, and when he saw several men still standing, he hurled a rope onto the deck of the ship at tremendous risk to himself. Lauren and Don clung to that rope and, hand over hand, they crossed through the 70 feet of flames, burning endlessly.

The story of Lauren and Don's devotion and duty doesn't end there. Despite suffering terrible burns, still with them today, they both served in the Navy for years after, fighting in some of the greatest Pacific engagements in World War II. Lauren and Don, thank you very much for your lifetime of service and your lifetime of sacrifice. Thank you very much. Thank you.

MR. STRATTON: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Feel pretty good, right? How long have you been married? Have long are you together? Listen to this one, folks.

MR. STRATTON: Sixty-seven years. My wife.

THE PRESIDENT: That's a long time. That's beautiful. That's beautiful. Thank you.

MR. STRATTON: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: That is beautiful.

As Lauren and Don will tell you, they're here because one man, Joe George, stopped at nothing to save them. Joe George rescued six men that day. He is no longer with us, but he will always honor and remember a man -- we will always do this -- whose courage knew no limits. His name will go down in history -- very brave, very strong.

Joe Ann, your father makes us all proud. Thank you for inspiring our nation by telling the story of your father -- a true patriot; a well-known man; a man that goes down, really, in the history with the Arizona; and a total hero. Thank you very much.

MS. TAYLOR: We're very proud of him.

THE PRESIDENT: You should be, right? That's so nice. Thank you for being here. I think you loved him, right?

MS. TAYLOR: I loved him very much. And I know you understand because you have your daughters.

THE PRESIDENT: I do.

MS. TAYLOR: You understand the relationship.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true. Thank you, Joe Ann. Appreciate it.

There are many remarkable things that I witness as President, but nothing can take the place of meeting heroes like those with us today. In them we see the strength of our nation, the courage of our men and women in uniform, the resolve to never accept failure, and the belief that justice will always triumph and that the America -- and the America that we know and love -- the United States -- will always prevail. We will always prevail.

And by the way, we're building it up bigger -- you know this. We're building it up bigger and stronger and better than ever before. Our military is very proud again, aren't they?

LIEUTENANT PREVITS: That's right.

THE PRESIDENT: You see what's happening.

LIEUTENANT PREVITS: Indeed.

THE PRESIDENT: They look at the day's budget, and so they're seeing lots of ships, right? Lots of planes. Lots of great equipment.

LIEUTENANT PREVITS: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Ken, Lauren, Don, and Joe Ann, I want to thank you for reminding us who we are, where we come from, and why we never, ever give up. Your story gives us all inspiration to do the right thing for our country, our countrymen, and for our God. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you very much. It's a great honor. Thank you. Thank you all.

Q Mr. President, what are you trying to accomplish with your staff shakeups today? Can you explain to us what you're trying to accomplish?

THE PRESIDENT: Make America great again.

You want to hear this, fellas? It's very interesting. Very interesting. Very beautiful statement. Very beautiful statement.

MR. STRATTON: All the people we met today and all the people who were lined along -- that we've been with, you could tell, with our military and everything, that this country is coming together again, and we're going to be there.

THE PRESIDENT: That's good. And now I know why you married this guy such a long time. (Laughter.) That's beautiful. Thank you.

I could never have said it that well, believe me. (Laughter.) Believe me. Thank you. That's so nice.

END

2:59 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump Before Marine One Departure
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 3:19:52 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
October 25, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
BEFORE MARINE ONE DEPARTURE

South Lawn

12:50 P.M. EDT

Q What's your reaction to Democrats paying for the dossier?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it's very sad what they've done with this fake dossier. It was made up, and I understand they paid a tremendous amount of money, and Hillary Clinton always denied it. The Democrats always denied it. And now only because it's going to come out in a court case, they said, yes, they did it. They admitted it, and they're embarrassed by it.

But I think it's a disgrace. It's just really -- it's a very sad -
- it's a very sad commentary on politics in this country.

Q Do you know which Republicans helped fund that?

Q Mr. President, (inaudible) Senator Bob Corker and his chairmanship?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so. I think it's fine the way it is. We have actually great unity in the Republican Party. Yesterday, I was --

Q (Inaudible) Bob Corker and Jeff Flake?

THE PRESIDENT: That's okay. Look, you know they have to do their thing. We have great unity. If you look at what happened yesterday at the meeting, we had, I guess, virtually every senator, including John McCain. We had a great conversation yesterday -- John McCain and myself -- about the military.

I think we had a -- I called it a lovefest. It was almost a lovefest. Maybe it was a lovefest. But we -- standing ovations. There is great unity. If you look at the Democrats with Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton, that's a mess. There's great unity in the Republican Party.

Q (Inaudible) this country is in the gutter right now. Do you agree with that? Do you bear any responsibility for that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it's sad. But I think to a large extent, in all due respect, I think the media causes a lot of it. Fake stories are being reported. A lot of bad things are being reported that aren't true, and I think to a certain extent, maybe I can blame the media.

But politics is a rough business. There's no question about it. I will say this: I think the Republican Party has a pretty good unity. When I looked at that room yesterday at lunch -- and you know, and you reported on it very well, Kristen. You gave it a very good report. The fact is there was tremendous unity in that room, and we're really unified. We're really unified on what we want to do.

We want tax cuts for the middle class. We want tax cuts for businesses to produce jobs. There's great unity.

Yes.

Q What about Senator Flake saying you are a danger to democracy?

THE PRESIDENT: Look, he was against me from before he ever knew me. He wrote a book about me before I ever met him, before I ever heard his name. His poll numbers in Arizona are so low that he couldn't win, and I don't blame him for leaving. I think he did the right thing for himself.

But if you know, long before he ever knew me, during the campaign, even before the campaign -- I mean, he came out with this horrible book, and I said, who is this guy?

In fact, I remembered the first time I saw him on television I had not really been -- nobody knew me in terms of politics. But the first time I saw him on television, I said, I assume he's a Democrat. Is he a Democrat? They said he's a Republican. I said, that's impossible.

So, look, his poll numbers are terrible. He's done terribly for the great people of Arizona, a state that likes Donald Trump very much as even you will admit. And he would have never won. In fact, even in the primary, he's way down in the primary. So he did the smart thing for himself. This way he can get out somewhat gracefully. But --

Q What about the comments that you're (inaudible).

THE PRESIDENT: Well, he's saying that -- he's saying that because he has nothing else to say.

But I do think this -- I do think this: I wish him well. I really believe he's going to do the right thing for the country. He's going to vote for tax cuts because we desperately need tax cuts to put our people back to work. We need tax cuts also to be able to compete with other countries.

Q (Inaudible) Bob Corker -- "liddle" Bob Corker?

THE PRESIDENT: You know what, I hope Bob -- and I really believe that Bob Corker is going to do the right thing also.

Yes, go ahead.

Q (Inaudible), Mr. President -- do you feel like that's (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't hear you. I can't -- what? Say it again.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Senator Flake did vote with me. I understand it was about 91 or even more than that. So from that standpoint, good.

No, I think I'll be boosted in Arizona because he's very unpopular. I think the fact that he did it the way he did it probably -- I mean, I'm very high in Arizona. I love the people; they like me. They like security at the border. You know, all of the things.

But I think I'm probably helped greatly in Arizona by what happened with Senator Flake.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think they'd do that. I really know that they want tax cuts. They know we need it. We need it for the country, we need it for the people, we need it for the middle class, we need it for jobs. I don't think they'd do that. I really don't.

I know them well enough. I don't know Flake very well, but I know Bob Corker. I think they really would do it. I think they feel they have to do it for the country.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: Say it?

Q (Inaudible) Democrats?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we're going to get some Democrat votes, yeah. I do believe -- I haven't started the process, but I believe that there are certain Democrats that, if they don't vote for these massive tax cuts for business, for jobs, and for the middle class, they will lose their races in '18.

Q Mr. President, should you be more civil (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the press makes me more uncivil than I am. You know, people don't understand -- I went to an Ivy League college, I was a nice student, I did very well, I'm a very intelligent person.

The fact is, I think -- I really believe -- I think the press creates a different image of Donald Trump than the real person.

Q In that vein, Mr. President, would you ever apologize to Sergeant La David Johnson's wife?

Q When is it okay for you to (inaudible) your punches --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it's always okay -- when somebody says something about you that's false, I think it's always okay to counterpunch or to fight back.

John.

Q You have talked, Mr. President, about the idea that any changes to tax-free contributions to 401(k)s are off the table. That was the source of your spat --

THE PRESIDENT: I wanted to end that quickly. 401(k)s, to me, are very important. And they're important because that's one of the great benefits to the middle class. I didn't want that to go too far. That's why I ended it very quickly.

Q But Kevin Brady, who is the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said this morning it could be on the table.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, maybe it is, and maybe we'll use it as negotiating. But trust me, that's one of the great things. You know, there are certain elements of deals you don't want to negotiate with. 401(k)s -- and Kevin knows it, and I think Kevin Brady is fantastic, but he knows how important 401(k)s are.

Q You told me last week you thought that the uranium sale to Russia was one of the big stories of the decade. Three congressional committees are now looking at that. We haven't heard you comment on it

since those investigations were launched.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the uranium sale to Russia and the way it was done, so underhanded, with tremendous amounts of money being passed -- I actually think that's Watergate, modern age.

Q Mr. President, what more do you want to know about the mission in Niger? And what have you asked the Pentagon to tell you and tell the country?

THE PRESIDENT: Say it again, please.

Q What more do you want to know about the mission in Niger? And what have you asked the Pentagon to tell you and tell the country about what went wrong?

THE PRESIDENT: I can't --

Q What more do you want to know about the mission in Niger --

Q And what went wrong, and what do you want the country to know about that.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we're going to look at it. Now, I have to say, we are decimating ISIS in the Middle East. What's happening is, they'll go to parts of Africa, they'll go to other places. When they get there, we meet them. It's a dangerous business -- I have to say, it's a dangerous business. So what --

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: No, I didn't. Not specifically. But I have generals that are great generals. These are great fighters. These are warriors and --

Q You gave them authority to do this mission.

THE PRESIDENT: I gave them authority to do what's right so that we win. That's the authority they have. I want to win and we're going to win, and we're beating ISIS very badly. You look at what's happened in the Middle East -- we have done more in eight months than the previous administration has done in many years.

Now, what happens is, you decimate them and that's all we've done. We have decimated ISIS in the Middle East. They go to Africa, they go to places. When they get there, we meet them there. That's what goes on. It's a tough business. It's a tough war, but we are winning it. And you know what? We're going to continue winning it.

With that being said, my generals and my military, they have decision-making ability. As far as the incident that we're talking about, I've been seeing it just like you've been seeing it. I've been getting reports. They have to meet the enemy and they meet them tough, and that's what happens.

Q Did Sergeant Johnson's wife (inaudible). Would you ever apologize to her?

THE PRESIDENT: I was extremely nice to her. She sounds like a lovely lady. I've never seen her. I've never met her, but she sounds like a lovely lady. But I was extremely nice to her. I was extremely courteous, as I was to everyone else.

You know, it's interesting, you folks have called many people that I spoke to. Everybody has said unbelievable, good thing about me, but you never report that.

Q We reported that.

Q Mr. President, but she was really upset by your phone call --

THE PRESIDENT: Did you report it? Did you report it?

Q We have reported that. You've talked about the --

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Q You're welcome. But what about your --

THE PRESIDENT: I can only say this: I was really nice to her. I respect her. I respect her family. I certainly respect La David, who - I, by the way, called La David right from the beginning. Just so you understand, they put a chart in front -- "La David." It says, La David Johnson.

So I called right from the beginning. There's no hesitation. One of the great memories of all time. There was no hesitation. I think she's a fantastic woman. I was extremely nice to her, extremely respectful.

Q You made four phone calls to four different families that day. Did you say anything different to Myeshia Johnson than you did to any of the other three families?

THE PRESIDENT: I would say, basically, we talked condolence. I mean, it's all about condolence, it's about warmth. In many cases you listen, because in so many cases -- one of the families, they were saying, yes, he was a great football star.

And honestly, they pour their heart out, John. It's the hardest calls. They pour their heart out. But I am always -- and look, you people have called many people that I've spoken to, and every one of them has said I couldn't have been nicer. Now, it's a rough time for these people. I mean, how tough is it? There's nothing tougher. But I have such respect for those families. Nobody has more respect than I do -- nobody.

Q In the budget deal in December, do you want DACA in that?

THE PRESIDENT: We're looking at DACA. We have to get something for it, but we are looking at DACA. And we'll see what happens. I would love to do a DACA deal, but we have to get something very substantial for it, including the wall, including security, including a strong border. We have to be able to stop drugs from pouring into our nation.

Q On taxes, sir, you talk about what the American people will get out of your tax plan. Why not tell them how it will affect you by releasing your taxes?

THE PRESIDENT: The tax plan is going to be incredible for this country. It's going to bring back jobs, it's going to cut taxes tremendously. We're going to bring back \$4 trillion, I think at least from overseas. That money is going to be put back to work in our country instead of other countries. The tax cut is going to be massive. It's going to keep companies from leaving our country. So important.

Q Have any of your family members or advisors been interviewed by the special counsel?

THE PRESIDENT: Not that I know of, no.

Q Have you been contacted --

THE PRESIDENT: And I have to say, the whole Russian thing is what it's turned out to be. This was the Democrats coming up with an excuse

for losing an election. It's an election that's very hard for a Democrat to lose because the Electoral College is set in such a way that it's very hard to lose that election for a Democrat. They lost it. They lost it very badly and very easily.

I mean, you look at the votes; it was 306 to what -- 223 or something. They lost it by a lot. They didn't know what to say, so they made up the whole Russia hoax. Now it's turning out that the hoax has turned around. And you look at what's happened with Russia, and you look at the uranium deal, and you look at the fake dossier. So that's all turned around.

Q (Inaudible), yes or no?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: No. We have a very good relationship. Honestly, when you look at -- when you take a look at what's happened with Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, and the hatred and the division and the animosity -- I'll tell you what, honestly, the Republicans are very, very well united.

Q Opioids --

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to have a big meeting on opioids tomorrow. We're going to be doing a very, very important meeting sometime in the very short -- the very near future on opioids, in terms of declaring a national emergency, which gives us power to do things that you can't do right now.

Q This Fusion GPS investigation began on the Republican side of things during the primary. Do you have any idea who it was who was collecting opposition data on you?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they say it began with the Republicans. I think I would know, but I won't say. It'll be determined. It'll be determined.

Look, Hillary would have never announced it was them, except for this great court case that's going on where the judge was going to reveal it. So they figured, we'll do it first. They're very embarrassed by it. It's a disgrace. Yes, it might have started with the Republicans early on in the primaries. I think I would know, but let's find out who it is. I'm sure that will come out.

Q Do you know who those Republicans are?

THE PRESIDENT: I think I would have, if I were to guess, I have one name in mind.

Q What's the name?

THE PRESIDENT: It will probably be revealed.

Q The DMZ. Yes or no, are you going? Yes or no?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'd rather not say but you'll be surprised.

END
P.M. EDT

1:05

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump Before Marine One Departure
Date: Friday, October 13, 2017 2:40:56 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 13, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
BEFORE MARINE ONE DEPARTURE

South Lawn

1:38 P.M. EDT

Q What do you say to critics who say that you ending the CSRs, the subsidies under Obamacare, will throw the markets into chaos?

THE PRESIDENT: What it's going to do is it's going to be time to negotiate healthcare that's going to be good for everybody. That money is a subsidy for insurance companies. Take a look at their stocks. Look where they are. They're going through the roof, from past -- I don't know about today. But the insurance companies that made a fortune, that money was a subsidy and almost, you could say, a payoff for insurance companies.

And what we have to do is come up with great healthcare. Now, that's what I did partially yesterday; that's going to cover a big segment. But now, for the rest, we have to come up with great -- whether it's going to be block grants or something else. And we just about have the votes.

Now, if the Democrats were smart, what they'd do is come and negotiate something where people could really get the kind of healthcare that they deserve, being citizens of our great country.

Q Mr. President, on the Iranian nuclear deal, why not just scrap it altogether now? You threatened to do so. Why not just end it now, withdraw?

THE PRESIDENT: Because we'll see what happens over the next short period of time. And I can do that instantaneously. I like a two-step process much better.

Q (Inaudible) healthcare?

THE PRESIDENT: Because I think what we'll do is we'll be able to renegotiate so that everybody gets to. We just took care of a big chunk, and now we'll take care of the other chunk. What would be nice -- if the Democratic leaders could come over to the White House, we'll negotiate some deal that's good for everybody. That's what I'd like. But they're always a block vote against everything. They're like obstructionists. If they came over, maybe we could make a deal. But the subsidy is really a subsidy to the insurance company. That's not going to people; that's making the insurance companies rich.

Q Mr. President, you had said you were going to rip the Iran deal up, and you called it the worst ever.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I may do that. I may do that. The deal is terrible. So what we've done is, through the certification process,

we'll have Congress take a look at it, and I may very well do that. But I like a two-step process much better.

John.

Q The moves that you've made on Obamacare here, with the executive order yesterday and then removing the subsidies --

THE PRESIDENT: We have great support.

Q -- is that a way for you to put pressure on Democrats and say, look, you're going to lose it -- come to the table and negotiate with them?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, they've already lost a big chunk, because as you know that's a big chunk and it's very popular. And you will have millions and millions of people sign up under that. You could say -- I mean, I'm not doing that consciously. I will say this, John -- I will say that the Democrats should come to me; I would even go to them. Because I'm only interested in one thing: getting great healthcare for this country. That was a big chunk. And as far as the subsidy is concerned, I don't want to make the insurance companies rich. If you look at their stock price over the last number of years, take a look at what's happened with those insurance companies. They're making a fortune by getting that kind of money.

Q How long will you give Rex Tillerson to get this new deal? And are strikes on Iran still a possibility if you don't get what you want?

THE PRESIDENT: We will see what happens with Iran. We're very unhappy with Iran. They have not treated us with the kind of respect that they should be treating. They should have thanked Barack Obama for making that deal. They were gone. They were economically gone. He infused \$100 [billion] to \$150 billion into their economy. He gave them \$1.7 billion in cash. And they should be, "Thank you, President Obama." They didn't say that.

Q On opioids, your wife is with you. She's been talking about the opioid crisis. You said you would declare a national emergency more than two months ago. What's taking so long?

THE PRESIDENT: We are studying national emergency right now. Believe it or not, doing national emergency, as you understand, is a very big statement.

We will be doing that. My wife, Melania, who happens to be right here, finds that subject to be of such vital importance, and she's very much involved. And as you know, she's on the committee and really wants to be involved in that process.

Q Have you spoken with Theresa May or Emmanuel Macron about the Iranian Deal?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q What did they say to you? What did you say to them?

THE PRESIDENT: They would love me to stay in, only for one reason: Look at the kind of money that's being sent. You know, Iran is spending money in various countries.

And I've always said it, and I say to them: Don't do anything. Don't worry about it. Take all the money you can get. They're all friends of mine.

Actually, Emmanuel called up, and he talked to me. And I said, look, Emmanuel, they just gave Renault a lot of money. Take their

money; enjoy yourselves. But we'll see what happens.

Iran has to behave much differently.

Q You promised that you would help people who are struggling. The CSR payment looks like it will hurt low-income people.

THE PRESIDENT: The CSR payments, if you take a look at CSR payments, that money is going to insurance companies to prop up insurance companies.

Q To help lower-income people.

THE PRESIDENT: That money is going to insurance companies to lift up their stock price, and that's not what I'm about.

Take a look at who those insurance companies support, and I guarantee you one thing: It's not Donald Trump.

Q So you don't think it will raise premiums at all?

Q Mr. President, the JCPOA fix that's being floated by Senators Cotton, Corker, and Rubio that would remove the sunset provisions, strengthen IAEA inspections, do some other things. Does that meet the bar for you, or do you need more?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we're going to take a look, John, at what happens. We're going to see what happens. We're going to see what they come back with. They may come back with something that's very satisfactory to me, and if they don't, within a very short period of time, I'll terminate the deal.

And as far as Puerto Rico is concerned, I love Puerto Rico.

Q (Inaudible) going down to Puerto Rico, and saying you won't stay there forever. You didn't say that about Texas or Louisiana. You said it about Puerto Rico. Why?

THE PRESIDENT: We've done a great job. We've done a great job in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has to get the infrastructure going. We're helping them with their infrastructure.

But most important on Puerto Rico is their electric plants are essentially gone. Now, they were gone before the hurricane; they were in bankruptcy, they owed \$9 billion -- I think it was \$9 billion. But the plants, as you know, were -- the electric was a disaster. After the storm, even more so.

We have to help them get the plants rebuilt. That's a long-term project, unfortunately. But we have to help them.

But I love the people of Puerto Rico, and we're going to help them.

Q On Puerto Rico, Mr. President, do you want to make sure that there remains a very bright line between hurricane relief and debt relief so that the two don't become so mingled?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have to watch -- you can't say there was a hurricane, and now we're going to spend X dollars. And we also have to do something with all the money that's been invested, mostly private. The government is going to have to become before that money, because the government is going to want security. They're going to have to become before that money. And I'm sure we'll be able to work that out.

But the Puerto Rican people have tremendous spirit. When I was there and I looked at the way that -- what they have to go through. They have a lot of problems. We're going to help them straighten it

out.

Q Could you clarify where you are on North Korea? You raised some eyebrows when you said this is "the calm before the storm." What's next on North Korea?

THE PRESIDENT: We're going to see what happens with North Korea. That's all I can say. We're going to see what happens. We're totally prepared for numerous things. We are going to see what happens with North Korea.

I will say, look, if something can happen where we negotiate, I'm always open to that. But if it's going to be something other than negotiation, believe me, we are ready, more so than we have ever been.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

END

1:46 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump in an Update from Disaster Relief Organizations on Hurricane Harvey Recovery Efforts
Date: Friday, September 01, 2017 5:18:30 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the President

For Immediate Release

September 1, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
IN AN UPDATE FROM DISASTER RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS
ON HURRICANE HARVEY RECOVERY EFFORTS

Oval Office

1:28 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. The First Lady and I are pleased to welcome Gail McGovern of the American Red Cross, David Hudson of the Salvation Army, and Kevin Ezell of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. These people have been absolutely incredible at what they've done.

I would like to thank them, and their staff and volunteers for the incredible work they're doing and in helping people affected by Hurricane Harvey. Sounds like a very innocent name but it's not an innocent hurricane, that I can tell you. It's of epic proportion.

These organizations and the many other non-profits involved represent the generosity, determination, and unbreakable spirit of the American people.

And Mike Pence was there yesterday and represented his country so well, in the love and the care, and I had so many just great comments about your visit, so I appreciate it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: When a disaster strikes, they work to help others in the time of need, which was over the last week, believe me. They've already provided tens of thousands of displaced Gulf Coast residents with meals, water, shelter, fresh blankets, and clean clothing.

When one American suffers -- and I say this quite a bit, especially lately, when you see what's going on -- we all suffer. We're one American family brought together in times of tragedy by the unbreakable bonds of love and loyalty that we have for one another. And there is a great love and a great loyalty in this country, and I think we've all seen it, maybe more so than ever before over the last four days. So I think we really have seen it. Nowhere is our unity more evident than in the actions of our volunteer and charitable organizations that rally to their neighbors' aid when disaster strikes.

The people of Texas and Louisiana were hit very hard by a historic flood. In their response, they have taught us all a lesson -- a very, very powerful lesson: There was no outbreak in crime. There was an outbreak of compassion only -- real beautiful, strong compassion. And they've really inspired us as a nation. To be honest, they've inspired the world, because the world is watching.

We're pleased to receive an update from Gail, David, and Kevin on the work of the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. The federal government is on the ground bringing in

significant resources to bear. And I want to assure these organizations and the others involved that we will continue to coordinate with them and bring all of the relief and the comfort and everything else that we absolutely can to the Gulf Coast.

And I want to also thank the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Texas. They have been outstanding. Just the coordination and the level of relationship has been, I think, pretty much unprecedented. So I just want to thank them. I want to thank all of the folks working on the ground for the administration. Tom Bossert is here today. Tom, thank you very much, we appreciate it. Every American heart is with the people of Texas and Louisiana. They're strong and resilient, and they have really overcome.

And we're in the process of just about, where I can I say, overcome this horrible devastation. Now it's going back to work, but the Coast Guard in particular, I have to also thank. They saved probably thousands of lives -- we were just talking about it -- going onto seas that very few people would want to be on in the worst of times, when they were saving a lot of people out there.

Together, we will help them all recover from this tragedy. We'll renew our hope and community, and we'll renew our hope and rebuild those homes, and businesses, and schools, and places of worship where the strength and vigor that comes from the love within our souls.

And I just authorized and signed a proclamation for prayer. And we're going to have, on Sunday, a prayer Sunday. And, Mike, that was something that was very special, just took place. So I think it's going to be something to see and to witness. It's been a long time. And our country deserves it right now.

I want to thank my wife, Melania, the First Lady. She's been so involved in this and helping so much. And so I want to thank you. Would you like to say a few words to start off?

MRS. TRUMP: It's great to be here with amazing people, and I want to thank all the volunteers all across the country dedicated to help to Texas -- and fantastic job. And we're going tomorrow to visit them, and I just want to tell them to be strong and everything will be okay.

THE PRESIDENT: See, I didn't tell her I was going to do that, Stewart. And she did a great job. (Laughter.) But she really has; she's been so dedicated to this. This has very much affected her, what's happened in Texas and neighboring states, frankly.

So I want thank you, First Lady. Thank you.

Salvation Army.

COMMISSIONER HUDSON: Yes, well, we're first of all very appreciative of this opportunity, appreciative of our partners in service. We are working hand-in-hand with groups like the Red Cross, where they provide shelter for people, and we're able to provide meals. And even though we're limited in being able to get in to a lot of the impacted areas, we've already served hundreds of thousands of meals, and literally millions of meals will be served.

And we can only do this as we partner together. And as I've told my coworkers, this is a time that we're all Texans. And no matter where you're from, we're all about serving Americans in need. And I'd like to thank you, Mr. President, the Red Cross, and the Baptists and all the other agencies that partner with us. Together we can make a difference.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. That's very nice.

Southern Baptists.

MR. EZELL: We're three different organizations, but we work best as one. And the joy of this is we really do lock arms and have the capacity to feed over 400,000 people a day. And, Mr. President, thank you for FEMA. They've been incredible through this. We've gone through many disasters, and they've done just a fantastic job stepping to the plate and being prepared and allowing us to volunteer (inaudible).

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we should thank Brock Long and all of the people at FEMA, and the people at Homeland and, I have to say General Kelly, who has been so much involved. As you know he just left, and he's now in the White House. But his spirit and anything else that's been involved over the last few weeks getting ready. Because, really, this has been probably now almost two weeks since we felt that it was probably going to hit that area. But General Kelly has done a fantastic job. And Elaine Duke has been terrific. So I want to thank all of our folks.

Red Cross, how are we doing?

MS. MCGOVERN: Sir, first of all, our hearts go out the people of Texas, and on behalf of the entire American Red Cross, so many people have lost everything and presented in our shelters with just the clothes on their back. I visited one of the shelters outside of Austin, and it housed about 200 people. And I had the opportunity to call to all the families -- everyone from a six-month-old baby to a 6'8" man -- and everybody in between.

And you heard stories of heartbreak and heartache. But the one thing that I hadn't seen in the nine years that I've been with the American Red Cross is the incredible resiliency of the American people. They are bound and determined to build back, and there are about 40,000 people in our shelters right now across the state of Texas. And our volunteers are pouring in, giving them comfort, hope. We served about 390,000 meals and snacks. And the incredible thing is our partners are there. They are getting the hot meals into our hands so that we can serve them.

Government has just been phenomenal. And when we had a hard time getting our volunteers in, the city gave us dump trucks so we could get volunteers and cots in. The Department of Defense gave us high-water vehicles -- 20 of them -- so we could break in and bring needed supplies.

So I'm just so appreciative of the teamwork. I'm appreciative of your support. And again, our hearts go out to the people of Texas.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Very nice. 390,000 --

MS. MCGOVERN: Meals and snacks.

THE PRESIDENT: And that's up until now. Just up to -- as of last night.

THE PRESIDENT: You'll be doubling that. That's a tremendous job.

MS. MCGOVERN: I'm quite sure we will.

THE PRESIDENT: Tremendous job.

Mike, would you like to say something?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Just, Mr. President, having -- I just returned from southeast Texas yesterday. We heard the resilience, the character, and the faith of the people of east Texas. We heard their gratitude to you and the First Lady for the administration's support, for your compassion, your admiration for our first responders from FEMA, down to local leadership.

But I also heard, Mr. President, about their gratitude for volunteer organizations that have literally been there from the very outset of this storm. And I want to thank you and the First Lady for taking the opportunity to call attention to the Salvation Army and the Red Cross and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief.

Anyone looking on should know that while the federal government is going to be there at your direction, we'll be seeking resources from the Congress to make sure that disaster relief is available for individuals and businesses. Literally, the work of meeting people's human needs each and every day will take all of us, and these volunteer organizations need resources and they need people.

And I would just add, Mr. President, that anyone looking on can go to NVOAD.org -- it's our website where all these organizations are listed. People can find out how they can be supportive of national volunteer organizations that at this very hour, and for weeks and months ahead, will be coming alongside families as they rebuild their lives.

THE PRESIDENT: That's good. Thank you, Mike. Thank you very much.

This is just some of the locations that over a very short period of time, they and others have managed to go to some of these locations, as you know very well. Some of the press has been there, and I will say they are devastated. Two days ago there was water like nobody has ever seen before. I guess in the history of our country we've never had an amount of water like we've had. And yet you were able to occupy all of these different locations and take care of people -- you and the others.

So we want to just thank you. That's really a special, special job. Thank you all very much. Appreciate it.

Q Do you think DACA is illegal? Do you think DACA is illegal? (Inaudible) later today, possibly?

THE PRESIDENT: We'll be releasing on DACA sometime over the weekend, probably Sunday, Saturday. Latest will be Monday. Great feeling for DACA.

Q Do you think it's illegal? DACA is illegal -- is that your sense?

Q Sir, will you be making the spending request today?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, we'll be making a request. Absolutely. For the state of Texas, yes -- and Louisiana.

And tomorrow I'm going to Louisiana with the First Lady, and Texas. So it will be Texas, Louisiana.

Thank you, everybody.

END

1:40 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump in Meet-and-Greet with Vietnam War Veterans
Date: Friday, November 10, 2017 3:47:55 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 10, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
IN MEET-AND-GREET WITH VIETNAM WAR VETERANS

Hyatt Regency Da Nang Resort and Spa
Da Nang, Vietnam

2:15 P.M. ICT

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Hello, everybody. And I assume that by now you're pretty exhausted. The media must be absolutely exhausted, looking to go home.

But we have had a tremendous time. And we're in Vietnam tomorrow, we go to the Philippines, and then back to the United States. We'll be landing in Washington. And I think we've had a tremendous period of time, starting in Japan, going to South Korea, going to China.

Last night's celebration in China was something, the likes of which few people have ever seen before. So we've had a very exciting time.

I'm very honored to be representing our country, and I will say that, when you speak of honors, one of my great honors is to present the people standing right behind me -- great, great warriors and veterans of the Vietnam War.

Our veterans are a national treasure, and I thank them all for their service, sacrifice, and patriotism.

To each of you with me today, you are the heroes who fulfill your duty to our nation. And each of you, under the most difficult conditions, did what you had to do, and you did it well.

My administration, as you all know, is committed to rebuilding our military and honoring the hard work and sacrifices of all veterans. We're extremely proud of what we've done with the Veterans Administration. Dr. Shulkin has done an amazing job with choice and accountability and so many other things that we are doing and in the process of doing. The Veterans Administration is a whole different place.

Our accountability efforts in Vietnam are very, very important to all of us. We will not rest until all of the 1,253 missing veterans are returned home. I want to thank the government of Vietnam for their assistance in our efforts.

Today, I'm signing a proclamation to honor the veterans of the Vietnam War. This is part of the ongoing 13-year commemoration of their sacrifice for freedom. And I just want to thank these seven very brave people for being here. I got to know them for a few minutes upfront, and they are definitely tough, smart cookies. We like them. I think they like me too. I'm not sure, but I think -- (applause) -- no, I think they do. I think they do. I think they see what we're doing for

our military.

Would you like to say a few words, any of you guys? Would you like to say something? Huh?

MR. HOPPER: Sure.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Come on. Come on up here. Here's your chance. You can be a big star now.

MR. HOPPER: Well, I'm not sure about that. But just on behalf of many of us standing up in the front of the room today, I just want to say what an honor and privilege it is to be with our President. I so admire what you're doing for our country.

Thank you for your dedication to our military, our country. And we're all behind you in making America great again.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you very much. That's so nice. Thank you very much.

MR. HOPPER: Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. REYNOLDS: It's an honor to be here. My family is so proud. My wife loves you. (Laughter.) She does. We all love you.

All of the veterans that I represent in my community asked me to say to you: Keep doing what you're doing. We need to win. We need to make America great again. And we definitely think you are on the right track. So, thank you. It's honor to meet you, sir.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: We will keep it going, and we will get it done.

MR. REYNOLDS: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: No doubt.

MR. REYNOLDS: I believe it. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Anybody?

MR. MORGAN: Mr. President, from my heart, thank you for your support of the military, and it's an honor to be here as one of seven Vietnam veterans representing the 58,000 heroes who never made it home.

Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you so much. (Applause.)

MR. MORGAN: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: You nervous?

MR. GOODE: I am nervous.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I don't think so. I don't think so.

MR. GOODE: I am nervous.

You know, it's an honor for me to be here today to meet the President of the United States that's doing such a fine job for America. I'm so proud of him and what he's doing, and I'm also really proud to represent all those veterans that are back home to be one of seven of these veterans that are here today. It's such an honor to represent the rest of those veterans in the United States of America.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I just want to thank everybody. These are special, special people. And just in speaking to them, before I came up -- they were so warm and so loving of our country -- I said, "Hey, would you like to say a few words?" And they said them better than anybody can say them.

They're brave, they're strong, they're great patriots. And we just want to thank you and all of the thousands and thousands and all of the people that served with you and in all of the other wars.

And, you know, one of the things, again, that I'm so happy with is what we're doing with the whole Veterans Administration. It is a whole different ballgame.

And I'm going to sign a proclamation, and I'll sign it with one pen, but we're going to make sure we have seven pens. And we're going to get you each one. But it's an important proclamation, and we'll do it right now.

Thank you all. You have done a fantastic job. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

So this is the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War by the President of the United States of America. It's a proclamation. And thank you very much.

(The proclamation is signed.)

END

2:21 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump in Meeting with the Senate Finance Committee
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 12:22:51 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 18, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
IN MEETING WITH THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cabinet Room

11:34 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I'm honored to welcome Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Finance Committee to the White House. And especially, I'd like to thank Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch -- thank you, Orrin -- and Ranking Member Ron Wyden for joining us today. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ron.

We're here to discuss our plan to deliver historic tax cuts for American families, businesses, workers. It will be the largest tax cut in the history of our country.

Here's some of the highlights from our framework. We are doubling the amount of income that is taxed at the zero bracket. In other words, the zero bracket -- many people will be able to take advantage of that bracket that are not in that bracket.

We're increasing the child tax credit. We will end the estate tax, sometimes referred to as the death tax.

We will cut the business tax rate from the highest in the developed world at 35 percent to no more than 20 percent. According to the Council of Economic Advisers, reducing the corporate tax rate from 35 to 20 percent would increase average household income by \$4,000 a year. So each household, on average, would take in \$4,000, and they'll go out and they'll spend that money and that will be great for the economy.

We're cutting taxes on small businesses to the lowest rate in more than 80 years. For 30 million Americans who own small businesses, it will be a 40 percent tax cut, and they will thrive and they will expand, and they will be happy.

For at least the next five years, businesses and manufacturers will be able to expense the full value of new equipment in the year in which they buy it -- something which nobody even thought in terms of, and something which will have, I think, one of the biggest impacts on our economy.

We will impose a one-time low tax on trillions of dollars of wealth parked overseas to encourage companies to bring back those profits and bring them back home, and spend the money at home where it belongs. Right now, they can't bring the money back in because of bureaucratic problems, because of certain legislation, and most importantly because the tax rate is so high that only a very foolish company head would bring the money back in. I think the numbers could even hit the \$4 trillion mark. People have been saying \$2.5 trillion for many years, but we know it's now much higher than that.

The vast majority of Americans will be able to file their taxes on a single sheet of paper, because not only will these be massive tax cuts, but these will be a big simplification. It's going to be a very big simplification. So it's really tax cuts and reform, but I focus on tax cuts because it's such an important weapon to get our country really moving.

So we'll go from being one of the highest-taxed nations in the world to the one of the lowest taxed, meaning more jobs, higher wages, and more products stamped with the words: Made in the USA.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, in my opinion. This is something that will be really unique. The timing is right. I have had people on both sides -- and I promised not to mention the name of the people on the other sides, or names -- but a lot of people are liking this very much, and I think we're going to have tremendous support.

We're going to restore America's competitive edge, rebuild America's middle class -- very much aimed at the middle class -- and renew the promise of the American Dream.

We're going to have companies pouring back into our country instead of leaving our country. And we're not going to have them leave and fire everybody, and make products and sell them back into our country totally untaxed. All we do is end up with lots of people without jobs and no product. It's not going to happen anymore.

So I just want to thank everybody for being here. It's a great honor. We're going to have a great discussion today, and I'm sure we'll have unanimous support. (Laughter.) I have no doubt, right? Right, Ron? I think, right.

So thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate it.

Q Mr. President, what did you say to Sergeant Johnson's widow on the phone yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say what that congresswoman said; didn't say it all. She knows it. And she now is not saying it. I did not say what she said, and I'd like her to make the statement again because I did not say what she said. I had a very nice conversation with the woman, with the wife who was -- sounded like a lovely woman. Did not say what the congresswoman said, and most people aren't too surprised to hear that.

Q What was the (inaudible), Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Let her make her statement again and then you'll find out.

Q She is saying that you said this -- the congresswoman.

THE PRESIDENT: Let her make her statement again and then you'll find out.

Q Mr. President, on healthcare, where do you stand on the bipartisan healthcare bill?

THE PRESIDENT: We'll see the bipartisan. We're going to see the bipartisan. And Lamar Alexander is working on it very hard from our side. And if something can happen, that's fine. But I won't do anything to enrich the insurance companies because right now the insurance companies are being enriched. They've been enriched by Obamacare like nothing anybody has ever seen before. I am not going to do anything to enrich the insurance companies.

Okay, thank you very much, everybody. Thank you very much.

EDT

END

11:40 A.M.

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From: White House Press Office
To: scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump on Antiquities Act Designations
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 3:34:22 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 4, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
ON ANTIQUITIES ACT DESIGNATIONS

Utah State Capitol
Salt Lake City, Utah

12:20 P.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you to a very special man, Orrin Hatch, for the introduction. And that was truly a nice introduction and I appreciate it.

You are a true fighter, Orrin. And I have to say, I've gotten to know him very well. I've gotten to know a lot of people very well. You meet fighters and you meet people that you thought were fighters but they're not so good at fighting. He's a fighter. We hope you will continue to serve your state and your country in the Senate for a very long time to come. (Applause.)

I want to especially thank you for the tremendous work in ushering massive tax cuts and reform through the Senate. Just happened, and we have a final step to go. And I predict we're going to be very successful. We're talking about massive, massive tax cuts. (Applause.) It's tax cuts and reform, but I always mention tax cuts first because that's what people like to hear.

We're now one huge step closer to delivering to the American people the historic tax relief as a giant present for Christmas. Remember I said we're bringing Christmas back? Christmas is back, bigger and better than ever before. We're bringing Christmas back. (Applause.) And we say it now with pride. Let me just say, to those here today and all across the country: Merry Christmas to everybody. (Applause.) And also, happy holidays and a great New Year. We're going to have a great, great year.

Joining us at this ceremony are many other tremendous leaders from Utah, including your great senator, Mike Lee. Where's Mike? Mike, come! Come here, Mike. Get up here, Mike. (Applause.) He worked along with Orrin and the rest of them. We got it done. Mike, thank you very much. (Applause.)

You want to say something?

SENATOR LEE: It's not every day the President of the United States asks you to take the microphone from him. But I want to say, Mr. President, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for being here. Thank you for standing with the people of Utah. We appreciate it deeply. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike.

I also want to recognize your fantastic representatives who are

with us -- Rob Bishop, John Curtis, Chris Stewart, and Mia Love. Thank you all. You're here. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

And I have to say, really -- talk about a very special guy that I made Secretary of the Interior. Does he know the interior. He's knows it, he loves it. He loves seeing it and riding on it. Ryan Zinke, who truly believes in protecting America -- he is protecting America. And nobody loves it more. Ryan. (Applause.) Thank you. Just as he protected America as an officer of the legendary Seal Team Six. He's a tough cookie and you've done a great job. Thank you, Ryan.

Governor Gary Herbert. Where is Gary? Come on Gary. Come on, Gary. Get over there, Gary. So they can -- (applause) -- and you're your wife, the First Lady, is fantastic. Thank you very much. First Lady. Thank you, First Lady.

Attorney General Sean Reyes. Sean, thank you. (Applause.) Thank you. An original supporter of mine. You know, you always remember those original supporters. Greg Hughes. Greg, thank you. (Applause.) He was an original right at the beginning. Thank you, Greg. He had a feeling.

Finally, I want to recognize the members of the local Utah Navajo. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Really appreciate it. We're profoundly honored by your presence here today, and I'm thrilled to be here with so many wonderful friends, so many people that saw something a little special and they said, we're with him, and I'm really working hard to put it back. And that's what we're doing today. This magnificent capitol, in your incredible state. And it is special people in a special state. Thank you very much for being here.

I've just come from touring Welfare Square with Senator Hatch and some amazing people from the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. (Applause.) Special. I spent a lot of time with them. In fact, I went around the store, I wanted a nice can of tuna fish -- (laughter) -- and they had plenty. They really help people. Incredible.

After our visit, I can truly say firsthand that Utah's awesome natural beauty is exceeded only by the warmth and grace and hospitality of its citizens. This state has many natural treasures, but its greatest treasure by far is its people. (Applause.) And we will ensure the right of the people to live according to the faith in their hearts, which is why we will always protect your religious liberty. (Applause.) And we've been doing that.

I know all of you feel blessed to be living among some of the most glorious natural wonders anywhere in the world. You cherish Utah's gleaming rivers and sweeping valleys. You take inspiration from its majestic peaks. And when you look upon its many winding canyons and glowing vistas, you marvel at the beauty of God's great creation. (Applause.)

And that is why I'm here today: Because some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington. And guess what? They're wrong.

The families and communities of Utah know and love this land the best, and you know the best how to take care of your land. You know how to protect it, and you know best how to conserve this land for many, many generations to come.

Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away. They don't know your land, and truly, they don't care for your land like you do. (Applause). But from now on, that won't matter. I've come to Utah

to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

But before I began -- because I understood how big it is -- I'm a real estate developer. When they start talking about millions of acres, I say, say it again? That's a lot. So, before I began, I met with Senator Orrin Hatch, who loves Utah and loves the people of Utah. I called Senator Mike Lee, who loves Utah and loves the people of Utah. I called your governor. I called my original -- where is he? There he is. I called all of the friends that I have in Utah. I said, what do you think? I said, will this be good for our country, and will it be good for your state? They said this would be incredible for our country, will be incredible for Utah. Finally, you would be giving people back their access to the land they know, to the land they understand, and most importantly, to the land that they love.

I also said, will it be at all controversial? They all told me no. (Laughter.) How did that happen? I don't think it is controversial, actually. I think it's so sensible.

Therefore, today, on the recommendation of Secretary Zinke, and with the wise counsel of Senator Hatch, Senator Lee, and the many others, I will sign two presidential proclamations. These actions will modify the national monuments designations of both Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante. (Applause.)

As many of you know, past administrations have severely abused the purpose, spirit, and intent of a century-old law known as the Antiquities Act. This law requires that only the smallest necessary area be set aside for special protection as national monuments. Unfortunately, previous administrations have ignored the standard and used the law to lock up hundreds of millions of acres of land and water under strict government control.

These abuses of the Antiquities Act give enormous power to faraway bureaucrats at the expense of the people who actually live here, work here, and make this place their home. This is where they raise their children. This is the place they love.

For example, the previous administration designated more than a half a billion acres of land and water, including Bears Ears. It did so over the loud objections of the people of this state and their elected representatives. Governor -- right?

The results have been very sad and very predictable. Here, and in other affected states, we have seen harmful and unnecessary restrictions on hunting, ranching, and responsible economic development. We have seen grazing restrictions prevent ranching families from passing their businesses and beloved heritage on to the children -- the children that they love.

We've seen many rural families stopped from enjoying their outdoor activities. And the fact they've done it all their lives made no difference to the bureaucrats in Washington.

We have seen needed improvements, like infrastructure upgrades and road maintenance, impeded and foreclosed. We have seen how this tragic federal overreach prevents many Native Americans from having their rightful voice over the sacred land where they practice their most important ancestral and religious traditions. (Applause.)

These abuses of the Antiquities Act have not just threatened your local economies; they've threatened your very way of life. They've threatened your hearts.

Our precious national treasures must be protected. And they, from now on, will be protected. (Applause.) Under my administration, we

will advance that protection through a truly representative process, one that listens to the local communities that knows the land the best and that cherishes the land the most. (Applause.)

With the action I'm taking today, we will not only give back your voice over the use of this land, we will also restore your access and your enjoyment. Public lands will once again be for public use -- (applause) -- because we know that people who are free to use their land and enjoy their land are the people most determined to conserve their land.

One values the splendor of Utah more than -- I'll tell you what, there's nobody out there. I just came in, and I'm looking around with Orrin and with Mike and with the governor and with everybody, and I'm just saying, what a beautiful picture it is. But no one values the splendor of Utah more than you do, and no one knows better how to use it.

With your help in treating our natural bounty with respect, gratitude, and love, we will put our nation's treasures to great and wonderful use. Families will hike and hunt on land they have known for generations, and they will preserve it for generations to come. Cattle will graze along the open range. Sweeping landscapes will inspire young Americans to dream beyond the horizon. And the world will stand in awe of the artistry God has worked right here in your great state.

Together, we will usher in a bright new future of wonder and wealth, liberty and law, and patriotism and pride all across this great land.

Thank you to the wonderful people of Utah. May God bless you and may God bless America. Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

And in your honor, I will now, with your representatives, sign this very, very important proclamation. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you. (Applause.)

(The proclamation is signed.)

END

12:37 P.M. MST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump on His Trip to Asia
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 5:05:03 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

2017 For Immediate Release

November 15,

REMARKS PRESS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
ON HIS TRIP TO ASIA

Diplomatic Reception Room

3:35 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

Last night, I returned from a historic 12-day trip to Asia. This journey took us to five nations to meet with dozens of foreign leaders, participate in three formal state visits, and attend three key regional summits. It was the longest visit to the region by an American President in more than a quarter of a century.

Everywhere we went, our foreign hosts greeted the American delegation, myself included, with incredible warmth, hospitality, and most importantly respect. And this great respect showed very well our country is -- further evidence that America's renewed confidence and standing in the world has never been stronger than it is right now.

When we are confident in ourselves, our strength, our flag, our history, our values -- other nations are confident in us. And when we treat our citizens with the respect they deserve, other countries treat America with the respect that our country so richly deserves.

During our travels, this is exactly what the world saw: a strong, proud, and confident America.

Today, I want to update the American people on the tremendous success of this trip and the progress we've made to advance American security and prosperity throughout the year.

When I came into office, our country was faced with a series of growing dangers. These threats included rogue regimes pursuing deadly weapons, foreign powers challenging America's influence, the spread of the murderous terror group ISIS, and years of unfair trade practices that had dangerously depleted our manufacturing base and wiped out millions and millions of middle-class jobs.

The challenges were inherited, and these products really showed what previous mistakes were made over many years -- and even decades -- by other administrations. Some of these mistakes were born of indifference and neglect. Others from naïve thinking and misguided judgement. In some cases, the negative influence of partisan politics and special interests was to blame. But the one common thread behind all of these problems was a failure to protect and promote the interests of the American people and American workers.

Upon my inauguration, I pledged that we would rebuild America, restore its economic strength, and defend its national security. With this goal in mind, I vowed that we would reaffirm old alliances and form new friendships in pursuit of shared goals. Above all, I swore that in every decision, with every action, I would put the best interests of the American people first.

Over the past 10 months, traveling across the globe and meeting with world leaders, that is exactly what I have done.

Earlier this year, in Saudi Arabia, I spoke to the leaders of more than 50 Arab and Muslim nations about our strategy to defeat terrorists by stripping them of financing, territory, and ideological support. And I urged the leaders to drive out the terrorists and extremists from their societies. Since that time, we have dealt ISIS one crushing defeat after another.

In Israel, I reaffirmed the unbreakable bond between America and the Jewish State, and I met with leaders of the Palestinian Authority and initiated an effort to facilitate lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

In Brussels, I urged our NATO allies to do more to strengthen our crucial alliance and set the stage for significant increases in member contributions. Billions and billions of dollars are pouring in because of that initiative. NATO, believe me, is very happy with Donald Trump and what I did.

In Warsaw, I declared to the world America's resolve to preserve and protect Western civilization and the values we hold so dear.

In Rome, Sicily, Hamburg, and Paris, I strengthened our friendships with key allies to promote our shared interests of security and prosperity.

In September, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, I urged that the nations of the world join in confronting rogue regimes that threaten humanity and laid out a model for international cooperation grounded in respect for sovereignty and the responsibilities that come with it.

On each trip, I have worked to advance American interests and leadership in the world.

And to each of these places, I have carried our vision for a better -- a vision for something stronger and sovereign -- so important -- sovereign and independent nations, rooted in their histories, confident in their destinies, and cooperating together to advance their security, prosperity, and the noble cause of peace.

It was this same vision that I carried to Asia two weeks ago. And it was this same commitment to you, the American people, that was always at the forefront of my mind and my thinking.

Our trip was defined by three core goals. First: to unite the world against the nuclear menace posed by the North Korean regime, a threat that has increased steadily through many administrations and now requires urgent action.

Second: to strengthen America's alliances and economic partnerships in a free and open Indo-Pacific, made up of thriving, independent nations, respectful of other countries and their own citizens, and safe from foreign domination and economic servitude.

And third: to finally -- after many years -- insist on fair and reciprocal trade. Fair and reciprocal trade -- so important. These two words -- fairness and reciprocity -- are an open invitation to every country that seeks to do business with the United States, and they are a firm warning to every country that cheats, breaks the rules, and engages in economic aggression -- like they've been doing in the past, especially in the recent past.

That is why we have almost an \$800-billion-a-year trade deficit with other nations. Unacceptable. We are going to start whittling that down, and as fast as possible.

With these goals, it was my profound honor to travel on this journey as your representative. I explained to all of the world leaders, and across Asia, how well the United States is doing. Economic growth has been over 3 percent the last two quarters and is going higher. Unemployment is at its lowest level in 17 years. The stock market has gained trillions of dollars in value since my election and has reached record highs. We are massively increasing our military budget to historic levels. The House has just passed a nearly \$700 billion defense package, and it could not come at a better time for our nation.

Once again our country is optimistic about the future, confident in our values, and proud of our history and a role in the world.

I want to thank every citizen of this country for the part you have played in making this great American comeback possible. In Asia, our message was clear and well received: America is here to compete, to do business, and to defend our values and our security.

We began our trip in Hawaii to pay our respects to brave American servicemembers at Pearl Harbor and the United States Pacific Command, the guardian of our security and freedom across the Indo-Pacific region.

As our country prepared to observe Veterans Day, we remembered the incredible sacrifices and courage of all of the veterans whose service has preserved our liberty and a way of life that is very special. We also thanked military families for their support for our brave servicemen and women.

From Hawaii, we traveled to Japan, a crucial U.S. ally and partner in the region. Upon landing in Japan, my first act was to thank the American servicemembers and Japanese Self-Defense Forces who personify the strength of our enduring alliance.

Prime Minister Abe and I agreed on our absolute determination to remain united to achieve the goal of denuclearized North Korea. Shortly following our visit, Japan announced additional sanctions on 35 North Korean entities and individuals. Japan also committed to shouldering more of the burden of our common defense by reimbursing costs borne by American taxpayers, as well as by making deep investments in Japan's own military. This will include purchases of U.S. advanced capabilities -- from jet fighters to missile defense systems worth many, many billions of dollars -- and jobs for the American worker.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed ways we can deepen our trade relationship based on the core principles of fairness and reciprocity. I am pleased that since January of this year, Japanese companies have announced investments in the United States worth more than \$8 billion -- 17,000 jobs. Thank you.

Oh, they don't have water? That's okay. What? That's okay.

(Drinks water.)

THE PRESIDENT: Japanese manufacturers, Toyota and Mazda, announced that they will be opening a new plant in the United States that will create 4,000 jobs.

We also signed agreements between our nations to enhance infrastructure development, increase access to affordable energy, and advance our foreign policy goals through economic investment.

From Japan, we traveled to another key American ally in Asia -- the Republic of Korea. My official state visit to South Korea was the first by an American President in 25 years.

Speaking before the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, I spoke the truth about the evil crimes of the North Korean regime, and I made clear that we will not allow this twisted dictatorship to hold the world hostage to nuclear blackmail.

I called on every nation, including China and Russia, to unite in isolating the North Korean regime -- cutting off all ties of trade and commerce -- until it stops its dangerous provocation on -- and this is the whole key to what we're doing -- on denuclearization. We have to denuclearize North Korea. We have ended the failed strategy of strategic patience, and, as a result, we have already seen important progress -- including tough new sanctions from the U.N. council -- we have a Security Council that has been with us and just about with us from the beginning.

South Korea agreed to harmonize sanctions and joined the United States in sanctioning additional rogue actors whose fund and funds have helped North Korea and North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. It's unacceptable to us.

The United States welcomed the decision of President Moon to remove the payload restrictions on missiles to combat the North Korean threat. And together we reaffirmed our commitment to a campaign of maximum pressure.

Like Japan, South Korea is increasing its defense contributions. During our meetings, President Moon acknowledged his desire for equitable cost-sharing for the United States military forces stationed in South Korea. And I visited soldiers at Camp Humphreys, a brand-new, joint American-South Korean base, paid for almost entirely by the South Korean government. At that base, I discussed with the United States and South Korean military leaders both military options and readiness to respond to North Korean provocation or offensive actions.

During our visit, President Moon and I also discussed America's commitment to reducing our trade deficit with South Korea. At my discretion and direction, we are currently renegotiating the disastrous U.S.-Korea trade agreement signed under the previous administration. It has been a disaster for the United States.

Last week, 42 South Korean companies announced their intent to invest in projects worth more than \$17 billion dollars in the United States, and 24 companies announced plans to purchase \$58 billion dollars in American goods and services.

From South Korea, Melania and I traveled to China, where, as in Japan and South Korea, we were greatly honored by the splendor of our reception. Our trip included the first official dinner held for a foreign leader in the Forbidden City

since the founding of the modern China, where we enjoyed a very productive evening hosted by President Xi and his wonderful wife, Madam Pung.

During our visit, President Xi pledged to faithfully implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on North Korea and to use his great economic influence over the regime to achieve our common goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

President Xi recognizes that a nuclear North Korea is a grave threat to China, and we agreed that we would not accept a so-called "freeze for freeze" agreement like those that have consistently failed in the past. We made that time is running out and we made it clear, and all options remain on the table.

I also had very candid conversations with President Xi about the need to reduce our staggering trade deficit with China and for our trading relationship to be conducted on a truly fair and equitable basis. We can no longer tolerate unfair trading practices that steal American jobs, wealth, and intellectual property. The days of the United States being taken advantage of are over.

In China, we also announced \$250 billion worth in trade-investment deals that will create jobs in the United States.

From China, I flew to the city of Da Nang in Vietnam, to attend the Leaders Meeting for APEC -- Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. There, I spoke to a major gathering of business leaders, where I reminded the world of America's historic role in the Pacific as a force for freedom and for peace.

Standing on this proud history, I offered our vision for robust trading relationships in which Indo-Pacific nations can all prosper and grow together. I announced that the United States is ready to make bilateral trade deals with any nation in the region that wants to be our partner in fair and reciprocal trade.

We will never again turn a blind eye to trading abuses, to cheating, economic aggression, or anything else from countries that profess a belief in open trade, but do not follow the rules or live by its principles themselves.

No international trading organization can function if members are allowed to exploit the openness of others for unfair economic gain. Trade abuses harm the United States and its workers -- but no more. No more.

We will take every trade action necessary to achieve the fair and reciprocal treatment that the United States has offered to the rest of the world for decades.

My message has resonated. The 21 APEC leaders -- for the first time ever -- recognized the importance of fair and reciprocal trade, recognized the need to address unfair trade practices, and acknowledged that the WTO is in strong need of reform. These leaders also noted that countries must do a better job following the rules to which they agreed.

I also made very clear that the United States will promote a free and open Indo-Pacific in which nations enjoy the independence and respect they deserve.

In Vietnam, during a state visit in Hanoi, I also met with President Quang and Prime Minister Fook to discuss the growing friendship between our countries. Our Vietnamese partners are taking new actions to enforce sanctions on North Korea. In addition, we committed to expand trade and investment between our countries, and we pledged to address the imbalances. I am particularly pleased that the United States and Vietnam recently announced \$12 billion in commercial agreements, which will include \$10 billion in U.S. content.

Finally, I visited the Philippines, where I met with numerous world leaders at the U.S.-ASEAN and East Asia Summits. At ASEAN -- the Association of Southeast Asian Nations -- we made it clear that no one owns the ocean. Freedom of navigation and overflight are critical to the security and prosperity of all nations.

I also met with the Prime Ministers of India, Australia, and Japan to discuss our shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

During our visit, President Duterte of the Philippines thanked the American people and our armed forces for supporting the recent liberation of Marawi from ISIS. We pledged to strengthen and deepen our long-standing alliance.

At the East Asia Summit, the United States negotiated and signed four important leaders' statements on the use of chemical weapons, money laundering, poverty alleviation, and countering terrorist propaganda and financing.

And crucially, at both summits and throughout the trip, we asked all nations to support our campaign of maximum pressure for North Korean denuclearization. And

they are responding by cutting trade with North Korea, restricting financial ties to the regime, and expelling North Korean diplomats and workers.

Over the last two weeks, we have made historic strides in reasserting American leadership, restoring American security, and reawakening American confidence.

Everywhere we went, I reaffirmed our vision for cooperation between proud, independent and sovereign countries -- and I made clear that the United States will be a reliable friend, a strong partner, and a powerful advocate for its own citizens.

The momentum from our trip will launch us on our continued effort to accomplish the three core objectives I outlined: to unite the world against North Korean nuclear threat, to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and to advance fair and reciprocal economic relations with our trading partners and allies in the region.

We have established a new framework for trade that will ensure reciprocity through enforcement actions, reform of international organizations, and new fair trade deals that benefit the United States and our partners.

And we have laid out a pathway toward peace and security in our world where sovereign nations can thrive, flourish, and prosper side-by-side.

This is our beautiful vision for the future. This is a where this vision -- this dream -- is only possible if America is strong, proud, and free.

As long as we are true to ourselves, faithful to our founding, and loyal to our citizens, then there is no task too great, no dream too large, no goal beyond our reach.

My fellow citizens: America is back. And the future has never looked brighter.

Thank you. God Bless you and God Bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all.

END

3:56 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump on Tax Reform | Springfield, MO
Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 4:56:01 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 30, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
ON TAX REFORM

Loren Cook Company
Springfield, Missouri

1:41 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you very much. It's so nice. And we appreciate it. And all of the people outside that were waving proudly the American flag -- believe me, we appreciate it very much.

I want to thank Jerry Cook, Steve Burney -- (applause) -- and all of the tremendous employees here at the Loren Cook Company for hosting us today. Where is Jerry? Where is Jerry? (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you, Jerry. What a job. I've heard so much about you. It's a great honor to know you, Jerry. Thank you.

I also want to welcome the many distinguished guests who are here with us for this very important event: Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin. (Applause.) Thank you, Steve. Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross. (Applause.) Small Business Administrator -- which, by the way, is a very large business, I will tell you that -- Linda McMahon, a friend of mine. (Applause.) And from the purely political world, a really great friend who did such an incredible job with his beautiful wife at the inauguration, Senator Roy Blunt. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.) Where's Roy? Thank you, Roy.

Governor Greitens is here, who is doing some job. (Applause.) Thank you, Governor. Special. Lieutenant Governor Parson. Lieutenant Governor, thank you, Lieutenant Governor. And our great members of ~~Commerece~~ [Congress], I want to thank you all for coming. There are so many. I was asking the Governor and Roy, I said, do you think I should announce them all? I have so many. But I'm honored that they're here.

Representative Sam Graves. (Applause.) Representative Vicky Hartzler, who has been terrific. (Applause.) My friend for a long time, and just somebody that he liked me from the beginning and I liked him, Billy Long. Where's Billy? (Applause.) Billy. Right, Billy? Right from the beginning. Blaine Luetkemeyer -- where's Blaine? Good. Thank you, Blaine. (Applause.) Representative Jason Smith. (Applause.) Jason, thank you for everything, Jason. Representative Ann Wagner. Hi, Ann. Good job, Ann. (Applause.)

And, I don't know, we have so many more. Anybody I forgot? Right? Everything okay? Good, I got it. You, I remember more than anybody. Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. And to the congressmen and congresswomen, we very much appreciate you all being here. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Before we begin, I'd like to take a few moments to discuss the deeply tragic situation in Texas and Louisiana. As we all know, our

Gulf Coast was hit over the weekend with a devastating hurricane of historic proportion. Torrential rains and terrible flooding continue to pose a grave danger to life and to property. Our first responders have been doing absolutely heroic work to shepherd people out of harm's way, and their courage and devotion has saved countless lives. They represent truly the very best of America. (Applause.)

We must be vigilant. We must protect the lives of our people. I was on the ground in Texas yesterday to meet with Governor Abbott -- who is doing, by the way, an incredible job -- and local officials so that we could coordinate the very big and unprecedented federal response.

In difficult times such as these, we see the true character of the American people: their strength, their love, and their resolve. We see friend helping friend, neighbor helping neighbor, and stranger helping stranger. And together, we will endure and we will overcome. (Applause.)

To those affected by this storm, we are praying for you and we are here with you every single step of the way. And I can speak, I know, for the people in this room -- every step of the way. (Applause.)

To those Americans who have lost loved ones: All of America is grieving with you, and our hearts are joined with yours forever. The citizens of Texas and the Gulf Coast need all the prayers, support, and resources our communities have to offer. Recovery will be tough, but I have seen the resilience of the American spirit firsthand, all over this country.

To the people of Houston, and across Texas and Louisiana: We are here with you today, we are with you tomorrow, and we will be with you every single day after to restore, recover, and rebuild.

As our thoughts and prayers remain firmly with the citizens and our fellow people -- people -- great, great people -- all affected by this tragedy. We're also glad to be back in the heartland with the very, very fine folks of Missouri. (Applause.)

And I said to Senator Blunt and I said to Billy Long on the plane coming in -- can I say "Missouri," or should I say "Missouruh"? Okay? And they said, whatever you want is okay. So I said, good. But I'm especially pleased to be here in Springfield, the birthplace of a great American icon, the legendary Route 66. Who would have known that? (Applause.)

This is the place where the "Main Street of America" got its start, and this is where America's main street will begin its big, beautiful comeback that -- you are seeing it right now. This is a comeback of historic proportions. You're seeing it happen right now. (Applause.) Right? You're seeing it.

We're here today to launch our plans to bring back Main Street by reducing the crushing tax burden on our companies and on our workers. (Applause.) Our self-destructive tax code costs Americans millions and millions of jobs, trillions of dollars, and billions of hours spent on compliance and paperwork. And you have seen what's happening with regulations -- they're going fast. We need regulations, but many of them are unnecessary, and they're going fast. (Applause.)

That is why the foundation of our job creation agenda is to fundamentally reform our tax code for the first time in more than 30 years. I want to work with Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, on a plan that is pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-worker -- and pro-American. (Applause.)

There is no more fitting place to launch this effort than right here in the American heartland, surrounded by hardworking men and women whose skill, determination, and drive are truly second to none.

(Applause.)

And, by the way, before I start, Ivanka Trump -- I see my beautiful daughter is in the audience. Stand up, honey. (Applause.) She's working very hard. I'm very proud of Ivanka.

For many decades, Route 66 captured the American spirit. The communities along this historic route were a vivid symbol of America's booming industry. Truck drivers hauled made-in-America goods along this vital artery of commerce. Families passed through bustling towns on their way to explore the great American West. And high-quality manufacturing jobs lifted up communities, gave Americans a paycheck that could support a family. Mr. Cook is a great example of the people that do it. (Applause.) Stand up. Stand up Mr. Cook. Stand up. (Applause.) I think they like you. And provided millions of our fellow citizens with the pride and dignity that comes with work.

But, in recent years, millions of Americans have watched that prosperity slip away in the rearview mirror. And it wasn't pleasant to watch, especially for me. I would sit back -- I was in business -- and I could see what was happening. It wasn't good.

If we want to renew our prosperity, and to restore opportunity, then we must reduce the tax burden on our companies and on our workers. (Applause.)

In the last 10 years, our economy has grown at only around two percent a year. If you look at other countries and you look at what their GDP is, they're unhappy when it's seven, eight, nine. And I speak to them -- leaders of the countries -- how are you doing? "Not well, not well." Why? "GDP is down to seven percent." And I'm saying, we were hitting one percent just a number of months ago. So we're going to change that around, folks, that I can tell you. And we're going change it around fast. (Applause.)

And today -- a very appropriate day that this should happen -- we just announced that we hit three percent in GDP. It just came out. (Applause.) And on a yearly basis, as you know, the last administration, during an eight-year period, never hit three percent. So we're really on our way.

If we achieve sustained three percent growth, that means 12 million new jobs and \$10 trillion dollars of new economic activity over the next decade. That's some numbers. (Applause.) And I happen to be one that thinks we can go much higher than three percent. There's no reason why we shouldn't. (Applause.)

So this is our once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver real tax reform for everyday hardworking Americans, and I am fully committed to working with Congress to get this job done. And I don't want to be disappointed by Congress, do you understand me? Do you understand? (Applause.)

Congress -- I think Congress is going to make a comeback. I hope so. (Laughter.) I tell you what, the United States is counting on it. (Applause.)

Here are my four principles for tax reform: First, we need a tax code that is simple, fair, and easy to understand. (Applause.) That means getting rid of the loopholes and complexity that primarily benefit the wealthiest Americans and special interests.

Our last major tax rewrite was 31 years ago. It eliminated dozens of loopholes and special interest tax breaks, reduced the number of tax brackets from fifteen to two, and lowered tax rates for both individuals and businesses. At the time, it was really something special.

Since then, our tax laws have tripled in size, and the tax code

itself now spans more than 2,600 pages, and most of it is not understandable. Tax rates have increased, and special interest loopholes have crept back into the system. The tax code is now a massive source of complexity and frustration for tens of millions of Americans.

In 1935, the basic 1040 form that most people file had two simple pages of instructions. Today, that basic form has one hundred pages of instructions, and it's pretty complex stuff. The tax code is so complicated that more than 90 percent of Americans need professional help to do their own taxes.

This enormous complexity is very unfair. It disadvantages ordinary Americans who don't have an army of accountants while benefitting deep-pocketed special interests. And most importantly, this is wrong. (Applause.) Thank you.

First and foremost, our tax system should benefit loyal, hardworking Americans and their families. (Applause.) That is why tax reform must dramatically simplify the tax code, eliminate special interest loopholes -- and I'm speaking against myself when I do this, I have to tell you. And I might be speaking against Mr. Cook, and we're both okay with it, is that right? It's crazy. We're speaking -- maybe we shouldn't be doing this, you know? (Laughter.) But we're doing the right thing. (Applause.) True. And allow the vast majority of our citizens to file their taxes on a single, simple page without having to hire an accountant.

Second, we need a competitive tax code that creates more jobs and higher wages for Americans. It's time to give American workers the pay raise that they've been looking for for many, many years. (Applause.)

In 1986, Ronald Reagan led the world by cutting our corporate tax rate to 34 percent. That was below the average rate for developed countries at the time. Everybody thought that was a monumental thing that happened. But then, under this pro-America system, our economy boomed. It just went beautifully -- right through the roof. The middle class thrived and median family income increased.

Other countries saw the success. They looked at us. They saw -- what is America doing? What's happening with the United States? And they acted very swiftly by cutting their taxes lower, and lower, and lower, and reforming their tax systems to be far more competitive than ours.

Over the past 30 years, the average business tax rate among developed nations fell from 45 percent to less than 24 percent. And some countries have an unbelievably low tax, including, by the way, China and some others that are highly competitive, and really doing very well against us. They are taking us, frankly, to the cleaners. So we must -- we have no choice -- we must lower our taxes.

And your Senator, Claire McCaskill, she must do this for you. And if she doesn't do it for you, you have to have to vote her out of office. (Applause.) She's got to make that commitment. She's got to make that commitment. If she doesn't do it, you just can't do this anymore, with the obstruction and the obstructionists. If we don't get tax cuts and reform approved, potentially, the biggest ever -- we are looking for the biggest ever -- jobs and our country cannot take off the way they should, and it could be much worse than that. But, at a minimum, they won't take off the way they should.

The Dems are looking to obstruct tax cuts and tax reform, just like they obstructed so many other things, including administration appointments and healthcare. Not one vote. We got not one vote to try and fix healthcare and get rid of Obamacare.

The strategy of our economic rivals has worked. They made their taxes lower -- and far lower, in many cases, than ours -- and jobs left our country. Large corporations changed their business models by exporting jobs to other countries and then shipping their goods back to the United States, where they'd make massive profits, and they wouldn't be paying tax to us either. So we lost the jobs, we lost the taxes, they closed the buildings, they closed the plants and factories. We got nothing but unemployment. We got nothing.

Other businesses -- even classic American brands -- switched their headquarters to foreign countries. Because of this and other reasons, like weak borders, America remains stuck in the past. Although I have to tell you, we have General Kelly here today, and we stopped 78 percent -- going up to 80 percent -- on the border traffic coming through, in just a short period of time. (Applause.) He has done some job. A whole different world out there right now.

Today, we are still taxing our businesses at 35 percent, and it's way more than that. And think of it: In some cases, way above 40 percent when you include state and local taxes, in various states. The United States is now behind France, behind Germany, behind Canada, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, and many other nations. Also, with these countries and almost every country, we have massive trade deficits -- numbers that you would not believe.

But this administration is going to fix that. One by one, we're fixing it. We're working right now on NAFTA -- the horrible, terrible NAFTA deal that took so much business out of your state and out of your cities and towns, and we're working on it. Let's see what happens. (Applause.)

Mexico is not happy. (Laughter.) But as I told them, you made a lot of money for a lot of years and everybody left you alone. We got to change this deal. And hopefully we can renegotiate it. But if we can't, we'll terminate it and we'll start all over again with a real deal. (Applause.)

So when it comes to the business tax, we are dead last. Can you believe that? So this cannot be allowed to continue any longer. America must lead the way, not follow from behind.

We have gone from a tax rate that is lower than our economic competitors, to one that is more than 60 percent higher. We have totally surrendered our competitive edge to other countries. We have totally surrendered. We're not surrendering anymore. (Applause.)

Ideally -- and I say this for our Secretary of the Treasury -- we would like to bring our business tax rate down to 15 percent, which would make our tax rate lower than most countries, but still, by no means the lowest, unfortunately, in the world. But it would make us highly competitive.

In other words, foreign companies have more than a 60 percent tax advantage over American companies. They can pay their workers more, sell their products and services at lower cost, and still make more money than their U.S. competitors.

We cannot restore our wealth if we continue to put our businesses at such a tremendous disadvantage. We must reduce the tax rate on American businesses so they keep jobs in America, create jobs in America, and compete for workers right here in America -- the America we love. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much.

Because when businesses compete for labor, your wages will go up. Lower taxes on American business means higher wages for American workers, and it means more products made right here in the USA. (Applause.)

When I was growing up, I always used to see the signs, and it was always stamped on the product: Made in the USA. You don't see it anymore. We're going to go back to Made in the USA -- Made in the USA." (Applause.)

The third principle for tax reform is a crucial one: tax relief for middle-class families. (Applause.) In a way -- and I've been saying this for a long time -- they've been sort of the forgotten people, but they're not forgotten any longer. I can tell you that. (Applause.)

We will lower taxes for middle-income Americans so they can keep more of their hard-earned paychecks, and they can do lots of things with those paychecks. And that really means buying product ideally made in this country, but that means they'll go out, and they'll spend their money. And it will be a beautiful thing to watch. This includes helping parents afford childcare and the cost of raising a family. That's so important to Ivanka Trump. (Applause.) Very, very important to everybody in this room, but so important to my daughter. It's one of her real big beliefs. And she's very committed to that. Right, Ivanka?

We believe that ordinary Americans know better than Washington how to spend their own money, and we want to help them take home as much of their money as possible and then spend it. (Applause.) So they'll keep their money. They'll spend their money. They'll buy our product. Our factories will be moving again. Companies are going to move back into our country, jobs are going to prosper, and our country is going to be just like it says on that beautiful red hat -- it says: Make America Great Again. That's what we're going to do. (Applause.) Right?

Fourth and finally, we want to bring back trillions of dollars in wealth that's parked overseas. Because of our high tax rate and horrible, outdated, bureaucratic rules, large companies that do business overseas will often park their profits offshore to avoid paying a high United States tax if the money is brought back home. So they leave the money over there.

The amount of money we're talking about is anywhere from \$3 trillion to \$5 trillion. Can you believe that? By making it less punitive for companies to bring back this money, and by making the process far less bureaucratic and difficult, we can return trillions and trillions of dollars to our economy and spur billions of dollars in new investments in our struggling communities and throughout our nation.

It's time to invest in our country, to rebuild our communities, and to hire our great American workers. (Applause.)

My administration is embracing a new economic model. It's called very simply: The American Model. Under this system, we will encourage companies to hire and grow in America, to raise wages for American workers, and to help rebuild our American cities and communities. That is how we will all succeed and grow together, as one team, with one shared sense of purpose, and one glorious American destiny. (Applause.)

So today I'm calling on all members of Congress -- Democrat, Republican and independent -- to support pro-American tax reform. They have to do it. It's time. (Applause.) They have to do it. It is time.

I'm calling on Congress to provide a level playing field for our workers and our companies, to attract new companies and businesses to our shores, and to put more money into the pockets of everyday, hardworking people and also into the pockets of our companies so they can continue to grow and expand. (Applause.)

What could possibly be more bipartisan than allowing families to keep more of what they earn and creating an environment for real job and wage growth in the country that we love so much? (Applause.)

So let's put -- or at least try to put -- the partisan posturing behind us and come together as Americans to create the 21st century tax code that our people deserve. (Applause.)

If we do this, if we unite in the name of common sense and the name of common good, then we will add millions and millions of new jobs, bring back trillions of dollars, and we will give America the competitive advantage that it so desperately needs and has been looking for for so long. It's time. (Applause.)

Products made with American hands, American labor, and American grit will once again be delivered throughout the world. It's true. (Applause.) It's time. Instead of exporting our jobs, we will export our goods. (Applause.) Our jobs will both stay here in America and come back to America. We'll have it both ways. Millions of struggling citizens will be lifted from welfare to work. They will love getting up in the morning. They will love going to their job. They will love earning a big, fat, beautiful paycheck. They will be proud again. (Applause.)

That is the future I want for our people. That is the future I want for America -- a nation where we are proud, prosperous, united, and free.

Today, I am asking every citizen to join me in dreaming big and bold and daring things -- beautiful things -- for our country. I am asking every member of Congress, of which we have many with us today, to join me in unleashing America's full potential. I am asking everyone in this room and across the nation to join me in demanding nothing but the best for our nation and for our people.

And if we do these things, and if we care for and support each other, and love each other, then we will truly make America great again.

Thank you. God bless you. (Applause.) God bless you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you very much. Governor, thank you. Thank you, Governor. Thank you, Senator. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

END

2:14 P.M. CDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump Saluting American Heroes | Struthers, OH
Date: Tuesday, July 25, 2017 8:54:39 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 25, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
SALUTING AMERICAN HEROES

AMVETS Post 44
Struthers, Ohio

6:28 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Look at all those cameras back there. Isn't that nice? (Laughter.) We love Ohio. Boy, do we love Ohio. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ohio loves you!

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. And I'm going to be speaking about you in a couple of minutes. You are something. You are brave and strong, and we're going to be talking about you. And that's why we're here, to talk about you. So thank you very much.

And thank you, Secretary Shulkin, for the introduction -- a special guy. And he's doing a tremendous job in leadership of the VA. He's working every day to keep our promise to take care of our great veterans.

Now, I went all over Ohio, but I went all over almost every state, and the veterans were a very, very big topic for me. You know that. And I think what we're doing, it's never been done before. We just had a bill -- the VA Accountability bill. They've been trying to get it for many, many decades. They were unable to get it, and we got it. That means people are accountable. (Applause.) That means people are accountable for taking care of our vets. And if they don't care proper care, we hold them accountable. So I think it's just great.

So, Secretary, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I also want to recognize two veterans here with us who now serve the American people as members of our Cabinet -- Secretary Zinke and Secretary Perry. And we're going to be a net exporter of energy very shortly. Where is our Perry? Come here. (Applause.)

And Secretary of the Interior controls about, what, 22 percent of the entire United States. So when somebody thinks they're big landlords, they're actually very small compared to him. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY ZINKE: He's in real estate. He knows. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's great to be back in Youngstown. It was an incredible time we had. And you know the numbers, and you saw for many, many years Democrats -- and they're really great -- but Democrats, they win in Youngstown. But not this time. (Laughter and applause.) Right? They started to get a little nervous at the beginning of that evening when they see Youngstown seems to be going the other way. That hasn't happened in a lot of decades.

And I hear we're doing better in the polls, even right now, than we were even on election night, in so many different places -- swing

states, et cetera -- because they see what we're doing with jobs. The jobs are the best they've been in 17 years. The stock market hit another all-time high today. We're doing trade deals. And, you know, we have statutory length problems where you have to wait statutorily before you do them. But everybody has been put on notice.

We're renegotiating NAFTA. And if we don't get the deal we want, we'll terminate NAFTA. NAFTA has been a disaster for Youngstown. It's been a disaster for Ohio. And people are coming back, if you look at Ohio. But if you look at Michigan and other places, the auto industry is starting to come back in a very, very big way. You see what's happening with coal. Coal is coming -- clean coal. We love clean coal. And it's coming back.

I especially want to thank John and Jan Brown whose leadership in AMVETS has improved the lives of so many. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, John. Thank you, Jan. And they were with us right from the beginning, first time I was here. First time. We really appreciate it, Jan. Thank you very much. Is he a good husband? Or just average? (Laughter.)

MRS. BROWN: (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: I know he is.

To all the veterans with us this evening, we're here to honor you, to celebrate your service, and to thank you for your sacrifice. A grateful nation salutes you. And that's from the bottom of the President's heart -- a truly grateful nation salutes you.

All week at the White House, we are celebrating American heroes. And nothing fills our hearts with more pride than to be with those who risked everything to protect our citizens and preserve our way of life.

This evening, we're joined by veterans from every major engagement since World War II. You have crossed oceans, trekked deserts, scaled mountains, and cut your way through jungles to secure our nation and defend our people. And nobody -- throughout history, nobody has done it better than you.

You gave all that you have for our country and for victory. We love victory, don't we? (Applause.) We haven't had enough victory, but we're having it now. We're seeing it. We're having it now. You carried out your duty with honor, courage and devotion. And with your sacrifice, you earned our freedom.

In my administration, we will always protect those who protect us. Believe me, we will protect you because you have protected us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. I tell you, thank you very much. That includes reforming the Department of Veterans Affairs -- where David is doing such an incredible job -- so we can serve you as faithfully as you served our nation.

Since my first day in office, we've taken one action after another to make sure that our veterans get the care they so richly deserve. We've begun to process a -- seamlessly transferring veterans' medical records. Horrible situation. You couldn't get your medical records. And now it's so easy and so good. And the system is fixed, finally, after all of these years. (Applause.)

We've published wait times at every VA facility. I used to go around and talk about the veterans and they'd stand on line for nine days, seven days, four days -- that was a good one -- fifteen days. People that could have been given a prescription and been better right away end up dying waiting on line. That's not happening anymore.

And we have choice. If that happens, you're going to go out to the

doctor. We're going to have choice, David. And it seems so obvious to me. Even before I really got into the nitty-gritty of the VA, it just seemed like -- why would this great veteran, who protected us, stand on line for days and days and days and wait for a simple solution where it became a big problem because of those time delays.

And we are now doing choice. And you go out and you take care of it with a great doctor. Hopefully, you have a great doctor. If he's not so good, you get another one, right? (Laughter.)

We've delivered same-day mental health services at every VA medical center. And so many of the veterans would come up to me during the campaign, and they really stressed how important the mental health aspect of what we're doing is.

We have nearly doubled the number of veterans given approvals to see the doctor of their choice. So not only is it choice, but we've doubled up and now we're going to be tripling up very shortly.

And, so importantly, I have signed new historic legislation to ensure that every single federal VA worker has to do what they have to do. They're going to be held accountable. (Applause.)

The pushback on that bill was unbelievable. I said to myself, oh, that should be easy. And then I looked at 40 years of turmoil trying to get it through. And we won't attack any particular group, but you understand why it was not easy to get through. Because some people didn't want that. They wanted it to be that certain workers could do a horrible job. And most of the workers are great. And the doctors -- a lot of the doctors in the VA are phenomenal talents -- phenomenal. But now we're going to be able to get to those doctors.

You've put America first every day of your lives, and now we have a VA that will truly put our veterans first -- veterans. Your stories are America's stories, and your names are the names of true American heroes.

I'd like to honor one such hero who is with us tonight: Robert M. Bishop. (Applause.) He looks good.

Nearly 76 years ago, Bob was a gunner aboard the USS Tennessee in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese bombs struck the turrets of that once-great ship.

During the attack, Bob was below the deck at his battle station for four excruciating hours of fire and hell. Five of his crewmembers never made it off the ship, giving their last breath in this courageous and incredible service to our country.

Bob stayed with his ship after the attack. And once it was repaired -- which went, actually, much faster than it goes today, folks -- you'll have to explain that one, folks. (Laughter.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And it cost less.

THE PRESIDENT: It cost a lot less. (Laughter.) He served on the Tennessee for another four-and-a-half years, fighting in some of the greatest engagements in the Pacific Ocean.

After World War II, Bob and his wife Doris moved back to Ohio. Good choice, Bob. That is a good choice. I love this state. Remember at the beginning, they always said, there is no victory without Ohio. Right, Mr. Chairman? Boy, did we win Ohio. Right? Remember? (Applause.) And it wasn't like it was close. That was a -- that was a big one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much. Where Bob served in the Navy Reserve and also worked in the steel industry for over 50 years. This year, Bob and Doris celebrated -- now, you're going to have to explain this to me -- their 74th wedding anniversary. Wow. (Applause.) That is fantastic. That is so beautiful.

He's been back to Pearl Harbor eight times to pay tribute to his

comrades. And it is with his -- really, this great wish of his and the great wish of so many people that know Bob, that he will attend the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor on the eve of his 101st birthday. And if your party gets -- (applause) -- and Bob, if your party gets a little bit cheap with the money, I'll pay for it, okay? (Applause.) Right? Right?

So, Bob, the depth of your love for the country -- you really inspire us all. Today, I'm truly honored to present you with a Certificate of Recognition for your heroic sacrifice, your lifetime of service, and your undying devotion to our great nation. Thank you, Bob.

Where is that beautiful certificate? Oh, nice frame. They never give me frames. They just give me the paper. I have to go out and get my own frame. It's never great. Thank you, Bob. Thank you. Congratulations. (Applause.)

To every veteran here this evening, your courage is the strength of our nation, and your patriotism is the beating heart of our shared destiny. Your stories will inspire generations of Americans to fight and to win for our country and for our great, beautiful American flag that we all honor.

May God bless you. May God bless our veterans. And may God bless the United States of America. And thank you very much, it's such an honor to be with you again. You are special people in a special state. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

END

6:42 P.M. EDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump to Civilian Heroes and Law Enforcement Officials
Date: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 5:46:42 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

Release For Immediate
October 4, 2017

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
TO CIVILIAN HEROES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Las Vegas, Nevada

12:54 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Governor. And we really appreciate that. And I will tell you, the people of Nevada and the extraordinary city have shown the world their incredible character, courage, and resolve. Nevada really is a very, very special place.

I'm honored to be here today at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department in the company of heroes. Thank you to our police, our firefighters, and to our first responders, and of course to Sheriff Lombardo. Incredible job you've done.

Mayor Goodman -- hello, Mayor Goodman. Senator Heller, thank you very much. Senator Cortez Masto. Majority Leader. Where is Kevin -- Majority Leader? Kevin McCarthy. Adam Laxalt. All of the great congressmen that we have with us today from both parties, we just are very honored that you could be with us.

And on behalf of a grateful nation, Melania and I thank each and every one of you in law enforcement. In the depths of horror, we will always find hope in the men and women who risk their lives for ours. The mass murder that took place on Sunday night fills America's heart with grief. America is truly a nation in mourning.

I visited the hospital earlier today where many victims are still recovering from their wounds, and we ask God to ease their suffering and to speed their healing. We pray for the recovery of the injured and those injured officers who so bravely threw themselves into danger when duty called. And we grieve the loss of the law enforcement personnel who were killed in this vicious attack.

Many families tonight will go to bed in a world that is suddenly empty. The people they so dearly love were torn away from them forever.

Our souls are stricken with grief for every American who lost a husband or a wife, a mother or a father, a son or a daughter. We know that your sorrow feels endless. We stand together to help you carry your pain. You're not alone. We will never leave your side.

Here at the police department, we remember one of our own who died this week, Charles Hartfield. He was a very, very special person. Officer Hartfield was a proud veteran, a devoted husband, a loving father. His death is a tragic loss for this police force, for this city, and for our great nation.

We struggle for the words to explain to our children how such evil can exist, how there can be such cruelty and such suffering. But we

cannot be defined by the evil that threatens us, or the violence that incites such terror.

We're defined by our love, our caring, and our courage. In the darkest moments, what shines most brightly is the goodness that thrives in the hearts of our people. That goodness is our lighthouse. And our solace is knowledge that the souls of those who passed are now at peace in Heaven.

Here on Earth, we are blessed to be surrounded by heroes. As one eyewitness recounted this week: "While everyone else was crouching, police officers were standing up as targets, just trying to direct people and tell them where to go." The officers were standing up in the line of fire to help those in danger and to find out where those horrible shots were coming from.

Words cannot describe the bravery that the whole world witnessed on Sunday night. Americans defied death and hatred with love and with courage. When the word -- and the worst of humanity strikes -- and strike it did -- the best of humanity responds.

Parents and spouses used their own bodies as shields to protect their loved ones. Americans dashed into a hail of bullets to rescue total strangers.

Joining us today are many of the heroes who were here during that horrible moment, that horrible night, including Las Vegas Metropolitan Police officers Tyler Peterson and Tana Gurule, and civilian Aaron Stalker.

Officer Peterson was on his second day on the job when the shooting began. I just visited with him in the hospital. Within minutes, he joined a group of officers rushing between flying bullets to clear the fairground and save lives.

Officer Gurule was off-duty attending the concert. Although she was unarmed, as soon as the shooting began, she threw on a yellow police vest and began evacuating victims.

And Aaron Stalker, a veteran, rushed to the scene to search for his loved ones, but when he couldn't find them, he began helping every person he could. As he recounts: "We used the plastic barriers as gurneys to carry the injured to transportation. I made splints out of whatever I could find and used anything to stop the horrible bleeding."

Among the wounded was the mother of Aaron's girlfriend. She is still in the hospital, and we are all pulling for her.

To every hero we [who] helped -- every hero saved so many lives. And believe me, a grateful nation thanks you. The example of those whose final act was to sacrifice themselves for those they loved should inspire all of us to show more love every day for the people who grace our lives.

In the months ahead, we will all have to wrestle with the horror of what has unfolded this week, but we will struggle through it together. We will endure the pain together. And we will overcome together as Americans.

May God bless and watch over those who protect us. May God bring healing to the families of the wounded, the injured, and the fallen. And may God bless our great country, America. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, Governor. Thank you very much.

END

1:02 P.M.

PDT

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Remarks by President Trump to the American Farm Bureau Annual Convention | Nashville, TN
Date: Monday, January 08, 2018 6:02:57 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate
Release
8, 2018

January

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
TO THE AMERICAN FARM BUREAU ANNUAL CONVENTION

Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center
Nashville, Tennessee

3:11 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Oh, you're so lucky. You people know real estate because they have -- all these rooms all over this beautiful building are packed, but you're here with us. Right? (Applause.) And I say, packed with our people, so it's great.

But thank you very much, Secretary Perdue, for the kind introduction. There could be no better person to be our Secretary of Agriculture -- a man known, trusted, and respected by your industry. That's for sure.

I'm thrilled to be back in the amazing state of Tennessee. (Applause.) Here, as the state slogan goes, we see America at its absolute best. And you're doing well. You're doing a lot better since November 8th, I might add. (Laughter and applause.)

At the same time, it's true of the people gathered here today, in our nation's farmer -- and you know that -- our nation's farmers are just the most incredible people, and we are doing a job for you. You're seeing it like nobody else -- regulation, death tax, so much. You're a big beneficiary, and you're really producing like nobody else. So I just want to thank you for that. (Applause.)

And that's why I'm so honored to be the first President to address the American Farm Bureau in more than 25 years. What happened? Where are they? What happened? (Applause.) What happened? Where are they?

And you know this is your 99th year, so I was very disappointed to hear that. (Laughter.) You understand. A hundred is so much cooler, I have to be honest. (Laughter.) So I'll be back, I think. Next year,

I'll come back. All right? We'll come back. (Applause.)

I want to thank Governor Haslam and Mrs. Haslam -- wonderful people -- for joining us, along with members of the Tennessee congressional delegation. And I, sort of, have this beautiful list that I wrote. Some of us came in on Air Force One. And they're great people, and they're fighting for you.

In addition to the Governor and your great Secretary, Senator Bob Corker. And they're out here someplace. Bob? (Applause.) Senator Lamar Alexander is here. Senator Pat Roberts. (Applause.) Thank you, Pat. Oh, does he love the farmers. Pat, does he love those farmers. Right, Pat? Stand up, Pat. Do you love the farmers, Pat? "Yes." He'll come in -- we're talking about a different subject, he'll say, "What about the farmers?" That's good. That's why they love you.

Representative Diane Black -- terrific woman. (Applause.) Representative Marsha Blackburn. Marsha. (Applause.) Representative Scott DesJarlais. I love that name. (Applause.) Hi, Scott. Thank you, Scott. Right from the beginning. Representative Chuck Fleischmann. (Applause.) Representative David Kustoff. Thank you, David. (Applause.) Representative Phil Roe. (Applause.)

I talk about Zippy, so I don't have to mention Zippy Duvall. I'll talk about him in this speech. (Applause.)

Tom Nassif. Where's Tom? Tom? Thank you, Tom. And Mark Morris, State Senate Majority Leader.

All right, I've done my job now. All right? Okay. (Applause.) I've done my job. Did I do a good job? Did I leave out anybody? I hope not. It's always trouble when you do that. You left out one person; it's like for the rest your life they never speak to you, so -- (laughter) -- it's always very dangerous. Thank you very much.

I'm also thrilled to see one of my good friends and early supporters -- and that is Tom. And I just said, president and CEO Tom Nassif.

I also want to thank the American Farm Bureau and -- Zippy, I said I was going to mention you, and I am going to mention you because you have been there since the beginning. And that tractor that you drove during the inauguration was a very, very special moment. So I want to thank Zippy Duvall. Thank you, Zippy. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.) It was a special day.

From that day on, we have been working every day to deliver for America's farmers just as they work every single day to deliver for us.

We know that our nation was founded by farmers. Our independence was won by farmers. Our continent was tamed by farmers. So true. Our armies have been fed by farmers and made of farmers. And throughout our history, farmers have always, always, always led the way. Are you surprised to hear that, farmers? I don't think so. (Applause.) You have led the way. Great people.

The men and women in this room come from different backgrounds and from all across our land, but each of you carries the same title that's been proudly borne by patriots and pioneers, inventors and entrepreneurs, the title of -- very proudly -- American farmer. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

You embody the values of hard work, grit, self-reliance and sheer determination we need to -- did you ever hear this expression? -- make America great again. Has anybody ever -- (applause) --

And we're seeing already -- it's very early -- 11 months -- the incredible results. We have created more than 2 million new jobs since the election. Substantially more. Economic growth has surged past 3

percent, something that wasn't supposed to happen for a long time. We're way ahead of schedule. Unemployment is at a 17-year low. By the way, African American unemployment is the lowest it's ever been in the history of our records. (Applause.) Great. I told you.

The stock market is hitting one all-time record after another, boosting your 401(k)s and retirement accounts for everyday Americans. Everybody happy with your 401(k)? (Applause.) Because if you're not, there's something very wrong. (Laughter.)

I had a policeman in New York come up to me and said, Mr. President -- I was shaking hands -- I love our -- do we love our police and our uniform? (Applause.) And he came up -- he was on line and we're taking pictures, and nice event, and he said, "Sir, I want to thank you for my 401(k)." I'd never thought in terms of this way. I said, I think I'm going to use this every once in a while. He said, "My 401(k) is up 39 percent. It's so good, my wife thinks I'm" -- don't forget this is like in nine months when I met him -- he said, "My wife thinks I'm an investment genius. Thank you, sir. Thank you." (Laughter.)

And I said, you know what, based on the stocks, 39 is not that good. You're not really doing that well. (Laughter.) Don't tell your wife that.

The American Dream is roaring back to life. And we have just signed into law the most significant tax cuts and reforms in American history. (Applause.) It's a total of \$5.5 trillion in tax cuts, with most of those benefits going to working families, small businesses, and who? The family farmer. (Applause.) And I hate to say this, but your competing party wants to raise those taxes. They want to raise them. Can't let that happen. We've worked too hard to get them.

Businesses across America have already started to raise wages, and more than 100 companies have already given bonuses and other benefits to hundreds of thousands of workers as a result of these massive tax cuts. You see it happening every day. Today, they just announced more -- \$1,000, sometimes more, per employee. Hundreds of thousands of employees, and overall millions of employees.

We have over a million workers that have already received a tax cut bonus, something that nobody even thought when we made the bill. Nobody thought of that. It happened. AT&T came out, another one came out, another one. Then they started copying. Now the ones that didn't get it, everyone is saying where's mine? So they're all going to have it. So we never thought about it, and frankly, that worked out fantastically well -- even before the February date, where you're going to start seeing a lot more money in your paycheck.

And yet, every Democrat in the House and every Democrat in the Senate voted against tax cuts for the American farmer and for the American worker. But Republicans came together and delivered historic relief for our farmers and our middle class. (Applause.) And it wasn't easy. And we cannot let anything happen to that. And if the Democrats ever had the chance, the first thing they would do is get rid of it and raise up your taxes, sometimes by 40, 50, 60 percent higher than you're paying right now. We can't have that. That will undermine everything that we've done. You see the record business all over the world; they're talking about the United States again, all over the world. We cannot let anything happen to what we're doing. (Applause.)

Under the really large tax cut -- I always call it massive; sometimes they say huge. (Laughter.) Not a bad one. Huge tax cut. But our huge tax cut that we just passed, Americans will be paying less in taxes and keeping more of their own money to do what you want. You can save it. You can spend it. But it's all good for our country.

We've lowered tax rates, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and doubled the child tax credit. (Applause.) It's a big thing.

Under this new law, the typical family of four earning \$75,000 will see an income tax cut of more than \$2,000 each, slashing their tax bill in half each year. (Applause.)

American businesses are going from the highest tax rate in the developed world last year -- the highest in the developed world, think of it -- to one of the most competitive this year. From 35 percent -- which is unacceptable -- all the way down to 21 percent. And on top of that, you have a lot of advantages.

Small- and mid-size businesses will receive massive tax cuts. So a lot of the folks in this room. (Applause.) They'll be able to deduct 20 percent of their business income. All American businesses, including American farmers, will be able to deduct 100 percent of the cost of new equipment in the year you make the investment. That is something that is tremendous. (Applause.) That is something that I think is going to be the sleeper of the bill. You deduct it all in one year, as opposed to over many years. That's a tremendous thing.

And from now on, most family farms and small-business owners will be spared -- and you're going to be spared, and it really is the word punishment of the deeply unfair estate tax, known as the death tax -- so you can keep your farms in the family. (Applause.) Get up. (Laughter.) That was a tough one to get. That was a tough one. (Applause.) Obviously, you love your families; otherwise, you wouldn't be standing for that one. Not going to help you much; going to help them a lot. (Laughter and applause.)

And what's been happening is, you know, you have a farm and it does well, but its value is more than the income really would justify. And what happens is families were forced to take these farms and sell them at a fire-sale price. And they go out and borrow too much money, and then they end up losing the farm. It's not going to happen anymore, folks. It's not going to happen. So I congratulate you. That was a tough one to get approved of all of them. (Applause.)

In every decision we make, we are honoring America's proud farming legacy. Years of crushing taxes, crippling regulations -- and it's never been worse than it was before I got here; it was horrible -- and corrupt politics left our communities hurting, our economy stagnant, and millions of hardworking Americans completely forgotten.

But they, guess what, are not forgotten anymore. No more. (Applause.) I used to call them the forgotten men and women, and then when everyone saw them coming into the polls, the other side said, "How do we get some of them?" They were unbelievable. They are forgotten no more. Remember that. You're forgotten no more. (Applause.) Thank you.

We're fighting for our farmers and we're fighting for our country, and for our great American flag. We are fighting for that flag. (Applause.) We want our flag respected. We want our flag respected. And we want our national anthem respected also. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE: USA! USA! USA!

THE PRESIDENT: There's plenty of space for people to express their views and to protest, but we love our flag, we love our anthem. And we want to keep it that way. (Applause.)

As we put money back in the pockets of all Americans, including our farmers and ranchers, we're also putting an end to the regulatory assault on your way of life. And it was an assault indeed.

For years, many of you have endured burdensome fines, inspections, paperwork, and relentless intrusion from an army of regulators at the EPA, the FDA, and countless other federal agencies. Is that right, by the way? (Applause.)

That's why I'm truly proud to report that within our first 11

months, my administration has cancelled or delayed over 1,500 planned regulatory actions or assaults -- more than any President in the history of the United States.

We have cut twenty-two regulations for every one new regulation. Think of that one. (Applause.) You remember when I would talk to you -- when I'd come down to Tennessee and different places, I'd say, for every new regulation, we're going to cut one extra regulation. Right? We did better. One -- and we cut twenty-two. Instead of two, it was twenty-two. So we're very honored by that. (Applause.)

If the Democrats got their way, they would reinstate every single regulation that we're cutting, and add many more burdensome rules that don't do anything but hamstring our economy and burden our people and our farmers.

My administration is in the process of rolling back a rule that hit our farmers and ranchers very, very hard -- the terrible Waters of the United States rule. You know about that. (Applause.) It sounds so nice. It sounds so innocent. And it was a disaster. You know that. It sounded so good. The title is so beautiful. That's where it stopped. (Laughter.)

It was absolutely -- and I have to say this: When I signed it, I said, oh, I'm going to be killed on this one. And you know what? People came to me and they saw me, and they were crying. Men that were tough and strong, women that were tough and strong -- they'd see me, their tears coming down their eyes because I gave them back their property, I gave them back their farms. They couldn't use them. (Applause.) We ditched the rule, I call it. We ditched the rule. (Applause.)

We're streamlining regulations that have blocked cutting-edge biotechnology, setting free our farmers to innovate, thrive, and to grow. Oh, are you happy you voted for me. (Laughter.) You are so lucky that I gave you that privilege. The other choice wasn't going to work out too well for the farmers, I hate to tell you -- (laughter) -- or the miners or anybody else. Because we know that our farmers are our future. So true.

We are removing harmful restrictions on forestry so you can log more timber, plant more trees, and export more renewable resources to other countries. Make money doing it. (Applause.)

We're restoring the rule of law and protecting our cherished Second Amendment. (Applause.) That was another thing that would have been gone had the other side won, but that wasn't so close. It didn't turn out to be. Remember? (Laughter.) "There is no way to 270." And there wasn't; we got 306 or 304. (Laughter.) "There was no way to 270." We ended up with 304, after two were taken away from us somehow. I don't know how that one -- we have 306, then it ended up being 304. You'll explain that to me some day.

To level the playing field for our great American exporters -- our farmers and ranchers, as well as our manufacturers -- we are reviewing all of our trade agreements to make sure they are fair and reciprocal -- reciprocal, so important.

On NAFTA, I am working very hard to get a better deal for our country and for our farmers and for our manufacturers. It's under negotiation as we speak. (Applause.) But think of it: When Mexico is making all of that money, when Canada is making all of that money, it's not the easiest negotiation. But we're going to make it fair for you people again.

Now we want to see even more victories for the American farmer and for the American rancher. Here today is Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts. And I'm looking forward to working with Congress to pass the Farm Bill, on time, so that it delivers for all of you. And

I support a bill that includes crop insurance, unless you don't want me to. (Applause.) Thank you. I guess you like it. Right? Good, because if I heard no applause, I'd say, forget it, give it up. (Laughter.) Now I can't do that. No, we're working hard on the farm bill and I think it's going to go well.

We're also moving swiftly to bring hope and prosperity to struggling rural communities. Last April, I commissioned a task force to meet with farmers and local communities to find the greatest barriers to rural prosperity.

Today, this task force is releasing its final report, and I am taking action right at that beautiful table, right out of the hills of Tennessee, right there. I'm going to be signing two very important bills.

The task force heard from farmers that broadband Internet access is an issue of vital concern to their communities and businesses. Is that a correct statement? (Applause.)

That is why today, in a few minutes, I will take the first step to expand access to broadband Internet in rural America -- (applause) -- so you can compete on a level playing field, which you were not able to do. Not fair. I will sign two presidential orders to provide broader and faster, and better Internet coverage. Make sure you look up @realDonaldTrump. Right? (Laughter.) I have a feeling you get that anyway. It's our only way around the media. Fake media. (Applause.)

I also want to thank Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn, who is here with us today, for her leadership on getting broadband. She's very, very strong on it -- getting it to rural America. Thank you, Marsha. (Applause.)

The task force also focused on the need to rebuild our crumbling rural infrastructure. We've already slashed harmful restrictions that delayed critical infrastructure projects for decades and decades. Hard to believe. And we are proposing infrastructure reforms to ensure that our rural communities have access to the best roadways, railways, and waterways anywhere in the world. And that's what's happening. We're going to be spending the necessary funds, and we're going to get you taken care of. It's about time. (Applause.) And these projects are going to be built -- like I do -- under budget and ahead of schedule. Right? (Applause.)

We are confronting the scourge of drug addiction and overdoses that plagues far too many of our rural communities and claims too many American lives all over our country.

We are fighting the opioid epidemic, and we are proudly supporting the men and women of law enforcement, including our wonderful ICE officers and Border Patrol Agents. These are incredible people who endorsed me during the campaign, and they are incredible. (Applause.) They're doing a great job at the border, by the way.

We are going to end chain migration. We are going to end the lottery system, and we are going to build the wall. (Applause.)

Every American child deserves to grow up in a safe community and to live a life full of dignity, purpose and hope. That is the future we all seek and we will fiercely defend for all Americans.

We see the promise of tomorrow in the incredible young farmers who have joined us today -- students who are achieving incredible things through amazing organizations like FFA and 4-H. (Applause.) Great people. Great people. Thank you. Great people. It's the future of our country. That's the future of our country. Great young people. Their devotion to our nation inspires us all. Really does.

But to ensure that our young people reach their potential, and our

nation fulfills its destiny, we must remember and honor our history. We have to remember our history. Mostly good, some not so good, but you learn from it. We have to remember our history.

That is why I want to close my remarks today by commemorating one of the most important days in American history -- today, January 8th. The story began right here in Tennessee. And like so many of the great stories of American history, many of its heroes were American farmers.

It was a pivotal moment in the War of 1812. At the time, the British Army seemed totally unstoppable. They had just beaten Napoleon in Europe, and set fire to the United States Capitol. But that did not stop a man named General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee. Did you ever hear of Andrew Jackson of Tennessee? (Applause.) He was a great general and a great President, and his ragtag militia of patriots who were ready to fight to defend American independence.

In December of 1814, Jackson and his Tennessee volunteers had made their way to New Orleans to defend that crucial port from the British. Through grueling winter weeks, horrible weather, icy rain, hunger, and sleepless nights, a few thousand American patriots fought to hold back a British force nearly twice as large and that everybody thought was totally unstoppable.

Finally, on this day, 203 years ago, the British launched their full-scale attack, and it was brutal. It was brutal. They expected to secure swift victory and seize control of the Mississippi River. And that would have been catastrophic for what we were doing.

It was not the first time the British had underestimated the American spirit. Do you notice how so many people underestimate the Americans? They're not underestimating us so much anymore, folks. (Applause.)

But Jackson's men quickly proved them very, very wrong. Within only one half an hour, an outnumbered force -- the American force -- achieved victory over one of the world's mightiest empires and one of the strongest armies ever seen. Tennessee -- congratulations, Tennessee. (Applause.) I like you too. I like you too, Tennessee.

The Americans held their ground. Independence was secured. Andrew Jackson's name was etched into history. And those patriot farmers proved once again that, in the words of Andrew Jackson, farmers are the "basis of society, and true friends of liberty." Great story. Love that story. Have great respect for Andrew Jackson. (Applause.)

Today, the Battle of New Orleans lives on in the American soul, and it lives on in each and every one of you.

Our task is to preserve the freedom that American soldiers have fought for and died for in every generation.

Our task is to uphold the values and principles that define who we are as a nation and as a people.

Our task is to love, cherish, and protect the flag and the Constitution of the United States.

If we do these things, if we reawaken the confidence that inspired Jackson's victory -- our country is getting its confidence back again -- the character that stormed the beaches of Normandy, and the courage that sent pilgrims across the ocean and astronauts to the moon, then there is nothing we can't do. (Applause.)

For America, there is no task too great, no goal too large, no dream beyond our reach. We are witnessing a new era of patriotism, prosperity, and pride. And at the forefront of this exciting new chapter is the great American farmer. Thank you. (Applause.)

A phrase that I've heard all my life, but I will repeat right now -

- very simple, but very, very accurate and concise: Farm country is God's country. So true. (Applause.)

Thank you very much, Tennessee. And thank you for the honor of speaking here this afternoon. I'm thrilled to stand with you today, and I will be standing with you for many years to come. Together, we truly are making America great again.

God bless you. God bless everyone. Thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

* * * * *

(The President moves to signing table and back to podium.)

"Streamlining and expediting requests to locate broadband facilities in rural America." (Applause.)

(The executive order is signed.)

Might as well be efficient. We'll do the other one while I'm here. Nice job in putting a mic at that table, folks. (Laughter.)

"Supporting broadband tower facilities in rural America and federal properties managed by the Department of the Interior." Those towers are going to go up, and you're going to have great, great broadband. Thank you. (Applause.)

(The presidential memorandum is signed.)

Thank you, everybody.

END

3:45

P.M. CST

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Thank you, XXXXXX, for that introduction.

I love Alaska. My wife Lola and I actually both have ties. Her dad worked up here while she was growing up and I did quite a bit of training while I was in the military.

And, as I say to my friend Senator Murkowski, Montana and Alaska aren't all that different...both states have a robust outdoor culture and a frontier outlook and we're both blessed with abundant energy resources.

Speaking of, some of you may know that my path to Interior Secretary was a little different than most. I hadn't spent much time in Washington, D.C., or served as a career politician. Instead, I served in the military, just like 10 percent of all Alaskans. Your state and mine have highest percentage of veterans. We should be proud of that.

So during my Navy years, in addition to getting up to Alaska to train, I also spent a lot of time in the Middle East on oil platforms. Though it was a little different than what you all did. I was mostly keeping bad guys off of them.

I'm pleased to be with the thousands of forward-looking and hard-working men and women of the Alaska energy industry.

In my view, energy is important for three reasons.

First, it's better for the environment that the U.S. produces energy. Thanks to advancements in technology, we can

responsibly develop our energy resources and return the land to equal or better quality than it was before.

I've spent a lot of time overseas, and I can tell you with 100 percent certainty it is better to develop our energy here under reasonable regulations, than have it produced overseas under little or no regulations.

Second, energy production is an absolute boon to the economy, supporting more than 9 million jobs and supplying affordable power for manufacturing, home heating, and transportation needs. And I can tell you, it's going to take a whole lot of energy to rebuild America's aging infrastructure.

And lastly, achieving American energy independence will strengthen our national security by reducing our reliance on foreign oil and allowing us to assist our allies with their energy needs.

As a military commander, I saw how the power of the American economy and American energy defeated our adversaries around the world. The world is safer when American is strong.

I am an unabashed supporter of Teddy Roosevelt whose views about America's holdings are best inscribed on the Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park – “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Contrary to what some believe, being a good steward of our land and resources does not mean locking it up and banning

public access. Teddy Roosevelt himself said that, "Conservation means development as much as it does protection."

Yet during the previous administration, nearly 94 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf was off limits for responsible development. And about half of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was out too.

As of March 1, 2017, only 16 million acres in the OCS (out of a total 1.7 billion acres) are under lease for oil and gas development. Of the little area that is open to development, more than 97 percent of the leases are in the Gulf of Mexico.

Offshore leasing revenues have been the second highest source of revenue to the Treasury behind personal income taxes paid. In 2008 the U.S. Treasury collected nearly \$18 billion in federal OCS leasing revenues.

Yet by contrast, last year in 2016, leasing revenues collected fell to only \$2.8 billion.

That's a drop of more than \$15 billion that would otherwise partially go toward funding important conservation programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Infrastructure, and our parks.

That's in part why President Trump and I got to work to rewrite the Five-Year Plan and get more people back to work on rigs, platforms, and other onshore oil and gas jobs.

I recognize that not all areas are appropriate for energy development, but many places provide the perfect opportunity to balance energy and conservation priorities. Thanks to new developments in science and technology, it is possible to responsibly develop American energy resources while being good stewards of the environment.

There is no debate that the federal government should regulate energy production within its borders and that the taxpayer should get fair value for the resources extracted. But when regulation becomes a punitive tool of political advocacy rather than public interest, there needs to be a change of course.

President Trump's America First Offshore Energy Executive Order began that course correction. That order directed me to conduct a review of the current five year offshore development plan for the Outer Continental Shelf, streamline permitting for seismic research and reconsider a host regulations hampering development.

The President and I are committed to energy dominance and his executive order was a decisive step in common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

I then took immediate action to implement the President's offshore energy policy by signing two Secretarial Orders.

Those orders are meant

- to enhance opportunities for energy exploration, leasing, and development on the Outer Continental Shelf;
- establish regulatory certainty for OCS activities; and
- promote conservation stewardship, by providing jobs, energy security, and revenue for the American people.

The first order directed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to immediately initiate development of a new “Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program,” with full consideration given to leasing the OCS offshore Alaska, the mid- and south-Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico. It also directs expedited consideration of appealed, new, or resubmitted seismic permitting applications for the Atlantic and the review or rescission of other regulations outlined in the President’s executive order.

Just a couple weeks ago, I appointed Scott Angelle the new Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and he will work with our energy team to promote safety, protect the environment and conserve resources through the regulatory oversight and enforcement of energy industry operations on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

He joined the bureau after more than 30 years of reforming agencies and organizations in both the public and private sectors of Louisiana. His career is characterized by a strong desire to achieve results that lead to greater success.

Today, I am announcing additional steps in our common sense energy policy for the benefit of the American people.

Today, I am signing a third Secretarial Order that will jump-start Alaskan energy production in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska and update resource assessments for the "1002 area" of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The order calls for the development of a revised Integrated Activity Plan for the National Petroleum Reserve that strikes an appropriate statutory balance for promoting development while protecting surface resources.

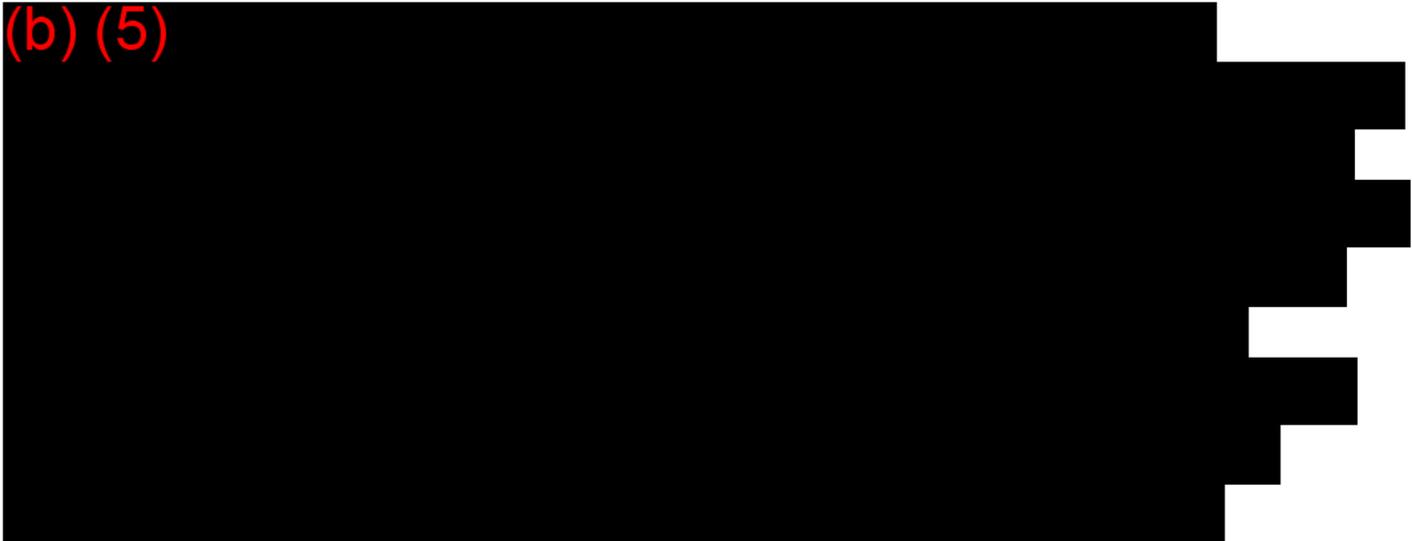
It also calls for an evaluation, under the existing Integrated Activity Plan, of ways to efficiently and effectively maximize the tracts offered for sale during the next National Petroleum Reserve lease sale.

The order also directs the Assistant Secretaries of Land and Minerals Management and Water and Science to submit a joint plan to the Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy for updating assessments of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and natural gas resources on Alaska's North Slope, focusing on Federal lands that include the National Petroleum Reserve and the Section 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

This joint plan shall include consideration of new geological and geophysical data, as well as the potential for reprocessing

existing geological and geophysical data.

(b) (5)



Regarding the National Petroleum Reserve, this land was set up with the sole intention of oil and gas production and serves a critical role in both our energy and national security. However, years of policy politics put roughly half of the National Petroleum Reserve off-limits.

Using this land for its original intent will create good paying jobs and revenue for our Northern-most city and strengthen our energy and national security.

Working with the Alaska Native community, Interior will identify areas in the National Petroleum Reserve where responsible energy development makes the most sense and devise a plan to extract resources.

We will do it in a way that respects both the environment and traditional uses of the land and maintains subsistence hunting and fishing access.

Let me close by saying that for all the needed changes we are making to the previous administration's energy policies, one thing does not change -- and that is our commitment to safety and our environment.

That remains our priority.

Nothing in the Secretarial Order I am signing today would reduce, eliminate, or modify any environmental or regulatory requirements for energy development.

We have thousands of talented and dedicated employees working on our frontlines ~~in Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement~~, who are focused on ~~strict adherence to the laws governing safe development and maintaining a strong offshore safety culture~~ the safe and responsible development of our nation's energy resources.

We are going to keep it that way and we will hold companies accountable. Good stewardship of our lands and waters and ~~responsible offshore development~~ maintaining U.S. energy dominance are not mutually exclusive.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to be here today. I'll now sign this order with you.

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- Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Members of the Committee...I'd like to introduce my friend, an American patriot
- Captain Cully Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Most Qualified for the Job)

- Important for Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership—Capt. Stimson fits the bill.
- We served together in the Navy, he has 20+ years experience as a lawyer, first served in Navy JAG Corps in 1990s.
- I worked with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.
- Captain Stimson's story is a lifetime of commitment to both community and country.
 - Captain of the Men's Soccer Team at Kenyon College
- Graduated George Mason University School of LaW
- Navy JAG Corps – 5 years active duty
- Called back to active duty 2001, to support Joint Special Ops Task Force JAG for SEAL Group Two.
- Served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs under Pres. George W. Bush
 - Advised Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates about Pentagon detention operations.
- Has been with Heritage Foundation as a Senior Legal Fellow & Manager of their Nat'l Security Law Program since 2007
- Served our nation 2+ decades in Navy, recently as Dep. Chief Judge of Navy-Marine Corps Trial Judiciary & adjunct law prof./instructor at Naval Justice School in reserve capacity.

PERSONAL LIFE (High-Character Human Being, Fit to Serve)

- Teaching high school/coaching & mentoring young Americans—devoted countless hours to cultivating next generation.
- Chairman of the Board, U.S. Soccer Foundation (charitable arm of U.S. Soccer): offers assistance to 35,000+ underserved and minority children.
- Captain Stimson has been married since 1995. He and his wife adopted four orphans.

- Epitome of a military officer: always first one to help others
 - Dozens of rec. letters for his students
 - Quietly paid tuition for two of his mentees who could not afford to take the Law School Admission Test.
 - Founded the Bryon J. Horn Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of a fallen fraternity brother.

BIPARTISAN LEADER (comfortable working across party lines)

- Worked with Jeh Johnson, then-General Counsel of the Dept of Defense, on a number of issues to keep our nation safe.
 - Eventually led to Capt. Stimson extending, and Johnson accepting, invitation to speak to the Heritage Foundation.
 - In that speech, Sec. Johnson remarked: “The office of General Counsel of the Defense Dept., particularly in the post-9/11 world, is in the middle of many difficult, front page issues.”
 - As General Counsel of the Navy, Capt. Stimson will confront a host of these difficult issues as well. I have full confidence in his ability to tackle them.

- Friend & brother-in-arms Capt. Stimson: Navy gaining an eminently qualified attorney, an honorable military officer, and an individual with vast experience/fidelity to law & our country.
- Long career of exemplary service in law & defense, excellent fit for the position to which he was nominated. No doubt he will be a wonderful General Counsel of the Navy.

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the Committee: it is an honor to be here today to tell you about an American patriot, a mentor, and a good friend, Captain Cully Stimson.

Captain Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy. I can think of no one more qualified for this job.

As a retired Navy SEAL Commander, I know just how important it is for the Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership, and the man I am introducing today fits the bill.

Captain Stimson and I served together in the Navy; he brings over two decades of experience as a lawyer, having first served in the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps, also known as the JAG Corps, in the 1990s.

In addition to our time together in the Navy, I also had the pleasure of working with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.

To tell Captain Stimson's story is to tell of his lifetime of commitment to both his community and his country. He has been a leader from very early on, serving as Captain of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team at Kenyon College.

He went on to graduate from The George Mason University School of Law, and he joined the Navy as a young lawyer in 1992. For five years, he was on active duty, serving in both San Diego, California and London, England.

Captain Stimson was called back to active duty in 2001, to support the Joint Special Operations Task Force JAG for SEAL Group Two.

In President George W. Bush's administration, Captain Stimson was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs, providing advice and counsel to Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates about the Pentagon's detention operations.

Since leaving public service, he has been with the Heritage Foundation as a Senior Legal Fellow and Manager of their National Security Law Program.

Captain Stimson has served our nation for over two decades in the Navy, more recently serving as Deputy Chief Judge of the Navy-Marine Corps Trial Judiciary and an adjunct law professor and instructor at the Naval Justice School in a reserve capacity.

A bulleted list of Captain Stimson's professional achievements, however, does not paint the full picture of how this man has demonstrated himself to be the kind of high-character human being fit for service.

From teaching high school to coaching and mentoring hundreds, if not thousands, of young Americans, Captain Stimson has devoted countless hours to cultivating the next generation. He is Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Soccer Foundation, the charitable arm of U.S. Soccer, which offers assistance to more than 35,000 underserved and minority children.

A devoted family man, Captain Stimson has been married since 1995. He and his lovely wife adopted four orphans.

Captain Stimson is the epitome of a military officer, representing honor, integrity and service. He has always been the first one willing to help others, whether that has meant writing dozens of letters of recommendations for colleges, graduate schools, judicial clerkships, and jobs, or quietly paying the tuition of two of his mentees who could not afford to take the Law School Admission Test. He also founded the Bryon J. Horn Memorial Scholarship Fund, in honor of a fallen fraternity brother.

Captain Stimson is the type of public servant who is comfortable working across party lines. When President Obama's Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson was General Counsel of the Department of Defense, he and Stimson worked together on a number of tough issues aimed to keep our great nation safe.

This bipartisan partnership eventually led to Captain Stimson extending, and Johnson accepting, an invitation to speak to the Heritage Foundation.

In that speech, Secretary Johnson spoke about his job, and one line from his remarks stands out in particular. "The office of General Counsel of the Defense Department," he said. "Particularly in the post-9/11 world, is in the middle of many difficult, front page issues."

In his job as General Counsel of the Navy, Captain Stimson will confront a host of these difficult issues as well. I would not be here today if I did not have full confidence in his ability to tackle them.

Captain Stimson's partnership with Secretary Johnson was not an isolated event, either; he also developed partnerships with Stephen Preston, who served as General Counsel of both the Department of Defense and the CIA under President Obama. Preston recently spoke on a panel that Captain Stimson hosted at Heritage.

In my friend and brother-in-arms Captain Stimson, the Navy is gaining an imminently qualified attorney, an honorable military officer, and an individual with vast experience, and fidelity to the law and our country.

He has a long career of exemplary service in law and defense, and is an excellent fit for the position to which he was nominated.

I have no doubt he will be a wonderful General Counsel of the Navy.

Testimony of U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan K. Zinke in support of the nomination of Captain Charles Stimson to the Department of Defense

Senate Armed Services Committee

Wednesday, July 11, 2017

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the Committee: it is an honor to be here today to tell you about an American patriot, a mentor, and a good friend, Captain Cully Stimson.

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Big thanks to my my good friend Secretary and Air Force Captain Rick Perry. You know Texas has a history of pilots who run for governor who run for president :-)

Every week in the Trump Administration is Heroes week.

President Trump values the military, values veterans, and recognizes that veterans have more to give their country after they take off the uniform.

A third of the President's cabinet has military experience. I'm proud to be among those ranks.

As veterans you and I know our service to our country doesn't end when we take off that uniform

We all have a responsibility to continue fighting for our country and our communities – whether through public service, elected office, or going the extra mile at home.

Many of you return home to start businesses, raise families, and in some cases – I'd like to see more of – run for office. Nobody understands and appreciates our great nation like you all do.

And also, as Veterans we need to look out for our own and if we see a brother or sister struggling with the transition from soldier to civilian it's all of our responsibility to help that teammate out.

At Interior, I'm proud to have 20% of the staff is made-up of military veterans – and we plan on increasing that number.

The service and sacrifice of our warriors and their families is incredible.

This story is probably true for a lot of you: At one point during the war in Iraq, my wife Lola was at home with our two young boys while her husband, daughter, and son in law were all forward deployed.

Lola was both parents and held our small military community together while the team was deployed.

To all of the military spouses in the room today THANK YOU.

Now I'd like to introduce somebody who proves that you don't have to serve to be a true advocate and fighter for veterans and military families. Please meet my friend Secretary Dave Shulkin

Every week in the Trump Administration is Heroes week.

President Trump values the military, values veterans, and recognizes that veterans have more to give their country after they take off the uniform.

A third of the President's cabinet has military experience. I'm proud to be among those ranks.

As veterans you and I know our service to our country doesn't end when we take off that uniform

We all have a responsibility to continue fighting for our country and our communities – whether through public service, elected office, or going the extra mile at home.

Many of you return home to start businesses, raise families, and in some cases – I'd like to see more of – run for office. Nobody understands and appreciates our great nation like you all do.

And also, as Veterans we need to look out for our own and if we see a brother or sister struggling with the transition from soldier to civilian it's all of our responsibility to help that teammate out.

At Interior, I'm proud to have 20% of the staff is made-up of military veterans – and we plan on increasing that number.

The service and sacrifice of our warriors and their families is incredible.

This story is probably true for a lot of you: At one point during the war in Iraq, my wife Lola was at home with our two young boys while her husband, daughter, and son in law were all forward deployed.

Lola was both parents and held our small military community together while the team was deployed.

To all of the military spouses in the room today THANK YOU.

Now I'd like to introduce another veteran. Air Force Captain – you know Texas has a history of pilots who run for governor who run for president - my good friend Secretary Rick Perry.

OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION ECONOMIC IMPACT OF REC ON PUBLIC LANDS

Thank you to Amy from OIA for the introduction. Good to see members of our business community, conservation community, and Congress represented.

I'm a 5th generation Montanan who grew up with a fly rod or rifle in hand. I grew up in America's public lands.

One of the things that scares me the most is seeing hunting and fishing become an elite sport where only wealthy landowners can afford to take their kids out.

Some of my best memories I have with my family is getting home from deployment and taking Lola and the kids deep in the wilderness to rock climb, float, hike, fish or hunt.

Recreation on public lands is both a part of our heritage and a major economic engine for our nation. Today's report is proof.

Over the years, I saw my hometown of Whitefish and Bozeman economies boom thanks to access to public lands and recreation opportunities.

The National Park Service is a major factor in the outdoor recreation economy. Visitor spending supported 318,000 jobs, provided \$12.0 billion in income, and \$34.9 billion in economic output to the U.S. economy last year.

In 2016, a record 330 million people visited our parks, and we are on pace to break that record in 2017– and in order to support that, we will look at innovative ways to enhance the visitor experience.

Yesterday I met with a group of outdoor recreation business leaders to discuss ways we can partner together to achieve that goal.

Under my leadership the Department will prioritize public access to public lands.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, the President and I are against the sale or transfer of federal lands. Period.

I support opening up public access to public lands.

Earlier this month I took a stand against transferring the National Bison Range.

I also opened up areas for recreation vehicles on public lands in Utah. This will allow persons with disabilities and people who just don't get around like they used to enjoy the area.

And on my first day I directed the entire department to look at opportunities across the board where we can open up access for hunting, fishing and recreation.

You'll see more from my office in the coming years on this subject.

I'm honored to be here and help highlight the important role outdoor recreation plays in our national economy. Thank you.

Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable At Shenandoah National Park

Thank you to Frank and Derrick for hosting me today. I see my fellow Montanan, KC Walsh is here. Good to see members of our business community, conservation community, and the Park Service represented.

I'm a 5th generation Montanan who grew up with a fly rod or rifle in hand. I grew up in America's public lands.

One of the things that scares me the most is seeing hunting and fishing become an elite sport where only wealthy landowners can afford to take their kids out.

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And on my first day I directed the entire department to look at opportunities across the board where we can open up access for hunting, fishing and recreation.

You'll see more from my office in the coming years on this subject.

So today I'm here to learn from you. How can we work together to bring our parks into the next century and improve visitor experience and tackle the maintenance backlog?

I'm honored to be here and I look forward to hearing your ideas about public-private partnerships in our parks. Thank you.

From: Twitter
To: [Ragnar Zinke](#)
Subject: Rep. Eric Swalwell Tweeted: Was struck at mental health forum to hear of @realDonaldTrump effect in schools, making more bullies. "Remarkable how abrupt difference is."
Date: Sunday, July 30, 2017 6:04:39 PM



Your Highlights

 **Rep. Eric Swalwell**
[@RepSwalwell](#)

Was struck at mental health forum to hear of [@realDonaldTrump](#) effect in schools, making more bullies. "Remarkable how abrupt difference is."

 880  9.2K  17K

 **David Nather**
[@DavidNather](#)

And now Price hints they're going to weaken the individual mandate. [@axios](#)

Price hints HHS might weaken individual mandate

He says the mandate is driving up costs, but insurers say premiums will rise even more without... [more](#)

[axios.com](#)

 15  47  26

 **Philip Rucker**
[@PhilipRucker](#)

NEW: Trump taps Kelly to enforce order, but can 'animals in the zoo' be tamed? My latest w/ [@costareports](#) & [@danbalz](#)

Trump enlists Kelly to enforce order, but can the 'animals in the zoo' be tamed?

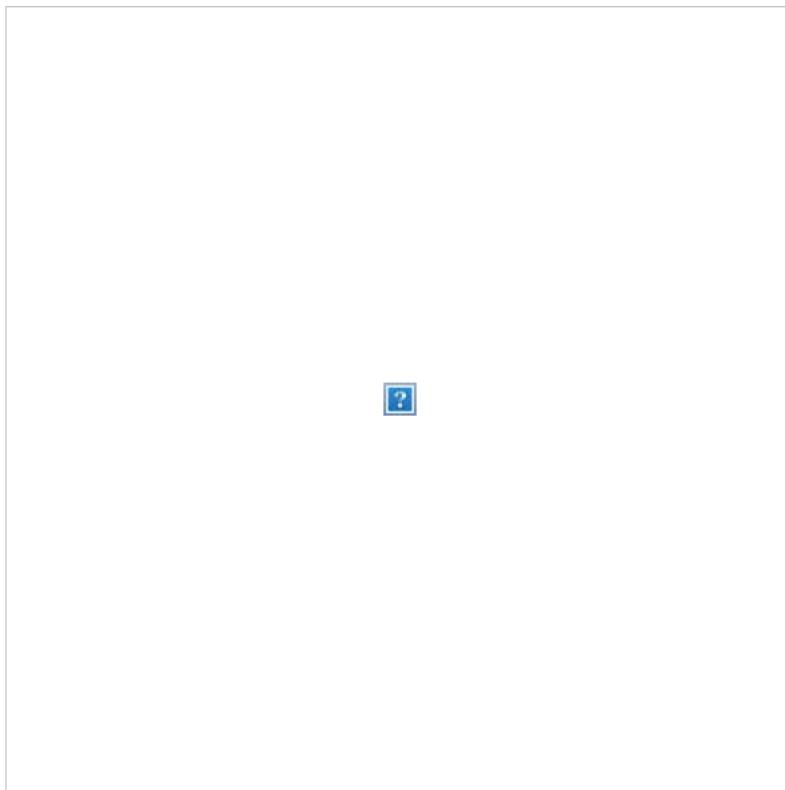
As some administration officials texted and called each other Saturday to discuss Kelly, ther... [more](#)

washingtonpost.com



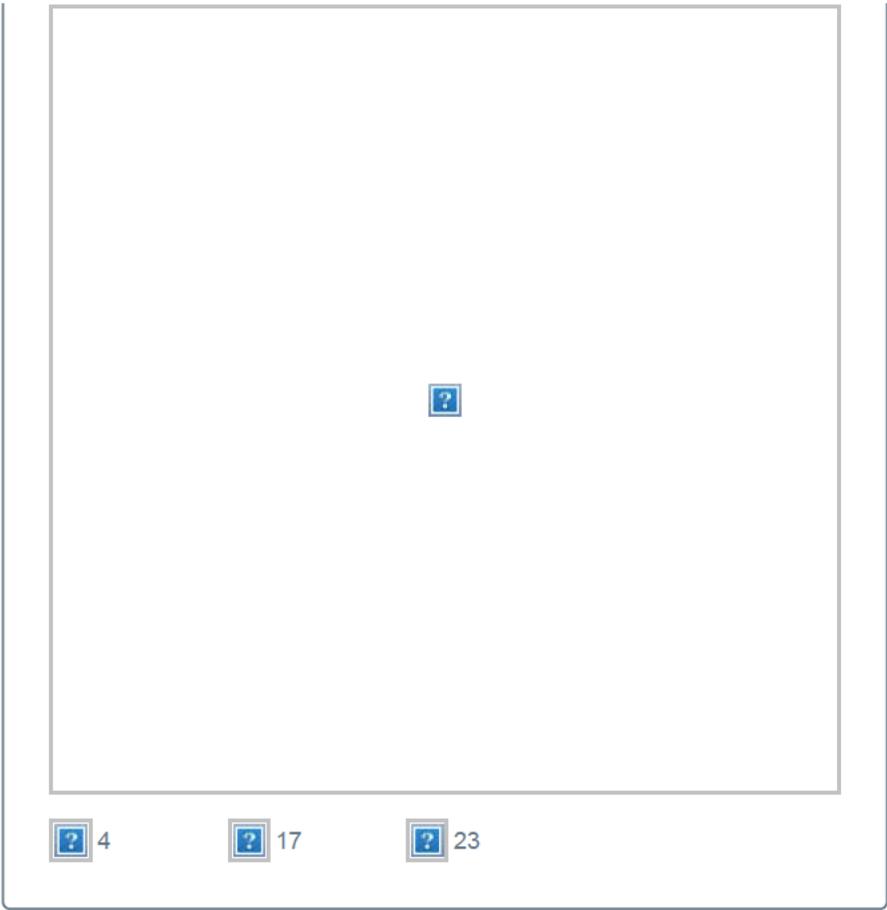
CNN
@CNN

This is the face of deportation: A dad with no criminal record, an American wife and two kids cnn.it/2u54OHg



Axios
@axios

For those at [@Politicon](#) this weekend, be sure to catch [@mikeallen](#) moderating a panel on deconstructing the election.



 **Daniella Diaz**
@DaniellaMicaela

[.@TomiLahren](#): "Luckily I'm 24 and I'm still on my parents health care." #Politicon2017

 890  1.8K  5.7K

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We sent this email to @DogDayInterior

Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

From: Clegg, Ellen
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Cc: [Marjorie Pritchard](#)
Subject: Response from the Boston Globe Editorial Page
Date: Saturday, November 25, 2017 12:30:45 PM

Heather,

Marjorie Pritchard shared your email with me. The Globe's editorial represents an opinion based on reporting in other media outlets, on document research, and on interviews with sources. Much of the source material – reporting by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and POLITICO – was linked in the piece. Reports by Reuters, the Chicago Tribune, and the Associated Press were also reviewed. We do not intend to retract our opinion; you are welcome to write a letter to the editor to rebut The Globe's institutional position.

Whitefish Energy does in fact have ties to Secretary Zinke. As Richard Perez-Pena reported in the New York Times on Oct. 27, 2017, Secretary Zinke and Andy Techmanski, the chief executive of Whitefish Energy, know each other, and the secretary's son worked on a Whitefish job over the summer.

POLITICO reviewed records from Interior made public after a FOIA by The Western Values Project that documented last-minute requests from Lola Zinke related to travel and high-level dinners. It is our opinion, legitimately drawn, that these requests caused extra work for staffers and, as the editorial noted (and as POLITICO's Ben Lefebvre reported on Nov. 21, 2017) raised questions about misuse of government resources. Washington Post reporters Lisa Rein and Drew Harwell reported on Nov. 16, 2017 that Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall sent the secretary's office an alert that her investigation into allegations of improper travel has been stymied by "absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips." This memo stated that Interior Department officials have not shown evidence that they have been able to "distinguish between personal, political and official travel" or cost-analysis documents to justify his choice of military or charter flights, according to the Post's reporting on Kendall's alert.

This same Kendall memo shows that the travel of Lola Zinke is also being reviewed; according to the Post, "Kendall wrote that the department's documentation was so lacking that investigators cannot determine 'the full extent' of her travel and how it was paid for." In addition to the last-minute requests reported by POLITICO, this very investigation of Lola Zinke's travel constitutes a burden on government resources, in the Globe's opinion. When that investigation concludes, please let us know.

Harwell and Rein also reported in the Post on Sept. 28, 2017: "Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke

chartered a flight from Las Vegas to near his home in Montana this summer aboard a plane owned by oil-and-gas executives, internal documents show. The flight, along with private flights during a trip to the Virgin Islands, could propel Zinke into the growing debate over the costs of travel by Cabinet secretaries, some of whom have chosen expensive charter jets and military planes at high expense to taxpayers over the cheaper option of flying commercial.” That flight, from Las Vegas to Kalispell, cost taxpayers \$12,375, according to an Interior Department spokeswoman (and I assume that spokeswoman is you, and that you were correctly quoted.) Commercial flights are much cheaper.

The use of the term “cleaned house” is a legitimately drawn opinion based on facts reported by the New York Times about Interior staff reassignments. On July 25, 2017, Coral Davenport and Nicholas Fandos of the Times reported:

“Between 7 and 8 p.m. on June 15, at least two dozen senior career officials at the Interior Department received emails informing them that they would be reassigned to new positions. While it is not unusual for new administrations to make personnel moves, some of the transferred employees said the moves appeared intended to undermine the department’s work on environmental priorities.” The story continues:

“Joel Clement, a climate change expert, received an email reassigning him to a position in an office overseeing fees and royalties from fossil fuel drilling. ‘I’m the climate change guy, and they moved me to the accounting office that collects fossil fuel royalties,’ said Mr. Clement, who went public with his complaints in a Washington Post opinion article last week. ‘They couldn’t have found a job less suited for me, or that sent a clearer signal that they were trying to get me to quit.’

“On Monday, Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, sent a letter to the Interior Department’s deputy inspector general, calling for an investigation into the personnel moves.

“The appointments and the policies have drawn cheers from the oil industry. ‘You’re hearing a desire to promote oil and natural gas opportunities on all lands, and on federal lands,’ said Erik Milito, the director of upstream issues for the American Petroleum Institute, which lobbies for oil companies. ‘And doing so on federal lands is a great way to bring in more revenue.’”

On Nov. 20, 2017, Anne Gearan of the Washington Post reported that President Trump called elephant hunting a “horror show” and “strongly suggested he will permanently block imports of elephant trophies from two African nations despite his administration’s earlier approval of the practice.” That story said: “Following strong bipartisan criticism of the administration’s decision to allow imports of trophy carcasses for the first time since the practice was halted under the Obama administration, Trump had moved Friday to put the imports on hold.” This

followed an initial story by Darryl Fears and Juliet Eilperin of the Post on Nov. 17, 2017, headlined: “Trophies from elephant hunts in Zimbabwe were banned in the US; Trump just reversed that”

Like the Post story, our editorial characterized the import of trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia as a reversal of a ban under President Obama. Our editorial opinion is reasonable, given the fact base. Under the Obama administration, elephant hunting trophies were allowed in South Africa, as you mention, because USFWS determined that South Africa had proved its management of elephants enhanced the endangered population. In 2015, the Obama administration determined that Zimbabwe had not provided sufficient proof and halted such imports.

Finally, illegal ivory sales in Massachusetts involve both imported trophies from hunts, as well as ivory from illegal poaching. There are concerns at the state level, in Massachusetts and elsewhere, about this trade in ivory objects, its impact on conservation of the endangered African elephant, and its role in funding terror in African nations. Ivory is often sold on Craigslist without clear provenance; the Massachusetts bills in the state legislature would address the sale of ivory acquired by any means.

You observe that the Obama administration racked up bills for charter flights, and attribute other failings to Obama’s leadership of the Interior Department. But the Trump administration took office 11 months ago vowing to “drain the swamp” – which a reasonable mind might interpret as putting an end to some of these practices. It is our editorial opinion that the current leadership of the Interior Department is continuing these questionable travel practices, making partisan staff changes without regard to individual expertise, and sending confusing signals on import of elephant trophies. We do not intend to retract our editorial opinion, but we would consider a letter to the editor; letters should be addressed to Matthew.Bernstein@globe.com. If Secretary Zinke would be interested in writing an op-ed piece on how he intends to protect national parks and national monuments in an era when there is a call for expanded oil and gas exploration on federal lands, kindly send a draft to Marjorie Pritchard, whose email you have.

Sincerely,

Ellen Clegg

Editorial Page Editor

The Boston Globe

Office: [617-929-3339](tel:617-929-3339)

From: SHeavey@thomsonreuters.com
To: Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov; Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Cc: timothy.gardner@thomsonreuters.com; valerie.yolcovic@thomsonreuters.com
Subject: Reuters query on Politico report on Zinke
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 9:37:15 AM

Dear Heather et al,

Does the Interior Department or the secretary have any comment on this report from Politico? (Below)

Many thanks in advance,

[Susan Heavey](#)

Correspondent

[Reuters News](#), Washington Bureau

Office (202) 898 8322

E-mail: sheavey@thomsonreuters.com

Thomson Reuters

MORE QUESTIONS ON ZINKE TRAVEL -- "Zinke's travels: Ski resort and Alaskan steakhouse," by Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre: "Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has attended at least two additional political fundraisers while traveling for official business, including a weekend ski getaway less than three weeks after he was sworn in where donors paid up to \$3,000 to attend, according to sources and documents reviewed by POLITICO.

"Zinke's previously undisclosed attendance at the events adds to scrutiny he is facing over his habit of mixing political activities with official business when traveling outside of Washington, D.C., and to questions over travel expenses incurred by members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet. In addition to the fundraisers, Zinke has held at least a half-dozen other events with big donors or influential conservative organizations while on official trips.

"Zinke, a former Montana congressman who became secretary March 1, started his fundraising appearances even before attending a March 30 Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser in St. Croix that POLITICO reported last week, at which donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with him. The Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel, which is investigating Zinke's use of travel and political activities in office, has been asked by a watchdog group to look into his appearance there." <http://politi.co/2xw560K>

From: Anna Palmer Jake Sherman Daniel Lippman [<mailto:politico@politico.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 6:46 AM

To: sheavey@reuters.com

Subject: POLITICO Playbook, presented by Chevron: NBC: Trump wanted nearly tenfold increase in nuclear arsenal, leading to Tillerson's 'moron' comment -- BIG MONEY: 36.5 billion for disaster relief -- SCOOPS: HOWIE KURTZ'S new book ... Josh Pitcock to ORACLE

[View online version](#) | Add politico@politico.com to your address book.



Today's POLITICO Playbook presented by Chevron

By ANNA PALMER (anna@politico.com: [@apalmerdc](https://twitter.com/apalmerdc)), JAKE SHERMAN (sherman@politico.com: [@JakeSherman](https://twitter.com/JakeSherman)) and DANIEL LIPPMAN (daniel@politico.com: [@dlippman](https://twitter.com/dlippman))

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DRIVING THE DAY

BIG NBC SCOOP -- "Trump Wanted Dramatic Increase in Nuclear Arsenal in Meeting With Military Leaders," by Courtney Kube, Kristen Welker, Carol Lee and Savannah Guthrie: "President Donald Trump said he wanted what amounted to a nearly tenfold increase in the U.S. nuclear arsenal during a gathering this past summer of the nation's highest ranking national security leaders, according to three officials who were in the room.

"**Trump's comments, the officials said, came in response** to a briefing slide he was shown that charted the steady reduction of U.S. nuclear weapons since the late 1960s. Trump indicated he wanted a bigger stockpile, not the bottom position on that downward-sloping curve.

"**According to the officials present, Trump's advisers**, among them the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, were surprised. Officials briefly explained the legal and practical impediments to a nuclear buildup and how the current military posture is stronger than it was at the height of the build-up. In interviews, they told NBC News that no such expansion is planned. The July 20 meeting was described as a lengthy and sometimes tense review of worldwide U.S. forces and operations. It was soon after the meeting broke up that officials who remained behind heard Tillerson say that Trump is a 'moron.'" <http://nbcnews.to/2yYtoMX>

-- **ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHER:** A rare Savannah Guthrie byline.

E TU, TOM BARRACK?-- "He's better than this,' says Thomas Barrack, Trump's loyal whisperer," by WaPo's Michael Kranish in New York: "Barrack, in interviews with The Washington Post, said he has been 'shocked' and 'stunned' by some of the president's rhetoric and

inflammatory tweets. He disagrees with some of Trump's proposals, including his efforts to ban immigrants from certain Muslim countries and his push for a border wall with Mexico. He wonders why his longtime friend spends so much of his time appealing to the fringes of American politics.

"**He thinks he has to be loyal to his base,**' Barrack said. 'I keep on saying, 'But who is your base? You don't have a natural base. Your base now is the world and America, so you have all these constituencies; show them who you really are.' In my opinion, he's better than this.' I tell him all the time: I don't like the rhetoric,' Barrack, who runs a large real estate investment company, said at his Manhattan office."

<http://wapo.st/2guNhc>

-- **WHAT TRUMP WANTS TO FOCUS ON:** @realDonaldTrump at 6:21 a.m.: "Stock Market has increased by 5.2 Trillion dollars since the election on November 8th, a 25% increase. Lowest unemployment in 16 years and.....if Congress gives us the massive tax cuts (and reform) I am asking for, those numbers will grow by leaps and bounds. #MAGA" ... **at 6:31 a.m.:** "It would be really nice if the Fake News Media would report the virtually unprecedented Stock Market growth since the election. Need tax cuts" ... **at 6:36 a.m.:** "The Democrats want MASSIVE tax increases & soft, crime producing borders. The Republicans want the biggest tax cut in history & the WALL!"

-- **TO BE SURE:** Some Republicans don't want the wall.

Good Wednesday morning. QUICK BULLETIN -- 2017 GENIUS GRANT WINNERS -- The MacArthur Foundation awards \$625,000 grants each year to a group of people they think exhibits "exceptional creativity." Here is the list of the 2017 winners <http://nyti.ms/2guJB5R>

SCOOP -- HOWARD KURTZ is writing a book about the relationship between **PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP** and the news media. Regnery expects to publish the book early next year.

CONGRESS PONYING UP ... -- BLOOMBERG: "House to Add \$36.5 Billion for Hurricane Relief, Puerto Rico Aid," by Kevin Whitelaw: "House lawmakers unveiled a bill Tuesday night that would provide \$36.5 billion in emergency funding for hurricane and wildfire relief requested by the Trump administration. With Congress under pressure to provide urgent help to storm victims in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, the House measure includes \$18.7 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster relief fund, as well as \$16 billion to replenish the nation's flood insurance program." <https://bloom.bg/2glfHW8>

WILDFIRES RAVAGING NORCAL -- L.A. TIMES: "Toll from Northern California firestorms sharply rise: 2,000 structures destroyed, at least 17 dead," by Paige St. John, Phil Willon, Louis Sahagun, Sonali Kohli, and Nina Agrawal: "The toll from Northern California's ranging wildfires continued to grow Tuesday evening as officials said the fires destroyed up to 2,000 structures and killed at least 17 people. The devastating losses establish firestorms among the most destructive in California history. The estimated losses of homes, businesses and other buildings jumped from 1,500 to 2,000, and officials fear the death toll will also continue to rise.

"**Sonoma County alone has received about 200 reports** of missing people since Sunday night, and sheriff's officials have located 45 of those people, said county spokeswoman Maggie Fleming. The majority of the fatalities are from Sonoma County, where huge swaths of the city of Santa Rosa were leveled by the Tubbs fire. Eleven people have died in Sonoma County as of 7 p.m. Tuesday, officials said. Two people have died in Napa County, three in Mendocino County and one in Yuba County, Cal Fire officials said." <http://lat.ms/2y6qAAJ>

-- "**Seen From Above: Entire California Communities Reduced to Ash,**" by NYT's Josh Haner, Troy Griggs and Anjali Singhvi: <http://nyti.ms/2fZ9LNa>

WHAT D.C. WILL BE TALKING ABOUT TODAY -- Nationals vs. Cubs, 4 p.m., TBS. If the Nats lose, the season is over. Dusty is going with Tanner Roark over Stephen Strasburg. If you don't know about baseball and someone asks you what you think, tell them you think this is a really ... well ... curious decision. Blame Jake if you get yelled at. (You likely won't.) Today is the kind of day that could shape the D.C. sports psyche for years. The Nationals have become part of the fabric of our city. Cross your fingers.

WHAT TRUMP IS READING -- @NBCNews: "JUST IN: In letter to NFL owners, Roger Goodell says: 'We believe that everyone should stand for the National Anthem.'" <http://bit.ly/2yZErpb>

OUR ALLIES ...

-- "**Wall Street Journal Reporter Sentenced to Prison by Turkish Court,**" by WSJ's Thomas Grove: "A Turkish court sentenced Wall Street Journal reporter Ayla Albayrak to two years and one month in prison Tuesday, declaring her guilty of engaging in terrorist propaganda in support of a banned Kurdish separatist organization through one of her Journal articles. ... Ms. Albayrak ... is currently in New York ... 'This was an unfounded criminal charge and wildly inappropriate conviction that wrongly singled out a balanced Wall Street Journal report,' said Wall Street Journal Editor in Chief Gerard Baker. 'The sole purpose of the article was to provide objective and independent reporting on events in Turkey, and it succeeded.'" <http://on.wsj.com/2yf4GuC>

-- "**How Israel Caught Russian Hackers Scouring the World for U.S. Secrets,**" by NYT's Nicole Perloth and Scott Shane: "It was a case of spies watching spies watching spies: Israeli intelligence officers looked on in real time as Russian government hackers searched computers around the world for the code names of American intelligence programs. What gave the Russian hacking, detected more than two years ago, such global reach was its improvised search tool -- antivirus software made by a Russian company, Kaspersky Lab, that is used by 400 million people worldwide, including by officials at some two dozen American government agencies. The Israeli officials who had hacked into Kaspersky's own network alerted the United States to the broad Russian intrusion, which has not been previously reported, leading to a decision just last month to order Kaspersky software removed from government computers." <http://nyti.ms/2yfWwBQ>

JOSH ROGIN in WaPo, "The Dalai Lama speaks on Trump and 'America first':" "Your ancestors really considered the importance of liberty, freedom, democracy, these things,' the Dalai Lama said in response to my question about his current view of the United States. 'The present president, in the very beginning he mentioned 'America first.' That sounded in my ear not very nice.' The Dalai Lama is concerned that the

United States, despite being 'the leader of the free world,' was becoming more 'selfish, nationalist,' he said." <http://wapo.st/2ygbJir>

THE LATEST ON IRAN DEAL -- "Democrats brace for Iran deal upheaval," by Elana Schor and Nahal Toosi: "Democrats and other defenders of the Iran nuclear deal have all but given up on President Donald Trump as he prepares to push the pact to the brink. So they've adopted a new strategy, if you can call it that: Appeal to cooler heads in Trump's orbit who want to keep the agreement in place, their boss' rhetoric notwithstanding.

"The aim is to avoid further inflaming tensions with U.S. allies or slowly strangling the deal after Trump declares Tehran out of compliance, which is expected to happen as soon as Thursday. European diplomats, former U.S. officials and like-minded activists are joining in with a ramped-up lobbying effort designed to dissuade the GOP-led Congress from responding to Trump by reimposing sanctions that are likely to destroy the deal." <http://politi.co/2hBjLYk>

***** A message from Chevron: When an endangered butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery, we protected the habitat and still plant the only thing they eat-buckwheat. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2y5XNvF> *****

NEW POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT POLL -- STEVEN SHEPARD -- "Majority backs stricter gun control laws after Vegas shooting": "A new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll shows that a majority of voters support stricter gun control laws in the wake of last week's mass murder of 58 concertgoers in Las Vegas by a single man with nearly two dozen firearms shooting from the window of his 32nd-floor hotel room.

"On most of the proposals to regulate gun ownership -- including background checks, restrictions on where Americans can carry firearms and prohibitions against accessories like the 'bump fire' stocks used by the Las Vegas gunman -- large majorities express support in the poll, conducted last Thursday through Monday.

"But despite those findings, voters still don't think the chances are high that Congress will act to strengthen federal firearm laws, even after the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history. And slightly more voters still say it's more important to protect Americans' right to own guns than it is, in general, to limit gun ownership." <http://politi.co/2guDZbE>

MORE QUESTIONS ON ZINKE TRAVEL -- "Zinke's travels: Ski resort and Alaskan steakhouse," by Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre: "Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has attended at least two additional political fundraisers while traveling for official business, including a weekend ski getaway less than three weeks after he was sworn in where donors paid up to \$3,000 to attend, according to sources and documents reviewed by POLITICO.

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"Zinke, a former Montana congressman who became secretary March 1, started his fundraising appearances even before attending a March 30 Virgin Islands Republican Party fundraiser in St. Croix that POLITICO reported last week, at which donors paid up to \$5,000 per couple for a photo with him. The Justice Department's Office of Special Counsel, which is investigating Zinke's use of travel and political activities in office, has been asked by a watchdog group to look into his appearance there." <http://politi.co/2xw560K>

MURPHY TAKES A PASS ... -- "Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy says he's ruling out a 2020 presidential run" - CBS News: <http://cbsn.ws/2wNDUGa>

2018 WATCH -- "Senate Democrats worry Russia could jeopardize reelection bids," by Kyle Cheney, Elana Schor, and Cory Bennett: "Democratic senators fighting to hold on to their seats next year are increasingly worried about a troubling reality: Russia appears set to mess with U.S. elections - again. ... Democratic senators such as Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and Jon Tester of Montana - who hail from states President Donald Trump won in 2016 - know they're already facing stiff reelection challenges.

"Now they're concerned the Trump administration is dragging its feet on thwarting sophisticated Russian cyber operations that could have significant impact on their races - and could even sway which party wins control of the Senate. The red- and purple-state Democratic seats are top targets for Republicans hoping to expand their two-seat majority in the Senate; Democrats likely would have to hold all of them if they are to have any hope of retaking the chamber. 'If there isn't some effort to take steps against Russian interference, every campaign is going to have to be on guard and working against it,' said Casey, describing himself as 'very concerned.'" <http://politi.co/2g0MwT4>

DACA UPDATE ...

-- "Meet the Republican who might cut a Dreamers deal," by Seung Min Kim: "As Donald Trump was pressing his hardline immigration platform en route to the GOP nomination last year, Republican Sen. Thom Tillis decided to go in a different direction entirely. Tillis, a reliable Republican on most issues, approached the No. 2 Senate Democrat, Dick Durbin, to discuss the fate of hundreds of thousands of 'Dreamers.' Sooner or later, Tillis thought, they would be at risk - a view that's come to life after Trump announced last month that nearly 700,000 young immigrants would begin losing legal protections early next year unless Capitol Hill intervenes.

"The freshman senator from North Carolina is now making his biggest immigration play yet, unveiling a plan to provide permanent relief to the undocumented immigrants who came here as minors. If a deal can be done to win over the warring parties and a president who has swung back and forth on the issue, it might start with Tillis, who has methodically carved out a profile as a pro-immigration Republican at a time when the GOP has swerved sharply to the right." <http://politi.co/2g0oyrf>

RUSSIA WATCH -- "Carter Page says he won't testify before Senate Intelligence panel in Russia probe," by Ali Watkins: "Carter Page, a former foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign, informed the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday that he will not be cooperating with any requests to appear before the panel for its investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election and would plead the Fifth, according

to a source familiar with the matter. A former naval-officer-turned-energy consultant, Page came under fire last year after reports emerged that he had met with high-level associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2016. While Page denied those meetings occurred, the Trump campaign distanced itself from the adviser not long after, with former officials saying that Page and Trump had never met."
<http://politi.co/2zcViFP>

ON PUERTO RICO -- "Trump's Puerto Rico video tells positive story but leaves a lot on cutting-room floor," by WaPo's Jenna Johnson: "The 8-minute-48-second video provides the kind of narrow, positive view of relief efforts in Puerto Rico that the president has been trying to convey amid the humanitarian crisis there -- a montage of stacks of bottled water, helicopters moving concrete slabs and supplies, boats carrying medical items and trucks hauling diesel. There are many more federal workers and military members featured than Puerto Ricans in need of aid, and there is no mention of the fact that 84 percent of the island is still without power and more than one-third of residents do not have access to clean drinking water. The last 81 seconds are devoted to documenting Trump's four-hour visit to the island last week." <http://wapo.st/2yflTJl> ...
The video <http://bit.ly/2zeJmn0>

-- "**José Andrés, Patrick O'Connell, and Aaron Silverman Will Cook a Michelin All-Star Dinner at Pineapple and Pearls,**" by Washingtonian's Anna Spiegel: "ThinkFoodGroup restaurateur José Andrés, chef Patrick O'Connell of the Inn at Little Washington, and Pineapple and Pearls chef/owner Aaron Silverman are teaming up at the latter restaurant on October 18 to raise funds for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, and those affected by the earthquakes in Mexico. ... Tickets are \$595 per person ... [and] the chefs are thinking nine dishes, or three each ... Online reservations will go live on the Pineapple and Pearls website on Wednesday, October 11 at 10 a.m. Only 56 seats are available for two seatings." <http://bit.ly/2ycPKeG> ... **Where to try to get tickets at 10 a.m.** <http://bit.ly/2yg9akf>

-- **ANOTHER INTERESTING TAKE AWAY** from the POLITICO/Morning Consult Poll: Only 32% believe the federal government has done enough for Puerto Rico compared to 47 percent for Texas and Louisiana and 46 percent for Florida. **AND...** 47% believe Puerto Rico should be a state while 26% disagree. The breakdown on party lines: 60% of Democrats say yes, while 17% say no. 36% of Republicans say yes, while 38% say no.

FOR YOUR RADAR -- "U.S. flies bombers over Korea as Trump discusses options," by Reuters' Christine Kim in Seoul and Eric Beech in Washington: "The U.S. military flew two strategic bombers over the Korean peninsula in a show of force late on Tuesday, as President Donald Trump met top defense officials to discuss how to respond to any threat from North Korea." <http://reut.rs/2zeqPqY>

-- "**Navy fires two officers over USS McCain collision, says deadly accident was 'preventable,'**" by WaPo's Andrew deGrandpre: "The U.S. Navy on Tuesday fired the USS John S. McCain's top two officers, calling the warship's deadly August collision with an oil tanker 'preventable.' Cmdr. Alfredo J. Sanchez, the McCain's commander, and Cmdr. Jessie L. Sanchez, its executive officer, were relieved of their duties and reassigned, Navy officials announced in a statement. Both were fired due to a lack of confidence, officials said. The McCain, a guided-missile destroyer, collided with the merchant vessel Alnic MC on Aug. 21 near Singapore. Ten American Sailors died and five others were injured." <http://wapo.st/2ybDTNT>

-- "**McMaster: 'We have devolved responsibility back to the departments,'**" by Bryan Bender: "National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster [on Tuesday] said he is steadily seeking to return more power to the Pentagon, State Department and other Cabinet agencies after what he characterized as a misuse of the National Security Council in recent years. McMaster, at an appearance at the Center for Strategic and International Studies marking the 70th anniversary of the NSC, said he believes too much operational authority was centralized in the White House body - originally designed as the president's principal forum for addressing security and foreign policy matters but not to carry out policy. 'It did cross a line,' the three-star Army general said, 'into an execution arm of the government.'"

-- "**Experts: North Korea Targeted U.S. Electric Power Companies,**" by NBC News' Andrea Mitchell and Ken Dilanian: "The cybersecurity company FireEye says in a new report to private clients, obtained exclusively by NBC News, that hackers linked to North Korea recently targeted U.S. electric power companies with spearphishing emails. The emails used fake invitations to a fundraiser to target victims ... A victim who downloaded the invitation attached to the email would also be downloading malware into his or her computer network ... The company did not dispute NBC's characterization of the report, but declined to comment." <http://nbcnews.to/2yX8xKl>

TRUMP'S WEDNESDAY -- Trump will meet with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He will travel to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to give a speech on tax reform and talk to Sean Hannity. He will then return to Washington.

-- **On the agenda:** Trump and Trudeau will talk trade and international security and "discuss strengthening the excellent bilateral relationship between our two countries by creating new opportunities for economic growth on both sides of the border," according to a Trudeau spokesman. **TRUDEAU** is also going to Capitol Hill.

THE JUICE ...

-- **JOSH PITCOCK**, former chief of staff to VP Mike Pence, is joining Oracle's government affairs team, Nancy Cook and Anna report. <http://politi.co/2zdqaGt>

-- **PARTY TIME:** POLITICO's annual 50 List party is here. Sign up for more information on the Oct. 12 event. <http://bit.ly/2kEvzTM> ... **The full list** <http://politi.co/2wBYXOw>

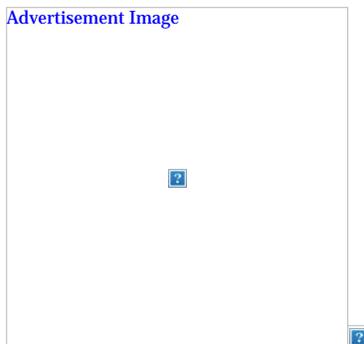
-- **HOT ONLINE:** **EMINEM's** verses on Donald Trump <http://bit.ly/2yXAu4q>

-- "**Twitter reverses decision, will allow Blackburn to promote Senate ad,**" by Kevin Robillard: <http://politi.co/2i20jgt>

SPORTS BLINK -- "USA Misses World Cup as Domsday Scenario Plays Out Across CONCACAF," by Sports Illustrated's Grant Wahl in Couva, Trinidad and Tobago: "On the most surreal and embarrassing night in U.S. soccer history, the U.S. men's national team lost 2-1 to Trinidad and Tobago (the worst team in the CONCACAF Hexagonal) and was eliminated from contention for World Cup 2018. ... All the U.S.

needed to do to qualify for the World Cup was to win or tie. And they lost, a deserving defeat that ended a miserable qualifying campaign—three wins in 10 Hexagonal games—and will raise enormous questions about the overall direction of the U.S. Soccer Federation, the players and coach Bruce Arena." <http://on.sj.com/2ycPoob>

#WOMENRULE PODCAST -- Anna sat down with SoulCycle CEO Melanie Whelan to talk about politics in the studio, how she doesn't believe work-life balance is a thing, why yellow is the new color for millennials and how women can succeed in their careers. *Listen to the podcast* <http://politi.co/2olmtJ7>



PLAYBOOK READS

PHOTO DU JOUR The sun rises through a cloud of smoke after a wildfire swept through the area in Sonoma County on Oct. 10 in Santa Rosa, Calif. | Paul Kitagaki Jr /The Sacramento Bee via AP

REVOLVING DOOR -- "Trump hires Hogan Gidley as a White House spokesman," by WaPo's Phil Rucker: "President Trump has hired Hogan Gidley, a longtime Republican campaign operative with deep roots in the conservative movement, to serve as a deputy White House press secretary ... This will be a reunion of sorts for [Sarah Huckabee] Sanders and Gidley, who worked together on campaigns for the press secretary's father, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee. Gidley served as a communications strategist on two presidential campaigns, Huckabee's in 2016 and former senator Rick Santorum's (Penn.) in 2012, logging tens of thousands of miles with both candidates." <http://wapo.st/2zeGJlo>

--**SPOTTED**: Hogan Gidley celebrating his new job with friends last night at Bluejacket in Navy Yard

GABE DEBENEDETTI in Bozeman, Montana: "Steve Bullock and the Lost Art of Political Persuasion": <http://politi.co/2yfgCwr>

HOLLYWOODLAND -- **TMZ**: "Harvey Weinstein Flying to Europe Tonight for Sex Addiction Rehab" <http://bit.ly/2yg163B>

--"Ronan Farrow on Harvey Weinstein Story: 'I Was Threatened With a Lawsuit,'" by Variety's Brian Steinberg: "Ronan Farrow didn't break the first story of shocking allegations about movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, but his New Yorker piece published Tuesday has added a new sordid dimension to the scandal. Farrow discussed his story Tuesday evening on MSNBC's 'The Rachel Maddow Show,' and there's good reason: He started the story under NBC's auspices. Asked why the story ran in the New Yorker rather than on NBC, Farrow told Maddow, 'You would have to ask NBC and NBC executives about the details.'"

"I will say that over many years, many news organizations have circled this story and faced a great deal of pressure in doing so," he continued. "There are now reports emerging about the kind of pressure news organizations have faced. That is real. And in the course of this reporting, I was threatened with a lawsuit personally by Mr. Weinstein.' He also challenged NBC's statement that the version of the story they saw wasn't publishable. 'I walked into the door at the New Yorker with an explosively reportable piece that should have been public,' he said. 'Immediately the New Yorker recognized that and it was not accurate to say that it was not reportable. In fact, there were multiple determinations at NBC that it was reportable.'" <http://bit.ly/2yaLVsy> ... *Ronan's piece* <http://bit.ly/2yEUf4r>

--"Harvey Weinstein's Wife Georgina Chapman Is Leaving Him: 'My Heart Breaks for All the Women Who Have Suffered,'" by People's Mary Green and Jodi Guglielmi: <http://bit.ly/2yXu7hw>

--@CBSNews: "DCCC says they will donate all of Harvey Weinstein's donations to non-profit Futures Without Violence, @edatpost reports on Red & Blue." <http://bit.ly/2zfFimD>

--"NYPD Was Ready to Arrest Harvey Weinstein in 2015 After Model Said She Was Groped," by The Daily Beast's Michael Daly: <http://thebea.st/2g0Xnwx>

***** **A message from Chevron**: This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat—buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2y5XNvF> *****

MEDIAWATCH -- **Jessica Bennett** is the new gender editor of the New York Times. She is the author of "Feminist Fight Club," and has been a columnist for Time.com and also worked for Newsweek and Tumblr. ... **Ashley Feinberg** has been hired as a senior reporter at HuffPost. She most recently has been a senior writer at Wired and is also a Gawker alum.

PLAYBOOKERS

SPOTTED at Capitol Lounge last night for a party in honor of former Rep. Jason Altmire's (D-Pa.) book, "Dead Center: How Political Polarization Divided America and What We Can Do About It" -- **\$19.33 on Amazon** <http://amzn.to/2i2W7gt> ... **Staff reunion pics** <http://bit.ly/2yace2o>: Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), Kathy Castor (D-Fla.), Val Demings (D-Fla.), Darren Soto (D-Fla.), Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.), Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.), and Jerry McNerney (D-Calif.), former Reps. Nick Rahall, Jack Kingston, Jim Moran, Bob Carr, Jeff Miller, Cliff Stearns, Allen Boyd, and Earl Pomeroy, Tom Scully, Rachael Heisler, Bob Cusack, Reid Wilson, Greg Giroux, Justin Sayfie, Fred Graefe.

-- **SPOTTED**: Chelsea Clinton keynoting the Girl Scouts National Convention: G.I.R.L. 2017 over the weekend in Columbus, Ohio -- **pic** <http://bit.ly/2guRkAT>

TRANSITIONS - Former Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla.) is the new co-chairman of Mercury and will be based in the firm's Miami office. ... **Fabion Seaton** is the new communications director of the Maryland Democratic Party. He most recently was press secretary for Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and also worked for former Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.).

... **Marcus Reese** is joining Crosscut Strategies as a senior adviser. He is former VP of government affairs at Herbalife and is an alum of the Bush-Cheney 2004 campaign and was also chief of staff at Tusk Strategies.

BIRTHDAY OF THE DAY: Charlie Black, chairman of the Prime Policy Group, is 7-0. **How he's celebrating**: "My wife Judy and I are going on a cruise ship around the Greek Islands next week, with good friends, including Trisha and Trent Lott." **Read his Playbook Plus Q&A**: <http://politi.co/2gbDy9p>

BIRTHDAYS: USTR Robert Lighthizer is 7-0 ... Katie Boyd, comms director for Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) ... Maura Gillespie, comms director for Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) ... Veronica Walsh ... Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) is 67 ... former Defense Secretary William Perry is 9-0 ... Jamie Weinstein, founding partner of JMW Strategies, is 34 ... Ron Prosor ... Tishman and Speyer CEO Rob Speyer ... Joel Riethmiller ... Trey Bohn ... Bruce DePuyt ... Bruce Bartlett is 66 ... Wendy Riemann ... USA Today alum Cooper Allen ... Mike Riggs, reporter at Reason magazine ... BuzzFeed's Tarini Parti ... Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.) is 55 ... Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Tex.) is 87 ... Politico's Sara Smith ... John Lipp ... Ben Mendelson ...

... **Lauren Culbertson**, public policy manager at Twitter ... Kristina Costa, CAP senior fellow ... Mandy Frohlich, COO of the American Physical Therapy Association (h/t Michael Frohlich) ... John Robinson, a Gore and Edwards alum (h/t Ryan Morgan) ... Bill Triplett ... Ashley Drummond Garcia ... Jennifer Williams ... Rachel Deahl ... ProPublica's Talia Buford ... former Rep. Bob Inglis (R-S.C.) is 58 ... Meaghan Gilmore ... Maggie Fly ... Alice Berman ... Marcus Veazey ... Ken Danieli ... Sandra Klassen ... Frank Lucician ... Mike Wolfe ... Karen Sommer Shalett ... Jessica Lerner ... Amanda Cooper (h/ts Teresa Vilmain)

***** **A message from Chevron**: This is a story about DOERS, butterflies, and buckwheat. In '75, the endangered El Segundo Blue butterfly was found near a Chevron refinery. We protected the habitat and planted the only thing they eat-buckwheat. We're still planting and keeping an eye on our littlest neighbor. Watch the video: <http://politi.co/2y5XNvF> *****

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MEDIA CONFERENCE
CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
February 9, 1987

- 9:00 a.m. Introduction and Overview: National Park Service
Regional Director Howard Chapman
will introduce. . .
- 9:05 a.m. U. S. Senator Pete Wilson
Speech
Will introduce. . .
- 9:15 a.m. U. S. Representative Robert Lagomarsino
Speech
- 9:30 a.m. Questions from floor
- 9:45 a.m. Opportunities for interviews and pictures

GOOD MORNING! IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TO CELEBRATE THE
TRANSFER OF SANTA ROSA ISLAND TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. I
WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COME AND
PARTICIPATE IN THIS IMPORTANT EVENT.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY SPECIAL TO ME.
EVERY DAY UP AND AT HOME IN CALIF, EXCEPT ON DAYS I
THEY ARE LIKE NO OTHER ISLANDS IN THE WORLD AND LONG AGO I

REALIZED WHAT A TREASURE THEY WERE TO THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA
WHO COULD APPRECIATE AND ENJOY THEIR BEAUTY AND UNIQUENESS.

HOWEVER, I, ALONG WITH MANY OTHER PEOPLE, FELT THESE MAGNIFICENT
ISLANDS SHOULD BE SHARED WITH EVERYONE. CONSEQUENTLY, AFTER MANY
YEARS OF HARD WORK AND NEGOTIATIONS AND THROUGH THE COOPERATION
AND EFFORTS OF THE PRIVATE LANDOWNERS - THE VAIL FAMILY AND THE

VERY FORGIVE
DAYS I RECALL
LOOK OUT
+ SEE
THAT

GHERINI FAMILY - AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THE CHANNEL
ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK WAS CREATED BY CONGRESS IN 1980. AS ONE OF
THE PRIMARY AUTHORS OF THE LEGISLATION WHICH ESTABLISHED THE PARK, IT WAS
TREMENDOUSLY REWARDING FOR ME TO SEE THIS DREAM BECOME A
REALITY. THE CREATION OF THE PARK WAS CERTAINLY A MAJOR
MILESTONE IN CONSERVING AND PROTECTING THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT OF

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS - IN CONTINUING INTO THE
FUTURE THE GOOD MANAGEMENT AND
STEWARDSHIP OF THE OWNERS - DR. GARY STANBA
WARREN VAIL
VIENE

SINCE THEN, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THROUGH THE
OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP OF THE PARK SUPERINTENDENT, BILL EHORN,
HAS BEEN WORKING TO PROTECT THE RESOURCES, PROVIDE INTERPRETIVE
PROGRAMS FOR THE PUBLIC AND DEVELOP THE ISLANDS FOR APPROPRIATE PUBLIC USE.

BILL IS TRULY TO BE COMMENDED FOR HIS EFFORTS TO, ~~IF YOU WILL,~~
"BRING THE ISLANDS TO THE PUBLIC." ~~I BELIEVE~~ THESE ISLANDS ARE A 3
PART OF BILL AND HE SHOWS HIS LOVE AND CARE FOR THEM ON A DAILY
BASIS. - AS A MATTER OF FACT, BILL'S ENTHUSIASM AND
PROFESSIONALISM WERE LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATION OF THE
PARK IN THE FIRST PLACE.

IN ADDITION, THOSE OF US IN CONGRESS HAVE BEEN WORKING TO
FURTHER PROTECT THE CHANNEL ISLANDS. I HAVE SPONSORED
LEGISLATION IN CONGRESS FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO CODIFY IN PUBLIC LAW
THE EXECUTIVE ORDER WHICH ESTABLISHED THE CHANNEL ISLANDS
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY. IN ADDITION, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS I
HAVE PERSONALLY REQUESTED SECRETARY OF INTERIOR HODEL TO PLACE
THE CHANNEL ISLANDS MARINE SANCTUARY OFF-LIMITS TO OIL AND GAS
DEVELOPMENT. I AM PLEASED THAT HE HAS AGREED WITH ME AND

PROHIBITED SUCH DEVELOPMENT IN EVERY CALIFORNIA OUTER CONTINENTAL
SHELF LEASE SALE, AND HAS MOST RECENTLY RECOMMENDED SUCH A 4
PROHIBITION IN THE PROPOSED OCS FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM FOR CALIFORNIA.

FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE BEEN WORKING TO SECURE THE
APPROPRIATIONS FUNDING NEEDED BY THE PARK SERVICE TO ACQUIRE THE
PRIVATE LANDS. I HAVE TESTIFIED BEFORE THE HOUSE INTERIOR
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE FOR SIX YEARS TO REQUEST ACQUISITION
FUNDING FOR THE CHANNEL ISLANDS. THROUGH OUR EFFORTS IN THE
HOUSE, AS WELL AS THOSE IN THE SENATE, PARTICULARLY BY SENATOR
PETE WILSON, WE HAVE FINALLY BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING THE

(5)

FUNDS TO PURCHASE SANTA ROSA. THIS HAS BEEN AN UPHILL BATTLE WHERE WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY FACED NUMEROUS OBSTACLES, LARGELY DUE TO CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS AIMED AT REDUCING THE FEDERAL DEFICITST ~~+~~ COMPETING PROJECTS. BUT WE HAVE MADE IT AND WE ARE HERE TODAY TO CELEBRATE THIS VICTORY!!

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS HAVE LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, AS WELL AS LOCALLY, FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING NATURAL, CULTURAL, SCENIC AND GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES. THE PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE BOTH ON THE ISLANDS AND IN THE WATERS AROUND THEM ARE ABUNDANT AND DIVERSE AND MANY NEW SPECIES UNIQUE TO THE ISLANDS HAVE EVOLVED DUE TO THEIR ISOLATION FROM THE MAINLAND.

(6)

SANTA ROSA ISLAND IS, AT NEARLY 53,000 ACRES, THE SECOND LARGEST OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS. IT COMPRISES APPROXIMATELY 44 PERCENT OF THE PARK'S TOTAL LAND AREA AND ABOUT 78 PERCENT OF THE LANDS TO BE MANAGED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. A MAJOR FAULT CUTS ACROSS THE ISLAND RESULTING IN SOME OUTSTANDING GEOLOGICAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL FEATURES. LARGE PORTIONS OF THE ISLAND ARE CURRENTLY IN GRASSLAND, BUT UNIQUE STANDS OF TORREY PINES, IRONWOOD TREES AND ENDEMIC ISLAND OAKS ARE ALSO FOUND ON SANTA ROSA. ANIMAL LIFE ON THE ISLAND INCLUDES SEABIRD AND PINNIPED ROOKERIES AS WELL AS MANY NON-ACQUATIC ANIMALS INCLUDING THE ISLAND FOX.

THE VICKERS AND VAIL FAMILY HAS MANAGED A CATTLE RANCHING
OPERATION ON THE ISLAND FOR MANY YEARS WHICH IS, CONSEQUENTLY, A
VERY IMPORTANT PART OF SANTA ROSA'S HISTORY. THE VAILS HAVE BEEN
EXCELLENT STEWARDS OF THE LAND. WHILE MANAGING THEIR CATTLE
OPERATION, THEY HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE
NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE ISLAND, INCLUDING THE MANY DIFFERENT
SPECIES OF ANIMALS. BECAUSE OF THEIR SPECIAL CARE OF THE LAND,
SANTA ROSA WILL BE ABLE TO BE ENJOYED BY PEOPLE TODAY AS WELL AS
FUTURE GENERATIONS. THEREFORE, I AM HOPEFUL THAT A LEASING
AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED BETWEEN THE LANDOWNERS, RUSS AND AL
VAIL, AND THE PARK SERVICE TO ENABLE CURRENT RANCHING OPERATIONS
TO CONTINUE. I BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR THE PARK
SERVICE INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM, AS WELL AS ALLOWING THE PARK
SERVICE ADDITIONAL TIME WHICH MAY BE NEEDED TO ADJUST TO THE

7

MANAGEMENT OF SUCH A LARGE LAND AREA — AND NO SMALL
THING THESE DAYS - SAVE THE TAXPAYERS
A LOT OF MONEY.
THROUGH MY DISCUSSIONS WITH SUPERINTENDENT EHORN, I BELIEVE
THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IS ALSO PLANNING FUTURE PUBLIC USE
FACILITIES ON THE ISLAND INCLUDING LIMITED CAMPGROUNDS AND
BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING SITES. THEREFORE, THE ACQUISITION OF SANTA
ROSA IS A MAJOR STEP TOWARDS THE PREPARATION OF THE ISLAND FOR
THE PUBLIC'S USE AND ENJOYMENT.

8

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE I WANT TO THANK TODAY. BUT
PARTICULARLY, I WANT TO THANK RUSS AND AL VAIL FOR THEIR
COOPERATION AND PATIENCE THROUGHOUT THIS LONG PROCESS. I REALIZE

IT HAS BEEN A HARDSHIP FOR THEM AND WE COULD HAVE NEVER REACHED THIS MILESTONE WITHOUT THEIR ASSISTANCE AND THEIR GENEROSITY IN AGREEING TO INCLUDE SANTA ROSA IN THE PARK. I ALSO WANT TO THANK BILL KELLY FROM THE LAW FIRM OF LATHAM, WATKINS AND HILLS, IN WASHINGTON, D.C., WHO HAS BEEN VERY INSTRUMENTAL IN THE LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS.

9

THANKS TO THE NAVY AT POINT MUGLY AND PORT HUENENE WITH SPECIAL KUDOS TO

LES MORGAN FOR ALL OF THEIR CONTINUING HELP & COURAGE

FURTHERMORE, MY THANKS AGAIN TO BILL EHORN FOR ALL OF HIS OUTSTANDING WORK ON THE ISLANDS. ALSO, HOWARD CHAPMAN, THE WESTERN REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DESERVES RECOGNITION FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE SANTA ROSA ISLAND ACQUISITION PROCESS. SENATOR PETE WILSON, AND ALSO MICHAEL WOOTTON, PETE'S LOS ANGELES OFFICE MANAGER, AND FORMERLY MY

BILL MOTT, THE DIRECTOR

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, ARE ALSO TO BE COMMENDED FOR THEIR MANY EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS, PETE HAS BEEN A STRONG VOICE IN THE SENATE FOR THE CHANNEL ISLANDS AND I AM CONFIDENT WILL CONTINUE TO WORK ON THE PARK'S BEHALF. IN ADDITION, SENATORS JIM MCCLURE OF IDAHO AND TED STEVENS OF ALASKA HAVE BEEN ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL IN PROVIDING FUNDS FOR LAND ACQUISITION AND WILL HOPEFULLY CONTINUE TO ASSIST US IN THIS ENDEAVOR.

THE FRIENDS OF THE ISLANDS PARK CONTINUE TO HELP THE LATE PHIL BURTON WAS ESSENTIAL

STILL AKA FORMERLY ON MY PERSONAL STAFF & NOW MINORITY ASSISTANT TO ME ON THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WE MUST NOW CONTINUE FORWARD AS WORK STILL REMAINS TO BE DONE. AS ADDITIONAL FUNDING IS NEEDED FOR PARK SERVICE OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE ON SANTA ROSA ISLAND, YOU HAVE MY COMMITMENT TO WORK IN WASHINGTON WITH SENATOR WILSON, SENATOR

CRANSTON AND THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEES TO SECURE THE
NECESSARY FUNDING. IN ADDITION, AS THE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR
NATIONAL PARKS OF THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND
PUBLIC LANDS, I WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE CHANNEL ISLANDS AND
PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT IS NEEDED.

FURTHERMORE, AS WORK PROGRESSES ON THE FISCAL YEAR 1988 BUDGET, I
WILL CONTINUE MY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN ACQUISITION APPROPRIATIONS FOR
THE PRIVATE PROPERTY ON EASTERN SANTA CRUZ ISLAND IN ORDER TO
COMPLETE THIS MAGNIFICENT PARK.

*FEELING
Giddy*

THANKS AGAIN TO EVERYONE WHO PLAYED A ROLE IN THIS HISTORIC
EVENT. I AM HOPEFUL THAT YOU WILL ALL BE ABLE TO, IF YOU HAVE
NOT ALREADY DONE SO, VISIT THE CHANNEL ISLANDS AND ENJOY THEIR
BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE RESOURCES AND PARTICULARLY THOSE FOUND ON
THE NEWEST ADDITION, SANTA ROSA ISLAND. THIS IS A VERY SPECIAL
PLACE TO BE SHARED BY EVERYONE!!

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Timothy Bergling](#)
Subject: Script heroes week
Date: Monday, July 24, 2017 12:19:25 PM
Attachments: [Script_HeroWeek.docx](#)

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Hi, I'm Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke.

This week, the Trump Administration is taking the time to celebrate American heroes from the U.S. military, law enforcement, and first responders.

It's an important reminder that real heroes don't wear capes.

At Interior, we have more than 35-hundred uniformed law enforcement personnel who keep our communities and visitors safe.

Like Bureau of Reclamation security officer Ivan Hernandez. He courageously dove into the water in an attempt to save the life of a trapped motorist whose vehicle crashed in the lake.

And just last month, the Washington, D.C., based U.S. Park Police helicopter pilot and crew provided a life-saving medivac flight during the attack on Members of Congress during baseball practice.

At Interior, we also have more than 45-hundred people who help battle wild fires in command centers and on the front lines across the west.

Our wildland firefighters battle the blazes from the air and ground. The most highly-trained firefighters – the smoke jumpers – even drop into the center of the fires by parachute.

Many firefighters have desk jobs throughout the year and are called on to deploy across the country at a moment's notice.

And to honor the men and women who have served in the U.S. military, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other bureaus maintain and manage dozens of war memorials, historical sites, and battlefields.

These historic grounds stretch from World War 2's fabled Midway Island in the Pacific to the streets of Boston and Philadelphia where our independence was born.

Interior also helps maintain hallowed ground like Arlington National Cemetery, where more than 300,000 heroes and their family members – including 360 Medal of Honor Recipients - have been laid to rest since 1866.

As a former military commander myself, I'm often overcome with gratitude and love of country when my wife and I walk the grounds of Arlington.

Heroes aren't just on the Hollywood movies, they are all around us. They run into the danger when everyone else is running away.

At Interior, we're dedicated to honoring their service and sacrifice every day.

This week, take a moment to pay tribute to the heroes in your community. Work with a service organization to clean up a memorial, volunteer with a VSO, or just shake the hand of a local hero and thank them for their service.

On behalf of everyone at the Department of the Interior, Thank you for your time.

May God bless America, and may God bless the men and women who defend her.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); (b) (6)
Subject: Sec. Zinke GQ
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 11:29:03 AM

Hi Renee, thanks for the call. Below are some topline messaging on the Secretary and his bio. Let me know if there's anything else you need.

TOPLINE

- Secretary Ryan Zinke is a fifth-generation Montanan and a 23-year veteran of the U.S. Navy SEALs
 - Zinke is a guy that the average American connects with. He's a veteran, comes from a blue collar family (three generations of plumbers), and like the President is incredibly close with his wife and adult children.
- Zinke is a total work horse whose leadership at Interior has been bold and decisive.
 - Zinke has signed a number of Secretarial orders to implement the President's American Energy First agenda.
 - Zinke is a hands-on leader who does extensive travel to the places impacted by his Department, like his four-day trip to Utah to conduct a review of the national monuments under the President's executive order.
- He is well-liked and well-respected by his colleagues in the cabinet and in the White House.
 - Zinke is always willing to go the extra mile and collaborate on projects

Secretary Ryan Zinke Bio

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

“As a former Navy SEAL, Ryan has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win,” President Donald Trump said in nominating the former congressman, who built an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Ryan has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for

revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Zinke is widely praised for his voting record supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

"I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior," Zinke said. "I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that our treasured public lands are 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people'. I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come. Most importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve. I look forward to making the Department of the Interior and America great again."

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations across the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master's degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master's degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

- Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Members of the Committee...I'd like to introduce my friend, an American patriot
- Captain Cully Stimson is President Donald Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the United States Navy.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Most Qualified for the Job)

- Important for Navy to have the most-qualified individuals in positions of leadership—Capt. Stimson fits the bill.
- We served together in the Navy, he has 20+ years experience as a lawyer, first served in Navy JAG Corps in 1990s.
- I worked with him and Congressman DeStefano on a bill to ensure victims of sexual assault in the military receive the legal services they deserve.
- Captain Stimson's story is a lifetime of commitment to both community and country.
 - His start as a leader: Captain of the Men's Varsity Soccer Team at Kenyon College
- Graduated George Mason University School of Law 1992, joined Navy JAG Corps – 5 years active duty
 - Called back to active duty 2001, to support Joint Special Ops Task Force JAG for SEAL Group Two.
- Served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs under Pres. George W. Bush
 - Advised Secretaries of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates about Pentagon detention operations.
- Has been with Heritage Foundation as a Senior Legal Fellow & Manager of their Nat'l Security Law Program since 2007
- Served our nation 2+ decades in Navy, recently as Dep. Chief Judge of Navy-Marine Corps Trial Judiciary & adjunct law prof./instructor at Naval Justice School in reserve capacity.

PERSONAL LIFE (High-Character Human Being, Fit to Serve)

- Teaching high school/coaching & mentoring young Americans—devoted countless hours to cultivating next generation.
- Chairman of the Board, U.S. Soccer Foundation (charitable arm of U.S. Soccer): offers assistance to 35,000+ underserved and minority children.
- Captain Stimson has been married since 1995. He and his wife adopted four orphans.
- Epitome of a military officer: always first one to help others
 - Dozens of rec. letters for his students
 - Quietly paid tuition for two of his mentees who could not afford to take the Law School Admission Test.
 - Founded the Bryon J. Horn Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of a fallen fraternity brother.

BIPARTISAN LEADER (comfortable working across party lines)

- Worked with Jeh Johnson, then-General Counsel of the Dept of Defense, on a number of issues to keep our nation safe.
 - Eventually led to Capt. Stimson extending, and Johnson accepting, invitation to speak to the Heritage Foundation.
 - In that speech, Sec. Johnson remarked: “The office of General Counsel of the Defense Dept., particularly in the post-9/11 world, is in the middle of many difficult, front page issues.”
 - As General Counsel of the Navy, Capt. Stimson will confront a host of these difficult issues as well. I have full confidence in his ability to tackle them.
- Friend & brother-in-arms Capt. Stimson: Navy gaining an eminently qualified attorney, an honorable military officer, and an individual with vast experience/fidelity to law & our country.
- Long career of exemplary service in law & defense, excellent fit for the position to which he was nominated. No doubt he will be a wonderful General Counsel of the Navy.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

[MAY 5, 2017](#) - [MAY 6, 2017](#) - [MAY 7, 2017](#) - [MAY 8, 2017](#) - [MAY 9, 2017](#) - [MAY 10, 2017](#)

TOP STORIES – MAY 5, 2017

1. [With National Monuments Under Review, Bears Ears Is Focus Of Fierce Debate](#)

NPR, May 5 / Kirk Siegler

A lot of the anger over federal public land in rural Utah today can be traced back to a windy, gray day in Arizona in September 1996. At the Grand Canyon, President Bill Clinton formally designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, more than 100 miles away.

2. [Record-setting southern Utah tourism highlights stakes of national monument debate](#)

KSL News, May 5 / Dave Cawley

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s plan to visit southern Utah next week will place him, and by extension the Trump Administration, in the middle of two bitter fights over public lands in the state.

3. [Patagonia to Zinke: 'Conserve Our Shared Public Lands for Future Generations'](#)

EcoWatch, May 5 / Yvon Chouinard and Rose Marcario

Dear Secretary Zinke,

As Secretary of the Interior, you hold the solemn responsibility to steward America's public lands and waters on behalf of the American people who own them. Our public lands, including the national monuments you are now reviewing, represent a vital part of our nation's heritage—a legacy that belongs not just to us, but to all future generations of Americans. It is an important part of your job to safeguard this legacy by making careful and informed decisions about what federal lands can be used for development and what special or vulnerable areas should be preserved for the future.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

4. [INTERIOR: Agency suspends advisory panels even as decisions loom](#)

E & E News, May 5 / Scott Streater

The Interior Department is formally reviewing the "charter and charge" of more than 200 advisory panels that assist federal agencies managing hundreds of millions of acres of public lands at a time when the Trump administration is considering significant changes to land-use designations and management practices.

5. [27 national monuments under Interior Dept. review](#)

David DeMille, May 5 / David DeMille

ST. GEORGE, Utah — Nearly two dozen national monuments will face a federal review period following an executive order by President Trump.

TOP STORIES – MAY 6, 2017

[BACK](#)

6. [Native American advocates size up Trump administration](#)

KPAX News, May 6 / Eleanor Mueller

With President Donald Trump's first 100 days in office in the rearview mirror, lawmakers and advocates are uncertain but hopeful about the impact the new administration will have on the Native American community.

7. [Op-ed: Utah Farm Bureau applauds review of national monuments](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 / Ron Gibson

Utah Farm Bureau applauds President Trump's review of presidential national monument designations over the past two decades, including the highly controversial 1996 Grand Staircase-Escalante and 2016 Bears Ears National Monument.



8. [**Much at stake as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke visits Bears Ears**](#)

The Deseret News, May 6 / Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — To all in the fight over the Bears Ears monument designation, there is much to win, a way of life to lose, and very little room on any side to compromise.

9. [**Supporters of Bears Ears, Grand Staircase rally in advance of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's visit**](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 / Peggy Fletcher Stack

After his birth in Utah's Monument Valley, James Adakai's umbilical cord was buried at Bears Ears.

10. [**In our opinion: Reviewing the Antiquities Act is an important course of action**](#)

The Deseret News, May 6 / Deseret News editorial board

We believe in the importance of conservation. The nation's public and shared lands are a vital treasure that need to be preserved.

11. [**Op-ed: Will Bears Ears Be the Next Standing Rock?**](#)

The New York Times, May 6 / Terry Tempest Williams

After seven years of organizing, the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition — made up of the Hopi, Navajo, Uintah and Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni Nations — played a key role in securing the protection of 1.35 million acres surrounding Bears Ears from development and resource extraction just before President Obama left office.

12. [**Zinke promises to hear out protestors of rescinding national monuments**](#)

The Washington Times, May 6 / Ben Wolfgang

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Sunday launched a “listening tour” across Utah designed to quell an uproar over his department's controversial review of national monuments.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

13. [National Monuments: Presidents Can Create Them, but Only Congress Can Undo Them](#)

Govexec.com, May 6 | Nicholas Bryner, Eric Biber, Mark Squillace and Sean B. Hecht

On April 26 President Trump issued an executive order calling for a review of national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act. This law authorizes presidents to set aside federal lands in order to protect “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.”

14. [Op-ed: National monuments are a positive economic force for rural communities](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 | Amy Roberts

The next several months are pivotal for the future of America's public lands. It is not easy to articulate how we have gotten to this point – but here we are.

TOP STORIES – MAY 7, 2017

[BACK](#)

15. [Rallies over Bears Ears act as prelude to Zinke's visit](#)

KSL News, May 7 | Jasen Lee and Marjorie Cortez

SALT LAKE CITY — For scores of Utahns, preserving the monument status of the state's newest protected public lands and one of its more revered places was more than enough reason to spend a weekend afternoon at the state Capitol.

16. [Zinke met by protest as he arrives to consider Utah voices on national monuments](#)

The Deseret News, May 7 | McKenzie Romero

SALT LAKE CITY — While protestors clogged the sidewalk outside, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he will be gathering perspectives of people on all sides of a deeply controversial issue as he reviews the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.



17. [Zinke starts review of Utah's Bears Ears National Monument](#)

The Las Vegas Review-Journal, May 7 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke will start a four-day Utah trip Sunday to assess whether 3.2 million acres of national monuments in the state's southern red rock region should be scaled down or even rescinded.

18. [The new range war](#)

The Christian Science Monitor, May 7 | Amanda Paulson

MAY 7, 2017 SALMON, IDAHO—Merill Beyeler bears the classic look of a Western rancher. He's got the leathery face of someone who has spent a lot of time outdoors. He wears flannel shirts, jeans, and a bone-colored cowboy hat.

19. [The Latest: Zinke says he may not favor shrinking monuments](#)

NewsOK, May 7 | The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Latest on a visit to Utah by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review the designation of national monuments (all times local):

20. [Zinke says monument designations have been an 'effective tool,' though 'very few ... are to the scale of the recent actions'](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 7 | Matthew Piper

As he embarked on a tour of Utah to review two national monuments, Ryan Zinke said he sees no evidence Native American proponents of Bears Ears National Monument were exploited by special interest groups, as state leaders have suggested.

21. [Zinke Begins Utah Listening Tour](#)

KUER News, May 7 | Judy Fahys

Utahns for and against national monuments have been asking the Trump administration to weigh in on Bears Ears ever since it was created in December. U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke arrived in Utah Sunday to hear their concerns firsthand.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

TOP STORIES – MAY 8, 2017

[BACK](#)

22. [Zinke in southern Utah to tour Bears Ears](#)

The Deseret News, May 8 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BLANDING — Native American supporters of the new Bears Ears National Monument talked Monday about the sacred nature of the rugged landscape and why it's so important to protect.

23. [Zinke kicks off Utah tour in national monuments review](#)

The Hill, May 8 | Timothy Cama

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is in Utah this week to tour two controversial national monuments that the Trump administration is considering rescinding or shrinking.

24. [Mr. Zinke, Keep Channeling Teddy Roosevelt](#)

The New York Times, May 8 | The Editorial Board

On his first day on the job, Ryan Zinke, President Trump's secretary of the interior, rode a horse to work, in plain imitation of Teddy Roosevelt, who as president used to gallop around Washington, and whose admirable record as a conservationist Mr. Zinke says he hopes to emulate.

25. [Could management shift to states even if public lands remain federally owned?](#)

The Las Vegas Sun, May 8 | Daniel Rothberg

At a Lake Tahoe fundraiser in August, Elko County Commissioner Demar Dahl — a leader in the movement to transfer federal land to the states — met privately with then-candidate Donald Trump. According to a story Dahl has told many times since then, he asked Trump how he would feel operating a 10-floor hotel in which eight floors were owned by a bureaucracy 2,500 miles away.



26. [Could management shift to states even if public lands remain federally owned?](#)

The Center for American Progress, May 8 / Mary Ellen Kustin

On April 26, President Donald Trump launched an attack on national parks, public lands, and waters. His executive order called on U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to “review” the 54 national monuments that presidents have designated or expanded since 1996. The order gives wide discretion to the secretary to recommend actions that the president or Congress should take to alter or rescind the protections for these natural, historical, and cultural treasures.

27. [US Interior secretary tours hotly contested Utah monument](#)

The Washington Post, May 8 / Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Monday will get a bird’s-eye view of one of 27 national monuments he’s been ordered to review as he flies over 1.3 million acres of southern Utah’s red rock plateaus, cliffs and canyons graced with sagebrush, juniper trees and ancient cliff dwellings in one of America’s newest and most hotly contested monuments.

28. [Interior Secretary Zinke in southern Utah to tour Bears Ears](#)

The Deseret News, May 8 / Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BLANDING — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke landed in San Juan County Monday to begin his first full day exploring the rugged footprint of the new Bears Ears National Monument.

29. [Bears Ears: Hatch, Utah delegation lead pushback effort](#)

The Spectrum, May 8 / David DeMille

After signing an executive order calling for a review of more than two dozen national monuments, President Donald Trump handed the pen to U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, crediting the Utah Republican for being a driving force behind the order.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

30. [San Juan County residents welcome visit from Secretary Zinke](#)

ABC 4 Utah, May 8 / Glen Mills

Interior secretary Ryan Zinke is touring two national monuments, and taking input from local stakeholders.

31. [Interior Turns Down Meetings With 2 Groups Supporting Utah Monuments](#)

The Morning Consult, May 8 / Jack Fitzpatrick

The Department of the Interior turned down meetings this week with at least two groups supporting national monument designations in Utah, spurring complaints that the Trump administration's review of monuments may be one-sided.

32. [Zinke: Monument status may not be best to save sacred land](#)

The Washington Post, May 8 / Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said sacred tribal lands he toured Monday in America's newest and most hotly contested monument should be preserved but he questioned whether the monument designation was the right way to do it.

33. [Interior Secretary visits Bears Ears National Monument to decide its fate](#)

Fox 13 News, May 8 / Ben Winslow

BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT -- Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke hiked past the lines of protesters out into the desert landscape.

34. [Interior Secretary visits Bears Ears National Monument to decide its fate](#)

KUTV 2 News, May 8 / Daniel Woodruff

Blanding, Utah — (KUTV) As the sun set over San Juan County Monday evening, Blanding, Utah, was buzzing.



35. [Interior secretary tours Bears Ears, hotly contested monument in Utah](#)

PBS Newshour, May 8 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke took an aerial tour Monday of one of America's newest and most hotly contested monuments — one of 27 he's been ordered to review by President Donald Trump to determine if they were properly established.

36. [Zinke flies over Bears Ears as critics urge him to 'Make San Juan County Great Again' and rescind monument](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 8 | Brian Maffly

Blanding • When Hank Stevens' family hunted under Bears Ears Buttes, they always honored the deer whose life they had taken and the place that nurtured it.

37. [Tribal leaders demand apology from Hatch after he said they 'don't fully understand' Bears Ears implications](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 8 | Mariah Noble

After Sen. Orrin Hatch said Sunday that American Indians "don't fully understand" what they would lose if Bears Ears is "made clearly into a monument," tribal leaders have called his comments offensive, and they demand an apology.

TOP STORIES – MAY 9, 2017

[BACK](#)

38. [Boyd Matheson: The Navy SEAL and the Bears Ears](#)

The Deseret News, May 9 | Boyd Matheson

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, a former Navy SEAL commander, is touring Utah this week in response to President Donald Trump's executive order calling for a review of national monument designations over the past 21 years. There will be many who want to get in the secretary's ear as he visits the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante areas. I hope he can shun and shut out the strident and vitriolic voices in order to truly listen to and hear all the parties who have something constructive to say.



39. [The public is invited to comment as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tours monuments Utah politicians want abolished or shrunk](#)

The National Geographic, May 9 | Laura Parker

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is touring a pair of controversial national monuments in Utah on horseback this week at the behest of President Trump, who is reconsidering their merits. Zinke's four-day visit will take in Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in southern Utah, the main targets in a review of 27 large monuments Trump ordered last month. The president assigned Zinke to examine whether his predecessors over-stepped their authority and made these monuments too large or ignored objections from the public.

40. [The Case for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#)

The Center for American Progress, May 9 | Jenny Rowland

President Donald Trump's national monuments executive order is an attack on American national parks, public lands, and oceans. One of its specific targets is the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.

41. [NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Standing in Bears Ears, Zinke says protections may change](#)

E & E News, May 9 | Jennifer Yachnin,

BLANDING, Utah — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke questioned yesterday whether a monument designation is the "right vehicle" to protect tracts in southern Utah, suggesting that other public lands categories could be more appropriate for the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument.

42. [The Latest: Utah Rancher Tells Zinke Monument Unnecessary](#)

US News, May 9 | The Associated Press

MONTICELLO, UTAH - Fifth-generation Utah rancher Bruce Adams has enjoyed a prime seat next to U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke this week as he reviews a national monument created on lands that Adams' ancestors helped settle in 1879.



43. [Executive Order gives ranchers hope](#)

Livestock News, May 9 | Karin Schiley

The signing of a recent executive order by the president is giving ranchers hope that the administration is taking steps to reverse what some consider governmental land-grabs throughout history.

44. [NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Bears Ears won't become a national park — Zinke](#)

E & E News, May 9 | Jennifer Yachnin

MONTICELLO, Utah — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke today ruled out the possibility that he will recommend converting Bears Ears National Monument into a national park but said he remained open to all other options for the 1.35 million acres of public lands.

TOP STORIES – MAY 10, 2017

[BACK](#)

45. [Tribune Editorial: Hatch continues to belittle Native Americans in Bears Ears dispute](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 10 | Tribune Editorial

No, Sen. Hatch, we won't just take your word for it.

Utah's senior senator put his foot very firmly into his mouth Monday by attacking the intelligence and the integrity of the five Native American nations whose elected leaders joined together to work for and, in the final days of the Obama administration, win national monument status for 1.35 million acres in southeast Utah known as Bears Ears.

46. [Will National Monuments Get a “Fair Hearing” on Zinke’s Listening Tour?](#)

Sierra, May 10 | Stacey Bare

On Sunday, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke stood in front of a small, windowless conference room in Salt Lake City next to one of the long-standing generals of the Sagebrush Rebellion, Senator Orrin Hatch.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

47. [Trump's national monument plan could easily fail — but he'll still declare victory](#)

The Los Angeles Times, May 10 | Evan Halper

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tangled with protesters, weaved through media hives and trotted on horseback across a Utah moonscape this week in pursuit of President Trump's executive order targeting national monuments.

48. [Gehrke: What Zinke isn't hearing, seeing during his trip to Utah](#)

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 10 | Robert Gehrke

Blake Spalding and Jen Castle opened the doors of Hell's Backbone Grill in 1999, drawn to the remote town of Boulder by their love of wilderness and the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

49. [Trump Takes Aim at Western Monuments That May Hold Oil Riches](#)

Bloomberg News, May 10 | Jennifer A Dlouhy

Bears Ears National Monument in Utah boasts stretches of red-and-yellow sandstone so brilliant they appear to be ablaze and rock structures so precarious they appear to defy gravity.

50. [Interior Secretary Zinke admires national monuments he'll likely recommend removing](#)

The Washington Times, May 10 | Ben Wolfgang

Based on the beautiful pictures and effusive praise he has posted to Twitter this week from one of the nation's newest national monuments, you might never guess that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke could set into motion the process to erase it from the map.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

51. [Interior Secretary Orders Protester To 'Be Nice' During Visit To Bears Ears](#)

The Huffington Post, May 10 | Chris D'Angelo

WASHINGTON — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke lost his manners during a visit to Bears Ears National Monument on Monday after being repeatedly questioned about why he hasn't spent more time talking with tribal leaders as part of his national monuments review.

52. [Bears Ears National Monument: Zinke gets mixed reactions during visit](#)

Fox News, May 10 | Andrew O'Reilly

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent the first day of his listening tour of the country's national monuments visiting the famed Anasazi ruins in Utah's Butler Wash and trying to assuage concerns of Utahns that undoing or shrinking the designation of the controversial 1.3-million acre Bears Ears National Monument would not automatically result in lots of oil rigs or mining equipment.

53. [Op-ed: Attempts to undo national monuments will rally formidable opposition](#)

The Hill, May 10 | Glenn Nelson

The Trump administration is well advised to gauge the political blowback as it contemplates an assault — disguised as a review — on the Antiquities Act, as well as two decades of amplifying diverse and inclusive stories in this country. During its final months, the Obama administration shrewdly protected a string of cultural landmarks that should form a formidable firewall around those designations, as well as earlier sacred sites, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in D.C. and the César E. Chávez National Monument in California.

54. [Hunting, fishing businesses unite support of National Monuments](#)

Ammoland, May 10 | Joe Evans

WASHINGTON -(Ammoland.com)- More than 100 hunting and fishing business owners and sporting organizations sent a letter today to Congress to show their support for national monuments and the responsible use of the Antiquities Act.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

55. [The best way to save sacred land? 'The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle'](#)

The Journal, May 10 | Michelle L. Price and Brady Mccombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah – U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said sacred tribal lands he toured Monday in America's newest and most hotly contested monument should be preserved but he questioned whether the monument designation was the right way to do it.

56. [NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Zinke: 'All of the above' possible for Bears Ears](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Jennifer Yachnin

MONTICELLO, Utah — Make the mistake of asking Heidi Redd how many animals her Indian Creek Cattle Co. owns, and she'll only laugh good-naturedly and ask if you want to know her annual income, too.

57. [Zinke rides with cattle ranchers working on Bears Ears](#)

The Deseret News, May 10 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BEARS EARS, San Juan County — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said Tuesday that in the context of Bears Ears National Monument, "cattle ranchers matter, too."

58. [NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Zinke review could open 2.7M acres to development — report](#)

E & E News, May 10 | Jennifer Yachnin

BLANDING, Utah — Boundary changes to a half-dozen national monuments could open up 2.7 million acres of land to fossil fuel extraction, according to a new analysis released by Greenpeace this morning.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

1. **With National Monuments Under Review, Bears Ears Is Focus Of Fierce Debate**

NPR, May 5 / Kirk Siegler

A lot of the anger over federal public land in rural Utah today can be traced back to a windy, gray day in Arizona in September 1996. At the Grand Canyon, President Bill Clinton formally designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, more than 100 miles away.

"On this remarkable site, God's handiwork is everywhere in the natural beauty of the Escalante Canyons," he said.

But Clinton didn't set foot in Utah. The planning for the monument was largely done in secret, and state leaders had little warning it was coming.

Now, nearly 21 years later, mistrust toward the federal government persists, in the tightknit, mostly Mormon town of Blanding, Utah. Folks can't help but draw a parallel to how President Barack Obama's sweeping Bears Ears National Monument ended up in their backyard.

"I don't understand how it would protect the land when you're inviting thousands of footprints in," says Laura O'Donnell.

O'Donnell, who works at Blanding's modest visitor center, says she is uncomfortable with her town suddenly being the flashpoint in the heated debate over the future of federal public lands.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is keeping a promise to travel into rural Utah beginning this weekend to hear from locals who live around the new 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears monument and the established 1.8 million-acre Grand Staircase monument to the west. The Trump administration has launched a 45-day review over whether large national monuments like these that protect federal land should be rescinded or shrunk.

In Blanding, Zinke's visit is highly anticipated. Here, opposition to the monument runs deeper than the usual anxieties in sagebrush country about adding more protections to public land that would restrict future mining and other development.

"Monuments should be an honor to an area, and we feel like this one is nothing but a punishment," says Jami Bayles, who founded a group called the Stewards of San Juan County.



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From her office at a small college, you can see the twin Bears Ears buttes framing the distant horizon out on the vast Cedar Mesa west of town. While not as visually dramatic as the famous national parks nearby, the area is dense with cliff dwellings and ancient artifacts.

Bayles and many of her neighbors felt offended when the federal government announced additional protections under a new monument because they felt it sent a message that the land was being threatened.

"We keep that place pristine, we keep it clean, we check on it all the time," Bayles says. "I guess my argument is, 'OK, yeah, it belongs to everybody, but not everybody has been taking care of it.' "

Bayles says that the monument is being pushed by extreme, out-of-state environmentalists and that her side has struggled to be heard.

There are deep pockets behind the campaign to protect Bears Ears.

San Juan County is about 50 percent Native American. A short drive down the road, on the Navajo Nation Reservation, tribal leaders say it's a lie for people in Blanding to argue that the monument is being pushed on them from the outside.

"For them to be here for 130 years, they should at least understand the Native Americans now," says Kenneth Maryboy, a chapter president.

Native Americans from around the Four Corners region, where Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona meet, who back the new monument are open about the fact that they're getting outside help and money because they didn't have a voice before, according to interviews with tribal leaders. Many tribes in the region have officially come out in support of the monument, though not all.

Maryboy was involved with the first talks with Utah's congressional delegation almost a decade ago about protecting Bears Ears as a National Conservation Area. They broke down last year, then came Obama's executive order.

"Our gripe and our fight is to preserve what's there, the Native American artifacts, the antiquities and all the shrines and the ruins," Maryboy says.



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The sacred burial grounds of the famous Navajo leader Manuelito are included in the new monument. Maryboy sees the monument as crucial to protecting these antiquities from vandalism and looting, a historical problem in San Juan County.

"The San Juan County good ol' boys don't want to see this happen," says Maryboy. "They adamantly, openly said, 'This is our land. The damn Navajos need to go back to the reservation.'"

It's not an overstatement to say that Zinke will see deep tension and polarization when he arrives at Bears Ears late this weekend for a two-day tour.

Tribes here point to a history of broken promises with the U.S. government. If the Trump administration moves to abolish Bears Ears, it's not hard to imagine a Standing Rock-inspired protest here. On the other hand, if the monument stays intact, some wonder whether the militias that support rancher Cliven Bundy and his sons would arrive in San Juan County.

Back in Blanding, some locals like Ferd Johnson are floating a compromise. Why not just shrink the monument and protect the cliff dwellings and other antiquities themselves, they say.

"All these environmentalists, these Navajos, Hopis and the other Indians didn't even know where the Bears Ears was," Johnson says. "Why is it so sacred if they don't even know where it is?"

The tribes dispute this. Some have already signaled they'll sue if, after Zinke's Utah trip, the Trump administration moves to rescind Bears Ears.

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2. **Record-setting southern Utah tourism highlights stakes of national monument debate**

KSL News, May 5 | Dave Cawley

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plan to visit southern Utah next week will place him, and by extension the Trump Administration, in the middle of two bitter fights over public lands in the state.



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One, a white-hot battle over the 1.3-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County, erupted last December when then-President Barack Obama created the monument at the request of tribal representatives and against the wishes of county and state leaders.

The other fight has simmered for two decades. It deals with an older and even larger monument, blamed by many in southern Utah for slowly strangling the life out of their communities. Yet the disagreement over Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is coming back to a boil even as tourism in the region sets new records year after year.

A review of economic indicators by KSL, including employment data, visitation statistics, tourism-related tax revenues and county building permit records obtained through an open records request, reveals both the struggles and opportunities facing places like Cannonville, Kanab, Boulder and Big Water.

The simmering dispute

An irritated Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, was sick of hearing about the values of southern Utah's tourism economy. During a meeting of the state's House Natural Resource, Agriculture and Environment Committee in late February, the lawmaker unloaded on his colleagues from Salt Lake City.

"People tell me there's all kinds of jobs down there; everything's going great," Noel said. "I really kind of get a gutful of it up here, I really do. It bothers me because it sends a false premise."

Noel represents House District 73, a giant swath of territory covering all of Kane, Garfield, San Juan, Wayne and Piute Counties, as well as pieces of Beaver and Sevier Counties. He chastised urban lawmakers for suggesting federal management of Utah lands has had a positive influence by driving visitors, and by extension their tax dollars, into the rural region he represents.

"I've lived there for 41 years. I've seen what's happened down there and my ancestors have lived there for over 100 years and it's not in a good condition as far as you say, as far as economically and what's happening to families," Noel said.

In recent years Noel has helped lead the charge in several high-profile efforts to take control of federal lands. Key among those lands is the monument at the heart of his district — Grand Staircase-Escalante.



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The maligned monument

As designated by President Bill Clinton in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument covered roughly 1.9 million acres. It's bounded on the east by Capitol Reef National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and on the west by Bryce Canyon National Park. The monument's northern edge abuts the Dixie National Forest, while its southern extremity touches the Arizona border.

Wrapped within it sits a maze of twisted river canyons, eroded sandstone pinnacles and arches, relics of pioneer history and fossilized dinosaur bones.

Rep. Noel's cry to turn over those lands to state management, or to at least prioritize cattle grazing, ATV use and mineral extraction, have support from people like Garfield County Commissioner Leland Pollock.

"200,000 acres would be a stretch, to say that there's antiquities, things of value that meet the Antiquities Act criteria," Pollock said. "What is it? It's BLM range. It's brush land. It's sage brush."

The Bureau of Land Management administers the monument, unlike most other Utah monuments which are instead operated by the National Park Service.

Prior to the designation two decades ago, a bitter fight had raged between the mining company Andalex Resources, Inc. and environmental groups over the company's plans to extract large amounts of coal from the region. Andalex held federal mineral leases around the Kaiparowitz Plateau.

The wording of President Clinton's declaration made clear those existing leases were to be honored. However, the company made the decision not to develop the resources and ultimately gave up the leases in exchange for \$14 million from the Department of the Interior.

Miners were not the only ones with claims to the land. Ranchers also held leases that allowed them to graze their cattle over much of what is now in the monument. Those uses were largely respected and allowed to continue by the Bureau of Land Management, though some parcels were withdrawn from use.



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Monument critics believe the coal reserves could still be developed, to the economic benefit of the region, were the federal land managers not standing in the way.

Recreation opportunities on the monument are expansive, though not without difficulty.

Unlike many national parks, where trails are paved and shuttle buses run on tight schedules, Grand Staircase-Escalante is almost entirely primitive. It holds just three established campgrounds: Calf Creek along state Route 12 between Boulder and Escalante, Deer Creek on the Burr Trail Road and White House on the Paria River. Roads to most popular destinations are unpaved and at times impassable due to weather or damage.

“They did not want tourism,” Pollock said. “The monument itself, they would tell me when I was first sworn in as a commissioner, ‘this wasn’t created for tourism. It was created to study science.’”

The popularity explosion

Want them or not, tourists are coming to Grand Staircase-Escalante in record numbers.

Visitation statistics maintained by the National Park Service show Zion led the pack of Utah parks in 2016, taking in 4.3 million people. Bryce Canyon, the state’s second-most-visited park, welcomed almost 2.4 million. Both figures are nearly double the visitation recorded in 1996, when Grand Staircase-Escalante was born.

BLM records show the monument has also almost doubled its annual visitation during the same period. It set a high-water mark of 923,236 visitors last year, placing it above even Canyonlands and about on par with Capitol Reef National Park.

The rate of visitation growth for Zion, Bryce and Arches accelerated sharply in 2013. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Director Natalie Gochnour noted that in recent years, the Utah Office of Tourism has heavily advertised the parks with the Mighty Five campaign.

“There’s a lot of money that goes into promoting our state and it’s proven to be very well invested ... but you have to be really careful that you also invest in the quality of that experience,” Gochnour said. “Whether it’s roads or campgrounds or bridges or water treatment plants, amenities, you need to invest in the tourism infrastructure business to get a payback from it.”



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In Washington County, home to St. George and the Zion gateway community of Springdale, taxes on short-term lodging and restaurant sales have followed a similar curve as the park's visitation. Grand County, too, has shown strong tourism-related tax growth, boosted by visitors to Arches who also stay and spend in Moab.

The visitation spike has helped accelerate recovery in Washington and Grand Counties following the recession of the late 2000s.

"The tax revenues related to tourism and travel are going up, have been for the last five years," Jennifer Leaver said. She works as a research analyst at Gardner Institute and has spent a good deal of time examining the economics of southern Utah. "Jobs have been either remaining flat or going up. Wages have been going up."

But while Garfield County is home to Bryce Canyon, it has not seen quite the same boost.

Challenges of the tourism economy

The tiny town of Boulder is made up of little more than a few buildings and farms snuggled into the valley where state Route 12 and the Burr Trail meet on the southern slopes of Boulder Mountain. As of the 2010 Census, Boulder claimed a population of 226.

Yet it's exactly where Blake Spalding and her partner chose to start their business, Hell's Backbone Grill, shortly after Grand Staircase-Escalante's creation.

"We really just built it up. This is our 18th season. We have about 45 employees that work with us year after year," Spalding said.

Hell's Backbone Grill, which is located on the grounds of the Boulder Mountain Lodge, has received numerous accolades from both local and national press over the years. It draws clientele with its menu and its reputation, but finding qualified help has proved to be one of the restaurant's biggest challenges.

"There's not a business from a construction company to the school to the towns themselves, certainly my restaurant, that isn't hiring right now. We have jobs aplenty," Spalding said. "What we don't have is residents to fill them."



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Making a life in a place like Boulder can be incredibly difficult, especially for someone accustomed to urban living. Cell phone service is spotty. Cultural options are limited, though outdoor recreation is in abundant supply. Grocery runs can require long drives to bigger towns. And while there are jobs available, many are not the kind capable of providing a steady living.

Lecia Langston, a regional economist with the Utah Department of Workforce Services, said tourism jobs tend to come and go.

“For Garfield County particularly they see a huge amount of seasonality so that during the summer they basically have to import a lot of their labor because they need it, but they don’t need it in the winter,” Langston said.

People who can’t afford to stay the winter on what they earned are forced to leave in search of other opportunities, as work in other more stable fields can prove tough to find.

“Garfield County has the highest percentage of leisure and hospitality services jobs in the state. They run about 43 percent of their total non-farm employment,” Langston said.

The result is a yo-yoing effect. In March, the most recent month for which numbers are available, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Garfield County was 7.1 percent. That was the lowest it’s been since the end of the recession but it was still well above the statewide average of 3.1 percent.

“If you were to look at the raw rate in July for Garfield County it would be very, very, very low,” Langston said. Conversely, it would be much, much higher in December. “Kane County (in March) actually looks fairly low, given the fact that they do have a lot of seasonality. Their unemployment rate right now is 3.2 percent, which is comparable to the state average.”

Kanab on the cusp

Kane and Garfield Counties have much in common, making that difference in their unemployment rate very conspicuous.

“What’s interesting about Kane County is they do have a couple of unusual employers that make their employment numbers look a little bit different,” Langston said. “Kane County’s largest employer is actually Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. They show up in what we call ‘other services’ so they have a really high percentage of employment in that sector. The other thing



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that's important to know about Kane County is they do have some manufacturing. Stampin' Up was a homegrown company that started in Kane County and still has a sizable employment presence."

That little bit of diversity helps make Kane's economy more resilient. Kane County Office of Tourism Executive Director Camille Johnson said the addition of steady jobs has allowed for more stability and, as a result, investment in the visitor experience.

"We had Comfort Suites and Hampton Inn open up in the last year and we've got a La Quinta on line to open in 2018. Then I just learned of one of our local partners that's doing an expansion," Johnson said. "We've had a lot of new restaurants open up."

The city also has geography to its advantage. Kanab sits within striking distance of Zion, Bryce Canyon, the Grand Canyon, Lake Powell and the Wave. The county is promoting Kanab as a place to base camp while visiting the whole variety of southern Utah destinations. The goal is to keep visitors in town long enough to help the local economy, rather than having them simply pass through on their way to another place.

Johnson said overcrowding in the banner locations like Zion also has Kane County pointing increasingly more visitors toward hidden gems outside of the Mighty Five.

"Because tourism is such a hot industry for us right now, we're having a little bit of a labor force crisis and a housing crisis," Johnson said. "With the two new hotels opening up and several restaurants, it spread our already thin labor force even thinner."

Up in Garfield County though, the hospitality industry has grown more slowly since the creation of Grand Staircase-Escalante.

Commercial building permit papers obtained by KSL through an open records request reveal much of the new lodging construction over the last 20 years has focused Ruby's Inn or the Bryce Canyon gateway communities. Recently, more rustic rental options like cabins, yurts or RV parks have started to open around Escalante and Tropic.

Back in Kanab, some fear the rapid growth could dilute the history and western character of the region.



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“Locals will say to me ‘we don’t want to be like Moab, we don’t want to be like Springdale, please don’t let that happen’,” Johnson said. “They’re afraid that we’ll lose the spirit of our community and our heritage and then it won’t be appealing for locals to stay here and then they uproot and then we lose that heritage.”

The tale of two Utahs

The loss of locals is already happening and not just in Kanab. It’s evident from the average age in many rural Utah counties.

“There are two different economic realities in our state. We call it ‘the tale of two Utahs’,” Natalie Gochnour said. “They basically have children who left the counties, presumably for employment opportunities, schooling and they don’t come back. And so these counties get older and older and older.”

Why don’t they come back? Experts agree it’s a lack of high-paying skilled work in rural communities.

“It’s kind of a catch-22 because there aren’t necessarily the kinds of jobs young people want, or that pay the kind of wages that they’d really like to have, so they leave and you don’t get the population growth that you need to spur the economic growth,” Lecia Langston, the Workforce Services regional economist, said.

Garfield County even declared a state of emergency in 2015 due to declining enrollment at Escalante High School.

“In 1996 you had about 144 children enrolled at Escalante school, seventh through 12th grade,” Commissioner Leland Pollock said. “When we declared that state of emergency it was down to 51.”

Pollock points to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument as the primary reason for the drop. Others though see the problem in more nuanced terms.

“I think it’s really a time to think very purposefully about rural Utah, particularly rural Utah that’s hurting, and figure out how do we connect and unify and help,” Gochnour said.



She suggested that could mean having policymakers lean on urban Utah's strength, investing the fruits of Wasatch Front productivity into rural counties through infrastructure improvements like better roads or broadband access. At the same time, battles over public lands could be quieted by some good-faith deal-making.

“I think a really productive place for state decision makers to focus is on land exchanges and making all of these state institutional trust lands that are locked up inside federal lands, not accessible, getting them closer to the cities, closer to the towns and letting those towns grow,” Gochnour said.

The Wasatch Front could in turn benefit in the form of reduced air pollution and traffic congestion, as more people disperse into areas outside of the urban core. Gochnour suggested outdoor gear companies already operating in the state could lead the charge, choosing to locate their manufacturing facilities in areas like Kanab.

“Maybe it's time for the state and the federal government, locals, recreationists to all come together and say ‘there is a path forward that can address our needs’.”

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3. **Patagonia to Zinke: 'Conserve Our Shared Public Lands for Future Generations'**

EcoWatch, May 5 | Yvon Chouinard and Rose Marcario

Dear Secretary Zinke,

As Secretary of the Interior, you hold the solemn responsibility to steward America's public lands and waters on behalf of the American people who own them. Our public lands, including the national monuments you are now reviewing, represent a vital part of our nation's heritage—a legacy that belongs not just to us, but to all future generations of Americans. It is an important part of your job to safeguard this legacy by making careful and informed decisions about what federal lands can be used for development and what special or vulnerable areas should be preserved for the future.

That is why the arbitrary 120-day deadline for you to review whether to shrink or rescind dozens of national monuments is absurd. As you know, the process to establish a national monument



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often takes years, if not decades. It involves significant study of the area of the proposed monument—including its ecological, cultural, archeological, economic and recreation value—and robust consultation with local communities and their elected representatives at every level. Given the unique and complex histories of each monument, there is simply no way to meaningfully review dozens of individual monuments in such a short period.

You justify this review on the false premise that the American people have not yet been heard on the designation of these national monuments. But the communities near the national monuments under your review have already made their voices heard during public input and stakeholder engagement periods prior to designation. For example, notwithstanding the rhetoric of Utah Governor Gary Herbert and members of the Utah Congressional delegation, the designation of Bears Ears National Monument involved years of public input gathered by the Obama administration. This process included a series of public meetings in Southeastern Utah in 2016, including several sessions attended by former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. It also included significant engagement with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which represents tribal nations for whom the land is sacred and contains archeological artifacts with immense cultural value. Additionally, in a recent poll, 68 percent of voters in seven Western states said they prioritize the protection of land, water and wildlife for recreation on public land, compared with 22 percent who prioritized increased production of fossil fuels. Your review must account for this extensive record of consultation as you purport to seek public input.

As you undertake this review, we urge you to consider the enormous economic benefits of protected public lands for nearby communities, including many rural areas. A recent study showed that areas in the West with protected lands consistently enjoy better rates of employment and income growth compared to those with no protected lands. In the 22 years since the Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah was declared a national monument, jobs grew by 38 percent in two neighboring counties. The designation of 17 national monuments—including nine monuments covered under your review—led to significant increases in per capita income in regions adjacent to the newly-protected areas.

Rescinding or shrinking the national monuments under review also threatens the fast-growing outdoor recreation economy, which relies significantly on recreation access to protected public lands. These lands are not "locked up," as the Trump administration has said repeatedly declared—they are extremely productive. As you know, since you participated in the outdoor industry's announcement of a new economic study last week, the recreation economy drives \$887 billion in consumer spending every year and supports more jobs (7.6 million) than oil,



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natural gas and mining combined. Rescinding or shrinking the national monuments under review would significantly impact the strength of the outdoor recreation economy and limit our ability to create and sustain jobs.

Patagonia has been outfitting outdoors people and protecting public lands for more than 30 years. The debate over land and water conservation is always complex and sometimes divisive. But we have never witnessed the legacy of America's federal lands encountering greater risk than we see right now. As you visit these protected places and report back to the president, I urge you to follow in the tradition of President Teddy Roosevelt and conserve our shared public lands for future generations.

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4. **INTERIOR: Agency suspends advisory panels even as decisions loom**

E & E News, May 5 | Scott Streater

The Interior Department is formally reviewing the "charter and charge" of more than 200 advisory panels that assist federal agencies managing hundreds of millions of acres of public lands at a time when the Trump administration is considering significant changes to land-use designations and management practices.

The Bureau of Land Management has told members of its 30 resource advisory councils (RACs) to postpone scheduled meetings through at least September as part of the new national review of Interior's advisory panels, both internal and external.

That includes canceling meetings of six other BLM advisory committees affiliated with specific sites within the agency's National Conservation Lands system, as well as two other high-profile panels: the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board and the North Slope Science Initiative Science Technical Advisory Panel in Alaska.

It also affects other panels, such as the National Park System Advisory Board, which advises the NPS director and Interior secretary "on matters relating to the National Park Service, the National Park System, and programs administered by the National Park Service," including the Antiquities Act, which has been targeted by GOP congressional leaders.



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The timing means some land management recommendations — including a high-profile review of national monuments — will be completed without the advisory panels' input.

Heather Swift, an Interior spokeswoman, told E&E News in an email today that the review is part of an ongoing effort by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke aimed at "restoring trust in the Department's decision-making."

Swift said the review of "the charter and charge of each Board/Advisory Committee" is designed to "maximize feedback from these boards and ensure their compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act," the 1972 law that ensures that advice by various advisory committees is objective and accessible to the public.

"This review process necessitates the temporary postponement of advisory committee meetings," Swift said.

But Swift said the review is also designed to ensure compliance with "the President's recent executive orders."

President Trump in the last month has signed a number of executive orders, including one requiring the review of all policies that may "potentially burden" energy production activity on federal lands.

Trump last week also signed one requiring Interior to review the boundaries of dozens of national monuments designated within the last two decades and to decide whether they should be altered or eliminated (Greenwire, April 26).

That executive order is targeted at more than 30 national monuments designated since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres. It will initially focus on the fate of the recently designated 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument but will ultimately include sites like the 1.9-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, both in Utah.

That executive order requires Zinke to submit a report with his recommendations on the national monuments to the president within 120 days, before the Interior review of the advisory committees and boards is completed and the postponement of the meetings lifted.

That means the Utah resource advisory council that provides recommendations to BLM on management of the 22.9 million acres of federal public lands in the state will not weigh in on the



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national monument issue; neither, presumably, will the members of the agency's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument advisory committee.

That concerns Greg Zimmerman, deputy director of the Center for Western Priorities.

"The Trump administration and Interior Secretary Zinke talk a big game about including Western communities in decisionmaking on public lands, but this action proves it's nothing more than talk," Zimmerman said. "They are shutting out input from communities just as the administration takes unprecedented steps toward wiping national monuments from the map."

It's a particular concern for BLM, critics say.

Canceling the BLM RAC meetings "sends a clear signal that Secretary Zinke intends to make decisions behind closed doors and not through an open and transparent public process," Zimmerman said.

The agency's 30 RACs, whose members are appointed by the Interior secretary, are designed to help guide BLM administrators on a wide variety of issues involving major projects such as multistate transmission lines and energy projects.

The advisory panels typically have 10 to 15 members, who are supposed to represent a cross-section of local residents, state government agencies, industry and conservation leaders. They evaluate and submit recommendations on "land use planning, fire management, off-highway vehicle use, recreation, oil and gas exploration, noxious weed management, grazing issues, wild horse and burro herd management issues," and other topics, according to BLM.

Recommendations from the RACs, established by Interior in 1995 during the Clinton administration, are supposed to carry significant weight with BLM leaders.

But there have been some high-profile examples in the past two years where BLM ignored the recommendations of its RACs.

BLM in January approved the final two segments of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project in Idaho over the objections of an eight-member subcommittee of the BLM Boise District's RAC that concluded the route would unnecessarily affect communities, natural resource values and private landowners (Greenwire, Jan. 20).



And last year, BLM formally approved the 287-megawatt Soda Mountain Solar Project in the Southern California desert, despite the recommendation of BLM California's Desert District RAC against the project and its impacts on wildlife, groundwater quality and other natural resources (E&E News PM, April 5, 2016).

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5. **27 national monuments under Interior Dept. review**

David DeMille, May 5 | David DeMille

ST. GEORGE, Utah — Nearly two dozen national monuments will face a federal review period following an executive order by President Trump.

The Department of the Interior, under new Trump appointee Secretary Ryan Zinke, released the names of 27 monuments Friday that it will put under a review, including a public comment period that will run for 60 days.

“Today’s action, initiating a formal public comment process finally gives a voice to local communities and states when it comes to Antiquities Act monument designations,” Zinke said in a written release. “There is no pre-determined outcome on any monument. I look forward to hearing from and engaging with local communities and stakeholders as this process continues.”

Trump ordered the reviews last week, covering a 21-year period bookended by two of the more controversial monument designations in recent memory, both in Utah: the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designated by President Clinton in 1996 and the Bears Ears National Monument designated by President Obama late last year.

Zinke is scheduled to visit both monuments next week, meeting with local officials.

Either Congress or the president can protect federal land by designating a national monuments, with the 1906 Antiquities Act giving the president authority to quickly preserve land without waiting for legislation from Congress. There were 129 monuments nationwide at the start of the year, with recent presidents tending to designate more land than most of their predecessors. George W. Bush and Obama each designated more than 200 million acres as monument lands.

The Bears Ears designation was especially contentious in recent years, with many Utah officials comparing it to the Grand Staircase-Escalante designation two decades earlier.



No president has ever moved to rescind a designation made by a previous president.

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6. Native American advocates size up Trump administration

KPAX News, May 6 / Eleanor Mueller

With President Donald Trump's first 100 days in office in the rearview mirror, lawmakers and advocates are uncertain but hopeful about the impact the new administration will have on the Native American community.

Trump's choice of Ryan Zinke to be secretary of the interior quelled the concerns of some; as a former congressman from Montana, Zinke has experience representing Native Americans in Washington, which is seen as a promising sign by many of the community's top advocates.

But some of the President's executive actions and controversial comments, including a recent reference to Democratic Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren as "Pocahontas," have raised some concerns. Lawmakers serving on the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs have voiced trepidation about the impact the new administration may have on Native American health care, education funding and sovereignty, among other issues.

However, community stakeholders say they trying to balance those concerns with optimism as the President's first term unfolds.

Zinke takes over

In interviews, lawmakers expressed trust in Zinke's demonstrated ability to understand the issues important to Native Americans across the nation. Hailing from a state with seven Indian reservations, Zinke possesses "a degree of knowledge" not typical of the interior secretary position, said Sen. John McCain, the current longest-serving member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

"Secretary Zinke has much more experience on Native American issues than his predecessor -- who had literally none," the Arizona Republican told CNN in an interview. "My initial impression is President Trump and the people around him support sovereignty and the Native American population. They can have a degree of knowledge and involvement in Native American issues that was not the case amongst their predecessors."



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The interior secretary under former President Barack Obama was Sally Jewell, the previous CEO of outdoor retailer REI. The Interior Department did not respond to requests for comment.

In 2015, then-Rep. Zinke sought to make tax breaks on coal mined from American Indian reservations permanent -- a move viewed as boosting the communities' revenue and creating jobs for tribal members. In a statement emailed to CNN, the National Congress of American Indians expressed their support for Zinke, citing "his approach to the (Bureau of Indian Affairs) as well as his commitment to giving tribal nations a seat at the table across the federal government."

"Ryan Zinke has a long history of fighting for our country," NCAI President Brian Cladoosby said in the statement. "Throughout his service as a congressman for Montana, he fought for Montanans and Montana's tribes in the halls of Congress. We have no doubt that Secretary Zinke will continue fighting for all tribes as secretary of interior."

Tribal sovereignty

The densest cloud of uncertainty surrounds the matter of tribal sovereignty, or the US agreement to protect the ability of individual tribal governments to govern themselves.

While Zinke's congressional track record reflects commitment to Native American self-determination, Trump's past is not as clear.

"Secretary Zinke has always supported the principles of tribal sovereignty and self-determination," McCain said. "That's an important pillar of our tribal relations."

In 1993, Trump's comments in a congressional hearing on Indian casinos shocked lawmakers and others.

"Go up to Connecticut, and you look (at the Mashantucket Pequots)," Trump told the House Natural Resources Native American affairs subcommittee. "They don't look like Indians to me."

In June 2016, then-presidential candidate Trump labeled Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts "Pocahontas" -- a reference to her claimed Indian heritage.

"Pocahontas is at it again!" Trump wrote in a tweet. "Goofy Elizabeth Warren, one of the least productive U.S. Senators, has a nasty mouth."



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The President resurfaced the comment in Atlanta on April 28 this year, telling a crowd of National Rifle Association members that "it may be Pocahontas" pursuing the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020.

The remarks were condemned by the National Council of American Indians, who in a May 3 statement called them "derogatory."

"I'm disturbed by some comments the President has made," Sen. Tom Udall, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, told CNN. "He has made some very derogatory comments about tribes. I hope Secretary Zinke encourages President Trump about the importance of self-determination, teach him about that, understand what it's all about."

Recent executive actions have done little to assuage these worries, the New Mexico Democrat said. On the Dakota Access Pipeline and the planned border wall (which would cut a reservation in half), Trump has moved ahead "without talking to" American Indian stakeholders, Udall said.

"He's taken action without consultation," Udall said. "One of the cores of trust and responsibility is government-to-government consultation, talking with tribes that are concerned.

"It shows a complete lack of understanding of tribal sovereignty, self-determination -- things very, very important to tribes," Udall added.

However, these are missteps that could be remedied with future collaboration, Udall said.

"The tribes are a little apprehensive," Udall said. "But I think if they see an outreached hand, it is going to help get some things done."

Education

One issue that's already on Zinke's plate at Interior is Native American education. Speaking at a March 8 hearing of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, the secretary acknowledged the failings of the Bureau of Indian Education.

"Words cannot capture how terrible it is that children in schools overseen by Bureau of Indian Education are so poorly served," Zinke said.



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Many lawmakers agree that the schools should be a top priority for the new administration. But though Zinke has said he supports upgrading the schools, actually making changes is more difficult.

"He responded as you might expect (during the March 8 hearing) -- that he was committed to it, that he understood the challenges and the situation, and he said it was on his highest priority list," McCain said. "He gave the right answers. And I believe him. But I've heard those same answers for years and years."

Among the things McCain said he would like to see: More federal funding for school choice initiatives.

"The answer to that in my view is to give the tribe access to BIE funds to be used for private tuition, tutors, classes, charter schools, so Native families have more choices," McCain said. "I'm not saying charter schools are better or worse -- although I personally believe they're better -- but Native American parents should be able to have a choice where they want their children to go."

According to a 2014 Government Accountability Office report, the Bureau of Indian Education spent about \$15,391 per pupil annually -- compared to the average of \$9,896 per student at public schools nationwide.

Despite this, Government Accountability Office reports have found that BIE students have higher dropout rates, lower scores on college admission tests and lower college entrance rates than their public school counterparts.

"We have a long way to go when it comes to Indian education," Udall said.

And the confirmation of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education has done little to assuage the New Mexico Democrat's concerns: "The thing that worries me the most is the new education secretary," he said.

DeVos's efforts to "voucherize education" "could well apply to the Bureau of Indian Education," Udall said.

"I think that would be a real disaster," Udall said. "It would be draining resources away from already depleted resources pool. That is not a good idea."



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Health care

Also on Zinke and lawmakers' wish lists are improvements to Native American health care.

"The one (issue) I would really start with would be Indian health care," Udall said. "It's been a hot-button issue."

During his January 17 confirmation hearing, Zinke told lawmakers that "as bad as the VA is, (Native American health) is worse."

With the ongoing GOP efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, lawmakers and advocates are unsure what the future may hold for the health care of the Native American community.

According to Udall, Republicans are "not involving Democrats" in health care reform discussions; an exclusion that makes it difficult for the party to advocate for Indian-American rights.

"It's a closed-door affair," Udall said. "The best advocates for Native Americans excluded from the table."

Given the underfunding of the Indian Health Service, many tribal members "rely heavily" on the Affordable Care Act's health exchange, Udall said. Were the federal government to cut discretionary spending -- as proposed in the President's budget -- and repeal Obamacare, tribes across the country would suffer, Udall said.

"The proposal in the budget is to increase defense dramatically at the expense of the domestic side," Udall said. "With that proposal and the proposal on the Affordable Care Act, that could be a big hit on the tribes across the country."

Speaking at the March 8 hearing, Paul Torres, the chairman of Al Pueblo Council of Governors, also voiced concerns about the budget cuts.

"These across-the-board cuts are alarming because the majority of programs serving Indian Country fall under the category of discretionary spending and are not exempted under the President's proposed plan," Torres said.

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7. **Op-ed: Utah Farm Bureau applauds review of national monuments**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 / Ron Gibson

Utah Farm Bureau applauds President Trump's review of presidential national monument designations over the past two decades, including the highly controversial 1996 Grand Staircase-Escalante and 2016 Bears Ears National Monument.

It is refreshing, remembering President Bill Clinton sitting on the south rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona without consulting local officials or notifying Utah's elected leaders of his intention to set aside 1.9 million acres in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Or, that one month before the end of his presidency, Barack Obama would unilaterally lock up another 1.35 million acres in the Bears Ears National Monument. Certainly, a closer look is warranted!

The president has authority under the Antiquities Act to "protect objects of historic and scientific interest" but it must be "confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected." Such was the case when Teddy Roosevelt made the 1,300-acre Devils Tower the first National Monument in 1906. Sadly, things have taken a drastic turn toward massive monuments since President Jimmy Carter in the 1970s.

Did protection of unique features or politics of the day drive the designation of nearly 3.5 million acres being locked away in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monuments? It's obvious the politics of Clinton and Obama didn't line up with Utah. The courts have declared there is no need to protect common sagebrush ground with no scientific or historic value. While there are clearly beautiful areas of historic and cultural importance that can be preserved in these monuments, much of it is common sagebrush that should be open for multiple uses.

A review of land ownership in the most affected counties – Kane, San Juan and Garfield – would bring into focus whether or not the designation of these national monuments is excessive and regulatory overkill. These rural county governments already struggle to meet their citizens' needs and to educate their children with only 10 percent (Kane), 8 percent (San Juan) and a paltry 5 percent (Garfield) of the land in these counties privately owned.

National monument designations in these three counties have, and will continue, to adversely impact generations-old sheep and cattle ranching families, as well as other multiple uses such as recreation and resource development. Livestock ranching, a major economic contributor going



back to pioneer settlement, must now deal with a new level of Resource Management Planning by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service.

In Utah, with 67 percent of the state owned and controlled by the federal government, family sheep and cattle ranchers have been compelled for generations to combine their limited private land and water with the public domain to have sustainable and economically viable businesses. While this model worked historically for these family businesses, increasing uncertainty in how public lands are managed makes going forward difficult. Ranchers have already had to absorb a reduction of 70 percent of livestock grazing numbers in the past 50 years.

Cattle ranching and its economic contribution in Southern Utah's Kane, Garfield and San Juan Counties has been hard hit by the presidential orders. Approximately 40,000 head of cattle were harvesting the annually renewing forage in these counties in 2016, generating more than \$33 million in direct sales. Using a conservative multiplier, as ranching families spend those dollars and they ripple through the small towns, cattle sales will generate more than \$50 million to the local economy. And that is a contribution that can renew itself every year.

Livestock grazing on the public lands is an important part of the history and culture of rural Utah and is a critical component of these rural economies. Harvesting the renewable forage provides an affordable protein for American dinner tables, contributes to the health of the ecosystem, reduces the potential for catastrophic wildfires, and supports rural, local economies.

The Utah Farm Bureau welcomes President Trump's desire to review these monuments for the past 20 years to ensure they're keeping with the stated intent of the Antiquities Act. With all the economic growth taking place along the Wasatch Front, it's important for us all to support one of the pillars of economic success for these rural Utah counties – agriculture.

Ron Gibson is president of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation.

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8. Much at stake as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke visits Bears Ears

The Deseret News, May 6 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — To all in the fight over the Bears Ears monument designation, there is much to win, a way of life to lose, and very little room on any side to compromise.



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When Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke steps off the plane Sunday in Utah, he will become the key witness to a dramatic showdown over the fate of the 1.35 million-acre monument, and for the next several days, the man everyone in this fight will want to meet.

If the monument stands, Native Americans, environmental groups and conservation organizations that spent millions of dollars on the effort for a new monument in San Juan County can set about on the next steps.

Monument status elevates the cultural, historical and spiritual significance of the rugged country, they say, and puts federal land managers on a path to protecting thousands upon thousands of ancient artifacts.

A monument designation for the region gives five Native American tribes not only a reason to celebrate, but a reason to hope that strong bonds will be forged with an American government that over centuries has let them down at best or betrayed them at worst.

To these Native American men and women who fight for the survival of the Bears Ears National Monument, it assures their spiritual connection there will live on, cradled in the arms of wind-swept buttes, pine-dotted mountaintops and sprawling Cedar Mesa sandstone.

But a loud chorus of people in San Juan County say they love the land as well, but hate the monument.

They're offended that a place hailed for its beauty and solitude suddenly needs an absentee landlord in Washington, D.C., to exercise oversight when generations have grown up with it as their backyard.

Regardless of the promises in President Barack Obama's Bears Ears proclamation, they see monument status as the wedge in the door of access that the federal government will eventually slam shut.

They fear hunting, fishing, grazing, collecting firewood, motorized travel — multiple uses of the land — will be chipped away and restricted until the activities are eventually gone. In their place will rise a Moab-esq atmosphere with monument signs, a visitor center, lines of cars and hoards of selfie-taking tourists intent on scratching one more destination off their to-do list.



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With 65 percent of land within Utah's borders already owned and controlled by the federal government, the state's leaders and county governments are indignant that one more layer of government control — over their objections — was hoisted upon a county that is already the poorest in the state, where jobs are already tough to come by.

Against this backdrop, Zinke — a former Navy Seal Team Six leader — will wade into the fray by visiting Bears Ears and meeting with local residents before he returns to Washington, D.C., to eventually advise President Donald Trump on what its fate should be.

"The fact that he has agreed to come and visit, I think, is a good thing for everybody," Gov. Gary Herbert said. "He needs to come and look at the public lands issues we have here in the Intermountain West and particularly in Utah. He needs to look at some of the areas of controversy. I think he needs to come with an open mind and an unbiased attitude, and take a look and listen to the pros and cons."

Zinke's visit to the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments — also under fire but in a blaze that was set 21 years ago when it was created — comes as a result of an executive order issued by President Trump on April 26.

That order directs a 45-day review centered around Bears Ears with resulting recommendations for the president, as well as a look at designations of monuments with more than 100,000 acres since 1996.

With a sympathetic president at the helm who campaigned on the promise to return power to the states and power to the people — and also unravel federal regulations — Utah's leaders are practically giddy at the prospect there will be some sort of presidential directive on Bears Ears.

While no president has ever rescinded a monument, and therefore that executive power has never been tested in court, five presidents have significantly reduced monuments. In the most extreme example, President Howard Taft reduced the Navajo National Monument by 89 percent.

Over time, 11 national monuments have been abolished through acts of Congress, according to the National Park Service, most typically because their importance was overstated or the resources for which they were established were diminished.

In Utah, a legal battle raged to overturn Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, but that proved unsuccessful.



History, then, offers a mosaic of executive branch and congressional reactions to controversial monument creations.

For supporters of Bears Ears, a rescission is akin to blasphemy — and any reduction in size as a so-called "compromise" is untenable.

"Friends of Cedar Mesa is committed to on-the-ground stewardship of these public lands whatever the politicians decide," said Josh Ewing, the group's executive director. "However, any shrinkage of the monument just makes it that much harder for us to do good stewardship to benefit the landscape as we're forced into legal/political/policy battles to stop bad things from happening to lands that should have been protected in the first place."

Jami Bayles, president of Stewards of San Juan County, said the designation goes against what residents want and won't automatically come with protections supporters want. The monument designation needs to go.

"It is appalling that nonlocal voices have drowned out those who treasure this land the most. Long before established bureaus arrived, it was and has always been the local people who have protected and cared for this land. We are the reason it is pristine," Bayles said.

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9. Supporters of Bears Ears, Grand Staircase rally in advance of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's visit

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 / Peggy Fletcher Stack

After his birth in Utah's Monument Valley, James Adakai's umbilical cord was buried at Bears Ears.

The Navajo Nation's commissioner for Bears Ears now worries such a sacred spot will be lost unless Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke agrees to meet with the state's tribal authorities during his four-day visit to Utah — a face-to-face conversation the secretary has so far declined.

Zinke needs to "listen to everyone," Adakai told a crowd of more than 1,000 supporters of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments gathered on the Capitol's steps Saturday afternoon.



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Zinke intends to be in the Beehive State from Sunday to Wednesday as part of President Donald Trump's plan to review 27 large monuments designated since 1996.

The review could lead Trump to shrink the size of some monuments or possibly attempt to rescind one, which has never happened. Zinke has until June 10 to report back on the 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears monument, the last one created by President Barack Obama just weeks before his term ended. The secretary has a few more months to make recommendations on the others, including Grand Staircase. Zinke's fact-finding trip will be highly watched and highly political, with a much smaller anti-monument rally held in Blanding on Saturday.

Many in the larger Capitol crowd — including a contingent of American Indians — held signs that read "Save our monuments — antiquities in stone and bone," "Don't Trump Utah," "Don't give our public lands to greedy local politicians," "Rural Born Utahn for Bears Ears" and "Honor Tribal Sovereignty."

As they filled the Capitol's steps and spilled down the lawns, Gavin Noyes, executive director of Utah Dine Bikeyah, told The Salt Lake Tribune he hoped Zinke would "walk the land with traditional tribal elders whose past and future is tied to Bears Ears." His group, which is led by Native Americans, sought the creation of the controversial monument over the objection of Utah's members of Congress and most state leaders.

Noyes opened the 1 p.m. rally under a blazing sun with a call for the Cabinet official to listen to more than just Utah's top politicians.

"Don't touch our monuments," he said. "Listen to the people, not the delegation."

The Dine Bikeyah director urged attendees to plant pro-monument signs in their yards so that when the Interior secretary arrives Sunday for meetings in Salt Lake City, he will be visually bombarded. Noyes further instructed supporters to pack Zinke's news conference scheduled for 4 p.m. Sunday to make their wishes known.

Evangeline Gray, a Navajo medicine woman, offered a prayer to the Creator Spirit, calling on the divine to "get people to hear our voices ... that the land is precious to us ... and to touch [the delegation's] heart."

Virgil Johnson, chairman of the Utah Tribal Leaders Association, said: "We are stewards of this land ... protective of our land and beliefs."



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Noting tribal sovereignty, Johnson said he asked for a meeting with Zinke while the Cabinet member was in Utah but was declined.

"We are not being heard," he said. "Our rights are being swept aside. ... It needs to stop."

That was followed by wild applause.

During Utah's legislative session earlier this year, state representatives passed resolutions asking the president either to reduce the size of Grand Staircase and Bears Ears or eliminate Bears Ears altogether.

"I represent a conservative district," state Rep. Patrice Arent, D-Millcreek, said "but I didn't hear from one person asking me to vote for these bills."

These lands are not just valuable to Utahns, but "all over the nation and world," Arent told the crowd. "We cannot afford to auction them off to the highest bidder."

She further argued that tourists visiting these monuments have helped, not hurt, the local economy — a point reiterated by Nate Waggoner, of the Boulder Chamber of Commerce, near the Grand Staircase monument.

At the same time supporters were meeting in Salt Lake City, dozens of Bears Ears opponents gathered in Blanding's Pioneer Park.

"Unlike the rally being held 300 miles away at the state Capitol, the San Juan celebration of local voices is about bringing together those who know and love our public lands the most," Ryan Bennaly, vice president of Stewards of San Juan County, wrote on the group's website. "For the monument advocates far, far away, San Juan County is a vacation spot. For First Nations people, it's our home."

At the Blanding rally, Jami Bayles urged participants to meet back at the park Monday, when they hope to meet with the secretary in person.

"San Juan County is eager to have Secretary Zinke visit our home and see firsthand why locals oppose the national monument designation," Bayles wrote on the site. "We have worked tirelessly to advocate for what's best for this land, and it's nice to know that someone is finally listening."



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Back at the Capitol rally, attended by many Native Americans and some residents of San Juan County, Jared Campbell of Salt Lake City brought his 3-year-old daughter, Phoebe, because she's "grown up living in the outdoors."

Recently, Campbell spent four days in the designated area, drinking in its beauty and grandeur.

After that experience, he wondered if monument opponents across the state have "touched the soil" there.

Zinke will have his chance this week. He plans a full day of meetings in San Juan County on Monday, followed by a visit to Bears Ears on Tuesday. He'll then travel to Kanab and a part of the Grand Staircase monument on Wednesday.

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10. **In our opinion: Reviewing the Antiquities Act is an important course of action**

The Deseret News, May 6 / Deseret News editorial board

We believe in the importance of conservation. The nation's public and shared lands are a vital treasure that need to be preserved.

Yet, legislators must fix the Antiquities Act and allow for greater local input and decision-making power before monuments are made.

As Utah welcomes U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to the state this weekend, we also welcome his department's review of the Antiquities Act.

Sec. Zinke's visit to Utah comes as President Trump directed the Department of the Interior to review national monument designations made under the Antiquities Act since 1996 that exceed 100,000 acres. On Friday, the department released a list of 15 monuments under review and invited public comment. The Bears Ears (1,353,000 acres) and the Grand Staircase-Escalante (1,700,000 acres) monuments in Utah both made the list.

The review is a worthwhile endeavor to see what public input went in to the designations. It should help lead to legislative revisions of the Antiquities Act, which is being used to lock up land without the consent of local citizens.



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Conservationists, of course, are fearful that this review will lead to rescinding or reducing of the Bears Ears National Monument. But, in the long-run, the important question for America is what should be the proper political process for declaring a monument designation that permits local involvement.

When President Theodore Roosevelt championed the Antiquities Act in the early 20th century, the legislation was enacted to protect Native American artifacts and sacred burial sites from looting and to preserve historic edifices or areas of scientific importance. Designations under the act were to “be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.”

In recent years, however, with the stroke of a pen, the executive branch has restricted access to millions of acres of land without, in some instances, even consulting the local citizenry or their political representatives. No matter the original intent of the Antiquities Act, the law is increasingly used to sanction unacceptable federal overreach.

Shared governance and compromise is part of what makes the American system unique — abuse of the Antiquities Act is antithetical to those principles.

Reporting by Deseret News’ Jesse Hyde uncovered the behind the scenes political maneuvering that led to the Trump administration’s decision to review the law. Utah’s senior Sen. Orrin Hatch played a major role in persuading Trump to look at rescinding or reducing the Bear’s Ears National Monument.

It’s well known that Utah’s political leaders have been lobbying the administration to reverse the order by President Obama creating the Bear’s Ears monument. In announcing the review, President Trump made it clear that he philosophically sides with Utah’s political leadership, saying, “The Antiquities Act does not give the federal government unlimited power to lock up millions of acres of land and water, and it is time we ended this abusive practice.”

If the administration is inclined to follow the advice of Utah’s governor, legislative leaders and congressional delegation and ultimately rescind or make changes to national monuments in Utah, it will immediately trigger lawsuits and a judicial review of the president’s authority to do so.

What will come of such a legal battle is unclear, but the real long-term solution to this problem is to fix the legislation. Whether or not Bear’s Ears should be rescinded is a question separate from



the legitimacy of the Antiquities Act. Polls show Utahns are largely split on the issue of Bear's Ears. We believe the region deserves protection.

Political leaders, however, have couched the most recent designation as a “betrayal” by the Obama Administration of good-faith efforts by the state to cobble together a consensus on how best to protect the land. Supporters of the monument argue, with some justification, that the state’s efforts in that direction were doomed to succumb to political pressures as they stumbled through the legislative process in Washington. Others counter by pointing out that the prospect of a presidential monument designation caused negotiations to go no where since conservationists were confident they would get their monument anyway.

The solution, however, should not be that the executive branch steps in to pick a winner. Rather, the U.S. needs a system that fosters the kind of compromise and local solutions that were being worked out.

Reviewing the Antiquities Act with an eye toward congressional revision is an important course of action and one that will hopefully lead to good conservationism and sound practices of shared governance.

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11. **Op-ed: Will Bears Ears Be the Next Standing Rock?**

The New York Times, May 6 | Terry Tempest Williams

“Rising from the center of the southeastern Utah landscape and visible from every direction are twin buttes so distinctive that in each of the native languages of the region their name is the same: Hoon’Naqvut, Shash Jáa, Kwiyaqatu Nukavachi, Ansh An Lashokdiwe, or ‘Bears Ears.’ For hundreds of generations, native peoples lived in the surrounding deep sandstone canyons, desert mesas ... one of the densest and most significant cultural landscapes in the United States.”

— Proclamation by President Barack Obama establishing Bears Ears National Monument, Dec. 28, 2016

After seven years of organizing, the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition — made up of the Hopi, Navajo, Uintah and Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni Nations — played a key role in



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securing the protection of 1.35 million acres surrounding Bears Ears from development and resource extraction just before President Obama left office.

But in our climate of political myopia, President Trump recently ordered the Interior Department to review the size and scope of national monuments larger than 100,000 acres created since 1996. He complained that these designations “unilaterally put millions of acres of land and water under strict federal control,” called them a “massive federal land grab” and directed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review and reverse some of them.

There is a subtext here, as his order made clear. Monument designations, the document said, can “create barriers to achieving energy independence” and “otherwise curtail economic growth.” Among the likely beneficiaries of any reversals are the oil and gas industries, mining and logging interests and commercial development.

In issuing this order, President Trump — who has never visited Bears Ears — apparently chose to listen to the bellicose politicians of Utah and do the bidding of Senator Orrin Hatch and Representatives Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz, who complain that Utahns were cut out of the process. Call that another alternative fact. The lawmakers claim it was an endgame move by the departing President Obama to create a “midnight monument.”

The truth is, the establishment of Bears Ears National Monument was a healing moment of historic importance. A unique agreement was reached between Indian tribes and the United States government for a collaborative approach to the management of Bears Ears. It was a clasp of hands across history. It was also about America looking into the deep future rather than into the narrow exhaust pipe of today. It was about drilling for hope and dignity, rather than fossil fuels.

But now Bears Ears could very well become another Standing Rock in both desecration and resistance — the latest example of a new colonialism, with the government bulldozing Indian sovereignty and privileging Big Oil. “If the Trump administration moves forward with their interests, they are taking us backward 100 years, rupturing trust once again between the federal government and Indian people,” Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, a former councilwoman from the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, said.



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No president has ever attempted to abolish a national monument, and it is unclear whether a president has the power to do it without Congress. And no president in the last half-century has reduced the size of a monument.

Bears Ears is a cradle of Native American history. Far from creating a “midnight monument” willed into existence at the slash of a presidential pen, the Obama designation provides these sacred lands with the protection that has long been in the prayers and dreams of tribal leaders.

“Bears Ears is all about Indian sovereignty,” said Russell Begaye, the president of the Navajo Nation.

The removal of one square inch from Bears Ears National Monument will be seen as an assault on the home ground of Native Americans in the American Southwest, a disrespect for their ceremonial lives and the traditional knowledge of their ancestors. Hundreds of thousands of artifacts are buried in the serpentine canyons and shifting pink sands of Cedar Mesa, hidden, until exposed by rain or wind or theft. The desecration of Indian graves has prompted F.B.I. raids and convictions.

But it’s not just about local desecration. So much of the American West these days is under threat of development and fossil fuel extraction. Our very sense of wildness and wilderness is at stake, from Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah to the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in New Mexico. “This is a war on our public lands,” said Senator Tom Udall, Democrat of New Mexico. Our national parks and monuments and other public lands are breathing spaces for a society increasingly holding its breath.

“We are not just protecting these lands for our people, but all people,” Jonah Yellowman, a Navajo medicine person and spiritual leader, said.

As a Utahn, I have spent considerable time in the pinyon-juniper-laced mesas and sandstone canyons of Bears Ears. This is a landscape of immense stillness where ancient handprints left on red rock walls are a reminder of who came before us and who will follow.

If President Trump is successful in rescinding Bears Ears National Monument, it will be a breach of faith with our future and our past. Over 330 million visits were made to the national parks last year. One park or monument at risk means all are at risk. Pick yours: Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Big Bend, Acadia. The federal Bureau of Land Management has proposed



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issuing oil and gas leases just outside Zion National Park, one of the nation's most visited parks. Forty national parks are vulnerable to oil and gas extraction.

A portrait of Andrew Jackson has been newly hung in the Oval Office over Donald Trump's shoulder. The portrait might remind our 45th president of how Jackson signed the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which lit the match to America's criminal treatment of native people. The Trail of Tears is just part of Jackson's legacy. His face still remains on the \$20 bill — fitting perhaps, since so much of the battle over land is the battle over the dollar.

No amount of money is a substitute for beauty. No amount of political power can be matched by the power of the land and the indigenous people who live here. If we do not rise to the defense of these sacred lands, Bears Ears National Monument will be reduced to oil rigs and derricks, shining bright against an oiled sky of obliterated stars.

Terry Tempest Williams is the author, most recently, of "The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks." She teaches at Dartmouth.

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12. **Zinke promises to hear out protestors of rescinding national monuments**

The Washington Times, May 6 | Ben Wolfgang

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Sunday launched a "listening tour" across Utah designed to quell an uproar over his department's controversial review of national monuments.

Mr. Zinke is spearheading a federal study of more than two dozen land and marine monuments following an executive order from President Trump last month.

The process is likely to lead to the first revocation of a U.S. monument, though there are still outstanding legal questions about whether a president has the power to make such a rescission.

Attempts to un-designate any monument surely will be met with legal challenges from environmental groups and tribal groups.

Mr. Zinke's review notably includes Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, established late in President Barack Obama's tenure and a prime example, critics say, of the previous



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administration stretching the century-old Antiquities Act to its breaking point in declaring vast areas of land as monuments and shutting them off from energy exploration and other activities.

Mr. Zinke met Sunday afternoon in Salt Lake City with members of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, kicking off a trip that will include a stop at Bears Ears on Tuesday and conclude Wednesday.

While Sunday's meeting was not open to the public or press, about 500 people protested outside the building as it occurred, carrying signs and shouting "Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears!"

Talking with reporters after the meeting, Mr. Zinke said the local Indians are "smart, capable, passionate, and have a deep sense of tie to their culture and want to preserve it."

He said no decisions had been made and that he was coming to Utah "without any predisposition of outcome."

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, Utah Republican, said Sunday evening that the Indians might be being manipulated by left-wing political groups.

More broadly, the monuments review includes sites dating back to 1924's Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho through Bears Ears.

Other notable monuments under review include Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante, Hanford Reach in Washington, Grand Canyon-Parashant in Arizona, the Papahānaumokuākea marine monument off the coast of Hawaii and a host of others.

Though the review need not mean any will be stripped of their designations, it's clear the administration intends to shrink the number of monuments and, in the process, open up that land for energy development.

Critics charge that the listening tour, along with the fact that the Interior Department is soliciting public comments as part of its study, is a sham.

"Trump and Zinke pretend to care what the public thinks, but they're really only listening to the oil, gas and timber industries. It's special interests, not the public, that want these monuments to lose protection," said Randi Spivak, public lands director at the Center for Biological Diversity.



“We must leave these spectacular cultural and national treasures just as they are. Our grandchildren won’t look back and wish we’d cut down more trees or drilled for more oil.”

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13. **National Monuments: Presidents Can Create Them, but Only Congress Can Undo Them**

Govexec.com, May 6 | Nicholas Bryner, Eric Biber, Mark Squillace and Sean B. Hecht

On April 26 President Trump issued an executive order calling for a review of national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act. This law authorizes presidents to set aside federal lands in order to protect “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.”

Since the act became law in 1906, presidents of both parties have used it to preserve 157 historic sites, archaeological treasures and scenic landscapes, from the Grand Canyon to key landmarks of the civil rights movement in Birmingham, Alabama.

President Trump calls recent national monuments “a massive federal land grab,” and argues that control over some should be given to the states. In our view, this misrepresents the law. National monuments can be designated only on federal lands already owned or controlled by the United States.

The president’s order also suggests that he may consider trying to rescind or shrink monuments that were previously designated. Based on our analysis of the Antiquities Act and other laws, presidents do not have the authority to undo or downsize existing national monuments. This power rests with Congress, which has reversed national monument designations only 10 times in more than a century.

Contests over land use

Trump’s executive order responds to opposition from some members of Congress and local officials to national monuments created by Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. It calls for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review certain national monuments created since 1996 and to recommend “Presidential actions, legislative proposals, or other actions,” presumably to shrink



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or eliminate these monuments. The order applies to monuments larger than 100,000 acres, as well as others to be identified by Secretary Zinke.

When a president creates a national monument, the area is “reserved” for the protection of sites and objects there, and may also be “withdrawn,” or exempted, from laws that would allow for mining, logging or oil and gas development. Frequently, monument designations grandfather in existing uses of the land, but prohibit new activities such as mineral leases or mining claims.

Zinke said that he will examine whether such restrictions have led to “loss of jobs, reduced wages and reduced public access” in communities around national monuments. Following Secretary Zinke’s review, the Trump administration may try either to rescind monument designations or modify them, either by reducing the size of the monument or authorizing more extractive activities within their boundaries.

Two of the most-contested monuments are in Utah. In 1996 President Clinton designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, a region of incredible slot canyons and remote plateaus. Twenty years later, President Obama designated Bears Ears National Monument, an area of scenic rock formations and sites sacred to Native American tribes.

Utah’s governor and congressional delegation oppose these monuments, arguing that they are larger than necessary and that presidents should defer to the state about whether to use the Antiquities Act. Local officials have raised similar complaints about the Gold Butte National Monument in Nevada and the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine, both designated by Obama in late 2016.

What the law says

The key question at issue is whether the Antiquities Act gives presidents the power to alter or revoke decisions by past administrations. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to decide what happens on “territory or other property belonging to the United States.” When Congress passed the Antiquities Act, it delegated a portion of that authority to the president so that administrations could act quickly to protect resources or sites that are threatened.

Critics of recent national monuments argue that if a president can create a national monument, the next one can undo it. However, the Antiquities Act speaks only of designating monuments. It says nothing about abolishing or shrinking them.



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Two other land management statutes from the turn of the 20th century – the Pickett Act of 1910 and the Forest Service Organic Act of 1897 – gave the president authority to withdraw other types of land, and also specifically stated that the president could modify or revoke those actions. These laws clearly contrast with the Antiquities Act’s silence on reversing past decisions.

In 1938, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt considered abolishing the Castle-Pinkney National Monument – a deteriorating fort in Charleston, South Carolina – Attorney General Homer Cummings advised that the president did not have the power to take this step. (Congress abolished the monument in 1951.)

Congress enacted a major overhaul of public lands law in 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, repealing many earlier laws. However, it did not change the Antiquities Act. The House Committee that drafted the 1976 law also made clear in legislative reports that it intended to prohibit the president from modifying or abolishing a national monument, stating that the law would “specifically reserve to the Congress the authority to modify and revoke withdrawals for national monuments created under the Antiquities Act.”

The value of preservation

Many national monuments faced vociferous local opposition when they were declared, including Jackson Hole National Monument, which is now part of Grand Teton National Park. But over time Americans have come to appreciate them.

Indeed, Congress has converted many monuments into national parks, including Acadia, the Grand Canyon, Arches and Joshua Tree. These four parks alone attracted over 13 million visitors in 2016. The aesthetic, cultural, scientific, spiritual and economic value of preserving them has long exceeded whatever short-term benefit could have been derived without legal protection.

As Secretary Zinke begins his review of Bears Ears and other national monuments, he should heed that lesson, and also ensure that his recommendations do not overstep the president’s lawful authority.

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14. **Op-ed: National monuments are a positive economic force for rural communities**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 6 / Amy Roberts

The next several months are pivotal for the future of America's public lands. It is not easy to articulate how we have gotten to this point – but here we are.

It seems like only yesterday that the outdoor industry and outdoor recreation economy were tiny blips on the radar of our national economy and jobs figures, yet over the last 20 years, the outdoor recreation economy has grown exponentially and contributes \$887 billion per year to the nation's GDP, and is responsible for over 7 million American jobs across the country.

The outdoor recreation economy, and the industry that supports it, is a major force in international trade, economic development, job creation and public lands policy and is a major financial contributor to programs that get kids and families outside across the nation. It is a growing economy that is uniquely American.

The outdoor industry supports protecting our nation's public lands, not just because the American landscape and its rugged, natural beauty sets our nation apart from the rest of the world, but also because America's public lands are the very foundation, the infrastructure, of the massive outdoor recreation economy.

So, why are the next few months so pivotal? President Trump signed an Executive Order last month ordering the Department of the Interior to review the designation of National Monuments over 100,000 acres in size and created between 1996 and the end of 2016 under the authority of the Antiquities Act, a Teddy Roosevelt-era law that has protected more of America's landscapes and waterways than perhaps any other law. Interestingly, the majority of Utah's National Parks were first protected as monuments.

As part of his department's review, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke has stated that he is committed to a transparent process that will take into account the views of multiple stakeholders. This is a good starting point, and we look forward to working with the Administration, Secretary Zinke and others to highlight the significant, beneficial role National Monuments and the Antiquities Act play in our American heritage, the protection of iconic places, and the development of local economies built on recreation and tourism.



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The notion that monuments are harmful to their surrounding communities and result in net job loss is demonstrably false. Cities and towns that have protected lands like National Parks and Monuments attract employers in fast-growing economic sectors like tech and health care. It is proven that the communities that protect and invest in recreation infrastructure end up having more diverse economies and are better prepared to weather potential economic downturns.

While it is true that some traditional jobs do, at times, decrease with the designation of a monument in the short-term, those losses tend to stabilize even as the local economy transitions. The addition of monuments in most cases speeds up the economic diversification of the local community from traditional rural economies to a more dynamic combination of energy development, agriculture, ranching, tourism and outdoor recreation that coexist on the land. These economies and the local tax base that supports schools and government services benefit from adding more recreation-related businesses such as guide services, retailers, manufacturers and additional service related jobs such as doctors, engineers and teachers. Outdoor recreation generates \$59 billion in state and local tax revenue.

As Secretary Zinke visits Utah this week and begins the evaluation of past monument designations, we ask that he remember that our national monuments are already the people's lands and that he consider the full and positive impact they have on the overall physical and economic health of our nation. We hope he notes the benefits they provide to our rural communities by counting ALL of the businesses and jobs added over a period of time after a designation, and the growth of the community's economy before and after the designation. As we have seen in Garfield County, Utah or Chaffee County, Colorado, if the process is truly transparent, the findings will be enlightening and should inform any eventual decision by this Administration on existing and future national monuments.

Amy Roberts is executive director of the Outdoor Industry Association.

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15. **Rallies over Bears Ears act as prelude to Zinke's visit**

KSL News, May 7 | Jasen Lee and Marjorie Cortez

SALT LAKE CITY — For scores of Utahns, preserving the monument status of the state's newest protected public lands and one of its more revered places was more than enough reason to spend a weekend afternoon at the state Capitol.

Hundreds of people fanned out across the front lawn and stairs leading up to the Capitol on Saturday to show their support for the national monument status of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante.

The "Monumental Rally," as it was called, was organized as "an urgent call to action" because the two monuments are in the crosshairs of powerful political interests, including Utah's congressional delegation and members of the Trump administration.

Opponents call the designations by two Democratic presidents — Barack Obama for Bears Ears and Bill Clinton for Grand Staircase-Escalante — federal overreach that didn't take into account the feelings and sensibilities of local interests.

Contrarily, supporters believe the designations preserve the land considered hallowed by Native Americans for centuries.

"My ancestors lived in the area and traded with other Native Americans in the area," explained Hank Stevens, member of the Navajo Nation. "The land is sacred in Native American culture. It's very important."

Stevens expressed concern that if the monument status were rescinded by the Trump administration, revered artifacts may be destroyed and many of the traditions practiced by local tribes could be lost.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is scheduled to be in Utah this week to visit with stakeholders concerned about the designation of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante as national monuments. The Trump administration has directed Zinke to conduct a 45-day review of the Bears Ears monument and a 120-day review of Grand Staircase-Escalante, then offer some recommendations.

The state Capitol rally was organized by Gavin Noyes, executive director of Utah Diné Bikéyah — a nonprofit organization that supports indigenous communities in protecting culturally significant ancestral lands.



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Noyes said Utahns must show Zinke that supporters intend to defend culturally important places such as Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante.

"This event is really important to remind Utahns that this is not a political issue," he said. "All Utahns care about our public lands and monuments. I'm proud to see so many of my fellow citizens out here supporting each other and supporting the land, and standing up for what's best for our future.

"We (also) want to remind people that local voices matter, and they should have a say in how lands are treated in this state. The governor and the Utah (congressional) delegation are out of touch."

Buoyed by a strong turnout, with throngs of people wearing "Protect Bears Ears" T-shirts and many hoisting signs supporting the individual causes of both national monuments, Noyes said he believes the message of the people will resonate with Zinke while he's in Utah.

"If Secretary Zinke gets a full understanding of who we are as Utahns and what our landscapes are like, I absolutely think that he would stand with us defend these lands," Noyes said.

Salt Lake City resident Ian Wade said because Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante are such "special" places, they deserve the added protection of monument status. He attributed much of the opposition to the monument status to partisanship.

"It's a political thing. People are just opposed to the idea that President Obama designated something in Utah just like they hated President Clinton when he designated Grand Staircase," Wade said. "Just the simple anger that a Democrat would do something in a Republican state."

Meanwhile, opponents of the monument designation gathered simultaneously at Pioneer Park in Blanding for a rally organized by Stewards of San Juan County.

Unlike monument supporters who are backed by corporations and the likes of actor Leonardo DiCaprio, Stewards of San Juan County has been a true grass-roots effort, said the organization's president, Jami Bayles.

People have literally walked up to her and other leaders of the group on the streets, offering the cash in their pockets to fight the designation, she said.

Ultimately, "it's a fight about what's right and what's wrong," Bayles said.

Area residents have been slighted by name-calling, insults, purposely left out by organizations conducting public opinion polls, and personal accounts of some opponents of the designation have even been dismissed as "fake news," she said.



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“We’ve been told by out-of-state recreation enthusiasts that, ‘My hobby is more important than your livelihood. If you don’t like it, go live somewhere else,’” Bayles said.

Through it all, area residents have stood resolute against the designation in the waning days of the Obama administration.

“The best part is we did this together. We did this on our own time and, we did this on our own dime. We paid for all this ourselves,” Bayles said.

San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman urged those in attendance to be “loud and controversial.” Otherwise, the county “is going to be steamrolled,” he said.

Still, Bayles and Lyman urged opponents to comport themselves with grace and decency during Zinke’s upcoming visit to the area and the ongoing fight.

"It's San Juan County's opportunity to show who we are with dignity and respect," Lyman said.

While Bears Ears is one of 27 national monuments that will be reviewed under an executive order by President Trump signed Friday, the outcome is yet unknown. Bayles said opponents of the designation will continue to fight “long and hard. We’re going to fight with everything that we have.”

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, addressing the rally via FaceTime, said he will urge Zinke during his upcoming visit to Utah to end the monument designation.

“It’s time to expect, my fellow Americans, to expect more. It’s time to expect freedom,” Lee said.

Eva Clarke, secretary of Stewards of San Juan County, said the fight has been a painful reminder that area residents must constantly be engaged to protect the land and way of life.

Area residents have joined forces with “my ancestors ... who first loved this beautiful, red earth,” Clarke said.

“Thank you so much. Keep up the good fight,” she said.

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16. Zinke met by protest as he arrives to consider Utah voices on national monuments

The Deseret News, May 7 | McKenzie Romero

SALT LAKE CITY — While protestors clogged the sidewalk outside, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he will be gathering perspectives of people on all sides of a deeply controversial issue as he reviews the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.

Zinke landed in Salt Lake City on Sunday bound for his four-day "listening tour" regarding the monuments — both designated by Democratic presidents and decried by Utah Republicans — but the voices on the street expressed their doubt the secretary will listen much at all.

Speaking to reporters in the offices of Utah's Bureau of Land Management, Zinke said that while many of the nearly 30 national monuments he will be reviewing enjoy widespread support, he doesn't believe that's the case with Bears Ears.

"The Bears Ears is not widely supported or accepted in the state of Utah," Zinke said, citing the outcry from state legislators and congressmen over the designation, and a Native American population he says is at odds with one another.

Zinke went on to say he has no doubt the area will be a breathtaking "cultural treasure," but he isn't decided about how it should be protected.

"I'm sure what I'm going to find over the next couple of days is beautiful, beautiful land worthy of protection. What vehicle that takes, I don't want to be predisposed because I haven't see it and haven't talked to everybody yet," Zinke said.

Outside, Dena Williams, of Salt Lake City, stood with her two sons among the crowd of protesters watching for a glimpse of Zinke's motorcade. The family carried signs demanding, "Keep public lands in public hands."

"This is important because this is about their future, their quality of life, and everything they hold important today and in the future is at risk," Williams said of her two boys.

Asked if she thinks Zinke will listen to that plea, Williams said she "wants to remain hopeful, but it's hard to tell."



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Nikolas Johnson, 14, and Lukas Johnson, 12, are active with the Boy Scouts of America, going often to Grand Staircase to hike, camp and enjoy nature.

"The president or anyone else shouldn't be controlling the lands. It should be the people," Nikolas said.

Lukas said he wants the nature he enjoys to be preserved for other kids in the future, voicing concern that without protections, "lousy coal and oil" will take over the land.

Under an executive order from President Donald Trump, Zinke will conduct a 45-day review of the Bears Ears monument and a 120-day review of Grand Staircase-Escalante before sending his recommendations to the White House.

"I'm looking at making sure we follow the law, what the Antiquities Act was intended to do, talking to all parties, and getting a perspective of making sure Utah and the stakeholders have a voice," Zinke said of the reviews.

While Zinke acknowledged no U.S. president has ever rescinded a national monument, he noted that few monuments "are to the scale of the recent actions," and saying it's not uncommon for a monument and its boundaries to be modified.

Rallies for and against the monument designations over the weekend prefaced Zinke's visit.

Opponents of the monuments say the designations by Democratic presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton are examples of federal overreach that didn't take into account the feelings and sensibilities of local interests.

But supporters believe setting the areas aside under the Antiquities Act preserves land considered hallowed by Native Americans for centuries and ensures they will remain intact for future generations to enjoy.

Zinke met Sunday with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which is made up of leaders of the Hopi Tribe, Utah Navajo Chapter of Olijato, Navajo Nation Council, Ute Indian Tribe and Zuni Tribe.



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The secretary called it the first time the tribal leaders have had an opportunity to voice their perspectives about the monument designations, describing the mistrust he believes they feel over a history of efforts to manage the land.

A similar mistrust, Zinke says, is felt by Utahns living near the monuments, the state's elected leaders and others.

However, at least some representatives of Native American groups in the state say they have been cut out of the conversation. Virgil Johnson, tribal chairman of the confederated tribes of the Goshute nation, was among the protestors Sunday and said his letter requesting a meeting with Zinke was denied.

"The executive order gives us a right to come to the table, but they're making decisions without native voices at the table," Johnson said. "What we would like is for him to see why we are very protective of our sacred grounds and the artifacts that are left there."

Throughout his media appearance, Zinke called himself a Montana man; a former geologist who is fascinated by archaeology; a military commander who wants to see "the frontlines" of any situation; an admirer of President Teddy Roosevelt, who created the Antiquities Act and designated the first national monument; and someone who is not an advocate of transferring or selling public lands.

Zinke also met Sunday with Sens. Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee, both R-Utah, followed by meetings with the State Historic Preservation Office and Utah Department of Heritage; legislative leadership and Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes; and the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration.

At the media appearance, Hatch introduced the secretary as someone who is "experienced in Western lands" and "understands what we're up against."

Afterward, Hatch said Native Americans in Utah "may not understand" how a national monument designation restricts what they are able to do on the land. Asked to provide examples of what tribes would no longer be able to do, Hatch simply said the reasons would take too much time to go into.



"They would be severely restricted on what they could or could not do on the land," Hatch said. "I can just tell you it will never cease until the far left gets their way in locking up all these lands in Utah, and we're just not going to allow that."

Hatch said there are a number of political obstacles between different Native American groups in the state and that sometimes different groups are "manipulated." He also said the state's elected leaders "love Utah" and will ensure it's protected without being "shoved around by radical people from elsewhere, on either side of the issues."

On Monday, Zinke will be joined by Gov. Gary Herbert and members of the state's congressional delegation as he flies over Bears Ears and takes a tour of the House of Fire site.

Moving forward, Zinke encouraged Utahns wanting to weigh in on the review to visit regulations.gov in the coming weeks to leave a comment.

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17. **Zinke starts review of Utah's Bears Ears National Monument**

The Las Vegas Review-Journal, May 7 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke will start a four-day Utah trip Sunday to assess whether 3.2 million acres of national monuments in the state's southern red rock region should be scaled down or even rescinded.

The re-evaluation of the new Bears Ears National Monument on sacred tribal lands and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, created in 1996, is part of an executive order signed last month by President Donald Trump calling for a review of 27 national monuments established by several former presidents.

The Bears Ears monument, a source of ire for Utah's conservative leadership, is a top priority in the review.

Zinke has been tasked with making a recommendation on that monument by June 10, about 2 ½ months before a final report about all the monuments.



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Utah Republican leaders, led by U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, campaigned hard to get President Donald Trump to take a second look at a monument designated by President Barack Obama near the end of his term.

Hatch and others contend the monument designation is a layer of unnecessary federal control that hurts local economies by closing the area to new energy development.

Hatch said in a statement he looks forward to hosting Zinke and showing him “our beautiful state and working with him to give the people of San Juan County a voice in protecting the lands they’ve lived on for generations.”

Zinke will spend Sunday in Salt Lake City before traveling Monday to the southeastern corner of Utah to spend time in the Bears Ears area.

On Wednesday, he’ll be in the area near the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Interior officials haven’t made public the details of whom Zinke plans to meet with. But officials with a coalition of five tribes that pushed for the Bears Ears designation said they have a one-hour meeting with Zinke Sunday in Salt Lake City.

Natasha Hales, the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition lead staffer, said members plan to tell Zinke about their long history with the Bears Ears land and the landscape’s sacred importance.

They also plan to reiterate that they’re willing to take legal action to defend the monument if needed.

“The Utah congressional delegation is cherry picking a few voices in opposition to this but there’s overwhelming support for this,” Hales said. “We wanted to take Secretary Zinke out on the ground with our people and show him around but that invitation was never extended.”

The monument review is rooted in the belief Trump and other critics that a law created by President Theodore Roosevelt to designate the monument has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Grand Staircase-Escalante is 1.9 million acres, about the size of Delaware. Bears Ears is a bit smaller at 1.3 million acres.



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Conservation groups counter that the review puts in limbo protections on large swaths of land home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and oceans habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments, which would be unprecedented.

Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company, put ads in newspapers in Utah and Montana over the weekend playing off Trump's own comments at the signing of the executive order in which he said, "I've heard a lot about Bears Ears, and I hear it's beautiful."

"Mr. President, Bears Ears National Monument is beautiful," the ad said, listing how it has more species diversity than Yellowstone and darker skies than Yosemite.

Zinke has said the report will recommend whether any monuments should be abolished or resized.

He promises an open-minded approach and said he remains opposed to selling any federal land or transferring it to state or local control.

Congress might weigh in as well. Numerous bills on the issue were introduced in the previous session, including measures to prevent the president from establishing or expanding monuments in particular states and to require consent of Congress or state legislatures.

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18. **The new range war**

The Christian Science Monitor, May 7 | Amanda Paulson

MAY 7, 2017 SALMON, IDAHO—Merill Beyeler bears the classic look of a Western rancher. He's got the leathery face of someone who has spent a lot of time outdoors. He wears flannel shirts, jeans, and a bone-colored cowboy hat.

Mr. Beyeler, whose family roots in Idaho's Lemhi County extend back to the 1850s, is also a rock-ribbed Republican. True, in Idaho, one of the reddest states in the nation, most people are Republican. But in Lemhi County, a hauntingly beautiful expanse of bald, taupe mountains and verdant river valleys wedged up against the Montana border, virtually no one puts a Democratic



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bumper sticker on his or her pickup. So you'd think that people like Beyeler would be happy at the prospect of the new Trump administration, buttressed by one of the most conservative cabinets in decades, ushering in a dramatic change in the management of public lands in the West. You'd think that they would relish the prospect of federal agencies either opening up more expanses to ranchers and commercial interests or giving more control back to the states.

You'd be wrong.

While Beyeler occasionally chafes at the way federal lands are managed, he doesn't want US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land opened up unconditionally to loggers or developers, or – worse – handed over to bureaucrats in Boise and sold off. “The reason you come home is that this is the soul of our people,” he says. “When you look at our public lands in that respect – as an economic driver and as the soul of our state – the idea of losing that, or risking that, is just too great.”

As the Trump administration works to fashion an identity in Washington, one of the big questions is how much the federal government will change its stewardship of public lands in the West. With Republicans in control of Congress, many envision a significant shift in access to and development of public expanses similar to what happened under the Reagan administration 35 years ago. They believe it could be one of the signature achievements of the Trump era. A few on the right are even pushing for an outright transfer of some of those lands back to state control.

Yet others – including many Republicans – occupy a more pragmatic middle. Like Beyeler, they are looking for a recalibration rather than a land-management revolution. They believe that the natural landscape is as much a part of the region's identity as coal seams and oil shale and requires at least some federal stewardship. And they believe firmly that public lands need to stay public – not sold off to private interests.

When Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R) of Utah recently introduced a bill in Congress to sell 3.3 million acres of federal lands in the West, he was forced to withdraw the legislation days later because of the backlash from his own constituents, many of whom regularly fish for steelhead trout or hunt elk on federal lands.

“I've been working in this field for 17 years, and no one has ever seen a congressman introduce a bill and then withdraw it within a week,” says Land Tawney, director of Backcountry Hunters



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and Anglers, a nonprofit that fiercely opposed the bill. “The sportsman community is about 70 percent conservative. We’re finding this is a unifying issue, with folks on both sides of the aisle. There can be nothing more American than our public lands.”

The land-use decisions of the next four years will have the most impact in places like Lemhi County, which is 92 percent owned by the federal government. Few areas of the United States are more remote than the high desert sagebrush area here.

Salmon, the county’s largest town, is 90 miles from a railroad, and 150 miles from an airport, the Interstate, or a Wal-Mart. The county is empty, stark, and stunning. Local ranchers and residents differ – even within families – over how public lands should be managed. But some of them are also working with government officials in a way that could become a model for solving future land wars in the West.

The battle over public lands and resources is as old as westward expansion itself. It extends from early fights over mining and water claims in the 1800s to the Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s to the anti-Washington “wise-use movement” of the 1980s and ’90s. The only constant in it all is the ebb and flow of tensions between Western residents and the largest landholder, Washington.

“The political side of it dates all the way back to the creation of the country,” says Robert Keiter, a law professor at the University of Utah and director of the Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources, and the Environment.

Last year, simmering frustrations about federal control over Western lands culminated most visibly in the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon by militant ranchers. Yet Westerners’ grievances have been finding an outlet through various assaults in Washington as well.

In late April, the Trump administration ordered the Interior Department to review some 30 places that have been designated national monuments over the past 20 years. The White House believes the designations have increasingly set aside more land than was intended under the 1906 Antiquities Act, costing the nation jobs. Environmentalists see the move undermining one of the most important tools for protecting national parks and public lands.

The change could affect places such as the Bears Ears National Monument, in the red-rock area of southern Utah, which was protected in the waning days of the Obama administration. Several Utah lawmakers, including Mr. Chaffetz and Republican Rep. Rob Bishop, have been pressing to



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overturn the designation. (In response, the Outdoor Industry Association pulled a trade show, which brings about \$45 million a year to Utah, from Salt Lake City.)

Western lawmakers have also been pushing the idea of selling off some public lands to private parties, or transferring them to state ownership. And the Trump administration is trying to repeal a regulation that requires oil and gas firms operating on public lands to control their methane emissions.

Behind all the rebellious moves is the size of Washington's real estate portfolio. The federal government owns 47 percent of all the land in 11 Western states. That ranges from a high of 85 percent in Nevada to a low of 30 percent in Montana.

"It's a long-standing irritation, and at times it becomes more pronounced," says Lynn Scarlett, global managing director for public policy for The Nature Conservancy and a former deputy Interior secretary under President George W. Bush. Ms. Scarlett says tensions have always simmered over how the federal government manages those lands in regard to energy development, mining, grazing rights, and endangered species.

What's new in the latest backlash, she says, is the focus on the lack of maintenance on public lands, which is largely the result of federal agencies getting less funding. Departments such as the Forest Service, BLM, and US Fish & Wildlife Service had hoped that highlighting the backlog of work would help them garner more funds. Instead, critics have just seized on the maintenance issues to buttress their argument that the federal government isn't the right steward of public lands.

"The bottom line is that we want our public lands to be managed in a way that's responsible," says Jennifer Fielder, a Montana state senator and chief executive officer of the American Lands Council, a leader in the call to transfer federal land to state control. "Those of us who live near here are sick of seeing the lock-it-up and let-it-burn policies out of Washington."

Senator Fielder says she watches the ineptitude from her living-room window in Montana. The Feds' inability or unwillingness to thin underbrush and perform other basic management practices, she says, led to a wildfire last summer becoming much larger, and more expensive, than it needed to be. "Forty thousand acres burnt to a crisp, habitat destroyed," she says.



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Others believe that having an absentee landlord isn't the best way to care for property and that the people closest to the land are the ones who know best how to manage it – and should reap the benefits from it.

“Without these lands, you can't operate as a republican form of government inside your state,” says Jim Chmelik, a former Idaho county commissioner and a leader of the land-transfer movement. “If you don't have access to your resources, you can't provide good-paying jobs and you can't provide a good quality of life.”

Yet critics of shifting control to the states believe it will either lead to lands being sold off to private interests or an oil derrick being put on top of every ridge, despoiling the natural beauty that attracts people from around the country – and contributes to regional economies. States also have far fewer resources than Washington to manage the vast public expanses. And most states are required to balance their budgets, which could put pressure on them to sell lands in lean times, even if they vow not to do so.

As proof, critics point out that 11 Western states were granted a total of almost 77 million acres of land at statehood. They've sold off about 44 percent of those lands. Nevada, granted 2.7 million acres at its founding, now has just 3,000 acres of public state land.

“Study after study has shown states can't afford” to manage public lands well, says Mr. Tawney of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Just south of Lehmi lies Custer County – home of some of the most spectacular wilderness in Idaho. The celebrated Middle Fork of the Salmon River flows through the area, and the rugged Sawtooth Mountains rise steeply from the plains. It's the third largest county in Idaho, but home to barely 4,000 people. Roughly 96 percent of the county is federal land.

“Custer County is the size of Connecticut, but we have one sheriff and four deputies,” says Wayne Butts, a county commissioner who has lived in Challis, the county seat, since he was 8. “There's no tax bases.”

Sitting next to the warmth of a wood-burning stove in his small-motor repair shop, he ticks off the economic limitations of living in a remote area: The county has a 100-year-old jail with just six beds in one room, making it impossible to house men and women at the same time. Local roads are in desperate need of repair, but no money exists to fix them. A decrease in grazing



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rights on federal lands has led to fewer ranchers, resulting in less local revenue. A molybdenum mine, once the county's largest employer, shut down in 2014.

People come from all over the country to hike, fish, and play in Custer County, but don't add much to the economy, says Mr. Butts: Many of them drive in from Boise, bring their own food and camping supplies. They don't even buy gas in Custer.

"Old-time customs and culture – that's the way we like it," says Butts. To him, that means ranching, mining, logging. He's frustrated that federal lands increasingly seem to be managed to inhibit those activities.

Still, despite all those irritations, Butts isn't willing to back transferring lands to state ownership unless he sees a budget proposal that makes sense to him. He thinks either the state or local communities could do a better job managing the lands, but he is well aware of the costs involved. Instead, he wants to see limits put on turning any more private land into public land and hopes that the Trump administration and Republican Congress will help roll back some of the more onerous environmental protections on federal lands that already exist.

A few dozen miles to the east of Challis, in the shadow of Idaho's tallest peak, Mt. Borah, Steve Smith shares many of Butts's grievances. Mr. Smith and his parents live on his family's 2,800-acre ranch, where they have a herd of 400 cows.

Just a mention of public lands is enough to set Smith and his father, Wiley, off, venting about their years of vexation in dealing with the BLM and Forest Service. This has included navigating around what they see as burdensome protections for the sage grouse, as well as a BLM water-rights claim that took them years to defeat.

Yet even this father and son don't agree on whether control of public lands should be shifted from Washington to the states. Despite his virulent criticism of federal management, Wiley doesn't believe states have the resources to care for public lands.

Steve would like to see a modest transfer – perhaps 2 percent of total holdings – provided states have a plan for how they will manage the areas. "The ranchers, the miners, the loggers – they're the ones that have taken care of these areas," he says. "[Federal officials] put a black mark on those industries and don't see that [the land] has been in their care for 150 years."



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Others are more adamant in their opposition to state control. On a cold, rainy Saturday in March, nearly 3,000 people gathered at the State Capitol in Boise to support public lands staying public – and under federal stewardship.

The demonstration attracted plenty of traditional environmentalists, but also hunters, anglers, and dirt-bike riders. “Rednecks and hippies unite!” read one sign. “I fill my freezer on public lands,” said another.

In between various chants – such as “Keep public lands in public hands!” – the crowd listened to speakers ranging from a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to a fifth-generation Idaho woman who talked of accompanying her mother on her first moose hunt when she was 8 days old.

“I hunt and I fish on public lands,” says Travis Long, who came to the rally from Kuna, Idaho, outfitted in camouflage. “I’ve got four kids and I want to make sure public lands remain that way.”

It is too early to know what a Trump administration will mean for public lands. Much of the push to undermine the power of federal oversight agencies, or to transfer or sell off public lands, is coming from Congress, and President Trump’s Interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, has repeatedly said he would never transfer or sell them.

“I think we’re in a better place with [Mr. Trump and Mr. Zinke] than we would have been with others interviewed for the Interior secretary, or with Ted Cruz,” says Whit Fosburgh, president and chief executive officer of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, a nonprofit that represents sportsmen and sportswomen.

At the same time, Mr. Fosburgh and other conservation leaders say they’re concerned about legislation that has been passed or proposed. In March, for instance, the Trump administration rescinded Barack Obama’s three-year moratorium on coal leases on federal land. A proposed bill in Congress would strip the Forest Service and BLM of their law enforcement powers, putting the job of policing environmental and other rules in the hands of local sheriffs.

“It’s one more attempt to weaken management of public lands,” says Fosburgh.



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Trump's proposed budget also includes a 12 percent cut to the Interior Department, which could make maintenance of public lands even more problematic and give states more leverage in their quest to take over.

Eventually, it's possible that some of the hostility to Washington's handling of public lands will die down under the new administration. The Sagebrush Rebellion subsided once Reagan came to power.

"In the big picture politically, it would not surprise me if [the transfer movement] slowly disappears from the radar screen with Republicans in control of Congress and the White House," says Mr. Keiter, the Utah law professor. "It works as an oppositional strategy to more progressive or environmentally friendly policies of Democratic administrations."

Perhaps the best hope for ending the standoffs over public lands is a more collaborative approach in the canyons and valley floors of the West itself – far from the politics of Washington and statehouses. One such effort is under way in Salmon, where ranchers, federal agencies, and conservation groups are finding common ground.

"What doesn't get attention is the really good, responsible, productive work taking place on the Western landscape," says Beyeler, the Lemhi County rancher.

At the same time that the Malheur standoff was occurring, he notes, the Forest Service and BLM were working with a local rancher to help him get seven miles of pipeline approved in an area that includes an important salmon spawning tributary. Endangered sockeye salmon travel more than 900 miles, up 6,500 feet of elevation, to spawn in rivers and lakes here.

"It was a collaborative process," says Beyeler. "I worry that this tension on whether the state or federal government should own [public lands] distracts from the collaborative work."

Tom Page, another Salmon Valley rancher, got into ranching in part because he wanted to see if he could do it in a conservation-minded way – and make money. He is surprised by how hard it has been to navigate all the environmental rules and by how difficult lawsuits filed by activists make it for local landowners.

When he recently sought to get approval for 200 feet of fence on his grazing allotment, to keep cows from straying into restricted forest land, federal officials told him not to apply for the permit. Because it would disturb fish and sage grouse habitat, the US Forest Service "knows they



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have to write a thick document for those 200 feet of fence,” says Mr. Page, and that they’re likely to be sued by environmentalists – which was not worth it, in their view, for such a small project.

The Upper Salmon area, Page agrees, has become a model for conservation and collaboration – but only because it has nonprofits and both federal and private money helping to support that work. In rural counties with less federal attention, there tends to be a lot less trust, he says.

Bob Cope has seen both cooperation and conflict. A large man with a deep voice and earthy sense of humor, he is a veterinarian for all the local ranchers as well as a Lemhi County commissioner. He has served on numerous state and federal committees representing Western interests.

With face-to-face collaboration and local involvement, he says public-lands disputes are solvable. But he understands people’s frustrations, especially when they see onerous rules being made by people back East.

“We can work with our federal officials, but [local people] get handcuffed,” he says. “We’ve had management by legislation and litigation. There’s still a lot of mistrust on both sides.... People feel like they have no voice.”

Over on the 25,000-acre ranch he’s managed for 20 years, Shane Rosenkrance epitomizes the attitude of many people in this part of Idaho. He harbors a deep love for the lands he manages and the public holdings that surround them. Mr. Rosenkrance points to the imposing peaks rising out of the desert floor – the Lost River Range, the Pioneer Mountains, Mt. Borah. He wants them to remain in federal hands and not be sold to individuals who might turn them into their own private preserves.

“You can go anywhere you want,” says Rosenkrance, whose family has lived in the valley for seven generations. “Residents appreciate that more than anyone. But we don’t want some guy in New York telling us how to manage these lands, or to lock them up.”

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19. The Latest: Zinke says he may not favor shrinking monuments

NewsOK, May 7 | The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Latest on a visit to Utah by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review the designation of national monuments (all times local):

6:40 p.m.

U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke says he may not necessarily recommend that President Donald Trump rescind or shrink two Utah national monuments, and it's possible that once he views the red rock areas, he could decide the monuments need to be larger.

Zinke told reporters Sunday in Salt Lake City that his visit is a listening tour and he wants to ensure that the Antiquities Act was used as intended when Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments were declared.

The Interior secretary spoke to reporters after a closed-door meeting with leaders of a tribal coalition that campaigned for the monument.

His visit comes after an executive order signed last month by President Donald Trump called for a review of 27 national monuments established by several former presidents.

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5:05 p.m.

More than 500 protesters urging the protection of Utah's Bears Ears National Monument are demonstrating outside a Salt Lake City building where U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is meeting with tribal leaders.

Protesters carried signs Sunday and shouted "Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears!" as Zinke started a four-day Utah trip.

He's assessing whether 3.2 million acres of the state's red rock region should remain national monuments or have borders scaled down.



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Zinke's meeting with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which pushed for the monument, was not open to the public or media.

His visit comes after an executive order signed last month by President Donald Trump called for a review of 27 national monuments established by several former presidents.

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4:15 p.m.

U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is meeting with a coalition of five tribes that pushed for President Barack Obama to designate Bears Ears National Monument.

Zinke's hour-long meeting Sunday with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition came as the Interior secretary kicked off a four-day tour in Utah.

The meeting was not open to the public or media, but Zinke is expected to speak to reporters later in the day.

While in Utah, he's expected to assess whether the designation of 3.2 million acres of national monuments in the state's southern red rock region should be scaled back or rescinded.

His visit comes after an executive order signed last month by President Donald Trump called for a review of 27 national monuments established by several former presidents.

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9:20 a.m.

U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is set to start a four-day Utah trip to assess whether the designation of 3.2 million acres of national monuments in the state's southern red rock region should be scaled back or rescinded.

Zinke arrives in Salt Lake City Sunday to launch the re-evaluation of the new Bears Ears National Monument and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

His visit comes after an executive order signed last month by President Donald Trump's called for a review of 27 national monuments established by several former presidents.



The Bears Ears monument is a source of ire for Utah's conservative leadership and is a top review priority.

Zinke must make a recommendation on that monument by June 10 ahead of a final report about all the monuments.

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20. **Zinke says monument designations have been an 'effective tool,' though 'very few ... are to the scale of the recent actions'**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 7 | Matthew Piper

As he embarked on a tour of Utah to review two national monuments, Ryan Zinke said he sees no evidence Native American proponents of Bears Ears National Monument were exploited by special interest groups, as state leaders have suggested.

"I think they're smart, capable, passionate, and have a deep sense of tie to their culture and want to preserve it," the secretary of the Interior said after a meeting with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which requested the monument on behalf of five tribes, at Salt Lake City's Bureau of Land Management office on Sunday.

Minutes later, however, Sen. Orrin Hatch said Native Americans are "manipulated sometimes by people" and that the "far left" has further designs on the 1.35 million acres in southeastern Utah protected by President Barack Obama on Dec. 28.

"The Indians, they don't fully understand that a lot of the things that they currently take for granted on those lands, they won't be able to do if it's made clearly into a monument or a wilderness," Hatch said.

Asked to describe which activities Obama's designation would prevent Native Americans from doing, Hatch said, "That'd take too much time right now."

Pressed further for one example, Hatch said: "Once you put a monument there, you do restrict a lot of things that could be done, and that includes use of the land. ... Just take my word for it."

Navajo nation delegate Davis Filfred, who serves as member of both the tribal coalition and a tribal commission created to provide input on management of the monument, said Sunday night that the meeting with Zinke was overdue.



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"I told him today that you met with the Utah delegation more than a couple of times thus far and this is the first time that we are meeting," Filfred said. "I'm requesting equal time."

While Filfred and others fight to defend it, Hatch and other state leaders have four days to convince Zinke that the Bears Ears National Monument designation constituted federal overreach and defied the will of most of the region's inhabitants.

Zinke then has until June 10 to recommend to President Donald Trump a fate for the newborn monument.

He also will stop within the boundaries of Grand Staircase-Escalante — whose 1996 designation by President Bill Clinton is the starting point for a review of 27 large monuments that was ordered by Trump. Utah leaders hope Trump will drastically reduce the boundaries of the 1.9 million-acre monument.

Zinke said he arrives in Utah "without any predisposition of outcome."

"Over the course of our history, I think it's undisputed that the monuments have been an effective tool to save [and] preserve some of our greatest cultural treasures," Zinke said, though he later added that "very few monuments are to the scale of the recent actions.

"Some of the monuments are, I don't want to say universally but certainly widely, supported and accepted," Zinke said. "The Bears Ears is not widely supported or accepted in the state of Utah."

His tour is reminiscent of one conducted last July by his predecessor, Sally Jewell, to inform Obama's decision.

Jewell witnessed striking vistas and delicate archaeological treasures as she weighed varied opinions about who should oversee them, and she concluded her visit by soliciting public comment for three hours inside a cramped Bluff Community Center.

The eventual designation hewed closely to boundaries in the Public Lands Initiative proposed by Utah's delegation, but if Obama's monument was intended as a compromise, it wasn't viewed that way by Utah leaders.

Hatch said Sunday that Obama made the declaration "without talking to any members of the delegation."



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"It was pretty pathetic," he said.

Zinke's entourage drove past about two dozen protesters lining the 200 South border of The Gateway shopping mall as he accessed BLM offices Sunday for his first meeting with a full complement of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. Zinke met earlier with Sens. Hatch and Mike Lee, Gov. Gary Herbert, Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes and state legislative leaders.

Proponents of the two disputed national monument designations worry that their voices will be absent from the Interior secretary's upcoming agenda.

Zinke's office rejected repeated requests to meet with members of the roundly pro-monument Boulder-Escalante Chamber of Commerce, writing "his current schedule is quite full and it's unlikely that he'll be able to accommodate any additional engagements." Chamber members were invited to comment on a forthcoming feedback website.

Members of Utah Dine Bikeyah, a grassroots nonprofit that supports the monument, also have called publicly for a meeting and sent Zinke's office a letter Sunday describing two previous letters and "several email and verbal requests" to meet.

Executive Director Gavin Noyes said Sunday that the Bears Ears boundaries were drawn based on the group's conversations with 75 Native American elders.

"We want to make sure that he doesn't trim any boundaries without talking to people who know the Bears Ears area the best," Noyes said. "The biggest risk at this point is that he believes that [largely anti-monument] Blanding and Monticello residents are the only people that he needs to meet with."

The Center for Western Priorities' Greg Zimmerman declared in a Sunday statement that Zinke's itinerary "[makes] it clear he intends for his visit to Utah to be a one-sided affair, ignoring input from local stakeholders who support national monuments at Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante."

Tribal leaders who pushed for the monument have said they will sue to preserve the protections, if necessary.

Filfred said Zinke agreed to meet with members of the intertribal coalition only last Wednesday, after multiple requests went unanswered.



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Sunday's hourlong meeting was insufficient for them to state their case for the monument, he said. He was unimpressed by Zinke's posture and took a cellphone photo of the secretary reclining in his chair.

"You're asking this question as if we're supposed to answer it in one sentence, one phrase, one paragraph," Filfred said.

Zinke said Sunday that it's clear involved Native Americans "have roots in that area. They recognize that this is the first time that they're at the table, and there is some distrust of previous efforts that the tribe and tribes, in this case, aren't heard. Remarkably, that's the same argument I hear from many counties and many elected officials: that the federal government by and large has not heard the local voice."

As a freshman representative from Montana, Zinke opposed a GOP effort to transfer federal lands to states.

"The federal government needs to do a much better job of managing our resources, but the sale or transfer of our land is an extreme proposal, and I won't tolerate it," he said last June after voting against a bill that would have given states the option to buy 2 million federal acres for logging.

He also took sides against Rob Bishop when the Utah representative, who serves as Natural Resources Committee chairman, tried to block funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund that the government uses to buy and conserve potentially threatened lands.

In January, however, Zinke said there was "no doubt the president has the power to amend a monument" and "[i]t will be interesting to see if a president can nullify a monument."

Utah's Legislature resolved during this year's session to ask Trump to rescind Bears Ears despite legal scholars' doubts that he has such authority.

Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, who has been supported by Utah leaders as a candidate to lead the Bureau of Land Management, has said that "a whole lot of just plain old sagebrush" that could be ranched or mined lies within the boundaries of the two monuments.



A recent poll conducted by Dan Jones & Associates and commissioned by UtahPolicy.com found that a small majority of Utahns support reducing the acreage in Bears Ears or eliminating it altogether, while a similarly slim majority say Trump should leave the Grand Staircase as is.

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21. **Zinke Begins Utah Listening Tour**

KUER News, May 7 | Judy Fahys

Utahns for and against national monuments have been asking the Trump administration to weigh in on Bears Ears ever since it was created in December. U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke arrived in Utah Sunday to hear their concerns firsthand.

Around two hundred protestors gathered outside the federal Bureau of Land Management's state office as Zinke met inside with leaders of the five tribes that will help manage the new Bears Ears National Monument.

"There's a lot of anger out there," he said afterward, speaking with reporters. "There's a lot of mistrust out there."

Zinke's visit coincides with an open public comment period on 27 national monuments that have been created in the past two decades. He invited all Utahns and all Americans to voice their concerns. Zinke insists his mind is NOT made up.

"I'm talking to all parties," he said, "and getting a perspective of making sure that Utah and all the stakeholders have a voice."

He's scheduled to tour the new Bears Ears National Monument on foot, in a plane and on horseback over the next two days. Then he visits the Grand Staircase Escalante Monument.

The Interior Secretary also met Sunday with Utah Republican leaders. They've organized the tour to make a case that Bears Ears should be rescinded and the Grand Staircase should be shrunk.

"We're going to make sure Utah functions the way it should function and that it's protected and that it's not just shoved around by radical people from elsewhere," said Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican who joined Zinke Sunday at the BLM.



Native Americans and conservationists throughout the state are among the monument supporters who complain they're being excluded from the Zinke meetings.

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22. **Zinke in southern Utah to tour Bears Ears**

The Deseret News, May 8 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BLANDING — Native American supporters of the new Bears Ears National Monument talked Monday about the sacred nature of the rugged landscape and why it's so important to protect.

At an event hosted by Utah Dine Bikeyah, reporters and photographers in town for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's visit were given aerial tours of the San Juan County monument.

The 30-minute flights come in advance of Zinke's scheduled hike to the House on Fire ruins near Mule Canyon, inside the monument footprint.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert is expected at the hike, as well as several staffers from Utah's congressional delegation.

Willie Grayeyes, chairman of the board of Utah Dine Bikeyah, said he hopes Zinke realizes that as Interior secretary he has a "trust responsibility" to Native Americans.

That responsibility, he added, should be part of Zinke's decision on whether the monument stands as Grayeyes hopes.

Members of Utah's congressional delegation have been united in opposition to Bears Ears' designation by former President Barack Obama late last year. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah led out on the effort that led to President Donald Trump signing an executive order on April 26 to review monument designations going back to 1996.

San Juan County commissioners were also at the airport for Zinke's arrival, which has stirred up residents. This is the second time in less than in a year that a secretary of the Interior has visited the region. Last summer, then-Secretary Sally Jewell was here.



“The windup has been pretty intense,” said San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman, who said it was clear Zinke intended to listen to the variety of viewpoints about the December 2016 designation.

“He's gone above and beyond in that respect,” he said. Lyman said the county leaders remain adamantly opposed to the monument.

"In this country we value consent, and this was done without our consent," he said.

This story will be updated throughout the day.

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23. **Zinke kicks off Utah tour in national monuments review**

The Hill, May 8 | Timothy Cama

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is in Utah this week to tour two controversial national monuments that the Trump administration is considering rescinding or shrinking.

Zinke arrived Sunday for meetings with stakeholders, including elected officials and a group of American Indian tribes that pushed for the creation of the Bears Ears National Monument.

At a news conference with Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) late Sunday, Zinke said that, unlike many other national monuments, Bears Ears doesn't enjoy local support, according to the Salt Lake Tribune.

“Over the course of our history, I think it’s undisputed that the monuments have been an effective tool to save [and] preserve some of our greatest cultural treasures,” Zinke said, adding later that “very few monuments are to the scale of the recent actions.”

“Some of the monuments are, I don’t want to say universally, but certainly widely, supported and accepted,” he continued said. “The Bears Ears is not widely supported or accepted in the state of Utah.”

Zinke pushed back on the narrative that the five nearby tribes that supported former President Barack Obama’s decision to protect the land were misled by environmentalists.



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“I think they’re smart, capable, passionate, and have a deep sense of tie to their culture and want to preserve it,” Zinke said, according to the Tribune.

Zinke had met earlier with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition.

Hatch, however, said he thinks the tribes were tricked.

“The Indians, they don't fully understand that a lot of the things that they currently take for granted on those lands, they won't be able to do if it's made clearly into a monument or a wilderness,” said Hatch, who declined to name specific activities that aren't allowed within the monument area.

Dozens of protesters supporting the monuments faced Zinke outside the Salt Lake City offices of the Bureau of Land Management when he arrived, the Deseret News reported.

Zinke, Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) and others are taking a plane trip Tuesday to see Bears Ears from the air. Later in the week, he'll tour parts of Bears Ears and the Grand Staircase-Escalante national monument on horseback.

Interior will also take formal comments soon via mail and online as they consider a revision of those monuments and two dozen others.

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24. **Mr. Zinke, Keep Channeling Teddy Roosevelt**

The New York Times, May 8 | The Editorial Board

On his first day on the job, Ryan Zinke, President Trump's secretary of the interior, rode a horse to work, in plain imitation of Teddy Roosevelt, who as president used to gallop around Washington, and whose admirable record as a conservationist Mr. Zinke says he hopes to emulate.

By all accounts, Mr. Zinke, a former Navy SEALs member and congressman from Montana, is not a dope. He therefore knows that he cannot possibly match Mr. Roosevelt if he embraces the dismaying anti-environmental agenda Mr. Trump has saddled him with.



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As David Roberts of Vox has pointed out, that agenda is both plutocratic and lazy. It seeks to confer new benefits on oil and gas interests that are already richly favored. Yet it requires nothing of Mr. Trump himself. All he has done is issue executive orders that tell someone else to do the work. He cannot scrap the clean power rule or President Barack Obama's aggressive fuel efficiency standards; the relevant federal agencies will have to face the laborious and uncertain process of writing new rules and whatever court challenges those rules bring.

In similar fashion, in two separate orders, Mr. Trump has instructed Mr. Zinke to review Obama policies designed to protect important landscapes for the enjoyment of future generations and the oceans from catastrophic oil spills. The wording in both orders makes it clear that Mr. Trump wants the policies revised or jettisoned altogether, and in the end, great damage could be inflicted on the environment. It's up to Mr. Zinke to make sure that does not happen.

One order instructs Mr. Zinke to review all national monument designations made under the Antiquities Act after Jan. 1, 1996, that encompass 100,000 or more acres. Since Mr. Roosevelt signed the law in 1906, eight Republican (including T.R.) and eight Democratic presidents have used it to unilaterally protect threatened landscapes from commercial intrusion. Mr. Trump complains that such designations prohibit new mining and drilling projects that could create jobs, but a close look at his order shows that it makes no economic sense and is little more than cynical genuflection to the Utah congressional delegation.

The order's bookends are the 1.9 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, established by President Bill Clinton in 1996, and the 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument established just last year by Mr. Obama. The designations have stuck in the craw of two Republican warhorses, Senator Orrin Hatch and Representative Rob Bishop.

Both monuments contain magnificent landscapes and priceless artifacts. Neither contains significant oil and gas reserves, and the Grand Staircase designation has led to a big growth in tourism. Bears Ears is likely to do the same. Both have popular support, and both are best left alone.

The second order deals with oil and gas exploration. The United States is producing robust supplies, from both federal and private lands, but the oil industry wants more, and so does Mr. Trump. He has therefore ordered Mr. Zinke to draw up a new five-year exploration plan, roll back an Obama rule from last December withdrawing America's Arctic waters from drilling, and "reconsider" several safety regulations implemented after the disastrous BP oil spill.



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Five-year plans come and go; every nearly every administration draws up a new one. Mr. Trump's plan calls for drilling in the Atlantic, an idea Mr. Obama rejected after protests from coastal states. The instructions on Alaska and safety precautions are simply irresponsible. Mr. Obama withdrew Alaskan waters using existing legal authority and for a very good reason: An oil spill in the inhospitable waters of the Arctic would be a disaster. Further, after Shell's bumbling and ultimately fruitless \$7 billion attempt to find oil, companies have been abandoning old leases right and left, and, whatever their ambitions elsewhere, do not seem to be seeking new ones in the Arctic.

As for revising and presumably weakening the safety regulations — common-sense efforts to strengthen specific pieces of offshore drilling equipment, like blowout preventers, that failed in the 2010 gulf disaster — it's hard to believe that even industry wants something that stupid.

Back to Mr. Zinke's first day on the job. The day after he got off his horse, he addressed his employees and promised to defend them against brutal budget cuts that Mr. Trump had already threatened. That's all well and good, but the real measure of his leadership is whether he will also defend the crucially important work his employees are involved in, and, like Mr. Roosevelt, decide to protect and add to the public lands and waters instead of diminishing them.

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25. Could management shift to states even if public lands remain federally owned?

The Las Vegas Sun, May 8 / Daniel Rothberg

At a Lake Tahoe fundraiser in August, Elko County Commissioner Demar Dahl — a leader in the movement to transfer federal land to the states — met privately with then-candidate Donald Trump. According to a story Dahl has told many times since then, he asked Trump how he would feel operating a 10-floor hotel in which eight floors were owned by a bureaucracy 2,500 miles away.

“He caught right on,” Dahl said.

This is how Dahl sees Nevada's position relative to the federal government, which owns more than 85 percent of the state. “So many of the rules and regulations we have to live by are made



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so far away in Washington by people who are not really familiar with our problems out here,” he said.

In late April, Dahl flew to Washington, D.C., to discuss the future of public lands with President Trump’s staff, after the administration invited him to a signing ceremony for an executive order on education. The political landscape around the land issue had changed since August. Trump’s administration had veered away from the pro-transfer position included in the Republican Party’s platform.

“I’m adamantly opposed to the sale or transfer of public lands,” Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said at an Outdoor Industry Association event that same week in April. “So is my boss.”

That position, which has hardened in recent weeks, has forced land-transfer advocates in the West to look at more modest proposals for giving states more control over federal lands. At the meeting in April, for instance, Dahl suggested transferring more management responsibilities to the states.

When asked about such proposals, a spokesperson for the Interior Department said in an email that Zinke “believes the federal government needs to be a better manager and a better neighbor and that bureaus need to work more closely with one another and local and state governments on local land management policy.” She added: “What works for Seattle doesn’t exactly work for Henderson.”

State legislators across the West introduced bills this year encouraging Congress to revisit the idea of wholesale land transfers — ceding large parcels of land to the states, which could then sell the land for development and extraction, or manage it for the public. Those bills face an uphill battle.

The federal government, which owns the majority of land in Nevada, Oregon and Utah, sits on nearly 47 percent of all Western land. It’s a reality that has existed since statehood, when the federal government ceded land to newly formed states looking to raise revenue for public services. Nonetheless, it’s a development that remains a thorn in the side of land-transfer advocates, who argue that local jurisdictions should make choices about how their land is managed.

Politicians supporting the land-transfer movement, though, have had difficulty making gains, facing headwinds from both sides of the partisan spectrum.



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Conservationists and sporting groups believe that transferring federal land could constrict space for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. It's likely that these groups would oppose Dahl's suggestion — to transfer management, not the land, to the states.

"That gets to be a very slippery slope," said Alex Boian, vice president of governmental relations for the Outdoor Industry Association. "It's not a real compromise."

A spokesperson for Montana-based Backcountry Hunters and Anglers echoed Boian's concern. She too called such proposals a slippery slope and likened the protection of public lands to a "second Second Amendment."

The groups flexed their political muscle this year with a successful social media campaign that urged Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, to withdraw a bill to sell 3.3 million acres of federal land. "It's the first shot across the bow," Land Tawney, executive director for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, told Outside Magazine in February. "We don't have the money, but we have the people."

At a recent lunch meeting with members of the Congressional Western Caucus, Zinke reiterated his opposition to divesting federal land, U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., said in an interview with The Sunday.

Zinke declined to discuss whether there would be any exceptions, said Amodei, who introduced legislation in 2014 that would have transferred about 7.5 million acres of federal land to Nevada.

"That's not in the cards at this time," Amodei said.

Amodei instead plans to prioritize smaller gains for the land-transfer movement. He stressed the importance of monitoring land use around Yucca Mountain, funding for the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act and proposed expansions of Air Force facilities at Nellis and Fallon. He said he expected the administration to be open to land bills that address county-by-county issues.

While Dahl was in D.C., Trump signed a directive ordering Zinke to review national monument designations dating back to the Clinton administration. The request asked the Interior Department to look at downsizing or eliminating any recent monuments declared through presidential powers. .



The American Lands Council, a group that Dahl co-founded, applauded the order. But the group said on its website: “reforms need to go much further.”

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26. Could management shift to states even if public lands remain federally owned?

The Center for American Progress, May 8 / Mary Ellen Kustin

On April 26, President Donald Trump launched an attack on national parks, public lands, and waters. His executive order called on U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to “review” the 54 national monuments that presidents have designated or expanded since 1996. The order gives wide discretion to the secretary to recommend actions that the president or Congress should take to alter or rescind the protections for these natural, historical, and cultural treasures.

While the order is written in such a way that all recent national monuments—including the Stonewall, César E. Chávez, Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality, and Pacific Remote Islands Marine national monuments—are subject to the 120-day review, Secretary Zinke publicly called out two monuments: The “bookends” of his review will be the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments, both located in Utah. These two monuments later made the list of monuments Secretary Zinke is initially reviewing.

It has been widely reported that the Utah congressional delegation was the driving force behind President Trump’s executive order. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) have been particularly outspoken in their opposition to the Antiquities Act writ large and to Utah’s national monuments specifically. Indeed, both were at the signing ceremony for the executive order; Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) were also in attendance. President Trump gave Sen. Hatch the pen he used to sign the order after recognizing Hatch as “tough” for repeatedly calling Trump to say “you got to do this.”

The national monument review will be a legal, moral, and political minefield. President Trump’s embrace of the Utah delegation and its pet cause is especially interesting given that most of the delegation’s members were vocal in their opposition to him during the presidential primary. For a president known to keep a list of those who speak ill of him, it is a curious alliance. The Center for American Progress’ analysis suggests that a closer look at the oil, gas, and coal underneath



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Utah's national monuments—and the fossil fuel industry's influence on Trump and the Utah delegation—might help explain this newly formed partnership.

The Trump administration and the Utah delegation's history of disagreement

President Trump struggled to find support in Utah during his campaign, with the majority of the state's voters supporting someone else in both the Republican caucuses and the general election. Rep. Bishop reluctantly voted for Trump, saying, "Unless he resigns, I must support the Republican nominee as my only option." Sen. Hatch eventually supported Trump, but only after endorsing two other Republican candidates first. And Utah's junior senator, Mike Lee, another critic of the Bears Ears National Monument, told constituents that Trump "scares [him] to death." Similarly, Utah Rep. Chris Stewart (R) said last year that "Donald trump does not represent republican ideals, he is our Mussolini."

In addition, the Trump administration's early policy statements on land management differ from those of the Utah delegation. During the campaign, Trump indicated in an interview with Field & Stream magazine that his administration would be "great stewards" of public lands and that he did not "like the idea" of transferring federal lands to the states. His pick of Secretary Zinke, who resigned his delegate post at the Republican National Convention over the party's platform on this issue, underscored that commitment. By contrast, Rep. Bishop, Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), and Sen. Lee (R-UT) have all introduced legislation that would make it easier to sell off public lands.

It is noteworthy, then, that President Trump is pushing an executive order that is a thinly veiled land seizure. He even parroted a land seizure activist talking point—embraced by Rep. Bishop and other proponents of diminishing federal land management—just before signing the order, saying he would "give that power back to the states and to the people, where it belongs." Curious, perhaps, until one remembers that this rhetoric traces its roots to industry-backed front groups with vested interests in selling off public lands for private gain.

Extractive industries threaten national monuments in Utah

Both President Trump and members of the Utah delegation, particularly Rep. Bishop, have benefited from oil, gas, and coal industry contributions. Trump's presidential campaign received more than \$1.1 million from the fossil fuel industry. And coal, oil, and gas interests contributed \$1 out of every \$10 raised—a total of at least \$10 million—for Trump's inaugural celebrations.



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These events were not subject to the same campaign finance restrictions as donations made during the election.

Rep. Bishop, meanwhile, received the highest percentage of out-of-state campaign contributions of anyone in the House, and the oil and gas industries—including the American Petroleum Institute, a trade association that represents hundreds of oil and gas companies—contributed more to his campaigns than any other industry. Although Bishop has repeatedly claimed that his issues with the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments have nothing to do with the fossil fuel interests located below them, both monuments appear to be in the sights of this heavily invested industry.

The American Petroleum Institute was quick to send a letter to House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop and his counterpart in the Senate shortly after the 115th Congress convened, imploring them to “re-examine the role and purpose of the Antiquities Act.” The organization argued that the law threatens the extraction of fossil fuels from public lands and waters. In addition, the oil and gas industry group Western Energy Alliance, or WEA, has indicated interest in drilling in Bears Ears. WEA President Kathleen Sgamma has said about the monument, “There certainly is industry appetite for development there, or else companies wouldn’t have leases in the area.” And geologists have known for years that the Grand Staircase-Escalante area has coal, oil, and mineral deposits.

The following maps reveal why special interests would want access to mine and drill within the boundaries of both Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments. A new analysis by CAP and Conservation Science Partners, or CSP, finds that Grand Staircase-Escalante scored in the 72nd percentile for oil and gas and the 37th percentile for mineral resources among similarly sized Western landscapes. The boundary of Grand Staircase-Escalante also encompasses the extensive coal beds found in the Kaiparowits Plateau. As CAP and CSP previously reported, when compared with similarly sized landscapes in the West, Bears Ears scored above the 50th percentile for both mineral resources and oil and gas. Without protection, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears would be at great risk of destructive mining and oil and gas development.

These national monuments are also two of the wildest and most ecologically valuable places in the West. The new analysis indicates that Grand Staircase-Escalante is in the top 4 percent for ecological intactness and the top 6 percent for connectivity, which are essential to biodiversity



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and landscape-level conservation. As CAP and CSP previously showed, Bears Ears is in the top 10 percent of similarly sized places in the West for these two important factors.

Even though national monuments are public lands that, by definition, belong to the people, President Trump said he was signing the executive order to “return control to the people—the people of Utah, the people of all the states, the people of the United States.” However, it appears the people he has in mind may be those with close industry ties.

Methodology

To determine the ecological importance of Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, CAP and CSP mapped and summarized 10 landscape-level indicators of resilience to climate change; ecological connectivity; and intactness, biodiversity, and remoteness. Publicly available spatial data and published methods of analysis were used to create indicator maps across 11 Western states to compare Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument with equivalently sized areas throughout the West. The same was done with each of seven national parks. A mixture of iconic Western national parks known for their ecological importance and Utah national parks were selected for comparison. CAP and CSP also assessed Bears Ears for two threat indicators: mineral resource potential and oil and gas resource potential. No coal resources were found within Bears Ears National Monument. Similarly, CAP and CSP assessed Grand Staircase-Escalante for three threat indicators: mineral resource potential, oil and gas resource potential, and coal resource potential.

CAP and CSP determined the values of each of the indicators relative to the larger landscape using a simple scoring system based on percentile ranks. Specifically, the mean value of each indicator within Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was compared with the distribution of means of a large random sample of 1,000 areas across the 11 Western states, including all jurisdictions. The size of the random samples was equivalent to the size of the monument. CAP and CSP did the same for the seven national parks. Scores on indicators ranged from 0 to 100. For example, a score of 98 for a given indicator signified that the mean value of that indicator in the monument was greater than or equal to 98 percent of the equivalently sized random samples. Scores of 50 or higher suggested a relatively important indicator.

A more detailed description of methods and data [can be found](#) here.



Mary Ellen Kustin is the Director of Policy for Public Lands at the Center for American Progress.

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27. **US Interior secretary tours hotly contested Utah monument**

The Washington Post, May 8 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Monday will get a bird’s-eye view of one of 27 national monuments he’s been ordered to review as he flies over 1.3 million acres of southern Utah’s red rock plateaus, cliffs and canyons graced with sagebrush, juniper trees and ancient cliff dwellings in one of America’s newest and most hotly contested monuments.

His tour guide aboard the helicopter will be Gov. Gary Herbert, one of several prominent Republican leaders in the state who oppose the Bears Ears National Monument. Herbert, U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and the rest of the all-GOP Congressional delegation consider the monument creation by former President Barack Obama an unnecessary layer of federal control that will hurt local economies by closing the area to new energy development and isn’t the best way to protect the lands.

During the first day of a four-day trip to Utah to see two monuments, Zinke was serenaded in Salt Lake City by about 500 protesters who chanted, “Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears.” They represented tribal leaders and conservationists on the other side of the debate who are imploring Zinke to leave Bears Ears alone to preserve lands considered sacred to the tribes.

After holding a closed-door meeting with a coalition of tribal leaders who pushed for the monument, Zinke spoke on Sunday of his admiration for President Theodore Roosevelt, who created the law that gives presidents the power to create monuments.

Zinke, a Montana Republican, said that “it is undisputed the monuments have been an effective tool to save, preserve our greatest cultural treasures.”

He insisted there is no predetermined outcome of his review, saying he may not recommend the monuments be made smaller or rescinded, and he might even recommend an addition. Zinke has been tasked with making a recommendation on the monument by June 10, about 2½ months before a final report about on all the monuments.



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“I’m coming in this thing as a Montanan, a former congressman and now the secretary of the Interior without any predispositions of outcome,” Zinke said at a news conference Sunday evening in Salt Lake City. “I want to make sure that the public has a voice, that the elected officials have a voice.”

The two monuments he’s reviewing in Utah are quite large. Created in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante is 1.9 million acres (7,700 square kilometers), about the size of Delaware. Bears Ears is a bit smaller at 1.3 million acres (5,300 square kilometers).

Hatch, who appeared with Zinke at the Sunday news conference, said he is grateful the Interior secretary was making the visit.

“He understands that there are two sides. Maybe more than two sides,” Hatch said.

Hatch led the campaign by Utah Republican to get President Donald Trump to take a second look a monument designated by President Barack Obama near the end of his term.

The monument review is rooted in the belief of Trump and other critics that a law signed by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to declare monuments has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Conservation groups contend that the monument review puts in limbo protections on large swaths of land that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and ocean habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments, which would be unprecedented.

Congress might weigh in as well. Numerous bills on the issue were introduced in the previous session, including measures to prevent the president from establishing or expanding monuments in particular states and to require the consent of Congress or state legislatures.

Zinke and Herbert are scheduled to hold a news conference Monday afternoon before hiking up to the House on Fire, one of dozens of intact ancient ruins within the monument.



On Tuesday, he plans to tour the area by while riding a horse, mentioning his horseback commute through the streets of Washington, D.C., on his first day on the job in March.

“I think, sometimes, the best way to see things is slow and easy with a horse,” Zinke said.

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28. **Interior Secretary Zinke in southern Utah to tour Bears Ears**

The Deseret News, May 8 / Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BLANDING — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke landed in San Juan County Monday to begin his first full day exploring the rugged footprint of the new Bears Ears National Monument.

Zinke's midmorning arrival created much fanfare at the tiny airport on the southern edge of Blanding, where Native American monument supporters pressed their case to the media.

Zinke is expected to stay in Utah through Wednesday, and he is being accompanied on this trip by Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah.

Earlier Monday, Native American supporters talked about the sacred nature of the rugged landscape and why it's so important to protect. At an event hosted by Utah Diné Bikéyah, reporters and photographers in town for Zinke's visit were given aerial tours of the monument.

Zinke took his own aerial tour of the Bears Ears region in one of three Blackhawk helicopters before a scheduled hike later Monday to the House on Fire ruins near Mule Canyon, inside the monument footprint.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert is expected at the hike, as well as several staffers from Utah's congressional delegation.

Ecoflight pilot Bruce Gordon, who has been flying 30 years, said he thinks having the "bird's eye" view of a landscape helps to further the conservation discussion.

"We give the land a voice and we try to be objective," he said. "The aerial perspective gives people a better view."



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Willie Grayeyes, chairman of the board of Utah Diné Bikéyah, said he hopes Zinke realizes that as Interior secretary he has a “trust responsibility” to Native Americans.

That responsibility, he added, should be part of Zinke’s decision on whether the monument stands as Grayeyes hopes.

Diné Bikéyah describes itself on its website as a nonprofit organization that "works toward healing of people and the Earth by supporting indigenous communities in protecting their culturally significant, ancestral lands."

Woody Lee, the legislative district assistant for the Navajo Nation Council, said he hopes Zinke makes time to meet with members of the nation. He said the Bears Ears region "is something we all hold sacred. It's like the U.S. Capitol building that all Americans hold sacred.”

Members of Utah's congressional delegation have been united in opposition to Bears Ears' designation by former President Barack Obama late last year. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah led out on the effort that led to President Donald Trump signing an executive order on April 26 to review monument designations going back to 1996.

San Juan County commissioners were also at the airport for Zinke's arrival, which has stirred up residents. This is the second time in less than in a year that a secretary of the Interior has visited the region. Last summer, then-Secretary Sally Jewell was here.

“The windup has been pretty intense," said San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman, who said it was clear Zinke intended to listen to the variety of viewpoints about the December 2016 designation.

“He's gone above and beyond in that respect," he said. Lyman said the county leaders remain adamantly opposed to the monument.

"In this country we value consent, and this was done without our consent," he said.

The morning brought together a pair of men who were engaged in an amiable discussion over the monument, despite holding polar opposite views.

Mathew Gross, with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, and Matthew Anderson, with the conservative Sutherland Institute, even posed for photos together.



"We may be opposites, but everybody cares about this land," Anderson said.

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29. **Bears Ears: Hatch, Utah delegation lead pushback effort**

The Spectrum, May 8 / David DeMille

After signing an executive order calling for a review of more than two dozen national monuments, President Donald Trump handed the pen to U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, crediting the Utah Republican for being a driving force behind the order.

"Believe me, he's tough," Trump said, nodding to Hatch during the April 26 signing ceremony. "He would call me and say, 'You gotta do this.' Is that right, Orrin?"

Two weeks later, Hatch and the rest of Utah's all-Republican congressional delegation were meeting with newly-appointed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke ahead of his on-site visit to the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, Utah's two largest and the two that Hatch calls examples of Washington-ordered "land grabs" that lock out local communities.

The 83-year-old was already a 20-year veteran of the Senate when then-President Bill Clinton signed the Grand Staircase into monument status in 1996, and when he saw Bears Ears leaning the same direction two decades later he said the similarities were obvious.

"Nearly 20 years ago, the Clinton administration blindsided Utah with a massive 1.9-million-acre monument designation in Southern Utah," Hatch said, saying that in both cases a monument designation would go against the will of Utah's elected representatives and local residents.

The debate over those two monuments has made Utah ground zero in what is likely to become a wide-ranging political battle over monument designations, one that most observers expect to end up being fought in the courtroom.

On one side is the contention that Bears Ears, like other western monuments, is among the places most in need of protection, an undulating collection of mountainous terrain rich in cultural significance to native tribes, thousands of archaeological sites, paleontological resources, scenic landscapes and some of the nation's darkest night skies.

A large coalition of tribal leaders, environmentalist groups, archaeologists and others fought for the monument designation.



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The monument proposal had the support of six of the seven Navajo chapters in the state, along with representatives from some two dozen other tribes and the National Congress of American Indians, as well as organizations like the Friends of Cedar Mesa and the Utah Diné Bikéyah, a conservation organization led by Native Americans.

"National monuments are designated so they may be preserved for all the people of the United States," said Madison Hayes, content manager for the advocacy group Alliance for a Better Utah. "These are national treasures. Once they are lost and sold off for development and extraction, there is no way to return these beautiful lands to their original state."

But Bears Ears, like the nearby Grand Staircase, is also rich with natural resources that area leaders contend could help prop up poor economies.

When Clinton signed the Grand Staircase into law, it closed ideas of mining coal out of potentially rich beds beneath the Kaiparowits Plateau, where the U.S. Geological Survey had suggested there were some 30 billion tons of minable coal.

Both monuments house what researchers suggest could be rich deposits of gas, oil, uranium and other resources.

Utah officials have long argued that environmental protections could be maintained while allowing for some resource extraction, and most have argued that both monuments ignored the wishes of local leadership.

"Utahns deserve a collaborative land management process that ensures local residents have a seat at the table," said U.S. Rep. Chris Stewart, whose district includes the Grand Staircase monument.

Legal experts suggest Trump would have difficulty unilaterally rescinding a national monument designated by a previous president, since that ability is not spelled out in the Antiquities Act.

But there are arguments that he could amend or shrink the borders of monuments.

Congress has acted in the past to remove monument status and to make changes to existing monuments, and Utah's lawmakers have been among those proposing legislative changes to the 1906 law.



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Last year, Hatch and Sen. Mike Lee proposed one measure that would have allowed monument designations to expire if states didn't sign off on them, and then a second bill that proposed exempting Utah from any new monuments. Neither made it to a vote.

Similarly, the Public Lands Initiative, legislation developed by Utah Reps. Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz as an alternative to the Bears Ears monument designation, never saw a vote.

But Trump's win on Election Day has raised the hopes of state officials that a Republican administration might take a different look at the monuments.

Utah's back-and-forth with federal agencies over control of federally-controlled lands within its borders goes back decades, reaching a fevered pitch in recent years as state lawmakers propose suing over control of about 31 million acres.

County commissioners, along with county and municipal leadership across the region, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert and other state leaders have pushed for changes to the monument designation.

The Legislature passed a resolution this year demanding the federal government revisit the issue.

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30. **San Juan County residents welcome visit from Secretary Zinke**

ABC 4 Utah, May 8 | Glen Mills

Interior secretary Ryan Zinke is touring two national monuments, and taking input from local stakeholders.

This is the latest step in a bitter battle over public lands in Utah. Both sides say their way of life is at risk, and they are doing all they can to protect it.

On Main Street in Blanding, Utah sits the JC Hunt Company. Carl and DeeAnn Hunt are the owners. They distribute petroleum to farmers and ranchers in the Four Corners area.

All around their business you will find a strong statement on public lands. They want the Bears Ears National Monument rescinded.



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"We are afraid we will lose those rights to go on the land, and to enjoy the land the way that we have," said DeeAnn Hunt.

The Hunts say the process under the Obama Administration was hijacked, and local voices weren't heard.

"Everybody was against the designation of the monument, and yet that was never taken into consideration. We feel like the monument was a foregone conclusion," said Carl Hunt.

Now opponents are getting a second chance under President Trump's Executive Order calling for a review of the Antiquities Act.

Over the next few days Secretary Zinke will get an up close look at the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase- Escalante monuments, which combine for about 3.2 million acres.

He's also meeting with local stakeholders to get their input on the impact. Even monument supporters are welcoming the visit.

"I'm glad he's coming to educate himself, and also walk the lay of the land, to have a better understanding," said Mark Maryboy, with Utah Dine Bikeyah, and former San Juan County Commissioner.

But, Maryboy says they are ready to file a lawsuit with the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals if President Trump decides to rescind the monument or alter the size.

They say it's about protecting sacred traditions.

"Go baby, go baby drill. That's their philosophy, and we are all about conservation, Mother Earth, protect the land. We believe in climate change," said Maryboy.

The Hunts say they too want to preserve the land. They say it's in their blood, but they say the monument consumes way too much land.

"We've lived here, we love the land, we take care of it. We've been taught as young people to be stewards over the land and to take care of it," said DeeAnn Hunt.

Secretary Zinke is viewing the Bears Ears National Monument by helicopter and horseback on Monday. No decisions will be made during this trip.



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31. Interior Turns Down Meetings With 2 Groups Supporting Utah Monuments

The Morning Consult, May 8 | Jack Fitzpatrick

The Department of the Interior turned down meetings this week with at least two groups supporting national monument designations in Utah, spurring complaints that the Trump administration's review of monuments may be one-sided.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is in Utah through Wednesday to meet with stakeholders about a review of potential changes to two national monuments in the state. But Interior has not announced any public meetings in the area, though the department is taking written comments online and Zinke has met with some major stakeholders.

Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument are among 27 national monuments the administration is considering altering or revoking under an executive action signed by President Donald Trump in April. Designation as a monument limits the number of activities that can take place on the land, such as energy production.

Opponents of the monuments criticized former Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama for creating them without enough public input, using the 1906 Antiquities Act to unilaterally designate the monuments without approval from Congress.

But as Zinke starts a 45-day review of Bears Ears and a 120-day review of the others, monument supporters say he has not engaged enough with the local community.

Interior turned down requests for meetings with Utah Diné Bikéyah, a nonprofit that supports Bears Ears and coordinates with five nearby tribes, Executive Director Gavin Noyes said. The department also declined to meet with some members of the Escalante & Boulder Utah Chamber of Commerce, Vice President Kris Waggoner said.

"We feel like our board members and the elders in the local community have critical knowledge that he [Zinke] needs to understand before he recommends any changes to the monument," Noyes said in a phone interview Monday. "So we don't quite understand why he hasn't felt it necessary to engage us, but we'll certainly continue trying to get that critical information to him. We had hoped to walk the land with him."



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Zinke met with the Utah congressional delegation Monday morning, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said in a statement. Interior also planned several stops to talk to local press Sunday through Wednesday, but Waggoner said she is not aware of any public meetings at which she could voice her support for the monuments.

Interior did not respond to requests on Monday for details on whom Zinke would meet during his tour.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported that Zinke on Sunday met with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which supports the Bears Ears monument designation.

Noyes said he is concerned Zinke will not spend enough time in the southern half of San Juan County, Utah, an area with a more predominantly Native American population. That southern half of the county is where the most people hope to preserve the land for cultural reasons, he said.

“The people who use Bears Ears daily for cultural purposes, those are all south of where it seems he is going to visit,” Noyes said. “It seems like he’s spending his time primarily in the Anglo [northern] half.”

Bears Ears has also attracted criticism from some local tribal organizations, such as the Utah-based Aneth Chapter of Navajo and the Blue Mountain Diné, an organization that represents Navajos living in San Juan County.

In lieu of meeting in person with Zinke, Noyes said his group still hopes to hold a conference call with him before Zinke finishes his Bears Ears review. Waggoner said she will organize a “party” May 12-14 at a business she owns, where she will set up computers for guests to submit online comments on the monuments review.

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32. **Zinke: Monument status may not be best to save sacred land**

The Washington Post, May 8 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said sacred tribal lands he toured Monday in America’s newest and most hotly contested monument should be preserved but he questioned whether the monument designation was the right way to do it.



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Zinke's aerial and ground tour of the Bears Ears National Monument was part of a review ordered by President Donald Trump to determine if 27 monuments were properly established.

Zinke spent the day getting familiar with the 1.3-million acre (5,300 square kilometers) swath of southern Utah with red rock plateaus, cliffs and canyons on land considered sacred to tribes.

His tour guide was Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, one of several prominent Republican leaders in the state who oppose Bears Ears National Monument.

Zinke, a Montana Republican, said he wants to make sure Native American culture is preserved but cautioned that not all tribal members share the same opinion about the monument designated by former President Barack Obama near the end of his term.

He spoke before taking a short, winding hike in the afternoon sun with Herbert and other state and local officials to a lookout post above ancient ruins.

"Of course, the legacy and what I've seen should be preserved," Zinke said, "The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle."

Herbert, U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and the rest of the all-GOP congressional delegation consider the monument creation by former President Barack Obama an unnecessary layer of federal control that will hurt local economies by closing the area to new energy development. They also say it isn't the best way to protect the land.

In Blanding, with a population of 3,400 people, two large banners read, "#RescindBearsEars," reflecting the popular sentiment among residents.

Bears Ears supporters made their voices heard too. They believe the monument adds vital protections to tribal lands where members perform ceremonies, collect herbs and wood for medicinal and spiritual purposes, and do healing rituals.

Tara Benally, a member of Navajo Nation, was standing just outside the Blanding airport wearing a shirt commemorating the December declaration of Bears Ears National Monument.

"We want it left as is. We have history going through there," said Benally, who lives south of the nearby town of Bluff. "That was basically my mom's playground as she was growing up."



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A group of Bears Ears supporters greeted Zinke when he arrived to the trailhead. One woman asked why he only met with tribal leaders for an hour.

Zinke, who was shaking another supporter's hand, turned around to face the woman and said: "Be nice." The woman responded that she always is.

The monument review is rooted in the belief of Trump and other critics that a law signed by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to declare monuments has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Conservation groups contend that the monument review puts in limbo protections on areas across the country that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and ocean habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

After his arrival Sunday in Salt Lake City, Zinke was met by about 500 protesters who chanted, "Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears."

He held a closed-door meeting with a coalition of tribal leaders who pushed for the monument then spoke of his admiration for Roosevelt.

Davis Filfred of the Navajo Nation said Monday that the one-hour meeting Sunday wasn't enough time for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to make their points to Zinke. Filfred, who was in the meeting, said it seems Zinke is listening more to opponents of the monument than people who want it preserved.

Zinke insisted there is no predetermined outcome of his review, saying he may not recommend the monuments be made smaller or rescinded, and he might even recommend an addition.

The two monuments he's reviewing in Utah are quite large. Created in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante is 1.9 million acres (7,700 square kilometers), about the size of Delaware. Bears Ears is smaller at 1.3 million acres.

Zinke has been tasked with making a recommendation on the Bears Ears monument by June 10, about 2½ months before a final report about all the monuments.



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Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments — a move that would be unprecedented.

On the way back from his hike to the ruins, Zinke stopped at the trailhead and spoke with several people on horseback and admired their horses. On Tuesday, Zinke plans to tour more of the Bears Ears area on horseback.

He said his upcoming decision is not just about how the local tribes, county officials or the governor feel about the monument, but it's also about how the entire country feels about it because it's America's public land.

“President Trump, I’m going to tell you, is a great boss. The reason why I think he felt so strongly about this is he feels like sometimes Washington makes these rules and we don’t have a voice,” Zinke said. “He put this in motion to make sure that local communities count. States count. America counts.”

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33. **Interior Secretary visits Bears Ears National Monument to decide its fate**

Fox 13 News, May 8 / Ben Winslow

BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT -- Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke hiked past the lines of protesters out into the desert landscape.

Accompanied by Governor Gary Herbert, Congressman Rob Bishop, members of the Utah State Legislature and news reporters, Zinke took in his surroundings.

"It is drop dead gorgeous country, no question about it!" he declared. "Beautiful vistas."

The Secretary of the Interior is here in Utah's most controversial national monument to help decide its fate. He's spending the next couple of days in San Juan and Kane counties as part of a review of national monuments ordered by President Trump.

Zinke is touring Bears Ears National Monument on Monday and Tuesday. He'll then stop by Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument on Wednesday.



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The president signed an executive order to review the use of the Antiquities Act, used to create national monuments. Bears Ears was basically the catalyst, having been created by President Obama at the end of his term.

At 1.35 million acres, the newly created national monument outraged Utah political leaders.

"I think there is a reverence for and a desire to be good stewards of the land and I think monuments are more restrictive," said House Speaker Greg Hughes, R-Draper. "Access becomes a lot harder."

Environmental and Native American tribal groups argue the area deserves protection. Filled with ancient petroglyphs and dwelling sites, they argue it is archaeologically rich and culturally sensitive.

"We call it holy places. We have offerings, we have prayer ceremonies done. We have places where our ancestors are buried. This is a sacred place," said Woody Lee, a Navajo Nation Council District Liaison.

San Juan County Commissioner Bruce Adams said locking up so much land in a national monument designation hurts the potential for development and hurts the local economy. He urged President Trump to rescind it.

"I want him to see what the economy and San Juan looks like. I want him to see how the monument might affect school children and see how it might affect the people who live here and work here every day of their life," Adams told FOX 13 as he waited to meet with Zinke.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Zinke said he was not an advocate for selling public lands (some Utah lawmakers have advocated such a move). Asked by FOX 13 if Bears Ears should be preserved, Zinke replied: "Yes."

"Of course what I've seen should be preserved. The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle," he said. "Whether it's not the right vehicle, it's public land."

Zinke insisted he is listening to all sides as he makes his recommendation to President Trump. He has 45 days to decide Bears Ears and has asked for public comment online by May 12.

If he recommends rescinding Bears Ears, tribal and environmental groups said they will sue.



"We're going to have to try to do something. I mean, we're not going to take this lying down," said Kenneth Maryboy, the Mexican Water Chapter President of the Navajo Nation.

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34. Interior Secretary visits Bears Ears National Monument to decide its fate

KUTV 2 News, May 8 / Daniel Woodruff

Blanding, Utah — (KUTV) As the sun set over San Juan County Monday evening, Blanding, Utah, was buzzing.

"I'm really happy," Nicole Francom said as she stood with family and friends outside her home, waiting for a glimpse of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's motorcade to pass by.

When he did, Zinke gave them a big wave. Francom and her group yelled "thank you" and "Trump this monument!"

"I feel like everyone in Blanding just got so much hope back," Francom said.

She feel this way because Zinke is touring the 1.3-million acre Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah. He is tasked with making a recommendation about what to do with the newly designated monument to President Trump by June.

Many in Blanding want the monument gone.

"Rescind it," said Wendy Black, "and then come back and do it the right way -- with the people, not against us."

Zinke said he hasn't made a decision yet.

"I'm actually optimistic at the end of the day we'll make a recommendation that I think will be best for our country," he told reporters Monday afternoon before he and a group of local and state elected officials hiked in to see some ancient Native American ruins. "We want to make sure that everyone's voice is heard."

But some feel that isn't happening.



"It seems like he's trying to lean his ear the other way," said Kenneth Maryboy, a member of the Navajo nation.

He and other native Americans say the monument protects their sacred lands. They want it left as it is.

"The intent is to leave it as a monument to where it will be for all people," said Woody Lee. "Not only natives, but for all people from now until eternity."

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35. Interior secretary tours Bears Ears, hotly contested monument in Utah

PBS Newshour, May 8 | Michelle L. Price and Brady McCombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke took an aerial tour Monday of one of America's newest and most hotly contested monuments — one of 27 he's been ordered to review by President Donald Trump to determine if they were properly established.

Zinke's tour guide for the helicopter ride over the 1.3-million acre (5,300 square kilometers) swath of southern Utah with red rock plateaus, cliffs and canyons was Gov. Gary Herbert, one of several prominent Republican leaders in the state who oppose Bears Ears National Monument.

Herbert, U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and the rest of the all-GOP congressional delegation consider the monument creation by former President Barack Obama an unnecessary layer of federal control that will hurt local economies by closing the area to new energy development. They also say it isn't the best way to protect the land.

"The only way to truly learn about and understand a place is with boots on the ground," Zinke posted to Twitter after landing in Blanding for the second day of his four-day trip to see Bears Ears and the Grand Staircase-Escalante.

Zinke and Herbert were expected to hold a news conference later in the day before taking a hike to one of the ancient ruins within the Bears Ears site.

The monument review is rooted in the belief of Trump and other critics that a law signed by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to declare monuments has been improperly



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used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Conservation groups contend that the monument review puts in limbo protections on areas that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and ocean habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

In Blanding, with a population of 3,400 people, two large banners read, “#RescindBearsEars,” reflecting the popular sentiment among residents.

Those who want Zinke to leave Bears Ears alone to preserve lands considered sacred by tribes made their voices heard, too. Tara Benally, a member of Navajo Nation, was standing just outside the Blanding airport wearing a shirt commemorating the December declaration of Bears Ears National Monument.

“We want it left as is. We have history going through there,” said Benally, who lives in the nearby town of Bluff. “That was basically my mom’s playground as she was growing up.”

After his arrival Sunday in Salt Lake City, Zinke was met by about 500 protesters who chanted, “Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears.”

He held a closed-door meeting with a coalition of tribal leaders who pushed for the monument then spoke of his admiration for Roosevelt,

Zinke, a Montana Republican, said “it is undisputed the monuments have been an effective tool to save, preserve our greatest cultural treasures.”

He insisted there is no predetermined outcome of his review, saying he may not recommend the monuments be made smaller or rescinded, and he might even recommend an addition.

Zinke has been tasked with making a recommendation on the Bears Ears monument by June 10, about 2½ months before a final report about all the monuments.

“I’m coming in this thing as a Montanan, a former congressman and now the secretary of the Interior without any predispositions of outcome,” Zinke said. “I want to make sure that the public has a voice, that the elected officials have a voice.”



The two monuments he's reviewing in Utah are quite large. Created in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante is 1.9 million acres (7,700 square kilometers), about the size of Delaware. Bears Ears is a bit smaller at 1.3 million acres.

Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments — a move that would be unprecedented.

On Tuesday, Zinke plans to tour the Bears Ears area on horseback.

"I think, sometimes, the best way to see things is slow and easy with a horse," Zinke said, referring to his commute ride through the streets of Washington, D.C., on his first day as Interior secretary.

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36. **Zinke flies over Bears Ears as critics urge him to 'Make San Juan County Great Again' and rescind monument**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 8 | Brian Maffly

Blanding • When Hank Stevens' family hunted under Bears Ears Buttes, they always honored the deer whose life they had taken and the place that nurtured it.

"We respect the animal where it dropped," said the Navajo tribal leader Monday while flying over the new Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah.

"We do a little ritual where we leave the intestine, testicles and the antlers there. We only take the meat and the buck hide."

Below, sinuous canyons fell away from the juniper-topped mesas surrounding Bears Ears Buttes, the 1.35-million-acre monument's namesake and home to tens of thousands of sites left by ancestral Puebloans.

The sky view was also enjoyed Monday by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke who is in Utah this week.



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Under orders from President Donald Trump, Zinke is reviewing 27 large national monuments designated since 1996, starting with Bears Ears, which former President Barack Obama designated at the request of five tribes with ancestral ties to these public lands.

The designation has sparked an intense backlash from Utah's political leaders denouncing it as "federal overreach" and a "land grab."

Joined by an entourage composed entirely of anti-monument politicians, Zinke flew over the landscape aboard three Army Black Hawk helicopters and later hiked to Butler Wash, a popular destination overlooking cliff dwellings left by ancient American Indians.

"It's been a while since I flew in a Black Hawk without people shooting at me," said Zinke in joking reference to his stint as a Navy Seal commander.

"The trip today verified it is drop-dead gorgeous country. No question about it," Zinke told reporters gathered Monday at the Butler Wash trailhead. "We want to make sure everyone's voice is heard. A lot of the anger out there in our country is local communities and states don't feel like they had a voice. Washington has done things that seem heavy handed without coordination."

Zinke's remarks echoed criticism of the monument designation leveled by Utah's top political leaders, including Gov. Gary Herbert, who joined the hike.

"We know you are going to take a good look at this with an open mind and unbiased attitude, and I know your challenge is to get some recommendations on what to do to bring us together and resolve some of these conflicts," Herbert told Zinke.

But many pro-monument Navajo, including Stevens, complain that they are being excluded from the discussion.

President of the Navajo Mountain tribal chapter, Stevens was among several members of Utah Dine Bikeyah, the grass-roots Navajo nonprofit that has long lobbied to conserve what it considers a sacred landscape, gathered at the Blanding Airport on Monday morning, hoping for a word with Zinke.

The new secretary, who has earned a reputation for respecting tribal interests as a Montana politician, gathered inside with state and local leaders who want Trump to rescind the monument.



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Bikeyah board Chairman Willie Grayeyes tried to enter but was barred by Utah Highway Patrol troopers.

"We are asking for equal time and it's not happening," said group member Woody Lee. "It happens all the time."

On Sunday in Salt Lake City, Zinke met with tribal leaders who support the monument, but his staff declined a formal meeting request submitted by Utah Dine Bikeyah. On the street outside the Bureau of Land Management headquarters, hundreds of Bears Ears supporters clamored for equal hearing and respect for tribal sovereignty.

Ute, Navajo and Puebloan tribal leaders are dismayed that the first national monument created at the request of American Indians could become the first undone by a succeeding president. But undoing or reducing the monument would not mean opening Bears Ears to extraction, Zinke said.

"Yes, of course the legacy and what I've seen should be preserved. The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle," said Zinke, who was trained as a geologist. "What vehicle of public land is appropriate to preserve the cultural identity, to make sure the tribes have a voice and make sure you preserve the traditions of hunting and fishing and public access?"

He said he is concerned about how monument rules would restrict land uses.

"If you live in the county, making a living is a good thing, too," he said. "Having your access limited is a problem."

Zinke is scheduled to continue his tour Tuesday with a ride through Bears Ears Buttes on a towering 17-hand horse provided by San Juan County Commissioner Bruce Adams.

He will conclude his tour Wednesday in Kanab, where he will review the 1.9-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, designated 20 years ago by President Bill Clinton.

At the Blanding airport Monday, Adams, a Monticello rancher, passed around white cowboy hats emblazoned with the Trumpian slogan: "Make San Juan County Great Again."

"By getting rid of this layer of this monument, we can get back to the greatness of where we were," Adams said.



He and other monument critics fear restrictions that come with monument status on the 1.35 million acres west of Blanding will thwart economic development, impede public access and undermine local schools by disrupting possible revenue sources.

On Monday, local monument opponents, including American Indians, presented their case for erasing the monument at the Utah State University Blanding campus and later at a park, where Zinke briefly joined them.

"We are concerned by the divisiveness created in our county among the people," Adams said. "We want to see the people unified and want to see them brought together and work together to make San Juan County great."

But Lee, the Bikeyah member, had a different take on Adams' idea of greatness.

"It's great as long as Indians don't say anything," Lee said.

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37. Tribal leaders demand apology from Hatch after he said they 'don't fully understand' Bears Ears implications

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 8 / Mariah Noble

After Sen. Orrin Hatch said Sunday that American Indians "don't fully understand" what they would lose if Bears Ears is "made clearly into a monument," tribal leaders have called his comments offensive, and they demand an apology.

Willie Grayeyes, chairman of the pro-monument Utah Dine Bikeyah board, said in a written statement Monday that it's "offensive" to believe "that Native Americans do not have a will of their own, or if they do take a position that their position is influenced by a non-native person."

American Indians "understand the special and sacred landscapes at Bears Ears National Monument better than anyone," Grayeyes said, and "have stewarded these landscapes for thousands of years." He said American Indians are "very pleased with the language used in the proclamation that protects the things we care about and gives us a voice in our future."



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Hatch "does not understand what he is working so hard to take away," Grayeyes said. "If he would just listen to us, he would stop fighting against what we stand for because it is not a threat to him or anyone else," Grayeyes said.

The Utah League of Native American Voters called Hatch's comments "blatantly racist, misinformed and condescending [in] tone."

Hatch also said Sunday that Americans Indians are "manipulated sometimes by people" and that the "far left" has further designs on the 1.35 million acres in southeastern Utah protected by President Barack Obama on Dec. 28.

"The Indians, they don't fully understand that a lot of the things that they currently take for granted on those lands, they won't be able to do if it's made clearly into a monument or a wilderness," Hatch said.

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38. **Boyd Matheson: The Navy SEAL and the Bears Ears**

The Deseret News, May 9 / Boyd Matheson

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, a former Navy SEAL commander, is touring Utah this week in response to President Donald Trump's executive order calling for a review of national monument designations over the past 21 years. There will be many who want to get in the secretary's ear as he visits the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante areas. I hope he can shun and shut out the strident and vitriolic voices in order to truly listen to and hear all the parties who have something constructive to say.

Zinke will need to rely on the training and leadership lessons of the SEAL teams he once led to navigate an issue that is deep and divisive, complex and infested with confusing rhetoric and an abundance of loud voices. Of late, the national monument issue has become filled with fictional claims and fraught with false choices. SEAL team members are known for their ability to drop into hostile environments, assess the situation and then act in the best interest of the country. Those skills will be priceless for his time here in Utah.

I hope the secretary brought his Navy SEAL Trident badge with him to remind him of what to do and how to act in dangerous or high-stakes circumstances. The Trident badge is unique in the



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military. Normally, the eagle is placed on military decorations with its head held high. On the Navy SEAL badge, however, the eagle's head is lowered to remind each SEAL team member that humility is the true measure of a warrior's strength. Zinke understands that humility is not weakness and there is real power in listening.

I remember attending a dinner meeting for new members of Congress when Zinke was a newly elected congressman from Montana. He arrived with many of the other freshmen, but it was easy to tell he was different from his new congressional colleagues. He had a quiet confidence about him. I sensed he knew exactly why he was there and what his mission was going to be as a representative. I watched him throughout the evening. Many of the other people in the room seemed obsessed with getting a word in, making a point, sounding smart, dropping names and talking about how they won their elections. Zinke didn't just listen; he listened intently and was one of only two people in the room taking notes. He said little, which actually spoke volumes about him as a leader. He asked a lot of questions instead of making statements. When he finally commented on an issue, it was clearly thought out and it concluded with a call to action.

I suspect that everyone, on all sides of the Bears Ears issue, will walk away feeling heard and understood this week.

I hope the secretary will lead the discussion this week to issues such as: 1. What do the people whose lives and livelihoods are dependent upon the Bears Ears area think about the monument designation? 2. Does the Antiquities Act's "smallest area possible" necessary to preserve and protect antiquities really require 1.3 million acres? 3. How multiple use and local input can transcend the all-or-nothing false choices of conserving land or unchecked commercialization. (There really won't be an oil rig on top of Bears Ears or under Delicate Arch.) 4. How the Native American tribes who live in San Juan County (not national tribal groups) and the other local citizens (not from the Wasatch Front or the rest of the nation) feel about the monument designation and its impact on their lives and futures. 5. Is a presidential declaration the right process for national monuments? Local and state input is critical to ensuring that national monuments preserve antiquities and empower local communities.

I believe what happens in Utah this week will lead to an important dialogue across the country and in Congress about the president, of either party, having the power to declare such vast monuments. Trump's executive order could be a rarity in that it actually reduces or limits executive branch power. That would be a welcome change. Restoring power to the people's



representatives and ultimately to the people is vital for the people of Utah, and especially those in San Juan County.

Zinke's visit is important to Utah and to the nation. His Navy SEALs training will come in most handy. As he hears from big business, big government and big environmental groups, I hope he also remembers his Navy SEAL ethos to "humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow Americans, always ready to defend those who are unable to defend themselves."

And then I hope he remembers that a wealthy man's playground should never come at the expense of a working man's dream.

Boyd C. Matheson is president of Sutherland Institute, a conservative think tank that advocates for a free market economy, civil society and community-driven solutions.

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39. The public is invited to comment as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tours monuments Utah politicians want abolished or shrunk

The National Geographic, May 9 | Laura Parker

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is touring a pair of controversial national monuments in Utah on horseback this week at the behest of President Trump, who is reconsidering their merits. Zinke's four-day visit will take in Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in southern Utah, the main targets in a review of 27 large monuments Trump ordered last month. The president assigned Zinke to examine whether his predecessors over-stepped their authority and made these monuments too large or ignored objections from the public.

The monuments under review are those created since 1996 by Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama. All but one are at least 100,000 acres in size. Bears Ears, which totals 1.35 million acres, was created by Obama in the final days of his presidency. The 1.7-million-acre Grand Staircase was designated by Clinton in 1996.

Utah lawmakers have been steamed for more than two decades about the creation of the Grand Staircase, which essentially locked up Utah's largest coal seam. They want the monument's size to be reduced so the coal can be mined. They also have been pushing to have Bear Ears revoked since Obama created it.



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A public comment period begins May 12. Information about submitting comments online or by mail can be found at the Interior Department's website [here](#).

The Antiquities Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, gives the president broad authority to set aside federal land for protection as national monuments. No president has ever revoked any monuments named by his predecessors; the question of whether a president can revoke a national monument has never been tested in court. The law does not require presidential consultation with anyone prior to creating a new monument. The Supreme Court dealt with the issue of size when it upheld Roosevelt's designation of the Grand Canyon National Monument in 1908.

Congress has the authority to abolish monuments outright, but it rarely does largely because of monuments' popularity with the public. More often, Congress has resized monuments, including Grand Staircase.

In addition to the Utah monuments, two others that have drawn fire are on Trump's list:

The creation of the 4,913-square-mile Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monuments in the Atlantic Ocean off New England has been challenged in court by five commercial fishing organizations, in part because commercial fishing is now prohibited within the monument's boundaries. And, the 87,560-acre Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine, also created by Obama, was added to the list after Gov. Paul LePage complained that there had not been adequate public comment before its designation. It is the only monument under review smaller than 100,000 acres.

Zinke, a Republican and fifth generation Montanan who touts his western heritage, rode horseback to the Interior Department on his first day on the job. A Republican, he served as Montana's lone congressman before Trump tapped him for Interior and says his voting record reflects a philosophy about public lands that aligns with Roosevelt's legacy as the conservation president.

Zinke resigned as a delegate to the Republican National Convention last summer because he disagreed with a party platform plank that endorsed the transfer of public lands to the states.

The Interior Department "is the steward of America's greatest treasures and the manager of one-fifth of our land," Zinke said in a statement. "Part of being a good steward is being a good neighbor and listening to the American people who we represent."



He said the review “finally gives voice to local communities and states” and added “there is no pre-determined outcome on any monument.”

Details about the monuments under review are from presidential proclamations published in the Federal Register as well as Interior Department websites for each of the monuments.

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40. **The Case for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument**

The Center for American Progress, May 9 | Jenny Rowland

President Donald Trump’s national monuments executive order is an attack on American national parks, public lands, and oceans. One of its specific targets is the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.

Although some Utah politicians argue that this monument has had a negative impact on the surrounding area, the reality on the ground is quite different: By a margin of better than 2 to 1, Utahns believe that the monument’s designation was good for their state. Even the Utah Office of Tourism cites the monument as one of its “most visited parks” and boasts about its vast size and “phenomenal” allure. The truth is that Grand Staircase-Escalante is valuable. It deserves its status as a national monument for a multitude of reasons and should not be targeted by Trump’s misguided attempts to sell out U.S. public lands.

This column details just some of the reasons why Grand Staircase-Escalante should remain protected as a national monument.

The local economy is thriving because of the monument

- Rural Western counties with more protected public lands, including national monuments, have faster-growing populations, employment rates, and personal incomes than those with less protected land. In fact, since Grand Staircase-Escalante’s designation in 1996, per capita incomes have risen 28 percent and employment has risen 40 percent in the communities adjacent to the national monument. While such statistics do not prove causation, they do disprove the idea that the national monument prevented economic growth.



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- The vice president of the Escalante Chamber of Commerce has attested to the region's economic success following designation, noting that the tourism industry has continued to grow and that local businesses are employing more people than ever.
- Arguments that the monument has hurt ranchers by limiting grazing are untrue. Grazing within the monument has remained virtually unchanged since the designation. In fact, it has shrunk by less than 0.5 percent.

Grand Staircase-Escalante is full of antiquities and areas of scientific and archeological interest

- The monument's scientific, natural, and cultural value, as well as its more than 20,000 archeological sites, deserved protection when the monument was designated—and still do today. The monument's Bureau of Land Management, or BLM, webpage notes that its "size, resources, and remote character provide extraordinary opportunities for geologists, paleontologists, archeologists, historians, and biologists in scientific research, education, and exploration." A BLM archeologist has also emphasized that the "wholeness" of the archeological record is what makes the area unique.
- The monument has been called a dinosaur "Shangri-La" due to its high volume of well-preserved fossils from the late Cretaceous Period. Twenty-one never-before-seen dinosaurs have been discovered in the monument since its designation.
- Grand Staircase-Escalante is in the top 4 percent of similarly sized places in the West for ecological intactness and in the top 7 percent for ecological connectivity and night sky darkness—higher than the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone national parks. These indicators are necessary for high biodiversity and landscape-level conservation.

The courts have ruled that there is no question as to the monument's legality under the Antiquities Act

- In 2004, a federal judge [ruled](#) that former President Bill Clinton was well within his legal authority in designating the monument. The judge rejected claims made by a group of Utah counties that the size of the monument exceeded what is allowed under the Antiquities Act.

Congress has confirmed and clarified the boundaries of the monument



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- At its creation, Grand Staircase-Escalante encompassed small pockets of land that were owned by the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration. An [agreement was reached with the federal government](#) in which state officials swapped the inholdings for more resource-rich federal land elsewhere in the state. In addition to receiving a \$50 million payment upon completion of the deal, the lands that the state government acquired in the exchange have generated more than \$310 million for Utah's public schools, counties, and other institutions.
- Importantly, the land exchange [passed through Congress](#) in 1998, codifying the new boundaries into law.

The monument holds oil, gas, and coal resources, raising questions about the motivations of those who want to roll back protections

- President Trump's executive order is part of a [larger effort](#) to sell off the nation's public lands to the highest bidder. Industry groups, including the American Petroleum Institute and the Western Energy Alliance, have already expressed interest in drilling in Utah's national monuments. Including Grand Staircase-Escalante in the review is yet another nod to the power of the fossil fuel industry to influence the administration's actions.
- The discussion on coal mining in the monument was settled 18 years ago, when the coal company that had leases within the monument's boundaries was compensated with a generous sum of \$14 million. At a time when most major coal companies have been in and out of bankruptcy and the price of coal has declined to around \$40 per ton, reversing protections on Grand Staircase-Escalante to appease special interests would not make economic sense. But it would sacrifice the rural economic gains driven by protection of natural and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is one of many national treasures under attack by the Trump administration. Any attempt by President Trump to eliminate or alter the monument would undermine the cultural and natural resources it protects.

Jenny Rowland is the Research and Advocacy Manager for the Public Lands Project at the Center for American Progress.

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41. **NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Standing in Bears Ears, Zinke says protections may change**

E & E News, May 9 | Jennifer Yachnin,

BLANDING, Utah — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke questioned yesterday whether a monument designation is the "right vehicle" to protect tracts in southern Utah, suggesting that other public lands categories could be more appropriate for the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument.

Zinke made the remarks in the midst of his visit to the Beehive State this week, as he meets with local officials in the course of a review of dozens of national monuments. He also drew criticism from some monument supporters over the lack of a public forum and for allegedly refusing to meet with them.

Following an aerial tour of the Bears Ears site with Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R), Zinke spoke with reporters at the Butler Wash, a site inside the monument several miles south of the city of Blanding.

"Of course the legacy of what I've seen should be preserved," Zinke said. "The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle or if it's not the right vehicle. It is public land. It was public land before the monument. It'll be public land after the monument."

Zinke added that he must recommend the "appropriate" type of public land to preserve the area's "cultural identity," as well as access for hunting and fishing.

"How best do we look at the future of what it should be?" Zinke asked. He pointed to the current mix of lands in the monument, which is managed by both the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.

Under President Trump's executive order mandating the review, Zinke has until June 10 to issue an interim report on Bears Ears and until late August to issue his recommendations for all monuments under review.

But he suggested the interim report could be simply that, and specific changes to Bears Ears may not be determined by next month.



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"Now, my recommendation doesn't have to be so detailed that it's the final solution," Zinke said, adding that he wanted to speak to additional archaeologists, state officials and others. "Let's get the information."

Trump's order charged Zinke with making recommendations on whether to reduce or eliminate some monuments created since 1996 that include more than 100,000 acres, or suggesting changes to management plans for those sites.

The Interior Department announced Friday it will examine 27 monuments, including two in Utah, the Bears Ears site created by President Obama and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designated by President Clinton.

Protesters

Zinke has faced criticism during his visit from members of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition — which represents the Hopi, Navajo, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni — who complained he did not spend sufficient time with the group, as well as from individuals who assert he has focused his time with opponents of the monument, including House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) and San Juan County commissioners.

In addition to those officials, Zinke was joined yesterday by Herbert, Utah House Speaker Greg Hughes (R) and other local officials who did not speak publicly.

Zinke brushed back questions over a lack of public forums during his visit to the state, arguing that Interior's decision to create a public comment forum for the monuments review on the agency's website will allow more individual voices to be heard.

But proponents of the monument, including the nonprofit Utah Diné Bikéyah and members of the Escalante & Boulder Utah Chamber of Commerce, said Zinke had rejected their requests for meetings.

"We are concerned and worried that he's not listening to the tribes," said Cassandra Begay, who serves as the tribal liaison on the board of the Salt Lake City-based Peaceful Advocates for Native Dialogue & Organizing Support.

Begay, who grew up in White Mesa in San Juan County, recalled gathering willow in what is now the Bears Ears monument to make Navajo baskets with her grandmother.



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"This is land we see as having a pulse: a living being," said Begay, one of a few dozen protesters who gathered at Butler Wash to encourage Zinke to retain the monument.

Begay later faced off with Zinke as she shouted questions at the secretary about whether he planned to meet again with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition.

"Sir, is there a reason why you're not listening to them more?" Begay shouted in a video she provided to reporters of the exchange. When the former Montana House lawmaker did not respond, she continued: "Zinke, are you going to visit with the tribes more?"

Zinke then turned and wagged a finger at the 31-year-old Begay and forcefully said: "Be nice."

She responded: "I'm so nice." Zinke continued: "Be nice. Don't be rude."

Legal fight

Bishop, who accompanied Zinke to the monument yesterday, praised the secretary's visit to his state.

"They're doing this the right way," said Bishop, who backed a legislative alternative to the Bears Ears designation known as the Utah Public Lands Initiative.

Bishop criticized former Obama administration Interior Secretary Sally Jewell for what he saw as shifting responsibility for the monument designation to the White House.

"This time, the White House told the secretary of Interior to be involved with it. That's exactly what should be done," Bishop said.

But whether the Trump administration can rescind the Bears Ears monument without congressional action remains to be seen.

While the conservative Pacific Legal Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute have asserted the president has inherent powers to alter decisions made under the Antiquities Act of 1906, legal scholars elsewhere suggest commanders in chief are limited to designating monuments (E&E News PM, March 29).



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Although past presidents have reduced the size of monuments — notably the then-Mount Olympus National Monument and Grand Canyon II National Monument — those decisions were never challenged in court.

While Zinke is scheduled to spend another day focusing on Bears Ears before moving on to the Grand Staircase-Escalante monument near Kanab tomorrow, he acknowledged yesterday that he will not be visiting every monument facing a review.

"I've got 27 monuments, and not all the monuments, quite frankly, are controversial," he said.

'Holding pattern'

In the meantime, key decisions on management of the monument remain in limbo.

Bureau of Land Management Utah State Director Ed Roberson, who accompanied Zinke and other officials on a short hike to historic cliff dwellings near Butler Wash, said the agency has yet to recruit a Monument Advisory Committee needed to proceed with planning.

"We're in that holding pattern," he said.

Under the proclamation establishing the Bears Ears monument, both a Bears Ears Commission representing tribal leaders and a 12-member MAC will collaborate on the management plan.

While the Bears Ears Commission announced its members in March, membership of the MAC remains undecided. Moreover, the Interior Department issued a temporary freeze on its more than 200 advisory panels through at least September (Greenwire, May 5).

In the meantime, Roberson said BLM is proceeding with some decisions on the site, such as debating artwork to be featured on expected signage. Images could include the House on Fire ruin located in the monument.

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42. **The Latest: Utah Rancher Tells Zinke Monument Unnecessary**

US News, May 9 | The Associated Press

MONTICELLO, UTAH - Fifth-generation Utah rancher Bruce Adams has enjoyed a prime seat next to U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke this week as he reviews a national monument created on lands that Adams' ancestors helped settle in 1879.

Adams, a county commissioner who opposes the monument, sat next to Zinke on a helicopter ride Monday and narrated the landscape of the Bears Ears National Monument. On Tuesday morning, Adams was scheduled to saddle up horses for Zinke's ride in the monument, one of 27 that President Donald Trump ordered Zinke to review to determine if they were properly established.

Adams gave Zinke a cowboy hat bearing the phrase "Make San Juan County Great Again" and delivered a clear message: The national monument designation is unnecessary and could hurt our ability to make a living off grazing and agriculture while taking away trust fund revenue for public schools.

"A monument is an overlay of protections that are already there. And so it becomes about control," Adams said. "Not only control of the land, but control of the people that are living there and trying to make a living on the land."

Echoing a common refrain from many locals in this southeastern corner of Utah, Adams said he and the locals cherish and take care of the vast expanse of tribal lands, canyons and plateaus where people hunt, fish and go camping. In Blanding, with a population of 3,400 people, banners are up around town that say "#RescindBearsEars."

"Let us just live our lives here in San Juan County," Adams said. "We're respectful people."

Zinke is getting an earful from locals and Utah's top Republican leaders who think President Barack Obama went too far in designating Bears Ears National Monument. They hope to persuade the administration to reverse the decision or at least downsize the 1.3 million acre (5,300 square kilometers) monument.

Supporters of the monument are making their voices heard, too, to let Zinke know that they worked behind the scenes for years to get protections from sacred tribal lands home to an



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estimated 100,000 archaeological sites, including ancient cliff dwellings. Tribal members visit the area to perform ceremonies, collect herbs and wood for medicinal and spiritual purposes and do healing rituals.

They offer a counterpoint to Adams, suggesting the monument will help the economy by bringing more visitors who will spend money at hotels and restaurants. They point out that the monument designation still allows grazing, hiking, hunting and fishing.

Bears Ears supporters have greeted Zinke throughout his trip. After his arrival Sunday in Salt Lake City, Zinke was met by about 500 protesters who chanted, "Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears."

In Bears Ears on Monday, supporters stood with signs as he arrived to take a hike to an ancient ruin. One woman asked why he only met with tribal leaders for an hour. Zinke, who was shaking another supporter's hand, turned around to face the woman and said: "Be nice." The woman responded that she always is.

Zinke has insisted there is no predetermined outcome of his review, rooted in the belief of Trump and other critics that a law signed by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to declare monuments has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Zinke said Monday that it's clear that sacred tribal lands in Bears Ears should be preserved, but openly questioned if a monument is the right way. He is due to make a recommendation about Bears Ears by June 10 and issue a final report on all monuments about 2½ months later.

Conservation groups contend that the monument review puts in limbo protections on areas across the country that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and ocean habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments — a move that would be unprecedented.

On Wednesday, Zinke is set to head west and visit the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, created in 1996. It is the oldest monument on the list of those to be reviewed.



Zinke has said multiple times that he wants to hear from locals and from different points of view — including from Native Americans who may not be in lockstep with a coalition of five tribes that pushed for the monument.

"A lot of the anger that is out there in our country is that local communities and states just don't feel like they've had a voice," Zinke, a Montana Republican, said.

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43. **Executive Order gives ranchers hope**

Livestock News, May 9 | Karin Schiley

The signing of a recent executive order by the president is giving ranchers hope that the administration is taking steps to reverse what some consider governmental land-grabs throughout history.

The Executive Order for a Review of Designation under the Antiquities Act of the Department of the Interior signed by President Trump on April 26 calls for the Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review the monument designations made under the Antiquities Act by previous presidents.

"The Antiquities Act does not give the federal government unlimited power to lock up millions of acres of land and water, and it's time we ended this abusive practice," said President Trump at the signing.

"That's why today I am signing this order and directing Secretary Zinke to end the abuses and return control to the people—the people of Utah, the people of all of the states, the people of the United States," Trump further declared.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President of the United States the authority, through a presidential proclamation, to create national monuments on public lands. The executive order asks the Department of Interior to review monument designations made under the Antiquities Act since 1996 that include 100,000 acres or more. To date, more than 80 natural areas have been set aside as park or preservation lands, including nearly 137 million acres of public lands.

"The Antiquities Act was meant to preserve objects of antiquity—sites, objects, not thousands of acres of sagebrush grassland," said Dr. Angus McIntosh, the executive director of the Range



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Allotment Owner's Association. The association represents the 22,000 ranchers who graze on public land allotments, many of whom have been impacted when a monument designation restricted or cut off their grazing rights completely.

"The attempt to propose designations by these federal bureaucrats has excluded cattle from grazing allotments, closed roads and launched a full-out assault on private landowner rights," said McIntosh.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association believes that this a good first step but that more legislation is needed for states to gain control over monument designations in the future.

In a press release, NCBA President Craig Uden said, "The Executive Order is an important first step to reining in past designations that were pushed through without local input. However, in order to bring the Act back to its original intent, Congress must act. Senator Murkowski's bill S. 33 Improved National Monument Designation Process Act would require Congressional approval of new designation, taking power away from the Administration and placing back into the hands of those most impacted."

Ethan Lane, Executive Director of the Public Lands Council agrees that the order is a measured first step in a political process that has been needed all along. "One of the most important aspects of this is that the president has asked Secretary Zinke to come back to him with congressional recommendations. What President Trump has said is 'Give me some ideas on how to fix it.'—that is incredibly refreshing."

While many of those impacted by previous monument designations may be hoping that the executive order means that those monument designations will be quickly rescinded, Lane says that the review process will take some time and patience along the way. Staffing issues, such as a new director of the BLM, must be addressed before the review process can begin.

Then, after each monument designation has been reviewed and reported back to the president, there is the legality regarding the complete rescinding of any monument designations is still under question.

"We believe that the monuments can be rescinded but there is some legal debate about that," said Lane. "Changing the boundaries of the monument designations may be simpler. You can still protect Bear's Ears with out taking a million acres around it."



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McIntosh believes the review needs to be taken a step further to include all prior landowner rights. "Most of these national monument designations have included up to almost 2 million acres of land without any consideration that there is private land included inside the boundaries of these designations," said McIntosh.

"There needs to be a review and report to congress on the prior rights that exist on these lands on why these designations should not be allowed to stand."

The news that rights are being put back into the hands of the states and the people residing in them gives western ranchers, who feel like they have been fighting a losing battle, hope that things can turn around in the future.

David Johnson, an Arizona rancher who has had his share of struggles dealing with the federal land management system, believes things may be finally turning in private landowners favor.

"We don't know what's going to happen but it does give us a little bit of hope," said Johnson. "The last years, we felt like we were doomed. They just kept designating more land and it felt like it was never going to change. This does give us a little hope."

Several years ago, Johnson lost his job when a federal park expansion cancelled the 200 head grazing permit of his employer. In more recent years, Johnson has watched federal land expansion swallow more and more land where he ranches in an area called the "Arizona strip."

While they do have hope for the future, the relationship between federal land employees and local private landowners has been strained for so long it will take a change in the attitude of the entire system to improve the existing climate.

"There is a difference between policing the land and managing the land. Federal employees have stopped people here and held them at gunpoint until they can get a law enforcement officer to write a ticket," said Johnson. It's left many with bitter taste that they have a hard time forgetting.

Still, the recent executive order is giving Johnson and other ranchers a reason to believe that their voices may finally be heard.

"The ones making the decisions are not from this area. None of us has had any say in what happens. Maybe things can start going in the other direction now."



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44. **NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Bears Ears won't become a national park — Zinke**

E & E News, May 9 | Jennifer Yachnin

MONTICELLO, Utah — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke today ruled out the possibility that he will recommend converting Bears Ears National Monument into a national park but said he remained open to all other options for the 1.35 million acres of public lands.

In a press conference at the Nature Conservancy's Dugout Ranch — which sits inside the monument's boundaries — Zinke said he would not endorse changing any or all of the Bears Ears site to a national park, something that would require congressional action.

"A national park has some distractors on it," Zinke said, although he did not offer specific details. "I don't think a national park is on the table."

According to the Congressional Research Service, about half of the existing national parks began as national monuments before being converted by Congress.

He added that he remains open to designations including a national conservation and recreation area.

"The rest of it is on the table. Right now, I'm still in the listening mode on it," Zinke said.

The former Montana House lawmaker is visiting southern Utah this week as he undertakes a review of dozens of national monuments, including a specific focus on Bears Ears, which was created by President Obama in his final weeks in office.

Zinke suggested yesterday that a national monument status might not be the "right vehicle" to protect the Bears Ears area and said he could recommend alternative statutes when he is due to submit an interim report to President Trump on June 10 (Greenwire, May 9).

Trump signed an executive order last month requiring the Interior Department to review all monuments created since 1996 that contain more than 100,000 acres of land, and to issue recommendations on whether those sites should be eliminated or reduced, or if there should be changes to their respective management plans.



Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) and state legislators, as well as Utah's all-GOP congressional delegation, have been vocal opponents of the Bears Ears monument and have likewise targeted the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, created by President Clinton, for revisions.

Zinke is set to tour Grand Staircase-Escalante tomorrow on the final day of his trip.

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45. **Tribune Editorial: Hatch continues to belittle Native Americans in Bears Ears dispute**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 10 | Tribune Editorial

No, Sen. Hatch, we won't just take your word for it.

Utah's senior senator put his foot very firmly into his mouth Monday by attacking the intelligence and the integrity of the five Native American nations whose elected leaders joined together to work for and, in the final days of the Obama administration, win national monument status for 1.35 million acres in southeast Utah known as Bears Ears.

This patronizing, condescending — if not downright racist — theme has been a constant throughout the debate over the monument plan. The five nations, and their supporters from many other tribes, are cruelly dismissed as dupes, pawns, unwitting tools of far-away radical environmentalists who must be fooling the tribes, paying them off, or both.

"The Indians, they don't fully understand that a lot of the things that they currently take for granted on those lands, they won't be able to do if it's made clearly into a monument or a wilderness," Hatch said.

It's already a monument. Nobody is proposing that the land receive the much more restrictive designation of "wilderness" — something that only Congress can do.

And, when pressed, Hatch couldn't name anything that the Indians can do now, or could do last year, that they won't be able to do under monument management. Management that, as specifically laid out in President Obama's proclamation, will include a formal voice for the affected nations.

"Just take my word for it," Hatch said.



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The tribes know better than to do that. They know exactly what they are doing, what they wanted, what they got and how to make the most of it going forward.

Leaders of Utah Dine Bikeyah called Hatch out for his patronizing words and demanded an apology.

Well. The Hollywood stereotype of the Native American includes a large dose of studied stoicism. Which is likely what they will need if they wait for Hatch to recant.

All this was part of a tour in which Hatch and other anti-monument Utah Republicans ushered Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke around the area as part of Zinke's mission to reassess national monuments in Utah and elsewhere.

Zinke made some hopeful noises about meeting with people on both sides of the issue, including the tribes whose leaders sought the designation. But the focus of his attention has been on the anti-monument side, state and local officials who drone on about federal overreach while disrespecting the Indians and clinging to pie-in-the-sky dreams about some fossil fuel or mining bonanza that will fall from the skies if the monument goes away.

So would it be condescending to say that it's Hatch who don't fully understand? Because he clearly doesn't.

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46. **Will National Monuments Get a “Fair Hearing” on Zinke’s Listening Tour?**

Sierra, May 10 | Stacey Bare

On Sunday, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke stood in front of a small, windowless conference room in Salt Lake City next to one of the long-standing generals of the Sagebrush Rebellion, Senator Orrin Hatch.

He was there to kick off a listening tour in response to President Trump’s recently signed executive order, which calls on the secretary to make sure any national monument in the United States larger than 100,000 acres created since 1996 gets a “fair hearing,” as Zinke put it. The Utah monuments that bookend the timeframe of Trump’s EO review, Grand Staircase–Escalante and Bears Ears, are located just a few hours to the south of where Zinke stood: millions of acres of land sacred to Native Americans that contain treasured archaeological sites, redrock,



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sagebrush, dark night skies, breathtaking ecological diversity, and miles of open vistas. They also happen to be objects of contempt for Utah's Republican leadership.

Zinke began his remarks by reminding the assembled group of media that the executive order does not strip any existing national monument of their designation. He reiterated that neither he nor President Trump supported the transfer or sale of public lands, and that there was no predetermined outcome for the process triggered by Trump's executive order. He affirmed that he was a "firm believer in NEPA [the National Environmental Policy Act, a critical environmental permitting process]" and saw the NEPA process as an important tool to protect clean air and water (his remarks happened to fall on the same day the Trump administration removed five scientists from a prominent EPA advisory board).

Zinke then turned to the importance of the monument-designation process as an effective tool to save and preserve our nation's shared cultural and natural treasures. He referenced the first national monument, Wyoming's Devils Tower—a Native American holy site like Bears Ears. Zinke argued that, even at just 1,200 acres, Devils Tower was controversial for its size at the time, no doubt drawing a stiff contrast to the vast, 1.35 million acres now under protection at Bears Ears.

The beauty of Bears Ears did not escape him, he made clear. Zinke spoke about the importance of considering tribal sovereignty in any decision-making, and how excited he was to again be riding a horse through Bears Ears to experience it firsthand—something he hadn't done since his first day as the secretary when, D.C. traffic be damned, he rode a horse to work.

Federal lands belong to all of America, he said—not just the purview of those who happen to neighbor their borders; each voice, whether local or far away, should weigh equally in the final judgement (though he did acknowledge that the Department of Interior needed to rebuild its relationship with some local communities that have lost trust in the agency, specifically because they feel their voices had not been heard).

In one response about the importance of access to public lands, Zinke talked about the benefits of time outdoors. He even spent time discussing his vision of an interconnected system of public lands to increase access and opportunities for people to get outside.

It all sounded great. Zinke is a good public speaker. He comes off as warm, understanding, compassionate, and the type of guy that will hold fast to his word.



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He and I have both served our country in uniform; however different our jobs, we have some shared values. I wanted to believe him.

But then, the real listening tour got underway—one in which Zinke seemingly had ears for one point of view.

While in Utah, Zinke only met with a carefully curated batch of interest groups. Pro-monument supporters were sidelined or chastised when they confronted Zinke. Worse, important pro-monument stakeholders—even the chamber of commerce for the two rural communities most heavily impacted by the monuments, Boulder-Escalante—were denied meetings, along with military veterans and pro-monument Native American community organizations.

Zinke is taking public comment for 15 days to potentially override years of consultation. He continues to carry the message that there is no support for Bears Ears. He says there is no preconceived outcome, but after meeting with special-interest groups, and being shepherded through our state with the Republican delegation—which likely hasn't told him that the boundaries of Bears Ears closely match their own Public Lands Initiative proposal—it sure feels like he already has an outcome in mind.

I want him to be my guy. I want to believe him, but I just can't.

When the online comment period opens up for these monuments later this month, the public needs to speak up. People need to make sure that Secretary Zinke listens to all our voices as he embarks on his listening tour—about why we need, love, and want our existing monuments; about how they fit, in his own words, “the Muir model.”

While you wait for the comment period to open up, you can take immediate action on Bears Ears by signing our online petition [here](#) or [here](#).

Finally, get in touch with Senator Hatch. Prior to the media briefing on Sunday, he told Native Americans they would not be able to do what they wanted on the land if it stayed as a monument. When pressed on what specifically the Native American community could not do, he said he did not have time for the answer, and to “take my word” for it. Give him a phone call, send a postcard, fax, or email, and ask him to clarify what he meant.

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47. **Trump's national monument plan could easily fail — but he'll still declare victory**

The Los Angeles Times, May 10 | Evan Halper

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tangled with protesters, weaved through media hives and trotted on horseback across a Utah moonscape this week in pursuit of President Trump's executive order targeting national monuments.

It's a directive that may prove legally tenuous but is nonetheless creating rich political theater for the White House.

Trump struggled during the campaign in deeply Republican Utah, particularly with its politically potent landowner rights movement. But now the Queens-born president is polishing his bona fides with that crowd by dispatching a rugged Cabinet secretary on a quest that is rankling environmentalists and Native American tribes.

Over four days ending Wednesday, Zinke is surveying two hotly contested monuments: the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears, which President Obama established at the behest of tribes and conservationists in the final weeks of his administration, and the 1.9-million-acre Grand Staircase Escalante, which has riled local developers and energy companies since President Clinton created it in 1996.

In the hardscrabble communities nearby, these monuments are often derided as a "betrayal," depriving them of potential jobs from energy extraction and other uses. Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch invoked the word yet again recently while railing against the Bears Ears designation on the Senate floor.

The administration's campaign against monuments was launched in Utah by design. The state is a hotbed of resistance to federal control of land. It has even passed a law calling on the federal government to cede control of most of its vast holdings to the state.

"They are trying to work with a favorable audience," said Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, the ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee. "Once they leave the confines of Utah and start looking at all those other monuments, the politics dramatically changes."



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Even in Utah, polls show the public is divided on whether the Bears Ears designation should be rescinded. But the state's political leadership is largely united, and Zinke is getting his fill of attaboys on this trip.

"We now have an opportunity to discuss and deliberate like we didn't even have during the Bush administration," said Ken Ivory, a Utah legislator who is leading a multi-state federal land push that would go much further than Trump's executive order. Ivory's crusade, which has a number of allies in Congress, seeks to export nationally the Utah approach of pushing the federal government to transfer its land to state control.

It's a sensitive political issue for Trump and Zinke, who are aligned with a large coalition of hunters, anglers and outdoor outfitters anxious about what states would do with the federal land. Both men consider themselves outdoorsmen and have made assurances the Trump administration will not be relinquishing federal control of the millions of acres at issue. But Ivory is nonetheless encouraged by the move against the monuments. "This will continue the discussion," he said.

The protected lands Zinke came to survey are at the core of Trump's order for a review of all monuments created since 1996 that are larger than 100,000 acres, which is ultimately expected to end with Zinke suggesting both areas either get stripped of the monument designation altogether or be downsized substantially. Zinke is in a race to review those and 19 other monuments, including six in California, before producing two lists of suggested eliminations and rollbacks. He will present the first list in mid-June.

There is ample evidence the exercise could go sideways, as some of Trump's other executive orders have. Trump's ban on visitors from six predominantly Muslim nations and his bid to punish sanctuary cities are both unraveling in court. The executive order Trump vowed would force builders of the Keystone XL oil pipeline to use American steel actually won't.

"The review of these monuments is predicated on the idea that the president has this authority that he doesn't have," said Kate Kelly, who was an advisor to former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. "There is no legal basis for it."

The last time a president moved to get rid of a monument on his own authority was in 1938, when Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to jettison the Castle-Pinckney National Monument in South Carolina. His attorney general looked into options at the time and reported back that Roosevelt couldn't do that. It would take an act of Congress, which ultimately authorized the federal



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government to offload the property in the 1950s. The president's authority to undo monument designations, environmentalists argue, has only shrunk since the Roosevelt administration, after Congress passed laws solidifying the federal protection.

Attorneys affiliated with some of the conservative think tanks influential in guiding Trump's agenda argue the Roosevelt administration got it all wrong. They say that not only does the president have explicit authority to scotch monuments, but that many of the monuments created under the century-old Antiquities Act were done so illegally. The act, their argument goes, was never intended to preserve sprawling land masses the size of Delaware.

By this line of reasoning, even Teddy Roosevelt was out of bounds when he designated the Grand Canyon a national monument. (It has since become a national park, and thus universally agreed to be untouchable by Trump's executive order).

"I think the president is in a strong position," said Todd Gaziano, an attorney at the Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation, a conservative advocacy group.

While no president has ever successfully eliminated national monuments, several have changed their shapes, and even shrunk them. John F. Kennedy substantially redrew the boundaries of the Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico, shaving off nearly 4,000 acres and adding 3,000, saying the borders of what needed to be preserved had evolved. When Olympic National Park in Washington was still a monument, it was reduced in size multiple times to enable timber harvesting, including in 1915 when logs were needed to build Navy ships for World War I.

But there was a big difference between those parings and the ones Trump may be on the verge of trying to make now: the earlier presidential moves to redraw monument boundaries were not contested. The courts have yet to weigh in on whether the president can take such action when stakeholders such as American Indian tribes, environmental groups and lawmakers vehemently object.

Those groups have made clear that they won't let Trump lift protections off a single acre of monument land without a bitter court fight.

Justin Pidot, a former deputy solicitor general at the Interior Department who now teaches law at the University of Denver, said if he were working for this administration he would be warning Zinke that the legal arguments are shaky. But, Pidot allowed, that may not be an overriding concern in this case.



“A lot of things this administration does, it does for political theater,” he said. “They can say they have done them, and then they get to rail against the courts for stopping them.”

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48. **Gehrke: What Zinke isn't hearing, seeing during his trip to Utah**

The Salt Lake Tribune, May 10 | Robert Gehrke

Blake Spalding and Jen Castle opened the doors of Hell's Backbone Grill in 1999, drawn to the remote town of Boulder by their love of wilderness and the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Their business, as well as the adjacent Boulder Lodge, has flourished, and when I visited a few weeks ago, the restaurant was full with the booming tourism season just gearing up.

Business has more than doubled in the last three years as a portion of the nearly million visitors drawn to the monument each year stop in for a bite at the only restaurant in the state to be in contention for the prestigious James Beard Award.

Spalding and Castle employ 45 people between the restaurant and their organic farm where they grow their own ingredients, and pay \$700,000 in wages — a significant boost to the economy in the town of about 200 people.

You'd think it's the type of information that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke might want to hear as he visits the area to assess the impact of both the Grand Staircase and the newly designated Bears Ears National Monument.

Nope.

The Interior Department refused a request for Zinke to meet with Spalding and a handful of other members of the Escalante-Boulder Chamber of Commerce, business leaders in the communities that are most affected by the decisions the secretary and President Donald Trump will make in coming weeks.

"The fact of the matter is that there isn't a business or company or school or clinic in this county that isn't hiring right now," Spalding told me this week. "So the idea that somehow Garfield County is in economic crisis because of the monument, it's alternative facts. But they are



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alternative facts that our county commissioners and governor are really wed to and basically, on this tour with Zinke, they're only having him interact with people that confirm his bias or the governor's bias that the monument needs to be rescinded or reduced."

Nathan Waggoner, who opened Escalante Outfitters in Escalante 11 years ago, said the chamber of commerce gathered letters of support for the monument from 150 business owners in the communities surrounding the monument and delivered them to Washington and never got any response from Zinke or the Interior Department.

"We reached out as many times as we can in as many different ways to try to talk to him and we're just concerned about the economic impact of eviscerating the national monument," said Waggoner, who now operates an outfitter, a hotel, a restaurant, an outdoor equipment store and a guide service.

While the tourism industry gets knocked for creating seasonal jobs, Waggoner said the 27 people who work for him are invested in their community, building homes and starting their own businesses.

"We really feel like our community is on the cusp of becoming something great, but because of this old anger some of these county commissioners and others harbor, they hold us back," he said.

Waggoner said his group of business owners will keep trying to convey their message to Zinke and anyone else who will listen.

When Zinke's predecessor, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, came to the region on a listening tour last year ahead of the designation of Bears Ears, she sat in a sweltering hall and heard scores of locals, for and against, voice their opinions. She met with tribal leaders who overwhelmingly supported the creation, and county commissioners who were steadfastly opposed.

Zinke did meet with the Bears Ears Inter-tribal Coalition and Interior has announced it will accept written comments from the public. But overall, his visit comes off as more scripted, with the narrative tightly controlled to present one side of the story rather than the full picture of the stunning landscape.

And the case being made against the value of monuments is obviously subject to challenge.



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Last week, Herbert's public lands director, Kathleen Clarke, was in Washington and told a House committee that monuments can severely damage local communities. I've asked the governor's office a half-dozen times since then for the evidence supporting her claim. They haven't provided any.

The common refrain among monument opponents — and, last session, the Utah Legislature — is that grazing has fallen by a third, the timber industry disappeared, and vast coal resources have been locked up.

Actually, according to recent figures, the active grazing in the monument has barely changed, aside from some grazing rights that were voluntarily retired. A lumber mill that closed in 2002 got most of its timber from the Dixie National Forest and was unrelated to the monument.

The Kaiparowits coal was and is locked up, but ask Carbon and Emery County if coal is a good bet these days. It's hard to know if that would have been developed or would be developed, given the plummeting demand, if Trump attempts to change the monument boundaries.

No doubt, rural Utah is suffering for a wide variety of reasons. But I have seen two studies of the economic impact of the Grand Staircase. One, by a pair of Utah State University faculty members critical of public lands, said the monument's a net wash.

The other, done by Headwaters Economics in 2011, said that communities around the monument, like Escalante and Boulder, saw strong growth in the number of jobs and income since the monument was designated.

That's the type of information that it might be good for Secretary Zinke to hear, the type of story that Spalding could have told him, if he was serious about learning all of the perspectives. But she's not giving up yet.

"Regardless of how it turns out, I want to say in the end I did everything I could to protect the monument," Spalding said. "I'm not going to go quietly, either, because I really believe this monument is precious. ... I never thought in my lifetime that this monument would seriously be under threat or I wouldn't have staked my life's work to it.

"Now we have to fight."

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49. **Trump Takes Aim at Western Monuments That May Hold Oil Riches**

Bloomberg News, May 10 | Jennifer A Dlouhy

Bears Ears National Monument in Utah boasts stretches of red-and-yellow sandstone so brilliant they appear to be ablaze and rock structures so precarious they appear to defy gravity.

The rugged terrain south of the Colorado River also has reserves of oil and natural gas that are currently off limits to new leasing -- restrictions that may end as the Trump administration reviews 27 large-scale monuments his predecessors set aside for protection.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers have praised President Donald Trump's order to review those monument designations, calling it a welcome reconsideration of federal overreach. Yet, environmental groups are concerned Trump will scrap or scale back those designations, and the net result will be a boost to the fortunes of oil drillers and mining companies.

"Oil and gas is definitely a factor -- particularly given that with Trump it's been something he's talked about consistently," said Tim Donaghey, a research specialist with Greenpeace. "They're going to try to knock down as many barriers as possible to expanded oil and gas drilling."

Under the 1906 Antiquities Act, presidents can set aside land to protect historic landmarks, structures or other objects of historic or scientific interest. Most recent monument proclamations have barred new mining claims and oil, gas and mineral leases, but typically protect existing rights, according to an assessment by the Congressional Research Service. Unlike national parks, which must be established by Congress, each monument has its own rules for how the land can be used.

Presidents of both parties have used the law to designate increasingly large parcels of land, raising the hackles of Republican lawmakers worried the protections will constrain energy development and animal grazing on the sites. Former President Barack Obama issued protections for a record amount of Western land -- much of it also rich in oil or minerals.

Republicans objected to what they have termed a "land grab," and Trump made reconsidering those designations an initial priority. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is traveling through Utah this week to see the sites, complete with a hike to Bears Ears' "House on Fire" ruins.



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More than 90 percent -- or 1.34 million acres -- of the Bears Ears national monument overlaps with potential reserves of oil, gas and coal, according to an analysis of U.S. government data by Greenpeace that was reviewed and checked by Bloomberg. The area also contains significant uranium resources, according to the Center for American Progress.

Those fossil fuels could lurk under some 2.7 million acres of five monuments, including Bears Ears, that are now under review, spanning an area bigger than Yellowstone National Park, according to Greenpeace's analysis.

The energy resources were illustrated by U.S. Energy Information Administration maps of dense oil and gas formations known to contain the fossil fuels and sedimentary basins likely to. The analysis also drew on U.S. Geological Survey data that shows recoverable coal.

Representative Rob Bishop, a Republican from Utah who heads the House Natural Resources Committee, has focused his ire on Bears Ears, the remote, stretch of desert designated by Obama just a month before he left office. Although environmentalists and some indigenous groups backed giving Bears Ears monument status, Bishop said out-of-state support drowned out local voices of opposition.

"They're trying to make this monument to protect it from being raped by oil and gas development, which is so ludicrous," Bishop said in an April interview.

Bishop has argued in favor of a similar, slightly smaller package of land protections, worked out with local officials. The set aside, which would need congressional approval, would allow recreation and grazing on some territory and tribal protections in another. Oil and mineral leasing would be banned in the protected zone but encouraged in other areas in the state.

At Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, which was also established by Obama in December, the potential riches include coal, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. More than 40 percent of its total area holds oil, gas or coal, according to the government data. The entirety of the Canyons of the Ancients monument just across the Utah border in Colorado has fossil fuel deposits.

To be sure, the government's geological data is not definitive -- the sedimentary basins don't necessarily contain abundant oil, gas or coal. But there is plenty of evidence of industry interest in some of the national monuments now under scrutiny.



For instance, EOG Resources last year won state approval to drill on state trust lands near Bears Ears. More than four dozen dormant wells were drilled in California's flower-dappled Carrizo Plain National Monument before it was protected. And a subsequently rescinded resource management plan governing Montana's Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument included plans for new oil and gas wells in the site.

Industry Appetite

"There certainly is industry appetite for development there, or else companies wouldn't have leases in the area," Kathleen Sgamma, head of the Western Energy Alliance, told E&E News regarding Bears Ears.

The presence of oil, gas and coal changes the political landscape amid the fight over this geological one.

"It's not just the fact that the resources are there, but that industry has been on the record stating that there's interest in development," said Kate Kelly, public lands director at the Center for American Progress. "We have to wonder who they are going to be listening to when they make these determinations."

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50. **Interior Secretary Zinke admires national monuments he'll likely recommend removing**

The Washington Times, May 10 | Ben Wolfgang

Based on the beautiful pictures and effusive praise he has posted to Twitter this week from one of the nation's newest national monuments, you might never guess that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke could set into motion the process to erase it from the map.

Mr. Zinke, tapped by President Trump to conduct a thorough review of more than two dozen national monuments, on Tuesday visited Bears Ears National Monument, a sprawling 1.35-million-acre stretch of land in Utah. It has become ground zero in the broader debate over whether the previous administration vastly overstepped its authority in cordoning off huge swaths of earth and sea as monuments to close them off from energy exploration and other human activities.



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Critics of former President Barack Obama expect Mr. Zinke, after his detailed review, to determine that the designation of Bears Ears and other national monuments should be revoked, or at least reduced.

The secretary fully opened that door this week by saying Monday that he is not sure a monument designation is the “right vehicle” to protect Bears Ears and retweeting a group opposed to the monument with the hashtag #RescindBearsEars.

At the same time, Mr. Zinke has tweeted numerous photos of the wondrous sights he has been taking in — including breathtaking helicopter shots of Bears Ears. He also has been upfront about his deep love and appreciation for America’s monuments and public lands, sending something of a mixed signal to those on both sides of the debate.

“The trip today verified it is drop-dead gorgeous country. No question about it,” Mr. Zinke told reporters Monday, according to The Salt Lake Tribune. “We want to make sure everyone’s voice is heard.”

Bears Ears is just one part of the broader review. More than two dozen other land and marine monuments also will be studied, including Utah’s Grand Staircase-Escalante, set aside by President Clinton during the height of his re-election campaign in 1996.

Since his nomination by Mr. Trump, Mr. Zinke has cast himself as a fierce defender of public lands and as someone who truly appreciates the importance of America’s monuments.

That has led critics to question how he possibly could recommend rescinding or shrinking those monuments and whether he is laying the groundwork to “cut a deal” that allows him to claim to be protecting public lands while placating those who want the size and scope of monuments diminished.

“Zinke seems like he is readying to cut a deal, protect some of the area, drill, frack other parts,” said Randi Spivak, public lands program director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “But the monument boundaries have already been reduced from the original proposal. Any further reduction in boundaries will put at risk from destructive mining and oil and gas development one of the most wild and ecologically important areas in the West.”

So far this week, Mr. Zinke has met with a number of stakeholders in Utah, including tribal groups in favor of and opposed to the Bears Ears monument.



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On much of his trip, he also has been joined by Rep. Rob Bishop, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, and Gov. Gary Richard Herbert, both Utah Republicans who oppose the Bears Ears designation.

Officials from the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition — a group of tribal leaders approved by the Obama administration to oversee the monument — said Mr. Zinke has not given them the amount of time he has given to those who favor revocation.

Many of those officials visited Washington last week and demanded a meeting with Mr. Zinke but were denied.

“We’re asking for equal time, and it’s not happening,” the Inter-Tribal coalition tweeted Tuesday.

Mr. Zinke tweeted this week that he is intent on speaking with all sides of the issue, and the Interior Department has flatly rejected claims that tribal leaders and other advocates of Bears Ears are being locked out of the process.

Some conservationists say Mr. Zinke’s eventual outcome — the rescission of the Bears Ears monument — is clear from his actions this week.

“He has cherry-picked the people who he’s talking to, and the list of people who he’s actually listening to is even smaller,” said Meghan Kissell, a spokeswoman for the Conservation Lands Foundation. “If Zinke wants to truly emulate Teddy Roosevelt in spirit, not just photo ops, he will start to take the time to understand the full breadth of the Bears Ears proclamation and not just pay lip service to this so-called review.”

Mr. Zinke’s supporters see the matter differently. They argue that his review process, and his trip to Utah this week, are key steps toward getting all the facts and coming to the right conclusion.

At the same time, however, they stress that the administration simply cannot allow the status quo to continue, and they favor a rewriting of the century-old Antiquities Act to limit how much power presidents have in establishing monuments.

“The Bears Ears Monument is only a symptom of something much greater. The real problem lies in the 111-year-old Antiquities Act. The act must be modernized,” Mr. Bishop said in a



statement Tuesday. “I am confident the secretary understands there must be legislative reform to the underlying problem, the Antiquities Act.”

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51. Interior Secretary Orders Protester To ‘Be Nice’ During Visit To Bears Ears

The Huffington Post, May 10 | Chris D’Angelo

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke visited the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah to review its use under the Antiquities Act, which gives the president unilateral power to declare lands as historic. President Donald Trump signed an executive order April 26 directing Secretary Zinke to consult communities across the country about national monuments that take up more than 100,000 acres as part of this review. Native advocates in Utah say that Zinke set aside just one hour to hear from tribes.

Zinke was apparently irked by the persistence of Cassandra Begay, a tribal liaison with the group Peaceful Advocates for Native Dialogue & Organizing Support. She was following the secretary as he greeted those gathered at Bears Ears, a 1.35 million-acre area in southeastern Utah that is one of 27 monuments threatened by President Donald Trump’s recent executive orders.

Their encounter can be seen in a video made by Begay and posted to YouTube and Facebook.

“When are you going to meet with the tribal leaders?” she asks. “It’s kind of unfair that you’ve only met with them for one hour, sir. Is there a reason why you’re not listening to them more?”

After being twice ignored, Begay presses Zinke again. He turns around and walks up to the much-shorter Begay. Holding up his finger, Zinke forcefully says, “Be. Nice.”

“I’m so nice,” Begay replies.

“Be nice,” Zinke says again. “Don’t be rude. Thank you.”

The video cuts off as Begay begins to fire back.

In her Facebook post, Begay described Zinke’s behavior as “demeaning and belittling.”



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“I was scared, and my heart was racing,” she said in a press statement. “It felt condescending and unnecessarily aggressive. I have no idea why asking a simple question to somebody who is on a listening tour would react so aggressively.”

The Department of the Interior did not respond to HuffPost’s request for comment on Tuesday.

Zinke’s appearance on Monday was part of a four-day “listening tour” regarding two Utah monuments, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, that were designated by Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, respectively. One of Trump’s executive orders directs the Interior Department to give a second look to all land monuments that cover more than 100,000 acres and were established since Jan. 1, 1996.

To be fair, Zinke has met twice this month with members of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, a group of five Native American tribes that co-manages the Bears Ears monument. The first meeting, in Washington, D.C., came after the coalition held a press conference to demand the Trump administration’s attention and threatened to sue if Trump rescinded the designation. Zinke also met with coalition members on April 7 in Utah.

However, the interior secretary was touring the monument with people opposed to its designation, including Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) and members of the San Juan County Commission (Bears Ears is located in that county). He has also met with members of the state’s all-Republican congressional delegation, who also oppose the monument. And comments made by Trump and Zinke hint at the direction the administration is likely to go.

Trump said on April 26 that he’s looking to end “another egregious abuse of federal power,” put “states back in charge” and open up now-protected areas to “tremendously positive things.” Zinke said during his visit Monday that he believes the Bears Ears area should be preserved, but that “the issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle.”

“It is public land,” Zinke said. “It was public land before the monument. It will be public land after the monument. What vehicle of public land is appropriate to preserve the cultural identity, to make sure the tribes have a voice and to make sure you protect the traditions of hunting and fishing and public access?”

He has been given 45 days to give Trump a recommendation on Bears Ears and 120 days for all other monuments.



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52. **Bears Ears National Monument: Zinke gets mixed reactions during visit**

Fox News, May 10 | Andrew O'Reilly

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke spent the first day of his listening tour of the country's national monuments visiting the famed Anasazi ruins in Utah's Butler Wash and trying to assuage concerns of Utahns that undoing or shrinking the designation of the controversial 1.3-million acre Bears Ears National Monument would not automatically result in lots of oil rigs or mining equipment.

"The legacy and what I've seen should be preserved. The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle," Zinke said, according to the Salt Lake Tribune. "What vehicle of public land is appropriate to preserve the cultural identity, to make sure the tribes have a voice and make sure you preserve the traditions of hunting and fishing and public access?"

Zinke -- a former Navy SEAL and congressman from Montana who calls himself a "Teddy Roosevelt Republican" -- was tasked last month by President Trump to review 27 national monuments across the country designated since 1996 that total 100,000 acres or more. In the executive order signed by Trump, the interior secretary also has been directed to produce an interim report in 45 days and issue a final report within 120 days.

Despite Zinke's assurances on Monday, many Native Americans in the Southwest say that any change in Bears Ears' status would be a major setback after years of lobbying to have the area named a national monument.

"The national monument has already been justified and there is no need for a review," Cassandra Begay, a Navajo and the tribal liaison for the Native American advocacy group PANDOS, told Fox News. "Bears Ears is the first time that Native Americans played a crucial role in the creation of a national monument in the United States."

The 1906 Antiquities Act authorizes the president to declare federal lands as monuments and restrict their use. After long-term discussions with Native American groups in the southwest, President Obama designated Bears Ears and Nevada's Gold Butte as monuments in the waning days of his presidency.



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The move was widely praised by environmentalists and Native Americans, but Republican lawmakers in Western states along with ranchers and those in the oil and gas industries widely panned the so-called “midnight monuments,” arguing that they do not represent the interests of the people in those states and will in time do more harm than good to the environment.

Trump has called the national monument protection efforts of his predecessors “a massive federal land grab,” saying Obama’s designations “unilaterally put millions of acres of land and water under strict federal control.”

Zinke faced criticism from Native American groups for traveling to Bears Ears for his four-day tour with an entourage of anti-monument politicians, including Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, and for only meeting with tribal leaders for a one-hour, closed-door meeting.

Davis Filfred of the Navajo Nation said that the meeting on Sunday in Salt Lake City wasn't enough time for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to make their points to Zinke. Filfred added that it seems Zinke is listening more to opponents of the monument than people who want it preserved.

Upon arriving at the Butler Wash trailhead on Monday, Zinke was greeted by PANDOS’ Begay and numerous other Bears Ears supporters. A video posted on YouTube shows Begay following Zinke and questioning him on why he won’t meet with tribal leaders before the interior secretary turns around, points his finger at her and chides her to “be nice.”

“My heart was racing when he came at me because I thought he was going to hit me,” Begay said. “It felt like he was about to snap! Certainly not what I expected from the interior secretary who is here on a listening tour.”

Others at the trailhead, however, had positive interactions with Zinke.

Hank Stevens, president of the Navajo Mountain Chapter, spoke to Zinke during his stop at Butler Wash and said Zinke promised to return to Utah to discuss the issue with tribal leaders.

“He reassured me that he is as worried about the issues as Native Americans are,” Stevens told Fox News. “This may be a fault of mine, but I always give people the benefit of the doubt.”

With the clock ticking on Zinke to hand in his recommendations to Trump, it is not entirely clear what powers the president actually has regarding Bears Ears.



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Congressional leaders and courts have in the past contested many national monument designations – Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, took heat for Jackson Hole National Monument, which later became Grand Teton National Park. Some monuments have also been scaled down, or enlarged, over the years by presidential orders or by Congress, but no president has ever attempted to eliminate his predecessor’s monument. If Trump tries to do so, the matter will most likely end up in court.

“It’s really unclear what powers the president has to abolish these monuments,” James Morton Turner, an associate professor of environmental studies at Wellesley College, told Fox News.

For his part, Stevens said the Trump administration could avoid all the legal tie-ups and protests if it just focused its attention somewhere a little farther away.

“President Trump seems to be all about space exploration,” Stevens said, noting the president signed a \$19.5 billion spending bill for NASA. “I say they should go that way and leave us down here alone.”

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53. **Op-ed: Attempts to undo national monuments will rally formidable opposition**

The Hill, May 10 | Glenn Nelson

The Trump administration is well advised to gauge the political blowback as it contemplates an assault — disguised as a review — on the Antiquities Act, as well as two decades of amplifying diverse and inclusive stories in this country. During its final months, the Obama administration shrewdly protected a string of cultural landmarks that should form a formidable firewall around those designations, as well as earlier sacred sites, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in D.C. and the César E. Chávez National Monument in California.

In all, Obama designated 25 culturally significant monuments, memorials, historical parks and preserves, plus dozens of national historical landmarks. The last of these was far from the least.

The Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument added to the thin ranks of national park units dedicated to women. Stonewall Inn was the first dedicated to the LGBTQ community. A second Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, plus Reconstruction Era, Freedom Riders and Birmingham Civil Rights National Monuments cemented the civil-rights base.



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The previous two years brought Honouliuli, a World War II Japanese imprisonment site in Hawaii, and San Gabriel Mountains, an important recreation area for the majority Latino population in the Los Angeles region.

The biggest target, Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, was the centerpiece of 10 units designated by Obama that are significant to Native Americans. It is to be co-managed by the Bears Ears Tribal Commission, a coalition of five tribes (Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Zuni) that lobbied for the protection.

It also attracted significant support from other communities of color, many represented by the Next 100 Coalition, an alliance of civil rights, environmental and community groups that advocate for more inclusive management of public lands.

You are understanding the magnitude of all this if you can hear the choir belting out the end of the Jeffersons theme song, “We finally got a piece of the pie-ee-eee-ee.”

The last of Obama’s public-lands designations were pieces of the American pie carved out for historically marginalized groups — people of color, LGBTQ and women. These are not your father’s tree huggers. They are the emerging wave of green in the U.S., where green isn’t just the color of environmental stewardship but also of permission. For these groups, it is permission to rediscover in the American landscape past selves that have been buried under the rubble of repression disguised as someone else’s destiny.

Connect the nouveau green with old-guard environmentalists (read: white, mostly liberal, mostly male) and you have the makings of a powerful voting bloc, certainly by the 2020 national election. By then, millennials, the most diverse generation in our history, will comprise about 40 percent of eligible voters. More states — Texas among them — are projected to be a majority nonwhite. Already there are more nonwhite babies than white babies being born every day in the U.S., and the mortality rate of whites has steadily risen.

It may go without saying that an alliance of the oppressed (people of color, LGBTQ, women), plus their environmentalist allies, will be politically activated by 2020. As demonstrated by the solidarity around women’s marches on Jan. 21 nationwide, it already has been. The newly protected federal lands either sit directly in or adjacent to urban areas or serve the galvanizing interests of Native Americans.



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The first line of engagement has been drawn at Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, which has been ground zero for the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion, the movement to transfer federal public lands to state control.

Those whispering in the ear of Trump about the legality of dashing or shrinking Bears Ears are uttering worse than alternative facts. The Antiquities Act of 1906 gives president's power to create national monuments to protect cultural, historical, and natural heritage for future generations. Only an act of Congress can undo those designations.

It should not, however, require an act of Congress to drill some reality into those wishing to walk back hard-fought and meaningful gains by an impending new power structure already eager to flex its muscles at the ballot box in four years. The new math of the resistance is palpable: Add up all the women's marches, science marches, #NoDAPL protests, and #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations, and subtract the number who attended President Donald J. Trump's inauguration.

Glenn Nelson is the founder of The Trail Posse, which covers race and inclusion in the outdoors, and a founding member of the Next 100 Coalition, which seeks a more inclusive approach to management of our nation's parks and public lands.

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54. **Hunting, fishing businesses unite support of National Monuments**

Ammoland, May 10 | Joe Evans

WASHINGTON -(Ammoland.com)- More than 100 hunting and fishing business owners and sporting organizations sent a letter today to Congress to show their support for national monuments and the responsible use of the Antiquities Act.

“As someone who has helped develop the outdoor industry in Colorado and watched it grow into an economic powerhouse, I am concerned by current efforts both to curtail national monuments and weaken the Antiquities Act itself,” said Jim Bartschi, president of Scott Fly Rods in Montrose, Colorado. “Public lands such as the new Browns Canyon National Monument preserve incredible outdoor opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, bike, camp and float – and they’re strongly supported by local communities, who understand that these lands offer one of the best new, sustainable ways to grow their local economies.



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“Since Theodore Roosevelt established the Antiquities Act in 1906, presidents of both parties have wisely used it to protect our nation’s most treasured hunting and fishing habitats,” Bartschi added. “Let’s make sure we celebrate these special places and work together to retain their status as national monuments.”

The letter is part of a larger effort to demonstrate the important role national monuments and the Antiquities Act play not only to small businesses and rural economies but also to hunters and anglers all across the country.

Business owners are meeting with decision makers in Washington this week to emphasize the value of public lands and national monuments to the outdoor industry.

“The outdoor industry accounts for \$887 billion in consumer spending and 7.6 million jobs, making it one of the largest economic sectors in the country,” said Jen Ripple, editor in chief of DUN Magazine and a Tennessee resident. “Much of this economic output depends on public lands. Tools for conservation like the Antiquities Act will help ensure that America’s public lands remain not only a great place to hunt and fish but also an important pillar of the hunting and fishing industry.”

The business owners’ letter details support for safeguarding national monuments and the Antiquities Act, as well as criteria to ensure that national monuments are representative of collaborative, ground-up solutions for the management of public lands.

“Though some national monuments can be controversial, the Antiquities Act is an effective and essential tool for conservation,” said Ryan Hughes, a Nevada-based outdoor writer and volunteer for Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. “In places like Berryessa Snow Mountain in California and Rio Grande del Norte in New Mexico, we’ve seen Congress unable or unwilling to pass legislative proposals created with the help of local stakeholders. The Antiquities Act aided in allowing these collaborative efforts to happen.”

A Wednesday press conference will feature Bartschi, Ripple and Hughes discussing the business letter and the importance of national monuments to hunting, fishing and the outdoor industry.

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55. **The best way to save sacred land? 'The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle'**

The Journal, May 10 | Michelle L. Price and Brady Mccombs, AP

BLANDING, Utah – U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said sacred tribal lands he toured Monday in America's newest and most hotly contested monument should be preserved but he questioned whether the monument designation was the right way to do it.

Zinke's aerial and ground tour of the Bears Ears National Monument was part of a review ordered by President Donald Trump to determine if 27 monuments were properly established.

Zinke spent the day getting familiar with the 1.3-million acre swath of southern Utah with red rock plateaus, cliffs and canyons on land considered sacred to tribes.

His tour guide was Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, one of several prominent Republican leaders in the state who oppose Bears Ears National Monument.

Zinke, a Montana Republican, said he wants to make sure Native American culture is preserved but cautioned that not all tribal members share the same opinion about the monument designated by former President Barack Obama near the end of his term.

He spoke before taking a short, winding hike in the afternoon sun with Herbert and other state and local officials to a lookout post above ancient ruins.

"Of course, the legacy and what I've seen should be preserved," Zinke said, "The issue is whether the monument is the right vehicle."

Herbert, U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and the rest of the all-GOP congressional delegation consider the monument creation by former President Barack Obama an unnecessary layer of federal control that will hurt local economies by closing the area to new energy development. They also say it isn't the best way to protect the land.

In Blanding, with a population of 3,400 people, two large banners read, "#RescindBearsEars," reflecting the popular sentiment among residents.



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Bears Ears supporters made their voices heard too. They believe the monument adds vital protections to tribal lands where members perform ceremonies, collect herbs and wood for medicinal and spiritual purposes, and do healing rituals.

Tara Benally, a member of Navajo Nation, was standing just outside the Blanding airport wearing a shirt commemorating the December declaration of Bears Ears National Monument.

“We want it left as is. We have history going through there,” said Benally, who lives south of the nearby town of Bluff. “That was basically my mom’s playground as she was growing up.”

A group of Bears Ears supporters greeted Zinke when he arrived to the trailhead. One woman asked why he only met with tribal leaders for an hour.

Zinke, who was shaking another supporter’s hand, turned around to face the woman and said: “Be nice.” The woman responded that she always is.

The monument review is rooted in the belief of Trump and other critics that a law signed by President Theodore Roosevelt allowing presidents to declare monuments has been improperly used to protect wide expanses of lands instead of places with particular historical or archaeological value.

Conservation groups contend that the monument review puts in limbo protections on areas across the country that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering Sequoias, deep canyons and ocean habitats where seals, whales and sea turtles roam.

After his arrival Sunday in Salt Lake City, Zinke was met by about 500 protesters who chanted, “Save our monuments, stand with Bears Ears.”

He held a closed-door meeting with a coalition of tribal leaders who pushed for the monument then spoke of his admiration for Roosevelt.

Davis Filfred of the Navajo Nation said Monday that the one-hour meeting Sunday wasn’t enough time for the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to make their points to Zinke. Filfred, who was in the meeting, said it seems Zinke is listening more to opponents of the monument than people who want it preserved.



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Zinke insisted there is no predetermined outcome of his review, saying he may not recommend the monuments be made smaller or rescinded, and he might even recommend an addition.

The two monuments he's reviewing in Utah are quite large. Created in 1996, Grand Staircase-Escalante is 1.9 million acres, about the size of Delaware. Bears Ears is smaller at 1.3 million acres.

Zinke has been tasked with making a recommendation on the Bears Ears monument by June 10, about 2½ months before a final report about all the monuments.

Environmental groups have vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts to rescind monuments – a move that would be unprecedented.

On the way back from his hike to the ruins, Zinke stopped at the trailhead and spoke with several people on horseback and admired their horses. .

He said his upcoming decision is not just about how the local tribes, county officials or the governor feel about the monument, but it's also about how the entire country feels about it because it's America's public land.

“President Trump, I'm going to tell you, is a great boss. The reason why I think he felt so strongly about this is he feels like sometimes Washington makes these rules and we don't have a voice,” Zinke said. “He put this in motion to make sure that local communities count. States count. America counts.”

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56. **NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Zinke: 'All of the above' possible for Bears Ears**

E & E News, May 10 | Jennifer Yachnin

MONTICELLO, Utah — Make the mistake of asking Heidi Redd how many animals her Indian Creek Cattle Co. owns, and she'll only laugh good-naturedly and ask if you want to know her annual income, too.

But when it comes to her opinion on the Bears Ears National Monument — the boundaries of which surround both the 5,200-acre Dugout Ranch she operates and the 250,000 acres of grazing land she is permitted to use — it's a different story.



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"The spirit of all these lands need our help and protection," Redd said yesterday after a meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who is visiting the 1.35-million-acre monument as he prepares to recommend whether it should be rescinded or reduced in size. She later added: "I'm not opposed to being in the monument."

She and Zinke spoke with reporters after a short hike near the ranch, where the fields are framed by red sandstone cliffs and talus slopes. Rock art and ancient dwellings can be found nearby.

Unlike many of the Utah elected officials Zinke has appeared with this week — including Gov. Gary Herbert (R) and House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R) — Redd is not an opponent of the monument created by President Obama in his final weeks in office.

But she is worried that should President Trump attempt to revoke the monument's status, or otherwise prompt conservationists to sue the federal government, it could prove a disaster for the area here in the Colorado Plateau.

"This is a spiritual place, and to have it turned into a mass of cars and people without direction or funding, we're going to be in a right bit of trouble," said Redd, dressed in a wide-brimmed hat, delicate turquoise jewelry and mud-caked cowboy boots. She has worked on this ranch about 20 miles north of Monticello for more than 50 years and last year unsuccessfully ran for the state Senate as a Democrat.

Redd asserted that since the designation late last year, she has seen an influx of visitors to the area, particularly those who would like to view the cliff dwellings, as well as a growing community of rock climbers. But she said there has not been an increase in the number of Bureau of Land Management or Forest Service rangers assigned to protect those sites.

"I would rather not have a monument if you are not going to protect it," said Redd, who sold her ranch to the Nature Conservancy in 1997 but continues to own her own home there and raise cattle on the land. The Nature Conservancy conducts research at the ranch in areas including soil science and the impacts of climate change on vegetation.

She later added that undoing the monument's status is not an option, however: "Monument or no, people are not going to stop coming now."

Redd, who was once an advocate for the failed Utah Public Lands Initiative that sought to protect the Bears Ears area via legislation without a monument designation, also warned that rescinding



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the monument could be more detrimental to the area, prompting "years of litigation, and could cause more damage."

Nature Conservancy Utah State Director Dave Livermore, who also accompanied Zinke on the hike yesterday, said he likewise urged the secretary to leave the current boundaries in place.

"We're fine with the way it is because it does allow our livestock raising to continue, it allows our science to continue," Livermore said.

'All of the above'

As Zinke continued his weeklong tour of the Beehive State yesterday in preparation for issuing recommendations on the future of Bears Ears next month — as well as dozens of other monuments in August — he said he is more of an "optimist" about his mission.

"If you list the priorities of all sides, the priorities are remarkably similar," Zinke said. "Everyone is talking about protection of the cultural resources, everyone is talking about making sure we have public access. A lot of people are rightly talking about infrastructure" like roads and bathrooms.

He dismissed concerns that any changes to the monument would prompt lawsuits, saying he plans to make recommendations on the "basis of doing what's right and not on the fear of litigation."

He later added: "I think there's a solution out there."

Zinke reiterated his assertion, however, that national monument status may not be the "right vehicle" for the Bears Ears area.

"All of the above," Zinke said when asked about the alternatives he could recommend. "The president has given me the flexibility to make a recommendation to him, and we have a lot of options."

Zinke did rule out the possibility of converting the area to a national park, which would require congressional action (E&E News PM, May 9).

But he said he could also ask Congress to step in to address the Bears Ears site or other monuments.



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"Congress has a role to play, too," Zinke said, before criticizing lawmakers for failing to address the area via legislation rather than allowing the White House to make the designation last year. "If Congress would have taken action earlier, probably a lot of the emotion around this wouldn't have taken place. We have to be partners with Congress on this."

Although Congress has converted dozens of national monuments to national parks, it has less often opted to abolish monuments created under the Antiquities Act of 1906 — doing so fewer than a dozen times.

"I think it's important to work with Congress," Zinke later added. "I wanted to make sure that we include both sides of the aisle."

Trump issued an executive order last month mandating a review of all monuments created since 1996 that encompass more than 100,000 acres. Zinke could suggest that the president rescind or reduce the size of those sites, or recommend changes to management plans.

'Unbalanced tour'

Protesters who have trailed Zinke throughout his visit to the state could not access the private Dugout Ranch site yesterday morning, opting instead to greet the secretary's caravan 20 miles east, on the road that leads north to Moab or south to Monticello.

Proponents of the monument, including the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, the Utah Diné Bikéyah and conservationists, have accused Zinke of spending the majority of his visit with opponents of the site.

"It does appear that they are predisposed to undo the monument in some way given the fact that he's had this unbalanced tour, spending the bulk of his time with monument opponents," said Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance Executive Director Scott Groene.

Groene criticized the Trump administration's efforts to backtrack on the Bears Ears monument, saying that despite arguments from Bishop and Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R) that Congress should have been allowed to address the site, "legislation is obviously not an alternative."

"The good alternative would be legislation, and they just went through an enormous effort for this very area and failed," Groene said. "They wasted a lot of our time for three years on the 'plundered land initiative' that they couldn't even get a House vote on."



Noting that the process has not begun yet on setting up management of the monument, he added: "No one has given this monument a chance yet."

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57. Zinke rides with cattle ranchers working on Bears Ears

The Deseret News, May 10 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

BEARS EARS, San Juan County — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said Tuesday that in the context of Bears Ears National Monument, "cattle ranchers matter, too."

He put those words into action on a soggy afternoon, traversing 20-miles of winding, dirt road switchbacks on Elk Ridge Mountain in a 4-wheel drive vehicle to the Bears Ears grazing allotment managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

While the skies cleared, Zinke became acquainted with Payton, a tall flashy Tobiano paint mare who would take him through lush meadows high on south Elk Ridge Mountain, followed by a contingent of riders, including exclusive coverage by the Deseret News.

Zinke's no greenhorn on a horse and made plain to Utah cattle ranchers he understands what it's like to grow up in ranching country, with small towns, big dreams and tough challenges.

In a meadow, north of the Bears Ears buttes that rise 9,000 feet in elevation, he listened to Kenny Black talk about the controversial Bears Ears Monument designation made in December by President Barack Obama.

"There are a lot of protections in place," said Black, who began ranching in 2001 after buying a startup herd from his grandfather.

"There is nothing wrong with regular public land," he said.

The San Juan County native worries that the monument designation will bring another reason for the federal government to cut back on grazing allotments.

Right now, he runs about 225 head of cattle on two federal allotments from the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, which owns the majority of land inside the footprint of the 1.35-million-acre monument.



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The presidential proclamation setting up Bears Ears National Monument declares that existing grazing will be honored, but Black, the Ivins family and the Johnson family are skeptical.

"The main thing is that it opens up the door to more federal regulations and scrutiny," Black said. "No one knows what the future will bring."

Zinke's visit to Bears Ears is part of an executive order directing the Montana native to review 27 monument designations — and come up with an answer on Bears Ears by early June — an unprecedented undertaking in the history of America's management of public lands.

Native American tribes, backed by environmental and conservation groups, pushed for a 1.9 million acre monument designation for Bears Ears, a successful act that Utah and San Juan County leaders called an affront to their concerns over how the sweeping landscape will be managed.

"Bears Ears is a little large to me. Beautiful country," Zinke said, jostling his horse to overstep sagebrush and fallen logs. He'd ridden some time in an unchanging landscape dotted with wildflowers and sagebrush, pine trees and soaked with rain.

That is what Black, Shawn Ivins and Sandy Johnson hoped he would see — large — that this country can accommodate ranching, hiking and Native American interests — without what they say is absentee dictatorship from Washington.

Zinke said that won't be the case any longer.

"We are going to pivot and change," he said. "Some of it is cultural within the department itself. But we want to be the 'advocate, the yep' team."

There was a moment when he brought his horse to attention and just stopped on the ride.

"I don't want to overemphasize respect."

In the Bears Ears controversy, this is the second time an Interior secretary visited southeast Utah to conduct a listening tour.

No one disagrees about the differences between Zinke's visit and that of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell in 2016.



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Sen. David Hinkins, R-Orangeville, just laughed at the contrast and shook his head.

"No comparison," he said. His smile was barely contained.

With Jewell's visit, monument critics were full of sighs, uptight, resigned. It's different now with Zinke.

"It was night and day," said San Juan County Commissioner Rebecca Benally, sporting a Brigham Young University ball cap while riding a dainty bay.

She said Jewell gave them 30 minutes in her listening tour, and listened to the coalition and Utah Dine Bikeyah — which spearheaded the proposal for the last seven years — for a day.

"I think he wants to listen to us."

That contrast has now put the opposing side in an attack mode, with Utah Dine Bikeyah issuing a statement that Zinke failed to give them enough time while he was here.

Board Chairman Willie Grayeyes said the one hour visit was a "tip of the hat" but worried it would not give the secretary the full story about the reasons for the monument push.

Grayeyes is an affable and sincere believer in the monument, and he is worried his voice, and that of the Navajo, are not being heard.

So do Sandy Johnson and Shawn Ivins, local ranchers who say there has never been such push for a monument until a few years ago.

"I've been coming off that mountain pretty much all my life, but until a few years ago is the only time I've heard of the Native Americans coming up here," Ivins said.

Is it an Old West fight about cowboys and the Native Americans who were here first?

Zinke, taking his military training to bear, was a Western diplomat: "I am an optimist."

He rode through hail and sleet and blinding wind. Next came mud and 20 miles to pavement. The storm had directed Zinke's destiny where it might be dicey, and the big mare named Payton was left to watch him go.



"I think he enjoyed himself. Away from all the crazy things," the rancher Black said.

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58. NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Zinke review could open 2.7M acres to development — report

E & E News, May 10 | Jennifer Yachnin

BLANDING, Utah — Boundary changes to a half-dozen national monuments could open up 2.7 million acres of land to fossil fuel extraction, according to a new analysis released by Greenpeace this morning.

The environmental advocacy group compared maps of existing monuments with data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, U.S. Geological Survey and other sources to examine areas with prospective oil, gas or coal deposits.

Greenpeace identified six national monuments with the largest potential energy development: Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, Canyons of the Ancients in Colorado, San Gabriel Mountains and Carrizo Plain in California, and the Upper Missouri River Breaks in Montana.

"These are the spectacular landscapes whose rugged contours and breathtaking views have defined America's history and identity for centuries," Greenpeace spokesman Travis Nichols said in a statement. "They are the common heritage of everyone in our country and must be preserved for future generations."

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is reviewing the status of 27 national monuments and is set to issue a report by late August recommending boundary changes or wholesale rescission of monuments, or amendments to management plans.

President Trump ordered the review late last month, requiring an assessment of all monuments created since 1996 that contain over 100,000 acres, as well as individual monuments selected by the Interior secretary.

Zinke is in Utah this week visiting the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments, which have been the target of complaints from GOP state and congressional leaders.



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An Interior spokeswoman could not immediately respond to a request for comment, but the agency told Greenpeace that the review is about "land management decisions" from local stakeholders.

"There is no pre-determined outcome on any monument currently under review," the Interior statement said.

Greenpeace spokesman Nichols accused Trump — who vowed to expand domestic energy extraction on public lands during his campaign — of attempting to "carve up these beautiful lands into corporate giveaways for the oil and gas industry."

But speaking from the Bears Ears monument on Monday, Zinke dismissed suggestions that the review of the nation's newest monument was prompted by desires to develop the area.

"We also have a pretty good idea of certainly the oil and gas potential: not much. So, Bears Ears isn't really about oil and gas at all," Zinke said. "There's some uranium. [I'm] more and more concerned about the present mill that's there."

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Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

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"In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said**. "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said**. "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational

oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said**. "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said**. "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said**. "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said**. "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said**. "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee**. "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald

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Secretary Ryan Zinke Appoints Veteran Interior Official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Tribal Leaders, Congressional Officials, Others Praise Selection

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced the appointment of former Interior Department official and former Chief of Staff to Rep. Steve Pearce (NM) Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior. In this role, Willens will work closely with yet-to-be-confirmed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt. Willens brings with him more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and the private sector. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department's many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

In addition to being a westerner, Todd brings a strong combination of public and private sector experience to the Interior Department," **Secretary Ryan Zinke said.** "Most of Interior's holdings and responsibilities are in the

West, and Todd's intimate understanding of the West, from growing up in rural California to his previous time at Interior to his tenure with Congressman Pearce, will be a major asset to the people we serve. I look forward to Todd helping us advance Interior's mission and the work of the Administration on behalf of local communities."

"It is an honor and privilege to be appointed as Interior's Assistant Deputy Secretary," **Willens said.** "I thank Secretary Zinke for his confidence in my abilities to serve the Department and the Administration. I look forward to getting to work contributing to the implementation of the President's priorities for the Department and our Agencies, making America great again."

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational

oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

"Todd's dedication to New Mexico and the West made him a most effective manager of people and policies," **Congressman Pearce said**. "More than anything though, my wife Cynthia and I consider him a close friend. He has run my congressional operations for nearly seven years and been my top adviser on numerous items, delivering countless successes on my behalf. I congratulate Todd and the Administration on his appointment to this important position."

"The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior," **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said**. "In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd's expertise and experience will be a valuable asset."

"I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular," **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said**. "Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior's trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration."

"The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority couldn't be more pleased with the selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Interior," **Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, said**. "A native of Northern California, Todd has a great deal of experience in Western water issues and, as a sportsman-conservationist, he has a long track record of delivering mutually beneficial policy outcomes for the benefit of fish, wildlife and water users throughout the Western United States. We look forward to working with Todd in his new capacity."

"The Civil War Trust strongly supports the appointment of Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior," **James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust, said**. "In his previous service on Capitol Hill and in the Department of the Interior, Todd has been a champion of our national parks and historic battlefield sites. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with him to preserve America's battlefield parks as places of remembrance as well as heritage tourism destinations."

"The Boone and Crockett Club proudly supports Todd Willens' appointment," **said Paul Phillips, co-chair of the Boone and Crockett Club's Policy Committee**. "Mr. Willens is a conservationist who hunts. He has this personal passion and understands the ecological and economic benefits that follow for the public. His experience in the complexities of policy at the Department of the Interior will serve the country and conservation community all very well."

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald

Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill. A California native, Willens is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

###



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From: Center for Western Priorities
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Secretary Ryan Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with one week left in his monuments attack
Date: Thursday, August 17, 2017 11:46:23 AM



CONTACT

Aaron Weiss, Media Director
Center for Western Priorities
aaron@westernpriorities.org
720-279-0019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 17, 2017

Secretary Zinke goes on Mediterranean vacation with only one week left to decide the fate of more than a dozen monuments he's never visited

DENVER—One week from today, Interior Secretary Zinke is due to decide the fate of dozens of national monuments protected over the last two decades. Secretary Zinke, who President Trump placed in charge of the review, promised that he would listen to and engage with local communities and national monument stakeholders before permanently closing any national monument lands.

Rather than spending his final week hearing from local communities who have worked tirelessly to protect their natural and cultural heritage as national monuments, Secretary Zinke is on vacation in the Mediterranean. His wife, Lola Zinke, [tweeted a picture early this morning](#) of herself and Secretary Zinke enjoying a sunrise on the Bosphorus Strait.

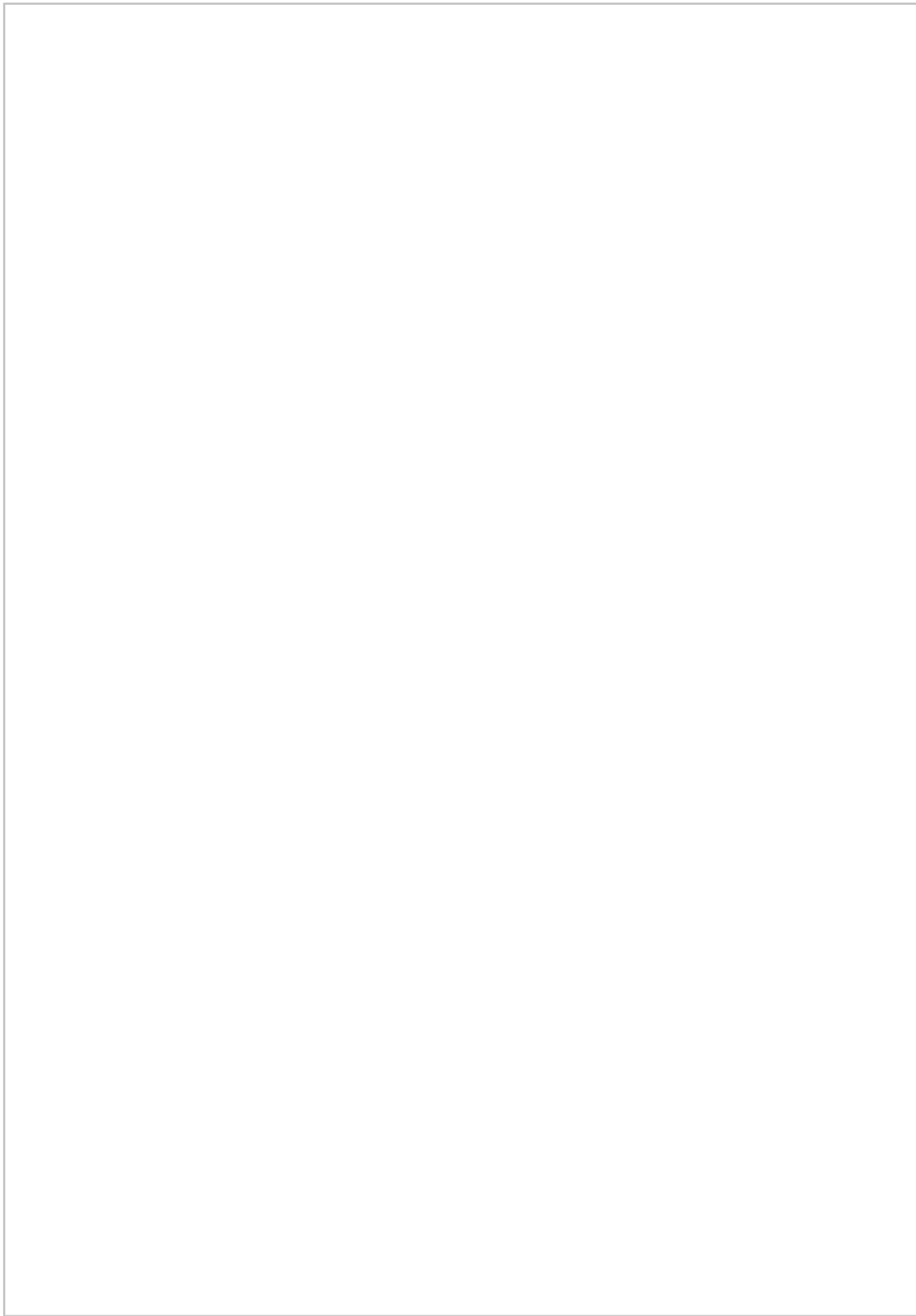


With only seven days remaining in the review, the secretary has failed to visit most of the national monuments on the chopping block. Of the 27 monuments under consideration for elimination, Secretary Zinke has visited and met with stakeholders at only 8 of them. The visits Secretary Zinke has made were marked by controversy, [failing to meet key stakeholders](#) and even admitting to a [group of veterans](#) in New Mexico that his mind was made up to eliminate national monuments.

The secretary is not expected to make other site visits prior to the August 24th deadline. In advance of next week's decision, the Center for Western Priorities issued the following statement from **Deputy Director Greg Zimmerman**:

"Our national monuments are full of beautiful places to take a summer trip.

Secretary Zinke promised a rigorous analysis of national monuments, but what the American public got was a sham review and a foreign vacation. If he bothered to listen, Secretary Zinke would have found that national monuments are cornerstones of Western economies, that they protect exceptional and unique lands, and, most of all, that virtually no Americans support eliminating national monuments. I worry, instead, he's moving to permanently shut down national monuments."



Additional Resources

- [Zinke vs. Zinke on National Monuments: Conflicting statements show review lacks consistent criteria, rigorous analysis](#)
- [Analysis finds near-unanimous support of Bears Ears and other national monuments as public comment period closes, including a 9-to-1 margin among Utahns](#)
- [Make no mistake: The Trump administration's monument review is an attack on our national parks](#)

###

The Center for Western Priorities is a conservation policy and advocacy organization focused on land and energy issues across the American West.

[Center for Western Priorities](#) | 820 16th Street Ste 450, Denver, CO 80202 | 303.974.7761

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From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Newell, Russell](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: SECRETARY: Upcoming Speaking Engagements
Date: Thursday, September 07, 2017 5:19:00 PM
Attachments: [Upcoming Speaking Engagements 0907.docx](#)

Laura,

As requested, here is an exhaustive summary of all upcoming Secretary speaking engagements that Leila has sent us. I will update this document periodically and send it along, and can even make this into a constantly-updating Google Doc if you think it to be a better idea than the calendar (probably easier to organize and easier to read).

This is all draft text and I welcome edits, suggestions, etc. I've left the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation event information a bit bare, as Heather suggested I pull from RZ interview tomorrow. Working on two different speeches for 9/11 (one for 9/10, one for 9/11). Russ and I have connected on DepSec speech for hunting, and will work on getting this done.

Document is attached and text is also included below in the body for your convenience.
Thanks.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements for Secretary Ryan Zinke (Strategic Calendar)

September 10, 2017

EVENT: Flight 93 Soundbreaking for "Tower of Voices"

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Shanksville, PA

NOTES: 3 minute remarks, keynote speech is September 11th VPOTUS (Secretary introducing him for 3 minutes there as well)

TYPE: Formal, but brief enough for notecard

AUDIENCE: General public

PRESS: Open

September 13, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet -- VIP Reception

and Banquet

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Dovetails with broader push for sportsmen engagement

TYPE: Secretary likely doesn't need formal remarks here, given familiarity with the issues and the audience; "5-10 minutes of remarks about his passion for the outdoors and highlight one or two top priorities he's focusing on as Secretary."

AUDIENCE: Foundation VIPs and reception guests

PRESS: Closed

September 20, 2017

EVENT: Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium at the Bass Pro HQ -- Gala Dinner Event

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Springfield, MO

NOTES: Event staff sent over detailed information, will sort through prior to drafting remarks

TYPE: Informal remarks on conservation, appreciation of the outdoors/wildlife, likely one notecard is fine

AUDIENCE: Conservation leaders

PRESS: Closed

September 22, 2017

EVENT: NRA Women's Leadership Forum Summit

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Irving, TX

NOTES: Secretary could talk about strong women in his personal life (mother, wife,

daughter) or professional life (military, political staff, Cabinet/Congressional colleagues). Big theme of NRA Women's push recently has been safety for females – women are safer when allowed to conceal carry.

TYPE: Formal, keynote remarks – opportunity to tell stories here

AUDIENCE: NRA forum participants, likely heavy female demographic

PRESS: Closed

September 25, 2017

EVENT: National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Seems like a niche topic that may require specific remarks – will need to coordinate here with OCL. Website notes “Waters of the U.S. rule,” “MSHA’s workplace exams rule,” and “long term highway funding” as topics to be discussed over the forum, which runs 4 days all told. This one is likely worth a call to Association POC.

TYPE: Formal, 10 minute remarks on aggregates production and “ESA” issues – flagging for prebrief on this unless Secretary is particularly well-read here, Q&A is included

AUDIENCE: Industry folks and other forum attendees

PRESS: Likely industry press

September 26, 2017

EVENT: Jefferson Island Club Citizen of the Year Award

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary is being honored as Citizen of the Year; it's for “legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service, and contributions in the spirit of America's founding fathers.”

TYPE: Informal remarks, will reach out to find out more about the event

AUDIENCE: Jefferson Island Club members

PRESS: Closed

October 11, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Coal Caucus

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: U.S. recently announced first-ever coal export to Ukraine, WSJ piece on “Coal Makes a Comeback” has good nuggets as well. Secretary was a member of the Caucus. Blake Deeley running point on this from OCL, finding out if we want to put in an “ask” or “call to action.”

TYPE: Informal, brief remarks at a roundtable

AUDIENCE: Members of Congress and their staff

PRESS: Closed

November 9, 2017

EVENT: America First Energy Conference (Heartland Institute)

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NOTES: Organization appears very pro-administration, focused on deregulation

TYPE: Formal remarks, possibly good to write them out given specificity of deregulation accomplishments and opportunity to get back on energy as hunting season winds down

AUDIENCE: Conference attendees (energy industry and policy folks)

PRESS: Presumably closed, will check

MISC. FLAGGING: Upcoming Deputy Secretary speech on hunting, upcoming Secretary speech on energy (Heritage Foundation), upcoming Vincent DeVito speech on tech (Oceans 17)

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Laura Rigas](#)
Cc: [Newell, Russell](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Alex Hinson](#)
Subject: Secretary's Strategic Calendar UPDATE 09/13
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 2:42:50 PM
Attachments: [Upcoming Speaking Engagements.docx](#)

All,

Below and attached, please find an updated strategic calendar for the Secretary's speaking engagements. New events on the schedule are highlighted in **yellow**.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements for Secretary Ryan Zinke (Strategic Calendar)

September 13, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet -- VIP Reception and Banquet

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Dovetails with broader push for sportsmen engagement, remarks written

TYPE: Secretary likely doesn't need formal remarks here, given familiarity with the issues and the audience; "5-10 minutes of remarks about his passion for the outdoors and highlight one or two top priorities he's focusing on as Secretary."

AUDIENCE: Foundation VIPs and reception guests

PRESS: Closed

September 20, 2017

EVENT: Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium at the Bass Pro HQ -- Gala Dinner Event

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Springfield, MO

NOTES: Event staff sent over detailed information, will sort through prior to drafting remarks

TYPE: Informal remarks on conservation, appreciation of the outdoors/wildlife, likely one notecard is fine

AUDIENCE: Conservation leaders

PRESS: Closed

September 22, 2017

EVENT: NRA Women's Leadership Forum Summit

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Irving, TX

NOTES: Secretary could talk about strong women in his personal life (grandmother, wife, daughter). Big theme of NRA is how women are "backbone" of organization.

TYPE: Formal, keynote remarks – opportunity to tell stories here

AUDIENCE: NRA forum participants, likely heavy female demographic

PRESS: Closed

September 25, 2017

EVENT: National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Seems like a niche topic that may require specific remarks – will need to coordinate here with OCL. Scheduling notes highlight Endangered Species Act policy speech.

TYPE: Formal, 10 minute remarks on ESA issues – flagging for prebrief on this unless Secretary is particularly well-read here, Q&A is included.

AUDIENCE: Industry folks and other forum attendees

PRESS: Likely industry press

EVENT: National Petroleum Council Meeting

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary Perry from Energy will also be there, and the invitation discusses inter-agency collaboration and the Trump Administration's commitment to development. This

could be a good place to preview/work through the Heritage speech, which is teed up to be a major policy address on energy.

TYPE: The invitation asks, in regard to the remarks, for the message of “a coordinated Administration working together to address energy issues. Such would be a continuation of the spirit displayed at the June 29 Energy Week event at the Department of Energy when you joined Secretary Perry, the President, Vice President, and other Administration officials.”

AUDIENCE: Members of the National Petroleum Council

PRESS: Open

September 26, 2017

EVENT: Jefferson Island Club Citizen of the Year Award

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary is being honored as Citizen of the Year; it’s for “legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service, and contributions in the spirit of America’s founding fathers.”

TYPE: Informal remarks, will reach out to find out more about the event

AUDIENCE: Jefferson Island Club members

PRESS: Closed

September 29, 2017

EVENT: Heritage Foundation Energy Speech

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Meeting with Vincent DeVito, who’s been tasked with typing up the first draft of the remarks

TYPE: Formal remarks, policy speech

AUDIENCE: Heritage Foundation

PRESS: Likely closed

October 11, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Coal Caucus

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: U.S. recently announced first-ever coal export to Ukraine, WSJ piece on “Coal Makes a Comeback” has good nuggets as well. Secretary was a member of the Caucus. Blake Deeley running point on this from OCL, finding out if we want to put in an “ask” or “call to action.”

TYPE: Informal, brief remarks at a roundtable

AUDIENCE: Members of Congress and their staff

PRESS: Closed

November 9, 2017

EVENT: America First Energy Conference (Heartland Institute)

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NOTES: Organization appears very pro-administration, focused on deregulation

TYPE: Formal remarks, possibly good to write them out given specificity of deregulation accomplishments and opportunity to get back on energy as hunting season winds down

AUDIENCE: Conference attendees (energy industry and policy folks)

PRESS: Presumably closed, will check

MISC. FLAGGING: Upcoming Vincent DeVito speech on tech at Oceans 17, 09/20

--

Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications

From: Esther Whieldon
To: [BLM main press email](#); [Heather Swift](#); [Interior Press](#)
Subject: Seeking verification/comment -- Steed taking over BLM
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 11:18:50 AM

Can you please confirm the contents of this email - that Zinke has appointed Steed as acting BLM director? What day did Zinke make the appointment and why did he decided to do this? Also, please address how the agency is dealing with the limitations of any BLM acting director's authority now that the vacancies act has kicked in and Trump has not nominated anyone for BLM director yet.

I'd love to have a response by noon if possible.

Thanks, Esther

From: "Nedd, Michael" <mnedd@blm.gov>
Date: November 15, 2017 at 3:03:21 PM PST
To: BLM_All_Employees <blm_all_employees@blm.gov>
Subject: BLM Acting Director

BLM employees:

This week, Secretary Ryan Zinke appointed Brian Steed as Acting Director of the BLM, and I want to welcome him as he begins his journey leading this great agency. John Ruhs and I have worked alongside Brian since his appointment as Deputy Director for Programs and Policy in October, and we have come to know his ethic, his intellect, and his passion for our multiple-use and sustained yield mission. His experience includes working as Chief of Staff to U.S. Representative Chris Stewart of Utah, teaching and researching economics at the University of Utah, and serving as a Deputy County Attorney in Iron County, Utah. He is a native of Logan, Utah, and now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and three children. Brian's western heritage and values make him a perfect fit for the BLM team.

Since March 15, I have had the honor of leading the BLM. Your tireless dedication to our mission inspires me every day. DOI leaders continually express their confidence in the BLM's leadership in the field and here in Washington, which is a testament to all of you. Thank you for supporting me as the Acting Director over these months, and remaining as ever BLM strong.

During the coming weeks, John and I will transition to different roles. John will return to his position as BLM Nevada State Director, and I will assume the duties of Acting Deputy Director for Operations. I appreciate John's sacrifice over the past seven months while he

has lived away from his family and the wide open spaces that he loves.

Please join me in welcoming Brian to his new position. As we move forward, let's continue to stay focused on our shared mission and values that guide us in our stewardship of America's public lands.

Take care and have a wonderful day! :)
Michael D. Nedd

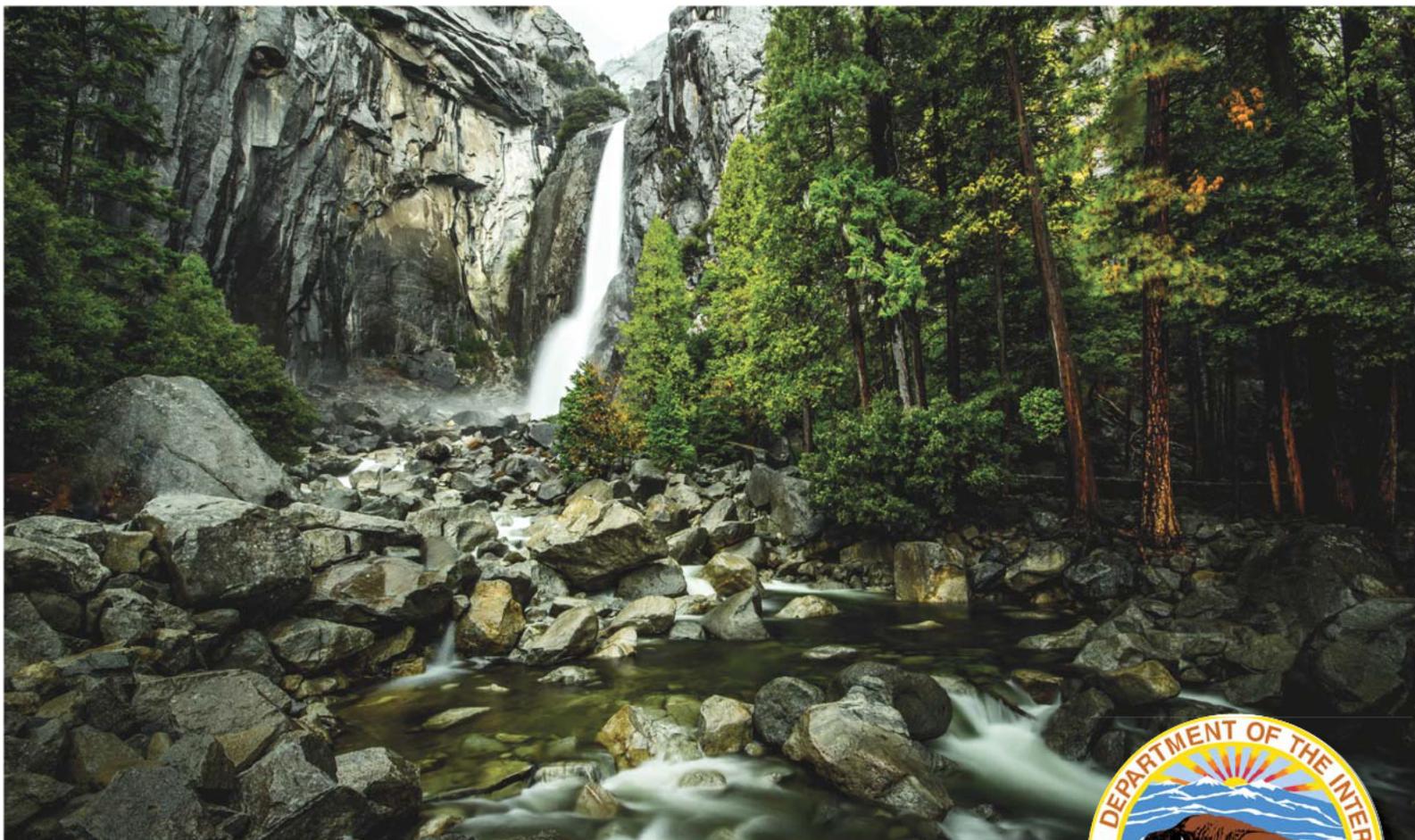
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OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

SEMIANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

for the period ending March 31, 2017



October 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017

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OUR OPERATING PRINCIPLES

As the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), we provide independent oversight and promote excellence, integrity, and accountability within DOI's programs, operations, and management. We do this by conducting audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations.

We keep the Secretary and Congress informed of problems and deficiencies relating to the administration of DOI programs and operations. As a result of us fulfilling these responsibilities, Americans can expect greater accountability and integrity in Government program administration.

Our core values define a shared OIG way, guiding employee behavior and decisions at all levels. Adhering to these values—objectivity and independence, integrity, and getting results—we build a foundation to develop trustworthy information that improves DOI.

- **Objectivity and independence** define us and are the bedrock of our credibility. These concepts are closely related. Any impairment to independence would impact objectivity. OIG and its employees must remain independent from undue outside influence and approach work with intellectual honesty.
- **Integrity** is a character trait and a way of doing business. By acting with integrity in all we do, we build a reputation for producing actionable and accurate work.
- **Getting results** depends on individual and team efforts. We positively impact DOI by detecting fraud and other wrongdoing, deterring unethical behavior and preventing deleterious outcomes, confirming programs achieved intended results and were fiscally responsible, and highlighting effective practices.

A Message From Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall

I am pleased to submit this semiannual report detailing the work we completed between October 1, 2016, and March 31, 2017. Our successful efforts to promote excellence, integrity, and accountability within DOI's programs, operations, and management happen with a small, highly trained and motivated workforce made up of auditors, investigators, attorneys, analysts, and various support staff.

In the last 6 months, our audits have uncovered systemic issues for potentially all of DOI's charge card policies and practices, and revealed that DOI's high-value information technology assets are not fully protected. We found that the U.S. Geological Survey and DOI's climate science centers and landscape conservation cooperatives lack necessary transparency, and we identified millions of dollars in potentially wasted funds by the Bureau of Reclamation pursuant to a cooperative agreement.

Our investigative work revealed mismanagement and wrongdoing by senior Government officials, to include multiple cases of ethical misconduct and violations by a Bureau of Land Management supervisory agent, a senior executive service Office of Acquisition and Property Management employee, and National Park Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) employees. We also investigated instances of retaliation and sexual harassment, improper contract awards, and theft of Federal funds on Indian land.

In its "2017 High-Risk Report," the Government Accountability Office added the efficiency and

effectiveness of Federal programs that serve American Indian tribes and their members as a new high-risk area—one with great vulnerability to fraud, waste, and mismanagement. We have certainly seen this to be true in our own work highlighted in this report, as well as work reported in our previous semiannual reports to Congress.

Our work has brought to light deficiencies in BIA's efforts to develop tribal energy resources, to manage tribal education programs and healthcare services, and to promote processes to secure tribal money against theft.

We continue to publish the results of all of our investigations, audits, inspections, and evaluations on our website, ensuring the entire scope of our work is available to the public. In addition, we have launched an in-house standardization effort designed to make our internal work processes more fluid and our report processes quicker, without compromising accuracy or completeness.

As we welcome a new Administration, we will remain focused on our mission to provide independent and objective oversight, and continue to provide the Secretary of the Interior, Congress, and the public with timely, accurate, and actionable reports to improve DOI's programs and operations.



Deputy Inspector General

2016 ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Organizational Assessment Report recaps our performance annually, summarizing our most significant FY 2016 achievements. More specifically, the report highlights how we have promoted excellence in DOI and held wrongdoers accountable.

These achievements resulted from our investigations, audits, inspections, and evaluations, as well as improvements in how we work internally and include—

- investigations on sexual harassment at two National Park Service locations that led to congressional hearings, international media attention, and actions by DOI to combat harassment agency-wide;
- work that revealed that the Bureau of Indian Education Director inappropriately hired two individuals, resulting in his removal from the position in March 2016;
- work that helped ensure DOI addressed unacceptable health and safety conditions for children in Indian Country schools;
- audit work that hastened the notification of customers of the U.S. Geological Survey Energy Geochemistry Laboratory in Lakewood, CO, about scientific misconduct and data manipulation issues at the lab;
- work that identified approximately \$12.6 million in questioned costs and recommendations for funds to be put to better use; and
- work that helped recover almost \$7.4 million through criminal penalties.

Likewise, special projects and internal improvements helped us be more effective in meeting our mission. For example—

- to encourage DOI to take action based on our findings, we implemented a new policy to publicly post the results of most investigations;
- we took steps to increase our information technology security;
- we increased the capacity of auditors and investigators in the Insular Areas to ensure good stewardship of Federal funding; and
- we excelled in our scores on the Governmentwide “Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey” results.

These achievements are possible only through the work and dedication of a highly qualified, trained, and motivated workforce.

2016 TOP MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The 2016 Top Management Challenges Report summarizes the most significant management and performance challenges facing DOI. By statute—the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000—this list is required to be included in DOI’s “Agency Financial Report” for fiscal year 2016.

Eight challenge areas are included in this year’s report—

- Energy management,
- Climate effects,
- Information technology,
- Water programs,
- Responsibility to American Indians and Insular Areas,
- Acquisition and financial assistance,
- Public safety and disaster response, and
- Operational efficiencies.

These challenge areas reflect continuing vulnerabilities and the emerging issues that DOI faces. These are the challenges we see as potential barriers to departmental efforts to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in bureau management and operations.



Reporting Highlights

Financial and Contract Audits

Contract and Grant Audits Identified \$3.6 Million in Questioned Costs and Deficient Oversight

Audits of contracts and grants that DOI awarded to six recipients identified a potential cost savings to the Government of \$3.6 million out of \$10.2 million in claimed costs. In addition, five of these audits identified deficient oversight by the bureaus. We made 34 recommendations to DOI related to the contracts and grants we audited, and we focused on recovering questioned costs and improving oversight. DOI is working with all audited recipients to recover costs and resolve these matters.

Hurricane Sandy Audits

In response to our Hurricane Sandy efforts, we audited three contracts totaling \$5.8 million and questioned \$1.3 million in costs: one at the Statue of Liberty National Monument, one to facilitate educational and work opportunities for young people, and one to replace the outside communications infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

Statue of Liberty National Monument Contract (Report No. 2016-CG-008)

In the Statue of Liberty National Monument audit, we found that the recipient claimed costs of \$4,100,530 on contracts awarded by the National Park Service (NPS) to fund an irrigation system and repairs, including landscaping and hardscaping, at the Main Immigration Building at the Statue of Liberty National Monument. As a result of our audit, we questioned \$257,493 that represented incomplete and inaccurate cost and pricing data, and costs that the contractor did not incur. We found that the recipient did not provide NPS with any support for the cost and pricing data in its proposal, as required by Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) § 15.408. During this audit, we also found that NPS did not obtain a fair and reasonable price or adequately oversee its contract with the recipient. As a result, NPS did not prevent or detect numerous problems, including inaccurate and incomplete supporting data for



The Main Immigration Building on Ellis Island in New York Harbor

the cost proposal and oversight on the recipient's compliance with the FAR's "Limitations on Subcontracting" clause.

*Educational and Work Youth Program Cooperative Agreement
(Report No. 2015-ER-061)*

We found that the recipient claimed costs of \$1,649,916 on a cooperative agreement and three specific task agreements awarded by NPS that focused on assisting in the coordination and cleanup of NPS sites in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. The agreements were designed to facilitate educational and work opportunities for young people so that they could gain a better understanding of and appreciation for NPS' natural and cultural resources. As a result of our audit, we questioned \$992,980 across the agreements, and identified noncompliance with contractual and regulatory requirements.

The recipient did not provide sufficient support for the in-kind matches it claimed under two of the agreements. We also identified inappropriate use of program management, training, and technology costs. In addition, the recipient had an inadequate accounting system to handle Federal funds, its required reporting was late and inaccurate, and it identified its teams inconsistently. Finally, the recipient's management of its volunteers may keep it from being able to match volunteer hours. For example, the recipient billed for in-kind matches by using estimates instead of actuals to calculate the in-kind contributions.

Communications Infrastructure Contract (Report No. 2016-CG-033)

We found that the recipient did not always comply with the applicable laws, contract clauses, and DOI guidance. Specifically, the contractor did not provide an environmental specialist, did not provide the data necessary to determine the contractor's compliance with the FAR's "Limitations on Subcontracting" clause, did not complete the percentage of completion sections in the invoices, and made mathematical and labor category errors in the certified payroll submissions.

For example, the recipient did not provide actual labor costs to NPS for NPS to evaluate the contractor's compliance with the FAR's Limitations on Subcontracting clause and submitted incomplete forms.

Piney Woods School Audit

The recipient claimed costs of \$524,478 on a cooperative agreement awarded by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that focused on supporting the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program. We questioned that entire cooperative agreement amount because the recipient had an inadequate accounting

system and lacked internal controls. While the recipient did provide value during the agreement, we found that the absence of these controls made it impossible to determine the allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of the recipient's claimed costs. We identified five issues related to the recipient's claimed costs, the amount owed on the agreement, recipient's compliance with the agreement terms and conditions, and BLM's compliance with the agreement terms and conditions.



Wild burro

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe – Bureau of Reclamation

We found that the recipient claimed interim costs of \$4,042,500 on a cooperative agreement awarded by the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). USBR awarded the agreement for the operation, maintenance, and administrative activities associated with the rural water system, which serves tribal and nontribal customers. Overall, we questioned \$1,440,748, which included unsupported payments to related parties, subcontractors, and vendors; unsupported internal transactions in the recipient's accounting system; unsupported financial reporting; and unallowable payments to vendors.

We found that payments to related parties, subcontracts, and vendors did not have the detailed support for the cost. For example, an invoice for painting a water tower listed only the total amount with no additional support. The recipient could not provide contracts associated with the subcontractors.

Lastly, we identified internal control weaknesses involving recording and processing journal entries, accounting, and billing systems, as well as deficiencies affecting timeliness and the accuracy of allocating and invoicing costs. We also identified deficiencies with USBR's contract oversight and administration. USBR did not effectively review the contractor's SF-425 financial reporting: the recipient stated on the form that it had \$883,432 in expenses but did not have the associated supporting documentation. DOI is working with all recipients to resolve these matters and recover costs.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe – Bureau of Indian Affairs

We found that the recipient claimed interim costs of \$2,974,507 on an Indian self-determination contract awarded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). BIA awarded the agreement for the facilities management program, and the recipient provided the necessary personnel, supplies, materials, equipment, facilities, and management services to accomplish the goals and objectives of this contract. The recipient also operated and administered the reservation's Facilities Management Operations and

Maintenance, Education, Non-Education, Quarters Maintenance, and Detention Center buildings.

Overall, we questioned a total of \$385,127, which included unsupported payments to related parties and vendors, unsupported internal transactions in the recipient's accounting system, and unallowable payments to vendors. We found that payments to related parties and vendors did not have detailed support for the cost. For example, an invoice for removing and installing a new sidewalk listed only the total amount with no additional support.

We identified internal control weaknesses involving recording and processing journal entries, accounting, and billing systems, as well as deficiencies affecting timeliness and the accuracy of allocating and invoicing costs. We also identified deficiencies with BIA's contract oversight and administration regarding the post-award process. The contract file was incomplete; it did not have all of the attachments included within the contract, and BIA could not provide the attachments identified within the contract. The recipient did not provide progress and financial reports to BIA on a quarterly basis. DOI is working with all recipients to resolve these matters and recover costs.

Audits of Wildlife and Sport Fish Grants Identified Nearly \$4 Million in Potential Savings and Program Improvements

Through its Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFRP), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) awards grants to States and territories that finance up to 75 percent (100 percent in territories) of projects, such as site development for boating access or the acquisition and management of natural habitats for game species. Under a reimbursable agreement with FWS, we audit all States and territories over a 5-year cycle, which is required by Federal law. In this semiannual period, we completed the audits of two agencies:

- State of Delaware, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Division of Fish and Wildlife; and
- Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

In these audits, we identified nearly \$3.9 million in ineligible costs or unsupported claims. In addition, we identified accounting and control issues that could expose WSFRP funds to some risk of misuse. In all, we provided 16 recommendations for program improvements. FWS is working with these agencies to resolve the issues and to recover costs where appropriate.

Delaware (Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Division of Fish and Wildlife)

In this audit, we identified issues with an ineligible match and unreconciled real property records.

Ineligible Match (Out-of-Period)

Under WSFRP, States must use State-matching (non-Federal) funds to cover at least 25 percent of costs incurred in performing projects under the grants. We found that the Division of Fish and Wildlife had claimed out-of-period, and therefore ineligible, amounts in its 25 percent. The Division cited past costs and the value of past donations as its current match. We did not question costs because the Division had received approval, erroneously, from the cognizant FWS Regional Office. When informed of our finding, both parties agreed to end this invalid practice.

Unreconciled Real Property Records

The Division had not reconciled its lands inventory with FWS as needed to ensure that real property acquired with WSFRP funding continues to serve conservation purposes. Both parties agreed with our finding.

**Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands
(Department of Planning and Natural Resources)**

In this audit, we questioned \$3,880,195 because the Department was unable to provide sufficient accounting for expenditures claimed and reimbursed on WSFRP grants. In addition, we found that the Department—

- was not able to provide adequate support for drawdown (reimbursement) requests;
- could not demonstrate that it followed Virgin Islands Government procurement policy related to the St. Croix Brugal Property project, and was not able to provide adequate support for costs claimed;
- claimed unallowable and unsupported payroll expenditures;
- did not adequately manage its WSFRP-funded equipment; and
- had not submitted accurate grant financial and performance reports in a timely manner.

Fiscal Year 2016 Financial Audit Identified Internal Control Weaknesses

Under a contract issued by DOI and monitored by us, KPMG, an independent public accounting firm, audited DOI's fiscal year 2016 financial statements and found no issues. As such, KPMG issued an unmodified opinion.

KPMG did, however, identify three significant internal control deficiencies:

- **Lack of Sufficient Controls over General Property, Plant, and Equipment.** KPMG found that DOI did not consistently apply policies, procedures, and controls to ensure that assets under construction were adequately monitored, and the associated transactions were timely and recorded accurately. Specifically, KPMG found eight assets totaling \$319 million that were placed in service in prior years, but were not transferred out of assets under construction until fiscal year 2016.
- **Lack of Sufficient Controls over Accrued Liabilities.** KPMG found that DOI did not take appropriate action for large variances in accrued liabilities, resulting in an inaccurate conclusion about the completeness and accuracy of the accrued liabilities recorded in the DOI's financial statements.
- **Lack of Sufficient General Information Technology Controls.** KPMG found that DOI did not in a timely manner recertify user access rights or remove user access rights due to changes in assigned duties or separations. In addition, KPMG identified untimely remediation of identified system vulnerabilities.

Under a separate contract issued by DOI and monitored by us, KPMG audited the financial statements of the Individual Indian Monies Trust Funds and the financial statements of the Tribal and Other Trust Funds managed by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) for fiscal year 2016. KPMG issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements of the Individual Monies Trust Funds and a qualified opinion on the financial statements of the Tribal and Other Trust Funds. KPMG issued a qualified opinion because it could not satisfy itself as to the fairness of the tribal trust fund balances.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



**Bureau of Land
Management**

Bureau of Land Management

BLM Supervisory Agent Violated Ethics Rules

We investigated allegations that a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) supervisory agent used his official position to provide preferential treatment for family members attending the 2015 Burning Man event in Nevada. The allegations also indicated that the agent intervened improperly in a 2015 hiring process for a special agent position that facilitated the hiring of his friend instead of other qualified applicants.

We found that the agent violated Federal ethics rules when he used his influence with Burning Man officials to obtain tickets and special passes for his family. He also directed on-duty BLM law enforcement employees to escort his family in BLM-procured vehicles, drove his BLM vehicle with his girlfriend, and directed his employee to make hotel reservations for his guests. We also confirmed the supervisory agent's intervention in the special agent hiring process to benefit a friend.

We forwarded our report to and received a response from the DOI Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management.



Burning Man event in Nevada

Allegations of False Reporting to Avoid Plugging and Abandonment Costs are Unsubstantiated

We and the BLM Special Investigations Group investigated allegations that an oil and gas company falsely reported production on a well that was incapable of producing to avoid plugging and abandonment costs and prevent expiration of the Federal mineral lease.

We found that no reporting violation occurred, and the company took corrective action as directed by BLM. Therefore, the allegation was unsubstantiated.

We provided a report of our investigation to BLM.



Bureau of Reclamation

Bureau of Reclamation

USBR's Klamath Basin Water User Mitigation Program Has Management Weaknesses

We conducted an audit to determine whether the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) had the legal authority to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Klamath Water and Power Agency (KWAPA) to administer the Water User Mitigation Program and whether related expenditures were allowable. We determined that USBR did not have the legal authority to enter into the cooperative agreement and, because the agreement was improper, the \$32.2 million that KWAPA spent over 7 years was a waste of funds. In addition, we identified KWAPA expenditures that were unsupported and unallowable, and have provided this information for USBR's consideration.

Only two of the five legal authorities cited by USBR—the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (Coordination Act) and the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 (Drought Relief Act)—provide USBR with



Upper Klamath Lake in south-central Oregon. The snow covered peak of Mt. McLoughlin is in the background.

authority to use financial assistance. Nevertheless, these authorities restrict the use of funds to specific activities. The Coordination Act authorized USBR generally to provide financial assistance for the development and protection of fish and wildlife, and the Drought Relief Act authorized USBR to provide financial assistance for the development of drought contingency plans. USBR's cooperative agreement with KWAPA failed to explain how any of the assistance provided or work performed met the requirements of the Coordination Act and Drought Relief Act.

We determined that the benefits of the Water User Mitigation Program flowed primarily to irrigation contractors rather than to fish and wildlife. Of the \$32.2 million expended under the cooperative agreement, \$28 million was used to compensate irrigation contractors for using pumped groundwater to irrigate their lands or for refraining from irrigation altogether. We also determined that none of the funds were used to develop a drought contingency plan. Finally, we determined that conflicting advice provided by the Office of the Solicitor facilitated USBR's award of the cooperative agreement.

We made three recommendations to address the weaknesses that allowed USBR to improperly award this cooperative agreement. DOI did not concur with two of our recommendations, but did concur with our third recommendation. We consider all three recommendations unresolved and not implemented; therefore, we referred them to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for resolution.

A related case, currently in the Court of Federal Claims (Lonny E. Baley, et al. v. United States (1-591L)), may have an impact on DOI's legal assessment of this matter. Among other things, a decision in that case may determine whether, and to what extent, the Government may incur liability for a "taking" under the Fifth Amendment when USBR does not provide water to its Klamath irrigation contractors in order to meet requirements under the Endangered Species Act. A trial was held in January 2017, and the parties are engaged in post-trial motions and briefing prior to the court rendering its decision.

USBR Missing Out on Millions Due to Uncollected Klamath Project's O&M Costs

While performing our audit of USBR's Klamath Basin Water User Mitigation Program, we found that USBR allocated 37.5 percent of the annual cost to operate and maintain (O&M) the Klamath Project's reserved works to flood

control, and ceased collecting these costs from project water contractors. USBR's allocation of costs to flood control purposes does not conform with USBR policy that purports to be based upon applicable statutes. We also found that even if the allocation of O&M costs to flood control purposes had been appropriate, USBR used an unsubstantiated basis for allocating the costs that appeared to assign too much of the O&M cost to flood control. As this matter was outside the objective and scope of our audit, we provided USBR with a management advisory report addressing the issue.

We estimated that USBR did not collect a total of \$5.6 million in O&M costs from 1975 to 2015 due to a former regional director's decision to allocate O&M costs to flood control purposes. We also estimated that if USBR does not begin collecting the entire amount of annual O&M costs from project water contractors, it will forgo approximately \$13.9 million in revenues over the next 30 years.

We made one recommendation to USBR to fully review the matter and take corrective action. USBR did not fully concur and we consider the recommendation unresolved and not implemented; therefore, we referred it to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for resolution.

USBR Could be Reimbursed Millions for A-Canal Head Gates and Fish Screens

While performing our audit of USBR's Klamath Basin Water User Mitigation Program, we found that USBR did not secure repayment of millions of dollars of costs incurred to design, construct, operate, and maintain new head gates and fish screens at the A-Canal diversion within the Klamath Project. Under the terms of a 1954 contract with USBR, the Klamath Irrigation District (KID) accepted responsibility for all O&M costs, including replacement costs, of Klamath Project transferred works. USBR was advised by the Office of the Solicitor that the cost of the new head gates and fish screens was an O&M cost because it was incurred to remedy conditions brought about by the operation of the Project. USBR supported efforts to have KID's repayment obligation eliminated through legislation rather than pursuing contract negotiations for repayment of the costs. As this matter was outside the objective and scope of our audit, we provided USBR with a management advisory report addressing the issue.

We did not attempt to identify USBR's total cost to design, construct, operate, and maintain the replacement A-Canal head gates and fish

screens, as such an effort would have been well beyond the objective and scope of our audit. From limited documentation that was available to us, however, it appears that the design and construction costs alone represent between \$16 million and \$20 million of costs that should be recovered from KID.

We made four recommendation to USBR to fully review the matter and take corrective action. USBR concurred with all four recommendations without fully agreeing with our finding that all costs to design, construct, operate, and maintain these facilities are costs that should be repaid by KID. We consider the recommendations resolved but not implemented and referred them to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for tracking of implementation.



Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, OR

The logo for the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) is centered on the page. It consists of a large, light gray oval. Inside the oval, on the left side, is a stylized gray silhouette of an offshore oil rig. To the right of the rig, the letters "BSEE" are written in a large, bold, light gray font. Below "BSEE", the words "Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement" are written in a smaller, light gray font. Overlaid on this logo is the text "Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement" in a large, bold, dark blue font.

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

Energy Company Fails to Document Safety Activities

We investigated allegations that an energy company conducted abandoned well operations at the South Timbalier offshore platform in the Gulf of Mexico, without prior approval from the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), and then falsified documentation related to those operations.

Our investigation determined that the company certified to BSEE that it successfully plugged and tested the well at the platform; however, the company subsequently determined the well had not been adequately sealed and performed remedial steps to regain well control without prior approval from BSEE. The company then failed to document its activities on safety reports or the well activity report. Furthermore, we found that during a routine platform inspection, the company failed to notify BSEE inspectors of the well control issues.

We provided our findings to BSEE and, during of our investigation, BSEE assessed the company \$965,000 in civil penalties for incidents of noncompliance related to the company's unauthorized well operations.

Wood Group Falsifies Safety Documentation

We investigated allegations that Wood Group Production Services Network, Inc. (WGPSN) systematically failed to comply with BSEE regulations related to offshore oil platform inspections. It was also alleged that WGPSN routinely falsified records associated with the company's platform inspection obligations.

We substantiated the allegations, and found that from 2011 to 2014, WGPSN employees falsified inspection reports and maintained documentation that falsely indicated platform facilities had been maintained according to safety and environmental regulations. The company admitted to submitting 87 false inspection reports to BSEE.

WGPSN pled guilty to submitting false statements to the Federal Government in violation of Title 18 U.S. Code § 1001. In accordance with a plea agreement, WGPSN was ordered to pay \$7 million in criminal fines, and a community service payment in the amount of \$500,000. The community service payment will help fund gulf coast projects by FWS, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

In recognition of certain measures taken by WGPSN to correct its compliance and ethics program, a 3-year administrative agreement was entered between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and WGPSN on February 23, 2017. For purposes of discretionary suspension and debarment, the DOI Suspending and Debarment Official signed the agreement, which requires the implementation of additional measures, periodic reporting, and verification by a third-party monitor.



Indian Affairs

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Indian Minerals Office Needs to Strengthen its Oversight of Navajo Allottee Oil and Gas Activities

We audited the Federal Indian Minerals Office (FIMO), a multi-bureau partnership within DOI created to oversee and assist Navajo oil and gas allottees. We found that FIMO did not fully follow the requirements of its 2005 memorandum of understanding (MOU) because (1) the MOU is outdated and does not contain sufficient operational detail and (2) there was insufficient oversight by the Executive Management Group. As a result, we identified a number of issues that hinder FIMO's management of oil and gas activities. These include poor communication about inspection and enforcement activities, unreconciled lease inventories, no coordination of outreach to allottees, a poor audit and compliance review process, and very little monitoring or oversight of FIMO.

FIMO emerged in the 1990s as a one-of-a-kind partnership to assist Navajo oil and gas lease allottees, following a 1985 lawsuit alleging that DOI had not fulfilled its duty to make timely royalty and lease rental payments. DOI brought together staff from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management, and Minerals Management Service (now the Office of Natural Resources Revenue) into a one-stop-shop to fulfill its Indian Trust responsibilities. Guided by successive MOUs, FIMO is responsible for three core functions—

- lease administration, which includes permitting, inspection, and enforcement;
- production accountability; and
- royalty compliance.

We made 14 recommendations to strengthen FIMO's oversight of Navajo allottee oil and gas activities.

Welfare Assistance Sent to Wrong Recipient Due to BIA Processing Errors

We investigated allegations from BIA's Cheyenne River Agency that two BIA General Assistance checks, for \$1,072 and \$536, were sent to the wrong recipient.

We did not find any evidence of theft. Because the wrong recipient had the same first name and last name as the intended recipient and the check was addressed only by first and last name (no middle name or initial), the wrong

recipient was able to cash the checks. Our investigation did not show that the wrong recipient obtained the checks through deceit; they were simply sent to him in error.

We also determined that BIA made processing errors, which caused the checks to be sent to the wrong recipient. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Dakota declined criminal prosecution of this matter.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

BIA Failed to Take Action on Misuse of Crow Transit Building Funds

We investigated allegations that the Crow Tribe misappropriated Federal Highway Administration grant funds. The BIA Division of Transportation administered the \$2,564,045 grant to the Crow Tribe for the construction of a transit facility on the reservation and an additional terminal in a separate location. The BIA Transportation Branch, Rocky Mountain Regional Office (RMRO), oversaw the project. A confidential informant alleged that the Crow Tribe used the money to offset general fund operations.

An independent review of a 2013 audit of the Tribe confirmed the misuse of funds, and we found that the BIA superintendent responsible for Crow Tribe activities was aware of the misappropriation and failed to take action. An RMRO official was responsible for the administration of the award to build the transit building and acknowledged that he did not provide appropriate oversight to the project.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

Ethics Violations Committed by Married BIA Employees

We investigated allegations that two married BIA Office of Trust Services employees solicited positions with a tribe while simultaneously assisting the tribe in obtaining Federal funds for its forestry program.

We found that the couple participated in the distribution of \$200,000 to the tribe while the husband sought the position of tribal forest manager and the wife considered an offer for a BIA superintendent position at the tribe. We found that the actions of the husband, who attempted to conceal his assistance to the tribe while his wife considered the position, violated Federal employment regulations. We also found that the couple's actions while the

husband was seeking employment with the tribe created the appearance of a conflict of interest. Neither the husband nor wife ultimately took positions with the tribe.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

Tribal Credit Card Used for Cash Advances and Personal Purchases

A former senior officer for the Northern Arapahoe Tribe alleged that a former administrative assistant used a tribal credit card to steal \$20,000 in cash advances and personal purchases, and that she used tribal funds to pay her mortgage. During our investigation, we also received an allegation that a former official of the Tribal Grants Program used tribal funds to pay his mortgage.

We confirmed that the former administrative assistant used the tribal credit card to take cash advances and make purchases for her personal use. We also confirmed that the former grants official used his position to award himself a grant, which he used to pay his mortgage. We could not substantiate the allegation that the administrative assistant used tribal funds to pay her mortgage.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

Alleged Misconduct by a BIA Employee and Alleged Misuse of a CDIB Card

We investigated allegations that a BIA superintendent might be receiving money or favors in exchange for his work with a tribe. According to the complaint, the superintendent continued working as a technical advisor for a tribe seeking Federal acknowledgment as a Native American Indian Tribe even after being ordered to stop. It was also alleged that one of the tribe's members requested social services by presenting a certificate degree of Indian blood (CDIB) card that potentially had been improperly produced.

We found that the superintendent began working with the tribe in 2002 and continued to help them even after he was moved to a different position. We found no evidence, however, that the superintendent received anything of value in exchange for helping the tribe after he changed jobs.

The superintendent assisted the tribe until late 2015, when he was directed by the BIA regional director to stop.

We also found that the tribe created two CDIB cards that were issued to two members, and that one of the members used his card to obtain medical services on three occasions. According to the tribe, the cards were issued under the direction of the superintendent. When we interviewed the superintendent, he said he told the tribe that while the tribe could issue cards internally, the cards could not be used to obtain services because the tribe was not federally recognized. The superintendent said he never saw the cards and he did not know the cards had been used to obtain services.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

Allegations of Stolen Bureau of Indian Education Grant Funds Not Substantiated

We investigated allegations that a former employee of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) stole grant funds awarded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) for a maintenance project.

We determined that grant funds totaling approximately \$129,000 were awarded to MBCI by BIE through BIA. We reviewed MBCI financial documents and determined that MBCI adequately accounted for the funds in question. We found no evidence to corroborate the allegation that the former employee stole grant funds or otherwise personally benefited from BIE grant monies.

We did discover that MBCI used surplus BIE grant funds from this project on other maintenance projects without notifying BIA.

We provided a report of our investigation to BIA.

Assistant Loan Manager Issued Excessive Number of Loans to Herself, Family, and Friends

We based this investigation on information that Monica Campbell, assistant loan manager for the Fort Peck Credit Program (FPCP) had been issued an excessive number of short term loans from the Fort Peck Tribes (FPT).

We showed that between December 18, 2014, and June 25, 2015, Campbell used her position to direct that 23 short-term loans be issued in her name and in the names of her relatives and a family friend. Seventeen of those loans were issued after FPCP established a policy that restricted the

maximum number of FPCP short-term loans any applicant could have at any time to three.

Campbell admitted she used her relatives and family friend as nominees to obtain the loans so that she could exceed the loan limit and that she received all the proceeds. Campbell pled guilty to one count of violating Title 18 U.S. Code § 1163, theft from an Indian tribal organization, and was sentenced to 2 years of probation and ordered to pay \$2,115 in restitution to the FPT.

The DOI Suspending and Debaring Official issued a default debarment determination to Campbell, debaring her from participation in Federal procurement and nonprocurement programs until 2019.

Former Director Stole funds from the Shoshone Oil and Gas Commission

We initiated this investigation based on allegations that John Enos, former Director, Shoshone Oil & Gas Commission (Commission), Ft. Washakie, WY, stole funds from the Commission.

Our investigation found that, while serving as the Commission's director, Enos stole from the Commission, and in April 2016, he pled guilty to a single count of violating Title 18 U.S. Code § 1163, theft from an Indian tribal organization, in U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming.

He was sentenced to 5 years of probation, and was ordered to pay restitution.

Individuals Embezzled Money From Cedarville Rancheria

In January 2014, we initiated this investigation after the Cedarville Rancheria, Northern Paiute Tribe, reported potential theft of Federal funds. The subjects allegedly used tribal credit cards for unallowable personal purchases between March and November 2013; these individuals were removed from their positions with the Tribe in December 2013.

Our investigation confirmed that tribal credit cards were used to make unallowable personal purchases of \$24,084.92 between March and November 2013. One subject paid off the purchases on the card with tribal funds and made no attempt to reimburse the Tribe. We also found that another subject used an assigned tribal credit card to make less than \$500 in unallowable

personal purchases, most of which occurred in 2011.

The Tribe was subsequently reimbursed for the loss amount by its insurance company after filing an employee dishonesty claim.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Eastern California declined criminal prosecution in this matter.

Daughter Sells Mother's Tribal Trust Lands and Steals Her Money

We received an allegation in March 2015 from a fiduciary trust officer from DOI's Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST), that Danelle Newman illegally obtained and sold her mother's tribal trust lands and negotiated a Cobell Settlement check belonging to her mother.

Our investigation found that Newman devised a scheme to defraud her mother of her tribal trust lands by adding herself to her mother's Individual Indian Money Account and obtaining a debit card in her mother's name. We also found that Newman forged her mother's signature on three deeds for land parcels belonging to her mother and sold the parcels to BIA. OST subsequently transferred \$22,372.62 to her mother's debit card for the fraudulent sale.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Dakota accepted the case for prosecution. Newman pled guilty to mail fraud, was sentenced to 50 months of probation, and was ordered to pay \$23,246.95 in restitution. In August 2016, all of Newman's mother's tribal trust lands were returned to her trust inventory.

We provided a report of our investigation to OST.



Insular Affairs

Insular Affairs

Guam Port Authority Aware of Issues With Cargo Handling Facilities and Equipment

We discontinued our evaluation of the Guam Port Authority's cargo handling facilities and equipment. Although our review identified a number of potential issues, we learned that the Port is aware of them and has begun implementing corrective action. Therefore, we believe that the Port should have an opportunity to finish implementing its changes before we complete a more thorough review.



National Park Service

Senior Yosemite National Park Official's Management Style May Have Contributed to Employees' Perception of Bias or Harassment

We investigated allegations forwarded by the National Park Service (NPS) that a senior official at Yosemite National Park had created a hostile work environment for employees by basing management decisions on bias or favoritism and by harassing or belittling certain employees. During our investigation, 12 unrelated allegations of discrimination, hostile work environment, and other misconduct involving Yosemite and NPS Pacific West Region employees were brought to our attention; we investigated those allegations as well.

While we found no evidence to support the allegation that the official based management decisions on bias or favoritism, we determined that his management style may have contributed to what some Yosemite employees perceived as inappropriate behavior. Forty-two of the 71 employees we interviewed about the allegations spoke highly of the official as a manager, but many of the remaining interviewees said that he sometimes communicated poorly; that he could be dismissive, abrupt, or overly critical; and that he would often publicly criticize and undermine employees after he lost confidence in them. Some felt the official's treatment of them was personal or motivated by factors such as gender bias, while others accepted his behavior and did not believe he was aware of it.

The official, who has retired from NPS, acknowledged that he tended to micromanage certain issues at Yosemite and that he was critical of his employees, but he said that he did not consider his behavior hostile or harassing. He said that his job was very demanding and that he had not intended to appear dismissive. He also said that no employees had ever brought their concerns to his attention.

Of the unrelated allegations we investigated, three resulted in adjudication by NPS or other Government entities and four resulted in a supervisor taking some action to correct the problem. We forwarded three allegations to the NPS ombudsman for review. In the two remaining cases, the subjects of the allegations no longer worked at the park.

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

Male Employees at Yellowstone National Park Created a Negative Work Environment for Female Coworkers

We initiated this investigation in September 2016 after NPS reported allegations brought forward by a Yellowstone National Park employee. This employee alleged that a pervasive culture of gender bias, sexual harassment, and financial misconduct existed in a work unit within Yellowstone's Maintenance Division. He alleged that this behavior was tolerated, and even fostered, by a "men's club" environment—one of insensitivity and arrogance toward other Yellowstone employees—that was pervasive in the division from 2011 to 2015. An additional allegation of hiring discrimination by a Maintenance Division supervisor was raised during the interviews, so we included this allegation in our investigation.

We found credible evidence that male supervisors and staff in the Maintenance Division unit created a work environment that included unwelcome and inappropriate comments and actions toward women. This negative work environment was allowed to continue because of the actions, or inaction, of supervisors. Specifically, the Maintenance Division supervisor should have known about and addressed some of the alleged misconduct.

Our investigation of the employee's allegations of financial misconduct confirmed that the Maintenance Division supervisor had allowed his employees to use his Government credit card to make purchases, in violation of DOI's Integrated Charge Card Policy. We also found that between 2011 and 2015, some Yellowstone employees made split purchases (breaking a large purchase into small, separate purchases in order to circumvent the procurement process). The employee's allegation that Yellowstone promoted another employee after she made more than \$10,000 in personal charges to her Government credit card was unfounded.

We also did not find evidence of hiring discrimination by the Maintenance Division supervisor. Although we confirmed that he had told a subordinate in 2016 that he would not be hiring women to fill open positions in the work unit, we found that he later offered positions to two women.

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

Investigation Reveals Absence of Oversight of Funds Donated by Cooperating Associations

During an ongoing investigation into an NPS employee's embezzlement of funds donated by a cooperating association, we determined that management at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site (MALU) did not have adequate oversight or controls in place to effectively oversee and manage association funds that were donated to NPS.

We learned that the MALU superintendent gave MALU's park cooperating association coordinator full responsibility for managing donated funds at the park and did not oversee how he managed and expended them. The absence of oversight allowed the coordinator to embezzle the donated funds without detection. We also found that NPS does not have a policy requiring a regional review or audit of the records of park cooperating association coordinators to ensure that donated funds are accounted for and expended properly.

To correct these issues and help prevent future fraud, we offered NPS' southeast regional director two recommendations: to develop and implement policies and procedures for the use, management, and oversight of donated cooperating association funds; and to train personnel on the new policies and procedures.



Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, GA

Inappropriate Behavior of a Management Official Found at DeSoto National Memorial

An investigation into allegations against a management official at NPS' De Soto National Memorial (DeSoto) in Bradenton, FL, revealed that the official behaved inappropriately toward a De Soto employee, violated NPS policies, and misused his position and created potential conflicts of interest.

We found that the management official touched the employee inappropriately, made inappropriate comments, and invaded the employee's personal space. The employee informed us that this contact and attention

were unwanted, and that the employee had asked the official many times to stop. The official acknowledged touching the employee and confirmed that the employee had asked him to stop, which he said he did.

It was also separately alleged that the official was actively violating NPS policies and retaliating against the employee in various ways for questioning his management decisions. Our investigation confirmed that the official participated in or directed multiple actions that violated policies covering alcohol consumption on park grounds, resident volunteer agreements, and use of black powder (gunpowder) during De Soto's historical reenactments. Although two other employees at De Soto told us that they felt the official had retaliated against the employee, we could not find conclusive evidence to support their assertions. The official denied knowingly violating policies or retaliating against the employee.

In addition, we found that the management official had misused his position and created a potential conflict of interest by vacationing for free at the personal homes of two resident volunteer couples with whom he was friends. He then directed subordinate staff to allow one of the couples to stay on park grounds without proper documentation, and he authorized the construction of a new parking pad (at a cost of about \$1,000) so that they could park their recreational vehicle while staying at De Soto.

While the official stated that he had not taken these actions specifically to benefit his friends or as repayment for letting him stay with them while on vacation, we found that his actions gave the appearance that he had failed to act impartially in his official position, failed to avoid the appearance of violating ethical standards, and directed subordinate employees to improperly provide benefits to his friends.

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

Alleged Off-Duty Misconduct by an Official at Denali National Park Unsubstantiated

We investigated an allegation that an NPS official employed at the Denali National Park (DNA) allegedly made inappropriate comments of a sexual nature to DNA staff during an off-duty gathering at the official's residence.

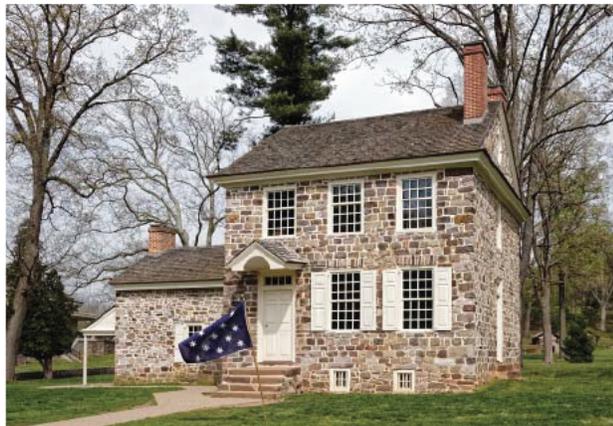
While our investigation did not substantiate that the official harassed or offended anyone, we did find that the official engaged in a conversation of a sexual nature with NPS employees. The conversation showed questionable

judgment by the official and did not support departmental policies that make supervisors responsible for “establishing and maintaining a safe, productive, supportive and well-ordered work environment for their employees.”

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

NPS Northeast Regional Director Violated Travel Regulations

We investigated allegations that Michael A. Caldwell, the Regional Director of NPS’ Northeast Region, had taken personal vacations under the guise of official Government travel and that he continued to live in NPS housing at Valley Forge National Historic Park (VAFO) after he was promoted from VAFO superintendent and reassigned to the NPS regional office in Philadelphia, PA.



Valley Forge National Historic Park

While Caldwell was authorized by NPS to continue living at VAFO, he admitted that between 2011 and 2015 he violated multiple Federal travel regulations on at least eight official trips. The total cost for these trips was \$17,481, and Caldwell’s admissions about the trips call into question whether they actually benefited the Government. We also found that Caldwell improperly accepted a gift, in the form of free vacation housing, from a subordinate.

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

City of Derby Made Improper Withdrawals of NPS Grant Funds

We investigated allegations that the City of Derby, CT, made two unauthorized withdrawals of NPS funds from its Save America’s Treasures grant to restore the Sterling Opera House in Derby. NPS informed us that the first withdrawal was for \$10,000 and occurred without any request for approval or supporting documentation. The second withdrawal was for

\$100,000 and allegedly occurred after Derby was explicitly told that its payment request had been disapproved.

We confirmed that Derby officials improperly withdrew NPS funds totaling \$110,000. A Derby official withdrew \$10,000 from the grant without obtaining the required approval. Seven months later, Derby made a \$150,000 withdrawal request, which NPS denied because the architectural design drawings did not comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. After being told that the request was disapproved, the same Derby official who withdrew the \$10,000 circumvented the approval process and withdrew \$100,000 without notifying NPS. We further discovered that Derby did not comply with several of the administrative grant conditions.

When interviewed, the official and the official's supervisor stated that they were unaware of the rules and proper procedures, and they could not provide an explanation for not complying with the grant provisions. Our investigation found, however, that NPS informed Derby through several communications and documents that it had to request approval before obtaining reimbursement from the grant.

In a settlement agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Connecticut, dated January 31, 2017, the City of Derby agreed to repay the \$110,000 in three installments by February 1, 2019.

We provided our report on this investigation to NPS.

Investigation Confirms that NPS Law Enforcement Supervisor Inappropriately Touched Employees

We investigated allegations that an NPS law enforcement supervisor at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CHAT) inappropriately touched two of his colleagues. We confirmed that on two occasions, the supervisor touched a CHAT division chief on her upper thigh, and that this contact was unwelcome. We also learned during our investigation that the supervisor touched another NPS employee in a way that made her uncomfortable. These incidents were reported to the CHAT superintendent, but he did not investigate them or report them to the Human Resources or Equal Employment Opportunity offices, as required by DOI policy.

We provided a report of our investigation to NPS for review and action.



Office of Natural Resources Revenue

Office of Natural Resources Revenue

ONRR Supervisor's Relationship With Subordinate Gave the Appearance of Favoritism

We investigated allegations concerning a relationship between an Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) supervisor and one of his subordinates. We found that while the relationship did not seem to violate standards of behavior for Federal employees, it did create the appearance among ONRR staff that the supervisor had given his employee an unfair advantage in a hiring action and intentionally assigned her fewer projects than her coworkers. Finally, both the supervisor and the employee falsely denied, to ONRR officials and initially to us, that they were in a relationship.

We opened our investigation after DOI's designated agency ethics official reported to us in 2016 that her office had received allegations that the supervisor was romantically involved with a subordinate. The allegations also stated that after the relationship began, the supervisor selected this employee for a promotion to a position under his supervision. Furthermore, the complaint alleged that the employee was unqualified for her new position and that once she was promoted, the supervisor showed favor to her by assigning her a smaller workload than her colleagues.

Our investigation found that the supervisor and the employee began dating in the fall of 2015. Shortly thereafter, the supervisor selected the employee for a promotion to a position that was one grade level higher than her previous position, and he became her direct supervisor. We determined the position was competitively advertised and found that the employee was qualified for the promotion.

We learned, however, that the supervisor, who was a selecting official for the position, did not disclose his personal relationship with the employee or recuse himself from the hiring board. This may have created the perception that the employee had received an unfair advantage during the hiring process. We also confirmed that the supervisor appeared to show the employee preferential treatment by assigning her significantly fewer cases than her colleagues.

In addition, we found that during a 2016 internal inquiry ONRR conducted into these same allegations, both the supervisor and the employee denied being in a relationship. Their lack of candor during the internal inquiry caused ONRR to determine that the allegations of favoritism were unfounded. They also initially failed to disclose their relationship to our office when we interviewed them, although they admitted to it during subsequent interviews.

We provided a report of our investigation to ONRR.

The seal of the Department of the Interior is a circular emblem. It features a central illustration of a bison standing in a landscape with mountains and a sunburst above. The text "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR" is written in a circular path around the top, and "MARCH 3, 1849" is written around the bottom. The seal is rendered in a light gray color.

**Office of the Secretary
and Multi-Office
Assignments**

Office of the Secretary and Multi-Office Assignments

Insufficient Documentation of Use of Extended Administrative Leave Found at DOI

We evaluated DOI's management of extended administrative leave to determine how many employees were on extended administrative leave, the factors that contributed to the length of time on leave, and whether DOI policies provided enough guidance for DOI and its bureaus to properly manage extended administrative leave. Between January 2013 and July 2016, DOI and its bureaus placed 242 employees on extended administrative leave (45 calendar days or more) at a cost of more than \$6 million in salaries.

During our evaluation, we found that many factors, including legal procedural steps to be completed before taking adverse action or time for completing investigations, contributed to the length of time an employee was on administrative leave. DOI, however, did not sufficiently document decisions related to using extended administrative leave, and as a result paid those salaries without sufficient evidence the leave was appropriate. More specifically, DOI did not document approvals to use extended administrative leave, consideration of alternatives to using administrative leave, or notifications to the employee that he or she was being placed on administrative leave.

In June 2016, DOI issued a new administrative leave policy, which addresses some of the documentation issues we identified in our evaluation. In addition, with the passage of the Administrative Leave Act of 2016, which places a number of restrictions on the use of administrative leave throughout the Government, DOI has an opportunity to further review its policies to improve its oversight of extended administrative leave and ensure compliance with the Act's requirements.

We made four recommendations that will help DOI effectively manage and oversee the use of extended administrative leave, reduce money lost to salaries paid out to employees unnecessarily on extended administrative leave, and implement the requirements of the Act.

IT Security Weaknesses at a Core Data Center Could Expose Sensitive Data

We evaluated the Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) program at a core data center and found it to be immature and not fully effective in protecting information technology (IT) systems from potential exploitation.

One bureau did not effectively oversee the contractor responsible for implementing the CDM program to ensure that vulnerabilities on a high-value IT asset were discovered and mitigated in a timely manner.

The bureaus' management practices left thousands of critical and high-risk vulnerabilities unmitigated for years. Bureau computers are running vulnerable, unsupported software because DOI has not established and enforced approved software lists. We also found that the data center's contingency planning practices contributed to hardware failures that temporarily affected the availability of other DOI systems.

These deficiencies occurred because the bureaus failed to install DOI's inventory management software on all computers, identify and remove unauthorized and unsupported products from its systems, mitigate vulnerabilities in a timely manner, monitor its contractors to ensure all IT security requirements were met, monitor computers to ensure they remained securely configured, and meet annual contingency planning and plan testing requirements. In our judgement, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) could have discovered the deficiencies we identified in BIA's IT security program had it implemented processes to verify and validate bureaus' compliance with Federal and departmental IT security requirements.

We made seven recommendations to the bureaus and one recommendation to OCIO to help ensure that DOI data centers and the systems they house are adequately secured.

DOI's CDM Program Cannot Provide Complete Information for Enterprise Risk Determinations

We assessed the effectiveness of DOI's CDM program for three high-value IT assets operated by three bureaus. We found that DOI's CDM program is immature and not fully effective in protecting high-value IT assets from exploitation. DOI's management practices failed to detect critical and high-risk vulnerabilities on one of its high-value IT assets and left thousands of critical and high-risk vulnerabilities unmitigated for years on three of its high-value assets.

We made six recommendations to protect DOI's high-value IT assets from loss or disruption by strengthening DOI's CDM practices. OCIO concurred with five of our recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation. The final report was revised to include a new DOI response.

Interior Business Center On Track To Meet DATA Act Requirements But DOI 6 Months Behind

We reviewed the status of DOI's efforts and those of the DOI Interior Business Center (IBC) to implement the Data Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) according to the eight steps in the "DATA Act Implementation Playbook" developed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

We found that, as of August 31, 2016, DOI was not on track to implement the DATA Act requirements by the Act's May 2017 deadline. We found that DOI is relying on a software upgrade that will not be completed on time due to vendor delays and is 6 months behind on the timeframes recommended in the playbook. Conversely, we found that IBC was on track to meet the deadline.

DOI Climate Science Programs Have Failed To Coordinate and Share Information

We evaluated DOI's climate science centers (CSCs) and landscape conservation cooperatives (LCCs) to determine whether they coordinated their programs and used available tools to prevent duplication of research efforts. We reviewed information sharing practices not only within DOI, but also throughout the greater scientific community using Climate.Data.gov, a Governmentwide data repository. We found that the CSCs and LCCs did not effectively share information, which could result in millions of Federal dollars wasted.

We reviewed policy and database use at two CSCs and their managing entity, the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center. We also looked at four LCCs and interviewed the LCC network coordinator. Our evaluation did not include a review of scientific research; rather, it focused on the processes that the CSCs and LCCs use to coordinate research.

We found that the CSCs and LCCs have not implemented sufficient internal controls or policies to coordinate research and have failed to use available technology to share scientific research. Communication and coordination between the two programs are informal and ad hoc and depend on the behavior of the CSC and LCC coordinators rather than on established policy. We also found poor project tracking at the LCCs. Further, the CSCs and LCCs in our sample fully neglected their responsibilities to share data with

Climate.Data.gov, as required by Executive Order Nos. 13653 and 13642. These failures could waste Federal funds and reduce the CSC and LCC contributions to the greater scientific community.

We provided three recommendations to help the CSCs and LCCs more effectively coordinate their research grant programs and share information with Federal, State, local, and private-sector colleagues.

The U.S. Geological Survey, which chiefly manages the CSCs, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which chiefly manages the LCCs, concurred or partly concurred with all of our recommendations, developed a plan to resolve all issues, and provided target dates for completion.

Deputy Director of the Office of Acquisition and Property Management Falsified Employment Records

We investigated allegations that senior executive service (SES) Deputy Director of the Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM), James McCaffery, falsified military and Federal employment records to improve his chances of gaining Federal employment.

During our investigation, McCaffery admitted that he falsified his military and Federal employment records, to include an unearned Purple Heart medal that he used to claim a 10-point veteran's hiring preference, and that he provided false statements to U.S. Office of Personnel Management investigators conducting his personnel background investigation. As a result, McCaffery could not obtain the favorable public trust determination required of the PAM deputy director position.

We determined that McCaffery's supervisor, PAM Director Debra Sonderman, SES, knew about McCaffery's dishonesty while he was still in a probationary SES status and took no action to resolve his inability to obtain a favorable public trust determination. She chose neither to remove nor to discipline him, nor to consult with her supervisor, despite a recommendation for removal from both the human resources and security offices.

McCaffery retired from Federal service on November 30, 2016. We provided a copy of our report to the Office of Policy, Management and Budget.



Purple Heart Medal

Alleged Retaliation by a Manager With Office of Civil Rights Unsubstantiated

We investigated an allegation that a manager with DOI's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) retaliated against an OCR employee by removing the employee from OCR and placing the employee on a detail outside DOI.

Our investigation did not reveal evidence of retaliation. According to the manager, he placed the employee on detail for disruptive behavior in the workplace, for undermining his authority, and for not supporting his management decisions. We did find that the manager placed the employee on detail in an effort to expedite the employee's departure from OCR instead of using the appropriate progressive discipline. In addition, he did not document the employee's misconduct, and had rated the employee as "superior" during the most recent end-of-year evaluation.

We issued a report of investigation to the Office of Policy, Management and Budget.

Construction Firm Misrepresented Itself as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business

We recently concluded an investigation into allegations that Kylee Construction, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) purportedly owned by a service-disabled veteran was actually controlled by Ricky Lanier, who was not a veteran. Based upon the assertion that it was owned by a service-disabled veteran, Kylee Construction had received a large number of Federal contracts, including \$10,313,788 in SDVOSB and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) 8(a) set-aside contracts with the National Park Service.

We found that Lanier formed two companies for the purpose of defrauding Federal set-aside programs. Lanier and his wife, Katrina, knowingly sent fraudulent documents to the Federal Government to gain an unfair advantage in receiving contracts from DOI and other Federal agencies. The Laniers managed and controlled both companies, and both had the same employees and assets. Neither firm performed any of the actual contracted work, which was instead done by subcontractors, often at a fraction of the cost represented to the Government by the Laniers.

The Laniers were convicted of wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and major fraud against the United States in U.S. District Court in December

2015. Ricky and Katrina Lanier were sentenced to serve Federal prison terms of 48 months and 30 months, respectively, in October 2016.

Inappropriate Behavior Admitted by the Director of the Office of Law Enforcement and Security

We investigated allegations made by an employee in DOI's Office of Law Enforcement and Security (OLES) that OLES Director Tim Lynn had hugged her, touched her, and made comments that caused her to feel uncomfortable. She also alleged that after she reported Lynn's unwanted behavior to his supervisor, Lynn embarrassed her in front of her coworkers and criticized her work to a colleague, actions she viewed as retaliation.

Lynn denied the employee's allegations. He said that touching people was in his nature and he had not intended to make her uncomfortable. While we confirmed that after Lynn's supervisor counseled him, he made a sarcastic remark to the employee during a meeting and expressed displeasure to a colleague about her performance, we found that he took no other significant actions against her.

During our investigation, we identified five other female employees who alleged that Lynn had acted unprofessionally toward them in various ways. When confronted, Lynn admitted to some of the actions but said he had not meant to make the women uncomfortable.

We provided this report to the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget.

Companies Conceal Unauthorized Oil Discharge

We investigated allegations that ATP Oil and Gas Corporation (ATP), Champion Technologies Inc. (Champion), and others improperly concealed oil sheens from a Gulf of Mexico offshore oil platform, and improperly used coffee filters to alter water samples prior to testing mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The purpose of the testing was to ensure that water discharged into the Gulf of Mexico during offshore operations met environmental standards.

We conducted a joint investigation with EPA's Criminal Investigation Division and found that between 2010 and 2012, employees of ATP purchased 4,025 gallons of a chemical product from Champion, and both companies knew the chemical would be used to conceal the unauthorized discharge of hydrocarbons into the Gulf of Mexico and prevent an oil sheen from being visible on the surface of the water.

ATP dissolved its business operations through bankruptcy proceedings. Champion pled guilty to misprision of a felony and was subsequently sentenced to a \$1 million fine, \$250,000 for community service, and a \$400 special assessment. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana declined to pursue additional prosecutions based on the matter.

Company Fails to Report Oil Production, Pay Royalties

We investigated allegations that General Production Service (GPS) failed to report oil production and pay the proper amount of mineral royalties associated with the sale of crude oil from a Federal lease located in Lost Hills, CA.

We conducted a joint investigation with Bureau of Land Management Special Investigations Group and found that from October 2010 through July 2016, the company failed to properly report oil production and pay mineral royalties owed to the Office of Natural Resources Revenue.

GPS agreed to pay \$300,000 to resolve the unpaid royalties and settle civil false claims allegations being considered by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado.

OIG Recommends Interim Agreement with PG&E

Section 745 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-235, and Federal Acquisition Regulation 9.104-5 provides that when an offeror affirms that it was convicted of a Federal felony within the preceding 24 months, the contracting officer shall not award to the corporation unless an agency suspension and debarment officer (SDO) has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

PG&E was convicted of obstructing a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation and violations of the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1958, specifically relating to record keeping and pipeline assessments. PG&E is the sole provider of utilities in parts of California. Although the U.S. Department of Transportation (DoT) OIG participated in the investigation, DOI was designated as the lead agency to review the matter on behalf of Federal agencies.

PG&E implemented corrective actions since the fatal September 9, 2010 explosion in San Bruno, CA, including the following completed and in-process actions:

- Settled all claims brought by those affected by the accident (more than \$500 million) and contributed \$70 million to the city;
- Specific to gas pipeline safety, brought in new leadership and hired gas-safety experts and appointed a new chief ethics and compliance officer;
- Is physically updating and improving its gas pipeline system, incorporating recommendations from investigatory agencies;
- Updating and digitizing its records, and building a new gas control center;
- Spent more than \$2.1 billion of shareholder funds on gas pipelines safety improvements;
- Developed new teams and processes to comply with regulatory regimes; and
- Completed 10 of the 12 NTSB recommendations; the two open recommendations are in an "open-acceptable status."

In recognition of corrective actions taken by the company, the OIG's Administrative Remedies Division (ARD) negotiated with PG&E and recommended that the DOI SDO enter into an interim administrative agreement. The December 21, 2016 interim agreement permits contracting officers to make awards, while adequately protecting the Government's interests. Specifically, under the agreement, ARD will conduct a review to determine whether PG&E has an effective compliance and ethics program. As such, ARD continues to work with the DoT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to assess PG&E's continuing corrective actions, compliance and ethics program, and the company's submissions regarding its gas pipeline safety program.



**Office of Surface Mining
Reclamation and
Enforcement**

The seal of the Department of the Interior, Office of Surface Mining is a circular emblem. It features a central scale of justice with an eagle perched atop the balance arm. Below the scale is a stylized landscape with a mountain range and a body of water. The text "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR" is inscribed along the top arc, and "OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING" is inscribed along the bottom arc.

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

Oversight of Annual Fund Transfer for Miner Benefits Needs Improvement

As part of its mission, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) distributes Federal funds intended for the welfare of retired mine workers and their dependents. Each year, OSMRE transfers millions of dollars drawn from two Government sources—the interest account of the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund and the U.S. Treasury’s General Fund—to the United Mine Workers of America Health and Retirement Funds (UMWAF). From 2011 through 2015, OSMRE transferred \$961.3 million in funds to UMWAF to provide benefits for retired miners and their families.

Our audit objectives were to determine whether OSMRE administered the transfer of funds to UMWAF consistent with the Federal Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act of 1992 (Coal Act), and to what extent OSMRE provided oversight to ensure that UMWAF managed the transferred funds in accordance with regulations and statutes.

We found that OSMRE provided minimal oversight of UMWAF’s federally supported health benefit plans, leaving the Federal Government without sufficient insight into how UMWAF has been using the transferred funds. As a result, OSMRE did not ensure that UMWAF managed the federally supported health benefit plans in accordance with regulations and statutes.

Federal regulations and statutes do not explicitly provide a mechanism for oversight by OSMRE. In addition, OSMRE personnel do not have experience with health benefit plans, leaving a large knowledge gap at all levels. Despite these limitations, OSMRE has continued to fund the annual transfer requests to UMWAF without obtaining and validating the necessary information and supporting documentation from UMWAF.

Without adequate Federal Government oversight and guidance, UMWAF made decisions on how to spend the funds transferred through OSMRE without considering the impact on the Government, which is responsible for most of the costs for providing these benefits. As a result, OSMRE certified the annual fund transfers without requiring UMWAF to provide appropriate supporting documentation. Specifically, we found that OSMRE—

- did not verify beneficiary enrollments and assignments;
- used unreconciled information to support the fund transfers;
- received inadequate documentation to support administrative expenses;

- did not require UMWAF to report delinquent operators to the IRS;
- did not require UMWAF to apply residual funds to shortfalls; and
- did not require UMWAF to remit interest earned on Federal funds.

OSMRE's inadequate oversight and statutory limitations have allowed too many decisions to reside with UMWAF, rather than with the Federal Government. We made 21 recommendations to assist OSMRE in improving its oversight to ensure that UMWAF administers federally funded benefits in accordance with regulations and statutes. In response to our draft report, OSMRE concurred with 10 recommendations, did not concur with 5 recommendations, and did not specify whether it concurred with 6 recommendations. We referred the recommendations to the Office of Policy, Management and Budget for resolution and implementation tracking.

OSMRE Not Using Its Authority to Oversee the Abandoned Mine Lands Program

We evaluated OSMRE to determine whether its oversight of certified States ensured that the use of AML funds met the intent and requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

We found that OSMRE has not used its authority over AML grants to ensure that certified States give coal reclamation projects priority over noncoal reclamation projects. This has allowed States to operate their reclamation programs without input from OSMRE regarding project selection. As a result, noncoal reclamation is completed while coal-related hazards persist. In addition, OSMRE was unable to provide a comprehensive accounting of the AML hazards facing certified States due to inaccuracies and incomplete information in its data management tools.

We made 11 recommendations to help OSMRE improve oversight and data management for AML grants given to certified States and to ensure that coal-related hazards are given reclamation priority. OSMRE concurred with all of our recommendations.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

No Endangered Species Act Violations Found in Masked Bobwhite Quail Program

We investigated potential violations of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) and possible reprisal associated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) recovery program for the endangered masked bobwhite quail at the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR) in Sasabe, AZ.

We initiated this investigation after learning that there had been an FWS PowerPoint presentation, developed by a BANWR employee, that contained photos of masked bobwhite quails that were injured and living in overcrowded conditions at BANWR. The photos of the quails depicted potential ESA violations.

In addition, we learned during our investigation that a supervisor at BANWR had approved the presentation and authorized the BANWR employee to show it to an advisory group to illustrate the quails' living conditions and the need to improve the facilities. Ten days after the presentation was shown, an FWS deputy regional supervisor lowered the BANWR supervisor's annual performance rating and reduced the amount of a monetary award she was to receive. The BANWR supervisor believed the deputy regional supervisor's actions were reprisal against her for allowing the presentation to be shown, so we included this issue in our investigation.

Although we confirmed that the quails had been living in overcrowded conditions at BANWR and that some had suffered injuries, we found no evidence of negligence by BANWR employees while caring for the quails. In addition, we learned before completing our investigation that FWS had improved the quails' living conditions.

We confirmed that soon after the BANWR employee gave the presentation, FWS regional officials visited BANWR to assess the quails and their facility; the BANWR supervisor's rating was lowered the day after they returned to the regional office. We further determined that FWS regional officials were concerned because the presentation had been shown to recovery team members



Masked Bobwhite Quail

who were not FWS employees, and they feared it might be released to the public. The officials we spoke to gave conflicting reasons for why the supervisor's rating was lowered; one said that her involvement in the presentation was a factor in the decision, while another said that the visit to the facility had revealed overall maintenance issues at BANWR.

We issued this report to FWS for review and action.

Appearance of Retaliation Found Against an FWS Region 4 Employee

We investigated whether an FWS Region 4 employee was the victim of retaliation, harassment, and a hostile work environment. The employee claimed that Region 4 managers retaliated after the employee alleged management impropriety, including prohibited personnel practices, nepotism, falsification of Government documents, intimidation, and failure to investigate allegations of wrongdoing.

We found that there was an appearance of retaliation against the employee after the employee alleged, in January 2013, that an FWS supervisor was not abiding by the terms of a settlement agreement. The employee had not received disciplinary action before the January 2013 complaint, but over the next 3 years, the employee was disciplined six times culminating in an August 2016 proposed removal from Federal service. The employee's first and second level supervisors admitted that they knew about the initial complaint; however, they claimed that the subsequent personnel actions were to address performance and disciplinary issues and that they had consulted with human resources.

We issued this report to the DOI Chief of Staff and to the U.S. Office of Special Council.

Assistant IA Director Acknowledged Improper Award of FWS Grant to Partner-Impact, LLC

We investigated a \$256,100 single-source cooperative agreement that FWS' International Affairs (IA) program awarded to a private company, Partner-Impact, LLC, to build a partnership strategy and marketing communication plan to reduce demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products. Assistant IA Director Bryan Arroyo acknowledged that he preselected Partner-Impact to receive the funds and influenced his staff to disregard procurement policy

and award a single-source cooperative agreement to the company. We also found that Partner-Impact did not complete most of the agreement's requirements because Arroyo directed the company to assist another anti-wildlife-trafficking initiative instead.

We provided a report of our investigation to FWS for review and action. DOI has said it will provide procurement training to managers and "relevant" procurement employees.

FWS Senior Official Overlooked Employees' Misconduct

After a 2016 investigation revealed multiple violations by former FWS employee Stephen M. Barton, we opened this investigation into potential mismanagement by Barton's former supervisor, Hannibal Bolton, FWS Senior Advisor for Diversity and Workforce Inclusion, while in his previous position as assistant director for FWS' Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFRP). We also investigated Bolton's oversight of two other former WSFRP employees who had reported to him.

We found that Bolton did not investigate or correct Barton's misconduct when he learned about it. Barton was therefore able to claim hundreds of hours of compensatory time without approval and to violate DOI's telework rules. Bolton also did not review Barton's travel or the travel of the two former WSFRP employees. His failure to do so allowed his employees to violate the Federal Travel Regulation by taking multiple personal trips to and from their home States at Government expense.

Stephen Barton pled guilty on October 26, 2016, to one count of Title 18 U.S. Code § 1001. He was sentenced on February 9, 2017, to 3 years of probation and a fine of \$10,000. FWS reassigned Hannibal Bolton from his management position in WSFR and revamped reporting requirements regarding outside employment. Bolton has since retired from FWS.

Alleged Illegal Construction of Cabin at Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge Unsubstantiated

We investigated an alleged illegal cabin construction project at the FWS Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. The complaint specifically alleged that a refuge official illegally authorized the construction of a cabin on Stuver Lake, under the guise of supporting a scientific lynx study, but that it was actually

intended for private guests to use as a base for moose hunting on the refuge. In addition to the allegations, the complaint questioned the refuge official's authority to authorize the project; FWS' compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies; the creation of a trail and felling of trees at the refuge; and the allegedly excessive project cost of \$50,000.



Dedman Lake, Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, AK

Our investigation found that the refuge official acted within his authority, with regional approval, and with the intent to facilitate scientific research and availability of emergency shelter.

We confirmed that the cabin had been used by refuge staff to conduct lynx research, but did find one instance when the cabin was used by a local resident who reserved the cabin for moose hunting.

The route created for access to the cabin in the winter was temporary and minimally disruptive to vegetation, and there was no evidence that any trees were cut down. The 12-by-16-foot cabin was constructed using approximately \$5,200 in materials, not \$50,000. We found that the refuge official failed to complete assessments necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act prior to initiating the construction project.

We provided a report of our investigation to FWS.

Alleged Collusion on Coastal Impact Assistance Program Grant Unsubstantiated

We completed an investigation into allegations of contract improprieties related to Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant funds awarded by FWS. The complainant alleged that a grantee facilitated bid rigging and violated acquisition regulations by allowing a contractor to change the contract's scope from the purchase of supplies to a research project.

Our investigation found that the contract in question was never awarded. The grantee determined that the contractor's initial proposal would exceed the available funding and that subsequent proposals, which were revised to lower the requested amount, would not be viable in an arctic environment.

We provided a report of our investigation to FWS.

FWS Employee Guilty of Theft of Funds From Recreation Fee Program

We initiated this investigation after receiving information that an FWS Region 3 refuge employee allegedly stole funds collected from the FWS Recreation Fee Program, which included the sale of Federal duck stamps and America the Beautiful passes to national parks and recreation lands. A new FWS supervisor, who had been reconciling program funds for 2015, discovered a shortage in the funds that the refuge employee had been managing.



U.S. duck stamp, circa 1991

We found evidence that between 1997 and February 2016, the refuge employee stole approximately \$12,400 in cash from the sale of duck stamps. We were unable to quantify the amount of money that she stole from the America the Beautiful passes due to an absence of documentation and oversight in Region 3.

The refuge employee admitted that since 1998 she had stolen approximately \$150 in cash every 2 weeks from the sale of the stamps and passes, and had used the money to pay for medication and gas. We found that the absence of any oversight by FWS managers not only made the theft possible, but also allowed it to continue for nearly 20 years. We determined, however, that program oversight had improved since the new FWS supervisor took over the program and identified the shortage in funds.

The refuge employee resigned from FWS in July 2016, and pled guilty to theft by swindle in district court. She was sentenced to 3 years of probation and 450 hours of community service, and she was fined \$128.

We provided a report of our investigation to FWS.



U.S. Geological Survey

USGS Needs To Improve the Strategic Planning, Performance Measurement, and Transparency for its National Water Census Program

We reviewed the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Water Census program. Specifically, we reviewed the program's strategic planning and goals, performance measurement, and funding for fiscal years 2011–2016. We determined that although improvements have been made in recent years, USGS has not included all of the required elements in its strategic science plan for the USGS Water Mission Area, sufficiently measured the program's performance, or transparently reported its use of allocated funds for the program.

USGS is in the process of updating its Water Mission Area strategic plan and improving its performance measurement and reporting. We offered three recommendations to help USGS further improve its strategic management efforts for the National Water Census.

USGS Employee Violates Ethics Rules

We investigated allegations that a USGS Research Ecologist violated ethics and employment rules by working in paid positions at two universities located in China without USGS's permission. The complainant alleged the positions in China required the research ecologist to use USGS-developed research technology and that the research ecologist's work was completed as part of China's Thousand Talents Plan.

Our investigation revealed the research ecologist traveled to China to collaborate and mentor students at Chinese educational institutions without USGS's permission. We could not show that any of them paid the research ecologist as an employee; however, the research ecologist acknowledged some of those institutions paid his travel expenses, which violated ethics rules.

We determined the research ecologist's current supervisor knew he held an honorary position at a Chinese university. His supervisor did not know the institution covered the research ecologist's travel expenses. We determined that the research ecologist completed annual ethics training and that he was informed during that training that off-duty mentoring positions needed USGS approval.

We could not substantiate the allegation that the research ecologist used USGS-developed technology in China. He denied using any proprietary USGS research technology while mentoring in China and added the information he shared was available to the public. The research ecologist told us that he was formally recruited for China's One Thousand Talents program, but he said he never actually participated in the program.

We provided a report of our investigation to USGS.



Appendices

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations Activities

Reports Issued	34
Audits (including Financial Audits), Inspections, and Evaluations	17
Contract and Grant Audits.....	8
Other Report Types ¹	9
 Total Monetary Impacts	\$69,709,900
Questioned Costs (includes unsupported costs)	\$46,109,720
Recommendations That Funds Be Put to Better Use.....	\$23,600,180
 Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations Recommendations Made.....	192
Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations Recommendations Closed	174

Investigative Activities

Cases Closed	242
Cases Opened	231
Complaints Received From All Sources.....	236

Criminal Prosecution Activities

Indictments/Informations	11
Convictions.....	13
Sentencings.....	12
Jail	84 months
Probation	396 months
Community Service	450 hours
Criminal Penalties.....	\$11,807,171.86
Asset Forfeiture.....	\$0
Criminal Matters Referred for Prosecution	38
Criminal Matters Declined This Period	36

¹ Other report types include management advisories, special projects, and other types of reports that are not classified as audits, inspections, or evaluations.

Civil Investigative Activities

Civil Referrals.....	8
Civil Declinations.....	1
Civil Settlements.....	\$410,000
Civil Recoveries.....	\$0

Administrative Investigative Activities

Personnel Suspensions.....	4
Reprimands/Counseling.....	6
Resignations.....	1
Removals.....	1
Retirements/Transfers.....	3
General Policy Actions.....	6
Contractor/Participant Suspensions.....	0
Contractor/Participant Debarments.....	11
Interim Agreement to Address Statutory Exclusions.....	1

REPORTS ISSUED

This listing includes all reports issued by the Office of Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations during the 6-month reporting period that ended March 31, 2017. It provides the report number, title, issue date, and monetary amounts identified in each report.

* *Funds To Be Put to Better Use*

** *Questioned Costs*

*** *Unsupported Costs*

Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Bureau of Land Management

2016-WR-027

Management Advisory: The Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program is not Maximizing Efficiencies or Complying With Federal Regulations (10/17/16) *\$3,700,000

Bureau of Reclamation

2015-WR-080

Audit of the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Basin Water User Mitigation Program (10/11/2016)

Multi-Office Assignments

2015-EAU-079

Bureau of Indian Affairs' Federal Indian Minerals Office (02/03/2017)

2015-ER-034

Climate Effects Program Coordination (03/17/2017)

2016-ER-070

Insufficient Documentation of Use of Extended Administrative Leave at the U.S. Department of the Interior (03/30/2017)

2016-FIN-025

Independent Auditors' Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Financial Statements for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2015 (11/15/2016)

2016-FIN-025-A

Independent Auditors' Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Closing Package Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2016 (11/15/2016)

2016-ITA-021

Information Technology Security Weaknesses at a Core Data Center Could Expose Sensitive Data (02/15/2017)

2016-ITA-062

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (03/10/2017)

ISD-IN-MOA-0004-2014-I

U.S. Department of the Interior's Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation Program Not Yet Capable of Providing Complete Information for Enterprise Risk Determinations (10/19/2016)

Office of the Secretary**2016-FIN-069**

DATA Act Readiness Review for the U.S. Department of the Interior (11/30/2016)

2016-FIN-069-A

DATA Act Readiness Review of Interior Business Center for the U.S. Department of the Interior (12/15/2016)

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians**2016-FIN-024**

Independent Auditors' Reports on the Tribal and Other Trust Funds and Individual Indian Monies Trust Funds Statements for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2015 (11/10/2016)

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement**2016-EAU-007**

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Oversight of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program (03/30/2017)

C-IN-OSM-0044-2014-A

Oversight of Annual Fund Transfer for Miner Benefits Needs Improvement (03/29/2017) *\$19,900,000 **\$38,878,548

U.S. Geological Survey**2016-WR-071**

The U.S. Geological Survey Needs To Improve the Strategic Planning, Performance Measurement, and Transparency for its National Water Census Program (02/15/2017)

Contract and Grant Audits

Bureau of Indian Affairs

2015-ER-069-A

Audit of Contract Nos. A13AV00621 and A12AV00769/A15AV00265
Between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
(12/16/2016) **\$2,668 ***\$382,459

Bureau of Land Management

2016-CG-006

Audit of Bureau of Land Management Cooperative Agreement
No. L10AC20002 With The Piney Woods School (02/14/2017)
***\$524,478

Bureau of Reclamation

2015-ER-069

Audit of Cooperative Agreement No. R95AV60020 Between the Bureau
of Reclamation and the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe (12/05/2016)
\$38,661 *\$1,402,087

National Park Service

2015-ER-061

Audit of Task Agreement Nos. P13AC00279, P13AC01094, and
P14AC00445 Between the National Park Service and the Student
Conservation Association Under Cooperative Agreement No.
P09AC00402 (02/03/2017) *\$180 ***\$740,681

2016-CG-008

Compliance Audit of National Park Service Contract No. P15PC00170
With Strategic Consulting Alliances, LLC (10/04/2016)
\$56,554 *\$202,939

2016-CG-033

Compliance Audit of National Park Service Contract P15PC00612 with
Kane Communications, LLC (03/31/2017)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

2016-EXT-005

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
Program Grants Awarded to the Government of the Virgin Islands,
Department of Planning and Natural Resources, From October 1, 2012,
Through September 30, 2014 (02/21/2017) ***\$3,880,195

2016-EXT-043

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Delaware, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Division of Fish and Wildlife, From July 1, 2013 Through June 30, 2015 (02/15/2017)

Other Assignment Types***Bureau of Indian Affairs*****2016-ITA-021-A**

Information Security Technical Vulnerability Assessment – Bureau of Indian Affairs (10/06/2016)

2016-ITA-021-B

Information Security Technical Vulnerability Assessment – Bureau of Indian Education (10/17/2016)

Bureau of Land Management**2017-CR-007**

Verification Review – Recommendations for the Report, “Bureau of Land Management’s Wildland Fire Program” (Audit No. C-EV-BLM-003-2012) (02/14/2017)

Bureau of Reclamation**2017-WR-011**

Verification Review – Recommendations for the Report, “Bureau of Reclamation’s Sustainable Water Management Programs and Activities” (WR-EV-BOR-0026-2013) (01/05/2017)

Multi-Office Assignments**2016-ER-049**

Inspector General’s Statement Summarizing the Major Management and Performance Challenges Facing the U.S. Department of the Interior (11/04/2016)

2017-FIN-016

Progress Made by the U.S. Department of the Interior in Implementing Government Charge Card Recommendations (01/31/2017)

National Park Service**2016-CG-008-A**

Management Advisory – Issues Identified During Our Compliance Audit of Strategic Consulting Alliances, LLC on Contract No. P15PC00170 With the National Park Service (10/04/2016)

2016-CG-033-A

Management Advisory – Issues Identified During Our Compliance Audit of Kane Communications, LLC, on Contract No. P15PC00612 with National Park Service (03/31/2017)

Office of Insular Affairs

2016-CR-035

Closeout Notice – Evaluation of Guam Port Authority Cargo Handling Facilities and Equipment (01/12/2017)

Office of the Secretary

2017-ER-010

Verification Review – Recommendations for the Report, “Wildland Urban Interface: Community Assistance” (ER-EV-MOA-0012-2009) (01/26/2017)

MONETARY RESOLUTION ACTIVITIES

Table 1: Inspector General Reports With Questioned Costs*

	Number of Reports	Questioned Costs*	Unsupported Costs
A. For which no management decision has been made by the commencement of the reporting period.	6	\$4,888,066	\$2,579,292
B. Which were issued during the reporting period.	7	\$46,109,270	\$7,132,839
Total (A+B)	13	\$50,997,336	\$9,712,131
C. For which a management decision was made during the reporting period.*	9	\$46,679,051	\$7,724,646
(i) Dollar value of costs disallowed.		\$42,894,238	\$5,618,815
(ii) Dollar value of costs allowed.		\$3,784,813	\$2,105,831
D. For which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period.*	4	\$4,318,285	\$1,987,485

* Does not include non-Federal funds. Unsupported costs are included in questioned costs.

Table 2: Inspector General Reports With Recommendations That Funds Be Put to Better Use*

	Number of Reports	Dollar Value
A. For which no management decision has been made by the commencement of the reporting period.	0	\$0
B. Which were issued during the reporting period.	3	\$23,600,180
Total (A+B)	3	\$23,600,180
C. For which a management decision was made during the reporting period.	2	\$3,700,180
(i) Dollar value of recommendations that were agreed to by management.		\$3,700,180
(ii) Dollar value of recommendations that were not agreed to by management.		\$0
D. For which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period.	1	\$19,900,000

* Does not include non-Federal funds.

REPORTS PENDING DECISION

This listing includes a summary of audit, inspection, and evaluation reports that were more than 6 months old on March 31, 2017 and still pending a management decision. It provides report number, title, issue date, and number of unresolved recommendations.

Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

C-EV-BIE-0023-2014

Condition of Indian School Facilities (09/30/2016)
21 Unresolved Recommendations

Bureau of Indian Affairs

CR-EV-BIA-0002-2013

BIA Needs Sweeping Changes to Manage the Osage Nation's Energy Resources (10/20/2014) 1 Unresolved Recommendation

Office of the Secretary

2015-ITA-032

U.S. Department of the Interior's Management of its Smartphones, Tablets, and Other Mobile Devices (06/22/2016)
1 Unresolved Recommendation

2015-ER-011

U.S. Department of the Interior's Internal Controls for Purchase Cards and Fleet Cards (09/30/2016) 1 Unresolved Recommendation

Contract and Grant Audits

Bureau of Reclamation

2015-ER-047

Request for Equitable Adjustment by Dix Corporation on Contract No. R11PC10035 With the Bureau of Reclamation (06/13/2016) 1 Unresolved Recommendation

Other Assignment Types

Bureau of Reclamation

2015-WR-080-B

Management Advisory – Operations and Maintenance Cost Allocation for the Klamath Project Reserved Works (09/27/2016)
1 Unresolved Recommendation

REPORTS WITH UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS

This listing provides a summary of reports issued by the Office of Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations prior to October 1, 2016, that still had open (unimplemented) recommendations as of March 31, 2017. Unimplemented recommendations are divided into resolved, management disagreed, and awaiting management decision categories. Recommendations with which management has disagreed have been referred to DOI for resolution. Recommendations are classified as awaiting management decision if either management did not respond or management's response was not sufficiently detailed to consider the recommendation resolved.

Open: 422 Resolved: 396 Disagreed: 4 Awaiting Decision: 22

Questioned Costs: \$32,126,403

Funds That Could Have Been Better Used: \$1,885,262

**Recommendations are "on pause" due to pending legislation and/or suspended rulemaking*

Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Bureau of Indian Affairs

2015-WR-012

Bureau of Indian Affairs Funded and/or Operated Detention Programs (02/11/2016) Resolved: 4

C-EV-BIE-0023-2014

Condition of Indian School Facilities (09/30/2016)
Awaiting Decision: 21

C-IS-BIE-0023-2014-A

Condition of Bureau of Indian Affairs Facilities at the Pine Hill Boarding School (01/11/2016) Resolved: 7

***CR-EV-BIA-0002-2013**

BIA Needs Sweeping Changes to Manage the Osage Nation's Energy Resources (10/20/2014) Resolved: 18 Disagreed: 1
Better Use: \$97,000

CR-EV-BIA-0011-2014

Bureau of Indian Affairs' Southern Ute Agency's Management of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's Energy Resources (02/09/2016)
Resolved: 5

NM-EV-BIE-0003-2008

School Violence Prevention (02/03/2010) Resolved: 1

WR-EV-BIA-0001-2012

Management of Social Services in BIA: Opportunity for Action (03/18/2013) Resolved: 1

Bureau of Land Management**2015-EAU-037**

The Bureau of Land Management's Determination Processes for Wind Energy Projects Proposed on Public Lands (12/23/2015) Resolved: 5

2015-EAU-057

Bureau of Land Management's Management of Private Acquired Leases (12/11/2015) Resolved: 5

2015-ITA-072

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 6

***C-IN-BLM-0002-2012**

Bureau of Land Management's Mineral Materials Program (03/31/2014) Resolved: 2

***C-IN-MOA-0013-2010**

Management of Rights-of-Way in the U.S. Department of the Interior (09/27/2012) Resolved: 4

***CR-EV-BLM-0004-2012**

Bureau of Land Management's Geothermal Resources Management (03/07/2013) Resolved: 4

***CR-IS-BLM-0004-2014**

Inspection Report – BLM Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Trespass and Drilling Without Approval (09/29/2014) Resolved: 2

Bureau of Reclamation**2015-ITA-017**

Cloud Computing Security Documentation in the Cyber Security Assessment Management Solution (11/12/2015) Resolved: 2

2015-ITA-072

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 3

ISD-IS-BOR-0003-2013

IT Security of the Grand Coulee Dam Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System (04/10/2014) Resolved: 2

ISD-IS-BOR-0004-2013

IT Security of the Glen Canyon Dam Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System (03/26/2014) Resolved: 2

WR-EV-BOR-0006-2014

Garrison Diversion Unit's Interim Cost Allocation (09/30/2015) Resolved: 1

***WR-EV-MOA-0015-2011**

Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Safety of Dams: Emergency Preparedness (12/27/2012) Resolved: 1

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management***CR-EV-BOEM-0001-2013**

U.S. Department of the Interior's Offshore Renewable Energy Program (09/25/2013) Resolved: 1

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement**2015-ITA-072**

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 1

CR-EV-BSEE-0006-2013

Offshore Oil and Gas Permitting, U.S. Department of the Interior (09/30/2014) Resolved: 2

CR-EV-BSEE-0014-2014

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Incident Investigation Program (08/18/2015) Resolved: 1

CR-IS-MOA-0004-2009

BLM and MMS Beneficial Use Deductions (03/08/2010) Resolved: 1

National Park Service**2015-ER-056**

Internal Control Review of Student Conservation Association, Inc.
(05/31/2016) Resolved: 1

2015-ITA-072

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the
U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security
Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 2

2015-WR-019

Operation and Management of the Brinkerhoff Lodge at Grand Teton
National Park (09/30/2015) Resolved: 1

WR-IS-NPS-0009-2013

NPS Contractor Oversight of Visitor Tent Cabins at Yosemite National
Park Involved in Hantavirus Outbreak (05/15/2013) Resolved: 2

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement***WR-EV-MOA-0015-2011**

Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Office of
Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Safety of Dams:
Emergency Preparedness (12/27/2012) Resolved: 3

Office of the Secretary**2015-CR-001**

Inspection of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Occupational Safety
and Health and Workers' Compensation Programs (02/09/2016)
Resolved: 5

2015-CR-031

Guam School Bus Transportation Program (08/09/2016) Resolved: 1

2015-ER-011

U.S. Department of the Interior's Internal Controls for Purchase Cards
and Fleet Cards (09/30/2016) Resolved: 1 Disagreed: 1

2015-FIN-046

Independent Auditors' Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior
Financial Statements for Fiscal Years 2015 and 2014 (11/13/2015)
Resolved: 2

2015-ITA-017

Cloud Computing Security Documentation in the Cyber Security Assessment Management Solution (11/12/2015) Resolved: 3

2015-ITA-032

U.S. Department of the Interior's Management of its Smartphones, Tablets, and Other Mobile Devices (06/22/2016)
Resolved: 3 Disagreed: 1 Better Use: \$1,763,423

2015-ITA-072

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 13

C-EV-MOA-0009-2011

Controls over Check Writing (10/31/2012) Resolved: 1

C-IN-MOA-0010-2008

Audit Report – Department of the Interior Museum Collections: Accountability and Preservation (12/16/2009) Resolved: 3

C-IN-MOA-0013-2010

Management of Rights-of-Way in the U.S. Department of the Interior (09/27/2012) Resolved: 1

C-IN-MOA-0049-2004

Department of the Interior Concessions Management (06/13/2005)
Resolved: 1

CR-IN-ONRR-0007-2014

Financial Management Division, Office of Natural Resources Revenue (06/03/2016) Resolved: 10

ER-EV-PMB-0005-2014

Evaluation of Security Features of the Main Interior Building (12/29/2014) Resolved: 2

ISD-EV-MOA-0001-2012

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (11/13/2012) Resolved: 1

ISD-EV-OCIO-0002-2014

DOI's Adoption of Cloud-Computing Technologies (05/21/2015)
Resolved: 2

ISD-IN-MOA-0001-2013

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (02/26/2014) Resolved: 5

ISD-IN-MOA-0004-2014

Security of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Publicly Accessible Information Technology Systems (07/15/2015) Resolved: 6

W-IN-MOA-0086-2004

Proper Use of Cooperative Agreements Could Improve Interior's Initiatives for Collaborative Partnerships (01/31/2007) Resolved: 1

WR-EV-OSS-0005-2009

Aviation Maintenance Tracking and Pilot Inspector Practices – Further Advances Needed (04/14/2009) Resolved: 1

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service***2015-FIN-021**

Performance Audit of Expenditures and Obligations Used by the Secretary of the Interior in Administering the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000, Public Law 106-408 for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014 (08/27/2015) Resolved: 1

2015-ITA-072

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 7

CR-EV-FWS-0002-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management of Oil and Gas Activities on Refuges (03/01/2015) Resolved: 3

CR-EV-MOA-0006-2012

U.S. Department of the Interior's Underground Injection Control Activities (03/31/2014) Resolved: 1

U.S. Geological Survey**2015-ITA-072**

Independent Auditors' Performance Audit Report on the U.S. Department of the Interior Federal Information Security Management Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (02/24/2016) Resolved: 3

CR-EV-GSV-0003-2014

Energy Resources Program, U.S. Geological Survey (05/13/2015)
Resolved: 3

CR-IS-GSV-0008-2014

Information Sharing between U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of
Ocean Energy Management (10/23/2014) Resolved: 1

Contract and Grant Audits***Bureau of Land Management*****2015-WR-062**

Bureau of Land Management Cooperative Agreement No. L12AC20673
With Utah Correctional Industries (11/27/2015) Resolved: 2
Questioned Costs: \$1,931,699

WR-CA-BLM-0013-2013

Cooperative Agreement No. JSA071001/L08AC13913 between the
Utah Correctional Industries and the Bureau of Land Management
(09/27/2013) Resolved: 2 Questioned Costs: \$2,004,553

National Park Service**2015-WR-084**

National Park Service Task Agreement Nos. P13AC00875 and
P13AC00891 With the University of Rhode Island (09/16/2016)
Resolved: 2 Questioned Costs: \$146,329

X-CX-NPS-0001-2014

Final Costs Claimed by NY Asphalt, Inc., Under Contract Nos.
INPSANDY12003, INP13PX28237, and INP13PX22222 With the
National Park Service (10/21/2014) Resolved: 2
Questioned Costs: \$988,203

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement**2015-ER-025**

Audit of the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program, State of
Indiana (09/30/2016) Resolved: 6 Questioned Costs: \$723,362

Bureau of Reclamation**2015-ER-047**

Request for Equitable Adjustment by Dix Corporation on Contract No. R11PC10035 With the Bureau of Reclamation (06/13/2016)
Awaiting Decision: 1 Questioned Costs: \$2,232,917

C-CX-BOR-0010-2013

Bureau of Reclamation Funding Agreements with Chippewa Cree Construction Corporation: R10AV60025 and 06NA602127 (12/16/2013) Resolved: 2 Questioned Costs: \$12,914,545

ER-CX-BOR-0010-2014

Crow Tribe Accounting System and Interim Costs Claimed Under Agreement Nos. R11AV60120 and R12AV60002 With the Bureau of Reclamation (06/24/2015) Resolved: 12 Questioned Costs: \$476,399

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**2015-EXT-005**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Fish and Game, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, From July 1, 2012, Through June 30, 2014 (01/07/2016) Resolved: 3

2015-EXT-006

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Fish and Game, Division of Marine Fisheries, From July 1, 2012, Through June 30, 2014 (02/04/2016) Resolved: 3 Questioned Costs: \$121,168

2015-EXT-009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Utah, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife Resources, From July 1, 2012, Through June 30, 2014 (09/19/2016) Resolved: 13
Questioned Costs: \$208,752

2015-EXT-041

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries From July 1, 2012, Through June 30, 2014 (09/07/2016) Resolved: 4 Questioned Costs: \$596,811
Better Use: \$14,506

2015-EXT-043

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, From October 1, 2012, Through September 30, 2014 (09/07/2016) Resolved: 2

2015-EXT-044

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Department of Lands and Natural Resources, From October 1, 2012, Through September 30, 2014 (08/10/2016) Resolved: 4 Questioned Costs: \$42,580

R-GR-FWS-0002-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (12/19/2014) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0003-2012

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, From July 1, 2009, Through June 30, 2011 (06/22/2012) Resolved: 7 Questioned Costs: \$6,028

R-GR-FWS-0003-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of South Dakota, Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (06/04/2013) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0004-2009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2005, Through June 30, 2007 (09/21/2009) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0005-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Oregon, Department of Fish and Wildlife, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (07/26/2013) Resolved: 10 Questioned Costs: \$58,976

R-GR-FWS-0006-2007

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Program Grants Awarded to the Virgin Islands, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, From October 1, 2003, Through September 30, 2005 (10/18/2007) Resolved: 6
Questioned Costs: \$60,000

R-GR-FWS-0006-2008

Audit on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Idaho, Department of Fish and Game, From July 1, 2005, Through June 30, 2007 (01/26/2009) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0006-2009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the American Samoa Government, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, From October 1, 2006, Through September 30, 2008 (12/07/2009) Resolved: 7
Questioned Costs: \$16,625

R-GR-FWS-0006-2011

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Government of the Virgin Islands, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, From October 1, 2008, Through September 30, 2010 (11/03/2011)
Resolved: 6 Questioned Costs: \$40,209

R-GR-FWS-0006-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the District of Columbia, Department of the Environment, From October 1, 2009, Through September 30, 2011 (07/30/2013) Resolved: 3

R-GR-FWS-0006-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (09/15/2014) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0007-2011

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2008, Through June 30, 2010 (11/30/2011) Resolved: 18

R-GR-FWS-0007-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (11/26/2014) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0008-2009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Game Commission, From July 1, 2006, Through June 30, 2008 (11/12/2009) Resolved: 4

R-GR-FWS-0008-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Kansas, Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (03/27/2015) Resolved: 8 Questioned Costs: \$328,860

R-GR-FWS-0009-2004

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Grants Administered by the State of New Hampshire, Fish and Game Department, From July 1, 2001, through June 30, 2003 (03/31/2005) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0010-2007

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Program Grants Awarded to the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, From July 1, 2004, Through June 30, 2006 (12/05/2007) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0010-2008

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Oregon, Department of Fish and Wildlife, From July 1, 2005, Through June 30, 2007 (02/26/2009) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0010-2009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the District of Columbia, Department of the Environment, From October 1, 2006, Through September 30, 2008 (02/26/2010) Resolved: 3
Questioned Costs: \$100,358

R-GR-FWS-0010-2012

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Nebraska, Game and Parks Commission, From July 1, 2009, Through June 30, 2011 (11/30/2012)
Resolved: 2

R-GR-FWS-0010-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Wyoming, Game and Fish Department, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (10/29/2013)
Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0010-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the American Samoa Government, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, From October 1, 2011, Through September 30, 2013 (12/17/2015) Resolved: 7
Questioned Costs: \$209,442 Better Use: \$10,333

R-GR-FWS-0011-2007

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Program Grants Awarded to the State of California, Department of Fish and Game, From July 1, 2004, Through June 30, 2006 (03/14/2008)
Resolved: 10 Questioned Costs: \$1,381,957

R-GR-FWS-0011-2009

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Utah, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife Resources, From July 1, 2006, Through June 30, 2008 (01/29/2010) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0011-2010

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2007, Through June 30, 2009 (11/22/2010) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0011-2012

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Iowa, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2009, Through June 30, 2011 (11/28/2012)
Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0011-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Montana, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (02/24/2014) Resolved: 2

R-GR-FWS-0011-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Game Commission From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (05/05/2016) Resolved: 15 Questioned Costs: \$1,508,801

R-GR-FWS-0012-2010

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, From July 1, 2007, Through June 30, 2009 (11/29/2010) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0012-2011

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Maine, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, From July 1, 2008, Through June 30, 2010 (03/01/2012) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0012-2012

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the Government of Guam, Department of Agriculture, From October 1, 2009, Through September 30, 2011 (11/14/2012) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0012-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Idaho, Department of Fish and Game, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (05/19/2014) Resolved: 3 Questioned Costs: \$564,627

R-GR-FWS-0013-2013

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of North Carolina, Division of Marine Fisheries, From July 1, 2010, Through June 30, 2012 (03/27/2014) Resolved: 2

R-GR-FWS-0013-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of West Virginia, Division of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (12/17/2015) Resolved: 11 Questioned Costs: \$295,812

R-GR-FWS-0014-2005

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Grants Awarded to the State of Texas, Parks and Wildlife Department, From September 1, 2002, Through August 31, 2004 (01/30/2007) Resolved: 4 Questioned Costs: \$2,461,399

R-GR-FWS-0014-2014

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Grants Awarded to the State of Colorado, Division of Parks and Wildlife, From July 1, 2011, Through June 30, 2013 (07/21/2015) Resolved: 7 Questioned Costs: \$696,955

R-GR-FWS-0016-2005

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Program Grants Awarded to the State of Maine, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, From July 1, 2003, Through June 30, 2005 (12/11/2007) Resolved: 1

R-GR-FWS-0025-2005

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Grants Awarded to the State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources, From July 1, 2003, Through June 30, 2005 (02/08/2007) Resolved: 2

X-CX-FWS-0002-2014

Interim Costs Claimed by Coastal Environmental Group, Under Contract Nos. INF13PC00214 and INF13PC00195 With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (05/04/2016) Resolved: 1
Questioned Costs: \$2,009,036

Other Assignment Types***Office of the Secretary*****2016-WR-022**

Management Advisory – Office of Aviation Services' Maintenance System Presents a Threat to Public Health and Safety (06/29/2016) Resolved: 3

ISD-IN-MOA-0004-2014-H

Management Advisory – Failure To Adequately Protect Sensitive Data on Thousands of U.S. Department of the Interior Laptop Computers (12/21/2015) Resolved: 1

Bureau of Reclamation**2015-WR-080-B**

Management Advisory – Operations and Maintenance Cost Allocation for the Klamath Project Reserved Works (09/27/2016) Disagreed: 1

2015-WR-080-C

Management Advisory – Reimbursement of A-Canal Head Gates and Fish Screens on the Klamath Project (09/27/2016) Resolved: 4

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**2015-ER-022-A**

Management Advisory – Issues Identified During our Audit of Interim Costs Claimed by Donjon Marine Company, Inc., Under Contract No. INF14PD01909 and our Audit of Interim Costs Claimed by Clean Venture Inc., Under Contract No. INF14D01910 with the Fish and Wildlife Service (08/03/2016) Resolved: 2

2016-CG-031-A

Management Advisory – Issues Identified During Our Audit of Interim Costs Claimed by Dewberry and Davis on Contract Nos. INF15PB000057 and INF15PB000059 With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (08/10/2016) Resolved: 2

X-CX-FWS-0003-2014

Management Advisory – Issues Identified During Our Audit of Interim Costs Claimed by Coastal Environmental Group, Under Contract Nos. INF13PC00214 and INF13PC00195 With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (05/04/2016) Resolved: 1

PEER REVIEWS COMPLETED

Government auditing and investigative standards require each statutory OIG to receive an independent, comprehensive peer review of its audit and investigative operations once every 3 years, consistent with applicable standards and guidelines. In general, these peer reviews determine whether the OIG's internal quality control system is adequate as designed and provides reasonable assurance that the OIG follows applicable standards, policies, and procedures. The Inspector General Act of 1978 requires that OIGs provide in their semiannual reports to Congress information about peer reviews of their respective organizations and their peer reviews of other OIGs.

Peer reviews are conducted in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's "Guide for Conducting External Peer Reviews of the Audit Organizations of Federal Offices of Inspector General," based on requirements in the "Government Auditing Standards." Federal audit organizations can receive a rating of pass, pass with deficiencies, or fail.

Audit Peer Reviews

In the most recent peer review of our audit organization, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) OIG reviewed the system of quality control for our Office of Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations (AIE) for the 3-year period ending September 30, 2013. Based on its review, AMTRAK determined that AIE's system of quality control provided reasonable assurance that AIE conforms to applicable professional standards in all material respects, and we received a peer review rating of pass.

We are currently undergoing a peer review by the Small Business Administration OIG for the 3-year period ending September 30, 2016. That review will be completed during the next semiannual reporting cycle.

Investigative Peer Reviews

During this reporting period, our Office of Investigation underwent a peer review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency OIG, and peer reviewed Amtrak OIG. Each review was conducted without incident or negative findings.

INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

OI-PI-15-0768-I

Investigation of Ethical Misconduct and Violations by BLM Supervisory Agent (see page 8 of this report)

OI-MT-11-0192-I

Investigation of Alleged Theft from the Northern Arapahoe Tribe (see page 19 of this report)

OI-MT-12-0355-I

Investigation of Theft from the Eastern Shoshone Tribe (see page 21 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0300-I

Allegation of Travel Fraud by NPS Northeast Regional Director (see page 30 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0240-I

Investigation of Alleged Off-Duty Misconduct by an Official at Denali National Park (see page 29 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0530-I

Allegation of Sexual Harassment by NPS Law Enforcement Supervisor (see page 31 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0529-I

Falsification of Employment Records by the Deputy Director of the Office of Acquisition and Property Management (see page 38 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0029-I

Investigation of Alleged Retaliation by a Manager with Office of Civil Rights (see page 39 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0806-I

Investigative Report of Alleged Inappropriate Behavior by the Director of the Office of Law Enforcement and Security (see page 40 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0163-I

Alleged Endangered Species Act Violation of the Masked Bobwhite Quail Program (see page 47 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0175-I

Allegations of Retaliation Against an FWS Region 4 Employee (see page 48 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0114-I

Alleged Improper Award of FWS Grant to Partner-Impact, LLC (see page 48 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0435-I

Investigative Report of Potential Mismanagement by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Director (see page 48 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0929-I

Allegations of Hostile Work Environment at Yosemite National Park (see page 26 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0900-I

Alleged Sexual Misconduct and Reprisal at Yellowstone National Park (see page 27 of this report)

OI-NM-16-0273-I

Investigation of Alleged Misconduct by a BIA Employee and Alleged Misuse of a CDIB Card (see page 19 of this report)

OI-GA-16-0706-I

Investigation of De Soto National Memorial Sexual Harassment Complaint (see page 28 of this report)

OI-PI-16-0650-I

Alleged Favoritism by an ONRR Supervisor (see page 33 of this report)

INSTANCES OF AGENCY INTERFERENCE

There have been no instances during this reporting period in which DOI or its bureaus or offices interfered with an audit, inspection, evaluation, investigation, or other OIG project.

SUSPENSIONS AND DEBARMENTS

Our Administrative Remedies Division (ARD) continued to provide training and outreach on administrative remedies. The ARD director and the DOI debarment program manager provided training at a DOI acquisition conference on suspension and debarment and referrals to ARD and a separate training to DOI OIG auditors during this period. ARD continued to assist Federal agencies in implementing effective suspension and debarment programs.

During this period, the ARD director moderated a panel discussion for about 50 attorneys at an American Bar Association Suspension and Debarment Subcommittee meeting on how suspending and debarring officials (SDO) assess the present responsibility of individuals. ARD also assisted the U.S. General Services Administration's SDO in providing information to Canadian officials on suspension and debarment best practices and Federal fraud analytics.

The Assistant Inspector General for Investigations and ARD staff participated in panel discussions and provided training to approximately 300 attendees at a suspension and debarment workshop that was jointly sponsored by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency and the Interagency Suspension and Debarment Committee. Presentations addressed a general primer, triggers for suspension and debarment referrals, and how to address fact-based and indictment-based suspension actions.

INSTANCES OF NONREMEDIATION

There have been no major Federal Financial Management Improvement Act weaknesses reported during this period.

ALLEGED WHISTLEBLOWER RETALIATION

In accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 (NDAA), we transmitted these reports of investigation to the Secretary of the Interior to make a determination about whether reprisal occurred.

Whistleblower Retaliation Allegation by a Contract Employee

We investigated allegations that a contract employee was reprisal against by DOI and contract officials after the employee raised concerns about unresolved information technology issues—a disclosure protected under the NDAA.

We found that the contract employee did make a whistleblower disclosure, but despite being removed from the contract, we did not find conclusive evidence that the employee was reprisal against. DOI officials denied they asked the contractor to remove the employee. The contractor claimed they were concerned about the employee's working relationship with DOI and reassigned the employee to another contract at the same pay rate.

Whistleblower Retaliation Allegation by Contract Employee

We investigated allegations that a contract employee was reprisal against by DOI and contract officials after disclosing alleged gross mismanagement and waste of Federal funds related to a construction project—a disclosure protected under the NDAA.

We found that the contract employee did make a whistleblower disclosure. We also found that subsequent to that disclosure, DOI did not extend the contract the employee was working under beyond its expiration date, and that the contractor terminated the contract employee from the company. DOI officials claimed there was not enough work left on the contract to warrant an extension and denied that the contract employee's disclosures were the reason for their decision. The contractor also denied that the contract employee's disclosures were the reason the employee was released from the company and explained that once the DOI contract ended, they had no suitable positions for the contract employee.

Alleged Endangered Species Act Violation of the Masked Bobwhite Quail Program

(see summary on page 47)

CROSS REFERENCES TO THE INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT

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Section 5(a)(2)	Recommendations for Corrective Action With Respect to Significant Problems, Abuses, and Deficiencies	1–52
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Section 5(a)(10)	Summary of Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Reports Issued Before the Commencement of the Reporting Period—	
Section 5(a)(10)(A)	For Which No Management Decision Has Been Made	63
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*N/A: Not applicable to this reporting period.

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Section 5(a)(11)	Significant Revised Management Decisions Made During the Reporting Period	N/A
Section 5(a)(12)	Significant Management Decisions With Which the Inspector General is in Disagreement	N/A
Section 5(a)(13)	Information Described Under Section 804(b) of the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996	N/A
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Section 5(a)(22)	Closed but Unpublished Reports Involving Senior Government Officials	N/A

*N/A: Not applicable to this reporting period.

OIG CONTACT INFORMATION



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1. APPROPRIATIONS:

House mulls enviro amendments, avoids monuments fight

The House plans to debate more than 300 amendments before the end of the week, including proposals dealing with carbon and the Clean Water Rule.

POLITICS

2. AGENDA:

Conservatives work to thwart Trump deal with Dems

3. WHITE HOUSE:

Trump deploys bully pulpit on taxes, energy

4. CAMPAIGN 2018:

Lola Zinke joins effort to unseat Tester

IN THE HOUSE

5. EPA:

Lawmakers question agency's response to Harvey

6. PUBLIC LANDS:

Bill giving states leasing control sharply divides panel

7. CHEMICALS:

Dems blast EPA absence at hearing on risk program

8. DOE:

Key Dem floats bill to reauthorize ARPA-E

9. CLIMATE:

Rep. Gabbard bill aims to expedite phaseout of fossil fuels

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Committee embarks on possible reforms to 'outdated' 1978 law

IN THE SENATE

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Murkowski 'finding out' about claims of stalled EPA grants

12. NOMINATIONS:

Stabenow urges delay, withdrawal of USDA science pick

13. LAW:

Democrats grumble as panel races through judicial picks

UPCOMING HEARINGS AND MARKUPS

14. CALENDAR:

Activity for September 4 - September 10, 2017

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1. COAL:

Court spurns BLM's 'irrational' approach to climate review

A federal court this morning rebuffed the Bureau of Land Management for failing to closely consider the climate impacts of several coal leases in Wyoming's Powder River Basin.

TOP STORIES

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A weakened CEQ gets a chance to flex its muscles

3. DOE:

Solar's *bête noire* — so far — not so scary

4. Q&A:

Ex-EIA chief on his 'very famous' wife, schadenfreude

POLITICS

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Governor sees 'repeal and replace' for Utah monuments

6. INTERIOR:

Zinke orders more access to hunting, fishing on public land

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Dem bill would shield gasoline reserve from Trump cuts

8. LOBBYING:

Ex-Pence chief of staff grabs biodiesel client

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Greens angry after feds shoot Mexican gray wolf in Ariz.

10. WILDLIFE:

5 animals experts are watching after Irma and Harvey

11. ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Video shows rare footage of jaguar in U.S.

12. PUBLIC LANDS:

Cherokee National Forest expands by 1,600 acres

13. PUBLIC LANDS:

Central Idaho could host nation's first dark sky reserve

14. ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Western wildfire rips through habitat of at-risk voles

15. WILDLIFE:

Mystery solved after Harvey spits out strange sea creature

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Groups challenge Trump waivers of environmental laws

17. ENERGY EFFICIENCY:

Lawsuit says DOE illegally stayed Obama standards

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18. DOE:

Solar industry mum as trade groups praise grid study

19. PIPELINES:

5 arrested in 'lockdown' protest of Enbridge's Line 3

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Local regulators press EPA to tap their expertise

21. FLINT CRISIS:

Tested water meets EPA lead standard

22. HURRICANE HARVEY:

Benzene leak much larger than Houston refinery first thought

23. ARMY CORPS:

Calif. dam structurally unsafe, threatens residents — report

24. HURRICANE IRMA:

Millions of gallons of sewage, wastewater swamp Fla.

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25. PESTICIDES:

43 kids report health problems after exposure at day care

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26. ALASKA:

NOAA seeks tips on pair who may have harassed whales

27. INDIANA:

Hundreds of geese killings prompt public outcry

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28. BARBUDA:

'Not a single living person' left on island hit by Irma

29. VIETNAM:

Typhoon kills 4, spares coffee region

30. MEXICO:

Tropical Storm Max rains on southern states

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San Juan Record

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U.S. President Donald Trump shows his signature after reducing the size of Bears Ears National Monument by more than 85 percent. Trump is joined at the signing by (left to right) Senator Orrin Hatch, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, Utah Governor Gary Herbert, Senator Mike Lee... and Betty Jones of McCracken Mesa. See more photos at sjrnews.com. Staff photo

Boundaries of Bears Ears cut by more than 85 percent, now two units

There are significant management changes for more than one million acres of public land in San Juan County after a presidential proclamation by President Donald Trump on December 4.

Instead of a 1.35-million acre Bears Ears National Monument, there are now two smaller national monuments in San Juan County, including the Indian Creek and the Shash Jaa national monuments.

See the map of the new monuments on page 2. The two units will be managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

Shash Jaa National Monument starts at the Bears Ears and runs down Arch and Mule canyons into Comb Wash. The monument includes Butler Wash, and eastern portions of Cedar Mesa all the way to the San Juan River, including San Juan Hill.

In general, the Wilderness Study Areas on Cedar Mesa are not included in the new monument.

Two Ancestral Puebloan sites are included in the monument but are not within the contiguous monument boundaries.

They are the Doll House Ruin, which is located in the Manti La Sal National Forest on Elk Ridge, and the Moon House Ruin, which is located at the top of Road Canyon on Cedar

Mesa. The new monument includes 129,980 acres of public land.

The Indian Creek National Monument includes Indian Creek Canyon starting at Newspaper Rock, and includes the Dugout Ranch, and adjacent canyons, including Cottonwood Canyon, Shay Canyon and the top of Salt Creek drainage.

The new monument includes 71,896 acres of public land.

The Nature Conservancy, which owns the Dugout Ranch, was a strong supporter of the original monument designation.

In total, the new monuments in San Juan County total 201,876 acres of public land, larger than Zions and Bryce Canyon national parks combined.

In Garfield and Kane counties, the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument was trimmed from 1,865 million acres to just over one million acres.

The maps show three smaller sections where the larger monument has existed for 21 years, including the Escalante Canyons (243,000 acres), Kaparowitz (551,000 acres) and Grand Staircase (212,000 acres) units.

The new monument boundary is still larger than the State of Rhode Island.

President Trump cuts Bears Ears by more 85 percent

For the second time in less than a year, a presidential signature has made significant changes to San Juan County. On December 4, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order that changed Bears Ears National Monument and created two additional, separate national monuments in San Juan County.

The action cut the amount of land from the Bears Ears National Monuments by more than 85 percent, from 1.35 million acres to 201,876 acres. Instead of a single massive Bears Ears monument, there is now a 130,000-acre Shash Jaa National Monument and a 72,000-acre Indian Creek National Monument.

In addition, Trump with-

drew more than 850,000 acres of land from the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument in neighboring Kane and Garfield counties.

The President signed the documents at the Utah State Capital Building as part of a whirlwind trip to Utah. He arrived in Air Force at 11 a.m. and was gone in less than two and a half hours.

During that time, he met with leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at Welfare Square and addressed about 1,000 supporters in the rotunda of the state capital building.

Speakers at the event included Trump, Senator Orrin Hatch, Governor Gary Herbert, and San Juan County Commission-

er Rebecca Benally. The text of Commissioner Benally's speech can be found on page 4.

Bears Ears National Monument was designated by President Barack Obama on December 28, 2016 under the Antiquities Act. The designation culminated several years of effort to resolve public lands issues in San Juan County, including a Congressional attempt to address the issue through the Public Lands Initiative.

A coalition of Native American tribes and environmental groups were instrumental in the creation of the monument.

Trump assumed office soon afterward and quickly directed his new Secretary of the Interior, Ryan

Zinke, to investigate possible misuse of the Antiquities Act.

Zinke visited the area in May and recommended soon afterwards that adjustments be made to the two monuments.

In the interim, the planning process for the new monument ground to a halt. Nearly one year after the designation, there has been no management infrastructure, no budgets, no increased management effort, and no progress. At the same time, visitation to sites in the monument increased dramatically.

Tribal and environmental organizations are expected to sponsor a host of lawsuits that will be filed in federal courts.



President Donald Trump signs the hat that Commissioner Bruce Adams has carried around for months. The hat says "Make San Juan County Great Again". Staff photo

This Week

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- Buckaroo wrestlers dedicate season to Aaron Butler 12

The Round-up

HANDEL'S Messiah

Sunday, December 10
7 p.m. • Blanding LDS Stake Center
100 West 800 North

Sunday, December 10
7 p.m. • Monticello LDS North Chapel
347 North 200 West

Weather

Nov 28-Dec 4

Monticello

	Hi	Low	Prec	Snow
28	50	32		
29	50	25		
30	56	27		
1	57	29		
2	56	29		
3	49	11		
4	32	9		

Blanding

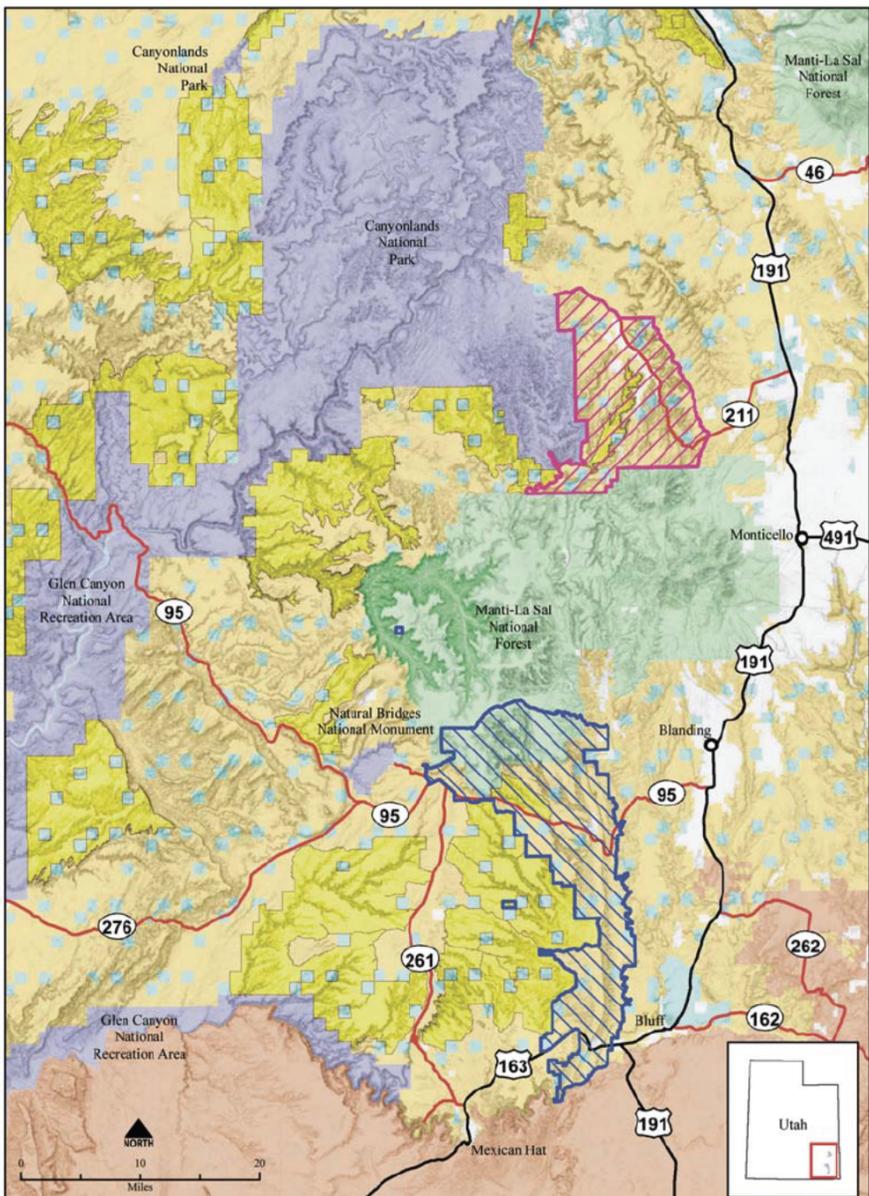
	Hi	Low	Prec	Snow
28	56	35		
29	49	36		
30	65	33		
1	58	36		
2	58	36		
3	55	35		
4	48	19		

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Bears Ears National Monument Boundary Modification



Legend:
 Shash Jia Unit
 Indian Creek Unit
 US Highway
 State Highway
 Wilderness Study Area
 Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
 Indian Reservation (IR)
 National Park Service (NPS)
 Private
 State
 US Forest Service (USFS)
 USFS Wilderness Area

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983
 Unit: Meter

Wide scale power outage planned in Blanding on Wednesday, December 13

by Kara Laws
Contributing writer

Blanding City will have a wide scale power outage on Wednesday, December 13. The outage will last for up to four hours and will include mostly residential areas. A map of the areas affected can be found on the Blanding City Facebook page.

This power outage is part of the final stages of a power project to maintain and upgrade the city power system.

The power project should be finished by the end of December, helping give all residents more reliable power.

In a very short city council meeting on November 28, the Blanding City Council officially adopted resolution 11-28-2017, a resolution that approved the event sponsorship policy.

This policy outlines what qualifies an event to receive consideration for city funding. It has been discussed and changed for several weeks, finally being approved this week.

A few of the stipulations events will need to meet in order to be considered

for city sponsorship include, but are not limited to, events that distinguish Blanding as a city with an array of opportunities for recreation, promote Blanding as a desirable place to live and visit, provide positive tax benefits or provide revenue opportunities to the city, and draw interest from outside Blanding and San Juan County.

Councilman Robert Ogle reminded the council once again that he feels the policy "is not in harmony with the appropriate role of government."

Ogle was the only council member who voted "nay" in adopting said resolution.

In other news, Blanding City will host a public hearing about dog licensing on December 12 beginning at 7:30 p.m. The council will make the decision on topic in the same meeting.

This will be the last council meeting with the current council members.

Council meetings will resume in January with two new members of the city council, including Robert Turk and Logan Shumway.

The first January meeting will also be the meeting that council will choose who will replace the council seat left vacant by Joe B Lyman.

Joe B. Lyman will be taking the mayoral seat in January, leaving his council seat open for council appointment.

The Blanding City Council also reviewed and approved the fiscal year auditor report for 2017.

The total assets for the city are just over \$56 million, with \$4.3 million in the fund balance and seven percent of that in the discretionary fund for council to disperse as needed.

The remaining is earmarked for public project such as public safety, roads, city debt, etc.

The City Council also wanted to remind Blanding residents that, as there is not any snow yet, residents should remember that when the snow does fall, cars need to be kept off of the road.

Residents are responsible for shoveling their drives and walks but should try and keep that snow out of the street.

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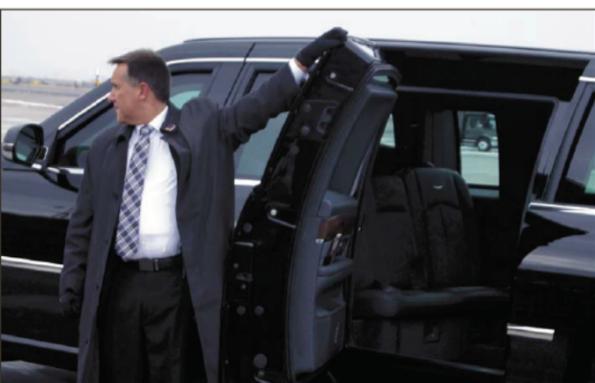
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US President Donald Trump made a whirlwind stop in Salt Lake City on December 4, culminating in signing a proclamation which cuts Bears Ears National Monument and creates Shash Jaa and Indian Creek national monuments. The *San Juan Record* accompanied the President as part of the official press pool. During the day, (clockwise from top left) Trump shopped briefly at the Bishop's Storehouse on Welfare Square; met with leadership of the LDS Church; spoke at the Capitol Building, saw a host of protesters; met with Trevor and Tristen Tharp, twin brothers from Magna who impersonate Trump and VP Mike Pence; and traveled in one of the "Beast" limousines.

Staff photos




Dr Jeff Cornelius
Monticello DENTAL

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Merry & Bright Awards

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Deck the porch, windows and roofs for Monticello's Christmas Light Competition!

PRIZES 1st: \$100, 2nd: \$75, 3rd: \$50

The judges favorites will receive a gift certificate from Empire Electric good towards their electric bill. Judging will take place on December 18; make sure your lights are on!

The competition is open to all homes in the Monticello city limits. To participate, simply have your home decorated by December 18.

Celebrate the joy of Christmas and make our streets sparkle!

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MONDAY-FRIDAY 8AM - 6PM

OPEN SATURDAYS 10AM - 4PM



San Juan County Commissioner Rebecca Benally shakes hands with President Donald Trump after Trump signs documents shrinking Bears Ears National Monument. Neaveh Netesosie is in traditional dress at left. Staff photo

Text of Commissioner Benally's speech

Rebecca Benally was a featured speaker at the Utah State Capital Building when President Trump signed the executive order. Her speech follows:

When Bears Ears National Monument was designated, it was a disheartening day for my communities and San Juan County citizens. A total of 1.35 million acres – an area larger than Rhode Island and Delaware – was now locked up with limited to no access; an area in our own back yard.

We have used these areas to gather plants for medicine, to cut wood to heat our homes, to hunt for food, and a sacred place to give offerings as Native American people

San Juan County has become a talking point for political pundits from both sides of the aisle. These are people who have never been to San Juan County and likely couldn't find us on the map, people who don't understand our culture, tradition and histories, people who don't care about us.

These are the people who have defined the narrative and passed judgment on us.

San Juan County is our home, it is our heart, it is where we come from, and it's where we choose to stay.

Let me tell you the true story.

This was nothing but a land grab. It is about control of the land, people and financial gains for the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). We have managed to manage this pristine land for generations in San Juan County. As a Native American Dine woman, it was insulting that bureaucrats thousands of miles away didn't believe we were capable of protecting and preserving our homeland. I know the bureaucrats have made promises to Native Americans and these promises were broken again and again.

Thank you, Secretary Zinke, for coming to San Juan, Kane, and Garfield counties and listening to the local grassroots people. Your boots on the ground approach was unexpected, but well received and appreciated. As I've stated earlier, he is a great horse rider.

Thank you Senator Hatch. You and your staff have been champions for us. Thank you for never giving up, for believing we

could rectify a wrong and for being a fighter for San Juan County and our people. Thank you to Senator Lee, Congressman Bishop, former Congressman Jason Chaffetz, Governor Herbert and the rest of the Utah delegation.

Thank you President Trump. Thank you for not being a typical politician and passing us over. Thank you for caring about San Juan County. We may be only 15,000 strong, but we matter. We appreciate you willing to take the backlash from the special interest groups as you stand for the people and the economy of San Juan County and the State of Utah.

Thank you to the lo-

cal grassroots people and to all Utah Navajo community chapters for your willingness to share your voice.

We came together in unity despite the fact that divisiveness was intended. Your work is the reason we are here today.

Thank you to the Sutherland Institute for exemplifying and amplifying our voice to the nation.

It is an honor to be here today. As commissioners, we have done all we can to represent and fight for San Juan County and the State of Utah and importantly for the people.

Now it is time to continue in unity and move together.



'ROUND THE REGION



Library telescope lending program

SOUTHWEST UTAH – Cedar Breaks National Monument and local astronomy clubs have collaborated with Iron and Washington County libraries to launch a brand new library telescope-lending program, making it easier for area residents to “reach for the stars.” Telescopes are now available to the public at the Cedar City and Parowan libraries in partnership with the Southern Utah Space Foundation (SUSF). More telescopes will become available at additional libraries throughout Iron and Washington counties in the coming months, in partnership with the St. George Astronomy Group and the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. Cedar Breaks National Monument, SUSF and the St. George Astronomy Group will maintain the telescopes in this program. Library patrons can check out a telescope as they would a book, and enjoy exploring the night sky for a week at a time in their own backyard or other dark place. The telescopes are modified to be user-friendly and are of higher quality than what most backyard stargazers use. Included with each telescope is an instruction manual, moon-map, pocket guide of the constellations and a night vision friendly red LED headlamp. Due to increasing light pollution, the opportunity to look at the stars is disappearing across the nation. Despite this trend, Cedar Breaks and southern Utah still boast some of the darkest skies in North America. With the launch of the telescope-lending program, residents from all walks of life will be able to get an even better opportunity to look up, question, wonder and explore this especially beautiful resource. – *Southern Utah News*

Utah ranks number one for Black Friday hunters

VERNAL – Shoppers begin to amass outside the doors of the Vernal Walmart in the waning hours of early morning. They're all eagerly awaiting the doors to open at 6 a.m. Most of them have been here a few minutes and you can tell they are starting to get impatient as they keep checking to see if the front door has opened yet. An associate opens one of the side entrances and the feeding frenzy begins. Walmart employees buzz around the store making sure everything has been set up for the crowds who will rummage through displays throughout the course of the day, searching for the best deals. Nobody is fighting over hoverboards this year, or at least not at this Walmart, but perhaps that is because the Black Friday rush has started earlier and earlier every year. Americans love deals and Utah is no different in that regard as a new study has produced data showing people in Utah hunt for bargains more than any other state in the country. Utah scored peak popularity points for three of the ten Black Friday online searches. The study cross-referenced the top 10 Black Friday search terms and revealed the states where these were the most popular. Utah outranked all the other 49 states by far. – *Uintah Basin Standard*

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Gingerbread

HOUSE TOUR

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The holiday season has inspired a streak of creativity around Monticello, resulting in a house-building boom... Gingerbread houses, that is. Tour the candy-filled town of at least 18 homes displayed in businesses around Monticello (see below). Visit all the homes, and you can enter to win in our multiple-prize drawing. Drawing prizes include fantastic gift cards from participating businesses. Drawing will be held at the Monticello Tree Lighting at Veterans Park on Saturday, December 16, 5 p.m. **DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE HOUSE!**

Details and forms are available at any of these participating businesses:

- Conoco/Subway ● San Juan County Library-Monticello ● Blue Mountain Foods ● Paca Pantry ● Zions Bank
- Wells Fargo ● San Juan Record ● Monticello Merc ● Unique Creations ● Main Street Drug & Boutique ● Jackalope Trading Company ● Artisan Jewelers ● Southeast Utah Welcome Center ● Thatzza Pizza ● Farm Bureau ● PS Petals & Sweets ● Mission Discovery School ● USU Monticello Learning Center ● Mimi's Thrift Emporium ● R&F Restaurant

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FESTIVAL OF TREES

Let's celebrate the Christmas season! The second annual Festival of Trees will kick off on Saturday, December 16 with a tree lighting ceremony and announcement of the Gingerbread House Tour winners at 5 p.m. in the Veterans Memorial Park. Don't miss your chance to participate in this year's celebration. Trees need to be completed by December 9. For more information, contact Jeremy at 435-587-2271.

Do you have an ad or story you need published in the December 27 or January 3 papers?

DON'T MISS THE

DOUBLE DEADLINE

5 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

The *San Juan Record* will be closed Sunday, December 24, 2017 thru Monday, January 1, 2018. Any stories, ads, classifieds, etc must be submitted by Wednesday, December 20 at 5 pm. We will reopen Tuesday, January 2 with regular hours (Mon-Fri, 8 am-5 pm). The regular deadline is Noon the Friday before publication.

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Letters to the Editor

The *San Juan Record* welcomes letters from our readers. Letters to the Editor must be:

- No more than 350 words
- Signed
- Include the author's address and phone number

The *San Juan Record* reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity and to eliminate libelous or tasteless material. Letters do not determine the editorial position of the *San Juan Record*.

Statements regarding local national monuments

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

"Our precious national treasures must be protected. And they, from now on, will be protected. Under my administration, we will advance that protection through a truly representative process, one that listens to the local communities that knows the land the best and that cherishes the land the most."

UTAH GOVERNOR GARY HERBERT

"By acting on Secretary Zinke's thoughtful recommendations, President Trump has restored balance to our public lands discussion. We are pleased that Utahns once again have a voice in the process of determining appropriate uses of these public lands that we love. By reducing these super-sized monuments to a size consistent with the intent of the law, new doors of dialogue have opened up that will allow thoughtful, long-term protection of these federal lands. Federal, state, local and tribal officials can now convene to craft legislation for appropriate special protections and responsible recreational uses."

DAVIS FILFRED

Navajo Nation Council Delegate

"More than 150 years ago, the federal government removed our ancestors from Bears Ears at gunpoint and sent them on the Long Walk, but we came back. The President's proposal is an attack on Tribes and will be remembered as equally disgraceful —but once again we will be back. We know how to persist; we know how to fight; and we will fight to defend Bears Ears."

SHAUN CHAPOOSE

Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee Member

"If it's a fight they want, it's a fight they are going to get. They declared war on us today. When it's all said and done, just remember this didn't have to happen. You (the Utah Delegation) could have honored our request to protect our heritage."

SENATOR ORRIN HATCH

"I'm thrilled and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Zinke for giving Utahns a voice in the protection of federal lands in Utah. The President's proclamation represents a balanced solution and a win for everyone on all sides of this issue. It also represents a new beginning in the way national monuments are designated, paving the way for more local input, and taking into account the actual letter and intent of the Antiquities Act, which calls for the 'smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.'"

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR RYAN ZINKE

"I thank President Trump for his leadership on the Monument Review and for keeping his promise to make sure the rural voice is heard once again. As I visited the Monuments in Utah, I met with Americans on all sides of the issue -- from ranchers to conservationists to tribal leaders -- and found that we agree on wanting to protect our heritage while still allowing public access to public land. The people of Utah overwhelmingly voiced to us that public land should be protected not for the special interests, but for the citizens of our great country who use them, and this is what President Trump is doing today. Bears Ears and Grand Staircase will remain under federal protection, will adhere to the spirit and letter of the Antiquities Act, and -- even after our modification -- combined will still be nearly twice the size of Rhode Island."

JONATHAN NEZ

Navajo Nation Vice President

"Bears Ears National Monument is not just for Native Americans but for all Americans. This is a sad day for indigenous people and for America. However, we are resilient and refuse to allow President Trump's unlawful decision to discourage us. We will continue to fight in honor of our ancestral warriors who fought for our way of life, for our culture and for our land too."



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Don't forget the Deadline

ALL SUBMISSIONS for the *San Juan Record* must be in by **NOON ON THE FRIDAY** before you wish it to run. This includes stories, advertisements, classifieds, legals, calendar items, etc. Submissions can be made by phone, email, fax, or bringing them in.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wednesday DECEMBER 6	Thursday DECEMBER 7	Friday DECEMBER 8	Tuesday DECEMBER 12	Wednesday DECEMBER 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Story Hour, 10:30 a.m., Monticello library ■ Story Hour, 10:30 a.m., Blanding library ■ Addiction Recovery meetings, Noon, San Juan Counseling, 356 South Main, Blanding ■ Monticello Rotary Club, Noon, R&F Restaurant ■ Lunch at Blanding Senior Center, Noon, 177 East 200 North, 435-678-2427 ■ Lunch at La Sal Senior Center (ages 60+), 200 S. Firehouse ■ Overeaters Anonymous, 6:45 p.m., Blanding Library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lunch at Monticello Senior Center (ages 60+), Noon, Hideout Community Center ■ Family Support Group, 6 p.m., San Juan Counseling office, 356 S. Main, Blanding ■ Al-Anon, 7 p.m., 132 1/2 South Main, Monticello ■ 12-Step Addiction Recovery Class, 7 p.m., Blanding North LDS Chapel, 255 N 200 E ■ Monticello Golf Board of Directors, 7 p.m., Hideout Community Center ■ Daughters of Utah Pioneers Primrose Camp of Blanding, 1 p.m. day meeting, 7 p.m. night meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lunch at Blanding Senior Center, Noon, 177 East 200 North, 435-678-2427 ■ Lunch at La Sal Senior Center (ages 60+), 200 S. Firehouse <p>Monday DECEMBER 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1 p.m., Monticello LDS North Chapel ■ San Juan Mental Health/Substance Abuse Special Service Dist, 3:30 p.m. (budget hearing at 3 p.m.), Blanding Library, 25 West 300 South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SJ Conservation District, 8 a.m., SJC Administration Building, 117 S. Main, Monticello ■ Lunch at Monticello Senior Center (ages 60+), Noon, Hideout Community Center ■ Blanding Rotary Club, 5:30 p.m., Blanding Library ■ 12-Step Addiction Recovery classes for all ages and addictions, 7 p.m., Blanding LDS North Chapel, 255 E 200 N ■ English class for Spanish speakers, 7 p.m., Monticello High School library ■ Clases de ingles, a las 7 en el tarde, en la biblioteca de Monticello High School ■ Monticello City Council, 7 p.m. Hideout Community Center. Broadcast live on 103.9 KAAJ-LP ■ Blanding City Council, 7 p.m., Blanding City Offices ■ Blanding Planning Commission, 8 p.m., Blanding City Offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Story Hour, 10:30 a.m., Monticello library ■ Story Hour, 10:30 a.m., Blanding library ■ Addiction Recovery meetings, Noon, San Juan Counseling, 356 South Main, Blanding ■ Monticello Rotary Club, Noon, R&F Restaurant ■ Lunch at Blanding Senior Center, Noon, 177 East 200 North, 435-678-2427 ■ Lunch at La Sal Senior Center (ages 60+), 200 S. Firehouse ■ San Juan County Fire and Emergency Services Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meeting, noon, SJC Administrative Building, Monticello ■ Overeaters Anonymous, 6:45 p.m., Blanding Library

Statements regarding local national monuments

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

"The Antiquities Act does not give the Federal Government unlimited power to lock up millions of acres of land and water, and it's time we ended this abusive practice. Public lands will once again be for public use."

JAMES ADAKAI
Oljato Chapter President

"The Bears Ears Commission of Tribes holds a vision of a Bears Ears National Monument that is a landscape of healing for all Americans and a symbol of Native American and community engagement in our nation's public lands. Today's actions fundamentally undermine this vision, tribal sovereignty, and the cultural heritage of all Americans."

CARLETON BOWEKATY
Pueblo of Zuni Tribal Councilman

"Bears Ears National Monument has brought much joy to our people. Our responsibility is to move forward as collaborative managers of this sacred landscape, and to protect our heritage for all Americans for the benefit of all people. We will continue to do so until this matter is resolved by the courts."

TERRY KNIGHT
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

"Because we are Commissioners, any decisions made regarding the fate of Bears Ears National Monument must involve us – the president is required by law to do so, but he did not involve us. In the decision today, President Trump has dishonored our longstanding ties to this cultural landscape and the government to government relationship that our sovereign tribes have with the United States government."

ETHEL BRANCH
Attorney General of the Navajo Nation

"What we saw today is a tremendous affront to tribal sovereignty and it is a tremendous overreach of executive authority. We intend to hold the president accountable for his actions in federal court."

LEIGH KUWANWISIWMA
Director of the Hopi Tribe Cultural Preservation Office

"Secretary Zinke and Utah politicians say that they have talked to tribes about the president's decision, but none of our Council leaders, executives, or our Commissioners were contacted. Working with tribes means leaving Bears Ears intact and supporting the Commission's efforts to bring our tribal expertise to the management of the Bears Ears National Monument – not leaving our important sites of pilgrimage, prayer, and the homes and graves of our ancestors unprotected."

WILLIE GRAYEYES
Chairman of Utah Diné Bikéyah

"Bears Ears National Monument was created to safeguard the history of five Native American Tribes and to protect their ongoing cultural uses of the land. This is a landscape that has been mined, looted and desecrated for 150 years and today, President Trump opened 85 percent of the land back up to these abuses. The current administration is playing politics with our native heritage, without even having the courage to look us in the eye. We have no other choice but to seek legal remedies against this illegal action, to listen to our people, and to restore hope in a future that is inclusive of Native American rights and interests on the land."

Technology in San Juan School District

by **Aaron C. Brewer**
M.A.Ed., CETL
San Juan School District

San Juan School District is working closely with school administration to bring technology into classrooms across the district.

Technology has an ever-increasing role in education. It is used to measure student understanding, report to parents, and develop new instructional methods for teaching concepts. These exciting innovations allow teachers to be more effective and efficient, students to have access to instruction tailored to their needs, and parents to be updated in a consistent and timely manner. Since the information provided by technology is so current, it can be used to identify student needs quickly, so that the teacher can adjust instruction accordingly. This allows teachers to work with individual students, small groups, or entire classes on specific, targeted skills or concepts. The effectiveness of instruction and student mastery can then be measured and adjusted again—creating a cycle of continual improvement.

It is important to note that technology doesn't replace instruction or teach-

ers, but rather enhances it by adding a dimension impossible to achieve with traditional educational tools. Through the use of technology, teachers can develop lessons tailored to the specific needs of individual students. Students can pursue interests and areas of study to a greater degree than in the past because technology brings a world of information to them, despite the remoteness of their surroundings. The use of technology in schools does not diminish the need for students to receive quality targeted instruction from highly qualified teachers. It is a tool that assists in improving curriculum, instruction, and research.

San Juan School District is working closely with school administration and teachers to incorporate technology into classrooms across the district. Building capacity in both teachers and school leaders provides tools to enhance education. The one to one initiative which provides each student access to a connected device has been growing and implemented in each school. Technology enables principals to work closely with teachers to monitor student mastery of standards, concepts, and skills.

In collaborative teacher meetings DATA meetings data from recent assessments is discussed in detail. This leads to identification of specific needs for individual students and teachers. Analyzing particular concepts and how well they have been mastered by students can inform decisions concerning how to proceed with future instruction. By utilizing the technology available, teachers can make better decisions, principals can provide better support for students and teachers, and students can benefit from a more individualized curriculum.

One concern about technology is security. The San Juan School District has a strong commitment to securing data of both the students and the employees. The district is constantly taking measures to protect any data collected by teachers or district personnel. This includes ongoing training for the tech department concerning what information should be collected, how it should be stored and shared, and when it is no longer needed, how it should be deleted.

Living in an ever-increasing digital age, San Juan School District is striving to fill this need. District staff is mindful of the possible downfalls involved, and is constantly working to ensure that it is being utilized effectively and responsibly.



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By Barbara Robinson

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From: Jack Gerard, API
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: State of American Energy 2018
Date: Wednesday, January 10, 2018 10:37:36 AM

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January 10, 2018

Dear Heather,

Projections show 2018 could be a record year for U.S. crude oil production. The U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) crude oil [production forecast](#) of 9.9 million barrels per day – surpassing the previous record from 1970 – is another landmark sign of the growing energy security that has reduced reliance on overseas energy and delivered savings to [American homes and businesses](#).

EIA projects that most of the growth will come from energy resources in tight rock formations that operators simply couldn't access even a few short years ago -- before advances in hydraulic fracturing and directional drilling technologies ushered in an [American energy revolution](#). The same technological innovations that have made the United States the world's energy leader have also made energy development, both onshore and offshore, [safer than ever](#).

Those game-changing innovations in energy development, safety and environmental protection are the focus of [API's 2018 State of American Energy report](#), "Powering Past Impossible." In addition to demonstrating how industry's use of advanced technologies and innovation produce the energy that [improves lives](#) and [grows the economy while simultaneously advancing environmental goals](#), this year's report illustrates various ways our companies strengthen and [engage with communities](#) to make them better places to live.

[The State of American Energy](#)



Each era has improved productivity and safety – so much so that today's natural gas and oil business would be mostly unrecognizable to the rugged souls who first struck oil at places like Titusville in Pennsylvania and Spindletop in Texas. Then, success was mostly determined by grit and blind luck. In this new century, advanced technologies and operational innovations launched an American energy renaissance, accessing new natural gas finds and expanding oil production from reserves that once were unavailable. Credit for this growth belongs to [the millions of women and men](#) who ensure that American energy is produced, refined and delivered every day, safely and reliably – because being a good neighbor is at the heart of operating responsibly.

Secure, affordable energy is fundamental to American life, prosperity and security. [Sound policies](#),

such as those outlined in report, can help ensure that the reliable energy Americans count on will be available now and in the future. I hope you enjoy [exploring the report](#) and learning about the many ways America's natural gas and oil industry is Powering Past Impossible.

Sincerely,

Jack N. Gerard
President & CEO
API

Meet America's Natural Gas and Oil Industry

How are we "Powering Past Impossible"? Through innovative products made from natural gas and oil that make a difference in the lives of Bergan, a retired U.S. Army combat veteran, and Jimmie, a first-responder with a small-town fire department. And thanks to industry professionals: Eric, a supervisor of a high-tech hydraulic fracturing control room; Leslie, a manager responsible for the safety and integrity of modern pipeline systems; Colleen and Lola, environmental experts who ensure that our operations protect the land, air and water; and Carmen, who represents industry's terrific opportunities for career-minded young Americans. [View this short video to learn more.](#)



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To stay up-to-date on the latest energy-related news, there is no better place to check than the [Energy Tomorrow Blog](#).



About API:

API is the only national trade association representing all facets of the oil and natural gas industry, which supports 10.3 million U.S. jobs and nearly 8 percent of the U.S. economy. API's more than 625 members include large integrated companies, as well as exploration and production, refining, marketing, pipeline, and marine businesses, and service and supply firms. They provide most of the nation's energy and are backed by a growing grassroots movement of more than 40 million Americans.

To learn more about API and the value of oil and natural gas, please visit [API.org](#).

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Jack Gerard, API
1220 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
US

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Wackowski, Stephen](#)
Subject: Steve - please review your press release
Date: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:24:03 PM

Steve- can you please drop in a quote and make any edits?

Secretary Zinke Names Steve Wackowski as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs

(ANCHORAGE) Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that Steve Wackowski will serve as his Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs based out of Anchorage. Zinke made the announcement in Anchorage as part of his current tour of Alaska.

“A lifelong Alaskan and Air Force Major, Steve is perfectly qualified to advise me on Alaskan issues,” said Secretary Zinke. “Like 10 percent of Alaskans, Steve enlisted in the military and then he continued his service as a civilian working for elected officials. His broad range of experience will prove to be invaluable as the Department focuses on future energy opportunities in Alaska, the welfare of Alaska Natives, and the vast expanses of lands and waters under Interior’s management.”

QUOTE STEVE

Wachowski grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family’s halibut and salmon sport-fishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary’s College, where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC-Berkeley’s Air Force ROTC program .

He is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve’s work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska’s North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the *Alaska Journal of Commerce*’s “Top 40 under 40” Award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as the late Senator Ted Stevens’ last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed U.S. Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski’s reelection campaign.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who says he continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their two-year-old son, Lucas, and their red fox lab, Cali.

Summary: Allegations of Travel and Ethics Violations by NPS Superintendent and Other Park Employees Unfounded

Report Date: May 3, 2017

The OIG investigated allegations that a national park superintendent, two of the park's administrators, and a Midwest regional officer may have violated ethics and travel regulations by joining an outside professional organization and attending multiple yearly conferences. It was alleged that the membership to the organization and the related travel were not essential to their respective positions and were a waste of taxpayer's money.

We found no evidence that employees violated Department ethics or Federal travel regulations through their membership in the outside trade organization or by attending the annual conferences. There was a consensus among the park employees and some National Park Service (NPS) regional office personnel that membership to the organization enhanced their ability to operate the park's unique assets. Additionally, NPS regional leadership were aware of the travel and supported it.

We also confirmed that the memberships were held in the name of the park and therefore did not violate Federal appropriations law, which generally prohibits the Federal Government from paying employees' membership fees for employees to outside organizations.

This is a summary of a report of investigation that we provided to the NPS Director.



From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: SUPPLEMENTAL In-Town Pool Report: Military spouses listening session
Date: Wednesday, August 02, 2017 2:39:43 PM

From: Debra Saunders [mailto:dsaunders@reviewjournal.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 2, 2017 2:33 PM
Subject: Fwd: SUPPLEMENTAL In-Town Pool Report: Military spouses listening session

Shortly after 1:30 p.m., Wednesday top figures in the Trump administration held a listening session with military spouses who discussed the hurdles they face looking for employment and continuing their careers. Names appear below.

Kellyanne Conway opened the event with statistics on military spouses. 92%, she said, are women, and 41% have dependent children. They are "highly educated, highly motivated," and in the working world, they should be "highly valued."

Ivanka Trump discussed the hurdles spouses face. Military wives have an unemployment rate of 16% -- four times the rate for adult women. They face "a wage deficit of 38%."

Secretary Acosta spoke of the harsh choices military spouses face. They must deal with "finding a new home, new schools, new friends." But also "excessive licensing is a barrier." Today 1 in 3 workers needs a license. States should find ways to recognize the licenses of other states for military spouses.

Administrator McMahon talked about growing up in a military base. A young friend's father was deployed, and the friend's mother was thrilled she got work as an Avon lady.

Kelly Hruska is with government affairs for the National Military Family Association. Her group gives grants to entrepreneurs.

Eric Eversole is a military spouse and serves in the Navy Reserve.

Elizabeth Griffin talked about the issues she faces as a language pathologist. "If you have children, that always falls on you." Often circumstances are such that she cannot "take positions that are career advancing."

Ivanka Trump asked Brooke Goldberg if there are careers to which military spouses gravitate? Yes, Goldberg answered "nursing, teaching, law degrees."

"And then we hit the barriers of licensing and certification."

Alexandria teacher Victoria Marrow said that because she has to move around "years and years of service and years of work" are not recognized.

Teacher Kim Lopez had a similar lament. She has 20 years experience but "Wherever I go, I start at the bottom."

Nicole Zillox is a nurse, which means long hours. Her biggest challenges: "licensing, portability and child care" for her long shifts.

Karla Mettling got her masters in 2003, and said she must continually ask, "Do I continue to achieve?"

Jennifer Korn of the White House Office of Public Liaison is the wife of a Marine. She thanked President Trump for hiring a military spouse. Korn too has had to make tough decisions. She and her husband lived apart for three years and she has had to ask, "Do I leave my career or leave my husband?"

Trump Administration:

Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the President

Ivanka Trump, Advisor to the President
Alex Acosta, Secretary of Labor
Linda McMahon, Small Business Administrator
Jennifer Korn, Special Assistant to the President and Marine Corps Spouse

External Participants:

Kelly Hruska

, National Military Family Association
Brooke Goldberg, Military Officers of America
Eric Eversole, Hiring our Heroes
Elizabeth Griffin, Speech Language Pathologist, Army Spouse, MD
Natasha Harth, Administrative Assistant, Marine Spouse, VA
Kim Lopez, Teacher, Air Force Spouse, UT
Victoria Marrow, Vocational Teacher, Marine Spouse, VA
Karla Mettling, Mental Health counselor, Army Spouse
Elizabeth O'Brien, Military Spouse Program Director, Army Spouse, VA
Trina S. Phillips, Currently Volunteer and Mother, Air Force Spouse, GA
Nicole Zillox, Registered Nurse, Navy Spouse, VA

--

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Supplemental pool 1 - Handshake/arrival
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 10:12:09 AM

From: Andrew BEATTY <Andrew.BEATTY@afp.com>

Date: July 13, 2017 at 4:03:26 PM GMT+2
Subject: Supplemental pool 1 - Handshake/arrival

At around 14:00 your supplemental pooler was ushered through the the Musée de l'Armée gates of the Invalides complex.

We passed between several long cannon and two stone pillars with carved crests which appeared to depict Louis XIV's face emanating rays of sunshine (he was know as the Sun King) and the trio of fleurs-de-lis signifying the French monarchy.

We pre-set at the entrance to the courtyard, looking back at the gates along a long cobbled driveway flanked on each side by mounted Republican Guard.

The horses whinnied away as we waited, until at 15:11 General Dunford arrived in an armored car with Général Pierre de Villiers, who is the is the Chef d'état-major.

At 15:24 an armored Renault pulled up and President Macron and the French First Lady got out. The car was followed by a few other vehicles that deposited a gaggle of advisors.

While Mr Macron waited he chatted with a military aides, and pointed his wife to some of the old military vehicles lined up on the grounds.

At 15:34 the first cars of the US presidential motorcade arrived, creeping slowly over the cobbles as the cavalry horns and drums played a jaunty little number.

The Beast pulled up and POTUS gave a smile though the window, then got out and greeted Macron by saying "Emanuel, nice to see you. This is so beautiful."

They enjoyed a handshake (fairly normal this time) and a pat in the shoulder.

The US First Lady could be heard saying "beautiful so nice" to Brigitte Macron.

President Trump put his hand on President Macron's shoulder, they chatted a bit more and then turned to pose for the cameras.

"Okay" Macron finally said after an avalanche clicks, leading President Trump into the courtyard.

Inside, a couple of hundred troops from the major service branches were already lined up in formation.

The two men walked over slowly to a group of infantry Republican Guard complete with red-feathered shako caps. As well as ceremonial duties they are also responsible for presidential security.

The band struck up the Star Spangled Banner, the president put his hand on his heart.

The band then launched into the La Marseillais.

After, the two presidents walked along reviewing the troops, chatting as they went.

The turned back down the line and an officer with a sword informed them both of the companies involved.

With the band now silent, Trump and Macron greeted dignitaries on the other side of the courtyard. The US delegation included Cohn, McMaster, Priebus, Powell and Bossert.

The pair were then reunited with their wives and walked inside to visit the tomb of Napoleon.

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From: Swift, Heather
To: [Gareth Rees](#); [David Bernhardt](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: Talking Points for interview tomorrow
Date: Wednesday, November 01, 2017 6:08:26 PM
Attachments: [TPs_DB_NPSFees.docx](#)

David, TPs attached.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

- GOSPEL -

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

EVANGILE DE JESUS CHRIST SELON ST. MATTHEW

Six jours après, Jésus prit avec lui Pierre, Jacques, et Jean, son frère, et il les conduisit à l'écart sur une haute montagne. Il fut transfiguré devant eux; son visage resplendit comme le soleil, et ses vêtements devinrent blancs comme la lumière. Et voici, Moïse et Élie leur apparurent, s'entretenant avec lui. Pierre, prenant la parole, dit à Jésus: Seigneur, il est bon que nous soyons ici; si tu le veux, je dresserai ici trois tentes, une pour toi, une pour Moïse, et une pour Élie. Comme il parlait encore, une nuée lumineuse les couvrit. Et voici, une voix fit entendre de la nuée ces paroles: Celui-ci est mon Fils bien-aimé, en qui j'ai mis toute mon affection: écoutez-le! Lorsqu'ils entendirent cette voix, les disciples tombèrent sur leur face, et furent saisis d'une grande frayeur. Mais Jésus, s'approchant, les toucha, et dit: Levez-vous, n'ayez pas peur! Ils levèrent les yeux, et ne virent que Jésus seul. Comme ils descendaient de la montagne, Jésus leur donna cet ordre: Ne parlez à personne de cette vision, jusqu'à ce que le Fils de l'homme soit ressuscité des morts.

- PICTURE FROM THE PAST -



This St. Martinville Lucky Forties softball team defeated the Catahoula Old Dirt Movers in the first round of a softball tournament to benefit local recreation projects back in July 1974. Team members included (kneeling from left) Tony Laperouse, Anthony Randazzo and Earl "Mac" Willis. Standing, Charlene Soileau, Brenda

Simon, Gaston Dautreuil, Glenda Breaux, Ward Delahoussay, Vira "Wildcat" Laughlin and Jim Douet. (From the Teche News Files)

If you have any old pictures (20 years or more) of general interest that you would like to share with our readers, please contact us at 394-6232 or 332-3562, drop them off at our office in St. Martinville or e-mail to news@techetoday.com.

Race for Senate president starts early?



by
Jeremy Alford

One of the more substantive issues looming over the next term of the Louisiana Legislature is who will succeed Senate President John Alario to lead the upper chamber.

Alario, R-Westwego, has held the post since 2012 and prior to that was a member of the House since 1972, a span during which he served as speaker twice.

That approaching exit will leave a major void in the Legislature, but much more so in the Senate.

He hasn't said anything official yet, but Sen. Bret Allain, R-Franklin, is certainly looking like an early candidate running to replace Alario for Senate president.

At least that's the portrait being painted by the spending in his Bayou Leadership PAC, which is Allain's leadership committee.

The PAC received a hefty \$25,000 contribution in April from Galliano shipbuilder Gary Chouest and the money has been circulating ever since.

Over the past two months Allain's PAC has given \$2,500 to Sen. Ed Price, D-Gonzales, for his recent campaign for the upper chamber; \$1,000 to Sen. Danny Martiny, R-Metairie, who's running for the Jefferson Parish Council; and \$1,000 to Sen. Neil Riser, R-Columbia, who's running for state treasurer.

Others said to be favored contenders for the Senate president's race next term are Sens. Page Cortez of Lafayette, Ronnie Johns of Lake Charles and Rick Ward of Maringouin.

Competition for Higgins

While it might be a while until we start hearing more chatter about 2018's congressional races, speculation is already stirring in the 3rd Congressional District.

That's where freshman Congressman Clay Higgins of Port Barre may face some opposition.

Republican attorney Josh Guillory of Lafayette has been raising money since January and has \$46,000 in his campaign war chest, according to the FEC.

Guillory describes himself as a "constitutional and family law attorney."

That tally normally wouldn't catch a second look, but Higgins himself had just \$44,000 in the bank as of June 30, with an additional \$10,000 in debts owed by his committee.

Not to be outdone in the 3rd, Democrats are making a hard push for Dr. Phillip Conner of Lake Charles, a family medicine and sleep specialist.

He is said to be seriously considering the race, but would only do it with a "first rate campaign team."

An endorsement for treasurer

The first notable endorsement of the election season has finally arrived.

The Jefferson Parish Republican Executive Committee has given an official nod to former state Rep. John Schroder's campaign for state treasurer.

There were 89 members voting and Schroder, a native of Covington, received nearly all of them.

Schroder's endorsement could be an early sign that he has infiltrated Jefferson Parish politics, which was important in the wake of state Rep. Julie Stokes of Kenner dropping out the race prior to qualifying.

It's a GOP-heavy parish with a lot big boxes in conservative precincts.

Schroder made the decision at the start of his campaign to have a political director focused only on Jefferson and Orleans parishes.

Political History: A state senator with artificial arms

In 1876 the ultra-conservative Redeemer Democrats were only one vote away from having control of the Louisiana Senate.

As a means to bringing about that majority, the most radical members of that faction targeted for assassination then-Sen. Marshal Harvey Twitchell, a Republican and former Union Army soldier.

Twitchell was a carpetbagger from Vermont who represented Red River Parish in the upper chamber. He was elected largely because of strong support from the black community in his district; Twitchell considered many free men of color his personal friends.

The assassin hired by the Redeemer Democrats went after Twitchell with a rifle and put six rounds into the senator. His brother was murdered during the attack, but Twitchell managed to play dead so convincingly that the assassin made his exit without firing another shot.

Twitchell's two arms took on most of the bullets somehow, and both had to be amputated above the elbows. Surprisingly he finished his term with a pair of wooden artificial arms, both of which were fashioned to

hold a pen or a fork.

Twitchell eventually returned to his home state of Vermont and married his second wife, who was also his childhood sweetheart.

He also went on to be appointed by both President Rutherford B. Hayes and President Grover Cleveland as

the American consul to Kingston in Canada, where he died at the age 65.

His memoir, "Carpetbagger From Vermont," was published in 1989.

For more Louisiana political news, visit www.LaPolitics.com or follow Jeremy Alford on Twitter @LaPoliticsNow.



-REMEMBER WHEN-

by Sally Angelle

100 YEARS AGO August 4, 1917

Word has been received that the registration of women (for the draft) is to be compulsory, but the service is still to be voluntary. The age limit is 15 to 60 years.

The St. Martinville Town Council called for a special election seeking voter approval of a \$20,000 bond issue to be used for the construction of public streets and highways both within and without the tow limits.

50 YEARS AGO August 3, 1967

Mayor Harold J. Resweber said that St. Martinville would need to add a new tower tank, additional pumps and larger lines crossing Bayou Teche in order to accommodate a request by the Police Jury to provide service to a proposed Ward 1 Water District.

The Louisiana Department of Highways awarded a \$4.75 million contract to T.L. James Inc. of Ruston for work on the Lafayette-Lenora stretch (La. 3052-Breaux Bridge) of I-10 in Lafayette and St. Martin parishes.

Paula Hendrick, Nancy Guidry and Max McLeod, outstanding students at Breaux Bridge High, will represent their school at Pelican State in Baton Rouge.

25 YEARS AGO July 29, 1992

At its regular meeting the Breaux Bridge city council named local businessman and civic leader Ray Pellerin to head a 13-member Craw-

fish Festival Advisory Commission to take a long look at the annual Crawfish Festival and recommend what course future festivals should take.

Steve Riley of Mamou was the winner in the senior division of the Accordion Festival held at Breaux Bridge. Kristi Guillory claimed the top spot in the junior division.

15 YEARS AGO July 31, 2002

An airboat idled along the shoreline of Henderson Lake as it prepared to start an intensive attack on the hydrilla grass that threatened the viability of the lake as a popular fishing, boating and tourism destination. Experts with the LSU AgCenter and the state Department of Natural Resources hoped the \$850,000 pilot project would control the invasive weed.

MaryBeth Robichaux of St. Martinville qualified as one of the 15 finalists from around the nation in the American Legion Air Rifle Competition. Her overall score included a 182 out of 200 in the standing position, a national record.

10 YEARS AGO Aug. 8, 2007

Joe's, as Amy's was known by Henderson residents, closed its doors. It was one of the first grocery stores in Henderson and was operated by three generations since the late 1920s.

After Henderson Police Chief Leroy Guidry provided information to the town council his department was finally given its own budget. Fines collected during the month of July totaled \$36,484.50.

Offshore energy production – Growing stronger through 'Made in America'

In the spirit of President Trump's "Made in America Week" it's important to highlight the contribution of Outer Continental Shelf energy resources. As the second largest revenue contributor to the Treasury - \$2.8 billion in 2016, OCS production supports more than 300,000 U.S. jobs, over \$30 billion in value added and in excess of \$55 billion in U.S. economic output.

With the OCS contributing one out of every six barrels produced in this country, we have an important role to play. The OCS contributes to energy security providing enough energy for one out of every ten Americans. National security is reinforced through reliable OCS production lessening our dependence on energy from areas of the world that do not share our values. Energy production from the OCS promotes economic security through the support of hundreds of thousands of jobs in 47 states.

That's why I've made it a priority since taking the helm at BSEE to make certain that our policies do not drive what would otherwise be investment in the U.S. into other countries because of what we have done in terms of some of our policies.

While we cannot control the price of the commodity, i.e. the price of oil and gas, we can help control the lifting costs and if the lifting costs are lowered without sacrificing safety, without sacrificing environmental safeguards – then we ought to be about that, and that's what the President and the Secretary has directed us to do first of all.



Scott Angelle

American ingenuity and technology advancements developed right here in the U.S. have provided opportunities for exploration in frontier areas and increased energy production in deeper waters. Being able to explore for and produce more offshore energy is an essential part of achieving energy dominance for America. The offshore energy industry relying on the ingenuity of Made in America companies are moving us forward toward this goal.

In addition, many of the technologies used across the globe in places like the North Sea and the Indian Ocean were developed by great Americans, many of them in your own zipcode. Made in America energy technology represents the highest standard of quality and performance throughout the world. The expertise demonstrated by American craftsmanship has far-reaching impacts on the world's economy and resource development. This is something that is not often recognized. American jobs and the resulting products from this hard work make a difference around the globe.

So as President Trump said, "We want to build, create, and grow more products in our country using American labor, American goods, and American grit. When we purchase products made in the USA, the profits stay here, the revenue stays here, and the jobs -- maybe most importantly of all -- they stay right here in the USA."

Scott Angelle is director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

From: Adams, Nathan
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Swift, Heather](#); [Newell, Russell](#); [Rebecca Matulka](#); [Larry Gillick](#)
Subject: TEST: Happy Holidays from Secretary Zinke
Date: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 9:21:39 AM
Attachments: [DOI email header.png](#)

Here's a draft of the Secretary's holiday message. Please confirm when I should send it.

Thanks,
Nate

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Interior, Secretary <secretary_of_the_interior@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Wed, Dec 20, 2017 at 9:18 AM
Subject: TEST: Happy Holidays from Secretary Zinke



To the entire Interior family, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Holidays. [However you celebrate the season](#), I hope you spend it with those nearest to your heart.



Happy New Year,
Secretary Zinke, Lolita and Ragnar

Visit doi.gov/employees for employee news, resources and events.

Please do not reply to this e-mail. This mailbox is not monitored.

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: The Bismarck Tribune: "Area business leaders eager to hear Trump's ideas on tax reform"
Date: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 10:43:29 PM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 6, 2017

THE BISMARCK TRIBUNE: "AREA BUSINESS LEADERS EAGER TO HEAR TRUMP'S IDEAS ON TAX REFORM"

"The U.S. tax code is bloated, cumbersome and long overdue for reform," [Gov.] Trump said in a statement. "Fortunately, President Trump recognizes that he and this Congress have a once-in-a-generation chance to simplify the tax code and cut taxes in a way that allows American workers and families to keep more of their hard-earned income."

Area business leaders eager to hear Trump's ideas on tax reform

By Amy Dalrymple
The Bismarck Tribune
September 5, 2017

...

The Mandan Refinery will be the backdrop Wednesday as President Donald Trump discusses the need for tax reform, a message several area business leaders are eagerly awaiting.

"We pay too much tax in this country, and I believe it restricts the free enterprise system," said Steve Herman, owner of AAction Movers in Bismarck.

Herman and his wife, Marcia, are among the small business owners Rep. Kevin Cramer invited to hear Trump speak.

...

"Any tax relief would be a benefit to everyone, I believe," Herman said.

Trump is expected to highlight personal stories from North Dakotans about the need for tax reform, including talking about Julie Ellingson, executive vice president of the North Dakota Stockmen's Association and a fourth-generation cattle rancher in Morton County.

...

Scott Meske, president of the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce, said he's particularly interested to hear how Trump's tax reform plan would affect small businesses, which represent 85 percent of the chamber's members.

...

Kathy Neset, a geologist and owner of Neset Consulting in Tioga, said she was asked to be part of a small group to greet Trump at the refinery on behalf of the North Dakota Petroleum Council.

...

"I would love to see some lower corporate tax rates and a simplified plan for all Americans," Neset said.

Gov. Doug Burgum, who will greet Trump at the Bismarck airport, said he's looking forward to discussing how tax reform can benefit workers, farmers, ranchers, businesses and families.

"The U.S. tax code is bloated, cumbersome and long overdue for reform," Burgum said in a statement. "Fortunately, President Trump recognizes that he and this Congress have a once-in-a-generation chance to simplify the tax code and cut taxes in a way that allows American workers and families to keep more of their hard-earned income."

Cramer said the refinery will be a good backdrop for Trump to highlight why tax reform is needed and how it will affect Middle America.

...

[Read the full article here.](#)

###

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The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: The White House Announces the 2017-2018 Class of White House Fellows
Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 11:15:52 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 2017

The White House Announces the 2017-2018 Class of White House Fellows

Today, the President's Commission on White House Fellows announces the appointment of the 2017-2018 class of White House Fellows. The prestigious White House Fellows program provides professionals from diverse backgrounds with an opportunity to engage in public service for one year by serving in various roles in Federal government.

Created in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the White House Fellows program was designed "to give the fellows first hand, high-level experience with the workings of the Federal government and to increase their sense of participation in national affairs." The fellowship was created as a non-partisan program and has maintained this tradition throughout both Republican and Democratic administrations. The mission of the White House Fellows program is to encourage active citizenship and service to the Nation. Throughout the year, fellows actively participate in an education program that expands their knowledge of leadership, policy-making, and contemporary issues. Community service also plays a vital role in the program, as fellows take part in service projects throughout the year.

The highly competitive selection process to become a White House Fellow is based on a record of remarkable professional accomplishment, evidence of leadership skills and the potential for further growth, and a commitment to public service. Selected individuals spend a year working as a full-time, paid fellow to senior White House staff, Cabinet Secretaries and other top-ranking government officials. Additional information about the White House Fellows program is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/participate/fellows>.

The 2017-2018 White House Fellows:

Ryan Bell is from Coppell, Texas and is placed at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Ryan is a Major in the United States Army. As an infantry officer, he led soldiers throughout the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific, including three combat tours in Iraq and two combat tours in Afghanistan. During Ryan's most recent assignment in Hawaii, he led 4,200 Soldiers as deputy Commander and Brigade executive officer of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division. Previously, Ryan served as deputy director for the Combating Terrorism Center and as an assistant professor of economics for the United States Military Academy's Department of Social Sciences. While in New York, Ryan led the West Point Parachute Team, winning a national championship in 2014, and co-founded the junior board for the Friends of the Children, a non-profit organization in New York City. His awards include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, Ranger Tab and the Combat Infantryman Badge. Ryan received a B.S. in management and Asian studies from the United States Air Force Academy, where he graduated with athletic distinction. He earned a M.S. in international relations from Troy University and a M.B.A. from Columbia Business School, where he served as class president.

Joseph Da Silva is from Norwood, Massachusetts and is placed at the U.S. Small Business Administration. Joe is a Major in the United States Army. As an infantry officer, he served in both conventional and special operations units, spending 42 months deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout his career, Joe led and managed organizations that conducted counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and foreign military training missions. Most notably Joe commanded a company that

secured the largest oil refinery in Iraq where his efforts helped build economic capacity and minimize insurgent financing from black market fuel. He last served at the U.S. Army Cyber Command where he helped lead the command's talent management efforts. Joe also served as an assistant professor of international relations at the United States Military Academy's Department of Social Sciences, where he ran the department's annual national security conference, co-edited a compendium on American grand strategy, and served as an active term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Joe earned a B.S. in American politics from the United States Military Academy, where he was the class president for the class of 2002. He also earned an M.A. with honors from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in international economics and strategic studies.

Rachel Gleichman is from Farmers Branch, Texas and is placed at the U.S. Department of Defense.

Rachel was most recently a partner at TNTP, a non-profit organization supporting public school systems. She was responsible for business development and worked directly with districts on a variety of talent management initiatives. Previously, she managed the Arizona Teaching Fellows, a program placing teachers in high-need schools in Phoenix, Yuma, and the Navajo Nation communities in northeast Arizona. She also led the Oakland Practitioner Teacher Program, a special education certification program supporting Oakland Teaching Fellows and Teach for America corps members in the bay area. Prior to joining TNTP, Rachel served as a school administrator in San Francisco, a Teach for America recruitment director in the mid-Atlantic region, and a high school English teacher in Baltimore. She was the founding board chair for CASA Academy, a K-3 public charter school in Phoenix, and currently serves on the board for the Capital Pride Alliance in Washington, D.C. In her free time, she volunteers with the Girl Scouts and the Internal Rescue Committee. Rachel received a B.A. in English literature, Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude, from Texas A&M University and an M.A. in teaching from the Johns Hopkins University.

Cristina Hernandez is from Las Vegas, Nevada and is placed at the U.S. Office of Personnel

Management. Cristina is a U.S. Army veteran and has served in the national security sector for over fifteen years. Most recently, she served as senior policy advisor to the director of science and technology for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. As a soldier and as a defense contractor, Cristina has led teams, delivered policy recommendations, and deployed innovative technologies to ensure the safety of those protecting our nation. She has served in Iraq and Afghanistan and has trained over 500 military members and intelligence analysts to support various missions all over the world. Cristina is also a Gold Star family member, having lost her brother while he served in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment in Afghanistan in 2009. While in the Army, Cristina received the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and she continues to volunteer and serve underprivileged communities today. Cristina was a next generation national security leaders fellow at the Center for a New American Security. She received a B.A. in political science from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and an M.P.A from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government

Shahla Jilani is from Washington D.C. and is placed at the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services. Shahla is a physician who has worked to address the medical needs of underserved populations, most recently at Unity Health Care, a non-profit organization. She completed dual residency training in internal medicine – pediatrics at the OSU Wexner Medical Center/Nationwide Children's Hospital. As a pediatrician, she cares for underserved children, focusing on socioeconomic determinants impacting their health. As an internist, she cares for homeless populations, bridging gaps between health care access and social determinants of disease. Together, as a dual pediatrician-internist, she specializes in transitioning special needs children from pediatric to adult medical care. Serving as assistant professor at George Washington and A.T. Still University Schools of Medicine/Wright Center, Shahla has taught medical students and physicians in-training at both classroom and clinical levels. Her teaching includes leading health literacy-education classes for lower-income communities, and academic mentorship programs for at-risk, inner-city youth. Similarly, she has led graduate-level medical education-service programs in developing communities in Bolivia, Peru, and Costa Rica. Before medicine, Shahla was a researcher studying tumor angiogenesis, resulting in scholarly publications; and, earning college honors, highest departmental honors, and joint M.A. – B.S. through the UCLA Scholars Program in molecular, cell, developmental biology. She received her M.D. from University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry.

Andy Ku is from Cupertino, California and is placed at the U.S. Department of Labor. Andy served as a director of product marketing at LinkedIn. He led marketing for the business unit that builds products to help people get jobs. He is proud that tens of millions of people use those products every week, with which millions of people get jobs every year. Prior to LinkedIn, he founded an internet company, which built a mobile app to help people find jobs they love by matching them to jobs that fit their strengths, skills, and interests. He also worked at Google, where he established how Google launched its most popular products, such as Google Maps, throughout Europe. His mission to help people discover and live out their vocation extends to community service. He co-founded the Mentoring Group of Silicon Valley, matching senior leaders with young professionals to help guide their careers. He recently served as a mentor and tutor at Year Up, which helps low-income youth gain skills to achieve their career potential. He has also served as a mentor at Lewisham Leaving Care in London, a program to help youths transition from juvenile detention and learn life skills. He received a B.S. in engineering from Stanford University and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School.

Jeffrey McLean is from Mequon, Wisconsin and is placed in the White House Office of American Innovation. Jeff is a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve. As an F/A-18 Super Hornet pilot, he completed three combat deployments on aircraft carriers, including 51 missions supporting Operation Enduring Freedom over Afghanistan. As a Navy Test Pilot, Jeff served as project officer for the revolutionary X-47B Unmanned Combat Air System that made history as both the first unmanned aircraft to land on an aircraft carrier and the first to achieve autonomous aerial refueling. His writing has appeared in several publications and he served as vice chairman of the U.S. Naval Institute editorial board. Jeff previously served as president of the Truman Scholars Association, a next generation national security leader with the Center for a New American Security, and a millennium leadership fellow with the Atlantic Council. A lifelong community leader, he was awarded the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and Outstanding Young Wisconsinite award for his impact through community service and through humanitarian projects in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Kampala, Uganda. He is a Fulbright and Truman Scholar and received an M.A. from Oxford University, an M.B.A. from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and a B.S. with honors and distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy.

Crystal Moore is from Meridian, Mississippi and is placed in the White House Office of Public Liaison. Crystal previously served as senior director of business development for Fullbridge, Inc., a venture-backed education technology company. While there, her efforts supported the creation of online and blended-learning programs on college campuses, ensuring over 12,000 students have exposure to career readiness skills. Prior to Fullbridge, Crystal was a consultant for Parthenon-EY, where she advised colleges and universities, national foundations, policy organizations, and private investment firms. Her commitment to the education sector began as a ProInspire fellow at D.C. public schools, and led her to interning for the White House Domestic Policy Council's education policy team. Crystal has contributed through various organizations over 2,000 hours to mentoring underrepresented minority students and she is a previous participant in the Echoing Green Direct Impact Program. While at Xavier University of Louisiana, Crystal was elected to serve as student body president and was the recipient of the St. Katherine Drexel Award, Xavier's highest student honor for service and leadership. At Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, she was a merit scholarship recipient. At Fuqua, she concentrated her studies in strategy and social entrepreneurship and studied education policy at the London School of Economics. Crystal graduated cum laude, with a B.S. in finance, from Xavier University of Louisiana. She also received her MBA from Duke University, The Fuqua School of Business.

Matthew Phillips is from Christiansburg, Virginia and is placed in the Office of the Vice President of the United States. Matt is a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy. As a nuclear-trained surface warfare officer, he has led hundreds of sailors at sea during four combat deployments. Most recently, he served as a reactor safety inspector and technical lead on the Navy's nuclear propulsion examining board. As operations officer, he coordinated and executed a counter-narcotic deployment that interdicted over \$500 million of cocaine traffic. Ashore, he led midshipmen as a company officer at the United States Naval Academy and taught courses in seamanship & navigation and leadership. His service has been recognized by numerous military decorations, including the Meritorious Service Medal. Following his fellowship, he will command one of the Navy's most advanced warships. An active volunteer with churches, food banks, and homeless shelters, he and his wife, Amy, have sought to make a difference in their community throughout his naval career. He graduated with honors from the United

States Naval Academy, receiving a B.S. in computer science, and participated on the men's glee club. Selected for the immediate graduate education program, he graduated with honors from the Naval Postgraduate School and received a M.S. in computer science.

Kyle Sheetz is from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is placed at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Kyle is a surgeon interested in improving the access and quality of surgical services in the United States. He is currently a resident in general surgery at the University of Michigan. Through his work with the Michigan surgical quality collaborative, he is involved in the development and implementation of initiatives that reduce costs and complications for high-risk surgery. As a fellow at the Center for Healthcare Outcomes and Policy, Kyle's research uses delivery system science to understand which treatments are most effective and how to institute large-scale practice changes. He holds degrees in medicine, clinical research design and biostatistics from the University of Michigan, where he was the recipient of the dean's award for research excellence. Kyle was a founding member of the academic surgeon development program, which fosters mentorship and career development for students interested in academic medicine. Kyle received a B.S. in biochemistry from Denison University in Granville, Ohio where he met his wife.

Jake Steel is from Garden City, Kansas and is placed in the White House Office of the Domestic Policy Council. Jake was most recently a math teacher in inner Oklahoma City, where he served as the math department chair. His focus on closing the achievement gap through the use of one-to-one technology has increased state test scores by over 30 percentage points, which assisted in the school's state report card being increased by two letter grades. Jake is a former Teach for America corps member and contributed to the organization on an alumni board. He served for two years as a full-time humanitarian volunteer in Ohio and volunteered as a community choir director and as an instructor for high school and college level seminary courses. After attending Johns Hopkins University, he was honored by the alumni council for the school of education for his commitment and leadership in his community. He studied in Jerusalem, Israel at Brigham Young University's Jerusalem center, where his academic work focused on ancient and modern near eastern studies and ancient religious texts. Jake earned a B.S. in communications from Brigham Young University, Idaho and an M.S. in education from Johns Hopkins University.

Christopher Stolte is from Aurora, Colorado and is placed at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Chris recently graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) of government with a master in public administration. Prior to attending HKS, Chris acted as the business advisor to the executive vice president (EVP) of unconventional for Shell, where he supported the EVP on day-to-day operations and long-term strategic matters. Before taking on the business advisor role, Chris was the completion engineering manager for Shell Appalachia, overseeing engineering activities across multiple appraisal and development areas in Appalachia. He has completed international assignments in Holland and China. Prior to his international assignments, he worked as a completion engineer supporting unconventional gas operations in the Pinedale Anticline and as a production engineer supporting multiple assets in the Gulf of Mexico. Chris has served on the boards of multiple non-profit and for-profit organizations. Most recently, he served on the board of advisors for Sourcewater, a water sharing platform for the energy industry. He holds a B.S. in petroleum engineering from the Colorado School of Mines, an M.B.A. from MIT, and an M.P.A. from Harvard.

Katelyn van Dam is from San Jose, California and is placed at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Katelyn is a Major in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. An attack helicopter pilot by trade, Katelyn conducted combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan and counter-piracy operations in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden. She served over ten years on active duty. In her final active assignment, Katelyn instructed new Marine Corps officers in tactics and leadership as a staff platoon commander at The Basic School in Quantico. She most recently served as a civil affairs officer with 2D Civil Affairs Group. In her personal capacity, Katelyn co-founded and served as director of strategy and policy for No Exceptions, a nonpartisan initiative that advocated for the military to fully integrate women into all combat arms specialties. The efforts of No Exceptions contributed to the successful implementation of this Department of Defense policy change in 2016. She is an alumna of the Center for New American Security's 2014 next generation national security leaders program. Katelyn was selected as the American Red Cross Tiffany Circle distinguished woman warrior of the year in 2015.

Katelyn has published articles in JHU SAIS' Foreign Policy Institute, War on the Rocks, Just Security, Marine Corps Gazette, and US Naval Institute, and was a guest on the Center for Strategic and International Studies' smart women, smart power podcast and the Diane Rehm Show. She is married to her amazing husband David van Dam, who is also a Marine Corps veteran. She recently completed a master of arts degree in international economics and international relations at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. Katelyn is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy.

Mathew Zulauf is from Muskegon, Michigan and is placed in the White House Office of the Staff Secretary. Mat is a Major in the United States Air Force and was a B-2 stealth bomber pilot. He served as the 509th Bomb Wing nuclear executive manager where he was responsible for the coordination, planning, and execution of the nuclear missions of the B-2. He deployed to the European and Pacific theaters on strategic assurance and deterrence missions. He has more than 2,000 flight hours including 1,100 hours as an instructor pilot in the B-2 and T-38. Previously, he served as a flight commander responsible for the military training and flight training of student pilots from the U.S. and numerous allied NATO countries. Other prior assignments included executive officer for the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, aide to the chief of staff, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President, and intern at NASA's advanced space propulsion laboratory developing a plasma engine for deep space travel. Major Zulauf received his commission and was a distinguished graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy where he was the top graduating cadet in physics. He also attended the U.S. Naval Academy on exchange. He received his masters of public policy in international security and economic policy from the University of Maryland.

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From: Ben Lefebvre
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: today's one email of questions from Politico
Date: Tuesday, October 03, 2017 12:41:17 PM

Hi Heather,

Sorry for all the email traffic – I know how it is when the flood gates are open. I'll try to keep things to one email today for the main question, though of course there may be follow-ups depending on what the answers are. And you can take a pass on the Lola stuff from yesterday. We're not going there.

So looking through the Secretary's trip calendar, I saw that there were about nine events he attended (listed below) that could be construed as political. I know that at least one DOI Secretary in the past was reprimanded for attending similar events. I was wondering if you could please tell me:

1. Did DOI set up these trips to co-incide with the political events he attended?
2. Is there any concern that the sheer number of political events attended during official trips could be construed as inappropriate use of official DOI funds/ Secretary's time? Was it appropriate for Secretary Zinke to carve out time for these nine events while on official DOI travel?
3. Were there any ethics waivers applied for to attend any of these political events? Anything you could forward me showing the Secretary asked/received permission from the appropriate department officials, if such permissions were needed?
4. Is there any estimate of how much these trips cost DOI?

If you have any questions, need any clarification, etc, please let me know. Events are as follows:

- Zinke attended a March 30 GOP event in the Virgin Islands with more than 50 people in attendance. Zinke's staff did not accompany him to the event, which was closed to the press, internal documents show.
- May 12: visits Westmoreland Resources Coal Company with VP Mike Pence and Steve Daines. DOI staff waited in cars while politicians met.
- May 11: Made Keynote remarks at RNC Spring Meeting Dinner in California.
- May 12: Rally for Greg Gianforte, with VP Mike Pence. Zinke delivered remarks introducing Gianforte. Gets group photo with Daines, Gianforte, Mrs. Pence.
- June 25: Attended the Rule of Law Defense Reception and Dinner in Nevada, where he made remarks and did a Q&A. dinner was attended by 19 state attorney generals, including Montana's Tim Fox. Zinke sat with Fox and Allen Richardson of Koch Industries at his dinner table.

- June 26: Vegas Golden Knights Development Camp Dinner at Red Rock Hotel and Resort in Nevada. Bill Foley, who's Fidelity donated \$200,000 to Zinke's congressional campaigns, introduced Zinke, who talked for 30 minutes.
- July 20: Made remarks at American Legislative Exchange Council Kick-off Reception at Denver Hyatt. 15 minutes of remarks, 15 minutes "fireside chat" with CEO Lisa Nelson.
- July 21: Featured speaker at Colorado Republican Committee Roundtable.
- July 22: Attended Western Conservative Summit in Denver. Was introduced as Interior Secretary.

Thank you,

Ben Lefebvre
Oil & gas policy reporter, POLITICOPro
Desk: 703-647-8775
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Proton: bjlefebvre@protonmail.com
Twitter: @bjlefebvre

From: Nachmany, Eli
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Todd Willens Press Release
Date: Monday, July 10, 2017 6:59:48 PM

Native American Leaders Praise Todd Willens as President Donald Trump’s Nominee for Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior

President Donald Trump has announced the nomination of former Interior Department official Todd Willens as Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Willens brings with him to Interior more than 20 years of public policy and governmental affairs experience, with proven successes on behalf of prior Administrations, Members of Congress, national associations, and private businesses. He possesses a deep knowledge and understanding of the Department’s many complex policies, ranging from land to energy, wildlife, and water management.

“The selection of Todd Willens to serve as Assistant Deputy Secretary deepens the bench at Interior,” **Jackie Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, said.** “In his prior work as Chief of Staff for Congressman Stevan Pearce, Todd handled a wide range of Native issues. In that role, he earned the great respect of many in Indian Country. As the Administration and Tribal Nations partner to advance economic development and self-sufficiency for Native communities, Todd’s expertise and experience will be a valuable asset.”

At the Department, Willens will focus on the policy initiatives and daily workings of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Charged with a host of responsibilities, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service oversees the protection of endangered species, the restoration and conservation of wildlife habitats, and the distribution of excise taxes to State fish and wildlife agencies. The National Park Service administers the United States’ national parks. Additionally, the Bureau of Reclamation manages water and other resources in the American West, while the U.S. Geological Survey strives to better understand the Earth and its resources through scientific examination.

“I have worked with Todd for several years. He has an exceptional understanding of western issues in general, and Native issues in particular,” **Chairman Paul Torres of the All Pueblo Council of Governors said.** “Todd is exactly the kind of leadership that can advance Interior’s trust responsibility to tribes, while supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This is an exceptional selection by the Administration.”

Willens served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) from 2010 to 2017.

During his tenure as Chief of Staff, Willens provided strategic advice and operational oversight to meet the needs of the constituents of the 2nd Congressional District of New Mexico. He worked closely with various stakeholders in this capacity, including local government officials, Congress, and the previous Administration to ramp up operations at defense bases, prevent job-killing regulatory action, and increase federal accountability significantly for the people of New Mexico.

“Todd Willens has worked on difficult Indian Country issues, proving himself to be a close listener to Native concerns and demonstrating the diplomatic skills necessary in the government-to-government relationship between the United State and Native Nations,”

Jackson Brossy, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office, said.

“Todd’s addition to the leadership at Interior will bring practical, on-the-ground experience with Indian Country, to the benefit of both Interior and Tribes. The Navajo Nation looks forward to working closely with Todd.”

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Willens served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior from 2006 to 2008. While at the Department, he worked on the National Parks Centennial, and the historic recovery of the Bald Eagle. In addition, Willens also served as Senior Policy Advisor for United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources from 2003 to 2006. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Chairman to develop key legislation, including the 2005 Endangered Species Act Reauthorization and the 2005 Energy Bill.

“For tribes, it is critically important to have knowledgeable and trusted leadership at Interior,” **Governor Kurt Riley of the Pueblo of Acoma said.** “Todd has long proved his exceptional understanding of Indian issues and his willingness to work with tribes to find practical solutions. Todd is an outstanding choice for Assistant Deputy Secretary.”

Willens is a native of California and is a 1994 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles. He currently lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and four children.

TONY NGUYEN (SHORT BIO)

Tony Nguyen, Associate Director for Workforce and Inclusion

Tony Nguyen joins the National Park Service from the United States Department of Energy (DOE), where he was the Director, Office of Human Capital Strategy and Analysis. Throughout his fifteen years of federal civil service, Mr. Nguyen has led major programs at the agency and government-wide levels to implement and improve strategic planning and performance management; workforce analysis, planning, and metrics; recruitment and hiring; diversity and inclusion; employee engagement; and HR service delivery. Before coming to DOE in 2006, Tony was a project manager in recruitment and information technology for the U.S. Peace Corps, and he recently completed a one-year executive rotation to the Executive Office of the President in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Performance and Personnel Management Division. As Associate Director (AD) for Workforce and Inclusion (W&I), Mr. Nguyen will lead all workforce programs for the National Park Service. Functions within W&I include staffing, compensation, benefits, employee and labor relations, employee performance management, suitability and security clearances, workers compensation, learning and development, and youth programs.

TONY NGUYEN (LONG BIO)

Tony Nguyen, Associate Director for Workforce and Inclusion

Tony Nguyen joins the National Park Service from the United States Department of Energy (DOE), where he was the Director, Office of Human Capital Strategy and Analysis. As the Associate Director (AD) for Workforce and Inclusion (W&I), Mr. Nguyen will lead all workforce programs for the National Park Service. Functions within W&I include staffing, compensation, benefits, employee and labor relations, employee performance management, suitability and security clearances, workers compensation, learning and development, and youth programs.

Throughout his fifteen years of federal civil service, Mr. Nguyen has led major programs at the agency and government-wide levels to implement and improve strategic planning and performance management; workforce analysis, planning, and metrics; recruitment and hiring; diversity and inclusion; employee engagement; and HR service delivery. In 2002, Tony began his federal service as an analyst for the U.S. Peace Corps, where he provided expertise and collaboration essential to redesigning the agency's processes and systems for volunteer recruitment, IT project management, and internal management controls. In 2006, he joined the Department of Energy (DOE) as a quality assurance manager, where he designed and managed the cost monitoring and oversight functions for a new enterprise-wide Training Most Efficient Organization that saved the DOE \$28M over a three-year period. Since 2010, Tony's leadership in human capital management has earned DOE recognition for transformative outcomes and best practices from multiple oversight agencies, in areas such as: hiring reform (time-to-hire); employee engagement (Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey); performance management (Goals-Engagement-Accountability-Results, or GEAR); and data-driven management reviews (HRStat 1.0). In addition, he designed and implemented the strategic planning and goal-setting processes that have set DOE's strategic goals and priorities for human capital management from 2011 thru 2020.

In 2014, Tony was appointed to the career Senior Executive Service (SES) as the Director for DOE's new Office of Human Capital Strategy and Analysis. As an Office Director, he led three corporate divisions for the Department: Workforce Analytics and Planning; Recruitment and Outreach; and Workforce Engagement and Effectiveness. In this capacity, he developed organizational partnerships and implemented strategies to develop DOE's leadership, strengthen its federal workforce, and improve HR's service delivery. In June 2017, he completed a one-year executive rotation to the Executive Office of the President in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Performance and Personnel Management Division, where he contributed policy development for the President's Executive Orders relating to the government reforms and the federal workforce and implementation guidance to agencies for the new regulation on Strategic Human Capital Management, 5 C.F.R. 250 (B).

He is a graduate of Lebanon Valley College with degrees in biology, philosophy, and Spanish. He attained the Project Management Professional (PMP) credential in 2005. Tony is a member of leading executive and HR professional organizations. He and his wife, Annie, reside with their four children in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

From: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: TPs
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:03:08 PM

Hey guys, please see some guidance for off topic talking points.
I don't see the Secretary getting asked but want him to be prepared just in case.
Please let me know if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Budget And Government Shutdown

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]

On Gen. Flynn:

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]

Roy Moore:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On DOJ:

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]

Proposed Targeted Peak-Season Fee Increase

- Secretary Zinke and President Trump love our national parks – in fact the President donated his first quarter salary to the National Park Service to restore Antietam National Battlefield.
- Our National Parks have fallen into disrepair and require about \$11 billion in maintenance.
- The NPS is proposing a pilot program to increase fees at 17 of the busiest national parks during peak season at each park. 400 of the parks will see no increase.
- 80% of the money will go directly to the park charging. 20% of the money will go to other parks that don't charge an entrance fee. The fee increase is expected to generate about \$70 million
- The revenue from these fees will improve things like restrooms, trails, roads, and visitors' centers.
- In addition to generating revenue, the peak and off-peak rates may also encourage visitors to plan their trips outside of peak season which has the added benefit of lightening congestion in the parks.
- 400 Parks are not increasing in price. Entrance to 299 National Park Service sites remains free

Comparison to bringing the kids to the movies

- The National Park entrance fee is \$70 for an entire car load of people for 7 days.
- By comparison, if I take my wife and two kids to Tysons Corner to watch a 3D movie that's \$68 before popcorn and a drink.

Q: The Trump budget cut funding for NPS. If you love the parks so much, why not ask for more money in the budget?

■ (b) (5) [Redacted]

■ [Redacted]

Deferred Maintenance

- Addressing the over \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog in repairs to national parks is a top priority for the Department and the Trump Administration.
- Park infrastructure includes trails, signage, restrooms, lodges, roads, bridges and waterlines that are fundamental to providing a world-class experience to visitors and the preservation of the natural and historical resources are parks protect.

(b) (5)



Q: Besides the peak-season fee proposal, what are some of the other ways you're trying to address the maintenance backlog?

(b) (5) [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

[Redacted]

NPS and Diversity

- The National Park Service is actively working to ensure that the Service's workforce and visiting public reflect America and we have hundreds of locations that highlight our Nation's diverse history and culture.
- The Service has taken several steps towards this goal, including by diversifying our employment applicant pool and ensuring that the National Park System accurately reflects our country's diversity.
- Reaching out to diverse populations with a special focus on the next generation is a core aim of the Find Your Park campaign that we have promoted with our partners at the National Park Foundation.

(b) (5)



Other Topics

ANWR – The Alaska 1002 area is a 1.5 million acre coastal plain in Alaska specifically set aside for the consideration of natural resource development under President Jimmy Carter. To develop energy there, however, Congress must give an authorization. The Trump Administration supports Alaska Natives' and the Delegation's effort to actualize that potential.

National Monument Review – The national monument review encompassed 27 national monuments, two of which are managed by the National Park Service and none were rescinded. The Secretary's recommendations was to restore access to public lands while balancing preservation and responsible resource use.

Confederate Monuments – “I'm an advocate of learning from our monuments, understanding the period they were made,” Secretary Ryan Zinke

“The NPS plays an important role in interpreting our nation's history. We tell America's story through our parks, and we are the keepers of many of the places where we became the nation that we are.” Mike Reynolds

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel 3 Fore arrival
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 10:36:11 AM

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 10:33:15 AM EDT
Subject: **Travel 3 Fore arrival**

Marine 1 touched down at 1013 on the ship's 1092 ft long runway full of helicopters and other aircraft next to Atlantic and docked naval ships. Trump was greeted by sec Mattis, acting naval sec sean stackley, and calf Richard McCormack. Priebus, miller, and mnuchin and wife exited back.

Trump saluted and chatted briefly beside the ship's 10--story superstructure that includes all air traffic and control functions. He then walked over a small red carpet surrounded by "rainbow sideboys" -- men dressed in green, red, purple, and blue that designate their functions on the ship. The monochrome suits and h omega look a bit like the tv show "Wiggles."

He then walked to a large gray platform that served as a giant elevator to take him down to the hangar base, a giant auditorium below.

He wan still wearing suit and red tie.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool #3: Hickam scene
Date: Friday, November 03, 2017 7:52:10 PM

From: Mike Bender <mike.bender@wsj.com>
Date: November 3, 2017 at 1:45:51 PM HST
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool #3: Hickam scene

At 114 pm local, POTUS & FLOTUS deplaned into 87 degree weather. The were greeted with leis by Hawaii Gov. David Ige and his wife, Dawn Ige; US Navy Adm. Harry Harris, commander of the US Pacific Command, his wife, Bruni Bradley; and Mikayla Webb, the daughter of Adm. Harris's aid.

POTUS's brightly colored lei — orange and yellow it appeared from a distance — was decorated with maile & ilima flowers, a combination traditionally presented to royalty on the island, Gov. Ige reports to the pool. (Hat tip to Mrs. Ige for the spelling assist.) The white lei given to FLOTUS was made of Pilake and rose.

POTUS spent about 15 minutes shaking hands with some of the roughly 100 greeters, a mix of troops and civilians. The pool was kept too far away to hear the interactions, and was hustled into vans before he finished.

At one point several woman cheered White House chief of staff John Kelly, who stood about 15 feet behind the president. "We love you General Kelly!" Mr. Kelly acknowledged his fans with a smile and placing his right hand over his heart.

—Mike Bender
The Wall Street Journal.
202-725-5805

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool #5: Pearl Harbor/lid
Date: Saturday, November 04, 2017 1:52:33 AM

From: Mike Bender <mike.bender@wsj.com>
Date: November 3, 2017 at 7:44:54 PM HST
Subject: **Travel pool #5: Pearl Harbor/lid**

As an orange sun set over the Hawaiian islands and dark gray clouds gathered around nearby mountains, POTUS made a somber and short visit to the USS Arizona Memorial — about 13 hours before wheels-up to Japan. POTUS & FLOTUS spent about 20 minutes at the simple yet stark shrine to the 1,177 crewman who died during the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

The pair stood for about a minute in front of the white marble wall etched with the names of the fallen during a wreath laying ceremony. The first couple adjusted the wreath slightly before two soldiers placed it near the wall. The Trumps then threw white pekake flower petals into the water where the remains of more than 900 Arizona crewmen rest.

As POTUS left the main room, and his staff and White House press followed, his chief of staff, retired Gen. John Kelly, slipped in and wordlessly took in the wall.

While Kelly absorbed the memorial, POTUS & FLOTUS stood in front of a plaque describing it. POTUS asked one of his hosts a few questions and nodded during the answers. Your pool was kept at a distance at which neither side of the conversation could be heard.

POTUS was escorted to the memorial on the Pacific Fleet admiral's barge, a sharp looking boat with a blue hull, white cabin and adorned with US flags. A second, smaller barge, the Remembrance, carried much of the president's staff. Most of the president's top staff traveling with him joined the tour, including HR McMaster, Dina Powell, Rob Porter, Hope Hicks, Sarah Sanders, Matt Pottinger, Bob Lighthizer, Michael Anton, and Jared Kushner.

With the pool holding in vans, POTUS received a second private military briefing from Pacific Command leaders after his tour, and briefly attended a reception on Pearl Harbor Base at PACOM Commander Harris's residence.

At the social, the President and First Lady visited w PACOM staff and listened to marine band, said White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders.

From his first tweet this morning at 6:51am Eastern, to the return to his Honolulu hotel at 7:33 p.m. Hawaii time, that's nearly a 19-hour day for POTUS on the first day of his 12-day trip halfway around the world.

For your record keeping:

- Pool departed POTUS's Honolulu hotel at 4:50pm, en route to USS Arizona Memorial. Arrived at the PAC fleet boathouse at 5:08pm
- 5:12 boarded the Pacific Fleet's Admiral's Barge
- At 5:40, POTUS was off his boat and saluting the memorial. He held the pose for about a minute.
- At 5:42, he and FLOTUS threw flower petals into the water
- POTUS and FLOTUS boarded the boat at 5:50 p.m.
- Motorcade was rolling from the boathouse at 6:34 p.m., and arrived at the reception 10 minutes later.
- Motorcade was rolling from the reception at 7:15 p.m.
- POTUS returned to his hotel at 7:33 p.m, when a travel/photo lid was promptly called.

- Participants in the wreath laying ceremony: The President and First Lady will be accompanied by Admiral Harris and his wife, Ms. Bradley. Others: HM1 Kyle Mobeck (USPACFLT) - Hometown: Rathdrum, Idaho; PS2 Koko Zaw (USPACFLT) - Hometown: Queens, New York; CS1 Shemeka Anderson - Hometown: Spartanburg, South Carolina

—Mike Bender
The Wall Street Journal.
202-725-5805
@MichaelCBender

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool 1 - Andrews
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2017 9:48:22 AM

From: "Bierman, Noah" <noah.bierman@latimes.com>
Date: July 22, 2017 at 9:06:32 AM EDT
Subject: **Travel pool 1 - Andrews**

Good morning from muggy but faintly breezy Joint Base Andrews where the president is about to be wheels up for Norfolk to commission the Gerald R Ford. Traveling with President Trump are Reince Priebus, Steve Mnuchin and his wife, per staff. Pool observed Mnuchin.

Marine 1 landed at 9:01. Trump walked into AF 1 at 9:05 In dark suit and red tie. He waved to a small group of onlookers and then reporters before boarding .

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool 6 — Trump on NoKo: "We'll see"
Date: Sunday, December 31, 2017 9:52:35 PM

From: Mike Bender <mike.bender@wsj.com>

Date: December 31, 2017 at 9:49:07 PM EST
Subject: Travel pool 6 — Trump on NoKo: "We'll see"

POTUS dropped in on the New Year's Eve party at Mar-a-Lago tonight at 9:25 p m., strolling past the assembled media pool and delivering very brief remarks. Asked for what his thoughts on North Korea's claims about developing its nuclear force, he said, "We'll see."

"Hello everybody. Happy new year. I think you're going to go in and take some pictures of the crowd. Great crowd. We're going to have a great year. We're going to have a fantastic 2018. We're off to a very good start, as you know, with the great tax cuts and ANWR and getting rid of the individual mandate, which is very, very unpopular, as you know. But we are going to have a tremendous year. Stock market, I think, is going to continue to go up. Companies are going to continue to come into the country. And they're doing it now, soon to be a record clip. So we look forward to seeing you inside. Come on along."

On North Korea leader Kim Jong Un's claim that he has a nuclear button on his desk, and that the weapons can reach the United States: "We'll see, we'll see. Come on inside."

A bit of color (with an assist from NYT's Emily Cochrane) for the curious:

POTUS and Barron were both in tuxedos. Melania had a full length rose gold glittery gown with floral accents.

Guests attended a cocktail reception near a swimming pool before the dinner. A red carpet led into the Grand Ballroom, where the dinner was held, and several guests confused the White House press corp for paparazzi (easy mistake), and stopped and posed for the cameras.

Guests arrived in full formal attire, many clutching champagne flutes and martini glasses. There was a lot of glitter -- full length gowns, clutches, shoes for women and a couple of the men -- and many of the women had fur stoles, some of them floor length. Louise Linton, wife of Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, was one of them, with a short white dress and white fur caplet. Screens televised the crowd at Times Square, while a cover band played.

Among the attendees: Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner (who wished the press corp a happy new year) and their two oldest children, Arabella and Joseph; Eric and Lara Trump; Don Jr. and his eldest son, Don III; Mr. Mnuchin (who promised 2018 will be "great") and his wife. Former NY Mets first baseman Keith Hernandez said hello, Fox Business host Lou Dobbs smiled, and Dr. Eric Kaplan, who claims to be the most-followed chiropractor on Twitter, stopped and chatted, too.

The menu tonight started with Trump Iceberg Wedge (roquefort, grape tomatoes, bacon, red onion) followed by a second course of Maine Lobster Ravioli (with fennel mousseline, olive & citrus verjus sauce). The third course was 7X Sliced Tenderloin & Pan-Seared Sea Bass (with taro root puree, morel mushrooms, roasted heirloom carrots, sweet cherries & burgundy jus). For dessert: Baked Alaska.

Happy new year everyone!

—Mike Bender
The Wall Street Journal.
(202)725-5805
mike.bender@wsj.com

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool 7/depart embassy for emperor greeting
Date: Sunday, November 05, 2017 9:06:32 PM

From: "Nakamura, David" <David.Nakamura@washpost.com>
Date: November 6, 2017 at 10:54:44 AM GMT+9
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool 7/depart embassy for emperor greeting

Pool held in vans as Potus did Q and A with biz leaders, and then spoke with US embassy staff. One note: after his introductory remarks to biz leaders ended and before pool was ushered out your pooler twice yelled a question to Potus about whether the US needs to consider tougher gun laws but he didn't answer. At 10:49 am motorcade left embassy for the Emperor Akihito's residence where the emperor and his wife will formally welcome the Trumps. There will be a preset pool to assist.

-30-

Sent from my iPhone

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool 10: Yad Vashem Background
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 7:15:57 AM

From: "Memoli, Michael" <michael.memoli@latimes.com>

Date: May 23, 2017 at 12:41:59 PM GMT+3
Subject: **Travel Pool 10: Yad Vashem Background**

Pool is loaded in vans ahead of the next scheduled movement, to Yad Vashem for a wreath-laying ceremony and guestbook signing.

Here is some background provided by the U.S. Embassy via the White House on events and personnel POTUS will see there.

Yad Vashem Press Notes

Yad Vashem, established by law in 1953, is Israel's official body entrusted with perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust. Official memorial ceremonies are held in The Hall of Remembrance, a solemn tent-like structure which allows visitors to pay their respects to the memories of the martyred dead. On the floor are the names of the six death camps and some of the concentration camps and killing sites throughout Europe. In front of the memorial flame lies a crypt containing ashes of victims. Press will enter the site via the Avenue and Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations, dedicated to non-Jews who risked their lives to help Jews, which is a wooded area with honorary plaques, like the one pictured here.

Arrival

1. Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate

Shalev was born in Jerusalem, and holds a bachelor's degree in Middle East Studies from the Hebrew University. During the Yom Kippur War, he served as Bureau Head of the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) Chief of Staff, and subsequently as Chief Education Officer of the IDF. Shalev served later as Director of Israel's Culture Authority. Since 1993, Shalev has led Yad Vashem in a comprehensive program to meaningfully teach and commemorate the Holocaust. Prioritizing education, Shalev founded Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Education. He also conceived and established Yad Vashem's Museums Complex, including the Holocaust History Museum, for which he serves as Chief Curator, and brought about a technological revolution at Yad Vashem. Shalev also serves as Chief Curator of Yad Vashem's permanent exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland) Museum's Jewish Pavilion. Under his direction, Yad Vashem was awarded the esteemed Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement to Society and State, and the Prince of Asturias Prize for Concord. The President of France has appointed him to the *Légion d'honneur*. Shalev has also received the President of Israel's Medal from the late President Shimon Peres, the Hebrew University's Rothberg Award for Jewish Education, and the Worthy

Citizen of Jerusalem Award. In December 2016 he was awarded the title of Commander of the Order of Civic Merit by the Kingdom of Spain.

2. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council

Rabbi Lau was born in Poland in 1937 and liberated from the Buchenwald Concentration Camp in 1945 by the U.S. Army when he immigrated to Israel. His father was a famous Rabbi who was killed during the Holocaust in Treblinka. Rabbi Lau received his Rabbinical ordination in 1960, and in 1971 was chosen as the regional Rabbi of North Tel Aviv. In 1979 he was chosen to serve as the Chief Rabbi of Netanya, and in 1983 became the youngest member of the Chief Rabbinical Council of Israel. He was chosen as the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa in 1988, and from 1993-2003, he served as the Chief Rabbi of Israel. He was chosen to serve a second time as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa in 2005, and in 2008 became Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council. He has published many books, including *Judaism, in Theory and Practice*; *Yahel Yisrael*; a *Commentary on the Ethics of the Fathers*; and his autobiography, *Do Not Raise Your Hand Against the Boy*. In 2005, Rabbi Lau received the prestigious Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement and Special Contributions to Society and the State. In 2011 French President Nicolas Sarkozy conferred the title of Legion d'Honneur on Rabbi Lau.

3. Inbal Kivity Ben Dov, Director of the Yad Vashem Commemoration & Community Relations Division

Greetings inside the Hall of Remembrance, before ceremony

1. Margot Hershenbaum (née Goldstein), is the sister of Ester Goldstein, the Holocaust Child Victim whose personal album will be presented to POTUS (<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/albums/goldstein.asp>). Margot was born in Berlin in 1929. In 1939, she was sent to Australia as part of the Kindertransport (organized rescue efforts of Jewish children between 1938-1940). She never saw her family again. She remained in Australia until 1948 when she went to live with her uncle in the United States and attended nursing school there. In 1957 she moved to Israel and became a nurse at Hadassah hospital. She met her husband Pinchas Hershenbaum (a Holocaust survivor from Lodz) and they married in 1961. They had a son and a daughter. Margot and her family settled in the town of Netanya, where she resides until today. Her husband passed away one year ago.

2. Colette Avital, Chairperson Center Organizations of Holocaust SURVIVORS in Israel

Ambassador Colette Avital immigrated to Israel from Romania. She has held a variety of key Foreign Ministry posts, including Deputy Director of Information (1979-1981), Director of the Training Division and Head of the Ehud Avriel school of Diplomacy (1984-1986), and Deputy Director General for Information, Media Communication and Culture (1986-1988). She served in Montreal, Brussels, Paris, Boston, and as Ambassador in Lisbon. She led Ministry's efforts to

upgrade the status of women in Diplomatic Service, and when she was appointed Consul General of Israel in New-York in 1992, it was the highest position attained by a woman in the Foreign Service. In January 1999 she turned to politics and won a seat in the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament. In the Knesset, she formed an Inquiry Committee for the Location and Restitution of the Assets of Holocaust Victims and initiated a law to create a State Company for the restitution of these assets. She served as Deputy- Speaker of the Knesset, and was a member of the Constitution and Law Committee, the Knesset Committee and the Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Committee. She has been awarded the Palmes Academiques and subsequently La Legion d'honneur by the French Government; the Cavaliere dell'ordine della Republica by the Italian Government and the National Order for Merit with the rank of High Officer by the Rumanian Government, and she has received the highest decoration given by Portugal, the Gran Cruz do Infante Dom Henrique.

3. Yossie Hollander, Chairman, Fuel Freedom Foundation

Yossie Hollander is the co-founder of Fuel Freedom Foundation (FFF), a nonprofit dedicated to opening the transportation fuels market to competition from cheaper, cleaner, healthier American made alternative fuels. It aims to end the US oil imports and launch a trillion dollar private investment that will grow the US economy over the next two decades. Hollander, who lives in Irvine, California, is a son of Holocaust survivors and the founder and major funder of Echoes and Reflections, the largest Holocaust education program in the U.S. He is on the board of USC Shoah Foundation, which is dedicated to archiving stories from Holocaust witnesses and survivors. Hollander serves on many other boards, including the executive board and management committee of the Weizmann Institute of Science, where he launched a renewable energy initiative. He and his wife Dana founded the Dana and Yossie Hollander Center for Structural Proteomics, a world leader in the field. He also serves as the chairman of the Weizmann tenure committee. Hollander has funded research at many universities, including Cornell, MIT, UC Berkeley, the University of Chicago, and Carnegie Mellon University. He is a member of the Board of Councilors at the University of Southern California's Dornsife College. Hollander received an honorary doctorate from the Weizmann Institute in 2010.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool 10a: Additional Background, from Yad Vashem
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 7:15:36 AM

From: "Memoli, Michael" <michael.memoli@latimes.com>

Date: May 23, 2017 at 12:48:45 PM GMT+3

Subject: **Travel Pool 10a: Additional Background, from Yad Vashem**

Press materials from Yad Vashem describe what POTUS will participate in as a memorial ceremony.

More from them:

"Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev will accompany President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump while at Yad Vashem. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Mrs. Sara Netanyahu, and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau will also join the President during his visit to Yad Vashem.

While the President's visit to Israel is brief, he has chosen to commemorate the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust by participating in a memorial ceremony in the Hall of Remembrance. During the ceremony, the President will rekindle the eternal flame and lay a wreath on a stone slab under which ashes from extermination camps are buried. El Maleh Rachamim, a Jewish prayer for the souls of the martyrs' of the Holocaust, will be sung by a cantor.

President Trump will be invited to sign the Yad Vashem guest book and Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev will present the President with a token of remembrance, an exact replica of the original Holocaust-era personal album that belonged to Ester Goldstein who was murdered during the Holocaust at the age of 16. Ester's sister Margot Herschenbaum, the sole survivor of her immediate family, will attend the Presidential event at Yad Vashem. Ms. Colette Avital, Chairperson of the Center Organization of Holocaust Survivors in Israel will be present at the ceremony at Yad Vashem.

The President will be presented with a replica of a Holocaust-era personal album belonging to Ester Goldstein, murdered during the Holocaust at age 16.

About the Token of Remembrance:

Don't Forget Me: Ester Goldstein's Personal Album

“Love life, and don’t be afraid of death. Believe in God and a better future”

Written in the album by Ester’s classmate Bella Lassore. Bella was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 where she was murdered. The personal album of Ester Goldstein is one of hundreds of thousands of personal items preserved for posterity in the Yad Vashem Archives.

The album is comprised of messages of hope and everlasting friendship inscribed by Ester’s family and friends. Some of the pages are embellished with optimistic and innocent illustrations, while others include photographs of those dearest to her.

The dedications in the album express familial devotion and steadfast connection to Judaism. The first entry is from 1937, when Ester was eleven years old, and the final one is dated September 16, 1942, about a month before Ester was deported to Riga (Latvia) and subsequently murdered.

This personal album is one of several included in an online exhibition available via Yad Vashem's website in four languages: English, Hebrew, Spanish and German.

Approximately 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered in the Holocaust, most of them leaving behind almost no trace – a handful of photographs and some personal belongings. This precious album offers insight into the life of a young girl that was cut brutally short.

Background on Margot Herschenbaum:

Margot Herschenbaum, was born in 1929. In 1939, she was sent to Australia as part of the Kindertransport (organized rescue efforts of Jewish children between 1938-1940) and is the sole survivor of her immediate family. In 1999 Margot filled out a Page of Testimony commemorating her family murdered in the Holocaust.

Background on Ester Goldstein:

Ester was born in 1926 in Joachimstrasse, Berlin to Blima and David Goldstein, who

moved to Germany from Poland two years before she was born. She had a sister Margot and a brother Heinz (Haim). In 1938, in the shadow of the increasing Nazi persecution of Jews, the family unsuccessfully attempted to flee Germany. However Ester was deported on 26 October 1942 to Riga and subsequently murdered at the age of 16. Details of this transport can be found on Yad Vashem's online database documenting the deportation of Jews from western European countries to ghettos, concentration and death camps in the east.

After liberation, Ester's cousin David Werner returned to the Goldstein family home in Berlin, where a neighbor gave him a box of papers that she had kept safe throughout the war. Among the papers was the album, which he gave to Margot, and in 2006, Margot donated it to Yad Vashem for safekeeping.

"Do not forget me" was a dedication written in the album by Ester's classmate Sonja Strenger who was deported to Auschwitz in 1943.

About Yad Vashem:

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, was established by the Israeli Parliament in 1953. Located in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem is dedicated to Holocaust remembrance, documentation, research and education. Through its International School for Holocaust Studies, International Institute for Holocaust Research, Archives, Museums and Library, Yad Vashem has become the global center for gathering and disseminating information about the Holocaust and seeks to meaningfully impart the legacy of the Shoah for generations to come.

The Hall of Remembrance was the first commemoration site established at Yad Vashem on the Mount of Remembrance. Its walls are made of basalt boulders brought from the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee, and its angular roof gives it a tent-like shape. Engraved on the mosaic floor are the names of 22 Nazi murder sites, symbolic of the hundreds of extermination and concentration camps, transit camps and killing sites that existed throughout Europe. The Eternal Flame continuously illuminates the Hall, its smoke exiting the building through an opening at the highest point of the ceiling. Before it stands a stone crypt containing the ashes of Holocaust victims.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool 12/Louisiana greeting
Date: Saturday, September 02, 2017 5:13:09 PM

From: "Gillman, Todd" <tgillman@dallasnews.com>

Date: September 2, 2017 at 4:05:30 PM CDT

Subject: Travel pool 12/Louisiana greeting

Trumps deplaned at 3:57. The governor and his wife were first and the president, first lady and cabinet members were still working their way down the [line.as](#) pool headed to vans. Blazing sun hid behind a cloud as we boarded.

Greeters, per White House and confirmed by local pooler from The Advocate.

Governor John Bel Edwards and wife Donna
Senator Bill Cassidy
Senator John Kennedy
Representative Clay Higgins, 3rd Congressional District
Representative Mike Johnson, 4th Congressional District
Representative Ralph Abraham, 5th Congressional District
Representative Garrett Graves, 6th Congressional District

Also lieutenant governor Billy Nungesser and state attorney general Jeff Landry.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool 18: LZ
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:40:16 AM

From: "Memoli, Michael" <michael.memoli@latimes.com>

Date: May 23, 2017 at 3:30:53 PM GMT+3

Subject: Travel Pool 18: LZ

Motorcade arrived at the Jerusalem landing zone at 3:28 on. Boarding helos shortly for the hop to Tel Aviv.

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[@mikememoli](https://twitter.com/mikememoli)

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #1 -- 11/9/17 -- motorcade arrival/welcome ceremony
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 8:44:09 PM
Attachments: [Image.png](#)

From: Andrew Restuccia <arestuccia@politico.com>
Date: November 9, 2017 at 9:35:56 AM GMT+8
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #1 -- 11/9/17 -- motorcade arrival/welcome ceremony

Good morning from Beijing, where POTUS arrived at the Great Hall of the People via motorcade for a welcoming ceremony at 9:17 am local time.

The motorcade pulled up in front of the Great Hall. POTUS, in a red tie, exited the motorcade with FLOTUS and greeted Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife. FLOTUS is wearing a long black and white dress.

Three horn players in red uniforms played briefly when POTUS arrived. As Xi and Trump stood on a platform together, a Chinese military band played the US and Chinese national anthems while ceremonial cannon fire erupted in nearby Tiananman Square, and a line of uniformed officials in green, white and blue uniforms stood at attention.

Xi and Trump then walked side by side on a red carpet that snaked around the area in front of the Great Hall. They walked past the uniformed troops and chatted briefly. And then paused in front of the military band as it played The Stars and Stipes Forver. They then walked by a crowd of school children waving American and Chinese flags. The children jumped up and down in a coordinated display of glee.

Xi, Trump and their wives walked up the stairs entered the Great Hall at 9:34 am, followed by US and Chinese officials.

Dozens of Chinese flags line the roof of the Great Hall, which faces Tiananmen Square. At the center of the square, there's a giant, maybe 100-foot-tall red lantern filled with oversized flowers.

Among the U.S. officials standing on the stairs of the Great Hall for the ceremony: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, US Trade Reprmentative Robert Lighthizer, communications director Hope Hicks, staff secretary Rob Porter, press secretary Sarah Sanders, US ambassador to China Terry Branstad, chief of staff John Kelly, social media director Dan Scavino, National Security Adviser HR McMaster and senior adviser Jared Kushner.

The Great Hall is the hub of much of China's government activity. It's a massive, cavernous, angular building made of stone that abuts Tiananmen Square. The square appears to have been emptied of tourists for the occasion.

POTUS is scheduled to soon meet with Xi for a bilateral meeting. And there's a state dinner tonight.

A photo of the scene is attached. 

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #1a, 11/8/17--More detail on POTUS attempted DMZ trip
Date: Tuesday, November 07, 2017 7:28:44 PM

From: Julie Davis <julie.davis@nytimes.com>
Date: November 8, 2017 at 9:13:51 AM GMT+9
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #1a, 11/8/17--More detail on POTUS attempted DMZ trip

First a correction: the LZ today was Yongsan Garrison, not Yongson.

Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders informed your pool that White House officials were hoping the fog would clear and allow a second attempt by President Trump to land at the DMZ, but instead it got worse.

She said the President Moon Jae-in of South Korea was going to join Trump there, a "historic moment" because she believes it would have been the first time a US and South Korean president had visited the DMZ together.

"The effort shows the strong and importance of the alliance between the two countries," Sanders said.

Motorcade is back at President Trump's hotel.

Julie Hirschfeld Davis
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The New York Times
(202) 257-0476 mobile

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #2a -- 11/9/17 -- transcript
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 11:01:59 PM

From: Andrew Restuccia <arestuccia@politico.com>
Date: November 9, 2017 at 11:57:31 AM GMT+8
To: "(b) (6)" <(b) (6)>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #2a -- 11/9/17 -- transcript

Here's are some key quotes from Trump's remarks at the bilat:

"It's an honor to be with you and there can be no more important subject than China-US relations. We have between us -- and we have to include other countries who could come in -- we have the capacity to solve world problems for many years to come."

"Our meeting last night was absolutely terrific. Our dinner was beyond that. We had a dinner that was going to last quickly -- 20 or 25 minutes -- because I was traveling and you were so nice and you said, 'we'll just do a quick dinner.' And I think it has to last at least two hours and we enjoyed every minute of it with your beautiful wife and Melania together. Their relationship is a great one and our relationship has already proven to be a great one."

"Our meeting this morning in front of my representatives and your representatives was excellent, discussing North Korea. And I do believe there's a solution to that as you do."

"Discussing trade...knowing that the United States really has to change its policies because they've gotten so far behind on trade with China and frankly with many other countries. And I have great respect for you with that because you're representing China. But it's too bad that past administrations allowed it to get so far out of kilter. But we'll make it fair and it'll be tremendous to both of us."

"My feeling toward you is an incredibly warm one. As we said there's great chemistry and I think we're going to do tremendous things both for China and the United States. And it is a very, very great honor to be with you. Thank you very much."

"The hosting of the military parade this morning was magnificent. The world was watching. I've already had people call from all over the world. They were all watching. Nothing you can see is so beautiful."

"I just want to thank you for the warm welcome and I look forward to many years of success and friendship, working together to solve not only our problems, but world problems and problems of great danger and security. I believe we can solve almost all of them and probably all of them."

And here are Xi's remarks, courtesy of co-pooler Michael Bender.

No major news from Xi. Some highlights from the Chinese leader:

- "We reached many common understandings."
- mentioned "Korea peninsula" instead of NoKo by name, and lumped it into a group of "major international and regional issues"
- "The China-US relationship now stands at a new starting point."

full transcript (beginning got cut off):

“...extending warm welcome to President Trump on your state visit to China from yesterday afternoon to the present we have had an in depth exchange of ideas on China-US relations and important issues of shared interest. We reached many common understandings. We both believe that China-US relations are important to the well being of our two peoples and on the peace, stability and prosperity of the world. For China and the United States, cooperation is the only viable choice and win-win cooperation can take us to a better future. We agree that China-US relations have made important progress this year. We have agreed to further promote strategic guidance of summit diplomacy for bilateral relations, strengthen interactions at high and all levels, make the most of the four high-level dialogue mechanisms, expand interactions and cooperation on economy and trade (inaudible) relations, law enforcement, people to people exchange and in other areas. In-house communication and cooperation on the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan and other major international and regional issues and work together to take China-US relations to even greater development. The China-US relationship now stands at a new starting point. China is ready to work with the United States to enhance cooperation and properly manage differences in a spirit of mutual respect and mutual benefit. This way will enable our two peoples, the region people across the world to benefit more from China-US relations. Thank you.”

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #3 / departure from Bastille Day parade
Date: Friday, July 14, 2017 6:54:55 AM

From: "Bennett, Brian" <brian.bennett@latimes.com>

Date: July 14, 2017 at 12:43:34 PM GMT+2

Subject: Travel pool report #3 / departure from Bastille Day parade

At 12:24 pm, the motorcade left the viewing stand at the Place de la Concorde and is headed for the airport for the Air Force One departure from Paris.

We are told POTUS and FLOTUS are in the limo, but we did not see them get in.

The press pool was rushed to the van while President Trump, FLOTUS, President Macron and Brigitte Macron were standing together and talking at the end of the Bastille Day parade.

The parade lasted more than two hours, during which French and American troops marched before the two leaders as well as armored personnel carriers, tanks, missile launchers and other military equipment. Dozens of military planes and helicopters flew down the Champs-Elysees and over the heads of the two presidents.

Bands played traditional French marching music. At one point a marching band spelled out the word "NICE" in front of the VIP reviewing stand. That band also played a rendition of Daft Punk's "Get Lucky."

At the conclusion of the parade, Macron issued brief remarks with Trump standing beside him. The remarks were open press.

"We have also found sure allies, friends, who came to help us," Macron said. "The United States of America are among them. That is why nothing will separate us, never. The presence today of the US President Donald Trump and his wife is the sign of a friendship that lasts through time."

The two couples then walked across the square to stand in front of large American and French flags unfurled before them.

Brian Bennett
Los Angeles Times
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool Report #5 -- POTUS departure.
Date: Saturday, May 27, 2017 10:25:35 AM

From: Michael Shear <michael.shear@nytimes.com>

Date: May 27, 2017 at 4:08:06 PM GMT+2
Subject: **Travel Pool Report #5 -- POTUS departure.**



Your pooler is informed by White House staff traveling with POTUS that at 4:04 pm local the motorcade has left the hotel en route the LZ for Marine One and the flight to the Sigonella.

Again, your pooler does not have eyes on POTUS but will pass along the movements from wh staff.

--

Michael D. Shear
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The New York Times
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #6
Date: Thursday, May 04, 2017 9:43:31 PM

From: Tara Palmeri <tpalmeri@politico.com>

Date: May 4, 2017 at 9:37:57 PM EDT

Subject: Travel pool report #6

President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull were seated at the same table in the center of the dining room of the Intrepid.

President Trump sat in between First lady Melania Trump and Lucy Turnbull. Prime Minister Turnbull sat to the right of his wife, Lucy Turnbull.

The event started with a trio of singers who sang the Australian anthem, followed by a color guard presentation. It was followed by the U.S. national anthem and then another color guard presentation.

Also in attendance: Rex Tillerson, Reince Priebus, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, U.N. ambassador for Australia Gillian Bird, John Travolta and country singer Kellie Pickler.

Anthony Pratt, executive chairman of Visy industries and Pratt Industries in the U.S., took the stage to pledge an investment of \$2 billion over the next decade for "high paying manufacturing jobs" in the Midwest.

Mr. Turnbull took the stage to underscore the closeness of the two countries. "We are always more assured of winning when we are fighting together," he said.

He also said the U.S. and Australia "condemn and we resist North Korea's reckless provocation."

Turnbull: "Today and together we condemn and resist the reckless provocations of North Korea. We fight together in Iraq and Afghanistan to defeat and destroy the terrorists who threaten our way of life. Today Australians and Americans stand shoulder to shoulder defending our freedoms."

Rupert Murdoch followed Turnbull to introduce Trump. He noted the significance of the President's announcement that he will visit Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Vatican later this month.

Trump took the stage at 9pm. He thanked the Australians for fighting alongside the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan. He spoke about the history of the Battle of the Coral Sea.

"There's no better place to remember the impact of military readiness than this ship," Trump said.

"This week my administration reached a historic deal with Congress, to end the devastating cuts to the United States military. I don't know what they were thinking when they started cutting, and it's coming back bigly. We're ordering lots of ships, lots of jobs."

"We will add \$25 billion for national defense in a short period of time."

Trump said that he had a "productive discussion" with PM Turnbull about the future of the two countries from national security to trade to immigration and enhanced economic cooperation.

"We affirmed the tremendous friendship between the US and Australia," Trump said. "The armed forces are fighting side by side to defeat ISIS and the scourge of terrorism, and we will eradicate terrorism."

For nearly a century Americans and Australians have fought together, bled together, he said.

"Our brave warriors have fought shoulder to shoulder in every major conflict together," Trump said, citing Normandy, Vietnam and the Middle East.

He said: "Our two nations were born as the rebellious children of the same parent. Americans have had no better friends than the Australians, I mean that."

Trump recounted the battle of the Coral Sea that he said formed the foundation of the strong ties that exist today.

He thanked Australia for its contributions to the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. "We are profoundly grateful for Australia's contribution in Iraq and Afghanistan," he said.

"On behalf of the United States, I thank Australia tonight.. we love Australia very much."

At the end he said: "So with love for our two nations, with pride in our shared history and with faith in almighty God we renew our old friendship."

He said the U.S. and Australia have a "great, great relationship."

Other highlights from Trump's speech:

- Trump started his speech by calling Rupert Murdoch a "good friend," adding there's "only one Rupert Murdoch"

- He also thanked pro Australian golfer Greg Norman, who he said convinced him that he could never be a great golfer.

- Mr. Trump chided Australian billionaire Anthony Pratt, who pledged \$2 billion over 10 years to invest in U.S. jobs, particularly in the Midwest: "That's peanuts for Anthony. You can do better," Mr. Trump said.

- " On the January phone call between Turnbull and Trump, he said: "We really didn't have a rough phone call. Everyone is talking about this phone call.... Now the record is straight, all of those people there," Trump said pointing to the media in the back of the room. "It got a little bit testy but that's okay. We have a very good relationship and i've very proud to it."

- Trump said he's been donating to the organization hosting the dinner, the American Australian Association, for years because Rupert Murdoch would pester him for money. He joked that he never really understood what he was giving to. "Now I realize it was money well spent," he said.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #7 -- 11/9/17 -- POTUS at dinner
Date: Thursday, November 09, 2017 7:04:13 AM

From: Andrew Restuccia <arestuccia@politico.com>
Date: November 9, 2017 at 6:48:05 PM GMT+8
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel pool report #7 -- 11/9/17 -- POTUS at dinner

POTUS, wearing a blue tie, entered the hall at 6:16 pm along with FLOTUS, who was wearing a long black printed dress. The state dinner is taking place in a room called Golden Hall -- an appropriate location for a US president who is fond of gold motifs.

Soon after entering, the hosts played a video with clips of Xi Jinping's April trip to Mar-a-Lago to visit POTUS, as well as a highlight reel of Trump's stops this week in Beijing. The montage included what looked to be a cell phone video of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner's daughter Arabella singing and reciting poetry in Mandarin during the Mar-a-Lago visit. It also later included a short clip of a video of Arabella speaking in Mandarin that POTUS brought to Beijing this week as a gift to Xi.

Xi and his wife were reportedly delighted by Arabella's performances.

Xi then walked onto a stage at the front of the room to deliver a toast. He spoke in Mandarin, but the remarks were translated in the room as he spoke.

"China and the United States, once involved in animosity, have grown into a community with our interests converging," Xi said, per the translation.

"To the prosperity of China and the United States and the well-being of our people," Xi said in toasting POTUS.

POTUS then gave a toast of his own: "Your nation is a testament to thousands of years of living history."

"Though we come from different places and far away lands, there is much that binds the east and the west," he said saying that people in both countries have overcome adversity to build great nations.

Mentioning his granddaughter Arabella, Trumo added, "Our children so often remind us of our shared humanity and true dignity."

"To the people of your country and to a friendship that will only grow stronger and stronger in the many years to come," Trump said at the end of his toast.

The screens in the room then played the whole video of Arabella reciting poetry and singing that Trump brought to China this week as a gift for Xi.

The pool was then ushered out of the room at 6:47 pm.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool Report #10- Blue House
Date: Tuesday, November 07, 2017 2:09:13 AM

From: Jerome CARTILLIER [mailto:Jerome.CARTILLIER@afp.com]

Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2017 3:40 PM

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Travel Pool Report #10- Blue House

After a 30 minute ride, Marine One landed at Yongsan Base.

On our way to the Blue House, onlookers could be seen waving the flags of the two countries but there were also protesters chanting and carrying signs "No war".

The pool motorcade was apparently separated from the presidential motorcade. Pool has asked for explanation to no avail at this stage.

Pool was then escorted inside the Blue House and could only see the arrival on a television screen.

Under a grey sky, POTUS and FLOTUS were greeted by president Moon Jae-In and his wife Kim Jung Sook.

The two leaders stood at attention for the national anthems.

They the walked side by side on a red carpet for a review of troops before greeting US and South Korean delegations.

US delegation included, among others, Rex Tillerson, H.R. McMaster, Jared Kushner, Steven Miller and Dina Powell.o

The two leaders then entered the main building. POTUS and FLOTUS sat down one after the other to sign the guest book.

The two presidents and their spouses then stood for a family picture.

"President Moon, this is such a great honor. Thank you", wrote POTUS.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #13 - Handshake
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2017 7:14:20 AM

From: Jerome CARTILLIER <Jerome.CARTILLIER@afp.com>
Date: November 12, 2017 at 8:12:30 PM GMT+8
Subject: Travel pool report #13 - Handshake

After a five minute drive from POTUS hotel, motorcade arrived at the Convention center for the ASEAN gala dinner.

At 8:02pm, POTUS wearing - like all the other leaders - Philippine formal attire, the Barong Tagalog (long-sleeve white shirt), walked on the red carpet.

He exchanged a lingering handshake and a few words with president Duterte's wife, who smiled, and then shook president Duterte's hand.

The three then turned to the photographers and as he was leaving, POTUS shook their hands again and smiled.

Everybody then stood for the family photo, POTUS standing to president Duterte's right.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #13
Date: Monday, September 18, 2017 4:25:38 PM

From: Anita Kumar <akumar@mcclatchydc.com>

Date: September 18, 2017 at 4:20:24 PM EDT

Subject: Travel pool report #13

New York
Sept 18, 2017

A few more tidbits from the Trump-Macron meeting:

The two leaders called each other by first name.

POTUS said he hopes a July 4th parade to show off US military strength could happen this year (which your pooler assumed means 2018) but it might take another year.

After POTUS spoke about the visit to France for Bastille Day, Macron said in English: "Our people in France were very proud to have you and your wife, Melania, in Paris for Bastille Day."

Here are a couple other quotes from POTUS:

Of Macron's governing in France, he said: "He's doing what has to be done." Later, near the end of the spray, he said "I am proud to say we are very very very good friends with France."

POTU did not appear to answer any shouted questions.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report #14 - Correction
Date: Sunday, November 12, 2017 8:00:19 AM

From: Jerome CARTILLIER <Jerome.CARTILLIER@afp.com>
Date: November 12, 2017 at 8:58:45 PM GMT+8
Subject: Travel pool report #14 - Correction

Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte was welcoming guests with his partner, Honeylet Avancena, who local media refer to as his “common-law” wife

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report 2 - SHS briefing
Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 6:22:36 AM

From: Andrew BEATTY <Andrew.BEATTY@afp.com>
Date: August 29, 2017 at 11:15:52 AM CDT
Subject: Travel pool report 2 - SHS briefing

Thirty minutes into the flight, after an unusually turbulent climb out of the greater Washington area, Sarah Huckabee Sanders came back to the press cabin to flesh out plans for the day.

Sanders indicated the president's schedule was still in flux because of the continued poor weather in Texas.

"Due to the weather and all of the circumstances it's a little bit more fluid today than a normal travel day," she said.

"The president wants to be very cautious about making sure that any activity doesn't disrupt any of the recovery efforts that are still ongoing, which is the reason for the locations we are going here today."

"As of right now, I don't know that we will be able to get to some of the really damaged areas.

Sanders said the WH began focusing on Harvey "early last week" and added that POTUS was joined aboard by secretaries Price and Carson, Administrator Linda McMahon and acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke.

Also on the plane, from the White House, we Chief of Staff John Kelly, deputy chiefs Joe Hagin and Kirstjen Nielsen and senior advisors Dina Powell and Marc Short.

Further to pool report 1, James Rivera, who manages the SBA's disaster assistance unit, is indeed aboard. "SBA plays a really, really big role" in terms of individual and small businesses loans Sanders said.

She described the two stops -- Corpus Christi and Austin -- as being somewhat divided between state and local responses.

"Corpus Christi is a little bit more focused on the local response and recovery, Austin will be heavier on the state efforts," she said.

On the ground in Corpus Christi the plan is for POTUS to meet Governor Greg Abbott and his wife and FEMA administrator William 'Brock' Long who are on the ground.

"There will be a big group kinda briefing, local officials there in Corpus Christi and Senators Cruz and Cornyn are expected to join there and be with us through a bit of the day."

"The first part of the trip and one of the main, primary reasons for secretaries Price, Secretary Carson and Administrator McMahon (being here), each of their agencies will play a really big role particularly in the recovery efforts going forward and today they will be with their counterparts of the governor's cabinet, so that they can really come back and make sure that we are all in (inaudible) to offer federal assistance and lay the foundation for what we know is going to be a long recovery effort."

"Those are agencies that will have a pretty heavy lift in this process and so we want to make sure that they have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with, with not just the state, but also the local authorities."

"That's a big part of what today will be about, is the coordination between local, state and federal officials, that will lay the groundwork for the recovery efforts that are going to be going on for quite some time."

POTUS will also see several US and state Reps and mayors, although not the mayor of Houston, Sylvester

Turner.

She said there may be some additional events that are not currently on the schedule, but she'll keep us posted on that.

She confirmed the intention is to go back on Saturday, this time "to a different part of the state."

Asked if we would fly over Houston, Sanders said she did not know. We requested to be with POTUS if and when that happens.

But there were no plans to helo while in Texas, because of the scattered showers.

She confirmed that a gaggle would come later, on the way back from Austin to D.C.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report 3 - WB/Ivanka Women Entrepreneurship
Date: Saturday, July 08, 2017 4:52:51 AM

From: Andrew BEATTY <Andrew.BEATTY@afp.com>
Date: July 8, 2017 at 10:45:40 AM GMT+2
Subject: **Fwd: Travel pool report 3 - WB/Ivanka Women Entrepreneurship**

At around 9:20 the pool was led into the Messe's large "Retreat" meeting room, where a symposium on women and entrepreneurship was already underway.

Beyond an audience of about 100, the president's daughter and advisor Ivanka Trump was one of eight discussants on stage.

Ivanka was sitting between IMF director Christine Lagarde and World Bank president Jim Yong Kim, who yesterday was seen chatting with POTUS during the family photo.

As the discussion progressed PMs Turnbull and Trudeau also stopped by, both wearing very sharp blue suits, as did Mrs Turnbull (the Australian PM's wife) and the UN Secretary General, who made some remarks.

Ivanka spoke briefly about the administration's focus on skills.

At 9:52 the president walked in, trailed by Dina Powell and various leaders including Merkel, May and Abe. The president stood in the back row for a family photo, with Ivanka front and center.

The leaders then sat down, with POTUS sat between Merkel and Abe.

The German Chancellor spoke first, thanking Ivanka among others, then Trudeau spoke. The Canadian PM called for concrete commitments to empower women "if we want to change the world we have to invest in women."

As he spoke, POTUS and Merkel chatted briefly.

The president then rose for remarks, saying "we have a great neighbor in Canada and Justin is doing a spectacular job. "

"Everybody loves him and they love him for a reason, so congratulations," he said to giggles from the audience and some leaders.

"I want to thank also chancellor Merkel for what she's done here. It's been really incredible the way things have been handled and nothing is easy," he said.

POTUS then noted the protests of "quite a few people... that seem to follow your G20s around. You have been amazing."

POTUS then turned to the subject in hand (more below) saying the World Bank's fund for spurring women entrepreneurs would transform "millions and millions of lives."

He pledged \$50 million from the US.

POTUS said women in developing and developed countries present "tremendous promise for economic growth and prosperity."

Among those looking on was aide Stephen Miller, who was stood at the back of the room.

"When more women participate in the work force, which by the way will be a lot more competition for people like me prior to government... the world economy will grow and millions of people will be lifted out of poverty."

POTUS continued in that vein, before his thoughts turned to Ivanka.

"I'm very proud of my daughter Ivanka, always have been from day one, I have to tell you that."

"If she weren't my daughter it would be so much easier for her" he said to some slightly nervous laughter. "It might be the only bad thing going for her."

He then praised World Bank president "my friend, ah Kim, great guy, really is."

"I might have even appointed him, but I didn't, he said to laughs.

The pool was led out and held for a while while the plenary took place (see co-pooler's report).

At 10:42 we are waiting to go into the Jokowi bilateral meeting.

Some background from a WH official:

At the G20 leaders' summit, President Donald J. Trump will announce the United States' intent to contribute \$50 million (the highest donor level) to the new World Bank Group Facility for Women Entrepreneurship, the innovative new facility that aims to advance women's entrepreneurship and help women in developing countries gain increased access to the finance, markets, and networks necessary to start and grow a business. The United States initiated the idea for the facility and will serve as a founding member along with other donor countries. The President will make the announcement at an event with World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, Chancellor Angela Merkel and other world leaders.

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel pool report 9 - motorcade and lift
Date: Saturday, July 08, 2017 12:09:59 PM

From: Andrew BEATTY <Andrew.BEATTY@afp.com>

Date: July 8, 2017 at 6:06:12 PM GMT+2
Subject: Travel pool report 9 - motorcade and lift

At 17:17 the motorcade sped away from the Hamburg Messe, whose blue carpets and modernist chairs have been home for the last two/three days.

We passed a group of people waving and holding Russian flags (Putin just left ahead of us) and plenty of riot cops.

We sped around the lake there were some onlookers who waved from behind the barricades.

At 17:21 the motorcade pulled to a stop, there was a fair bit of confusion, with some people running from the vehicles in front. It turned out we were already at the landing zone.

Your pool moved toward the LZ proper as Marine One took off, we stopped and sheltered from the wash behind a white van but were urgently moved out of the way by German police. That is when we realized the van was a sniper position and we were standing right in front of the sights of a marksman.

At 17:30 another helo landed. Your poolers, now caked in dust, watched as Cohn, Powell, and S. Miller boarded.

At 17:37 another helo provided a fresh pelting with debris.

We landed at the airport about six minutes later, by Air Force One, ahead of POTUS.

At 17:52 Marine One landed, a few moments later the President and First Lady walked and greeted six individuals waiting at the bottoms of the steps.

The first couple then climbed up the steps, gave a quick wave and entered Air Force One.

At 18:05 we are rolling. Next stop, Joint Base Andrews.

[Unsubscribe](#)

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Pool Report No. 7 Trump comments at church
Date: Saturday, September 02, 2017 3:16:47 PM

From: "Rucker, Philip" <Philip.Rucker@washpost.com>

Date: September 2, 2017 at 2:11:12 PM CDT

Subject: Travel Pool Report No. 7 Trump comments at church

President Trump delivered about five minutes of remarks inside First Church of Pearland in the Houston suburb of Pearland. (Color from the visit to the church is forthcoming from Todd.)

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott introduced Trump, who spoke extemporaneously to volunteers and storm victims who had gathered at the church.

Trump began by praising Abbott: "I want to congratulate the governor. I want to congratulate everybody that's worked so hard. It's been an incredible five days, six days. It seems like it's been much longer than that, but actually it's going so well that it's going fast, in a certain sense."

Trump highlighted National Day of Prayer tomorrow. He said, "So many of you are faith based and I want to just tell you that tomorrow we have national prayer day." Trump added, "Tomorrow's a very big day, so go to your church and pray and enjoy the day."

Trump then went through praising dignitaries on stage with him, starting with Sen. Ted Cruz. Trump thanked Cruz "for working so hard."

Trump said, in reference to Cruz, "We have to push that stuff through, but we will. We signed some very big authorizations last night, and we'll get it through."

Then Trump motioned for his FEMA director: "Brock, come here a minute, Brock. What a job you've done!"

Trump commented, "The water's disappearing. We knew we have a long way to go, but the water's disappearing. And you look at the neighborhoods and you see it's – we just saw it through there. Two days ago, even yesterday, they had water. Today it's all swept up and cleaned up. We've got a lot of hard-working people, I'll tell you that."

Trump praised Secretary Ben Carson and then Secretary DeVos, noting that she just had "a full-page story today in the Wall Street Journal."

Trump again commended Abbott as well as his wife, the first lady and, Trump said, "The real boss of the family."

Trump said, "They have worked so hard and the coordination between the federal and the state and the local has been terrific, and we're going to keep it going that way. If anything, I don't know if it gets better, but we're going to try to make it better."

He added, "The cameras are blazing and I have to say it, you have a great, great governor."

Trump spoke at length about the reforms at the VA under Secretary Shulkin before returning to the subject of Harvey and again congratulating Abbott.

Trump closed by talking about the recovery: "It's a long term. We're talking about, they say 2 years, 3 years, but I think that because this is Texas you'll prob do it in 6 months!" At that, the people in the church burst into loud cheers.

Philip Rucker

The Washington Post

White House Bureau Chief

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel Report #11
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:26:26 AM

From: Annie Karni <akarni@politico.com>

Date: May 22, 2017 at 5:06:00 PM GMT+3

Subject: Travel Report #11

Travel Report # 11:

POTUS and FLOTUS arrived at the plaza in front of the Western Wall at 4:19 p.m., after finishing a closed-press tour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump.

At the Wall, the holiest prayer site in Judaism, POTUS donned a black yarmulke. He and FLOTUS were accompanied by Ivanka and Jared, and greeted by the Rabbi of the Western Wall, Shmuel Rabinovich, and another rabbi, whose ID was not totally clear (it is likely the director general of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, Mordechai Eliav, but not confirmed). Rabinovich and the other rabbi explained to Trump the history of the Wall, and it's importance in Judaism, according to the White House (we couldn't hear).

The Trump group then divided by gender. On the men's side of the Wall, we spotted Gary Cohn taking pictures with his phone, David Friedman, Jason Greenblatt, and Sean Spicer.

On the women's side, Hope Hicks and Dina Powell sat in two rows of plastic chairs, set at the back end of the plaza.

On the men's side, only Trump and Kushner approached the Wall, accompanied by the two rabbis. The rest sat in the plastic chairs.

As female poolers, Carol and I were technically on the female side of the Wall, separated from the male press pool by a small, low barrier that we could look over. We couldn't hear anything of what was happening, but the rabbis spoke quietly to Trump as they approached the Wall.

At 4:23 p.m., Trump went up to the wall alone -- even Kushner hung back. Trump touched the Wall with his right hand and stared straight

ahead, swaying back and forth slightly. After a long, reflective pause in that position, he stuck his note into a crack in the wall (Spicer said he would get back to us about what the note said). Trump then took a deep sigh, turned toward the cameras and media, and seemed to mouth "thank you" at the press riser. He then was rejoined by the rabbis, who presented him with an oversized, gold-leafed book. We are trying to find out the significance of the book.

Kushner hung back, out of the photo-op.

After the photo, Trump signed another book, and the group left just after 4:25 p.m.

And here's a feed from Carol, who watched the woman's side:

Mrs. Trump walked with three women and Ivanka Trump. One of the women was Rabbi Rabinovich's wife, Yael. Mrs. Trump was listening to one of the women, who appeared to be telling her about the wall. They walked - both Mrs. Trump and Ms. Trump in very high heels - to the book placed on the podium in front of the women's side of the wall.

Mrs. Trump listened as she walked and the woman was telling her things your pooler could only hear snippets like "amazing" and "for your family and for the world."

After a few minutes standing and listening, Mrs. Trump approached the wall. She placed a folded up piece of paper in a crack (pool has asked for info about what it said), and then she placed her hand on the wall, standing for a few moments.

Ivanka Trump then approached the wall. Your pooler did not see her place a paper in it. She stood with her hand on the wall, appearing to pray. She stood much longer than Mrs. Trump. The women left after that. Mrs. Trump joined her husband where they had separated earlier.

We are now holding in a beautiful room at the King David hotel, with a balcony overlooking the old city.

Annie Karni

White House Reporter

POLITICO

718-915-3177

@AnnieKarni

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: Daly, Matthew
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Travel
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 4:09:55 PM

Do you have comment on Kendall memo re travel?
I have response from David Bernhardt.

Also, letter refers to Lolita Zinke. Does she prefer Lola or Lolita on the wire?

Matthew Daly
Congressional Reporter
The Associated Press
202-641-9481 direct
202-365-2993 cell
Follow me on Twitter: @MatthewDalyWDC

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From: Freddy Monares
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Troy Downing Endorsement?
Date: Friday, August 25, 2017 4:29:02 PM

Hi Heather,

My name is Freddy Monares and I am the state and county government reporter for the Bozeman Daily Chronicle.

I saw two tweets sent out by Lola Zinke, and I was just wondering if Ryan was endorsing Downing for the Senate run in 2018? I'm aware that they were friends prior to Downing's announcement, but I just saw the tweets and was curious if they were an endorsement?

Thank you.

Freddy Monares | State and County Government Reporter

Bozeman Daily Chronicle: empowering the community

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Upcoming Speaking Engagements for Secretary Ryan Zinke (Strategic Calendar)

September 10, 2017

EVENT: Flight 93 Soundbreaking for “Tower of Voices”

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Shanksville, PA

NOTES: 3 minute remarks, keynote speech is September 11th VPOTUS (Secretary introducing him for 3 minutes there as well)

TYPE: Formal, but brief enough for notecard

AUDIENCE: General public

PRESS: Open

September 13, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet -- VIP Reception and Banquet

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Dovetails with broader push for sportsmen engagement

TYPE: Secretary likely doesn't need formal remarks here, given familiarity with the issues and the audience; “5-10 minutes of remarks about his passion for the outdoors and highlight one or two top priorities he's focusing on as Secretary.”

AUDIENCE: Foundation VIPs and reception guests

PRESS: Closed

September 20, 2017

EVENT: Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium at the Bass Pro HQ -- Gala Dinner Event

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Springfield, MO

NOTES: Event staff sent over detailed information, will sort through prior to drafting remarks

TYPE: Informal remarks on conservation, appreciation of the outdoors/wildlife, likely one notecard is fine

AUDIENCE: Conservation leaders

PRESS: Closed

September 22, 2017

EVENT: NRA Women's Leadership Forum Summit

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Irving, TX

NOTES: Secretary could talk about strong women in his personal life (mother, wife, daughter) or professional life (military, political staff, Cabinet/Congressional colleagues). Big theme of NRA Women's push recently has been safety for females – women are safer when allowed to conceal carry.

TYPE: Formal, keynote remarks – opportunity to tell stories here

AUDIENCE: NRA forum participants, likely heavy female demographic
PRESS: Closed

September 25, 2017

EVENT: National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Seems like a niche topic that may require specific remarks – will need to coordinate here with OCL. Website notes “Waters of the U.S. rule,” “MSHA’s workplace exams rule,” and “long term highway funding” as topics to be discussed over the forum, which runs 4 days all told. This one is likely worth a call to Association POC.

TYPE: Formal, 10 minute remarks on aggregates production and “ESA” issues – flagging for prebrief on this unless Secretary is particularly well-read here, Q&A is included

AUDIENCE: Industry folks and other forum attendees

PRESS: Likely industry press

September 26, 2017

EVENT: Jefferson Island Club Citizen of the Year Award

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary is being honored as Citizen of the Year; it’s for “legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service, and contributions in the spirit of America’s founding fathers.”

TYPE: Informal remarks, will reach out to find out more about the event

AUDIENCE: Jefferson Island Club members

PRESS: Closed

October 11, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Coal Caucus

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: U.S. recently announced first-ever coal export to Ukraine, WSJ piece on “Coal Makes a Comeback” has good nuggets as well. Secretary was a member of the Caucus. Blake Deeley running point on this from OCL, finding out if we want to put in an “ask” or “call to action.”

TYPE: Informal, brief remarks at a roundtable

AUDIENCE: Members of Congress and their staff

PRESS: Closed

November 9, 2017

EVENT: America First Energy Conference (Heartland Institute)

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NOTES: Organization appears very pro-administration, focused on deregulation

TYPE: Formal remarks, possibly good to write them out given specificity of deregulation accomplishments and opportunity to get back on energy as hunting season winds down

AUDIENCE: Conference attendees (energy industry and policy folks)

PRESS: Presumably closed, will check

MISC. FLAGGING: Upcoming Deputy Secretary speech on hunting, upcoming Secretary speech on energy (Heritage Foundation), upcoming Vincent DeVito speech on tech (Oceans 17)

Upcoming Speaking Engagements for Secretary Ryan Zinke (Strategic Calendar)

September 13, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet -- VIP Reception and Banquet

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Dovetails with broader push for sportsmen engagement, remarks written

TYPE: Secretary likely doesn't need formal remarks here, given familiarity with the issues and the audience; "5-10 minutes of remarks about his passion for the outdoors and highlight one or two top priorities he's focusing on as Secretary."

AUDIENCE: Foundation VIPs and reception guests

PRESS: Closed

September 20, 2017

EVENT: Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium at the Bass Pro HQ -- Gala Dinner Event

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Springfield, MO

NOTES: Event staff sent over detailed information, will sort through prior to drafting remarks

TYPE: Informal remarks on conservation, appreciation of the outdoors/wildlife, likely one notecard is fine

AUDIENCE: Conservation leaders

PRESS: Closed

September 22, 2017

EVENT: NRA Women's Leadership Forum Summit

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Irving, TX

NOTES: Secretary could talk about strong women in his personal life (grandmother, wife, daughter). Big theme of NRA is how women are "backbone" of organization.

TYPE: Formal, keynote remarks – opportunity to tell stories here

AUDIENCE: NRA forum participants, likely heavy female demographic

PRESS: Closed

September 25, 2017

EVENT: National Stone Sand and Gravel Association Legislative and Policy Forum

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Seems like a niche topic that may require specific remarks – will need to coordinate here with OCL. Scheduling notes highlight Endangered Species Act policy speech.

TYPE: Formal, 10 minute remarks on ESA issues – flagging for prebrief on this unless Secretary is particularly well-read here, Q&A is included.

AUDIENCE: Industry folks and other forum attendees

PRESS: Likely industry press

EVENT: National Petroleum Council Meeting

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary Perry from Energy will also be there, and the invitation discusses inter-agency collaboration and the Trump Administration's commitment to development. This could be a good place to preview/work through the Heritage speech, which is teed up to be a major policy address on energy.

TYPE: The invitation asks, in regard to the remarks, for the message of “a coordinated Administration working together to address energy issues. Such would be a continuation of the spirit displayed at the June 29 Energy Week event at the Department of Energy when you joined Secretary Perry, the President, Vice President, and other Administration officials.”

AUDIENCE: Members of the National Petroleum Council

PRESS: Open

September 26, 2017

EVENT: Jefferson Island Club Citizen of the Year Award

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Secretary is being honored as Citizen of the Year; it's for “legislators who have distinguished themselves for their outstanding leadership, dedication to public service, and contributions in the spirit of America's founding fathers.”

TYPE: Informal remarks, will reach out to find out more about the event

AUDIENCE: Jefferson Island Club members

PRESS: Closed

September 29, 2017

EVENT: Heritage Foundation Energy Speech

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: Meeting with Vincent DeVito, who's been tasked with typing up the first draft of the remarks

TYPE: Formal remarks, policy speech

AUDIENCE: Heritage Foundation

PRESS: Likely closed

October 11, 2017

EVENT: Congressional Coal Caucus

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Washington, D.C.

NOTES: U.S. recently announced first-ever coal export to Ukraine, WSJ piece on “Coal Makes a Comeback” has good nuggets as well. Secretary was a member of the Caucus. Blake Deeley running point on this from OCL, finding out if we want to put in an “ask” or “call to action.”

TYPE: Informal, brief remarks at a roundtable

AUDIENCE: Members of Congress and their staff

PRESS: Closed

November 9, 2017

EVENT: America First Energy Conference (Heartland Institute)

PRINCIPAL SPEAKING: Secretary Ryan Zinke

LOCATION: Houston, TX

NOTES: Organization appears very pro-administration, focused on deregulation

TYPE: Formal remarks, possibly good to write them out given specificity of deregulation accomplishments and opportunity to get back on energy as hunting season winds down

AUDIENCE: Conference attendees (energy industry and policy folks)

PRESS: Presumably closed, will check

MISC. FLAGGING: Upcoming Vincent DeVito speech on tech at Oceans 17, on 09/20

From: Mark Asmussen
To: [Caroline Boulton](#); [Rusty Roddy](#); [Raul Matias](#); [Heathar Putnam](#); christine_lopez@ios.doi.gov; [Greg Knee](#); laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov; heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; [Aaron Thiele](#); downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov; [Mark Schuette](#); scott_brecht@nps.gov
Subject: Update on (b) (6)
Date: Friday, July 14, 2017 9:58:15 AM

Good morning all,

Just wanted to give everyone an update. (b) (6)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. We are so thankful for the support and prayers from our DOI family, and appreciate your continued prayers for healing. I apologize if I left anyone off the list, and as always safe travels!
Mark

Sent from my iPhone

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2017
Date: Friday, August 04, 2017 11:23:08 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 4, 2017

UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2017

UPDATE: The President will depart the White House en route to Joint Base Andrews at 3:15PM.

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart the White House en route to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) headquarters to receive a briefing on hurricane season. The President will then return to the White House. In the afternoon, the President will have lunch with Vice President Mike Pence. The President will then speak with President Emmanuel Macron of France by telephone. Later in the afternoon, the President will depart the White House for Joint Base Andrews, en route to Morristown, New Jersey. In the evening, the President will depart Morristown, New Jersey, en route to Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster.

-
In-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: Tribune
Radio: Talk Media News

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: AFP
Radio: NPR

EDT

9:00AM In-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:45AM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to FEMA headquarters

South Portico

In-Town Travel Pool (Final Gather 9:15AM – Palm Room Doors)

10:00AM THE PRESIDENT receives a FEMA briefing on hurricane season

FEMA Headquarters

In-Town Travel Pool Spray

10:55AM THE PRESIDENT departs FEMA headquarters en route to the White House

FEMA Headquarters

In-Town Travel Pool

12:30PM THE PRESIDENT has lunch with Vice President Mike Pence

Private Dining Room

Closed Press

1:30PM THE PRESIDENT speaks with President Emmanuel Macron of France by telephone

Private Dining Room

Closed Press

2:15PM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

Joint Base Andrews

Virginia Gate

3:15PM THE PRESIDENT departs the White House en route to Joint Base Andrews

South Lawn

Open Press

3:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs Washington, D.C. en route to Morristown, New Jersey

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:25PM THE PRESIDENT arrives in Morristown, New Jersey

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, New Jersey en route to Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:50PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

###

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2017
Date: Monday, August 14, 2017 9:15:03 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 14, 2017

**UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2017**

Update: The President will meet with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Wray on Charlottesville at 11:30AM.

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart Morristown, NJ for Joint Base Andrews en route to The White House. The President will then meet with Chief of Staff General John Kelly. The President will then meet with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Wray on Charlottesville. In the afternoon, The President will sign a memorandum on addressing China's laws, policies, practices, and actions related to intellectual property, innovation, and technology. The President will then meet with the National Economic Council. In the evening, the President will depart the White House for Joint Base Andrews, en route to John F. Kennedy International Airport. The President will depart John F. Kennedy International Airport to Trump Tower – New York. The President will then speak with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan by telephone.

In-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: Boston Globe
Radio: SRN

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP
TV Corr & Crew: CNN
Print: NYTimes
Radio: CBS

EDT

7:00AM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:00AM In-Town Travel Pool Call Time

9:00AM THE PRESIDENT departs Bedminster, NJ en route to Morristown, NJ

Bedminster LZ

Closed Press

9:15AM THE PRESIDENT arrives Morristown Municipal Airport

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:25AM THE PRESIDENT departs Morristown, NJ en route Washington, DC

Morristown Municipal Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:15AM THE PRESIDENT arrives Joint Base Andrews

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:25AM THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route The White House

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

10:35AM THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House

South Lawn

Open Press

11:15AM THE PRESIDENT meets with Chief of Staff General John Kelly

Treaty Room

Closed Press

11:30AM THE PRESIDENT meets with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Wray on Charlottesville

Treaty Room

Closed Press

3:00PM THE PRESIDENT signs a memorandum on addressing China's laws, policies, practices, and actions related to intellectual property, innovation, and technology

Diplomatic Reception Room

In-Town Travel Pool

3:45PM THE PRESIDENT meets with the National Economic Council

Blue Room

Closed Press

7:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs The White House en route Joint Base Andrews

South Lawn

Open Press

7:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Joint Base Andrews

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

7:20PM THE PRESIDENT departs Joint Base Andrews en route New York, NY

Joint Base Andrews

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:15PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at John F. Kennedy International Airport

John. F. Kennedy International Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:25PM THE PRESIDENT departs John F. Kennedy International Airport en route Wall Street Landing Zone

John. F. Kennedy International Airport

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:45PM THE PRESIDENT arrives Wall Street Landing Zone

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:55PM THE PRESIDENT departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route Trump Tower

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:10PM THE PRESIDENT arrives Trump Tower

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:30PM THE PRESIDENT speaks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan by telephone

Trump Tower

Closed Press

###

[Unsubscribe](#)

The White House · 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW · Washington DC 20500 · 202-456-1111

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017
Date: Thursday, September 21, 2017 10:08:25 AM

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2017

UPDATED DAILY GUIDANCE AND PRESS SCHEDULE FOR
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017

UPDATE: Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin will give an on camera press briefing at 3:00PM and Ambassador Nikki Haley will give an on camera press briefing at 4:30PM

In the morning, President Donald J. Trump will depart Trump Tower en route to the Lotte New York Palace Hotel where he will participate in a meeting with the President of Afghanistan followed by an expanded meeting with the President of Afghanistan. Later in the morning, the President will participate in an expanded meeting with the President of Ukraine. The President will then participate in an expanded meeting with the President of the Republic of Korea. The President will then attend a working lunch with the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Republic of Korea. In the afternoon, the President will participate in an expanded meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan. The President will then participate in an expanded meeting with the President of Turkey. The President will then depart the Lotte New York Palace Hotel en route to the Wall Street Landing Zone where he will depart for Bedminster, NJ.

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

Wires: AP, Reuters, Bloomberg
Wire Photos: AP, Reuters, AFP, NYT
TV Corr & Crew: ABC
Print: LA Times
Radio: NPR

EDT

7:45AM Out-of-Town Travel Pool Call Time

8:45AM THE PRESIDENT departs Trump Tower en route to the Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Trump Tower

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

8:50AM THE PRESIDENT arrives at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:15AM THE PRESIDENT participates in a meeting with the President of Afghanistan

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

9:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Afghanistan

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Closed Press

10:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Ukraine

Hubbard 1 – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

11:30AM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of the Republic of Korea

Hubbard 1 – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

12:15PM THE PRESIDENT attends a working lunch with the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Republic of Korea

Spellman Room – Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

1:30PM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the Prime Minister of Japan

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:00PM THE PRESIDENT participates in an expanded meeting with the President of Turkey

Hubbard 1– Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:35PM THE PRESIDENT departs the Lotte New York Palace Hotel en route to the Wall Street Landing Zone

Lotte New York Palace Hotel

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

3:50PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at the Wall Street Landing Zone

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:00PM THE PRESIDENT departs New York en route to Bedminster, NJ

Wall Street LZ

Out-of-Town Travel Pool

4:20PM THE PRESIDENT arrives at Trump National Golf Club

Trump National Golf Club – Bedminster, NJ

Closed Press

Briefing Schedule

3:00PM Press Briefing with Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin

4:30PM Press Briefing with Ambassador Nikki Haley

New York Hilton Midtown – Rhinelander Gallery South

On Camera

###

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Proposal for Event with Girl Scouts of the USA Summer 2017

Goals of the Event

- Highlight the ongoing partnership between the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service with the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) to introduce girls from all over America to the resources available to them to enjoy and support in the 417 National Park units.
- Promote the Girl Scout Ranger Program and the opportunity for girls to earn a certificate or patch through service at the National Park unit of their choice.
- National announcement of the new Girl Scout Outdoor Troop Camping Badges.
- Provide the Secretary an opportunity to engage with the girl scouts in their community service project, at a skill station such as first aid, or a ranger hike.
- Promote the event through earned media and social media amplification.

National Park Location:

Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, VA (45 min south DC off I-95)

Adjacent to Marine Corps Base Quantico

- Washington, DC Media market
- Prince William Forest Park is a diverse natural and cultural area located near Washington, D.C. The park is 15,000 acres of secondary growth forest.
- The park is the largest protected natural area in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region at over 16,000 acres (6,500 ha).
- Camping, hiking, picnicking and bicycling are ways that visitors enjoy the park. Protection of a large portion of the Quantico Creek Watershed is an important natural function of the park. Headwaters for the North and South forks of Quantico Creek are in the park. Both creeks can be enjoyed by walking along park hiking trails.
- Telegraph Picnic Pavilion has picnic tables, a covered picnic pavilion, grills, and a restroom facility. The parking lot can hold over 70 cars. Also available is a group amphitheater and an indoor mess hall.

Date: Saturday- July – August (**Dependent upon Secretary Zinke schedule**)

Attendees:

Secretary Ryan Zinke (invited)

Acting Director of the National Park Service Mike Reynolds (invited)

CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA

GSUSA National Board Members in DC area

Acting Director of the National Park Service Mike Reynolds

GS Juniors (65-70, ages 9-11)*

GS Cadettes (30 girls, ages 12-14) to lead skill stations*

Troop Leaders to support event and activities

GSUSA staff

NPS staff

Press invited

*Will be reaching out to Troops serving military families or Troops on a military base

Proposal for Event with Girl Scouts of the USA Summer 2017

Proposed Agenda: Date (TBD)

8:30 am Girl Scout Leadership, Staff and Volunteers arrive at National Park Location to set up for event and prepare skill stations

- Volunteer, Staff and Troop leaders set up skill stations

10:00 am - 10:30 Program Remarks by:

- Secretary Ryan Zinke (invited)
- CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA
- Acting Director of the National Park Service Mike Reynolds (invited)
- Girl Scout selected from the participating troop
- Welcome and background on park and NPS/GSUSA partnership and introduce the Secretary: Mike Reynolds (3-4 minutes)
- Importance of partnership with Girl Scouts of the USA to bring more youth in nature through the National Park Service (stewardship, enjoyment, health and volunteerism): Secretary Zinke (5-10 minutes)
- Appreciation for partnership with the Department of the Interior and to engage girls in meaningful outdoor experiences through National Parks and highlight Girl Scout Ranger Program and announce new Outdoor Troop Camping Badge: CEO GSUSA or GSUSA National Board Member (5-10 minutes)
- Closing: Girl selected from Troop (2-3 minutes) highlight benefits of being outdoors and spending time in national parks earning the Girl Scout Ranger patch and Girl Scout badges.

After the official program, Secretary and Acting Director to interact with the girls in one or all of the following activities:

- Join their community service project in the park
- Lead or assist at a skill station to help a girl earn her badge
- Co-lead a nature hike with the girls

10:45am-11:45pm Community Service project

Ideas include:

- Basic trail maintenance
- Campfire cleanout
- Invasive plant removal
- Painting/ wash windows

11:45am – 12:45pm Hike

During Hike:

- History of park
- Flora and fauna
- Current research projects and how girls can get involved
-

12:45pm-1:45pm Brown Bag Lunch

- Girls will share lunch with park rangers to learn more about their careers and ask questions

2:00pm-5:00pm Skill Stations to earn Girl Scout Ranger Patch and portions of Girl Scout badges
(Girls divided into four to six groups)

- Fire building basics (no fire/ just instruction)
- Outdoor craft/ art in the outdoors
- Basic Knot learning
- Learn “Leave No Trace Principles” games

Closing: award girls Girl Scout Ranger patch. Girls will depart the park when the program activities are complete.

Contact:

Denise Ryan, Manager, Federal Relations, Girl Scouts of the USA, (202) 478-9828, dryan@girlscouts.org



35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WALL

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WALL



VIETNAM VETERANS
MEMORIAL FUND



FOUNDERS OF THE WALL

35TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAM
NOVEMBER 2017





JIMMY CARTER

November 2017

I am honored and inspired to take part in recognizing the 35th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. When I signed the bill allowing for this memorial, I doubt that anyone envisioned a monument this profound and moving. The Wall that heals, conceived by a Vietnam veteran, assures us that none of the 58,318 men and women listed here, who courageously fought and ultimately sacrificed themselves for their country, will ever be forgotten. It is gratifying to know that their comrades who survived and returned to a nation that offered them less than a heroes' welcome have found solace and healing at The Wall. America is indebted to all who have answered the call to duty; those who are still among us as well as those named here. We are grateful for your dedication to ensuring the strong, free America that we all love so dearly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter".



Dear Friends,

When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in 1982, no one could have imagined the impact it would have 35 years later. It all started with a promise to never forget the names of those who sacrificed all in Vietnam and to honor all those who served in the Vietnam War. Along the way, The Wall helped to heal the wounds of a nation and changed the way America treats its veterans.

Today, veterans are welcomed home and thanked for their service. Vietnam veterans did not have that same experience when they came home. The Wall gave Vietnam veterans a tangible symbol of recognition from the American people for their service.

As we commemorate The Wall's 35th anniversary – family, friends, veterans and volunteers will read the names of the 58,318 service members listed on The Wall. As each name is said aloud, we will remember that behind each name is a face and a story of a life cut short and a family changed forever by their loss. By reading their names, we keep the promise to never forget.

This year, a new – and much needed – conversation about the Vietnam War has started. We must keep the conversation going so that we continue to educate current and future generations about the impact of the Vietnam War. The next step is to build the Education Center at The Wall so that we can ensure that for generations to come, American service members are properly honored and receive the recognition they justly deserve. The campaign to build the Center has gained momentum this year but there is still a long way to go and we need your help to make it a reality.

On this Veterans Day, you can be assured that VVMF will keep the promise to never forget – in 2017 and beyond.

Thank you for joining us this week and for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Knotts".

Jim Knotts
President and CEO
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
Veteran, Operation Desert Storm



Dear Friends,

I served in Vietnam as an infantry squad leader in 1968. I lost friends there and I came back to a country that was deeply divided over the war.

America has a responsibility to honor the men and women who serve this nation – and to remember those who do not return.

I spoke at the groundbreaking for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982 and on that day, the first step was taken to honor all Vietnam veterans.

The Wall is a memorial like no other. It is a memorial that remembers individual sacrifice. Each family member or loved one that visits has a different experience. When I look at The Wall, I feel pride for serving my country and respect for all those who served and especially those who sacrificed everything and didn't make it home. They each had a family they left behind that was changed forever by their loss. The Wall should serve as a reminder for generations to come of the price of war.

It has now been more than 40 years since the war's end, but it's important that we never forget. Never forget their names. Never forget their faces. Never forget what they gave for their country. It's important that we educate current and future generations about the Vietnam War and its impact, legacies and lessons learned.

I have been privileged to lead the 35th Anniversary of The Wall commemorative committee this past year. By taking part in this week's commemorative events, I know that you are joining me in keeping the promise that was made when The Wall was built - the promise to never forget those who served and sacrificed all for our country.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Hagel".

Chuck Hagel
24th Secretary of Defense
Chairman, 35th Anniversary of The
Wall Committee



THANK YOU TO THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WALL COMMITTEE

Chair – The Honorable Chuck Hagel, 24th U.S. Secretary of Defense *

Government & Military Leaders

The Honorable Colin Powell, 65th U.S. Secretary of State *

The Honorable Tom Ridge, 1st U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security *

The Honorable Eric Shinseki, 7th U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs *

The Honorable Richard Armitage, 13th US Deputy Secretary of State *

The Honorable Max Cleland, Former U.S. Senator (D-Ga) *

The Honorable Bob Kerrey, Former U.S. Senator (D- Ne) and 35th Governor of Nebraska *

The Honorable Chuck Robb, Former U.S. Senator (D-Va) and 64th Governor of Virginia *

General Peter Pace, 16th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff *

General Richard Myers, 15th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff *

General George W. Casey, Jr., 36th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army

General Barry McCaffrey, Former Director of the White House National Drug Control Policy *

Business and Civic Leaders

Alan Buckelew, Chief Information Officer, Carnival Corporation *^

Henry Cisneros, Principal, Siebert, Cisneros, Shank & Co., LLC

Edward B. Cody, Chairman, Board of Directors, PenFed Credit Union *

Tom Hagel, Professor Emeritus, University of Dayton School of Law *

Red McCombs, Founder, Red McCombs Automotive Group

Bill Murdy, Civilian Aide to the Sec. of the Army and Chairman, Thayer Hotel Group *^

Bob Parsons, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist and Founder and CEO of YAM Worldwide *

Frederick W. Smith, Chairman, President and CEO, FedEx Corporation *

Ken Stinson, Chairman Emeritus, Kiewit, Inc. *

Entertainment

Ann-Margret, Award-winning Actress/Entertainer

Jimmy Buffett, Entertainer/Humanitarian

Gary Sinise, Actor/Humanitarian

* Vietnam War Veteran

^ VVMF Board Member





35TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS

NOVEMBER 7–11, 2017 WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Reading of the Names Opening Ceremony Tuesday, Nov. 7, 3:30 p.m.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Reading of the Names Tuesday, Nov. 7, 4 p.m. – Midnight
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wednesday, Nov. 8, 5 a.m. – Midnight
Thursday, Nov. 9, 5 a.m. – Midnight
Friday, Nov. 10, 5 a.m. – Midnight

**Reception honoring Maya Lin,
the designer of The Wall*** Friday, Nov. 10, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
The Willard Hotel

**Breakfast with Lynn Novick,
co-director of *The Vietnam War**** Saturday, Nov. 11, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
The Hamilton

Veterans Day Observance at The Wall Saturday, Nov. 11, 1:00 p.m.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial

*Ticketed event



ANNUAL VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCE AT THE WALL

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2017 – 1:00 PM

Master of Ceremonies

Jim Knotts, President and CEO of VVMF

Invocation

CH (CPT) Joseph Mason

Presentation of Colors

Joint Armed Forces Color Guard
Military District of Washington

National Anthem

Pledge of Allegiance

LTG Charles N. Pede, USA

Welcome

Ryan Zinke, United States Secretary of the Interior

Vietnam Women's Memorial

Diane Carlson Evans, Founder and President of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation
Kate O'Hare-Palmer, U.S. Army Nurse Corps, Vietnam

Special Remarks

Maya Lin, the Designer of The Wall

Keynote Remarks

The Honorable Chuck Hagel, 24th Secretary of Defense

Wreath Laying

Patriotic Organizations

"Amazing Grace"

Chris Jackson, Bagpiper

Taps



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS OF THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WALL COMMEMORATION

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Leadership Circle

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CHUCK HAGEL



Chuck Hagel served as the 24th Secretary of Defense from February 2013 to February 2015. During his tenure, he directed significant steps to modernize America's partnerships and alliances, advance the rebalance in Asia-Pacific, bolster support for European allies, and enhance defense cooperation in the Middle East while overseeing the end of America's combat mission in Afghanistan. In addition, he led major initiatives for service members and their families, including increasing resources for suicide prevention, combating sexual assault, and accounting for missing personnel. Further, Secretary Hagel improved partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include health record interoperability, service treatment record transferability, and continuity of mental health services and support. Secretary Hagel launched the Defense Innovation Initiative to better prepare the Pentagon for future threats, and enacted comprehensive

reforms to the Nuclear Enterprise and Military Health system. He is the only Vietnam veteran and the first enlisted combat veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense.

Hagel served two terms in the United States Senate (1997-2009) representing the state of Nebraska. Hagel was a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Intelligence Committees. He Chaired the Foreign Relations International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion Subcommittee; and the Banking Committee's International Trade and Finance, and Securities Subcommittees. Hagel also served as the Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and the Senate Climate Change Observer Group.

Previously, Secretary Hagel was a Distinguished Professor at Georgetown University, Co-Chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, Chairman of the Atlantic Council, Chairman of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee, and Co-Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Corporate Council. He served as a member of the Secretary of Defense's Policy Board, Secretary of Energy's Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of Nuclear Power, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Board of Directors and Systemic Risk Council; as a Senior Advisor to Gallup; and on the Advisory Boards of Corsair Capital, Deutsche Bank America, M.I.C. Industries, Bread for the World, Bonnie J. Addario Lung Cancer Foundation, Center for the Study of the Presidency, Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, George C. Marshall Foundation, Georgetown's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Global Strategy Forum, Global Zero, Hamilton Project, Initiative for Global Development, Lung Cancer Alliance, International Center for the Study Of Radicalization and Political Violence, National Bureau of Asian Research's Next Generation Leadership Board, Ploughshares Fund, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, U.S. Institute of Peace Middle East Senior Working Group, U.S. Middle East Project, America Abroad Media, American Security Project, and The Washington Center.

Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate, Hagel was president of McCarthy & Company, an investment banking firm in Omaha, Nebraska. In the mid-1980's, Hagel co-founded VANGUARD Cellular Systems, Inc., a publicly traded corporation. He was President and CEO of the World USO, Private Sector Council (PSC), and Chief Operating Officer of the 1990 Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations (G-7 Summit). Hagel also served as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration under President Ronald Reagan and Deputy Commissioner General of the 1982 World's Fair.

He is the author of the book, *America: Our Next Chapter* and was the subject of a 2006 book by Charlyne Berens entitled, *Chuck Hagel: Moving Forward*. A graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Hagel and his wife, Lilibet, have a daughter (Allyn) and son (Ziller).

MAYA LIN



Walter Smith

Artist, designer and environmentalist, Maya Lin interprets the natural world through science, history, politics, and culture, creating a remarkable and highly acclaimed body of work in art and architecture. Her works merge the physical and psychological environment, presenting a new way of seeing the world around us.

Lin's Memorials address the critical social and historical issues of our time. From the Vietnam Memorial which she designed as an undergraduate student at Yale, to The Civil Rights Memorial in Alabama, and the Women's Table at Yale make our history part of the landscape. To her latest, *What is Missing?* which is focused on the environment.

Lin's art explores how we experience and relate to Nature, setting up a systematic ordering of the land that is tied to history, memory, time, and language. Her interest in landscape has led to works influenced by topographies and natural phenomena.

Her work asks the viewer to reconsider nature and the environment at a time when it is crucial to do so. A committed environmentalist, she is working on her last memorial, *What is Missing?*; a cross-platform, global memorial to the planet, located in select scientific institutions, online as a website, and a book, calling attention to the crisis surrounding biodiversity and habitat loss. Please visit www.whatismissing.org for more information.

Her architectural projects include the main building and master plan for Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, MA, the Museum for Chinese in America (2009) in New York City and the Riggio-Lynch Interfaith Chapel (2004) and Langston Hughes Library (1999) in Clinton, Tennessee. Currently she is working on the redesign of the Neilson Library at Smith College. Her designs create a close dialogue between the landscape and built environment, and she is committed to advocating sustainable design solutions in all her works.

Lin has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at museums and galleries worldwide, with works in the permanent collections of the National gallery of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art; The Smithsonian Institution; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; The Nevada Museum of Art; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; and the California Academy of Sciences.

A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, she has been profiled in, among others, *TIME*, *The New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker*. The 1996 documentary about her, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, won the Academy Award for Best Documentary. Her book about her work and creative process, *Boundaries*, is in its fifth printing with Simon & Schuster. *Maya Lin: Topologies*, a monograph spanning the past 30 years of her career was first released in Fall 2015 by Skira Rizzoli and is in its second printing. In 2009 she was awarded the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for artistic excellence, and in 2016 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by President Barack Obama, the Nation's highest Civilian Honor.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

The idea for building a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. came from Jan Scruggs, a wounded and decorated Vietnam veteran, who wanted to make sure that the names of all those who died in Vietnam were remembered. Soon joined by his first ally, Robert Doubek, an attorney and former Air Force intelligence officer during the war, they incorporated the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund on April 27, 1979.

Scruggs and Doubek began to recruit others to help and soon had a small group of Vietnam-era veterans on board. Col. Donald E. Schaet, Jack Wheeler, and John Woods were part of this core group. They soon learned that it required an Act of Congress to build a memorial on federal land. Scruggs and Doubek met with a senator from Maryland, Charles "Mac" Mathias, a Navy veteran of World War II, to outline their plans. One of Mathias' early suggestions was that the memorial should be on the Mall.

As they forged a partnership with Mathias and his staff, VVMF also set out to establish other key relationships including contacting Virginia Senator John Warner. Warner, who had served as Secretary of the Navy during the war, was himself a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. After meeting with the VVMF officers and advisors, Warner volunteered to help the organization raise the seed money needed to launch the fundraising campaign.

On November 8, 1979, VVMF held a press conference in which Mathias, Warner, and several others announced the introduction of legislation to grant two acres of land near the Lincoln Memorial for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

With the seed money from several defense industry donors, VVMF launched its first large-scale direct mail campaign to reach out to the public. The first fundraising letter was signed by Bob Hope.

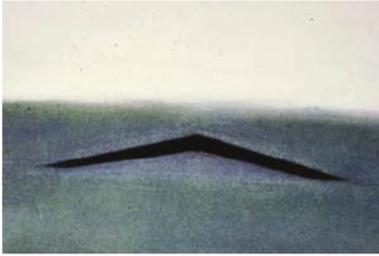
On July 1, 1980 at a White House Rose Garden ceremony, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation providing two acres for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall. With the site approved, VVMF scrambled to address the issues of what the Memorial would look like and who would design it. It was decided that VVMF would hold a design competition, open to any American citizen over 18 years of age.

The purpose of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was to honor all who had served, with a special tribute – their names engraved – for those who did not return. The chief design criteria were that the memorial: 1) be reflective and contemplative in character, 2) be harmonious with its site and environment, 3) make no political statement about the



Jimmy Carter at Rose Garden Ceremony.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL



Maya Lin's design submission.

war itself, and 4) contain the names of all who died or remained missing.

In the Fall of 1980, the national design competition was announced. By the March 31, 1981, deadline, 1,421 design entries were submitted for judging.

Design entry number 1026, unanimously selected by the jury, was submitted by Maya Ying Lin, a 21-year-old architecture student at Yale University, who was of Chinese descent. Lin's design consisted of two polished, reflective black granite walls, or arms. Each wall grew, sinking low into the ground, with the earth behind it. One arm pointed directly to the Washington Monument to the east, while the other pointed west to the Lincoln Memorial.

Critical to her design was the order of the names "At the intersection of these walls, on the right side, at the wall's top, is carved the date of the first death. It is followed by the names of those who have died in the war, in chronological order," Lin wrote in the narrative that accompanied the design. "These names continue on this wall, appearing to recede into the earth at the wall's end. The names resume on the left wall, as the wall emerges from the earth, continuing back to the origin, where the date of the last death is carved, at the bottom of this wall. Thus the war's beginning and end meet; the war is 'complete,' coming full circle."

On May 6, 1981, a press conference was held to announce the winner and the initial public reaction was generally positive. But several weeks after the announcement, a handful of people began to protest the design. They complained about the walls being black. They did not like the idea that it was below ground level. They did not like its minimalist design. Lin herself became a focus of contention. Opponents of the design made an issue of her race, her age, and her gender. Various parties sought to alter, undermine and gain control of the design. Lin fought fiercely to maintain her artistic vision and to retain the powerful simplicity of The Wall.



Jan Scruggs, Maya Lin and Bob Doubek at press conference to announce the winning design.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

An architect of record was required to execute the project because Lin was not yet an architect. VVMF and Lin interviewed several noted architectural firms, and the firm of Cooper-Lecky Partnership was selected. Working closely with Cooper-Lecky, Lin advanced her aesthetic vision while benefitting from the firm's expertise. Cooper-Lecky was ideal for

the project as the firm had worked on the National Zoo, and was skilled at landscape integrated architectural solutions. Doubek, Cooper-Lecky and Lin participated in all of the numerous required design review and approval meetings.



The crowd at the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982.

VVMF and Lin continued to struggle with the controversy. By early 1982, VVMF asked Warner to bring together both sides for a closed-door session to hammer out the issues. VVMF agreed to a compromise – to add a statue and a flag.

An official groundbreaking ceremony was held on March 26, 1982, and construction got underway. As soon as ground was broken, planning for its

dedication ceremonies in the week leading up to Veterans Day began – to include a Salute to Vietnam Veterans. The Salute opened with a vigil Wednesday morning at the National Cathedral, where all of the nearly 58,000 names on The Wall were read by volunteers around the clock, day and night, through midnight Friday. On Saturday, a grand parade took place where veterans marched holding banners, flags, and signs. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall) was dedicated on November 13, 1982.

Visitors have left more than 400,000 items at The Wall since the dedication. Those items of remembrance and tribute now make up the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection.

On November 8, 1984, the Three Servicemen Statue, designed by Frederick Hart, was dedicated as part of the memorial site. In November 1993, the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue, designed by Glenna Goodacre, was dedicated. The *In Memory* plaque – honoring those who served in Vietnam and later died as a result of their service – was dedicated in November 2004.

The impact of The Wall over the last 35 years has been wide-ranging. It separated the war from the warrior and changed the way America treats its veterans. Veterans refer to its "healing" power. Attracting more than five million visitors each year, The Wall is considered one of the most incredible works of art in the world.

WALL FACTS

- ★ There were 1,421 entries judged as part of the design competition for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- ★ The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built with all private funds from donations large and small.
- ★ When The Wall was dedicated in 1982, it had 57,939 names inscribed on it. Today, there are 58,318 names on The Wall.
- ★ The Wall is nearly 500 feet in length and stands slightly more than 10 feet tall at its highest point.
- ★ The Wall is composed of black granite from Bangalore, India.
- ★ There are 160 Medal of Honor recipients listed on The Wall.
- ★ There are 8 women listed on The Wall.
- ★ There are 16 chaplains listed on The Wall.
- ★ The average age of service members on The Wall is 22 years, 9 months.
- ★ Each name is preceded (on the west wall) or followed (on the east wall) by a symbol designating status. The diamond symbol denotes that the service member's death was confirmed. The cross (or plus) symbol denotes missing in action.
- ★ The youngest service member listed on The Wall – Dan Bullock – was 15 years old when he was killed in Vietnam
- ★ There are 64 graduates of Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia on The Wall – the most from any high school.
- ★ Service members who died in 1968 – the deadliest year of the war – cover 72 of the 140 panels on The Wall.
- ★ There have been more than 400,000 items left at The Wall since its dedication in 1982.



ABOUT THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is the nonprofit organization that built the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall) in Washington, D.C. in 1982. VVMF's mission is to honor and preserve the legacy of service in America and educate all generations about the impact of the Vietnam War and era. We honor the service of all, preserve the memory of those who died during the war and since returning home, and educate all generations about the lasting impact of the war.

This week's 35th anniversary events and other VVMF ceremonies, programs, and education efforts are made possible by donations from our generous supporters.

VVMF's work includes:

Care and Preservation of the Memorial Site

VVMF partners with the National Park Service (NPS) to care for The Wall, the Three Servicemen Statue, the flagpole, and the In Memory plaque. VVMF's role in the care of the memorial site includes financial responsibility for engraving new names on The Wall, changing status symbols on The Wall, printing new paper directories each year, treating the lawn on the site, and conservation efforts for the Three Servicemen Statue, flagpole, and In Memory plaque.

The Wall That Heals

The Wall That Heals mobile exhibit features a half-scale replica of The Wall in Washington, D.C. along with a mobile Education Center. Through *The Wall That Heals*, VVMF is able to offer communities the opportunity to host The Wall and share the memorial with millions around the country while educating current generations through VVMF's educational exhibits.

Wall of Faces

The Wall of Faces is an effort to connect a face and a story to each name on The Wall. The names of more than 58,000 service members are listed on The Wall and there is a face and a story of a life cut short

behind each one. Collected photos are displayed online at VVMF's Wall of Faces which features a page for every service member on The Wall.





ABOUT THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND



Ceremonies at The Wall

Each year, VVMF hosts several ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to help carry out its mission to honor those who have served and sacrificed for our country. Ceremonies on Memorial Day and Veterans Day allow the public to honor those inscribed on the Memorial as well as those veterans who returned home.

Items left at The Wall

Since The Wall was dedicated in 1982, more than 400,000 items have been left by visitors as remembrances and tributes. NPS collects and preserves these objects as part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, with curatorial support from VVMF. VVMF introduced the virtual collection of items left at The Wall in 2015 on its website to share the collection with the public.



In Memory

VVMF's *In Memory* program honors Vietnam veterans whose lives were cut short as a result of their service in Vietnam, but are not eligible for inscription on The Wall under Department of Defense guidelines. VVMF hosts a ceremony each June to induct new honorees into the *In Memory* Honor Roll.

Education

VVMF develops and distributes comprehensive and balanced education materials that help students learn about the lasting impact of the Vietnam War and era. In order to ensure that current and future generations never forget the impact of the Vietnam era, VVMF is in the fundraising stages to build the Education Center at The Wall, an interactive learning facility on the National Mall that will feature the faces and stories of the service members on The Wall and honor America's legacy of service.

For more information on VVMF's work or to make a donation in support of these programs, please visit: www.vvmf.org or call **202-393-0090**.



HELP BUILD THE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE WALL



How do you tell the story of the most divisive period within our nation during the 20th century? With each passing day, we are losing the voices that can tell the first-hand accounts of the Vietnam War and era. We must act now and preserve these personal stories from the past to educate our future.



To ensure that current and future generations never forget the impact of the Vietnam era, VVMF is in the fundraising stages to build the Education Center at The Wall.

The Education Center at The Wall will be an interactive learning facility on our National Mall with multimedia exhibits giving first-person accounts of veterans and citizens who lived through the Vietnam

War and era. Powerful exhibits featuring the faces of the fallen and some of the more than 400,000 items left at The Wall will leave lasting impressions on the impact of war.

HELP BUILD THE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE WALL



All that is needed to start construction is the funding. As with the building of The Wall – the Center has to be built 100% from private donations. Of the \$130 million campaign goal, \$42.5 million has been raised so far by committed individuals, corporations and foundations.

The time is now. Please consider making a donation to help build the Education Center at The Wall.

To learn more and to find out how you can help, go to www.buildthecenter.org.



Renderings courtesy of Ralph Appelbaum Associates

"A MASTERPIECE"

CNN

"COMPELLING...
DEEPLY FELT"
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"A MUST-WATCH
★★★★★"
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"POWERFUL...
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"A MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT.
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"ASTOUNDING...
WORTH EVERY SINGLE MINUTE."
The Washington Post

"THE VIETNAM WAR' WILL
BREAK YOUR HEART AND
WIN YOUR MIND."
The New York Times



THE VIETNAM WAR

A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK



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Funding for THE VIETNAM WAR provided by BANK OF AMERICA; CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING; PBS; DAVID H. KOCH; THE BLAWATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION; PARK FOUNDATION; THE ARTHUR WINING DAVIS FOUNDATIONS; THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION; THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION; NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES; THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS; FOOD FOUNDATION JUST FILMS; ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND; AND MEMBERS OF THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY: JONATHAN & JEANNIE LAVINE; DIANE & HAL BRIERLEY; AMY & DAVID ABRAMS; JOHN & CATHERINE DEBS; FULLERTON FAMILY CHARITABLE FUND; THE MONTGOME FAMILY; LYNDIA & STEWART RESNICK; THE GOLKIN FAMILY FOUNDATION; THE LYNCH FOUNDATION; THE ROGER & ROSEMARY ENRICO FOUNDATION; RICHARD S. & BONNA L. STRONG FOUNDATION; BONNIE & TOM MCCLOSKEY; BARBARA K. & CYRUS B. SWEET III; THE LAVENDER BUTTERFLY FUND



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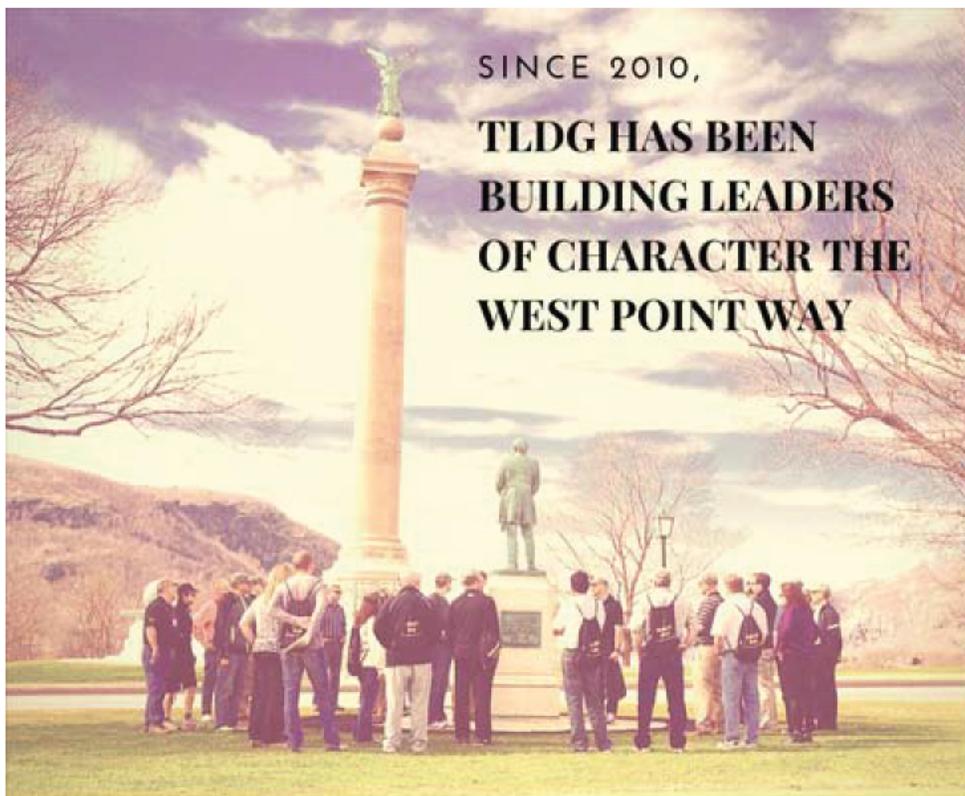
PenFed Credit Union is honored and humbled to sponsor the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's Veterans Day Observance at the Wall. We join with our community and our nation in paying tribute to those who have served in our nation's military conflicts. At this singular location, we gather to acknowledge the service and sacrifices of our servicemen and women.



USAA proudly supports the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

FOR MORE INFORMATION | USAA.COM/VVMF | 844-488-WALL (9255)

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THANK YOU

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund wishes to thank the following individuals and companies for helping make this week's events possible:

Paul Masi and the Veterans Advisory Board for the Verizon Corporation for providing the American and POW/MIA flags for the Veterans Day ceremony

National Park Service

Acton Mobile

Christopher Jackson

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

VVMF would like to thank the amazing volunteers of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial who have assisted millions of visitors to The Wall this year. We thank them for their countless hours keeping “watch” over The Wall and helping visitors find names and do name rubbings. Their efforts at The Wall advance our mission to educate current generations about the impact of the Vietnam War. Their dedication is appreciated and we couldn’t do what we do without them!

Special thanks and congratulations to the 2017 Libby Hatch Volunteer Recognition Award winner, Bill Shugarts. At a luncheon in September, we thanked Bill for his thousands of hours of service and outstanding commitment to preserving the legacy of the Memorial.





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Arlington, VA 22202
202-393-0090
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From: Wackowski, Stephen
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Wackowski bio and hunting pictures
Date: Saturday, May 27, 2017 11:26:30 PM

Laura & Heather-

See below and attached. If this is not the angle you wanted to take with my announcement let me know. The trip is going well so far--the boss handled the presser in Fairbanks airport well. Micah should be sending you a recording.

My Best,

Steve

Steve Wackowski is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and spent his summers working in Ninilchik for his family's halibut and salmon sportfishing business. After graduating from Bartlett High School in Anchorage, he played division I-AA football at Saint Mary's College where he earned a degree in Computer Science and a commission in the Air Force Reserve from UC Berkeley's Air Force ROTC program.

Steve is currently a Major in the Reserve and drills at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at the 611th Air Operations Center. He has served on several active duty tours throughout his reserve career including contingency deployments to Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq.

After his last active duty tour Steve moved home to Alaska to work as the remote sensing operations manager for Fairweather Science, LLC in Anchorage. Steve's work detecting and mapping maternal polar bear dens for oil and gas companies on Alaska's North Slope was nationally recognized and helped earn him the Alaska Journal of Commerce's Top 40 under 40 award in 2015.

His public policy background includes serving as a Professional Staff member on the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and as Senator Ted Stevens' last serving Press Secretary. He most recently managed US Senate Energy Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski's reelection campaign, helping her to obtain her largest margin of victory ever.

Steve is avid hunter and fisherman who continually gets out-fished by his wife Lindsay. They enjoy spending time in the Alaska outdoors with their red fox lab, Cali and two year old son, Lucas.

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Daniel Jorjani](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Subject: Wash Post inquiry
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 10:45:57 AM

Dan, below is a rather extensive inquiry I received from Washington Post regarding the secretary's travel. Can you please give me a quick call? I have one question. 208-5338

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?
- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.
 - What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?
- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?
- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barbara, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?
 - On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the

- calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
- Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?
 - May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay? At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?
 - June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?
 - July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.
 - What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura_Rigas@ios.doi.gov); dwbernhardt@ios.doi.gov; downey_magallanes@ios.doi.gov; russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; daniel_jorjani@sol.doi.gov; scott_hommel@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Watchdog says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document travel - The Washington Post
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 2:44:49 PM

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/watchdog-says-interior-secretary-ryan-zinke-failed-to-properly-document-travel/2017/11/16/3277bac6-ca3f-11e7-b0cf-7689a9f2d84e_story.html?utm_term=.651f0a01b142

Watchdog says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke failed to properly document travel



Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has failed to keep complete records — and in some cases kept none at all — of his travel since taking office, the agency’s watchdog told department officials this week, saying that management of Zinke’s travel was “deficient” and lacked oversight.

A [rare alert](#) sent by Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall to the secretary’s office Wednesday, obtained by The Washington Post, said her investigation into allegations of improper travel practices by Zinke has been stymied by “absent or incomplete documentation for several pertinent trips.”

Interior lawyers and ethics officials also have not shown evidence to investigators that they have been able to “distinguish between personal, political and official travel” or cost-analysis documents to justify his choice of military or charter flights, Kendall wrote.

The memo reveals that the inspector general is also scrutinizing the travel of Zinke’s wife, Lola, who often accompanied him on official trips. Kendall wrote that the department’s documentation was so lacking that investigators cannot determine “the full extent” of Lola Zinke’s travel and how it was paid for.

[\[Zinke took \\$12,000 charter flight home in oil executive's plane, documents show\]](#)

Does Trump's Cabinet have a private plane problem?

Members of President Trump's Cabinet have taken noncommercial flights at the expense of taxpayers, and Trump says he's "not happy." (Monica Akhtar/TWP)

The alert raises new questions about the travel of the former Navy SEAL commander and former congressman from Montana. The Post and other news organizations have reported that Zinke flew a private plane owned by an oil executive, took charter flights in the Virgin Islands and has mixed official travel with stops at political fundraisers and donor events.

Interior Department officials have said that all of Zinke's travel was approved in advance by ethics officials and that private-charter flights were booked only when feasible commercial flights were unavailable.

But the agency declined to publicly release documents authorizing his travel or to say what percentage, if any, of the cost of these trips was covered by Republican campaign funds, as would be required.

Kendall's office has requested complete records for Zinke and his wife's travel, including authorizations and reimbursement documents that would "describe all instances when Mrs. Zinke traveled in a government-owned vehicle, watercraft, or aircraft," including the details of who paid.

[\[\[Traveling in style: White House wrestles with Cabinet costs\]\]](#)

In a letter of response obtained by The Post, Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt told Kendall that the agency would provide the outstanding travel documents. But he blamed the Obama administration for any record-keeping issues.

"When I arrived at the Department in August 2017, it was clear to me that the

Secretary and I inherited an organizational and operational mess from the previous administration,” Bernhardt wrote. “From my perspective . . . it appears that the exact same [travel] procedures and processes utilized by the previous Administration remain in place and continue to be dysfunctional.”

Bernhardt added that was “apparently unclear” until last week whether all of former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell’s travel records had been entered into the agency’s tracking system.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The Office of Special Counsel, an independent agency, also is investigating Zinke’s travel to political fundraisers and appearances for possible violations of the Hatch Act, which bans federal officials from engaging in political activity on the job.

Zinke is one of four current and former Trump administration Cabinet secretaries under investigation by agency watchdogs. Tom Price, another former member of Congress who was secretary of health and human services, resigned in late September after taking at least \$400,000 in chartered flights at taxpayer expense.

The watchdog for the Environmental Protection Agency also is investigating Administrator Scott Pruitt’s frequent travels to his home state of Oklahoma. Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin’s July trip to Europe, which combined official travel for himself, his wife and two top aides with sightseeing and a Wimbledon tennis event, also is under review.

The Treasury Department inspector general’s office found in October that Secretary Steven Mnuchin’s multiple flights on military jets to destinations from West Virginia to Italy was legal, but that Treasury officials had offered poor justifications for the travel.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

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Note: 250 visitor's is the maximum allowed.

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Laura.Rigas@ios.doi.gov)
Subject: WH east wing tour ideas reporters
Date: Wednesday, November 22, 2017 10:15:59 AM

These ones are always good to work with and each has a (b) (6) :
Mike Doyle (EE) and his wife and son
Tim Cama (The Hill) wife and daughter
Jennifer Dalhouy (Bloomberg) husband and son

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
Department of the Interior

From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH In-town Travel Pool Report 1
Date: Sunday, September 24, 2017 5:58:17 PM

From: SV Date <sv.date@huffpost.com>

Date: September 24, 2017 at 5:55:46 PM EDT

Subject: WH In-town Travel Pool Report 1

Marine 1 approached from the direction of the Washington Monument and landed on the South Lawn at 5:40 pm.

POTUS climbed out, saluted the Marine who had opened the door and pulled down the stairs for him and crossed the grass to introduce reporters to Marine Maj. James Thompson, one of the pilots of the helicopter who was making his last flight, and his wife and three children.

He then took questions from reporters for several minutes. He said NFL players had to “respect” the flag, that he was not calling on a boycott of the league, that he didn’t know anything about HHS Sec Tom Price’s chartered flights but that they were “looking into it.”

He then entered the WH through the South Portico entrance.

The WH press office 10 minutes later issued a travel photo lid for the evening.

Full transcript of the president’s remarks coming ASAP.

-30-

S.V. Dáte

Senior White House Correspondent

HuffPost

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH In-town Travel Pool Report 1
Date: Sunday, September 24, 2017 5:57:58 PM

From: SV Date <sv.date@huffpost.com>
Date: September 24, 2017 at 5:55:46 PM EDT
Subject: WH In-town Travel Pool Report 1

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-30-

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH POOL President Fort Myers Travel Report #1
Date: Thursday, September 14, 2017 12:31:47 PM

From: "Zoldan, Sheldon" <SZOLDAN@Fortmyer.gannett.com>

Date: September 14, 2017 at 11:55:51 AM EDT

Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH POOL President Fort Myers Travel Report #1

From: Gluck, Frank
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2017 10:58 AM
To: Zoldan, Sheldon <SZOLDAN@Fortmyer.gannett.com>
Subject: Re: WH update #1 Fort Myers

Air Force 2 landed at RSW @ 10:05, five minutes ahead of schedule. Local temp is 86 degrees, with 76 % humidity, making it feel like 96.

Potus landed at 10:40 and deplaned at 10:45. Potus wearing white hat and presidential jacket. Greeted by Vp Pence (wearing Vp jacket) and his wife. Marco Rubio and AG Bindi seen at the greeting president. In motorcade at 10:55 to meet w FEMA and local officials.

Greeting members of coast guard at 11 am at Private Sky hangar. Potus wearing white USA hat

First Lady wearing olive green shirt, white cap and white tennis shoes

Potus thanks local officials, Thanks Marco Rubio and shakes his hand. Says about Gov Rick Scott: "the job he's done is incredible. Adding later: "I hope this man right here, rick Scott, runs for the Senate."

President, who was barely audible over the sound of running engines of nearby Blackhawk helicopters, took no questions from local press. Press was moved back to the terminal after the 10-15 mins of remarks. He's scheduled now to fly in a Blackhawk to Naples for roughly 90 mins before returning to RSW and leaving Florida

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH pool report #3 - background briefing on Paris trip
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 4:17:51 PM

From: Linskey, Annie [mailto:annie.linskey@globe.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 4:09 PM
Subject: WH pool report #3 - background briefing on Paris trip

Here's a quick rundown on the background briefing by a senior administration official on the president's upcoming trip to Paris. Do check any quotes against the transcript. (Contact me directly if you want to know who the SAO is, but the briefing is background only so I'm not including in this report.)

On Thursday POTUS is expected to have a working lunch with Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford and other military officials.

Also, on Thursday Trump and Macron will have a bilat meeting. It is sked for up to 1 hour and 15 min, but could go longer. The focus is Syria and counterterrorism. But climate could come up, according to the senior administration official.

The bilat will be followed by a "press event" featuring POTUS and Macron.

On Thursday evening POTUS and FLOTUS will have a private dinner with Macron and his wife.

The senior administration official is aware that Merkel is sked to be in Paris earlier on Thursday, but does not expect POTUS to meet with her. "That's not on the schedule right now," said a SAO.

On Friday, POTUS and FLOTUS will be guests of honor at the Bastille Day events in Paris. POTUS will leave France after the events.

Other quotes of note:

The senior administration official praised France for its NATO commitment, saying the country already commits 1.8 percent of its GDP to the alliance's defense. "Their numbers are trending in a positive direction," said a senior administration official.

"France is far and away one of the strongest military members of the alliance," said a SAO.

--

Annie Linskey
Boston Globe
DC Bureau
desk: 202-857-5131
cell: 443-627-0556
[@annielinskey](https://twitter.com/annielinskey)

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH print pool report 4
Date: Thursday, January 04, 2018 2:08:45 PM

From: David Smith [mailto:david.smith@theguardian.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 4, 2018 1:48 PM
Subject: WH print pool report 4

Final section from Roosevelt Room pool spray:

POTUS said: "Mr Vice-President, did you have anything to say?"

VPOTUS said: "Mr President, you've made immigration a centrepiece in the national debate over the last year and a half. You said all along the way we're going to build a wall, we're going to reform our immigration system, we're going to enforce the laws of this country for the citizens of this country. But you also said along the way that we're going to do it with a big heart and you've opened the door to an agreement on DACA and today, as part of an ongoing discussion with these Republican leaders but also with Democrats on Capitol Hill, to accomplish that, and I look forward to being a part of it."

POTUS replied: "Very good, thank you, Mike. And Senator Grassley, anything to say?"

POTUS turned to his right and touched Senator Chuck Grassley on the arm. Grassley, wearing a pale blue sweater under his suit jacket, said: "Of course, what you said, we were here, I think, with you on November the 8th. We set out a programme that we all agreed to here. We know that there has to be negotiations in regard to that, but you've laid out some principles that we will not compromise on."

POTUS tapped Grassley on the arm and said: "And you've been a great voice in a lot of different ways and we appreciate it, thank you very much."

POTUS looked along the table to Senator Lindsey Graham. "Lindsey. Used to be a great enemy of mine, now he's a great friend of mine. I really like Lindsey. Can you believe that? I never thought I'd say that but I do like him a lot."

Graham grinned broadly and shifted in his chair, then said: "Thank you. I like me too, so we have something in common."

There was laughter in the room and POTUS, jokingly putting his hand over his mouth, interjected: "We all know that."

Then Graham said: "Obama couldn't do it. Bush couldn't do it. I think you can do it. There's a bill to be had. If you want it bad enough, we'll get it and it'll be good for the country. Everybody's got to give a little bit but I've never been more optimistic about an immigration reform proposal making it to the president's desk than I am right now."

POTUS: "I think we have a good chance. Tom Cotton."

Senator Cotton said: "Thank you for having us, Mr President. As Senator Graham said, I think there's a deal to be had here. The president's made clear he wants to provide some kind of protections for those who received the DACA work permits but at the same time we have to deal with the negative consequences of that. We have to end chain migration prevent a future set of new chain migrants coming, we have to secure our border, we have to enforce our laws on the interior

as well to decrease the illegal immigration that will inevitably encourage overstays. The president and our group have been clear on that from the very beginning and I hope the Democrats will sit down with us and finally take yes for an answer on it.

POTUS: "I think we've got a good shot, I really do. Tom, anything?"

Senator Thom Tillis said: "Mr President, I just want to say exactly what Lindsey did. If you think about in the Obama administration, you had the votes to pass Obamacare and you couldn't get the DREAM Act passed, then you know there's something structurally wrong with just the baseline. If you just think about it, you're providing the leadership to come up with a balance where you're going to produce a bipartisan solution and a solution that's consistent with your principles which I think are important for us to fulfil the promises we made to the American people. And we can provide certainty to the DACA population, and shame on anybody for getting caught up in words: the wall, for example, when we've got the opportunity to provide a solution, achieve your objectives and do something good for the DACA population, then I think we should.

POTUS: "Thank you, Tom, very much. You're right 100%."

POTUS then said "Tom" again but looked at Senator James Lankford, who responded: "Mr President, thanks for bringing us all together. I mentioned to you in September when you first made the announcement about DACA that you'd given a tremendous gift to the American people. It's been 20 years since we've had a vote on immigration of any type that's actually passed and become law. Immigration issues are very hard, they're very emotional, but there's been no deadline, so every time the Congress starts to work on it, they work on it for a while then drop it because it's difficult. You gave us a deadline and setting that for March the 1st and that's a tremendous gift to be able to get that done. Thanks for engagement on this. I do absolutely agree with your heart on the issues on DACA and for those kids, and be able to find – we've got to get a legislative solution but we've got to deal with every other issue as well or we'll just keep having DACA votes every 10 years and we can't do that. So thanks and, by the way, thanks for the new leadership at DHS as well, and looking forward to seeing your leadership in the days ahead of us."

POTUS: "I have to say James Lankford has been tremendous help, not only on what we just passed but will be a tremendous help in this and James, I want to thank you for your support. You've been really fantastic and I can say that for all of the men and the people in this room, they've been fantastic."

POTUS turned to Senator John Cornyn, adding: "And John, you have really been – we can't even call you the whip, but you have been more than a whip. You've been so fantastic on the taxes and the tax cuts and the reform and the success of that and certainly it wasn't easy, it went right to the last minute, and you were right there, and we all want to thank you. The job you did was fantastic. So, Senator Cornyn, want to say a few words?"

Cornyn replied: "Mr President, thank you for having us here. America's the most generous country in the world when it comes to legal immigration but that generosity has been abused by people who are exploiting the vulnerabilities we have along the border with a lack of enforcement. And we saw the previous administration try to usurp the authority that only Congress and the White House have in passing immigration laws. They tried to do it by executive action and the courts struck that down. So I do think this is an important opportunity for those of us who care not only about the people and about our legal immigration system that's benefited us all but also are determined to eliminate and stop illegal immigration along with the drugs and the harm that that causes. And I do think this is a great opportunity, I hope we make the most of it, coming from a border state, 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, my constituents in Texas all understand the importance of border security and enforcement. At the same time, they are people with big hearts and like you, and like the rest of us, want to do the right thing by these adults who came here as children, and I think we have a right opportunity."

POTUS said: "Well, thank you very much, and I have to tell you that as I walked into the room, I don't know if you heard the latest, but the market is up about 150 points. And we broke a very, very big barrier: 25,000. And there were those who'd say we wouldn't break 25,000 by the end of the eighth year, and we're in the 11th month. We broke 25,000 just as we came in now. I have to be a little careful, because as we walk out maybe it goes down. You always have to be careful with that, Tom.

"But we did, in fact, break 25,000: very substantially break it, very easily. So I guess our new number is 30,000. But what it means is every time you see that number go up on Wall Street it means jobs, it means success, it means 401(k)s that are flourishing.

"I was in New York at a big event recently, and I take a lot of pictures with police and with firemen and with the military. And one of the policemen came up, an officer, and he said, 'Sir, I want to thank you. My 401(k) is through the roof. My wife thinks I'm a brilliant investor.' He said he was up 39%. I said, 'You should be doing better than that, actually.' But he said, 'I'm up 39% in nine months.' And he said, 'I've never seen anything like it. My wife is so happy, my family is so happy.'

"And people with 401(k)s, unless they're really having difficulties in life, they're doing very, very well. So I just want to congratulate everyone in the room because you worked so hard. I may finish off with our new secretary, who's just in the position but, I will tell you, respected by everybody. I got a very good vote. Got a very good vote. And would you like to say anything?"

Kirstjen Nielsen, the Homeland Security Secretary, said: "Yes. I just want to thank you for your leadership on this issue. And I really appreciate your support of the men and women at DHS. They do have a very dangerous job, one that we don't often like to talk about. But they do put their lives in danger for all of us every day.

"And I really look forward to working with all of you, and learning today about your progress. As you know, border security, we have to have the wall and the technology and personnel that go with that, but we also need to close the loopholes that we can do the expedited removal because that's a core part of border security. So I look very much forward to working with you and others in Congress to get this done."

POTUS said: "You're going to break all of General Kelly – who's right over here – you're going to break all of his records, right?"

Nielsen smiled: "Absolutely."

POTUS: "Because he had some pretty good records; 78 percent is -- so far, that's the best number. So you have to break 78 percent. That's tough, but you'll do it."

Nielsen: "All right. Yes, sir."

POTUS: "Thank you all very much. Appreciate it."

A reporter in the room shouted a question: "Your message to DREAMers, Mr. President? Your message to DREAMers, Mr President? What do you say?"

POTUS replied: "Hopefully, everything's going to work out very well. We really want it to work out. I can tell you the Republicans want to see it work out very well. If we have support from the Democrats, I think DACA is going to be terrific. We have people that have been working on this issue for a long time. As Lindsey said, as others have said, we really are at a point where I think we could do something spectacular for the people on the border, the people coming through.

"We have to be careful because there's a drug epidemic like the likes of which we've never seen in this country. We need protection. We need the wall. We need all of those things. And, frankly, I think a lot of Democrats agree with us. When they see what's happening, when they see the kind of problems we're having at the border, they really understand it. Whether they'll vote that way is another situation, but they really understand it.

"So we want to thank you all for being here. We have a great spirit going in the Republican Party. I think it can be bipartisan. I hope it's going to be bipartisan. And we take care of a lot of problems. We can take care of a lot of problems. It would be really nice to do it in a bipartisan way. OK? Thank you all."

Then came the questions about Steve Bannon as described in a previous pool report.

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH Travel Pool 2
Date: Monday, October 16, 2017 5:54:42 PM

From: SV Date <sv.date@huffpost.com>

Date: October 16, 2017 at 5:44:36 PM EDT

Subject: WH Travel Pool 2

Air Force 1 touched down at Greenville-Spartanburg airport at 5:21.

He emerged from the plane at 5:30 and greeted at the base of the stairs by Gov. Henry McMaster, his wife and their two adult children.

Also flying down aboard was Sen. Lindsey Graham and Rep. Joe Wilson.

POTUS waved at the crowd assembled behind some barriers and then climbed into his limo.

But minutes later, the motorcade stopped and he and went out to shake hands with the 100 or supporters.

Pool was at the rear of the motorcade and could not see or hear any details.

At 1741 POTUS reentered his limo and the motorcade is rolling toward the event site.

-30-

S.V. Dáte
Senior White House Correspondent
HuffPost
[202-624-9338](tel:202-624-9338) (o)
[202-615-5845](tel:202-615-5845) (m)
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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH Travel Pool Report #7
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 1:59:48 AM

From: Mark Landler <landler@nytimes.com>
Date: November 8, 2017 at 2:56:28 PM GMT+8
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH Travel Pool Report #7

President Trump and his wife stepped off Air Force One at 2:50 pm. Chinese authorities pushed a large staircase to the side of the plane.

The first couple were met on a red carpet by officials, a line of school children waving US and Chinese flags and an honor guard in white and blue uniforms, holding rifles with fixed bayonets.

Spotted at the bottom of the stairs: Ambassador Terry Branstad, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Motorcade is rolling at 2:53 pm, past another row of flag-waving school-children.

Mark Landler
NY Times

###

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From: White House Press Office
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: WH Travel Pool Report #10
Date: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 3:17:23 AM

From: Mark Landler [mailto:landler@nytimes.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2017 5:14 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WH Travel Pool Report #10

In the Forbidden City

President Trump, President Xi Jinping, and their wives walked through the Gate of Supreme Harmony and gazed across a sprawling — and deserted, save for your pool — courtyard. The slanting rays of the afternoon sun reflected off the gold filigree on the sides of the pavilions, casting a soft glow.

After a guide explained the sites, POTUS, clad in a blue overcoat, and FLOTUS, in a black one, walked down a flight of stairs and into the courtyard, alongside Xi and his wife.

The foursome stopped in the middle of the square and turned to face a wall of cameras. Trump made pleasantries with Xi, but no words were audible to the pool. At one point, POTUS gestured to the stones underfoot.

After the photo op, the group strolled on toward the Palace of Supreme Peace, climbing another long flight of stairs.

Later, the WH staff, as well as Secretary of State Tillerson, USTR Robert Lighthizer and Amb. Terry Branstad, walked through and posed for a photo.

Pool is now resetting for the next sighting.

Mark Landler
NY Times

###

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From: Timothy Williams
To: [Heather Swift](#)
Subject: Wife"s first catfish
Date: Saturday, September 16, 2017 7:21:52 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.txt](#)

@timwjr if you wanted to use it? My twitter handle is there as well.

Tim

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Johnson, Virginia](#)
Subject: WSJ
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 8:20:01 AM

Mark Zuckerberg Hits the Road to Meet Regular Folks—With a Few Conditions

As he tours America, Facebook CEO appears at homes and businesses with little notice, asks not to be quoted; not always recognized

By Reid J. Epstein and

Mark Zuckerberg is trying to understand America, so he's embarked on a journey to meet people like hockey moms and steelworkers who don't typically cross his path.

But there are rules to abide by if you are an ordinary person about to meet an extraordinary entrepreneur.

Rule One: You probably won't know Mr. Zuckerberg is coming.

Rule Two: If you do know he's coming, keep it to yourself.

Rule Three: Be careful what you reveal about the meeting.

While the Facebook CEO has built a social network that inspired people around the world to share the most intimate details about their personal lives, his team goes to extraordinary lengths to keep his movements under wraps and control how he is perceived. Midway through a "personal challenge" to travel to 30 states he'd never visited, the 33-year-old aims "to talk to more people about how they're living, working and thinking about the future," he wrote in January on his Facebook page.

Among those people was Kyle McKasson, manager of the Wilton Candy Kitchen, a century-old shop on the town square in Wilton, Iowa.

He was at work one Monday afternoon in June when two men and a woman dressed in jeans and button-down shirts entered the store, which is a regular stop on Iowa's presidential campaign circuit.

The three said they were from California on a business trip on their way to Chicago and asked Mr. McKasson for a tour of the store and its museum of the history of Wilton, population 2,800. They didn't tell their names, he said, and he thought it impolite to ask.

Four days later, the same three people returned to the candy store, and one of his new customers revealed their true mission: "Mark Zuckerberg will be here in five minutes."

A startled Mr. McKasson, 54, asked: "What do I need to do?" he recalled, and was told: "Nothing."

Mr. Zuckerberg walked through the red-and-white store door. He ordered a \$5.75 chocolate

malt. An assistant paid the world's fifth-richest man's tab with a debit card.

The tech titan chatted with the young cashier about her future plans and spoke to Mr. McKasson about life in Wilton and the city's downtown revitalization efforts.

Members of Mr. Zuckerberg's team plan his visits with secrecy, but there are rare instances of the Facebook CEO's cover being blown. The result: chaos.

When someone let slip he'd be at the Kusanya Café on Chicago's South Side, Renée Banks, a barista, said she had to fetch extra chairs for the 100 people who showed up.

Mr. Zuckerberg sitting on a porch at a home in Dallas. PHOTO: TAYLOR TOYNES

Amy Dudley, a spokeswoman for the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative LLC, an entity formed in 2015 by Mr. Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, which is helping to arrange the CEO's tour, said the design of "these visits is to have the most honest and candid interactions and discussions as possible, without the additional attention that's likely to come as a result of word getting out ahead of time."

For nearly a decade, Mr. Zuckerberg has started every year with a "personal challenge." In 2009, this meant wearing a tie every day. Another year, he swore only to eat meat that he had personally slaughtered. "I just killed a pig and a goat," he boasted in a private Facebook post in 2011.

Facebook, the 13-year-old company he co-founded, now has two billion monthly active users. Its market value is \$446 billion.

In Wilton, Mr. Zuckerberg's advance team had stopped at city hall to secure a meeting with Wilton Mayor Bob Barrett and City Administrator Chris Ball to discuss life in rural Iowa before the CEO went to the candy store.

But Messers. Ball and Barrett were asked not to tell anyone Mr. Zuckerberg was coming. Mr. Ball said Mr. Zuckerberg's representatives instructed them not to relay verbatim quotes from their discussions with him if asked by reporters.

"They asked me not to quote what Mr. Zuckerberg said," Mr. Ball said. "They said to refer people to their press guys."

Mr. Zuckerberg on July 4 at the Mount Marathon Race in Seward, Alaska. PHOTO: RUSS WINSLOW

Mr. Zuckerberg spent the July 4 weekend in Alaska, the 15th state he's visited on his tour since it began in January. He stayed at the Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge, a \$1,000-per-night fishing resort on the Kenai Peninsula. A receptionist said the lodge's owners wouldn't discuss the visit. "You have to call Amy Dudley," she said.

Ms. Dudley, a former aide to Vice President Joe Biden and Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, said Mr. Zuckerberg declined to be interviewed for this article.

Despite his world-wide fame, Mr. Zuckerberg isn't always recognized by his surprise hosts.

In June, he attended an Iftar dinner in Minneapolis. Mr. Zuckerberg arrived after the prayers and the other people in the room, who were mostly refugees from Somalia, didn't know who he was, said attendee Mohammed Jama.

Blues musician James "Super Chikan" Johnson was booked in February to play a concert funded by a mystery client at the Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, Miss. Mr. Johnson, 66, said it is unusual for him to not be told for whom he'd be performing. When he was on stage setting up his equipment, Mr. Zuckerberg approached.

"They said, 'That's Mark Zuckerberg.' I said, 'Who dat?'" Mr. Johnson said. "They said, 'It's the Facebook guy, the guy who owns the Facebook. I said, 'You've got to be kidding me.' I had no idea who he was."

The secrecy surrounding Mr. Zuckerberg's visits has nearly led to his target audience blowing him off.

Adam Kragthorpe, who runs a local youth hockey program in Minnetonka, Minn., deleted the initial email from James Eby requesting a meeting for "a Fortune 500 CEO who is traveling the United States and visiting a wide range of communities."

"We thought it was a multilevel marketing scheme," Mr. Kragthorpe said.

Mr. Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, with Bill Lockett, owner of Ground Zero Blues Club in Mississippi in February. PHOTO: SCOTT TRIMBLE

Mr. Eby, who planned travels for four Defense secretaries in the Obama administration, is now a contractor working for the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. He declined to comment.

Two days after he emailed Mr. Kragthorpe, Mr. Eby arrived unannounced at the hockey rink.

Mr. Kragthorpe said he was told that Mr. Zuckerberg would like to visit with hockey families a couple of days later. He said Mr. Eby told him not to tell anyone the Facebook CEO was coming and asked that people at the rink not photograph the CEO.

The Zuckerberg entourage, which can be up to eight people, includes a professional photographer. His aides said there is no prohibition against others snapping pictures.

In Newton Falls, Ohio, Dan Moore got a call in April from Jimmy Dahman, a former presidential campaign field organizer for Hillary Clinton in Ohio. Mr. Dahman doesn't work for Mr. Zuckerberg's organization, but was acting as a volunteer, he said.

He wanted to know if Mr. Moore, a Democratic union steelworker who was a volunteer for Donald Trump's presidential campaign, would host "a billionaire philanthropist from California" at his home five days later.

Four days later, Mr. Moore, 57, was standing in his driveway waiting for his mystery guest. Fifteen minutes before a pair of black SUVs arrived, he was told he'd be joined by Mr. Zuckerberg.

Mr. Moore and his family enjoyed a dinner of chicken Francaise and baked whitefish Mr. Zuckerberg's staff had catered from a nearby restaurant. As Mr. Zuckerberg was leaving, he made one request, Mr. Moore said.

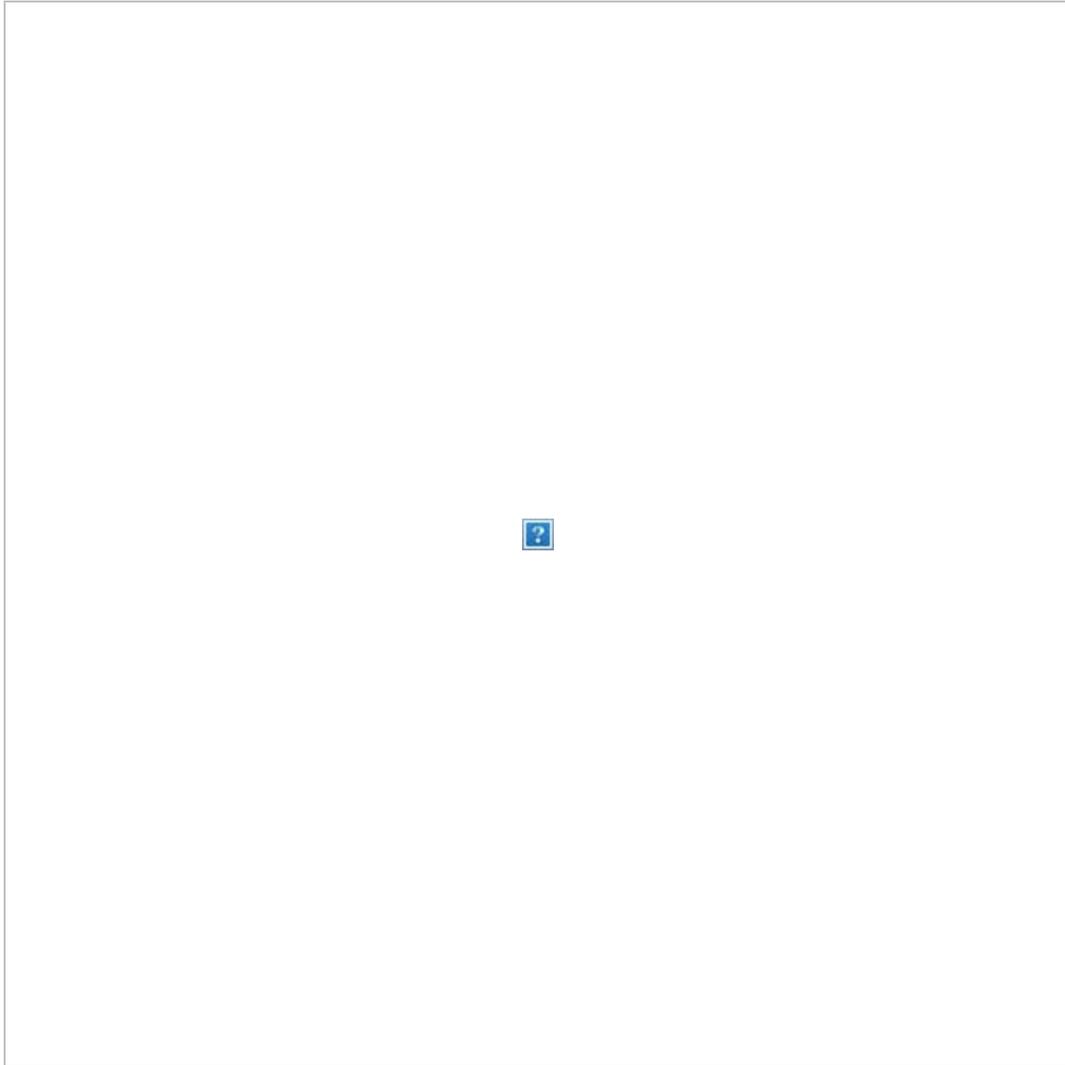
“He said, ‘If there are any news reporters that call you, just make sure you tell them I’m not running for president.’”

Write to Reid J. Epstein at reid.epstein@wsj.com and Deepa Seetharaman at Deepa.Seetharaman@wsj.com

From: The White House
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Your 1600 Daily
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 2:04:03 PM



STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP



As you all know, shortly after 7:00 a.m. this morning, a gunman opened fire on members of Congress and their staffs as they were practicing for tomorrow's annual charity baseball game.

Authorities are continuing to investigate the crime, and the assailant has now died from his injuries. The FBI is leading the investigation and will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

Congressman Steve Scalise, a member of House leadership, was shot and badly

wounded, and is now in stable condition at the hospital, along with two very courageous Capitol Police officers. At least two others were also wounded.

Many lives would have been lost if not for the heroic actions of the two Capitol Police officers who took down the gunman despite sustaining gunshot wounds during a very, very brutal assault.

Melania and I are grateful for their heroism and praying for the swift recovery of all victims.

Congressman Scalise is a friend, and a very good friend. He's a patriot and he's a fighter. He will recover from this assault. And, Steve, I want you to know that you have the prayers not only of the entire city behind you, but of an entire nation and, frankly, the entire world. America is praying for you and America is praying for all of the victims of this terrible shooting.

I spoke with Steve's wife, Jennifer, and I pledged to her our full and absolute support -- anything she needs. We are with her and with the entire Scalise family.

I have also spoken with Chief Matthew Verderosa -- he's doing a fantastic job -- of the Capitol Police to express our sympathies for his wounded officers and to express my admiration for their courage. Our brave Capitol Police perform a challenging job with incredible skill, and their sacrifice makes democracy possible.

We also commend the brave first responders from Alexandria Police, Fire and Rescue who rushed to the scene. Everyone on that field is a public servant -- our courageous police, our congressional aides who work so tirelessly behind the scenes with enormous devotion, and our dedicated members of Congress who represent our people.

We may have our differences, but we do well, in times like these, to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country.

We can all agree that we are blessed to be Americans, that our children deserve to grow up in a nation of safety and peace, and that we are strongest when we are unified and when we work together for the common good.

Please take a moment today to cherish those you love, and always remember those who serve and keep us safe. God bless them all, God bless you, and God Bless America. Thank you.

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August 21, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Zinke,

On behalf of the National Stone Sand and Gravel Association, I write to invite you to address our Legislative and Policy Forum in Washington, D.C., Sept. 24-27, 2017. As you are aware, NSSGA has over 800 members in North America whose activities support hundreds of thousands of jobs across the continent and contribute exponentially to an evolving global economy. Our Forum is designed to bring representatives of these voices together in our nation's capital for innovative discussions on infrastructure, development, safety, the environment, tax and trade.

We wish to specifically request your appearance on **Monday, Sept. 25, 2017, at your convenience between 6 and 7 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill** at 400 New Jersey Ave NW. We understand that this Forum is occurring at a crucial time in the fiscal year when your Department is highly active. You are invited to enjoy as much of our Forum as time allows, but we expect not to keep you longer than 30 minutes for brief 10 minute remarks followed by questions. Our membership would be very interested in hearing about the important work your department is undertaking, particularly on Endangered Species Act issues. We believe your input and participation would be invaluable in fostering a robust discussion among our nearly 300 expected attendees.

We would appreciate the favor of a reply by September 5, 2017. Should you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to reach out to Laura O'Neill-Kaumo, NSSGA senior vice president of government and regulatory affairs, at loneill@nssga.org. We look forward to the pleasure of your company and hearing the unique perspective that you will undoubtedly bring to our anticipated event.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Johnson
NSSGA President and CEO



August 2, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

On behalf of the Steering Committee for National Clean Energy Week (NCEW), I am writing to invite you to participate in the inaugural National Clean Energy Week Symposium. The symposium will be held on Tuesday, September 26, 2017 at the Reserve Officers Association at One Constitution Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002.

It would be an honor to have you open the symposium with an 8:00 am breakfast featuring a discussion with you and Secretary Perry on the topic of "Harnessing the Potential of Clean Energy in the 21st Century". The discussion will be moderated by The Honorable Kelly Ayotte, who serves as a senior advisor to Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES). If this time does not work for your schedule, we would be happy to accommodate you at another time.

The purpose of NCEW is to bring together industry associations, business leaders, non-profits, and advocates in the clean energy space for a week of events and activities in Washington, DC, and across America highlighting the value and benefits of clean energy solutions. In Washington, DC, there will be a series of events on Capitol Hill and downtown highlighting the work of these industries.

The NCEW Steering Committee is led by key industry associations across the clean energy spectrum. Members of the Steering Committee include:

*American Council on Renewable Energy
American Gas Association
American Wind Energy Association
Advanced Energy Economy
Business Council for Sustainable Energy
Clean Energy Business Network*

*CRES Forum
National Hydropower Association
Nuclear Energy Institute
Solar Energy Industries Association
Solid Waste Association of North America*

It would be an honor for you to join us for this event. Please do not hesitate to contact me at hreams@citizensfor.com or (202) 276-7579.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Reams".

Heather Reams
Managing Director

From: Swift, Heather
To: [David Mihalic](#)
Subject: Zinke speeches
Date: Thursday, June 22, 2017 6:48:04 PM
Attachments: [Remarks_OutdoorIndustryEconomicReport.docx](#)
[Remarks_ShenandoahRoundtable.docx](#)

Attached is two speeches Z had for two outdoor rec events.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Daly, Matthew
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: Zinke travel
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 3:42:04 PM

Can you send me your statement from last night on Lola Zinke?

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Ryan K. Zinke

March 6, 2017

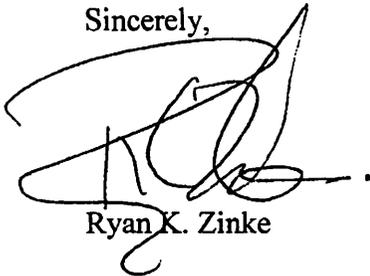
Continental Divide International, LLC
409 W 2nd Street
Whitefish, MT 59937

To Whom It May Concern,

With confirmation by the United States Senate to become Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I am required to resign from all outside positions in which I serve. The purpose of this letter is to convey my resignation, effective immediately, from my management positions with Continental Divide International, LLC; however, I will remain a non-managing member.

During my appointment to the position of Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I will not manage or provide any other services to Continental Divide International, LLC, and I will receive only passive investment income therefrom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Zinke', with a large, sweeping flourish above it. The signature is positioned to the right of the word 'Sincerely,' and above the printed name 'Ryan K. Zinke'.

Ryan K. Zinke

Ryan K. Zinke

March 6, 2017

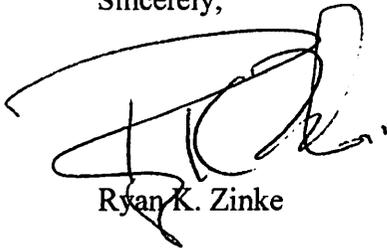
Double Tap, LLC
409 W 2nd Street
Whitefish, MT 59937

To Whom It May Concern,

With confirmation by the United States Senate to become Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I am required to resign from all outside positions in which I serve. The purpose of this letter is to convey my resignation, effective immediately, from my position as a managing member of Double Tap, LLC; however, I will remain a non-managing member.

During my appointment to the position of Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I will not manage or provide any other services to Double Tap, LLC, and I will receive only passive investment income therefrom.

Sincerely,



Ryan K. Zinke

Ryan K. Zinke

March 6, 2017

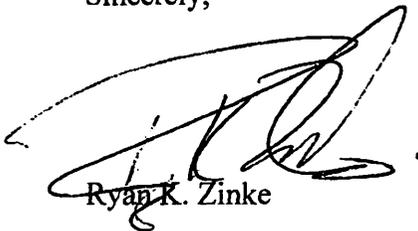
Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation
409 W 2nd Street
Whitefish, MT 59937

To Whom It May Concern,

With confirmation by the United States Senate to become Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I am required to resign from all outside positions in which I serve. The purpose of this letter is to convey my resignation, effective immediately, as President of Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation.

During my appointment to the position of Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, I will not manage or provide any other services to Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation.

Sincerely,



Ryan K. Zinke

January 10, 2017

Melinda Loftin
Designated Agency Ethics Official
and Director, Ethics Office
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 7346
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Loftin:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Secretary of the Department of Interior.

As required by 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me: any spouse or minor child of mine; any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner; any organization in which I serve as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee; and any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Foundation. For a period of one year after my resignation, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know this entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my positions with Continental Divide International, LLC, and become a non-managing member of this entity. During my appointment to the position of Secretary, I will not manage this entity or provide any other services to it. Instead, I will receive only passive investment income from it. As Secretary, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of Continental Divide International, LLC, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with Double Tap, LLC, and I will become a non-managing member of this entity. During my appointment, I will not manage this entity or provide any other services to it. Instead, I will receive only passive investment income from it. As Secretary, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter

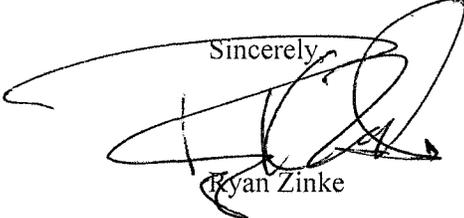
that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of Double Tap, LLC, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

I receive royalties from Thomas Nelson for sales of my book, *American Commander: Serving a Country Worth Fighting For and Training the Brave Soldiers Who Lead the Way*. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know Thomas Nelson is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

My spouse has a vested beneficial interest in, and receives property management fees from, a family trust with underlying assets consisting of rental properties and an undeveloped lot, all of which are located in Santa Barbara, CA. As Secretary, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of this trust, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

If I am confirmed as Secretary of the Department of the Interior, I am aware that I am prohibited by 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) from holding a financial interest in any surface or underground coal mining operation. Additionally, I am aware that my position is subject to the prohibitions against holding any financial interest in federal lands or resources administered or controlled by the Department of the Interior extended to me by supplemental regulation 5 C.F.R. § 3501.103.

Finally, I have been advised that this ethics agreement will be posted publicly, consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

Ryan Zinke

February 2, 2017

Melinda Loftin
Designated Agency Ethics Official
and Director, Ethics Office
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 7346
Washington, DC 20240

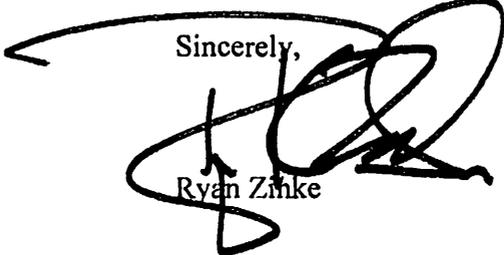
Dear Ms. Loftin:

The purpose of this letter is to supplement my ethics agreement signed on January 10, 2017. The following information supplements my ethics agreement:

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge required under the Executive Order dated January 28, 2017 (“Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Appointees”) and that I will be bound by the requirements and restrictions therein in addition to the commitments I made in the ethics agreement I signed on January 10, 2017.

I have been advised that this supplement to my ethics agreement will be posted publicly, consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,



Ryan Zinke

From: Corbin Hiar
To: [Swift, Heather](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: FW: COMPLETED - Request for Information for order 65394 for GREAT NORTHERN VETERANS PEACE PARK FOUNDATION, INC. (D172957)
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:36:38 PM
Attachments: [Certificate for Request for Information Fulfillment.pdf](#)
[CertificateOfFact.pdf](#)

For the record, here's proof that I was only able to nail this story down about an hour and a half ago.

From: Business Registration [mailto:noreply@mtsosfilings.gov]
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 4:08 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: COMPLETED - Request for Information for order 65394 for GREAT NORTHERN VETERANS PEACE PARK FOUNDATION, INC. (D172957)

Dear Business Customer,

Business Name: GREAT NORTHERN VETERANS PEACE PARK FOUNDATION, INC.

Your request for information has been processed, and the document(s) are attached to this email.

To view the information, log in to SIMS and go to "My Service Orders" tab and select the appropriate request to view the information.

Please contact the Business Services Division at (406) 444-5522 with any questions you may have.

Best Regards,

Corey Stapleton
Montana Secretary of State

Delivery Id: 359269

From: Heather Swift
To: [Laura Rigas](#); [Scott Hommel](#)
Subject: Fwd: Following up re Mrs. Zinke
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 8:18:32 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Date: June 19, 2017 at 9:29:58 PM EDT
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Noelle Straub <nstraub@eenews.net>
Subject: RE: Following up re Mrs. Zinke

Hi Heather,

Thanks for reaching out and I'm sorry about the radio silence on my end. Because the editors weren't comfortable running my unnamed sources' claims against your stated denials, we've decided to hold the story for now.

Best,

Corbin

From: Swift, Heather [heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2017 3:34 PM
To: Corbin Hiar
Cc: Noelle Straub
Subject: Following up re Mrs. Zinke

Hi Corbin, I saw you submitted FOIA requests regarding Mrs. Zinke last week. Is there anything you need follow-up information on?

Thank you,

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Laura Rigas](mailto:Laura.Rigas)
Subject: Fwd: Interior Department and EE
Date: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 4:00:11 PM

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Michael Witt** <michael@eenews.net>
Date: Wed, Jun 7, 2017 at 3:57 PM
Subject: RE: Interior Department and EE
To: "Swift, Heather" <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

Heather –

Thanks for sending this. I have briefed my partner and editor-in-chief Kevin Braun and the Greenwire editor, Cy Zaneski on our call and have forwarded your email to them.

You will hear back from Cy today – unclear exactly what time as he's juggling his afternoon deadline but you will hear from him.

I appreciate the straight-forward manner of your presentation. It has prompted a serious conversation here and I expect you will have a substantive and respectful conversation.

Let me know if you are not satisfied with the follow-up,

Michael Witt

Publisher

E&E News

mwitt@eenews.net

202-446-0422 (office)

301-717-7062

E&E NEWS

122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001

www.eenews.net | @EENewsUpdates | 202-628-6500

Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, E&E TV

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 2:43 PM
To: Michael Witt; Laura Rigas
Subject: Interior Department and EE

Hi there, Michael. Thank you for taking my call earlier today. The Department has dozens if not over a hundred subscriptions to E&E so it's no secret that we value your coverage of our issues. As such, the Department and E&E enjoy a positive and productive working relationship with every reporter on your staff with the exception of one.

Corbin Hiar has proven to be unwilling to work with the Department in a professional and unbiased manner. He routinely springs biased and poorly-researched stories on us with about an hour deadline to respond, knowing that responses to these types of questions require days. We have had several conversations with him over the months about getting more time to respond to inquiries that are not run of the mill policy questions. I have explained that we often have to track down official documentation, speak with attorneys, speak with the Secretary, etc. This is not something that can be done in an hour. He sometimes gives me a day extension but that is still not adequate time in many cases.

Additionally, when the Department's communications office presents information that proves the allegations wrong, he refuses to accept that perhaps he was given bad information, and still treats the allegations as if they were true, and continues to write an inaccurate and leading article.

For example: (example 3 below) There was a matter of the Secretary resigning from his small businesses upon confirmation to the Cabinet. The Secretary in fact resigned and we provided Corbin with the proper legal documentation to prove that. We also had statements explaining the process and the timeline, clearly showing that the Secretary met all of his requirements. Rather than cut bait on a non-story, Corbin proceeded as planned with a leading and biased [story that strongly insinuated](#) that the Secretary was not in full compliance with his ethics pledge.

There are still more troubling exchanges where I approach Corbin to get information about a story he is researching and then he blatantly lied to me that he is writing a story. The situation with Mrs. Zinke is a perfect example, which is example 1 below.

My colleagues and I have made every effort to have a positive and productive working relationship with Corbin and all of E&E. Jennifer was one of the only reporters to get a one-on-one in Utah when the Secretary was there for Bears Ears. I've given Corbin plenty of "heads up" opportunities for announcements and travel, and the comms director at the Interior would have a weekly call with him to go over the week ahead. In the end,

Corbin however has not returned the professionalism. Instead he sneaks around and writes leading and misinformed stories in darkness. I'm happy to continue working with any one of your other reporters but Corbin has taken an antagonistic and combative approach to his beat. I'm afraid his editor hasn't done much to correct his tactics either.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reply all, I've CCed my boss, Laura Rigas, DOI Communications

Director.

Heather Swift

Press Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior

c: 202-897-7111

d: 202-208-5338

EXAMPLE 1: Investigative piece into the wife of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Lolita Zinke. I have been hearing for weeks from a sitting U.S. Senator, reporters from other news outlets, past administration officials, hill staff, and current DOI employees that Corbin has been asking around for information on Mrs. Zinke. When I approached Corbin twice on the subject, he avoided discussing the scope of his story or the deadline, or even ask a question about some of the information that he has been fed. As recent as yesterday, I asked Corbin if there was anything I could answer for him as I had heard once again that he was asking people for information on Mrs. Zinke. He gave one piece of intel, that Mrs. Zinke has a desk at the Department, which is patently false, and he refused to accept this fact. This morning I received an email from Corbin at 10:00 AM, with an 11:30 deadline, suggesting multiple accounts of wrong-doing by Mrs. Zinke and the Secretary, and not a shred of evidence to support his claims. When I asked about the claims he is extremely cagey, if not all together non-responsive.

10:02 AM (3 hours ago)

Corbin Hiar [via ios.doi.gov](mailto:ios.doi.gov)

to Interior_Press

We have a story about Mrs. Zinke's activities at Interior that, due to competitive pressures, may run as soon as today. The story notes that she has travelled in official vehicles with the secretary, which appears to be a violation the [department's policy](#) against transporting family members in government vehicles except for in cases of emergency. It also details many of the non-public events she has attended with the secretary, her desk in his office, and her role managing CDI and a family trust with assets in California. The story, which provides background on Mrs. Zinke and her life with the secretary, includes quotes from watchdogs and former government officials noting how unusual such an arrangement is.

Why did she need that desk? Why has she traveled in government vehicles if, as Heather said yesterday, she has "no role at Interior"? Why did she receive an ethics briefing in early March if she has no role? Why did she attend a meeting with California Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown about water, infrastructure and conservation projects when such efforts could affect the value of her family trust or benefit CDI? Why was that meeting and all other events during the California trip not included on the secretary's calendar?

Please get back to me with any responses by 11:30. And I'm happy to provide more detail about the story if you have any questions.

Thanks, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](#)

EXAMPLE 2: Article summarizing aspects of Interior nominee David Bernhardt's senate hearing in which Corbin writes extensively about alleged ties to Jack Abramoff, without ever contacting the Department for a response. Corbin's article was wildly misleading and insinuated guilt and that Mr. Bernhardt was lying. When I approached Corbin and asked why he didn't contact Interior for information, he said it was because he didn't want to get scooped by Politico on the story. After I provided Corbin with a statement refuting the allegations, he included a few words he picked out of our statement.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 05, 2017 3:11 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: ?

Corbin - Curious why you didn't reach out to us about this article? <https://www.eenews.net/eedaily/2017/06/05/stories/1060055514>

On Mon, Jun 5, 2017 at 3:37 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi Heather,

Thanks for reading and for the question. There were a couple of reasons I didn't contact you about the story.

First and foremost, because I was quoting directly from Bernhardt, who as a nominee for Interior's second-highest job can be reasonably expected to represent the viewpoints of the department.

Second, and less importantly, because I didn't get the QFRs until Friday evening and wasn't able to go through them until Sunday afternoon. We also knew Politico would have something out on Monday morning and wanted to do the same.

Do you disagree with my reasoning here? Is there some statement from Interior that you'd like us to consider adding?

Best, C

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 05, 2017 4:34 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: ?

1. Mr. Bernhardt is not yet our Deputy Secretary and therefore does not speak on behalf of the Department.
2. You have two email addresses for me, one for Laura, and three cell phone numbers between the two of us. We are always responsive over the weekend.
3. Background: Mr. Bernhardt is a highly-experienced and well-respected veteran Interior official. Mr. Bernhardt has been cleared several times over by the IG, the FBI and other federal government ethics officials with regard to Abramoff. All have corroborated Bernhardt was not at the dinner. Prior to his nomination, Mr. Bernhardt was subject to rigorous ethics vetting that found him fit for service.

DOI Statement: Just as Mr. Bernhardt said in response to Senator Franken, Mr. Bernhardt does not believe he ever met Abramoff and has no relationship with him. Mr. Bernhardt is unequivocal that he never attended any dinner, let alone the dinner that E&E News wrongly insinuated that he did. All E&E had to do to verify this fact was pick up the phone and ask.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We've updated the story.

Note: The story was updated to include the line.... Interior Press Secretary Heather Swift, however, said in an email that Bernhardt "never attended any dinner" with Abramoff.

EXAMPLE 3: On a Friday after 5:00PM (when Government employees go home if they don't telework) Corbin emails weeks worth of research and allegations of misconduct by the Secretary, asking for a response by 11:00AM Monday. Essentially giving the Department two hours to work with the career officials in the Department to track down legal and ethics paperwork (not to mention Montana Secretary of State and Montana lawyers who are 2 hours behind). Corbin alleged the Secretary did not fulfill his ethics requirements because he was still a member of his family's small businesses upon confirmation to the Cabinet. The Secretary however did in fact resign and we provided Corbin with the proper legal documentation to prove that. We also explained the process and the timeline, clearly showing that the Secretary met all of his requirements. Rather than cut bait on a non-story, Corbin proceeded as planned with a wildly biased story that strongly insinuated that the Secretary was not in full compliance with his ethics pledge.

On **Fri, May 19, 2017 at 5:09 PM**, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

Best, C

Corbin Hiar
[Interior Reporter](mailto:chiar@eenews.net)
O: 202 446 0438
M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](https://twitter.com/corbinhiar)

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 11:43 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

"The claims made by E&E are patently false, and as promised, 'upon confirmation' Secretary Zinke resigned as a managing member from the family's two small businesses and a nonprofit organization which he founded to build the Veterans Peace Park, a sledding park for the children of Whitefish, Montana. The Secretary worked with the career veteran ethics officials at the Department every step of the way. He currently has no management role in any of the organizations identified."

Timeline of events:

On January 10, then-Congressman Zinke signed a letter pledging to resign as a managing official from the three entities 'upon confirmation' (which he did). (document attached)

On March 2nd, just an hour after arriving at the Department for the first time, the Secretary [met with ethics officials](#) to go over the ethics regulations and laws, including a review of his ethics agreement. This was his first meeting as Secretary.

On March 6th, the ethics officials presented the Secretary with, and he signed, documents executing the resignation (attached).

Regarding Mrs. Zinke: “There was no violation of any government ethics rules. Out of an abundance of caution, Mrs. Zinke received an ethics briefing in early March to avoid even the appearance of a conflict.

On background:

The Executive Branch Stands of Ethical Conduct do not apply to private citizens, including spouses.

Following the death of her mother in October, Mrs. Zinke inherited her parents' home and residential rental property business.

May 25 (13 days ago)

Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

to me, Interior_Press, Laura

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Why did it take Secretary Zinke three days to in office to sign the resignation letters? What happened to the letters after he signed them? Why did the Montana Secretary of State's office not receive them?

Please get back to me by 11 a m. We plan to run the story today.

May 25 (13 days ago)

Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

to Corbin, Interior_Press, Laura

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[]

[]

Corbin, The Secretary fulfilled his commitment and requirement to resign as a managing official. I'll remind you of the timeline. The Secretary's very first meeting was with the ethics office to resign as a managing official from the three entities. The ethics office then prepared the paperwork and presented it to him as soon as it was available, which was two businessdays later. Preparing and executing legal documents is a process, which in this case, was done as thoroughly and as expeditiously as possible. The documents were mailed to the attorney of the boards, who confirmed receipt, fulfilling the Secretary's requirement.

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-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO](#); [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: FYI -- DOI/Zinke
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 11:57:29 AM
Attachments: [Zinke, Ryan - Resignation Letters.pdf](#)
[Zinke-Ryan-finalAMENDEDEEA.pdf](#)

Team: Wanted to make you aware of a hit piece from EE News (trade subscription) regarding Sec. Zinke's ethics agreement and whether or not he resigned from his two family businesses and non profit organization. Inquiry in blue at the far bottom.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swift, Heather**
Date: Tue, May 23, 2017 at 11:43 AM
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance
To: Corbin Hiar

"The claims made by E&E are patently false, and as promised, 'upon confirmation' Secretary Zinke resigned as a managing member from the family's two small businesses and a nonprofit organization which he founded to build the Veterans Peace Park, a sledding park for the children of Whitefish, Montana. The Secretary worked with the career veteran ethics officials at the Department every step of the way. He currently has no management role in any of the organizations identified."

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-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior

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Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

Best, C

Corbin Hiar
[Interior Reporter](#)
O: 202 446 0438
M: 718 608 5314
T: [@corbinhiar](#)

From: Michael Witt
To: Swift_Heather
Subject: RE: Interior Department and EE
Date: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 4:11:42 PM

Certainly my goal – I appreciate you reaching out.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 4:04 PM
To: Michael Witt
Subject: Re: Interior Department and EE

Thank you, Michael. Your willingness to hear me out and your concern for the matter gives me hope E&E and DOI can get back on good footing.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jun 7, 2017 at 3:57 PM, Michael Witt <michael@eenews.net> wrote:
Heather –

Thanks for sending this. I have briefed my partner and editor-in-chief Kevin Braun and the Greenwire editor, Cy Zaneski on our call and have forwarded your email to them.

You will hear back from Cy today – unclear exactly what time as he's juggling his afternoon deadline but you will hear from him.

I appreciate the straight-forward manner of your presentation. It has prompted a serious conversation here and I expect you will have a substantive and respectful conversation.

Let me know if you are not satisfied with the follow-up,

Michael Witt
Publisher
E&E News

mwitt@eenews.net
202-446-0422 (office)
301-717-7062

E&E NEWS
122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001
www.eenews.net | @EENewsUpdates | 202-628-6500
Energywire, Climatewire, Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, E&E TV

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 2:43 PM
To: Michael Witt; Laura Rigas
Subject: Interior Department and EE

Hi there, Michael. Thank you for taking my call earlier today. The Department has dozens if not over a hundred subscriptions to E&E so it's no secret that we value your coverage of our issues. As such, the Department and E&E enjoy a positive and productive working relationship with every reporter on your staff with the exception of one.

Corbin Hiar has proven to be unwilling to work with the Department in a professional and unbiased manner. He routinely springs biased and poorly-researched stories on us with about an hour deadline to respond, knowing that responses to these types of questions require days. We have had several conversations with him over the months

about getting more time to respond to inquiries that are not run of the mill policy questions. I have explained that we often have to track down official documentation, speak with attorneys, speak with the Secretary, etc. This is not something that can be done in an hour. He sometimes gives me a day extension but that is still not adequate time in many cases.

Additionally, when the Department's communications office presents information that proves the allegations wrong, he refuses to accept that perhaps he was given bad information, and still treats the allegations as if they were true, and continues to write an inaccurate and leading article.

For example: (example 3 below) There was a matter of the Secretary resigning from his small businesses upon confirmation to the Cabinet. The Secretary in fact resigned and we provided Corbin with the proper legal documentation to prove that. We also had statements explaining the process and the timeline, clearly showing that the Secretary met all of his requirements. Rather than cut bait on a non-story, Corbin proceeded as planned with a leading and biased [story that strongly insinuated](#) that the Secretary was not in full compliance with his ethics pledge.

There are still more troubling exchanges where I approach Corbin to get information about a story he is researching and then he blatantly lied to me that he is writing a story. The situation with Mrs. Zinke is a perfect example, which is example 1 below.

My colleagues and I have made every effort to have a positive and productive working relationship with Corbin and all of E&E. Jennifer was one of the only reporters to get a one-on-one in Utah when the Secretary was there for Bears Ears. I've given Corbin plenty of "heads up" opportunities for announcements and travel, and the comms director at the Interior would have a weekly call with him to go over the week ahead. In the end,

Corbin however has not returned the professionalism. Instead he sneaks around and writes leading and misinformed stories in darkness. I'm happy to continue working with any one of your other reporters but Corbin has taken an antagonistic and combative approach to his beat. I'm afraid his editor hasn't done much to correct his tactics either.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reply all, I've CCed my boss, Laura Rigas, DOI Communications Director.

Heather Swift
Press Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
c: 202-897-7111
d: 202-208-5338

EXAMPLE 1: Investigative piece into the wife of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Lolita Zinke. I have been hearing for weeks from a sitting U.S. Senator, reporters from other news outlets, past administration officials, hill staff, and current DOI employees that Corbin has been asking around for information on Mrs. Zinke. When I approached Corbin twice on the subject, he avoided discussing the scope of his story or the deadline, or even ask a question about some of the information that he has been fed. As recent as yesterday, I asked Corbin if there was anything I could answer for him as I had heard once again that he was asking people for information on Mrs. Zinke. He gave one piece of intel, that Mrs. Zinke has a desk at the Department, which is patently false, and he refused to accept this fact. This morning I received an email from Corbin at 10:00 AM, with an 11:30 deadline, suggesting multiple accounts of wrong-doing by Mrs. Zinke and the Secretary, and not a shred of evidence to support his claims. When I asked about the claims he is extremely cagey, if not all together non-responsive.

10:02 AM (3 hours ago)

Corbin Hiar [via ios.doi.gov](mailto:via@ios.doi.gov)

to Interior_Press

We have a story about Mrs. Zinke's activities at Interior that, due to competitive pressures, may run as soon as today. The story notes that she has travelled in official vehicles with the secretary, which appears to be a violation of the [department's policy](#) against transporting family members in government vehicles except for in cases of emergency. It also details many of the non-public events she has attended with the secretary, her desk in his office, and her role managing CDI and a family trust with assets in California. The story, which provides background on Mrs. Zinke and her life with the secretary, includes quotes from watchdogs and former government officials noting how unusual such an arrangement is.

Why did she need that desk? Why has she traveled in government vehicles if, as Heather said yesterday, she has "no role at Interior"? Why did she receive an ethics briefing in early March if she has no role? Why did she attend a meeting with California Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown about water, infrastructure and conservation projects when such efforts could affect the value of her family trust or benefit CDI? Why was that meeting and all other events during the California trip not included on the secretary's calendar?

Please get back to me with any responses by 11:30. And I'm happy to provide more detail about the story if you have any questions.

Thanks, C

Corbin Hiar
[Interior Reporter](#)
O: 202 446 0438
M: 718 608 5314
T: [@corbinhiar](#)

EXAMPLE 2: Article summarizing aspects of Interior nominee David Bernhardt's senate hearing in which Corbin writes extensively about alleged ties to Jack Abramoff, without ever contacting the Department for a response. Corbin's article was wildly misleading and insinuated guilt and that Mr. Bernhardt was lying. When I approached Corbin and asked why he didn't contact Interior for information, he said it was because he didn't want to get scooped by Politico on the story. After I provided Corbin with a statement refuting the allegations, he included a few words he picked out of our statement.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 05, 2017 3:11 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: ?

Corbin - Curious why you didn't reach out to us about this article? <https://www.eenews.net/eedaily/2017/06/05/stories/1060055514>

On Mon, Jun 5, 2017 at 3:37 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:
Hi Heather,

Thanks for reading and for the question. There were a couple of reasons I didn't contact you about the story.

First and foremost, because I was quoting directly from Bernhardt, who as a nominee for Interior's second-highest job can be reasonably expected to represent the viewpoints of the department.

Second, and less importantly, because I didn't get the QFRs until Friday evening and wasn't able to go through them until Sunday afternoon. We also knew Politico would have something out on Monday morning and wanted to do the same.

Do you disagree with my reasoning here? Is there some statement from Interior that you'd like us to consider adding?

Best, C

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, June 05, 2017 4:34 PM

To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

Subject: Re: ?

1. Mr. Bernhardt is not yet our Deputy Secretary and therefore does not speak on behalf of the Department.
2. You have two email addresses for me, one for Laura, and three cell phone numbers between the two of us. We are always responsive over the weekend.
3. Background: Mr. Bernhardt is a highly-experienced and well-respected veteran Interior official. Mr. Bernhardt has been cleared several times over by the IG, the FBI and other federal government ethics officials with regard to Abramoff. All have corroborated Bernhardt was not at the dinner. Prior to his nomination, Mr. Bernhardt was subject to rigorous ethics vetting that found him fit for service.

DOI Statement: Just as Mr. Bernhard said in response to Senator Franken, Mr. Bernhardt does not believe he ever met Abramoff and has no relationship with him. Mr. Bernhardt is unequivocal that he never attended any dinner, let alone the dinner that E&E News wrongly insinuated that he did. All E&E had to do to verify this fact was pick up the phone and ask.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We've updated the story.

Note: The story was updated to include the line.... Interior Press Secretary Heather Swift, however, said in an email that Bernhardt "never attended any dinner" with Abramoff.

EXAMPLE 3: On a Friday after 5:00PM (when Government employees go home if they don't telework) Corbin emails weeks worth of research and allegations of misconduct by the Secretary, asking for a response by 11:00AM Monday. Essentially giving the Department two hours to work with the career officials in the Department to track down legal and ethics paperwork (not to mention Montana Secretary of State and Montana lawyers who are 2 hours behind). Corbin alleged the Secretary did not fulfill his ethics requirements because he was still a member of his family's small businesses upon confirmation to the Cabinet. The Secretary however did in fact resign and we provided Corbin with the proper legal documentation to prove that. We also explained the process and the timeline, clearly showing that the Secretary met all of his requirements. Rather than cut bait on a non-story, Corbin proceeded as planned with a wildly biased story that strongly insinuated that the Secretary was not in full compliance with his ethics pledge.

On **Fri, May 19, 2017 at 5:09 PM**, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit

in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

Best, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](#)

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 11:43 AM

To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

"The claims made by E&E are patently false, and as promised, 'upon confirmation' Secretary Zinke resigned as a managing member from the family's two small businesses and a nonprofit organization which he founded to build the Veterans Peace Park, a sledding park for the children of Whitefish, Montana. The Secretary worked with the career veteran ethics officials at the Department every step of the way. He currently has no management role in any of the organizations identified."

Timeline of events:

On January 10, then-Congressman Zinke signed a letter pledging to resign as a managing official from the three entities 'upon confirmation' (which he did). (document attached)

On March 2nd, just an hour after arriving at the Department for the first time, the Secretary [met with ethics officials](#) to go over the ethics regulations and laws, including a review of his ethics agreement. This was his first meeting as Secretary.

On March 6th, the ethics officials presented the Secretary with, and he signed, documents executing the resignation (attached).

Regarding Mrs. Zinke: "There was no violation of any government ethics rules. Out of an abundance of caution, Mrs. Zinke received an ethics briefing in early March to avoid even the appearance of a conflict.

On background:

The Executive Branch Stands of Ethical Conduct do not apply to private citizens, including spouses.

Following the death of her mother in October, Mrs. Zinke inherited her parents' home and residential rental property business.

May 25 (13 days ago)

Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

to me, Interior_Press, Laura

Why did it take Secretary Zinke three days to in office to sign the resignation letters? What happened to the letters after he signed them? Why did the Montana Secretary of State's office not receive them?

Please get back to me by 11 a.m. We plan to run the story today.

May 25 (13 days ago)

Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

to Corbin, Interior_Press, Laura

Corbin, The Secretary fulfilled his commitment and requirement to resign as a managing official. I'll remind you of the timeline. The Secretary's very first meeting was with the ethics office to resign as a managing official from the three entities. The ethics office then prepared the paperwork and presented it to him as soon as it was available, which was two businessdays later. Preparing and executing legal documents is a process, which in this case, was done as thoroughly and as expeditiously as possible. The documents were mailed to the attorney of the boards, who confirmed receipt, fulfilling the Secretary's requirement.

On March 2nd, just an hour after arriving at the Department for the first time, the Secretary [met with ethics officials](#) to go over the ethics regulations and laws, including a review of his ethics agreement. This was his first meeting as Secretary.

On March 6th, the ethics officials presented the Secretary with, and he signed, documents executing the resignation (attached).

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Corbin Hiar](#)
Subject: Re: Poking around
Date: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 4:04:09 PM

That she's a private citizen and has no role at Interior.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 4:02 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Well, she's a managing member of Continental Divide International and runs a family trust.
What else am I missing?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 4:00 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: Poking around

What "current activities" are you looking at? She has no role at Interior. What do you think she does?

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 3:58 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

It's pretty broad at this point. I'm looking into both her background and current activities.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 3:56 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: Re: Poking around

She has no role at Interior. What's the scope of your story?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, Jun 6, 2017 at 3:50 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Well, they're not intended to be weird. But yes, I am still pursuing a story about Mrs. Zinke. I plan to reach out soon with specific questions about her role at Interior.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, June 06, 2017 2:30 PM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Subject: Poking around

Why is it I keep hearing from multiple sources that you're asking weird questions about Mrs. Zinke?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Corbin Hiar](#)
Cc: [Noelle Straub](#); [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Mrs. Zinke
Date: Friday, June 09, 2017 11:51:05 AM

Please reach out to me before running your story with any hangups or points of contention. I'd also like to give the Mrs. a courtesy heads up if you decide to publish this.

Statement:

“Spouses of Cabinet members received a briefing by White House ethics officials in April. Maintaining ethical standards is of the highest importance to the Secretary, and to that point, out of an abundance of caution, Mrs. Zinke also received an ethics briefing by veteran ethics officials at Interior in order to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest.

“The claims made by E&E about Mrs. Zinke’s supposed involvement at the Interior Department are demonstrably false; for instance the crux of E&E’s argument, that Mrs. Zinke supposedly has a desk at Interior, is wrong. No such desk or workspace exists, and when asked to provide proof, E&E could not. While Mrs. Zinke has popped in to have lunch or say hello to her husband a couple times over the past several months, as happy couples do, the allegations that she is driving policy-making are flat-out wrong.

“Occasionally, Mrs. Zinke will travel at her own expense to site visits, such as a recent visit to Yosemite National Park. The Secretary enjoys his wife’s support while travelling because it allows for him to connect with his staff on a deeper level. All travel by Mrs. Zinke was at the personal cost of the Zinkes and approved by the ethics office prior to travel.

“Furthermore, the spouse of the secretary is permitted to travel in the secretary’s secure vehicle with him when deemed necessary. The secretary is often confronted by protesters and other variables, and ensuring the secretary’s quick and secure transport between points A and B is critical. At no point did Mrs. Zinke riding in the car with the secretary incur any additional expense or break any ethics guidance.

“Unfounded and down-right false allegations like these are ‘gotcha’ journalism at its worst and it smells of political gamesmanship. We would expect more from a news organization.”

On background:

The Executive Branch Stands of Ethical Conduct do not apply to private citizens,

including spouses, and therefore Mrs. Zinke is well within her right legally and ethically to remain a manager in the family business.

Following the death of her mother in October, Mrs. Zinke inherited her parents' home and residential rental property business in California.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jun 7, 2017 at 10:26 AM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

I am sorry about the short notice, but we've heard from sources familiar with the desk that other reporters are pursuing a similar story about Mrs. Zinke.

After talking with Noelle, we've decided to hold the story for a day. Please get back to us with any addition comment for the story by 11:00 tomorrow.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 10:12 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>; Noelle Straub <nstraub@eenews.net>; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Mrs. Zinke

Corbin, 11:30 is an impossible and seemingly it was a deliberative effort on your part to not give the Interior Department the opportunity to respond and show you why the allegations are false.

I mean, just on it's face, what is this fictitious desk you talk about? No such desk exists. Where is your proof that Mrs. Zinke has a desk in the office?

Please give me until Friday at 11:30 so I can speak with the appropriate officials at the Department.

-
Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Wed, Jun 7, 2017 at 10:02 AM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

We have a story about Mrs. Zinke's activities at Interior that, due to competitive pressures, may run as soon as today. The story notes that she has travelled in official vehicles with the secretary, which appears to be a violation the [department's policy](#) against transporting family members in government vehicles except for in cases of emergency. It also details many of the non-public events she has attended with the secretary, her desk in his office, and her role managing CDI and a family trust with assets in California. The story, which provides background on Mrs. Zinke and her life with the secretary, includes quotes from watchdogs and former government officials noting how unusual such an arrangement is.

Why did she need that desk? Why has she traveled in government vehicles if, as Heather said yesterday, she has "no role at Interior"? Why did she receive an ethics briefing in early March if she has no role? Why did she attend a meeting with California Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown about water, infrastructure and conservation projects when such efforts could affect the value of her family trust or benefit CDI? Why was that meeting and all other events during the California trip not included on the secretary's calendar?

Please get back to me with any responses by 11:30. And I'm happy to provide more detail about the story if you have any questions.

Thanks, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](#)

E&E NEWS

122 C St NW, 7th Fl; Washington, DC, 20001

The leader in energy and environment news

Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, Climatewire, Energywire, E&ETV

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Corbin Hiar](#)
Cc: [Noelle Straub](#); [Laura Rigas](#); Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Mrs. Zinke
Date: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 10:27:38 AM

Corbin, there's no such desk! Literally, how can you report on something that is patently, physically false. People are lying to you and you're accepting it as fact with zero proof.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>; Noelle Straub <nstraub@eenews.net>; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
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Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

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Please get back to me with any responses by 11:30. And I'm happy to provide more detail about the story if you have any questions.

Thanks, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](#)

E&E NEWS

122 C St NW, 7th Fl; Washington, DC, 20001

The leader in energy and environment news

Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, Climatewire, Energywire, E&ETV

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Scott Hommel](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Megan Bloomgren](#)
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:29:00 PM

Poke.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
[Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov](#) | [Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov](#)

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 12:31 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
Meg/Laura/Scott -- The hit piece inquiry from E&E is below. My proposed response is in red. Yes, it's very amped up. Our Deadline is Tomorrow at 11:00AM

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

[Redacted]

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
[Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov](#) | [Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov](#)

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Corbin Hiar** <chiar@eenews.net>

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

Best, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

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E&E NEWS

122 C St NW, 7th Fl; Washington, DC, 20001

The leader in energy and environment news

Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, Climatewire, Energywire, E&ETV

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Corbin Hiar](#)
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 10:13:14 AM

Corbin, The Secretary fulfilled his commitment and requirement to resign as a managing official. I'll remind you of the timeline. The Secretary's very first meeting was with the ethics office to resign as a managing official from the three entities. The ethics office then prepared the paperwork and presented it to him as soon as it was available, which was two business days later. Preparing and executing legal documents is a process, which in this case, was done as thoroughly and as expeditiously as possible. The documents were mailed to the attorney of the boards, who confirmed receipt, fulfilling the Secretary's requirement.

On March 2nd, just an hour after arriving at the Department for the first time, the Secretary [met with ethics officials](#) to go over the ethics regulations and laws, including a review of his ethics agreement. This was his first meeting as Secretary.

On March 6th, the ethics officials presented the Secretary with, and he signed, documents executing the resignation (attached).

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 9:05 AM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Why did it take Secretary Zinke three days to in office to sign the resignation letters? What happened to the letters after he signed them? Why did the Montana Secretary of State's office not receive them?

Please get back to me by 11 a.m. We plan to run the story today.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 11:43 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

"The claims made by E&E are patently false, and as promised, 'upon confirmation' Secretary Zinke resigned as a managing member from the family's two small businesses and a nonprofit organization which he founded to build the Veterans Peace Park, a sledding park for the children of Whitefish, Montana. The Secretary worked with the career veteran ethics

officials at the Department every step of the way. He currently has no management role in any of the organizations identified."

Timeline of events:

On January 10, then-Congressman Zinke signed a letter pledging to resign as a managing official from the three entities 'upon confirmation' (which he did). (document attached)

On March 2nd, just an hour after arriving at the Department for the first time, the Secretary [met with ethics officials](#) to go over the ethics regulations and laws, including a review of his ethics agreement. This was his first meeting as Secretary.

On March 6th, the ethics officials presented the Secretary with, and he signed, documents executing the resignation (attached).

Regarding Mrs. Zinke: "There was no violation of any government ethics rules. Out of an abundance of caution, Mrs. Zinke received an ethics briefing in early March to avoid even the appearance of a conflict.

On background:

The Executive Branch Standards of Ethical Conduct do not apply to private citizens, including spouses.

Following the death of her mother in October, Mrs. Zinke inherited her parents' home and residential rental property business.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Tue, May 23, 2017 at 11:00 AM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Thanks for the update. We'll standby.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 10:54 AM
To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

sending you something shortly. getting it cleared by ethics. will take a moment.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 10:43 AM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

While we've agreed to hold the story until tomorrow's Greenwire, we'd appreciate it if you could provide us comment by the end of today or first thing on Tuesday. Thanks for your consideration.

Best, C

From: Corbin Hiar
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:35 PM
To: 'Swift, Heather' <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: RE: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

Noelle's cell phone number is (b) (6)

There's a lot of documents. But the most significant ones are Secretary Zinke's [ethics](#)

[agreement](#) and proof that he hasn't complied with it:

https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/05/22/document_gw_01.pdf

https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/05/22/document_gw_02.pdf

https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/05/22/document_gw_03.pdf

And I really am sorry about the timing of this. As I tried to explain to you and Laura before sending this request – I got voicemail on both of your phones – I was delayed in sending this due to the calendar story Noelle assigned this morning and because I wasn't able to definitively confirm that the secretary hadn't resigned until after 4 p.m. We're also planning to run this faster than usual because we don't want it to get lost in all the budget news that's coming out later in the week.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:26 PM

To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov; Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

Please send me her cell phone number.

Please also send me all of the documents you're working off.

Also, sending a bogus email after 5:00PM on a Friday for a Monday morning deadline absolutely flies in the face of you claiming you're trying to give us time to respond to your inquires. You didn't just come up with this hit job half an hour ago.

Furthermore, it's Secretary Zinke and Mrs. Zinke.

-
Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, May 19, 2017 at 5:18 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Noelle's cell phone number is 202-316-1325.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]

Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:11 PM

To: Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net>

Cc: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

Subject: Re: Request for comment on Secretary Zinke's ethics compliance

Corbin, please send me your editor's number.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Fri, May 19, 2017 at 5:09 PM, Corbin Hiar <chiar@eenews.net> wrote:

Hi, we're planning to run a story in Monday's Greenwire about Secretary Zinke's failure to resign from Continental Divide International LLC, Double Tap LLC, and Great Northern Veterans Peace Park Inc. before assuming office, as he promised to do in his agreement with the Office of Government Ethics. The story explains that his continued involvement with these entities as well as Lolita's role at CDI and

access to top decisionmakers open the secretary up to, at the very least, the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Do you have any comment on Zinke's failure to follow through on his OGE agreement? Also, can you explain why Lolita has been allowed to sit in on meetings with the governor of California, a state in which she owns more than \$1 million worth of property, and other closed-door events? How will Interior prevent her or the secretary for violating ethics and conflict of interest laws and policies?

I'd also like to note that the story includes links to previous reporting on Zinke's alleged travel fraud and close ties to the Special Operations for America PAC as well as documents about the history of CDI. That's not something you can really comment on, but I don't want you to be surprised when you see it in the story.

Please get back to me with a comment by 11 a.m. on Monday. Feel free to give me a call on my cell phone with any questions or concerns you may have about this request. I'm happy to elaborate if needed.

Best, C

Corbin Hiar

[Interior Reporter](#)

O: 202 446 0438

M: 718 608 5314

T: [@corbinhiar](#)

E&E NEWS

122 C St NW, 7th Fl; Washington, DC, 20001

The leader in energy and environment news

Greenwire, E&E Daily, E&E News PM, Climatewire, Energywire, E&ETV

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#); [Laura Rigas](#); [Russell Newell](#)
Subject: DOI - Heads up IG report
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2017 12:21:06 PM
Attachments: [MA_ZinkeTravel_111517.pdf](#)
[Document.pdf](#)

The IG is investigating Zinke's travel. In the process of that, they IDed an area where the paperwork process (done by career officials the same way it was for previous admins) is a bit troublesome. Attached is the letter the IG sent to Dep Sec and the letter Dep Sec sent back.

The IG letter was sent to the Hill so we expect Dems to make hay over it.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Congressional, OIG** <oig_congressional@doioig.gov>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 11:54 AM
Subject: OIG Management Advisory to Hill & public

Yesterday DOI OIG delivered the attached Management Advisory to Deputy Secretary Bernhardt regarding secretarial travel. (b) (5) [REDACTED] It was just sent to Congress and will be posted publicly tomorrow, 11/17.

Nancy K. DiPaolo
Director, External Affairs
Office of the Inspector General
Department of the Interior
202.208.4357
(c) 202.805.4701

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO](mailto:Shah.Raj.S.EOP/WHO)
Cc: russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: From Interior
Date: Monday, October 02, 2017 10:52:56 AM

sure. thanks.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 2, 2017 at 10:34 AM, Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <[<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5))> wrote:

[<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5))
[Redacted]

From: Heather Swift [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 10:05 AM
To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO [<\(b\) \(5\)>](mailto:(b) (5)); russell_newell@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: From Interior

Raj - As it's a bit more reaching than the standard travel inquiry I wanted to double check what you all wanted us to do with it. There's A LOT of wrong information in here, such as the claim that there were political events in California, Nevada, others. I have the answers for all of these questions, just for your reference.

- OVERALL questions
- How many flights has Sec. Zinke taken on government or charter jets? Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, type of plane, destinations, dates of use, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?
- On what trips did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola and/or other members of Sec. Zinke's family join?
- The calendar says that spouses attended a cultural briefing with local reindeer herders on May 26 in Norway. Was Lola Zinke one of the spouses?
- Did Sec. Zinke take steps to limit the costs of his travel? If so, what were they?

- Virgin Islands
 - What was the official purpose of the U.S. Virgin Islands trip during Zinke's first month as Interior secretary?
 - What was the cost of the trip?
 - Did Sec. Zinke's wife Lola attend?
 - While some flights appear to be commercial, others are not shown, including multiple flights on March 31. Can you please provide the manifest, type of plane, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips?

- Big Sky event
 - Sec. Zinke was in Big Sky in March 17-19, the same time Sen. Daines hosted a "weekend in the Montana mountains" benefiting the Daines Big Sky Committee. He attended multiple Daines receptions and stayed the night at Daines' home. A fundraiser flyer says requested contributions were \$3,000 for PACs, \$1,500 for personal.
 - What was the policy purpose of this trip?
 - Was this a political trip?
 - Who paid for Zinke's travel to the political events?

- Atlanta
 - What was the purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip to the NRA Institute for Legislative Action event in Atlanta on April 28? Was this a political event? What was the cost of flying on Air Force One, and did the DOI reimburse any other agencies for the seats of Sec. Zinke, Lola Zinke or his staff?

- April 12-20
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke spoke at the Reagan Center in Santa Barbara and campaigned for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On April 15 and 16, Sec. Zinke was in Santa Barabra, including a meeting with former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino. What was the meeting about? Did these home trips entail personal or official use? The items don't say that it was "personal travel" or "paid for personally" - was it?
 - On April 17, Sec. Zinke went to the Reagan Ranch Center and met the vice president of the Young America's Foundation. What was the official policy purpose of this trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

- May 5-13: Montana, Utah, California, Montana
 - What was the official policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's trip on May 5-13?
 - During the trip, Sec. Zinke gave keynote remarks to the RNC Spring Meeting Dinner and attended a rally for Greg Gianforte. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - On May 8 and May 9, Sec. Zinke traveled in a B200 Turboprop 8-passenger plane, the calendar states. Can you please provide the manifest, cost of the trip, owner of the jet and source of payment for the trips?
 - Sec. Zinke spent that weekend at home in Kalispell, Montana. He then flew to Dulles and home on Monday. Federal regulations say employees' official travel should by no means

include personal use. Did these home trips entail personal use?

- May 25-June 2: Norway, Greenland, Alaska, Idaho
 - What was the official purpose of this trip?
 - Sec. Zinke attended a reception for Rep. Don Young at Sullivan's Steakhouse. Was this a political trip? What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?
 - Sec. Zinke flew from Boise to L.A. on June 2. The June 3 and 4 dates say "Personal travel // Paid for personally" in Santa Barbara. What did Sec. Zinke pay for? How much did he pay? At what rate did he pay for the travel personally? What aircraft did he fly on? What was the total cost to government?

- June 25-28: Nevada, Montana
 - On June 25, Sec. Zinke attended the Rule of Law Defense Fund Reception & Dinner, where he sat at a dinner table with leaders of the casino industry, the NRA, the Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries. What was the policy purpose of Sec. Zinke's attendance? Was this a political event?
 - On June 26, Sec. Zinke flew from Las Vegas to Kalispell on a private plane tied to a Republican donor. Can you please provide the aircraft manifest, purpose, cost of the trip and source of payment for the trips? It appears Sec. Zinke spent the night afterward at his home in Whitefish; is that correct, and wouldn't that convey personal use?

- July 20-22: Colorado
 - On July 20, Sec. Zinke gave remarks in Denver at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He also attended a Colorado Republican Committee roundtable and gave remarks at the Western Conservative Summit.
 - What was the official policy purpose of these trips? Were these trips political or personal? What were Sec. Zinke's remarks at these trips. What was the cost for this trip, and who covered the expenses?

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: RE: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview
Date: Monday, July 31, 2017 2:53:55 PM

Thank you! Sorry I overlooked this...

Brad

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 2:51 PM
To: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

Brad, here's the statement.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 1:44 PM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

The Secretary spent a number of hours with the reporter over a several month span, where they talked about everything from his love of public lands, admiration of the President and his cabinet, and the Administration's shared vision to Make America Great Again. The reporter selectively used quotes out of context to write a story that fit her pre-conceived narrative. Secretary Zinke looks forward to continuing to carry out the President's agenda and fulfill Interior's mission to protect and manage our nation's natural resources and cultural heritage.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Jul 31, 2017 at 8:20 AM, Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

See below. I'm at my desk until 8:45 a.m. Let's discuss.

Brad Rateike
The White House
Assistant Director of Cabinet Communications

(b) (6)
Desk: (b) (6)
Mobile: (b) (6)

From: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 8:19 AM
To: Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Cc: Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO (b) (6)>
Subject: FW: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

Adam, work with Brad. We need some guidance/answers here in case asked.

From: Hemming, Andrew J. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2017 7:36 AM
To: Boza-Holman, Sofia M. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>;
Cheung, Steven EOP/WHO (b) (6)>; Ditto, Jessica E.
EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Ferre, Helen A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Fetalvo, Ninio J. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Grisham, Stephanie A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Hulse, Elliott Y. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Hurley, Carolina L. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Montesi, Janet M. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Parkinson, Andrew Z. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Ross, Tyler E. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Sanders, Sarah H. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Shoemaker, Clay M. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Short, Michael C. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Sims, Cliff D. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>; Strom, Natalie M. EOP/WHO
(b) (6)>; Walters, Lindsay E. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)>
Subject: Flagging - Zinke a bit out over his skis in a GQ interview

A Zinke interview just popped in GQ and he has a couple of eyebrow-raising quotes in there about Trump.

KEY SECTIONS:

Zinke Calls His Job Interview With Trump Disorganized:

Rumors buzzed that he'd been shortlisted for the job atop the Interior Department, but when Zinke and his wife, Lola, passed through the gilded doors of Trump Tower, he actually had no clue what position he was interviewing for—Priebus had never said definitively. And by the end of a rambling conversation with the president-elect, Zinke still wasn't entirely sure.

"The conversation went a hundred seconds. It went from women in combat to Syria policy to the Chinese to energy independence, a little about public lands, a little about hunting access," Zinke tells me. "Most of the conversation was not really Interior, per se." At one point, Trump proposed the Veterans Affairs post, to which Zinke quipped, "I don't think you hate me that much."

He was flying back to Montana when Mike Pence called him. "The vice president says, 'Well, congratulations!'" Zinke recalls, sharing the moment he was asked to join the Trump Cabinet, "and I asked him, 'What job?'"

Zinke Says The Trump Administration Has Had “A Lot Of Distractions And Chatter”:

Thirty minutes into our ride, after snaking through another throng of tourists, we approach the Washington Monument—that stone memorial to the original military man turned president—and Zinke takes stock of these still-early days of the Trump administration. "The president is the best boss I've ever had," Zinke tells me, "but there's a lot of distractions and chatter." He tugs on his reins to pause for a moment and consider the structure, the city's tallest by edict. "You're just always looking for ways to stay above that."

Zinke Complains About How Hard It Is To Bring People Onboard And Notes Government Is Different Than Business:

For all that camera-ready affection for the boss, members of the Trump cabinet, Zinke included, admit to being frustrated with the White House, which they say has left them chronically short-staffed. According to the Partnership for Public Service, the White House has yet to nominate staffers for 357 out of 570 key agency positions. So far, only 50 nominees have been confirmed. (By this time in their first terms, President Obama had gotten 203 confirmed; George W. Bush, 203.)

...

Zinke, four months into the job, has been able to fill only two key positions that require White House approval, out of 15 vacancies. He notes that he's submitted the names of "awfully good, just super people," but that the past few months have been a waiting game. "Operating a business sometimes is a little different from operating in the Oval Office," Zinke says. "[In business], it's just 'All right, you're hired.' But I think the White House is running into the swamp...there's a bureaucracy there that's very difficult to determine." (Zinke may have himself to thank for recent inaction, though. The day after his unseemly call to Murkowski, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which the Alaska senator chairs, announced that hearings for a slate of Zinke's nominees would be delayed.)

Zinke Said The WH Is “Getting Its Legs Under It” And Says They Were “Getting In Other People’s Business A Bit Too Much”:

Zinke insists that he and his team have gotten along just fine with their designated White House minder, but John Kelly, who served until last week as the secretary of homeland security, was a bit more candid when we spoke. "I don't need a lot of supervision," he told me. "Obviously the White House is getting its legs under it, but early on it was a bit of a pain. They were getting in other people's business a little bit too much." (Kelly's tune will presumably change: On Friday he was named White House chief of staff.)

<http://www.gq.com/story/ryan-zinke-secretary-of-interior-profile>

From: Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Subject: RE: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 9:26:09 AM

Heather – Tried you, but realized that’s the wrong number. Call me this morning when you’re able.

(b) (6)

From: Dorr, Kaelan K. EOP/WHO
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:26 PM
To: Shah, Raj S. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Ditto, Jessica E. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Kennedy, Adam R. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Hemming, Andrew J. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Dubke, Michael D. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Cheung, Steven EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Flagging the below for the broader team - they've responded that they didn't know who he was when they accepted invite, etc.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:13:21 PM EDT
To: <(b) (6)>, "Love, Kelly A. EOP/ Who" <(b) (6)>, Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Kelly, can you give me a call? 202-8897-7111

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 9:04:25 PM EDT
To: Dell Cameron <dell.cameron@gizmodo.com>
Cc: Interior Press <Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov>, Bryan Menegus <bryan.menegus@gizmodo.com>
Subject: Re: Press inquiry: Chuck Johnson, Palmer Luckey

Hi Dell, the Secretary nor anyone on staff was aware of the behavior you outlined. Regarding setting up the meeting, a friend of the Secretary's suggested he talk with them about their technology. As a result, they had a very brief meeting with the Secretary there was no action after.

For your background, please see this letter then-Congressman Zinke penned denouncing such behavior, tactics and rhetoric
<https://www.daines.senate.gov/news/press-releases/tester-daines-zinke-bullock-fox-stand-against-anti-semitism-and-white-nationalism>

Sent from my iPhone
On May 22, 2017, at 8:23 PM, Dell Cameron
<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Thanks Heather.

Can you say who arranged this meeting? One of those "gentlemen," Chuck Johnson, is a fairly controversial figure.

- His website is fundraising for Andrew Anglin, publisher neo-Nazi website Daily Stormer. Link: <http://gizmodo.com/internet-gremlin-chuck-johnsons-website-becomes-inaccess-1794791944>
- Prior to the meeting, Johnson incorrectly identified a student at University of Virginia and accused her of making false rape accusations (he attacked her online and posted a photo of her). Link: <http://jezebel.com/woman-falsely-idd-as-uvas-jackie-by-conservative-blogge-1671234663>
- He was booted from Twitter after saying he planned to "take out" a black activist. Link: <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/05/troll-charles-johnson-banned-from-twitter-207688>
- He's argued that homosexuality was responsible for an Amtrak derailment. Link: <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/05/15/op-ed-amtrak-accident-isnt-part-gay-agenda>
- He falsely claimed a "left-wing Democrat" nurse in New Jersey had Ebola and offered \$1,000 for pictures of a Republican candidate's wife, who was in a nursing home. Link: <http://bit.ly/139nGar>

Was the secretary aware of Mr. Johnson's... how do I put it.... extremely inappropriate and abusive behavior prior to taking that meeting?

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: (469) 387-1810

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 6:23 PM, Swift, Heather
<heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hey there, Dell. The Secretary had a brief meeting where he listened to their ideas about using technology on the border and referred the gentlemen to the Department of Homeland Security.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov 1
Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 5:03 PM, Dell Cameron
<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Follow up.

Please excuse the language in this email below, I'm quoting one of the attendees of the meeting in which Mr. Zinke, Downey Magallanes, Scott Hommel, Nancy Guiden, as well as acting Communications Director Megan Bloomgren, were all present.

We asked Mr. Luckey if he could elaborate on what was discussed w/ the Secretary at this meeting.

Mr. Luckey told our reporter: "I could give you an answer. Or I could tell you to go fuck yourself."

In response, we're filing a FOIA request for additional information about the meeting & printing a story about the meeting within the hour.

Regards,

Dell Cameron
Staff Reporter, Gizmodo
Gizmodo Media Group
Email: dell@gizmodo.com
Signal: (469) 387-1810
PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 2:46 PM, Dell Cameron

<dell.cameron@gizmodo.com> wrote:

Good afternoon,

It came to our attention that Sec. Zinke attended a meeting on April 12 with Oculus Rift founder Palmer Luckey and WeSearchr founder Charles Johnson, as well as four Interior staff members, concerning the construction of a border wall.

Can your office elaborate on what that meeting was about, and why Johnson and Luckey were asked to advise on such a project?

Thanks,

Dell Cameron

Staff Reporter, Gizmodo

Gizmodo Media Group

Email: dell@gizmodo.com

Signal: [\(469\) 387-1810](tel:4693871810)

PGP: keybase.io/dellcam

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#); [Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 2:28:07 PM

The department cannot comment on political matters.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Mon, Oct 30, 2017 at 2:11 PM, Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)> wrote:

How are you handling these PAC questions?

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2017 10:43 AM
To: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>; Rateike, Bradley A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>; Love, Kelly A. EOP/WHO <(b) (6)>
Subject: Fwd: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data

Brad, inquiry below regarding the campaign PAC.

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Esther Whieldon <ewhieldon@politico.com>
Date: Fri, Oct 27, 2017 at 5:56 PM
Subject: Questions about Zinke for Congress PAC data
To: Interior Press <interior_press@ios.doi.gov>, Heather Swift <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov>

I'm looking over some of the Zinke for Congress PAC expenditures. Please answer the following questions.

1) Please address the sale of the RV to Buttrey and whether the PAC sold it to him for less than it's actual value. And please address whether Lola Zinke may have conversely sold the RV to the PAC for more than it was worth.

2) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported a \$22K-ish payment to First BankCard and listed the underlying transactions as all happening on December 31.

2a) Please provide the dates that the three expenses listed underneath were actually incurred?

recipient_name	recipient_state	disbursement_description	disbursement_amount	disbursement_date
VONS	CA	CAMPAIGN DINNER	314.36	12/31/2016 0:00
WESTHOUSE	NY	LODGING	696.18	12/31/2016 0:00
LIME INN	Virgin Islands	LODGING	522.74	12/31/2016 0:00

3) The Zinke for Congress PAC reported the receipt of this \$13,997.653 transfer on its April Quarterly report, but does not list the individual contributions contained in the transfer-in from Zinke Victory Fund. Why is that?

4) Lastly, please provide a general comment on the extent to which Zinke ensured his campaign PAC followed campaign finance and disclosure laws.

Please respond by 10 am Monday as we plan to run a story at 11 a.m. Apologies for the short notice.

Thanks, Esther

Esther Whieldon

Reporter

POLITICO

301-213-4370 (mobile)

703-672-2788 (office)

ewhieldon@politico.com

Twitter: @esthernow

From: Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO
To: [Swift, Heather](#)
Cc: [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: RE: Sec. Zinke GQ
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 2:13:30 PM

Terrific

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Thursday, May 25, 2017 12:39 PM
To: Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO (b) (6) >
Cc: Laura Rigas <laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov>
Subject: Re: Sec. Zinke GQ

(b) (5)

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
[@DOIPressSec](#)
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:25 PM, Hudson, Hope R. EOP/WHO

(b) (6) > wrote:

This is so helpful. Thank you! (b) (5)

Thanks!

Sent from my iPhone

On May 25, 2017, at 11:29 AM, Swift, Heather <heather_swift@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Hi Renee, thanks for the call. Below are some topline messaging on the Secretary and his bio. Let me know if there's anything else you need.

TOPLINE

- Secretary Ryan Zinke is a fifth-generation Montanan and a 23-year veteran of the U.S. Navy SEALs
 - Zinke is a guy that the average American connects with. He's a veteran, comes from a blue collar family (three generations of plumbers), and like the President is incredibly close with his wife and adult children.

- Zinke is a total work horse whose leadership at Interior has been bold and decisive.
 - Zinke has signed a number of Secretarial orders to implement the President's American Energy First agenda.
 - Zinke is a hands-on leader who does extensive travel to the places impacted by his Department, like his four-day trip to Utah to conduct a review of the national monuments under the President's executive order.

- He is well-liked and well-respected by his colleagues in the cabinet and in the White House.
 - Zinke is always willing to go the extra mile and collaborate on projects

Secretary Ryan Zinke Bio

Ryan Zinke was sworn in as the 52nd Secretary of the Interior on March 1, 2017.

A fifth-generation Montanan and former U.S. Navy SEAL Commander, Ryan Zinke built one of the strongest track records in the 114th Congress on championing sportsmen's access, conservation, regulatory relief, forest management, responsible energy development, and smart management of federal lands.

“As a former Navy SEAL, Ryan has incredible leadership skills and an attitude of doing whatever it takes to win,” President Donald Trump said in nominating the former congressman, who built an impressive portfolio on Interior issues ranging from federal mineral leases to tribal affairs to public lands conservation.

Growing up in a logging and rail town near Glacier National Park, Ryan has had a lifelong appreciation for conserving America's natural beauty while honoring Teddy Roosevelt's vision of multiple-use on our public lands. He has consistently led the efforts to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Congress, and has also been a firm advocate for our nation's sportsmen to gain access to our public lands with the SCORE Act and SHARE Act. Zinke also coauthored the Resilient Federal Forest Act, which initiated new reforms for revitalizing America's timber towns and preventing wildfires by emphasizing the collaborative process.

Zinke is widely praised for his voting record supporting the Teddy Roosevelt philosophy of managing public lands, which calls for multiple-use to include economic, recreation and conservation. He has pledged to explore every possibility for safely and responsibly repealing bad regulations and using public natural resources to create jobs and wealth for the American people.

“I am honored and humbled to serve Montana and America as Secretary of the Interior,” Zinke said. “I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that

our treasured public lands are ‘for the benefit and enjoyment of the people’. I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come. Most importantly, our sovereign Indian Nations and territories must have the respect and freedom they deserve. I look forward to making the Department of the Interior and America great again.”

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation’s lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters; is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states; and upholds trust responsibilities to the 567 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

Ryan Zinke represented the state of Montana in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2014. Before that he served in the Montana State Senate from 2009 to 2011, but the bulk of his public service was 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL officer.

Zinke enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and was soon selected to join the elite force where he would build an honorable career until his retirement in 2008. He retired with the rank of Commander after leading SEAL operations across the globe, including as the Deputy and Acting Commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq and two tours at SEAL Team Six. Zinke was the first Navy SEAL elected to the U.S. House and is the first SEAL to serve as a cabinet secretary.

Zinke holds a Geology degree from the University of Oregon, where he was an All-PAC 10 football player; a Master’s degree in Business Finance from National University; and a Master’s degree in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego. Ryan and his wife Lolita (Lola) have three children and two granddaughters. Zinke is proud to be an adopted member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribe at the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana.

-

Heather Swift

Department of the Interior

@DOIPressSec

Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: jlawrence@usatoday.com; dmastio@usatoday.com; [Laura Rigas](#)
Subject: Re: Secretary Zinke Op-Ed Pitch
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2017 5:17:06 PM
Attachments: [OpEd_MadeInAmerica_Rec_FINAL.docx](#)

Jill, Heather Swift here - press secretary at the Department of the Interior.

Attached is an op-ed from Secretary Ryan Zinke written exclusively for USA Today. [Also here is a high-res headshot.](#)

Please let me know if you're interested in running this in the Sunday edition, or on Monday.

Happy to discuss any edits as well.

Best,
Heather

(b) (6)

-

Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Jul 13, 2017 at 12:54 PM, Sadler, Kelly J. EOP/WHO

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Jill,

Hi - we're branding next week "Made in America" and would love to kick it off by placing an op-ed with you by Secretary Zinke on America's public lands and how public private partnerships can and will create a world-class outdoor experience. We'd love this to go in your weekend edition or to run on Monday.

Are you interested in the exclusive? We'll have the copy by the end of the day to review.

Thanks,
Kelly

Kelly Sadler
Special Assistant to the President
Office of Communications
White House

C: (b) (6)

From: Laura Rigas
To: [Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO](#)
Cc: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov
Subject: Re: TPs
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:05:57 PM

Many thx!!

Laura Keehner Rigas
Communications Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
(202) 897-7022 cell
@Interior

On Dec 4, 2017, at 11:03 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hey guys, please see some guidance for off topic talking points.
I don't see the Secretary getting asked but want him to be prepared just in case.
Please let me know if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Budget And Government Shutdown

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On Gen. Flynn:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

Roy Moore:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On DOJ:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

From: Swift, Heather
To: [Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO](#)
Subject: Re: Zinke next week Mornings w Maria
Date: Thursday, September 28, 2017 1:24:56 PM

Yes.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO

<[\(b\) \(6\)](#)> wrote:

Hey! Apologies for the delay. Have you been coordinating with FEMA on the visit? Just want to double check.

I think it would be good to do press but I want to make sure we're sensitive about this and coordinating with DHS/FEMA.

From: Swift, Heather [mailto:heather_swift@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 8:22 AM
To: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO <[\(b\) \(6\)](#)>
Subject: Zinke next week Mornings w Maria

Alexa - Next week Zinke will be in south florida touring a lot of the hurricane damage at four national parks and also visiting some FEMA sites. Are you OK with Zinke doing FBN Mornings w/ Maria Thursday or Friday next week? We'd probably want to have a camera crew go to the tour he does at a FEMA site. We are also looking into if he can meet with displaced PR families. His wife Lola is a native spanish speaker so she will accompany as well.

-
Heather Swift
Department of the Interior
@DOIPressSec
Heather_Swift@ios.doi.gov | Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

From: Henning, Alexa A. EOP/WHO
To: heather_swift@ios.doi.gov; laura_rigas@ios.doi.gov
Subject: TPs
Date: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:03:08 PM

Hey guys, please see some guidance for off topic talking points.
I don't see the Secretary getting asked but want him to be prepared just in case.
Please let me know if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Budget And Government Shutdown

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]

On Gen. Flynn:

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]

Roy Moore:

(b) (5)
[Redacted]

On DOJ:

. (b) (5)
[Redacted]